



The Cool Gent: The Nine Lives of Radio Legend Herb Kent

Herb Kent, David Smallwood

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When Herb Kent was a straight-A college student in the 1940s, his white professor told him, “You have the best voice in class, but you’ll never make it in radio because you’re a Negro.” This did not deter the poor kid from the Chicago housing projects who had decided on a radio career at age five. It was just one more obstacle to face head on and overcome.

Known as the Cool Gent, the King of the Dusties, and the Mayor of Bronzeville, Herb Kent is one of radio’s most illustrious and legendary stars. This fascinating autobiography details both the high and low points of Herb's life while providing a vivid picture of black music, culture, and personalities from the 1950s to today. Herb had a typical rock-and-roll lifestyle—drugs, alcohol, all-night partying, and women—eventually hitting rock bottom, where he finally faced his personal demons. At least nine times Herb came close to death, but through it all, he maintained his debonair, classy persona and his uncanny knack for picking timeless tunes. And he didn’t save only himself; along the way, he blazed new trails for all African Americans and remains a role model for today's top deejays.

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