Dave Brubeck and White Middlebrow:
A case study of *Time Out*

By

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We acknowledge and respect the lək̓ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university
stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with
the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

My thesis investigates the tension between popular appeal and critical failure in Brubeck's most flourishing years – during the '50s and early '60s – through the notion of "middlebrow" music. Middlebrow is a term originally used by cultural critics in the first half of the twentieth century to describe accessible cultural products that implement elements of high culture to fulfill the consuming aspirations of expanding middle-class audiences. In my thesis, I use *Time Out* as a case study in the broader discussion of Brubeck's career and middlebrow culture.

Since middlebrow culture is a multifaceted phenomenon, I focus on one agent during each chapter. In order, these are Brubeck himself (as a middlebrow producer), cultural intermediaries (as tastemakers of middlebrow consumers), and Brubeck's critics (which include both jazz critics and musicians). In the first chapter, I discuss Brubeck's reliance on "legitimate" culture (European elitism), the accessibility of *Time Out* in relation to the dispositions of its white middle-class audiences, and Brubeck's pioneering rhetoric in tandem with his privileges as a white musician. In the second chapter, I explain the mediation of his music and character in mainstream media and the legacy of *Time Out* in popular music outside the scope of jazz. In the last chapter, I discuss critics' responses to Brubeck's claims of innovation and commercial success to reassess his middlebrow locus in the context of mid-century modern jazz. Within the topics mentioned above, I re-evaluate articles, interviews, and reviews concerning Brubeck's most controversial years using theories by Pierre Bourdieu, Amiri Baraka, and Ingrid Monson.

My thesis ends with some broad conclusions. I claim that affiliation with classical music, claims of innovation, and commercial privileges as a white musician were the three fundamentals that engendered the middlebrow conflict in Brubeck's popular appeal and critical failure. Another conclusion is based on the impact of Brubeck's middlebrow music beyond the scope of jazz. Concerning *Time Out*'s legacy in popularizing complex meters in various genres of popular music, I argue that Brubeck's accessible formula is a significant example of middlebrow music's power in expanding the boundaries of mainstream music.

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Introduction

Jazz pianist and composer Dave Brubeck (1920-2012) is one of the most debated white musicians in jazz history. During the '50s and '60s, he was an important figure in the resurgence of jazz in mainstream America. Brubeck's music and character established an unprecedented number of new jazz audiences among mostly white middle-class consumers. He appealed to this group because he was classically trained and had a postgraduate degree in music. He was favored for his decorum and healthy lifestyle when most jazz musicians were deemed to be debauched. With *Time Out*, the iconic album Dave Brubeck Quartet released in 1959, Brubeck's popularity reached meteoric levels as the single version of "Take Five" hit the pop charts.[1] In a year that witnessed the germination of many fresh ideas, Brubeck's music provided an easy gateway to jazz for the newbie listeners among white middle-class audiences. It offered an appealing combination of different musical ideas – such as complex meters and early 20th-century techniques in art music like polytonality – that was progressive and accessible at once. This was particularly the case for those whose level of education and cultural awareness made them reluctant to traditionalist white Dixieland bands but were at once unfamiliar with the complexities of Afro-modernist idioms.

[1] "Billboard Hot 100, Week of October 9, 1961," Billboard, accessed on September 13, 2022. https://www.billboard.com/charts/hot-100/1961-10-09/

Meanwhile, many jazz musicians and critics did not like his music and personality. For naysayers, Brubeck's commercial success with white audiences was anything but remarkable during the momentous years of the civil rights movement. The criticism, however, was more than only about his income. In his interviews, Brubeck was never shy about promoting himself as an innovator and was promoted alike in mainstream magazines and promotional texts. Such claims were contentious when they went along with his lucrative career as a white jazz musician. They prompted many African American musicians, critics, and jazz aficionados to be skeptical about the relation between his commercial success and stylistic contributions to the genre. This was partly due to the growing awareness about civil rights issues that brought forth the ineluctable preference for experimentation with vernacular elements, techniques, and improvisation. And, for hardcore jazz communities, Brubeck's approach to modern jazz was not really convergent with the emotional and intellectual sensibilities that forged bebop as the hotbed of modern courses in jazz. Yet promotions represented Brubeck as a pioneer, and he benefited from them financially.

My thesis investigates the tension between popular appeal and critical failure in Brubeck's most flourishing years through the notion of "middlebrow" music.[2] Middlebrow was originally a derogatory term used by cultural critics in the first half of the twentieth century in response to

[2] This period encompasses the growth of Brubeck's popularity with his quartet from the early '50s to its zenith in the early '60s. The classic Dave Brubeck Quartet – which consisted of himself as the pianist and bandleader, alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, drummer Joe Morello, and bassist Eugene Wright – was active from 1958 until they disbanded in 1967. Brubeck led different quartets afterward, and his musical career lasted until he died in 2012. Meanwhile, his focus shifted towards composition, with sacred classical works such as cantatas and oratorios.

the changing economic, technological, and social milieu.[3] When the boundaries between high and low cultures were still rigid, these critics condemned the cultural products that diluted elements of high culture to fulfill the consuming aspirations of expanding middle-class audiences.[4] Recent scholarship on such cultural phenomena – that started in the '90s within the field of literary studies – has sought for reconsidering their cultural significance apart from the embodiment of preceding negative connotations.[5] As a concept, middlebrow is very fluid; it is associated with a wide variety of cultural producers, consumers, and products. But certain qualities can bind them together. French sociologist and cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu has

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[3] See, for example, Dwight McDonald, "Masscult and Midcult," in *Masscult and Midcult: Essays Against the American Grain*, edited by John Summers (New York: New York Review Books, 2011). Frankfurt School ideas, especially Theodor Adorno's critique of the culture industry, were highly influential in McDonald's criticism of the middlebrow.

[4] Early criticism can be traced in Virginia Woolf's 1932 letter "Middlebrow," published posthumously in her essay collection *The Death of the Moth* (1942). Later, Russell Lynes parodied Wolf and other highbrow critics for their pretentious castigation of middlebrows in his satirical essay "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow" published in *Harper* magazine in 1949. The most detailed critique of middlebrow culture happened during the post-war period in Dwight McDonald's long essay *Masscult and Midcult* (1960).

[5] For example, one counterargument in recent scholarship is reconsidering the tendentious criticism among mid-century cultural critics that middlebrow products are always conservative and usually inferior copies of high cultural products. Recent scholarships have shown how middlebrow can embrace strategies that are new and innovative. In literary studies during the '90s, monographs that progressed research in the middlebrow culture are Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), and Janice Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste and Middlebrow Desire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

had a major influence in defining the features of middlebrow culture (*culture moyenne*).[6] Bourdieu's work, for example, shows that the mediation of tastemakers is an indispensable part of making middlebrow culture. Recently, Beth Driscoll has elaborated on the middlebrow features using Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of "family resemblance."[7]

My interest in studying Brubeck in relation to middlebrow music derives from the recent expansion of scholarship on both subjects. In recent decades, especially after Brubeck died in 2012, the amount of exclusive research in his career has increased. Philip Clark's biography *Dave Brubeck: A Life in Time* is the first exhaustive source of its kind.[8] Two scholarly monographs have been published recently on *Time Out* and Brubeck's ambitious jazz musical

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[6] During the '60s and '70s, Bourdieu researched the dispositions of the new *petit bourgeoise* in France. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

[7] Beth Driscoll, "The Middlebrow Family Resemblance: Features of the Historical and Contemporary Middlebrow," Post 45, January 7, 2016, https://post45.org/2016/07/the-middlebrow-family-resemblance-features-of-the-historical-and-contemporary-middlebrow/#footnote_34_7035. Driscoll discusses eight qualities. According to her, middlebrow is middle-class, reverential (towards legitimate high culture), commercial, mediated (through the promotions of tastemakers), emotional, feminized (compared to masculinity of high modernism), recreational, and earnest. For more information, see Beth Driscoll, *The New Literary Middlebrow: Tastemakers and Reading in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2014).

[8] Philip Clark, *Dave Brubeck: A Life in Time* (New York: Hachette Books, 2020). The first biographies on Brubeck were published during the '90s. Compared to Clark's book, they are rather short or for general readership without footnotes and bibliographies. These books are Fred M. Hall, *It's about Time: The Dave Brubeck Story* (Fayetteville: Arkansas University Press, 1996), and Ilse Storb and Klaus Gottard Fischer, *Dave Brubeck Improvisations and Compositions: The Idea of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994).

project *The Real Ambassadors*.[9] Stephen Crist's book is the first in-depth analysis of *Time Out* and its legacy with previously unpublished documents from the archive of Brubeck Collection in Wilton, Connecticut. Several articles have studied sequences of Brubeck's career that I refer to throughout my thesis. These include Michael Spencer's study of Brubeck's popularity on college campuses, and Crist's account of Brubeck's world tour as part of the U.S State Department's Jazz Ambassador program.[10] Other sources are monographs on modern jazz history that have

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[9] Stephen A. Crist, *Dave Brubeck's Time Out* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), and Keith Hatschek, *The Real Ambassadors: Dave and Iola Brubeck and Louis Armstrong Challenge Segregation* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2022).

[10] Michael Spencer, "'Jazz-mad Collegiennes:' Dave Brubeck, Cultural Convergence and the College Jazz Renaissance in California," *Jazz Perspective* 6, no.3 (2012): 337-53, Stephen A. Crist, "Jazz as Democracy? Dave Brubeck and Cold War Politics," *The Journal of Musicology* 26, no.2 (2009): 133-174. Furthermore, Andy Birtwistle has studied Brubeck's relation to mid-century modernism in Andy Birtwistle, "Marking time and sound difference: Brubeck, temporality, and modernity," *Popular Music* 29, no. 3 (2010): 351-371. Kelsey Klotz's article on Brubeck's response to racial tensions during the years of civil rights movement is another example: Kelsey Klotz, "Dave Brubeck's Southern Strategy," *Daedalus* 148, no. 2 (2019): 52-66. Klotz's article critically studies Brubeck's 1960 cancellation of college campus tours in the South. Another article by Klotz is Kelsey Klotz, "Performing Authenticity 'In Your Own Sweet Way'," *Journal of Jazz Studies* 12, no. 1 (2019): 72-91. These articles are outgrowths of her PhD. Dissertation on whiteness and racial power dynamics in Cool jazz. See Kelsey Klotz, "Racial Ideologies in 1950s Cool Jazz" (PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 2016). Also, the author has a forthcoming monograph on Brubeck, Kelsey Klotz, *Dave Brubeck and the Performance of Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning Hilary Geddes' undergraduate thesis about *Time Out*, Hilary Geddes, "Language, Rhythm, and Legitimacy Issues: An Examination of Factors Contributing to the Success of *Time Out*," *Sydney Undergraduate Journal of Musicology*, vol. 6 (2016): 23-39.

dedicated extensive sections or chapters to Brubeck. These include Ted Gioia's history of West Coast jazz, Iain Anderson's account of avant-garde jazz in the '60s, Ingrid Monson's critical study of jazz in the years of civil rights movement, and sociologist Paul Lopes's study of the modern jazz world.[11] Although in most of the sources I mentioned above themes related to Brubeck's middlebrowism are, directly or indirectly, discussed, this is not the focus of these works.

The study of middlebrow music in musicology is fairly new compared to that of literary studies.[12] Monographs have been published recently both on classical and popular music subjects.[13] In terms of middlebrow culture in jazz history, the scope of research topics is

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[11] Ted Gioia, *West Coast Jazz: Modern Jazz in California, 1945-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 66-91; a similar source is Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 381-410, Iain Anderson, *This Is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 29-31, Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 62-65 and 92-95, Paul Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Another source is Eddie Meadows, *Bebop to Cool: Context, Ideology, and Musical Identity* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

[12] For more information about the background of scholarship in middlebrow music see, Christopher Chowrimootoo et al., "Colloquy: Musicology and the Middlebrow," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 73, no. 2 (2020): 327–333.

[13] Some of these sources are: Christopher Chowrimootoo's book about Benjamin Britten's popular operas and their relation to mid-century middlebrow modernism in Christopher Chowrimootoo, *Middlebrow and Modernism: Britten's Operas and the Great Divide* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), Kate Guthrie's study of classical music appreciation programs in Kate Guthrie, *The Art of Appreciation: Music and Middlebrow Culture in Modern Britain* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021), and John Howland, *Hearing Luxe Pop:*

relatively narrow. John Howland has explored various middlebrow subjects in the interwar period: First, the trend of orchestral arrangements during the Swing and big band era that was popular among white middle-class audiences, such as in Paul Whiteman's "symphonic jazz" and later Stan Kenton's "progressive jazz;"[14] and second, the promotion and elevation of Duke Ellington's status as a "serious" composer during his flourishing years.[15] As far as the author's knowledge, Brubeck is the only post-war jazz musician that has been exclusively studied regarding his middlebrow status. The first research is Nicolas Pillai's article "Brubeck betwixt and between."[16] Pillai's study opens intriguing insights into the middlebrow conflict (popular success vs. critical failure) surrounding Brubeck's controversial years with a focus on his presence and reception in the UK media – as in newspapers, jazz magazines and television performances. In analyzing Brubeck's character and public demeanor, Pillai discusses his "lack

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Glorification, Glamour, and the Middlebrow in American Popular Music (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021).

[14] John Howland, "Jazz with Strings: Between Jazz and the Great American Songbook," in *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries*, edited by David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, and Daniel Goldmark (London: University of California Press, 2012), 150-197.

[15] John Howland, "Marketing the Middlebrow: Reconsidering Ellingtonia, the Legacy of Early Ellington Criticism, and the Idea of a "Serious" Jazz Composer," in *Duke Ellington Studies*, edited by John Howland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 32-75.

[16] Nicolas Pillai, "Brubeck betwixt and between: Television, Pop and the Middlebrow," in *New Jazz Conceptions: History, Theory, Practice*, edited by Roger Fagge and Nicolas Pillai (New York: Routledge, 2017), 90-110.

of humility" in asserting himself as an innovator.[17] Pioneering rhetoric was not uncommon among successful modern jazz musicians. However, according to Pillai, Brubeck's remarks had a double entendre, as they were interpreted differently depending on viewing them from critic's or audience's perspectives. For critics, as I mentioned earlier, claims of innovation merely showed his smugness when juxtaposed with his wealthy status as a white musician. On the contrary, Brubeck's remarks and character assured his audience's engagement as they were impressed by his high confidence and sincerity in explaining the complexities of his music.

In my thesis, I use *Time Out* as a case study in the broader discussion of Brubeck's career and middlebrow culture.[18] In addition to the themes discussed in Pillai's article, I investigate the

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[17] Brubeck was, in fact, reputed for his lack of humility among jazz critics. For example, see Ralph Gleason, "Brubeck: For the First Time, Read How Dave Thinks, Works, Believes, and How He Reacts to Critics," *Downbeat* 24, no. 15 (1957): 14

[18] In addition to *Time Out*, topics that I talk about include (in chronological order): Brubeck's popularity on college campuses, his appearance on *Time Magazine*'s cover, and his worldwide tour as part of the US department's Jazz Ambassador program. There are other important topics that are outside the scope of my thesis, as I believe there are more debatable in terms of Brubeck's reaction to the racial turmoil in the early '60s. The first topic is Brubeck's cancellation of college campus tours in the South in reaction to pressures by the college authorities that did not allow his black Bass player Eugene Wright to perform with the ensemble. The second topic is Brubeck's jazz musical *The Real Ambassador*s, in which he collaborated with Louis Armstrong as their manifesto in response to the objectives of the government's program. It is interesting that in either case, Brubeck sustained a moderate position that, as Wynton Marsalis' has said, enabled him to "simultaneously voice his anger and maintain a non-threatening image, in ways that black protesters typically could not." Klotz, *Dave Brubeck's Southern Strategy*, 61.

following: the accessibility of his music in relation to the dispositions of his white middle-class audiences, Brubeck's reliance on "legitimate" culture (European elitism), his commerciality, the influence of the Cold War cultural policies, the mediation of his music and character in mainstream media, and his earnestness in terms of promoting inclusiveness with a liberal eclectic approach. One topic that is inevitable throughout all discussions of middlebrow jazz is racial dynamics. After all, jazz was quintessentially born out of elements in the tradition of black music and in its history the roles of race and class were constantly intertwined.

In each chapter, I focus on one agent. In order, these are Brubeck himself (as a middlebrow producer), cultural intermediaries (as tastemakers of middlebrow consumers), and Brubeck's critics (which include both jazz critics and musicians). Two connotations of middlebrow are present throughout the three chapters of my thesis. The first one is the middlebrow as a neutral concept with all its cultural dispositions, which is discussed chiefly during the first two chapters. And second, the middlebrow as a critical term – which more or less alludes to its original meaning – is reviewed during the last chapter.

In the first chapter, I start with a brief biography that explains Brubeck's affiliation with white middlebrow culture before the outset of his mainstream popularity. The next section discusses unconventional time signatures as the main marketing idea in *Time Out*. I explore the relationship between its accessibility and popularity by comparing it to similar examples in the modern jazz world. Finally, I review the extramusical factors – such as his pioneering rhetoric and whiteness – that contributed to Brubeck's success with white middlebrow audiences.

The second chapter is about the role of mediators in promoting Brubeck. I use Pierre Bourdieu's term "cultural intermediaries" to explain the content of marketing Brubeck in

mainstream media. I demonstrate their role as public-sector of Cold War cultural policies. Then I discuss the impact of marketing themes in the works of cultural intermediaries on Brubeck's career and how it urged him to refresh his aesthetic promotion in *Time Out*. I conclude the chapter by exploring the legacy of unconventional time signatures in *Time Out* and its broader influence on other middlebrow music outside the scope of jazz.

In chapter three, I discuss the recurrent themes among critics of Brubeck. After a brief background of jazz criticism, I return to *Time Out* with Ira Gitler's infamous album review in *Downbeat* magazine. I depict the "middlebrow conflict" surrounding Brubeck's music by juxtaposing Gitler's points of criticism with statements by Brubeck and other critics. The final section places three problematic but interrelated topics associated with Brubeck's middlebrowism in the overarching context of mid-century modern jazz. In discussing swing (authenticity), innovation, and commercial success, I explain the motives behind the criticism of Brubeck's career.[19]

My thesis ends with some broad conclusions. Since the opposing forces between high and low – such as authenticity vs. commerciality and seriousness vs. entertainment – are the most strident in the field of middlebrow culture, my outcomes hinge on what I call "middlebrow conflict" surrounding Brubeck's most successful years. I claim that affiliation with classical music, claims of innovation, and commercial privileges as a white musician were the three fundamentals that engendered the middlebrow conflict in Brubeck's popular appeal and critical

[19] Amiri Baraka's ideas about innovation in modern jazz in his monograph, *Blues People*, are a pivotal part of this section.

failure. Another conclusion is based on the impact of Brubeck's middlebrow music beyond the scope of jazz. Concerning *Time Out*'s legacy in popularizing complex meters in various genres of popular music, I argue that Brubeck's accessible formula is a significant example of middlebrow music's power in expanding the boundaries of mainstream music.

Chapter One: Brubeck, White Middlebrow, and *Time Out*

> So, it's time that the jazz musicians take up their original role of leading the public into more adventurous rhythms … We are the only group that I know [that] can play an entire concert and not play in 4/4 or even in 3/4 … we have four things in 5/4 time, and things like Blue Rondo à la Turk using 9/8, a thing called Unsquared Dance that's in 7/4 time … that's very difficult to play in … if we set up this pattern we're going to stay in the difficult time signature throughout and improvise.[20]

The above statement alludes to the novelties in the album *Time Out*, in which Dave Brubeck Quartet experimented with meters that were viewed as uncommon, demanding, and unprecedented in the context of mid-century modern jazz. [21] However, as we will see later in this chapter, other modern jazz musicians also experimented with uncommon meters before or around the time when Dave Brubeck Quartet released *Time Out*. Yet, none could achieve the massive commercial success as Brubeck did with this album. One wonders what Brubeck's formula for popular appeal was. What type of audience did he address when emphasizing "the original role of leading the *public* into more adventurous rhythms"?

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[20] This epigraph is taken from Brubeck's interview with jazz critic Ralph Gleason in the TV show *Jazz Casual*, which first aired in 1961. Onemediamusic, "Jazz Casual – The Dave Brubeck Quartet and Ralph J. Gleason," *YouTube* Video, 50:19, June 14, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4l1gI7qciqA&t=715s

[21] Since the establishment of the Quartet in 1951, Brubeck had constantly demonstrated his interest in experimenting with polytonality and polyrhythm. Some of the experiments before *Time Out* that became quite popular include polytonal themes in his composition *The Duke* (of the album *Jazz Red Hot and Cool*, 1955), and polyrhythmic approach in his rendition of the jazz standard *My Prince Will Come* (of the album *Dave Digs Disney*, 1957).

In this chapter, I begin by explaining Brubeck's strong connection to white middlebrow culture through recounting various chapters in his training and career before *Time Out.* I claim that the development of his pianistic style and various influences during his college studies moulded his character as a white middlebrow producer. The popularization of his college campus tours reinforced his bond with white middle-class audiences – as the middlebrow consumer – and paved the way for his commercial achievement with *Time Out*.

Furthermore, I explain how Brubeck's use and promotion of unconventional time signatures in *Time Out* successfully targeted the middle-class market. By comparing uncommon meters in his music with more complex examples in jazz, I suggest that *Time Out* is on the spectrum of middlebrow cultural products (like, for example, music appreciation programs) that effectively assimilate high culture and avant-garde idioms to educate the aspiring middle-class. Then, I discuss Brubeck's rhetoric and public image as part of his extramusical appeal. I explain how Brubeck attempted to elevate his role in the modern jazz scene by presenting himself as a pioneer in his interviews and speeches. This pioneering rhetoric also sparked a debate among the highbrow jazz community, which criticized his pianistic style. Finally, by comparing Dave Brubeck to John Lewis – an African American jazz pianist with a similar personality to Brubeck – I argue that Brubeck's positionality as a white figure helped him access a broader audience than figures like Lewis.

Dave Brubeck and white middlebrow culture

Sequences in Brubeck's life and his career development prior to *Time Out* demonstrate his affiliation with white middlebrow culture. His pianistic approach, for instance, grew out of a mix of old-fashioned swing with some early-modern art music techniques.[22] As Lewis Porter elaborates: "In short, Brubeck was a swing player who overlaid classical music and modern jazz onto his swing style, not a classical player who got into jazz. And because his style was well established by 1942, his swing was an older approach, not fully compatible with modern bebop feel."[23] To better understand this "older approach," it is worth briefly recounting Brubeck's training in jazz.

Brubeck was a countryside boy who grew up in a remoted ranch in Northern California. He received early piano lessons from his mother, who was a classically trained pianist. Since he was born with crossed eyes, Brubeck had difficulties in reading music and had to abandon classical training.[24] He got acquainted with jazz through listening to up-and-coming radio stations in the era of Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman big bands, and swing pianists such as Teddy Wilson,

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[22] Philip Clark, *Dave Brubeck: A Life in Time* (New York: Hachette Books, 2020), 16.

[23] Lewis Porter, "Reconsidering the Piano Legacy of Dave Brubeck, in a Deep Dive Centennial Special," WBGO, February 26, 2020, https://www.wbgo.org/music/2020-02-20/reconsidering-the-piano-legacy-of-dave-brubeck-in-a-deep-dive-centennial-special.

[24] Fred Hall, *It's about Time: The Dave Brubeck Story* (Fayetteville: Arkansas University Press, 1996), 8.

Art Tatum, and Count Basie.[25] In the early '40s, Brubeck was living on the West Coast, far away from the new pianistic style that was emerging in New York City.[26] This was when the young Bud Powell alongside other bebop piano players pushed forward the old swing style and later defined the dominant school of piano playing among the modern jazz performers. In fact, Brubeck's approach to jazz piano playing developed from a mix of swing-stride piano – which he had acquired by listening to Basie and Tatum – and pounding polytonal chords – that he later developed during his post-graduate studies, under the tutelage of French composer Darius Milhaud. Later in the '50s, the incompatibility of Brubeck's approach with the forming criteria of Afro-modernism led some jazz critics to question the authenticity of his style, which will be discussed in the chapter about critics.[27]

Brubeck's bond with white middlebrow culture furthered during and after his university studies. In 1942, when higher education had a significant value among the expanding middle-class, Brubeck obtained his undergraduate degree in music from the College of the Pacific. By then, he was a would-be bandleader whose college performances indicated harmonic and

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[25] Hall, *It's about Time*, 11.

[26] According to Ted Gioia, prior to the '50s, bebop was rarely known on the West Coast as Dixieland traditional bands still dominated the jazz scene. When Brubeck released his early experimental records in the late '40s with the independent label Fantasy Records, the company had been recently purchased by Max and Sol Weiss. Weiss brothers were new to music business as their main occupation was pressing industry. With the help of Brubeck, they bought the bankrupt Coronet Records, which recorded Dixieland bands, and changed the label to Fantasy Records. Ted Gioia, *West Coast Jazz: Modern Jazz in California, 1945-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 60-65.

[27] See pages 67-71.

formal ideas reminiscent of West Coast white bandleader Stan Kenton.[28] The so-called "progressive jazz" style of Kenton was, as explained by John Howland, a "self-consciously complex big band music" that "stylistically emulated the music of prewar modernist composers such as Igor Stravinsky and Paul Hindemith."[29] This cross-pollination of big band jazz and modern classical idioms, while being particularly popular among white middle-class audiences, was a common subject to middlebrowism among music and cultural critics.[30] Later in 1946, when studying composition with Darius Milhaud at Mills college, Brubeck upheld his interest in Kenton's music. In his own words:

> By the time I was with Milhaud, I could hear that Kenton was putting different keys together and he was adventurous with rhythm – he'd obviously been studying Stravinsky. And he was from Los Angeles, and I liked that he was from California. Kenton opened things up, for me and for how people thought about using a big band, and Milhaud liked what he heard.[31]

Compared to Kenton, Brubeck had the chance to bolster his knowledge of counterpoint, polytonality, and polyrhythm by studying with the French Émigré who in turn was influenced by Stravinsky. Milhaud was once a member of *Les Six*, a group of avant-garde Parisian composers that emerged in the '20s. The group had a distinct penchant for the quotidian life and popular culture of interwar Paris in which jazz had a significant presence. At Mills, Milhaud was an avid

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[28] Hall, *It's about Time*, 18.

[29] John Howland, "Jazz with Strings: Between Jazz and the Great American Songbook," in *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries*, edited by David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, and Daniel Goldmark (London: University of California Press, 2012), 176.

[30] Howland, "Jazz with Strings," 177.

[31] Clark, *Dave* Brubeck, 50. Kenton's arranger Pete Rugolo also studied with Milhaud at Mills College and was in the same class with Brubeck's older brother, Howard.

supporter of students who had had a different background than the European classical tradition and emphasized the importance of establishing their identity as composers based on their social, musical, and cultural milieu.[32]

Studying with Milhaud not only encouraged Brubeck to pursue his interests in jazz more seriously, but also brought prestige to his character in the eyes of white middle-class audiences. He was an imminent modern jazz figure who studied with an elite French composer. After a few years of financial struggle with a jazz octet consisted mostly of Milhaud's students, Brubeck eventually settled with his well-known quartet in the early '50s. Dave Brubeck, alongside his alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, bassist Bob Bates, and drummer Joe Dodge, found a desirable audience in the ever-growing college campuses around the US, where dozens of white middle-class students were attracted by the serious and cerebral quality of their so-called Cool jazz. As Robert Faulkner explains the popularity of Brubeck on college campuses:

> College campuses contained large numbers of bored young people, most of whom had an interest in popular music and some of whom were jazz fans. Between the two, you could sell enough tickets to fill a medium-sized auditorium and thus pay the expenses and salaries of such a traveling operation. Students came to the concerts to hear Brubeck play the kind of jazz they had become familiar with through his recordings. The records created an audience for live performance, and the live performances created an audience for the records. In university concert halls, Brubeck could play music people couldn't easily dance to, like his experiments with unconventional (for jazz) time signatures like 5/4 ("Take Five").[33]

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[32] Deborah Mawer, "Milhaud and Brubeck: French classical teacher and American jazz student" in *French Music and Jazz in Conversation: From Debussy to Brubeck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 249-50. This attitude is evident in the wide span of Milhaud's pupils at Mills college, which ranged from popular musicians like Brubeck and Burt Bacharach to contemporary music figures such as Steve Reich and Philip Glass.

[33] Robert Faulkner and Howard Becker, "*Do You Know . . .?" The Jazz Repertoire in Action* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 95.

Newspapers and magazines of the period depict the concert's attendants as "college men and women—undergraduates or recent graduates—lately come of age, men and women who learned about jazz at college concerts which, before Brubeck, were almost unknown."[34] Therefore, the college campus tours introduced and popularized jazz among new audiences, and Brubeck in turn perpetuated his attachment to white middlebrow culture.

Time Out: a background

Brubeck's rise to stardom following the widespread college campus tours enabled him to be part of the State Department's Jazz Ambassador program in 1958.[35] Fascinated by the rhythmic ideas he heard during this famous tour, he decided to create an album entirely based on original compositions with time signatures other than the common time (four beats of four

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[34] C.H. Garrigues, "Brubeck's Fans Learned About Jazz in College," unknown source and page number. Quoted in Michael Spencer, "'Jazz-mad Collegiennes:' Dave Brubeck, Cultural Convergence and the College Jazz Renaissance in California," Jazz Perspective 6, no.3 (2012): 348-9.

[35] Between 1956-58, when civil rights and racial issues were hot debates in America, the State Department – in order to ameliorate its public image in neutral countries during the Cold War period – sent a racially integrated group of prominent jazz musicians to disseminate its nation-building music as the true emblem of democracy. Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and Dave Brubeck were the musicians who performed around the world during this program. For more information see Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), Lisa E. Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2010), Stephen Crist, "Jazz as Democracy? Dave Brubeck and Cold War Politics," *The Journal of Musicology* 26, no. 2 (2009): 133-174.

quarter notes per measure). As the story is often told by Brubeck, the marketing executives at Columbia records were initially reluctant to release such an unusual record, and the record label agreed "only on condition that he also record an album of standards as a commercial backup."[36] Nevertheless, in 1961, two years after the release of *Time Out*, Dave Brubeck Quartet made its way to the pop charts, and the single version of the well-known track "Take Five" became the first jazz single to sell a million copies.

Uncommon meters: *Time Out* and the mid-century modern jazz

The year 1959 had already been a daring year for Columbia Records when they ventured to release two other albums of entire originals: Charles Mingus' *Mingus Ah Um* and Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*. These, along with Brubeck's *Time Out*, are among the collection of iconic modern jazz albums that were released during that momentous year. Despite being categorized as modern jazz albums, in terms of the musical vocabulary, there are essential differences between them. As Brubeck's biographer Philip Clark states:

> As Mingus was placing free jazz revolution in the context of a history that stretched right back to 1920's New Orleans, and Miles was engaged in nothing less than reinvigorating the blues, the explicit classicism of "Blue Rondo a la Turk" or "Three to Get Ready" was being interpreted by some as a "middlebrow indulgence" – not even posing questions about "whither jazz," let alone providing any answers.[37]

In other words, while Mingus and Davis were experimenting with pushing the boundaries of improvisation and vernacular idioms in jazz, Brubeck's borrowing from pre-existent materials in

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[36] Stephen Crist, *Dave Brubeck's Time Out* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 43. The album turned out to be *Gone with the Wind*, the studio album released earlier than *Time Out in* 1959.

[37] Clark, *Dave Brubeck*, 200.

classical music did not stand with the level of experimentality in those Afro-modernist works. Clark, however, leaves us with explaining how such an album at the peak of modern jazz became one of the most commercially successful ones in the history of jazz.

The essential point in understanding the popularity of progressive elements in *Time Out* lies, as Stephen Crist suggest, in "its unique amalgamation of complexity and simplicity."[38] The practice of playing jazz in asymmetrical meters – as in "Blue Rondo à la Turk" (track 1) and "Take Five" (track 3) – or of shifting meters – as in "Three to Get Ready" (track 4) and "Cathy's Waltz" (track 5) – was not frequent in mainstream jazz before the release of *Time Out;* therefore, musicians required specific training to become proficient in such techniques. Nevertheless, in dealing with these difficulties Brubeck maintains a level of straightforwardness that secures its accessibility for an audience broader than typical modern jazz followers. The first track, "Blue Rondo à la Turk," begins with a simple and attractive theme in 9/8 that consists of three measures of 2+2+2+3 beats followed by one measure of 3+3+3. The idea is to combine a Turkish rhythmic pattern in 9/8 (known as *Aksak* in Turkish music theory) with blues improvisation and classical Rondo form. In the transition section between the composed theme in 9/8 and the blues improvisation in 4/4, Brubeck encapsulates these three ideas in the way that the dilettante audience could easily recognize and appreciate them, as suggested by the title. *Figure 1* shows how Paul Desmond's 4/4 blues variations on the main theme oscillates every two measures with the original theme in 9/8, played by Brubeck.[39]

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[38] Crist, *Dave Brubeck's Time Out*, 213.

[39] Fierra Brass, "Blue Rondo A La Turk," Musescore.com, August 20, 2014, https://musescore.com/fierabrass/scores/286641.

Figure 1

In "Take Five," both the composed and improvisatory sections are in 5/4. The well-known two-chord vamp that alternates between E♭ minor and B♭ minor 7th in the piano is ubiquitous throughout, even underneath Joe Morello's fascinating and relatively long drum solo. As jazz critic Alyn Shipton has commented on the piece: "for all perceived problems musicians had with this piece in 1959, apart from the mental gear-change needed to think and play five beats to the bar instead of four, 'Take Five' is extremely simple."[40] While the vamp's repetitiveness

[40] Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, rev. ed. (New York: Continuum, 2007): 513. Quoted in Crist, *Dave Brubeck's Time Out*, 214.

bothered jazz critics like Ira Gitler, who in a scathing remark compared it to "Chinese water torture," its catchiness made the 5/4 meter easy to follow.[41]

Evaluating *Time Out* in comparison with other jazz musicians who experimented with uncommon meter demonstrates how Brubeck's brand of jazz could attract a greater audience. Although in *Time Out*'s liner notes, jazz critic Steve Race described its rhythmical innovation as "the first exploration in this uncharted sea", Brubeck was certainly not the first jazz musician to experiment with asymmetrical and shifting meters.[42] As Crist elaborates on the effectiveness of Brubeck's brand of modern jazz:

> With regard to his work with unusual meters and rhythms on *Time Out*, Dave Brubeck's metrical experimentation didn't appear out of nowhere in 1959 … Brubeck wasn't the only jazz musician or the first, to move beyond common meter. But his enduring legacy, it seems, rests on his unique ability to pursue progressive musical agenda, while simultaneously achieving broad popular appeal.[43]

Hence prior to *Time Out,* there were both white and African American musicians in the realm of modern jazz that experimented with such ideas. A few years before *Time Out*, Lennie Tristano, another white pianist who had a penchant for mingling avant-garde art music techniques with jazz, released a self-titled album that consisted of a piece called "Turkish Mambo." Tristano's experiment, using multitrack technique, is an improvisation on three lines of recorded piano, piled on top of another, that combines two asymmetrical meters in 5 and 7 with triple and quadruple meters. As Eddie Meadows explains, "Turkish Mambo" "is a more mechanical display of metric ingenuity than an interactive creative jazz rhythm."[44] Compared to

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[41] Ira Gitler, "Review of *Time Out,*" *Downbeat* 27, no. 9 (1960): 37–38.

[42] Steve Race, liner notes for *Time Out* by Dave Brubeck Quartet, CBS records, CBS 460611, 1987, compact disc.

[43] Crist, *Dave Brubeck's Time Out*, 218.

[44] Eddie Meadows, *Bebop to Cool: Context, Ideology, and Musical Identity* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 328.

Brubeck's straightforwardness in "Take Five" and "Blue Rondo à la Turk," this is an intricate combination of uncommon meters that could have been only construed by the audience which had certain knowledge of avant-garde music.

Among the afro-modernists an analogous case is an album by bebop drummer Max Roach. Four months before the release of *Time Out*, Roach recorded the album *Quiet as its Kept* that contains a track entirely in 5/4 called "As Long as You're Living." Unlike "Take Five," that is based on composition and improvisation, "As Long as You're Living" relies on the sheer prowess of bop musicians in improvising on a 12-bar blues progression. The smooth swing in 5/4 throughout a piece that was merely grounded on consecutive improvisations, was rather appreciated by hardcore jazz fans who were familiar with bebop idioms. As German critic, Ulrich Olshausen has explained in his comparison between Brubeck and Roach:

> Brubeck's pieces in odd meters were a sensation above all because he knows how to shape all rhythmic innovations in such a tremendously concise manner and thereby to popularize them … unlike Max Roach, for instance, who attained such complexities with deviations from the canonical common time that only insiders could follow him.[45]

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[45] "Da waren dann Brubecks Stücke in ungeraden Metren eine Sensation, vor allem deshalb, weil er es verstand, alle seine rhythmischen Neuerungen so enorm griffig zu gestalten und dadurch zu popularisieren—im Unterschied etwa zu Max Roach, der mit seinen Abweichungen vom kanonisierten Viervierteltakt zu solchen Komplexitäten gelangte, daß ihm nur noch Insider folgen konnten." Ulrich Olshausen, "Swingender Akademiker: Dave Brubeck—Zwischen Kritik und Anerkennung," *Musik + Medizin* 3 (1979): 46. Translated by Stephen Crist. Quoted in Crist, *Dave Brubeck's Time Out*, 213.

Thus, compared to Roach's piece, "Take Five" is conspicuously accessible and, with the catchy saxophone themes composed by Paul Desmond, had the quality of appealing to the audience that might not be familiar with the exhaustive improvisatory approach of bop musicians.

In fact, the balance between Brubeck's and Desmond's opposing musical characteristics was one of the main appeals to new audiences. Throughout their years of collaboration, Brubeck's compositional formalism and Desmond's improvisational lyricism complemented each other in a way that their audiences could appreciate the best of both worlds. As Iain Anderson states, from their early recording to popular hits like "Take Five" and "Blue Rondo" "Desmond's graceful alto served as a fitting foil to Brubeck's structuralism. Whenever the leader's curiosity with classical design or unusual meter threatened to degenerate into stiff formality, Desmond's fluid melodic tone restored a sense of spontaneity and lyricism."[46]

While other jazz musicians had introduced uncommon meters in their music before *Time Out*, the "experimental" label of the album prompted responses from Roach and other African American jazz modernists. Modern jazz during the '50s and '60s witnessed an aesthetic debate surrounding the future of its development, of whether to emulate the elitism of European model with penchants for composition and classical music techniques or through virtuosic improvisations based on the complexities of African American idioms. Considering Roach's political activism and the fact that *Time Out* and *Quiet as It's Kept* were released around the same time in 1959, we can infer that Roach must have been eager to comment on Brubeck's

[46] Iain Anderson, *This Is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 30.

commercial success and the widespread media attention he gained amidst the turmoil of the civil rights movement. As Ingrid Monson explains, Roach's extensive use of 5/4 in the album *We insist! Freedom Now Suite*, which he released the very next year (1960), could be interpreted as a commentary on Brubeck's "Take Five," since it was the most debated 5/4 piece in jazz.[47]

Oscar Peterson, another great figure of modern jazz piano, was also critical of *Time Out*'s branding, calling it "progressive" rather than "experimental." In an interview with the British jazz magazine *Melody* Maker, when he was asked to remark on the popularity of uncommon time signatures in Brubeck's music he stated:

> 'Take Five' … has made him more ready to be progressive, without being too experimental. For there is nothing new in his use of unusual time signatures. This has been going on for a long time. Dave has merely put it into the spotlight. Most of the great jazz pianists have introduced it into their playing at some time or another – only because it has fitted into a mood or a phrase, but it has passed unnoticed by the listener.[48]

Therefore, the cultural significance of *Time Out*'s music, as Peterson's backhanded praise implies, is its ability to highlight the "progressive" idea of uncommon meters for a broader range of listeners, in a way that other modern jazz figures did not. All tracks with uncommon or shifting meters are embedded with memorable themes and presented astutely – in ways that made it accessible especially to those who were new to jazz.

In that regard, Brubeck's style and his targeted audience is analogous to Kenton's "progressive jazz" and even before Kenton, to earlier white middlebrow figures in the history of

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[47] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 178.

[48] Quoted in Nicolas Pillai, "Brubeck betwixt and between: Television, Pop and the Middlebrow," in *New Jazz Conceptions: History, Theory, Practice*, edited by Roger Fagge and Nicolas Pillai (New York: Routledge, 2017), 93-4.

jazz. One can simply trace back the commercialized infusion of classical music idioms into jazz to the “symphonic jazz” of the interwar bandleader Paul Whiteman, whose quasi-orchestral arrangements of the dance tunes thrived in "bridging urban entertainment styles and the aspirational consumer interests of white middle-class America."[49] Compared to the entertainment aura of the big band era, however, during the ‘50s and ‘60s, combos like Dave Brubeck Quartet pioneered in updating jazz’s cultural status to the emergent modernistic aspirations of the white middle-class.[50] Modern jazz frequently dwelled in salon concerts, festivals, high schools, and college campuses instead of more traditional venues like nightclubs. Besides, Brubeck – who, unlike Whiteman and Kenton, acquired formal musical training in college – provided a more advanced form of jazz and modern classical music cross-fertilization that represented the modernistic sonic expectations of the white middlebrow: serious, cool, and rational yet perfectly accessible. Nowadays, the fact that May 4 (5/4) is informally reputed as Dave Brubeck day ratifies the profound influence of “Take Five” in America’s popular culture.

But in addition to the musical qualities there were also extramusical elements that facilitated the expansion of Brubeck’s audience.

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[49] John Howland, "Marketing the Middlebrow: Reconsidering Ellingtonia, the Legacy of Early Ellington Criticism, and the Idea of a "Serious" Jazz Composer," in *Duke Ellington Studies*, edited by John Howland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 41

[50] As Ian Anderson has pointed out, the prevalence of modern jazz during the post-war period was part of the wider phenomenon of middle-class’ enthusiasm for cultural education. The popularity of middlebrow magazines like *New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and *Harper*, alongside Book-of-the-Month Club and Leonard Bernstein’s classical music appreciation programs on television, are other evidence of this tendency. Anderson, *This Is Our Music*, 11-12.

"I Did Something First!": Brubeck's rhetoric and public image

Another key element in understanding the extensive popularity of Brubeck pertains to his public demeanor and the way he attracted a specific audience. As we saw in the opening quotation, Brubeck was often fond of explaining the difficulties of his music before his performances, in which he demonstrated how skillfully and effortlessly he was able to handle those technical challenges. This way of presenting his music, while conveying the deftness of his combo to targeted audiences, was described by the British critic Benny Green, as "Brubeck shyly telling us that what he is now about to play is more or less impossible, but that he is going to be very gallant and play it anyway."[51] To be more exact, Brubeck's tendency to use musical terms impressed the inexperienced audience which, on the one hand, lacked the background knowledge in jazz to assess Brubeck's claims and, on the other hand, was excited about discovering the "exclusive" aspects of his music.[52]

Moreover, while recounting his background in interviews, Brubeck usually emphasized the unmatched experimentality of his musical ideas. For instance, in a long tripartite interview with Ralph Gleason published in *Downbeat* magazine in 1957, Brubeck – without mentioning specific names – separated his way from traditionalists in jazz, by implying how he had always thought ahead of his time: "I certainly could have been more of a traditionalist. Like so many people I

[51] Dominic Green, *Such Sweet Thunder: Benny Green on Jazz* (London: Scribner, 2001): 39. Quoted in Pillai, *Brubeck Betwixt and Between*, 93.

[52] Pillai, *Brubeck Betwixt and Between*, 100.

might *become* more of a traditionalist, but I think it's healthy when you're young, to push and expand. Years ago, I was thinking of an idiom that is avant-garde now."[53]

In another part, Brubeck explains how he had thought of abandoning jazz before starting his studies with Milhaud since he had found it too limited for his adventurous ideas:

> When I went back [from the Army] to study under Milhaud, to be honest, I was going to give up jazz because of all the hassle I had had, even in the army, to get the musicians to play my stuff. And I recalled even Kenton thought I was too far-out. So, I figured jazz wouldn't be the place to present the ideas I wanted too. It was too narrow. So, I thought composition would be the answer.[54]

Although Brubeck does not elaborate enough on his "far-out" ideas, such remarks highlight his inclination to impress the reader with his pioneering rhetoric. Intriguingly, Brubeck rarely discussed the achievement of Afro-modernists in jazz during his interview with Gleason. When Gleason asks him to comment on Miles Davis, he reveals his admiration for Miles Davis Nonet and the pivotal role of their album, *The Birth of Cool*, in shaping modern ideas in the West Coast scene. Yet, Brubeck emphasizes that his experience with the octet at Mills college had preceded the Nonet.[55] Similar to the promotion of uncommon time signatures in *Time Out,* these occasions demonstrate that Brubeck was concerned with uplifting his public image as the first person to foster new ideas in the genre.

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[53] Ralph J. Gleason, "Brubeck: 'I Did Something First'," *Downbeat* 24, no. 17 (1957): 14.

[54] Ralph J. Gleason, "Dave Brubeck Remembers: 'They Said I Was Too Far Out'," *Downbeat* 24, no. 16 (1957): 19. As Brubeck continues, Milhaud later encouraged him to pursue a career in jazz.

[55] "I think it was great to hear Miles' first group. That was a great group. I liked it very much. I know the octet predates that group, as far as a unit, but they recorded before us." Gleason, "Brubeck: 'I Did Something First'," 15.

Brubeck's academic background and charisma can explain why he became so popular, as these principles were revered among middle-class audiences. Nevertheless, were these qualities enough for a mainstream jazz musician to gain such a vast amount of attention, or was race identification with white, middle-class audiences also an essential factor?

Brubeck's positionality and white privilege

Brubeck was perhaps the most frequently heard name in mainstream media among other mid-century jazz musicians whose music was classically tinged. But the fusion of jazz and classical music in academia was primarily associated with the so-called "Third Stream" movement. [56] Among Third Stream musicians, John Lewis, the founder of the Modern Jazz Quartet (also known as MJQ), bears compelling similarities with the personal character and musical approach of Brubeck. As an African American who, like Brubeck, had a master's degree in music, Lewis cared about his public appearance and elevating jazz's social image. He advocated for performing jazz in concert halls rather than in nightclubs.[57] In addition, his most renowned pieces with MJQ— such as "Vendome" and "Django" – demonstrate Lewis's interest in juxtaposing classically-influenced sections with improvisations based on blues and bebop idioms. Akin to Brubeck, he frequently used contrapuntal devices that evoke the influences of Bach; however, while Brubeck's works feature modern approaches to harmony (like polytonality), Lewis's harmonization tends to be more classical, reminiscent of the Common

[56] This is a term coined by jazz historian, educator, and composer Gunther Schuller. During the late '50s, when jazz was hardly recognized inside academia, Schuller and his colleagues strove to provide it an academic prestige by combining contemporary art music idioms and jazz improvisation.

[57] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 96.

practice period. Considering how conventional his harmonic approach was, the Modern Jazz Quartet could have been a less risky option than Brubeck for the broad middle-class market in the US. Yet the ensemble failed to be as commercially successful as Brubeck's combo. This disparity was noticed by the jazz critic Leonard Feather who, in his comparison between DBQ and MJQ, stated:

> On the one hand, you are delighted that an intelligent, ambitious, clean-living, and talented fellow like Brubeck can win so many fans and, in effect, do so much for jazz; on the other hand, you are distressed that an intelligent, ambitious, clean-living, and talented fellow like John Lewis, mentor of the MJQ, can have accomplished so much more, musically, while gaining so much less ground, economically.[58]

Feather's point was a recurring theme in criticism of Brubeck's career. Jazz critics usually cited the inequality of Brubeck's and Lewis' income as a problematic issue in music market.[59]

Undoubtedly, one of the fundamental reasons for Brubeck's extraordinary success with the middle-class market was the "structural privileges" that white musicians benefited from during this period.[60] In fact, the amount of media attention and coverage in jazz publications that white musicians received allowed them to promote their music more comfortably than their African American counterparts. Even in *Downbeat* – that published essays in favor of the Afro-modern musicians – there is evidence of such bias. According to Dan Morgenstern, the editor-

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[58] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 95.

[59] Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 66.

[60] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 73. This is regardless of how progressive white musicians' attitudes were regarding the racial issues (Brubeck was known in mainstream media for being among the first white jazz musicians who addressed and advocated the civil rights movement).

in-chief of the magazine during the ’60s, the then-publisher, John Maher, used to say that “he didn’t want too many black people on the cover.”[61]

To understand why such biases existed would require the explanation of racial stereotypes and contradictions that lingered after the advent of bebop. Although African American musicians played a major part in elevating the status of jazz as art music, there was still a predisposition in mainstream media to undermine their role by coding the primitivity of their style. Since this paradox (intellectual vs. primitive) continued to exist, “performance priority was given in tertiary settings to either white-dominated jazz genres such as Swing or, less often, simply to white jazz modernists.”[62] This means that Brubeck’s positionality as a white cerebral figure enabled him to be more conspicuous than African American musicians who aimed at a similar market. This issue will be discussed in more detail throughout the chapter on critics.

[61] Daniel King, “Brubeck was anointed a ‘king’ of jazz while many others were neglected,” SFGATE, Dec. 6, 2005. https://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/VIEW-Brubeck-was-anointed-a-king-of-jazz-2558172.php

[62] Christopher Coady, *John Lewis and the Challenge of “Real” Black Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 36.

Chapter Two: Cultural Intermediaries, White Middlebrow Audiences, and *Time Out's* Legacy

MIDDLE AGED MAN 1

I think Stubby's gone overboard with those altered chords, don't you?

YOUNG WOMAN

I agree. I think Brubeck and Desmond have gone just as far with dissonance as I care to go.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN 2

Oh, nonsense. Have you heard Lennie Tristano's latest recording? He reached outer space! (burst of laughter)

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

Someday they'll make the cycle and get back to pure old Dixieland. I say atonality is just a passing phase in jazz music. What do you think Mr. Everett?

VINCE EVERETT

[puzzled face] Lady, I don't know what the hell you're talkin' about![63]

My epigraph is taken from a scene in 1957 musical drama *Jailhouse Rock*, in which several white well-heeled professionals are discussing modern jazz at a party. Vince Everett, the hero who is played by Elvis Presley, is an up-and-coming rock and roll singer recently discovered by Peggy Van Elden, his promoter and later lover. Peggy has invited Vince to a party at her parent's house, where she first introduces him to her mother and her father, a college professor. Realizing that Vince is a musician, Peggy's father plays a hi-fi record by a fictional jazz musician, Stubby Reitmeyer. The scene above occurs when Vince and Peggy have joined the group of

[63] Studiosoundworks, "Elvis Presley discusses atonality in jazz (Dave Brubeck and Lennie Tristano references)," *YouTube* Video, 0:43, July 25, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqqKu05m8bA

listeners. The contrast between the elite discussion and Vince's philistinism creates a rather humorous discomfort that causes Vince to leave the party immediately.

Although clearly a film about rock and roll, the above dialogue also provides insights into the variety of tastes among white jazz followers. While the ostentatious behaviour of the upper middle-class guests is portrayed in such a way that the audience could sympathize with Presley's bewilderment, its depiction of modern jazz audiences "provided a backhanded acknowledgment of the music's status."[64] That being said, the dialogue implies the different ranks of accessibility and innovation among white modern jazz figures. In the young lady's statement, Brubeck and Desmond are championed as the most appealing musicians in terms of the balance between sophistication and accessibility. As we saw in the previous chapter, dissonances in their polytonal approach make them progressive, yet still accessible to broad audiences.

But why and how did jazz – which like rock 'n roll used to have a different social and cultural milieu - proliferate and acquire such modern credibility among white middle-class audiences? What was the role of mainstream media and Cold War cultural policies in reconstructing and changing the public image of the genre? How did Brubeck's representation participate in this image-making, and what was the role of albums such as *Time Out* in perpetuating the white middlebrow culture?

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[64] Iain Anderson, *This Is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 36.

In this chapter, I use Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "cultural intermediaries" to investigate Brubeck's marketing in mainstream media and the qualities that popularized him among white middlebrow audiences. Two recurrent themes in the promotional texts and magazines were the respectable character of Brubeck when compared to other jazz musicians, and frequent references to his classical music background. I explain the relation of these two themes to Cold War cultural policies and the modernistic style that was popular among white middle-class consumers. During the '50s, the government promoted jazz as a uniquely American art form, but with a certain image that was politically safe and appealed to the middlebrow taste of an expanding group of white middle-class consumers. A third section will examine the influence of cultural intermediaries on Brubeck during and after his participation in the Jazz Ambassador program. I claim that the representation of Brubeck as a classically trained jazz musician fabricated false expectations of his classical piano skills. Brubeck's music, in turn, leaned towards a more liberal approach in the late fifties, especially after his international tour and during the rising political tension in the South. Lastly, I will explore the legacy of complex meters in *Time Out* among other genres of popular music. I claim that contrary to any pretense of classical training, it was Brubeck's use of complex meters combined with memorable melodies in *Time Out* that paved the way for its subsequent practices among white middlebrow musicians later in the 20th century.

Brubeck's representation by cultural intermediaries

The rise to fame of Dave Brubeck Quartet took place as various mediators contributed to constructing representations of Brubeck that appealed to white middlebrow audiences. Had it

not been for the vast promotion of his music and character in media, Brubeck could not have achieved such mainstream success with albums like *Time Out*. The mid-twentieth century was an era when tastemakers had a remarkable influence in filling the gap between cultural production and consumption. Various agents ranging from media personalities (like journalists, radio and TV presenters, etc.) to critics and marketing executives flourished in guiding the cultural taste of naïve, but avid middlebrow consumers. In this section, I use the term "cultural intermediaries" from Pierre Bourdieu's book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), to explain the content of commentaries and how they later influenced Brubeck's artistic strategies. Following Bourdieu's analysis of the new *petit bourgeoise*'s taste in '60s France, the term "cultural intermediaries" is used to explain the role of "occupations involving presentation and representation," and those who "work in institutions that provide symbolic goods and services."[65] Keith Negus suggests that such occupations became "central to the workings of capitalism in general," and the connection between cultural intermediaries and middlebrow consumers often tends to "blur a number of conventional distinctions [like] between high art/popular culture."[66] With that in mind, it is time to investigate the representation of Brubeck's music and character in mainstream media and works of other cultural intermediaries.

[65] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 359.

[66] Keith Negus, "The Work of Cultural Intermediaries and the Enduring Distance Between Production and Consumption," *Cultural Studies* 16, no. 4 (2002): 503.

As I explained in the previous chapter, Brubeck's bond with white middlebrow audiences was established through the college campus tours. In his early days, when Brubeck had to self-promote his college performances, his wife Iola had a crucial role in organizing events for the quartet. With the growing number of colleges and universities around the country, its fame soon passed the borders of the West Coast. This new audience for jazz, which differed in "class background, race/ethnicity background, and conventional sensibilities from the typical audience of urban jazz scene," later expanded to concert halls and among white middle-class professionals in addition to college students.[67] As George Avakian – the renowned record producer who brought Brubeck, Miles Davis, and many other figures of modern jazz to Columbia Records – once said about Brubeck's socio-cultural status:

> His music was easily accessible to the average person, it was not too complicated. And the group was quite appealing because here you had four all-American young boys to watch as well as to listen to. Dave was quite easy to sell to middle-America because he LOOKED like middle-America, he talked like middle-America. He was a nice guy that you were glad your daughter was going out with.[68]

Although Avakian's statement corroborates the accessibility of Brubeck's brand of jazz to the "average person," racial implications are embedded in his comments when describing the appealing personality of the quartet members. As the majority of "middle-America" were white, one wonders what qualities appealed to white mainstream audiences and how many of them were racially coded? Would a black musician with the same qualities as Brubeck's music

[67] Paul Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 238.

[68] Artfrob, "1959, the Year that Changed Jazz," *YouTube* Video, 59:01, February 13, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKYa3wwc1SU&t=962s

and character still be considered a person "that you were glad your daughter was going out with?"[69]

Themes of "respectable image" and "association with classical music" were ubiquitous throughout the accounts of Brubeck's success in promotional texts, journals, and middlebrow magazines. In November 1953, a year before Brubeck's appearance on *Time Magazine*'s cover, his quartet was part of a West Coast package tour alongside Charlie Parker, Chet Baker, and Shelly Manne. Brubeck had recently received widespread attention for his college campus recording called *Jazz at Oberlin*, the album that brought tremendous profit for its small independent West Coast publisher, Fantasy Records. One of the concert programs highlighted Brubeck's affiliation with figures of early 20th-century modernism when it described him as "a young composer with an impressive academic background" who had studied "personally with Darius Milhaud and Arnold Schoenberg."[70] This is followed by complements that manifest how he is both comfortable in classical and jazz world. His compositional erudition and improvisational skills are described with the following: "Combine a trained musical mind steeped in the approach of extended serious composition with a natural knack for jazz

[69] The comedy-drama *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) is a good example that proposes this question within white communities. Although John, the main character, is prosperous and highly educated, the father of his fiancée is certainly not glad about their interracial marriage. John is hardly accepted into the white family merely because of his skin color.

[70] Mentioning Schoenberg as his tutor is clearly for marketing purposes as Brubeck had only two unsuccessful sessions with the German modernist. For more information see Fred Hall, *It's about Time: The Dave Brubeck Story* (Fayetteville: Arkansas University Press, 1996), 23.

improvisation, and you have a remarkably fresh and valid result – you have the unique and exciting music of Dave Brubeck."[71]

Nothing less than *Time Magazine*'s cover story put Brubeck's image in the spotlight. The vivid cover, designed by Boris Artzybasheff, portrays his face at the center of the picture as a serious intellect with his typical horn-rimmed glasses and his head, with its cerebral charisma, surrounded by musical notes and figures of the quartet's instruments (Figure 2).[72] While describing the music, the covers story is abundant in classical music references, "He [Brubeck] grabs huge fistfuls of notes, builds them into a sonata-size movement that ignores the divisions of the stock 32-bar chorus," "Like Bach staring off to improvise a passacaglia, they lay down the tune – say, Let's Fall in Love – as a kind of groundwork," "Teacher Milhaud filled him with counterpoint and polytonality, fired him with the conviction that improvisation of jazz was as valid for him as the improvisation of toccatas and fugues was for Bach."[73] Furthermore, Brubeck is distinguished from the typical image of jazz musician with his healthy lifestyle:

> In a business that has known more than its share of dope and liquor, Brubeck rarely drinks, and, after seriously and philosophically considering the possible value of mescaline, rejected the whole idea. While itinerant musicians are apt to dally with the belles along the way, Dave is happily married and has four children (a fifth is on the way).

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[71] Philip Clark, *Dave Brubeck: A Life in Time* (New York: Hachette Books, 2020), 27.

[72] As Hilary Geddes points out, the hands surrounding Brubeck's portrait are all white, "reinforcing the idea that Brubeck's *respectable qualities* simply do not exist in musicians of color." Hilary Geddes, "Language, Rhythm, and Legitimacy Issues: An Examination of Factors Contributing to the Success of *Time Out*," *Sydney Undergraduate Journal of Musicology*, vol. 6 (2016): 35.

[73] Harman Carter, "The Man on Cloud No. 7," *Time* 64, no. 19 (November 8, 1954): 67–76. https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/printout/0,8816,857657,00.html

Figure 2

Racially coded comments persist. When it comes to talking about the pioneering figures of Cool jazz, for example, only white musicians are entitled: “Jazz as played by Brubeck and other modernists (Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, Stan Getz, and Shorty Rogers) is neither chaotic nor

abandoned. It evokes neither swinging hips nor hip flasks. It goes to the head and the heart more than to the feet." Brubeck was in fact, the first white musician – and only the second after Louis Armstrong – to appear on *Time Magazine*'s cover.[74] When these racially rigged comments went along with reports of his $100000 yearly income in the cover story, it inevitably elicited resentment from jazz devotees, especially among the African American community, which, as Ingrid Monson wrote, viewed his income and lifestyle to be "grossly out of proportion to his artistic contributions to the genre."[75] More about this will be covered during the chapter on critics. For now, let's examine how these themes permeated the mainstream media.

Jazz in the '50s: Cold War cultural policies, mid-century modernism, and white middlebrow:

The resurgence of jazz was an important part of the cultural agenda during the post-war period. In the early '50s the modern sound of bebop had already found its niche audience among the bohemian middle-class. Beat generation authors like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg cherished the "ironic hipsterism" of bebop with its nonconformity and innovative deviations from the norm.[76] Following the fresh vibe initiated by Beat authors, Norman Mailer

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[74] Louis Armstrong appeared on *Time* magazine's cover on February 21, 1949. Brubeck's appearance as the second jazz musicians raised a lot of controversy as the jazz community was expecting figures like Duke Ellington to be on the cover.

[75] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 94.

[76] Scott Saul, *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 212.

wrote his infamous article "The White Negro" in 1957, where he postulated numerous racial stereotypes about African American music. His position aligned with the primitivist appeal of African culture that had its roots in early 20th-century modernism. Mailer embraced the rebellious quality of bebop and hyper-sexuality of the black male as alternatives to the conformity culture propagated by Eisenhower's post-war cultural policy. As John Gennari explains: "In their critique of American cold war ideology and dominant white middle-class culture, these writers embraced jazz as a hallmark of 'personal freedom,' grafting African American rebellion onto their own programs of political and cultural dissent."[77] Although influential in popularizing the phenomenon among white middle-class intelligentsia, Mailer and Beat authors represented only a minority perspective among the white majority during the post-war era. The government also had its own plans for the resurgence of the genre.

Social transformation and Cold War cultural policies went hand-in-hand with legitimizing and mainstreaming a new face of jazz. The post-war period brought economic prosperity and the subsequent expansion of the middle-class. Due to increased leisure time, there was a massive demand for cultural self-education among the ever-growing white middle-class consumers – notably the *petite-bourgeoise* and white-collar professionals. Mainstream magazines, alongside radio and the latest forms of media like television, were aimed at this clueless middlebrow audience to nurture and fulfill what cultural historian Jacques Barzun called in 1954 "America's passion for culture."[78] Meanwhile, the emergence of the US as a superpower during the Cold

[77] John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 321.

[78] Anderson, *This Is Our Music*, 12.

War also necessitated its cultural emancipation from the hegemony of Eurocentrism. Consequently, the government projected and supported jazz as a truly national art form and an emblem of America's cultural diplomacy against accusations of racial discrimination. As Penny Von Eschen explains: "Indeed, by the mid-50s jazz was widely celebrated in establishment and middlebrow circles alike as a pivotal cultural weapon of the Cold War – in newspapers and magazines ranging from the *New York Times* and *Newsweek* to *Reader's Digest* and *Variety*."[79]

Nevertheless, to popularize this national heritage among a broader white audience, government programs attempted to construct a respectable public image that was purged from all the disreputable, often racially coded, connotations, which were associated with the louche lifestyle of jazz musicians – delinquency, drug abuse, and sexual immorality to name a few.[80] Mainstream media often promoted jazz figures that fit middle-class expectations of a decent clean-living persona. This version of modern jazz was also politically safer than other styles. In the era when Afro-modernists were addressing the political turmoil with their music, the proper and *comme il faut* character of white figures like Dave Brubeck represented the respectable image of jazz that at least did not interfere – if not completely in agreement – with the Cold War cultural policies. Concomitantly, fewer opportunities were given to African American musicians that frequently spoke out against the racial inequities in the music industry or Jim Crow laws of the Southern states. Those who drew the public's attention towards the

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[79] Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 18.

[80] Andy Birtwistle, "Marking time and sound difference: Brubeck, temporality, and modernity," *Popular Music* 29, no. 3 (2010): 363.

rising political conflict with their explicit statements contradicted the propagandistic image of jazz as a trope of American democracy.

Another measure in the process of legitimizing jazz for broad middle-class consumption was the promotion of certain styles that infused elements of elite culture, most significantly Western art music. This aesthetic proclivity towards classically infused modern jazz created a paradox in which, although jazz was celebrated as a native American art form, the uplift of its cultural status was still dominated by European terms and standards. This was in part due to European art music being revered among the middlebrow consumers who looked upon this "legitimate" art as a source of impression and admiration (without necessarily having the knowledge for interpretation). As Pierre Bourdieu explains,

> The middlebrow culture (*culture moyenne)* owes some of its charm, in the eyes of the middle-classes who are its main consumers, to references to legitimate culture it contains and which encourage and justify confusion of the two – accessible versions of avant-garde experiments or accessible works which pass for avant-garde experiments.[81]

Therefore, the unbridled energy of bebop improvisation – often compared to the crooked modernism of Abstract Expressionism paintings – had to be domesticated by more cerebral and rational species of modernism of which the accessible cross-pollination of jazz and classical music elements perfectly corresponded to such expectations. This "domestication" obviously has racial connotations, as we saw in *Time Magazine*'s cover story: it was about substituting the physical with the cerebral and abandoning chaotic expressions for rational thinking.

[81] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 323.

Respectable jazz was, in fact, closely related to the modernism of "International Style" in architecture and design.[82] As Tom Perchard explains: "in music as in art and design, postwar reconstruction bred modernisms that were often calmer, approachable that – for the time being at least – still looked ahead, but which were now more given to the rational than the heroic."[83] In other words, the cosmopolitan and transnational modernism, "contained expression" and "concealed aggression," contrary to the brazen modernism of avant-garde cultural products.[84] This approach was prevalent among the white middlebrow professionals that looked for nothing more than the sheer functionality in design and rationality in their cultural consumption. Perchard demonstrates this tempered modern aesthetics with a compelling excerpt from a less known short story called *The Apartment*, written in 1959 by German author Heinz Huber. This passage, which is the narrator's description of a character in the story, perfectly evidences the harmony between various cultural properties of a middlebrow professional:

> He says he understands nothing about art, says he's a rationalist, a technician . . . but he quite simply has it, that unerring sense of style, that infallible modernity . . . He's an expert in Cool Jazz, and that's what his whole flat is like – Cool Jazz converted into armchairs, carpets, lamps (or rather light-fittings), and pictures.[85]

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[82] An architectural style that was developed throughout the first half of the 20th-century. International style sought to remove the ornaments and decoration for a more functional and rational modernistic approach.

[83] Tom Perchard,"Mid-century Modern Jazz: Music and Design in the Postwar Home," *Popular Music* 36, no. 1 (2017): 55.

[84] Perchard, "Mid-century Modern Jazz," 64

[85] Huber. H, "The new apartment", *The Listener*, June 4, 1959: 989. Quoted in Perchard, "Mid-century Modern Jazz," 65. In addition, these new audiences were principal customers of the latest technological advancements in

The moderate modernism associated with new white audiences of jazz is also well portrayed in visual promotional sources that emphasized their presence as main patrons for the most recent jazz venues such as college campuses, concert halls, and jazz festivals. The documentary *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, which captures precious scenes from the performances and ambiance of 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, promoted the new cachet surrounding jazz with "modern visual aesthetics" and recurrent shots that portrayed the fashionable white bourgeoise among audiences.[86] The comments of Bern Stern, the director, on documentary's aesthetic approach immediately evoke the government's cultural policy for legitimizing jazz among the middle-class: "Too many movies have given jazz an association with violence, narcotics, electric chairs, and murder. We tried to show the form and beauty of jazz by various devices, such as wave and water effects, children playing, and reflections."[87] Hence, to celebrate jazz as the national legacy of America, various institutions reconstructed and advertised a new face of jazz that, on the one hand, was respectable and could appeal to the modern aspirations of its new

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the recording industry. Hi-fi culture became prevailing among the white middle-class professionals and students who could afford high-quality turntables and appreciate the pure sound of latest modern jazz recordings during their pastimes.

[86] John Gennari, "Hipsters, Blue Bloods, Rebels, and Hooligans: The Cultural Politics of the Newport Jazz Festival," in *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies*, edited by Robert O'Meally, Brent Edwards, and Farah Griffin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 135. Although, as Gennari points out, the documentary attempted to show a diverse and racially integrated picture, there is still a noticeable emphasis on the white affluent audience; most of them were the residents of Newport.

[87] Gennari, "Hipsters, Blue Bloods, Rebels, and Hooligans," 136.

middlebrow admirers and, on the other hand, did not challenge the Cold War's socio-political doctrine.

The influence of cultural intermediaries' marketing on Brubeck

Frequent associations with Western art music in mainstream media, notwithstanding its projection to white middlebrow audiences, belied Brubeck's classical piano skills and on occasions put him in rather uncomfortable position. After all, due to his poor eyesight, Brubeck was not trained as a classical pianist, nor did he have the sight-reading proficiency required for a classical musician.[88] Nonetheless, expectations were high for his classical music skills when Brubeck's reputation travelled abroad in the late fifties with the quartet's participation as part of the Jazz Ambassador program. As Steven Crist's exhaustive account of the quartet's tour in the Eastern Bloc demonstrates, executives at the State Department corresponded with Brubeck's booking agency to suggest that he should flaunt his classical background with "one classical number" in order to approach these countries' audiences.[89] Brubeck's response was,

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[88] As Monson points: "Since he [Brubeck] was never a proficient reader of music (by his own admission), he was in many ways far less appropriate than John Lewis or Miles Davis as an example of the jazz musician who was skilled in classical music. Brubeck, after all, was nearly dropped from the undergraduate music program at College of the Pacific after it was discovered that he could not sight-read. He could write music and did well in harmony but could not perform from the printed page. When it came to performance, Brubeck had always been an ''ear musician'' like Wes Montgomery." Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 92.

[89] Frances Church, Letter to Dave Brubeck, January 22, 1958 (Brubeck Collection, 1.A.2.3). Quoted in Stephen Crist, "Jazz as Democracy? Dave Brubeck and Cold War Politics," *The Journal of Musicology*, 26, no.2 (2009): 141.

"[I] hope you have not given [a] false impression to [the] State Department. I cannot play classical piano."[90] Instead, after his tour in Poland, Brubeck composed a homage to Chopin called "Dziekuje" (means thank you in Polish) that emulated "typical Chopin devices" like arpeggiated patterns in the left-hand accompaniment and large leaps in the melody.[91]

A similar anecdote was when Dave's brother, Howard Brubeck – also a composer and a music professor at San Diego State College – came up with the idea of Dave's collaboration with San Diego Symphony after a successful performance of his own work with the orchestra. As Howard told the story:

> The president of the San Diego Symphony . . . became obsessed in 1955 with the idea that Dave should be scheduled to play the *Rhapsody in Blue* [by George Gershwin] with the orchestra, then conducted by Robert Shaw. When I explained that Dave was essentially a jazz musician and confined himself to on-the-spot improvisations based on traditional popular tunes, she responded by saying that I should write some tunes on which he could improvise with the orchestra.[92]

A year later, Howard wrote a new composition for jazz ensemble and orchestra, initially titled "Dialogue." In 1959, just a day short of *Time Out*'s release, Dave Brubeck Quartet with the New York Philharmonic debuted *Dialogues for Jazz Combo and Orchestra* at the Carnegie Hall, under the baton of Leonard Bernstein.[93]

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[90] Dave Brubeck, telegram to Frances Church, January 27, 1958 (Brubeck Collection, 1.A.2.36). Quoted in Crist, "Jazz as Democracy," 141.

[91] Clark, *Dave Brubeck*, 172.

[92] Stephen Crist, *Dave Brubeck's Time Out* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 65.

[93] The piece was finally recorded and released by Columbia records on the album *Bernstein Plays Brubeck Plays Bernstein* (1961).

Therefore, the background stories of “Dziekuje” and “Jazz Combo” indicate how classical music associations in Brubeck’s image-making brought unrealistic prospects regarding his piano skills, and Brubeck, in turn, had to camouflage his lack of classical training by performing middlebrow crossovers à la Chopin or Gershwin. But why did this discrepancy exist between Brubeck’s actual abilities and their representation in the works of cultural intermediaries? As Keith Negus explains, one of the cultural intermediaries’ crucial roles is determining the “use value” of the cultural products; they represent it by advertising imagery, marketing, and promotion tools that “link a product, service, or celebrity to a citizen,” and persuade the consumer by “forging a sense of identification.”[94] In terms of Brubeck’s image, classical music and proper lifestyle were the most important values to appeal to white middlebrow. Thus, to be most effective, cultural intermediaries had to be consistent in their image-making of Brubeck’s classical music competency, no matter how close it was to reality.

Time Out and its middlebrow legacy

Since his worldwide tour in 1958, Dave Brubeck Quartet’s recordings took a noticeable liberal turn. On the one hand, with albums like *Jazz Impression of Eurasia* (1958), Brubeck and his colleagues displayed more wide-ranging, particularly exotic, influences from the foreign musical material they absorbed during the Jazz Ambassador program. This aesthetic turn perhaps could ease, to some extent, the burden of classical music labeling that I discussed above. On the other hand, the escalation of political conflict in the South with recent incidents like *Little Rock Crisis* instigated new albums like *Gone with the Wind* (1959) and *Southern Scene*

[94] Negus, “The Work of Cultural Intermediaries,” 504.

(1960). Instead of targeting popular Broadway tunes in earlier popular albums such as *Jazz: Red Hot and Cool* (1955) and *Dave Digs Disney* (1957), Brubeck incorporated songs from the segregated South and combined them with his typical polytonal and polyrhythmic approach.[95] The commercial pinnacle of this liberal twist turned out to be *Time Out.*

The eclectic approach of *Time Out* corresponded to a growing interest in inclusiveness and exotic cultures among white middle-class, which foreshadowed counterculture's fascination with such concepts during the next decade.[96] The introduction of Steve Race's liner notes promotes this aspect of the album. As Race states: "Basically it [*Time Out*] shows the blending of three cultures: the formalism of classical Western music, the freedom of jazz improvisation, and the often-complex pulse of African folk music. Brubeck even uses, in the first number, a Turkish folk rhythm."[97] Race's liner notes also allude to the accessibility of these novel aspects in *Time Out* when he talks about "Take Five:" "Conscious of how easy the listener can lose their way in a quintuple rhythm, Dave Brubeck plays a constant vamp figure throughout, maintaining it even under Joe Morello's drum solo." The appreciation of easy-to-grasp eclectic elements in *Time* Out among its middlebrow audience was once described by British critic Benny Green as:

> When they applaud the trick of playing four beats a bar against a background of only three, they are applauding not only Brubeck's cleverness but their own percipience in noticing it. They enjoy being offered titles like 'Blue Rondo À La Turk', because the implication is that they understand

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[95] For an exhaustive account of these two albums see: Kelsey Klotz, "Dave Brubeck's Southern Strategy," *Daedalus* 148, no. 2 (2019): 52-66.

[96] Fred Kaplan, *1959: They Year Everything Changed* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2009), 132.

[97] Steve Race, Liner notes for *Time Out* by Dave Brubeck Quartet, CBS records, CBS 460611, 1987, compact disc. http://www.davebrubeckjazz.com/Take-Five-&-Time-Out/Time-Out-~-Original-Liner-Notes

> blues, rondos and even Turks. Brubeck appeals to the culture vulture that resides in us all, the beast in the attic of so many jazz fanciers.[98]

In the description of album tracks, references to classical music are used more moderately than what we saw in *Time Magazine*'s coverage. Classical elements are treated rather in the same place as other exotic elements to promote the diversity of styles. The "Blue Rondo" section, for instance, is more about the juxtaposition of the complex 9/8 with blues improvisation in 4/4; the last sentence suffices to say that the piece is in classical rondo form. Elsewhere, the section on "Three To Get Ready" starts with describing the opening theme as "a simple 'Haydn-esque' waltz theme in C major." But then shifts the focus to the creative feature of oscillating between 3/4 and 4/4. In Race's liner notes, there is rather a conspicuous tendency to put Brubeck's experiment with complex meters in line with the previous accomplishments of African American musicians in the history of jazz. As Race states:

> The New Orleans pioneers soon broke free of the tyranny imposed by the easy brass key of B-flat. Men like Coleman Hawkins brought a new chromaticism to jazz. Bird, Diz and Monk broadened its

[98] Dominic Green, *Such Sweet Thunder: Benny Green on Jazz* (London: Scribner, 2001), 44-5. Quoted in Nicolas Pillai, "Brubeck betwixt and between: Television, Pop and the Middlebrow," in *New Jazz Conceptions: History, Theory, Practice*, edited by Roger Fagge and Nicolas Pillai (New York: Routledge, 2017), 100. Green's argument about the accessibility of progressive elements in "Blue Rondo" resonates with Dwight McDonald's criticism of culture industry products and their consumers – which in turn was inspired by Theodor Adorno and Clement Greenberg. As McDonald restate Clement Greenberg's arguments, middlebrow products are embedded with a sort of "built-in reaction" that: "predigests art for the spectator and spares him effort, provides him with a shortcut to the pleasures of art that detours what is necessarily difficult in the genuine art." Dwight McDonald, "Masscult and Midcult," in *Masscult and Midcult: Essays Against the American Grain*, edited by John Summers (New York: New York Review Books, 2011), 68. Similar criticism will be discussed during the next chapter in Ira Gitler's review of *Time Out*.

> harmonic horizon. Duke Ellington gave it structure, and a wide palette of colors. Yet rhythmically, jazz has not progressed. Born within earshot of the street parade, and with the stirring songs of the Civil War still echoing through the South, jazz music was bounded by the left-right, left-right of marching feet.
>
> Dave Brubeck, pioneer already in so many other fields, is really the first to explore the uncharted seas of compound time. True, some musicians before him experimented with jazz in waltz time, notably Benny Carter and Max Roach. But Dave has gone further, finding still more exotic time signatures, and even laying one rhythm in counterpoint over another.

The next chapter will discuss whether Brubeck's music in *Time Out* could stand with such historical innovations in jazz. In any case, *Time Out*'s liner notes clearly show the change in the representation of Brubeck's music, in which more emphasis was on the eclectic approach and alignment with the African American tradition of jazz rather than the elitism of classical music.

That being said, the legacy of *Time Out* – that is, its popularization of complex time signatures among new audiences, even outside the scope of jazz – suggests its distinct cultural achievement compared to other works of mid-century modern jazz. A year after *Time Out*'s release on December 14, 1959, the album eventually showed its commercial potential. When it started to sell more than was expected, Brubeck insisted on releasing a truncated version of "Take Five," suitable for playing on pop radio stations, that could push forward its reachability to audiences that may have never been listening to jazz, let alone modern jazz, before this recording. A correspondence between Columbia Records marketing executives describes the background story of this single version as:

> Dave Brubeck has increasingly indicated his desire to participate in the singles record field. He feels that he needs this kind of exposure and promotion in order to broaden his appeal and bring him to new consumers who may not now be buying him. He feels that some of the recent album

> material could well be attractive on this basis, and he is keeping the single record philosophy in mind more and more in planning new projects.[99]

Brubeck's bet paid off. The 45 RPM single version sold in unprecedented numbers for a jazz recording, and within a few months after its release in May 1961, it reached No. 25 on Billboard Hot 100.[100] Brubeck's respectable and accessible modern jazz once again expanded the jazz audience. It was congruent with the government's principles and fulfilled the ambition of propagating jazz as America's national legacy. The massive popularity of *Time Out* encouraged Brubeck to repeat the formula with successive albums on unconventional time signatures.[101] The front cover of the next album, *Time Further Out!* (1961), brings the time signature of each piece to the foreground and highlights them as a promotional tool besides their titles (Figure 3).[102] The left side of the cover is Juan Miro's painting "The Sun," which is ideally in agreement with the accessible modernism of Dave Brubeck Quartet, as Miro was also considerably popular among middlebrow audiences.[103]

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[99] Stan Kavan to Bill Gallagher, February 18, 1960 (Macero Collection, box 7, foulder 16). Quoted in Crist, *Brubeck's Time Out*, 190.

[100] "Billboard Hot 100, Week of October 9, 1961," Billboard, accessed on September 13, 2022. https://www.billboard.com/charts/hot-100/1961-10-09/

[101] These albums were *Time Further Out* (1961), *Countdown-Time in Outer Space* (1962), *Time Changes* (1964), and *Time In* (1965).

[102] "Cover Album of Time Further Out," Columbia Records, accessed August 26, 2022, https://www.impexrecords.com/time-further-out/.

[103] Peter Schjeldahl, "Joan Miró's Modernism for Everybody," New Yorker, March 4, 2019. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/03/11/joan-miros-modernism-for-everybody

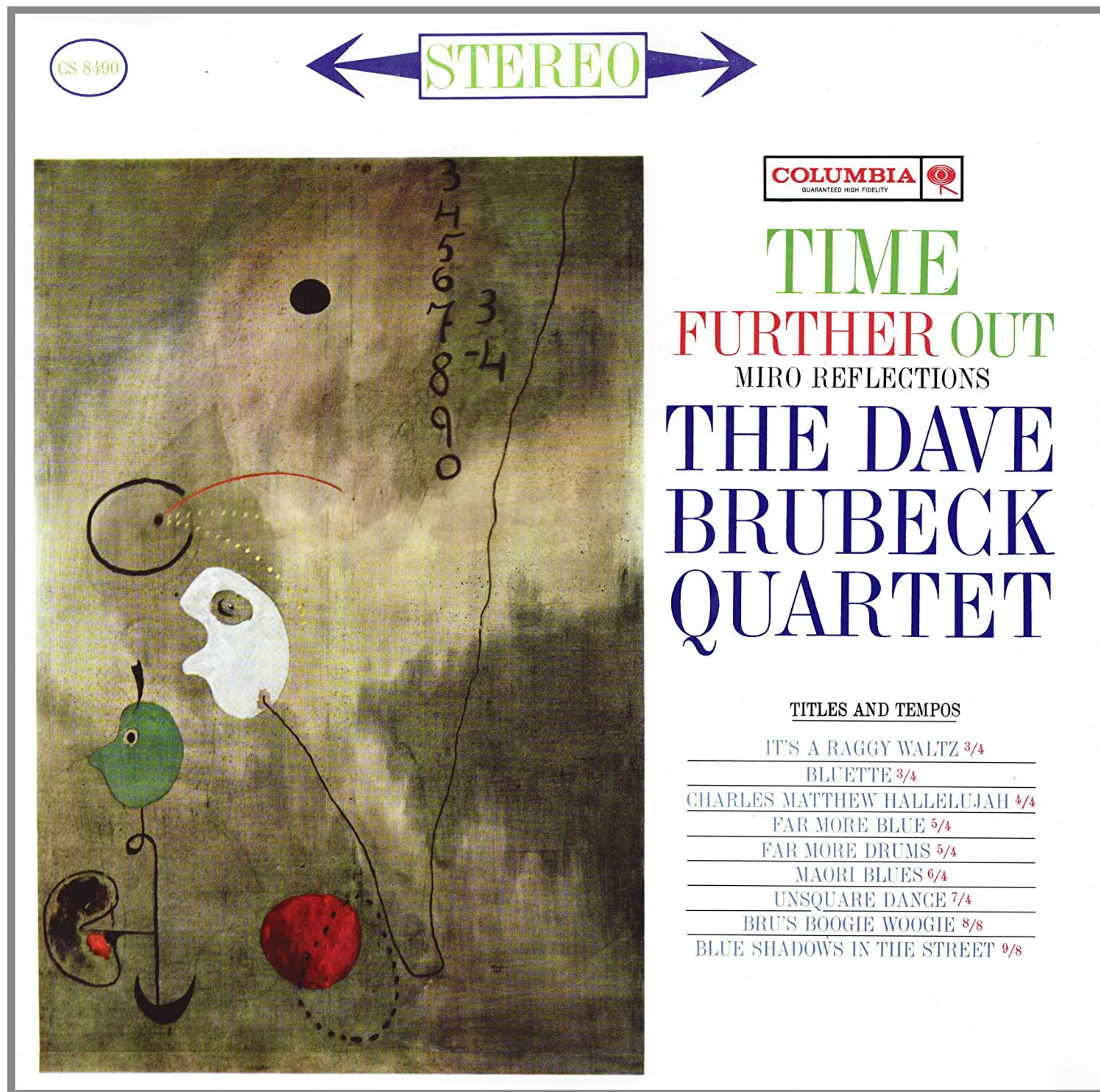

Figure 3

The meteoric success of these albums and their potential to bring new audiences to jazz also grabbed the attention of Ralph Gleason, who, throughout his career as a jazz critic, had an up and down relationship with Brubeck's music:

> Dave Brubeck, . . . whether or not you dig him and whether or not he has had a direct influence as a jazz stylist upon other jazz musicians, has been a major force in broadening public acceptance of jazz. Thousands of radio stations have played Brubeck albums and single hits like 'Take Five' that would never in a million years have played a jazz record knowingly. Thousands of people who profess a dislike for jazz have met it through Brubeck and ended up liking it. There are many hard-

> core jazz musicians who publicize their distaste for Brubeck who have a long way to go before they do as much as he has done for the music they love"[104]

Gleason's equivocal comments about Brubeck's influence on other jazz musicians persist to this day. Although many jazz musicians have praised Brubeck's compositional and harmonic skills, there is no consensus about the influence and legacy of his pianistic style; certainly, fewer jazz pianists have cited his name as their influence than Thelonious Monk, Oscar Peterson, or white figures like Bill Evans. A recent article by jazz pianist and educator Lewis Porter even demonstrates the absence of his name in some jazz encyclopedias.[105] But, the legacy of complex meters in *Time Out* and the scope of its influence in various other genres of popular music during the '60s is indeed salient. From Lalo Schifrin's theme song for *Mission: Impossible*, to the French Chanson of Claude Nougaro[106], and Blind Faith's psychedelic rock[107], they all evince the wide span of *Time Out*'s audience and the prevalence of complex meters among popular musicians.

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[104] Ralph J. Gleason, unidentified clipping, August 15, 1962 (Brubeck Collection). Quoted in Crist, *Brubeck's Time Out*, 192.

[105] Lewis Porter, "Reconsidering the Piano Legacy of Dave Brubeck, in a Deep Dive Centennial Special," WBGO, February 26, 2020. https://www.wbgo.org/music/2020-02-20/reconsidering-the-piano-legacy-of-dave-brubeck-in-a-deep-dive-centennial-special.

[106] Nougaro used the melody of "Three to Get Ready" in the track "Le jazz et java," and "Blue Rondo à la Turk" in "À bout de souffle," which was a homage to Jean Luc Godard's movie.

[107] Blind Faith used the meter of "Take Five" with a similar chord progression in their track "Do What You Like."

Likewise, progressive rock musicians in bands like Emerson, Lake, Palmer, Jethro Tull, and King Crimson manifested their interest in Brubeck's music. In an oft-quoted statement by Keith Emerson of ELP, he told the story of his acquaintance with Brubeck's music. As he stated:

> When I was 15 years old, I was going through further education in Sussex, England. My mother and father earned little and my meager earnings from a newspaper and grocery round were put towards a stereo record player. That Christmas, my present from Mum and Dad was a single 45 vinyl record. *"Take Five"*. On the B-side was *"Blue Rondo a la Turk"*. I played the hell out of it. In 1968, I recorded a 4/4 version of Blue Rondo and played the hell out of it in live performance.[108]

Elsewhere, Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull, who made a hit with their 5/4 song "Living in the Past" in 1969, also admitted Brubeck's influence, though not directly, in his account of the song's background story:

> . . . I dutifully went upstairs and fiddled around for an hour and came up with a song, and tried to make it as uncommercial as I could . . . And against all the odds, it did become a hit! It was No.3 in the Singles Chart, and it was only the second occasion, I think, that a piece of music in an uncommon time signature of 5/4 was ever in the charts. The other time had been Dave Brubeck's *Take Five*. That was somewhere in the back of my mind, really, because I was quite an admired of his and the fact that he did these quite simple but elegant songs in an unlikely time signature – it impressed me as a young man, so maybe that was what drove me to try to do that.[109]

Declaring surprise about the song's commercial potential in Anderson's comments is similar to Brubeck's account of *Time Out*'s unexpected success. In both narratives, implementing complex meters is regarded as if it is a risky decision for commercial purposes; however, by emphasizing the unpredicted success, they also implicitly acknowledge the middlebrow musician's knack for making sophisticated ideas appealing to broad audiences. Regardless of how many prog rock

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[108] Keith Emerson, "MEETING MR. BRUBECK AGAIN," KEITH EMERSON, October 3, 2009. https://www.keithemerson.com/MiscPages/2009/20090924-DaveBrubeck.html

[109] Aaron Slater, "How I wrote 'Living In The Past' by Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson," SONGWRITING, March 28, 2018. https://www.songwritingmagazine.co.uk/how-i-wrote/living-in-the-past-jethro-tull

musicians have directly cited Brubeck as their influence, many bands experimented with complex meters in their songs and concept albums. The middlebrow status of the early '70s progressive rock– with its inclination towards legitimizing rock with classical music influences, eclecticism, and appeal to white middle-class consumers – correlates their music with Brubeck.[110] They all fall under the umbrella of white middlebrow popular music in the second half of 20th-century with its distinct, nuanced formula that get projected to a social stratum with its own musical, cultural, and racial dispositions.

[110] Not to mention that like Brubeck, prog rock musicians were also castigated by critics for diluting the authenticity of their genres.

Chapter Three: Critics and Brubeck

> What's interesting is that you would think that the sophisticates, the jazz insiders, the people who knew jazz would be the ones who would be the most receptive to his [Brubeck's] music 'cause they'd understand it and that the public hearing jarring new rhythms of polytonality, block chords, hearing, Blue Moon, or Indiana played in a completely different way, it would be the public that wouldn't get it and it would be the critics who got it. And yet it's the other way around.[111]

These remarks by Hedrick Smith from his documentary about Dave Brubeck point to an intriguing opposition regarding the middlebrow status of the musician. As many commentators on jazz history have mentioned, although Brubeck was very popular among white middle-class audiences, his relationship with critics was rather strained.[112] A comparison between readers' and critics' polls in the most circulated jazz magazines of the period like *Downbeat* and *Metronome* evinces this meaningful gap between the two agents. As Ingrid Monson has observed, while white jazz musicians like Dave Brubeck and Stan Getz dominated the readers' poll, critics obviously preferred African American performers.[113] Critics' lack of appreciation derived from the predominance of certain aesthetic principles that reinforced the African

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[111] Hedrick Smith, interview with Ted Gioia, in *Rediscovering Dave Brubeck,* PBS, first premiered on December 16, 2001. https://www.pbs.org/brubeck/theMusic/criticTedGioia.htm

[112] For example, see Ira Gitler's interview with Hedrick Smith highlights Gene Lees' oft-quoted statement that, "Dave always was more popular with the public than he was with the critics." Ira Gitler, interview by Hedrick Smith, *Rediscovering Dave Brubeck,* PBS, December 16, 2001. https://www.pbs.org/brubeck/theMusic/criticIraGitler.htm

[113] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 67.

American discourse throughout the vagaries of the post-war period. In the ‘50s and early ‘60s, some jazz critics often aligned their reviews of Brubeck’s music with his association with white middlebrow culture.

In this chapter, I begin with a quick review of post-war jazz criticism and its two main discourses, namely the white liberal discourse and African American discourse. In the second section, I discuss the criticism in Ira Gitler’s review of *Time Out*. Themes suggesting a lack of authenticity and commerciality in his review were obviously recurrent in all complaints of middlebrow music. Gitler’s remarks are juxtaposed with statements by Brubeck and others to reveal the “middlebrow conflict” surrounding Brubeck’s music and career.

The last section places three problematic (and at once interrelated) topics associated with Brubeck’s middlebrowism in the over-arching context of mid-century modern jazz. Lack of swing, Brubeck’s relation to the course of innovation, and his massive commercial success are three points of criticism that I discuss through statements and responses by musicians and critics. First, I show how the complaints about Brubeck’s lack of swing correlated with the controversy over his frequent claims as an innovator. Then, I consider the topic of innovation using Amiri Baraka’s critique of classical approaches and their failure to advance innovation in modern jazz. Baraka championed the high modernism of avant-garde jazz – such as the music of Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman – as the right path for innovation. That being said, he was unclear about the business objectives of avant-garde jazz, whether this music must embrace an “anti-commercial” ideology or not. To finish, I compare avant-garde jazz musicians’ relation to the music industry with that of Brubeck. I claim that instead of embracing an anti-commercial ideology, avant-garde figures like Ornette Coleman challenged the long-term bias in the music

industry that brought a massive profit for middlebrow figures like Brubeck. Instead, Coleman sought to have a fair share, fitting his artistic role in the genre.

Post-war jazz criticism

Jazz critics played a cardinal role in advocating and discussing jazz during the post-war period with their writings in magazines such as *Downbeat*, *Metronome*, and *Jazz Review*. The realm of anglophone jazz criticism during its founding years in the '30s and '40s mainly consisted of white male professionals from various backgrounds like journalism and literary criticism.[114] To validate their position as white agents in a quintessentially black genre, many critics advocated the liberal attitude of considering jazz beyond racial boundaries. They also criticized the predominant viewpoint among earlier European counterparts like Hugues Panassié, who had a condescending model of appreciating jazz as primitive folk art. With the advent of bebop and the ensuing debate on the elevation of jazz to higher cultural status, critics like Nat Hentoff and Leonard Feather were among the first to draw the attention of the American intelligentsia to modern jazz's potential as an inherently American modern music.[115] Finally, as the civil rights movement was developing in the '50s, there were critics with leftist views like Ralph Gleason, who was inclined to view jazz in its social context and promoted African American jazz modernists who raised their voices against social injustice.

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[114] For a detailed discussion of jazz criticism in the US, see John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[115] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 165-7.

The prevalence of liberal discourse and the advocacy for the civil rights movements in the circle of highbrow jazz criticism had two important consequences: first, the development of "colorblind ideology" in the late '40s and early '50s; and second, the growing preference for Afro-modernists among jazz connoisseurs in later years. The so-called "White Liberal Integrationists" upheld the idea of a universal jazz world "free of racial conflicts," in which the quality of music should be the only criterion for evaluation – without engaging assessments based on race.[116] As Ingrid Monson explains, "the link between the discourse of colorblindness and modern aesthetics in jazz was forged through the notion of music as a higher principle than race."[117] The liberal discourse, which was primarily propagated by the government's rhetoric of "democratizing" jazz, celebrated the collaboration between white and African American musicians as evidence of its success. Yet, its failure to address the white jazz community's systematic privileges initiated what Monson describes as an "ideological shift" among some white musicians and critics.[118]

During the second half of the '50s, more jazz critics became receptive to Afro-modernists' anti-establishment discourse. In tandem with African American authors and intellectuals such as Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, and Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), these critics wrote extensively, though with different slants, on the aesthetics of Afro-modernism. They brought the attention of white jazz enthusiasts to the innovative stylistic strategies of modern black performers in counterarguing the government's narrative. Therefore, this aesthetics begot the

[116] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 57.

[117] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 82.

[118] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 12.

criteria for measuring authenticity and innovation among jazz musicians outside Afro-modernists' clique. As Monson elaborates: "the internalization of Afro-modernist standards as a recursive element in their aesthetics, was important in the gradual blackening of musical taste among jazz aficionados during the civil right years."[119]

Reviewing *Time Out* review: Brubeck's middlebrowism in the case of Ira Gitler's critique

Dave Brubeck received mixed reviews from the critic's community throughout his career. Critics like Nat Hentoff and Barry Ulanov, as advocators of the liberal discourse, praised his harmonic inventions and compositional approach in fusing jazz with classical music – frequently by referring to Western art music terminology.[120] As we saw in the previous chapter, after Brubeck's controversial appearance on the cover of *Time Magazine* in 1954, more musicians and critics became skeptical of his success with new middlebrow audiences by debating whether his achievements in jazz merited such a level of recognition in the mainstream media. Two frequent points of contention emerged around Brubeck's growing popularity during the '50s and early '60s. These were his "alleged lack of swing" and "relatively unequaled commercial success" as a white musician.

One of the most notorious examples is Ira Gitler's review of *Time Out*, published in *Downbeat* in April 1960 – four months after the album's release. While reviewers of other

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[119] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 91.

[120] For instance, listen to Nat Hentoff's radio series on the history of jazz. Nat Hentoff, "Dave Brubeck, part one," Evolution of jazz, WGBH Radio Station, Boston, MA: May 15, 1965. https://archive.mith.umd.edu/airwaves/episode/cpb-aacip-500-kd1qkz43/

iconic jazz albums in 1959, like *Kind of Blue* and *Mingus Ah Um,* wrote admirably and conferred the maximum rating on these albums, Gitler gave *Time Out* an uninspiring 2 out of 5 stars. As the only review of *Time Out* published in mainstream jazz periodicals around its release, Gitler's critique touched on Brubeck's lack of swing, commerciality, and eclecticism. In the following, I connect these themes in Gitler's argument to characterize the middlebrow conflict as the essential notion in understanding the album's tarnished reputation among highbrow jazz communities.

Gitler begins his review by disavowing Steve Race's claim that Brubeck's experiment with unconventional time signatures is a true jazz milestone. He questions the "authenticity" of *Time Out* as a *jazz* album by stating, "Jazz experiments of any kind are fine, but there has to be something in addition to the experiment. The substance of the compositions being played should engender a jazz feeling."[121] By emphasizing swing, Gitler implies its significance as the essence of authentic jazz feeling. Further, like other commentators on Brubeck's pianistic style, Gitler criticizes his heavy block chords, which he claims to function as a strategy to divert from swinging: "substituting bombast for swing is a Brubeckian credo." He also believed that the experiment with uncommon time signatures only exacerbated the situation, citing the relentless vamp he found omnipresent in tracks like "Take Five" and "Pick Up Sticks." He

[121] Ira Gitler, "Review of *Time Out,*" *Downbeat* 27, no. 9 (1960): 37–38. http://www.davebrubeckjazz.com/Take-Five-&-Time-Out/Time-Out-~-Reviews

concludes, "If this is what we have to endure with experimentation in time, take me back to good old 4/4. It's not far-out, but it does swing."[122]

While for Gitler the stationary rhythmic quality of tracks with uncommon time signatures led to the lack of swing and authenticity, Brubeck cited his rhythmic and metric experiments as key features of the album to validate his care for African roots. He often told the story of his presence at Dr. Willis James' lecture in Lenox School of Jazz, where the African American professor discussed African holler fields. As Brubeck recounted: "He started to sing a very complicated but interesting song in a language completely foreign to me . . . When he finished, . . . he said, 'That African folk song is in 5/4 time, and the DBQ [Dave Brubeck Quartet] is on the right track.' I felt vindicated. It was a happy day in my life."[123] Not all African music experts, however, agreed. In a review of the album, published in the *African Music Society Journal* in 1961, South African ethnomusicologist Andrew Tracey stated:

> Time signatures such as 2+2+2+ 3/8 [Blue Rondo à la Turk], 5/4 [Take Five], 3+ 3+ 4+ 4/4 [Three to Get Ready] and 6/4 [Pick up Sticks] look promising, and some of them turn out to be fascinating. What I really miss, however, is the *combination* of different rhythms or time signatures which is the hallmark of African instrumental ensemble music. Once established, for instance, on a pattern of two bars of 3/4 followed by two of 4/4, Brubeck and [the] group remain fixed inside that pattern.[124]

Tracey's remarks indirectly acknowledge the album's success in introducing those meters to new audiences. Nevertheless, the "*combination* of different meters or time signatures" in

[122] The only track that Gitler positively reviewed was "Strange Meadow Lark," which is the sole track entirely in 4/4, and the pounding style is also absent.

[123] Philip Clark, *Dave Brubeck: A Life in Time* (New York: Hachette Books, 2020), 217.

[124] Andrew Tracey, "TIME OUT. The Dave Brubeck Quartet. CBS/ALD 6504. 12" LP," *African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music* 2, no. 4 (1961): 112-113.

African music would require a different sensibility that might not be available to white middlebrow listeners.[125] Hence, juxtaposing these contrasting statements reveals how Brubeck's experiment with time signatures was an object of debate in terms of authenticity. What Brubeck thought was an element for authenticating his brand of jazz was deemed by some critics as the opposite. The issue of authenticity was, in fact, a common middlebrow conflict for artists like Brubeck.

Moreover, the way Gitler pigeonholes Brubeck's jazz entails the criticism of middlebrow's commerciality. Although the review was published a year before the single version of "Take Five" would hit the pop charts, Gitler had already considered Brubeck's jazz essentially targeted for commercial intention:

> In classical music, there is a kind of pretentious pap, sometimes called "semi-classical," which serves as the real thing for some people. As a parallel, Brubeck is a "semi-jazz" player. There is "pop jazz" with no pretentions like that purveyed by George Shearing and everyone accepts it for what it is. Brubeck, on the other hand, has been palmed off as serious jazzman for too long.[126]

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[125] Amiri Baraka discusses the legacy of African polyrhythm in jazz in his monograph *Blues People* (I will explain Baraka's book later in this chapter). As he states, polyrhythm is inherited in African music, "over one rhythm, many other rhythms and a rhythmically derived 'melody' are all juxtaposed." In bebop, the subtleties of this sort of polyrhythm are transformed into jazz. As Baraka elaborates, "Above the steadiness and almost perfect *legato* implied by the cymbals' beat and augmented by the bass fiddle, the other instruments would vary their attack on the melodic line, thereby displacing accents in such a way as to imply a polyrhythmic level." In addition: "The good bebop drummer, while maintaining the steady 4/4 with the cymbal, uses his left hand and high-hat cymbal and bass drum to set up a still more complex polyrhythmic effect." Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Experience in White America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999), 195. The juxtaposition of simple and compound meters is a substantial feature of swing. A typical example is the drummer's compound subdivisions of each (4/4) beat in one line while varying rhythmic accents in the steady 4/4 in other lines.

[126] Gitler, Review of *Time Out*, 37.

Here, the comparison between Shearing and Brubeck is worth further investigation. In his 1957 interview with Ralph Gleason, Brubeck paid tribute to Shearing by acknowledging how the British pianist paved the way for jazz musicians like him to make his music commercially viable:

> Up to then they said we [Brubeck's combo] were too radical. We weren't commercial enough. So, I will always, and I think all contemporary jazz musicians should, give a tremendous amount of credit to George Shearing because he opened up the possibility of getting some decent jazz back into the night clubs … He helped make it possible for me to make it. And, just as Shearing was a forerunner and created a certain audience and certain places to present *our* group, I think we did that for the Modern Jazz Quartet.[127]

Pursuing an audience broader than typical jazz aficionados (namely among white middle-class audiences) and having a penchant for employing classical music idioms were indeed two points that Brubeck and Shearing had in common. Gitler's discrimination between the two musicians indicates that there was unanimity in the jazz community to regard Shearing as a representative of commercially oriented, but relatively unproblematic, jazz. However, the case of Brubeck was more disputable as he proclaimed to be a forerunner in the modern jazz world. Hardcore critics like Gitler believed that beneath this modernistic pretension, there was the same commercial quality as in Shearing's music.

In response to accusations of commerciality, Brubeck rarely made direct comments.[128] In an interview with the British magazine, Disc in 1961, Brubeck firmly denied the claims by

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[127] Ralph J. Gleason, "Brubeck: 'I Did Something First'," *Downbeat* 24, no. 17 (1957): 14.

[128] For example, in an interview by Les Tomkins published in *Jazz Professional* magazine in 1963, the interviewer states: "I asked Dave whether criticism is in ratio to commercial success. He didn't answer this directly." Les Tomkins, "Jazz Professional, UK," Dave Brubeck Jazz, Accessed March 13, 2022. http://www.davebrubeckjazz.com/Media/Articles-&-Interviews/Jazz-Professional,-UK

emphasizing his passion for innovation: "'Take Five' was recorded as a challenge, not as a commercial gimmick . . . It seems to me that the public have been heavily underestimated in their appreciation of involved jazz rhythms." Later he continues: "as long as I live, I will always be doing something new . . . But I state emphatically that I will never play what I think is commercial jazz."[129] From his comments in earlier years, it appears that what Brubeck regarded as notoriously commercial was trad jazz revivalists like Turk Murphy in the US and Chris Barber in Britain, who hit the best-selling charts during the '50s and '60s with their pure Dixieland style.[130] As we have seen several times, the stress on "innovation" was an essential part of Brubeck's rhetoric that he used to segregate himself from what he thought was "a pointless rewind back through history."[131]

Instead, Gitler perceived commerciality and middlebrowism in the very elements that Brubeck promoted as part and parcel of his innovative style. The eclectic approach of *Time Out* is relevant in this regard. The inclination towards exploiting non-Western elements was, in fact, prevalent among white jazz musicians. As Paul Lopes explains:

> [unlike black musicians] For white musicians, a strong association of jazz with their social class identity was far less important and less "meaningful," and therefore, their strategies were more oriented to direct musical associations with jazz music, mainstream American pop music, classical music, or international music such as Brazilian music or Indian music.[132]

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[129] June Harris, "I don't want to go commercial says DAVE BRUBECK," *Disc*, November 25, 1961: 4.

[130] Clark, *Dave Brubeck*, 89-90.

[131] Clark, *Dave Brubeck*, 90.

[132] Paul Lopes, "Pierre Bourdieu's Fields of Cultural Production: A Case Study of Modern Jazz," in *Pierre Bourdieu: Fieldwork in Culture*, edited by Nicholas Brown and Imre Szeman (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 179.

This tendency is evident in Brubeck's writings and interviews on his compositional approach. In his 1961 interview with Gene Lees, for instance, Brubeck emphasized the combination of advanced harmonic vocabulary in Western music with the complex rhythmic vocabulary of Africa, India, and the Middle East as his main goal in albums like *Jazz Impressions of Eurasia* and *Time Out*.[133] In doing so, he believed that he could not only push the boundaries of jazz, which he found restrictive, but to expand its audience. With that in mind, let's return to Gitler's review.

In his argument, Gitler rejects Brubeck's superficial eclecticism when he compares its quality to that of oriental kitsch. For example, see how he vilifies "Blue Rondo": "Take 'Blue Rondo À La Turk' in 9/8. After hearing that ersatz, corny Chopinesque he used for Polish representation in *Jazz Impressions of Eurasia*, I am surprised he didn't play 'In A Persian Market' here. Blue Rondo's theme is equally far from jazz."[134] The analogy that Gitler draws between "Blue Rondo," "Dziekuje," and Albert Ketèlbey's "In A Persian Market" connotes the middlebrow quality of eclectic elements in Brubeck's music. Albert Ketèlbey's music – extremely popular in the early twentieth century as light orchestral compositions on oriental subjects – was denounced by highbrow critics for its phony representations that, nonetheless, appealed to Western middlebrow audiences and their fascination with exotic themes. In Gitler's view,

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[133] "What I can see for a future music involves getting the European to use the rhythmic heritage of Africa, the Middle East, and India." Gene Lees, "About This Man Brubeck: Part 2," *Downbeat* 28, no. 15 (1961): 17.

[134] Gitler, Review of *Time Out*, 37. Here, Gitler is referring to "Dziekuje," the piece that Brubeck composed as a homage to Chopin after visiting his house museum near Warsaw. All tracks in *Jazz Impressions of Eurasia* are inspired by visiting various countries that were part of the International Tour.

Brubeck's amalgamation of classical form with Turkish *aksak* rhythm and blues improvisation demonstrated a similar quality. The eclectic style not only lacked the jazz quality but also was projected in a way that, like Ketèlbey's music, corresponded to the middlebrow's deep skin appreciation of these diverse styles. As Christopher Chowrimootoo explains, "At a time when ideas of aesthetic purity reigned, eclecticism and inconsistency were serious charges."[135] Later in this chapter, we will see how the majority of Afro-modernists and the critics who supported them embraced an autonomous and aesthetically pure modern discourse that carried on innovation as creative experimentations within the context of vernacular idioms. For now, I delve into an over-arching investigation of three common themes in the criticism of Brubeck's music and career, to clarify his roles as a cultural signifier in mid-century modern jazz discussion.

Brubeck and the critics: a lack of swing, innovation, and commercial success

One can trace back the complaints about Brubeck's inability to swing to Ralph Gleason's 1955 *Downbeat* essay. A year after the controversy of *Time Magazine*, Gleason pointed to the prevailing debate, instigated by Miles Davis, among jazz modernists over Brubeck's swinging ability and his disproportionate income. As Gleason states, "One of the things that bugs musicians the most is the knowledge that jazz must swing, and Dave doesn't and they do and he's made it and they haven't."[136] Two years later, John Mehegan made a similar statement in a

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[135] Christopher Chowrimootoo, *Middlebrow and Modernism: Britten's Operas and the Great Divide* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 2.

[136] Ralph J. Gleason, "Perspectives," *Downbeat* 22, no.7 (1955): 18.

series of articles about jazz pianists and their stylistic contributions, "musicians have been fairly unanimous in putting down the quartet as a dull unswinging group."[137]

As Kevin Starr has elaborated, critics' distrust in Brubeck's swinging competence had at once musical and racial implications.[138] On the one hand, they believed that Brubeck's piano playing – with its pounding polytonal block chords, his penchant for polyrhythms in improvisations, and the other techniques he espoused from European art music – interrupted the smooth, swinging pulse that is the essence of authentic jazz. Some decades after those controversial years, the renowned jazz critic Stanley Crouch made a similar point when Hedrick Smith asked him to explain the criticism on Brubeck's swinging style. Compared to outright criticism during the '50s and '60s, Crouch describes his thoughts in a rather euphemistic way that acknowledges Brubeck's use of art music techniques by calling it experimental. As he states:

> Swing is a hard thing to do, particularly to keep swinging. You can start swinging, but to continue swinging, that's another thing . . . the thing is that because he was an experimental player uh, he would come up on things that would take him out of the arena of swing. But because he was an experimental player, too, he would follow these ideas wherever they took him.[139]

The racial implication was that Brubeck, as a white jazz musician, was under a more rigorous investigation by critics who thought swing was an inherent ability of African American performers. Swing, though a hardly definable term in jazz, was deemed to be rooted in the musician's emotional sensibilities, which black musicians were naturally more capable of

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[137] John Mehegan, "Jazz Pianists: 2," *Downbeat* 24, no.13 (1957): 17.

[138] Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 405.

[139] Stanley Crouch, interview by Hedrick Smith, *Rediscovering Dave Brubeck,* PBS, first premiered on December 16, 2001. https://www.pbs.org/brubeck/theMusic/criticStanlyCrouch.htm

demonstrating than their white counterparts. It should be pointed out that such claims were essentially grounded in the sonic racial stereotypes that were underlying jazz criticism since its early days to distinguish between the characteristics of black and white performers.[140] Monson grounds these racial stereotypes using a Nietzschean Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy: "In the chain of implicit oppositions operating in the aesthetic discourses of the 1950s, composition, intellectualism, and Western classical music were coded as white, while improvisation, emotional expressiveness, and the legacy of the blues were coded as black."[141] Hence, those who castigated Brubeck's style emphasized the idea of "racial authenticity" in jazz performance, and Brubeck's whiteness and classical approach made him a fitting prospect for such criticism.

However, the arguments above mostly depend on a single criterion: that Brubeck had objectively no swing. But Brubeck's music did swing, if only in a rather old-fashioned way that sounded distinctly enough from the dominant school of Powell.[142] Furthermore, Brubeck also had supporters within the African American community. Charles Mingus, for instance, responded to Miles Davis's criticism in 1955 with a public letter published in *Downbeat*. Mingus endorsed Brubeck's swinging skill by admiring his "sincerity" in believing that his music really

[140] There were always some exceptions from both sides. As an iconoclast musician, Thelonious Monk was also criticized for his swinging style. On the other side, some white jazz modernists like Gerry Mulligan were praised by critics for their swinging. See Ted Gioia, *West Coast Jazz: Modern Jazz in California, 1945-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 67.

[141] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 83.

[142] See page 14 of this thesis.

swings. Moreover, he questioned Davis' arbitrary comments by highlighting the subjectivity of swing's perception among different musicians and listeners:

> He feels a certain pulse and plays a certain pulse which gives him pleasure and a sense of exaltation because he's sincerely doing something the way he, Dave Brubeck, feels like doing it. And, as you said in your story, Miles, 'If a guy makes you pat your foot, and if you feel it down your back, etc.,' then Dave is the swingiest *by your own definition*, Miles, because at Newport and elsewhere Dave had the whole house patting its feet and even clapping its hands…[143]

So, if a well-known musician like Mingus endorsed Brubeck's swinging skill, why did some critics and musicians point their fingers at his inability to do so? Advocators of the liberal discourse like Gene Lees tried to justify the criticism as merely a kind of jealousy among the musicians who could not make as much money as Brubeck. [144] However, investigating Brubeck's response to such accusations unravels more profound motives underlying such criticism.

As Brubeck invariably claimed to be an innovator and was extremely popular among new white middlebrow audiences with this rhetoric, "lack of swing" intended to question Brubeck's stylistic contributions to the genre. After all, if he could not swing as well as innovators like Powell, why should one even consider him a "jazz" pioneer? In the interview with Gene Lees, published in 1961, Brubeck explained the role of swing in his fusion of composition and improvisation. As he states:

> The Problem … is to swing and create'. The piano men who swing the most are usually the ones who don't play creatively, compose, experiment, or try to understand the scope of jazz. In their self-imposed technical trap they crystallize, and, on the altar of swing, sacrifice their future creative ability in order to gain a perfection of performance. I admire this type of instrumentalist,

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[143] Charles Mingus, "An Open Letter to Miles Davis," *Downbeat* 22, no. 24 (1955): 12-13.

https://www.charlesmingus.com/mingus/an-open-letter-to-miles-davis

[144] Lees, "About This Man Brubeck: Part 1," 22.

> but he isn't my idea of complete musician. The way I want to swing is the most difficult – to superimpose over what the bass and drum are doing.[145]

These remarks show that Brubeck was aware of the swinging standard among hardcore jazz communities. Nonetheless, by emphasizing "composition" and "creation," he confronts swinging in their virtuosic improvisations with his own compositional and polyrhythmic approach. Brubeck believed in the necessity of broadening the scope of jazz's vocabulary by exercising what he learned from his academic studies and assumed that swinging is the "most difficult" in this case. Once again, Brubeck's remarks allude to an over-arching debate on innovation.

Hence, the ambiguity surrounding Brubeck's swinging ability implied the aesthetic contention between the rhetoric of progression vs. experimentation during this period. On the one hand, progressivism believed that jazz should be developed according to the standards of European elitism. On the other hand, experimentalism viewed innovation through the growing complexities of African American avant-garde. In fact, modern jazz discourse during the '50s and early '60s developed into two main directions, although not always easily distinguishable. Cool jazz figures like Dave Brubeck and Third Stream musicians were engaged in emulating various elements of classical music. Meanwhile, musicians associated with labels like hard-bop, soul jazz, and later free jazz sought for new ideas directly from within the jazz tradition – i.e., the vernacular idioms such as blues and gospel, and improvisational experiments based on them. [146]

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[145] Gene Lees, "About This Man Brubeck: Part 1," *Downbeat* 28, no. 13 (1961): 22-24.

[146] These two approaches are obviously in the same vein as the two aforementioned discourses of jazz criticism.

The classical approach, which evidently had the government's support, viewed jazz history through the typical evolutionary lens, in which the folk seeds of jazz had to be cultivated according to the "image of the European classical tradition."[147] Brubeck's two-part article in *Downbeat* titled "Jazz' Evolvement as Art Form," which he had written a year before he would establish his quartet, indicates traces of this attitude. Although Brubeck acknowledged the origins of jazz in blues and spirituals and emphasized the necessity of revitalizing the genre with complex African rhythms, he described its folk materials as "changeless," "simple," and "limited."[148] He surmised that jazz, which "took the mixed parentage of primitive African and the highly developed European cultures . . . has changed from the folk music and shall continue to change." As Ronald Radano suggests, this assessment of folk "perpetuates a biased ethnocentrism in which 'simple,' rural cultures lag behind sophisticated, 'complex' urban environments."[149] With the ongoing attention to civil rights, the classical approach waned in popularity as it had less influence on determining the ensuing trajectory of innovation in the

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[147] Ronald Radano, *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 12.

[148] "When one thinks back to the pre-jazz era of the American Negro, one hears the simplest kind of expression harmonically and melodically . . . The melodic line was simple and of the folk. It was almost as limited in range as that of a Gregorian chant." Dave Brubeck, "Jazz' Evolvement as Art Form," *Downbeat* 17, no. 2 (1950): 12.

[149] Radano, *New Musical Figurations*, 12.

genre.[150] To get a better sense of the classical approach's failure and the necessity of innovation according to the jazz tradition, let's review the ideas of Amiri Baraka.

Indeed, the most significant critique of jazz innovation and middlebrow jazz/classical crossovers came in Baraka's groundbreaking monograph on African American music, titled *Blues People: Negro Experience in White America* (1963). Baraka's socio-political reading of jazz was a "modernist gesture" inspired by the criticism of mass culture in the writings of New York Intellectuals during the '50s.[151] When civil rights were a hot debate, this study reconsidered the African heritage of American identity in order to reinforce the "black nationalist agenda."[152] Baraka thought of bebop's legacy as the last artistic resort of "Negro People" that, unlike their literature, had not been thoroughly diluted into white cultural mores. He praised bebop musicians' intentional alienation from mainstream culture as a sort of civil disobedience due to

[150] As Paul Lopes states: "By the early 1960s, the classical approach was fading in importance within the jazz art world just as a large number of mostly black musicians were advancing the second approach to innovation in jazz. To many musicians, the classical approach seemed contrived and far removed from the jazz tradition. The classical jazz approach also proved to have little impact on the development of the jazz tradition during the renaissance. In part, its failure was due to viewing the 'advance' of jazz as more derivative than innovative. Classical jazz modernists relied on pre-existing forms, harmonies, and timbres in the classical tradition." Paul Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 244.

[151] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 71. New York Intellectuals were a loosely defined circle of American authors and literary critics, mostly with left-wing views, who wrote extensively on mass culture in Marxist periodicals like *Partisan Review* and *Dissent*. Cultural critics like Dwight McDonald and Clement Greenberg were the first writers who criticized the growing middlebrow culture in the US.

[152] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 71.

not getting accepted into society despite all the idle promises.[153] This isolation also thrusted new ideas that developed from the quintessential African elements. For Baraka, bebop was unaffected by the superficial and "self-consciously intellectual" music of progressive jazz, known with white figures like Stan Kenton and Boyd Raeburn. As Baraka states, "the term progressive carries much the same intention of showing how much 'advance' jazz had made since its cruder days when only Negroes played it."[154] In contrast, "The 'harshness' and 'asymmetry' of bebop was much closer to the traditional Afro-American concept of music than most of its detractors ever stopped to realize."[155] When it comes to investigating the fifties, the influence of middlebrow culture is indispensable in Baraka's assessment.[156]

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[153] Baraka, *Blues People*, 186. This point was essentially a criticism of how African American middle class had abandoned its background in order to assimilate to such standards without getting the "expected reimbursement" from the goverment. Despite their great contribution to two world wars and post-war society, black people were still treated inferior to the white majority, especially in the South. According to him, beboppers saw this effect and felt the urge to return jazz to its "original separateness" from mass culture – before its dilution during the Swing era. Nonetheless, this separation "put on a more intellectually and psychologically satisfying level the traditional separation and isolation of the black man from America." Baraka, *Blues People*, 200.

[154] Baraka, *Blues People*, 206.

[155] Baraka, *Blues People*, 210.

[156] Baraka even criticized hard bop as a different middlebrow derivation of bebop, projected at black middle-class audiences. For him, this substyle failed to push forward the achievements of bebop with its conscious overemphasizes of the vernacular idioms. According to Baraka, this strategy appealed to black middle-class audiences who, since bebop, became proud of appreciating their musical roots.

For Baraka, the elaborate practice of using classical idioms in jazz as a tool for innovation, whether it be the middlebrow cool jazz or the academic attempts of Third Stream, "canonized" those very elements in a genre that was originally proud of "its separation from the emotional and philosophical attitudes of classical music."[157] Unsurprisingly, he described cool jazz as "tepid new popular music of the white middle-brow middle class," but with a more sophisticated and technical inflection compared to previous white appropriation like Swing and progressive jazz.[158] Nevertheless, this point did not mean that he would totally reject the use of classical music: "There is no doubt in my mind that the techniques of European classical music can be utilized by jazz musicians, but in ways that will not subject the philosophy of Negro music to the less indigenously personal attitudes of European-derived music."[159] In his view, the recent experiments of avant-garde jazz musicians such as Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor indicated the right path to follow post bebop. Notwithstanding their accurate sensibilities for contemporary art music idioms, Baraka claimed these musicians were "re-emphasizing the most expressive qualities of Afro-American musical tradition."[160] In all of these examples, Baraka values "alienation" as a means to innovation. The intellectual recluse from the

[157] Baraka, *Blues People*, 230.

[158] Brubeck's name is mentioned as the forerunner of this style with its "consciously affected pickups from European music." According to Baraka, "this was natural for college-bred audience who wanted a little culture with their popular music." Baraka, *Blues People*, 214.

[159] Baraka, *Blues People*, 229.

[160] Baraka, *Blues People*, 225.

mainstream, in tandem with adherence to the emotional and philosophical qualities of "Negro music" are the keys that create new ideas in jazz.[161]

Avant-garde jazz musicians had a convoluted relation to music business as they demanded a fair share according to their stylistic contribution to the genre and not a total abandonment of commercial interest. In that regard, Baraka's argument is somewhat ambiguous. It is not clear whether this separation of "high modern jazz" means embracing an "anti-commercial" ideology or not. Modern jazz was partly a reaction against the music industry's decision to exclude certain, mostly African American, musicians whose musical complexity did not bear enough selling potential.[162] Experimental jazz figures often complained against the selling patterns imposed by various agents in the music industry that marginalized their music. Another issue, as Paul Lopes explains, "is often lamenting the inability of restricted popular artists to reach audiences due to the hold that industrial art professionals and industrial art gatekeepers have over access to the popular market."[163] A well-known anecdote, for example, was Ornette

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[161] Baraka believed that alienation was a common point among various forms of "high art" in the US. This "strategy of exclusion," as called by Andreas Huyssen in his book *After the Great Divide*, was indeed prevalent among the cultural critics and gatekeepers of high modernism in the first half of the 20th century. See Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Post Modernism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), vii.

[162] Modern jazz as an autonomous art form was still in its embryonic stage, and musicians relied on their income from record sales alongside live performances in jazz clubs, concert halls, etc.

[163] Lopes, "Pierre Bourdieu's Fields of Cultural Production," 181. Paul Lopes has elaborated on modern jazz history through Bourdieu's *Fields of Cultural Production* theory. He suggests that in addition to Bourdieu's classification of "bourgeois art" and "restricted high art" as *subfields* with higher *symbolic capital*, and "industrial

Coleman's complaint in 1962 about his salary compared to Brubeck's after realizing that he earned twice as him by playing at the same venue (*Five Spot*):

> I've never gotten $2,000 a week yet. The most I've gotten is $1,200 a week. And yet I've packed audiences into the same clubs that have been paying $4,000 a week to people who haven't packed the house. I was pulling packed houses in one club with $1,200 a week, and then they brought Dave Brubeck in the next week and paid him several times that amount, and he didn't fill the house at all. In fact, they lost money on Dave Brubeck. So, if I'm packing the house and making as much money for the man as people who are getting paid more than me, then wouldn't it seem that I should get the same amount?"[164]

Coleman's story addresses not only the payment inequality but also his competence to attract the jazz connoisseurs more than Brubeck if he had been given more proper deals.[165] Even among the academic circle of Third Stream with their similar approach to Brubeck, he was considered far off the track as a serious musician with his commercial success. As Gunther Schuller once stated in a 1957 lecture at Brandeis University:

> The mainstream of jazz today is terribly limited. It is too uncomplicated, both rhythmically and tonally. Mr. Brubeck was a great hope to us in the late forties and early fifties in doing something

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art" with its high *economic capital*, there is the fourth artistic *subfield* of "restricted popular art" in the US music market (See Lopes, "Pierre Bourdieu's Fields of Cultural Production," 173). For Lopes, free jazz is a form of the latter. He argues that the typical economic polarity between restricted high art and commercial bourgeois art (that is, the low economic capital vs. high economic capital, respectively) does not apply between restricted popular art and industrial art. According to him, unlike the frequent denouncement of a broad audience in restricted high art, artists in the subfield of restricted popular art aspired to have a larger audience. But they complained that they were unable to do so due to the "industrial gatekeeper's circumvention" (in other words, agents like marketing executives, jazz promoters, etc. that "control" the audience's access to cultural products.)

[164] A.B. Spellman, *Four Jazz Lives* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 131.

[165] *Five Spot* was one of the most popular destinations in NYC among jazz aficionados and intellectuals interested in avant-garde music.

> about this; but today he is only a commercial jazz player. His so-called experimentations with time changes are merely superficial.[166]

So, if Brubeck was not the most pioneering innovator as he claimed, and yet he could "laugh all the way to the bank," all those critical comments sound reasonable.[167] Brubeck's extraordinarily financial success was just one of many interrelated aspects of his problematic career that played into the hands of critics.

Throughout this section, I demonstrated how the critique of Brubeck's middlebrowism was complex and multifaceted. Underlying those complaints about his lack of swing and authenticity was an aesthetic debate on innovation. For critics and African American experimentalist, Brubeck's jazz "canonized" the classical influence. But were other white jazz modernists like Lennie Tristano, Bill Evans, and Gunther Schuller, to name a few, who had a penchant for using classical idioms. Yet, they were indeed not as controversial as Brubeck was. His polemical situation derived from the fact that hardly anyone more than Brubeck claimed to be an innovator while benefiting from the music industry's support. Brubeck's tremendous financial success occurred in the era when many avant-garde musicians were mistreated by discrimination in the music business. Therefore, race, social milieu, stylistic approach, lack of humility, and commercial privileges were all subtly interrelated in creating the criticism surrounding Brubeck's most successful years.

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[166] Ralph Thomas, "Brubeck vs. Schuller: Two Approaches to Modern Music," *Toronto Sun*, 1964 (Brubeck Collection). Quote in Stephen Crist, *Dave Brubeck's Time Out* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 226-7.

[167] Mehegan, "Jazz Pianists 2," 17.

Conclusion

What can we learn from Brubeck's most successful years through the lens of middlebrow culture? In my thesis, I touched on various aspects of the "middlebrow conflict" surrounding his career. Brubeck's affiliation with classical music was one of the essential aspects of that conflict. Although Brubeck is regarded as a jazz musician, his classical training in college, especially the period with Darius Milhaud, profoundly impacted his musicianship. There is no doubt that the music of Art Tatum, Stan Kenton, and Duke Ellington initiated his interest in pursuing a musical career – and not the classical music that his mother urged him to learn. Nonetheless, he developed his musical skills in the academic environment, where development was propagated through the model of European elitism. When Brubeck debuted his professional career in the late '40s, his ideas of advancing jazz were already based on this notion and not through the growing complexities of bebop. Evidently, he acknowledged jazz's African roots to justify his care for preserving the authentic elements of the genre. Regardless of how sincere his intentions were, the fact that the majority of his audience were newbie white middle-class listeners indicates that his music was not primarily appealing for its adherence to African roots. Finally, affiliation with classical music was not always beneficial for Brubeck. There was the paradox that although his progressive/accessible cross-pollination created a massive audience for him, frequent associations with classical music in the works of "cultural intermediaries" belied his classical piano skills and put him in uncomfortable positions. Following the development of the civil rights discourse, the promotional content for Brubeck's albums in the

late ‘50s astutely leaned towards highlighting the eclectic elements to ease the burden of classical music expectations.

Claims of innovation and Brubeck’s privileges as a white musician in the music industry were other features of that middlebrow conflict. With regard to his locus in mid-century modern jazz, Brubeck’s music was indeed influential in expanding the compositional techniques and harmonic vocabulary of the genre.[168] However, what Brubeck promoted and popularized as his progressive brand certainly was not the most innovative jazz out there.[169] For prominent avant-garde jazz musicians – like Cecil Taylor and Antony Braxton – that led the innovative path during the ‘60s, adopting pre-existent idioms in classical music was only an introductory option among more advanced and nuanced possibilities for creating new ideas.[170] By insisting on his

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[168] One of the long-lasting legacies is that some of his compositions, such as “In Your Own Sweet Way” and “The Duke,” became jazz standards.

[169] In his essay on the legacy of iconic 1959 albums, Darius Brubeck provided a thought-provoking assessment of *Time Out* that implies the middlebrow status of his father’s album. He states: “After the intellectual intensity surrounding the three above mentioned albums [*Kind of Blue*, *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, and *Giant Steps*], to include a popular hit like *Time Out* may seem like dragging *Star Wars* into a discussion of avant-garde cinema.” Darius Brubeck, “1959: The Beginning of Beyond,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, edited by Mervyn Cooke and David Horn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 198. This article summarizes his master’s thesis, Darius Brubeck, “Jazz 1959: The Beginning of Beyond,” master’s thesis (University of Nottingham, 2002).

[170] In an oft-quoted statement by Cecil Taylor, he declares: “when Brubeck opened in 1951 in New York, I was very impressed with the depth and texture of his harmony, which had more notes in it than anyone else’s that I had ever heard. It also had a rhythmical movement that I found exciting . . . I don’t think that [sic] that music is

pioneering rhetoric Brubeck conveyed his high level of confidence that impressed white middlebrow audiences. But claims of innovation also unveiled his bias in promoting the aesthetic superiority of his innovation model. He proved not to be cognizant of the tension such supercilious statements provoked in hardcore jazz communities. During the years of the civil rights movement, avant-garde jazz musicians were highly influential in pushing the boundaries of jazz by aptly reframing the subtleties in the music of their ancestors. They apprehended the experimental potential in broadening different complexities than European elitism. Afro-modernism implemented stylistic strategies that deeply echoed the "urban sensibilities of modern America" and defied the modernistic narrative that the government attempted to impose on jazz during the Cold War period.[171]

As far as I explored in my research, Brubeck never addressed the deep-rooted income inequality in the jazz business. It is reasonable to speculate that he did not want to act in a way that would jeopardize his privileged position – as his innocuous response to racial inequality was also projected in a way that did not put his career at great risk. Avant-gardists who faced discrimination witnessed all the credits that went to Brubeck in the music industry and the attention to his name in the mainstream magazine headlines. So, when Brubeck had massive

important now for what it made, but I still think that it was important then, for the gaps it filled." A.B. Spellman, *Four Jazz Lives* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 61.

[171] Ronald Radano, "Hot Fantasies, American Modernism and the Idea of Black Rhythm," in *Music and the Racial Imagination*, edited by Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 471.

commercial success and preferred to remain silent about that, those musicians certainly had the right to criticize Brubeck's privileged position.

Finally, we can ponder Brubeck's middlebrowism from a different perspective that is broader than the scope of jazz. As I explained in my thesis, the cultural significance of Brubeck's music – particularly the influence of *Time Out* – is the popularization of progressive ideas in other genres of popular music. *Time Out* is, in fact, a great example of how a musical concept (unconventional time signatures) that used to be confined to niche genres or less known styles can spread into the realm of the mainstream. Using asymmetrical/shifting meters is now less considered "unconventional" in popular music because of the accessible formula that Dave Brubeck Quartet initiated in albums like *Time Out*. The number of pop hits that have embedded complex or shifting meters in their riffs or catchy tunes have considerably increased since then.[172] Hence, *Time Out* is evident of middlebrow music's potential to enrich the heterogeneity and expand the vocabulary of mainstream music beyond the boundaries of a specific genre.

[172] I previously referenced the influence of *Time Out* on popular musicians from various genres in the subsequent decades (the '60s and '70s). A brief collection of more recent songs that use 5/4 can be seen in this YouTube video, which include a wide variety of popular music genres: David Bennett Piano, "Songs that use 5/4 time," *YouTube* Video, 18:24, Feb 15, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQ76-WiFTlo&t=255s

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