



Jazz in America

Bebop • Cool • Hard Bop

- I. Bebop
 - A. Bebop was at the forefront of jazz and went through its most concentrated growth and development from 1940–1955.*
 - B. Bebop was primarily played by small groups (combos).
 - 1. A typical bebop combo is composed of two horns (e.g., trumpet and saxophone) and rhythm section (piano, bass, and drums).
 - 2. Although usually a quintet, bebop combos can range in size from three pieces (e.g., piano, bass, and drums) to seven pieces (e.g., three horns, guitar, and three rhythm).
 - C. Whereas in Big Band Swing the focus is on the arrangement and the playing of the ensemble, in Bebop the focus is on the soloist.
 - 1. Bebop combo arrangements are simple and rarely written.
 - 2. The basic format is simply the head played in unison by the horns for the first and last chorus with a lot of improvised solos in between. The head serves as a “frame” for the most important part: the improvised solos.
 - 3. The combo is the perfect setting for featuring soloists, i.e., no elaborate arrangements, just good, solid improvised interplay between soloist and rhythm section surrounded by the head at the beginning and the end (very little rehearsal, if any, is required).
 - D. Jam Sessions
 - 1. Jam sessions are informal, non-rehearsed gatherings of musicians where they play together, challenge each other (who can “outplay” whom), and learn from each other.
 - 2. Bebop, in large part, developed through jam sessions.
 - 3. Jam sessions can be held anywhere, e.g., someone’s house, a bar, nightclub, etc.; some of the most famous jam sessions in jazz history occurred at a nightclub called Minton’s Playhouse in Harlem in the 1940s.
 - 4. Bebop was and still is the music most played at jazz jam sessions because all the musicians need to know are the head (the song’s main melody) and changes (the song’s chord progression).**
 - E. Bebop is far more musically complex than its Big Band Swing forbearer.
 - 1. Bebop harmonies (chords) are more complex.
 - 2. Tempos are often much faster (although the bebop style can be played at any tempo).
 - 3. Bebop heads are more intricate and difficult to play than regular melodies.
 - 4. Bebop musicians improvise far more complex solos than those of the Swing Era.
 - 5. Bebop requires musical virtuosity and artistry to play it.
 - F. Whereas Big Band Swing was considered entertainment (i.e., dance music), Bebop was considered *art* music (like classical music, i.e., bebop was for listening only). Bebop musicians considered themselves *artists*, not merely entertainers.
 - G. Bebop was primarily an African American invention.
 - H. The two most important bebop pioneers were:
 - 1. alto saxophonist **Charlie Parker** (his nickname was “Bird”)
 - 2. trumpeter **Dizzy Gillespie**
 - I. Scat Singing
 - 1. Scat singing (AKA “scatting”) is a type of singing whereby the vocalist imitates the style of bebop jazz solos (as played by instrumentalists) using nonsense syllables; scat solos, like their instrumental counterparts, are improvised.
 - 2. One of the most important scat pioneers was **Ella Fitzgerald**.
 - J. Cultural Implications of Bebop
 - 1. The demise of the Swing Era big bands was, in part, due to World War II because of:
 - a. the draft – many jazz musicians were called to war, leaving few at home.

* 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.

** In jazz terminology (slang), a *change* is simply a chord. Therefore *playing the changes* simply means playing through the chord progression (a series of chords).

- b. bands raided each other, that is, with so few musicians left at home, band leaders “stole” musicians from other bands, offering them a slightly better deal; many bands that were intact before the war were depleted.
 - c. transportation to reach night spots outside city limits was difficult due to gas shortages (gas rationing), tire shortages (rubber rationing), and the dismantling of urban and interurban railways.
 - d. midnight curfews (“brown-outs”)
 - e. 20% amusement tax – customers would have to pay 20 cents tax on the dollar in any nightclub that included dancing.
2. Racism and segregation were rampant in America during the Swing and Bebop eras.
 3. African American jazz musicians became increasingly disenchanted with swing music the more they watched European Americans capitalize on it; they wanted to create their “own” music, a music that was not for dancing but for listening: a true African American *art* form.
 4. Bebop reflected the culture of the times; like the African American experience at the time, the music:
 - a. was difficult
 - b. alluded to the blues
 - c. explored new directions and uncharted territory
 - d. was separate from the mainstream of America

II. 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. They ranged in size from trios to nonets (nine-piece band).
 2. “Classical” instruments such as flute, French horn, tuba, and vibraphone (vibes) were often found in cool jazz groups.
- D. Cool Jazz was a blending of jazz and classical music.
- E. Cool Jazz often included 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 was different from Bebop which had 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; in Bebop the emphasis was on the improvised solos, In Cool Jazz, both the arrangement *and* the improvised solos 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. Other important cool jazz pioneers include:
 1. pianist **Dave Brubeck**
 2. trumpeter **Chet Baker**
 3. baritone saxophonist **Gerry Mulligan**
 4. the **Modern Jazz Quartet**
- I. Cultural Implications of Cool Jazz
 1. Cool Jazz brought jazz music back to the mainstream; that is, it repopularized jazz.
 - a. Swing Era big band jazz had been popular.
 - b. Bebop, because of its intensity and complexity, did not have the mass appeal of the Swing (Big Band) Era.
 - c. 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 played in nightclubs and dance halls).
 2. Bebop was associated with the East Coast (e.g., New York); Cool Jazz was associated with the West Coast (e.g., California); Cool Jazz is often referred to as “West Coast Jazz.”
 - a. The California image of casual, laid back suburbia was the perfect backdrop and breeding ground for Cool Jazz.
 - b. Cool Jazz represented the increasing importance of California to American society and culture.
 3. Post 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.
 - a. “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.
 - b. After many labor strikes, Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act, mandating a “cooling off period” in labor disputes.
 - c. Fictional heroes like James Bond and Mike Hammer remained cool and calm while the world exploded around them.

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** 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 was trumpet, alto saxophone, baritone saxophone, trombone, French horn, tuba, piano, bass, and drums.

- d. 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," "The Donna Reed Show," "Father Knows Best").
4. Due to the newly developed weapon of mass destruction, the atomic bomb, cool thinking was required at this crucial point in history.

III. Hard Bop

- A. Hard Bop was at the forefront of jazz and went through its most concentrated growth and development from 1951–1958.*
- B. Hard Bop was, in part, a reaction to Cool Jazz.
 1. Many jazz musicians felt that with Cool Jazz, the music had become too "classical" in nature, that is, too European (not enough "blues").
 2. Hard Bop was a return to music that was more Afro-centric, more blues based.
- C. There were two factions of Hard Bop: *Funky Jazz*** and *Mainstream*.
 1. *Funky Jazz* was relatively simple (simple melodies, simple chord progressions, simple forms); its essence was one of groove and feeling and was heavily influenced by blues and gospel music.
 2. *Mainstream Jazz* (AKA *Straight-Ahead Jazz* or simply *Hard Bop*) was far more complex (more difficult melodies, improvisations, chord progressions, and forms); it was still about groove and feeling but added the complexities of Bebop; a bit of arranging was often included as well (worked out introductions, endings, harmonized heads, background lines, etc.).
- D. The size and instrumentation of Hard Bop combos was similar to that of its Bebop forerunner: usually two or three horns plus rhythm section.
- E. One of the most important Hard Bop groups was the **Miles Davis Quintet** of the mid 1950s.
- F. There are dozens of important Hard Bop musicians; in fact, Hard Bop is the main style and influence of most "straight-ahead" jazz played and heard today. In addition to Miles Davis, a few of the most important hard bop pioneers in jazz history include:
 1. alto saxophonist **Cannonball Adderley**
 2. drummer **Art Blakey**
 3. tenor saxophonist **John Coltrane**
 4. tenor saxophonist **Sonny Rollins**
 5. pianist **Horace Silver**
- G. Cultural Implications of Hard Bop
 1. One of the key features of Hard Bop was its African American identity. Hard Bop was heavily influenced by traditional and popular African American music.
 - a. Hard Bop's influences included bebop, blues, rhythm and blues (R&B), and black gospel music.
 - b. Hard Bop was undeniably Afro-centric.
 2. Hard Bop, in part, was a means of artistic expression by young African American men to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the social, political, and economic climate of America at that time, i.e., segregation and lack of economic equity; Hard Bop reflected and contributed to the beginnings of the 1950s–1960s civil rights movement.
 3. Hard Bop was mainly an East Coast (e.g., New York) phenomenon.
 - a. Hard Bop reflected the fast-paced, driving, complex New York lifestyle.
 - b. As in all major northern cities, New York experienced an increasing African American population, making it an ideal backdrop and fertile breeding ground for Hard Bop.

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** The term *Funky Jazz* in the 1950s should not be confused with *Funk*, a style of popular music pioneered in the 1970s. *Funky Jazz* is characterized by its earthy, "low down," soulful, bluesy, and gospel flavored qualities, e.g., "Moanin'" by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. While *Funk* also combines elements of jazz, blues, and soul, it is characterized by syncopated rock rhythms and heavy, repetitive bass lines, e.g., "Chameleon" by Herbie Hancock.