

## Cool jazz.

A term applied to diverse styles of modern jazz variously perceived as subdued, understated, or emotionally cool. There was some implication that performers in this style were emotionally detached from their creation; however, the players themselves often voiced distaste for the label because their music was as taxing to play as other styles of jazz and was by no means devoid of emotion.

Most saxophonists of the cool school were disciples of Lester Young. Young's emulators tried to match his relaxed rhythmic sense, his tuneful approach to improvisation, his soft, dry, lightweight tone, and his slow vibrato. Many cool saxophonists played in the big bands led by Woody Herman and Stan Kenton at some time during the late 1940s or early 1950s; among the most prominent were Lee Konitz, Stan Getz, Art Pepper, and Zoot Sims. A number of cool trumpeters, including Chet Baker and Shorty Rogers, drew on the style of Miles Davis, who used almost no vibrato, placed great emphasis on simplicity and lyricism, and avoided the upper register of the instrument. Cool drummers played more quietly and conservatively than other modern jazz drummers. Although there is no well-defined cool jazz piano style, George Shearing and John Lewis are sometimes classified as cool players because of their light, clean touch and their stress on economy and lyricism in improvisation. Sometimes the term is also applied to Lennie Tristano, whose style provided a modern alternative to bop, though this seems to contradict the high degree of intensity in Tristano's work.

The most influential arrangers in cool jazz were Claude Thornhill and Gil Evans, whose concepts supplied the foundations for Miles Davis's nonet recordings of 1949–50, later reissued collectively as *Birth of the Cool*. Five of the 11 arrangements in this series were contributed by Gerry Mulligan, who led several bands during the 1950s that used instrumentation similar to that of Davis's group. (Gil Evans revived this instrumentation for several albums with Davis between 1957 and 1962.) Davis's nonet was originally seen as the smallest unit capable of reproducing the flavor of Thornhill's big band of the mid-1940s. It was unusual in that the tenor saxophone was frequently excluded and tuba (sometimes playing the melody line) and french horn were added. The musicians played without vibrato, using a dry tone. While many of the pieces for large ensemble had the floating, almost motionless quality associated with Thornhill's *Snowfall* (1941), others gave way to the jumpier character of bop, though with soft tone-colors sometimes described as "pastel."

Prototypical cool groups of the 1950s and 1960s include the Modern Jazz Quartet, George Shearing's quintet, the quartets led by Dave Brubeck and Gerry Mulligan, and many ensembles led by Jimmy Giuffrè. Some critics consider that the modern jazz produced on the West Coast during the 1950s (see *West coast jazz*) constitutes a category of cool jazz. It is more accurate to designate as cool only a few communities of white jazz musicians playing at that time in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and Boston, as well as the output of the Modern Jazz Quartet and some of the music made by Miles Davis's groups; these comprised African-American musicians who, though rooted in the bop style of the 1940s, often played in a

smoother, less fiery manner than did most bop players. Indeed, although much cool jazz of the 1950s owes a large stylistic debt to groups led by Count Basie and Lester Young in the late 1930s, cool musicians did not ignore the bop approaches that had emerged in the mid-1940s. Some cool saxophonists may have drawn almost exclusively on the work of Young, but most also incorporated the bop ideas of Charlie Parker. Furthermore, most used bop tunes rather than those associated with Basie.

In cool jazz, improvised counterpoint of the type practiced in the earliest days of ensemble jazz underwent a revival. In some performances by the Modern Jazz Quartet, John Lewis improvised lines simultaneously with Milt Jackson, as did Dave Brubeck with Paul Desmond, and Bob Brookmeyer with Gerry Mulligan and Jimmy Giuffrè in other groups.

See also Jazz (i), §V, 6.

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MARK C. GRIDLEY: 'Cool jazz', *Grove Music Online* (Accessed 15 March 2008), <<http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=jazz.100900>>