



The Jazz Ear: Conversations over Music

By Ben Ratliff

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"*The Jazz Ear* will be a permanent part of learning how to listen inside the musicians playing."?Nat Hentoff, *Jazz Times*

Jazz is conducted almost wordlessly: John Coltrane rarely told his quartet what to do, and Miles Davis famously gave his group only the barest instructions before recording his masterpiece *Kind of Blue*. Musicians often avoid discussing their craft for fear of destroying its improvisational essence, rendering jazz among the most ephemeral and least transparent of the performing arts.

In *The Jazz Ear*, acclaimed music critic Ben Ratliff discusses with jazz greats the recordings that most influenced them and skillfully coaxes out a profound understanding of the men and women themselves, the context of their work, and how jazz?from horn blare to drum riff?is conceptualized. Ratliff speaks with Sonny Rollins, Ornette Coleman, Branford Marsalis, Dianne Reeves, Wayne Shorter, Joshua Redman, and others about the subtle variations in generation and attitude that define their music.

Playful and keenly insightful, *The Jazz Ear* is a revelatory exploration of a unique way of making and hearing music.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Ratliff, the jazz critic for the *New York Times*, spent just over two years interviewing jazz greats for a recurring feature at the paper: rather than ask musicians like Pat Metheny or Dianne Reeves to name their favorite records, Ratliff sat with them as they listened to songs and picked out the qualities they found most artistically compelling. The approach brings some surprises, as his subjects pick everything from Ukrainian cantorial music to Ralph Vaughan Williams to the Fifth Dimension, but each chapter brings provocative insights and will have readers scurrying to track down various records. (Ratliff also provides a listening guide for each of his interviewees.) Though each chapter stands alone, connections are made from one interview to the next; Metheny and Joshua Redman, for example, both select songs from Sonny Rollins. The interview with Redman also hints at Ratliff's argument in his 2007 *Coltrane: The Story of a Sound* about jazz as a collaborative medium, while Branford Marsalis speaks candidly about young musicians' failure to understand the melodic legacy they've inherited, then plays a jazz-influenced piece by Stravinsky to make his point. Whether you're a seasoned listener or just discovering the form, Ratliff is a wonderful guide. (Nov. 11) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From School Library Journal

Starred Review. Admirers of jazz should be deeply thankful for Ratliff, *New York Times* jazz critic and author of *Coltrane: The Story of a Sound*. Jazz is perhaps the most elusive art form to discuss and critique, and Ratliff's latest book fills a vacuum in the realm of understanding jazz. Originally published as a series in the *New York Times*, the 15 conversations presented here consist of Ratliff sitting down with such diverse and talented luminaries as Sonny Rollins, Pat Metheny, Paul Motian, and Dianne Reeves. The treasure of these conversations is not just their fluid and intimate manner but their focus on the recordings that had the greatest influence on the artists and their musical paths. Ratliff's insight that one may understand musicians more by discussing the music that moves them rather than the music they have created results in a unique rendering of some of the major jazz artists of our time. An added bonus is the recommended-listening section, in which Ratliff shares his list of his subjects' seminal recordings. Highly recommended for all libraries.—Peter Thornell, Hingham P.L., MA

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review New York Times jazz critic Ratliff decided to ask some of the music's masters, mostly revered senior figures but also some middle-generation stars, to listen with him and talk about their choices of recordings that especially engage them. His aim was to learn something about how these great players heard music, what elements of composition and performance most deeply impressed them. Guitarist Pat Metheny listens for what he calls glue, likened to what Ratliff calls inevitability, in a performance. Saxophonist Sonny Rollins says, "You can have a fixed time and play against it. That's what I feel is heaven." Composer-conductor Maria Schneider focuses on the motion of music, particularly when it is most like flying. Trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, one of the great modernist soloists, appreciates the wholeness of a band and soloist who can "play from the piece." The records responded to include classical and pop pieces as well as jazz, and the conversations can become existentialist or metaphysical, for the musicians are very smart and sensitive. This is the ideal follow-up to Wynton Marsalis' *Moving to Higher Ground* (2008), a sort of next step up into the magic of jazz. --Ray Olson

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Wayne Ross:

The book *The Jazz Ear: Conversations over Music* gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You need to use to make your capable considerably more increase. Book can to become your best friend when you getting anxiety or having big problem using your subject. If you can make reading through a book *The Jazz Ear: Conversations over Music* to become your habit, you can get more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about several or all subjects. You may know everything if you like open up and read a guide *The Jazz Ear: Conversations over Music*. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science guide or encyclopedia or others. So , how do you think about this guide?

Ginger Beals:

The actual book *The Jazz Ear: Conversations over Music* has a lot associated with on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of help. The book was published by the very famous author. The writer makes some research ahead of write this book. This kind of book very easy to read you will get the point easily after reading this book.

Patricia Northcutt:

The reason why? Because this *The Jazz Ear: Conversations over Music* is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will jolt you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who have write the book in such awesome way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book possess such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I have been you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

Brandon Giles:

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