



The History of Music

Music of World War 2

Music During the War



Musicians recognised the importance of entertainment for soldiers during the war. The music not only gave the soldiers a reprieve from the terrors of war, but it also served to boost the morale of the troops while they were fighting. Music provided a distraction for the soldiers from the war that was being waged around them. The faster songs distracted troops with their catchy beats, and the ballads reminded the men of their loved ones at home who they were fighting for.

The Forces Sweetheart



Dame Vera Lynn DBE (born 20_March 1917) is a popular British vocalist whose career flourished during World War II, when she was nicknamed "The Forces' Sweetheart". Among her numerous popular songs are "We'll Meet Again" and "The White Cliffs of Dover". She was considered one of the major entertainers during World War II.



**There'll be bluebirds over
the white cliffs of Dover**

White Cliffs of Dover

- Below is the song "White Cliffs of Dover", which became famous during World War Two. Pilots flying to Germany from the airfields in south England would know that they had made it home safely when they saw the white cliffs of Dover, so this sight had a special significance at this time. Several different singers produced versions of this song, but the one by Vera Lynn is best-known in Britain.

Big Band and Swing

Swing began in the late 1920s but it was between 1935 and 1946 when big band swing music became the most popular music in America, also known as the Swing Era.

A typical song played in swing style would include a strong rhythm accompanied by wind, string or brass instruments, also including vocals. A soloist would commonly take centre stage and improvise a solo with the band in the background.

Glenn Miller and Duke Ellington are two of the most famous big band leaders from this time.

By the late 1940s, this type of music was less popular.



Glenn Miller

- **Alton Glenn Miller** (1904–1944), was an American jazz musician and band leader in the swing era. He was one of the best-selling recording artists from 1939 to 1942, leading one of the best known "Big Bands". Miller's signature recordings include, "In the Mood" and "Chattanooga Choo Choo".
- While travelling to entertain U.S. troops in France during World War II, Miller's plane disappeared in bad weather. His body was never found.



Chattanooga
Choo Choo

Glenn Miller



Compare
the two
pieces of
music that
you have
just
listened to.



DO YOU THINK THESE 2
STYLES OF MUSIC ARE
SIMILAR?



WHICH DO YOU PREFER?



WHAT INSTRUMENTS CAN
YOU IDENTIFY?



Duke Ellington

Duke Ellington

- Edward Kennedy Ellington, known as 'Duke' was born in Washington DC. Duke's grandparents had been slaves and like most African Americans at the time, Duke was a victim of racial prejudice at times. Both of his parents were pianists and when Duke was seven years old, he started piano lessons. Around this time, he was given the nickname 'Duke' because of his good manners.
- Duke became a well-known jazz pianist and composer. Jazz is a type of American music that has roots in blues and ragtime. It has lots of improvisation and solos from different instruments.
- Duke's jazz orchestra, The Washingtonians, played at the famous Cotton Club in Harlem. In jazz, orchestras are often known as big bands. At the time, African Americans were allowed to perform at the club but not allowed in as customers. Performers even had to enter via a back door.

Duke Ellington

- Duke and his big band wrote some of the world's most famous jazz pieces, including 'I'm Beginning to See the Light', 'It Don't Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got that Swing', 'Take the A Train' and 'In a Sentimental Mood'.
- In an era of racism, Duke was proud of who he was, and this is reflected in compositions, such as 'Black and Tan Fantasy', 'Black, Brown and Beige' and 'Creole Rhapsody'. He said: "My men and my race are the inspiration of my work. I try to catch the character and mood and feeling of my people."
- Duke was awarded the Presidential Medal of Honour and the Legion d'Honneur, both the highest awards a civilian can receive; the first in the USA, the second in France. He won 14 Grammy awards and has a star on the Hollywood 'Walk of Fame'.

Listen to 'If it Ain't Got That Swing'

