

Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History

From Oxford University Press



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Drawing from contemporary journalism, reviews, program notes, memoirs, interviews, and other sources, Keeping Time lets you experience, first hand, the controversies and critical issues that have accompanied jazz from its very birth. Edited by Robert Walser, these sixty-two thought provoking pieces offer a wealth of insight into jazz. Some of the giants of jazz speak to us here, including Jelly Roll Morton, Billie Holiday, Charles Mingus and Wynton Marsalis. And there are pieces by writers such as Langston Hughes, Norman Mailer, and Ralph Ellison, and by critics such as Leonard Feather and Gunther Schuller. Readers will find Louis Armstrong on what makes swing, Dizzy Gillespie on bebop, and Miles Davis on jazz-rock fusion. Equally important, Walser has selected writings that capture the passionate reactions of people who have loved, hated, supported, and argued about jazz. One can read, for instance, a dismissive article written in 1918 that relegates jazz to the "servant's hall of music" along with "the clatter of the clogs, the click of Slavic heels." Or a debate between Wynton Marsalis and Herbie Hancock over the merits of free jazz and electric instruments. Or Duke Ellington's claim that jazz is neither highbrow nor lowbrow, but "goes back to something just about as old--and as natural--as the circulation of the blood." In the end, the focus here remains on how the music works and why people have cared about it. Filled with passionately felt, insightful writing, Keeping Time will increase one's historical awareness of jazz even as it provokes lively discussion among jazz aficionados, whether in clubs, concert halls or classrooms.



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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

These two compilations take very different approaches to understanding jazz. Keeping Time is a fairly traditional documentary history, using newspaper and magazine articles, interviews, and excerpts from autobiographies and secondary accounts. After explaining the early years of the music, Walser, chair of musicology at UCLA, provides fascinating material dealing with the jazz age in the 1920s, swing in the Thirties, and belop in the Forties. The book is less convincing on the hard-bop 1950s, provides very little information on the avant-garde in the next decade, and largely ignores Seventies fusion. It ends with an excellent outline of the Wynton Marsalis-led return to traditionalism in the 1980s and a more general, less satisfying examination of jazz today. The Jazz Cadence of America attempts to show the reciprocal effects of jazz and American culture on each other. After dealing with definitions of "jazz," O'Meally (American literature, Columbia; Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday, LJ 11/1/91) traces the place of jazz in American society; the influence of the music on painting, architecture, photography, film, and dance; jazz history from different perspectives; and the impact of jazz on literature. Some sections provide fascinating insights into the relationship of jazz to the other arts, especially painting and literature. However, the book seldom shows the connection between jazz and American society or the effect of other aspects of American culture on jazz. Despite obvious flaws, The Jazz Cadence offers an innovative approach to understanding jazz within a larger social context. Complementing each other with little overlap, these two compilations are recommended as classroom texts.? David P. Szatmary, Univ. of Washington, Seattle Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Review

"An impressive achievement. The introductions to the excerpts alone provide a fascinating mini-history of jazz that ranges through a wider variety of topics than many full-scale histories."--Gary Tomlinson, Professor of Music, University of Pennsylvania

"What a terrific collection. I hadn't realized how desperately I needed it until I started to read it. I used it in a jazz intro survey class and found it invaluable, as did the students."-- James McCalla, Professor of Music, Bowdoin College

"Excellent and sometimes provocative readings in jazz history; an important addition to the curriculum." -- Brian Torff, Fairfield University

"My students love this book. It puts them in touch with the time period like no other book I've seen. It's an excellent discussion starter for jazz history and American music classes."--Reed Gratz, University of La Verne, CA

"A fascinating look at how critics, writers and musicians wrote about jazz from its earliest years through the `90s."--Newark Star-Ledger

"Walser provides fascinating material dealing with the jazz age in the 1920's, swing in the Thirties, and bebop in the Forties."--David P. Szatmary, Library Journal

"An informative collection of primary source material. From quotations to important essays, [it] will aid the study of jazz history."--Brian Fitzpatrick, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

"Very informed, well written reading."--Bill Stanford Pincheon, Washington State University

"Superb collection. As a jazz historian who has worked his way through quantities of interesting documents, I appreciate the care and range that Walser demonstrates."--David W. Stone, Michigan State University

About the Author

Robert Walser is at University of California, Los Angeles.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lila Smith:

The book Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You can use to make your capable much more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting pressure or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make examining a book Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History to be your habit, you can get a lot more advantages, like add your personal capable, increase your knowledge about a number of or all subjects. You are able to know everything if you like available and read a guide Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science reserve or encyclopedia or others. So, how do you think about this publication?

Bonnie Lugo:

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Josue Denson:

The book Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History has a lot of knowledge on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of benefit. The book was published by the very famous author. The writer makes some research prior to write this book. That book very easy to read you may get the point easily after perusing this book.

Melvin Dove:

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