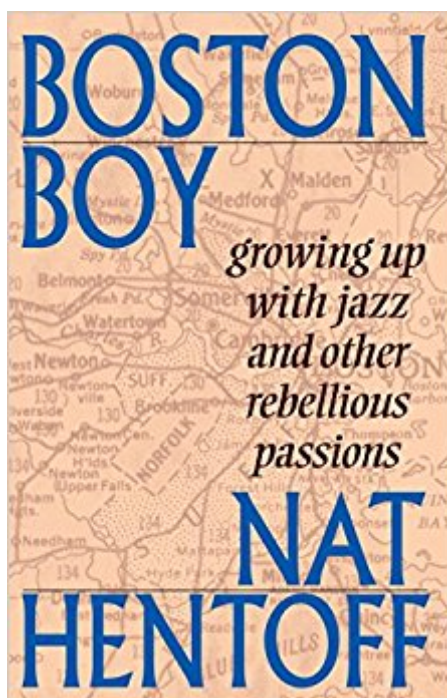


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# Boston Boy: Growing Up With Jazz And Other Rebellious Passions



## Synopsis

Boston Boy is Nat Hentoff's memoir of growing up in the Roxbury section of Boston in the 1930s and 1940s. He grapples with Judaism and anti-Semitism. He develops a passion for outspoken journalism and First Amendment freedom of speech. And he discovers his love of jazz music as he follows, and is befriended by, the great jazz musicians of the day, including Duke Ellington and Lester Young among others. "This memoir of [Hentoff's] youth should be appreciated not only by adults who grew up through the fires of their own youthful rebellion, but by those restless young people who are now bringing their own views and questions to the world they are inheriting. They could learn from this example that rebels can be gentle as well as enraged and compassionate in their commitment." "New York Times Book Review" "Nat Hentoff knows jazz. And it comes alive in this wonderful, touching memoir." "Ken Burns, creator of the PBS series Jazz" "[A] charmingly bittersweet memoir." "Boston Globe" "This is a touching book about a painful, wonderful time in Boston"; I loved it." "Anthony Lewis" "Nat Hentoff was born in Boston in 1925 and lived there until he moved to New York City at the age of twenty-eight. For many years he has written a weekly column for the Village Voice. His column for the Washington Times is syndicated in 250 newspapers, and he writes regularly about music for the Wall Street Journal. For twenty-five years, he was a staff writer for the New Yorker and for many years was a columnist for the Washington Post. His numerous books cover subjects ranging from jazz music and musicians to civil rights and civil liberties, on which he is a recognized authority. He was jazz critic at Down Beat and has written liner notes for many important jazz recordings. His work has won him honors not only from the music industry, but also from the American Bar Association and the American Library Association.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this evocative memoir, Hentoff, an author and columnist for the Village Voice, recounts his experience growing up Jewish in the Boston of the 1930s and '40s and the influences that shaped him. PW described the work as "told with frankness and gently self-deprecating wit." Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"[A] charmingly bittersweet memoir." [Boston Globe](#) "This memoir of [Hentoff's] youth should be appreciated not only by adults who grew up through the fires of their own youthful rebellion, but by those restless young people who are now bringing their own views and questions to the world they are inheriting. They could learn from this example that rebels can be gentle as well as enraged and compassionate in their commitment." [New York Times Book Review](#) "Nat Hentoff knows jazz. And it comes alive in this wonderful, touching memoir." [Ken Burns](#), creator of the PBS series *Jazz* "This is a touching book about a painful, wonderful time in Boston" [I loved it.](#) [Anthony Lewis](#) "[A] charmingly bittersweet memoir." [Boston Globe](#) "This memoir of [Hentoff's] youth should be appreciated not only by adults who grew up through the fires of their own youthful rebellion, but by those restless young people who are now bringing their own views and questions to the world they are inheriting. They could learn from this example that rebels can be gentle as well as enraged and compassionate in their commitment." [New York Times Book Review](#) "Nat Hentoff knows jazz. And it comes alive in this wonderful, touching memoir." [Ken Burns](#), creator of the PBS series *Jazz* "This is a touching book about a painful, wonderful time in Boston" [I loved it.](#) [Anthony Lewis](#)

Essential reading for Bostonians and musicians, esp jazz people. Learn about a Boston you probably never knew existed (as I did, and I've lived here all my life) and about the lost and wonderful world of Boston jazz.

Nat Hentoff is a treasure. The book captures his formative years growing up in Boston, the anti-semitism, the burgeoning jazz scene, his years in Boston radio. All good stuff. I highly recommend it.

It's great to see a book like this. As another Boston boy, I had many similar experiences that have been hard and perhaps confusing to explain to someone who grew up in another time and place. My wife feels that she understands me better now after reading *Boston Boy*. We are giving copies to our sons. The book for me is nostalgic, poignant, and somewhat reassuring. Helps to understand that generation, that time, and that place. We made it in spite of the bastards.

Some years ago I read the book by Nat Hentoff about the U.S educational system. It not only was very good, but quite humorous, as I recall. This memoir was good, but I wanted more of his life!

Once, jazz was a real and pervasive presence in Boston and in the dim and scruffy clubs of the South End, this American Music-par-excellence thrilled thousands of aficionados, while yet rarely affording its dedicated and colorful creators a living. It was the Twenties and the Jazz Age; it was the Thirties and the age of the Big Bands; it was the wartime Forties, the age of The Savoy on Mass Ave and of Sidney Bechet; it was the baby-boom Fifties and the age of Storeyville in Kenmore Square... There were Big Bands and great ballrooms but there were, as well, many talented smaller bands, playing inspired improvised jazz and struggling to survive as they enthralled more limited audiences in more limited venues. Nat Hentoff eloquently reminisces about a time when the soulful sound of trumpet and clarinet, piano and bass - pained, glorious, yearning, introspective, challenging, alien even - could inadvertently reach out of the smoky, dark, cave-like clubs of Washington and Columbus Avenues, and so mesmerize a young boy that it could change his life. Nat Hentoff blends this tale of a city, its cultural glories and its social sins, with the story of the music, light and dark, somber and witty, pure and besmirched - the faithful mirror of the human soul. He leaves one desolate that - much too soon! - things changed, and he leaves one wondering why Boston let it happen; why the city - host to The Berklee College of Music and the New England Conservatory, the Symphony as well as The Boston Pops - couldn't swiftly rally to support and, in time, to save a once-thriving Jazz community... Oh, economics and changing taste are the answer, of course, but one is left wishing that Boston had been able to sustain its local jazz scene and, failing that, wishing that it should presently choose, at the least and at last, to honor it with a South End Jazz Museum. Many of the greatest Jazz Musicians played there once and their presence or passage should not be forgotten.

Nat Hentoff, who later became famous as a writer about jazz and civil liberties, describes his

"coming of age" and discovery of jazz in the Boston of the 1940s. A very enjoyable read.

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