

In the Mood? Crank It Up!

By Dennis Payton Knight

I have managed over the years to gather up a nice library of music, much of it in the jazz and big band genres, but some classic rock, country and blues, too. Most of the time when I am on the road, driving alone, I let my music system shuffle songs at random. I do it for the variety and the nice surprises I have managed to hide in there.

I keep the volume at a respectable level, but I crank it up whenever I hear the opening saxophone riffs of Glenn Miller's classic, *In the Mood*. And the volume doesn't go back down until it finishes its wondrous climbing coda at the end. I dig every note of it. Crank it up.

Later, when out rips the pulsating Gene Krupa drum solo driving the tempo for *Sing, Sing, Sing (With a Swing)*, I crank the music up again. It's my favorite version, the Benny Goodman Swing Orchestra in their famous 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert. With Goodman leading the band and swinging the clarinet solos, Krupa keeps the pulse, with extended riffs from Harry James on trumpet, Babe Russin on tenor sax, and others. It's chaotic, bombastic, and exhilarating, but the music is layered and nuanced. Someplace in the twelve-minute performance I believe Lionel Hampton is hammering the vibraphone, too. Crank it up.

When my system shuffles to Stan Kenton's *Malagueña*, up goes the volume again. It's a classical Latin flamenco featuring four mellophones which Kenton uniquely drafted into his execution of big band jazz. The instrument is a three-valve brass horn in the middle range, the marching band equivalent to the French horn. My son played them both, and very well, so I'm a fan for that reason. And with mellophones to the power of four, Kenton's *Malagueña* is *muy magnifica*. Crank it up.

My crank-it-up rating is not reserved for the big bands, either. I give it to just about anything Ray Charles ever recorded, from *Hit the Road, Jack* to *Hallelujah I Love Her So* and all his *Crying Time* in between. *Baby What'd I Say?* Crank it up again.

I dig the Temptations, too. *My Girl*, *The Way You Do the Things You Do*, *Treat Her Like a Lady*. I don't think another group ever achieved such a combination of close harmony and beautiful, swinging soul like the Temptations. Or is it *Just My Imagination* running away with me? Crank it up. *Ain't Too Proud to Beg*.

And I crank it up when my ears catch the rocky strains of Creedence Clearwater Revival. Big wheel keep on turnin', *Proud Mary* keep on burnin', rollin', rollin' rollin' on the river. *Have You Ever Seen the Rain? Down on the Corner*, out in the street, Willy and the Poorboys are playin'. Crank it Up! There's a *Bad Moon* on the rise.

So, go ahead, ask me my favorite song, 'cause I'm *In the Mood*. Crank it up!