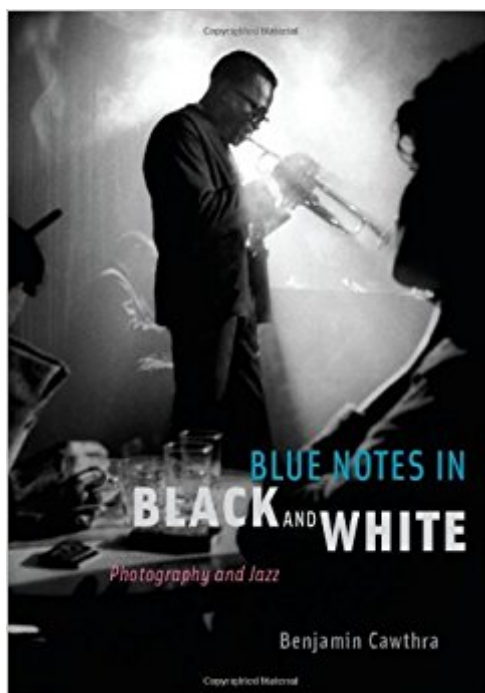


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Blue Notes In Black And White: Photography And Jazz



Synopsis

Miles Davis, supremely cool behind his shades. Billie Holiday, eyes closed and head tilted back in full cry. John Coltrane, one hand behind his neck and a finger held pensively to his lips. These iconic images have captivated jazz fans nearly as much as the music has. Jazz photographs are visual landmarks in American history, acting as both a reflection and a vital part of African American culture in a time of immense upheaval, conflict, and celebration. Charting the development of jazz photography from the swing era of the 1930s to the rise of black nationalism in the 1960s, *Blue Notes in Black and White* is the first of its kind: a fascinating account of the partnership between two of the twentieth century's most innovative art forms. Benjamin Cawthra introduces us to the great jazz photographers—including Gjon Mili, William Gottlieb, Herman Leonard, Francis Wolff, Roy DeCarava, and William Claxton—and their struggles, hustles, styles, and creative visions. We also meet their legendary subjects, such as Duke Ellington, sweating through a late-night jam session for the troops during World War II, and Dizzy Gillespie, stylish in beret, glasses, and goatee. Cawthra shows us the connections between the photographers, art directors, editors, and record producers who crafted a look for jazz that would sell magazines and albums. And on the other side of the lens, he explores how the musicians shaped their public images to further their own financial and political goals. This mixture of art, commerce, and racial politics resulted in a rich visual legacy that is vividly on display in *Blue Notes in Black and White*. Beyond illuminating the aesthetic power of these images, Cawthra ultimately shows how jazz and its imagery served a crucial function in the struggle for civil rights, making African Americans proudly, powerfully visible.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Benjamin Cawthra insightfully narrates the vast history of jazz--and its turbulent love-hate relationship with American culture. . . . To Cawthra, jazz photography genuinely captures a moment in time--these images are 'benchmarks' in the metamorphosis of music. . . ." --Down Beat

"A brilliant study of the complex relationships among jazz, photography, racial identity, racial politics, and definitions of black masculinity. . . . A must-have for anyone seriously interested in the politics and sociology of jazz and how it was perceived from the 1930s through the 1960s." -- Library Journal

"You sense an author consumed and excited by his subject Dr. Cawthra analyzes pictures of individual musicians and elucidates their context, searching for messages and narratives about jazz as a whole." -- New York Times

"It's striking how one photographer's style differs from every other, as though each had been compelled to devise an approach that none of his compatriots could have imagined. Ideal reading while spinning Monk or Kind of Blue." -- MOJO

"Benjamin Cawthra's outstanding book . . . provides a window into the history of jazz and a perfect merging of jazz music and black-and-white art photography. It also illustrates both the gradual merging and eventual divergence of black and white cultures during the middle of the 20th century." -- Music Media Monthly

"Benjamin Cawthra, writing with grace and a formidable command of jazz history and American culture, makes us see the sounds, the social relations, and the myths of jazz as he ably uncovers the personal and institutional networks of musicians, writers, magazines, and record companies in which jazz photography developed. Even as Blue Notes in Black and White casts a sharp eye on photographic aesthetics--its pages brim with bracing insights into Gjon Mili's informal but magisterial style, Francis Wolff's use of chiaroscuro, and Herman Leonard's concept of the sculpted face--it also works as a groundbreaking history of jazz criticism. At its best, this excellent book serves as a model for a multisensory music criticism: while reading it, I often felt I was hearing the music more deeply." -- John Gennari, author of *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics*

"This is a highly engaging and deeply engaged meditation on the development of the modern jazz photography tradition. Cawthra's probing analysis of how 'the photographic culture of jazz' helped make jazz visible perceptively illuminates and contributes significantly to the fascinating, revealing, and ongoing debate surrounding not just the jazz image, notably the African American jazz image, but also jazz history, the meanings of jazz, and indeed the role of jazz in the making of modern American culture." -- Waldo E. Martin, Jr.,

author of No Coward Soldiers: Black Cultural Politics in Postwar America" This first in-depth history of jazz photography provides the reader with a three-dimensional view of its fascinating subject, illuminating the music, the media, and the makers – the foreground and the background." -- Dan Morgenstern, author of Living with Jazz

Benjamin Cawthra is associate professor of history and associate director of the Center for Oral and Public History at California State University, Fullerton.

This was a gift for my brother who is into Black and White photography and Jazz so it was a natural! He seems to be enjoying it!

Interesting insight into America's African-american culture which has spread universally in a single century. The author has given us a different "look" at the creators of this wonderful genesis.

Cawthra's book examines the complexity of race, identity, and art. At a time when African Americans are fighting for full and equal citizenship, jazz and its creators struggle to be seen as legitimate. Along the way another art form, photography, also gains ground as its burgeoning masters document the jazz scene and those who created it. The magnificent photos and the author's thoughtful look at the contradictions of equality and independence and art and entertainment in America make for a very enjoyable read. A great choice for any jazz or photography lover.

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