

## CENTENARY CELEBRATION: ENTERTAINERS BORN IN 1908

**Lionel Hampton** (April 20, 1908-August 31, 2002) is credited for taking a novelty instrument—the vibraphone—and making it a star. Although Red Norvo introduced the vibraphone to jazz audiences in the 1920s, it was Hampton who became the master.

Although born in Louisville, Kentucky, Hampton was largely raised in Chicago and began his career playing drums in local bands. When his friend saxophonist Les Hite moved to Los Angeles to form his own band, Hampton followed, making his first recording in 1929 with Paul Howard's Quality Serenaders.

He joined the Hite band in 1930, switching to the vibraphone. The Hite band frequently accompanied Louis Armstrong on recordings, giving Hampton valuable exposure.



In 1936, Hampton formed his own group, earning an engagement at Los Angeles' Paradise Café. Hampton quickly disbanded his group, however, after Benny Goodman heard him and asked him to join his quartet, breaking the color barrier. As Hampton's popularity grew, he was added to Goodman's full orchestra.

Hampton left Goodman's orchestra in 1940 to form his own orchestra. The orchestra recorded for Victor, Decca, and Verve before disbanding in 1946. Undaunted, Hampton continued to perform into the 1990s, leading a number of groups.

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A tragic fire destroyed Hampton's New York apartment and much of his music memorabilia in 1997. Five years later, Lionel Hampton died.

To see the legendary Lionel Hampton perform click the following link.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ugQHrMUBbA>

**Dorothy McNulty** (1908-2003) was one of the few entertainers to be honored with three stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. She is better known as Penny Singleton, a stage name she adopted in 1938.

Born Mariana Dorothy Agnes Letitia McNulty, she began her show business career at age 8, singing and dancing as "Baby Dorothy" during intermission at a Philadelphia silent movie theatre. After graduating from elementary school Dorothy joined a touring vaudeville act—The Kiddie Kabaret.

Although she briefly attended Columbia University, she left college to pursue a career in show business. McNulty made her Broadway debut in 1927, singing and dancing in *Good News*. This was followed by a more prominent role in the stage version of *Follow Thru*, where she introduced the standard "Button Up Your Overcoat."



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McNulty made her film debut in the 1930 film version of *Good News*. Click the following link to view a clip of her performance of the title number.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmx\\_2pDmQbg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmx_2pDmQbg)

After a brief return to Broadway, McNulty's film career went into high gear in 1936 after an appearance in *After the Thin Man*. In 1937, she married Lawrence Singleton. Although the marriage did not last, McNulty kept the name, adding "Penny" because of her penchant for saving large numbers of pennies.

Penny Singleton appeared in 11 films in 1938, including the first in a series of 28 *Blondie* and *Dagwood* films produced between 1938 and 1950.

Singleton is also remembered as the voice of Jane Jetson in the short-lived cartoon series.

For a more detailed remembrance of Penny Singleton, see the December 2003 issue of *Trans-Lux*.

**Eve Arden** (April 30, 1908-November 12, 1990) was a film and television star whose career spanned over 60 years. Although she appeared in over 60 movies, she is best remembered for her role as a high school teacher in the 1950s television series *Our Miss Brooks*. Click the link to sample her work. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSVMA2NTdKw>



Born Eunice M. Quedens in Mill Valley, California, she left high school at age 16 to pursue a stage career. Her film debut was in the 1929 musical *Song of Love*. She is credited as Eunice Quedens. Her Broadway debut was in the 1934 *Ziegfeld Follies* revue.

Arden's role as a fast talking, wise-cracking supporting character in the 1937 film *Stage Door* was oft repeated in future roles, such as her Academy Award-nominated role in *Mildred Pierce* (1945), supporting Joan Crawford.

Eve Arden played high school teacher Connie Brooks in *Our Miss Brooks* from 1948 to 1957 on the radio, from 1952 to 1956 on television, and in the 1956 feature film. Her performance was so convincing that she was made an honorary member of the National Education Association.

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Arden resumed her “career” in education in 1978, playing the role of harassed principal McGee in both *Grease* and *Grease 2*.

Eve Arden appeared in a number of other television programs, most notably *The Mothers-in-Law*, airing from 1967-69. Her other films credits include *Dancing Lady* (1933), *Cocoanut Grove* (1938), *No, No Nanette* (1940), *Ziegfeld Girl* (1941), and *Sing for Your Supper* (1941).

Arden was married to Ned Bergen from 1939 to 1947 and to actor Brooks West from 1952 to until his death in 1984. She died of cancer in 1990.

**Leroy Anderson** (1908-1975) was an American composer best remembered for his novelty “miniature” tunes such as the *Syncopated Clock* and *The Typewriter*, but also the composer of such standards as *Sleigh Ride* and *Blue Tango*. Here’s a sample of *Blue Tango*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6bXjKC5fxc>

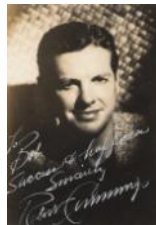
Anderson was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 29, 1908. He attended Harvard, studying music but working toward a career as a language teacher. He accepted a position as a language teacher at a private school in Pennsylvania only to change his mind and decide to try a career in music.

Boston Pops Director Arthur Fiedler became acquainted with Anderson’s compositions for the Harvard Band and asked him to arrange a medley for the Pops. Anderson’s first arrangement for the Boston Pops, a medley of Harvard songs—*Harvard Fantasy*—was so successful that Anderson began a long collaboration with Fiedler. The Boston Pops continued to premier Anderson’s works until 1950.

*The Syncopated Clock* was used as the theme music for CBS’ *The Late Show* in the early 1950s. Another of Anderson’s compositions, *Plink, Plank, Plunk*, was used as the theme song for *I’ve Got a Secret*.

**Bob Cummings** (1908-1990) was a movie and television actor with almost 70 films to his credit. Although best known for his comedy talents, he effectively played dramatic roles in two Alfred Hitchcock films—*Saboteur* (1942) and *Dial M for Murder* (1954). Similarly, Cummings was not known as a singer, but was effective in *Moon Over Miami* (1941) singing “You Started Something” with Betty Grable. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPB6dNBPw7w>

Born in Joplin, Missouri, Cummings learned to fly while still in high school. Seems his godfather—Orville Wright—knew a thing or two about flight.



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After attending Carnegie Tech, Cummings enrolled at the American of Dramatic Arts in New York. While in New York, Cummings had a brief Broadway career under the stage name Blake Stanhope Conway, passing himself off as an Englishman.

Abandoning his “British ancestry,” Cummings moved to Hollywood as wealthy Texan Bruce Hutchens. After a few acting jobs under that name, Cummings began acting in the 1930s under his own name. He worked as a contract player for most of the 1930s, appearing mostly in minor roles in films like *Seasoned Greetings* (1933), *Sons of the Desert* (1933), *Millions in the Air* (1935), and *Forgotten Faces* (1936).

In 1938 he appeared in *College Swing*, followed, in 1939, by a starring role opposite Deanna Durbin in *Three Smart Girls Grow Up*. Among his notable comedy roles were *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1941), *Moon Over Miami* (1941), and *The Bride Wore Boots* (1946).

Cummings also found significant success on radio and television. He starred in the radio drama *Those We Love* from 1938 to 1945 and in a number of television series between 1952 and 1964, most notably *The Bob Cummings Show* from 1955 to 1959.

Cummings was an early advocate of natural foods, authoring *Stay Young and Vital* in 1960 touting the benefits of health foods and exercise. He was a frequent critic of refined products like white flour, white rice, and sugar.