

Universal Mind of Bill Evans (1966 Documentary)

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Bill Evans on the Creative Process and Self-Teaching
Conversation With His Brother Harry, 1966

Songs appeared: [0:00](#) □ Spartacus Love Theme (aka Emily) [13:06](#) □
I Like New York in June, How About You? [17:53](#) □ Star Eyes
(Analyzing the Melody and Harmonics) [22:07](#) □ Star Eyes (Full
Song) [40:52](#) □ Very Early [42:15](#) □ Time Remembered [43:07](#) □ My Bells



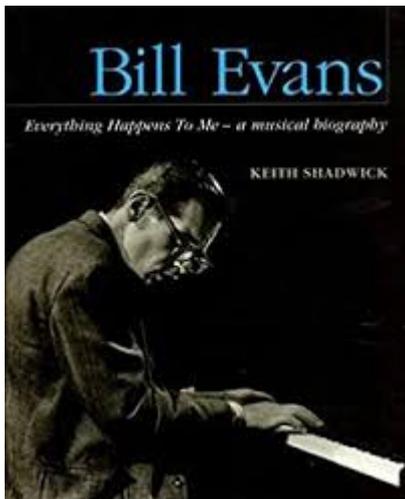
In 1966, legendary jazz pianist Bill Evans (August 16, 1929–September 15, 1980) sat down with his composer brother, Harry Evans, for an intense and deeply insightful conversation later released as Universal Mind of Bill Evans: The Creative

Process and Self-Teaching. From filmmaker William Meier comes this gorgeous cinematic adaptation of Evans's thoughts on the auto-didactic quality of creativity and the value of working at the intersection of clarity, complexity, and spontaneity.

"I believe that all people are in possession of what might be called a universal musical mind. Any true music speaks with this universal mind, to the universal mind in all people. The understanding that results will vary only in so far as people have or have not been conditioned to the various styles of music in which the universal mind speaks.

Consequently, often some effort and exposure is necessary in order to understand some music coming from a different period or a different culture than that to which the listener has been conditioned. I do not agree that the layman's opinion is less of a valid judgement of music than that of the professional musician. In fact, I would often rely more on the judgement of a sensitive layman than that of a professional, since the professional, because of his constant involvement with the mechanics of music, must fight to preserve the naivety that the layman already possesses.

The whole process of learning the facility of being able to play jazz is to take these problems from the outer level in, one by one, and to stay with it at a very intense, conscious-concentration level until that process becomes secondary and subconscious. Now, when that becomes subconscious, then you can begin concentrating on that next problem, which will allow you to do a little more. I don't consider myself as talented as many people but in some ways that was an advantage because I didn't have a great facility immediately, so I had to be more analytical and in a way – that forced me to build something.



Most people just don't realize the immensity of the problem and, either because they can't conquer it immediately, think that they haven't got the ability, or they're so impatient to conquer it that they never do see it through. If you do understand the problem, then you can enjoy your whole trip through. People tend to approximate the product rather than attacking it in a realistic, true way at any elementary level – regardless of how elementary – but it must be entirely true and entirely real and entirely accurate.

They would rather approximate the entire problem than to take a small part of it and be real and true about it. To approximate the whole thing in a vague way gives you a feeling that you've more or less touched the thing, but in this way you just lead yourself toward confusion, and ultimately you're going to get so confused that you'll never find your way out. It is true of any subject that the person that succeeds in anything has the realistic viewpoint at the beginning and [knows] that the problem is large and that he has to take it a step at a time and that he has to enjoy the step-by-step learning procedure.

They're trying to do a thing in a way that is so general [that] they can't possibly build on that. If they build on that, they're building on top of confusion and vagueness, and they can't possibly progress. If you try to approximate something that is very advanced and don't know what you're

doing, you can't advance."

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