



Count Basie and Bette Davis at command performance.

MADE IN FRANCE © CLASSICS RECORDS

THE CHRONOLOGICAL



COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA 1953-1954

with Marshall Royal, Joe Newman, Ernie Wilkins,
Thad Jones, Wendell Culley, Frank Foster,
Henderson Chambers, Benny Powell...

CLASSICS

COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

1953-1954

1	BUBBLES (Hefti) (1405-1)	12-12-53	4:00
2	SOFTLY WITH FEELINGS (Hefti) (1406-2)	12-12-53	3:06
3	CHERRY POINT (Hefti) (1407-6)	12-12-53	3:22
4	BASIE GOES WESS (Wess) (1408-1)	12-12-53	3:53
5	RIGHT ON (Green) (1409-5)	12-12-53	2:40
6	THE BLUES DONE COME BACK (Wilkins) (1410-1)	12-12-53	3:36
7	SLOW BUT SURE (Albam) (1887-6)	08-16-54	3:43
8	YOU FOR ME (Hefti) (1888-3)	08-16-54	3:10
9	SHE'S JUST MY SIZE (Wilkins) (1889-2)	08-16-54	4:29
10	SOFT DRINK (Jones) (1890-4)	08-16-54	3:05
11	TWO FOR THE BLUES (Hefti) (1891-2)	08-16-54	2:48
12	BLUES BACKSTAGE (Foster) (1892-4)	08-16-54	4:35
13	I FEEL LIKE A NEW MAN (Albam) (1893-4)	08-16-54	2:54

14	DOWN FOR THE COUNT (Foster) (1894-1)	08-16-54	6:01
15	STEREOPHONIC (Wilkins) (1895-7)	08-17-54	2:24
16	SIXTEEN MEN SWINGING (Wilkins) (1896-2)	08-17-54	3:04
17	SKA-DI-DLE-DEE-BEE-DOO (Hefti) (1897-2)	08-17-54	3:37
18	PERDIDO (Tizol) (1898-4)	08-17-54	4:54
19	MAMBO MIST (Barnes) (1899-2)	08-17-54	4:06

Photo courtesy of Jazz Magazine. Special thanks to Léon Dierckx.

THE CLASSICS CHRONOLOGICAL SERIES

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COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA 1953-1954

1954 was the beginning of a very remarkable year for us. In March I finally got a chance to make my first trip to Europe. That had been in the works for a while, and when it seems like it was actually about to come through, the kids in the band began to look forward to it like a team getting ready for the World Series or something like that. (...) It was a very big thrill for me to be making my first trip overseas." (Count Basie)

Born in Red Bank (New Jersey) on August 21, 1904, William Basie started out by playing drums in a local band. However, he soon began taking piano lessons, and one of his teachers was none other than Fats Waller, the man in part responsible for young Basie's style. His formative years were spent in New York, and working on the road as accompanist. He toured extensively until 1927, when he settled in Kansas City. During his short spell with Walter Page, he met several musicians who were later to become members of his own orchestra. Until 1934, Basie played in Kansas City's most popular big band, that of Bennie Moten. Some of their magnificent recordings feature the Basie piano and - like "Moten Swing" - have remained perennial favourites. Basie formed the first band of his own in 1934, but it was two years later that his career really started to gather pace. His group regularly broadcast over a local radio station, and it was at that time he began to be called "Count" Basie. Producer John Hammond heard the band and organized its first national tour, one that brought Count Basie and his Orchestra to New York. The ensuing decades of the Basie career are well known. Except for a good two years from 1950 to 1952, when he had to disband his orchestra in favour of a small group, he kept on swinging right into the 1980's. Count Basie died on April 26, 1984. Fortunately, the "Count Basie Orchestra", currently directed by Bill Hughes (replacing Grover Mitchell), still remains active.

Volume 17 of the complete recordings of Count Basie and his Orchestra presented in chronological order, opens with the second half of the tracks made in mid-December 1953. It is futile to single out any of these tracks since all of them are simply wonderful: Neil Hefti's charts suited Basie's band of the time like a glove. Both "Bubbies" and "Softly With Feeling" are ample proof: terrific tunes played by a band full of great soloists but whose biggest assets were the ensembles, always played with relaxed perfection. Count Basie and his men were received in Europe with great enthusiasm by fans who had been waiting for almost two decades to hear a band they only knew from records. Beginning in Denmark, they next gave several wonderful concerts in Sweden, followed by triumphant appearances all over Western Europe. What a pity the band could not make any studio sessions in Europe but several live recordings bear witness to this unforgettable trip. Back in America Basie and his orchestra went on a tour across the country, followed by an extended residency at "Birdland" in New York. Before going on the road the band made an extended session on two consecutive days in August, 1954. The charts recorded are rather varied and include some by the best arrangers then working for the Count. Few other tunes were ever more aptly titled than Ernie Wilkins' "Sixteen Men Swinging"! On the experimental Latin-tinged "Mambo Mist" the band sounds as if it felt queasy; the style did just not suit Basie and his crew. Since it was not regularly played at concerts one can only guess that Norman Granz was trying out fashionable rhythms popular at the time. To be continued...

Anatol Schenker, August 2007

DISCOGRAPHY COUNT BASIE 1953-1954

COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA: Reunald Jones-Joe Wilder-Wendell Culley-Joe Newman-t/Henderson Chambers-Henry Coker-Benny Powell-tb/Marshall Royal-cl-as/Ernie Wilkins-as-ts-a/Frank Wess-ts-a/Frank Foster-ts/Charlie Fowlkes-bar/Count Basie-p-org/Freddie Green-g-a/Eddie Jones-b/Gus Johnson-d/Neal Hefti-a.

New York, December 12, 1953

1405-1	Bubbles -aNH	Clef MGC626 (LP)
1406-2	Softly With Feelings -aNH	Clef 89112
1407-6	Cherry Point -aNH	Clef 89120
1408-1	Basie Goes Wess -aFW	Clef 89112
1409-5	Right On -aFG	Clef 89120
1410-1	The Blues Done Come Back -aEW	Clef 89115

COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA: Reunald Jones-Thad Jones-Wendell Culley-Joe Newman-t/Bill Hughes-Henry Coker-Benny Powell-tb/Marshall Royal-cl-as/Ernie Wilkins-as-ts-a/Frank Wess-ts-a/Charlie Fowlkes-bar/Count Basie-p-org/Freddie Green-g/Eddie Jones-b/Gus Johnson-d/Manny Albam-Neal Hefti-a.

New York, August 16, 1954

1887-6	Slow But Sure -aMA	Clef 89126
1888-3	You For Me -aNH	Clef 89126
1889-2	She's Just My Size -aEW	Clef MGC647 (LP)
1890-4	Soft Drink -aMA	Clef 89131
1891-2	Two For The Blues -aNH	Clef 89131
1892-4	Blues Backstage -aFF	Clef MGC666 (LP)
1893-4	I Feel Like A New Man -aMA	Clef 89137
1894-1	Down For The Count -aFF	Clef MGC666 (LP)

COUNT BASIE AND HIS ORCHESTRA: Reunald Jones-Thad Jones-Wendell Culley-Joe Newman-t/Bill Hughes-Henry Coker-Benny Powell-tb/Marshall Royal-cl-as/Ernie Wilkins-as-ts-a/Frank Wess-Frank Foster-ts/Charlie Fowlkes-bar/Count Basie-p-org or Bill Hughes*-p/Freddie Green-g/Eddie Jones-b/Gus Johnson-d/Neal Hefti-a.

New York, August 17, 1954

1895-7	Stereophonic -aEW	Clef 89137
1896-2	Sixteen Men Swinging -aEW	Clef MGC647 (LP)
1897-2	*Ska-Di-Die-Dee-Bee-Doo -aNH	Clef 89147
1898-4	Perdido -aEW	Clef MGC666 (LP)
1899-2	Mambo Mist	Clef MGC647 (LP)