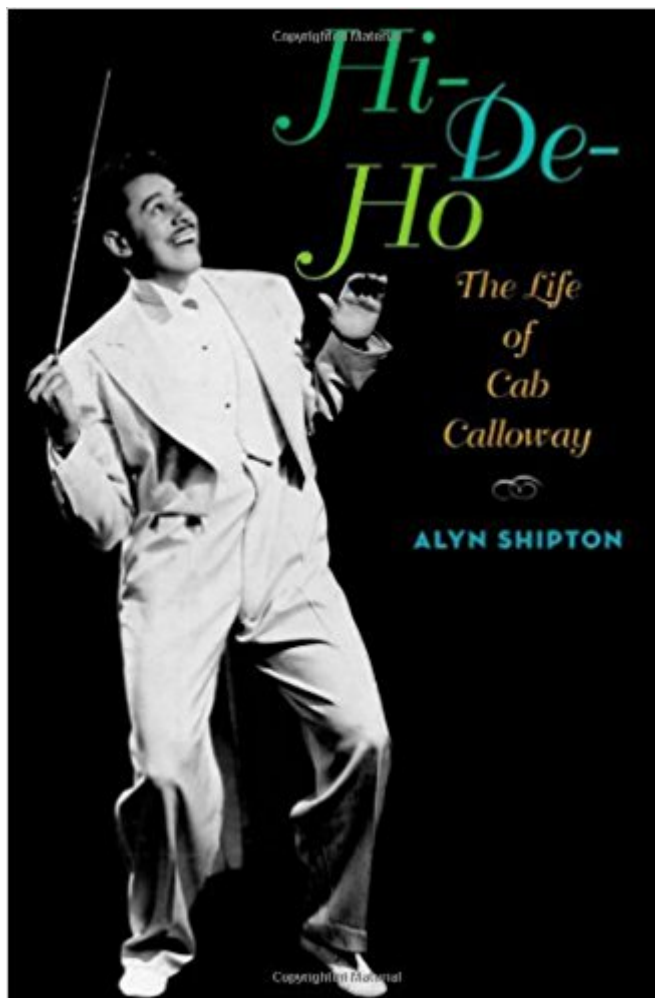


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# Hi-De-Ho: The Life Of Cab Calloway



## Synopsis

Clad in white tie and tails, dancing and scatting his way through the "Hi-de-ho" chorus of "Minnie the Moocher," Cab Calloway exuded a sly charm and sophistication that endeared him to legions of fans. In *Hi-de-ho*, author Alyn Shipton offers the first full-length biography of Cab Calloway, whose vocal theatrics and flamboyant stage presence made him one of the highest-earning African American bandleaders. Shipton sheds new light on Calloway's life and career, explaining how he traversed racial and social boundaries to become one of the country's most beloved entertainers. Drawing on first-hand accounts from Calloway's family, friends, and fellow musicians, the book traces the roots of this music icon, from his childhood in Rochester, New York, to his life of hustling on the streets of Baltimore. Shipton highlights how Calloway's desire to earn money to support his infant daughter prompted his first break into show business, when he joined his sister Blanche in a traveling revue. Beginning in obscure Baltimore nightclubs and culminating in his replacement of Duke Ellington at New York's famed Cotton Club, Calloway honed his gifts of scat singing and call-and-response routines. His career as a bandleader was matched by his genius as a talent-spotter, evidenced by his hiring of such jazz luminaries as Ben Webster, Dizzy Gillespie, and Jonah Jones. As the swing era waned, Calloway reinvented himself as a musical theatre star, appearing as Sportin' Life in "Porgy and Bess" in the early 1950s; in later years, Calloway cemented his status as a living legend through cameos on "Sesame Street" and his show-stopping appearance in the wildly popular "The Blues Brothers" movie, bringing his trademark "hi-de-ho" refrain to a new generation of audiences. More than any other source, *Hi-de-ho* stands as an entertaining, not-to-be-missed portrait of Cab Calloway--one that expertly frames his enduring significance as a pioneering artist and entertainer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"I met Cab Calloway at Eddie Condon's club -- he lit up the room by his presence and I can understand why everyone loved the man. Alyn Shipton captures Cab's spirit in his biography *Hi-De-Ho*; every page is filled with anecdotes about Cab and his music. Chu Berry, Ben Webster, and other well known musicians spring from the pages. Not only does Shipton bring Cab Calloway to life, he makes the reader understand the era in which he lived. For a short time, we enter his world, and what a world it was." --Marian McPartland OBE, jazz pianist, writer, composer, radio host (*Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz*)

"If you think Cab Calloway was just a show-off chanting 'Hi De Ho' and shaking his hair, think again. Thanks to Alyn Shipton, we now have an entirely new and convincing portrait of the singer/bandleader/actor. Thoroughly researched and engaging, Shipton's book has enlightened us with the complete story of this important artist." --Krin Gabbard, author of *Hotter Than That: The Trumpet*

"Mr. Shipton's excellent book should convince many readers and, I hope, some critics, that it might be time to experience Calloway's recordings and movies again, and try to discover, in part at least, what the hi-de-ho-ing was all about." --William F. Gavin, *The Washington Times*

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"*Hi-De-Ho* delivers! Beautifully written and multifaceted - this revealing biography crystallizes the transformative power of Cab Calloway's groundbreaking genius. In a manner as universal and inspiring as the legend portrayed, Shipton highlights the breadth and impact of my grandfather's continuing legacy." --Christopher Calloway Brooks, Director - The Cab Calloway Orchestra

"Shipton presents in admirable detail

Calloway's professional apex as Cotton Club headliner and leader of the foremost big band in the United States and reveals him as a superior artistic tactician. He also offers critical reconsiderations of Calloway's vocal and instrumental recordings, making a strong case for his inclusion as a musical innovator in the class of Louis Armstrong or Duke Ellington. An essential purchase for any jazz or popular music collection." --Library Journal

"Makes a solid case for Calloway as a jazz musician as well as an entertainer, and he certainly makes you want to listen to 'Minnie' and all the others, for the umpteenth time in my case and, it is to be hoped, for the first time in others." --The Washington Post

"Shipton, for his part, is an enthusiastic advocate, not just for Calloway but also for the mostly forgotten instrumentalists who worked in his orchestra over the years. Yet his analysis of the recordings tends to be astute, and is the high point of this book. All celebrity musicians should be blessed with such a sympathetic listener for a biographer." --The Weekly Standard

"Alyn Shipton's is the first full-length book devoted to the man. The British broadcaster has written extensively about figures in the singer's orbit-including trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Doc Cheatham, guitarist Danny Barker, and songwriter Jimmy McHugh-and here deftly brings out the band's inner musical dynamics." --The Wall Street Journal

"Shipton gives [Calloway] his due. Must reading for swing buffs." --Terry Teachout

"This formidable book opens the door for future books on Calloway's enduring influence." -The Week

"Recommended for any music fan, particularly to those of us who had our first glimpse of Calloway in the 'Blues Brothers' movie." --The Herald Sun

"Enlightening. Thorough. This is the first real biography of an important cultural icon...Shipton describes how the Sesame Street producers saw potential in his attire and scatting vocalizations as he did "commercials" for numbers and letters. Cab jumped in enthusiastically. In The Blues Brothers he plays a janitor who, through movie magic, suddenly turns to Hi-De-Ho'ing while the Brothers are evading the police. As Shipton describes these moments, you're there." --JJA News

"Provides a reliable, fully informed account of Calloway's career, one in which the emphasis is placed squarely - and properly - on his musical achievements...I can think of no better way to be brought face to face with the extent of that achievement than to read Hi-De-Ho." --Commentary

"It is the great merit of Mr. Shipton's richly documented, well-written, and musically informed "Hi-De-Ho" that he makes a convincing case for Calloway as an unjustly neglected entertainer...Mr. Shipton's excellent book should convince many readers and, I hope, some critics, that it might be time to experience Calloway's recordings and movies again, and try to discover, in part at least, what the hi-de-ho-ing was all about." --The Washington Times

"Hi-De-Ho dutifully fulfills its role as the sorely needed and long-awaited starting point for Calloway studies, as Shipton opens the door to numerous avenues of future research on the performer." --American Music

Alyn Shipton is the author of several award winning books on music including *A New History of Jazz* and *Groovin' High: the Life of Dizzy Gillespie*. He is jazz critic for *The Times* in London and has presented jazz programs on BBC radio since 1989. He is also an accomplished double bassist and has played with many traditional and mainstream jazz bands.

Cab Calloway was jazz, and he was a premier jazz aficionado. He was raised in Baltimore, and moved to Chicago. His first appearance on the stage was in a show at the Loop Theatre with his sister, Blanche. In 1929, he returned to Chicago and acted as a vocalist with The Alabamians. He returned to New York and appeared with the Hot Chocolate Revue. In He took over The Missourians, eventually changing the name to Cab Calloway and His Orchestra. Cab recorded *Minnie the Moocher*, a trademark song that would remain his for his entire life. He became the leader of a band that took over for Duke Ellington. He was known as "The man in the zoot suit with the reet pleats." He brought slang along with his own brand of music in early radio broadcasts in the 1930s and 40s. Cab was on Broadway and then went to the London stage with *Porgy and Bess*. He and Pearl Bailey had a Broadway revival of *Hello Dolly*. He was in films four decades which introduced him to a whole new audience. I love Cab Calloway and his brand of music. We are all indebted to him .Recommended. prisrob 04-24-11 Are You Hep to the Jive The Early Years: 1930-34

A lot of the information in this book was taken from Cab's own book, *Minnie The Moocher and Me*", but Alyn doesn't have Cab's way with words. He used a lot of technical information that only other musicians would know or care about or understand and it was pretty dry reading.

I enjoyed reading this book. I appreciate all the information. With that said, the title is a little misleading. The book is not so much about Cab the person as it is about his bands and his music. There is ample content about the places Cab played, lots and lots of band members' names, and plenty of other related details about the bands' travels and gigs. The pace is brisk and concentrated, and hits the significant highlights. However, there is not a comparable amount of insight into the man himself. In fact, it kind of put me off that in at least six chapters the author quoted Cab's autobiography. I've read the autobiography - I bought this book to experience a different perspective! With a title like "The Life of Cab Calloway" I expected to learn more about the person. Perhaps if the book were titled something like "The Life of Cab Calloway's Bands," or "The Music of Cab Calloway," it would more accurately reflect the book's content. Again, I enjoyed this book and

appreciate the information. I don't regret reading it. Given the title, though, I was hoping to learn more about the person we know as Cab Calloway.

This is really more about Cab's music and band members than it is a traditional biography. The author delves deeply, perhaps too deeply, into the backgrounds of every band member. As a piece of musical research this is excellent, but the flavor of Cab's life and opinions is muted to the endless detail of personal backgrounds and what the critics thought. After reading Cab's own prose, "Mini The Moocher And Me" I really appreciate this complex man. This book is all about musical scholarship, and therefore to call it "The Life of Cab Calloway" is misleading.

Not a very interesting book! I would have done better just googling his name and reading what was available! I would not recommend this book!

If you don't know who Cab Calloway was, you're not only missing a captivating and original American musical legend, but also the forefather of, well, more contemporary popular music than you'd ever imagine. Even Michael Jackson was a fan! Sadly, the day when Cab Calloway was a household name and cross-generational idol have long passed. There's a decent chance that, if you're young enough, your grandparents might only have a faint idea. While it's not entirely true to say that Calloway's been written out of musical history, the fact is that his massive success, dapper dress, utter charm and great stage shows all meant that sometimes he wasn't taken as seriously as some of his (often less-talented) peers. As far as I can tell, this is currently the only book on Calloway currently in print. A shame, as in his own way Calloway is as important a part of America's artistic legacy as Louis Armstrong or Elvis Presley or Hank Williams or Nina Simone. Fortunately, the book is quite good. It's a "straight" biography, by which I mean that it starts prior to his birth and follows things chronologically, without any attempt to impose a novel narrative structure on things. It's incredibly researched, which is almost a minor flaw - early in the book, details of Calloway's childhood addresses and the like are a bit less than compelling. On the downside, the writing is solid but often a little dry, but Shipton makes up for this with lots of detail. With a little imagination, the reader can easily picture some of the more personal moments of struggle and fame, to the societal backdrop against which he operated. One of Calloway's "problems" - if you want to call it that - is that he made it what he did look easy. Anyone who's seen Hugh Laurie from "House" in an earlier role depicting PG Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster will probably recall the scene wherein poor Bertie enlists his starched valet, Jeeves, in an attempt to conquer the easy swing and jive of "Minnie The

Moocher" - and just how tough it was. If early jazz and recorded pop music is your thing, this book will add a lot of perspective to your knowledge of Calloway and the era in which he operated. You'll definitely want to check out his recordings afterwards.

I chose this book by chance, more because of an interest in the time period than otherwise, since I knew virtually nothing of Cab Calloway beyond "Minnie the Moocher." I was surprised at how it captured my interest. It is a thoroughly well-written account, replete with citations and anecdotes, which paints an intriguing picture of an entertainer who was far more influential and innovative in his time than I could have known. The multi-dimensional portrait, with varied historical references, should hold the interest of even those who know little if anything of the genre.

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