What is Jazz?

By Kevin L. Carter

Asked to define jazz, the great trumpeter Louis Armstrong said, “Jazz is music that’s never played the same way once.”

Wynton Marsalis, one of Armstrong’s spiritual and musical descendants, has a different take on the music he loves and continues to spread around the world. “Jazz,” he said simply, “is blues.”

His brother Branford, one of the great contemporary tenor saxophone players, says, “Jazz is a language, the musical language of African American slaves, and like any language, it reflects its speakers and grows with them.”

There are many ways to define jazz. The three musicians above, all from New Orleans and all of whom have lived their lives surrounded by the music, had emotional, gut-level reactions to the question, “What is jazz?”

Those who have less emotion invested in the issue, however, could define jazz in these ways:

• It is a form of black American music that developed in New Orleans from southern musical genres such as the blues, gospel and ragtime, as well as other African American and Caribbean forms of music, such as Afro-Cuban music.

• It is a music distinguished by one central characteristic — improvisation.

• It is America’s classical music, America’s musical gift to the world.

Today’s jazz comes in many variations. There’s straight-ahead, bop, hard bop, post-bop, avant-garde and fusion. There’s swing and Dixieland. There’s Latin jazz. And then there’s smooth jazz, which some people say isn’t jazz at all. Each form of jazz has certain qualities that distinguish it. Any type of jazz should contain musical elements that recall the blues or gospel. Jazz should contain syncopated, complicated rhythms. It should contain at least some improvisations; and, most of all, jazz should “swing!”

The history of jazz and the history of American culture are very closely related. It’s hard to determine just when jazz emerged in New Orleans, but most historians point to the turn of the 20th century, around 1900.

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New Orleans, at the time, was the busiest port in the South, receiving goods from the Caribbean, Latin America and points beyond and delivering them via river or land to the rest of the United States.

New Orleans also was bustling home to a diverse population. Different ethnic groups of color, including the descendants of African American slaves, Cuban, and Haitian immigrants and Creoles of mixed African, French and Spanish descent, combined cultural and musical influences with European immigrants, their descendants and even Native Americans, to create a new tradition.

Between 1900 and the 1940s, thousands of African Americans moved from the South to the North, and their music, especially jazz, went with them.

In Northern cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York and Boston, jazz brought a creative spirit, a new cultural outlook and an appeal that broke down barriers between blacks and whites.

In New York’s Harlem during the 1920s, for example, at the legendary Cotton Club, Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway held court, playing to full, all-white houses almost every night.

Later, as jazz bands began integrating, white musicians saw black jazz musicians as equals and teachers rather than people whose creativity they could exploit. Jazz became such a dominant art form in the 1920s that the decade became known as the Jazz Age.

Following World War I, jazz was established as a worldwide music, as the U.S. State Department sent jazz ambassadors such as Dizzy Gillespie to Latin America, Africa and other areas.

Today, jazz is as common in Japan or Britain or Brazil or Russia or India as it is in Detroit, New York or any major American city.

All of these places in other countries have produced great jazz musicians, some of whom have come to America to make an impact on the country that inspired them in the first place.

Swingin’ Soldiers

During World Wars I and II, African Americans in the armed forces helped introduce jazz to Europe, Asia and other parts of the world.

Among the millions of American soldiers who traveled to France to fight the Germans in World War I were thousands of young African Americans. Among those African Americans was a distinctive unit — the 369th National Guard Regiment. This regimental band was led by bandleader Lt. James Reese Europe and was known as the Harlem Hellfighters.

The band was composed of jazz musicians from New York and Puerto Rico who played military music in a distinctive style. These musicians have been given much of the credit for introducing American jazz to the European people.

Music in the News

Jazz was a great innovation in the history of music. It also had great importance in breaking down racial barriers between white and black musicians and audiences. Great jazz musicians exposed white audiences to African American heritage and raised awareness of African American creativity. Music continues to break down barriers today. In the newspaper, find a story or photo of a popular musician who is African American. Think about his or her music. Then write a paragraph or short essay explaining how the work of this musician is breaking down barriers, increasing diversity or expanding cultural awareness in the United States today.

On the Cover: Painting of Thelonious Monk by Adam Lovitz, the Beloved Collection/Brent Reynolds.
Some Greats of Jazz

DUKE ELLINGTON
Composer, Band Leader & Musical Genius (1899 - 1974)

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington was not just the greatest jazz composer ever. He was one of the greatest musicians of the 20th century. His creativity spanned several eras, composing (sometimes with Billy Strayhorn) and arranging enduring standards such as "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing), "Mood Indigo," "Take The 'A' Train," and "Caravan."

Ellington was a bandleader who continued to stay on the road for more than 50 years, bringing top sidemen like Harry Carney and Juan Tizol with him for almost that long.

Born in upper-middle-class Washington, D.C., son of a White House butler, Ellington was something of a dandy from early on, earning the nickname "Duke."

He began playing professionally in 1917 and moved to New York in the 20s, where the pianist started a big band and became bandleader at the famed Cotton Club.

Ellington's reputation grew from there. He began composing for - and appearing in - both Broadway shows and Hollywood movies. Ellington continued to travel the country and world until the early 1970s.

His band was an innovation in the development of music and in arrangement. Ellington was the first to write parts for specific musicians rather than for each section. The practice gave the music a special richness unheard in the work of others, and all of those years on the road served Ellington as a moving, living, breathing laboratory for musical experimentation and development.

JELLY ROLL MORTON
First Jazz Superstar (1890 - 1941)

Jelly Roll Morton claimed to have invented jazz. That was not exactly true, but this fun-loving Louisiana Creole was the first jazz superstar. He also was one of the originators of the jazz piano style, developing it from ragtime and other blues-influenced styles.

He wrote many early jazz hits such as "Mr. Jelly Roll" and "King Porter Stomp."

Born Ferdinand Lamothe in a diverse, middle-class New Orleans neighborhood, Morton began taking piano lessons from a Cuban-born neighbor as a teenager. He later played in New Orleans' famed Storyville district.

That early training brought to his jazz what he called "the Spanish tinge" — Latin styles such as danzón and habanera.

He first recorded in 1923, laying down some of jazz's most innovative and successful tracks with his Red Hot Peppers, a band that included several of early jazz's best musicians. He barnstormed through the South and West until the early 1930s, when he moved to New York. He started out strong there, but the Great Depression and changes in the music itself almost killed Morton's career.

There were later revivals of New Orleans-style music, the first coming in the 1950s. But Morton, his health failing because of decades of hard living, died before he had a chance to profit from it.

More than 50 years after his death, Jelly's Last Jam, a retrospective of Morton's career, opened on Broadway, rekindling interest in the life of this jazz piano pioneer.

Music in the News

The places where musicians live can influence their creativity and style. Jelly Roll Morton built on the ragtime and blues of Louisiana to develop his jazz piano style. Duke Ellington drew energy and inspiration from the audiences at the Cotton Club and concert halls around the country. What things in your community might influence your sense of style if you were a musician coming up? Look through the newspaper for people, places, sounds or traditions that could be future influences. Make a list and write out why each item is important to the community and to you.
Jazz is a music born of many cultures and many generations. Jazz is distinct in the way it has combined cultural influences. And in its century of evolution, jazz has influenced and spawned many other styles of music — and other kinds of artistic expression.

Black gospel music, Catholic and Protestant hymns, Cajun songs, ragtime piano music, the blues and brass band music came together to create the early forms of the music we now call jazz.

As African Americans moved from the South to the West and North, the jazz, blues and religious music they created evolved and splintered into yet other forms of music.

The term “jazz” means a lot of things now, and what one person may consider jazz is not the same as what another might consider it.

Here are some kinds of music that gave us jazz, and that jazz has given us:

**SWING**
This genre was and is the domain of the big band. Popular mostly during the 1930s and ’40s, swing was a dance music, but a style that also allowed for complex arrangements and gave opportunities for band members to improvise. Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller were all swing bandleaders.

**BEBOP**
Spearheaded by musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Max Roach, Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk, bebop represented a radical departure from the popular style of the swing era. Playing mostly in small combos rather than big bands, the musicians often worked at breakneck tempos. They concentrated on long-form improvisations that depended not on the melody of the tune but on the underlying chord changes.

**HARD BOP/POST-BOP**
An evolution of the bop formula that allowed for a more funky and bluesy feel. Hard bop players such as Horace Silver, Jackie McLean and Lee Morgan, as well as the 1950s’ John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley and Miles Davis, were and are known for their soulful styles. Contemporary stars such as Branford and Wynton Marsalis and Wallace Roney play a similar style, known now as post-bop.

**AVANT-GARDE/FREE JAZZ**
If bop was a departure from swing, the free jazz movement was a departure from bop and hard bop. When musicians such as Miles Davis and John Coltrane recorded modal compositions in the ’50s and ’60s – songs that did not utilize traditional chord changes – this style took off. Musicians such as saxophonist Ornette Coleman and pianist Cecil Taylor began playing tunes that, after an initial statement, contained no chord structure at all, allowing for unfettered improvisation. Later, John Coltrane and Sun Ra incorporated freer music into their compositions; unlike straight free jazz, there was more structure in their works.
FUSION
The original definition of this term was a combination of jazz and rock, almost always electric. Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, most anything from Pat Metheny and superbands such as Return to Forever and Weather Report have been designated fusion icons. The term has also recently encompassed jazz/world music efforts from groups such as Fred Ho’s Afro Asian Music Ensemble and Rudresh Mahanthappa’s Dakshina Ensemble.

SMOOTH JAZZ
A commercially oriented offshoot of fusion, smooth jazz is characterized by computerized, repetitive rhythms and sweet keyboard sounds. Not often are great improvisers attracted to this form of music, but musicians such as Grover Washington Jr., Spyro Gyra, the Yellowjackets and Fourplay have occasionally produced substantial music in the genre.

LATIN JAZZ
This broad category is dominated by Cuban, Brazilian, Caribbean and Latino-American musicians. They incorporate Afro-Latin American drum and percussion rhythms, Spanish and Portuguese chord structures and song forms and aboriginal American influences. There have always been Latin American elements in jazz, but it was Dizzy Gillespie’s collaborations with the Cuban Chano Pozo that made the connection solid and permanent. Since then, musicians such as Tito Puente, Poncho Sanchez, Irakere (which gave birth to the careers of Arturo Sandoval, Patato Ferreira and Chucho Valdes), Danilo Perez, David Sanchez, Claudio Roditi, Paulo Moura, Hermeto Pascoal, Hilton Ruiz, Monty-Alexander, Michel Camilo and Gonzalo Rubalcaba have combined their Latin heritage with a deep, intimate knowledge of American jazz to form a sound all their own.

HIP-HOP JAZZ
In the early 1990s rap musicians began discovering jazz, and jazz musicians began lowering their guard and seeing musical quality of the work of some of young hip-hop poets. The same aesthetic of rebellion, intellectualism and improvisation that characterized the bebop, hard bop and avant-garde movements also characterized early hip-hop, and producers and MCs such as Q-Tip and Ali Shaheed Muhammad of the Tribe Called Quest, Guru of Gang Starr, Pete Rock and C.L. Smooth and Prince Paul began incorporating jazz samples and, in the case of the Roots, live jazz accompaniment, into their music. At the same time, jazz musicians such as Ron Carter, Greg Osby, Herbie Hancock and even Miles Davis collaborated with rap and hip-hop producers, bringing two venerable African American traditions closer together.

The Jazz-Motown Connection
The Motown Sound made famous in Detroit was a combination of adventuruous, gospel-influenced singing, songwriting that contained the best rock and rhythm-and-blues rhythms and arrangements. It also took strength from the background musicianship that came from powerful jazz players.

A huge part of Motown’s success was due to the “Funk Brothers.” One of the smartest things Motown founder Berry Gordy did was hire a core group of 7-10 musicians whose work earned them that nickname.

Gordy was a huge fan of jazz greats Thelonious Monk and Charlie Parker and his first business had been a jazz record store.

Music in the News
Jazz combined the traditions and cultures of different ethnic groups. When cultures come together, creative things often result. Search stories, photos and ads in the newspaper for an example of something that has resulted from different cultures or ethnic traditions coming together. On a sheet of paper, list what each tradition brought to the situation. Then design a poster or newspaper ad, showcasing how communities become richer when different cultures come together.

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Despite winning 13 Grammy Awards and selling millions of records, Ella Fitzgerald may still be one of the most underrated jazz vocalists in history. Known also as “Lady Ella” and the “First Lady of Song,” Fitzgerald was known for being one of the most well-known and best-selling singers in jazz and popular music throughout her six-decade career. But it is as a musician that Fitzgerald has made her biggest impact. As a scat singer—who had mastered the improvisational technique most popular among jazz vocalists—Fitzgerald was unmatched.

Fitzgerald was a large, healthy woman blessed with a clear three-octave mezzo-soprano voice and the ability to sing the most complicated lyrics with quickness, fluidity and precise diction. Yet she distinguished herself from other vocalists with the exuberance of her delivery. On songs such as “A-Tisket, A-Tasket” and “How High the Moon,” to name just two, Fitzgerald sounded so upbeat she seemed to always be smiling.

Such positivity was surprising, given Fitzgerald’s background. Like the great Billie Holiday, Fitzgerald was born in poverty and lived a very hard life in her early years. She was born in Newport News, Virginia, but her parents both died when she was in her early teens, forcing her to move to an orphanage in New York. She was later sent to a reformatory, where she encountered physical and psychological abuse.

She ran away and was living in the streets when she first won an amateur competition at the famous Apollo Theater in New York’s Harlem neighborhood. She was 16. At 17, Ella was recommended to bandleader Chick Webb by saxophonist Benny Carter (who had seen her at the Apollo). Webb was impressed and hired her as vocalist in his big band. She sang with Webb’s band for the next six years (including two years after he died in 1941), quitting when she decided to go solo. She performed with many different groups, including the Ink Spots and Louis Jordan’s band, during this period.

It was in 1946, after she met bebop trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, that Fitzgerald began to develop as a scat singer. Bop represented freedom for all improvising musicians, including Fitzgerald, who thought of her voice as another frontline instrument. She began improvising in a manner that reminded people of a horn.

Her scats enhanced songs like “How High the Moon” and “Lady Be Good,” and her reputation as a musician grew. Between 1947 and 1953 she recorded primarily with her husband, bassist Ray Brown.

In the 1950s and ’60s, she signed with Verve Records (run by her manager, Norman Granz), and recorded several albums of standards by Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin, Duke Ellington, Harold Arlen and other composers. Fitzgerald continued to record more pop-oriented material on which her jazz skills were not showcased, but the albums sold well.

In 1972, Fitzgerald’s last truly creative period began when she signed with Pablo Records (again run by Granz) and recorded with Joe Pass, Oscar Peterson, Count Basie and other jazzmen. By the 1980s, Fitzgerald began slowing down creatively, and her health deteriorated. She suffered from diabetes-related heart and vision problems, and in 1992 her legs were amputated below the knees.

She died in 1996 at the age of 79, but her impact on vocal music was indelible.

MUSIC in the News

Music is not only a form of artistic expression. It also can be an expression of values, feelings or opinions held by the community. Or it can shape values, feelings or opinions in the community. As a class, discuss musicians or styles of music you feel have importance or influence beyond art. In what ways do they influence how people feel, behave or connect with the world beyond entertainment? Think like a music critic and write a short “review” of a musician or style of music that has this kind of influence. Be sure to support your opinions with examples in your review.
JOHN COLTRANE (1926 - 1967)

Jazz genius & his legacy

There have been many musicians who have had great impact on jazz, but the impact of John Coltrane goes beyond music. It stretches to religion and culture, as well.

Born September 23, 1926 in Hamlet, North Carolina, Coltrane began playing the saxophone while in elementary school, but he did not really begin playing earnestly until he moved to Philadelphia in 1943. Two years later, he was drafted into the Navy and played in a Hawaii-based Navy band. His first recording was made while he was in Hawaii in 1946.

In the course of his career, Coltrane played tenor saxophone principally, but recorded several tracks on soprano and alto.

During the early 1950s Coltrane returned to Philadelphia, and in 1955 he was hired by trumpeter Miles Davis, with whom he recorded the stunning — and pioneering — Kind of Blue and Milestones albums. He also began developing his distinctive “sheets of sound” style, in which he overwhelmed each melody by playing all possible notes within a chord, exploring each with an intensity unseen before.

As the ‘50s moved into the 1960s, Coltrane continued to develop his sound, recording several important discs as a leader, including Giant Steps in 1959, My Favorite Things in 1961, and Africa/Brass in 1962.

By the early ‘60s, Coltrane had become one of the most popular and commercially successful jazz musicians of all time.

But his playing, and his outlook on music and life, were changing radically. During the early part of his career, Coltrane was a hard-bop player — a saxophonist who played in a sophisticated blues-based style, innovatively but within an established, conventional framework.

As he grew older, Coltrane drew closer to the avant-garde — a movement within jazz that pushed for a freer, more radical style. Free jazz players such as Ornette Coleman played solos seemingly without form or structure, disregarding chord structures and changes. Many of the same elements that gave birth to free jazz were present on earlier Coltrane recordings such as his work on Kind of Blue and his solos on My Favorite Things.

At the same time Coltrane started exploring the music of other cultures, such as West African music and Indian music. The latter was to have more and more of an impact on Coltrane’s life and music in his later years.

Part of that was because the saxophonist had become increasingly interested in spiritual topics. Early in his career, Coltrane had been a heroin addict, and it was not until 1958 that he kicked the habit. From then on, he poured all of his energies into an obsessive practice routine, an ascetic, pure lifestyle and an eternal quest for spiritual knowledge.

A Love Supreme, his 1965 masterpiece and his bestselling album, was in many ways the culmination of this spiritual quest. The album, Coltrane said in his liner notes and later interviews, was his way of thanking God for delivering him from addiction and providing him musical and spiritual guidance.

In the last years of his life — he died of liver cancer in 1967 — Coltrane explored Indian spirituality and music. Albums such as Ascension and Meditations harkedened to such elements of Indian classical music as chants and ragas.

ALICE COLTRANE

It is this spiritual background and orientation that has consumed the professional and personal life of Coltrane’s widow, Alice Coltrane, whom he had married in 1965 and who had become part of his band in his later years.

An organist, harpist and pianist, Alice Coltrane’s recordings of the 1970s were even more obviously Indian in their orientation than her late husband’s. Many of her recordings, such as Journey in Satchidananda, Universal Consciousness and the live Transfiguration were performed with former John Coltrane sidemen/collaborators such as Pharoah Sanders.

Now in her late 60s, Alice Coltrane founded a center for Indian spirituality in the San Francisco Bay Area. She performs often with her sons Ravi (named for John Coltrane’s friend Ravi Shankar, the Indian classical musician) and Oran. Both sons are saxophonists — Ravi principally a tenorist, Oran playing alto.

Ravi Coltrane, the older of the Coltrane sons, has staked out a successful career as a leader, recording three albums and performing as part of the avant-garde funk-jazz M-Base collective.

MUSIC in the News

John Coltrane was only 41 when he died, but his music has been a great influence on hundreds of musicians. People of great talent often influence others in their field, or people just entering a field. In the newspaper, find a musician you think has enough talent to be an influence on others. Write a short paragraph explaining how this musician is an influence and how long you think he/she will be an influence. Then find a person in a field outside music whose work or talents influence others. Write a paragraph explaining this person’s influence. Finish by writing a third paragraph comparing the ways the musician and non-musician are an influence on others.
A big, blustery bassist who was always fighting personal demons, Charles Mingus expanded his role from being the "bottom" in musical ensembles to soloist and leader.

He also distinguished himself as a businessman, arranger and composer, incorporating elements of classical music, free jazz and world music into his big-band and small-ensemble work.

On top of that, he showed the world a cuttingly sharp wit, a powerful social conscience and, not always below the surface, a highly developed sense of rage and outrage.

Born in Nogales, Arizona, and raised in South Central Los Angeles, Mingus began his career in Southern California in the 1940s, studying classical bass.

He moved to New York in the 1950s, where he played with Duke Ellington, wrote prolifically (more than 300 scores) and formed his own recording and publishing companies.

Many of his complex compositions greatly influenced both avant-garde jazz ("Pithecanthropus Erectus") and contemporary classical composers ("Epitaph").

In the late '60s, when Mingus found himself without sufficient creative outlets and money, he stopped recording for three years and was under a psychologist's care.

In 1971 he received two Guggenheim fellowships, however, and began recording and composing again. Some of his most important work, such as "Cumbia and Jazz Fusion," came during this period.

In 1977 Mingus was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and he died in Mexico in 1979.

DIZZY GILLESPIE
Teacher, Innovator & Character (1917 - 1993)

Distinguished by his puffy cheeks and bent trumpet, John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie was one of jazz's true characters.

He was also one of the music's great harmonic, stylistic and rhythmic innovators, as well as one of its most effective teachers.

Diz was also not too bad a trumpeter, either.

Originally from Cheraw, South Carolina, Gillespie helped create the bebop style in the 1940s — a significant musical departure from the swing and traditional forms that preceded it. He also brought Afro-Cuban music to the forefront of jazz, hooking up with Cuban conga star Chano Pozo in 1947.

But a revolution was launched two years before that when Gillespie met up with the great saxophonist Charlie Parker. Their fast-paced, improvising style was radical for its time, and many jazz fans of the time were not impressed.

But others, especially younger musicians, fell in love with the new "bebop" style, and the accompanying ways of dressing and speaking that came with it.

In the following decades, Gillespie traveled around the world, often on tours organized by the U.S. State Department.

He helped bring some of the best post-Castro Cuban musicians into U.S. jazz (including Arturo Sandoval, Paquito D'Rivera and Ignacio Berroa) and continued to teach, formally and otherwise, until his death in 1993.

CHARLES MINGUS
Bassist Who Rose to the Top (1922 - 1979)
Although not as technically skilled or powerful as Louis Armstrong or Dizzy Gillespie, trumpeter Miles Davis may have had more impact on popular culture than his two counterparts.

He not only recorded some of the most important, commercially successful and fascinating music ever, but he was a driving force who discovered, trained or developed dozens of musicians. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, the son of a dentist and a music teacher, Davis was always known for his style and dynamic personality.

After moving to New York and leaving the famous Juilliard School of Music in 1946, he began playing with Billy Eckstine and later, Charlie Parker. By the early 1950s, he had teamed with Gil Evans to compose and arrange for his groundbreaking nine-piece nonet ensemble. With this group Davis helped develop the "cool jazz" style typified in his 1957 record Birth of the Cool and the later Miles Ahead.

His next groundbreaking project was Kind of Blue, featuring John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley and Bill Evans. This record, released in 1959, is the best-selling jazz album of all time, topping more than 2 million copies sold.

But by 1956, when Monk connected with John Coltrane (and later, Johnny Griffin), the ears of fans began to become more receptive to other ways of playing jazz piano.

He recorded prolifically through the ‘60s and early ‘70s, but health problems in 1973 led to the end of his creative career.

Many of his compositions, such as "Round Midnight," "In Walked Bud," "Straight No Chaser," "Bemsha Swing," and "Epistrophy," have been covered over and over again and have become jazz standards.

His son, drummer T.S. Monk, enjoyed pop success with Bon Bon Vie in the early ‘60s, but the younger Monk has since devoted his musical and administrative energies to his father’s legacy.

Davis continued to evolve, sell hundreds of thousands of albums and discover other musicians through the 1960s. His 1970 album Bitches Brew, which featured electric instruments and jazz-rock rhythms, solidified his reputation for breaking rules and breaking new ground and is now considered a jazz classic.

Davis recorded several more records in the early 1970s before going on a six-year break for health reasons.

In the 1980s and ‘90s Davis recorded several records, most notably Tutu in 1986 and Doo-Bop, a hip-hop collaboration released after he died of AIDS in 1991.

THELONIOUS MONK
Pianist with Distinctive Style (1917 - 1982)

Harlem-raised Thelonious Monk had one of the quirkiest, most original piano styles in jazz, but his genius was not recognized until relatively late in his life.

Monk played jagged, angular piano solos and tunes, allowing lots of space for, well, space between phrases. Monk's style was essentially based on the stride piano technique that grew out of ragtime and also was influenced by his childhood neighbor James P. Johnson. It was something that had never been heard before he perfected it in the 1940s. It hasn't really been heard since, either.

His unusual music caused him difficulty in the late ‘40s and early ‘50s. Monk's introverted and quirky personality, along with his music, caused even other musicians to brand him "crazy."

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MILES DAVIS
Creator & Cultural Icon
(1926 - 1991)

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MUSIC in the news

When people do new things in music, art or other fields, they often do not win immediate acceptance or praise. Find an example in today’s newspaper of someone you think is doing something new in music, the arts, sports or business. Write a short paragraph describing what this person is doing. Write a second paragraph describing how this person’s efforts are being received, and whether you think that will change in the future.

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His unusual music caused him difficulty in the late ‘40s and early ‘50s. Monk's introverted and quirky personality, along with his music, caused even other musicians to brand him "crazy."

But by 1956, when Monk connected with John Coltrane (and later, Johnny Griffin), the ears of fans began to become more receptive to other ways of playing jazz piano.

He recorded prolifically through the ‘60s and early ‘70s, but health problems in 1973 led to the end of his creative career.

Many of his compositions, such as “Round Midnight,” “In Walked Bud,” “Straight No Chaser,” “Bemsha Swing,” and “Epistrophy,” have been covered over and over again and have become jazz standards.

His son, drummer T.S. Monk, enjoyed pop success with Bon Bon Vie in the early ‘60s, but the younger Monk has since devoted his musical and administrative energies to his father's legacy.

Davis continued to evolve, sell hundreds of thousands of albums and discover other musicians through the 1960s. His 1970 album Bitches Brew, which featured electric instruments and jazz-rock rhythms, solidified his reputation for breaking rules and breaking new ground and is now considered a jazz classic.

Davis recorded several more records in the early 1970s before going on a six-year break for health reasons.

In the 1980s and ‘90s Davis recorded several records, most notably Tutu in 1986 and Doo-Bop, a hip-hop collaboration released after he died of AIDS in 1991.
JACK DEJOHNETTE  
(1942 - )

Jack DeJohnette, who now often appears in a trio setting with pianist Keith Jarrett and bassist Gary Peacock, is one of percussion's most eclectic, forward-looking players. DeJohnette has a keen sense of color, and he enjoys utilizing his entire drum set and the sounds it produces to bring alternate dimensions to his timekeeping. His sense of melody and color may be due to his earlier career as a pianist. DeJohnette played with John Coltrane while in his early 20s and still occasionally records on piano. He also boasts a stint with Miles Davis on the landmark Bitches Brew in 1972 and later recorded with Jarrett, Pat Metheny, Jan Garbarek and Kenny Wheeler before branching out as a leader.

JEFF 'TAIN' WATTS  
(1960 - )

One of contemporary jazz's most innovative and fresh-sounding drummers, the explosive and expressive Jeff "Tain" Watts spent many of his formative years working separately with Branford and Wynton Marsalis. A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Watts has been branching out as a leader and writer since the mid-'90s. He even has acting experience; ably portraying jazz drummer Rhythm Jones in Spike Lee's Mo' Better Blues (1990). Recently Watts has recorded three albums as a leader – Citizen Tain, Bar Talk and 2004's live disc, Detained at the Blue Note.

REGINA CARTER  
(1962 - )

Like Stuff Smith, Eddie South, Joe Venuti, Stephane Grappelli, Billy Bang, Jean-Luc Ponty and John Blake before her, Detroit native Regina Carter is challenging the notion that the violin is solely a classical instrument. Or a country fiddle. Although Carter is acquainted with both styles, in her hands the violin can swing like any horn. Carter enjoys incorporating world music and pop in her music, and her style of playing and improvising is highly original and percussive. On her 2000 album Motor City Moments, Carter performs with or plays music by Detroit-trained musicians Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Thad Jones and Milt Jackson.

CASSANDRA WILSON  
(1955 - )

The most interesting and commercially successful female jazz vocalist of this era, Cassandra Wilson has never had problems attacking material not traditionally associated with jazz. Born in Jackson, Mississippi, Wilson became known in the late 1980s and early 1990s for her work with the free-jazz collective M-Base. While most of her early work as a leader was standards-laden, Wilson went in a more rootsy-blues direction with her 1993 Blue Light Til Dawn. Blessed with a languid, emotionally resonant contralto voice, she followed two years later with the even more adventurous New Moon Daughter, on which she covered material ranging from European pop to Billie Holiday to Hank Williams.

WAYNE SHORTER  
(1933 - )

An eccentric, gentle-natured Newark, New Jersey native, Wayne Shorter has made great contributions to jazz as a soprano and tenor saxophonist and composer. But it may be his work with the groundbreaking fusion ensemble Weather Report in the 1970s that proves the most important of his career. Shortly after leaving Miles Davis, Shorter hooked up with fellow Miles alum Joe Zawinul and formed the electric ensemble, which combined elements of hard bop, funk, rock, world music and the avant-garde to create an unforgettable sound. After leaving Weather Report, Shorter went into something of a slump, suffering personal tragedies and recovering only in the early part of this century. His 2003 Alegria won two Grammys (Best Jazz Instrumental Album, Individual or Group and Best Instrumental Composition for "Sacajawea").
Kevin Mahogany, a big, tall baritone with a presence reminiscent of Barry White and Joe Williams, is one of a rare breed these days – the male jazz singer. Starting out in Kansas City, Missouri, Mahogany played horns and sang in various funk and R&B groups before deciding to sing jazz. Taking a road many younger jazz musicians are exploring today, Mahogany has recorded Motown hits in a jazz style, attempting to expand a canon that, especially for singers, can seem limited. On his 2002 *Pride and Joy*, Mahogany often strips the songs down to their core, singing “Just My Imagination (Running Away With Me),” with piano only and “Tears of a Clown” with just a guitar backing him. The experiments work well, showing convincingly that a good vocalist can be effective with many different types of material.

DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER
(1950 - )

The term “traditional” is relative when talking about Dee Dee Bridgewater, because while she is often moored in the world of jazz standards, she does have an adventurous streak. This talented singer and actress grew up in Flint, Michigan. She was the love interest in John Sayles’ *The Brother from Another Planet* and continues to be one of the best traditional jazz singers around. Leaving the U.S. in the mid-1980s, Bridgewater now lives in France, and her fan base continues to be concentrated abroad. But her 1997 *Ella Fitzgerald tribute* album, *Dear Ella*, won a Grammy and awakened an entire new American fan base to her work.

KENNY GARRETT
(1960 - )

Truly one of the top saxophonists performing in jazz today, Kenny Garrett – the real *Kenny G* - played with Miles Davis in one of Davis’s last ensembles. Several of Garrett’s albums have paid homage, in small ways, to his predecessors – Davis, Wayne Shorter and John Coltrane. Other discs – as well as Garrett’s live performances – contain more powerful personal statements. His compositions, such as “Charlie Brown Goes to South Africa,” are bright, sweetly earnest and spirited. Garrett has been able to remain faithful to the jazz tradition without forgetting that he lives in the 21st century, and he stays open to all influences.

GERI ALLEN
(1957 - )

Epitomizing the jazz lifestyle, Detroit native Geri Allen has adroitly absorbed the lessons of her piano ancestors. Holder of a master’s degree in ethnomusicology from the University of Pittsburgh, Allen has delved into the music of the African Diaspora migration as well as the African American jazz tradition. Her academic interests combine very appropriately with her innate sense of swing. Allen is a sensitive, intuitive player who has complemented and challenged some of the best (including her husband, trumpeter Wallace Roney), and she will continue to make a large impact on the music.

WYNTON MARSALIS
(1961 - )

Despite his relative youth, Wynton Marsalis may be the world’s most important living jazz musician. He is certainly among the most famous, especially among those under the age of 50. Marsalis, the trumpet-playing scion of a prominent New Orleans musical family and second-oldest of the jazz-playing sons of pianist Ellis Marsalis Jr., made a decision early in his career that cemented his status. Despite coming up in the early ‘80s, when fusion ruled jazz and hip-hop ruled the tastes of teen musicians, Marsalis played the music of the straight-ahead mainstream. And he played it well. This caused a renewed interest in jazz among other young players (and record companies). It also subjected Marsalis to intense criticism for his dogmatic interpretation of jazz history, his rigid musical conservatism and his disdain for other types of music. Nevertheless, Marsalis, who is artistic director of the Jazz at Lincoln Center program in New York City, plays with astonishing technique, which has been noted extensively. But he also plays with a childlike joy, which is seldom noticed.

CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE
(1972 - )

A native of Philadelphia, Christian McBride began his career by playing electric bass in funk and soul bands while studying classical upright bass at the same time. Knowing that he ultimately would have to choose between two masters, he went acoustic, which proved for him to be a good choice. Collaborating with young musicians such as fellow Philadelphian Rodney Green on drums, McBride plays a style of acoustic fusion that doesn’t discount the mainstream, but instead draws on contemporary and pop song forms for inspiration.
representing
JAZZ

Jazz is a lifelong love
For Rep. John Conyers

BY KATHY DAHLSTROM

The official website of U.S. Rep. John Conyers lists the “issues” that are important to the longtime Michigan congressman. They include such topics as the war in Iraq, labor, voting rights, education, racial profiling and violence against women.

And jazz.

Right up there with national and international concerns is the music that has been a lifelong love for the 76-year-old Detroit Democrat.

One of his proudest achievements, in fact, was passage of a House bill declaring the music style a “rare and valuable national American treasure.”

By passing the 1987 bill, lawmakers agreed to help preserve the important art form. Conyers’ work also led to creation of the Smithsonian Institution’s jazz studies program.

Sometimes called the “ambassador for jazz,” Conyers has been a music booster throughout his four decades in Congress. He established an annual forum bringing educators and musicians together to explore different types of jazz and also pushed for May 25 to be National Tap Dancing Day.

He’s worked on better health-care benefits for musicians and wants to put together a festival of Haitian and jazz musicians.

“If we don’t preserve the music, there’s nobody else left to do it,” the congressman told a reporter.

Conyers, who listens to the sounds of jazz greats John Coltrane, Miles Davis and Charlie Parker while he works, grew up listening to great music. He earned a letter at Northwestern High School for playing trumpet but also studied bass, piano, tenor sax and trombone.

Growing up in the 50s, he hung out with many musicians who went on to careers in New York City.

Today when the lawyer is back in the 14th District, which includes his native Detroit, he relaxes at historic Baker’s Keyboard Lounge. It’s one of the many jazz clubs he visited as a teenager.

Concerned that jazz was being listened to more abroad than in the United States, he was pleased to see April become Jazz Appreciation Month in 2002. He sees jazz as the root of most current popular music.

“... Jazz fans of all ages, from school children to the most seasoned adults, will now have the chance to enjoy [jazz] in all of its beautiful, melodic forms,” he said.

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In the 15 years since Queen Latifah came out with her first hit single, “Ladies First,” the New Jersey native has evolved from pioneering female rapper to television and movie star to business conglomerate.

Latifah was born Dana Owens on March 18, 1970 in Newark, New Jersey, the daughter of a police officer. She got her nickname at the age of 8 from a cousin — “latifah” is Arabic for “delicate” and “sensitive.”

While her career has taken her all over the world, she still maintains her Jersey connections with her original entertainment company, Flavor Unit, which operates there.

She has appeared in more than a dozen movies and produced a couple, has been nominated for an Oscar, has been the star of her own talk show and sitcom, and has become a spokeswoman of sorts for full-figured women and positive body image.

“To me, all women are beautiful,” she told the British Broadcasting Company (BBC). “Every woman is a queen and we all have different things to offer.”

Oh yeah. She’s a jazz singer, too.

How does she do all of this?

“Hard work and hustle, baby,” she told Ebony magazine.

Latifah affirmed her love of jazz — and showcased her vocal skills—with her 2004 CD, The Dana Owens Album.

The record, which is receiving play on jazz-formatted on-air and satellite radio stations, is a compilation of jazz and blues standards.

When it comes to jazz vocals, the choice of sidemen is crucial, and Latifah enlisted true jazz players to back her.

Herbie Hancock (producer, keyboards), Jeff Porcaro (drums), John Pattitucci (bass), Vinnie Colaiuta (drums) and David “Fathead” Newman (saxophones) all appear on different tracks.

Another coup was the duet of Latifah/Owens with the great soul-gospel singer Al Green on her cover of Green’s, “Simply Beautiful.” And she gave new takes on songs ranging from Screamin’ Jay Hawkins’ “I Put a Spell On You” to Kid Creole and the Coconuts’ “Hard Times.”

Her 2002 appearance in the movie Chicago, in which she played the vivacious Mama Morton, foreshadowed Latifah’s latest breakout. But her interest in singing in addition to rapping first surfaced on her 1992 album Black Reign.

By the time she portrayed a jazz singer in 1998’s Living Out Loud, her love for jazz — and her skill — was obvious.

Her success in many different media, and her forays into different business ventures, are all part of a far-reaching plan for Latifah. She has said in past interviews that she views herself as a hip-hop personality first and foremost, but that she will not be limited by others’ perceptions of that role.

Rappers have been acting onscreen for almost 15 years now, but Latifah was the first to receive an Oscar nomination. After she received the nomination for Chicago (Best Supporting Actress), Latifah said she felt it had broken barriers for hip-hop performers.

Now an established presence in film as well as other media, Latifah is at a point in her career where she can have more artistic control over her projects.

Her talent, persona and looks have lent themselves to comparisons to past stars such as Pearl Bailey, Sarah Vaughan and Bessie Smith, and Latifah has said she is interested in portraying all three in movies.

If she does, don’t be surprised if she ends up producing the films herself.
What is the best way to learn how to play, write or just appreciate jazz music? Is it better to study jazz in college, or should young musicians learn the old-fashioned way, by playing club and concert dates with older, more experienced musicians, getting inspired and taking lumps before live audiences?

On one hand, the opportunities for younger musicians to get gigs for live performances have diminished greatly since jazz peaked in popularity in the 1940s and 1950s. There just aren't as many places for jazz musicians to play.

On the other hand, the opportunities for students to learn about jazz in college and even high school have skyrocketed, and many top jazz musicians double as professors.

Below is a short roundup of some of the more notable jazz programs available at American colleges and universities:

**DETOUR’S WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY**
[www.music.wayne.edu](http://www.music.wayne.edu)
Wayne State has one of the Midwest’s top music programs, offering undergraduate and graduate study in instrumental and vocal performance. Its Lab Band and Guitar Ensemble, as well as the Jazz Invoice vocal ensemble, are nationally known.

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS**
[www.music.unt.edu](http://www.music.unt.edu)
The University of North Texas was the pioneer in jazz education. The school, located in Denton near Dallas-Fort Worth, established its jazz studies program in 1947, making it the first of its kind in the nation. The program offers bachelor’s degrees in arranging, instrumental and vocal performance, as well as master’s programs in jazz studies and music education with an emphasis on jazz.

**BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC IN BOSTON**
[www.berklee.edu](http://www.berklee.edu)
The Berklee College of Music may have the most well-known jazz program in the United States today. By many measures it is certainly the most successful, counting among its alumni jazz luminaries such as Branford Marsalis, Bill Frisell, Quincy Jones, Diana Krall, Jeff “Tain” Watts, Roy Hargrove, Joe Zawinul, Juan Luis Guerra, John Scofield, Bob James, Harvey Mason, Joe Lovano and countless others. Musicians from every discipline study and teach at Berklee, and the school is one of the best places for aspiring jazzers to learn and gig while studying.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**
[www.usc.edu/music/academic/programs/jazz.html](http://www.usc.edu/music/academic/programs/jazz.html)
The University of Southern California has a jazz program that offers doctorate-degree training. The program also oversees the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance, led by artistic director Terence Blanchard. The Monk Institute offers an intensive tuition-free two-year jazz performance program to select undergrads.

**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN FORT LAUDERDALE**
[www.fiu.edu/~music](http://www.fiu.edu/~music)
Florida International offers undergraduate and graduate studies and boasts professors such as trumpeter Arturo Sandoval. The nearby University of Miami (www.music.miami.edu) in Coral Gables also offers a strong instrumental program.

**JUILLIARD SCHOOL**
[www.juilliard.edu](http://www.juilliard.edu)
The world famous Juilliard School in New York City established its Jazz Studies program in 2001. Unlike most programs, Juilliard does not offer undergraduate or graduate degrees. The highly selective program focuses on performance and gives those who complete its 2-year program an Artist Diploma in Jazz Studies. Juilliard Jazz is backed by the muscle power of Lincoln Center Jazz, and boasts faculty such as Wynton Marsalis, Kenny Barron, Wynton Gordon and Herlin Riley.

**LIONEL HAMPTON SCHOOL OF MUSIC AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO**
[www.class.uidaho.edu/music](http://www.class.uidaho.edu/music)
The Lionel Hampton School of Music was established in 1987 in honor of the great jazz vibraphonist. The school offers undergraduate concentrations in performance, history and literature, arranging/composing and education. The Hampton School is also home to the International Jazz Collection at the Lionel Hampton Center, a collection largely devoted to mementos of Hampton’s career.

Musicians can learn to play jazz by studying and by working in live performances. As a class discuss what each kind of experience contributes to a musician’s training as a jazz player. Music is not the only field in which people can learn and improve by studying and by working. Find an example in the newspaper. Write a paragraph explaining how studying and working can teach a person in this field, and which you think would be more valuable.
Learn about Jazz online

Here are some interesting and important jazz websites at which you can learn more about the music.

ALL ABOUT JAZZ
www.allaboutjazz.com
A comprehensive look at the form, including profiles, links to venues in your community, articles, CD reviews and even a section devoted to jazz around the world.

JAZZ ONLINE
www.jazzonline.com
Includes reviews, performance clips and a brief guide to various styles of jazz.

THELONIOUS MONK INSTITUTE OF JAZZ
www.monkstitute.com
Official site of non-profit education organization started by Monk’s family and the late opera singer Maria Fisher to promote jazz education. Site includes a jazz resource library and information about the institute’s free, college-level program for top young jazz artists.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG HOUSE AND ARCHIVES
www.satchmo.net
The site of a museum dedicated to one of music’s greatest heroes.

DOWN BEAT MAGAZINE
www.downbeat.com
Official site of one of music's most influential magazines. Includes an archive of news articles and reviews.

THE RED HOT JAZZ ARCHIVE
www.redhotjazz.com
A look at jazz pioneers (from 1895 to 1930), including a suggested reading list and two old films you can watch via Internet.

NPR JAZZ
www.nprjazz.org
National Public Radio's jazz site includes listings of local radio stations that play jazz, reviews, features and a list of “must-have” CDs.

about the author

Kevin L. Carter is a writer with extensive experience in criticism and cultural writing. He has spent his life playing and studying music from Africa and the African diaspora. For more than a decade he was a staff writer for The Philadelphia Inquirer, reviewing jazz, salsa, reggae, samba, gospel, R&B, hip-hop and other African-derived genres of music. Now a freelance critic, he also has written about a broad array of cultural topics for the Inquirer’s editorial page, as well as other newspapers and magazines. A graduate of Harvard University and the University of Hawaii, Carter is proficient in several languages and is a decorated martial artist who has written about his experiences as a sumo wrestler in Japan, Europe and North America. He lives in Princeton, New Jersey with his wife and three sons.
Women play important roles in many arts and professions. In today's newspaper, find an example of a woman who is a leader in music, entertainment or another field. Write a paragraph describing what skills this woman needed to become successful. Then write a second paragraph describing what challenges this successful woman faced that a man in the same field might not have faced. Discuss as a class.

Marion Hayden
(One of the founding members of Sisters in Jazz)

Lots of girls hold first chair in school orchestras and bands. But many of those talented players don’t go on to college music programs.

Sisters in Jazz, an international mentoring program for women jazz musicians, is trying to change that.

“The real object of the program is to put ourselves out of business,” said Sunny Wilkinson, a jazz singer who teaches music at Michigan State University. “No disparity between women and men—that’s our grand scheme.”

Sisters in Jazz is an offshoot of the International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE).

It was founded by Wilkinson and fellow Michigan music educators Diana Spradling and Marion Hayden, after Wilkinson was asked to lead the IAJE’s Women’s Caucus in 1995.

To encourage women to study jazz, the IAJE holds an annual contest for college music majors. The five winners form a jazz quintet at the group’s annual conference in Long Beach, California.

Students from around the world compete for the honor, which includes a chance to learn from prominent jazz artists. The winners also perform at a Women in Jazz concert in May at John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

This competition that draws musicians from all over the world started out 10 years ago with just a handful of students.

“it always bothered me that so few women were in college music programs but there were all these high school women in first chair,” Wilkinson recalled. “We wanted to bring the odds up for kids.”

As Sisters in Jazz, Wilkinson, Spradling and Hayden matched five college students with jazz professionals from Ann Arbor, Detroit, Flint, Lansing and Grand Rapids.

The mentors met regularly with their “apprentices” to listen to music, make music together and discuss the music business and what it’s like to be a “woman in jazz.” They all kept journals during the six months and performed together at Western Michigan University.

Hope College instructor Kristin Ward, one of the first apprentices, still has her journal. The Holland resident also still talks regularly with her mentor, Sheila Landis of Rochester Hills.

“We really meshed,” said Ward, who teaches clarinet and vocal jazz. “I wanted to be a woman in jazz taken seriously. She is taken quite seriously.”

Her protégée was an “accomplished musician who hardly needed me,” Landis said. “But I discovered I have quite a nurturing aspect. We really hit it off.”

Since then the singer has shared her experiences with other apprentices. “Any time you can share with someone, everyone grows and benefits,” she said.

In 1998, the IAJE held its first international competition for college students. That year a survey showed that women students were only 3 percent of the students in U.S. college and university jazz ensembles.

Katherine Cartwright, who mentors a Russian singer through e-mail, believes Sisters in Jazz has helped many young jazz musicians. But there’s still a lot of work to do.

She encourages her students at Hunter College in New York to study theory and composition (“all the stuff the boys study”) and shoot high. More women need to earn doctorates and take charge of jazz programs, she said.

“It’s a tough career but there are a lot of mentors out there happy to help.”
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