

Duke Ellington Selects: THE BEST IN JAZZ



JAZZ CAME from the people. It is as natively American as the New Orleans delta-land and the Chicago honky-tonks which it painted so vividly in words and music. Yet jazz, born of the resonant thump of jungle drums and the piercing wail of a boatmen's chorus, was woven into the American fabric when our nation was still a wilderness.

Not long ago, most of us looked askance at the often wild, sometimes cacophonous music that was finding its voice on Basin and Beale Streets. Then men like Jelly Roll Morton and Bix Beiderbecke gave it truth and meaning. They made it possible for Benny Goodman and

Stan Kenton to play concerts in Carnegie Hall. They made it clear that jazz, an authentic folk music stamped "Made in America," was part of our growth.

Of all jazz musicians who link yesterday's ragtime with today's dance music, Duke Ellington is the dean. In his 27 years as a pianist and composer, the Duke has played alongside every great brass, reed, and rhythm man of his day. Now, he picks those music makers who, "on the basis of their over-all contribution, their all-time record, consistently good performance, and love of music," constitute 1951's All-American jazz band.

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"Benny Goodman has virtuosity magnificently allied with inspired improvisation." His clarinet is inspiring on a dance floor or in a symphony orchestra. Duke's alto-sax choice is Johnny Hodges.

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In 1947, an expert affirmed, "There isn't any possibility of uncertainty about who's the greatest living jazz artist. It's Louis and only Louis." Trumpetman Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong was born in New Orleans. He learned to play the bugle in a home for boys, and by the time he was 18, his hot trumpet was known all the way from Basin Street to the Mississippi. "Louis has grown up with jazz," says Ellington, "and he represents the very essence of the solo artist."



In one year, Coleman Hawkins, Ellington's tenor-sax selection, made music on more phonograph records than any other recording musician. "The 'Hawk' was the first great tenor-sax instrumentalist and is still at the very top of the heap."



"I'm torn between the sentimental gentleness of Dorsey and the magic translucency of Brown." Duke Ellington gives equal honors on the trombone to the Sentimental Gentleman, Tommy Dorsey (above, left), and to Lawrence Brown.



"Bing Crosby, long an institution among American romantic baritones, is easily distinguishable as Mr. Music in that department." Ex-band vocalist, movie and radio star, the Groaner owes it all to a magic delivery of "Boo, boo, boo." "In the vocalizing field, Frank Sinatra figures strong, too, and the great Mr. B., Billy Eckstine, of the newer, younger crop, threatens to inherit Bing's throne in the not-too-distant future. His tonal quality and vibrato are unique."



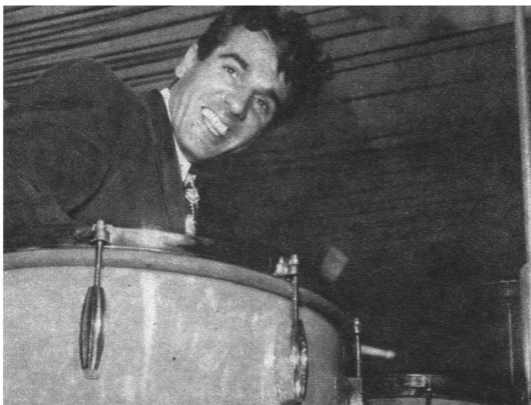
"The styles of Sarah Vaughan (*above*), Ella Fitzgerald, and Lena Horne are completely different. I'll never forget the impact with which I heard each of them for the first time." A dead heat.



"Django Reinhardt combines a beautiful and hauntingly romantic gypsy quality with the true spirit of jazz. His wonderful turn with us through Europe was a most exciting and revealing experience for every other member of the band."



Duke Ellington says of Oscar Pettiford (*above*): "Pettiford has recently switched to cello. His cello is mellow, but on bass he's still the ace." The Duke's choice on violin is Raymond Nance, "an imaginative creator of great melodic mood."




Gene Krupa is an alumnus of that great Benny Goodman band that also produced such musical giants as Harry James, Ziggy Elman, Roy Eldridge, and Teddy Wilson. It was Krupa's vibrant beat that helped make *Sing, Sing, Sing* and *And the Angels Sing* best-selling records for a decade. "Gene Krupa set the pattern for many drummers in the Swing Era and has had a vital and valuable influence."



Art Tatum is blind. But, as one critic put it, when Tatum played, "there wasn't anyone else that belonged in the same hall with him." Duke Ellington concurs: "Art Tatum is the man who makes me want to close up my piano forever—or perhaps just turn it over to him for life."



"How can one make a decision between the wonderful subtlety and finesse of Red Norvo and the thrilling personality and drive of Lionel Hampton (*above*)? We are fortunate that they have both given so much to music. On the vibraharp, I vote another dead heat." 

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