

## AS SERIOUS AS YOUR LIFE

VAL WILMER is an internationally acclaimed journalist, author and black music historian who has been documenting African-American music since 1959. In that time, she has interviewed and photographed almost every significant figure in post-war jazz, blues and R&B, from Louis Armstrong and Thelonious Monk to Sun Ra and Albert Ayler via Muddy Waters and Aretha Franklin. As a photographer, her work features in the permanent collections of the British Library, the V&A Museum and the National Portrait Gallery; as a writer and historian, she has contributed to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*. She lives in London.

**VAL WILMER**

**AS SERIOUS AS YOUR LIFE**

*BLACK MUSIC AND THE FREE JAZZ REVOLUTION, 1957–1977*

WITH A NEW FOREWORD BY RICHARD WILLIAMS

Photographs by the author



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Everybody is a potential drum in as much as they have their own heartbeat; of course once their hearts stop beating, they stop swinging. Some people can't stand any rhythm or beats other than their own; these are people whose tuning is off in some kind of way. It seems that anybody with their own heartbeat should be compatible to rhythm, period.

Pat Patrick

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a *different drummer*. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.

Henry David Thoreau

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## Foreword

At the time Val Wilmer sat down to write *As Serious As Your Life*, jazz was about as unfashionable as it was possible for a once-favoured music to be. What remained of the popularity it had enjoyed in the central decades of the century, when it illuminated the lives of generations of nighthawks, flappers, beatniks and hipsters, relied on a willingness to make an often humbling accommodation with the crushing force of the all-conquering rock machine. To the outsider, jazz probably appeared to be on life support. What Wilmer knew, however, was that even as it seemed to be vanishing from the public consciousness in the middle of the 1970s, as the great totemic figures – the Armstrongs and Ellingtons, the Holidays and Monks – were slipping off the stage, life still teemed within the world of the music and those who made it. And what she captured in this classic volume was the combination of unstoppable creativity, faith and stoicism that impelled a new generation of musicians to pursue a calling that held out little promise of the material rewards on offer to the more fortunate of their predecessors.

The ‘new jazz’, as the author called it in the book’s original subtitle, was inspired by a sense of mission that had evolved from the innovations of a group of radical thinkers whose core members included the pianists Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra and the saxophonists John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler. Each of these men questioned, from his own viewpoint, the rules of melody, harmony and rhythm and the conventions of vertical and linear structure previously applied throughout the evolution of jazz.

Free jazz, the new wave, the avant-garde, the new thing: those were the names it went by, and its early manifestations were widely

disparaged by those who saw the new freedoms as a threat to their cherished beliefs and assumptions. For this was not comfortable music, in any sense. When Coltrane turned Richard Rodgers' 'My Favorite Things' – a song from *The Sound of Music*, for heaven's sake – into a 30-minute ululation that tore obsessively at the seams of conventional musical structure, or when Ayler turned George Gershwin's 'Summertime' inside out in the search for some deeper and darker emotional resonance, the loudest response was outrage.

Unlike the many critics who expressed their distaste, Wilmer recognised that these musicians and those who followed them were far from apostates or heretics. Rather than rejecting the essence of jazz, they had done the opposite by embracing some of the music's neglected core values, in particular a directness of emotional expression that went right back to the raw collective polyphony of the earliest jazz. It was to be rediscovered by musicians whose virtuosity enabled them to extend not just the grammar and syntax of the music but, crucially, the language of their individual instruments.

Through the realisation that self-reliance was the best armour against the indifference of the commercial music business, this group of mostly African-American musicians developed an urgent and empowering sense of community. *As Serious As Your Life* examines events such as the founding of New York's Jazz Composers Guild in 1964 and the creation of Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians three years later, which may have varied in long-term impact (the former flaring briefly, the latter still flourishing as it celebrated its 50th anniversary) but offered equally vital signposts to a future in which musicians could no longer rely on an established infrastructure of club-owners, concert promoters and record companies.

Val Wilmer, born in 1941 in Harrogate, Yorkshire and raised in South London, formed an immediate emotional rapport with American jazz at the age of 12, when she encountered recordings by Fats Waller, Bessie Smith and others. She began attending jazz concerts in London and soon started to write about what she heard,



making efforts to contact visiting American musicians to get their direct testimony. She was 17 when her first article, a profile of the American blues and folk singer Jesse Fuller, was accepted by *Jazz Journal*. Over the next few years, often in the face of unhelpful reactions from male colleagues who scarcely bothered to disguise their scorn at the idea of a woman trespassing on their turf, she wrote regularly for *Down Beat*, the *Melody Maker* and other major publications, gradually shifting her area of interest from the mainstream to the musicians operating on the music's leading edge. She was also honing her skills as a professional photographer, illustrating her texts with images that began to show a less frequently examined side of the musicians' existence: not on stage in the glow of the spotlight (although she was good at that, too) but at home in their kitchens, or holding their small children, or getting a haircut, or playing pool together, or catching a nap on the band bus between gigs.

Unlike many who write or have written about this music, Wilmer sees the musicians as human beings first, and their music as the product of that humanity. Her sensitivity to their creative and economic struggle, and her understanding of the challenges facing an outsider, enlarged her access to their community as she became a trusted and valued chronicler of their lives.

Her first book, *Jazz People* (1970), consisted of profiles of 14 American musicians, each accompanied by a photograph. Her second, *The Face of Black Music* (1976), concentrated on the images, its title proclaiming her belief in the essentially African-American core of the music, from the country blues of Baby Tate and Guitar Shorty – whom she encountered on trips to the Deep South – to the high sophistication of Archie Shepp and Miles Davis. Its publication followed a solo exhibition at the V&A Museum in London, where her work forms part of the permanent photographic collection. (Her photographs are also in the collections of the National Portrait Gallery, the Arts Council, the Smithsonian Institution, the New York Public Library and the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris.)

With *As Serious As Your Life*, however, she produced something different. Here was a book that thoroughly documented, investigated and celebrated the new music, underpinned by a radical political consciousness embracing socialism, feminism, anti-racism and gay rights, and by the fruits of her encounters with African-American poets, playwrights and essayists such as Langston Hughes, Jayne Cortez and Amiri Baraka. It records the complex interlocking creative relationships that developed as the music underwent its rapid development, the invention of platforms on which the music could present itself in the battle to fight exclusion from the mainstream, and the struggle to reconcile the professional and personal demands of life as a player of a music existing in the margins. All these are examined in fascinating and often moving detail.

As a teenager, Val Wilmer's earliest encounters with jazz musicians taught her that those who had received scant public attention were often as interesting and as artistically significant as the ones who regularly appeared on magazine covers. So in addition to shining fresh light on the major figures, this book introduces others – the saxophonist Frank Lowe, the trumpeter Earl Cross and the drummer Milford Graves, for instance – who may not have been as well known outside the community but who were playing important roles in the music's evolution.

Even more striking is the book's pioneering insistence on the significance of the place of women in the music. In a pair of chapters, the author goes beyond the stereotypes to discover the reality of women not just in supportive roles (as partners, fans and organisers) but as committed practitioners. In the field of gender studies, these chapters have been acknowledged as, in the words of Farah Jasmine Griffin, a professor of English and comparative literature and African-American studies at Columbia University in New York, 'an important precursor to contemporary scholarship on the music.' Through her references to such players as the trumpeter Barbara Donald, the pianist Alice Coltrane and the guitarist

Monnette Sudler, Wilmer helped pave the way for a current generation represented by the saxophonist Matana Roberts, the guitarist Mary Halvorson and the cellist Tomeka Reid – women who are accepted without question as the equals of the men with whom they collaborate in musical explorations whose origins can be traced to the big bang of free jazz.

The vindication of this music's dream may have been long deferred, but its explosion continues to resonate. John Coltrane and Sun Ra are acknowledged as giants; the music of Alice Coltrane is being discovered by new listeners a decade after her death; a then-obscure figure such as the trumpeter/composer Wadada Leo Smith is now a revered elder of the twenty-first century, helping to raise the new generations. Val Wilmer's great work, the fruit of a lifetime's immersion in the music and the lives of those who make it, enlightens any reader seeking to know the origins of that explosion and to understand how it opened the doorway to a future whose promise is still being realised.

Richard Williams

*December 2017*

## Author's Prefatory Note

Living through this music from the start of the 1960s was an experience without equal. To stay in New York, to know the musicians and interview them for *Melody Maker* and other journals was exhilarating and exhausting and a lifetime's lesson about dedication. Writing this book was to acknowledge certain responsibilities placed on my shoulders; completing it was a labour of love. Since it first appeared in 1977, corrections and a few revisions have been made, but it is a social history of a particular period and I feel that any attempt to further update the text would be pointless. Times change and so do opinions, nevertheless I stand by most of what I wrote originally and truly believe that the time is approaching when these artists will be as revered for their collective and individual innovations as are the giants of previous eras.

## *Introduction*

### **A State of Mind**

You know, Black music is how *our* lives are, and how we are looking at, and relating to, the outside world. It's just a state of mind.

Jerome Cooper

In the summer of 1972 I sat in a clapboard house beside a North Carolina tobacco field and listened to a man called Guitar Shorty singing and playing the blues. Some of his words were made up on the spot, others were as old as the music itself. Whatever their immediate source, however, each phrase derived from the rich musical legacy of Black America. Shorty's instrumental work, likewise, was a combination of things remembered and things invented, but his dynamics were good and the music was full of surprises. For the earnest student of the blues, though, there was one thing distressingly wrong: the guitarist seemed blissfully unaware of the classic eight-bar, twelve-bar and sixteen-bar structures of the most common kinds of blues. He fragmented the time and switched from one pattern or chord sequence to another whenever the change sounded right to him, a cavalier attitude to form that caused one of my companions, a local white guitarist, to exclaim – albeit with enthusiasm – ‘Shorty’s a real free-form guitar player; he don’t play *nothing* right!’

On my way back to New York that night I started thinking about freedom in music and how it is just that refusal to conform to any preconceived (i.e. European) patterns or rules that is one of the chief virtues of Black or African-American music. No matter

who the performer – a housemaid bearing witness in church on a Sunday or a guitarist playing the Saturday night blues in some downhome bar – the music is never predictable. Polished or basic – Duke Ellington whipping his sidemen through the majestic surge of sound that was uniquely his (and their) creation, Eddie Kendricks singing in his exquisite falsetto high above the Temptations, Albert Ayler wrenching meanings from ‘Summertime’ that Gershwin never dreamed of – the sound of surprise is what counts. Black music is, with the cinema, the most important art form of this century. In terms of influence, there is scarcely anyone untouched by it.

The music of Black Americans has always been free. It is the white critics and the media, it seems to me, who want to chain it.

Leo Smith, a young trumpeter who grew up in the Mississippi Delta, summed up the musician’s attitude: ‘I never considered the blues to be twelve-bars, I never considered the blues to be a closed form. The blues is exactly, in my understanding of it, a free music.’ To Smith, a strong believer in total improvisation, the blues lay behind all his musical activities, the opinion of critics notwithstanding. ‘They say that what we were playing wasn’t really anything. That was all right, that was fine, because I have a strong background in the blues in the sense of knowing that whatever course you take, you should not be concerned with the outcome of it because you’ve decided to take that course.’ Smith and Guitar Shorty had more than a little in common; it was the critics who begged to differ.

It was at the turn of the ’sixties with the appearance of a series of recordings made by Ornette Coleman, an alto saxophonist from Texas, that the music hitherto known as ‘jazz’ began first to be described as ‘free’ music. Coleman, along with the pianist Cecil Taylor and the tenor saxophonist John Coltrane and, eventually, the drummer Sunny Murray, gave other musicians who were tired of the restrictions placed on their playing by earlier forms the opportunity for greater freedom. The three innovators had

different approaches, but basically their message was the same: the player no longer needed to confine himself to a single key, or to use a set pattern of chords as a base for his improvisation, nor did he have to stick to a given time-signature or even, with the absence of a regular pulse, to bar-lines. The New Music, as it began to be known among musicians, opened up new vistas for everyone.

Through improvisation, the jazz musician had been able to present a changing perspective on a given piece each time he played it. The performer in this music is, in effect, the composer who spontaneously creates new compositions, something that the player of Western symphonic music is unable to do because he must stick to what is written down. To the Afro-American, the freedom inherent in improvisation is his or her birthright, and so the possibilities indicated by a lessened need for the musician to relate to a pre-ordained form should, one would imagine, have been cause for celebration.

Instead, it was the signal for an unprecedented attack from the critical establishment. With a few notable exceptions, the critics attacked the unfamiliar directions the music had taken. There is nothing new about that: in the avant-garde of every art the innovators are often dismissed as ‘anarchists’ or ‘charlatans’; the difference here is that this music has been around for twenty years and people who should have known better have not yet caught up with it. The so-called New Music has been treated irresponsibly by many critics, something that could not, I suggest, have gone on for so long had the music in question been created by whites.

The trumpet player Lester Bowie pinpointed the situation by citing the case of a virtuoso instrumentalist, one of the most important musicians of today who is, ironically, equally regarded as a composer in the ‘legitimate’ sense of writing notes down on paper. ‘Look at Anthony Braxton!’ he said. ‘Because he is a “Black jazz musician”, he has difficulty in having his compositions played. If he was called “Leonard Bernstein”, he would not have such a problem. But he does “jazz” and it’s not *serious* music.’<sup>1</sup>

Although it would be hard to imagine someone more serious about the music than Braxton, the comparison with Bernstein is not so apt as it might seem at first, for more than a couple of decades separate them in age. The point is that it is a question of birth rather than longevity that dictates how a musician's career will be allowed to progress. Duke Ellington was turned down for a Pulitzer Prize at the age of sixty-seven, after all. ('Fate's being kind to me,' he said sardonically. 'Fate doesn't want me to be too famous too soon.') In Braxton's case, when his British sponsors attempted to have him classified as a 'concert artist' in order to avoid fulfilling the stringent 'exchange' system imposed on 'non-classical' artists by the local Musicians' Union, the saxophonist was rejected in spite of his singular reputation. The implication was clear. Anyone unfortunate enough to be born Black could never be considered as anything other than a 'jazz musician' – in other words, an 'entertainer' – no matter how many instruments he had mastered or from whatever quarter his artistry had drawn praise. On this occasion, even the endorsement of white critics and composers was insufficient.\*

The lack of respect accorded the musical creations of Blacks knows no bounds. Ornette Coleman, who was himself accorded fulsome praise by Bernstein when he first came to New York, went to London to record his symphonic work *Skies of America*. During the early part of the session, two 'cellists with the London Philharmonic Orchestra were discussing the score. 'It almost looks like music when you see it written down', said one of them. Several of the musicians engaged to play Coleman's music sniggered as the conductor ran through individual sections of the piece. Eventually, even the normally imperturbable Coleman had had enough of it. He picked up his saxophone and played the entire passage under

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\*This would, of course, have happened to a white instrumentalist, too, under a system that treats musicians as exchangeable units of labour, but the basis is essentially racist.



scrutiny from start to finish. The smiles slipped rapidly from the dubious faces when they realised how neatly the various sections fitted together. There was an embarrassed silence.

A similar situation occurred when Anthony Braxton hired five tuba players for a recording session. The musicians refused to take his ideas seriously. On another occasion, at a run-through for a television programme in which a group led by the drummer Beaver Harris was taking part, two sound engineers were talking. 'You'd better get them off the stage so we can set up the mikes and take a level.' 'Well,' came the reply, 'all you need for this bunch is a noise reading.' And this took place in the studios of New York *educational* television.

A contemporary white American composer, talking with some British musicians, felt sufficiently relaxed to describe an instrumentalist whose talents he had utilised as 'one of the few Blacks I can talk to'. For the elucidation of the assembled 'foreigners', he added, 'Blacks are getting ridiculous in the States now.' The inference was clear: Afro-American demands for respect for themselves and their creations disturbed his equilibrium. Yet the composer, using the system where recurring patterns are played in phase with each other until they almost overlap, had just been recording a percussion work, the overall sound of which bore a striking resemblance to the *balafon* music of the people of Lawra in north-western Ghana, a country which had recently had the pleasure of his company.

In addition, the use of phase patterns and tape loops in this context could be said to be only a mechanical approximation of the barely imperceptible shifts in improvisation that occur within a West African drum-choir playing continually over a long period.

At times it seems as though there is a definite conspiracy afoot to inhibit the progress of the new Black music. If that sounds doubtful, examine the facts. Jazz, we are told, is undergoing a renaissance in popularity, and the flood of new records on the market and the opening of new nightclubs confirms this. Yet apart from a few

'token' new musicians (i.e. affiliated to the avant-garde) whose faces fit, little or no employment is available in those clubs for the many fine musicians who, until they started to take matters into their own hands, had no place to play apart from their own homes. The recording business is slightly better but the advances paid to musicians remain pitifully inadequate. At one time there was talk about Underground music, but the new music, the *new jazz*, is the real Underground music.

It is unfortunate that as far as Black music is concerned, its evolution has occurred so rapidly that the champion of yesterday's new sounds has become the opponent of today's in many cases. Despite those politically aware writers involved with bringing Black achievements to a wider public, many 'critics' are oblivious to the social situation responsible for African-American music and unconcerned with its true significance. Such individuals are responsible for propagating the widely held belief that no progress has occurred in the music since the innovations of John Coltrane.

Ignorance about the New Music is appalling even in some sections of the music press. Were one to believe many writers, the exciting and innovative artist Rahsaan Roland Kirk, a man whose expression is not limited to a single instrument, achieved his fame as a result of 'gimmickry' (playing three horns at once) and 'freak' effects. Long ago Kirk developed a way of 'growling' the melody line he was simultaneously playing on the flute, a concept that has been copied extensively. This became acceptable, however, for Kirk was considered a player who belonged to the mainstream of the music. When Dewey Redman, a musician of the same age whose roots went equally deep, discovered how to sing through his saxophone while playing it, his innovation was churlishly dismissed. By aligning himself with the so-called 'avant-garde' through his association with Ornette Coleman, Redman was a radical, i.e. a 'freak', and worthy only of passing interest. He developed the ability to sing either a related line or one that was unrelated to what he was playing on the saxophone and the effect was stunning. It called to

mind the voicing of two horns locked head-on in a battling blues band, but what did the critics say? ‘Most of the reviews I’ve read, I’ve been hollering and screeching into the horn. I never read a review where the guy seemed to know what I was trying to do. It’s always that I use some kind of funny effect or a growl or a holler. But it’s not a fluke, it’s something that I studied, and I have never heard anybody else do that.’

Another example occurred in dealings with a magazine devoted solely to the art of percussion. Month by month, it featured interviews with drummers who are active in jazz, rock and session work. I called up the editor and offered him what I considered to be a ‘scoop’ interview with three of the leading contemporary percussionists. He expressed a tentative interest in the idea, but when I mentioned the names of the participants, admitted that their names were unknown to him. It was as if the editor of a film magazine had never heard of Godard, Truffaut and Chabrol. Together with another man, two of the drummers concerned were responsible for structuring an entire era of percussion.

It is difficult to imagine an artist like Anthony Braxton being invited to play in the average American jazz club, in spite of the fact that he is generally regarded as one of the most important among the young saxophone players. This is not to say that he was not at one time accustomed to nightclubs – they are the traditional environment for players of so-called jazz, after all, as well as the proving ground – but Braxton does not compromise, something that others are often forced to do.

Overall it is the dedication of the musicians that is the reason for this book. It endeavours to introduce the new musicians, to describe who they are and where they come from. It also explains why some of them are forced to compromise and why, in spite of the fact that it is hard to earn any kind of living from the new music, so many of them refuse to do so.

Above all, I hope it will show that the musicians are flesh-and-blood people, not just names on a piece of plastic playing their

hearts out for the benefit of anyone with the price of a record album. ‘When people go to hear the music they expect to hear the guy sock it to ’em, *do* it to ’em. And right – I don’t blame them, they’ve paid their money,’ said Noah Howard, another of the younger saxophonists. ‘But you never know what a guy is going through. I’ve seen guys go on the stage and play and they’ve just got a telephone call that one of their parents has died. Musicians are human beings and sometimes, I think people tend to be a little unfair and not recognise them as such. They treat them as a jukebox – put your money in, turn on, and turn it off.’

The cultural effects of the politics and economics of the situation cover the entire span of the musicians’ lives and their music, from their chances of work and acclaim to their personal relationships. The music itself describes the political position of Blacks in America just as their position dictates their day-to-day life, the instruments they play and the places where their music can be heard. In the case of African-American music, the fact that the creators are the colonised in a colonialist society has a vital bearing on the way the music has evolved, how it is regarded by the world at large, and the way in which the artists are treated. To ignore the realities and continue to listen to the music is, to my mind, not only insulting but ignorant.

As Noah Howard has also pointed out: ‘Let’s go back to Al Jolson – he made money painting his face black. Elvis Presley made the money from Little Richard. The Rolling Stones came to America and made five million dollars in thirty days, *playing the blues*. The history of this country has enlightened me.’

In most histories of jazz to date – ‘America’s only art form’, it is generally called, conveniently ignoring its *Afro*-American origins – political interpretations of events have been omitted because these histories were written at a time when Black achievements were seldom documented scrupulously. But how the music evolved and developed can be examined in two distinct ways. Traditionally, histories begin in New Orleans or thereabouts with emancipated

slaves picking up the instruments left behind when the Army bands broke up after the Civil War. The other, the political interpretation, concentrates on explaining *why* the only drums to be found among a people who had come from a drum-oriented culture were those played in those military bands. Not one African percussion device survived slavery, in fact.

In contrast to those islands under French and Spanish rule, and with the exception of the special case of Congo Square in New Orleans, the drum was actually banned by the British in America and the West Indies because it was thought that it could be used to incite revolt. It was also an emotive link with Africa. 'You pick up the drum and you think of the Black man,' said Milford Graves, one of the innovators on the instrument. 'You generally think of Africa and you think well, this is really his culture. And just as anything else by the Black people has been suppressed, so the drum has been along with it. It was a great factor in Black Africa and I think this is why it was suppressed – because it played a major part in their whole lifestyle.'

I feel that the long section on drums makes up for some of the omissions of the past. I have documented the career of Ed Blackwell in detail because he is a prime example of a major artist to suffer neglect as a result of this lack of understanding of the role played by his instrument. The drums, after all, echo the heartbeat, and as Milford Graves has also noted: If you study the anatomy of the ear, you'll see that the so-called *eardrum* is nothing but a membrane, and the so-called *hammer* is nothing but a drumstick.' The drums, said Beaver Harris, 'are the spirit behind the musicians'.

Another, seldom acknowledged, spirit behind the male musicians is that of the women who share their lives. The freelance musician has always been forced to lead a precarious existence and his economic plight is increased if he refuses to compromise his art or subsidise his income with a day-job. As a result he generally relies on a woman for support. The majority of the musicians deny this, but wives or 'old ladies' are often responsible for maintaining

them spiritually as well as economically, and yet the man who puts his wife and family before the music tends to be rejected by the subculture. In an attempt to redress the balance, I have talked with a number of musicians about the role played by women in their lives, and to the women themselves.

This book does not pretend to be a comprehensive history of the 'New Music'; it has been impossible to mention all the people who have contributed to its progress or to examine European contributions. It will, however, serve as an introduction. I have concentrated on lesser-known musicians as a source of information in many cases because I feel their experience is more typical and so more helpful in contributing to an understanding of the world of Black music. The careers of the major innovators and their contributions have been exhaustively examined elsewhere, and the length of the chapters on Coltrane, Taylor and Coleman bears no relation to their monolithic contribution.

Except where indicated, all quoted remarks arise from conversations with the author. My political attitudes have to a large extent been influenced by the analyses offered by musicians such as Andrew Cyrille, Milford Graves, Billy Harper, Archie Shepp, Clifford Thornton and Charles Tolliver in much the same way that all my listening has been conditioned by almost twenty-five years of exposure to Black Music in all its forms.

In the revised edition, I have corrected factual errors and, in the concluding chapter, contextualised events and briefly analysed contemporary attitudes. For these tasks, I am indebted to Mike Hames and his unlimited discographical knowledge. Several new biographies have been added but space had prevented the inclusion of many other individuals that I would have liked to mention.

'In some countries one is allowed to be what one wants to be, but in others one can go so far and not further. In some parts of the world we are recognised and get credit for what we are. However, here in the USA they take away from us what is originally ours. They get a substitute in our place – not as good as we are but

superficially close enough to fool the public. In one sentence: they claim the rights to our God-given talents. This has happened to the Negro in many fields and in jazz music it has been done constantly for the past fifty years. Expressing myself bluntly: many white imitators of Negro jazz – I do not speak of the dedicated and talented white musicians – are called great jazz musicians while the true creators of real jazz have to work for peanuts – if they can get any work at all! It's a shame.<sup>2</sup>

The preceding remarks could have been made by any of the younger, more politicised Black musicians, and the sentiments are hardly new. That they were, in fact, made by a man born at the turn of the century seems to me ample reason for the continuing need to stress the truth about the music and to expose the injustices that have been and continue to be inflicted on its creators by the music industry and the media.

### Notes

- 1 Interview with Philippe Carles and Daniel Soutif, in *Jazz Magazine*, March 1974.
- 2 Drummer Herbie 'Kat' Cowans in a letter to Johnny Simmen, published in *Coda*, June 1971.