

Lyrics & Jazz

I'm a sentimental sap, that's all – but weren't we all? In some liner notes, I saw a quote from one of the Huxleys that each generation creates its own beat. If so, the decade of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, the sit-down strike, and the beginnings of the Second World War was, despite the Swing Era, oddly sentimental. It was, of course, the decade of the classic American popular song. The early pioneers Berlin and Kern were joined by Gershwin, Porter, Rodgers, Arlen, Youmans, Schwartz, Duke (Vernon and Ellington), Carmichael, Warren, and more, and more, and more. We had a profusion of great popular composers that will never come our way again. We could enjoy humming or whistling those melodies, but, oh, the lyrics and sentiments that came with them!

The dance: Heaven, "I'm in heaven – Loudly the saxophones bray – Can't you hear those dancin' feet? – gotta dance, gotta dance – I'm always shaking just like a flivver – Let the dance floor feel your leather – When we dance, you're charming and you're gentle – But while there's music, and love, and romance – Till the tune ends....and it soon ends.

The partner: You are the angel glow that lights the star – You are my most impossible dream come true – You make me smile with my heart – You're my idea of an ideal personality – I can see how fair you are – The only one my arms could ever hold – You're just too much and just too very, very – You may not be an angel – The way you sing off -key – You're Mickey Mouse.

How: Never thought I'd fall – I never knew the charm of spring – I used to think that you were someone that I could take or leave alone – I never dreamed in my imagination – I wanted love and there it was shining out of your eyes – a trip to the moon on gossamer wings – all at once my most fantastic dreams come true.

Thwarted: My heart is sad and lonely – If I expected love when first we met – But other loves surround you – You made a plaything out of romance – Everybody knows you left me – Now laughing friends deride – Adieu to love, don't ever call again – I knew somehow it had to be – There's pain in my heart and it won't ever end.

Commitment: Till you let me spend my life making love to you – I'll be tired of you, when stars are tired of gleaming – Just you and I forever and a day – We'll always contrive to keep love and romance forever alive – Not for just an hour, not for just a day, not for just a year – It would be heaven to climb to heaven with you.

Aside from the sentiment, the common denominator seemed to be that you could dance to them. Their basic rhythm pattern and lilt invited your feet to join in. You could even walk to them – walk? You could saunter, you could stroll, you could stride, swing, swagger, waddle, amble – sometimes (solitary and unobserved) you could even skip. I guess it was that built-in pulse that made them such ideal vehicles for jazz improvisations. I don't hear many contemporary tunes utilized by jazz players and in the rare instances when it does occur, it tends to be a rather mundane direct reproduction of such melody as the selection possesses.

On the other hand, if you walked down the street in time to some of our current popular tunes, several well-meaning citizens would probably refer you to a center for the severe nervous disorders. Would you care to give me a few bars of some of the recent Top Ten? Devil Inside? Bad? Hysteria? I Want Her? Hungry Eyes? Perhaps some of the more romantic titles – Push It – Father Figure – I Want Your Sex – Get Outta My Dreams, Get Into My Car? Nothing, eh? Remember when KMPC banned Woody's 'Goosey Gander' because it was suggestive? Or when radio stations across the country refused to air 'Heaven Can Wait' because it implied that immediate satisfaction outranked eventual resurrection?sweet, sequestered days.

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