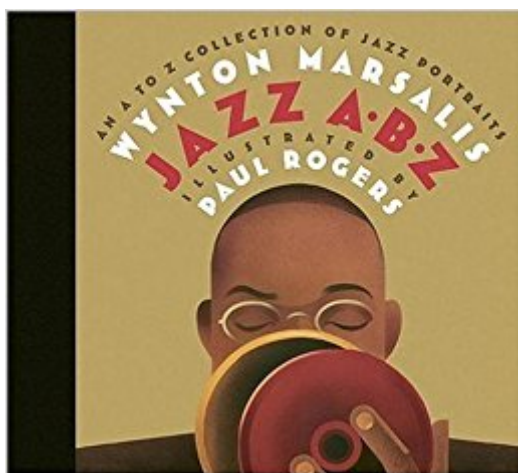


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# Jazz ABZ: An A To Z Collection Of Jazz Portraits



## Synopsis

In a swinging improvisation with poster artist Paul Rogers, Wynton Marsalis celebrates the spirit of twenty-six stellar jazz performers, from Armstrong to Dizzy Gillespie and showcases the same number of poetic forms. A is for "almighty" Louis Armstrong, whose amazing artistry unfolds in an accumulative poem shaped like the letter he stands for. As for sax master Sonny Rollins, whose "robust style radiates roundness," could there be a better tribute than a poetic rondeau? In an extraordinary feat, Pulitzer Prize-winning jazz composer Wynton Marsalis harmonizes his love and knowledge of jazz's most celebrated artists with an astounding diversity of poetic forms – from simple blues (Count Basie) to a complex pantoum (Charlie Parker), from a tender sonnet (Sarah Vaughan) to a performance poem snapping the rhythms of Art Blakey to life. Matching Wynton Marsalis's musical cadences note for note is the bold, poster-style art of Paul Rogers, highlighted in two phenomenal foldout spreads. The art's vibrant nostalgic feel is echoed in an exquisite design, with its size simulating an old 78 LP and its endpapers die-cut to mimic a vintage record sleeve. Complete with a discography and brief biographies of the featured musicians as well as notes on the various poetic forms, this is truly an incomparable gift book – for older children learning about jazz, longtime jazz aficionados, lovers of poetry, and readers of all ages who appreciate the finest in book design.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: NP (What's this?)

Hardcover: 76 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #721,816 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #29 in Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Music > Jazz #181 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Musical #934 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Multicultural

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. This electric collaboration between Marsalis and Rogers is an insider's A to Z guide through the greats of jazz. The recognizable giants are all here—Miles Davis with a stunning portrait in hues that call to mind his legendary *Kind of Blue*, and John Coltrane with a list song that conjures his "cascading through closely clustered chord changes." But to get all the subtle asides or to understand why Joe "King" Oliver's tribute ("the Kaiser of cornet") seems almost more laudatory than Louis Armstrong's, newcomers will have to read the brief bios at the book's close (the King took Satchmo under his wing) by jazz historian Phil Schaap. The poster-like portraits pay homage to each larger-than-life personality. Davis gets a close-up but Sonny Rollins's painting in shades of black, yellow and white backs up so readers can see him swinging with his sax. Marsalis picks a poetic style suited to each subject: haiku for minimalist pianist Thelonious Monk, while a three-page foldout for percussionist Abdullah Ibn Buhaina (Art Blakey) rolls out like a drum score. Each poem brims with words that showcase the letter in the alphabet and the accomplishments of its subject (e.g., Armstrong with his "angular aural arabesques aplenty"). This is a must for anyone who has ever been drawn to a scat by Ella or a riff from Miles or who has whirled around the dance floor courtesy of Count Basie. The passion for jazz shared by this book's creators emanates from every spread—and it's contagious. All ages. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Starred Review. Grade 7 Up—Fans of poetry, jazz, and modern art will love this book. With Marsalis handling the words and Rogers the graphics, they have created an illustrated catalog of great jazz innovators from A (Louis Armstrong) to Z (Dizzy Gillespie). Large, colorful, LP-size paintings of the forefathers and mothers of jazz face cleanly printed, sometimes shaped poetry. The stylized artwork is gorgeous, evoking the spirit of pop art, Blue Note album covers, and 1920s advertising art. Particularly eye-catching are the images of Thelonious Monk (an homage to early-20th-century food-label graphics) and Eubie Blake (with hands and a keyboard integrated into the poem), but every page is a delight to behold. Although Marsalis includes 27 different poetic forms, his poems move along similarly at the pace of a drum solo. The selections are visual, but work best when read aloud like slam poetry, beat poetry, or hip-hop. Particular highlights are a playful Miles Davis selection and a challenging performance poem for Art Blakey. In addition to the information about the musicians embedded in the poems, short biographical sketches are included. This uncommon alphabet book will delight readers and deserves a place in most library collections.—Steev Baker, Kewaskum Public Library, WI Copyright © Reed Business

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This is a great book for introducing jazz to kids. It has artwork very reminiscent of the work of the Harlem Renaissance.

My son loves it.

I collect alphabet books and this one is superb! I sent a copy to a friend who is a jazz musician and he was quite impressed...and of course, I kept a copy for myself!

love it

Great, creative book--fun to read.

The art work is first rate: each page would make a great poster, it's that stylized and refined. The print and colors are high quality and elegant. The selection of jazz greats -- only one musician per letter -- may seem unfair and arbitrary to some readers. But hey, it doesn't promise to be an encyclopedia or who's who! Loosen up! Remember, it's an intro for kids! I like how it's light and not \*too\* educational and pedantic. My gripe that it's too wordy, too poetic. It's extremely tiring to read to the little ones, especially late at night at crankytime. If there were a dumbed down, large text version, I would buy it. Seriously.

Five Stars for sure, ten stars if that was a choice. I was impressed with the amazingly fast service. Great.

Before I post my review, I'd like to make a correction to 's book information which states this book is for ages 4 to 8. Jazz ABZ would work extremely well in a high school or college jazz history class, and would be a hip coffee table book gift for a jazz fan, but it's not for young children! This is a visually stunning and brilliantly written book. The first page instantly grabs you: it has a large round hole in the center to resemble a classic lp record sleeve. The second page is a glossy black picture of a record with the author information listed on the record label. Wynton Marsalis collaborated with artist Paul Rogers to create this beautiful book. They selected famous jazz musicians for each letter of the alphabet. Marsalis wrote poems using a variety of poetic forms to fit each musician's unique

playing/composing style. Many of the poems were written while Marsalis was touring, and he read and refined them with the other musicians on the bus or plane during the course of their travels. While Marsalis has very strong opinions about other jazz musicians (the PBS Ken Burns series, while interesting, was essentially "Jazz According to Wynton"), he keeps his opinionated and didactic sides at bay and focuses on the task at hand with this book. Jazz ABZ is a book that assumes its readers have a decent understanding of jazz terms and forms. For this reason, it's not appropriate for elementary school readers (unless they have an unusually advanced understanding of this music). Imagine reading "Couldn't he just keep on cascading through closely clustered chord changes, cartwheeling through complex, careening, chromatic calculations?" to introduce third graders to the music of John Coltrane... I think not. Most of the poems work well with the illustrations and the different musician's personalities and music. The back of the book includes excellent short biographical sketches of each musician by Phil Schaap. Highly recommended.

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