

Acid Jazz - African Contemporary - Rai - Jazz Styles Drummers Guide

Acid Jazz to Rai, lets examine the origins or better yet roots of those styles in order to understand them deeper.

Acid Jazz originated in the late 1980s, but achieved greater popularity in the 1990s, especially in San Francisco and New York City. Prominent Acid Jazz bands include Alphabet Soup, Galactic, Brand New Heavies, Groove Collective, and Digable Planets. Instrumental music is as important as the lyrics in Acid Jazz, and the style is characterized by danceable grooves and lengthy, repetitive compositions. A typical Acid Jazz ensemble blends horns, a full rhythm section (often percussion in addition to a drum set), a vocalist (singing and rapping), and even a Dj.

The role of a drum set player in Acid Jazz is to maintain a solid rhythmic foundation with a characteristic relaxed groove. This is achieved by playing specific patterns (generally Hip Hop or Funk) with a strong sense of time. A small set-up is common (hi-hat, snare, bass drum, cymbal), but some drummers use a larger kit depending on instrumentation and musical influences. Acid Jazz players strive for a consistent sound, often imitating that of a drum machine. Acid Jazz tempo range varies according to the style being played (see individual styles below). The following grooves are practical for this genre.

While African music dates back to prehistoric times, the primary concern of the drum set player is contemporary African music. Since the continent of Africa has one fifth the land mass and population of the planet, and literally hundreds of cultures, musical styles number in the thousands. Though a modern drummer may encounter other contemporary African styles (Nanigo, Zoblazo, Mapouka, Nffialax and Makossa are a few examples), the styles presented in this chapter are the most common types a drum set player may need to play. Contemporary African music began with the sounds and rhythms of Afro-Cuban music in the 1920s and 1930s. At about that time, African composers began to create early versions of African Pop and Jazz. In the 1940s, Greek-run record labels helped promote the new music developing in the Congo-Zaire region of Western Africa. With the introduction of radio throughout Africa after World War 11, and later through television broadcasts, contemporary African music achieved massive popularity across the continent. As Western instruments (most importantly the electric guitar) became cheaper through mass production, African musicians began to use them. This enabled composers to easily incorporate new developments in Western music (Rock n' Roll, Reggae) into the African musical culture. Today, contemporary African music has achieved popularity on a global scale, influencing many other genres while continuing to develop in its own directions.

Rai developed in Northern Africa, primarily in Western Algeria in the port city of Oran. It's a form of Maghreb music (North African region), and its roots go back to the early 1900s when the folk music of nomadic North African tribes was combined with romantic Arabic poetry. Western Algerian culture has, as 20th century pop music spread, incorporated those sounds and ideas into its own indigenous music. Rai is influenced by such diverse styles as Funk, Rock, Ska, Reggae, Jazz, Techno, House and Afro-Cuban combined with the quarter-tone scales of Arabic music.

About the Author

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