

Jazz compact Discs for Your Library

A recommended list of 102 jazz CDs for libraries starting to collect

By Maurice. J. Freedman

My vocation is librarianship. My avocation is listening to jazz, enjoying and collecting its expression in all mediums, most especially the LP and all too infrequently live performance.

The breadth of jazz material available in the compact disc medium is so limited at this point that even if we had the temerity to suggest a “best of” or “greatest” or “basic list” of jazz recordings, so many of the classic performances are not on CD that any such claim would be laughable to even the most casual jazz listener.

For example, most jazz critics feel that among the very most important and influential recording in the history of jazz are those by Louis Armstrong’s Hot Five and Hot Seven, none of which are available on CD. Charlie Parker, seen by most as one of the most important figures (after Armstrong) in the history of jazz, is represented by three CDs in the current catalogs, none of which contain any of the revered and seminal recordings he made for the Dial record label.

And there are hosts of great artists on a variety of labels, past and present, who have none of their music in the CD medium. The situation is getting much better, each month’s *Schwann* and *Green* catalogs bringing news of classics being issued on CD.

The pleasures of CDs

No effort will be made here to address the pro/con argument of CDs for libraries. Lots of libraries have them already, and apparently they do not degrade form circulation misactivity at the alarming rate that LPs do. We love sound; not having to discwash the disc and stylus before each playing (you audiophiles know all about this); the extra tracks that were never previously issued or for any other reason make the CD version much longer than the LP’s; and being able to listen to as much as 70+ minutes uninterrupted.

But we still buy LPs because that is the only medium in which, for example, we could get the Fresh Sound Records’ (Barcelona, Spain) limited print reissue of *Beverly Kenney Sings for Johnny Smith*, originally released on Roost in 1955, and probably out-of-print that year.

Libraries will have to work especially hard to acquire the jazz CDs listed here. The typical record store does not have an extensive jazz collection from which to select. Further, because jazz enjoys a much greater respect in Europe and Japan than in the United States – an especially grotesque situation because jazz originate in the United States and its best musicians almost always have been Afro-Americans—many of the CDs recommended are imports, and of necessity are more expensive and even harder to acquire.

A matter of taste

As is true of all critical appreciation, the personal taste of the writer is inseparable form the evaluation. In fairness to the reader, this author’s prejudices and preferences will be offered at the outset.

We all have our won view of what is good. For us the view is that fusion, New Age, and the Windham Hill recordings are in the category “Hawaiian elevator music,” railed against by Alan Arkin in the movie *Simon*. The musicians who create this stuff, talented and otherwise, are not

begrudged the money they are making. On the other hand, we do not have to like it, and it is rejected for this list.

Almost all of the material presented here is by performers we have had the good fortune to have seen in person. Much of the viewing was at Birdland, the New York City mecca, where for \$1.80 one could listen to two or three groups playing music for six hours. One memorable night the bill featured Maynard Ferguson's big Band, the Miles Davis Quintet, and The Hi-Los.

The other places are the long-defunct Sugar Hill Club of Newark, New Jersey; a variety of concert halls (indoor and out) and clubs around the country; and finally, the New York haunts, most notably the Village Vanguard, the best place in existence to see jazz from the standpoints of consistency of quality, variety of groups performing, cost (non-ripoff prices), and respect for the musicians.

The coverage by CDs of the great music and the great performers of jazz is quite erratic. An attempt was made to ensure that some instances of the great ones of jazz would be found here, even if they were not at their classic best, such classic best not being available on CD.

Because of the need to limit the list, many performers and current recordings are not included. (A supplement to this collection will appear in LJ very soon.) Thus, even with the limited number of CDs available, we have chosen to include multiple selections by a performer because that person's contribution has been so special.

We would like to thank Peter Jacobs's Professional Media Service (13620 S. Crenshaw Blvd., Gardena CA 90249), which was gracious enough to find and acquire virtually all of the CDs listed here with no apparent sweat or extra effort.

ARMSTRONG, Louis. **Satch Plays Fats.** Columbia CK 40378. 38:28 min. The great composer, Thomas "Fats" Waller, interpreted by the greatest jazzman of them all.

ARMSTRONG, Louis & Duke Ellington. **The Great Reunion.** Mobile Fidelity MFCD 2-807. 68+ min. Beauteous readings of Duke's music, with Duke and Louis's All-Stars; our favorite, *Drop Me Off in Harlem.*

ARMSTRONG, Louis & Oscar Peterson. **Louis Armstrong Meets Oscar Peterson.** Verve 825 713-2. 70:47 min. Incredible quantity of great music; catch *Let's Do It*, by Cole Porter, laden with double entendre.

BAKER, Chet. **Chet.** Riverside OJCCD-087-2. 51:10 min. Wonderfully lyrical trumpeter, with great Pepper Adams; one new track.

BASIE, Count. **The Essential Count Basie.** Vol. 1. Columbia CK 40608. 46:55 min. The original fantastic Basie Band; with Lester Young (Pres), Jimmy Rushing, et al.

BASIE, Count. **Count Basie: Compact Jazz.** Verve 831 364-2. 56:11 min. "Best of" that includes *April in Paris* and other winners of the 50s and 60s.

BASIE, Count & Billy Eckstine. **Basie-Eckstine, Inc.** Roulette RCD 59042. 38:10 min. Mr. B. as in beautiful with the big Basie Band; *I Want a Little Girl*, *Blues the Mother of Sin*, etc.

BASIE, Count & Joe Williams. **Memories Ad-Lib.** Roulette RCD 59037. 37:06 min. The big blues singer backed by the Count on organ with a combo; laid-back swinging standards; a winner.

BASIE, Count & Lambert, Hendricks & Ross. **Sing Along with Basie.** Roulette RCD 59041. 35:07 min. The original "vocalese" group doing Basie classics, accompanied by Basie Band and Joe Williams. A must!

BASIE, Count & Sarah Vaughan. **Sarah Vaughan & Count Basie**. Roulette RCD 59043. 38:19 min. Sassie and Basie swinging away, strong performances, including classic ballads (*Lover Man*, et al.).

BENNET, Tony. **Jazz**. 2 LPs on 1 CD. Columbia CGK 40424. 68:41 min. Tony in different settings with hip backing: Zoot, Getz, Hancock, Carter, Blakery, et al.

BEST of Dixieland. **Best of Dixieland: Compact Jazz**. Verve 831 375-2. 62:05 min. Best representation of Dixie in CD form; many all-time greats, including Lewis, Ory, Teagarden Condon, etc.

BLAKEY, Art & the Jazz Messengers. **The Big Beat**. Blue Note CDP 7 46400 2. 50:10 min. Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, group; classic *Paper Moon* and first-time release of alternate take; a great one.

BLAKEY, Art & the Jazz Messengers. **A Night at Birdland**. Vols. 1 & 2. Blue Note CDP 7 46519 2, CDP 7 46520. 53:24, 51:51 min. Live form Birdland; includes Clifford Brown and Horace Silver; Pee Wee Marquette, MC, adds color.

BOWIE, Lester. **Avant Pop; Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy**. ECM 829 563-2. 47:36 min. Avant garde jazz brass group; includes *Blueberry Hill* and Willie Nelson's *Crazy*; interesting.

BRAFF, Ruby & Scott Hamilton. **A Sailboat in the Moonlight**. Concord Jazz CCD-4296. 43:05 min. Pretty pre-bebop sounds on cornet and tenor sax respectively; not too many others carrying the torch as well.

BROWN, Clifford. **At Basing Street**. Emarcy 814 648-2 40:18 min. The last album of the Brown-Roach Quintet; includes Sonny Rollins; is absolutely essential.

BROWN, Clifford. **With Strings**. Emarcy 814 642-2. 40:44 min. One of the prettiest albums ever made; has to be accessible to a tone-deaf chimpanzee; warm, delicate, etc.

BRUBECK, Dave. **Time Out**. Columbia CK 40585. 38:32 min. Brubeck best seller, but also good music; the best of it from Paul Desmond, the unique and soulful alto player.

CHARLES, Ray. **The Great Ray Charles Live**. Atlantic 7 81732-2. 72:02 min. The Genius live and well; includes 16 tracks of dynamite; Ray sings and plays sax and piano.

COLE, Nat. **Just One of Those Things**. Capitol 7 46649 2. Not the first choice for Cole, but the best obtainable; must have Nat Cole in any collection.

COLTRANE, John. **Blue Train**. Blue Note CDP 7 46095 2. 42:15 min. A 50s Coltrane with his own group; includes trumpet and trombone stars, Lee Morgan and Curtis Fuller.

COLTRANE, John, **A Love Supreme**. MCA/ Impulse MCAD-5660. 33:09 min. Late Coltrane with his classic quartet; pick of what's out now; the great backing, Tyner, Jones, and Garrison.

COLTRANE, John, & Johnny Hartman. **John Coltrane & Johnny Hartman**. MCA/ Impulse MCAD-5661. 31:24 min. According to Robert Parker, the greatest vocalists; essential!

DANIELS, Eddie. **Breakthrough**. GRP Records GRP-D-9533. 50:50 min. With the Philharmonia Orchestra, he shows that there is clarinet after Benny Goodman; a virtuoso performance.

DAVIS, Miles. **Kind of Blue**. Columbia CK 40579. 45:10 min. An all-star sextet that broke new ground with modal themes; Bill Evans, Coltrane, etc., made group immortal.

DAVIS, Miles. **Live Miles**. Columbia CK 40609. 40:09 min. Unreleased portion of 1961 Carnegie Hall concert; full orchestra *Concierto de Aranquez* plus combo numbers.

DAVIS, Miles. **The Miles Davis Quintet: 'Round About Midnight**. Columbia CK 40610. 39:10 min. His first success on Columbia; has classic *Bye Bye Blackbird* that everybody had to imitate.

ELLINGTON, Duke. **The Blanton-Webster Band**. 3 discs. RCA 5659-2-RB. 70:31, 73:38, 66:20 min. The arguably greatest Ellington band on three comprehensive discs; excellent booklet; most of famous songs here.

ELLINGTON, Duke. **Ellington at Newport**. Columbia CK 40587. 43:57 min. Live Newport performance of later Duke; includes exciting Gonsalves 27-chorus tenor solo, all captured here.

EVANS, Bill. **Everybody Digs Bill Evans**. Riverside OJCCD 068. Everybody should dig Bill Evans; considered by many as the best of the post-Bud Powell pianists.

EVANS, Gil. **Out of the Cool**. MCA/Impulse MCAD-5653. 37:28 min. Genius composer and arranger at his very best with his own group; a personal favorite and a must.

FERGUSON, Maynard. **A Message from Newport**. Roulette RCD 59024. 37:21 min. Here's Maynard's Birdland Dream Band (as known then) at its best; note: seven cuts, not nine as on face of CD.

FITZGERALD, Ella. **Cole Porter Songbook**. Vols. 1 & 2. Verve 821 0989-2, 821 990-2. 54:05, 55:17 min. Buy all songbooks if you can; also on CD are Berlin, Kern, and Mercer, if you have extra money.

FITZGERALD, Ella & Louis Armstrong. **Porgy & Bess**. 2 LPs on 1 CD. Verve 827 475-2. 6:11 min. The best *Porgy & Bess* from this corner; Louis and Ella Making beautiful music.

FITZGERALD, Ella. **Rodgers & Hart Songbook**. Vols. 1 & 2. Verve 821 579-2, 821 580-2. 55:49, 56:15 min. May favorite of the songbooks; both discs a necessity.

FITZGERALD, Ella. **Ella Fitzgerald Sings the George & Ira Gershwin Songbook**. 3 discs. Verve 825 0242-2. Ella and Nelson Riddle, S'Wonderful!

FITZGERALD, Ella. **Songbooks (Silver Collection)**. Verve 823 445-2. 63:34 min. Only included if your library cannot afford the individual Ella songbooks.

FROM Spirituals to Swing. 2 discs. Vanguard VCD2-47/48, 55:23, 55:15 min. John Hammond Carnegie hall concerts 1983-39; Basie, Goodman, Pres, Lips Page, and blues/gospel; nice assemblage.

GARNER, Erroll. **Concert by the Sea**. Columbia CK 40589. 43:42 min. The 50s recording that sold and sold; Erroll playing and moaning and making his unique music; not best sound.

GETZ, Stan & J.J. Johnson. **At the Opera House**. Verve 831 272-2. 73:06 min. All but 3.5 minutes of two entire concerts; a magnificent record; J.J., a great jazz trombonist.

GILLESPIE, Dizzy. **A Portrait of Duke Ellington**. Verve 817 107-2. 41:42 min. Dizzy with a small orchestra behind him doing 11 Duke tunes.

GOODMAN, Benny. **Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert**. 2 discs. Columbia G2K 40244. 49, 53:04 min. The classic Benny Goodman Carnegie Hall concert; on everyone's all-time list.

HENDERSON, Bill. **Bill Henderson Sings (Best of Bill Henderson)**. Suite Beat SBCD-2016. 55:34 min. A fine jazz singer who has yet to get his due; *Joey* was a jazz hit in the 50s.

HERMAN, Woody. **50th Anniversary Tour**. Concord Jazz CDD-4302. 48:26 min. The most recent; we prefer his second and third Herds, but they are not on CD; Woody must be in your library.

HOLIDAY, Billie. **The Billie Holiday Songbook**. Verve 823 246-2. 45:46 min. 50s Billie doing songs identified with her, with three tracks not on the LP; *God Bless the Child* and more; a must!

HOLIDAY, Billie. **Lady in Satin**. Columbia CK 40247. 44:32 min. Her last studio recording, her voice worn and tired, and each cut dripping with emotion; a jewel.

HOLIDAY, Billie. **The Quintessential Billie Holiday**. Vols. 1 & 2. Columbia CK 40646, CK 40709. 47:49, 48:40 min. Billie approaching the peak of her powers, with variety of back ups; some of her best work.

HOLIDAY, Billie. **Silver Collection**. Verve 823 449-2. 65:21 min. A miscellany of Billie on Verve, her later career label; strong and varied performances.

HUBBARD, Freddie. **Born To Be Blue**. Pablo 2312-134. Once of the best trumpeters today; sometimes too commercial, but not her; his *Up Jumped Spring* is lovely.

JARRETT, Keith. **Köln Concert**. ECM 810 067-2. 66:08 min. Our concession to New Age music; two solo piano LPs fitted onto one CD; turn on and enjoy.

KENTON, Stan & the Four Freshmen. **Live at Butler University**. Creative World STD 1059. 62:52 min. Kenton had to be listed, but neither the Freshmen nor Stan's band at their classic best; the flavor is there.

KIRK, Rahsaan Roland. **We Free Kings**. Mercury 826 455-2. 43:12 min. One of jazz's great originals who played several wind instruments simultaneously; a blind man and jazz force.

KONITZ, Lee & Michel Petrucciani. **Toot Sweet**. OWL JULIA 028. 48:21 min. Konitz, a non-Bird altoist of the 50s (a rare bird, indeed) and Petrucciani make good music here.

KRUPA, Gene. **Drummer Man**. Verve 827 843-2. 39:39 min. The classic, re-created a decade later; Roy Eldridge and Anita O'Day, trumpeting and singing their famous Krupa hits.

LEWIS, Mel. **20 Years at The Village Vanguard**. Atlantic 7 81655-2. 56:09 min. Their only CD, a must for the modern big band sound; Mel, the best big band drummer today.

McCONNELL, Rob. **Big Band Jazz**. Vols. 1 & 2. PAUSA CD 7140, 7141. 31:29, 31:09 min. The Canadian band of flawless technique and a great lead trumpeter, Arnie Chycoski; great sound and music.

McRAE, Carmen. **You're Lookin' at Me**. Concord Jazz CCD-4235. 37:10 min. Carmen, a great in her own right, doing songs associated with Nat Cole; should be more of her on CD.

MANNE, Shelly. **My Fair Lady**. Mobile Fidelity MFCD-809. 36:12 min. The trio includes Andre Previn playing his best jazz piano; a popular LP in its time, and still terrific.

MARSALIS, Branford. **Royal Garden Blues**. Columbia CK 40363. 44:14 min. The sax-playing brother who does it all, including the old Dixie favorite *Royal Garden Blues*.

MARSALIS, Wynton. **J Mood**. Columbia CK 40308. 42:54 min. The prodigy virtuoso *enfant terrible* trumpeter; no one has his technique, but several are more original.

MELILLO, Mike & Chet Baker. **Symphonically**. Soul Note SN-1134CD. 47:25 min. Melillo, a brilliant and underrated pianist/composer with Chet and small classical orchestra make great music.

MINGUS, Charles. **Blues & Roots**. Atlantic 1305-2. 38:52 min. A genius, ranked after Ellington as a composer, gets incredible sounds and music out of his group; exciting.

MINGUS, Charles. **New Tijuana Moods**. Bluebird 5644-2-RB. 68:26 min. Mingus is quoted as saying this is his best recording; How can we quarrel with that?

THE MODERN Jazz Quartet. **Django**. Prestige FCD-639-7057. This is our favorite of the MJQ because Symphony Sid played it most; named for the great Romany guitarist.

MONK, Thelonious. **Monk with Coltrane**. Riverside OJCCD 039. Monk, an authentic genius, coupled with, for many, the greatest sax player since Parker.

MONK, Thelonious. **Thelonious Monk and the Jazz Giants**. Riverside FCD-60-018. 67:58 min. Monk and eight of his compositions; as distinctive and recognizable a player and composer as jazz ever has had.

MULLIGAN, Gerry. **Gerry Mulligan: Compact Jazz**. Mercury 830 697-2. 59:51 min. A pastiche of Mulligan, who, after Harry Carney, popularized the baritone sax; a good sampler.

MURPHY, Mark. **Bop for Kerouac**. Muse MCD-5253. 39:57 min. One of the few jazz singers who really uses his voice like a horn; an original singer; with Richie Cole.

MURRAY, David. **Live at Sweet Basil**. Vols. 1 & 2. Black Saint BSR-0085CD, BSR-0095CD. 49:28 min. The avant-garde saxophonist with a small big band playing the familiar and unfamiliar in their own way.

NELSON, Oliver. **More Blues & the Abstract Truth**. MCAD-5888. 43:17 min. A great jazz arranger with star players, Phil Woods and Thad Jones, make it a great recording.

O'DAY, Anita. **This Is Anita**. Verve 829 261-2 38:01 min. One of the great jazz singers doing great tune; some of her best work on the CD.

PARKER, Charlie. **Now's the Time**. Verve 825 671-2. 39:19 min. More Bird on Verve; the genius of bebop; should be in every library; one previously unissued cut.

PARKER, Charlie & Dizzy Gillespie. **Bird & Diz**. Verve 831 133-2. 40:41 min. This is definitive music by the guys who invented bebop; contains three previously unissued cuts; improved sound.

PEPPER, Art. **Modern Jazz Classics**. Mobile Fidelity MFCD-805. 41:10 min. West Coast 50s music by saxist and author Pepper; all great jazz tunes and a personal favorite.

PETERSON, Oscar. **Silver Collection**. Verve 823 447-2. 61:29 min. One of the greatest jazz pianists, doing a tour de force in this lengthy (CD only) collection.

PETERSON, Oscar & Clark Terry. **Oscar Peterson Trio Plus One**. Verve 818 840-2. 40:54 min. Clark Terry, one of the truly fine and tasteful jazz trumpet virtuoso, fooling and serious with O; fun and music.

PLEASURE, King & Annie Ross. **King Pleasure Sings/Annie Ross Sings**. Fantasy/OJC OJCCD-217-2. 37:17 min. Tow who helped invent modern jazz singing and "vocalese" on one CD; great Bird and Wardell Gray solos sung.

POWELL, Bud. **Time Was**. RCA 6367-2-RB. 64:36 min. The man the movie *'Round Midnight* is most about: a founder of modern jazz piano.

REINHARDT, Django. **With the Quintet of the Hot Club**. Vogue CD-600121. One of the few older recordings on CD; Django with Grappelli made recordings that Willie Nelson knows, too.

RICH, Buddy. **This One's for Basie**. Verve 817 788-2. 41:25 min. Rich revered Basie, put together an all-star band including Sweets Edison, and recorded Basie Material; A KO.

ROACH, Max. **M'Boom/Collage**. Soul Note SN 1059CD. 42:57 min. Max, the most adventurous drummer today, and one of the all-time greatest; his experimental percussion group.

ROACH, Max. **Survivors**. Soul Note SN 1093CD. 43:01 min. Roach with a string quartet doing intense and interesting jazz on this Italian record label.

ROLLINS, Sonny. **A Night at the Village Vanguard**. Vols. 1 & 2. Blue Note CDP 7 46517 2, CDP 7 46518 2. 55:45, 65:17 min. Norman Mailer's favorite Sonny Rollins work; a king of the tenor, taking risks, showing his genius; five previously unissued cuts.

SHAW, Artie. **Begin the Beguine**. Bluebird 6274-2-RB. 67:08 min. Includes many of the big hits, but not the great Hot Lips Page's *St. James Infirmary*; *Star Dust*, etc.

SIMS, Zoot & Joe Pass. **Blues for Two**. Pablo 2310-879. Two greats making beautiful music, Zoot on tenor, Pass on guitar; Zoot could swing at the drop of a hat.

SINATRA, Frank. **In the Wee Small Hours**. Capitol CDP 7 46571 2. 45:07 min. Our favorite ballad album; his voice at its 50s best; shamefully one of the original LP cuts is dropped.

SINATRA, Frank. **Songs for Swinging' Lovers**. Capitol CDP 7 46570 2. 45:01 min. At a new singing peak of maturity and strength; and Riddle, as above, arranging and swinging away.

TATUM, Art. **Live at the Crescendo**. Vogue CD-600116. Count Basie called him the greatest pianist ever; the only Tatum CD available.

TORME, Mel. **Mel Torme Swings Shurbert Alley**. Verve 821 581-2. 39:15 min. With the Marty Paich band, swinging renditions of show tunes the way we like them; Paich, a great arranger.

VAUGHAN, Sarah. **Complete Sarah Vaughan**. Vols. 1-4: 6,5,6,6 discs. Mercury 826 320-2, 826 327-2, 826 333-2, 830 714-2. A 23-disc library in itself, all of Sarah's Mercury recordings; an incredible range of material.

VAUGHAN, Sarah. **Gershwin Live!** Columbia MK 37277. 61:11 min. Current Sarah, her vocal instrument in a bravura performance with Tilson Thomas conducting Gershwin.

VAUGHAN, Sarah & Billy Eckstine. **Irving Berling Songbook**. Verve 822 526-2. 37:13 min. Mainly romantic songs to snuggle around the fire with, and these two at their and Belin's best.

WASHINGTON, Dinah. **Dinah Jams**. Emarcy 814 639-2. The Queen of the Blues in a laid-back jam session setting; includes Clifford Brown, Clark Terry, etc.

WASHINGTON, Dinah. **Dinah Washington: Compact jazz**. Mercury 830 700-2 56:15 min. Yes, *What a Difference a Day Makes* is here, and a selection of her other work on Mercury; Dinah, an original.

WEBSTER, Ben. **The Complete Ben Webster—Big Tenor**. 2 discs. Emarcy 824 836-2 (1). 45:33, 53:25 min. Duke's former tenor player, collected on this two-disc set, playing his beg soulful tenor; one of the best.

WILLIAM, Joe. **A Man Ain't Supposed To Cry**. Roulette RCD 59023. 35:43 min. An album of ballads we have always treasured; one hopes Roulette will get all of his LPs on CD; form the 50s.

WILLIAMS, Joe. **Nothin' but the Blues**. Delos DCD-4001. The relatively recent Joe, doing some "blues" he never did with Basie; includes extra cuts not on the LP.

WOODS, Phil. **Heaven**. Blackhawk 504. A recent effort, his earlier work unavailable; Phil, one of the best alto saxists ever.

WORLD Saxophone Quartet. **Live at Brooklyn Academy of Music**. Black Saint BSR 0096CD. 47:01 min. Hard to pick just one of theirs; four saxes, unaccompanied, each a virtuoso; strong post-bop.

YOUNG, Lester. **Jazz Giants**. Verve 830 20-2. 42:33 min. Later Pres; one of the handful of jazz geniuses; he influenced people on all instruments.

YOUNG, Lester & Teddy Wilson. **Pres and Teddy**. Verve 831 270-2. The other person who *'Round Midnight* is about; with the distinguished pianist, Teddy Wilson; smooth and fine.