

Cab calloway



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Cab Calloway was an influential singer and actor in the 1930's. Born in Rochester, NY, on December 25, 1907, he started from rock bottom and worked his way up, until he was discovered and on top. To get to the top, Cab was a part of many different scenes and had much help from family and friends.

According to Dan Gediman, Cab was the "Hi De Ho" man, a legendary showman, gifted singer, bandleader, actor, and fashion setter. He was a larger than life figure, who was immortalized in cartoons and caricatures, was also the leader of one of the greatest bands of the Swing Era (Dan Gediman, "Cab Calloway"). Scott Yanow thought Cab was "One of the great entertainers," and Cab's name was a household one by 1932, and never really declined in fame (Scott Yanow, "Cab Calloway's Biography").

Cab grew up in Baltimore, and attended law school there briefly, before he quit school and set off to try and make it as a singer and dancer. As a young man Cab was following his father's footsteps in becoming a lawyer, going to law school and studying law. Cab wanted to be an entertainer even though his family discouraged him. They thought that it would be more appropriate for him to become a lawyer like his dad. Although, at the time that he was going to law school, his sister, Blanche Calloway, was a popular singer and was producing and singing a few fine records before retiring in the mid 1930's (Yanow). Well, his sister Blanche who was a prominent singer of the time convinced Cab to put more of an effort into his entertainment career. So while Cab was attending law school in Chicago, he also moonlighted at local nightclubs as a performer. While performing in Chicago he met the famous trumpeter and singer Louis Armstrong, who taught him to scat. According to

the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture defines scat singing in music as "a jazz vocal style using emotive, onomatopoeic, and nonsense syllables instead of words in solo improvisations on a melody". Scat has deep antecedents in the West African practice of assigning fixed syllables to percussion patterns, but the style was made popular by trumpeter and singer Louis Armstrong from 1927 on. The popular theory that scat singing began when a vocalist forgot the lyrics may be true, but this origin does not explain the persistence of the style. Earlier, as an accompanist to singers, notably the blues singer Bessie Smith, Armstrong played riffs that took on vocalization qualities. His scat reversed the process. Later scat singers fitted their styles, all individualized, to the music of their times. Ella Fitzgerald phrased her scat with the fluidity of a saxophone. Earlier, Cab Calloway became known as the "Hi-De-Ho" man for his wordless choruses. Sarah Vaughan's improvisations included bebop harmonic advances of the 1940s. By the mid-1960s Betty Carter was exploiting extremes of range and flexibility of time similar to those of saxophonist John Coltrane. The vocal trio Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross also phonetically imitated horn solos. In the 1960s the Swingle Singers recorded classical numbers using scat syllables but generally without improvisation (The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Scat).

Finally when Cab decided to put a 100% effort into his music career, his sister Blanche helped him by getting him a role in "Plantation Days", Cab then traveled around, on the road with the crew and cast of "Plantation Days", and this was in 1925.

Once committed to his new career, Cab then found the "Alabamians", and joined them to further peruse his singing and dancing career. The Alabamians were a good band, but they weren't a good enough band to make it in New York. So, after a "battle of the bands", head to head competition on the road with the "Missourians" where the Alabamians had lost, Cab decided to then leave the Alabamians and to join the Missourians. The Missourians was an excellent group, that had previously recorded heated instrumentals but had fallen upon hard times, but now with Cab felt a new hope for fame. This new arrangement worked out better for Cab. According to Gunther Schuler, The Missourians started out as Wilson Robinson's in the early 1920s and then formed their identity while operating as Andrew Preer's Cotton Club Orchestra from 1925-27, when they were the house band of the Cotton Club. The ten-piece group toured with Ethel Waters in 1927 and changed its name to the Missourians at the time, since it was no longer based at the Cotton Club. The band played regularly at the Savory Ballroom from 1928-29 under the direction of George Scott. Although they had recorded "I've Found a New Baby" under Andrew Preer's leadership in 1927 (when one of its trumpeters was Sidney DeParis), its main accomplishments were the dozen hot recordings that it made as the Missourians for RCA from 1929-30. However, the band was struggling and would have broken up were it not for Cab, who had first started working with the Missourians in 1929. Cab hired all of the musicians as the nucleus of his orchestra in 1930 and once again they had great success at the Cotton Club. But this time the Missourians (whose name was dropped) were quite subservient to its leader, no longer having its own separate identity. And

over time, one by one, the musicians were replaced by Cab as the Missourians passed into history (Gunther Schuler, " The Missourians").

Cab's road to fame started in 1929, when he worked in the revue of " Hot Chocolates". He then started recording in 1930 and 1931, and hit it big with " Minnie the Moocher", and his regular engagement at the Cotton Club. In the early 30's, the Cotton Club was known as a " hip new club in Harlem known for lavish shows with musicians such as Duke Ellington and other top performers," as described by Gediman. Minnie the Moocher was put together by Cab and his manager, Irving Mills. It sold over a million copies and set a record for the biggest audience ever for a black band. The band spent a lot of time touring but racism was a big problem for black bands then, so Cab traveled by train quiet lavishly (Milt Hinton, Cab on the Road).

Cab's style, was described by Gunther Schuler as " Flamboyant. All singing, all dancing. Cab was a great balladeer as well as doing fast tempo phrasing. He was instrumental in introducing scat and making it popular" (Schuler, " What was his style?"). In Cab's later career he had some financial problems resulting from past gambling. These problems resulted in Cab's band breaking up. He went back to playing in small clubs and eventually landed a role in " Sportin' Life". This show was a huge success and added a new life to Cab's career. Cab's scat singing, dancing, comedic personality, and flashy elegance had made him a star and a million selling recording artist. " People still remember Cab Calloway as a vaudevillian with his wonderful white tuxedos and all of that and, a great, great showman."-Gunther Schuler. Cab continued to perform up until his death in 1994 at the age of 88. " Cab Showed us all how to enjoy life in his music, all you needed to see was the <https://assignbuster.com/cab-calloway/>

smiling grin and you know it was Cab having fun" (Quincy Jones, "What a Man")

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