Simple Isn't Easy

songs by Red Mitchell

Limited Edition

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Introduction

When Red left the USA for Sweden in 1968, he promised himself that he would learn to verbalize his feelings. He was fed up with the increasing violence that had come into Hollywood's studio world where he spent nine years as MGM's 1st bassist. His marriage was breaking up and he felt deeply troubled over the recent assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. His passion for equality in all aspects of race, gender and politics led him to Sweden. He had been there in 1954 with Red Norvo and Billie Holiday. In Europe, he believed, he could get back to just playing jazz and writing songs that would express his thoughts on love and hate, politics and greed, nature and music.

Rarely does a day or week go by that I don't think of one of Red's lines. "Simple isn't easy", "Love drives out hate, hate drives out love", "Envy's so little that when people feel it they shrink right before your eyes," or "You can take your funny money and run honey". His lyrics are relevant in today's world. I can just about hear him singing about "poles apart", the "sun and the water" and "the purest heart" (dedicated to his dog, Lady) and, of course, his love themes and his humorous play on words. His passion for jazz as a means of communication to bring people together with love went deeper than any desire for fortune or fame. He loved playing for people in his living room and in small venues, country libraries or small bars in the city.

I had the privilege of spending the last 10 years of Red's life with him on a journey "to compose himself "as he used to say. He received two Swedish Grammy awards for recordings that combine his incomparable talent on the bass, piano and composition. I believe he reached his goal in verbalizing his feelings and I know that he touched the hearts of everyone he met. You couldn't help but feel his great humanity and dedication to the art of music.

This songbook is part of an effort to publish all of Red's works and to promote his legacy. I couldn't have done it without the help of several musicians including Bill Charlap, Jim Ferguson, Brian Healy, Roger Kellaway, but most of all Bill Mays. Thank you to Susan Mingus for giving permission from Jazz Workshop Inc. to publish Red's lyric to Good-bye Pork Pie Hat. Jan and Ric Mancuso have helped tremendously with the final publishing details.

Diane Mitchell

Red's songs are so personal they're almost extensions of Red himself--artful, soulful, and seasoned with both rage and humor.

It's uncanny how Red's spirit shines through each one of these songs as you examine it or play it.

Talk about straight from the heart-- Red Mitchell had that gift all right.

Dave Frishberg,

May 28, 2003

Red Mitchell - biography

Born Keith Moore Mitchell in New York City on September 20, 1927, Red showed an early interest in both music and how things work. While growing up in New Jersey, he was encouraged by both his mother, who loved nature and poetry, and his engineer father, who loved music and could explain how things worked. After nine years of piano lessons, four years of alto sax and clarinet and an engineering scholarship to Cornell University, he started playing bass in the army in 1947.

His first steady jazz gig was on 52nd street in 1948, playing in a trio opposite Charlie Parker's quintet. By the 1950s he had achieved early recognition for his recordings and performances with Charlie Ventura, Woody Herman, the Red Norvo Trio, the Gerry Mulligan Quartet, Andre Previn, Hampton Hawes and Billie Holliday among others. His second record as a leader, *Presenting Red Mitchell*, with Billy Higgins, Lorraine Geller and James Clay is still selling. Starting with a recommendation by Barney Kessel, he became involved in film and TV music.

In 1959 he became 1st bassist at MGM; and with Harold Land as co-leader formed a quintet in the early 1960s. Since 1966, in response to the demands of composers such as Henry Mancini, he changed the tuning of his bass to fifths. This combined with amplifying it so that it sounds acoustic, makes possible a much greater range of notes, colors, dynamics and chords.

In order to get back to playing only jazz Red moved to Stockholm in 1968. He was welcomed in Sweden and around Europe, forming several groups and playing with visiting friends. Between 1977 and 1990 he spent about three months a year in New York City playing mostly at Bradley's with his favorite piano partners. Guitar and bass performances with Jim Hall, Herb Ellis, Joe Pass, Joe Beck and others brought attention to his "incomparable mastery" of the jazz bass. Leonard Feather called him "the best bass soloist in jazz".

He received recognition also for his singing, piano playing and original songs in 1986 and 1991 when he won the Swedish Grammy Awards. He wrote 122 songs, all of which he called "Tell it like it is music." In the words of the Grammy committee, "Firmly rooted in the immortal mainstream of jazz, having enriched Sweden's music life for 23 years, on his new record he performs as pianist, master bass player and vocal artist; also as the author of song lyrics that are both fierce and full of love. Here is a virile poetry, an almost burlesque humor and a playfulness that is rich in both intelligence and heart."

Red pursued his interest in jazz education with his course entitled, "Communication", "Bass Workshop" and "The Fifth-Tuned Bass" and taught students both privately and at music schools and clinics in Europe and the USA. Two of his better known students are Charlie Haden and J.J. Wiggins.

In September 1991 he and Horace Parlan visited Moscow as the first privately sponsored jazz musicians to perform in the Soviet Union. Russian television followed them from the airport to concert halls, Red's master class and studio recording sessions.

A trio recording with Red, Horace and Viachislav Preobrazhenski (VP for short) was released entitled, We All Hope.

Starting in the late 1980s Red began working extensively with Roger Kellaway with whom he had recorded in Los Angeles in the 1960s. From 1987 to 1992 they collaborated on eight CDs including *Life's a Take*, the first of the Concord Records Maybeck Recital Hall Duo Series. Indeed, the duo format dominated his recording sessions from the middle 1970s with many of his favorite musician friends including Clark Terry, Lee Konitz, Herb Ellis, Kenny Barron, Hank Jones, Bill Mays, Warne Marsh, Jimmy Rowles and many others. His discography by this time had gained him the reputation of being one of the most recorded bassists in jazz.

On November 8, 1992 Red died of a stroke just 10 months after he and his wife, Diane, had returned to the USA where they had settled in Salem, Oregon. A Memorial Fund has been set up in his name to complete unfinished projects and further the legacy of his life and his mastery of the acoustic bass. A Red Mitchell Memorial Fund Scholarship was awarded to bassist Larry Holloway on February 8, 1997. A poetry book entitled "Keith 'Red' Mitchell - Selected Poems 1968 – 1992 was published by Red Inc Music Company in 1999.

Red Mitchell was dedicated to music and communication. His personality and his playing were often described as being larger than life. Jim Hall said, "Red played the most gorgeous melodic solos of anybody on any instrument. I think maybe he and Lester Young were in the same league. The fact that it was coming out of a stringed-bass was mind-boggling." And the classical bass soloist Gary Karr, said, "I have always judged talent, whether its jazz or classical, on the sound a person produces because the sound is your signature. I think Red's signature was sure genius."

Music

OK, Every nation has its own
Traditions and its language,
And to take good care of them is really laudable;
And the language and the traditions find
Their way into the music
With results that now and then are really audible

But the function of the music is
To get beneath our differences –
Communicate directly, soul to soul.
It's the nearest thing to
Universal language we've developed
And its purpose is to make the whole world whole.

By

Red Mitchell

A Declaration Of Interdependence







A Dreamer's Lullabye



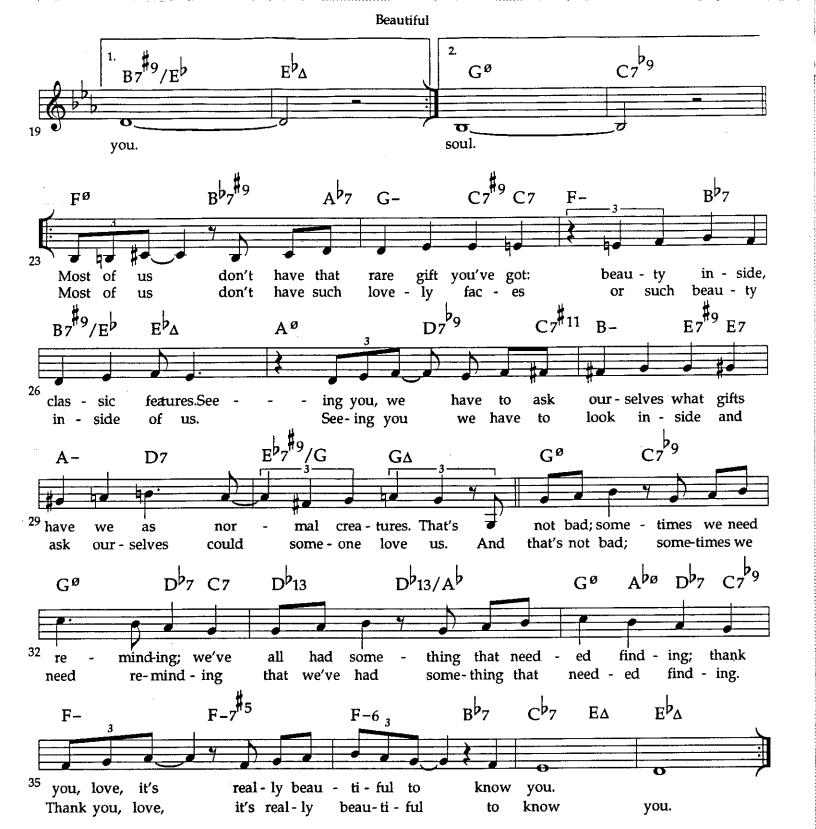
As You Are

Music: Nils Lindberg/Lyrics: Red Mitchell

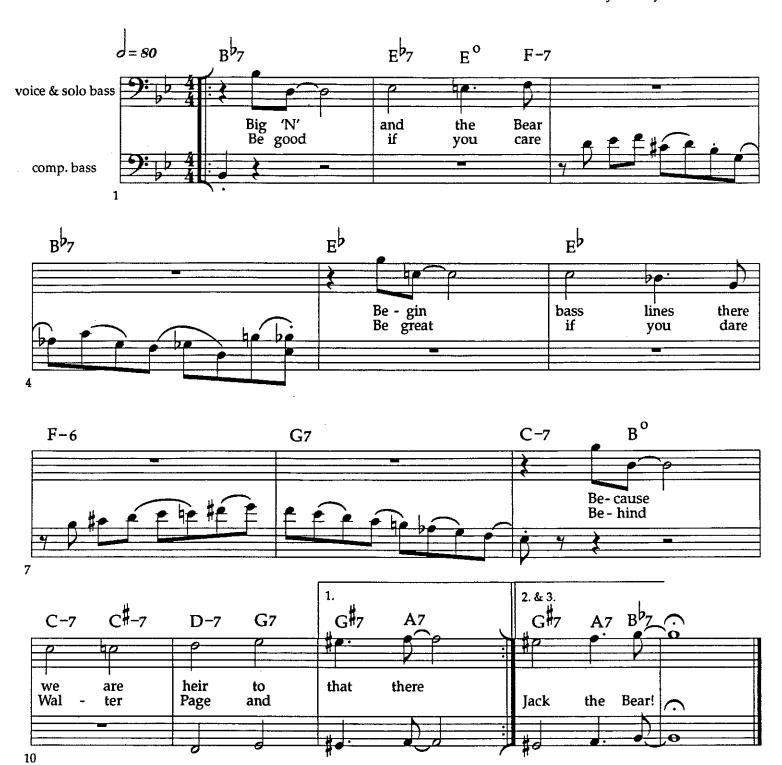








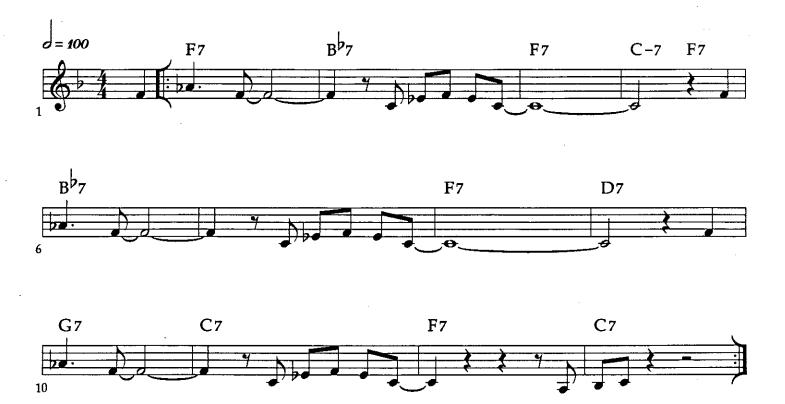
Big 'N' And The Bear



Blues For A Crushed Soul





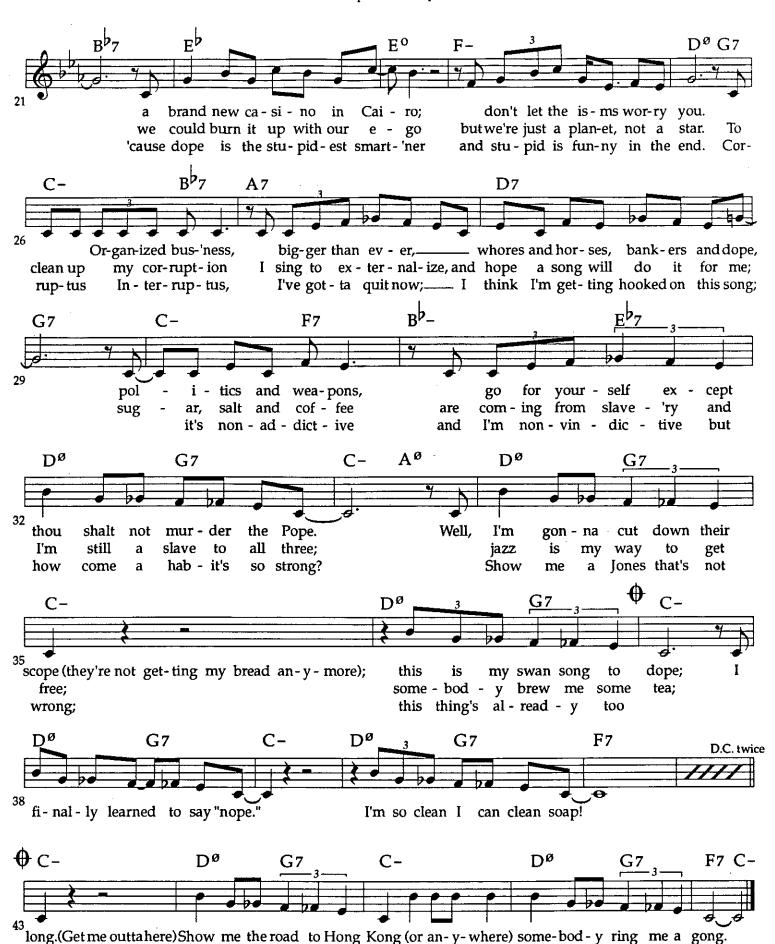


Bureau Blues



Corruptus Interruptus



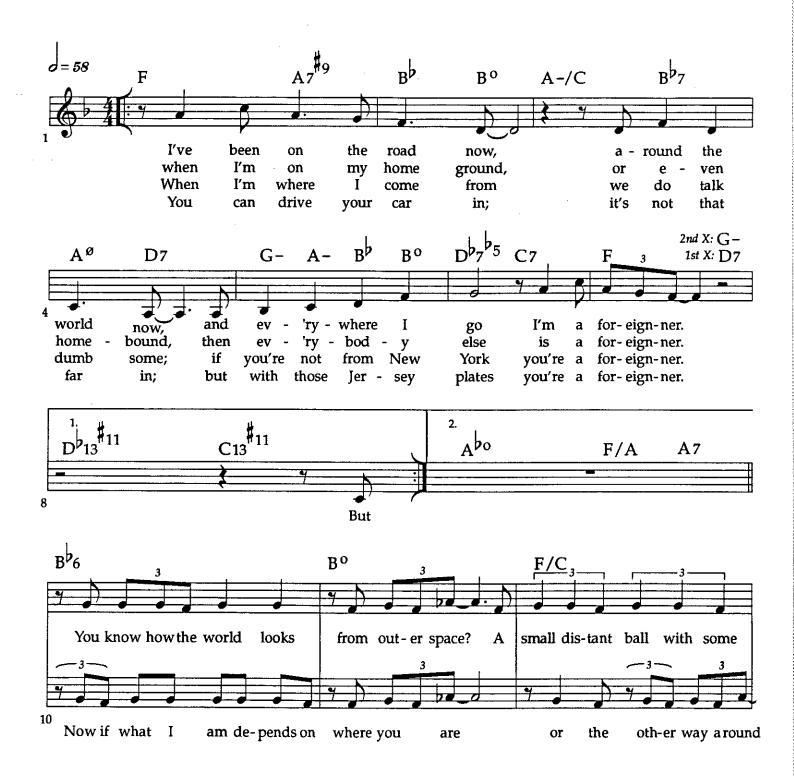








for-ces that have formed us and brought us to - get - her all I real - ly know is I love us. I can say for sure that the odds of our meet-ing were much less than one in a mill-ion.





for-eign-ers?

Boo!

all for-eign-ers

of

or

scared

been

Goodbye Pork-Pie Hat

Music: Charles Mingus/Lyrics: Red Mitchell







How You Sound

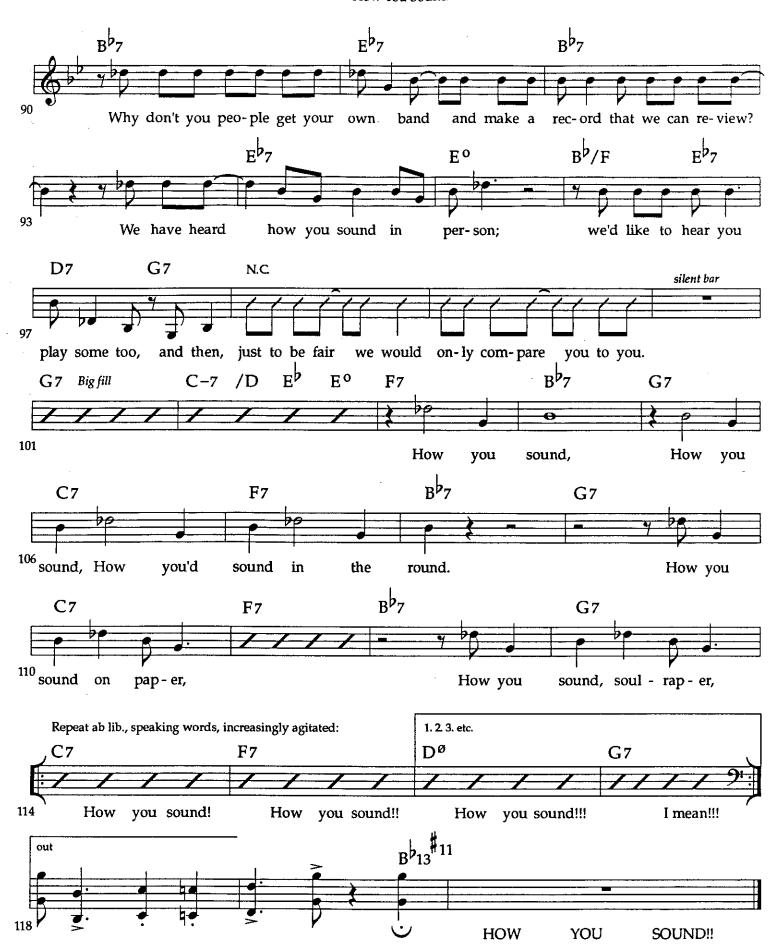


if so, why not help your love, as man-y peo-ple do? If you take bread to hurt in-stead, then © 1979, Red Inc Music Co (STIM)





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I Can't Believe It But I Do



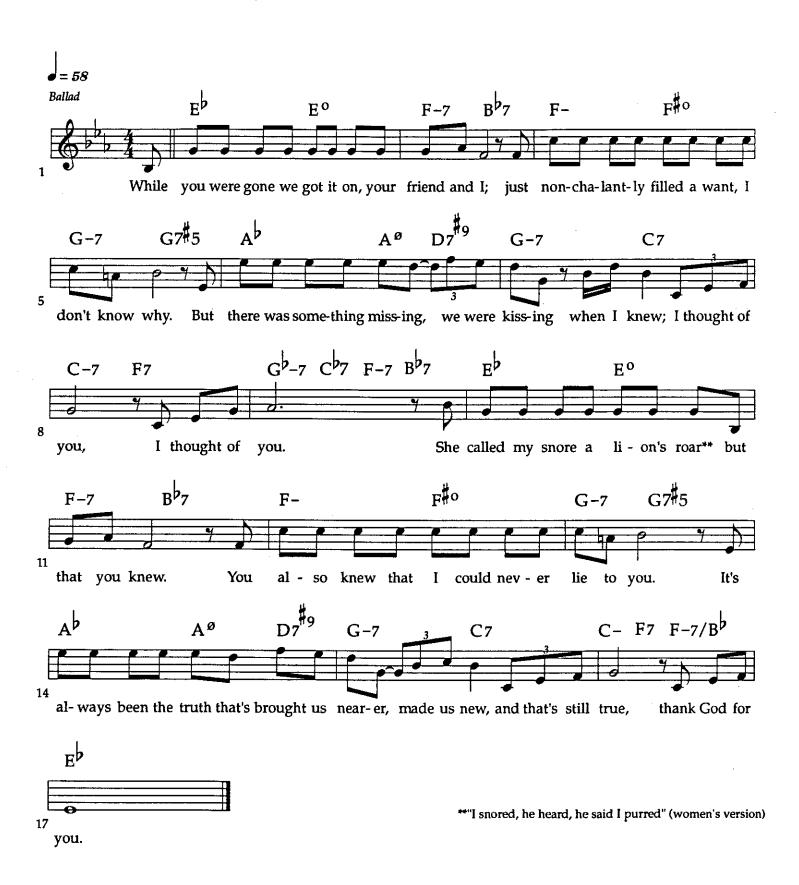


I Do Love Love





I Thought Of You

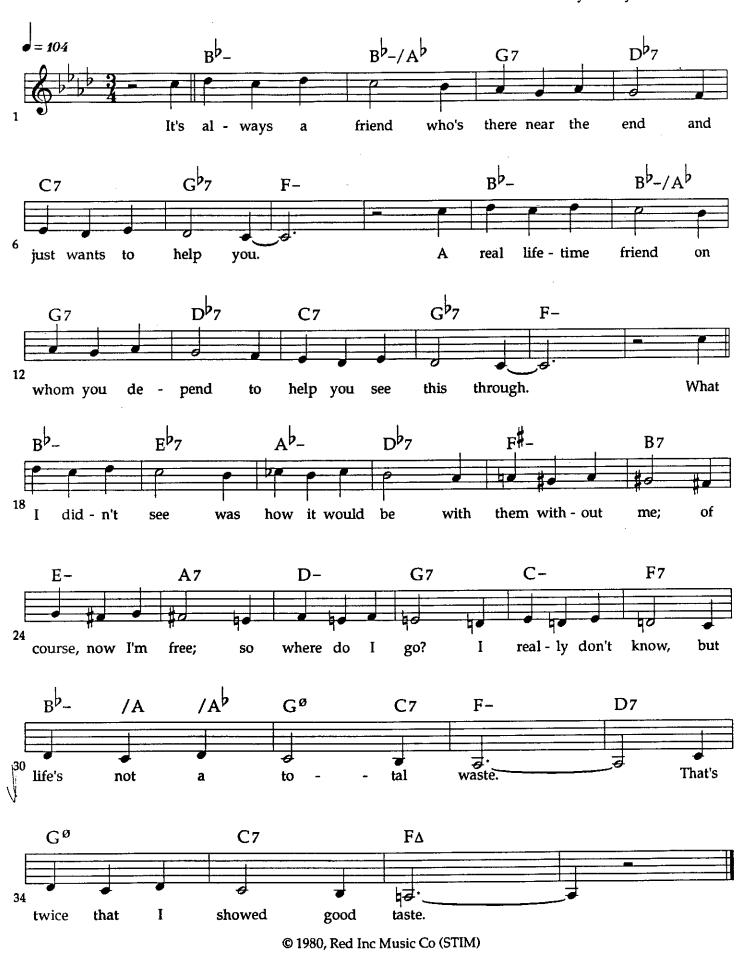


I'm A Homebody

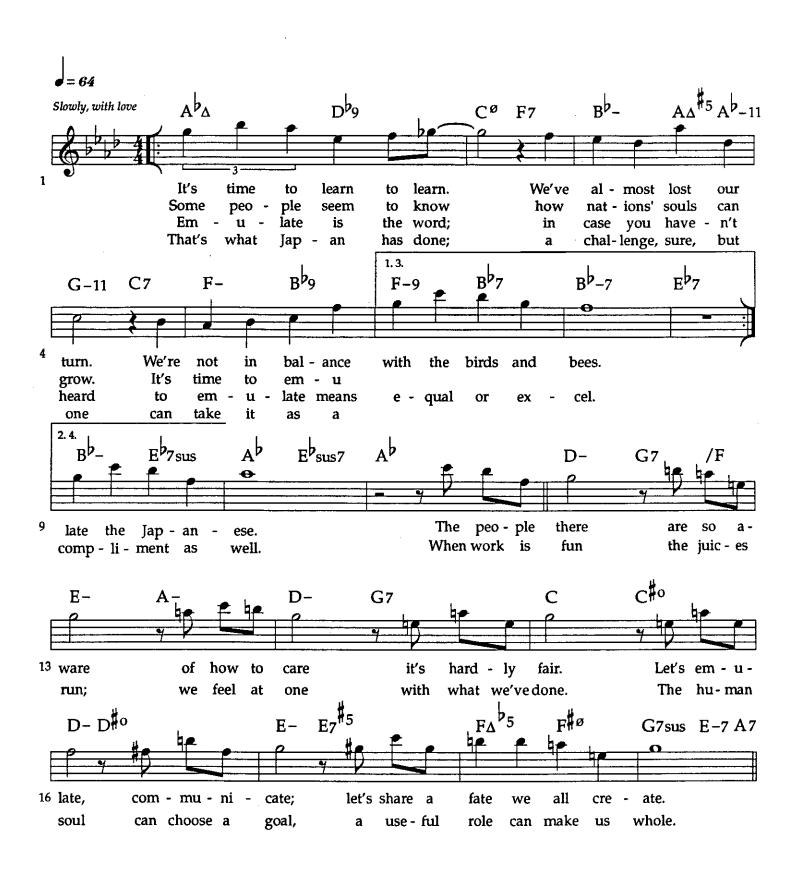




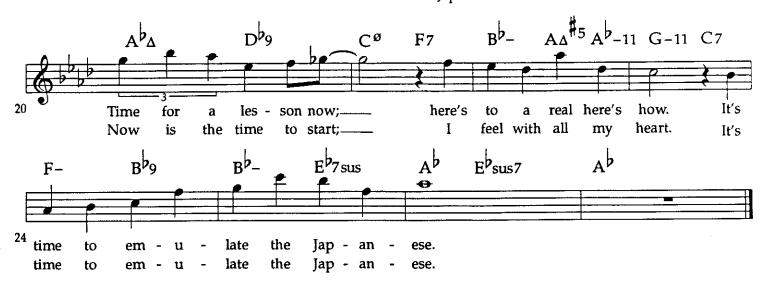
It's Always A Friend



It's Time To Emulate The Japanese



It's Time To Emulate The Japanese

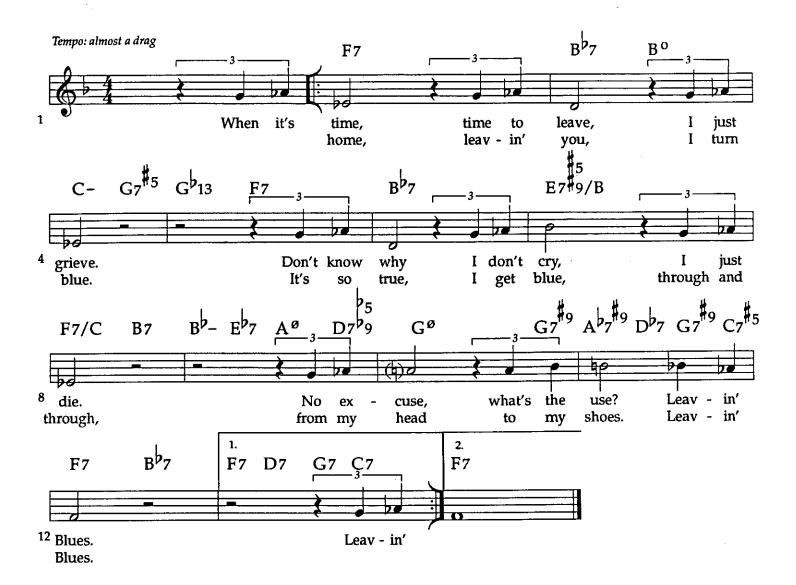


Jam For Your Bread

Music by Red Mitchell

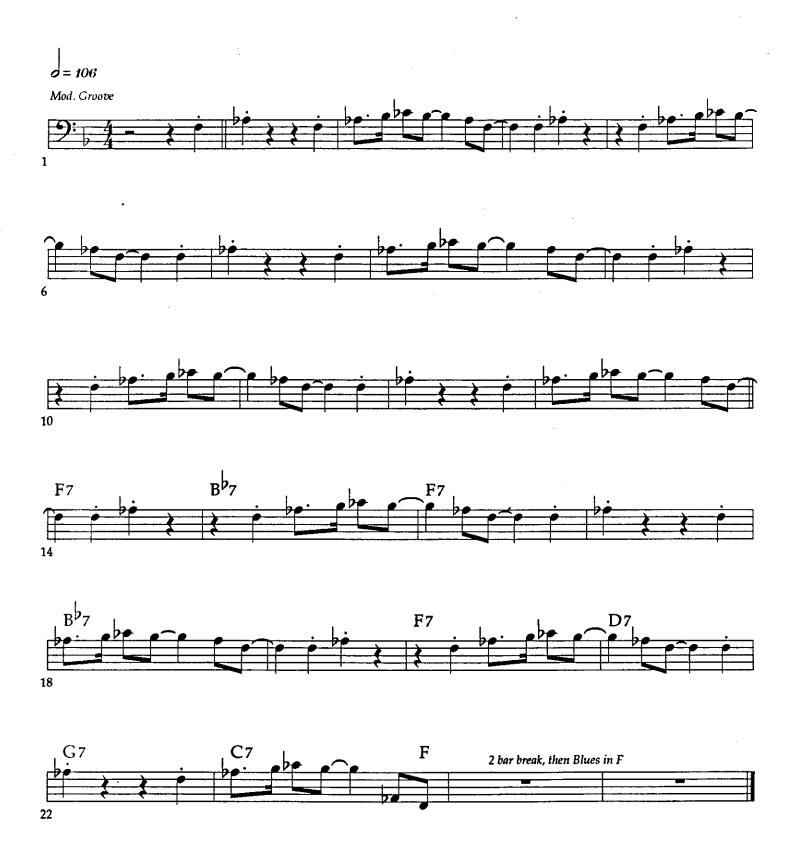


Leavin' Blues



Life's A Take (Red's Blues)

Music by Red Mitchell



Lonely Islands



Looking For A Friend







Love's Not Only The Blues

(To Allan, my on-stream off-spring)

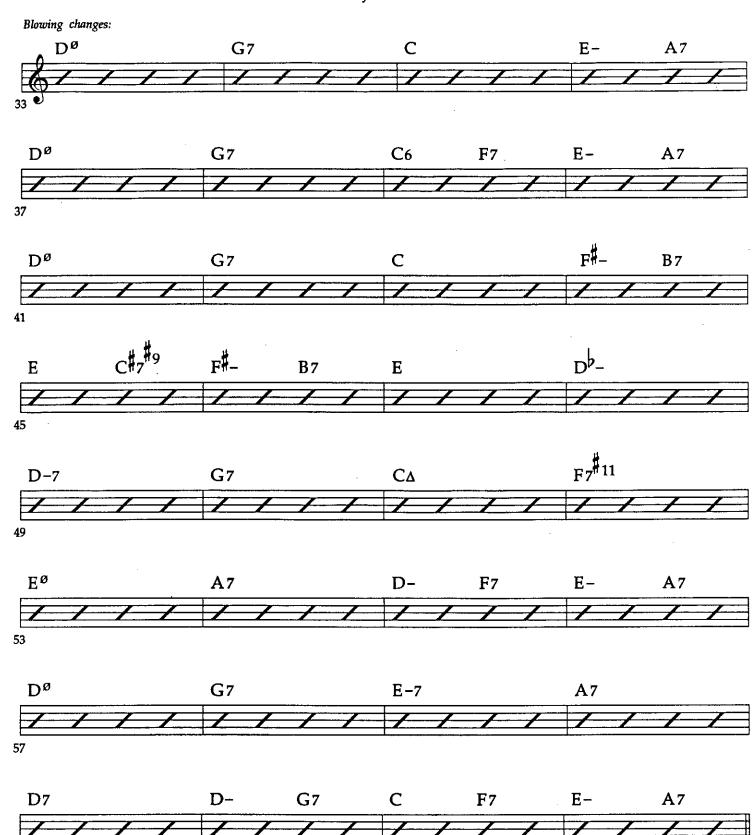


Meadow Skies



My Woman





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No Time To Kill



Now What Are We Gonna Do?







ritard.

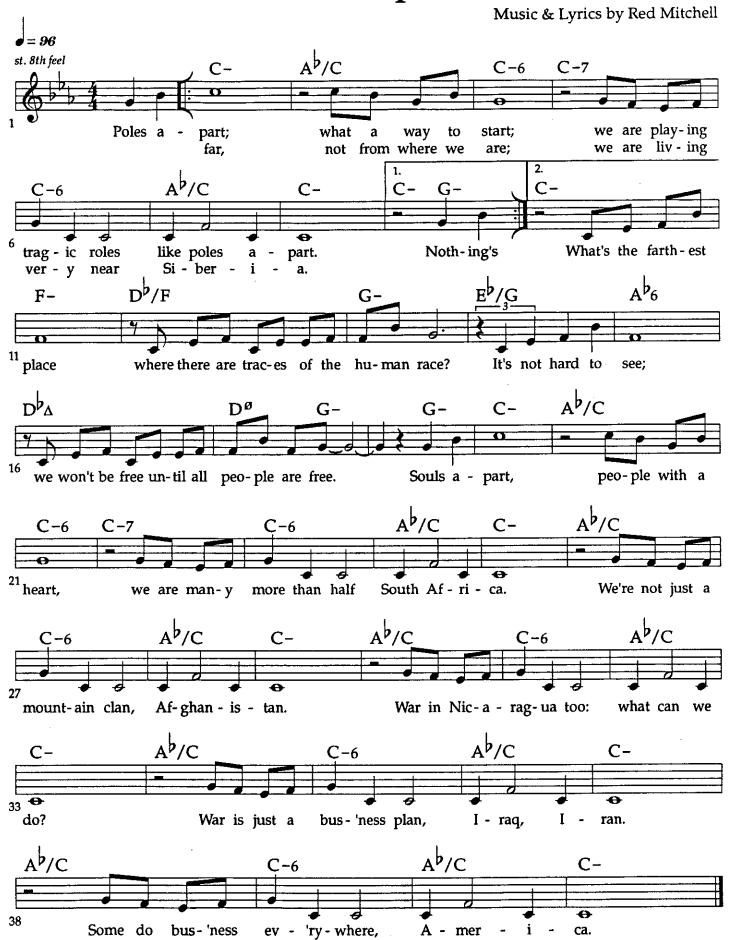


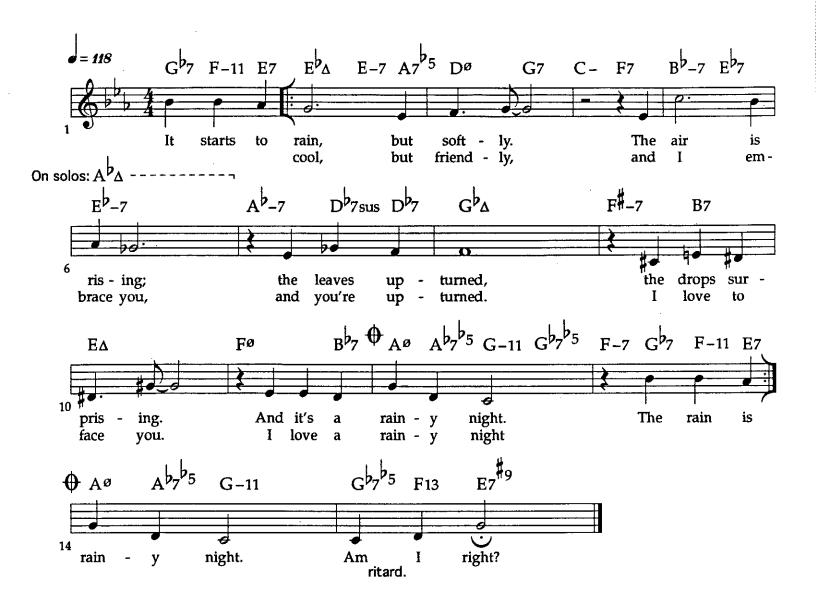
One Long String





Poles Apart





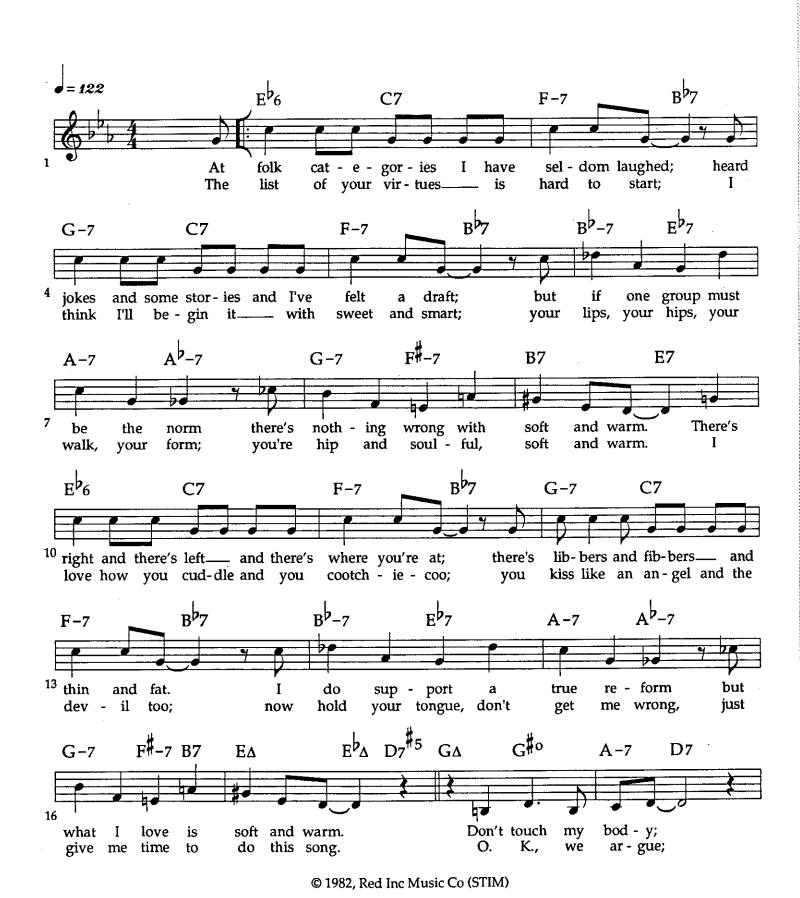




Simple Isn't Easy



Soft And Warm





Talking



The Genius To Compose





The Purest Heart

Music & Lyrics by Red Mitchell = 82 5 G7#9 \mathbf{E}^{\flat} Gospel feel C-F7 The pur-est I heart I know is yours; love my kind of love is yours; the kind that's life in your smile; when you is are spir bove; it up if there's a Ep/Bp B^b7 A^o F-G-C7 Fluck just know Your heal ing you. ing kind and just like A per fect you. To hap ру so am learn from for If Moth - er rea son us too. /Bb \mathbf{E}_{p} Αø Do C-Αø feel like real ly noth ing ing cures bal that 'cause you dures ance en re take while but all you my may Nat dreamed love she let me ure up 1. 2. 3. B^b7 B7/Gb C7 **F**7 G-F-G-14 else in life The can do. pur est The love of spond to pure love too. life ľll If there's real ly try. a E_{ρ} G-F- \mathbf{E}_{Δ} 18 by send ing You know you Du $E^{\flat}\Delta$ $E^{\flat}\Delta$ 22 love - ly ly love - ly love - ly dy love - ly love lil - la lil - la lil - la lil - la lil la hun den

© 1980, Red Inc Music Co (STIM)

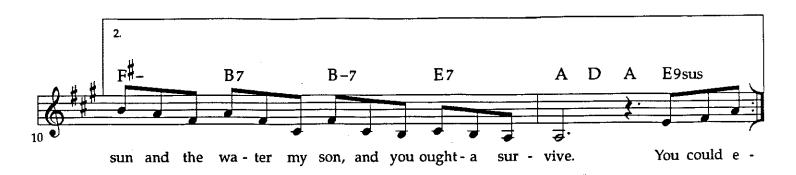
The Sun And The Water

Music & Lyrics by Red Mitchell



I'd like to talk to you, son, a - bout us - ing the sun and the wa - ter and may-be sor - ry that we've been a - bus - ing the bal-ance of na-ture. We've been misrase some big debts if you'd place some big bets on the sun shine. Use just a mind a re-quest that you find out the best use of wa - ter. We don't de-











What I Am



me Red.

call

name's Keith but you can

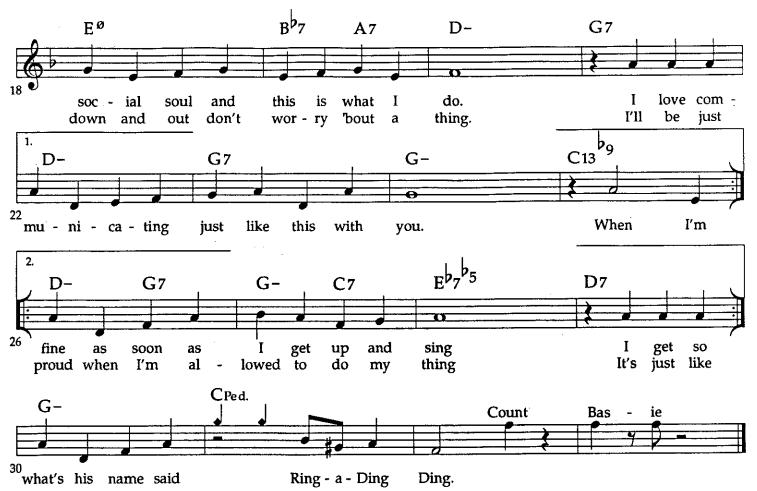
When I Have You



When I'm Singing



When I'm Singing



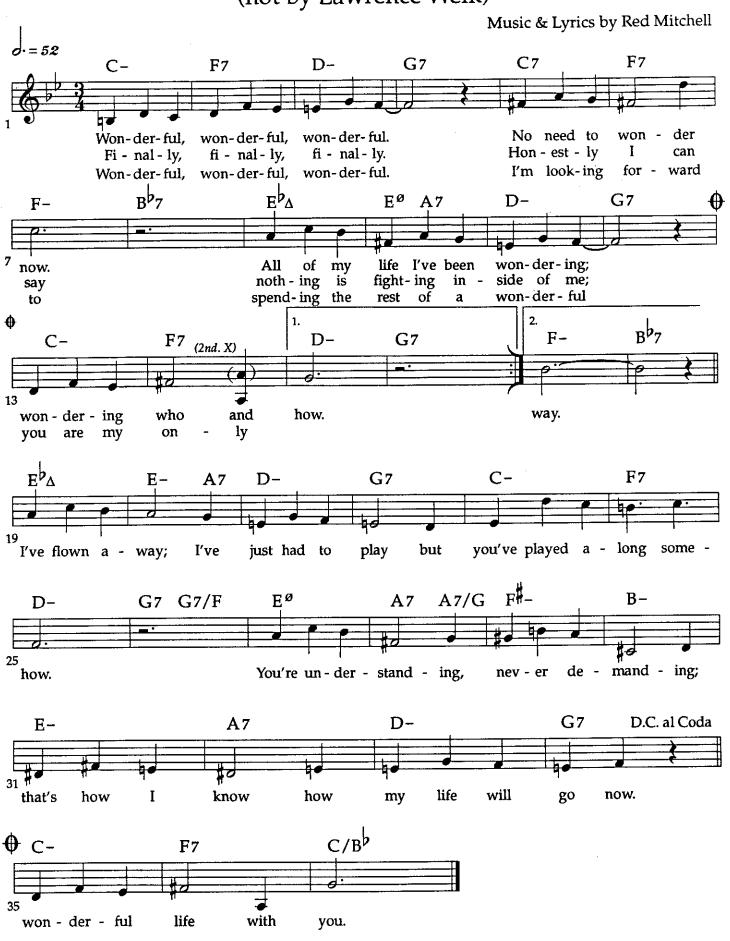
("What's his name-you know, the little guy with the big mouth")

Where's Don Ellis Now?



Wonderful

(not by Lawrence Welk)



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You Can Take Your Funny Money And Run, Honey





bye,

bye

ba - by but you

can't buy

me!

You People Need Music

Music by Red Mitchell



You're Me



*ditteno = New Jerseyese for "didn't know"