

Eubie Blake

Jazz Musicians

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James Hubert Blake was born in Baltimore, Maryland on February 7, 1883. His parents, John and Emily Black were both former slaves. Eubie started taking Organ lessons at the age of six and by the time he was sixteen he was playing professionally in Baltimore saloons and bordellos. He wrote Charleston Rag in 1899.

Eubie moved to Atlantic City and met singer Noble Sissle in 1915. Eubie and Noble teamed together as a vaudeville act called the Dixie Duo. The team also wrote musicals for the stage. They wrote the first all Black musical, Shuffle Along, which became a major hit. They also wrote Revue Negre, Plantation Review, and Rhapsody in Black. Eubie continued to write songs during this period and produced several hits during the twenties including I'm just crazy about Harry, and Memories of You.

Eubie, Noble and Lew Payton teamed together in 1924 and wrote the smash hit, The Chocolate Dandies. In 1925 Eubie and Noble hit the vaudeville circuit again in the U.S. and in Europe. Eubie returned to the U.S. in 1927, but Noble remained in Europe.

Eubie toured USO shows with his band during World War II. He began studying formal music composition in 1946 earning a degree from New York University. Although largely inactive during the fifties, Eubie made a few appearances in Ragtime Revivals.

Eubie remained a forgotten unknown until 1969, when at the age of 86, he recorded a double album called The Eighty-Six Years of Eubie Blake. Eubie's popularity soared and he was much in demand at Jazz festivals and concerts. Eubie also lectured at colleges across the country. He formed his own recording company in 1972. Eubie was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1981.

Eubie continued to perform until he was 98 years old. He died on February 12, 1983 at the age of One Hundred (and 5 days) in New York City.

Sources:

Encyclopedia Britannica

Encyclopedia Africana

Atlanta Music Group (AMG)