



Hotter Than That: The Trumpet, Jazz, and American Culture

Krin Gabbard

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A swinging cultural history of the instrument that in many ways defined a century

The twentieth century was barely under way when the grandson of a slave picked up a trumpet and transformed American culture. Before that moment, the trumpet had been a regimental staple in marching bands, a ceremonial accessory for royalty, and an occasional diva at the symphony. Because it could make more noise than just about anything, the trumpet had been much more declarative than musical for most of its history. Around 1900, however, Buddy Bolden made the trumpet declare in brand-new ways. He may even have invented jazz, or something very much like it. And as an African American, he found a vital new way to assert himself as a man.

Hotter Than That is a cultural history of the trumpet from its origins in ancient Egypt to its role in royal courts and on battlefields, and ultimately to its stunning appropriation by great jazz artists such as Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and Wynton Marsalis. The book also looks at how trumpets have been manufactured over the centuries and at the price that artists have paid for devoting their bodies and souls to this most demanding of instruments. In the course of tracing the trumpet's evolution both as an instrument and as the primary vehicle for jazz in America, Krin Gabbard also meditates on its importance for black male sexuality and its continuing reappropriation by white culture.

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