

Portrait of **Bunny Berigan**

BERIGAN with
BENNY GOODMAN
TOMMY DORSEY
GLENN MILLER
CONNIE BOSWELL
FRANK TRUMBauer
GENE GIFFORD

BUD FREEMAN
RAY BAUDUC
EDDIE MILLER
MATTY MATLOCK
CLAUDE THORNHILL
DAVE TOUGH
GENE KRUPA
EDGAR SAMPSON
JIMMY DORSEY



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LIVING ERA
**Portrait of
Bunny Berigan**

AAD

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PORTRAIT OF BUNNY BERIGAN

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- [1] **ME MINUS YOU** [3:01]
(Webster/Loeb)
12379-A (a)
- [2] **SHE REMINDS ME OF YOU** [3:00]
(Gordon/Revell)
14927-1 (b)
- [3] **TROUBLED** [3:31]
(Countee/Trumbauer)
86222-1 (c)
- [4] **PLANTATION MOODS** [2:45]
(Rose/Trumbauer)
86220-1 (c)
- [5] **IN A LITTLE SPANISH TOWN** [2:31]
(Lewis/Young/Wayne)
17381-1 (d)
- [6] **SOLO HOP** [2:48]
(Miller)
17382-1 (e)
- [7] **NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES** [3:15]
(Gifford/Manone/Bishop)
89794-1 (f)
- [8] **SQUAREFACE** [3:24]
(Gifford/Tharp)
89796-1 (f)
- [9] **KING PORTER STOMP** [3:07]
(Morton)
8592547-1A (g)
- [10] **THE BUZZARD** [3:09]
(Freeman)
60191-A (h)
- [11] **TILLIE'S DOWNTOWN NOW** [3:18]
(Freeman)
60192-B (h)
- [12] **YOU TOOK ADVANTAGE OF ME** [3:26]
(Rodgers/Hart)
60229-A (i)
- [13] **CHICKEN AND WAFFLES** [3:03]
(Berigan)
60230-A (i)
- [14] **I'M COMING VIRGINIA** [2:46]
(Cook/Heywood)
60231-A (i)
- [15] **BLUES** [3:19]
(Berigan)
60232-A (i)
- [16] **SWING MISTER CHARLIE** [3:07]
(Robinson/Taylor/Brooks)
18721-1 (j)
- [17] **BLUE LOU** [2:51]
(Carter)
20563-1 (k)
- [18] **MARIE** [3:18]
(Berlin)
04534-1 (l)
- [19] **BLACK BOTTOM** [3:26]
(Henderson/de Silva/Brown)
017766-1 (m)
- [20] **THE PRISONER'S SONG** [4:11]
(Massey)
011676-1 (n)
- [21] **I CAN'T GET STARTED** [4:47]
(Duke/Ira Gershwin)
011675-1 (n)

MADE IN ENGLAND



TT: 68:57

Publishers
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Albert McCarthy once observed that during his lifetime (1908-1942) Berigan was often ignored by the intelligentsia of jazz critics and was regarded, with condescension, as a "product of the swing era".

Berigan was a product of his own natural originality and musical determination, one who achieved the musical stature of Bix, while following quite different paths. Like everyone who lifted a horn to his lips he was influenced by Armstrong but the amazing power, the majesty of phrase were peculiarly his own. He first achieved national (and international) fame for his solos with the Goodman band in 1935 but by the turn of the thirties was in great demand for record sessions, broadcasts and pit orchestras. In the early thirties he made appearances of increasing frequency with the finest of New York musicians with jazz orientation (the Dorsey Brothers, Artie Shaw, Bud Freeman and many others) and **Me Minus You** is a typical example. Connie Boswell was a fine all-round musician and a real swinger of a singer. Berigan's ability as an accompanist was already mature. He once advised a young musician: "Keep your fill-ins rather simple, especially if the number is medium bright tempo. Be careful to avoid playing anything that will conflict with the voice or attract too much attention from it." All this is observed in his fine work behind Connie and his own solos cement the integration of the piece with a tight, intense hotness. Under the pseudonym of Paul Hamilton the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra and a rather indifferent vocalist drive into **She Reminds Me Of You**. Bunny is still the hottest man around, seemingly impelling the whole group with fine inspiration.

Frank Trumbauer was once described by collector Norman Jenkinson as "The first of the cool musicians". There is more than a little truth here; his "C" melody saxophone was played with a strange detachment while retaining hints of romantic phraseology. He assembled a fine band for the Victor sessions of 1934, including Bunny, Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw and Artie Bernstein.

The tracks present a strange, appealing fusion of the nostalgia of white jazz of the late twenties and the forcefulness of the oncoming swing era; somehow it all hangs together and Berigan is masterly in conception and outrageous in technical control.

Glenn Miller took time off from his arranging work and trombone playing with Ray Noble to direct his first big band sessions in 1935. They had more hotness in them than ever sensed in the famous Miller band of the thirties and forties. Berigan swung like fury in **Spanish Town** and Eddie Miller wrote of **Solo Hop**: "Matty Matlock was supposed to do this arrangement of **Pagan Love Song** but, when he brought it in, Glenn complained that it had no melody chorus. But he said: "Let's change the name and make an original out of

it and do it anyway. So that's what we did." It was probably Glenn's best big band record; Eddie Miller and Ray Bauduc are superb – of Berigan's contribution one can only say what a solo, what a hop!

Jazz glories in unpredictability and when big band Casa Loma Orchestrator Gene Gifford was scheduled to lead a small band session for Victor few anticipated that the arrangements would be so inspiring that after the "takes" had been made and approved, the musicians kept playing them for their own pleasure. Berigan is now at the peak of his maturity and, quite simply, delivers one of the most powerful trumpet statements on record in **Nothin' But The Blues**. In contrast **Squareface** is gentle and tenderly humorous as Manone sings a hymn to his bottle of gin. The muted utterances of Berigan and Samel have searching, lovely tone while no clarinet solo has ever sounded so lyrically fragile as that of Matty Matlock.

The story has been told (and re-told) many times of the famous evening in the Palamor Ballroom (Los Angeles) on August 21st 1935 when the swing era was introduced by Benny Goodman – seemingly by accident. The band was tired, listless and disillusioned as the musicians went through "schmaltz" routines; then Krupa shouted to Benny: "If we're gonna die then let's die playing our own thing!" Let Benny Goodman take over. "Then Berigan stood up and he and myself blew into **King Porter Stomp** – we could not understand it, the place exploded! Little did we know it but the swing era had begun and on the West Coast!".

King Porter Stomp is a truly great big band track. Berigan plays with unbelievable ferocity, BG is truly great and Krupa swings the band like a demon. The spirit, if not the style, of Jelly Roll is re-born.

In contrast, we have the small band intimacy of Bud Freeman's **Windy City Five** playing **The Buzzard** and **Tillie's Downtown Now** with Bud Freeman both on clarinet and tenor, Eddie Condon and Berigan. The selections ride easily and sense a warm beat. Bunny made scores of records under his own name. Some were frankly commercial but, in the **Blue Boys** session, he produced some of his finest work and revealed great understanding with Eddie Miller and Ray Bauduc. In **Swing Mister Charlie** by **Berigan and his Boys**, Bunny is re-united with the great drummer Dave Tough and both generate a tremendous drive.

The first Berigan big band was a little rough but had a healthy greed for jazz. In Benny Carter's classic, **Blue Lou**, the reeds play well and the selection finds the trumpet man in a relaxed pensive mood, every note is well placed and the solos have a thoughtful, logical progression.

Tommy Dorsey's **Marie** was a great success. Tommy had worked carefully on the idea (not basically new) of the band chanting song titles behind Jack Leonard's vocal; it worked, but could Mr D ever have anticipated the fantastic impact of Berigan's solo? After Bunny left the band Tommy had it scored for four trumpets – it was the *only* way to re-create the power. Pee Wee Erwin summed it all up: "Some months later I asked a Victor recording engineer where Berigan had stood for his **Marie** solo. He showed me a point approximately 30 feet from the microphone. When I recorded **Who** I stood about 15 feet away – and I was known in those days for a big tone. You could never fully appreciate that tone he had, and the power, unless you stood in front of that horn and heard it. He'd hit a note and it would be just like a cannon. I'm not talking about volume. It was sheer body of sound."

Like other bandleaders, Tommy Dorsey had problems with Berigan's prodigious (and tragic) addiction to alcohol. It is said that during a Dorsey intermission a fan approached Bunny and asked how he played so well when he was drunk; he swayed just a little and replied: "Because I'm always drunk when I rehearse!"

The musical contribution of the Berigan big band has been strangely underestimated by jazz critics – probably due to the personal eccentricities of its members (including those of its leader). The band was greatly respected in Harlem and possessed a zany, individual, swinging propensity backed by a fine bandbook of arrangements; certainly research is needed into the legacy of one hundred records waxed by the group. **Black Bottom** drives like hell and is a fine, healthy big band contribution.

Why Victor decided to record **The Prisoner's Song** and **I Can't Get Started** on 12 inch, 78 rpm waxes we shall never know. Such a facility was rarely granted to the leader of a swing band. **The Prisoner's Song** is a good, forceful side giving a rare example of Berigan's "growl" trumpet but not strikingly original; could someone somewhere in Victor have realised that **I Can't Get Started** was going to be one of the outstanding big band "hits" of the thirties or, indeed, of all time?

Armstrong himself appreciated its originality. As late as 1940 he wandered into Timme Rosenkrantz's record shop in Harlem and bought five more pressings (his own copy being thoroughly worn out). Timme asked quite simply: "Why don't you play this lovely tune, Louis?". The answer came quickly: "No, that's Bunny's. It belongs to him. You just *don't* touch that one since he made it."

Berigan was mainly a boring, nondescript kind of singer; yet somehow his plaintive, puzzled whispering latched onto the bewilderment of a playboy who just "couldn't get his gal"; not a particularly poignant situation, yet women wept when they heard this unique

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MONO

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Bunny
Berigan

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