



# Body and Soul: Jazz, Blues, and Race in American Film, 1927-63

*Peter Stanfield*

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How the dark continent of blues and jazz provided Hollywood with a resonant resource to construct and negotiate the boundaries of American cultural identity? Writing in the late 1930s, New York journalist Joseph Mitchell observed: Except for the minstrel show, the strip act is probably America's only original contribution to the theater. In *Body and Soul*, Peter Stanfield's arguments echo Mitchell's observation. Stanfield begins by exploring how Hollywood used black face minstrelsy to represent an emerging urban American theatrical history, and ends with a look at how American film at the close of the studio era represented urban decay through the figure of the burlesque dancer and stripper. In between, Stanfield considers the representation of American urban life in jazz, blues, ballads, and sin-songs, and the manner in which the film studios exploited this gutter music. Alongside extensive, thought-provoking, and lively analysis of some of the most popular jazz and blues songs of the twentieth century-Frankie and Johnny, St. Louis Blues, The Man I Love, Blues in the Night, and *Body and Soul*-the book contains new work on black face minstrelsy in early sound movies

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