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**Growing Up With Jazz: Twenty Four Musicians  
Talk about Their Lives and Careers**

by W. Royal Stokes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. 242 pp, £17.99, hardback. ISBN 0195159276

Jazz writings of the last 30 to 40 years, whether academic or populist, have tended to focus attention on the big name players. For a music that seems to continually struggle at the margins (profit and otherwise) and is full of unsung heroes, this heavy

concentration of writing about the few is rather unrepresentative of jazz life for the many. While there are some well known musicians featured in this book, it is refreshing to come across a work that largely documents and celebrates players whose working lives remain just below the radar.

*Growing Up With Jazz* is constructed almost entirely through interviews with a cross section of jazz musicians. Royal Stokes has authored a number of books about the music as well as writing for jazz periodicals and broadcasting on jazz radio in the States. His knowledge of and deep affection for jazz are clear throughout this latest book in which he presents the stories of 24 musicians and their very different journeys through the music. His particular interest lies in the musicians' early development and the subsequent nature of their daily working lives. Most of the interviews were conducted at some time over the last ten years though some material is drawn from correspondence and the interview with drummer, Art Blakey (the single 'top ten' celebrity in the book), comes in the form of a radio broadcast from 1977.

The chapter headings resist an easy chronology, and instead reflect the way in which the stylistic eras of jazz are re-presented to audiences by new generations of players. The author distinguishes three groups of player, 'Keepers of the Flame', 'Modernists' and 'Visionaries and Eclectics', for each chapter. This was a pragmatic division no doubt but one that seems a little arbitrary and I am not convinced that this was the most effective way of steering a narrative through these interviews. Of course, the thematic development of a book based on interviews can go in many possible ways. Twenty years previously, Ira Gitler in his classic, *Swing to Bop* (1987), conducted a large number of interviews to construct a picture of the music in transition in the 1940s. These interviews

were then spliced together verbatim to create sets of themes about this period. More recently, Paul Berliner's immense *Thinking in Jazz* (1994) takes the reader through a narrative which is backed up throughout with comments from a wide range of interviews. Stokes has taken a different tack and allows the interviewees to talk about their lives with little comment or thematic analysis from the author. This has the advantage of transparency – letting the subjects speak for themselves – but sometimes risks the book losing its direction.

The engaging themes within this work develop in spite of the chapter headings rather than through them. Firstly, Royal Stokes pays more than passing attention to the lives of women in jazz. There have been a number of monographs which look in depth at women jazz musicians, notably Linda Dahl's *Stormy Weather* (1984); by contrast *Growing Up With Jazz* juxtaposes the working lives of women and men, and implicitly makes the point that the lack of regard for many women jazz players lies within social dynamics rather than the notes that they play. A second focus which deserves comment is the attention paid to non-American musicians. In fact, this is the first jazz book that I have read which features Asian jazz players. It is a sad commentary on a music which often celebrates its diasporic qualities that so little is written about the music once it moves beyond the confines of its home, and Stokes' inclusion of players from a wider world is salutary. Perhaps most compelling is the range of experiences that led these musicians towards the jazz life; formal and informal instruction, prodigies and late conversions to jazz, encouragement and hostility towards the lifestyle all played a part in these accounts. A true celebration of the diversity contained within a musical culture.

The difficulty with a book composed sequentially of interviews is that while the

reader obtains at one level a sometimes vivid picture of the jazz life, the frequent gig schedules, names of influential teachers and the mundane aspects of playing can loom quite large and this litany repeated over many interviews can be enervating. When the everyday is not sufficiently framed by the insights of the interviewer or interviewee, then it becomes bland and this aspect of the book could have benefited from rather more rigorous editing. The interviews which seem to capture the essentials of the jazz world are those which manage at some point to evade the minutiae of gigs and the 'who played with whom' factor. Affecting for me was the life of vocalist, Rene Marie, and the clear tensions running throughout the interview between her being a performer and a difficult family life was moving. Hers was a story with which I am sure most musicians can empathise and learn from. Don Byron's engaging account of his becoming a clarinet player and in particular the tension between being a black jazz musician and playing a 'white' instrument is fascinating and hugely eloquent about the layers of meaning that can emerge for performers through what they do.

Many but not all the interviews in this book make for a stimulating read, particularly if one has some existing insight into the life of jazz musicians and can contextualise the names of the musicians who appear. The avoidance of the usual reliance on too many well known players for source material is a strength and in that way adds a new dimension to the literature. Not a core book for a university department in the way that work by Ingrid Monson (1997) or Paul Berliner (1994) should be, this could be a complementary volume for collections which are looking to expand their ethnographic literature. The reflections of these musicians from many different backgrounds, and the easy style of the writing may also make this book a useful

read for young jazz musicians contemplating the life ahead of them.

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**Setting the Record Straight. A Material History of Classical Recording** by Colin Symes. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004. 384 pp, £27.95, hardback. ISBN 0819567213

More than any other factor, recording changed music fundamentally in the 20th century. Acoustical recording dates from the 19th century (1877), but it was in the early years of the 20th century that the transforming and revolutionary implications of Edison's invention started to make themselves felt. A sizeable proportion of the world's population now has access to an almost unlimited quantity and diversity of music, representing thousands of cultures and subcultures and centuries of musical traditions. Despite the extraordinary impact of recording upon the ways in which people encounter, use, understand, and evaluate music, serious writing on the history and character of music recording has been slow to develop. Evan Eisenberg's wonderfully engaging book *The Recording Angel* (1987;

recently republished and expanded as Eisenberg, 2005) and Gelatt's *The Fabulous Phonograph* (1977), published at exactly the centenary of Edison's original invention, are two of the earlier book-length studies, but in recent years there has been increasing interest in both the history and the cultural impact of recording, including books by Chanan (1995), Day (2000), and Katz (2004).

Colin Symes' *Setting the Record Straight. A Material History of Classical Recording* is a very valuable addition to this emerging literature, tackling the material practices and many discourses (words and images) that surround and have become attached to recording. Symes deals specifically and more or less exclusively with classical music (i.e. Western art music), which is a considerable advantage in terms of focus – and necessary in practical terms (unless the book was to become enormous) since the kinds of discourse and practice that have become intertwined with classical music are very different from the practices and discourses of pop. The main argument of the book is that in order to overcome initial hostility towards recorded music, an ever-extending web of writing and illustration has accumulated, 'generated by the record's centrifugal forces' (p. 212), the purpose of which has been to establish and stabilise 'record culture', and to regulate it in a particular kind of way within (musical) culture more broadly. And, perhaps not surprisingly, the dominating ideology in all of this – what Symes calls the 'keystone discourse' – is the experience of the concert: overwhelmingly, the discourses and iconography of recording present recordings as bringing into the home the experience of the concert hall, with essentially the same associated cultural and social values.

Chapter 1 ('Playing by the Book: Toward a Textual Theory of the Phonograph') sets out Symes' basic premise: the history of the phonograph and the record has many