

Starr-Waterman

American Popular Music

Chapter 6: “In the Mood”: The Swing Era, 1935–1945

Key People

Benny Goodman (1909–1986): Chicago-born son of working-class Eastern European Jewish immigrants who became a celebrity bandleader during the swing era and was crowned by the media the “King of Swing.”

Bob Wills (1905–1975): A fiddler and bandleader from East Texas whose musical career ran from the 1920s through the 1960s.

Charlie Parker (1920–1955): Pioneering alto saxophonist who developed the highly expressive bebop style of jazz in the 1940s.

Duke Ellington (1899–1974): Highly original celebrity bandleader of the swing era known for his skill as a performer, composer, and arranger whose idiosyncratic approach generally meant that his band enjoyed less commercial success than more mainstream-sounding dance orchestras.

Fletcher Henderson (1898–1952): His band is widely credited with inspiring the rise of swing.

Gene Autry (1907-1998)- Texas born, first successful singing cowboy; institutionalized the image of the singing cowboy in a series of over 90 films.

Gene Krupa (1909–1973): Flamboyant drummer with the Benny Goodman Orchestra and influential white bandleader who hired black musicians.

Glenn Miller (1904-1944)- His Glenn Miller Orchestra was the most popular dance band in the world from 1939-1942, breaking records for both record sales and concert attendance.

John Birks (“Dizzy”) Gillespie (1917–1993): Influential trumpeter who championed the blending of Afro-Cuban music and modern jazz.

John Hammond (1910–1987): Influential jazz enthusiast and promoter who also helped Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Count Basie, and (much later) Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen receive recording contracts with Columbia Records, where he worked as an A&R (artists and repertoire) man.

Machito (1909–1984): Havana-born bandleader and singer, also known as Frank Grillo, who led the Afro-Cubans, an ensemble that introduced a more authentic form of Latin music to the United States during the swing era.

Mario Bauza (1911-1993): The musician who did the most to introduce authentic Afro-Cuban music into big band jazz; Havana-born composer, arranger, clarinetist, and trumpeter, often called the “Father of Latin Jazz.”

Roy Claxton Acuff (1903–1992): The most popular hillbilly singer of the Swing Era who performed in a style that was self-consciously rooted in southern folk music.

William “Count” Basie (1904–1984): Bandleader in Kansas City, Missouri, who performed riff-oriented big band music more closely linked to the country blues tradition than the style of the New York bands.

Xavier Cugat (1900–1990): Spanish-born violinist, bandleader, and film star who did the most to popularize Latin music during the swing era, known as the “Rhumba King.”