



It's About That Time: Miles Davis On and Off Record

By Richard Cook

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Here is quite simply one of the most original books about a jazz musician ever published--a biography-cum-discography that focuses in turn on fourteen major albums recorded by Miles Davis, using them as a jumping off point for an illuminating discussion of the turbulent life and work of the "Evil Genius of Jazz."

Richard Cook, a veteran writer respected throughout the jazz world, looks at such landmark recordings as *Birth of the Cool*, *Miles Ahead*, *Kind of Blue*, *The Complete Live at The Plugged Nickel*, *In a Silent Way*, *Bitches Brew*, and *Live at Montreux*. Each of these recordings is considered in detail, illuminating their contribution to Davis's development as instrumentalist, group leader, and composer. But Cook goes well beyond these fourteen albums, evaluating all the trumpeter's recordings (official and bootleg), and relating them to events in Miles's life as well as to wider currents in contemporary music. Cook helps us disentangle Miles the legendary figure from the music itself, to re-hear and reconsider this marvelous body of work ranging over four exhilarating decades. The author also highlights the indispensable contributions of sidemen such as John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Herbie Hancock, John McLaughlin, John Scofield, and many others, as well as calling for a reassessment of the importance of such "satellite" figures as Gil Evans, Bill Evans, Wayne Shorter, Tony Williams and Chick Corea in the development of Miles's music.

A comprehensive and rigorous guide to the music and life of Miles Davis, *It's About That Time* is a stunning book that burns away the fog of myth that surrounds its complex and contrary subject.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Though he didn't set out to write the definitive take on Miles Davis' discography, jazz expert Cook (Richard Cook's Jazz Encyclopedia) has done just that. Chronologically organized around 14 seminal recordings, Cook expertly traces Davis's evolution as an artist from his early days playing with Charlie Parker to his last official studio release, 1992's posthumous Doo Bop, which Cook calls an "uneventful, rote hip hop record which Davis often seems to have wandered into by accident." This candor and objectivity elevate the book above more pedestrian efforts to explore (and more often exalt) Davis's body of work; clearly an admirer, Cooke has the wherewithal to laud works such as *Porgy and Bess*, counting the album as a monument to Davis and his collaborators, while conceding that some pieces are too long and too slow. Despite Davis's voluminous output, Cook puts both landmark studio releases and bootlegs into perspective while keeping the book on track, a seemingly effortless skill that allows him to analyze the details of *Birth of the Cool* or *Bitches Brew* without losing sight of the big picture—or the reader. Cook's thoughtful, illuminating criticism and boundless knowledge of his subject make this a rich and satisfying read for jazz aficionados and novices alike.

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Review

"Cook's takes on the music of Miles Davis are incisive and refreshing. He gets inside the music and makes it palpable. Like the great American jazz critic Whitney Balliett (1926-2007), Cook had the knack, the knowledge, and the poetry to discern and elucidate the mystery of jazz without desiccating its flesh, blood, and neural pathways. Cook's insightful and literate provides listeners familiar with the music of Miles Davis new listening angles, and those unfamiliar with his music valuable reference points from which to start listening." -Laurence Svirchek, *American Music*

"Though he didn't set out to write the definitive take on Miles Davis's discography, jazz expert Cook has done just that.... Cook's thoughtful, illuminating criticism and boundless knowledge of his subject make this a rich and satisfying read for jazz aficionados and novices alike." --*Publishers Weekly* [starred review]

"Few authors capture the mystery of improvised music as succinctly as British critic Richard Cook." --Matthew Lurie, *Time Out: Chicago*

"Cook's strength is wittily showing, with lots of fresh observations, how Davis's music was a continual journey." --*New York Sun*

"A worthy overview of his career and music." --*New York Sun*

"It's hard to imagine a more ideal writer for this project *It's About That Time* brings fresh insight to a lifetime of music and can help even a longtime connoisseur hear it in a whole new way."--Steve Greenlee, *The Boston Globe*

"Considering its scope, *About That Time* is a fast and breezy read."--*New York Sun*

"Cook hangs *It's About Time* on his own bandstand-cozy judgements, which are nearly as colorful as the late Whitney Balliett's and as impassioned as Gary Giddins'."--Jay Harvey, *The Indianapolis Star*

"A fascinating new portrait of the protean horn man, which offers detailed and perceptive analysis of the trumpeter's key albums."--Charles Waring, *Mojo*

"Outstanding."--David Isaacson, *Word*

"The real reasons why there was never anyone cooler than Miles becomes clear."--*Observer*

"Valuable a systematic and comprehensive examination of Davis's recordings, objective to a fault as Cook unpicks them and engages in a sustained exercise of close listening which reveals Davis's creations not to float serenely above and apart from his turbulent life, but very much subject to the circumstances in which they were made the author's manifest expertise and anecdotal knowledge make him an extremely reliable guide through Davis's back catalogue. *It's About That Time* is suitable both for those entirely new to Davis or those steeped in him."--David Stubbs, *Wire*

"Cook characteristically shines a light into unconsidered corners and magnifies details to reveal the key importance of what might otherwise seem minor gestures. This book will not only make tyros want to hear the records, but will send Antediluvian Davis admirers like me rushing to remind ourselves of forgotten minutiae, weigh our assessments against Cook's, or just savour favourite moments again. Big fun!"--Barry Witherden, *BBC Music Magazine*

"Cook is a jazz expert who scrutinizes 14 key recordings by the great trumpeter-composer. Along the way, readers get an insider's view of Davis the private man." --Allen Pierleoni, *Sacramento Bee*

About the Author

Richard Cook is the Editor of *Jazz Review*, the leading British jazz magazine, the co-author (with Brian Morton) of the monumental *Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD*, and the author of *Blue Note Records: The Biography* and *Richard Cook's Jazz Encyclopedia*. His articles have appeared in such magazines and newspapers as *The Wire* and *The Sunday Times*. He was also host of a jazz radio program on Greater London Radio and a former contributor to BBC radio productions.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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