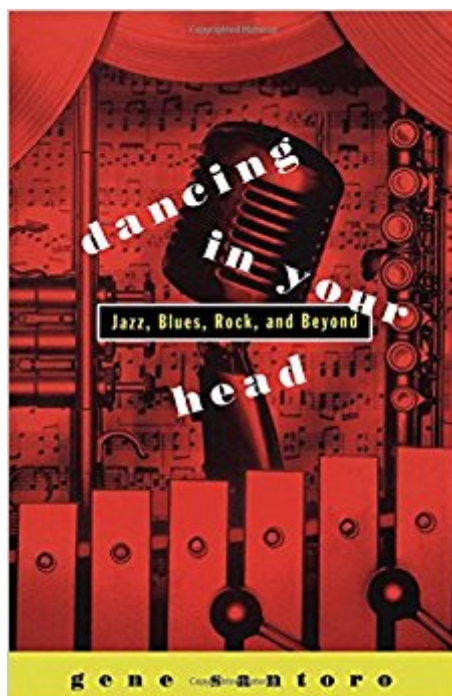


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Dancing In Your Head: Jazz, Blues, Rock, And Beyond



Synopsis

As music columnist for *The Nation*, Gene Santoro has established himself as an important new critical voice, able to write well on a broad spectrum of popular music and jazz without losing touch with the cutting edge of today's music scene. About Nat "King" Cole, Santoro comments: "adjectives can't describe the swinging, ingratiating self-confidence laced with tenderness that colors Nat "King" Cole's singing. His baritone/tenor is so airy and elemental, so palpably physical, it invites you in, then surrounds you glowingly..." And on the highly successful rock band Living Colour, Santoro is no less evocative: "hardcore metal raveups slam into bluesy ballads and psychedelized pop, lilting Caribbean inflections collide with hip-hop scrambles of prerecorded material and touches of funk." *Dancing in Your Head* gathers Santoro's liveliest reviews and essays for the first time, introducing a fresh and provocative perspective on several decades of musicians and their work. Santoro covers a wide musical vista, from the legendary blues singer Robert Johnson to Public Enemy's controversial rap lyrics, from the long running clash between blues and African American gospel to the rock iconoclast Neil Young, from the great James Brown to George Hay, the founder of the Grand Ole Opry. Documenting the evolution of jazz, rock and roll, and rap, Santoro's observations are incisive, honest, and reflective. Of his early exposure to Jimi Hendrix, John Coltrane and Bela Bartok, Santoro remarks, "That sense of wonder and discovery is what happens when you've been hit by art's immediate vatic power. It has never left me, has been touched and renewed by each encounter I've valued." Santoro examines the staying power of music legends Lou Reed, Eric Clapton, the Grateful Dead, and Sun Ra, the freewheeling jazz artist who prefers to call himself a tone artist rather than a musician. Special highlights include several pieces on Miles Davis; book reviews, including one on Gunther Schuller's two-volume *History of Jazz*; a lively and detailed profile of the Neville Brothers; and a discussion of jazz great Ornette Coleman that compares him to Orson Welles and Charles Ives. Taken together the pieces in *Dancing In Your Head* examine the historical roots of today's popular music while offering insight into performers and trends that dominate the current scene. Balancing a critical and historical sensibility with an unharnessed enthusiasm for all forms of music, Santoro is an ideal guide to the old and new.

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Customer Reviews

Santoro, music columnist for the Nation, is an avid generalist who writes with emotion, enthusiasm and distinct likes and dislikes. Here, he offers 65 articles and record and book reviews written between 1986 and 1992 for the Nation, the Village Voice, Downbeat and other publications. He opens with an appreciation of bluesman Robert Johnson's creative use of the constraints imposed by 78rpm recording, and he closes with raves for saxophonist John Zorn's "sonic assault" on traditional musical boundaries and for Steve Coleman, whose musical evolution he traces. Santoro also covers gospel, James Brown, country (which, he writes, is based on "commercially generated nostalgia"), Jeff Beck, Gunther Schuller, the Grateful Dead, Les Paul, Charlie Mingus, Henry Threadgill and many others. His longer pieces, like those on Miles Davis and the Neville Brothers, are generally more satisfying. Santoro is a fast-paced reporter and his shorter pieces don't always reach full stride. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Santoro is conversant with many diverse areas of contemporary music. Remarkably, he never spreads himself too thin. His book includes cogent reviews of a potpourri of performers; free jazz explorers Ornette Coleman and Sun Ra, country music star k.d. lang, rap group Public Enemy, and rocker Neil Young are all insightfully profiled. Santoro's animosity toward many major record labels (he derides them as "those corporate custodians of our cultural history") and his consistent championing of avant-garde and Afrocentric artists certainly place him among the ranks of left-leaning reviewers, yet he never lacks informed reasons for the strong charges and exultations he indulges in his judgments. Politics do not stand in Santoro's way as he breaks ranks with other polemical pop critics by generously defending the nostalgia-driven marketing of Woodstock-era bands ("This usually disposable music can and does find lasting meaning in people's lives. If it didn't, we'd need a radically new definition of culture"). What's more, Santoro's recommendations

make *Dancing In Your Head* a worthy guide for libraries expanding their sound recording collections. Aaron Cohen --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Santoro's love of music and deep knowledge of its global history shines through. My primary beef is that he has a habit of repeating himself; even though this is a collection of articles written for different periodicals, reading the same thing time and again gives the unfair impression that Santoro knows less about his subjects than he actually does. (It's not as tedious as his Charles Mingus bio; if I read "Mingus was feeling the Zeitgeist again" one more time, I was going to throw that damned book across the room.) "*Dancing in Your Head*" rewards patience with fascinating insights into the many faces of American music.

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