
Subject: Re: Starbucks

Posted by [lon](#) on Tue, 11 Oct 2005 04:25:26 GMT

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Unfortunately internet chats do not lend to these longer forms. what I usually do is break up a message like this and write it as a conversation. They get complex very fast. I think every music can be 'cultural iconographic art.' And Blues is the icon of what? If the reply as I would suspect is of the slave condition, then Jump and Swing would be the icon of freedom. Thinking ahead to what might happen in New Orleans I heard a funny remark which may belong in the context of reconstruction: the phrase I heard was, "Even the old stuff is new." Meaning that a recreation and gentrification of the area would only benefit those who experience the icon rather than the reality. I remember a few years ago, one of the best programs on the public radio here was from the state capitol. It was called "Downhome Dairyland" by Rick March. It was about Polka music. It was about how one area had different styles than the other based on the ethnicity of the population. It was about how the Germans brought polka to Texas where it became Conjunto. And it was even about an ethnic presentation of polka where Hispanic and German bands took the same stage at a national event in Washington DC. But when I mentioned this to anyone they thought it was silly and frivolous because it was, you know, polka: no class ethnic music with silly lyrics about the jilted lover telling his sweetheart to jump off a bridge. That is the "Jump off The Bridge Polka" BTW. I suppose there is an equivalent in the blues world for such a sentiment. But the iconography is all different. And I find it most odd that white people of a certain age are the ones who have become guardians of the style. Guardians of the Style is a phrase specifically applied to barbershop harmony. The Hi-los _sound_ like barbershop to some people, but they are not guardians of the style like groups such as The Sweet Adelines and Excaliber. In the case of these blues aficionados or cognoscenti the authenticity of the tragic rarely makes way for the joy and freedom in more upbeat expressions. Bedroom jazz falls into a similar category: people of my age admire the likes of Miles Davis and Dave Brubeck over Maynard Ferguson or Ted Heath because they fit their idea of what jazz is: bedroom or seduction music. Something that 'goes better with coke' to borrow the borrowed phrase from Gil Scott Heron. So in the iconographic sense blues = tragic = serious. But OTOH Swing = joyous = silly. I just happen to be serious about my swing and jump blues. I'll venture, though I cannot give proof, that swing and big band music in its complexity is, in that complexity, a higher art form. Stan Kenton always maintained this as a fact. Finally, I have been most puzzled by music education for young people. In their school bands they are taught the big band classics. Yet when they leave school, they have virtually no place to practice the skills learned except in the few bands that tour and as studio musicians. To me, this is a tragic loss. Something similar happens in Drum Corps: the joy and exultation in playing as a unit is lost nearly as soon as it has been experienced. If you think I'm getting off track, the common thread here is joy in the music-- happy music-- to put it simply. That is the icon I want to portray.
