



Baker's Holiday

EASY LIVING
THERE IS NO CREATED LOVE
WHEN YOUR LOVED HAS GONE
TELL
OLD DEVIL CALLED LOVE
MEAN TO ME DON'T EXPLAIN
THINGS I FEEL
THESE FEELING
YOU'RE MY TRILL





The late **Billie Holiday** left behind, as a reminder of her greatness, a huge body of recordings. Her singing was only a part of the legacy, however. **Billie's** introduction of many new songs, and what she did with the old songs, helped to swell the storehouse of the jazz repertoire for all the singers and players who grew up with her, as well as those who came after.

This is a tribute to **Lady Day** from one who is both a singer and a player—flugelhornist **Chet Baker**. "Her style was so unique—so different," he says of **Billie**. "She had a way of combining singing and talking a tune that was very intimate. One thing I really liked about her was that she never raised her voice.

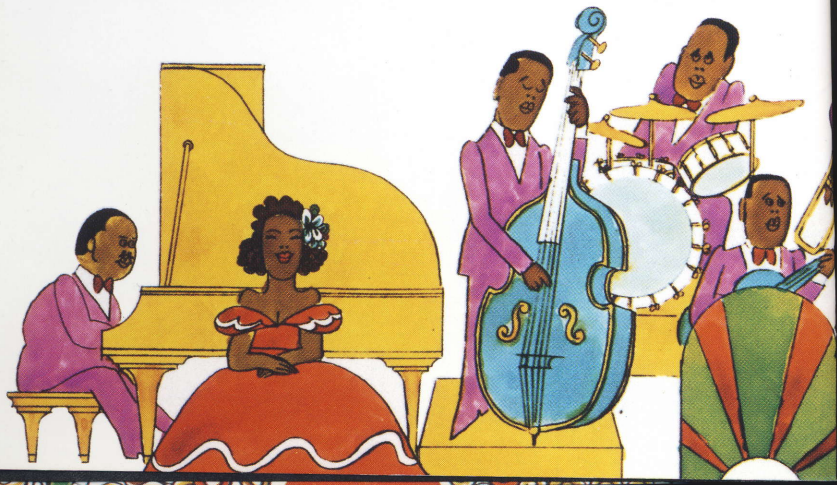
At least I never heard her shout. Her way of singing really reflected a lot of soul. **Billie Holiday** was **Billie Holiday**—that's all. She was great. She always did

the best tunes, tunes that really lent themselves to her style of singing. She really didn't have a great voice, but what she did with it. . . ."

Chet, another vocalist who doesn't shout, began singing long before he took up the trumpet. "When I was 11 or 12, my mother used to drag me around to the amateur contests that they had in Los Angeles on Sunday afternoons. I never won but I was second once. Even at that time, I was singing the current ballads. I sang in a church choir at the same time—1941 and 1942.

"My phrasing as a singer," continues Baker, "has been influenced a lot by my playing. If I hadn't been a trumpet player, I don't know if I would have arrived at singing that way eventually. I probably wouldn't have.

"The things I'm really conscious of when I sing are intonation, good diction with-







out over-enunciating, a casual, relaxed way of phrasing, and singing in tune."

In mentioning some of his favorite singers, Chet says, "I like Frank (Sinatra), of course, Mel Torme, David Allen," and adds, "but I've never listened to singers with the idea of copying anybody."

This has long been evident in Baker's tender, highly personal style and is reiterated by the vocals in this set: *Travelin' Light*; *Easy Living*; *When Your Lover Has Gone*; and *There Is No Greater Love*.

The sound of his fluegelhorn is warm and tender, too, but there is also some good, medium-tempo swinging among the instrumental selections: *That Ole Devil Called Love*; *You're My Thrill*; *Crazy She Calls Me*; *Mean To Me*; *These Foolish Things*; and *Don't Explain*.





THE SONGS

Travelin' Light—Billie first introduced this with Paul Whiteman's band in 1943. Jimmy Mundy, who is responsible for all the arrangements here, had a hand in writing the song. Jimmy, originally a tenor saxophonist, extracts some mellow sounds from the saxophone section throughout the album.

Easy Living—from a 1937 collaboration between Billie and Teddy Wilson, a combination that produced some of the most memorable sessions of the '30s. This is the only track where Chet sings and plays.

That Ole Devil Called Love—Billie recorded it in 1944. Here, Chet is aided and abetted by pianist Hank Jones with intro and short solo. Chet says of Jones: "He's always been one of my favorites. I've never had a chance to work with him before because he's so busy. It was a nice experience. He's a beautiful soloist and a great accompanist. He has the knack of being there and yet not getting in the way."

You're My Thrill and **Crazy She Calls Me** were first done by Billie at the same 1949 record date. Here, the former receives a bounce treatment with a short Jones solo. On all three numbers that lead to the end of the first side, Baker plays with considerable taste and feeling. "I once owned these particular records by Billie," he explains.

Side two opens with **When Your Lover Has Gone**, a number Billie first did in 1955 with backing from trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison. Chet does some nice vocal improvising in the second chorus.

Mean To Me—another bow to the team of Billie and Wilson, circa 1937. Chet is in an insinuating, medium groove, reminiscent of an earlier period of one of his first influences, Miles Davis.

These Foolish Things—although she recorded it in the '50s, Billie first did this import from England with Teddy Wilson in 1936. Mundy gives it a *Black Velvet* intro and Chet soliloquizes above the saxophones.

There Is No Greater Love—this is Billie, vintage 1947. Chet's vocal twines around fluted columns. **Don't Explain**—a song written by Billie with Arthur Herzog, Jr., recorded in 1945. One of her most moving pieces, its message was an extremely personal one when she sang it. Baker mournfully "sings" it on the fluegelhorn as an English horn echoes him hauntingly.

Billie Holiday died on July 17, 1959. She is remembered in many ways. An unpretentious, never-maudlin, musical tribute to one of the ways. That is Baker's Billie.

—Ira Gitler



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