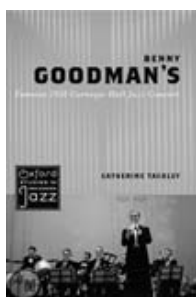


# Book Reviews

## BENNY GOODMAN'S FAMOUS 1938 CARNEGIE HALL JAZZ CONCERT

by Catherine Tackley. Oxford Studies in Recorded Jazz, Oxford University Press, pb, 223pp. ISBN 978-0-19-539831-1



Part of OUP's Oxford Studies in Recorded Jazz series, which includes titles on Jarrett's Köln Concert and Miles Davis's studio output, this book attempts to place Goodman's seminal 1938 Carnegie Hall performance within its proper historical and cultural context. Series Editor Jeremy Barham describes these titles as aiming to "renew musical debate in jazz scholarship", and this book is clearly a thoroughly researched, scholarly work.

The blurb declares it "a must-read for all serious jazz fans", and this seems a fair estimation if "serious" means to be particularly interested in the intellectual study of jazz theory and history. The book is by no means a light read, dense as it is with some quite technical descriptions of the precise notes themselves that were performed at the eponymous concert. Those looking for a broader précis of Goodman's music and why this concert in particular was historically significant may be put off by the sometimes jargon-heavy narrative of this "Oxford study".

The author Catherine Tackley, a clarinettist and bandleader herself, uses the 1950 Columbia title, *The Famous 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert*, as the basis for her study. The detailed analysis of the musical recordings on this album is supplemented by consideration of "the concert as an event in itself . . . and the ensuing reception and responses", as well as the context of the concert in terms of time and place in the course of 20th century jazz. Tackley says that existing scholarly works on Goodman are surprisingly lacking, and so hopes her book "sheds new light on the performances of Benny Goodman".

Although dense, this is a relatively slim volume, with three parts covering "Context", "Performance" and "Representation". There

are also appendices listing the Carnegie Hall programme and members of the orchestra, and a detailed discography. A few monochrome images add interest to the piece, and the author favours frequent representations of transcribed scores to illustrate her arguments, but on the whole this is a mostly textual affair. For students of jazz history and those interested in the Goodman swing era, this will be a welcome arrival.

Sally Evans-Darby

## MR.PC

The Life And Music Of Paul Chambers, by Rob Palmer. Equinox Publishing Ltd, hb, 430pp. ISBN 978-1-84553-636-7

Comprehensive would be the first word that springs to mind, exhaustive even, for this book. The author covers everything from his early life in Detroit to his death, aged just 33 in 1969. Chambers was the bass player in the mid to late 1950s and the early to middle years of the 1960s. He was first-call bass man on record dates and gigs all over NYC and seemed to be always on the scene wherever top-level jazz was played. Unlike his mentor and friend, Ray Brown, who confined himself mainly to touring with the Peterson trio, Paul was there to be hired, keenly sought-after and, like Brown, highly influential.

I found the early pages and the end ones most enlightening. Palmer talked to Chambers's wife, Ann, and his sons Pierre and Eric. He explodes the myth, long held, that fellow bassist Doug Watkins was Paul's cousin; he wasn't but they were best friends and Doug was best man at his wedding. Where the reader will require greater stamina is reading those central sections where just about every record Chambers played on is listed and analysed, critically in almost every case. The only discs to survive censure of any kind are Miles's *Kind Of Blue* and Oliver Nelson's *Blues And The Abstract Truth*. The end pages are fascinating for coverage of his many women friends, his

illnesses and death, and the fate of his famous Lady's Head double bass, coveted by the likes of Richard Davis, Ron Carter and Eugene Wright but kept in the family.

There are errors, small but silly. For example: The photo on page 82 is of Red Garland, not Wynton Kelly. Monk did not replace Horace Silver on the Blue Note *Misterioso* recording, they both played on it. The March 1958 Prestige recording was a Coltrane-led set, not Red Garland's.

Chambers was important. Critic Martin Williams said that a handy definition of swing would be "any two successive notes played by Paul Chambers". For those reasons, if no other, this book is recommended, warts and all.

Derek Ansell

## TAJ MAHAL FOXTROT

The Story Of Bombay's Jazz Age, by Naresh Fernandes. Roli Books, 191pp + 22-minute CD featuring The Symphonians, Teddy Weatherford, Lequime's Grand Hotel Orchestra, Ken Mac, Frank J. Orford, Toni Pinto. Available from Amazon. More details at [tajmahalfoxtrot.com](http://tajmahalfoxtrot.com)

Above my desk hang three drawings by the Goanese artist Francis Newton Souza. One is of a Catholic priest, one of a very fat man walking a very tiny dog on a string, and one is of a jazz group. They're all from the late 1950s before Souza emigrated from Bombay, where he was one of the founders of the Progressive Artists' Group. Its mission was to open up the subcontinent to modernity and naturalise the discoveries of the international avant-garde.

The tangled knot of figures and instruments – hard to tell one from the other – in the drawing doesn't perhaps quite capture the reality of Bombay's jazz scene at that time. Swing was still largely a high-end entertainment, associated with such plush environments as the Taj Mahal Hotel opposite the Gateway to India, scene of a 2008 attack by militants. It was favoured by Anglo-Indians and the middle class and its ethos was escapist rather than subversive.

In the same way, most Indian musicians were in thrall to the great American names, rather than developing a distinctive idiom of their own. But that situation was about to change. Stars like Louis Armstrong, Duke



Micky Correa band at the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bom

Ellington and Dave Brubeck not only visited India, but in the case of the latter pair, took away valuable lessons. Naresh Fernandes quotes Brubeck as saying that the “creative output” of the quartet was influenced by Indian metres, allowing Desmond and Brubeck to experiment on *Take Five* and *Blue Rondo A La Turk*. John Coltrane was apparently influenced by raga, though the nature of that influence has never been satisfactorily discussed. Shades of old colonial connections turned up in projects like Curry Jazz, or more positively in the Harriott/Mayer collaboration/crossover Indo-Jazz Fusions. The Jazz Yatras kept up a valuable level of inter-cultural contact. Asha Puthli sang on Ornette Coleman’s *Science Fiction*.

Fernandes’ account goes back a long way before this. The pre-history of jazz in India is largely a matter of minstrel shows, regimental bands and “spiritual” groups such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers, who went to India in 1890. The jazz story really begins with the arrival in 1935 of Minnesotan violinist Leon Abbey, leading an “all negro” jazz band. It becomes an all-Indian story when Goanese trumpeter Frank Fernand meets Mahatma Gandhi and has a vision of a fully vernacular subcontinental jazz style.

The other key figure was another Goanese, Anthony Gonsalves, a major figure in film and orchestral music whose keynote song *My Name Is Anthony Gonsalves* is a Bollywood staple. Whereas a musician like “Chic Chocolate” was happy to be identified as India’s Louis Armstrong, Gonsalves – who only died last year – was determined to create a new hybrid of Western and Hindustani music.

Some of the most influential figures in Fernandes’s narrative were African-Americans like pianist Teddy Weatherford, but after independence and the horrors of partition there is a new, nativist strain. It comes out strongly in the work of “Dizzy Sal” (born Edward Saldanha), a brilliant piano player who had a brief success in the US but succumbed to a nervous disorder, perhaps heightened by intense religious belief and commitment to the cult of St Cecilia, and then to a disfiguring skin ailment. He’s one of the fascinating might-have-beens in this book.

Arguably the most innovative of all Indian jazz musicians was Braz Gonsalves – his namesake in the Ellington band wondered if

any of these guys were kinsmen – whose Raga Rock is a key recording. Braz also turned to religion. Perhaps the most underrated of those who did establish some reputation outside India is guitarist Amancio D’Silva, a brilliant musician who anticipated John McLaughlin’s Shakti crossovers by a couple of decades.

Jazz thrived in a very different social environment in India than in the US or Britain. If Souza’s drawings say more about his inner state than the social reality, cartoonist Mario Miranda’s lively depiction of a morning jam session – good Indian girls weren’t allowed out at night – gets closer to the hectic cosmopolitanism of these semilicit affairs. (It was still happening in London in the 1980s, when young Asian men and women skipped school or faked sick-notes to dance ecstatically to bhangra music before lunch.)

Fernandes has done his research thoroughly. Such a book runs some inevitable risk of degenerating into a procession of unfamiliar names, and the narrative is sometimes inconsistent, not helped by an apparently random distribution of pictures. In fact, the text and visual component are best taken separately. It’s a sumptuous book, and a generous invitation to further research in this fascinating field.

Brian Morton

### JAZZ ICONS

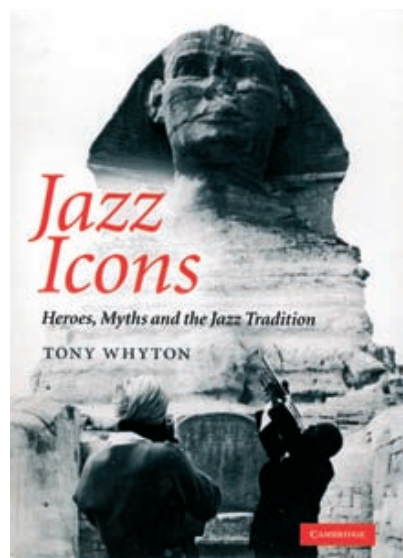
*Heroes, Myths And The Jazz Tradition*, by Tony Whyton. Cambridge University Press, 219pp, 10 illustrations. £17.09. ISBN 978-1-107-61802-8

Author Tony Whyton of the University of Salford was in 2010 awarded the largest ever grant for jazz. The money was given to front a transnational research programme into the European jazz scene and the ways in which the music and the culture of Europe were changing.

Salford collaborated with six other universities on the three-year €1m project. About that grant one prominent and respected jazz journalist said: “I haven’t figured out yet how it benefited the jazz world.”

In *Jazz Icons* Whyton debates jazz from a non-musical standpoint, for the book contains no notated musical examples, no musical analysis is given, neither does Whyton scrutinise jazz history other than in a negligible manner. His interest as expressed in *Jazz Icons* is largely with Armstrong, Ellington, Parker, Davis and Marsalis, these being mainstream and predominantly black.

What we have here is a publication linking selected jazz icons with something called New Jazz Studies, a discipline now not really new, but some 20 years old. To buttress this newish sub-discipline came a new discourse, which used terms such as auratic, diegesis, inclusionists, exclusionists, sacralisation, meta-commentary, teleological, tropes (as in “signifying transforms material



by troping it”) and signifiers.

Here the name of Krin Gabbard must be mentioned. He is one of the fathers of New Jazz Studies, an American academic who applied these neologisms – and many more – to jazz, a man to whom Whyton refers frequently in the pages of *Jazz Icons*. Gabbard is not a musician, though on his website he mentions that currently he is learning the trumpet. He is one of several scholars from disciplines outside musicology and music history to “open up” (Gabbard’s phrase) jazz studies to interdisciplinary approaches which involve psychoanalysis, critical race theory, modes of representation, gender theory and the history of the music’s reception. Clearly, Tony Whyton has learned much from Krin Gabbard, whose books make mind-numbing, verbose reading, being for the jazz enthusiast slightly off-message and over-eclectic. In the process, much of the joy of jazz has been ironed out.

By the end of the century higher education had grown to be big. Today, more than 40 per cent of British 18-year-olds pursue tertiary level study. But, beyond lowered standards and the pursuit of silly subjects, this growth has meant that universities have had to *insist* that teaching staff defend or justify their tenure by publishing “research”. For this, lecturers are given points, these being a research assessment. The higher education funding bodies use them to determine grants awarded for this research. Tangled with this are tenure and promotion requirements. Thus there is pressure on young academics, who must publish or perish.

Maybe it’s an impertinent thought but here, I suspect, is the motive behind a book such as *Jazz Icons*, which is not an easy read. One might applaud Tony Whyton for winning the largest-ever grant for jazz but that applause wouldn’t necessarily extend to any lucidity offered in *Jazz Icons*.

John Robert Brown

*continued on page 13*



Day circa 1938