Eckstine, Billy (1914-1993) Encyclopedia Article

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Although he was best known after 1948 as a singer of popular ballads, Pittsburgh-born Billy Eckstine was a standout jazz singer from 1939-43 with Earl Hines' Band and best known for his bluesy recording of "Jelly, Jelly." He also led a jazz orchestra in the mid-forties that was many years ahead of its time. During the transitional bebop era, Eckstine assembled such cutting-edge jazz stars as trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis, saxophonists Charlie Parker and Dexter Gordon, and Art Blakey on drums. He also gave a start to Sarah Vaughan, one of the most innovative of jazz singers. Unfortunately, the Eckstine Band was so poorly recorded that no evidence remains of its extraordinary music.

Further Reading:

Balliett, Whitney. *American Musicians.* New York, Oxford Press, 1986.

Simon, George T. *The Big Bands.* New York, MacMillan, 1974.