

Too Dead to Swing

Hal Glatzer

Audio Playwrights (Sep 7, 2000)

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This audio book embarks with an uptempo Swing number that jitterbugs right into the silky clear voice of the murder mystery's heroine, Katy Green. "In May of 1940 I was looking for work in Los Angeles. I'd ridden the noisy red street cars over to the Musician's Union every day."

While in line at a hot dog stand in a Santa Monica amusement park, Katy bumps into ex-boyfriend/songwriter, Ted Nywatt. Ted tells Katy about the all-female Swing band he's put together to showcase his songs, the Ultra Belles. While Katy and Ted chitchat, the Ultra Belles' violinist is pushed off the pier by an unidentified attacker. Katy, also a violinist, is offered the spot temporarily.

The mystery and mayhem that began on the pier in Santa Monica continues as the Ultra Belles go on tour. They have attracted a major talent agency and will ride in style on some of the newest trains of the times: The Southern Pacific's Starlight and the Western Pacific's Zephyr. While Ted tends to business with the conductor, the Ultra Belles' new agent, Manny, gathers information from each musician for the band's press, thus introducing each lady colorfully. "All in all the Ultra Belles were a fair cross-section of the distaff ranks of the American Federation of Musicians," who are on the threshold of a deadly tour.

Susan Egan portrays Katy as intelligent and strong enough to take on drama typically written for the male hero of the 1940s. She knows jujitsu and is wise enough not to go off the deep end with the Casanova types. "A fling with a Lothario can be a lot of fun if you don't get all mushy over him. Guys like that really know how to please a girl. They've got great technique if you take my meaning. You just have to remember they are always looking for somebody to practice on."

Too Dead to Swing is a dramatization reminiscent of the old radio plays with believable sound effects. A cast of Broadway regulars deliver their parts flawlessly, making the six hours of audio play seem like six minutes.

VYVYAN LYNN (January / February 2001)

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