

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

*Presents*

**SIXTEEN MEN SWINGING**

AS RECORDED BY THE COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA

ARRANGED BY ERNIE WILKINS

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY DYLAN CANTERBURY, ROB DUBOFF, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

**FULL SCORE**

JLP-5177

MUSIC BY ERNIE WILKINS

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THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

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# COUNT BASIE SERIES

## SIXTEEN MEN SWINGING (1954)

### **Count Basie Biography:**

Next to Duke Ellington, there is no more famous band in the history of jazz than that of William 'Count' Basie. Although his economical piano playing was ahead of his time compared to several of his more stride-oriented contemporaries, Basie was always best known as the face of an organization that played a continuous role in shaping the trajectory of jazz for over 50 years.

Born on August 21, 1904 in Red Bank, New Jersey, even as a youth Basie was attracted to not just music in general, but the idea of being a bandleader specifically. Settling on the piano as his main instrument as a teen, Basie's musical apprenticeship was fairly typical for the time. Most of his education stemmed from hanging around the Harlem stride piano scene of the 1920s. A series of tours with vaudeville troupes came next; when one of the troupes broke up in Kansas City in 1927, Basie found himself stranded.

This turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as it was not long before Basie found himself hired by bassist Walter Page to play with his now-legendary territory band, the Blue Devils. His notoriety rising, Basie eventually left the Blue Devils to take over the piano chair in the Bennie Moten Orchestra, considered to be the finest band in the Kansas City area. After Moten's sudden death in 1935, rather than letting the band fall apart, Basie ended up taking over the reigns himself, bringing in several of his former Blue Devils band mates, including Page himself, in the process. It did not take long for this new band to make its impact on the world of jazz. The Basie organization had memorized many arrangements supplied to them by Eddie Durham. They also had arrangements that were fairly loosely organized and easy to customize on the spot, known informally as 'head' arrangements. This allowed for a much more soloist-friendly environment than most of the other bands of the swing era. In addition, the band's rhythm section was responsible for a distinctive shift in the way time is kept in jazz. Spurred by drummer 'Papa' Jo Jones's more free-form approach and guitarist Freddie Green's steady 'rhythm' style of playing, the innovations of this organization would play a key role in setting up the eventual rise of bebop in the 1940s.

World War II was not kind to big bands for a variety of reasons, and Basie's band was no exception. Financial considerations would force him to reduce his ensemble to an octet by the end of the 1940s. By the mid-1950s, however, Basie was able to reform his big band, aided in no small part to a series of hit recordings, including a particularly popular version of the jazz standard April In Paris. This new Basie band maintained the same relentless sense of swing as the earlier units, but was much more organized as a whole. Gone were the "head" arrangements of old in favor of a consistently expanding library of charts provided by what may have been the greatest stable of arrangers ever housed by a single band.

Basie's celebrity firmly cemented by this point, his band remained true to this new format for the rest of his life. The 1960s and 1970s would see a string of successful albums backing singers such as Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan and Tony Bennett, among others. In addition, the band began to see an increased presence in Las Vegas and Hollywood; Basie's famous cameo in Mel Brooks's Blazing Saddles is no doubt a highlight of the now-classic comedy. Basie continued a busy touring and recording schedule even when he was wheelchair-bound in his final years.

Basie passed away on April 26, 1984. The band that bears his name continues to tour to this day, performing both the favorites of the past as well as new arrangements and continuing to collaborate with some of jazz's top vocalists, including George Benson and Diane Schuur. The list of notable artists brought to prominence through the ranks of his band include saxophonists Lester Young, Frank Foster and Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis, trumpeters Harry 'Sweets' Edison, Buck Clayton, and Thad Jones, trombonists Dicky Wells and Al Grey, and drummer Sonny Payne. Notable arrangers who contributed to the band's book include Frank Foster, Neal Hefti, Ernie Wilkins, Thad Jones, Billy Byers, Quincy Jones, and Sammy Nestico.



## **The Music:**

Few song titles have been more reflective of the artist performing it than *Sixteen Men Swinging*. Recorded by the Count Basie Orchestra for their 1954 album *Dance Session*, this Ernie Wilkins chart serves as a high-energy burner that brilliantly features soloists and ensemble alike.

## **Notes to the Conductor:**

Wasting no time, the ensemble bursts out of the gate at full volume and brisk tempo before the main theme enters at measure 9. The melody is handled both times by the sax section, with some brass accompaniment on the second pass. Following the melody is a 16 bar shout chorus that doesn't let up on the intensity in the slightest, with the band riffing hard and being driven along by Gus Johnson's volcanic drumming.

With the ensemble having had their say, the next several choruses are split up amongst three soloists. First up is tenor sax, then trombone, and finally trumpet, with a series of punchy backgrounds that shouldn't be played too shyly. Each soloist should set the stage for their successor, allowing for a sense of progression of intensity that ultimately culminates in a short high note display at the end of the trumpet solo. The final shout chorus makes up for its relative brevity with its hard-swinging enthusiasm, with the band tagging an ascending riff before coming to a thrilling all-out conclusion.

This publication was prepared from the original set of parts - this is not a transcription. The trombone 4 part is an added, optional part.

**Dylan Canterbury**

*February 2026*

4<sup>TH</sup> TENOR

C. BASIE ORCH.

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# SIXTEEN MEN SWINGING

Above is the second tenor saxophone part that was played by Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis.



# SIXTEEN MEN SWINGING

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## SCORE

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FAST SWING ♩ = 240

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Alto Sax 1

Alto Sax 2

Tenore Sax 1

Tenore Sax 2

Baritone Sax

Trumpet 1

Trumpet 2

Trumpet 3

Trumpet 4

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Trombone 3

Trombone 4 (Opt.)

Guitar

Piano

Bass

Drum Set

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

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