



NEWS & INFO

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MARK RUFFIN
BRINGS TO LIFE HIS COLORFUL MIX
OF HISTORICAL FICTION AND JAZZ FANTASY WITH
BEBOP FAIRY TALES,
TO BE PUBLISHED BY HIS ROUGH IN CREATIVE WORKS
SEPTEMBER 1

VETERAN BROADCASTER'S STORY COLLECTION
HELPS TO CELEBRATE A LANDMARK IN HIS 40-YEAR CAREER
AS A DISC JOCKEY,
MUSIC PROGRAMMER, & INTERVIEWER

Mark Ruffin, known coast-to-coast as the afternoon drivetime DJ for SiriusXM's Real Jazz channel, relates some of his self-imagined "jazz stories" in his short story collection *Bebop Fairy Tales: An Historical Fiction Trilogy on Jazz, Intolerance, and Baseball*. Ruffin's scintillating blend of historical fiction with jazz—and, yes, baseball—draws on the two diversions' parallel stations as great and uniquely American pastimes. The emphasis, however, is on jazz, as an art form and as both an expression and an arbiter of race in America.

The self-published collection, available September 1, comes during Ruffin's 40th anniversary as a jazz radio broadcaster, which he marks in 2020. The convergence is not a coincidence: these tales could only have come from a mind that's been immersed with the music's folklore. "My mind's been flooded with jazz stories, both true and made up," he says. "But the made-up ones always come from the truth, from doing interviews with all these great musicians."

Ruffin can say without exaggeration that he has spent his whole life steeped in jazz. One of his earliest memories is of a robbery at his parents' record store on the West Side of his hometown of Chicago, while a Miles Davis record played on the store's turntable. "[It was] 'If I Were a Bell'—where he starts it by saying, 'I'll play it and tell you what it is later,'" Ruffin says. "At the end the needle would come back to the beginning. I was scared, but I also remember that every time that voice came back and said that, I was okay."

It's only the first of the lifetime's worth of jazz stories and memories Ruffin has collected. Many more have come straight from the mouths of the musicians who he has interviewed over his four decades in radio: the interviews on which he's built his superlative reputation not only as a broadcaster and

raconteur, but as an expert and historian of the music. What he didn't learn through his lived experience, personal and professional, he gained through his front-row seat to jazz history, soaking up the musicians' tales and lessons with the same ear for detail that he brings to programming the music.

Mark Ruffin was born September 24, 1956 in Chicago, Illinois. His father, an electrician, set up a shop on Chicago's West Side that repaired TVs and radios on one side and sold records on the other. Ruffin's Records was also where Mark (and his five siblings) gained the technical and musical knowledge that would form the nucleus of his career in jazz radio.

Ruffin's first experience in radio was at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, where he worked on the staff of campus radio station WSIU. His knowledge of electronics allowed him to earn his then-required FCC license; his love of the music gave him something to do when he was operating those electronics.

Over the next 25 years, Ruffin worked at WDCB-FM, where he started his career as an interviewer; WBEE-AM, where he brought the station ratings success for the first time in its twenty-year history; and WNUA-FM, where he produced the nationally syndicated *Ramsey Lewis Show*. He returned to WBEZ, before transitioning in the 2000s to a nationally syndicated show (co-hosted with Neil Tesser), *Listen Here*.

In 2005, Ruffin was hired by Harpo Productions—Oprah Winfrey's shop—as a producer on Winfrey's channel at what was then XM Satellite Radio. By 2007 he had moved to New York to work at XM's jazz fusion channel, Beyond Jazz—then crossing over to Real Jazz, the channel that was created when XM merged with Sirius Satellite Radio in 2009. Ruffin turned the Beyond Jazz concept into a fusion program (now called “Friday Fusion”) and eventually became program director.

Ruffin in the 1990s began to pursue writing fiction—specifically, screenwriting, eventually becoming a 2003 semifinalist in the Sundance Institute's screenplay competition. One of his early (unproduced) screenplays, a Jazz Age tale in which Fats Waller is kidnapped by Al Capone, suggested a unique, jazz-focused form of historical fiction. Ruffin reinvented himself as a writer of print stories, and from 2003 until 2020 worked at the collection that has now become *Bebop Fairy Tales*. “How can I explain it, other than that it's about how powerful jazz is in people's lives?” he says. “I suppose the real thread behind all three stories is, ‘intolerance is stupid.’”

Bebop Fairy Tales is available for purchase on Amazon.

www.bebop.markruffin.com