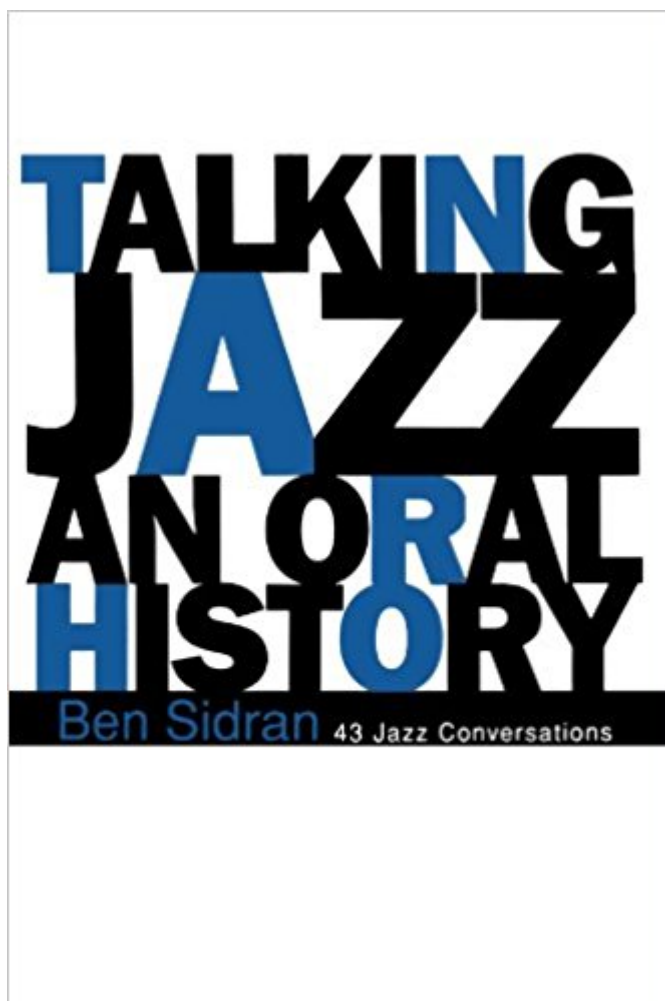


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Talking Jazz



Synopsis

Miles Davis, Gil Evans, Dizzy Gillespie, Jon Hendricks, Max Roach, Betty Carter, Jackie McLean, Don Cherry, Sonny Rollins, McCoy Tyner, Archie Shepp, Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, Keith Jarrett, Wynton Marsalis, and Jack DeJohnette; these are just a few of the jazz musicians whose conversations with Ben Sidran are recorded in this volume. In stimulating, personal, and informative discussions, they not only reveal their personalities, but also detail aspects of the performance, technique, business, history, and emotions of jazz. Newly expanded with previously unpublished dialogues with David Murray, Dr. John, and Mose Allison, Talking Jazz is undoubtedly the best oral history of recent and contemporary jazz.

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Customer Reviews

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Ben Sidran is a performing and recording musician, producer, composer, host of radio and

television music programs, music historian, and writer.

Wonderful and real storytelling, by the protagonist himself or herself.

This is probably the best book of interviews with contemporary jazz musicians in print. They derive from Ben Sidran's show on NPR, *Sidran on Record*; they date from the mid-1980s to 1990, & thus capture jazz during something of a resurgence as "classic" jazz become newly fashionable. But Sidran doesn't seem especially interested in following the neo-hard-bop line--Wynton & Branford Marsalis are interviewed here, but that's about it. Instead, Sidran is interested at once in the "classic" jazz players (most of the players he interviews are from the generation that came to prominence in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s); and also in emphasizing jazz as a pluralist idiom that feeds into many varieties of popular music. Thus he also interviews musicians like Dr John, Joe Sample, Charles Brown, Steve Gadd, Bobby McFerrin, even Donald Fagen from Steely Dan. He also touches on the avantgarde with interviews with Don Cherry, Archie Shepp & David Murray; & there are interviews with a few important nonmusicians: the recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder & Max Gordon, owner of the Village Vanguard. There are some marvelous interviews here--for instance, the one with the great Michel Petrucciani, where he sounds as joyous & rambunctious as on any of his recordings. Miles Davis is unusually relaxed--no revelations, but it's still worth reading. The interview with Keith Jarrett makes him sound as spacey & self-important as one would guess from his recordings. The interview with Don Cherry is an excellent memorial to an irreplaceable musician. Interesting to hear him talk about his & Ornette's hanging around Harry Partch, or going to hear a Stockhausen concert in the 1950s. -- Wynton Marsalis is mentioned several times by other musicians in the book, both positively (Betty Carter) & with doubts about his agendas & approach (Herbie Hancock); the interview with Marsalis isn't one of his most memorably opinionated & polemical, though it has its moments which will be catnip to Marsalophiles & -phobes alike. (E.g. the judgment that *The Birth of the Cool* was irrelevant to the development of jazz & was merely "gorillaed into the history of the music"--a remark that is pretty crass in the context of a volume that also contains an interview with Gil Evans.) The Marsalis verbal tics & oddities of phrasing are well-displayed--e.g. the comment that the members of the Coltrane quartet "would just swing on the highest level of serious Negroid implication". The only problems with this book are a lack of an index, & the occasion mistranscription of a name (the bane of interviews). The transcriptions seem to be lightly edited, which is very welcome--I'm not a fan of interview volumes that preserve every stumble & hesitation. They read very well. For the record here are the subjects: Miles Davis, Gil

Evans, Dizzy Gillespie, Jay McShann, Red Rodney, Frank Morgan, John Hendricks, Max Roach, Willie Ruff, Art Blakey, Betty Carter, Jackie McLean, Horace Silver, Abdullah Ibrahim, Mose Allison, Sonny Rollins, Phil Woods, Johnny Griffin, Pepper Adams, Michel Petrucciani, McCoy Tyner, Max Gordon, Archie Shepp, Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, Keith Jarrett, Branford Marsalis, Rudy Van Gelder, George Benson, Wynton Marsalis, Charles Brown, Dr. John, Joe Sample, Jack DeJohnette, Denny Zeitlin, Don Cherry, Carla Bley, David Murray, Steve Gadd, Donald Fagen, Bobby McFerrin, Dave Grusin, & Bob James. While the book doesn't function as a serious historical survey, I think it's more stimulating & useful than any number of marmoreal histories of jazz. It's a book to set beside Art Taylor's *_Notes and Tones_* & Nat Hentoff's old collection (if I remember rightly, the title's *_Hear Me Talking to Ya_*).

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