



## Lost Chords: White Musicians and their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945

By Richard M. Sudhalter

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**Lost Chords: White Musicians and their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945** By Richard M. Sudhalter

Too many jazz fans and critics--and even some jazz musicians--still contend that white players have contributed little of substance to the music; that even, with every white musician removed from the canon, the history and nature of jazz would remain unchanged. Now, with *Lost Chords*, musician-historian Richard M. Sudhalter challenges this narrow view, with a book that pays definitive tribute to a generation of white jazz players, many unjustly forgotten--while never scanting the role of the great black pioneers.

Greeted enthusiastically by the jazz community upon its original publication, this monumental volume offers an exhaustively documented, vividly narrated history of white jazz contribution in the vital years 1915 to 1945. Beginning in New Orleans, Sudhalter takes the reader on a fascinating multicultural odyssey through the hot jazz gestation centers of Chicago and New York, Indiana and Texas, examining such bands such as the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, the Original Memphis Five, and the Casa Loma Orchestra. Readers will find luminous accounts of many key soloists, including Bix Beiderbecke, Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden, Red Norvo, Bud Freeman, the Dorsey Brothers, Bunny Berigan, Pee Wee Russell, and Artie Shaw, among others. Sudhalter reinforces the reputations of these and many other major jazzmen, pleading their cases persuasively and eloquently, without ever descending to polemic. Along the way, he gives due credit to Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Duke Ellington, Coleman Hawkins, and countless other major black figures.

Already hailed as a basic reference book on the subject--and now incorporating information that has come to light since its first publication--*Lost Chords* is a ground-breaking book that should significantly alter perceptions about jazz and its players, reminding readers of this great music's multicultural origins.

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**Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #1833091 in Books
- Published on: 2001-11-29
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 2.10" w x 6.00" l, 2.60 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 890 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

In his massive and erudite study, trumpeter and Bix Beiderbecke biographer Sudhalter makes the case that white musicians have been unfairly overlooked in the canonical histories of jazz. Sure to stir up controversy among critics, scholars and fans of "American classical music," Sudhalter's history argues that the rise of multiculturalism, for all its positive effects on society at large, has helped foster a popular misconception of jazz as an art form dominated by African-Americans. While Sudhalter's polemical position provides structure to what otherwise might have become an unwieldy and anecdotal discussion, it creates conceptual difficulties. Sudhalter fails to establish how race worked in early 20th-century America, taking for granted that, like today, Sicilian, Jewish and Irish musicians would have been regarded as "white." However, a number of recent studies have suggested that the full privileges of "whiteness" didn't extend to members of these ethnic groups at the turn of the century. The book—which includes profiles of a number of celebrated European-American jazzmen—Beiderbecke, Bunny Berigan, Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw, to name a few—is at its most intriguing when examining such lesser known figures as the sweetly tragic New Orleans cornetist Emmett Hardy, the multitalented bandleader Adrian Rollins and the irascible braggart Nick LaRocca, leader of the seminal Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Whether or not you buy Sudhalter's basic premise, there's much to be learned from his scholarly, sometimes combative, narrative. Photos not seen by PW. (Jan.) FYI: A two-CD companion album will be released by Challenge Records to coincide with publication. Sudhalter is planning a second volume.

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From Library Journal

On a mission to promulgate the ostensibly neglected story of white jazz innovators, Sudhalter, a trumpeter and jazz writer, offers a bouncy, well-researched account of white jazzsters from 1915 to 1945, interlaced with explanations of musical styles and a few somewhat superfluous musical notations. The author expertly recounts the trek white jazzmen took from New Orleans to Chicago and their contributions to New York hot jazz, the new generation of Chicago jazzmen, and big bands. After chapters on such giants as Bix Beiderbecke, Jack Purvis, and Bunny Berrigan, Sudhalter ends the book with sections on the bands of Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and others. Throughout, the author repeatedly and unnecessarily bludgeons the reader with the point that these white jazz luminaries contributed to jazz as much as their African American counterparts, whom he mentions only peripherally. His lopsided perspective keeps an excellent book from turning into a classic. This informative, sometimes fascinating, but ultimately unbalanced history should appeal to general readers and aficionados alike. —David P. Szatmary, Univ. of Washington, Seattle

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From [Booklist](#)

Musician and scholar Sudhalter is often contentious in this massive work, but about points of musical performance rather than the race politics he diplomatically treats in the book's introduction. He hotly disputes, say, the low rating of Jimmy Dorsey in Gunther Schuller's magisterial *Swing Era* (1989), but he doesn't touch the chip-on-the-shoulder argument that jazz is black music--period. All jazz fans can read him without fear of offense, even should they still disagree with him about the musicians and schools of performance that are the subjects of the book's 28 chapters. Far from offended, deep-dyed fans, whether neophytes or weighty authorities in terms of listening experience, surely will be overjoyed by the range, depth, and readability--Sudhalter is no academic drudge, but an ace writer--of his coverage. As its page count suggests, this is a virtual encyclopedia of its subject, some of whose parts (e.g., the two chapters on Artie

Shaw) are long and comprehensive enough to be published as freestanding books. No jazz collection--no music collection--should be without it. *Ray Olson*

## **Users Review**

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