



The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz

Jeffrey Magee

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If Benny Goodman was the "King of Swing," then Fletcher Henderson was the power behind the throne. Now Jeffrey Magee offers a fascinating account of Henderson's musical career, throwing new light on the emergence of modern jazz and the world that created it.

Drawing on an unprecedented combination of sources, including sound recordings and hundreds of scores that have been available only since Goodman's death, Magee illuminates Henderson's musical output, from his early work as a New York bandleader, to his pivotal role in building the Kingdom of Swing. He shows how Henderson, standing at the forefront of the New York jazz scene during the 1920s and '30s, assembled the era's best musicians, simultaneously preserving jazz's distinctiveness *and* performing popular dance music that reached a wide audience. Magee reveals how, in Henderson's largely segregated musical world, black and white musicians worked together to establish jazz, how Henderson's style rose out of collaborations with many key players, how these players deftly combined improvised and written music, and how their work negotiated artistic and commercial impulses.

Whether placing Henderson's life in the context of the Harlem Renaissance or describing how the savvy use of network radio made the Henderson-Goodman style a national standard, Jeffrey Magee brings to life a monumental musician who helped to shape an era.

"An invaluable survey of Henderson's life and music."

--Don Heckman, *Los Angeles Times*

"Magee has written an important book, illuminating an era too often reduced to its most familiar names. Goodman might have been the King of Swing, but Henderson here emerges as that kingdom's chief architect."

--*Boston Globe*

"Excellent.... Jazz fans have waited 30 years for a trained musicologist...to evaluate Henderson's strengths and weaknesses and attempt to place him in the history of American music."

--Will Friedwald, *New York Sun*

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