



*Joe  
Williams*

*Ballad  
and  
Blues  
Master*

# Joe Williams

## Ballad and Blues Master

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LIVE



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1. *You Showed Me The Way* 3:20
2. *Everyday (I'll Fall In Love)* 3:47
3. *You Can Depend On Me* 4:01
4. *A Hundred Years From Today!*  
*Tomorrow Night* 4:46
5. *Ain't No Use* 3:10
6. *I've Only Myself To Blame* 2:40
7. *When Sunny Gets Blue* 3:00
8. *Who She Do* 4:48
9. *I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues* 4:36
10. *Dinner For One Please, James* 3:27
11. *You've Got Me Crying Again* 2:55
12. *Blues Medley: 9:18*  
*Cherry Red*  
*Tell Me Where To Scratch*  
*Person To Person*

Joe Williams - vocals  
Norman Simmons - piano, musical director, arranger  
Henry Johnson - guitar  
Bob Badgley - bass  
Gerryck King - drums

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Live recordings produced by Miriam Cutler, David Kreisberg and Ron Berinstein for Hemisphere Productions. Executive Producer: Ron Berinstein. Produced for release by Eulis Cathey.

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During the medley of "A Hundred Years From Today"/"Tomorrow Night," on this ridiculously aptly named album, Joe Williams pays homage to two singers: Maxine Sullivan and Ethel Waters.

When I ask him about them, he says the following:

"Maxine Sullivan could do more with a song—singing the melody with just her little inflections and what have you. I think every girl singer should be made to listen to Maxine Sullivan again and again and again and over and over and over again. Because then they would learn how less is more.

"Ethel Waters was the standard by which all other singers were measured. The thing that I got from her mostly was a great depth of feeling. She managed to make me believe everything that she was singing. And beautifully, without going too far out; she just stayed within the framework of the song itself and made me believe it."

There you have it: Joe Williams on singing. Less is more. Little inflections. Staying within the framework of the song. Depth of feeling. During the end of our conversation, I ask Joe about some business matter or other, and he says he leaves that up to his manager. "I just sing songs," he says.

Just sings songs.

Although it wasn't until the mid '50s—and that extraordinary stint with the Count Basie Orchestra—that the world at large learned about him, Joe Williams has been a singer of songs, a ballad and blues master (if Joe doesn't have that on his business card, he should), since the late '30s, when he started singing with bands around Chicago.

He's been singing for 55 years, but rarely was he singing better than in May of 1987, when the recording trucks stopped off at Hollywood's Vine St. Bar & Grill to capture the previous "Every Night" and this companion set. Joe Williams and his quartet, singing the bejeezers out of a few jumping blues and a stack of little known ballads. It doesn't—does not—get much better than this.

"On this date, we came up with some things that I hadn't recorded or that I hadn't done in a long time," says Joe about the repertoire.

With the great Norman Simmons steering guitarist Henry Johnson, bassist Bob Badgley and drummer Gerryck King, Joe and company display ballad and blues mastery, indeed. They whoop it up on the blues and lay it out all nice and easy on the ballads.

I can't believe that anybody who has been paying any attention still thinks of Joe Williams primarily as a blues singer, but, for the record, until he signed on with Basie, he was just as known for his simply-stated ballads.

"In 1940, Coleman Hawkins asked me to join him and said, 'I want you to sing ballads.' So I said, 'Okay,' and he gave me \$80 a week to sing ballads with the band. Then Gerald Wilson wanted me to sing ballads and swing songs. And then I joined Andy Kirk, and, again, he wanted me to sing ballads.

"And Lionel Hampton in 1943 wanted me to sing ballads. And for a valid reason: I did the blues and broke it up in Philadelphia, but we wound up having a rather talented girl singer named Dinah Washington. So Lionel came to me and said, 'Gates, you sing the pretty songs, let Dinah sing the blues.'"

While some of the ballads here—"When Sunny Gets Blue" and "I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues," for instance—are jazz standards, most are not.

"You Showed Me The Way," which kicks things off, was co-written by Ella Fitzgerald, and was a hit for her with the Chick Webb band in '37. Joe revived it as a tribute to Ella, who was being honored at the time by the Society of Singers.

"I used to sing 'Everyday (I'll Fall In Love)' for dancing in Chicago, with Jimmie Noone's orchestra," recalls Joe. "Jimmie Noone was a fabulous New Orleans clarinetist and I sang with him in '37, '38 and '39, doing radio broadcasts from two clubs in Chicago--Cabin Inn and Swing Man.

"I've rarely done it since then. In fact, I think it's on the very first album I did with Basie, in 1955, and nobody paid any attention to it because 'Everyday I Have The Blues' is on there. And when people would say, 'Would you sing "Everyday"?' I'd say, sure... 'Everyday I'll fall in love, all over again with you....' Just for fun."

"You Can Depend On Me," of course, was a hit for Count Basie and Jimmy Rushing, Basie's first great vocalist, but Joe says he used to listen to Earl Hines, who co-wrote the song, play it on the radio in Chicago, with Walter Fuller singing.

"I've Only Myself To Blame" and "You've Got Me Crying Again"—another couple of sentimental '30s ballads—are Joe Williams reprises; both were included on his classic "A Man Ain't Supposed To Cry" album, which firmly put his ballads squarely on the jazz vocal map.

Perhaps the most obscure song here is "Dinner For One Please, James," a sad, sad song about a man and his butler, the only

person he has left to talk to after the missus has up and left. It's by Michael Carr, an obscure Tin Pan Alley tunesmith ("Did Your Mother Come From Ireland" and "South Of The Border" are his best known songs), and it has great meaning for Joe Williams.

"It was the very first song that I sang with an orchestra," he says. "I think I heard a Ray Noble recording of that—I used to hear him on the radio—and I thought it was a beautiful song.

"There was a guy named Francois from New York who had an orchestra in a place called Dave's Cafe, where they used to broadcast from.

"When I was about 16 years old, he played a dance on a Sunday afternoon at a place called Warwick Hall in Chicago, and I was at the dance. He was auditioning singers—he was getting ready to leave town—and my group told me that I should go up and audition. And I said, 'You've got to be kidding.'

"And they said, 'Yeah, you should. Only you're afraid to.' So that did it. And I went up and sang 'Dinner For One Please, James' and he wanted to take me with him. 25 bucks a week. And my mother said, 'Yes, of course, sure...as soon as you get through school.' Hahahaha. 'As soon as you get through high school, sure.'

Hahahaha."

Joe Williams finished high school and, eventually, became one of the finest male singers jazz has ever known. What happened to Francois and his orchestra is lost to the mists of time.

"We were fortunate," says Joe Williams about the presence of Verve's recording equipment in Hollywood on those spring evenings in 1987. "Many times you do performances and at the end of the night, the guys have a drink and sit down and talk about it, and say, 'Hey, we made music tonight, didn't we? It really came together.'

"For it to be captured is really an unusual thing."

Hey, they made music that week. Yessireebob. No muss, no fuss, just, as he would put it, Joe Williams singing songs.

The word is mastery.


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1. *You Showed Me The Way* 3:20  
B. Green/E. Fitzgerald/T. McCrae/C. Webb  
EMI Robbins Catalog, Inc. Rytoec Inc. Cherio Corp. (ASCAP)
2. *Everyday (I'll Fall In Love)* 3:47  
Fain/Kahal  
Warner Bros. Music Corp. (ASCAP)
3. *You Can Depend On Me* 4:01  
E. Hines/L. Dunlop/C. Carpenter  
Peer International Corp./Southern Music Publ. Corp. (BMI)
4. *A Hundred Years From Today/  
Tomorrow Night* 4:46  
Young/Washington — Coslow/Grosz  
EMI Robbins Music/Warock Corp. /Cherio Corp. —  
Bourne, Inc. (ASCAP)
5. *Ain't No Use* 3:10  
Wyche/Kirkland  
Forshay Music, Inc. (BMI)
6. *I've Only Myself To Blame* 2:40  
M. Evans  
Music Sales Corp. (ASCAP)
7. *When Sunny Gets Blue* 3:00  
M. Fischer/J. Segal  
Marvin Music Co./Fischer Music Corp. (ASCAP)
8. *Who She Do* 4:48  
J. Williams  
Jillean Music, Inc./Gopam Enterprises, Inc. (BMI)
9. *I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues* 4:36  
D. Ellington/D. George  
Tempo Music/Ricki Music (ASCAP)
10. *Dinner For One Please, James* 3:27  
M. Carr  
Chappell & Co., Inc. (ASCAP)
11. *You've Got Me Crying Again* 2:55  
I. Jones/C. Newman  
Music Sales Corp./Bantam Music Publ. Co. (ASCAP)

12. *Blues Medley:* 9:18  
*Cherry Red*  
J. Turner  
MCA Music Publishing (ASCAP)  
*Tell Me Where To Scratch*  
J. Williams  
Jillean Music Inc./Gopam Enterprises, Inc. (BMI)  
*Person To Person*  
E. Vinson  
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*Joe Williams - vocals*  
*Norman Simmons - piano, musical director,  
arranger*  
*Henry Johnson - guitar*  
*Bob Badgley - bass*  
*Gerryck King - drums*

*Henry Johnson appears courtesy of Impulse/MCA  
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Also Available from this performance:  
*Joe Williams: Every Night - Live At Vine Street*  
833 236-2/4*



# Joe Williams



314 511 354-2

COMPACT  
disc  
DIGITAL AUDIO

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- 1 *You Showed Me The Way*
  - 2 *Everyday (I'll Fall In Love)*
  - 3 *You Can Depend On Me*
  - 4 *A Hundred Years From Today/Tomorrow Night*
  - 5 *Ain't No Use*
  - 6 *I've Only Myself To Blame*
  - 7 *When Sunny Gets Blue*
  - 8 *Who She Do*
  - 9 *I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues*
  - 10 *Dinner For One*
- Please, James*
- 11 *You've Got Me Crying Again*
  - 12 *Blues Medley:*
    - *Cherry Red*
    - *Tell Me Where To Scratch*
    - *Person To Person*

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