

The Ultimate Jazz Archive Vol.168 – Billie Holiday [1952-1955] [2005]



01.I Can't Face The Music 02.Lover Come Back To Me 03.Yesterdays 04.How Deep Is The Ocean 05.I Cried For You 06.What A Little Moonlight Can Do 07.Love Me Or Leave Me 08.Stormy Blues 09.Willow Weep For Me 10.Too Marvelous For Words 11.I Thought About You 12.P.S. I Love You 13.Stormy Weather 14.Love For Sale 15.I Get A Kick Out Of You 16.Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me 17.I Got A Right To Sing The Blues 18.It Had To Be You 19.Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone

Billie Holiday was a true artist of her day and rose as a social phenomenon in the 1950s. Her soulful, unique singing voice and her ability to boldly turn any material that she confronted into her own music made her a superstar of her time. Today, Holiday is remembered for her masterpieces, creativity and vivacity, as many of Holiday's songs are as well known today as they were decades ago. Holiday's poignant voice is still considered to be one of the greatest jazz voices of all time.

Holiday (born Eleanora Fagan) grew up in jazz talent-rich Baltimore in the 1920s. As a young teenager, Holiday served the beginning part of her so-called "apprenticeship" by singing along with records by Bessie Smith or Louis Armstrong in after-hours jazz clubs. When Holiday's mother, Sadie Fagan, moved to New York in search of a better job, Billie eventually went with her. She made her true singing debut in obscure Harlem nightclubs and borrowed her professional name – Billie Holiday – from screen star Billie Dove. Although she never underwent any technical training and never even so much as learned how to read music, Holiday quickly became an active participant in what was then one of the most vibrant jazz scenes in the country. She would move from one club to another, working for tips. She would sometimes sing with the accompaniment of a house piano player while other times she would work as part of a group of performers.

Written by bluesever
Friday, 02 May 2014 15:50 -

At the age of 18 and after gaining more experience than most adult musicians can claim, Holiday was spotted by John Hammond and cut her first record as part of a studio group led by Benny Goodman, who was then just on the verge of public prominence. In 1935 Holiday's career got a big push when she recorded four sides that went on to become hits, including "What a Little Moonlight Can Do" and "Miss Brown to You." This landed her a recording contract of her own, and then, until 1942, she recorded a number of master tracks that would ultimately become an important building block of early American jazz music.

Holiday began working with Lester Young in 1936, who pegged her with her now-famous nickname of "Lady Day." When Holiday joined Count Basie in 1937 and then Artie Shaw in 1938, she became one of the very first black women to work with a white orchestra, an impressive accomplishment of her time.

In the 1930s, when Holiday was working with Columbia Records, she was first introduced to the poem "Strange Fruit," an emotional piece about the lynching of a black man. Though Columbia would not allow her to record the piece due to subject matter, Holiday went on to record the song with an alternate label, Commodore, and the song eventually became one of Holiday's classics. It was "Strange Fruit" that eventually prompted Lady Day to continue more of her signature, moving ballads.

Holiday recorded about 100 new recordings on another label, Verve, from 1952 to 1959. Her voice became more rugged and vulnerable on these tracks than earlier in her career. During this period, she toured Europe, and made her final studio recordings for the MGM label in March of 1959.

Despite her lack of technical training, Holiday's unique diction, inimitable phrasing and acute dramatic intensity made her the outstanding jazz singer of her day. White gardenias, worn in her hair, became her trademark. "Singing songs like the 'The Man I Love' or 'Porgy' is no more work than sitting down and eating Chinese roast duck, and I love roast duck," she wrote in her autobiography. "I've lived songs like that."

Billie Holiday, a musical legend still popular today, died an untimely death at the age of 44. Her emotive voice, innovative techniques and touching songs will forever be remembered and enjoyed. --- billieholiday.com

Written by bluesever
Friday, 02 May 2014 15:50 -

Billie Holiday - jedna z wielkich dam jazzu zwana "Lady Day", której głos i styl śpiewania stał się od razu rozpoznawalny. Zasłynęła dzięki takim utworom jak "God Bless The Child", "Strange Fruit" czy "My Man".

Billie Holiday urodziła się w 1915 roku w Filadelfii jako Eleonora Fagan Gough. Jej dzieciństwo nie było szczęśliwe, ojciec zostawił matkę, gdy Billie była niemowlęciem. Po przeprowadzce do Nowego Jorku śpiewała w podrzędnych klubach Harlemu. Od gwiazdy filmowej Billie Dove zapożyczyła sobie pseudonim - i tak narodziła się jedna z największych gwiazd wśród wokalistek jazzowych - Billie Holiday, obdarzona nie tylko niezwykle, pełnym emocji głosem, ale także siłą ekspresji i energią, jaka w kobiecych głosach była dotychczas mało spotykana.

W wieku 18 lat została dostrzeżona przez Johna Hamonnda, który umożliwił jej pierwsze studyjne nagrania w Columbia Studios. Wkrótce utwory takie jak "Miss Brown To You" czy "What a Little Moonlight Can Do" stały się wielkimi hitami. Dzięki temu Holiday podpisała kontrakt z wytwórnią płytową. W 1935 wystąpiła w filmie "Symphony In Black: A Rapsody of Negro Life" z muzyką Duke'a Ellingtona. W 1937 rozpoczęła współpracę z Lesterem Youngiem, który obdarzył ją przydomkiem "Lady Day". Przydomek ten, tak jak białe gardenie wpinane we włosy stał się znakiem rozpoznawczym Billie. Rok później zaczęła śpiewać z zespołem Artie'ego Shawa.

Wyjątkowym utworem w karierze Billie Holiday stała się piosenka "Strange Fruit" opowiadająca o brutalnym traktowaniu czarnoskórych Amerykanów w tamtym czasie. Gdy jedna z wytwórni odmówiła wydania piosenki, Billie znalazła inną a "Strange Fruit" stała się jednym z największych i najbardziej kontrowersyjnych (a w niektórych rozgłoszeniach jednym z zabronionych) hitów tej wokalistki. Po raz ostatni Holiday pojawiła się w nagraniu telewizyjnym w 1957, gdzie wystąpiła w "The Sound of Jazz" z Lesterem, Youngiem i Colemanem Hawkinsem.

Billie Holiday współpracowała z największymi muzykami swoich czasów, jednak w życiu osobistym nie była szczęśliwa. Nieudane związki, rozbita rodzina, nadużywanie alkoholu i narkotyków oraz depresja spowodowały przedwczesną śmierć Lady Day, która odeszła w wieku 44 lat. W 1972 powstał o niej film "Lady Sings the Blues", gdzie główną rolę zagrała inna wokalistka, Diana Ross. ---rmf.fm

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