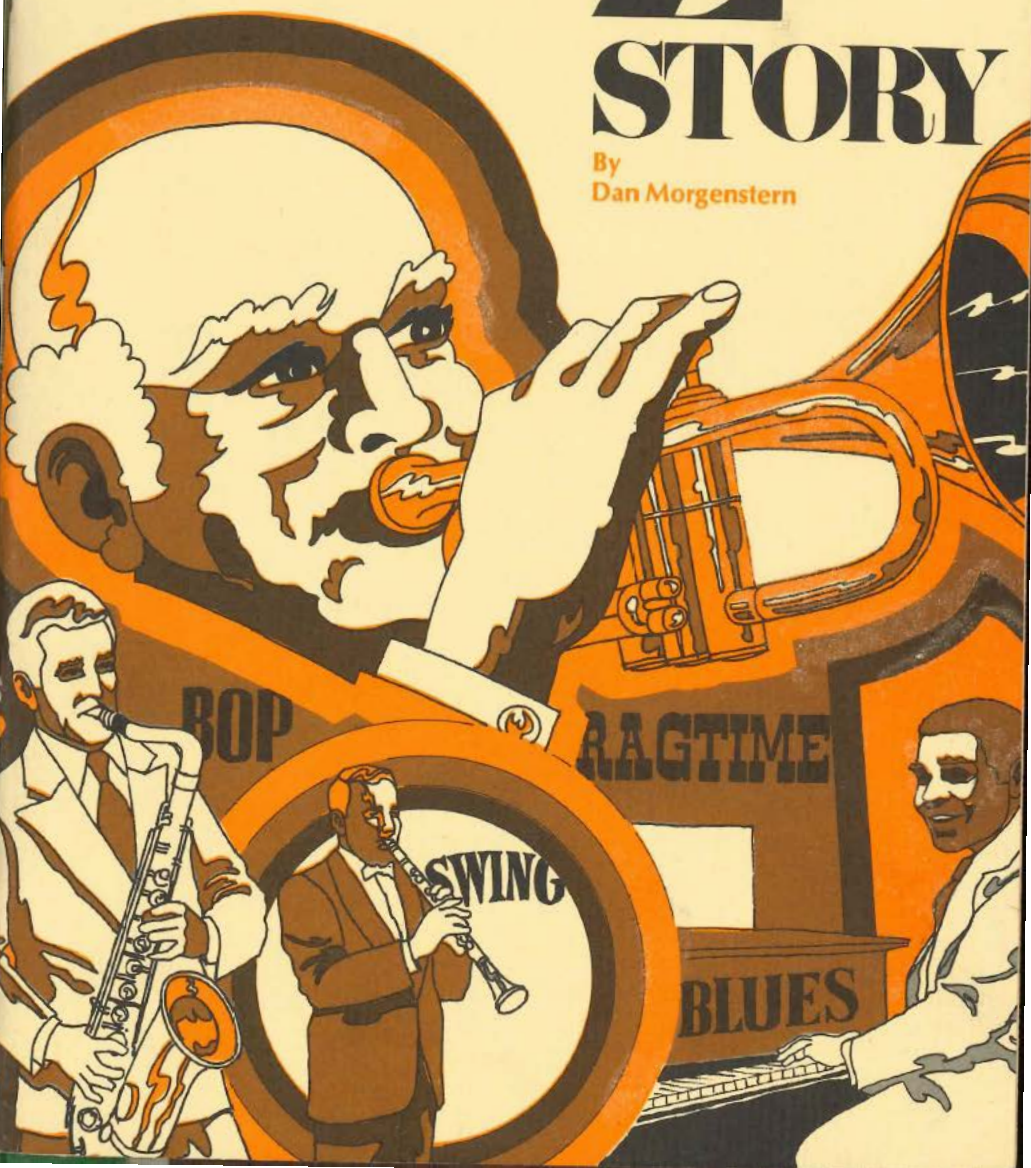


An Outline
History
of Jazz

THE JAZZ STORY

By
Dan Morgenstern



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BY DAN MORGENSTERN

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THE JAZZ STORY

In the span of less than a century, the remarkable native American music called jazz has risen from obscure folk origins to become this country's most significant original art form, loved and played in nearly every land on earth.

Today, jazz flourishes in many styles, from basic blues and ragtime through New Orleans and dixieland, swing and mainstream, bebop and modern to free form and electronic. What is extraordinary is not that jazz has taken so many forms, but that each form has been vital enough to survive and to retain its own character and special appeal. It takes only open ears and an open mind to appreciate all the many and wide-ranging delights jazz has to offer.

The Roots

Jazz developed from folk sources. Its origins are shrouded in obscurity, but the slaves brought here from Africa, torn from their own ancestral culture, developed it as a new form of communication in song and story.

Black music in America retained much of Africa in its distinctive rhythmic elements and also in its tradition of collective improvisation. This heritage, blended with the music of the new land, much of it vocal, produced more than just a new sound. It generated an entire new mode of musical expression.

The most famous form of early Afro-American music is the spiritual. These beautiful and moving religious songs were most often heard by white audiences in more genteel versions than those performed in rural black churches. What is known as gospel music today more accurately reflects the emotional power and rhythmic drive of early Afro-American music than a recording of a spiritual by the famous Fisk Jubilee Singers from the first decade of this century.

Other early musical forms dating from the slavery years include work songs, children's songs, and dances, adding up to a remarkable legacy, especially since musical activity was considerably restricted under that system.

Birth of the Blues

After the slaves were freed, Afro-American music grew rapidly. The availability of musical instruments, including military band discards, and the new found mobility gave birth to the basic roots of jazz: brass and dance band music and the blues.

The blues, a seemingly simple form of music that nevertheless lends itself to almost infinite variation, has been a significant part of every jazz style, and has also survived in its own right. Today's rock and soul music would be impossible without the blues. Simply explained, it is an eight (or twelve) bar strain with lyrics in which the first stanza is repeated. It gets its characteristic "blue" quality from a flattening of the third and seventh notes of the tempered scale. In effect, the blues is the secular counterpart of the spirituals.

Brass Bands and Ragtime

By the late 1880's, there were black brass, dance and concert bands in most southern cities. (At the same time, black music in the north was generally more European-oriented.) Around this era, ragtime began to emerge. Though primarily a piano music, bands also began to pick it up and perform it.



Ragtime's golden age was roughly from 1898 to 1908, but its total span began earlier and lingered much later. Recently, it has been rediscovered. A music of great melodic charm, its rhythms are heavily syncopated, but it has almost no blues elements. Ragtime and early jazz are closely related, but ragtime certainly was more sedate.

Greatest of the ragtime composers was *Scott Joplin* (1868-1917). Other masters of the form include *James Scott*, *Louis Chauvin*, *Eubie Blake* (born in 1883 and still very active at this writing as a composer and pianist), and *Joseph Lamb*, a white man who absorbed the idiom completely.

Enter "Jass"

Ragtime, especially in its watered-down popular versions, was entertainment designed for the middle class and was frowned on by the musical establishment. The music not yet called jazz (in its earliest usage it was spelled "jass"), came into being during the last decade of the 19th century, rising out of the black working-class districts of southern cities. Like ragtime, it was a music meant for dancing.

The city that has become synonymous with early jazz is New Orleans. There is reality as well as myth behind this notion.

New Orleans: Fact and Fancy

New Orleans played a key role in the birth and growth of jazz and the music's early history has been more thoroughly researched and documented there than anywhere else. But while the city may have had more and better jazz than any other from about 1895 to 1917, New Orleans was by no means the only place where the sounds were incubating. Every southern city with a sizable black population had music that must be considered early jazz. It came out of St. Louis, which grew to be the center of ragtime; Memphis, which was the birthplace of W. C. Handy (1873-1958), the famed composer and collector of blues; Atlanta, Baltimore, and other such cities.

What was unique to New Orleans at the time was a very open and free social atmosphere. People of different ethnic and racial backgrounds could establish contact, and out of this easy communication came a rich musical tradition involving French, Spanish, German, Irish and African elements. It was no wonder that this cosmopolitan and lively city was a fertile breeding ground for jazz.

If New Orleans was the birthplace of jazz in truth as well as in legend, the tale that the music was born in its red light district is purest nonsense. New Orleans did have legalized prostitution and featured some of the most elaborate and elegant "sporting houses" in the nation. But the music, if any, that was heard in these establishments was made by solo pianists.

Actually, jazz was first heard in quite different settings. New Orleans was noted for its many social and fraternal organizations, most of which sponsored or hired bands for a variety of occasions—indoor and outdoor dances, picnics, store openings, birthday or anniversary parties. And, of course, jazz was the feature of the famous funeral parades, which survive even today. Traditionally, a band assembles in front of the church and leads a slow procession to the cemetery, playing solemn marches and mournful hymns. On the way back to town, the pace quickens and fast, peppy marches and rags replace the dirges. These parades, always great crowd attractors, were important to the growth of jazz. It was here that trumpeters and clarinetists would display their inventiveness and the drummers work out the rhythmic patterns that became the foundation for "swinging" the beat.

The Early Musicians

The players in these early bands were mostly artisans (carpenters, bricklayers, tailors, etc.) or laborers who took time out on weekends and holidays to make music along with a little extra cash.

The first famous New Orleans musician, and the archetypical jazzman, was *Buddy Bolden* (1868-1931). A barber by trade, he played cornet and began to lead a band in the early 1890's. Quite probably, he was the first to mix the basic, rough blues with more conventional band music. It was a significant step in the evolution of jazz.

Bolden suffered a seizure during a 1907 Mardi Gras parade and spent the rest of his life in an institution for the incurably insane. Rumors that he made records have never been substantiated, and all we know of his music comes from the recollections of other musicians who heard him when they were young.

Bunk Johnson (1879-1949), who played second cornet in one of Bolden's last bands, contributed greatly to the revival of interest in classic New Orleans jazz that took place during the last decade of his life. A great storyteller and colorful personality, Johnson is responsible for much of the New Orleans legend. But much of what he had to say was more fantasy than fact.

Many people, including serious fans, believe that the early jazz musicians were self-taught geniuses who didn't read music and never took a formal lesson. A romantic notion, but entirely untrue. Almost every major figure in early jazz had at least a solid grasp of legitimate musical fundamentals, and often much more.

Still, they developed wholly original approaches to their instruments. A prime example is *Joseph (King) Oliver* (1885-1938), a cornetist and bandleader who used all sorts of found objects, including drinking glasses, a sand pail, and a rubber bathroom plunger to coax a variety of sounds from his horn. *Freddie Keppard* (1889-1933), Oliver's chief rival, didn't use mutes, perhaps because he took pride in being the loudest cornet in town. Keppard, the first New Orleans great to take the music to the rest of the country, played in New York vaudeville with the *Original Creole Orchestra* in 1912.

Jazz Comes North

By the early years of the second decade, the instrumentation of the typical jazz band had become cornet (or trumpet), trombone, clarinet, guitar, string bass and drums. (Piano rarely made it since most jobs were on location and pianos were hard to transport.) The banjo and tuba, so closely identified now with early jazz, actually came in a few years later because early recording techniques couldn't pick up the softer guitar and string bass sounds.

The cornet played the lead, the trombone filled out the bass harmony part in a sliding style, and the clarinet embellished between these two brass poles. The first real jazz improvisers

were the clarinetists, among them *Sidney Bechet* (1897-1959). An accomplished musician before he was 10, Bechet moved from clarinet to playing mainly soprano saxophone. He was to become one of the most famous early jazzmen abroad, visiting England and France in 1919 and Moscow in 1927.

Most veteran jazz musicians state that their music had no specific name at first, other than ragtime or syncopated sounds. The first band to use the term "jass" was that of trombonist *Tom Brown*, a white New Orleanian who introduced it in Chicago in 1915. The origin of the word is cloudy and its initial meaning has been the subject of much debate.

The band that made the word stick was also white and also from New Orleans, the *Original Dixieland Jass Band*. This group had a huge success in New York in 1917-18 and was the first more or less authentic jazz band to make records. Most of its members were graduates of the bands of *Papa Jack Laine* (1873-1966), a drummer who organized his first band in 1888 and is thought to have been the first white jazz musician. In any case, there was much musical integration in New Orleans, and a number of light skinned Afro-Americans "passed" in white bands.

By 1917, many key jazz players, white and black, had left New Orleans and other southern cities to come north. The reason was not the notorious 1917 closing of the New Orleans red light district, but simple economics. The great war in Europe had created an industrial boom, and the musicians merely followed in the wake of millions of workers moving north to the promise of better jobs.



Little Louis and the King

King Oliver moved to Chicago in 1918. As his replacement in the best band in his hometown, he recommended an 18-year-old, Louis Armstrong. Little Louis, as his elders called him, had been born on the 4th of July in 1900, in poverty that was extreme even for New Orleans' black population. His earliest musical activity was singing in the streets for pennies with a boy's quartet he had organized. Later he sold coal and worked on the levee.

Louis received his first musical instruction at reform school, where he spent eighteen months for shooting off an old pistol loaded with blanks on the street on New Year's Eve of 1913. He came out with enough musical savvy to take jobs with various bands in town. The first established musician to sense the youngster's great talent was King Oliver, who tutored Louis and became his idol.

The Creole Jazz Band

When Oliver sent for Louis to join him in Chicago, that city had become the world's new jazz center. Even though New York was where the Original Dixieland Jass Band had scored its big success, followed by the spawning of the first dance craze associated with the music, the New York bands seemed to take on the vaudeville aspects of the ODJB's style without grasping the real nature of the music. Theirs was an imitation dixieland (of which Ted Lewis was the first and most successful practitioner), but there were few southern musicians in New York to lend the music a New Orleans authenticity.

Chicago, on the other hand, was teeming with New Orleans musicmakers, and the city's nightlife was booming in the wake of prohibition. By all odds, the best band in town was Oliver's *Creole Jazz Band*, especially after Louis joined in late 1922. The band represented the final great flowering of classic New Orleans ensemble style and was also the harbinger of something new. Aside from the two cornetists, its stars were the *Dodds Brothers*, clarinetist *Johnny* (1892-1940) and drummer *Baby* (1898-1959). Baby Dodds brought a new level of rhythmic subtlety and drive to jazz drumming. Along with another New Orleans-bred musician, *Zutty Singleton* (b. 1897), he introduced the concept of swinging to the jazz drums. But the leading missionary of swinging was, unquestionably, Louis Armstrong.

Jazz On Records

The Creole Jazz Band began to record in 1923 and while not the first black New Orleans band to make records, it was the

best. The records were quite widely distributed and the band's impact on musicians was great. Two years earlier trombonist *Kid Ory* (1886-1973) and his *Sunshine Orchestra* captured the honor of being the first recorded artists in this category. However, they recorded for an obscure California company which soon went out of business and their records were heard by very few.

Also in 1923, the *New Orleans Rhythm Kings*, a white group active in Chicago, began to make records. This was a much more sophisticated group than the old Dixieland Jass Band, and on one of its recording dates, it used the great New Orleans pianist-composer *Ferdinand (Jelly Roll) Morton* (1885-1941). That same year, Jelly Roll also made his own initial records.

Jelly Roll Morton

Morton, whose fabulous series of 1938 recordings for the Library of Congress are a goldmine of information about early jazz, was a complex man. Vain, ambitious, and given to exaggeration, he was a pool shark, hustler and gambler as well as a brilliant pianist and composer. His greatest talent, perhaps, was for organizing and arranging. The series of records he made with his *Red Hot Peppers* between 1926 and 1928 stands, alongside *Oliver's*, as the crowning glory of the New Orleans tradition and one of the great achievements in jazz.

Louis in New York

That tradition, however, was too restricting for a creative genius like Louis Armstrong. He left *Oliver* in late 1924, accepting an offer from New York's most prestigious black bandleader, *Fletcher Henderson* (1897-1952). Henderson's band played at *Roseland Ballroom* on Broadway and was the first significant "big band" in jazz history.

Evolved from the standard dance band of the era, the first big jazz bands consisted of three trumpets, one trombone, three saxophones (doubling all kinds of reed instruments), and a rhythm section of piano, banjo, bass (string or brass) and drums. These bands played from written scores (arrangements or "charts"), but allowed freedom of invention for the featured soloists and often took liberties in departing from the written notes.

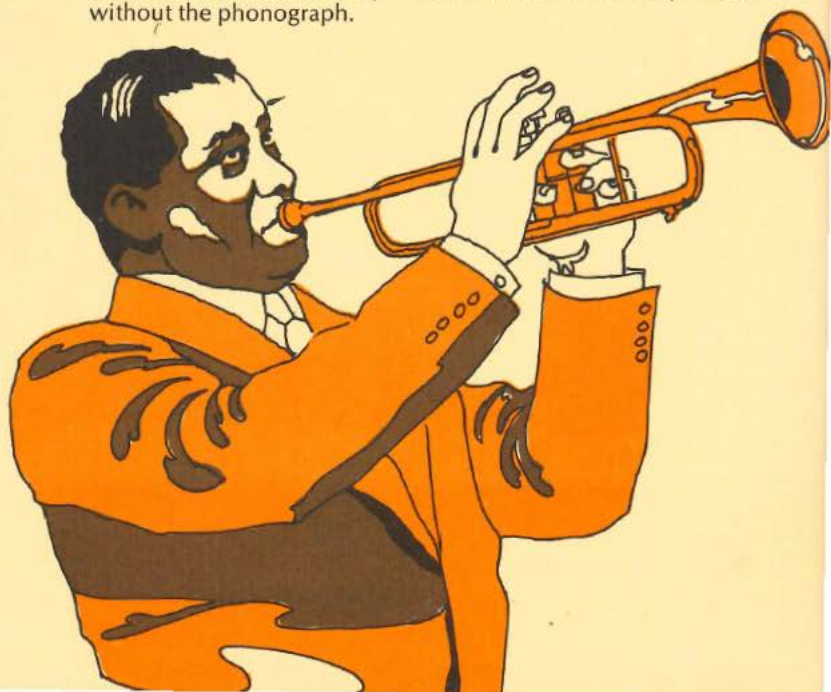
Though it was the best of the day, Henderson's band lacked rhythmic smoothness and flexibility when Louis joined up. The flow and grace of his short solos on records with the band make them stand out like diamonds in a tin setting.



The elements of Louis' style, already then in perfect balance, included a sound that was the most musical and appealing yet heard from a trumpet; a gift for melodic invention that was as logical as it was new and startling; and a rhythmic poise (jazzmen call it "time") that made other players sound stiff and clumsy in comparison.

His impact on musicians was tremendous. Nevertheless, Henderson didn't feature him regularly, perhaps because he felt that the white dancers for whom his band performed were not ready for Louis' innovations. During his year with the band, however, Louis caused a transformation in its style and, eventually, in the whole big band field. Henderson's chief arranger, *Don Redman* (1900-1964) grasped what Louis was doing and got some of it on paper. After working with Louis, tenor saxophonist *Coleman Hawkins* (1901-1969) developed a style for his instrument that became the guidepost for the next decade.

While in New York, Louis also made records with *Sidney Bechet*, and with *Bessie Smith* (1894-1937), the greatest of all blues singers. In 1925, he returned to Chicago and began to make records under his own name with a small group, the *Hot Five*. Included were his wife *Lil Hardin Armstrong* (1899-1971) on piano, *Kid Ory*, *Johnny Dodds*, and guitarist *Johnny St. Cyr*. The records, first to feature Louis extensively, became a sensation among musicians, first all over the United States and later all over the world. The dissemination of jazz, and in a very real sense its whole development, would have been impossible without the phonograph.



King Louis

The Hot Five was strictly a recording band. For everyday work, Louis played in a variety of situations, including theater pit bands. He continued to grow and develop and in 1927 switched from cornet to the more brilliant trumpet. He had occasionally featured his unique gravel-voiced singing, but only as a novelty. Its popular potential became apparent in 1929, when, back in New York, he starred in a musical show in which he introduced the famous *Ain't Misbehavin'*, singing as well as playing the great tune written by pianist *Thomas (Fats) Waller* (1904-1942), himself one of the greatest instrumentalists-singers-showmen in jazz.

It was during his last year in Chicago while working with another pianist, *Earl (Fatha) Hines* (b. 1905), that Louis reached his first artistic peak. Hines was the first real peer to work with Louis. Inspired by him, he was in turn able to inspire. Some of the true masterpieces of jazz, among them *West End Blues* and the duet *Weatherbird*, resulted from the Armstrong-Hines union.


The Jazz Age

Louis Armstrong dominated the musical landscape of the 20's and, in fact, shaped the jazz language of the decade to come as well. But the jazz of the "Jazz Age" was more often than not just peppy dance music made by young men playing their banjos and saxophones who had little understanding of (or interest in) what the blues and/or Louis Armstrong were about. Still, a surprising amount of music produced by this dance-happy period contained genuine jazz elements.

Paul Whiteman

The most popular bandleader of the decade was *Paul Whiteman* (1890-1967), who ironically became known as the "King of Jazz," although his first successful bands played no jazz at all and his later ones precious little. These later bands, however, did play superb dance music, expertly scored and performed by the best white musicians the extravagant Whiteman paychecks could attract. From 1926 on, Whiteman gave occasional solo spots to such jazz-influenced players as cornetist *Red Nichols*, violinist *Joe Venuti*, guitarist *Eddie Lang* (1904-1933), and the *Dorsey Brothers* (trombonist-trumpeter *Tommy* (1905-1956) and clarinetist-saxophonist *Jimmy* (1904-1957), all of whom later became bandleaders in their own right.

In 1927, Whiteman took over the key personnel of *Jean Goldkette's* jazz-oriented band, which included a young cornetist and sometime pianist and composer of rare talent, *Bix Beiderbecke* (1903-1931). Bix's very lyrical, personal music and



early death combined to make him the first (and most durable) jazz legend. His romanticized life story became the inspiration for a novel and a film, neither of them close to the truth.

Bix's closest personal and musical friend during the most creative period of his life was saxophonist *Frank Trumbauer* (1901-1956). Fondly known as Bix and Tram, the team enhanced many an otherwise dull Whiteman record with their brilliant interplay or their individual efforts.

The Beiderbecke Legacy

Bix's bittersweet lyricism influenced many aspiring jazzmen, among them the so-called *Austin High Gang* made up of gifted Chicago youngsters only a few of whom ever actually attended Austin High School. Among them were such later sparkplugs of the Swing Era as drummers *Gene Krupa* (b. 1909) and *Dave Tough* (1908-1948); clarinetist *Frank Teschemacher* (1905-1932); saxophonist *Bud Freeman* (b. 1906); pianists *Joe Sullivan* (1906-1971) and *Jess Stacy* (b. 1904); and guitarist-entrepreneur *Eddie Condon* (1905-1973). Their contemporaries and occasional comrades-in-arms included a clarinet prodigy named *Benny Goodman* (b. 1909); and a somewhat older reedman and character, *Mezz Mezzrow* (1899-1972), whose 1946 autobiography, *Really the Blues*, remains, despite inaccuracies, one of the best jazz books.

Trumbauer, though not a legend like Bix, influenced perhaps as many musicians. Among them were two of the greatest saxophonists in jazz history, *Benny Carter* (b. 1906) and *Lester (Prez) Young* (1909-1959).

Black and White

A great influence on young Goodman was the New Orleans clarinetist *Jimmie Noone* (1895-1944), an exceptional technician with a beautiful tone. Chicago was an inspiring environment for a young musician. There was plenty of music and there were plenty of masters to learn from. Cornetist *Muggsy Spannier* (1906-1967) took his early cues from King Oliver. In New York, there was less contact between black and white players, though white jazzmen often made the trek to Harlem or worked opposite Fletcher Henderson at the Roseland. When a young Texas trombonist, *Jack Teagarden* (1905-1964), came to town in 1928, he startled everyone with his blues-based playing (and singing), very close in concept to that of Henderson's trombone star, *Jimmy Harrison* (1900-1931). These two set the pace for all comers.

Teagarden, alongside Benny Goodman, worked in *Ben Pollack's* band. Pollack, who'd played drums with the New

Orleans Rhythm Kings, was quite a talent spotter and always had good bands. When Henderson arranger Don Redman took over *McKinney's Cotton Pickers* in 1928 and made it one of the bands of the '20's, his replacement was Benny Carter. Carter could (and still can) write arrangements and play trumpet and clarinet as well as the alto sax. Today, he writes primarily for films and TV.

The Unique Duke

Another artist whose career has spanned more than fifty years is *Duke Ellington* (b. 1899). By 1927, he was one of New York's most successful bandleaders, resident at Harlem's Cotton Club—a nightspot catering to whites only but featuring the best in black talent.

Ellington's unique gifts as composer-arranger-pianist are coupled with equally outstanding leadership abilities. From 1927 to 1941, with very few exceptions and occasional additions, his personnel remained unchanged—a record no other bandleader (except Guy Lombardo, of all people) ever matched.

Great musicians passed through the Ellington ranks between 1924 and the present. Among the standouts: great baritone saxist *Harry Carney* (b. 1907), who joined in 1927 and is still aboard; *Johnny Hodges* (1906-1970), whose alto sax sound was one of the glories of jazz; *Joe (Tricky Sam) Nanton* (1904-1946), master of the "talking" trombone; *Barney Bigard* (b. 1906), whose pure-toned clarinet brought a touch of New Orleans to the band; *Ben Webster* (b. 1909), one of Coleman Hawkins' greatest disciples; drummer *Sonny Greer* (b. 1903); and *Rex Stewart* (1907-1967) and *Cootie Williams* (b. 1908), an incomparable trumpet team. (Williams is back in the fold today, after stints with Benny Goodman and as leader of his own bands.) Among the later stars were trumpeter *Clark Terry* and tenor saxist *Paul Gonsalves*, both born in 1920.

Ellington's music constitutes a world within the world of jazz. One of the century's outstanding composers, he has written over 1,000 short pieces, plus many suites, music for films, the theater and television, religious works and more. He must be ranked one of the century's foremost musicians, regardless of labels. His uninterrupted activity as a bandleader since 1924 has earned him a high place in each successive decade, and his achievement is a history of jazz in itself.

Three outstanding contributors to Ellingtonia must be mentioned. They are trumpeter-composer *Bubber Miley* (1903-1932), the co-creator of the first significant style for the band and, like his exact contemporary *Bix Beiderbecke*, a victim of too much, too soon; bassist *Jimmy Blanton* (1918-1942), who in his two years with Ellington shaped a whole new role for his instrument in jazz, both as a solo and ensemble voice; and

Billy Strayhorn (1915-1967), composer-arranger and Ellington alter ego who contributed much to the band from 1939 until his death.

Stride and Boogie Woogie

Aside from the band, for which he writes with such splendid skill, Ellington's instrument is the piano. When he came to New York as a young man, his idols were *James P. Johnson* (1891-1955), a brilliant instrumentalist and gifted composer, and Johnson's closest rival, *Willie (The Lion) Smith* (1898-1973). Both were masters of the "stride" school of jazz piano, marked by an exceptionally strong, pumping line in the left hand. James P.'s prize student was Fats Waller. New York pianists often met in friendly but fierce contests—the beginnings of what would later be known as "jam sessions."

In Chicago, a very different piano style came into the picture in the late '20's, dubbed boogie-woogie after the most famous composition by its first significant exponent, *Pinetop Smith* (1904-1929). This rolling, eight-to-the-bar bass style was popular at house parties in the Windy City and became a national craze in 1939, after three of its best practitioners, *Albert Ammons*, *Pete Johnson* and *Meade Lux Lewis*, had been presented in concert at Carnegie Hall.

Kansas City Sounds

Johnson was from Kansas City, where boogie-woogie was also popular. The midwestern center was a haven for jazz musicians throughout the rule of Boss Pendergast, when the city was wide open and music could be heard around the clock.

The earliest and one of the best of the K. C. bands was led by *Bennie Moten* (1894-1935). By 1930 it had in its ranks pianist *Count Basie* (b. 1905) who'd learned from Fats Waller; trumpeter-singer *Oran (Hot Lips) Page* (1908-1954), one of Louis Armstrong's greatest disciples; and an outstanding singer, *Jimmy Rushing* (1903-1972). The city was to put its imprint on jazz during the '30's and early '40's.

Depression Days

The great Depression had its impact on jazz as it did on virtually all other facets of American life. The record business reached its lowest ebb in 1931. By that year, many musicians who had been able to make a living playing jazz had been forced to either take commercial music jobs or leave the field entirely.

But the music survived. Again, Louis Armstrong set a pattern. At the helm of a big band with his increasingly popular singing as a feature, he recast the pop hits of the day in his

unique jazz mold, as such artists as Fats Waller and *Billie Holiday* (1915-1959), perhaps the most gifted of female jazz singers, would do a few years later.

Thus, while sentimental music and romantic "crooners" were the rage (among them *Bing Crosby*, who had worked with Paul Whiteman and learned more than a little from jazz), a new kind of "hot" dance music began to take hold. It wasn't really new, but rather a streamlining of the Henderson style, introduced by the *Casa Loma Orchestra* which featured the arrangements of Georgia-born guitarist *Gene Gifford* (1908-1970). Almost forgotten today, this band paved the way for the Swing Era.



The Coming of Swing

As we've seen, big bands were a feature of the jazz landscape from the first. Though the Swing Era didn't come into full flower until 1935, most up-and-coming young jazzmen from 1930 found themselves working in big bands.

Among these were two pacesetters of the decade, trumpeter Roy (Little Jazz) Eldridge (b. 1911) and tenorist Leon (Chu) Berry (1910-1941). Eldridge, the most influential trumpeter after Louis, has a fiery, mercurial style and great range and swing. He is still very active. Among the bands he sparked

were Fletcher Henderson's and Teddy Hill's. The latter group also included Berry, the most gifted follower of Coleman Hawkins, and the brilliant trombonist *Dicky Wells* (b. 1909).

Another trendsetting band was that of tiny, hunchbacked drummer *Chick Webb* (1909-1939), who by dint of almost superhuman energy overcame his physical handicap and made himself into perhaps the greatest of all jazz drummers. His band really got under way when he heard and hired a young girl singer in 1935. Her name was *Ella Fitzgerald*.

The King of Swing

But it was Benny Goodman who became the standard-bearer of swing. In 1934, he gave up a lucrative career as a studio musician to form a big band with a commitment to good music. His jazz-oriented style met with little enthusiasm at first. He was almost ready to give it up near the end of a disastrous cross-country tour in the summer of '35 when suddenly his fortunes shifted. His band was received with tremendous acclaim at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles.

It seems that the band's broadcasts had been especially well timed for California listeners. Whatever the reason, the band, which included such jazz stars as the marvelous trumpeter *Bunny Berigan* (1908-1942) and drummer *Gene Krupa*, not to mention Benny himself, now scored success after success. Some



of the band's best material was contributed by arrangers Fletcher Henderson and his gifted younger brother Horace.

As the bands grew in popularity, a new breed of fan began to appear. This fan wanted to listen as much as he wanted to dance. (In fact, some disdained dancing altogether.) He knew each man in each band and read the new swing magazines that were springing up—*Metronome*, *Down Beat*, *Orchestra World*. He collected records and listened to the growing number of band broadcasts on radio. Band leaders were becoming national figures on a scale with Hollywood stars.

Other Great Bands

Benny's arch rival in the popularity sweepstakes was fellow clarinetist *Artie Shaw* (b. 1910), who was an on-again-off-again leader. Other very successful bands included those of *Jimmy Dorsey* and *Tommy Dorsey*, whose co-led Dorsey Brothers Band split up after one of their celebrated fights.

First among black bandleaders were *Duke Ellington* and *Jimmie Lunceford* (1902-1947). The latter led a highly disciplined and showmanship-oriented band which nevertheless spotlighted brilliant jazz soloists, among them saxophonists *Willie Smith* and *Joe Thomas* and trombonist *Trummy Young* (b. 1912). The man who set the band's style, trumpeter-arranger *Sy Oliver* (b. 1910), later went with Tommy Dorsey.





A newcomer on the national scene was Count Basie's crew from Kansas City, with key soloists *Lester Young* and *Herschel Evans* (1909-1939) on tenors, *Buck Clayton* (b. 1912) and *Harry Edison* (b. 1915) on trumpets, and *Jimmy Rushing* and *Billie Holiday* (later *Helen Humes*) on vocals.

But important as these were (Lester in particular created a whole new style for his instrument), it was the rhythm section of Basie that gave the band its unique, smooth and rock-steady drive—the incarnation of swing. *Freddie Green* (b. 1911 and still with Basie today) on guitar, *Walter Page* (1900-1957) on bass, and *Jo Jones* (b. 1913) on drums and the Count on piano made the rhythm section what it was. Basie, of course, has continued to lead excellent bands to this day, but the greatest years were 1936-42.

Talent Spotter No. 1

The Basie band was brought east through the efforts of *John Hammond*, a young jazz enthusiast who had discovered *Billie Holiday* and boogie woogie and who also happened to be *Benny Goodman's* brother-in-law. It was Hammond who persuaded Benny to form a trio composed of himself, black pianist *Teddy Wilson* (b. 1912), and drummer *Gene Krupa*.

Not long after the Goodman Trio was launched, it became a quartet with the addition of vibraharpist (and sometime drummer and pianist) *Lionel Hampton* (b. 1909), a veritable dynamo of musical wit and energy. It was the first interracial group to perform regularly in public. Both Hampton and Wilson later formed big bands of their own with Benny's help and blessing. Hampton's was a long-lived venture. Other Goodman sidemen who launched successful bandleading careers were

Gene Krupa and trumpeter *Harry James* (b. 1916). The James band became the most successful of the '40's.

Still More Bands

Other great swing bands included *Andy Kirk's*, with pianist-arranger *Mary Lou Williams* (b. 1910) as the guiding spirit; *Earl Hines's*; *Cab Calloway's*, with *Chu Berry* and a young trumpeter named *Dizzy Gillespie* (b. 1917); trumpeter *Erskine Hawkins*, tenorist *Charlie Barnet's*; trombonist *Glenn Miller's*, and the *Mills Blue Rhythm Band* with New Orleans trumpeter *Henry (Red) Allen* (1907-1967) and trombonist *J. C. Higginbotham* (1906-1973) as key soloists.

A big band that didn't hit the big time until the mid-40's but had been around since 1936 was one led by clarinetist-singer *Woody Herman* (b. 1913). A unique unit was "the biggest little band in the land," a sextet led by bassist *John Kirby* (1908-1952) featuring the superb arrangements and trumpeting of *Charlie Shavers* (1915-1971).

The Swing Era, naturally, was not only a time of big bands, or small groups emulating their sound. All kinds of music was being played, including that being made by solo pianists.

Art Tatum

Outstanding among pianists was *Art Tatum* (1910-1956), whose accomplishment impressed even classicist *Vladimir Horowitz*. Perhaps the most gifted technician of all jazzmen, Tatum had other assets as well, among them an harmonic sense so acute as to make him an almost infallible improviser. This aspect of his style, as well as his great rhythmic freedom, influenced the young players who became the founders of a new style called bebop.

Other unique musical figures of the '30's were violinist *Stuff Smith* (1909-1967), one of the first to play an electrically amplified instrument, and guitarist *Django Reinhardt* (1910-1953) a Belgian-born gypsy who was the first non-American jazzman of significance. (Among those who did missionary work in Europe in the '30's were *Coleman Hawkins* and *Benny Carter*; the number of U.S. jazzmen living abroad increased greatly after the Second World War.)

Exit The Big Bands

The war years took a heavy toll of big bands. Restrictions made travel more difficult and the best talent was being siphoned off by the draft. But more importantly, public tastes were changing.

Ironically, the bands were in the end devoured by a monster they had given birth to: the singers. Typified by Tommy Dorsey's *Frank Sinatra*, the vocalist made popular by a band affiliation went out on his own; and the public seemed to want romantic ballads more than swinging dance music.

The big bands that survived the war soon found another form of competition cutting into their following—television. "The tube" kept people home more and more, and inevitably many ballrooms shut their doors for good in the years between 1947 and 1955. By then it had also become too expensive a proposition to keep 16 men traveling on the road in the big bands' itinerant tradition. The leaders who didn't give up (Ellington, Basie, Woody Herman, Harry James) had something special in the way of talent and dedication that gave them durability in spite of changing tastes and lifestyles.

The only new bands to come along in the post-war decades and make it were those of pianist-composer *Stan Kenton* (b. 1912), who started his band in 1940 but didn't hit until '45; drummer *Buddy Rich* (b. 1917), a veteran of many famous swing era bands and one of jazzdom's most phenomenal musicians; and co-leaders *Thad Jones* (b. 1923), a trumpeter and composer, and *Mel Lewis* (b. 1929), a drummer once with Kenton. Another Kenton alumnus, high-note trumpeter *Maynard Ferguson* (b. 1928), has led successful big bands on and off.

The Bebop "Revolution"

In any case, a new style, not necessarily inimical to the big bands yet very different in spirit from earlier jazz modes, had sprung up during the war. Bebop, as it came to be called, was initially a musician's music, born in the experimentation of informal jam sessions.

Characterized by harmonic sophistication, rhythmic complexity, and few concessions to public taste, bop was spearheaded by *Charlie Parker* (1920-1955), an alto saxophonist born and reared in Kansas City.

After apprenticeship with big bands (including Earl Hines'), Parker settled in New York. From 1944 on, he began to attract attention on Manhattan's 52nd Street, a midtown block known as "Swing Street" which featured a concentration of jazz clubs and jazz talent not equalled before or since.

Bird

"Bird," as Parker was called by his fans, was a fantastic improviser whose imagination was matched by his technique. His way of playing (though influenced by Lester Young and guitarist *Charlie Christian* (1916-1942), a remarkable musician

who was featured with Benny Goodman's sextet between 1939 and '41), was something new in the world of jazz. His influence on musicians can be compared in scope only to that of Louis Armstrong.

Parker's principal early companions were Dizzy Gillespie, a trumpeter of abilities that almost matched Bird's, and drummer *Kenny Clarke* (b. 1914). Dizzy and Bird worked together in Hines' band and then in the one formed by Hines vocalist *Billy Eckstine* (b. 1914), the key developer of bop talent. Among those who passed through the Eckstine ranks were trumpeters *Miles Davis* (b. 1927), *Fats Navarro* (1923-1950), and *Kenny Dorham* (1924-1972); saxophonists *Sonny Stitt* (b. 1924), *Dexter Gordon* (b. 1923), and *Gene Ammons* (b. 1925); and pianist-arranger-bandleader *Tadd Dameron* (1917-1965).

Bop, of course, was basically small-group music, meant for listening, not dancing. Still, there were big bands featuring bop—among them those led by Dizzy Gillespie, who had several good crews in the late '40's and early to mid-50's; and Woody Herman's so-called *Second Herd*, which included the cream of white bop—trumpeter *Red Rodney* (b. 1927), and saxophonists *Stan Getz* (b. 1927), *Al Cohn* and *Zoot Sims* (b. 1925), and *Serge Chaloff* (1923-1957).

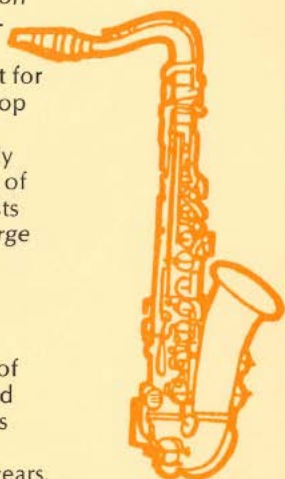
Bop Versus New Orleans

Ironically, the coming of bop coincided with a revival of interest in New Orleans and other traditional jazz. This served to polarize audiences and musicians and point up differences rather than common ground. The needless harm done by partisan journalists and critics on both sides lingered on for years.

Parker's greatest disciples were not alto saxophonists, except for Sonny Stitt. Parker dominated on that instrument. Pianist *Bud Powell* (1924-1966) translated Bird's mode to the keyboard; drummers *Max Roach* and *Art Blakey* (b. 1919) adapted it to the percussion instruments. A unique figure is pianist-composer *Thelonious Monk*, also born in 1919. With roots in the stride piano tradition, Monk is a forerunner of bop—in it but not of it.

After Parker

When Parker died in 1955, the bop era had almost ended, though his influence was still vividly felt. So-called cool jazz, spearheaded by a Miles Davis record date involving such important players as Roach, trombonist *J. J. Johnson* (b. 1924), pianist-composer *John Lewis* (b. 1920), baritone saxist-arranger *Gerry Mulligan* (b. 1927), and alto saxophonist *Lee Konitz* (b. 1927), came into being. Featured were arrangements by





Mulligan, Lewis and the very gifted *Gil Evans* (b. 1912). The proponents of cool jazz (a musical label which, like most others, wasn't very accurate or useful) included Stan Getz, Mulligan (notably his quartet with trumpeter *Chet Baker* [b. 1929]), and John Lewis' very successful and long-lived *Modern Jazz Quartet* with *Milt Jackson* (b. 1923) on vibraphone. These musicians have in common a strong feeling for melodic improvisation and a rather gentle tonal palette.

Even vaguer than "cool" was the once-popular designation "West Coast," applied to jazz emanating from California. A much more significant and stylistically definable trend was so-called hard bop, a mid-50's development. Tenorist *Sonny Rollins* (b. 1929) is a key figure here. He played with the *Clifford Brown-Max Roach Quintet*, perhaps the last great bop band. In 1956, Brown was killed in a car crash at the age of 25. He was a remarkably talented trumpeter whose influence prevails today in *Freddie Hubbard* (b. 1938).

Rollins, who developed into one of the most interesting and imaginative improvisers in jazz, also worked with Miles Davis. But a more regular member of the trumpeter's group was *John Coltrane* (1927-1967), a tenor and soprano saxophonist who was probably the most influential post-Parker musician aside from Davis himself.

Modal Jazz

The Davis group of 1958 with Coltrane, altoist *Cannonball Adderley* (b. 1928), and pianist *Bill Evans* (b. 1929), introduced the concept of scalar improvisation (based on scales and modes rather than chords). It was extended further by Coltrane's own quartet with drummer *Elvin Jones* (b. 1929) and pianist *McCoy Tyner* (b. 1938). Davis himself has moved in other directions. After featuring some of the most gifted young jazzmen of the '60's, among them tenorist *Wayne Shorter* (b. 1933), pianist *Herbie Hancock* (b. 1940), and drummer *Tony Williams* (b. 1945), he began to amplify his trumpet electrically and lead a percussive group blending free improvisation with rock rhythms.

A unique musician with roots in Parker, Ellington and Tatum is *Charles Mingus* (b. 1920), bassist and composer and creator of an impressive body of music. Among his associates have been pianist *Jaki Byard* (b. 1922), altoist *Charles McPherson* (b. 1939), and tenorist *Booker Ervin* (1930-1970).

Also unclassifiable is pianist-teacher *Lennie Tristano* (b. 1919), who in the late '40's led a very distinctive group including *Lee Konitz* and tenorist *Warne Marsh* (b. 1927). *Konitz* has extended some of *Tristano's* ideas of pure improvisation.

"Free" Jazz

This idea, if in quite different form, was further developed by *Ornette Coleman* (b. 1930), who plays alto sax, trumpet and violin and also composes. Very controversial when they first appeared on the national scene in 1958, Coleman and his music have now been accepted by all but the most reactionary elements. Actually, his "free" music seems very coherent and even formalistic in comparison with some of the more radical recent developments. Musicians associated with Coleman from '58 to the present include trumpeter *Don Cherry* (b. 1936), bassist *Charlie Haden* (b. 1937), and drummers *Ed Blackwell* (b. 1927) and *Billy Higgins* (b. 1936). Coleman recently composed a work for symphony orchestra. Still another new road is traveled by the unique pianist-composer *Cecil Taylor* (b. 1933).

Summing Up

No one can presume to guess what form the next development in jazz will take. What we do know is that the music today presents a rich panorama of sounds and styles.

Thelonious Monk, that uncompromising original who went from the obscurity of the pre-bop jam sessions in Harlem to the cover of TIME and worldwide acclaim without ever diluting his music, once defined jazz in his unique way.

"Jazz and freedom," Monk said, "go hand in hand. That explains it. There isn't any more to add to it. If I do add to it, it gets complicated. That's something for you to think about. You think about it and dig it. *You dig it.*"

Jazz, a music born in slavery, has become the universal song of freedom.

Think about that. And dig it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

DAN MORGENSTERN is one of the world's foremost jazz authorities. The former editor-in-chief of *Down Beat* and *Metronome* magazines. Co-chairman of the Jazz Advisory Panel to the National Endowment For the Arts, a Trustee of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, and Chairman of the Board of Advisors of the New York Jazz Museum, Morgenstern has also been active as a television producer (the series "Just Jazz" for the Public Broadcasting Service), radio commentator ("The Scope of Jazz," Pacifica Network), and concert producer ("Jazz In The Garden," New York Museum of Modern Art).

RECOMMENDED RECORDS

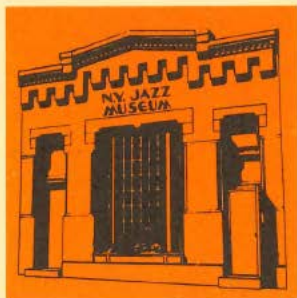
- Louis Armstrong: **The Genius of Louis Armstrong**, Columbia G 30416;
Rare Items: 1935-44, Decca 79225
- Count Basie: **Basie's Best**, Decca DXS 7170
- Sidney Bechet: **The Blue Bechet**, RCA LPV 535
- Charlie Christian: **Solo Flight**, Columbia G 30779
(with Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton, Basie, etc.)
- John Coltrane: **Giant Steps**, Atlantic 1311
- Miles Davis: **The Real Birth of the Cool**, Capitol M-11026;
Kind of Blue, Columbia CS 8163
- Duke Ellington: **Daybreak Express**, RCA LPV 506;
At His Very Best, RCA LPM 1715
- Dizzy Gillespie: **The Giants of Jazz**, Atlantic SD 2-905
(with Sonny Stitt, Thelonious Monk, Art Blakey, others)
- Benny Goodman: **Carnegie Hall Concert**, Columbia OSL 160
- Coleman Hawkins: **Body and Soul**, RCA LPV 501
- Fletcher Henderson: **Fletcher Henderson, Vol. 2**, Decca 79228
- Billie Holiday: **Strange Fruit**, Atlantic SD 1614
- Charles Mingus: **Better Git It In Your Soul**, Columbia G 30628
- Thelonious Monk: **Thelonious Monk, Vols. 1-2**, Blue Note 81510-11
- Jelly Roll Morton: **King of New Orleans Jazz**, RCA LPM 1649
- Charlie Parker: **Charlie Parker Memorial**, Savoy 12000;
Bird and Diz, Verve 68006
- Max Roach: **The Best of Max Roach and Clifford Brown**, GNP 18
- Sonny Rollins: **Sonny Rollins**, Prestige PR 24004
- Bessie Smith: **Nobody's Blues But Mine**, Columbia G 31093
- Art Tatum: **Solo Piano**, Capitol M-11028
- Fats Waller: **Valentine Stomp**, RCA LPV 525

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Louis Armstrong: **Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans**, Prentice-Hall.
- Stanley Dance: **The World of Duke Ellington**, Scribner.
- Andre Hodeir: **Jazz, Its Evolution and Essence**, Grove.
- Max Jones and
John Chilton: **Louis . . . The Louis Armstrong Story**, Little, Brown.
- Ross Russell: **Bird Lives: The High Life and Hard Times of Charlie Parker**,
Charterhouse.
- Gunther Schuller: **Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development**, Oxford.
- Nat Shapiro, and
Nat Hentoff: **Hear Me Talkin' To Ya**, Dover.
The Jazz Makers, Grove.
- Arnold Shaw: **The Street That Never Slept**, Cowles.
- George Simon: **The Big Bands**, Macmillan.
- Eileen Southern: **The Music of Black Americans: A History**, Norton.
- Marshall Stearns: **The Story of Jazz**, Mentor.
- Martin Williams: **Where's the Melody?**, Pantheon.
- Martin Williams: **The Jazz Tradition**, Oxford

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*Howard E. Fischer, Executive Director
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