

American innovators: miles davis and john cage



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Miles Davis was born in 1926 and died in 1991. He considered to be born in the right place at the right time and to be modern and stylish. He received his first trumpet at the age of thirteen in 1959. On the other hand, Steve Reich was recently credited as being the greatest living composer by The New York Times. His path does not only embrace Western Classical Music aspects but also rhythms, harmonies and American vernacular music structures especially, jazz. Steve turned seventy years old in 2006. That is basically a summary of the two jazz artists' biography.

Kind of Blue is the name of the best selling album that was recorded in 1959. I listened to Viso Music Vault, Blue in Green and Summertime musical pieces. I discovered that this was a great composer and singer. His music was so interesting that I kept on listening to the tracks. This music was smooth to my ears to an extent that I could comfortably handle my class assignment while the music is on. The songs sounded melodic because of the musical instruments used in them like the trumpet and many others. The instruments have different musical notes that bring about the melody to the music. I also found the songs to be relaxing, so that if one had a stressful day, they tend to relax the nerves with the sound of these melodies. His music is also soothing, it brings out the smoothness and leisurely feeling to someone's body, mind, heart and soul.

This music sounds romantic by nature. It brings about the tender feeling of love. In jazz music some music effects are similar; beats two and four being accented, music being swung in various styles, some of the notes are used out of keys. The artists also use notes that are out of key to bring out the song's uniqueness. Davis also used keys two, five and one and progression

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one, one, four and five in his rendition. Harmonic instruments like the guitar, piano and bass and seventh chords were also used to make up some chord progressions to make jazz music sound funky. Bebop, swing, waltz, nova and bossa are some of the common styles that make up jazz music.

Melody and chords do not really matter in jazz. What matters is how creative an artist is and what he makes out of a song. Jazz music needs a lot of careful listening and interest to understand it. Improvisation and use of the saxophone makes jazz music sound soulful by nature. I did enjoy Miles' music because of its relaxing and melodic nature. I enjoyed the lovely bit of the music; it was so soothing and funky to listen to, nevertheless I got bored at some point because I am new to jazz music. However, the tunes caught my ears and I kept on yearning for a lot of them.

This music had a lot to do with the use of musical instruments instead of words, so I came to understand the music without words. One just needs to concentrate and consider the inner meaning of the tunes. It takes a person to a different world and it is soothing to the soul. Steve Reich was thinking of orchestration and harmony when composing music for the eighteen musicians. He started with a series of chords. He used instruments of similar timbre to bring out the sub patterns clearly. These instruments played against each other to bring out clear sub patterns. Steve thought of producing canonic sub patterns by pairing instruments against each other.

Reich's music uses similar notes like quavers to create some rhythm, for example, twelve quavers starting to play one after another in the same

sequence. This helps in bringing out diversity. Steve's music not only contains the seeds of his past writings but also his future works

too. His music, especially the pieces that he wrote for the eighteen musicians, symbolizes great harmony. This music also has a great variety of instrumental timbre, for example, violin phase and pianos.

Steve's music is very similar to most of the set pieces I listen to. I tend to recognize the same harmony during my Sunday services as we sing the catholic hymns. The combination of various instruments that matches harmonically is used to create a rhythm, and the use of the same musical notes at different start points that brings out diversity is also applied in many gospel songs I listen to. I also hear similar musical appliances in my school choir and in various music competitions. I consider Reich's music to be classical because of his use of canons, repetitive figures and slow harmonic rhythms. This composing style have been of great influence to numerous music groups and many other composers. I also consider it classical because it changed the course of music history. Yes, Steve is among the handful of composers who are still alive and who can sincerely claim to have brought some alteration to the path that music history was heading. Reich is one of the century's fabulous composers. His music embraces the spoken voice as a component. He also crossed the boundaries in music. His self composed music for the eighteen musicians was harmonic and orchestral in nature and this was a new thing to the world of music. Reich is very creative to an extent of making music from the sound of the train.

Reich's and Miles' music both encompassed the use of instruments like piano, drum, guitar and trumpet. However, Reich's music cut across many aspects. It was also harmonic and very creative unlike Miles' whose music was not harmonic. Reich created harmony by the use of the same musical note but repeated severally at different starting times whereas Miles used just about any musical note acceptable in the Jazz music world. Miles' music was monotonous in the sense that it lacked creativity, any jazz music he performed entailed almost the same rendition unlike Steve's where creativity was the order of the day. In every composition he did, a listener expected something new.

Miles' music could only be done by one jazz artist while Steve's pieces could be performed by many musicians with no confusion. This is because one of his main aims was to create some harmony. Steve's music encompassed things like claps, repetition of musical notes, the use of many instruments to bring out the funky bit of jazz music. Reich also used similar musical notes like quavers to create some rhythm. These quavers are twelve in number and they play one after another.

Jazz music is interesting. It soothes the soul and one can still perform other tasks while listening to it. Jazz music needs a lot of careful listening and interest to understand it. This music was smooth to my ears to an extent that I could comfortably handle my class assignment while the music is on. The songs sounded melodically because of the musical instruments, used in them like the trumpet and many others. The instruments have different musical notes that bring about the melody to the music. Improvisation and use of the saxophone makes jazz music sound soulful by nature. Both these

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artists have hit the Jazz world with good music and their works are always celebrated.