

First Public Jazz Event in the GDR (June 11, 1956)

Abstract

In the 1950s, the jazz debate in East Germany shifted and became focused on the difference between “authentic” and “commercial” or “false” jazz. At first, jazz was fundamentally rejected by the GDR regime; starting in the mid-1950s, however, organizations such as the Free German Youth availed themselves of the authenticity argument in order to sanction jazz and to use it to attract new members. On July 11, 1956, the first public jazz event was held in the GDR in East Berlin; in addition to East German citizens, musicians and guests from the West also took part. The official caption by the GDR news agency ADN reads: “The discussion about jazz, the true and the false, has ruffled feathers in the democratic press and in youth forums. In order to clarify contentious issues, the group Jazz Berlin has organized a jazz evening on July 11, 1956, in the Culture Hall of the Ministry for Post and Telecommunications in Berlin. Jazz lovers from the democratic sector and from West Berlin were among the performers and listeners at this event. In the picture: saxophones sound off in jazz rhythms. Benny Mämpel (right) and Horst Deutschendorf with their tenor saxophones.”

Source



Source: Photo: Reuel / Zentralbild. © Bundesarchiv Bild 183-38956-0002

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