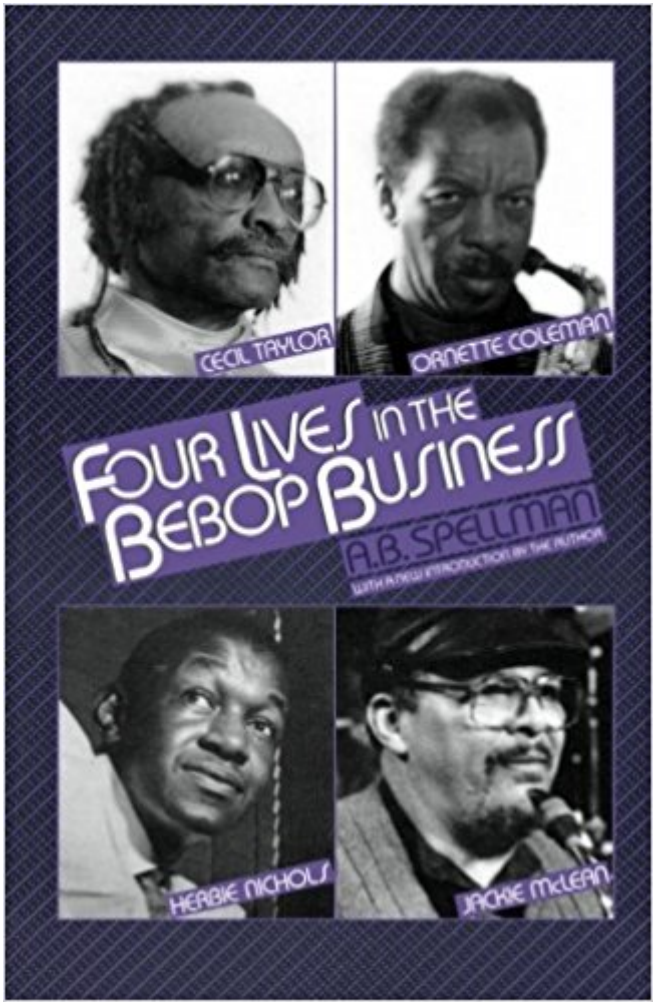
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Four Lives In The Bebop Business



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Synopsis

This book offers biographical sketches and quotations from four black musicians: Herbie Nichols, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, and Jackie McLean. Photographs.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I enjoyed this book thoroughly. The four biographies were wonderful and deepened my understanding of the bebop era and what life is like for career musicians. I was at first drawn to this book because of the biography of Herbie Nichols; I own the complete works of Herbie Nichols on CD but until I read this book only knew that he was unappreciated during his lifetime. Now I really understand Mr. Nichols and my respect for him and ability to appreciate his music is much deeper. Same for Ornette Coleman, who until I read his biography here was to my mind merely an eccentric who had helped ruin the commercial viability of jazz. Thanks to this book I now understand how sincere and committed and courageous Ornette Coleman was. I bought this book on about a month ago and I do not understand why lists it, a month later, as "out of print". I urge anyone who wants to deepen his/her understanding of jazz music to read this wonderful book. People who want to learn jazz can no longer simply go to 52nd Street in NYC and learn from the masters directly. Books such as this book, videos, and CD’s are the only way for the current and future generations to learn about the golden age of jazz. Thus, this book is *essential* for a sincere student of jazz. The book’s high quality is worthy of the heavy responsibility it thus bears. By the way in the course of the four biographies it contains a lot of fascinating detailed insights about Theolonius Monk, Miles Davis and

Charlie Parker.

For those who have not read this book or are not familiar with the works of A.B. Spellman.As Charlie Parker said Now,s the Time , , ,

A must-have book for any jazz library.

This book is a great resource for someone looking for words to match the music of such greats as Ornette Coleman. Not only does it look at the lives and developments of these people as musicians, but also at the constant struggles such artists faced (still face?) in the music industry. I can't imagine there was any other book of its kind back when it was first published in 1966, but that aside, its still worth a read now that such important jazz figures are more widely appreciated. Spellman has a deep respect for the musicians he writes about. More than a respect, a reverence. This is particularly true of the section dedicated to Herbie Nichols. I picked this book up simply because I'm a huge Ornette Coleman fan, but I think my favorite parts of the book were the conversations with Cecil Taylor. His perspective on Stockhausen is priceless and pretty entertaining.

Spellman, a lucid analyst of the avant garde jazz movement in the '60s (see his liner notes, for example, on the original release of Coltrane's "Ascension"), has contributed with this book four compelling portraits of musicians who gave and have given their lives to jazz."Four Lives in the Bebop Business" profiles two altoists, Jackie McLean and Ornette Coleman; and two pianists, Cecil Taylor and Herbie Nichols. Spellman skillfully crafts the narratives, while wisely allowing his subjects to tell large chunks of their stories in their own words.It becomes clear as one reads the book that it took a lot of guts to be a jazz musician during the '50s and '60s (and still does). All four of the musicians faced major obstacles in pursuing their art.McLean, who enjoyed the greatest amount of commercial success of the four, especially early on, battled drug addiction. Taylor and Coleman faced open hostility because of their challenging, groundbreaking approaches to playing their instruments. Nichols (the only one of the four who is not still alive) was just plain ignored, despite his brilliantly original playing (check out the two-disk Blue Note compilation of his music), and spent much of his all-too-brief career playing in Greenwich Village dives.In spite of bad accommodations, poor pay, public indifference, critical hostility and difficulty finding gigs, these artists, the book makes clear, would never play anything other than jazz. In this sense, the book has an underlying inspirational message. Still, it remains for America to fully embrace its only true indigenous art form,

something which to this day has not occurred.The book also offers insights from the musicians on the creative process and about the historic changes in jazz that occurred during the ’60s, from the perspective of men who were on the front lines of the battles between critics, musicians, and the listening public.Required reading for the serious jazz listener.

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