

Jazz Music in the Cultural Cold War

Relevant to

Modules on the Cold War, USSR, and USA in the mid-twentieth century

Background

The Cold War saw two political blocs around the USA and USSR face off against one another. The Cold War did not only have political, economic and military dimensions, though: the cultural arena was another realm in which the conflict played out. Dr Iain Stewart examines how jazz music was leveraged by the different parties at different points in the Cold War for different purposes.

Watch Dr Iain Stewart's introductory lecture (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1Ra-dpFL1M>) and download the PDF containing primary source extracts.

Questions to think about

- When did the government of the USSR endorse jazz, and when was it banned – and why?
- How did jazz fans in the early Cold War period get hold of jazz music, and what might it have meant to them?
- Why did the US government think that jazz music was a powerful tool to promote America?
- How does studying the cultural Cold War change what we think about the Cold War generally?
- How did jazz musicians feel about participating in promotional tours to the US in the Cold War era?

Further resources

[The Jazz Ambassadors of the Cold War](#), a radio programme on the role of jazz musician in American cultural diplomacy during the Cold War.

[Wind of Change](#), a podcast about popular music and the cultural cold war during the 1980s.

Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War by Frances Stonor Saunders is an enjoyable popular history book on the cultural Cold War. Available in paperback.