



LESTER YOUNG

If you were to stop 100 teen-aged fans at a Stones concert and ask them to name the greatest tenor saxophonist of all time, chances are that 50 would reply with a blank stare; most of the rest would name John Coltrane, but an enlightened few might recall that their father had once told them about a man named Lester Young. Two or three might even know that his nickname was Prez.

This estimate, though it may seem a trifle harsh, is not so intended. Rather, it is an attempt to point up the extent to which, in this age of fast turnovers when an interest in any artistic manifestation more than five years old is classified as nostalgia, Lester's name in some small measure has survived. Half-forgotten legend he may be, but for a man whose best years already were two or three decades behind him when he died, it is an affirmation of his impact that his name means anything at all today. Now, with the reclamation of these masterful Commodore sides from his halcyon years, there can be no excuse for unfamiliarity with the man or for the nonpareil sound and the style of which he was the uncontested progenitor.

Lester Young was not the first major influence in his field. Beyond cavil, Coleman Hawkins played the original role and was for more than a decade the only pervasively important tenor soloist. What Lester represented was not a first direction, but the first change of direction.

Hawkins himself once said: "Lester had his own thing. He had it even back around 1933 in Kansas City. His best days were the late 1930s, when I came home from Europe and heard him with Basie. And none of his imitators could really ever get anywhere."

The difference between Hawkins and Prez? Choose your own analogy—hot compared to cool, hard vs. soft, energy as opposed to relaxation. The records of both men provide the only answer needed, the only explanation possible.

He was a strange man, this Lester Willis Young, hiding behind a veil of self-effacement, seeking in booze and dope a refuge from the ugliness of obloquy that pursued him through his 49 years, dealing with society through indirection as he made up a personal language, some of which became standard jazz argot. He sprinkled his speech with personal punctuations like "oodastaddis" and "voul" and the suffix "-oreeny". Obscure in his speech, he spoke through his horn with lucidity and warmth.

Beauty was his sole objective in life; "That was real pretty" was the ultimate compliment he could pay you. As one of his sidemen once said, "Prez got that light tone because that's the way he wanted everything to be. Once I bought him a pair of shoes, then visited him one day and found them in the wastebasket. Then I realized—they were hard-soled shoes and he wouldn't wear anything but moccasins or slippers. Everything had to be soft or gentle, else he wanted no part of it."

Prez himself was a soft and gentle man who, tormented by the demands of 20th century society on a black man and an artist, turned to personal eccentricity as a facade for his insecurity. He had a distracted manner and a vaguely oriental look to his heavy-lidded eyes. He used to shuffle onto the bandstand with odd, mincing little steps. He was, contrary to the impression he sometimes gave, neither gay nor, despite his involvement with narcotics, a junkie.

He was the maverick in a celebrated musical family. "My father was a fine musician," he once said. "He taught all the instruments and could play them all. He traveled with carnival minstrel shows. I played in a family band with him and my brother Lee and my sister Irma."

Born in Woodville, Miss., and raised in New Orleans, he made his first flight from Jim Crow and paternal discipline when his father told him the family band had been booked on a string of dates through the South. He wandered through Kansas and Missouri with King Oliver, with Walter Page, then briefly worked with Count Basie. He left Basie to join Fletcher Henderson in 1934, replacing Coleman Hawkins who had just departed for London.

"I got bruised," he told me, "because I didn't sound like Hawkins, you know? They rang the bell on me. So I did a lot of teardrops there, you know? I was rooming at Fletcher's house and Mrs. Henderson would come in every morning and that bitch would start playing them records with Hawkins and everything... and I would listen, because I didn't want to hurt nobody's feelings." (Prez's greeting to everyone he met was: "How are your feelings?")

After a fast breakup with Henderson (he insisted on and received from Fletcher a letter confirming that he had not been fired), Lester worked with Andy Kirk for six months before returning to Basie in Kansas City. Not long after, John Hammond arranged for the band to head East.

It was during this vital stage in his career that Billie Holiday, who toured with the orchestra and for a while was the love of his life, gave Lester his nickname. "I always felt he was the greatest, so his name had to be the greatest," she wrote in her autobiography. "In this country kings or counts or dukes don't amount to nothing. The greatest man around then was Franklin D. Roosevelt, and he was the President. So I started calling him the President. It got shortened to Prez."

The first recordings by the Basie band in 1937 gave an entirely new dimension to a swing era commercially dominated by Benny Goodman. Basie's band and rhythm section were looser, less formal, and Prez was now reaching his creative peak. When Lester leaped in, the jazz world followed. As Dexter Gordon said, "Hawkins had done everything possible; he was the master of the horn, but when Prez appeared we all began to listen to him. He had an entirely new sound, one we had been waiting for, the first one to really tell a story on the horn."

Revolutionary though they were, the brief Prez solos on Basie's records were only the tip of a cool iceberg, one that came fully into view when the historic Kansas City combo dates were cut, starting in 1938. Five of the tracks here are priceless in that they also offer extensive samplings of Lester on clarinet, an instrument he rarely played with Basie.

What will strike the average listener, whether he hears this music today for the first time or rehears it in the context of what has happened in the ensuing 34 years, is the calculated quietness, the total relaxation of the music. Here is a reversion to the opposite end of a volume spectrum that seems, in these hysterical 1970s, to be

extending itself mercilessly to the other extremity. Lester's clarinet is subdued, liquid, spare in its use and secure in its choice of notes. Buck Clayton, whose way with the cup mute gained him the admiration of all his peers both in and out of the Basie band, played an open horn only once, in the final half chorus of *I Want a Little Girl*.

What few ensembles there are, such as the riff choruses on *Countless Blues*, bring the two horns together with an understated delicacy that was matched at that time only by the John Kirby sextet. Under it all you have Jo Jones' hi-hat and brushwork, his easy nudging of the rhythm section; the quietly strummed acoustic guitar of Freddie Green, then as now an indispensable element of the Basie beat; and the stability of Walter Page, who has a rare solo outing on *Pagin' The Devil*.

To render the first two Kansas City sessions doubly unique there was the undisputed fact that these were the first records ever to feature an electric guitar. Eddie Durham, while playing trombone with the Jimmie Lunceford band in 1935-6, doubled on a guitar in which he placed a steel resonator to enhance the sound. By 1938, playing with Basie, he had acquired one of the first electric guitars. At the time this was a total revelation: his clarity and fluency in delineating single-note passages was like nothing before in jazz annals. Because he soon became busy as a full-time arranger (for Glenn Miller among others), and because of the tremendous and justified acclaim that greeted Charlie Christian when he descended on the Apple in 1939, Durham's historic role in establishing the amplified guitar has too often been low-rated or ignored. An examination of his work on these two 1938 sessions should set the record straight.

A series of traumatic developments in Lester Young's life separated the session that produced *Way Down Yonder* from the 1944 date. His departure from the Basie ranks is an event that will not readily be forgotten by any of us who were around. It was time for a Basie band date at the Columbia studios, and everyone was there but Prez. The reason became apparent only later—he had refused to record on Friday the Thirteenth.

That was in December of 1940. From that point on, life went unevenly for Prez. After a short-lived venture as a combo leader, he joined forces with his brother Lee. Later he played in a band led by another tenor player, Al Sears, touring for USO camp shows. None of this was calculated to bring his career to new creative heights. He rejoined Basie in December 1943 but stayed only a few months. During that time the last Commodore Kansas City group date was made.

Prez had retained his masterful control of the horn. He was in sympathetic company. Bill Coleman, one of the great unrecognized trumpeters of his day (he has lived in Europe since 1948) and trombonist Dicky Wells, Lester's burry-toned Basie colleague, gave the frontline an easy, effortless quality that complemented Lester's essence. Joe Bushkin's graceful way with a grace note, John Simmons' unobtrusive bass, and the perennial value of having Jo Jones in the rhythm section, all helped create the kind of ambiance that was by now, for Prez, increasingly rare.

If Lester's very special qualities can be pinpointed in any one brief musical statement, perhaps it would be the release of a chorus on *I Got Rhythm*. Starting with a repeated note, he works his way out of it, like a kitten out of a bag, slurring up almost subliminally, note by note, to the dominant (F concert) that ends the phrase. On the face of it, there is nothing to this; transcribed, it would look like eight bars of less than exceptionally inspired improvisation. Hearing it, you know how much Lester could make out of how little, and that was at least part of his secret.

Not too long after this session, Prez was called up for Army service. They took his horn away from him and refused to let him play in the band; they made him cut off his premature-hippie long hair. "The Army was a terrifying experience for him," said Charlie Carpenter, who was his manager for ten years.

After 15 months during which racism, com-

bined with various forms of psychological and physical agony including time in a detention barracks in Georgia, all took their toll, Lester returned to a civilian world with which he could not come to terms. Carpenter feels he had already reached the point of no return. He led a combo, but a physical and artistic decline had set in that became slowly more pathetic and conspicuous during the next decade. He was in and out of the hospital—malnutrition, nervous breakdown. He spent most of his final year holed up in a seedy Broadway hotel room, from the window of which he stared across the street at Birdland, a club he had opened and helped establish, the scene of so many triumphs years ago.

Prez died early in the morning of March 15, 1959, not 24 hours after he had limped weakly off a plane from Paris.

In an article for *Playboy* not long afterward, I wrote: "Four days later, at a funeral home on East 52nd Street, those who had heard Prez and had not forgotten him listened to Al Hibbler sing *In The Garden* and trombonist Tyree Glenn play a muted solo of *Just A-Wearyin' For You*."

"Prez would have liked that," said one musician later. "But the photographers snapping flash-light pictures while it was going on—he wouldn't have wanted that to happen. Wasn't no beauty in that and Prez wouldn't have wanted anything that wasn't pretty."

#### CHU BERRY AND BEN WEBSTER

There was a time in the molding of jazz when this suffering, struggling, esoteric art form, scorned by many proper blacks as "the devil's music" and by whites as nigger music, had no place to turn for moral or economic support. The great jazz orchestras, black or white, had to function essentially as dance bands. For all practical purposes there were no organized small jazz combos: the groups that worked 52nd Street or the small Harlem clubs were mostly ad hoc units. There was no *Down Beat*, and with rare exceptions no serious writing about jazz anywhere in America. (Europe, of course, was another matter.)

Not the least of the problems facing us early fans was the absence of such a light in the wilderness as Commodore Records.

Today there are thousands of record companies. In the mid-1930s the entire United States had four major ones: Victor, Columbia, Brunswick and Decca was just emerging. The demand for out-of-print jazz masterpieces was small enough to be insignificant to these giants who owned the rights, but large enough to be meaningful to Mill Gabler and customers of his Commodore Music Shop on East 42nd Street, where musicians, fans and visiting jazz critics hung out.

"People bought records by Fletcher or Duke," Gabler recalls, "but there was no small band jazz to speak of, even though that's what was being played on 52nd Street; so I decided to record it because nobody else had, and I knew I could sell it to the people who came to my store."

Leon "Chu" Berry was one of the in-group names Gabler cut during the first year of Com-



modore Records. Unknown to the general public, he was more familiar to record buyers in Paris and London than to the juke-box patrons in Gotham or Harlem, where tastes leaned respectively to Sammy Kaye and the Ink Spots.



My own first recollection of Chu (or Choo, as we called him then) is a very special memory. Only hours off the "Normandie," on my first U.S. visit, I was speeded away by John Hammond to the Savoy Ballroom, where Teddy Hill had the incumbent band, with Chu and Roy Eldridge as the chief soloists. In a Melody Maker report on that inspiring evening, I observed, rather superciliously, that Chu's tone had improved (how could I know when the prior evidence consisted of a few brief solos on poorly recorded 78s?), and that his phrasing was "almost the equal of Hawkins."

Later that same night, after the Savoy had put us out at its regular 2:30 closing hour, I wound up in an uptown after hours joint called the 1-0-1 Club, and since it was well known as a musicians' hangout, I was not surprised to see Chu walk in.

"He is only 25 now," I wrote, "and has been playing tenor for six years. It was when Hawkins came to his home town of Wheeling, W. Va. that he was first fascinated by the saxophone. He studied assiduously on alto for several years but switched to tenor when he went on the road with Sammy Stewart."

"Chu had bad luck; the Stewart band, as well as Cecil Scott's and Benny Carter's, all broke up soon after he joined. But he is well known through his records with Spike Hughes, the Chocolate Dandies and Red Norvo, and has now been with Hill for two years."

A stocky, cheerful man, Berry seemed surprised to find someone from a foreign country who already knew something about his background. After a long chat and an hour of blowing a borrowed alto in the house combo, Chu walked me outside and we found it was broad daylight. "Time flies in Harlem but it has exceptionally graceful wings," I observed in my best 1935 prose.

July 1937 proved to be the turning point in Chu's career. He joined the band of Cab Calloway, whose singing often stopped long enough to allow his many soloists to reveal their gifts. With Coleman Hawkins a distant figure, wandering around Europe, Chu became the new kingpin of the tenor, admired for his soft, caressingly mellow sound, depth of feeling, and a masterful technique that defied any tempo to stump him. Lionel Hampton, Mildred Bailey, Gene Krupa and Wingy Manone used him on record dates. He even won the 1937 polls conducted by *Metro-nome* and *Down Beat*, which by now were devoting more and more space to jazz.

On Chu's first Commodore date was a group of close friends: Roy Eldridge was his jam session buddy, and Danny Barker had joined Cab's band on Chu's recommendation. Clyde Hart, who played for a while in Roy's own little band, was an habitue of 52nd Street and Minton's; Artie Shapiro worked with Joe Marsala and other denizens of Swing Alley. Big Sid Catlett, though at that time a member of the big, cumbersome Louis Armstrong orchestra, stood tall and proud among his small combo contemporaries, respected by the more famous drummers who dominated the swing era scene.

For the second session, Lips Page furnished a supplicant, more riff-and-blues-based style (as in the ebullient *Monday at Minton's*) in contrast with Roy's whip-like, crackling lead. Lips' vocal on *Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You* has the same world-weary, gully-low sound that would shortly make a hit out of a tune he had recorded only days before with Artie Shaw's orchestra, the then unknown *Blues In The Night*.

Al Casey had been every guitarist's idol since his early-funk foray on *Buck Jumpin'* with Fats Waller. Al Morgan was a New Orleans bassist whose roots went back to the riverboat trips with Fate Marable, Harry Jaeger, like Catlett, was one of several drummers who passed before the Benny Goodman ray-gun in the early 1940s.

To a great degree in those days, the men were the music. As Lips Page once remarked to me during a typical jam session, "The material is immaterial." Any ballad with good changes was suitable grist for the 52nd Street mill: *Stardust*, *Sunny Side* and *Body and Soul* (the latter heard here in a pre-Hawkins version) were typical. For

the up tempos, it was fellers, let's take some chords and lay some choruses on them. *I Got Rhythm* was transmuted into *Blowing Up A Breeze*; *Forty Six West Fifty Two* (the address of the Commodore Music Shop's second branch) used the harmonic basis of *Sweet Georgia Brown*, and *Sittin' In* was founded on a pattern that went all the way back to the Original Dixieland Band and *Tiger Rag*.

Though he spent most of his professional life in somebody else's saxophone section, it was the informal, fraternal spirit of the jam session that always nudged Chu Berry to creative peaks. Later, after Hawkins came home, there was one famous Monday night convocation when Chu, Ben Webster, Don Byas and Lester Young all took part in what may have been the all-time definitive workout on *Cherokee*. Hawkins, significantly, sat that one out. He was not a noble oblige type, not a competitive musician. He preferred to come back a couple of nights later and play *Body and Soul* as the uncontested champion.



Ben Webster/ Bill Gottlieb

Ben Webster, like Chu, had played in the bands of Carter, Fletcher Henderson and Calloway. By 1944, when the four sides that feature him here were cut under the name of the Sidney Catlett Quartet, he had another notch on his horn representing four years with Ellington.

Only a year or so older than Chu, Ben too was of the pre-cool school, in the sense that he could play with a ferocious, implacable drive on the up tempos, then turn around, wrap his great hands around the chords of a ballad, and bring to it a beguiling, bear-hug warmth.

By 1944 jazz was in the middle of some apocalyptic changes. There were younger pianists agile enough to quote Art Tatum licks, as Marlowe Morris does on *Sleep* and *Memories of You*. There were drummers who stood on the borderline between swing and bop: big Sid was equally at home in a Dixie group at Ryan's or a modern set at the Onyx. John Simmons was essentially a walker on bass, the man who set it up for the Leroy Vinnegars a generation later. (Like Catlett, he had lingered awhile in the Goodman band, vintage summer of '41.)

Ben's speciality was the upward-swooping phrase; he scaled notes like a mountain climber. You hear this only occasionally, but it was one of his trademarks. But the essence of Ben's greatness was his facility for transforming a simple melodic phrase into something entirely his own. In lesser hands, *Just A Riff* would reflect nothing but its title; played by Frog (musicians still use that nickname for him), that primitive parade of half and quarter notes became something very special, very intimate, very alive.

Most musicians who have heard Ben Webster through the greatest years of his impact do not need to be reminded that this was a giant, a man whose lyricism and ability to swing remained unaffected by the passage of time. But the years, particularly in the land of planned obsolescence, were not kind to Ben. He was back home in Kansas City during the '40s, rejoined Ellington for a few months in 1948, and during the next decade emerged occasionally from obscurity, often through the help of Norman Granz. But by the early 1960s he was living in Los Angeles watching upstart youngsters, who could scarcely even run the changes of tunes he had helped immortalize, take all the jobs he deserved.

By 1965 he had moved to Europe, where, while

promoters are not fighting for his services, at least he is known, respected and lives in relative ease.

At that, he is more fortunate than Chu Berry. One night in Ohio, during a grinding tour with Calloway, Chu decided that rather than ride the bus again he would take a car and go on ahead to Canada. Danny Barker recalled later that from the band bus the musicians saw red light flares on the road, signaling an accident. Chu was lying on the highway, unconscious. He was taken to a small hospital where Barker heard an attendant say: "We can't get a doctor until tomorrow at 7 a.m."

Chu died in the early hours of Friday morning, Oct. 31, 1941, just a month past his 31st birthday. Had he lived it is conceivable that *Ghost of a Chance*, the one big record he had made with Calloway, could have done for him what *Body and Soul* had done for Hawkins. He might have played Newport, Monterey, racked up a total of more albums than Bird or Sonny Stitt; on the other hand, he might have ended up just another disappointed expatriate. Speculation, I suppose, is pointless: it is more relevant to be thankful for the memories brought back by the Commodore sessions. At least we are assured that his creativity, unlike that of too many titans in our belatedly acknowledged art form, has not been erased from the record; for those who take the time to listen, Chu's place in jazz history looms bright and clear again for a new generation to study and respect.

LEONARD FEATHER

(Author of *From Satchmo to Miles*, Stein & Day)

#### Side One

##### LESTER YOUNG WITH THE KANSAS CITY SIX:

- 1. THREE LITTLE WORDS**  
(By Bert Kalmar & Harry Ruby; Warner Bros., ASCAP. Time: 2:52)
- 2. JO-JO**  
(By Joe Bushkin; Comreco, ASCAP. Time: 3:18)
- 3. FOUR O'CLOCK DRAG**  
(By Milt Gabler; Comreco, ASCAP. Time: 2:49)
- 4. I GOT RHYTHM**  
(By George Gershwin & Ira Gershwin; New World Music, ASCAP. Time: 3:16)
- 5. FOUR O'CLOCK DRAG #2**  
(By Milt Gabler; Comreco, ASCAP. Time: 4:10)  
(Composite of alternate versions, previously unissued.)
- 6. JO-JO #2**  
(By Joe Bushkin; Comreco, ASCAP. Time: 3:50)  
(Composite of alternate versions, previously unissued.)

#### Side Two

##### LESTER YOUNG WITH THE KANSAS CITY SIX:

- 1. I GOT RHYTHM #2**  
(By George Gershwin & Ira Gershwin; New World Music, ASCAP. Time: 3:16)  
(Alternate version, previously unissued.)
- 2. THREE LITTLE WORDS #2**  
(By Bert Kalmar & Harry Ruby; Warner Bros., ASCAP. Time: 3:19)  
(Alternate version, previously unissued.)
- 3. WAY DOWN YONDER IN NEW ORLEANS**  
(By Turner Layton & Henry Creamer; Shapiro, Bernstein, ASCAP. Time: 2:57)
- 4. I WANT A LITTLE GIRL**  
(By Billy Moll & Murray Mencher; Shapiro, Bernstein, ASCAP. Time: 2:52)
- 5. COUNTLESS BLUES**  
(By Milt Gabler; Comreco, ASCAP. Time: 2:59)
- 6. PAGIN' THE DEVIL**  
(By Walter Page; Comreco, ASCAP. Time: 2:55)
- 7. THEM THERE EYES**  
(By Maceo Pinkard, Doris Tauber & William Tracey; Bourne, ASCAP. Time: 2:57)

*Three Little Words, Jo-Jo, Four O'Clock Drag & I Got Rhythm* were recorded at WOR Recording Studios, New York, N.Y. on March 28, 1944.

*Lester Young With The Kansas City Six:* Lester Young, tenor sax; Bill Coleman, trumpet; Dicky Wells, trombone; Joe Bushkin, piano; John Simmons, bass; Jo Jones, drums.

*Way Down Yonder In New Orleans, I Want A Little Girl, Countless Blues, Pagin' The Devil & Them There Eyes* were recorded at Brunswick Record Corp., New York, N.Y. on September 27, 1938.

*Lester Young With The Kansas City Six:* Lester Young, clarinet; Buck Clayton, trumpet; Eddie Durham, electric guitar; Freddie Green, guitar; Walter Page, bass; Jo Jones, drums.

*On Way Down Yonder In New Orleans & Them There Eyes* Lester Young also plays tenor sax.

The vocal on *Them There Eyes* is by Freddie Green.

#### Side Three

##### CHU BERRY AND HIS "LITTLE JAZZ"

##### ENSEMBLE:

- 1. STARDUST**  
(By Hoagy Carmichael & Mitchell Parish; Mills, ASCAP. Time: 4:00)
  - 2. FORTY SIX WEST FIFTY TWO**  
(By Chu Berry; Comreco, ASCAP. Time: 2:35)
- ##### CHU BERRY AND HIS JAZZ ENSEMBLE:
- 3. ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET**  
(By Jimmy McHugh & Dorothy Fields; Shapiro, Bernstein, ASCAP. Time: 4:05)
  - 4. BLOWING UP A BREEZE**  
(By Chu Berry & Oran Page; Comreco, ASCAP. Time: 2:33)
  - 5. GEE BABY, AIN'T I GOOD TO YOU**  
(By Don Redman & Andy Razaf; Michael H. Goldsen, ASCAP. Time: 4:21)
  - 6. MONDAY AT MINTON'S**  
(By Chu Berry & Oran Page; Comreco, ASCAP. Time: 2:58)

#### Side Four

##### CHU BERRY AND HIS "LITTLE JAZZ"

##### ENSEMBLE:

- 1. BODY AND SOUL**  
(By Johnny Green, Robert Sour, Eddie Heyman & Frank Elyton; Warner Bros., ASCAP. Time: 3:56)
  - 2. SITTIN' IN**  
(By Roy Eldridge; Comreco, ASCAP. Time: 2:13)
- ##### BEN WEBSTER WITH THE BIG SID CATLETT QUARTET:
- 3. SLEEP**  
(By Earl Lebieg, Miller/Theodore Presser, ASCAP. Time: 3:34)
  - 4. MEMORIES OF YOU**  
(By Eubie Blake & Andy Razaf; Shapiro, Bernstein, ASCAP. Time: 3:46)
  - 5. JUST A RIFF**  
(By Sid Catlett; Leeds, ASCAP. Time: 3:58)
  - 6. LINGER AWHILE**  
(By Vincent Rose & Harry Owens; Leo Feist, ASCAP. Time: 3:10)

*Stardust, Forty Six West Fifty Two, Body And Soul & Sittin' In* were recorded at Brunswick Record Corp., New York, N.Y. on November 10, 1938.

*CHU BERRY AND HIS "LITTLE JAZZ" ENSEMBLE:* Chu Berry, tenor sax; Roy Eldridge, trumpet; Clyde Hart, piano; Danny Barker, guitar; Artie Shapiro, bass; Sidney Catlett, drums.

*On The Sunny Side Of The Street, Blowing Up A Breeze, Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You & Monday At Minton's* were recorded at Reeves Sound Studios, New York, N.Y. on August 28, 1941.

*CHU BERRY AND HIS JAZZ ENSEMBLE:* Chu Berry, tenor sax; Hot Lips Page, trumpet; Clyde Hart, piano; Al Casey, guitar; Al Morgan, bass; Harry Jaeger, drums.

The vocal on *Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You* is by Hot Lips Page.

*Sleep, Memories Of You, Just A Riff & Linger Awhile* were recorded at WOR Recording Studios, New York, N.Y. on March 18, 1944.

*BEN WEBSTER WITH THE BIG SID CATLETT QUARTET:* Ben Webster, tenor sax; Marlowe Morris, piano; John Simmons, bass; Sidney Catlett, drums.

Album design: Loring Eutomey  
PRODUCED BY MILT GABLER, COMMODORE RECORDS

Commodore original monaural recordings were previously issued in 78 rpm, 45 rpm, and 33 1/3 rpm form on Commodore and other licensed labels. They are now re-issued as monaural recordings suitable for monaural and stereophonic reproduction. These historic performances have been collected from the Commodore archives and reproduced from the best available sources. In mastering them, every effort has been made to preserve the sound quality of the original disc recordings. We have not tried to hide the imperfections, nor "enhance" the sound by electronic means, because these practices would have been detrimental to the music. We trust, therefore, that disturbances due to the condition of the sources will be regarded as minor and greatly compensated by the faithful reproduction we aimed to achieve.

MILT GABLER

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