



# DANGEROUS RHYTHMS

JAZZ AND THE  
UNDERWORLD

T. J. English

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WILLIAM MORROW

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# NOTES

## Intro

- 1 **“Strange Fruit”**: David Margolick, *Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song* (Ecco, 2012).
- 1 **Lynching in America**: Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (Random House: 2002); *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* (Third Edition) (Equal Justice Initiative, 2017) (<https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org>).
- 3 **Origins of jazz**: Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–26.
- 3 **“Nothing says ‘I want to live’ as much as jazz”**: Stanley Crouch, *Considering Genius: Writings on Jazz* (Civitas Books, 2006), 25.
- 3 **Origins of organized crime**: James Fentress, *Eminent Gangsters: Immigrants and the Birth of Organized Crime in America* (UPA, 2010), vii–xiii, 1–77.
- 7 **Lionel Hampton on *The Tonight Show***: *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*, August 21, 1990, episode #28.313, NBC. In his autobiography, Hampton writes about his uncle Richard working in the bootlegging operations of Capone. Lionel Hampton, *Hamp: An Autobiography* (Grand Central, 1990).
- 9 **To jazz purists everywhere**: What constitutes jazz music has been the subject of books and essays for many decades. A good starting point on the characteristics of the music is Ted Gioia’s *How to Listen to Jazz* (Basic Books, 2016).

## Chapter 1: Shadow of the Demimonde

- 13 **Early life of Louis Armstrong:** There are many biographies of Armstrong that deal extensively with his early years, including Terry Teachout's *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009) and Laurence Bergreen's *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life* (Broadway Books, 1997). These and other biographies (as well as this account) all lean heavily on Armstrong's own memoir, the highly entertaining *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans* (Prentice-Hall, 1954).
- 14 **music in New Orleans:** Ned Sublette, *The World that Made New Orleans* (Chicago Review Press, 2008), 62, 72–73, 110, 257, 277, 280, 287–289, 299.
- 14 **Legendary bassist Pops Foster:** Tom Stoddard (as told to), *Pops Foster: The Autobiography of a New Orleans Jazz Man* (University of California Press, 1977).
- 14 **“[Willie] put a two-by-four”:** Stoddard, *Pops Foster*, 2.
- 15 **Jazz funerals:** Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and “Inventor of Jazz”* (Pantheon, 1933), xii, 16–21; Gioia, *History of Jazz*, 31–32; Gary Krist, *Empire of Sin: A Story of Sex, Jazz, Murder, and the Battle for Modern New Orleans* (Crown, 2014), 193–194; Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya: The Story of Jazz as Told by the Men Who Made It* (Reinhart and Co., 1955), 16, 21–22; Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 61.
- 15 **Prostitution in New Orleans:** Herbert Asbury, *The French Quarter: An Informal History of the New Orleans Underworld* (Knopf, 1936); Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red Light District* (University of Alabama Press, 1974), 21–72.
- 16 **Pianists as “professors”:** Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 43–48.
- 16 **Ferdinand Joseph LaMothe (Jelly Roll Morton):** Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*; Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans*, 44, 50, 53, 55–56, 59–60, 83–97, 100–124, 151, 168, 204, 216; Gioia, *History of Jazz*, 30–44, 59, 62, 72, 92; Phil Kastras, *Dead Man Blues: Jelly Roll Morton Way Out West* (University of California Press, 2001).
- 16 **“Those years I worked for all the houses”:** Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 51.
- 16 **Congo Square:** Sublette, *The World that Made New Orleans*, 119, 121, 282, 285.

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- 17 **“My grandfather, that’s about the furthest”**: Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle: An Autobiography* (Da Capo Press, 2002), 8.
- 18 **“[They called it the Battlefield]”**: Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 7.
- 19 **“All I had to do was turn my back”**: Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 26.
- 19 **“When we were not selling newspapers”**: Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 25.
- 20 **“We began by walking down Rampart Street”**: Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 34.
- 21 **Andrew Pons incident**: Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 61–62. According to an article in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, Armstrong got the names wrong in his memoir. He identified Andrew Pons as Henry Ponce and Joe Segretto as Joe Segretta. Segretto was a well-known bar owner who later became a manager for up-and-coming trumpeter and singer Louis Prima. James Karst, “Louis Armstrong caught in the crossfire on the Battlefield,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, July 2, 2017.
- 23 **Origins of Storyville**: Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans*, ix–xii, 1–19.
- 25 **Thomas Charles Anderson**: Krist, *Empire of Sin*, 60, 109, 111, 147, 185–186, 303–306, 308–310; Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans*, 22, 42–49, 61–62, 71–73, 75–82, 97–98, 114, 125, 130–136, 142–146, 151–158, 166–167, 174, 206.
- 26 **Origins of the term “mob boss”**: T. J. English, *Paddy Whacked: The Untold Story of the Irish American Gangster* (William Morrow, 2005), 26.
- 28 **“[Anderson] had practically everything there”**: Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 53.
- 29 **“Why is the jass music”**: “Jass and Jassism,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, June 17, 1917.
- 30 **“Hilma Burt’s was on the corner of Customhouse and Basin Street”**: Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 47.
- 30 **“Hers was no doubt one of the best”**: Ibid.
- 31 **“Jelly lived a pretty fast life”**: Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans*, 34.
- 32 **“Jelly Roll Morton found that out long before I did”**: Stanley Dance, *The World of Earl Hines* (Scribner, 1977), 47.
- 32 **Jelly Roll Morton on the road**: Kastras, *Dead Man Blues*, 74–171; Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 113–147, 170–206.
- 33 **“It’s a funny thing”**: Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 121.
- 34 **“This Cordelia, she never would back up Ferd”**: Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 243–244.

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- 36 **“Round about 4 A.M.”:** Shaprio and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya*, 12.
- 36 **“These pimps and hustlers”:** *True* magazine, November 1947.
- 37 **Armstrong at Matranga’s:** Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 113–116.
- 37 **“[He] liked my way of playing so much”:** Ibid.
- 39 **“The tonk was not running”:** Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 125–126.
- 39 **“While I was in the prison yard”:** Ibid.

## Chapter 2: Sicilian Message

- 41 **In New Orleans, corruption and the plundering of municipal funds:** Krist, *Empire of Sin*, 19–21, 68–70, 142–153, 181; Asbury, *The French Quarter*, 21–25, 40–43; Rose, *Storyville*, *New Orleans*, 61–72.
- 41 **Influence of Tammany Hall:** English, *Paddy Whacked*, 5, 6.
- 41 **The Ring:** Asbury, *The French Quarter*, 49–52, 63, 75–76; Krist, *Empire of Sin*, 72, 110–111, 304, 306–307.
- 42 **Sicilians in Louisiana:** Krist, *Empire of Sin*, 21–22, 28–29, 55, 159–160, 277; Fentress, *Eminent Gangsters*, 1–30; Thomas Hunt, *Deep Water: Joseph P. Macheca and the Birth of the American Mafia* (iUniverse INC, 2007), 32–33; Asbury, *The French Quarter*, 21, 116–118.
- 43 **The Sicilian Black Hand:** Fentress, *Eminent Gangsters*, 81–82; Krist, *Empire of Sin*, 157–174.
- 44 ***Il Stuppagghieri* in New Orleans:** Fentress, *Eminent Gangsters*, 12–27.
- 44 **The Matranga family:** Fentress, *Eminent Gangsters*, 17–18, 23–24, 26–30.
- 45 **Matranga rivalry with the Provenzanos:** Hunt, *Deep Water*, 137, 139, 154, 176, 186, 189–191, 194, 201–205, 211, 216, 259–260, 280, 361.
- 48 **Killing of Chief David Hennessy:** Richard Gambino, *Vendetta: The True Story of the Largest Lynching in U.S. History* (Doubleday, 1977), 11–12, 14–20, 26, 34–44; Joseph E. Persico, “Vendetta in New Orleans,” *American Heritage Magazine*, vol. 24, no. 4, June 1972.
- 50 **Lynching of Sicilians:** Gambino, *Vendetta*, 46–53, 55, 57, 62–63; John F. Coxe, “The New Orleans Mafia Incident,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 4, 1937, 3–46.
- 52 **Blacks and Italians:** Gary Boulard, “Blacks, Italians and the Making of New Orleans Jazz,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1988, 536–546; Ronald L. Morris, *Wait until Dark: Jazz and the Underworld, 1880–1940*

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- (Bowling Green University Press, 1981), 18, 84–85, 87–92; John Gen-nari, *Flavor and Soul: Italian America and Its African American Edge* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), 17, 31–33, 89, 91.
- 53 **Origins of Louis Prima in New Orleans:** Gary Boulard, *Just a Gigolo: The Life and Times of Louis Prima* (Center for Louisiana Studies, 1989), 1–24.
- 54 **Dominic James “Nick” LaRocca:** H. O. Bruno, *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band* (Louisiana State University Press, 1960), 1–3, 11–25, 27, 83–96, 150–176, 202–204. The legacy of Nick LaRocca in New Orleans is a troubled one. In the 1950s, in a series of letters to various publications, LaRocca denigrated the role of African Americans in the creation of jazz, claiming, “My contention is that the negroes learned to play rhythm and blues from the whites. The negro did not play any kind of music equal to the white men at any time” (as quoted in the Ken Burns PBS documentary series *Jazz*). LaRocca declared himself “the creator of jazz” and “the Christopher Columbus of music.” Many of his original letters have been preserved at Tulane University’s Hogan Jazz Archive. For a cogent analysis of the LaRocca controversy, see Michael Patrick Welsh, “Jazz’s Great White Hype,” *Narratively*, August 14, 2014.
- 55 **LaRocca in Chicago:** Bruno, *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band*, 150–176.
- 55 **Original Dixieland Jass Band:** Bruno, *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band*.
- 58 **The end of Storyville:** Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans*, 166–181.
- 59 **Armstrong and the Streckfus Steamboat Line:** Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 187–192, 194, 209, 211.
- 60 **“The ofays were not used to seeing colored boys”:** Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 189.

## Chapter 3: Kansas City Stomp

- 63 **Thomas Joseph “T. J.” Pendergast:** Diane Mutti Burke (ed.), *Wide Open Town: Kansas City in the Pendergast Era* (University Press of Kansas, 2018), 33, 37, 42–47, 165–166, 196–197, 281–282; English, *Paddy Whacked*, 213–224; Lawrence H. Larsen and Janice J. Huston, *Pendergast!*

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- (University of Missouri Press, 1997); William M. Reddig, *Tom's Town: Kansas City and the Pendergast Legend* (J. B. Lippincott, 1991).
- 64 **"I'm not bragging when I say":** Larsen and Huston, *Pendergast!*, 2.
- 65 **"One of them hesitated":** Larsen and Huston, *Pendergast!*, 6.
- 66 **"the wettest city in the Territories":** English, *Paddy Whacked*, 216–224; Frank R. Hayde, *The Mafia and the Machine* (Barricade Books, 2010), 1–84; Terence William O'Malley, *Black Hand/Strawman: The History of Organized Crime in Kansas City* (The Covington Group, 2011), 13–15.
- 67 **Felix H. Payne:** Nathan W. Pearson, *Goin' to Kansas City* (University of Illinois Press, 1994), 88–89, 97–98; Frank Driggs and Chuck Haddix, *Kansas City Jazz: From Ragtime to Bebop—A History* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 29, 130; Sydney Vigram, "African Americans in Tom's Town: Black Kansas City Negotiates the Pendergast Machine" (honors thesis in history), March 27, 2017.
- 68 **Piney Brown:** Pearson, *Goin' to Kansas City*, 97–98, 108; Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, 290–291.
- 69 **Johnny Lazia:** *United States of America v. John Lazia*, Western District of Missouri, Indictment No. 12287, September 16, 1933; Hayde, *The Mafia and the Machine*, 29–72; O'Malley, *Black Hand/Strawman*, 16–19, 48–59; William Ouseley, *Open City: The True Story of the KC Crime Family* (Leathers Publishing, 2012), 59, 70, 76–101, 119–133.
- 71 **Black Hand in Kansas City:** Hayde, *The Mafia and the Machine*, 79–84; Ouseley, *Open City*, 11–51; O'Malley, *Black Hand/Strawman*, 1–12.
- 71 **Killing of Officer Joseph Raimo:** Ouseley, *Open City*, 303–305; O'Malley, *Black Hand/Strawman*, 3–5.
- 74 **"The shows, also known to musicians as 'smokers'":** Stanley Crouch, *Kansas City Lightning: The Rise and Times of Charlie Parker* (Harper, 2013), 218–219.
- 74 **The Cuban Gardens:** *United States of America v. John Lazia*, Western District of Missouri, Bill of Exceptions No. 12028, May 7, 1934. This remarkable document, 291 pages, includes testimony from various witnesses regarding the Cuban Gardens, which had fallen into bankruptcy and litigation. The testimony offers a highly detailed look into the financing of the club and Lazia's role in it. Two months after these hearings, the mob boss was assassinated, suggesting that the fortunes of the



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- Cuban Gardens—Lazia's great dream and ultimately a grand failure—may have led directly to his death.
- 76 **“Andy was playing tuba”**: Driggs and Haddix, *Kansas City Jazz*, 87.
- 77 **18th and Vine district**: Author interview, Geri Sanders (Director of Collections), American Jazz Museum, Kansas City, KS, February 27, 2020; Count Basie as told to Albert Murray, *Good Morning Blues: The Autobiography of Count Basie* (Random House, 1985), 107–155; Andy Kirk as told to Amy Lee, *Twenty Years on Wheels* (Bayou Press, 1989), 6, 44–48; Crouch, *Kansas City Lightning*, 59–62, 116–117, 122–125, 137–146; Linda Dahl, *Morning Glory: A Biography of Mary Lou Williams* (University of California Press, 1999), 69–72; Driggs and Haddix, *Kansas City Jazz*, 24–29, 33–34, 39, 225, 234; Leroy Astransky, *Jazz City: The Impact of Cities on the Development of Jazz* (Prentice-Hall, 1978), 153–172; Pearson, *Goin' to Kansas City*, 107–120; Ross Russel, *Jazz Styles in Kansas City and the Southwest* (Da Capo Press, 1973), 11–30; Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, 284–288, 291, 298–301.
- 77 **“Oh my, marvelous town”**: Pearson, *Goin' to Kansas City*, 108. This quote originates from a 1968 television interview that Basie did with Ralph J. Gleason on *Jazz Casual*, a program on KQED in San Francisco.
- 78 **“Now, at that time”**: Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, 107.
- 79 **Payne kidnapping**: Robert Trussell, “The Jazz Age: Journalism Wars of KC's Jazz Age: Feud Between ‘American’ and ‘Call’ Peaked with Kidnapping of Editor,” *Kansas City Star*, February 20, 1990; Robert Trussell, “A Case of Black and White: The Night They Beat Up Cab Calloway and Gave Kansas City a Black Eye,” *Kansas City Star*, February 28, 1988.
- 80 **“Everybody in Bennie Moten's band had guns”**: Eddie Durham, oral history, Missouri Historical Society, February, 22, 1977.
- 80 **“Everybody carried a gun”**: Count Basie, oral history, Missouri Historical Society, February 15, 1977.
- 81 **“I played at one place”**: Ibid.
- 81 **“I'd had a problem in Kansas City with a police officer”**: Ibid.
- 82 **“They would raid us occasionally”**: Ibid.
- 82 **Bennie Moten**: Driggs and Haddix, *Kansas City Jazz*, 4, 33, 40, 42–45, 53, 94–97, 101–102, 107–111, 118–119, 121–122, 124–130; Pearson, *Goin' to Kansas City*, 121–134; Burke, *Wide Open Town*, 239–240, 244–245;

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Russel, *Jazz Styles of Kansas City and the Southwest*, 88–112; Kirk, *Twenty Years on Wheels*.

- 83 **“Bennie was a businessman first”**: Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya*, 297.
- 84 **Musicians’ Protective Union Local 627**: Driggs and Haddix, *Kansas City Jazz*, 63–64, 85–86, 129, 133, 164–165, 170–171, 175, 188, 235; Pearson, *Goin’ to Kansas City*, 7, 164, 168, 187–188, 208; Russel, *Jazz Styles of Kansas City and the Southwest*, 87–91; Kirk, *Twenty Years on Wheels*, 89, 111; Dahl, *Morning Glory*, 123–124.
- 86 **Union Station Massacre**: O’Malley, *Black Hand/Strawman*, 33–42.
- 87 **Shooting of Johnny Lazia**: Hyde, *The Mafia and the Machine*, 65–67; O’Malley, *Black Hand/Strawman*, 55–56.
- 88 **Death of Pendergast**: English, *Paddy Whacked*, 223–224; Larsen and Huston, *Pendergast!*, 166–187.

## Chapter 4: Disfiguration

- 89 **Armstrong’s arrival in Chicago**: Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya*, 103–107; Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong*, 175–211; Teachout, *Pops*, 58, 60, 62–63; Eddie Condon, *We Called It Music* (Holt, 1947), 98–99; William Howland Kenny, *Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904–1930* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 43, 53, 57, 131.
- 90 **“I smiled all over my face”**: Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 212.
- 90 **“What he carried with him”**: Teachout, *Pops*, 84.
- 91 **“As the doors opened the trumpets”**: Condon, *We Called It Music*, 111.
- 93 **Armstrong’s parting with King Oliver**: Louis Armstrong, *Swing That Music* (Da Capo Press, 1993), 21–22; Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong*, 202–203, 228–229; Teachout, *Pops*, 72–73, 75–76, 115–116.
- 93 **Joe Glaser**: Armstrong, *Swing That Music*, 13, 51–53, 125–128; Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong*, 277–279, 283, 372–388; Teachout, *Pops*, 17, 208, 211, 241–242, 272–273, 317, 365; Terry Teachout, “Satchmo and the Jews: Louis Armstrong’s Heterodox Views,” *Commentary* magazine, November 2009; Ernie Anderson, “Joe Glaser & Louis Armstrong: A Memoir by Ernie Anderson” (parts I & II), *Storyville* magazine, vol. 160 (December 1, 1994) and vol. 162 (March 1, 1995): viewed via the Louis

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- 93 **Lincoln Gardens and Sunset Cafe:** Dempsey J. Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Jazz* (Academy Chicago Publications, 1983); Kenny, *Chicago Jazz*, 19–21, 24, 40, 50–51, 57, 103, 154.
- 95 **“Something you need to know about me”:** “Joseph G. Glaser Is Dead; Booking Agent for Many Stars,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1969.
- 95 **“All the young musicians in town”:** Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya*, 115.
- 96 **Al Capone:** Herbert Asbury, *Gem of the Prairie: An Informal History of the Chicago Underworld* (later titled *The Gangs of Chicago*, originally published by Knopf, 1940), 62, 318–320, 323–324, 334–336, 344, 349–351, 353–369, 371–374; John Kobler, *Capone: The Life and World of Al Capone* (Putnam, 1971); Laurence Bergreen, *Capone: The Man and the Era* (Simon & Schuster, 1994); Gus Russo, *The Outfit: The Role of Chicago’s Underworld in the Shaping of Modern America* (Bloomsbury USA, 2002), 2, 23–25, 27, 35–38, 43–44, 52, 59, 106–107, 214, 215, 340–341.
- 96 **Dean O’Banion murder:** English, *Paddy Whacked*, 147–148; Kobler, *Capone*, 98, 101–110, 124.
- 97 **“When one of Capone’s Boys”:** Armstrong, *Swing That Music*, 33.
- 101 **Attempted hit on Johnny Torrio:** Asbury, *Gem of the Prairie*, 347–351, 353–355; Bergreen, *Capone*, 143–146; Kobler, *Capone*, 207–208, 212, 301.
- 102 **Capone and jazz:** The gangster’s affection for jazz is touched upon in all of the major Capone biographies, especially Bergreen’s *Capone*, and in many Chicago-based jazz memoirs, such as Condon’s *We Called It Music*.
- 103 **Fats Waller in Chicago:** Maurice Waller and Anthony Calabrese, *Fats Waller* (Schirmer Books, 1977).
- 104 **Joe E. Lewis:** Art Cohn, *The Joker Is Wild: The Story of Joe E. Lewis* (Random House, 1955).
- 109 **Sam “Momo” Giancana:** Sam Giancana and Chuck Giancana, *Double Cross: The Explosive Inside Story of the Mobster Who Controlled America* (Warner Books, 1992); Russo, *The Outfit*, 42, 179–183, 187, 301, 369–370, 374–378, 388–390, 398, 407–408, 413, 427, 448–449.

## Chapter 5: Birth of the Hipster

- 113 **The Plantation Café:** Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Jazz*, 13, 27–28; Kenny, *Chicago Jazz*, 21–23, 26, 149–151.
- 113 **“Close those windows or I’ll blow you off 35th Street”:** Kenny, *Chicago Jazz*, 149.
- 113 **Attacks on Capone’s establishments:** Kenny, *Chicago Jazz*, 150–151.
- 113 **The quotable Capone:** Kobler, *Capone*, 58, 112; Bergreen, *Capone*, 212–213, 239–240, 261–264, 268, 356–357, 369, 418, 436, 509. All of the biographies quote Capone from the various Chicago newspapers of the day.
- 114 **“Are you hip?”:** Kenny, *Chicago Jazz*, 152.
- 115 **Milton “Mezz” Mezzrow:** Mezz Mezzrow with Bernard Wolfe, *Really the Blues* (Random House, 1946). Mezzrow is a legend in jazz history, partly because of his musicianship and his role as a prominent marijuana dealer, but mostly because of *Really the Blues*, which has achieved the status of a classic. Given Mezzrow’s identification with Black culture, people tend to have strong feelings about his legacy. Laurence Bergreen, who wrote an otherwise excellent biography of Louis Armstrong (cited as a source for this book), sullies his work by going out of his way to scorn Mezzrow. Bergreen describes Mezzrow as “sinister” and *Really the Blues* as “a chilling self-portrait of an opportunistic junkie, and proto-hipster.” Bergreen blames Mezzrow for getting Armstrong “habituated to the drug” when, in truth, Satchmo was more than capable of handling that himself.
- 116 **“Our whole jazz music was, in a way”:** Mezzrow, *Really the Blues*, 182.
- 116 **“Only [musician] I ever heard of”:** Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya*, 130–131.
- 117 **Jazz scene in Detroit:** Mezzrow, *Really the Blues*, 90–92; Lars Bjorn, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in Detroit, 1920–1960* (University of Michigan Press, 2001).
- 117 **The Purple Gang in Detroit:** Gregory A. Fornier, *The Elusive Purple Gang: Detroit’s Kosher Nostra* (Wheatmark Inc, 1977); Mezzrow, *Really the Blues*, 92–101.
- 117 **“Soon I found myself hanging out with them”:** Mezzrow, *Really the Blues*, 96.

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- 119 **“The smell in that room was enough to knock you out”:** Mezzrow, *Really the Blues*, 97.
- 120 **“Years later, when I was living in New York”:** Mezzrow, *Really the Blues*, 101.
- 121 **“At one place we worked”:** Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya*, 130.
- 121 **“The other customers left and the doors were closed”:** Condon, *We Called It Music*, 125.
- 122 **Earl “Fatha” Hines:** Dance, *The World of Earl Hines*.
- 123 **“They told us no harm would come to us”:** Dance, *The World of Earl Hines*, 118.
- 123 **Hines at the Grand Terrace:** Ibid.
- 125 **“I was in a music store a block away when the [massacre] occurred”:** Dance, *The World of Earl Hines*, 123.
- 125 **Ebony magazine article:** Ben Burns, *Nitty Gritty: A White Editor in Black Journalism* (University Press of Mississippi, 1996); Earl Hines, “How Gangsters Ran the Band Business,” *Ebony*, September 1948; “Hines Says Gangs Ruled Band ‘Biz’,” *Carolina Times*, August 20, 1949.
- 127 **Tommy Rockwell:** Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong*, 317, 329, 338–339, 348, 378; Teachout, *Pops*, 127–134, 136, 162–165.
- 127 **Glaser rape conviction:** Teachout, *Pops*, 205–207, 210; Ricky Riccardi, *Heart Full of Rhythm: The Big Band Years of Louis Armstrong* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 164–165, 167.
- 131 **Armstrong marijuana arrest in Los Angeles:** Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong*, 328–331; Teachout, *Pops*, 157–159, 302.
- 132 **Johnny Collins:** Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong*, 330, 335–336, 343, 347, 370–371; Teachout, *Pops*, 159–160, 162–165, 177, 181–190.
- 134 **Frankie Foster incident:** Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong*, 338, 340; Teachout, *Pops*, 162–165, 169.

## Chapter 6: Friends in Dark Places

- 137 **The Hotsy Totsy Club:** Jimmy Durante and Jack Kofoed, *Night Clubs* (Knopf, 1931), 31, 163–169; Stanley Walker, *The Nightclub Era* (Frederick A. Stokes, 1983), 236–240; Robert Sylvester, *No Cover Charge*:

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- A Backward Look at the Nightclubs* (Dial Press, 1956), 3–24; “Gives New Version of Café Murders; Doorman at Hotsy Totsy Club Says a Bartender Fled, Stuffing Pistol into Pocket,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1930.
- 137 **Jack “Legs” Diamond:** Gary Levine, *Jack “Legs” Diamond: Anatomy of a Gangster* (Purple Mountain Press, 1995).
- 139 **Al Jolson and Walter Winchell:** Tristin Howard, *Winchell and Runyon: The Untold Story* (Hamilton Books, 2010), 134–135. This incident is part of New York City showbiz lore. In some accounts, Winchell’s role is replaced by journalist (and future screenwriter) Mark Hellinger. It seems far more likely that Winchell would be in a position to exert this degree of influence over the likes of Legs Diamond.
- 141 **“One night a large party came in”:** Condon, *We Called It Music*, 183–184.
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- 142 **Hotsy Totsy shooting and aftermath:** Levine, *Jack “Legs” Diamond*, 99–104, 111–113, 197; Walker, *The Nightclub Era*, 236–240; Sylvester, *No Cover Charge*, 11–24.
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- 147 **“I’d had a bellyful of gangsters”:** Mezzrow, *Really the Blues*, 182.
- 147 **“A bunch of ugly-looking gangsters”:** Mezzrow, *Really the Blues*, 183.
- 148 **Cutting sessions:** Rex Stewart, *Jazz Masters of the 30s* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 143–150; Edward Kennedy Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (Doubleday, 1973); Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya*, 219–220. Many jazz autobiographies and histories touch on the subject of cutting sessions, as well as the rent parties, from the 1920s through the 1950s.
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- 298 **“[One club owner] refused”:** Dahl, *Morning Glory*, 117.
- 298 **“She was very attractive”:** Dahl, *Morning Glory*, 80.
- 300 **“An evil person will cause”:** Dahl, *Morning Glory*, 246.
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## Chapter 13: The Muck and the Mud

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- 327 **Jack Entratter:** Schwartz, *At the Sands*, 20–21, 28, 33–34, 38–39, 42–44, 58–62, 95, 96, 98, 109–110, 151–153, 167–170; Podell-Raber with Pignone, *The Copa*, 7, 14, 31, 41–44; “Jack Entratter of Las Vegas, 57,” *New York Times*, March 12, 1971.
- 328 **Evolution of Las Vegas:** Schwartz, *At the Sands*, 4–5, 9–12, 16–28, 62, 64–69, 71, 89–91, 183; Sally Denton and Roger Morris, *The Money and the Power: The Making of Las Vegas and Its Hold on America* (Knopf, 2001), 1–35; Nicholas Pileggi, *Casino: Love and Honor in Las Vegas* (Simon & Schuster, 1995), 4–5, 8–10, 83, 181.
- 331 **Racism and Vegas:** Davis Jr. and Boyar and Boyar, *Yes I Can*, 385–386, 412, 417; Daniel Mark Epstein, *Nat King Cole* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 232–233, 245–246, 320–321; Horne, *Jazz and Justice*, 162–166; Rosemary Pearce, “Fear and Motels in Las Vegas: Segregation and Celebrity on the Strip,” USSO, U.S. Studies Online, October 14, 2020; “The March that Never Happened: Desegregating the Vegas Strip,” *Nevada Law Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2004.
- 332 **“Man, I love show business”:** Epstein, *Nat King Cole*, 256.
- 332 **“A three- or four-year-old baby”:** Davis Jr. and Boyar and Boyar, *Yes I Can*, 365–366.
- 333 **Sands changes its racial policies:** Schwartz, *At the Sands*, 101, 104–108, 178.
- 334 **The Westside agreement:** Alan Mattay, “The Moulin Rouge: A Symbol of Las Vegas’ Civil Rights Struggle,” *Intermountain Histories*, University of Nevada, February 17, 2017; Horne, *Jazz and Justice*, 162–166.
- 335 **Cole confrontation with Entratter:** Epstein, *Nat King Cole*, 232–233.
- 336 **“If you want to see what a million dollars”:** Sammy Davis Jr. and Jane and Burt Boyar, *Why Me?: The Sammy Davis, Jr. Story* (Random House, 1992), 113.
- 336 **Jackie Mason and Sinatra:** Kaplan, *Sinatra*, 702–703, 714.
- 337 **Shecky Greene and Sinatra:** Kaplan, *Sinatra*, 704–705, 712–715.

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- 339 **"I never got a bouquet of flowers":** Samuel G. Freedman, "The Blues of Expatriate Paris: Recalling America's Jazz Exiles," *New York Times*, October 12, 1986.
- 340 **"That [album] is what put Debut on its feet":** John F. Goodman, *Mingus Speaks* (University of California Press, 2013), 164.
- 341 **Mingus and Joey Gallo:** Goodman, *Mingus Speaks*, 197, 199, 201, 251, 275, 287.
- 342 **Max Roach and the *Freedom Now Suite*:** Horne, *Jazz and Justice*, 257–259, 275, 282.
- 343 **"I'm jealous when I see ballet dancers":** Abbey Lincoln oral history interview, Museum of American History, Smithsonian, August 17–18, 1996.
- 344 **Murder of Tommy Eboli:** "Mafia Chief Slain in Ambush," *Daily News*, July 17, 1972; Emanuel Perlmutter, "A Key Gang Figure Slain in Brooklyn," *New York Times*, July 17, 1972; FBI file, Morris Levy.
- 344 **Levy and Eboli in Europe:** FBI file, Morris Levy.
- 344 **"Levy said he knows of Eboli's reputation":** Ibid.
- 345 **Levy incident outside Blue Angel nightclub:** Carlin, *Morris Levy*, 179–180.
- 345 **Vincent "the Chin" Gigante:** FBI file, Morris Levy; Carlin, *Morris Levy*, 157, 162–163, 167–169, 197–199, 208, 218–219, 221, 225–226.
- 347 **"Gigante controls by threats of force":** FBI file, Morris Levy. Also, see George Anastasia, "Extortion Case Ties Music Industry Executive with Mob," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 25, 1987.
- 347 **Levy and Betty Carter:** William R. Baur, *Open the Door: The Life and Music of Betty Carter* (University of Michigan Press, 2003), 135–137, 141–142.

## Chapter 14: Twilight of the Underworld

- 352 **"I found God in a little garden in Paris":** Dahl, *Morning Glory*, 233.
- 352 **"Jazz is healing to the soul":** Dahl, *Morning Glory*, 270.
- 353 **Mary Lou's Mass:** Dahl, *Morning Glory*, 306, 309–312, 317, 319, 321, 326–327, 360, 362, 376.
- 354 **"There were no complaints":** Dahl, *Morning Glory*, 367.

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- 355 **Satchmo and Glaser, the later years:** Teachout, *Pops*, 278–280, 317, 332–333, 337, 356, 365. Teachout also wrote a controversial play about the Satchmo-Glaser relationship titled *Satchmo at the Waldorf*, which debuted in Chicago at the Court Theatre in January 2016: Chris Jones, “Behind a great trumpeter, the notorious Joe Glaser,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 29, 2016.
- 357 **“I’ll bury you, you motherfucker”:** Wein with Chinen, *Myself Among Others*, 299–300. Ricky Riccardi, esteemed director of the Louis Armstrong House Museum in Queens, New York, and author of *Heart Full of Rhythm*, a stellar Armstrong biography, takes issue with Wein’s account of the Armstrong-Glaser relationship in its dying days. Riccardi suggests that Wein’s deathbed anecdote is likely a fabrication, born of animus by Wein toward Glaser. Furthermore, Riccardi was critical of *Satchmo at the Waldorf*, Terry Teachout’s play, which was influenced by Wein’s memoir. Riccardi and Teachout hashed it out in a friendly though spirited debate on Riccardi’s blog, *The Wonderful World of Louis Armstrong* (<https://dippermouth.blogspot.com>), commencing on June 6, 2015.
- 357 **Sinatra and the Nevada Gaming Control Board:** Bill Prochnau, “Ol’ Blue Eyes’ Scores Big Hit with Nevada’s Gaming Board,” *Washington Post*, February 12, 1981.
- 359 **Westchester Premier Theater:** Matt Birkbeck, *Deconstructing Sammy: Music, Money, Madness, and the Mob* (HarperCollins, 2008), 179–182, 223; Kaplan, *Sinatra*, 860–861.
- 363 **Sal “Sal the Swindler” Pisello:** William Knoedelseder, *Stiffed: The True Story of MCA, the Music Business and the Mafia* (HarperCollins, 1993), 16–18, 29–39, 79–83, 115–116, 134–136, 236, 245–247, 291, 318, 346–349, 405–407.
- 363 **MCA’s legacy in the music business:** Dannen, *Hit Men*, 53–56, 79, 89, 112, 137, 234–235; Knoedelseder, *Stiffed*, 10, 14, 21, 24, 26, 33, 35–36, 104, 106–107, 120, 135, 138, 160–161, 269–271, 300, 335–336, 348, 366, 435.
- 364 **Levy’s cut-outs deal with LaMonte:** Dannen, *Hit Men*, 53–56, 282; Knoedelseder, *Stiffed*, 55–61, 156–236, 397–404; Carlin, *Morris Levy*, 209–220.
- 366 **Indictment of Levy:** William Knoedelseder, “Morris Levy: Big Clout in

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the Record Industry: His Behind-the-Scenes Influence Is Felt Throughout the Industry,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1986.

- 367 **“MCA served me with a summons”:** Carlin, *Morris Levy*, 218.
- 368 **“Let me tell you something about the mob”:** Jim Schuh, “Record Heat: Morris Levy’s Bad-Rap Rap,” *Boston Phoenix*, October 7, 1986.
- 369 **Levy on trial in Los Angeles:** Carlin, *Morris Levy*, 225–237; Knoedelseder, *Stiffed*, 107–108, 309–311, 313, 397–404, 420–425; “Sadly, No Tears for Morris Levy,” *Billboard*, November 19, 1988.
- 370 **“He was still physically imposing”:** Carlin, *Morris Levy*, 244.

## Coda

- 372 **The decline of jazz as a commercial force:** Gioia, *History of Jazz*, 369–388; Thomas C. Horne, “The Decline of Jazz: From the Pit,” *Harvard Crimson*, May 19, 1965; Ethan Dodd, “Is Jazz Dead?,” *Yale News*, April 11, 2019. In 2014, Nielsen’s Year End Report stated that jazz represented 1.4 percent of total U.S. music consumption. Even so, sales statistics do not reflect the cultural relevance of the music, which has persevered in the marketplace and culture longer than any other indigenous form of American music.
- 372 **Emergence of Wynton Marsalis:** Mary Campbell, “Wynton Marsalis: Boy Wonder of Jazz Has Been ‘Discovered,’” AP, June 2, 1982; Peter Applebome, “High Notes and Low: A Jazz Success Story with a Tinge of the Blues: At Lincoln Center, Designing the Canon Draws Fire,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1998; Nate Chinen, “Wynton Marsalis: The Once and Future King of Jazz at Lincoln Center,” *New York Times*, August 27, 2006.
- 373 **Jazz at Lincoln Center:** “History,” Jazz at Lincoln Center official website (<https://www.jazz.org/history/>); Giovanni Russonello, “At 30, What Does Jazz at Lincoln Center Mean?,” *New York Times*, September 13, 2017.
- 374 **The Village Vanguard:** Gordon, *Live at the Village Vanguard*.
- 375 **Cécille McLorin Salvant at the Vanguard:** The author attended the performance of Salvant at the club in September 2017. He can attest that the lines were long and the show was brilliant.

## SOURCES

This book was based mostly on archival research. Given that many of the people who lived this history are no longer with us, I was dependent, to a large extent, on the public record. Of these sources, by far the most useful were the oral histories. Thankfully, a few prestigious institutions had the foresight to record interviews with many jazz musicians from throughout history. Some of these musicians were involved in the business of jazz almost from the beginning. The key oral history archives are housed at the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University; the National Museum of American History, part of the Smithsonian Institution; the Jazz Archive at Duke University; the Library of Congress; the Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane University; and the Louis Armstrong House Museum.

Also helpful were the American Italian Museum in New Orleans, the New Orleans Historical Society, and the Jazz Museum of New Orleans. Any jazz research in the Crescent City also involves walking the streets of the French Quarter as well as what used to be the infamous jazz and bordello district of Storyville.

In Kansas City, I visited the American Jazz Museum and the Kansas City Public Library, and I familiarized myself with the historically essential 18th and Vine jazz district.

Research for this book began in early 2020, a few weeks before the Covid-19 pandemic set in. I was able to make research trips to New Orleans and Kansas City before everything shut down. Luckily, many of the other key locations—Chicago, Los Angeles, Las Vegas—are all cities I have either lived in or visited in the past. Anywhere I go, I make myself aware of the local jazz history and venues past and present.

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It is astounding how much archival research is now available digitally online. Most of my research was conducted from my home base of New York City. Not only is New York a city with a long-standing association between jazz and the underworld, it contains various research institutions that were essential to this project, most notably the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, the New York Public Library in Midtown Manhattan, and the Louis Armstrong House Museum in the neighborhood of Hollis, Queens.

The importance of these institutions is that they lead you to other sources, most notably newspaper and magazine articles, academic journals, and documentary films that shed light on your subject from varying angles. Within the notes section of this book you will find reference to the many periodicals, articles, and essays that informed this study.

Also of importance were the many memoirs, biographies, and jazz and mob histories that have been written over the decades. A big part of the research for this book involved culling anecdotes from memoirs and biographies and cross-checking them with oral history interviews from the likes of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Sonny Greer, Count Basie, and many others. The relevant publications, both on the music and the organized crime sides of this story, are listed in the bibliography.

Finally, the most illuminating form of research is the music itself. Listen carefully to a song like “Doctor Jazz” by Jelly Roll Morton, or “Muggles” by Louis Armstrong, or “The Mooche” by Duke Ellington, or “The Damned Don’t Cry” by John Coltrane, and you are likely to experience something of the connection between jazz and the underworld, which is a symbiosis entombed in history but also a living, breathing expression of liberation, aggression, and existential longing that is personified in the music. Jazz is a confluence of many elements, but one of those elements is most definitely its legacy of intermingling artistry and shadiness, an understanding that for the music to thrive as a commercial entity—especially when performed in nightclubs—it exists as a seduction for people from the upperworld as much as those who, accord-

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ing to Langston Hughes, toil in “the primitive world, closer to the earth and much nearer to the stars.”

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