



Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop

Guthrie P. Ramsey

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This powerful book covers the vast and various terrain of African American music, from bebop to hip-hop. Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., begins with an absorbing account of his own musical experiences with family and friends on the South Side of Chicago, evoking Sunday-morning worship services, family gatherings with food and dancing, and jam sessions at local nightclubs. This lays the foundation for a brilliant discussion of how musical meaning emerges in the private and communal realms of lived experience and how African American music has shaped and reflected identities in the black community. Deeply informed by Ramsey's experience as an accomplished musician, a sophisticated cultural theorist, and an enthusiast brought up in the community he discusses, *Race Music* explores the global influence and popularity of African American music, its social relevance, and key questions regarding its interpretation and criticism.

Beginning with jazz, rhythm and blues, and gospel, this book demonstrates that while each genre of music is distinct—possessing its own conventions, performance practices, and formal qualities—each is also grounded in similar techniques and conceptual frameworks identified with African American musical traditions. Ramsey provides vivid glimpses of the careers of Dinah Washington, Louis Jordan, Dizzy Gillespie, Cootie Williams, and Mahalia Jackson, among others, to show how the social changes of the 1940s elicited an Afro-modernism that inspired much of the music and culture that followed.

Race Music illustrates how, by transcending the boundaries between genres, black communities bridged generational divides and passed down knowledge of musical forms and styles. It also considers how the discourse of soul music contributed to the vibrant social climate of the Black Power Era. Multilayered and masterfully written, *Race Music* provides a dynamic framework for rethinking the many facets of African American music and the ethnocentric energy that infused its creation.

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