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The Big Bands



Synopsis

The Big Bands come swing back to glory in this big, definitive, all-inclusive chronicle of the men and the music that made America forget its troubles and just get happy. This is it. The whole scene. The way it was when you could catch Gene Krupa, tearing it up in the Madhattan Room of the Hotel Pennsylvania. Or fight it out for a front-row balcony seat at the Paramount for the fabulous Tommy Dorsey stage show with Frank Sinatra and the Pied Pipers. Or roll up the rugs and dance to Jimmy Dorsey's big broadcast, featuring Bob Eberly and Helen O'Connell from the Steel Pier at Atlantic City.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (28 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Well, I found the 1967 hardcover edition at an estate sale a month ago, and bought it for a dollar. It was a book club reprint. By the time I was three, in December of 1947, the majority of the big bands were gone. Those that survived into the late '50's and early '60's included Ellington's and Basie's and a few others. The author knows his subject: he was one of Glenn Miller's earliest drummers, but realizing he wasn't the most talented guy around, he became a jazz critic and reporter for Metronome magazine and covered the entire era of big band domination, which only lasted a dozen years. The bands faced the money shortage of the Depression, the life disruptions of World War II (including a long musician's union strike which banned making records) and then the changing taste of the post-war generation. In 500 fascinating pages, Mr. Simon covers in depth the biggest stars of the era, and in less detail the minor league players and leaders of bands and orchestras, the jazz-oriented, the dixielanders, the black outfits, and the society dance kings. I began to be exposed

to big band records in childhood, and by college age was going to proms and concerts by surviving orchestras, so I've been a casual fan of the style for half a century. I've seen the film versions of the careers of Benny Goodman, Miller, Duchin, and others, and owned LP's, cassettes and CD's of both early recordings and recreations. This book enthralled me and taught me more than I ever needed to know about the who, and why and how of these outfits, great and small, long-lived and brief, immortal and long forgotten. Simon quotes from period reviews extensively, and tells many personal stories of his business and personal relationships with leaders and singers and instrumentalists.

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