

# Duke Ellington

## Kyle Etges

### Signature Recordings

*Cottontail.* Cottontail stands as a fine example of Ellington's "Blanton-Webster" years, where the band was at its peak in performance and popularity. The "Blanton-Webster" moniker refers to bassist Jimmy Blanton and tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, who recorded Cottontail on May 4th, 1940 alongside Johnny Hodges, Barney Bigard, Chauncey Houghton, and Harry Carney on saxophone; Cootie Williams, Wallace Jones, and Ray Nance on trumpet; Rex Stewart on cornet; Juan Tizol, Joe Nanton, and Lawrence Brown on trombone; Fred Guy on guitar, Duke on piano, and Sonny Greer on drums. John Hasse, author of *The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington*, states that Cottontail "opened a window on the future, predicting elements to come in jazz." Indeed, Jimmy Blanton's driving quarter-note feel throughout the piece predicts a collective gravitation away from the traditional two feel amongst modern bassists. Webster's solo on this record is so iconic that audiences would insist on note-for-note renditions of it in live performances. Even now, it stands as a testament to Webster's mastery of expression, predicting techniques and patterns that John Coltrane would use decades later. Ellington also shows off his Harlem stride credentials in a quick solo before going into an orchestrated sax soli, one of the first of its kind. After a blaring shout chorus, the piece recalls the A section before Harry Carney caps everything off with the droning tonic.

*Diminuendo & Crescendo in Blue.* This piece is remarkable for two reasons: *Diminuendo & Crescendo in Blue* exemplifies Duke's classical influence, and his desire to write more grandiose pieces with more extended forms. Secondly, a performance of this piece at the Newport Jazz Festival is often cited as the finest performance of Duke's career. Duke's monumental work was first recorded in 1936, however I have chosen the iconic 1956 live recording at Newport to demonstrate this piece. Personnel included Clark Terry, Ray Nance, Willie Cook, and Cat Anderson on trumpet; Britt Woodman and Quentin Jackson on trombone; Johnny Hodges, Russel Procope, Jimmy Hamilton, Paul Gonsalves, and Harry Carney on saxophone; Duke on piano, Jimmy Woode on bass, and Sam Woodyard on drums. Before the performance, it is said that Duke told Paul Gonsalves to take "as many choruses as you want" in the open blues section between the *Diminuendo* and *Crescendo* portions of the piece. At Newport, Gonsalves wound up taking 27 blues choruses. In the book *Backstory in Blue*, credit is given to Elaine Anderson as the first person to stand up and begin dancing to Gonsalves' solo. After that, the recording is evidence enough of the frenzied state of the audience from that moment on. This performance sparked a revitalized interest in Duke Ellington's band, and perhaps a revitalized interest in Swing music in general, evidenced by the return of several big bands in the 1960s.

*Reminiscing in Tempo.* There are a plethora of iconic compositions from Duke's pre-war Cotton Club years, but *Reminiscing in Tempo* stands out as a culmination of that ensemble of those glory years. First recorded in 1935 in New York, Duke penned this 13-minute work after the

death of his mother. Along with some of Duke's other pieces from the same era, his longer compositions posed a problem for the most advanced recording technology at the time. *Reminiscing in Tempo* required both sides of a 78rpm record. Alongside Duke on piano, his band consists of Johnny Hodges, Otto Harwick, Barney Bigard, Marshall Royal, and Harry Carney on saxophone; Cootie Williams, Arthur Wetzal, Louis Bacon, and Charlie Allen on trumpet; Rex Stewart on cornet; Juan Tizol, "Tricky Sam" Nanton, and Lawrence Brown on trombone; Fred Guy on guitar, Willman Braud on bass, and Sonny Greer on drums. This piece is often separated into four distinct parts. Part One is a somber work, introduced by Duke's ostinato that is quickly taken over by the saxes. The section then evolves away from this line, into a trombone solo juxtaposed with a sax soli. The melody wanders through the different sections of the group before moving into part two. A muted trumpet presents a new interpretation of the melody, countered with moving sax harmonies. In particular, Harry Carney has some beautiful flourishes in this section. About halfway through the piece, Duke breaks away into an unaccompanied piano solo that refers back to the opening riff. After flipping the proverbial record over, Duke and Carney bring us into part three. Barney Bigard takes the lion's share of the melody here on clarinet, staying primarily in the dark and husky low register of the instrument. Bigard is joined by the rest of the sax section on clarinets, capping off part three. The melody is reprised in part four by a bold unmuted trumpet, though it is soon taken over by Harry Carney. Ellington's masterful hand is certainly evident here, as fully orchestrated melodies feel more like Bach chorales than a dance at the Cotton Club. A trombone soli brings the ensemble back in after another piano break. *Reminiscing in Tempo* is an important historical piece as a culmination of the group's sound from 1931-35, as well as a glimpse into what is to come for Duke as a composer. In his efforts to be acknowledged as the serious musician that he was, his pieces would become longer, more complex, and more heavily influenced by classical music.

### **Educational Resources**

Aebersold, J. (1999). *Vol. 12, Music of Duke Ellington* [Book & CD]. Indiana, USA: Jamey Aebersold Jazz.

Ellington, E. K. (1973). *Duke Ellington: Music is my mistress*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc.

Ellington, E. K. (2009). *The Duke Ellington real book: C edition*. Minnesota, USA: Hal Leonard.

*Essentially Ellington* (2018). Retrieved from <https://academy.jazz.org/ee/>

- Contains catalog of repertoire, recording archive of The Duke Ellington Orchestra and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, and teaching guides centered around Duke Ellington's life and music.

Levi, R. (2018). NPR's jazz profiles: Duke Ellington: The pianist. *NPR*. Retrieved from [https://www.npr.org/programs/jazzprofiles/archive/ellington\\_pianist.html](https://www.npr.org/programs/jazzprofiles/archive/ellington_pianist.html)

# Count Basie

## Kyle Etges

### Signature Recordings

*Every Tub.* This barn-burning tune is a fine example of Count Basie's early work. Everything from Lester Young's commanding opening solo to the riff-based shout chorus mark *Every Tub* as quintessential Kansas City swing. Count Basie is also heard on two occasions in the piece, playing his signature solo style and employment of space. Recorded in 1938 in Kansas City on the Decca label, this piece features Buck Clayton, Ed Lewis, and Harry Edison on trumpet; Eddie Durham, Benny Morton, and Dan Minor on trombone; Earl Warren, Lester Young, Herschel Evans, and Jack Washington on saxophone; the Count himself on piano, Freddie Green on guitar, Walter Page on bass, and Jo Jones drums.

*Lil' Darlin'.* Count Basie collaborated with a number of composers and arrangers as a bandleader. Neal Hefti was one of the more iconic among them, helping Count Basie establish his ensemble's signature sound. Nowhere is this more evident than in *Lil' Darlin'*, taken at a sultry 70 beats per minute. It's application of space, emotion, feel, and style say more about the Basie band's sound than words ever could. Despite the tempo, this style is deceptively difficult to emulate. This slow swing style is often referred to amongst various bandleaders as an "adult tempo," as the experience of any given player is often laid bare at this slower speed. The work was first featured on Count Basie's 1958 masterpiece *Atomic Basie*, originally titled *E=MC2*. Personnel on this record includes Charles Fowlkes, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Frank Foster, Frank Wess, and Marshall Royal on sax; Joe Newman, Snooky Young, Thad Jones, and Wendell Culley on trumpet; Al Grey, Benny Powell, and Henry Coker on trombone; Freddie Green on guitar, Basie on piano, Eddie Jones on bass, and Sonny Payne on drums.

*Hay Burner.* When discussing Count Basie, one would be remiss not to mention Sammy Nestico. Their collaboration led to the release of *Basie Straight Ahead*, recorded in Hollywood in 1968. This album would become the highest-selling record in Basie's career. Each piece, it is said, was recorded in a single take. Even if this rumour is unfounded, it proves the legendary status of each member of Basie's "New Testament" band. Though the album contains one beautifully arranged and executed composition after the other, *Hay Burner* stands out with its singable melody and driving medium tempo. Personnel include Marshal Royal, Bobby Plater, Eric Dixon, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, and Charlie Fowlkes on saxophone; Sonny Cohn, Gene Goe, Oscar Brashear, and Al Aarons on trumpet; Grover Mitchell, Richard Boone, Bill Hughes, and Steve Galloway on trombone; Freddie Green on guitar, Basie on piano, Norman Keenan on bass, and Harold Jones on drums.

## Educational Resources

Aebersold, J. (1999). *Vol. 37, Sammy Nestico* [Book & CD]. Indiana, USA: Jamey Aebersold Jazz.

Basie, C., Hathaway, C. (1940). *Count Basie's piano stylings: 15 piano solos taken from the recordings of Count Basie and his orchestra*. New York, NY: Bremen Publishing.

Basie, C., DeRosa, R. (arr.) (2007). *Jumpin' at the Woodside*. Retrieved from <https://www.alfred.com/jumpin-at-the-woodside/p/00-26897/>

- Grade 2. Includes full sax section, 4 trumpet parts, 4 trombone parts, guitar, piano, bass, and drums, as well as optional parts for flute, french horn, baritone, and tuba.

[FULL CONCERT] *Oscar Peterson & Count Basie & Joe Pass 1980 - Words & Music* (1980). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HAZP7nWo6A> [uploaded by palanzana on Sep 27, 2013].

Hefti, N., Phillipe, R. (arr.) (2004). *Splanky*. Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/Splanky/2701883.item#/>

- Grade 1. Includes full sax section, 3 trumpet parts, 3 trombone parts, guitar, piano, bass, and drums, as well as additional parts for flute, french horn, baritone, and tuba.

Nestico, S. (1968). *Switch in Time*. Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/Switch-in-Time/546390.item#/>

- Grade 3. Includes full sax section, 4 trumpet parts, 4 trombone parts, guitar, piano, bass, and drums. Score is reduced.

# Benny Goodman

## Kyle Etges

### Signature Recordings

*Christopher Columbus.* The melody to this early Goodman record is immediately recognizable to even the most casual fan of the music. It is interesting to hear this early predecessor of Goodman's most famous work, *Sing Sing Sing*. The riff-based melodic approach is typical of the big bands of its era, and the piece is also notable for being Fletcher Henderson's contribution to the group. Released on the Victor label in April 1936, most likely in New York City. Because of Goodman's notoriously high turnover rate, it is difficult to say with any certainty who played on this particular single. Musicians in Goodman's band in the year 1936 included Richard Clark, Bill DePew, Fletcher Henderson, Horace Henderson, Spud Murphy, Arthur Rollini, and Hymie Schertzer on saxophone; Pee Wee Erwin, Harry Geller, Gordon Griffin, Manny Klein, and Nate Katabler on trumpet; Red Ballard, Joe Harris, Murray McEachern on trombone; Jess Stacy on piano, Harry Goodman on bass, and Gene Krupa on drums.

*Mission to Moscow.* Goodman recorded this single six years after *Christopher Columbus*, in 1942 in New York City. The single showcases a much more mature ensemble, moving beyond simple riffs into sophisticated solos and arrangements. This record marks the noteworthy collaboration between Goodman and arranger Mel Powell. It was also the last single Goodman made before the World War II ban on recordings, in order to ration resources for the military.

*Mission to Moscow* is a classically-tinged arrangement, simultaneously signifying Mel Powell's background and Goodman's taste for the music. Within the opening lines of the melody, the classical influence is all but obvious. Personnel on this record include George Berg, Sol Kane, Vido Musso, Clint Neagley, and Bud Schiffman on saxophone; Alvin Davis, Jimmy Maxwell, Jonny Napton, and Bernie Privin on trumpet; Charlie Castaido, Cutty Cutshall, and Lou McGarthy on trombone; Tom Morgan on guitar, the arranger Mel Powell on piano, Sid Weiss on bass, and Alvin Stoller on drums.

*Moonglow.* A huge hit for Goodman in 1934, *Moonglow* was re-recorded in 1936 with his legendary quartet, featuring Lionel Hampton on vibraphone, Teddy Wilson on piano, and Gene Krupa on drums. Goodman's quartet is notable for being one of the first publicly integrated ensembles, featuring both white musicians and musicians of color. It is also significant for including Lionel Hampton on vibraphone, bringing an unusual novelty instrument into the standard jazz lexicon. This version of *Moonglow* would chart #8 in the US in 1936, and is featured in the 1956 movie "Picnic."

## Educational Resources

Goodman, B., Ayeroff, S. (ed.) (1992). *Benny Goodman - Jazz masters series*. USA: Music Sales America.

Goodman, B., Hampton, L., Flory, M. (arr.) (2010). *Flying Home*. Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/Flying-Home/10273590.item#/>

- Grade 5. Includes full sax section, 4 trumpet parts, 4 trombone parts, vibraphone, piano, bass, drums.

Goodman, B., Webb, C., Sampson, E., Yasinitsky, G. (arr.) (2015). *Stompin' at the Savoy*. Retrieved from <https://www.alfred.com/stompin-at-the-savoy/p/00-41157/>

- Grade 3. Includes full sax section, 4 trumpet parts, 4 trombone parts, guitar, piano, bass, and drums, as well as optional parts for flute, vibraphone, tuba, french horn, and baritone.

Prima, L., Cook, P. (1936) *Sing, Sing, Sing*. Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/Sing%2C-Sing%2C-Sing/2354561.item#/submit>

- Grade 2. Includes full sax section, 3 trumpet parts, 3 trombone parts, tuba, guitar, piano, bass, and drums.

Vitale, T. (2009). Benny Goodman: Forever the king of swing. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104713445>

# Lester Young

## Kyle Etges

### Signature Recordings

*A Sailboat in the Moonlight.* Lester Young is almost synonymous with Billie Holiday. Their legendary pairing in the late 30s, their nicknames for one another, and their friendship is a cornerstone of the history of jazz. The work plays as most popular songs did in the 30s, but Lester's unobtrusive and sophisticated counterlines are noteworthy. This series of recordings would provide the template for how instrumentalists approach playing with vocalists, without obstructing the lyrics. They are joined on this record by Edmund Hall on clarinet, Buck Clayton, on trumpet, Freddie Green on guitar, James Sherman on piano, Walter Page on bass, and Jo Jones on drums. *A Sailboat in the Moonlight* was recorded in 1937 on the Vocalian label. Because this label was bought and released by six different parent labels in the 1930s alone, the location of this record date is unclear.

*Blue Lester.* My personal favorite recording of Lester Young, *Blue Lester* showcases the musicians masterful use of tone, phrasing, voice leading, and style that would be imitated for years to come. Joined by Count Basie, Freddie Green, Rodney Richardson on bass, and Shadow Wilson on drums, this short piece exemplifies Lester's post-Basie combo work. Both Basie and Young take a solo over the AABA Form. This recording has been reissued on several different albums and compilations, but the earliest release seems to be from 1951, on an album simply called *Tenor Sax Solos*. According to the album's liner notes, *Blue Lester* was recorded in New York City on May 1st, 1944.

*Lester Leaps In.* During his tenure with Count Basie, only one composition is credited to Lester Young. This simple riff over rhythm changes would prove to be a huge hit for Basie, and perfectly showcases the Kansas City Swing style that Basie's band pioneered. The first recording of *Lester Leaps In* was in 1939 with the Kansas City 7. Basie and Young are joined by Buck Clayton on trumpet, Dickie Wells on trombone, Freddie Green on guitar, Walter Page on bass, and Jo Jones on drums. After the simple melody, Young showcases his harmonic sophistication and unparalleled cool style. His playing over the breaks in his second chorus employ some harmonic and stylistic ideas far ahead of his time.

### Educational Resources

*Fine And Mellow Billie Holiday with Coleman Hawkins Lester Young Ben Webster Gerry Mulligan Vic Dickenson Roy Eldridge* (1957). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaPIyo51cr4> [uploaded by wasserkuh101 on Dec 14, 2009]

Vitale, T. (2009). Lester Young: 'The Prez' still rules at 100. *NPR Morning Edition*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=112255870>

Young, L., Hess, F. (1996). *Lester Young's greatest transcriptions*. Lebanon, IN: Houston Publishing.

Young, L. (2004). *The Lester Young Collection: Tenor Saxophone*. Minnesota, USA: Hal Leonard.

Young, L., Sigler, R. (2009). *Lester Leaps In*. Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/Lester-Leaps-In/10071890.item#/>

- Grade 2. Includes full sax section, 4 trumpet parts, 4 trombone parts, guitar, piano, bass, and drums, as well as optional parts for flute, french horn, tuba, and baritone.

## **Guided Listening**

### *Fine & Mellow.*

As we watch and listen to this supergroup's rendition of *Fine & Mellow* from 1957, listen for the following:

- The form and instrumentation.
- The orchestration underneath Billie's verses. How are the instruments interplaying with the vocals?
- Ben Webster's solo: stylistic elements and overall feel.
- Lester Young's solo: stylistic elements and overall feel.
- Compare and contrast Ben Webster's and Lester Young's solo. Identify similarities and differences.
- How do their differences reflect the history of jazz?