

Columbia University
African-American Studies, Anthropology, and Film
Fall 2006

JAZZ ON FILM

INSTRUCTOR: John Szwed

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Regular attendance and participation
- 2) Attendance at film showings
- 3) Read all assigned texts
- 4) 1-page paper on each week's film, due in class the week of the showing, beginning Sept 19
- 5) A short classroom presentation on one of the scheduled films or related material
- 6) Final paper of 15-20 pages (based on a topic that has been discussed with the instructor)

REQUIRED READING

Krin Gabbard. *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema*

SUGGESTED READING

John Szwed. *Jazz 101*

Additional course readings in packet

Bibliographies and Filmographies

Library of Congress Guide to Jazz on Film Bibliography:
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cocoon/ihas/html/jots/jazzscreen-home.html>

The Internet Movie Base: <http://www.imdb.com/search>

Scott Yanow. *Jazz on Film: The Complete Story of the Musicians & Music Onscreen* (2004)

Klaus Stratemann. *Louis Armstrong on the Screen*. (1996)

Klaus Stratemann. *Duke Ellington: Day by Day and Film by Film*. (1992)

Other Reference Materials

David Butler. *Jazz Noir: Listening to Music From Phantom Lady to The Last Seduction*. (2002)

Krin Gabbard. *Black Magic: White Hollywood and African American Culture*. (2004)

Daniel Goldmark. *Tunes for 'Toons': Music and the Hollywood Cartoon*. (2005)

Franco La Polla, ed. *All That Jazz: From New Orleans to Hollywood and Beyond*. (2003)

Peter Stanfield. *Body and Soul: Jazz and Blues in American Film 1927-63*. (2005)

WEEKLY TOPICS

Week 1: Introduction: Concepts, Genres

Excerpts to be shown in class: samples of short films, soundies, artist films, cartoons, TV dramas. (including Oskar Fischinger and Max Fleischer films; Walt Disney's *Music Land*)

Week 2: Beginnings

Film: *The Jazz Singer* (1927)

Excerpts to be shown in class: *The Jazz Singer* (1952 & 1980 versions); *The King of Jazz* (1930); *Hallelujah* (1928)

Readings: Michael Rogin, "Blackface, White Noise" and "Racial Masquerade and Ethnic Assimilation" from *Blackface, White Noise*; Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins*, 1-33, 35-63; Robert Carringer, "Introduction: History of a Popular Culture Classic" from *The Jazz Singer Film Guide*

Week 3: Jazz Histories From Hollywood

Film: *New Orleans* (1947)

Excerpts to be shown in class: *It's All True* (1993 [1942]); *Birth of the Blues* (1941); *Syncopation* (1942); *Pretty Baby* (1977); *A Song is Born* (1948); *Cotton Club* (1984)

Readings: Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins*, 101-37, 204-238; Scott DeVeaux, "Introduction" from *Birth of Bebop* (1997); Sidney Bechet, "A Bend in the Road" and "Omar" from *Treat It Gentle* (1960)

Week 4: Biopics: Jazz Romance

Films: *The Gene Krupa Story* (1959); *Young Man With a Horn* (1950)

Excerpts to be shown in class: *Mo Better Blues* (1990), *Some Like It Hot* (1959); *A Man Called Adam* (1966); Miles Davis performance clips

Reading: Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins*, 64-100; George F. Custen, "Reel Life," in *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History*, 1992; Sharon Willis, "Introduction" from *High Contrast*, 1-19; David Ake, "Re-Gendering Jazz," in *Jazz Cultures*, 2002, 62-82; John Szwed, "The Man" in *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies*, Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Edwards, and Farrah Griffin, eds.

Recommended reading: Krin Gabbard, *Black Magic: White Hollywood and African American Culture*, 2004

Week 5: Biopics: Jazz Tragedy

Film: *Bird* (1988)

Excerpts to be shown in class: *The Man With the Golden Arm* (1955) *Sweet Love, Bitter* (1967); *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951); jazz on sound tracks (example: Miles Davis)

Readings: Stanley Crouch, "Bird Land," *The New Republic*; Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins*, 64-100

Recommended reading: Gary Giddins, *Celebrating Bird* (1987); John A. Williams, *Night Song* (aka *Sweet Love, Bitter*); David Butler, *Jazz Noir: Listening to Music From Phantom Lady to The Last Seduction*, 2002

Week 6: The Musical

Film: *Cabin in the Sky* (1942)

Excerpts to be shown in class: *Check & Double Check* (1930) *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944); *Green Pastures* (1936); *Carmen Jones* (1954); *The Gospel at Colonus* (1988); *Creole Giselle* (1987)

Readings: Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins*, 160-203; James Naremore, "Uptown Folk: Blackness and Entertainment in Cabin in the Sky," in *Representing Jazz*, Krin Gabbard, ed.; Rick Altman, "The American Film Musical as Dual-Focus Narrative" and "The Folk Musical" from *The American Film Musical*

Week 7: The Musical (cont'd)

Film: *New York, New York* (1977)

Excerpts to be shown in class: *A Personal Journey Through American Movies With Martin Scorsese* (1995) *Absolute Beginners* (1986)]; *Short Cuts* (1993)

Readings: Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins*, 266-295; Rick Altman, "Saving the Dying Myth: Reflexivity as Reinforcement," from *The American Film Musical*

Week 8: The Influence of Jazz on the Underground Film

Films: *Pull My Daisy* (1958); *Shadows* (1960)

Excerpts to be shown in class: Harry Smith, *Early Abstractions (1946-57)*; *Too Late Blues* (1961); *Ornette: Made in America* (1986)

Readings: Jack Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" (*Black Mountain Review*, Autumn, 1957); David Sterritt, "Splendid Entertainment for the Entire Family," *Mad to be Saved* (1998); "The First Statement of the New American Cinema Group"; Jonas Mekas, "Notes On the New American Cinema"; and Parker Tyler, "For Shadows and Pull My Daisy," all three from *Film Culture Reader*, P. Adams Sitney; "John Casasavetes, "Nostalgia in Times Square" (*The Wire*, 7, 1984) Recommended Reading: Ray Carney, *Shadows* (2001)

Week 9: Jazz as Emblem and Symptom: The Beats and Teenagers

Films: *The Connection* (1960); *The Subterraneans* (1960)

Excerpts to be shown in class: *The Beat Generation* (1960); *The Wild One* (1953); *Beach Party* (1963); *Beat Girl* (1962); *Heart Beat* (1980); Jack Kerouac interviewed by William Buckley

Readings: Bob Kaufman, "Bagel Shop Jazz" from *Solitudes Crowded With Loneliness*, 1965; David Sterritt, "Hollywood and It's Discontents" and "Inside the Beatcave"

Recommended Reading: Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*, 1958

Week 10: Loving the Alien: Blaxploitation Meets Science Fiction

Film: *Space is the Place* (1974)

Excerpts to be shown in class: Sun Ra Arkestra, *The Cry of Jazz* (1985), the Arkestra's home movies; *Brother From Another Planet* (1984); George Clinton's

The Mothership Tour; Hawkwind, *Love in Space*; *Chappaqua* (1966); *Zachariah* (1971)

Reading: John F. Szwed, *Space is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra*, pp. xv-xviii, 228-239, 330-333, 382-388

Week 11: Jazz Films Overseas

Film: *'Round Midnight* (1986)

Excerpts to be shown in class: *Swing Kids* (1993); *Ces't la vie, mon cher* (1993); *Stormy Monday* (1988); *Jazzman* (1984); *Bix* (1990)

Reading: Jean-Pierre Coursodon, "Round Midnight: An Interview With Bertrand Tavernier," *Cinéaste*, 15, 2 (1986: 19-22, 23)

Week 12: Documentaries

Films: *Let's Get Lost* (1988); *Great Day in Harlem* (1994)

Excerpts to be shown in class: *Mingus* (1968); *Jazz On a Summer Day* (1960); *Jammin' the Blues* (1944); *Straight No Chaser* (1988); *Ken Burns' Jazz* (2000); *Under the Lizards* (1993)

Reading: Hal Hinson, "Let's Get Lost: Baker as Icon," *Washington Post*, June 2, 1989

Week 13: Films Made on the Principles of Jazz

Film: *Time Code* (2000)

Excerpts: *Happy Together* (1997)