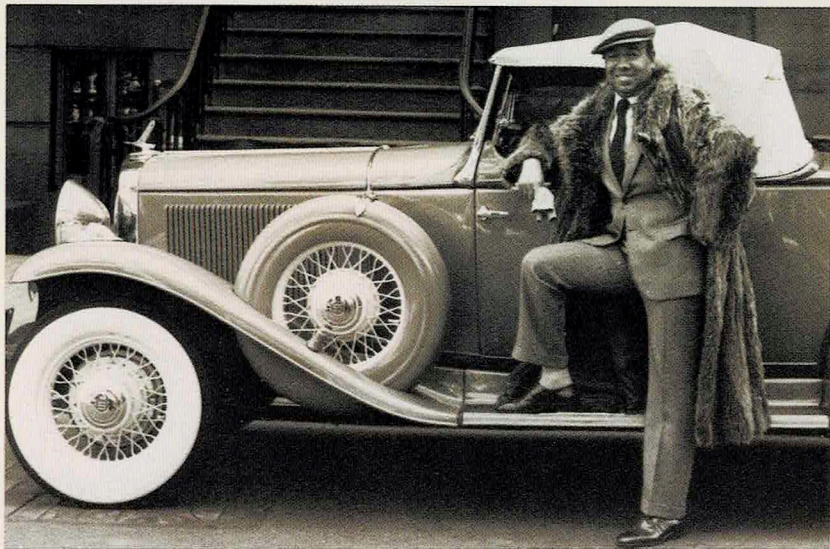


Guess Who's in Town

Bobby Short

*Performs the Songs of
Andy Razaf*



He was an anomaly in the business of big-league lyric writing in this country. He was a black man, born Andreameenantania Razafkieriefio, the American son of a Madagascan nobleman. The Twenties and Thirties were his time, Harlem was Andy Razaf's domain. He wrote with the great music men of his age—Waller, Blake, Johnson, Handy—over five hundred songs sold before his death in 1973. The man has been forgotten utterly. Only the songs of Andy Razaf remain today. These are some of his best.

In the course of his brilliant career, while celebrating both on record and at Manhattan's Cafe Carlyle the masterworks of Gershwin, Porter, Rodgers, Hart and their peers, Bobby Short has managed to rescue many unjustly forgotten songs from obscurity. This album extends that grand tradition.

1. GUESS WHO'S IN TOWN

Andy Razaf's early reputation was made writing "bawdy blues," sexually suggestive blues tunes rife with double entendre. Singers of "bawdy blues" in the Twenties broke down roughly into two camps: the frank, carnal style of Bessie Smith—the subtler, flirtatious style of Ethel Waters. Andy wrote for them both, realizing his first hit record with Waters' recording of "My Special Friend Is Back In Town," a delicious bit of borderline pornography composed with J.C. Johnson in 1926. "Guess Who's In Town" was a followup for Miss Waters two years later. The Jazz Age was now peaking, the blues were on the way out and, as Bobby's exuberant reading here demonstrates, this new Razaf/Johnson tune leaned more toward the delirious than the salacious. But only a little.

2. HONEYSUCKLE ROSE

The twenty-year collaboration between Andy Razaf and Thomas "Fats" Waller was one of the richest musical partnerships in our history. It was also a non-stop battle of wills between Fats, the eternal carouser, and his supremely disciplined lyricist. "Honeysuckle Rose" was begun at a piano in Andy's mother's home on the Jersey shore where Andy had lured Fats for a stretch of undisturbed work on their first Broadway score, an impending musical to be called **KEEP SHUFFLIN'**. "Honeysuckle Rose" was completed on the phone, with Andy shouting lyrics from N.J. and Fats furnishing music from a barstool in Harlem. The beach retreat scheme had held Mr. Waller about three hours. "Honeysuckle Rose" eventually went into **KEEP SHUFFLIN'** as an innocuous soft shoe shuffle and was then forgotten until Fats, in the Thirties, resurrected it for Swing sessions. Bobby and company here take yet another look at this most durable of pop standards, displaying it to fresh advantage with a striking new rhythmic showcase.

3. HOW CAN YOU FACE ME?

By 1934 Fats Waller was a coast to coast star, with his own radio show, touring band and record deals. His managers were taking great pains to gain control over Fats. Among many moves they made was an effort to distance Fats from Andy as a collaborator, teaming him instead with white lyricists hired to produce sappy tunes that would reinforce Fats Waller's public image as one goofy music maker. Could Andy have written "How Can You Face Me?" at least partly with his ever-more unapproachable partner in mind?

*How can you face me?
After what I've gone through,
All on account of you,
Tearing my heart in two.*

Bobby's ruminative yet relentless vocal, mirrored in traded solos by the ensemble, captures perfectly Andy's own lyric stance here. You gotta wonder.

4. **A PORTER'S LOVE SONG
(TO A CHAMBER MAID)**

Andy, in 1930, contributed lyrics to a revue at Small's Paradise, a very toney nightspot on Seventh Avenue off 135th Street that miraculously still stands up in Harlem today. The entertainment, with music by stride piano genius James P. Johnson, was entitled **KITCHEN MECHANICS' REVUE** and contained terrific tongue-in-cheek tunes like "Elevator Poppa, Switchboard Mamma" and "Shake Your Duster." "Porter's Love Song" was the hit of the evening, displaying all the wit of a Cole Porter lyric in reverse. Bobby's peerless way with Porter helps emphasize the lyric achievement here, Andy's ability to suggest what "Cole" might have written about those who served, rather than those pampered few who got served.

5. **SPOSIN'**

After Fats, Andy's favorite music man was Paul Denniker. Denniker was a talented Tin Pan Alley regular and an Englishman. Denniker was also white, a fact which raised a few eyebrows around town in the Twenties. Andy seems never to have given the biracial partnering much thought. Denniker too seems not to have cared less about the whole matter. "Sposin'," their biggest hit, made both men a lot of money. Bobby's flush treatment of the tune is perfectly fundamental.

6. **AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'**

"Ain't Misbehavin'" was a hit uptown at a club called Connie's Inn from the moment that it was introduced there in a revue called **HOT FEET** in the winter of 1929. "Ain't Misbehavin'" was a hit downtown on Broadway when **HOT FEET** was transferred to the Hudson Theatre as **HOT CHOCOLATES**—the musical—in the summer of 1929. "Ain't Misbehavin'" was a hit every time it was reprised throughout the course of **HOT CHOCOLATES**, especially when young Louis Armstrong trumpeted the song from the Hudson Theatre orchestra pit at intermission. "Ain't Misbehavin'" has always been and will always be a hit.

7. **TAN MANHATTAN**

By 1940, the craze for "coloured musicals" on Broadway had ended, killed in the Thirties by saturation and the Depression. Undaunted, Andy in 1940, with his old partner Eubie Blake, mounted **TAN MANHATTAN**, an old-fashioned 2½ hour "coloured musical" extravaganza, packed with production numbers, a hefty cast of singers, dancers, comics, a full choir, a crowded orchestra pit and a musical score numbering some fifteen-plus tunes. The show opened in Washington and closed at the Apollo in Harlem. Broadway never gave it a glance. Bobby and the band here rousing recall **TAN MANHATTAN** for a brilliant moment in the spotlight.

8. **BLACK AND BLUE**

"Black And Blue" may have been America's first racial protest song. Andy wrote it late in the pre-Broadway tryout of **HOT CHOCOLATES** at the instigation of gangster Dutch Schultz, the show's big money backer, who envisioned a comedy number featuring, "some little colored girl singing about how tough it is being colored." The Dutchman was not amused by Andy's interpretation but "Black And Blue's" riveting lyric made it a smash. Bobby, Marshall and Sweets remind us of the timeless pathos that is "Black And Blue's" truth.

9. **MAKE BELIEVE BALLROOM**

In 1935 an anonymous independent N.Y. radio station—call letters WNEW—debuted a new program whose premise would soon revolutionize the broadcast industry. Hosted by Martin Block, WNEW's "Make Believe Ballroom" featured nothing but phonograph records played from a make-believe stage. The show's unprecedented approach generated instant popularity and a charming theme song from the team of Razaf and Denniker. Here Bobby's crooning approach evokes the memory of countless faceless band singers while Phil Moore's "Name That Tune" arrangement slips in echoes of Chick Webb, Goodman, Miller and Lionel Hampton. "Away we go, by radio, to realms of sweet delight."

10. **I'M GONNA MOVE TO THE
OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN**

Often Andy was called in to fix songs lyrically. With "Outskirts Of Town," William Weldon had worked out a nasty blues riff and had set it to his own rather raw lyric. Andy was hired to smooth the thing out, while still juicing the song up. Bobby's vocal extolls the contributions of both men.

11. **LONESOME SWALLOW**

As first recorded in 1928 by Ethel Waters and James P. Johnson, this lovely spiritual-like blues was a tour de force of vocal purity and straightforward stride piano adornment. Here, incredibly, Bobby does the memory of that classic recording full justice.

—Barry Singer

—Barry Singer is the author of a forthcoming Andy Razaf biography.

**PRODUCED BY BOBBY SHORT
AND PHIL MOORE**

Orchestrations and Arrangements—Phil Moore
Orchestra conducted by Phil Moore
Associate Producer—Jack Tracy
Engineer—Hugh Davies
Recorded at Capital Studio A,
Hollywood, California
Mastered at Atlantic Studios,
NYC by Sam Feldman
Art Direction: Bob Defrin
Front cover photo: Frank Moscati
CD Mastered by: Stephen Innocenzi

Alto sax **MARSHALL ROYAL**
Trumpet **HARRY SWEETS EDISON**
Trombone **BUSTER COOPER**
Baritone sax & reeds **BILL GREEN**
Bass **AL MCKIBBON**
Drums **PAUL HUMPHREY**
Guitars **JOHN COLLINS & NEIL LANG**
Vocals & piano **BOBBY SHORT**



© 1987 Atlantic Recording Corporation for the
United States and WEA International Inc. for the
world outside of the United States.
All Rights Reserved. Printed in U.S.A.