

Jazz and Blues

Although both jazz and blues are forms of traditional African-American music, there are three major differences between jazz music and blues music. The first difference is related to instrumentation. Blues music almost always involves a singer accompanied by a guitar. In contrast, while vocal and guitar-based jazz exist, neither is really dominant in jazz. Instead, a vast amount of serious jazz is purely instrumental, and features instruments like saxophone, trumpet, piano, bass, and drums. Second, most blues music is theoretically much simpler than jazz. Mastering blues is about learning to sing in a passionate way, learning to feel the groove of the band, and about keeping things simple. This isn't easy, but it's not complex in terms of music theory. In jazz, however, there is much more expectation to show technical virtuosity, whether as a singer or an instrumentalist, and jazz harmony and structure has gotten increasingly complex over time. The final difference between jazz and blues relates to their historical relationship. Blues is really the progenitor of jazz music. Blues music began to develop sometime in the 1860s, when African-Americans combined church music, work songs, chants, and narrative ballads into a new form of music. Jazz began to develop later on, as Black musicians began to combine blues music with other forms of music, from popular and church songs to marching band music to French dance tunes and more. By the 1940s jazz was no longer mainly used for dancing, but had become an "art music" for listening, like classical music. Although they are linked deeply, jazz and blues remain very different in major ways.