

Barnett and Crandall suggest that the nation's flourishing "minimills" may be the industry's salvation. Operating with nonunion labor, aggressive management, and the newest technology, these small mills are able to turn scrap metal into finished steel. They now produce about 20 percent of the nation's steel. It is a heartening success story. But Little Steel does not make the massive structural beams used in construction and in defense industries such as shipbuilding. As Strohmeyer sees it, the continuing failure of labor and management in Big Steel to work together for their mutual long-term benefit threatens national security as well as jobs.

### *Arts & Letters*

#### **UP FROM THE CRADLE OF JAZZ: New Orleans Music Since World War II**

by Jason Berry, Jonathan Foose,  
and Tad Jones  
Univ. of Ga., 1986  
285 pp. \$35 cloth,  
\$15.95 paper



In addition to its Cajun and creole cuisines, and its festive Mardi Gras celebrations, New Orleans is known for its centuries-old tradition of fine music. Authors Berry, Foose, and Jones (a journalist, musician/producer, and researcher, respectively) look at the four decades since World War II to chronicle the development of the city's rhythm and blues (R & B) and jazz styles—related offspring that share an ancestry of gospel, Deep South blues, and Caribbean rhythms.

The result is a rich medley. The authors describe the major R & B artists: Eddie Lee "Guitar Slim" Jones, the Delta bluesman who, as a headliner at the Dew Drop Inn, befriended an obscure blind pianist named Ray Charles; Huey "Piano" Smith, whose "Rockin' Pneumonia and the Boogie Woogie Flu" (1957) is today a dance classic; and the legendary Henry Roeland Byrd, alias Professor Longhair, who "laid the foundation of a unique musical sound that the coming generation revered and built upon." Byrd's career plummeted during the 1960s; he was destitute and ill until a 1970 rediscovery. "Take out your false teeth poppa, 'cause mamma wants to mingle in your gumdrops," sang Longhair in a 1979 recording session just before his death.

The city's musical families—the Lasties, the Nevilles, the Acorns—are discussed as well. Through these dynasties, ethnic traditions, idiom, and musical styles were passed from one genera-

tion to the next.

The family dynasties extended into the segregated clubs, notably the Dew Drop and Club Tiajuana. And the authors' discussion of these clubs remind us that this music grew up in a segregated society. Fats Domino, for example, was discovered by a white agent who lay on the floor of a taxi in order to get to the performer's show; in 1949 it was illegal to drive a white person to a black establishment. But the success of R & B brought black musicians closer to a white market, and, thereby, to mainstream society. Whites who wanted to hear and play "black music" (rock 'n' roll was the white stepchild of R & B) helped to weaken the city's Jim Crow laws that had long kept the two races apart.

**MISHIMA:**  
**A Vision of the Void**  
by Marguerite Yourcenar  
translated by Alberto Manguel  
Farrar, 1986  
152 pp. \$14.95

On November 25, 1970, Japanese writer Yukio Mishima, then 45 and renowned as a novelist, playwright, filmmaker, actor, and right-wing political activist disgusted "at the political confusion of his time," led his private band of uniformed militants into the headquarters of the Eastern Army in Tokyo. After tying up the commanding general, he leapt onto a balcony to deliver a harangue to the assembled troops; then, with the faltering assistance of aides, he committed *seppuku*, ritual samurai suicide.

This very public and, at the same time, very private man is the subject of an elegant appreciation by Yourcenar, best known for her novel *Memoirs of Hadrian* and the distinction of being the first woman elected to the Académie Française. Yourcenar recognizes that an "uneasy balance is established between our interest in the man and our interest in his books." So she mingles her discussion of both. Beginning with the autobiographical *Confessions of a Mask* (a "short masterpiece on the theme of anguish and withdrawal" reminiscent of "the nearly contemporary *Stranger* of Camus"), she proceeds through the tetralogy *The Sea of Fertility*, whose "denuded style, sometimes almost flat, restrained even in lyrical moments, [is] crisscrossed with furrows intended, it seems, to make us stumble." The final volume of the latter, sent by Mishima to his publisher on the day of his suicide, contains the image of emptiness that supplies Yourcenar with her subtitle.