

## **Music and Culture of the Great Depression 1930-1940**

### **Music Genres and Artists**

#### **Depression Era Songs:**

“Brother Can You Spare a Dime” by Bing Crosby <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI8-CbJYGMA>

“We Sure Got Hard Times” by Barbecue Bob <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OS8DTE8cQE>

“Happy Days are Here Again” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dd-Un22DzA>

“Are You Making Any Money” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imkdY7BG8EQ>

“Big Rock Candy Mountain” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6FOIhdaaWI>

“Life is just a Bowl of Cherries” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mc6RS9e3Dhw>

**Blues** - usually associated with a region or city in terms style: Delta, Mississippi, Memphis, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis

“Detroit Moan” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoPArFY9sf0>

“Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground” Acoustic Blues by Blind Willie Johnson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNj2BXW852g>

“NRA Blues” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvotYOxSWW0>

“Mean Low Blues” by Blues Birdhead <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k85j4dKg0Kk>

## **Jazz**

Louis Armstrong - orchestra/jazz band

“All of Me” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFzxo-XI8As>

Duke Ellington - orchestra/jazz band

“It Don’t Mean a Thing If It Ain’t Got that Swing” with Ella Fitzgerald

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxfMRhyzu3g>

Ella Fitzgerald “Puttin’ on the Ritz” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LReuyfg3r\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LReuyfg3r_Q)

Dixieland Jazz “When the Saints Go Marching In” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QOzZOVdlUM>

**Big Band** - many swing jazz orchestras travelled the country  
- played mostly for dances (cheap entertainment during Depression)

Benny Goodman and Orchestra “Sing, Sing, Sing” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2S1I\\_ien6A&list=PLBF6E393905D1467F](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2S1I_ien6A&list=PLBF6E393905D1467F)

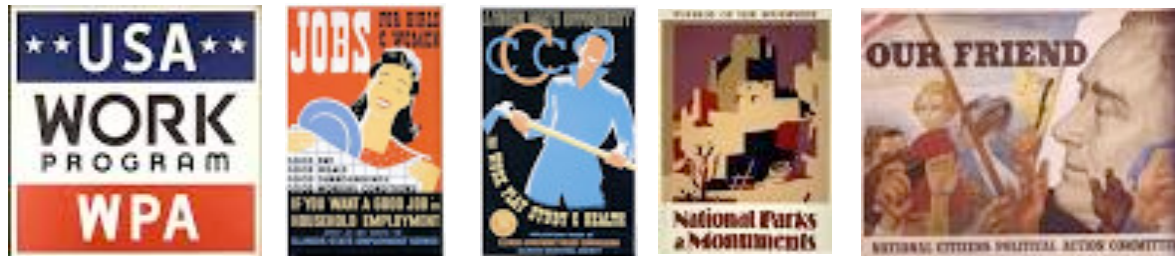


## New Deal - Works Project Administration (WPA)

Artists, Musicians, Actors, Writers, etc. were paid to create, research, produce, perform. The WPA sponsored indigenous, regional talent and encouraged the growth of national artistic culture.

Federal Art Project - posters, murals, paintings

- over 200,000 art pieces were created for public places like schools, libraries, and post offices
- posters (early graphic design) were created to support the New Deal



Federal Music Project - concerts, classes, composer forums, music festivals, research in regional music (Appalachia, Creole, Negro, cowboy, etc.)



Federal Writers Project - provided work for historians, teachers, librarians. They were to work American Guides - focusing on the scenic, historical, cultural, and economic resources of the United States. The writers traveled to different regions, did research, conducted interviews, and wrote about the broad American culture. This project grew to include many other writing projects.



There was also a Federal Theatre Project. No Pictures here.

## Comics of the 1930s

Betty Boop



Blondie



Dick Tracy



Donald Duck

Flash Gordon



L'il Abner

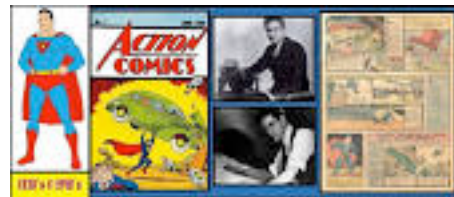


Nancy



Popeye

The Shadow



Superman

## 1930s Theatre

Zeigfield Follies

George and Ira Gershwin - Girl Crazy and Of Thee I Sing

"I Got Rhythm" sung by Judy Garland in 1943 movie of musical Girl Crazy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dQObjXN7pU>

Cole Porter - Anything Goes with Ethel Merman

Red Hot and Blue with Ethel Merman and Bob Hope

Ethel Merman and Bing Crosby "You're the Top" from Anything Goes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCfqIXiLxSE>

**Radio in 1930s** - without many luxuries, people continued to buy radios and they became the center of many families' homes.

1st Mass Media

Linked country - brought common culture - even to rural areas

News - up to the minute news from all over the world

Fireside Chats - FDR used the radio to communicate hope and vision

### **Comedians:**

Jack Benny

George Burns and Gracie Allen

Amos and Andy

Fibber McGhee and Molly

Charlie McCarthy

Will Rogers

**Soap Operas** - daytime, sponsored by Proctor and Gamble soap products

**Drama and Adventure** - evening

Orson Wells - War of the Worlds

Lone Ranger

Green Hornet

The Shadow

### **Singers and Musicians**

Bing Crosby

Mills Brothers

Guy Lombardo's Orchestra

Dance instruction

Grand Ole Opry

Metropolitan Opera

Boston Pops

### **Sports**

Baseball games

Horse Racing - 40 million listened to race between Seabiscuit and War Admiral

### **News Coverage**

Hindenburg

War news from Europe



## **Movies and the Golden Age of Hollywood**

- Silent stars did not make transition well (with exception of Charlie Chaplin)
- First Drive-in theatre opened in New Jersey during 1930s
- Movie theaters popped up in every town. Movies were an escape from the struggles of the Depression
- 80 million Americans went to the movies once or more per week

### **Domination of Movie Studios**

- Actors, directors, and everyone who worked in movies were under contract with a specific studio
- Most movies are filmed on the film lot or studio lot where elaborate sets are created for every film

Major Studios:

20th Century Fox  
MGM  
Paramount  
Warner Brothers



Minor Studios:

Columbia  
Universal  
United Artist

MGM - Home of the Stars - over 60 big names

- Wizard of Oz
- Gone With the Wind
- Tarzan Series
- Tom and Jerry
- Grand Hotel



## **Disney**

1932 "Flowers and Trees" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BqM8nU7-b8>  
- first color cartoon, Academy Award

1933 "The Three Little Pigs" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPs6\\_Og8RHA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPs6_Og8RHA)

1935 "Band Concert" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLvnCxVds2c>  
-first color Mickey Mouse cartoon

1937 "Snow White" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kWr9e4JN5I>  
-first feature length animated film

## Genres of Movies

Romantic Comedies  
Musical Comedies  
Musicals  
Slapstick Comedies  
Screwball Comedies  
Gangster Films  
Horror Films  
Newspaper Reporting Films  
Detective Films

## Top Stars

Clark Gable  
Cary Grant  
Gary Cooper  
Fred Astaire  
Charlie Chaplin  
Jimmie Stewart  
Spencer Tracy

Claudette Colbert  
Katherine Hepburn  
Jean Arthur  
Ginger Rogers  
Bette Davis  
Carole Lombard  
Joan Crawford  
Greta Garbo  
Judy Garland  
Mae West



## Child Stars

Shirley Temple (Little Colonel, Little Princess)

Mickey Rooney (Andy Hardy films)

Judy Garland (Wizard of Oz)



## Comedians

W.C. Fields

Three Stooges

Marks Brothers

Little Rascals

Laurel and Hardy



## Biggest Movies of the 1930s:

### Wizard of Oz

"Somewhere Over the Rainbow" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSZxmZmBfnU>

Dorothy, Glenda and the Munchkin Parade <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOEQ-ImGWJO>

**Gone with the Wind** - 1939 - top grossing film of the decade

- most expensive to make - \$4.25 million

- 8 Academy Awards

- 1st African American to win an Academy Award - Hattie McDaniel

Official Trailer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFu-jemU-bA>



Shirley Temple "Goodship Lollipop" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLLSqYyPD8>

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington - Jimmy Stewart <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6UbYHCkoZs>

"Swing Time" with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxPgplMujzQ>

"Top Hat" with Fred Astaire <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZOJoV6H2UM>

42nd Street big production with overhead shots [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iM\\_Xjw4mOro&list=PL\\_5AbqVqmRdEB1Y32G1Iul8p4oO9FYEW&index=21](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iM_Xjw4mOro&list=PL_5AbqVqmRdEB1Y32G1Iul8p4oO9FYEW&index=21)

Frankenstein trailer 1931 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5HCmd-Rjvc>