

Latin jazz

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An umbrella term for a genre of music that blends jazz with the musical practices, styles, and traditions of the Caribbean and Latin America. Historically, music from the Caribbean and Latin America has shared a common history with jazz, intersecting, cross influencing, and at times seeming inseparable, as both have played prominent roles in each other's development. As jazz emerged from New Orleans at the turn of the 20th century, the city's Caribbean culture served as one important component of the foundations of jazz, something acknowledged by a number of musicians. Most noted is Jelly Roll Morton who proclaimed, "If you can't manage to put tinges of Spanish in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning, I call it, for jazz." In this context "Spanish" refers to music coming from Spanish-speaking regions of the Caribbean and Latin America. In 1898, composer Benjamin Harney published the *Ragtime Instructor*, in which he stated, "Ragtime or Negro dance time originally takes its initiative steps from Spanish music, or rather from Mexico, where it is known under the head and names of Habanera, Danza, Seguidillo, etc." Interviewed in 1938, the celebrated composer Duke Ellington recalled: "When I came into the world, Southern Negroes were expressing their feelings in rhythmic 'blues' in which Spanish syncopations had a part."

The Caribbean and Latin American influence on jazz remained prominent throughout the first half of the 20th century due, in part, to the growing presence of Caribbean and Latin American musicians participating in the New York jazz scene. Notable examples include Puerto Rican valve trombonist Juan Tizol, who performed with Ellington; Cuban bandleader Frank "Machito" Grillo, who formed Machito and his Afro Cubans in 1942; and Cuban flautist Alberto Socarras, who performed in Benny Carter's band. Caribbean and Latin American musicians' participation on the jazz scene in the 1930s and 40s, and the exposure of Latin music styles they brought to American jazz musicians, provided the foundation for the emergence of Latin jazz.

It was not until the mid-1940s, with the innovative work of Dizzy Gillespie, Chano Pozo, Mario Bauzá, Machito, Stan Kenton, and George Russell, among others, that a separate stylistic label was deemed necessary to differentiate Latin-influenced jazz from other jazz styles. Previously, more specific terminology had been used to delineate stylistic variations, such as the names of dances, including rumba or tango, that were associated with a song's rhythmic structure. As jazz became less associated with dance, such terms were used with less frequency, and two broader labels emerged for Latin-influenced jazz: first "Cubop" (by 1946), and, later, "Latin jazz." Dizzy Gillespie popularized Cubop, in part through his big band's acclaimed performance of the "Afro-Cubano Drums Suite" with Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo at Carnegie Hall in 29 September 1947, an event which is popularly referred to as the birth of Latin jazz. An elision of the words Cuba and bebop, and drawing equally on both styles, Cubop symbolized a new level of cross-cultural musical integration in comparison to previous Caribbean and Latin American and jazz mixings. Although the Gillespie/Pozo collaboration was brief (1946–8), due to Pozo's untimely death,

their influence on jazz was profound, reaching beyond the Latin jazz standards they co-wrote (“Manteca” and “Tin Tin Deo”). Pozo became a symbol of Latino recognition within the jazz world; he established the conga drums’ use in jazz settings, and he opened opportunities for numerous percussionists to make significant contributions to jazz, such as Mongo Santamaría, Ray Barretto, Sabú Martínez, Willie Bobo, Cándido Camero, Airto, and Tito Puente. Gillespie’s stature in the jazz community legitimized and inspired greater incorporation of Latin musical structures and principles into jazz music making. Bop players further incorporated Latin rhythms and repertoire, and some non-Latino jazz musicians, like Cal Tjader, George Shearing, and Stan Kenton, dedicated much of their professional energies to performing Latin jazz.

As jazz musicians turned toward other Latin American music styles for inspiration and musical mixings, most notably Brazilian music, the term Cubop was eventually replaced by the more geographically inclusive “Latin jazz.” This has remained the substyle’s most frequently used label. Other less frequently used terms include: Afro-Latin jazz, Afro-Cuban jazz, Caribbean jazz, and jazz Latin.

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