

Musical Movie Memories

Discussion Guide for 1920s-30s Music

Run film segments one at a time on a TV or projection system. Pause on the 4 questions at the end of each so the viewers can respond and share their memories woken by the film. This Discussion Guide suggests additional questions to aid the session leader.

All films in this special program are filled with music, singers and bands from the late 1920s through the 1930s. Music has proven helpful in bringing smiles and distant memories even to seniors with alzheimers.

Unlike regular volumes of Movie Memories with their vast variety, there may not be that much to discuss with some of the films. You can tell by reactions whether the viewers enjoy the films. Standard questions which can be applied to each segment are: Did you like the song? Do you like jazz and swing bands? Do you remember _____? Would you like to watch the film again? What is your favorite song from this era? Do you want to see more Bing Crosby musicals? Etc. Do not hesitate to ask these simple questions again and again!

Disc #1



Al Jolson Trailers

We just watched coming attractions for 3 Al Jolson films: **Wonder Bar** (1934), **Go Into Your Dance** (1935) and **The Singing Kid** (1936). These “trailers” showed the highlights of three of Al’s films from the mid-1930s.

Have you ever see the first sound film -- The Jazz Singer -- with Al Jolson on TV?

Do the trailers make you want to see the complete movies?

Who are your favorite singers, stars or dancers from 1930s Hollywood musicals?

Glorifying the American Girl

This 1929 musical comedy was produced by Florenz Ziegfeld and highlights Ziegfeld’s current star, dancer Mary Eaton. The last third of the film is basically a Follies production, with cameo appearances by Rudy Vallee and Helen Morgan.

Mary Eaton never achieved fame or success in the movies. Her only other role was in “Cocoanuts” with the Marx Brothers. We only watched Mary sing a few songs in the sheet music section of a store.



Sheet music was sold for folks to play popular songs on their home pianos years before television came along. Did your home have a piano when you were young?

Rudy Vallee was a popular crooner in the 1920s and 30s. Bing Crosby had even more fans. Who did you prefer?

Helen Morgan was famous as a torch singer and she certainly put her soul into the song we just heard. Her best known stage and movie role was as Julie in the musical **Show Boat**. Has anyone seen a presentation of **Show Boat** live onstage?

Did you like these music clips? Would you like to see them again?

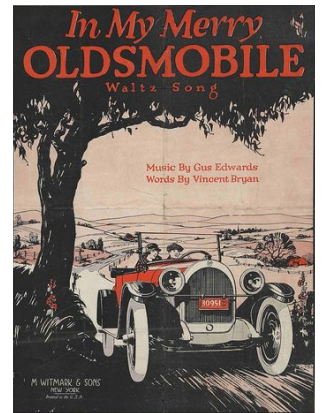
In My Merry Oldsmobile

This 1931 cartoon was sponsored by Oldsmobile cars. The one in the film looked like it was from 1910, which is way before any of us. Do you remember your parents' first car? What was the first car you had?

Do you recall Sing-Along cartoons in theaters? Did the audience join in?

The idea of singing as a bouncing ball shows the words carried over to television with "Sing Along With Mitch Miller" in the 1960s, and today there are sing-along version of "The Wizard of Oz" and "The Sound of Music."

Do you enjoy singing?



St. Louis Blues

The song "St. Louis Blues" was written in 1914 by W.C. Handy.

Sometimes referred to as The Empress of the Blues, Bessie Smith was the most popular female blues singer of the 1920s and 1930s. She is often regarded as one of the greatest singers of her era and, along with Louis Armstrong, a major influence on subsequent jazz vocalists.

St. Louis Blues, released in 1929, is Bessie's only film appearance.

Can you name other blues singers of the 1930s? (Some answers: Helen Morgan, Billie Holiday, Mildred Bailey, Ethel Waters, Mamie Smith and Ma Rainey.)

In the story, Bessie is heart broken because her man steals her money and runs off. Have you ever been heart broken?

Dixiana

Dixiana (1930) is a lavish American musical film produced by RKO Radio Pictures. The final third of the picture was photographed in early "two-strip" Technicolor, which filmed reds and greens but could not film true blue color. Did you find the unusual color pleasing to watch?

The film features the comedy team of Wheeler and Woolsey. Bert Wheeler (who we did not see) was the younger romantic lead while Robert Woolsey was the wise guy in the dance number with chorus girls. Wheeler and Woolsey made many comedies for RKO Pictures in the 1930s. Does anyone remember them?

The black tap dancer is Bill Robinson, also known as Bojangles. He danced with Shirley Temple in **The Little Colonel**, **The Littlest Rebel** and several more. If you remember Shirley, you probably remember her tap dancing with Bonjangles.

Do you like movie musicals? Would you like to see the complete film of Dixiana?

Bubbling Over (1934)

Samson Peabody is the janitor in an apartment building where he and his wife Ethel Waters live with a large crowd of Samson's freeloading relatives. We only watched the scenes in which Ethel sings.

Ethel Waters was an American blues, jazz and gospel vocalist and actress who frequently performed jazz, big band, and pop music on the Broadway stage and in concerts, although she began her career in the 1920s singing blues.

Musical Movie Memories

Study Guide for 1920s-30s Music

Disc #2

Busby Berkeley Trailers

Busby Berkeley was a movie director and choreographer famous for his elaborate musical production numbers involving complex geometric patterns. Berkeley's works used large numbers of showgirls and props as fantasy elements.

We got glimpses from Berkeley's first three musicals: 42nd Street, Goldiggers of 1933, Footlight Parade. All of them were released in 1933 by Warner Brothers. Do you have a favorite among the three films? Can you name another Busby Berkeley musical? (Dames, Goldiggers of 1935, Wonder Bar, In Caliente and others.)

Do you like 1930s musicals with lavish production numbers? Do you like crooners like Dick Powell? Does Ruby Keeler seem like the girl next door?



Melody in May

Ruth Etting was an American singing star and actress of the 1920s and 1930s, who had over 60 hit recordings. She worked in stage, radio and film. Her signature tunes were "Shine On Harvest Moon," "Ten Cents a Dance" and "Love Me or Leave Me."

Ruth led a colorful life and was mixed up with a gangster who pushed her career along. Her life story was told in the 1955 film "**Love Me Or Leave Me**," which starred Doris Day as Ruth.

Do you remember Ruth Etting or the Doris Day movie about her life? Did you enjoy the song she sang -- "It Had To Be You?"

We only saw half of the movie. The plot concerned a young friend of Ruth's who was not popular with girls, until they found out that his date to the high school dance was the famous singer. Were some boys shy in high school? How about the girls?

Do boy-girl problems work themselves out as quickly in real life as they do in the movies?

Symphony in Black

(1935) Duke Ellington plays his symphonic jazz piece ('A Rhapsody of Negro Life') with his orchestra against background scenes depicting the musical movements. The jilted woman is the great blues singer Billie Holiday.

Duke's composition was indeed a short symphony and not popular music of the 1940s. Do you enjoy jazz or black spiritual music? Could you follow the storyline?

Duke Ellington composed and performed for over 50 years. He called his music "American Music" rather than jazz, while melding the finest jazz orchestra of the 20th century.

"Philips Broadcast of 1938"

Producer George Pal started his career making Puppetoons in the 1930s and 40s. They look like cartoons but are made by moving wooden puppets and filming them one frame at a time.

This is actually a promotional film that advertises Philips Radios. It was made in England where George Pal got his start. Pal went on to make fantasies like **Tom Thumb**, **Atlantis** and **The Time Machine**.

Do you remember Puppetoons? Did you enjoy the music?

Artie Shaw's Class in Swing

(1939) Artie Shaw was a superb American jazz clarinetist, composer, and bandleader. The short describes how a swing band is put together. The girl singer is Helen Forrest, who recorded 38 records with Artie Shaw.

Was the educational aspect of the film of interest, or mainly the music?



"Blue of the Night"

This 1933 complete musical short features Bing Crosby's theme song -- "Blue of the Night."

Feel free to talk about Bing Crosby as a singer or movie star.

Was Bing also a good comedian? Did he make you laugh? Did he make you swoon when you were young? Did he look like he was a good kisser?

What is your favorite Bing Crosby song or movie?

Would you like to see more Bing Crosby films?

Bonus DVD #3: Musical "Soundies" from the 1940s!

Note to Session Leader: Each segment ends with four comments or questions. Be sure to hit "Pause" to freeze the questions onscreen. Otherwise the next segment will begin without time for discussion. You can certainly run several short segments before discussing them, or run the films without any discussion.

Additional Bing Crosby and other musicals of the 1930s, 40s and 50s are available from Festival Films. Additional Discussion Guides may be downloaded from www.fesfilms.com/mm.html.

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Musical Movie Memories

Discussion Guide for 1940s Music

Run DVD film segments on a TV or projection TV system to an assembled group. Pause on the four onscreen questions at the end to encourage discussion and interaction, which can be far more meaningful and fun than simply watching the films! This Discussion Guide can help trigger memories of the film, the music or the era. **Watch. Recall. Share the Memories.**

All films in this 2-disc program are filled with music, singers and bands from the 1940s. Music has proven to be especially useful in bringing smiles and limited recall even to seniors with Alzheimers.

There is not much to discuss with some of these film selections. If a band and singer perform a popular song, the same questions apply again and again: Did you like the band, the song, the singer, etc? The follow-up questions are: Who is your all-time favorite band, song or singer? If a number gets applause, you might ask if they want to see it again.

A few games or "Pop Quizes" are written in to encourage the group to call out names or vote on a favorite. How many Big Bands can we name? How many girl singers do you remember from the 1940s. How about male singers? Who is the best dancer -- Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly? Who is the hottest clarinet player -- Artie Shaw or Benny Goodman?

Disc #1 (58 min. of film content)

(Note: the onscreen questions or comments are listed under each title.)

Introduction - Dinah Shore and Cab Calloway (5 min.)

Dinah Shore sang "The Last Time I Saw Paris" in 1946.

Cab Calloway rocked his 1931 song "Minnie the Moocher" in 1942.

What are your most vivid musical memories from the 1940s?

Dinah Shore sang in the 1946 movie "Till the Clouds Roll By." The song was written in 1940 by Jerome Kern, and this movie is a biography of Kern. The wistful nature of the song refers to the occupation of Paris in World War-2. Many of the songs in this program have links to the War.



What kind of car did Dinah Shore drive? Can you sing her theme song? ("See the USA in your Chevrolet....")

Cab Calloway and his band perform Cab's most famous song, "Minnie the Moocher." This is a 1942 Soundie made for special juke boxes called "Panorams" and that showed movies! Have you ever heard of a Soundie before or recall seeing one? The song was written in 1931.

Your Hit Parade (1943, 7 min.)

Lucky Strike sponsored "Your Hit Parade" on radio and TV from 1935 to 1959!

Frank Sinatra was a regular radio guest 1943-'45.

Did you listen to the radio a lot in the 1940s?

What were your favorite stars and shows?

Did you enjoy dancing to popular hits of the day?

How many listened to "Your Hit Parade" at some point in your lives?

Frank Sinatra sings "Stardust," which was written in 1927 but was just as



popular in 1943. In fact it has been recorded more than 1,500 times, and is one of the most popular songs ever composed! Can you think of any songs that are more popular?

Who was your favorite singer -- Frank Sinatra or Bing Crosby?

Kay Kyser and his comedy band were also popular and appeared in quite a few movies. Who remembers Kay Kyser's Kollege of Musical Knowledge?



Bing Crosby & the Coast Guard Band (1943, 8 min.)

Bing Crosby entertained the troops during World War-2.

Bing's 1942 song "White Christmas" sold the most records ever!

Could you croon like Bing?

What is your favorite Bing Crosby song, movie or memory?

Bing Crosby sang "Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive" and "Don't Fence Me In" with the Bouncing Ball in a short that was made for the armed forces around 1943.

Both Bing and Bob Hope made many films to aid the war effort, and they also performed for the troops in Europe. Do you have memories of Bing and Bob from the war years?

Did you ever try to sing like Bing? Do you have a favorite movie of his?

Second Chorus (1940, 8 min.)

Artie Shaw was the premier jazz clarinetist in the 1930s and '40s.

What is your favorite Fred Astaire movie?

Did you ever try dancing with Fred? Ever dream of dancing with him?

Which do you prefer -- Jazz and Swing music or Rock 'n Roll?

"Second Chorus," made in 1940, features two giants of show business -- Fred Astaire and clarinetist Artie Shaw.



Did you ever take dance lessons so you could dance like Fred? Did you ever play a musical instrument in a band? High school bands do count!

What kind of music do you prefer -- jazz, swing, jitterbug, rock n' roll, be-bop or popular songs?

Stage Door Canteen (1943, 9 min.)

The Stage Door Canteen entertained service men in New York City before they went overseas.

Where were you in life during World War-II?

Were you ever on a dance floor as crowded as the one in the movie?

Do you recall the joy in the country when the war ended?

We just watched Ethel Merman, Xavier Cugat, Ethel Waters and Count Basie. Are there any comments on these numbers or on music from the 1940s?

What were you doing during World War-2? Were you a child, a teenager, in the service or did you help out on the home front?

What are your memories from the war years?

The Fabulous Dorseys (1947, 12 min.)

Art Tatum was one of the greatest jazz pianists of all time. This is one of his few film appearances.

Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey had two of the most popular Big Bands of the 1940s.

Pop Quiz! Name other 1940s Big Bands.

Tell us your favorite song! Sing a bit of it!



This film is a 1947 biography of Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, who both had Big Bands in the 1940s.

Do you like hot jazz jam sessions like the one with Art Tatum?

Bob Eberly and Helen O'Connell recorded many hit records with the Dorseys like "Brazil" and "Tangerine." "Marie" was a number 1 hit for Tommy Dorsey.

Here are the major Big Bands of the 1940s:

(A partial list of top Big Bands: Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, the Dorsey Brothers, Artie Shaw, Harry James, Paul Whiteman, Kay Kyser, Gene Krupa, Ted Lewis, Cab Calloway, Count Basie, Xavier Cugat, Guy Lombardo, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, Duke Ellington, Bob Crosby, Louis Armstrong and more!)

Three Soundies (1940s, 9 min.)

"It's Been a Long, Long Time" reflected post-war sentiments.

The ever-popular "Deep Purple" was written in 1933.

"Sentimental Journey" was a huge hit in 1944.

What is your very favorite song from the 1940s?

We just enjoyed three more Soundies with Big Bands of Stan Kenton, Larry Clinton and Glen Gray performing three popular songs of the 1940s.

Who has a favorite song from the 1940s? Was the song played in a movie? Did you hear it on the radio? Who sang your favorite song?

Did you have a record collection?

Musical Movie Memories

Discussion Guide for 1940s Music

Each DVD disc for “Musical Memories of the 1940s” runs about one hour. This is a great length in which to just watch the films, and because they are musical there may be a desire to screen them again and again without discussion.

However, one hour is too much film for a session of Movie Memories because reminiscing and sharing memories, which is the heart of the program, can take as much time as a film segment. Assuming there is no deadline for the end of a session, it can be allowed to run as long as interest remains strong. Remember that it is always best to end on a high note after a spirited discussion and leave the audience wanting more ... for next time.

The musical numbers are split onto two DVDs to force at least two sessions of Music Memories. You may find yourself ending session 1 on DVD #1 with **Stage Door Canteen** and memories of the war years. This would leave two segments from disc 1 to show the next time along with parts of DVD #2. Improvise, and let your audience guide the session lengths!

Disc #2 (69 min. of film content)

Introduction -- A repeat of Dinah Shore from Disc #1. (2 min.)

Second Chorus - Part 2 (1940, 10 min.)

Greatest clarinetist -- Artie Shaw or Benny Goodman?

Fred Astaire does which best -- DANCE or conduct a band?

All you professional dancers -- here's your chance to show us how it's done.

Did you love to dance in the 1940s and '50s?

Which dancer do you like best -- Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly?

Did you love to dance in ball rooms or night clubs? Did you learn to dance from Arthur Murray or Fred Astaire's Dance Studio? Would anyone like to demonstrate?

When G.I. Johnny Comes Home (1945, 8 min.)

How happy was the USA when World War-2 finally ended?

Do you remember adjusting to No More War?

Would the world be happier with more group singing?

Do you enjoy singing along with the Bouncing Ball?

This 1945 cartoon from Paramount Pictures was the first in a series of color “Bouncing Ball” Screen Song cartoons. Were some of the jokes funny?

If the audience did sing along with the song you can ask questions such as: Did the girls sing louder than the boys? Who won? Do you want a rematch next time? Would you like to see more films we can sing along with? Do you feel happier after a good song?

If no one sang, then ask about the end of the war: Did you lose any friends or family in the war? Do you remember the end of World War-2 when the soldiers came back? How happy was everyone? Did life settle down quickly?



Stage Door Canteen - Part 2 (1945, 14 min.)

Do you like Benny Goodman?

Do you like Peggy Lee? Did you like her song?

Did you ever play a musical instrument?

Did you ever want to sing in a band or on the radio?

Is it more fun to listen to great music or talk about it?



Guy Lombardo conducted his orchestra in "Sleep, Baby, Sleep."

Kenny Baker sang "Good Night, Sweetheart." Freddy Martin and band performed "Don't Worry Island." Benny Goodman played "Why Don't You Do Right" accompanied by Peggy Lee.

Did you ever see any Big Bands in person? Did you see any rock 'n roll stars in the 1950s?

Do you enjoy listening to live music?

Did you take dancing lessons as a child? How about piano lessons?

If you had kept up with your lessons, could you have become a super star?

Would anyone like to sing for us now?

Three Movie Trailers (1945, 8 min.)

Who do you remember best: Don Ameche, Alice Faye, Betty Grable or Carmen Miranda?

Glenn Miller and his Orchestra made 2 films: "Sun Valley Serenade" and "Orchestra Wives."

"Moonlight Serenade" was Glenn Miller's theme song.

Do you have a favorite Hollywood musical from the 1940s?

We just got a taste of the movie musicals that 20th Century Fox made with Don Ameche, Betty Grable, Alice Faye and Carmen Miranda.

That Night in Rio was made in color in 1940. Do you remember glorious Technicolor?

Orchestra Wives is a black and white 1942 film featuring Glenn Miller's Orchestra.

Down Argentine Way is a 1940 color film shot in South America.

Pop Quiz! How many female movie stars can you name who made musicals in the 1940s? Just name actresses this time.

Here are a few: Ginger Rogers, Judy Garland, Eleanor Powell, Esther Williams, Ann Miller, Jane Powell, Alice Faye, Betty Grable, Carmen Miranda, Betty Hutton.

Private Buckaroo (1945, 27 min.)

Trumpeter Harry James was one of the most popular band leaders of the swinging '40s!

Name the three Andrews Sisters. Does any other trio match their harmony?

Did the finale make you want to join up and march off to war?

Name some other musicals from the war years.

This 1942 musical was quite patriotic. Did anyone want to march off with the soldiers at the end of the film?



The Andrews Sisters were Maxene, Patty and LaVerne.

Which one is still alive? (Patty.) The trio sold over 75 million records!

Could you dance like the Jivin' Jacks and Jills?

Did you spot Donald O'Connor in the film? Did you notice one of the Three Stooges - Shemp? How about Bowery Boy actor Huntz Hall?

Harry James was an incredibly popular bandleader and trumpet player.

Would you like to name men who starred in movie musicals of the 1940s?

Here are a few: Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, Bing Crosby, Don Ameche, Nelson Eddy, Mickey Rooney, Donald O'Connor.

Would you like to see the musical films again at a later date?

Bonus DVD #3:

Musical "Soundies" from the 1940s!

Two full hours of music without Movie Memories questions.

(All different from the Soundies in **1930s Musical Movie Memories.**)

Fats Waller
Stan Kenton
Liberace!
Larry Clinton
Rudy Vallee
Mills Brothers
Spike Jones
Cab Calloway
& More!

Additional Bing Crosby films, Sing Alongs and other musicals of the 1930s, 40s and 50s are available from Festival Films. Additional Study Guides may be downloaded from www.fesfilms.com/mm.html.

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