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Of Books and Brits

It is always entertaining to watch certain British writers go into tizzies whenever an American writer dares to suggest that the British did *not* "appreciate" jazz before "the" Americans did. But, no matter how energetically they dance up and down and scream "No no no!" while across the Channel the French echo "Non non non!" there was a substantial body of writing in praise of jazz in major American publications, such as the *Atlantic* and the New York *Times*, long before the British ever heard the stuff, much less levitated into transports over it. Furthermore, the music, far from being despised and rejected, had so great a popularity that elderly lady piano teachers who didn't understand it were terrified of the desire of young people to learn to play it. It even gave its name to an age, and it simply won't do to say that people then didn't really know what it was. Many of them did, and some of the pieces written in the 1920s, notably R.D. Darrell's perceptive evaluations of Armstrong and Ellington, stand up to this day.

Stanley Dance, in excoriation of one of James Lincoln Collier's latest works, stated yet again, in the May *JazzTimes*, that *Melody Maker* and Panassie's *Le Jazz Hot* preceded *Down Beat*. This reiteration is becoming extremely tiresome. First of all it's irrelevant. But more importantly, it tells us only that Panassie and company had no choice but to found a jazz magazine, preaching to a very small group of people, because outlets to the larger public, particularly intellectual publications, were not open to them on the subject. In America they were, and Collier has documented nearly two hundred articles on jazz in the New York *Times* in the decade from 1918 to 1928, all of them serious and most of them favorable to the music. That averages out to ten a year, a substantial coverage of an art form that was still in its formative stages, and well before Louis Armstrong firmly defined its direction. The rapturous article on jazz by Carl Engel, head of the music division of the Library of Congress, appeared in the *Atlantic* in 1922.

The Stanley Dance comments appear in a review of **The Reception of Jazz in America: a New View**, an eighty-page monograph published by the Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College, City of New York, Brooklyn, NY 11210. The price is $11, postage included. Stanley says, "The main argument of this blown-up monograph could well have been delivered in a thousand-word article." The argument, yes; the evidence, no. Had Collier not cited instance after instance, article after article, of the serious and often appreciative writings about jazz in non-specialized magazines whose editors presumably were catering to public interest, he would have been castigated for failing to offer evidence to support his thesis. Offer it he does, 41,000 words of it.

"Collier," Dance says, "wants to prove that Europeans were not ahead of Americans in their appreciation of jazz, and he goes to extraordinary lengths to make his point." Hardly extraordinary. The book is quite slim. Collier simply combed through a lot of writing that the Europeans have to believe with religious fervor doesn't exist if they are to maintain their mystic credo that they got there first because the colonials were far too unenlighted to appreciate what their country had wrought. Since the British cannot claim to have invented jazz -- although some recent writings lead one to suspect they may be about to try -- it seems to be a matter of desperation to them to be credited with being its first appreciators.

Actually Collier long accepted, as I did, the view of jazz as an ignored music first appreciated by the Europeans, which is what Marshall Stearns, among others, told us it was. And then he began to discover evidence, masses of it, that this isn't so. And so, quite separately, did I, as I came across writings the Europeans simply have not examined. You can't examine them, either, if you stay in London. Among other things, he began to muse on the fame the Cotton Club radio broadcasts brought Ellington; and then brought Cab Calloway when he replaced Ellington in that spot.

"The people who claimed that Europeans were more appreciative were the American musicians who went to Europe, and they were right at least in respect to the printed word," writes Dance, who was born in England and lives in California. One of the very first things I learned as a young newspaper reporter is that the people I interviewed had a vested interest in my favorable impression of them. Anyone naive enough to think that the first American jazz musicians to go to Europe were above sucking up to the press probably shouldn't be allowed to handle his own money. And, as Collier proves, everybody has been *wrong* about the printed word.

Stanley says that Collier faults Panassie for, among other things, "not visiting the U.S. sooner, but it cost much more to do so in those days; and there were no fat grants of the kind that support Collier's 'research'." Collier received no grant, fat or otherwise, to write this monograph, and it's neither here nor there whether a grant was involved. Nor does sarcastic placement of quotation marks around the word "research" invalidate the painstaking work done.

"Even," Stanley continues, "those American writers who began to catch up in writing books about jazz do not escape the disapproval of this censorious revisionist. Why? Because the wretched fellows exhibited left-wing tendencies!"

The implication is that Collier is a red-baiter, a neo-McCarthyist. Collier has impeccable left-wing credentials of his own. He comes from a long line of New England radicals, and is himself a dedicated civil-libertarian whose work has included a careful documentation of the discrimination against blacks by symphony orchestras. Collier isn't deploring the politics of these writers; he is deploring a tendency -- common on both the left and the right -- to distort history to make desired political points, something too many chroniclers of jazz, Nat Hentoff and John Hammond prominently among them, have been only too willing to do.

Collier makes it clear that, far from being a black music played for black audiences, jazz emerged substantially as a black music played for white audiences in a period when blacks were held in abject subservience. Black patrons could not get on the river boats of legend; blacks could not get into some of the best nightclubs in Chicago, even some of those owned by

blacks, who were interested in white money from uptown. Even black waiters discouraged a black audience, because the white boys were better tippers. Blacks were not allowed in the Cotton Club during Duke Ellington's sojourn there. Norman Granz fought to get black customers into jazz clubs in the 1950s. As late as 1955 in Kansas City, Art Farmer was not allowed to sit with white customers between sets.

"In short," Dance concludes, "this is another nasty piece of work by a writer rapidly painting himself into a corner."

I consider both Collier and Dance friends – and hope they will be when this is over. But I have to look at Collier's evidence, and not once does Stanley refute it, or even confront it. He passes over it, as if the book were an unsubstantiated polemic; its value is precisely its indisputable documentation of extensive American writings on jazz well before the British or French had even a vague idea of what it was.

In the British claim to be the first great champions of jazz -- a claim that carries the suggestion that we British are not racist, unlike you rotten Yanks, a position that recent history has rendered untenable -- British writers maintain a silence, possibly an embarrassed one, on the subject of Sir Henry Coward, to whom jazz was anathema.

Born in Liverpool in 1849, self-educated, he was first a schoolteacher with a love of music, which he studied with passion. At the age of 40, he turned from all other activities to devote his life to it, becoming in due course Britain's most prominent choral director. He traveled with his choir throughout America, Europe, Eurasia, and Africa, retiring in 1924, receiving a knighthood in 1926, and writing a denunciation of jazz the next year. On page 12 of the London *Times* of September 22, 1927, there is a report of a speech in which Sir Henry called jazz "the essence of vulgarity" and said he feared for its "effects on the morals of the white race."

The following editorial (which, incidentally, suggests that the first foreigners to go jazz crazy were not the French or the [illegible] but the Canadians) appeared in the December 12, 1927, issue of the University of Toronto publication *The Varsity*:

"An article in the November number of the *National Review*, by Sir Henry Coward, merits the notice and discussion of the thinking student. It decries with vehemence the devolutionizing effect of modern jazz, not only on the individual, but upon the future of the white race.

"Historically, the decay of great nations was caused by the nature of ethics and morality derived from the form of their pleasures. Jazz, according to the writer, is a type of primitive music both in structure and mode of performance. It is decidedly atavistic, deadening and vulgarizing the senses. But it has a greater significance. Scientifically, it denotes 'going back to the standards and crudities of the cave man and the Negro of the Southern plantation.' And, 'because the popularization of this class of music, and its reaction on the subconscious memory evokes practices and usages of the past, such as immodest dances, it leads to -- in fact has lead [sic] to -- a lowering of the prestige of white races.'

"If we wish to escape the fact of nine great Empires which have dominated and declined, we must see that our lotus-eating does not take the place of working, and that in following a 'wearisome and irritating reiteration of cacophonic imbecility, we do not allow jazz to pay fat dividends . . . while our high thinking and spirituality decay.'

"The future world supremacy of the east has for some time been a subject of discussion. That we, as a people, are hastening to our own decline is, perhaps, a new slant on the question. Sir Henry concludes his article with the hint that the white races have lost a lot of 'that subtle element of the superman superiority' owing to the fact that visiting coloured students see so much of the giddy side of English life, and miss the sober elements."

That the British think they are far better jazz critics than the Americans is obvious; one of them has actually said so to me. But this is the projection of a deeper assumption that not even the loss of Empire has diminished, one that is harbored by even the most decent of English people without their being aware of it. I have heard it baldly stated a few times, and not only by Sir Henry Coward. Their sense of superiority is astonishing. One of these affirmations came from my father, who was from Manchester, when he was a little in his cups. "I must tell you," he said, "that with every fiber of my being, I'm proud of being an Englishman." And his mother, my paternal grandmother, in turn once said in her thick Lancashire accent, "The's nao doubt abaht it, the English are a soo-perior race."

Of all the American writers who bother the Brits, Whitney Balliett seems to head the list. One of the periodic attempts to tear him down appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* in April, 1988. Reviewing Balliett's **American Musicians**, (Oxford), Francis Davis complains that "the only contemporary musicians under fifty years of age included among these '56 portraits in jazz' are the guitarist Gene Bertoncini and the bassist Michael Moore, minor figures in chamber jazz, and in no way indicative of current directions of jazz."

This is specious at three levels. First of all, the book is not presented as a "complete" study of jazz, it is a collection, a gathering together of the extraordinarily valuable essays Balliett happens to have written since 1962. Second, if a man has made himself expert in, say, baroque music, it would be silly to dismiss his writing on the grounds that he doesn't cover Steve Reich or Penderecki or Ligetti or Xenakis in his book. I want to know what he has to say on the field in which he *is* expert, not lament that he does not venture into some other field in which he is not. It is a classic example of bad criticism in discussing not what the work is designed to do but what the critic wishes it had done; or more precisely what he would have done had he had the opportunity and the talent to do it. The book, and the essay on Bertoncini and Moore, were never intended to be about "current directions in jazz" and to complain that they aren't is willfully deceptive. It's like saying that *Hamlet* isn't funny. Thirdly, the appeal to Whitney Balliett of these older jazz musicians may be a literary one: they have more story to tell than younger players. Finally, Balliett may well feel a sense of urgency at the passing of so many living libraries of history, a desperation to get some of the information down soon. If you want to read about younger jazzmen, don't go to Balliett, go to Gary Giddens.

Among the problems I have with a good deal of English writing about jazz (but by no means all; there's some good stuff too) is that it often reveals a serious deficiency of knowledge of the country that gave this music birth and nurture. For example, on that same page of the *Times Literary*

Supplement there is a review by Adam Lively of Bob Wilber's autobiography, **Music Was Not Enough** (Oxford), a book written with English writer Derek Webster. Nowhere does Lively say (and Derek Webster didn't know enough about America to be aware of it) the most obvious thing about the book: that it is scattered with inaccuracies, ranging from serious ones such as the statement that Will Marion Cook studied violin with Eugene Ysaye (he studied with Josef Joachim) to oddly funny ones, like moving the Museum of Natural History five blocks to West 86th Street in New York (it lies between West 79th and West 81st). I've seen cordial reviews of that book by British writers who cannot detect its errors; but then Wilber is an Anglophile, and they probably love what he says to them about their country.

British writers on jazz tend to discuss America and its arts with aplomb and undoubting authority, including some who have never been here even for a visit. And it matters, because those who depend on written sources for their information all too often replicate errors. No doubt, we will soon read somewhere else that Will Marion Cook studied with Ysaye. The British jazz writers too often sound like anthropologists discussing, say, the Jivaro Indians, without ever having done field research among them. They simply have no idea of the depth of jazz in the American culture, their knowledge being confined to what they glean from records, hear from jazz musicians famous enough to come over there, or read in books that may or may not be reliable. They do not know of all the excellent jazz players who live and work in smaller centers all over America, people like the late saxophonist John Park in Texas or the late pianist Don Murray of Louisville or, in Toronto alone, the brilliant pianists Doug Riley and Bernie Senensky and trumpeter Guido Basso and guitarist Lorne Lofsky; or, in Denver, drummer Jill Fredericksen, bassist Fred Hamilton, and pianist Rob Mullins, none of whom is mentioned in three recent British dictionaries of jazz, the new *Grove's* among them. You find these people everywhere in America; the European writers don't know about them, because they do not know this culture, they have not wandered around this country and encountered excellent local players in places like Santa Maria, California; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and Rochester, New York, each with his or her ardent local following. As I have previously noted, we understand their culture far better than they do ours. We grow out of theirs; they do not grow out of ours. Frank Strazzeri understands Italy better than Gianni Basso understands the United States. It's as simple as that. When "we" write about Europe, we are writing about our roots. When "they" write about America, they are not writing about theirs.

Let us consider what Collier actually says in *The Reception of Jazz in America*. First he quotes all the writers, European and American alike, who have said that jazz had no public acceptance in America and/or that it was first appreciated in Europe: Neil Leonard, Sidney Finkelstein, Whitney Balliett, Frank Tirro, Rudi Blesh, Marshall Stearns, Leroy Ostransky, John Hammond, Charles Delaunay, Timme Rosenkrantz, Iris Ditke, Derek Jewell, Eric Hobsbawm, Ian Carr, Krystian Brodacki. That list could be extended.

Collier points out that contact between blacks and whites, social and even sexual, was always more widespread than is generally supposed, and many white children were exposed to black culture by the cooks and nannies and others who had charge of them. He quotes Earl Hines, speaking of the Grand Terrace in Chicago, "The audiences were mixed. Segregation never crossed anyone's mind." And, Collier says, blacks had been extensively accepted as entertainers in post-Civil War minstrel shows, and later in variety and vaudeville. He quotes Tom Whaley, who later was Duke Ellington's copyist, speaking of Boston: "Well, you see, up till the First World War there was nothing but black musicians. White musicians didn't have a chance." In New York, James Reese Europe, Ford Dabney, and Luckey Roberts commanded many of the best society jobs. Louis Metcalf said as far back as 1922 that there were jazz bands in every town he had visited, thousands of them in total.

Pointing out that not everyone liked jazz -- not everyone likes opera, either -- Collier writes: "Contrary to what has been said by virtually every jazz writer who has touched on the subject, the American press generally supported jazz, if only because it has never been in the business of attacking fashions that appeal to its readers. The New York *Times*, for example, routinely reported the sermons and statements of the antis, and the town council votes to ban jazz; but its own stance toward the music was mildly approving. As early as 1919 the *Sunday Times Magazine* included a long article excoriating the world of serious dance for ignoring jazz, and over the next ten years it ran 189 articles on jazz, in addition to more than 100 others in the early part of the 1910s on the controversy over the 'jazz dances.' The paper itself never editorialized against jazz, and the special articles it ran in the Sunday magazine and elsewhere were invariably favorable." Collier uncovered a 1917 article in the important weekly *Literary Digest* analyzing jazz rhythms. "Between 1917 and 1929 leading American magazines would run over 100 articles on jazz, only a small minority of them hostile to the music," he says.

Collier says that for all the popularity of jazz-influenced dance music, "probably only a minority of Americans really appreciated jazz, and had some idea of what it was. But it was not a small minority (and) by 1919 *Music Trade Review* was saying, 'To-day jazz music and jazz dancing are not novelties. They are accepted by the public at large. Their apostles run into the thousands and their disciples into the millions.'"

Later Collier takes note of "a series of popularity polls that *Orchestra World* ran for a while in 1931 . . . . Most of those at the top of the lists were ordinary dance bands; but Ellington's group ran second or first most of the time, and important jazz musicians like Sonny Greer, Bubber Miley, Red Nichols, Steve Brown, and King Oliver also made the list, some of them high up on it. It must be realized that by this time jazz bandleaders like Oliver and Nichols had national reputations in America, at least among those who followed popular music more or less closely." And though there was in the 1920s a period of popularity of so-called "symphonic jazz" as exemplified by Paul Whiteman, some of the leading intellectuals of music objected to it. Composer Virgil Thomson wrote in *Vanity Fair* that Whiteman "has refined (jazz), smoothed out its harshness, taught elegance to its rhythms, blended its jarring polyphonies into an ensemble of mellow harmonic unity . . . . He has suppressed what was striking and original in it, and taught it the manners of Vienna."

In 1935, writing in *Down Beat* from London, Leonard

Feather said, "To all you hopefuls who pasture Europe as a haven of intelligence where everyone knows all about good jazz, let me begin by destroying your illusions right away. I was in New York for the first time last month, and came away with the impression that, however dumb your great U.S. public may be, ours is even dumber."

Two years later, in 1937, *Time* magazine estimated that there were a half million "serious jazz fanciers" in the United States.

Collier extensively discusses the writings of Robert Donaldson Darrell, who wrote for *Phonograph Monthly Review*. "The magazine is virtually unknown to jazz writers," Collier says, "and Darrell is even less well known, but it is my belief that he can make a fair claim to be called the first jazz critic. He was by no means the first to grasp the essence of jazz; in fact, he was relatively late coming to the music. But he was the first person to review jazz regularly with sensitivity and perception, and he did so for some five years. The bulk of Darrell's critical judgments from about mid-1927 on hold up today. The same could be said of very few critics of the period, in any field." Darrell wrote that Ellington's *Blues I Love to Sing* and *Creole Love Call* were "among the greatest hot performances of all times." He also wrote:

"The marvelously gifted (jazzically) pianist of Louis Armstrong's orchestra [Earl Hines] gets only an occasional opportunity to display his talents in solo discs, so connoisseurs of ultra-modern jazz should not let his present couple of original Caution Blues and a Monday Date slip by. The former is moderately interesting, but the intently rambling Monday Date decidedly extraordinary. Strawinskites and Bartokians will find more than a trace of their cherished modern feeling right here . . . ." Collier quotes Darrell repeatedly, and in all cases his perceptions are right on the mark -- and written well before Panassie and Goffin entered the field.

After the appearance of Collier's monograph, the only thing the Europeans can do to restore their myth is to search out all those newspapers and microfilms from which he quotes and burn them. They're also going to have to hunt down R.D. Darrell and shoot him. He's alive. Both courses of action being impractical, they'll do the only possible thing: try to pretend his monograph was never written. And they will.

The Collier monograph is an important book, one of the most important -- in spite of its slight volume -- ever to appear on the subject. And it is one of the most carefully-researched.

This is in sharp contrast to Gunther Schuller's **The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945**, published by Oxford University Press, $30. The sequel to his *Early Jazz* is being proclaimed the pivotal work on this period of American musical history. Eric Hobsbawm has already praised it in the *New York Review of Books*, demonstrating the European innocence of American musical life and cultural history. Despite Schuller's prestige, the twenty years he spent writing this book, his 30,000 listenings to recordings, 900 pages and 500,000 words of text, it has some serious shortcomings.

Schuller says that "this kind of systematic/comprehensive listening to the recorded evidence . . . (is) often the only reliable information the jazz historian has to go on . . . ." Often, maybe, but by no means always. There are many important witnesses to the era, even to its dawning days, still with us, and Schuller failed to make proper use of an invaluable research resource, the telephone. He could have talked to such people as Bud Dant, still an active musician and living in Hawaii, who was recording in the 1920s. Spiegel Wilcox, who played in the Jean Goldkette band with Bix Beiderbecke and Frank Trumbauer, is alive and living in Cortland, New York, still playing well and leading a small group; in fact I spoke to him recently. Bill Challis is alive. So is Lyle (Spud) Murphy, who was a staff arranger for Benny Goodman from 1935 to '37. It is a jazz historian's duty to get the information these people have on paper before it is too late -- not to make guesses. As a result of this blinkered fixation on records rather than living witnesses to the era, Schuller commits errors so elementary that they would get a neophyte newspaper reporter fired, others that would earn the kid a city editor's reprimand for not knowing the difference between reporting and editorializing.

Example: "Whether (Ray) Conniff's engagement as trombonist/arranger with (Artie) Shaw in 1944 occurred because Shaw recalled Conniff's talent or because it was a chance hiring of a fine player who happened to be available, I cannot say." Then why didn't he call Conniff or Shaw and ask? And if he couldn't be bothered, why didn't he cut the passage out? It tells us nothing, except that Schuller doesn't know.

Schuller describes the metamorphosis of the Woody Herman orchestra from the eclectic "band that plays the blues" into the band associated with *Caldonia* and *Apple Honey*, but doesn't tell why it happened. The earlier band was a co-operative, with Herman its elected leader. As its members went into military service, Herman bought up their shares until he owned the whole band and took it in the direction he wanted to go. Schuller doesn't mention this.

Schuller says that Herman broke up his band in December 1946 because of commercial pressures, planning "to take a long rest after more than twenty years of . . . toil." That's not so. Herman closed it down because his beloved wife Charlotte, tortured by his absences and occasional affairs with women, was becoming addicted to pills and booze. When Herman resolved the problem at home, he immediately formed a new band -- and took Charlotte on the road with him, then ever afterwards. After Charlotte was gone, Woody gave me permission to write that, which I did, long before Schuller's book went to press. Schuller didn't consult Herman, who was alive when the book was being written, but, obviously, trusted some printed source. Probably the information came from some article planted by a press agent in *Down Beat* or another publication of the time, for the very purpose of masking the real reason for the break-up of the band. Where primary sources are available, the historian should never -- never! -- accept secondary sources. That's elementary.

Tommy Dorsey is portrayed as reluctant to integrate jazz and swing-band elements into his orchestra, but alumni of the band attest to his love of jazz and his eagerness to have players like Bud Freeman and Johnny Mince blow long solos as Dorsey grinned with admiration. Why didn't Schuller consult Paul Weston or Don Lodice?

Of the Jimmie Lunceford band Schuller says its "unanimity, one feels, was not imposed from above by the leader . . . but came more out of a mutual respect among the chief arranger-architects of the band . . . ." Never mind how "one feels." Why didn't Schuller phone Snooky Young or Gerald Wilson

and ask? Why didn't he call Al Grey, who played trombone in that band, and who would have told him how Lunceford required his musicians to arrive early and tuned them up individually, and how he instructed them on phrasing? Lunceford knew exactly what he wanted and got it -- the short notes, the lightness, the bounce -- and the evidence is indeed that the uniformity was imposed from above by the leader.

He calls Fletcher Henderson the "principal arranger" for Goodman. Henderson wrote for or sold to Goodman maybe twenty charts; Spud Murphy contributed about fifty to that band's library.

These errors make me uncomfortable with a book I wanted to like without reservation. I am uneasy in those parts of it offering "information" new to me because of the suspicion that what I am being told is as erroneous as passages bearing on matters of which I have personal knowledge.

Another shortcoming is the book's length. It goes on for mind-numbing pages in analyzing early Benny Goodman records that are obscure, unobtainable, and insignificant, and shed little if any light in any case. The book would have benefitted by judicious cutting. It is 550,000 words, which makes it thirteen times the length of the Collier monograph.

An amazing hole in a book presented as scholarly is its failure to cite sources, either in the text or in footnotes, thereby rendering it impossible for later students to trace the origins of its information -- and misinformation.

The Schuller book, due to the author's academic credentials, is likely to be used as a source by scholars. Indeed, Martin Williams is quoted on the dust jacket as saying, "All future commentary on jazz -- indeed on American music -- should be indebted to Schuller's work." Alas, it probably will be. Yet its carelessness renders it unreliable as history. And that is a pity. It has great virtues. In its comprehensive (though at times prolix) musical analyses, it is a fine piece of work. Schuller's background as composer, conductor, and educator, joined to perceptive taste and ears, cause these passages of discussion to glow with intelligence. His descriptions of players' styles are excellent. There are many examples in musical notation that will be incomprehensible to laymen, but they are a mine of rich ore to musicians. For its analyses, the book should be required study in jazz composition and arranging courses. (It should be noted, however, that the transcription of jazz solos is a dodgy business, due to the inability of the system to capture subtleties of phrasing, dynamics, tone, and inflection. Where the records are not available to go with the notation, Schuller's analyses are useless.) It is the analytical material in this book that is worth quoting.

The book is notable for something else: lack of cant. While it emphasizes that the vast preponderance of impetus and innovation in jazz came from black musicians, the music was by no means without fertilization from white players, arrangers, and bandleaders. Schuller's assessment of the significance of Ishant Jones is one of the book's refreshing surprises. If he rightly puts emphasis on Duke Ellington both as composer and bandleader, and on Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, and Charlie Christian among major soloists, he also accounts Bunny Berigan, Jack Teagarden, and Pee Wee Russell among the great soloists -- and Herman as one of the great bandleaders. (And Schuller has already been attacked for these inclusions.)

In a wistful passage with which every writer can sympathize, Schuller says that "at a certain point I simply ran out of time (and energy), and the book . . . had finally to be put to bed." That too is a pity. As it is, flaws and all, *The Swing Era* is a valuable contribution to jazz scholarship. It could have been a masterpiece.

What the English can claim is that they have produced all the good dictionaries and encyclopedias of jazz -- and some of the worst. The excellent include the three volumes of Leonard Feather's pioneering and still monumental Encyclopedias of Jazz in the Fifties, Sixties, and Seventies. (Leonard has been an American citizen for many years, but he was born in London and emigrated to the United States as an adult.) It is a set of books every writer on jazz uses constantly.

In addition to the three volumes by Feather, every jazz lover should have, and every writer on the subject absolutely needs to have, John Chilton's *Who's Who of Jazz: Storyville to Swing Street*. Its emphasis is on older jazz to the partial exclusion of later music, but within that limitation it is a first-rate piece of work, detailed, accurate, and useful.

The standards set by these two men are far above those of three new dictionaries of jazz, all British, that have come out in America in the last year or two.

The Harmony Illustrated Encyclopedia of Jazz, a 208-page magazine-format paperback, contains, it informs us on the cover, "more than 400 photographs and album covers." The book was written by Brian Case and Stan Britt, and "Revised and Updated by Chrissie Murray." It is doubtful that anyone has a burning need for album covers in an encyclopedia, but there are lots of them. The book has color photos on every page. What it is short on is information. The list of important jazz artists on whom there are no biographical data is astonishing. There is, to be sure, an appendix to the book, with three- or four-line sketches. It appears to be an Oops! section for the last-minute inclusion of some overlooked people, among them Sid Catlett, Kenny Clarke, Wild Bill Davison, Eddie Durham, George Duvivier, Wardell Gray, John Guarnieri, Bobby Hackett, Budd Johnson, Philly Joe Jones, John Kirby, Howard McGhee, Shelly Manne, Don Redman and Edgar Sampson.

The book probably deserves a place in the Guinness Book of Records for the number of oversights among volumes on jazz. The book has no biographical sketches whatsoever on Nat Adderley, Kenny Barron, Oscar Brashear, Alan Broadbent, Clifford Brown, Ray Brown, Ralph Burns, Tony Coe, Buddy Collette, Israel Crosby, Bill Crow, Richard Davis, Willie Dennis, Jack DeJohnette, Kenny Drew, Tal Farlow, Victor Feldman, Clare Fischer, Carl Fontana, Dave Frishberg, Conrad Gozzo, John Heard, Neal Hefti, Milton Hinton, Ahmad Jamal, Plas Johnson, Steve Jordan, Shake Keane, Roger Kellaway, Moe Koffman, Scott LaFaro, Bill Mays, Rob McConnell, Don Menza, Joe Mondragon, Paul Motian, Jimmy Mundy, Sal Nistico, Walter Page, Oscar Pettiford, Al Porcino, Mel Powell, Mike Renzi, Frank Rosolino, Tom Scott, Don Schesky, Sahib Shihab, Billy Taylor, Edmund Thigpen, Don Thompson, Leroy Vinnegar, Bill Watrous, Larry Wilcox, Ernie Wilkins, Pat Williams, and Joe Williams. It does have full entries on Annette Peacock (though none on ex-husband Gary Peacock), Flora Purim, and Frank Zappa. It's a terrible book; pass.

Considerably better is **Jazz: the Essential Companion**,

although this book, by Ian Carr, Digby Fairweather, and Brian Priestly, fails to mention Oscar Brashear, Ralph Burns, Alan Broadbent, Larry Bunker, Bill Crow, Willie Dennis, Carl Fontana, Conrad Gozzo, John Heard, Plas Johnson, Moe Koffman, Bill Mays, Rob McConnell, Don Menza, Jimmy Mundy, Al Porcino, Mike Renzi, Don Sebesky, Don Thompson, Larry Wilcox, Pat Williams, and adds a few omissions of its own; Lenny Breau isn't mentioned, for example.

On the whole, this is a fairly good reference work, though not up to the standard of Chilton and Feather. It contains an absolutely exquisite example of the serenely self-congratulatory set of the mind of the British in general and those who write about jazz in particular. The item in which it appears is the bio of Kenny Wheeler. Ian Carr writes: 'Although naturally reticent and self-effacing, Wheeler has always had the inner necessity and vision of the true artist, and this brought him early in his career to Europe, the perfect environment for him because it does not have the gladiatorial competitiveness of the American jazz scene.'

This is ludicrous for several reasons, the first being that it is, and please forgive a lapse into the vernacular, bullshit. One might even say it is John Bullshit.

Let us discuss the vision Kenny, according to Carr, "always" had. I don't know how much of the "always" of Kenny's life Carr knows, but I know quite a bit of it, since we went to high school together. Kenny had no such vision in high school. He didn't have it when he was twenty. He didn't have it when he left for England, and in fact, Kenny's wife told some of our friends in St. Catharines, where we grew up, that Kenny, who now is an instructor in the summers at Banff, had told her that for the first time in his life, he thought maybe he knew enough to teach. Wheeler's success has amazed me not because I thought he lacked talent -- I knew he had it as far back as 1946 -- but because he lacked that quality of self-involvment usually necessary to the artist. His achievements are for that reason only the more thrilling to me.

No "inner necessity and vision of the true artist" took him to England. He went there partly at my suggestion. I remember vividly the night the decision was made. Kenny simply wanted to make a living as a horn player. He had worked sporadically in Toronto, but there was no jazz scene in Canada, no recording industry to speak of, which is why Robert Farnon (mentioned in none of the three new encyclopedias of jazz, though he is a major inspiration of jazz composers everywhere) never returned to Canada after World War II.

Kenny visited me in Montreal, hoping there might be a little action there. I knew there wasn't much, though there was more than in Toronto. I showed him around. We went to the Club St. Michel, one of the training grounds for any number of Montreal jazz musicians, Oscar Peterson among them. Kenny had his horn with him. He wanted to sit in. The trombone player in the group was Japanese; I now know that it was Butch Watanabe (a fine player who isn't mentioned in any of three new encyclopedias). I knew none of the players. Kenny was too shy to ask to sit in. He never did that night; had he been asked to play, he might have remained in Canada.

We sat there at that little table, discussing the cultural restrictions of Canada. The jazz scene was minimal. Book publishing was minimal. Like so many Canadians before us, we were feeling the country's limitations. Kenny and I both wanted to go to the United States, where the opportunities were. But getting a visa was difficult. I suggested England as a second-best choice. We'd heard the Ted Heath and Robert Farnon records, and knew there was at least studio work there. A Canadian passport in those days bore the inscription *A Canadian citizen is a British subject*, and we needed no visas to get in. We planned that he would go first and I would within a few weeks join him. He caught a boat and I, for various reasons, didn't join him, got an American visa, and moved to the United States. I'm glad Kenny went to England. It turned out to be a good move. But it wasn't made for anything like the reason Carr invents in the cause of British self-flattery.

Carr's phrase "the gladiatorial competitiveness of the United States jazz scene" is another manifestation of British cultural parochialism. One of the reasons I have maintained so many friendships among jazz musicians is that I like them (with some exceptions) as people, and one of the things I love about them is their love for each other, their sense of community and kindness and mutual admiration. Let one of them get sick and watch how they all rally to his aid. An amiable competitiveness is indeed there; the cutting contest is part of jazz history. But it is the competitiveness of athletes, and when a great young player such as Jon Faddis or Vaughan Nark or Tom Harrell arrives on the scene, just watch how the older players like Dizzy Gillespie and Clark Terry and Phil Woods become his outriding protectors and enthusiastic champions. And, let us note, it is that tennis-like competition that has made American musicians the best in the world.

Perhaps a measure of the book is that the item on lead author Ian Carr, a trumpet player, is nine column inches compared with the three on Howard McGhee, two and a half for Jon Faddis, and nothing at all on Marvin Stamm. Digby Fairweather, a cornetist, gets not quite five inches, compared with Nat Adderley, a cornetist, who gets two and a half. Brian Priestley, a pianist, gets three and a half inches compared with two and a half inches for Dodo Marmarosa; Junior Mance and Warren Bernhardt aren't mentioned. In his introduction to the book, Ian Carr writes "This is the first time a jazz dictionary has been written entirely by musicians . . . " John Chilton is a trumpet player, and although Leonard Feather is the first to deplore his own piano-playing, he *is* a musician, with a long history as a composer and arranger. So *both* previous important dictionaries of jazz were written by musicians.

It is against this background that the jazz world eagerly awaited **The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz**, published by Macmillan Press Limited, London, and edited by Barry Kernfeld, an American. Macmillan is acquiring within the writing fraternity an appalling reputation for screwing up jazz books. The dictionary, according to the dust jacket, was written by "250 of the world's leading jazz experts." Aside from the fact that you'd have trouble getting any of them to admit that there *are* 250 jazz experts in the world, the fact is that numerous anonymous academics were engaged at submicroscopic fees to work on this two-volume project. They frequently knew nothing about their subjects as they pored through the files at the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers. The results show in the shallowness of many entries.

The book has caused, at least west of the Atlantic, a state of almost stunned disillusion. It has had the curious effect of

bringing together writers of all political and aesthetic prejudices and persuasions in a common view. It may be the first time they have ever agreed on anything, and what they agree on is this: that the book is a disaster. It is a disaster because, unlike the preposterous *Harmony Illustrated Encyclopedia*, it cannot be ignored and, like Gunther Schuller's book, will be accepted by those who do not know better as authoritative. Even *People* magazine has deplored it, saying it compromises Grove's reputation for reliability.

Within the jazz community in the United States, it has become almost a parlor game to see who got left out. There is something seriously amiss with a dictionary of jazz that includes items on Maria Muldaur and Tania Maria and omits Peggy Lee. Among the missing are:

Ernie Andrews, Joey Baron, Guido Basso, Don Bennett, Jane Ira Bloom, Carmen Bradford, Nick Brignola, Carol Britto, Big Bill Broonzy, Flora Bryant, Rolly Bundock, Terri Lyne Carrington, Jodie Christian, John and Jeff Clayton, John Colianni, Billy Childs, Jimmy and Jeannie Cheatham, Don and Alicia Cunningham, Barbara Dane, Garry Dial, Dorothy Donegan, Ray Drummond, Billy Exiner, Robert Farnon, Ernie Felice, Vernell Fournier, John Frigo, Hal Gaylor, Russell George, Ralph Grierson, Vinnie Golia, Don Grusin, Sol Gubin, Corky Hale, Don Heckman, Huddy Ledbetter, Chuck Hedges, Eddie Higgins, Joe Kennedy, Peggy Lee, Bobby Lewis, Don Lodice, Delfeayo and Ellis Marsalis, Rich Matteson, John Mayall, Susannah McCorkle, Gil Melle, Memphis Slim, Rob Mullins, Larry Novack, Johnny Otis, Dick Oatts, Betty O'Hara, Harvey Phillips, Al Plank, Gene Puerling, Sue Raney, Dianne Reeves, Doug Riley, Stacy Rowles, Vi Redd, Bobby Scott, Bernie Senensky, Diane Schuur, Lynn Seaton, Marlene Shaw, the Singers Unlimited, O.C. Smith, William Grant Still, Art Van Damme, Clara Ward, T-Bone Walker, Jiggs Whigham, Alec Wilder, Rick Wilkins, Marion Williams, Pat Williams, Lem Winchester, Mike Wofford, Dave Young the bassist, Eliot Zigmund, Earl Zindars and Michael Zwerin.

A lot of excellent younger musicians are ignored, such as John Basile, Joe Cohn, Harry Connick Jr., Bill Kirchner, Steve Kujala, Peter Leitch, the second Ted Nash, Vaughan Nark, Ken Peplowski, and Peter Sprague.

The book gives the impression that only New York City and Los Angeles matter -- and the authors aren't entirely sure about L.A. Contemporary Chicago is all but ignored. And you'd think there were no musicians in Washington DC, Miami, San Francisco, and the Pacific Northwest. There is a long list of jazz nightclubs which, in Los Angeles alone, manages to omit Catalina, Donte's, Memory Lane, the Persian Room, and the Vine Street Bar and Grill.

The book is scattered with inaccuracies. It says, for example, that Gerry Mulligan's tentet was modeled on the Miles Davis ensemble. Mulligan probably had more to do with the shaping of that earlier group than Davis did, but certainly it was a co-operative developed out of the thinking of Gil Evans. Miles was *appointed* leader of that group, which was essentially a workshop of the writers, including Evans, Mulligan, John Lewis, and Johnny Carisi. It was an attempt to reduce the Claude Thornhill sound to the minimum number of instruments. Thus the statement by J. Bradford Robinson is misleading at the least. Evidence that the right hand didn't know what the left was doing is found in the essay on Miles Davis, written by editor Barry Kernfeld himself: he gets it right.

In an item on trumpeter Sam Noto, Robert Dickow writes that in Toronto "he played and composed for Rob McConnell's Boss Brass, which recorded about 20 of his pieces." God only knows where that came from. Sam Noto, who is not an arranger, wrote nothing whatever for the Boss Brass; almost every chart that band recorded was by either McConnell or Ian McDougall.

Digby Fairweather says that Tony Coe "from the 1970s *collaborated* with *arranger* Henry Mancini as the soloist on soundtracks for the 'Pink Panther' films." The italics are mine. I hope Tony Coe has the grace to be embarrassed by this, and by Fairweather's encomium to his work as against the cavalier treatment of Al Cohn on the facing page.

There are items, as there should be, on some record producers, including George Avakian, John Hammond, and Orrin Keepnews. But there is nothing on Creed Taylor or Bob Thiele, both significant and influential producers, and nothing on Helen Keane, the first woman jazz producer of importance. Martha Glaser isn't mentioned. Neither is Paul Weston, who aside from his work as a jazz arranger, was substantially responsible as music director of Capitol Records in its early days for that company's extensive jazz recording program, including the work of Nat Cole on that label. There are no items on Max Gordon and Barney Josephson. Important disc jockeys such as Symphony Sid Torrin, Ed Mackenzie, and Dave Garroway, who did so much to spread interest in the music, are ignored, and there is no section on disc jockeys as such. Nat Shapiro gets an item; Barry Ulanov doesn't. And, perhaps significantly, neither does Otis Ferguson. A book must have parameters, but the lines of exclusion in *Grove's* seem to be strange and arbitrary indeed.

Often the items seem curiously incomplete. The Carr-Fairweather-Priestley book gives some sense of the character of the people, giving causes of death, though it sometimes is wrong. It says that Frank Rosolino committed "suicide after first killing his children." No, he killed only one of them; he blinded the other. It's a gruesome distinction, but the item is not quite accurate. The Grove doesn't give you any sense of the lives of its subjects at all, and most of the time ignores the cause of death, including the suicides of a number of its subjects. Most people in this book just die, although respectable causes of mortality, such as automobile accidents in the cases of Clifford Brown and Eddie Costa, are occasionally noted. Sonny Berman dies of a heart attack at twenty-one after jamming all night. Oh sure. Bill Evans just has "personal difficulties and health problems." Some careers trail off -- at the point, one suspects, where the press stopped writing about them. One gets an image of young researchers milling in puzzled circles among the Rutgers filing cabinets as the clippings run out, like lemmings confronted by the sea. Tony Aless's career seems to stop in the 1950s; that he went on to be a significant teacher in New York isn't mentioned. The book tells you nothing about Monty Alexander after 1976 and his *Cobolimbo* album; that he and Ray Brown and Herb Ellis have been working together and recording for Concord isn't mentioned, nor is the growing richness and mastery of his playing. Charlie Kennedy's career ends with a 1964 June Christy recording. That this excellent musician quit the

profession, went to work on a loading dock, and refuses to have anything to do with music, isn't mentioned. If you want to know what happened to him after he disappeared from the music world, this book won't tell you.

The two volumes have a curiously bland quality about them, although there's one item that is morbidly funny: the entry on Joe Maini says that he "died after losing a game of Russian roulette." He certainly did.

Even the writing is a little odd, with a schizoid quality. The spellings are American, according to Webster's -- "color" rather than "colour," for example. But some of the useage is British. Their quaint word "whilst" turns up. In places the dictionary follows the new British fad of spelling titles without capital letters, after the manner of the French. (One is reminded of the James Joyce affectation of the French punctuation mark -- a 2-em dash at the start of the paragraph -- which is utterly confusing.) In places you see titles such as *Have you ever felt that way, When lights are low, They can't take that away from me, Hot and bothered.* But much of the time they conform to American (and erstwhile British) practice: *Round Midnight, Stairway to the Stars, Saturday Night Function.* Standing always in awe as I do of our learned British cousins, I wondered if there were some arcane rule underlying the inconsistencies that I, in my fathomless colonial ignorance, might be missing. The French capitalize the first word of a title and then the first noun within it. I found no such consistency. I toyed with the idea that in some wild, jazz-inspired ideal of improvisatory freedom, the American and British contributors had been allowed to render titles according to current national fashion. But no, in the same paragraph on Benny Carter, indeed the same sentence, one finds *I'd love it* and *Crazy Rhythm*. Who's in charge of copy-reading around here?

If the book is generally bland, with recitations of facts without interpretation, the most superficial biographical details without judgment, there are unexpected lapses in this policy. At the end of the item on John LaPorta, Brian Priestley, who is listed in his own book with Carr and Fairweather as "piano, arranger, author, broadcaster" and presumably considers himself a fine arranger, delivers this bit of venom: "LaPorta's compositions . . . are not compelling, and his high-level involvement with jazz education betokens considerable responsibility for its lop-sided achievements so far."

Now that is a curious leap of logic. There has never been much correlation between ability as artist and talent as teacher: Gordon Delamont wasn't a very good composer, but he was a superb theorist and teacher, whose students have included Rick Wilkins (who isn't mentioned in the book) and Rob McConnell. So too George Tremblay (who isn't mentioned in the book), mentor, it sometimes seems, to half the jazz and film composers in California. Of course, there will be heart-broken weeping and tearing of clothes at Indiana University, North Texas State, Rice, Eastman, and all the other sink-holes of American jazz education on the discovery that far across the Atlantic, Brian Priestley doesn't think much of their work. (He presumably thinks highly of his own teaching.) But aside from all that, John LaPorta has not had all that much influence in American jazz education, good or bad. The book has no entries at all on Robert Share, who designed the original system of teaching at Berklee; or Dr. Eugene Hall, who raised the teaching of jazz at North Texas State to a level of international repute, or Prof. Leon Breeden, his successor, all of whom have had more influence in American jazz education than LaPorta. And they, incidentally, are far better and tougher critics of the jazz education movement than Priestley. That remark about LaPorta, and I am surprised that it was allowed to find its way into print, is curiously gratuitous. What has Priestley got against poor John LaPorta? Or is the remark directed at some competitor British critic as the latest round in a vendetta we know not of? If ever there was "gladiatorial competitiveness," it is among British jazz critics.

But Priestley's most arresting pontification is the one that ends his entry on Neal Hefti: (T)he pace-setting performances on the album *Basie* (1957) . . . exerted a stultifying influence on most big-band arranging thereafter." This is going to come as one hell of a surprise to Johnny Mandel, Rob McConnell, Ladd McIntosh (who isn't mentioned in the book), Dick Hazard (who isn't mentioned in the book), Lalo Schifrin, Gerald Wilson, Clare Fischer, Bob Florence, Sahib Shihab, Bill Potts, Francy Boland, Bill Holman, Roger Kellaway, Cl[illegible] Ogerman, Bob Brookmeyer, Gerry Mulligan, and more. (Not to mention a few who are gone, such as Thad Jones, Gil Evans, and Eddie Sauter.) Did you guys know that? Did you realize that Hefti and Basie stultified you all in 1957? We have Brian Priestley's word for it, and That Word -- hands over hearts, please -- Is British.

The book leans heavily on Chilton and Feather, and is forthright about attributing the credits. Unfortunately, the items drawn from these sources add little if anything to the originals.

Grove's doesn't even tell us what we want to know about new people and later developments, except that big-band writing got stultified in 1957. It sells for a whopping $350. The three Feather books are in print, though poorly distributed. You are far better off to pick up a copy of Chilton and order the Feather books directly from Leonard. The original *Encyclopedia of Jazz* is $19, *Jazz in the Sixties* $15, *Jazz in the Seventies* $17, plus $2 a volume for postage, $3 for two or three volumes. That's $54 for all three. You can Leonard at 13833 Riverside Drive, Sherman Oaks CA 9142[illegible]

The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz is the only book I can think of to be denounced by some of its own contributors, including Feather. Lee Jeske of *Cash Box* had contributed biographical items to a previous *Grove's*. He asked that they not be used again. Not only were they used, they were, he says, edited without his consultation until they embarrassed him. Jeske wrote a scathing article on the dictionary, disowning the material that appears over his byline.

I should like to propose the establishment at some university of a data-base to catalog the errors of jazz history. A writer would be able to consult it and avoid the mistakes of prior printed sources. When errors turn up in books seen as authoritative, the compounded effects are far-reaching. An example. Gabriel Faure did *not* write the *Requiem* on the death of his father. Why then do we keep reading that he did? Well, one reason is that the 1971 *Britannica* says so. And who knows where the error started.

James Lincoln Collier's fine little monograph clears away a lot of errors of jazz history just as Gunther Schuller's *The Swing Era* and, far more so, Grove's have given us a massive collection of new ones.