

The Swing Era



© 2013 by Everett Collection. Used under license of Shutterstock, Inc.

Chapter 5

- *Swing* was first used by radio broadcasters—instead of referring to it as “hot” music. The term is confusing because it also describes an important rhythmic attribute of jazz performance from that period. Swing was centered on big jazz bands active in cities such as New York and Kansas City. Swing was commercialized, packaged, and sold over the radio airwaves, through records, and through live performance. It became big business.
- By 1935, the Depression had lifted somewhat, and the middle class had money to spend on entertainment. The repeal of Prohibition in 1933 helped to get jazz out of the speakeasies and into public’s eye.
- Some reasons for the popularity of swing music:
 - Swing furnished music for an insatiable desire to dance.
 - The music helped people forget their problems
 - Swing catered to a large college market
 - Swing bands furnished the public with entertainer idols such as Benny Goodman, Cab Calloway, Gene Krupa, Duke Ellington, Artie Shaw, Tommy Dorsey, and Frank Sinatra.
- The big band was soon to become a major attraction in theatres, hotels, dance halls, and night clubs. The most famous such venues in Chicago, New York and other large cities featured lavish floor shows featuring dancers, singers, and comedians. Therefore, the visual aspect of the show also became an integral part of the presentation. Some bands developed a stage presence that was nothing short of dramatic causing dancers and listening audiences to respond in kind.
- As the popularity of social dancing was rising in the late 1920s and 1930s so was the musical response of the bands. The music reflected the needs of the dancers and the dancers in turn inspired the musicians.

Style

- The use of larger bands with twelve or more musicians:
 - Three to four trumpets
 - Two to three trombones
 - Four to five saxes: two altos, two tenors, one baritone
 - Three to four rhythm: bass, piano, drums, guitar
- The majority of big band swing repertoire consisted of popular songs. As a result these familiar melodies gained more importance. Because it was often necessary to have lyrics, singers became an integral part of the style.
- With a majority of commercial bands improvised solos were less prominent.
- A smooth, sweet sound that became commercially viable.

Swing Music Features the Following:

- The use of more sophisticated harmonic progressions.
- Arrangers became very important; the influences of Redman and Henderson are apparent:

From *Jazz History Overview* by Gordon Vernick and Geoffrey Haydon. Copyright © 2007 by Kendall Hunt Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission.

- Melodies are supported by block harmonization
- Harmonized solo lines
- Call and response between sections
- The music was well-arranged and the bands were carefully rehearsed with an emphasis on precision, teamwork, and blend.
- There is a de-emphasis on improvised solos, although Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Benny Goodman still placed much emphasis on improvised solos.
- The music requires proficient reading ability.
- The bandleader, or front man, was often a featured player on the piano or another instrument.
- Immediate identification of the band to the listener was of utmost importance.
- Each band had a highly recognizable theme song.
- The bandleaders would strive to establish a unique sound or style.
- Many bands used gimmickry to excess.
- The style of arranging common to the 1930s and 1940s still exists today. Most modern big bands use the same instrumentation and format.
- The great success experienced by bandleaders who wrote their own arrangements and were playing members of their bands is due to their thorough knowledge of the individual musician's capabilities. This explains the great success of Duke Ellington, Benny Carter, Glenn Miller, Don Redman, and Fletcher Henderson to name a few.
- Other important bandleaders had arrangers who were an integral part of the organization's success: Chick Webb had Edgar Sampson; Jimmie Lunceford had Sy Oliver and Ed Wilcox; Andy Kirk had Mary Lou Williams; Count Basie had Buck Clayton, Eddie Durham, and Dicky Wells. These arrangers were writing for musicians whom they knew. This kind of writing intended to cater to individual players was in contrast with bandleaders who often simply purchased "stock" arrangements written by anonymous arrangers for many of the commercial dance bands; these writers were not writing for individuals, but faceless instrumentalists.

Important Bands of the Swing Era

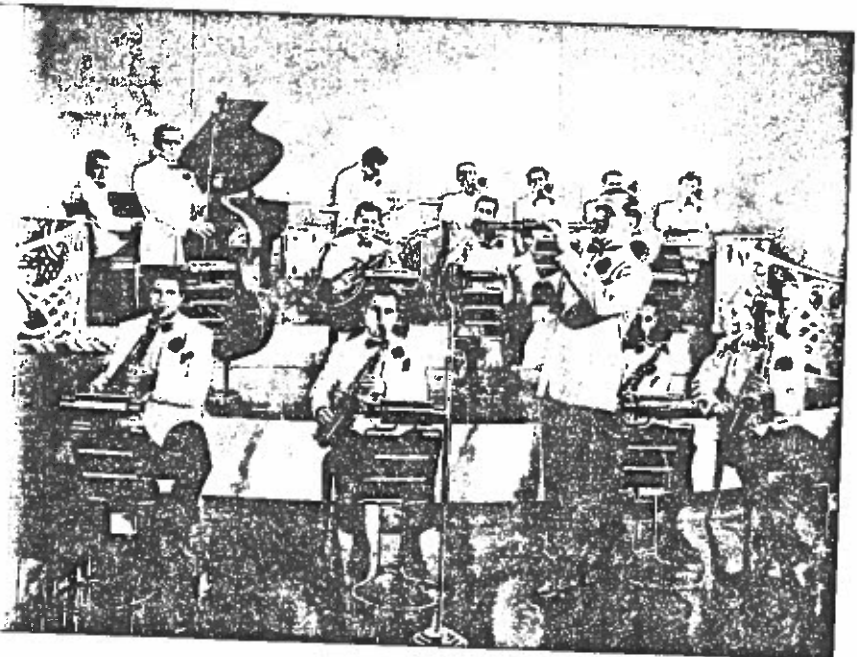
Casa Loma Band

- The Casa Loma Band was formed in Detroit under the leadership of Glen Gray in 1929.
- This band was an important predecessor (late 1920s to early 1930s) to the Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey bands. It helped set the stage for the Swing Era.
- It was one of the first white bands to come close to a good swing feel.
- There were no star soloists; the band exhibited good, cleanly executed ensemble playing with good and sometimes flashy arrangements in a variety of styles (also used riffs).
- The band was very popular with the college crowd and remained popular until the end of World War II.

Benny Goodman Band

- Benny Goodman (1909–1986) was born and raised in Chicago.
- He was an excellent clarinetist and uncompromising bandleader, eventually dubbed the “King of Swing.”
- He formed his own band in 1934 and with the help of John Hammond, the Benny Goodman band was hired for a nationally broadcast weekly radio show called *Let's Dance* in 1934.
- In the summer of 1935, after leaving the radio show, the Goodman band embarked on a summer tour. As they made their way west to California, they experienced little success.
- Then, seemingly out of nowhere, they experienced a wildly successful engagement playing mostly Fletcher Henderson arrangements at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles.
- The Palomar Ballroom engagement was favorably reviewed in the press and has since been determined to be the unofficially beginning of the Swing Era.
- The Benny Goodman Band featured the following:
 - Excellent improvising soloists
 - Highly polished arrangements, many written by Fletcher Henderson and Eddie Sauter
 - A strong sense of swing
 - A style that suited the youthful taste of the country
- Beginning in 1936, with the encouragement of John Hammond, Benny Goodman hired African-American jazz musicians for his band, making it the first to be racially integrated. Pianist Teddy Wilson, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, and later guitarist Charlie Christian performed and recorded with Benny Goodman's small and large ensembles. The small group recordings are among the best of their time and became quite popular.
- Goodman's clarinet work was so well respected that he was able to commission works from twentieth-century classical composers. The following works were written for Benny Goodman:

Benny Goodman Band.
© Bettmann/CORBIS



- Bela Bartok, *Contrasts*
- Aaron Copland, *Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra*
- Morton Gould, *Derivations for Clarinet and Band*
- Goodman was a demanding bandleader who did not tolerate problems, professional or otherwise, with his band members. Therefore, there were many personnel changes over the years of its existence. The following is a partial list of players who played in the Benny Goodman Band.

Artie Shaw Band

- Artie Shaw (born 1910) was raised in New Haven, Connecticut. He was first influenced by Louis Armstrong, Frankie Trumbauer, and Bix Beiderbecke.
- In 1930, after a short time in Cleveland and Los Angeles playing with different bands, he moved to New York City. He made his first appearance as a bandleader at a swing concert in 1936 held at the Imperial Theater.
- He led a big band that played refined and subtle jazz in the late 1930s and early 1940s.
- He was an excellent clarinetist, arranger, and improviser, often displaying impressionistic and other classical influences in his playing.
- He was considered a rival to Benny Goodman.
- He hired Billie Holiday to tour with his band in the late 1930s, making his the first white band to perform with a black female vocalist.
- He became a big-name performer with his successful 1938 recording of "Begin the Beguine."
- Some important musicians who were members of his band include the following:
 - Roy Eldridge, trumpet
 - Billie Holiday, vocalist
 - Hot Lips Page, trumpet
 - Johnny Guarneri, piano
 - Max Kaminsky, trumpet
- In 1940, following the lead of bandleaders such as Count Basie and Benny Goodman, Shaw organized a small group named the Gramercy Five. They made many successful and significant recordings.
- In 1954, Artie Shaw, for all practical purposes, retired from the music business and has since then mostly functioned as a jazz spokesman when he feels the urge to make his opinion known.
- As a jazz clarinetist and leader of bands, Artie Shaw was second to none. He is one of the most adventurous and charismatic yet controversial figures of jazz.

Tommy Dorsey Band

- Tommy Dorsey (1905–1956) was born in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania.
- He was one of the finest trombone players in all of jazz (brother of saxophonist Jimmy Dorsey). At first he played with bands

led by Jean Goldkette and Paul Whiteman. He also made recordings with Bix Beiderbecke, Red Nichols, Joe Venuti, and Eddie Lang.

- In 1932, he and his brother, Jimmy, formed the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, which included Glenn Miller and Bob Crosby (Bing Crosby's brother). In 1935, Tommy quit the band and started his own band.
- He was an outstanding interpreter of ballads. "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" became his band's theme song. His most commercially successful recording was a big band version of "Boogie-Woogie," originally a Pinetop Smith piano composition.
- A hard-swinging band with polished arrangements, the Tommy Dorsey Band was sometimes recognized as one of the greatest all-around dance bands.
- Some important musicians who were members of his band include the following:
 - Buddy Rich, Dave Tough, drums
 - Bunny Berigan, trumpet
 - Frank Sinatra, vocalist
 - Pee Wee Erwin, trumpet
 - Sy Oliver, arranger
- In 1947, both Dorsey brothers were featured in a movie called *The Fabulous Dorseys*. In 1953, the brothers worked out their differences and reformed the Dorsey Brothers Band. They were featured on their own television program in 1955 to 1956.

Glenn Miller Band

- Glenn Miller (1904–1944) was born in Clarinda, Iowa. He began his professional career as a studio musician and a dance band sideman playing with bands led by Ben Pollack, Red Nichols, the Dorsey Brothers, and English bandleader Ray Noble. He formed his own band in 1937 but did not experience much success until 1939 when the band was broadcast on radio while performing at the Meadowbrook Ballroom in New Jersey and the Glen Island Casino in New York.
- From 1939 to 1944, Miller led one of the most popular and commercially successful bands of the Swing Era.
- The band's emphasis was on arrangements and attractive melodies.
- Improvised solos were not so important, but one exceptionally talented soloist was cornetist Bobby Hackett.
- The popular vocal group the Pied Pipers sang with Miller's band.
- Miller's characteristic arranging technique was doubling the saxophone melody an octave higher on clarinet.
- The Glenn Miller Band's best-known recordings are "In the Mood," "Little Brown Jug," and "Moonlight Serenade."

Jimmy Lunceford Orchestra

- Jimmy Lunceford (1902–1947) was born in Fulton, Missouri, but he grew up in Denver where as a boy, he studied music with Paul Whiteman's father. In the early 1930s he played in Cleveland and Buffalo. The band eventually was hired to play

at the Cotton Club in 1934, and by 1935 they were nationally known as the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra.

- Less known for soloists, Lunceford's band was known for precision, clean execution in its performance of excellent and imaginative arrangements, and showmanship.
- Sy Oliver created the majority of arrangements and is partly responsible for the "Lunceford style." His arrangements of "For Dancers Only" and "Margie" established him as a talented and innovative dance band arranger ahead of his time.
- The band had excellent soloists including the following:
 - Willie Smith, alto sax
 - Trummy Young, trombone
 - Joe Thomas, trumpet

Chick Webb Orchestra

- Chick Webb (1909–1939) was born in Baltimore, Maryland. As a result of tuberculosis contracted early in life, he had a hunchback and found it difficult to get around. Doctors felt that drumming would be helpful. By the age of seventeen, he was in New York playing with Benny Carter and Duke Ellington. In 1931, he formed the Chick Webb Orchestra.
- He was an outstanding drummer and bandleader made famous through recordings and performances at the Savoy Ballroom in New York City.
- He was one of the most influential drummers of his era, possessing a powerful sense of swing.
- He hired singer Ella Fitzgerald in 1934.
- One of Fitzgerald's first hits was based on a nursery rhyme: "A Tisket a Tasket."
- For two years, Fitzgerald assumed leadership of Webb's band after his untimely death.
- Some important musicians who were members of his band include the following:
 - Bobby Stark, trumpet
 - Taft Jordan, trumpet
 - Louis Jordan, sax and vocals
 - Edgar Sampson, alto sax, arranger

Important Swing Era Trumpet Players

Roy Eldridge was born on January 30, 1911 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Known as "Little Jazz," Roy Eldridge was a fiery, energetic trumpeter who bridged the gap between Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie. He possessed tremendous range and technique, was an excellent improviser and had a bright brassy tone. He also could "growl" with the best of them. Perhaps because he was originally a drummer, his trumpet playing exhibited great rhythmic drive. He began touring with carnivals when he was 16. His playing was strongly influenced by Armstrong and he was hired by such band leaders as Horace Henderson, Zack Whyte, and Speed Webb. In 1930, he moved to New York and worked with a number of well-known dance bands. In 1934, he left New York to join the Michigan-based McKinney's Cotton Pickers performing

with the outstanding tenor saxophonist Chu Berry. He made his first recording in 1935 in New York with the Teddy Hill Orchestra and soon after joined Fletcher Henderson's orchestra where his upper register abilities were featured. Drummer Gene Krupa hired Eldridge in 1941 where he was a featured soloist and singer. He later toured with the Artie Shaw band in 1944 and then later led his own band. Eldridge was a very competitive player who loved playing in jam sessions. His late 1940s work with Norman Granz' "Jazz at the Philharmonic" series was an ideal opportunity to showcase his talents. After the 1940s he freelanced in New York, spent time in Europe, and made many memorable recordings. He died on February 26, 1989.

Rowland Bernart "Bunny" Berigan was born November 2, 1908 in Hilbert, Wisconsin. From 1935 to 1939, Berigan, was recognized (along with Eldridge and Armstrong) as one of the top trumpet players in jazz. He had a beautiful tone and a wide range. A great soloist, Berigan brought excitement to every group with which he played. He was an outstanding soloist, full of fire and bravado. Berigan played in many Midwestern territory bands in the mid to late 1920s and in 1930 he was hired to play trumpet in the Hal Kemp Orchestra, but soon left to perform with Paul Whiteman. By the early 1930s, Berigan gained a reputation as a hot jazz soloist appearing on numerous records with the Boswell Sisters and the Dorsey Brothers. In 1935 he performed with Benny Goodman's orchestra, recording classic solos on Goodman's first two hit records "King Porter Stomp" and "Sometimes I'm Happy." As an in-demand studio musician he performed on countless recordings and in 1937 joined Tommy Dorsey, recording more classic solos on "Marie" and "Song of India." After leaving Dorsey, he found enough financial backing to form his own orchestra and record his biggest hit "I Can't Get Started." A great bandleader, but a terrible businessman, he was soon forced to disband and perform for other bandleaders. He died on June 2, 1942 at the much too young age of thirty-three never to achieve his full potential.

Charlie Shavers was born August 3, 1917 in New York City. He was one of most well-respected trumpeters to emerge during the Swing Era. He was an excellent trumpet player, possessing great technique, a beautiful "buttery" sound, and an extroverted style along with a great sense of melody. Shavers began as a pianist before switching to trumpet—this may account for his great arranging skills. By the time he was 18 he was performing professionally; first with Tiny Bradshaw's band; later Lucky Millinder's big band. In 1937, he became a key member of John Kirby's Sextet where he became an integral part of the group playing excellent muted solos and arranging many numbers for the band. He also had a major hit with his composition "Undecided." He left Kirby in 1944 and joined Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra from 1945 until Dorsey's death in 1956. He also recorded with the Metronome All-Stars and toured with Jazz at the Philharmonic. A competitive player, his cutting sessions with Roy Eldridge were infamous. Shavers died July 8, 1971 in New York City.

Harry James was born March 15, 1916 in Albany, Georgia. He was one of the most outstanding trumpet players of the Swing Era. He possessed excellent technique, tremendous range, big beautiful sound all of which made his trumpet work instantly identifiable.

He was also one of the most popular bandleaders of the 1940s, and he continued to lead his band until just before his death. He grew up in Texas around circus performers and his father was a circus bandleader and trumpet player. As a circus musician James developed his prodigious technique and range. He was only 14 when he won a state music contest as a trumpeter and soon after turned professional. In 1935 he became a member of Ben Pollack's band. In 1936, he was a star trumpet player with the Benny Goodman Band. In December 1937, he made recordings under his own name. In early 1939, he left Goodman and formed his own orchestra, soon hiring a young unknown singer named Frank Sinatra. He enjoyed tremendous popularity in the 1940s and 1950s, but was often criticized as being too commercial. His trumpet playing set a very high standard and was universally respected. Harry James died July 5, 1983.

Charles Melvin "Cootie" Williams was born on July 11, 1911 in Mobile, Alabama. He was an integral part of Duke Ellington's band and a valued soloist from 1929 to 1940. He replaced trumpeter Bubber Miley whose plunger mute and growl contributed to the Ellington band's distinctive "jungle" sound. Williams was able to expand on that role with his superior technique. His brilliant open horn playing is featured in many of Ellington's recordings, including "Concerto for Cootie," which Ellington wrote specifically for him. Williams frequently recorded on his own with artists such as Teddy Wilson, Billie Holiday, Lionel Hampton, and other fellow Ellingtonians. He played with Benny Goodman in 1941 for a year before leaving in 1942 to form his own band. Williams led his own bands from 1942 until 1959 and employed some of the most outstanding young bebop players of the day such as Bud Powell, Arnett Cobb, "Lockjaw" Davis, and Eddie Vinson. Williams collaborated with Thelonious Monk on the composition "Round Midnight," introducing it in 1944 when it became the band's theme song. In 1948 when times became tough for big bands, Williams reduced the group to a sextet that played the Savoy Ballroom for eleven years. He recorded many albums, two of the best with fellow Ellington cornetist Rex Stewart titled *The Big Challenge* and *Porgy and Bess Revisited*. He rejoined Ellington in 1962 and stayed with the band even after Duke's death in 1974 when his son Mercer Ellington took over. Cootie Williams died September 15, 1985.

Wilbur Dorsey "Buck" Clayton was born on November 11, 1911 in Parson, Kansas. He first achieved national notoriety as a trumpet soloist with the Count Basie Orchestra during the 1930s and 1940s. Clayton began his career in California with a band that later ended up traveling to China. In 1936, while visiting Kansas City, he was invited to join the Count Basie orchestra as a replacement for "Hot Lips Page." This band was the same one that John Hammond heard and invited to New York. Clayton was also featured on sessions with tenor saxophonist Lester Young, pianist Teddy Wilson, and the singer Billie Holiday in the late 1930s. He remained in the Basie band until 1943, when he left for army service. After leaving the army, Clayton wrote arrangements for many bands including Basie, Benny Goodman, and Harry James before forming a sextet in the late 1940s. After the 1940s, he was active as a performer, arranger, and teacher. His later career focused on his work as a studio musician, jam session player, writer, and

arranger. He had a dry, striking tone and possessed great dexterity. His approach was melodic yet more understated than many of his contemporaries. He died on December 8, 1991.

Important Swing Era Tenor Saxophonists

Coleman Hawkins

If historians or scholars ever decide to assign the accolade “Father of the Tenor Saxophone,” Coleman Hawkins would undoubtedly be a top contender. Perhaps the reason why he is not already considered such is because of his counterpart, Lester Young, who, in his own way, deserves the same title. Both of these tenor saxophonists, in different ways, made equally important contributions to the instrument around the same time.

Coleman Hawkins (also known as either “Hawk” or “Bean”) was born in St. Joseph, Missouri in 1904. His first musical instruments were piano and cello but he eventually settled on saxophone at age 14. While in high school in Topeka, Kansas, he took two years of music theory courses at Washburn College. After spending some time playing in Kansas City theaters, he was hired to play in Mamie Smith’s Blues Hounds in 1922. He toured the United States with Mamie Smith and eventually settled in New York City in 1923. Shortly thereafter, he joined the Fletcher Henderson Band and remained with them until 1934. During this ten-year period, Hawkins’ developed from a Broadway style slap-tongue player into a swing jazz tenor saxophonist with a robust sound and formidable technique. The beginnings of this transformation can be traced to the year 1924 when Louis Armstrong was a member of the Fletcher Henderson Band. Within two years after 1924, Hawkins had become a leading tenor saxophonist mostly by transferring many of Armstrong’s innovations to the tenor saxophone.

From 1934 to 1939, Hawkins was in Europe where he performed with many European and ex-patriot jazz musicians including Jack Hylton and Django Reinhardt. It was during these years that many other tenor saxophonists established themselves in the United States, mostly by emulating Hawkins’ accomplishments with the Fletcher Henderson Band. Upon returning to the States, Hawkins found many potential rivals playing his chosen instrument including Ben Webster and Lester Young. In 1939, not to be outdone by these players, he produced perhaps his most significant recording “Body and Soul.” It was a perfectly conceived improvisation based on the song’s melody and chord progression. It quickly became a sensation with the public and jazz musicians who then and now continue to hold it in high esteem.

In the 1940s Hawkins proved himself to be an important mentor for the younger generation of jazz players as the bebop style was evolving. He was the first musician to use Thelonious Monk on recordings and hire other young players such as Max Roach and Dizzy Gillespie. Although he never developed into a Bebop player himself, he was receptive to the style unlike many of his contemporaries who often gave negative commentary about the Bebop generation. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Hawkins continued to perform but his pre-1940s accomplishments have proved to be

the most influential on jazz saxophonists. Coleman Hawkins died May 19, 1969.

Lester Young

Lester Young was born in Woodville, Mississippi, on August 27, 1909. His father, Willis Young, gave him his first music lessons. Willis led a family band that traveled and performed in the Midwest. While a member of his father's band, Lester learned to play the violin, trumpet, and drums before choosing the saxophone as his main instrument. At age 19, he quit the Young family band to play with bands in Phoenix and Minneapolis. After playing with The Thirteen Original Blue Devils in 1932, he moved to Kansas City in 1933 to join the Bennie Moten Band.

Lester Young achieved national recognition after joining Count Basie's band in 1936. For the next eight years, Young toured with the Basie band while making recordings with a variety of small groups. He became a favorite sideman of Billie Holiday on her recordings. She nicknamed him "Prez," short for President of the Saxophone.

In 1944, Young spent a short and unhappy period of time in the U.S. Army. Differing accounts of his experience in the Army indicate he bore emotional scars after his dishonorable discharge later that same year. In the late 1940s, Young led small groups in nightclubs and on recordings. He also performed with Norman Granz' Jazz at the Philharmonic. In the 1950s, he experienced a gradual deterioration in his health resulting in a similar decline in his playing.

Young's style was the antithesis to Coleman Hawkins's Louis Armstrong influenced approach. Influenced by Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer, Young's tone was light and airy; he used an economy of notes while leaving plenty of empty space in his solos. This kind of playing proved to be a starting point for the 1950s cool style jazz musicians. Stan Getz was especially influenced by Young's style. Lester Young died on March 15, 1959 in New York City.

Ben Webster

Benjamin Francis Webster was born in Kansas City, Missouri, March 27, 1909. He grew up learning several different instruments (violin, piano) before settling on the saxophone. He began his music education on the streets of Kansas City and in jam sessions. He traveled throughout the Midwest playing with many bands including one led by Lester Young's father Willis Young. Webster was able to hear Lester Young at times while being mentored by both Lester and his father who "taught [him] the notes on the horn." In the 1930s Webster played with many well-known big bands including those led by Bennie Moten, Andy Kirk, Fletcher Henderson, Benny Carter, Cab Calloway, and Teddy Wilson.

From 1940 to 1942, Webster was a member of Duke Ellington's band where he established himself as a top soloist on the tenor saxophone. His playing became such an integral part of Ellington's band that it is now referred to as the Blanton/Webster Band. Webster's solos on "Cottontail," "In a Mellow Tone," and "C-Jam

Blues" were second to none. After an altercation that resulted in Webster cutting one of Ellington's suits in small pieces, Webster left the Ellington band.

From the mid-1940s to 1964, Webster found work either in New York or Los Angeles. He also was a featured soloist with the Norman Granz' Jazz at the Philharmonic bands. In 1964, Webster moved to Europe where he remained active for the rest of his career.

Even though he encountered Lester Young early in his life, Webster's style was deeply influenced by Coleman Hawkins, especially with regard to his big, rich tone and vibrato. However, there were more subtle differences between the two players due to Webster's tendency to play with less force and use more space. Describing his style as "an alto approach to the tenor," Webster lists Benny Carter and Johnny Hodges, both alto saxophonists, as important influences as well. Webster continues to influence jazz tenor saxophonists of the late 20th and early 21st century. He died in Amsterdam on September 20, 1973.

Chu Berry

Leon "Chu" Berry was born in Wheeling, West Virginia on September 13, 1908. As the product of a good family, his half sister, a jazz pianist, inspired him to pursue music by learning to play the saxophone. He performed with jazz bands as a teenager in Wheeling and Charleston. By 1929, he was working professionally in New York. Throughout the 1930s he played with many jazz bands including those led by Teddy Hill, Benny Carter, and Fletcher Henderson. In 1937, he began a more long lasting association with Cab Calloway's band. He also appeared on recordings made by well-known artists such as Lionel Hampton, Roy Eldridge, Teddy Wilson, Count Basie, and Bessie Smith. By the late 1930s he was recognized as a leading jazz tenor saxophonist winning an All-Star Band distinction in *Metronome* magazine in 1937 and 1938.

Although Berry was deeply influenced by Coleman Hawkins, he had a unique style that was harmonically advanced and an impressive ability to improvise flawlessly at fast speeds. For this reason, it is assumed Charlie Parker, a Chu Berry disciple, named his son Leon.

Berry's life tragically ended on October 31, 1941 due to an auto accident in Ohio when he was on his way to a Cab Calloway engagement in Canada. His reputation would undoubtedly be far greater had he not died so young. Coleman Hawkins considered him "... about the best." Even modern saxophonists such as Branford Marsalis say Berry is a significant influence on jazz tenor saxophonists of today.

Important Swing Era Alto Saxophonists

John Cornelius "Johnny" Hodges was born July 25, 1906 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is primarily known for his work with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. His alto saxophone sound became an integral part of Ellington's sound when he joined in 1928. He was a masterful improviser, possessed great technique, and had a

most distinctive and beautiful tone on the instrument. In fact, his unique tone makes him one of the easiest performers to identify. He began on drums and piano before taking up the saxophone at the age of 14, playing soprano first and later the alto. He took lessons from Sydney Bechet and began his professional career in Boston and New York around 1924. He made hundreds of records with Ellington and recorded with numerous small groups, many of which were comprised of members of Ellington's band. Some titles associated with Hodges include: "Jeep's Blues," "Hodge Podge," and "The Jeep is Jumpin'" all cowritten with Duke. Other Ellington recordings that bear Hodges trademark sound include: "Things Ain't What They Used To Be," "Don't Get Around Much Any More," "Passion Flower," and "Blood Count." His sound was a model for alto sax players of the 1930s and early 1940s and it influenced many younger musicians who would go on to be important in the bebop era and beyond. Johnny Hodges died on May 11, 1970 in New York City.

Bennett Lester "Benny" Carter was born August 8, 1907. He began as a trumpet player after having heard trumpeters Cuban Bennett and Bubber Miley, but soon switched to the saxophone where he began to emulate C-melody saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer. From 1924 to 1928, Carter worked as a sideman in some of the nation's top bands including Earl Hines and the Charlie Johnson Orchestra. During this period he taught himself the craft of arranging. In 1930, Carter joined Fletcher Henderson's orchestra, assuming the arranging duties previously handled by Don Redman. Carter's innovative scores, particularly his writing for the sax section, helped to revitalize the band. In 1931, Carter became musical director of another important musical organization: the Detroit-based McKinney's Cotton Pickers. In 1932, Carter returned to New York and soon began putting together his own orchestra, which eventually would include such swing stars as Chu Berry, Teddy Wilson, Sid Catlett, and Dicky Wells. However, this excellent band was not a commercial success. Carter traveled to Europe in 1935 staying until 1938, successfully performing and directing groups in France and England. Upon his return to the States he realized that the country was at the height of the Swing Era and the big band sounds, which he had helped shape, were sweeping the airwaves. He formed another outstanding orchestra, which spent much of 1939 and 1940 at Harlem's famed Savoy Ballroom. As an arranger, his arrangements were in great demand and featured on recordings by Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, Gene Krupa, and Tommy Dorsey. In 1941, Carter cut the group back to a sextet, which included bebop pioneers Dizzy Gillespie and Kenny Clarke. In 1942, he reformed his big band and it included important future bebop stars, such as Miles Davis, J. J. Johnson, Max Roach, and Art Pepper, all having later acknowledged their debt to Carter as a teacher. After settling in California in 1942, Carter found himself writing music for films such as the soundtrack to *Stormy Weather* in 1943. He later arranged music for dozens of feature films and television productions. He has provided arrangements for almost every major popular singer including Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Lou Rawls, Ray Charles, Peggy Lee, Louis Armstrong, Pearl Bailey, Billy Eckstine and Mel Torme.

Benny Carter has made contributions to music in numerous areas. As a soloist, Carter, along with Johnny Hodges, was the model for Swing Era alto saxophonists. He also had the unique ability to double on trumpet, which is very unusual for a saxophonist. As an arranger, he was one of the principal architects of the big band style and helped chart the course of big band jazz during the 1930s. His arrangements for Fletcher Henderson in the early 1930s and McKinney's Cotton Pickers were often emulated by other arrangers. Some of his compositions, such as "When Lights Are Low" and "Blues In My Heart," have become jazz standards. Carter also made major musical contributions to the world of film and television. Benny Carter died July 12, 2003.

Willie Smith (1910–1967), originally from Charleston, South Carolina, was considered one of the finest alto saxophonists in jazz together with Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter during the 1930s. He had a distinctive sound, a swinging style, and strong leadership skills, all of which were a major asset to Jimmy Lunceford's orchestra. Smith was also an excellent clarinetist and was considered a very good arranger, having contributed many numbers to the Lunceford band. Willie Smith attended Fisk University in the late 1920s where he met Lunceford. When Lunceford formed his band he asked Smith to join as an alto player in 1929. A superb lead alto saxophonist and the strongest soloist in the Lunceford Orchestra, Smith was one of the stars of the group until 1942. He left Lunceford and over the next few years played with a number of important big bands led by Charlie Spivak, Duke Ellington, and the trumpet player, Harry James. He remained with James in the 1950s and early 1960s, while also occasionally playing with Norman Granz' Jazz at the Philharmonic.

Henry "Buster" Smith (1904–1991) was originally from Alsdorf, Texas. He could play the play organ, guitar, alto saxophone, and the clarinet by the time he was 18. He began playing alto saxophone and clarinet professionally in Dallas in the early 1920s. In 1925, he joined the famous Midwestern territory band Page's Blue Devils. He played with some of the best musicians in the Southwest (from Oklahoma City to Kansas City) including Hot Lips Page, Walter Page, Lester Young, Count Basie, and Jimmy Rushing, and by 1931 became the leader of the Blue Devils. In 1933, he joined the Bennie Moten Orchestra. After Moten's sudden death in 1935, Smith remained in the band that eventually became the Count Basie Orchestra. The band's great success in Kansas City led to the group relocating to New York by 1937. Buster Smith is reputed to have used a thicker saxophone reed that produced a louder and "drier" sound that was different from the sweeter, more refined sound of Johnny Hodges. Smith's sound could carry better in the loud clubs of Kansas City. An excellent blues player he mentored the young Kansas City alto saxophonist Charlie Parker. Smith's tone, attack (the way he played his notes), linear conception, and rhythmic feel strongly influenced Parker who revolutionized jazz in the 1940s.

Important Musicians of the Swing Era

Trumpet	Alto Sax	Tenor Sax	Trombone
Hot Lips Page	Johnny Hodges	Lester Young	Tommy Dorsey
Roy Eldridge	Benny Carter	Coleman Hawkins	Glenn Miller
Bunny Berigan	Willie Smith	Ben Webster	"Tricky" Sam Nanton
Harry James	Buster Smith	Bud Freeman	Lawrence Brown
Cootie Williams	Jimmy Dorsey	Vido Musso	J. C. Higginbotham
Harry "Sweets" Edison	Russell Procope	Chu Berry	Benny Morton
Henry "Red" Allen		Herschel Evans	Vic Dickenson
Buck Clayton		Don Byas	Dicky Wells
Charlie Shavers		Georgie Auld	Jack Teagarden
Ziggy Elman			Trummy Young
Rex Stewart			Jimmy Harrison
Jonah Jones			Miff Mole

Bass	Drums	Piano	Arrangers
Walter Page	Sid Catlett	Teddy Wilson	Don Redman
Jimmy Blanton	Jo Jones	Duke Ellington	Bill Challis
John Kirby	William "Cozy" Cole	Count Basie	Duke Ellington
Israel Crosby	Dave Tough	Jess Stacy	Sy Oliver
	Chick Webb	Mel Powell	Fletcher Henderson
	Gene Krupa	Mary Lou Williams	Mary Lou Williams
	Buddy Rich	Nat Cole	Edgar Sampson
	Lionel Hampton	Billy Kyle	Billy Strayhorn
		Nat Pierce	Eddie Sauter
		Claude Thornhill	Jerry Gray
			Glenn Miller
			Jimmy Mundy
			Paul Weston
			Buck Clayton
			Eddie Durham
			Spud Murphy

Clarinet	Vocalists
Benny Goodman	Peggy Lee
Barney Bigard	Helen Forrest
Artie Shaw	Nat Cole
Buster Bailey	Frank Sinatra
	Mildred Bailey
	Jo Stafford
	Boswell Sisters
	Anita O'Day