The French connection: Mythologies of *La Nouvelle Orléans* in French discourse on jazz

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Abstract
In the 20th century, jazz music spread throughout global culture like few other musical forms. Over the 40-year period in which jazz was assimilated into French culture, myths about the origin of jazz played an important role in the discourse surrounding the music. By examining both how these myths functioned in the discourse and examining how they changed over time depending on cultural circumstances, this article shows how writers increasingly used jazz etiologies and writing on the importance of New Orleans to the history of jazz to bridge the cultural gap and to make a French connection with jazz music, so that the enjoyment of it could be experienced as authentically French. From early abstract expressive origins, to the latter strategic deployment of these myths as a feature of New Orleans revitalism, this discourse played an important role in the integration of jazz into French cultural identity.

Keywords  
France, jazz, music, New Orleans revitalism, origin myths

Over the course of the 20th century, jazz music spread out to become a recognized part of global culture. Few other cultural forms have been woven so intricately into the structure of feeling of so many cultures, and the stories of these immigrations and integrations are beginning to be told (Atkins, 2001; Jackson, 2003; Jones, 2001; Jordan, 2010; Ogren, 1989; Starr, 2004). In many cases, cultures made sense of jazz by using current changes in the music to think about continuity and discontinuity in the experience of everyday life. Yet narratives must have beginnings in order to make sense of the present. Any story of jazz needs an origin myth as its foundation if the narrative is to make sense, and...