



Mr. B: The Music and Life of Billy Eckstine (Hal Leonard Jazz Biographies)

Cary Ginell

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Mr. B: The Music and Life of Billy Eckstine (Hal Leonard Jazz Biographies) Cary Ginell (Book). In 1950, Billy Eckstine was the most popular singer in America. Movie-star handsome with an elegant pencil-thin mustache and a wide vibrato, Eckstine possessed one of the most magnificent voices in popular music history. Born in Pittsburgh, Eckstine won a talent contest by imitating Cab Calloway and started leading jazz orchestras under the name Baron Billy. In 1939, he joined Earl Hines' orchestra, composing and performing the hits "Jelly, Jelly" and "Stormy Monday Blues." In 1944, he formed what is now considered the first bebop orchestra that included, during its brief three-year run, legendary figures such as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and Sarah Vaughan. Signing with MGM, he rose to superstar status, sold millions of records, marketed his own line of "Mr. B." shirt collars, and inspired an army of female admirers, known as "Billy-soxers." Eckstine fought all his life for recognition and respect in his quest to become America's first black romantic singing idol, but he faced hardships in the segregated music world of the '40s and '50s. Despite this, he went on to influence many singers who followed, including Arthur Prysock, Johnny Hartman, Johnny Mathis, Kevin Mahogany, Barry White, and even Elvis Presley. In this book, Cary Ginell traces, for the first time, the life of one of the twentieth century's most amazing success stories, the man known simply as "Mr. B."

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