



by Wolfgang Beyer, Monica Ladurner

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Fiction

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Swinging Not Marching: Youth, Jazz and the Nazis

Im Swing gegen den Gleichschritt. Die Jugend, der Jazz und die Nazis

review

Drawing from their joint documentary film that won second prize at the New York Film Festival in 2010, Bayer and Ladurner's fascinating new book tells the story of young jazz and swing fans in Nazi Europe. The authors make generous use of anecdotes, interviews and archive material to paint a vivid picture of a youth culture phenomenon that has been neglected as a subject of study. They acknowledge this specific youth culture as a counterculture in its own right and position it within the wider discourse of Nazi-era countercultures.

We learn about the Austrian 'Schlurfs', the German 'Swings', the French 'Zazous' and the Czech 'Potapki'. Then there were the jazz purists who looked down on their adolescent, funloving contemporaries who enjoyed dancing and socialising to the sound of swing. What unified them was their lack of a political agenda. The majority of swing fans were in their teens, and theirs was more of a typical adolescent resistance against enforced order – any enforced order. The book is full of little anecdotes that are a testament to the playfulness, imagination and courage of these young music lovers. Of course, the Nazi authorities eventually struck back, putting the 'Swing Youth', as it became officially known, on the same level as Jews and other persecuted groups. As individual case studies in the book show, the Nazis did not shy away from interning these youngsters in labour

and concentration camps, and some did not survive.

The book follows a broadly chronological structure that charts the escalating persecution. It highlights certain aspects – for example the relationship and, in some rare cases, cross-over between the Swing Youth and the Hitler Youth; the origins of the fear of ‘the black man’s music’; and an equally deep-rooted fear of a sexualised, free-spirited youth that took hold long before the Nazis came to power. In the final chapters, the authors point out parallels and continuities, such as the continuing vilification of the ‘Schlurfs’ even after the Nazi era had officially ended in Austria.

Swinging Not Marching is one of those rare books that genuinely combine academic rigour and popular appeal. As well as being relevant for students of cultural history and the Nazi era, the book will feed the continuing interest amongst the general public in life during the Nazi era and particularly in the jazz legacy, demonstrated by Esi Edugyan’s recent success with *Half-Blood Blues*.

press quotes

‘There are plenty of interviews with those who were there at the time, and the authors document in detail the discussions conducted in the media about jazz, as well as citing the internal Nazi reports about the Swing youth and their music.’ – NDR

‘The authors meticulously document the enthusiasm for a culture that was diametrically opposed to official Nazi propaganda.’ – Vorarlberger Nachrichten

about the authors

Wolfgang Beyer was born in 1958 and is a screenwriter for documentaries and feature films. He also writes satirical and culturally critical news commentaries and has developed numerous TV documentaries for ORF and other broadcasting companies.

Monica Ladurner was born in 1962 and studied Law, Piano and Dance. She has been developing TV programs, reports and documentaries for numerous broadcasting companies including ORF, arte, Pro7, 3sat, MDR, WDR, ARD, Schweizer Rundfunk and BR Alpha.

Both authors live in Vienna. Their film *Schlurf – Im Swing gegen den Gleichschritt* was awarded second place at the New York Film Festival.

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