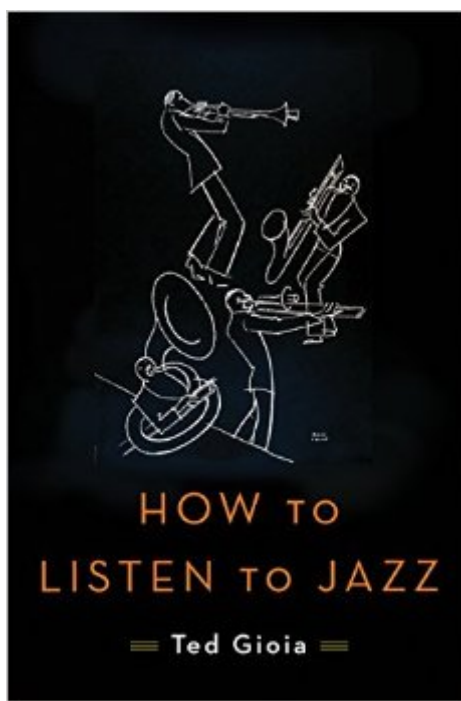


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# How To Listen To Jazz



## Synopsis

Jazz is the great American art form, its very essence is predicated on freedom and creativity. Its sound unequivocally calls forth narratives of past struggles and future dreams. Yet jazz can be as inscrutable as it is mesmerizing, especially to outsiders who don't know what to make of improvisation or unexpected shifts in melody or tempo. How does a casual listener learn to understand and appreciate the nuances between the unapologetic and innovative sounds of Louis Armstrong, the complexity of Coleman Hawkins's saxophone, and the exotic and alluring compositions of Duke Ellington? How does Thelonius Monk fit in alongside Benny Goodman and John Coltrane? In *How to Listen to Jazz*, award-winning music scholar Ted Gioia presents a lively, accessible introduction to the art of listening to jazz. Covering everything from the music's structure and history to the basic building blocks of improvisation, Gioia shows exactly what to listen for in a jazz performance. He shares listening strategies that will help readers understand and appreciate jazz for the rest of their lives, and provides a history of the major movements in jazz right up to the present day. He concludes with a guide to 150 elite musicians who are setting the tone for 21st century jazz. Both an appreciation and an introduction to jazz by a foremost expert, *How to Listen to Jazz* is a must-read for anyone who's ever wanted to understand America's greatest contribution to the world of music.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 272 pages

Publisher: Basic Books (May 17, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465060897

ISBN-13: 978-0465060894

Product Dimensions: 5.7 x 1.2 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (22 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #74,377 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #48 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Jazz](#) #158 in [Books > Humor & Entertainment > Sheet Music & Scores > Forms & Genres > Popular](#) #2973 in [Books > History > Americas > United States](#)

## Customer Reviews

(My apologies if this review is long-winded!) I began listening to jazz almost 27 years ago as the '80s drew to a close and I had become utterly bored and restless with pop. I really had no idea what to

listen for in jazz but was starting to feel an increasing affinity for the wistful sounds of horns, cymbals and the double bass that drifted through the radio, especially in the wee small hours (as it were, LOL!). I remember asking a staff at the first HMV store in Toronto for a recommendation and heard the name of Coltrane for probably only the second time in my life. Long story short, I started my exploration with CDs of the Holy Cole Trio (at the time, an up-and-coming Canadian jazz trio), Linda Ronstadt & the Nelson Riddle Orchestra, and Coltrane's "My Favourite Things" album. Since then, more than 95% of my CD purchases have been of this genre. As a person who neither plays nor read music, all I do is listen and try to appreciate the music for what appealed to me; in other words, enjoy jazz in my own terms. Over time, I've learnt to appreciate the spontaneity of sounds in the music; to enjoy discerning order or harmony in their apparent chaos/freedom; to try to shadow along the musicians' "detours"/improvisations of familiar tunes; and just immerse in the musicians' seemingly superhuman mastery of their instruments and performance. This, and catching live performances in jazz clubs whenever I could slip some precious little time in to do so in my travels, especially in Europe. After all, how else could a lay listener get guidance on how to appreciate jazz music?

"What could be stranger than a band playing the identical song, night after night, but making it different each time." We've all read reviews of jazz albums (especially) over the years giving an album either a thumb's up or down. But rarely are the reasons given in easy to understand terms that everyone can understand--some reviewers using fairly esoteric terms to describe the music. This book goes some way in explaining the different parts of jazz that will help some jazz fans better come to grips with some of the terms and reasons why a particular song/album is "good" or "bad". Most of the key elements in music, even something as apparently arcane as jazz, can be grasped without advanced training. This slim volume (222 pages of text) includes an informative Introduction that lays out the basic premise of the book, 8 pages listing 150 early/mid career jazz artists (including Mary Halvorson, Wycliffe Gordon, Warren Wolf, Django Bates, Julian Lage, Tomeka Reid, Cuong Vu, and many others who are making a mark in jazz--but why the list is here puzzles me--is it helpful for fans who might not be familiar with newer musicians?), notes on the chapters, and a much needed Index. There's no photographs--and none are needed. For me the book floats close to 3 "stars" while others may feel it's worth a higher rating. After reading this you may find yourself listening to jazz a bit differently--or you may feel that however you hear jazz--without using Gioia's approach--suits you just fine. To each his own. The author, Ted Gioia, whose written several good books on jazz (including "The History of Jazz", and "The Jazz

Standards") has taken a different path in his latest work.

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