



Richie Kamuca Quartet – Richie Kamuca Quartet  
V.S.O.P. Records - Mode Records

I begin this discussion from the library with a recent acquisition which I'm happy to say (at least for me) resulted in a very pleasant surprise as I was unaware of tenor saxophonist **Richie Kamuca** until recently. Richie was born on July 23, 1930, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and grew up in the East before heading west just as Bebop was becoming the principal style of jazz. His early sound and style were influenced by tenor saxophonist **Lester Young**, and he would tour with the orchestras of **Woody Herman** and **Stan Kenton**. Kamuca also worked with **Al Cohn** and **Bill Perkins** as part of Herman's Four Brothers Sax Section, and on the west coast, he also played with **Chet Baker**, **Maynard Ferguson**, **The Lighthouse All-Stars**, **Shelly Manne** and **Shorty Rogers** among others. He worked with the All-Stars from 1957 to 1958, and with Manne and His Men from 1959-1962. **The Richie Kamuca Quartet** was recorded in June 1957 and hit the stores that year on Mode Records (Mod-LP-102). The rhythm section is made up of **Carl Perkins** on piano, **Leroy Vinnegar** on bass and **Stan Levey** on drums. My copy used for this report is the 1985 Stereo reissue (V.S.O.P. Records-Mode Records 17 – MOD-LP-102).

The 1931 popular song, **Just Friends** by John Klenner and Sam M. Lewis starts the first side and is a swift-moving opener which launches the album with the quartet's propulsive improvisation. A jazz standard favorite for many musicians and vocalists, the first recording was made in 1932 by baritone vocalist **Russ Columbo** with **The Leonard Joy Orchestra**, becoming a hit. Kamuca is first in the solo spotlight and gives a heated statement of swinging jazz, then Perkins offers his own ideas with electrically charged energy next. Richie responds with a short excursion of fierce lyricism prior to exchanging a few phrases with Stan who makes his presence known on a rousing excursion of joyful riffs ahead of the finale. **Rain Drain** is the only original on the album by Kamuca and this finger-snapping tune

flows along at a relaxing tempo. Here, Richie presents the first solo with an impeccable interpretation of delightfully inspired verses. Carl follows with a brief statement of undeniable pleasure that soars with skillful agility, strongly fostered by the superb supplement by Leroy and Stan.

The 1939 torch song, **What's New?** by Bob Haggart and Johnny Burke is the first of two ballads on the album and was originally composed as an instrumental in 1938. It was originally titled I'm Free while Haggart was a member of **The Bob Crosby Orchestra**. This popular classic was written as a showcase for a fellow bandmate, trumpet player **Billy Butterfield**. Burke wrote the lyrics, revising the tune because of his unique description of a one-sided conversation between former lovers as the song unfolds to **What's New?** Kamuca is ever so thoughtful as he glides gently through the tender melody and also caresses each richly expressed note of the song's only solo before the delicately sweet finale. The first side ends with **Early Bird**, the first of two tunes by pianist Carl Perkins which opens with a bluesy midtempo opening chorus by the quartet that flows comfortably through the melody. Richie delivers a light, melodic swing on the opening solo that offers an excellent example of his sense of pace, and is equally satisfying intellectually, as it is emotionally fulsome. The next reading by Carl takes off at a fanciful flight and Leroy executes a brief bass solo that will delight many, thanks to the rhythmic thrust provided by Stan before the close.

**Nevertheless**, also known by its full title, **Nevertheless (I'm In Love with You)** opens the second side and was written in 1931 by Harry Ruby and Bert Kalmar. It became a hit after the initial recording by bandleader **Jack Denny** that year and was featured in the 1950 biographical film about the songwriting team, **Three Little Words**. The quartet unfolds the standard with a carefree beat to begin the melody and everyone gets the opportunity to say their piece individually. Richie puts together an excellent lead solo weaving soulfully through each verse with a nice laid-back groove. Carl follows with a thoroughly delightful reading during which he works his magic, then comes Leroy who gives an interpretation of harmonious beauty. Stan exchanges a few succinct ideas with Richie before the foursome wraps it up with good feelings. **My One and Only Love** by Guy Wood and Robert Mellin was written in 1953 and is the second ballad on the LP. This jazz standard was originally written as an instrumental titled **Music From Beyond The Moon** by Wood and Jack Lawrence. It was first sung by **Vic Damone** in 1948 and has been recorded as an instrumental and vocal numerous times, ultimately



becoming an ageless classic. Richie carries the theme gracefully interacting with the trio's affectionate groundwork that touches the heart. His opening statement is full of expressive beauty and lovingly presented ahead of Perkins who delivers an elegantly sincere presentation that's a gorgeous work of art.

**Fire One**, the second original from Perkins brings the tempo back to medium speed with a bluesy flavor that allows Richie, Carl and Leroy one chorus each to convey their message with a great deal of spirit. The album ends on an upbeat note with the 1938 jazz standard, **Cherokee** by Ray Noble. Noble's best known, and definitive composition has been recorded over the years many times and is a perennial favorite among jazz musicians and vocalists. It was originally written as part of a five-part movement known as **Indian Suite (Cherokee, Comanche War Dance, Iroquois, Seminole, and Sioux Sue)** and became a hit a year later as an instrumental for **The Charlie Barnet Orchestra**. The quartet launches the theme robustly, making a rapid run through each phrase with authority. Kamuca is particularly spirited on the lead solo as Perkins, Vinnegar, and Levey provide the stimulating foundation behind him. The second reading offers a fine example of Carl's playing in a hard-driving vein as he builds each verse at a combusive pace. Stan's technical mastery and rhythmic exhilaration end the album with brief exchanges with Richie on the final reading leading to the concluding theme statement.

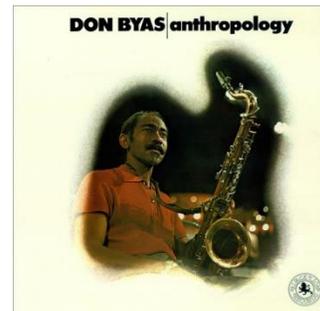
During his lifetime, Kamuca recorded and worked with some of the greatest musicians in the genre of jazz on both the east and west coast including **Roy Eldridge, Gary McFarland, Gerry Mulligan, Art Pepper, Jimmy Rowles, Cy Touff** among others. Sadly, his music is overlooked today, despite being a solid musician with a soft, warm, lyrical tone that suggests the sounds of tenor saxophonist legends, **Stan Getz** and **Lester Young**. **Richie Kamuca** deserved greater recognition of his talent and a career which was on track to make him better known when he died of cancer on July 22, 1977, just before his forty-seventh birthday. The engineer of the original session is **Dayton Howe**, who also worked on many of the original **Mode** albums in addition to other labels including **ABC-Paramount, Discovery, Pacific Jazz, MGM Records, and World Pacific**. I'm happy to report that **The Richie Kamuca Quartet** is a beautiful-sounding album that will wear well with repeated listening. The only negative aspect of this record is its length, the LP clocks in just under thirty-one minutes. But there's a lot of music packed into each selection by **The Richie Kamuca Quartet** and the easiest solution to remedy this issue, of course, is

to simply play it again! The quartet's interaction throughout each song is a pleasure to enjoy and the album itself a pure delight which I hope you'll seek out for a spot in your jazz library!

Dayton Howe – Source: Discogs.com

Cherokee, Indian Suite, Just Friends, My One and Only Love, Three Little Words, What's New? – Source: JazzStandards.com

Richie Kamuca, Nevertheless – Source: Wikipedia.org



Don Byas – Anthropology  
Black Lion Records

This LP offered for your approval from the library comes from tenor saxophonist **Don Byas**, a swing and bebop musician who played in the orchestras of **Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Lionel Hampton**. He also worked with **Art Blakey, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, and Ethel Waters** among others. The album is titled **Anthropology** (Black Lion Records BLP 30126) and was recorded in performance at the **Jazzhus Montmartre** (also known as **Café Montmartre**) on January 13, 1963. My copy used for this report is the 1974 Netherlands Stereo reissue which is the second pressing. The rhythm section is an outstanding trio of Danish descent, pianist **Bent Axen**, bassist **Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen** and drummer **William Schiöppfe**. The album opens with the title tune, a bebop standard written in 1945 by Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker which is also known as **Thriving From a Riff** or **Thriving on a Riff**. Schiöppfe introduces the standard with robust energy, setting the pace for the rapid-fire melody. Byas soars into a fiercely, blazing opening statement, revealing the splendor of his tone at full stretch. Axen launches into the next reading like a man possessed of intensity and power. Pedersen gives a brief presentation bursting with molten force shadowed by Byas who also moves in a steady



expression. Schiöppfe ends the readings with extreme fierceness while exchanging a few notes with Byas who leads the quartet into a vigorous ending.

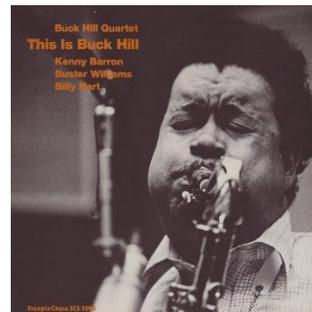
The beautiful song, **Moonlight in Vermont** was written in 1944 by John Blackburn and Karl A. Suessdorf. This timeless evergreen provides a perfect backdrop for Byas' beautifully conceived, luscious melody. He presents with a dreamy interpretation on the opening solo which though slow-paced is serene, not melancholy. Axen offers a graceful elegance on the next performance with discreet, perfectly tailored reinforcement by Pedersen and Schiöppfe. Byas' closing chorus is lovingly rendered, completing the song with a tender climax that is absolutely gorgeous. Charlie Parker's 1945 bebop standard **Billie's Bounce** ends the first side on an upbeat note with a spirited interpretation by the quartet. Pedersen and Schiöppfe bring the song to life with a duet introduction which blossoms into a lively theme with a festive swing. Byas energizes the first solo with a rock-steady beat that cooks convincingly. Axen delivers a fiery performance for the closing solo with dazzling fluency, a compelling display of lyricism and masterful ease.

Dizzy Gillespie's most famous and recorded composition, **Night In Tunisia** was written in 1942 with Frank Paparelli. It opens the second side with enthusiastic excitement on the introduction by the rhythm section. Don sails securely over the trio on the vigorously energetic theme, then launches into a strong-toned, vibrant opening statement which is well-constructed and melodic. Bent steps up next to present a freewheeling exuberant performance that is succulent and tasty. Byas provides a few more verses with Pedersen and Schiöppfe providing the power to fuel his second rousing presentation of sizzling exuberance. The bassist takes over for an abbreviated scorcher, followed by Schiöppfe who speaks last in a short statement of incredible precision with a superb touch. The record ends with the 1932 ballad, **Don't Blame Me**, written by Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields. This song made its first appearance on Broadway in the show, **Clowns in Clover** and later in two films, **The Bad and The Beautiful** in 1952 and **Two Weeks in Another Town** ten years later. Byas begins the standard with a delicately soft introduction and heart-warming melody presentation, leading to a sultry opening statement which is exquisite. Axen expresses a gentle affection on the final solo performance preceding Byas who ends the song and LP with a tender candor on the closing chorus.

In 1964, Byas was celebrating his third decade as a professional musician. In honor of that achievement, the LP

was originally released as **The Big Sound-Don Byas' 30th Anniversary Album** by Fontana (688 605 ZL) in the Netherlands and Debut Records (DEB-142) in Denmark. Two songs on the original LP are omitted on **Anthropology**, they are **There'll Never Be Another You** by Harry Warren and Mack Gordon, and **Walkin'** by Richard Carpenter. Both songs are featured on the 1992 CD-album, **Walkin'** (Black Lion Records BLCD 760167). Don Byas possessed a gorgeous tone, a sophisticated harmonic sense, and sound which was full of jubilation, he would live the last twenty-six years of his life in Europe. The dialogue between the foursome is fascinating, making the five performances swinging music that's alive. Though out of print for many years, **Anthropology** is an invitation to explore and enjoy a remarkable album of jazz by **Don Byas** which I not only recommend but am sure will become a welcome addition in any library.

Don't Blame Me – Source: Wikipedia.org



Buck Hill Quartet – This Is Buck Hill  
SteepleChase Records

The album I've chosen from the library this time is by one of my favorite tenor saxophonists. His birth name is **Roger Wendell Hill**, but the jazz world would come to know him by his nickname **Buck**. He began his professional career as a musician in 1943 while maintaining his job as a postman in Washington D.C. for over three decades. He first worked with guitarist **Charlie Byrd** in the late fifties, also appearing on albums by jazz pianist, vocalist **Shirley Horn**, trumpet player **Alan Houser** and organist **Shirley Scott**, but didn't record as a leader until the late seventies. **This Is Buck Hill** (SteepleChase Records SCS 1095) offers all the excitement, emotion and energy of an after-hours jam session. For his debut, the saxophonist is joined by the outstanding rhythm section of **Kenny Barron** on piano, **Buster Williams** on bass and **Billy Hart** on drums. My copy used in this report is the original 1978 US Stereo album.



**Tokudo**, an original by the bassist opens the first side, he would record it again on his third release for **Muse Records**, **Heartbeat** (Muse Records MR 5171) one year later. This tune is a brisk uptempo groove from the outset of the dynamic theme and everyone gets to speak individually with aggressive momentum. Buck soars with captivating inspiration on the first solo, succeeded by Kenny who attacks the next reading viciously. Buster is up next with a stimulating interpretation that's an excellent showcase of his virtuosity and Billy delivers the closing performance equally with searing and soulful choruses prior to the theme's return. The timeless evergreen **Yesterdays** by Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach is one of the most recorded compositions in jazz and pop with over one-hundred notable vocal and instrumental interpretations since its creation in 1933. The song swings at a medium tempo with the quartet presenting the melody collectively. Hill takes the lead with an abundantly strong beat on the opening statement that is lyrically pleasant. Barron is equally imaginative and compelling on the next reading, followed by Williams who presents a rewarding performance deep in feeling preceding the ensemble's beautiful finale.

A forcefully and energetically introduction by Billy Hart begins Sonny Rollins' **Oleo**. The ensemble gets things underway with a blistering hot theme rendition, then Buck takes off at breakneck speed with a thrilling high-temperature lead solo including three verses of white heat with no accompaniment. Kenny fuels the next reading with plenty of fire and Billy returns to exchange a few final expedient comments with Buck which reaches a brilliant climax on the closing chorus. The second side begins with the first of three selections by Hill, **I'm Aquarius** is a beautiful ballad by Buck which appeared as part of a suite on a 1973 album by trumpet player **Alan Houser** titled **No Samba** (Straight Ahead ARS 001). It opens elegantly with a cascading flow of tenderness from Kenny that proceeds gently into the melody with the sax directing the quartet softly. He establishes a mood of pensive restraint on the opening statement which is distinctively personal, ahead of Kenny who ends the solos with a delicate sensitivity that is stunning and leads to a sultry finale.

**S.M.Y.** is a lively original by Buck with an irresistible groove that exudes happiness from the melody. The saxman has his say first with a vivacious interpretation of feisty, fiery choruses. Kenny digs in masterfully on the second reading of this upbeat swinger with plenty of passion, then Buck returns to deliver a high-voltage postscript that's a

knockout ahead of the theme's reprise and climax. The album ends with **Two Chord Molly**, an uptempo original that affords everyone except Billy an opportunity to contribute lengthy readings. The trio lays down a swinging line on the introduction with Buck adding comments as they romp through the festive melody. Kenny is up first and delivers an enthusiastically rigorous opening statement, Buster gets down to business next with a sizzling workout of his own that is highly enjoyable. Buck wraps up the solos with expeditious phrases of electricity on the final reading which ends the album on an upbeat note. During Hill's solo on the final track, you can hear someone commenting (I'm sure positively) on his performance.

The man behind the controls on **This Is Buck Hill** is **Elvin Campbell**, whose exemplary work can be heard on many jazz LP's from **Atlantic**, **Decca**, **Fontana**, **Mercury Records**, and **Milestone Records** among others. On this album, his recording is nearly flawless, the highs, midrange, and bottom end are all very detailed with an excellent soundstage and crystal-clear clarity on the four instruments. Buck would record three more albums for **SteepleChase**, **Scope** (SCS 1123) in 1979, **Easy To Love** (SCS-1160) in 1982 and **Impressions** (SCS 1173) in 1983. His 1997 two-CD-album, **Northsea Festival** contains **Easy To Love** and **Impressions**. He would also record two LP's and one CD-album for **Muse Records**, **Capital Hill** (MR 5384) and **The Buck Stops Here** (MR 5416) in 1990, **I'm Beginning To See The Light** (MR 5449) in 1991 and **Impulse** (MR 5483) in 1992. His final CD-album **Relax** (CD 0039) was released on **Severn Records** in 2006. He passed away at the age of ninety at his home in Greenbelt, Maryland on March 20, 2017.

**Buck Hill** makes a distinctive first impression with strong performances on each of the songs aided by the superlative trio of **Kenny Barron**, **Buster Williams**, and **Billy Hart**. The music on **This Is Buck Hill** still sounds as fresh today as when it first hit the stores forty-years ago. It's also a pleasure to hear this foursome in resolute form, fully committed to achieving a goal of excellent jazz with an extraordinary interaction that belies the fact this was their first time recording together. On your next hunt for some Hard-Bop, Post-Bop or Contemporary Jazz you can enjoy at any time of the day or evening, I'll hope you'll consider **This Is Buck Hill** for a spot in your library. He was a veteran jazzman who certainly deserves a place alongside the greatest to ever blow the tenor saxophone. There was only one pressing of the album issued in the US and Denmark (both LP's sharing the same catalog number) by **SteepleChase** and the CD-

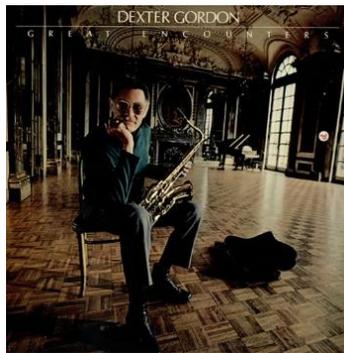


album (SCCD 31095) came out in 1993 and adds an additional take of **S.M.Y.** All three editions are currently out of print!

Oleo, Yesterdays – Source: JazzStandards.com

Alan Houser, No Samba – Source: Album liner notes by J.R. Taylor

Roger Wendell Hill, Tokudo, Heartbeat, Scope, Easy To Love, Impressions, Northsea Festival, Capital Hill, The Buck Stops Here, I'm Beginning To See The Light, Impulse, Relax, Elvin Campbell – Source: AllMusic.com, Wikipedia.org



Dexter Gordon – Great Encounters  
Columbia

Tenor saxophonist **Dexter Gordon** is the subject of this report with two sessions which makes up his 1979 LP, **Great Encounters** (Columbia JC 35978). Joining him for the first two tracks which were recorded live at **Carnegie Hall** on **September 23, 1978** are **Johnny Griffin** on tenor sax; **George Cables** on piano; **Rufus Reid** on bass and **Eddie Gladden** on drums. My copy used in this report is the original 1979 Stereo LP. The album opener **Blues Up and Down**, was written in 1950 by tenor saxophonist **Gene Ammons** and alto, tenor saxophonist **Sonny Stitt**. The song is the epitome of the terms “blowing session”, “cutting session” or “sax battle” and made its first appearance on the Prestige ten-inch album, **Battle of The Saxes** (Prestige PRLP 107), released in 1951 by Messer’s Ammons and Stitt. Gordon and Griffin attack the song in the same blistering fast velocity by delivering the opening melody swiftly which makes the most of the song’s rhythmic conception in a hard-driving fashion. Dexter leads off the solos with a torrid performance which rivals the speed of a race car as he builds each verse with stunning ideas. Griffin matches the

excitement of Gordon’s statement by roaring away with soulful phrasing and an intense quickness in each melodic line that is hot enough to create sparks. The two saxophonists spar with each other through the next series of choruses at a breakneck tempo while the rhythm section keeps the groove flowing with a substantial amount of energetic emotion in support.

**Cake**, a Gordon original composition was written in 1962, making its debut on the Blue Note album, **Go** (BLP 4112/BST 84112) as **Cheese Cake**. The rhythm section establishes an efficiently enjoyable groove to introduce the song, then both horns join in unison, presenting the main theme propelled by the horsepower of the rhythm section’s swinging supplement. Gordon opens the soloing with a blazingly hot reading, delivering a fierce impact like a brick through a plate glass window. Griffin continues the rigorous mood by stating his case with an impressive hard-driving performance of his own. Gladden punctuates the final statement with fine form in a concise performance while exchanging a few thoughts between both saxes, ahead of the theme’s return and finale. The entire concert featuring both songs heard here can be found on Gordon’s 1998 CD-album, **Live at Carnegie Hall** (Columbia Legacy CK 65312).

The mood changes to start the second side with a rollicking rendition of Gordon’s original **Diggin’ In** which adds the Vocalese talents of **Eddie Jefferson** who wrote the lyrics; trumpet player **Woody Shaw** and trombonist **Curtis Fuller** to the quartet. The front line gets the party started with a lively introduction, then Jefferson stokes the engines with an impressive vocal presentation of the melody and sings exceptionally well on the first solo including exchanging a few phrases with Gordon. Dexter takes over for a straight-ahead reading which is intelligently constructed, swings like mad and emanates a jubilant spirit through each verse. Shaw matches the passion on the next performance in effectively intricate fashion by fueling the rhythm section with fire from his horn. Fuller responds with a fat-toned quick-fire presentation full of enthusiasm and whip-crack precision.

**Ruby My Dear** was written by Thelonious Monk in 1947, appearing on the pianist’s 1952 album, **Genius of Modern Music** (Blue Note BLP 5002). The tune was written for Monk’s first love Rubie Richardson and is one of the most beautiful ballads in jazz. Lyrics were added to the song in 1998 by lyricist Sally Swisher for vocalist **Carmen McRae** who sang it on her tribute album, **Carmen Sings Monk**



(Novus 3086-1-N) as **Dear Ruby** due to copyright issues. Dexter's opening statement is one of haunting dreaminess where each note is elegantly presented, and his interpretation is picturesque and lovely. Cables follows with a brief presentation, expressing thoughtfulness with a delicately simple reading over Reid and Gladden who are well disciplined in their immaculate accompaniment leading to a gentle finale of the finest versions of this gorgeous Monk original ever heard.

**It's Only a Paper Moon** was written in 1933 by Harold Arlen, E.Y. Harburg and Billy Rose. It began life on Broadway appearing in an unsuccessful production titled **The Great Magoo**, but would find new life in the film, **Take a Chance**, released the same year, becoming a bigger hit years later in the hands of **Nat King Cole** and **Ella Fitzgerald**. The album's finale brings back the talents of Jefferson, Shaw and Fuller for a joyous sendoff through the melody by the sextet, then Eddie steps in to serenade the listener with a bold, swinging tone that is inventive and beautifully enunciated. Gordon comes in next taking off in a superb showcase which is fresh, emotionally compelling and exceptionally pleasurable. Shaw takes care of business on the next reading with a fury that demonstrates his technical ability and melodic flow. Cables builds steadily on the next solo of joyfully significant verses which follow one another with virtuous self-assurance and Fuller is also in marvelous form on the final interpretation with a blazing solo that hits a perfect stride and works wonderfully.

The choice of using Jefferson for this album came about because Gordon met up with Eddie at **The Tin Palace** after a performance at **The Village Vanguard**. I'm extremely grateful that their discussion resulted in his appearance on the record. My only regret about **Great Encounters** is that Jefferson couldn't be used for the entire album instead of just two tracks. He was a true innovator and his vocal treatments of classic songs and solos reveal a tremendous fire and a maturity which was stylish, authoritative and once heard, you'd never mistake him for anyone else. Six months after this record was made, \*Jefferson was shot and killed after leaving **Baker's Keyboard Lounge** in **Detroit, Michigan** on **May 8, 1979** by a disgruntled dancer he fired. **The Manhattan Transfer** would pay homage to both Jefferson and tenor saxophonist **Coleman Hawkins** on their rendition of **Body and Soul** from their 1979 release, **Extensions** (Atlantic SD 19258). The live tracks were recorded by engineer Tom Arrison and the studio tracks were recorded by engineer **Don Puluse**. **Great Encounters** only received one pressing on vinyl and has been out of

print since its initial release and the 2006 CD-album from **Wounded Bird Records** (WOU 5978) also, but it's worth digging for to add to your library and is an overlooked gem which can give considerable pleasure upon repeated listening.

Vocalese - a musical composition consisting of the singing of melody with vowel sounds or nonsense syllables rather than text, as for special effect in classical compositions, in polyphonic jazz singing by special groups, or in virtuoso vocal exercises. Source: Dictionary.com

Ruby, My Dear, It's Only a Paper Moon, \*Jefferson – Source: Wikipedia.org