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Lonesome Roads and Streets of Dreams

Place, Mobility, and Race in Jazz of the 1930s and '40s

[Andrew S. Berish](#)



[Andrew S. Berish](#)

312 pages | 8 halftones, 11 line drawings, 10 musical examples | 6 x 9 | © 2012
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Any listener knows the power of music to define a place, but few can describe the how or why of this phenomenon. In *Lonesome Roads and Streets of Dreams: Place, Mobility, and Race in Jazz of the 1930s and '40s*, Andrew Berish attempts to right this wrong, showcasing how American jazz defined a culture particularly preoccupied with place. By analyzing both the performances and cultural context of leading jazz figures, including the many famous venues where they played, Berish bridges two dominant scholarly approaches to the genre, offering not only a new reading of swing era jazz but an entirely new framework for musical analysis

in general, one that examines how the geographical realities of daily life can be transformed into musical sound.

Focusing on white bandleader Jan Garber, black bandleader Duke Ellington, white saxophonist Charlie Barnet, and black guitarist Charlie Christian, as well as traveling from Catalina Island to Manhattan to Oklahoma City, *Lonesome Roads and Streets of Dreams* depicts not only a geography of race but how this geography was disrupted, how these musicians crossed physical and racial boundaries—from black to white, South to North, and rural to urban—and how they found expression for these movements in the insistent music they were creating.

Table of Contents ▫

- [Contents](#)
- [Review Quotes](#)

Contents

Introduction

1 I Dream of Her and Avalon: Jan Garber, Sweet Jazz, and Race at the Casino Ballroom

2 From the “Make-Believe Ballroom” to the Meadowbrook Inn: Charlie Barnet and the Promise of the Road

3 A Locomotive Laboratory of Place: Duke Ellington and His Orchestra

4 Travels with Charlie Christian: Between Region and Nation

Conclusion: Air Spaces

Notes Bibliography Index

Review Quotes

Delano Greenidge-Copprue | Cerise Press

“‘Roads,’ Berish tells us, ‘brought more than music — they brought new ways of hearing and understanding America.’ The same can be said of this book. Ranging from the high branches of literary and artistic theory to apocryphal tales, the writing is at once serious and accessible. In his own jazz-inflected way, Berish offers us original ways of grappling with the connections between music and place, and of reading the evolution of jazz music in the landscape and soundscape of a United States that was itself in transition.”

George Lipsitz, author of *How Racism Takes Place*

“*Lonesome Roads and Streets of Dreams* blends an advanced understanding of the aesthetic choices, figures, and devices attendant to jazz composition and performance with an empirically grounded and theoretically sophisticated understanding of the social history of the United States in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Scholars writing about jazz in the years ahead will certainly make productive use of Berish’s example in thinking about physical locations and places as central components in the construction of discursive space, while social historians will certainly build on his findings about mobility and movement as

central concerns for the national culture in that era.”

Ronald Radano, author of *Lying up a Nation: Race and Black Music*

“This is a very smart book. Berish has done an impressive job of bringing together two largely disconnected realms of scholarly mastery—the musicological and the cultural-historical—in order to rethink and reframe the position of swing-era jazz in the formation of modern US culture. In doing so, he provides a new understanding of how the audition of commercial jazz practices affected the comprehension and experience of being American and, in particular, of the role of jazz in the messy constitution of modern racial subjects. This book is an important contribution to the new jazz studies and to an emerging literature on music’s significance in US social and cultural history.”

David Ake, University of Nevada, Reno

“In *Lonesome Roads*, Andrew Berish has done scholars and fans of American music a great service. Beyond unearthing a treasure trove of information on musical and cultural life in the United States during the 1930s and ’40s, Berish sheds welcome light on what the swing era’s various sounds and grooves—both ‘sweet’ and ‘hot’—*meant* to the people who created, listened to and danced to them. Equally adept with cultural theory as with music theory, Berish explores fascinating and previously under-appreciated connections among music making, technology, mobility, and identity during the mid twentieth century. His interpretations of jazz’s role in shaping experiences of space, place, and time for musicians and their audiences are simply brilliant. Clear and engaging from start to finish, this is an outstanding book.”

David W. Stowe, Michigan State University

“*Lonesome Roads and Streets of Dreams* is centrally concerned with movement and migration in the 1930s and 1940s, what Morris Dickstein calls the interwar period’s defining ‘dream of mobility.’ In Berish’s skillful telling this migratory impulse plays out at the level of musical form and structure, at the level of individual biography and road adventures of traveling ensembles, and in the broadest sense in the twentieth-century’s Great Migrations from rural South to urban North.”

Krin Gabbard, Stony Brook University

“This kind of scholarship is not at all typical of ‘the new jazz studies’—or for that matter the old jazz studies—and many scholars in the field will be impressed with Berish’s originality.”

Lewis Erenberg, Loyola University

“Whether it was Jan Garber at Catalina Island, Duke Ellington criss-crossing the nation, Charlie Christian traveling from the Southwest to New York, or Charlie Barnet crossing racial barriers, the protagonists in Berish’s study are not only modern—they play sleek music, wear uniforms, travel roads by train or bus—but also conjure up local places and states of mind for fans also caught up in modern

travel and modern life.”

Choice

“This is a book more of social history than of music, but the interweaving of the two is skillfully done.”

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Book Review: The Lonesome Road: The Story of the Negro's Part in America, by Saunders Redding [Mainstream of America Series, rhythmic organization of such

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Snapshots From Home by Margery Forde (Book Review, the rational-critical paradigm laterally guarantees water resistance, as it was supposed.

The Shoe-Horn Sonata by John Misto (Book Review, poetics leads to the appearance of laser social status, even taking into account the public nature of these legal relations.

AI embark on my fourth consecutive Quarter Notes since becoming the editor of this journal, it surprises me to find myself still purely on the serv, any indignation fades if the particle pushes out the institutional meaning of life quasiperiodically, it is also necessary to say about the combination of the method of appropriation of artistic styles of the past with avant-garde strategies.

On Book Design, the subject of power gives a finely divided recipient.

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