

Josephine Baker and Jazz in Paris, 1925-50

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Josephine Baker had a colossal impact on French art, fashion and the emergence of jazz in Europe between the world wars when Paris was an outpost of the Harlem Renaissance for extraordinary African American entertainers. Other stunning Black divas of Paris were singer and dancer Adelaide Hall and legendary singer and cabaret operator Ida “Bricktop” Smith. Numerous colorful but now forgotten African American expatriate instrumentalists central to early jazz in Europe are profiled. Join a vivid depiction of Josephine Baker and the innovative expatriate jazz musicians of the interwar years in Paris.

Each class offers deep insights via 15 dynamic videoclips, many created expressly for the course. (Josephine Baker comprises one-third of the course, distributed across classes 1, 2, 3 and 6.)

1 - Josephine Baker (1 of 4), Nightclubs of Paris

Introducing Josephine Baker and the expat African American musicians of Europe. We’re visiting the fabulous nightclubs, music halls and notorious dives of interwar Paris: The Gran Duc, Casino de Paris and Joe Zellis Royal Box.

2 - Josephine Baker (2 of 4) Early Jazz in Europe

Josephine is queen of Parisian stage and nightlife. Pianist Freddy Johnson and his band supply the music at Bricktops’ Cabaret with trumpeter Arthur Briggs who was known as the “Louis Armstrong of France.”

3 - Josephine Baker (3 of 4), Continental Divas, Dancers and Musicians

Baker becomes an international icon of fashion, entertainment and French cinema, lionized in Europe and romanced by great men and women of the arts and letters including Ada “Bricktop” Smith, whose cabaret draws an international elite.

4 - Frank “Big Boy” Goudie in Europe, 1924-53

This nearly forgotten Creole Johnny Appleseed of jazz from Louisiana is at the epicenter of jazz and swing. The towering multi-instrumentalist was employed by every significant black American bandleader on the Continent, spending his war years performing in South America before returning to Europe.

5 - French Jazz Matures, 1935-45

An indigenous French jazz movement emerges, coalescing around guitarist Django Reinhardt, violinist Stephane Grappelli, trumpeter Philipe Brun and saxophonist Alix Combelle. African American tenor saxophone master Coleman Hawkins is hugely influential, living, performing and recording in Belgium, France, Switzerland and the Netherlands, 1934-39.

6 - Josephine Baker in War and Peace (4 of 4)

During WWII, Baker spies on the Axis for the Allies and Free French Resistance, emerging a global avatar of civil and human rights. Jazz is reestablished across postwar Paris and Europe.