

Melvin Crump

Music was the bridge Melvin Crump built between Black and white.

First trained in saxophone, Crump's lungs couldn't take the strain and he switched to drums. Their rhythmic beat accompanied his trips across the country as a Canadian Pacific Railway porter.

Musicians worked full time and played full time. Jazz clubs were always located close to the railway tracks and, on trips to Montreal or Vancouver, Crump would sit in with the best musicians from the United States and Canada. He was one of the first Black Canadians to play with white musicians, no small matter in the segregationist 1950s.

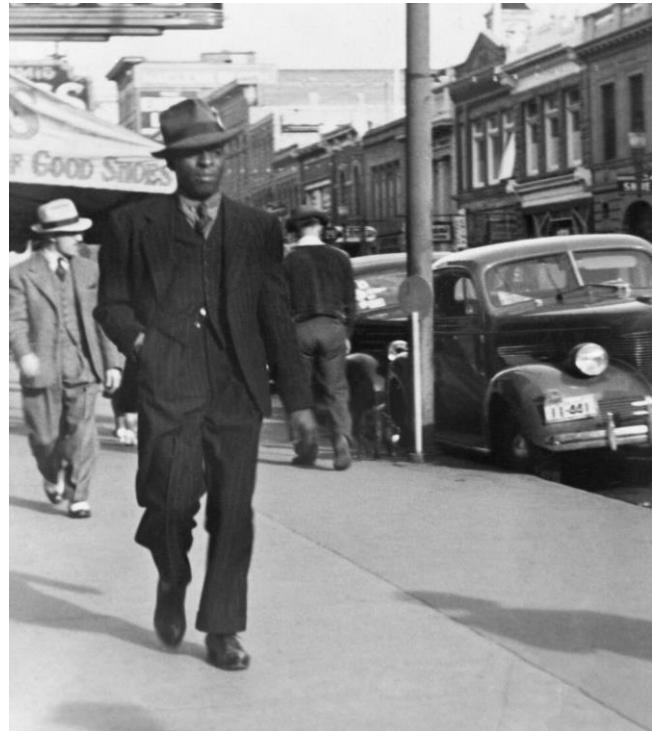
Closely tied to his music was his commitment to the rights of African-Canadians. When insulted in a Montana restaurant, Crump led a group of "coloured" porters out and returned with someone who could demand that they receive service.

Crump was president of the Alberta Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, and he refused to work on trains travelling south of the border if Black people encountered racism.

Melvin Crump travelled Canada from seas to sea, but jazz was his imaginative destination.

Melvin's Drums

Crump played drums with the Edmonton band "The Knights of Harlem" and later with Les Bailey's "Tiger Ace and the Knights of Swing." He played with the Bert Proctor Swingsters at the Utopia Club, and at Foggy Manor in Calgary, then joined Kashmir's Jazz Band. From the 1930s into the late 1980s he drummed, a beloved and respected fixture in the music world.



Melvin Crump on 8th Avenue, Calgary, Alberta
Glenbow Archives NA-4210-3

Melvin recalled his favourite drum kit while playing at a gig in the early '80s. "The best set I ever had; the best for Latin music." Crump sold this drum kit in 2002, after a career of playing jazz that set a local standard for the genre. Cary Asplund, 11 year old son of a former band mate, bought the drum kit for a nominal fee. The young Asplund was already in a band and had plans for a future in music.

Born: August 31, 1916 – Died: November 11, 2009

Additional Resources

- **Alberta on Record**
<https://albertaonrecord.ca/crump-melvin>

Our Collections

Glenbow Museum

<https://www.glenbow.org>

Glenbow Western Research Centre | Glenbow Library and Archives

<https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/glenbowlibraryandarchives>

Glenbow Library and Archives | Digital Collection

<https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/asset-management/2R340826N9XM?WS=PackagePres&Flat=1>