

# Hitting the high notes in the world of jazz

By **TIMOTHY HUNTER**

**B**ill Crow may not be one of the biggest names in jazz, but since moving to New York City in 1950, the bass player has crossed paths with more than a few legends on and off the bandstand.

He went swimming with Charlie Parker. He watched Stan Getz nearly die from a heroin overdose. He went fishing with Charles Mingus. He performed in the Soviet Union with a dictatorial Benny Goodman. He toured and recorded with Gerry Mulligan and was close friends with Zoot Sims.

In **From Birdland to Broadway** (Oxford University Press, \$22.95), Crow shares insightful anecdotes from his long career and writes in a style that's as relaxed, friendly and straight ahead as a Mulligan baritone sax solo.

Whether describing his early "scuffling" days in the Big Apple, when he struggled to line up paying gigs and adequate instruments, or his later years as a pit musician in a series of unsuccessful Broadway musicals, he never skimps on the humorous asides and telling details.

What's more, he renders most of the technical stuff, such as flugelhornist Clark Terry's method of rotary breathing, understandable to even the most unrhythmic or tone-deaf reader.

Bop lives in Crow's colorful account.

Other new books:

■ **In Memory of Junior** (Algonquin, \$16.95) by Clyde Edgerton. Two questions arise after reading this smart and quirky novel about family squabbles and land-hungry heirs in rural North Carolina.

First, how can a story that spans three

## SHORT TAKES



**Edgerton**

generations of two Southern clans and is filled with a multitude of odd-ball characters read like a sprightly novella instead of a turgid epic?

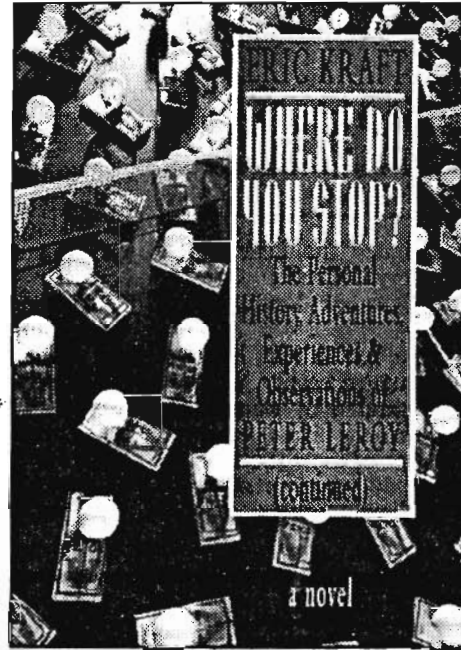
And second, how can a story that's loaded with

graveyard imagery, involves the death of a child and revolves around the imminent demise of an invalid patriarch and his bedridden second wife be so free of gloom and despair?

The answers can be found in the way Edgerton lets his deftly etched characters tell the tale from their own distinct perspectives in alternating chapters. The narrative efficiently glides forward while the many narrators gracefully reveal their engaging humanity and unique contributions to the world of the living.

■ **The Journey of Ibn Fattouma** (Doubleday, \$20) by Naguib Mahfouz. Translated by Denys Johnson-Davies. In this slim, illuminating parable about "the spirit of true Islam" and the hardships and temptations Muslims encounter in foreign lands, the Egyptian Nobel laureate briskly chronicles an inquisitive Arab man's lifelong search for the utopian land of Gebel.

Traveling by caravan, Ibn Fattouma stops in various exotic countries, including one



The cover of "Where Do You Stop?", which continues the whimsical adventures of Peter Leroy, begun in "Little Follies."

which resembles modern America and another that is similar to the old Soviet Union.

First published in Arabic in 1983, this cleanly written work casts a refreshingly benevolent light on Islam and is captivating in its simplicity.

■ **The Cat Inside** (Viking, \$12.50) by William S. Burroughs. The author of "Naked Lunch" and "Junky" delivers a short, im-

passioned and highly impressionistic pastiche to cats (especially his own), cat spirits through roam history and the catlike creatures that prowls his imagination.

As for dogs:

"I am not a dog hater. I do hate what man has made of his best friend. The snarl of a panther is certainly more dangerous than the snarl of a dog, but it isn't ugly. A cat's rage is beautiful, burning with a pure orange flame, all its hair standing up and crackling blue sparks, eyes blazing and sputtering. But a dog's snarl is ugly... a self-righteous, occupied snarl."

■ **Where Do You Stop?** (Crown, \$15) by Eric Kraft. The giddy excitement of expanding scientific consciousness is coupled with the awakening of sexual desires in this goofy and thoroughly enjoyable novel about a boy's first year in junior high.

Peter Leroy, who appeared in Kraft's "Little Follies," begins seventh grade with an adventurous imagination and a big crush on his pal's older sister. Soon, his leggy and brainy Miss Wizard of a science teacher is inspiring him to apply the principles of quantum physics to a number of nutty pursuits, such as getting his inventor grandfather on TV.

Never mind that some of the kids in the book seem a little quick for their age. They have enough energy, enthusiasm, curiosity, or nascent lust to be fun and believable.

And Kraft's evocation of the 1950s, when people had recently discovered television and were about to discover racial integration, is affectionate and uncluttered.

You won't want this charming little exercise in learned whimsy to end.

Hunter is a free-lance critic.

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