

Gerry Mulligan – Top 25 icons in Jazz History

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Gerry Mulligan – Top 25 icons in Jazz History

Over on the West Coast, arranger and baritone saxophonist [Gerry Mulligan](#) – who'd worked with [Miles Davis](#) on the records that became known as Birth of the Cool – took “cool” jazz further than Miles had done. By playing without a chord instrument – a guitar or piano – his band achieved a spare, pared-down feeling. His perfect front-line partner was trumpeter [Chet Baker](#), whose economical, Spartan inventions contrasted perfectly with Mulligan's more harmonically complex baritone sax.

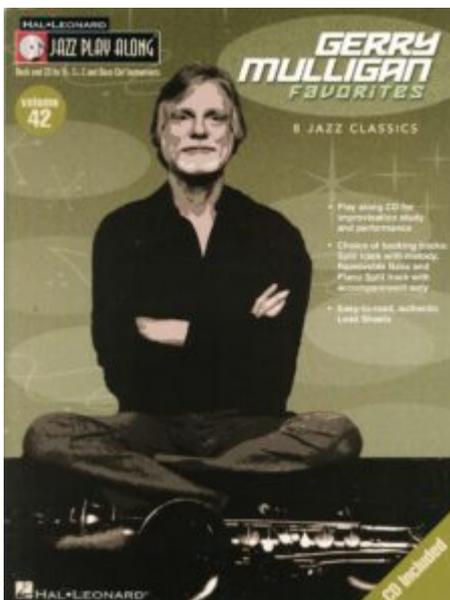
Gerry Mulligan Quartet ~ [My Funny Valentine](#)

This song would later be a big hit for Chet as a vocalist, but the original version by the Mulligan Quartet is a benchmark in the development of cool jazz.

Gerry Mulligan

Gerry Mulligan, byname of **Gerald Joseph Mulligan**, (born April 6, 1927, [Queens Village](#), [Long Island](#), [New York](#), U.S.–died January 20, 1996, [Darren](#), Connecticut), American baritone saxophonist, arranger, and composer noted for his role in popularizing “cool” [jazz](#)—a delicate, dry, understated approach to jazz style.

Mulligan showed strong musical instincts from his early youth. He played piano and wind instruments with a number of small musical ensembles throughout his school years. Leaving school in 1944, he worked with a number of bands, most notably with [Gene Krupa’s](#) big band (1946), as an arranger. Shortly after that, Mulligan became involved in a movement to develop a different style of jazz, known as [cool jazz](#).



He also had begun to specialize in baritone [saxophone](#) and to perform live and on recordings with groups led by such musicians as [Miles Davis](#), Kai Winding, Elliot Lawrence, and Claude Thornhill. In 1952 Mulligan formed his own quartet,

which included [Chet Baker](#) on trumpet. The group, notable for its lack of a pianist, brought international acclaim to both Baker and Mulligan.

During the following decades Mulligan continued to work as a freelance arranger, formed groups varying in size from 4 to 20 (including the 13-piece Concert Jazz Band of the 1960s), and played throughout Europe and the United States and in Japan. He is considered to have been a versatile musician, equally comfortable with many styles of jazz, and one of the more important baritone saxophonists in the jazz [idiom](#).

My Funny Valentine

“**My Funny Valentine**” is a [show tune](#) from the 1937 [Richard Rodgers](#) and [Lorenz Hart](#) musical [Babes in Arms](#) in which it was introduced by former child star [Mitzi Green](#). The song became a popular [jazz standard](#), appearing on over 1300 albums performed by over 600 artists. One of them was [Chet Baker](#), for whom it became his [signature song](#).

In 2015, it was announced that the [Gerry Mulligan](#) quartet featuring [Chet Baker](#)'s version of the song was inducted into the [Library of Congress's National Recording Registry](#) for the song's “cultural, artistic and/or historical significance to American society and the nation's audio legacy”. Mulligan also recorded the song with his Concert Jazz Band in 1960.

The Gerry Mulligan Quartet's studio recording of “My Funny Valentine” had been a hit for the piano-less group in the autumn of 1952, so it was an established part of the quartet's repertoire when producer Dick Bock recorded this live performance on May 20, 1953 at The Haig jazz club in Hollywood, California.

At over five minutes, nearly twice as long as the single, trumpeter Chet Baker and baritone saxophonist Mulligan had room to stretch out. The result is a darker, more expressive

version of "My Funny Valentine," propelled by a Carson Smith bass line that is simple, but insistent and almost ominous. After a short roll by drummer Larry Bunker, Baker's solo is melancholy and direct, followed by Mulligan's more playful chorus. When Baker rejoins Mulligan, the playing intensifies, punctuated by Baker's plaintive wail. No occasional clinking of glasses on the live recording can diminish the power of this West Coast cool jazz classic.

The popularity of the 1952 studio version may have helped to keep this performance in the vault until the 1960s. For many, however, this extended version has become the definitive Mulligan and Baker collaboration.

The song in popular culture

- In [The Simpsons](#) Season 29 episode "[Haw-Haw Land](#)", [Nelson Muntz](#) sings "My Funny Valentine" to [Lisa Simpson](#). The Frank Sinatra version is later used in the same episode.
- In [The Good Cop](#) Season 1 episode "Did the TV Star Do It?", Tony Caruso Sr., played by [Tony Danza](#), starts to sing "My Funny Valentine" on TV, but the murderer/TV host pretends to be offended by what he claims are the misogynistic lyrics. He then fires Tony Sr, allowing him to claim Tony Jr. is out for revenge when he arrests the murderer.
- In the 1995 Season 2 episode of [Living Single](#), entitled "Singing the Blues", Kyle Barker ([T.C. Carson](#)) sings "My Funny Valentine" to his on-again/off-again rival and lover Maxine "Max" Shaw ([Erika Alexander](#)) in an attempt to regain his confidence after an earlier performance was derailed by her presence. She is left swooning by the end of the number. In 2015 Carson covered the song on a single.
- [Matt Damon](#) sang the song in the 1999 movie [The Talented Mr. Ripley](#).
- The song was used in [The Vicar of Dibley](#) episode

“Engagement”.

- In [JoJo's Bizarre Adventure](#): Part 7 ‘Steel Ball Run’, the main antagonist, Funny Valentine, is named after said song.
- In [Cowboy Bebop](#), the fifteenth episode of the anime is named after said song.
- In [Before We Go](#), [Alice Eve](#) sings “My Funny Valentine” and [Chris Evans](#) plays the trumpet.
- In [Grey's Anatomy](#) Season 8 Episode 12 “[Hope for the Hopeless](#)” Richard sings it to Adele.

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