



The Horn: A Novel

John Clellon Holmes

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This mesmerizing tale of a musician's rise and fall is widely considered the greatest jazz novel ever published

Edgar Pool came up with the big bands. He spent the 1930s crisscrossing the country, playing in only the finest dance halls. In those days, a saxophone player was expected to stay on the beat, to swing without getting too hot. But Edgar—whom the young men called “the Horn”—couldn't help but rebel. His sound was always far-out, never pedestrian. When the bebop revolution came, Edgar was recognized as one of the vanguard. But by then it was already too late; the world had passed the Horn by.

This is the story of jazz in the transition years between swing titans Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young and bop innovators Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Rich in the details of a musician's life—the grind of the road; the flash of inspiration; the seduction of booze, drugs, and willing women—it is also a heart-wrenching portrait of the price an artist pays for being ahead of his time.

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