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Jazz (Second Edition) By Scott DeVeaux, Gary Giddins Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #548030 in Books
- Brand: W.W. Norton & Co
- Published on: 2015-02-01
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.80" h x .90" w x 8.10" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 475 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The difficulties of writing cogently about jazz—of discerning musical regularities in a genre built around improvisatory jams, and a narrative thread that transcends haphazard biography—are admirably addressed in this history. Critic Giddins (*Bing Crosby*) and historian DeVeaux (*The Birth of Bebop*) have an easier task in the book's first half, which traces jazz's coalescence in New Orleans out of varied strands of black music, its shaping by Armstrong, Ellington and other giants and its efflorescence in the big band era as the soundtrack of the American century. The tune grows unavoidably less catchy as postwar bebop and successor avant-garde tendencies transform jazz into a self-conscious art music epitomized by John Coltrane's existential squawk. (The authors maintain a cordial respect for every strain of modern jazz except Kenny G: There are many things to dislike about smooth jazz—for example, everything, they sputter.) The multimedia work contains moment-by-moment exegeses of classic recordings (2:13: [Artie] Shaw's line climaxes on a dramatic high note) that readers can find on the publisher's Web site, along with study aids. The authors' fluent, engaging treatment mixes scholarly lore and sociocultural analysis with piquant character studies and rapt evocations of musical artistry; the result is a treasure-trove for fans and students alike. Photos. (Oct.)

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Review

Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux's *Jazz* cuts through the gibberish, racial politics, and ideology that typify so much of contemporary jazz criticism. This excellent book, which not only addresses musical theory but provides insight into the history of the art as well, will serve the general reader but can also be used to stimulate discussion groups and jazz workshops. --Ishmael Reed, author of *Mixing It Up: Taking On the Media Bullies and Other Reflections*"

Like no other history, *Jazz* involves the reader right from the start in an active listening role. The parsing of the selected recordings is brilliantly done, and this feature alone makes the book a must, for beginners and seasoned fans. But there's much more, all imbued with the coauthors' love for and understanding of the music, in all its many facets and as a living, still evolving language. --Dan Morgenstern, director of the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, and author of *Living with Jazz*"

Starred Review. There are numerous histories of jazz on the market, but renowned critic Giddins and scholar DeVeaux's offering jumps immediately to the top of the list.

Giddins is without question the most persuasive literary stylist current working in jazz criticism--no writer has ever written about Louis Armstrong with such vividness, or about Cecil Taylor with such sympathy and analytical insight. DeVeaux provides academic clout and formal rigor, bringing to bear a strong foundation in musicological methodology.

In an innovative departure from previous approaches to the history of American Jazz, this eagerly awaited new text by Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux offers a unique combination of cutting-edge historical scholarship and experienced journalistic perspectives. This book is destined to become an important resource, one that confronts crucially important musical and social issues in depth--and with passion--George E. Lewis, Case Professor of American Music, Columbia University, and author of *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*

This extraordinary book is the one we've been waiting for—an exhaustive, multi-disciplinary, judiciously

crafted history of jazz and its culture. It is sure to become the industry standard, cherished by students as well as aficionados, who may dispute its judgments but will surely keep it close at hand as an essential reference.--Krin Gabbard, author of *Hotter Than That: The Trumpet, Jazz, and American Culture*

This is without a doubt one of the best books on jazz ever written. Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux have achieved a monumental feat by creating a history of jazz that will appeal to academicians and aficionados alike. Thoroughly researched and carefully documented, yet written in an entertaining and enjoyable narrative style, this is truly a book for jazz lovers of all backgrounds. By telling the story of jazz in its full cultural, musical, political, social, economic, and historical context, Giddins and DeVeaux have given us one hell of a kick-ass book!--David Baker, Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Jazz Department, Indiana University

About the Author

Scott DeVeaux is a nationally recognized jazz scholar whose 1997 book *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* won the American Book Award, an ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award, the Otto Kinkeldey Award from the American Musicological Society, and the ARSC Award for Excellence in Historical Sound Research. He has taught jazz history at the University of Virginia for more than 25 years.

Gary Giddins is the Executive Director of the Leon Levy Center for Biography at the City University of New York. He was the Village Voice jazz columnist for over 30 years and remains a preeminent jazz critic who received the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Ralph J. Gleason Music Book Award, and the Bell Atlantic Award for *Visions of Jazz: The First Century* in 1998. His other books include *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams: The Early Years, 1903–1940*, which won the Ralph J. Gleason Music Book Award and the ARSC Award for Excellence in Historical Sound Research; *Weatherbird: Jazz at the Dawn of Its Second Century*; *Faces in the Crowd*; *Natural Selection*; *Warning Shadows*; and biographies of Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker. He has won an unparalleled six ASCAP-Deems Taylor Awards, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Peabody Award in Broadcasting.

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