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### **Biographies of Jazz and Blues Singers and Musicians**

To order any of these titles, contact the library by email, phone, mail, in person, or order through our [online catalog](#). Select titles can be [downloaded from BARD](#).

#### **Louis Armstrong, Master of Modernism** By Thomas David. Brothers

Read by Bob Moore Reading time 23 hours, 3 minutes

Music professor examines the life, career, and influence of jazz trumpeter and bandleader Armstrong (1901-1971). Chronicles Armstrong's ascendancy in the music scenes of Chicago and New York City and discusses ways he helped to establish jazz as a musical art form. Pulitzer finalist. 2014.

[Download from BARD: Louis Armstrong, Master of Modernism](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB078244

#### **Princess Noire the Tumultuous Reign of Nina Simone** By Nadine Cohodas

Read by Celeste Lawson Reading time 16 hours, 7 minutes

Biography of musician Nina Simone (1933-2003) chronicles her training as a classical pianist, foray into singing and jazz, and rise from Atlantic City clubs to the Newport Jazz Festival and European venues. Discusses Simone's financial troubles, civil rights involvement, and mental illness that affected her career and personal life. 2010.

[Download from BARD: Princess Noire the Tumultuous Reign of Nina...](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB071869

#### **Late Life Jazz the Life and Career of Rosemary Clooney** by Ken Crossland

Read by Robert Sams Reading time 15 hours, 30 minutes

Biography of singer Rosemary Clooney (1928-2002), aunt of movie star George Clooney, chronicles her life as she traveled from Kentucky to Hollywood.

Highlights her 1940s Big Band career, her starring role in the 1954 film *White Christmas* alongside Bing Crosby, and her 1970s comeback as a jazz singer. 2013.

[Download from BARD: Late Life Jazz the Life and Career of Rosemary...](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB077847

**Music is My Mistress** By Duke Ellington

Read by Peter Jay Fernandez      Reading time 17 hours, 50 minutes

Autobiography of bandleader, composer, and jazz musician Duke Ellington (1899-1974). Describes Ellington's childhood in Washington, D.C., his fellow artists, his 1923 arrival in New York City, subsequent worldwide tours, and his philosophy of life. 1973.

[Download from BARD: Music is My Mistress](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB066574

**Hand Me My Travelin' Shoes in Search of Blind Willie McTell** By Michael Gray

Read by Jake Williams      Reading time 18 hours, 10 minutes

Author Michael Gray recounts his odyssey through the Deep South to research this biography of Georgia blues singer and twelve-string guitarist William Samuel McTell (1903-1959), who was born blind. Portrays Willie's travels and performances during the segregation era and the way his reputation grew after his death. 2009.

[Download from BARD: Hand Me My Travelin' Shoes in Search of Blind...](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB071430

**Searching for Robert Johnson** By Peter Guralnick

Read by Chuck Young      Reading time 2 hours, 35 minutes

Author of music biographies including Last Train to Memphis (DB 40087) examines the short life and long legacy of bluesman Johnson, who died at age twenty-seven in 1938. From scarce information, the author stitches together what is known of his life, and looks at the many blues musicians he influenced. 1989.

[Download from BARD: Searching for Robert Johnson](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB089243

**When I Left Home My Story** By Buddy Guy

Read by Mirron E. Willis

Reading time 7 hours, 29 minutes

Legendary blues guitarist Buddy Guy (born 1936) reminisces about growing up as the son of Louisiana sharecroppers, moving to Chicago in 1957 and playing in nightclubs, and working with Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Junior Wells, Eric Clapton, and the Rolling Stones. Strong language. Commercial audiobook. 2012.

[Download from BARD: When I Left Home My Story](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB075698

**Herbie Hancock Possibilities** By Herbie Hancock

Read by Herbie Hancock

Reading time 12 hours, 35 minutes

Grammy Award winner Hancock (born 1940) reflects on his life and career. Discusses growing up on Chicago's South Side, discovering music and jazz, playing in Miles Davis's band, his solo career, drug addiction, becoming a Buddhist, and his work as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. Unrated. Commercial audiobook. 2014.

[Download From BARD: Herbie Hancock Possibilities](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB080338

**Lady Sings the Blues** By Billie Holiday

Read by Dawn Ursula

Reading time 8 hours, 15 minutes

Memoir of the famous jazz and blues singer, written in 1956, just three years before her death at forty-four. She shares details of her Baltimore youth, her rise to fame in the jazz world, and the struggles she experienced with racism and drug addiction. Some strong language. 1956.

[Download from BARD: Lady Sings the Blues](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB083025

**Thelonious Monk the Life and Times of an American Original** By Robin D.G. Kelley

Read by Julian Thompson                      Reading time 34 hours, 47 minutes  
Historian chronicles the life of jazz pianist and composer Thelonious Sphere Monk (1917-1982), from his poverty-stricken childhood in North Carolina to his reclusive final years in New York City. Discusses Monk's musical influences, unique playing style, artistic collaborations, eccentric behavior, and influential oeuvre--much of which became jazz standards. 2009.

[Download from BARD: Thelonious Monk the Life and Times of an...](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB071039

**The Uncrowned King of Swing Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz** By Jeffrey Magee

Read by Roy Avers                              Reading time 16 hours, 29 minutes  
Music professor's biography of the African American musician credits Henderson with devising the arranging formula that made Benny Goodman the King of Swing. Portrays Henderson as a pianist and bandleader who "profoundly shaped American jazz...during the 1920s and 1930s." Describes Henderson's work with Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and others. 2005.

[Download from BARD: The Uncrowned King of Swing Fletcher...](#)

Also available on cassette RC060620

**Chasin' the Bird the Life and Legacy of Charlie Parker** By Brian Priestley

Read by Gregory Maupin                      Reading time 10 hours, 2 minutes  
British jazz critic analyzes the music of African American saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker (1920-1955), tracing Parker's contributions to jazz and bebop. Documents Parker's recordings and performances and describes his Kansas City depression-era childhood, his first paid engagement at age fourteen, and his early addiction to alcohol and drugs. 2005.

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Also available on digital cartridge DB089919

**Coltrane: the Story of a Sound** By Ben Ratliff

Read by Julian Thompson                      Reading time 8 hours, 48 minutes

New York Times jazz critic analyzes the performance style of saxophonist John Coltrane (1926-1967), from his 1946 recordings as a navy bandsman and 1950s improvisational experimentation to his 1961 breakthrough song, "My Favorite Things." Discusses Coltrane's openness to other cultures and influence on other musicians. Some strong language. 2007.

[Download from BARD: Coltrane: the Story of a Sound](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB066428

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**Respect the Life of Aretha Franklin** By David Ritz

Read by Brad. Raymond                      Reading time 17 hours, 21 minutes

Ritz, author of Ray Charles (DB 46564) and coauthor of When I Left Home (DB 75698), examines the life of legendary singer Aretha Franklin (born 1942).

Discusses her childhood in Detroit, her personal struggles impacted by phenomenal career success, and her legacy to the music industry. Unrated. Commercial audiobook. 2014.

[Download from BARD: Respect the Life of Aretha Franklin](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB079771

**W.C. Handy the Life and Times of the Man Who Made the Blues** By David Robertson

Read by Jake Williams                      Reading time 11 hours, 31 minutes

Biography of William Christopher Handy (1873-1958) traces his Alabama childhood during Reconstruction, his musical training, and his early career performing in ragtime and vaudeville venues. Highlights Handy's ability to write scores and publish commercially, his relocation to Memphis and then Harlem, and the accident that blinded him. 2009.

[Download from BARD W.C Handy the Life and Times of the Man who...](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB069060

**Billie Holiday the Musician and the Myth** By John F. Szwed

Read by Cecelia Riddett

Reading time 7 hours, 29 minutes

Jazz scholar Szwed begins his examination of singer Billie Holiday by looking at the many contradictory stories told about her and by her, especially in her own 1956 autobiography *Lady Sings the Blues*. He analyzes Holiday's influences, iconic songs, and unique gifts as a singer. Some strong language. 2015.

[Download from BARD: Billie Holiday the Musician and the Myth](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB081774

**Duke a Life of Duke Ellington** By Terry Teachout

Read by Jake Williams

Reading time 19 hours, 57 minutes

Wall Street Journal drama critic profiles jazz virtuoso Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington (1899-1974). Details Ellington's early life in Washington, D.C., as the son of a butler and grandson of a slave, his personal relationships, and his career as a bandleader and composer. 2013.

[Download from BARD: Duke a Life of Duke Ellington](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB077714

**Pops a Life of Louis Armstrong** By Terry Teachout

Read by Conrad Feininger

Reading time 15 hours, 5 minutes

Biography of jazz musician Louis Armstrong by a drama critic and former musician. Uses newly available material to portray the trumpeter in the contexts of his time. Traces Armstrong's impoverished childhood in turn-of-the-twentieth-century New Orleans, his ascent in the music world, and his personal life. Some strong language. 2009.

[Download from BARD: Pops a Life of Louis Armstrong](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB072358

**Giants of Jazz** By Studs Terkel

Read by Robert Sams

Reading time 6 hours, 12 minutes

Collective biography of thirteen American jazz greats: Joe Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Bix Beiderbecke, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Billie Holiday, Woody Herman, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and John Coltrane. Portraits blend musicians' life stories with information about the evolution of jazz. Includes discography. 1957.

[Download from BARD: Giants of Jazz](#)

**Escaping the Delta Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues** By

Elijah Wald

Read by Julian Thompson                      Reading time 14 hours, 40 minutes

Author of *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll* (DB 71861) researches the origins of Mississippi Delta blues. Recaps the life of African American singer Robert Johnson (1911-1938) and his influence on white performers who revived the genre in the 1960s. Debunks stereotypes and myths surrounding the music. 2004.

[Download from BARD: Escaping the Delta Robert Johnson and the...](#)

Also available on digital cartridge DB074297

**Say No to the Devil the Life and Musical Genius of Rev. Gary Davis** By Ian

Zack

Read by Bob Moor                                      Reading time 12 hours, 7 minutes

Accidentally blinded in infancy, Davis endured an impoverished childhood in South Carolina. Through his extraordinary gifts as a guitar player, however, he made a life as a street singer and preacher, moving to New York in the 1940s and, eventually, becoming an icon of the 1960s folk music revival. 2015

[Download from BARD: Say No to the Devil the Life and Musical Genius ...](#)

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