

I received this message below from a fellow jazz fan. I thought it is interesting enough to share and make us all think a little. Sometimes jazz fans are the music's own enemies.

Geoff Roach
Executive Director - San Jose Jazz

Text of the message follows. The author is Pat Cooke - a bassist and New Orleans native who is now in his mid 80s and still actively performing.

Subject: Re: The "Trad Poice"

Here goes....I read the "bees in my bonnet," and kept silent. After reading Ken Dryden's comments, I have to say I agree with Ken. As you know, I was born and raised in New Orleans and enjoyed playing dixieland for many years, and still do; but one thing about a few of its devotees, a group which I call the "trad police," really give me a pain. They are always reciting their version of "the rules". You have to use certain instrumentation, and you must play like someone who has been dead for at least 50 years, with no amplification, etc, ad infinitum. This is in part an attempt at showing that they are one of the elite, and knowledgeable of all the fine points, even though they all do not necessarily agree with each other.

In other forms of jazz (yes Virginia, there are other forms of jazz), there doesn't seem to be this cadre of 'experts' to tell you about all the 'rules' you are breaking. In other forms of jazz, they all seem to allow you the latitude to be a little creative, and I believe creativity to be the very soul of jazz. If creativity is stifled, you cannot with any honesty call the performance jazz.

I don't tell the horn players or any one else how to play, and I resent it when someone who is not a bass player tells me how to play bass, or what kind of equipment I should be using, or not using. I played bass back when there were no amplifiers, and had to cut through a full brass section plus a heavy drummer with sheer strength. I welcome the amplifier, and so do my fingers. I wouldn't play without it.

BTW, if amplifiers had been available, the "old masters" would have used them..

Pat Cooke

Norman Vickers writes: Thanks, Pat, for your contribution. It has been my observation that the Jazz Societies which were most rigid about what forms of music were acceptable for performance were the ones which gradually dwindled into extinction. There has to be some "progress." Both listeners and most musicians crave innovation.