

The King Of Jazz Clarinet Benny Goodman

Born May 30, 1909 in Chicago, Benjamin David Goodman would grow up to be known as the King of Swing. He was the ninth born and had eleven siblings. His musical career began at the young age of ten when his father decided to enroll Benny and his two older brothers in Kehelah Jacob Synagogue where they took music lessons and he later benefited from lessons given to him by Franz Schoepp, who was a classical clarinetist. With Benny's interest and passion for playing, it was not long before he was playing professionally. In fact, he was playing professionally before he was sixteen, which goes to show the kind of natural talent this individual had. At the age of sixteen, Benjamin was playing with the Ben Pollack orchestra, who he remained with until 1929. During his time with the orchestra, he made some of his first recordings, including the creation of his own record. It was with this band that he really started to become quite a success and the success continued on through the 1930s, which his father was not fortunate enough to see as he had passed away in an accident after Benny had joined the Ben Pollack orchestra. While the death hit Benny hard and he always regretted that his father had refused to retire when Benny had offered to take care of him and his mother, the tragedy did not slow him down in his career. His reputation continued to grow, but this does not mean that things were becoming any easier. During a tour in 1935, Goodman's band nearly broke up because of the immense stress they were under. The type of jazz they were playing was quite a bit different than the jazz most people were accustomed to and it was not always accepted. Benjamin Goodman was so influential in his music that it is said that without Benny there would have been no swing music. He was known as a virtuoso clarinetist and one of the best jazz clarinetists of the time. He was innovative and experimental with his music, so much so that it took time before some people were able to accept it. Finally, in the year of 1957, he was inducted into the Jazz Hall of Fame for his exceptional talent. Even after the induction, he continued to play with as much interest and energy, perhaps even with more than he did before. He played in small groups with other musicians, recorded his music, played in festivals and participated in tours, but did not limit himself to playing jazz throughout all this. He played the swing he was best known for and also continued to play some classical music, which was really his roots as classical was some of the first music he was taught to play when he was young. In later years, his health deteriorated, but he continued to play until his death in 1986 when he passed away of a heart attack at the age of 77. It seems that even after passing, his influence was still strong as he was awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement award later that year.

About the Author

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