

## Wardell Gray - Central Avenue (1976)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Twisted* 2. *Easy Living* 3. *Southside* 4. *Sweet Lorraine* NYC - 11/11/49 5. *Scrapple from The Apple* 6. *Move*  
Hula Hut, LA 8/27/50  
7. *A Sinner Kissed an Angel* 8. *Blue Gray* 9. *Grayhound* 10. *Treadin*  
Detroit - 4/25/50  
11. *April Skies* 12. *Bright Boy* 13. *Jackie* 14. *Farmer's Market* 15. *Sweet and lovely*  
16. *Lover man*  
LA - 1/21/52  
17. *The Man I Love* 18. *Lavonne* 19. *So Long Broadway* 20. *Paul's Cause*  
LA - 2/20/53 Musicians: Wardell Gray - tenor sax Al Haig - piano Tommy Potter - bass Roy Haynes - drums Clark Terry - trumpet Sonny Criss - alto sax Dexter Gordon - tenor sax Jimmy Bunn - piano Billy Hadnott - bass Chuck Thompson - drums Phil Hill - piano John Richardson - bass Art Madigan - drums Art Farmer - trumpet Hampton Hawes - piano Harper Crosby - bass Lawrence Marable - drums Robert Collier - conga Frank Morgan - alto sax Sonny Clark - piano Teddy Charles - vibes Dick Nivison – bass

Wardell Gray was one of the top tenors to emerge during the bop era (along with Dexter Gordon and Teddy Edwards). His Lester Young-influenced tone made his playing attractive to swing musicians as well as younger modernists. He grew up in Detroit, playing in local bands as a teenager. Gray was with Earl Hines during 1943-1945, recording with him (1945). That same year, he moved to Los Angeles and he became a major part of the Central Avenue scene, having nightly tenor battles with Dexter Gordon; their recording of "The Chase" was popular. Gray recorded with Charlie Parker in 1947 and yet his style appealed to Benny Goodman, with whom he played the following year. Among his own sessions, his solos on "Twisted" (1949) and "Farmer's Market" (1952) were turned into memorable vocalese by Annie Ross a few years later. Back in New York, Gray played and recorded with Tadd Dameron and the Count Basie septet and big band (1950-1951); "Little Pony," his showcase with the Basie orchestra, is a classic. Gray was featured on some Norman Granz jam sessions ("Apple Jam" has a particularly heated solo) and recorded with Louie Bellson (1952-1953). Ironically, Wardell Gray, who in the late '40s was an inspiration to some younger musicians due to his opposition to drug

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use, himself became involved in drugs and died mysteriously in Las Vegas on May 25, 1955, when he was just 34. ---Scott Yanow, allmusic.com

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