



Acoustic instruments 'antique' to young musicians.

## Carter sings blues over 'electric' jazz

MIDDLETOWN, Conn. (AP) — New sounds and new economics are infiltrating the world of jazz, and scat singer Betty Carter is concerned. "I wouldn't know what to tell my kid if he wanted to become a jazz musician today," the 52-year-old vocalist said in an interview before a performance at Wesleyan University. The traditional acoustical sound is being replaced by commercial, electronic music, she said.

Some of Carter's early experiences revolved around Detroit's Chapel Hill Baptist Church, where her father was choir director, "and that's where a lot of the singers started from," she said.

But her first associations with music came from high school in Detroit. "During assemblies, I was the student that the teachers would call on to cool the kids out before the big speeches came, to play the piano or sing."

In the 1940s, jazz was popularized in Detroit by such masters as Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach and Charlie Parker. Carter's favorite musician, Gillespie, did not like to employ women in his band, so she worked — tumultuously, at times — for Lionel Hampton.

Fame, which she says is not a measure of a jazz artist's worth, came late to Betty Carter, due partly to the fact that jazz "was born in the street more than anything else."

"Individualism was the most important thing," she said. "Why should I make money copying you? As far as blacks in show business were concerned, we would applaud because it was good, but you would never make any money singing like Sarah Vaughan."

The same is true for good young jazz musicians today, she said, but there's the rub. "It wasn't necessary in those days 25 years ago for me to have a hot record in order to get a job. I could get a job around the corner to practice."

"Now, a young musician has to have a hit record."

Carter believes that recording companies prefer to promote other types of music because jazz is not a mass-market success.

As a scat singer, she would, least of all, assert that the value of jazz is apparent to everyone. In fact, she acknowledges that most people today have been told what jazz is, rather than really experiencing it.

"They have been told, for instance, that **Joni Mitchell** did some things with Charlie Mingus; all of a sudden she was on the jazz list."

"I mean, that's insulting to the young kids because they're being deceived."

Carter formed her own record label after a mid-1960s bout with a record company that would not let her choose an arranger.

In addition, she said, young musicians have been raised on electronic instruments, "and electric instruments really lean toward the commercial market."

"I have come up in the acoustical world — the acoustical piano and the bass and the track drums, and that's like antique to some young musicians."

There are the defectors — "some real, honest-to-god jazz artists who defected to make commercial music, watering down the music, which again to me is deceiving young musicians."

"Time's just different," Carter added. "We shouldn't expect for it to stay the same and it's not going to stay the same."