

*The individual voice of Free Jazz, reflected through its aesthetics, ideologies, and reflections on society*

Free jazz was devised in the 1960s, through a culmination of a variety of musical, and cultural concepts. Its distinctive voice comes largely through a rejection of the conventional melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic structures formed by both jazz and classical musicians before that time. The group of black African American musicians who developed the style of Free Jazz were greatly influenced by an exploration of two clear musical paths. The first is an interest in non-European and African musical devices, such as including African rhythms, tonality, and melodic principles used by slaves from America in the Antebellum period, and techniques as antiphony, and falsetto breaks. Alongside this was an investigation of the Western musical developments from the beginning of the twentieth century, included Atonality, and Hyper complexity.

Throughout the history of American jazz, a reflection of culture and society has been deeply embedded within the music. From a voyeuristic point of view the reader can observe how the performers have tried to portray the social context in which the music has been produced. This also includes the musical expression of the performers and their own personal emotions. Although this is seen from the embryonic stages of jazz in New Orleans with military brass bands conglomerating with elements of African music, it is through Free Jazz that we see the strongest reflection of society's thoughts being expressed through the music.

Since the recordings of The Original Dixieland Jazz Band in 1917, jazz has followed a path of being controlled by a white hegemony, where black musicians have been used to entertain and exploited for their music. In the 1940s we see the first psychological changes of the performer and audience, with a shift in an ideology, and approach towards their music, with the artists becoming autonomous over their art form. In 1960s these thoughts came to a culmination, with black musicians no longer wishing to be controlled by a white musical industry, and started to reinforce the autonomous aesthetics that were devised in the Bebop era.

As in the 1940s, the nascent period of Free Jazz was interwoven with political and social reflections, with musicians using their music to express their thoughts of the social context. It is during this period that we see a psychological development of the artist towards his music,

there is a shift in the way the music is portrayed to the audience, and how it is linked with social thoughts of the performer. As well as exploring musical concepts, the musicians and the genre can be seen to follow sociological principles, with ideas such as antagonism, alienation and experimentalism attempting to be expressed through performance and composition. Jazz musicians of this period, such as Archie Shepp and Albert Ayler, identified with these new theories, and attempted to find a musical style that would encapsulate the way they felt, and express their feelings towards the music and society they were within.

Within this political struggle represented in the sixties, musicians adopted these thoughts of liberation and equality of race, and used it as a political message in their music. Titles of compositions were devoted to political leaders and black musicians. New associations, such as the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), were being formed by black musicians, and concerts of black jazz artists were devised and performed. These musicians started to reject the doctrines presented by the American white ideology, and explored other religions and philosophies, which they applied to the music in their technical approaches to performing and compositional techniques. The psychology of the Free Jazz artists followed the same principles of the Bebop musicians in reaction towards the audience, having little care of their thoughts, except for their dedicated followers. Musicians also became aware of their personal appearance, and started to adopt new dress codes that denoted their beliefs and ideologies.

In this paper I will explore the individual voice of Free Jazz through its musical aesthetics, and ideologies of the jazz musicians, including their social and political thoughts.