

Texas Music History Overview

Narrator: Roots of Texas music run deep.

N: Although many iconic musicians have emerged from the Lone Star State, the real treasure of Texas music is in its diversity and development.

N: Texas has long been a cross roads for a wide variety of different cultures and music of this dynamic and diverse society reflects a distinct and rich heritage.

N: From Cajun to conjunto, blues to western swing, the music of Texas and the Southwest provides a window into the traditions and history of past generations.

(Music playing)

N: Music has been a part of the story of Texas since the first humans set foot in the region.

N: Native tribes, including the Caddos of East Texas and the Karankawas of the Gulf Coast, have left archaeological evidence of a musical tradition that was heavily percussive but also included primitive wind instruments.

N: Texas-based tribes, such as the Kickapoo, Tigua, and Alabama-Coushatta, continue to celebrate their culture through music to this day.

N: When Spanish conquistadors claimed the region as New Spain, they brought new music traditions to the region, including those of the Muslim African Moors, who had occupied Spain for centuries, as well as those of the African slaves that the Spanish had brought.

N: When Spain took over the French owned Louisiana colony, cultural traditions mingled further.

N: By the early part of the eighteenth century, a unique mix of Spanish, French, African, Arabic, and Native American cultures was present in Texas.

N: In the early nineteenth century, Spain began encouraging Americans to settle in the region by offering land grants.

N: After Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1821, Americans such as Stephen F. Austin settled in the region, eventually declaring the independence of Texas from Mexico.

N: These political changes had a profound impact of the cultural diversity of the region as a flood of immigrants including Germans, Czech, Polish, and French arrived.

(Music playing)

N: The intermingling of cultures introduced a very important element to the development of Texas music, the accordion.

N: Present in the folk traditions of these European immigrants, the accordion was adopted by the local Mexican population, and it remains an important part of Texas music.

(Music playing)

N: The music of Tejanos, or Texans of Mexican-Spanish descent, evolved into such genres Conjunto, which borrows heavily German polka tradition.

(Music playing)

N: Slavery was legal in Texas until 1863 and the fertile lands of East Texas attracted American plantation owners who brought their slaves.

N: The call and response of slave work songs found a place in black gospel music and provided a foundation for Texas blues.

(Music playing)

N: French settlers brought their own black slaves into neighboring Louisiana during the 1700s.

N: By the early 1900, many of the descendants of these French speaking blacks migrated into East Texas.

N: Their folk music, known as French la la, mixed with the blues of English-speaking blacks to form the unique and lively music known as zydeco.

(Music playing)

N: In the 1920s as jazz music was emerging, Texas had a thriving circuit of both black territory bands and white dance bands.

N: As these bands traveled and shared influences across Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and beyond, they contributed development of Kansas City swing and western swing, helping to introduce the electric guitar and the steel guitar in the process.

(Music playing)

N: During the Great Depression of the 1930s the iconic Texas cowboy leant his image and experience to a far-reaching phenomenon.

N: Hollywood's singing cowboy was a romantic, mythologized interpretation of a very eclectic legacy.

(Music playing)

N: The post World War II era saw the modernizing of existing genres such as zydeco, country, blues, jazz, and conjunto, and introduced new styles influenced by them, including R&B and honky tonk.

(Music playing)

N: When rock and roll exploded across the nation, Texas was at the heart of it.

(Music playing)

N: Today, Texans continue to draw upon the diverse musical traditions of the Lone Star state, even as they continue to expand upon them.

N: Texas music remains a dynamic and important reflection of our culture.

(Music playing)