



Spirits Rejoice!: Jazz and American Religion

Jason C. Bivins

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In *Spirits Rejoice!* Jason Bivins explores the relationship between American religion and American music, and the places where religion and jazz have overlapped.

Much writing about jazz tends toward glorified discographies or impressionistic descriptions of the actual sounds. Rather than providing a history, or series of biographical entries, *Spirits Rejoice!* takes to heart a central characteristic of jazz itself and improvises, generating a collection of themes, pursuits, reoccurring foci, and interpretations. Bivins riffs on interviews, liner notes, journals, audience reception, and critical commentary, producing a work that argues for the centrality of religious experiences to any legitimate understanding of jazz, while also suggesting that jazz opens up new interpretations of American religious history. Bivins examines themes such as musical creativity as related to specific religious traditions, jazz as a form of ritual and healing, and jazz cosmologies and metaphysics. *Spirits Rejoice!* connects Religious Studies to Jazz Studies through thematic portraits, and a vast number of interviews to propose a new, improvisationally fluid archive for thinking about religion, race, and sound in the United States. Bivins's conclusions explore how the sound of spirits rejoicing challenges not only prevailing understandings of race and music, but also the way we think about religion.

Spirits Rejoice! is an essential volume for any student of jazz, American religion, or American culture.

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