

# Thriving on a Riff



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Thriving on a Riff explores the influence of jazz and blues in two key areas of cultural expression, literature and film, where these musics have often been inextricably linked with notions of racial identity and self-representation. From the Harlem Renaissance to

the present day, African American writers have adapted blues and jazz forms for their own ends. Individual chapters here focus on the distinctive approaches of writers as various as Sterling Brown (Steven C. Tracy), James Weldon Johnson and J.J. Phillips (Nick Heffernan), Paul Beatty (Bertram Ashe) and Amiri Baraka and Nathaniel Mackey (David Murray). There are interviews (by Graham Lock) with leading contemporary poets Michael S. Harper and Jayne Cortez, who also read their work on the book's companion website. The performing self, as found in autobiography as well as in music and film, is explored in Krin Gabbard's account of Miles Davis, while John Gennari investigates factual and fictional versions of Charlie Parker. Cinema's representations of musical performance have varied greatly, as is shown by essays on Hollywood's adaptations of blackface minstrelsy (Corin Willis) and Howard Hawks' view of jazz as democracy in action (Ian Brookes). Film scores too have proved controversial in deploying jazz to denote sleaze and criminality: reacting against this audio stereotyping, the more sophisticated and nuanced efforts of Duke Ellington and John Lewis are discussed by, respectively, Mervyn Cooke and David Butler. Finally, Michael Jarrett brings together many interpretative threads in proposing a new model of influence, or conduction, exemplified in the iconic sounds of the train and its various criss-crossing echoes in and through African American culture. A significant addition to the growing body of work on jazz and blues as cross-cultural influences, *Thriving on a Riff* presents new and provocative work by the most distinguished scholars in the field, whose perspectives span the genres.

作者介绍:

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