

Historical Listener's Guide

NOTE: The Ken Burns *Jazz* series is a 10-DVD history of jazz. Also the Ken Burns Series of CDs collects recordings from various decades from Louis Armstrong to John Coltrane -- a quick way to create an "instant" jazz collection. The list below only scratches the surface of great jazz on record.

I have highlighted historic recordings, which is not to say they are dated. On the contrary, calling them historic means to me they are the foundation upon which jazz was built and their musical value is enduring. I have indicated recordings that are packaged together rather than citing individual tracks as I did in the class. The list would be overwhelmingly long if it were to focus on tracks rather than albums which collect particularly good collections of tracks.

I used the album selections available on iTunes and Spotify as my source. Youtube probably has everything I have recommended here at no cost, but the quality may be uneven. Typically there will be four or five people who post an entire well-known album or selections from it. Some will be in high-quality audio and others will be much less than that. In any case, if you use a computer as a player, you will find listening through headphones the best, and second to that, a good set of external speakers plugged into the computer's mini (headphone) output jack.

There is a separate file of DVD recommendations. See Class Six notes and links for that list.

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Louis Armstrong

The important sessions to listen to are the Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings made between 1925 and 1928. The recording from 1927 and 1928 are more accomplished. The boxed set I use is a four-CD collection called:

Louis Armstrong Hot Fives and Sevens - JSP Records, CDs, 312 - 315

Jelly Roll Morton. The key sessions occurred between 1926 - 1927

Jelly Roll Morton, Birth of the Hot

The Classic Chicago Red Hot Peppers Sessions, 1926 - 1927, Bluebird Records 66641-

Classic Ragtime (Revived) - There are no recordings of Scott Joplin playing piano.

James Scott "Piano Rolls." played by the composer.

Modern ragtime pianists are Max Morath and Joshua Rifkin

Stride Piano:

Fats Waller

The Joint Is Jumping

Bluebird, 6288-2

Fats Waller Piano Solos: Turn on the Heat

Bluebird, 2482-2

James P. Johnson: "The Original Decca Recordings: Snowy Morning Blues"

The Decca recordings were redistributed by GRP records. Most tracks are from 1944; but there are six or seven from 1930, the most outstanding being "You've got to be modernistic."

Duke Ellington

"Duke Ellington; Solos, Duets, and Trios" (with Billy Strayhorn) Bluebird, 2178-2; and "Piano Reflections," Capitol Records.

"The Okeh Ellington," Columbia Jazz Masterpieces, C2K - 46177 (1927 - 1930

Duke Ellington, "The Blanton-Webster Band-1940" Bluebird, 5659-2 (3 discs)

Duke Ellington: "Black Brown and Beige" Bluebird, 6641-2 (3 discs)

Count Basie: "The Complete Decca Recordings" This is the classic Basie band from the 1930s. Also "Ken Burns Jazz Collection: Count Basie" is a collection from many decades of the band.

Benny Goodman: "The Carnegie Hall Concert-1938" (Big Band)
"The Small Group Recordings" w/ Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson, and Gene Krupa. These recordings are on RCA.

Lester Young: With members of the Basie Band : 1936 - 1937 and Billie Holiday.
"The Lester Young Story" Proper Records (British). Various American labels.

Lambert Hendricks & Ross: "Everybody's Boppin'" Columbia 45020

"Sing A Song of Basie" Impulse Records (GRD 112)

Art Tatum: "The Solo Masterpieces: Vol. One" Pablo Records (from the 1950s)

Bud Powell, "The Amazing Bud Powell," "The Genius of Bud Powell." "Jazz Giant"

Oscar Peterson: "At the Concertgebouw" (rec. live 1957), "My Favorite Instrument," "The Sound of the Trio" "Oscar Peterson Plays the Duke Ellington Songbook".

Bill Evans: "Portrait in Jazz" "Autumn Leaves" "Alone." "Conversations with Myself," "Everybody Digs Bill Evans" (rec. 1959)

Charlie Parker: "Boss Bird: Studio Recordings, 1944 - 1951." Proper Records, Box 46.
This is the most complete set. The original recordings were made for Dial and Savoy records. Any recording of the Dial and Savoy sessions ca. 1945 are excellent.

Woody Herman: The Herman "Herd" from the 1940s. Capitol Records. (Various song titles to look for: "Woodchoppers Ball," "Early Autumn," "Four Brothers," "Lemon Drop.")

Horace Silver: ""Best of Horace Silver" Blue Note retrospective. "Blowin' the Blues Away" and "Doin' the Thing" are both on Blue Note. The "Best of..." repeats some songs.

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers: "A Night at the Black Hawk" or "Mosaic". Blue Note Records.

Thelonious Monk: "The Composer" (Columbia); "Brilliant Corners" (Riverside); "Misterioso" (Prestige) "Monk / Trane" (collaboration between Monk and Coltrane recorded live at The Five Spot in New York City). On this legendary live recording, they play Monk's compositions

Charles Mingus: Almost any recording between 1955 and 1975 (except for "Town Hall Concert")

Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool (Columbia); "Workin'"; "Steamin'" "Relaxin'" "Cookin'" (Prestige), "Round About Midnight" (Columbia) "Four and More," (Col.) "Kind of Blue" (Col.)

John Coltrane: "Giant Steps," (Atlantic, 1957); "The Last Giant" (Atlantic, a good anthology), "The Art of John Coltrane" (Blue Note), "Ballads" (Impulse, a lyrical, gentle Coltrane); "At the Village Vanguard" (Impulse, intense Coltrane), "A Love Supreme" (Impulse, spiritual Coltrane)
John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk, "At the Five Spot" (as noted above).

Some contemporary artists:

Herbie Hancock, "Takin' Off," "Maiden Voyage" "Speak Like A Child," "Mwandishi."

Chick Corea. "Now He Sings, Now He Sobs", "The Akoustik Band" "My Spanish Heart" Piano Improvisations, 1972)"

Joshua Redman, "Spirit of the Moment" and "Joshua Redman."

Wynton Marsalis, "Standard Time, vols. 1 - 3";

Jackie Terrasson, "Smile. "

Keith Jarrett: "Whisper Not" and a series of albums called "Jazz Standards" (vols 1 -3).

CAVEAT: There are so many contemporary musicians who are wonderful to listen to, the task of listing them is just overwhelming. Perhaps this is where I must invoke the title of the course, Exploring Jazz, and invite you to explore on your own.