

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910458407903321
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Titolo	The imperfect art : reflections on jazz and modern culture / / Ted Gioia
Pubbl/distr/stampa	New York ; ; Oxford, [England] : , : Oxford University Press, , 1988 ©1988
ISBN	1-280-52474-X 9786610524747 0-19-536259-4
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (175 p.)
Disciplina	785.42/09
Soggetti	Jazz - History and criticism Music - Philosophy and aesthetics Electronic books.
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Contents; 1 Louis Armstrong and Furniture Music; 2 Jazz and the Primitivist Myth; 3 The Imperfect Art; 4 Neoclassicism in Jazz; 5 What Has Jazz to Do with Aesthetics?; 6 Boredom and Jazz; 7 Jazz as Song; Notes; About the Author; Index; A; B; C; D; E; F; G; H; I; J; K; L; M; N; O; P; R; S; T; U; V; W; Y; Credits
Sommario/riassunto	Taking a wide-ranging approach rare in jazz criticism, Ted Gioia draws upon fields as disparate as literary criticism, art history, sociology, and aesthetic philosophy in order to place jazz within the turbulent cultural environment of the twentieth century. He argues that because improvisation--the essence of jazz--must often fail under the pressure of on-the-spot creativity, we should view jazz as an ""imperfect art"" and base our judgments of it on an ""aesthetics of imperfection." Incorporating the thought of such seminal thinkers as Walter Benjamin, Jose Ortega y Gasset, and Roland Barth