

Women in Blues (and Jazz)



As the music recording industry and radio expanded in the early 20th century, allowing individual performers to reach widespread audiences, women found new opportunities. Their work opened doors to other women and, often, to racial and ethnic groups previously ignored by the mainstream. Answers these questions about women in jazz and blues.

1. In 1920, Mamie Smith, an African American singer, recorded "Crazy Blues" and opened up a new music market. What market was this?

- Blues records
- Race records
- Jazz records
- Cover records

2. In 1923, Bessie Smith (no relation to Mamie Smith) skyrocketed to fame as a blues singer with her recording of "Downhearted Blues." The song was written by:

- Bessie Smith
- Jazz musician Clarence Williams
- Jazz musicians Alberta Hunter and Lovie Austin
- Blues singer Ma Rainey

3. The first jazz song recorded by a woman may have been:

- Ella Fitzgerald's "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," recorded in 1938
- Marion Harris's "When I Hear That Jazz Band Play," recorded in 1917
- Mamie Smith's "It's Right Here for You," recorded in 1920
- Ethel Water's "Stormy Weather," recorded in 1933

4. Hattie McDaniel, a blues singer and one of the first African American women to sing on the radio, was also the first African American to:

- Win an Academy Award
- Appear in a film musical
- Perform on the radio together with a white singer
- Start her own record label

Sources:

Alexander, Scott. *The Red Hot Jazz Archive: A History of Jazz before 1930*. <http://www.redhotjazz.com/> (accessed October 1929, 2010).

<http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/quiz>