HIT ME WITH A HOT NOTE!

Congratulations to the local cast of “Duke Ellington’s Sophisticated Ladies,” a Tony Award-winning show that premiered on Broadway in 1981 with musical direction by Duke’s son, Mercer, and which runs through the 6th of this month at the Porchlight Music Theatre in Chicago.

According to a review by Chris Jones in the Chicago Tribune, “You have to be able to evoke the Cotton Club and the Newport Jazz Festival . . . The sentimental, sophisticated and the indigo of mood. All are legitimately Dukish, and all are handled superbly here . . . ”

Jones observed, “There is a palpable sense of racial unity in this show, of partnership, or sharing, of tolerance, of mutual caring and belonging. The Duke would have loved everything about that feeling.”

To go along with “Sophisticated Ladies,” there were even some Ellington-themed swing dance classes last month by Traffic Jam! Swing, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the Chicago swing dance and lindy hop scene.
BIG BAND TOUR DATES

COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA
directed by Scotty Barnhart
Mar 27-29, 2020, Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA

TINY HILL ORCHESTRA
directed by Dan Stevens
Mar 1, 2020, Casa del Sol, Donna, TX
Mar 8, 2020, Mission Bell, Mission, TX

SYD LAWRENCE ORCHESTRA
directed by Chris Dean
Mar 8, 2020, Pavillion, Weymouth, Dorset, United Kingdom
Mar 14, 2020, Hilton, Glasgow, United Kingdom [private]
Mar 15, 2020, Alvaston Hall, Alvaston, Nantwich, Cheshire, UK
Mar 26, 2020, The Apex, Bury St Edmonds, United Kingdom
Mar 31, 2020, Kings Theatre, Southsea, Portsmouth, UK

GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA-USA
directed by Nick Hilscher
Mar 1, 2020, Boulder’s Dinner Theatre, Boulder, CO
Mar 3, 2020, Rio Rancho High School, Ro Rancho, NM
Mar 4, 2020, Rio Grande Theatre, Las Cruces, NM
Mar 6, 2020, Sedona Performing Arts Center, Sedona, AZ
Mar 7, 2020, Del E Webb Performing ArtsCtr, Wickenburg, AZ
Mar 8, 2020, Virginia G Piper Theatre, Scottsdale, AZ
Mar 10, 2020, West Ranch HS Theater, Stevenson Ranch, CA
Mar 11, 2020, Royce Hall, Los Angeles, CA
Mar 12, 2020, Fox Performing Arts Center, Riverside, CA
Mar 13, 2020, Fox Theater, Bakersfield, CA
Mar 14, 2020, Clark Center, Arroyo Grande, CA
Mar 16, 2020, Saroyan Theatre, Fresno, CA
Mar 18, 2020, The Center for the Arts, Grass Valley, CA
Mar 20, 2020, Admiral Theatre, Bremerton, WA
Mar 21, 2020, Federal Way PA&EC Center, Federal Way, WA
Mar 22, 2020, Tillamook High School, Tillamook, OR
Mar 25, 2020, California Theatre, San Jose, CA
Mar 28, 2020, Hult Center for the Performing Arts, Eugene, OR
Mar 29, 2020, Elsinore Theatre, Salem, OR
Mar 30, 2020, Martin Woldson Theater, Spokane, WA
For much of his life, Michael Highton has been an aficionado of Tex Beneke’s music, researching it, writing about it, and helping other collectors have access to it with dozens of Beneke releases on LP and CD over the years.


This latest release puts a cap on one of Michael’s finest crowning achievements, “The Glenn Miller Formula Series,” which gathered nearly all of Beneke’s Thesaurus transcriptions. These go way beyond the usual Miller warhorses; some weren’t even listed in Charles Garrod’s Beneke discography.

Even though the 1950s represented some of the toughest time for big bands, Beneke continued to lead a solid band and was still adding to his music library at this point. My personal favorites here include Pennies From Heaven, The Moon Was Yellow, I Never Knew, and What Can You Do (When the Band Goes)?. In my opinion, Tex should have picked himself to be the vocalist on Angry, not someone else.

Three songs, from Thesaurus disc no.1711, were not available to Michael for inclusion in the series, but as bonuses, there is at the start of track 24, The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise, one example of Thesaurus’ generic Beneke voice introductions, plus as tracks 25 and 26, two broadcast renditions, Moonglow and Love Me Or Leave Me.

Total playing time is a munificent 78:37, and sound quality is good to very good.

Michael, again thank you for all of your dedicated work! Happy listening to us all!
This has to be one of the most generous playing times on a big band CD: 79:45 total (almost asking for trouble on some CD players).

And the sound quality is pretty good, too.

I guess it's the material that doesn't fully convince me.

Even at this late date in his career, Jimmy and the band are great. His famed sidemen in 1951 and 1952 included Shorty Sherock on trumpet, Jimmy Henderson (later the Director of The Glenn Miller Orchestra from 1975 to 1981) on trombone, Buzzy Brauner on tenor saxophone, and Sol Schlinger on baritone sax.

When they had appropriate material, everything is good to me. Besides Dorsey's theme song, *Contrasts*, there are enjoyable performances such as *By Heck* (a new arrangement of an old tune that goes back to the days of the mid-'30s Dorsey Brothers band), *Sweet Sue-Just You*, several small-group Dorseyland Jazz Band pieces like *South Rampart Street Parade* (which is introduced by Jimmy himself), and a pleasant ballad, *I Threw the Broken Pieces of My Heart*, which is sung by male vocalist Sandy Evans, not unlike how Bob Eberly might have done it.

But when the material was weak, exemplified most by the Calypso-tinged *She Is Leaking Joe*, then the level of appeal for me goes down. Adding insult to injury, track 4, another lesser song, *Tahiti, My Island*, is mistakenly titled on the CD as *The Heat in My Eyes*.

Incidentally, one of the radio announcers heard on these broadcasts, Johnny Grant, later served starting in 1980 as the 13th “Honorary Mayor of Hollywood” and, as such, was present at local functions including the unveiling of new stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Grant died in 2008 at the age of 84.
Another nice job from Crystal Stream Audio, though these two compact discs partially overlap with some Himber CDs once put out by Renovation Records. Understand this is not a “complete” release, but it does sample the Himber band almost to the end of its Victor contract in 1939, and adds *Darn That Dream* from the Royale label in 1940.

**NECROLOGY**

**MARK CEDERQUIST**, 48, d.2/25/2020. 78 rpm record collector / producer and consultant for Glenn Miller “Swing For The Jukebox” set of five newly-pressed 78s taken from the masters by Rollofone Records.

**PEGGY CLARK SCHWARTZ**, 95, d.2/14/2020. Member of the vocal group The Clark Sisters (aka The Sentimentalists) with T Dorsey ‘43-’46. Married to clarinetist Willie Schwartz for 42 years (he died in 1990).