

JAZZ BIBLIOGRAPHY OF DISCOGRAPHIES

Bibliography of Discographies: Volume 2: Jazz. By Daniel Allen.
R. R. Bowker Company, New York and London, 1981. 239 pp.

This work is nothing less than a godsend for anyone involved in serious research on jazz and related musics--a truly significant and timely contribution to a field in which scholarly activity is growing rapidly.

A model of intelligent, clear organization in lending easy access to a goldmine of discographic lore, Allen's work also often serves as a key to articles on the same subject published in conjunction with, or adjacent to the discographies--a not insignificant bonus, since even major jazz periodicals at best are only partially indexed, and such indexes as have been published are in the main long out-of-print.

The work, which lists discographies published between 1935 and 1980 dealing with jazz, blues, ragtime, gospel and rhythm & blues, is the second in the series that began with the splendid Gray-Gibson volume covering discographies of classical music (1925-1975), published in 1977, and will continue with three volumes on popular music; ethnic and folk music; and general discographies of music, label lists, speech and animal sounds.

The body of the bibliography contains personal names (the preponderance of entries) and other subjects (among them record labels, songs, styles and instruments), arranged in a single-numbered alphabetical sequence. Set up in double column format, the entries are neatly and cleanly presented, and surnames of authors and editors are capitalized, which makes scanning even easier.

An excellent index encompasses names of authors, editors, series titles and distinctive discography titles. A list of subject headings that are not the names of musicians, composers or musical groups further facilitates access. In addition, the author has provided a list of small publishers cited in the text (if the entries are not known to be out-of-print) with complete addresses, and a list of periodicals cited (again with addresses, if in print) including bibliographic information if known.

Given the history of discography, it is not surprising that the majority of entries should deal with jazz. A good (if statistically imprecise) picture of the relative proportions can be gleaned from the numbers of entries under generic subject headings: Jazz Music, 176; Blues Music, 29; Rhythm & Blues, 20; Ragtime, 14; Gospel Music, 6. After all, until quite recently, jazz has dominated the field. This book shows clearly for the first time just how much dedicated work was done by industrious amateur scholars--mostly European--in a host of small (if not microscopic) periodicals and pamphlets, many of them self-published, none of them financially remunerative.

It is easy to forget that almost total darkness reigned where even basic information on jazz discs was concerned until the mid-1930s. Slowly, laboriously, piece by piece, the names, dates, places, matrix and catalog numbers, etc. were put together like a gigantic puzzle, until today we bask in the luxury of having Rust, Jepsen, Bruyninckx, Timmer et al. at arm's reach. It is good to know that Charles Delauney is still around to see just how far his pioneering labors have led.

Another pioneer, Walter C. Allen (represented by 32 entries, including that ornament of bio-discography, Hendersonia), would have been justly proud of the work his son has performed here, for here is yet another landmark in the history of jazz discography.

It goes without saying that a work of this nature must be incomplete, but in the already heavy use it has seen at the Institute of Jazz Studies (to say that it is useful to such an archive is a gigantic understatement), we have only been able to discover some very minor omissions. Ironically, these are related to members of the IJS staff (that's why we discovered them, I guess): The excellent discographic handbooks published by Columbia University's radio station, WKCR, in conjunction with Phil Schaap's marathon tributes to major jazz figures have gone unlisted, and the Lester Young discography (by now largely obsolete) compiled by the undersigned while at Down Beat has an entry for Part 1 only, followed by the comment "later parts not published." However, Part 2 did appear, in the Down Beat annual, Music '73 (pp. 49-54). Trouble is that Part 1 was published in Music '71. We skipped a year because we ran out of space, Dan. Why didn't you ask?

Congratulations all around, also to the publisher for producing so handsome a tome. May it stay in print forever, with periodic revisions.

Dan Morgenstern