

Is Conventional Jazz History Distorted by Myths?

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INTRODUCTION

In his 2010 book, *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet: Race and the Mythology, Politics, and Business of Jazz*, Randall Sandke strongly criticizes jazz writers and scholars for presenting a biased and misleading picture of jazz history. As indicated by the book's title, Sandke's primary focus is on the issue of race in jazz or, more specifically, on the depiction of race in conventional jazz history. According to Sandke, jazz historians commonly portray the music as "the expression of a distinct and independent African-American culture, isolated by its long history of slavery, segregation, and discrimination." He labels this view as exclusionary. In contrast, Sandke argues that while jazz may have originally been created by black Americans, it evolved into a form consisting of a mixture of musical elements from different cultures. From this perspective jazz is "more properly understood as the juncture of a wide variety of influences under the broader umbrella of American and indeed world culture." He labels this view as inclusionary. In brief, the exclusionary approach views jazz as an African American music, while the inclusionary approach views jazz as a multi-cultural music created by African Americans.¹

Sandke acknowledges that the tendency of jazz writers to emphasize the influence of African American culture in jazz is "perhaps only natural, given that the music sprang from a black environment, and the overwhelming majority of its greatest exponents have been African-American."² But he identifies another—and for him, clearly more significant—reason why jazz writers tend to place so much emphasis on the role of African American culture in jazz history. It is because jazz writers and scholars have traditionally been social activists seeking to use jazz to fight racism and promote social change. Sandke traces the link between social activism and jazz literature to the first generation of jazz writers from the 1930s. These writers tended to be leftists or liberals who viewed jazz as an authentic form of African American

¹ Sandke, *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet*, 1.

² Sandke, 2.

folk music and sought to publicize the music's contribution to American culture. By so doing, they hoped to counteract the racist attitudes and segregationist policies prevalent at the time. As Sandke explains it:

Going back to the beginnings of jazz scholarship and on through today there has been a marked tendency to combine the study of jazz with a desire to effect positive social change. Many jazz historians felt, and still feel, that it is their duty to use jazz as a tool to promote social and economic justice for African-Americans.³

Sandke commends the early activist writers for their opposition to racism and for their efforts to promote racial equality. He also praises them for helping to alter the widely held notions of black cultural and intellectual inferiority. However, he criticizes these writers for being overly zealous in their efforts to use jazz to promote social change. This overzealousness led some of the early writers to invent theories based on little or no evidence. Facts that did not fit these theories were ignored and replaced by myths. The result is the common depiction of jazz as an exclusively African American style of music.

Sandke also criticizes the recent generation of jazz writers and scholars for readily accepting and perpetuating the myths created by the earlier jazz writers. He contends that the recent jazz historians, especially those within academic circles, uncritically accept the false notions put forth by earlier writers because of their eagerness to display their liberal credentials. Consequently, "the mythology of jazz is alive as ever, as is the desire to force the music into an ideological mold."⁴ Since the recent historians, like their predecessors, are guided more by their adherence to liberal ideology than by their desire for historical accuracy, their work continues to advance the notion of jazz as a style of African American music born out of oppression. Sandke argues further that continued adherence to the exclusionary view of jazz fosters both racial separation and reverse discrimination.

In essence, Sandke sees conventional jazz history—from its beginnings in the thirties, through to the present—as largely consisting of mythology shaped by ideology. As he explains it, "several generations of jazz writers believed it was their duty to combat racism by depicting the music as an outgrowth of African culture; as the product of an insular black community; and as a reaction to segregation and discrimination." Sandke then asks: "But how does

³ Sandke, 2.

⁴ Sandke, 35.

the historical record actually compare with these assessments?”⁵ He answers this question by conducting a critical analysis of seven myths that are closely associated with the exclusionary view of jazz history. Sandke examines six of these myths in a single chapter, titled “Good Intentions and Bad History.” The seventh is contained in a chapter of its own, titled “The Biggest Myth of All.” These myths, which are described in subsequent sections of the paper, are as follows:

Myth 1: Jazz has African origins

Myth 2: Congo Square was the link between African music and jazz

Myth 3: The 1890s Jim Crow laws led to the creation of jazz

Myth 4: Buddy Bolden was the quintessential black musician who embodied the raw primitive nature of jazz

Myth 5: Rhythm was the defining characteristic of bebop

Myth 6: Black nationalism was the source of avant-garde jazz

Myth 7: Jazz was sustained almost exclusively by the black community until after

Sandke’s critical analysis of these myths is generally quite convincing. He does a good job (with one exception) of tracing the myths back to their original sources and documenting their appearance in the work of early jazz writers. He also provides strong evidence that refutes these myths. Sandke, however, makes very little effort to support his assertion that these myths are being perpetuated by present day writers and scholars. Sandke’s failure to adequately support this assertion raises a question about its accuracy. This question was the impetus behind the present study.

This study’s objective is to examine the extent to which the myths identified by Sandke are being perpetuated by contemporary jazz historians. This will be done by conducting a content analysis of all surveys of jazz history published since 1990.⁶ The books included in the study are listed in Table 1.⁷

⁵ Sandke, 39.

⁶ The study does not include the more specialized types of historically oriented jazz books, such as biographies and autobiographies, collections of historical essays, regional studies, and other specific topic areas. The decision to limit the study to survey histories was based on methodological considerations. To expand the sample of books beyond this core category would have required subjective selection procedures that risked biasing the study and weakening the research design.

The list includes works by such prominent jazz writers and scholars as Martin Williams, Gary Giddins, Scott DeVeaux, Lewis Porter, Michael Ullman, and Ted Gioia. Although the fourteen books being examined in this study represent only a small portion of the recent jazz literature, they are fundamental sources of jazz history for students and non-students alike. Most of the books have been published in multiple editions, attesting to their popularity and influence. As can be seen in the last column of Table 1, only two of the listed books are cited by Sandke: Martin Williams's *The Jazz Tradition*, and Ward and Burns's *Jazz: A History of America's Music*. Thus, in his critical analysis of the jazz mythology, Sandke ignores the vast majority of survey histories published over the past two decades. I believe this reflects Sandke's failure to adequately assess the extent to which recent jazz historians are perpetuating myths from the past.

The content analysis of recent surveys of jazz history is presented in the sections that follow. Each section focuses on one of the seven myths identified by Sandke. In each section I describe the myth, present Sandke's refutation of the myth, and examine the extent to which the myth appears in the recent survey histories. I then summarize the findings and draw some conclusions.

Table 1. Surveys of jazz history included in the current study. Full publication information is contained in the bibliography.

Author(s)	Book Title	Original Publication Date	Edition of Text Used in Study	Cited by Sandke
Joachim-Ernst Berendt and Gunther Huesmann*	<i>The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to the 21st Century</i>	1953	2009	No
Martin Williams	<i>The Jazz Tradition</i>	1970	1993	Yes
Frank Tirro	<i>Jazz: A History</i>	1977	1993	No
Mark Gridley	<i>Jazz Styles: History and Analysis</i>	1978	2000	No
Grover Sales	<i>Jazz: America's Classical Music</i>	1984	1992	No
Donald Megill and Richard Demory	<i>Introduction to Jazz History</i>	1989	2004	No
Lewis Porter and Michael Ullman	<i>Jazz: From Its Origins to the Present</i>	1993	1993	No

⁷ Three of the books listed in Table 1 were originally published prior to 1990, but each has been revised, updated, and re-released subsequently.

Ted Gioia	<i>The History of Jazz</i>	1997	1997	No
Burton Peretti	<i>Jazz in American Culture</i>	1997	1997	No
Mervyn Cooke	<i>Jazz</i>	1999	1999	No
Geoffrey Ward and Ken Burns	<i>Jazz: A History of America's Music</i>	2000	2000	Yes
Alyn Shipton	<i>A New History of Jazz</i>	2001	2001	No
Henry Martin and Keith Waters	<i>Jazz: The First 100 Years</i>	2002	2002	No
Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux	<i>Jazz</i>	2009	2009	No

*Original and later editions were written by Joachim-Ernst Berendt. Huesmann joined Berendt in 1981, and took over as author after Berendt's death in 2000.

MYTH 1: JAZZ HAS AFRICAN ORIGINS

One of the primary goals of jazz historians has been to explain the music's origins. A significant portion of these explanatory efforts has focused on the influence of traditional African music in the creation of jazz.⁸ It is Sandke's contention that jazz writers have greatly exaggerated the African influence, leading to the widespread but erroneous belief that jazz has African origins and is an extension of traditional African music. Sandke traces the African origins theory to three writers. One is Rudi Blesh, author of one of the first American jazz history books, *Shining Trumpets*, published in 1946. In it he wrote, "Jazz . . . is a synthesis of African and European material so predominantly African in character and method that it might be more accurate to define it as an African art form."⁹ Another writer to promote this idea is Marshall Stearns, author of *A Story of Jazz*, published in 1956. Stearns devoted a chapter of his book to "Jazz and West African Music" in which he wrote, "An assortment of West African musical characteristics are preserved, more or less intact, in the United States"¹⁰ A third example is composer and musicologist Gunther Shuller,

⁸ Most slaves were brought to the American colonies from West Africa, and most of the African traditions that the jazz writers describe came from that region. For convenience, the terms West Africa(n) and Africa(n) are used interchangeably in this paper.

⁹ Rudi Blesh, *Shining Trumpets*, 5.

¹⁰ Marshall Stearns, *The Story of Jazz*, 14.

whose book *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* attempts to demonstrate the link between jazz and African music by comparing the structural forms of both styles.

Sandke presents several arguments refuting the African origins theory. One argument is framed around the concept of polyrhythm, the simultaneous use of two or more related but opposing meters. The use of polyrhythms is often identified as one of the traditional West African musical elements that African Americans incorporated into jazz. Sandke, however, sees the rhythmic approaches of West African music and jazz as substantially different. When the slaves transplanted the music of Africa to the American colonies, polyrhythms became compressed into simple and regular meters common to Western classical music. Sandke acknowledges that polyrhythms do occur in jazz, but unlike African music, where polyrhythms remain throughout an entire performance, “polyrhythms [in jazz] function by creating a feeling of momentary tension that ultimately resolves by reemphasizing the basic meter—much like the role of dissonance plays in harmony.”¹¹ He adds that researchers who traveled to Africa to find parallels between traditional African music and jazz found very little in common between the two styles.¹²

Sandke also points out that attempts to merge traditional African music and jazz have consistently failed. He argues that if jazz were truly an extension of traditional African music, the merging of the two styles would have been quite easily accomplished. The fact that this has not been the case is evidence that the two styles are basically dissimilar. While Sandke concedes that jazz does contain some African musical elements, he maintains that the music is mainly characterized by a blend of Afro-American and Euro-American musical influences. He concludes that, “Jazz is a homegrown music, created by African-Americans. Let’s just leave it at that.”¹³

Do the authors of recent survey histories continue to perpetuate the African origins theory? My analysis of these books indicates they do not. Instead, the vast majority of recent writers describe the origins of jazz as a mixture of African and European (and Caribbean) musical elements. Twelve of the fourteen books included in this study emphasize the multicultural nature of

¹¹ Sandke, 40.

¹² Sandke, 41.

¹³ Sandke.44.

jazz origins.¹⁴ This view is reflected in the following passages from books by Frank Tirro, Megill and Demory, and Martin and Waters.

The embryonic music [of jazz] developed from the traditions of West African, European, and American music as they were brought together by African Americans in the southern United States. It continued to evolve from the marriage of African-American sacred and secular music with American band traditions and instruments as well as with European harmonies and forms.¹⁵

Western European music also heavily influenced the development of jazz. These early influences came from four areas: church hymns, folk songs and dances, military marches and airs, and classical compositions. Not all forms were present in the Americas when the first slaves were brought over, but each eventually had an effect. . . . It might be said that of the three major elements of music, Africa's principal contribution was rhythm, Europe's was harmony, and both furnished melody; however, it was the Afro-Americans who combined all three elements into a whole.¹⁶

Jazz is difficult to define, in part, because of its complex history, for jazz has African, European, and even Caribbean roots. Although the precise contributions of various cultures and subcultures remain controversial, without their blending, jazz would not have come into being. This much is clear: Jazz arose not in Africa, not in Europe, and not in the Caribbean, but in the United States, thanks to the importation of nonnative musical elements into the dominant European culture of the U.S. society.¹⁷

The literature contains two basic explanations of why the black originators of jazz combined their traditional African music with European and Caribbean musical styles. One is that the slaves were forced to give up much of their African culture—including many of their musical traditions—because of

¹⁴ Berendt and Huesmann, *The Jazz Book*, 10; Williams, *The Jazz Tradition*, 10; Tirro, *Jazz*, 3; Gridley, *Jazz Styles*, 32, 39-49; Sales, *Jazz*, 3, 49; Megill and Demory, *Introduction to Jazz History*, 2-3; Porter and Ullman, *Jazz*, 7-9; Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 6-8; Cooke, *Jazz*, 14; Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 6-7; Ward and Burns, *Jazz*, 10; Martin and Waters, *Jazz*, 3-5.

¹⁵ Tirro, 3.

¹⁶ Megill and Demory, 3.

¹⁷ Martin and Waters, 3.

systematic resocialization imposed upon them by slaveholders and other dominant whites.¹⁸ The other is that the blending of African and European cultural traits—including those associated with music—reflects the pluralistic nature of American society into which African Americans were acculturated.¹⁹ While these two explanations reflect somewhat different perspectives, they basically agree that by the time jazz emerged, the traditional African musical traits blended with those of the European culture. In New Orleans, where jazz originated, there was an additional blending of Caribbean culture. It is this multicultural explanation of jazz, not the African origins theory, that dominates examined in this study.

MYTH 2: CONGO SQUARE WAS THE LINK BETWEEN AFRICAN MUSIC AND JAZZ

New Orleans, the city identified as the birthplace of jazz, has a unique history. It was a French (and briefly Spanish) colony until 1803, when it became part of the United States. Unlike the English colonies, which banned African instruments and dancing among its slaves, slaves in New Orleans were allowed to gather in public and dance to their native music. These events were held in an area known as Congo Square. The early jazz writers identified Congo Square as the place where African music survived intact and was passed on to the first generation of jazz musicians. According to Sandke, although this idea has proven to be false, it remains part of jazz mythology.

Sandke traces the Congo Square myth to *Jazzmen* (1939), edited by Frederick Ramsey Jr. and Charles Edward Smith, the first jazz history book published in the United States. The myth also appears in a number of other jazz history books, including those by Robert Goffin, Rudi Blesh, Marshall Stearns, and Gunther Schuller. The idea that Congo Square was a link between African music and jazz rests on the premise that African dances continued in Congo Square as late as the 1880s. Since jazz originated around the 1890s, this would mean that some of the music's founders were alive when the Congo Square events took place. As expressed in *Jazzmen*, "The leader of the first great [jazz] orchestra, Buddy Bolden, was already in his teens before the Congo Square dances were discontinued."²⁰ The idea that the Congo

¹⁸ Those holding this view include Cooke, 17; Porter and Ullman, 9; and Megill and Demory, 3.

¹⁹ Those holding this view include Berendt and Huesmann, 10; Gridley, 39; and Ward and Burns, 10.

²⁰ Ramsey and Smith, eds. *Jazzmen*, 9.

Square events continued into the 1880s led Rudi Blesh to speculate: "What, then, must have been the effect of this African survival at its height, on the children and youths who, in future years, formed the first street bands? May not some of them have danced and sung, drummed or blown wooden trumpets in the historic Square?"²¹

Claims that the Congo Square events continued into the 1880s were based on two articles written in the late-nineteenth century by journalists Lafcadio Hearn and George Washington Cable. As it turns out, both articles were false. Hearn based his article on a single observation of a small group of African American dancers in what he mistakenly thought was Congo Square. The Cable's article was found to be pure fabrication. He claimed the dances still existed at the time he was writing (in 1883), but he based his report not on first-hand observations as he implied but on previously published reports.²²

The truth of Congo Square was uncovered by New Orleans historians Henry Kmen and Jerah Johnson (1995). As a result of their separate work, we now know that there were no dances in Congo Square during the 1880s and that the dances were discontinued long before the founders of jazz were alive. Therefore, Congo Square could not have been a direct link between African music and jazz. Furthermore, both Kmen and Johnson indicate that even in the early nineteenth century, the Congo Square events were no longer purely African, but included music and instruments of other New Orleans cultures.

The work of Kmen and Johnson seems to have thoroughly penetrated the jazz history literature, either directly or indirectly. None of the recent books examined in this study claim that the Congo Square dances continued into the 1880s and none claim Congo Square was a link between African music and jazz.

While there is overall agreement that Congo Square was not a direct link between African music and jazz, there is relatively little agreement regarding what role if any Congo Square played in the history of jazz. Five of the recent books make no mention of Congo Square whatsoever.²³ Four of the books briefly describe its existence and then move on to other topics.²⁴ Three books view Congo Square events as helping to shape the New Orleans culture,

²¹ Blesh, 157-158.

²² Sandke, 46-48; See also Widmer, "The Invention of a Memory," 69-78.

²³ Williams; Gridley; Sales; Megill and Demory; and Peretti.

²⁴ Berendt and Huesmann, 6; Porter and Ullman, 7-8; Tirro, 5; and Cooke, 8.

thereby acting as a foundation upon which jazz was built.²⁵ In this regard, Giddins and DeVeaux write, “The important thing is that [the Congo Square events] were permitted to continue as long as they did. . . . Here, African music enjoyed an untrammled exposure that assured it a role in the developing culture of New Orleans.”²⁶ The remaining two books view the Congo Square dances, not as the location where African music persisted, but instead as a place where slaves were already beginning to blend musical elements from different non-African cultures.²⁷ As explained by Martin and Waters, “Contemporary descriptions of the gathering of slaves on Sundays and holidays in New Orleans’ Place Congo (now called Louis Armstrong Park) reveal a mix of African and European instruments.”²⁸ Despite these different perspectives, the recent writers make one thing clear: the Congo Square events were discontinued too soon to have had a direct impact on the creation of jazz.

MYTH 3: THE 1890s JIM CROW LAWS LED TO THE CREATION OF JAZZ

The third myth identified by Sandke revolves around the Jim Crow laws imposed in Louisiana in the 1890s. As Sandke explains it: “One of the most frequently cited ‘creation myths’ concerning jazz purports to show how the music came about as a response to discriminatory racial legislation enacted in Louisiana during the 1890s.”²⁹ According to this myth, discriminatory laws forced previously antagonistic mixed-race Creoles and blacks to live together, to work together, and perform music together.

The notion that Jim Crow laws contributed to the creation of jazz can be traced to Alan Lomax, who theorized that these discriminatory laws pushed Creoles out of the skilled trades they once dominated and into music as a source of livelihood.³⁰ Creoles had always valued music as a cultural commodity, but until the Jim Crow laws, music for most had been only a hobby and not a profession. At the same time that Creoles were turning to music as a livelihood, many blacks were using music as a means of upward mobility, since it was one of the few lucrative occupations open to them. According to Lomax, it was the meeting of musicians from these two groups—

²⁵ Shipton, 19-20; Giddins and DeVeaux, 77; and Gioia, 4-5.

²⁶ Giddins and DeVeaux, 77.

²⁷ Martin and Waters, 10; and Ward and Burns, 9-10.

²⁸ Martin and Waters, 10.

²⁹ Sandke, 49.

³⁰ Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 79.

one on the way down, the other on the way up—that led to the creation of jazz. Samuel Charters added a significant detail to this theory by citing “Louisiana Legislative Code No. 111 of 1894” as the law that forced the Creoles, who had historically resided in downtown French neighborhoods, to move to the black and American uptown neighborhoods, where they struggled to maintain their superior status in a hostile environment.³¹ Further elaborations followed, but at this point the basics of the theory had been established.

Sandke rejects the idea that racial discrimination led to jazz. First of all, he argues, city directories of New Orleans reveal that the Creoles did not lose their skilled trade work as a result of discriminatory legislation. Instead, Creoles continued to dominate certain trades, including carpentry and cabinetmaking, masonry, house painting, and plastering. Secondly, while the proportion of African American musicians did increase around the turn of the twentieth century, there is no evidence this was due to discriminatory legislation. Sandke contends that the increase was more likely due to the popularity of Creole and black bands during this period rather than to racial discrimination.³²

Sandke also cites the work of New Orleans historian Jerah Johnson in his refutation of the myth.³³ Johnson traces misconceptions that crept into the work of jazz historians as they elaborated upon the theory that jazz was born out of racial discrimination. One serious error revealed by Johnson is that Samuel Charters was mistaken when he identified “Louisiana Legislative Code No. 111 of 1894” as the law that forced Creoles into uptown neighborhoods. The law that Charters refers to—which was imposed in 1890, not 1894—required separate train cars for black and white passengers, and was not aimed at residential segregation. Furthermore, Johnson argues that the Jim Crow laws that were passed in the 1890s were not systematically enforced until near or during World War I, by which time jazz had already been developed.

If discriminatory laws did not bring Creole and black musicians together, what did? Sandke suggests that the answer lies in the music itself. “There was a growing demand at all levels of society for the hot new style of dance music

³¹ Charters, *Jazz New Orleans, 1885-1957*, 3.

³² Sandke, 49-50.

³³ Johnson, “Jim Crow Laws of the 1890s and the Origins of New Orleans Jazz,” 243-251.

that came to be known as jazz; and . . . anyone who couldn't or wouldn't play it would be left out of a competitive and lucrative market." Furthermore, there was the irresistible appeal of this new style of music that drew the Creole and black musicians together. "Historians and social critics, many of whom are just as passionately drawn to the music as the musicians themselves, never seem content to ascribe this passion to the power of the music alone."³⁴

Like the earlier writers, most of the recent jazz historians identify discriminatory racial legislation as contributing to the creation of jazz. Nine of the fourteen recent survey histories embrace this view.³⁵ A tenth book mentions it as a theory without endorsing it.³⁶ Significantly, six of these books claim that it was the non-existent "Louisiana Legislative Code No. 111 of 1894" that brought the formerly antagonistic Creoles and blacks together.³⁷ As stated by Ted Gioia, "Toward the close of the nineteenth century, this separate existence no longer remained possible for many black Creoles. Perhaps the most decisive turning point was the passage of the Louisiana Legislative Code in 1894 that designated that any one of African ancestry was a Negro. Slowly, but inexorably, these Creoles of color were pushed into closer and closer contact with the black underclass they had strenuously avoided for so long." He goes on to add, "The forced association took place not only in the broader social arena, but also in the musical subculture of New Orleans."³⁸

It is important to note that five of the recent books also suggest that Creoles joined blacks in playing jazz because of the popularity of the music.³⁹ In most of these books, however, the primary explanation is that racial discrimination led to the blending of Creole and black musical styles. The exception is the Martin and Waters book, which identifies the "effects of discrimination" and the "popularity of the music" as two explanations of the origins of jazz. Martin and Waters refer to the first explanation as the "uptown/downtown" theory because it focuses on the idea that the forced mixing of uptown-dwelling black musicians with downtown-dwelling Creoles

³⁴ Sandke, 53.

³⁵ Tirro, 117; Gridley, 39; Porter and Ullman, 23; Gioia, 34; Peretti, 19; Cooke, 47; Shipton, 76; Ward and Burns, 16; and Giddins and DeVaux, 78-79.

³⁶ Martin and Waters, 39-40.

³⁷ Tirro, 117; Porter and Ullman, 23; Gioia, 34; Cooke, 47; Shipton, 76; and Giddins and DeVaux, 78.

³⁸ Gioia, 34.

³⁹ Gridley, 38; Porter and Ullman, 23; Peretti, 20; Martin and Waters, 40; and Giddins and DeVaux, 80.

created a catalyst for jazz. They refer to the second explanation as the “generational” theory because it focuses on the fact that an earlier generation of trained Creole musicians were followed by a newer generation of musicians who played a hotter more popular style of dance music, which evolved into jazz.⁴⁰ Other than Martin and Waters’s neutral position, however, the recent jazz writers generally invoke discriminatory legislation to explain jazz origins.

MYTH 4: BUDDY BOLDEN WAS THE QUINTESSENTIAL BLACK MUSICIAN WHO EMBODIED THE RAW PRIMITIVE NATURE OF JAZZ

The next myth identified by Sandke concerns Buddy Bolden, the man many consider the creator of jazz. Bolden’s status is largely based on anecdotal evidence given to early jazz historians by old-time New Orleans musicians, most notably cornet player Bunk Johnson. Johnson was originally tracked down by jazz writer William Russell and the communication between the two provided the groundbreaking information about Bolden that appeared in *Jazzmen*. Gradually, over the years, a rough portrait of Buddy Bolden emerged. Unfortunately, as noted by Sandke, this portrait proved to be more mythological than factual.

The mythological Buddy Bolden basically fit the stereotype of a black uptown New Orleans musician who invented a new type of music based on raw feelings and emotion. As described by Sandke, “Bolden is typically portrayed as the quintessential ‘uptown black’ (as opposed to the more refined ‘downtown Creole’), meaning he was poor, uneducated, and the product of a largely insular black environment.”⁴¹ Although he was a professional musician, he was believed to have been musically illiterate. At times, Bolden was pictured quite ominously, as seen in the following caricature by English historian Eric Hobsbawm: “We see him first, surrounded by legendary mist, as Buddy Bolden, the demon barber of Franklin Street, the blackest of black men, as the tale goes, ‘a pure Negro’ (for blackness means low status, even among Negroes), who found his cornet on the street.”⁴²

It was the work of Bolden biographer Donald Marquis that set the record straight. His well-known and respected 1978 book, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*:

⁴⁰ Martin and Waters, 39-40.

⁴¹ Sandke, 54.

⁴² Hobsbawm, *The Jazz Scene*, 172.

First Man of Jazz, combined documentary evidence with in-depth interviews to correct many of the factual errors that originated with Bunk Johnson and others. Marquis's findings, as summarized by Sandke, indicate that Bolden was never a barber; he never edited a scandal sheet called *The Cricket*; and "Tin Type Hall," where he supposedly played, never existed. As Sandke notes, "Trumpeter Bunk Johnson, who supplied many of these colorful and misleading details, was simply too young to have worked in Bolden's band as he claimed."⁴³ Most significantly, Marquis's findings have altered the common perception of Bolden as the product of a segregated uptown neighborhood who was both uneducated and musically untrained.

Marquis's examination of city directories found that the neighborhood in which Bolden spent most of his life was integrated in terms of ethnicity and social class. With regard to formal education, the evidence Marquis pieced together from interviews and archival material indicates that Bolden not only attended, but also completed school. Marquis also discovered that Bolden received formal music lessons from a neighbor who taught him the rudiments of reading music and playing the cornet.⁴⁴ Taken together, these findings cast Bolden in an entirely different light than the depictions of him in early jazz history books.

Not surprisingly, given the widespread popularity of Marquis's work, the mythological Buddy Bolden does not appear in the recent survey histories. Six of the seven books that discuss Bolden's life present him in terms similar to those put forth by Marquis and Sandke.⁴⁵ Like the work of these two writers, the recent historians seek to dispel the myths contained in earlier portrayals of Bolden's life. For example, as explained by Gioia: "For years, only the barest sketch of a biography was available—a biography that placed Bolden as a barber and editor of a local scandal sheet, both facts ultimately proven to be untrue. However, detailed research conducted by Donald Marquis . . . put to rest the many misconceptions and brings us probably as close as we will ever get to Bolden and his music."⁴⁶ Most importantly, the recent literature replaces the racial and cultural stereotypes that surrounded Bolden with a more accurate portrait. In this regard, Ward and Burns write, "Bolden grew up and lived for

⁴³ Sandke, 54.

⁴⁴ Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 22-38.

⁴⁵ Those books that discuss Bolden without including any myths are Porter and Ullman, 16, 25; Gioia, 35; Shipton, 83; Ward and Burns, 21; Martin and Waters, 41; and Giddins and DeVaux, 80-1. The one book that includes some falsehoods is Tirro, 114.

⁴⁶ Gioia, 35.

most of his life on First Street, in an integrated workingman's neighborhood where every kind of music was his for the hearing,"⁴⁷ while Giddins and DeVaux write, "Bolden, who could read music (he had studied with a neighbor), played in every kind of setting."⁴⁸

As a result of these and other works, Buddy Bolden has come to life as a more real person than the mythical one introduced to the jazz public more than a half-century ago. He is now generally pictured as a young man who combined the music he heard around New Orleans with his own personal techniques to create a blues-inflected musical style that came to be known as jazz.

MYTH 5: RHYTHM WAS THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC OF BEBOP

For the next myth, we jump to the 1940s, when bebop replaced swing as the dominant jazz style in America. Bebop was developed by some of the most innovative musicians in jazz history, including most prominently, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, and Dexter Gordon. But what made their music so innovative? According to Sandke, many jazz writers, including LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Martin Williams and Gunther Schuller, view rhythmic innovations as bebop's most distinctive innovation. As Sandke quotes from Williams's book *The Jazz Tradition*, "The crucial thing about the bebop style is that its basis came from the resources of jazz itself, and it came about in much the same way that innovation had come about in the past. That basis is rhythmic, and it involves the rhythmic subdivision....We should not talk about harmonic exactness or substitute chords and the rest before we have talked about rhythm."⁴⁹ By focusing on rhythm, Williams and the other writers tend to isolate the African-based component of jazz, thereby linking bebop to African roots. This is a myth, claims Sandke, because bebop's rhythmic and harmonic developments are so closely linked that it is impossible to determine the more essential element.

Sandke goes on to say, however, that "harmony was uppermost in the minds of the beboppers when discussing their new musical language." He provides several comments from musicians supporting this assertion. Bill

⁴⁷ Ward and Burns, 21.

⁴⁸ Giddins and DeVaux, 81.

⁴⁹ Williams, 137-138.

Doggett is quoted as explaining how he and Dizzy Gillespie would “sit around and talk music, chord changes; that was the real thing at that particular time... We would take a tune like ‘I Can’t Get Started,’ which Diz made one of his great tunes. Now this was a slow ballad, and we would try to make different chords off of almost every note there was in the tune.” And Milt Hinton is quoted as describing how Gillespie talked about experimenting with chord progressions. “We’re gonna play ‘I Got Rhythm’ but we’re gonna use these Changes. Instead of using B-flat and D-flat, we’re gonna use B-flat, D-flat, G-flat, or F and we change.”⁵⁰ Comments such as these suggest that harmony was a crucial element of bebop; certainly as important as, or more important than, rhythm.

Another component of Sandke’s overall argument is that popular songs from the thirties provided the basis for bebop’s harmonic innovations, dispelling the notion that bebop was a revolutionary music, as claimed by Jones (Baraka), or that it represented an “atavistic” return to African music, as suggested by Schuller. Sandke notes that the songs adapted by the beboppers—which included American standards such as “Embraceable You,” “I Got Rhythm,” “Don’t Blame Me” and “Cherokee”—were harmonically sophisticated and anticipated some of the innovations commonly associated with bop. The chord changes from many of these songs provided the harmonic underpinnings of bebop classics, such as “Yardbird Suite” and “Salt Peanuts.”⁵¹

Do the recent jazz writers continue to identify rhythm as bebop’s definitive musical element and ignore the harmonic component? As we have already seen, Martin Williams’s *The Jazz Tradition* was cited by Sandke as a major source of the bebop myth. This is an older book—originally published in 1970—but is included among the recent books because a second enlarged edition was published in 1993. Given Williams’s prominence—he directed the Jazz and American Culture programs at the Smithsonian Institute and compiled the *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*—it might be expected that his theory would have had widespread influence among recent jazz writers. This is not the case, however, with only one of the recent books citing Williams’s theory.⁵² None of the other writers make reference to the theory and none identify rhythmic innovation as bebop’s defining characteristic.

⁵⁰ Sandke, 58.

⁵¹ Sandke, 60-61.

⁵² Ward and Burns, 305.

In general, recent survey histories place far greater attention on bebop's harmonic, and to some extent melodic innovations, than on its rhythmic innovations. The idea that harmony is critical to bebop appears throughout the literature in many different contexts. Burton Peretti, for example, includes it in his discussion of bop's swing roots: "Bebop was rooted in the tunes, harmonies, and instrumental techniques of late-thirties swing."⁵³ Grover Sales mentions it when discussing the beboppers' role models: "Where older trumpeters followed Louis Armstrong, young Dizzy Gillespie patterned his style after Roy Eldridge's advanced harmonic language and fiery outbursts in the upper register taken at frightening tempos."⁵⁴ Megill and Demory include harmony as part of their discussion of the beboppers' virtuosity: "The sophisticated chord structures, irregular melodies, and flashing speed left uninitiated listeners befuddled."⁵⁵ And Martin and Waters mention it in their discussion of bop from the musicians' perspective: "The one characteristic that players most frequently single out as new was the harmony. As saxophonist Illinois Jacquet pointed out, 'the major difference in the new music was the chord changes.'"⁵⁶ Other writers include references to harmony in various other contexts.⁵⁷

The recent books also include another of Sandke's major themes: the notion that beboppers relied on popular songs as the basis of their harmonic innovations. All the recent writers (including Williams) mention the beboppers' use of popular songs in the music's development.⁵⁸ In fact, the general impression conveyed by this literature is that the practice of taking and reshaping the chordal structures of popular songs was a defining characteristic of bebop innovation. As Mark Gridley writes, "Because bop musicians liked to improvise on difficult chord progressions, they sometimes wrote original progressions themselves. But a more common practice was to improvise on

⁵³ Peretti, 103.

⁵⁴ Sales, 120-121.

⁵⁵ Megill and Demory, 152.

⁵⁶ Martin and Waters, 176.

⁵⁷ Berendt and Huesmann, 14-15; Tirro, 299; Gridley, 150-151; Porter and Ullman, 194; Gioia, 202-203; Cooke, 116; Shipton, 437; Ward and Burns, 291; and Giddins and DeVaux, 299.

⁵⁸ Berendt and Huesmann, 115; Williams, 158; Tirro, 295; Gridley, 151; Sales, 138; Megill and Demory, 180; Porter and Ullman, 188; Gioia, 201; Peretti, 101; Cooke, 118; Shipton, 486; Ward and Burns, 320; Martin and Waters, 174-175; and Giddins and DeVaux, 311.

popular song progressions that were challenging.”⁵⁹ Or as expressed by Ted Gioia, “Most bop compositions simply followed, more or less, the conventional progressions of prewar standards. But even when working over the familiar territory of ‘I Got Rhythm’ or the twelve bar blues, the boppers made heavy use of flatted ninths, sharpened elevenths, and other altered or higher intervals, to a degree unknown in earlier jazz.”⁶⁰

As can be seen from the statements quoted above, the recent historians place a great deal of emphasis on bebop harmony. While they do not ignore bebop’s melodic and rhythmic innovations, they tend to place greater emphasis on the music’s harmonic innovations, especially as these relate to the popular songs of the period. Most importantly, for present purposes, none of the recent writers—besides Williams—identifies rhythm as bebop’s defining characteristic.

MYTH 6: BLACK NATIONALISM WAS THE SOURCE OF AVANT-GARDE JAZZ

The 1960s saw the emergence of a radical new jazz style called avant-garde jazz, or free jazz. The musicians most closely identified with avant-garde jazz were Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, and Albert Ayler. In general, avant-garde musicians rejected the traditional harmonic conventions of jazz and commonly infused their music with extreme levels of dissonance and atonality. The origins of avant-garde jazz coincided with the emergence of black nationalism, and many critics and musicians have identified black nationalism as the primary source of avant-garde jazz. Sandke views this as a typical jazz myth because it emphasizes the music’s connection to African American culture and ignores the European (Western) element.

Sandke traces this myth to black activist LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) who perceived avant-garde jazz and black nationalism as being intricately related. According to Sandke, Jones claimed the music had African roots and referred to it as “New Black Music” to emphasize its racial connection.⁶¹ Sandke also traces the myth to Marxist critic Frank Kofsky, who wrote: “Today’s avant-garde movement in jazz is a musical representation of the ghetto’s vote of no confidence in Western civilization and the American Dream—that Negro

⁵⁹ Gridley, 151.

⁶⁰ Gioia, 203.

⁶¹ Sandke, 63.

avant-garde intransigents, in other words, are saying through their horns, as LeRoi Jones would have it, ‘Up your ass, feeble-minded ofays!’”⁶²

Sandke argues that it was not black nationalism, but artistic modernism, that spawned avant-garde jazz. “What [Jones and Kofsky] and many present-day jazz writers miss (or chose to ignore),” he writes, “is that the advent of avant-garde jazz would have been unthinkable without the Western concept of artistic modernism.”⁶³ The modernist movement, which emerged in Europe around the turn of the twentieth century, rejected traditional nineteenth century norms and conventions and sought to replace them with innovative and sometimes startling approaches to art and culture. The term “avant-garde” is a related concept and is generally used to describe the farthest out elements of artistic modernism.

Although modernism was born in Europe, it found a new home in the United States after the Second World War. In fact, as explained by Sandke, modernism became the dominant style in post-war American society. Thus, “it was impossible for those coming of age [in America] after the war to escape the influence of modernism.”⁶⁴ This “mainstreaming of the modern” provides the essence of Sandke’s argument that avant-garde jazz would be unthinkable without artistic modernism. Black avant-garde musicians, like other Americans, were inevitably influenced by modernism.

To substantiate his point, Sandke identifies common elements in both avant-garde jazz and modernism. He notes, for example, that avant-garde jazz and cutting-edge forms of modernism both sought to break free from past artistic canons of beauty and the time-honored means of achieving structural coherence. Perhaps his most compelling evidence of the connection between avant-garde jazz and modernism is the fact that avant-garde jazz never gained favor with the African American community it was supposed to represent, but instead found its most fervent following “in those interracial places that have traditionally harbored exploratory art: artists’ communities in downtown New York (specifically the East and West Village and Soho), Europe and the universities.”⁶⁵

⁶² Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, 131.

⁶³ Sandke, 63.

⁶⁴ Sandke, 64.

⁶⁵ Sandke, 66.

The vast majority of recent jazz histories—eleven out of fourteen—include some mention of black nationalism in their discussions of avant-garde jazz.⁶⁶ The manner in which the recent writers depict the role of black nationalism in avant-garde jazz differs, however, from that of earlier writers like LeRoi Jones, who was a leading figure in the black nationalist movement, and Frank Kofsky, a Marxist sympathizer. Unlike Jones and Kofsky, who were writing in the midst of the sixties racial upheaval, the recent writers are emotionally and historically removed from the racial turmoil of that era and present a more detached narrative of black nationalism's connection to avant-garde jazz. The following two passages by Porter and Ullman, and Ward and Burns, exemplify the recent literature in this regard.

The effects of the political turmoil [of the sixties] on jazz were various, and complicated. The rage that many musicians felt about racial injustice, epitomized in the sixties by the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Malcom X and by inner city riots, was expressed more or less directly by some avant-garde players in screaming, inchoate solos amid a barrage of barely organized sound from free ensembles.⁶⁷

Some young musicians now saw it as their mission not only to revolutionize the music but to reclaim it for their community, to reassert what they believed to be its African roots, to reject every vestige of the European tradition that had been an integral part of it from the beginning.⁶⁸

The question that arises at this point is whether the recent writers also include the influence of artistic modernism in their discussions of avant-garde jazz. This question is significant, for it is the failure of writers such as Jones and Kofsky to recognize the role of Western modernism in avant-garde jazz that Sandke identifies as the basis of this myth. My content analysis revealed that thirteen of the fourteen books included in the study recognize the influence of modernism—or similar concepts such as the classical avant-garde

⁶⁶ Berendt and Huesmann, 26-28; Tirro, 372; Sales, 196-200; Porter and Ullman, 355; Gioia, 338; Peretti, 140-142; Cooke, 157-158; Shipton, 793; Ward and Burns, 439; Martin and Waters, 240-244; and Giddins and DeVaux, 449-451.

⁶⁷ Porter and Ullman, 355.

⁶⁸ Ward and Burns, 439.

or postmodernism—in the music’s development.⁶⁹ The following statements by Ward and Burns, and Megill and Demory, are representative.

That same month [November, 1959], a musician [Ornette Coleman] arrived in New York, who seemed to challenge the basic premises upon which all these masters had built their music. . . . His music would be given a variety of labels . . . but it was clear that jazz now had an avant-garde in the modernist European sense for which accessibility would take a backseat to individual expression.⁷⁰

Today’s avant-garde jazz concerts are often scarcely distinguishable from those of the classical avant-garde. The two musical streams have influenced each other greatly since the sixties. Not only have jazz composers incorporated the advanced harmonies and extended forms of classical composers, but also European and American classical composers have borrowed many elements from jazz.⁷¹

In sum, the vast majority of recent historians frame their discussions of avant-garde jazz within the context of both black nationalism and Western modernism. To place avant-garde jazz within the context of both black nationalism and modernism is quite appropriate, since artistic modernism has historically been associated with broader social and political movements, such as pacifism and socialism.⁷² In the case of avant-garde jazz, the association was with black nationalism.

MYTH 7: JAZZ WAS SUSTAINED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY BY THE BLACK COMMUNITY UNTIL AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

The final myth identified by Sandke, which he refers to as “the biggest myth of all,” is that the black community was the primary jazz audience prior to the

⁶⁹ Those books that make the connection between modernism and avant-garde jazz are, Berendt and Huesmann, 21-22; Williams, 247; Tirro, 377; Gridley, 291; Sales, 192-193; Megill and Demory, 194; Gioia, 355-356, 359; Peretti, 144; Cooke, 168; Shipton, 794, 881-889; Ward and Burns, 413; Martin and Waters, 260; and Giddins and DeVeaux, 447-448. The one book that does not include modernism in its treatment of avant-garde jazz is Porter and Ullman.

⁷⁰ Ward and Burns, 413.

⁷¹ Megill and Demory, 194.

⁷² For the association between modernism and social movements see, Edward Abrahams, *The Lyrical Left*; Scott and Rutkoff, *New York Modern*, 194-222; and Pells, *Modernist America*, 116-123.

Second World War. As he explains: “One of the least studied aspects of jazz is its audience, and consequently a mistaken conventional wisdom has filled the void. Many writers seem to assume jazz was sustained almost exclusively by the black community until after the Second World War. But whites have supported jazz almost from its beginning.”⁷³ This is a peculiar myth because Sandke does not identify any jazz books in which the myth appears. In fact, he offers no real evidence of its existence, except for the following reference to Robert Altman’s movie *Kansas City*.

A scene in Robert Altman’s 1996 movie *Kansas City* depicts a black band entertaining an almost exclusively black audience at a fictional “Hey Hey” club in the 1930s. But as was the case in New York and Chicago in the 1920s, Kansas City’s bigger bands and best musicians played for a largely white clientele.⁷⁴

Sandke devotes the entire chapter to documenting the existence of a white jazz audience. He explains that black musicians had entertained whites during the slave days, and that this practice continued up to the time when jazz was created in New Orleans. He goes on to provide a great deal of information about the widespread white support for jazz as the music spread from New Orleans to Chicago and New York and other American cities.

As Sandke has correctly observed, the audience is one of the least studied aspects of jazz. However, the audience is not completely ignored by the recent jazz writers, and is often included in discussions of jazz artists and the jazz scene in the survey histories. For example, numerous discussions of Joe “King” Oliver’s career include references to his audience, including the appeal of his band to whites in both New Orleans and Chicago during the early 1900s. Frank Tirro quotes New Orleans musician and writer Edmond Souchon as explaining that even before Oliver left for Chicago, “he had acquired a technique that was much more smooth, and that his band was adapting itself to the white dancers more and more.”⁷⁵ Ward and Burns describe King Oliver’s early career in these terms: “He could play roughly enough to suit the whores and pimps of Storyville and sweetly enough to please white dancers at Tulane University.”⁷⁶ And Grover Sales reports that once Oliver reached Chicago, his band “had become a sensation at the Lincoln Gardens dance hall, a magnet for

⁷³ Sandke, 139.

⁷⁴ Sandke, 152.

⁷⁵ Tirro, 123.

⁷⁶ Ward and Burns, 48.

young white musicians and dropouts.”⁷⁷ The careers of other famous pre-World War II jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson are also described in terms of their appeal to white audiences.⁷⁸

Nowhere in the recent survey histories is there the suggestion that jazz was sustained almost exclusively by the black community until after the Second World War. Indeed, Sandke provides virtually no evidence for the existence of this myth even among earlier jazz writers.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study was generated by Randall Sandke’s recent critique of conventional jazz history. One of Sandke’s main criticisms is that jazz history largely consists of mythology based on ideology. He traces the mythology of jazz to the earliest generation of jazz writers who were primarily left-liberal activists seeking to use jazz to fight racism and promote social change. Unfortunately, these early writers shaped jazz history to fit their ideological beliefs, depicting the music as the expression of an isolated and oppressed African American culture. The present study examined one aspect of Sandke’s thesis: his assertion that recent jazz writers and scholars continue to perpetuate the exclusionary myths generated by earlier jazz writers. The study consisted of a content analysis of fourteen survey histories of jazz published since 1990.

The findings indicate that only one of the myths identified by Sandke appears with any frequency in the recent survey histories. This myth—found in nine of the books—is that the 1890s Jim Crow laws contributed to the creation of jazz by forcing Creoles and blacks to live together and to perform music together. Sandke has provided strong evidence to refute this myth. He has also put forth an alternative explanation of jazz creation that is quite convincing. This explanation identifies the music itself as the catalyst that brought Creole and black musicians together. More precisely, Sandke contends that the new hot style of music that blacks began playing at the end of the nineteenth century was so popular with the public that Creole musicians seeking to make

⁷⁷ Sales, 60.

⁷⁸ Berendt and Huesmann, 12; Williams, 100; Gridley, 85; Megill and Demory, 70; Porter and Ullman, 76; Gioia, 124-125; Peretti, 44; Cooke, 100; Shipton, 237; Martin and Waters, 86; and Giddins and DeVeaux, 149.

a living from music were forced to include it in their repertoires. In addition, he argues that it was also the appeal of the music to the musicians themselves that drew many of them to jazz.

Otherwise, Sandke's myths are rarely found in the recent survey histories. Only one of the remaining myths appears in more than one book. It is the myth that jazz has African origins, which is found in two of the fourteen books included in the study. Three other myths are found in a single book each: one is the myth that pictures Buddy Bolden as the quintessential black musician who embodied the raw primitive nature of jazz; another is the myth that rhythm was the defining characteristic of bebop; and the other is the myth that identifies black nationalism as the primary source of avant-garde jazz. Finally, there are two myths that are not found in any of the recent books. One is that Congo Square was the link between African music and jazz; the other is that jazz was sustained almost exclusively by the black community prior to the World War II.

Thus, for the most part, the historians whose books were included in the study are not perpetuating the mythology of jazz. With the one exception described above—the idea that Jim Crow laws forced Creole and black musicians together—their books are nearly free of the jazz myths identified by Sandke. Ideally, of course, the literature would contain no myths. But myths (which are essentially unfounded or false notions accepted as facts) appear in all types of historical literature. One of the purposes of historical research is to uncover myths and errors contained in the literature and to replace them with more factual information. Sandke accuses the recent jazz historians of bypassing this vetting process because they do not wish to uncover and replace myths that support their liberal beliefs. The present study suggests that the recent jazz historians have done an admirable job identifying the myths generated by earlier writers and replacing them with more factual information.

Moreover, the books in the present study do not generally espouse an exclusionary view of jazz history. Instead, like Sandke, the authors of these books basically view jazz as an inclusionary form of music. That is, they view jazz as the creation of African Americans who combined African and European (and Caribbean) musical elements to create a uniquely American style of music. While some of the writers continue to focus on the African roots of jazz, all of them emphasize the idea that jazz is an inclusive art form embodying musical styles and elements from different cultures.

These findings point to what I believe is a fundamental weakness underlying Sandke's treatment of jazz mythology. It is his assumption that the earlier and recent jazz writers share an activist ideology that transcends

generational and historical differences, and that this ideological consistency has led to the perpetuation of myths. This assumption ignores some important distinctions between the two groups. Most of the earlier writers were left-liberal activists and jazz enthusiasts who were largely inexperienced as historians. Their enthusiasm and activism, along with their inexperience, led them to accept and disseminate many fallacies as facts. The fact that they were writing during a time of intense left-liberal activism also influenced their approach to jazz history. Most of the historians whose books were examined in this study are also jazz enthusiasts and most are probably liberals. However, in contrast to the earlier writers, most of these writers are relatively experienced as jazz historians, with many having academic affiliations. In addition, they are writing during a time of relatively little left-liberal activism. As such, these recent writers take a more scholarly and dispassionate approach to jazz history than the earlier generation. Consequently, their work is largely free of the exclusionary myths generated by earlier writers.

It must be acknowledged that the above generalizations are based on a small sample of contemporary historians and their books. Sandke locates the perpetuation of jazz mythology in sources that extend far wider than the writers and books included in this study. In particular, he is especially critical of college professors who he accuses of using their courses to advocate an exclusionary viewpoint and to perpetuate jazz mythology. It could therefore be argued that the present study has ignored precisely those sources that are most responsible for the perpetuation of jazz myths. I would contend, however, that the writers included in this study represent the mainstream of jazz scholarship and that their books reflect a conventional view of jazz history. It is therefore reasonable to conclude—unless further research proves otherwise—that the perpetuation of jazz mythology among recent jazz historians is far less prevalent than Sandke would have us believe.

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