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IASJ Newsletter

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From the Editor

Jazz was born in New Orleans. The musical forms of rags, blues and songs were mixed up to become a new musical genre called jazz. As it turned out swing and improvisation became the main characteristics of jazz. Roughly every ten years a new style emerged and funny enough not any of the elder styles ever died out. Jazz moved from music of sub-culture of New Orleans to the center of popular music in the Swing period to art-music later on in the 20th century. Till today these three layers exist and maybe this explains why jazz has neither attained the status that classical music has nor the popularity that pop music has.

In much research the focus of attention goes to the Afro-American roots of jazz. If more attention was given research to the European roots of jazz was done, I would not be surprised if the results would show a large influence of French music on the birth of jazz as well. At the time jazz was born in New Orleans the city was a kind of "Paris-sûr-Mississipi" as James Collier called it in his book The Making of Jazz. The state of Louisiana is named after the French King Louis XIV. Today, when you arrive at the airport, you will still see "Bienvenu à Nouvel Orleans" although the city has little in common with the old Orleans in France. Robichaux, Bechet, and La Motte just to name a few early jazz musicians were Creoles and they all spoke English and French. One of the more romantic and less scientific explanations of the origins of the word "jazz" is that it stems from the French "chasser", the chasing and mingling of voices in a French conversation.

There is no hard evidence to this moment on how French jazz really is. With the 11th Annual IASJ Jazz Meeting 2000 taking place in "Paris-sûr-Seine" in France the participants will sense, feel and can do some educated guessing on the subject. But there is much more to the 11th Annual IASJ Jazz Meeting in Paris: all participants, guest and visitors will become part of the French jazz experience!

Walter Turkenburg
Editor