

**BURKE**  
*Beautiful*

**The Songs of Johnny Burke**



**SHARON PAIGE AND KEITH INGHAM**



Love is funny  
Or it's sad,  
Or it's quiet  
Or it's mad.  
It's a good thing  
Or it's bad,  
But beautiful!

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*From "But Beautiful" (1947)  
Lyric by Johnny Burke, music by  
James Van Heusen*



## From Sharon Paige ...

It has been an absolute joy to work with Keith Ingham on this long-overdue Johnny Burke collection. While we did not include such wonderful (but over-recorded) standards as “Here’s That Rainy Day,” “Misty” or the 1936 Academy Award–nominated “Pennies From Heaven,” we feel we have selected a delicious sampling of Burke’s best work, highlighting his extraordinary versatility.

Johnny Burke has the most unique ability to express deep, heartfelt longing by asking simple and direct questions: “What’s New?,” “Do You Know Why?” and, in the case of the sublime “A Hundred Dreams From Now”: “What would be wrong in pretending that we just met?” A poet’s imagery pervades his work; he drops in lyrical gems for us to discover. Who else could conjure up “A Sleighride in July” to convey the wounded heart and naivete of young love, or “Humpty Dumpty Heart” to express the overwhelming desire for love and the willingness to take yet another chance in its pursuit?

During the 1930s and 40s, Johnny Burke worked in Hollywood at Paramount Pictures—most notably in partnership with composer James Van Heusen—as the lyricist of choice for Bing Crosby. The creative exercise of avoiding the phrase “I love you” in his lyrics is believed to be a directive from Crosby, who felt that such sentimentality did not suit his film persona. But as evidenced in songs like “But Beautiful,” “It Could Happen to You” or “Like Someone in Love,” it is obvious that Burke has the heart of a true Romantic; he is completely in love with love.

Johnny Burke is a wizard at turning a phrase by using gentle, no-nonsense, conversational language. If he had not succeeded as a lyricist, he would have made a fine advice columnist, sharing his positive attitude toward life and his philosophical bent for being thankful for the little things; as he puts it, “Aren’t You Glad You’re You?”

Burke has the ability to make you sigh from emotion, but also smile to the point of laughter: “Swinging on a Star,” “Get Rid of Monday,” “One, Two, Button Your Shoe” and the sly “You

Don't Have to Know the Language." Either way, he will always surprise you. A little-known fact about Johnny Burke is that along with being a stellar lyricist, he was an accomplished musician and composer in his own right. Our final song, "He Makes Me Feel I'm Lovely," is from the 1961 Broadway musical *Donnybrook*, based on the film *The Quiet Man*. Words and music by Johnny Burke!

Let's give credit where credit is due; the man has a stunning way with words. Simply put, they are Burke Beautiful.

*Sharon Paige broke into show business in her teens as a singing and dancing chorus girl and moved quickly to featured roles. She has traveled throughout the United States and Canada, performing in the national companies of Broadway and Off Broadway musicals. Sharon has also toured the summer-tent, dinner-theater and nightclub circuits. In 2008, she and Keith Ingham released their Ned Washington tribute CD, Love Is the Thing; Burke Beautiful is their second collaboration. Sharon currently resides and sings in New York City.*

“One of the best things that’s happened to me is a 145-pound Irish leprechaun named Johnny Burke.”

—*Bing Crosby in his autobiography, Call Me Lucky*

## From Keith Ingham ...

Born in Antioch, California, on October 3, 1908, Johnny Burke was raised in Chicago and attended the University of Wisconsin. His musical career began when he took a job with the Irving Berlin publishing company's Chicago office as a song pluggger and composer. Teaming up with Harold Spina in 1933, he began to concentrate only on lyrics, producing one substantial hit, "Annie Doesn't Live Here Anymore," and novelty songs like "You're Not the Only Oyster in the Stew" and "My Very Good Friend the Milkman," both memorably recorded by the great Fats Waller.

Burke joined forces with composer Arthur Johnston when Paramount Pictures called requesting a song for a movie that was to star Bing Crosby. They completed the song, sent it off to Paramount and heard nothing more until Burke was asked to go to Hollywood to meet Crosby, who loved the song so much that it became the title of the movie *Pennies From Heaven*. The whole score was a hit, and Burke and Johnston collaborated on two more movies; then, in 1937, the lyricist found another successful composer in James Monaco. Together they created song hits for nine movies, their final film being the first of the "Road" pictures co-starring Crosby and Bob Hope.

All of this, however, was but a prelude to what became one of the most successful songwriting partnerships in American popular music. Burke and James Van Heusen got together in 1939, their collaboration lasting for 20 years and producing over 200 songs and 32 movie scores.

They also co-wrote several Broadway musicals including *Carnival in Flanders* (1953). Although not a success, the show gave us the masterwork "Here's That Rainy Day," a song that will forever be identified with Frank Sinatra. Burke also had major one-off hits with jazz musicians such as Erroll Garner ("Misty"), Bob Haggart ("What's New?") and Duke Ellington ("A Hundred Dreams From Now").





**AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU'RE YOU?** is from the 1945 movie *The Bells of St. Mary's*, which starred Big Crosby as the Catholic priest Father O'Malley. Here is Johnny Burke at his poetic best, invoking a rose, the dawn, a meadowlark, a summer sky and apple pie, and bringing us back to reality with "Pardon the grammar, but ain't life grand?"

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**SLEIGHRIDE IN JULY** was introduced by Dinah Shore in the 1944 film *Belle of the Yukon*. It's an example of Burke's oblique way of dealing with a love affair gone wrong.

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**YOU DON'T HAVE TO KNOW THE LANGUAGE**, from the 1946 movie *Road to Rio*, is a perfect example of Burke's metaphorical style, finding a way to say "I love you" in a uniquely philosophical and poetic way. Naturally we gave it a Brazilian flavor.

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**BUT BEAUTIFUL** is from the same film and was another huge hit for Crosby, with Burke once again skirting the words "I love you" but getting to the heart of the matter.

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**MY HEART IS A HOBO** is a great swinging song from the Paramount movie *Welcome Stranger* (1947). It was introduced by Crosby, and who else but Burke could rhyme Omar Khayyam with "hates the stodgy guy that I am"? Well, maybe the other great Johnny, Mr. Mercer.

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**HUMPTY DUMPTY HEART** hails from the obscure 1941 film *Playmates*, which starred John Barrymore. Crosby recorded it the same year, backed by a Woody Herman small group.

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**IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU** was featured in Paramount's *And the Angels Sing* (1944) starring Dorothy Lamour and Fred MacMurray. The song has become something of an up-tempo jazz standard, but I decided to slow it down and feature Ron McClure's arco bass obligato to embellish Van Heusen's beautiful melody.

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**SWINGING ON A STAR** was the hit song from the 1944 film *Going My Way*, winning Academy Awards for Crosby as best actor and Burke and Van Heusen for this song. The idea for the lyric came to Burke when he was at Crosby's house waiting on his assignment to write a song that was both educational and uplifting. Crosby's children were at home and reluctant to go to school, and Burke humorously warned them that by avoiding school they might end up like an old mule or a fish or a pig with a dirty face. Realizing he had a potential lyric, he rushed over to Van Heusen's home, and together they wrote this charming little masterpiece that manages to deliver a serious message.

**A HUNDRED DREAMS FROM NOW** was Burke's only collaboration with Duke Ellington, dating from 1958. It's a rarity that deserves to be better known.

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**GET RID OF MONDAY**, written in 1955, is an unusually bluesy song in the Burke-Van Heusen catalogue.

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**SUDDENLY IT'S SPRING** was written in 1944 for the film version of *Lady in the Dark*, the Broadway musical by Moss Hart, Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin. The movie starred Ginger Rogers (who introduced this song) and Ray Milland.

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**ONE, TWO, BUTTON YOUR SHOE** is a marvelous swinging song from the 1936 movie *Pennies From Heaven*. Burke's lyric is tailored for Crosby's laid-back style: casual yet compelling.

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**WHAT'S NEW?**, one of Crosby's biggest hits (1939), began life as an instrumental, showcasing the talent of Billy Butterfield, star trumpet player in the Bob Crosby orchestra (Bing's younger brother). Originally titled "I'm Free," the tune was first given to Johnny Mercer, who uncharacteristically drew a blank. The music was written by the band's great bassist and arranger, Bob Haggart, whom I knew and played with in the World's Greatest Jazz Band. He told me he didn't realize that Johnny Burke had written the brilliantly conversational lyric until he heard Crosby's recording. The last line, "I still love you so," is a rare example of Burke directly expressing what Crosby had always asked him to avoid.

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**LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE** is another Dinah Shore standard from the film musical *Belle of the Yukon* (1944). It has become a great favorite among jazz musicians, so this track features Bobby Porcelli's jazz flute.

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**DO YOU KNOW WHY?** was first heard in the 1940 film *Love Thy Neighbor* starring Mary Martin, Jack Benny and Eddie "Rochester" Anderson.

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**HE MAKES ME FEEL I'M LOVELY**, with both a lyric and music by Burke, has long outlived *Donnybrook*, the 1961 Broadway musical it was written for. Due to a newspaper strike, the show was not reviewed and closed after just a few weeks, leaving Burke devastated. He died three years later, leaving behind some 550 songs. They will be performed as long as there is an audience for heartfelt, tender, witty and imaginative lyrics.

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A few words about our band: Jimmy Van Heusen's tunes have always attracted the best jazz musicians, who relish their inbuilt swing, solid structure and good harmony. **BOBBY PORCELLI**, alto sax and flute, is a veteran of the great Latin Jazz big bands of Tito Puente and Mongo Santamaria, and currently is featured in the Arturo O'Farrell Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra. Bassist **RON McCLURE** has played with Stan Getz, Sarah Vaughan and Buddy Rich, and for years was with Blood, Sweat and Tears. **ARNIE WISE** played with Bill Evans for two years and recorded with Antonio Carlos Jobim, Thad Jones, Zoot Sims and other jazz greats.

*Keith Ingham has recorded extensively and worked with Benny Goodman and vocalists Maxine Sullivan and Peggy Lee, garnering a couple of Grammy nominations along the way. In his view, "The time was right to present the genius of Johnny Burke."*

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Arranged by KEITH INGHAM

Produced by KEITH INGHAM and SHARON PAIGE

Associate Producers: BILL RUDMAN and KEN BLOOM

Recorded March 20 and 24, 2015, at Tedesco Studios, Paramus, NJ

Engineer: TOM TEDESCO

Mixed and Mastered by CHIP FABRIZI, PPI Recording, NYC

Design: LUANN GRAFFEO-BLONKOWSKI / 64 Second Design

Cover Illustration: LUANN GRAFFEO-BLONKOWSKI

Photo of Keith Ingham: CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON.

Photo of Burke and Van Heusen courtesy of PHOTOFEST.

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BILL RUDMAN, Artistic Director

HEATHER MEEKER, Executive Director



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HCD 3215

1. **AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU'RE YOU?** (1945) 2:19
  2. **SLEIGHRIDE IN JULY** (1944) 4:10
3. **YOU DON'T HAVE TO KNOW THE LANGUAGE** (1947) 2:57
  4. **BUT BEAUTIFUL** (1947) 4:15
  5. **MY HEART IS A HOBO** (1947) 2:13
  6. **HUMPTY DUMPTY HEART** (1941) 2:46
  7. **IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU** (1944) 3:15
  8. **SWINGING ON A STAR** (1944) 3:29
9. **A HUNDRED DREAMS FROM NOW** (1958) 2:38
  10. **GET RID OF MONDAY** (1955) 3:38
  11. **SUDDENLY IT'S SPRING** (1944) 2:34
12. **ONE, TWO, BUTTON YOUR SHOE** (1936) 2:44
  13. **WHAT'S NEW?** (1939) 3:13
  14. **LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE** (1944) 2:53
  15. **DO YOU KNOW WHY?** (1940) 3:44
16. **HE MAKES ME FEEL I'M LOVELY** (1961) 2:16

All lyrics by Johnny Burke, all music by James Van Heusen except "One Hundred Dreams From Now" (music by Duke Ellington); "One, Two, Button Your Shoe" (music by Arthur Johnston); "What's New?" (music by Bob Haggart); and "He Makes Me Feel I'm Lovely" (music and lyric by Burke).

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