Patrick Burke. 2008. *Come In And Hear The Truth: Jazz and Race on 52nd Street*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

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In today's Manhattan, the street signs on Fifty-second Street between Fifth and Seventh Avenues tell passersby that they are on "Swing Street," even though nothing about the towering skyscrapers and the moving mass of people in business suits reflect this locale. Instead, what the street signs point to is a Fifty-second Street of the past: a collection of nightclubs and other establishments that jazz critics and scholars have designated as the birthplace of bebop, one of jazz's paradigm-shifting genres. In *Come In And Hear The Truth: Jazz and Race on 52nd Street,* Patrick Burke argues that while this designation may be true, historical accounts of this particular time and place tend to overlook nuanced narratives of racial identity, gender identity, racial mixing, cosmopolitan nightlife, the music business, artistic integrity, morality and vice, the enduring debate over "authentic jazz," and the path in which the music would continue to develop—closer to its roots in Dixieland and early Chicago-style jazz or in the "modern" bebop. Burke seeks to uncover this hidden history by taking a concentrated look at the musicians active on Fifty-second Street between 1930 and 1944. As the book's subtitle suggests, the neon signs that filled the night sky on Fifty-second Street illuminated a bevy of after-hour establishments that fashioned themselves—some more overtly than others—as hotbeds of "authentic" jazz. Burke's main goal is to deconstruct this discourse of jazz authenticity by explaining that what appears to have simply been a dispute over the merits of musical styles was also one about black and white masculinity and racial identity, and how these formations were played out in the music. This study is especially important because of its in-depth look at what was, by all accounts, an ephemeral moment in jazz history that resonates into the present. Much of how we understand jazz today comes from what was happening in the dark, smoky, cramped clubs of Fifty-second Street (including the image of a dark, smoky, cramped jazz club), and Burke rightly and successfully gives these clubs and their culture a closer, more thorough inspection.

Throughout his study, Burke makes it clear that the discourse surrounding jazz authenticity on Fifty-second Street always involved notions of race, which ultimately influenced the actions of club owners, audiences, and musicians. It might be of no surprise to the current-day reader that race was a determining factor in which acts would play in the 1930s and

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1940s, even as the idea of "authentic" jazz varied from club to club; but what readers might find surprising are the ways in which white musicians were thought to embody blackness and, maybe even more surprising, that black musicians were thought to embody whiteness. The scenario depicted in the epigraph of the introduction captures Fifty-second Street's unique environment: Italian-American trumpeter Wingy Malone contends a club's advertisement of the African-American trumpet virtuoso Dizzy Gillespie by posting his own sign at another club, beckoning the public to come inside and hear the "Truth."

Burke makes a case for the clubs of Fifty-second Street as the grounds of highly racially-charged and interlocking relationships between musicians, clubs, press, and public. Burke aims to describe how Fifty-second Street's "musicians were among the first in the United States to demonstrate professional cooperation across racial lines, and their music, while it sometimes reinforced stereotypes, also pointed the way to novel, affirmative conceptions of race," thus implicating bebop at the fore of "new visions of jazz and racial identity that had an enduring impact on American culture" (12). While this perspective on the musical culture of Fifty-second Street is fair and elucidates important and oft-forgotten details of an era, new visions of jazz and racial identity were also being forged concurrently elsewhere in New York City. Luis del Campo and Joe Loco played what became known as "Afro-Cuban jazz" at various locations in Manhattan in the early 1940s. Most important in this regard was Machito and his Afro-Cubans, under the musical direction of former Cab Calloway big-band member Mario Bauzá, who was key to the bourgeoning of Afro-Cuban jazz with the composition "Tanga" in 1943 and on the stage of the Palladium Ballroom on Fifty-third Street and Broadway (right around the corner) in the late 1940s. Thus, the strength of Burke's concentrated focus on Fifty-second Street is also a limitation, because while the number and proximity of nightclubs on Fifty-second Street justify its close treatment, it was ultimately a small strip in a dense city that held a variety of challenges to musical, social, and racial regimes. The Harlem after-hour clubs of the late 1930s and early 1940s offer a good point of comparison to the music culture of Fifty-second Street, and although Burke briefly touches upon the fascinating relationship between jazz in Harlem and in midtown Manhattan, it warrants even greater attention and discussion, as I will demonstrate in this review.

Burke recreates significant stages in the development and demise of Fifty-second Street's jazz scene through the construction of a narrative that spans Fifty-second Street's first speakeasies-turned-nightclubs to the scene's infiltration by "hep cat" poseurs, vice, and, eventually, the commercial industry. As an ethnomusicologist, Burke strategically shifts between ethnography

(fragments of his interviews appear in the many quotes by musicians and fans who were active on Fifty-second Street in the 1940s) and archival research (a chronology and graph of the clubs of Fifty-second Street are included in the book's appendix). In a more traditionally musicological approach, Burke uses musical analysis in his theorization of the comedic elements in the music of violinist Stuff Smith in chapter 3. Disciplines aside, Burke's project (which grew out of his dissertation) stands as a theorization of a unique artistic and social space. He concludes that this space set a precedent for the complex webs of interaction between blacks and whites, musicians and the general public, careful listeners and jitterbugs, populists and elitists, and traditionalists and reformists critical to jazz music and culture since World War II.

It was on "Swing Street" that bebop was born. Those who find this ironic might also know that the act of juxtaposing swing, the epitome of a commercialized and populist genre, with bebop, the raw, artistic, anti-commercial underdog, is itself a "Truth" for jazz connoisseurs and historians. Musicologist Scott DeVeaux has pointed out that this juxtaposition is not only inaccurate (Dizzy Gillespie was well aware of the market potential of his nickname, goatee, and beret), but also imposes a distinction between commercialism and artistry that ignores the interrelatedness of these two forces (1997:438–9). Overall, jazz historians have never really adopted an Adornian disdain for popular songs (repertory like Benny Goodman's "Goody Goody" from 1936 and "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" from 1938 by Ella Fitzgerald with Chick Webb make such persuasive examples); but, until recently, jazz histories have epitomized bebop as a statement of black cultural authenticity in rebellion against capitalism and white hegemony. Subsequent jazz styles have been contextualized in light of this "Truth," and Burke treats this paradigm with suspicion in *Come in and Hear the Truth.*

The move away from framing bebop as a product of cultural essentialism and towards a genre of exceptional artistic merit has led to a propensity within modern jazz scholarship to view bebop as an apotheosis—one that has influenced every concurrent jazz style in one way or another (see for example Giddins and DeVeaux 2009; George Lewis 2008; Ingrid Monson 2007; Eric Porter 2002; Ted Gioia 1997), and one that neither DeVeaux nor Burke fully detract. Burke's insistence to arrive at an understanding of how musicians active on Fifty-second Street from 1930–50 promoted jazz as a virtuoso art form is inevitably an attempt to convey something that all current-day conservatives and pluralists will agree upon; but he isn't simply rehashing an old story here. Burke's project carefully considers the intermediaries between Benny Goodman and Dizzy Gillespie: the often overlooked musicians who provided the impetus for the bebop revolution,

such as The Spirits of Rhythm, trumpeter Louis Prima, violinist Stuff Smith, John Kirby's Sextet and singer Maxine Sullivan, singer Babs Gonzales, and saxophonist Charlie Ventura. That Burke's last two chapters focus on bebop as an emergent style is to be expected, but this particular ending has less to do with a historical bias and more to do with the real circumstances that contributed to Swing Street's twenty-year change from a musician's haven to a thriving and turbulent jazz scene, and ultimately to a present-day street sign.

"The Street," as it became known, was initially a collection of speakeasies on the ground floors of residential brownstones that spanned Fifty-second Street. Both black and white musicians around the country were attracted to the promise of New York's commercial music industry in midtown Manhattan. The importance of New York City as a commercial hub fed the venues and institutions that, by the 1930s, made New York City the artistic epicenter of the United States, and the negative effects of the 1929 stock market crash around the country only reinforced New York's image as a place in which to seek opportunity. In Prohibition New York, these musicians found that speakeasies were viable and profitable spaces for musical performance and also offered refuge from the fluctuations of the music industry marketplace. After Prohibition, the predominantly white, industrial worker-like fraternity culture that had been fermenting among musicians in these speakeasies-turned-bars developed into a burgeoning scene of novel and experimental jazz music. In comparison to the perceived rigidity of Manhattan's entertainment district a short walk away, the Fifty-second Street clubs maintained a relatively loose (and sometimes subversive) social atmosphere.

Race played a central role in deciding who played in which clubs, what was played, and who came to see them play. These race relations were both blindly upheld and vehemently challenged, as Burke alludes to in his subtitle. Intermingled with conceptions of race was the polemic of commercialism—clubs need patrons to survive, and innovative, charismatic musicians attract patrons, but the line between innovation and gimmick was seldom agreed upon by the bevy of musicians, critics, club owners, and patrons holding stakes in The Street. Burke points out in chapter 5 that by 1940, Fifty-second Street had transformed from a loose-knit collection of speakeasies that doubled as enclaves for musicians into to a café society: a fashionable underground for the white celebrity and wealthy socialite, and also licentious "hep cats." As swing lay in decline, the underground jazz clubs on Fifty-second Street—The Onyx, The Famous Door, The Hickory House, The Three Deuces—became the bastion of jazz authenticity and anti-commercialist sentiment. Both of these discourses became commodities that jazz musicians came to use to their advantage.

Burke argues that white musicians on The Street constructed their personas on stereotypes of black identity, which served to both validate their anti-commercial ethos and attract audiences. Conversely, an African-American musician like violinist Stuff Smith—whose performance style is given a thought-provoking analysis in chapter 3—actively competed with these white musicians on the basis of his version of an authentic black identity, which Burke theorizes as "jive." Burke discusses jive in the context of Jerry Palmer's *The Logic of the Absurd: On Film and Television Comedy*, which offers a surprising but persuasive way of understanding Smith's strategy of humor, racial signifiers, and instrumental virtuosity. Jive, in Burke's reading of Palmer, has two parts: peripeteia ("the construction of a shock or surprise," i.e., a joke's punch-line), and "a situation that is seen as simultaneously implausible and plausible but in which implausibility outweighs plausibility" (74). It is in the context of jive that Burke offers a convincing musical analysis of Smith's most popular composition, "I'se a Muggin," in which he argues that its linear flow (in terms of form and harmonic sequence) is disrupted by "implausible" logical absurdities that make the composition cohesive and compelling. Smith's seemingly foolish antics—his "muggin'"—betrayed the cleverness and calculation behind his performance style. For Burke, Smith represents a reworking of the minstrel legacy that set a precedent for jazz musicians of the next generation, especially Dizzy Gillespie: one in which the black performer's cleverness is flaunted in the face of his white audience.

A contrasting manifestation of performed racial identity is explored in chapter 4—the tight ensemble playing, harmonic sophistication, and refined stage presence of John Kirby's Sextet at the Onyx Club in the late 1930s. Kirby, Burke argues, not only offered an alternative to more raucous black musicians like Stuff Smith, but his restraint and organization (qualities considered innate to white musicians) also engendered a debate about jazz authenticity. "Jitterbugs" interested in "hot jazz" would go see the Italian-American trumpeter Louis Prima (whose darker complexion and "black" stage persona rendered him racially ambiguous) at the Famous Door, while an emergent class of "jazz cognoscenti" followed Kirby at the Onyx. Contributing to Kirby's uniqueness was the addition of singer Maxine Sullivan in the late 1930s to his group, who fronted the ensemble's performance of minimalist, highly-stylized swing arrangements of light classics and faced considerable criticism from the press (for their recording "Bounce of the Sugar Plum Fairy," for instance). Burke notes that critics like Leonard Feather, Gunther Schuller, and others took the bifurcation of jazz patronage between groups like Prima's and that of Kirby's as an impetus to speculate about which groups represented authentic jazz, wherein the

very idea of authenticity was constructed upon racial signifiers. Thus, the competition over audiences between clubs on Fifty-second Street often ran parallel with the competition to represent an authentic black identity and an authentic black music, and Kirby's group contributed to the fray by presenting a relatively rare public image of black refinement and sophistication. Kirby's competition was the "hot jazz" and Dixieland revival led by Prima and others, such as white clarinetist Joe Marsala.

Authenticity and anti-commercialism have been constant themes in jazz discourse and the blues tradition has traditionally been the gauge by which these concepts are measured. Amiri Baraka's *Blues People* is the first and most influential published work to do this, and it is significant that bebop is praised for its restoration of the blues tradition in jazz (the blues tradition, for Baraka, being an authentic crystallization of African-American historical experience and culture) in the face of "the sinister vapidity of mainline American culture" (Baraka 1963:182). Burke is quite critical of Baraka's assessment and, like jazz historians before him, eschews the blues as the basis for authenticity. Instead, Burke distinguishes bebop in that it:

> reflected black political and social concerns . . . As black audiences, musicians, and club owners became significant aspects of the street's culture, black identity became something white performers and patrons had to negotiate in fluid social situations rather than simply view or enact onstage. (170–71)

The music culture of Fifty-second Street came into fruition with bebop because musicians like Gillespie and Charlie Parker "[leavened] their musical rigor with commercial savvy," while being "confident of their superiority over white musicians of lesser skill and saw it as their prerogative to accept or reject them" (170–71). It would seem that Baraka's vision of authenticity has been transformed by Burke into one based on an assertion of racial and artistic legitimacy in the face of white hegemony. Whereas Baraka sees bebop musicians as authentic because of their folk roots and their distance from mainstream culture, Burke regards them as such because of their artistic prowess and individual agency. Burke's position on bebop's historical significance reinforces one of his most important underlying points: that Fifty-second Street was a space where issues of identity—especially racial identity—could be challenged and renegotiated.

But Fifty-second Street was not the only space where this challenge and renegotiation was taking place. While Burke's book positions Fifty-second Street's musical culture as the locus of a paradigm shift, it is useful to keep in mind that The Street was not isolated from the city. Ideas about music, race, and masculinity traveled to and from Fifty-second Street in the same

way that the physical bodies of musicians and audiences traveled. Including Fifty-second Street within the context of the many musical cultures of New York City does not necessarily negate Burke's claim of uniqueness for The Street—after all, Fifty-second Street's distinction as singular time and place in jazz history is secured by the testimonials of the musicians themselves. It is striking, however, that in addition to not mentioning what was happening at the Palladium Ballroom in the late 1940s, there is no discussion of race relations and musical innovations in Harlem at clubs such as Minton's Playhouse and Monroe's Uptown House, where Gillespie and other bebop musicians foreshadowed in Burke's work thrived. In his recent biography of Thelonious Monk, Robin D. G. Kelley explains how the jam sessions at both of these clubs became renowned throughout the city and beyond, provoking everyone in the "jazz world" to find their way to these "Harlem after-hour joints, choosing to 'miss their sleep' rather than miss out on an opportunity to jam . . . " (Kelley 2009: 71). While the music being played in Harlem was not yet called bebop, it was new and innovative, and did draw in both black and white musicians and audiences. Relating Fifty-second Street to Harlem's scene might have more effectively brought its musical culture into relief, which was one of Burke's main goals, but this is not to take away from the overall contribution of his project. Instead, understanding what happened on Fifty-second Street is critical and Burke's project can be seen as a major contribution to the understanding of the roots of modern jazz. As a close reading of localized events, performances, and musicians, *Come In And Hear the Truth* is a panoramic snapshot of the relatively short history of one of New York City's most important and previously underexplored hubs of jazz music.

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