

# “The Jazz Age”

An insight into the influence of jazz  
music on the 20's



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*Tory January 2011*





<http://www.streetswing.com/histclub/a2cotclb0.htm>



# The Cotton Club

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- ❖ The gangster Owen Madden opened the Cotton Club in the early 1920's. The club was very popular among upperclass white people. The famous club was themed around the racism that was prominent during the times - the clients were all white, while the employees and entertainers were African-American. Even the name the "Cotton Club" is reminiscent of when slaves picked cotton for their owners in the south. The dancing girls were all tall and light-skinned African-Americans, and the performers were expected to provide the audience with "jungle" music. The club featured jazz music performed by greatest musicians and singers of the time. Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday were among the great entertainers that performed at the Cotton Club.









# Bessie Smith

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- ❖ Bessie Smith, also referred to as “The Empress of Blues” was a prominent blues recording artist in the 1920’s. She paired her expressive blues singing with jazz music of the time. She recorded nearly 200 songs, including hits “Downhearted Blues” and “St. Louis Blues.” She recorded with Joe Smith, her “preferred accompanist,” as well as Louis Armstrong. She was featured heavily in the shows of the Theater Owners Booking Association, which was a prominent string of vaudeville theaters which, while owned by white people, provided entertainment for a black audience. She was one of the highest paid black entertainer of the 1920’s. The Great Depression and alcoholism put a damper on her career, though she continued recording until her death in 1937.



<http://www.amoeba.com/blog/2009/04/jamoeblog/happy-birthday-bessie-smith-empress-of-the-blues.html>







# Duke Ellington

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- ❖ Duke Ellington was a great jazz composer, pianist and bandleader of the 1920's. He moved to New York in 1923 where he got a regular gig with his band at the Cotton Club, which brought him much success and fame. He was very charismatic and had a wonderfully charming stage persona. He conducted his band through the use of gestures, as opposed to the more conventional use of batons. He composed over a thousand songs in his lifetime, including the hits "It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing" and "Mood Indigo." He composed music in order to parallel the nature and mood of "his people," the African-American community. He is still recognized today as one of the greatest jazz artists of all time.



<http://keepswinging.blogspot.com/2010/04/duke-ellington-early-1930-year-of.html>





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<http://www.kalamu.com/bol/2006/08/27/louis-armstrong-“west-end-blues”/>



# Louis Armstrong

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- ❖ Louis Armstrong was one of the first major stars of the 20th century. Composing dozens of songs, Armstrong set many standards in the new-to-the-time jazz music. In 1922, Louis Armstrong joined “King” Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band as a trumpet player in Chicago. The band was one of the most highly influential jazz bands at the time. At his wife’s urging, he moved to New York, where he joined the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra. He returned to Chicago once more in 1925, and started his own group: Louis Armstrong and The Hot Five, which became The Hot Seven in 1927. He recorded music with famous blues vocalists such as Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey. He became legendary for his trumpet solos and his “scat” vocals, which are nonsensical, improvisational lyrics in jazz music. He is regarded as one of the greatest trumpet players in the world and a father of jazz.







<http://snarkerati.com/movie-news/gershwin-biopic-is-being-composed/>

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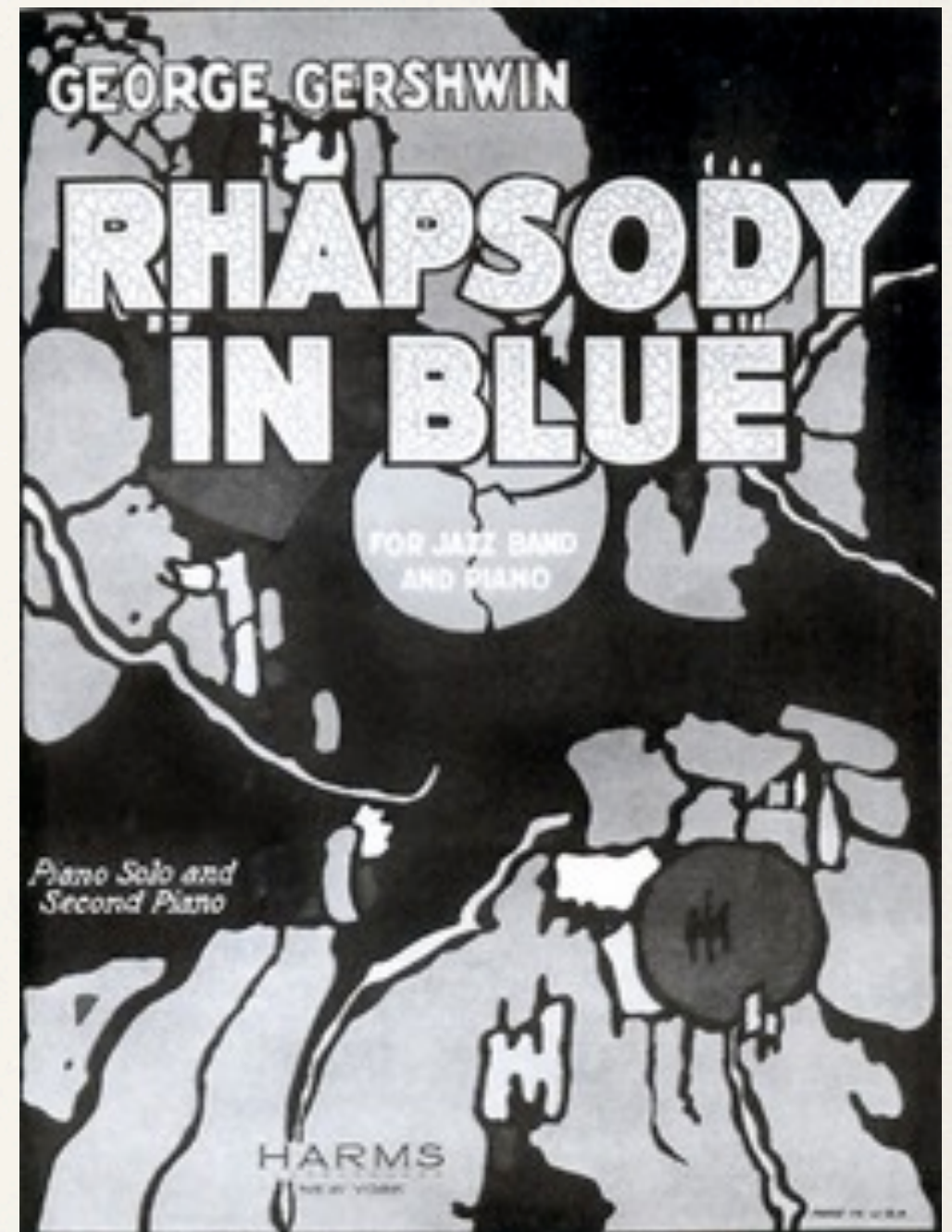
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# George Gershwin

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- ✧ George Gershwin began training as a pianist at the age of thirteen. He left school at fifteen to go work in Tin Pan Alley, plugging sheet music for publishers for three years. He worked as an accompanist for vocals and did a bit of composition. At the age of twenty, his composition brought him fame with his piece, "Swanee," which was performed vocally by Al Jolson. He and his brother, Ira, joined forces to write many hit songs for Broadway. He composed "Rhapsody In Blue" which opened up a whole new aspect in jazz music. It was very popular with the public, but met with mixed reviews by critics. Many felt that it was a string of musical segments strung together. Regardless of what it was, it gave Gershwin his name and opened up new doors in jazz music.





**The End**