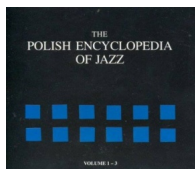


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After 1945, like the rest of the Eastern and Central Europe, Poland fell under the dominance of Stalinist Russia—and the Soviets certainly did not dig the swing!! Consequently, only certain musical forms were allowed to flourish, particularly those with folk rhythm, without syncopation. One tempo was prescribed for everybody and army marching bands rose in importance. The process of political and cultural oppression intensified after 1949 and jazz music was outlawed as the music of the enemy. In Stalinist Poland, jazz music was banned along with modern art, decent toilet paper and the right to travel abroad.

Thankfully, not everybody toed the party line. Young people in Poland with no taste for Russian recipes and political doctrines rediscovered jazz. Being banned and sometimes even persecuted, jazz went underground, or, as was said, into “the catacombs.” Jazz could only be played at private homes and private parties. Since the late 1940s, jazz has embraced the spirit of independence, nonconformity and cosmopolitanism in Poland.

One band came to dominate the hidden landscape of the Polish jazz scene. The name of this

Written by bluesever

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group was Melomani ("the Music Aficionados"). The ensemble was established in 1947 from among the hippest cats of the day. Many of them were students of the Lodz Film School, famous for establishing one of the leading European film movements and commonly referred to as the "Polish School." Musicians of the Melomani hung out at the Lodz YMCA, one of the few existing oases for nonconformists and independent thinkers in the Poland of late 1940s.

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