

## Readin' and Singin and Listenin': Three Reviews

"Collected Works: A Journal of Jazz 1954-2000" Whitney Balliett  
St. Martin's Press, 872 pages, \$40

Review by Patrick Kurp

This misleadingly titled doorstop of a book is a mandatory pleasure for lovers of jazz, elegant prose and the shifting fortunes of American popular culture.

For nearly 50 years, Whitney Balliett has covered jazz, mostly for *The New Yorker*, the way A. J. Liebling once covered boxing and food for the same magazine – with passion, humor and lyricism. Balliett's preferred manner is celebratory, though he isn't shy about skewering the mediocre and pompous (Stan Kenton and Wynton Marsalis, respectively).

Of Balliet's many virtues, two stand out after rereading this encyclopedic assemblage: His gift for capturing in words an art that defies language, and his novelistic ability to render character. To choose a random example, he writes of Stan Getz, "His tone is a moist, primped version of Lester Young's, which was dry and nasal."

Balliett is simply one of the finest stylists in the language, regardless of genre. He is never dull, pretentious or inexact. Every page holds at least one phrase or sentence I wish I had written. Had

he chosen to write fiction, we would speak of Balliett in the same breath as Henry James and John Cheever – magicians and masters of their craft.

**Rebecca Parris**  
"My Foolish Heart" (Koch Jazz, KOC-CD-7887)

Review by Tom Pierce

Rebecca Parris, a frequent award winning vocalist in Boston, has enjoyed a reputation among musicians and fans, of having one of the most deeply rich and powerful voices in Jazz. She recently released her seventh overall and first all ballad CD, "My Foolish Heart".

Each song in this collection is effectively shaded with subtle differences in mood and instrumental arrangement. The title track, for example, utilizes solo piano to accompany her passionate, but well controlled delivery of this haunting standard.

"The Shadow Of Your Smile" features George Mesterhazy's synthesized string background and melodic guitar to complement her exquisite lower register performance. Ms. Parris creates an intensely moving rendition of "Body And Soul". She ably continues a long Jazz tradition begun by Coleman Hawkins' in his 1939 recording. She concludes a soulful reading of "Lover Man", long associated with Billie Holiday, with a compelling tension-released ending.

Throughout the CD, she balanced her prodigious technique with a sensitive understanding interpretation of the lyrics. Readers need to tuck this one into their collection.

**Dancin' in the Streets**

Review by Nona Chalmers Teabout

This year's *Festival International de Jazz de Montreal*, was a social, cultural and people experience *extraordinaire*. And there was also Jazz. There were 2,000 musicians, 350 venues and 500 concerts. In fact, if it was Jazz or even remotely related to it, you could find it somewhere between the main stage on *Rue de Ste. Catherine* and old Montreal! There was Traditional, Classical, Zydeco, Mainstream and Wayout. There were the Jazz Masters like Little Jimmie Scott, the Wayne Shorter Quartet and Ibrahim Ferrer with Ruben Gonzalez and the Buena Vista Social Club appearing at various venues.

Roy Hargrove played for four nights in a row. Femi Kuti, following in the African tradition of his father Fela Kuti, blended sounds from the motherland and Jazz licks with such finesse that he both confused and delighted the audience. Cesaria Evora, from Cape Verde Island, took the audience on a melodic journey bewitching everyone within listening distance. Added to this Jazz Jam(bulya) was Dee Dee Bridgwater, Michael Brecker,

Brad Mehldau, Regina Carter, John Scofield.

Then there were the free venues, yes free! Some played on smaller stages in clubs, some on the block (as we use to say in Brooklyn) and some even stopped traffic and played at street intersections. A band from Baton Rouge called Coffee featuring Ernest Scott playing down home Jazz with just the right amount of Louisiana hot sauce added.

Chicago Jazz/Blues man, Ronnie Baker Brooks, sang the livin, lovin, leavin blues. And he was a "killer" guitar player. My friend and I attended a free midnight performance at the Club Soda where Mr. Baker Brooks did an even more soulful rendition of his earlier songs. The club owner gave us the best seats in the house. (my friend said he did it because he thought I was someone famous with my long African Locs)

As we walked along Ste. Catherine St. back to our hotel on our last day at the festival, my friend commented with a glint in her eyes that "She loved the music, stayed out until 3(am), and danced in the streets."

And not incidentally lost her heart to a blues man with three names."

