

The Anatomy of the South African Jazz Appreciation Societies

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ABSTRACT This paper dwells, in the main, on jazz appreciation societies in urbanised South Africa; particularly their origin, role and meaning. On the continent of Africa, South Africa stands out as the country that has a globally recognised jazz tradition and that the tradition is linked to the origins of jazz in the United States of America, which dates back to the early 1900. Yet South Africa jazz has seen different styles come and go, creating a strong tradition of listening to jazz by fashionable audiences who gather on weekends, traditionally Sundays, to listen to their beloved jazz recordings. This ritual is accompanied by specific dress codes, intriguing city language and improvised dance styles. Mostly, not musicians themselves, these people have kindled the jazz tradition throughout times when commercialism has threatened, and continues to threaten the very existence of the art. Drawing from jazz interviews with appreciation society members and jazz radio programme anchors in Gauteng area of South Africa, the study documents the jazz appreciation society phenomenon.