

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

Presents

NICE 'N' EASY

ARRANGED BY BILLY BYERS

PREPARED BY DYLAN CANTERBURY, ROB DUBOFF, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

FULL SCORE

JLP-8126

LYRICS BY ALAN AND MARILYN BERGMAN

MUSIC BY LEW SPENCE

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THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

PO Box 1236

SARATOGA SPRINGS NY 12866 USA

COUNT BASIE SERIES

NICE 'N' EASY (1963)

Background:

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 reins 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 specialized in 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' 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' "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 Foster, Jones, Neal Hefti, Quincy Jones and Sammy Nestico.



Saxophonist, composer and arranger Frank Foster (1928-2011) helped shape the sound of the New Testament edition of the Count Basie Orchestra, from 1953 to 1964. He wrote and arranged for played for the Basie band following his service in the Korean War. Foster earned his place in jazz history with tunes like *Shiny Stockings*, *Down for the Count*, *Blues Backstage*, *Back to the Apple*, *Discommotion*, and *Blues in Hoss' Flat*.

Tony award winner Billy Byers began playing trombone professionally while still in his teens, joining Karl Kiffle's Hollywood Canteen Kids. He maintained that being a trombone player made him a better arranger, giving him a seat in the band that allowed him to hear all the other instruments. Byers played with and arranged for jazz greats including Buddy Rich, Benny Goodman, Harold Arlen, Bing Crosby, Duke Ellington, Barbra Streisand, Sarah Vaughan, Quincy Jones, Frank Sinatra and Count Basie. In a career that spanned five decades, Byers scored over 100 films, wrote arrangements for hundreds of television shows, and orchestrated dozens of Broadway shows.

The Music:

In many ways, Billy Byers' take on *Nice 'n' Easy* can be considered a textbook example of what a dance band arrangement should sound like. Written for Count Basie's 1963 album *This Time By Basie! Hits of the '50s and '60s*, aside from some slight ranginess in the introduction, this is a fairly simple and easy-swinging arrangement that practically plays itself.

Notes to the Conductor:

A simple one measure riff rapidly decays into the soft melody, handled by an ensemble of flute, 2 alto saxes and trumpet for the first two A sections. A gentle counter-line in the tenor sax and two trombones provides the majority of accompaniment before the brass section as a whole takes over melody duties at measure 17 with the saxes joining in 8 measures later.

The saxes handle the final melody tag at measure 33 with some gently insistent brass riffs behind them. This leads into a half chorus of trumpet solo (provided by the ever-tasteful Al Aarons on the original recording) with light backgrounds from the saxophone. The chart returns to the bridge as already played before at measure 51. The ending tag is slightly altered at measure 73, where the volume suddenly rises, only to abruptly drop back down for a typically minimalist Basie piano break before a gently elegant conclusion.

This arrangement is for jazz big band. This is not a transcription - it has been prepared from Billy Byers' original score.

Doug DuBoff and Dylan Canterbury

July 2018

Count Basie ORCHESTRA
1/24/63

Nice and Easy
arr. Billy Byers 1/2

A. Solo.

Flutec

4 Trumpet

4 Trombone

Bucket

Drum

Violins

Viola

Celli

Bass

Here is the first page of Billy Byers' score for Nice 'n' Easy written in 1963 for the Count Basie Orchestra.

NICE 'N' EASY

RECORDED BY COUNT BASIE

LYRICS BY ALAN AND MARILYN BERGMAN, MUSIC BY LEW SPENCE

ARRANGED BY BILLY BYERS

PREPARED BY DYLAN CANTERBURY, ROB DUBOFF AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

SCORE

MEDIUM SWING ♩ = 120

①

WOODWIND 1: ALTO SAX
WOODWIND 2: ALTO SAX
WOODWIND 3: TENOR SAX
WOODWIND 4: FLUTE/TENOR SAX
WOODWIND 5: BARITONE SAX
TRUMPET 1
TRUMPET 2
TRUMPET 3
TRUMPET 4
TROMBONE 1
TROMBONE 2
TROMBONE 3
TROMBONE 4
GUITAR
PIANO
BASS
DRUM SET

ff mf mp p (FLUTE) (TO BUCKET MUTE) (BUCKET MUTE) (BRUSHES) CROSS-STICK (w BRUSH HANDLE) sm (4) (8)

D^b6 D^b7 G^b6 B^b7 E^bm7 A^b13

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

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9

WAL 1 (A. Sax) *mf*

WAL 2 (A. Sax) *mf*

WAL 3 (T. Sax) *mf*

WAL 4 (FL) *mf* (TO TENOR SAX)

WAL 5 (B. Sax) *mf*

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TRP. 4

TBN. 1 *mp*

TBN. 2 *mp*

TBN. 3 *mp*

TBN. 4 *mp*

GTR. $D^{\flat 6}$ $D^{\flat +}$ $D^{\flat 7}$ $G^{\flat 6}$ $B^{\flat 7}$ $E^{\flat m7}$ $A^{\flat 7}$ $A^{\flat m7}$ $D^{\flat 9}$

PKO. $D^{\flat 6}$ $D^{\flat +}$ $D^{\flat 7}$ $G^{\flat 6}$ $B^{\flat 7}$ $E^{\flat m7}$ $A^{\flat 7}$ $A^{\flat m7}$ $D^{\flat 9}$

BS. $D^{\flat 6}$ $D^{\flat +}$ $D^{\flat 7}$ $G^{\flat 6}$ $B^{\flat 7}$ $E^{\flat m7}$ $A^{\flat 7}$ $A^{\flat m7}$ $D^{\flat 9}$

DR. (4) (8)