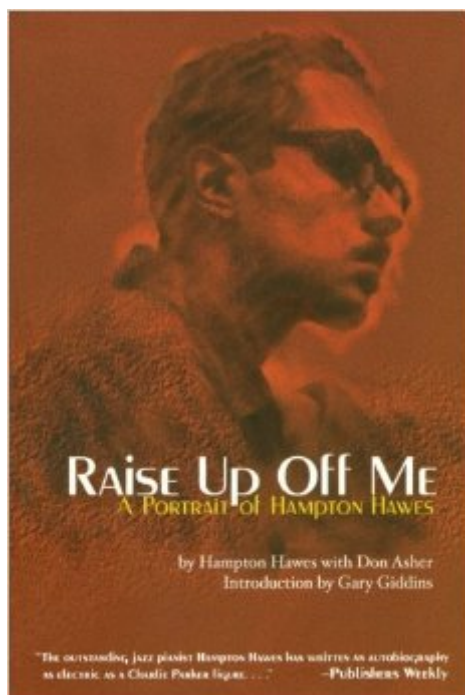


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Raise Up Off Me: A Portrait Of Hampton Hawes



Synopsis

Hampton Hawes [1928–1977] was one of jazz's greatest pianists. Among his peers from California the self-taught Hawes was second only to Oscar Peterson. At the time of his celebration as New Star of the Year by downbeat magazine (1956), Hawes was already struggling with a heroin addiction that would lead to his arrest and imprisonment, and the interruption of a brilliant career. In 1963 President John F. Kennedy granted Hawes an Executive Pardon. In eloquent and humorous language Hampton Hawes tells of a life of suffering and redemption that reads like an improbable novel. Gary Giddins has called it "a major contribution to the literature of jazz." This book includes a complete discography and eight pages of photographs.

Book Information

Paperback: 216 pages

Publisher: Da Capo Press (November 6, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1560253533

ISBN-13: 978-1560253532

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (24 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #143,642 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #18 inÂ Books > Arts &

Photography > Music > Biographies > Jazz #127 inÂ Books > Arts & Photography > Music >

Musical Genres > Jazz #370 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature > Television Performers

Customer Reviews

Outside of Arthur Taylor's Notes and Tones, Raise...is one of the most important books written on Be-bop or jazz period. It's written from an insider's point of view. Like jazz drummer Taylor, who would better know the cracks and crevices of the world of Be-bop than someone who lived it. Hawes was one of the hippest, bluesiest players to come out of the hard-bop era. 'Raise...is a gas. I laughed all the way through. Hawes is humorous and raw to the gut, check out his interview in Taylor's Notes and Tones. He's a little more toned down though in "Raise..., yet he paints still a marvelous picture of the most dynamic era in jazz, like no one else could. It's a book you can't put down. It's the closest you can get to without actually having been there. "Raise...is raw, vicious, funny, entertaining and downright honest.

If you like jazz, get your hands on this book and read it! Its humor, honesty, attention to detail, and readability put other autobiographies (Mingus, Miles) to shame. Hawes was the bluesiest of the beboppers and could rightly be called the unrecognized father of hard bop. Unfortunately, he also had a heroin habit that crippled his career. For more on that, read the book. Some of his recordings are still in print. Give them a listen, and then start calling DeCapo Press to get them to reprint this jazz literature classic! END

I love this book. Remember, back then when you played this music, it wasn't exactly a sweet world for the musicians (Black ones). I'm glad he let everyone know how hard it was out there. Drugs took this Bad Boy out the game and the world passed him by. Musicians like Brother Hawes, will never be acknowledged for their great playing in the U.S.A. If there was a dumb remark in this book, I didn't see it. Again, think back to the times he was living in. He talked about Jimmy Rushing and the way he thought about things. Jimmy Rushing came out of a different era, yet some of his thoughts were not far behind. When he described Black people, some were light skinned, some were black... The book is not dated, it's just good.

I enjoyed reading this book very much. It is first of all Hampton Hawes biography of his life as a jazz musician. It tells us of his way from being a little boy attending his father's church on Sundays to a highly acclaimed jazz pianist, his downfall because of his heroin addiction, his 10-year jail sentence (which was reduced to six after Hawes had written to John Kennedy!), his way back up on the European market, his love relationship with Jackie, and his new found love after separating from Jackie after almost two decades. The very last sentence of the book speaks about his ex-wife Jackie - and it is very touching and shows that Hawes indeed must have been a nice man. There is only one really dumb remark in the book that I felt was disgusting. (Find it for yourself... ;-)) Hawes repeatedly talks about Black issues. I personally feel that those statements are very intelligent, and can therefore recommend this book not only to those of you interested in jazz, but also to anyone into Black issues.

I had never heard of Hawes and I'm too old to fully appreciate his cool jazz and I've never been into drugs, but I enjoyed the book. Read it in two sittings over two days. It's the rhythms of his speech and the atmospheres he recreates that appeal to me. Anyone who loves Miles and later jazz musicians will find his portraits of that era appealing.

This memoir appears to be based on interviews conducted by co-author Don Asher. The conversational tone is a boon to the book, giving it a sort of stream-of-consciousness style that is in tune with the Beat writers of the Fifties---the same period that Hawes is describing. Honest and at times raw, this book is ranked as one of the greatest jazz biographies---right up there with Mingus' "Beneath the Underdog", and the Miles Davis bio. Hawes does a great job bringing to life the post-bebop period. He describes his times as a "square peg" in the armed forces, stationed in Japan, frequenting brothels, and bouncing in and out of trouble. Getting back to the U.S., he establishes himself as a poll-winning pianist, only to get busted for his habit and put in prison for a ten-year term. After getting a Presidential pardon from John Kennedy, he re-emerges on the jazz scene, exploring Europe, getting homesick, dealing with his shipwrecked marriage. Along the way, there are "cameos" from Art Tatum, Monk, Miles, and Duke, to name a few. Anybody who appreciates jazz music should find this book interesting.

This was a great read. The book is written in an informal, jazz-like, free-flowing style which (according to the author) mimicked Hawes's speaking style. Hamp didn't romanticize his heroin habit; he portrayed it honestly. And ultimately, he kicked, so this isn't a rise-and-fall narrative. The story is chockfull of amusing anecdotes about his adventures in the military, the New York and L.A. music scenes, and his pursuit of the fine art of jazz. I would recommend this book to anyone who is into the golden years of American jazz, the 50s and 60s.

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