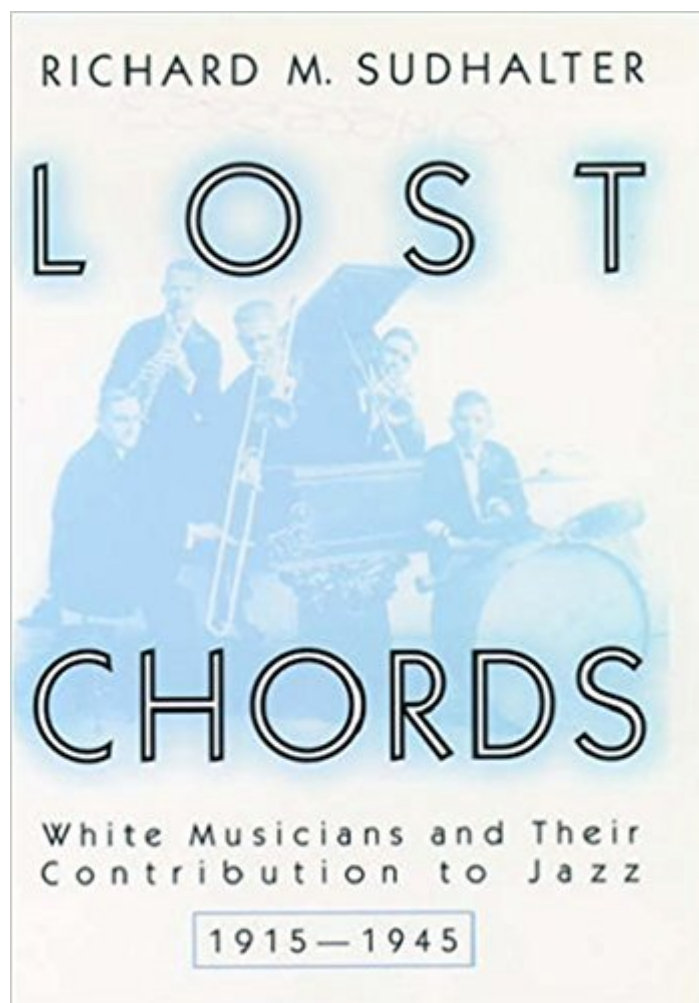


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# Lost Chords: White Musicians And Their Contribution To Jazz, 1915-1945



## Synopsis

Many jazz fans and critics--and even some jazz musicians--contend that white players have contributed little of substance to the music; that even, with every white musician removed from the canon, the history and nature of jazz would remain unchanged. Now, with *Lost Chords*, musician-historian Richard M. Sudhalter challenges this narrow view, with a book that pays definitive tribute to a generation of white jazz players, many unjustly forgotten--while never scanting the role of the great black pioneers. Eagerly awaited by the jazz community, this monumental volume offers an exhaustively documented, vividly narrated history of white jazz contribution in the vital years 1915 to 1945. Beginning in New Orleans, Sudhalter takes the reader on a fascinating multicultural odyssey through the hot jazz gestation centers of Chicago and New York, Indiana and Texas, examining such bands such as the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, the Original Memphis Five, and the Casa Loma Orchestra. Readers will find luminous accounts of many key soloists, including Bix Beiderbecke, Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden, Red Norvo, Bud Freeman, the Dorsey Brothers, Bunny Berigan, Pee Wee Russell, and Artie Shaw, among others. Sudhalter revives the once-great reputations of these and many other major jazzmen, pleading their cases persuasively and eloquently, without ever descending to polemic. Along the way, he gives due credit to Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Duke Ellington, Coleman Hawkins, and countless other major black figures. Destined to become a basic reference book on the subject, *Lost Chords* is a ground-breaking book that should significantly alter perceptions about jazz and its players, reminding readers of this great music's multicultural origins.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In his massive and erudite study, trumpeter and Bix Beiderbecke biographer Sudhalter makes the case that white musicians have been unfairly overlooked in the canonical histories of jazz. Sure to stir up controversy among critics, scholars and fans of "American classical music," Sudhalter's history argues that the rise of multiculturalism, for all its positive effects on society at large, has helped foster a popular misconception of jazz as an art form dominated by African-Americans. While Sudhalter's polemical position provides structure to what otherwise might have become an unwieldy and anecdotal discussion, it creates conceptual difficulties. Sudhalter fails to establish how race worked in early 20th-century America, taking for granted that, like today, Sicilian, Jewish and Irish musicians would have been regarded as "white." However, a number of recent studies have suggested that the full privileges of "whiteness" didn't extend to members of these ethnic groups at the turn of the century. The book—which includes profiles of a number of celebrated European-American jazzmen—Beiderbecke, Bunny Berigan, Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw, to name a few—is at its most intriguing when examining such lesser known figures as the sweetly tragic New Orleans cornetist Emmett Hardy, the multitalented bandleader Adrian Rollins and the irascible braggart Nick LaRocca, leader of the seminal Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Whether or not you buy Sudhalter's basic premise, there's much to be learned from his scholarly, sometimes combative, narrative. Photos not seen by PW. (Jan.) FYI: A two-CD companion album will be released by Challenge Records to coincide with publication. Sudhalter is planning a second volume. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

On a mission to promulgate the ostensibly neglected story of white jazz innovators, Sudhalter, a trumpeter and jazz writer, offers a bouncy, well-researched account of white jazzsters from 1915 to 1945, interlaced with explanations of musical styles and a few somewhat superfluous musical notations. The author expertly recounts the trek white jazzmen took from New Orleans to Chicago and their contributions to New York hot jazz, the new generation of Chicago jazzmen, and big bands. After chapters on such giants as Bix Beiderbecke, Jack Purvis, and Bunny Berrigan, Sudhalter ends the book with sections on the bands of Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and others. Throughout, the author repeatedly and unnecessarily bludgeons the reader with the point that these white jazz luminaries contributed to jazz as much as their African American counterparts, whom he mentions only peripherally. His lopsided perspective keeps an excellent book from turning into a

classic. This informative, sometimes fascinating, but ultimately unbalanced history should appeal to general readers and aficionados alike. David P. Szatmary, Univ. of Washington, Seattle Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

When "Lost Chords" first came out, I was hosting & producing a classic jazz radio program, and featured cuts analyzed in the book and addressed several issues that were brewing in the press - that is, the jazz press, which mostly took the attitude that a book highlighting white musicians contributions to jazz had to be, if for no other reason than its very existence, racist. That view was utter nonsense, and re-proved my long-held contention that many a reviewer never actually read their review subjects. This book was the first at-length attempt to give many under-appreciated white musicians their due for contributions to the art form. In no way was Richard Sudhalter unfairly criticizing black musicians - time and time again, he pointed out that many still-fabulous black artists had some technical flaws - but Sudhalter points out the same flaws in many of the white musicians he critiques, too. Take the case of Red Nichols - perhaps the single most aggrieved white jazz musician of his time. Sudhalter examines his career and recordings, and placed Nichols properly in context as one of the great hornmen of his era. No, Mr. Sudhalter does not place Red in the same strata as, say, Louis Armstrong or Bix Beiderbecke...because he wasn't. But, unlike many other jazz critics and writers from the 1930's on, Sudhalter points out the subtle yet marked differences between Nichols' output and several other musicians, and also tries to explain WHY Nichols received brutal treatment - when he wasn't completely ignored, that is - at the hands of critics. It is this fascination with perspectives, a devout attempt to uncover ignored jazz giants and re-focusing the reader's attentions on key performers & performances, that makes "Lost Chords" absolutely essential reading to anyone interested in jazz history. It is well worth adding to a serious jazz fan's library at any reasonable price.

I daresay it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a jazz historian who didn't believe that the music was primarily created by black Americans. However, jazz is a CULTURAL music; the notes and rhythms are oblivious to skin color. While the culture that produced jazz and blues existed mostly in the black communities, there were significant contributions made to the music by non-black musicians who found pathways into the revolt of the gutbucket: blues, ragtime and jazz. The tragedy of these musicians is that except for a very few they have been marginalized by history and jazz critics. Sudhalter's book redeems, at last, their legacy and contribution to the music. The musicians themselves were, for the most part, never the ones to have issues: note the friendship

and mutual respect that existed between Armstrong and Beiderbecke, or the Fletcher Henderson and Goldkette orchestras in the late 1920s. Invariably, when you use terms like "black" and "white" musicians you start a war with the pedantic critics, which is why I prefer to speak in terms of culturally created music and "non-black" musicians. Yes, maybe its all semantics, but my only wish is that Sudhalter might have framed the terms without reference to "white" and "black". Perhaps "forgotten" is a better term, but it so happens that most of the "forgotten" musicians happened to be white. At any rate, its a great book and a classic for the ages.

The book is brilliant. Sudhalter was a great musical and cultural historian and a wonderful writer, and this book should be a cornerstone of all sorts of collections. I was disappointed only in the physicality of the book: I ordered a new copy but mine appears distinctly used. I do not recommend the particular seller I got my copy from.

A great gift

This book gave me a closer look at a number of musicians whose work I had not really investigated. It's a great launching pad to explore musicians who made an undeniable contribution to jazz but whose work has either been overshadowed, ignored or pushed out of the general picture. A fantastic resource and Sudhalter's untimely demise was a great loss to those interested in jazz history.

A wonderful trip thru what must have been an incredible period to be an active jazz fan. Thank you Jeff Ellis for your accomplishments. The nine years you have invested are proven by this book to be extraordinarily justified. Readers should be aware there is a companion CD of selected samples of the jazz discussed in this book which should also be ordered.

Not a mere antidote to political correctness in jazz criticism; Lost Chords is a prewar cultural history, a lesson in music structure, a history of woodwind instruments, a guide to innovations in guitar tuning, AND MORE. It shows the musicians as human beings with all their failings, humor, drives, hard work, and talent. I especially loved the account of the bass sax --- an instrument that looks like it could double as a moonshine still --- and its usefulness in the early days of sound recording. Sudhalter admonishes us to listen to the music and to make up your own mind. Exactly right. A good place to start is Robert Parker's Bix Beiderbecke Great Original Performances 1924-1930

(available on ) If you have ever heard an early 78 rpm record, you will be astonished at Parker's sound restoration.

A very comprehensive study in detail of 30 years of jazz. This is a book to be dipped into or read chapter at a time. I haven't read all of it yet, just the bits that interested me. It is a mine of information with no equal. Every jazz enthusiast should have it

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