

# Eighty Years of Black Entertainment: Big Bands and the Blues

Big bands and the blues have been a staple of black entertainment for over eighty years. These two genres of music have shaped the sound of American popular music and continue to influence musicians and audiences today.

Big bands emerged in the 1920s and 1930s as a fusion of jazz and dance music. These large ensembles, typically consisting of ten or more musicians, played a wide range of music, from swing and jazz standards to popular songs of the day. Some of the most famous big bands of the era included the Count Basie Orchestra, the Duke Ellington Orchestra, and the Glenn Miller Orchestra.



## I Remember: Eighty Years of Black Entertainment, Big Bands, and the Blues by Clyde E. B. Bernhardt

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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The blues, on the other hand, has roots in the African American experience in the rural South. The music is characterized by its use of the "blue note," a note that is slightly flatted, and its emphasis on improvisation. Blues musicians often sang about the hardships of life, but their music also expressed hope and resilience. Some of the most influential blues musicians of the early 20th century include Robert Johnson, B.B. King, and Muddy Waters.

In the 1940s and 1950s, big bands and the blues began to decline in popularity as rock and roll emerged as the new dominant form of music. However, these genres continued to be played and enjoyed by a loyal following. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a resurgence of interest in big bands and the blues as part of a broader revival of interest in traditional American music. Today, these genres continue to be played and enjoyed by a wide range of people around the world.

### **The Impact of Big Bands and the Blues**

Big bands and the blues have had a profound impact on American culture. These genres of music have helped to shape the sound of American popular music, and they have influenced musicians and audiences alike. Big bands, in particular, played a major role in the development of swing dancing, which was a popular pastime in the 1930s and 1940s. The blues, on the other hand, has had a major impact on the development of rock and roll and other genres of popular music.

In addition to their musical impact, big bands and the blues have also had a significant social impact. These genres of music have helped to break down racial barriers and have promoted understanding and appreciation of African American culture. Big bands, in particular, were one of the first

integrated musical ensembles in the United States. The blues, on the other hand, has been a powerful voice for the African American experience, expressing both the hardships and the triumphs of life.

Big bands and the blues are two of the most important genres of American music. These genres have shaped the sound of American popular music, and they have influenced musicians and audiences alike. Big bands and the blues have also had a significant social impact, helping to break down racial barriers and promote understanding and appreciation of African American culture. Today, these genres continue to be played and enjoyed by a wide range of people around the world, and their legacy is likely to continue for many years to come.



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