



# More Important Than the Music: A History of Jazz Discography

*Bruce D. Epperson*

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Today, jazz is considered high art, America's national music, and the catalog of its recordings—its discography—is often taken for granted. But behind jazz discography is a fraught and highly colorful history of research, fanaticism, and the intense desire to know who played what, where, and when. This history gets its first full-length treatment in Bruce D. Epperson's *More Important Than the Music*. Following the dedicated few who sought to keep jazz's legacy organized, Epperson tells a fascinating story of archival pursuit in the face of negligence and deception, a tale that saw curses and threats regularly employed, with fisticuffs and lawsuits only slightly rarer.

Epperson examines the documentation of recorded jazz from its casual origins as a novelty in the 1920s and '30s, through the overwhelming deluge of 12-inch vinyl records in the middle of the twentieth century, to the use of computers by today's discographers. Though he focuses much of his attention on comprehensive discographies, he also examines the development of a variety of related listings, such as buyer's guides and library catalogs, and he closes with a look toward discography's future. From the little black book to the full-featured online database, *More Important Than the Music* offers a history not just of jazz discography but of the profoundly human desire to preserve history itself.

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