



WILLIAM "COUNT" BASIE was born in Red Bank, New Jersey, on August 21, 1906. He has played the piano virtually since childhood, taking his first music lessons from his mother. In his teens he worked in local theatres and small clubs, and by the time he was fourteen he had reached such a professional peak that he was accompanying Bessie Smith — world-famous "Empress Of The Blues," whose records sold literally in millions during the twenties. Also at that time he came into contact with the twenties style setters "Fats" Waller and Willie "The Lion" Smith.

In 1926 Basie started touring with a variety unit and wound up in Kansas City. He decided to stay there for a while, and became pianist arranger with a still-remembered Kansas City group known as Walter Page's Blue Devils. Later he joined Benny Moten's band, which was one well-known in Jazz circles, despite the fact that it seldom ventured outside Kansas City as a unit. When Moten died in 1935 Basie took over the leadership of the group. By the summer of that year Basie had a ten piece band which John Hammond, socialite critic, heard broadcasting from the Reno Club, Kansas City.

Hammond was so impressed that he arranged for Basie and his group to leave Kansas City and move to the bigger entertainment fields of Chicago.

They made their first records under the Count's name soon after arriving there, and those initial sides have been on sale here since 1937 without a break. The titles (on the Brunswick label) include "Pennies From Heaven," "Swinging At The Daisy Chain" and "Roseland Shuffle."

By 1937 the band had become internationally famous. Basie's piano style was then, and is now, superbly simple, and he was ably supported by a magnificent rhythm unit composed of Freddie Green (guitar); Jo Jones (drums); and Walter Page (bass). The blues singer was Jimmy Rushing. Tenor saxes were Lester Young and Herschel Evans, with Earl Warren on alto sax and Buck Clayton and Harry Edison on trumpets, Dickie Wells and Benny Merton on trombone. Their arrangements were either written by Eddie Durham, various members of the band or developed spontaneously.

By 1938 the band, under the Count's leadership, had made its New York bow at the Roseland Ballroom (the Manhattan equivalent of the Hammersmith Palais), and the following year, after a Carnegie Hall concert, real fame came to them when their "One O'Clock Jump" became a national hit.

The wartime prosperity boom in the United States meant a similar prosperity for the Count. He and the band travelled to Hollywood to take part in such movies as "Reveille With Beverly" (Frank Sinatra's debut film as

Welcome to

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COUNT BASIE SWINGS and JOE WILLIAMS SINGS

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COUNT BASIE BIG BAND
COUNT BASIE SMALL BAND

with ELLA FITZGERALD April in Paris
with ELLA and JOE WILLIAMS Party Blues
COLUMBIA LX106 (12" 78)

Recorded under the personal supervision of Norman Granz

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a solo singer), "Stage Door Canteen" (in which Basie's band accompanied Ethel Waters in a number called "Quick Sands"), "Mister Big" and "Crazy House."

Their recording of "9.20 Special" sold particularly well, and they managed to land a number of important hotel bookings, an unusual thing for a coloured band in the States, in addition to the usual round of theatre, club and radio work.

Throughout the forties, despite the occasional loss of key soloists, Basie's band consistently topped the popularity polls. The Basie style, then as now, relied upon solid musicianship in execution, effective simplicity in material, with everything played in the most swingingly relaxed style ever known for a full size group.

During these years the band featured a number of outstanding tenor sax men including Don Byas, Buddy Tate, Lucky Thompson and Illinois Jacquet. Al Killian, Emmett Berry and Joe Newman were amongst the trumpet stars. The trombone section included Vic Dickenson and Jay Jay Johnson.

Except for a period in 1950-51 when he led a swinging sextet, Basie has led a big band continuously. The present day band was formed in 1952 and since then has covered an enormous amount of significant ground. As well as repeated engagements at Birdland in New York, and nation-wide concert tours in the United States, co-starring with such famous solo stars as Billy Eckstine, Sarah Vaughan, George Shearing and Al Hibbler, he has had two Continental tours (1954 and 1955) when France, Scandinavia, Germany and Italy were amongst the countries visited.

He has had countless record dates under the supervision of impresario Norman Granz. These discs, released here on Columbia, were the only recordings by a regularly formed big band to reach the "Billboard" and "Cash Box" popularity charts in years. "Every Day," featuring Joe Williams' singing, was released in 1955 and the record really displayed this fabulous vocalist's virtuosity, excitement and feeling.

Extreme effects, pretentiousness and ponderously sentimental pieces have no part in Count's scheme of things. Soloists are prominently featured in almost every number.

His principal of playing "pure" Jazz has proved more successful than serving a trumped up hash of "novelty" or "progressive" music.

Despite its basic simplicity, however, the Basie hallmark has never been successfully reproduced. One can tell the genuine article by its indefinable authority and ease.

As a pianist, Basie more or less personifies his band—uncomplicated yet inimitable. His touch and timing are almost legendary.

Joe Williams

Joe Williams grew up in Chicago. He started his professional career in 1937 and worked with Jimmie Noone, Coleman Hawkins, Lionel Hampton, Andy Kirk, and also with the two piano boogie woogie team of Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson. In those days, although Joe sang the blues, he emphasised ballads more.

Back in 1950, when Count Basie had his sextet with Clark Terry, Wardell Gray, and Buddy DeFranco, Williams worked with him during a long engagement in Chicago, but it was not until Christmas Day, 1954, that he finally joined the Count. He has been with him ever since.

After his hit with "Every Day" does Williams think of himself as a rhythm and blues singer?

He does not. "I sing the blues and I sing rhythm," he says. But then he goes on to deny the existence of rhythm and blues.

"It's just a name," he says, "a tag, something somebody thought up to relegate it to a certain category, a certain market. Personally I like good blues, and to me a good blues has to have a story. Sometimes it's a happy story, sometimes a sad story, sometimes a story with hope and sometimes no hope at all. But always a story. I try to bring out the stories in songs, and I'm happy to have had a small part in the success of a good blues like 'Every Day.'"

Does Williams like other blues singers?

Depends on what kind. "I'm not a knocker, so I won't mention the ones I don't like," he says. But the ones he does like are Ray Charles and Joe Turner.

Of the ballad singers his favourite is Nat Cole.

Williams, who spent a decade working in Chicago clubs before joining Basie, is a hi-fi fan with a tape recorder, and a family man with a wife whom he married in 1951, and two children. They all go out on the road with him. His job with Basie he thinks is the most exciting experience of his life.

"I have no immediate plans for the future except to keep on working with Basie," he explains. "I'm having a ball with the band. A ball."

And watching Williams sitting with the band you can see what he means. He keeps up with everything going on on the stand, singing riffs along with the sections. It's like being paid to enjoy oneself.

When he sings, ballads or blues, he remains absolutely immobile. But that does not detract from the tremendous emotional power of his voice.

He can work on the emotions of his audience as though he were working on a musical instrument. Backed by the Basie band the effect is phenomenal.

Williams says simply "I'm a Jazz singer," and perhaps there is little left to say.



The Men Behind Basie

There is a strength and beat about the Basie band which, over the years has reached a superlative level. Led by the great band pianist, Basie, from the orchestra itself, each section blends with a perfection and suppleness impossible to find in another band of this size. A soloist, flying high in his improvised flight, can rely on full support from the other sections.

For the rhythm section, Freddie Greene, the only remaining veteran from the pre-war Basie band, plays guitar with a drive that has not faltered through the years. No Basie band could swing without him. Born in Charleston, South Carolina on March 31, 1911, he has been with Basie since 1937. He learnt to play guitar at the age of 21. Strictly an orchestral player, he is one of the best known guitarists in the Jazz world.

Along with him is Ed Jones, almost a newcomer to the band having joined it in 1953, and Sonny Payne on drums. In Ed Jones, Basie has a sure-fingered, big toned stylist with a drive that underlines the whole band. Payne, born in 1930, is the son of a drummer and played with Erskine Hawkins and Earl Bostic before joining Basie in 1955.

Basie's idea of the saxophone section is still the best of Jazz forms. The sharp, piercing altos—Marshall Royal and Bill Graham, with Royal leading—stand out above the rest. The tenors, played by Frank Wess and Frank Foster, support them, whilst Charlie Fowlkes on baritone, underlines them. The punch of Fowlkes' playing has long been a feature of the new Basie ensemble. A hard blower, almost of the rhythm and blues style, Fowlkes was previously with Tiny Bradshaw and Lionel Hampton.

Henry Coker leads trombones. Coker, from Dallas, Texas, spent the World War II years in Honolulu, playing very little Jazz. In 1945, when he returned to the United States, he joined Benny Carter, Eddie Heywood and Illinois Jacquet, before coming to Basie to take over lead and the largest trombone solo part. With him on trombones are Benny Powell and Bill Hughes. Powell, a soloist whose ideas conform closely to the New York school of Lewis, and Miles Davis, has a smooth style of attack, dazzling in its range and superb articulation.

Probably the most difficult lot of the entire band falls upon the lead trumpet, Reunald Jones, who has been with Basie since 1952. Born in Indiana in 1910, Jones played with Chick Webb, Don Redman, Willy Briant, and Jimmy Lunceford before joining Basie. He belongs to the school of hard blowing trumpeters which may well become extinct if the present cool style takes over. He is a natural leader, leaving the solo work to Joe Newman and Thad Jones. He has the trumpets completely under control, leading them into the many moods and contrasts which are a feature of Basie music.

In Joe Newman, Basie has probably one of the most versatile, as well as one of the most feeling musicians of the instrument since Gillespie. Born in New Orleans in 1921, Joe played with Lionel Hampton before joining Basie in 1943. He stayed with him for two years and then left to play small group Jazz with Illinois Jacquet and J. C. Heard. When he returned to Basie in 1951 his style had developed enormously, and since then he has been given ample opportunity to reveal his inventive and fertile show of ideas. He is one of the most heavily featured of the band's soloists. Wendell Culley takes occasional trumpet solo choruses, whilst Thad Jones, a more conscious modernist, is well featured.

Harold Fielding acknowledges with thanks the co-operation of Harold Davison through whom he has booked Count Basie and his Orchestra for this tour. Scenery built by Rae Stage Equipment Ltd., and painted by Alick Johnstone. Stage cloth made by John Holliday & Sons Ltd. Special Music Desks by Boosey & Hawkes. Electrical equipment by Strand Electric & Engineering Co. Ltd. Chairs by Slinga Furniture.

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MONDAY	APRIL 8TH	DE MONTFORT HALL	LEICESTER	6.30 & 8.50
TUESDAY	APRIL 9TH	CITY HALL	NEWCASTLE	6.20 & 8.40
WEDNESDAY	APRIL 10TH	CITY HALL	NEWCASTLE	6.20 & 8.40
THURSDAY	APRIL 11TH	ST. ANDREW'S HALL	GLASGOW	6.30 & 8.45
FRIDAY	APRIL 12TH	ST. ANDREW'S HALL	GLASGOW	6.30 & 8.45
SATURDAY	APRIL 12TH	ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL <i>General Manager: T. E. Bean</i>	LONDON	3.00
SATURDAY	APRIL 13TH	THE RITZ	SOUTHEND	8.30
SUNDAY	APRIL 14TH	CAPITOL	CARDIFF	5.30 & 8.00
MONDAY	APRIL 15TH	WINTER GARDENS	BOURNEMOUTH	6.00 & 8.30
TUESDAY	APRIL 16TH	ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL <i>General Manager: T. E. Bean</i>	LONDON	6.15 & 9.00
WEDNESDAY	APRIL 17TH	ROYAL ALBERT HALL <i>Manager: C. Hopper</i>	LONDON	6.20 & 8.50
THURSDAY	APRIL 18TH	ROYAL ALBERT HALL <i>Manager: C. Hopper</i>	LONDON	6.20 & 8.50
FRIDAY	APRIL 19TH	RIALTO CINEMA	YORK	5.00 & 7.30
SATURDAY	APRIL 20TH	TOWN HALL	BIRMINGHAM	6.30 & 8.50
SUNDAY	APRIL 21ST	PALACE THEATRE <i>Entertainments Executive Manager: Kathleen Williams</i>	BLACKPOOL	6.10 & 8.15

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