

# 3 Shades of Blue Miles Davis John Coltrane Bill Evans and the Lost Empire of Cool by James Kaplan

3 Shades of Blue: Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Bill Evans, and the Lost Empire of Cool

By: James Kaplan

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The national bestseller! “A superb book...[Kaplan is] a master biographer, a dogged researcher and shaper of narrative, and this is his most ambitious book to date.” — Los Angeles Times From the author of the definitive biography of Frank Sinatra, the story of how jazz arrived at the pinnacle of American culture in 1959, told through the journey of three towering artists —Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Bill Evans—who came together to create the most iconic jazz album of all time, Kind of Blue The myth of the '60s depends on the 1950s being the “before times” of conformity, segregation, straightness— The Lonely Crowd and The Organization Man . This all carries some truth, but it does nothing to explain how, in 1959, America’s great indigenous art form, jazz, reached the height of its power and popularity, thanks to a number of Black geniuses so legendary they go by one name—Monk, Mingus, Rollins, Coltrane, and, above all, Miles. Nineteen fifty-nine saw Miles, Coltrane, Bill Evans, and more come together to record what is widely considered the greatest jazz album of all time, and certainly the bestselling: Kind of Blue . 3 Shades of Blue is James Kaplan’s magnificent account of the paths of the three giants to the mountaintop of 1959 and beyond. It’s a book about music, and business, and race, and heroin, and the towns that gave jazz its home, from New Orleans and New York to Kansas City, Philadelphia, Chicago, and LA. It’s an astonishing meditation on creativity and the strange hothouses that can produce its full flowering. It’s a book about the great forebears of this golden age, particularly Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, and the disrupters, like Ornette Coleman, who would take the music down truly new paths. And it’s about why the world of jazz most people know is a museum to this never-replicated period. But above all, 3 Shades of Blue is a book about three very different men—their struggles, their choices, their tragedies, their greatness. Bill Evans had a gruesome downward spiral; John Coltrane took the mystic’s path into a space far away from mainstream concerns. Miles had three or four sea changes in him before the end. The tapestry of their lives is, in Kaplan’s hands, an American odyssey with no direction home. It is also a masterpiece, a book about jazz that is as big as America.

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