

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the most popular forms of entertainment were minstrel shows, traveling acting troupes, circuses, and other shows of that type. At this time, newspaper ballyhoo was unknown, and it was the custom for shows to precede their performance with a gala street parade, led by a blaring brass band. In the South, around New Orleans, promoters wanting more "flash" began using small negro bands dressed in flashy uniforms and plenty of brass buttons and shiny buckles; these negro bands were the first "jazz," or "jam" bands.

Being unable to read music, these negro-bands depended entirely upon their sense of rhythm, and played such wild, highly-syncopated music that listeners on the sidelines were seized with the same feelings that modern day "jitterbugs" are seized with, whatever it is.

From these first negro jazz bands came the six and seven-piece combos that were popular until about 1922. These bands, composed usually of piano, trumpet, trombone, clarinet, drums, and banjo, played much in an "every man for himself" style, but from records made by some of the groups, such as The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, and Bix Beiderbecke's Wolverines, it is proved that they played the finest form of jazz, and in a style that many modern musicians try to imitate.

In 1922 jazz underwent a distinct change, brought about by one Paul Whiteman, who came into Atlantic City with an orchestra larger than any used previously, composed of a choir of strings, a saxophone section, a brass section, and a rhythm section. Whiteman's "symphonic jazz" caught on so fast, that soon the trend of all jazz was from the unrestrained type featured by the small bands to the smooth, orchestrated type that Whiteman's band played. From the "Whiteman" type swing, another type orchestra evolved, the "stylists" such as Guy Lombardo, Hal Kemp, and others, who feature a smooth, sweet, sedate type music.

The "stylists" ruined jazz for a while. Many of the greatest jazz musicians were forced to quit their style and join one of the more "commercial" bands, in order to make a living. To them it was agony, for playing "written" music night after night, never varying, and not having any

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SWING ARRIVES

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chance to improvise, as they had in smaller jazz bands, went against their grain. The escape from this condition were the private, informal jam sessions that the musicians held in their free moments, and which soon became popular where ever there were musicians. Soon, proprietors of small clubs began using jam bands to exhibit their wares to a paying public. In New York, Chicago, and other cities, small clubs opened their portals to the swing musicians, and their arms to a rushing business. Newspapers, noticing a change in taste for this music, opened the way for a new swing music era that paved the way for swing bands to gain renewed favor in the field of jazz. The change began in 1934, and reached new heights by 1936. Out of the change came a new style which is half old time jazz and half modern commercial style. Large bands are used, and written arrangements are played, but the individual has a chance to ad lib and improvise as much as in the old jazz bands, and swing has become more precise and technical. Out of the trend came Benny Goodman's great band, Glen Gray and the Casa Loma orchestra, The Dorsey's bands, Chick Webb, Louis Armstrong's band, and recently Artie Shaw, Jan Savitt, Charley Barnett, Gene Krupa, Harry James, and others whose bands are coming into the public eye, and ear.

The development of swing is similar to the development of the automobile. A band like Artie Shaw's is as much more modern and developed than the first "jazz band" of the 90's as a modern Ford or Buick is over the first "horseless carriage," yet the modern orchestra works on the same principal as the first ones, as much as the automobile works on the same principal as the horseless carriage. There is just a little more polish and finesse, a few changes here and there through the years and a little "streamlining" for modern effect.

Is swing music an art? Art is anything creative, whether it be the craftsmanship of a sculptor, silversmith, or painter, and the swing musician is certainly a creator, for every time he "ad libs" a melody, he changes on the original theme to suit his style and mood, and makes a new melody of it. It is said that "jazz cannot last," but it will last as long as there are people to play it and listen to it. The style may change one way or other, but the basic form will remain.