Page, Walter,

in full WALTER SYLVESTER PAGE (b. Feb. 9, 1900, Gallatin, Mo., U.S.—d. Dec. 20, 1957, New York, N.Y.), black American swing-era musician, one of the first to play "walking" lines on the string bass. A pioneer of the Southwestern jazz style, he was a star of the Count Basie band during its greatest period.

Page played in several bands in the 1920s before forming Walter Page's Blue Devils (1925-31) in Oklahoma City. A historically important early "territory band" (i.e., those in the South and Midwest), it toured widely in the Southwest, and though it recorded only once, in 1929, it had a reputation for outstanding performers, among them woodwind soloist Buster Smith, singer Jimmy Rushing, and pianist Bill (later Count) Basie. By the end of 1931 most of the principal Blue Devils, including Page, had been absorbed into the older, Kansas City-based Bennie Moten band. From 1935 to 1942 Page was with Count Basie's band and was part of the innovative "All-American" rhythm section during that band's classic period. He returned to Basie in 1946-48, then spent the rest of his career freelancing in swing bands.

Early in his career Page played baritone saxophone and tuba, and as a string bassist he was a principal figure in the rise of metres in jazz. His evenly accented, four-beat "walking" bass lines provided not only a harmonic foundation but a melodic counterpoint in his accompaniments, and he chose notes that enhanced the playing of his bands and soloists. His beat was the foundation of his bands' pulse and momentum; in Basie's rhythm section it was perfectly synchronized with the guitar of Freddie Greene and the drums of Jo Jones.