



COUNT BASIE THEN AS NOW – MVD

Jazz great William “Count” Basie comes back to life in this rich documentary, which traces the history of the pianist, composer, and bandleader over several decades. Filmmaker Gary Keys juxtaposes a round table discussion among old cats from the Count Basie Orchestra with recorded performances, including a cameo appearance in *Blazing Saddles*. Archival clips and a gallery of portraits and snapshots shows the ever-smiling face of a man as vivacious as the grooves he delivers—his good humor suffusing the music and the players going at it all around him, from Lester Young to Ella Fitzgerald.

DUKE ELLINGTON: Reminiscing in Tempo – MVD

For years, friends of the late Duke Ellington came together at his very eccentric sister Ruth Ellington Boatwright’s home to celebrate the life of the late musician. One guest, a religious man, states that he never met The Duke, but like many fans of the famous jazz composer and pianist, he got to know him through his music. Perhaps affected by Ruth’s attire (huge glasses lined with jewels—no doubt fake—and a curly blond wig) and Al Hibbler’s flapping dentures, the man opines matter-of-factly that we will die but The Duke’s music never will. And it hasn’t. *Reminiscing in Tempo* is a great excuse to hear Ellington’s music...for anyone without a record player. You see, director Gary Keys is a cool cat and a great lover of music but this puff doesn’t strain to understand Ellington the man, coasting on the appeal of The Duke’s deceptively simple compositions and glossing over much of his personal life, his remote relationship to the Civil Rights movement, and the purpose of his perpetually classy demeanor.

- Nick Nicholson