

Famous Popular Pianists from the 1920s

We offer a selection of over 100 MIDI files of performances by some of the best known popular style pianists to record on reproducing piano roll. All these pianists made disc recordings, and artists such as Zez Confrey and George Gershwin are perhaps better known as composers. Pauline Alpert and Lee Sims are not so well remembered, however they were highly regarded in their day and both pianists have an individual style. Freddie Rich is better known as a band leader. The only Duo-Art roll recording by Billy Mayerl is included.



Pauline Alpert (1905–1988)



Described by Duo-Art promotional literature as “The Young Lady Who Sounds Like Two Pianos”

Alpert was two years old when the family moved from New York to Rochester, where she eventually entered the Eastman School of Music on a four year scholarship. Though trained in the classics, she excelled at playing the popular music then sweeping the country. Ultimately she appeared at the Paramount Theatre in New York; she recorded for Victor and for many years was prominent on radio.

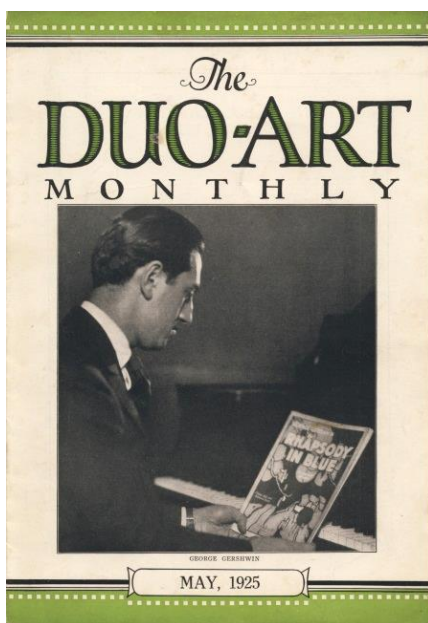
She began with Duo-Art in the late 1920s simply by walking in and playing for Frank Milne (a prominent Duo-Art popular artist) who was “flabbergasted.” Apparently Aeolian management thought that people would not believe she was capable of such playing and she was asked to ‘tone it down.’ For this reason, her disc recordings are sometimes regarded as less constrained. In any case, her Duo-Art roll recordings are highly regarded. As one writer described it, when she performed at the 1979 AMICA convention (aged 74) she hobbled to the piano, then let rip as if she was aged 20. In 1925, she appeared in Al Jolson’s show *Big Boy*, where next to Jolson himself, her piano playing was the most applauded feature of the show. She recorded over 50 songs on Duo-Art rolls during 1927-29.

ZeZ Confrey (1895–1971)



Confrey was an active participant in the popular music scene of the 1920s. He wrote over 100 works, and was billed as a “novelty pianist and composer”. In the now famous 1924 Paul Whiteman concert that premiered Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, Confrey also shot to fame when he played his *Kitten on the Keys*. He trained at the Chicago Musical College with the hope of becoming a concert pianist but his only recordings are his 44 Ampico piano rolls of (mostly) popular music. His *Modern Course in Novelty Piano Playing* was published in 1923 and remained in print for 40 years. His most remembered works are *Dizzy Fingers* and *Kitten on the Keys*. In this compilation, *Kitten on the Keys* is played by Ampico popular pianist Herbert Clair.

George Gershwin (1898–1937)



Gershwin left school at age 15 to work as a ‘song plugger’ for publisher Jerome Remick, where he developed his skills as a pianist, improviser and composer. After two years with Remick, he took up work with the Standard Company recording 88-note player rolls for the Perfection label under various pseudonyms. In 1917, he was introduced to Aeolian by Felix Arndt (composer of *Nola*), where he recorded 88-note and Duo-Art rolls. His early Duo-Art rolls were duets with other pianists, and in 1919 the first of his 17 solo Duo-Art rolls was issued. At around this time, he made roll recordings for the Welte-Mignon Corporation, which some believe to show his true playing style, because these rolls were generally unedited.

His first major hit was *Swanee* in 1919, which he recorded for the Duo-Art, but not for the Welte-Mignon. On Tuesday, 12th of February 1924, the historic first performance of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* took place at Aeolian Hall in New York. Gershwin recorded this work for Aeolian over two rolls, with part 2 appearing first in May 1925, and part 1 nearly two years later. The arrangement is said to be by Gershwin, although it is not known if he played both parts. His last Duo-Art roll recordings appeared in 1926, including two songs from his show “Tip Toes”.

Freddie Rich (1898–1956)



Born in Poland, Efrem (Freddie) Rich is today best known as an American band leader, with luminaries such as the Dorsey Brothers and Benny Goodman in his band. He was a pianist, described by Aeolian as completing “his piano training under no less a master than the late Rafael Joseffy, which is sufficient proof that he is a well grounded and thorough musician.” He recorded over 40 Duo-Art rolls for Aeolian, the first appearing in late 1924. He formed his own band in the 1920s, which became a resident band for the Waldorf-Astoria for a while. His band made many recordings for a range of gramophone labels, but Rich only recorded his piano playing skills on piano roll.

Lee Sims (1898–1966)



Of all the popular artists on piano roll, Lee Sims stands out for his arrangements. Sometimes bordering on 1920s jazz style, Sims uses a flowing style reminiscent of Roger Williams. All this in the one song in some cases. Although a pianist, Sims was known also as a theatre organist, beginning his career playing theatre organ for silent movies. During the 1920s, Sims began working for radio stations, as a studio manager and a performer. He founded the Lee Sims School of Music, and married student Ilomay Bailey, a vocalist; the two formed a team appearing in the 1930s on various radio shows. Sims recorded extensively for Brunswick during the 1920s and 1930s. He made 14 roll recordings for Ampico in the late 1920s.

Billy Mayerl (1902–1959)



Mayerl was born in London, and began studying piano at the Trinity College of Music at age seven. Though classically trained, he established his reputation as a composer and performer of popular light music. He appeared with hotel bands, did broadcasting and recording, and founded the Billy Mayerl School of Music. He recorded over 30 88-note piano rolls for the Echo label in the early 1920s; his only Duo-Art roll was issued in 1926. He made many disc recordings from 1926 to 1950.

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Title	Composer	Pianist	Roll No.	Rec date	time	midi file name
Anything Your Heart Desires from "Just A Minute"	Harry Archer (1888-1960)	Alpert	585	12 1928	2:44	Anything Heart Desires, Alpert DA
Blue Baby Why Are You Blue	Klages, Green and Haid	Alpert	713440	12 1927	3:01	Blue Baby, Alpert DA
Dancing Tambourine	William C. Polla (1876-1939)	Alpert	713430	11 1927	3:16	Dancing Tambourine, Alpert DA
Dear on a Night Like This	Con Conrad (1891-1938)	Alpert	457	01 1928	2:48	Dear on a Night Like This, Alpert DA
Dreamhouse	Lynn F. Cowan (1888-1973)	Alpert	562	10 1928	2:31	Dreamhouse, Alpert DA
Fashionette	Glogau & King	Alpert	73437	09 1929	2:31	Fashionette, Alpert DA
Here Am I Broken Hearted	Ray Henderson (1896-1970)	Alpert	713444	12 1927	3:09	Here Am I Broken Hearted, Alpert DA
I Know That You Know from "Oh Please"	Vincent Youmans (1888-1946)	Alpert	713326	02 1927	2:55	I Know that You Know, Alpert DA
Kiss and Make Up	Bogate and Hoefle	Alpert	713448	12 1927	2:52	Kiss and Make Up, Alpert DA
Me and my Shadow	Jolson, Rose & Dreyer	Alpert	713404	09 1927	3:03	Me and My Shadow, Alpert DA
My Blue Heaven	Walter Donaldson (1893-1947)	Alpert	713438	11 1927	3:32	My Blue Heaven, Alpert DA
Pompanola from "Three Cheers"	DeSylva, Brown & Henderson	Alpert	590	12 1928	3:24	Pompanola, Alpert DA
Ragamuffin	Jesse Greer (1896-1970)	Alpert	73337	06 1929	2:43	Ragamuffin, Alpert DA
Rain on the Roof	Ann Ronell	Alpert	862	04 1932	3:18	Rain on the Roof, Alpert DA
Roses of Yesterday	Irving Berlin (1888-1989)	Alpert	575	11 1928	3:20	Roses of Yesterday, Alpert DA
Side by Side	Harry M. Woods (1896-1970)	Alpert	713393	07 1927	2:42	Side by Side, Alpert DA
Song is Ended	Irving Berlin (1888-1989)	Alpert	456	01 1928	3:08	Song is Ended, Alpert DA
Sunny Side Up, Keep Your	DeSylva, Brown and Henderson	Alpert	708	02 1932	2:34	Sunny Side Up, Alpert DA
Sweepin' The Clouds Away	Sam Coslow	Alpert	747	07 1930	3:00	Sweepin Clouds Away, Alpert DA
Wedding of the Painted Doll	Nacio Herb Brown (1896-1964)	Alpert	631	04 1929	3:42	Wedding Painted Doll, Alpert DA
When Eliza Rolls Her Eyes	Warren-Alpert	Alpert	570	10 1928	2:49	When Eliza Rolls Her Eyes, Alpert DA
Kitten on the Keys	ZeZ Confrey (1895-1971)	Clair	60621	04 1922	2:25	Kitten on the Keys, Clair A
Ah-Ha!	James Monaco (1885-1945)	Confrey	206411	09 1925	2:48	Ah-Ha, Confrey AA
Are You Sorry	Milton Ager (1893-1979)	Confrey	206251	08 1925	2:55	Are You Sorry A
By The Waters Of Minnetonka	Thurlow Lieurance (1878-1963)	Confrey	68091	09 1927	2:42	By Waters of Minnetonka, Confrey AA
Dizzy Fingers	ZeZ Confrey (1895-1971)	Confrey	65581	01 1926	2:23	Dizzy Fingers, Confrey AA
Fantasy of Today	ZeZ Confrey (1895-1971)	Confrey	65713	02 1926	4:11	Fantasy of Today (Confrey) A
Fascinating Rhythm	George Gershwin (1898-1937)	Confrey	205821	04 1925	2:48	Fascinating Rhythm A
Fond of You	Lewis E. Gensler (1896-1978)	Confrey	206781	01 1926	2:38	Fond of You A
Gimme a Little Kiss Will Ya Huh	Maceo Pinkard (1897-1962)	Confrey	207361	06 1926	3:24	Gimme Little Kiss, Confrey AA
Good News	DeSylva-Brown-Henderson	Confrey	209411	12 1927	2:39	Good News, Confrey AA
Jay Walk	ZeZ Confrey (1895-1971)	Confrey	66821	12 1926	2:26	Jay Walk, Confrey AA
Let It Rain, Let It Pour	Walter Donaldson (1893-1947)	Confrey	205911	05 1925	2:44	Let It Rain Let It Pour A

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Loud Speakin' Papa	Lew Pollack (1895-1946)	Confrey	206581	11 1925	2:39	Loud Speakin' Papa, Confrey AA
Manhattan from "The Garrick Gaities 1925"	Richard Rodgers (1902-1979)	Confrey	206421	09 1925	2:35	Manhattan, Confrey AA
Me Too	Al Sherman (1897-1973)	Confrey	208221	01 1927	2:40	Me Too, Confrey AA
Musical Comedy Favourites No.8 1. Do I Love You?; 2. Kitty's Kisses; 3. Temptation Strut; 4. Cross Your Heart	Christine & Goetz; Conrad; Lindsay & Rubens; Gensler	Confrey	66353	08 1926	3:57	Musical Comedy 8, Confrey A
No Man's Mama	Lew Pollack (1895-1946)	Confrey	206691	12 1925	2:49	No Man's Mama, Confrey AA
Oh If I Only Had You	Cliff Friend (1893-1974)	Confrey	208031	11 1926	2:22	Oh If I Only Had You, Confrey AA
Oh! Flo	Walter Donaldson (1893-1947)	Confrey	205671	03 1925	2:35	Oh Flo, Confrey A
Oh, Lady Be Good!	George Gershwin (1898-1937)	Confrey	205661	03 1925	2:41	Oh Lady Be Good, Confrey AA
Save Your Sorrow (For To-Morrow)	Al Sherman (1897-1973)	Confrey	206471	10 1925	2:40	Save Your Sorrow, Confrey AA
Sometimes I'm Happy	Vincent Youmans (1988-1946)	Confrey	208891	08 1927	2:39	Sometimes I'm Happy A
Sweet Child (I'm Wild About You)	Lewis-Simon-Whiting	Confrey	207041	03 1926	2:36	Sweet Child, Confrey AA
Sweet Georgia Brown	Ben Bernie, Maceo Pinkard & Kenneth Casey	Confrey	206241	08 1925	1:12	Sweet Georgia Brown A
Sweet Little You	Irving Bibb (1889-1962)	Confrey	205561	02 1925	2:50	Sweet Little You, Confrey AA
Sweet Man	Maceo Pinkard (1897-1962)	Confrey	206571	11 1925	2:39	Sweet Man, Confrey AA
Then I'll Be Happy	Cliff Friend (1893-1974)	Confrey	206931	02 1926	2:41	Then I'll Be Happy, Confrey AA
Titina (Foxtrot)	Leo Daniderff (1878-1943)	Confrey	205921	05 1925	2:34	Titina, Confrey AA
What Can I Say After I Say I'm Sorry	Walter Donaldson & Abe Lyman	Confrey	207171	04 1926	10:48	What Can I Say After A
When I Think Of You	Vincent Rose (1880-1944)	Confrey	206181	07 1925	2:49	When I Think Of You, Confrey AA
You Told Me To Go	Henry R. Cohen	Confrey	206941	02 1926	2:38	You Told Me to Go A
Charleston	James P. Johnson (1894-1955)	Confrey	206191	07 1925	2:36	Charleston, Confrey AA
Charleston Medley 1. How Come You Do Me Like You Do; 2. Doodle Doo Doo; 3. Too Tired.		Confrey	64101	02 1925	3:18	Charleston Medley, Confrey A
Humorestless	Dvorak-Confrey	Confrey	64381	04 1925	2:43	Humorestless, Confrey A
My Castle In Spain	Isham Edgar Jones (1894-1956)	Confrey	207031	03 1926	3:01	My Castle in Spain (Jones), Confrey A
Waltz Mirage	Zeze Confrey (1895-1971)	Confrey	66941	12 1926	2:27	Waltz Mirage (Confrey) A
Drifting Along With the Tide	George Gershwin (1898-1937)	Gershwin	1744	10 1921	2:21	Drifting Along, Gershwin DA
East Is West Chinese Lullaby	Robert Bowers (1877-1941)	Gershwin	3969	1919-20	1:09	East Is West, Gershwin LW
First Rose Of Summer	Jerome Kern (1885-1945)	Gershwin	3966	1919-20	3:32	First Rose Of Summer, Gershwin LW
I Was So Young, You Were So Beautiful from "Good Morning Judge"	George Gershwin (1898-1937)	Gershwin	10033	10 1919	3:38	I Was So Young, Gershwin DA

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I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles	Kenbrovin & Kellette (pseudonym for James Kendis (1883-1946) & James Brockman)	Gershwin	3970	1919-20	1:35	I'm Forever Blow Bubbles, Gershwin LW
Kickin' the Clouds Away	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Gershwin	686	07 1925	2:43	Kickin the Clouds Away, Gershwin DA
Left All Alone Again Blues	Jerome Kern (1885- 1945)	Gershwin	1664	05 1920	2:00	Left Alone Again Blues, Gershwin DA
Limehouse Nights	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Gershwin	541 br	03 1920	2:40	Limehouse Nights, Gershwin DA
Novelette in Fourths (Salon Selection)	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Gershwin	3968	1919-20	2:40	Novelette (Gershwin), Gershwin LW
Rhapsody in Blue Part 1	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Gershwin	70947	01 1927	8:45	Rhapsody in Blue-1, Gershwin DA
Rhapsody in Blue Part 2 Andante and Finale	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Gershwin	68787	05 1925	4:54	Rhapsody In Blue-2, Gershwin DA
Rock-A-Bye Lullaby Land	Walter Donaldson (1893- 1947)	Gershwin	1705	01 1921	3:25	Rock-A-Bye Lullaby Land, Gershwin DA
So Am I	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Gershwin	102625	09 1925	4:05	So Am I, Gershwin DA
Sometime, from "Sometime"	Rudolf Friml (1879-1972)	Gershwin	3971	1919-20	1:56	Sometime, Gershwin LW
Swanee	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Gershwin	1649	02 1920	2:17	Swanee, Gershwin DA
Sweet and Low Down	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Gershwin	713214	04 1926	3:04	Sweet and Low Down, Gershwin DA
Tee-Oodle-Um-Bum-Bo One Step	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Gershwin	10023	09 1919	2:10	Tee-Oodle-Um, Gershwin DA
That Certain Feeling	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Gershwin	713216	04 1926	2:33	That Certain Feeling, Gershwin DA
Tulip Time	David Stamper (1883- 1963)	Gershwin	3973	1919-20	1:53	Tulip Time, Gershwin LW
Whip-Poor-Will	Jerome Kern (1885- 1945)	Gershwin	1719	04 1921	3:11	Whip-Poor-Will, Gershwin DA
Whose Baby Are You?	Jerome Kern (1885- 1945)	Gershwin	1667	05 1920	2:19	Whose Baby Are You, Gershwin DA
Yearning	Neil Moret (pseudonym for Charles N. Daniels)	Gershwin	3965	1919-20	2:51	Yearning, Gershwin LW
For Your Country and My Country	Irving Berlin (1888-1989)	Gershwin & Erlebach	1543	09 1917	2:32	For Your Country (one-step) DA
Land Where the Good Songs Go	Jerome Kern (1885- 1945)	Gershwin & Erlebach	1590	07 1918	3:28	Land Where Good Songs Go DA
Eskimo Shivers	Billy Mayerl (1902-1959)	Mayerl	0708 br	01 1926	3:18	Eskimo Shivers, Mayerl DA
Alabamy Bound	Ray Henderson (1896- 1970)	Rich	713098	05 1925	3:58	Alabamy Bound, Rich DA
Fascinating Rhythm	George Gershwin (1898- 1937)	Rich	713074	03 1925	3:02	Fascinating Rhythm, Rich DA
Follow The Swallow	Ray Henderson (1896- 1970)	Rich	713034	11 1924	3:33	Follow The Swallow, Rich DA
Hallelujah	Vincent Youmans (1888- 1946)	Rich	0820 br	07 1927	2:44	Hallelujah (Youmans) Rich DA
Indian Love Call	Rudolf Friml (1879-1972)	Rich	0673 br	06 1925	3:59	Indian Love Call, Rich DA
Just A Little Longer	Irving Berlin (1888-1989)	Rich	713303	12 1926	2:46	Just a Little Longer, Rich DA
Moonlight on the Ganges	Richard Myers (1901- 1977)	Rich	0769 br	01 1927	2:27	Moonlight on Ganges (Myer) Rich DA

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Oh, Lady be Good	George Gershwin (1898-1937)	Rich	0726 br	02 1925	3:04	Oh, Lady be Good, Rich DA
Please	Joe Cooper	Rich	713020	09 1924	3:15	Please, Rich DA
Tea for Two	Vincent Youmans (1888-1946)	Rich	0667 br	05 1925	3:16	Tea for Two, Rich DA
Want a Little Lovin'	Harry Warren (1893-1981)	Rich	713175	12 1925	2:50	Want a Little Lovin, Rich DA
When I Was The Dandy and You Were The Belle	Handman & Dreyer	Rich	713040	11 1924	3:19	When I Was The Dandy, Rich DA
All Alone With You (In a Little Rendezvous)	Ted Snyder (1881-1965)	Rich and Milne	713032	11 1924	3:21	All Alone With You (Snyder) DA
Are You Lonesome Tonight	Lou Handman (1894-1956)	Sims	209653	02 1928	4:43	Are You Lonesome Tonight, Sims A
Blue and Broken Hearted	Ray Henderson (1896-1970)	Sims	209233	11 1927	3:58	Blue & Broken Hearted, Sims A
Down Where the Sun Goes Down	W. Isham Jones & Verne Buck	Sims	69343	01 1928	3:44	Down Where the Sun Goes, Sims AB
I'm Coming Virginia	Donald Heywood (1896-1967)	Sims	208983	09 1927	3:26	I'm Coming Virginia, Sims A
Kashmiri Song	Amy Woodforde-Finden (1860-1919)	Sims	69573	01 1929	5:38	Kashmiri Song, Sims A
Little Grey Home in the West	Hermann Löhr (1871-1943)	Sims	69503	12 1928	4:08	Little Grey Home, Sims A
Me and My Shadow	Dave Dreyer (1894-1967)	Sims	20897	08 1927	4:22	Me and My Shadow, Sims A
Meditation	Lee Sims (1898-1966)	Sims	68761	03 1928	3:38	Meditation (Sims) A
My Wild Irish Rose	Chauncey Olcott (1858-1932)	Sims	69433	11 1928	5:49	My Wild Irish Rose, Sims A
Pale Moon	Frederick Knight Logan (1871-1928)	Sims	69303	10 1928	3:57	Pale Moon, Sims A
Some of These Days	Shelton Brooks	Sims	68633	02 1928	3:28	Some of These Days, Sims AA
Mine	James F. Hanley (1892-1942)	Sims	209123	10 1927	4:08	Mine, Sims A
World is Waiting For the Sunrise, The	Ernest Joseph Seitz (1892-1978)	Sims	70253	10 1929	5:27	World is Waiting Sunrise, Sims A