

Blues and Jazz

Creating an American Artform

Delta Blues



- 💧 African-Americans in the 1800s sang about the pains of slavery, usually without any instruments.
- 💧 The first blues music was created along the Mississippi Delta. This style is called Delta Blues and sometimes Country Blues.
- 💧 Blues music travelled up the Mississippi river and became popular in big cities like Kansas City, Chicago, and Memphis.

Ragtime

- 💧 Piano players in the 1890s played the piano in a new exciting way to get people moving.
- 💧 To do this, they purposely played “between the beats” or during the backbeat. This type of rhythm is called syncopation.
- 💧 Scott Joplin is one of the most famous ragtime composers of all time.



Putting it All Together - Dixieland

- 💧 Musicians played “classical” instruments (like the trumpet, clarinet, and tuba) to “blues” ideas (blue notes, 12-bar blues) with “ragtime” rhythms (syncopation).
- 💧 This music first came out of New Orleans but travelled up the Mississippi River just like Blues Music.
- 💧 Louis Armstrong is the most famous Dixieland musician.



Everyone Loves Jazz! From Dixieland to Swing

💧 The 1920s are called the Jazz Age. It was a rebellious time when many traditions about music, dancing, and drinking were challenged. It ended with the Great Depression in 1929.



💧 Swing music was really easy to dance to and became the most popular music in America during the 1930s and early 1940s.



The Swing Era



Swing bands usually featured a soloist. This was usually the band leader and the person audiences came to see

- Benny Goodman
- Count Basie



In the 1940s, many bandleaders were singers. These bands were called “Big Bands”

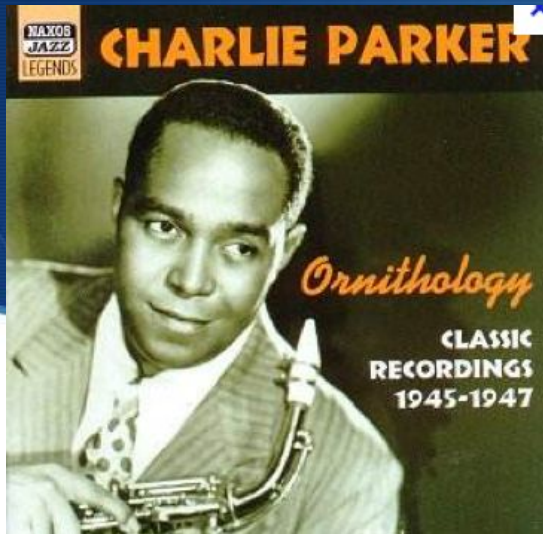
- Frank Sinatra
- Ella Fitzgerald
- Billie Holiday



Just make something up . . .

- 💧 Improvisation is perhaps the most important characteristic of Jazz. A song could never be played the same way twice.
- 💧 In Classical Music, all the notes are written down.
- 💧 In Jazz Music, the players make up the notes as they go along.
- 💧 This meant the “players” were more important, not the composers.





Turning Jazz into “Art”

- 💧 Charlie Parker and other Jazz musicians did not like Swing and Big Band music because there was no improvisation and they thought it sounded “cheesy”. They created Bebop as a form of music too fast and too unpredictable for dancing.
- 💧 Audiences, instead, watched the musicians play, and admired their creativity.
- 💧 Jazz was no longer entertainment. It now art.

What Else Can We Do?

As Jazz evolved into America's Art Music, musicians explored as many different musical ideas as they could.

Some musicians played music without a melody.

Some musicians made music with dissonance.

Some musicians randomized their musical ideas and explored the results.



Impact of Jazz Music

- 💧 Blues and Jazz music still inspire music today.
- 💧 Many popular styles of music, such as Rock and Roll, R&B, Funk, or Hip Hop, are direct descendants of Blues and Jazz music.
- 💧 Outside of music, Jazz has changed America . . .
 - 💧 African-Americans were first recognized for their musical abilities as Blues and Jazz musicians.
 - 💧 Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Ella Fitzgerald are among the first celebrated African-Americans.
 - 💧 Women challenged traditions through dance and as bandleaders.
 - 💧 Women gained suffrage (voting rights) in 1920.