

TED HEATH AND HIS MUSIC

So Easy

Original
Recordings
1948-1952



TED HEATH & HIS MUSIC *'So Easy'*

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Ted Heath not only survived the so-called "Big Band Era" - he prolonged it. Along with his contemporaries such as Ellington, Basie, Brown and Herman, he continued his international popularity through concerts and recordings, even though the "dance band" *per se* had lost its widespread appeal and venues. In fact, all of those mentioned had been leaders for ten-or-more years before Heath started his own band in 1945.

He was born Edward Heath in Wandsworth, a section of London, in 1902. He reportedly was a trombone prodigy and was busking with his instrument while still very young.

As early as 1936 the Heath trombone was already an ubiquitous presence in the British dance bands. In that year, Hilton Schleman, in his book *Rhythm on Record*, cited Heath's participation as a sideman-arranger in the combinations of Ambrose, Lew Davis, Bert Firman, The Four Bright Sparks, Jack Hylton, Howard Jacobs, Syd Lipton, The Rhythm Rascals, and Jay Wilbur.

During WWII he played with Geraldo's radio band, and then in 1945 - when the dance band industry was beset with competition from new forms of musical entertainment and TV - he formed a band which rose to immense success

against the odds, actually prolonging the popularity of the full dance unit, especially in Great Britain.

During the band's existence it was very popular on radio and for its many personal appearances. Frequent gigs during the 1950s were its concerts at London's Palladium. It even made it across the Atlantic to make two tours of the US, which were unusual in that the entire combination was present. Previously, Jack Hylton and Ray Noble were compelled to use American musicians. In 1948, the Heath band commenced releasing recordings on the London label, a subsidiary of British Decca, which sold very well in the States. Particularly appealing were those LPs which presented a single composer's works, i.e., "Kern for Moderns"; "Rodgers for Moderns"; etc.

Critically listening to this compilation of Ted Heath and his Music, one recalls the sounds of the very best American swing bands: Tommy Dorsey, Les Brown, Glenn Miller, Stan Kenton, Jimmy Dorsey, and many others. But the arrangements do not copy, but rather hint - or embellish - by creating a *mélange* of sounds and styles. Looking at the list of songs, even a true swing band *aficionado* cannot predict how a particular selection will sound from its title.

Here are some instances. That Heath was a trombone expert shows in the marvelous trombone choir-effect which was a Tommy Dorsey specialty. Les Brown's arrangement style is represented by the full-range unison sound each instrumental section in-turn displays. Occasionally Glenn Miller's special colouring of the woodwinds, with the clarinet doubling above the saxophones, can be heard. Dynamics were Kenton's specialty: Heath employs them liberally. And who could forget Jimmy Dorsey's tasteful use of the solo alto saxophone, which Heath very frequently uses. And there are also whimsical touches to some pieces.

The songs on this album range from classic pop ballads to up-tempo swingers and also include rhythm and mood numbers composed for concert presentation.

For example, the opening and closing tracks show inspiration from earlier Glenn Miller recordings. **Blue Skies March** is reminiscent of Miller's quasi-martial arrangement of "St Louis Blues". The closer, **Colonel Bogey** (featured in the movie *Bridge on the River Kwai*), again evokes Miller in style and tempo: this time "American Patrol". Other Milleresque moments include the woodwinds' voicing on the melody of **With a Song in my Heart** (Track 2) and the whimsical co-option of Miller's introduction to "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" for Heath's own composition **Night Train to Scotland** (Track 3).

And speaking of whimsy, note the several counter-melodies in **Blue Skies March** which are quoted from other compositions such as "Stormy Weather".

Heath also was fortunate to have exceptional section leaders who could impart strong solos. **My Silent Love** (Track 8) is indeed reminiscent of Harry James especially in the first chorus. **Harlem Nocturne** (Track 6) contains passages which resemble Jimmy Dorsey's alto saxophone solos.

Sidewalks of Cuba (Track 9) is treated unlike its Latin-sounding title, recalling the stylings of Stan Kenton, or perhaps, Woody Herman.

Button Up Your Overcoat (Track 12) is pure Les Brown – at least in the first chorus – and invokes Brown's arrangement of "Back in Your Own Backyard", a contemporary 1920s composition.

Compositions, likely intended for concert presentation, are represented by **Roumanian Roundabout** and **Obsession** (Tracks 14 and 19), among others.

Heath passed away in 1969, but his band survived – like Basie, Kenton, Miller, Brown, etc. – in various incarnations: the so-called "ghost bands". In fact, many of Heath's original musicians gathered together to re-create "His Music" into the 21st Century.

Paul Roth, 2003

REFERENCES

Hilton R.Schleman, *Rhythm on Record*, Melody Maker Ltd., London, 1936.

Roger D. Kinkle, *The Complete Encyclopedia of Popular Music and Jazz 1900-1950*, Arlington House, New Rochelle, NY, 1974.

The Big Bands Database Plus

Paul Roth, a Florida-based musicologist-archivist, specializes in the dance band culture, especially the American and British combinations of the 1930s. His personal

archive includes over 25,000 selections many of which are on his 7,000-or-so 78s. He produced and hosted "big band" shows on Washington, DC radio in the 1980s and on Florida radio and TV in the 1990s. He lectures on the history of the popular song and is currently writing a series of essays, which he hopes to publish as a book on the "commercial" dance band. To this end he has been taping interviews with bandleaders, vocalists, etc. for over twenty years. Roth is a retired engineer and academician. He is also an amateur woodwind player.

1. **Blue Skies March** 2:23

(Irving Berlin)

Decca F 9594, London 719, mx DR 14617-1

Recorded 8 February 1950

2. **With A Song In My Heart** 2:49

(Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart)

London 1058, mx DR 14259-2

Recorded 3 November 1949

3. **Night Train To Scotland** from "Portrait of England" 2:48

(Reg Briggs-Ted Heath)

London 454, mx DR 13404-2

Recorded 11 April 1949

4. **Stratford Water** from "Portrait of England" 2:45

(Reg Briggs-Ted Heath)

Featuring Reg Owen, soprano sax

London 454, mx DR 13403-1

Recorded 11 April 1949

5. **Deep Forest** 3:00

(Reginale Foresythe-Earl Hines-Andy Razaf)

Decca F 8956, London 329, mx DR 12217-1

Recorded 15 April 1948

6. **Harlem Nocturne** 2:57

(Earle Hagen)

Featuring Leslie Gilbert, alto sax

Decca F 9020, London 410, mx DR 12775-1

Recorded 5 October 1948

7. **Lady Byrd** 2:31

(Tadd Dameron, arr. George Shearing)

Decca F 9209, London 471, mx DR 13294-3

Recorded 1 March 1949

8. **My Silent Love** 2:59

(Dana Suesse-Edward Heyman)

Featuring Stan Reynolds, trumpet

Decca F 9370, London 589, mx DR 14191-1

Recorded 20 October 1949

9. **Sidewalks Of Cuba** 2:29
(Ben Oakland-Irving Mills-Mitchell Parish)
Featuring Sammy Stokes, double bass
Decca F 9594, London 719, mx DR 14618-1
Recorded 8 February 1950
10. **The Nearness Of You** 2:59
(Hoagy Carmichael-Ned Washington)
Featuring Les Gilbert, alto sax
Decca F 9255, London 1056, mx DR 14021-1
Recorded 2 September 1949
11. **Lyonia** 2:52
(Tadd Dameron)
Decca F 9255, London 1056, mx DR 14020-1
Recorded 2 September 1949
12. **Button Up Your Overcoat** 2:58
(Buddy de Sylva-Lew Brown-Ray Henderson)
Decca F 9460, London 1057, mx DR 15039-1
Recorded 25 May 1950
13. **You're Nearer** 2:46
(Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart)
Featuring Stan Roderick, trumpet
Decca F 9086, London 1057, mx DR 13089-1
Recorded 15 February 1949
14. **Roumanian Roundabout** 2:27
(Tibor Kordah)
Decca F 9435, London 1026, mx DR 14492-1
Recorded 2 January 1950
15. **Pagan Love** 2:23
(Nacio Herb Brown-Arthur Freed)
Decca F 8956, London 329, mx DR 12218-1
Recorded 15 April 1948
16. **So Easy** 2:47
(Tadd Dameron)
London 1058, mx DR 14260-1
Recorded 3 November 1949
17. **London Fog** 2:48
(Reg Briggs)
London 1026, mx DR 13090-1
Recorded 15 February 1949
18. **Hawaiian Mambo (Hawaiian War Chant)** 2:51
(Johnny Noble-Ralph Freed-Leleiohaku)
London 1198, mx DR 16740-1
Recorded 11 February 1952
19. **Obsession** 2:48
(David Bee)
London 1198, mx DR 16739-1
Recorded 11 February 1952
20. **Colonel Bogey** 2:39
(Kenneth V. Alford, arr. Reg Owen)
Decca F 9540, London LPB 374, mx DR 15391
Recorded 19 September 1950

All selections recorded in London

Transfers and Production by David Lennick
Digital Noise Reduction by Andrew Lang for
K&A Productions Ltd.
Discographical information courtesy of *The Jazz Discography* by Tom Lord
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Original monochrome photo of Ted Heath
from MAXJAZZ/Lebrecht Music Collection

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Total Time: 56:12

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