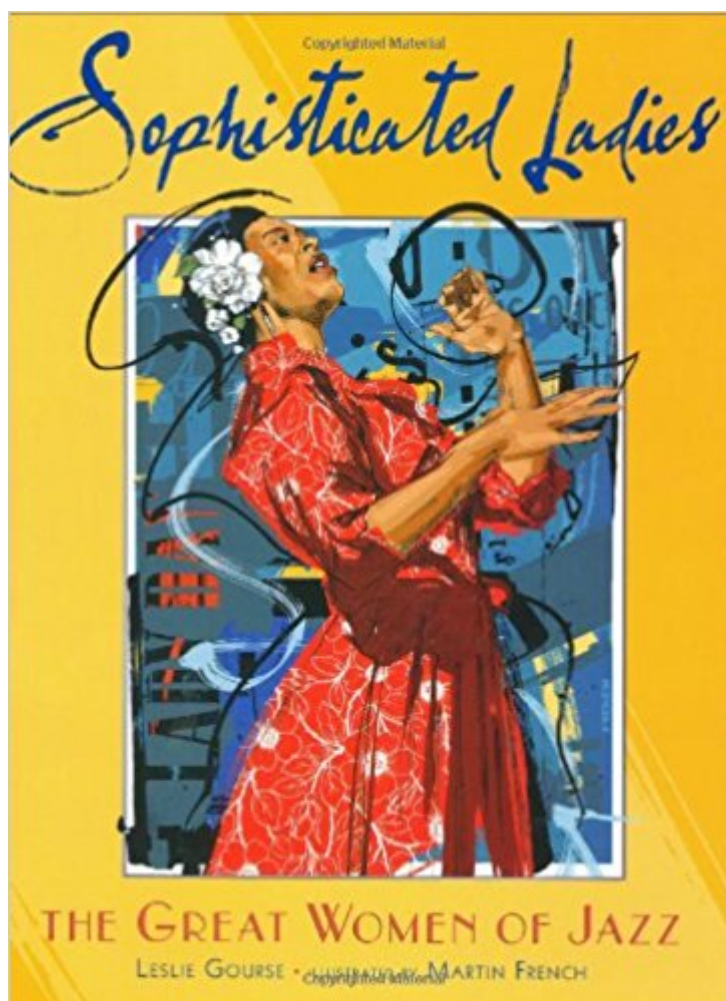


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# Sophisticated Ladies: The Great Women Of Jazz



## Synopsis

This handsome volume contains the stories of fourteen fabulous women, blues and jazz singers all. Their art reflected their backgrounds—often small, poverty-ridden towns in the South—and the influence of musicians who preceded them. Each singer adapted the culture of jazz and wove it into her own personal style. Jazz historian Leslie Gourse's biographies of Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, Mildred Bailey, Mabel Mercer, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Anita O'Day, Peggy Lee, Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan, Betty Carter, Rosemary Clooney, Cassandra Wilson, and Diana Krall offer a fascinating glimpse into American history and a continually evolving musical genre.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up—This lively collective biography of 14 singers begins in the 1920s with Bessie Smith and Ethel Waters and moves on through current performers Cassandra Wilson and Diana Krall. A vibrant, full-page portrait opens each chapter, depicting the performer with bold vitality, in a style suggestive of a theater poster. Gourse mentions the singers' childhoods and backgrounds and traces the influences on and course of their careers, not shying away from the poverty, health issues, addictions, and chaotic lifestyles experienced by many of them. Her descriptions of their individual styles are particularly apt, whether of Peggy Lee, rarely singing a note louder than needed or Anita O'Day, her dry, husky voice slurring the melody as she handled a variety of songs. The spot-on discography points students to the best-known songs of each artist. Alyn Shipton's *Jazz Makers: Vanguard of Sound* (Oxford Univ., 2002) offers similar but more comprehensive coverage,

including more than 50 biographical sketches of great figures of jazz, both male and female. Joyce Adams Burner, Hillcrest Library, Prairie Village, KS Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Jazz historian Gourse, who died in 2004, combines with illustrator French to produce an attractive and informative overview of female jazz singers. Fourteen artists, from Bessie Smith to Diana Krall, are covered in biographical essays three-to-four pages long that trace the singer's life and offer commentary on her vocal style and place in jazz history. Each essay begins with a striking, full-color portrait that captures each vocalist in her prime; the vivid colors combine effectively with the poster-style design (in addition to illustrating children's books, French has designed art for such commercial clients as the Grammy Awards and the Joffrey Ballet). This volume will be popular with middle-grade report writers, but it also belongs in the hands of young people interested in jazz, who may be prompted to move from these quick takes to full-length biographies. The appended bibliography is dominated by adult titles, but the discography, featuring easily obtainable reissues on CD, is just right for young listeners. Bill Ott Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

IF only we had more on each page about their childhoods!!! Wonderful artistic illustrations about each DIVA! I love the colors!

This is really a good book because it gives you the facts straight out & clear about each of these performers. Enjoyed it so much that I finished it in one sitting!!

Leslie Gourse has written a fabulous introduction to the great female jazz singers. She's included Ella Fitzgerald (of course!), Bessie Smith and a host of others including currently popular singers like Diana Krall. Ms. Gourse is an excellent researcher and writer, and this book should be included in all school libraries. Highly recommended

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