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**ELLA FITZGERALD DEBUTS ON
FIRST U.S. POSTAGE STAMP OF 2007**

Ceremony at Renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York

WASHINGTON — The "First Lady of Song," Ella Fitzgerald, becomes the 30th honoree in the popular Black Heritage commemorative stamp series issued by the U.S. Postal Service® on Jan. 10.

The Postal Service™ will commemorate the new 39-cent stamp during a first-day-of-issue ceremony tomorrow at Jazz at Lincoln Center, New York, N.Y., when the stamp goes on sale nationwide. The stamp image is a portrait based on a photograph taken circa 1956 that captures the joy and excitement that Fitzgerald brought to music.

"The Postal Service is proud to celebrate the life and legacy of Ella Fitzgerald," said Vice President and Consumer Advocate Delores Killete, who will dedicate the stamp. "Her magnificent voice combined with her gift of pitch made her a remarkable 20th century legend. This stamp is a powerful reminder of her extraordinary contribution to the world of music."

Joining Killete in dedicating the stamp will be Fitzgerald's son, Ray Brown, Jr., and Katherine Brown, executive director of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

"My mother would be extremely overwhelmed, honored and surprised to be portrayed on a stamp," said Ray Brown, Jr. "For me it's interesting because a stamp is something that's used every day, yet it gives people an opportunity to reflect on individuals they commemorate and to learn why they are so special."

"We're very proud of the commitment the U.S. Postal Service has made to honor the legends of jazz, our true American art form," added Katherine Brown. "Raising awareness about incredible artists such as Ella Fitzgerald enriches all of our communities. It is indeed a privilege that the Postal Service chose Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center, to launch this special stamp."

Also scheduled to participate is the internationally renowned song stylist, Nancy Wilson, who will emcee the ceremony; Phoebe Jacobs, executive vice president of the Louis Armstrong



Educational Foundation, Inc., and long-time friend of Fitzgerald; Jennifer Sanon, vocalist; and, Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III, pastor, Abyssinian Baptist Church, New York, N.Y.

Honored guests will include stamp artist Paul Davis and stamp designer Ethel Kessler; Vinnie Malloy, New York district manager and postmaster, U.S. Postal Service; Manuel Gilyard, president, Ebony Society Philatelic Events and Reflections (ESPERS); Barbara A. McKinzie, international president, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., of which Fitzgerald was an honorary member; and other members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Over the years, Fitzgerald won 13 Grammy Awards and many other honors, including the National Medal of Arts, presented to her in 1987 by President Ronald Reagan. She was one of five artists awarded Kennedy Center Honors in 1979. In 1989, the Society of Singers created an award for lifetime achievement, called it the “Ella,” and made her its first recipient. In 2005, Jazz at Lincoln Center inducted Fitzgerald into its Nesuhi Ertegun Jazz Hall of Fame.

Fitzgerald continued to perform up until a few years before her death, when failing health compelled her reluctant retirement. She died at her home in Beverly Hills, Calif., on June 15, 1996. Fans and colleagues alike mourned the passing of this beloved singer. Ira Gershwin once remarked, “I never knew how good our songs were until I heard Ella Fitzgerald sing them.”

ELLA FITZGERALD BACKGROUNDER

The First Lady of Song

Fitzgerald (1917–1996) was widely known as “The First Lady of Song.” Her extraordinary vocal range and flexibility, combined with her gift for pitch, rhythmic sense, and flawless diction, made her a favorite of fans, songwriters and other singers.

Ella Jane Fitzgerald was born April 25, 1917, in Newport News, Va. She was still very young when she moved with her mother to Yonkers, N.Y. From an early age, she loved to sing and dance. Although charmed by her performances, people laughed when she told them she was going to be famous. In 1932, after her mother died, she went to live with her aunt in Harlem. By the time she was 16, she was on her own, dancing on the street for tips. In November 1934, Fitzgerald entered an amateur competition at the historic Apollo Theater to show off her dancing skills. At the last minute, she decided to sing instead, and was named the winner. Not long after that, at the Harlem Opera House, she won another talent competition.

Her success as an amateur brought Fitzgerald to the attention of bandleader and drummer Chick Webb, who hired her to sing with his orchestra. In 1938, she and Webb scored a number-one hit record with “A-Tisket, A-Tasket,” a novelty song Fitzgerald co-wrote with Van Alexander based on a child’s rope-skipping rhyme. In this early phase of her career, Fitzgerald showed her mastery of swing music. After Webb’s death in 1939, the band was billed as Ella Fitzgerald and Her Famous Orchestra until its members went their separate ways in 1942.

Performing with Dizzy

The song “Flying Home,” recorded in the fall of 1945, is widely considered a masterpiece of scat singing — the vocalizing of nonsense syllables, often as if the singer were an instrumental soloist. Fitzgerald’s scat reflected her growing interest in bebop, a jazz style that improvised around chords and harmony, as well as melody. Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, one of the architects of bebop, encouraged Fitzgerald to “sit in” for jam sessions with his band.

“Listening to Dizzy made me want to try something with my voice that would be like a horn,” Fitzgerald

said. "He'd shout, 'go ahead and blow' and I would improvise." Her recordings of songs like "Lady Be Good" and "How High the Moon" consolidated Fitzgerald's reputation as a jazz singer. "How High the Moon" became one of her signature tunes.

The next phase of Fitzgerald's career found her joining forces with concert promoter Norman Granz, who produced many of her albums over the years. In 1956, Fitzgerald began recording the "Cole Porter Songbook," a best-selling album that launched a timeless series of "Songbook" recordings of the works of great American songwriters. She recorded more than 200 standards for the "Songbook" albums, among them works by Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, Duke Ellington, George and Ira Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart, Jerome Kern, and Johnny Mercer.

An early highlight among Fitzgerald's several dozen albums was "Ella Sings Gershwin," which was recorded in 1950 and was a precursor to her "Songbook" project. The later "George and Ira Gershwin Songbook" is cited by many as one of Fitzgerald's most special collections. Her "Duke Ellington Songbook" also has many admirers. Her collaborations with Louis Armstrong, including "Ella and Louis," were among her most popular efforts. Armstrong was only one of the celebrated musicians with whom Fitzgerald recorded and performed. Others included Count Basie, Joe Pass and Oscar Peterson.

Ella in Europe

Many of Fitzgerald's fans treasure her live albums. Three of her most admired live recordings were made before audiences in Europe — "Ella in Rome," "Ella in Berlin" and "Ella Returns to Berlin."

For decades, she kept up a numbing schedule of recording and touring internationally, often working 40 weeks a year. Fitzgerald broke many racial barriers — she was the first black artist to appear in various exclusive clubs around the United States, including the famed Copacabana in New York, in June 1957. She sang at the inaugural gala for President John F. Kennedy on Jan. 20, 1961.

Fitzgerald appeared in a small number of Hollywood films, including "Ride 'Em Cowboy," a 1942 comedy with Abbott and Costello. In 1955, she had a role as a singer in "Pete Kelly's Blues," preserving a glimpse of what it would have been like to see her perform in a nightclub. She also appeared in "St. Louis Blues," released in 1958, and "Let No Man Write My Epitaph" in 1960.

Fitzgerald is also remembered for her famous "Is it live or is it Memorex?" commercials of the early 1970s in which she performed a high note to break a wine glass.

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"Is it live or is it Memorex?" is a trademark of Imation Corporation.

Ella Fitzgerald Philatelic Products

Philatelic Products

There are six philatelic products available for the *Ella Fitzgerald* stamp issue.

- Item 460720, Block of 4 - \$1.56
- Item 460730, Block of 10 - \$3.90
- Item 460740, Full Pane of 20 - \$7.80
- Item 460761, First Day Cover - \$0.77
- Item 460776, Diary Page w/Maxi Card and Pane - \$12.95
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- Mouse Pad \$ 5.99
- Ceramic Mug \$ 9.99
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Licensing products can be ordered from:

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US POSTAL SERVICE
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KANSAS CITY MO 64121-9014

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ELLA FITZGERALD STAMP
POSTMASTER
421 EIGHTH AVE RM 2029B
NEW YORK NY 10199-9998

After applying the first day of issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by March 10, 2007.

One hundred and fifty million Ella Fitzgerald stamps were printed.

For more information on Jazz at Lincoln Center, [visit the Web site www.jalc.org](http://www.jalc.org).

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