

Meet the Big Band



Benny Goodman

Much like a symphony orchestra or concert band, a big band is made up of groupings of similar instruments that are combined to form a larger ensemble. Big band music is characterized by contrasting the sounds of saxophones, trumpets, trombones and the **rhythm section**. The genre was pioneered by Fletcher Henderson in the mid to late 1920s and brought to a wider audience by clarinetist Benny Goodman, who was dubbed “the King of Swing.” William “Count” Basie and Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington are two famous composers and big band leaders that you will learn about later. Big band jazz flourished as the most popular style of music in America during the 1930s and 40s and captivated an entire generation.

ACTIVITY: Listen up!

EXAMPLE 8.1: “JAZZU BLUES,” BY CODY HENRY

WHERE YOU ARE	1 ST CHORUS	2 ND CHORUS	3 RD CHORUS	4 TH & 5 TH CHORUS	6 TH & 7 TH CHORUS	8 TH CHORUS	9 TH & 10 TH CHORUS
WHAT YOU ARE HEARING	RIFF #1: Saxophones	RIFF #2: Trombones	RIFF #3: Trumpets	SOLO: Saxophone BACKGROUNDS: Trombones	SOLO: Trombone BACKGROUNDS: Saxophones	SOLO: Piano	SHOUT CHORUS

Now it’s your turn! Listen to the example and fill in the blanks below. Pay attention to which instruments have the melody and which instruments have the backgrounds.

EXAMPLE 8.2: “PROCRASTINATION BLUES,” BY CODY HENRY

WHERE YOU ARE	1 ST CHORUS	2 ND CHORUS	3 RD CHORUS	4 TH & 5 TH CHORUS	6 TH & 7 TH CHORUS	8 TH CHORUS	9 TH & 10 TH CHORUS
WHAT YOU ARE HEARING	RIFF #1: _____	RIFF #2: _____	RIFF #3: _____	SOLO: Trumpet BACKGROUNDS: _____	SOLO: Saxophone BACKGROUNDS: _____	SOLO: Piano	_____

Anatomy of a Big Band

- Trumpets (back row)
- Trombones (middle row)
- Saxophones (front row)
- Rhythm (left side)

Count Basie Orchestra



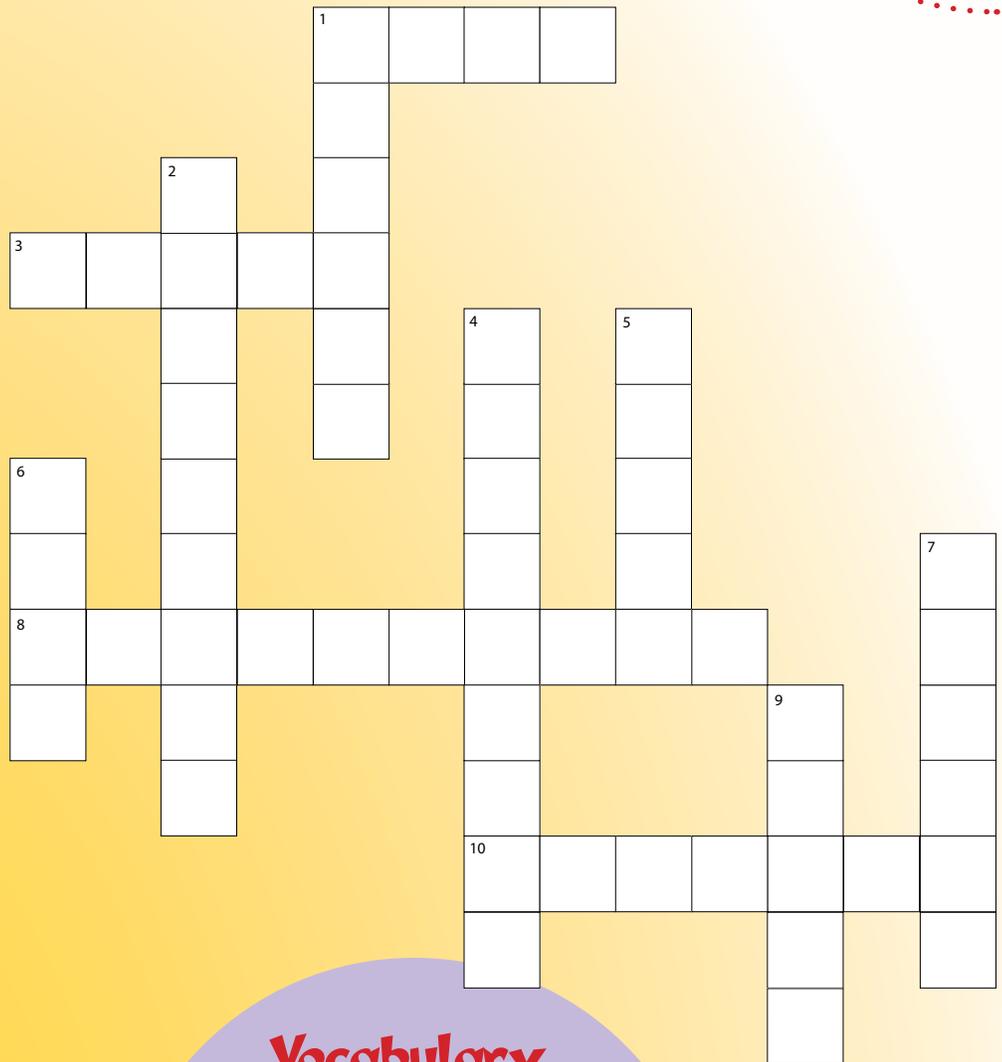


HISTORICAL PROFILE: **William "Count" Basie**

Born in Red Bank, New Jersey on August 21, 1904, Basie is known as one of the most influential pianists and bandleaders in jazz. As a youngster, he did chores for local movie houses in exchange for free admission (in those days, movies were accompanied by live music, usually piano or organ). Around 1924, at just 20 years of age, Basie moved to Harlem, New York, where he began playing professionally. Basie moved to Kansas City in 1929 where he joined Bennie Moten's band. When Moten died, Basie formed his own band, which is considered to be one of the most important big bands in jazz history. His sparse, **syncopated** piano playing and exquisite timing served as a model for other pianists for decades to come. William "Count" Basie led the Count Basie Orchestra for nearly 50 years until his death in 1984.

Activity

Using the clues below complete the crossword puzzle.



DOWN

- 1 The section containing the piano, bass and drums
- 2 Instruments that produce sound by the vibration of a reed
- 4 Smaller version of a big band
- 5 The nickname given to the kid from Red Bank
- 6 Edward Kennedy Ellington's nickname
- 7 A succession of notes that form a complete musical statement
- 9 The section of instruments containing trombones and trumpets

ACROSS

- 1 A short, repeated musical idea or phrase
- 3 The climax of a big band song where everyone is playing
- 8 Big band style associated with Count Basie
- 10 A large ensemble of instruments often consisting of saxophones, trumpets, trombones and a rhythm section

Vocabulary

Big Band
Brass Section
Rhythm Section
Woodwind Section
Kansas City Style
Jazz Combo

Shout Chorus
Riff
Melody
Background
Syncopated
Solo