

Jazz is a music genre that started in the early 1900's or earlier, within the African-American communities of the Southern United States. It combines African rhythms and European harmony to create a new African American art form. It combines blues, improvisation, polyrhythms, syncopation and dance. Jazz also has elements from popular music especially, in its early days, from American popular music. As the music developed and spread around the world it has split into many styles: New Orleans jazz dating from the early 1910s, big band swing, Kansas City jazz and Gypsy jazz from the 1930s and 1940s, bebop from the mid-1940s on down through Afro-Cuban jazz, West Coast jazz, ska jazz, cool jazz, avant-garde jazz, soul jazz, Latin jazz in various forms, smooth jazz, jazz fusion and jazz rock, jazz funk, acid jazz, and other ways of playing the music.



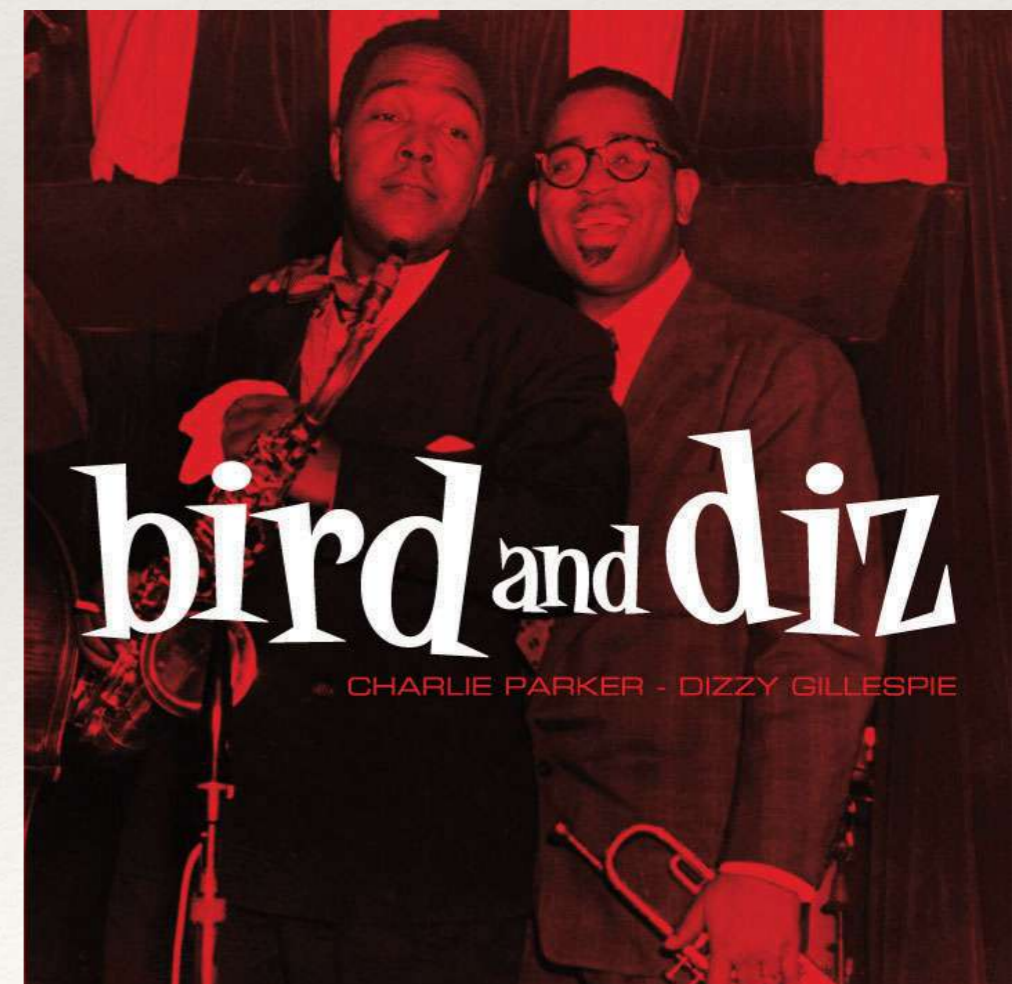
Louis Armstrong (1901-1971) was the greatest of all Jazz musicians. Armstrong defined what it was to play jazz. Like almost all early jazz musicians, Louis was from New Orleans. He was from a very poor family and was sent to reform school when he was twelve. He loved music and his favorite artist was Joe "King" Oliver. When he was older King Oliver gave him his first real cornet, and even gave him lessons. In 1922 Louis joined Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in Chicago. His playing in the band soon made him very well known. By 1925 he formed his own band, Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven. Their recordings are considered jazz classics and are some of the greatest of all time. Louis Armstrong would record and play music for the rest of his life. His influence on jazz and American culture makes him one of the most important American artists ever.



Duke Ellington was born April 29, 1899, in Washington, D.C. A major figure in the history of jazz music, his career lasted more than half a century, during which time he composed thousands of songs. He created one of the most famous sounds in music during the big band era and continued to play jazz until his death in 1974. Ellington's became popular in the 1940s when he composed several swing masterworks, including "Cotton Tail" and "Ko-Ko." Some of his most popular songs included "It Don't Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got That Swing," "Sophisticated Lady," "Prelude to a Kiss," "Take the A Train," and "Satin Doll." More than 12,000 people attended his funeral. He was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York City. He is considered the greatest American composer of all time.



Charlie Parker was one of the most important artists in jazz history. He created bebop in the 1940s which is a style of jazz. A legendary person in his own lifetime, he was looked up to by those who worked with him, and he inspired a generation of jazz performers and composers. Early in his career he got the nickname "Yardbird" which was later shortened to "Bird". The nickname inspired many titles for Charlie's Be-bop songs including Yardbird Suite and Ornithology, which means the 'study of birds'. Unfortunately, Charlie's long time use of drugs and alcohol which began when he was a teenager, ended his life in 1955 at the age of 34. When most musicians are enjoying their peak years as musical artists, Charlie Parker's life had ended. Still, he was one of the greatest jazz musicians that ever lived.



Miles Davis (1926-1991) is the most famous jazz trumpeter of all time, not to mention one of the most important musicians of the 20th century. His record debut came in 1946. Miles soon became a major figure of jazz. He changed the directions of jazz several times, recording albums such as "Birth Of The Cool" (1949) which started the cool-jazz era, "Milestones" (1953), "Kind Of Blue" (1959) which was the beginning of modal jazz, orchestral jazz masterpieces such as "Porgy And Bess" (1958) and "Sketches Of Spain" (1961)." He was the first jazz musician of the 1960's to use rock rhythms, and this changed both jazz and rock music forever. From the bebop jazz he first played with saxophonist Charlie Parker to the wah-wah sounds he played to keep up with Jimi Hendrix, Davis was one of the greatest musicians of all-time.



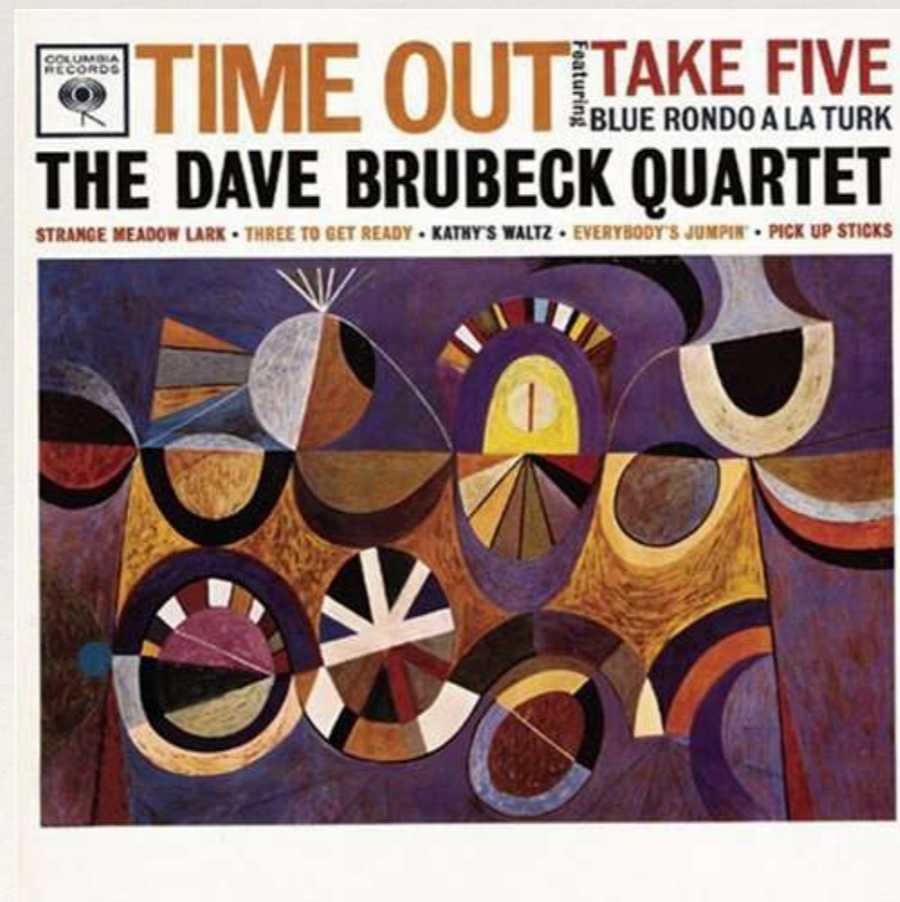
Thelonious Monk (1917 – 1982) was an American jazz pianist and composer. He is one of the greatest jazz musicians in American music. Monk had a unique piano style and wrote many jazz standards, including "Epistrophy", "Round Midnight", "Blue Monk", "Straight, No Chaser" and "Well, You Needn't". Monk is the second-most recorded jazz composer after Duke Ellington, even though he only wrote about 70.

His music has unusual harmonies and melodic twists. His style was not appreciated at first, but he is now thought to be one of the all time great figures in jazz.

He was known for his unique style in suits, hats and sunglasses. He was also known to stop, stand up from the keyboard and dance for a few moments before returning to the piano. He is one of five jazz musicians to have been featured on the cover of Time, after Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck, and Duke Ellington, and before Wynton Marsalis.



Dave Brubeck (1920 –2012) was an American jazz pianist and composer best known for helping create cool jazz. He wrote a number of jazz standards, including "In Your Own Sweet Way" and "The Duke". Brubeck used many styles in his music, reflecting his mother's attempts at classical training and his improvisational skills. His music is known for using unusual time signatures over different rhythms, meters, and tonalities. His long-time musical partner, alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, wrote the saxophone melody for the Dave Brubeck Quartet's best remembered piece, "Take Five", which is in 5/4 time and has endured as a jazz classic on one of the top-selling jazz albums, *Time Out*. He was also a respected composer of orchestral and sacred music, and wrote soundtracks for television such as *Mr. Broadway* and the animated miniseries *This Is America, Charlie Brown*.



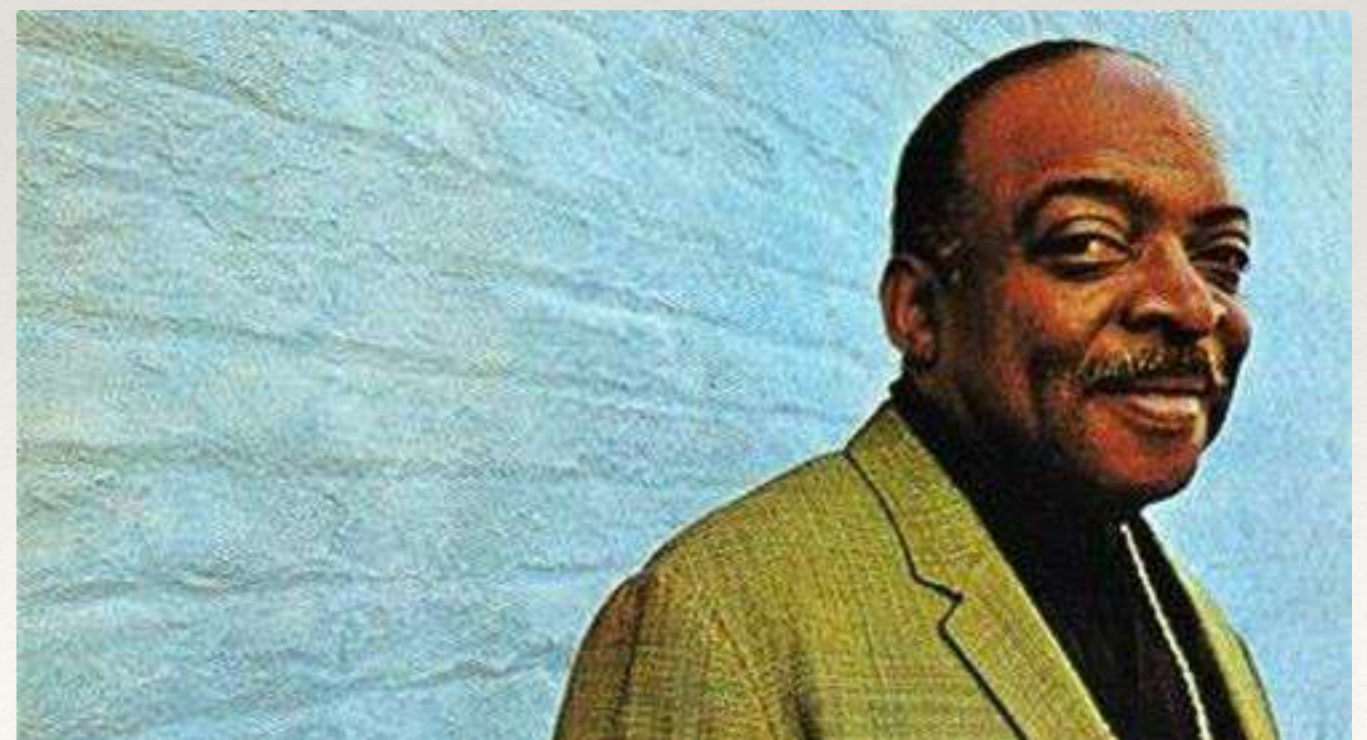
Charles Mingus (1922 – 1979) was a very famous American jazz bass player, composer and bandleader. Mingus's songs had the hot and soulful feel of hard bop and drew from black gospel music while sometimes drawing on elements of classical music. Mingus had his own brand of music that combined tradition with unique and unexplored types of jazz. He once said Duke Ellington and church was his main influences. Mingus focused on improvisation, like the old New Orleans jazz parades, paying special attention to how each band member worked with the group as a whole. In creating his bands, Mingus looked not only at the skills of the available musicians, but also their personalities. Many musicians passed through his bands and later went on to very good careers. He hired talented and sometimes little-known artists, whom he used to make unusual bands. As a performer, Mingus was a leader in double bass technique, widely recognized as one of the instrument's most greatest players.



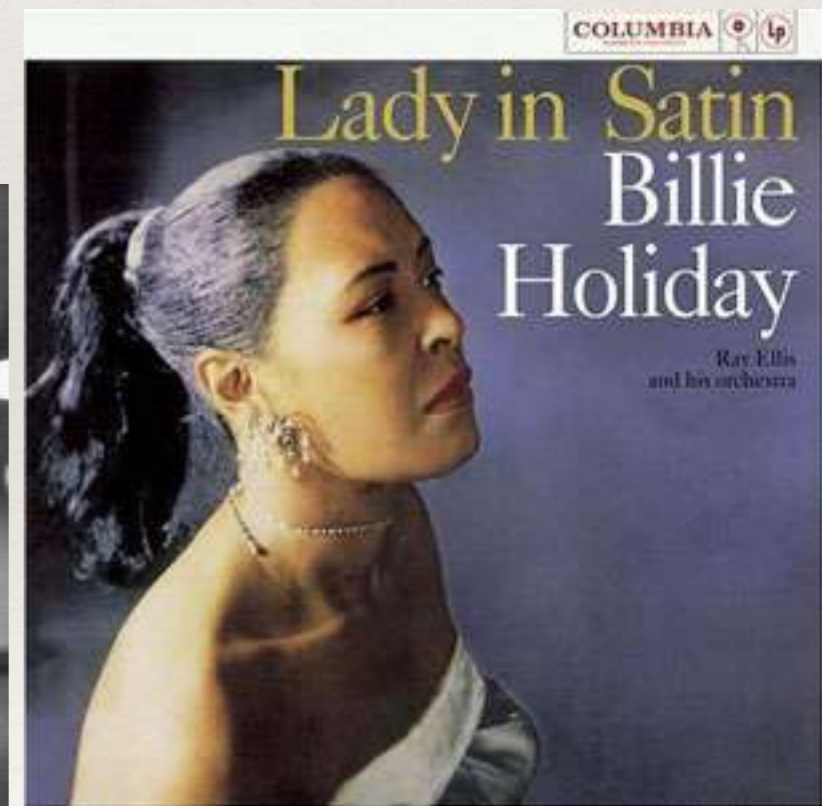
Even though he had a short career (he first came to notice as a sideman at age 29 in 1955, began a solo career at 33 in 1960, and was dead at 40 in 1967), saxophonist John Coltrane was among the most important figures in jazz. Coltrane's best works covered about 12 years from 1955–67. His melodic style, which started with his early career, can be heard on the Miles Davis-led albums recorded for Prestige and Columbia labels during the period of 1955 and 1956. Most of Coltrane's early solo albums are of a high quality, as 'Blue Train' (1957), which best shows his early hard bop style. Works such as 'Giant Steps' (1959) and 'My Favorite Things' (1960), are examples of his later work. Almost all the albums of Coltrane of the early 1960s are regarded as classics. His free jazz recording 'A Love Supreme' is considered one of the great pieces of music of all time.



Groundbreaking pianist, organist, composer and bandleader, Count Basie led one of the most successful bands in history. For 50 years the Count Basie Orchestra, an incredibly popular group of musicians who included players like Lester Young, Sweets Edison, Buck Clayton and Joe Williams, maintained a reputation of one of the most swingin' and hardhittin' bands in America. Winner of nine Grammy awards, Basie introduced multiple generations of listeners to the big band sound. He wrote numerous standards like "April in Paris" and "One O'Clock Jump," which, for years, have been covered by countless other artists. Basie is also remembered by his colleagues as being considerate, modest, relaxed and enthusiastic. Without Basie's crucial presence on the scene, popular and big band music would be drastically different, and undoubtedly less influential than it has become.



“Lady Day” was perhaps the most exceptional popular music singer of the 20th century. She wrote few songs, but when she sang, she took on a deep, personal and intimate approach. Her vocal style and intonation was inspired greatly by the sound of the instruments she heard and was filled with a profound intensity. In that manner, she developed a new style, incorporating the manipulation of phrasing and tempo. Her recording of the song “Strange Fruit” is considered one of the most important songs in history, because of its powerful theme and topic, and because of Holiday’s powerful performance. She received multiple posthumous Grammy Hall of Fame awards and Grammy Best Historic Album awards for her work. Although her delivery may have been somewhat thin and her range fairly limited, there is no doubt that her voice was more powerful than any at the time could have hoped to be.



Few can match the swingin' sounds of Goodman's Big Band. Benny Goodman, known as the "King of Swing," led one of the most popular bands of the early 20th century. His 1938 concert at Carnegie hall is considered to be one of the most important live shows in American music history, as it showcased jazz' coming to prominence as a respectable art form. Despite being a major player of big-band swing music, Goodman also helped the advancement of be-bop. Having a one of the first racially-integrated music groups and being a strong opposer of Jim Crow Laws, Goodman promoted racial-equality by not touring the Southern States. Goodman was both an important influence in popular and jazz music, as well as a prominent Civil Rights activist.



Django Reinhardt is often regarded as one of the greatest guitar players of all time and was the first important European jazz musician who made major contributions to the development of the genre. After his third and fourth fingers were paralyzed when he suffered burns in a fire, Reinhardt used only the index and middle fingers of his left hand on his solos and invented an entirely new style of jazz guitar technique (sometimes called 'hot' jazz guitar) that has since become a living musical tradition within French Gypsy culture. With violinist Stéphane Grappelli, he co-founded the Quintette du Hot Club de France, described by critic Thom Jurek as "one of the most original bands in the history of recorded jazz." [4] Reinhardt's most popular compositions have become jazz standards, including "Minor Swing", "Daphne", "Belleville", "Djangology", "Swing '42", and "Nuages".



American jazz trumpet player, singer, composer and bandleader, Dizzy Gillespie was very significant in the development of bebop and modern jazz. His trumpet playing influenced such players as Miles Davis, Clifford Brown and Fats Navarro. After spending time in Cuba and coming back to America, Gillespie also greatly helped in the advancement of Afro-Cuban Jazz. He was characterized by his horn rimmed glasses, bent trumpet and uniquely puffy cheeks when playing. A great improviser, Dizzy added a certain layer of harmonic complexity to his music, something previously unknown in jazz. Songs like "Salt Peanuts" and "Goovin' High" were very different, both harmonically and rhythmically, when compared with the sounds of his contemporaries. Remaining true to bebop his entire career, Gillespie is remembered as one of the most influential trumpet players in history.



Sonny Rollins was born in 1930 in Harlem to parents who had emigrated from the Virgin Islands. By the time he was 19, he had recorded with trombonist J.J. Johnson and pianist Bud Powell. Soon he was one of the most sought after saxophonists in New York, and could be heard playing with Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk. Rollins developed a bold melodic style. In the mid 1950s, influenced heavily by Charlie Parker, Rollins hit his stride as an artist. In 1956 he recorded two important albums: *Saxophone Colossus*, which features the tune "St. Thomas," and *Tenor Madness*, on whose title track, a driving blues, Rollins trades choruses with John Coltrane. By the end of the 1950s however, Rollins was feeling pressured by promoters, and frustrated by his own playing. In 1959 he took a break from gigging and recording, and devoted his time to practicing on the Williamsburg Bridge in New York City. When he returned to the music business in 1963, he named his comeback album *The Bridge*.

Since the 1960s, Rollins has maintained a steady performance career, and has firmly established himself as a jazz master who is still evolving, and still playing to packed houses.

