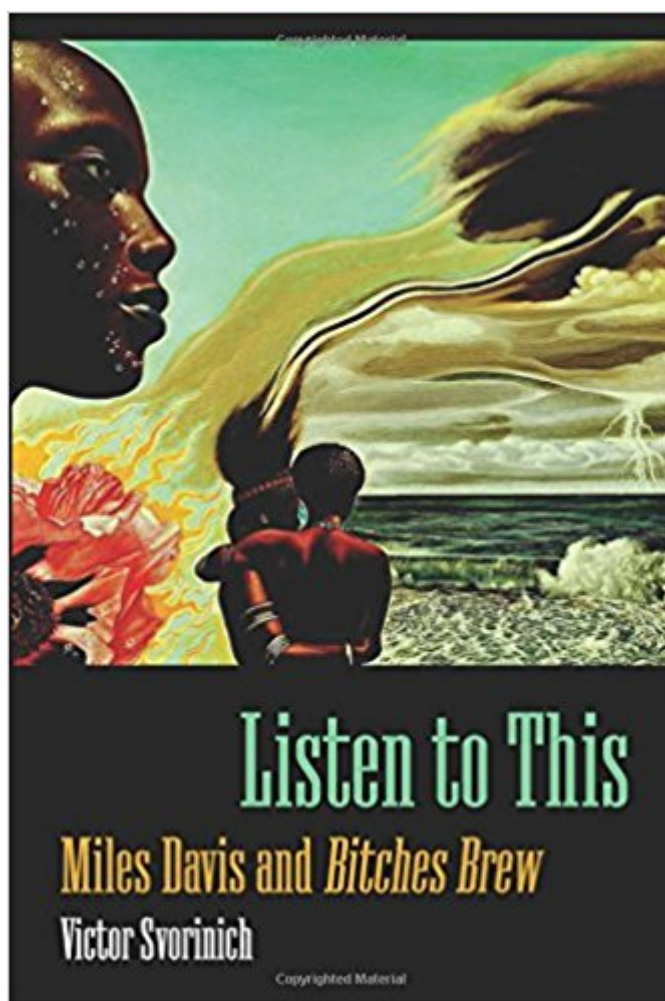


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Listen To This: Miles Davis And Bitches Brew (American Made Music Series)



Synopsis

The first close critical treatment of the album that shook jazz with its electric sound and rock-influenced style

Book Information

Series: American Made Music Series

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Customer Reviews

Listen to This is the third book of the making of the Miles Davis masterpiece, following to Ashley Kahn's Kind Of Blue (2000, Da Capo Press) and Yasuki Nakayama's the Truth Of Agharta And Pangaea (2011, Kawade, Japan.) While latter two books focusing on the moment of creation and the inside stories, Victor Svorinich tries to conjure 3D Miles up from our memories. His analysis of climate, preparation, music and post production depicts how only Miles really knew what he was looking for and endeavored in recreating the music in his head. He says Miles served as the conceptualist for Bitches Brew, and placed an emphasis in expanding upon small clumps and creating new composition out of them. In this sense, he seems to stand by Miles' side against Zawinul's claim as an original composer. Uniqueness of this book is containing verbal evidences from photographers. They are favorable to Miles as they successfully captured Miles. Svorinich writes Miles' incredible will to achieve at any cost makes the prince of darkness a charismatic, timeless figure. From an every sound of his trumpet, we can feel a layer of warmth, beauty, and romanticism. Whatever the method, Svorinich stresses, it had to come out from underneath the shyness, the darkness, and the tough skin which life gave Miles. Would like to point

out one misunderstanding by Svorinich. Agharta is recorded in Osaka. (not Tokyo show, p152) Agharta is a record of matinee (start 4:00pm local time), while Pangaea is the second performance of the same day (start 7:00pm local time). Sony got Columbia's approval of live recording for the limited Japan sales only, assigned Japanese engineer for this project. Getting a good reputation from Japan, Columbia decided sales of Agharta in America. However, facing severe comment from critics, they abandoned producing Pangaea in America. There was a controversy between Japanese and American engineers about the cutting level for this product as in p110. These two records still have some popularity in the Japanese market. Notwithstanding his physical condition at that time, Miles sparkles here and there.

I used to not listen to Miles post 60s. I am more into straight ahead jazz. This book has broadened my horizons. I hadn't realized the influence of the Bitches Brew album until reading the book. And because of Svorinich, It's all I've been listening to for weeks. Well done.

The chapters dealing with the actual recording of the album, with Davis' concept and working style, with the mechanics of Columbia's promotion of the album, and with Davis' relationship with Columbia and Teo Macero were good--lots of details and insights I haven't seen elsewhere. But this accounts for about 100 pages in the book, and if you weed out the copies of letters and the music scores, there's about 85 pages of decent text. I liked looking at the original letters and memos between Columbia execs and Davis (gives you a real "you are there" feel) but I don't see the value of a transcription of the trumpet solo on "John McLaughlin" when the solo didn't appear on the album. The rest of the book includes an attempt to place the album in its cultural and historical context, which was okay but didn't offer much that hasn't already been written by others. It also has short and not particularly useful bios of Elvis, Hendrix, Dylan, and Sly Stone; a discussion of the albums that came out after Bitches Brew, those of both Davis and his sidemen; an interview with Thom Yorke of Radiohead about how he was influenced by the album; and a curious chapter about what it was like to photograph Miles Davis. These chapters started to feel like filler and weren't particularly gratifying. And I wasn't happy with the author's characterization of Agharta as a failure of an album that was the result of Davis being deathly ill during his Japan tour. But now that the book's out in paperback at a more reasonable price (it was \$55 in hardcover, no way it's worth that) it's a not bad read, if not outstanding.

A superb recording, a seminal work by Miles Davis and these instruments: 3 keyboards, 1 bass

clarinet, 1 soprano sax, 1 oboe, 2 percussionists, and 1 guitarist PLUS the great Miles Davis.
Original music recorded in one take, no alternate versions. Brilliant! Fusion/Electric Jazz at its best.

The topic is covered thoroughly with great insight. There is a lot of detail without being boring. A good writer.

Why the heck not??

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