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ARTICLE



Black creative genius matters: Rahsaan Roland Kirk, the Jazz and People's Movement, and the politics of "black classical music."

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ABSTRACT

The Jazz and People's Movement, led by multi-instrumentalist and Atlantic Records recording star Rahsaan Roland Kirk, began disrupting network television talk shows in 1970. The movement aimed to stop the erasure of "black creative genius" not only from the nation's television airwaves, but from its collective history and memory – to make that which was practically invisible visible once again. But Rahsaan Roland Kirk and the Jazz and People's Movement do not fit neatly into the usual categories historians use to describe the politics of the "long Sixties." Kirk occupied a hybrid position – equal parts radical, reformist, and countercultural – and fashioned himself as what scholars such as Elizabeth Jelin and Lorena Oropeza have called "memory entrepreneurs" – men and women who give voice to those disappeared or otherwise silenced by the state. Rahsaan Roland Kirk acted as jazz's foremost memory entrepreneur not to expose state violence, exactly, but to reveal the whitewashing – the disappearing – of black creative genius out of American popular memory. That whitewashing falls into another category of violence – cultural violence – executed in service of the maintenance of American racial hierarchies. This essay restores both Kirk's and the Jazz and People's Movement's places in the respective histories of the long civil rights movement, Black Power, and the counterculture. It shows how easily the cultural politics of the three – so often treated separately by historians – overlapped and were intertwined. As such, the essay argues for Kirk as a prominent black political artist who illuminated the intersection of popular music and civil rights politics over the long Sixties.

KEYWORDS

Rahsaan Roland Kirk; civil rights; black Power; African-Americans; jazz; television; memory; counterculture; politics

On August 27 1970, in the midst of filming an episode of *The Merv Griffin Show* in New York City, all hell broke loose. As Griffin invited Broadway actor Larry Kert to join him for an interview on the CBS television studio stage, at least fifty members of the audience stood up from their seats and, in

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Black Creative Genius Matters: Rahsaan Roland Kirk, the Jazz and People's Movement, and the Politics of "Black Classical Music"

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Figure 1. August 27 1970: The Jazz and People's Movement disrupts the Merv Griffin Show, CBS Studios, New York. UPI Photo.

a coordinated sonic attack, started blowing on police whistles and other small instruments smuggled into the taping. Their leader, jazz multi-instrumentalist and Atlantic Records recording star, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, wailed on his clarinet as he led this rebel band of musicians and friends toward the stage. The show's producers rushed to overcome the disruption by striking up the studio band, but the cacophony from the insurgents only grew louder. A bewildered Griffin called off the taping and darted from the stage.

Neither the producers nor Griffin understood at first that they had been targeted in the debut nonviolent direct action protest of the Jazz and People's Movement. As Kirk and others crowded the CBS stage (Figure 1), many held aloft signs featuring pithy slogans: "Honor American Jazz Music," "Hire More Black Artists on TV," "This Protest Is Just the Beginning," and "Stop the Whitewash Now." In the same way that students had, ten years earlier, shut down lunch counters at national chain stores such as Woolworth's and Kress, the new Jazz and People's Movement aimed to use nonviolent direct action to shut down television shows judged to be racially exclusionary. "Stop the Whitewash Now!" meant stopping the erasure of "black creative genius" not only from the nation's television airwaves, but from its collective history and memory. In the immediate

aftermath of *The Merv Griffin Show* disruption, Griffin and his producers spoke with the demonstrators and agreed to feature more black jazz artists on the show.¹

In recent years, historians have become increasingly attentive to the importance of jazz artists in American political culture. But Rahsaan Roland Kirk and the Jazz and People's Movement have largely escaped scholarly attention. Thanks to the pioneering work of Eric Porter, Mary Dudziak, Scott Saul, Penny Von Eschen, Ingrid Monson, Robin D. G. Kelley, and Ruth Feldstein, among others, we now have a fuller appreciation of the central roles played by jazz artists in Cold War politics – both internationally and at home – as well as in civil rights and Black Power politics in the 1960s and 1970s.²

Those few scholars who have examined Kirk have tended to pigeonhole him in the new jazz vanguard of the 1960s and 1970s. Along with artists such as Archie Shepp and Cecil Taylor, Kirk is often linked to the Black Arts Movement that is presented as a cultural analog of Black Power. According to Amiri Baraka, the poet and intellectual most commonly associated with the Black Arts movement, black audiences had been “denuded of their blackness by the ‘white magic’ of the ‘Mass Media.’”³ Like other “missionaries of culture” associated with the Black Arts Movement, Kirk responded to this condition by seeking to “restore cultural understanding to the black man.”⁴ Josh Kun, who devotes half a chapter to Kirk in his influential book, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (2005), borrows from Baraka in labeling Kirk “a Screamer, a jazz musician wedded to the idea of jazz as revolutionary music and the jazz player as an audio revolutionary.” Kun is correct that, by some measures, Kirk functioned as a jazz revolutionary: His “devotion to black sound as *black freedom* [italics added] set out to disorganize and, in the case of the TV shows, physically disrupt dominant ideologies of cultural ownership and racial oppression, while constructing radical alternatives – renaming jazz as Black Classical Music and re-sounding the black struggle for freedom as the struggle for music.” But such characterizations tell only part of Kirk's story and risk relegating him and the Jazz and People's Movement to the footnotes of the struggle for black equality – revolutionaries who represented a tiny American avant-garde.⁵

Kirk's marginalization can also be seen in the way that Eric Porter sets the Jazz and People's Movement within a discussion of “preservationism” – “an ethos and a historical vision about the development of black music,” Porter writes, that “venerated black artistry” and, thus, worked to preserve the memory and history of “black classical music.” Preservationists feared that jazz, as an American musical tradition, “was in danger of being lost.” Yet Kirk did not aim to merely preserve jazz as an American form of classical music (the way critics say that Wynton Marsalis does as artistic director at

Jazz at Lincoln Center, for example). Rather, he expected to improve conditions for living and future jazz musicians too. Indeed, Kirk's music and politics were multivalent and internally contradictory in ways that have confounded scholars.⁶

This essay starts from the premise that Rahsaan Roland Kirk and the Jazz and People's Movement do not fit neatly into the usual categories historians use to describe the politics of the "long Sixties." Kirk occupied instead a hybrid position – equal parts radical, reformist, and countercultural – who fashioned himself as what the Argentine legal scholar Elizabeth Jelin calls a "memory entrepreneur." In writing about human rights activists who have worked to expose the brutal tactics of Latin American military regimes, Jelin describes memory entrepreneurs as seeking "social recognition and political legitimacy" of a particular "interpretation or narrative of the past." In order to change public understanding and affect political and cultural change, Jelin writes, "there has to be someone who initiates, who promotes and devotes her or his energies to the desired end." Lorena Oropeza, following Jelin, sharpens the definition of memory entrepreneurs as "people who apply the full force of their personality and persuasive power to bring forth a new – or formerly suppressed – version of the past in service of a political cause." Memory entrepreneurs thus give voice to those disappeared or otherwise silenced by the state.⁷

Rahsaan Roland Kirk acted as jazz's foremost memory entrepreneur not to expose overt state violence *per se*, but rather to reveal the whitewashing – the disappearing – of black creative genius out of American popular memory. That whitewashing falls into another category of violence – cultural violence – executed in service of an enduring, unresolved crime against humanity: the maintenance of American racial hierarchies. But Kirk's politics, though militant, did not dovetail perfectly either with Black Power or the cultural politics that attended it. He had ties to the Black Arts movement, but he simultaneously located himself and the Jazz and People's Movement in the mainstream civil rights movement, envisioning it as an extension of Operation Breadbasket, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s economic opportunity initiative. Furthermore, Kirk's particular embodiment of memory entrepreneurship articulated the recovery and assertion of black creative genius in truly entrepreneurial fashion – as in claiming a rightful share of the popular music market, and equating equal economic opportunity with individual freedom – but within a Sixties frame of interracial, countercultural (even psychedelic), universal brotherhood and sisterhood. That is, Kirk not only "performed civil rights," to borrow Ruth Feldstein's phrase, but he performed Black Power and the counterculture as well – and he demanded the right to perform them on television.⁸

By restoring Rahsaan Roland Kirk's and the Jazz and People's Movement's to their crucial place in the respective histories of the long civil rights movement, Black Power, and the counterculture, this essay

shows how all three were intertwined in ways that have been underappreciated by historians.⁹ As a prominent black political artist, Kirk stood at the intersection of popular music and black freedom in ways that blur the lines between civil rights and black power, and between politics and culture.

Kirk as Memory Entrepreneur

Not long after *The Merv Griffin Show* protests, *Down Beat*, the nation's leading jazz magazine, expressed cautious optimism about the prospects for the Jazz and People's Movement. The magazine observed that the movement's leader Rahsaan Roland Kirk commanded "the respect and affection of the jazz community." Indeed, by 1970, American jazz had produced few artists as popular as Kirk, who had a following among both audiences and fellow artists. He had paid his dues throughout the 1960s, workshopping and woodshedding with his mentors. By the start of the new decade, he had established himself as one of the most high-profile jazz musicians, band leaders, and amateur jazz historians in the country.¹⁰

Kirk's knowledge of jazz history, virtually unrivaled among his peers, emerged out of his Ohio upbringing. Born as Ronald Kirk in Columbus in 1935, he lost his sight at the age of two when a nurse mistakenly overdosed his eyes with medicated drops. Kirk's sightlessness directly shaped his development as a musician, jazz scholar, and activist. He grew up facing the double discrimination of being both disabled and black. "There is a lot more prejudice toward blind people than even black people," Kirk later told an interviewer, "because nobody wants to even think of blind people as people." He recounted to *Ebony* how, in some restaurants, "they say, 'sit him down over there' . . . like a dog."¹¹ Consequently, as a teenager in Columbus, where he attended the Ohio School for the Blind, Kirk devoted himself to committing jazz history to memory. He rarely missed Symphony Sid's radio show and other live broadcasts from New York. Every week, Kirk could be found standing in the aisles of local record stores, having his friends read "every word" from the record sleeves. Todd Barkan, Kirk's friend from Columbus (who later opened the Keystone Korner jazz club in San Francisco), remembered going from the stores to Kirk's house where they held their own jazz seminars – a full day of listening only to tenor saxophone players, for example, or to stride piano, or to trumpet: "we'd listen to the history of jazz that way," Barkan recalled of those pre-television whitewash days. As teens, they relied on the less obviously exclusionary technologies of radio and record players, which opened up the world of black classical music before television and rock and roll came along and began closing it off.¹²

Along the way, Kirk started playing the saxophone and eventually developed the ability to play dozens of instruments. In Columbus, he frequented Gaetz Music House where following a dream in which he saw himself

playing multiple instruments at the same time, he claimed the instruments that would define his career. From the basement, Lloyd Gaetz brought up a damaged saxello which Kirk customized into having a bigger, curved bell, with modified keys, resulting in what he called a “manzello.” He also acquired a stritch, a very long horn that looked like an extra-large soprano sax, but which was actually a straightened out alto sax. When a bandleader poked fun at Kirk for playing two instruments at once, Kirk put all three in his mouth – keying the manzello for lead and the tenor saxophone for harmony while droning on the stritch. His playing thrilled the crowd.¹³ Kirk changed his first name from Ronald to Roland and, as early as 1963, British jazz critics who saw him perform at Ronnie Scott’s in London were calling him “the most exciting musician there has ever been in the history of jazz,” and perhaps, in competition with John Coltrane, the next jazz “Messiah.”¹⁴

Most writing on Kirk in his lifetime returned to this ability to play three horns simultaneously (Figure 2), with some dismissing his “gimmicks,” or “carnival” tricks as though he was a latter-day minstrel or Vaudeville act. But like the British press, most audiences marveled at his skill. “Kirk is that rare virtuoso whose musical range makes the mind boggle,” *Ebony* reported in 1966. “When he blows one horn, say the tenor saxophone, he is the equal of any musician around today. But when he blows three horns simultaneously, he is truly out of sight.” Critic Leonard Feather agreed, noting that “visually and aurally, [Kirk] is the most sensational thing that has happened to jazz in the past ten years.”¹⁵

Dating to early in his career as a bandleader, Kirk established himself through his live performance repertoire as a jazz historian and memory entrepreneur. Every night, Kirk and his band would sample from a range of past jazz greats. Describing one typical performance, music critic Robert Palmer reported that Kirk “played some of the finest New Orleans style straight funky blues clarinet,” followed by Duke Ellington’s “Satin Doll,” and “some Coltrane things.” Kirk’s “sense of history,” Palmer observed, was evident not merely in his sampling of jazz greats but in the range of styles he played with proficiency. Kirk “uses a Charlie Parker inspired base, but encompasses early jazz styles from Dixie to K. C. jump and newer ones like substitute chords and energy playing,” Palmer recounted. “He will start out a number and it will sound like a Mingus prayer meeting for awhile and then something like straight ahead [jazz] and even poppish and then will get free and into a collage of sound textures, then maybe he will give a one-man Ellington reed section impression and finally settle down to the blues.” Similarly, Kirk’s 1970 album, *Rahsaan, Rahsaan*, begins with a seventeen minute blend of musical styles, recorded live at the Village Vanguard, called “The Seeker.” Early in the performance, Kirk name checks Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, and Johnny Hodges (all alto saxophone players), but only to chastise the audience: “you all don’t know, hardly, them names,” he said. “You think you’re all so hip . . .,” he teases later in the song, as

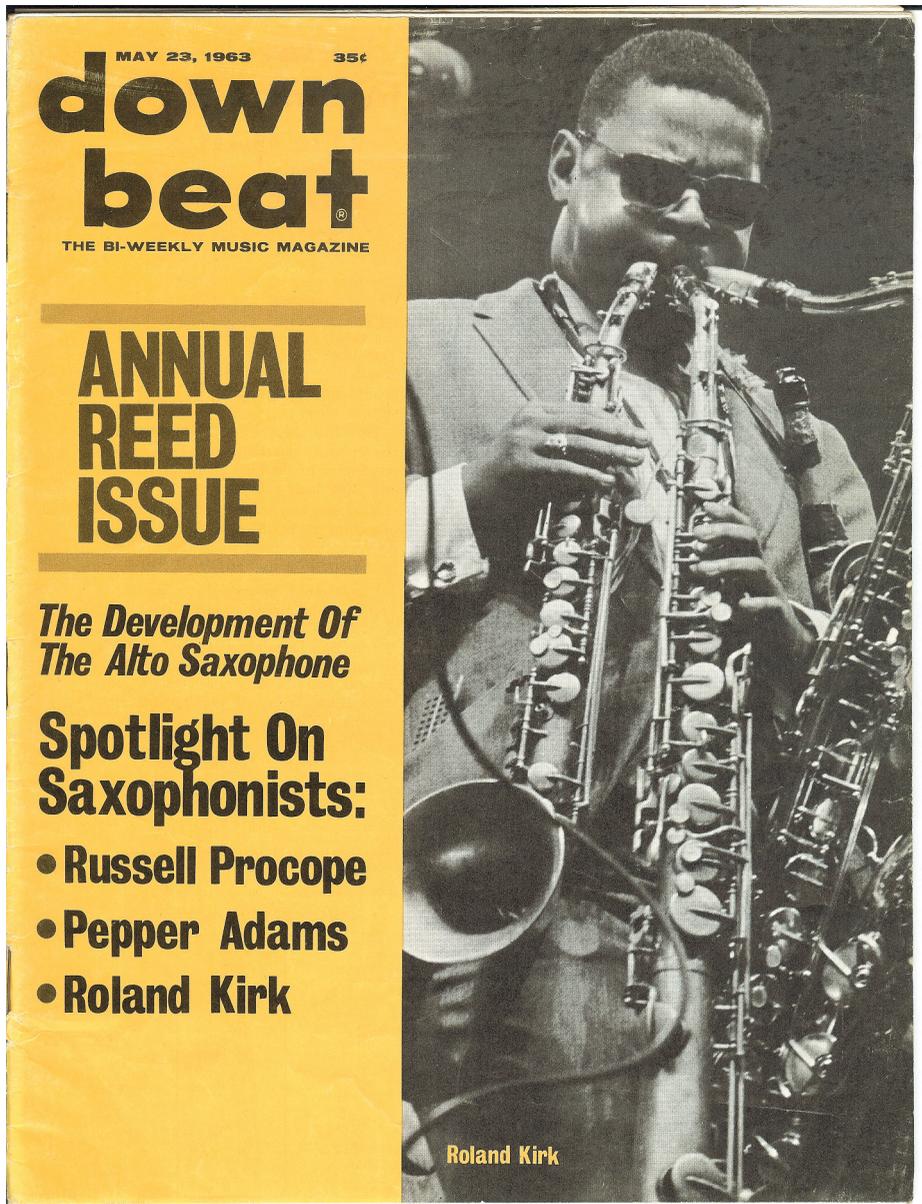


Figure 2. May 23 1963 issue of *Down Beat*. Courtesy *Down Beat*.

the band slowed down in transition. “We could really go all the way back to Africa, and really lay something on you,” Kirk says, almost boasting of his band’s deep knowledge of the music’s history and form. “But we’re gonna stay right down here in New Orleans because you people ain’t really given them people no credit in these days.” At this point, Kirk’s pianist, Ron Burton, breaks into a stride piano vamp, Fats Waller-style, and the song takes off with Kirk blowing on his clarinet, pulling the audience along. As the song ends, amidst the clash of

cymbals and Kirk himself hammering on a gong, he admonishes the audience to “Seek! Seek! Seek!” Kirk may not have been a jazz Messiah, but at times, he transformed the role of memory entrepreneur into one of preacher. He railed from his pulpit at the Vanguard like an Old Testament jazz evangelist.¹⁶ For Kirk, this was a profoundly political act – a way to fight what he saw as the systematic erasure of his trailblazing forebears from national memory. Dan Morgenstern later called Kirk “a kind of living repository of the jazz tradition, as well as a fearless experimenter and traveler into uncharted territory.”¹⁷

By the time Kirk launched the Jazz and People’s Movement, he had concluded that popular music – from Motown to rock and roll – had seduced audiences into forsaking jazz. But the audience, especially the black audience, was far from blameless. “Black people don’t know the roots of where they come from and where their music comes from,” Kirk lamented to one interviewer. He found this especially frustrating because this African-American audience obviously did not grow up listening to Motown or learning about music only from television. “They was raised listening to good music,” he noted, but “they threw it away, man.”¹⁸

Black Classical Music

Consequently, Kirk responded to this crisis by promoting and defending “black classical music” to anyone who would listen. He reclaimed and repurposed Motown and other popular songs as a way of showing their origins in older black music. And Kirk appealed to younger audiences as a countercultural voice, conversant about the transcendent power of music – all while demanding of the white power structure recognition of, and economic equality for, artists of black creative genius.

It is not clear whether it was Kirk or someone else who first coined the term “black classical music.” But by 1970, the label found frequent use among jazz musicians and fans. As Eric Porter has noted, Collective Black Artists perhaps did the most to promote the term with its WNYC radio show, “The Anthology of Black Classical Music.” For Porter, the CBA’s “preservationist imperative” underpinned the promotion of black classical music as a vehicle for “radical nationalist politics and community education.” The radio show and the CBA’s newspaper, *Expansions*, featured profiles of black creative genius – from jazz legends Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday, to blues artists such as Bessie Smith and Leadbelly, to Paul Robeson – as a way to place these artists “in the context of racial and economic oppression” and to characterize their work “as politicized responses to their experiences.” According to the British jazz journalist, Valerie Wilmer, the CBA and other groups like it “grew out of an awareness that unless musicians attempted to control their own destinies, the music was doomed to an ever-diminishing audience in the face of economic pressures from the huge conglomerates that control the music

industry” – the ones pushing rock and roll, funk, and soul over jazz. As a “self-reliance programme,” the promotion of black classical music by jazz musicians fits comfortably under the cultural politics umbrella of Black Power.¹⁹

Rahsaan Roland Kirk would not have questioned linking black classical music to Black Power. Judged by the standards of Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, who defined Black Power in part by calling on African Americans to resist “cultural terrorism” by “redefine[ing] ourselves” through the recovery of their African heritage, it is easy to see Kirk, who used “black classical music” as a way to redefine jazz and jazz artists, as promoting Black Power. Especially after he changed his name a second time to “Rahsaan,” more and more saw Kirk as a Black Power spokesman. The name came to him in a dream, but in an era when Cassius Clay became Muhammad Ali and Lew Alcindor became Kareem Abdul Jabbar, the name change was often interpreted as an indication of converting to Islam or at least an adherence to militant politics.²⁰

Yet, as a memory entrepreneur, Kirk saw himself primarily as an educator, presenting – and sometimes lecturing – about jazz history to his audiences. Indeed, this was central to his identity. He told audiences that his mother played Charlie Parker and Sidney Bechet to him when he was still in the womb. In recounting his artistic education to interviewers, he recalled that he sat in with Count Basie and Charlie Parker, both of whom encouraged him. When Kirk moved to New York in 1961, he joined the big band of Charles Mingus, whom Kirk and others regarded as both jazz scholar and political artist. As a Mercury Records recording artist in the early to mid-1960s, Kirk repeatedly paid tribute to past jazz greats – Gary Giddins calls him a “great jazz patriot” for the “list of his compositions [that] reads like a register of jazz saints and includes tributes to Lester Young, Clifford Brown, Sidney Bechet, Don Byas, Fats Waller, Charles Mingus, Dizzy Gillespie, Johnny Griffin, Harry Carney, and Barney Bigard.”²¹ By Kirk’s reckoning, the likes of Parker, Bechet, and Coltrane were no less important to American music than Mozart, Bach, and Beethoven to European classical music. Renaming jazz as “black classical music” placed it on the same plane of (un-erased) respectability as classical music.²²

It makes sense that some historians would identify Kirk and black classical music with the wider Black Arts Movement – or at least within a strain of black nationalism associated with the jazz avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s. Kirk certainly would have supported Stokely Carmichael’s call to resist “the dictatorship of definition, interpretation, and consciousness,” imposed on the black community by the white majority, a dictatorship that in his view, had robbed African Americans of a full appreciation of black creative genius. Kirk’s jazz evangelism and history lessons functioned in much the same way that the writings of Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, and Larry Neal called for “cultural recovery and retrieval.” Indeed, for Baraka, only the blues and jazz

had “been able to survive the constant and willful dilutions of the black middle class” – the same folks whom Kirk tagged for not paying enough attention to New Orleans music – and that gave the music its revolutionary potential.²³

Even if Kirk did not fit seamlessly into a Black Power political tradition, the Jazz and People’s Movement emerged, in part, as a by-product of a longstanding cultural nationalism most often associated with the Black Arts Movement. In recent years, historians and others have corrected earlier interpretations of the Black Arts Movement as merely an auxiliary to Black Power. In fact, as James Smethurst has argued, it makes just as much sense to see Black Power as the “political wing of the Black Arts Movement” as the other way around. But even at the height of Black Power, cultural nationalism was hardly new. As Daniel Widener has argued, “a concern with the politics of art consistently stood at the forefront of black politics after 1941.” Robin D. G. Kelley has shown how artists such as Randy Weston, Ahmed Abdul-Malik, Sathima Bea Benjamin, and Guy Warren went as far as rejecting the notion of “a unique black American identity,” and instead chose to identify more with Africa. Meanwhile, other jazz artists participated more directly in the Black Arts Movement and the cultural nationalism associated with poet Amiri Baraka and Maulana Karenga, founder of the black nationalist US organization. Herbie Hancock, Don Cherry, Jimmy Heath, and others, for example, accepted Swahili names and recorded an album called *Kawaida*, which effectively celebrated the cultural nationalist teachings of Karenga and US. By participating in what Robin Kelley has called a “self-conscious collective effort to promote black art for black communities” these musicians played, presented, and taught what we might call Black Power jazz.²⁴

DIY in Black Power Jazz

By 1970, when the Jazz and People’s Movement formed, jazz artists had built a vast array of local projects that, even if they were not at first associated with black nationalism, eventually came to be so. Although Do-It-Yourself (DIY) is more commonly associated with the punk revolution of the late 1970s and 1980s, when musicians and fans rejected music industry promoters, record labels, and the music press in favor of putting on their own shows, recording for their own labels, and launching their own “zines” and radio shows, jazz musicians built a nationwide urban archipelago of DIY projects in the Sixties. In effect, Black Power jazz existed long before Carmichael coined the term “Black Power.”²⁵

Indeed, Charles Mingus first modeled a DIY ethic as early as 1953 when he established The Jazz Workshop in New York City. The Workshop functioned at first as an actual workshop for musicians who wanted to get together and try out new material. By 1960, it had become politicized. That year, out of the Workshop, Mingus and drummer Max Roach plotted

against Newport Jazz Festival promoter George Wein, whom they felt had been deliberately excluding and underpaying major black jazz artists. Primarily (but not entirely) as a publicity stunt, Mingus and Roach organized a counter-festival elsewhere in Newport, timed to coincide with Wein's festival, featuring Coleman Hawkins, Kenny Dorham, and Philly Jo Jones, among others. "It was exhilarating for the musicians involved to realize," Nat Hentoff later wrote, "that for once in their careers" they could exclude "booking agents, impresarios, and other middlemen" and produce their own festival on their terms. Coming in the same year as the lunch-counter sit-ins in Greensboro, Nashville, and elsewhere, the counter-festival functioned, one journalist said, like a "sit-out."²⁶

Less than a year later, Roland Kirk joined Mingus's band and became his protégé in both music and politics. Mingus joked that Kirk would be his new creation, "my Frankenstein," but, in fact, Mingus grew quite fond of Kirk. He later wrote a song, "Roland Kirk's Message," in his honor. Kirk returned the favor with two songs, "Where Mingus and Monk Live," and "Mingus-Griff Song." Kirk, who played and recorded with Mingus on songs such as "Oh Lord, Don't Let Them Drop that Atomic Bomb on Me," witnessed plenty of the bandleader's stage rants and absorbed the lesson that black jazz artists had a responsibility as citizens to speak up.²⁷

In the first half of the 1960s, jazz musicians, particularly those associated with "free jazz" or the "New Thing," experimented with DIY projects as a way of wresting control away from the club owners. Trumpeter Bill Dixon established the Jazz Composers Guild in New York in 1964. Dixon had led a Boston civil rights group, the En Garde Committee for Freedom, with other activists and musicians. The Jazz Composers Guild, which included Archie Shepp, Cecil Taylor, Roswell Rudd, Paul and Carla Bley, organized their own concerts and coordinated their own publicity. They only accepted offers from established clubs if those offers were considered "advantageous to the Guild as a whole." In Los Angeles, Horace Tapscott founded the Underground Musicians Association to do much the same thing as the Guild, but for West Coast musicians. Likewise, in 1965, a group of Chicago musicians started the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). As Joseph Jarman of the Art Ensemble of Chicago said, "this organization came about so that we would be able to do that under our own terms rather than under the terms of The Man." They founded the AACM to put an end to feeling "constantly controlled by the honky mentality," Jarman said. Similarly, in New York, Amiri Baraka, Larry Neal and others established the Jazzmobile in order to bring music to black audiences in "culturally-deprived areas where many of the younger Blacks had never heard jazz before." Jazzmobile artists emphasized that they did not seek "recognition from the dominant white society," as Neal put it. The black artist, Neal

countered, “must decide that his art belongs primarily to his own people.” But not all jazz artists, even those regarded as radicals, agreed.²⁸

While Kirk supported bringing black creative genius to the black community, he likewise demanded recognition of that genius from the whites who owned and controlled the economic infrastructure of jazz in the United States. Kirk certainly agreed with Archie Shepp, who told one white interviewer, “you own the music and we make it.” As jazz historian Frank Kofsky argued at the time, “with very minor exceptions,” whites owned “the booking agencies, recording companies, nightclubs, festivals, magazines, radio stations, etc.” Blacks, on the other hand, owned “nothing but their talent.” Nowhere, Kofsky argued, was “the disparity between the level of black achievement and the lack of appropriate white recognition (in socioeconomic terms) as gross as in jazz; nowhere else, that is, is a black man venerated as an artist of the greatest creative potential at precisely the same moment as he is being pushed into the gutter as a nigger.” While the DIY approach seen at Mingus’s alternative Newport festival and in the Jazz Composers Guild generated cultural recognition for the artists, it was not accompanied by an attendant redistribution of profit. Therefore, Kirk and others brainstormed about ways to pair cultural recognition with socioeconomic redistribution.²⁹

As early as 1966, artists such as Shepp and Cecil Taylor called for musician boycotts of certain jazz clubs, record companies, trade magazines, and musicians’ unions. Only by withholding their participation from the existing system, they believed, could they compel white recognition and compensation for their talent. Despite the DIY efforts taking place all over jazz, however, the boycott idea never gained real traction. Self-booking and self-recording did not pay the bills. And the labels and clubs could survive just fine without the relatively smaller audiences enamored with free jazz. Black jazz artists needed something closer to a broad-based social movement. What they needed was an extension of the civil rights movement, with a dose of countercultural flair, to get the attention of those in power.³⁰

Enter Rahsaan Roland Kirk. By the end of the 1960s, Kirk made a name for himself as an artist deeply concerned with the question of race. Especially after Kirk moved to Atlantic Records in 1967, he began a long custom of recording music that directly addressed racial issues. On albums such as *The Inflated Tear* (1968), *Volunteered Slavery* (1969), *Rahsaan, Rahsaan* (1970), *Natural Black Inventions: Root Strata* (1971), *Blacknuss* (1972), *Bright Moments* (1974) through to *the Case of the Three Sided Dream in Audio Color* (1975), Kirk consistently deployed his knowledge of jazz history for political purposes. On *Volunteered Slavery*, Kirk recorded his own versions of Stevie Wonder’s “My Cherie Amour,” and Burt Bacharach’s “I Say a Little Prayer,” not because Atlantic had pressured him to do so, but because he and the band enjoyed playing them. “That’s why it’s

‘Volunteered Slavery,’” Ed Williams wrote in the liner notes. Critic Robert Palmer interpreted the title song as “Kirk’s comment on – you name it, Amerikan democracy, the music business, habits – all of it, ‘volunteered slavery.’” By calling it slavery, Kirk signaled that artists were hardly free in the existing music industry landscape; reaching a wide audience required recording popular songs. Even so, Kirk infuses parts of “I Say a Little Prayer” with flashes of Coltrane’s “A Love Supreme,” and turns it into a commentary on the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr, shouting at the start “they shot him down! Down to the ground!” (which is why listeners need to say a little prayer). In effect, Kirk turned a Burt Bacharach easy-listening tune into what Josh Kun has called “an eight-minute-long black civil rights howl.” The second side of the album, recorded live at the Newport Jazz Festival, features a three-song tribute to John Coltrane.³¹

Dreams, Vibrations, and the Counterculture

Like some of the black cultural nationalists of the Black Arts Movement, Kirk also came across as deeply spiritual at times, which made him attractive to a countercultural audience beyond black nationalists. Kirk never presented himself as a spiritual leader – he was no jazz counterpart to, say, Maulana Karenga – but that did not stop others from seeing him that way. The combination of his musical virtuosity, sightlessness, and sense of style stirred a measure of awe and reverence among many in his audience. By the end of the Sixties, it became common for reviewers to describe Kirk’s performances not merely as musical, but “as an experience,” “nothing short of a happening.” In one typical review from 1969, a writer suggested that Kirk’s music “explores the depths of human anguish and deprivation, yet it reveals the joy which can only be experienced by a man and his compatriots who, through their musical existence, radiate the positive essence of being.” Similarly, Ed Williams observed that Kirk “completely overwhelms you with a sonic-outpouring that transforms the stage into the altar of an ancient African rite where Roland is the link between this and the spiritual world, transmitting strength to the weak, hope to the dejected, healing and protection to the faithful.” Critic Robert Palmer agreed, urging his readers go see Kirk play in Manhattan, either at the Vanguard or Slug’s. “You won’t be disappointed,” he wrote. “You’ll be saved.”³²

If Kirk never presented himself as a spiritual leader, audiences could be forgiven for mistaking him, at least in his appearance, for some kind of “psychedelic African shaman.” He often dressed in long caftans that extended nearly to the floor and draped beads and an array of small instruments – flutes, whistles, horns, and bells – around both his neck and his long walking stick. Critic Glenn O’Brien later wrote that Kirk dressed like a “beatnik Nigerian undertaker,” but in the gatefold photo of



Figure 3. June 1973: Rahsaan Roland Kirk and the Vibration Society, backstage at Keystone Korner, San Francisco. Gatefold image from the *Bright Moments* LP. Photograph by Jim Marshall, courtesy Jim Marshall Estate.

the *Bright Moments* LP (Figure 3), taken in the back office of San Francisco's Keystone Korner, Kirk looks like he might be the leader of a small band of hippie spiritual seekers, or revolutionaries – or both.³³ At other times, though, Kirk embodied his own form of what Judy Kutulas calls the era's "peacock style."³⁴ He often stepped on stage wearing shiny vinyl jumpsuits, with two white lions, representing Kirk's astrological sign, Leo, emblazoned on his chest. And on some occasions, he wore an eclectic ensemble that, according to one review, "would scare the pants off Carnaby Street customers": a sheepskin vest over a turtleneck shirt, strings of love beads, a thick chain belt, and knee-high leather boots adorned with bells. "It symbolizes vibrations of people," Kirk told one interviewer who asked about his outfit. "You feel uneasy about it, but that's what eyesight does to you . . . it's an awful hangup."³⁵

Kirk spoke frequently of both dreams and vibrations in ways that seemed alternately spiritual and psychedelic. "Part of my religion is through dreams," he told one interviewer. "My philosophy is through dreams . . . let's say I'm motivated by dreams." Indeed, just as Kirk said that the idea to play multiple reed instruments simultaneously came to him in a teenage dream, he explained in 1970, on the eve of the Jazz and People's Movement protests, that his new name had come to him in a dream in which he heard everyone calling him, "Rahsaan, Rahsaan." The name, he claimed, could be

translated to mean either “the sound of the sun,” or “black vibrations.” Without the burden of eyesight, Kirk said he could actually hear the sun, which “sets off a whole lot of vibrations.” If people would just “close their eyes enough,” he argued, they, too, could hear the sun. “Sometimes on tenor, I try to get a sun sound.” Such pronouncements seemed to place Kirk at the center of the era’s counterculture and its pursuit of expanding consciousness. As Rob Tyner, lead singer of Detroit’s revolutionary rock group, the MC5, put it, “the art form we are dealing with is literally vibrations because we produce sound vibrations.” The type of music – rock, soul, or jazz – did not matter, Tyner argued. “If it says something to you on a vibrational level, you stay and you become more opened up by it.”³⁶

Yet Kirk was not the first jazz artist to invoke the cosmic power of dreams and vibrations. He certainly would have been aware that King Pleasure derived his name from a dream in which, at age 6, he realized that he was the “real savior of the universe,” and a “baby planet nucleus.” On his 1960 LP, *Golden Days*, Pleasure described both the dream and his philosophy of Planetism.³⁷ More famously, Sun Ra (whom Kirk knew well) recorded at least half a dozen “meditations on dreams” over the years. Sun Ra said that his dream experiences taught him that “a substitute future, a vice-future (though not a bad one), and an alter-destiny can be developed” for all of humanity. At the same time, unlike Kirk, who saw vibrations as universal and unifying, Sun Ra worried about “other kinds of vibrations” that “tampered” with the goodness in people. “If any force were to attack this planet from outer space, it would attack with vibrations,” he said. “We’ve got to have a kind of music to counteract any vibrations from outer space that would be harmful to this planet.” To a mainstream American public wowed by the science behind NASA’s Apollo missions, such talk might have seemed wacky, but among a countercultural audience, the cosmic power of the universe’s vibrations had currency.³⁸

Later in the 1970s, prominent black cultural commentators such as Gil Scott-Heron and Ellis Haizlip would speak of “vibrations” as central to black solidarity, but for Kirk, dreams and vibrations served as invisible forces that brought together a young, interracial, countercultural audience for a higher purpose. Heron told *Rolling Stone* in 1975 that “Our vibration is based on creative solidarity: trying to influence the black community toward the same kind of dignity and self-respect that we know is necessary to survive. We’re trying to put out survival kits on wax.” And as Gayle Wald has shown, Haizlip saw the vibrations of “black counterpublic spaces” – of black people’s “occupation” of white spaces – as critical to a utopian vision of transforming white cultural spaces, including television. No doubt, Kirk would have been sympathetic with both Heron’s and Haizlip’s prescriptive use of “vibrations,” but his use of the term preceded theirs and always took on a more inclusive tone. Although he did not oppose occupations such as

sit-ins as a tactic, he ultimately sought not a counterpublic space, but an integrated space where black musicians participated equally – and were compensated equally – with white musicians.³⁹

In fact, as early as 1970, the same year that Kirk launched the Jazz and People's Movement, he began referring to both his band and his audience – an interracial community of kindred spirits – as the Vibration Society. “The Vibration Society created us,” he said. “Our music *is* the vibrations that hold society together . . . The Vibration Society we're talking about is brought about through our music.” To the extent that Kirk articulated a theory of music, and the sonic affect of his music in particular, it was that vibrations possessed transformative and transcendent power. Some years later, he wrote to his fans about the necessity “for us to vibrate through the music with each other. . . .to keep our vibration chain going,” as a way to sustain this global community.⁴⁰

Consequently, Kirk's combination of black power jazz and psychedelic presence attracted an enormous countercultural audience in clubs and on college campuses – much larger than any other jazz artist, and as big as many top rock and roll acts. It did not hurt that some of the most famous rock stars in the world adored Kirk and his music. Jimi Hendrix's biographer, Charles Shaar Murray, claims that Hendrix was “in awe” of Kirk, arriving in London “with a battered copy of *Rip, Rig, and Panic* [Kirk's 1965 LP] in his luggage,” and jumping at the chance to play with Kirk when he played Ronnie Scott's club. In addition to Hendrix, Kirk's performances in London attracted The Who's Pete Townshend, the Hollies, and Donovan, among others. By 1969, Kirk's virtuosity led film director John Crome to invite him to perform in his concert documentary, *Supershow*, alongside Led Zeppelin, Stephen Stills, and including jams with Eric Clapton, Buddy Guy, Jack Bruce, and Dick Heckstall-Smith. The way that Kirk sang and scatted through the flute as he played “was a way of vulgarizing and humanizing something that's often thought of as a refined classical instrument,” Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson later said. Kirk's subversive approach inspired Anderson to “make the flute something that could stand up next to Clapton and Hendrix.”⁴¹

In the United States, Kirk similarly built an audience beyond the usual jazz crowd, particularly after his electrifying performance at the 1969 Newport Jazz Festival (some of which appears on the second side of *Volunteered Slavery*). He shared the stage with Frank Zappa, the Grateful Dead, Love, The Who, Led Zeppelin, Santana, Tower of Power, and many other rock groups at venues such as Winterland and the Fillmore in San Francisco, the Fillmore East in New York, the Boston Tea Party, and numerous university campuses. At universities, Kirk and percussionist Joe Texidor made a point of meeting with students, sitting on the stage for “a rap session” before each show. He sometimes ended a show by smashing a wooden chair to bits the way that Pete Townshend destroyed his guitars; “that would make those college kids go frickin' crazy!,” his widow, Dorthaan

Kirk recalled. More than that, Kirk succeeded in “bridging the jazz-rock gap,” according to the *New York Daily News*, by bringing the Woodstock generation to his headlining shows at places like the Village Vanguard and Town Hall in New York. As Todd Barkan later recalled, Kirk’s music, which is “basically psychedelic music” that “expands your consciousness,” did a lot to attract hippies to Keystone Korner in San Francisco, and to establish its reputation as “the only, really, psychedelic jazz club, ever.”⁴²

Kirk built this countercultural audience in the way that he played his music but also in the way that he spoke from the stage. As one reviewer noted, Kirk proved, at a time when the influence of jazz seemed to be fading, that jazz, in fact, “still has the power to communicate in a real and direct way with a young mass audience.” To see Kirk play may have been like attending an “apocalyptic revival meeting,” but as with a Charles Mingus performance, one could expect commentary, too. Robert Palmer noted that Kirk delighted in speaking to his audiences from the stage, with “bits about dope to let you know he digs it, bits about Vietnam to let you know he doesn’t, little speeches thanking the audience for its vibrations.”⁴³

And yet, even as Kirk became popular as a hip, transcendent, countercultural figure, he never lost his militant edge. An undercurrent of resentment could almost always be detected under his more populist calls for uniting “all of the beautiful people” through music. If as a memory entrepreneur, he demanded recognition of black creative genius, he also criticized white popular artists for making money off an art form founded by African-Americans. He complained that the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and others “come into the country, they take all the bread [money],” playing bigger and bigger venues. Even as he shared the stage with rock acts, he complained that “the white man is playing our music and not giving us credit for it. They’re the ones that headline the bill, and it’s our music that they play.” Black musicians, on the other hand, had to “sacrifice” their music if they wanted to be heard, as he himself did on *Volunteered Slavery*, recording his own versions of popular Bert Bacharach and Stevie Wonder songs. That anyone would tolerate that situation made him angry. “I’m not bitter,” he would joke to audiences. “I’m bittersweet.” Despite conciliatory talk of vibrating together through the music, Kirk never hid his frustration with the economic theft and exploitation of black jazz musicians.⁴⁴

By 1969, as Kirk reached a wider, more diverse audience, he began to speak of the plight of black jazz musicians in ways that registered the influence of black cultural nationalism, the counterculture, and the civil rights struggle. Sounding like Archie Shepp, Kirk complained that “the black man and his music have been and will continue to suffer at the hands of managers and promoters.” The black jazz musician, he said, “is getting screwed out of gigs and out of making a living in the music business.” In

one particularly ugly episode, Kirk took on legendary promoter Bill Graham at the Fillmore in San Francisco when bouncers at the front door would not let Kirk's pianist, Ron Burton, enter, even as members of Led Zeppelin glided by unperturbed. Kirk protested by simply refusing to go on stage. Furious, Graham pulled Kirk and his bandmates from the bill, paying them for three nights just to go away. "It's the closest we ever made to the rip-off that the rock groups make," Kirk later quipped.⁴⁵

But rather than call for boycotts of clubs and a DIY approach to music booking, Kirk demanded equal treatment from the club owners, the talent bookers, the record labels, and the radio and television stations. "All I want is freedom and power," he said. "I want the freedom to live the way I please, and the power to preserve this freedom. This isn't a concept just for black people, it is for whites, yellows, Indians . . . freedom is for everybody." In this case, "power" meant economic power – to earn enough to live as an artist. As such, Kirk's vision for himself and other jazz musicians mirrored what David Farber has called the counterculture's commitment to "right livelihoods." For Farber, the counterculture *writ large* functioned as "an ongoing project of self-conscious cultural producers" trying to "build more autonomy into their lives" – not only as "lone practitioners . . . but as part of a collective experiment in community building." Kirk wanted freedom to live the way he pleased, certainly, but he founded the Jazz and People's Movement as a way to unify a community of artists and fans – the Vibration Society. The white power structure would then be compelled to both recognize black creative genius and provide the economic compensation such genius demanded.⁴⁶

The Jazz and People's Movement

Kirk founded the Jazz and People's Movement not to protest against the music industry, but, rather, to protest the erasure of black creative genius from American network television. For Kirk, network television was the key battleground on which to fight for greater black visibility and simultaneously win the chance for black jazz artists to make their own right livelihoods. As Aniko Bodroghkozy has shown, despite predictions in the early 1950s that the new medium of television would prove to be a "strong ally to the black community in its struggle for racial equality," such hopes were misplaced. By the 1970s, network television had demonstrated that its engagement with the black community – whether in original programming or network news – would be limited to certain narratives: "the story of 'black and white together,' the story of the 'worthy black victim,' and the story of the aspirational 'civil rights subject.'" Although 1970s situation comedies such as *Good Times* and *Sanford and Son* sought to portray stories of black

life and struggle, these were exceptions on a white dominated television landscape.⁴⁷

For Kirk, however, the absence of black *musicians* – including and especially jazz musicians – on network talk shows and variety shows constituted the most glaring whitewashing of black life and culture. He often complained from the stage that Lawrence Welk and his orchestra commanded a national television audience each Saturday night while more accomplished black jazz bandleaders such as Count Basie or Duke Ellington remained in the TV shadows.

To find black music on television, one had to turn to *Soul Train*, a black counterpart to the mostly white teenage dance show, *American Bandstand*, or to *Soul!* a black arts show aired on public television. First broadcast in Chicago on a UHF channel, WCIU-TV, *Soul Train* eventually reached a nationally syndicated audience, showcasing Motown, R&B, funk, and disco artists. Christine Acham notes that the show's founder, Don Cornelius, brought a sense of black cultural nationalism to the show, staffing and running the production with black staff, presenting black performers, and targeting a black viewership through its formatting and advertising. Cornelius said that he wanted “to present to the black market visually what they've been hearing on the radio . . . and to give exposure to those artists that don't get invited to do any other free television.” Similarly, as Gayle Wald has shown, Ellis Haizlip founded *Soul!* as a variety show program “dedicated to cultural expressions of the black freedom movement . . . a weekly platform for music, poetry, dance, politics, style, and fashion.” Broadcast at first locally on New York's public television affiliate, WNDT (later WNET), *Soul!* could eventually be seen on PBS affiliates around the country. Like Don Cornelius at *Soul Train*, Haizlip fashioned *Soul!* as a show produced by and for African Americans. According to Wald, Haizlip saw “Soul!” – the name and the word – as a pre-figurative term, as a “placeholder for an as-yet-unknown word – and world – that the television program, in its own small way, would attempt to envision.”⁴⁸

Although Rahsaan Roland Kirk knew and appreciated *Soul!*, the Jazz and People's Movement differed in crucial ways from both Haizlip's project and *Soul Train*. For one thing, all this talk of “soul” left Kirk cold. He saw it as a smokescreen. Kirk critiqued both soul and funk as commodified (and, thus, adulterated) forms of black music. “Sure, you see a whole lot of this soul jive,” he said, but “it's really the blues, but they callin' it soul to sell it.” Rather than confront the television audience with blackness (or *blacknuss*, as he would later call it), “everything is sell, sell, sell . . .” In the meantime, the greatest jazz artists (who showed up rarely on *Soul!* and never on *Soul Train*) had been shut out of the national memory and the marketplace. Reclaiming their rightful place in both would require greater visibility than that offered by these syndicated shows.⁴⁹

As such, Kirk took the fight to network television. Kirk believed, much as scholar Richard Iton later argued, that jazz – like other black cultural forms – derives its political legitimacy from its “ability to render the invisible visible . . . or the unheard audible.” Iton showed that in the struggle against exclusion and erasure, black artists have drawn “from both the integrationist and nationalist traditions, depending on the audience in question and the prevailing circumstances.” Kirk’s approach to the restoration of black creative genius to its rightful place sometimes drew upon black nationalist rhetoric and practice, but always in furtherance of a goal that was fundamentally integrationist. Kirk never thought that the “audience in question” (to borrow again from Iton) was anyone but the entire American public. His “survival kits,” on wax or on television, were fundamentally both interracial and economic.⁵⁰

This orientation emerged out of Kirk’s political experiences in both the nonviolent civil rights movement and the labor movement. He participated in the 1963 March on Washington and held in high esteem both Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. When King was killed, Kirk got his band together and rolled through the streets of San Francisco for hours, playing music from the back of a flatbed truck, as a way to provide a peaceful outlet for the community’s anger and pain. He also belonged to the American Federation of Musicians (Local 802, in New York) which supported him in his decision to leave Mercury Records because, he said, “they wouldn’t push my material.”⁵¹

Kirk first grew frustrated with the television networks in the early 1960s, not long after he arrived in New York. “I used to write letters, I used to take records to these people, and I used to try to get different talent coordinators to come out and hear us; it didn’t do any good,” he remembered. By 1969, Kirk’s friend, Mark Davis, began sending letters to television shows all over the United States, enclosing reviews of Kirk’s records and performances, in an effort to persuade the shows to book Kirk’s band. He got nowhere. Kirk persuaded Davis to shift the focus beyond Kirk’s own lack of recognition to the absence of any black heroes on television. As Kirk remarked to one interviewer, his young son saw no black Superman on television. “They ain’t got no black man flying on television . . . that he can relate to.” His son had to relate to Superman, he said, but he “never sees him swooping down to pick up no black people, you dig.” These comments on heroes on television might seem like a departure from his main message, but they were, in fact, consistent with his worldview. For Kirk, the heroes of black creative genius were jazz musicians, and it seemed inconceivable that television could render so many black musical heroes nonexistent.⁵²

When *Down Beat* reported on the first Jazz and People’s Movement action against the *Merv Griffin Show*, it called the protest “unorthodox,” but other than the organizers being jazz musicians, there was nothing

unorthodox about it. Kirk acknowledged to one journalist that “it’s a drag” to have to disrupt a show to “get ‘em to know that you are serious,” but organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) had “condoned what we’ve done.” In fact, the Jazz and People’s Movement followed a long tradition of seeking, as Kevin Gaines has argued, “the cooperation of white political and business elites in the pursuit of race progress.” The Black Arts Movement ruled out cooperation with white political and business elites (and instead formed their own self-run collectives), but the Jazz and People’s Movement hewed more closely to the example of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s (SCLC) Operation Breadbasket.⁵³

Operation Breadbasket had garnered national attention by pressuring private companies to treat black workers and customers no differently than they would treat white workers and customers. Before his death, Martin Luther King, Jr had appointed a young Jesse Jackson as national director of Operation Breadbasket, and Jackson quickly led the organization in a series of boycotts against the A&P and other national supermarket chains. A Greater New York Operation Breadbasket Fact Sheet stated the organization’s goals simply: “to bring about a fair participation in this country’s economic system by the Black Community.”⁵⁴ In the same way that Breadbasket pushed the A&P to reinvest the money it made from black customers into the community, the Jazz and People’s Movement would press the networks to reinvest in the black artists who founded and carried on the musical tradition from which they had profited.

It is not clear how Kirk first aligned himself with Operation Breadbasket. Jackson directed the national office and the most prominent campaigns from Chicago, not New York, but Kirk certainly knew of Jackson’s work from (if nowhere else) Julian “Cannonball” Adderley’s 1970 LP, *Country Preacher*, recorded live at Breadbasket headquarters. In fact, the group named the title song after Jackson, who is heard giving a rousing introduction to the song “Walk Tall,” at the start of Side One. Adderley himself tells the audience that he and his band have been preaching about “the good word of Operation Breadbasket” and black music all over the country. It made sense that Kirk, a good friend of Adderley’s, would pick up on the same impulse and link his own work to that of Operation Breadbasket, too, particularly as the Greater New York branch of Breadbasket began to ramp up activity in 1969 and 1970. Jesse Jackson gave the keynote address at the New York branch’s opening in Brooklyn in October 1969, which also may have caught Kirk’s attention. Kirk worked with Rev. William A. Jones, pastor of the Bethany Baptist Church in Brooklyn, and head of the Greater New York Breadbasket, as both Breadbasket and the Jazz and People’s Movement operated in tandem, if not in direct coordination, across most of 1970 and 1971. As Kirk led the Jazz and People’s Movement in one protest after another against the television networks, Operation Breadbasket

opened up a new front in the campaign against the A&P in New York, resulting in a national boycott, and many arrests at nonviolent sit-ins at the company's Manhattan headquarters.⁵⁵

In the wake of the successful *Merv Griffin Show* action, the Jazz and People's Movement circulated a list of demands to other network television shows, threatening similar disruptions and boycotts. Here, they were following Operation Breadbasket's model. The list of demands included the establishment of a "board of jazz musicians" that would "coordinate production of at least three to four jazz specials per season, designed to educate the public to jazz, r&b, gospel, etc." The television specials would not only be attentive to putting the music in historical context, but it would help to bring new talent to the viewing public. Moreover, the movement called for the regular appearance of black musicians on weekly television talk shows, variety shows, and other programs – not only playing music but as featured interviewees, like white artists. "The airways belong to the public, and we're here to dramatize that fact," trumpeter Lee Morgan said after the *Griffin Show* protest. "Jazz is the only real American music, but how often do you see jazz musicians in front of the camera? And we're not talking about jazz musicians playing in the house band!" Finally, like Operation Breadbasket, the Jazz and People's Movement demanded that the networks hire black producers, directors, and talent scouts.⁵⁶

When Kirk led others into NBC Studios at Rockefeller Center to interrupt a *Tonight Show* taping, NBC producers quickly capitulated and promised a series of meetings with musicians. "I'm not here just to put together shows," director Joseph Cuneff told the activists. "I'm here to help." NBC's *Today Show* soon agreed to host Kirk and others in two half-hour segments, back-to-back, with host Hugh Downs introducing the Jazz and People's Movement by saying "when there's that much desperation to get a message across, I want to hear what the message is." Kirk responded as a memory entrepreneur by making some of his usual arguments about Black Classical Music as the American equivalent to Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, but more pointedly also said that "without black music there would be no rock." Without black creative genius as a foundation, he said, "there would be no Tom Jones, there would be no Beatles, there would be no hip talk" because Lester Young and others were the "revolutionaries" who invented this music and countercultural way of speaking (he specifically mentioned use of the word "dig!"). Artists like Young, he contended, "haven't really got the credit that they deserve." In contrast, when black jazz musicians went to Europe, Kirk argued, they were routinely invited onto television and radio shows, promoting not only their own work, but the music in general.⁵⁷

When the Jazz and People's Movement disrupted the recording of ABC's *Dick Cavett Show* on October 13 1970, producers moved swiftly to book members of the movement on a show the following week. Cavett himself

acknowledged his sense of “guilt” for not knowing more about the full range of jazz represented by his guests: Freddie Hubbard, Cecil Taylor, Billy Harper, and Andrew Cyrille. Although Kirk could not be present, his wife at the time, Edith, read out an endorsement of the Jazz and People’s Movement by Operation Breadbasket. The group had been booked for a 15-minute slot, but the discussion went on for half an hour. Kirk later told *Rolling Stone* that the Cavett panel marked a real breakthrough because Cavett interviewed the musicians, “rather than just going on, playing that music – play your horn, boy! – and that’s it, to be rushed off . . .” Later, *The Merv Griffin Show* did the same by inviting Cannonball Adderley both to perform and to sit for an interview. These brief appearances hardly compared to the exposure of country music stars such as Johnny Cash and Glen Campbell, each of whom had their own weekly network variety shows, but they were breakthroughs, nonetheless. *Washington Post* columnist Hollie West, for one, found the sudden attention paid to jazz musicians by the television networks thrilling. Yet, “as welcome as these recent appearances are,” he wrote, “they are not enough.” If a Vladimir Horowitz or Arthur Rubinstein “can be given an hour of network time, surely Ellington should get the same time to present his concert works,” West argued. “Why can’t we view a Roy Eldridge, Earl Hines, Oscar Peterson, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Modern Jazz Quartet, Cecil Taylor, Sarah Vaughan or Ella Fitzgerald at length?” These were exactly the questions Kirk had been asking for years.⁵⁸

The highwater mark for the Jazz and People’s Movement came in January 1971, when Kirk and others appeared on the legendary *Ed Sullivan Show* (Figure 4). Mark Davis had contacted the show’s producers not long after the Merv Griffin and Dick Cavett protests. Davis told them that if they wanted to avoid a similar disruption, they should book Kirk and others onto the show. Following a series of meetings, producer Robert H. Precht wrote to Kirk, saying that his team appreciated “the opportunity to become better acquainted with your music and the cause of the black jazz musician and the ‘Operation Breadbasket’ movement.” As “responsible producers” in network television, Precht wrote, “it is our desire to do what we can to further your aspirations.” He promised to book Kirk “along with a group of other jazz musicians” on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, early in 1971 and again in the following season. For his part, Kirk got the gig by promising to play something accessible, such as his version of Stevie Wonder’s “My Cherie Amour”. But when Ed Sullivan – the same man who introduced American television viewers to The Beatles – welcomed Kirk’s group to the stage, they looked like the musical wing of the Black Panther Party. Kirk brought jazz giants Charles Mingus, Archie Shepp, and Roy Haynes to join him and five others from The Vibration Society for the performance. Davis later recalled that Kirk did not believe that this All-Star



Figure 4. January 1971: Ed Sullivan and Raheem Roland Kirk. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Michael Cuscuna.

band's appearance on *Ed Sullivan* would suddenly lead Americans to "go out and start buying jazz records." Rather, he assembled this group as way to get these artists on the historical record by having them appear together on the most popular variety show in television history.⁵⁹

Instead of a quick performance of a popular Stevie Wonder song, Kirk introduced the members of the band as he led them through an exhilarating, ramshackle medley. "True black music will be heard tonight," Kirk declared at the start. "We want you to get into it with us out in the audience. Don't let 'em wave a sign.," he said, knowing that they were going to go past their allotted time. "You just get into it with us." As he then played the opening lines of his own "The Inflated Tear," he went on to introduce Shepp as a "true artist, playwright, and saxophonist," before trading honks and pops with Mingus – it was clear by now that this was not "My Cherie Amour" – and launching into Mingus's revolutionary "Haitian Fight Song" – a song about which Mingus had once said, "I can't play it right unless I'm thinking about prejudice and persecution, and how unfair it is." Shepp later recalled that Kirk "insisted on doing his thing, and he didn't tailor the performance for television or Ed Sullivan . . . even the time he allotted to us." The medley concluded with a New Orleans style romp, featuring Kirk blowing on the clarinet, just as he had when he first disrupted Merv Griffin's show months earlier. For six minutes, it looked like a guerrilla takeover of America's most famous variety show, broadcast to millions.⁶⁰

Indeed, after the *Ed Sullivan Show* performance, it seemed for a brief time as though the revolution had been won. *Rolling Stone* gushed over the appearance of Shepp, "whose playing the past two years has been limited to small New York clubs," and Mingus, "who hasn't appeared anywhere for at least that long." To see "Shepp's guttural sax music" get its first national exposure, alongside Mingus, "grinning like a Cheshire cat," could only be seen as historic. Jazz critic Leonard Feather acknowledged the pathbreaking performance and commended "Kirk's principles and objectives." But he wondered "whether or not anything of lasting value to black music and/or jazz was accomplished." As it turned out, he was right to worry.⁶¹

Within a few months, Kirk himself concluded that the Jazz and People's Movement's successes on network television were fleeting. Television hosts like Merv Griffin, Dick Cavett, and Ed Sullivan had signaled their solidarity with the movement. *The Today Show's* Hugh Downs had said to Kirk, on air, that maybe black classical musicians, past and present, would finally get the recognition that they deserved. The medium of television, he continued, could advance the cause by "showing how amazing jazz is when it's played." But nothing of the sort happened. Kirk complained to one reporter that the *Ed Sullivan Show* "didn't mean shit to nobody, nowhere." There had been little follow-through from the networks or anyone else. "They haven't

invited us to play the White House, they haven't invited us nowhere," he lamented. "Still no one knows what we talked about."⁶²

Even as Kirk grew more frustrated, the Jazz and People's Movement expanded its attention to arts foundations and radio stations which were just as guilty of "whitewashing" black creative genius as network television. Archie Shepp launched a new organization, Black Artists for Community Action, that coordinated with the Jazz and People's Movement and Operation Breadbasket to target the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. Organizers demanded "an end to the obvious and blatant racist policies" of the Guggenheim Foundation "in the allocation of awards." They argued that the Foundation had "systematically excluded" black artists when handing out its awards. "The black community as a whole has become outraged by the acute suffering, degradation and GENOCIDE of the black artist by such white run foundations," the group wrote. Organizers demanded that 1 USD million be allocated to black arts experts for distribution to black artists, and that "special honorary awards" be awarded to black artists over the age of 50 "who have made outstanding contributions to the arts and humanities." Honorees could include deceased artists, whose families would be eligible for Foundation grants. When James Mathias, the Guggenheim Foundation's Administrative Vice President, dismissed the groups' accusations and refused to meet with them, Shepp and Kirk led a sit-in at the Foundation's offices, where more than a dozen people played horns, beat drums, and "disrupted the Foundation's activities for several hours." The following month, Charles Mingus received a 15,000 USD fellowship. Meanwhile, the Foundation sought to expand its jazz budget; although only 5,000 USD had been awarded to jazz musicians in 1970, by 1976, it had grown to nearly 700,000, USD and it cleared 1 USD million in 1979.⁶³

That same spring, the Jazz and People's Movement disrupted the Al Roberts Show on WLIB, a commercial jazz station (1190 on the AM band) in Harlem. Led again by Kirk and Shepp, along with Eddie Gale, the musicians and their supporters moved through the studios at the station, playing music, until they were granted airtime. Dick Novick, the station manager, explained that the station had been losing money on jazz over the last several years, which led management to move toward playing only R&B from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day. The activists countered that the station had abdicated its educational function and yielded to "Madison Avenue," which had been "dictating what the public wants, what is in demand" by "pushing only one form of our music." By the end of the year, the protests helped fuel a takeover bid that made WLIB the first black-owned radio station in New York.⁶⁴

At times, Kirk's frustration with the limited success of the Jazz and People's Movement caused him to propose more radical action. Like Cecil

Taylor before him, Kirk called for a national strike – days without music – as a way to draw attention to the erasure of black creative genius. If jazz musicians could get organized like the Black Panthers, he told one interviewer, they could “have some lights turned off and have days where you wouldn’t even hear no music; have days when we wouldn’t even permit disc jockeys to play records.” Only then, Kirk argued, “we would see a change.” There is no evidence that this plan ever got traction, but when Kirk accepted an interview request at San Francisco’s KSAN one night after playing at Keystone Korner, he showed up and hijacked the station. “You brought me on the show,” he said, “now I’m going to put on the show I want to put on.” He said over the air that he had guns and had locked the DJ in the closet (both statements were untrue and, in fact, the DJ remained in the booth). “We’re going to play black classical music,” Kirk preached, “and we’ll let people call in and talk about it.” For the next several hours, listeners called in to testify about their love of jazz. The police arrived, but let the show go on without making arrests.⁶⁵

Although the Jazz and People’s Movement did not last much beyond 1972, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, ever the memory entrepreneur, carried the movement’s torch in various ways for another five years until 1977, when he died from a stroke at age 41. On *Blacknuss* (1972), he pointed out to listeners that “there’s 36 black notes and 52 white notes” on a piano and introduced the title song as written using only the black notes. He gave one of his finest performances of that song in a late 1972 episode of *Soull!*, having again smashed a chair by way of introduction, delighting the mostly African-American studio audience. In 1975, Kirk issued *The Case of the 3 Sided Dream in Audio Color* (1975), an album that some have called the jazz equivalent to The Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* LP. Yet Kirk’s album was political in tone. In the album’s opening segment, the voice of God commands Kirk to go to sleep and dream. “Oh, dream? What am I gonna dream about?” Kirk replies. “I’m trying to wake up and live and make some money off the dreams that people been making off my dreams.” And as critic Stanley Crouch noted, Kirk proved himself to be “a very impressive archivist” on 1976’s *Other Folk’s Music*, sampling from a Paul Robeson recording and referencing the likes of Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, Fats Waller and Art Tatum throughout the record. He formed an all-star band, the Black Classical Music Society, featuring Ron Carter, Freddie Hubbard, Elvin Jones, and McCoy Tyner for a benefit concert in support of Todd Barkan’s Keystone Korner. And he kept the Vibration Society together, issuing semi-regular newsletters to members, and teaching students at a Vibration Society School of Music at his home in Orange, New Jersey.⁶⁶

Are We Really Still Doing This?

At the same time, Kirk lamented the failure of the Jazz and People's Movement to liberate black creative genius on "Plantation Earth." In fact, in his view, the exact opposite of what the movement aimed to achieve had come to pass. "It's all gettin' turned around," he told *Down Beat* in 1974. Instead of providing a platform for jazz, the networks tailored their music programming around specialized shows such as "The Midnight Special," and "In Concert" which featured mostly white rock bands. "These are things that we told them to do [for jazz], but they are turning around and presenting other music in the way we asked that they present Black Classical Music," Kirk concluded.⁶⁷

How much changed in the years that followed? Twenty-five years later, in 1999, NAACP President Kweisi Mfume described what he saw as "a virtual whitewash in programming" on network television. Not one of the three networks' 26 new shows for the 1999–2000 schedule included a leading nonwhite character. "This glaring omission is an outrage and a shameful display by network executives who are clueless, careless, or both," Mfume charged. "TV is such an enormous dictator of images, ideas, and stereotypes. To ignore that kind of presence in American homes and in the world is to ignore, I think, the greatest challenge we have." Although Richard Pryor had used his 1977 television show to present jazz, and although Branford Marsalis (and later Kevin Eubanks) led *The Tonight Show* band in the 1990s, Mfume effectively echoed Kirk in calling the erasure of both black creative genius and the black experience "the greatest challenge" facing activists in the long struggle for black equality.⁶⁸

In the new century, that challenge persists despite token advances. Questlove may lead The Roots as Jimmy Fallon's backing band on *The Tonight Show*, and Jon Batiste may lead *The Stephen Colbert Show* band, but few jazz artists appear as interviewed guests on those shows. With some exceptions, black creative genius remains at the margins of American television, presented mostly on subscription channels; indeed, one has to pay for Quincy Jones' Qwest.TV to find jazz on demand. The #OscarSoWhite campaign against the Academy Awards could likewise be applied to network television's erasure of jazz greats from the nation's airwaves. This reality is the reason that *Grey's Anatomy* actor Jesse Williams electrified the audience and captured media attention with his speech at the BET Awards in 2016. In accepting an acting prize, Williams criticized "this invention called whiteness" for "burying black people out of sight and out of mind while extracting our culture, our dollars, our entertainment like oil, black gold." Sounding like Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Williams accused the entertainment industry of "ghettoizing and demeaning our creations, then stealing them, gentrifying our genius." The key to overcoming this racial erasure, Williams suggested,

is by learning black history. “The more we learn about who we are and how we got here,” he said, “the more we will mobilize.” That would have been music to Rahsaan Roland Kirk’s ears.⁶⁹

Notes

1. “Musicians Disrupt TV Show, Ask More Jazz,” *Down Beat* Vol. 37, No. 19 (October 1 1970), 11; “Grass Roots Jazz Protest Hits TV,” *Down Beat*, Vol. 37, No. 20 (October 15 1970), 12, 39.
2. Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?*; Dudziak, “Josephine Baker, Racial Protest, and the Cold War”; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*; Monson, *Freedom Sounds*; Saul, *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain’t*; Kelley, *Africa Speaks, America Answers*; Feldstein, “I Don’t Trust You Anymore”; Feldstein, *How It Feels to Be Free*.
3. Van DeBurg, *Black Camelot*, 205; Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 262. Kirk is the subject of one non-scholarly biography: Kruth, *Bright Moments*.
4. Matlin, *On the Corner*, 151, 152.
5. Kun, *Audiotopia*, 138, 140–141.
6. Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?* 222.
7. Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, 33–34; Oropeza, “The Heart of Chicano History,” 50.
8. Feldstein, *How It Feels to Be Free*, 8.
9. Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past.” On the “long Sixties,” see, for example, Jameson, “Periodizing the 60s;” Marwick, “The Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties;” Varon, “Time Is an Ocean;” Farber, “The Radical Sixties;” Hayden, *The Long Sixties*.
10. “Grass Roots Jazz Protest Hits TV,” 39.
11. “Roland Kirk,” *Fusion*, June 12 1969, 7; “Roland Kirk: Modern One-Man Band,” *Ebony*, Vol 21, No. 7 (May 1966), 184.
12. Don DeMichael, “Roland Kirk and the Road to Frustration,” *Down Beat* Vol. 30, No. 12 (May 23 1963), 15; Valerie Wilmer, “Roland Kirk Talks to Valerie Wilmer,” *Jazz News and Review* Vol 7, No. 25 (Nov 1963), 4; Barkan, interview with author; Geoffrey Himes, “Rahsaan Roland Kirk: The Cult of Kirk,” *Jazz Times* June 2008, online: <http://jazztimes.com/articles/17992-rahsaan-roland-kirk-the-cult-of-kirk> (accessed April 11 2019).
13. Himes, “Rahsaan Roland Kirk”; “Kim Bonythong Presents Rahsaan Roland Kirk,” undated Australian promotional booklet, Joel Dorn Papers, Box 6, Archives Center, National Museum of American History Smithsonian; Gary Jardim, “Rashaan Roland Kirk: He Could See Only Light,” undated newspaper clipping, publication unknown, Frank Foster Papers, Duke University; “Rahsaan Roland Kirk is Ready,” undated Atlantic Records promotional clipping, Dorn Papers, Box 6; Dan Morgenstern notes that Wilbur Sweatman, Ross Gorman and Fess Williams also played “several instruments simultaneously. . .but these men used it as a showmanship trick, not for creative purposes” the way Kirk did. Dan Morgenstern, liner notes to *Rahsaan: The Complete Mercury Recordings of Roland Kirk*, Mercury Records, PHCE-4001-10 (1990), compact disc box set.
14. “Roland Kirk at Ronnie Scott’s,” *Jazz News and Review*, Vol. 7, No. 24 (Oct 1963), 9; Wilmer, “Roland Kirk Talks to Valerie Wilmer,” 3.
15. “Roland Kirk: Modern One-Man Band,” 181.

16. “The Seeker,” performed by Rahsaan Roland Kirk, *Rahsaan, Rahsaan*, Atlantic Records, SD 1575 (1970), LP.
17. Bob Palmer, “Their Lives in Art,” *Go Magazine*, Vol. II, No. 2 (April 1970), 46. Dan Morgenstern, “Roland Kirk,” liner notes to *Rahsaan*.
18. Mike Bourne, “Rahsaan Roland Kirk: Heavy Vibrations,” *Down Beat* Vol. 37, No. 19 (October 1 1970), 30; Michael Cuscuna, “Rahsaan Roland Kirk,” *Jazz & Pop*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Apr 1971), 35.
19. Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?*, 221, 222; Wilmer, *As Serious as Your Life*, 217.
20. Carmichael and Hamilton, *Black Power*, 34; See also, Joseph, *Waiting for the Midnight Hour*, 200.
21. Rahsaan Roland Kirk, “Bright Moments,” performed by Rahsaan Roland Kirk, *Compliments of the Mysterious Phantom*, Hyena Records, TMF 9211 (2003), compact disc; DeMichael, “Roland Kirk and the Road to Frustration,” 16; Giddins, *Visions of Jazz*, 432.
22. Todd Barkan, “Rahsaan Speaks His Peace,” *Down Beat* (August 15 1974), 42.
23. Carmichael quoted in Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 27; Karenga quoted in Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 80; Baraka quoted in Scot Brown, *Fighting for US*, 147.
24. Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 14; Widener, *Black Arts West*, 3; Kelley, *Africa Speaks, America Answers*; Brown, *Fighting for US*, 138; Kelley, “Dig They Freedom,” 18.
25. On DIY in punk, see MacLeod, *Kids of the Black Hole*; Mattson, “Did Punk Matter?”; Dunn, *Global Punk*.
26. Nat Hentoff, liner notes, *Newport Rebels*, Candid Records CJM 8022 (1961), LP; Saul, 125.
27. Santoro, *Myself When I’m Real*, 186. “Roland Kirk’s Message,” performed by Charles Mingus, *Mingus Plays Piano*, Impulse! A-60 (1964), LP; “Where Monk and Mingus Live,” performed by Roland Kirk, *Kirk’s Works*, Mercury Records, EMS-2-411, (1977), LP; “Mingus-Griff Song,” performed by Roland Kirk, *Kirk in Copenhagen*, Mercury Records, SR 60894 (1964), LP; “Oh Lord, Don’t Let Them Drop that Atomic Bomb on Me,” performed by Charles Mingus, *Oh Yeah*, Atlantic Records SD 1377 (1962), LP.
28. Backus, *Fire Music*, 70, 74–75; Wilmer, *As Serious as Your Life*, 214–15, 218; Widener, 128–29; Neal quoted in Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, 120.
29. Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, 12, 27–28.
30. Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 259–260.
31. Cuscuna, “Rahsaan Roland Kirk,” 35; “My Cherie Amour” and “I Say a Little Prayer,” performed by Roland Kirk, *Volunteered Slavery*, Atlantic Records, SD 1534 (1968), LP. Ed Williams, liner notes, *Volunteered Slavery*; Palmer, “Their Lives in Art,” 45–46.
32. “Roland Kirk,” *Fusion* June 12 1969, p. 7; Williams, liner notes, *Volunteered Slavery*; Palmer, “Their Lives in Art,” 45–46; “Kirk-Jones-Liebman,” concert review, publication unknown, ca. Sep 1968, Dorn Papers, Box 6.
33. John Stubblefield, “He Could Hear around Corners,” liner notes to *Dog Years in the Fourth Ring*, 32 Jazz Records, 32032, (1997), three compact disc set; Palmer, “Their Lives in Art,” 45; Glenn O’Brien, “The Great Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Or: What You Don’t Know about Black Classical Music Could Be Killing You,” unpublished 2002, *Rock’s Backpages* <http://rocksbackpages.com/print.html?ArticleID=7417>.
34. Kutulas, “Dedicated Followers of Fashion,” 174. See also, Kutulas, *After Aquarius Dawned*.
35. Cliff Smith, “Roland Kirk: The Sounds That Go Round In His Head all the Time,” *Rochester Times-Union* April 10 1969, p. 11D; “Bittersweet Kirk Masters Full Range of

- Black Music,' *Montreal Star* October 17 1972, page unknown, clipping, George Bonifacio personal papers; "Rahsaan Roland Kirk is ready," Undated Atlantic Records promotional clipping, Dorn Papers, Box 6.
36. Cuscuna, "Rahsaan Roland Kirk," 32; Roger Alan Jones, "Rahsaan Roland Kirk: Odyssey with the Sound of the Sun, *East West Journal* February 1973, 27; Tyner quoted in Charles Shaar Murray, "Teen Outrage in Croydon," *Creem*, March 1972, 58–59.
 37. Szwed, 136–37; King Pleasure, liner notes, *Golden Days*, HiFi Jazz J425 (1960), LP.
 38. Dorthaan Kirk, e-mail to author, January 1 2019; Szwed, 315–16; John S. Wilson, "Sun Ra: 'I'm Talking about Cosmic Things,'" *New York Times* April 7 1968, p. 174.
 39. Sheila Weiler, "Gil Scott-Heron: Survival Kits on Wax," *Rolling Stone* January 2 1975; Wald, *It's Been Beautiful*, 22, 25.
 40. Mike Bourne, "Rahsaan Roland Kirk: Heavy Vibrations," *Down Beat* Vol 37, No. 19 (October 1 1970), 13; Vibration Society newsletter, February 1977, Dorn Papers, Box 6.
 41. Murray, *Crosstown Traffic*, 237; Townshend, *Who I Am*, 169–70; Chris Welch "Kirk: Doesn't Fit into the Avant Garde" *Melody Maker* November 12 1966; "Roland Kirk," *Fusion* June 12 1969, p. 7; *Supershow*, film, directed by John Crome, 1969, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43f-RGNGgN0> (accessed April 11 2019); Himes, "Rahsaan Roland Kirk: The Cult of Kirk."
 42. Ty Davis, "That was Rahsaan, Man!" *NYT* May 31 1971, D22-23; "Kirk and His Group Give Programs Here," *NYT* April 3 1971, 17; Townshend, 169; Cuscuna, "Rahsaan Roland Kirk," 35; Dorthaan Kirk, interview with author; Jack Deacy, "Bridging the Jazz-Rock Gap," *New York Daily News*, September 9 1969, clipping in Dorn papers, Box 6; "Kirk-Jones-Liebman," concert review; Barkan interview.
 43. Charles Shaar Murray, "Isaac Hayes' *Black Moses* and Other Albums," *Oz* 1972; O'Brien "The Great Rahsaan Roland Kirk"; Palmer, "Their Lives in Art," 46.
 44. *Rip, Rig, and Panic* liner notes; Mark Davis, interview with author; Alan Offstein, review of Roland Kirk concert at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, July 11 1968, undated clipping, publication unknown, Joel Dorn Papers, Box 6; Davis, "That was Rahsaan, Man!"; "Roland Kirk," *Fusion* June 12 1969, 11.
 45. "Roland Kirk," *Fusion* June 12 1969, 11; Cuscuna, "Rahsaan Roland Kirk," 35.
 46. "Roland Kirk," *Fusion* June 12 1969, 11; Farber, "Building the Counterculture, Creating Right Livelihoods," 3.
 47. Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time*, 17, 229. Bodroghkozy quotes a 1950 *Ebony* that argued that "television is free of racial barriers." See "Television: Negro Performers Win Better Roles in TV Than in Any Other Entertainment Medium," *Ebony* June 1950, 22–23.
 48. Acham, *Revolution Televised*, 60–61; Wald, *It's Been Beautiful*, 1, 8.
 49. "Roland Kirk," *Fusion* June 12 1969, 11.
 50. Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 19, 20, 22.
 51. Dorthaan Kirk, interview with author; "Roland Kirk," *Fusion*, 7; "Rahsaan Roland Kirk," obituary, *International Musician*, undated clipping, Frank Foster Papers; Chris Welch, "Kirk: Doesn't Fit into the Avant Garde," *Melody Maker*, November 12 1966.
 52. Cuscuna, "Rahsaan Roland Kirk," 32; Davis interview.
 53. Cuscuna, "Rahsaan Roland Kirk," 32.
 54. "Greater New York Operation Breadbasket Fact Sheet," undated, Operation Breadbasket papers, Box 577, Folder 5, Rose Library Special Collections, Emory University, Atlanta.
 55. Jesse Jackson, Introduction to "Walk Tall," on The Cannonball Adderley Quintet, *Country Preacher*, Capitol Records, SKAO-404 (1970), LP; Cannonball Adderley, "Country Preacher," performed by The Cannonball Adderley Quintet, *Country Preacher*; Rev. William A. Jones, Jr. letter to "Friends of Operation Breadbasket,"

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56. “Grass Roots Jazz Protest Hits TV,” *Down Beat* Vol 37, No. 20 (October 15 1970), 12 and 39.
 57. Hollie I. West, “Breaking Into the Ed Sullivan Show,” *Washington Post*, January 31 1971; “Jazz & People’s Movement Promised NBC Action,” *Down Beat* Vol 37, No. 22 (November 12 1970), p. 11; *Radio Free Rahsaan*, Episode 4, Broadcast on WBGO-FM, Newark and National Public Radio, October 28 1984, Bonifacio papers.
 58. “Jazz Protesers Do Cavett Show, Push On,” *Down Beat* 37:23 (November 26 1970), p. 8; “Jazz Avant-Garde Wants on Tube,” *Rolling Stone* November 26 1970, p. 8; Cuscuna, “Rahsaan Roland Kirk,” 35; West, “Breaking into the Ed Sullivan Show.”
 59. Davis interview; Robert H. Precht, Jr, letter to Rahsaan Roland Kirk, December 3 1970, copy courtesy Mark Davis; Archie Shepp, interview with author.
 60. The full Ed Sullivan performance is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzGj_5FGT8 (accessed April 18 2019), and is also included in *The Case of the Three Sided Dream*, dir. Adam Kahan (Syndicado Studios, 2014) (streaming on Amazon Prime, Docurama films); Minqus quoted in Wald, 118; Shepp interview.
 61. “Random Notes,” *Rolling Stone* February 18 1971, 4; Leonard Feather, “TV Soundings,” *Down Beat* Vol. 38, No. 7, April 1 1971, 12.
 62. *Radio Free Rahsaan*, Episode 4; Stephen Curwood, “Black Notes: The Righteous Anger of R. Roland Kirk,” *Boston Phoenix* March 9 1971, 16; Cuscuna, “Rahsaan Roland Kirk,” 32.
 63. Robert Levin, “The Third World,” *Jazz & Pop* Vol 10, No. 5, 10–11; Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?*, 223–24; Shepp interview.
 64. “The Game’s The Same” *Expansions*, April 1971, 3, in Reggie Workman: Collective Black Artists Papers, Institute of Jazz Studies, Dana Library, Rutgers University – Newark; Steven Kurutz, “For the Heartbeat of Harlem, A New Chorus,” *NYT* September 10 2006, 140.
 65. Cuscuna, “Rahsaan Roland Kirk,” 32; Les Scher interview, *Radio Free Rahsaan*, Episode #4; Barkan interview.
 66. Rahsaan Roland Kirk, *Blacknuss*, Atlantic Records, SD 1601 (1972), LP; Rahsaan Roland Kirk, *The Case of the 3 Sided Dream in Audio Color*, Atlantic Records, SD 1674 (1975), LP; Stanley Crouch, liner notes, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, *Others Folks’ Music*, Atlantic Records, SD 1686 (1976), LP; “Keystone Korner Benefit/The Black Classical Music Society,” concert review, *Down Beat* (undated clipping, circa March 1975), Bonifacio papers; Frank Foster, interview with Adam Kahan, courtesy Adam Kahan.
 67. “Plantation Earth” references from several episodes of *Radio Free Rahsaan*; Todd Barkan, “Rahsaan Speaks His Peace,” 14.
 68. Torres, *Black, White and In Color*, 161.

69. “How a Cri de Coeur on Racial Injustice Stole the Scene at the BET Awards,” *New York Times* June 28 2016, C3.

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