

Tania Fils-Aime

4 November 2022

Blues Women vs Jazzmen

There is a lot of discourse on the difference between Jazzmen versus Blues women. The difference factors in the instruments, society at the time during the early and late 20th century, and the individual's own experience.

During the mid to late 20th century, jazz and blues music started to become more prevalent. Black musicians used music as their freedom of expression, a lack thereof. Blues and jazz shared many of the same instruments, few being the guitar, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, and the piano. Drums were also a major piece of contribution since it oftenly carried the beat heavily. From the book, *An Introduction to America's Music*, it is revealed that drums were banned by slave owners in fear it would be used to initiate a riot. Its sound felt to be deafening by others. (Crawford & Hamberlin, 2018, p. 76).

Originated in the South, jazz and blues became more popular during enslavement. Jazz and blues musicians would sing about their injustice and sorrows in code, unbeknownst to the slave owners and white people. Some sounds were used to express their emotions as well, whether it was making a rhythmic beat with their body or shouting, in a pattern-like noise. Despite the racism and the result of segregation

coming from it, it's ironic how black people still chose to be exclusive amongst their own gender as opposed to coming and working together in the music industry.

Jazzmen usually referred to themselves as the “boys club”, considering jazz was majorily taken up by men. *Trumpet Men: Representations of Masculinity of Jazz After Black Power*, disclosed that misogyny was a common thing in the industry, where it was looked at as the norm. Linda Dahl, jazzwomen, suspected that masculinity alone already puts women at a disadvantage. She had expressed, “The jazz world were held to be 'masculine' prerogatives: aggressive self-confidence on the bandstand, displaying one's 'chops' or sheer blowing power; a single-minded attention to career moves, including frequent absences from home and family.” (Johnson, p. 4, 2010). As mentioned beforehand, although drums were banned, it was still considered as a “masculine” instrument, along with the trombone and trumpet, to name a few. Women were also expected to stay home and take care of the family while the man went out and worked.

Blues women used this genre as a way to express their grief and mourn for liberation. Granted that the instruments played a major role in the blues era, they deliberately relied on their vocals to get their message across. Blues became very popularized amongst women during the Civil War, sharing their experience and want for freedom. In *Blues Women: The First Civil Rights Workers*, Josephine Baker, Blues singer, is introduced as a pioneer from rebelling against her trauma and challenging thoughts against her naked body as a black woman. (Cartwright, p. 11, 2014).

Unsurprisingly, men's bodies are criticized more than women. It was Josephine's way of owning her sexual freedom and gaining back control of her body.

References

Cartwright, J. (2014, September 25). *Blues Women: The First Civil Rights Workers*.

Academia.edu Retrieved November 4, 2022, from

[https://www.academia.edu/10100383/Blues_Women_First_Civil_Rights_W](https://www.academia.edu/10100383/Blues_Women_First_Civil_Rights_Workers)
orkers

Crawford, R., & Hamberlin, L. (2019). *An introduction to america's music*. W.W. Norton
& Company.

Johnson, A. J. (2014, May 31). *Trumpet men: Performances of jazz masculinity*.

Academia.edu. Retrieved November 4, 2022, from

[https://www.academia.edu/5771082/Trumpet_Men_Performances_of_Jaz](https://www.academia.edu/5771082/Trumpet_Men_Performances_of_Jazz_Masculinity)
z_Masculinity