

Book & DVD Reviews

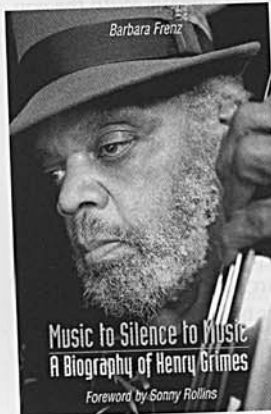
bibliography has a helpful list of relevant websites and half-a-dozen source books.

The many years spent preparing this volume are entirely vindicated by its quality, scope and wealth of fascinating and valuable information on the recorded legacy of probably the UK's premier modern jazz musician. Unequivocally recommended.

Bob Weir

MUSIC TO SILENCE TO MUSIC

A Biography Of Henry Grimes by Barbara Frenz.
Northway Publications 315pp, hb, £20. ISBN 978-0-9928222-5-5



The case of Henry Grimes, bass player, is indeed a strange one. As this book reports he was very active in the 1950s and 60s, taking a positive role in first bop and later free jazz sessions and then, suddenly, in 1968 he disappeared with-

out trace. Grimes moved to San Francisco and later to a poor area of Los Angeles, sold his quality German bass for much less than it was worth and wasn't seen again for three decades. As Ms Frenz traces what happened to him in those lost years, we learn that he had hardly any money, took whatever low-paid jobs he could find, lived in a small room in a scruffy hotel in a very poor area of the city, never played an instrument, never owned a record player or a television for all of those years. His only occupation or, it might better be called recreation, was composing stream-of-consciousness poetry which Ms Frenz likens to improvisation with words.

Grimes made his first record as a sideman with saxophonist Shafi Hadi, at the time a member of the Charles Mingus combo. Over the next three months he made five recordings for leaders Tony Scott, Gerry Mulligan and Lee Konitz. He also played bass on Reunion, the coming together of Mulligan and Chet Baker in 1958. He worked extensively with Sonny Rollins, who rated his bass playing very highly and he played live and on record with the saxophonist, including a European tour. In a chapter headed "In Transition" Ms Frenz compares Grimes and Paul Chambers, saying that both were outstanding bass players but by the late 60s, neither could make a living. This surprises me because although I know little of Grimes's circumstances then, Chambers was highly regarded, still playing and recording. At any rate, Grimes began playing with Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler and other leading members of the avant-garde and found there was virtually no money at all to be

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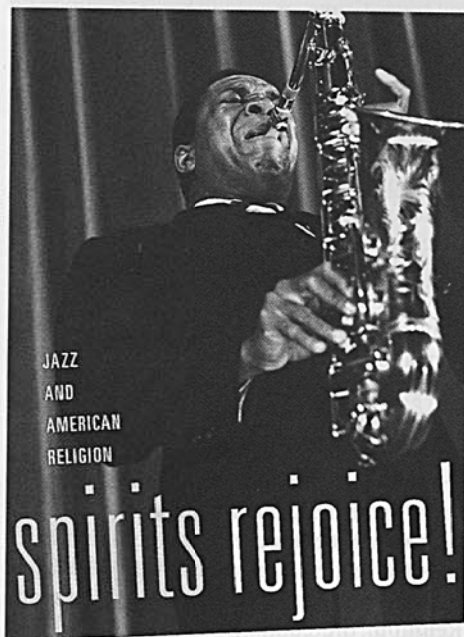
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made playing free jazz and disappeared.

Eventually a dedicated jazz enthusiast and social worker, Marshall Marotte, set out to find Grimes. He succeeded in 2002. His first question was "How is Albert doing?", 31 years after Albert Ayler's death. With the considerable help of journalist Margaret Davis (who later became Henry's wife) and Marotte and the generous donation of a bass from bassist William Parker, Grimes was coaxed back onto the scene and began receiving accolades as though he had never been away. With his new bass, named Olive Oil due to its colour, he has gone from strength to strength, touring worldwide. Ms Frenz has written a detailed, well-researched book littered with reviews and comments from Henry's contemporaries. It is a remarkable, true story of 30 lost years, a truth that is stranger than fiction.

Derek Ansell



Jason C. Bivins

SPIRITS REJOICE!

Jazz And American Religion by Jason C. Bivins. Oxford University Press, hb, 369pp with bibliography, filmography and discography, \$29.95. ISBN 978-0-19-023091-3

The author of this ambitious, stimulating albeit problematic book is Professor of Religious Studies at North Carolina State University and also, according to the short sleeve blurb, an accomplished jazz guitarist. Put at its simplest, Bivins' thesis here is that the evolving history of jazz in America can suggest fresh and rich ways to re-vision, and live, our sense of what religion – or rather, perhaps, spirituality – may mean today.