



Stardust Melody: The Life and Music of Hoagy Carmichael

Richard M. Sudhalter

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Georgia on My Mind, Rockin' Chair, Skylark, Lazybones, and of course the incomparable *Star Dust*--who else could have composed these classic American songs but Hoagy Carmichael? He remains, for millions, the voice of heartland America, eternal counterpoint to the urban sensibility of Cole Porter and George Gershwin. Now, trumpeter and historian Richard M. Sudhalter has penned the first book-length biography of the man Alec Wilder hailed as "the most talented, inventive, sophisticated and jazz-oriented of all the great songwriters--the greatest of the great craftsmen."

Stardust Melody follows Carmichael from his roaring-twenties Indiana youth to bandstands and recording studios across the nation, playing piano and singing alongside jazz greats Jack Teagarden, Benny Goodman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, and close friends Bix Beiderbecke and Louis Armstrong. It illuminates his peak Hollywood years, starring in such films as *To Have and Have Not* and *The Best Years of Our Lives*, and on radio, records and TV. With compassionate insight Sudhalter depicts Hoagy's triumphs and tragedies, and his mounting despair as rock-and-roll drowns out and lays waste to the last days of a brilliant career.

With an insider's clarity Sudhalter explores the songs themselves, still fresh and appealing while reminding us of our innocent American yesterdays. Drawing on Carmichael's private papers and on interviews with family, friends and colleagues, he reveals that "The Old Music Master" was almost as gifted a wordsmith as a shaper of melodies. In all, *Stardust Melody* offers a richly textured portrait of one of our greatest musical figures, an inspiring American icon.

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