

Theistic Objectivism: An Autopsy

By Michael Emerling

Reviewed by Roy A. Childs, Jr. / Published by the author, 1975 / \$1.50

Some years ago, there was a magazine published called *The Christian Objectivist*, founded by a Biblical scholar and a college professor, looking for all the world like a yellow, primitive version of *The Objectivist*. Their aim was to rescue us from the usual sorts of things—doubt, depravity, despair, and the like—by offering us an inspiring union of Christianity with the thought of Ayn Rand. I do not know what has become of these people; I have not heard anything of them for several years.

Now, apparently, a new group with similar inclinations has popped up in the Washington, D.C., area, centering around the ideas and person of James Kiefer, a mathematician whose original argument for the existence of God was quoted, albeit somewhat mysteriously, in the first edition of Richard Taylor's *Metaphysics*. Kiefer has lately stirred up some controversy and converts by offering before a libertarian-oriented group in the Washington, D.C., area two lengthy lectures devoted to refuting Nathaniel Branden's lecture "The Concept of God" from the *Basic Principles of Objectivism* course and providing a proof for the existence of God from Objectivist premises.

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Without going into any detail, it should be said that what we have in the case of these people is an amazing phenomenon. A small group of people, possessed of extraordinary intelligence, has asked the Kantian-type question "How is the fidelity of man's consciousness to the facts of reality possible?"—and, in seeking a comprehensive answer, have reasoned their way into chastity, the Trinity, and Sunday Mass.

Michael Emerling, a disciple of George H. Smith—if

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you can imagine such a thing—and a frequent contributor to *Libertarian Review*, seems to regard this with an attitude akin to moral indignation. Despite the fact that there are at best a dozen people involved in this "movement"—people who, by the way, seem seriously to regard *Atlas Shrugged* as an inspired text—Emerling has gotten himself sufficiently worked up to have privately published a rejoinder to Kie-

fer's argument. Its title is *Theistic Objectivism: An Autopsy*, and it is filled with the sort of argumentative razzle-dazzle that one has come to expect from Students of Objectivism in their published missives.

Unfortunately, it isn't very good. The problem is that Emerling has not taken sufficient time and care to grasp Kiefer's argument, or to state it properly. I have read Kiefer's paper, and have had a lengthy discussion with Kiefer and two of his disciples. I think they are flatly wrong. But Emerling's statement of their views is simply unrecognizable to me, as it seems to be for others familiar with the Kiefer argument. In some ways, Emerling's response is effectively pointed; in a fundamental sense, he seems to have missed the point entirely. Why he bothered to publish it in the first place is another question.

If one is a student of such theological disputes, therefore, one should find this booklet interesting and useful, without finding it definitive. For those interested in watching the heated flogging of dead horses it is, as we book reviewers say, "must reading."



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Music IN REVIEW

Jazz: The Golden Age

By Neil McCaffrey

PART IV: THE DUKE AND HIS DUCHESS

Duke Ellington is in danger of becoming a household god, a solemn invocation made by men of uncertain faith. Duke did nothing to discourage this. The last decades of his awesome career were crowded with concert appearances, cathedral appearances, long-winded compositions, all the panoply of an international institution. The music tended to get lost.

Fortunately, he recorded amply during his most productive years, 1927-42, and most of the records survive on LP reissues, largely from Columbia and RCA. They are a monument to the most fecund composer-arranger in the jazz idiom, and the leader of what many hold to be the

lead the way, they were there to profit from the vast new audience for their music.

Yet Duke was never to achieve major popularity in these years—nor, in truth, to feel entirely comfortable in the swing-band pattern. To be sure, several of this set's high points come from these years: "Merry-Go-Round," "Harmony in Harlem," "Slap Happy." But so do some works of uncertain taste, like "In a Jam" and "Battle of Swing."

There are 48 bountiful selections here. To particularize among them would require a whole issue of *LR*. But a few points are worth noting. All but four compositions are Duke's. All the arrangements are his—and the band's: their musical life was one long collaboration, and Duke always thought out his music in terms of his players. In the '30s the personnel changed hardly at all. It was the era before prima donnas. The major soloists were Johnny Hodges on alto and soprano sax and Cootie Williams on open and growl trumpet. But hardly less important were the liquid, lacy clarinet of Barney Bigard, the booming, gutty baritone sax of Harry Carney, the witty trumpet of Rex Stewart, and trombonists Tricky Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown.

In a recent issue of *The Village Voice*, 14 jazz critics picked their favorite albums. Six of them named this one—and I think the other eight have some explaining to do. But so do all 14. Not one of them picked *Duke Ellington Presents Ivie Anderson*, a recent two-album set in a somewhat more commercial vein that may nonetheless be the most interesting Ellington collection ever issued.

Ivie Anderson was a nonpareil. She joined the band in 1931, its first vocalist,

and stayed into 1942, when asthma finally wore her down. (It would kill her in 1949, at 45.) In all that time, she never received her due, either from the public or the critics. It may be instructive to speculate why.

Public indifference is easily explained. In an era when the word was only beginning to be used in the modern sense, Ivie was cool. Singing with the most elegant band of them all, she fit. Though a crowd-pleaser, she shared with the bandmen an indefinable detachment. Call it class. I've seen her before a white audience, and before a colored audience. The whites were indifferent, the blacks at the Apollo only a shade more responsive—and then only when she put on her hip act (which was a delight: a touch of self-mockery—and more than a little mockery of the unaware audience. This side of her is represented in the album with "Killing Myself," "I'm Checkin' Out—Goombye," and "I've Got to Be a Rugcutter").

But how do we explain the indifference of the critics? I am not straining after paradox when I suggest—unconscious racism.

But could this be, when it is no overstatement to describe jazz critics as a

you hear them saying, with Bobby Short (in his book, *Black and White Baby*): "Like Gertrude Lawrence, she could sing the worst songs in the grandest way. Hers was a rare gift. She was a popular singer who listened to lyrics, and stayed within the character of the song. She was my favorite singer—not only then, but for all time."

There are 32 songs here, and the performances range from good to imperishable. Ballads or rhythm tunes, Ivie never falters. A lovely song like "Isn't Love the Strangest Thing?" can send her into lyrical flights, yet she is never maudlin. Some of the songs ("In a Mizz," "There's a Lull in My Life," "If You Were in My Place") would defeat most singers; Ivie's intona-

“So, when you make for that desert island, I don't care how few albums you bring; this must be one of them.”

Ivie Anderson was a nonpareil.

tion is flawless, her phrasing an adventure.

She is equally at home on rhythm tunes. "Truckin'" swings as hard as anything Duke ever recorded; "Oh Babe, Maybe Someday" isn't far behind. On these and other rhythmic gems like "Raising the Rent" and "Get Yourself a New Broom," drollery enhances the Anderson contributions. All in all, no other jazz singer can put so many facets on display.

If this collection brings Ivie Anderson front and center for the first time, the band is no less interesting. The players, in fact, seem to enjoy the change from the heavier Ellington diet, as if lightning Milton with Herrick and Lovelace. It is a dimension of Ellingtonia that never came out of the closet till this album.

So, when you make for that desert island, I don't care how few albums you bring; this must be one of them. ■

The Ellington Era: 1927-1940, Vol. 1
Columbia 3CL 27 (3 records) / \$13.98
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RCA's Bluebird reissue program hasn't yet gotten around to Duke, and the parent label has behaved irresponsibly about keeping him in the catalog. French RCA, on the other hand, has all but completed its reissue program—album after album, in chronological order. But since these albums are only available here randomly and more or less sub rosa, you'll have less trouble finding Columbia reissues. The most imposing of them is a three-album set called *The Ellington Era: 1927-1940, Volume 1*. (What ever became of Volume 2?)

These records span two generations, from the ten-piece band just breaking in at Harlem's Cotton Club in 1927 to the 15-piece powerhouse of 1940. The band, and jazz history, unfold in 48 panoramic selections. The effect is stunning. I don't mean to suggest a simple onward-and-upward progression; though most Ellington buffs do in fact regard the 1940-42 band as the acme. I once did myself, and said so in the first jazz review I ever wrote, back around 1942. I've since come to prefer the "blue" period of the early '30s and the early swing of the mid-'30s. The '20s sides show the band developing its distinctive voice, the sophisticated "jungle" music of "Black and Tan Fantasy" and "The Mooche." In the early '30s, popular music was at its most sentimental, after the brash '20s. Duke grew apace. Melodic masterpieces poured from his pen, many represented here: "Lazy Rhapsody," "Blue Lightnin'," "Drop Me Off in Harlem."

The Swing Era that dawned in the mid-'30s was a watershed. In one sense, the Negro bands were pioneers. They had taught the whites; taught them less, however, than modern historians would have us believe. But swing—i.e., the commercial breakthrough of jazz—was almost entirely the work of white bands. So, if Duke and the other black bands didn't

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