

CENTENNIAL  
CELEBRATION



OJC-31464

# JOHNNY MERCER

**KARRIN ALLYSON**

**CHET BAKER**

**TONY BENNETT & BILL EVANS**

**ROSEMARY CLOONEY**

**FREDDY COLE**

**ETTA JONES**

**MONICA MANCINI**

**JANE MONHEIT**

**DIANNE REEVES**

**TIERNEY SUTTON BAND**

**MEL TORMÉ & GEORGE SHEARING**

**SARAH VAUGHAN**

**JIMMY WITHERSPOON**



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1. **I'M OLD FASHIONED—CHET BAKER** 5:08
2. **TRAV'LIN' LIGHT—ETTA JONES** 3:43
3. **DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES—TONY BENNETT & BILL EVANS** 2:24
4. **AUTUMN LEAVES—KARRIN ALLYSON** 4:46
5. **I REMEMBER YOU—FREDDY COLE** 5:14
6. **MIDNIGHT SUN—SARAH VAUGHAN** 4:38
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10. **ON THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA AND THE SANTA FE—MONICA MANCINI** 4:39
11. **HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD—ROSEMARY CLOONEY** 3:00
12. **AC-CENT-TCHU-ATE THE POSITIVE—MEL TORMÉ & GEORGE SHEARING [LIVE]** 3:06
13. **ONE FOR MY BABY (AND ONE MORE FOR THE ROAD)—DIANNE REEVES** 3:50

Compilation produced by Nick Phillips

Mastered by Joe Tarantino (Joe Tarantino  
Mastering, Berkeley, CA)

Contains previously released material  
recorded between 1958 and 2007.



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**1. I'M OLD FASHIONED** 5:08

(Jerome Kern-Johnny Mercer)

Universal Polygram International-ASCAP

Chet Baker—vocals; Kenny Drew—piano; George Morrow—bass; Philly Joe Jones—drums. Produced by Orrin Keepnews. Recorded in New York City; August 1958. From *Chet Baker Sings: It Could Happen to You* (Riverside 1120/OJCCD-303).

**2. TRAV'LIN' LIGHT** 3:43

(Johnny Mercer-Jimmy Mundy-Trummy Young) Music Sales/WB Music-ASCAP

Etta Jones—vocals; Patty Bown—piano; Budd Johnson—tenor saxophone; Art Davis—bass; Ed Shaughnessy—drums. Supervision by Esmond Edwards. Recorded by Rudy Van Gelder at Van Gelder Studio, Englewood Cliffs, NJ; May 4, 1962. From *Lonely and Blue* (Prestige 7241/OJCCD-702).

**3. DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES** 2:24

(Henry Mancini-Johnny Mercer) Warner Bros. Music-ASCAP

Tony Bennett—vocals; Bill Evans—piano. Produced by Helen Keane. Recorded by Don Cody at Fantasy Studios, Berkeley, CA; June 1975. From *The Tony Bennett/Bill Evans Album* (Fantasy FCD-30177).

**4. AUTUMN LEAVES (LES FEUILLES MORTES)** 4:46

(Joseph Kozma-Johnny Mercer-Jacques Prévert) Morley Music-ASCAP  
Karrin Allyson—vocals; Bob Bowman—bass; Paul Smith—piano; Rod Fleeman—acoustic guitar; Claude “Fiddler” Williams—violin. Produced by Nick Phillips. Recorded by

Ron Ubel at Soundtrack Studios, Kansas City, MO; January 1996. From *Collage* (Concord Jazz CCD-4709).

**5. I REMEMBER YOU** 5:14

(Johnny Mercer-Victor Schertzinger) Sony ATV Harmony-ASCAP

Freddy Cole—vocals; Jerry Byrd—guitar; Cedar Walton—piano; Herman Burney—bass; Curtis Boyd—drums. Produced by Todd Barkan. Recorded by Robert Friedrich at Sear Sound, Studio C, New York City; September 1999. From *Merry-Go-Round* (Telarc CD-83493).

**6. MIDNIGHT SUN** 4:38

(Sonny Burke-Lionel Hampton-Johnny Mercer) Regent Music-BMI

Sarah Vaughan—vocals; Oscar Peterson—piano; Joe Pass—guitar; Ray Brown—bass; Louie Bellson—drums. Produced by Norman Granz. Recorded by Val Valentin at Group IV Recording Studios, Hollywood, CA; April 25, 1978. From *How Long Has This Been Going On?* (Pablo PACD-2310-821).

**7. BLUES IN THE NIGHT** 4:04

(Harold Arlen-Johnny Mercer) Warner Bros. Music-ASCAP

Jimmy Witherspoon—vocals; Pepper Adams—baritone saxophone; Roger Kellaway—piano; Richard Davis—bass; Mel Lewis—drums. Produced by Peter Paul. Arranged by Roger Kellaway. Recorded in New York City; 1965 or 1966. From *Blues for Easy Livers* (Prestige 7475/OBCCD-585).

**8. MOON RIVER** 4:43

(Henry Mancini-Johnny Mercer) Famous Music-ASCAP

Jane Monheit—vocals; Michael Kanan—piano; plus strings; arranged and conducted by Jorge Calandrelli. Produced by Jorge Calandrelli. Album recorded by Elliot Scheiner at Avatar Studios, New York City; and Seth Present at G Studio

Digital, Studio City, CA; 2007. From *Surrender* (Concord Records CCD-30050).

**9. SKYLARK** 5:50

(Johnny Mercer-Hoagy Carmichael) Songs of Peer/WB Music-ASCAP

Tierney Sutton Band: Tierney Sutton—vocals; Christian Jacob—piano; Trey Henry, Kevin Axt—bass; Ray Brinker—drums. Produced by Elaine Martone. Recorded by Robert Friedrich at NRG Recording Studio, Studio A, Burbank, CA; September 2008. From *Desire* (Telarc CD-83685).

**10. ON THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA AND THE SANTA FE** 4:39

(Johnny Mercer-Harry Warren) EMI Feist Catalog-ASCAP

Monica Mancini—vocals; Dean Parks—guitar; Michael Lang—piano; Chuck Berghofer—bass; and Dennis Rowland as “Jim”; arranged by Michael Lang and Gregg Field. Produced by Gregg Field. Album recorded by Don Murray, Jess Sutcliffe, Seth Present, Bill Smith, and Gregg Field at Capitol Studios and Studio G Digital; June or July 2000. From *The Dreams of Johnny Mercer* (Concord Records CCD-49370).

**11. HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD** 3:00

(Johnny Mercer-Richard Whiting) Harms, Inc.-ASCAP

Rosemary Clooney—vocals; Scott Hamilton—tenor saxophone; Warren Vaché—cornet; Ed Bickert—guitar; John Oddo—piano; Michael Moore—bass; Joe Cocuzzo—drums. Produced by Carl E. Jefferson. Recorded by Ed Trabanco at Penny Lane Studios, New York City; August 1987. From *Sings the Lyrics of Johnny Mercer* (Concord Jazz CCD-4333).

**12. AC-CENT-TCHU-ATE THE POSTIVE [LIVE]** 3:06

(Johnny Mercer-Harold Arlen) Famous Music-ASCAP

Mel Tormé—vocals; George Shearing—piano. Produced by Carl E. Jefferson. Recorded by Phil Edwards at Paul Masson Mountain Winery, Saratoga, CA; September 1990. From *Mel & George “Do” World War II* (Concord Records CCD-4471).

**13. ONE FOR MY BABY (AND ONE MORE FOR THE ROAD)** 3:50

(Harold Arlen-Johnny Mercer) Harwin Music Corp.-ASCAP

Dianne Reeves—vocals; Peter Martin—piano; Robert Hurst—bass; Jeff Hamilton—drums; arranged by Matt Catingub. Soundtrack album produced by Allen J. Sviridoff. Album recorded by Edward Tise and Leslie Ann Jones at CBS Studio Center Stage, Studio City, CA; Capitol Studios, Studio A, Hollywood, CA; 2005. From *Good Night, And Good Luck*. (Concord Jazz CCD-2307).

Compilation produced by Nick Phillips

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titled “Les Feuilles Mortes,” made famous by Edith Piaf. The tune found its way into the hands of Capitol Records; the label was given three months to come up with a version in English or lose the license. Mercer wrote what became one of his most pervasive lyrics while waiting for a ride to catch a train, words that preserved the song’s original solemnity and became universally popular; “I’ve made more money on ‘Autumn Leaves’ than any other song I ever wrote,” he once revealed.

“I Remember You”—This classic features Victor Scherzinger’s music and is easily one of Mercer’s most haunting creations—“When my life is through/And the angels ask me to recall/The thrill of them all/Then I shall tell them/I remember you.” It is also a stunning example of how in great songwriting apparent simplicity can hide truly inspired craftsmanship. Gene Lees writes of how Mercer “built the entire lyric out of the *oo* and *oh* sounds and the liquid consonant *l*, with brief appearances by *m* and *n*.”

“Midnight Sun”—Mercer’s love of jazz fired many of his career-choices and connected him to many of its giants. He signed and recorded Billie Holiday for Capitol; he co-wrote the enduringly hip words to Duke Ellington’s “Satin Doll.” And he penned the lyric to “Midnight Sun,” co-composed by Lionel Hampton and pianist Sonny Burke. Mercer heard it as an instrumental on the car radio in 1954 while driving from Newport Beach to Los Angeles. Before arriving, he had the complete words, which stand among his most exotic, rhyming “ruby chalice,” “alabaster palace” and “aurora borealis”!

“Blues in the Night”—Mercer’s love of trains, the blues, and folksy vernacular—“big eye,” “two-face,” “worrisome thing”—all came together in 1941, pro-

ducing his best-known effort with composer Harold Arlen (and the most memorable part of a film of the same title). It was Arlen who spied the line “My mama done tol’ me” at the bottom of Mercer’s draft of the lyric and suggested that it be moved to the top.

“Moon River”—If Mercer had a theme song, most agree this was his. Sung first by Audrey Hepburn, memorably strumming an acoustic guitar on a Manhattan fire escape in the 1961 film *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, it won Mercer the third of his four Oscars, and was the first of a number of winning collaborations with composer Henry Mancini.

“Skylark”—It seemed every time Mercer got together with Hoagy Carmichael, lightning struck—in 1933, it was “Lazybones”; in 1951, the Academy Award-winning “In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening.” In 1941, they came up with a melody and a message of yearning that arguably marks the creative pinnacle of their relationship. Certainly their most successful: try to name a vocalist who has not recorded this winsome gem.

“On the Atchinson, Topeka and the Santa Fe”—1946 was the year, *The Harvey Girls* the film, and Judy Garland the lucky actor who got first dibs on this tune that harkens back to the same small-town, old-time America conjured by Hoagy Carmichael’s “Memphis in June” or Rodger and Hammerstein’s “Surrey with the Fringe on Top” (or for that matter, Randy Newman’s “Dayton, Ohio—1903.”) Mercer got the title off a sidecar, and when asked to create music for a film about a railroad, he suggested the title to his co-composer Harry Warren. (Warren later commented on the ease of their partnership: “You never were in trouble with Johnny, no matter what

you wrote. He never asked you to take a note out or said, ‘I can’t find a rhyme here.’”)

“Hooray for Hollywood”—Made to order for the 1938 film *Hollywood Hotel* with Richard Whiting providing the music, this song not only name checks a number of stars of the day—Shirley Temple, Tyrone Power, Donald Duck, makeup artist Max Factor—but takes a shot or two at Tinseltown: “That phony super Coney Hollywood...” Mercer was idealistic but not hoodwinked.

“Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive”—The original sheet music includes the instruction “Slowly... sermon-like,” revealing the inspiration for the song: a newspaper article a friend sent to Mercer quoting the Harlem preacher Father Divine. Composed by Mercer while on a car ride with composer Harold Arlen behind the wheel, singing a melody he had recently created, the song was first used in the 1944 wartime film *Here Come the Waves*.

“One for My Baby (And One More for the Road)”—Another Mercer-Arlen collaboration yielded this tune for the 1943 film *The Sky’s the Limit*, sung first by Fred Astaire. Perhaps more than any song of the modern era, it captures perfectly the hard-drinking, late-night life personified by some of its best interpreters: Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis, Jr., Billy Eckstine, and most famously, Frank Sinatra.

**I**t is said that the artist who creates from his heart cannot help but put himself in his work. Mercer certainly did. The long, lazy summers and cool evening breezes of his Savannah youth can be felt wafting through many of his lyrics. The ease with which his words roll off the tongue seems one with the languid flow of Southern conversation. Mercer confirmed that the “huckleberry friend” in “Moon River” refers to four childhood chums—three black, one white—with whom he spent hours berry-picking. Written for his daughter Amanda, “Mandy is Two” accurately captures the giddy pride of a first-time father. With its confessional aspect—like the couplet “Could tell you a lot/But that’s not in a gentleman’s code”—the message in “One for My Baby” is regarded by many as a veiled reference to Mercer’s affair with Judy Garland.

From the same tune there’s the line, “You’d never know it/But, buddy, I’m a kind of poet.” Talk about an understatement. In *Portrait of Johnny*, Lees relates being asked by a friend of Mercer’s, “Don’t you think Johnny was more than a lyricist? That he was a poet?” “‘No’, I said without hesitation,” writes Lees. “‘He was more than a poet—he was a lyricist.’”

—Ashley Kahn, June 2009

Ashley Kahn is the author of *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, *The House That Trane Built: The Story of Impulse Records*, and other jazz titles. He often contributes to National Public Radio’s “Morning Edition.”

One needs no more than an abbreviated list of Johnny Mercer's songs to grasp the full breadth and aggregate weight of his importance. Is it possible to imagine a world without "Moon River"? Or "Skylark"? Or "Blues in the Night," "That Old Black Magic," "Come Rain or Come Shine," "Autumn Leaves," "Satin Doll," "Days of Wine and Roses," "Jeepers Creepers," "I Remember You," "Goody Goody," "My Shining Hour," "Lazy Bones," "Fools Rush In," "Hooray for Hollywood," "Midnight Sun," "Summer Wind," "Laura"?

Mercer wrote the words to all of these timeless melodies, and some of the music too, tunes that have touched generations of music fans, sold millions of recordings, and continue to resonate as part of our common cultural language. The melodies of his songs constitute a great proportion of what jazz players call "standards." At this very moment, somewhere, in some way, a number of his songs are being played—guaranteed.

When Mercer wrote his songs—most for Hollywood movies, some for Broadway shows, many for legendary singers—they were created in a specific time and place. Yes, they are part of the Great American Songbook, on a par with the best of Cole Porter, the Gershwin brothers, Rodgers and Hart. But a vast number have proven to be timelessly modern, surviving their original context and intention. "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive," for example, was initially a World War II morale booster; today, its message remains generally germane (and ever needed). Who remembers the 1943 film *The Sky's the Limit*? Who can ever forget the tune Mercer wrote for it, "One for

My Baby (And One More for the Road)"?

Quantifiable evidence of Mercer's impact: over a forty-year career, he wrote more than 1500 songs, generating more than 100 hits, 13 in the Top Ten. More than 385 movies have included Mercer tunes; 18 were nominated for an Academy Award. He co-founded both the Songwriters Hall of Fame and Capitol Records, the music label that brought some of the greatest music by the Beatles and the Beach Boys—not to mention Frank Sinatra, Nat Cole, Dean Martin, and countless others—to American ears.

Mercer's significance is also measurable relative to the greatness of the melody makers with whom he collaborated: Hoagy Carmichael, Harold Arlen, Jerome Kern, Bernie Hanighen, Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Richard Whiting, Woody Herman, Harry Warren, André Previn, Steve Allen, Neal Hefti, John Williams, Gordon Jenkins, Henry Mancini. There are many, many more in that list, including Jimmy Van Heusen, who put it simply, "as far as lyric writers are concerned, I don't think there's anybody near him."

In Gene Lees's book *Portrait of Johnny* (less a biography and more one songwriter ruminating on the career of another and their common craft) the components of Mercer's genius are described. His ability to convey grand ideas and sly humor so effectively, and with such deceptively simple, everyday language. His uncanny gift at recall, remembering words from a sign or a newspaper headline, or lyrical ideas he had jotted down, when needed. His knack, aided by his initial role as a singer, at meticulously fitting words to music, down to the vowel sounds and rhyme schemes. (More often than not with Mercer's work, the music came first.) His arrival in New York

City at the outset of the Great Depression and how that intensified his drive to create and succeed. His profound, abiding passion for jazz and African-American culture in general, and the hip sensibility that helped engender (Is there a better example than Mercer's lyric to "Satin Doll"?)

Then there were Mercer's deep Southern roots. A native of Savannah, Georgia, he was the scion of a landed family, not rich nor poor, but one that proudly could trace its roots back to pre-Revolutionary days. Before Mercer had reached his 25th birthday, he had established himself—with the success of "Lazy Bones," written with Hoagy Carmichael—as the only true Southerner among a retinue of tunesmiths who were all city dwellers, yet who were writing music that in style and subject, emanated from the roots of American culture. Oscar Hammerstein III—one of not many in that inner circle of classic song—once confessed, "Johnny Mercer is the greatest American lyricist alive. I could no more write a lyric of his than fly. It's so Americana."

John Herndon Mercer was born in 1909, and died from a brain tumor in 1975. Marking his centenary in a manner befitting his widespread and long-lasting influence would require releasing a veritable library of music. This single disc collection is intended to serve as a portal into the rich, lyrical world that Mercer created, to show how the music of one man continues to light creative fires in today's music scene.

"I'm Old Fashioned"—This ode to the little things that never fade in meaning—moonlight, starry skies, the sound of rain—is as sincere as self-referential; Mercer's focus never strayed far from the ideal of

romantic love. The great composer Jerome Kern provided the music, yet another of the tight little circle responsible for the Great American Songbook (If there was ever a doubt as to the camaraderie between the songwriters of Mercer's generation, know that Harold Arlen had a portrait of Jerome Kern in his Manhattan apartment painted by George Gershwin.)

"Trav'lin' Light"—The lyric was written by Mercer specifically for Billie Holiday who, for \$75, recorded two sides for Capitol Records during a brief Los Angeles jaunt in 1942 (signed to Columbia, she recorded under the not-exactly impenetrable name "Lady Day"). For backing, Mercer recruited his old boss Paul Whiteman and his big band. The melody came from trombonist Trummy Young, a homeboy of Mercer's from Savannah, who composed it while in Earl Hines's group; he ended up sharing the credit with another Hines alumnus, arranger Jimmy Mundy.

"Days of Wine and Roses"—Mercer was a notorious reviser; Andre Previn recalled being handed words to a song only to have Mercer replace it three times on a weekly basis. "Johnny why are you rewriting these? They're perfectly beautiful?" he asked. "Hell, I'm rewriting 'Goody Goody,'" Mercer replied, mentioning one of his earliest creations. The rare exception was "Days of Wine and Roses," a two-sentence lyric that came in one fell swoop and garnered Mercer his fourth Oscar. The title came from a poem by Ernest Dowson; the music from Henry Mancini.

"Autumn Leaves"—A number of times, Mercer helped translate a French *chanson* into English. In 1951, it was a melody composed by Joseph Kosma