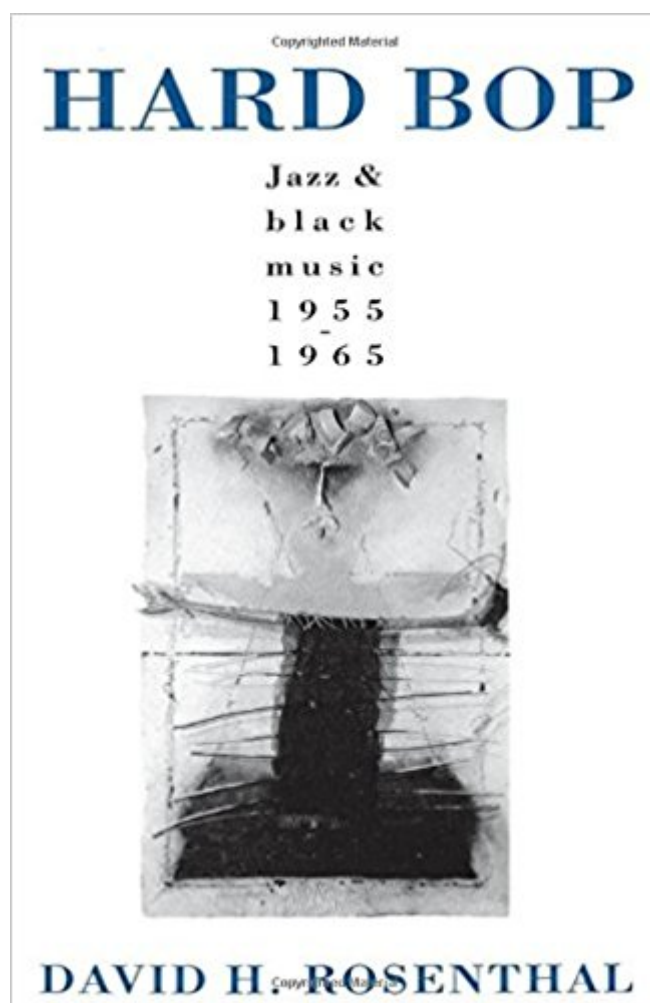


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Hard Bop: Jazz And Black Music 1955-1965



Synopsis

It's nineteen fifty-something, in a dark, cramped, smoke-filled room. Everyone's wearing black. And on-stage a tenor is blowing his heart out, a searching, jagged saxophone journey played out against a moody, walking bass and the swish of a drummer's brushes. To a great many listeners--from African American aficionados of the period to a whole new group of fans today--this is the very embodiment of jazz. It is also quintessential hard bop. In this, the first thorough study of the subject, jazz expert and enthusiast David H. Rosenthal vividly examines the roots, traditions, explorations and permutations, personalities and recordings of a climactic period in jazz history. Beginning with hard bop's origins as an amalgam of bebop and R&B, Rosenthal narrates the growth of a movement that embraced the heavy beat and bluesy phrasing of such popular artists as Horace Silver and Cannonball Adderley; the stark, astringent, tormented music of saxophonists Jackie McLean and Tina Brooks; the gentler, more lyrical contributions of trumpeter Art Farmer, pianists Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan, composers Benny Golson and Gigi Gryce; and such consciously experimental and truly one-of-a-kind players and composers as Andrew Hill, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and Charles Mingus. Hard bop welcomed all influences--whether Gospel, the blues, Latin rhythms, or Debussy and Ravel--into its astonishingly creative, hard-swinging orbit. Although its emphasis on expression and downright "badness" over technical virtuosity was unappreciated by critics, hard bop was the music of black neighborhoods and the last jazz movement to attract the most talented young black musicians. Fortunately, records were there to catch it all. The years between 1955 and 1965 are unrivaled in jazz history for the number of milestones on vinyl. Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*, Charles Mingus's *Mingus Ah Um*, Thelonious Monk's *Brilliant Corners*, Horace Silver's *Further Explorations*--Rosenthal gives a perceptive cut-by-cut analysis of these and other jazz masterpieces, supplying an essential discography as well. For knowledgeable jazz-lovers and novices alike, *Hard Bop* is a lively, multi-dimensional, much-needed examination of the artists, the milieus, and above all the sounds of one of America's great musical epochs.

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Customer Reviews

Hard bop, the mid-1950s resurgence of bebop, was an eclectic movement that encompassed many diverse styles of music, as Rosenthal (Loves of the Poets) spiritedly demonstrates here. His encyclopedic overview covers the accomplishments of the jazz "greats" of the period, from the lyrical compositions of Benny Golson and Gigi Gryce, the soul jazz of saxophonist Stanley Turrentine and the "bad" trumpet of Lee Morgan to the heterodox talents of Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Relating hard bop to gospel, blues and black popular traditions, the study emphasizes its roots in the dark, sinister mood of ghettos and discusses its demise after the 1960s as many blacks joined the middle class, moved out of inner cities and were increasingly influenced by white culture. Lively prose and perceptive characterization of musicians and their performances make the book a welcome resource for jazz fans and music historians. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Arguing that the decade of "hard bop" was one of the most creative in jazz, Rosenthal analyzes the contributions of many well-known musicians like Horace Silver and Sonny Rollins, and lesser-known but also important figures including Tadd Dameron and Elmo Hope. Rosenthal thinks through his material carefully and develops interesting and defensible ideas. He uses major recordings and jazz books as guideposts, drawing from music theory and jazz history where appropriate. Readers will find this well-written and open-minded study authoritative yet friendly--a refreshingly nonpartisan evaluation that mines a rich vein of music. It's apparently the first book-length study of an exciting decade and will appeal to anyone interested in jazz.- Paul Baker, CUNA Inc., Madison, Wis.Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Excellent book!

Awesome read

Excellent

Despite a lava flow of mediocre offerings, there have been a number of good books written on jazz over the years; the essays of Nat Hentoff, Gary Giddins and Stanley Crouch along with various histories and aesthetic treatises (Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray) enrich both our enjoyment and knowledge of this dynamic art form. While he has apparently published only one book on the topic, David H. Rosenthal's writing in "Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music 1955-1965" exhibits a number of unique characteristics which demonstrate that he belongs in the same rarified company. Rosenthal's calm and guileless enthusiasm, a combination of streetwise smarts and poetic sensitivity, allows him to venture intelligent observations without lapsing into mere opinion mongering. Aspects of the jazz subculture (and necessarily, the life of the black Americans within it) are discussed without recourse to reductionist political or sociological theories. Perhaps this can be attributed to Rosenthal's distance from day-to-day involvement in the "jazz industry

Derived from several primary sources, including personal interviews. Includes Footnotes, Discography, and Index, as well as Table of Contents. A simple lay of the land, not a dry chronological accounting of events. A pleasure to read and reread as I am attaining and retaining information on this specific genre of music to enable Paul Brusger to keep these rhythms rolling smoothly and straight ahead.

"Hard Bop" is bop with an edge, bop with an aggressive, blues-based attack. Its archetype practitioner was trumpeter Lee Morgan, killed outside a nightclub in January 1972 by his lover. Influenced by boppers such as Fats Navarro and Dizzy Gillespie, Morgan and other hard boppers developed a style emphasizing minor keys, a "dark" mood, slurs, and half-valve effects. Morgan's most popular number in the idiom was the huge 1964 hard bebop/R&B hit "The Sidewinder." Hard bop is introduced here through the prism of Lee Morgan: Morgan helped develop the style as an alternative to bop's successor, cool jazz, as developed, in part, by Gerry Mulligan and Miles Davis, and hard bop began to fade with his murder. But the book tackles more than Morgan, and, in fact, more than hard bop: It's a fascinating account of the various musical streams colliding--sometimes

melding-- in the 10 years between 1955 and 1965. Rosenthal traces the evolution of hard bebop as bop declined ("bebop . . . had turned into something of a straitjacket . . . Many of its best practitioners were dead, and others . . . were in decline"). Musicians looked to R & B to revive bop, and a new "more emotionally expressive and more formally flexible style began to emerge." Rosenthal looks at the expressions of hard bop in such diverse artists as Sonny Rollins, the soulful Horace Silver ("The Preacher"), Cannonball Adderley, organist Jimmy Smith ("Midnight Special"), Jackie MacClean, and, to a lesser degree, Art Farmer, Andrew Hill, Mingus, and some of the pre-1965 John Coltrane (e.g., with Miles on "Cookin'"). Rosenthal perceptively notes that hard bebop was a "complicated set . . . of interlocking tendencies," rather than a static, easily defined style. I enjoy this book because it explores a somewhat brief phenomenon, and shows how it developed, flourished, and then gave way to new elements. The writing is crisp, intelligent, energetic, and full of illustrative anecdotes that illuminate and entertain (not the dry pedantic treatise one might expect on this rather narrow topic). Rosenthal shows the connections between various elements of jazz, and presents it as a living, evolving, powerful force. Eleven chapters following the introduction, no pictures. Very highly recommended to jazz fans of any stripe.

There's plenty of good information and some nice anecdotes in this history, but it's presented non-chronologically as a loose string of biographies grouped under almost arbitrary chapter headings. The biographies leap into each other abruptly, and after a while it becomes impossible to distinguish individuals among the parade of similar faces. There are some nice analyses of some major albums, though, and it seems like a good starting point for someone trying to determine which recordings might paint the best picture of the hard bop era. Still...there's no long line to follow, and the last quarter feels like a grind.

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