



# **Sugar Free Saxophone: The Life and Music of Jackie Mclean**

*Derek Ansell*

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John Lenwood McLean - sugar free saxophonist from Sugar Hill, Harlem - is widely known as one of the finest, most consistent soloists in jazz history. From early in his career Jackie's powerful, unsentimental, sometimes astringent sound and inventive style made audiences and critics sit up and listen. Steeped in - but eventually moving well beyond - the influence of his mentor and friend Charlie Parker, he built an attractive, instantly recognisable musical personality. As author Derek Ansell says, his career trajectory is far from the typical jazz story of the tragic artist in which early brilliance leads to later decline. McLean's story is one of glorious triumph over the drug addiction that affected so many of his friends and might have destroyed him. Able to produce uniformly fine recordings through the darkest periods of his personal life, he saw his reputation as a musician steadily grow and became not only a living legend as an improviser but a much respected educator whose students carry on his legacy. Fortunately, McLean's discography is large and Derek Ansell is a surefooted guide through the recordings, presenting them in the context in which they were made and indicating the special gems among a vast body of recorded work that is one of jazz's greatest treasures.

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