February, with its mostly-cold short days and long nights, is a good time to let jazz music warm you up and brighten your environs. Among our new recordings of renowned instrumental jazz players like Charles Mingus, John Coltrane, and Miles Davis, etc., we have a few compilation albums of the great Billie Holiday. Her voice, sweetness and sadness all mixed together, could charm anyone.

“More than nearly any other singer, Holiday phrased her performances in the manner of a jazz instrumental soloist, and accordingly she has to be seen as a complete jazz musician and not merely a singer. Nevertheless, her voice, even in the light and lively numbers she often sang during her early period, carried a wounded poignancy that was part of her attraction for general audiences. Although Holiday claimed also to have taken Bessie Smith as her model, she sang few blues, and none in the powerful, weighted manner of Smith. She was, however, a master of blues singing, as for example on Fine and Mellow (1939), which she built around blue thirds descending to seconds to create an endless tension perfectly suited to the forlorn text.”

~Wynton Marsalis