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Doug Ramsey on Jazz and other matters...

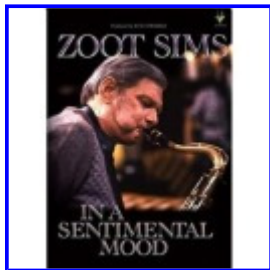
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DVD: Zoot Sims

November 4, 2011 By [Doug Ramsey](#) [1 Comment](#)

Zoot Sims, [In A Sentimental Mood](#) (MVD)



We see the tenor saxophonist sitting on a couch telling bassist Red Mitchell about his treasured old horn. Then the two and guitarist Rune Gustafsson play “In a Sentimental Mood.” Sims tells about Benny Goodman stealing his apple, and they play “Gone With the Wind.” For nearly an hour, we eavesdrop on a superb trio in an intimate setting, sharing stories and music. Like [The Sound of Jazz](#), it is a video rarity—musicians allowed to be themselves, cameras and microphones capturing the proceedings without contrivance. It was November, 1984. Four months later, Zoot was gone. This is a treasure.

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[November 11, 2011 at 8:03 am](#)

Marvellous.

Zoot is tired and amused. He obviously knows that he's come to the end of one of the roads.

His playing is gorgeous, all play beautifully. The conversation is unique.

It takes so little – and so much – to make great music.

Thank heavens for those moments.

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Doug Ramsey



Doug is a recipient of the lifetime achievement award of the Jazz Journalists Association. He lives in the Pacific Northwest, where he settled following a career in print and broadcast journalism in cities including New York, New Orleans, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland, San Antonio, Cleveland and Washington, DC. His writing about jazz has paralleled his life in journalism... [\[Read More ...\]](#)

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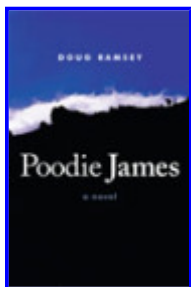


Mike Harris on [Correspondence: A Granz Film](#)

What an unbelievable discovery---incredible band, superb music, and photography that could have taken place yesterday. Thank you, Alan and Doug, for bringing this treasure...

Posted Nov 17, 2011

Doug's Books



Doug's most recent book is a novel, [Poodie James](#). Previously, he published [Take Five: The Public and Private Lives of Paul Desmond](#). He is also the author of [Jazz Matters: Reflections on the Music and Some of its Makers](#). He contributed to [The Oxford Companion to Jazz](#) and co-edited [Journalism Ethics: Why Change?](#) He is at work on another novel in which, as in *Poodie James*, music is incidental.

Doug's Picks

CD: Ron Carter

Ron Carter's Great Big Band (Sunnyside)



The venerable bassist's first recording at the helm of a big band has style, depth and power. The playlist of jazz standards may suggest that Carter and arranger Robert Freedman are plowing old ground, but they produce a crop of fresh ideas. They transform "Opus One," "Con Alma," "Sail Away," "The Golden Striker," "St. Louis Blues" and eight others. Harmonically and rhythmically, Carter leads. He solos, but does not dominate the album, leaving space for Steve Wilson, Greg Gisbert, Wayne Escoffery, Jerry Dodgion, Mulgrew Miller and Scott Robinson—a few of the 17 top-flight members of the band.

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CD: Rudresh Mahanthappa

Rudresh Mahanthappa, *Samdhi* (ACT)



This is the latest chapter in the alto saxophonist's accommodation of his Indian cultural heritage to his American jazz ethos. Or is it the other way around? He combines electric guitar, electric bass, drums, the astonishing South Indian percussionist Anantha Krishnan and

discreet post-production manipulation. Guitarist Dave Gilmore is a stimulating foil. The demonic “Killer” and the electronically multiplied saxophones of “Parakram #2” may require conventionally attuned ears to adjust to the Mahanthappa ethos. Relaxed pieces like “Ahhh,” “For My Lady” and “Rune” bring contemplative satisfactions.

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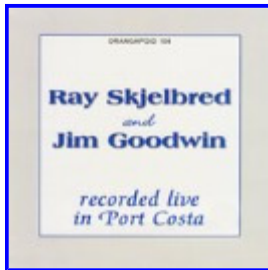
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CD: Ray Skjelbred, Jim Goodwin

Ray Skjelbred & Jim Goodwin, [*Recorded Live in Port Costa*](#)
(Orangapoid)



A couple of years ago [I wrote](#) about the night I discovered Jim Goodwin’s cornet playing and became an instant fan: “His solos had echoes and intimations of Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, Ruby Braff, Max Kaminsky and Wild Bill Davison. He wrapped all of that into a style of great individuality, intimacy, forthright conviction and humor.” This CD captures Goodwin and pianist Skjelbred in 1977, 32 years before Goodwin’s death. His solo on “Russian Lullaby” is pure joyous intensity, “Black and Tan Fantasy” a distillation of early Ellington and Bubber Miley. These previously unissued club performances come as a surprise and a treat.

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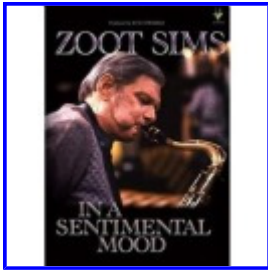
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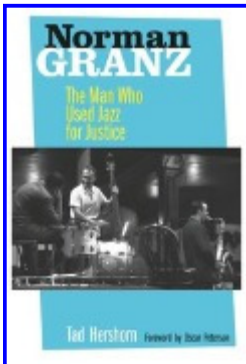
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[Book: Hershorn on Granz](#)

Tad Hershorn, [Norman Granz, The Man Who Used Jazz for Justice](#)
(California)



In his biography of the concert, recording and equal rights trailblazer, Hershorn praises Granz’s achievements as thoroughly as he examines the impresario’s notoriously abrasive manner. In the balance, Granz emerges as an admirable figure who bulldozed his way through or finessed his way around obstacles to gain acceptance for the music he loved while demanding just treatment of its musicians. The book is alive with anecdotes about virtually all of the major jazz figures of four decades, and

with stories of what Granz achieved for jazz and society. Hershorn's work aids understanding of a crucial period of American history.

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[CD: Bruce Babad](#)

Bruce Babad, [A Tribute to Paul Desmond](#) (Primrose Lane).



Alto saxophonist Babad approximates Desmond's relaxation and lyricism without imitating him. From a pure sound standpoint, in the melody choruses of "Wendy," "My Funny Valentine," "Take Five" and other pieces associated with Desmond, he is almost eerily like his predecessor, but in the blowing choruses his harmonic approach and tonal characteristics earmark his individuality. Babad's quotes may not quite achieve Desmond's sly subversiveness, but they are literate and entertaining. His "Jan" is a lovely ballad, his "B.A.B.A.D" a witty "I Got Rhythm" contrafact. Guitarist Larry Koonse, pianist Ed Czach, bassist Luther Hughes and drummer Steve Barnes are superb. This is a sleeper.

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