



Swing It, Sister: The Influence of Female Jazz Musicians on Music and Society

KIRSTEN SAUR

Women in Music

- ▶ Lack of recognition as professional performers.
- ▶ Not remembered like male performers and composers until after their deaths.
- ▶ Remembered far after their times.

Thesis

- ▶ Female jazz instrumentalists, both as solo artists and in ensembles, and vocalists, both as soloists and in groups, of the jazz era influenced music and society in their own times and in later times. They added new musical concepts, added new vocal styles, worked to change the society they lived in, and worked hard to find their place in music no matter what got in their way, making them inspirations for future generations of women striving to succeed in the world.

Female Instrumentalists

- ▶ Less recognized than vocalists
- ▶ History transmitted orally
- ▶ Valaida Snow
- ▶ Nona Gendryx
- ▶ Memphis Minnie
- ▶ Rosetta Tharpe

Sherrie Tucker: *Telling Performances: Jazz History Remembered and Remade by the Women in the Band*

- ▶ “Jazz is a place where women instrumentalists take pride in their work, play just as good as men, and win converts. It is also a world where women are well aware of the powerful belief system which work against them: the widespread skepticism about their abilities, their reputations as “novelties,” and the classic paradoxes of what it means to cross the gender division of labor. [W]omen know that what they do is considered a ‘man’s job,’ and when they walk in, men (and sometimes women) will say (or think) ‘woman musician, she can’t play.’ And they also know they if they do the job well, they will be said to be good “for girls,” or that they ‘play like men.’ And they know that even if they ‘make believers of them’ today, the same battles will have to be fought tomorrow.

Vocalists

- ▶ Remembered more than instrumentalists
- ▶ Ella Fitzgerald
- ▶ Bessie Smith
- ▶ Billie Holiday

Ella Fitzgerald

- ▶ Poor childhood
- ▶ Run away
- ▶ Her way to the top
- ▶ Her influence on society
- ▶ Her influence in music



Ella's Voice

▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epRXoS_P0lk

Bessie Smith

- ▶ Poor beginnings
- ▶ Her big break
- ▶ Her social influence
- ▶ Her voice



Bessie's voice

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MzU8xM99Uo>

Billie Holiday

- ▶ A rough start
- ▶ Her big break
- ▶ Her unique voice
- ▶ Her musical influence



Billie's voice

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXRiKEybN0s>

Conclusion

- ▶ All of these women of jazz, either with instruments or voice, influenced music in different ways. They fought against the social norms and did what they could to perform the music they loved. They inspired future generations to fight for their dreams and inspired future artists to apply their unique musical abilities and talents in the music they love.

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