Swing
(The Big Band Era)
1930-1945

Instrumentation of a modern big band:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 trumpets</th>
<th>4 trombones</th>
<th>5 saxophones</th>
<th>rhythm section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lead</td>
<td>lead</td>
<td>lead alto</td>
<td>piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>section</td>
<td>section</td>
<td>second alto</td>
<td>guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>section</td>
<td>jazz</td>
<td>first tenor</td>
<td>acoustic bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jazz</td>
<td>bass trombone</td>
<td>second tenor</td>
<td>drums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>baritone sax</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Playing in a big band required a high level of musicianship. Players had to be able to read music, blend well in their sections, play in tune and swing! Saxophonists were expected to “double” on clarinet, and in later big bands, flute.

Rhythm section roles:
guitarists played **rhythm guitar**: strumming chords on every beat
pianists played on every beat, every other beat (beats 2 & 4, the backbeat) or **comped**
bassists usually played a **walking bass line**, a moving series of quarter notes (playing on every beat)
drummers played the bass drum on every beat, and played a **ride rhythm** on the cymbal

This heavy emphasis on every beat (walking bass + rhythm guitar + bass drum) created a **four-beat rhythm**

**Swing feeling** is a result of:
1. **walking bass**
2. **ride rhythm**
3. **swing eighth notes**

**Important Swing Bandleaders**
composer, pianist **Duke Ellington**
pianist **Count Basie**
clarinetist **Benny Goodman** (the “King of Swing”)
trombonist **Glen Miller**
trombonist **Tommy Dorsey**