



Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music 1955-1965

David H. Rosenthal

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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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