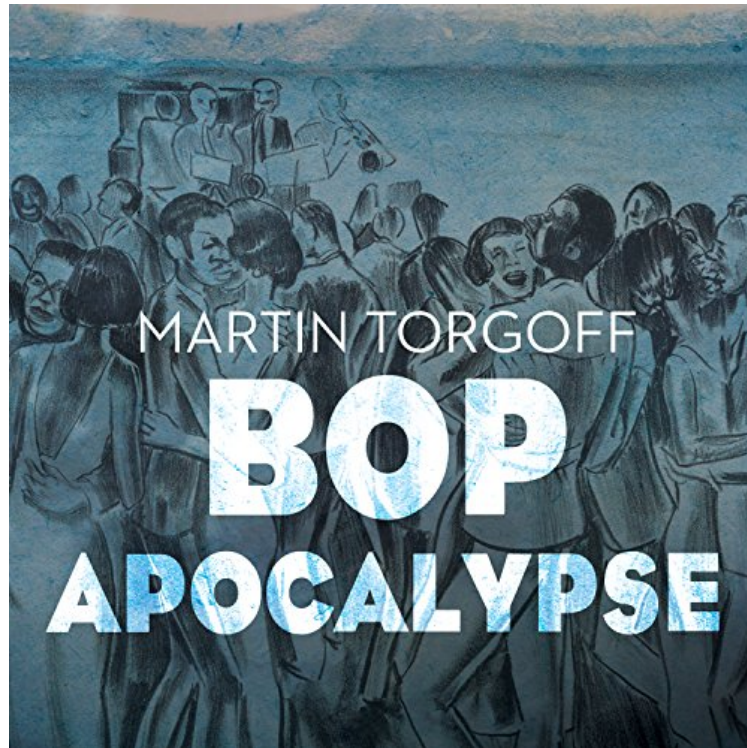


[Download pdf ebook] Bop Apocalypse: Jazz, Race, the Beats, and Drugs

## Bop Apocalypse: Jazz, Race, the Beats, and Drugs

*Martin Torgoff*

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**Martin Torgoff : Bop Apocalypse: Jazz, Race, the Beats, and Drugs** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bop Apocalypse: Jazz, Race, the Beats, and Drugs:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Aural EnhancersBy Keith A. ComessWhile the "counterculture" of the 1960s inexorably linked rock music to drug consumption, mind-altering chemical use by musicians antedates that convergence by a long, long time. In "Bop Apocalypse" (Bop), Martin Torgoff - no stranger to prodigious drug consumption, himself - writes the inextricably intermingled history of jazz, opiates, weed and alcohol. The book fills a niche between Mezz Mezzrow's "Really the Blues" and Jay Stevens', "Storming Heaven".Use of psychedelics ("mind manifesting" agents) of one kind or another is as old as recorded history. Western cultures historically favor alcohol whereas others prefer peyote, cannabis and a host of lesser known agents. Nineteenth and early- mid-20th century authors as diverse as Aldous Huxley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (most famously Kubla Kahn's "Pleasure Dome"), H.P. Lovecraft (the obscure but fascinating and influential, "The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath") wrote about their experiences.When tincture of opium was legal, a number of British romantics including Elizabeth Barrett-Browning, Lord Byron, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Walter Scott all partook of it for medicinal or other purposes. More recently, the "Beat Generation" (Ginsberg, Kerouac, Huncke, Burroughs) and a host of others wrote of the pleasures of crank, weed and speed. Later on, the counterculture discovered acid, mushrooms and other, more esoteric substances alone or in combination. So clearly, there is a nexus between mind-expanding drugs, literary endeavors and music.The debate between drug-induced creativity and drugs as a "lifestyle

burden" is the sub rosa text of the book. "Bop" is an interlinked series of biographical sketches of the giants of the early 20th century American jazz era. The justly infamous proto-drug warrior, Harry Jacob Anslinger (the first commissioner of the U.S. Treasury Department's Federal Bureau of Narcotics, which later morphed into today's paramilitary DEA) features prominently in the story, as he should. He cleverly associated weed with dark-skinned immigrants, low-life sailors and other "undesirables" and created a mechanism for outlawing it. Worse, Anslinger held office for 32 seemingly interminable years, until 1962. He hung on for another 2 years as U.S. Representative to the United Nations Narcotics Commission. In other words, his campaign of disinformation, "alternative facts", and flagrant lies larded with overt racism allowed him to warp public perceptions for over a quarter century, from its beginning all the way up to the Beats. In so doing, he managed to launch a "war" which has consumed billions of dollars of public funds, destroy countless lives, create narco-states and fund international criminal enterprises of heretofore unimaginable dimensions. One group that was especially susceptible to Anslinger's depredations were jazz musicians. Most of them were black (bad enough). They played "degenerate" music (worse) that, along with pot, "corrupted America's (white) youth" (the absolute worst). Anslinger's menagerie of lies and vitriolic campaign of social stigmatization served as a lucrative feeding trough for corporations, police and self-enriching politicians. Of course, this continues through the present day, as does drug use in the music and literary world. Torgoff's book contains all sorts of interesting and depressing vignettes from the lives of (amongst others), Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Miles Davis, Jackie McLean, John Coltrane and Charlie Parker. The author traces the major influx of weed to Mezz Mezzrow, dealer extraordinaire to New York's nascent demi-monde. Once established, it spread rapidly, fueling the "Jazz Age" and later the "Beat Generation". Of course, as Torgoff notes, the Beats themselves arose in reaction to suffocating American conservatism. With the subsequent catalyst of the Vietnam War and the civil rights struggle, the counterculture went "all in" on drugs and in a very public fashion. Where does "Bop" fit in to existing literature on the subject? "Really the Blues" is "really the reference" to the formative years of the early jazz era. Torgoff riffs off Mezzrow's classic. It compliments (as in "adds to") Art Pepper's excellent "Straight Life" and provides detail on musicians who didn't leave a literary legacy (Young, for instance) and those who did, but whose accounts are of dubious fealty to the truth (Billie Holiday) or are novelists' embellishments ("On the Road", "Junkie", etc). It leaves off well before the acid era (Jay Stevens). Being that "Bop" is about music, Torgoff waxes poetic on jazz. Some of his superlatives verge on (or are) hagiography, pure and simple. His poetic flights on the music would probably have brought a blush of embarrassment to the cheeks of the musicians themselves. He is hardly less laudatory on Ginsberg, Kerouac, Burroughs and a bit more restrained on Huncke. Curiously, most of the book concentrates on the "East Coast" movement and very little on the "West Coasters" (e.g., Pepper) appears. In sum, this is an interesting and important contribution to the history of American jazz music and its emphasis on the seminal role of drug consumption offers an unusual twist to the enterprise. It fits well with other books dealing (more-or-less) with the same issues, some of which are mentioned above. It's worth reading, especially if aural enhancers are your thing. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I thoroughly enjoyed how Martin describes the music scene. By Ana Dimas Martin Torgoff once again goes in deep about the history of drugs and the impact it has on society. The history of music is perfectly weaved into the use of drugs. I thoroughly enjoyed how Martin describes the music scene, I could hear the notes come off the page. A must read for any music buff or anyone that has been tempted by drugs. Read it! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars. By Jeffery G. Good history of those who are really hip

Bop Apocalypse, a narrative history from master storyteller Martin Torgoff, details the rise of early drug culture in America by weaving together the disparate elements that formed this new segment of the American fabric. Channeling his decades of writing experience, Torgoff connects the birth of jazz in New Orleans, the first drug laws, Louis Armstrong, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, swing, Lester Young, Billie Holiday, the Savoy Ballroom, Reefer Madness, Charlie Parker, the birth of bebop, the rise of the Beat Generation, and the launch of heroin in Harlem. Having spent a lifetime immersed in the overlapping worlds of music and drugs, Torgoff reveals material that has never been disclosed before. Bop Apocalypse is a truly fresh contribution to our understanding of jazz, race, and drug culture.

"Luridly entertaining." Publishers Weekly A comprehensive and compassionate account of the intersections of jazz, race, and drugs in mid-20th-century America...from first page to last...Torgoff's descriptions of the music are excellent...Listen and read and weep. A textured story of human hope and hopelessness, of artistry that blossomed in the most daunting and, in some cases, demeaning circumstances. Kirkus "[Torgoff] follows the birth of jazz in New Orleans, its development as the original soundtrack for drop-offs and underworld underlings, and its eventual progeny, the Beat generation." The New Yorker "Bop Apocalypse dissects how American drug culture was born and how it shaped American music...Torgoff seamlessly weaves one decade into the next." Wall Street Journal "Bop Apocalypse dissects how American drug culture was born and how it shaped American music...Torgoff seamlessly weaves one decade into the next." Memphis Flyer "Astutely reported...compellingly written...Torgoff cuts between scenes with the

skill of a consummate filmmaker...A sometimes harrowing but essential read."