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Why Jazz Happened is the first comprehensive social history of jazz. It provides an intimate and compelling look at the many forces that shaped this most American of art forms and the many influences that gave rise to jazz's post-war styles. Rich with the voices of musicians, producers, promoters, and others on the scene during the decades following World War II, this book views jazz's evolution through the prism of technological advances, social transformations, changes in the law, economic trends, and much more.

In an absorbing narrative enlivened by the commentary of key personalities, Marc Myers describes the myriad of events and trends that affected the music's evolution, among them, the American Federation of Musicians strike in the early 1940s, changes in radio and concert-promotion, the introduction of the long-playing record, the suburbanization of Los Angeles, the Civil Rights movement, the "British invasion" and the rise of electronic instruments. This groundbreaking book deepens our appreciation of this music by identifying many of the developments outside of jazz itself that contributed most to its texture, complexity, and growth.