Shaw, Artie (1910-) Encyclopedia Article

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One of the three great clarinet-playing band leaders of the twentieth century, along with Benny Goodman and Woody Herman, Artie Shaw was also an experimental leader during the big band era. Born Arthur Arshawsky in New York City, he played in dance bands while in high school and turned professional at age 15, eventually free-lancing in recording studios. In 1935, he played jazz backed by a string quartet and formed a big band that included a string section. Two years later, returning to traditional instrumentation, he recorded his first big hit, Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine." In 1939, he abandoned his band and went to Mexico. After frequent stops and starts in the music business, Shaw published his autobiography in 1952 and played briefly with a new combo called the Grammercy 5 before a final retirement. He was married eight times to a bevy of beauties that included screen stars Ava Gardner and Lana Turner.

Further Reading:

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

Shaw, Artie. *The Trouble with Cinderella.* New York, Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1952.

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