

50 Essential Big Band Recordings

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This list combines some of the most historically important big band recordings and some recordings that are personal favorites. Represented is every major band, their great soloists and many of jazz's finest arrangers. Thousands of recordings are currently available and it is often difficult for the young player to know where start building a collection. This list is by no means an absolute, but it gives the aspiring musician an excellent resource of swinging big band music.

Notes on the Format: The album title is listed first, followed by the name of the record label.

- 1) **Count Basie**--Complete Decca Recordings 1937-1939 (GRP/Decca)
- 2) **Count Basie**--Complete Atomic Basie (Blue Note/Roulette)
- 3) **Count Basie**--Breakfast Dance and Barbecue (Blue Note/Roulette)
- 4) **Count Basie**--Basie at Birdland (Roulette)
- 5) **Count Basie**--April in Paris (Verve)
- 6) **Count Basie and Frank Sinatra**--Sinatra at the Sands (Reprise)
- 7) **Duke Ellington**--Blanton/Webster Band 1939-1942 (BMG/RCA)
- 8) **Duke Ellington**--Early Ellington: Complete Brunswick Recordings 1926-1931 (GRP/Decca)
- 9) **Duke Ellington**--Carnegie Hall Concerts January 1943 (Prestige)
- 10) **Duke Ellington**--Jazz Party (Sony/Columbia)
- 11) **Duke Ellington**--Great Paris Concert (Reprise)
- 12) **Duke Ellington**--Ellington at Newport (Sony/Columbia)
- 13) **Duke Ellington**--Great Fargo Concert 11/7/1940 (Stash)
- 14) **Maynard Ferguson**--Birdland Dreamband (RCA)
- 15) **Maynard Ferguson**--Message from Newport (Roulette)
- 16) **Maynard Ferguson**--Message from Birdland (Roulette)
- 17) **Dizzy Gillespie**--Complete RCA/Victor Recordings 1937-1949 (BMG/RCA)
- 18) **Dizzy Gillespie**--Birk's Works: Verve Big Band Sessions (Verve)
- 19) **Fletcher Henderson**--1924-1925 (Classics)
- 20) **Benny Goodman**--Birth of Swing 1935-1936 (Bluebird/RCA)
- 21) **Benny Goodman**--Harry James Years Volume 1 (Bluebird/RCA)
- 22) **Harry James**--1937-1939 (Classics)
- 23) **Jimmie Lunceford**--1939-1940 (Classics)
- 24) **Benny Carter**--1943-1946 (Classics)
- 25) **Tommy Dorsey**--Yes, Indeed! (Bluebird/RCA)
- 26) **Lionel Hampton**--1947 (Classics)
- 27) **Stan Kenton**--New Concepts in Artistry and Rhythm (Capitol)
- 28) **Stan Kenton**--Portraits on Standards (Capitol)
- 29) **Stan Kenton**--West Side Story (Capitol)
- 30) **Woody Herman**--Keeper of the Flame: Complete Capitol Recordings (Capitol)
- 31) **Woody Herman**--Woody's Winners (Columbia)
- 32) **Woody Herman**--Herd at Montreux (OJC/Fantasy)
- 33) **Tadd Dameron**--The Magic Touch (OJC/Riverside)
- 34) **Gil Evans and Miles Davis**--Miles Ahead (Sony/Columbia)
- 35) **Thad Jones/Mel Lewis**--Consumation (Blue Note)
- 36) **Thad Jones/Mel Lewis**--Live at the Village Vanguard (Solid State)
- 37) **Thad Jones/Mel Lewis**--Suite for Pops
- 38) **Buddy Rich**--Big Swing Face (Blue Note/Pacific Jazz)
- 39) **Buddy Rich**--Swingin' New Band (Blue Note/Pacific Jazz)
- 40) **Buddy Rich**--Roar of '74 (Groove)
- 41) **Buddy Rich**--Plays and Plays and Plays (RCA)
- 42) **Gerald Wilson**--Portraits (Pacific Jazz)
- 43) **Gerry Mulligan**--Concert Jazz Band at the Village Vanguard (Verve)
- 44) **Capp/Pierce Juggernaut**--Juggernaut Live (Concord)
- 45) **Louie Bellson**--Explosion (Pablo)
- 46) **Bill Holman**--In a Jazz Orbit (VSOP)
- 47) **Terry Gibbs**--Dream Band Volume 1 (OJC/Contemporary)
- 48) **Charles Mingus**--Let My Children Hear Music (Columbia)
- 49) **Toshiko Akiyoshi**--Long Yellow Road (RCA)
- 50) **Charles Tolliver**--Impact (Strata East)