



# The Best Gig in Town: Jazz Artists at the White House, 1969-1974

*Edward Allan Faine*

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During his term in office, Nixon held thirteen jazz-related performances at the White House. This book pays homage to that handful of iconic entertainers who graced the East Room stage: singers Pearl Bailey, Peggy Lee, and Frank Sinatra; pianists Henry Mancini, Bobby Short, and Billy Taylor; New Orleans musicians Pete Fountain and Al Hirt; and the instrumental groups the Modern Jazz Quartet and the World's Greatest Jazz Band.

In assembling these profiles, the author drew on published sources as well as archival taped performances, transcribing everything from Nixon's introductory and closing remarks to the statements made by the stars to the reaction of the glitterati in the audience. For all the tunes played or sung, Faine provides details on their origins and the comments from attending journalists and critics. To be expected, the entertainers performed their signature songs: Henry Mancini played "Moon River," Peggy Lee sang "Fever," Pearl Bailey belted out "Hello, Dolly," and Frank Sinatra crooned "One for My Baby."

*The Best Gig in Town* offers a fresh view of the Nixon presidency, one rarely seen by ordinary Americans: a view of a White House at play with Nixon as genial and gracious host.

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