Straight to Baby
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Published in:
Cold War Film Genres

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2018

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):

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12. STRAIGHT TO BABY: SCORING FEMALE JAZZ AGENCY AND NEW MASCULINITY IN HENRY MANCINI’S PETER GUNN

Kristin McGee

People want to be smart, and when they listen to jazz with a modern story, they start to get the feeling, even though they don’t know what they are doing. Any emotion can be inspired by jazz. It has a lot of sexual drive, and this is one way TV can employ sex in its stories without being questioned by the censors. 

Henry Mancini

Mancini intuited that he could write for the five or six players who might be pictured in a club scene and bring that music forward sometimes to take on the responsibilities of narrative scoring, with extensions, digressions, builds, and climaxes that matched the action on screen. He would use jazz in a storytelling capacity.

INTRODUCTION

Three cultural dispositifs gain currency in jazz-informed media of the 1950s. The first is the rising visibility of the West Coast jazz musician after the success of Henry Mancini’s crime jazz series Peter Gunn. The second and third relate to alternative gender stagings occurring within American culture resulting from a variety of jazz-informed media. The late 1950s, in particular, witnessed an unorthodox representation of the white working woman through what I shall categorize as a female jazz agency. The last but perhaps more restricting dispositif supported the image of the so-called new man, and the attendant
notions of ‘new masculinity’ connected to both jazz connoisseurship and a liberal sex politics presented in jazz-informed entertainment media, especially Mancini’s Peter Gunn.

While important scholarship within film music studies uncovers much of the unique aesthetic and musical strategies developed by Mancini and others in the postwar period, few scholars have examined the ways in which Mancini’s music incorporated creative techniques to both reinforce and transgress accepted gendered representations within the crime detective and noir genre. Many argue that his hybrid compositional practices, which incorporated non-traditional music genres and especially jazz and popular music, were so compelling that they had a profound impact on film scoring from the 1960s on. Yet most fail to interrogate how this captivating and flexible style affected our understanding of gender and sexuality at the cusp of the 1960s, an era emblemized by its progressive transformations within sociopolitical fields. Connected to such larger transformations is Peter Gunn’s immense popularity which partly resulted from Mancini’s transformed positioning of jazz’s dominant race and gender associations within symbolic media such as film and television.

The extreme popularity of Mancini’s television scores conditioned film and television music consumers in the postwar period to favor more modern musical genres over the “patch-work” or cue-based romantic soundtracks of the classic Hollywood era. Part of this appeal owed itself to the laid-back and minimalistic style of West Coast cool jazz which prominently appeared in both narrative and diegetic sequences within the Peter Gunn series. Further the narratives connected to Peter Gunn’s use of cool jazz can be understood as deeply invested in promoting the so-called “new masculinity” of an ideal, middle-class, male consumer, one who positioned himself within an expanding network of distinctive representations of masculinity partly defined by the rising status of jazz as art.

This form of jazz, associated largely with an exclusively white masculinity, was perhaps most publicly epitomized by Hugh Hefner, a jazz sponsor, wealthy bachelor, upper-class elite, and modern media curator, whose controversial ideas about sex and women were well circulated. While Hefner’s debates about gender significantly influenced the American consciousness in the 1950s and ’60s, the image that the public more likely associated with this new masculine ideal, however, was the detective Peter Gunn with his love of modern (white) jazz, his cosmopolitan, independent way of life, his cool sexuality, and his easy-going “man about town” demeanor. Therefore, jazz’s positioning in Peter Gunn, but also in surrounding and related media, was critical for promoting and poetically staging not only this new cosmopolitan masculinity but also the materialist comforts to be gained from disavowing the black roots of urban jazz culture. Finally, this new masculinity sought to distance itself from
earlier Hollywood representations of heteronormative romantic relationships with all of the burdens attached to monogamy and marriage. The coalescing of images of various professional and established wealthy white men with distinctive musical tastes within American media would all assist the circulation and growing acceptance of this new jazz-loving figure.

By the late 1950s, the incorporation of diegetic jazz in dominant visual media less often referenced the black origins of its circulation such as the innovative performances and recordings of West Coast black jazz musicians Wardell Gray and Dexter Gordon, and instead promoted the evolving figure of the intellectual white jazz artist as the center of the emerging jazz idiom.6 The Gunn series, a narrative which predominantly depicts white musicians performing jazz, functioned not only to affirm the gendered relations between Hart and Gunn but also to elevate the artistic and critical appeal of the show and its connection to the culturally revered cool jazz genre. By representing white musicians as the normative image of the performing jazz musician, the show simultaneously elided the continued presence of prominent black jazz musicians in LA’s many local jazz scenes such as Central Ave, once the spatial locus of modern jazz during the 1940s.

In his book West Coast Jazz, Ted Gioia portrays the tension surrounding the rise of the cool jazz moniker and the resulting resentment felt by many black West Coast musicians as they struggled to gain visibility in the postwar era. Further, Gioia dispels the myth of cool jazz lyricism as the defining feature of West Coast jazz, instead highlighting those soloists evolving from Central Avenue who played a very advanced style of modern jazz influenced especially by Charlie Parker’s bebop performances on the west coast during 1945 to 1947. One example is his review of altoist Sonny Criss, whose technique was diligently influenced by Parker, but whose emotional style drew heavily from gospel and blues. According to Gioia, by the early 1950s, the moment in which cool jazz’s international reputation was gaining commercial appeal, Central Avenue was a ghost town. Most reviews of West Coast jazz depicted its overall decline in the 1960s, even for the newly anointed white cool jazz players. Gioia confirms this image:

By the early 1960s, West Coast jazz was already in decline, with shrinking audience for both recorded and live jazz. The breakdown of the Central Avenue scene a decade earlier now proved to be a harbinger of the collapse of the whole Southern California jazz community. Even the recently anointed stars of white West Coast jazz were being forced underground into studio work and other non-jazz gigs . . . As it was the 1960s were years of retrenchment in which major stars struggled and new names found it all the harder to make a reputation.”7
The studio work to which Gioia refers was no more prominently and successfully enacted than in Mancini’s use of West Coast jazz within *Peter Gunn*. In the series, the image of the weekly jazz musician with a steady gig, who was white, middle class, and well respected by the community, was something of a misnomer or at least a cultural elision but the series did much to revive the careers of a small group of musicians who managed to transition from touring big bands into the film and television industry after the war. The series also cemented the connection between the genre of the crime detective series and the local West Coast jazz scene but, rather than depicting the racial and gendered diversity of LA’s jazz community, the series upheld the cult of the white jazz musician as the quintessential cool jazz performer, an image that would come at the expense of those black musicians having established the innovative new sounds of modern jazz over a decade earlier. Further, contributing to the erasure of jazz’s complex cultural, but black-based, community origins during the 1940s, *Peter Gunn*’s fictional jazz world is coolly consumed by a range of character types and classes from detectives to mobsters and from middle-class whites to beatniks and circus performers, yet each of these represents members of the predominantly white working and middle class. In real life, however, the late 1950s was a period in which jazz was performed by smaller groups in smaller clubs consumed by smaller audiences. The jazz that fared well in such a climate was mixed mediated, well marketed in new media, such as high-fidelity recordings, and driven by combinations of new youth-oriented genres such as rock and roll and popular music.

While the new masculinity image was clearly connected to particular associations with modern jazz in 1950s media, within this chapter, I argue that Mancini’s innovative musical scoring also facilitated a potent counterpart to the new jazz male, in his enactment of a female jazz agency, which especially resulted from his approach towards scoring gender within *Peter Gunn*. While the enactment of a hip, gentrified new man was effectuated in part by one’s connection to, and appreciation of, cool (white) jazz, the space for positioning women as modern agents of this new jazz/film economy was less rigidly portrayed. In fact, as I reveal, Mancini’s flexible scoring of music in connection to his work with female jazz vocalists before and during *Peter Gunn*’s broadcast years, provide a more complex and sometimes confusing image of the postwar modern woman. Moreover, the series’s image of the modern working (white) woman and, more importantly, of an independent jazz musician was also connected to the increasingly respected West Coast sound.

Yet, in this series, Mancini’s music appears both to promote female jazz agency while also containing it. First, his programming of diegetic performances of female jazz artists confirms women’s role in postwar American jazz culture. Second, however, by doubling and reworking such progressive diegetic jazz performances into lighter, domesticated musical forms within
“ambi-diegetic” or purely narrative sequences, such female jazz agency is often undermined so that more traditional gendered positions could be maintained. In this chapter, I uncover such strategies within the filmed narratives of various episodes of *Peter Gunn* from 1959 but also by connecting the extratextual visual texts of various media to this female jazz agency, including Mancini’s tie-in albums recorded in relation to the series, which quickly elided and displaced images of black jazz from the West Coast to the television screen in the postwar period.

**Sounding Women in Classic Hollywood and Noir/Crime Genres**

During the 1940s and 1950s, film noir’s narratives featured depictions of the urban *demi-monde* with characters whose relations to love and family veered from the conventions of mainstream Hollywood A-list dramas. Yet, even as noir offered more complex characters displaying greater psychological depth, its broader stories typically inscribed traditional heteronormative relationships. In the quickly produced, but often more experimental B-rated crime genres, male detectives, typically portrayed as single white men, maintained only fleeting connections to romantic partners as temporary love interests. Occasionally, women acted as collaborators in sleuthing pursuits but often transitioned into romantic partners for domestic unions, usually secured at the end of the film. In short, women’s roles in these films were often secondary, acting as foils to prominent men.

As Kathryn Kalinak reveals, dominant and hierarchical enactments of gender are well examined by film scholars, yet few have understood how the sound world of classic film originally established the gendered sonic expectations of noir narratives. Following Claudia Gorbman’s famous treatise on narrative music, Kalinak argues that such gendered principles were first established in the 1930s and continue to ground our perception of film music codes. During this formative period, composers exploited music’s power to construct cultural or affective associations between the narrative and the musical content. In particular, narrative music devices afforded the mapping of cultural identities on to particular character types.

Despite claims of music’s abstract or non-narrative structure, film-music composers relied upon particular conventions to situate the gendered sound worlds of its characters. These include stock cues to reference stereotypical character types, musical genres with cultural and gendered associations, and compositional structures, such as particular harmonies and melodic techniques, to allude clearly to a woman’s sexual or cultural status. Women’s secondary position in relation to prominent men as objects of desire or excess, for example, could be clarified not only through the cinematic filming aesthetic that prioritized the “male gaze” but also through a set of sonic conventions.
that would become standard in classical Hollywood scoring. Such conventions created a sonic world whose compositional structures and main motives in relation to representing women prominently reinforced the dominance of the masculinized perspective or, as Kalinak argues: “the Hollywood film itself . . . created an image of women as the projection of its own (male) fear and desire.”\(^\text{14}\) Feminized musical cues were therefore composed to reinforce this larger masculine sonic world.

Recently, film-music scholars have interrogated established perceptions of women’s roles in noir and crime film narratives to extend the sonic analyses of largely classic Hollywood gendered soundscapes. Through her investigation of various B-level noir and crime films from the 1940s, Catherine Haworth posits that women sometimes inhabited more complex roles which afforded agency and mobility across classic Hollywood archetypes.\(^\text{15}\) Such mobility was achieved and supported musically through the use of both existing library music (cues) and newly composed musical sequences, albeit often only temporarily in the initial stages of a film’s narrative. Haworth reveals that, ultimately, musical conventions would also be used to contain such mobility by fetishistically or reductively highlighting gendered or cultural difference.\(^\text{16}\) The agency of female detectives in 1940s noir/crime genres is contained as they acquiesce their working status to take up the romantic or domestic needs of male protagonists who eventually rehydrate their dominant roles as detectives. Musically this is rendered by occasionally allowing women agency in the sleuthing scenes while the scoring takes on more chromatic and tension-creating moods and, then again, reasserting their secondary romantic interest role with more classical leitmotif themes where the female amateur detective is scored with romantic upper-register strings or other feminine-identified orchestrations. As women moved from investigative to romantic roles in these films, critics quickly connected such transformations as projections of anxieties about the changing roles of women during the postwar era.\(^\text{17}\)

**Henry Mancini’s Ambi-diegetic Jazz for *Peter Gunn***

Accepting that such scoring conventions for women of the noir and crime genre existed, it is conceivable that Henry Mancini, an experienced film arranger and big band composer of the war and postwar era, consciously navigated both film and popular music codes to enact sonically such identity markers as race, sexuality, and gender in the late 1950s. But to understand better Mancini’s unique scoring practices, it is first important to recognize how the changing role of film and of recording in the late 1950s had an impact on his compositional style. Mancini’s role as a television composer of the crime genre coincides with two important events: first, the collapse of the big movie-studio system; and second, the high-fidelity revolution in recording which hastened
the commercial market for high-fidelity systems and for long-play albums in the postwar era.\textsuperscript{18} This technology further motivated new recording techniques, such as multi-miked stereo recording. According to Mancini scholar John Caps, these two events facilitated Mancini’s rise as the most important and popular film and television composer of the 1950s and ‘60s.\textsuperscript{19} The introduction of the high-fidelity album also enabled Mancini to promote a relatively new music commodity, the tie-in album, which assisted the vertical integration of the film, television, and music industry during the 1950s.

Prior to \textit{Peter Gunn}, Mancini had gained critical experience performing and arranging with big bands during and after the war; before the war he arranged for the Benny Goodman Big Band and, during the war, he was conscripted into the Air Force Band where he arranged and performed a variety of genres. After the war, Mancini worked for the newly formed Glenn Miller Orchestra led by Tex Beneke. These positions gained him a reputation as an arranger of jazz and popular music and also had a profound impact on his musical scoring of film and television during the 1950s.

In the early 1950s, Mancini left the big bands and moved to Los Angeles with the encouragement of his musical colleague and later wife Ginny O’Connor whom he met while working with the Glenn Miller Big Band. O’Connor sang with the professional popular group the Mello-Larks for whom Mancini arranged for the Miller band.\textsuperscript{20} O’Connor, recognizing the sea changes the music industry was undergoing, encouraged Mancini to leave the big bands and settle into Hollywood where her family maintained connections with the film studios. After a recommendation from his wife, he was invited to work for Universal films to arrange a Dorsey Brothers short subject film.\textsuperscript{21} This led to other small arranging assignments. At first, he began modestly, arranging for B-level films in a variety of genres from dramas, fantasy, to musical comedy and noir. Some of his first important films were only partially scored by him under the model of the industrial film soundtrack which employed arrangers, cue sheet compilers, script markers, musical directors, and main theme composers. Some of these films were dramas, such as \textsl{Green Dolphin Street} (1947) and \textit{Meet Danny Wilson} (1951) starring Frank Sinatra, or comedies such as the Abbott and Costello comedy, \textit{Abbott and Costello Go to Mars} (1953), the fantasy films \textsl{City Beneath the Sea} (1953), and \textsl{Creature from the Black Lagoon} (1954), the jazz-centered biopic films, \textit{The Glenn Miller Story} (1953) and \textit{The Benny Goodman Story} (1956), and his first teen musical, \textit{Rock, Pretty Baby} (1956). Just before \textit{Peter Gunn}, in 1958, Mancini scored a dramatic film entitled \textit{Flood Tide} featuring singer Julie London. With each of these films, Mancini acquired critical experience in scoring a variety of music genres as well as filmic genres and character types; this experience would influence his writing for his most popular series \textit{Peter Gunn}.

For the most part, the scores on which Mancini assisted during the 1950s
were the traditional and heavily industrial patchwork films drawn from large studio cue music libraries. His most important film, however, which would establish both his unique hybrid musical scoring style as well as the increasingly important role of the tie-in album, was Orson Welles’s *Touch of Evil* (1958). In this experimental film, Welles had wanted diegetic “street” music including Afro-Cuban drumming, rock and roll, and jazz emanating from the bars and cafés of a Mexican/American border town. In an interview, Mancini identified how this new innovative use of both diegetic and source music was a concept he had cultivated even before Welles’s aesthetic request: “Dramatic sequences in that score were really just another aspect of the source music that was already coming from the streets. That’s exactly what Welles had wanted all along, although I must admit I was committed of [sic] that approach before I ever knew what Welles was thinking.” This approach would become critical for innovating the television and film soundtrack with his series *Peter Gunn* in 1959.

During the late 1950s, in the environment of the collapse of the major film studios, Mancini was released from his contract with Universal. In need of money, he developed his *Touch of Evil* soundtrack into an independent album of fully composed songs and shopped it to various record companies; most declined but the local Challenge Records eventually signed it, making this his first soundtrack album of a dramatic score. This was also his fourth credited soundtrack album including two teen rock and roll musicals *Rock Pretty Baby* (1956) and *The Long Hot Summer* (1958) and the dramatic film *Driftwood and Dreams* (1957).

By 1958, Mancini was no longer on contract with Universal but he retained his studio lot pass which allowed him to network with producers and directors. In that year, he ran into television producer Blake Edwards who had been developing a series idea based upon a new kind of detective, one who was sophisticated and loved West Coast cool jazz. According to Caps, it was with Edwards that Mancini envisioned extending his prior scoring practice from *Touch of Evil* in which the relation between the diegetic music from the film’s setting and the dramatic score would become both intertwined and more complex. In *Peter Gunn*, the musical narrative concept led to one of the most successful crime genre series ever and also established the groundbreaking popularity of Mancini’s crime jazz genre through the new medium of the tie-in album.

*Peter Gunn* ran for over two years (1959–61) and produced 114 episodes, each featuring several jazz moments or diegetic performances. Because Mancini was dedicated to the new high-fidelity sound, rather than recording the music for *Peter Gunn* at the film/television studio, he hired a special, newly equipped hi-fi music studio with which to record his three tie-in albums: *Music from Peter Gunn* (RCA Victor), *More Music from Peter Gunn* (RCA Victor) and
Dreamsville (Columbia). *Dreamsville* was the only tie-in album to feature vocal arrangements composed from many of the series’s instrumental themes. The first two albums featured instrumentals exclusively and most were full arrangements reworked from the series’s weekly material. Each album featured many of the same musicians who recorded the soundtrack but Mancini also invited special guests including prominent West Coast musicians such as drummer Shelly Manne. Many of the recording artists from *Peter Gunn* had also worked in the war-era big bands such as Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, and Glen Miller. Other musicians were known to Mancini from Universal’s film music division.\(^{24}\)

The show’s weekly budget of $2,000 could accommodate only twelve players but later, as the music became increasingly popular, Mancini expanded his weekly sessions to include five saxes, four winds, four trombones, and two trumpets, with drums, piano, vibes, and guitar as sidemen. The players from the West Coast jazz scene included bassist Rolly Bundock, drummer Jack Sperling, trumpeter Pete Candoli and his brother Conte, trumpet soloist Shelly Manne and the Nash brothers with Ted on saxophone and Dick as the series’s leading trombone soloist.\(^{25}\) Hollywood studio players were later added to fill out the album recordings, including pianists John Williams (the same Williams who would become one of the most famous film composers of the late twentieth century) and Jimmy Rowles.

The weekly crime series was the first to evoke the contemporary West Coast sounds of LA’s jazz scene. Nearly every episode featured diegetic jazz sequences filmed at the fictional club, Mothers, apparently so named to placate television censors anxious about the weekly incursion of an urban jazz club into family viewing hours.\(^{26}\) Within these sequences, detective Peter Gunn often wandered into the club after work to hear jazz, to steal a few romantic moments with jazz vocalist Edie Hart, or to meet with potential clients to discuss crime assignments. The combination of Gunn’s love of jazz and his romantic interest with the leading vocalist of Mothers provided avenues for showcasing both cool jazz and several local jazz musicians, including Lola Albright who was an established film actor and pop jazz singer prior to 1958. In fact, Mancini suggested Hart for the part after arranging her album *Lola Wants You* in 1957 for CBS’s Columbia Records.

**SCORING WOMEN IN PETER GUNN**

In the *Peter Gunn* series, Lola Albright\(^{27}\) portrayed the show’s sultry nightclub singer and romantic partner Edie Hart. Albright remained in the show for all three seasons, winning an Emmy for Best Supporting Actress in 1959. Albright first gained acclaim in the 1949 Hollywood Kirk Douglas boxing drama *Champion*. Although she began her film career performing musical
roles, she was just as often cast as the femme fatale or troubled woman in noir pictures or serious dramas. In her early career, she appeared in several films with musical themes, including her debut, the musical comedy *The Unfinished Dance* in 1947. She later starred in *Silver Whip* (1953) in which she played a saloon singer, in Frank Sinatra’s *The Tender Trap* (1955) as one of the women who tries to tempt Sinatra into marriage, and in Elvis Presley’s *Kid Galahad* (1962).28

Many would argue that Albright’s understated and cool performance as Hart in *Peter Gunn* would remain the high point of her acting and musical career. In 1992, Mancini reflected on Albright’s depiction of the smoky nightclub’s singer claiming: “She was perfect casting for that role because she had an off-the-cuff kind of jazz delivery that was very hard to find, just enough to believe that she’d be singing in that club and that she shouldn’t be on Broadway or doing movies.”29 Part of the show’s believability owed to the seemingly realistic network of musicians drawn from the West Coast scene of which Hart was a participant and local recording artist.

In *Peter Gunn*, Hart continued her trade as a jazz singer; she appeared in nearly every episode as the lounge singer at the small jazz club Mothers. Her secondary role was as Gunn’s steady romantic partner. The shows portrayal of Hart’s character was somewhat unusual in mid-century America in both its representation of female jazz agency and in her romantic relationship to *Peter Gunn* (see Figure 12.1). Throughout the series, Hart earns her living as an independent jazz musician who eventually gets her own nightclub at the end of season three. Beyond the series’s fictional narrative, her television role buttressed her real-life status as a modern jazz singer collaborating with established LA jazz musicians both of whose reputations preceded the series but were enhanced by it (in the diegetic portions staged at Mothers and in the release of three highly popular tie-in albums). Albright is one of the regular artists employed in this small-scale postwar jazz club and her cool, reserved style of performing and singing coalesced around the image of West Coast jazz, which contributed greatly to this series’s popularity and cultural cachet.

Mancini’s use of jazz in the series served to elevate Hart/Albright’s agency and to inscribe her cool and collected individuality. Yet, despite its highly revered modern take on the crime/noir soundtrack, jazz would also be used as narrative scoring to position her character in relation to the overall gendered and racial hierarchies presented within postwar America. This complex positioning of agency in the frame of normative gender expectations was achieved especially through Mancini’s complex mixture of diegetic and non-diegetic scoring practices. The composer’s fuzzy “in-between” or “ambi-diegetic”30 incorporation of jazz was a novel element of the show and one already partially cultivated as an aesthetic practice in his scoring of Orson Welles’s *Touch of Evil*.31
To achieve sonic and narrative continuity, Mancini adapted diegetic material performed by the instrumental combo at Mothers into non-diegetic narrative cues such as for Hart’s romantic interludes with Gunn. These served first and foremost to provide affective continuity for the series by linking particular motives and melodies to particular characters and places. Two prominent spaces for such ambi-diegetic jazz were the backstage balcony at Mothers or Pete’s bachelor pad. These were also important spaces in reconfiguring Hart’s role as a jazz musician into a supporting romantic partner. Equally important was music’s narrative role in mediating Hart’s professional status as an independent jazz musician. One might argue that these cues also served to contain her agency as an independent working woman. In this sense, Mancini drew from the narrative strategies of 1940s noir film-music composers who inserted particular genres and scoring techniques, such as late-romantic (feminized) orchestrations, to contain women’s agency. Yet Mancini further complicates such techniques by altering the affective and gendered expectations connected to particular genres. Critical in this departure was his use of jazz for a greater variety of affective ends and in the ambi-diegetic musical sequences adapted...
from diegetic scenes intrinsic to the main plot (Gunn being a lover of jazz who frequents Mothers for information gathering and intimate intermissions). I'll return to this point in the specific analyses of particular scenes later in the chapter.

While the new masculinity of Gunn’s character is reinforced by Gunn’s independent lifestyle and appreciation of modern jazz, the associations of the female lead in the series did not necessarily carry the same connotations, although jazz’s connection to Hart’s character is significantly more varied and complex than in prior noir scorings. For example, by composing romantic themes derived from the diegetic instrumental combo performances as the narrative and dramatic soundscape for Hart’s secondary role as Gunn’s love interest, her status is both complex and changing throughout the series. In these sensual interludes, one might expect the more conventional noir scoring of sultry saxophones and slurred, brassy tones to suggest the overt sexuality of an independent female jazz performer. Rather, Mancini’s orchestration generally rejects such sonic clichés of sexual excess to favor shorter improvised solos provided by instruments with more subdued timbres.

Further, by avoiding the now clichéd use of stripper jazz to intimate a sensual mood between Hart and Gunn, Mancini maintains Hart’s sophisticated and respectable (white, middle-class) image. Instead of a solo saxophone, he composes sequences with lighter textures and arrangements more connected to the cool jazz aesthetic. These included improvised melodies performed by the more reserved jazz guitar, flute or vibraphone. These lighter and dreamy textures would be featured on many of the tracks from the tie-in LPs. For example, “Dreamsville,” an airy tune featuring Mancini’s characteristic vibraphones, guitar, and piano, often provided the sonic backdrop for domestic, romantic interludes between various characters. These romantic pieces prioritized catchy but simple melodic phrases over jazz-oriented chord changes.

The easy-listening appeal of such narrative music referenced the growing popularity of the West Coast bachelor pad or exotica genre produced and marketed by well-known studio composers including Martin Denny and Les Baxter. This lighter but sophisticated jazz was marketed less as the work of live jazz musicians from LA’s local scene and more as music produced by specialist composers (such as Mancini) to be consumed in domestic spaces, as technologically enhanced cultural flights to exotic locales. In the series, however, this light jazz underscored a new type of femininity driven by Edie’s status as a respectable, mature but independent woman with modern, consumer-driven tastes. These sophisticated tastes were reinforced in scenes where Hart relaxes in her living room fashionably equipped with a hi-fi stereo system (enjoying her West Coast jazz collection), a plush white matching sofa set, shaggy rug, and fireplace, all of the accoutrements of a white, sophisticated, working woman, itself a relatively new character type in American media.
Peter Gunn’s Gendered Ambi-diegesis: from Female Jazz agency to Hi-fi Domesticity

While Caps, Smith, and others argue that Mancini abandoned the classic Hollywood patchwork or cue-sheet scoring format for this series, I suggest rather that he adapted it to create motives that elicited, variously, complex moods, scenes, and character associations. In this sense, he rejected the strict use of leitmotifs to inscribe particular gendered character types. For example, in season one, Mancini typically reincorporated four to five diegetic pieces from Mothers into narrative music sequences to elicit various gendered, sexualized, and affective associations for the episode’s main characters. The most common musical cues were implemented into three scenarios: scenes of romantic domesticity; scenes of sexual tension between Gunn and others; or the sensual late-night or backstage interludes between Gunn and Hart. For these three scene types and corollary affective associations, Mancini typically composed and programmed five themes into the series within the genre of light or crossover jazz; these were composed into full songs for his three tie-in albums. From the first two tie-in albums from season one, Music from Peter Gunn and More Music from Peter Gunn, five pieces satisfy the growing pop-jazz formula designed for both masculine consumption and for eliciting the range of heteronormative intimacy within the series. These are “Slow and Easy,” “Soft Sounds,” “Blues for Mothers,” “Dreamsville,” and “A Quiet Gass.”

“Slow and Easy”

One of Mancini’s favorite pieces featured throughout season one is the theme/piece “Slow and Easy.” It appears in the very first episode, The Kill, to intimate the jazz-drenched amorous relationship between Gunn and Hart. We first hear the song at Mothers. The scene establishes Gunn’s dedicated relationship to the club. The viewer first sees the marque of Mothers in neon lights against a dark, damp city street. More importantly, we hear a small combo improvising modern jazz which seeps from the concrete walls out on to the street. Next, we see Pete casually enter the club, apparently dropping by after work to relax to the sounds of Mothers’s intimate style of jazz.

The club’s regular jazz singer Edie Hart is first introduced with a dramatic bongo solo as she enters the stage to perform an unusually polyrhythmic version of “Day In Day Out” (Figure 12.2). This performance appears inspired by the mixed-genre eclecticism of West Coast cool jazz. The lyrics of this first performance foreshadow the steadiness of Gunn and Hart’s relationship (“Can’t you see it’s love, can there be any doubt, when there it is, day in day out”). From his approving looks and contented smile, Gunn appears to enjoy the jazz combo in the company of the well-healed but well-weathered...
“Mother,” the owner of the club. He seems especially turned on by Hart’s mixed-genre version of “Day In Day Out,” a nod to the classic American songbook and a novel reworking of this standard in a Latin jazz-inspired jacket. After a few numbers, between Edie’s sets Pete wanders to the balcony presumably to meet her, as if this is his habit. As Edie enters through the back door, the music to “Slow and Easy” is heard faintly in the background; the viewer is aware that the jazz combo plays on without Edie for the remainder of the set.

During her performance break, Edie first expresses her love for Gunn as he listens attentively to her; the background jazz meanders in and out of their conversation like a third party. He coolly reciprocates. Yet as if to diminish the seriousness of her declaration, Hart’s tone is rather understated:

**Hart:** I really love you very much.
**Gunn:** I really love you very much.
**Hart:** But not that much. I’m just one of your favorite singers in the all the world.
**Gunn:** [turns closer to face and embraces her] One of my very favorite.
**Hart:** Uh huh, I know the type. I lost my voice you’d hate my guts.
**Gunn:** You don’t just sing like your voice.
**Hart:** Is it true what they say about you?
**Gunn:** What do they say?
**Hart:** Pete Gunn for hire.
**Gunn:** True.
**Hart:** Well I’ve saved up a few dollars. I’ll buy ya a steak later.
**Gunn:** I’ll take a rain check. I’ve got to run an errand for Mother.
**Hart:** Gonna take you all night?
**Gunn:** Hard to say.
**Hart:** I’ll hang around, if you don’t show up by three o’clock, [laughs softly], I’ll kill myself . . .

Then, as the camera pans away from close-ups of the couple, we hear the urban sound of train noises. The back door opens with the jazz pianist Emit (played by pianist Bill Chadney) calling Edie back to the stage. She leaves through the back door to resume her role as professional singer. In other words, as detective work is Gunn’s main preoccupation, jazz is Hart’s, even as she coyly jokes about her romantic dependence upon Gunn.

This first interaction, leading to Hart’s love declaration, sets the stage for the couple’s weekly romantic trysts. Further, it established the use of diegetic cool jazz as the culturally appropriate backdrop for this relationship. As the next examples will uncover, this unique positioning led to the transformed ideological and cultural associations attributed to jazz on the American screen at the end of the decade. From season one, this may be the only scene where “Slow
“Slow and Easy” dramatizes the overt sensuality of Gunn and Hart’s relationship. The next time the theme is introduced, it is used to suggest the calm and reassuring palette of their steadfast, domestic relationship.

In Episode 4 of season one, The Blind Pianist, for example, the theme is scored as narrative music for Gunn’s return to his apartment late at night where he discovers Edie sleeping peacefully on his couch. The theme is rendered by trombones in harmony with lots of sweet vibrato. Throughout the series, vibrato emerges as an important marker of both gender and romance. As Jeff Smith notes, Mancini was not only a virtuoso melodic composer, he was also adept at turning “unusual sonorities into brilliant song hooks” for his crossover albums. Sectional vibrato by the trombones often referenced the couple’s quiet domestic romance, while solo saxophone vibrato intimated a more overt sexuality between Gunn and a dangerous sexual woman. In the midst of this sweet jazz rendition, Hart wakes up to complain about Gunn’s cheap perfume stink; presumably he has been out with a floozy in his crime-solving endeavors. They talk in quiet intimate tones while the song continues in the background. In this first episode, “Slow and Easy” sets up the predictable and “easy” nature of their romance but, true to his flexible adaptation of jazz material, Mancini would adapt it to suggest other associations in differing contexts throughout the series.

The next time we hear this melody, it occurs in Episode 19, Murder on the Midway, to reflect the dangerous sexual allure of the very attractive “Rowena” (played by the beautiful Nita Talbot), a carnival-employed, belly dancer who performs a sensual dance for a fictional but repugnant orientalist prince who forced her into a harem as a young woman. This time the theme, performed by solo saxophone, is slower and bluesier in a style enhancing the extreme sexual energy between Gunn and this tempting, experienced man-eater, the quintessential noir femme fatale. Her allure is reinforced by the orientalist associations of her performance art (typically rendered by oboe and hand drums). Later we hear the theme again after Rowena and Gunn visit Mothers together, much to the dislike of Hart. As Gunn accompanies Rowena back to her tent, the theme reappears in the original arrangement as a mid-tempo blues performed again by trombones in the upper register. This time Rowena coyly offers an invitation at kissing distance: “I hope I loused up your romance.” To which Gunn replies “It’s possible” to which she says “Good more for me” before landing a long kiss on his mouth. The altered orchestration (solo saxophone versus sectional trombones), new tempos (medium versus slow) and use of blue notes and vibrato provided varied connotations for the level of sensuality and tension between Gunn and these female characters. Mancini would develop such scoring strategies with relatively few resources and a small group of musicians to stage a range of gendered and sexual affects in later episodes.

In Episode 24, The Ugly Frame, the tune is performed diegetically at Mothers
as Gunn and Hart chat at the bar while a despondent Lieutenant Jacoby sits alone at a table. He worries about his upcoming hearing (he has been framed). This time Mancini forgoes the usual brass players for a more economic piano and guitar doubling. This paired-down arrangement effectively marks this version as a melancholy, solitary background for drinking one’s blues away rather than sounds that would suggest a sensual invitation for romance.

We hear the theme again in Episode 26, "Keep Smiling," in an after-hours gentleman’s club for betting and jazz. As the blackmailing, attractive femme fatale Emily (played by Mara Corday) enters the club, the music transitions from slowly rendered small-group blues to a more up-tempo version of the tune. This time the lead melody on trombone and trumpet is played in a more aggressive New Orleans hot-jazz style. Gunn and the blackmailing Emily flirt relentlessly even though both are playing a part to ensnare the other in their scheme. This more chaotic hot-jazz rendition of the theme suggests not only sexual danger but also a possible link to the unpredictable world of crime and gambling. In this scene, Mancini relies upon prior associations of underworld jazz from both noir and the classic Hollywood period.

“Slow and Easy” could also be used to suggest sexual tension between the secondary characters embroiled in the main crime plot. In Episode 9, "Image of Sally," this theme provides the backdrop for the doomed relationship of Sally and Si, the man just released from jail who took the rap for the main gangster Joe Nord. After serving his time, Si enters the apartment of his former girlfriend Sally Hall, the damsel in distress. Sally is now the property of Joe Nord but she wants out. She offers him a drink and he declines. She walks over to her record collection and puts on “Slow and Easy.” Here the music is rendered by the sensual trombone theme with lots of blue notes and vibrato; its audibility marks the melancholy backdrop for these doomed but romantically invested lovers. By filming Sally’s character playing the record, the music functions on various levels: diegetically, as a replica of a typical modern apartment (with a record player and LP collection); dramatically, to cue the destitution of these tragic lovers; and finally, within the industrial and commercial context of television and the recorded division of RCA Victor (Figure 12.3). Here it functions outside of the diegesis to promote the recorded version of Mancini’s tie-in LP (Music from Peter Gunn) providing viewers a snippet of what they can consume in their own living rooms.

Finally, in Episode 11, "Death House Testament," Gunn takes the bait of a sexy, sophisticated “brunette” who appears to be sleeping in her expensive car while her cute diamond-studded poodle peers curiously out of the window, drawing Gunn’s attention as he passes by. Gunn wakes the woman and offers to drive her somewhere. She accepts. As Gunn gets into the car, she drapes her long legs over the front seat. She slides to the middle to be closer to Gunn so she can demand that he kiss her. He pauses, claiming he doesn’t even know...
her name. She replies: “Sandra Leads” to which he coolly retorts “I always insist on a formal introduction.” As he kisses her, he fishes through her purse to discover a small, feminine gun at which he asks “Alright Sandra – why are we so fond of each other?”

For this scene, the album arrangement of “Slow and Easy” is heard as narrative music, again rendered by sectional trombones in a slower tempo to provide the sexually charged music undergirding the feminine trap set up by this attractive woman and her dog. The contrasting arrangement of the bridge, however, establishes this character’s upper-class identity as a wealthy white woman. The high-class background is enacted sonically by the doubling in octaves on three instruments which would come to be synonymous with Mancini’s light pop jazz style – the guitar, piano, and vibraphones. In this arrangement, the lush major tonalities of the bridge are orchestrated in melodious and languid octaves and performed by the characteristic trio. This trio often framed the upper-class standing of prominent but sensual white women in the Gunn series, with the Victorian associations of the piano as an important intertextual sonic cue. Thus, the alluring sensuality of this female temptress is framed by her white upper-class identification, a musical, cultural and visual depiction we would often witness later in the crime jazz series of the Bond films.

In each of these episodes, “Slow and Easy” continuously references the jazz club Mothers and Hart’s performances there. Therefore the connections to this setting act as an important precursor to both her professional work and her romantic relationship. Mancini’s unique rescoring of such themes depended upon the gendered and professional associations of jazz and blues sonically enacted, variously and over time, within different settings to suggest a diverse range of character types and affective worlds. Further, Mancini resisted using musical themes as one-dimensional leitmotifs to stage statically the gendered, affective, and psychological dimension of the show’s main characters. Rather, diegetic music was flexibly scored to suggest something slightly different about the various male–female interactions of the series characters as demanded by each new crime-driven or romantic situation. Through Mancini’s artful orchestrations and the combined uses of narrative and diegetic or rather ambi-diegetic scorings, these themes successfully communicated to the viewer much about the level of intimacy, the danger of the alluring woman, the overt sexuality of the encounter, or the contented domesticity shared between Hart and Gunn who predictably reunite after hours in the comfortable environment of bachelor pads or working-women apartments. Finally, in Mancini’s scoring, jazz would be fully instrumental in inviting a respectable white woman into its associative world of sex, romance, and professional performance.
The two albums connected to the series, *The Music of Peter Gunn* and *More Music from Peter Gunn*, profoundly expanded the commercial success and critical acclaim of Mancini as a film music composer during the 1950s and 1960s. They also facilitated the rise of the economic popularity of the new genre of pop jazz and the medium of the tie-in album. Further, the two tie-in albums carrying the series title were the first blockbuster LPs released by a film and television soundtrack composer in the 1950s. In 1959, Mancini recorded his first tie-in album for the series *Music from Peter Gunn* (LPM/LSP 1956) with RCA Victor. This album became the first television soundtrack to reach number one on the *Billboard* Pop LP charts in 1959, selling more than a million copies and winning a Grammy for Album of the Year, a feat unheard of for film music composers. The second album recorded, also in 1959 for RCA Victor, was *More Music from Peter Gunn* (RCA LMP 2040) which was favorably reviewed but not as popular as the first release.

Most scholars of Mancini (and *Peter Gunn*) cite and examine these two albums. Yet Mancini also released a third tie-in album to feature the series’s main female character Edie Hart, portrayed by singer and actress Lola Albright. This vocal album, entitled *Dreamsville*, was released in 1959 by Columbia records (CL 1327) and featured many of the same musicians from the other two albums (Figure 12.4). The album showcased vocal versions of various instrumental themes heard both in the series and recorded on the other two albums. For example, Mancini arranged new vocal versions of the instrumentals “Dreamsville,” “Brief and Breezy,” “Soft Sounds,” “Slow and Easy,” “Sorta Blue,” and “Session at Pete’s Pad” (as “Straight to Baby”), four of the five themes most often scored to indicate Edie’s relation to Gunn in the series. But only two of the newly arranged vocals appear as performances by Edie Hart at Mothers in season one; these are “Brief and Breezy” (Episode 37) and “Straight to Baby” (performed in Episodes 31 and 34). Contributing to the aesthetic continuity between the three tie-in albums, *Dreamsville* featured themes from the other two LPs, yet most of the arrangements were made sweeter with the addition of strings, harp, and a production aesthetic featuring a warm and heavily reverberating soundstage. What are missing from these new vocal arrangements are the sultry saxophones of the instrumentals and Pete Condoli’s loud, aggressive trumpet solos of the *Music from Peter Gunn* soundtrack. Moreover, *Dreamsville* departed from the strategy of the other two albums by focusing more upon the light pop jazz genre for Albright as the featured soloist. Finally, Mancini wrote only half of the material for Albright’s *Dreamsville* album. Of the twelve tunes, the other six were popular torch or jazz songs, which favorably exhibited Albright’s talents and range. Two of the vocal tracks not connected to the show’s original theme music which did

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**Dreamsville**

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appear dietetically as solo jazz performances by Hart at Mothers were “You’re Driving Me Crazy, What Did I Do?” (Episode 34) and “Just You Just Me” (Episode 38).37

Even though the album’s timbre and style are sweet and romantic, it featured many unusual orchestrations such as “Slow and Easy,” arranged for flute, strings, piano, and guitar. The album’s tune which most represented the *Peter Gunn* crime jazz sound is “Straight to Baby,” a vocal version of “Session at Pete’s Pad” with new lyrics written by Mancini’s frequent collaborator Sammy Cahn. “Straight to Baby” is also one of only two original songs from the album to appear diegetically in season one.38 It appears twice, but only once in its entirety, in *Love Me to Death*. In this episode, Hart sings the tune at
Mothers during the very first scene as Pete listens with enjoyment and admiration. Its main function is to provide the backdrop during Gunn’s introduction to two wealthy sisters who hire Gunn to investigate their third sister’s new (blackmailing) husband. Yet the episode’s serious filmic attention to Albright’s performance also effectively positioned the song as one of the album’s featured numbers. Further, by featuring Hart/Albright singing what would have been a familiar but dramatically altered tune, the song functioned to showcase Albright’s unique vocal jazz talent in the context of the larger aesthetic vision of Mancini’s scoring. His flexible adaptation of ambi-diegetic jazz-flavored themes elicited particular moods while also showcasing the unique talents and sonorities of his revered musicians who themselves could improvise and adapt to different settings and moods. The new slower vocal arrangement in the key of E minor, a whole step up from the original instrumental of “Session at Pete’s Pad,” was a perfect vehicle to display Albright’s cool and smoky alto register. The contrast to the original was striking: the first, a faster and assertive arrangement scored as narrative music to elicit the dangerous fight scenes between Gunn and various criminals. This new, slower, laid-back, and economic scoring rejected its original role as narrative music and rather supported the full appreciation of Albright/Hart’s unembellished cool jazz vocal style in the diegetic setting.

Mancini sets up Albright’s first verse with a simple II-V-I turnaround in bass, accompanied by brushes on trap set. This minimal background texture is embellished with only intermittent short piano mordents. In other words, the texture in the first four measures is light and cool. The form is also straight ahead and uncomplicated; a 32-bar form is embellished with only two short solos on piano and then vibes, pointing both to Mancini’s distinctive arrangements which relied upon economical pairings of vibes with piano or guitar and drew from the West Coast sound that often promoted non-traditional big band solo instruments such as alto flute or vibes.

The song’s cool jazz style and the poetic lyrics also established Hart’s agency as a competent jazz performer in the West Coast style. Her utterance of jazz lingo with words and references such as “straight,” “baby,” and “I blow” marks this performance’s connection to current beatnik appropriations of black culture and its mediation in literature, film, and popular culture. But the ambiguity of these phrases also facilitated a musical and poetic voice for Hart’s enduring female desire of an ambiguous object. In her diegetic performance of these lyrics, Hart enacts an active female gaze for Gunn and for her love of the jazz performance. But her performance is open for interpretation because, from these lyrics and their delivery, we are not sure if Hart longs only for Gunn or for a romantic alliance within her preferred jazz space, the jazz club. From the song’s main line “take me straight to baby” the term “baby” is usually reserved to refer to women as objects of desire in an earlier musical
historical moment such as in classic film noir. At other times, in blues lingo, "baby" might refer to black men as objects in black women’s blues poetics (Davis, Harrison). But this diegetic jazz performance also suggests another reading: it points rather to the integral relationship between performing jazz (an active stance) and desiring a man (an active stance). Hart longs to stay at her cherished jazz spot where she can blow and express her art with her baby at her side. In short, this artful diegetic scoring of a commercially released cool jazz vocal tune allows for variable interpretations and levels of artistic and gendered jazz agency.

**Gendered Jazz Myths in Gunn’s Noir Jazz**

While the diegetic performances of Edie Hart as well as the tie-in album of *Dreamsville* did much to promote the idea of the independent female jazz artist within the genre of crime jazz, Mancini also supported other performances for female jazz vocalists in this series. These performances expanded the images of professional jazz women but simultaneously reinscribed older myths surrounding the blues and jazz singer, especially those enacted within earlier Hollywood films with narratives treating black women musicians as victims of male culture.

Several episodes from season one featured a number of musical artists not connected to Mothers’s jazz combo. The first was the prolific and respected LA trumpeter and soloist Shorty Rogers who collaborated with many West Coast jazz bands during the 1950s, including those of Stan Kenton and the Lighthouse Allstars. He also led his own group, Shorty Rogers and his Giants, and performed on other projects to release dozens of recordings during the 1950s and ’60s. Rogers was also a frequent composer and arranger for film and television during the 1950s. Notably, Rogers’s scores include *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) and *The Wild One* (1954), two contemporary films with crime and urban jazz and/or youth-oriented themes.

From Episode 5, *The Frog*, Gunn walks into Mothers to see the unknown Rogers taking a few choruses on “How High the Moon” before Hart/Albright takes over the head. After a neat and tight performance, Hart looks to Gunn and says “I don’t think you know Shorty Rogers” to which Gunn casually responds “Hiya Shorty.” Rogers is here filmed blowing his relatively unusual cool-toned flugelhorn. During the pre-production of the series, Rogers had been invited to record the theme song for the show under his name, an invitation he turned down for Mancini, so his appearance as guest soloist here was not surprising. As a respected composer and trumpet player with several West Coast groups, his performance served to buttress the show’s connection to both the LA jazz scene and the increasingly trendy West Coast sound in the late 1950s.
A second featured musician, who performed a central role in a later episode, **Lynn’s Blues** (episode nine) and its larger jazz-driven narrative, was the jazz and pop vocalist Linda Lawson, an actor and musician who worked extensively in television and film. In addition to television and film appearances, she performed as a nightclub singer at various clubs including the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. Her performances also contributed to the expansion of jazz labels such as Verve in the 1950s and ’60s into the crossover jazz and pop market as well as the domestic market for hi-fi stereo systems.

This episode perpetuated older Hollywood noir narratives which linked jazz culture to organized crime. In films and in journalistic accounts, the jazz public was well familiarized with images of the speakeasies from the 1920s; many were jazz joints owned by notorious mobsters such as Al Capone. Chicago jazz clubs were well-known repositories for bootlegged alcohol during prohibition and these clubs’ violent histories reveal the unwanted relationships between jazz musicians and mob bosses. In one notorious example, Chicago’s famous Green Mill Cabaret singer Joe Lewis was attacked, his tongue cut out, and left for dead by mobster and club owner Machinegun Jack McGurn (Al Capone’s leading hitman) after Lewis threatened to leave for another club. Yet, like this story, most of our knowledge of the connections between jazz musicians and organized crime emerges from anecdotes later retold by agents and musicians (notably Louis Armstrong or Frank Sinatra). But such narratives rarely depicted stories of jazz women’s intimidation by crime bosses in jazz sites. Women performers similarly suffered such economic and performance pressures, however, while also being subjected to unwanted sexual advances from unscrupulous nightclub bosses.

While Hart’s character rarely interacts with criminal characters, thus maintaining her respectability, in this episode Lynn Martel, performed by Linda Lawson, is the talented but compromised singer forced to perform under the unscrupulous terms of a crime boss. Therefore this episode attempted to promote an older jazz narrative. Yet, even though her middle-class, respectable position in society is suggested through her friendship with Hart, her blues-inflected performances provide the pretext to incorporate the jazz mob story.

The first scene opens in the hotel lobby with a patron entering the elevator. The elevator is stopped at mid-floor and the man is shot from above. The next scene opens in the hotel ballroom to feature a nearly catatonic jazz singer (Lynn Martel) exuding her grief through her torch song as she sings “blue is the color of the sea, till my lover left me.” Martel exits the stage in mid-phrase, too despondent to continue. Her desperation is caused by her forced contract with the club’s owner Babe Santana, a crime boss character who carries a knife and threatens Gunn after he attempted to console Lynn in her dressing room.

The plot appears to have been inspired by Peggy Lee’s character in **Pete Kelly’s Blues** from 1955 which takes place in a Kansas City speakeasy from
the 1920s. Again, the familiar figure of the victimized, exploited blues woman provides the dominant narrative of jazz women, who are almost always singers. In contrast to both this episode and to *Pete Kelly’s Blues*, however, in reality most blues women were black, and this new version of the blues singer myth displaces the black progeny of blues and jazz singing. Earlier images of blues singers were first projected in the experimental sound films of the 1920s and 1930s with performances by both Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday. Yet, in *Peter Gunn*, this tragic female jazz figure provides a brief counter to Edie’s straight-arrow, respectable, middle-class demeanor; Edie is both a stable romantic figure and a jazz artist isolated from the excesses of crime and prostitution. While Martel’s forced, and therefore less respectable, sexual relationship is indirectly referenced, Edie’s chasteness is reinforced by her committed relationship with Gunn even as she appears nonchalant in her half-hearted complaints of his absence.

In this episode, in keeping with the jazz-mob narrative, the criminals are Italian but, to balance such blatant stereotypes, the most corrupt and powerful businessman in the narrative is an Anglo-Saxon man by the name of Nat Krueger (this might be a good corollary to Joe Glaser’s and Al Capone’s connections to jazz in the 1920s). Fortunately (sarcasm intended), we later discover that Lynn is not really from a criminal or “immigrant” background but that she has unwittingly found herself affiliating with such types because of her jazz singer profession. The episode reinforces her “wrong place at the wrong time” circumstance when Edie reassures Gunn that she has family in the Midwest and was a “sweet, normal girl” before she got wrapped up with Santana. With the help of Edie, Gunn’s role is to save Martel from her crime boss. After she tries to kill herself with gas, Gunn literally slaps some sense into her (she apparently required once again aggressive cajoling from a strong man). He escorts her back to Edie’s apartment to recover. The two are followed by Krueger and eventually a car chase ensues between Krueger, Jacoby, and the police. Krueger is caught and Lynn returns to the hotel for one last performance to sing her signature song “Meaning of the Blues.”

This signature song, composed by Bobby Troupe (who hosted the ABC Stars of Jazz television program in the mid-1950s) would have been familiar to audiences because it was popularized by Julie London in 1957. Lawson had also recently recorded this song in a compilation album arranged by Mancini entitled *Songs for My Boyfriend* (1957 Verve 2097) with Linda Leigh, Marlene Willis, and Joan O’Brien. In other words, Mancini draws from his strategy of ambi-diegetic music not only to represent functional jazz myths of victimized blues singers working in crime-driven nightclubs but also by making connections to contemporaneous vocal jazz performances of popular singers promoted by the expanding crossover jazz record labels such as Verve. Mancini would increasingly rely upon this savvy cross-promotional marketing
new masculinity in Henry Mancini’s *Peter Gunn*

...technique in his other compilation soundtracks which could make connections between the cultural fictions of television and film and the cultural and affective connections of real-life performances of popular music. With such a strategy, the show’s cultural and contemporary significance is reinforced by such real-world connections to pop culture.  

Linda Lawson released her solo album *Introducing Linda Lawson* in 1960, shortly after her appearance on *Peter Gunn*, with the independent Chancellor label in which she recorded a variety of torch songs and blues-oriented jazz ballads such as “Mood Indigo,” “The Meaning of the Blues,” and “But Beautiful.” The album featured prominent modern jazz musicians from the West Coast including Bud Shank on alto sax, Jimmy Rowles on piano, Al Porcino on trumpet, Mel Lewis on drums, and Frank Rosolina on trombone. It was conducted and arranged by Marty Paich, a composer and arranger often compared to Mancini in this period because of his blending of jazz and other genres within high-fidelity arrangements for home stereo systems. Jimmy Rowles had also recorded on Mancini’s two LPs for the Gunn series. Both

Figure 12.3 Lynn Martel (Linda Lawson) sings her “Meaning of the Blues” in Peter Gunn’s “Lynn’s Blues.”
Paich and Mancini had often worked with the same group of white studio/jazz musicians from the West Coast jazz scene.

In the postwar period, struggling jazz companies expanded into the vocal jazz and crossover market with compilation albums featuring sensual ballads by attractive and mostly white female jazz or torch song singers, such as Linda Lawson. Many crossover vocal jazz albums featured attractive performers who presented star Hollywood qualities and therefore these albums established connections to television or film. Of course, Mancini had also released such an album featuring Lola Albright in his Dreamsville LP. While the exotica or bachelor-pad light jazz of the 1950s and '60s were often instrumental music with exotic instrumentations and soundscapes, vocalists were not often historicated as part of the genre, with the exception of Yma Sumac who recorded a number of Hollywood-inspired exotica albums during the 1950s. Apart from Yma Sumac, women rarely contributed to this new crossover market as composers, lead performers, or producers, yet images of women were prominently positioned on record covers as sensual, exotic objects. In short, the genre performed almost exclusively for men and by men positioned a highly sensual, exotic, and feminized image to market such consumer products as masculine.

**Conclusion**

Mancini’s postwar connection to the bachelor-pad sounds of Martin Denny or to *Playboy*-era cocktail jazz were clear, especially as these currents sought to market their music to a multigenerational, upwardly mobile, male, postwar audience. By combining jazz and pop into easy-listening melodies with mostly instrumental arrangements and the addition of the occasional torch song by a beautiful female vocalist, Mancini’s work successfully appealed to a more mature audience, one that preferred listening to high-quality arrangements performed by the best (white) studio jazz musicians over visiting late-night (black) jazz clubs. The bachelor-pad or easy-listening genre was also perfect for the series’s setting, in that it provided the soundstage for various living-room scenes to market Mancini’s music but also to promote the new masculine consumer, whether engaged in romantic, escapist, exotic fantasies or simply seeking after-work relaxation. Such new objects of consumerism, from the hi-fi stereo system to the adult record collection of worldly sophisticated jazz sounds, provided the necessary accoutrements to cement Gunn and, by association, Mancini’s musical status as the most adept composer to score this new consumer-driven masculinity for the upwardly mobile man.

Further, in the *Peter Gunn* series, the secondary appearances by guests, such as singer Linda Lawson and trumpeter Shorty Rogers, reveal Mancini’s (and Edwards’s) efforts in supporting the careers of musicians connected to the broader jazz scene of the West Coast. In such cameo appearances, Mancini’s
use of ambi-diegetic jazz further buttressed the cool image of West Coast jazz in connection with Peter Gunn’s new masculinity. Sometimes, such appearances also made real connections to the performative spaces of West Coast jazz; at other times, as in the depiction of torch singer Lynn Martel, older gendered jazz myths were reconfigured into the gentrified spaces of a mediated white jazz world within this fictional space. Yet the gendered images, enacted musically and within the larger narrative of Peter Gunn, complicated the dominance and sexism of this new masculinity in providing one of the first serious narrative representations of an independent jazz woman. By combining many vocal performances and uses of ambi-diegetic jazz within the series, Mancini’s scoring enabled a level of creative agency for Albright’s character which elevated her artistic creditably and connected her to the broader professional world of West Coast jazz. His masterly ability flexibly to adapt diegetic jazz for the filmic goals of affective, spatial, and narrative cuing, however, also served to reinforce more established and normative gender positions in postwar America where women supposedly sought long-term monogamous relationships and desired a life of domestic comforts and economic dependability. Because this normative gendered desire is treated with a coy and ironic stance and because it fails to materialize in the Gunn series, this may be one of the first enactments of female jazz agency, in conjunction with representations of female desire, which is not limited, sonically or visually, to temporary forms of agency typically staged in the service of the dominant man prior to the late 1950s.  

Ultimately, the Peter Gunn series reinforced Hefner’s elitist and gentrified concept of a consumerist-driven, urban, and independent new man, one resistant to the bonds of marriage and open for sexual adventures which were partly facilitated through an appreciation of high jazz. But to forget that this same series was one of only a few to promote professional hi-fi recordings of female jazz vocalists, while dramatizing an enduring image of an independent professional artist with considerable jazz agency when most of the new crossover hi-fi exotic or cool jazz recordings featured male artists exclusively, would be to oversimplify the gender politics of such jazz-centered media and their connections to the cool jazz rage of the West Coast which, increasingly, gained cultural capital as it displaced images of black jazz throughout the world. These progressive images of gender and jazz in no small part set the stage for mediating the radical transformations of race, gender, and sex politics that would explode during the 1960s within the counterculture.

Notes
2. Caps, Henry Mancini: Reinventing Film Music, p. 46.


5. Yet other behind-the-scenes workers, such as producers and writers, including the show’s writer and creator Blake Edwards also gained a reputation throughout Los Angeles as a jazz lover and attractive, charming bachelor. This type of educated, flexible and less rigid man assisted the growing acceptance of the new masculinity.

6. Butler and others point to the representation of West Coast jazz during the 1950s in both film and other related media as prioritizing the cult of the white jazz musician. For Butler, the band leader who provided the most visible image of this new sound was Stan Kenton with his Innovations in Modern Music Orchestra. Kenton’s orchestras provided white audiences an image that facilitated the idealization of white jazz musicians. See David Butler, “Touch of Kenton: Jazz in 1950s Film Noir,” in *Jazz Noir*, p. 111. For other discussions of the cult of the white jazz musician see Krin Gabbard “Jazz Becomes Art” *Jammin’ at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 101–37; and John Gennari, *Blowin Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) p. 182.


11. Kalinak proposes Max Steiner as the twentieth-century composer who most rigorously established Hollywood film music-scoring conventions, both through the conviction of his aesthetic principles and with the dogma with which he promoted these convictions. Such conventions include the selective use of non-diegetic music for dramatic purposes, a correspondence between that music and the narrative, the synchronization between narrative action and music (as in the technique of mickey mousing), and the use of the leitmotif as a structural framework. See Katherine Kalinak, “Chapter Five: Every character should have a theme: *The Informer*, Max Steiner and the Classical Film Score,” *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Score* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1992), pp. 113–34.


14. Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, p. 120.

15. Haworth, “Detective Agency?: Scoring the Amateur Female Investigator in 1940s Hollywood.”
17. Yvonne Tasker reviews the critique of this anxiety in Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema (London and New York: Routledge 1998), p. 92. Of course, these were anxieties reflecting the positions of middle-class white women as non-white working-class women had frequently worked to sustain themselves and their families. For a comprehensive historical account of Black women’s labor in the United States see, for example, Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, from Slavery to the Present (New York: Basic Books, 2010).
19. Ibid., pp. 1–2.
20. Ibid., p. 14
22. Ibid., p. 41.
23. Ibid., p. 42.
31. Morris Holbrook defines this category in relation to the narrative and affective prompting elicited by diegetic music’s reappearance within the narrative film score, as is often the case with diegetic jazz within Peter Gunn. He situates this category outside of diegetic or non-diegetic occurrences stating: “ambi-diegetic music refers to on-screen music produced inside the film (like diegetic music) that plays a role in furthering the movie’s dramatic development (as is typical of non-diegetic music). When on-screen performers play a jazz piece in a manner that advances the plot, comments on the nature of a character’s persona, or reinforces a key theme, we have a case of ambi-diegesis.” Morris’s main example is the related jazz-inflected film Pete Kelly’s Blues (1995), which similarly utilized jazz to comment upon the character’s psychological and affective world, as well as to forward the narrative of the film, Holbrook, Music, Movies, Meanings and Markets, p. xix.
32. This was asserted by Peter Gunn journalist Quigley on his Peter Gunn website: Mike Quigley, “Seasons 1, 2 and 3,” Peter Gunn Episode Guide. Accessed February 18, 2017, http://www.petergunn.tv/
34. Ibid.
37. Other vocal jazz and classic American songbook arrangements not performed in *Peter Gunn* but recorded for the album were “It’s Always You” famously sung by Frank Sinatra in the film *Road to Zanzibar*; “Two Sleepy People,” composed by Hoagy Carmichael in 1938, “They Didn’t Believe Me” composed by Jerome Kern and “We Kiss in a Shadow” from *The King and I*.
39. Rogers was one of the first to incorporate the flugelhorn into modern jazz recordings in the 1950s.
44. Paramount’s *St. Louis Blues* (1929) starred Bessie Smith as a love-worn, whiskey-drinking, blues singer who laments her no-good, two-timing man, and the Duke Ellington film *Symphony in Black* (Paramount 1935) featured a young Billie Holiday, rejected and jealous of her boyfriend’s new romantic partner as she cathartically sings “That Man.”
45. This practice would become more common and relevant for popular music compilation soundtracks in movies of the counterculture such as *The Graduate* (MGM, 1967) and *Easy Rider* (Warner Bros., 1969).
46. According to jazz journalist Marc Myers, Chancellor Records was a Philadelphia label with a Hollywood presence thanks to Am-Par, the music subsidiary of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). Myers also lists the many fine West Coast musicians featured on Lawson’s album: Al Porcino, Stu Williamson and Jack Sheldon (tp); Frank Rosolino (tb); Bud Shank (as); Bill Perkins (ts); Med Flory (bar); Jimmy Rowles (p); Bill Pittman (g); Joe Mondragon (b); Mel Lewis (d); and the Hollywood String Ensemble. See Myers’s website “Introducing Linda Lawson” *JazzWax*. Accessed 5 May 5, 2017, http://www.jazzwax.com/2013/02/introducing-linda-lawson.html
47. This filmic device, allowing women only temporary agency, was, of course, typical of earlier aural and visual depictions of women within 1940s noir and crime detective genres. See Haworth, “Detective Agency?: Scoring the Amateur Female Investigator in 1940s Hollywood,” and Ann Kaplan, *Women in Film Noir* (London: BFI, 1998).
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