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Jazz Photography  
and Photographers,  
1900–60

During the course of the twentieth century a wide range of American photographers made images of jazz musicians. Like many of their predecessors, these photographers were preoccupied with the reality of the American experience, the land, culture, and the myths that defined America.<sup>1</sup> Jazz was central to their experience.

Their photographs show the leading players on the bandstand creating moments of musical history, but the contribution of these images to our understanding of the music goes beyond performance portraiture. Jazz photographs document the wide variety of musical practices embraced by jazz musicians; the development of instruments and playing techniques; and provide insights into musicians' lifestyles, working conditions, social, communal, and familial activities, and professional practices and associations. The use of photography in publicity material tells us how musicians wished to present themselves and indicates changes in the place of jazz in American entertainment and visual culture. Photographs show the variety of and evolutions in the spaces in which jazz was performed, the nature of audiences and dancers, and provide pointers to the relationships between musicians and spectators. Musicians often inscribed messages on the face of photographs, which tells us about their relationships with mentors and colleagues, professional associates, friends, family, and fans. In short, these photographs reflect the hopes and concerns of a period when the country was undergoing cultural upheaval on a scale never previously experienced and speak of personal, social, and racial struggles and achievements as much as the strivings of men and women toward a new form of artistic expression.

The relationship between photographers and jazz dates back to the earliest days of the music and is uniquely comprehensive. Anthologies such as Al Rose and Edmond Souchon's *New Orleans Jazz*, Orrin Keepnews and Bill Grauer's *Pictorial History of Jazz*, and Frank Driggs and Harris Lewine's *Black Beauty, White Heat* present images of jazz pioneers from the early-1890s: "Cracked and faded with age," as Rudi Blesh affectionately explained, "they are documentary relics of a bygone era from the tooting of Fate Marable's calliope on the Mississippi River to the polished notes of Bix Beiderbecke's green gold cornet."<sup>2</sup>

As the number of photographers interested in the field grew in the decades that followed, images of virtually every jazz musicians of any stature were made and many are now available to researchers in private or public archives, published anthologies, and websites. These archives range from the enormous collection assembled by Frank Driggs and now held by Jazz at Lincoln Centre, around 3,500 photographs by Francis Wolff recently made available online from the Mosaic Records website, some 2,500 items in the William Gottlieb collection in the Library of Congress, and around 2,250 photographs of the writer, editor, critic, and producer Dave E. Dexter at the University of Missouri. Smaller collections, such as the 200 images at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music made by

the photographer Frank Kuchircuk in the early-1950s and the jazz photography of James Arkatov, a Russian-born cellist with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra now held by UCLA Library Special Collections, contain important images although they are almost entirely overlooked by jazz scholars. While the photograph of Buddy Bolden reminds us that the authenticity of some of the earliest images in these collections might be problematic,<sup>3</sup> the fact remains that the entire history of jazz as an art form has been extensively documented in images of its most important practitioners in publicity portraits, in studio or live performance, in informal jam sessions, traveling between venues, or in social settings.

Jazz photographs stand as both documentary records and artifacts of enormous expressive potency. As documents they are of inestimable value to critics, historians and musicologists, discographers and biographers, enthusiasts and collectors. They provide evidence about the nature and compositions of jazz bands, changes in instruments, and the ways they were combined; they offer clues to the backgrounds of individual musicians, locate itinerant musicians in a particular place at a particular time, and show how their identities as artists developed; recording studio photography has helped identify players on particular records and provides an understanding about how recording techniques developed over time; and we can sense changing social trends and the halting progress toward integration in photographs of musicians at work, leisure, or traveling. The affective potency of jazz photography is however just as important as their evidential status. Jazz critics and enthusiasts alike find that these expressive images often stimulate memories of performances and experiences that often hold deeply personal meanings. In describing their evocative power, these images are frequently described as “atmospheric,” a term used to foreground the ability of photographs to rekindle the experiential impact of live performance and the personal memory of these experiences.

In short, jazz is an art form whose entire existence has been both documented and expressed through photography and it is this combination that situates these photographs among the most valuable visual records in modern American history. That such an archive exists is due to the enthusiasm of photographers to what for significant periods was a minority—and always racially charged—music. Some made a commitment to documenting jazz at particular stages in their careers, including those to whom the label “jazz photographers” is most often applied: Charles Peterson, Herman Leonard, William Claxton, Francis Wolff, Charles Stewart, Dennis Stock, Herb Snitzer—to name but a few. Rarely, or at best insufficiently, remunerated for occasional illustrations for magazine articles, album covers, or publicity shoots; operating under difficult conditions; and usually struggling to find exhibition opportunities at the time, they are now celebrated as key contributors to the jazz photography tradition. These photographers have attracted considerable attention, but they were by no means the only ones with an interest in the subject. Studio portraitists, art photographers, fashion

photographers, documentarians, and photojournalists also made photographs of jazz musicians in the course of their professional practices and as personal projects. These photographers were a diverse group including among their ranks African American as well as white studio workers and the émigrés and exiles who arrived in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century.

### I. The significance of jazz photographs

First published in *Life* in 1938, Charles Peterson's portrayal of a "typical" swing fan collages a variety of media as collectively they facilitated the experience of jazz (Figure 4). The fan sits beside his radio, his left ear close to the speaker; his body is moving with the beat of a swing band, feet jerked off the floor in excitement.



Figure 4: Charles Peterson. *The Swing Fan*. New York. 1938.  
Don Peterson.

A record is turning on the turntable, a record store bag hangs over the back of the chair, and a pile of magazines illustrates the place of the jazz press. Photographs are pinned to the wall. Peterson's image is a contrived *tableau vivant*, but his portrayal appears accurately to represent the social and demographic characteristics of a typical swing fan of the period and effectively directs attention toward the role of photography as part of an immersive process through which many aficionados of the period consumed their music.<sup>4</sup>

Jazz photographs have always been important to fans, enthusiasts, and collectors. By the late-1920s photography was firmly enmeshed in a network of technologies that included recorded music, radio, and illustrated print media. These technologies changed the ways in which the music was consumed and enjoyed, creating "circles of resonance" in which "listeners shared, debated, analyzed, and fought, often passionately, over their personal patterns of empathy and appreciation for what they heard in the grooves of 78 rpm recordings."<sup>5</sup> Young white collectors and enthusiasts like Peterson's swing fan went to considerable lengths to acquire signed photographs of their jazz idols. Bob Inman's swing era diary recounts how as a teenager in the mid-1930s he toured New York streets to call on magazines and management offices, visiting musicians in their hotels, dressing



Figures 5a and 5b: Publicity photographs signed for Bob Inman. [left] Reproduction of 1937 autographed MCA publicity portrait of William "Count" Basie, unidentified photographer, undated copy. [right] Autographed clipping of Roy Eldridge, unidentified publication, c.1937. *Bob Inman scrapbook (IJS.0289)*, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University Libraries.

rooms, or on stage; or (as in the case of Roy Eldridge) writing directly to the musician's home address to secure signed photographs (Figures 5a and 5b).<sup>6</sup> Letters from the mostly white readers of *Down Beat* confirm that signed photographs were treasured artifacts among fans. One correspondent complained that Charlie Barnet was not a "solid guy" because he refused to sign a photograph while another praised Gene Krupa as "the finest guy there is" because he spoke to the writer behind the stage and gave him five autographed photographs.<sup>7</sup>

For many years *Down Beat* and other music magazines carried advertisements offering photographs of jazz musicians "ready for framing" for as little as 10c. each. Around 55 percent of nearly 1,500 testimonial advertisements appearing in *Down Beat* between 1939 and 1949 included a photography offer as an inducement to enquiry. A total of 175 advertisements in the period (12 percent) offered a free (or nominal charge) 10 × 8-inch photograph of the musician(s) featured in the advertisement (Figures 6a and 6b). Advertisers used photography to extend the reach and life span of the sales dialogue initiated by advertisements with a range of visual material, most commonly photographic brochures

**CHARLIE Carroll**

"Ace Rhythm Man"  
for Larry Clinton

Send 10¢  
for photo

SEND FOR 1941 CATALOG

**WFL DRUM CO.**  
1728 N. DAMEN AVE.  
CHICAGO, ILL.  
WM. F. LUDWIG—FOUNDER

**GENUINE PHOTOGRAPHS**  
OF YOUR FAVORITE DRUMMERS 10¢

Here's Your First 3 Dozen!

- ORMOND DOWNES
- Kay Kyser
- ROY HARRIS
- Nedie Teather
- GEORGE WETTLING
- Hank Garland
- COZY COLE
- Carmen Basile
- BOB WHITE
- Fredie Martin
- BIG CAT
- Louis Armstrong
- BEN POLLACK
- Red Nichols
- EDDIE SHEA
- Key Kyser
- Randy Smith
- NBC Chicago
- Hal McIntyre
- Roger Pryor
- BOBBY CHRISTIAN
- SAM TAYLOR
- Red Nichols
- PAUL COLLINS
- Jack Teagarden
- Rudy Vallee
- Joe Bevitt
- E. A. KENYON
- Leslie Caron
- FRANK FLYNN
- Ted Weems
- ALLEN DEMPSEY
- CBS Chicago
- Dick Thompson
- Art Lesher
- MURRAY GAER
- Sammy Kaye
- HARRY LINDEMAN
- Freddy Fisher
- Leslie Caron
- CBS Chicago
- CHARLIE MASTER
- JOHNNY JACOBS
- Red Nichols
- Red Saunders
- Oscar Orchestra
- Frank Sulli
- RBC Chicago
- Bob Spangler
- Red Nichols
- BUD MOORE
- San Francisco Studios
- ALICE GARDNER
- Little Walter Little
- AUGIE THIELMAN
- Red Nichols
- JOE CARTZ
- Tommy Reynolds
- Leslie Caron
- Own Trio
- MAURICE LISHON
- Paul Frees Chicago
- GIL BAER
- Red Nichols
- BEEF McGARVEY
- Toronto, Canada
- BUDDE BURTON
- Red Nichols
- HARRY BUDDINGER
- RBC Chicago

Ludwig & Ludwig, Inc.  
1101 Boardsley Ave., Dept. 351 Elkhart, Indiana

Figures 6a–6c: Photography offers in *Down Beat*.  
*Down Beat*, March 1945 and April 1941.

or “magazines.” Always copiously illustrated, advertisers positioned these brochures as packed with helpful information drawn from the life and work of the endorsers by combining detailed product information with personality photographs, discussions about bandleaders’ styles and techniques, and tips for success. These brochures elaborated and reinforced the advertisement by drawing on the same visual imagery attracting the enquirer initially (Figure 7).<sup>8</sup>

In the pretelevision age photographs filled a gap in the demand for visual information for black as much as white enthusiasts. African American families had a long tradition of pinning photographs cut from magazines and newspapers to the walls of their homes, a practice originally born of necessity among the rural poor but one that migrated with people to the urban setting. Zora Neale Hurston described the walls of a cabin in Alabama adorned with calendars, scarves, and colorful advertisements and spoke of how “Decorating a decoration . . . did not seem out of place . . . Whatever the Negro does of his own volition he embellishes.”<sup>9</sup> Collected, exchanged, and pinned to walls and doors in African American homes and clubs (Figure 8), photographs were vested with a permanence that has now all but vanished.

At Harlem's Apollo Theatre Gordon "Doc," "El Fabuloso," "Candid Camera King," or "The World's Greatest" Anderson, as he variously styled himself, spotted the opportunity to make a living by selling photographs taken in



Figure 7: Drummer's Digest. WFL Drum Co. n.d.  
Ray Bauduc Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University



Figure 8: Charles “Teenie” Harris. *Photographs on wall of club*. n.d.  
Carnegie Museum of Art.

performance and backstage to the large and increasingly sophisticated black population of Harlem.<sup>10</sup> Born in 1916 in Baltimore, Anderson started as a photographer at the city’s Royal Theatre immediately after his military service before moving to the Apollo. In New York he made candid shots of artists both on- and offstage, greeting friends and fans, and as they arrived or left the theatre. His subjects included all the great names from the late-1940s to the mid-1970s (including a rare shot of a teenage Billie Holiday). Anderson usually photographed the first show and then printed his montaged shots in order to sell them to the artists and fans (Figure 9) while the memory of the performance was still fresh. His ability to earn a living in this way for over twenty years underlines the importance of visual imagery to both artists and audiences at the time.

This demand for photography underlines what John Raeburn has called “Americans’ picture hunger” in the 1930s. Rooted in the belief that photographs offered a permanent and inner-directed pleasure in an age of uncertainty and material absence, “What is certain is that the extraordinary expansion of photography’s art world [...] meant that larger, more varied audiences had unprecedented access to pictures.” This shift toward the consumption of visual media had profound effects as the growing hegemony of photography in the 1930s increased Americans’ self-awareness of culture and community while at the same time stimulating interest in the power of symbol, myth, and rhetoric.<sup>11</sup>



Figure 9: Gordon Anderson. *Cab Calloway*. Apollo Theatre. 1947.

*Cab Calloway*. Clockwise from top left: trombonist Jimmy Buxton, Berry Brother tap dance team, dancer Count Leroy and comedy-dance duo Moke and Pole. Peter Vacher Collection.

Jazz and photography came of age as popular art forms at a moment when cultural assessments of jazz were not yet settled, allowing the visual image to play a critical role in shaping perceptions by complementing the aural experience of jazz. Recent research has confirmed that interactions between technologies—or, more correctly, the interactions between their sensory effects on users—can underpin new forms of social meaning and have helped to clarify the processes involved in these exchanges. What have come to be known as cross-modal correspondences between the senses suggest that sound can enliven sight, sight can enliven sound, and that both in combination enhance memory recall of an event through their apparent mimetic fidelity; and the greater the congruence between cross-modal sensory exchanges, the greater the mutual influence. W. J. T. Mitchell, for instance, has questioned whether *any* medium can be described as purely as visual, tactile or auditory. He concludes that all visual media turn out to involve the other senses.<sup>12</sup> Barry E. Stein and M. Alex Meredith consolidated much of this research in the following terms:<sup>13</sup>

*The integration of inputs from different sensory modalities not only transforms some of their individual characteristics, but does so in ways that can enhance the quality of life. Integrated sensory inputs produce far richer experiences than would be predicted from their simple co-existence or the linear sum of their individual products . . . the*

*use of one sensory system can influence (i.e. enhance, degrade, change) perception via. another sensory system, and that information can be transferred across modalities so that they may substitute for one another.*

Generally, “the visual modality predominates,” although “co-operative interactions” among sensory modalities are most evident when the individual sensory systems carry “concordant information.”<sup>14</sup> We can be sure then that for jazz enthusiasts and listeners of all types, photography not only deepened the experience of jazz by complementing its sounds, whether consumed on record or in live performance, but also helped to shape the meaning of the music.

#### Photographs and the “Golden Age” of jazz

The significance that viewers attached to the jazz photograph stretched well beyond the period of youthful enthusiasm. In 1989 Sara Robbin of Los Angeles wrote to Benny Goodman’s daughter, Rachel Goodman Edelson, enclosing a small snapshot of the musician and his orchestra taken over 50 years earlier at the San Francisco World Fair in July 1939. The photograph (Figure 10), a simple snapshot pasted onto card by the local drugstore processing Sara’s film, held deeply personal meanings:<sup>15</sup>

*My late husband and I with our two sons (ages-12–16 years) were visiting the World's Fair in San Francisco (1939) where your father was playing. We were all fans of his and enjoyed his music very much. I thought you would like to have these pictures, as*



Figure 10: Sara Robbin. *Benny Goodman Orchestra*. World's Fair. San Francisco. 1939.  
Gilmore Music Library/Benny Goodman Collection.

*I know it would give you pleasure to see them. It also gives me pleasure for being able to bring a little remembrance of him to you. He was a great musician.*

The following year Goodman's daughter received another photograph of the band taken in Atlantic City in 1939 by Buck Schaub, whose accompanying letter explained that

*during a break in a performance I went backstage and passed the picture around to the various members of the band. Some said, "I'm not in the picture." I replied, "Please sign it anyway." I was a great admirer of your Dad and his music.*

The Benny Goodman archive at Yale's Gilmore Music Library contains many other examples of snapshots sent to the musician by admirers stirred by the memories the images evoked.

An extensive body of research concerned with family albums and vernacular photography has revealed the potency of photographs in creating and shaping both personal and social memory in the manner described above. Perhaps more than any other domestic object photographs assist in preserving the memory of personal ties and rekindling the emotions associated with them.<sup>16</sup> Photographs communicate tangible and enduring signs of relationships, experiences, and values, confirming and enlarging personal identity through symbols that provide a broader perspective on present-day life. As material objects, photographs can form what Pierre Nora has termed *lieux de mémoire* “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself [...] at a particular historical moment [...] the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists.”<sup>17</sup>

The relationship between personal and collective memory and the visual image is however complex, and scholars have stressed the mediating power of the photograph as a constructed object.<sup>18</sup> A photograph conveys reminiscences and memories and the moods associated with them, but the interaction between the viewer and the object has its own permeating quality. As the photograph ages, signs contained with it “spread” from indexical to iconic; metaphor replaces mimesis as the image acquires its own autonomy to stand on its own in constituting a sign. The reception of visual sensations is intricately tied to context and biography as the information in the photograph is transformed into a memory-image by the pervasive and quite possibly involuntary power of imaginative recreation. Indeed, the photograph can indicate intention that a memory should be brought into being in which absences can be as revealing as the recall of specific event.<sup>19</sup>

Often consumed by viewers (including, it should be stressed, jazz writers and critics) highly motivated to nostalgize the image, jazz photographs appear to be particularly potent in this respect, creating links with the past that transcend personal experience, evoking recollections and moods which do not depend

on the viewer having experienced those events or times. Acting as a prompt to vicarious recollection, jazz photographs bring back to life the experience of jazz performance in some past golden age, a glimpse inside a long-lost world of jazz.

Yet every viewer has their own “golden age.” One of Vilém Flusser’s key insights was the observation that the photograph’s location in time and place is undermined by the very form of its material presentation. As the eye wanders over the surface of an image, the viewer takes in one element after another, producing new temporal relationships between them: the eye “can return to an element of the image it has already seen, and ‘before’ can become ‘after.’” Geoff Dyer developed this theme when he proposed that the best jazz photographs have an achronological character, inviting the viewer to speculate as to what preceded and immediately followed the action represented in the image.<sup>20</sup> This lack of temporal fixity further mediates the relationship between image and memory. Once detached from the origins and practice of the music and embodied in sites of memory, photographs can assume the status of myth as they appear and reappear in motion pictures, advertisements, and popular literature.

Jazz photography has developed then not simply as an adjunct to memory recall but has played an active role in constructing a narrative and aesthetic for jazz, framing the way the music has come to be understood. For Tony Whyton, visual representations of jazz are seductive, “artistic” monochromatic images that turn musicians into icons and make the subject “look more real whilst signifying honesty, nostalgia and sentimentality;” and, for Peter Townsend, photography has been central to the changing meaning of jazz through “the ensemble of visual signs [...] iconic personalities and cool composition that comprises the myth of jazz.” Mourning the passing of the renowned jazz photographer Paul Hoefler, Len Dobbin proposed that each of his images “helped shape our collective view of the jazz musician as sophisticated artist.” Perhaps more than any other, Herman Leonard’s photographs have emerged as the exemplar of the visual expression of jazz, evoking a sound as much as a look.<sup>21</sup>

### Interest in jazz photography

For much of their careers, the work of the photographers surveyed in this book went largely unacknowledged; the images of many of even the most storied of these practitioners were made in the course of personal projects and generally went unremunerated. Few, if any, self-identified as “jazz” photographers—at least at the time. William Claxton’s 1955 *Jazz West Coast*—arguably the first single-author jazz photobook of significance—sold well on first publication but was soon out of print; within a few years Claxton had moved away from jazz toward Hollywood portraiture and fashion photography.

Recent decades have however seen a marked increase in the awareness and appreciation of jazz imagery. This resurgence is related to the growth of scholarly

research in visual culture and the development of jazz studies programs in universities around the world. Increasing interest in jazz photographs must also be situated alongside changing perceptions of the music. Benjamin Cawthra believes that jazz photography began to aspire to the status of art as artistic validation of the music itself moved to the mainstream of the American cultural establishment and Heather Pinson has linked the rising status of photography with the sway of neoclassicism in jazz associated with Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at Lincoln Centre. To be sure, jazz photography began to gain traction just at a point when jazz became “Jazz on Jazz [...] attempting to energize the present by mining the past.”<sup>22</sup> What seems to have been renewed interest in a “Golden Age” of jazz perhaps accounts for the enthusiasm with which Robert Parent’s touring photographic exhibitions of classic jazz imagery in 1978 were greeted and which encouraged William Gottlieb, after having quit the jazz scene some 30 years previously, to publish a selection of his negatives in 1979 as *The Golden Age of Jazz*. The success of the book launched Gottlieb on a late career shift involving lectures and exhibitions, personal appearances at galleries and museums, and “a cottage industry of postcards, T-shirts and posters.”<sup>23</sup>

In other signs of emerging interest, Roy DeCarava’s show “The sound I saw” at the Studio Museum in Harlem opened on January 18, 1983; Milt Hinton’s memoir, lavishly illustrated with his own photographs, was published in 1988 following dedicated conservation efforts by David G. Berger and Holly Maxson; and a few years later W. Royal Stokes published an anthology of photographs by the jazz musician turned photographer Charles Peterson.<sup>24</sup> Following Lee Tanner’s group showings of jazz photography at Kimballs East in Emeryville, California, in 1990 and curation of jazz photography in *Jazz Times* and other writings, exhibitions of jazz photography have become more frequent and photobooks by other jazz photographers began to emerge with some regularity. These publications in turn drew renewed attention to a series of older jazz photobooks, especially those by Keepnews and Grauer, Driggs and Lewine, and Rose and Souchon.<sup>25</sup>

The decisive moment however came with the rediscovery of the work of Herman Leonard. Leonard had produced memorable photographs of musicians between 1948 and 1956, many of which appeared in promotional material and on the covers of album from RCA Victor, Decca, Capitol, Mercury, and Verve. After several lean years he left the music scene and pursued a career in fashion, advertising, and film work. “Rediscovering” his negatives some 30 years later, Leonard published his first book, *The Eye of Jazz*, in 1985. An exhibition at the Special Photographers’ Company in London generated considerable interest and led to exhibitions in the United States, including an important showing in New Orleans in 1992. Exhibitions of his work continued and in 1995 his second book, *Jazz Memories*, appeared. Renewed attention began to be directed toward other photographers: William Claxton’s photographs of west coast musicians,

particularly the highly photogenic trumpeter Chet Baker, were reappraised as indicative of a practice at the intersection of film, fashion, and music, and Dennis Stocks's jazz portraits have been resituated within a practice devoted (at least at the time) to avant-garde and counterculture trends.

## II. Key names in jazz photography

While the work of many photographers will be addressed throughout this book, constraints of space mean that not all can be discussed in detail. The following section therefore provides an overview of the key names in jazz photography, the context in which they worked, and the nature of their affinity with the music. Many points raised here will be picked up and developed in later chapters.

### Studio photographers

Studio portraiture in jazz is often considered by jazz scholars as publicity, a commercial practice telling us little about photographers and sitters.<sup>26</sup> Chapter 5 takes a more critical view of this practice. Many of the studio photographers whose sitters regularly included jazz musicians were émigrés arriving in the United States in the first decades of the twentieth century: James J. Kriegsmann, who arrived from Vienna in 1929 to launch a 40-year career as a portraitist of black musical talent; Murray Korman; the Russian-born brothers Maurice and Seymour Zeldman who formed the Maurice Seymour studio for theatrical and celebrity portraiture; and Bruno Bernard, another German exile. While Murray Korman occasionally worked on location his portrait of Billie Holiday is more typical of the studio approach of these photographers (Figure 11). Overwhelmingly Jewish and often fleeing persecution in their native countries of central and eastern Europe, émigré photographers forged an identity with black musicians rooted in their own experiences of discrimination, flight, and assimilation.

By mid-century a wide range of studio photographers around the country were making portraits of jazz musicians and bands. The Bert Studio in Kansas City; Sussman in Minneapolis; the Bloom, Daguerre and Gibson Studios in Chicago; and Hollywood and New York celebrity portraitists such as Anton Bruehl, George Maillard Kesslère, Lansing Brown, W. G. Harris, Bert Parry, John E. Reed, A. L. "Whitey" Schaeffer, Lee of Hollywood, and Clarence Bull all made stylish studio portraits of jazz musicians. Working at a point in time when leading jazz musicians were beginning to move away from the early ensemble tradition, these portraitists help raise the cultural capital of jazz by imbuing the presentation of black artists with production values previously reserved for white sitters. Their engagement with jazz might not have been as personal as that of the émigré photographers, but in their use of lighting, pose, setting, and techniques—the "play of gestures" unique to studio portraiture—the contribution of their output in raising the cultural capital of jazz was no less significant.



Figure 11: Murray Korman. *Billie Holiday*. n.d.  
Clyde Adams Collection/permission of Leslie Greaves.



Figure 12: James Van Der Zee. *Don Frye Trio*. New York. 1937.  
Peter Vacher Collection.

### African American jazz photography

Other than Charles (“Chuck”) Stewart and Milt Hinton, few black photographers are recognized specifically for jazz imagery. Hugh Bell’s early jazz photographs are only occasionally reproduced in jazz texts even though many consider these to have been central to his practice. Roy DeCarava’s photographs, with their deep blacks, spare but sensitive composition and subtle use of lighting, do not conform to what is generally thought of as the “jazz image,” and it falls to writers outside jazz scholarship to offer insightful interpretative essays on his photographs of musicians.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, a wide range of African American photographers were involved in documenting jazz musicians and their activities. Their work is discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

As African American photography advanced in the decades following the turn of the century, New York photographers like R. E. Mercer, William Edward Elcha, the leading African American chronicler of “Jazz Age” Manhattan and the Harlem studio portraitist James Van Der Zee (Figure 12), Arthur Bedou and Villard Paddio in New Orleans, Carroll Maynard, William Edward Woodard’s Studios in Chicago, Kansas City, and New York City, and Hooks Brothers in Memphis were acutely conscious of the ways in which they represented black identity. Evidence of this concern can be located in their portraits of jazz musicians and bands just as much as in individual and family portraiture.

Roy DeCarava and Gordon Parks were pivotal figures in the development of African American photography during the 1940s. Parks has only occasional involvement with jazz subjects but was influential in shaping black photography's representation of race. If Parks was postural, Roy DeCarava was quietly experiential. Born in 1919 to a single mother in Harlem, DeCarava became one of the most important photographers of his generation in his portrayals of Harlem's people and jazz giants. Milt Hinton, a working bass player and talented amateur photographer, made a point of documenting the people and events of his long career as a jazz musician. After studies at Ohio University and an apprenticeship with Herman Leonard, Chuck Stewart made jazz one of his specialties. During a career of over 50 years, Stewart captured images of virtually every well-known musician and vocalist as well as taking on advertising and other commercial assignments. Other black photographers engaged with jazz included the record producer and designer Esmond Edwards and the theatre photographers Gordon Anderson and Bert Andrews. Andrews apprenticed with Chuck Stewart and assumed Elcha's mantle in the 1950s as photographers of black theatrical and musical talent including many jazz musicians of the period.

Many African American photographers training their cameras on jazz subjects did so as one aspect of their varied work as photojournalists with black newspapers and magazines and/or studio portraitists. For some, like Marion J. Porter in New Orleans, Austen Hansen and Morgan and Marvin Smith in New York City, Allen Edward Cole in Cleveland, Ohio, R. C. Hickman in Dallas, and John W. Moseley in Philadelphia, jazz musicians were an occasional part of the daily routine documenting the lives and events of local African American communities. Others concentrated rather more on jazz subjects: Charles "Teenie" Harris, who opened a portrait studio in Pittsburgh in 1931, became the main photographer for the *Pittsburgh Courier*; Benny Joseph in Houston and Ernest C. Withers in Memphis combined journalistic activities with operating a local portrait studio; and in Seattle, Al Smith captured images of African Americans in the many jazz clubs and bars of his city, creating an impactful sense of participation in his images. Ted Williams carried out assignments in the United States, Europe, Latin America, and the Far East for publications such as *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Ebony*, and *Look*. His involvement with jazz was much more than an occasional requirement of the job and his extraordinarily accomplished images represent an archive of the highest artistic quality.

On the west coast Charles Williams and Harry Adams were news photographer for the *California Eagle* and the *Los Angeles Sentinel*. Even more committed to jazz were Bob Douglas, Bob Moore, and Howard Morehead. Douglas began his career in the early-1940s as a nightclub photographer in Detroit and later moved to Los Angeles (Figure 13), while Morehead combined jazz photography with black glamour photography in freelance activities



Figure 13: Bob Douglas. *Lionel Hampton*. Los Angeles. 1950.  
Tom and Ethel Bradley Centre for African American Arts, California State University.

and work for the *Herald Dispatch*. Jack Davis chronicled the African American community and its music in Los Angeles. San Francisco in the 1940s and 1950s was another city with an active jazz scene with a wealth of documentary images left by photographers such as Wesley Johnson Jr., Red Powell, Steve Jackson Jr., and J. B. Coleman. Born in Florida in 1926 David Johnson, Ansel Adams's first African American student, made images of jazz as part of his work as a community photographer and photojournalist in the Bay area for over five decades.

#### White photographers of the interwar period

Another group comprises the young white Americans who moved into photography as the medium extended its reach during the interwar period. This cohort includes those most widely recognized as contributors to jazz photography: Charles Peterson, Burt Goldblatt, Marvin Koner, Herman Leonard, Robert Parent, Burt Glinn, Art Kane, William Claxton, Bob Willoughby, Don Hunstein, Dennis Stock, and Bert Stern. Their work is discussed in Chapter 8.

Early documentarians such as Berenice Abbott, Genevieve Naylor, and Lucy Ashjian took an interest in jazz and black culture while Jack Delano and Russell Lee made images of Chicago jazz clubs for the Photographic Section of the Farm Security Administration in the 1930s. Few photographers were closer to the world of 1930s and 1940s jazz than Charles Peterson and Skippy Adelman. For two years Peterson lived with his family above the Onyx Club; on hand to

photograph in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Street clubs, his images reflect his friendships with the players he knew best, the coterie of musicians around Eddie Condon and his hard-drinking “gang of Chicago ruffians.” Adelman, a Greenwich Village resident and one of the new generation of hard-bitten photojournalists, was as close as Peterson had been in midtown Manhattan to the swirl of activities around Condon.

Most of these photographers combined an interest in jazz with commercial practices based on art, fashion, documentary, photojournalism, portraiture, and advertising commissions. William Gottlieb’s photography was made as an adjunct to his journalism; Phil Stern, Bert Stern, and Duncan P. Schiedt built successful careers as advertising photographers. Among fashion photographers, Arthur Elgort and Doug Quackenbusch saw a natural affinity between style and jazz. Ed Feingersch, a student of Alexey Brodovitch and assistant to Gjon Mili, was a photojournalist known for his images of Marilyn Monroe but who memorably documented Thelonious Monk’s daily life and performances. Both Herman Leonard and William Claxton were attracted to fashion and the look of jazz: after his early jazz period Leonard moved toward fashion photography and reportage while William Claxton was always attracted to jazz personalities like Chet Baker at the intersection of glamour, celebrity, and cultural change. Dennis Stock’s jazz work mainly dates to the years between 1957 and the early-1960s, when he completed the photography for what would become *Jazz Street*. “PoPsie” Randolph was encouraged to take photography seriously by Benny Goodman and returned frequently to making jazz portraits.

Bob Willoughby and Don Hunstein at Columbia; Bob Parent, a freelancer with Prestige and other labels; Don Bronstein at Columbia and Chess; David B. Hecht at RCA Victor and Carnegie Hall; and Charlie Mihn and Ray Whitten, the first photographers hired by Capitol Records, were all successful commercial photographers. Hecht headed RCA Victor’s photo department and was primarily responsible for producing record covers. Influenced by Hans Kaden, Sid Grossman, and Alexey Brodovitch, he photographed several thousand record covers over a period of more than twenty years (Figure 14). Esther Bubley’s images from Norman Granz’s “Funky Blues” session in 1952 brought a documentary photographer’s eye to a music with which she was previously unfamiliar. Eliot Elisofon took on a number of jazz-related assignments and W. Eugene Smith’s involvement with the jazz loft movement was an unusually sustained and intensive documentary project. The photojournalist Frank Kuchirchuk made a series of glorious monochrome images at Lindsay’s Sky Bar in Cleveland in the early-1950s while moonlighting from his day job as a photographer with the International News Service. Reid Miles, Bob Cato, Burt Goldblatt, Victor Kalin, and Ralston Crawford all trained as artists or designers and linked their aesthetic aspirations with jazz. Burt Glinn’s photographs in *The Beat Scene* taken between 1957 and 1960 framed Thelonious Monk and



Figure 14: David B. Hecht. *Benny Goodman. Recording session. Carnegie Hall. 1953.*  
Gilmore Music Library/Goodman Papers, Yale University.

other jazz musicians as members of the artistic avant-garde. The renowned film director Stanley Kubrick was a jazz enthusiast and accomplished photographer who carried out a number of assignments for the illustrated press among traditional musicians in New Orleans.

Amateur photography was for a long time a white pursuit. The writer, historian, and revivalist William Russell was a keen amateur photographer with a profound affinity with the early New Orleans scene. John Steiner, the respected historian of Chicago jazz and founder of the City's Jazz Institute, used his camera to document the lives of the many musicians he befriended, many of which

were published in the anthology *Destination Chicago Jazz* written with Sandor Demlinger, another photographer. Enthusiasts such as Harry Perkins Tate Jr. in Los Angeles and Bernie Moss in Boston were also assiduous in documenting local jazz people and activities. Stanley Dance, the British-born writer, business manager, record producer, and historian, photographed many of his encounters and his “family albums” at Yale University are a treasure trove of jazz memory. New Orleans has benefited from a large number of talented amateurs and participant observers with a passion for the city’s culture and music, notably Grauman Marks and Dr. Bernard “Bernie” Steinau.

### The European exiles

The exiles who arrived in Americas after fleeing Nazi terror between the mid-to late-1930s and the early-1940s included many accomplished photographers. More invested in European modernism than were many American photographers, this group made a major contribution to the development of American visual culture in documentary, photojournalistic, and art practices and were extremely important contributors to the new illustrated press. Almost all Jewish in heritage if not belief, an affinity with African Americans and their music found expression in the photography of a number in this cohort as they sought to evolve personal and social identities in their new country. Their work is discussed in Chapter 9.

Zinn Arthur, whose work as a band leader has overshadowed his contribution as a photographer, arrived from the Ukraine in 1921. While Weegee (born Usher Fellig in Hungary) is known for his uninhibited street photography, his humane and sympathetic images of black culture and musicians lack the acerbic vision of his better known work. Gjon Mili was a pioneer in stroboscopic photography and accomplished portraitist. Mili made a series of well-known photographs of a staged jazz jam session in his New York studio in the early-1940s as well as making stopped motion photographs of Lindy Hoppers and other dancers.

Jazz was seen by many of the exiles as a powerful form of cultural expression by another minority group offering scope for an exploration of their own place in the United States. Drawing on modernist ideas developed in Europe prior to their flight, the work of exiles such as Rose Mandel, John Guttmann, Alexander Alland, and Lisette Model is imbued with unsettling, exploratory, and enquiring signs. Francis Wolff, the cofounder with Alfred Lion of Blue Note Records, who arrived in 1939, had been a commercial photographer in Berlin and brought with him a deep sense of German Jewish *kultur*. Fred Plaut, a German electrical engineer who became a sound engineer with Columbia as well as being an accomplished photographer, also took a special interest in jazz. Lisl Steiner was a portraitist who found an affinity with musicians and other artistic personalities. The work of other exiles showed the signs of the documentary ethic: Roman



Figure 15: Otto Hess. *Count Basie and the Coca Cola Bottle*. New York. n.d.  
New York Public Library, Otto Hess Collection.

Vishniac's photographs of the guitarist and activist Josh White performing at Café Society; Otto Hess (Figure 15) and Henry Ries's documentation of the midtown Manhattan jazz scene of the 1930s and festivals on Randall's Island; and Clemens Kalischer and Joe Petrovec's candid portrayals of the personalities around the jazz roundtable meetings at Lenox and Tanglewood.

## Notes

1. Jonathan Green, *American Photography: A Critical History 1945 to Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984), 1.
2. Rudi Blesh, “Old Photographs: They Document the Legendary Days of Jazz,” in *Jazzways*, ed. George S. Rosenthal and Frank Zachary (London: Musicians Press, 1946), 19.
3. The only known photograph of Buddy Bolden is perhaps the most famous example of the difficulties surrounding early jazz imagery. Taken around 1905 it has been reproduced many times; although the date was once stated as “before 1895,” it may have been printed in reverse and the personnel are in doubt. There has even been a suggestion that the photograph in fact is a montage of two separate square negatives. Neither an original print nor negative exists so none of these contentions can be verified. See Donald M. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), 76–77; and Gerhardt Kubik, Justin Winston, and Clive Wilson, “The Buddy Bolden Band Photograph,” *Jazz Archivist* 22 (2009): 1–24.
4. Bruce Boyd Raeburn, *New Orleans Style and the Writing of American Jazz History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 152–53, presents survey evidence compiled in 1942 by William C. Love and his collaborators suggesting that the average collector of the period was a 26-year-old white male: “Broadly speaking, the middle-class composition of the collector community is indisputable, as is the preponderance of males compared to females (a ratio of 15 to 1).”
5. William Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory 1890–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xv. Ken Prouty, “The Problem with Community,” in *Knowing Jazz: Community, Pedagogy, and Canon in the Information Age* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 41, makes the point that to assume that recordings are poor substitutes for performances misconstrues how relationships in jazz are constructed. Susan J. Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting 1899–1922* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 302, notes that radio broadcasts also brought about new associations of like-minded amateurs.
6. Ken Vail, *Swing Era Scrapbook: The Teenage Diaries and Radio Logs of Bob Inman 1936–38* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 2.
7. “Ella Fitzgerald Mobbed by Crowd,” *Down Beat*, July 15, 1940 and “Chords and Dischords,” *Down Beat*, September 15, 1940.
8. Alan John Ainsworth, “Photographic Representations of Jazz: Testimonial Advertising in *Down Beat*, 1938–48,” *Jazz Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (2018): 111–52, presents the results of an analysis of over 1,500 testimonial advertisements over a ten-year period from which the data in this paragraph are drawn.
9. Patricia Hills, *Cultural Legacies and the Transformation of the Cubist Collage Aesthetic* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2011), 229–32; Hurston quoted by Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong: Master of Modernism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014), 84.
10. “Apollo Threater’s Gordon ‘Doc’ Anderson and Billie Holiday, 1950s,” *Harlem World*, 2014. <https://www.harlemworld.com> There is a collection of Gordon Anderson’s photographs at the New York Public Library’s Schomburg Centre.
11. John Raeburn, *A Staggering Revolution: A Cultural History of Thirties Photography* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 7; Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 160.
12. For cross-modal interactions, see Charles Spence and others, “Store Atmospherics: A Multisensory Perspective,” *Psychology and Marketing* 31, no. 7 (2014): 472–88 and (with Massimiliano Zampini), “The Role of Auditory Clues in Modulating the Perceived Crispness and Staleness of Potato Chips,” *Journal of Sensory Studies* 19, no. 5 (n.d.): 347–63. Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering, “For the Record: Popular Music and Photography as Technologies of Memory,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 9, no. 2 (2006): 149–65, propose that “the mutual compatibility and interaction” between recorded sound and photography is what viewers and listeners generally believe to be the mimetic fidelity of both media. In combination the “apparently uncoded actuality” of recorded music and photography is the source of their “symbolic potency, the indexical connection with flesh-and-blood referents that makes the experience so moving.” W. J. T. Mitchell, “There Are No Visual Media,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 4, no. 2 (2005): 257.
13. B. E. Stein and M. A. Meredith, *The Merging of the Senses* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), xi, 1.

14. Stein and Meredith, *The Merging of the Senses*, 7.
15. Benny Goodman Papers, Box 28, Folders 66 and 67A, Gilmore Music Library, Yale University.
16. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 69.
17. Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” *Representations* no. 26 (Spring 1989): 7. For family snapshots and albums, see R. Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1987); Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Patricia Holland, “Introduction: Memory and the Family Album,” in *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography*, ed. Jo Spence and Patricia Holland (London: Virago Press, 1991), 1–14; and Gillian Rose, “Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28, no. 1 (2003): 5–18.
18. Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering, *Photography, Music and Memory: Pieces of the Past in Everyday Life* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering, “Echoes and Reverberations: Photography and Phonography as Historical Forms,” *Media History* 13, nos. 2–3 (2007): 273–88. A special edition of *photographies* in 2010 was also devoted to the subject of memory and included Karen Cross and Julia Pec, “Editorial: Special Issue on Photography, Archive and Memory,” *Photographies* 3, no. 2 (2010): 127–38; and David Bate, “The Memory of Photograph,” *Photographies* 3, no. 2 (2010): 243–57. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 174–75 and 224, has described the “reification which resemblance needs for its own fulfillment.”
19. Clive Scott, *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 34.
20. Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000–2006), 9; Geoff Dyer, *But Beautiful: A Book about Jazz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), xi–xii.
21. Tony Whyton, *Jazz Icons: Heroes, Myths and the Jazz Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 7; Peter Townsend, *Jazz in American Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 166; Len Dobbin, “Legendary Jazz Photographer Paul Hoeffler Passed Away,” AllAboutJazz.com, 2005, <https://archive.is/20120722154154/http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/news.php?id=6823#selection-1057.0-1057.53>; K. Heather Pinson, *The Jazz Image: Seeing Music through Herman Leonard’s Photography* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010), 1. John F. Szwed describes how jazz musicians have “become models of a lifestyle, popping up in chic ads or flavoring the walls of apartments of hip characters in films.” The jazz musicians in turn become “one of the first truly nonmechanical metaphors for the twentieth century [...] Not since the English Gentleman, with his modality of poise, authority and how-one-should-be, has such an image dominated the world.” John F. Szwed, *Jazz 101: A Complete Guide to Learning and Loving Jazz* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 7–9.
22. Benjamin Cawthra, *Blue Notes in Black and White: Photography and Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 263; K. Heather Pinson, *The Jazz Image: Seeing Music through Herman Leonard’s Photography* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010), 127; and Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux, *Jazz* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 575.
23. Library of Congress, “The Faces of Jazz,” Online Text. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed September 3, 2015, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200185530/>.
24. Milt Hinton and David G. Berger, *Bass Line: The Stories and Photographs of Milt Hinton* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); and W. Royal Stokes, *Swing Era New York: The Jazz Photographs of Charles Peterson* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
25. Orin Keepnews and Bill Grauer Jr., *A Pictorial History of Jazz: People and Places from New Orleans to Modern Jazz* (Feltham, Middlesex: Spring Books, 1968); Frank Driggs and Harris Lewine, *Black Beauty, White Heat: A Pictorial History of Jazz 1920–1950* (New York: Da Capo, 1995); and Al Rose and Edmond Souchon, *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).
26. Hank O’Neal, “Interview with the Author,” 2018. O’Neal argues that much excellent jazz photography has been overlooked because it is considered commercial. He cites the example of the Polish-born photographer Ryszard Horowitz who relocated to America in 1959 to study under Alexey Brodovitch. Horowitz worked for a number of film and design companies and as an art director in advertising. He is recognized as a pioneer of special effects photography

- predating digital imaging, often employing fictitious and surrealist imagery and was a pioneer of the photocomposition style that found expression in dream-like images. All the time he continued making jazz photographs of leading players. Horowitz's photos of jazz musicians have been collected in a book, *All That Jazz* (2014).
27. Qiana Mestrich, "RIP Photographer Hugh Bell," Dodge and Burn: Decolonizing Photography, 2012, <https://dodgeburnphoto.com/2012/11/rip-photographer-hugh-bell/>, considers Bell to be best known for jazz imagery. Geoff Dyer's perceptive analysis of DeCarava's photograph of Elvin Jones, "On Portraits," *Aperture*, no. 224 (2016): 23–24, is an example from outside jazz scholarship of a critical assessment. Saul Scott is one jazz writer who has taken a close interest in DeCarava's work: see Scott Saul, *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 248–53.