

If Jazz Were On MTV!

by Stan Ra

If we took a close look into the CD collections of let's say, a thousand teenagers, Jazz CD's would most likely be a rarity. Why is it that jazz music seems to be dying among the teens of the new millennium? What is it about the music that doesn't appeal to the kids? We'll take a look into the reasons why my peers won't give jazz a chance, and what they think can be done to make jazz more appealing to kids.

One cold January morning I started my survey amongst some friends and classmates in my school. Questions that I asked included, "Why don't you listen to jazz?", "What do you think of when you hear jazz?", and "Name some jazz musicians." Upon asking those questions I was very surprised by what people had to say. The answers that came for each question were quite interesting and a few were disappointing.

"So, why don't you listen to jazz?" I asked.

"It's so boring and slow and how can you listen to music without any words? You're so weird Stan." replied a friend.

The general consensus among everyone I talked to was that jazz was a slow, boring kind of music. While I could disagree very strongly, I understood where they were coming from. Someone pointed out to me that when jazz is heard in public, for instance TV or in the movies, ballads and medium/slow tempo swing is being used. Therefore this is the only kind of jazz that a majority of teens are exposed to. Although, some students noted that they had heard up-tempo songs of John Coltrane and Charlie Parker, they still found the music boring. I found that people wanted to hear words in a song so they could sing along and such, but they said that jazz didn't have that to offer to them.

In addition to jazz music being boring and slow, students stated that they didn't know of any jazz musicians or new jazz CD's that even come out. Basically stating that, jazz isn't getting enough media attention in mainstream America." If jazz videos were on TRL (A MTV music video show), I would go out and buy jazz CD's". That statement by student Stephanie Carnation sums the problem up the best. Many people showed interest in listening to jazz but none new where they could find out about jazz CD's or the local jazz radio station.

Jazz seems to have an image attached to it. The image that young people have of jazz is old people in smoky bars. In my opinion the problem isn't the smoky clubs but the old people mentioned in that image. The music is viewed for older folks, those who were around during the sixties and earlier. While I was talking to some of my peers they all seemed to say that jazz had a very elderly and boring image. Many of them said that jazz needed to make an effort to reach out to young people.

Although jazz seems to be dying in mainstream media, especially in America, there is still hope for the music. The demand for it may not be so great amongst a large amount of teens but on the other hand there are those who are in demand for the music. That demand will keep it going. Hopefully with more publicity in the media, and more specials on jazz (Like the PBS special), jazz will remain an "influential and important music"

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