

But Beautiful

Written by bluesever
Friday, 27 November 2015 18:02 -

But Beautiful

The song was one of Art Pepper's favorites. True story: *"One day a call came in on our unlisted number asking Art to play a special gig. It was the funeral of a man Art had never met—who was a major fan. The money (always important) was good, and they weren't asking for the whole band. Just Art. Art asked what tune they'd like to hear. They left it up to him. He pondered. Definitely NOT "Goodbye!" He finally decided on "But Beautiful." Art believed in beauty and believed it worked for any occasion.*

But Beautiful

Bing Crosby introduced "**But Beautiful**" in the fifth "Road to Rio" film that he made with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour. Road to Rio outgrossed every other film in 1948 and also introduced "You Don't Have to Know the Language" and "Experience." It was scored by composer Jimmy Van Heusen and lyricist Johnny Burke, who collaborated for over a dozen years and produced dozens of hits and award-winning songs.



Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, Bing Crosby

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If ever a composer defined the term "standard," it would undoubtedly be Edward Chester Babcock, better known by his stage name of **Jimmy Van Heusen**.



Jimmy Van Heusen

Van Heusen was by all reckoning a complex, multi-talented individual with personal charisma to match. He lived the life of a rock star before rock stars existed. Van Heusen was not only a Hollywood jet-setter, he was also a test pilot. A raconteur of wine, women and song who some say could out-Sinatra Frank himself. The man's musical output was so prodigious and influential that it is too monumental a task to summarize his career in anything less than a book.



Frank Sinatra and Jimmy Van Heusen

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Edward Chester Babcock was born on January 26, 1913 in Syracuse, New York. His upbringing had been proper and religious and he even attended a seminary school for a short time . . . until he was kicked out for deflowering some of the local girls in a nearby cemetery.



Bing Crosby and Jimmy Van Heusen

By 1939 the 27-year-old songwriter was known for his knack for hit melodies. At this time Van Heusen stumbled into a collaboration with Johnny Burke, who was employed by the Irving Berlin Publishing Company. Like Van Heusen, Burke was a contract pianist who was rapidly rising as a songwriter. In Burke's case, his specialty was lyrics, and his poetic skills seemed much better suited to the young Van Heusen than did DeLange's.



Johnny Burke

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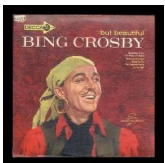
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Legend has it that Burke was visiting the publisher Van Heusen worked at, and offhandedly asked Jimmy if he "had any tunes." Van Heusen played one, and Burke then put down some lyrics for "Oh, You Crazy Moon," which got picked up by a few orchestras and became a minor hit. Supposedly Burke stopped by after "Moon" was published, and the pair cranked out "Polka Dots and Moonbeams." The song was recorded by Tommy Dorsey, featuring a vocal by a little-known guy named Frank Sinatra. The melody had a few leaps and skips that fit Sinatra's style perfectly, and the song became his first national hit in 1940.



Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke

Burke was well established as a lyricist in Hollywood, having penned numbers for some Bing Crosby films. Burke and Van Heusen were quickly tapped to compose the soundtracks for the Bob Hope and Bing Crosby "Road" movies, of which the songs became as popular as the films.



"Road to Rio" ST

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According to Allen Forte in his book "Listening to Classic American Popular Songs" Tex Beneke's recording of "But Beautiful" appeared on the popular radio program Your Hit Parade on February 14, 1948. *"...It stayed for nine weeks and rose to third place once, which was quite a record for a song that sophisticated."*



Tex Beneke

Forte goes on to say, *"The lyrics for the song exemplify Burke's considerable talent as well as his more modern approach to lyric writing, in which he used a combination of blank verse and rhymed verse. It is perhaps his most elegant production."*

Burke opens the song by describing the vagaries of love with three contrasting emotions in a triple rhyme: *"funny or sad," "quiet or mad," "good thing or bad."*

And he continues,

"tearful or gay," "problem or play," "heartache either way,"
ending each group of phrases with
"but beautiful."



Nancy Wilson - But Beautiful

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Forte also describes in detail how well matched the lyrics are to the melodic and rhythmic motives of the song. *"...Melody, rhythm, and lyrics combine to create an aesthetically intriguing and charming musical statement."*



Stan Getz - But Beautiful

"But Beautiful" has been a favorite of pop and jazz vocalists for generations and continues to be tapped by contemporary singers Dena DeRose, Wesla Whitfield, Bobbe Norris, and Tiziana Ghiglioni. Pianists Chick Corea and Kenny Drew, Jr. as well as guitarists Mimi Fox and Ron Eschete have recorded the song. Vocalist Jimmy Scott and saxophonist Stan Getz with the Bill Evans Trio entitled albums But Beautiful.

BETTY CARTER



BUT BEAUTIFUL

Betty Carter - But Beautiful

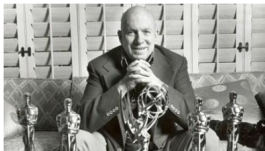
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But Beautiful lyrics

*Love is funny Or it's sad Or it's quiet Or it's mad It's a good thing Or it's bad But beautiful
Beautiful To take a chance And if you fall You fall And I'm thinking I wouldn't mind At all
Love is tearful Or it's gay It's a problem Or it's play It's a heartache Either way But beautiful
And I'm thinking If you were mine I'd never Let you go And that would be But beautiful I
know And I'm thinking If you were mine I'd never Let you go And that would be But
beautiful That would be But beautiful I know*



Jimmy Van Heusen with Oscars