

PROGRAMMED AND ANNOTATED BY DAVID A. JASEN

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FJ 2818

CHICK WEBB & HIS ORCHESTRA

FEATURING

ELLA FITZGERALD



COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FJ 2818

SIDE ONE

1. That's A Plenty
2. That Was My Heart — featuring Ella
3. Blue Room
4. Deep In A Dream — featuring Ella
5. One O'Clock Jump

Total Time — 16:09

SIDE TWO

1. Wanton Rhythm
2. Big Boy Blue — featuring Ella
3. Have a Good Time
4. Swing, Mister Charlie
5. Vote Mr. Rhythm — featuring Ella

Total Time — 10:31

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Smithsonian Institution
Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Public Service

Credits

Produced by Jerry Lyons
Programming & Annotation: David A. Jason
Remastering: Carl Seltzer

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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William "Chick" Webb was born on February 10, 1909 in Baltimore, Maryland. A hunchback, the result of contracting tuberculosis of the spine, Chick bought his first drum set and joined his first band at the age of eleven. During his teens, he played drums in the Jazzola Orchestra, which performed nightly on pleasure steamers. He came to New York City in 1925 where he played in Edgar Dowell's orchestra. He formed his own groups which played at the better dance halls until he toured with the Hot Chocolate revue in 1930. From 1931, he was mainly associated with the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, where he originated most of the various jitterbug dance steps which became so popular during the big band era.

His orchestra, usually consisting of thirteen pieces, had many of the finest sidemen available. At various times, these included Johnny Hodges, Jimmy Harrison, Benny Carter, Hilton Jefferson, Don Kirkpatrick, Joe Steele, Taft Jordan, Sandy Williams, John Kirby, Bobby Stark, Louis Jordan, Garvin Bushell, and the first jazz flutist, Wayman Carver. Chick's overall sound must be credited to his fine arranger, Edgar Sampson, who later supplied Benny Goodman with some of his excellent charts.

At the Savoy, Chick was king and could do no wrong. During the Swing era, he challenged every band to come to the Savoy and was content to let the dance patrons be the judge of who had the best band. His Battles of the Bands became world famous and he always won. Perhaps the most famous battle occurred when on May 11, 1937, Benny Goodman answered the challenge. In a glorious two and a half hour battle, Benny's great aggregation went down in glorious defeat. Benny's drummer, Gene Krupa, remembered that Chick "just cut me to ribbons—made me feel awfully small. That man was dynamic; he could reach the most amazing heights. When he really let go,

you had a feeling that the entire atmosphere in the place was being charged. When he felt like it, he could cut down any of us."

The band played theatre dates and toured regularly throughout the thirties. Also, in 1937, the band was featured regularly on the NBC radio program, Good Time Society.

Perhaps the greatest distinction given to the band was when emcee Bardu Ali discovered sixteen-and-a-half year old Ella Fitzgerald in an amateur talent contest held at the Harlem Opera House. From that time on, Ella was the female vocalist for the Webb orchestra.

Always in ill-health, and a few months after turning thirty, Chick Webb died in his hometown of Baltimore on June 16, 1939. Ella continued with the band after Chick's death until the second world war put an end to the big band era.

The selections on this album, taken from radio broadcasts in 1939, illustrate the various types of music as performed by this most popular of bands. Included is a beautiful ballad written by Chick (THAT WAS MY HEART) and sung by Ella. The Band's version of ONE O'CLOCK JUMP proves that Count Basie didn't have an exclusive on it. The band is certainly in fine fettle here.