

It Had To Be You:

Popular Keyboard from the Days of the Speakeasy to the Television Era

NW289

Virtuosos once played great whorehouse piano in Madam Queenie's chain of relief stations. City dudes filled requests (or demands) on the Last Chance Saloon's bullet-scarred upright. Pseudo tune carriers hammered out chords on beer-stained spinets down at Morey's or at fraternity sing-alongs. Romantic tinklers on hidden baby grands stirred garden-spot lovers and provided atmosphere at Park Avenue soirees. Piano players were unquestionably the most popular of all musical types and the piano keyboard the instrument for the masses and loftier social breeds.

All that began decades ago. The instrument grew more and more popular through sociological change; new inventions such as piano-player rolls, records, and radio; population explosions; international wars; and territorial battles between tail gunners on beer trucks. The piano player filled a need for background music or life-of-the-party entertainment. (Until now, when the young seem literally welded to the guitar.)

There were piano-playing stars who came along and faded. Solo artists established themselves as long-time attractions at clubs and hotel rooms. Individuals graced neighborhood watering holes and were almost as well known to the steady patrons as were the bartenders. Others toured in vaudeville or sparked Broadway musicals. Some became noted songwriters. Some became total stews as they were treated to free drinks by indulgent friends. Some just scuffled for a meager living.

These pianists played the hit melodies of their day almost as written, without jazz improvisations, unfamiliar chord changes, or magnificent new styles like stride or boogie-woogie. Certainly the newer methods sneaked in, and individuals stood out for their technique and personal sound and their ability to keep the melody ever present without elaborating it to the point of difficult recognition. These were the "popular keyboard" artists, the straight players who made up the greatest number of professionals and found most commercial success.

Years before Prohibition, café pianists played requests, show music, semiclassical pieces, and accompaniments for whiskey tenors and singing waiters.

Then came the Volstead Act and the birth of joints and social clubs and rooms that purveyed illegal whiskey and other attractions. There was hardly a city or hamlet in the whole of the United States that was totally dry. Just two years after Prohibition started there were five thousand speakeasies and nightclubs in Manhattan alone. Over a thousand were in the Broadway belt.

If you don't know what a speakeasy was, turn on the television and watch any one of the late-night Jimmy Cagney-Edward G. Robinson movies about the Roaring Twenties. Speakeasies ran the gamut from beer joints and sawdust spots to chic salons and private society clubs. Membership was by entrance fee or invitation or knowing the password ("Joe sent me"), and card carrying was as popular then as it is now in this age of credit cards.

New York's Fifty-second Street was an overpopulated area of the better rooms. But they fostered greater exclusivity. Those lesser people who held no cards or were refused admission because they knew no one of importance roamed up and down the street trying to gain entrée. If they were sober enough to read they would have seen the signs on most of the basement entrances:

THIS IS A PRIVATE RESIDENCE. DO NOT RING BELL.

The smart clubs were opened by mobsters and social-register types. In 1924 a group of society women opened the Lido-Venice on East Fifty-third Street in New York. They had their own measure of decorum and membership, and snobbery kept out the riff-raff.

There was the other side of the coin then, too. Look at the 1925 letter of solicitation from The Night Club, at Forty-second Street and Seventh Avenue:

Dear Sir:

I am opening the Night Club Sunday, May 3rd, and I am herewith asking you to become a member. Anticipating your joining, I am enclosing a membership card for which I would ask you to send me 85¢. Upon the receipt of this I shall immediately forward you an admission card for the opening week for such night as you desire to attend.

You need anticipate no interference on the part of the Government. It will not be necessary for you to bring any kind of refreshments whatever. I shall take care of this personally. Please keep this to yourself; be a good fellow.

Let me have your check for 85¢ by return mail.

If you don't want to be a member please return enclosed card.

Yours for a good time,
(signed) Ray Griffith

There were even smart clubs like the Mirador, Moritz, and Deauville whose claim to fame was good food.

Remember, these places were all outside the law. In most speakeasies piano players stashed up against a wall fulfilled patrons' requests. In the posh palaces the piano furnished half-heard or unlistened-to music during lunch and dinner or brightened perceptibly as the hour and the patrons grew happier. The pianists played the kind of music the patrons could recognize—mostly show tunes—and performed to emphasize the melody. Some of the players are barely remembered now: Joe Kahn, Milton Luttenberg. Some achieved fame as songwriters: Ruby Bloom, Ralph Rainger. Some worked in vaudeville as accompanists or featured performers: Charles Baum, Lou Alter, Al and Lee Reiser.

When Repeal came in 1933, a whole new world of joy seeking opened up. The speakeasies turned legitimate (though many of the operators were former bootleggers) and "café society" was born.

The title was inane. It meant those of the Four Hundred who dressed up the classier rooms and drew ordinary people to gawk at them and pay the exorbitant prices. Robert Sylvester called it "a basically ridiculous entity," but it worked for such snobbish bonifaces as El Morocco's John Perona, the Stork Club's Sherman Billingsley, and many others. The rich kids' folks were as broke as the rest of the world during the Depression. For most, the tabs in those places were out of reach. But the kids attracted attention and patrons so the owners invited them in as freebees. They got the best tables, deluxe treatment, champagne partying. They were publicity bait. And it worked so well that often the owners, believing that their own social status had become solidified, would turn away the cash-carrying clientele because they didn't appear nice enough to spend their real money in those plush saloons. That paradox made the places even more popular.

It was all part of the new, unleashed life. H. I. Brock in the New York Herald Tribune described the nightclub scene in New York in the early thirties:

The horizontal range is from Park Avenue and Fifth, where the great hotels cluster, through all the midtown streets from river to river, with a concentration of the biggest, brightest and noisiest around the white lights of Times Square. After that, it reaches north and south, taking in all the foreign quarters that create on Manhattan a map in miniature of Europe and parts of Asia, Africa and South America....

The vertical range is from the sort of hotel-basement café, deep below the sidewalk, that used to be called rathskeller...to the many so-called "roofs"...

There are nightclubs of every degree, nightclubs for every complexion, nightclubs for everybody. The back rooms of the old-time saloons, restored to active service by the New Deal, are not back rooms any more. They are neighborhood nightclubs, with a piano player or accordion squeezer supplying the entertainment to mixed company, engaged otherwise in playing Ping-Pong, in talk or argument, or in drinking beer or stronger potions—with, once in a while, perhaps, a fight or a yell for the police.

There were other sounds in the classier places: "the drone of saxophones, the beat of drums, the wail of violins, the throb and ripple of smitten wires from the zymbalon [sic], or merely the tickling of a toy piano's ivories..

The tinkling pianos were a constant all over town. The quality of the talents varied from magnificent to "oh, well." Some of the better known of those players (not included in this album) were Frederick Loewe (composer of *My Fair Lady*, etc.), who worked in cafés in Yorkville and Greenwich Village, Addison Bailey at the Drake, Imogen Carpenter and Harold Woodall at the Weylin, Virginia and Hayes at the Rainbow Grill, Edie and Rack, Dorothy Tanner at the Biltmore, Frank Carter and Arthur Bowie at Barney Gallant's, Bill Forrest at the Place Elegante, Estelle Jayne at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, Ira Brandt, Bunty Pendleton, and Frances Maddox at the St. Regis, Evelyn Tyner, Helen Myers, and Walter Feldkamp at the Stork Club. They all played show tunes almost exclusively.

All those named were talented pianists. All had vast repertoires. Most had the ability, if they didn't know a song well enough, to fake it to satisfy some drunk who was asking for a real oldie or for some new Broadway melody that hadn't yet reached the East Side.

I embarrassed myself years ago by making an overheard point about wrong chords, etc. And learned a lesson. Several years after World War II, El Borracho on East Fifty-fifth Street was one of the more popular cafe-society clubs. It attracted gossip-column readers, out-of-towners, the social set, and such as me.

I was there for dinner with friends one evening. During the meal, some overimbiber kept yelling at the piano player (who was an acquaintance of mine) to play some brand-new show song that was then not very well known. The pianist hesitated fulfilling the request; he just didn't know the tune. But that patron's loud insistence had to be satisfied somehow. The piano player started the tune. He was hardly close to the melody; his changes were totally wrong; but he was satisfying a customer. The performance grated on my stupor (I'd had more than my share to drink), and I remarked, too loudly, to someone at my table how bad the playing was.

The song was finished. The patron who had asked for the tune applauded with passion. He'd had a good time and didn't recognize the errors. All he knew was that he had heard what he thought was his song.

A moment later the piano player asked if he could see me. I walked out to the bar with him. And then this: "Hey, Mort, why make such a point of my mistakes? I was only trying to make a guy, who didn't care that much, happy. And did. I'm only trying to make a living. Why louse it up?"

He was right. I apologized for my comment, for being too loud, for my red face. I should have known better. I did after that. Satisfying the customer is still the nightclub pianist's main purpose.

Café society was a key to the nightlife of the city. Piano players were the usual entertainment. But there were other phenomena—cocktail hours where people gathered to waltz or tango or foxtrot; nights out when people dressed up in tuxedos or tails and evening gowns. Blue suits and black shoes for men were almost required dress for informal places. Any man in brown shoes was usually refused entree to the better rooms and hotels. White socks were for tennis matches, golfclub heads, and garage mechanics.

After the war, the social set had embarked on other careers. Sugar daddies put money in Broadway shows to buy a part for some young lady they sponsored. Social-register youngsters became singers. Rich fathers or men of importance opened up nightclub doors for daughters who wanted careers: Eve Symington, Senator Wadsworth's daughter, sang at the Place Pigalle; Lois Elliman, daughter of the wealthy real-estate family, was another of the "Blue Blood Blues Singers" (*Variety's* description). So were Adelaide Moffett, Cobina Wright, Jr. (her mother was the columnist) Eleanor French, Annee Francine, and Sally Clark (a Roosevelt). They all began their rounds of the upper-class nightlife as part of the "cuffo society" where it was "smart to be seen." They added spotlighted performances to their activities for fame, for money, for excitement.

There was a male adjunct to all this—popular society names who were always surrounded by "beviés of lovely barflies," according to the gossip columns. The columnist George Ross called them the "nabobs of the night-time resorts" and included such socialites as the much-married Tommy Manville, Jimmy and Woolie Donahue, Dan Topping, and Shipwreck Kelly. Their presence in a room meant free publicity and upper-crust standing. They were a large part of those times.

As were the piano players. They were always there, in saloon and salon, on stage in vaudeville, featured on Broadway and on radio, adding excitement to motion pictures, creating hit records, or simply playing what the customer wanted to hear. They were part of the social life of this century. They popularized melody, created atmosphere, filled moments of loneliness, stirred memories, listened to tales of woe when the bartender was bored, answered requests like "Play it again, Sam," and supplied the closing notes of "One for My Baby."

The mores of pleasure seeking have changed these past few years. Café society is dead. So are cocktail dances and speakeasies and a whole lot of other places that need a piano player to be popular. The guitar has taken over, bolstered by an entire range of other electrified instruments. But the piano is still dusted off for family gatherings, is still the center of attraction for millions on a night out or a night in.

The tempos of the businessman's bounce are gone. Discos are the rage of the moment. We don't know how long the new sounds will last. We do know that the sound of a piano playing the hits of the day has been popular this entire century and longer. The players heard here had much to do with making the keyboard popular.

MORT GOODE writes Broadway and popular songs, scores and scripts for movies, comedy and variety for TV, acts and special material for comedians and nightclub performers, and extensively on most kinds of music from jazz to Broadway to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. With Jay Burton he wrote a comedy album for the late "Fat Jack" Leonard called *How to Lose Weight* and an animated film for the Marx Brothers characters titled *How the West Was Lost*.

The Recordings

Side One

Band 1

Mine, All Mine (Mia-todo Mia) (Herman Ruby, Ruby Cowans, and Sammy Stepf)

LEE SIMS

Originally issued on Brunswick 3754-A

Variety covered Lee Sims and Ilomay Bailey, his wife, in a "New Acts" review on August 18, 1933. (Though this record is solo Sims, writing about him without mention of her is nearly impossible and would have been sacrilege in Lee's mind. She was a singer, beautiful in the manner of Jeanette MacDonald and a prime target for Hollywood types who tried to entice her west to pursue a movie career. Sims would have none of that and kept her as close as a married team could be.) In part the review reads:

Lee Sims and Ilomay Bailey are writing something of a chapter in the history of post-radio show business with their Capitol theatre engagement, as headliners. . . . It illustrates something about the radio as a name-maker in relation to the direct value of the radio-made act for personal appearances in theatres. . . .

The two combined, according to average variety standards, when there was some vaudeville time around, would rate the deuce position, and that only on sporadic bookings. They are orthodox rostrum workers....

But, thanks to the ether's coverage, they suddenly have found fame thrust upon them....[They have] been tea'd and cocktail-partied by Major Edward Bowes, managing director of the Capitol, preparatory to their stage coming-out appearance. And as headliners.

Because of a fortuitous combination of circumstances, Sims and Miss Bailey found themselves enjoying a prominence in the public prints which extended beyond their wildest expectations, or those of their managerial sponsors. They came from Chicago to debut on the Chase & Sanborn coffee hour with Bert Lahr, right on the heels of that program, through a happy combination of its time and hour and Eddie Cantor, having established itself in the public consciousness as a landmark on the air waves. With Cantor deserting the mike for Hollywood and Lahr's initial entry as his successor something of a disappointment, the reasonably good impression of the supporting variety talent in the persons of Sims and Bailey was all the more accentuated. Thus, properly spotted in the top show of the air, Sims and Bailey in two months have found themselves in overnight prominence with unexpected fame thrust upon them as headliners of Broadway's deluxiest deluxer.

Abel.

Sims was born in Champaign, Illinois, in 1898 and died in New York in 1966. He was a stylist who—for the time—used advanced chord structures and patterns and, through radio and records, influenced young pianists. He played organ in theaters and appeared on prime radio shows quite often. His first radio show was in 1920. Later he had his own NBC program, *Piano Moods*. He was also responsible for two movie background scores—*Drums and Dames at the Ritz*—and wrote a two-volume *Instructions for Modern Piano*.

Band 2

Canadian Capers (Gus Chandler, Bert White, and Henry Cohen)

PHIL OHMAN & VICTOR ARDEN

Originally issued on Victor 22608 (master 63169-7)

Ohman and Arden were often billed as the "Ace Piano Team." It was not mere press agent's hyperbole: they were one of the best. Each had made a reputation as a soloist—Arden cutting piano rolls, Ohman playing around New York—before they teamed up in 1919.

As twin-keyboard players they appeared on the Roxy stage in 1922, toured in vaudeville, starred in Vitaphone movie shorts, and were featured on national radio shows. They were also headliners at such places as the Casanova Club and the Astor Hotel.

Both were practiced and classically trained musicians. Phil Ohman, from New Britain, Connecticut, was born in 1897 and died in 1954. He started playing professionally in New York in 1915 at Wanamaker's department store. Victor Arden was born in Winona, Minnesota, in 1903 and died in 1962. He attended the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. Ohman and Arden's national reputation grew through their guest radio appearances in the late twenties and mid-thirties. They were regulars on the American Album of Familiar Music in 1934-35 and on the Bayer Musical Revue in 1935. They split soon after, each going out as the leader of his own band.

For musical-comedy buffs, their fame came out of their appearances in Broadway shows. In the twenties they were featured in *Lady Be Good*, *Tip-Toes*, *Oh Kay!*, *Funny Face*, and *Spring Is Here*.

The manner of their performances is interesting for those who weren't around then. They did not appear on stage. During the entr'acte (the Act II overture) a spotlight would find Ohman and Arden, appropriately dressed in tails, at twin keyboards in the pit. It highlighted them as they highlighted the songs from the show. The entr'acte was a technique to help people whistle the score as they left the theater and an exciting way to get the melodies across.

Lester Gottlieb, former CBS program director and now a TV producer, remembers how deeply impressive they were: I was in my early teens then and used to scrape money together to sit in the second balcony during Saturday matinees. When that light hit them just before those second-act curtains, and they played the magnificent Gershwin and Rodgers melodies, you could feel the quality of the material and the hit potential. They added their part in helping to popularize those songs.

Band 3

Kitten on the Keys (Zez Confrey)

ZEZ CONFREY (AND HIS ORCHESTRA)

Originally issued on Brunswick 2082

"Kitten on the Keys," written and introduced by Zez Confrey (born Edward E. Confrey in 1895), in Chicago around 1921, is one of the most familiar of all white rags. This recording was his first of this melody. He later recorded other versions with a variety of musical combinations, though some credit Vincent Lopez with making the song popular.

David Ewen in his *History of Popular Music* calls Confrey "the most significant composer of piano rags after Felix Arndt." Confrey studied at the Chicago Musical College, then played drums in theaters and jazz orchestras. His attempts to translate drum rhythms into piano music started him composing. He was the writer of such other popular rags as "Stumbling" and "Dizzy Fingers."

In *They All Played Ragtime* Rudi Blesh takes a dim view of white ragtime tunes. He cheers the creative syncopations of the black originators but decries the watered-down versions that came out of Tin Pan Alley:

The course of white ragtime composition and playing from 1912 on was toward mere digital speed, dexterity, and fanciful piano embroidery, while melodic originality and rhythmic force progressively disappeared. Compositions that show this progressive deterioration include Confrey's "Kitten on the Keys."...

The composition's flash suited the public's taste of those times, and it wasn't until the thirties that new generations, weaned on jazz, began to accept black rhythms and musical inventions.

Alec Wilder in his *American Popular Song* credits Confrey with creativity in "Stumbling":

...it may be the first pop tune that used the rhythm of 3/4 inside a 4/4 time signature...a nutty, off-centered feeling. . . . This rhythmic idea, used many times later on, is not so much American as it is unconventional. And anything that managed to crack the conventional mold was healthy.

Meanwhile, "Kitten on the Keys" was a full-blown hit throughout the twenties. The tinkle and the tempo made the song one of the most popular keyboard pieces of those times.

Band 4

I'm Always Chasing Rainbows (Harry Carroll and Joseph McCarthy)

WALTER GROSS

Originally issued on Bluebird 10795

Walter Gross was born in 1909 and died fifty-eight years later. He was a wonderful pianist who spent his early career around New York, wound up in service during World War II, then settled in California.

Perhaps you do not recognize his name. Certainly you know his melody "Tenderly," one of the very few songs he wrote. Most surprisingly, because rarely does a waltz catch on as this did, it became the second most performed tune in the history of ASCAP (Only "Stardust" has been heard more often.)

All who heard or played with Gross spout superlatives when describing his playing. Alec Wilder wrote: "a marvelous pianist." In *Simon Says* George Simon describes an evening on the town in 1941 with clarinetist Jimmy Lytell when most of what he heard was Jimmy "explode on the wondrous merits of Walter Gross' piano-playing and the nerve of anybody else to say anything else." The legendary John Hammond states his feeling in his usual forthright fashion: "Fabulous, just a fabulous player."

In the early thirties Walter played with various minor bands around New York, then spent some time with Ted Black's Orchestra and with Rudy Vallee. In 1937-38 he was part of George Hall's Band, recorded with Paul Whiteman's Swing Wing, then became staff pianist at CBS.

On radio's *Saturday Night Swing Show* back in 1938-39, Gross started out as the pianist and graduated to conductor during the last months it was on. After the war he played mostly in the smaller rooms around Hollywood, as soloist or with small groups.

Tommy Mace, the clarinet and saxophone player who was featured with many of the great big bands, recalls his association with Walter early in 1946. They were two-thirds of a trio (the third was a drummer) playing in the upstairs room at Ciro's, one of the classier and more popular clubs in Hollywood. Mace raves about Gross's piano playing and those evenings when "Tenderly" was just finished and Walter would ask if it sounded good enough and would he and the drummer mind playing it.

Walter Gross's abilities are fully apparent here. David Ewen commented on the song:

A highly profitable use of a classical melody was made in 1918 by Harry Carroll. . . . The melody came from Chopin's "Fantaisie Impromptu in C-sharp minor." [It was] introduced on the Broadway stage in *Oh Look!* in 1918 and attractively recalled in 1945 for the motion picture *The Dolly Sisters*.

Band 5

Enlloro (Voodoo Moon) (Obdulio Morales, Julio Blanco, and Marion Sunshine)

CARMEN CAVALLARO (AND HIS ORCHESTRA)

Originally issued on Decca 15059

His press agents and bookers billed him as "The Poet of the Piano" when he began to lead his own orchestra. That was early in the forties, after a decade of playing with such bands as those of Al Kavelin, Rudy Vallee, Abe Lyman, and Enric Madriguera. During his days with Kavelin (1933-37) he was billed simply as "Carmen."

Carmen Cavallaro was born in New York in 1913. His musicianship was singled out by reviewers while he played with the Kavelin orchestra. In November, 1935, George Simon wrote in *Metronome*:

Be sure to note this lad Carmen. He is positively sensational at the keys. A beautiful touch plus a magnificent technique permit full expression of his really genteel taste. His fill-ins behind the band, his modulations and his solos are the height of dance-musical refinement. And one of the biggest surprises is to hear Carmen, who quite obviously has studied much concert piano, begin to get off on some real swing.

Later, when Cavallaro had become well established as a performer and a leader (his orchestra played the best hotels in the country, with long stays in Chicago and New York), critics used such adjectives and phrases as "stylish," "theatrical," "rather flowery, with excellent technique, beautiful chords."

Cavallaro's style made him one of the most popular keyboard players after World War II. When the movie *The Eddy Duchin Story* was made, Carmen played the soundtrack, imitating the Duchin style. All the publicity and advertising of the film made great note of Cavallaro's contribution.

In his book *The Big Bands*, written thirty years after that first review in *Metronome*, George Simon hadn't changed his opinion at all:

Carmen Cavallaro was, so far as I was concerned, the best of all the flashy, society-music pianists. He had an extraordinary technique and touch, great dynamic control, and surprisingly, more than a slight feeling for jazz.

"Enlloro" has particular memories for me. I had just returned from too long overseas service to civilian status in 1946. My then-wife had a particular liking for most Latin-sounding music. The Cavallaro record was a national and a local hit, especially at our home, where it was played constantly and helped me get that "Hup-two-three-four" tempo out of my system.

Band 6

Aquellos Ojos Verdes (Green Eyes) (Nilo Menendez)

NAT BRANDWYNNE

Originally issued on Decca 3910

Nat Brandwynne's playing is gentle, filled with tasteful chords and simple phrasing, but his style and the romantic atmosphere he created with his orchestra made him one of the most successful of all society pianists.

He was born in New York in 1910. Brandwynne and Duchin got their real professional starts at the same time—the early thirties—in the Leo Reisman Orchestra at the Central Park Casino, where they were featured as a two-piano team. The handsome Duchin achieved greater public acclaim then and later with his flashier performing. Some critics, however, wrote that Brandwynne was the more musically impressive pianist. Years later, *Variety* tied their styles together. It wrote of Brandwynne: "He's Duchinesque."

Brandwynne became the musical director for Russ Columbo soon after that thirties stint with Reisman, then worked for Kate Smith. Soon after, he began to lead his own hotel bands. His music was warm and danceable and attracted throngs to the cocktail-dansants at the Peacock Alley café in the Waldorf-Astoria. New York was Brandwynne's main base into the late fifties, when he moved to Las Vegas, where he remains one of the major orchestra leaders.

"Aquellos Ojos Verdes" is a Cuban song written in 1931. It was introduced by Don Azpiazu and His Havana Casino Orchestra, then found its way to this country as "Green Eyes." Latin rhythms were a major part of all orchestra repertoires, though the presentations differed according to the patrons. When the song acquired English lyrics, Jimmy Dorsey and His Orchestra made a best-selling record in 1941 featuring Helen O'Connell and Bob Eberle. Nat Brandwynne's solo, as a bolero, is much closer to the warm mood of the original.

Band 7

It Had to Be You (Gus Kahn and Isham Jones)

EDDY DUCHIN

Originally issued on Columbia LP-CL-6010

The 1956 movie of Eddy Duchin's life, starring Tyrone Power, dramatically outlined the highlights of his career. There were many.

Edwin Frank Duchin was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1909 and died in New York from leukemia in 1951. He was one of society's all-time favorite pianists, one of the nation's most popular young bandleaders. His billing often read: "The Adonis of the Supper Room Maestros." It was not unjustified.

His father was a tailor, but Eddy was drawn to pharmacy and enrolled at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy. But he spent one summer vacation playing with Leo Reisman, then, after graduation, returned to New York to rejoin Reisman at the Central Park Casino in 1929. Duchin stayed with that band until 1931, when he started his own at the same club.

The Duchin style was often imitated. It was light and flowery and stayed very close to the original melody, with flourishes and dynamics added. The style and his looks attracted fans. By 1934 he had reached the height of popularity and was gaining a national reputation on sustaining radio shows. Then he was featured on the *Ed Wynn Show* in 1934-35 and the *Burns and Allen Show* in 1936. He was in movies during that period, too—*Coronado* in 1935 and *The Hit Parade* in 1937. He remained at the top of his profession until he enlisted in the navy a few years later.

In 1946, after his service, Duchin starred on the *Kraft Music Hall* radio show and in 1949 had his own show on nationwide radio. It was soon after service that he recorded this version of "It Had to Be You." His treatment is warm, nostalgic, appealing, and very much in the style and mood that made him so popular.

Late in his career Duchin was often billed as "The Magic Fingers of Radio." About his technique he said: "I play the piano the way I would sing—if I could sing." He did sing while he played, and very often his voice was picked up on microphone. His playing represented pure melody; his singing wasn't always that exact.

One story about his abilities. When Sergei Rachmaninoff once heard Eddy Duchin at practice backstage the following conversation took place:

SR: Why do you play this sort of thing? You have talent, you should be working as a concert pianist.

ED: There's nothing I'd like better—but I have to make a living.

SR: How much do you make here?

Duchin told him.

SR: You stick to what you're doing!

(Although this anecdote sounds rather similar to the—possibly apocryphal—exchange between Gershwin and Ravel, it has been confirmed by Duchin's son Peter. Ed.)

Side Two

Band 1

A Lover's Lullaby (Frankie Carle, Andy Razaf, and Larry Wagner)

A Sunrise Serenade (Frankie Carle and Jack Lawrence)

FRANKIE CARLE

Originally issued on Columbia 35570

Frankie Carle was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1903. He took his first piano lessons at the age of five from his uncle, Nicholas Colangelo (whom some called a famed pianist, others a longhaired failure). Carle gave his first recital when he was nine (stilts were built onto his shoes so he could reach the pedals), wrote his first song at thirteen, and by eighteen was playing in dance bands and as an accompanist for vaudeville performers.

Vaudeville touring taught Carle much about showmanship. He later invented his own theatrical stunts—playing with mittens on and playing his own "Carle Boogie" with his back to the piano. They were show-stoppers.

One of his earlier jobs was with Ed McEnnelly's band, then one of New England's favorites. Later Carle worked with Mal Hallett and was teamed with such outstanding sidemen as Gene Krupa, Spud Murphy, Jack Teagarden, and Toots Mondello. In 1939 Frankie was "discovered" by Horace Heidt and played with him for the next five years, until Carle left to start his own orchestra.

By 1944 he had written a string of hit songs. Two of his biggest are included here. "A Lover's Lullaby" was popularized by Glen Gray and the Casa Loma Orchestra, and "A Sunrise Serenade" was one of the greatest of all the Glenn Miller miracles.

Carle's light, buoyant style attracted a wide audience. His billing was "The Pianist with the Golden Touch," and he rarely attempted to move out of that sweet sound. Critics spelled it out in such phrases as ". . . never too subtle for anyone to understand, always pleasant, enjoyable, and almost boy-scoutish in its down-to-earthiness."

Musicians remember one other of Carle's talents: he was a superb piano tuner. Wherever he and his band traveled the tuning fork went. He tuned every piano he played himself, making certain each string was right: "I just couldn't stand a piano out of tune, and it helped me keep my sanity, knowing the pitch was perfect."

Band 2

Happy Talk (Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II)

CY WALTER

Originally issued on Columbia LP-6161

Cy Walter was one of the tastiest and most creative pianists ever around the New York café-society scene. John Hammond says he was "simply brilliant." *The New York Times* called him "master of the cocktail piano." The superlatives about his warm personality, endless repertoire of show tunes, fluency of style, and imaginative presentation are too lengthy for this space. He wasn't one of a kind but most assuredly one of the best. His manner of working those better East Side rooms was as clear as his thought about it: "I'm here more to be seen than heard, so people can eat, drink, talk, and schmooze."

Cy's playing was perfect for schmoozing and other moments of relaxation, and he spent a lifetime creating settings and moods.

Born in Minneapolis around 1915 (he died in New York on August 18, 1968) of a family of active musicians, Cy began his piano studies at five. He switched to cello when he was fourteen but found that instrument restrictive for his musical ideas and too bulky to travel easily.

Back to piano he went, and after graduating from the University of Minnesota he headed for New York. He worked first as a coach for singers, then joined Eddie Lane's orchestra in 1934. (If you want conversation about how good Cy was then, ask Eddie Lane, now managing director of the Berkshire Hotel in New York.)

In 1938 Cy paired with pianist Gil Bowers at some of the plushier clubs around town. Cy worked as a single for the next few years—at Le Ruban Bleu when it first opened, No.1 Fifth Avenue, La Martinique, and more such café-society hangouts. He appeared often on *Piano Playhouse*, a radio show of the forties, and was a regular on the Frank Sinatra show in 1947.

"Cy Walter at the Drake" started out in 1945 with no special fanfare, no promise of a long marriage. He remained there until 1951. For some time after that he ran his own club (Night Cap), played the Blue Angel, and appeared at the Algonquin Hotel for two seasons. There were other stops, but in 1959 Cy Walter returned to the Drake, where he remained until his death.

No one ever counted the show tunes Cy knew well and played perfectly. It was often a topic of conversation, as were the number of drunks who made strange requests. The New York Times pursued the question at one point. Cy was asked: "How many drunks does a cocktail pianist see in 30 years?"

"Why don't you ask how many times I've been asked to play 'Begin the Beguine'?", he queried. "But I'll never forget the guy who wanted the first act of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. I said I only knew the last act, so he asked then for 'Stars and Stripes Forever.' I played 'Easter Parade' and stood at attention while doing it. He was happy."

Band 3

Begin the Beguine (Cole Porter)

EDDIE HEYWOOD, JR.

Originally issued on Decca 23398 A

Eddie Heywood, Jr., has a simple technique that evolves into a highly styled, unusual, easily identifiable rhythmic approach as he interpolates bass notes and odd, attractive bass figures with unexpected sparkling accents. He gained prominence first as a jazz pianist before he recorded for commercial and popular success. Eddie rose to fame with this hit recording of "Begin the Beguine," then continued with a number of other best-sellers, including his own compositions "Canadian Sunset," "Land of Dreams," and "Soft Summer Breeze."

Heywood was born in Atlanta in 1915. His pianist father worked with blues singers during the twenties and thirties and was his son's music teacher. Eddie, Jr., took his first professional job, in an Atlanta theater, when he was fourteen and toured with his father's band from 1932 to 1936. He joined Clarence Love in Kansas City and opened with Benny Carter in Harlem's Savoy Ballroom early in 1939.

That Carter orchestra didn't survive too long, but Eddie was an established New York player by then. A year later he had his own small unit at Café Society Downtown. Critics raved.

Several years ago the *New Yorker* magazine did a profile on Max Gordon and Barney Josephson, the noted operators of the Village Vanguard and Café Society Downtown respectively. Both had featured Eddie Heywood, Jr., and his group early in the forties. Barney told the story of the time Eddie was first booked into his club. It was the extra duty of the leader of the group playing there to act as MC—a particular problem for Eddie, who had a stammer, but the job was too important to pass up. He and Barney worried about it until it was time for the first introduction. Barney says Eddie never stammered at all.

Max Gordon talked about how well Eddie played at the Vanguard for the Revuers and Judy Holliday, who were launching their careers. They were one of the hit attractions of the town in those days. So were Eddie and his fine trio.

Band 4

Carioca (Vincent Youmans, Gus Kahn and Edward Eliscu)

LIBERACE

Originally issued on Columbia CL-6217

Life magazine in 1953 called Liberace "the biggest solo attraction in U.S. concert halls." Gate receipts and popular appeal underscored that statement. The flamboyant pianist oozed charm, and women and men across the country wallowed in it.

The popularity came with a rush. I was working on the Monday-through-Friday-afternoon Kate Smith TV show back in those early fifties. The program came out of the Hudson Theatre on West Forty-fourth Street in New York. Liberace was booked for an appearance. Not that I was consulted, but his name meant little to me.

The late Barry Wood, the producer, explained how well the pianist was doing in a Washington hotel room and how much he felt Liberace would mean to the show. I expressed doubts, and as usual Barry paid no attention to me and went ahead with his plans. He knew lots more than I did. The day Liberace appeared the lines flowed around the block, screaming for a glance at him or a ticket. into the theater. That was ten years before the Beatles, but the crowd reaction was as hysterical as it was later to the four Britishers.

Liberace's whole name is Wladziu Valentino Liberace, which sparked comedy lines, snide remarks, Polish jokes, and other put-downs behind his back and to his face. Liberace didn't ever seem to mind. "Wisecracks," he laughed, "lifted my income from \$150 per week to \$1,000,000 per year. So why should I resent it?" It made sense. He had been an intermission pianist at the Persian Room in the Plaza Hotel in 1940 for \$35 a week.

There was a great measure of showmanship in everything Liberace did. His playing was totally theatrical, "with graceful arpeggios and twinkling trills and athletic runs up and down the ivories" according to one critic. Others wrote that he had two styles of playing: "fast, loud and energetic; and slow, with sentimentally exaggerated retards and accelerandos." The candelabrum on the piano, the Liberace trademark that caused so much of the controversy about him, was inspired by a scene in *A Song to Remember*, the film about Chopin. Liberace used the candelabrum for the first time when he appeared at the Plaza in New York in 1947.

Theatrical magic is not easily explained. Women writers around the country referred to Liberace as "that velvet-eyed pianist." One psychiatrist concluded: "He awakens the mother instinct in women."

Band 5

Autumn in New York (Vernon Duke)

BUDDY WEED

Originally issued on Columbia LP-CL-6160

Harold Eugene "Buddy" Weed was born in Ossining, New York, in 1918. He began studying the piano at four and later became a virtuoso on the instrument in swing and more formal idioms. His playing was tasteful and imaginative, economical but with flourishes, and he always exhibited unquestionable technique.

When Buddy began to work around New York City in the late thirties, he played under some of the best big-band leaders of those days—Jack Teagarden, Charlie Spivak, and Teddy Powell. Metronome made note of his abilities in 1940, when George Simon dropped into the Famous Door on Fifty-second Street to catch the Powell outfit and wrote: "That Buddy Weed sure plays fine piano."

Later in 1940 Buddy joined the reorganized Paul Whiteman Orchestra, a modernized outfit that featured some of Weed's delightful arrangements.

Buddy stayed with the Whiteman organization until 1942, when he entered the service. He cut some fine V-Discs (special records made for free distribution to servicemen) with Ella Fitzgerald and also recorded with Bud Freeman and his orchestra. After the war, Buddy joined ABC as a studio musician and played steadily on radio and later on TV shows. During those postwar years there was also much work in New York nightclubs and as a pianist and arranger in recording studios.

Weed's talent comes clear on "Autumn in New York." The song was introduced in 1934 in the revue *Thumbs Up* and soon became one of the most recorded songs of the era. The light Buddy Weed touch treats the melody with full understanding, caressing its gentle mood lovingly, quietly, simply.

Band 6

La Vie en Rose (Louiguy, Edith Piaf, and Mack David)

GEORGE FEYER

Originally issued on Vox LP-500

George Feyer is very much a part of present-day New York nightlife. He can still be heard at the midtown hotels, playing show tunes, answering requests, creating mood and atmosphere in the manner of those recent times when the town featured many more such players. His style is elegant, full of dash and wordless observation, as befits a debonair, cosmopolitan artist.

Feyer was born in 1908 in Hungary and studied piano at the Budapest Conservatory under Dohnányi, Kodály, and Szekely. His career was pointed toward classical music, and he was recognized as one of the rising young concert pianists. His switch to popular music received little favorable reaction in his own country. But soon he was one of the best-known and best-paid entertainers in Europe. He played in exclusive nightclubs in Paris, Deauville, Nice, Monte Carlo, The Hague, Geneva, and St. Moritz and also had a regular weekly program on Radio Paris.

Feyer came to the United States in 1951 and made his debut at the then famous and flourishing Gogi's La Rue in New York. His style was perfect for the room, where his refined and tasteful arrangements, blending European tradition with the best of American popular and show music, had immediate appeal. The Feyer repertoire is limitless, and, as was once written, "he plays the classics with a touch of Broadway, and Broadway with a touch of Paris."

The Parisian touch fits this echo of that city and gives clear evidence that Feyer, a resident of Paris for many years, absorbed its culture and spirit fully and can transfer a true sense of its individuality through his playing.

Band 7

The Most Beautiful Girl in the World (Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart)

FAIRCHILD & CARROLL

Originally issued on Liberty L-196

Edgar Fairchild and Adam Carroll were the first two-piano team featured in a Broadway show—the 1922 *George White's Scandals*, which predated, of course, the Phil Ohman and Victor Arden performance with Fred and Adele Astaire in the 1924 *Lady Be Good*.

The forming of the team came about quite accidentally. Adam Carroll grew up in Philadelphia, studied with Franz Von Stobbe (a former instructor at the Leipzig Conservatory), then earned money playing piano in a nickelodeon. He moved to playing in the pit in the large movie houses on Market Street. His experience earned him a recording contract with the old De Luxe Company and a transfer to New York when the company moved there.

Edgar Fairchild started life as Milton Suskind in Manhattan. His piano studies took him to Frank Damrosch's Institute of Musical Art. He was still in knee pants when he graduated and performed as soloist at Aeolian Hall. Suskind took a postgraduate course with Damrosch, then found work recording for a piano-roll company. Artists who had heard him play were convinced he could become a successful concert pianist and told him to quit work and go to Europe for further study. The income was too good to leave, however.

Suskind was recording classical pieces under his own name and also branching out into popular music. To avoid confusion he took the name Edgar Fairchild for that new side of his career.

Fairchild was delving into so-called symphonic jazz. He wasn't sure where the study was taking him, but he knew he needed more than a single piano to expand his ideas. That's when he teamed with Carroll, who was becoming popular.

The team was the first to play jazz with a symphony orchestra when they performed their "hot" fantasy on Carmen as featured soloists with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

After their Scandals success the team split. Each partnered for a while with Ralph Rainger (composer of "Moanin' Low"); each played solo for a time, Carroll as accompanist to Libby Holman in *Three's a Crowd*, Fairchild in London for a couple of years. The separation ended when they reunited for *On Your Toes*.

Fairchild once explained that their success was due to hewing to their original principle of adding sauce to the melody instead of drowning it with crazy harmonies and noisy dissonances. If you're playing a piece by Mozart you don't want Stravinsky harmonies. Too many people make popular music a vehicle to show off their own tricks and superimpose their own ideas. They forget they are only interpreters.

Fairchild and Carroll did play melody. Each seemed able to perform things the other could not, making one distinctive and pleasing style.

Band 8

Autumn Leaves (Joseph Kosma and Johnny Mercer)

ROGER WILLIAMS

Originally issued on Kapp 2-4106

Roger Williams was born in Nebraska, where his mother was once director of a symphony orchestra at a state college, and raised in Des Moines, Iowa, where his father built one of the largest Lutheran churches. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree at Idaho State College and then moved to New York for further studies at Juilliard.

He began working in hotel and café-society clubs in New York. Jazz historian Frank Driggs remembers him vividly:

I was an NBC page early in the fifties. When I saved enough change, I would take a date to such places as the café Madison in the Hotel Madison in New York. Roger Williams was playing there then, still using his right name, Lou Weertz. He was most accommodating to me, a kid, who was usually trying to impress a lady. The room was often half empty, so Roger would play anything I requested in that waterfall style of his, and helped make a big man out of me—at least for those moments.

Roger soon developed his driving, forthright style, with its melodic emphasis. He added rippling arpeggios and lush harmonies and, with his impressive technique, made it all work. His intensity and pianism prompted one observer to comment during a Williams performance at the Persian Room that "there was blood over the keyboard."

One bit of history to prove how simple it is to make a hit record. Dave Kapp was supervising a Jane Morgan session. They had finished earlier than scheduled and had some unused time left in the studio. Williams was there as a guest, though scheduled to record for the Kapp label a few days later.

Kapp asked Williams if he wished to rehearse, as long as he was there. Roger said, "Sure, I'll just run through 'Falling Leaves.'"

The engineers kept the tape running while Roger rehearsed. When he was finished, Kapp said, "Okay, Roger, that's it. That's your record. You got everything perfect, except the title. It still is called 'Autumn Leaves,' you know."

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Side One

Total time 24:29

- 1 **MINE, ALL MINE** (Herman Ruby, Ruby Cowan, and Sammy Stept) 2:42
(publ. Bourne Co.)
Lee Sims
- 2 **CANADIAN CAPERS** (Gus Chandler, Bert White, and Henry Cohen) 3:13
(publ. Warner Bros. Music, a Division of Warner Bros., Inc.)
Phil Ohman and Victor Arden
- 3 **KITTEN ON THE KEYS** (Zez Confrey) 3:13
(publ. Mills Music, Inc.)
Zez Confrey and His Orchestra
- 4 **I'M ALWAYS CHASING RAINBOWS** (Harry Carroll and Joseph McCarthy) 2:57
(publ. Robbins Music Corp./Venus Music Corp.)
Walter Gross
- 5 **ENLLORO** (Obdulio Morales, Julio Blanco, and Marion Sunshine) 7:37
(publ. MCA Music)
Carmen Cavallaro and His Orchestra
- 6 **AQUELLOS OJOS VERDES** (Nilo Menendez) 3:01
(publ. Peer International Corp.)
Nat Brandwynne
- 7 **IT HAD TO BE YOU** (Gus Kahn and Isham Jones) 1:21
(publ. Warner Bros.-Seven Arts, Inc.)
Eddy Duchin

Side Two

Total time 21:57

- 1 **A LOVER'S LULLABY** (Frankie Carle, Andy Razaf, and Larry Wagner)
A SUNRISE SERENADE (Frankie Carle and Jack Lawrence) 2:40
(publ. Dorsey Bros. Music/Edwin H. Morris & Co., Inc.)
Frankie Carle
- 2 **HAPPY TALK** (Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II) 1:50
(publ. Williamson Music, Inc.)
Cy Walter
- 3 **BEGIN THE BEGUINE** (Cole Porter) 3:19
(publ. Harms, Inc.)
Eddie Heywood, Jr.
- 4 **CARIOCA** (Vincent Youmans, Gus Kahn, and Edward Eliscu) 2:17
(publ. T. B. Harms Co.)
Liberace
- 5 **AUTUMN IN NEW YORK** (Vernon Duke) 3:03
(publ. Harms, Inc.)
Buddy Weed
- 6 **LA VIE EN ROSE** (Louiguy, Edith Piaf, and Mack David) 1:51
(publ. Harms, Inc.)
George Feyer
- 7 **THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN THE WORLD** (Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart) 3:26
(publ. T. B. Harms Co.)
Fairchild and Carroll
- 8 **AUTUMN LEAVES** (Joseph Kosma and Johnny Mercer) 3:03
(publ. Morley Music Co., Inc.)
Roger Williams

Full discographic information for each selection may be found within the individual discussions of the works in the liner notes.

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