

## What Is Jazz? What Is Latin-Jazz?

**Jazz.** A musical style that evolved in the United States around 1900, chiefly played by Afro-Americans, though the music has since been produced and consumed interracially and internationally. Jazz was, in the earliest stages, a brewing of many stylistic influences - African rhythms and “blue tones,” European instruments and harmonies, marches, dance music, church music, and ragtime - all played with an exaggerated, emotional pulse (or beat). The twelve-bar blues form originated in jazz and has always been prevalent in jazz performance. The most important characteristic of jazz, however, is improvisation. Virtually every jazz selection will focus on improvisation, even when many other characteristics remain optional. Jazz continues to develop, absorb new styles and techniques, and change with great rapidity, but improvisation, the blues, and the vigorous pulse remain reasonably constant throughout its history of development from folk music to art music. (Jerry Coker. *Listening To Jazz.*)

Jazz historian, Gunther Schuller believes for music to be considered jazz it must contain “swing, improvisation, and blue notes.” When considering contemporary styles, it would be safe to consider music jazz if it contained “two of these three elements.” (Glenn Fisher)

Latin jazz can be define as “the umbrella term used to describe improvisatory music that combines the harmonic elements and practices of American jazz and the rhythmic elements of music-cultures such as Cuba, Brazil, Central and South America and the Caribbean region.” (Terry O’Mahoney)

### Important Jazz Musicians and Composers

This list is of the major figures and not to be considered all inclusive. It is only a starting place. Many other excellent musicians had a major impact on the development of jazz music. For information on these and other musicians, along with recorded examples, I strongly recommend the Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz which is available through the Smithsonian Institution.

Louis Armstrong	Count Basie	Miles Davis
Ornette Coleman	John Coltrane	Duke Ellington
George Gershwin	Dizzy Gillespie	Herbie Hancock
Billie Holliday	Scott Joplin	Thelonious Monk
Charlie Parker	Sonny Rollins	Horace Silver

### Influential Latin-Jazz Musicians and Composers

- 1940's: Cuban - Mario Bauza (arranger/composer), Machito (bandleader/composer, Chano Pozo (percussionist), American - Dizzy Gillespie (trumpeter/bandleader)
- 1950's: Cuban - Tito Puente (percussion/bandleader), Israel ‘Cachao’ Lopez (bassist)  
American - Cal Tjader (vibest),
- 1960's: Brazilian - Antonio Carlos Jobim (composer, guitarist, pianist), Joao Gilberto (composer, guitarist), Astrud Gilberto (vocalist), Laurindo Almeida (guitarist), Airtio Moreira (percussionist), Sergio Mendez and Brazil 66  
Cuban - Mongo Santamaria (percussion) American - Stan Getz (saxophone), Charlie Byrd (guitar)
- 1970's: Cuban groups - Irakere and Los Van Van, American - Poncho Sanchez (percussion), Eddie Palmieri (guitar)
- 1980's: Brazilian - Duduka da Fonseca (drummer), Cuban - Arturo Sandoval (trumpet), Paquito DiRivera (saxophone/clarinet)
- 1990's: Brazilian - Trio da Paz (group), Nilson Matta (bassist), Dominican Republic - Michel Camilo (piano), Cuban - pianists Gonzalo Rubalcaba and Hilario Duran, and Horacio ‘El Negro’ Hernandez (drummer), Mexican - Victor Mendoza (vibist)