FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

The New Renaissance: Computers and the Next Level of Civilization
Douglas S. Robertson
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Gary Gidden's new book is a wonderful attempt to see jazz in all of its diversity. The book avoids looking at jazz from an era-bias (the 20s) or from an academic point of view (Oliver influenced Armstrong who influenced…). Instead we have eight sections: Precursors, A New Music, A Popular Music, A Modern Music, A Mainstream Music, An Alternative Music, A Struggling Music and A Traditional Music. These topics force us to look at artists for the traditions or emphasis in which they worked. Artists like Louis Armstrong crop up in various sections, and as Giddens admits, some fairly serious people (Sidney Bechet, Clifford Brown, Benny Carter and others) are only mentioned in passing. In exchange we see some original, though perhaps minor voices usually ignored in favor of giants. Minor and major figures alike are illuminated in revealing ways, and the insight to the music and performers is masterful.

Unfortunately, the book lacks both photographs and a discography. Giddens analyzes these performances so powerfully that it is a shame that we don't have a tool to find the recordings that he so ably describes. A decent grounding in music and musical terms is expected, and a familiarity with jazz and its sub-genres such as swing, blues, bebop, cool, etc. is necessary. This is not a book for non-major music appreciation classes, but it would be a great text for a jazz history class for music majors. Highly recommended.