

# The Story of Jazz

narrated by LANGSTON HUGHES



with Documentary Recordings



ML  
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H893  
1984

WRITTEN BY LANGSTON HUGHES,  
AUTHOR OF "THE FIRST BOOK OF JAZZ"  
PUBLISHED BY FRANKLIN WATTS, INC.

FC 17312 FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP., N.Y.

MUSIC LP

carlier

# THE STORY OF JAZZ

## SIDE I

### Band 1. BEGINNINGS

Introduction, Africa, The South,  
New Orleans; Jelly Roll Morton,  
Rags, Bunk Johnson,  
Scott Joplin, Louis Armstrong.

### Band 2. THE BLUES

Introduction, St. Louis Blues, Ma Rainey,  
Perdido Street Blues.

## SIDE II

### CHARACTERISTICS

A Break, A Riff, Boogie Woogie;  
Bix Biederbecke, Duke Ellington, Earl Hines,  
Dizzy Gillespie, Lennie Tristano, Teenagers,  
Mary Lou Williams.

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. R 59-99

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632 Broadway, NYC, USA 10012

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FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FC 7312  
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MUSIC LP 791 Seventh Ave., NYC, USA

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AUTHOR OF "THE FIRST BOOK OF JAZZ"  
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## (1) FIREWORKS

Jazz!.....America's music----made in the  
U. S. A.....Louis Armstrong:

Baby Dodds:

## (2) BABY DODDS

Jelly Roll Morton:

## (3) MR. JELLY LORD

Johnny Dodds:

Great names in jazz----American jazz----  
that began a hundred years or more before  
any of these men were born----began in  
various ways, in various places. One beginning  
was with the varied rhythms of African drums  
played by slaves in Congo Square in New  
Orleans:

## (4) DRUMS OF THE YORUBA

Their drums must have sounded like these  
drums of Africa, as played in Nigeria----for  
most of the slaves brought to America were  
from the West Coast of Africa. With them  
came their rhythms, passed down from parents  
to children:

Working in the cotton fields on the great  
Southern plantations, when the slaves raised  
a cry, it was a rhythmical cry:

## (5) OL' HANNAH

And afterawhile, loading cotton bales on the  
old paddle-wheel steamers on the Mississippi,  
they sang:

## (6) OLD MAN (LEADBELLY)

The Mississippi, mighty river, bearing cotton  
and music and dreams.

## (7) POURQUOI CES LARMES

New Orleans.....on the Delta.....at the mouth  
of the Mississippi----first a French city....

then a Spanish city.....and finally an American  
city. There, in that city of the Delta, were  
heard.....the music of Spain and the rhythms  
of the French quadrilles.....And later, since  
thousands of sail boats went back and forth  
between the Gulf and the Caribbean, the  
rhythms of the West Indies came:

## (8) DEUX AMOURS

The people of New Orleans heard all this  
music. They began to put it together into a  
music of their own, always syncopating the  
rhythms a little bit more, ever a little bit  
more, influenced no doubt by the Congo drums.

Jelly Roll Morton took the theme of an old  
French quadrille and transformed it into a  
piece which he called "The Tiger Rag":

## (9) TIGER RAG

Borrowing from the rhythms around them and  
the swing of the levee songs, the colored  
marching bands of New Orleans put into their  
street marches lively strains like these:

## (10) DOWN BY THE RIVER

That's Bunk Johnson's Original Superior Band  
playing "Down By The River":

In the late 1800's in a town farther up the  
Mississippi River----Sedalia, Missouri----a  
man named Scott Joplin began to popularize on  
the piano this new syncopated music. He  
called his music ragtime. He composed many  
such pieces himself, his best known being "The  
Maple Leaf Rag", and he made many player-  
piano rolls, sold by the thousands throughout  
the country:

## (11) ORIGINAL RAGS

This is Scott Joplin himself playing one of  
his original rags:

Louis Armstrong of New Orleans, born on the  
4th of July, 1900, as a young man, played his  
trumpet on the Mississippi River boats. Into  
Louis' playing crept the blue notes of the field  
hollers and plantation songs he'd heard.....and  
the brightness of ragtime.....and the loneliness  
of the big old muddy river.....and the happiness

of dancing people on the boats where he played.  
.....Louis put these things all together, lifted  
his horn to his lips, and played like this:

## (12) I'M NOT ROUGH

That's Louis!.....His nickname is Satchmo.....  
All through his early music run the strains of  
the blues:

### Side I, Band 2

Nobody knows who first made up the songs  
called the blues.....But their three line, 12-bar  
form has since become a standard pattern in  
American music.....Certainly the blues show  
traces of the work songs, the field hollers, and  
the plantation cries of the Deep South.....The  
blues.....Maybe one hot day, a man was working  
in a rice field when a song came into his head,  
then out of his mouth----a song.....with words  
.....perhaps like this:

Oh, the sun is so hot  
And the day is so doggone long.....

Then, when he couldn't think of anything else  
right away to go with it, he repeated the same  
lines:

Yes, the sun is so hot  
And the day is so doggone long.....

But, by that time, maybe he had a new thought,  
so he sang:

And that is the reason  
I'm singing this doggone song.

Something like that must have happened the day  
the first blues was born, for that is the pattern  
of the blues----a 12-bar musical pattern----  
one long line of four bars which is repeated,  
words and music, then a third line of four  
bars to rhyme lyrically with the first two lines  
that are always the same. The melody and  
beat of the blues are not unlike those of a field  
holler. Perhaps thousands of blues were made  
up in this way in the fields or on the levees----  
to relieve the monotony of working, to express  
some thought passing through the singer's  
mind, or just for fun.....Then, one day in  
Memphis, W. C. Handy wrote down the first  
composed blues, "The Memphis Blues", around  
1912. And a few years later, he wrote his  
famous, "St. Louis Blues":

## (13) ST. LOUIS BLUES

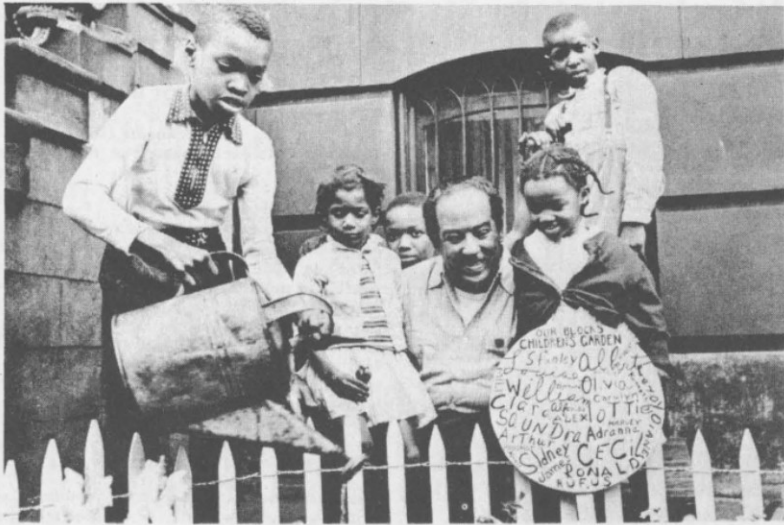
Travelling singers like Ma Rainey, Blind Lemon  
Jefferson, and Bessie Smith began to sing their  
blues far and wide.....This is the great Ma  
Rainey in 1923 singing "The Travelling Blues":

## (14) TRAVELLING BLUES

The blues, mingling with the rhythms of the  
African drums of Congo Square, the field  
hollers and levee songs, ragtime and the synco-  
pation of the New Orleans marching bands, all  
merging and mingling in the early New Orleans  
and Dixieland jazz, that was to form the basis  
and set the patterns for all the other kinds of  
jazz that were to come:

## (15) PERDIDO STREET BLUES

That's the "Perdido Street Blues" played by  
the New Orleans Wanderers.....Dixieland  
jazz.....George Mitchell, cornet.....Johnny  
Dodds, clarinet.....Lil Armstrong, piano.....  
Johnny St. Cyr, banjo.....and Kid Ory's  
trombone.....Recorded in Chicago, 1926.....  
That's jazz!



Langston Hughes

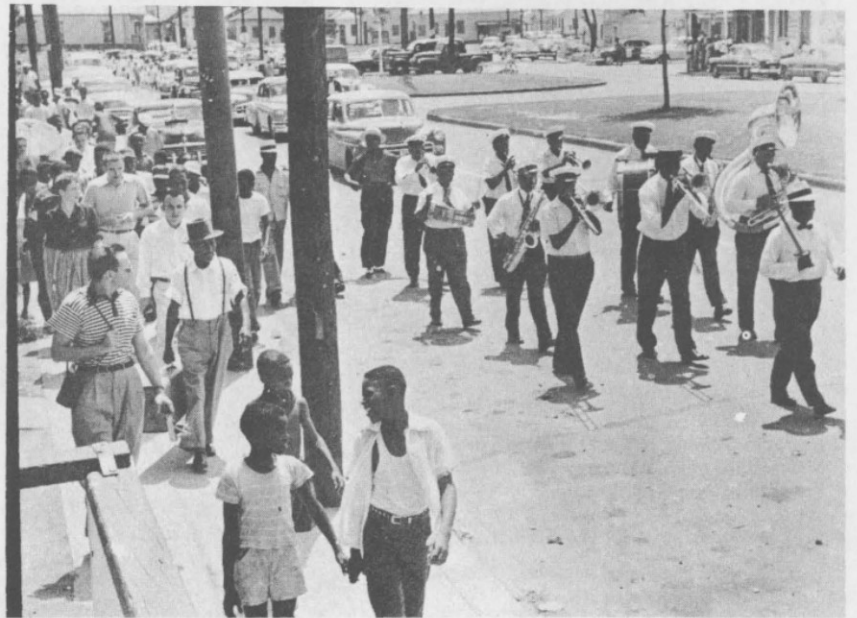
Leadbelly

Photo by Frederic Ramsey



Photo by G. D. Hackett

Mary Lou Williams



Eureka Jazz Band, New Orleans

Photo by Frederic Ramsey

## SIDE II

Jazz music has certain characteristics

### (16) WOLVERINE BLUES

...That's a break.....A break is a very brief syncopated interlude, usually of two to four bars, between musical phrases. In unwritten jazz, the breaks are often improvised....Now, you listen for another break.....You're listening to Jelly Roll Morton, piano, Johnny Dodds, clarinet, and Baby Dodds, playing the "Wolverine Blues".....They're probably improvising on an old theme:

Improvising means composing as one plays, or making up variations on old themes directly on the instruments being played---rather than from written notes. This was very common among the early jazz players, many of whom could not read or write music. They played by ear, and to them syncopation---or jazzing---just seemed to come naturally, or at least with ease.....Now, another thing common to jazz is a riff. Like breaks, riffs are often used.

A riff is a single rhythmical phrase repeated several times sometimes, over and over, usually as a background to the lead melody.

In this Count Basie piece, listen to the riff at the very beginning of this section, right after the drum beats:

### (17) DON'T YOU MISS YOUR BABY

Hear the repeated figure? An ensemble riff..... Now you listen for the riff.....

Now let's try another record. See how many riffs or breaks you can pick out in this example of Kansas City jazz:

### (18) FROGGY BOTTOM

Kansas City---the town that produced such famous jazz players as Bennie Moten, Count Basie, Mary Lou Williams, Buck Clayton, and Andy Kirk whose orchestra is now playing "Froggy Bottom":

Kansas City in the 1920's and '30's was also a great town for boogie woogie piano players---as was Chicago---the players travelling all over the West and Southwest---Pine Top Smith, Albert Ammons, Jimmy Yancey, Meade Lux Lewis:

### (19) HONKY TONK TRAIN

Boogie woogie is a kind of blues-ragtime with a strong deep powerful rolling bass added. "Trilling the treble and rolling the bass" is the way some players describe boogie woogie. Here is a portion of "Honky Tonk Train" as played by Lewis:

In the early 1920's when many New Orleans musicians migrated to Chicago, young musicians there like Bix Beiderbecke, Art Hodes, Mezz Mezzrow, Paul Whiteman, and Jimmie McPartland came to hear them night after night, and tried to learn to play like them.

A style of Chicago jazz evolved, of which a good example is Bix Beiderbecke's

### (20) SOMEBODY STOLE MY GAL

As the old jazz changed into swing, or mellowed into sweet jazz, bands like Bunny Berigan's were popular:

### (21) I'M COMING VIRGINIA

In New York one of the groups that became famous in the 1920's and continues famous to this day, after more than a quarter of a century of playing, is Duke Ellington's Orchestra.

This is Ellington's "The Mooche":

### (22) THE MOOCHE

Duke Ellington's band is very popular in Europe. And other American orchestras such as Benny Goodman, Cab Calloway, Glenn Miller, Charlie Barnet, Woody Herman, Tommy Dorsey, and Lionel Hampton's have won wide popularity. By 1940, jazz---America's music---had gone everywhere in the world, and people in Paris, and Cairo, and London, and Tokyo had learned to love it, and to play or to try to play it. Earl Hines, whose piano you are hearing now, has played his music in many countries abroad:

### (23) "JUST TOO SOON" UP

About 1945 a young man named Dizzy Gillespie in New York, along with other musicians like Thelonius Monk, Bud Powell, and Charlie Parker, began to play a somewhat new kind of jazz with clashing chords, dissonances, off-rhythms, and sometimes bongo drums from Cuba furnishing the percussion.

This music came to be called be-bop.

Here is Dizzy Gillespie with Chano Pozo on drums playing "Oopapada":

### (24) OOPAPADA

After World War II, many of the big bands dissolved, and small combinations became popular. Many of these small combos play a cool kind of jazz termed modern or progressive jazz---influenced by all the older forms of jazz, of course---but most directly by bop. Here is such a small combo, Lennie Tristano's, playing in modern style a blues:

### (25) "BLUES"

People listen to jazz for fun, dance to jazz for fun, and play jazz for fun. From the Congo drums of New Orleans, and the street bands there, and Louis Armstrong to Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman and Lennie Tristano and Dave Brubeck and Dizzy Gillespie and Chet Baker, jazz is fun. And you don't have to be a musician to play jazz.

These are some teen-agers in the basement of a housing project in New York City playing with just a few sticks on benches, some pop bottles, and a bongo---just for fun:

### (26) TEEN-AGERS DRUMMING

Boys making up their own music---just like the old-timers did in long-ago New Orleans---improvising just for fun.

And now, to sign us off, here is Mary Lou Williams at the piano in a great jam session recorded in New York.

They're playing just for fun.

### (27) JGON MILI JAM SESSION

---made in the U. S. A.....Jazz!

## CREDITS

1. FIREWORKS, Jazz Volume 9, Side 1, Band 5. June 27, 1928, OK 8597
2. BABY DODDS, Footnotes to Jazz, Volume 1, Side 2, Band 1. Recorded by Moses Asch, FP 30
3. MR. JELLY LORD, Jazz Volume 2, Side 2, Band 2. June 1927, BI 0258
4. DRUMS OF THE YORUBA OF NIGERIA, Side 2, Band 5. Recorded by William Bascom. P 441
5. OL' HANNAH, Jazz Volume 1, "The South", Side 1, Band 1. Recorded by Moses Asch, FP 53 (1950).
6. OLD MAN ('Levee Song') Lead Belly, "This Is My Land" Side 2, Band 4. Recorded by Moses Asch
7. POURQUOI CES L'ARMES, Haitian Piano, Side 2, Band 3. Recorded by Harold Courlander, FP 837
8. DEUX AMOURS, Haitian Piano, Side 2, Band 3. Recorded by Harold Courlander, FP 837 (1952)
9. TIGER RAG, Jazz Volume 3, Side 2, Band 4. September 1922, Gennett 4968
10. DOWN BY THE RIVER, Jazz Volume 3, Side 1, Band 5. June 1942, Jazzman 8
11. ORIGINAL RAGS, Scott Joplin, Jazz Volume 11, Side 2, Band 2. Jazz Classics 534
12. I'M NOT ROUGH, Jazz Volume 2, Side 2, Band 6. December 1927, Okeh 8551
13. ST. LOUIS BLUES, Ammons, Jazz, Volume 10, Side 1, Band 4. 1939, SA 12003
14. TRAVELING BLUES, Jazz, Volume 4, Side 2, Band 3. 1929 Para 14011/12706.
15. PERDIDO STREET BLUES, Jazz Volume 3, Side 1, Band 1. July 13, 1926. Columbia 689
16. WOLVERINE BLUES, Jazz Volume 9, Side 1, Band 3. June 10, 1927, FV 21064
17. DON'T YOU MISS YOUR BABY, Jazz, Volume 4, Side 1, Band 3. 1937. De 1770
18. FROGGY BOTTOM, Jazz Volume 10, Side 2, Band 3. March 1938. De 729
19. HONKY TONK TRAIN, Jazz Volume 10, Side 1, Band 5. Chicago, 1929. Para 12896
20. SOMEBODY STOLE MY GAL, Jazz Volume 6, Side 2, Band 1. Pk 41030
21. I'M COMING VIRGINIA, Jazz Volume 11, Side 2, Band 4. December 1935. De 18116
22. THE MOOCHE, Jazz Volume 4, Side 1, Band 4. 1928. Ok 8623
23. JUST TOO SOON, Jazz Volume 9, Side 1, Band 4. 1928. QRS 7039
24. OOPAPADA, Jazz, Volume 4, Side 1, Band 4. 1947. Vi 20-2480
25. BLUES, Jazz Volume 9, Side 2, Band 7. Recorded by Moses Asch
26. TEEN-AGERS DRUMMING: "1, 2, 3 and A Zing", Side 2, Band 4. Recorded by Tony Schwartz. (FP 703)
27. JGON MILI JAM SESSION, Asch Recordings, No. 1006A. Recorded by Moses Asch

This album is recorded and technical editing by Mel Kaiser.

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