

What is Jazz

Quotes from various writers on the evolution of Jazz Music

“Jazz music is an American art.” Ira Gilter, Smithsonian Institute

“This is clear: Jazz arose not in Africa, not in Europe, and not in the Caribbean, but in the United States, thanks to the importation of nonnative musical elements into the dominant European culture of US society.” –Henry Martin, Rutgers University

Preliminary description- Jazz is an Afro-American musical idiom- in which many Afro American idioms have contributed: field hollers, spirituals, gospel, blues, cake-walks, ragtime, R&B, and yes, even Rock and Roll. All of these are closely related and have helped to form Jazz. It’s important to note that these idioms are not Jazz, but have close relationships.” –Ira Gilter

“Improvisation is the crucial feature in Jazz, and the spontaneous creation of new works within stylistic parameters is the key to Jazz performance.–Frank Tirro, Yale University

“Jazz is the study of the improvised line. –Dr. Richard Holland, Oswego State

“Jazz is the highway along which the whole world will move tomorrow” –Ernest Ansermet, Swiss Conductor, quote after hearing Sidney Bechet perform in Europe.

“The West has produced four outstanding styles: three European and one American: those of Schoenberg, Bartok, and Stravinsky and that of Jazz– Of Jazz he writes, “It is profoundly continuous with older music; it’s continuity with the past may be more important than it is obvious novelty.....the new styles also, to be sure, are both alike and different. The differences among them, when scrutinized with sympathy, prove to be more important than any similarity...but the similarity, however superficial, is important in a broad perspective.”–William W. Austin, Musicologist

“Jazz, originally, ‘Jass,’ was a vulgar term for sexual intercourse. This was the white mans early response to the music. –NY Times article in 1917, after reviewing Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

“One should not give that early definition a purely negative interpretation, for Jazz has to do with the fundamental rhythms of human life; it has to do with Western man’s contemporary reassessment of human’s life traditional values and of this own nature and in view of its origins in Black-American life. Jazz has to do with human survival itself.” –Ira Gilter, Smithsonian Institute

“Jazz tends to be applied indiscriminately to many music’s since it’s popularity in 1920. Whether the influence is rhythmically, melodically, or tonally! George Gershwin has been called a Jazz composer; Paul Whiteman, who played jazz-influenced dance music in the 30’s, “The King of Jazz”; Bands such as Glenn Miller, Andy Kirk and Guy Lombardo performed popular music but not Jazz per se. –Holland

Jazz is a player's art (even when working under a Jazz composer) in that Improvisation involves these qualities:

- 1) Sometimes it is an embellishment
- 2) Spontaneity.
- 3) Different configurations of musical ensembles.
- 4) To perform and improvise at the same time.
- 5) You can up to any # of players improvising at the same time, but not necessarily.
- 6) Each performance tends to have it’s own unique quality.

Gridley, Holland, Gilter, Tirro, Meggill.

It is an art that has developed and evolved.–Holland.

Two aspects that almost all jazz styles have in common:

I.Swing

a.How it makes you feel. It makes you want to move; dance - the clapping of hands – tapping of feet

b.Musical characteristics. Steady, constant beat/pulse. An abundance of syncopated rhythms

Syncopating = accenting just before or just after a beat

Swing example “Oh When the Saints”

1.European straight/classical in nature (lack of syncopation)

2.Syncopated version, filled with

-much syncopation

-makes you want to move

-performance is highly spirited conveying a lilting feeling.

II. Improvisation

A.“Off the cuff”, “To perform and compose at the same time” (Gridley)

-Drew Carey – dictates a scenario - a context. Within the context the comedians use words and phrases improvising a story. (Cowan)

-Jazz musician’s context is a song/tune. They use individual & grouped together notes (chosen according to the chord of the moment) to improvise a musical story. They base the notes chosen on Melody, harmony, rhythm and put the story to the form given. Form is the cornerstone for holding a musical story together. Within the framework of any given form, many different sides of a musical story can be told.

How to listen to Jazz

To appreciate music, the listener must be actively

involved. Understanding and enjoyment go hand in hand. Passive listening

will not bring intelligent musical enjoyment. Rather, such enjoyment is fostered through active participation:

1. Imagine layers of sound, one on top of another, all moving forward in time. Each layer can represent the sound of a different instrument.
2. Try to notice relationships between sounds (for i.e., listen to R-section roles as compared to those in the front line)
3. Try to imagine a graph of the solo line..
4. Some people hum the original tune to themselves while listening to the improvisations which are guided by its chord changes.
5. Try to divide the sounds into the functions they serve i.e.
 - a. Soloist role? (What instruments)
 - b. Accompanist role? Supporting role to foreground material.
 - c. Rhythm section: Guitar, Piano , bass , drums

Instrument Roles

6. Often, the different periods of history move people in different ways. From this class, try to discern which period interests you the most. Then, start there with your listening. Every period has great improvisers to offer for great listening.
 7. Listen to the style of improvisation one tries to make, is it melodic? Harmonically based? Rhythmically based? Find players that stimulate your interests in these areas.
 - 8) Is the music you're listening more compositional based or improvised? Which offers the greatest appeal to you as a listener?
- Mark Gridley, Concise Guide to Jazz, Dr. Richard Holland
Two common Forms found in Jazz

BLUES:

- 1st 4 bars are original statement "A"
- 2nd 4 bars are original statement with slightly different melody and harmony. "A' "
- 3rd 4 bars resolve with closing melody. "B"

12 bar repetitive form with storyline in vocal version.

AAB lyric form. (Often in vocal blues, AA=Call B=Response) in other words there is an answer to the question or story at hand. Lyrical Form:

AAB

"My Mama Told me not to come back 'no more" Ist Lyric
"Ohh, My Mama Told me not to come back no more" IInd lyric
" cause I'm a dirty rotten thief, that can't get it on the floor" IIIrd

Lyric

I Chord

Bars I-IV

IV Chord

Bars V-VI

I Chord

Bars VII-VIII

V Chord

Bars IX-X

I Chord

Bars XI-XII

Many melodies developed from tonal Blues scale.

-Most influential idiom on Jazz.

- Subject to careless misuse and misunderstanding.

-Blues is not just an emotion or a melancholy feeling, it is a musical form which can display a variety of emotional satire.

-A musical form that was derived by Black-Americans and dates as far back to emancipation times.

-Blues Scale-a close relative to an African mode which is full of inflected pitch. "Intonation"- a musical color and tonality expressed through music.

Listening examples:

Bessie Smith- "St. Louis Blues"

Jelly Roll Morton- "Dead Man Blues"

Robert Johnson- "Cross Road Blues"

Joe Williams w/Count Basie- "Every Day I Have the Blues"

Duke Ellington- "KO-KO"

Charlie Parker- "Parker's Mood"

Thelonius Monk- "Misterioso"

II..A A B A = Song form, 32 measure form (generally) or "I Got Rhythm"

A - Melody, Measures 1-8

A - Repetition of first A, measures 9-16

B - New melody = Bridge, measures 17-24

A - Repetition of first A, measures 25 -32

Otherwise known as Popular Song Format.

Examples:

1) "Candy"-Lee Morgan

2) "Let's Fall in Love"-Dianna Krall

3) "Cherokee"- "Charlie Barnet "Ko-Ko"-Charlie Parker

Listening to a Few Samples of Jazz Recordings:

1. Jelly Roll Morton's "Red Onion Jazz Babies "

Collective improvisation Combo

2.Star Spangled Banner-Eubie Blake

3.West End Blues - Louis Armstrong

4. "Honky Tonk Blues"- Mead Lux Lewis

5. "Taxi War Dance"-Lester Young with Count Basie
6. "Ko-ko"- Charlie Parker
7. "Subconscious-Lee"- Lennie Tristano
8. "Gertrude's Bounce"-Clifford Brown
9. "Cloning"-Ornette Coleman
10. "Birdland"-Weather Report