

I really appreciate PBS (UNC TV) here in North Carolina. On cable we have several PBS channels and my favorite is UNC EX. A couple of months ago, I saw that they were playing the series Ken Burns Jazz. I only miss 2 episodes. I watched or DVR'ed the episodes each Saturday night. I really enjoyed the series and it gave me a much more full picture of this American art form.

Music has always been a large part of my life. I grew up singing in children's choir. At home we listened to many different types of music. I played in the band in school (6th - my junior year at Elon). As the years went along I was introduced to many different styles of music and I learned to appreciate them. The musicians who most impressed me are the ones who write and perform their own music. In my mind there are two basic types of people in the music world. Those who play for the fame and those who play for the love of the music. Most artists will struggle back and forth with these two areas. I tend to gravitate to those who are playing and singing with a purpose that is not self centered. I particularly appreciate those who do see the talents they have been given as a gift from God and seek to honor Him with them. I often lament looking at artists who are extremely gifted and in my view waste it raging against God or direct it towards building themselves up.

Well that is enough ranting for now. I have a broad taste in styles of music and a big digital library. I can be listening to Alison Kraus & Union Station or Lady Antebellum or Darius Rucker and then go to Michael Kamen or James Newton Howard or John Williams. I can go from Chris Tomlin or Matt Redman or Robin Mark to Darin Leon or Israel Kamakawiwo'ole or Jake Shimabukuro. I go through phases where one album is on repeat for days or where I'm going through several playlists at work.

I got into jazz later in my life. I got into it from enjoying the history, stories, and music of the World War II era. I have a huge respect for my grandparents' generation and what they went through. In soaking all that in I developed a love for big band and swing music. Later in college a good friend of mine (Rob Mancuso) along with others told me about other Jazz artists and I was able to hear more because of the Elon Jazz Band "The Emanons." Years later when I started working where I do now I learned about more artists. I also caught bits and pieces of the Jazz series and started collecting some music.

It was so nice to be able to sit down and watch the series and get a better picture of the art form. It made me appreciate the artists I knew and get to know more. Jazz is a purely American art form that draws in the influences from all over the world. It takes those influences and shapes them into something new and pure. Yes there are many schools of Jazz and I enjoy some over others but now I can appreciate the place each has in the art form. It is an art form that was built in large part by the African-American community. But

the beauty of it is by it's nature it broke down walls of segregation. It drew black, white, Latino, and more together. Each brought something new to the session and all benefited. In a world that was divided it brought unity. Musicians fought to have the same rights in society regardless of color. They were brothers in the music. But it took a long time and a lot of fighting to make a change. They you had the backlash as segregation where people wanted to divide in music because of color and the art of Jazz suffered. Those fences are being mended. The struggle of every facet of American life has been and will continue to be reflected in Jazz.

I'm so glad for the work of Ken Burns and his staff. They bring such passion and enlightenment to each project they do. I'm so glad that I got to learn more and grow more thanks to watching the Jazz series. I encourage you to check it out.

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