

Starr-Waterman

American Popular Music

Chapter 3: “Catching as the Small-Pox”: Social Dance and Jazz, 1917–1935

Filmography

*The Jazz Singer* (1927): based on a successful Broadway play, starring Al Jolson, a vaudeville superstar. The film tells the story of a Jewish cantor’s son who becomes a success singing “jazz” songs in blackface.

*The Broadway Melody* (1929): The first “all talking, all singing, all dancing” film musical, released by MGM. It won an Oscar in 1930 for best picture of the year, helping establish musical cinema as a legitimate form.

*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921): Silent movie starring Rudolph Valentino, whose image as a “Latin lover” was promoted through a tango dance scene.

*Good Morning, Vietnam* (1988): Louis Armstrong’s rendition of “What a Wonderful World” originally released in 1967, broke into the top-40 seventeen years after his death with its inclusion in the soundtrack of this film.

*The King of Jazz* (1930): Sound film in which Paul Whiteman appears as a magician stirring a bubbling cauldron into which ingredients of jazz are thrown: English ballads, Scottish bagpipes, Irish gig, Austrian waltz, Italian opera, Spanish flamenco, Russian balalaikas, but no evidence of ethnic groups most responsible for jazz: African Americans, and its inclusion in popular song, theater, and film (Jewish immigrants).