

## THE JAZZ SCENE: INTRODUCTION TO THE 1989 EDITION

by Eric Hobsbawm (Francis Newton)\*

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*This is the Introduction to the 1989 edition of Eric Hobsbawm's book "The Jazz Scene", originally published in 1959.*



*Eric Hobsbawm: the pseudonym Francis Newton was intended to keep the author's writings as an historian apart from his writings as a jazz journalist...PHOTO COURTESY NEW STATESMAN*

**T**his book was first published almost thirty years ago, under the pseudonym Francis Newton (based on Frankie Newton, the trumpeter), which was then intended to keep the author's writings as an historian apart from his writings as a jazz journalist. The attempt did not succeed, so it is now republished under my own name. To reprint a work of 1959-61 may seem like reprinting an old telephone

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*\*When, in the mid-1950s, the historian Eric Hobsbawm noticed that the novelist Kingsley Amis, who surely knew less about jazz than he did, was writing on the subject for a national newspaper, he asked Norman Mackenzie, who now wrote for the "New Statesman", to secure him the post of jazz critic for the magazine. Hobsbawm got the job, and became its regular jazz reporter under the pseudonym 'Francis Newton' (Frankie Newton, who played on Billie Holiday's recording of "Strange Fruit" was one of the very few American jazz musicians who was generally believed to have been a Communist).*

directory. Three decades are a large enough chunk of the life of a human being, but they are a much larger fraction of the history of so rapidly evolving, so constantly changing a music as jazz. However, *The Jazz Scene* may be a reminder of the days when Armstrong and Ellington were still alive, when it was possible to listen within a few days or weeks to the living Bechet and Basie, to Ella Fitzgerald, the dying Billie Holiday and the glorious Mahalia Jackson, to Gillespie, Miles Davis, Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young, to Mingus, Monk, Pee Wee Russell, Jack Teagarden, Hodges and Webster. It was a golden age for jazz, and we knew it.

What is more, the years between 1955 and 1961 were one of the rare periods when the old and the new coexisted in jazz and both prospered. The sounds of New Orleans were alive, played both by old men now dead and young white disciples. So, but only just, were the big bands: in fact the great Ellington was just entering on a new lease of life with the Newport Festival, of 1956. Bebop had re-entered the mainstream of jazz, out of which its revolutionaries had emerged and against which they had rebelled. Dizzy Gillespie could already be seen, not simply as an innovator but as Armstrong's successor to the crown of jazz trumpeters.



*Dizzy Gillespie, (left) seen here paying tribute to Louis Armstrong, could already be seen, not simply as an innovator but as Armstrong's successor to the crown of jazz trumpeters...*

And a new generation of rebels had already come together in what looked like a new avant-garde, organizing, in 1960, an anti-festival to the Newport Jazz Festival which, in the 1950s, had come to be the major ecumenical attempt to bring the best in jazz

together. While the older battles between the traditionalists and modernists faded into the historical background, Ornette Coleman, Archie Shepp, Eric Dolphy, Don Cherry and others were now joined, in the ill-defined area of 'free jazz', by established avant-garde stars like John Coltrane, Charles Mingus or Cecil Taylor.



*In the 1960s newer 'free jazz' musicians such as Archie Shepp (left) and Eric Dolphy (below, pictured with Charles Mingus) were joined by established avant-garde stars like John Coltrane, Mingus and Cecil Taylor...  
MINGUS & DOLPHY PHOTO  
COURTESY PINTEREST*



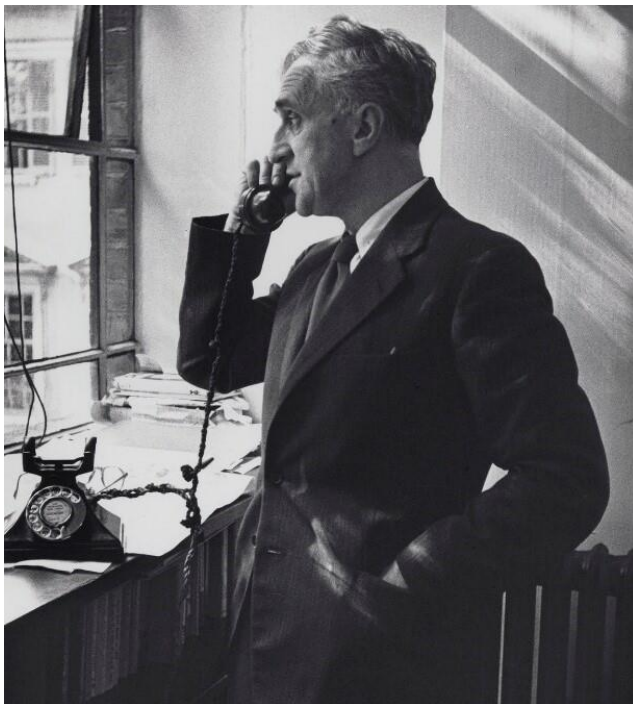
In fact, most of the developments of the 1960s and 1970s were already being anticipated in 1960, when the author, on his first visit to the USA, found the nights too short to listen to everything that could be heard in New York from the Half-Note and the Five-spot in the Village to Small's Paradise and the Apollo in Harlem, and further west in Chicago and San Francisco. But is it enough merely to recall a golden age? And if not, what else can justify reprinting a book which plainly can't tell readers much about the state of jazz in the late 1980s, and does not intend to.

But then, even in 1960 it was not the object of *The Jazz Scene* to provide a survey of the scene at that time. It tried to do two things. First and foremost I set out to see jazz, which is one of the most significant phenomena of twentieth-century world culture, in historical perspective. I set out to trace its social roots and history, to

analyse its economic structure, the body of its musicians, the nature of its public, and the reasons for its extraordinary appeal, both in the USA and elsewhere.

This was one of the first books to investigate jazz in this manner. I hope a good deal of what it says retains its interest, and much of its argument can still stand, even if certain chapters — for instance the study of the jazz business in the later 1950s, which was based on first-hand documentation — is now only of historical interest and the pop music it discusses is dead. In any case, *The Jazz Scene* is a contribution to the history of jazz, and especially of the jazz public, in Britain, a subject which is still not adequately known.

In the second place, the book set out to provide a general introduction to jazz for the generation of fans and sympathizers which had discovered it in the 1950s, and for the educated and ‘cultured’ readers in general, who were just then becoming aware that they ought to know something about it. For it was in the middle 1950s that the guardians of established culture for the first time felt that they had to inform their public about jazz, which is why the *Observer* commissioned a jazz column from a fashionable novelist, and (inspired by this) I talked myself into becoming jazz correspondent for Kingsley Martin's *New Statesman*. Jazz has always been a minority interest, like classical music, but unlike classical music the taste for it has not been stable. Interest in it has grown by spurts and, conversely, there have been times when it was in the doldrums.



*Kingsley Martin, editor of the “New Statesman”, who hired Eric Hobsbawm to write on jazz under the pseudonym Francis Newton... PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY*

The later 1930s and the 1950s were a period when it expanded quite strikingly, the years of the 1929 slump (in the USA at least) when even Harlem preferred soft lights and sweet music to Ellington and Armstrong. The periods when interest in jazz has grown or revived have also, for reasons obvious to publishers, been the times when new generations of fans wanted to know more about it.

But we are once again in a period when interest in jazz is reviving quite dramatically in both Britain and the USA. For, shortly after *The Jazz Scene* appeared, the golden age of the 1950s came to a sudden end, leaving jazz to retreat into rancorous and poverty-stricken isolation for some twenty years.

What made this generation of loneliness so melancholy and paradoxical was that the music that almost killed jazz was derived from the same roots that had generated jazz. Rock-and-roll was and is very obviously the offspring of American Negro blues.

The young, without whom jazz cannot exist — hardly any jazz-fan has ever been converted after the age of twenty — abandoned it, and with spectacular suddenness.

Three years after 1960, when the golden age was at its peak, in the year of the Beatles' triumph across the world, jazz had been virtually knocked out of the ring. 'Bird Lives' could still be seen painted on lonely walls, but the celebrated New York jazz venue named after him, Birdland, had ceased to exist. To revisit New York in 1963 was a depressing experience for the jazz-lover who had last experienced it in 1960. This did not mean that jazz disappeared, only that both its musicians and its public grew older, and were not reinforced by the young.



*In 1963 'Bird Lives' could still be seen painted on lonely walls, but the celebrated New York jazz venue named after him, Birdland, had ceased to exist...*

Of course outside the USA and Britain, which were the main centres and sources of rock, the youthful public for jazz, though probably socially and intellectually select and upmarket, remained substantial and commercially far from negligible. More than one American jazz player found it convenient for this reason to emigrate to Europe in those decades. In France, Italy and Germany, Brazil and Japan, Scandinavia and — commercially less relevant — the USSR and Eastern Europe, jazz remained viable. In the USA and Britain its public was confined to middle-aged men and women who had been young in the 1920s, 1930s or, at best, in the 1950s.

As an established English saxophone player Jimmy Skidmore put it in 1976: 'I don't think I could make a living totally in this country. I don't think anyone could. . . . There aren't enough people, there isn't enough money. . . . The band has been to Germany more times in the last couple of years than it's done gigs in this country.'

Such was the reality of jazz in the 1960s and much of the 1970s, at any rate in the Anglo-saxon world. There was no market for it. According to the *Billboard International Music Industry Directory of 1972* a mere 1.3 per cent of records and tapes sold in the USA represented jazz, as against 6.1 per cent of classical music and 75 per cent rock and similar music. Jazz clubs went on closing, jazz recitals declined, avant-garde musicians played for each other in private apartments, and the growing recognition of jazz as something which belonged to official American culture, while providing a welcome subsidy to uncommercial musicians through schools, colleges

and other institutions, reinforced the youthful conviction that jazz now belonged to the world of the adults. Unlike rock, it was not their own music.



*English saxophonist Jimmy Skidmore: "I don't think I could make a living totally in the UK. I don't think anyone could. . . . There aren't enough people, there isn't enough money..."* PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

Only a certain exhaustion of the musical impulse behind rock, which first became obvious in the later 1970s began to leave room for a revival of interest in jazz, as distinct from rock. (Some jazz musicians had, of course, devised a 'fusion' of jazz and rock, to the horror of purists especially from the avant-garde, and it was probably through this merger that jazz retained a certain public presence in the years of isolation: through Miles Davis, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, the British guitarist John McLaughlin and the Austrian-American combination of Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter in Weather Report).

Why should rock have almost killed jazz for twenty years? Both derived from the music of black Americans, and it was through jazz musicians and jazz fans that the Negro blues first came to the attention of the public outside the Southern states and the Northern ghettos. Since they were among the few whites who were familiar with

the artists and repertoire of 'race record' catalogues (diplomatically renamed 'rhythm-and-blues' in the late 1940s), white jazz- and blues-lovers were instrumental in launching rock.

Ahmet Ertegun, who founded Atlantic Records, which became a leading rock label, was one of two brothers who had long formed part of the tiny international community of jazz-record collectors and experts. John Hammond, whose crucial role in the development of jazz in the 1930s is recorded in *The Jazz Scene*, also developed the careers of Bob Dylan, Aretha Franklin and, later, Bruce Springsteen. Where would British rock have been without the influence of the handful of local blues-enthusiasts like the late Alexis Korner, who inspired the Rolling Stones, or the ('trad') jazz enthusiasts who imported American country and city blues singers like Muddy Waters and made them familiar in Lancashire and Lanark long before more than a handful of Americans outside some black ghettos even knew of their existence?



*Ahmet Ertegun (above left), who founded Atlantic Records, pictured here with his brother Nesuhi... PHOTO CREDIT WILLIAM GOTTLIEB*

Initially there seemed to be no hostility or incompatibility between jazz and rock, even though attentive readers of *The Jazz Scene* will register the note of gentle contempt with which critics and, above all, the musical professionals of jazz, then treated the early triumphs of rock-and-roll, whose public seemed unable to distinguish between a Bill Haley (*Rock Around the Clock*) and a Chuck Berry.

A crucial distinction between jazz and rock was that rock was never a minority music. Rhythm-and-blues, as it developed after the Second World War, was the folk music of urban Negroes in the 1940s, when one and a quarter millions of Blacks left the South for the Northern and Western ghettos. They constituted a new market, which was then supplied chiefly by independent record labels like Chess Records, founded in Chicago in 1949 by two Polish immigrants connected with the club circuit, and specializing in the so-called 'Chicago Blues' style (Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson) and recording, among others, Chuck Berry, who was probably — with Elvis Presley — the major influence on 1950s rock-and-roll.



*L-R, Polish immigrants Leonard & Phil Chess, who founded Chess Records in Chicago in 1949, with Marshall Chess (right): they recorded Chuck Berry, who was probably — with Elvis Presley — the major influence on 1950s rock-and-roll...*  
*PHOTO COURTESY CHESS FAMILY ARCHIVE*

White adolescents began to buy black r&b records in the early 1950s, having discovered this music on local and specialized radio stations which multiplied during those years, as the mass of adults transferred its attentions to television. At first sight they seemed to be the habitual tiny and untypical minority which can still be seen on the fringes of black entertainment, like the white visitors to Chicago ghetto blues clubs. Yet as soon as the music industry became aware of this potential white youth market, it became evident that rock was the opposite of a minority taste. It was the music of an entire age-group.

Almost certainly this was the result of the 'economic miracle' of the 1950s, which not only created a western world of full employment, but also, probably for the first time, gave the mass of adolescents adequately paid jobs and therefore money in the pocket, or an unprecedented share of middle-class parents' prosperity. It was this children's and adolescents' market that transformed the music industry.



From 1955, when rock-and-roll was born, to 1959 American record sales rose by 36 per cent every year. After a brief pause, the British invasion of 1963, led by the Beatles, initiated an even more spectacular surge: US record sales, which had grown from \$277 million in 1955 to \$600 million in 1959, had passed \$2,000 million by 1973 (now including tapes). Seventy-five to 80 per cent of these sales represented rock music and similar sounds. The commercial fortunes of the record industry had never before depended so overwhelmingly on a single musical genre addressed to a single narrow age-band.

The correlation of record sales with economic development and income was utterly obvious. In 1973 the highest per-capita expenditure on records occurred in the USA, followed (in rank order) by Sweden, West Germany, the Netherlands and Britain. All these countries spent between \$7 and \$10. In the same year Italians, Spaniards and Mexicans spent between \$1 and \$1.4 per head, and Brazilians \$0.66.

Almost immediately rock music thus became the all-purpose medium for expressing the desires, instincts, feelings and aspirations of the age-set between puberty and the moments when adults settle down in some conventional social niche, family or career: the voice and idiom of a self-conscious 'youth' and 'youth culture' in modern industrial societies. It could express anything and everything within this age-range, but while rock clearly developed regional, national, class or politico-ideological variants, its basic idiom, like the equally demotic—populist costume associated with youth (notably jeans) crossed national, class and ideological barriers.

As in the lives of its age-groups, in rock music the public and the private, feeling and conviction, love, rebellion and art, acting as doing and as stage-behaviour, were not distinguishable from each other. Older observers, for instance, used to keeping revolution and music apart in principle and to judging each by its own criteria, were apt to be perplexed by the apocalyptic rhetoric which could surround rock at the peak of the global youth rebellion, when *Rolling Stone* wrote, apropos of a 1969 rock concert:



*Guitarist Jimi Hendrix onstage at Woodstock in 1969: rock deprived jazz of most of its potential new listeners, because the young people who flocked to rock found in it, in a simplified and perhaps coarsened version, much, if not everything, that had attracted their elders to jazz...*

*An army of peaceful guerrillas established a city larger than Rochester, New York, and showed itself immediately ready to turn back on the already ravaged city and [its] inoperable life-styles, imminently prepared to move onto the mist-covered field and into the cool, still woods. And they will do it again, the threat of youthful dissidence in Paris and Prague and Fort Lauderdale and Berkeley and Chicago and London criss-crossing ever more closely until the map of the world we live in is viable for and visible to all of those that are part of it and all those buried under it.\**

Woodstock was obviously a marvellous experience for the participants, but even then its political significance and the strictly musical interest of a lot of its performers were not as obvious as all that. A universal cultural idiom cannot be judged by the same criteria as a special kind of art-music, and there was and is no point in judging rock by the standards of good jazz. However, rock deprived jazz of most of its potential new listeners, because the young people who flocked to rock found in it, in a simplified and perhaps coarsened version, much, if not everything, that had attracted their elders to jazz: rhythm, an immediately identifiable voice or 'sound', real (or faked) spontaneity and vitality, and a way of directly transferring human emotions into music. Moreover, they discovered all this in a music which was related to jazz.



*Hobsbawm: the new avant-garde of 'free jazz', moving towards atonality and breaking down everything that had hitherto given jazz a structure... widened the gap between the music and its public...*

Why would they need jazz? With rare exceptions, the young who would have been converted to jazz now had an alternative. What made that alternative increasingly attractive, and helped to reduce the space for an embattled and isolated jazz still further, was its own transformation. As the bebop revolutionaries rejoined the mainstream of jazz in the second half of the 1950s, the new avant-garde of 'free jazz', moving towards atonality and breaking down everything that had hitherto given jazz a structure — including the beat round which it was organized — widened the gap between the music and its public, including the jazz public. And it was not surprising that the avant-garde reacted to the desertion of the public by taking an even more extreme and embattled stance.

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\* Cited in S Chapple and R Garofalo, "Rock'n'Roll Is Here To Pay" (Chicago 1977), p 144.

At the start of the new revolution it was perfectly easy to recognize in, say, Ornette Coleman's saxophone the blues feeling of his native Texas, and the tradition of the great horn-players of the past was obvious in Coltrane. Yet those were not the things the innovators wanted the public to notice about them. But the situation of the new avant-garde in the dark decades was paradoxical. The loosening of the traditional framework of jazz, its increasing shift towards something like avant-garde classical music developed from a jazz base, opened it to all manner of non-jazz influences, European, African, Islamic, Latin American and especially Indian.



*It was easy to recognize in the saxophone of Ornette Coleman (left) the blues feeling of his native Texas, and the tradition of the great horn-players of the past was obvious in John Coltrane (below)...*



In the 1960s it went through a variety of exoticisms. In other words, it became less American than it had been, and far more cosmopolitan than before. Perhaps because the American jazz public became relatively less important in jazz, perhaps for other reasons, after 1962 free jazz became the first style of jazz whose history cannot be written without taking account of important developments in Europe and, one might add, of European musicians. At the same time — and equally paradoxically — the new avant-garde which broke with jazz tradition was unusually anxious to stress its links with that tradition, even when they had previously taken very little notice of it:

as when Coltrane (1926-67) in 1961 took up the soprano saxophone, hitherto virtually monopolized by the recently deceased Sidney Bechet, and was followed by numerous young avant-garde horn-players. Bechet had been little more than a musically irrelevant name to most musicians of Coltrane's generation. This reassertion of tradition was political rather than musical.

For — the third aspect of the paradox — the 1960s jazz avant-garde was consciously and politically black, as no previous generation of Negro jazzmen had been, though *The Jazz Scene* already noted the links between jazz experimentation and black consciousness. As Whitney Balliett put it in the 1970s: 'Free jazz is actually the blackest jazz there is'.\* Black and politically radical. Thus *Charlie Haden: Liberation Music Orchestra* (1969) contained four Spanish Civil War songs, a number inspired by the riots at the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention, a commemoration of Che Guevara and a version of *We Shall Overcome*.



*Whitney Balliett: 'Free jazz is actually the blackest jazz there is'...*  
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

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\* Whitney Balliett, "New York Notes: A Journal of Jazz in the Seventies" (New York 1977), p 147.

Archie Shepp (tenor and soprano sax), one of the major figures of the avant-garde, created a musical commemoration of Malcolm X and an *Attica Blues* inspired by the well-known black prison riot. Political consciousness continued to link the avant-garde to the mass of the American black people and its musical traditions, and therefore provided a possible way back to the mainstream of jazz. However, in the short run it must have made the isolation of that avant-garde from an uncomprehending black public particularly frustrating.



*Archie Shepp: he created a musical commemoration of Malcolm X and an “Attica Blues” inspired by the well-known black prison riot... PHOTO COURTESY PETER SMETANA*

A rejection of success (except on the most uncompromising terms proposed by the artist) is characteristic of avant-gardes, and in jazz, which has always lived by the paying customer, concessions to the box office seemed particularly dangerous to the player who wanted the status of 'artist'. How could they compromise with rock? ('There is a certain political position involved in the choice of those who seldom refer to the more readily assimilated rock-rhythms'.\*)

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\*Valerie Wilmer, *As Serious As Your Life: The Story of the New Jazz* (London 1977; second edn, 1987), p 27.

And yet, for three reasons, rock had to influence jazz. The first is that American (and British) jazz musicians born since the 1940s grew up in an atmosphere drenched in rock, or its ghetto equivalent, and therefore could hardly avoid assimilating some of it. The second is that rock, an art of amateurs and the musically or even the alphabetically illiterate required — and because of its limitless wealth could call upon — the technical and musical competence of jazz professionals, and jazz musicians could hardly be blamed for wanting to cut themselves thin slices of so huge and sweet a cake. But third, and most important, rock was musically innovative.

As so often in the history of the arts, major artistic revolutions come not from self-described revolutionaries but from those employing innovation for commercial purposes. As the early movies were more effectively revolutionary than cubism, so the rock entrepreneurs have changed the musical scene more profoundly than classical or free jazz avant-gardes. The major innovation of rock was technological. It secured the mass breakthrough of electronic music. Pedants may point out that in jazz there were pioneers of electrified instruments (Charlie Christian revolutionized the guitar that way and Billie Holiday transformed the use of the human voice by marrying it to the personal microphone) and that revolutionary ways of generating sound, such as synthesizers, were pioneered for classical avant-garde music concerts.



*Charlie Christian: while he revolutionized the guitar through the use of the electric instrument, it was rock which secured the mass breakthrough of electronic music...*

However, it is undeniable that rock was the first music that systematically substituted electrified instruments for acoustic ones and systematically used electronic technology not for special effects but for the normal repertoire accepted by a mass public. It was the first music to turn the technicians of sound and recording studios into equal partners in the creation of a musical performance, chiefly because

the incompetence of the actual rock performers was often such that no adequate records or even performances could have been achieved otherwise. It is evident that such innovations could not but interest musicians of genuine originality and talent.

The second rock innovation concerns the concept of the 'group'. The rock group not only developed an original instrumentation behind the voice or voices (basically, percussion and various kinds of electric guitars, the bass guitar taking the place of the bass), but consisted essentially of a collective rather than a small group of virtuosos who expected to demonstrate their skills.\*

Of course the members of very few rock groups, unlike those of jazz combos, had any individual skills to demonstrate. Moreover, the 'group' was ideally characterized by an unmistakable 'sound', an auditory trademark by means of which it, or rather its studio technicians, attempted to establish its individuality. And, unlike the old 'big band' of jazz, the rock group was small. It produced its 'big sound' (which does not necessarily mean a large volume of sound, though rock preferred ultra-strong amplification) with a minimal number of people.

This helped to bring small jazz groups back to something had had commonly been lost sight of in the days of the bebop succession of solos, namely the possibility of collective improvisation and small-group texture. Sophisticated rock arrangements like the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper*, not unreasonably described as 'symphonic rock', could not but give intelligent jazz musicians ideas.



*Sophisticated rock arrangements like the Beatles' "Sergeant Pepper" (left) could not but give intelligent jazz musicians ideas...*

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\* It also, incidentally, gave a virtual monopoly to singing groups, hitherto somewhat exceptional in jazz and blues, and — in spite of the overwhelming superiority of women in vocal blues, gospel-song and jazz — to (young) men.

The third interesting element in rock was its insistent and pulsating rhythm. While initially it was plainly much cruder than jazz rhythm, the combination of various rhythm instruments which made up the rock group — for all its keyboards, guitars and percussion would normally have belonged to the rhythm section of a jazz band — produced its own potential complexities, which jazz players could transform into multilayered and shifting ostinatos and rhythmic counterpoints.

And yet, while, as we have seen, some of the most talented jazz musicians developed a jazz—rock 'fusion' in the 1970s — Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* of 1969 set the pace — the merged style did not permanently shape the future of jazz, nor did the injection of jazz elements provide a permanent life-giving blood transfusion for rock. What seems to have happened is a growing musical exhaustion of rock in the course of the 1970s which may or may not be connected with the retreat of the great wave of youth rebellion which reached its peak in the late sixties and early seventies.



*Miles Davis (above): his “Bitches Brew” of 1969 set the pace for jazz-rock 'fusion' in the 1970s, but the merged style did not permanently shape the future of jazz...*

Somehow, insensibly, the space for jazz seemed to become a little less cramped. One began to observe that intelligent or fashionable fifth- or sixth-formers once again began to treat parents of their friends who possessed Miles Davis records with a certain interest. By the late seventies and early eighties there were undeniable signs of a modest revival, even though by then much of the classical repertoire of jazz had been frozen into permanent immobility by the death of so many of its great and formative figures, ancient and modern: the jazz life has not favoured longevity. For by 1980 even some of the formative 'new music' stars had disappeared: eg John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, Eric Dolphy.



Much of the jazz which the new fans learned to love was thus incapable of further change and development, because it was a music of the dead, a situation which was to provide scope for a curious form of resurrectionism, by which live musicians reproduced the sounds of the past; as when a team under the direction of Bob Wilber reconstituted the music and sound of the early Ellington band for the film *Cotton Club*.



*Bob Wilber, pictured here with his mentor Sidney Bechet: jazz was a music of the dead, providing scope for a curious form of resurrectionism...*

Moreover, initially a very high proportion of the live jazz the new fans could hear came from musicians ranging from the rather middle-aged to the very ancient. Thus at the time I wrote a similar introduction for an Italian reprint of *The Jazz Scene* which appeared in 1982, jazz-lovers in London had the choice of listening to a variety of veterans: to Harry 'Sweets' Edison, Joe Newman, Buddy Tate and Frank Foster, who had been enrolled in the Basie band of long ago; to Nat Pierce, known since the days of Woody Herman; Shelly Manne and Art Pepper familiar from the 'cool' days of the 1950s, Al Grey, who went back to the swing bands of the thirties, Trummy Young of 1912 vintage, who had spent long years with Louis Armstrong, and other members of the older generation.

Indeed, among the important players performing that week perhaps only the pianist McCoy Tyner (born 1938), known for his work with Coltrane in the 1960s, would not have been immediately familiar to most jazz-lovers in 1960. The jazz revival has continued since then. It has, inevitably, benefited the diminishing band of survivors, some of whom, returning from exile in Europe or in the anonymity of television, film and recording studios, have reconstituted groups dissolved long since, at least for occasional engagements and tours, such as the Modern Jazz Quartet, the Art Farmer—Benny Golson Jazztet.

It has been a particular blessing for the survivors of the first jazz revolution, for it is bebop that has emerged or re-emerged as the central style of 1980s jazz and the basic model for youthful musicians. Conversely, the new revival has left out the old, the first 'return to tradition' of those who wanted to recapture the music of New Orleans, and the twenties. 'Trad', 'Dixieland' or whatever it may be called, the longest-lasting of jazz styles, the one which, based on the happy nostalgia of white middle-class and increasingly middle-aged amateurs best resisted the cavalry charge of rock, but also the one which, it has been said, created nothing of musical value,\* has not felt the new wind in its sails.

The players who have probably benefited most from it are the gifted musicians who soldiered on through the dark days of the avant-garde in the 1960s and 1970s and who are tempted back into the jazz mainstream by the reappearance of a living jazz public. Such players were not young by the standards of the days when an Armstrong won a world reputation in his twenties, a Charlie Parker was dead at thirty-five, and nobody was surprised that the jazz guitar was revolutionized by a player (Charlie Christian) who was scarcely out of his teens. Thus the members of the influential World Saxophone Quartet, which made its reputation in the 1980s (Hamiett Bluiett, Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, David Murray) were born, respectively, in 1938, 1940, 1942 and 1955 — that is to say all except one were, at the time of writing (1988), in their late forties.



*The influential World Saxophone Quartet which made its reputation in the 1980s...*  
PHOTO CREDIT STUART NICHOLSON

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\* *The New Grove: Gospel, Blues and Jazz (London 1987), p. 292 This is a little unfair — the New Orleans revival recovered important artists who would otherwise have dropped out of sight, like Sidney Bechet, and produced some enchanting music with their help — but it is not grossly unfair.*

Where we find new American jazz stars with a reputation while in their twenties, they are, very likely, second-generation players like the brothers Marsalis (Wynton, classical and jazz trumpet, was born in 1960, Branford, a saxophonist, in 1961).\*



*The brothers Marsalis (Branford, a saxophonist, left, born in 1961) and Wynton (classical and jazz trumpet, right, born in 1960)... PHOTO COURTESY DEFINITIVE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAZZ & BLUES*

Genuinely youthful first-generation musicians of major achievement are still scarce in the USA — or at least they have not yet emerged — although in Britain the jazz revival has inspired a substantial number of the young, especially in the (black) West Indian community, which has produced players of brilliance and originality such as the saxophonist Courtney Pine. The shape and development of the present jazz revival cannot yet be seen in perspective, and if they could, a few introductory pages to a book republished after almost three decades are not the place to make the attempt. Even the size and scale of the revival are not yet clear. However, its existence is undeniable.

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*\*Their father, Ellis Marsalis, a New Orleans pianist and passionate supporter of Ornette Coleman and the avant-garde, made a commercial living in order to bring up his family. In New Orleans, music is still often a family trade, as it was in the days of the Bachs.*



*In Britain the jazz revival has inspired a substantial number of the young, especially in the (black) West Indian community, which has produced players of brilliance and originality such as the saxophonist Courtney Pine (above)... PHOTO COURTESY JOHN FORDHAM'S THE SOUND OF JAZZ*

The resuscitation of *The Jazz Scene* is a small and marginal symptom of it. Moreover, one or two things about it, which distinguish it from its predecessors, are already discernible. It occurs at a time when jazz has had time to establish itself as a recognized part of twentieth-century culture, including musical culture, as was not yet the case in the 1950s. It would today no longer be necessary to assume complete ignorance about it on the part of the sort of people for whom 'Francis Newton' wrote in the *New Statesman*, and whose ideal type was defined for him by its great editor Kingsley Martin as 'a civil servant in his forties', ie an educated person of the professional classes in early middle age.

Conversely, jazz musicians are no longer, to any extent, musical illiterates of untutored natural talents. Most of them are today musically educated, sometimes — as in the case of Wynton Marsalis from the jazz end of the scale, the pianist Friedrich Gulda from the classical end — equally well known in jazz and classical-music circles. It is no longer necessary to make the case for jazz.

Second, in the course of its twenty-year exile jazz probably moved both economically and intellectually upmarket as its public grew older, ie away from the simple foot-tapping or dancing entertainment and towards a more self-conscious, and certainly a more expensive, experience. An evening for two at Ronnie Scott's in London is not designed for the impecunious, and neither is taking in a set in Greenwich Village.

Indeed, the now fashionable Manhattan combination of restaurant dinner to live jazz accompaniment underlines the shift away from the demotic milieu.



*Ronnie Scott's, with Ernestine Anderson performing, and Stan Tracey on piano: an evening for two at this club in London is not designed for the impecunious... PHOTO COURTESY REEL ART*

It seems equally probable that the new white jazz public contains a large middle class and intellectual component, as witness the multiplication of serious books about jazz, a very high proportion of which in the USA are published by university presses. This, as well as the emergence from the underground of the population of academic jazz-buffs (among them the present author), has had a beneficial effect on our knowledge of the jazz phenomenon.

Third, I have already suggested that live jazz may by now be a little over-shadowed by the corpus of its own dead 'classics', the substantial body of the great records of the golden ages, and notably the 1940s and 1950s, so that current creative musicians are more inspired by the past than their predecessors were. This, it has been suggested (and not only by disappointed supporters of the avant-garde) may be the first era of neo-traditionalism among the original talents; for the earlier 'New Orleans' traditionalism was a movement of fans rather than players, even though some fans became players.\*

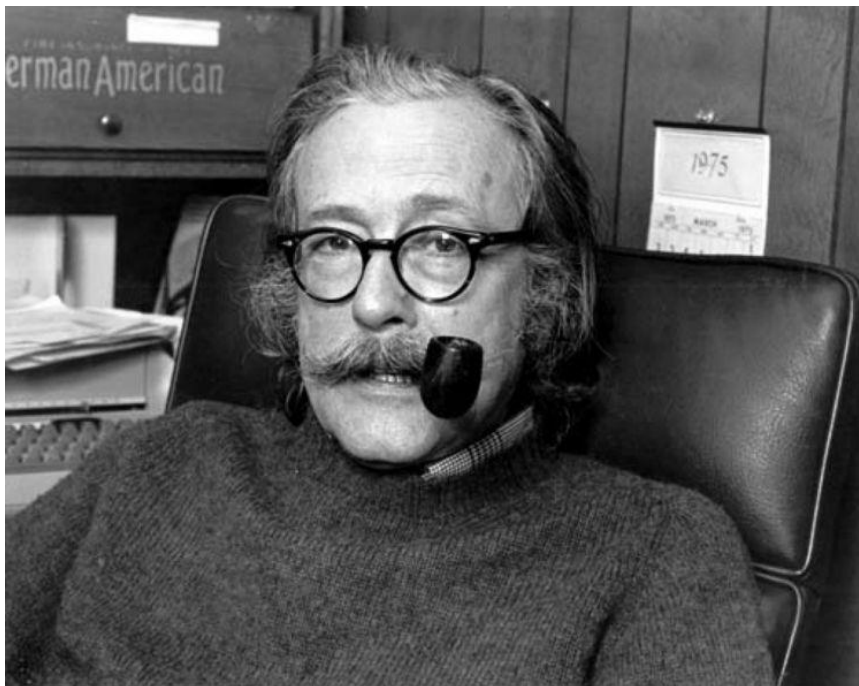
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\* 'Currently also jazz risks limiting itself to a period of classicism — beginning with Charlie Parker and ending with Ornette Coleman boarding a plane for New York in 1959. During those two decades bebop became synonymous with jazz, and, like many of his generation, Marsalis owes strongest allegiance to this era.' Francis Davis, "In the Moment: Jazz in the 1980s" (New York 1986), p 30.

Nevertheless, a jazz revival means the recruitment to jazz of a new generation of the young, including the impecunious and the unestablished, and certainly those not content with things as they are. In Britain jazz venues are cheap and multiplying. It is unlikely that the music the young play or listen to can or will remain confined within the limits of what is culturally and institutionally recognized, or what can be bought with a middle-class income, or even of what Charlie Parker and the Miles Davis Quintet played. Jazz is unofficial, unestablished and unpredictable, or it is nothing.

The only thing that can be safely said about it is that it has survived the most difficult years of its extraordinary career. New relays of men and women will once again hear its marvellous sounds for the first time in their lives, and fall in love with it as we did; generally at the age of first love, as we did. They will not know that, fifty years later, through it one can relive the miraculous revelations of youth, and if they knew, they would not care. But it is true.

The book is republished as it appeared in 1961. I have updated nothing but the *Guide to Further Reading*, for the list of records then recommended (see chapter 2) are themselves a historical record of what was available to the British jazz-lover at the start of the 1960s. *The Jazz Scene* was translated into French, Italian and Japanese shortly after its original publication, and into Czech in the early 1970s (thanks to the devotion to jazz of Lubomir Doruzka, an aficionado since 1943). It was reprinted in the USA in 1975 and has been republished, with new introductions, in Italian (1982) and, newly translated by Mr Takis Tsiros, in Greek (1988).



*Ralph Gleason: a good man is hard to find, and he was one of the best... PHOTO CREDIT S F GATE*

Of those who helped me while I prepared *The Jazz Scene* three friends are now dead: Denis Preston, John Hammond Jr and Ralph Gleason. I would like to dedicate this edition to the memory of all three, but especially of Ralph Gleason and Jeanie Gleason, who is still alive: in memory of days and nights in San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley and London. As they used to sing: a good man is hard to find. He was one of the best.