

# The History Of African American Music

**BLACK MUSIC IN THE RED, WHITE & BLUE**

June is officially African-American Music Appreciation Month, so GMR teamed up with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to showcase the contributions of some of the finest musicians in American history.

**BLUES ROBERT JOHNSON**  
 One of the most powerful blues guitarists who ever lived, Johnson is the inspiration behind most of the Delta Blues. There are many records he used to play, but his most famous was his recording on guitar.  
 Influenced: Led Zeppelin, Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton

**1937 1938 8**  
 1937-1938 8

**JAZZ MILES DAVIS**  
 Just one album, "Kind of Blue," is enough to put Miles Davis in the pantheon of jazz greats. His music is a blend of hard bop, modal jazz, and post-bop.  
 Influenced: Frank Zappa, Jerry Garcia, Red Hot Chili Peppers

**1947 1948 48**  
 1947-1948 48

**SOUL RAY CHARLES**  
 He is responsible for the sound of soul music. His music is a blend of gospel, blues, and jazz.  
 Influenced: James Brown, Marvin Gaye, Otis Redding

**1949 1955 55**  
 1949-1955 55

**FUNK PARLIAMENT-FUNKADELIC**  
 The funkiest of funk groups, Parliament-Funkadelic is a collective of funk musicians who have been instrumental in the development of funk music.  
 Influenced: Prince, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Gnarls Barkley

**1970 1974 24**  
 1970-1974 24

**R&B PRINCE**  
 Prince has been a hit all around — funk, pop, R&B, and more. He is a true pioneer of the new wave sound.  
 Influenced: Dr. Dre, Pharrell, Justin Timberlake

**1978 1979 25**  
 1978-1979 25

**HIP-HOP TUPAC SHAKUR**  
 Tupac is one of the greatest rappers of all time. He was a true pioneer of the new wave sound.  
 Influenced: Jay-Z, Eminem, Jay G

**1991 1992 11**  
 1991-1992 11

**NOTEWORTHY SINGLES**  
 African-American artists have been leading the charts since the start of the century. These tracks are just the tip of the iceberg.

- Ray Charles "Hallelujah I Love the Lord" (1959)
- The Platters "The Great Pretender" (1955)
- Ray Charles "Georgia on My Mind" (1962)
- The Supremes "Dancing Queen" (1969)
- Jackson 5 "ABC" (1970)
- Wesley Jackson "Sister" (1971)
- Michael Jackson "Rock With You" (1980)
- Boyz n the Mood "Pump Up the Volume" (1982)
- Whitney Houston "I've Been Lonely" (1987)
- Boyz n the Mood "The Boner" (1991)
- Robyn "Freaky Like Me" (2000)
- Prince "The Love Symbol Album" (2002)
- Jay-Z "Black Album" (2003)

**TOP 10 ARTISTS**  
 Each decade has its own top 10 artists. Here are the top 10 artists of the 20th century.

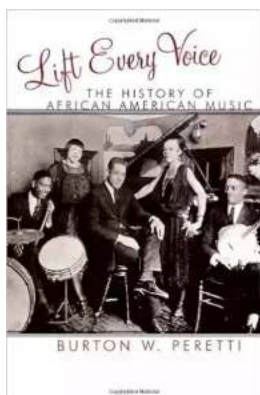
- 1950s: Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole
- 1960s: Ray Charles, The Supremes, James Brown, Marvin Gaye
- 1970s: Jackson 5, James Brown, Bruce Springsteen
- 1980s: Michael Jackson, Prince, Janet Jackson
- 1990s: Janet Jackson, Boyz n the Mood, Whitney Houston, R. Kelly, TLC, Paul Robby

When exploring the history of American music, it is impossible to overlook the profound influence that African Americans have had on the development of various genres. From the spirituals and work songs that emerged during the era of slavery to the birth of jazz, blues, gospel, soul, and hip-hop, African American music continues to captivate and inspire a global audience. In this article, we will

delve deep into the captivating history of African American music and shed light on its cultural significance.

## Exploring the Roots: The Era of Slavery

The origins of African American music can be traced back to the era of slavery in the United States. Ripped away from their homeland and stripped of their cultural identity, African slaves turned to music as a means of expressing their sorrow, hope, and resistance. Spirituals, rooted in African musical traditions and blending Christian themes, became a powerful tool for communication and reflection during this tumultuous period.



### Lift Every Voice: The History of African American Music (The African American History Series)

by Burton W. Peretti (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 2509 KB

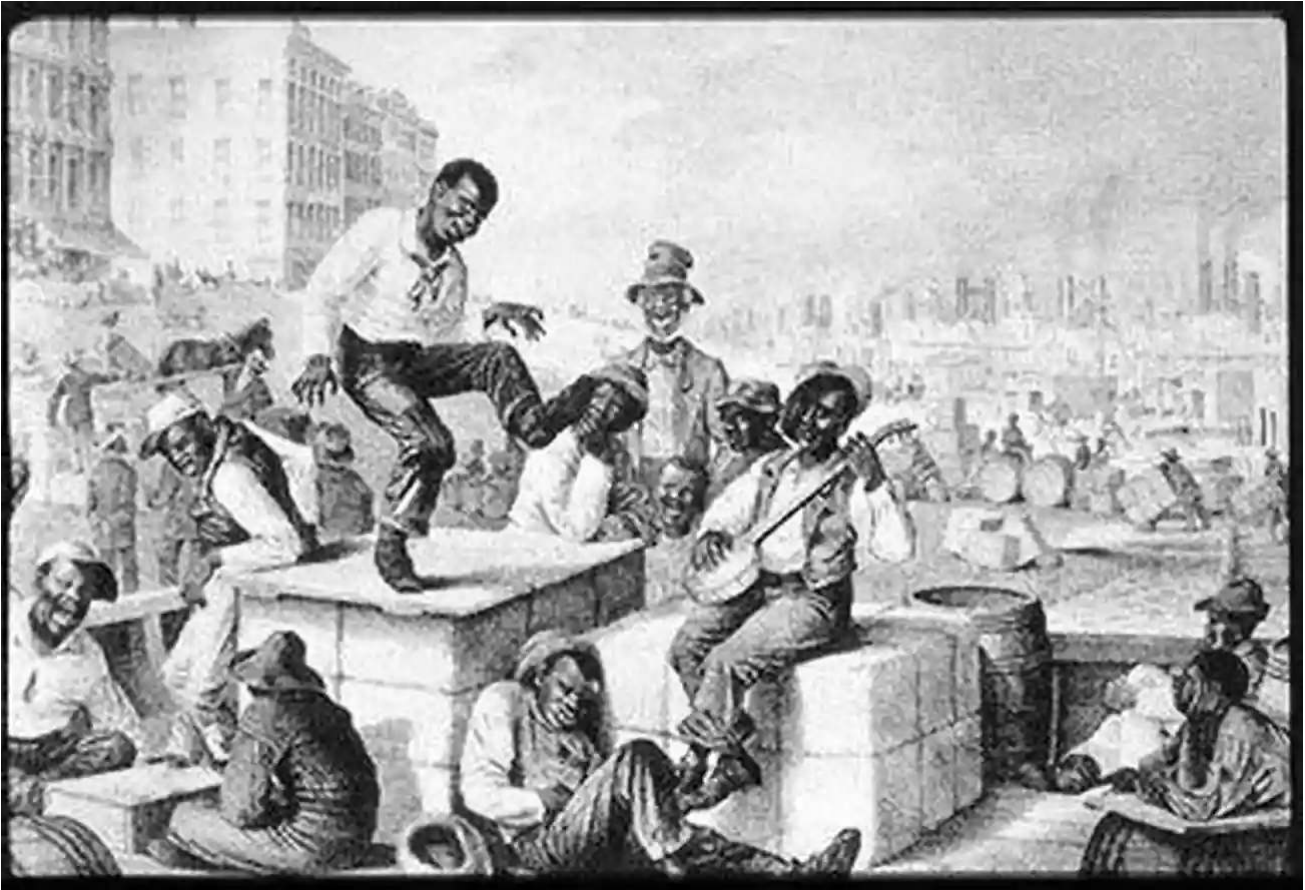
Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 240 pages





## **Birth of Jazz and Blues**

As African Americans gradually gained more freedom and opportunities for artistic expression, new genres began to emerge. Jazz, often referred to as America's greatest contribution to the musical world, originated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, primarily among African American communities in New Orleans. With its unique syncopated rhythms and improvisational elements, jazz revolutionized popular music and continues to influence musicians to this day.

Blues, another genre deeply rooted in African American experiences, rose to prominence in the early 20th century. Originating in the Mississippi Delta region, blues music often conveyed feelings of sadness, longing, and despair. Its distinctive twelve-bar structure and heartfelt lyrics were a reflection of the

challenges faced by African Americans during the era of segregation and racial turmoil.

## **Gospel, Soul, and the Civil Rights Movement**

With the onset of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-20th century, African American music took on a new dimension. Gospel music, derived from African American religious traditions, gained significant popularity during this period. Known for its powerful vocals and themes of faith, hope, and resilience, gospel music provided a soundtrack for the struggle for equal rights.



Soul music, characterized by its soulful vocals and emotive delivery, also gained prominence during the Civil Rights Movement. Artists like Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, and Sam Cooke used their music to convey messages of love, empowerment, and social change. Their timeless hits continue to inspire generations and serve as a reminder of the importance of unity and equality.



## The Rise of Hip-Hop

In the late 1970s, African American music experienced another revolution with the rise of hip-hop. Originating in African American and Latino communities in New York City, hip-hop became a cultural force that transcended music. Through its dynamic rhythms, poetic lyrics, and bold fashion, hip-hop gave a voice to urban youth and addressed social issues such as poverty, racism, and police brutality.



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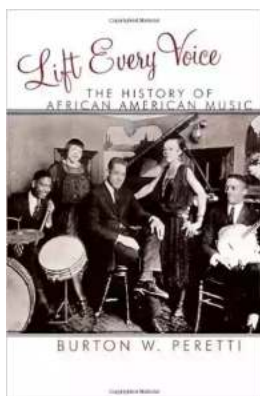
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## The Influence of African American Music Today

The impact of African American music reaches far beyond its cultural origins. It has left an indelible mark on popular music across the globe, influencing countless artists from various genres. From the smooth melodies of R&B to the energetic beats of rap, African American music continues to inspire and shape the sound of contemporary music.

The history of African American music is a testament to the resilience, creativity, and cultural contributions of African Americans throughout the centuries. From the spirituals of the slave era to the revolutionary hip-hop movement, African American music has transcended boundaries and empowered generations of artists and listeners. As we continue to appreciate and celebrate this rich musical heritage, let us recognize the profound impact it has had on shaping the diverse tapestry of American and global culture.

Keywords: African American music, history, slavery, jazz, blues, gospel, soul, hip-hop, Civil Rights Movement



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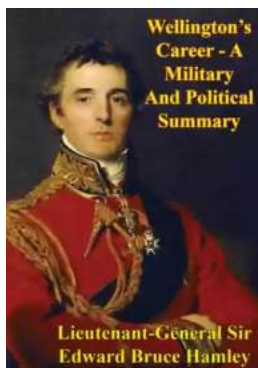
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Since their enslavement in West Africa and transport to plantations of the New World, black people have made music that has been deeply entwined with their religious, community, and individual identities. Music was one of the most important constant elements of African American culture in the centuries-long journey from slavery to freedom. It also continued to play this role in blacks' post-emancipation odyssey from second-class citizenship to full equality. *Lift Every Voice* traces the roots of black music in Africa and slavery and its evolution in the United States from the end of slavery to the present day. The music's creators, consumers, and distributors are all part of the story. Musical genres such as spirituals, ragtime, the blues, jazz, gospel, rhythm and blues, rock, soul, and hip-hop—as well as black contributions to classical, country, and other American music forms—depict the continuities and innovations that mark both the music and the history of African Americans. A rich selection of documents help to define the place of music within African American communities and the nation as a whole.



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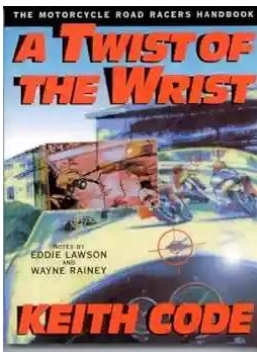
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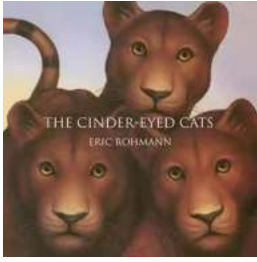
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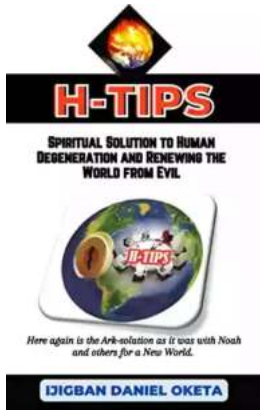
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