

= Hasaan Ibn Ali =

Hasaan Ibn Ali (born William Henry Langford , Jr . ; May 6 , 1931 ? 1980) was an American jazz pianist and composer .

Ibn Ali was strongly influenced by Elmo Hope , and his playing was rapid and intense , retaining a sense of rhythm even when his style became increasingly unconventional . Several recordings of his playing may exist , but only one ? The Max Roach Trio Featuring the Legendary Hasaan ? has been released . Ibn Ali built a reputation in Philadelphia , where he influenced musicians including John Coltrane , but he remained little known elsewhere .

= = Life and career = =

Hasaan Ibn Ali was born William Henry Langford , Jr. in Philadelphia on May 6 , 1931 . In 1946 (aged 15) he toured with trumpeter Joe Morris 's rhythm and blues band . In 1950 he played locally with Clifford Brown , Miles Davis , J. J. Johnson , Max Roach , and others . Based in Philadelphia , Ibn Ali did freelance work and built a reputation locally as " an original composer and theorist " , in musicologist Lewis Porter 's words . The pianist played with Horace Arnold in New York City in 1959 , and again in 1961 ? 62 , this time in a trio with Henry Grimes . According to Roach , on visits to New York , Ibn Ali went from club to club to play , and sometimes went to the drummer 's home in the middle of the night to continue playing , alone , on the piano there .

Ibn Ali remained an obscure figure until his only released recording , The Max Roach Trio Featuring the Legendary Hasaan , which was recorded on December 4 and 7 , 1964 , and released six months later . The trio contained Roach and bassist Art Davis , and the album consisted of seven tracks , all written by Ibn Ali . The recording opportunity was initiated by Roach , who used his influence with the owner of Atlantic Records to secure the session for Ibn Ali . Alan Sukoening , in his liner notes to the album , wrote " For a while it appeared that it was Hasaan Ibn Ali 's destiny to be known ? to those who had heard of him at all ? as the extraordinary jazz pianist from Philadelphia who had never made a record . " After the album , Ibn Ali returned to obscurity .

According to music journalist Tom Moon , Ibn Ali was " Described by (usually tolerant) jazz musicians as eccentric and / or unstable " . Saxophonist Odean Pope , who was mentored by Ibn Ali , stated that the pianist " was so advanced that musicians shied away from him . [...] He was very dedicated , very sincere , but also very outspoken [...] If he were in a club , and the pianist wasn 't making it , Hasaan would push him right off the bench and start playing himself . "

Ibn Ali had further studio sessions , with Pope , Art Davis and drummer Khalil Madi , on August 23 and September 7 , 1965 . However , the master tapes of the unreleased recordings were said to have been destroyed in a fire at the record label 's warehouse in 1976 . The Library of Congress has a 1964 recording of an Ibn Ali solo improvisation , recorded at Roach 's home . John Murph in JazzTimes described it in 2014 as " Thoroughly modern with a whimsical rhythmic undertow and wayward melodic passages , it sounds like a new Jason Moran composition . "

" Reckless with his health , Hasaan died young " , commented writer Geoffrey Haydon in 2002 . The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz states that Ibn Ali died in Philadelphia in 1980 (aged 48 or 49) .

= = Playing style and influences = =

A contemporary reviewer for The Glasgow Herald commented on Ibn Ali 's playing on the Atlantic album with Roach that " One 's first reaction is astonishment at the blazing finger technique , [...] and the complete individuality of his harmonics [sic] " . AllMusic reviewer Scott Yanow described Ibn Ali 's playing on the album as " intense , somewhat virtuosic and rhythmic , yet often melodic in a quirky way " .

Drummer Sherman Ferguson said of Ibn Ali , " he was a prime example of somebody that was very avant @-@ garde in some ways , but he was always musical . So people of all ages liked his music , even when he played out . [... He] had that thing , where he had a natural feeling . He got to the thing where it swung no matter what he was doing . " Saxophonist Benny Golson commented that

Ibn Ali " became very skilled at the modern sounds , and then went right past them into something very esoteric . He went way out there . I guess you could say his brakes didn 't work . "

Jazz critic Kenny Mathieson described Ibn Ali as " An Elmo Hope acolyte with a rhythmic quirkiness that had him compared with [Thelonious] Monk and [Herbie] Nichols " . Ibn Ali himself credited Hope with being his main inspiration : " by meeting Mr Hope it was like talking to and having acquaintance with the mystery of music , who explained not by the ruler or lip but with music . So from him I heard how to learn . "

= = Legacy = =

Pope credits Ibn Ali with influencing saxophonist John Coltrane 's sheets of sound approach . Ibn Ali examined the possibilities of playing fourths , and of using " chord progressions that moved by seconds or thirds instead of fifths , in playing a variety of scales and arpeggios against each chord " ? features later used extensively in Coltrane 's playing . A home recording of Ibn Ali playing with Coltrane and others in 1952 may exist .

Pope also commented that " every important musician who came out of this area [Philadelphia] in the fifties and sixties , including McCoy Tyner , learned from him . "