



Jazz in America

Cool Jazz

- I. Cool Jazz
 - A. Cool Jazz was at the forefront of jazz and went through its most concentrated growth and development from 1949–1955.*
 - B. Whereas Bebop was “hot,” i.e., loud, exciting, and loose, cool jazz was “cool,” i.e., soft, more reserved, and controlled.
 - C. Whereas Bebop bands were usually a quartet or quintet and were composed of saxophone and/or trumpet and rhythm section, cool jazz groups had a wider variety of size and instrumentation.
 1. Cool Jazz groups ranged in size from trios to nonets (nine-piece band).
 2. “Classical music instruments” such as flute, French horn, tuba, and vibraphone (vibes) were often found in Cool Jazz groups.
 - D. Cool Jazz was heavily influenced by classical music. Cool Jazz musicians usually played with a more pure, “classical” sound.
 - E. Cool Jazz often includes counterpoint, that is, two or more melodic lines occurring at the same time (counterpoint was a common musical device used by classical music composers such as J.S. Bach); this is different from bebop which has its focus on one melodic line at a time (i.e., each individual solo with chordal accompaniment).
 - F. Unlike Bebop, much of Cool Jazz was *arranged* (written) ahead of time.
 1. In Bebop the emphasis was on the improvised solos; the arrangements were not that important.
 2. In Cool Jazz, the improvised solos *and* the arrangements were important.
 - G. The most important Cool Jazz pioneer was trumpeter **Miles Davis**** the first important Cool Jazz album was his “Birth of the Cool.”***
 - H. Miles later recorded “Kind of Blue,” one of the most important, indeed, *groundbreaking* jazz albums in history.
 - I. Other important Cool Jazz pioneers include:
 1. **Dave Brubeck** (piano)
 2. **Chet Baker** (trumpet)
 3. **Paul Desmond** (alto saxophone)
 3. **Gerry Mulligan** (baritone saxophone)
 4. **The Modern Jazz Quartet** (**Milt Jackson**, vibes; **John Lewis**, piano; **Percy Heath**, bass, **Kenny Clarke/Connie Kay**, drums)
- II. Cultural Implications of Cool Jazz
 - A. Cool Jazz brought jazz music back to the mainstream; that is, it *repopularized* jazz.
 1. Swing Era big band jazz had been popular.
 2. Bebop, because of its intensity and complexity, did not have the mass appeal of the Swing (Big Band) Era.
 3. Dave Brubeck and other Cool Jazz artists brought jazz to college campuses in the 1950s, finding a new audience for jazz (before this, jazz was mostly just played in nightclubs and dance halls).
 - B. Bebop was associated with the East Coast (e.g., New York); Cool Jazz was associated with the West Coast (e.g., California).
 - C. The California image of casual, laid back suburbia was the perfect backdrop and breeding ground for Cool Jazz.
 - D. Cool Jazz represented the increasing importance of California to American society and culture.
 - E. After World War II, American attitudes were shifting due to both a newfound affluence in the 1950s and a growing uncertainty of the future; Cool Jazz reflected (and contributed to) a subdued emotion and quiet intellectual control that had become valued in American society.
 - F. “Keeping cool” was an expression of emotional self-control in times of crisis that was found in American street slang as well as in the language of army test pilots.
 - G. Fictional heroes like James Bond and Mike Hammer remained cool and calm while the world exploded around them.
 - H. America’s top choice of entertainment had “cooled down” from the nightclubs, dance halls, amusement parks, vaudeville, etc., of prior generations to television featuring shows about simple suburban life (e.g., “Leave It to Beaver,” “Father Knows Best,” “The Donna Reed Show”).

* All styles of jazz from Early Jazz to contemporary are still being performed and recorded today. The style dates given are approximations of when each respective style came to the forefront of jazz and experienced its most concentrated development; of course, styles and dates overlap.

** Miles Davis was an innovator in many styles of jazz, not just cool; he played bebop, cool jazz, hard bop, modal jazz, and fusion.

*** The instrumentation of the Miles Davis Nonet on the “Birth of the Cool” album is trumpet, alto saxophone, baritone saxophone, trombone, French horn, tuba, piano, bass, and drums.