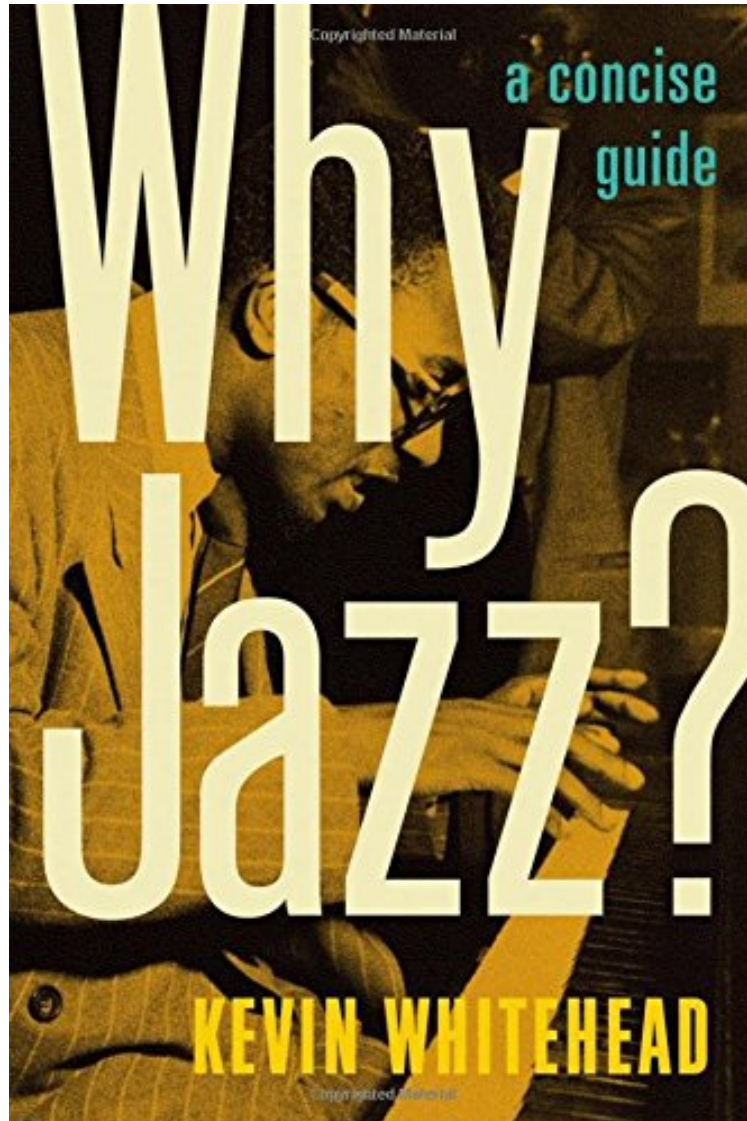


Why Jazz?: A Concise Guide

Kevin Whitehead

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Kevin Whitehead : Why Jazz?: A Concise Guide before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why Jazz?: A Concise Guide:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Kevin Whitehead does tell why!By lee brownKevin Whitehead has written the liveliest and, incidentally, the most compact and yet complete book on jazz you will find. His answer to the question posed in the title is simple, if a little misleadingly so: Once you learn something about how jazz works, you will realize how much fun it is. The books Q A format applies a little artificially now and then, but is easily ignored in

those cases. The book benefits from the fact that KW is a colorful writer, a fact that sets him off from most jazz journalists and historians, and from all jazz theorists. Lee B. Brown / Jazznotes/ The Other Paper / Columbus0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This is a fun read I can highly recommend whether you are new ...By mary m yznagaThis is a fun read I can highly recommend whether you are new to jazz or not. Whitehead has spent many decades exploring the music and it shows. His well-honed writing style is eminently readable. This book is a great addition to any jazz library, academic or personal.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. More like a text bookBy DanA lot get of technical information. More like a text book. You need to know music but I did get some general info that was good.

What was the first jazz record? Are jazz solos really improvised? How did jazz lay the groundwork for rock and country music? In *Why Jazz?*, author and NPR jazz critic Kevin Whitehead provides lively, insightful answers to these and many other fascinating questions, offering an entertaining guide for both novice listeners and long-time fans. Organized chronologically in a convenient question and answer format, this terrific resource makes jazz accessible to a broad audience, and especially to readers who've found the music bewildering or best left to the experts. Yet *Why Jazz?* is much more than an informative QA; it concisely traces the century-old history of this American and global art form, from its beginnings in New Orleans up through the current postmodern period. Whitehead provides brief profiles of the archetypal figures of jazz--from Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington to Wynton Marsalis and John Zorn--and illuminates their contributions as musicians, performers, and composers. Also highlighted are the building blocks of the jazz sound--call and response, rhythmic contrasts, personalized performance techniques and improvisation--and discussion of how visionary musicians have reinterpreted these elements to continually redefine jazz, ushering in the swing era, bebop, cool jazz, hard bop, and the avant-garde. Along the way, *Why Jazz?* provides helpful plain-English descriptions of musical terminology and techniques, from "blue notes" to "conducted improvising." And unlike other histories which haphazardly cover the stylistic branches of jazz that emerged after the 1960s, *Why Jazz?* groups latter-day musical trends by decade, the better to place them in historical context. Whether read in self-contained sections or as a continuous narrative, this compact reference presents a trove of essential information that belongs on the shelf of anyone who's ever been interested in jazz.

From BooklistWhitehead delivers a survey of the genre thats painfully simple for even the casual jazz fan but readable enough to pull in neophytes, especially those who catch Whiteheads jazz reviews on NPRs Fresh Air. The informationa brief tutorial on how the music works, followed by a historical survey of jazzis delivered in bite-size pieces presented in QA format. Sample questions: What material do jazz musicians play? What is stride piano? What is cool jazz? How are modern jazz musicians educated? If the questions are simplistic, Whitehead still covers a lot of bases: jazz theory, origins of the genre, seminal figures, subgenres, and, helpfully, postmodern jazz. A nice, light primer that might be useful as collateral reading for beginning jazz-appreciation classes. --Alan Moores "Whitehead's concise responses deliver the answers that reveal his deep knowledge of the music and sharp style. Even readers who never touched a piano will be able to follow his summation of why bebop was such a radical departure. This book belongs on the syllabus of all introductory jazz courses." --Downbeat, Editors' Pick "Whitehead is a pithy writer, stylish without getting sidetracked by his own cleverness." --ChicagoReader.com "It used to be said that anyone who immediately appreciated new and different musical approaches in jazz "had ears." Mr. Whitehead has ears, and a catholicity of taste to accurately describe, although not necessarily subscribe to, different kinds of jazz. He possesses the critical tools to differentiate between the authentic and the bogus, and he has a clear writing style that enables him (for the most part) to write about complicated music in an understandable way....Mr. Whitehead manages to offer informed, concise and jargon-free insights into every kind of jazz and every important innovator, and does so in a reader-friendly style that should appeal to jazz fans and those who simply want to learn a bit more about the music." --The Washington Times "Whitehead poses many substantive and important questions about the origins of the music, its substance, its major innovators, and its principal ebbs and flows. His answers are mini-essays on these topics, most of which have been carefully pared to a minimum of clear and smart words...The brevity of this book ought not be confused with a lack of substance. Whitehead's tone is conversational, engaging, and direct, and he deserves plenty of credit for an original concept...But perhaps the best thing for me about the book is the ambition of the last chapter, "Jazz After 1980," in which Whitehead sorts out the trends and innovators of the past 30 years in just 27 pages - a remarkable achievement that shows how carefully he listens and how cogently he judges." --The Arts Fuse "A breezy read in question-and-answer format, and it's as necessary as ever these days, as distant as jazz has become to the general population." --Patrick Jarenwattananon, NPR's "A Blog Supreme""With remarkable precision and polish, he traces the lineaments of each genre, discerns the significance of key figures, explains the anatomy of sound, and sketches the important venues - making this a useful reference for a puzzled or curious audience." --Books and Culture "An admirably concise primer in QA format that covers lots of ground without being preachy." --FinancialTimes.com "Despite its brevity it functions as effectively, in its way, as vaster tomes by the likes of Gary Giddins or Alyn Shipton because Whitehead is a succinct, amusing summarist (part of the gig as longtime National Public Radio critic) and

commands a broad appreciation and experience of the music...He's concerned with brass tacks and nails points with precision, deftly handling the jazz education debate or the crux of George Russell's Lydian chromatic concept." --
DownBeat About the Author Kevin Whitehead is the longtime jazz critic for National Public Radio's "Fresh Air" and has written about jazz for many publications, including the Chicago Sun-Times, Down Beat, and the Village Voice. He is the author of *New Dutch Swing* (1998), and his essays have appeared in such collections as *Da Capo Best Music Writing 2006*, *Jazz: The First Century*, and *The Cartoon Music Book*.