

BOOK

Miss Rosen Book Review #62



Twelve by twelve inches. A cardboard slipcase for a twelve-inch album. Vinyl. The way it all began. When turntables were the way music was orchestrated in the era of mass reproduction. And so it was, and it had been, that the photograph was part of that experience, the sleeve being the perfect place upon which to project, a veritable canvas, a movie screen, a silent and simple place for a single image upon which to consider the songs recorded on A and B sides. And once upon a time, not so long ago, the music pressed was a thing to behold unto itself, perhaps the height of the era being the jazz albums that had been produced.

Jazz Covers I and II by **Joaquim Paulo** with editor Julius Wiedemann (Taschen) is an impressive compendium, taking us back to the way it was, when you could gaze upon the photograph, the way in which the artist designed to complement the energy of the album, each cover design being a distinct in the way it sets the tone through the visual iconography of the creative director, who integrated the image into a larger frame, using line, text, and form to produce a visual rhythm all its own.

Jazz Covers I and II is a veritable treasure trove that includes interviews with Bob Ciano, former art director at CTI; Fred Cohen, Owner of Jazz Record Center, NY; Michael Cuscuna, producer at Blue Note Records; Rudy Van Gelder, sound engineer; Ashley Kahn, author and jazz critic; and Creed Taylor, founder of Impulse! The volumes also include record covers A-Z by artist, with captions detailing title, year, label, design, and photo (where applicable). Volume II take it to the next level with a series of twelve DJ's top ten lists.

By returning to the primacy of the vinyl album itself in a box set volume of large-format photography books, we are given a taste of a way of life that is taking on the hallmarks of the old school, the age of mechanical reproduction before the advent of computerization. Vinyl. Film. Print. All of these things are aspects of the modern era that now seem almost quaint, if not earnest. There is an aspect of the hand that still exists in the reproduction, be it book, print, or film that is all but erased in a world set to digital.

Jazz Covers I and II remind us of this, taking us back to a time when less was more so that what stood out strongest was the art itself. The art of sound, the music of a place and time, a very American way of experiencing the world, the great leaps and bounds that art, photography, and music made after the war, the way in which the 50s, 60s, and 70s has now become a Golden



Archie Shepp, *The Magic of Ju-Ju* (Impulse), Robert & Barbara Flynn (Design), William E. Levy (Photo), 1967

Era that we can reflect upon. *Jazz Covers I and II* is that mirror into which we can see ourselves, where culture has come and gone and remains, preserved forevermore on vinyl and paper covered sleeves that line shelves, crates, and walls.

We are living at a time when the library transforms before our very eyes as we move to catalogue and house so many things as microchips. Yet despite these advances the primacy of the object itself remains, as *Jazz Covers I and II* reminds us with every turn of the page. The time once was and forever will be an era that we either lived during its day or look back upon nostalgically. These books contain more than just images but a way of seeing that embodies a shared history of twentieth-century American art.

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LINKS

- http://www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/popculture/all/44931/facts.jazz_covers.htm
- <http://missrosen.wordpress.com>

CONTRIBUTORS

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