



David Sancious



Charlie Parker, Robert Reisner's 'Bird'.

jazz books

A word of advice to the jazz novice seeking an introduction to the finest of insanities: each of the books on the subject reviewed below is an admirable companion and reference work, but should not be taken as an introduction. Dive into the sound, experience the indescribable feeling that jazz music conveys, follow your own instincts and do not fear the unknown. In short: *listen* first. If you are seduced, then read. To do otherwise would be like studying biology without having smelled a flower.

Jazz, edited by Nat Hentoff and Albert J. McCarthy

A collection of twelve scholarly essays on the origins and directions of the music. Each piece,

written with hindsight, offers new perspectives on history and peels away a lot of the fallacies. Especially illuminating are the chapters on Kansas and the Southwest and the material of Duke Ellington. **Live at the Village Vanguard** by Max Gordon

Gordon runs one of the best-known still-operating jazz clubs in the world and just about everyone who is anyone in the field has played there. This is the story of that venue and if the walls could talk, they probably would have added a dozen more chapters. The famous names drift through the pages and the anecdotes abound. A witty and charming book, capturing the spirit of a vital part of the world's greatest city.

Chasin' The Trane by J. C. Thomas

John Coltrane, profound musician, thinker, mystic. Fifteen years after his death, people are still

trying to figure out where he was headed. Thomas occasionally lets his reverence for Trane override his sensibilities and thus becomes gushy and embarrassing. But the book is still a work of love and many celebrities share their personal recollections of a great and good man. Essential.

Bird, edited by Robert Reisner

Charlie Parker spawned as many stories about his lifestyle as his music in his brief 35 years. This book is subtitled 'The Legend of Charlie Parker', an assemblage of stories about the man from people who knew him, loved him, hated him, loaned him money or gave him somewhere to sleep. Bird was broke more often than he was rich, could drink anyone under the table and eat enough for four. He was generous, selfish, arrogant and humble. He was a genius, a driving force, a one-man revolution. His mark on music is

irrevocable. This book depicts the man behind the myth, very readable and beautifully illustrated.

Inside Jazz, by Leonard Feather
Feather, doyen of the jazz writers, presents a meticulously researched analysis of bebop. For the musician it is undoubtedly illuminating, for the layman the technical passages on playing will be heavy going. The seminal figures are discussed and there are useful discographies.

The Jazz Life, by Nat Hentoff

A fascinating insight on the cultural influences of jazz, culled from interviews with musicians. Revealing accounts of what drove and inspired them and also what killed far too many (the chapter on drugs alone is worth the price of the book).

All the above titles are published by Da Capo Press.

Duncan Campbell

Jazz!

Dexter Gordon
American Classic
Joe Albany
Portrait Of An Artist
Elektra Musician

Dexter Gordon and Joe Albany have much in common. Both are bebop originals from the 40s; Gordon a seminal figure in the development of jazz tenor playing and Albany a pianist who worked with both Charlie Parker and Lester Young. Both also spent long years virtually lost to the music they helped pioneer.

Albany spent the 50s and 60s in a wasteland of drug addiction and prisons. He began recording again in the 70s yet this album is his first for a major label since 1946. Gordon was also an addict throughout the 50s but recorded some fine albums on Blue Note. He spent the 60s and early 70s an expatriate in Scandinavia. Both men are now undergoing a resurgence of popularity in their homeland.

American Classic is straight bebop, pretty much unchanged in essence of influence since its inception. On *Side One*, Gordon's brusque approach is nicely contrasted with Grover Washington Jr's limpid soprano. Shirley Scott on organ gets a little grating however, neither her imagination nor her tone really completing the others. *Side Two* features Gordon's regular quartet made up by piano, bass and drums.

If *American Classic* tugs just a little towards nostalgia, Joe Albany's set sounds thoroughly fresh despite its traditional base. Perhaps it's that *Portrait Of An Artist* seems somehow richer in ideas. Albany is a totally two-handed pianist who is most obviously influenced by Art Tatum but never succumbs to a florid approach (eg Oscar Peterson at times). Here his style often seems ruminative, almost leisurely building lines of thoughtful beauty. Occasionally the tempo is sprightly but, as Albany states on the sleeve, he seems to have particular empathy for ballads. There is excellent support from guitar,

bass and drums but the spotlight remains on the piano.
Peter Thomson

David Sancious
The Bridge
Bud Powell
Inner Fires
Elektra Musician

David Sancious is a musical hybrid, having been subjected to bebop, classical and R&B by his family, and played rock from his early teens. He played on Bruce Springsteen's first three albums, and has also recorded with the likes of Stanley Clarke, Jack Bruce and Billy Cobham.

The Bridge is his first serious solo recording. Sancious combines the discipline of the jazz musician with the feel for simple melodies of the pop performer. In fact, the title track of this LP comes close to a pop ballad in places. The pieces here are all based on piano or synthesiser improvisations. Sancious also plays guitar and percussion. He neatly avoids self-indulgence, with each piece being clean and simple in execution. Variety is the keynote, from the bluesy 'What If' to the sweet meditations of 'The Eyes Have It' and the sprightly dance of 'Morning'. The contrasts, the imagination and the dexterity at work make *The Bridge* memorable and eminently satisfying.

Earl 'Bud' Powell was popularly described as 'a driven man'. This craftsman of post-war jazz piano tried to walk the fine line between genius and insanity, but fell off it all too often. He spent some harrowing years in institutions, finally dying in 1966 from alcoholism, tuberculosis and malnutrition.

Inner Fires is a previously unreleased recording of a 1953 gig with the equally unpredictable Charles Mingus on bass and the utterly reliable Roy Haynes on drums. This was a heavenly trio, Powell burning his way through the compositions of George and Ira Gershwin, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, George Shearing and others. The emotions at work are overwhelming, and the pace of the playing would cripple lesser performers. Whatever drove Bud Powell, it was no ordinary force.
Duncan Campbell

Mose Allison
Middle Class White Boy
Elektra Musician

Mose Allison may mockingly
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