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| The Jazz Age |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| The name of The Jazz Age age derives from F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose fame as a writer was affixed to the generic vista named in *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922). Historians of jazz have been leery of the expression, and rarely even refer to Fitzgerald, who emphasised the *age*, not the ‘jazz’. As a period term, the jazz age has conformed fairly closely to the parameters set by Fitzgerald in a letter to Maxwell Perkins in 1931, extending ‘from the suppression of the riots of May Day 1919 to the crash of the stock market in 1929’. It has been understandably consigned to the ‘lost generation’ of expatriate American writers, as Gertrude Stein identified them to Hemingway. The mid-century eminence of fiction by Fitzgerald and Hemingway — filled with hard-drinking characters lurching through life as an endless party — canonised the jazz age as an alcoholic binge contemporaneous with prohibition. The annals of jazz history confirm the diagnosis, most famously in the case of trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke. Frederick Turner’s novel *1929* (2003) is a vivid depiction of the alcoholic haze Bix shared with his ‘age’. *1929* reveals by contrast that actual ‘jazz age’ novels consigned jazz to a strictly subordinate role, background music at best. |
| The name of The Jazz Age age is one of the few aspects of the famous time it designates that can be traced with certainty, deriving as it does from F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose fame as a writer was affixed to the generic vista named in *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922). Historians of jazz have been leery of the expression, and rarely even refer to Fitzgerald, who emphasised the *age*, not the ‘jazz’. As a period term, the jazz age has conformed fairly closely to the parameters set by Fitzgerald in a letter to Maxwell Perkins in 1931, extending ‘from the suppression of the riots of May Day 1919 to the crash of the stock market in 1929’. It has been understandably consigned to the ‘lost generation’ of expatriate American writers, as Gertrude Stein identified them to Hemingway. The mid-century eminence of fiction by Fitzgerald and Hemingway — filled with hard-drinking characters lurching through life as an endless party — canonised the jazz age as an alcoholic binge contemporaneous with prohibition. The annals of jazz history confirm the diagnosis, most famously in the case of trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke. Frederick Turner’s novel *1929* (2003) is a vivid depiction of the alcoholic haze Bix shared with his ‘age’. *1929* reveals by contrast that actual ‘jazz age’ novels consigned jazz to a strictly subordinate role, background music at best. |
| Further reading:  (Fitzgerald)  (Koenig)  (Rasula) |