

African-american spirituals developed out of the agony of individuals stripped of their home and identity, forced to travel to an unknown land and become slaves, Slave labor was excruciating and demeaning, spending countless hours of back-breaking labor under the sun.

Slaves began singing songs to pass the time. Through several generations work songs and spirituals developed as ways to pass the time and communicate with one another. Work songs focused on the rough conditions faced on a daily basis. Slaves were prohibited from talking about their master overseers, so they often incorporated code words to mention subjects that were off-limits.

Slaves were often expected to sing by the overseer. If they were being silent, constantly being oppressed and physically abused, these songs took on a sorrowful tune and told stories of hardship and struggle. Ex slave Frederick Douglass once wrote 'the songs of slaves represented their sorrows, rather than their joys. Like tears, they were a relief to aching hearts.'

Slave spirituals are often the most well recognized forms of early African-American music, as slaves on plantations or in the city, African Americans were allowed to attend Christian Church. They often stayed after service to participate in song. Slaves took the common Christian themes of repentance and deliverance and incorporated them into a genre that would become one of the biggest influences on early American music.

These spirituals also ignited a strong religious faction among slaves. Themes from the Bible like the Exodus became a metaphor for slavery, substituting the Mississippi or Ohio River for the Jordan River. Songs like Follow the Drinking Gourd became a metaphor of the Big Dipper, giving slaves directions to the Underground Railroad. Contrary to myth, slave and work songs were actually organized, intelligent compositions.

Their music has historically been labeled as monophonic, meaning there is one melody, one note at a time. This is not true at all. Upon dissecting these songs one can see if their music is actually homophonic, as the melody is often included accompanying parts and rhythms. One of the most crucial elements of slave songs known as syncopation actually originated in Africa.

Syncopation is a rhythmic technique which involves stressing beats that are not normally stressed. Drums and other percussion instruments were banned on the assumption that slaves would use them to communicate ideas of escaping or uprising with each other, so they implemented stomping and clapping to create

cross rhythms that went against the fixed beat to create a sound previously unheard of by white settlers.

Slaves that could play instruments however we're allowed a banjo or other stringed instrument. Some songs use a call-and-response style of singing, where a lead singer will call out a short verse and the rest of the workers will respond with the refrain, usually with the recurring theme. An interesting and crucial aspect of this nature of music is that it is imperfect. Followers may begin the refrain before the leader was finished with the solo, or the leader may begin the solo before the chorus was finished.

This type of call and response create a unique blend of melodies and high and low pitches that were bound together by strong rhythmic elements. The actual songs sung were unique in themselves, as they portrayed striking imagery without the use of rhyme scheme as most songs originated. As improvisation spirituals became synonymous with hope, weather for freedom or perhaps the darkest form of emancipation, death : regardless slave songs shared a common theme of fighting disguised as good versus evil or God fighting the devil.

Spirituals invigorated African-americans to fight their bondage and free their souls and before your slave I'll be buried in my grave and go home to my Lord and be free. Throughout American history African-americans have been patronized to continue to face prejudice in their daily lives. One way in which African Americans became involved with music was through minstrel shows, tracing the inception back to Chatham Theatre in 1843 a white Irish American Protestant with a black face sat on stage of three others dressed in Plantation or slave like clothing singing tales of slave life.

This was the first performance of Emmet's Virginia minstrels and is still generally considered to be the birth of the commercialized blackface minstrel show. In their early form these impersonations were conventionally staged by white male performers blackening up their face and when they were not wearing white gloves, also blackening their hands. The visual picture was completed by dance music and song performances.

This form of entertainment became a central part of the saloons, taverns and music halls across Britain. Glasgow, a city departing point for America, had developed close ties with certain American states such as Virginia, a place where American musical influence was truly alive. During this time, period sheet music was evolving. The evolution of sheet music led to more racial cues and circumstances.

Throughout these shows the Irish in America as a group used the phrase 'blacking up' to establish its ethnic separation from other races across the country. There were two groups of Irish Americans that participated in blackface, Minister Lee these two consisted of the Irish Catholics and the Irish protestants. Christopher J Smith suggests that when we examine all the sources we should see that the roots of blackface minstrel go back virtually to the founding of the American colonies.

During this entertainment period based on cross race impersonation, blackface delineation or minstrel. it consisted in the grotesque and caricatured impersonations of African-american men and were performed by white British or American men. In most cases, however, after the end of the Civil War, blacks were thoroughly integrated in dimensional shows.

When one race impersonates another for entertainment, reception becomes a barometer of ethnic hegemony, interracial politics and power. Artists have been repeatedly tempted to appropriate and even try to reassign signifiers from this tradition, but blackface and its indelible liability associated minstrel repertoire retained the power to reopen these hard to heal deep wounds.

While most regarded them as a representation of African-american low cultural, one vision originated among whites in another originated among blacks. 20th century artists also had to address the derogatory way in which minstrel represented black people. Most regarded them both those instances of African-american low culture.

In today's society we see the impact of minstrel shows and blackface performances. The language of modernity therefore involved a measure of what historian Michael North calls 'racial ventriloquism', yet it wasn't only white writers who resorted to this practice. Although one might imagine that early 20th century black modernists would have seized the opportunity to silence the ways of minstrel, in fact they did no such thing at all.

Minstrel tropes are still ubiquitous in black modernist literature. Wallace Thurmond, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke all used, interrogate and revised the form of these minstrel shows. As the minstrel men of the 19th century encouraged styles of racialized masculinity, contemporary white youth too were attracted not only to the music, but various cultural artifacts.

Extended beyond what was once considered to be hip and cool for blacks was now beginning to be liked by whites. This began with the integration of black and whites and minstrel shows at saloons and theaters all across America. Simply put, blackface minstrel was for buy-in about the white community, although in its early period it was a form of engaging the black other. It is misleading to suggest that this

engagement might even have been supportive of action to correct the other social play. Black mints really promoted racism and undermined the African-american race during this time period, thus allowing prejudice and stereotyping to live on after the Civil War, after the transatlantic slave trade had ended.

It is during this period to which America witnessed the birth a powerful musical expression conceived as the result of the black man's struggle for his survival and freedom. Known for his ability to endure, his spiritual strength, his outstanding sense of rhythm, black men in America would use these characteristics to shape the sounds and ideas of their music in the years to come.

The earliest trace of popular black music that still exists today is the Blues. In the difficult period of transition from slavery to freedom during the mid 19th century the Blues became an outlet and a therapeutic release for black men to unburden himself from the cruel and harsh realities of his life. It is during this time while performing the in company of whites that the black American singer had to develop dual personality traits as a survival mechanism by removing black slang verbal codes and suggestive material in order to appeal to the white crowd.

At the turn of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th the earliest forms of jazz emerged when black musicians and other African Americans became immersed in modern life in society, and what was originally known as a 'coon song' during the American minstrel period. It was during the earliest 20th century where it acquired the additional label of ragtime, with the focus primarily based exclusively upon syncopated time and not so much melody or fine harmony.

Ragtime would become the precursor to modern-day jazz, seen as a revolt against Victorian codes of behavior. The Black American artists of this time were abandoning accepted musical styles of the time period and entering risky stylistic and social terrain, being a direct challenge to Western norms and culture. The birth of jazz music was more than just music. It was a cultural movement which influenced the entire language and attitude of all its followers.

In this respect jazz became a prototype for later forms of music such as rock and roll and hip hop, because it was hated by the bourgeoisie and musical establishment of that time period. Largely associated with the drug use and deviancy, jazz music in its earliest forms was referred to as the devil's music. One cannot discuss the rods of jazz without mentioning the great Jelly Roll Morton. Identified as a major influence on the development of early American jazz, the self-proclaimed inventor of jazz was responsible for writing the first complex and self-conscious compositions employing breaks, stopped on devices, improvising feeling and the swing rhythm, all factors of jazz that would continue to shape the genre for decades to come.

Growing up as a Creole in New Orleans in the early 20th century, Jelly Roll Morton became both the face and the talked about jazz musician. Known for his flamboyant demeanor, Morton was also a warehouse entertainer. An alleged payment with the diamond tooth and a large wardrobe of flashy suits, making much of the American society associate jazz music with criminality and deviance.

Growing up in New Orleans, Morton describes the city as the stomping grounds for all the greatest jazz pianists in the country. Wherever jazz was being played Morton notes how there was no discrimination of any kind, with people of different color and backgrounds mingled together just as they wish to, and everyone was just like one big happy family. Although by the early to mid 20th century major cities like New York and Chicago, both had established jazz scenes, they cannot be comparable to New Orleans.

Historically, New Orleans was a major port where on Sundays, a place called Congo Square became a destination hotspot for slaves and free blacks for Sunday recreation and market activity. Here in Congo Square, African music was performed throughout the early and middle decades of the 19th century, leaving many historians to believe that jazz, and by extension, all black music, traces its genealogy to this iconic square in New Orleans.

Another major reason why New Orleans had such a distinct jazz culture would be the city's complex social order of white black and Creole inhabitants, who each had their own unique musical performances and styles. With the racially mixed and diversity there is no wonder how New Orleans jazz became such a unique style and expressive art form.

Although many see a direct connection between African music and dance and the early rise of jazz, Jelly Roll Morton stresses how early jazz was a unique product of America, not Africa. He notes how African music is nothing like New Orleans music. Just like oil come out of Oklahoma, jazz came out of New Orleans, starting with Jelly Roll Morton, followed by other New Orleans greats, like Louis Armstrong and King Oliver.

All three allowed it to branch out and become music that no longer only belonged to New Orleans, but to the world. While the blues, ragtime and evolution into jazz can all be traced back to African roots, it was the African American who truly shaped the foundation of what the future of modern music would sound like. Although originally only heard in the streets and clubs of New Orleans, the once forbidden and demonic music scene would spread like wildfire and penetrate mainstream American culture, placing the black artists at the center of attention in the public

eye. Characterized by their carefree, lazy, yet extremely personalized and intimate performances, it is the American black artists of the early 20th century that would ultimately shape the sounds of American popular music in the years to come.