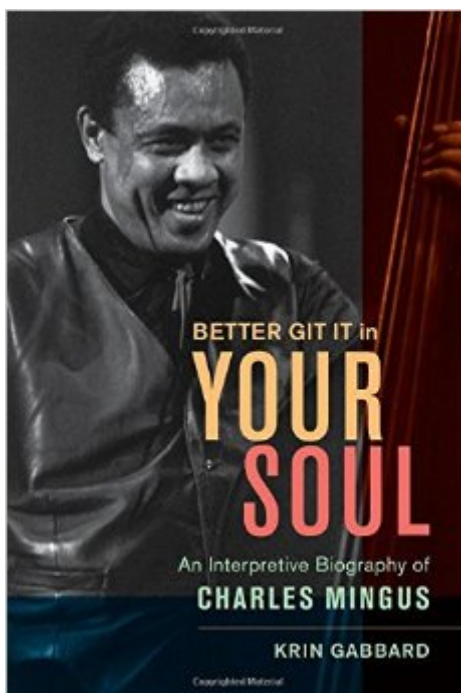


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# Better Git It In Your Soul: An Interpretive Biography Of Charles Mingus



## Synopsis

Charles Mingus is one of the most important and most mythologized composers and performers in jazz history. Classically trained and of mixed race, he was an outspoken innovator as well as a bandleader, composer, producer, and record-label owner. His vivid autobiography, *Beneath the Underdog*, has done much to shape the image of Mingus as something of a wild man: idiosyncratic musical genius with a penchant for skirt-chasing and violent outbursts. But, as the autobiography reveals, he was also a hopeless romantic. After exploring the most important events in Mingus's life, Krin Gabbard takes a careful look at Mingus as a writer as well as a composer and musician. He digs into how and why Mingus chose to do so much self-analysis, how he worked to craft his racial identity in a world that saw him simply as "black," and how his mental and physical health problems shaped his career. Gabbard sets aside the myth-making and convincingly argues that Charles Mingus created a unique language of emotions and not just in music. Capturing many essential moments in jazz history anew, *A Better Git It in Your Soul* will fascinate anyone who cares about jazz, African American history, and the artist's life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was really looking forward to reading this book. In vain did I await reviews shortly after what had stated as its official publication date, so I went ahead and bought it with no outside guidance. This is a severely flawed book. I don't get any joy from posting negative reviews but feel a certain responsibility to warn other readers. This book reinforces my observation that the publishing industry

long ago abandoned the art of proofreading and even the notion of a fact-checking editor. I find this very sad. But before I list specific factual errors, I must point out that Gabbard has uncovered little new information on his subject. He relies heavily on previous biographies (to be fair, he does acknowledge this). Apparently what he's attempting to "interpret" is Mingus's own "autobiography," *BENEATH THE UNDERDOG*, which is anything but a proper autobiography. It is more an anthology of boasts of sexual adventures; Mr. Gabbard speculates on which may actually be plausible. Potential buyers should be aware that only the first 111 pages of *BETTER GIT IT IN YOUR SOUL* sketch the outlines of its subject's life, and this section of the book is padded with digressions, including over four pages discussing the Italian immigrant who built the famous Watts Towers, near which the Mingus family lived many years. Leaving aside mere typographical errors, these are the factual errors/dubious opinions that irritated me most (page references are to first hardcover edition): 1.) on page 14 we're told the US military didn't desegregate until "more than a century after the Civil War." In fact, the US Armed Forces officially desegregated in 1948, the year after Jackie Robinson broke into Major League Baseball; 2.

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