

Book Recommendation: Zawinul – Ein Leben aus Jazz

This year's Christmas reading is of a special nature. On the one hand, it is in German only (our title translation: **Zawinul – A Life Of Jazz**). On the other hand, the book is not so easy to get – search the second-hand market and you will find it (a few links are given at the end of the article).



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Well, Joe Zawinul wasn't just anyone. One of the most renowned jazz musicians, one of the most gifted keyboardists and ... one of the most important endorsers of synthesizer manufacturers such as ARP and KORG for many years.

His constellation of two [ARP 2600](#) synthesizers, one keyboard normal, one inverted, was legendary. Zawinul improvised live on both keyboards at the same time and of course the resulting harmonies were perfect. Geniuses can do that.



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The massive sound of an Oberheim 4-Voice, with which Zawinul wrote jazz and synthesizer history in the song "Birdland" with his fusion band *Weather Report* (with Wayne Shorter and Jaco Pastorius, among others), is legendary.

And Zawinul's beloved master keyboard, a [Sequential Prophet T8](#), is also legendary. For decades, the musician – always surrounded by a rig of synthesizers (including e.g. the [Chroma Polaris](#)) – used the Prophet T8 as his main instrument on stage.



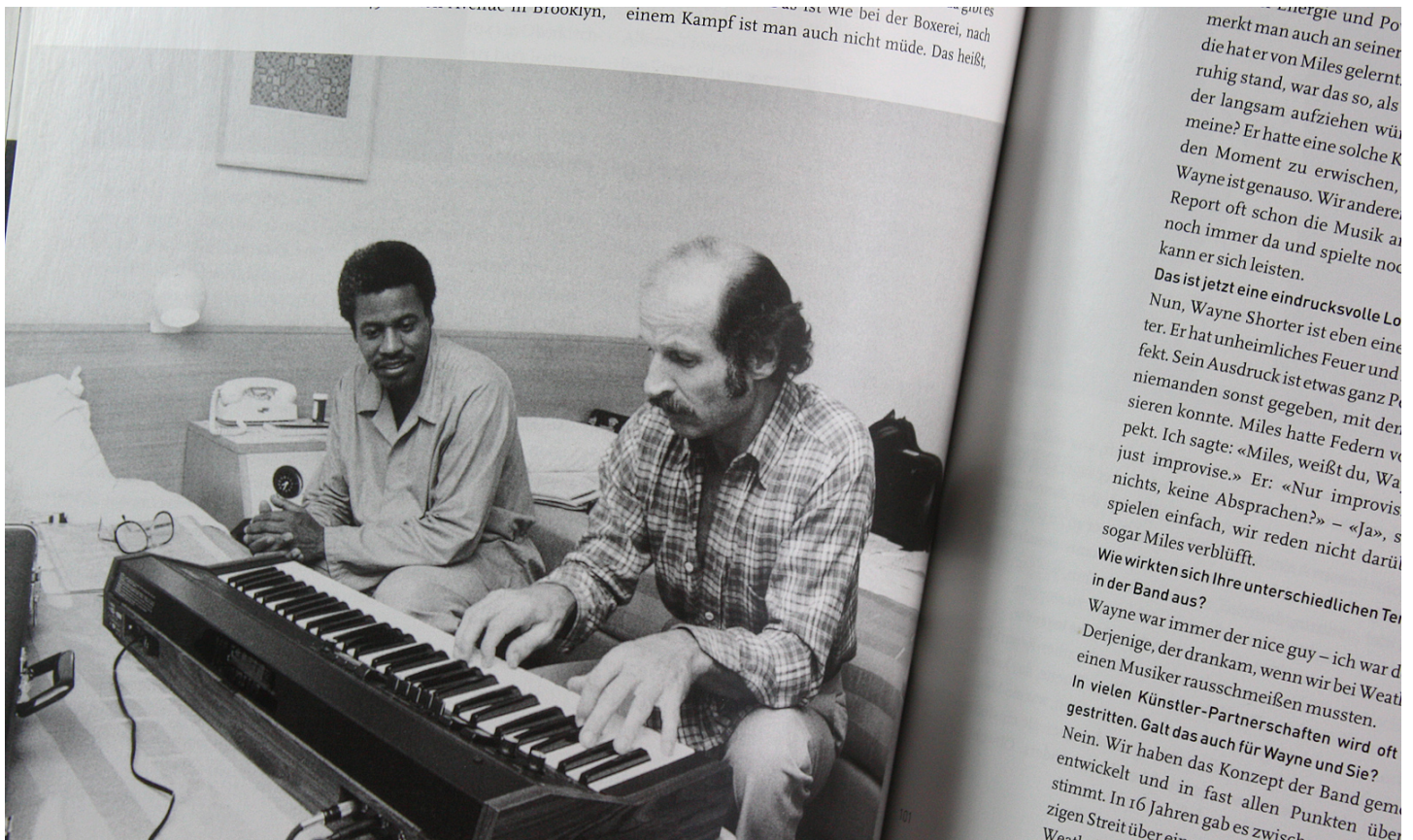
«Für mich bedeutete Komponieren immer, mich niederzusetzen und zu spielen. Alles, was Sie je von mir gehört haben, entstand durch pure Improvisation.»

15_Komponieren

«Man muss ein Katalysator sein»

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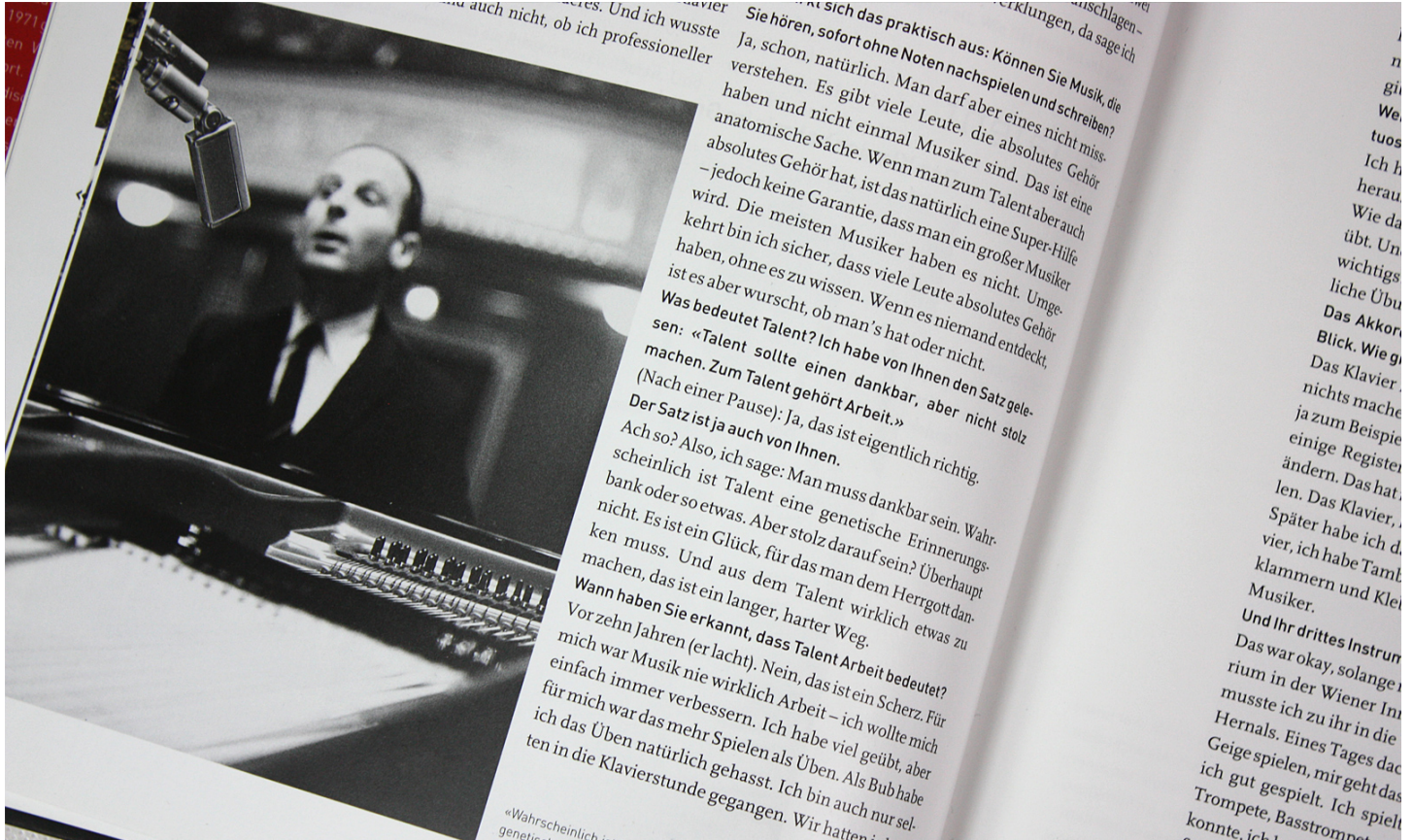
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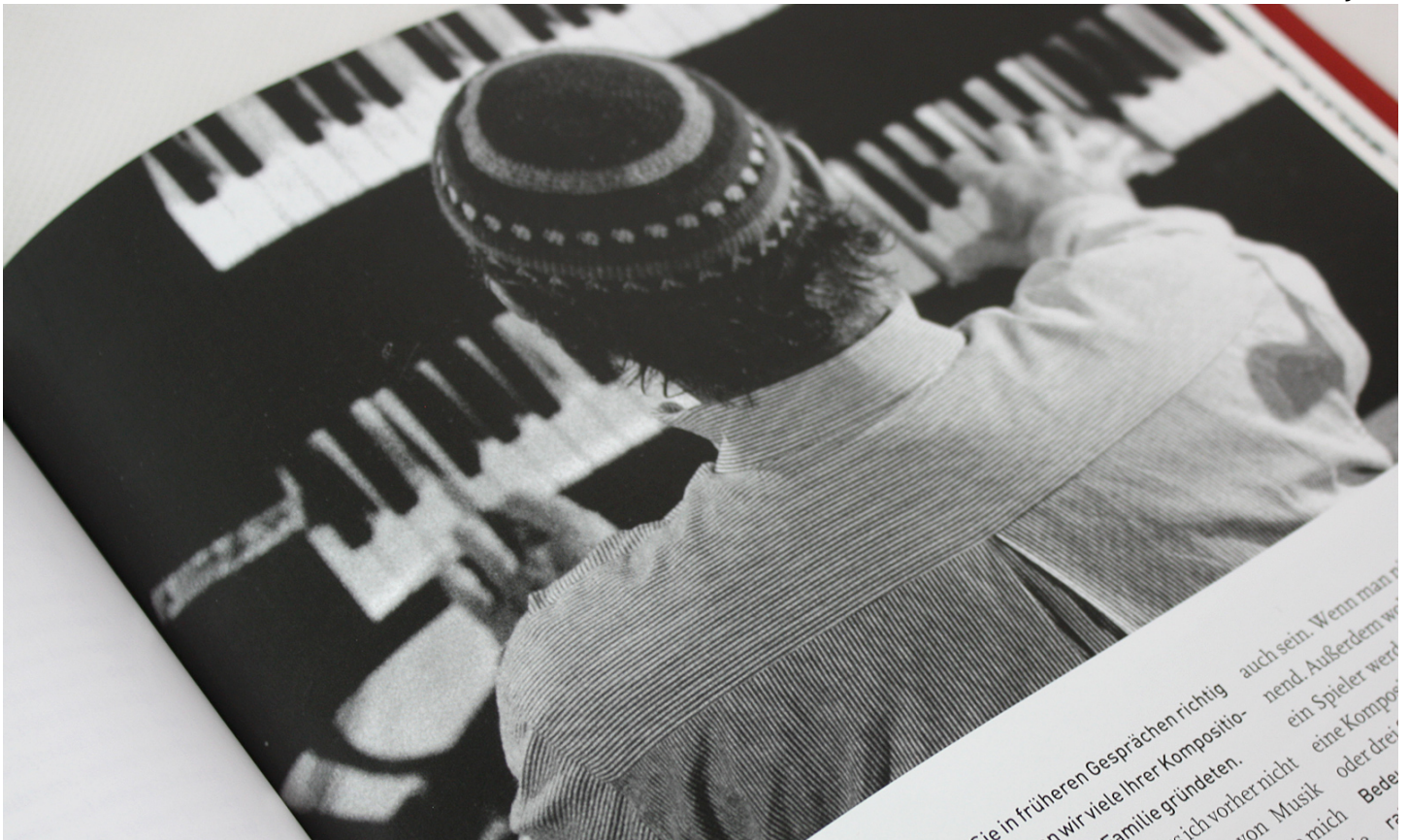
Well, long story short, *Zawinul – A Life of Jazz* is just as worth reading for admirers of fusion music as it is for synthesizer enthusiasts. There are one or two incorrect keyboard designations, but the publisher can be forgiven for that.

The book, based on interviews, is a remarkable biography of Josef Zawinul. Descriptions of his childhood in bombed-out Vienna get under your skin, as do many details of his later successful career in the USA.



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FAZ review note (2002), source: perlentaucher.de

“The reviewer Wolfgang Sandner is a little skeptical that Joe Zawinul invented hip-hop himself, as he claims in the interview in this volume. Otherwise, however, he has few doubts about the genius of the jazz pianist and briefly recounts his story: from piano-playing child prodigy to accompanist to the giant Miles Davis to pioneer of various fashions and styles – such as fusion or jazz rock – with “Weather Report”. Sandner assumes that dealing with Zawinul cannot always have been easy, but Gunther Baumann has done everything right in this volume, which consists of interviews and Baumann’s comments on them. The reviewer finds the “unpretentious tone” of the book, which he considers “one of the best” about Zawinul, extremely pleasant.”



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Zawinul - Ein Leben aus Jazz

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