

A HISTORY OF JAZZ BEFORE 1930

The Red Hot Jazz Archive



KING OLIVER'S CREOLE JAZZ BAND

The music called Jazz was born sometime around 1895 in New Orleans. It combined elements of Ragtime, marching band music and Blues. What differentiated Jazz from these earlier styles was the widespread use of improvisation, often by more than one player at a time. Jazz represented a break from Western musical traditions, where the composer wrote a piece of music on paper and the musicians then tried their best to play exactly what was in the score. In a Jazz piece, the song is often just a starting point or frame of reference for the musicians to

improvise around. The song might have been a popular ditty or blues that they didn't compose, but by the time they were finished with it they had composed a new piece that often bore little resemblance to the original song. Many of these virtuoso musicians were not good sight readers and some could not read music at all, nevertheless their playing thrilled audiences and the spontaneous music they created captured a joy and sense of adventure that was an exciting and radical departure from the music of that time. The first Jazz was played by African-American and Creole musicians in New Orleans. The cornet player, [Buddy Bolden](#) is generally considered to be the first real Jazz musician. Other early players included [Freddie Keppard](#), [Bunk Johnson](#) and [Clarence Williams](#). Although these musicians names are unknown to most people, then and now, their ideas are still being elaborated on to this day. Most of these men could not make a living with their music and were forced to work menial jobs to get by. The second wave of New Orleans Jazz musicians like [Joe "King" Oliver](#), [Kid Ory](#) and [Jelly Roll Morton](#) formed small bands that took the music of these older men and increased the complexity and dynamic of their music, as well as gaining greater commercial success. This music became know as "Hot Jazz", because of the often breakneck speeds and amazing improvised polyphony that these bands produced. A young virtuoso cornet player named [Louis Armstrong](#) was discovered in New Orleans by [King Oliver](#). [Armstrong](#) soon grew to become the greatest Jazz musician of his era and eventually one of the biggest stars in the world. The impact of [Armstrong](#) and other Jazz musicians altered the course of both popular and Classical music. African-American musical styles became the dominant force in 20th century music.

The Red Hot Archive is a place to study and enjoy the music of these early "Jazzmen". Due to recent advances in technology it is now possible to broadcast text, music and pictures around the world via the Internet. This site is an experiment in using this new multimedia technology. We hope it will combine the best of books and audio recordings, into valuable and enjoyable tools for

appreciating this music and the men and women who produced it. This site is a work in progress and will continue to grow as more recordings and writings are added to the archive. Submissions, suggestions and corrections are welcome.

Scott Alexander

Check out the Red Hot Jazz group if you are interested in talking about old jazz at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RedHotJazz>

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