



The Guest List: How Manhattan Defined American Sophistication---from the Algonquin Round Table to Truman Capote's Ball

Ethan Mordden

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From the 1920s to the early 1960s, Manhattan was America's beacon of sophistication. From the theatres of Broadway to the lobby of the Algonquin Hotel to tables at the Stork Club, intelligence and wit were the twinned coins of the realm. Alexander Woolcott, Irving Berlin, Edna Ferber, Arturo Toscanini, Leonard Bernstein, Cole Porter, Dorothy Parker, Truman Capote, the Lunts and Helen Hayes presided over the town. Their books, plays, performances, speeches, dinner parties, masked balls, loves, hates, likes and dislikes became the aspirations of a nation. If you wanted to be sophisticated, you played by Manhattan's rules. If you didn't, you simply weren't on the guest list. The Heartland rebelled against Manhattan's dictum, but never prevailed. In this lively cultural history, Mordden chronicles the city's most powerful and influential era.

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