

Throwback: Eddie Harris - Lovely Is Today



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Eddie Harris' sometimes electric sax was a multi-genre extension of his ever curious and inventive nature. A native of Chicago, Harris studied vibraphone with the noted violinist and music educator Walter Dyett of DuSable High School who had groomed people like Nat King Cole and Bo Diddley among others. Harris' first professional gig was as a pianist for saxophone player Gene Ammons and he also had the luck to sit in with Charlie Parker and Lester Young. He signed his first record contract with Vee Jay as a pianist but wound up working as a tenor saxophonist. *Exodus To Jazz* was his first album and it became the first jazz album to go gold because of Harris' version of the theme song from the Biblical film [Exodus](#). By 1965 he moved to the Columbia label and produced *The In Sound* which contained his "[Freedom Jazz Dance](#)" song that Miles Davis made famous on his *Miles Smiles* album. In 1966 Harris began to experiment with the electric saxophone called the Varitone on his *Mean Greens* project. The experimentation paid off and 1967's *The Electrifying Eddie Harris* which did well chart wise on the strength of "[Listen Here](#)" and proved him to be the best player of the Varitone. The electric kick continued until the

end of the '60's with *Plug Me In*, *High Voltage* and *Silver Cycles*. "Lovely Is Today" comes from 1968's *Plug Me In*. A last minute gig with Less McCann at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1969 resulted in the *Swiss Movement* recording made popular by the singles ["Compared To What"](#) and ["Cold Duck Time."](#) Harris got involved with fusion in 1970 with *Come On Down* where he was singing through his instrument. His inventiveness with horns showed-up with the reed trumpet and saxophone that he played on *Free Speech* and *Instant Death*. He continued to explore rock music by working Jeff Beck, Steve Winwood and a squad of other British rockers. In 1975 he took his fans by surprise and did the stand-up comedy album *That's Why I'm Talking Shit*. In 1976 he recorded the underrated *How Can You Live Like That* and left Atlantic Records in 1978. Several more Eddie Harris albums were released in the '80s, '90's and '00s. Eddie Harris died in 1996 of cancer and kidney disease.