

## BOOK REVIEW

### **Black Music, White Business**

*Illuminating the History and Political Economy of Jazz*

BY FRANK KOFSKY

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Valerie Wilmer's recent article in these pages, titled Great Black Music, was received with a scorn amounting to viciousness in some quarters. Valerie, you see, dared to express the truth that black people play better jazz than white people, as a general rule, and that, the music is a reflection of their state in the world at any given time.

The cries of the reactionary white critics who've been able to make comfortable livings out of jazz while Bird and Eric have died were predictable, bearing a startling resemblance to the utterances of those Blimps who tried to keep the South African cricket tour going. Take the phrase "keep politics out of sport," substitute "music" for "sport," and you have exactly what these guys are all about.

Of course, this puts all white critics at risk, myself no less than any other. We are all to some extent parasites, and that dilemma constitutes a large proportion of Kofsky's book, which is available as an import in Britain. Critics are necessarily parasites, yet perhaps they are necessary parasites too; otherwise, how are people to know what's going on? A critic has, of course, to remember his responsibilities, particularly to the artists who provide him with something to write about. It's when these responsibilities are forgotten that a critic begins to look like the lowest form of human life.

Kofsky lays into many well-known critics very hard indeed, providing documented evidence of hypocrisy, in the case of several, and destroying their credibility in the process.