

***Jazz***  
FOR  
**DUMMIES®**  
2ND EDITION

**by Dirk Sutro**



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.



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## Jazz For Dummies®, 2nd Edition

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# Introduction

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**A**s you begin your journey in jazz, you become a member of an enlightened group. It's not quite a cult, but it's a devoted group that inspires a loyalty and dedication that many people don't understand.

Jazz is more than 100 years old and has undergone many changes. It has never been music for the masses and has probably, with time, become *more* obscure — more complex and less accessible. Jazz is a deep and amazing art form that's yet to find its rightful place alongside classical music or modern art. Many people are wary of jazz, yet most people fall in love on their first date with it. They only need the right kind of introduction.

When big-band jazz and ballroom swing dancing faded in the years after World War II, jazz began to change. It began to move out of clubs and into concert halls. As the ranks of jazz clubs thinned, college jazz programs became the training grounds of new players, moving the music away from everyday experience and everyday people. Today, school children seldom hear jazz or learn about it, let alone play it. And radio has all but abandoned the music it popularized during the '30s and '40s.

Yet jazz survives among hardcore fans who have the patience to find it in music stores, online, and at live venues. Because the music is so emotionally powerful, anyone can connect with it, without knowing much about it. Trumpeter and bandleader Louis Armstrong can make you laugh; saxophonist Charlie Parker can shoot an electrical jolt up your spine; and vocalist Billie Holiday can make you cry — even if you don't know what key the music's in, whether the artists are improvising, or even what makes jazz, well, *jazz*.

## *About This Book*

The purpose of this book is to give your brain just enough information so you can find the jazz you like, and then let it connect with your heart. Jazz can be extremely complicated, but I do my best to explain the complications and give you insight into jazz's more important concepts. You uncover just enough history and theory to get a feel for jazz and begin to appreciate and understand its major movements and musicians.

This book is written for those of you who aren't experts but who want to feel the jazz groove and enjoy a lifelong love affair with this original American music. This book is also detailed enough, though, that those jazz fanatics can find new and useful information.

There isn't a right or wrong way to use this book. Read it right through from front to back, stopping whenever you feel the urge to buy a new CD or musical download; spend a little more time and find out about a style of jazz or a musician in more depth. Browse the Table of Contents and choose whatever strikes your fancy — Louis Armstrong? Cool jazz? Austin, Texas', jazz scene? Or go the random route: Flop the book open and see what you find.

Each chapter is somewhat self-contained. If you've heard about Charlie "Bird" Parker and you want to get to him right away, for example, you can go straight to Chapter 7, where you can find some bio information as well as details on Bird's part in the jazz of his era and some of his best recordings. Every few pages there's a list or a sidebar waiting for you like a bite-size bar of good chocolate.

By presenting the information in short sections, with clear headings and useful icons, I've made it so that you can use the book any way you like. If you're the organized, dedicated type, by all means park yourself in a comfortable place, begin at the beginning, and read through in order. But if you're impatient like me and you want to hear some great music today, thumb through, find a page that interests you, read a few paragraphs, and start building your music collection.

*Jazz For Dummies*, 2nd Edition, builds on the basics that give you enough information to know why each musician is important and enough to know whether you're interested in knowing more. The rest is up to you.

## Conventions Used in This Book

So you can steer your way through the world of jazz, I use a few conventions:

- ✔ If I mention a song, I put it in quotes — for example, "Mary Had a Little Lamb." If I mention a CD title, it's in italics with the label following in parentheses like this: *Mother Goose's Greatest Nursery Hits* (Singing Goose).
- ✔ I also use *italics* to point out defined terms or to emphasize a word.
- ✔ **Boldface** text indicates key words in bulleted lists.
- ✔ `Monofont` highlights Web addresses and e-mail addresses.

When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, rest assured that I haven't put in any extra characters (such as hyphens) to indicate the break. So, when using one of these Web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist.

## *What You're Not to Read*

I include a number of sidebars throughout this book; they're the shaded gray boxes. They're chock-full of fun and interesting information about jazz, but you don't have to read them if you don't want to.

## *Foolish Assumptions*

Because you're reading this book, I've made the following assumptions about you:

- ✔ You're a newcomer interested in understanding and appreciating jazz.
- ✔ You're a music student interested in playing jazz or a musician who wants to find out more about jazz.
- ✔ You already love some music such as blues, funk, Latin, rock, or soul that connects with jazz somewhere along the line.
- ✔ You're a busy person who wants to get a lot of information in a short time — so you might not read this book through from cover to cover.
- ✔ You're a curious and self-motivated person eager to expand your knowledge and enjoyment of music, and you may do additional research beyond this book.

## *How This Book Is Organized*

No matter what sort of reader you are, this book's basic structure is logical and user friendly.

### *Part I: All That Jazz: A Tour of the Basics*

Part I lays out the basic building blocks of jazz: its origins, essential elements (such as swing and improvisation), structural principles, and instruments. What makes jazz *jazz*? When you get through Part I, you should have the answer to that question.

## ***Part II: Jazz Greats and Great Jazz: An Evolutionary Riff***

Part II traces the story of jazz from Africa to popular jazz meccas like New Orleans, Chicago, Kansas City, New York, California, and other stops along the way. Like any good story, this one features colorful characters: Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman, and many more of the amazing artists who propelled jazz forward at every stage in its evolution.

## ***Part III: The Beat Goes On: Jazz Appreciation 101***

Part III is a practical guide to experiencing jazz in the real world. Discover how jazz permeates popular culture from Hollywood versions of the music and musicians to its impact on advertising, fashion, and film. In Part III, you also determine how to throw a successful jazz dinner party, spend a night on the town searching out great jazz clubs and concerts, and splurge on a weekend of jazz festivals around the country.

## ***Part IV: I Like the Way You Play: The Jazz Musician***

Part IV acknowledges the fact that there are legions of you out there who want to play jazz, but you're afraid or don't know where to start. Whether you're 15 or 55 years old, it's not as hard as you think to starting playing music, so here's how to go from crawling to walking to running, as fast as you can. I give you advice on how to start playing and how to join a band, and I also give you the lowdown on technology's impact on recording jazz.

## ***Part V: The Part of Tens***

Part V features important highlights in friendly groups of ten: great cities to experience jazz and tips for building and enjoying your collection. If you like to read in short bursts, begin in this part of this book.

## Part VI: Appendixes

Part VI covers a wide range of information to help you dive even more deeply into jazz. You find more than 100 recommended records to check out, a few trustworthy jazz labels, and jazz resources such as books, magazines, movies, and Web sites.

## Icons Used in This Book

This book uses a series of icons to point you to specific kinds of useful or interesting information. Here's a list:



The use of this icon is where I take the liberty of recommending a personal favorite song, CD, event, and so on. These instances may not always be part of every critic's list, but they're the baaaddest (that's a good thing) jazz around, in Yours Truly's opinion.



If there's anything anywhere you should remember, I point it out with this icon.



This icon highlights a description of the key characteristics of a particular player's sound. Eventually, with some listening and perhaps a little reading, you should be able to identify several players after hearing a few seconds of their music.



The tip icon points out exactly what you may think it does: a tip. In a few places, I offer a bit of advice for collecting, finding a good place to hear live jazz, and so on. This icon points you to these bits of wisdom.

## Where to Go from Here

In your hands, you're holding almost 400 pages worth of jazz. How do you get started? If you're reading this intro, that's a good place to start, but you also get a quick overview by reading Chapter 1 and any chapter in the middle that interests you. Or, if you want to start collecting and listening to music right away, turn to Appendix A. You might already have a favorite player such as Miles Davis or Charlie Parker. You can start with their short biographies and lists of suggested CDs. Another option: Start with a style you've already heard, such as swing or bebop. But if you want a thrill, dive into free jazz. It might feel a little like bungee-jumping!

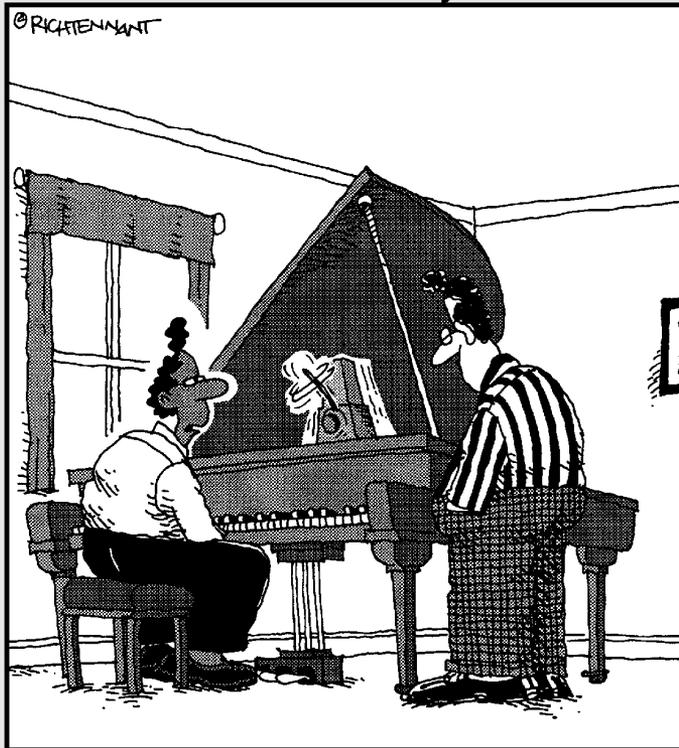
This isn't a high school class, and you won't be tested. Don't get hung up trying to remember names, dates, spellings, and modes. Music is for listening. Jazz is best appreciated by putting on headphones and playing a CD with your eyes closed, or hitting your local club for a taste of the real live deal. If there's one piece of advice I can give you, it's this: Get into listening right away. Go down to your favorite music store or onto your favorite music Web site and start your collection.

I hope this book marks the beginning of a new love life full of warm fuzzies — those moments when you're listening to a tune and something about it gives you goose bumps and time seems to stand still.

# Part I

# All That Jazz: A Tour of the Basics

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave By Rich Tennant



“It’s a jazz metronome. It’s like a regular metronome except it takes a 32-bar solo during each practice session.”

## *In this part . . .*

**p**lunging into jazz isn't as difficult as you may think. The music is challenging and complex, but it's also emotional and personal, which makes it easy for you to connect with. Make friends with loveable characters like Louis Armstrong and Miles Davis, who lead you into jazz as you get to know their personalities and recordings. In this part, I explain the basic traits of jazz and take you back to jazz's beginnings. I also provide some basic music history and theory. Then you take a look at jazz's essential instruments and find out what parts they play. When you're done, you're ready to dive into a larger pool of music and musicians.

# Chapter 1

## In the Beginning: Entering the World of Jazz

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Surveying jazz's traits and roots
  - ▶ Knowing some elements of jazz theory
  - ▶ Looking at jazz's instruments
  - ▶ Traveling through jazz history
  - ▶ Growing into a jazz fan
  - ▶ Becoming a jazz musician
- 

**Y**ou may not own many jazz CDs now, and you may not think you know anything about jazz. Yet the music is such a part of the American experience that it creeps in from the periphery through radio, film, television, and live performances you come across by accident, through friends who unexpectedly have jazz playing in their homes, and, these days, via hundreds of Web sites.

In the pages ahead, you dive deep into the music. In this chapter, I describe the lay of the land of jazz, giving you details that point you in different directions, and you visit the beginnings of jazz and the theory behind the music. You also take a trip through the land of instruments — how does jazz get its sound? On your journey to becoming a fan, you meet the great players and discover a bit about playing jazz yourself. By the time your travels come to an end in this chapter, you may know which styles and periods of jazz you want to visit first in the rest of the book.

### *Delving into Jazz's Characteristics and Roots*



Most likely, you know jazz when you hear it, but you may not be able to describe it. Jazz's signature traits include improvisation, individual voices, swing, and syncopation.

- ✔ *Improvisation* is when a jazz musician invents what he plays — often gathering inspiration from the melody or chords of a song but sometimes creating completely from scratch.
- ✔ *Individual voices* combine quantity of notes, phrasing, speed, tone, and subtleties such as bending strings on a guitar or varieties of breathing on a horn.
- ✔ *Swing* refers to jazz's relentless forward momentum, a beat that makes you want to move or dance or pound your hands on a table.

## How I fell in love with jazz

My relationship with jazz began in ninth grade with Dave Brubeck, as I learned to pound out those strange 5/4 patterns on the drum set I chose because Ringo Starr had one. It was my first experience with music different than and more challenging than four-beats-to-the-bar rock and pop. Now I had to count in fives. 1-2-3-4-5. As I pumped that basic beat out on bass drum, I learned how to split my brain so my hands could move in separate syncopated patterns. It wasn't easy, but I learned how to do it before I learned how to juggle three tennis balls.

But it wasn't until high school when I really fell in love with jazz, and the object of my affection was Miles Davis. Given the rock and roll context of my stadium concert teen years, Miles was the logical place to begin, with funky beats and electric guitars and a horn filtered through loud electronic effects.

In between these experiences, I was touched by jazz in other random ways that fit the music's bigger picture now but didn't then because I couldn't see it.

- ✔ My good friend and jazz jam partner took lessons from a cool black pianist named Wilbur Barranco. At the time, mostly what I knew about him was that he told my friend to “watch the little finger” — meaning that even the pinkie must play its part on the piano. In

recent years, I found his name in small type on records he made with Charlie Parker.

- ✔ In high school, I briefly dated a girl who knew a guy who played in a big band led by a trumpeter named Maynard Ferguson. From photos I knew he had a big shock of white hair, and from television knew he was flamboyant and could hit amazingly high notes. Later, I learned he was part of a big band continuum that began in the swing era.
- ✔ One night before I could drive, my mom dropped me off at a jazz festival in Berkeley, California, at the open-air Greek Theatre. I remember an excited guy in the audience chanting, “John Coltrane, John Coltrane, John Coltrane, John Coltrane . . .” It didn't mean anything to me at the time, but it stayed in my head, and today, I realize that the concert took place only two or three years after the great saxophonist's death, so I was present when Coltrane's memory was alive and many fans had first-hand experience of his music. From that moment I began to realize that jazz and its fans were a special group, tightly bonded by the music, and that listening to live jazz could become a sort of spiritual experience. Jazz's mix of musical sophistication and emotional intensity is what keeps me in love with the music.

- ✓ *Syncopation* is the way jazz musicians place notes and accents before and after the beat in ways that emphasize the beat and keep it moving. Syncopation is what makes jazz sound so different from the more regular rhythms of classical or pop music.

Sometimes one of these elements is more prevalent than the others, or a key element is entirely absent. One rule about jazz is that there aren't many rules. However, whether you listen to Louis Armstrong's early music, Benny Goodman's swing band, Charlie Parker's bebop, Miles Davis's cool jazz, or John Coltrane's spiritual flights, you can usually find these key ingredients. (I cover all these folks in Part II.)

So now you may be wondering: How exactly did jazz begin? It's a complicated story with many footnotes, but jazz was born in New Orleans around the turn of the 20th century when African Americans started mixing their culture with European instruments and elements of classical music. Elemental rhythms and soulful vocals, as well as all manner of drums and instruments including horns and pre-banjoes, came straight out of Africa. Blues that originated among slaves and gospel from black churches were two other key ingredients. From Europe came Adolphe Sax's invention (guess which instrument he created?) and other brass instruments, as well as pianos that were a part of many low- and middle-income households and classical music that was a part of one's education in certain circles.

Chapter 2 is full of additional information on the traits and roots of jazz.

## *Getting the Lowdown on Jazz Theory*

Good jazz hits you at an emotional level, but it's also technically complex and challenging music. Many jazz tunes use either the 12-measure structure of blues, or the 32-measure structure of popular songs. Knowing how these structures work, as well as a little about the rhythms that propel good jazz, and the ways in which jazz musicians improvise, helps you gain a deeper appreciation of the music. (I cover jazz theory in Chapter 3.)

## *Familiarizing Yourself with the Instruments of Jazz*



Although any instrument can be used to play jazz, some instruments on which new styles of jazz were invented include the following: basses, drums, pianos, trumpets, and saxophones. Every one of these instruments has its heroes in every era, and that's because these instruments are best suited to the roles required in jazz.

- ✓ *Basses, drums, and pianos* come together as rhythm sections that propel the music. Pianists can also play chords and melodies.
- ✓ *Trumpets and saxophones* carry melodies or improvise with a sound that easily carries over the band. The sound of these horns sometimes resembles the sound of a human voice, which is probably one reason why these instruments convey emotions most effectively.

Head to Chapter 4 for details about these instruments and a few others used in jazz, such as trombones, clarinets, flutes, guitars, vibraphones, and organs.

## Meeting Jazz Greats throughout History



Hundreds of musicians make up the history of jazz, but a handful of talented players stand out as essential innovators at key turning points. By following this line of musicians, you can fill in the rest of the music's history around them:

- ✓ **Louis Armstrong:** He was the hero of New Orleans jazz and made jazz's first important recordings in New Orleans in the '20s.
- ✓ **Benny Goodman:** Goodman was an icon of big band swing in the 1930s — a great clarinetist and leader and one of the first to feature black and white musicians together in a popular jazz ensemble.
- ✓ **Duke Ellington:** As a leader in the 1930s, he took the art of the big band to new heights with his composing and arranging, and he was a phenomenal pianist who made important recordings with musicians ranging from bassist Jimmy Blanton to avant garde saxophonist John Coltrane.
- ✓ **Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker:** These two men were players primarily responsible for inventing bebop — a form of speedy, mostly improvised jazz — in the 1940s.
- ✓ **Miles Davis:** Davis played an important part in several styles of jazz beginning with bebop in the 1940s and continuing through laidback cool jazz, electric jazz, jazz rock, and synthesized jazz. His interpretations of compositions such as Gershwin's *Porgy & Bess* and dozens of popular songs set a high standard for soloists.
- ✓ **John Coltrane:** In the 1960s, Coltrane opened the door to free improvisation and influences from around the world.
- ✓ **Ornette Coleman:** He took improvisation in the 1960s to the edge of the jazz universe.

And jazz continued to flourish beyond the 1960s. The '70s brought more electric jazz, as pianists Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock experimented with synthesizers, Miles Davis assimilated funk, rock, and soul; and the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians in Chicago gave freely improvised music a rallying point.

Meanwhile, Latin music had a significant impact on jazz beginning with Jelly Roll Morton's "Spanish tinge," continuing with Dizzy Gillespie's use of Latin rhythms, and the emergence of Latin jazz giants like Tito Puente.

In recent years, jazz musicians collaborated with all sorts of players from other genres. For example:

- ✔ Dave Brubeck performed with symphony orchestras.
- ✔ Saxophonist Joshua Redman performed with the Rolling Stones.
- ✔ Herbie Hancock recorded with rock stars Carlos Santana and Sting.

Dozens of original artists over the years have contributed masterful music, from Bix Beiderbecke to Lester Young, and musicians whose names cover the entire middle of the alphabet. In Part II, I provide you with a brief history of jazz from its humble beginnings to the exciting artists of today.



Jazz can't be divided into neatly defined periods. While distinct styles emerged in certain eras, many musicians crossed from one era into the next, radically redefining their approach. Players in the forefront include Miles Davis and Coleman Hawkins. In every style of jazz, you can usually hear elements from earlier eras. Also, remember that the history I provide is only a simple abstraction of what really happened. For almost every example, there's a counter example. Still, a basic history gives you a framework for understanding the music, whether everyone agrees on the parts of the frame.

## *Becoming a Fan*

Jazz has rules and theories, but the best jazz is music that hits you at a gut level. If you haven't heard much jazz but you're a patient fan of music, all you need to do is spend an hour listening to any of jazz's hundreds of important recordings. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to connect with Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, or Betty Carter. All it takes is a willingness to listen and withholding judgment until the music gets inside your head.

In Part III of this book, I give you tips on appreciating jazz to its fullest:

- ✔ Chapter 11 has details on recognizing how jazz has seeped into popular culture, from films and advertising to fashion, literature, and beyond.
- ✔ I help you throw a jazzy dinner party in Chapter 12, with advice on décor, playlists, jazz talk, and more.
- ✔ There's nothing quite like a live jazz concert; in Chapter 13, I give you a survival guide for attending shows in clubs and concert halls.
- ✔ Ready to hit the road? Chapter 14 is full of facts on jazz festivals in the United States and around the world.



Although reading a book like this may help you decide what kind of jazz you like, how to build a collection, and where to hear live jazz, becoming a fan is largely a personal journey guided by your own intuitions and tastes. That's the beauty of jazz. There's something for everyone.

## *Playing Your Heart Out*

If you develop a passion for jazz or even an obsession, you may want to start playing it. Listening to some of the greats makes that idea seem intimidating, but after you select an instrument, take some lessons, and practice. You can begin playing a simple blues-based jazz song within weeks. If the bug hits hard enough, you may be surprised what you can do after a year. Check out Chapter 15 for plenty of handy advice for aspiring jazz musicians, such as selecting an instrument, finding a teacher, and studying music in college.

Chapter 16 is the place to go if you want to take your musicianship to the next level: joining an established band or starting your own. I give you tips on recruiting members, being a respected leader, playing well with others, and selecting music to play. I also show you how to publicize your band, land cool gigs, prepare for a performance, and hit the road with minimum hassle.



Eventually, you may find yourself acquiring more CDs and audio equipment and adding shelves to house your jazz collection, and you may even decide to install a home studio where you can play and record your own music. There's nothing like the feeling of making music yourself with a few friends. It's one thing to listen; it's quite another to play and to feel the music actually flowing through your body, into your instrument, and out into the world.

Thanks to affordable digital recording and easy distribution via the Internet, today's jazz musicians can pursue individual styles and make a living without having to sell millions of CDs. Many successful players today play gigs, sell CDs and books online, and send newsletters to their growing personal mailing lists. In Chapter 17, I discuss the use of today's technology to record jazz at home and sell it online.

## Chapter 2

# Altered Ears: Understanding the Traits and Roots of Jazz

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Recognizing the elements of jazz
  - ▶ Visiting jazz's heritage
  - ▶ Appreciating jazz's rhythm, harmony, melody, and sounds
  - ▶ Connecting jazz to other forms of music
- 

**J**azz has a tough time of it in this modern, convenient world. People have grown used to getting everything instantly — from fast food to fast oil changes, Internet access, and digital photos. When it comes to music, some people are impatient in that realm too. They often settle for what's played on radio and television — places where you don't hear much jazz these days. Internet music Web sites and satellite radio offer endless choices, but you have to know what you're looking for.

Getting into jazz is like getting into gourmet food: you have to seek it out. Sometimes the search is hard work, but when you succeed, the “meal” is worth it. Jazz encompasses some of the most complex, diverse, and soul-satisfying music on Earth.



If you're relatively new to jazz, you may find it hard to understand — even strange — and you may have trouble connecting emotionally. Don't give up. Many current fans felt the same way. I didn't know quite what to make of Miles Davis when I first heard his music — a time when most of my peers were into Woodstock and acid rock.

The purpose of this chapter is to give you a set of altered ears, like when you upgrade your sound system in order to hear all the nuances of the music. I'm hooking you up with a pair of sensitive ears for hearing and appreciating jazz from its roots and basic elements to subtler nuances.

## Defining Jazz: The Swingin' Thing

“It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing)” — Duke Ellington wrote that homage to jazz. Singer and bandleader Cab Calloway popularized it. Critics and historians expend thousands of words attempting to define jazz, but Cab covered most of it in just 11 words. After all the searching, only a handful of elements exist that musicians and experts commonly accept as defining characteristics of jazz.

Although listeners may not agree on which music and musicians qualify as jazz, at a basic level, you can identify jazz by a few distinguishing traits: swing and syncopation, improvisation, bent notes and modes, and distinctive voices. Chapter 3 covers these in more detail.

### Swing and syncopation

*Swing* is the rhythmic momentum that makes you want to dance or snap your fingers to a good jazz tune. Part of what makes jazz swing is the use of syncopation.

*Syncopation* is the technique of placing accents or emphasis in surprising places. When jazz truly swings, the beat bombards you, even if the players emphasize the beat by playing right with it some moments or just before or after it at other times.



To get a better understanding of what I’m talking about, think of classical music. Classical music is primarily written music — musicians rely on sheet music which shows them phrasing, where the beats fall, and what notes to play. Jazz, on the other hand, is *felt*. Sure, a lot of jazz *standards* (songs known and played by many musicians) exist as sheet music, but usually only in an outline form showing the basic *changes* (chord structure) of the song and its melody. (I cover chords and melody in the section “Hearing harmony and melody” later in this chapter.) The swing feel and syncopation can’t be captured in musical notation, only in live jazz, where players either have the rhythmic stuff, or they don’t.



To hear what syncopation sounds like, take a look at a common holiday song: “Jingle Bells.” Sing the first line the usual way, just like you learned it:

“Jin-gle bells, jin-gle bells, jin-GLE all the way.”

The “GLE” on the third “jingle” gets special emphasis (at least that’s the way I learned it).

Now sing it a few times and change some accents like this:

“JIN-gle bells, JIN-gle bells, jin-gle . . . ALL . . . the way.”

Make up your own interpretations. Try it with other songs such as “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” or “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” The variation is the basic idea behind syncopation. And when you get a few players bouncing these ideas back and forth, some of them hitting one beat harder, others hitting a different beat harder, you begin to feel the magic of great jazz.

## Improvisation



Good jazz demands tremendous technical and creative ability because its players invent at least half of the music spontaneously. Famous jazz tunes have familiar melodies set to consistent chord changes, but legendary jazz players from trumpeter Louis Armstrong to saxophonists Lester Young and Charlie Parker made their mark with their phenomenal ability to improvise. The melody and changes of a jazz tune make up a framework and starting point for exploring the possibilities of a song. (See “Hearing harmony and melody” later in this chapter for details on melody and chords.)

Blues has the most basic structure for improvising in jazz. A basic blues song comprises 12 measures or *bars*. (Blues that most people can instantly recognize is commonly called *12-bar blues*: Each bar, or measure, contains four beats.) Here’s a basic blues song, invented on the spot.

Wait . . . before you sing, start tapping your foot slowly and steadily: 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4. Each line gets one measure or group of four beats.

“Well, I woke up this morning . . .

took down my Dummies book.

(pause)

(pause)

“Well, I woke up this morning . . .

took down my Dummies book.

(pause)

(pause)

“Put on some Coltrane

man my soul was shook.”

(pause)

(pause — and back to the beginning!)

Now, expand the song on your own. Make up a couple more verses and invent your own words, melody, and accents.

Congratulations! You've now completed a basic seminar in improvisation. And while 12-bar blues is just one simple structure used in jazz, you're starting to get a feel for how jazz players invent music within a framework.

## *Bent notes and innovative modes*



Jazz players often use note combinations that can't be produced on a piano. They bend a note (by bending a string on guitar or sliding between notes on a saxophone) to alter its pitch and make a sound that doesn't exist in the western chromatic scale (start at middle C on a piano, and move up key by key to B, just before the next C. Those 12 tones constitute the western chromatic scale). Bent notes help give jazz its mystery, tension, and energy.



Another unusual jazz technique is the use of modes. Modes are various scales or groups of notes. The term *modal jazz* refers to a new approach pioneered by Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and others in the late '50s and early '60s (see Chapters 7 and 8 for more about these periods in jazz). Instead of using rapid chord changes that required a soloist to employ many different scales, modal jazz songs (and improvisations) build around one or two scales — either chromatic scales or scales from Indian, African, Arabic, and other world music. Many nonwestern scales subdivide an octave into smaller increments, or microtones. Arabic scales, for instance, have 17, 19, or 24 notes; an Indian scale has 22.



Coltrane and Davis were early explorers of modal jazz, along with some of their peers. Tunes such as Davis' "So What" and Coltrane's famous version of Richard Rodgers' "My Favorite Things" exemplify the dark, meditative, mysterious vibe of modal jazz. Here are a few more great modal jazz recordings:

- ✓ Coltrane's "Impressions"
- ✓ Davis's "Flamenco Sketches" and "Milestones"
- ✓ Pianist Bill Evans' "Peace Piece"
- ✓ Saxophonist Wayne Shorter's "Footprints"

Other American music, including Broadway show tunes and modern classical compositions, uses many more different chords and scales instead of modal jazz's minimalist approach. These types of music possess their own assets, including surprising melodies and intricate harmonies, but they don't give the same freedom to a soloist that modern jazz does.

In addition, the leader of a jazz group may say, “I like these nine notes. Improvise with them any way you want, but only choose from these nine notes.” That’s also modal. And guess what? It’s also okay, and it’s part of the invention and innovation that keep jazz evolving and exciting.

## Distinctive voices

In the same way that every person has a distinctive voice, so does every jazz musician. With experience, you can detect variations in *phrasing* (the way a musician puts together a string of notes, similar to our patterns of speech), tone, rhythmic sense, improvisational style, and other elements that mark each player’s musical personality. These original voices characterize modern jazz, which is often music designed to showcase great soloists and their voices. For example:

- ✓ Miles Davis played the trumpet in a muted whisper.
- ✓ Charlie Parker’s saxophone had a sharp edge, and he soloed with phenomenal speed and variety.
- ✓ Jo Jones, on drums, invented a symphony of sounds using only his cymbals.



With a little listening experience, you can recognize the distinctive voices of many players. A jazz musician isn’t only a musician, but also he’s an unusual type of composer who invents music spontaneously and whose style and preferences affect his performance just as much as the structure of the song does.

## So where did the word *jazz* come from, anyway?

Jazz. Everyone may assert some idea of what it sounds like, right? Hip or mellow, hot or cool, Dixieland or avant garde, most anyone with a casual interest in music uses the word *jazz*. But just as attempts to define jazz clearly have stirred decades of debate, so has the use of the very word *jazz*.

Origins of the word *jazz* are hazy and theories abound. In its original connotation, *jazz* was *jass*. The word came out of bars and bordellos where early jazz was born in places like New Orleans, with its notorious Storyville red light district (see Chapter 5). Perhaps African Americans coined the term themselves to describe their music during its formative years, when jazz was used

as a verb. A musician may have said, “Jazz it up,” when he wanted a band to pick up a song’s pace and swing hard. In various literature from the past, the word has been spelled *jasz*, *jascz*, *jas*, *jass*, *jaz*, and *jazz*. Jazz was also a euphemism for sex.

Maybe jazz, like other words, takes its meaning from its sound, or its sound from its meaning. On that basis, jazz can mean to hit, or strike, or launch, or some such short, quick stroke or action. While stories of the word’s origins vary, one thing about the word *jazz* is certain: No two people, whether they’re writers, historians, musicians, or fans, can agree on exactly what *jazz* means or where it came from.

## *Back in the Golden Days: Digging the Roots of Jazz*

Although jazz is performed by musicians of many colors and mixes elements of many kinds of music, it's essentially African-American music. Interwoven with jazz's history is the history of the black experience in America. However, European music and blues also influenced jazz. The following sections cover these influences in more detail. (Chapter 5 includes more details about the creation of jazz.)

### *Adapting West African traditions*

Essential elements of jazz arrived in America in 1619 with the first Africans brought as “cargo” by Dutch sailors who landed in Jamestown, Virginia. Various African musical elements that eventually surfaced in jazz came from areas where slaves were taken along the West African coast, known as the Ivory Coast or Gold Coast, stretching from Dakar in the north to Congo in the south, and including Senegal, Ghana, Guinea, Dahomey (now part of Benin), and the Niger delta. Many of the Africans sold into slavery weren't commoners but, instead, were kings and priests who led tribal rituals and musical performances. Among the tribes raided for slaves were the Yoruba, Ibo, Fanti, Ashanti, Susu, and Ewe; many of these musicians eventually became leading performers in both black and white cultures in the New World.

Various traders preferred slaves from particular regions and tribes, and the traditions of those slaves influenced the music in the traders' home regions. For example, the French acquired Dahomeans. Thus, Dahomeans who worshipped vodun (spirit) and the snake god, Damballa, brought rituals to New Orleans that became known as *voodoo* — elements of which appeared in early blues and jazz. Various bluesmen referenced *mojo hands* and *black cats*, and jazz pioneer Jelly Roll Morton blamed a voodoo curse for ill health and a declining career. I think you can hear a dark, mystical strain in his music. (See Chapter 5 for more about him.)

In Africa, music was a vital part of daily life and members of a community all participated. African musicians played a variety of string, percussion, and wind instruments, but after these musicians landed in America, they adapted to a new array of drums, fiddles, trumpets, French horns, and other instruments. Musicians found themselves relocated within a musical culture partially based on formal notation instead of the unwritten and improvised traditions of Africa, where *griots* — resident tribal poet-historians — sang and told tales that preserved tribal history, arts, philosophy, and mythology.

Much of the adaptation to the new musical setting occurred in white churches, where slaves were taught to read music from hymnals and song

books and where they often performed alongside white people at services. The harsh change was difficult for African musicians who found their music restrained or redirected along Euro-American lines, yet the blending of African rhythms, melodies, harmonies, and improvisation, with more formal Euro-American music, was at the heart of the invention of jazz (see Chapter 5 for details on jazz's invention).



Even in the early stages, the impact of African musicians on American music began to emerge. Here are key elements:

- ✓ **Call and response:** like when a preacher or dance leader shouts a statement, and his audience shouts back; when instrumentalists have a “conversation” consisting of traded musical “statements”
- ✓ **Improvisation:** embellishment around a song's primary melody
- ✓ **Pentatonic scales:** five-tone scales later used as primary scales in blues
- ✓ **Polyrhythms:** the overlapping of different rhythmic patterns
- ✓ **Swing or forward momentum:** a sense of urgency created by relentless rhythmic drive
- ✓ **Syncopation:** rhythmic accents around the underlying beat

I cover these elements in more detail in Chapter 3.

## *Borrowing from European classics*

European musical traditions also make up a vital part of jazz. Elements like swing and improvisation (which I cover earlier in this chapter) found their way into jazz from Africa, but jazz's major instruments, including the piano, saxophone (invented in Belgium about 1840 by Adolphe Sax), and assorted horns came to jazz by way of Europe.



If you talk to a *musicologist* — someone who studies origins of music and instruments — you may hear that many European instruments resemble modified versions of instruments from the Middle East and Africa.

Largely because of the availability, popularity, and portability of violins, slaves received training in classical music and performed a range of music that also included dance and folk. Violin was the most popular instrument for slaves, and in the 1700s, they sometimes accompanied their owners to colleges such as William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, for musical education. In 1770, blacks were part of the first U.S. performance of Handel's “Messiah” by the Trinity Church choir of New York. This classical training eventually turned up in jazz. Violin found its way into jazz in the '20s, thanks to Stephane Grappelli, Stuff Smith, and Joe Venuti, who used violins to play the same sorts of melodies and solos as saxophonists and trumpeters.

## The New Orleans jazz connection

New Orleans is best known for public performances of raw African music and dance by slaves in Congo Square and is an ethnically diverse city where Creoles (people of mixed ethnicity, such as African, Cuban, French, and Spanish) received formal training in music, including classical and opera. The famed French Opera House opened in 1859, and many of its most popular performers were Creole. In early New Orleans, Creoles, due to their European roots, enjoyed superior status to African Americans. But in 1890, the Louisiana Legislature enacted Code 111, which made the Creole equal in status to the newly freed slaves which was a big blow to the Creoles. Most of the Creoles had

slaves themselves and now they were forced to a lower social status. This change was a catalyst for the start of what is called jazz as it forced these two cultures to come together — the Creoles with their formal training and the rawness of the newly freed slaves.

New Orleans played an essential role in the formative years of jazz legends like Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton (a Creole), and King Oliver (see Chapter 5). The great myth is that early jazz players honed their craft in hazy bars and whorehouses, but many of the early greats combined formal training with performances in a variety of contexts such as parades and Sunday concerts in parks.

Blacks who worshipped at Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic churches in East Coast cities such as Baltimore, Charleston, New York, and Philadelphia often received training in European music including classical. During the 18th and 19th centuries, some congregations (and choirs) were interracial. Northern cities included blacks in cultural events; in some cases, African Americans formed their own cultural societies, such as the Philadelphia Library Company of Colored Persons, which, beginning in 1833, presented concerts, lectures, and debates.



Contrary to the common belief that jazz was created primarily by uneducated blacks with roots in blues, folk, and field chants, African Americans had the ability to read music and to play classical and other styles of music well before the inception of jazz. Jazz pioneers such as Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton, and James P. Johnson brought sophisticated musical knowledge to their music. (I cover these pioneers in more detail in Chapter 5.)

While jazz musicians brought classical elements into jazz, classical composers borrowed from African-American music. This transferring of styles proves that even before the invention of jazz and before African-American music was valued by American universities, concert halls, and arts patrons, the quality and originality of black music had already captivated the leading artists of classical music.



In turn, classical composers such as Bartok and Debussy inspired jazz bassist and composer Charles Mingus. These classical composers utilized folk music in their creations. Mingus, in the '50s and '60s, composed ambitious suites such as “The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady” (1963) that, like pieces by Bartok and Debussy, combined a variety of influences (blues, jazz, folk, classical) into an elaborate piece that explored various themes using an 11-piece ensemble. (Chapter 8 has more info about Mingus.)

From Joplin and Johnson, to Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, Gil Evans, and, today, Maria Schneider, some jazz composers have brought a knowledge of classical arranging, composing, and musical theory to their masterful jazz compositions.

## *Adding some blues*

Jazz partially builds on the blues, and some jazz directly grows on a blues foundation, utilizing the structure of the traditional blues known as 12-bar blues. (See the section “Improvisation” earlier in this chapter for an example of the 12-bar blues in action.)



The tradition of call and response, and more simply improvisation, is a big part of jazz. In good blues, jazz, and gospel, players listen intently to each other’s playing, and have an almost intuitive connection — an uncanny sixth sense felt between musicians. Here are some examples:

- ✓ In the gospel church, the preacher sings out a line of sermon, and his congregation tosses it back to him.
- ✓ In blues and jazz, one musician plays or sings something, and another player throws it back in slightly new, altered form, adding a new variation to the theme and exploring a song further.
- ✓ Still another player may take a swing at the musical phrase, even adding a new melodic run.

Some of the earliest jazz musicians were vocalists who branched into jazz from roots in blues. Some notable singers give jazz its bluesy beginnings:

- ✓ Ida Cox
- ✓ Ma Rainey
- ✓ Jimmy Rushing
- ✓ Bessie Smith
- ✓ Mamie Smith

- ✓ Jack Teagarden
- ✓ Ethel Waters
- ✓ Louis Armstrong

Known to jazz fans primarily as a trumpeter, Armstrong was also a singer from the start, and his singing rooted in blues. Armstrong's singing behind the beat, stretching words over several notes, reinterpreting melodies, and improvising (scat-singing), all characterized the blues that he imported into jazz. (See Chapter 5 for more about Armstrong.) Other bluesmen who improvised with voices and guitars and whose inventive techniques influenced jazz include Lonnie Johnson, Robert ("Crossroads") Johnson, and Leadbelly.



On her 1926 recording of W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues," Bessie Smith was joined by Louis Armstrong on trumpet in a performance that melded Smith's earthy blues vocals with Armstrong's jazz trumpet, providing an important early link between the genres.



By the way, if you're into (or want to get into) the blues, check out *Blues For Dummies* (Wiley) by Lonnie Brooks and Cub Coda.

## The Real Deal: Appreciating Genuine Jazz

When you begin to feel rhythms, hear harmonies and melodies, and get an incredible rush from jazz's amazing improvisers, then you know you're on the road to becoming a bona fide jazz fan. "Getting it" requires multitask listening. To truly appreciate jazz, you need to identify each part (bass line, melody, harmony, improvisation) and at the same time hear how all of the parts fit together. And when the music gets under your skin, there's no telling how far you may take this new love affair.



Before I go into greater detail in the following sections, take your new knowledge of jazz for a test drive. Cue up some jazz from Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, or Charlie Parker and listen to how some of the following elements jump out of the music:

- ✓ Bassists anchor the bottom end, help drive the rhythms, and play musical counterpoint to other instruments.
- ✓ Drummers fuel the engines, propelling the music forward, also interacting with all other instrumentalists to provide rhythmic variety.
- ✓ Guitarists and pianists hook up with bassists and drummers to keep time but also provide rich harmonic textures, melodies, and solos.

- ✔ Trumpeters, saxophonists, and singers lead the melody and improvise melodic lines around the chords and rhythms.
- ✔ All players use a telepathic empathy that makes the parts of jazz come together, but within this new creation, however, you can still detect the individual personalities of each of jazz's elements.

Chapter 3 covers more about the musical theory behind jazz.

## *Tapping the rhythm section*

Jazz usually has a juicy beat that you can feel. A basic difference between swing and a stiffer beat stems from the placement of accents. People who're unfamiliar with jazz often clap on the first and third beat in every group of four. Jazz audiences, by contrast, usually emphasize two and four, with a looser, swing feeling that dates back to gospel music in African-American churches. (See Part III for how to become an informed jazz audience member.)



Although some jazz encompasses complex or irregular rhythms that may escape the tap of your foot, most jazz retains a steady beat embellished by the drummer and other players. If jazz is tough for you to appreciate, its rhythms offer the easiest point of access. You don't have to know a lot of theory to connect with this exciting energy.

Here are some tips to follow to begin feeling the rhythm of jazz:

- ✔ Listen to Louis Armstrong or some other early jazz performers. Tap your foot, clap your hands, or move your body. Try to feel the music, and listen to the way various instruments carry the rhythms. Although all jazz players tie into the music's rhythms, "rhythm sections" have primary rhythmic responsibility.
- ✔ Identify the rhythm section by remembering that it usually consists of standup bass (or tuba), drums, and sometimes piano or guitar (these versatile instruments can also play harmonies and melodies, which I cover in the next section).
- ✔ Concentrate on the drummer while you tap your foot to the music. Hear how he fills in assorted rhythms all around the primary beat, usually carried by his right foot as it tromps on a pedal that pounds his bass drum.
- ✔ Listen to the bassist (or tuba player) and hear how these bottom-end instruments secure the rhythms with their steady thumping.

## Hearing harmony and melody



*Harmony* is the way two or more notes sound together. With 88 keys on a piano, the harmonic possibilities are nearly infinite. *Melody* is a series of single notes that together make a musical statement. Melody is what most people commonly call the *tune* of a song.

Harmony and melody form a vital partnership. Within a jazz song, harmony works on several levels:

- ✓ A guitar player or pianist plays *chords* — combinations of notes. These notes harmonize with each other in various ways.
- ✓ A singer or sax player adds a melody over the chords. So the melody harmonizes with the chords.
- ✓ A bass player adds another line of music beneath the chords and primary melody, adding yet another layer of harmony.

As you get into jazz by Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Miles Davis, and other legendary jazz players, listen to each new song six times in a row . . . or more. In the first time through, listen for basic rhythms, chords, and melodies. Now go back and listen for harmony. After you feel comfortable with basic rhythms, chords, harmonies, and melodies, start paying attention to the ways in which players improvise.



But how can you tell when they're improvising? It's not always easy. Sometimes, even when playing a familiar song, jazz musicians alter the basic melody. Sometimes you may still recognize it. Other times, familiar songs sound like new songs because of the way jazz musicians reinvent them. In the most common type of jazz song, the band plays the song's signature melody all the way through once before the improvisation begins. Then they usually end the song by playing the melody again.

## Comparing jazz's musical personalities

The joy of getting into jazz comes when you begin to recognize the players' "voices." Jazz's legendary players embrace special sounds of their own:

- ✓ **Louis Armstrong:** spirited cornet and warm, gruff vocals.
- ✓ **Miles Davis:** muted, whispery trumpet
- ✓ **Charlie Parker:** sharp, speedy alto sax
- ✓ **Lester Young:** smooth, sexy tenor saxophone



Listen to various versions of the same tune to distinguish different voices. A prime example: “Body and Soul.” Tenor saxophonists Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins were contemporaries (see Chapter 6). But Hawkins’ readily available 1939 recording of the song is very different from Young’s versions of the same tune. The comparison offers a straightforward way to hear how each group combines harmony and melody, how they improvise, and what qualities distinguish their individual voices on saxophone.



Each player was an early modernist but in different ways. Young’s versions are generally characterized by

- ✓ **Slower tempo:** Both musicians played up-tempo tunes, but Young leaned toward slower songs and ballads that showcased his lyrical improvisations.
- ✓ **Reverence for the basic melody:** Traces of this admiration can be found in his solos, where Young incorporated aspects of a song’s original melody in his solos.
- ✓ **Long, flowing lines of melody and improvisation, and fewer notes in each line:** As a forerunner of ’50s cool jazz, which I cover in Chapter 7, Young preferred a languid, understated approach that gave his music an easy flowing quality.
- ✓ **Slurry, gentle, and breathy tone:** Young’s sound romanced your emotions as you listened to his music.



Hawkins’ landmark version of “Body and Soul” exhibits other traits:

- ✓ Abandonment of the written melody, in favor of new melodies that Hawkins improvises over the original chords as played by his band
- ✓ Faster, edgier melodic lines, and greater density of notes in his improvisation
- ✓ Gentler tone but with more definition to each note.

From here, your explorations into jazz include many similar comparisons. Most great jazz players recorded versions “standard” tunes, especially ballads. These standards give you a chance to compare the ways in which the best players from different eras interpret the same songs. Discover, for instance, how Fats Waller’s original “Honeysuckle Rose” differs from subsequent interpretations by Oscar Peterson and many other jazz greats, or, especially, how the great trumpeters, saxophonists, and vocalists compare in their treatment of tunes.

## *New Edition: Updating the Jazz Tradition*

Beyond the basic elements I cover in the section “The Swingin’ Thing: Defining Jazz” earlier in this chapter, what exactly constitutes jazz varies from one critic, historian, or musicologist to another. For example, does saxophonist Kenny G play jazz? Some radio stations say he does, but I don’t think so. Kenny G is a technically proficient player, but his music has none of the swing or compelling urgency that I associate with jazz. A more accurate label for his music may be *instrumental pop*, and in fact, in various interviews Kenny G has agreed his music isn’t truly jazz.

In the following sections I describe various branches of jazz and several forms of music borrowed from traditional jazz.

### *Considering avant garde, free, and acid jazz*



Does that frantic noise known as *free jazz*, *abstract jazz*, or *avant garde jazz* qualify as jazz? By the late 1960s, some musicians attempted to stretch jazz’s boundaries by making music with minimal structure and no consistent sense of swing. Ironically, many of these musicians trained in more traditional forms of jazz, and the music of artists such as Anthony Braxton and the Art Ensemble of Chicago obviously demonstrates improvisation, distinctive voices, and polyrhythms in abundance. Clearly, it does qualify as jazz (and I go into a bit more detail on these forms in Chapter 8).

What about the 1990s music known as *acid jazz*? Is it really jazz? Not by my definition. Although some acid jazz uses traditional instruments, other examples borrow sound electronically from other music, so the end result tends to have a more layered, electronic sound that’s distinct from most of jazz’s earthier, spontaneous aura. Acid jazz’s rhythms, usually simple and somewhat repetitious, are danceable but lack the creative power of jazz’s polyrhythms. I give you a bit more detail on the style in Chapter 10.

### *Linking to other relevant music forms*

Besides blues, give-and-take exists between jazz and seemingly unrelated genres including Western Swing. For instance, in the ’30s and ’40s, Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys made some of the all-time coolest music. Their sound may not be pure jazz, but jazz fans can love it because it contains essential jazz ingredients.



Bob Wills, a fiddler, grew up working Texas cotton fields alongside African Americans and was a big fan of black music and musicians including Bessie Smith. Although the Texas Playboys provided a twangy, countrified backdrop, the improvisations fit within a jazz context: The members of the group included

- ✔ Bob Wills, improvisations
- ✔ Eldon Shamblin, guitarist
- ✔ Jimmy Wyble, guitarist
- ✔ Cameron Hill, guitarist
- ✔ Noel Boggs, steel guitarist

Wyble and Hill were big fans of early swing and bebop's guitarist Charlie Christian (see Chapter 6 for more about him), and you can hear his influence in their work with Wills. Like Christian's, their guitar solos come as strings of single notes and are delivered with a Charlie Christian-like sense of swing.

Through the years, Broadway musicals and jazz also enjoyed a close relationship. Musicals penned by Scott Joplin, James P. Johnson, and Duke Ellington brought jazz to the Broadway stage (or, in the case of Joplin, were aimed at Broadway — his ambitious "Treemonisha," completed in 1910, didn't make its Broadway debut until 1975, which shows how long it can take for audiences to catch up with art). George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" (1935) included jazz-influenced tunes such as "Summertime," and Leonard Bernstein's music for "West Side Story" (1957) utilized bold jazz rhythms and horn arrangements.

Jazz also borrowed from Broadway. Famed Broadway tunesmiths such as Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, George and Ira Gershwin, Lorenz Hart, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, and Cole Porter wrote dozens of show tunes that became so-called *standards* of the jazz repertoire. A lot of the most memorable jazz is created when virtuoso players take these songs and remake them in their own styles. For example,

- ✔ John Coltrane's version of Rodgers' "My Favorite Things"
- ✔ Charlie Parker's renditions of Vernon Duke's "April in Paris"
- ✔ Jimmy McHugh's "I'm in the Mood for Love"
- ✔ Ella Fitzgerald's and Miles Davis's interpretations of Gershwin's "Summertime"



## Chapter 3

# The Scheme of Things: Elements of Jazz Theory

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Beginning with the basic structures of jazz songs
  - ▶ Looking at elements of rhythm
  - ▶ Investigating methods of improvisation
- 

**J**azz is music that you can love immediately on many levels. Swinging rhythms make you tap your foot right away. Improvisations by great players like Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young grab hold of your emotions. Battling horn sections in big bands get you as excited as watching two sides try to out-cheer each other at a big college football game.

Yet jazz is also complex and subtle music that has finally earned its place as an American art form worthy of the same intelligent consideration as classical music or great paintings. A lot of thought and genius have gone into the best jazz. A deeper appreciation of its inner workings help you appreciate the music on many levels and open your mind to more challenging forms of jazz.

In this chapter, you go deeper into some of the theories behind the music, with an emphasis on improvisation — jazz’s central element. After you’re finished, you can experience the music intellectually and emotionally. The mix of these two elements gives jazz its durability. Great jazz is music you can return to again and again and discover something new and amazing.

## *Playing in Bars: Basic Song Structures*

Over the past 100 years, jazz’s repertoire has grown to thousands of pieces. Within that large catalog of music, jazz has different organizing principles. Even in jazz with extensive improvisation, musicians often rely on a basic structure.



Measures (or bars) are the basic units of music. A *measure* is each space between vertical lines on a written piece of music. Each measure in a piece of music usually contains four beats; a *beat* is the time it takes to tap your foot once. Groups of measures, most often in groups of 12 or 32, provide the framework for most jazz tunes. These forms came to jazz from blues, marching band music, popular songs, and ragtime. Think of these structures as paragraphs that come together to tell the musical story of a song.

In the following sections, I describe two of jazz's most common song structures: 12-bar and 32-bar. I also give you a few pointers on how to start recognizing different formats when you listen to jazz.

## Getting the hang of 12-bar blues

Blues, a common form in jazz (see Chapter 2 for blues details), usually comes in standard 12-bar form. Each verse of a song contains 12 bars; those 12 bars divide into three 4-bar sections. And each bar contains four beats. A 12-bar chorus of a familiar blues song like “Kansas City” goes (assuming you know the melody):

I'm going to Kansas City  
 Kansas City here I come  
 (Pause for four beats)  
 (Pause for four beats)  
 I'm going to Kansas City  
 Kansas City here I come  
 (Pause for four beats)  
 (Pause for four beats)  
 They got some crazy little women there  
 And I'm gonna get me one  
 (Pause for four beats)  
 (Pause for four beats)

Another verse follows using the same 12-bar structure:

I'm gonna be standin' on the corner  
 of 12th Street and Vine

(Pause for four beats)  
(Pause for four beats)  
I'm gonna be standin' on the corner  
of 12th Street and Vine  
(Pause for four beats)  
(Pause for four beats)  
With my Kansas City baby  
My bottle of Kansas City wine  
(Pause for four beats)  
(Pause for four beats)

Now, as in most any song, comes the drama in the form of a transition section called the *bridge*. It also fits the 12-bar structure, but its first few lines (through “I’m goin’ just the same”) provide contrast with the rest of the piece. Without pauses in between, these lines — each spread over four beats — pick up the song’s momentum:

I might take a train  
I might take a plane  
But if I have to walk  
I’m goin’ just the same  
I’m goin’ to Kansas City  
Kansas City here I come  
(Pause for four beats)  
(Pause for four beats)  
They’ve got some crazy little women there  
And I’m gonna get me one  
(Pause for four beats)  
(Pause for four beats)

There are many examples of the 12-bar format in jazz, from the New Orleans Rhythm King’s “Tin Roof Blues” to Duke Ellington’s “Koko” and Thelonious Monk’s “Misterioso.”

## Examining the 32-bar format

Besides 12 bars, another familiar structure in jazz is the 32-bar format of many standards — songs written in the '30s and '40s by popular composers that were adopted by jazz musicians who used their catchy melodies and smart chord changes as a basis for improvisation. (See “Just Wingin’ It: Methods of Improv” later in this chapter for details about melodies, chords, and improvisation.) Songs that became popular among jazz musicians include “I Got Rhythm,” “I Thought About You,” “Over the Rainbow,” and “Stella By Starlight.”



Most 32-bar standards are divided into four 8-bar sections, in a form known as AABA: three similar A sections, and a B section in the middle in which the melody and chords change. Within an 8-bar section, every bar has four beats. Dramatically, the sections tell a story or run through a range of emotions.

As originally written, some 32-bar songs have introductions or lead-ups, and many also have a *coda* — a short extension on the end that wraps up the song. Most jazz players, however, compress standards into 32-bar form.

Here's how the form works:

- ✓ The musical theme, or primary melody, is stated in the first A section.
- ✓ The second A is a variation that includes the second verse of lyrics.
- ✓ The B section provides contrast by introducing a new segment of melody (and, in songs with lyrics, a line that somehow reflects on the mood or theme of the piece). In a short story or novel, this would be the point where the action peaks, where the story reaches its dramatic climax, where the hero comes face to face with his or her ultimate challenge.
- ✓ After overcoming that challenge, or in music, after that musical high point is attained, the final A section provides resolution, or, if you want, a (usually) happy ending. Its structure is similar to those of the first two A sections.



In summary, then, the 32-bar structure looks like this:

- A    statement
- A    repetition
- B    contrast
- A    return

Compare the 12-bar blues structure with the 32-bar pop song structure. They're similar. Each begins with a melodic A theme that is repeated. Each includes a contrasting B section that builds emotion. While the 32-bar form repeats the original theme as an ending, the 12-bar structure ends with a B section — although if you listen to most any blues song, it has a few notes at the end of this section that act as a natural conclusion to the series of three sections.

## *Tuning your ears to different forms in jazz*

Although 12 bars and 32 bars are the most common forms, modern jazz uses a variety of others. Knowing these two, however, gives you enough knowledge to start recognizing forms of jazz music.



When listening to a jazz song, tap out the time with your foot and begin counting the number of 4-bar measures in your head. Many times you easily detect the 32-bar structure. Other times, you discover an alternative form. For example, Dave Brubeck composes songs around sections of unusual lengths, such as five or seven beats; free jazz players (see Chapter 8) proceed without an established structure to guide them, inventing the music as they go along, so that different sections come in different lengths.



One of the most rewarding things for jazz lovers is listening to several of our heroes play their versions of familiar standards. Here are some CDs you can use for comparison:

- ✓ **Miles Davis, *My Funny Valentine* (Sony):** This live 1964 album features the great trumpeter with one of his finest groups (bassist Ron Carter, tenor saxophonist George Coleman, pianist Herbie Hancock, drummer Tony Williams), improvising beautifully on standards such as “All of You,” “My Funny Valentine,” and “I Thought About You.” See Chapters 7 and 8 for more about Miles.
- ✓ **Charlie Parker, *Charlie Parker Plays Standards* (Verve):** This CD includes Bird’s freewheeling versions of “Love for Sale,” “I Got Rhythm,” and “Embraceable You.” Check out Chapter 7 for more about Charlie.
- ✓ **Ella Fitzgerald, *Song Books* CD series (Verve):** This example is definitive in standards as interpreted by a singer. You can buy one CD at a time or the complete 16-CD box set. Find out more about Ella in Chapter 7.

## Spending a few minutes on time signatures

Although you're not going to learn to read music, you should know about the notation called the "time signature" that appears on every piece of music. The most common time signatures are 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4. The top number tells you how many beats per measure; the bottom tells you the value of those beats. So, 2/4 means two quarter notes per measure; 3/4 means three quarter notes; and 4/4 indicates four quarter notes. Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" is notated with a 5/4 time signature, with five quarter notes per measure.

Don't worry too much about the idea of quarter notes. In the most basic sense, 4/4 simply means four beats per bar, while 5/4 means five per bar.

In this chapter, I discuss the basic rhythmic unit of four beats per measure. However, jazz comes in all sorts of unusual rhythmic groupings, or time signatures. Composers such as Dave Brubeck write music with groupings of 5 beats ("Take Five"), as well as 7, 9, and 11 beats per measure. Brubeck's "Blue Rondo à la Turk" begins with nine beats per measure, with

different combinations within those nine beats, then morphs into standard 4/4 time, or four beats per measure. (I discuss Brubeck's work in detail in Chapters 7 and 8.)

As you can see through basic math, time signatures with even numbers are symmetrical, while odds are asymmetrical. As is true of design, or human faces, asymmetry adds interest to jazz. Songs with odd-number sequences like Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" requires more effort to understand, but after you lock into the structure and the patterns of improvisation, you may be impressed with how musicians combine intellectual and emotional elements in a song. When Brubeck alternates four-beat sections with nine-beat sections, it's as if you were driving on a flat desert highway and suddenly began climbing a twisty mountain road. The change of scenery is exciting. The more a composer uses and combines time signatures other than 4/4, the harder you have to work, but the experience can be extremely satisfying in the long run.

## *Moving with the Music: Swing, Syncopation, and Polyrhythms*

Swing, syncopation, and polyrhythms are the powers that make jazz move. Swing is a defining quality of jazz; it's the music's relentless forward momentum in the form of loose, driving rhythms. Swing is the mysterious thing that is essential in jazz and completely lacking in classical music.

Now add in syncopation and polyrhythms and you have the rhythmic ingredients that give jazz its finger-popping, head-bobbing effect on listeners. Take a look in this section at how these three qualities — swing, syncopation, and polyrhythms — come together.

## *Swing and syncopation: Messing around with the beat*



Underlying all jazz (except the fringiest stuff) is the rhythmic momentum known as swing. *Swing* is the loose, irresistible forward momentum that propels the best jazz. A basic idea in jazz that creates swing is changing the accent on beats in a four-beat measure. The technique of placing accents all around the beat is known as *syncopation* (which I cover briefly in Chapter 2).



In a lot of music, ranging from marching to pop hits and children's songs, the accents fall on the first and third beats. Tap your foot and sing this song, four beats per line:

Ring around the rosies  
A pocket full of posies  
Ashes, ashes  
We all fall down

Replay it in your head, and if you're like most people, you find that your accents in the first line fell on "Ring" and "ro" — the first and third beats.



Jazz usually emphasizes the second and fourth beats or the *backbeats*, giving the music its unique sound. As an example, imagine a gospel choir singing these lines, four beats per line:

He's got the whole world  
In his hands  
He's got the whole wide world  
In his hands  
He's got the whole world  
In his hands  
He's got the whole world  
In his hands

Most people recognize that the words fall all around the beat, with primary accents on two and four. In this particular example, "world" and "hands" are stretched, with each word ending sharply on two and four. A nonswing version would have the accents on "He's" and "whole," with each word of the "whole world" line (except "the") falling on its own beat. According to historians, the backbeat sense of time is cultural; in America, it was formalized in African-American churches.

## Receiving a rhythmic education

When you imagine the training it takes to become a professional musician, you may think of hours spent learning to read music, playing scales, and practicing with a metronome to get the sense of time.

But in fact, depending on the area of expertise, musicians may focus on certain sections more heavily:

- ✓ A jazz player can spend significant chunks of practice time just mastering rhythmic combinations. He may play scales over and over, each time at a different speed, with different accents and different notes grouped together.
- ✓ Music teachers assign exercises in clapping and counting, and students compete to see who can clap out the most complicated rhythms. Try it for yourself by seeing how many different ways you can clap out a pattern over a steady 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4 rhythm that you tap with your foot.
- ✓ Jazz drummers travel with a bagful of rhythms. At a moment's notice, they can produce slow blues patterns, fast bebop

patterns, Latin rhythms (see Chapter 9), and waltz rhythms. Using their hands, feet, drums, and cymbals, they overlap two or more rhythms and become one-man machines for polyrhythms.

- ✓ Drummers and bass players need to be in step with each other. You often see them make eye contact during a performance as they anticipate what's next. Sometimes they practice alone together, fooling around with rhythms, finding ways to complement or contrast.

If you're interested in drums and drummers, seek one of the dozens of books devoted to modern drumming (such as Burt Korall's *Drummin' Men — The Heartbeat of Jazz: The Bebop Years*) and the fine art of syncopation that is its centerpiece. Visit an online bookstore, and you can find many drumming instruction books with syncopation in the titles. Also, many books by and about drummers include Art Blakey, Lionel Hampton, and Gene Krupa. In these books, jazz drummers explain some of their influences and techniques.



Give the backbeat feel to any song that counts out in fours. Put the accents on one and three, and then try them on two and four. Notice how the placement of the beat changes the song. Many blues and jazz singers from Jimmy Rushing to Ella Fitzgerald often stretch words so that their endings fall on two and four, adding to the syncopated swing.

But that's only a part of how jazz players think about the beat and where to place accents. While swing relies partly on the backbeat, jazz players actually vary their accents all around the beat. Within a solo, it's common to hear a horn player put accents in a variety of locations just before a beat, right on the beat, or just after. Picture each beat with an oval around it. This territory is all "in bounds" for the beat.

Now imagine a small jazz group of four or five players who are all thinking about the beat this way. You feel the music swinging because the players have a good sense of time, but as they collaborate, layers of rhythmic patterns combine to form fascinating groups known as *polyrhythms* (see the next section). These rhythmic combinations have become increasingly complex since early New Orleans jazz, which was built around simpler rhythms derived from brass bands.



In the music of Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, and other greats, you can easily hear the range of rhythmic dramas created by musicians just by changing the placement of accents.



Check out the following CDs: Young's *Prez and Teddy* (Polygram), with pianist Teddy Wilson; Hawkins' *Body and Soul* (RCA); Parker's *Essential Charlie Parker* (Polygram); and Blakey's *Orgy in Rhythm, Vols. 1 and 2* (Blue Note). Each CD contains a lot of 12- and 32-bar songs, which embody swing, syncopation, and polyrhythms.

## *Polyrhythms: Tension and release*



Musicians use tools including rhythms to carry you along through the song. When a jazz song begins with four beats per measure and builds texture through overlapping rhythms, the resulting *polyrhythms* (the use or an instance of simultaneous contrasting rhythms) create curiosity, tension, and excitement. Rhythms can relax you and carry you on an emotional journey, from curiosity, through tension and awe, to resolution.

When early jazz players began inventing the music, they brought new rhythmic ideas to the western world (see Chapter 2 for more details). Classical music, while rich in melody and harmony, usually relies on rigid rhythms. Musicians keep time by playing right on the beat. If you listen to Bach or Beethoven, you can keep basic time with your foot as various instruments add their parts in perfect synchronization. In jazz, however, rhythms work more independently from the rest of the music — moving around the beat, supporting the musical themes or contrasting with them, pushing or leading the music to new high points.

A basic subdivision of the beat in performance became a staple of jazz: the contrasting combination of pairs of beats with trios of beats. You can find this same contrast in jazz, from improvisations by Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, and Charlie Parker, to many types of big band music.



Here's an easy way to understand what I'm talking about.

**1. Tap out a basic beat with your foot.**

1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4. Keep it going steady.

**2. Clap your hands twice on each beat.**

As your foot goes down-up, down-up: clap-clap, clap-clap, clap-clap, clap-clap.

Another way to subdivide those same basic 1-2-3-4 series would be to clap your hands three times on each beat. Clap-clap-clap, clap-clap-clap, clap-clap-clap, clap-clap-clap. This basic polyrhythm adds richness while sustaining the basic beat.



What you get from jazz depends as much on you as it does on the musicians and their music. Go through the double and triple exercise again. The first time, concentrate on the tapping of your foot, and notice how the double and triple hand claps add variety. On the second time around, concentrate on the double and triple hand claps, and notice how your foot taps add a new dimension. With each listening to a piece of jazz, focus on a different aspect of the music, and different parts come together in a new light.

Space is another important element in the structure of jazz rhythms. Whether it's a simple blues or a dense jazz tune with overlapping polyrhythms, places where there is nothing create anticipation and force listeners to notice what's on either side of the space.

In the music of Bill Evans or Miles Davis, the choices they make about where to put spaces (or breaks in the music) are as important as the ones they make about where to play notes. Spaces are like musical picture frames that focus your attention. When Davis surrounds one of his spare phrases with silence, that phrase stands out like a sculpture in a garden nook.

Space helps create a “tension-and-release” drama. A song and its rhythms climb to an emotional peak. Right after the peak, leaving a space allows the emotion to register. It's like a tense scene in a movie, where one character has a dramatic line of dialog, and then there's no dialog as what was said sinks in.



Music is a subjective, individual experience. What you bring to it effects what you take from it. To see what I mean, try out a completely different way of listening. Put on a CD like Davis's “Kind of Blue” and instead of listening to the notes, listen for silences. You gain a new appreciation of Davis and other jazz players as gifted sculptors of sonic clay.



## Checking out a few rhythm gurus

It takes the entire jazz group to create rhythms. Great instrumentalists play lines of improvised melody, and some soloists even imagine the rhythms of a human voice when they improvise.

Here are two CDs and a video featuring musicians who exemplify rhythmic mastery:

✓ **“Moanin’” (Blue Note) by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers:** Rhythmically, this 1958 album contains rich, exotic combinations, especially on “The Drum Thunder (Miniature) Suite.” This piece includes several solo breaks by drummer and bandleader Blakey. Unlike earlier drummers who used their bass drums almost as metronomes, Blakey uses his for accents. With combinations of drums and cymbals, he plays patterns ahead of the beat, on it, and behind it (on the backbeat). Blakey even taps on his set’s metal hardware. He adds clusters of two beats over groups of three to create contrast and tension, and in one section, he even uses his drums to emulate the drum

section of a marching band. When you listen to the CD, note how he also makes effective use of space to add drama.

- ✓ **“Drums of Passion” (Sony) by Babatunde Olatunji:** This album, released in 1959, was among the first African music recorded in a modern studio, and the CD offers a high-fidelity collection of jazz’s root rhythms. The drumming of Olatunji and his bandmates sustains powerful, driving beats but also illustrates all sorts of syncopation as well as endless layers of polyrhythms.
- ✓ **“A Different Drummer” (Rhapsody Films) by Elvin Jones:** This documentary about the great drummer, Elvin Jones, (best known as a member of John Coltrane’s band) shows him in action with explanations of how he builds a solo on a basic beat. Watch in amazement as Jones — a devotee of African rhythms — adds layer after layer of rhythm until he’s baked a rich polyrhythmic pie.

## Just Wingin’ It: Methods of Improv



Improvisation occurs when a player or group departs from the written music and begins inventing new music. Typically, a performer makes up new melodies to fit with a song’s basic structure (see “Playing Bars: Basic Song Structures” earlier in this chapter for details about song structure). Improvisation can spotlight an individual or focus on group interaction. Often, a song alternates between sections of group and individual improvisation.

Players use different ways to improvise, and you can hear more in the music if you know a little about how musicians think. In the following sections, take a look at several different elements improvisers can use to make new music based on the original composition. These elements include chords, harmony, melody, scales, and call and response.

## *Finding inspiration in melodies*

A series of single notes makes up a melody. Most people refer to the melody as the *tune* of the song. Even without knowing much about theory, a musician can begin improvising around a simple melody. This approach is something you can try by using your voice.



Think of a favorite song that you know well. Sing through the first verse, then start making up a new melody. You can use the original words if you want or invent nonsense scat-singing sounds to go with your melody (Chapter 6 has more info about scat singing). If you concentrate on the mood of the song and its melody, you might be surprised at what you come up with.

All of us can create reasonably cool melodies that sound similar to other melodies. But few of us could come close to the beautiful, complex solos invented by jazz's improvisers. That's because their knowledge of chords, harmonies, and scales gives them an array of hundreds of options, and they know those options so well that they select from them by instinct to create beautiful new music on the spot.

Chords, harmonies, and scales are really just elements of a system that dictates how notes fit together. Here's a simple explanation of those elements:

- ✓ **Chords:** *Chords* combine three or more notes together harmoniously. Pianists and guitarists are the only jazz musicians who can play chords. Some arrangements call for several instruments to play the notes of a chord together.
- ✓ **Scales:** *Scales* are series of notes differing in pitch according to a certain scheme. A scale consists of eight notes, stepping up from the starting note to the ending note an octave higher. Each jazz song has its own chords, and the chords determine which key it's in. Each key has its own scale. A jazz musician knows scales in many keys, so when it comes time to solo, he uses scales that fit the chords.
- ✓ **Harmony:** *Harmony* is sound of several notes together — such as chords or combinations of notes played by band members. On a basic level, a jazz soloist uses the right scale, or series of notes, to fit with a chord. Harmony could be as simple as one note from a guitar combined with a different note from a bass. Or it could be as complicated as a jazz big band, where a pianist plays chords with his left hand and melodies with his right, while other instruments each play a part of a chord, and some of the players carry the melody and create solos.



Early jazz musicians knew their basics, and they used melodies as their source of inspiration for improvising. Listen to 1920s Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, or Jelly Roll Morton (see Chapter 5 for more about these guys), and you can hear traces of the melody throughout their improvisations.



Go back to the early days of jazz improvisation, but keep in mind that on record, the following musicians were limited to three minutes per song and that their early improvisations were mild by today's standards.

- ✓ Louis Armstrong, *West End Blues* (EPM Musique)
- ✓ Sidney Bechet, *The Sidney Bechet Story*, box set (Proper)
- ✓ Jelly Roll Morton, *Birth of the Hot* (RCA)

Improvising by reinterpreting the melody sounds simple enough, but when you consider the number of tunes a working jazz musician must know, you can see why this craft takes years and years to master. I once interviewed a cocktail lounge pianist who knew hundreds, maybe even thousands, of jazz songs. You could name most any well-known tune, and he could play it, complete with chords, melody, and his own interpretations and improvisations.



Think of jazz as a new language with a huge vocabulary, rules of grammar and punctuation, and dictionaries full of slang. A jazz player's goal is to learn techniques and tunes so well that playing them comes as spontaneously as talking with a friend. Even though much jazz is improvised, musicians must know a lot of theory and songs before they become masterful improvisers. Melodies are only part of this knowledge.

## *Experimenting with chords*



Songs move through chord changes. By learning all of a tune's chords — sometimes several per measure — a soloist can improvise something that sounds good even without knowing the melody (see the previous section for more on melodies and chords).

Basic chords are composed of three notes. For instance, on a piano, a C chord consists of the notes C, E, and G (the first, third, and fifth notes in the C scale, designated as I, III, V). Early jazz musicians used notes from a song's chords to invent their own melodies. For example, a musician playing a song that begins with a C chord and continues through several more chords could use the notes in a C scale to improvise over that chord and different scales to fit with other chords. A C scale consists of eight notes to choose from to invent a new line of melody to go with the chord.

As jazz became more technical in the bebop era (covered in Chapter 7), songs used chords consisting of four or five notes, and players improvised using notes from scales that fit those chords. Because bebop is so fast and uses many chords, soloists needed to have dozens of scales memorized so that they could recall them and use them instantly.

Players also invert chords. To *invert* a chord means to play the basic notes of that chord in a different order. For instance, the C chord can be played with the C note as its lowest root note, or it can be rearranged with C somewhere else in the chord's structure, such as choosing to play a C that is higher than the E and G that round out the chord, instead of lower.



Eventually, instead of using the stock chords for a familiar tune, jazz guitarists and pianists (who play the chords) use other chords that fit but sound different. They also add extra chords between a piece's primary chords. Thus, guitarists and pianists may play some chords that aren't part of the original composition, while maintaining the piece's basic chords.

Beboppers such as Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker were famous among their peers for replacing the written chords with other surprising chords that gave old songs a new twist. In the 1950s and '60s, pianists and guitarists invented exotic chord substitutions and sequences, and horn players used these chords as a launching pad for new improvisational flights. In the '60s, John Coltrane and others pushed the approach even farther, using a different chord on each beat as the basis for a solo.

## Scaling the heights of jazz



Scales are ascending or descending series of notes and fit with a song's chords. Scales range from the major, minor, and pentatonic (five tones used mostly in blues), to Lydian, Phrygian, and other exotic-sounding scales from around the world. The pentatonic scale is a basic building block of jazz and blues. On a piano, the scale ascends C, D, E, G, A.

By copying Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*, you can sing a standard eight-note major scale. Try it: Do-Re-Mi-Fa-So-La-Ti-Do. Standard scales are constructed from the notes on a piano. Starting with middle C, one octave on a piano keyboard ascends like this: C, C#, D, D#, E, F, F#, G, G#, B, C (# stands for a sharp note). Those notes can be combined into all sorts of scale. Jazz musicians also experiment with notes in between those standard notes, as when guitarists bend a string, or trumpeters bend notes using a combination of air and mouth position.

Through the '30s and into the '40s, most jazz players didn't think about scales, only melodies and chords. Many players developed their own sound simply by creating signature patterns, or riffs, that they could use in their solos. Sometimes at peak moments, they repeated these riffs over and over with variations, creating waves and waves of musical energy.



But Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker (see Chapter 7 for more about them) pushed the music into the expansive territory of scales, as they improvised longer and more complex lines that required more choices than a song's chords could offer. A chord may consist of three or four notes, and a scale that fits with it has eight. Sometimes an experienced soloist uses notes outside that chord to surprise you or create a special sound or mood.

Guitars and wind instruments also give their players the potential to bend notes, finding tones a few hairs away from the standard notes on a piano (the notes of the western chromatic scale). A guitarist pushes a string against the neck and slides it a tiny bit sideways to a tone that's not part of a regular scale. Or a saxophonist uses his lips and breath to coax in-between tones from his horn. Although performers don't like labels, the word *microtonalists* — a category for musicians who find all those notes between the notes of a standard scale — describes musicians such as Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, and Archie Shepp.



Clarinetist Joe Maneri grew up listening to Arnold Schoenberg, the modernist composer who, along with Austrian peers Alban Berg and Anton Webern, experimented with microtones early in the 20th century — more than 50 years before microtones appeared in jazz. In the '50s, Maneri studied music theory with Joseph Schmid, a student of Berg's, and went on to create his own system that divides an octave into 72 tones. Clarinetists and saxophonists use alternative fingerings to reach those notes, and Maneri even invented an electronic keyboard based on his system. Today, Maneri and his son Mat have recorded several CDs of their music, and they remain leading proponents of microtones and avid members of the Boston Microtonal Society ([www.bostonmicrotonalsociety.org](http://www.bostonmicrotonalsociety.org)).



Maneri's *In Full Cry* (ECM) gives you a sampling of how he pushed beyond the normal bounds of jazz by using microtones.

## *Conversing with call and response*



In previous sections, I describe improvisations as individual players' inventing new music. But although jazz's best-known players get much of the attention, it's the collaborative effort of the group that makes the music possible. Whether you're listening to Louis Armstrong's Hot Fives and Hot Sevens recordings, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker's '40s bebop, John Coltrane's signature albums from the '60s, or the Art Ensemble of Chicago's freeform '70s music, the collective effort is key.

On one level, the sound dates back to the call-and-response of African chants and of early African-American music and church services, where one person delivers a line and another (or a group) responds. You can even hear this dynamic in Rev. Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream . . ." speech, where he pauses to let the audience participate with manners of affirmations. Whether in sermons, gospel music, or jazz, this back and forth, or call and response, adds a conversational element. In good jazz, improvisation is a dialog among several players, and the dialogue can go on for minutes or hours.

Given jazz's improvisational nature, songs expand or contract within a particular structure to fit the situation. For example, with the limited time of a radio, recording, or television performance, a jazz group may perform a tight (shortened) version of a composition without room for the call and response. In a live setting, though, especially if the crowd is enthusiastic and the band is up for it, the chorus can be repeated any number of times to support rounds of improvisation.

## The rise of modal jazz

In the '60s, John Coltrane began to use modal jazz to give him more latitude for improvisation. The term *modal jazz* is hard to define but easier to hear. Modal jazz often relies upon scales, or series of notes, that sound exotic. You may detect flavors from African, Arabic, Asian, Balinese, flamenco, and other music in modal jazz.

In addition to the use of scales with names like aeolian, dorian, lydian, and phrygian, modal jazz is distinguished by slower and fewer chord changes. If you listen to Coltrane's recordings from the '60s, you can hear how many of his solos build on one or two root notes, instead of the rapidly changing chords of a Charlie Parker tune. Often these repeated root notes, also referred to as *drones*, are played by bass and piano. Coltrane chose to improvise with over chords and drone notes.

For a primer on the sound of modal jazz, these recordings are a good starting point. Check out

Chapter 8 for more about John Coltrane and his take on modal jazz.

- ✔ Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* (Sony), with pianists Bill Evans or Wynton Kelly and bassist Paul Chambers providing the meditative drones on songs such as "All Blues."
- ✔ John Coltrane's *My Favorite Things* (Atlantic/WEA), including the title tune with Coltrane's soprano sax soaring above root tones played by bassist Steve Davis. Also hear Coltrane's albums *Giant Steps* (Atlantic/WEA) and *A Love Supreme* (Impulse).
- ✔ Herbie Hancock's *Maiden Voyage* (Blue Note), including the title track which captures the dreamy vibe of modal jazz as Hancock improvises spare, sparkling lines on piano.

## Chapter 4

# Tools of the Trade: The Instruments of Jazz

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Surveying brass and reed instruments
  - ▶ Plucking on strings
  - ▶ Picking out percussion
  - ▶ Hitting the keyboards
- 

**S**wing is the pulse of all great jazz. It's that loose-but-relentless forward momentum, rooted in rhythm sections of basses, drums, pianos, and guitars but carried by all the players. A jazz band, no matter the type of jazz or the size of the band, has the versatility of a classical ensemble and the range of an orchestra. In this chapter, you can check out the instruments that make all types of jazz music swing.

## *Blow Out: Brass and Reeds*

Jazz's wind instruments include the clarinet, cornet, flute, saxophone, trombone, and trumpet. They're jazz's stars because they play most of the melodies and solos. In range, smoothness, and reliance on air to create sound, wind instruments are like the human voice — which maybe one reason for their tremendous appeal. I cover these instruments in the following sections.

## *Feeling saxxy: Jazz's signature sound*



In the history of jazz, no other instrument has had the impact of the saxophone. If I had to guess why, I would say it's because the saxophone has a sound most equivalent to the human voice. Both can be soft and sensitive or extremely assertive and cover most any emotion. The saxophone can slide between notes with a grace not possible on most other jazz instruments.

Saxophones were invented decades before jazz, and were familiar instruments by the time of jazz's birth. Musicians around the world had played all shapes and sizes of horns for centuries but nothing quite like the saxophone. From Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young, to Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, and Ornette Coleman, most of jazz's innovators have been saxophonists.



When I talk about saxophonists, I'm actually referring to musicians who play various types of saxophones:

- ✓ Alto sax (Charlie Parker)
- ✓ Baritone sax (Gerry Mulligan)
- ✓ Soprano sax (John Coltrane)
- ✓ Tenor sax (Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, John Coltrane)



These horns showed up in jazz beginning in the late 1920s. With their expressive range, saxophones soon became sexy darlings of jazz, stars of jam session battles that lasted for hours. Soaring above piano, bass, and drums, saxophonists played a lead role in small groups, many of which spun off from big bands during the late 1930s. Saxophones also took a lead in '60s and '70s avant garde jazz and in '70s and '80s electric jazz — some players amplified traditional saxophones, while others experimented with a new invention known as the electronic wind instrument (EWI).

In the following sections, I discuss the creation of the saxophone and show you the different kinds of saxophones used in jazz.

### *Inventing the saxophone*

So where did the saxophone come from? Good question! Adolphe Sax was the Belgian son of a father who made musical instruments. Sax was a musician and instrument maker who became dissatisfied with available horns, so he designed a reliable replacement with a sound that combined the qualities of brass, strings, and woodwinds. Sax patented the saxophone in 1846 and eventually designed 14 different varieties. His first design was a C bass saxophone, which impressed composers including Hector Berlioz, who began writing music for the new instrument.

Initially, the saxophone was scorned by old schoolers who played other wind instruments including clarinets. But when Adolphe Sax won a battle of wind instruments with his new invention, composers and musicians began warming up to his durable, versatile, appealing invention.

### *Surveying different types of saxophones*

Of the many saxophones designed by Adolphe Sax, several became mainstays of jazz: soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone. These saxophones have six keys and use similar fingerings. A master of one type can generally play the others.

- ✔ A soprano sax (see Figure 4-1) is straight (rarely, do you see a curved one) and resembles a clarinet, only narrower. Its sound is high, biting.



**Figure 4-1:**  
A soprano sax looks like a clarinet.

*Courtesy of Yamaha Corporation of America, Band and Orchestral Division*

- ✔ Alto, baritone, and tenor saxes are the ones that look like, well, saxes (when you typically think of a saxophone). All are brass and have the classic curved shape and upturned flared bell.
  - Alto (see Figure 4-2) is smallest of these three. It has an edge like the soprano sax, but its range isn't as high.



**Figure 4-2:**  
An alto saxophone is smaller than tenors and baritones.

*Courtesy of Yamaha Corporation of America, Band and Orchestral Division*

- The tenor (see Figure 4-3) is mid-size and has an extra curve where the body meets the mouthpiece. It occupies the warm middle zone of sound.
- Baritone saxes (see Figure 4-4) have an extra loop where the body meets the mouthpiece. It covers the bottom end of the sound range.

**Figure 4-3:**  
A tenor saxophone curves where the mouthpiece and the body meet.



**Figure 4-4:**  
A baritone saxophone has a loop where the mouthpiece and the body meet.



Early C-melody saxophones (a higher-pitched cousin of Adophe Sax's C-bass saxophone), favored by players such as Jack Pettis and Frankie Trumbauer, had a range between alto and tenor. No one uses them today (a possible opportunity for a young player to create a "new" sound).

Most saxophone mouthpieces are made of hard rubber (a few players prefer metal), and are similar to a clarinet's mouthpiece. There's a small clamp for attaching a reed, which vibrates with the player's breath. Saxophonists can be particular about their mouthpieces and reeds, searching for the perfect combination, treasuring it like expensive jewelry after they find it.

### *Brassy cousins: Cornets and trumpets*

Cornets and trumpets are cousins with similar but distinctive sounds; both have ancient roots that reach back to horns in ancient Egypt. In the Middle Ages, there were horns of tubing bent like trumpets, only much longer.

Over the years, various bends made horns more compact, without compromising their sound. In the early 1800s, various valved cornets and trumpets appeared, and in the 1840s Adolphe Sax (see "Inventing the saxophone" earlier in this chapter to find out more about him) introduced a line of valved bugles (or "saxhorns"). The modern cornet, with valves in the middle, was first manufactured by Antoine Courtois in 1855.

Trumpets developed on a parallel track. Joseph Haydn and other composers wrote parts for keyed trumpets. The piston-valve trumpet was invented by Francois Perinet in 1839.

Trumpets and cornets both use similar tubing but differ in their proportions of cylindrical and conical bores. The trumpet has less cylindrical tubing; its tubing stays the same size from mouthpiece to bell. The cornet's conical tubing tapers more dramatically than the trumpet's; it widens continually from the mouthpiece to the bell. This is said to give the cornet a smoother, mellower sound. The trumpet's sound is brighter and more commanding.

The cornet fit well with early New Orleans bands, where it was among colorful brass sections that grew out of marching bands and was used by players including Buddy Bolden and Louis Armstrong (see Chapter 5). Although the sound of cornet became synonymous with Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke, this horn fell out of favor for years until it was picked up again by Dixieland revival players in the 1940s and 1950s. A few modern musicians have also played cornet, among them Nat Adderley and Warren Vache. Trumpeters like Buddy Bolden and Louis Armstrong (see Chapter 5 for more about them) actually played the trumpetlike cornet in the early years of jazz, although Armstrong eventually switched to trumpet.

## Getting a fuller sound with the flugelhorn

In recent decades the flugelhorn — a slightly larger variation of a trumpet with a fuller, warmer tone — has been showcased by Art Farmer, Freddie Hubbard, and Clark Terry. The flugelhorn is well suited for ballads.

- ✓ Miles Davis used a flugelhorn for the minimalist cool sound on his 1957 album *Miles Ahead*.
- ✓ Trumpeter and bandleader Shorty Rogers played flugelhorn in 1950s cool jazz.
- ✓ Freddie Hubbard's big, sweet sound flugelhorn became a centerpiece of romantic '70s soul-jazz.
- ✓ South-African trumpeter Hugh Masekela uses flugelhorn on albums such as *Almost Like Being in Jazz* that combine African rhythms and textures with contemporary American jazz.
- ✓ Tom Harrell, a top trumpeter in the midst of his career, uses trumpets and flugelhorns, depending on the song.

The trumpet is better suited to its lead role in modern jazz. As Armstrong switched from cornet to trumpet, the trumpet's powerful sound fit his pioneering solos and distinct tone. Subsequent trumpeters — Chet Baker, Clifford Brown, Miles Davis, and Dizzy Gillespie — exploited the trumpet's range of sounds, from loud and piercing to soft, muted, and whispery.

## Sliding sounds: Trombones

Early jazz trombonists were called *tailgaters* because they hung their slides out from the backs of horse-drawn wagons that carried jazz bands through the streets of New Orleans.

Certain elements characterize the playing of the early New Orleans tailgaters. These sounds really defined the role that trombone was to play and continues to play in the jazz ensemble. In New Orleans, trombones played the bass parts later performed by bass guitarists. In big bands, trombones helped anchor the bottom beat, and they harmonized with trumpets and saxophones in brass sections. Trombones can also do some of the things a human voice can do.



Here are some of the things to listen for when you listen to jazz trombone:

- ✓ **Glissando:** Also called a smooth slide because the instrument slides through a string of notes that sounds, at times, like an elephant braying. This technique is what most people recognize as “that trombone sound.” (The term is Italian, as are many musical terms — purists may refer to more than one glissando as *glissandi*.)

- ✔ **Vibrato:** A wavering sound often kept up through the entire length of a note or phrase, adding dynamic detail. The term literally means “with vibration,” and after you recognize vibrato, you understand why. Vibrato is also a common technique used by vocalists.
- ✔ **Playing on the beat:** Trombone lends itself well to playing below other horns, so it often assumes a rhythmic role of pumping out the bass beat.
- ✔ **Wah-wah sounds:** The phrase may sound a little weird, but the trombones mimic this sound with mutes and plungers placed over or inside the horn’s bell. Mutes were especially popular with early New Orleans and subsequent swing-era.

Although slide trombone is the familiar jazz icon, the valve trombone is another species used in jazz.



All brass instruments are similar in that a player creates different pitches by varying the vibration of his lips, the opening of his mouth, and the volume of air. Pitch also changes when the length traveled by air changes. The slide on a slide trombone changes this distance, while the valves on a valve trombone or trumpet accomplish the task.

While trombonists are usually lumped together, some of jazz’s most innovative players used valve trombones, including “Tricky” Sam Nanton (who made his trombone “talk” like a human voice in Duke Ellington’s orchestra) and Bob Brookmeyer (who played with West Coast cool jazzmen Gerry Mulligan and Jimmy Giuffre). Brookmeyer is one of the few valve trombonists to record his own albums as a leader.

## *Starring in the swing era: Clarinets*

When you think of the swing era (which I cover in Chapter 6), the first images that come to mind are probably famous bandleaders, mysterious saxophonists, and stylish singers. But for a few years during the heyday of big bands, clarinets were the stars.



Early jazz didn’t feature long solos, but in terms of carrying melodies and standing out in a crowd, clarinets kept a high profile. New Orleans clarinetists led by Johnny Dodds and Jimmie Noone were among the most important figures in early jazz. Although they weren’t bandleaders or prolific composers, the clarinetists pioneered the idea of the gifted soloist for whom a band’s music might be custom tailored. In more recent years, players such as Buddy DeFranco and Eddie Daniels took the clarinet to frontline status.

Harry Carney, Benny Goodman, Omer Simeon, and Artie Shaw were some of the most talented clarinetists of ’20s and ’30s. Goodman and Shaw are remembered as big-band leaders but were epic instrumentalists.



Leaders like Goodman and Shaw used clarinets for their strong and distinctive sound that pierced through layers of big band arrangements. The instruments have the capacity for mesmerizing melodies that, even in jazz, can sound like mythological snake-charming music. They're light, compact, and easy to wave flamboyantly — a bonus for leaders like Goodman and Shaw.

Clarinets resemble oboes and soprano saxophones (which I cover earlier in this chapter), but clarinets are distinct in both construction and tone. Oboes and clarinets are made of hardwood, usually Grenadillo, while saxophones are brass. Oboes have a small double reed that lends a sharper, more exotic sound. Clarinets have a saxophone-like reed that requires more respiratory strength but yields a bigger tone. (Oboes have rarely been heard in jazz; saxophonist Don Redman used one occasionally with the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra during the 1920s, and woodwind player Yusef Lateef has occasionally added oboe to his arsenal of saxophone and flute.)

The alto clarinet (see Figure 4-5) has a wide range and big tone that makes it well suited for jazz, but it's perhaps the most difficult to master among woodwind instruments. Fingerings on the alto clarinet are more complicated than on saxophones or oboes.

**Figure 4-5:**

The alto clarinet has complicated fingerings.



Jazz musicians also play bass clarinet — a larger more cumbersome instrument with a fuller, deeper tone (see Figure 4-6). Bass clarinets are rare but became popular in free jazz and fusion during the '70s (see Chapter 8). Among those boosting the modern clarinet boom were Hamiett Bluiett, Gunter Hampel, Bennie Maupin, Roscoe Mitchell, and David Murray.



Bennie Maupin adds dark, foreboding sounds on Miles Davis's revolutionary 1969 album *Bitches Brew* (Sony). Deep down in the bottom end, his horn here sounds almost like a Gregorian chant. If you listen closely to this recording, you hear how Maupin's playing helps shape the music. On his 1998 solo album *Driving While Black* (Intuition), Maupin adds electronic effects to make mesmerizing, contemporary jazz.



**Figure 4-6:**  
The bass clarinet is more cumbersome than the alto clarinet.

*Courtesy of Yamaha Corporation of America, Band and Orchestral Division*

## On the edge of jazz: Flutes

Flutes are close relatives of saxophones (covered earlier in this chapter), although they don't have reeds. Generally, the flute — a long, straight metal tube with keys similar to a saxophone's — has been a fringe instrument in jazz, played seriously by only a handful of musicians. Its role in jazz music is primarily to add harmonies and colors to small group and big band music, but players such as Eric Dolphy, Yusef Lateef, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, and James Moody have done beautiful improvisations.



The flute's ethereal sound is one of the most distinctive in jazz. A mouthpiece unlike that of any other wind instrument lets a flutist blend chanting, humming, and other vocal sounds into her flute playing and to make shrills, distorted shrieks, and cries utilizing a technique called *overblowing*. When noted jazz flutist James Newton plays, the transition between his humming, singing, breathing, and flute playing is so seamless it all sounds like one magical instrument.

The basic design of a flute with its long tube with finger holes and air hole hasn't changed in thousands of years. Ancient Chinese drawings show flutes. But the breakthrough for modern flutists came in 1850 when Theobald Boehm redesigned the instrument with larger holes that produced a bigger sound. The holes were too large to be covered with fingertips, so Boehm added keys that controlled padded hole covers.

## Albert Socarras: The first jazz flutist on record

Albert Socarras was first to record the jazz flute. Like other jazz flutists, Socarras was a *doubler*—he played saxophone and clarinet. Socarras played flute on several songs recorded by Clarence Williams’s big band in 1929, and his solo on “Have You Ever Felt That Way” included on *Clarence Williams 1929* (Classics) is the earliest example of flute improvisation I’ve found.

“Have You Ever Felt That Way” is an upbeat number led by Williams’ piano and “de-de-de-doo” vocals. After cornetist Ed Allen’s raunchy

solo, Socarras comes trilling in, delivers an inventive solo, and pauses as Williams calls out, “Everybody in the cycle now; everybody in the cycle” and then takes his piano break. Socarras returns for another burst of invention. Although his moment lasts only 30 seconds or so, it’s enough to show that he was a capable improviser as creative as horn players, pianists, and vocalists — the common leading sounds of his day. Socarras pointed the way toward jazz’s great flute virtuosos who didn’t come along until the 1950s.



Finding a concentrated sample of great jazz flute music is difficult. Probably half of jazz’s top flutists play other wind instruments, including saxophones, and these players seldom make recordings that focus solely on the flute. More commonly, these doublers include a flute tune or two on their albums. Only a handful of flutists have made recordings devoted to the flute: Herbie Mann, Frank Wess, Hubert Laws, Holly Hofmann, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Charles Lloyd, Sam Most, Jeremy Steig, Buddy Collette, Lloyd McNeil, and James Newton. For details on an early doubler, see the nearby sidebar “Albert Socarras: The first jazz flutist on record.”

In recent decades, flutists like Eric Dolphy, Joe Farrell, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, James Moody, Yusef Lateef, Hubert Laws, James Newton, and Frank Wess have brought the instrument front and center with their sublime performances.



For intimate headphone listening that can be as calming as a good meditation, try these albums that feature the flute:

- ✓ ***Does Your House Have Lions (Rhino)***: In this retrospective of music from 1961 to 1976, Rahsaan Roland Kirk moves easily from flute to saxophone and exotic wind instruments such as the mandello and stritch as he runs a range of jazz influences from New Orleans to bebop. He also displays his talent for playing two or three saxophones at once.
- ✓ ***Echo Canyon (Celestial Harmonies)***: James Newton gets inspiration from Southwestern landscapes and painter Georgia O’Keeffe to evoke the mystical moods of red canyons, deserts, and mesas.
- ✓ ***Live at Pep’s (Impulse)***: Yusef Lateef plays flute, as well as bamboo flute and saxophone, on this powerful live recording in 1964.

## Strumming Along: Strings

In early jazz, tubas usually took the low parts, but by the swing era, most bands had bassists on different instruments, and by the late 1930s, when small groups began outnumbering big bands, bass players were pretty standard.

The bassist's role evolved as jazz matured. It began as the steady thumping power source of a band but eventually provide harmonies and melodies.

### *Building the foundation: The standup bass*

The bass is one of the oldest instruments used in jazz, dating back through centuries of classical music. It's the only classical string instrument to become a fixture in jazz (although there have been a few violins). The bass allows for a more percussive attack with a broader range of sounds better suited to versatile jazz ensembles. Originally named contrabass, because its range is lower than the bass range of other instruments including the piano, it's more commonly referred to as "standup" or "upright" bass. Standup? Upright? Sounds like a truly honest instrument.

Unlike a guitar (which I cover later in this chapter), a bass is fretless, which means a bassist can slide to positions that deliver all sorts of notes in between the notes of familiar scales. It also means that bassists can easily produce glissandos like trombones (covered earlier in this chapter) by sliding a finger along a string through a seamless series of notes.

Basses haven't changed much since the time of Bach and Beethoven. They have four strings (although big band bassist Chubby Jackson used a custom five-stringer with Woody Herman's Thundering Herd during the 1940s). They are still made of wood, with slots called f-holes cut into the top (or sounding board) to disperse sound. Historically, jazz bassists usually plucked the strings (*pizzicato*) to deliver a thumping groove, but they employ bows (*arco* style) for all sorts of sliding sounds and sustained notes.



The bass is commonly perceived as a partner of drums in a jazz band's rhythm section, but bassists and drummers really play independent and complementary parts. Together, they ensure that the music's steady pulse is felt, sometimes by implication (that is, carefully placed silences or off-beat accents) as much as emphasis. One instrument keeps the basic beat while the other embroiders it. Other times, both musicians move all around the beat. In the rhythm section, a bassist and a drummer form the nucleus of the music, the solid rhythmic core around which other players build layers of improvisation. (I discuss drums in more detail later in this chapter.)



Basses succeed in starring roles in the hands of versatile bassists beginning with Jimmy Blanton in the '40s. A bass can beautifully carry a melody (especially when played with a bow — a technique known as arco) or ring out improvisations in its resonant, deep voice.

As Louis Armstrong and innovative soloists such as swing-era saxophonists Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins, bebop saxophonist Charlie Parker, and multi-style trumpeter Miles Davis explored new roles for their instruments, bassists advanced their art too. Jimmy Blanton, Charles Mingus, Ray Brown, Scott LaFaro, and Charlie Haden vastly extended the bass' emotional range.

## *Connecting with current: The electric bass*

In jazz, bassists initially fought a battle to be heard in bands powered by bold brass. Going back to the advent of recordings and microphones in the '20s, bassists experiment with amplifying their instruments. Today, standup bassists who need extra volume for clubs and concert halls use a *pickup* — an electronic microphonelike accessory that clips onto their instrument and picks up the vibrations.

During the '60s, electric rock-and-roll with jazzy flavors caught the attention of many jazz players. Bassists, led by Monk Montgomery, added electric bass guitar to their arsenal during the '50s. In the '70s, Ron Carter brought an extensive knowledge of the acoustic bassman's craft to his work on electric bass, sometimes using a smaller, higher-pitched standup piccolo bass.

Electric basses also give modern big band musicians enough power to be heard without playing too hard. And in the late '60s and early '70s, when Miles Davis and others turned to electric jazz, the electric bass joined other electric instruments in the music known as fusion (see Chapter 8 for details). Electric basses have the added benefit of portability, which made them extremely popular with working and traveling bassists.

Some electric bassists favor instruments with five or six strings, instead of the standard four, which gives a broader range. Others such as Jaco Pastorius (of Weather Report) favored fretless electric basses that produced swooping, sliding sounds.

## *Picking it up: Guitars*



Playing the guitar is an act that marries the instrument's rhythmic and melodic sides. A thumb can pluck bass lines while fingers play chords and melodies, as the guitarist pushes down combinations of strings at various frets (strips of steel across a guitar's neck). And when a guitarist strums chords to emphasize the beat, he becomes a part of the rhythm section, which also includes bass, drums, and sometimes piano.

The guitar's role changed substantially since it first showed up in New Orleans jazz bands. As jazz groups grew larger during the late 1920s, guitarists couldn't play loud enough to be heard. That problem was solved with the electric guitar (covered later in this section), and since then several generations of jazz guitarists have expanded their instrument's repertoire.

In the following sections, I describe the guitar's early years in jazz and how musicians electrified it in later decades.

### *The guitar versus the banjo*

Around New Orleans, where jazz was born, guitar and its banjo cousin had been popular for years. String trios with a guitar or banjo — and with mandolin and bass — played often in African-American and Creole neighborhoods. Between 1895, when Buddy Bolden formed his band, and the '20s, when jazz proliferated and the earliest jazz recordings were made, the guitar's role was minimalized. Yet Bolden's lineup in 1905 included the guitar. (See Chapter 5 for more about Bolden and other early jazz musicians.)

Early guitar players often doubled on banjo because it's louder and can be heard in settings that drown out acoustic guitar. Johnny St. Cyr favored his banjo over a guitar on recordings he made with Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton. Musicians who concentrated on banjo in early jazz bands included Bill Johnson (with King Oliver), Papa Charlie Jackson, and Harry Reser. Even Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra, a '20s prototype for classic '30s and '40s big bands, often included a banjo in the guitar's eventual slot.



Whether jazz's earliest fretmen selected a banjo or a guitar, their role was predominantly rhythmic. They rarely carried a melody or soloed. They helped bassists, pianists, and drummers keep the pace by strumming the chords.

By the mid-'20s, when early jazz recordings were made by Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, and King Oliver, newer, louder guitars boosted the instrument's profile. By 1927, St. Cyr had swapped his banjo for a guitar, and as jazz rose to popularity via records and radio, guitarists completely replaced banjo players. Eddie Lang and Lonnie Johnson were jazz's earliest guitar virtuosos — rhythm section players but also improvisers who soloed alongside trumpeters and saxophonists.

### *Electrifying the guitar*

Guitar fanatics experimented with ways to electrify guitars during the early 1930s. Pioneering guitar inventor Les Paul even jammed a phonograph needle into the top of his acoustic guitar and got a primitive electric sound. (See Chapter 17 for more information about Paul.)

## Going beyond six strings

A standard jazz guitar has six strings, but guitarists including Bucky Pizzarelli, his son John, Howard Alden, and George Van Eps deployed seven-stringers that extended the instrument's range. Other guitarists, such as San Francisco-Bay Area phenom Charlie Hunter, have developed exotic

custom instruments. Hunter's guitar combines five strings in the guitar's standard range with three fatter bass strings. This setup allows him to play bass lines, chords, and melodies simultaneously. Close your eyes, and sometimes you may think you're hearing a trio.



In 1935, guitarist Eddie Durham played what may have been the earliest amplified jazz guitar solo. Durham carved out the top of his acoustic guitar and inserted a pie-pan-like resonator under the strings to brighten and reflect the sound back toward the audience. On the song "Hitting the Bottle" with Jimmie Lunceford's big band, Durham soloed as Lunceford held a microphone up to his guitar, to get a new, amplified sound.



Catch Durham in the late 1930s on *Lester Young — The Kansas City Sessions* (Verve), playing inventive solos that point the way toward Charlie Christian, who reinvented the art of jazz guitar (see Chapter 6 for more about him). This album is great not only for Durham, but also because it includes some excellent playing by Young and other greats.

When the earliest electric guitars came out during the late '30s, a few savvy jazz guitarists quickly saw their potential. St. Louis-born Floyd Smith, a member of Andy Kirk's orchestra, was among the first to plug in. He played an electric guitar developed primarily for Hawaiian music, and his efforts can be heard on Kirk's recordings from the late '30s. Rickenbacker produced early electric guitars (including the famous solid-body "frying pan" guitar), but none found widespread use in jazz. Smith's newfound electric sound is apparent on "Floyd's Guitar Blues," on the album *Andy Kirk/Introduction: His Best Recordings 1929–1946* (Best of Jazz).



At Gibson, Lloyd Loar, a factor technician, began developing electric pickups during the early '20s. He later left the company, but in 1935, Gibson introduced its ES 150 hollow-body electric guitar, and the juice flowed straight into jazz after guitarist Charlie Christian bought one in 1937 and won a spot in Benny Goodman's band. Later electric jazz guitars played by Barney Kessel and others weren't all that different from Christian's, although craftsmanship, pickups, and hardware went through many refinements.

Plugged in, guitarists played several roles: rhythmic, melodic, and improvisational. But they weren't as common in small modern jazz groups as piano. When an electric jazz guitarist strums a chord, it sustains for several

seconds, filling the space behind a melody or solo. A guitarist can play each chord in several positions on the neck, so he can place it in the low, middle, or upper range of the musical spectrum. He can play chords using anywhere from two to six strings, depending on how much texture or sound he needs. He can also play a melody or counter-melody along with a saxophonist, trumpeter, or singer, which adds another musical dimension.



Some of my favorite jazz guitar music comes from small groups where the guitarist is the featured player, filling many roles at once, and especially on solo albums, where the instrument's full potential is realized. Here are a few albums for serious guitar-heads (like me):

- ✓ **Barney Kessel: *Solo* (Concord):** Kessel was a great rhythm guitarist and a phenomenal improviser. On this recording, his multi-talents come together without any other instruments in the way of his brilliant sound.
- ✓ **Joe Pass: *Virtuoso* (Pablo):** Wow, can this man play. This recording stands as an all-time great testimony to the potential of jazz guitar, as Pass transforms the instrument into a one-man group on great tunes such as “Cherokee,” “How High the Moon,” and “Stella by Starlight.”
- ✓ ***The Swinging Guitar of Tal Farlow* (Polygram):** On this late '50s trio session, Farlow showed his stuff on songs such as “Yardbird Suite” and the romantic “Taking a Chance on Love.”

## *Pound Away: Percussion*

On cymbals, drums, vibraphones, and handheld accessories, percussionists provide the pulse that keeps jazz moving. They strike surfaces with sticks and mallets to produce sounds that contrast with the smoother, flowing sound of bass, guitar, piano, and wind instruments. I cover different percussion instruments in the following sections.

### *Drums through the ages*

A good drummer is a jazz band's glue. While bass players (or tubas or trombones in early jazz bands) anchor the beat, the drummer has a multi-purpose role: Utilizing his bass drum pedal, he can emphasize the beat, but he can also embellish it with accents or bass drum *kicks*. Using an array of drums, cymbals, and accessories, the drummer fills in with accents, flourishes, rolls, cymbal crashes, and rhythmic combinations.



Great drummers help make great jazz bands. Seated behind horns and given fewer solos than most of their bandmates, drummers can seem anonymous. And yet, drummers are the engines who move the music ahead. They keep it swinging and interact with various lead soloists, spurring them on to new creative highs.

In the following sections, I take you through the evolution of drums, from the earliest drums to drums in current times.

### *The earliest drums*

Drums used in jazz today grew from ancient roots. Rhythm was the essence of African music. Architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe visited New Orleans in 1821, and in his journal made drawings of cylindrical African drums played at Sunday celebrations by slaves gathered in Congo Square.

Evolution of the modern drum set used in jazz began in the theater. Prior to that, drummers in marching, concert, and jazz bands focused on a single percussion instrument: bass drum, snare drum, or cymbals. Drummers in early New Orleans jazz groups led by Buddy Bolden and John Robichaux (see Chapter 5 for details on them) used marching drums, although they sometimes played two drums at once by hand. When they played gigs in cramped theatres, drummers were forced to play bass and snare drums simultaneously, because there wasn't room for two or three people.



In 1909 William Ludwig, founder of Ludwig & Ludwig drums, patented the first modern bass drum pedal. His durable metal, spring-loaded thumper met the demands of ragtime and jazz drummers who played faster and harder. The pedal was the single most important advance that gave drummers the ability to play powerful polyrhythms anchored by booming bass drum beats.

### *Drums from the 1920s to the 1940s*

By the time Louis Armstrong, King Oliver, and Jelly Roll Morton made their seminal jazz records of the 1920s (see Chapter 5), drummers led by Baby Dodds were playing kits that included many items:

- ✓ **Bass drum with pedal:** 28 inches in diameter, a holdover from marching bands. Big bass drums were standard into the 1930s.
- ✓ **Snare drum:** Throughout jazz, dating back to New Orleans brass bands, the snare drum was the key instrument in the drummer's arsenal. Depending on how it's tuned, the snare fits in the middle-to-high range of a group's sound. The drummer uses his snare to keep time with just a few combinations, or he fills in more elaborate textures with rolls and other fast patterns. Good drummers use snares and cymbals to provide empathetic support for vocalists, horn players, and other lead performers.

✓ **Cymbals:** In early jazz, one cymbal was called a *choke cymbal*. A drummer would accent key moments in the music by striking the cymbal for a dramatic crash, then choking it with his hand. The abrupt sound made an exclamation point. In swing and bebop, drummers added more cymbals and expanded their role, keeping steady time or adding crashes to accent emotional high points.



Kits also included wood blocks, cowbells, and other percussive paraphernalia, mounted atop the bass drum. By the '30s, drummers had so much hardware that a separate metal rack was added to hold these accessories. Jazz drum sets became known as *trap drums*, for the contraptions kept in the tray.

Photos document the evolution of the drum set through jazz's history. Bass drums became much smaller and portable for road trips; they produced a tighter sound suited to up-tempo swing and bebop. Snare drums, originally made from bent, laminated wood, were later made from steel, which produced a crisper, louder sound. Ludwig's 1920s "Black Beauty" snare, made of gunmetal engraved with a scroll pattern, became a coveted item that's still manufactured and popular today.

Drummers eventually added more cymbals, as well as one or two tom-toms, often mounted atop the bass drum. Tom-toms have proportions similar to a bass drum but are much smaller and provide a range of higher pitches, depending on their size and tuning. Initially, these were Chinese drums with painted heads that couldn't be tuned. Eventually, a floor tom on legs became standard as well. Later, tom-toms were made more like snare drums, only deeper, and usually from bent wood, not steel.

Cymbals became bigger in the 1930s and '40s, as drummers began to "ride" them to keep time. The high-hat — a pair of cymbals on a metal stand clapped together by a pedal — started out as one cymbal struck by an extension of the bass drum pedal, then became a pair of cymbals mounted within a foot pedal, and finally the high-hat that's one of a jazz drummer's essential tools today. In Count Basie's orchestra beginning in the 1930s, drummer Jo Jones became a master of subtle high-hat rhythms and sounds.

### ***Drums in modern times***

By the 1940s, bebop drummers such as Kenny Clarke used drum sets that are essentially the same as most jazz players use today. (Check out Chapter 7 for bebop details.) Drums now come in a variety of materials (wood, metal, carbon fiber), and various drummers (like Buddy Rich) expanded their drum sets to suit their personal needs. However, the basic drum set includes

- ✓ Bass drum (with pedal)
- ✓ Snare drum
- ✓ Mounted tom-tom

- ✓ Floor tom
- ✓ Two cymbals
- ✓ High-hat (see Figure 4-7)



**Figure 4-7:**  
A variety of  
drums and  
accessories  
make up a  
modern  
drum kit.



As drum sets changed, so did the role of drummers. In the '20s and '30s, drummers kept a steady beat on bass drum with cymbals and other drums for accents. By the '40s, bebop drummers lifted primary rhythmic roles upward to cymbals and snare by using bass drum for a combination of steady rhythms and accents.

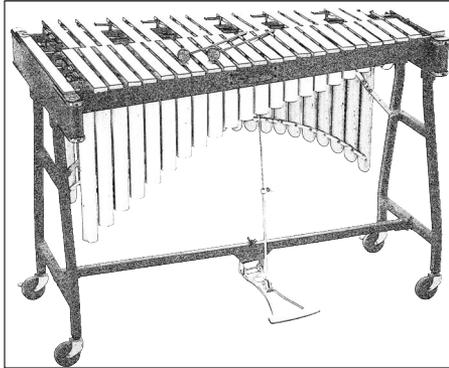
In the '80s, drummers like Ronald Shannon Jackson used their kits to evoke the layered sound of earlier African drum circles. In a small way, the drummer's role had returned home to its African roots, except one person now covered the parts of many.

## Good vibes

The vibraphone may be the ultimate jazz instrument. Marrying melodic capability with percussive power, the instrument slips easily between rhythmic and lyrical roles. The vibraphone, often called *vibes*, can add pianolike chords with an echoed, ringing sound that gives depth to the music.

A vibraphone is a melodic member of the percussion family whose relatives include marimba, xylophone, and glockenspiel. All have bars laid out like a piano's keys, which the player strikes with mallets (see Figure 4-8). While the marimba and xylophone's bars are made of wood, vibes use bars made of metal or aluminum on recent models.

**Figure 4-8:**  
A musician  
plays a  
vibraphone  
with mallets.



Although rare, vibes have been used in dramatic ways since the 1920s:

- ✓ Lionel Hampton's vibes were a driving lead voice in his big bands.
- ✓ Milt Jackson's vibes added a fresh dimension to bebop.
- ✓ Cal Tjader fused vibes with Latinized versions of great jazz tunes.
- ✓ Gary Burton has made some of the most provocative and subtle jazz, often in duo or small-group settings.

Vibes get their vibrations from motorized baffles that open and close inside resonating tubes hanging below each aluminum bar. The baffles add a wavering (vibrato) effect that can be varied in frequency (by changing the speed of the motor that turns the baffles) to fit the mood or song. Vibes also have a pedal that allows the player to damp the bars, that is, to stop them from ringing after they are struck. To watch a vibraphonist in person is to see a magician work magic with two or four wands that are his mallets.



Treat yourself to a couple of CDs by jazz's modern masters of vibraphone:

- ✓ ***The Complete Lionel Hampton, Volumes 1 and 2 (1937–1938) (RCA):*** Get a good listen to jazz's early master of vibes. Hear how Hampton's playing blossomed when he moved from drums to vibes and combined his rhythmic sense with new harmonic and melodic potential.
- ✓ ***Dialogue (Blue Note):*** Bobby Hutcherson was the leading jazz vibraphonist of the late '50s and '60s, and on his debut solo album from 1965, he established vibes as a strong counterpoint to jazz's more familiar instruments. As of 2006, Hutcherson is still in prime form and serves as co-leader and mentor of the San Francisco Jazz Collective.

## *Tickling the Ebonies and Ivories: Keyboards*

Pianists aren't often the lead instruments in a jazz band, but they're frequently the glue that holds a group together. That's because pianists, along with guitarists, are the only players who can play all of a piece's basic parts. Pianists dating back to Jelly Roll Morton and Fats Waller were among jazz's first important innovators. Pianists, more than any other jazz instrumentalists, also have a long history of making great solo albums.

Just ahead, I explain the piano's versatile personality and introduce you to some of the important players and innovations.

### *The piano's many talents*

The piano was born in the early 1700s as a successor to the harpsichord. Unlike the plucked strings of the harpsichord, the piano made its debut with its padded mallets striking the strings. This effect displays a warmer, less harsh tone. The piano brought durability and increased volume, as well as foot pedals to control tone and duration of notes. By the end of the 18th century, pianos came in models ranging from compact uprights to 19-foot concert grands, which were eventually used in jazz settings ranging from clubs to concert halls.

In the years when jazz was invented, pianos were a part of many American households, which is why a lot of ragtime and early jazz musicians were pianists. Pianos, encompassing a musical range through 88 keys from bassoons to piccolos, also became important instruments for composers such as Duke Ellington.



Among jazz instruments, pianos and guitars (which I cover earlier in this chapter) are the ones that allow a single performer to combine bass lines, chords, and melodies, with all sorts of rhythmic variations. Pianos are basically an orchestra in a box — a big, beautiful wooden box.

Several performers in jazz's rich history have played the piano:

- ✓ Scott Joplin and Eubie Blake wrote and played ragtime during jazz's formative years. They kept one-two-one-two rhythms with left hand bass notes and chords while their right hands carried the melody. They helped infuse the jazz that followed with the “ragged” swinging rhythms that formed its basis.

- ✔ James P. Johnson and Duke Ellington, in 1920s New York City, were among the great stride pianists, giving the style its name with left hands striding back and forth between bass notes an octave apart while right hands carried melodies and improvised. Their syncopated rhythms (with accents all around the beat instead of right on it) and improvisations formed the basis of modern jazz piano. In fact, Ellington's own style evolved along with jazz, and he collaborated with top players in most of jazz's major eras and styles.
- ✔ Bud Powell, bebop pianist, used his left hand to provide spare, supporting chords as his right hand improvised melodic lines (like what Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker played on their horns). Hard bop pianists backed off on the speed and dialed in a soulful, bluesier feeling.
- ✔ Cecil Taylor, avant garde pianist, broke the rules with both hands and pounded the keys (and sometimes other parts of the piano) to drum up powerful rhythms.

As the players evolved, so did their pianos. Jazz pianists today choose from a variety of instruments ranging up to Cecil Taylor's precious Bosendorfers, which cost more than \$100,000.

## *The organ as the piano's soulful alter ego*

Sacred and profane. That's one way to view the organ's evolution as a jazz instrument. Pipe organs, originally created for spectacular European cathedrals, eventually became fixtures in early American movie theatres where African-American musicians, including Fats Waller and Count Basie, often played them with boldness. Then, during the 1960s, electric organs became centerpieces in some very sexy soul-jazz.



In their construction, pipe organs bear obvious similarity to the human voice: Their sound comes from wind rushing through tubes. And the organ is actually as much a wind instrument as a member of the keyboard and piano clan. It has a keyboard, but the sound quality and way it's produced is similar to many horns and flutes. Electric organs use electronic circuits to create the sound. Thanks to foot-pedaled bass notes, a good organist can, by himself, cover all the elements of a small jazz group: bass, rhythms, chords, melodies, and improvisations.

Partly because of its sound and partly because of its presence in churches, organs first met the hands of African-American musicians during Sunday services, where Fats Waller first played one. He became a legendary pianist, but he was also jazz's first important organist.



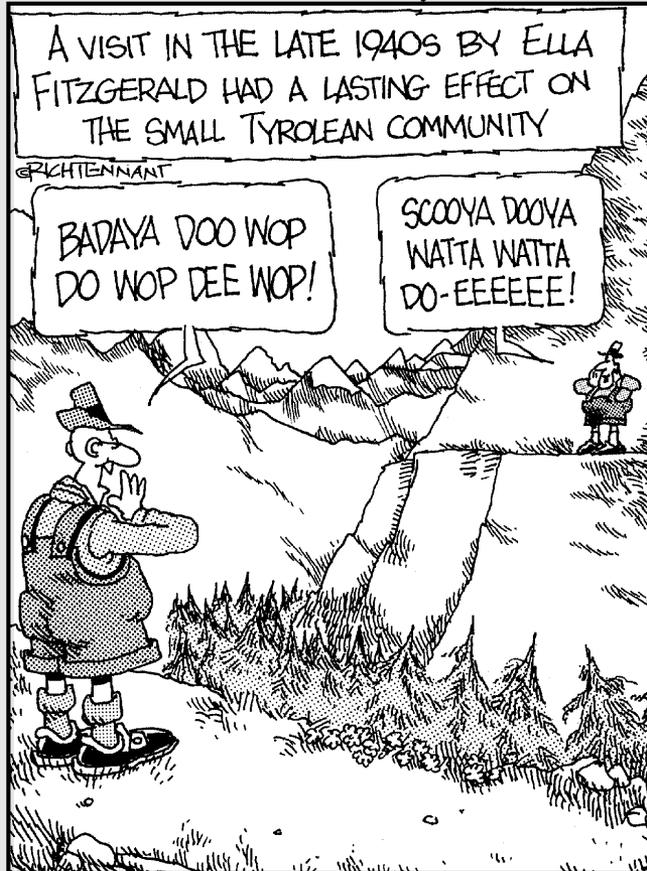
Due to its wailing sound and lethargic key action compared with piano, the organ is particularly well suited to slower, bluesy jazz, and in fact, some of the coolest organ music is blues.

The Hammond B-3, with its big, welling sound, was made famous by blues and jazz players from Jimmy Smith to Barbara Dennerlein and Joey DeFrancesco. Because the player needs to hold down a key to produce a sound (instead of a short strike that produces sound on a piano), the organ requires a more fluid technique and produces a more flowing sound than the piano. Because it's electric, an organ can sustain a note indefinitely; organs also have a variety of built-in instrumental sounds and are often played through a spinning speaker that adds a wavering vibrato. The B-3 has two keyboards, as well as foot pedals for bass notes, which gives it even more range than a piano. While the B-3 is the standard and its sound is synonymous with organ in blues and jazz, keyboard players have used other models as well as synthesizers to create organlike sounds.

# Part II

# Jazz Greats and Great Jazz: An Evolutionary Riff

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave By Rich Tennant



## *In this part . . .*

**Y**our trip through jazz history in this part begins in New Orleans, where African, blues, classical, funeral, marching, and ragtime music come together in this rich gumbo of a city. The first jazz musicians develop the music in New Orleans and make the first significant recordings in Chicago. Then you're off aboard big band swing for a stop at New York bebop. Later, it's a short hop to hard bop; cool, free, and electric jazz; Latin jazz; and rolling on into the new millennium.

## Chapter 5

# The Birth of an American Music: Jazz into the 1920s

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Seeing the creation of jazz in New Orleans
  - ▶ Meeting Buddy Bolden and other early musicians
  - ▶ Making time for ragtime
  - ▶ Recording the first jazz and moving jazz to Chicago
  - ▶ Introducing white players
- 

**I**n this chapter, I tell you the details of the birth of jazz in New Orleans, the influence of ragtime on early jazz, and the growth of Chicago as the center of jazz in the 1920s. You also meet a few of the earliest (and most influential) musicians of jazz.

## *Blending the Ingredients of Jazz in New Orleans*

Waves of change swept America between the Civil War and the turn of the century. Agriculture and rural life gave way to industry and urbanization. With the end of the war and slavery, many African Americans moved to the big cities.

Life was simpler then. Riverboats, horse-drawn carriages, and gas lamps hadn't been replaced by automobiles, airplanes, and electricity. While some American cities wrestled with a new multicultural identity, New Orleans was more accepting of ethnic diversity due to its early history under French and

Spanish rule before it became a part of the United States. African Americans, French, Spanish, Europeans, and Native Americans mixed more freely than in most cities, and the atmosphere was conducive to new combinations of culture and fresh forms of expression.

In this cultural gumbo, the earliest jazz was born during the 1880s and 1890s, played primarily by African Americans who brought their blues, spirituals, and work songs together with European music and instruments (especially brass). Improvisation — the spontaneous invention of rhythms and melodies that is part of authentic African music — was a vital element in jazz from the beginning.



New Orleans, with its rich multicultural history and population, was the natural place for jazz's invention. Consider the ingredients available during the last years of the 19th century:

- ✔ **A mixed population with French, Spanish, African, and West Indian roots — and a cosmopolitan atmosphere:** African music came to New Orleans via slave trade. Slaves arrived directly from Africa (the first slaves were brought to Virginia in 1619) or via the West Indies, a busy slave market because of the warm weather (similar to that of Africa).
- ✔ **A great concentration of African Americans and other people of color:** In 1880, when New Orleans was a major population center in the South; 55,000 of 210,000 residents were non-white.
- ✔ **Brass marching bands, a popular tradition since Louisiana was under French rule:** After the Civil War, marching bands brought brass instruments into New Orleans, and into the hands of African-American players. New Orleans brass bands utilized basic elements of jazz: improvisation, polyrhythms, and syncopation (see Chapter 3 for more about these elements).
- ✔ **Relaxed attitudes toward people of color:** The ethnically diverse population mixed freely, sharing musical influences. When Code 111 was enacted in 1894 proclaiming Afro-European Creoles and African Americans to be of equal status, Creoles moved to the black part of town. This move hastened the mingling of classically trained Creole musicians with bluesier, folksier blacks.
- ✔ **A wealth of music including blues, spirituals, marches, popular “Tin Pan Alley” songs, opera, and classical music:** When you listen to recordings by Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Jelly Roll Morton and others, you can hear these influences.
- ✔ **Storyville — the notorious district marked out by local statute for licensed prostitution:** Storyville's night life included dozens of saloons, honky tonks, and houses of pleasure featuring entertainment — including early jazz players.

## *We Were Here First: Jazz's Earliest Musicians*

The first jazz bands were offshoots of New Orleans brass bands that marched in parades and played social occasions ranging from picnics and parties to funerals. Instrumentation varied, depending on the occasion:

- ✓ Marching bands might be larger, with portable instruments.
- ✓ Dance/party bands could include piano and occasionally upright bass.
- ✓ Cornets, trumpets, and clarinets were the lead and solo instruments.
- ✓ Tubas, trombones, and basses anchored the bottom end.
- ✓ Drummers kept time on drum kits that combined parade drums.

Jazz has always been defined by its stars — those individual artists who gave each new style its life, color, and unique personality. Early jazz was no exception. Although Louis Armstrong and some of his peers are the best known pioneers (see “Migrating North: Chicago as the New Center of Jazz,” later in this chapter, for more details about them), the generation before them led the way, and had a legend of its own. I cover some of the earliest jazz trailblazers in the following sections.

### *Buddy Bolden and his powerful cornet*

Legend has it that the sharp, powerful sound of Buddy Bolden’s cornet carried for miles through the purple New Orleans dawn — a time of day when a good party would still be swinging. In the first years of the 20th century, a transitional period between ragtime and jazz (I cover ragtime in more detail later in this chapter under “Ragging the Rhythm: The Influence of Ragtime”), Bolden was the Miles Davis or Charlie Parker of his day.

Born barely a decade after the Civil War, Bolden grew up hearing brass bands like Excelsior, Eureka, and Onward, which all marched in military-style uniforms near his home. Bolden began playing cornet at 17 and, by 1900, was a star who may have become worldly famous, but his career ended after mental problems set in and he was institutionalized in 1907.

In 1895, Bolden formed what may have been the first jazz band: bass, drums, valve trombone, clarinet, guitar, and his own cornet. The music was brassy and sassy, in sharp contrast to the smoother, softer music made by bands like Bolden’s rival, John Robichaux (see the next section for more about him).

Bolden was part of the darker uptown African-American population, and his looser, largely improvised music jumped to marching band beats.



Bolden combined brass band music with blues, spirituals, marching music, and traditional styles such as polkas, funeral dirges, and ragtime into his own prototypical jazz. Those who heard him agree on his powerful cornet, ragged rhythms, and bluesy colors, as well as his gift for improvising — a departure from the tight scores of ragtime and brass band music.

While experts disagree as to the sophistication of Bolden's technique, no one questions the *power* of his music or that he delivered something fresh and exciting — a new sound with African rhythms and roots that compelled folks to pile on to the dance floor. In fact, some nights, when Bolden and Robichaux's bands performed blocks apart, Bolden could often lure fans to his bandstand with his brilliant cornet. Unfortunately, no recordings of Bolden's band exist (a rumored recording on wax cylinder — the predecessor to the record — has never been found).



You know what Bolden's music sounded like because of musicians who later described it or played in Bolden's style. From the beginning, then, jazz's evolution wasn't linear, as it often looks on timelines. Instead it occurred through a rich exchange among bands, composers, and musicians who moved the new music steadily forward.

But Bolden's impact was huge and direct. Several early New Orleans trumpeters heard him when they were budding young players:

- ✓ Joe "King" Oliver was born in 1885, eight years after Bolden and was 20 when Bolden hit his prime around 1905.
- ✓ Freddie Keppard was in his teens when Bolden hit his prime.
- ✓ Louis Armstrong was only five or six in 1905, but he later recalled having seen and heard Bolden around New Orleans.
- ✓ Bunk Johnson, trumpeter, and Fate Marable, pianist, were two more early New Orleans jazz musicians who probably heard Bolden as teenagers and went on to significant careers of their own.

Other musicians on the scene provided direct links between Bolden and his successors. Bud Scott (banjo player) went on from Bolden's band to perform with Keppard and Oliver.

## *Other Bolden-era innovators*

While Buddy Bolden was the most innovative of his time, many players were prominent in New Orleans during the late 1800s and early 1900s:

- ✔ **John Robichaux's orchestra:** This group rivaled Bolden's band. Robichaux played the more stately Creole variety of jazz, in contrast to Bolden's loose, black, bluesy jazz, but Bolden's group won a battle between the two bands.
- ✔ **The Onward Brass Band:** The band was one of New Orleans's top marching bands beginning in the 1880s. The group continued into the '30s and was led by famed trumpeter Joe "King" Oliver for a short time around 1915.
- ✔ **The Excelsior Band:** This troop lasted for decades and saw many top players pass through its ranks, including cornet and trumpeters Henry "Red" Allen and Manuel Perez (who also played with Onward), trombonist Honoré Dutrey (who later played with Louis Armstrong), and clarinetists Lorenzo and Luis Tio.
- ✔ **The Original Creole Band:** Freddie Keppard featured his trumpet in this ensemble that was one of the first jazz groups to tour extensively, bringing live New Orleans jazz to California and many points in between as early as 1914. Since Keppard began performing as a teenager at the time of Bolden's prime, his later recordings are among the few that give an idea of what jazz sounded like in its early years.
- ✔ **Freddie Keppard:** He was a bandleader and cornetist and was second only to Bolden among jazz's early New Orleans horn players. He led the Olympia Orchestra and in the 1920s was one of the first New Orleans jazz musicians to move to Chicago. Compared with Armstrong's smooth style, Keppard chopped steadily ahead in marching band rhythm.
- ✔ **George Lewis:** Lewis was a clarinetist who stayed and played in New Orleans while his peers went off to Chicago in the 1920s. He joined trumpeter Bunk Johnson for a 1942 recording that replicated earlier New Orleans jazz.
- ✔ **Bunk Johnson:** Born in 1889, trumpeter Bunk Johnson is the important link between two masters: Bolden and Armstrong. Later, he was one of the few original New Orleans players still alive to record the music during its revival in the '40s.
- ✔ **Fate Marable:** Fate was a pianist whose band played on Mississippi riverboats in the early 1900s. Louis Armstrong, King Oliver, drummers Baby Dodds and Zutty Singleton, banjo and guitar player Johnny St. Cyr, trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen and many other musicians who honed their skills in Marable's hard working group.
- ✔ **George Baquet:** A top clarinetist, Baquet founded the Excelsior Band, played in Keppard's Creole Orchestra, and mentored Sidney Bechet, one of the greatest clarinetists to come out of New Orleans.
- ✔ **Kid Ory:** This trombonist, born in 1886, was credited for popularizing "tailgate" trombone — when New Orleans marching bands performed from the backs of wagons and the trombone hung out over the tailgate.

- ✔ **Joe “King” Oliver:** Oliver led bands that featured group improvisation. He was one of the first trumpeters to make extensive use of mutes — a system of using a variety of objects in and out of the bell of the horn to get a “wah-wah” sound. Later, musicians including Miles Davis used mutes to attain their signature sounds. Oliver was an important mentor to Louis Armstrong, who as a young musician played in Oliver’s band.

Between 1910 and 1920, several Caucasian musicians began ragging (see the next section for info on ragtime) their music:

- ✔ **Tom Brown:** Born in New Orleans in 1888, he was a trombonist who by 1910 fronted his own bands in New Orleans. Brown played “hot” jazz in the tradition of Bolden and Keppard. In 1915, he moved to Chicago and was one of the first musicians whose music was called jass, or jazz.
- ✔ **Johnny DeDroit & The New Orleans Jazz Orchestra:** This group was a fixture at New Orleans dances and restaurants during the 1920s. DeDroit was a solid trumpeter, but his band grew to infamy for performing in elf costumes at the Fairmont Hotel.
- ✔ **The Louisiana Five:** As the second New Orleans jazz group to record its music, this ensemble popped on the scene only months after the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB). The Five’s clarinetist Alcide Nunez had earlier been in the Original Jazz Band.
- ✔ **The New Orleans Rhythm Kings:** Unlike the ODJB, this band openly acknowledged the influence of black music in their jazz. Formed by trumpeter Paul Mares, trombonist George Brunies, and clarinetist Leon Roppolo, the group made the first integrated jazz recording (featuring Jelly Roll Morton) in 1923. They also took the New Orleans sound to Chicago, where their performances inspired the Austin High Gang, which is covered later in this chapter.

Of all the white bands in this list, the New Orleans Rhythm Kings is the only band whose music has been resurrected on CD. *New Orleans Rhythm Kings & Jelly Roll Morton* captures a turning point in jazz and race relations in America.



## Ragging the Rhythm: The Influence of Ragtime

Beginning in the 1890s, the popular music known as ragtime was key to the creation of jazz. I cover the elements of ragtime music and introduce you to the genre’s innovators in the following sections.

## *The sound of ragtime*

Ragtime was among the many varieties of music heard and played around New Orleans in the early 1900s. Early jazz musicians, particularly pianists, played the music and incorporated its syncopated rhythms and catchy melodies into their jazz. Although both black and Creole musicians would've heard ragtime, the Creoles were more likely to play the music verbatim from sheet music because many of them had formal music training. Early jazz players acknowledged their music as a variation on ragtime.

Songs displayed a new combination of musical elements: classical, European, Latin, blues, folk. Ragtime contained little improvisation, but its syncopated or “ragged” rhythms marked a shift from the stiffer beats of popular dance and marching music. Whether played by two hands on piano or by several instruments, the rhythmically rich music overlapped syncopated patterns and accents that fell in surprising places. (Check out Chapter 3 for more on syncopation.)

Ragtime was European-influenced, in the sense that it was composed, not improvised, and featured carefully crafted melodies and harmonies. It didn't use the simple, raw blues base common in early jazz. Depending on the player, ragtime could sound concisely European, or it could become a loose, swinging precursor of jazz.

## *The masters of ragtime*

During ragtime's prime years between 1899 and 1917, some 6,000 rags were composed. The “big three” composers were Scott Joplin (“Maple Leaf Rag”), James Scott (“Hilarity Rag”), and Joseph Lamb (“American Beauty Rag”). Joplin was the most prolific, and he surpassed his peers in later years by penning orchestral works that influenced both jazz and theater music. In the following sections, I give you some details about the lives of ragtime's “big three:” Joplin, Lamb, and Scott.



By 1910, ragtime was a national phenomenon, and in the quest for popularity, the music became lighter and sweeter, but the ragtime era came to a close in 1917 with Scott Joplin's passing, and by the end of World War I, elements of ragtime merged into varieties of jazz including swing — although you could detect ragtime's jaunty rhythms and complimentary left and right hand piano parts in the playing of mostly James P. Johnson. Johnson is important for bridging styles between earlier ragtime and subsequent swing. Many people became familiar with Joplin's music from the popular 1973 film *The Sting*, with Robert Redford and Paul Newman.

### *Scott Joplin*

Joplin (1868–1917) was born in Texas, grew up in Texarkana on the Texas-Arkansas border, and moved to Sedalia, Missouri, where he studied European music including opera. He performed in Chicago during the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, where ragtime was heard for the first time by an estimated 27.5 million people in attendance.

Over the next several years, ragtime became a popular craze, and the sheet music of Joplin's technically demanding "Maple Leaf Rag" eventually sold more than one million copies. After the fair, Joplin attended George R. Smith College and gave lessons in ragtime performance and composition. In 1899 in Sedalia, he presented his musical "The Ragtime Dance," a predecessor to his later opera "Treemonisha." Joplin moved to St. Louis in 1901 and focused more on composing than performing.

Although Scott Joplin wrote several musicals, which never had popular success, he was best known for his rags. Between 1899 and his death from syphilis in 1917, Joplin published at least 60 songs and earned the self-proclaimed title of "The King of Ragtime Composers." Although his music was never recorded, it survives on player piano rolls made from his performances, as well as on CDs of his compositions played by pianists including Dick Hyman and Josh Rifkin.

### *Joseph Lamb*

Joseph Lamb (1887–1960) was born in Montclair, New Jersey, and heavily influenced musically by his two sisters, who were classical pianists. Taking no formal lessons himself, Lamb picked up piano by watching his sisters and studying musical scores.

Lamb, a student of Scott Joplin's, published a dozen popular rags during the 1910s, and was the lone white guy among the three prolific ragtime composers. Lamb's rags include "American Beauty," "Champagne," "Cleopatra," and "Ethiopia."

What made Joseph Lamb such an interesting composer was that not only was he a self-taught pianist, but also he had a talent of discovering a composer's style and giving his compositions a similar style. This technique made his pieces much like Joplin's.

An essential recording of Lamb's music is "American Beauties: The Rags of Joseph Lamb," played by pianist Virginia Eskin.



### ***James Scott***

Scott (1885–1938), born in Neosho, Missouri, learned piano as a child by listening to his mother, a former slave, play folk, blues, and gospel songs. His diligence and perfect pitch made him a quick study.

Scott composed close to 40 rags beginning in 1903. After Scott Joplin heard Scott's rags, he helped him land a publishing deal, and James Scott's "Frog Legs Rag" (1906) sold almost as many as Joplin's bestselling "Maple Leaf Rag." By 1921, Scott had published two dozen popular rags.

Jazz began to eclipse ragtime in popularity in the 1920s, so Scott wrote a protest song entitled "Don't Jazz Me — Rag (I'm Music)" in 1921. But by the late '20s the popularity of ragtime was declining, and Scott couldn't find a publisher for his new compositions.

## ***The evolution of ragtime into stride piano***

After ragtime became a popular phenomenon that sold thousands of copies of sheet music, the piano style, with its jaunty left-hand bass lines and twinkling right-hand melodies, evolved into the style known as stride. *Stride* refers to the striding pattern of the pianist's left hand, which jumps between low notes and chords and notes an octave higher, resulting in a sort of "oompah" bass pattern. The right hand, meanwhile, plays light, fast melodies. Stride was important because it was the style that during the '20s bridged the transition between ragtime and swing.

Here's a look at a few important stride pianists.

### ***Eubie Blake***

Blake (1883–1983) was a key composer and player during the 1920s prime of stride piano and early jazz, and, due to his longevity, was around to authenticate early jazz for contemporary listeners.

Blake, a musician, composer, and performer from Baltimore, published his first rags in 1914. He met his lifelong friend and collaborator, Noble Sissle, the following year. When Sissle enlisted in 1917, he recruited Blake to join the military band, but Blake was too old to serve, so he began composing music for the band. After the war, Blake and Sissle went on to write and perform such notable musical hits as "I'm Just Wild About Harry" and such successful Broadway shows as "Shuffle Along."

After their 1925 musical “The Chocolate Dandies” flopped, Blake and Sissle toured Europe together and eventually broke up. They reunited on Blake’s 1968 album *The 86 Years of Eubie Blake*.



Too bad *The 86 Years* isn’t available on CD, but many of Blake’s earlier recordings can be found. One of the most interesting albums is *Mozart to Modern* — performances by classical musicians of music by Blake, George Gershwin, and Mozart.

### *James P. Johnson*

A prolific pianist and composer, James P. Johnson (1894–1955) was known as the King of Stride Piano. Johnson was born in New Brunswick, NJ, and as a young musician studied and played classical music and popular songs including the ragtime of Scott Joplin and others. He was the first of the legendary Harlem stride pianists, a group that included Duke Ellington and Fats Waller, who were heavily influenced by Johnson (Waller even took lessons from him).

Time proved the worth of his work. A retrospective of his music was performed at Carnegie Hall in 1945. *De Organizer* was revived and staged in 2002, helping to secure his place alongside other greats as a composer of American music that encompassed blues, classical, jazz, and popular influences. The inclusion of Johnson’s performances alongside recordings by saxophonist Coleman Hawkins and pianist Art Tatum proves Johnson’s relevance to the modern era that blossomed during the 1940s.



The multi-volume *James P. Johnson* series on the Classics label offers a comprehensive listen to Johnson’s recordings, from the 1920s through the 1940s. Included are his original compositions, recordings with blues singers, versions of other famous tunes, and his only performance of his tune “Yamecrow” (performed on another occasion by Fats Waller at Carnegie Hall).

## *It’s a New Record: The Original Dixieland Jazz Band*

Although African-American musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Buddy Bolden, Sidney Bechet, Jelly Roll Morton, and King Oliver were the players who created early jazz and sped its evolution, the all-white Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB), made the first jazz record.

Cornetist Nick LaRocca led the group. He began his career in the popular Stein’s Band from Dixie, one of the best white groups of the teens. LaRocca later claimed to be jazz’s inventor (as did Jelly Roll Morton) after the ODJB made the first jazz recordings in New York in 1917. But the music copied

black jazz, so most experts agree that the ODJB produced no significant improvisation and didn't play a major part in jazz's invention.



Whether you believe that the ODJB contributed to jazz's evolution, you should have their music in your collection. *Complete Original Dixieland Jazz Band (1917–1936)* gives an excellent overview of the band's music, from “Livery Stable Blues” — with horns braying like barnyard animals — to their version of “St. Louis Blues.”

## *Migrating North: Chicago as the New Center of Jazz*

Ragtime had already made a break with traditional American music when Buddy Bolden and his peers began assimilating it into early jazz (see “Ragging the Rhythm: The Influence of Ragtime” earlier in this chapter for details). After Bolden, several musicians who'd played with or heard him took the music to the next level. Between 1910 and 1920, the music matured, and as southern blacks moved north for jobs, jazz migrated to Chicago, where bustling clubs and recording studios gave players a shot at fame.

Sidney Bechet, Johnny Dodds, Freddie Keppard, Jimmie Noone, King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, and Louis Armstrong were key players in the migration. These musicians bridged the transition between early New Orleans jazz and 1920s Chicago, after they migrated (along with tens of thousands of blacks from other southern states) to the Windy City, where many of them settled on the South Side. As they took in new influences (including classical music), the jazz they played in clubs, such as the black-owned Pekin Inn, the Richelieu, and the Deluxe, grew more sophisticated.



Like New Orleans jazz, South Side (black) Chicago jazz had distinctive traits:

- ✓ Faster tempos, which prompted new higher levels of musicianship and improvisation.
- ✓ Straightforward chord patterns that encouraged improvisation.
- ✓ Scads of new popular songs — many in 32-bar format — by composers including Joe Jordan, Morton, and Spencer and Clarence Williams.
- ✓ The rise of singers such as Ida Cox, Alberta Hunter, Ma Rainey, Mamie and Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, and others.
- ✓ A new cache of leading players, only some of whom could read music well, with a variety of personal styles, including Armstrong, Bechet, Dodds, Lil Hardin, Earl Hines, Noone, Oliver, and Luis Russell.

In the following sections, I cover some of the most influential African-American jazz musicians of 1920s Chicago. (For more about white jazz musicians in Chicago during this time, see “Going Sweet with a Touch of Hot: Early White Jazz Musicians,” later in this chapter.)

## *Louis Armstrong*



Louis Armstrong (see Figure 5-1) was the father of modern jazz trumpet and improvisation (both vocal and instrumental). Armstrong, more than any other jazz musician, combined instrumental, comedic, compositional, and vocal ability. He was the first famous player to popularize swinging, syncopated, bluesy rhythms, and he was a madly inventive soloist and charismatic front man who charmed a variety of audiences — white and black, young and old.



**Figure 5-1:**  
Louis Armstrong became the first modern soloist in jazz.

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Armstrong (1901–1971) was the first modern jazz soloist, playing a lead role, taking more and longer solos than supporting bandmates. Early bands, including King Oliver’s, were more collaborative, but Armstrong used his small groups to showcase his soloing abilities, and the notion of organizing a

band and music around a soloist became a standard approach in modern jazz. Technically, Armstrong had no equals — no one could match his tone, dexterity, and the ability to hit high notes unreachable by other musicians.



In Chicago, Louis Armstrong became a star by blowing sharp solos on trumpet and cornet. While his mentor, King Oliver, played a powerful mid-range, bluesy cornet, and legendary cornetist Freddie Keppard was penetrating and nimble (see the next section for more about Keppard), Armstrong combined elements from both with a special something of his own. Listening to Armstrong's vocal and instrumental improvisations, you can hear jazz's connections to blues and gospel: the shouts, moans, and cries common to blues; the mournful-to-joyful sound of gospel. When Armstrong solos, you can also hear how his instrumental phrasings grow from the way he sings, in the same way that later solos by Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, and Miles Davis often improvised lines as lyrical as a singer's melodies. It's no coincidence that Young and vocalist Billie Holiday had such a natural rapport on the recordings they made together.

By his teens, Armstrong was performing professionally aboard Mississippi riverboats with bands such as Fate Marable's. By his 20s, he could out play any trumpeter at head-to-head improvising battles. In 1918, Armstrong replaced his early idol King Oliver in Kid Ory's band, and in 1922, Oliver summoned Armstrong to Chicago to join the Creole Jazz Band as his sidekick cornetist. Armstrong recorded 41 cuts with the band in 1923 (a small portion of the thousands of recordings he made during his career), and eventually surpassed Oliver in originality and long-term impact on jazz — Oliver's career was confined to the 1920s, and he made only a few recordings as a leader.

At the urging of his second wife, Lil Hardin, a pianist and member of Oliver's band, Armstrong joined Fletcher Henderson's big band as featured soloist in New York in 1924. Armstrong's impact was immediate — the band began to swing like never before.

In 1925, Armstrong returned to Chicago, where he formed his own group (the Hot Five and later Hot Seven) and began recording as a leader. In the landmark recordings he made with those groups, you hear the transition from old-school ensemble playing, to a new, modern jazz. By the end of the 1920s, with his Hot Five and Hot Seven, Armstrong had completed what most experts believe to be his most important recordings.



Every jazz collection must include the Hot Five and Seven sessions, which produced more than 50 songs such as "Cornet Chop Suey," "Heebie Jeebies," "Potato Head Blues," "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," and "Wild Man Blues." *The Hot Fives and Sevens* boxed set includes these recordings on three discs as well as Armstrong's recordings with other early jazz groups and players on a fourth disc.

## Sidney Bechet



Clarinetist Sidney Bechet (1897–1959) had a career that spanned several generations of jazz, from early New Orleans through swing, bebop, and the traditional jazz revival of the 1950s (see Chapters 6 and 7 for details about these types of jazz). Born in New Orleans, he was known in his teens as the best clarinet soloist there before he moved to Chicago in 1918. Bechet was the first great jazz soloist to record (even before Louis Armstrong) and displayed an abundance of jazz's basic ingredients: loose, relentless swing and inspired improvisation. Of Creole heritage, his music combined Euro, African, and blues elements. He was also one of the first American jazz musicians to move to Europe in 1925, living for many years in Paris where he died. Bechet was extremely popular with French fans, but his move kept him less familiar to American listeners. See Bechet in Figure 5-2.



**Figure 5-2:**  
Sidney Bechet used a variety of influences in his jazz.

## Jelly Roll Morton

“Jelly Roll” Morton (1890–1941) was a pianist and composer (real name: Ferdinand Joseph Lamothe, oft-stated La Menthe) who claimed that he invented jazz, and he certainly had a significant impact. Morton was a womanizer, and “Jelly Roll” was common slang for his favorite part of a woman’s body (this slang is mild compared to the sexual lyrics of some of his songs). Morton (see Figure 5-3) is best known for the recordings he made with the Red Hot Peppers in Chicago in 1923 shortly after he moved there. Before that, he was a peer of Louis Armstrong and King Oliver in the important post-Bolden years in New Orleans and spent a great deal of time on the West Coast between 1917 and 1922.

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**Figure 5-3:**  
Jelly Roll  
Morton is  
famous for  
recordings  
with the  
Red Hot  
Peppers.

© CORBIS



Morton was proud of his French/African “Creole” heritage and broad musical background encompassing classical and international music (he later noted the “Latin tinge” in his music). Signature tunes include “Grandpa’s Spells” and “Black Bottom Stomp,” and you can hear traces of classical music in many of his recordings. Records made in 1926–1927 in Chicago by Morton’s Red Hot Peppers rival those by Armstrong’s Hot Five and Hot Seven.

## Joe “King” Oliver

Trumpeter Joe “King” Oliver (1885–1938), a native of New Orleans, headed to Chicago in 1919 (he became known as “King” among friends and fans because at the time he was the king of jazz trumpet). Oliver wasn’t an innovator on the order of Louis Armstrong, but he was one of the first cornet/trumpet players who used mutes in the bell of his horn to attain a distinctive “wah-wah” sound. Oliver was a powerhouse cornet player who conquered his leading competitors — Manuel Perez and Freddie Keppard — by out-dueling both men in an improvisational slugfest.



Trumpeters of the 1920s used mutes or plungers (sometimes the actual rubber pieces from toilet plungers) in the bells of their horns to achieve a wailing “wah-wah-wah” sound reminiscent of the sound of voices rising and falling during a gospel church service. Oliver used mutes, cups, and glasses to get his signature sound.

## The early women of jazz

Although plenty of men were credited with jazz’s invention, women were there too. Most of them were singers who sometimes crossed the line from blues into jazz with their interpretations and improvisations. Here are a few:



- ✓ **Ida Cox (1886–1967):** Blues and jazz vocalist Cox sang with Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver during the 1920s, and she had a parallel career billed as “Queen of the Blues,” writing and recording several songs. She continued performing through the ’40s and ’50s, and in 1962 made the album *Blues for Rampart Street* with saxophonist Coleman Hawkins.

Cox’s dozens of recordings are collected on the multi-volume *Completed Recorded Works* on the Document label. *Blues for Rampart Street* has also been re-released on CD.

- ✓ **Lil Hardin (1898–1971):** While most of early jazz’s women were singers, Hardin was a pianist who played an essential role in promoting Louis Armstrong’s career after she married the trumpeter in 1924. She also composed many of Armstrong’s famous tunes including “Struttin’ With Some Barbecue.” After she and Armstrong divorced in 1938, she led bands of her own and appeared in Broadway musicals including Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle’s “Shuffle Along” (see previous sections for information on Blake and Sissle).
- ✓ **Alberta Hunter (1895–1984):** Hunter was another singer whose career crossed between jazz, especially on recordings with trumpeter Louis

Armstrong, clarinetist Sidney Bechet, and Fletcher Henderson's orchestra. Later in life she worked as a nurse for several years, before reviving her career as a vocalist in the 1970s. Recordings from both the early and late phases of her career are readily available on CD, including the excellent *Amtrak Blues* — one of her last albums.

- ✓ **Ma Rainey (1886–1939):** Gertrude “Ma Rainey” grew up singing with her family in minstrel shows. Like many of her female peers with prolific careers as blues singers, Rainey also made many recordings with jazz greats.

The CD *Ma Rainey* (Milestone) includes her famous “See See Rider Blues” featuring Armstrong, Henderson, and clarinetist Buster Bailey, as well as “Slave to the Blues” with Hawkins.



- ✓ **Bessie Smith (1895–1937):** Best known for the early blues and jazz divas, Smith made her recording debut in 1923, accompanied by pianist Clarence Williams on “Down Hearted Blues” and “Gulf Coast Blues,” which sold 750,000 copies. Her recording of “St. Louis Blues” with Louis Armstrong is a diamond of early jazz, and her career as a singer was on the upswing when she was killed in an auto accident in 1937.

Countless compilation CDs and box sets are devoted to Smith, but the five-volume *Bessie Smith: The Complete Recordings* is the one to own if you want a full representation of her music.



- ✓ **Mamie Smith (1883–1946):** She too was a blues diva who also performed with jazz heroes like Coleman Hawkins and Bubber Miley, but before the rest of these ladies, Smith made the first blues recordings in 1920, selling more than a million of “It’s Right Here For You” and “Crazy Blues.” The music was smoother and sweeter than some of her gutsier blues.

*Crazy Blues* (Sony) is an excellent collection of Smith’s best recordings, while the four-volume *Completed Recorded Works* (Document) is the authoritative set.



## Investigating other significant African-American musicians

Other giants of the New Orleans-to-Chicago transition included

- ✓ **Henry “Red” Allen (1908–1967):** Louis Armstrong’s peer in New Orleans, trumpeter Allen was one of jazz’s most innovative early soloists. He played with greats including Fletcher Henderson, Coleman Hawkins, Fate Marable, King Oliver, and Luis Russell.





- ✓ **Johnny Dodds (1892–1940):** Dodds' strong improvised lines on clarinet in bands led by Louis Armstrong and King Oliver served as sharp counterpoint to their trumpets.
- ✓ **Warren “Baby” Dodds (1898–1959):** Baby Dodds was a drummer extraordinary and brother of clarinetist Johnny Dodds. He pioneered the design and use of a drum set that let one player produce polyrhythms.
- ✓ **Earl Hines (1903–1983):** In Chicago, pianist Hines was on the forefront of the hot black jazz being played in South Side clubs. Hines was one of the few pianists to play in leading swing bands as well as top '40s bebop groups that included Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker.  
*Piano Man* (ASV Living Era) is a superb overview of Hines' early mastery in both solo and group contexts, while *Earl Hines Solo Piano* (Delta) is cool music from the late period.
- ✓ **Jimmie Noone (1895–1944):** His style wasn't as wild and free as Sidney Bechet and Johnny Dodds, but his smooth, fluid melodies and improvisations on clarinet gave him a sound of his own.
- ✓ **George “Pops” Foster (1892–1969):** Foster's career lasted for more than 60 years. He was never prominent as a leader, but you can find his name and bass-playing on countless albums by other musicians.
- ✓ **Freddie Keppard (1889–1933):** Keppard became popular in 1920s Chicago and was also responsible for taking early New Orleans music to the western parts of the U.S. in later years. Legend says he turned down the opportunity to record the first jazz record as early as 1915. Much of this cornetist's music went unrecorded, because apparently, he was afraid his style would be copied.
- ✓ **Albert Nicholas (1900–1973):** Nicholas was another New Orleans/Chicago original on clarinet. You can hear him on *New Orleans/Chicago Connection* (Delmark) which presents Nicholas playing with great “Dixie-blues” pianist Art Hodes.
- ✓ **Manuel Perez (1873–1946):** The cornetist Perez was an unsung hero of the early Creole jazz in New Orleans. He was a member of the Onward Brass Band before starting his own Imperial Orchestra, and a top musician aboard riverboats with Fate Marable. Perez's only recording is with the Elgar's Creole Orchestra.
- ✓ **Luis Russell (1902–1963):** In 1927, pianist Luis Russell formed Luis Russell's Orchestra — one of the first larger bands (10 pieces) that pointed the way toward full-blown 1930s big bands. In the 1930s, Louis Armstrong took over as leader, with Russell as his musical director. Critics say Russell compromised the driving, bluesy sound of his band as he helped Armstrong take it in a milder, more commercial direction.

✓ **Clarence Williams (1898–1965):** Williams was a Renaissance man of jazz and wore many hats: bandleader, composer, manager, pianist, record label honcho. He began his career in New Orleans and moved on to Chicago and New York. He was among the first to profit by recording black singers like Mamie Smith and marketing the music to white northerners. Williams signed black artists like Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet, and he helped many black performers maintain control of profits from their music.

## *Going Sweet with a Touch of Hot: Early White Jazz Musicians*

In Chicago during the 1910s and 1920s, as black jazz players created the jumping South Side scene, they began to have an impact on white Chicagoan. By the 1920s, some white players sat in with black bands — thankful for the chance to discover, gracious in their praise of the black pioneers. Some black musicians didn't encourage whites to join them and were angry when they felt white players were copping their ideas.



The best white jazz players abandoned sweet dance music made by white bands and passionately pursued the hotter black sound. For teenage musicians, it was a satisfying example of adolescent rebellion. White players tended to have more formal training and hear different, lighter music at home and in church. Their jazz reflected their roots, in that it was carefully arranged and precisely played, but lacked the drive and spontaneity of black jazz.

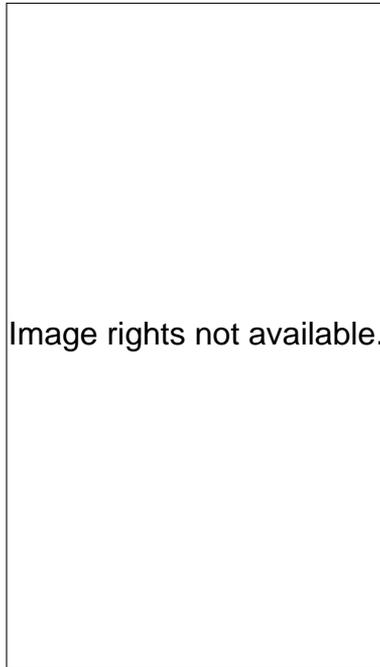
In the following sections, I introduce you to some influential white musicians who played a vital part in Chicago jazz during the 1920s.

## *Introducing Bix Beiderbecke*



Cornetist Bix Beiderbecke (1903–1931) was Louis Armstrong's white alter ego. In Chicago, Armstrong and Beiderbecke knew, and heard, each other. Like Armstrong, Beiderbecke was a trumpeter and cornetist, and he was the first famous white jazz soloist and bandleader. Inspired by Armstrong and other innovators, but also by classical composers including Claude Debussy, Beiderbecke had a distinctive sound — delicate and lyrical. He made some of the finest of the new hybridized white jazz.

Born in Davenport, Iowa, Beiderbecke (see Figure 5-4) was a teenage pianist who taught himself cornet by listening to the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's Nick LaRocca and other leading players. But he soon developed an elegant style of his own. Beiderbecke was an early master of the cornet and one of the first white jazz players who jammed with African Americans, who accepted him as a solid jazzman with an original voice.



**Figure 5-4:**  
Bix  
Beiderbecke  
was the first  
famous  
white jazz  
musician.

© Bettmann/CORBIS

After moving to Chicago in 1921, Beiderbecke was smitten with the torrid jazz scene. He admired fellow cornetists King Oliver and Louis Armstrong, but he didn't directly copy them. In 1923, Beiderbecke formed a band called The Wolverines; later, in St. Louis, Missouri, he launched a band with leading St. Louis saxophonist, Frankie Trumbauer. By 1925, Beiderbecke was making magical records of his own. Handsome and hard-partying, Beiderbecke served as a poster boy for the jazz age.



His imaginative use of the cornet's middle range (as opposed to gruff lows and squealing highs emphasized by others) inspired other cornetists and trumpeters. His innovative ensemble arrangements pointed the way toward more intricate group arrangements by Fletcher Henderson and other big band leaders during the late 1920s and early 1930s (see Chapter 6 for more about

Henderson). And his dreamy, melodic compositions for piano were forerunners of impressionistic jazz made by Bill Evans, Miles Davis, and other 1950s cool jazz players (see Chapter 7).

## *Tuning in to the Austin High Gang*



Chicago's Austin High Gang (named for their suburban high school) made jazz in the spirit of their heroes. The Gang was a loose collection of musicians who hung out together but never recorded under that name. As student musicians, many of the members played classical music and studied theory, which gave a methodical sound to their jazz. In high school, they practiced together constantly and performed at school dances.

The Gang ventured to South Side clubs and dance halls, where they were blown away by a wild, smoky scene featuring uninhibited dancers and black performers such as Louis Armstrong, Baby Dodds, and King Oliver. They worshipped early white players such as Beiderbecke and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings (see "Other Bolden-era innovators" earlier in this chapter for more about them) who'd been inspired by King Oliver and his bands. Members and associates of the Austin High Gang included the following:

- ✔ **Eddie Condon:** Condon (1905–1973) was one of the few guitarists to play a prominent part in Chicago jazz in the years before electric guitars.
- ✔ **Bud Freeman:** Freeman (1906–1991) was one of the Gang's leading saxophonists and played with hero Bix Beiderbecke.
- ✔ **Benny Goodman:** Goodman (1909–1986) was a young jazz player with extensive musical training. He studied classical clarinet as a boy and listened to leading New Orleans clarinetists as he developed a jazz style of his own. Goodman played in Ben Pollock's band in Chicago and later led a big band of his own that played in the sweeter, popular, white swing style (see Chapter 6 for more on Goodman and big bands).
- ✔ **Gene Krupa:** Krupa (1909–1973) became famous as the flamboyant, hair-shaking, hard-drumming catalyst of Benny Goodman's band. His playing helped create the distinctive sound of popular Goodman tunes such as "Sing Sing Sing."
- ✔ **Pee Wee Russell:** A fresh voice on clarinet and a veteran of early Southwestern jazz bands, Russell (1906–1969) was a prime Chicago-style jazz player, but he also fit in effectively with younger bebop and avant garde jazz players such as bassist Charlie Haden and pianist Steve Kuhn during the '60s. (See Chapters 7 and 8, respectively, for more about bebop and avant garde jazz.)



Catch Russell on the CD *Clarinet Strut* (Drive Archive).

- ✓ **Jack Teagarden:** On his horn and as a singer, Teagarden (1905–1964) was a swing-era master with roots in blues. He led a big band during the early '40s, but his larger legacy is as a durable swing trombonist in bands including Louis Armstrong's all-star ensembles of the '50s.

Check out *Jack Teagarden 1928–1943* (Best of Jazz).

- ✓ **Frank Teschemacher:** A central member of the Austin High Gang, Teschemacher (1906–1932) was a shy man who let his clarinet and saxophone do the talking.

- ✓ **Dave Tough:** Tough (1907–1948) was a less famous but well-respected swing drummer among the white Chicago groups, and later in the big bands of Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and Woody Herman.



For a sense of what The Austin High Gang's music sounded like, check out *Bud Freeman (1928–1939)* (Giants of Jazz) or *Pee Wee Russell Jazz Original* (Verve), which features Russell alongside Austin High sidekicks like Condon, Freeman, and Teagarden.



## Chapter 6

# The Golden Era of Big Band Swing: The 1930s and Beyond

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Setting the stage for big band swing
  - ▶ Going on the road with Midwest territory bands
  - ▶ Looking at the influence of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Benny Goodman
  - ▶ Meeting big bands, solo musicians, and singers
- 

New Orleans rose to a Mardi Gras of primal jazz through the early 1900s, but during the late teens and early 1920s, the best New Orleans musicians migrated to Chicago to take advantage of the vibrant jazz scene (see Chapter 5). In the 1930s, though, New York City became the new capital of music composing, publishing, and recording and the hottest place for new jazz.

Already, in Chicago, the Midwest, and New York, larger bands had replaced small groups as jazz's dominant format. A new generation of big band leaders launched the Swing Era in earnest. Born as America emerged from the Depression, big band swing — a music that offered upbeat escape — became a popular phenomenon. Traditionalists also believe that the big band era produced jazz that's never been equaled (fans of bebop and newer music give them a good argument).



Initially, two types of big bands emerged in the late 1920s and the early 1930s (not counting the bands led by Duke Ellington, who belongs in a class all his own — see “Coronating Duke Ellington” later in this chapter):

- ✓ *Smooth and sophisticated bands* played intricate arrangements and confined soloists to smaller roles. College-educated players such as Benny Goodman, Fletcher Henderson, Coleman Hawkins, and Don Redman populated many of these smooth bands.
- ✓ *Rougher blues-oriented “territory” bands* from the Midwest and Southwest and their successors in New York City (such as Count Basie’s band) showcased talented soloists.

In this chapter, I explain the beginnings of the big band era in big cities and on the road with Midwest territory bands. I also introduce you to a variety of important 1930s jazz figures, including Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Benny Goodman.

## *In with a Bang: Big Band Beginnings*

Big band jazz came of age in the 1930s. Through the 1920s, groups in New Orleans, Chicago, and New York City expanded in size and musical sophistication. Leaders like Count Basie, Benny Goodman, and Fletcher Henderson were among the '20s pioneers who became heroes of '30s swing. New York became the center of the music industry, while big band music spread to ballrooms across the country. More than any time in history, jazz was a central part of mainstream American entertainment.

### *The new hub: New York City*

Jazz had been growing in New York City since the turn of the century. Musicians found all the elements that would make big band jazz a popular and artistic success. Songwriting and music publishing were based out of New York City, and big bands relied on popular songs, many of which came from Broadway shows. The recording industry, which had been centered in Chicago during the 1920s, began shifting to New York. By 1935, when big band jazz's Golden Era began, most of the jazz musicians who led important big bands were in New York.

Not coincidentally for jazz, the Golden Era of big bands coincided with the Golden Age of radio. Radio propelled big band music across the country, and New York City owned the title of nation's media hub. As many as 90 million Americans listened to the radio, and big band music could be heard over the air in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and many other cities.

The prime big band swing years highlighted several artists who set the stage — both through their musical inventions and through their new ideas about the meaning of being black in America. These ambitious artists shared a sophisticated knowledge of music:

- ✔ **Will Marion Cook (1869–1944):** Cook, an African-American violinist and composer, studied at Oberlin Conservatory and the National Conservatory of Music (with Dvorak). He led the 50-piece New York Syncopated Orchestra and wrote orchestral music in the classical

tradition, while utilizing the rhythms and spontaneity of African and African-American music. He also mentored young musicians Sidney Bechet, clarinetist/saxophonist and Duke Ellington, pianist/bandleader. Cook also helped open Broadway productions to black players.

- ✓ **James Reese Europe (1881–1919):** Europe laid the groundwork for the big bands of the 1930s with music he made in 1913 and 1914. Europe composed pieces for ensembles as large as his 50-piece Hell Fighters Band (from the 369th U.S. Infantry), yet he infused his music with ragtime’s syncopated momentum. (See Chapter 5 for details about ragtime.) He collaborated with Cook to compose *In Darkeydom* in 1914, and he and the fighters recorded 24 tunes before Europe was stabbed to death by a drummer at a gig in Boston.

Today, the music is available on the CD *James Reese Europe’s 369th Infantry Hell Fighters Band* (Memphis Archives).

- ✓ **James P. Johnson (1894–1955):** Johnson, a giant of stride piano (see Chapter 5) emerged during the late 1920s and early 1930s as one of jazz’s first distinguished composers. In symphonic works such as “Symphony Harlem,” “Tone Poem,” and “Yamecrow,” he incorporated blues and gospel within a classical context.



By 1923, New Orleans-flavored jazz belatedly spread across the country. The artists responsible for this circulation included King Oliver, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, Jelly Roll Morton, Kid Ory, Clarence Williams (with Sidney Bechet) and Doc Cook (with Freddie Keppard and Jimmie Noone), and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings.

By the late '20s and early '30s, jazz, made by giants like Morton, Bechet, Oliver, Armstrong, and Beiderbecke, evolved into big band swing. (See Chapter 5 for more about all these musicians.)



In New York, the sophisticated, elegant music of big band swing replaced the simpler sounds of New Orleans and South Side Chicago. Big band arrangers such as Don Redman (with Fletcher Henderson) and Duke Ellington (eventually aided by Billy Strayhorn) crafted their music to make dramatic use of expanded lineups. Intricate arrangements used sections of saxophones, trumpets, and trombones to create the kind of drama formerly achieved by soloists. In the context of these bands and arrangements, where the group sound took first priority, soloists were confined to certain places within tight arrangements. (Soloists didn’t take the lead until small-group jazz bloomed in the 1940s. See Chapter 7 for more info.)

Most jazz artists who wanted to make it big needed to be in New York. Even star soloists from the Midwest “territory bands,” an essential part of big band history, wound up in New York eventually. (I cover these bands in detail later in this chapter.)

When New York City emerged as the new center for jazz, Harlem became the core of black creativity. The Harlem Renaissance of the 1930s produced a flowering of African-American arts led by writers like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. Jazz was an essential part of the scene. Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway led house orchestras at the Cotton Club. Pianists James P. Johnson, Willie “The Lion” Smith, and Fats Waller made quantum leaps beyond the earlier piano of Earl Hines and Jelly Roll Morton. Not only were Ellington, Johnson, and Waller phenomenal pianists, but they composed music that has stood the test of time and is today regarded as some of the finest American music of the 20th century.

Around the same time, New York also became the core for American popular song. Composers such as Harold Arlen, George and Ira Gershwin, Jerome Kern, and Cole Porter wrote dozens of Broadway hits that became raw material for generations of jazz musicians who played the melodies and improvised around the chord changes.

## *Leading the way: Fletcher Henderson*

As you listen to Fletcher Henderson’s big band, you hear jazz evolving from early New Orleans style to sophisticated swing. Georgia-born Henderson (1897–1952) grew up listening to the blues of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey, and the big bands he led in New York beginning in 1923 swung with a rootsy, bluesy feel — a feel absent from most ragtime and dance bands.

Henderson’s ensembles were more polished than the territory bands that emerged at the same time (see the section on these bands later in this chapter for details). His musicians were generally well trained, and many of them read music (not always the case in the territory bands). Being able to read well was essential because Henderson relied on tight arrangements with Don Redman, Benny Carter, and Bill Challis. Henderson’s orchestra pointed the way toward famous big bands of the 1930s (in fact, Henderson became Benny Goodman’s arranger). Redman — saxophonist, clarinetist, and sensitive arranger — held the key to Henderson’s success.

As early as 1924, when Henderson recruited Louis Armstrong, the combination of Redman’s charts and Armstrong’s virtuosity gave the music a hot, new sound. Later, the band’s arrangements grew around star soloists such as saxophonists Leon “Chu” Berry and Benny Carter, trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Rex Stewart, and trombonists J.C. Higginbotham, Rex Stewart, and Dickie Wells. From this group, Carter and Eldridge were most successful at making the transition from big bands to the small group era of the ’40s and ’50s, where their talents as improvisers could shine even brighter.



Comparing Henderson's big band during the group's formative years in the 1920s, with Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers of that same era, gives you an idea of the music's evolution. Morton brought opera and classical influences into his music, but his arrangements, although tight, were never as intricate or inventive as Redman's arrangements for Henderson. Morton's band included seven members, compared with the 10 or 12 or more that added new colors, complexities, and textures beginning with Henderson.

With its rich orchestrations, swinging rhythms, and subtle interplay between sections, Henderson's big band (including star soloists Louis Armstrong and Lester Young) was the most important forerunner of the legendary big bands of the 1930s. After Henderson became Benny Goodman's arranger, musical ideas transferred from one generation to the next.



Henderson's importance is apparent on the boxed-set *The Fletcher Henderson Story: A Study in Frustration* (Sony) and the multi-volume *Fletcher Henderson* CD series on the Classics label.

## *Fletcher Henderson's peers*

Henderson boosted jazz into the modern era of big band swing by expanding the size of jazz bands toward full-blown big bands, handpicking his star soloists, and arranging material to showcase them. As the music picked up steam, several other bandleaders helped bring the new music to the brink of its golden era. Of course, Duke Ellington began organizing big bands in the 1920s and eventually built bands that many critics and fans feel were the finest of the swing era. Ellington is covered later in this chapter.

Meanwhile, as Henderson and Ellington led the charge, several other big-band leaders helped sustain the moment into the 1930s prime of swing. Some were pure showmen who knew how to grab and hold an audience. Others placed a higher priority on jazz as an art form. Let's take a close look at a few of the prime big band leaders from the music's formative years.

- ✓ **Cab Calloway (1907–1994):** The “Hi-De-Ho” man mesmerized audiences — beginning at Harlem’s Cotton Club in the ’30s — with his wild jazz, flip-flopping hair, big smile, warm vocals, and big bands.
- ✓ **Benny Carter (1907–2003):** Carter played a part in nearly every phase of jazz’s development. His instrumental talents included the saxophone and trumpet, but Carter also composed and arranged music. During the early 1930s, he performed and arranged for Fletcher Henderson and McKinney’s Cotton Pickers.

Carter went to London during the mid-1930s to become a staff songsmith and arranger for the BBC dance orchestra. While in London, Carter eventually had a tremendous influence on the jazz of Western Europe. When Carter returned to the United States, he led a popular big band in New York City, and his career continued into the 1990s.

- ✔ **Lionel Hampton (1909–2002):** A jazz institution as both a musician and bandleader — Hampton reigns as the most famous of all jazz vibraphonists. In fact, in 1930, Hampton sat in on a recording session with Armstrong, and during a break Hampton walked over to a vibraphone and started to play. He ended up playing the vibes on one song. The song became a hit; Hampton had introduced a new voice to jazz and became “King of the Vibes.” His bands swung wildly.
- ✔ **Earl Hines (1903–1983):** Hines led one of the Midwest’s most popular 1930s big bands, home-based at Chicago’s Grand Terrace hotel. His music gained more influence in some ways than Duke Ellington’s from the same period. NBC radio carried the Hines band to points west and south of Chicago.
- ✔ **Andy Kirk (1898–1992):** Kirk’s Clouds of Joy featured the arrangements and piano of Mary Lou Williams. Unlike the ensemble’s Kansas City peers, the band relied less on collective *riffing* (short, rhythmic phrases) and more on Williams’s imagination, as well as solos by saxman Don Byas (who became a leading soloist of both swing and bebop but fell from American radar when he moved to Europe during the 1940s) and trumpeter Howard McGhee.
- ✔ **Jimmie Lunceford (1902–1947):** Showmanship, swing, and tight arrangements mark characteristics of Lunceford’s band, beginning with a 1934 stint at New York’s fabled Cotton Club. Sy Oliver’s lyrical arrangements enabled some of the band’s finest music. In July of 1947, Lunceford collapsed and died while signing autographs in a Seaside, Oregon, record store. The record of his death sites a heart attack as the cause, but rumors circulated that a racist restaurant owner poisoned him.
- ✔ **McKinney’s Cotton Pickers:** Formed in Detroit during the early ’20s by drummer William McKinney (who expanded his group from six to ten pieces), the band made a big bang in Harlem ballrooms beginning in 1929. McKinney plucked arranger Don Redman from Fletcher Henderson in 1927, and he also recruited star players such as saxophonist Coleman Hawkins and pianists James P. Johnson and Fats Waller. The Cotton Pickers were hot enough to hold their own with the more famous Duke Ellington and Count Basie bands before they disbanded in 1934.
- ✔ **Chick Webb (1909–1939).** Hunchbacked and less than five feet tall, Webb fought off congenital tuberculosis of the spine to become one of the most competitive drummers and bandleaders of the big band era. In a 1937 battle of the bands at New York City’s Savoy Ballroom, Webb’s band blew away the rival Benny Goodman big band (with Gene Krupa on



drums). Powered by Webb's dynamic personality and charismatic playing, his orchestra featured a young singer named Ella Fitzgerald.

Webb discovered Fitzgerald after she won a talent contest at the Apollo Theatre, became her legal guardian, and built his show around the singer, who provided him with his biggest hit record, "A Tisket-A-Tasket," in 1938.

*Stompin' at the Savoy* (Proper) is a comprehensive box set that includes Fitzgerald's hit and 99 other tunes ranging from updates of New Orleans standards to flashy new swing numbers.

## The influence of Chicago big bands

In Chicago, sweeter, milder white dance bands struck out in fresh directions. Many of these bands recorded in New York, and many of their players later joined famous New York bands. They had a smooth, swinging sound that appealed to the mostly white crowds in the dance halls and ballrooms where they performed. By most accounts, they didn't have the impact of Fletcher Henderson and his successors (see the previous sections), but they did advance the cause of big band swing with larger lineups and sophisticated arrangements.

- ✓ **The Casa Loma Orchestra:** Glen Gray formed his group (with advice from Jean Goldkette) in Detroit in 1927, and it was named for the Casa Loma Hotel in Toronto, where it was the house band. With arrangements by guitarist Gene Gifford, Casa Loma became one of the leading white swing bands and made several popular recordings (including "Casa Loma Stomp" and "Smoke Rings") that are available today on CDs. Through various lineups, the band continued to tour until 1963.
- ✓ **Jean Goldkette (1899–1962):** His popular dance orchestra performed early swing, with solos by Bix Beiderbecke (see Chapter 5) and trombonist Tommy Dorsey. Under Glen Gray's direction, this ensemble became the famed Casa Loma Orchestra.
- ✓ **Ben Pollack (1903–1971):** Pollack, the original drummer with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, collaborated with Jelly Roll Morton. Pollack's swing bands included clarinetist Benny Goodman, trumpeter Harry James, saxman Bud Freeman, and trombonist/arranger Glenn Miller. In 1934, members of Pollack's band joined singer Bob Crosby's (Bing's brother) popular swing ensemble.
- ✓ **Glenn Miller (1904–1944):** The Glenn Miller Band became one of the swing era's most popular bands during World War II, beginning with the 1940 hit "Tuxedo Junction" and continuing through Miller's military service, when he led the Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band. Their sound featured clarinet and saxophone carrying the melody with the rest of the

saxophone section providing a subtly shaded backdrop. Miller was a trombonist and arranger in bands led by Ray Noble and Ben Pollock before he formed his own group in 1937.

- ✓ **Paul Whiteman (1890–1967):** Whiteman was a famous bandleader during the 1920s and the self-proclaimed “King of Jazz” — although purists don’t even consider his music jazz, because it lacked swing and improvisation. Whiteman’s group included star soloists Bix Beiderbecke (see Chapter 5), trombonist Jack Teagarden (see Chapter 6), trumpeter Bunny Berigan, and guitarist Eddie Lang. Despite his stellar lineup of jazz musicians, Whiteman preferred melodic, intricately arranged popular music. For instance, he commissioned George Gershwin’s famous composition, “Rhapsody in Blue.”

## Traveling the Highway: Midwest Territory Bands

New York big band jazz reached new levels of sophistication with fresh arrangements and technically proficient players. But looser, blues-based bands played and toured through the Midwest in the 1930s. These bands, known as *territory bands*, performed on stages in San Antonio, Dallas, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Memphis, St. Louis, and Omaha.

The competitiveness of the regional bands reached an all-time high. Passion motivated their music more than the desire for commercial success drove many of the New York big bands. In the following sections, I introduce you to Bennie Moten, an important territory bandleader, and some of the biggest bands of the day.

### Bennie Moten

Moten (1894–1935), a ragtime pianist who formed his band in Kansas City, first recorded in 1923 with a six-piece New Orleans-style lineup. By 1924, he returned to the recording studio but this time in Camden, New Jersey. The ensemble expanded to 10-pieces — only two pieces shy of Fletcher Henderson’s big band across the Hudson River in New York City (I discuss Henderson in detail earlier in this chapter).



Moten’s music grew out of early jazz and blues, with impromptu *head arrangements* (short melodic themes) that led to extended improvisational jams. Moten’s band had a buoyant rhythm section that served as a model for big band rhythm sections to come.

After 1929 Moten turned piano and arranging duties over to Bill “Count” Basie, who modeled his own big band after Moten’s. (I talk about Count Basie later in this chapter.) Moten’s ensemble made its last and most memorable recordings in New Jersey in 1932. Arrangements by saxophonist Eddie Barefield and guitarist Eddie Durham alternated ensemble passages with sizzling solos by trumpeter Oran “Hot Lips” Page, saxophonist Ben Webster, and others.

## *Scoping out other territory bands*

Other territory bands swung hard with that loose, wide-open blues feel. Recording wasn’t common in the Midwest; so much of this music (with the exception of Bennie Moten’s) isn’t well documented (today, you can choose from several excellent CDs of Moten’s music). Even though their recorded legacies remain small, their reputations still loom large even today.

- ✔ **Troy Floyd’s** nine-piece San Antonio ensemble had tight arrangements and a smooth, less bluesy feel than its peers, as captured on recordings from 1928 and 1929.
- ✔ **Walter Page’s** Blue Devils hailed from Kansas City and featured top players including trombonist and arranger Eddie Durham, trumpeter Oran “Hot Lips” Page, and singer Jimmy Rushing.
- ✔ **Jesse Stone’s** Blues Serenaders was a top Kansas City group, famous today for helping to launch a young saxophonist named Coleman Hawkins.
- ✔ **Alphonse Trent’s** all-black band broke color barriers with a longstanding gig at the all-white Adolphus Hotel in Dallas during the 1920s. They also reached a radio audience with live shows on a Dallas station.

## *Coronating Duke Ellington*

Jazz’s gods (and goddesses) traditionally ascend mostly on the basis of instrumental prowess, but for his impact in several important areas, Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington (1899–1974) is without equal.

Born in Washington, D.C., in 1899, Ellington (see Figure 6-1) wanted to be a painter, which may help explain the colorful sweep of his music. Duke’s career spanned many genres: ragtime, New Orleans jazz, late-1920s territory band, New York big band, 1940s bebop, 1950s cool jazz, and 1960s free jazz. He also made contributions as a leader, composer, arranger, and pianist, and he assimilated a tremendous variety of influences including classical music.



**Figure 6-1:**  
Duke Ellington is one of the most influential jazz musicians in history.

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Like other inventors of sophisticated big band music, Ellington had formal training. He moved to New York in 1922 and two years later took over Elmer Snowden's band, a six-piece unit, which was typical of the time. Inspired by James P. Johnson's classically influenced ragtime compositions, Ellington began to write music of his own.

By 1926, Ellington's group had grown to 12 pieces, but the stiff music couldn't compare with Louis Armstrong's or Jelly Roll Morton's (see Chapter 5 for more about them). Trumpeter Bubber Miley pushed Ellington toward a looser, swinging sound, and by the late 1920s, Ellington's arrangements featured swelling horns by soloists Miley, alto saxman Johnny Hodges, clarinetist Barney Bigard, and trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton.



Ellington created waves of tension by setting sections against each other, then making them "play nice" together. Blaring trumpets cut across silky smooth saxes; melodies batted back and forth; tempos changed for dramatic emphasis and the music swung with syncopated rhythms. Ellington sometimes composed at a piano with his band around him, and he wrote their improvised melodies into his scores.

The Duke was among the first big band leaders to showcase a singer's voice as an instrument, when Adelaide Hall sang wordless melodies on "Creole Love Call" (Hall later lived in London and starred in stage musicals such as "The Sun Never Sets"). Ellington also employed bassists in bold new ways, as Jimmy Blanton and Oscar Pettiford became soloists and improvisers on par with saxophonists and trumpeters.

As Ellington's compositions matured, his songs became masterful ensemble pieces for a dozen or more distinctive voices, as well as showcases for his talented musicians. Although Fletcher Henderson, Chick Webb, Jimmy Lunceford, and other big band leaders of the 1920s advanced the music beyond the rougher New Orleans and Midwest/Territory sounds (I discuss the Midwest territory bands earlier in this chapter), Ellington elevated the art of big band music to new heights of sophistication. His music wasn't just entertainment: He often composed with a message in mind, and many of his compositions meditated on his experiences as an African American. In fact, Ellington often imagined theatrical scenes while he composed.

Ellington's band reigned for five decades, and Ellington composed dozens of tunes, later collaborating with his alter ego, Billy Strayhorn. (Strayhorn was the band's unsung creative force from 1938 through 1967, on compositions and arrangements including "Lush Life," "Passion Flower," and "Take the A Train." Visit [www.billystrayhorn.com](http://www.billystrayhorn.com).) Although big bands faded following World War II, Ellington wrote and recorded jazz through two more decades. Ellington enjoyed a comfortable income for the rest of his life thanks to royalties from "Mood Indigo" and other compositions. The royalties helped subsidize his big band, which often operated near break even or lost money.

There are at least 1,000 Ellington CDs covering the band's music from the 1920s through the 1960s, and even, under new leaders including his son Mercer, after Duke's death. You probably want something from each decade; studio sessions as well as live performances at Newport Jazz Festival and elsewhere; his "Anatomy of a Murder" film score, his sacred music, and his collaborations on piano with John Coltrane and other great improvisers.

## *Crowning a Count and a King of Swing*

Jazz is famous for its royalty, and among this circle the Duke (Ellington) is a sort of god. Yet there are many other players who earned their titles, including soloists like Bird and Diz, and bandleaders like William "Count" Basie and Benny Goodman — the King of Swing. Here, you take a look at the Count and the King and what their creative talents contributed to the golden era of big band swing.

## Count Basie

One of the greatest of the swing bands belonged to Count Basie (1904–1984). Born in New Jersey, Basie (see Figure 6-2) spent his teens touring and getting a behind-the-scenes knowledge of the world of entertainment. He also served as an accompanist for silent films.

Basie lived in Harlem during the 1920s, where he played a variety of venues and heard pianists James P. Johnson, Lucky Roberts, and Willie “The Lion” Smith. He also met Fats Waller, who accompanied a silent film on pipe organ at the Lincoln Theatre, and eventually Waller let Basie join him at the organ. Basie was traveling with a vaudeville company that broke up in Kansas City, and he decided to stay there.



**Figure 6-2:**  
Count Basie's swing band was one of the best around.

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In swing music, Basie rose to stardom through territory bands: Walter Page's Blue Devils and The Kansas City Orchestra, led by Bennie Moten (he served as both pianist and arranger). Members of Moten's group formed the nucleus of Basie's first band, the 9-piece Barons of Rhythm. (I cover territory bands earlier in this chapter.)

When producer John Hammond (who also made Benny Goodman famous) heard the Basie band's 1936 radio broadcasts from Kansas City's Reno Club, he offered a recording contract and brought the band to New York City for a gig at the Roseland Ballroom. Basie's band expanded to 15 members and became the house band at the Famous Door on New York's 52nd Street.



Within two years Basie's orchestra made its fame with hard-swinging tunes such as "One O'Clock Jump" and "Jumpin' at the Woodside." Compared with the carefully orchestrated sound of Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington's bands, Basie's retained the looser, bluesy feel of the territory bands. Instead of songs arranged all the way through, Basie's band was known for *riffing*: using head arrangements, consisting of a basic melody or "head," at the start of the song, followed by improvisations from several band members. Often, the intuitive interplay between the players and sections sounded as if the music was intentionally orchestrated.

Over the years, the Basie band doubled as a PhD program of sorts for musicians. Basie's list of phenomenal players include

- ✓ Jimmy Rushing, singer
- ✓ Herschel Evans and Lester Young, saxophonists
- ✓ Buck Clayton and Harry "Sweet" Edison, trumpeters
- ✓ Dickie Wells, trombonist
- ✓ Jo Jones, drummer
- ✓ Freddie Green, guitarist

Basie's band played and recorded excellent music for several decades. Music from the '40s through the '70s, with arrangements by Neal Hefti, Frank Wess, Frank Foster, Thad Jones, is some of the band's finest.



Every jazz collection should include a few recordings of the Basie band featuring superb vocalists Jimmy Rushing, Big Joe Turner, and Joe Williams. Include *Sing Along with Basie*, also featuring vocal trio Lambert, Hendricks & Ross in your collection. Another must-have is the superstar collaboration between the Basie and Ellington bands on *First Time! The Count Meets The Duke*.

## Benny Goodman

Benny Goodman, the "King of Swing," carried big band swing to new popularity and led the way in showcasing star soloists. Goodman (1909–1986) openly expressed his admiration for early African-American swing bands, such as Fletcher Henderson's. (I talk about Henderson earlier in this chapter.) At the

suggestion of producer John Hammond, Goodman (see Figure 6-3) hired Henderson to be his arranger. To meet the demand of the radio audience and ballroom dancing crowd, both black and white bands tended toward smoother, middle-of-the-road sounds.



**Figure 6-3:**  
Benny  
Goodman  
helped  
showcase  
star soloists  
in his band.

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As a young musician, Goodman classically trained on clarinet, in Chicago, he also studied the music of Louis Armstrong and King Oliver (see Chapter 5), as well as clarinetists Buster Bailey, Barney Bigard, Johnny Dodds, Albert Nicholas, and Jimmie Noone.



Goodman's big band music had a more precise and exacting sound than Count Basie's loosely swinging, liberally improvising crew, but Goodman had an ear for gifted players. The music swung in a ballroom dancing mode, and the leader himself played peerless clarinet.

Goodman integrated his group with Charlie Christian, Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson, and others as essential members. The small group recordings he made with these players during the 1930s sped the transition from big band swing to a format that left more room for improvisation. Given Goodman's phenomenal

popularity, his use of black musicians helped launch their careers (with concerts and recordings) in a way that wouldn't have been possible had they been in all-black bands.

The prime of Goodman's big band career came between 1936 and 1939, when his band included some big namers:

- ✓ Harry James, Bunny Berigan, and Ziggy Elman, trumpeters
- ✓ Jess Stacy and Teddy Wilson, pianists
- ✓ Davey Tough and Gene Krupa, drummers
- ✓ Lionel Hampton, vibraphonist

When Goodman's band played Carnegie Hall in 1938, joined by members of the Count Basie and Duke Ellington bands, the milestone performance elevated the music to new legitimacy. This performance was the first time jazz had been featured in such a big way at a concert hall previously known for classical music. Even though Goodman was the headliner, he had the grace to include several great players who provided inspiration.



The recording of this concert is available on the CD *Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert* (Sony), and it should be a part of your collection.

## Coming on Strong: Other Important Big Bands

Although Count Basie and Benny Goodman were the powerhouses of big band swing, several other notable bands pushed the music forward.

- ✓ **Charlie Barnet (1913–1991):** Barnet, a leader and saxophonist who admired Count Basie and Duke Ellington's big bands, was one of the first to front an integrated orchestra; his group also was one of the first predominantly white bands to play Harlem's famed Apollo Theatre. Barnet assembled a big band in 1932 and became well known with the 1939 hit "Cherokee." In the 1940s, Barnet's band recorded more hits including "Skyliner," and as the band moved to demanding bebop charts, the lineup included rising stars such as trumpeters Maynard Ferguson and Doc Severinsen and guitarist Barney Kessel.
- ✓ **Bob Crosby (1913–1993):** A bandleader and vocalist (brother of Bing Crosby), he helped Chicago-style jazz evolve into big band swing with new arrangements of earlier jazz tunes such as "South Rampart Street Parade" and "Wolverine Blues."

- ✔ **Jimmy Dorsey (1904–1957):** A solid Chicago-style clarinetist (and saxophonist), Dorsey was one of the first to use the alto sax in jazz at a time when the tenor prevailed.
- ✔ **Tommy Dorsey (1905–1956):** Known for his warm tone on trombone, Dorsey took an instrumental lead (like his brother, Jimmy) in early Chicago jazz and the transition of jazz in Chicago to 1930s big band swing. His orchestra included trumpeter Bunny Berigan, saxman Bud Freeman, and a teen singer named Frank Sinatra.
- ✔ **Artie Shaw (1910–2004):** Shaw was a top-notch clarinetist who also led big bands that were among the best of the 1930s. Shaw was a visionary who experimented with strings and hired rising players. In the 1940s, Shaw was among the few big band leaders to play bebop (see Chapter 7). Shaw and his band recorded a string of popular hits starting with “Begin the Beguine” in 1938. In 1954, Shaw quit jazz to focus on his writing. His books include his first novel *I Love You, I Hate You, Drop Dead* and the semi-autobiographical *The Trouble With Cinderella*. Although Shaw continued to write, he never enjoyed the success with writing that he attained with jazz.

## *The Rise of the Soloist: Instrumentalists and Vocalists*

As we’ve seen, big band swing was a cohesive group effort. In fact, it has been said that for great leaders like Basie, Ellington, and Goodman, their bands became their “instruments.” Still, individual artists were able to shine. While leaders’ names were featured on album covers and theater marquees, top singers and instrumentalists played featured parts. In big bands, many leading performers polished technical abilities that would sustain them through long, prolific careers. Here, you can take a look at some of the individual stars of great bands.

### *Turning up the heat: Brilliant improvisers*

As new, sophisticated compositions and arrangements shaped the music of big bands led by Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and others, the Golden Era of Swing was also marked by the emergence of some of jazz’s most gifted soloists. I cover many of them in the following sections.

### *The saxophonists*

Gifted saxophonists of the era included the following folks:

✔ **Coleman Hawkins (1904–1969):** This saxophonist pointed the way toward modern saxophone with his phenomenal 1939 reinvention of the song “Body and Soul,” improvising new melodies over the original chords. His strong, melodic sound was suited to a big band because it could blend with a saxophone section or stand out during solos.

✔ **Lester Young (1909–1959):** He played tenor saxophone with a smooth and sweet sound. Young (see Figure 6-4) made breakthroughs in music by varying the length of his phrases so that they overlapped breaks between key passages in the music.

Like many great soloists of his era, Young was schooled in big bands. When he was tapped in 1934 to replace Coleman Hawkins in Fletcher Henderson’s big band, Young lasted only a short while — his light, airy sound and unconventional phrasing wasn’t accepted by his bandmates.

Although Young is generally known for the music he made during the 1940s, he continued to record excellent albums during the 1950s, when his style was emulated by cool jazz players like Paul Desmond and Stan Getz.

✔ **Johnny Hodges (1907–1970):** Hodges, an alto saxophonist and a member of Duke Ellington’s orchestra, was one of the first to elevate the saxophone to a lead instrument. He began on clarinet and studied with Sidney Bechet. After switching to saxophone, he developed a warm sound that was perfectly suited to ballads. In addition to his recordings with Ellington’s big band, Hodges made several fine recordings during the 1950s with small groups of Ellington band players.

### *The trumpeters*

Important trumpeters of the era included the following players:

✔ **Harry “Sweets” Edison (1915–1999)** added bluesy riffs to Basie’s band from 1938 to 1950.

✔ **Roy Eldridge (1911–1989)** invented fleet, technically adept solos with Elmer Snowden’s band, McKinney’s Cotton Pickers, and Fletcher Henderson, and was also a driving force in 1940s bebop (which I cover in Chapter 7).

✔ **Orin “Hot Lips” Page (1908–1954)** was a star soloist in Midwest territory bands led by Walter Page and Bennie Moten. He later played with Count Basie and Artie Shaw.



**Figure 6-4:**  
Lester Young was innovative for varying the length of the phrases in his music.

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### *The rhythm players: Drummers and bassists*

Drummers and bassists who kept the rhythm included the following people:

- ✔ **Jimmy Blanton (1918–1942):** was a member of Ellington’s big band and who reinvented the role of the bass by combining arco (bowed) and pizzicato (plucked) techniques to fill a range of musical roles. He carried melodies and improvised phenomenally, and his duos with Ellington on piano (such as “Pitter, Patter, Panther”) are considered revelations of the modern era.
- ✔ **Jo Jones (1911–1985):** Jones made his name in Walter Page’s Blue Devils, but while in Count Basie’s band, he elevated drumming to new levels of sophistication. His subtle work on cymbals and use of complex polyrhythms showed how a drummer could weave his sounds throughout the music’s textures, instead of merely driving the beat.
- ✔ **Gene Krupa (1909–1973):** Krupa was the catalyst in Benny Goodman’s big band. He became well known for his wild hair and bass drum bombs. Krupa and Jo Jones transformed drumming from the basic function performed in New Orleans and Chicago to the complex modern interplay with a big band’s overlapping rhythms and harmonies found in New York.

## Plugged in and proud of it: Charlie Christian, the first jazz guitarist

After Charlie Christian (1916–1942) plugged in one of the first electric jazz guitars made by Gibson, he quickly re-invented the art of jazz guitar. In Christian's hands, with a louder voice that could be heard in a big band, the guitar stepped out as a solo instrument that traded licks with saxes and trumpets. In 1939 in Los Angeles, Benny Goodman reluctantly granted Christian an audition (after all, there was no such thing as an electric jazz guitarist or even a guitarist who wanted to solo like a saxophonist), and after an awe-inspiring 45-minute solo on

"Rose Room," Christian was invited to join the band.

During the three years before he died of tuberculosis in New York, Christian created the single-line style of electric jazz guitar, improvising melodic strings of notes in a style comparable to that of the major saxophonists. In the 1940s, he was among the few big band swing musicians to participate in jams at New York City's Hickory House that led to the invention of bebop, which I cover in Chapter 7.

- ✔ **Oscar Pettiford (1922–1960):** Pettiford succeeded Blanton as Ellington's bassist, and extended Blanton's ideas while playing a variety of melodic, harmonic, and improvisational roles (as well as cello).
- ✔ **Chick Webb (1909–1939):** Chick was among the first to tune his drums and to use wire brushes.

## *Romancing America: Talented singers*

Showmanship, musicianship, and tight, catchy tunes propelled big bands to popular success. Most of the bands also featured vocalists whose personalities and lyrics gave audiences a friendly way into the music. Some of the great singers were primarily interpreters and entertainers (*crooners*); others used their voices as instruments for innovation and improvisation and extended Louis Armstrong's earlier explorations of vocal potential, including his early scat-singing (see the nearby sidebar for details). The recording ban of 1942, in a dispute over royalties, didn't cover vocalists, so many singers made popular (though not always great) recordings.

Songwriters of the 1930s and 1940s such as George and Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Harold Arlen, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, Jerome Kern, and Johnny Mercer took jazz in a lighter direction. The singers connected with a broader audience. Never before had so many talented singers and great songs existed in the industry at the same time.

As composers created a songbook of American classics, singers became interpreters of catchy lyrics and remarkable melodies that have become “standards” of the jazz repertoire. For most of these singers, the jazz notion of improvisation came less in the form of radical invention and more in the form of *interpretation* — adding your personal signature to the melody with individual voices and phrasings.

In front of the big bands of the 1930s and 1940s, singers scaled new heights of popularity and creativity. In the jazz ensembles of the late 1920s, singers sang an occasional number, but during the swing era, several bands built their success around singers in the same way that band leaders such as Duke Ellington and Count Basie composed and arranged music around their best instrumentalists. Check out the prominent male and female singers in the following list:

- ✔ **Ivie Anderson (1905–1949):** As an expressive interpreter and inventive improviser, Anderson starred as the vocalist in Duke Ellington’s big band through the mid-1930s. For her ability to carry a song while fitting within the band, she was one of Ellington’s favorites.
- ✔ **Mildred Bailey (1907–1951):** She was the wife of vibraphonist Red Norvo and had a delicate voice and solid sense of swing. Bailey is best known for the music she made during the 1930s with Benny Goodman and Paul Whiteman.
- ✔ **Connee Boswell (1907–1976):** Boswell was acknowledged by Ella Fitzgerald as an important source of inspiration. She recorded with Bob Crosby’s band, and during the 1930s, Connee helped invent multi-part jazz vocal harmonies as one-third of the Boswell Sisters.
- ✔ **Bing Crosby (1903–1977):** From his roots in Chicago jazz, Crosby became a pop sensation as a big band crooner with bands led by Paul Whiteman. With Paul Whiteman (discussed earlier in this chapter) during the late 1920s, Crosby’s strengths relied on warm personalized vocals and improvisational scat-singing.
- ✔ **Doris Day (born 1924) and Rosemary Clooney (1928–2002):** They became famous through their movies, but each held a leading lady role in the big band era. Day sang sweetly and emotionally with Bob Crosby and Les Brown’s bands. Clooney’s first hit was the 1951 “Come On-A My House.” In the 1950s, she recorded several songs with Bing Crosby and starred alongside him in the popular 1954 holiday classic “White Christmas” — the kind of ballad that became her strong suit. She also hosted her own television program in the ’50s.
- ✔ **Ella Fitzgerald (1917–1996):** She became a queen of swing during the songwriting boom of the 1930s. Her first hit was the 1938 “A-Tisket, A-Tasket.” When Chick Webb passed away in 1939, Fitzgerald stayed on to



lead his ensemble through two more years. She brought emotional depth to beautiful and romantic lyrics, but her earliest vocals have an innocent charm that sometimes borders on childish cuteness. Ella was the 20th century's greatest and most prolific jazz singer, winning 13 Grammys and selling more than 40 million albums.

Fitzgerald continued her career through the '60s, '70s, and '80s, and while her voice began fading, some of her music is strong, especially the 1974 *Ella in London*, re-released on CD.

- ✓ **Helen Forrest (1917–1999):** She possessed smooth, innocent, emotionally transparent vocals with Artie Shaw's band (where she replaced Billie Holiday) and with Benny Goodman and Harry James. I'm head over heels for Helen Forrest!
- ✓ **Billie Holiday (1915–1959):** Her vocals were shaded with the dark emotions of a life troubled by heroin addiction, depression, and racism. Her best recordings derive from mostly small groups, especially when her voice teamed with Lester Young's saxophone. (Check out Young in "The Rise of the Soloist: Musical Improvisers and Singers" earlier in this chapter.) But Holiday also lent her hypnotic and seductive sound to the bands of Count Basie, Benny Goodman, and Artie Shaw. Holiday recorded the haunting song "Strange Fruit" in 1939 — the "fruit" being black bodies that hung from southern trees after lynchings. This song was a bold statement from a black performer some 25 years before the Civil Rights movement.
- ✓ **Jimmy Rushing (1903–1972):** Rushing delivered a blues-infused voice that fit with the Basie Band's rootsy, driving brand of jazz. Like Basie, Rushing's early experience included a stint with Bennie Moten's band.
- ✓ **Sarah Vaughan (1924–1990):** Born in Newark, New Jersey, Vaughn had an abundance of the jazz singer's essential gifts: a fine voice with a phenomenal range and the ability to spark a song's lyrics to life with her personal emotional stamp. Her voice rivaled the voices of the world's finest singers, even in opera, and spanned more than four octaves and was capable of infinite subtleties.



Vaughan also developed a recognizable sound all her own. Her throaty, smoky low end covers a tenor sax's territory, but she also handles high passages with silky sophistication. When you listen to her, notice how her voice keeps company with a range of instruments. She also makes subtle use of *dynamics* (changes in volume) and *space* (best defined as the number of instruments playing at once).

## The art of scat-singing

*Scat-singing* refers to the technique where vocalists improvise wordless melodies, based on meaningless syllables and sounds. In the 1920s, Don Redman (on “My Papa Doesn’t Two Time” and Louis Armstrong (on “Heebie Jeebies”) pioneered experimentation with scat-singing, but what survived was what would fit within the three-minute limits of one side of a 78 rpm record. Ella Fitzgerald developed a sophisticated scat technique, inspired by the improvisations of horn players. She invented fast, precise lines, sometimes related to a song’s melody, other

times departing from it and weaving through the harmonies. She shaped her sound by bending notes and adding many types of tonal inflections.

Other singers also advanced the art of scat-singing. Eddie Jefferson and King Pleasure sang amazing bebop versions of jazz tunes originally recorded as instrumentals. In the 1950s, Jon Hendricks took scat-singing even further, creating complex multi-voice harmonies in his group Lambert Hendricks & Ross. Hendricks proved that singers can make great instrumental music without any instruments at all.

## Chapter 7

# Bebop to Cool: The 1940s and 1950s

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Witnessing the birth of bebop
  - ▶ Introducing players who made bop be
  - ▶ Mixing big bands with bebop
  - ▶ Distinguishing between hard bop and cool jazz
- 

**S**tarting in the '40s, World War II was in full swing, and Americans, including musicians, were called to serve their country. The music industry was slowed by a recording ban imposed by the musicians' union in a dispute over artists' royalties. After sailing through the late 1930s, big band swing and ballroom dancing began to stall under a newly imposed entertainment tax. Gasoline rationing made it hard to travel any distance for a night on the town.

As the ranks of bigger, flashier venues and bands thinned out, a new generation of young jazz musicians met to jam in small bars and after-hours clubs. The new creative jolt hit hardest in New York City, with its unusually high concentration of first-rate players. At clubs like Minton's, Monroe's, the Royal Roost, Small's Paradise, and the Three Deuces, the sounds of madly improvising saxophones and trumpets rose above a rapid-fire foundation of bass and drums. Soon, the new music was christened *bebop*, for the two-beat combinations that often ended musical phrases.

In this chapter, you explore how the inventors of bebop carried jazz into unmapped territory. You find out how jazz's new individual stars, the improvisers, went about creating their amazing solos. And you discover how bebop influenced big bands and branched into two other forms: hard bop and cool jazz.

## *Taking Note of Bebop's Beginnings*

Jazz, like any art form, constantly evolves. The current generation matures and a fresher new generation comes of age. Innovative and vital musical ideas become mainstream or completely tapped out when players exploit the full range of possibilities.

In its prime, big band swing, which grew out of New Orleans and Chicago jazz, became commercial music for dancing and entertainment (see Chapter 6 for details about this form of jazz). Bands such as Duke Ellington's and Count Basie's still had some of their most creative years ahead of them, but for the most part, by the beginning of World War II, the best musicians looked for a fresh approach. In the following sections, I cover the factors that led to the creation of bebop, bebop's characteristics, and bebop's importance as a statement of African-American identity.

### *Swing loses its vitality and audience*

The birth of bebop coincided with World War II, or should I say collided? The war adversely affected many aspects of the entertainment world:

- ✓ The draft removed tens of thousands of American men from swing jazz's ballroom scene, as well as from the bands.
- ✓ Gas and rubber shortages curtailed road trips — the means by which many bands made their livings.
- ✓ Midnight curfews shut down clubs and ballrooms during their prime hours.
- ✓ An amusement tax as high as 20 percent in some cities raised the cost of operating venues.
- ✓ Racism made it tough for black musicians to tour; they had to stay in separate hotels, eat in different restaurants, and were excluded from performing at various venues.
- ✓ From 1942 to 1944, the recording ban removed new records as an important source of a big band's income and exposure.



The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) instigated the recording ban in a dispute over royalties. The ban applied only to instrumental music. The AFM ordered its members not to record until major recording companies met demands that royalties be paid not only for the sale of records but also for

use of the music by radio stations and on jukeboxes. The process took two years before all the big recording labels met the demands and recording resumed. Unfortunately, this lapse meant that most of bebop's important early performances were never caught on tape.

Some big bands did survive, however. For instance, Count Basie and Duke Ellington kept their bands going through the '40s, '50s, and '60s. But for every band that managed to keep going, several broke up. Even the King of Swing, Benny Goodman, redirected his energies to performing in small groups instead of leading a big band. Eventually, too, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, and other leaders found ways to bebop with their big bands, as I explain later in this chapter.

## *Bebop's distinct traits emerge*

Bebop was revolutionary music that emerged in New York City beginning around 1940. Whereas big band swing had the faith of the American masses, bebop went against the grain with its 180-degree shift of priorities.

Some young boppers appreciated the swing of bands led by drummer Chick Webb or pianist Count Basie but preferred the more innovative music of Duke Ellington and Artie Shaw's orchestras. They also studied the music of pianist Art Tatum and saxophonist Coleman Hawkins who had already explored advanced harmonies, altered chords, and chord substitution — all hallmarks of bebop. (I cover all these musicians, and swing in general, in Chapter 6.)



Bebop marked a departure from swing in every essential element. Here are its characteristics:

- ✓ **Improvisational:** The song's melody was only stated once at the beginning and end. Improvisers such as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie (whom I cover later in this chapter) traded improvisations, replacing the battling horn sections of big bands.
- ✓ **Small-group music:** Bebop often utilized a rhythm section of bass, drums, and piano, plus trumpet, and saxophone.
- ✓ **Speed:** Bebop played at break-neck speeds; even on slow ballads, the solos sped wildly.
- ✓ **Brash and harsh:** To the unskilled ear, the music sounded this way, even if it was actually carefully structured.
- ✓ **Complex rhythms:** Musicians improvised rhythmic patterns around the basic beat and around each other.

- ✓ **Rapid series of chords:** Instead of being built around just a few chords as in New Orleans jazz (see Chapter 5) and most big band swing, bebop used rapid series of chords, many of them altered from their standard form. *Passing chords*, inserted between the basic chords, added texture and complexity.
- ✓ **Drastically changed role for the instruments:** Bop drummers shifted primary timekeeping duties from bass drum to cymbals and snare, lending the music a lighter, effervescent aura. They began playing multiple overlapping rhythms (polyrhythms — see Chapter 3 for details about this and other elements of jazz theory).

## *Bebop becomes a statement of black identity*

For some black musicians, bebop became a statement of black identity, at a time when the civil rights movement was beginning. The NAACP organized its Legal Defense and Education Fund in 1939. Richard Wright's 1940 novel *Native Son* gave a bleak account of conditions for blacks in America. In 1941, Bernard Rustin, who later organized the March on Washington, launched a New York branch of the Congress on Racial Equality. In the past, white musicians appropriated the best ideas from black New Orleans and Chicago jazz (see Chapter 5 for details). White swing bands including Benny Goodman's enjoyed commercial success with music that included many ideas and players taken from African-American big bands. Black bandleader and arranger Fletcher Henderson even became Goodman's arranger.



As the black beboppers staked new ground, they risked rejection by their public, peers, and critics to make music so fast and technically demanding that it was difficult to understand and nearly impossible to copy. Compared with the sweet, melodic sounds of big band swing, bebop had little commercial potential.

### So where did “bebop” come from?

The word bebop may come from the “be-bop” sound of bop’s improvised lines, especially when the lines ended with a pair of notes, often with the accent on the second syllable: be-BOP! Or it may refer to two syllables used by players to sing bop phrases. Like other labels applied to art forms, *bebop* wasn’t coined by musicians,

but by writers. Throughout the history of jazz, tension has existed between players who make creative breakthroughs and critics and scholars who attempt to define and label the music. Ultimately, jazz doesn’t fit neatly into categories, but they are useful in explaining the music.

## Surveying Influential Bebop Musicians

Bebop began with saxophonists and trumpeters blowing red hot, speedy lines that floated above equally fleet rhythm sections. Eventually, bop worked its way into every format, from soloists to big bands, and was played on every instrument. Bassists, drummers, guitarists, pianists — they all became as inventive as horn players. Even vocalists began to bop. No matter what kind of tone or range a musician had, he could find ways to produce bebop's challenging new mode of improvisational jazz. I cover a variety of influential bebop musicians in the following sections.

### The early beboppers



Although bebop veered sharply away from swing, many of bebop's inventors began their careers in big bands; for instance, saxophonist Charlie Parker started with Earl Hines, and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie started with Cab Calloway (for more about these big bands, see Chapter 6). Others from the swing era who participated in the transition to bebop include the following:

- ✔ **Jimmy Blanton:** Blanton's able hands transformed the bass from a basic beat keeper into a versatile tool for improvising. He was one of the first jazz players to use a bow (arco) instead of just plucking the strings (pizzicato).
- ✔ **Charlie Christian:** He used one of the first electric jazz guitars to play saxophonelike lines of improvisation.
- ✔ **Roy Eldridge:** Playing an essential part in the history of jazz trumpet, Eldridge emerged as a leading swing era trumpeter with his own groups and in bands led by Gene Krupa and Artie Shaw. His solos had the melodic familiarity of swing, along with bebop's breathtaking speed and surprising selection of notes.
- ✔ **Coleman Hawkins:** After ten years with the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, Hawkins, a saxophonist, emerged as a leading soloist of the small group era, spanning the transition from swing to bebop. His 1939 version of "Body and Soul" is considered a landmark performance that signaled the beginning of bebop. He dispensed almost entirely with the original melody to improvise one of his own over the original chords. (See the nearby sidebar "Creating something new from the old" for details on this technique.)
- ✔ **Jo Jones:** As the timekeeper in Count Basie's big band Jones expanded the drummer's role by using all of his cymbals and drums to create multiple, overlapping rhythms that contrasted with the rest of the band instead of merely supporting it.

- ✔ **Davey Tough:** As he drummed his way to the top of the heap of Chicago jazz in the 1930s, Tough also foreshadowed the style of bebop drummers like Kenny Clarke. Tough played fast and light, and instead of just pounding out the beat, he subtly adjusted his rhythms and sounds to the mood and movement of the music. He helped make the cymbals and snare drum — suited to faster tempos — the mainstays of modern drumming in the bebop era.
- ✔ **Lester Young:** Making his name as featured soloist in the Count Basie Orchestra, Young's idiosyncratic phrasing inspired both the boppers and the cool jazz players of the 1950s. Young's long, languid lines of melody and improvisation on the saxophone stretched outside a song's structure and chord changes.

## *Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, the leaders of the pack*



Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie led bebop's charge into a new land of altered harmonies, chords, and extended improvisations. Parker was the compulsive creative genius, while Gillespie was the methodical one. Parker and Gillespie came from very different backgrounds and lived individual lives. But their careers soared as two of bebop's most influential musicians.

### *Charlie "Yardbird" Parker*

If you ask most music fans to name the single most important jazz musician of the 20th century, they might cite Louis Armstrong (see Chapter 5 for more about him). But if you asked academics, critics, musicians, and jazz buffs, most of them would single out saxophonist Charlie "Yardbird" Parker (1920–1955), whose nickname, shortened to "Bird," came to symbolize the soaring flight of his music and his genius (although legend says the name came after Parker suggested he and his bandmates cook up a "yardbird" for dinner, after their car ran over the chicken in question).

## **Creating something new from the old**

The idea of using a popular song's chords as the basis for a radical new bebop song, without referencing the original melody, became commonplace with Charlie Parker and other beboppers. For example, Parker's "Koko" was built on "Cherokee," his "Donna Lee" on "Indiana," and his "Meandering" was a reworking of George

Gershwin's "Embraceable You." Beboppers could utilize beautiful chord changes without paying royalties, and, because most players learned the changes to dozens of popular standards, there was usually common ground for improvising together.

Parker (see Figure 7-1) grew up in Kansas City, Missouri, after his birth on August 29, 1920. Missouri also claimed many of the best territory bands (see Chapter 6) led by Count Basie, Bennie Moten, and others. Parker went to New York for the first time in 1939, and sat in on jams at Monroe's Uptown House, where musicians invented the music that became bebop.



**Figure 7-1:**  
Charlie Parker was nicknamed "Bird."

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Parker's hard-edged tone cuts through other instruments. Sometimes his phrases are long and overlap the chord sequences; other times they're fast fragments. Even his speediest, densest solos have logic and structure. His influences weren't only his predecessors in jazz but also classical composers Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Paul Hindemith, and Edgard Varese. You can hear their influence in Parker's unpredictable improvised melodies and harsh, unconventional harmonies.

### ***John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie***

Born in Cheraw, South Carolina, Dizzy Gillespie (1917–1993) became Charlie Parker's alter-ego. Gillespie (see Figure 7-2) was raised in a musical family. His father was a musician who introduced his nine children to various instruments. Dizzy started on trombone but switched to trumpet at 15. As a young professional, he performed in big bands led by Cab Calloway, Benny Carter, Charlie Barnet, Earl Hines, and Duke Ellington (see Chapter 6 for more about them).

Gillespie's peers dubbed him "Dizzy" for his madcap antics on and off stage. He told jokes, made clownish faces, threw an occasional spitball during practice, and, in the 1950s, began using a trumpet with its bell bent upward as if sending sound toward the heavens.



**Figure 7-2:**  
Dizzy  
Gillespie  
played in  
many big  
bands of the  
1940s.

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Gillespie's early influence was trumpeter Roy Eldridge, but by the mid-1940s, with Parker, Gillespie developed a personal sound distinguished by many characteristics:

- ✓ Dizzying speed
- ✓ Dramatic dives from high notes to low
- ✓ Alternating clear and slurred notes
- ✓ Alternative chords for familiar songs
- ✓ New tunes composed over the chords of popular songs

Gillespie wrote some of bebop's signature songs (including "Hot House," "A Night in Tunisia," "Groovin' High," and "Salt Peanuts"). He was also one of the first jazz players to add Latin rhythms (through associations with band-leader Machito, Cuban composer/arranger Mario Bauza, and Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo; see the nearby sidebar "Bebop's Cuban connections").

### *A meeting of two great jazz minds*

In 1943 in New York, Parker joined pianist Earl Hines's big band, which included Gillespie. The two began practicing together. Gillespie was more interested in theory and chord patterns (in musicians' jargon, he added minor seventh and minor ninth and augmented and diminished chords that gave the music an unusual sound). Parker was more into melodies and blues-based improvisations that employed rapid and unusual rhythmic patterns. (I cover jazz theory in detail in Chapter 3.)

Unfortunately for jazz history and jazz fans, the recording ban meant that early bebop wasn't recorded (see the section "Swing loses its vitality and importance," earlier in this chapter).

Together, their connection was electrifying. Gillespie's trumpet and Parker's alto saxophone established bebop's signature two-horn lead, and together each produced some of his best music. By 1945, Parker and Gillespie played New York clubs such as the Three Deuces and the Spotlite, as well as in Los Angeles.



If you're eager to hear real bebop right away, get a copy of *Bird and Diz At Carnegie Hall* (Roost), recorded in the fall of 1947. This live session is particularly exciting because it includes shouts and murmurs from both the players and audience as the music picks up steam. Highlights include "A Night In Tunisia," "Dizzy Atmosphere," "Groovin' High," "Salt Peanuts," and "Relaxin' At Camarillo."



On tunes such as Gillespie's "Groovin' High," Parker and Gillespie played the melody in tandem with harmonized lines intertwining. Their uncanny chemistry allowed each to play a bold individualistic line that dovetailed perfectly with the others. Then they launched the music into orbit with their stellar improvisations. Sometimes one or the other stretched out for several measures. Other times, they traded short improvised phrases, almost as if they were having a conversation in hipster jive. There was no time to think. Together, they had a chemistry that has never been equaled by another pair of jazz geniuses.

### *Bird and Diz move on*

After initial sparks between these two masters produced some of jazz's greatest recordings, their paths diverged. Parker's problems with drugs and alcohol began to take their toll. He was hospitalized for drug addiction and mood disorder at Camarillo State Hospital north of Los Angeles for six months in 1946 and 1947. From 1947 to 1950, Parker fronted a variety of groups including a highly regarded quintet that featured trumpeter Miles Davis in the role formerly played by Gillespie. Davis provided a whispery, mellower alternative to Gillespie's high-pitched, frenetic sound.

Davis only played bop for a short while before he moved on to cool jazz and hard bop. His subtle, minimalist sound left Parker more room to improvise than he had with Gillespie.

In addition to a quintet including Davis, Parker recorded and performed with a variety of bebop's top players during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Among the most important of them were

- ✓ Drummer Max Roach, along with Kenny Clarke
- ✓ Pianist Duke Jordan
- ✓ Bassist Tommy Potter



You should have several Parker CDs, including collaborations with Gillespie. Parker was the most significant soloist from the bebop era. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- ✓ ***Dizzy Gillespie/Charlie Parker: Town Hall, New York City, June 22, 1945 (Uptown)***: Made during a radio broadcast, these recordings were recently recovered and represent some of the best early bop played by Parker and Gillespie.
- ✓ ***Diz and Bird at Carnegie Hall (Blue Note)***: In 1947, the bebop heroes gave this excellent performance with a big band.
- ✓ ***Jazz at Massey Hall (OJC)***: Recorded in Toronto in 1953, the album catches the dynamic duo with an all-star band performing bebop classics like “A Night in Tunisia” and “Salt Peanuts.”
- ✓ ***Charlie Parker: A Studio Chronicle 1940–1948 (JSP Records)***: A ton of bop for a reasonable price.
- ✓ ***Charlie Parker: The Cole Porter Songbook (Polygram)***: Bird was known for flying fast, but this set shows he also had a loving way with a ballad.

Gillespie, meanwhile, pursued his ambition to lead a big band that would combine bebop with Latin elements. This area became his focus during the late 1940s, when he played and recorded with Latin masters such as percussionist Chano Pozo. Unlike Parker, who died prematurely, Gillespie enjoyed a long and productive career, and mentored many generations of musicians. One of them was his disciple, Cuban trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, whom Gillespie helped bring to the U.S. In his later years, Gillespie traveled with his famous all-star United Nations Orchestra, which combined great music with spreading a message of world peace and multicultural harmony.

## Bebop's Cuban connections

Jelly Roll Morton talked about the “Latin tinge” in his music, but Dizzy Gillespie was the first jazz musician to give Latin rhythms — Afro-Cuban, to be exact — a major role in his music. In the 1940s, Gillespie collaborated with three famous Cubans: composer Mario Bauza, conga drummer Chano Pozo, and bandleader Machito. Through the rest of his career, Gillespie employed a variety of Afro-Cuban rhythmic combinations on his recordings and in his live performances. Meanwhile, Latin jazz musicians like Machito led bebop bands of their own (see Chapter 9). There was a healthy

give-and-take between jazz musicians such as Gillespie who began using Latin rhythms and Latin musicians who took inspiration from bebop.

In the 1950s, vibraphonist Cal Tjader was an innovator in combining Latin and jazz elements. Trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Horace Silver, and pianist George Shearing employed Afro-Cuban elements in a serious way in the 1950s. Of course, Latin musicians made some of the most important contributions. For more on Latin jazz, see Chapter 9.



Your collection should include at least a handful of Gillespie CDs. Here are a few suggestions:

- ✓ ***Dizzy's Big Four (OJC)***: Dizzy hooks up with three great players including bassist Ray Brown (see Chapter 6) for a rousing session that shows a range of moods and tones, including splashes of Latin flavors.
- ✓ ***Odyssey: 1945–1952 (Savoy)***: Ride along as Dizzy evolves from frantic bebopper to seasoned master.
- ✓ ***The Dizzy Gillespie Story: 1939–1950 (Proper)***: Three discs of Dizzy's best bop, from the prime Parker years, as well as with Cab Calloway, Lionel Hampton, and other collaborators.
- ✓ ***Sonny Side Up (Polygram)***: Dizzy goes to town with two great saxophonist Sonny's: Rollins and Stitt.

## *Thelonious Monk, the quirky genius*

Fragmented chords and off-kilter melodies lend Thelonious Monk's playing a strange charm. Unusual harmonies and melodies and teetering tempos are Monk's distinguishing traits as a bebopper who bent jazz beyond the rules of swing. Combining wild imagination with a dark sense of humor, Monk (1917–1982) has the most recognizable style of any jazz pianist. Embedded within his version of the Cole Porter song “Sweet and Lovely,” for instance, is “Tea For Two,” and he often reworked older tunes into new ones, such as the popular song “I Got Rhythm” became Monk's “Rhythm-a-Ning.”



Whether making his own music or reworking classic jazz tunes such as “All the Things You Are” and “I Should Care,” Monk (see Figure 7-3) communicated oceans of emotion with only a few notes. Other bop pianists played fast, using a lot of notes, but Monk selected the minimum number of notes to convey a melody and a feeling. His left hand mixes spare chords and single bass notes, while his right renders a written or improvised melody. Witness his playing on *The Complete Blue Note Recordings* (Blue Note), a must-have collection of Monk’s finest music that includes the great standards mentioned above and many more, as well as several original Monk compositions like “Misterioso” and “Well, You Needn’t.”



**Figure 7-3:**  
Thelonious  
Monk’s  
playing  
style is  
unmistak-  
able.

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## *Vocalists who bopped*

The art of scat singing — improvising melodies with nonsense sounds and syllables — reached new creative highs in bebop. The King and Queen of this vocal art were Jon Hendricks and Ella Fitzgerald. By freeing their voices from lyrics, bebop vocalists used their voices like trumpets or saxophones to improvise.

Hendricks led the innovative late-1950s vocal trio Lambert, Hendricks & Ross (with arranger Dave Lambert and Annie Ross), which took scat singing and vocal harmony into new, complex three-part territory, with performances such as their bebop-speed of “Cloudburst” and “Summertime,” where they sing a melody improvised by trumpeter Miles Davis in his earlier version of the tune. (The technique of re-creating an instrumental solo with voice is called “vocalese,” and this trio sang new versions of dozens of bebop solos.)

Fitzgerald (see Figure 7-4) was a master of her instrument — her voice. She approached singing like an instrumentalist with her 1920s performance of “A-Tisket, A-Tasket” with Chick Webb’s big band. Whether on “Cotton Tail” with Duke Ellington’s big band, or trading licks with instrumentalists such as trumpeter Roy Eldridge, Fitzgerald demonstrated how a singer could use her voice to improvise. (See Chapter 6 for more about her.)



**Figure 7-4:**  
Ella  
Fitzgerald  
was the  
queen of  
scat singing.

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## *Bebop's other prime players*

Dozens of musicians played excellent bebop during the 1940s. Here are some of the other artists who energized the music during its formative years.

### ***Barney Kessel***

A leading cool, swing, and bebop guitar man, Kessel (1923–2004) recorded with Charlie Parker (on the Dial sessions, covered earlier in the chapter) and played alongside Parker at producer Norman Granz’s legendary Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts. Kessel went on to make eclectic music of his own, often with bop leanings.

Catch Kessel on *Complete Charlie Parker on Dial* (Jazz Classics). Some of his best music as a leader is on *To Swing Or Not To Swing* (Original Jazz Classics).

### ***Fats Navarro***

Fats Navarro (1923–1950), a young bop trumpeter inspired by both Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, lived a short life but made a big impact. He recorded more than 150 songs, many with groups other than his own.

Among his personal best pieces are *Nostalgia* (Savoy) and the two-CD *Complete Blue Note and Capitol Recordings of Fats Navarro and Tadd Dameron* (Blue Note).

### ***Oscar Pettiford***

Pettiford (1922–1960) ranks among the top three innovators on bass, coaxing an array of sounds from his instrument with both *pizzicato* (plucked) and *arco* (bowed) techniques. Good examples of Pettiford’s gift are on *Oscar Pettiford Sextet* (Discovery).

### ***Bud Powell***

Bud Powell (1924–1966) came closer to than any pianist at equaling on his instrument the bebop that Charlie Parker played on alto saxophone. Powell was a vital force in bop’s invention as one of a handful of regular pianists who frequented New York City’s 52nd Street scene during the mid-’40s. He was a fast, fluid, clever player who meshed well with Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie.

### ***Max Roach***

Max Roach (born 1924) was a mainstay of 1940s bebop and hard bop (which I cover later in this chapter). Early on, Roach was one of the leading bebop drummers. Instead of just staying in the background and keeping time, Roach listened closely to bop’s fast improvisers and invented drum parts that responded to them. Unlike instrumentalists, drummers don’t have several notes to choose from, but Roach used the various tones of his drums and cymbals to create musical combinations. He also changed the way a drummer keeps basic time, shifting the emphasis from bass drum to cymbals.

Roach recorded dozens of albums with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Charles Mingus, Bud Powell, and Sonny Rollins. Later, he was one of the few beboppers to play free jazz with saxophonist Anthony Braxton and pianist Cecil Taylor (see Chapter 8). Formally trained in music, Roach was among the few drummers to write his own extended compositions, such as the “Freedom Now Suite,” inspired by black struggle for equality.



Roach conveyed a sense of jazz’s African roots — the group improvisation, shifting and overlapping rhythms, and a spiritual dimension. He helped make drummers an equal partner in group collaboration. Roach is one of the few drummers with several CDs under his own name. Among the best of his recordings are *Deeds Not Words* (OJC), *Percussion Bitter Sweet* (GRP), and *Brown and Roach, Inc.* (Polygram).

### ***Sonny Stitt***



One of my favorite saxophonists is Sonny Stitt (1924–1982). Stitt played alto and tenor saxophones. On alto, he had a sharp, cutting sound reminiscent of Charlie Parker’s. On tenor, however, his sound was softer and gentler and more original. Stitt made his first recordings in the 1940s, during bebop’s prime. He went on to make more than 100 albums in a career that lasted through the 1960s.



Stitt’s improvisations sparkle with freshness and energy, and his technique is flawless. You must hear *Kaleidoscope* (Original Jazz Classics), as well as *Sonny Stitt 1950–1951* (Melodie Jazz Classic).

## ***Combining Bebop and Big Bands***

World War II’s end in 1945 and the advent of bebop brought major changes to the sound of big bands. Among the draft, which took musicians and fans away from the music, the recording ban, which kept new jazz away from the public, and a cabaret tax that forced some clubs to close, the national jazz scene was ready for revival.



Big bands led by Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman (see Chapter 6 for details on those guys) remained popular among fans of swing, but other big-band leaders took a new approach.

➤ **Woody Herman (1913–1987):** Clarinetist and saxophonist Woody Herman led the Woody Herman Orchestra — one of the most popular swing bands of the early 1940s. In 1946 he organized the first bop-oriented big band, The Herd (over the years, he led a series of three different Herds). Herman’s Herds combined driving rhythms with great arrangements and tight solos.

- ✓ **Stan Kenton (1911–1979):** Kenton was one of jazz’s most popular and controversial figures of the 1940s, ’50s, and ’60s. Scorned by swing and bop purists for playing dissonant, unconventional pieces, Kenton used as many as 24 players (compared with 17 in a conventional big band). Today, he is regarded as one of the most important modern bandleaders. Kenton augmented his big band with extra brass, violins, or percussion, and he built a reputation for offbeat compositions, provocative arrangements, and great soloists.
- ✓ **Claude Thornhill (1909–1969):** Emerging as the leader of Claude Thornhill and His Orchestra during the late 1940s, Thornhill was a pianist and arranger whose orchestral recordings combined his love of bebop and classical music. As compared with the big, brassy sound of some big bands, Thornhill’s trademark was an understated sound with arrangements that had his orchestra playing chords with the notes spread among various sections. Thornhill’s use of french horn, bass clarinet, and tuba during the 1940s inspired Miles Davis’s 1949 *Birth of the Cool* (Capitol), with arrangements by Thornhill’s protégé, Gil Evans.

To sample Thornhill’s unusual hybrid music, get a copy of *Snowfall* (ASV Living Era). The music ranges from “Hungarian Dance No. 5” and “Arab Dance” (from *The Nutcracker*) to bebop tunes like Charlie Parker’s “Donna Lee.”



## Branching Off Bebop into Hard Bop and Cool Jazz



Jazz headed in new directions during the 1950s, with hard bop refining elements of bebop and cool jazz offering a minimalist alternative.

- ✓ Hard bop, developed primarily in New York City, was a bluesy, driving, stripped-down variant of bebop, made mostly by black musicians.
- ✓ Cool jazz was lighter, lyrical, intricately arranged, sometimes influenced by classical music.

I cover both of these offshoots of bebop in the following sections. I also discuss an important musician who crossed between hard bop and cool jazz: Miles Davis.

### *New York and hard bop*

Some hard boppers were graduates of 1940s bebop, including drummer Art Blakey and tenor saxophonists Sonny Rollins and Dexter Gordon. Others were relative newcomers searching for new sounds. The new generation

included players from outside New York City, especially from Detroit and Philadelphia.



Hard bop isn't as fast or frantic as bebop. It had a dark, gritty aura that seemed to suit New York in the 1950s. Hard bop is distinguished by a few key characteristics:

- ✓ Intense, swinging momentum rooted in gospel and blues, at slower tempos than bebop.
- ✓ New compositions that were more elaborate and technically demanding (in terms of group precision) than bebop.
- ✓ Intuitive, subtle interplay between players in bands where the group dynamic was as important as the solos.

Like bebop, hard bop was distinguished by its soloists' distinctive voices. Here are some of the many players who made important contributions.

### ***Cannonball Adderley***

A physical and creative giant of hard bop, alto saxophonist Adderley (1928–1975) produced a long line of solid recordings during the 1950s and '60s. Adderley improvised not only with speed and unpredictability, but also with a sweet tone and a melodic approach. A milestone in Adderley's career came when he joined the Miles Davis All Star Sextet in the late 1950s, where Adderley's alto saxophone played counterpoint to John Coltrane's tenor on Davis's famous *Kind of Blue* album.



The following Cannonball CDs are a few of my favorites:

- ✓ ***Cannonball Adderley Quintet in Chicago with John Coltrane (Polygram)***: Two great saxophonists team up for a stirring session.
- ✓ ***Cannonball Adderley Quintet in San Francisco (Riverside)***: A great live recording with Cannonball's brother Nat on trumpet.
- ✓ ***Cannonball's Bossa Nova (Blue Note)***: The saxophonist's take on the Brazilian craze that swept America during the early 1960s.



### ***Art Blakey***

Art Blakey (1919–1990) was one of the first drummers to tune his drums so that his playing made a melodic contribution. Blakey shifted from bass drum up to snare and cymbals, providing a looser, more fluid sound.

In the 1940s, Blakey played with Charlie Parker and other beboppers, but in the 1950s he became the most prolific bandleader of the hard bop era.

With pianist Horace Silver, Blakey founded the Jazz Messengers in 1953, and after Silver left the following year, Blakey led the band through four decades of innovative jazz. Blakey's Messengers served as a type of grad school for aspiring players like Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, and brothers Wynton (trumpet) and Branford (saxophone) Marsalis. See Chapter 8 for more about Shorter and Hubbard, and Chapter 10 for more about the Marsalis brothers.

### *Clifford Brown*

By the age of 26, Brown (1930–1956) had already created some of hard bop's most significant music — a series of recordings highlighted by the recordings he made with the Clifford Brown-Max Roach Quintet. Brown's bright, bluesy sound and beautiful phrasing made him one of the most distinctive trumpeters of his time. Considering his youth, Brown played with surprising maturity. He didn't overplay to show off his technique, and he adapted well to musical contexts, whether driving a hard bop band, or playing a more subdued role in collaborations with singers Sarah Vaughan and Dinah Washington.

### *Dexter Gordon*

Known as “Long Tall Dex,” Gordon (1923–1990) stood 6-foot 5-inches tall and played tenor saxophone with a subtle, smooth sound that combined some of Charlie Parker's speed and inventiveness with Lester Young's laid-back, lyrical approach.

Gordon was part of the core group of bebop players in the 1940s, and was one of the few who spent significant time in both New York City and Los Angeles. He forged a link between gritty East Coast jazz and milder West Coast jazz. During the 1950s, Gordon's sound evolved into bluesy, hard bop, but drug problems cut into his creativity during the 1950s, but he came back strong in the 1960s and 1970s.



In his prime, Gordon played saxophone like he spoke: soft, mellow, whispery, and with carefully chosen phrases. Some of his best music can be heard on these CDs:

- ✓ **Dexter Gordon: *Ballads* (Blue Note):** Beautiful renditions of romantic tunes such as “Body and Soul” and “Willow Weep for Me.”
- ✓ **Go (Blue Note):** A laid-back, bluesy set that was one of Gordon's favorite recordings, showcasing the saxophonist's big, warm tone.

### *J.J. Johnson*

Johnson (born 1924) was hard bop's best trombonist during the 1950s, composing, arranging, and playing music with a bluesy, hard bop feel, utilizing unconventional instrumentations and harmonies. He was a driving force in 1940s bebop as one of the few trombonists who could keep up with Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker.

Johnson recorded with fellow trombonist Kai Winding (the sound of two trombones as lead voices takes some getting use to because they're rarely heard as a duo in jazz or any other music). He made several albums with his own groups: *Get Mad Bebop* (Savoy), *Early Bones* (Prestige), and *The Eminent Jay Jay Johnson, Vols. 1 and 2* (EMD/Blue Note).

### ***Jackie McLean***

McLean (1932–2006) wailed a gritty alto saxophone in 1950s hard bop and was one of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers from 1956 to 1958, following stints with Miles Davis and Charles Mingus. McLean went through a free-jazz phase during the 1960s (see Chapter 8 for free jazz info), before returning to his hard bop roots.

McLean made excellent albums on Blue Note including *Swing, Swang, Swingin'*; *Tippin' the Scales*; and *Bluesnik*. McLean continues to make solid music that features his biting, probing sound, including his 2005 CD *Consequence*.

### ***Charles Mingus***

Mingus (1922–1978) played 1940s bebop with raw power and exhibited an unconventional genius of standup bass and masterfully composed with ambitious ideas. He went on to explore an array of styles including hard bop. Mingus spent his formative years in Los Angeles — part of the jazz scene that also included his good friend Buddy Collette. Mingus was a Renaissance man whose talents reached beyond jazz: He arranged, composed, led a band, played bass, and wrote a book (*Beneath the Underdog*) — Mingus' colorful account of a life in jazz. I cover Mingus in more detail in Chapter 8.

### ***Hank Mobley***

Mobley (1930–1986), a tenor saxophonist whose style was deeply rooted in rhythm and blues, became one of the most soulful of 1950s hard boppers. On his 25 or so albums, you can hear a sound somewhere between the toughness of Sonny Rollins and the gentleness of Lester Young.

The best of his 1950s output includes *No Room for Squares* (EMD/Blue Note) and *Workout* (Blue Note).

### ***James Moody***

Moody (born 1925) is the master of reeds — alto, tenor, and soprano saxes, and flute, as well as an entertaining vocalist whose live shows often include his signature song “Moody's Mood for Love,” with its charmingly silly lyrics.

Some of Moody's early bop solos can be heard on the 1948 album *Dizzy Gillespie and His Big Band* (GNP). Among Moody's own albums, look for *Hi-Fi Party* (Original Jazz Classics), *Last Train from Overbrook* (Argo), *Never Again* (Muse), *Young at Heart* (WEA/Warner), and *Moody Plays Mancini* (WEA/Warner). Moody's 2004 CD *Homage* (Savoy Jazz) proves that he's one of jazz's survivors.

### ***Sonny Rollins***

On tenor saxophone, Rollins, who cites Coleman Hawkins as a primary influence (check out Chapter 6 for details on Hawkins), played some of the most vital hard bop of the 1950s and 1960s.



Rollins' method of improvisation included a "thematic" approach, wherein he took pieces of a song's melody and cycled them through several variations. As of 2006, Rollins (born 1930) is one of the last living legends from the bebop and hard bop eras. Take a listen to his CDs *Saxophone Colossus* (OJC), *Tenor Madness* (OJC), and *Way Out West* (OJC).

### ***Horace Silver***

Horace Silver (born 1928) co-founded the Jazz Messengers, the leading hard bop band, with drummer Art Blakey.



He was a central figure in hard bop, playing in a bluesy style driven by rhythmic left-hand chord patterns and lyrical right-hand improvisations. He is also a prolific arranger/composer and was among the first jazz players to bring soul and funk flavors into the music.

## ***Los Angeles and West Coast cool***

Jazz recording and publishing have been based mostly in New York City (and, to a lesser extent, Chicago) since the 1930s and '40s, with the West Coast viewed as a smaller, secondary scene. In fact, Los Angeles has a rich history of hosting jazz and jazz musicians, dating back to visits by Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, and Kid Ory during jazz's formative years (see Chapter 5 for details on these musicians).

In the 1940s and '50s, Los Angeles had a vibrant jazz scene along Central Avenue and in other neighborhoods. The scene included black hard bop clubs like Billy Berg's, the Finale, and Shepp's Playhouse — all places where Charlie Parker and other East Coast greats performed, as well as locals like Sonny Criss, Teddy Edwards, Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray, and Frank Morgan.



But the movement that made the West Coast famous was cool jazz. Here are some of the elements that give the music its special sounds:

- ✓ Light, lyrical sound
- ✓ Gentler, flowing rhythms, as opposed to the driving rhythms of hard bop
- ✓ Whispy saxophones and muted trumpets
- ✓ Compositions and arrangements that incorporated the influence of classical composers like Stravinsky and Debussy
- ✓ Brazilian styles (such as samba and bossa nova) in music by saxophonist Stan Getz and others
- ✓ Odd meters (instead of the familiar four-beats-per measure), especially in Dave Brubeck songs like “Take Five” and “Blue Rondo à la Turk”
- ✓ Instruments not normally associated with jazz, such as French horn, oboe, bassoon, and bass clarinet, especially in larger ensembles

By the 1950s, the West Coast became an important jazz center — not only for the Los Angeles scene but also because of San Francisco Bay Area clubs. In L.A., Howard Rumsey’s Lighthouse became the hub for cool jazz. San Francisco had clubs like the Blackhawk and Bay Area musicians like Dave Brubeck, who single-handedly put cool jazz on the nation’s radar (for more on San Francisco jazz, see the sidebar “Northern cool: The San Francisco Bay Area”).

Although cool jazz, like hard bop, relied upon tight, intuitive interplay between band members, the music was also marked by amazing individuals and solos. Let’s look at some heroes of cool jazz.

### ***Chet Baker***

Trumpeter Baker (1929–1988) was a leading creative force in California cool jazz. He was known for a whispery, Miles Davis–like tone. Over the course of his career, he played with Charlie Parker, as well as with several major cool schoolers including saxophonists Gerry Mulligan, Jimmy Giuffre, and Stan Getz; pianist Bill Evans; and drummer Shelly Manne. Baker was also an excellent singer.

The movie “Let’s Get Lost” is a dark documentary about the later part of Baker’s life. The CD *My Funny Valentine* (Blue Note) includes some of Baker’s best playing.

## Northern cool: The San Francisco Bay Area

Although some top Bay Area jazz players moved to New York to seek their fortunes, Dave Brubeck, who was born in the Bay Area city of Concord, stayed home and became a national phenomenon. San Francisco's cool jazz benefited from its association with the emerging Beat scene, centered on North Beach cafes and bookstores like City Lights and poets like Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Allan Ginsburg, and Michael McClure. The scene was fictionalized in Jack Kerouac's classical Beat novel *On the Road*.

Through the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Bay Area scene was dominated by traditional jazz revival bands like Lu Watters Yerba Buena Jazz

Band. Area clubs included the famous Blackhawk in San Francisco, where several musicians including Miles Davis recorded live albums. The Blackhawk was a showcase for both New Yorkers like Davis and locals like Brubeck, his collaborator, saxophonist Paul Desmond, and vibraphonist Cal Tjader (for more on Tjader and his special brand of Latin jazz, see Chapter 9).

Although San Francisco never equaled Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans, or New York with the size of its scene, the Bay Area produced artists like Brubeck and Tjader who made signature contributions to the West Coast sound.

### *Dave Brubeck*

Beginning in the 1950s, pianist Dave Brubeck (born 1920) offered a brainy alternative to mellow cool jazz and driving hard bop. Brubeck studied with modernist classical composer Darius Milhaud, and performed classical music influences in his jazz. Some of Brubeck's improvised music leans toward classical, with dark, graceful chord changes and melodies so carefully crafted they sound as if they are composed.

Brubeck made the cover of *Time* magazine in 1954, and his recording of *Take Five*, written by and co-starring saxophonist Paul Desmond, is probably the best known jazz tune ever. Brubeck also composes religious music, and he's one of the few players to fuse jazz with classical strings in a successful way, as heard on *Brubeck Plays Bernstein* (Sony).

### *Bill Evans*

For pure emotional power, it's hard to beat Bill Evans (1912–1980), a member of Miles Davis's late '50s sextet that also included saxophonists John Coltrane (see Chapter 8 for more about him) and Cannonball Adderley. Like Dave Brubeck, Evans created music that fused classical music with jazz. As with Brubeck, you can hear the classical influence in beautifully composed or improvised melodies and harmonies. Sadly, some of the same, dark emotions that fed Evans' music also led him into drug abuse, which ended his life prematurely.



Evans' best recordings include his second album, from 1958, *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* (OJC), as well as his 1961 *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* (Riverside), and *Undercurrent* (Blue Note), a duet with guitarist Jim Hall.

### ***Gil Evans***

The most famous arranger of cool jazz, Evans (1912–1988) helped artists scale new heights of creativity by placing them in carefully orchestrated contexts that both showcased their genius and added complex shadings. For trumpeter Miles Davis, Evans (with Gerry Mulligan) did the arrangements for the landmark *Birth of the Cool* (Blue Note) album (see the section on Davis below), and also arranged music for Davis's *Miles Ahead* (Sony), *Porgy and Bess* (Sony), and the *Sketches of Spain* (Sony).

### ***Stan Getz***

Getz (1927–1991) was a tenor saxophonist with a lush, gentle sound inspired by Lester Young. Stan Getz made some of the best jazz of the 1950s, combining gritty hard bop with mellower cool jazz. In the early 1960s, his collaborations with Brazilians like Antonio Carlos Jobim and Joao Gilberto sparked America's Bossa Nova craze, including the hit song "Girl from Ipanema." Check out Chapter 9 for more about Jobim and Gilberto.

### ***Jimmy Giuffre***

Giuffre (born 1921) was one of the most innovative West Coast jazzmen, equally adept on clarinet and saxophone. After stints in several 1940s big bands, Giuffre recorded some fine music in experimental groups such as his trio with trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and guitarist Jim Hall — the group lacked jazz's traditional piano, bass, and drums.

### ***Chico Hamilton***

Vastly underappreciated, Hamilton (born 1921) was a versatile drummer who played in small and large groups — some with unconventional lineups. The Chico Hamilton Quintet, for instance, featured drums, saxophone, guitar, bass, and cello (you can catch Hamilton and his group performing in a night club scene in the 1958 film *The Sweet Smell of Success*). Hamilton demonstrated his range by performing with old schoolers such as Count Basie and Lester Young, as well as avant garde innovators like saxophonist Arthur Blythe, and electric jazz pioneers such as guitarist Larry Coryell. (See Chapter 8 for more about avant garde and jazz fusion.)

### ***Lee Konitz***

Another member of trumpeter Miles Davis's *Birth of the Cool* (Capitol) crew was alto and soprano saxophonist Lee Konitz (born 1927). His collaborators also included other 1950s cool jazz colleagues such as saxophonists Warne Marsh, Gerry Mulligan, and Jimmy Giuffre; and pianist Lennie Tristano. Konitz was known for his understated playing.

### ***Shelly Manne***

The best of the California cool drummers during the 1950s and 1960s was Manne (1920–1984) who used his influence as a bandleader and owned the famous Shelly’s Manne-Hole jazz club. Manne had enough technique and showmanship to become the centerpiece of a band, but he also used his sensitivity to create empathetic background rhythms for great soloists. He was equally important as a drummer who could propel a small or large band and perform flamboyant solos.

### ***The Modern Jazz Quartet***



Although not based on the West Coast, the Modern Jazz Quartet (MJQ) played brainy, cool jazz with heavy classical leanings. In essence, the Quartet was a traveling jazz chamber ensemble, in which classically trained pianist John Lewis used intricate compositions and arrangements to take jazz in directions as formal as classical music. Their prime years were the 1950s and early 1960s, but they regrouped in the 1980s (See Chapter 8 for more about this band).

### ***Gerry Mulligan***

Probably no one in jazz has done more with a baritone saxophone. Born in New York, Mulligan (1927–1996) became a founding father of cool jazz, through his participation in Miles Davis’s *Birth of the Cool* (Capitol): he played and contributed several arrangements (although Gil Evans is mistakenly thought to have arranged the whole album).



By playing minimal melodic lines on baritone, Mulligan added a deep, dreamy mood to cool jazz, as well as to sessions with swing-era stars including saxophonist Ben Webster, and bebop pianist Thelonious Monk.

### ***Art Pepper***

Dark currents in Pepper’s cool, sometimes fragmented bop mirrored the ups and downs of a tough life that included drug addiction. Art Pepper (1925–1982) was a California native and part of L.A.’s vital 1940s and 1950s scene. He played in orchestras led by Benny Carter (I cover him in Chapter 6) and Stan Kenton.

### ***Shorty Rogers***

Rogers (1924–1994) played a vital part in the Los Angeles cool jazz scene. Shorty Rogers and His Giants (their CD has the same name) had a changing lineup that sometimes expanded to nine players and showcased Rogers’ trumpet as well as his skill as an arranger. Roger composed cool-jazz scores for the films *The Wild One* (with Marlon Brando) and *The Man with the Golden Arm* (with Frank Sinatra).

### ***Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars***

Drummer Howard Rumsey (born 1917) launched his career during the 1940s with Stan Kenton's orchestra. After bouncing through various bands, he landed as leader of the house band at the Lighthouse Cafe in Hermosa Beach in Southern California.

Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars served as a vital training ground for a crew of important California cool players: trombonist Frank Rosolino; trumpeters Conte Candoli, Stu Williamson, and Shorty Rogers; multi-reedmen Bob Cooper, Bud Shank, Jimmy Giuffre, and Buddy Collette; pianists Claude Williamson, Sonny Clark, and Hampton Hawes; and drummers Shelly Manne and Stan Levy. Several CDs chronicle the music, including the three-volume *Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars* (OJC).

### ***George Shearing***

Ranging from swing to Latin, bebop, cool, and classical, Shearing's piano playing is complex, subtle, and spectacular. Shearing's late 1940s quintet featured great interplay between his piano and Marjorie Hyams' vibes (Hyams was one of jazz's top players at the time but shortly retired to raise a family).

Hear Shearing (born 1919) on *The London Years/1939–1943* (Hep), *Lullaby of Birdland* (Verve), *Blues Alley and Jazz* (Concord), and *My Favorite Things* (Telarc).

### ***Lennie Tristano***

Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane are the famous figureheads of jazz's *avant garde* (see Chapter 8 for *avant garde* details), but in 1949, on the songs "Intuition" and "Digression" — found on *Crosscurrents* (Capitol) — Tristano (1919–1978) pointed the way toward 1950s cool jazz and '60s free jazz.



Tristano's sound included complicated changes in time signature (number of beats per measure), dense harmonies, exotic melodies, dissonance between his own piano parts and between other instruments, and a variety of seemingly disparate sounds brought together.

Tristano's collective improvisations with Lee Konitz and other cool jazz peers were forerunners of collective jazz in the late 1960s, and his overdubbed piano parts on the album *Requiem* (Atlantic), were also well in advance of the rise of technology and computers in the studio. Tristano studied classical music at the American Conservatory in Chicago before dedicating himself to jazz, and you can hear the influence of composers including Stravinsky in Tristano's complicated, moody harmonies.



Tristano's 1949 album *Crosscurrents* (Capitol) is a landmark of improvised jazz that sounds like it could've been recorded ten years later. Although the music was almost entirely invented on the spot, it has logic, and it moves seamlessly through many moods.

### *Kai Winding*

Kai Winding (1922–1983) is perhaps best known as J.J. Johnson's cool jazz counterpart on their shared recording dates (I discuss J.J. Johnson earlier in this chapter). Captivated by bebop, Winding had a major impact on Stan Kenton's orchestra with his unusual vibrato. Winding played on trumpeter Miles Davis's landmark *Birth of the Cool* (Capitol), and he frequently collaborated with J.J. Johnson during the mid-'50s. *Kai Winding Solo* (Verve) catches the trombonist in his prime.

## *Miles Davis and the best of both worlds*

Miles Davis (1926–1991) was born in Alton, Illinois, and his lengthy career spanned bebop, cool jazz, hard bop, fusion, and funk. Davis (see Figure 7-5) began playing at age 9, entered Juilliard at 18, but soon dropped out to join New York City's emerging bebop scene. In the mid-1940s, Davis's laid-back, slurry sound made an interesting match with bebop pioneer Charlie Parker's manic saxophone. But Davis soon transformed his sound to the whispery, minimalist style that became his trademark.

Davis was a visionary leader who brought out some of the best performances by several dozen of jazz's finest players, and who launched them on their careers. Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane, Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, Horace Silver, and Wayne Shorter are but a few of the musicians who performed in Davis's bands over the years. (See Chapter 8 for more about Coltrane, Hancock, and Shorter.)



In 1949, Davis helped invent the cool sound with his *Birth of the Cool* (Capitol) album, music played by a nine-piece ensemble, with arrangements by Gil Evans and saxophonist Gerry Mulligan. Whether playing hard bop, cool jazz, or later styles, Davis knew that space was as important as sound.



Davis's mid-'50s quintet made a string of albums with one-word titles like *Cookin'*, *Workin'*, *Steamin'*, and *Relaxin'* (all available on Original Jazz Classics) that exemplified dark, moody hard bop. Davis's most famous album, probably included in more jazz collections than any other, is the 1959 *Kind of Blue* (Sony), which includes the legendary John Coltrane on saxophone. (I'm also a fan of Davis's electric jazz, covered in Chapter 8).



**Figure 7-5:**  
Miles Davis  
played both  
hard bop  
and cool  
jazz.

*Everett Collection*

Some purists feel that Davis sold out by going electric during the mid-'60s, and by blending jazz with other music. To me, music from all his phases has stood the test of time. In Chapter 8, I cover Davis's electric phase in detail.



## Chapter 8

# A Radical Departure: The 1960s and 1970s

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Experimenting with the avant garde
  - ▶ Feeling liberated with free jazz
  - ▶ Recognizing how jazz reflected the sixties
  - ▶ Focusing on electric fusions
- 

**W**hen the black-and-white '50s faded into the Technicolor '60s, jazz exploded in radical directions that indicated the social and political changes ahead. But the past wasn't entirely abandoned. As new music developed, older forms of jazz came along. Giants from jazz's Golden Age of the '30s still made vital music (see Chapter 6 for details on this era), and hard bop players from the '50s played bluesy, hard-driving jazz for three more decades (Chapter 7 has the scoop on bebop). But as in earlier eras, a new generation once again arrived to lead jazz in new directions. Those paths ranged from free improvisation to mergers of jazz with classical and world music and the adoption of electric instruments and synthesizers.

## *The Future Is Now: Avant Garde Jazz*



Avant garde jazz is experimental and often includes significant improvisation, but it also usually has structure. It may sometimes sound chaotic, but it's often elaborately composed in advance.

In the following sections, I discuss two avant garde movements — the Lydian Concept and Third Stream — that originated in the '40s and '50s and how they continued to influence jazz musicians through the '60s and '70s.

## George Russell and his Lydian Concept

Pianist and composer George Russell (born 1923) developed his “Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization” during the 1940s. *Lydian* refers to an ancient Greek scale — an exotic-sounding variation of a standard major scale. Russell composed pieces for musicians that often used Afro-Cuban elements (see Chapter 9 for details about jazz with Afro-Cuban elements).

The Lydian mode was effectively used by Beethoven, Prokofiev, Ravel, and Scriabin, but Russell was one of the first to bring this element — originally built on simple blues or popular Broadway songs — into jazz. The Lydian mode became the basis for spare, moody jazz compositions and improvisations.

Russell’s 1953 book on his own Lydian Concept set the stage for music by John Coltrane, Miles Davis, pianist Bill Evans, and others in the 1960s, utilizing only a few scales (instead of the many scales required to follow bebop’s frantic chord changes) and allowing greater freedom for improvisation. Russell’s fans included modernist Japanese classical composer Toru Takemitsu, another example of the increasingly blurred boundary between jazz and classical music (see the next section).



Hear Russell’s older compositions on ’50s/early ’60s albums such as *Jazz Workshop* (Bluebird); *Stratusphunk* (Original Jazz Classics); *The Outer View* (Original Jazz Classics); and *Electronic Sonata for Souls Loved by Nature* (Soul Note) (this one’s out of print, but dig around for a copy). Today, Russell leads and tours with his International Living Time Orchestra. To hear how his music has evolved, get *The 80th Birthday Concert* (Concept).

## Third stream and its classical elements

In 1957, author-composer-conductor-teacher Gunther Schuller coined the phrase *third stream* for music that combined jazz and classical elements. He said that he meant for the term to refer to a separate new genre of music not simply jazz with classical elements or vice versa. Classical composers such as Bartok, who combined Hungarian folk music with classical forms, had earlier invented similar hybrids.



Third stream music combined jazz’s rhythmic drive and improvisation with classical instrumentation and forms such as:

- ✓ **Fugues:** Contrasting melodies that overlap and intertwine as they’re expressed by different musical instruments.
- ✓ **Suites:** Musical compositions that move through loosely related movements, like chapters in a short novel.
- ✓ **Concertos:** Composed for orchestra (or jazz ensemble) and one or two solo instruments.

Modern composers such as George Gershwin, Darius Milhaud, and Igor Stravinsky had already brought jazz and African-American influences into their music. Now avant garde jazz brought distinctive classical elements into a musical tradition that was built on blues and popular music.

In the following sections, I examine the contributions of three third stream pioneers.

### ***Dave Brubeck***

Pianist and composer Dave Brubeck, born 1920, (see Figure 8-1) made his mark on '50s jazz and had significant impact on '60s third stream jazz. One of Brubeck's favorite classical forms was the fugue, which he studied after some coaxing from his mentor: Darius Milhaud. Brubeck continues to record and perform today, often accompanied by symphony orchestra, continuing his efforts to merge classical and jazz elements.

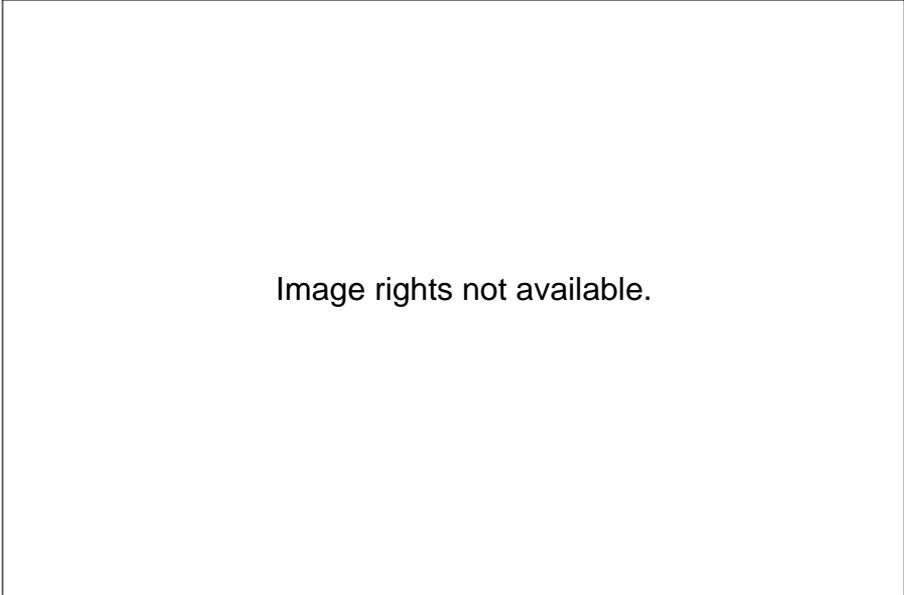


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**Figure 8-1:**  
Classical  
fugues  
influenced  
some of  
Dave  
Brubeck's  
music.

© Bettmann/CORBIS

In the '60s, jazz composers began erasing the line between jazz and classical music. Brubeck began to eliminate the division with his "Chromatic Fantasy Sonata" (inspired by Bach's "Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue"). This piece borrows melodies from Bach and creates a new *sonata* (a musical composition of three or four movements of contrasting forms). This piece is played by classical musicians such as the Brodsky Quartet, yet it uses rhythms and melodies that evoke the spontaneous, improvised nature of jazz.

In 1967, Brubeck turned away from jazz to focus on composing other music such as operas, ballets, cantatas, an oratorio, and various religious commissions including a Catholic mass. This fusion of classical music with jazz was praised by critics on Brubeck's 1970 album, *Elementals for Jazzcombo, Orchestra and Baritone-Solo*. Brubeck and his quartet also performed with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and recorded several albums of his sacred music with various symphony orchestras.

### *Charles Mingus*

Mingus (1922–1979) was a player in the invention of bebop (see Chapter 7 for details) and a prolific composer and utilized classical elements in his jazz. Even in his teens, Mingus (see Figure 8-2) listened to Wagner, Strauss, and Debussy and wrote his own band arrangements.



**Figure 8-2:**  
Charles  
Mingus  
used  
classical  
elements in  
his jazz  
composi-  
tions.

*Fantasy, Inc.*



Mingus's 1963 ballet score "The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady" is a classical suite: an orchestral piece for big band that includes classical colors such as Mingus playing his bass *arco style* (with a bow instead of plucking with his fingers) and horn arrangements reminiscent of Duke Ellington.



Mingus's 1972 album *Let My Children Hear Music*, one of his last recordings, is one of his most ambitious compositions and ensemble arrangements of classical scope. Appropriately, an online blogger noted that he purchased this album together with a recording of Mahler's Eighth Symphony and found them to be equally challenging orchestral compositions.

### *The Modern Jazz Quartet*

The Modern Jazz Quartet banded in 1952 and played for 22 years (members included bassist Percy Heath, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, and drummer Connie Kay, who later was replaced with Albert "Tootie" Heath). This long history meant that leader John Lewis's successful combination of classical forms and arrangements with jazz instruments and improvisations suggested one path for jazz musicians of the '60s seeking fresh directions.



Lewis loved writing jazz pieces that utilized the classical fugue form (see "Third stream and its classical elements" earlier in this chapter for info on fugue), such as "Alexander's Fugue," "A Fugue for Music Inn," and "Vendome," a composition that alternates with sections from Oscar Hammerstein and Jerome Kern's "All the Things You Are."

## *Letting Loose: Free Jazz*



Free jazz liberates players from traditional structures, such as melodic themes, patterns of chords, and restrictions on the duration or format of improvisations. Whereas third stream avant garde jazz was innovative for bringing together jazz and classical music, free jazz was based almost entirely on improvisation. Many free jazz pieces begin with a musical theme, and then, as in other forms of jazz, the players take turns soloing.

But a song's structure varies from loose to virtually nonexistent:

- ✓ Bandmates improvised collectively or one at a time.
- ✓ Music shifts occurred impulsively instead of on cue or from sheet music.
- ✓ Free-jazz players used instruments in unconventional ways to produce unusual sounds such as horns generating moans, shrieks, and cries.

Along with John Coltrane, saxophonist Ornette Coleman and pianist Cecil Taylor rank as the most influential adventurers in early '60s jazz. Although their music seems to be coming from shared ideas, Coleman's emerged freer, while Taylor's had more structure. I cover all three pioneers in the following sections.



Peruse your local (or online) music store for CDs by these other free players: reedmen Arthur Blythe, Henry Threadgill, David Murray, and John Zorn; trumpeter Lester Bowie; pianists Don Pullen and Marilyn Crispell; violinist Leroy Jenkins; trombonist George Lewis; drummer Sunny Murray; and guitarists Sonny Sharrock and James “Blood” Ulmer.

## *John Coltrane's spiritual quest*

Tenor saxophonist John Coltrane (1926–1967) grew up in High Point, North Carolina, and played various horns as a teenager and for a Navy band in Hawaii around the end of World War II in 1945. Although Coltrane (shown in Figure 8-3) broke jazz wide open with his free explorations and spirituality, he began his career in rhythm-and-blues and jazz bands led by King Kolax, Eddie “Cleanhead” Vinson, Jimmy Heath, Howard McGhee, Dizzy Gillespie, and Earl Bostic.



**Figure 8-3:**  
John Coltrane is one of the most influential jazz musicians of the 20th century.

*Everett Collection*

Coltrane's move into experimental music came in Miles Davis's 1959 *Kind of Blue* quintet. On that album Coltrane's solos began to break free from the past as he explored wildly imaginative improvisations using only a few scales and began to explore the exotic saxophone tones that eventually became his signature. Key elements of Coltrane's music include the following:

- ✔ **Free, soaring solos:** Coltrane selected a few chords and scales as the basis for improvisations that became longer than most any player's before him.
- ✔ **Wild sounds:** Squeals and squawks that others may consider "noise" artfully integrated into his solos, extending the emotional range and intensity.
- ✔ **Modal:** *Modal* is a meditative approach that Coltrane used as his fascination with Shankar and Indian music grew. Coltrane wrote songs centered on single scales or modes instead of complex chord changes. Improvisers felt freer to play straight from their feelings because they didn't need to follow the zigzagging chord changes of jazz.
- ✔ **Blues connections:** Coltrane captured the earthy feel of blues on albums such as *Blue Train*.

Coltrane's music and personal life continued to follow a spiritual path, and he studied eastern religions and musicians including Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar (Coltrane named his son Ravi, who's discussed in Chapter 10). Coltrane saw his music as a spiritual offering. To this day in San Francisco, the Church of John Coltrane uses his music as a basis for services.



Coltrane's 1964 album *A Love Supreme* marked a new milestone, as the music took on a meditative aura, and Coltrane improvised with no restrictions as far as chord changes, melodies, or length of solo. The music built on spare "sketches" of themes that Coltrane explained to his band just before the recording session. Coltrane gave his only live performance of *A Love Supreme* at the Antibes Jazz Festival in 1965.



Late in his career, Coltrane used pure feeling and less preconceived form in his music. He often used a soprano sax instead of a tenor sax to capture increasingly intense feelings. The power of the music shows through his albums that showcase both uncompromising art and commercial viability — the saxophonist tapped something primal and universal in human emotions.

Among 20th century jazz musicians, Coltrane ranks as one of the most influential, alongside Charlie Parker (see Chapter 7) and Miles Davis (covered later in this chapter and in Chapter 7). Young players who got their start with Coltrane include drummer Elvin Jones and pianist McCoy Tyner. As they continued in Coltrane's spirit, you could hear the dark moods and boundless improvisation they learned from Coltrane.

## *Ornette Coleman on the fringe*

Born in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1930, saxophonist Ornette Coleman grew up hearing Texas blues and R&B. He played in bands led by guitarist Pee Wee Crayton and others. But unlike other young musicians who play and record in established styles before finding a sound of their own, Coleman made fringe music almost from the start.

Coleman's music paralleled abstract painting — art with no tangible subject. Instead, feelings, impressions, and emotions posed as the subjects. Coleman's music has only the loosest structure, sometimes as limited as a simple strand of melody or repeated funky rhythms. Players improvised practically all the music.



*Harmolodics*, as Coleman (see Figure 8-4) calls his musical system, lets musicians respond to their intuitions and to each other as they invent new harmonies and melodies on the spot. Coleman's music challenges listeners to be patient with open ears and an open mind but reaping the rewards.



**Figure 8-4:**  
Ornette  
Coleman's  
music is  
loosely  
structured.

*Everett Collection*



Coleman's music may at times seem random, but it has traits in common with other jazz:

- ✓ **Improvisation:** Coleman's goal wasn't to lead his bandmates, but instead, it was to create a context where they found their deepest personal expression through improvisation in a group context. No written melody or harmony defined the range of improvisation.
- ✓ **Form:** Most of Coleman's pieces derived their forms only from the spontaneous ideas of the performers and the ways in which individual listeners interpreted the music. Like an abstract painting, Coleman's music produces vastly different emotions and thoughts in different listeners.
- ✓ **Distinctive voices:** Coleman's revolutionary sound on alto saxophone resonates in his sharp tone and soaring improvised melodies. Among the first free jazz musicians, Coleman forced new sounds from his instruments through different breathing techniques and also through use of the horn's parts, such as the clicking of keys, or tapping on the horn's body.
- ✓ **Swing:** Coleman may fly away from any sort of structure, but Charlie Haden on bass and Billy Higgins on drums swing hard through several sections on *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (Atlantic), laying down a loose, grooving foundation for Coleman's liberal creations.
- ✓ **Logic:** Coleman exhibited logic to his seemingly free jazz. He and trumpeter Don Cherry (his frequent collaborator, whom I cover later in this chapter) often played notes in tandem that implied chords. Coleman's approach relied on collective improvisation with gifted bandmates like bassist Charlie Haden and drummers Ed Blackwell and Billy Higgins.



Check out Coleman on two prime examples of his jazz:

- ✓ Coleman's 1959 album *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (with its cover by abstract painter Jackson Pollock) set the jazz world on its ear with its odd and exotic beauty. Some critics and old-school players didn't know what to make of Coleman's wild, squealing improvisations. Early engagements at the Five Spot club in New York brought curious legends like Miles Davis, who watched in awe as Coleman performed using a plastic saxophone.
- ✓ Coleman's 1960 album *Free Jazz (A Collective Improvisation)* is another example of early free jazz. Coleman assembled two quartets and made them improvise face to face without predetermined chords, tunes, or structures. The result? An exciting new variety of intuitive chamber music, in which the players responded to and elaborated on each other's ideas. The collective approach signified the desire for social harmony at a time when America lived in upheaval.

In the '70s, Coleman visited Morocco and played with masters of *joujouka*, the native music. Also in the '70s, running a parallel track to Miles Davis, Coleman plugged in with his band *Prime Time*. Alongside Coleman, the band included two electric basses, two guitars, and two drummers, producing a whirlwind of sound.

As of 2006, Coleman continues to tour and create new music, making him one of the most prolific and durable of free jazz's pioneers.

## *Cecil Taylor's stunning tones*

Unlike most of his '60s peers, pianist Cecil Taylor (born 1929) had formal training in classical music. At the New England Conservatory of Music, he studied Stravinsky and emulated Dave Brubeck, Duke Ellington, and Lennie Tristano — all of whom used classical elements.



Taylor (see Figure 8-5) wasn't interested in new electronic instruments because he considered himself strictly an acoustic pianist. Nor did he favor the formless approach of Ornette Coleman. Instead, Taylor used phenomenal technique to achieve stunning, overlapping sounds and tones above a recognizable structure.



Taylor's 1966 album *Unit Structures* explodes like a volcano with percussion, piano, two horns, and two basses, and various scales, rhythmic patterns, and musical themes specified by Taylor and the music guided by Taylor's piano. His 1978 recording "Unit" is a sextet session in which the group improvisations empathize amazingly.

Some critics say that although Taylor's music is improvised, it contains the imaginative structure, harmonies, contrasting melodies, and rhythmic variations of great classical music.

## *Other free jazz players of the 1960s*

Some musicians preferred completely free improvisation and others utilized various means of structuring their music beforehand. All of them took jazz into new and exciting places. I cover some of these giants in the following sections.

### *The Art Ensemble of Chicago*

This ensemble arose from the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) like the World Saxophone Quartet (covered later in this chapter). The Art Ensemble included trumpeter Lester Bowie, bassist Malachi Favors, drummer Don Moye, saxophonist Joseph Jarman, and flutist and saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell (Bowie died in 1999; Favors in 2004).

Image rights not available.

**Figure 8-5:**  
Cecil Taylor  
overlapped  
sounds and  
tones when  
he played  
the piano.

© Bettmann/CORBIS

The group's jazz used authentic African sounds (including chants) and instruments. It's almost entirely improvised, and their performances provided a spectacle, with band members painting their faces and wearing loose clothes made from African-print fabrics. Balanced on the cutting edge of '60s and '70s jazz, the ensemble's music was also rooted deep in Africa.

*Tutankhamun* (Black Lion) embodies their early (circa-1969) music.



### ***Paul Bley***

On piano, Paul Bley (born 1932) plays a lighter, dreamier style of jazz than his peers. Early on, Bley played with 1950s cool and hard-bop musicians such as trumpeter Chet Baker and saxophonist Jackie McLean, but by the 1960s, Bley left those structures to explore largely improvised jazz.



Look for *Improvisations: Introducing Paul Bley* (Original Jazz Classics), *Paul Bley with Gary Peacock* (ECM), and *Copenhagen and Harlem* (Arista).

### ***Anthony Braxton***

With his cardigan sweaters and wire-rimmed glasses, Anthony Braxton (born 1945) looks like a college math professor, and his music is as perplexing as advanced calculus. Sometimes Braxton played unaccompanied and other times he composed epic works — symphonic in their precision and

complexity. Braxton plays the alto sax and other wind instruments as well as piano and has produced some of jazz's most unconventional music since the mid-'60s.



Listen to *For Alto Saxophone* (Delmark), *Dortmund/Quartet 1976* (Hat Art), and *Six Monk's Compositions/1987* (Black Saint).

### ***Don Cherry***

Trumpeter Don Cherry (1936–1995) composed and played music that drew from both international and classical sources. He inspired many musicians who came through his bands.

- ✓ Cherry first explored free jazz as a member of Ornette Coleman's Quartet.
- ✓ He then formed his own band, Old and New Dreams, with drummer Ed Blackwell, bassist Charlie Haden, and saxophonist Dewey Redman.
- ✓ Cherry played with Coltrane, Shepp, and other free-jazz leaders in the '60s.
- ✓ In the '70s he made music with rock musicians such as Lou Reed and the Talking Heads.
- ✓ In the '70s and '80s, Cherry brought international sounds into his music through his band, Codona, that showed a move from hard-edge free jazz to a gentler combination of jazz sounds with the music of Africa, India, South America, and the Middle East.



Head out to your favorite music store and get Cherry's *Symphony for Improvisers* (Blue Note) as well as *Codona*, Vols. 1, 2, & 3. The first CD finds Cherry leading a sextet through some bold improvised jazz in 1966, whereas the *Codona* series combines Cherry's sharp solos on trumpet with the soothing thrum of world rhythms.

### ***Eric Dolphy***

Eric Dolphy (1928–1964) was an associate of fellow saxophonists Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane. Together in Coltrane's group, Dolphy and Coltrane soloed until they felt they finished — which may have been ten minutes or an hour or longer.

Through his association with composer Gunther Schuller, Dolphy also had a hand, or horn, in early '60s experiments at combining jazz with elements of classical music. He mainly played the alto sax, but he also played bass clarinet and flute.



Hear Dolphy's wild leaps of imagination on *Here and There* (Original Jazz Classics), *Out There* (Original Jazz Classics), and *Far Cry* (Original Jazz Classics), and on several Coltrane albums including *Impressions* (GRP/Impulse!).



Dolphy also made numerous free jazz albums as a leader beginning in 1960. *Out To Lunch* (Blue Note), recorded months before his death in 1964, features some of his wild, free blowing, with its dark, haunting undertones.

### ***Archie Shepp***

On tenor saxophone and piano, Archie Shepp (born 1937) has been a vital free-jazz player from the start. Cecil Taylor recruited Shepp to his band in 1960, and in the mid-'60s Coltrane helped Shepp land a recording contract. Throughout his career, Shepp asserted that improvisation is the essential element of jazz, as it was in the African music that influenced jazz. Improvisation became a sort of conversation between musicians, and also between Shepp and his audiences, who would add to the music by openly responding with hand claps, foot taps, shouts, and whatever else they could use.

Shepp saw his free jazz as expressing some of the emotions felt by African Americans during the turbulent 1960s. One of Shepp's songs is titled "Malcolm, Malcolm — Semper Malcolm," in honor of civil rights leader Malcolm X. He believes that it was important for jazz to express political, social, and emotional realities, not just entertain.

Although his early saxophone playing took the form of honking, screaming expression, his more recent music is more bluesy and melodic, in order to reach a broader audience.



Check out *Archie Shepp in Europe* (Delmark), *Four for Trane* (GRP/Impulse!), *On This Night* (GRP), and *Magic of Ju-Ju* (GRP/Impulse!).

### ***Sun Ra***

Sun Ra (1914–1993) claimed he was from another galaxy and because his birth certificate was never found, he held on to his other-worldly demeanor.

Quite possibly, Sun Ra's musical transformation was one of the most radical in jazz. He began in the 1940s as a musical arranger for Chicago stage shows and as a member of Fletcher Henderson's swing band (see Chapter 6 for information on Henderson). But by 1955, he led the Arkestra series of bands:

- ✓ The Solar Arkestra
- ✓ The Myth-Science Arkestra
- ✓ The Omniverse Arkestra

These names all add to Sun Ra's fascination with space travel. The bands started out playing hard bop (see Chapter 7 for info on hard bop) but soon began experimenting with free improvisation.

Live performances with the Arkestra groups paraded a spectacle of costumes, movement, and sound; the music was equally stunning. The visual spectacle included the troupe hitting the stage in capes, robes, and space helmets, joined by dancers who chanted phrases such as "We travel the space ways, from planet to planet." Sometimes the band paraded right off the stage and through the audience.



You want some of Sun Ra's music in your collection (especially if you plan to be aboard the next mission to Mars). But before you try the music, you may want to watch the Sun Ra's weird sci-fi film *Space is the Place*, in which he portrays an alien who comes to earth in a spaceship. Also check out *Atlantis* (1967) and *Languidity* (1978) (both on the Evidence label) for two recordings from Sun Ra's earthbound collection, mixing swirling synthesizers with horns and other acoustic instruments to create sonic journeys through space.

Today the Arkestra, under the leadership of Marshall Allen, includes more than a dozen players, some of whom were recruited by Sun Ra in the '50s and '60s.

### ***The World Saxophone Quartet***

Since the late '60s, the World Saxophone Quartet has produced a string of provocative albums of original music and revamped classic jazz. Members of The World Saxophone Quartet include

- ✓ Oliver Lake and Julius Hemphill, alto saxophonists
- ✓ David Murray, tenor saxophonist
- ✓ Hamiett Bluiett, baritone saxophonist

The group's music combines jazz, blues, and gospel with authentic African rhythms and instruments. They continued to perform and record through the '80s and '90s, until Hemphill's death in 1995.



Get acquainted with the group by starting with *Steppin' With* (Black Saint), *W.S.Q.* (Black Saint), and *Plays Duke Ellington* (Elektra).

## ***Chicago and New York City, the two centers for free jazz***

In the '60s and '70s, Chicago and New York became the centers for free jazz.

### Chicago

In Chicago, a group of African-American jazz players led by pianist Muhal Richard Abrams founded the AACM in 1965 as a nonprofit collection of musicians and composers dedicated to creating “serious, original music” — a more generic rephrasing of the collective’s original “Great Black Music.” So naturally, Chicago became a destination for musicians wishing to tap the AACM’s source of creative power and support.



Truly, the AACM supports new and diverse musical expressions of the black experience in America by combining roots with revolution. Members of the AACM painted their faces and wore tribal costumes while they performed their avant garde music. The AACM gives black musicians the solidarity and support they need to make music for artistic, not commercial, reasons. The AACM members include

- ✓ The Art Ensemble of Chicago
- ✓ Lester Bowie
- ✓ Anthony Braxton
- ✓ Chico Freeman
- ✓ George Lewis
- ✓ Henry Threadgill

The AACM presents concerts, takes jazz into city schools, and maintains its own music school. It is a vital organization still today.

### New York City

In New York City, some musicians performed experimental jazz at various urban venues including industrial-style lofts, thus earning the label “loft jazz.” Andrew Cyrille, Sam Rivers, Cecil Taylor comprised some members of the New York scene. *Wildflowers* (Knitting Factory) documents this period on a boxed set of CDs.

In the '80s, the Knitting Factory took on the role of lofts where experimental jazz had been performed in the '60s and '70s. Players recorded by the Knitting Factory label include

- ✓ Rashied Ali (onetime John Coltrane drummer)
- ✓ Anthony Braxton (also an AACM member)
- ✓ Don Byron
- ✓ Anthony Coleman

- ✓ Mark Dresser
- ✓ The Jazz Passengers
- ✓ Junk Genius (a San Francisco band)
- ✓ Roscoe Mitchell
- ✓ Roy Nathanson

In recent years, the Knitting Factory opened a Los Angeles sister club and expanded its program to include contemporary music, not just jazz.



Both the Knitting Factory and the AACM have fascinating Web sites that provide a lot of information on the music as well as bios of many musicians. Check out their sites online:

- ✓ AACM Web site: [www.aacmchicago.org](http://www.aacmchicago.org)
- ✓ Knitting Factory Web site: [www.knittingfactory.com](http://www.knittingfactory.com)

## Academia finally embraces jazz

One of the signs that jazz was earning acceptance as important American music came when universities began to offer courses and degrees in jazz history and performance.

- ✓ The University of North Texas became the first American university to offer a degree in jazz in 1947.
- ✓ Prompted by John Lewis, a faculty member (with Max Roach, Kenny Dorham, Bill Evans, and other jazz greats), Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry enrolled at the Lenox School of Jazz in Massachusetts in 1959.
- ✓ Also in 1959, big band legend Stan Kenton began offering the first of his summer jazz camps in Bloomington, Indiana.
- ✓ Indiana University (IU) popularized jazz bands in the '50s and '60s and offered a bachelor's degree in jazz studies for the first time in 1968. In 1979, IU added a master's

degree program in jazz. As a result of new awareness of black culture in the 1960s, many other universities soon added a variety of African-American studies including jazz.

The National Association of Jazz Educators (now known the International Association of Jazz Educators) was founded in 1968 to promote jazz as an important part of curriculum at all levels of education and has grown to more than 8,000 members in 42 countries.

Today universities offer many types of jazz programs, from history and theory, to performance, and in all styles from ragtime to free jazz. Most professional jazz players today have college degrees in music, some of them from prestigious schools like Juilliard and Berklee. College educations would have been a radical notion during jazz's early years, when aspiring performers earned their "degrees" on the road.

## Music with a Message: 1960s Jazz as Social Expression



From the beginning, jazz had social and political significance. Listening to melting-pot-early-jazz from New Orleans, sweet-Depression-antidote-jazz from the 1930s, or wake-up-bebop from the 1940s, it's easy to see how each type of music reflected those times in America. In the 1960s, jazz's social messages screamed with blatancy, especially in the music of African-American musicians for whom the music became a direct expression of new ideas about being black in America. In the following sections, I discuss how musicians explored their heritage and expressed their struggle.

### Connecting with world cultures

African music was a primary building block of jazz. In the 1950s, jazz musicians such as drummers Art Blakey and Max Roach began reconnecting with the music's origins by utilizing authentic African elements in their music.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, jazz musicians from many ethnic backgrounds broadened the music by bringing in a variety of international influences at a time when the U.S. was at war in Vietnam and racial tensions were on the rise at home. Here are some examples of those influences:

- ✔ John Coltrane used the mournful drone typical of an Indian sitar (a stringed instrument) in his saxophone playing. Albums with this influence include *Africa/Brass*, *Brazilia*, *India*, and *Olé*.
- ✔ Chick Corea, jazz pianist, collaborated with Brazilian percussionist Airto and his wife, vocalist Flora Purim, to make jazz with the lush bird cries and rushing rhythms one associates with a rain forest, as on his album *Light as a Feather* (Polygram).
- ✔ Yusef Lateef, flutist, brought minor-key Asian melodies to his 1961 recording *Eastern Sounds* (OJC).
- ✔ Charles Lloyd used Latin rhythms and tropical wind instrument sounds through his saxophone and flute on his 1966 album *Forest Flower* (Atlantic). This record became extremely popular with young '60s jazz fans and sold more than one million copies. The album showed Lloyd's growing fascination with Islamic Sufi music, Indian singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and fado (Portuguese folk music) vocalist Amalia Rodrigues.
- ✔ John McLaughlin explored religion and music, two forces that turn up in the introspective, moody music, through his electric jazz guitarist. Check out these sounds on albums such as *The Inner Mounting Flame* (Sony) with the Mahavishnu Orchestra.

## Black Power and racial turmoil

In jazz, a new group of musicians experimented with making music that didn't use earlier forms and techniques. Jazz's avant garde sought to express pure emotions in exciting new ways. During the 1960s and 1970s, these musicians were often criticized or misunderstood. Today, though, they're highly regarded as innovators whose jazz kept pace with a rapidly changing world:



- ✓ **Albert Ayler:** Ayler (1936–1970) was one of the most experimental saxophonists of the '60s. He served in Vietnam and identified with the Black Power movement, but emphasized that his music was spiritual, not intended to provoke conflict. His free jazz captured the racial and political turmoil of the '60s, as well as hope for the future.

His jazz was ground in black church music, and early '60s albums with titles like *Spiritual Unity* (ESP) give a sense of his mission. Before he died, Ayler's music moved toward rock, with hippie-era lyrics by his girlfriend Mary Maria Parks. His last albums included *Music is the Healing force of the Universe* (Universal).



- ✓ **Amira Baraka:** In the '60s, poet, author, and scholar Amira Baraka (formerly Leroi Jones) wrote about the significance of African-American music as an expression of the black struggle for freedom and equality.

His book *Blues People* is a must for comprehending blues and jazz as an expression of African-American culture.



- ✓ **Archie Shepp:** Shepp (covered earlier in this chapter) was a saxophonist who identified with Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, the Black Muslims, and the Black Power movement. He viewed his music as an expression of the black struggle, and saw John Coltrane as a leader in freeing black musicians to make music for higher purposes than entertainment.

Shepp's *Four for Trane* (GRP), a tribute to his musical and spiritual mentor, shows how one saxophonist reinvents another's music through improvisation. More than many of his peers, Shepp channeled African music into his jazz, through sounds and rhythms such as on the albums *The Cry of My People* (Impulse) and *The Magic of Ju-Ju* (Universal), with his frantic, improvised saxophone lines woven through the light rhythms of popular African Ju-Ju music.

## Plug In: Electric and Eclectic Fusions

Free jazz constituted one jazz branch that flowed during the 1960s. Another stream blended jazz with rock, funk, and other styles and became known as *fusion* or *electric jazz*, which hit its prime during the late '60s and early '70s.

## Electrifying jazz instrumentation

Trumpeter Miles Davis was the first jazz musician to go electric in a big way. As early as 1968, Davis added electric keyboards to his band. By the seventies, he electrified the rest of the band with electric bass, electric guitar, and even electronic effects for his trumpet. As instruments went electric, the process of recording went electronic. Jazz albums were traditionally recorded live with the band playing together in the same room, but Davis's albums began to use studio technology to edit, cut, paste, and mix a variety of sounds. Albums such as *Bitches Brew* came from longer recordings that were edited to album length.

Inventor Robert Moog created some of the first synthesizers, used by the Beatles in pop music, and by various jazz musicians. Pianists such as Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock used synthesizers to emulate electric guitars, string sections, or entire orchestras. Synthesizers gave any instrument, even Davis's trumpet, the ability to sound like any other instrument. Some saxophone players tried the new electric wind instrument (EWI), which relied entirely on electronics

for its sound. It was mostly a novelty that never became a regular instrument in jazz. Most saxophonists play their instruments without special effects now. Young musicians who like computers and electronic manipulation usually use these tools to tweak sounds made on their regular instruments.

With electric instruments, bands such as Davis's had the ability to play loud enough for larger venues. Davis eventually opened for the Grateful Dead at the Fillmore in San Francisco and also played large rock and jazz festivals. The electric connection also meant the some jazz began incorporating more rock sounds such as guitars. Davis's guitarists used various distorting effects that gave them rock-and-roll tones. In fact, many jazz fans wonder what may have happened had Davis recorded with Jimi Hendrix or Prince. It might have been another boring all-star jam session, but it just might have produced some brilliant music, with Prince's funk rhythms and high-pitched vocals layered in with Davis's whispery trumpet.



Although some fans and critics dismiss fusion for not being genuine jazz, it contains all the hallmarks. Musically, there's no question: it's jazz. Fusion swings and includes extensive improvisation and features soloists with distinctive voices. In fact, many of the first musicians to play fusion had played more traditional acoustic jazz before they went electric. I cover several of them in the following sections.

## Miles Davis

Miles Davis (1926–1991), who played unplugged bebop and cool jazz during the 1940s and 1950s (check out Chapter 7 for details), teamed his trumpet with electric instruments and utilized elements from funk and rock. His bandmates included electric guitarists such as John McLaughlin and jazz pianists

like Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea — with Davis they played electric keyboards, but Corea later returned to acoustic piano, while Hancock played both acoustic and electric.



Playing his trumpet through electronic effects, Davis got a haunting, echoey sound, and he sprayed delicate lines of improvised melody against the canvas of throbbing, pulsing sounds provided by his bands.

Throughout his career, Davis had a knack for discovering raw talent. Countless musicians who participated in Davis's early electric sessions went on to play essential parts during the next phase of jazz fusion. These musicians included

- ✓ Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, and Joe Zawinul, keyboard players
- ✓ Wayne Shorter, saxophonist
- ✓ John McLaughlin, guitarist
- ✓ Ron Carter, acoustic and electric bassist



Davis's 1960s albums *In a Silent Way* (Sony) and *Bitches Brew* (Sony) started a revolution by harnessing rock's electric guitars and funk's electric bass rhythms and drums to Davis probing, amplified trumpet. It was the first time a veteran jazz musician embraced electric music.

## Other fusioners



In addition to Davis's key recordings, hunt down some of these other players at your local music store:

- ✓ **Chick Corea (born 1941):** Corea played with Miles Davis and went on to fusions of his own, leading the group Return to Forever. *Light As A Feather* (Polygram) blends Corea's electric piano with Brazilian rhythms and Flora Purim's light, airy vocals. *Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy* (Polygram) takes fusion in a more electrifying rock direction.
- ✓ **The Crusaders:** During the 1970s, parties popped with the Crusaders just as much as with hard rock. *Scratch* (MCA) is an electric jazz-funk party classic.
- ✓ **Herbie Hancock (born 1940):** *Headhunters* (Columbia) is one of Hancock's all-time top electric jazz/funk recordings, but I'm also partial to his 1974 *Thrust* (Priority), which includes the beautiful song "Butterfly."

- ✔ **Freddie Hubbard (born 1938):** This talented trumpeter (and flugelhorn player) made one of my favorite electric jazz albums. *Red Clay* came out in 1970 and captured my attention with its spare arrangements and Hubbard's mellow flugelhorn solos.
- ✔ **John McLaughlin (born 1942):** McLaughlin formed the *Mahavishnu Orchestra* — an electrifying jazz/rock fusion band, and its albums *Inner Mounting Flame* (Columbia) and *Birds of Fire* (Columbia) are electric jazz classics.
- ✔ **Grover Washington, Jr. (born 1943):** On my friend Brad Shuster's megawatt system, saxman Washington's 1975 *Mister Magic* (Motown) split our eardrums. It's one of the most important albums to merge jazz with funk and soul — great solos, rock-solid rhythms.
- ✔ **Weather Report:** Led by keyboardist Joe Zawinul and saxman Wayne Shorter, this electric jazz group really soared after bassist Jaco Pastorius came aboard. *Black Market* (Columbia) makes my A-list of electric jazz.





## Chapter 9

# The Perfect Hybrid: Latin Jazz

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Surveying the elements and influences of Latin jazz
  - ▶ Introducing the Cuboppers in the '40s and '50s
  - ▶ Shimmying in the '60s and plugging in to the electric '70s
  - ▶ Shaking it up with Latin jazz's latest generation
- .....

**B**ossa nova, Cubop, calypso, mambo, salsa, cha-cha-cha. Since the early beginnings of jazz, Latin rhythms have spiced up the music. Over the years, Latin music has proved to be extremely compatible with jazz when it comes to creating new hybrid forms of music. Both are driven by syncopated rhythms, but Latin music added new rhythmic patterns. Both often rely on strong melodies as hooks, but Latin music added new romantic melodies from Latin songs. Both are loose and spontaneous music, so their musicians make music together very naturally.



Of course, jazz's basic rhythmic roots derive from African heritage, but the music has a tradition of rhythmic variety dating back to New Orleans, where the cultural mix included African, French, Hispanic, and assorted tropical flavors (see Chapter 5 for details).

In this chapter, I introduce you to several styles of Latin jazz, including Cubop and bossa, and the amazing musicians who play them.

## *A Sound of Many Origins: Defining Latin Jazz*



*Latin* can be a misleading word. Generally, “Latin” means anything from Cuban to Mexican to South American, but in the history of American jazz, it most often means Cuban (or Afro-Cuban, because much of Cuba’s population

originally came from Africa). Latin jazz incorporates a variety of elements — mostly rhythmic — from several locales outside the United States and mostly in the southern hemisphere.

- ✓ *Salsa* refers to spicy Afro-Cuban dance music (and Mexican hot sauce).
- ✓ *Bossa nova* and *samba* are Brazilian.
- ✓ *Mambo* is Cuban.

All through the creation of this new hybrid known as Latin jazz, American and Latin musicians came together in a common love of improvisation and syncopated rhythms. Although Jelly Roll Morton (see Chapter 5) was the first big-name jazz musician to acknowledge Latin flavors in his music when he spoke of “the Spanish tinge,” the first significant appearance of Latin musicians and rhythms in jazz came when bebopper Dizzy Gillespie teamed with Cuban bandleaders Machito and Mario Bauza as well as percussionist Chano Pozo in the mid-1940s (see “Meet the Cuboppers: Latin Jazz in the 1940s,” later in this chapter, for details on these folks). Although the Cubans became famous with jazz fans, they had already been stars in their native country.

Hard bop pianist Horace Silver experimented with Latin jazz, as did arranger Gil Evans with trumpeter Miles Davis (see Chapters 7 and 8), and Duke Ellington (see Chapter 6). Saxophonist Stan Getz recorded popular Brazilian-flavored albums in the '60s, and Cuban saxophonist Paquito D’Rivera made several excellent Latin jazz albums beginning in the '80s.

Latin jazz also encompasses Airto Moreira’s Brazilian-flavored jazz; percussionist Tito Puente (covered later in this chapter) — known to pop audiences as composer of the Santana hit “Oye Como Va;” vibraphonist Cal Tjader’s adventurous Latin jazz from the '50s and '60s; percussionist Carlos “Patato” Valdez; and percussionist and composer Mongo Santamaria, who recorded the 1963 hit song “Watermelon Man.”

## *Making Their Mark: Early Latin Influences on Jazz*

Jelly Roll Morton, the pianist and bandleader who helped create New Orleans jazz (see Chapter 5), utilized Caribbean rhythms. In his music from the '20s, you sometimes hear his left hand play a Latin pattern known as a *habanera*.



To get a feel for habanera, tap your foot 1-2 . . . 1-2, and over each set of two foot beats, tap out four beats: 1 . . . 2, 3, 4. The hesitation between 1 and 2 is what gives habanera its Latin flavor.

In the '30s, bandleaders Don Azpiazu and Xavier Cugat helped popularize Cuban dance music called *rhumba*. Cugat had a hit in 1935 with Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine," and continued to play light, commercial Latin jazz into the '50s. Cugat was important because he helped introduce America to Latin rhythms, setting the stage for Latin jazz musicians such as percussionist/bandleader Tito Puente and pianist Perez Prado (both artists are discussed later in this chapter).

Among Latin musicians, Alberto (or Albert) Socarras impacted early jazz and led Latin jazz bands during the '30s and hired jazz musicians like singer Cab Calloway (see Chapter 6) and Cuban percussionist/composer Mongo Santamaria. Socarras was also one of the first jazz flutists.

Some swing bands used Latin flavors occasionally during the '30s. Duke Ellington (see Chapter 6) played songs written by his Puerto Rican trombonist Juan Tizol, including the famous Ellington anthem "Caravan." But it wasn't until the '40s in New York that Latin elements began turning up in jazz in a significant way.

## *Meet the Cuboppers: Latin Jazz in the 1940s*

New York — an obvious birthplace for new forms of jazz — in the '40s had almost as eclectic a culture as New Orleans in the '20s. Saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, the inventors of bebop (see Chapter 7 for details on bebop), were the first famous jazz players to make major use of Latin flavors. In turn, Cuban immigrants in New York merged bebop into their music, and the cultural exchange between American jazz players and recent immigrants created something called *Cubop* — blazing bebop played over Afro-Cuban rhythms.

Cubop music may move to syncopated Latin rhythms, and then switch to the straight up 1-2-3-4 of big band swing. When Gillespie and Parker collaborated during the 1940s with bandleader Machito, the resulting hybrid featured Latin rhythms (played on traditional drum sets and Latin congas and timbales) and brass horn sections, with Gillespie and Parker's speedy, complicated bebop solos soaring above it all. Gillespie and Machito's artistic relationship lasted on and off into the 1980s, and they're considered key players in the invention of Cubop.

Latin musicians who played a role in Cubop's evolution include Mario Bauza, Machito, Dizzy Gillespie, Chano Pozo, and Chico O'Farrill. I cover these musicians in the following sections.

## *Mario Bauza and Machito*

Mario Bauza (1911–1993) was a key player in the early 1940s' fusion of jazz with Latin influences. Bauza played trumpet in swing bands led by Don Redman and Cab Calloway, and he acted as musical director in drummer Chick Webb's band (see Chapter 6 for more on these guys). Bauza and his brother-in-law Machito (given name: Frank Grillo) were both Cubans who came to the U.S. Three years after Machito (1912–1984) arrived in the U.S. in 1937, he started his own band called *The Afro-Cubans*. The next year, 1941, Bauza joined *The Afro-Cubans* as writer, arranger, and trumpeter.



Collaborating with American jazzmen like Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, Machito (see Figure 9-1) and Bauza helped create Cubop. Cubop encompasses some of the most amazing and underappreciated jazz.



**Figure 9-1:**  
Machito  
helped  
create the  
form of Latin  
jazz known  
as Cubop.



*The Original Mambo Kings* (Verve) album featuring Machito's ensemble is one of the hottest big band jazz recordings. Machito and his orchestra stir up a storm behind sax players Flip Phillips and Charlie Parker, and trumpeters Mario Bauza and Dizzy Gillespie. Infectious rhythms on this recording keep the music grooving, and it's fresh '40s Cubop — a new blend never heard before. Overall, the sound suggests a similarity to the ensemble work in bands led by Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Benny Goodman (see Chapter 6 for more about these musicians). Songs on this CD include Bauza's composition "Tanga," one of the first Afro-Cuban jazz compositions.



Machito and Bauza endured for decades, continuing to make music into the 1970s. Excellent later examples of the band's percolating dance music can be heard through several recordings:

- ✓ *Machito Plays Mambos and Cha-Chas* (Palladium)
- ✓ *Machito Live at the North Sea Jazz Festival* (Top Ten Hits) — an example of Cubop's jazzier side
- ✓ *Kenya* (Palladium Latin Jazz) by Machito
- ✓ *The Tanga Suite* (Messidor) by Bauza
- ✓ *Messidor's Finest Volume One*, where Bauza, in the 1990s, finally leads his own orchestra in a recording of some of his finest music

## Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo

Obviously it takes two to tango, or in this case, Cubop. Dizzy Gillespie (1917–1993) lead the driving force of Cubop from the jazz side of music. Much of the credit for bringing Afro-Cuban influences to jazz goes to Chano Pozo (1915–1948), a Cuban percussionist who came to New York City in 1947.

Gillespie focused on Afro-Cuban rhythms years before bebop. In 1939, he and Mario Bauza (see the previous section) played together in bandleader Cab Calloway's trumpet section, and Gillespie also played a brief stint in flutist Alberto Socarras's somewhat commercial Afro-Cuban big band. Gillespie carried the Afro-Cuban connection into bebop and Cubop. After he and saxophonist Charlie Parker had made many recordings and performed numerous times together, Gillespie struck out on his own.

As leader of a bebop big band, Gillespie continued to utilize Latin rhythms. Modeled on Billy Eckstine's big band, which brought together many key players during the early days of bebop, Gillespie's first band broke up in 1945, without enough bookings to stay afloat. But Gillespie was hooked on the format and organized another big band within a few years, with an emphasis on Cuban rhythms.

Gillespie then hired Chano Pozo, whose percussion and vocal style traced through Cuba and back to West African voodoo cults that arrived in Cuba with the slave trade during the 18th and 19th centuries. Pozo had ancient roots, but he also loved playing the new kind of jazz. His 15-month collaboration with Gillespie during the late 1940s produced the definitive examples of Cubop.

- ✔ Chano Pozo and Arsenio Rodriguez' *Legendary Sessions 1947–1953* includes torrid Cubop with Machito and his orchestra. Rodriguez was a Cuban guitarist and bandleader who came to the U.S. in the 1940s and continued to lead groups of his own while occasional playing with his fellow Cubans.
- ✔ Gillespie and his band carried Cubop to a broader American jazz audience. The best examples of Gillespie and Pozo's association come to light on *Dizzy Gillespie and His Big Band In Concert* (GNP) and *Diz 'n' Bird at Carnegie Hall* (Roost/Blue Note).



On the GNP disc, dating from 1948, “Emanon” shows how natural it was for jazz drummers to collaborate with Cuban percussionists — an easy merger that became common in years to come. Drummer Joe Harris plays standard jazz rhythms and Pozo embellishes them, then they switch roles, lending the music a loose, loping feeling.

Meanwhile, Charlie Parker also maintained his Latin love affair. *South of the Border* (Verve) — a compilation of music including his collaborations with Machito's orchestra — incorporates much of Parker's Cubop.

## Chico O'Farrill

Like Mario Bauza and Chano Pozo, composer, arranger, and trumpeter Chico O'Farrill (1921–2001) was born in Cuba and came to the U.S. at the height of Dizzy Gillespie's fascination with Cubop. O'Farrill arrived well versed in both Afro-Cuban rhythms and American big band jazz. His symphonic arrangements also displayed his love of classical composers Debussy and Stravinsky.



In O'Farrill's compositions, you can hear Stravinsky's sweeping melodies and love of moody Russian folk music. His big band arrangements utilize harmonies Stravinsky used with a classical orchestra, and it's thrilling to hear subtle classical elements pulsing to a Latin beat and accented by bebop solos. (Today O'Farrill's band continues with his son Arturo at the helm.)

O'Farrill is the unsung hero of Latin big band music, including hot dance music. When he moved to New York in 1948, he soon found enthusiastic collaborators such as Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Goodman (see Chapter 6), and Stan Kenton (see Chapter 7).

O’Farrill created “Undercurrent Blues” for Goodman, “Afro-Cuban Suite” for Charlie Parker with Machito’s orchestra, “Manteca Suite” for Dizzy Gillespie, more than 80 arrangements for Count Basie (see Chapter 6 for more about him), a symphony that opened in Mexico City in 1992, and the 1996 “Trumpet Fantasy” for Wynton Marsalis.



Check out these must-haves for your collection:

- ✓ The CD *Chico O’Farrill: Heart of a Legend* tells part of the story of Latin jazz from O’Farrill’s viewpoint and gives him deserved credit — not only for Latin jazz in America but also for composing and arranging Cuban masterpieces such as “La Verde Campina,” inspired by the gorgeous Cuban countryside.
- ✓ O’Farrill’s recordings from the late 1940s and early 1950s — summarized on the CD *Cuban Blues* (Verve) — are a must for your collection. The eclectic blend on this session features several musicians: trumpeter Roy Eldridge, saxophonist Flip Phillips, bassist Ray Brown, drummer Jo Jones, plus Mario Bauza and a host of Latin percussionists. For a broader impression of O’Farrill, purchase the soundtrack from the film, *Heart of a Legend*.

## The Beat Goes On: Latin Jazz Flowering in the 1950s

Machito, Dizzy Gillespie, and Chano Pozo set a torrid Afro-Cuban pace in the 1940s, and momentum carried into the 1950s, as bandleaders followed the lead of these earlier guys and kept the spices flowing. During the 1950s, Latin elements also turned up in the driving, bluesy jazz called *hard bop*, and in orchestrated California *cool jazz* as the mambo beat became popular. (See Chapter 7 for more about hard bop and cool jazz.)

In the following sections, I cover a few major players of Latin jazz in the 1950s.

### Art Blakey

The largely rhythmic Latin influence mesmerized drummer Art Blakey (1919–1990). Blakey, longtime leader of the *Jazz Messengers*, experimented with all sorts of rhythms beginning soon after his 1948 visit to Africa, where he experienced the dense overlapping rhythms of African drumming. Later, Blakey mixed these rhythms with Latin rhythms through collaboration with Latin musicians.



*Orgy in Rhythm, Vols. 1 & 2* (Blue Note) incorporated Latin and Afro-Cuban rhythms with powerful, percussive music. Blakey also plays a prominent part on pianist Horace Silver's recording, *Horace Silver Trio, Vol. 1: Spotlight on Drums* (EMD/Blue Note), along with Latin percussionist Sabu Martinez, who grew up in New York City's Spanish Harlem neighborhood and got his break when he succeeded Chano Pozo in Dizzy Gillespie's band in 1948. Check out Chapter 7 for more about Blakey.

## Woody Herman

Bandleader, clarinetist, and saxophonist Woody Herman (1913–1987) and his Herd recorded their songwriter Ralph Burns' Latin-flavored “Bijou” — a big band piece set to a rumba rhythm — during the 1940s. During the 1950s, Herman teamed with Latin percussionist Tito Puente on *Puente's Beat/Herman's Heat* (Evidence). The album is a tour de force of Latin jazz, with Puente providing the percussive power on mambos, cha-chas, and other tunes set to Latin beats. See Chapter 7 for more about Herman.

## Stan Kenton

Pianist, arranger, and bandleader Stan Kenton (1911–1979) experimented with Latin rhythms by adding Latin musicians to his big band. In 1946, Kenton and his band sold a million copies of the Latin jazz tune “Tampico,” with June Christy on vocals. The following year, Kenton and the band recorded Pete Ruggolo's “Machito,” a tribute to the Cuban musician and bandleader. Adding Latin rhythms proved to be both an artistic and commercial success.



Get a hold of *The Innovations Orchestra* (EMD/Blue Note), with Kenton's 37-piece ensemble including Brazilian guitarist Laurindo Almeida, conga player Carlos Vidal, and trumpeter Chico Alvarez. Also check out *Cuban Fire* (Blue Note) — another hot Kenton big band session, featuring an oversize ensemble fueled by five Latin percussionists including Willie Rodriguez on bongos. See Chapter 7 for more about Kenton.

## Perez Prado

Cuban pianist Perez Prado (1916–1983) was known as “The Mambo King,” a performer and bandleader who helped spark the mambo craze in the 1950s. But his brand of Latin jazz was much broader than Cuban mambo. He loved American swing jazz, and he acquired a love of all sorts of Latin rhythms and

musical elements through travels to Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Venezuela. Listeners sometimes observe that Latin jazz, with its exotic sounds, seems rooted in nature. For Prado, this was no accident. He used the sounds of birds, frogs, rushing rivers, and wind as the inspiration for his mambos.



Check out Prado on *Havana 3 a.m.* (BMG) and *Mondo Mambo* (Rhino). Prado and Machito (who I cover earlier in this chapter) team up with vocalist Beny More on *The Most from Beny More* (BMG/RCA), and there's some fine Cuban big band music from the 1950s on *Tumbao Cubano: Cuban Big Band Sound* (Palladium). Also look for Cuban guitarist Arsenio Rodriguez' *Leyendas* (Sony), as well as Puerto Rican vocalist Tito Rodriguez' *Live at Birdland* (Palladium).

## Tito Puente

A category unto himself, Tito Puente (1923–2000) has been the single most prolific player of Latin jazz since the 1950s. Puente was known as “El Rey” — The King — of timbales. As a percussionist (he also played vibes, congas, and bongos), Puente has worked with countless leading players including percussionists Machito, Mongo Santamaria, Willie Bobo, and Carlos “Patato” Valdez. As a leader, Puente's own albums feature talents as diverse as saxophonist Mario Rivera, flutist Dave Valentin, and rising young pianist Hilton Ruiz.



Always keeping the “Latin” before the “jazz,” Puente has made an amazing string of recordings that feature a mix of original Latin jazz tunes and reworked jazz standards, always with hot, driving rhythms.



Add some essential zing to your collection with *Dance Mania* (BMG), *El Rey* (Concord Picante), *Salsa Meets Jazz* (Concord Picante), and *Royal T* (Concord Picante).

## George Shearing

In a small-group setting, pianist George Shearing (born 1919) went Latin with great results during the 1950s. His thoughtful, subtle playing made an interesting combination with claves, congas, maracas, and timbales on albums such as *Latin Escapade* (Capital). He collaborated with Cuban percussionists Armando Peraza and Willie Bobo. Shearing was already popular, so his Afro-Cuban music reached a wide audience.

*The Best of George Shearing* (EMD/Blue Note) contains some of Shearing's best Latin jazz. See Chapter 7 for more about Shearing.

## Cal Tjader

More than any American jazzman of the '60s and '70s, Tjader (1925–1982) was a vital creator of fresh Latin jazz. Cal Tjader's contributions to Latin jazz were twofold: He played melodic vibes that blended seamlessly with Latin rhythms; and, as a leader, he selected great combinations of players and Latin-flavored material.

He played with great Latin percussionists like Willie Bobo and Mongo Santamaria and kept his Latin fascination going strong over the course of several albums. His later works included *Primo* (Original Jazz Classics), *Descarga* (Original Jazz Classics), *La Onda Va Bien* (Concord Picante), and *A Fuego Vivo* (Concord Picante).



Check out 1954's *Tjader Plays Mambo* (Original Jazz Classics) and subsequent albums including *Black Orchid* (Fantasy), *Latin Concert* (Original Jazz Classics), *Latino* (Fantasy), *El Sonid Nuevo* (Verve), and *Primo* (Original Jazz Classics).

## The Good Life: The Bossa 1960s

The reedy sound of saxophones and flutes fits naturally with Latin rhythms, especially those from Brazil and other parts of South America. These instruments are perfect for evoking the feeling of rain forests, complete with the sound of waterfalls, screeching monkeys, and chirping birds. So it's not surprising that musicians have been adept at blending Latin elements into their jazz. The most successful of these musicians are

- ✓ Saxophonists Stan Getz and Gato Barbieri
- ✓ Flutists like Herbie Mann, and, more recently, Dave Valentin
- ✓ Singer Astrud Gilberto, one of the first people to make a case for bossa in the United States with her recording of "Girl from Ipanema"

Bossa Nova music was gentle, romantic, and set to the Cuban *samba* rhythm. In the following sections, I introduce you to major bossa musicians of the 1960s.

## Gato Barbieri

Born in Argentina, saxophonist Gato Barbieri (born 1934) blended Latin rhythms and melodies into his free-spirited jazz since the late 1960s. Barbieri was one of the first to use these rhythms as the foundation for honking, squealing free improvisations.



*El Pampero* (BMG/RCA) epitomizes excellent early Barbieri, while more recent gems include *The Third World Revisited* (Bluebird), *Chapter 3: Viva Emiliano Zapata* (GRP/Impulse!), with arrangements by Chico O'Farrill, and *Para Los Amigos* (A&M).

## Ray Barretto

Like Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo before him, percussionist Ray Barretto (1929–2006) broke into jazz jamming with New York City's top players. He played in Tito Puente's band, but he also played with jazzmen including pianist Red Garland, saxophonists Lou Donaldson and Gene Ammons, and guitarist Kenny Burrell — as well as Cal Tjader (whom I cover earlier in this chapter).

Barretto directed the Latin jazz of the Fania All Stars during the 1960s, and has made a string of fine Latin jazz albums into the 1990s. His music is distinguished by a lighter, gentler feel than '50s Cubop or early '60s bossa nova.



Check out Barretto on *Carnaval* (Fantasy), *Handprints* (Concord Picante), *Taboo* (Concord Picante), as well as on Ammons' *Boss Tenor* (Original Jazz Classics) and Donaldson's *Blues Walk* (EMD/Blue Note).

## Willie Bobo

Schooled as Machito's assistant and later as a member of bands fronted by Tito Puente and Cal Tjader, Willie Bobo (1934–1983) lent the Latin pulse to some of jazz pianist George Shearing's recordings, and late in his career collaborated with funk and rock musicians including Carlos Santana (Bobo's *Spanish Grease* album, on Polygram, merges soul, jazz, and Latin flavors).



A two-CD reissue of Bobo's *Unos, Dos, Tres* and *Spanish Grease* (PGD/Verve) albums is a 1960s classic. Also look for *Talkin' Verve* (PGD/Verve) and *Latino!* (Fantasy) with vibist Cal Tjader and percussionist Mongo Santamaria.

## Stan Getz

Stan Getz (1927–1991), saxophonist, was a leader on the West Coast cool jazz scene before he became smitten with Latin music, especially from Brazil. Getz's breathy, lyrical sound was well suited to gentle, beautiful Brazilian songs.

Getz connected with Latin-loving vibraphonist Cal Tjader on *Stan Getz with Cal Tjader* (Original Jazz Classics). After his seminal early 1960s sessions with Joao Gilberto, Getz remained passionate about Latin rhythms, as heard on *The Best of Two Worlds* (Sony) as well as *Apasionado* (A&M).

## Astrud and Joao Gilberto

The 1963 collaboration of singer Astrud (born 1940) with husband, singer, and guitarist Joao Gilberto (born 1932); Brazilian composer Antonio Carlos Jobim; and American saxophonist Stan Getz produced warm, breezy Latin jazz that was extremely popular in its time but has aged gracefully.



Get *The Astrud Gilberto Album* (PGD/Verve) as well as her *Look at the Rainbow* (PGD/Verve). Also find *The Legendary Joao Gilberto* (World Pacific), as well as *Getz and Gilberto* (Mobile Fidelity), essential albums of early '60s bossa jazz.

## Herbie Mann

Herbie Mann, a flutist born in 1930, merged jazz and Latin music in the most inventive ways in the '60s. Earlier he had led the Afro-Jazz Sextet and visited Brazil and Africa, and by the time of his 1960 *Flute, Brass, Vibes and Percussion* (Verve), his music utilized an eclectic array of Latin elements — particularly Brazilian and Afro-Cuban.

*Brazil Blues* (United Artists) portrays another Mann collection of exotic sounds (including xylophonelike marimba). *Do the Bossa Nova* (Atlantic) helped hail the start of the national bossa craze, and Mann later diversified his cultural base even farther on the '70s albums *Reggae* (Atlantic) and *Brazil: Once Again* (Atlantic).

## Mongo Santamaria

For his prolific output as a leader of his own bands and with countless other musicians, Mongo Santamaria (1922–2003), a percussionist and composer, deserves to be ranked among jazz’s top players. His compositional hits include “Afro Blue” and “Parati,” both Latin jazz standards. Born in Havana, Cuba, Santamaria came to New York City in 1950 and made a mark recording Afro-Cuban jazz and playing with pianist George Shearing. He later worked with Latin jazz leader/vibraphonist Cal Tjader as well as with Dizzy Gillespie, Chick Corea (covered later in this chapter), Hubert Laws, even harmonica monster Toots Thielemans.



Heat up to Santamaria’s rhythms on *Afro-Roots* (Prestige), *At the Black Hawk* (Fantasy), *Skins* (Milestone), *Soy Yo* (Concord), and on Tito Puente’s *Top Percussion* (BMG).

## Let’s Get Funky: The Spicy 1970s

While many top creators of 1960s Latin jazz kept going strong into the 1970s and 1980s, younger players came along with new hybrids. Latin rhythms, especially the mambo, lent a strong influence to funk and soul jazz sounds of the early 1970s. Meet the influential players of 1970s Latin jazz in the following sections.

### Chick Corea

Electric instruments used by jazzmen such as pianist Chick Corea (born 1941) added new twists to Latin jazz. Corea’s *Light as a Feather* (Polydor) seamlessly merges electric jazz with the Brazilian rhythms of percussionist Airto Moreira and wild exotic vocals of Flora Purim. Corea’s later album *My Spanish Heart* (Polydor) carries a mellower, more romantic Latin vibe. Chapter 8 has more information about Corea.

Catch Corea, who’s busier than ever and still loves using Latin rhythms and sounds, on his 2006 CD *The Ultimate Adventure* (Stretch Records), inspired by a story written by Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard (Corea is a Scientology devotee).

## Poncho Sanchez

Poncho Sanchez (born 1951) learned about Latin jazz under a master: Cal Tjader. Sanchez performed as a member of Tjader's band for several years beginning in 1975, and he spiced up albums such as *La Onda Va Bien* (Concord Picante) and *Gozame! Pero Ya* (Concord Picante). By the '70s, Sanchez was hailed as the successor on timbales to Tito Puente.

Sanchez began leading his own bands during the early 1980s, producing some of the decade's hottest Latin jazz. *Papa Gato* (Concord Picante), *Fuerte!* (Concord Picante), *Chile Con Soul* (Concord Picante), *Para Todos* (Concord Picante), and *Soul Sauce: Memories of Cal Tjader* (Concord Picante) are among more recent winners by Sanchez. Today, Sanchez is in the prime of his career. He continues to record a new album almost every year, including the 2005 *Do It!* (Concord) with Sanchez's version of the song "Tin Tin Deo," written for Dizzy Gillespie by Chano Pozo.

## Arturo Sandoval

A protégé of Dizzy Gillespie, Cuban-born trumpeter Arturo Sandoval (born 1949) began making hot Latin jazz in Cuba in the 1970s — first as a member of the Orquesta Cubana de Musica Moderna (also including saxophonist and clarinetist Paquito D'Rivera), then as part of Irakere, a leading Cuban jazz ensemble. Sandoval plays Gillespie-like bebop over scintillating Latin rhythm.



Check out *Danzon* (UNI/GRP), *Arturo Sandoval & the Latin Train* (UNI/GRP), *No Problem* (Jazz House), and *Hot House* (N2K), as well as dueling with his mentor Dizzy on Gillespie's *To a Finland Station* (Original Jazz Classics).

## Latin Jazz: The New Generation

Because of CNN, MTV, and satellite communications, culture is becoming more global and less regional. Different types of music from various parts of the world spread quickly. For example, thanks to the 1999 documentary film *Buena Vista Social Club*, and its accompanying CDs, a whole new group of Americans learned about authentic Cuban music.



Latin jazz today covers a tremendous range of styles, influences, and artists, from "Texas rumba" to "Latin jungle jazz," mambo and South American varieties. Visit [www.latinjazznet.com](http://www.latinjazznet.com) or [www.latinjazzclub.com](http://www.latinjazzclub.com). With America's rapidly growing Latino population (one-third of California's

population in 2005, for instance), advertisers, radio (including satellite and Internet), and television (especially cable and satellite) offer all sorts of new Latin content, including a variety of music.

Today, some players uphold the tradition of Cubop or bossa nova or other styles from past decades, but new combinations of Latin rhythms, jazz styles, and other influences exist. The following sections cover a few of the best musicians of Latin jazz today.

## Jerry Gonzalez

Jerry Gonzalez (born 1949), a top latter-day bebop trumpeter and also an excellent percussionist, founded the *Fort Apache Band*, an innovative Latin jazz ensemble that does tangy things to famous jazz tunes by players such as pianist Thelonious Monk, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, trumpeter Miles Davis, and other legendary figures.



To hear how Gonzalez builds on his vast appreciation of jazz dating back to Louis Armstrong with his Puerto Rican/New York City roots and his experiences with Tito Puente and Mongo Santamaria, get *The River Is Deep* (Enja), *Rhumba Para Monk* (Sunnyside), *Obatala* (Enja), and *Pensativo* (Milestone).

## Sergio Mendes

Beginning with *Brasil '66*, Brazilian bandleader and keyboard player Sergio Mendes (born 1941) celebrated streaks of commercial success in the United States, but his big bands have also made some red hot music, combining excellent arrangements with solid musicianship and a variety of Brazilian-flavored vocals.

Mendes grew up in Rio de Janeiro during the prime of Bossa Nova (see above). His Brazilian mentors were Antonio Carlos Jobim and Joao Gilberto, and he heard American jazz greats like Stan Getz and Dizzy Gillespie when they came to Brazil. His love of jazz was one reason he moved to the U.S. in 1964. He formed *Brazil '65* the following year, and continued through several decades, changing the band's name as time went by – *Brazil '66*, *Brazil '77*, *Brazil '88*.



Get *Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66* (A&M), his group's first album, and the *Brasileiro* (Elektra) from the '90s — Mendes' return to Brazilian roots after years of straying into mild pop.

## Musicians of the Latin jazz world

The growing audience for Latin jazz means growing attention via awards programs such as the Grammys. The Latin Grammy Hall of Fame opened in 2001 and the list of inductees included

- ✓ Argentinian composer and master of the accordionlike bandoneon Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992), whose passions included tango as well as Rachmaninov and Bach.
- ✓ Brazilian composer and singer Caetano Veloso, a driving force of '60s *tropicalia*, a new music that reflected a new generation's rebellion against Brazil's military dictatorship in the '60s.
- ✓ Antonio Carlos Jobim, whose music became popular in America during the early '60s by Stan Getz.
- ✓ And early 20th century Latin musicians such as Don Azpiazu, Carlos Gardel, Lucho Gatica, Armando Manzanero, Perez Prado, Santana, and Javier Solis.

For more info on the Latin Grammys, check out the Web site at [www.grammy.com/Latin](http://www.grammy.com/Latin). Billboard magazine's annual Latin Music Awards program is also a great way to keep tabs on new Latin jazz music. Visit [www.billboardevents.com/billboardevents/latin/index.jsp](http://www.billboardevents.com/billboardevents/latin/index.jsp) for more info.

### Danilo Perez

Danilo Perez (born 1966), a pianist, grew up in Panama studying classical music and moved to the U.S. for college, first at Indiana University, then at Berklee College of Music. His music is deeply steeped in Panama combines the precision of classical performance with the improvisational spirit of modern jazz. Check out Perez' CD *Motherland* (Polygram), with tunes like "Panafrica," "Panama Libre," and "Panama 2000."

### Gonzalo Rubalcaba

A young, promising pianist born in Havana, Cuba, in 1963, Gonzalo Rubalcaba grew up listening to his father, pianist Guillermo Rubalcaba, and other Cuban music, as well as jazz by Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and other American jazz legends. He studied classical music at a Cuban conservatory, and later toured with Cuban big band Orquesta Aragon. He began his solo career in the late 1980s and soon signed with Blue Note.

Hear Rubalcaba in peak form on *Supernova* (Blue Note), with a trio including bass and drums, supported by three additional Latin percussionists.

## Hilton Ruiz

Ruiz (born 1952) grew up in New York City playing classical music, jazz, and Latin jazz. As a teen, he played in a Latin soul band; his jazz mentor was pianist Mary Lou Williams.

Ruiz shows his range on recordings such as *Manhattan Mambo* (Telarc), *Hands on Percussion* (Sony) with timbales king Tito Puente and *Heroes* (Telarc) — a collection of jazz tunes by some of his heroes, such as Dizzy Gillespie’s “Con Alma” and Herbie Hancock’s “Maiden Voyage.”

## Chucho Valdes

Born in Cuba, this bandleader and pianist (born 1941) founded the Cuban jazz ensemble Irakere in the 1970s, and he also plays wonderful Afro-Cuban-flavored jazz piano, inspired by jazz pianists Bill Evans, Art Tatum, and McCoy Tyner. He won a Grammy in 1998 for the album *Habana* (Polygram) — his collaboration with trumpeter Roy Hargrove. It’s a prime example of Valdes’ own take on Latin jazz, distinguished by his blindingly fast improvisations. Today, Valdes is respected not only as a musician but also as the founder of the Havana Jazz Festival.

## Other Latin musicians worth watching



The list of excellent Latin players can extend for pages, but it’s too large to go into depth on everyone, so here’s the short list of bands worth checking out, including a song for your listening pleasure. (The recording company is in parentheses.) These selections are worth your time:

- ✓ Afro-Cuban All-Stars, *A Toto Cuba Le Gusta* (Nonesuch)
- ✓ Francisco Aguabella, *Ochimini* (Cubop)
- ✓ Azymuth, *Crazy Rhythm* (Milestone)
- ✓ Bongo Logic, *Tipiqueros* (RykoLatino)
- ✓ Wilson “Chembo” Corniel, *Portrait in Rhythms* (Mambo Maniacs)
- ✓ Conrad Herwig, *The Latin Side of John Coltrane* (Astor Place)
- ✓ Bobby Matos, *Footprints* (Ubiquity), also featuring Jerry Gonzalez
- ✓ Manny Oquendo and Libre, any of their albums

- ✔ Mario Rivera, *El Commandante/The Meringue Jazz* (RTE)
- ✔ John Santos and the Machete Ensemble, *Machete* (Xenophile)
- ✔ Charlie Sepulveda, *The New Arrival* (Groovin' High)
- ✔ Omar Sosa, *Sentir* (Ota Records)
- ✔ Trio Mundo, *Rides Again* (Zoho Music)
- ✔ Carlos "Patato" Valdes, *Ritmo Y Candela II: African Crossroads* (Round World Music)
- ✔ Chris Washburne, *Nuyorican Nights* (Jazzheads)

## Chapter 10

# Looking Ahead: The Present and Future of Jazz

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Meeting traditionalist musicians
  - ▶ Looking at artists combining jazz and classical music
  - ▶ Surveying contemporary jazz forms
  - ▶ Taking stock of the future
  - ▶ Listening to jazz masters' current work
- 

**A**s the new millennium approached, one thing became clear: artists no longer felt bound by categories, and jazz became difficult to define. In 2005, Herbie Hancock, a beacon of creativity in hard bop, fusion, and jazz-funk, released *Possibilities*, a CD on which he collaborated with pop stars such as John Mayer, Santana, Paul Simon, and Sting. Is it jazz? Probably not, but Hancock's willingness to step outside the jazz box is indicative of the increasing irrelevance of categories.

Traditionalists speak of jazz as “America's classical music,” yet, as is the case in classical music, innovation is an essential quality of jazz. In order to move forward, new jazz is not going to sound like old jazz. In a global, cross-cultural society, artists find new ways of containing jazz within new musical contexts.

Before you consider what the future may hold, look at the recent past. It's too early to have a clear perspective on jazz in the nineties, but the decade produced exceptional music. In many ways, it was also a generational turning point. In the past, jazz's living legends, like African griots (storytellers), handed down jazz's origins and traditions through their interactions with younger musicians. But since the last edition of this book, many of those “griots” have passed away: Benny Carter (2003), Lionel Hampton (2004), Milt Hinton (2000), J.J. Johnson (2001), and Artie Shaw (2004).

With the loss of the last of its original legends, jazz is headed into a new era where young players won't have first-hand access to the genre's original masters. As that direct connection vanishes, some traditions may fade, or revive

(with a twist); meanwhile, young musicians may feel freer to explore unfamiliar directions. Already, that's happening. In this chapter, I introduce you to a new generation of jazz musicians — those who are upholding established traditions and those who are infusing jazz with other musical styles.



Unfamiliar music may take some getting used to. Some of the music in this chapter, when you have a chance to listen to it, may sound strange to you, and you may not even like it. Over the years I have found that it's essential to turn off your inner critic when you're first exposed to new music. Some of the more experimental music is more approachable in terms of feelings and impressions, instead of established styles or conventions. In time, some of the music you like best at first may later seem dull; while music that first rubbed you the wrong way grows on you the more you listen to it.

## *Current Artists Keeping Jazz Traditions*

Among the current generation of jazz musicians, many people believe that the acoustic jazz of the '40s and '50s set the all-time standard. They're not fond of electric jazz or free jazz. They like songs with melodies, and they prefer improvisations that relate to the melodies and chords of these songs. It's been interesting to hear how they re-interpret classic jazz tunes and compose new music in the classic jazz tradition.

### *The neo-traditionalist instrumentalists*

In the '80s, Wynton Marsalis helped launch a revival of '50s and '60s jazz (I cover Marsalis later in this chapter). He's been joined by a new generation of players who are fresh voices within established traditions.

This new generation includes

- ✓ **Bassists:** Ben Allison, Avishai Cohen, Robert Hurst III, and Christian McBride
- ✓ **Drummers:** Herlin Riley, Kenny Washington, Jeff "Tain" Watts, and Matt Wilson
- ✓ **Flutist:** Nicole Mitchell
- ✓ **Guitarists:** Fareed Haque, Kurt Rosenwinkel, and Mark Whitfield
- ✓ **Percussionist:** Hamid Drake
- ✓ **Pianists:** Vijay Iyer, Kenny Kirkland, Brad Mehldau, Jason Moran, Danilo Perez, and Marcus Roberts

- ✔ **Saxophonists:** Eric Alexander, Seamus Blake, Jane Bunnett, James Carter, Claire Daly (a rare baritone specialist), Kenny Garrett, Branford Marsalis (Wynton's brother), Greg Osby, Evan Parker, Chris Potter, Steve Wilson, and Miguel Zenón
- ✔ **Trombonist:** Josh Roseman
- ✔ **Trumpeters:** Terence Blanchard, Dave Douglas, Roy Hargrove, Ingrid Jensen, Jeremy Pelt, and Wallace Roney
- ✔ **Vibraphonist:** Joe Locke

Choosing favorites is purely subjective and guaranteed to make someone upset, but the following sections contain a few more good bets from the up-and-comers.

### *Ravi Coltrane*

One of the most promising players is Ravi Coltrane (born 1965), named by his father John Coltrane after Indian sitar master Ravi Shankar. Coltrane is about the same age as Wynton Marsalis, but he's a late bloomer just hitting his stride.



Like his father (see Chapter 8 for more about John), Ravi specializes in soprano and tenor saxophones, and he composes his own music. His fourth album, *In Flux*, came out in 2005 and earned his best reviews yet for the compositions, for his playing, and for his ability (like his father's) to create chemistry within the group.



Coltrane's sound is a mix of his father's cries, shrieks, and whispers, and a subtler, gentler melodic approach reminiscent of earlier tenors. In the summer of 2005, Ravi Coltrane took a challenging step. He played the JVC Jazz Festival (see Chapter 14) with his father's onetime pianist, McCoy Tyner, and their excellent performance provoked eerie (but good) memories of his father's music.

### *Stefon Harris*

Stefon Harris has good vibes, literally. He's a vibraphonist and xylophonist — heir apparent to mallet masters before him such as Gary Burton, Lionel Hampton, Bobby Hutcherson, Milt Jackson, and Red Norvo.

Harris has a bachelor's degree in classical music and a master's degree in jazz, so his music spans the distance between brainy and bluesy. He's recognized as both a prolific composer and a phenomenal (and phenomenally fast) player. He's been known to leave a cloud of red dust behind after his red-tipped mallets attack the vibraphone's metal bars, and he sometimes lines up both a xylophone and vibraphone, doubling his playing field and energizing the stage as he leaps great distances in a single bound.



Harris' music ranges from traditional to Latin to experimental and from a plethora of originals to remakes of tunes ranging from "Summertime" to "There Is No Greater Love." Most of all, Harris sounds like a postmodern bebopper, refining the rapid lines invented by Charlie Parker and others during the '40s. Check out Chapter 7 for more about bebop.



Harris' CDs *Black Action Figure* and *The Grand Unification Theory* were both nominated for Grammys. The second one sweeps through 11 movements and incorporates elements of African, Latin, classical, and jazz music.

### Charlie Hunter



If you like the grooving sound of 1960s giants like guitarist Wes Montgomery and organist Jimmy Smith, you may like Charlie Hunter's funky out jazz. Hunter is a multi-tasking extraordinaire: He plays bass lines, pianolike chords, and melodic guitar lines all at once, using a special eight-string guitar.

Hunter began playing at the age of 12, and in his teens, he studied with electric guitar wiz Joe Satriani. He played blues, funk, rockabilly, and soul before discovering jazz at 18, working his way backward from Wes Montgomery to jazz guitar pioneer Charlie Christian (see Chapter 6 for more about him), with plenty of blues and soul along the way.

In 1993, Hunter was in the band Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy, which opened stadium shows for U2. Settling into a blues/soul/jazz sound of his own through regular gigs with his band in the San Francisco Bay Area, Hunter was signed to Blue Note Records. At first, critics labeled his music "acid jazz" (see "What is acid jazz, man?" later in this chapter), but Hunter considers himself a part of the jazz tradition going back to Louis Armstrong (see Chapter 5) and Charlie Parker (see Chapter 7).



Hunter's *Steady Groovin'* (Blue Note) is a CD that sounds great cranked up on your stereo with the mega-bass. Get blown away by the sound of one man wielding his broad-necked ax. Another pick is *Natty Dread* (Blue Note) — Hunter's groove/jazz reincarnation of Bob Marley.

### Chris Speed

These days, people think of the clarinet as a fossil from jazz's dinosaur age, but Chris Speed (who also plays tenor sax) is spearheading the instrument's revival. Speed was born in Seattle and studied at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston before going pro with various bands.

Speed grew up with classical music, and his music also draws from funk, free jazz, Middle Eastern music, and modern rock. Speed exemplifies the new generation of musicians who create music outside of jazz's earlier traditions.



Speed out and get this reedman's *Swell Henry* (Squealer), *Emit* (Songlines), and *Deviantics* (Songlines). (Order *Swell Henry* directly online. Visit [www.squealermusic.com](http://www.squealermusic.com).)

## *Jazz's vocal resurgence*

During jazz's Golden Age, which is how some folks refer to the big band era of the 1930s and early 1940s (see Chapter 6), jazz singers took center stage:

- ✓ Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra in a “sweet” vein
- ✓ Joe Williams and Jimmy Rushing in a bluesy Kansas City style
- ✓ Jon Hendricks, bebopper
- ✓ Billie Holiday, Helen Forrest, Ella Fitzgerald, and Sarah Vaughan, great ladies of swing and scat-singing

Today's best jazz vocalists are both inventive interpreters of great lyrics and melodies, and muscular improvisers.

### *The gals*

After recording CDs devoted to the music of Bill Evans (*Blue in Green*) and Frank Sinatra (*Dancing in the Dark*), Tierney Sutton stretches out on her 2005 release *I'm With the Band*, presenting deeply personal readings of tunes including “S Wonderful,” “Surrey with the Fringe On Top,” and “What a Little Moonlight Will Do.” Along the way, she swaps solos with her bandmates as an instrumental equal. Sutton's voice is subtle, airy, and clear, and she has an irresistible sense of swing.

The current she-generation also includes passionate Brazilian Luciana Souza; Billie Holiday–influenced Madeleine Peyroux; and risk-taker Cassandra Wilson, whose career thus far has ranged from freeform funk to bebop improvisation, and whose supple voice does justice to unconventional song selections ranging from Neil Young to Son House and even the Monkees.

### *The guys*

On the he-side, Kurt Elling merges scat-singing and other vocal inventions with standard jazz tunes and Beat poetry. Andy Bey is a late-bloomer with an operatic range who breathes new life into familiar standards. Jamie Cullum is the wild kid with a jazz-caliber voice and a repertoire that merges jazz, classical, blues, hip-hop, dance, and pop.

## *Women taking over the jazz world*

At this point, for the first time, women stand out as *great* jazz players, not just *women* jazz players. At last, a slew of women are building on the foundation established by female jazz musicians including pianists Carla Bley, Lil Hardin (Louis Armstrong's wife), Marian McPartland, and Mary Lou Williams, and trumpeter Clora Bryant.



These days, *Downbeat* magazine's annual Critic's Poll is full of female instrumentalists:

- ✓ **Baritone saxophonist:** Claire Daly
- ✓ **Bassist:** Joëlle Léandre
- ✓ **Drummers:** Terri Lynn Carrington and Allison Miller
- ✓ **Flutists:** Holly Hofmann, Nicole Mitchell, Anne Drummond, and Ali Ryerson
- ✓ **Guitarist:** Mimi Fox
- ✓ **Organist:** Barbara Dennerlein
- ✓ **Percussionist:** Susie Ibarra
- ✓ **Soprano saxophonists:** Jane Ira Bloom and Jane Bunnett
- ✓ **Trumpeter:** Ingrid Jensen
- ✓ **Violinist:** Jenny Scheinman



One of the most prolific and versatile women of jazz is composer and big bandleader, Maria Schneider. Schneider moved from Minnesota to New York City to launch her career in 1985. She studied composition with Bob Brookmeyer and served as an assistant to composer/arranger Gil Evans, conducting several of his pieces. Now the *Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra* is one of jazz's finest big bands, and Schneider is considered one of jazz's top composers and bandleaders.

Schneider earned a Grammy in 2005 for the album *Concert in the Garden* (Artist-Track), a melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic feast that has been compared with sweeping Hollywood film scores.

## *Jazz Fusing with Classical Music*

Currently most jazz musicians enter the profession with college degrees; many of them have a serious working knowledge of both jazz and classical music. They've grown up playing both varieties and many of them pursue both genres — or explore fresh mergers of the two.

### *Wynton Marsalis leads the way*

In the 1980s, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis (see Figure 10-1) staked his ground as keeper of the bebop/hard bop flame and as a critic of electric jazz, pop jazz, or jazz that departs from core values as set forth in the 1920s through early 1960s.

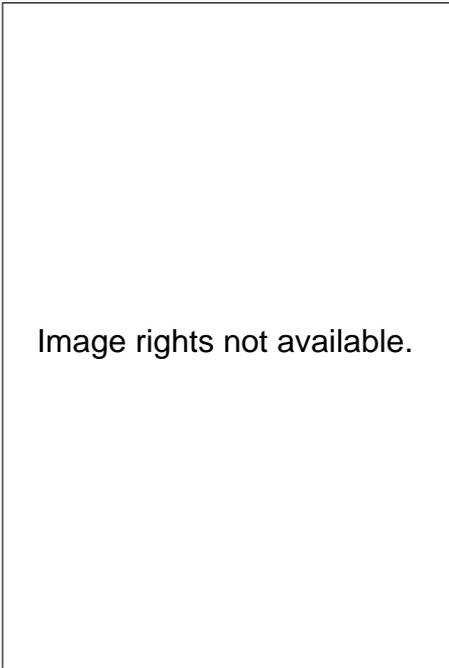


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**Figure 10-1:**

Wynton  
Marsalis  
plays both  
jazz and  
classical  
music.

©Lynn Goldsmith/CORBIS

Marsalis began his career as a member of Art Blakey's *Jazz Messengers*. On his major-label debut album, he used Miles Davis' rhythm section of pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Tony Williams. Since then Marsalis has led a succession of young bands that adhere to the driving unplugged sound of the 50s and 60s with strong standard tunes and new originals providing the context for excellent improvisations.

Marsalis composes, plays, and records classical music as well as jazz. As artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center since 1997, Marsalis has almost single-handedly elevated jazz in America to the status of classical music. Just the fact of jazz being performed regularly at one of the nation's most prestigious concert halls is significant because it was traditionally relegated to smoky clubs. Marsalis has done more than any contemporary jazz musicians to earn the same respect for jazz as classical music has always received. A sign of the crossover between categories came in 1983 when Marsalis became the first artist to win Grammys in both genres.

Marsalis has also expanded the range of a "jazz" artist. In recent years, his projects have included a score for *Sweet Release*, a ballet staged by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre; and *At the Octoroon Balls*, inspired by African-American history and performed by the classical Orion String Quartet with the Chamber Music Society of the Lincoln Center.



In 2002, Marsalis released the CD *All Rise*, a 12-part composition (inspired by the 12-bar structure of blues) commissioned by the New York Philharmonic with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and Morgan State University Choir. Live performances of *All Rise* received reviews that praised the successful marriage of classical orchestra with jazz ensemble.

Earlier jazz geniuses like Scott Joplin (see Chapter 5) and Duke Ellington (see Chapter 6) composed similarly ambitious works. The difference now is that Marsalis, as an African-American jazz artist, has the status among American artists to get his works produced and presented in top-notch venues.

## *Other recent jazz and classical connections*

Jazz players today often reinvent great classical compositions as jazz pieces. Classical music offers amazing melodies and challenging harmonies. Compositions by great composers provide an inspiring framework for improvisation, and it's intriguing to see how jazz musicians invent new music around the classics.

### *The Classical Jazz Quartet*

The Classical Jazz Quartet presents cross-pollination between jazz and classical music. The group consists of prominent jazz players Kenny Barron (piano), Ron Carter (bass), Stefon Harris (vibraphone), and Lewis Nash (drums).

On their CD *Nutcracker* (Vertical Jazz), the group gives an eight-song tribute to Tchaikovsky's famous piece. The traditional ballet's tale of Clara, a magical nutcracker, and toys that come to life is re-imagined by Belden as the story of a modern prince who sweeps his girl away to a happening jazz club. Within the music, Tchaikovsky's melodies appear and also serve as a point of departure for improvisations inspired by the original composition.

### *Marc O'Connor*



Violinist Marc O'Connor is part of the new generation of musicians who don't feel restricted by conventional genres. In 2005, he released *Hot Swing Live in New York* (Omac), his third CD in the tradition of his mentor, violinist Stephane Grappelli. This swing is the vintage swing that was popular at Paris's popular Hot Club of France during the 1930s — one of the rare instances where a violinist became a jazz legend. O'Connor also collaborated with classical cellist Yo-Yo Ma on sweeping cross-cultural recordings such as *Appalachia Waltz* (Sony), and in 2005 released *Double Violin Concerto* (Omac), an original composition. To hear O'Connor improvise is to hear bluegrass, classical, and jazz seamlessly combine.

## College grad or road warrior?

In the old days 99.9 percent of jazz musicians mastered their art on the bandstand and on the road, playing night after night and spending time with fellow musicians who schooled them in music — the personal passing down of jazz tradition. Today, most jazz players possess a degree in music, sometimes from schools such as Berklee, Juilliard, and Columbia, where the curriculum includes history, theory, and exposure to many types of music — in addition to actually playing music.

The struggle to master an instrument is universal, but this newer approach to jazz is different. Some people believe that a portion of the power of jazz from the 1920s through 1950s came from the challenging lives lived by artists who faced prejudice, poverty, and addiction. Jazz musicians

like Chet Baker, Miles Davis, and Charlie Parker exorcised demons with music, and the emotional heat was tangible. It's also true that financially secure, college-educated players make some of the fieriest jazz if they can dip into their deepest thoughts, fears, and feelings.

Players today face challenges of their own: the greatest of which may be redefining jazz and taking it in fresh directions after nearly 100 years of inspired innovation. A college education adds the possibility of composing, arranging, educating, and performing in a variety of combinations and contexts. In the future, it's likely the "jazz" musician won't exist, only musicians who incorporate jazz history and principles into artistically free careers. See Chapter 15 for more details about the study of jazz in college.

### *Lalo Schifrin*

Another critically acclaimed genre-buster is pianist and conductor Lalo Schifrin. His most notable work is his *Jazz Meets the Symphony* CDs. The sixth installment, released in 2005, includes ten Schifrin compositions that reflect an array of influences: "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5," "Jazzette," "Salón México," and "Cincinnati Kid."

Born in Argentina in 1932, Schifrin moved to New York in 1958 and was in Dizzy Gillespie's Quintet from 1960 to 1962. His recent focus on capturing the essence of jazz within a classical context is another new twist. Although the music is completely composed (not improvised) it maintains jazz's spontaneity — the sense that it is being created on the spot.

## Considering Contemporary Jazz

Jazz emerges in various forms of popular music. Acid jazz, invented in London clubs, uses jazz rhythms (and sometimes borrows bass lines or other musical excerpts from '60s and '70s jazz recordings). Smooth jazz uses jazz rhythms and includes some improvisation, but it's better for setting a mood than for serious listening. The popularity of smooth jazz radio stations during the '80s and '90s introduced many listeners to jazz and led them to other, more challenging forms of the music.

## What is acid jazz, man?



The term *acid jazz*, born in London and designed for moving and grooving, was coined by dance club deejays and refers to music that combines jazz, soul, funk, and even contemporary hip-hop. Some acid jazz blends in segments, or samples, from earlier recordings. An acid jazz artist may extract a funky bass part from a 1970s piece, tweak it electronically so you don't recognize it, and build a new song on top with layers of instrumentation (sometimes synthesized).



Much of acid jazz draws from funky jazz from the '60s and '70s. Acid jazz isn't genuine jazz because it doesn't emphasize improvisation; it doesn't swing like jazz does; it doesn't feature soloists with strong original voices:

- ✓ **Guitarist:** Grant Green
- ✓ **Organist:** Charles Earland
- ✓ **Saxophonists:** Houston Person and Lou Donaldson
- ✓ **Trumpeters:** Donald Byrd and Miles Davis
- ✓ **Vibraphonist:** Roy Ayers



If you've never sampled acid jazz, find one of several compilation CDs on different record labels:

- ✓ BGP
- ✓ Instinct
- ✓ Irma
- ✓ PGD/Hollywood
- ✓ Ubiquity

Look for the following acid jazz artists:

- ✓ A Tribe Called Quest
- ✓ Brand New Heavies
- ✓ Chris Bowden
- ✓ Count Basic
- ✓ Digable Planets
- ✓ EM&I
- ✓ Galliano
- ✓ Gang Starr and Tribe
- ✓ Greyboy

- ✓ Incognito
- ✓ Jamiroquai
- ✓ Money Mark
- ✓ Mother Earth
- ✓ Night Trains
- ✓ Slide Five
- ✓ Snowboy
- ✓ Soul Bossa Trio
- ✓ Spiritual Vibes
- ✓ The James Taylor Quartet (no, not *that* James Taylor)

## Is “smooth jazz” really jazz?

In the '90s, a mild brand of instrumental music became popular on FM radio stations. The stations promoted it as *smooth jazz*, but serious jazz fans don't consider it jazz. Many smooth jazz artists are fine players, and some of the music is extremely appealing with melodic, funky, or romantic tones. But most smooth jazz lacks jazz's essential qualities as discussed in Chapter 2.



In short, smooth jazz often doesn't have the rhythmic, syncopated drive known as swing, and it also doesn't include much improvisation. Additionally, in their attempt to make simple, pleasant sounds, the players don't allow themselves to find their own individual voices, as the best players do in jazz.

With that said, however, nothing is wrong with liking smooth jazz. Music that furthers interest in jazz and explores other players under the “jazz” heading is good for the overall health of jazz.

## Jazz on the Edge and into the Future

Going back to pianist Lennie Tristano's experiments with free-form improvisation during the late '40s, some jazz musicians have put their energies into making experimental music based on some of jazz's principles. This music may include swing and improvisation, but it may also include computers and electronic sound processing. Composers with roots in jazz are taking the music to new places. Some, for instance, create full-length operas. The difference between these operas and the ones written by Scott Joplin and his peers during the 1920s is that today's jazz operas are actually being produced.

The following sections cover many of jazz's artists who continue to push the envelope of technology.

## George Lewis

George Lewis is my idea of an artist who maximizes the present and visualizes the future. He's an author, composer, improviser, researcher, and trombonist who also uses computers and computer software to make music. He joined the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians in Chicago in the 1970s, collaborated with free jazzer Anthony Braxton, and worked with avant garde musicians Derek Bailey, Lester, Roscoe Mitchell, and John Zorn (see Chapter 8 for more about free and avant garde jazz). Lewis also plunged into computers and software to create interactive electronic music (a computer responds to what he plays, and he responds to what the computer "plays"), and he teamed with filmmakers and video artists to produce performance pieces that combined music with projected visuals.



Lewis's recordings include

- ✓ Conversations
- ✓ Endless Shout
- ✓ The Shadowgraph Series: Compositions for Creative Orchestra
- ✓ Voyager



For a look at one of music's experimental laboratories, visit the Web site for France's Ircam ([www.ircam.fr](http://www.ircam.fr)), where Lewis and other artists go to explore new ways of making music, particularly by using new technology and complex software.

## Anthony Davis

George Lewis's friend and sometime-collaborator, pianist Anthony Davis, is another jazz musician moving beyond the old boundaries. Davis's early career included free jazz with Lewis, Anthony Braxton, and Oliver Lake, but he has become known as the composer of experimental operas like *X*, *The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, and *Amistad*, as well as music for Broadway productions including Tony Kushner's *Angels in America: Millenium Approaches*.

Lewis (at Columbia University) and Davis (at the University of California San Diego) are full-time professors as well as internationally respected artists, which means that they're providing an incredible range of creative options to budding musicians.

## Other musicians

Other musicians who are pushing jazz into new unmapped territories include the following:

- ✓ **Bassist:** Mark Dresser seizes the moment and improvises from whatever he's feeling at a particular moment. He believes that music is a summation of all the elements that come together at a point in time.
- ✓ **Flutist:** Mathias Ziegler combines jazz and classical sounds with a lot of improvisation and uses special flutes that divide a musical scale into quarter-tones — notes that fall in between the notes in a traditional scale.
- ✓ **Guitarists:** *Marc Ribot's* sound ranges from technically amazing to intentionally raw; *Bill Frisell* and *Derek Bailey* use electronic equipment and add squeaks, taps, and mechanical sounds to their playing.
- ✓ **Mezzo-soprano:** Alexandra Montano's musical influences range from Medieval and Renaissance music to opera. She sings pieces that range from new classical music to improvised free jazz.
- ✓ **Pianists:** Myra Melford, a professor at U.C. Berkeley, combines jazz with Indian music and instruments such as harmonium, and her music is largely improvised. Denman Maroney is an improviser who plays what he feels.



John Zorn's Tzadik label has some of the most far-out, genre-bending music you can wrap your ears around ([www.tzadik.com](http://www.tzadik.com)).

## Living Jazz Masters



While young upstarts offer hope for the future of jazz, some of the best jazz today comes from living legends and seasoned professionals. These players range in age from 40 to 80 and have survived jazz's brutal coming of age and are currently in their prime. Here are a few personal favorites and a suggested CD by each of them:

- ✓ Howard Alden and Jimmy Bruno, *Full Circle* (Concord)
- ✓ Michael Brecker, *Two Blocks from the Edge* (Impulse!)
- ✓ Randy Brecker, *Into the Sun* (Concord)
- ✓ Gary Burton, *Astor Piazzolla Reunion* (Concord)

- ✔ Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, *Heart & Soul* (Capri)
- ✔ Olu Dara, *In The World: From Natchez to New York* (Atlantic)
- ✔ Jack DeJohnette, *Music from the Hearts of the Masters* (Kindred Rhythm)
- ✔ Eliane Elias, *The Three Americas* (Blue Note)
- ✔ Charlie Haden and Hank Jones, *Steal Away* (Verve)
- ✔ Sheila Jordan, *Celebration: Live at the Triad* (Highnote)
- ✔ Lee Konitz, *Parallels* (Chesky)
- ✔ Joe Lovano, *Joyous Encounter* (Blue Note)
- ✔ Sonny Rollins, *The Freelance Years* (Riverside)
- ✔ Wayne Shorter, *Beyond the Sound Barrier* (Verve)
- ✔ Bobby Watson, *Horizon Reassembled* (Palmetto)

# Part III

# The Beat Goes On: Jazz Appreciation 101

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I don't get it. I'm playing a legendary jazz musician and the director keeps telling me to stick to the script and stop improvising."

## *In this part . . .*

**J**azz is more than mere music — it's an American art form that infuses our culture, from commercials, fashion, and film, to dinner party conversation. Part III is your primer for appreciating jazz in all its variations. This part begins with a celebration of jazz in popular culture and some tips on how to throw a jazzy dinner party full of great music and conversation. From your home, take your appreciation on the road and discover jazz in clubs, concert halls, and at some of the best jazz festivals around the world.

## Chapter 11

# Mass Appeal: Taking Note of Jazz in Popular Culture

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Adding the magic of jazz to movies
  - ▶ Setting stylish fashion trends
  - ▶ Jazzing up art and literature
  - ▶ Using hip jazz jargon
  - ▶ Selling products with jazz
- 

**T**he impact of jazz on American culture is undeniable, though you may not even realize it. From films and novels, to advertising, fashion, and even language, aspects of jazz filter out to the masses. In this chapter you look at the ways in which jazz has permeated pop culture over the past 100 years, from slang and film, to fiction and fashion. I want to give credit to the music and the musicians for whatever coolness, hipness, and tastefulness they've imparted to our nation over the years!

### *On the Silver Screen: Jazz on Film*

Until the '50s, jazz's role in American films was primarily in the form of cameo appearances in nightclub and party scenes; early portrayals of jazz musicians helped sustain negative stereotypes. Jazz players weren't featured as main characters, and the music selected was generally mainstream. In the '50s, though, films such as *Young Man with a Horn* began to treat jazz and jazz performers as legitimate artistic subject matter. In the following sections, find out how films portrayed jazz and jazz musicians over time.

## *Casting Louis Armstrong in the beginning*

Louis Armstrong made his most important music in the 1920s (see Chapter 5 for details), but he became a star in the 1930s through films that cast him as a stereotypical black entertainer, on hand to provide a lighter interlude, but not as a serious artist or actor. Lead roles went to white actors.



To some extent, the film roles represented Armstrong's public persona as required by a segregated society of that time. In live performance, he camped it up just as much as on film. Many jazz fans feel that as a jazz musician, his most important years were the 1920s, and thereafter Armstrong became a mainstream entertainer more than a jazz innovator. While some African-American critics feel that Armstrong sold out by taking roles as the always-happy black entertainer, he was still one of the first black actors to be prominently featured. Even if his performances on film were more Broadway shtick than serious jazz, the appearance of a prominent jazz trumpeter on screen brought jazz into the American mainstream. I cover some of Armstrong's film roles in the following sections.

### *A Rhapsody in Black and Blue*

In the 1932 short film *A Rhapsody in Black and Blue*, Armstrong appears in a black man's dream. The dream unfolds after the man, distracted from his household chores by Armstrong's music, is knocked unconscious by his demanding wife. In the dream, Armstrong plays trumpet in a nightclub, dressed in a leopard skin — a typical portrayal of a black man in those times as primitive and naïve.

### *Pennies from Heaven*

In the 1936 film *Pennies from Heaven*, starring Bing Crosby, Armstrong plays a musician who negotiates a poor contract for himself, then sings the tune "Skeleton in the Closet" as a skeleton chases him. On one level, this can be seen as a fantasy or bad dream. On another, the image of a black man being chased by a skeleton verged on the slapstick approach of minstrel shows in which blacks were cast as buffoons.

### *Going Places*

Armstrong often hammed it up like a clownish minstrel performer on film, speaking throwaway lines, making faces, widening his eyes in exaggerated amazement. In the 1938 film *Going Places*, Armstrong plays the groom of a racehorse, a disappointing role that has him serenading the horse but not interacting significantly with human characters. Again, Armstrong's appearance was a mixed blessing for jazz. Audiences saw a famous black musician in a prominent part, introducing him to new audiences. But he could have had a much more positive impact had he been cast as a hero.

### *Hello, Dolly!*

Even Armstrong's popular performance in *Hello, Dolly!* (1969) portrayed the stereotypical black simpleton, making the white folks smile. At least in this case, he co-starred with Carol Channing. Casting Armstrong alongside a white entertainer was a step up from the old cliché of a black performer hamming it up for a white audience. The 1960s were a transitional time; in the 1950s, black musicians weren't cast as the equals of whites. *Hello, Dolly!* marked a step in the right direction.

The title song summed up the pros and cons of Armstrong's role. While the song is a pop show number made for entertainment purposes, Armstrong's version gives it a jazz flavor. His gruff, friendly vocal style is quite different than the usual smooth Broadway delivery, and he even manages to scat-sing a few bars — one of the rare instances when jazz improvisation infiltrates a show tune. Whether they knew it or not, American audiences were getting a good shot of jazz with their entertainment.

## *Chronicling jazz musicians' lives*

Is there a genuine jazz film? One that makes authentic jazz its centerpiece instead of a decoration? The short answer is yes, from Kirk Douglas's trumpeter role in *Young Man with a Horn* (1950) to Dexter Gordon's emigrant saxophonist in *Round Midnight* (1986) and a fading Chet Baker in the documentary *Let's Get Lost* (1988). The time between the Douglas and Gordon films gives a window on social progress. It was the time it took to move from a white actor playing a jazz musician, to a black actor and jazz musician giving a very real portrayal of jazz music and a life in jazz. After Douglas portrayed an expatriate jazz musician, Gordon actually was one.

In the following sections, I cover a few feature films and documentaries that shed light on the lives of jazz musicians.

### *Hollywood feature films*

In the 1950s, Hollywood, always looking for the latest cultural trend, latched onto jazz. Boosted by pianist Dave Brubeck's 1954 appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine and other coverage of jazz, jazz musicians became the '50s equivalent of '60s hippie rock musicians. At the same time, jazz began to turn up on soundtracks for films such as *On the Waterfront*, starring Marlon Brando. The time was right for films (like the following) that took jazz as subject matter instead of just background color.

- ✓ ***Young Man with A Horn:*** This film, partially inspired by the tragic life of trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke (see Chapter 5), features captivating black-and-white images, good music, and a story that gets to the heart of a jazz musician's struggles as a marginalized artist. Kirk Douglas, as trumpeter Rick Martin, is torn between the music he makes as deeply

personal art and the music he makes to earn a buck. When he duets with Doris Day and departs from the score to improvise a few catchy lines, the conductor tells Douglas to stick with what's written.

- ✓ ***The Benny Goodman Story***: Steve Allen in *The Benny Goodman Story* (1955) barely scratches the surface of what it means to live a life in jazz. The music here is excellent (the soundtrack is actually Goodman), but important facts about Goodman's career are left out of this Hollywood tale of a star player's rise to fame and fortune with his 1938 performance at Carnegie Hall as the climax (well, that much is true). Goodman's childhood poverty, his black heroes like clarinetist Jimmie Noone, his experiences learning jazz from leading black jazz musicians, his hiring of black arranger Fletcher Henderson to heat up the Goodman band's sound, his gutsy integration of his band — important turning points like these are mostly missing. Instead of showing late nights, uncomfortable bus rides, bad food, and unscrupulous promoters, this movie is a sanitized version of jazz. I cover Goodman in detail in Chapter 6.
- ✓ ***Round Midnight***: For me, the modern film that cuts closest to the core of what a jazzman's life is probably like is Bertrand Tavernier's *Round Midnight*, with the laconic, chain-smoking, musically brilliant saxophonist Dexter Gordon in the lead role. Gordon says more with actions than words. When he performs, you can tell immediately that this is a jazz musician playing jazz, not an actor. Here's a world-weary artist living one moment at a time. You get the sense that in a career in jazz, nothing can surprise him. One major downside to casting actors as jazz musicians is that no matter how much they try, their technique never looks quite right (see Sean Penn in *Sweet and Lowdown*). See Chapter 7 for more about Gordon.
- ✓ ***Bird***: For comparison's sake, Tavernier's film, with both Dexter Gordon and his music, is more infused with jazz than Clint Eastwood's 1988 *Bird*, with Forest Whitaker playing Charlie "Yardbird" Parker (who I cover in Chapter 7). But *Bird* still ranks as the best contemporary jazz film, combining excellent music and acting with a compelling story crafted from the ups and downs of Parker's life.
- ✓ ***Kansas City***: This movie (1996) has some great music and great period costumes and settings. Given Robert Altman's reputation for spontaneous filmmaking, it's surprising that he didn't do more with the wealth of jazz talent on hand (more than a dozen top players, including bassist Ron Carter, trumpeter Nicholas Payton, and vocalist Kevin Mahogany). Someone still needs to make a Hollywood film set amid Kansas City jazz, although this movie had a positive effect by bringing jazz to a mass audience for jazz.



### Documentaries

More than Hollywood feature films, several fine documentaries offer unflinching portrayals of jazz and its heroes. My favorite examples include



- ✔ **Bix Beiderbecke:** This thorough documentary (1981) does an impressive job showing how the genius trumpeter made his huge contribution before dying at age 28. First-hand interviews with musical peers including Hoagy Carmichael add credibility, and period photos capture the flavor of the life, times, cities, and clubs inhabited by Beiderbecke.
- ✔ **Let's Get Lost:** Director Bruce Weber's 1988 intimate look at Chet Baker in his final days is both tragic and inspiring. Baker was never able to kick his junkie lifestyle and appears here as a bleary-eyed, toothless shadow of his younger handsome self. However, his trumpet playing and his heart-rending singing, along with Weber's gorgeous black-and-white imagery, sweep you away into the dreamy world of a real-life jazz legend. See Chapter 7 for more about Baker.
- ✔ **Jazz:** Ken Burns's ambitious series for public television (2001), available on DVD, gives his typically romantic, sweeping portrayal of history, with great interviews, period music, and hundreds of rare photographs. Some jazz fans, though, were disappointed that he barely mentioned any jazz made after the early '60s.

### Other films worth checking out



Here are some other documentaries and performance films that pulse with authentic jazz: *Jammin' the Blues* (Lester Young and other greats); *Jazz on a Summer's Day* (Louis Armstrong, Anita O'Day, Monk and others); *Jazz '34* (James Carter, Joshua Redman and other current jazz greats perform classic jazz); *Lush Life* (composer Billy Strayhorn); *The Sound of Jazz* (Count Basie, Coleman Hawkins and others); *Straight, No Chaser* (pianist Thelonious Monk). Add to these *Art Blakey: The Jazz Messenger*; *Celebrating Bird*; *Jackie McLean on Mars*; *Jazz on the West Coast*; *Charles Mingus: Triumph of the Underdog*; *My Name is Albert Ayler*; and *Mystery, Mister Ra* (Sun Ra). Appendix C has more information about these and other jazz films.

## Using jazz in soundtracks

In another variation on the Hollywood-Jazz connection, a number of films make extensive use of jazz on their soundtracks or have jazz scores composed by jazz greats. These films' soundtracks include the following:

- ✔ **Anatomy of a Murder:** Duke Ellington's music on the soundtrack for this movie (1959) by director Otto Preminger was praised for perfectly complementing the mood of this black-and-white courtroom drama. For more information on Duke Ellington, see Chapter 6.
- ✔ **The Man with the Golden Arm:** Famed film composer Elmer Bernstein wrote the jazz-flavored score for *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), starring Frank Sinatra as a card dealer who dreams of being a jazz drummer but is sidetracked by his drug addiction and manipulative wife.

- ✔ **Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud:** Miles Davis and a group including drummer Kenny Clarke and three European players improvised the moody, brooding score that perfectly suits *Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud* (1958), a black-and-white French film directed by Louis Malle. Recorded around the same time as Davis's *Kind of Blue* album, the soundtrack is symbolic of the fact that many famous modern American jazz musicians have been more celebrated in Europe than at home. After all, Davis wasn't commissioned to score any American films.
- ✔ **Blow Up:** Miles Davis's protégé, pianist Herbie Hancock (see Chapter 8), composed the music for this French film (1966) by Michel Antonioni.
- ✔ **Breathless:** Another great example of jazz combined with an electrifying film is Martial Solal's score for Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (1960), about a young couple on an adrenaline rush of a road trip. Solal's music was inspired by great jazz pianists such as Erroll Garner, Thelonious Monk, Oscar Peterson, Bud Powell, Art Tatum, and Lennie Tristano.
- ✔ **Taxi Driver:** Famed film composer Bernard Herrmann, best known for scoring Hitchcock films like *Vertigo* and *Psycho*, also wrote the jazz score for Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976), and the spare saxophone-centered music is the perfect accompaniment to the main character's unraveling mental state as he cruises the seedy underside of New York City in his Checker cab.
- ✔ **Rosewood:** More recently, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis (see Chapter 10) composed a score for the John Singleton film *Rosewood* (1997), about the 1923 torching of a black town in Florida by a mob of white people. The combination of jazz with prejudice makes a telling combination.

Among the many soundtracks, no one else has produced as many jazz soundtracks as Woody Allen. He's famous (among other reasons) for using jazz in his films. Composer, arranger, and jazz pianist Dick Hyman serves as his musical director for *Zelig* (1983), *Stardust Memories* (1980), *Radio Days* (1987), and *Sweet and Lowdown* (1999).

Sean Penn starred in *Sweet and Lowdown* as the jazz guitarist character partly based on the great Belgian gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt. Reinhardt and French violinist Stephane Grappelli were famous for their performances together in the late 1930s and early 1940s. They made the Hot Club of France famous, and popular swing revival bands today like the Hot Club of Cowtown (from Texas) pay homage to Django.



For many years no trip to New York City was complete without a stop to hear Woody playing clarinet on Monday nights, most recently at The Carlyle at Madison Avenue and 76th Street. Allen is a decent musician, and you can also see him perform on film in the documentary *Wild Man Blues* — named for the famous tune written by Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton.

## Setting movie cartoons to jazz

Jazz's influence on American culture hit a high in the mid-1920s as jazz went mainstream through the popular image of the flapper girl in a short dress and headband, dancing the Charleston with a tuxedoed guy packing Prohibition-era bootleg liquor in a hip flask. Jazz was American music, and the Jazz Age marked America's modern era, setting it apart from European influences (in music, art, architecture, and so on) that had dominated Victorian times.

Saturday matinee movies in the 1920s were double features with a cartoon in between. Tapping into pop culture, these cartoons were often set to jazz. New and upbeat, jazz lent the cartoons a hip pedigree, aligning them with modern architecture and fashion. Jazz's syncopated rhythms were perfect for cartoon action sequences depicting fights, factories, or fast trains.

Cartoonist Max Fleischer's famous Betty Boop character was based on flappers, and he set the cartoons to swing jazz by Cab Calloway, Don Redman, and others. Caricatures of Calloway (as a walrus) appear with Boop in *Talkartoon* and *Minnie the Moocher* (Calloway co-wrote the famous song from which the cartoon takes its title). In another cartoon Fleischer also had Betty sing a duet with Louis Armstrong on his tune "I'll Be Glad When You're Dead You Rascal You."



Cartoons by Max and Dave Fleischer moved to the music of many famous jazz groups:

- ✓ The Boswell Sisters in *Sleepy Time Down South* (1932)
- ✓ Cab Calloway's *Minnie the Moocher* (1932)
- ✓ Albert Ammons in *Boogie Doodle* (1948)
- ✓ Oscar Peterson in *Begone Dull Care* (1949)

In the 1940s, composer Raymond Scott's music, especially the tune "Powerhouse," was used for cartoon action sequences. Scott's music appeared in several classic Looney Tunes cartoons and more recently in *The Simpsons* and *Ren and Stimpy*.

While there's no direct evidence showing that moviegoers heard or bought more jazz because of cartoons, these animated shorts were a vital part of the pop culture that brought jazz to millions of Americans who may not have heard much jazz otherwise.

Beyond conventional cartoons, several animated art films offer innovative use of jazz, such as John and Faith Hubley's *Harlem Wednesday* (1958), which strings together paintings by Gregorio Prestopino and music by composer and jazz saxophonist Benny Carter for a wildly inventive portrayal of a day in the life of Harlem.

## Seeing jazz musicians in cartoons

When it came to jazz, some of the hippest films weren't animated cartoons starring Mickey Mouse and other cartoon heroes. By hip, I mean in the sense that they used jazz in artful ways, but not in the ways in which they depicted black musicians such as Louis Armstrong (see "Casting Louis Armstrong in the beginning" earlier in this chapter). In the 1937 *Clean Pastures*,

he appears as a cartoon caricature with over-size lips, a round body, and a dumbfounded look on his face. Other jazz heroes recreated as cartoon characters include Benny Goodman, Fats Waller, and Paul Whiteman as well as Duke Ellington in *Date with Duke* (1947) and Woody Herman in *Rhapsody in Wood* (1947).

This and other films by the Hubleys, with music by Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, and Quincy Jones, are available on the collection *The Cosmic Eye*. The images in these films were inspired by the art of Klee, Matisse, Miro, Modigliani, and Picasso, and they mark one of the few times that jazz has been paired with the modern art that seems so similar in its adventuresome spirit.

## *I Like Your Style: Jazz and Fashion*

Jazz emerged as a colorful, exciting, spontaneous alternative to the staid Victorian era. Along with it came fresh fashions that helped the music find its new niche in American culture: as the colorful, flamboyant music of young people. Women who loved swing dancing (known as "flappers" for their flapping arms) wore short dresses and short hair. Men turned up in brightly colored, carefully tailored, baggy zoot suits. Eventually, clothes also helped elevate jazz's status. Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and others were seen in crisp, modern suits, and jazz began to earn respect; highbrow venues such as Carnegie Hall started presenting jazz concerts.

### *Focusing on flappers*

In the 1920s, women known as *flappers* brought a feminist streak to jazz. Big band swing was the soundtrack for their social lives. Wearing then-outrageous sleeveless jerseys, short skirts, and bobbed hair, they were a sexy, flamboyant reaction to stiff Victorianism. These women of F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jazz Age danced The Black Bottom, The Charleston, and the Fox Trot to syncopated jazz played by the big bands of Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, McKinney's Cotton Pickers, and Paul Whiteman. Articles at the time warned against the evils of jazz, syncopated music that sounded wild compared to classical music and John Philip Souza marches. As they do

today, fashion designers looked to the emerging arts around them for inspiration. In New York City, it was black ballroom dancing culture, featuring jazz music and new women's fashions that exposed arms, legs, and necks.

Female jazz singers made their own fashion statements, which became part of their marketing through press photos and album covers. As front women for big bands, singers such as Helen Forrest, Anita O'Day, Maxine Sullivan, Sarah Vaughan, and Ethel Waters all wore gorgeous dresses, each with personal flair. (See Chapter 5 for more about these early women of jazz.)

## *Zippering up zoot suits*

Long before zoot suits became the stuff of Broadway musicals, they made a bold statement of identity for the hip black men who wore them to jazz concerts in 1930s Harlem. With their baggy, high-waisted, suspended pants and broad-shouldered tapering coats, they were a rebellion against the bland, buttoned-down styles of the day. Malcolm X was a young hustler known as Detroit Red who had his political consciousness raised when he participated in the racially charged “zoot suit riots” in Detroit in the 1940s, before he became an early hero of African-American civil rights. In Los Angeles, young Mexican-Americans also made a rebellious statement with their zoot suits.



The zoot suit is an extension of jazz's early identity as dangerous, evil music — music of nightclubs, dance halls, and bars — and especially African-American music, which was at odds with the comfortable status quo.

As happened with the music, however, zoot suits eventually became accepted as a fashion statement, and today are often viewed more as ultrahip outfits than a statement of identity. Today, Andre 3000 of the hip-hop band Outkast wears zoot suits as high fashion.

## *Dressing for respect*

Bing Crosby, Benny Goodman, Frank Sinatra, and other white swing era stars made stylish suits and ties fashionable for young white Americans. In the '40s and '50s and beyond, many black jazz musicians made a point of being perfectly dressed in suits and ties. Through the decades, many jazz musicians dressed formally because they wanted their music to earn the same respect accorded to classical music. Gradually, jazz was invited into prestigious venues like Carnegie Hall, and jazz fans came in appropriate attire. I cover the fashion influence of a few musicians in the following sections.

### *Dizzy Gillespie*

Dizzy Gillespie, with his hip glasses, goatee, and stylish suits presented the notion that jazz should be accepted as a serious art form but also as music with its own distinctive identity. Suits and ties were a sign of respectability.

### *Miles Davis*

From his beginnings, Miles Davis was a fashion icon — an artist whose clothes became as much a part of his stage presence as they did for pop artists such as Jimi Hendrix and Prince. By the '70s, Davis wore oversize shades, black hats, capes, and long leather coats that made him seem like some kind of artistic superhero: a combination of Clint Eastwood, Zorro, and boxer Jack Johnson. Photos of Davis from various times in his long career prove that he carefully crafted his visual identity.

### *Wynton Marsalis*

Wynton Marsalis maintains the designer-suited image of jazz's earlier years. He wears tailored designer suits (not Davis's flamboyant outfits) in keeping with his identity as spokesman for a new era of black musicians. Seeing Marsalis as a main player in Ken Burns' *Jazz* series on public television, and in his frequent appearances elsewhere in the media, makes one aware that at least a few jazz musicians are finally gaining acceptance as great American artists on a par with writers, painters, classical players, and conductors.

## *In Good Taste: Jazz in Art and Literature*

Like other artists, photographers and writers are always on the lookout for new modes of expression. In the decades following World War II, as jazz evolved from bebop to hard bop and cool jazz, many of these artists became fans of jazz. The music turned up in their art in ways that were sometimes direct, sometimes oblique. I cover the influence of jazz on photographers and writers in the following sections.

### *Through the lens: Jazz photos*

In recent years, photographs of black jazz musicians by William Claxton, Gordon Parks, and other photographers are finally receiving their due as fine art. (Others had photographed jazz musicians, but more as journalists than fine artists.) These photos are worthy of museums and galleries, and they're important both for their depiction of jazz musicians as worthy subjects and because they marked some of the first instances in which black photographers gained acceptance in the art world.

#### *William Claxton*

William Claxton grew up in California listening to big band jazz and began shooting jazz musicians for album covers in the 1950s. His special skill was in making them relaxed enough to reveal their inner emotions. In his photos, these famous musicians live on as icons of the youthful, rebellious spirit of jazz. While his photos weren't originally viewed as fine art, they're now treasured by collectors, curators, and gallery owners.

In 2001 and 2002, Claxton's photos were exhibited in London, Los Angeles, Paris, and Tokyo. Claxton's "Jazz Seen" takes you behind the curtain and offstage for a look at the personal lives of famous jazz performers and an intimate look at their many moods. Connoisseurs may also want a copy of "Jazz Life" — an over-size volume with a lot of photos and evocative text — Claxton's elegant (and expensive) collaboration with brainy European jazz critic Joachim Berendt.

### ***Roy DeCarava***

Roy DeCarava collaborated with poet Langston Hughes on the 1955 book *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*, with Hughes's words and DeCarava's photos focusing on family and neighborhood life in Harlem. For Americans who saw the book, it offered a look into a culture they had rarely seen. DeCarava's book *The Sound I Saw*, written during the 1960s but not published until 2001, was a similar project, only this time DeCarava supplied both the photos and the words. *The Sound I Saw* combines his New York City street photos of Miles Davis, Coleman Hawkins, Elvin Jones, and other jazz musicians at work and at play, with his poetry depicting a range of images and emotions from black urban life. It's a heartfelt tribute to the lives of African-American artists, from one of their own.

### ***Gordon Parks***

Gordon Parks became known as a photojournalist for *Life* magazine, and his photos of African Americans including jazz musicians such as Duke Ellington (as well as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King) brought black life to mainstream America during the civil rights era. Parks is also the author of two memoirs and numerous other books, in which he often acknowledges the importance of jazz on his life and photography. His gritty black-and-white photos are the visual equivalent of gritty hard bop and free jazz played by Clifford Brown, Ornette Coleman, and others (see Chapters 7 and 8 for more about these forms of jazz).

### ***Carl Van Vechten***

Harlem photographer Carl Van Vechten shot photographs of many famed artists of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1930s. From jazz, his subjects included Bessie Smith, particularly one famous photo of her with hair pulled back, looking to the side of the camera in a pensive mood, holding a feather fan. In this photo (and others), Van Vechten portrayed the personal warmth of a black artist who was part of a music form seen at the time as subversive and threatening to mainstream culture and family values.

## ***The write stuff: Jazz as an inspiration for books***

When respected writers take jazz as their subject, they often discover hidden subtleties and themes. When they take the time for in-depth consideration of

jazz, they show you that the music and its artists are worthy of deeper reflection. And when their books serve as the basis for films, their fresh perceptions reach a mass audience.

Dozens of authors have used jazz as their inspiration, sometimes in mass-market fiction, others in books with literary aspirations. Here are just a few.

- ✔ **Candace Allen:** Allen's first novel was *Valaida*, based on the life of Valaida Snow, one of jazz's first female trumpeters. Allen captures the difficulties of being a female African-American artist in a field dominated by men, as well as the rush of playing jazz with some of Louis Armstrong's bandmates.
- ✔ **Geoff Dyer:** *But Beautiful: A Book About Jazz* won the Somerset Maugham Prize for fiction in 1992. It's a collection of stories inspired by the music of jazz greats including Charles Mingus, Thelonious Monk, Art Pepper, and Bud Powell.
- ✔ **Charles Mingus:** No jazz library is complete without a copy of Charles Mingus' *Beneath the Underdog*, supposedly the bassist's autobiography but probably with plenty of exaggeration and imagination. It's the fascinating story of a jazz player learning the ropes in Los Angeles.
- ✔ **Bill Moody:** Moody is the author of a series of novels including *Solo Hand* and *Looking for Chet Baker* and featuring Moody's main character Evan Horne, a jazz clarinetist. By setting his fiction amid jazz, Moody gives readers a look into the world of the jazz musician.
- ✔ **Michael Ondaatje:** Ondaatje wrote the script for *The English Patient* and penned the novel *Coming Through Slaughter*, inspired by the life of Buddy Bolden — the legendary New Orleans cornet player (see Chapter 5 for details about him). Ondaatje's book isn't intended to be factual. It's an improvisation in words that uses Bolden, about whom little is known, as a point of departure. Ondaatje's book has been critically acclaimed as one of the best jazz novels.

## *Are You Hep to the Jive? Jazz Jargon*

One of the most pervasive ways in which jazz has become a part of our lives is through language. Through movies, radio, books, and word of mouth, jazz jive talk invented by Cab Calloway, Lester Young, and others was adopted by later hipsters such as Jack Kerouac, '60s hippies, and current rappers. Today words like hip, cool, and bad (meaning good) are common, but most people probably don't know that they originated among jazz players in the '30s and '40s.

Bandleader Cab Calloway posed the question "Are you hep to the jive?" and was a leader in popularizing the slang used by jazz musicians. Another legendary slang singer was saxophonist Lester Young. He used so many particular phrases that at times you had to know him well to understand him. (See Chapter 6 for details about both musicians.)

Calloway compiled much of the best jazz slang in his *Hepsters Dictionary*, published in 1945. It's now out of print and fetches as much as \$350 on online auctions. Originally, the idea of coded slang dates back to a time when slaves used words with double meanings so masters and bosses couldn't understand them. After Calloway and others popularized jazz lingo, though, it began entering mainstream American life through various art forms.

- ✔ Novelist Jack Kerouac was a huge fan of jazz whose characters in *On the Road* spoke like jazz musicians.
- ✔ Screenwriters and directors also incorporated jazz language into biker films like *The Wild One* (1953) and *Easy Rider* (1969).
- ✔ Most hippies who used words like *cool* and *mellow* and *reefer* probably didn't know that their lingo originated in Harlem during the 1930s and 1940s, was brought into the mainstream through books and literature, and survived as a mainstream of hip culture through several decades.

In the '60s, I took a drive with my parents through San Francisco's Haight Ashbury neighborhood to look at the hippies. Later, I learned that Jack Kerouac and the Beat Generation had used words including "hip." But it was years later that I found out that the word's origin was probably in the Chicago jazz scene during Prohibition, when jazz fans carrying hip flasks became known as "hipsters."

Here are a few of Cab Calloway's favorite words (which he undoubtedly collected from the black Harlem culture all around him) and their meanings. Many of the phrases have become a part of the mainstream:

- ✔ **Apple:** The big town, Harlem (By some accounts, Lester Young coined the phrase "The Big Apple.")
- ✔ **Beat it out:** Play it hot, emphasize the rhythm (This was decades before Michael Jackson's "Beat It" or the Go-Gos' "We Got the Beat.")
- ✔ **Chick:** Girl
- ✔ **Corny:** Old fashioned
- ✔ **Hip:** Wise, sophisticated
- ✔ **Mellow:** All right, fine
- ✔ **Pops, Jack:** Salutation for males
- ✔ **Reefer:** Marijuana
- ✔ **Riff:** Hot lick, musical phrase
- ✔ **Rock me:** Send me, kill me, move me with rhythm
- ✔ **Solid:** Great, swell, okay
- ✔ **Threads:** Suit, dress or costume

## *Making the Sale: Jazz in Advertising*

As jazz has moved from clubs to concert halls in recent years, led by Wynton Marsalis's high profile reign as artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center (see Chapter 10 for more details), the music and its stars have become enough of a part of popular American culture that they've turned up in advertisements for products ranging from automobiles to watches and fashion.

Many companies and influential business savvy marketers have appealed to the public through a marketing theme centered on jazz:

- ✔ **Apple Computer:** This company chose Miles Davis to represent iBook. Davis's "Flamenco Sketches" from the *Kind of Blue* album was used for a romantic commercial titled "The Possibility of Love." With Miles as the soundtrack, you too can fall in love with a laptop! Apple is known for its sexy designs, so a cut from Miles fits well.
- ✔ **Acura:** The use of Sarah Vaughan's "Key Largo" for Acura tells you that these cars are classy, elegant, and crafted down to the last detail.
- ✔ **Volkswagen:** Charles Mingus's bluesy "II B.S." for Volkswagen gives the car an upbeat, universally appealing context.
- ✔ **Estée Lauder:** This huge cosmetics company used Louis Armstrong's "What A Wonderful World." Armstrong's song is a dream about an ideal world — one that you may be able to enter with the right look.
- ✔ **GMC:** "They All Laughed" by Louis Armstrong was used for GMC's Envoy SUV — a song that's a testament to the vision of explorers and inventors such as Christopher Columbus and Thomas Edison. Here's an attempt to rub some adventurousness off on a car.
- ✔ **Infiniti:** Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" takes on a different identity as part of a pitch for Infiniti luxury automobiles than it had when it came out in the late 1950s and its audience was beatniks and cool college students. Now, those young seekers have come of age, and "Take Five" has become a classic of controlled, intelligent jazz that still sounds great after nearly 50 years.
- ✔ **Radio Shack:** Brubeck's "Blue Rondo A La Turk" takes the rondo form from classical music and transforms it into a jazz tune. Maybe this song represents the diverse array of products in one of these stores, or the sophisticated technology.

## Chapter 12

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# Good Times: Jazzing Up Any Dinner Party

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Jazzing up your home décor
  - ▶ Spinning tunes to set the mood
  - ▶ Sparking conversation with jazz tidbits
  - ▶ Picking out party favors
- 

You're hosting a mellow dinner party with good friends and not wanting to make the usual small talk about the president's policies, your parents, or the real estate market. If you've read this far, you're probably already a music buff. You may have a pretty fair collection of CDs, some vinyl, maybe an mp3 player loaded with a growing number of succulent jazz tunes. And if you've read this far, your music library probably goes well beyond classic albums by Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, or Charlie Parker. Nice work!

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some jazz recipes that make your dinner party a smash hit, amazing your friends with your inside knowledge. I'm going to tell you how to create the right mood with decorations, compile playlists that surprise your guests, fill your conversation with captivating details about jazz history, and send your guests home with cool trinkets.

## *Setting the Stage with Jazzy Décor*

With a little daydreaming and careful online flea-marketing, you can transform your living room into a gallery of great images and memorabilia from the history of jazz. Together with great food and music (see the following section for details), these items help you sweep your guests away on a romantic flight of jazz fancy.



The key to any jazz collection is that it's personal. Choose the artists and periods you like the most, and gather artifacts that reflect your passions. If you need help deciding, head to Part II, where I cover many different eras, from the 1920s to today's jazz scene.



Don't just settle for any old décor to set the mood for your party. The World Wide Web is a fantastic source for inexpensive, one-of-a-kind finds. Look for a few eye-catching items that may impress your guests and serve as great conversation pieces, like the following:

- ✓ **Old magazines:** I found a 1966 *Life* magazine with a fold-out cover of Louis Armstrong blowing his horn. I also have a 1952 issue of *Downbeat* with Louis on the cover, celebrating his induction into the Jazz Hall of Fame. A more exotic choice: Satchmo on the cover of a 1947 issue of the French magazine *Regards*. Any one of these would look great framed and hung on your dining room wall. Three of them together would make a really stunning statement.
- ✓ **Photo prints:** You can get a print of photographer Carl Van Vechten's black-and-white image of Bessie Smith holding a feather fan, with a shy, pensive look on her face. This photo and others by Van Vechten are available from the Library of Congress Web site. Photos of jazz musicians by William Gottlieb (whose photos are featured in this book) also are available from the Library of Congress. In your own city, there are probably photographers or galleries selling prints of jazz performers (either famous musicians or unsung local heroes).
- ✓ **Posters:** A silk-screened Mondrian-like poster in tribute to Afro-Cuban percussion great Chano Pozo lends your décor the essential Latin ingredient Pozo brought to his collaborations with Dizzy Gillespie. Or you can add a cool '50s touch in the form of a poster for Miles Davis's 1957 headlining gig at San Francisco's Blackhawk, with Dave Brubeck as the opener. Artist Paul Colin's posters of Josephine Baker and the jazz age are available for less than \$50 from a variety of online poster outlets. IKEA, the Scandinavian home furnishing chain that's gradually spreading across the United States, is a great place to purchase good-looking wood and metal picture frames at very reasonable prices.
- ✓ **Vinyl records:** Benny Goodman's 1938 performance at Carnegie Hall was an epic event, both for putting jazz in a first-class concert venue and for showcasing black and white musicians together. I found the two-record set on vinyl on eBay for less than \$20, with a cool cover photo of Goodman, flanked by lists of his stellar special guests. Display the album cover where guests can see it, and play them cuts like "One O'Clock Jump" and "Stompin' at the Savoy" (I hope you have a turntable).
- ✓ **DVDs:** Launch your décor into the stratosphere with a DVD featuring intergalactic jazz emissary Sun Ra. Even with the sound turned down, Sun's godly presence lends your party a special aura. Not exactly otherworldly but certainly dreamlike is the *Cool Jazz Sound* DVD, which captures Miles Davis and John Coltrane performing together on television

on together in 1959. *Charles Mingus: Triumph of the Underdog* includes rare footage of the enigmatic bassist. The larger and better your television, the more amazing this DVD is.

Of course, the danger of DVDs is that they may hijack your party causing you to forget all about dinner. For more examples of great DVDs, see Chapter 11.

- ✓ **Finishing touches:** Turn on your lights to a jazz tempo with jazz-themed switchplate covers, or serve food on china with jazz patterns. Other items I've seen include a neon sign in the shape of a saxophone, lamps made from trumpets and saxophones, musical instrument mouse pads, and porkpie hats you can hang on the wall as a tribute to saxophonist Lester Young, the subject of Charles Mingus's famous composition "Goodbye Porkpie Hat."



Check out the following Web sites to help you decorate:

- ✓ **eBay ([www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)):** eBay is an online superstore where you can find good deals on jazz-related items, from vintage photos and vinyl records with striking covers to rare books, collectible magazines, and frameable posters.
- ✓ **Google ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)):** Google is your best friend when you're searching for posters, photos, and other jazz-related artifacts. With this search engine, you can find dozens more sources in addition to the ones listed here.
- ✓ **The Library of Congress ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)):** Jazz photos by the two great Williams (Claxton and Gottlieb) are available in a high-resolution format.
- ✓ **International Poster Gallery ([www.internationalposter.com](http://www.internationalposter.com)):** Beautiful jazz posters by artist Niklaus Troxler are more expensive than conventional posters but worth the money if you're starting a collection.
- ✓ **[www.jazzposters.com](http://www.jazzposters.com):** This site features posters of most of jazz's legends, some priced under \$10 — including portraits, reproductions of posters from past performances, and paintings.
- ✓ **[www.postershop.com](http://www.postershop.com):** This site has a huge assortment of jazz posters made from cool black-and-white photos of performers like Louis Armstrong and Miles Davis.

## Cueing Up Terrific Tunes

When you deejay your own party, be sure to select a flavorful mix of music that's hip enough to impress people but not so abstract that it detracts from the mood. In the following sections, I give you tips on the coolest kinds of music for each part of your evening.



If you have an mp3 player, you can compile various playlists for special occasions (see the sidebar “Compiling cool playlists for your dinner party” later in this chapter for details). Another option? I use a 300-CD changer. Sometimes I play a single CD all the way through; other times I set the machine to “random play” and let it surprise me with combinations that I may not think of myself.

## *Easing into the evening*



If you’re hosting three or four couples for an intimate evening, you want the music to start off gentle and romantic. Don’t clobber guests with frantic bebop or wailing free jazz. Ease your guests into the music, the evening, and some conversation. Good choices for starters are 1950s cool jazz, solo piano music, or romantic vocal jazz featuring Billie Holiday, Mel Tormé, or another of jazz’s great singers.



For this mood, I recommend Miles Davis’s laid-back albums from the 1950s, such as *Relaxin’* and *Steamin’*, or various vocal albums. Two of my favorite singers are Nat King Cole and Abbey Lincoln. *The Best of Nat King Cole Trio: Vocal Classics, Vol. 1 (1942–1946)* (Blue Note) includes “Straighten Up and Fly Right” and other sweet Cole classics. Lincoln’s *That’s Him* is a great (harder to find) album that captures the singer in a young, innocent period singing romantic tunes to the accompaniment of ace players such as saxophonist Sonny Rollins and trumpeter Kenny Dorham. Lincoln’s voice is sweet on tunes including her version of “Tender As A Rose.”

Other selections for the get-acquainted cocktail hour of your evening can include something by Chet Baker (early muted trumpet or late-career misty vocals); some moody solo piano (Bill Evans, Ahmad Jamal, or a personal favorite, Mike Wofford); a selection of lush saxophone (breathy Ben Webster, ’50s Stan Getz, and Gerry Mulligan), and touches of flute (Charles Lloyd and Herbie Mann). Online music stores list dozens of albums; choose some music that most appeals to you, and you can tell your guests why you like it.

## *Boosting the energy during dinner*

At this point the clock is headed toward 7:00 p.m., the sun’s dropping, people are relaxing, and dinner is starting to season the atmosphere with sweet and spicy smells.



When your guests are seated and dinner is served, the music needs to be mellow enough for dining and dialogue, but uptempo enough to keep the energy flowing. Kick it up a notch or two from your cocktail music mix. Big band swing is good here (Woody Herman or Duke Ellington), along with some Latin jazz (Chico O’Farrill or Tito Puente) or African percussion music (try Babatunde Olatunji). Whatever music you choose, spend some time reading

bios and notes online so you can play the good host and provide a few stories and basic information (see “Keeping the Conversation Flowing with Jazz Talk,” later in this chapter for more details).



Imagine good vibes around the table and think of '50s hard bop by drummer Art Blakey (and the Jazz Messengers), trumpeter Clifford Brown, pianist Horace Silver, and saxophonists Cannonball Adderley and Sonny Rollins. Toss in a J.J. Johnson/Kai Winding trombone duo for flavor, and simmer in some bluesy jazz organ by Jimmy McGriff, Richard “Groove” Holmes, or Jimmy Smith.

## *Upping the elegance during dessert*



Clear away those main course dishes, serve some espresso and/or liqueur, and lead into dessert with something a little fancier and upbeat. In my mind, dessert is the evening’s climactic moment, like finally seeing the aliens in a sci-fi film, or the end of the big chase scene in an action movie. You’ve been building to this point with food, music, and spirits. Now, as you bring out homemade cream puffs, gourmet ice cream, apple pie, or chocolate mousse, you want the music to accentuate this important flourish.

Any uptempo jazz is good. Mellow electric jazz from the 1970s may be a good fit (something by Weather Report or Miles Davis?), especially if your guests are also fans of rock ‘n’ roll. Remember, you don’t have to serve a mix of straight jazz — you can add pop, rock, folk, electronic, hip-hop, or any other music that fits your personalized dinner party playlist.

Some fiery Latin jazz by Machito, Chano Pozo, Tito Puente, or Pancho Sanchez heats up the mood. Big band music stimulates some fresh conversation: If you can, find a copy of the Duke Ellington band’s *Live at Fargo* (I bought it on vinyl in a used record store some years back; you may find a copy the same way or from an online rare records source). It’s an electrifying performance on a snowy eve; as a conversation piece, play one of Ellington’s duos with bassist Jimmy Blanton, fascinating for the interaction between the two musicians and for Blanton’s breakthroughs in improvisation. *Never No Lament: The Blanton Webster Band* (RCA) is a three-disc mother lode of golden music, including the famous Blanton/Ellington duet on “Pitter Patter Panther.”



Here are a few other specific cuts to consider, especially if you’re the type who may program the entire evening’s musical menu on your computer or mp3 player.

✓ *The Complete Decca Recordings*, by Count Basie’s band

- “Roseland Shuffle”
- “One O’Clock Jump”
- “Topsy”

✓ *Blowin' Up A Storm*, by Woody Herman

- “Apple Honey”
- “Bijou”
- “Caldonia”
- “Northwest Passage”

## *Ending your night on an electric note*



Now that you’ve made it to the end of dessert, it’s time to bust open your evening with the wildest jazz you’ve got. After all, if your friends aren’t ready to try it now, they probably never will be. Anyway, if they don’t like it, you can always change the music — or they may decide to say good night, and you can play music until you’re satisfied.

Riveting electric jazz (Mahavishnu Orchestra, 1980s Miles Davis) may reenergize the party. You can mix in some hip-hop to keep things flowing (I’m a big fan of Missy Elliott and Outkast). Improvised free jazz is the ultimate in wild energy, perfect for jolting your guests wide awake just before they make the drive home.



Check out these displays of jazz genius:

- ✓ Miles Davis’s *Jack Johnson* and *Get Up With It* (especially the eerie jolt of “Rated X”)
- ✓ Mahavishnu Orchestra’s *The Inner Mounting Flame* (starring guitarist John McLaughlin)
- ✓ Weather Report’s *I Sing The Body Electric* and *Heavy Weather* (with the late great Jaco Pastorius on electric bass)
- ✓ Tony Williams’ *Emergency*
- ✓ The Art Ensemble of Chicago or the World Saxophone Quartet (all of the many albums by these groups are worth a listen)

Hey, about now you should be getting a commission on all the CDs your guests buy after you get them hooked.

## Compiling cool playlists for your dinner party

Disc jockeys understand the impact of assembling sets of music by mood and transition. You can select pieces from various periods that fit your personal tastes or create an atmosphere for different parts of your evening. Playing one CD all the way through gives you the exact picture of where an artist was at a particular point in his career, and how that artist and his producer put the music in order to have an impact. Using a multi-CD changer and using the “random” feature is a great way to create unexpected transition. My changer has an uncanny knack for finding interesting combinations I never would have thought about.

If you want to get into creating playlists of your own, a computer with music software is an essential tool. This way, you can store thousands of songs from your CDs and from online music sources, catalog them any way you want, and rearrange them into playlists to suit any mood or occasion (like a dinner party). Here, I’ve included some exemplary playlists; many of the songs are available from various CDs or online sources. I leave it up to you to find the music. Whether you use them, these lists give you an idea of how playlists can sustain a mood or explore a style of jazz.

### Playlist 1: Dinner or dessert

- ✓ Duke Ellington, “Queen Suite”
- ✓ Duke Ellington/Johnny Hodges, “Passion Flower”
- ✓ Sarah Vaughan, “Lush Life”
- ✓ Ella Fitzgerald, “Daydream”
- ✓ Clifford Brown/Max Roach, “The Scene Is Clean”
- ✓ Charlie Parker, “Star Eyes”
- ✓ Ornette Coleman, “Science Fiction”
- ✓ John Coltrane, “Crescent”
- ✓ Art Ensemble of Chicago, “Fanfare for the Warriors”

### Playlist 2: Drinks or dinner

- ✓ Jack Teagarden, “I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues”
- ✓ King Pleasure, “I’m in the Mood For Love”
- ✓ Chet Baker, “Let’s Get Lost”
- ✓ Mel Tormé, “How High The Moon”
- ✓ Jimmy Rushing, “See See Rider”
- ✓ Nat King Cole, “Route 66”
- ✓ Joe Williams, “Cherry”
- ✓ Louis Jordan, “Knock Me A Kiss”
- ✓ Mose Allison, “The Seventh Son”

### Playlist 3: Great vocals

- ✓ Lil Hardin Armstrong, “Hi De Ho Man”
- ✓ Connie Boswell, “Me Minus You”
- ✓ Helen Forrest, “All the Things You Are”
- ✓ Anita O’Day, “Skylark”
- ✓ Dinah Washington, “Ain’t Misbehavin’”
- ✓ Billie Holiday, “Body and Soul”
- ✓ Sheila Jordan, “Am I Blue”
- ✓ Betty Carter, “My Favorite Things”
- ✓ Tierney Sutton, “Route 66”

## *Keeping the Conversation Flowing with Jazz Talk*

Music and decorations set the mood for your jazz party, but you can also take an active role in prompting and sustaining good conversation. Some of your guests may already know a lot about jazz, while others may be complete newbies. Armed with a few facts and anecdotes from jazz history, you can help make sure the conversation is entertaining, lively, and built on jazz. In the following sections, I explain how to dig up interesting stories to tell to your guests and provide you with some details about lesser-known musicians.

### *Finding nuggets of info to share with your guests*

Stories about players, odd factoids, unsung heroes, insider slang — you can store all sorts of items from books (such those in Appendix C) or online sources in your head and drop them into the conversation.



The Red Hot Jazz Archive ([www.redhotjazz.com](http://www.redhotjazz.com)) is a definitive online source of information about jazz before 1930. You may be amazed how many important players there were, how many great stories there are about those players and their music, and how much you can discover about who played with whom. This first-rate Web site compiled by jazz fanatics gives general history, as well as individual biographies and discographies (lists of recordings) for dozens of famous and not-so-famous players, ranging from Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton to Bunk Johnson, Freddie Keppard, and Clarence Williams. After an hour or two touring this Web site, you know enough to share a bit with your dinner guests.



One trick I often use at parties is to keep a laptop computer with wireless Internet connection at hand. That way, when the conversation raises questions, you can come up with intriguing (and accurate) answers within a few seconds.

### *Dishing about lesser-known musicians*

For every Louis Armstrong or Lester Young or Charlie Parker, there's a Bix Beiderbecke, Chu Berry, or Lucky Thompson who was a gifted unsung hero of his time. In fact, you can tell an alternate history of jazz using only unfamiliar favorites, and that history might be more compelling than the familiar version (see Part II for a quick overview). But then, I've always been a fan of the underdog, an advocate of artists who made a valiant effort but never achieved immortality. So, in the following sections, I present a few of those deserving musicians from jazz history.

### *New Orleans*

Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, and King Oliver are names most often associated with early jazz, which was born in New Orleans, but clarinetist Jimmie Noone, cornetist Freddie Keppard, and drummers Baby Dodds and Zutty Singleton were all in the thick of the action.

- ✔ Noone was a part of pre-recording-era bands such as Keppard's and the Young Olympia Band. His career stretched from New Orleans to 1920s Chicago, then into the 1930s and early 1940s. Pull selections (and great bio information) from *Jimmie Noone: His Best Recordings (1923–1940)* (Best of Jazz).
- ✔ Dodds provided rhythmic juice for Armstrong, Morton, and Oliver. His drumming is showcased on *Baby Dodds* (American Music).
- ✔ Singleton pioneered the use of brushes instead of drumsticks for a softer swishing sound. The CD *New Orleans Drums* has several cuts featuring Dodds and Singleton, but it's out of print and tough to find.

Check out Chapter 5 for more about this jazz era.

### *Chicago*

In Chicago there were two scenes: South Side and North Side, black and white. Players from both sides checked each other out and many of them played together.



Clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow's memoir *Really the Blues* is a fascinating account of his life inside the Windy City's jazz scene in the 1920s and 1930s as both a musician and pot provider to stars like Louis Armstrong. Mezzrow hung out with black and white musicians, although he idolized the black artists. His stories be fun to recount at your party. Mezzrow's book is rich with accounts of "muggles" (marijuana) and "vipers" (pothead musicians) and all-night jaunts to South Side clubs and jam sessions.

See Chapter 5 for more details about this period of jazz.

### *Big bands*

Bands led by Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Benny Goodman get the lion's share of attention, but there were dozens of other worthy bands. Drummer Chick Webb's were some of the hottest. Webb was a wonder to watch, a tiny hunchbacked man who leaned into his drum kit and made magic.

Charlie Barnet, Jimmy Dorsey, Erskine Hawkins, and Andy Kirk led important thirties big bands, and you can reach back to the 1920s to grab McKinney's Cotton Pickers. Barnet was a wealthy ladies' man who didn't have to work but became a killer tenor saxophonist and fronted top-notch bands that included Lena Horne, Barney Kessel, Dodo Marmarosa, and Clark Terry. His

band's big hit song was "Cherokee," and by some accounts, they were "the blackest white band of them all." In jazz, that's quite an honor. You can find bios and other stories on these guys at [www.redhotjazz.com](http://www.redhotjazz.com).

Head to Chapter 6 to find out more about the big band era.

### *Bebop*



Lucky Thompson is my favorite under-appreciated bebop hero. He was among the few saxophonists of his era to play soprano (along with tenor), and he was an awesome improviser on both ballads and uptempo tunes. He possessed Charlie Parker's speed and ingenuity, combined with lyrical, romantic phrasings and tone.

Trumpeter Howard McGhee was another major talent who is seldom mentioned. In mid-'40s Los Angeles, he was at the heart of a thriving club scene. There are pictures of McGhee with Miles Davis, where McGhee is the cool veteran and Davis his reverent disciple. McGhee's CD *Trumpet at Tempo* (Jazz Classics) should earn respect from your guests for your hipster knowledge of jazz.

I give you the full scoop on the bebop era in Chapter 7.

### *Players on unusual instruments*

Saxophones and trumpets are standard tools in jazz, but all sorts of other instruments have done duty over the years.

- ✔ **Accordion:** Take Leon Sash — the guy made a legitimate jazz instrument out of the accordion on his 1967 *I Remember Newport* album (Delmark); imagine "Pennies From Heaven" and "Our Love Is Here To Stay" channeled through Sash's bellows and keyboard.
- ✔ **Bagpipes:** Rufus Harley played the bagpipes, and legend has it that he abandoned his saxophone and took up the pipes after hearing them on television as part of President John F. Kennedy's funeral procession. Harley's recordings are tough to find, but you can hunt them down online. His CD *The Pied Piper of Jazz* (Label M) consists of recordings from the 1960s and proves that Harley is much more tasty than a plateful of haggis (a nice name for the Scottish pudding made from sheep's intestines).
- ✔ **Cello:** Cellist Tristan Honsinger creates a blend of music somewhere near the intersection of improvised jazz and classical music; blow a few minds wide open with his CDs: *Map of Moods* (FMP) and *Hearth* (FMP). *Hearth* is a collaborative effort with pianist Cecil Taylor and saxophonist Evan Parker.

- ✔ **Conch shells:** For seasoning, add Steve Turré on conch shells. Usually a trombonist, Turré occasionally blows the univalve mollusks associated with ancient Crete, transforming the instrument of goddesses into a medium for eery modern jazz. *Sanctified Shells* (Polygram) is Turré’s conch-ified tour de force.
- ✔ **French horn:** Dial in something from Julius Watkins, who has been called the “Charlie Parker of French Horn.” It’s not well known, but Watkins recorded with Kenny Clarke, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk. Try *Julius Watkins Sextet Vols. 1 and 2* (Blue Note), a reissue of two records Watkins made in the mid-1950s with crack musicians including Clarke and Art Blakey.

Check out Chapter 4 for more details on the traditional instruments used in jazz.

### *A few unsung female heroes*

Jazz’s legends are almost entirely male, but man, some strong women have held their own going back further than you may think.



Sprinkle a few of these ladies into the conversation to let your guests know you’re an equal-opportunity host, and slide a few of their CDs into your machine. Much of their music is readily available.

- ✔ **Clora Bryant:** Tell your friends that one of your favorite players is trumpeter Clora Bryant (but you may want to listen to her music first). She was a regular on Los Angeles’ Central Avenue scene in the ’40s and ’50s. She led her own groups and performed alongside heavies such as Buddy Collette and Charles Mingus. Clora traded solos with Dizzy Gillespie, Dexter Gordon, and Charlie Parker, which isn’t something you do unless you’ve got serious chops.  
  
Bryant’s *Gal With A Horn* album (Vsoop Records) was released in 1957, and it’s a great conversation piece, with full-blown versions of “Sweet Georgia Brown,” “Makin’ Whoopee,” and my favorite, “Man with a Horn.”
- ✔ **Dorothy Ashby:** You can bet your guests have never heard of Dorothy Ashby. Women in jazz are rare enough, but harps are almost unheard of. It’s ethereal to hear Ashby plucking jazz lines with the speed and nuance of a saxophonist or pianist, but on the harp. If this all sounds heavenly to you, get Ashby’s *Afro-Harping* (Verve) or *Hip Harp* (Prest).
- ✔ **Valaida Snow:** Valaida Snow’s bold trumpet earned her the nickname “Little Louis” (after Louis Armstrong) in the 1930s, when she played with greats like Count Basie, Fletcher Henderson, and Earl Hines. *Hot Snow: Queen of Trumpet and Song* (DRG) is an impressive collection of Snow’s trumpeting and vocals.

See Chapters 5, 6, and 10 for additional information on influential women in jazz.

## Pop quiz! A few bits of jazz trivia

Stump your guests and get them hooked on great tales of jazz by playing a few rounds of jazz trivia. And if one of them does come up with correct answers, then you've found a closet jazz fanatic you can invite back again some time for more discussion and debate on the great topics of jazz. Take the quiz first yourself, and then spring this pop quiz on your friends and see whether they earn a passing grade (answers given after all the questions):

1. Name the television program Charlie Parker was watching when he died.
2. What is Dizzy Gillespie's real name?
3. What's the make and model of saxophone played by John Coltrane?
4. Who is the jazz performer featured on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1954?
5. What is the jazz label founded by a Jewish refugee of Hitler-era Berlin, who first heard live jazz at an ice skating rink?
6. What jazz musician authored the book *Beneath the Underdog*?
7. Name the four jazz musicians born in 1899 (the same year aspirin was patented and the paper clip was invented by Englishman Robert Malcolm Taylor).
8. Name the great jazz guitarist who recorded with the Beach Boys, Liberace, Dean Martin, Elvis Presley, the Righteous Brothers, and Frank Sinatra.
9. What's the nickname of the first electric guitar?
10. Whose nickname was "Jug"?
11. Whose nickname was "Bean"?
12. Whose nickname was "Bags"?
13. Whose nickname was "Klook"?
14. What is the all-time bestselling jazz album?
15. Who was the first jazz musician to win the National Medal of Arts?

The answers:

1. Dorsey Brothers variety show
2. John Birks Gillespie
3. Selmer Mark VI
4. Dave Brubeck
5. Blue Note (Alfred Lion)
6. Charles Mingus
7. Paul Barbarin, Duke Ellington, Jean Goldkette, Mezz Mezzrow
8. Barney Kessel
9. The Frying Pan (1931)
10. Gene Ammons
11. Coleman Hawkins
12. Milt Jackson
13. Kenny Clarke
14. Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* (more than five million)
15. Dizzy Gillespie (1989)

## *Sending Your Guests Home with Fun Party Favors*



Send your friends into the night with an unconventional jazz party favor. For this sort of stuff, it's hard to beat online auction sites such as eBay. Check out these great party favors:

- ✓ **CDs:** One great choice? *Slim's Jam* (Drive Archive) is a highly entertaining CD featuring guitarist/vocalist/humorist Slim Gaillard jiving and jamming with Charlie Parker and other giants.
- ✓ **Movies:** *Stormy Weather* stars Cab Calloway, Lena Horne, Bill Robinson, and Fats Waller. It's short on story, long on great performances.
- ✓ **Magazines:** Dig up treasures like a 1968 magazine ad featuring Benny Goodman for Smirnoff vodka; a 1965 *Downbeat* magazine with Cecil Taylor on the cover; and a 1962 magazine ad with Gene Krupa for Zildjian cymbals.
- ✓ **Postcards:** A postcard signed by Billie Holiday, featuring a photo of Antoine's restaurant in New Orleans, is an excellent display piece to frame and put in your house.
- ✓ **Tote bags:** Jazz tote bags featuring the faces of Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and other stars are your dinner party equivalent of those coveted gift bags given to stars in Hollywood.
- ✓ **T-shirts:** On an online auction site, you can find clothing like a Thelonious Monk T-shirt and a Miles Davis pink baby-doll T-shirt.
- ✓ **Buttons:** Wear Satchmo all the time with Louis Armstrong pin-on buttons.
- ✓ **Unusual items:** Keep your eyes peeled for unique items such as a 1993 funeral handbill for Sun Ra and a set of Django Reinhardt guitar picks with his photo on them.

Now that the party is over, you can relax and regroup. I recommend that you play the James Brown CD, *20 All-Time Greatest Hits* (Polydor/PGD). Well, it doesn't really qualify as jazz, but you can have that party debris cleaned up in record time!



## Chapter 13

# Lovin' It Live: A Jazz Concert Survival Guide

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Checking on artist and tour information
  - ▶ Surveying different venues
  - ▶ Getting great seats
  - ▶ Minding your manners at a concert
  - ▶ Clubbing around the world
- 

**O**ne thought may haunt you as you get older: You have only so much time on earth, so you better make the most of it. If you're into music, this means you must spend your time as carefully as you spend your money. If you want the best that your time can buy, you should get out and hear as much live music as you can, and make sure that it's the best live music you can find.

The purpose of this chapter is to help you have a “perfect” jazz concert experience. Tickets aren't cheap these days, and when you spend the time and money to hear live jazz, you want to be sure you have a great experience. Many things can throw a wrench in your plans:

- ✔ Performers who aren't in peak form
- ✔ Poor sound systems
- ✔ Uncomfortable seating
- ✔ Audiences that talk too much (instead of listening)
- ✔ Lights that are too bright or that hit you right in the eyes

In this chapter, I tell you how to guarantee the best possible concert experience, from researching and choosing the performers you want to hear, to finding a good seat, behaving appropriately at the show, and figuring out which clubs in other cities may be worth a road trip.



Live music performed in a room is multidimensional in profound ways that I doubt can ever be captured by a recording. Sure, you could pop a DVD into your home theater system, but live music is unbeatable. The facial expressions of performers add emotional impact, and the techniques of the bands may amaze you.

## *Do Your Homework: Researching Different Artists*



So you want to hear some live jazz? Before you start filling your schedule with concerts, you have to dig around a little for some information. You may not know which artists are planning on visiting your area, or you may be strapped for cash (or time!) and need to limit the number of concerts you attend. And even if you already have a good idea which artists you want to hear when they come to town, you still need to do some homework. With a bit of research, you can find out

- ✓ Where your city falls on a performer's tour (later is usually better because they're in the groove)
- ✓ What their newest album sounds like
- ✓ Who's in the touring band (it's probably different than the one on the CD)
- ✓ Which older tunes are likely to be featured along with new material

In the following sections, you decide on shows to see by finding basic tour details and tracking down tour reviews.

### *Searching for basic information about musicians and tours*

Musicians, when they perform at your local club or concert hall, are frequently in the midst of a regional or national tour. Looking at several different resources, such as Web sites and newspapers, can help you find out which songs they're playing, who's playing with them, and whether they seem to be sounding good.

In the following sections, I give you helpful tips for discovering which musicians are coming to your area, finding the facts on different tours, and determining which shows are the ones you definitely want to see.



### *Using local resources to find out who's coming to town*

First thing's first: Make a list of concerts you may want to see. Then use a few local resources like those in the following list to discover which shows are on the local horizon:

- ✓ The best source is often your city's independent weekly paper — most larger cities have them — or daily newspaper. (Magazines aren't as good as newspapers because long lead times prevent them from getting detailed concert information.)
- ✓ Clubs and other concert venues have Web sites that include more extensive calendars than your local papers.
- ✓ Your city probably has either a local public radio station or a college radio station that announces jazz concerts.

With these sources, you may find out interesting information like the following:

- ✓ **Whether the performer is playing multiple concerts in your town:** Be aware that opening nights sometimes are hampered by technical glitches, or that the musicians may be tired (and uninspired) after a long day or night of traveling.
- ✓ **Whether the tour has a theme:** Singers, for instance, sometimes pay tribute to a favorite composer such as Cole Porter. Saxophonists or trumpeters may honor greats like Charlie Parker or Miles Davis — this can be great if you like that music, or disappointing if they don't do it justice.

### *Checking out a musician's Web site for tour details*

These days, most musicians have Web sites under their own names: [herbiehancock.com](http://herbiehancock.com), [wyntonmarsalis.com](http://wyntonmarsalis.com), [jasonmoran.com](http://jasonmoran.com). These sites are usually well maintained and include information on concerts and CDs, as well as news, photos, reviews, and even personal diaries. Here's a sampling of information you can find on musician Web sites:



- ✓ **The tour schedule:** It's usually current, but if the schedule lists a concert months in advance, the date(s) may change or be cancelled in the event of illness.
- ✓ **A sense of the artist's latest creative efforts:** Has he or she written and recorded a bunch of new music? Collaborated with other talented musicians or composers? Or is there a new CD compilation of old recordings?



Fans of many musicians keep Web sites of their own; these sites can be a great place to find reviews and commentary. Fans tell you exactly what they think, and they often have well-informed opinions. They know whether a musician is in peak form and whether his or her band is good. They also often post set lists of songs from recent concerts, so you can see exactly what's coming your way. You can find fan Web sites (and musician Web sites, for that matter) by entering a musician's name into your favorite search engine.

### *Getting the scoop on a musician's latest work*



A musician's career goes through ups and downs and in-betweens. Every year, every album, every tour comes from a different place. You want to know whether it's a good place, or at least a place you can relate to. Here's how to take a musician's creative temperature:

- ✔ **Get the musician's latest CD:** Read reviews on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [salon.com](http://salon.com), [www.allaboutjazz.com](http://www.allaboutjazz.com), [jazztimes.com](http://jazztimes.com), and other Web sites. Many performers go on tour when they have a new recording to promote. If you don't like the album, you may not like the concert.
- ✔ **See who's in the band:** Sometimes jazz musicians record with famous players and hit the road with their working bands. And sometimes, there's better chemistry with the working band. But there are also times when great players team up for a tour and create something new and exciting. You should be able to find out the members of a musician's touring band on the musician's Web site (see the previous section).
- ✔ **Figure out whether the musician is moving ahead or treading water:** For some musicians, every year is a new challenge that brings new compositions, collaborations, and evolutionary changes to their technique. For others, though, some years are spent performing earlier composition or classic jazz tunes. Articles and interviews in jazz magazines such as *Downbeat* and *Jazz Times* give you a detailed idea of what they're thinking and doing and whether it sounds good to you. See the next section for more details about reviews.

### *Reading reviews of a tour*



Reviewers and critics — some better than others — can give you an excellent idea of what to expect at a jazz concert. I rely on original writing style and writers who aren't afraid to say what they think when I read reviews and make my decisions about seeing particular shows. (Of course, reviews are subjective, and you have to decide whether you want to see a performer. Often your loyalty to a musician far outweighs any information you gather.)

Your sources for reviews range from respected magazines similar to *The New Yorker* (well, there's really no magazine like *The New Yorker*) to top newspapers such as *The New York Times* and writers for a variety of Web sites.



I spent four years reviewing live jazz for the San Diego edition of *The Los Angeles Times*. I became interested in writing about music during college, and my first hero among critics was the *San Francisco Chronicle's* Thomas Albright. He came to my critical review class at the University of California at Berkeley. Albright wore a floppy moustache and a Civil War coat. His reviews showed similar flair. He had a gift for capturing the electricity of great live music; his knowledge of jazz was deep; and he had an ear for the subtler nuances of a performance.



After you find your own gold standard among writers, you won't trust just any review. Here are some writers and publications that I trust when it comes to reporting and reviewing jazz:

- ✓ ***The New Yorker*:** Top jazz scribes Whitney Balliett and Francis Davis are among those who've made this magazine's jazz coverage highly respected. Although *The New Yorker* doesn't carry reviews or profiles in every issue, its club and concert listings are a treasure trove of what's new with jazz's leading players. Check out the magazine's Web site at [www.newyorker.com](http://www.newyorker.com).
- ✓ ***Downbeat*:** This magazine is the longtime Bible of jazz fans. I began reading *Downbeat* as a teenager and buying albums based on how many stars they received from the magazine's reviewers. Hunt down some back issues, and you may be amazed how many "scoops" the magazine provided from the beginning, singling out promising talents such as Gene Krupa and Benny Goodman before they became famous. Pioneering jazz writers such as Stanley Dance, Leonard Feather, and Helen Oakley helped *Downbeat* stake its claim. A subscription costs about \$30 a year. Or pick it up on most newsstands. *Downbeat's* Web site ([www.downbeatjazz.com](http://www.downbeatjazz.com)) doesn't offer as much information as ones hosted by some other jazz magazines.
- ✓ ***Jazz Times*:** This magazine, in recent years, has given *Downbeat* a run for its money, surpassing its predecessors in size and quality. *Jazz Times* features top writers such as Gary Giddins, Nat Hentoff, Bill Milkowsky, and Josef Woodard. A subscription runs about \$24 per year, or find it at most newsstands. *Jazz Times* also has a good Web site: [jazztimes.com](http://jazztimes.com).
- ✓ ***The New York Times*:** Jazz writer Ben Ratliff and the publication's broad, intelligent, forward-looking arts coverage both compel me to include *The Times* on my list. Many of jazz's best performers live in New York, so what

happens there often signals what's to come in the rest of the country. I have a Sunday-only subscription. If you don't want it every week, pick up an occasional copy from a major bookstore.

Ratliff's concert and CD reviews, always delivered with intelligence and humor, helps you decide which artists deserve your time and ticket money. The newspaper's web site ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)) gives you access to articles by Ratliff and others if you're a paid subscriber with a password.

- ✓ **City newspapers:** If a performer is headed for your town from somewhere else, you can check out reviews from earlier stops on the tour. Use a search engine to find newspapers in those cities; keep in mind that sometimes, you have to register for access (usually for free).
- ✓ **[allaboutjazz.com](http://allaboutjazz.com):** This Web site is one of the oldest and best jazz sites. It features a tremendous volume of CD and concert reviews that give you valuable information on the most recent efforts by jazz artists of all stripes. Currently, the content is free, which makes the site more accessible than sites that charge or require you to have a subscription to a related publication.
- ✓ **[villagevoice.com](http://villagevoice.com):** This site is the online extension of the subversive sixties weekly. Check out reviewers led by the brainy Francis Davis, whose words also appear in *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*.

## *A Room with a View (and Good Sound): Assessing Venues*

My rule of thumb is that music always takes priority over venue. When you can catch someone you love in only one venue, you have to sacrifice your ideals for reality. I've heard some great concerts in venues that by the light of day would probably be condemned by a building inspector.



If it comes down to two great concerts on the same night, I'd rather hear the one in the better venue. If you have a choice of hearing a performance in your hometown (San Diego, in my case) or a nearby bigger city (Los Angeles), you may consider making the trek (2 hours for me) if you discover that the venue is superior. In San Diego, for instance, I know many music fans who drive to Los Angeles to hear a performance at the spectacular new Disney Concert Hall designed by architect Frank Gehry.

In any case, it's doesn't hurt to find out a few details about a venue when you're preparing to see a show. In the following sections, I explain how to assess a venue's sound quality and clue you in on a few unpleasant elements to avoid.

## *Surveying sound quality*



The United States has some of the world's finest concert halls, and probably some of the worst. Assessing sound quality is an individual matter, so you have to evaluate for yourself the various halls and clubs in your region. All sorts of variables affect the sound, but the bottom line is what you hear from the audience. After you've attended several live performances, you know which places sound good. Obviously, you want to stick with shows at the best-sounding venues if possible, although there are times when a must-see musician is performing somewhere (say, a county fairground) where you have to settle for sub-par sound.



The center of a room usually offers the best sound. There's usually a sweet spot a few rows back from the stage, but not too far back. Occasionally, in a spacious hall with amplified sound, sitting in the back can be good. The sound from speakers may be more balanced there than it is if you're somewhere closer, where you're getting only part of the music.

However, if you sit too far back, especially in a large concert hall or spacious theater, you may be the victim of bouncing sounds that, when they reach the back, are out of whack. Also, if you sit too far off to one side, you risk imbalanced sound, especially if there's a sound system with left and right speakers.



Perhaps the venue hosting your favorite jazz musician isn't often used for live music, like a library or a community center. If you're paying for tickets, ask local music fans if they've heard a show there, or ask the concert promoter how the room is set up for seating and sound.

## *Steering clear of a few bad venue features*



Flaws that can ruin your live music experience are fairly easy to find. If a venue you've never been to before is presenting some jazz that you really want to hear, my advice is to take a chance. If your experience is ruined by loud talking, bad sound, or a poor performance, many places can refund your money or provide complimentary tickets to a future show. It never hurts to ask.

Also, if you find yourself in a bad seat (with an obstructed view, too much street noise, or a loud hum from an air conditioner), tell an usher; he may be able to move you somewhere better. I once got a sound guy to adjust the mix so those in the back could hear the guitar better.



Here are a few qualities you don't want in a club or concert hall:

- ✓ **Poor location for bar or food concessions:** Clinking glasses and ice, shouting people, and whirring blenders don't mix with live jazz. I also find it very distracting when food is served during a performance. To me, listening to jazz and eating dinner should be separate endeavors. If you want to eat while you listen, stay home and watch a DVD. Or, if you own the restaurant, serve food far from the stage.
- ✓ **Bad lighting:** A lighting designer once told me that the effects of the lighting should be apparent but not the lighting itself. You don't want bright lights shining down on you or breaking your lines of sight. Make sure that venues turn down the house lights during a performance. A well-lit stage and a darker audience enhance your experience so you can forget where you are for a while and float away with the music.
- ✓ **Uncomfortable seating:** After shelling out your hard-earned money for a concert, you want to be comfy while enjoying the show. Some places have one-size-fits-all seats that really only fit people who weigh about 150 pounds. Of course, the club owner or promoter wants room for as many paying patrons as possible, but if you're not driving a compact body, make sure you find a place with accommodating seats. If you're tall, look for an aisle seat where you can stretch your arms and legs.
- ✓ **Poor sight lines:** A lot of jazz clubs operate in converted spaces with columns, wall angles, and other quirks that make it difficult to see the stage. If you arrive at a place like this and you're lucky, the tables and chairs are moveable. If you can't see a thing, ask for the manager and request another seat.

You also run the risk of sitting behind a tall person whose head blocks the star saxophonist from your view. If you end up in this situation, ask your neighbor if he would mind trading seats with someone at his table, or in his row, if it helps more people gain a better view.

As newer clubs come on the scene, many of them accommodate guests with tiered seating that lets you see over the heads of people in front of you or eliminate poles and skewed views.

- ✓ **Inadequate or filthy restrooms:** The venue may have its act together but forget the minor details. Messy restrooms are worse for women than for men. You might want to scout the place in advance, or ask a friend who's visited before.

## Traveling back in time to the Keystone Korner

I started going to jazz clubs when I was 18 or 19. Back then, a driver's license doctored with a razor blade or a number clipped from a newspaper and lick-glued over your actual birth date would often get a teenager into a grownup club. That's how I began going to San Francisco's fabled Keystone Korner, where, by the time I graduated from college, I had heard Miles Davis, Dexter Gordon, Bobby Hutcherson, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Sam Rivers, and other legends before I even knew they were legends.

Keystone was so small that there were no bad seats in the house. Even in the back row, you

were only 50 feet from the stage, and the sound filled the room and spilled onto the sidewalk. Back then it was still kosher to smoke in clubs, and lots of people did, but somehow it wasn't offensive (maybe because I bummed a cigarette now and then myself). There was also no such thing as a bad view. Every seat had a clear shot at the stage. And I don't remember any noise from the bar, ice clanging into glasses, or people shouting for drinks. Maybe I've mythologized the place, but I remember Keystone Korner as the perfect jazz club.

## Have a Seat: Scoring Great Tickets Creatively

Most clubs sell tickets in advance. Sometimes you can reserve seats, but other times it's first come, first served. At clubs with open seating, you and your group can send a couple of people early to save seats for you.



Sometimes there is simply no way to get the good seats, at least not through conventional channels. At medium and large venues, many of the best tickets are commonly withheld for the band's friends and family, or for VIPs. That doesn't mean you can't get some of these tickets, though. I have used many strategies, and have often succeeded. Here are a few tactics to try:

- ✔ **Playing the media card:** If you can write and you like music, you may be able to review concerts for your community paper and gain free admission. Sometimes venues hold seats for reviewers.
- ✔ **Being proactive:** If a show is "sold out," call the venue's business office. It may have last-minute extra tickets or know where you can find some. Once I called the business office of a 1,000-seat outdoor concert venue the day before a show and asked whether any of the good seats that had been withheld were unclaimed. They were, and I got them for face value. Another time, I called the business office of a sports arena where the

rock band REM was playing, and asked whether anyone there had special tickets they weren't using. They sent me to an employee with front row center seats, and I ended up getting stared down by Michael Stipe.

- ✓ **Scalping tickets:** When a show is sold out, sometimes you can buy tickets from someone outside the venue. I have gone to "sold out" concerts and purchased tickets this way. If you show up about an hour before the show, the person with the tickets, even a scalper, is getting antsy and often sells tickets for face value. Bring cash. Don't be afraid to bargain. All he can say is no. (In some cities, selling tickets for more than face value is illegal. But in most cities, people buy and sell tickets outside venues all the time without any difficulty.)

Also, you can sometimes get tickets at a reasonable price from one of the "ticket services" (nice words for scalpers). On the day of the show, they are often caught holding more tickets than they can sell.

- ✓ **Searching the Internet:** Don't forget online sources. Check on eBay and [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org). A few months back, my daughter was visiting New York City and dying to attend a sold out Tori Amos show at the Hammerstein Ballroom. I bought two good seats on eBay, relisted one of them and sold it, and ended up with one great seat for a reasonable price.
- ✓ **Calling your local jazz radio station:** In most cities, these stations are small public or college stations. Sometimes they give away tickets on the air. Their phones aren't usually too busy, so you may even get a deejay on the line who gives you advice about concerts, venues, and tickets. She might even know someone who has extra tickets to sell.
- ✓ **Frequenting your local independent record stores:** These stores are stocked with knowledgeable clerks. Most stores have a jazz guru who can recommend CDs and shows and who may have an inside scoop on tickets.



Creativity is key! But sometimes, there's no substitute for the good old-fashioned way: Get there early or buy tickets weeks or months in advance, as soon as you hear about a show. If you're buying tickets on site, find out what time the box office opens, and get there an hour (or sometimes even *hours*) early.

## *Behave Yourself: A Concert Etiquette Primer*

As you get ready to go to a jazz show, your adrenaline starts pumping. It's gonna be great to hang with friends, sit down amid an anxious crowd, sense the anticipation when the performers walk out, and enjoy the great moment when they begin playing.

Throughout the course of a concert, you go through many emotions. So do the musicians. What should you do to be sure you get the most from the experience while showing the most respect for the players? I give you a few basic tips in the following sections.

## *Respond appropriately to the music*

You're in a small recital hall with comfortable seats set on tiers with first-rate sound and sight lines (for more info on the "perfect seat," see "A Room with a View [and Good Sound]: Assessing Venues" earlier in this chapter). But the audience tends to be a little too conservative for your liking because when the music gets hot, everyone sits in their seats like stone-cold marble statues. Now, if I were a musician (well, a good musician), I would find it tough to rise to the occasion. Many modern jazz players say that they're proud that you can hear jazz in concert halls once reserved for classical music. While your behavior there may be more formal than in a club, musicians still need your feedback.



So my first bit of advice is to respond to the music — out loud. Here are a few examples:

- ✓ If a saxophonist plays a twisty line that gives you goose bumps, shout out a word or two of encouragement.
- ✓ When the band gets grooving and the bass and drums lock into a solid groove, clap your hands or stomp your foot in time, or at least wiggle your head and shoulders.
- ✓ When a truly inspired performance comes to an end, be the first to get on your feet and whistle or yell or clap. See yourself as a catalyst for your section.



There are times when you should be quiet at a show too. If a solo pianist is playing a soft, spacious ballad, try not to make noise: no whispering, talking, cell phone ringing, seat squeaking — and especially no opening of candy, gum, peanuts, or anything else that comes in that mortifyingly loud plastic.

## *Check the rules before you snap photos*

Another question of etiquette is whether you can take photos at a concert. It's possible to sneak shots with a pocket digital camera, if you turn off the flash. But you get better photos if you call the club or concert hall first and find out if taking pictures is allowed. Most clubs and concert halls featuring well-known jazz players probably won't let you shoot. But smaller clubs may allow it.



If you're a serious photographer, write the artist's manager via the artist's Web site. If you can show good samples, and if you offer to provide copies of anything you get that's good, the manager may provide you the clearance to take photos. Who knows?



Offer to shoot a concert for your local paper. This tactic may finagle you a press pass. Don't expect payment, but you might get great shots of a famous player or two.

## *Approach musicians respectfully*

You may dream of meeting your musical hero or at least getting him to sign an album or photo. This, too, isn't impossible. In a small club, I've often watched fans tactfully approach the stage or the backstage exits after a show and get something signed. Some venues offer special opportunities to meet performers before or after a show, if you buy tickets for a series of concerts or make a donation to the facility.



Here are a few more tips to obtain that coveted autograph (or at least a word or a handshake):

- ✓ **Write a performer a fan letter.** As with photo requests (see the previous section), you can sometimes get a chance to meet your jazz idol. The more that you can make your case, the better.
  - Point to a certain album or song that changed your life.
  - Talk about how your son or daughter plays in the high school jazz band.
- ✓ **Join the group's fan club.** Many clubs have benefits that include autograph signings before or after a show, free merchandise, or early ticket sales. Check the performer's Web site for more information.
- ✓ **Meet a band member (not the leader) first.** Sometimes you can get to a member of the band more easily than its leader. If you strike up a conversation by the stage during intermission or after the show, or at the exit as you leave, you may be able to ask a band member to ask the "boss" to sign something.



Most jazz performers aren't media superstars (except maybe Wynton Marsalis), and they don't get mobbed. In fact, a lot of them (unfortunately) can walk around most any American city without being recognized, although some performers might draw a crowd in Paris or Tokyo. Most jazz musicians are grateful for loyal fans like you and express their gratitude through autographs or handshakes.

## Live and Global: Great Jazz Venues around the World

Big cities like New York and London have some of the best jazz venues, but smaller towns have good jazz as well. In fact, hundreds of American cities have some live jazz. In San Diego, about 20 minutes from the suburb where I live, Dizzy's is a small alcohol-free club in a downtown storefront that presents a mix of local and leading national players. If you come to San Diego, you find interesting music almost every night of the week at Dizzy's ([www.dizzyssandiego.com](http://www.dizzyssandiego.com)).



Whether you're bound for Boston, Chicago, London, Los Angeles, Portland, Tokyo, San Francisco, or another destination, finding a good jazz club gives your stay a focal point. Plan your trip with jazz in advance, and when you get there you won't have the last-minute thumb-the-guidebook blues.

Here are some of the best jazz venues in the country and around the world:

✓ **Baker's Keyboard Lounge:** Detroit, Michigan. Baker's Keyboard Lounge bills itself as the "world's oldest jazz club." It opened in 1934, and Dave Brubeck, Cab Calloway, Chick Corea, Gene Krupa, and Sonny Stitt are a few of the famous players who've performed there. In recent years, new owners have set about restoring it to its former glory. Head to [www.bakerskeyboardlounge.com](http://www.bakerskeyboardlounge.com) for its events calendar.

✓ **Birdland, The Iridium, and The Village Vanguard:** New York City, New York. You could spend a month hearing jazz in the Big Apple. Jazz history was made in these venues. Several live albums were recorded here, and their walls feature photos of dozens of legends. These clubs offer world-famous jazz musicians several nights a week. Many venues present artists for a week at a time. They often open a series mid-week and run through the weekend. Most jazz bands sound best after they've had a couple days to get into their groove.

If two shows play each night, try to catch the second one — the music is generally hotter at the late show. Visit the clubs' Web sites for touring info: [www.birdlandjazz.com](http://www.birdlandjazz.com), [www.iridiumjazzclub.com](http://www.iridiumjazzclub.com), and [www.villagevanguard.net](http://www.villagevanguard.net).



✓ **The Blue Note:** Various cities. When it comes to classy live jazz, the Blue Note name has a definite caché in the states (the record label is a separate business). If you're looking for a guaranteed night of great jazz, you can't go wrong with the Blue Note clubs in Milano, Italy, or Tokyo, Japan. Blue Notes are also located in Fukuoka, Nagoya, Osaka, and New York City. For more information on the Blue Note chain, visit [www.bluenote.net](http://www.bluenote.net).

- ✔ **Catalina Bar & Grill and the Jazz Bakery:** Los Angeles, California. Catalina Bar & Grill and the Jazz Bakery are two prime spots for listening to jazz. To the south of Los Angeles, the Orange County Performing Arts Center ([www.ocpac.org](http://www.ocpac.org)) presents first-rate jazz in both concert hall and clublike settings. Visit the following Web sites for the Los Angeles clubs: [www.catalinajazzclub.com](http://www.catalinajazzclub.com) and [www.jazzbakery.com](http://www.jazzbakery.com).
- ✔ **Dimitriou's Jazz Alley:** Seattle, Washington. In this northwestern city famous for its arts and culture, the Jazz Alley offers the best jazz. Since opening in 1979, the venue has moved and renovated several times and is now equipped with a spacious stage, theatrical lighting, a primo sound system, and even a recording studio. Visit [www.jazzalley.org](http://www.jazzalley.org) for more info.
- ✔ **The Jazz Kitchen:** Indianapolis, Indiana. Newly renovated with a large stage and great sound system, this place has fantastic food and features live jazz six nights a week. Check out [www.thejazzkitchen.com](http://www.thejazzkitchen.com) for additional info.
- ✔ **The Jazz Showcase:** Chicago, Illinois. The Jazz Showcase is one of the city's oldest clubs, opened in 1947. It offers a consistent menu of world-class jazz musicians like Benny Golson and Frank Morgan. Check out [www.jazzshowcase.com](http://www.jazzshowcase.com) for more information.
- ✔ **The Regattabar:** Boston, Massachusetts. Ron Carter, Kenny Garrett, Chris Potter, McCoy Tyner, and Kenny Werner were all featured on one calendar of upcoming shows. The 225-seat club at the sleek, contemporary Charles Hotel also hosts a summer jazz festival. Visit [www.regattabarjazz.com](http://www.regattabarjazz.com).
- ✔ **Ronnie Scott's:** London, England. Inspired by American beboppers like Bird and Diz (also known as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie), Ronnie Scott opened his club in a basement in 1959, and it later moved to its current location. Scott passed away in 1996, but his club ([www.ronniescotts.co.uk](http://www.ronniescotts.co.uk)) is world famous and continues to thrive.
- ✔ **Yoshi's:** Oakland, California. Custom built for jazz, Yoshi's is the most comfortable, beautiful, and great-sounding club I've been to. Charlie Haden, Charlie Hunter, Ahmad Jamal, and Mike Stern were all booked during a recent month. The adjacent Japanese restaurant includes a sushi bar. The club has won just about every suitable honor bestowed by area media, and it's ranked among *USA Today's* "10 Great Places for a Jazz Night Out." Visit the club's Web site: [www.yoshis.com](http://www.yoshis.com).

Check out Chapter 20 for additional information about different venues in great jazz cities.

## Chapter 14

# Traveling Jazz: Your Ticket to the Best Festivals

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Finding out about the Newport Jazz Festival
  - ▶ Trekking to America's finest jazz fests
  - ▶ Going global with festivals around the world
  - ▶ Reviving traditional jazz
  - ▶ Planning your trip
- 

**J**azz festivals give you a chance to feast on great music for several hours and even days — if you have the stamina. They offer a completely different experience from clubs and concert halls (which I cover in Chapter 13), but what you give up in intimacy and sound quality is made up for by the spectacle, camaraderie, and massive energy of these friendly occasions that are open to the skies and whatever weather they may bring.

No matter where you are in America or the rest of the world, chances are that a cool jazz festival is a short plane, train, or automobile ride away. There are dozens of them, ranging from famous international gatherings in Switzerland and the Netherlands to beloved American fests in Chicago, Detroit, New York, and other cities.

In this chapter, you look at a variety of jazz festivals in the United States and abroad. I also show you how to choose one that's best for you and give you a few tips on preparing for your trip.

## *Starting with the Newport Jazz Festival*

As a teen, George Wein was an aspiring jazz pianist who studied with legendary musician Teddy Wilson at Juilliard. But his business side won out, and he opened his Storyville jazz club in Boston in 1950. Four years later, prompted by upscale jazz buffs, he launched the Newport Jazz Festival in Rhode Island. Today this festival is regarded as the first of the big outdoor music festivals, as well as a place where many of jazz's key innovations went on public display for the first time.

From the start, Newport Jazz (now known as the JVC Jazz Festival at Newport) presented a phenomenal lineup inspired by Wein's goal of mixing New Orleans jazz with swing, bebop, and modern variations. (See Part II for a tour of different jazz styles.) The first year's program at the Newport Tennis Casino included Ella Fitzgerald, Erroll Garner, Dizzy Gillespie, Lee Konitz, Gerry Mulligan, Oscar Peterson, and Lennie Tristano, as well as a power-packed tribute to Count Basie featuring Buck Clayton, Vic Dickenson, Milt Hinton, Jo Jones, Teddy Wilson, and Lester Young.

Today, JVC Jazz Festivals take place in both Newport (August) and New York City (June). During the summer, satellite versions of the festival are held in several American cities.

- ✔ In Newport, a waterfront town of 26,000 situated on Aquidneck Island in Narragansett Bay, festival concerts take place during four days at the Newport Casino at the International Tennis Hall of Fame. The casino, designed in 1880 in the Shingle style by architects McKim Meade and White, is a grand piece of American architectural history.
- ✔ In New York City, festival concerts take place over the course of 12 days at Carnegie Hall, the Rose Theater, the Studio Museum of Harlem, and other venues. Just as Newport takes on the relaxed, breezy atmosphere of its setting, the New York festival moves to the rhythms of this major city, with its forest of high-rise buildings and its long tradition of innovative jazz. New York has the world's highest concentration of top-notch jazz musicians (and fans!), and that's reflected in this festival's ability to draw stellar talent and big audiences. After all, they don't have to travel far to perform. New jazz is often heard first in New York, and it's inspiring when "locals" like saxophonist Don Byron and guitarist/vocalist John Pizzarelli bring their latest music and bands here.

For more information, check out [www.festivalproductions.net/jvcjazz.htm](http://www.festivalproductions.net/jvcjazz.htm).

## *Touring Some American Festivals*

America has the best jazz of any country in the world. From coast to coast, numerous annual festivals give you a chance to experience a rich blend of international, national, and regional talent. In the following sections, you get the lowdown on some of the best jazz festivals in the United States.

### *Chicago Jazz Festival*

The Chicago Jazz Festival ([www.chicagojazzfestival.org](http://www.chicagojazzfestival.org)) is held each September in an exotic outdoor setting: urban Grand Park, with its views of the downtown high-rise skyline. The city's eclectic jazz history, from 1920s hot jazz to 1960s free jazz, is reflected in the four-day schedule. Members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), such as Joseph Jarman and Leroy Jenkins, come to perform their avant garde music, but there are also events such as 2005's "Homage to King Oliver."

### *Detroit International Jazz Festival*

Billed as "America's largest free jazz festival" (*free* as in ticket prices, not *free jazz*), this festival, held over Labor Day weekend in September, is an urban spectacle presented amid downtown high rises in Hart Plaza. Covering its core bases with performers like Dave Brubeck, T.S. Monk, and McCoy Tyner, the Detroit festival ([www.detroitjazzfest.com](http://www.detroitjazzfest.com)) also branches into blues and other related genres. Often, natives like saxophonist Charles McPherson, who grew up listening to jazz as well as the Motown soul that originated in Detroit, revisit their roots with performances here.

### *Earshot Jazz Festival, Seattle*

The Space Needle isn't Seattle's only attraction, especially for three weeks in late October and early November. This city presents a great jazz festival that includes a broader range of music than many, from blues and spoken word to the best freeform improvised jazz. Earshot ([www.earshot.org](http://www.earshot.org)) fills several venues and forces you to appreciate this sparkling clean and artistic city. Hundreds of performers take to the stage in venues all around town, from intimate clubs to the Seattle Art Museum and the Seattle Symphony's Nordstrom Recital Hall at Benaroya Hall, which is renowned for excellent sound. The festival takes full advantage of the rich arts and cultural scene, with jazz films at

the Northwest Film Forum and multimedia performances at Consolidated Works, a venue for collaborative arts.

## *Elkhart Jazz Festival, Indiana*

Indiana is America's school band capital and home to Selmer, the famed saxophone company. It stands to reason, then, that Elkhart is a hotbed of jazz. Elkhart's jazz fest ([www.elkhartjazzfestival.com](http://www.elkhartjazzfestival.com)), covering three days in June, is a jazz extravaganza occupying seven indoor and outdoor stages by the Elkhart River. It prides itself on placing you closer to the music than other fests. Several venues seat 200 to 300; they're small enough that there's not a bad seat in the house. Howard Alden, Shelly Berg, Kenny Davern, Ken Peplowski, and Bucky Piazzarelli are the kinds of players who turn up here.

## *Indy Jazz Fest, Indiana*

Each June, a couple of weeks after the Indianapolis 500, the city reasserts its artistic identity with the three-day Indy Jazz Festival ([www.indyjazzfest.net](http://www.indyjazzfest.net)). Broader than just jazz, the three-day event is held outdoors in Military Park downtown — a 14-acre park in the shape of a military badge, in honor of the Civil War military camp once based there. This festival is billed as “a family reunion,” and children under 14 get in free with an adult. Near the main stage, Neighborhood Row has booths manned by recreational and non-profit institutions with an emphasis on activities for kids. The musical lineup has ranged from jazz greats like trombonist Slide Hampton and trumpeter Christ Botti to blues guitarist Susan Tedeschi and pop singer Tony Bennett.

## *Monterey Jazz Festival, California*

Monterey claims the title “longest running jazz festival in the world” (due to the fact that the Newport Jazz Festival changed locations). The Monterey Jazz Festival ([www.montereyjazzfestival.org](http://www.montereyjazzfestival.org)) began in 1958 and has presented greats like Louis Armstrong, Art Farmer, Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, and Max Roach. A counterpoint to the urban vibe of Chicago and Detroit (covered earlier in this chapter), Monterey Jazz takes over the Monterey Fairgrounds for three days in September, as the crowd reaches 40,000 plus. Historically, Monterey has been to the West Coast what Newport Jazz was to the East Coast: the prestigious showplace for some of the region's best musicians to rub elbows with their international peers. Among the West Coasters who have given Monterey its California flavor over the years are Dave Brubeck, Charles Lloyd, Charles Mingus, and Gerry Mulligan.



For a taste of Monterey, get the box CD set *Monterey Jazz Festival: 40 Legendary Years* (Warner). Here, the Left Coast set shares disc space with Cannonball Adderley, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk. You can decide whether there's a difference between the sounds of the East and West coasts.

## *New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival*

Hurricane Katrina, in 2005, made many realize just how much the Big Easy's gumbo of authentic American people, architecture, and music is valued. The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival ([www.nojazzfest.com](http://www.nojazzfest.com)) is no different. Held over two weekends in late April and early May, the festival is a gumbo of musical flavors, mixing all sorts of jazz with blues, country, folk, rock, soul, blues, and regional specialties like brass bands, Terrence Simien, Buckwheat Zydeco, and various Cajun and Bayou music. The 2005 event even had a tribute to blues giant Howlin' Wolf, featuring living legend Hubert Sumlin. Despite some Katrina damage, the festival carried on in 2006 as usual at the New Orleans Fair Grounds.

## *Playboy Jazz Festival, Hollywood*

Hef's Playboy Mansion in Los Angeles has a magnetic pull for celebrities, and the Playboy festival ([www.festivalproductions.net](http://www.festivalproductions.net)) in June is no less glitzy an affair, with its star-spangled audience and famous host: comedian Bill Cosby. The lineup may range from bona fide jazzers like Dave Brubeck, Dave Holland, and Poncho Sanchez to Brazilian diva Daniela Mercury and gospel group the Blind Boys of Alabama. The festival also celebrates music such as gypsy, reggae, and salsa. The setting is superb: the Hollywood Bowl, an architectural monument with a bandshell designed by Lloyd Wright (Frank's son), remodeled in a not-quite-authentic form said to improve the sound. It's a beautiful place to hear music on a warm California night.

## *Portland Jazz Festival, Oregon*

Oregon's African-American history is rooted in the men and women who came here to build military ships during World War II. Since then, the city has supported a core of local players in a string of clubs. The Portland Jazz Festival ([www.pdxjazz.com](http://www.pdxjazz.com)) sprawls over ten days in February and is one of the best in the country, with most concerts held in downtown hotel ballrooms. The lineups are among the strongest anywhere. Maybe the lush forests and views of the Cascade Mountains call players like Dee Dee Bridgewater, Ravi Coltrane, Jim Hall, Nicholas Payton, and McCoy Tyner each year.

## *San Francisco Jazz Festival*

Unlike other festivals that bunch a ton of events into a few days, San Francisco spreads its festival ([www.sfjazz.org](http://www.sfjazz.org)) through several weeks in October and November. The jazz ranges from promising high schoolers to top professionals including experimental pioneers like Don Byron, Ornette Coleman, and the World Saxophone Quartet, along with authentic music from Africa and other international locales. There's always a strong contingent of famous locals, too, such as Bobby Hutcherson, Joshua Redman, and Pharoah Sanders — players who remind you that while the West Coast is best known for cool jazz, edgier stuff is here, too.

## *Telluride Jazz Celebration, Colorado*

Travel along winding mountain roads to this three-day indoor/outdoor bash held every August in this former mining town high in the San Juan Mountains, where the air is thinner and the mountain views are spectacular. At the Telluride Jazz Festival ([www.telluridejazz.com](http://www.telluridejazz.com)), listen to the likes of Ron Carter, Dave Holland, John Scofield, and Lizz Wright. You won't find a healthier-looking crowd anywhere. Many of these folks spend their spare time scaling peaks and fishing mountain creeks.

## *Foreign Affairs: Jazz Festing Abroad*

With the lineups and crowds at their festivals, you almost get the feeling that Europeans like jazz more than Americans. It's a fact that American musicians including Chet Baker, Sidney Bechet, Dexter Gordon, and Bud Powell became European expatriates because they felt more appreciated.

European jazz festivals offer the chance to experience first-rate jazz in colorful locales. Many of these events combine top American players with excellent natives, so the music sounds fresh — especially if the lyrics are in a foreign language. In the following sections, I take you on a global tour of some of the best international jazz fests.

## *Copenhagen Jazz Festival, Denmark*

Scandinavia's largest city hosts a fine jazz festival that begins the first Friday in July and runs for ten days. Established players such as Gary Burton, Chick

Corea, Hank Jones, and Brad Mehldau are mainstays, along with contemporary Scandinavians such as keyboard and synthesizer wiz Bugge Wesseltoft. The Copenhagen Jazz Festival ([festival.jazz.dk](http://festival.jazz.dk)) is a place where you hear many European languages as well as all sorts of English accents, brought together by the universal “language” that is jazz. It’s a great way to see the city because many concerts are free in urban parks and plazas.

## ***Guelph Jazz Festival, Canada***

This humble burg (its population is just over 100,000) at the junction of the Speed and Eramosa does jazz in a big way. Founded in 1994, the Guelph Jazz Festival ([www.guelphjazzfestival.com](http://www.guelphjazzfestival.com)) is held during five days in early September and leans toward experimental jazz and improvisational music by artists such as the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Mark Dresser, Joseph Jarman, Roscoe Mitchell, Pauline Oliveros, and Wadada Leo Smith. Sometimes the musicians collaborate with artists working in other media, such as visual art or dance. The lineup also includes musicians from around the world: Asia to Indonesia to Europe, as well as a lot of Canadian talent. In the tradition of New Orleans, the festival knows how to take jazz to the streets — its 40th anniversary tribute to the AACM consisted of a parade led by the 17-piece Fanfare Pourpour through the heart of Guelph.

## ***Guinness Jazz Festival, Cork, Ireland***

World-class beer, the rugged Atlantic coastline, and rich farmlands cut by river valleys — you couldn’t ask for a better setting than Ireland’s Guinness Jazz Festival ([www.corkjazzfestival.com](http://www.corkjazzfestival.com)), held during four days at the end of October. The event mixes American talents like Chick Corea and McCoy Tyner with rising Irish stars such as Dylan Rynhart and various Europeans.

## ***International Festival Musique Actuelle, Victoriaville, Canada***

Held in May in this city outside Montreal, this five-day festival ([www.fimav.qc.ca](http://www.fimav.qc.ca)) emphasizes cutting-edge improvised music. One year it tossed free jazz explorer Anthony Braxton together with the experimental Detroit electronic band Wolf Eyes. It also featured rock and feedback master Thurston Moore from the rock group Sonic Youth and a group called The Boredoms. If you like jazz that pushes boundaries, this fest is your zone.

## *Jazz Festival Willisau, Switzerland*

American musicians like Don Byron, Dave Liebman, and Joe Lovano join talented jazzers from throughout Europe for four days of live music in early September in this medieval town between Bern and Zurich. If you want convincing evidence that Europeans are no slouches when it comes to innovative jazz, go hear the Americans and Euros go head-to-head at this festival ([www.jazzwillisau.ch](http://www.jazzwillisau.ch)).

## *Malta Jazz Festival*

In the center of the Mediterranean, Malta provides a great summer escape to a festival held in the 16th-century capital city Valletta. The three-day Malta Jazz Festival ([www.maltajazzfest.com](http://www.maltajazzfest.com)), held in July, offers a lineup that has ranged from drummer Brian Blade to avant garde saxophonist and composer John Zorn to Argentine composer Dino Saluzzi, a master of the *bandoneon* (a small accordion especially popular in Latin America). While you listen to the music, look up from the harborfront to the castle, built in the 16th century by the Knights of St. John.

## *Moers International New Jazz Festival, Germany*

Players from around the world (representing 14 nations one year) join the best from the United States for an extended weekend of music making every May, in the small town of Moers, near Dusseldorf. As it's matured over 30 years, the Moers festival ([www.moers-festival.com](http://www.moers-festival.com)) has acquired an experimental atmosphere. Performances range from contemporary big bands to turntable masters to musicians from Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Nigeria, Senegal, Trinidad, and Yemen. Now *that's* international!

## *Montreux Jazz Festival, Switzerland*

Switzerland's stunning Lake Geneva in July sets the stage for the Montreux Jazz Festival — the granddaddy of the Euro fests.

One of the first jazz albums that grabbed my attention was Les McCann and Eddie Harris's 1969 *Swiss Movement*, especially the song that became their

signature: “Compared to What.” At the time, the festival — brainchild of Swiss jazz buff Claude Nobs — was a mere rookie and has since become world famous.

As in relationships, Europeans aren’t as cut-and-dried as Americans are with their musical categories. At Montreux’s “jazz” festival ([www.montreux-jazz.com](http://www.montreux-jazz.com)), for instance, the music ranges from Crosby, Stills & Nash and B.B. King to George Benson, Marcus Miller, and Oscar Peterson.

### ***North Sea Jazz Festival, Rotterdam, the Netherlands***

This three-day jazz party in July is known for the consistent high quality of its music. In 1976, the North Sea Jazz Festival ([www.northseajazz.nl](http://www.northseajazz.nl)) began with a boom; the lineup included Count Basie’s big band, Dizzy Gillespie, Sun Ra, Horace Silver, Cecil Taylor, and Randy Weston. It’s matured since then, featuring an international flock of musicians in jazz and related genres. In 2006, this festival moved to Rotterdam, a booming industrial town, from its longtime home in The Hague.

### ***Umbria Jazz Festival, Perugia, Italy***

The hilltop town of Perugia has addictive chocolate, the most amazing old buildings (and narrow streets), and, since 1973, one of Europe’s best jazz fests, spanning ten days in July. Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis played there in the early years, and the festival has sustained its reputation for booking the best American and European players. The Umbria Jazz Festival ([www.umbriajazz.com](http://www.umbriajazz.com)) offers the benefit of excellent jazz, spectacular old architecture, and a core of enthusiastic Italian jazz fans who mingle with tourists from around the world.

## ***Checking Out Traditional Jazz Festivals***

Old-school New Orleans jazz (see Chapter 5 for details), dominated by horns and moving to basic one-two-one-two marching rhythms, enjoyed a revival in the 1950s and remains extremely popular on an underground festival circuit today. (*Underground* doesn’t mean the traditional jazz movement is small, only that it flies mostly under the radar of American media.)

Festival circuit bands have names that reek of nostalgia: The Bearcats, Buck Creek, Cornet Chop Suey, Night Blooming Jazzmen, Royal Society Jazz Orchestra, Titanic Jazz Band, and the 101st Army Dixieland Band. For music largely invented by black musicians in the South, today's traditional jazz festivals are mostly inhabited by white musicians in the West. The music is mostly in the same vein, and many of the same bands show up at several festivals. Here are a few traditional fests to start you off:

- ✔ **Colorado River Jazz Festival, Blythe, California:** Blythe is a tiny town on the California-Nevada border that sizzles in summer and is one of the warmest spots in the country in February, when the Colorado River Jazz Festival ([home.earthlink.net/~blythejazzfest](http://home.earthlink.net/~blythejazzfest)) takes place over three days at the Colorado River Fair Grounds. The dry, flat, desert beauty of the place provides a beautiful backdrop for a mix of jazz by some of the groups named earlier, as well as distinctly West Coast bands like Alcatraz Angeles (named after the island in San Francisco Bay that was once home to a famous prison).
- ✔ **Dixieland Jazz by the Sea, San Clemente, California:** San Clemente is a coastal beach town midway between San Diego and Los Angeles that plays host to the Dixieland festival ([www.sanclementerotary.org/jazz](http://www.sanclementerotary.org/jazz)) for two days each May. Unlike other Southern California cities, San Clemente retains much of its original charm, with neighborhood restaurants and shops and small, reasonably affordable motels. The festival is held at the San Clemente Community Center, a cozy Spanish-style building typical of the area's regional architecture.
- ✔ **Dixieland-Monterey's Jazz Bash by the Bay, California:** Monterey has some of California's earliest history and one of the longest-running traditional jazz festivals. Dixieland-Monterey's Jazz Bash by the Bay ([www.dixieland-monterey.com](http://www.dixieland-monterey.com)) began in 1980 and emphasizes classic jazz, big bands, swing, and ragtime. The waterfront location is a draw not only for fans but also for top-drawer jazz acts that perform at the three-day festival in early March. You hear echoes of Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Jelly Roll Morton, and old New Orleans bands dominated by trumpets, trombones, tubas, banjos, and clarinets.
- ✔ **Sacramento Jazz Jubilee:** The largest of the traditional jazz festivals, the Jubilee ([www.sacjazz.com](http://www.sacjazz.com)) draws more than 100,000 rabid fans to California's capital city to hear 125 bands during four days over Memorial Day weekend. The fest emphasizes traditional jazz, but since the first event more than 30 years ago, it's expanded to include gospel, Latin, western swing, and zydeco.
- ✔ **San Diego Thanksgiving Dixieland Jazz Festival:** While the rest of the nation begins its autumn chill, San Diego often gets a hot desert wind known as a "Santa Ana" that takes temperatures into the summer range.

Jazz fans from colder climes escape for a five-day weekend of jazz that begins the Wednesday night before Thanksgiving. The Dixieland Jazz Festival ([www.dixielandjazzfestival.org/festival.htm](http://www.dixielandjazzfestival.org/festival.htm)) books bands from around the world alongside American groups. You haven't lived until you've heard a band like Paris Washboard (from France) belting out authentic American jazz.

## Planning a Trip to a Festival



You've read about a few of the best festivals, and hundreds more around the world feature all sorts of jazz. So how do you decide where to go?

- ✓ **Do some research.** A search engine like Google is your best friend. You can find reviews of many jazz festivals dating back several years. These reviews give you a good idea of the music and the shortcomings, such as uncomfortable venues and poor sound.
- ✓ **Consider cost.** Your choices range from a festival close to home to one requiring air travel, hotel rooms, ground transportation, and meals.
- ✓ **Choose a festival that has a lot of the music you like.** If you lean toward experimental jazz, don't go to a traditional jazz festival. And if you're purely into old-school jazz, you probably won't be satisfied by one of the more progressive festivals. Also, if you're a jazz purist, take a close look at what music is presented under the "jazz" banner. Many festivals feature some jazz alongside all sorts of other music.



Here are a few more tips for planning your great jazz getaway:

- ✓ **Start planning your jazz festival vacation at least six months in advance.** If you have a line on a good travel agent, he can help with details. If you're reasonably organized, though, you can do a lot of planning and booking (of flights, hotels, rental cars, and so on) online. Before you make travel plans, though, be sure to purchase or reserve your tickets. Many festivals sell out in advance.

In cities that host major festivals, the best hotels are likely to be booked well in advance. With a little research online, you can figure out whether you want to stay near the festival, or maybe in a quaint, less crowded location not far away.

- ✓ **Check the weather of the city you plan to visit.** Some places are dry as a bone, and others get torrential rains. Some have T-shirt weather, and others require warm jackets — especially at night in mountain locations.

- ✔ **Bring along your CDs for an autograph.** Aside from the usual items that a traveler needs, a jazz fan might bring CDs or photos by one of the featured artists and ask for an autograph. It's not tacky at all to ask, unless you go sell it later on eBay.
- ✔ **Bring your camera.** Make sure that you have plenty of film or a capacious memory card in your digital camera. (I prefer a pocket-size digital camera in hand for spontaneous shooting.) At a small-town fest, you can never tell when one of the musicians may materialize unexpectedly, giving you a shot at a candid photo. Keep in mind that cameras aren't allowed in many of the major jazz festivals, but smaller traditional jazz festivals usually let you snap pictures.

## Part IV

# I Like the Way You Play: The Jazz Musician

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



"That's the third time tonight that's happened. They start out playing jazz, but by the end, everyone's playing a polka. I blame the new guitarist from Milwaukee."

## *In this part . . .*

**Y**ou're listening to jazz and loving it now (I hope) . . . but you could be playing it too. Whether you're a 10-year-old who wants to bop or a gray panther with a yen to play like Ben (Webster, that is), in this part I tell you how to choose an instrument and a teacher, how to organize a band, and what you need to know before you take that band on the road. And if you want to take advantage of today's affordable recording equipment, I give you the lowdown on home studios.

## Chapter 15

# Feeding the Jazz Jones: Advice for Aspiring Players

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Introducing kids to music
  - ▶ Choosing an appropriate instrument
  - ▶ Finding and working with a great teacher
  - ▶ Studying music in college
- 

**A** love of jazz can be cultivated from childhood. Some experts even believe that exposing a child to music before birth jumpstarts the process. Children are capable of playing instruments at an early age, and the benefits of hands-on musical experiences are tremendous. Studies are showing that exposure to music helps students excel in science and math, and an early interest in music can blossom into a passion that adds richness to life.

While all sorts of music can be gratifying as either a profession or a hobby, jazz may be the most diverse, challenging, and consistently rewarding. It combines the discipline and complexity of classical music with the raw emotion of blues and gospel. Even children who can't walk yet smile and wave their arms and try to move to music when they hear it.

So how do you introduce your child to jazz? How do you help him choose an instrument and find a teacher who conveys a healthy balance of fun and discipline? What can you do if you (or your child) want to pursue music at the college level? In this chapter, I talk about ways to point young people toward a deep involvement with music.

## Sparking an Interest in Music

There's one easy way to tell whether children are ready for music lessons: If they ask, they're ready. If you're in tune with your children, you can tell when they're interested. You may notice them paying rapt attention to a musician in a park or on TV. Or maybe they drum their hands like crazy to the radio. Perhaps they invent melodies and lyrics. You also can use parent-teacher conferences at school to get a sense of their musical interest or ability.

Part of your job as a parent is to let your children experience music, musicians, and instruments. To figure out whether to invest in lessons, weigh your youngster's interest in music and playing an instrument with your inclinations as a parent and your child's personality and natural talents.



The famous "Suzuki Method" starts children on violin when they're three or four years old. But that's pretty young. Generally, by the age of six or seven, a child has developed the interest, physical skill, concentration, and cognitive ability needed to benefit from music instruction.



Before children are ready for lessons, steer them toward music every chance you get.

- ✔ Let your children hear and see live musicians.
  - Invite a friend over who plays an instrument and have him perform.
  - Go to a mall that has live music on weekends.
  - Visit a neighborhood park with a summer jazz series.
  - Sign children up for school field trips to the symphony, or take them to a performance yourself.
  - Attend church services as a great place for a no-pressure sample of music. Countless blues, country, and jazz performers, from Ella to Elvis, began their singing careers in church choirs.
- ✔ Be a role model.
  - Show your kids how to use the stereo, and set one up where they can use it often.
  - Encourage your children to look at your albums and play them.
  - Take family trips to record stores and buy a CD if they find one they like — within the limits of their weekly allowance, of course.

- Don't put your instruments away in a closet. Leave them where they're convenient for spur-of-the-moment jamming. Hang guitars on wall hooks and reinforce the idea that music is an integral part of daily life, not a separate pursuit that's only for special people.
- ✓ Give children inexpensive instruments as birthday and holiday gifts.
  - A plastic recorder is only \$10 or \$15. Many elementary schools include group recorder lessons as part of basic curriculum.
  - A wood block provides an economical introduction to drumming, and snare drums and African djembe drums cost less than \$100.



Although this book is about jazz, it's most important that children develop an interest in music, instead of a specific type of music. Regardless of which instrument you and your child choose (see the next section), it's a fact that children absorb music (like they discover languages) much faster and more naturally than adults. No right way exists, per se, to lead a child into music. The most important thing is to make music available, encourage it, and see how it evolves in a young, creative mind.

If you like, try the following ideas to aim children specifically toward jazz:



- ✓ Jazz instruments such as bass, drums, saxophone, and trumpet are tough for four- and five-year-olds, but you can play a lot of jazz CDs for them. Show them pictures of great jazz players like Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, and Duke Ellington, and tell a few stories about them.
- ✓ Some great books about jazz have been written especially for children. *Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra* by Andrea Davis Pinkney (Hyperion) is great for young readers, or to read to young children. So is *If I Only Had a Horn: Young Louis Armstrong* by Roxanne Orgill (Houghton Mifflin). Your local librarian or bookstore clerk can recommend other titles.



Some children are so passionate about music that all you have to do is guide them and help with details (and write the checks). Other kids need encouragement and aren't as self-directed. Music lessons can be worthwhile even for children who don't seem eager. After a little effort on their part and encouragement from you, many young musicians get the bug. If things don't work out, that's okay; some children simply aren't interested in playing an instrument. But after those early years are gone, you can't go back and wonder whether music should've been a bigger part of your kids' lives.

## Selecting the Right Instrument

Which instrument should your child play? If he's ready for lessons, hopefully he tells you, but other factors can come into play. In the following sections, I show you what to consider as you and your child decide on an instrument. (Check out Chapter 4 for more information on the instruments of jazz music.)

### Trying out instruments for size



One consideration is practical: Children need to start with an instrument that suits their age, size, and strength. They should be able to reach basic fingering positions on a neck or keyboard or keys on wind instruments such as flutes, saxophones, and trumpets. A full-size bass is too much for a 6- or 8-year-old, but a  $\frac{1}{4}$ - or  $\frac{1}{2}$ -size model should do the trick.

There's also a practical element of the instrument's own size and volume. If your child takes a bus to school every day, a smaller instrument is easier to carry. If you live in a modest apartment, condominium, or mobile home, a trumpet or electric guitar might prove to be too much for you or your neighbors.



If your child's school has a music program (no sure thing these days), a teacher may demonstrate instruments and let a child decide which one to play. If not, encourage music by attending concerts or visiting music stores.

### Surveying the pros and cons of specific instruments

What kind of music does your child want to play? Bases, drums, saxophones, and trumpets are prominent in jazz, but any instrument (and genre) is a good place to start. All roads can lead to jazz eventually. I give you the lowdown on the pros and cons of several instruments in the following sections.



If you have two children who are both learning instruments, think about getting them involved with different instruments. This tactic avoids sibling rivalry and gives each child her own territory to excel in.

#### Brass and wind instruments

Many children who gravitate toward wind instruments begin with the clarinet. It's less cumbersome to play and more portable than a saxophone. Keep in mind, though, that the clarinet requires a strong *embouchure* — musical

terminology for the set of lips and tongue that, along with breath, control the sound of a wind instrument. Beginning clarinetists can be frustrated by the challenge of getting a good sound.

Later, the same techniques used on a clarinet can be transferred to a saxophone. Saxophones are cool because they're the most common "stars" of a jazz band. Young extroverts tend to take to the saxophone.

Trumpets deliver big, gratifying sounds. Beginning bands play music that calls for two- and three-note trumpet parts.

### ***Strings***

Children as young as three can play downsized violins. Suzuki training is specifically designed for very young children to learn music by ear and master technique before they have the cognitive ability to read music. Violin is a great way to get into music through school bands and orchestras, but remember that violins aren't common in jazz.

Guitars and basses, on the other hand, are core instruments in jazz and great instruments for beginners. Guitars are easier for young, small hands to get a grip on; jazz basses don't have frets and their strings are huge compared with guitar strings. It's harder to get good sound from a bass. But both basses and guitars are available in children's models. A child can also start on guitar and switch to bass later.

### ***Drums***

Drums are easy to get sound from right away. Child-size drum sets are available and so are small hand-played drums from around the world. Because rhythms form the foundation of jazz (and pretty much all music), and because percussion is a satisfying outlet for youthful energy, drums are great instruments to start with. The downside to drums is that you can't play melodies. Children who already love humming and singing and fooling around on a piano may be happier with another instrument.

### ***Pianos***

Traditionally, American children begin their musical educations on piano. The great thing about piano is that it covers several octaves and combines several parts of a piece: bass lines, chords, melodies, and various rhythms. Because the keys are laid out in a row and easy to see, the piano is a good instrument for gaining a basic knowledge of musical theory: how notes, chords, and harmonies work.

Countless jazz composers and musicians began their musical training on piano. It's surprising how many pros who play other instruments still use a

piano to practice, teach, or compose. Pianists, though, can be lonely. If your young musician likes working independently, this instrument may be a natural choice. On the other hand, band instruments come together in a collaborative social environment that can be good for both loners and outgoing kids.

### *Large and unusual instruments*

Some less popular instruments give children some elbow room. If your child gets good, his talent and instrument can be more in demand. On one hand, your child might feel self-conscious with a harp or bassoon; on the other, she can feel special.



The tuba is surprisingly satisfying, standing out as the anchor of a piece's bottom end. In general, though, larger instruments including harps and trombones are best for children age 10 and older.

## *Deciding whether to rent or buy*



Should you rent or buy? It's better to rent at first. You know within a few weeks or months if music lessons agree with your child or whether you've chosen the right instrument. After you discover a basic level of interest and commitment, you can buy an instrument. Many music stores credit your rental fees toward a purchase.

Some instruments used in jazz can be expensive. Here are some estimates for beginners' equipment:

- ✓ Saxophones and trumpets: Under \$1,000
- ✓ Electric jazz guitar: Under \$1,000
- ✓ Acoustic bass: \$2,500 and up
- ✓ Drums: Under \$1,000
- ✓ Piano: Thousands of dollars

And don't forget about upgrades! In high school, many musicians want better instruments. Wind instruments such as clarinets, flutes, and saxophones become expensive. Some parents invest \$5,000 or more in an upgrade. But if a child stops playing, many high-quality instruments can be sold for 50 percent or more of their original price.

## *Making the Most of Lessons*

When a child starts music lessons, it's essential to find a teacher whose style suits the student. You also need to make sure that you provide support for your child's practice routine. I cover these topics in the following sections.



Don't put too much stock in those stories of gifted children who began music lessons at age 3 or 4. There are just as many success stories about musicians who found their calling in middle school or high school. Whatever you do, don't become a stage parent who puts too much pressure on your child, and don't satisfy shortcomings in your own childhood music experiences by living vicariously through your child.

## *Finding a terrific teacher*

In most communities, from small to large, there are many music teachers. Drive around your community and you may pass music stores and private homes with signs for music lessons. The Yellow Pages list music stores, music lessons, and music teachers. Newspaper classified ads offer more choices.



So how do you find a teacher who's right for your child? Heed the following advice to find the most reputable and worthy teachers in your area:

- ✓ **Rely heavily on word of mouth.** This tool is your best. Ask if your child has friends who're already taking lessons, and ask teachers for recommendations.
- ✓ **Call two or three music stores to find out whether they offer lessons.** Different stores offer lessons on different instruments. Ask how much the store charges for lessons, how long the lessons are, and what qualifications they require of their instructors.
- ✓ **Check your local high school and college to find a music teacher.** High school teachers look for experience and usually don't charge for lessons. They want experience, satisfaction, and credit for service work that can be listed on college applications.

College students usually charge for their services, but their rates are often lower than what you'd pay a full-time professional or music store instructor. Graduate students are particularly well qualified. Most of them have years of experience playing and teaching.



Choose two or three candidates and talk to each of them — bring your child along to see some interaction. Treat the meeting like an interview but a little less formal. Find out the following information:

- ✓ **Background in music:** Have they performed or recorded professionally? Do they have a degree in music? How long have they been teaching?
- ✓ **Philosophy of teaching music:** What do they do at the first few lessons? How much practice do they require of students? Many teachers hold periodic recitals featuring their students. Some have connections with youth bands and orchestras and encourage their protégés to participate. Public performances can be difficult for introverts, but they offer a chance to gain confidence and experience.

- ✓ **Evaluation of a student's progress:** Do they expect a new scale or piece to be learned each week? Do they ask a child to practice a certain number of hours each week and have a parent initial a time card? Does a child learn one new piece each month? And how do they reward success? Young players love it when a teacher sticks a little star on a sheet of music that's been mastered.
- ✓ **Rates:** Rates can range quite a bit. One teacher I know gives 30-minute lessons for \$20; another offers 1-hour lessons for \$50. Some teachers let you pay by the lesson; others ask that you pay for a month of lessons up front. Discounts may be available if you pay for several lessons at once.
- ✓ **Cancellation policies:** Some teachers have liberal policies and others make you pay for missed lessons. In fairness to teachers, they rely on having regular students to provide consistent income. It's bad etiquette to cancel constantly or change the schedule all the time.
- ✓ **Expectations for parents:** You need to know what the teacher expects from you. Suzuki instruction requires parental participation. Obviously, the older the child, the less parental supervision is necessary.



It's common for budding musicians to have several different private instructors between grade school and high school. By eighth or ninth grade, many kids tell you if they're bored with their teachers.

## *Keeping an eye on the practice routine*



When lessons begin, your role is to provide support. Aside from paying and providing transportation, you need to encourage more than criticize. When a child starts lessons, teachers don't usually want parents to be there. The presence of a parent is a big distraction from the basic learning process and the bond that should form between student and mentor.

It takes several lessons for most beginners to get basic sound from an instrument and several more to be able to play a piece or two. You hear by trial and error at first, but make sure to love those squeaks and squawks and botched notes as signs of effort. Young players won't get into jazz until they've mastered basic skills.

Music teachers believe it's a good idea to set aside a place in your home for practicing. This hallowed ground could be the garage, the family room, a bedroom, a den, and so on. Follow these points for consistent practice:

- ✓ **Playing in the same place each time builds consistency.** Get your aspiring player practicing and in the groove as a habit more than a chore.
- ✓ **Delete distractions.** Don't leave the television or stereo going in another room; unplug the phone, or turn off the cell phone.



✓ **Regularity is more important than the length of each practice session.**  
It's better to practice 20 or 30 minutes each day than an hour a couple times a week.

Without being too nosy, see whether your child's teacher provides a good practice routine. Assignments vary according to age, so younger students should be watching, imitating, and practicing. Musicians who are 5 or 6 years old don't have the language and abstract thinking skills of 10- or 12-year-olds, who can master more advanced methods of analyzing and playing written music.

Beginners need to know exactly what to do for each five or ten minutes of their practice sessions. The sessions should have enough flexibility that the child doesn't get bored. The routine needs to vary to keep young students interested. Because improvisation is a part of jazz, students often have a period of each lesson or practice session devoted to spontaneous invention.



Ask the music teacher to recommend CDs. Listening to these together can be a great way for you and your child to rally around music. It's great fun to figure out the ways in which rhythms, melodies, and harmonies fit together, and to distinguish improvised sections from those that are composed. You can talk about the moods and images each of you gets from a piece.



Many parents face the challenge of children who are bored of practicing or even refuse to do it. Younger, newer students require more flexibility here. Don't give up too soon. Sometimes you can work with your child and his teacher to develop a more satisfying practice plan. Try shorter sessions or different music. If a child consistently refuses to play and tells you that he can't stand lessons, after a few weeks you may decide to steer him toward art classes, competitive sports, or another outlet for energy and creativity.

## *Pursuing Music in College*

With more than 1,300 college and university music programs to choose from in the United States, you (or your high school senior) can spend a lot of time selecting a school with a strong music program. In the following sections, I discuss the different facets of a college education in music and give you a list of some great music schools in the U.S.

### *Receiving a well-rounded education*



A young musician's educational path depends on his goals. For those set on careers as performers, many college programs offer a performance emphasis. However, making a living as a performer is difficult. Some students wind up graduating to careers in completely different fields, and others pursue

jazz-related careers that don't involve performance, such as artist manager, arts administrator, author, concert promoter, critic, editor, educator, radio host, record producer, and talent scout (known as "artists and repertoire").

Many college students advance their musical educations on several fronts:

- ✓ Majoring in music or take several music classes while majoring in other subjects ranging from liberal arts to sciences and technology.
- ✓ Performing in department of music groups and ensembles, but they also have jazz groups of their own that play outside gigs.
- ✓ Taking private lessons with college professors and extra lessons with off-campus instructors to gain a variety of experience.

Some undergraduate programs let students pursue jazz within a broader context of music. For instance, the University of California, San Diego has two jazz ensembles and a variety of jazz classes so students can learn history and theory and gain performance experience. But there are also classes in music history dating back centuries, in critical thinking, in computer music, and in various other areas of music unrelated to jazz.

Even within a jazz program, an education can take many directions. Some students concentrate on performance, and others focus on composition. Some students aim for careers as professors and teachers, and others want jobs in music administration. Music degrees with an emphasis on jazz usually require non-jazz classes. Any good jazz program can produce a student with a solid knowledge of jazz history and performance, as well as some knowledge of other musical traditions. Boundaries between genres such as blues, classical, and jazz are breaking down, so it's healthy for students with a primary interest in jazz to study many other types of music and perform with players in many other styles. A lot of musicians love performing live jazz, but they also play bluegrass, blues, classical, and other music. The more styles you can play the more gigs you may get.



Although it's not often discussed, I think it's worthwhile for young musicians to consider adding a few business classes to their college educations. Some universities offer classes in the business side of music: managing public arts organizations, negotiating recording contracts, managing talent. No matter how gifted a musician is as a performer, knowledge of business is invaluable because everyone needs to earn a living, manage a career, and know about financial matters. In today's industry, more and more artists are going the independent route and distributing their music through Web sites and self-produced CDs, so it's valuable to have knowledge of business and finance.



Today's successful jazz performers often have multi-faceted careers, making contributions in other areas of music. While they maintain busy performance schedules, some write books and operas, and still others explore the leading edge of musical technology and computers. Most young musicians today

have grown up with a computer as a second “instrument” in their arsenal. The more a young artist knows about all aspects of music, the better.

## *Looking at top music schools*

Choosing a college or university is a subjective matter that takes into account many factors: a student’s personality, preferences, and career goals; the school’s programs; the school’s faculty; tuition fees; housing options; and even the weather. That said, the following sections cover a few music schools that have a reputation as excellent choices for aspiring jazz players.



Of course this is only a basic primer. You can find more detailed information in many books and Web sites, including individual college and university sites, as well as sites that give a broader view. Here are a few places to find information about college music programs:

- ✓ **The International Association for Jazz Education:** Promoting jazz education, the IAJE counts more than 8,000 educators and musicians from around the world as members. The IAJE presents clinics and conferences and hosts an annual meeting. It’s an excellent source of information related to jazz education. The group’s Web site ([www.iaje.org](http://www.iaje.org)) lists top college jazz programs around the world.
- ✓ **The National Association for Music Education:** Visit [menc.org](http://menc.org) for detailed descriptions of careers in music.
- ✓ ***The Student’s Guide to College Music Programs (Symphony)*:** This book lists many of America’s best music schools and provides information on financial aid and careers in music.
- ✓ ***U.S. News & World Report*:** The magazine publishes an annual “best colleges” issue, and some of the schools offer excellent music programs. Visit [usnews.com](http://usnews.com).

### ***Berklee College of Music***

Based in Boston, Massachusetts, Berklee offers a range of majors:

- ✓ Composition
- ✓ Contemporary writing and production
- ✓ Film scoring
- ✓ Jazz composition
- ✓ Music business/management
- ✓ Music education
- ✓ Music production and engineering

- ✓ Music synthesis
- ✓ Music therapy
- ✓ Performance
- ✓ Professional music
- ✓ Songwriting

As many as 85 percent of Berklee grads land a career in music. In many circles, a degree from Berklee is considered the gold standard. Compared with campuses of major universities that often enroll 20,000 or 30,000 students, Berklee is relatively small with a student body of just under 4,000.

Quincy Jones, Branford Marsalis, Dave Samuels, and Tierney Sutton are only a handful of Berklee graduates with prominent careers in jazz. In 2005 alone, Berklee alumni and faculty received a total of 23 Grammy nominations. For more information on the Berklee School of Music, visit [www.berklee.edu](http://www.berklee.edu).

### ***Indiana University (IU)***

This university in the heart of Bloomington, Indiana, combines composition, history, performance, theory, and other elements in its jazz degree program, which also includes small and large ensembles. The performance repertoire combines classic and modern jazz with experimental contemporary jazz.

David Baker, the chairman of the Department of Jazz Studies, is a highly regarded musician and educator and conducts the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. Alumni include bassists John Clayton and Robert Hurst, saxophonist Michael Brecker, and trumpeters Chris Botti and Randy Brecker. Visit IU's School of Music Web site at [www.music.indiana.edu](http://www.music.indiana.edu).

### ***Juilliard Institute for Jazz Studies***

New York is full of fine music schools, but Juilliard is legendary. The school offers a rare opportunity for aspiring jazz players in the form of a tuition-free two-year post-baccalaureate "Artists Diploma" for a small group of 18 or so who pass an audition. Juilliard also offers a four-year bachelor's degree in Jazz Studies. Check out Juilliard online at [www.juilliard.edu](http://www.juilliard.edu).

Juilliard's jazz program collaborates with the Jazz at Lincoln Center, where Wynton Marsalis serves as music director. Juilliard's faculty includes drummers Lewis Nash and Herlin Riley, pianist Kenny Barron, and Marsalis.

### ***New York University (NYU)***

New York, New York hosts this huge university, totaling its enrollment at about 50,000. NYU isn't cheap, but it's also not as expensive as big private universities. NYU is at the heart of America's jazz pulse, though, and offers

students access to great live jazz several nights a week, along with undergraduate and graduate programs in jazz.

The faculty is stocked with heavies like trombonist Robin Eubanks, trumpeter Brian Lynch, saxophonist Chris Potter, and guitarist John Scofield. For more information on NYU, visit [www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/music](http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/music).

### ***Oberlin Conservatory of Music***

Oberlin added jazz to its curriculum in 1972, but the school, based in Oberlin, Ohio, has been associated with music since the 1953 release of Dave Brubeck's *Jazz at Oberlin* album, recorded in Finney Chapel. The music program offers majors in jazz studies as well as composition, electronic and computer music, music history, music theory, performance, and other areas.

The faculty includes saxophonist Gary Bartz (who's played with Miles Davis and Art Blakey) and drummer Billy Hart (who's played with Herbie Hancock and Cecil Taylor). Visit Oberlin's Web site at [www.oberlin.edu/con](http://www.oberlin.edu/con).

### ***Rutgers University***

Centered in the Mason Gross School of the Arts, the undergraduate music degree program emphasizes jazz studies, music education, or performance and includes two ensembles and several small groups for student musicians. Instruction at this New Brunswick, New Jersey school is extremely personal, with one faculty member for every three to four students.

Jazz faculty members include pianist Stanley Cowell (who's performed with Oliver Nelson and Sonny Rollins), trumpeter William Fielder (who's played with Duke Ellington and Art Pepper), and drummer Victor Lewis (who's performed with Stan Getz and Dexter Gordon). For more info on Rutgers' music program, head to [www.masongross.rutgers.edu/music/music.html](http://www.masongross.rutgers.edu/music/music.html).

### ***University of North Texas (UNT)***

Located in Denton, Texas, UNT offers undergraduate jazz performance degrees for arrangers, instrumentalists, and vocalists. Seven jazz groups are open to students, along with other student jazz ensembles. UNT is also the home of a highly regarded marching band. For more information, visit [www.music.unt.edu/musiced/index.html](http://www.music.unt.edu/musiced/index.html).

### ***University of Oregon***

Eugene, Oregon (a town of 137,000), hosts a big-time jazz program, with an undergraduate degree that combines composition, arranging, history, and improvisation. The degree prepares young jazz players for careers in performance as well as education and other specialties. Log on to [music1.uoregon.edu](http://music1.uoregon.edu) and check out all that the university has to offer.

***University of Wisconsin-Whitewater***

Undergraduates create custom bachelor's degree programs built around individual interests with emphasis in history-theory and performance — performance is regarded as an essential element of any music degree.

Jazz has a solid reputation here; Guest artists in recent years have included Maynard Ferguson, Al Foster, and Dave Holland. Check out the Web site at [www.uww.edu/factsheets/run/factsheet.php?id=8](http://www.uww.edu/factsheets/run/factsheet.php?id=8).

## Chapter 16

# So You Wanna Be in a Band: Fitting into a Jazz Ensemble

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Fitting into an established band
  - ▶ Recruiting a group of your own
  - ▶ Drumming up some publicity to land gigs
  - ▶ Getting into the performance zone
  - ▶ Hitting the road, Jack
- 

You went out and bought an instrument and have taken lessons for months now. You're reading music, and you're good enough to play your way through a half dozen standards. You're ready to start making music with other musicians. After all, jazz is group music as much as solo music.

As any musician can tell you, working in a band presents some of life's major challenges (and rewards). From what I know, a band is pretty much like a family, with complementary and conflicting personalities, strengths and weaknesses, and regular fights ranging from debates to shout fests. Getting into a band is like getting into a relationship. If you don't go in with blinders on, your chances of success are much greater.



Being in a band is the most productive lesson a musician can have. It requires a whole new level of musicianship, but it also forces players to rise to the occasion with new levels of maturity and thoughtful communication. As life experiences go, this is one of the most uniquely rewarding, and it's never too late to begin.

In this chapter, you can explore what it's like to take those first steps toward band-dom. You may not think you're ready, but music teachers agree there's nothing like practicing with a band to speed your growth as a player.

## Joining an Established Group

If you don't see yourself as a bandleader, and you don't want the headaches that go with the job such as booking gigs and tracking finances, you can join an existing band, which, for first-time band members, is a great way to learn the ropes: how a band is run, how to schedule practices, what happens at practice, and how to collaborate with a group of musicians with different personalities and musical abilities.

There are bands that specialize in most styles and periods of jazz. Decide what kind of music you want to play and seek out like-minded players of similar ability — or who are slightly better than you are, so you can challenge yourself. Also look for musicians who have similar goals. If you're hardcore and want to become skilled at a bunch of tunes, perform several nights a week, and record a CD, then you don't want to hook up with a group that wants only to get together occasionally for a casual jam session.



Before you go looking for a band to join, you should probably know at least a dozen jazz standards. Any good teacher can help you select and master these songs (see Chapter 15 for advice on finding a great teacher).

Here are a few pointers on how to find a group that needs your talents:

- ✓ **Classified ads:** Independent weekly papers in most cities feature classified ads for musicians. Reading these ads can be a good way to latch on to a small group that's up and coming.
- ✓ **College campuses:** Some community colleges have big bands that are open to players of all ages; College music programs have small groups and ensembles that are open to students (sometimes even to non-music students).
- ✓ **Community groups:** Most towns have independent ensembles that may be run by enthusiastic individuals or community arts groups.
- ✓ **Jazz societies:** Many cities have societies or groups devoted to traditional jazz. These groups are great places to find out about local bands seeking musicians.



Keep in mind that you may have to audition for a band. An audition may require you to demonstrate basics such as scales and to join the band on a basic jazz tune or two. If you don't know any tunes yet, you probably aren't ready for a band, unless it's specifically a beginning band. If you meet the musical standard, consider these details before you join:

- ✔ Do the players argue and fail to reach mutually agreeable solutions?
- ✔ Do the players have musical harmony, or are they unable to find a groove or agree on who solos when and for how long?
- ✔ How often does the band practice and where?
- ✔ Who chooses the music?
- ✔ What's expected of you between practices in the way of learning new material?
- ✔ If the players are a working band, do they actually have a system in place for getting equipment and players to the gig on time and making sure everything is set up right?
- ✔ How much does the band charge per gig, and how is the money distributed (often, the leader makes more than the rest of the band)?

## *Building a Band from the Ground Up*

Forming and sustaining a band requires a whole new set of skills. Whether you're a teenager, a recent college graduate, or an older player getting your mojo going again, you need to evolve from a solo cat who worries only about the glitches, schedule, and talents of one to a manager, mentor, arranger, or shrink who suddenly has two, three, or four other egos to consider.



Real musicians don't form a band with the idea of fame, fortune, and recording contracts. They do it for other reasons: love of music, camaraderie, a structure for improving one's ability, the satisfaction of trying something new. Just making the effort to be in a band, practice together, and master a few songs brings tremendous satisfaction.

In the following sections, I explain how to find members for your band and tell you about the roles of the leader and the rest of the members. I also give you tips on playing well together and building a repertoire of great music.

### *Recruiting the members*



Before you start auditioning musicians, figure out how big you want your band to be and which instruments to feature (see the following list). Many first timers start out with a duo or trio. Because a pianist can cover bass, chords, and melodies, he can fit with most any instrument. In any lineup, you need someone who can cover these parts. Two horn players, for instance, can't

produce a full group sound because they specialize in melodies and not chords and bass notes. You can build a trio around bass, drums, and just about any other instrument: flute, guitar, saxophone, trumpet, vocal, or violin.

- ✔ **Guitarists:** A guitarist is capable (at least, in better hands than mine) of covering bass lines, chords, and melodies. A guitarist can go it alone or fit in a variety of contexts ranging from duos with pianists and vocalists, to trios with bass and drums, to a quartet that adds a piano, and larger ensembles up to big-band size.
- ✔ **Pianists:** These musicians have a versatility that's similar to guitarists. Going solo, they can play several parts at once but also mesh with other instruments, playing bass lines, chords, and melodies as needed, as well as improvising and providing support for other improvisers.
- ✔ **Trumpeters, saxophonists, trombonists, clarinetists, flutists, and vocalists:** These instrumentalists need a band to support them and fill out the textures around their single strands of melody.
- ✔ **Drummers and bassists:** These folks also need a band, and most bands need them because they form a solid foundation. Bassists plunk out steady rhythms and harmonize on melodies, while drummers take the lead role in sustaining the tempo and beat. A new band can face the challenge of staying on beat through the song, and a drummer provides the solid anchor for that challenge.



You can search an abundance of places for musicians:

- ✔ **Classified ads:** Find players looking for bands here, or post an ad looking for musicians.
- ✔ **Music stores:** Independent music stores sometimes have bulletin boards with band-related postings. Ask a clerk for ideas on finding musicians.
- ✔ **Jazz radio stations:** Jazz radio stations in most towns are small and community oriented. They usually know and promote local musicians. Place a call and you can probably find a deejay or station manager who can point you toward bands.
- ✔ **Local musicians' union:** In some towns, union headquarters are places where band members hang out, jam, and network. See if your town has an active, helpful union. (See the sidebar "Should you join the union?" later in this chapter for more about unions.)
- ✔ **Friends who have friends who want to play:** Every social setting, from the workplace to a holiday party, usually includes people who play music. Ask around until you find some musicians — if you're not big on parties, view them as creative opportunities that change your mind.



It's easier to recruit one member at a time. If you find one person with whom you can build rapport, the two of you can have an easier time adding a third or fourth together.



You can tell a lot about a person by talking over the phone. For starters, you need to know if you like a person or can establish a basic connection. Personalities and life experiences may be as important to your group's chemistry as musical experience and ability. When talking to prospective band members on the telephone, have the following list of questions at hand. You can screen out a lot of people on the phone without taking the time to meet them in person.

- ✓ Why do you want to be in a band?
- ✓ What kind of equipment do you have?
- ✓ How long have you been playing and how often do you play?
- ✓ What level do you consider yourself?
- ✓ What kind of performing experience do you have?
- ✓ What are your strengths as a player? Weaknesses?
- ✓ Where would we practice?
- ✓ Do you want to play gigs?
- ✓ Do you have any leads on gigs?
- ✓ What are a few of your favorite songs?
- ✓ Can you suggest other musicians to round out our group?



Also talk about practical matters such as time, money, and transportation. Someone may be a great player but won't work out if he can't attend regular practices due to time or distance factors. Also, you don't want a drummer with a tiny compact car who's counting on you for transportation or a guitarist who has a fine guitar but no amplifier. As long as you're making music for fun more than money, it shouldn't be difficult to agree on finances. But if you're playing for profit, figure out the details ahead of time. You don't want to explain the payout details outside a club at 2 a.m. after a gig.

If you like your candidate(s) (and the answers you get) after asking these questions, take the next steps to getting to know them:

**1. If you're just starting, you need to audition your first players.**

After you've recruited some musicians, you can invite new prospects to meet the play with the group.

**2. Count off a tune you both know and see what happens.**

If you and your prospect are ready to be in a band, you should be able to find at least one song to play together. Keep it simple — play the melody and then improvise a little. Find people who're both empathetic collaborators when you solo and who, if they know how to improvise, don't hog more than their share of solos.

### 3. Perform a gut check.

Generally it's good to trust your intuition. The music may be okay, but if there's something nagging you about your collaboration, the little voice in your head probably won't go away until you resolve the issue. People who talk too much, don't make eye contact, or seem unusually nervous may be geniuses, or they may simply be annoying or difficult.

Try out more than one partner. After you meet two or three, you have some grounds for comparison. If this is your first band, understanding how musical personalities mesh takes time. Some of us like to lie back and let someone else take the lead; others of us have strong personalities and need to surround ourselves with willing followers.



When you think you have the makings of a band, and before the first formal practice, develop a list of a half dozen or more songs you might play together. My own first tunes on guitar were “Blue Bossa” and “Autumn Leaves.” Your list of tunes can cover a range of moods and musical elements. You probably want a couple of melodic ballads, an uptempo tune or two, some blues (good for improvisation), and a couple wild cards — I love it when jazz players take a familiar pop or rock song and jazzify it, as singer Paul Anka did with Nirvana's “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” accompanied by a big band.

## *Understanding the role of a leader*

If you're the leader of the pack, you have certain responsibilities to your bandmates: booking dates, keeping the calendar, calling practices, and reminding people to come. Most likely, you're also your own P.R. agency (see “Publicizing Your Band and Landing Gigs” later in this chapter for details).

You don't want to rule like General Patton, but you don't need to be as irresponsible as Bart Simpson either. Find a happy medium and a leadership style that's somewhere in between and combines organization and discipline with a charm that makes you likable in spite of any flaws you may have.

A few folks are born leaders. It's tough to imagine Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, or Benny Goodman as anything except front men, but if you possess some basic musicianship and maturity, you can acquire leadership skills, too.



So what do your bandmates need from their fearless leader? Check out this list for starters:

- ✔ **Be a great communicator.** Set simple goals and communicate those clearly. Tell musicians exactly what you expect from them.
- ✔ **Lead by example.** Practice diligently, be on time, know your band's material better than anyone else, and treat everyone respectfully.
- ✔ **Take your band places they didn't think they could go.** Choose some songs that challenge them. Give a less assertive band member a chance to become the centerpiece of one tune. Push yourself and others in the group to compose original material. Check out "Stocking up on standard songs and wild cards" later in this chapter for more about selecting music to play.
- ✔ **Don't be a dictator.** More than any other musical genre, jazz is a collective effort. You need your bandmates as much as they need you, so remember the golden rule: Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- ✔ **Be forgiving.** Everyone makes mistakes. The first time someone shows up late, doesn't practice, or muffs a performance, let them know that you noticed, but that it's okay as long as they try to do better in the future.
- ✔ **Be open to new ideas.** Figure out how you think a song should sound, but be open to new ideas after you begin rehearsing and if the song isn't working out. It doesn't matter where a good idea comes from; it makes everyone look good.

## *Considering band members' contributions*

Whether you join or lead a band, being a part of one involves the same kinds of courtesies and responsibilities as when you start a new job or volunteer at a local library or school. Being part of a band requires a degree of maturity, and after a band agrees on shared goals, it's the job of every member to work toward the common good.



What does a band need from its members?

- ✔ Keep a regular practice schedule.
- ✔ Know the material.
- ✔ Own a good quality instrument and maintain it on a regular basis.
- ✔ Eat right, sleep right, and don't do things that are bad for your health.

- ✔ Show up for every practice and perform in tip-top shape.
- ✔ Suggest but don't argue to absurdity.
- ✔ Be a good public relations representative for the band.
- ✔ Don't gossip.

## *Playing well together*

Everyone brings an individual personality and approach to music. As a leader (or member), you need to be a bit of a shrink to figure out other people and how best to collaborate with them. In the following sections, I give you ways to make sure that everyone in the band can shine and provide a few handy hints on minding your manners as you play.

### *Ensuring that everyone can stand out*

Personalities translate into musical approaches. A cocky and confident musician may feel that she deserves plenty of solo spots. An introspective player, who may be just as good, won't assert his desire to step into the spotlight. A flamboyant person may overplay and get in the way, while a quieter person may be more in tune with the song and the rest of the band.



Here are a few suggestions of how to include each member in a special way in the band:

- ✔ **Select material that suits your players.** Don't give a Dizzy Gillespie tune with Rocky Mountain highs to a trumpeter who has trouble hitting high notes. Don't ask a vocalist who stumbles over lyrics to do "Twisted," a high-velocity song sung to perfection by fifties vocal group Lambert, Hendricks & Ross.
- ✔ **Have a least one tune where each band member can shine.** Most musicians have favorite tunes they've already mastered, but if you're the leader, your take on their talent helps you select material best suited to their musical and improvisational strengths.
- ✔ **Choose compositions that feature highlights for everyone.** Select uptempo driving numbers to showcase drummers, ballads for horns and vocalists, and songs with a strong beat for bassists.
- ✔ **Go against the grain.** Give your bassist the lead melody line, and let your horns carry the rhythms. (See "Stocking up on standard songs and wild cards" later in this chapter for more about material.)
- ✔ **Mix it up:** Play sets of different-sounding songs that lend themselves to individual solos. Mix it up with fast tempos, slow tempos, Latin tunes, atonal tunes, Broadway hits, blues, and famous bebop numbers.



Also remember that improvisation is a vital element of jazz, and you need to find the right ways to showcase your group's improvisational talent. To many players, the best songs for improvisation are those with simple chord changes and straightforward, beautiful melodies. The less that's written down on paper, the more room for soloist creation.



### *Following some basic playing etiquette*

Jazz musicians generally don't like rules, but if you're playing in a band or going to jam sessions here are some basic guidelines that keeps you in good with your peers.

- ✔ **Keep your solos short and sweet so others get their time too.** A solo should add something to the tune and complement the group effort. A soloist should listen closely to the other musicians, and there should be give and take — not just take.
- ✔ **Figure out the rotation for solos and stick to it.** Often the bandleader takes the last solo. Sometimes a natural order exists: Someone is good at starting the rotation with a bold statement, and someone else is good at bringing things back toward the song and its melody.
- ✔ **Drummers and bassists get fewer solos.** I don't know about you, but if there's one thing that usually irritates me, it's an endless drum solo. There are exceptions, but most jazz bands give most of the solo time to trumpets, saxophones, and other traditional lead instruments.
- ✔ **Music is like good conversation, so don't butt in on another soloist.** Well, there's another thing that irritates me — it's when one musician plays too much while another is improvising. When someone solos, the job of the other instrumentalists is to support him, not compete — unless it's the kind of song where a couple of players, say, a trumpeter and saxophonist, are trading short solos in a sort of duel.
- ✔ **Don't play over a vocalist.** When a singer is singing the words to a song, be like wallpaper, stay in the background. The audience wants to hear the lyrics and melody.
- ✔ **Know the power of silence — what you don't play is as important as what you do play.** My favorite players are those who add just the right notes. It's easy, especially for budding musicians, to play too much in their desire to demonstrate their chops.
- ✔ **Don't play if you don't know the song.** Obviously, this tip applies to public performances and jam sessions, not practices. It's possible to fake it in the background on some tunes, but you shouldn't jump in on a solo if you don't know the chords and melody.

- ✔ **Focus on fitting with the band, not standing out as a great genius.** Unless you're the star, it's much more important to be a partner with your bandmates than to show off. No one likes a show-off — especially one whose ego is bigger than his ability.
- ✔ **Work out complementary melody parts so you aren't all playing the exact same line as other horns in the band.** The coolest thing about a band's version of a jazz standard is the original take on it, including ways that one instrument or section can carry a melody while another plays another line in harmony.
- ✔ **Don't diss a fellow player on stage, even if his solo stinks.** Don't curse or say something mean, and keep a pleasant expression on your face; the audience can tell what you're feeling, and it's not pleasant to watch a band in public conflict.
- ✔ **Play in tune.** Buy the right tune-up equipment and know how to use it. Most bands tune to one instrument, such as the piano. Before you ever join a band, you should be confident in your ability to tune up quickly and accurately. The first time I went to a jam session, it took me ten agonizing minutes to tune my guitar because I was so nervous.
- ✔ **Serve the music, not yourself.** In addition to being considerate of your bandmates, be respectful of the tune. You choose songs because they're thoughtfully composed. Comprehend the tune thoroughly, and when you play it, imagine the composer and his times and earlier recordings as you try to deliver a version worthy of the song and its history.

## *Stocking up on standard songs and wild cards*

How many songs does your band need to have in its repertoire before it can play a gig? I asked a musician I know and he gave me the obvious answer: enough tunes to fill the length of the gig. If you're going to an hour-long set, you probably need eight to ten tunes, depending on the length of improvisations. The type of venue and audience tells you how much to solo and how much to stick with a song's written chords and melody.

Bands often play two sets in an evening, and if the audience remains largely the same, you don't want to repeat anything. So 15 to 20 tunes is an ideal target. Working jazzmen — those who are in ongoing bands, substitute in other bands, and participate in jam sessions — know dozens of tunes.



When you have basic mastery of an instrument, the first thing any jazz teacher tells you is to start learning standards. Get your hands on a standard song book like *The Real Book* (highly regarded among players as being concise and accurate), and start working your way through it beginning with simpler songs. Most standards have been recorded by dozens of famous jazz players, so when you're learning these songs, you can use your favorite version to get ideas about phrasing, tempo, and dynamics. (Dedicated musicians figure out how to transcribe music themselves. It's the best way to ensure accuracy, but most people rely on existing music books and the guidance of more experienced players.)



After you and your band know a few tunes, the next batch comes easier. A complete list of standards (including show tunes and jazz compositions) is beyond our scope here, but here are several that are beautiful, often played, and frequently requested.

- ✓ *All Blues* (Miles Davis)
- ✓ *Autumn Leaves* (Johnny Mercer)
- ✓ *Blue Bossa* (Kenny Dorham)
- ✓ *Blue in Green* (Miles Davis)
- ✓ *Body and Soul* (Johnny Green)
- ✓ *Cherokee* (Ray Noble)
- ✓ *Desafinado* (Antonio Carlos Jobim)
- ✓ *Dolphin Dance* (Herbie Hancock)
- ✓ *Equinox* (John Coltrane)
- ✓ *Fall* (Wayne Shorter)
- ✓ *Footprints* (Wayne Shorter)
- ✓ *Freddie Freeloader* (Miles Davis)
- ✓ *Girl from Ipanema* (Antonio Carlos Jobim)
- ✓ *Goodbye Porkpie Hat* (Charles Mingus)
- ✓ *Green Dolphin Street* (Kaper/Washington)
- ✓ *Groovin' High* (Dizzy Gillespie)
- ✓ *How High the Moon* (Morgan Lewis)
- ✓ *I Can't Get Started* (Vernon Duke)
- ✓ *In a Sentimental Mood* (Duke Ellington)
- ✓ *I Should Care* (Cahn Stordahl Weston)

- ✓ *Isn't It Romantic* (Rodgers and Hart)
- ✓ *Lush Life* (Billy Strayhorn)
- ✓ *Maiden Voyage* (Herbie Hancock)
- ✓ *Misty* (Erroll Garner)
- ✓ *Mood Indigo* (Duke Ellington)
- ✓ *My Favorite Things* (Richard Rodgers)
- ✓ *My Funny Valentine* (Rodgers and Hart)
- ✓ *Nica's Dream* (Horace Silver)
- ✓ *Night and Day* (Cole Porter)
- ✓ *Ornithology* (Charlie Parker)
- ✓ *Prelude To A Kiss* (Duke Ellington)
- ✓ *'Round Midnight* (Thelonious Monk)
- ✓ *Satin Doll* (Duke Ellington)
- ✓ *Sidewinder* (Lee Morgan)
- ✓ *Sophisticated Lady* (Duke Ellington)
- ✓ *So What* (Miles Davis)
- ✓ *Stella by Starlight* (Victor Young)
- ✓ *Stolen Moments* (Oliver Nelson)
- ✓ *Straight No Chaser* (Thelonious Monk)
- ✓ *Take Five* (Paul Desmond)
- ✓ *They Can't Take That Away from Me* (George Gershwin)
- ✓ *Well You Needn't* (Thelonious Monk)
- ✓ *What Is This Thing Called Love* (Cole Porter)

If you and your band can master even half these tunes, you should be able to play just about any gig. Throw in a few songs that reflect your own personal quirks and you're on your way. You can take just about any pop or rock tune, for instance, and jazz it up. Guitarist Brian Setzer has worked out a big band arrangement of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, the famous holiday season ballet. All sorts of Beatles tunes have been adapted by jazz musicians. There are also songs that come in handy for special occasions, such as "Happy Birthday," "Auld Lang Syne," and "The Wedding March" (Wagner).

A handful of jazzified pop hits may round out your set. Your repertoire could range from Beck and Green Day to James Brown, Michael Jackson, Rick

James, Gwen Stefani, and Stevie Wonder. The more I think about it, the more I can imagine what a wild time you would have with your versions of funk and soul tunes. Get those horns swinging in unison!

## *Publicizing Your Band and Landing Gigs*

A lot of folks want to get gigs, make CDs, and grow an ever greater following for their music. Very few of them reach their goals. Musicians tend to focus on their music, and it's rare to find one who has an equivalent commitment to marketing himself and managing his career. If you really want to succeed in the music business, then you need to work as hard on marketing yourself as you do on your music. In this high-tech age, there are more ways than ever to put yourself out there, as I show you in the following sections.

### *Harnessing the power of the Internet*



Publicity isn't difficult, but it's time consuming. Musicians who sustain careers have their act together communications-wise. And what faster, easier way to communicate these days than via the World Wide Web? Here are some ideas and examples (see Chapter 17 for more about using the Internet):

- ✔ One guitarist I know has, over the years, compiled an e-mail list of about 3,000 names. Every week he sends a personal newsletter full of humor and anecdotes, as well as upcoming dates and news about his career. If only 20 or 30 of these people turn up at each performance, he has a solid core audience.

Names from your list come from several sources: sign-ups on your Web site (the address should be listed on business cards, tickets, fliers, and CDs), sign-ups at gigs, referrals from friends, and names (and e-mail addresses) that you acquire in every social situation. Every situation, including meetings at work and casual dinners with friends, presents an opportunity to talk about your music.

Any e-mail program is capable of keeping your mailing list, but some programs let you enter more data (such as multiple phone numbers) and sort your list by zip code, length of time on your list, last CD purchased from your Web site, and so on.

- ✔ Another musician I know is religious about getting her performances listed in newspaper calendars. It's surprisingly easy with the Internet. Almost every paper has a Web site where you can submit event listings, and these lists amount to some of the most effective free publicity you can get.

✓ Most every band has a Web site now, and if you're the leader, it's your job to put one up or get someone to do it for you. It's not expensive to register a domain name like [dirksdirtyband.com](http://dirksdirtyband.com), and it's also affordable to get space on a server where you can park your site. Designing a basic site is fairly simple. You don't have to learn programming code; the Web software available writes the code for you. All you have to do is design.

If you don't have the time or interest, I guarantee there's a 16-year-old in your neighborhood who can create something simple in exchange for a few CDs, a few bucks, or a credit and e-mail address as your Web designer that helps him land more of his own Web designing gigs.

There are many ways to publicize your Web site:

- Ask writers to include the address at the bottom of articles about your band.
- Put the address on bumper stickers, business cards, CDs, fliers, and T-shirts.
- Put your band on Web sites such as [www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com) and include your Web address.
- Ask friends and fellow musicians to include links to your Web site on their Web sites or [myspace.com](http://myspace.com) pages ([myspace.com](http://myspace.com) is a huge online community where musicians can put their music out to a mass audience for free).

## *Smiling for the camera*



A good publicity shot is priceless in terms of the visibility it earns your group. Many musicians don't have photos at all, others have bad ones. For general purposes you want a simple, clear black-and-white shot. A photo of one musician with an instrument is preferable to a shot of an entire group; a tight shot of band members together is better than a distant shot that shows the band and a stage in front of an audience. Many publications run your photo very small, and the more distant the shot, the smaller you and your group look in a tiny reproduction of the photo. Don't use one that's too silly, or cluttered with stuff like furniture, buildings, or cars. At the size many photos are reproduced, a simple image looks much more dramatic.

With modern technology and more and more affordable digital cameras, it's fast and easy to take reasonably good publicity shots on your own. Have someone in your band take the picture or turn to a friend, an amateur photographer, or a photography student at the local college who can take some pictures as a favor, for the experience, or for a nominal fee.



Use your imagination when taking photos for your group. Instead of having someone shoot your photo straight on with a standard lens, try for unusual angles with a wide angle lens. Interesting backgrounds can also hold attention. For instance, instead of shooting against a white wall or black curtain, try a rough concrete surface, corrugated metal, or horizontal blinds.

Digital photography makes it easy to get photos out to the world along with written information. Use photos on Web page and promotional fliers. Order a few dozen 8" × 10" *glossies* (glossy prints) so you can submit them to newspapers and Web sites along with written information. Get a few hundred small (say, 3" × 5") glossy cards printed with a photo of the band and contact information. Small printing shops print these things all the time, and they aren't expensive.

## *Playing for free*

An economical way to put your music out there is to play some gigs on a volunteer basis. It takes only one chance encounter with the right person for you to get noticed. Success in the arts is like a chemical reaction: After the number of collisions reaches critical mass, something is bound to happen.

At the radio station where I hosted a program for a few years, there were two kinds of musicians: those who felt that performing on our program was work that they should be paid for and those who viewed exposure to thousands of listeners as valuable free advertising. Many times, musicians who performed on the program would tell us later that they couldn't believe how many people heard them and visited their Web site or bought their CD or booked them to perform.

Producers who book these shows are extremely busy and receive stacks of pitches in the mail every day. Send them a sample of your music and no more than a page about your band and upcoming gigs — and an offer to perform on short notice if they have a sudden opening.

Also, many local television stations have morning shows that feature local musicians. Call the station and explain that you need to talk to whoever books the guests. If you get that person on the line, tell them in less than 30 seconds the name of your band, your type of music, and that you think you'd be good for their program. Then offer to send more information.



Although producers usually book the guests, hosts sometimes have a say, so it doesn't hurt to send your CD and page of information to them, too. Sometimes you can find a radio or TV host who's more into music than the producer.

If your group is small and portable, you can even do some *busking* — that's a British term for performing spur-of-the-moment in public places such as parks, street corners, and subway stations (you need a license to do that in New York City now). Before San Diego's historic Gaslamp Quarter district went upscale, one could often find a saxophonist or guitarist performing during the lunch hour with their instrument case open for contributions.

Put out some information cards where people can grab one, and if you have a CD, put it on display for purchase. Also have regular business cards in case people want something that fits into a wallet or small purse.



Some cities have laws about where you can and can't perform in public. Many cities encourage performances as a part of public arts programs, but in other locations, you may need a permit. It's a good idea to call your city's planning department or the office of your city council member to find out about these policies.

## *Performing at social events*

People want live jazz for all sorts of events, ranging from Rotary Club barbecues to Chamber of Commerce ribbon cuttings, dedications of new buildings, company parties, weddings, and family reunions. Some of these gigs actually pay better than club dates. I discuss these types of gigs in the following sections.



Word-of-mouth marketing is your best tool for obtaining gigs all around. Many times your success is built off knowing people. If you find someone who knows someone (and so on) and play a successful show for them, your gig may lead to more gigs down the road.

### *Local events*

Smaller satellite towns outside major cities often need entertainment for events at city halls, libraries, parks, and schools. Visit your city's Web site to see whether there's a spring or summer concert series. Call your city council member's office, school district office, school office, or branch librarian, and ask whether they know of events that need live music. These opportunities can hone your musical and P.R. skills. Put out a stack of business cards, and who knows what may come of it?

### *Private parties*

Don't overlook so-called *socials* — private parties that often pay better than regular gigs. In well-to-do neighborhoods, people pay a good band \$1,000 or more for a night of music. Polished professional groups may make \$3,000 or more. Many musicians play club dates for credibility and exposure, but they play socials for the money.

### *Going corporate*

Another variation on employment for musicians is the corporate gig. Many American cities do blockbuster business in conventions and conferences. Every event hosts parties and social occasions. Talk to your local convention and visitors' bureau to find out what events are coming to town and how various companies hire performers. Many cities also have talent agents who specialize in providing entertainment for corporate occasions. If you seriously want to pursue corporate dates, you may want to hire an agent (but know that a percentage of your pay goes to the agent).

## *Approaching a variety of local venues*

A lot of musicians complain that they just can't land a gig, but I bet you there are gigs to be had within a few minutes of your home. New jazz musicians tend to think of a gig as a performance in a cool little jazz club with a name like the Purple Onion, but there are all kinds of venues and occasions where you might find work. Many restaurant owners hire musicians to play in their bars. These gigs may not pay much, but they provide experience, and the fact that some people are too busy talking to listen to you can be a blessing if your band is still working out its kinks.



The Internet and telephones are great marketing tools, but sometimes a personal visit to a venue is even better. You can walk into a coffeehouse, nightclub, real estate office, record store, or restaurant and ask to see a manager or whoever hires entertainers. All you want is "face time:" shake the person's hand, hand him a card, and tell him you're happy to provide more information at his convenience. You can offer to play one time for free, as a sort of audition and trial to test audience response. Of course, this also would be a great time to tell friends and family to show up and pack the house.

Pounding the pavement is the way to land jobs. A couple of enterprising 11th graders I know have a weekly gig at a pizza joint in a hip part of town, and a second gig performing in a small coffeehouse next to a multiplex cinema. These are talented musicians who are still learning their craft. They have a repertoire of a dozen or more tunes. They usually work as a trio of drums-piano-bass, but sometimes splinter off a duo.

## *Producing a CD*



When your group has mastered several tunes (and maybe even composed some originals) and honed its sound at several gigs and practice sessions, you may consider producing a CD of your music. Give some careful consideration before you proceed. Many indie jazz CDs are mediocre, and it's not necessarily the musicians. If your repertoire consists primarily of standards, it's

almost impossible to contribute a significant new version of a song such as “Round Midnight” or “Embraceable You.” Even if you feel that your group’s music is solid, getting a good recording of jazz is harder than it seems. Most rock music, for instance, doesn’t rely on technical perfection. Distortion is a desirable trait for electric guitar. But when it comes to acoustic jazz played by piano, bass, drums, and horns, recording and mixing is a delicate matter.

So what are some of the benefits of producing a CD? You might consider cutting your own CD for reasons other than a professional release. For instance, a CD can

- ✔ **Serve as a calling card to land gigs and radio performances:** At radio station KPBS-FM in San Diego, where I hosted a public radio program for years, we received dozens of CDs each month, from established musicians and from aspiring upstarts. It was rare when the performance and technical quality were good enough to earn airplay, but sometimes the CD landed the group an appearance on the program.
- ✔ **Become a part of special promotions:** Offer some CDs to your local college or public radio station to give away on the air or use as items for fundraising auctions. Or offer them on your Web site to the first ten people who submit the correct answer to your jazz trivia question.
- ✔ **Function as a sounding board:** A CD gives you and your bandmates a record of what you really sound like at a given time. It’s amazing what you hear after you get a bit of distance from the recording and listen to your CD again. It might sound better than you thought, or it might sound horrific. Often the adrenalin rush of the recording session taints one’s critical judgment.
- ✔ **Make a good gift:** A CD also makes a great gift for family and friends.

Depending on how serious you are about recording, you might want to retain a producer/technical director. An experienced producer and engineer can assist with the following tasks:

- ✔ Helping polish original tunes and select existing songs
- ✔ Giving advice on arrangements, suggesting parts to each player
- ✔ Knowing when a band has given its best performance, and when it needs to do another take
- ✔ Identifying which microphones to use for various instruments and where to place them
- ✔ Mixing the final result into a seamless blend.
- ✔ Dishing out advice on the order of tunes on a CD

You might find an engineer or producer at your local college music department (maybe a student or staff person), at your local radio station, through a

fellow musician, or by asking a club manager. If you can afford to record in a professional studio, it can provide an engineer.

Sometimes the same person can serve as engineer and produce. In other cases, one person or more can help you choose songs and critique your performances (this can be a friend or fellow musician), while a technical person handles the actual recording.

For more details about technology as it relates to jazz, check out Chapter 17.

## Preparing Yourself and Your Band to Perform

Giving your best onstage is a challenge similar to what Olympic athletes face when, after months of training, they have to turn in their best performance in competition. Many players have solid basic chops, but the special ones rise to the concert occasion.



So what can you do to make sure that your best show comes out in front of an audience? You need to practice, practice, practice. It's not enough to just make it through a tune. You should be able to play your part in your sleep. Beginners sometimes have a hard time getting up in front of people and delivering a stellar performance on demand. In a few of my experiences, there were times that I choked horribly. Despite all the cool things I played alone in my living room, the fear factor temporarily wiped my brain blank and rendered my hands useless.



If you're like me and suffer from performance anxiety, try these practical ideas to overcome your fears:

- ✓ **Practice relaxation exercises such as deep breathing and meditation.** It's amazing how much difference it makes if you just close your eyes and force yourself to take 15 or 20 slow deep breaths, all the way in and out — the kind that feel like they fill you up with air right down into your belly.
- ✓ **Always open your set with the same song — one that you know and play well.** That way, you know you're off to a strong start, smoothing the way to good performances to follow.
- ✓ **Write out your set list beforehand and go over it with your band.** That way everyone knows what's expected.
- ✓ **Scout the venue before you play it.** Whether it's a nightclub, an auditorium, or someone's living room, you can relieve a lot of performance-night stress if you know how a room is configured and what your band needs to do to set up and sound right.



Aside from the little things to do to psyche yourself up for the show, make sure that you take care of the show details ahead of time so you won't be stressing out while you're trying to play:

- ✓ **Plan transportation, equipment loading and unloading, and parking ahead of time.** You need more time if you have a lot of equipment, a long road trip, or a horrific trek from the parking lot to the stage. Drummers and guitarists need extra time to set up equipment and check their sound.
- ✓ **Bring extra items for emergencies.** Include reeds, sets of strings, extension cords, headphones, patch cords, and so on.
- ✓ **Find out in advance when and how you're paid.** A check before the gig? Cash after the gig? Also ask who's in charge of paying you. You don't want to be looking for a check at midnight in a roomful of people who've had a few drinks.
- ✓ **Ask a friend to record the show or take photos.** If you want a recording or photos, assign that to someone well in advance, and put them in charge of the logistics. Sometimes you have to obtain press passes for these types of activities.
- ✓ **Arrange for someone to sell your CDs for you.** If you plan to sell CDs at your gig, check in advance to be sure it's all right, too.
- ✓ **Assemble the guest list.** There always seems to be family and friends who want to be on a guest list. If you need a list, put one person in charge and make sure that you let your employer (venue manager) know about it in advance.



The goal, according to most musicians I know, is to lose yourself in the music. You don't want to feel like you're outside your body watching yourself have an off night. Plan ahead and relax your body and soul. You want to be right there inside the music, so absorbed that the audience and the things going on around you are secondary.

## *Taking (and Polishing) Your Show on the Road*

You may not be Dave Brubeck, but the time may come when you take to the road for a short tour or something more ambitious. Successful touring with a band is basically successful traveling but with instruments and appointments to make. Many local and regional groups hit the road once or twice a year.

It's not about making money; it's about the experience of seeing new places, meeting new people, and testing your talent in new settings.



Touring is one of the best ways for a band to find its own sound. Hanging out together and performing together every day promotes a bonding experience through a meeting of minds (some of which are intuitive and nonverbal).

Even if you don't all get along perfectly, playing together each night forces you to find the band's best groove. Almost every musician I meet who's recorded and toured tells me that the whole process is backwards. Instead of recording a CD and then hitting the road to support it, they'd rather write the material, take it on the road, and then record it, after they've finagled the subtle band chemistry that makes a song unique.

A lot of people give you theories about finding a unique sound, but playing, not talking, is the best way to do it. After all, your band consists of several musicians who all have unique personalities, interests, and musical styles. Naturally, whatever you play together won't sound like anyone else.



If your band is new to the notion of road trips, keep it simple the first time out:

- ✓ Book a couple of gigs each in nearby cities and take a three-day-weekend tour.
- ✓ Book dates in advance.
- ✓ Agree on financial terms.
- ✓ Arrange times for loading in equipment, doing a sound check, and starting the performance.
- ✓ Make travel arrangements for the group.
  - You can stay in a hotel or motel or bunk with people you know.
  - Travel by car, van, or private plane.
- ✓ Take a digital camera to capture cool and fun moments.
- ✓ Take care of yourself.
  - Eat less and eat well.
  - Drink a lot of water.
  - Get a good night's sleep (if you stay in a motel, try to book one that's not right next to the freeway).
  - Get to the gig ahead of time so you won't be rushed.

## Should you join the union?

Jazz musicians are typically freelancers without an office and the social and professional support that goes with it. The union (and local union hall) provides a rallying point for players. The musicians' union serves as a focal point for musicians' interests. It can be reassuring for a freelancer to know that he isn't alone against the world.

Local chapters of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) are powerful in big cities like New York City and Chicago, but clubs in other towns are low-paying and non-union. The union has rules about pay and working conditions. Local chapters have different membership dues. You pay an annual fee plus a percentage of your pay for each gig.

The union also provides a strong Washington lobby that watches out for the interests of musicians in areas such as copyrights, royalties,

and other issues related to the Internet, radio, recording companies, and television; Medicare and other issues that affect the personal welfare of musicians are also supported.

Contrary to popular belief, the union isn't in the business of getting gigs for you, although it provides networking opportunities that help in this regard. The union is best for musicians who work for symphony orchestras, Broadway shows, and theme parks — places that have money and hire numerous musicians. So if your music career includes all sorts of recording and performance contexts, the union is useful. If you're a jazz player aiming only for gigs in small clubs — well, most of them won't use union-approved contracts.

For a description of the AFM and a list of benefits visit [www.afm.org](http://www.afm.org).

## Chapter 17

# Digital Jazz: Making Music in High-Tech Times

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Reviewing the impact of a few innovative engineers
  - ▶ Thinking about a home studio
  - ▶ Marketing your music with the help of the Web
- 

**I**n the past 20 years, affordable equipment and the growth of the Internet have changed the way musicians steer their careers. It's no longer "major label or bust." In fact, jazz being a specialized art form, few players land big recording contracts or audiences. Instead, jazz musicians travel independent routes and become producers, promoters, engineers, and artists all rolled into one. The new self-determinism is a bonus for both musicians and listeners who surf the net for affordable music that can be downloaded to a computer.

In this chapter, I describe how to become best friends with technology as you take control of your music from home studios to Internet marketing and distribution. First, though, a trip back to the days of tube tone, vinyl records, and radio, a time when Les Paul and Rudy Van Gelder were the mad professors of home studiology and invented recording techniques still used in jazz today.

## *The First Recording Masterminds*

Jazz has been recorded in significant quantities since the 1920s, but having a recording studio at home wasn't feasible until equipment was produced in larger quantities and at lower prices in the years after World War II. For the first time, musicians such as Les Paul and engineers like Rudy Van Gelder could use their own equipment and knowledge of music to customize the sound of their recordings. This marked the beginning of a new way of making records (and eventually CDs).

In the beginning, a few large record companies had the only professional studios, but by the 1950s, all sorts of individuals could set up a recording space and experiment with new ways of capturing music. Today, there are old schoolers who like to record the old-fashioned way and techies who produce amazing recordings using laptop computers as their “studios.” For budding jazz musicians and fans, it’s useful to know how recording has evolved, and I give you some highlights in the following sections. Some of the best jazz was recorded with equipment that was primitive by today’s standards — yet those recordings sound surprisingly good.

## *Les Paul: A recording wizard*



Known as the Wizard of Waukesha (Wisconsin), Les Paul was born in 1915 and built his first recording machine in 1929 at the age of 14. Through his experiments with equipment and recording techniques, he pioneered many elements that became standard in recording all types of music, including jazz:

- ✓ **Sound-on-sound:** Layering one musical part over another, originally on one strip of tape. This method allowed Paul to create the sound of several guitars by himself. Originally, Paul accomplished this by using two tape machines: one to play back what was already recorded, the other to record that music plus a new part he would add. By going back and forth between machines, he could continue to add parts.
- ✓ **Overdubbing:** Mixing newly recorded material with previously recorded material. Sometimes a musician overdubs a new part in place of an original part that doesn’t work or contains a mistake.
- ✓ **Reverb effects:** Imitating the echo (or sense of depth) that rooms add on music.
- ✓ **Multi-tracking:** Recording several different musical instruments or parts, each as a separate part that can be customized and combined with other parts. Multi-track recorders have expanded from two to four to thirty-two and more tracks, meaning that each instrument or section in a big band recording can be individually adjusted. With each instrument or section on a different track, the volume and sound of each can be adjusted to suit the whole.

Paul first tried sound-on-sound in 1934 on a platter machine (a predecessor to the tape recorder that translated sound waves into grooves on a platter, which later become known as a record). In the ’40s, Paul saw a German tape recorder, and with some help from singer Bing Crosby, who wanted to record his own music, convinced Ampex (an electronics company) to manufacture 50 recorders. Paul’s own personal machine had an extra recording head that allowed him to experiment with recording multiple parts.



In his home garage studio in 1947, Paul made what many consider to be the first multi-track recording, his “*Lover*,” featuring eight guitar parts all played by Paul and layered over each other. Not only was Paul a technical genius, but also he was (and is) a phenomenal guitarist, and his recording captured the sound of his fast, melodic guitar lines skittered over each other in very graceful ways. With one musician accompanying himself, it sounds as if several players with amazing intuition are working together. As a result of this recording, Paul signed with Capitol Records and teamed with his wife, vocalist Mary Ford, on hits such as “*How High the Moon*” and “*Brazil*” (with six guitar parts played by Paul).



In the '50s, Paul designed the first eight-track tape recorder (for Ampex), and in consecutive years he spent time perfecting multi-track techniques. Not only could Paul create layers of sound, but also he realized that multi-tracking freed musicians to add parts at different times in different places. The parts could be recorded separately and mixed together later. Today, there are purists who believe that jazz should be recorded live, with no overdubs. Even so, multi-tracking is useful because bass, drums, piano, saxophone, and trumpet, for example, can each be recorded on a separate track in balanced together in the final mix. Multi-tracking was even more important beginning in the late 1960s, when jazz musicians led by Miles Davis began to utilize electric instruments and synthesizers. Instruments were added and subtracted, and had their sounds altered in the multi-track mixing process.

## *Rudy Van Gelder: Setting standards*

Another scientist of sound is Rudy Van Gelder, who set the standard for jazz recording in the '50s and '60s with sessions for Blue Note Records in his Inglewood, New Jersey, garage. Like Les Paul, Van Gelder began tinkering with sound in his teens by taking apart radio equipment and building custom electronics from salvaged parts. He recorded neighborhood musicians in his parents' garage, and these demos were so remarkable that record labels came calling for his services as an engineer. In the following sections, I give you the scoop on Van Gelder's professional recording career.

### *Starting out as a professional engineer*

Van Gelder was on a quest for perfect sound — in the case of jazz, he wanted a natural, transparent recording that captured the music as if you were hearing it live. Dozens of jazz albums recorded by Van Gelder are admired for capturing the true nuances of each instrument and making each instrument stand out. Van Gelder has been protective of his techniques, so the specifics of how he achieved his sound remain secret.

Van Gelder's home studio became a laboratory where he experimented with equipment and even built his own mixer when he couldn't buy one to suit his needs. At the time, only large record companies had state-of-the-art recording equipment. Van Gelder pioneered an independent studio as an alternative to major label recording studios.

His first audio mixing board came from a radio station because professional quality boards weren't yet widely available to individuals. Among Van Gelder's aesthetic decisions was the use of a 7-foot Steinway grand piano for pianists such as Horace Silver, instead of a 9-foot concert model — the smaller instrument produced a more balanced sound for recordings.

Van Gelder's efforts paid off. The intimate environment of his home studio helped musicians give warm, spontaneous performances like what they could achieve in the laid-back atmosphere of a small club. His reputation spread.

### *Making legendary music with Blue Note Records*

Van Gelder was working as an optometrist when Blue Note Records founder Alfred Lion hired him in 1953 to engineer his first recording for the label at his Hackensack, New Jersey, home studio. Van Gelder quit his day job in 1959 and moved to Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, where he still engineers albums that are among the best in jazz.

Through the '50s, the duo perfected Blue Note's signature sound on dozens of albums by legends like Cannonball Adderley, Art Blakey, Clifford Brown, and Herbie Hancock. Van Gelder also engineered Miles Davis's *Birth of the Cool* and numerous essential recordings of avant garde jazz saxophonist John Coltrane. (See Chapters 7 and 8 for details about all these musicians.)

Blue Note's artists included many of the innovators in the '50s jazz style known as hard bop — bluesy, driving acoustic jazz featuring plenty of improvisation (see Chapter 7 for details on hard bop). Given the music's spontaneous nature, Van Gelder refined his studio techniques (such as microphone selection and placement) to capture the range of volumes, tempos, and tones that arise when players venture off the charts.



Hardcore jazz fans knew that they could count on Blue Note for quality every time — an amazing achievement when you consider that the recordings were made at Van Gelder's home. Songs were carefully selected and rehearsed, and over time, Blue Note's stellar reputation as the Mercedes Benz of jazz labels was the result of Lion's laser instinct for talent and material, and Van Gelder's consistently superb recordings.



### *Listening to Van Gelder today*

Keeping pace with technology, Van Gelder continually upgrades his studio with the latest digital equipment and software. Unlike analog recordings made on tape, digital recordings can be duplicated without sacrificing sound quality. But Van Gelder's recordings make it obvious that it was the man as much as the equipment that made the recordings great — technology is only a tool, and that's a lesson for every home studio maven. You need good ears to get the most from those sessions.



As you expand your jazz collection, check out dozens of special Rudy Van Gelder (RVG) reissues of his original Blue Note recordings. (I give you tips on building a jazz collection in Chapter 21.) Originally recorded for vinyl, the songs have been remastered and remixed for CDs by Van Gelder, and these albums often include additional bonus tracks that weren't on the original releases. See whether you can hear the distinctive nuances of the Van Gelder touch (carefully balanced sound levels, clearly distinguished instruments, and overall clarity) in the CDs from the following artists:

- ✓ Art Blakey, *Buhaina's Delight*
- ✓ Tina Brooks, *True Blue*
- ✓ Clifford Brown, *Clifford Brown Memorial Album*
- ✓ John Coltrane, *Blue Train*
- ✓ J.J. Johnson, *The Eminent, Vols. 1 and 2*
- ✓ Hank Mobley, *No Room for Squares*
- ✓ Lee Morgan, *The Sidewinder*
- ✓ Leo Parker, *Let Me Tell You 'Bout It*
- ✓ Horace Silver, *Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers*
- ✓ Jimmy Smith, *The Sounds of Jimmy Smith*

## *Tapping into Today's Technology to Create and Sell Jazz*

In the early days of recording, making an album required a lot of planning, a budget, and a means of distribution. An aspiring jazz player would be lucky to get a recording opportunity that required getting a recording company's attention through a live performance heard by the right person or through word of mouth. In the 1930s and 1940s, an affordable home studio didn't exist, let alone one that could make high-quality recordings that could be easily duplicated and distributed.

## Sound waves: Peaks in the history of recording

Jazz was first recorded in 1917 by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (see Chapter 5), but recording technology had already evolved for 40 years. One disappointing fact is that other types of music were recorded many years before jazz; we mourn the loss of music made by cornet player Buddy Bolden and other early heroes. Nonetheless, the advent of sound recording marked a genuine modern marvel. Here are a few highlights:

- ✔ 1877: Thomas Edison records sound to a cylinder and demonstrates his phonograph for the editors of *Scientific American*. Edison's first recording: "Mary Had a Little Lamb."
- ✔ 1878: Edison patents his cylinder phonograph.
- ✔ 1888: Emile Berliner patents the flat-disc phonograph.
- ✔ 1898: Valdemar Poulsen patents the wire recorder.
- ✔ 1901: Thomas Edison's music cylinders are now mass-produced, but only 120 or so can be made from one original master.
- ✔ 1906: The Victor cabinet "Victrola" phonograph is released.
- ✔ 1908: John Lomax records a black saloon-keeper singing "Home on the Range." His son Alan later makes important archival recordings of Jelly Roll Morton and countless blues musicians. John and Alan Lomax were among the first to make important recordings in the field using newly invented portable equipment.
- ✔ 1913: Thomas Edison's cylinders become obsolete when Edison begins manufacturing the Edison Disc Phonograph.
- ✔ 1917: The Original Dixieland Jazz Band makes the first jazz recording.
- ✔ 1923: Bessie Smith's record "Down-Hearted Blues" sells 750,000.
- ✔ 1926: Bing Crosby makes recordings using new Bell Labs microphones that enhance the warm "crooner" sound.
- ✔ 1927: Automatic Music Instrument introduces the first jukebox.
- ✔ 1928: German Georg Neumann launches a microphone company that continues to create some of the best mics for recording music.
- ✔ 1931: Pfleumer and AEG build the first magnetic tape recorders.
- ✔ 1948: Columbia introduces the 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  rpm record with 23 minutes of music per side.
- ✔ 1949: Magnecord produces one of the first stereo tape recorders.
- ✔ 1958: The first stereo albums are released.
- ✔ 1958: Koss introduces stereo headphones, creating a whole new personal experience of music.
- ✔ 1962: Henry Kloss markets the first portable stereo.
- ✔ 1963: Philips unveils the compact audio cassette.
- ✔ 1979: Sony introduces the Walkman personal cassette player.
- ✔ 1982: The first CDs are released.
- ✔ 1981: IBM's first PC is released, creating the potential to record and mix music on computers.

- ✓ 1984: Apple's first Macintosh is released, which eventually led to the advent of Apple's iTunes software and popular online music store — an alternative way for artists to distribute music.
- ✓ 1988: CD sales exceed record sales.
- ✓ 1989: Digidesign's Sound Tools software is released as the "first tapeless recording studio."
- ✓ 1991: Sound Tools is renamed Pro Tools (today available for both PC and Mac).
- ✓ 1993: Digidesign releases Session 8 Limited, the first Windows-based recording software.
- ✓ 2001: Apple's first iPod is released.

Powerful personal computers, sophisticated sound software, and the rise of the Internet have all changed the recording industry completely. Today, with a modest investment in equipment, a jazz musician can begin recording music with extremely high quality. That music can be cheaply copied onto CDs, which cost only pennies apiece, or quickly posted on a Web site.

While use of all the new technologies isn't yet universal among jazz players, nearly all musicians employ some technology. The following sections feature some simple advice from professional musicians about how to put technology to work for you and your music.



For more detailed information on setting up a home studio, check out *Home Recording for Musicians For Dummies*, 2nd Edition, by Jeff Strong (Wiley). Other books on specific types of recording software can be found through the *For Dummies* line. For an introduction to creating Web sites and Internet marketing, check out *Building a Web Site For Dummies*, 2nd Edition, by David A. Crowder (Wiley) and *Internet Marketing For Dummies* by Frank Catalano and Bud E. Smith (Wiley).



I cover a lot of sound ground here. You may be an ambitious sort who tries some of these things (and more), or you may not be ready to record and market music. No matter your experience or ambitions, remember that you're making music most of all for yourself, for the satisfaction of exploring your creative side and expressing emotions in a medium that can be more effective and satisfying than words. Finding an audience is a reward but not a promise.

## *The nuts and bolts of home studios*

Most every serious musician today, even amateurs, is equipped to do at least some recording at home. Almost everyone owns a computer or has access to one. With software and some basic electronic equipment, it's fairly affordable to record, edit, and mix music. Some computer setups are good enough to produce pro-quality CDs, and others are sufficient to use for rehearsing, making demos, and creating basic CDs of your music.

Typically, the younger the musician, the more he or she uses technology. Today's 20-year-olds have been using computers since they were in kindergarten. To young people, mouse-clicking through software menus is as easy and natural as brushing their teeth.

The hard part of setting up a home studio, though, is gathering (and paying for) all the special software and hardware that you need to start recording seriously. A jazz guitarist I know says it takes \$6,000 to \$15,000 to equip a pro-grade home studio.



Despite potentially paying thousands of dollars for home equipment, you may reap savings by not having to purchase time in a professional studio, especially if you plan to spend a fair amount of time on recording and polishing your music. What's another benefit of having your own studio? You can write and transcribe music, in addition to recording and editing it, on a home computer.



Keep in mind that a recording or CD sounds only as good as your playback system. Consumer stuff from a local warehouse store won't do justice to the music. Even musicians with modest home studios invest in a good pair of studio monitor speakers, available from professional sound stores (many of which sell equipment online). These speakers are design to be clean and accurate in order to help you get the best sound mix possible.

After you complete a CD of music at home, making copies doesn't take much work. If you want more than a few copies, give your recording to a CD production company (you can find dozens of them online). They charge about \$1,500 for 1,000 CDs, including duplicating, packaging, and a simple graphic design (if you don't do one yourself). Of course, you can also sell your songs from your own Web site or on many music Web sites that feature independent musicians (see the next section).



Before you run out and start buying recording equipment, be sure that a home studio truly fits your needs and the level of your expertise. You may decide that you would rather pay a professional studio to do the job. In Los Angeles, a jazz trumpeter I know says he can buy studio time for \$50 to \$100 per hour. It's possible to record several songs in a day, so the convenience of not worrying about equipment and engineering may be worth it to you.



If you decide to take the plunge and set up a home recording studio, be sure to give careful thought to its location. The more privacy a room has the more ideal it is as a home studio.

## *The rise of the Internet in selling music*

Today, the music industry is so competitive, and profit margins are so narrow, that recording companies often expect new artists to come to them with professionally recorded CDs, ready for release. In some cases, musicians even pay the recording companies to release their CDs just to get distribution. Other musicians, though, don't think a musician should pay a company to release his music. Marketing and distribution are often minimal, and most new CDs get lost in the marketplace of music stores and online outlets.

In fact, the old model of distributing music via CDs in record stores is falling away. Very few independent stores remain that are willing to stock and prominently display CDs by unknown or local artists. Big chain stores are mostly interested in music by popular artists guaranteed to sell. Even if a store stocks your CD, a jazz fan who hasn't heard of you stands very little chance of finding and buying your CD among thousands of titles on shelves.

It's very likely that someday soon, such a thing as a music store won't exist, and everyone may get their music online; in that case, an artist with a good Web site and a good head for marketing has an even better position to bypass the traditional methods. In the following sections, I discuss creating a Web site and using other independent Web sites to market and sell your music.

### *Building your own Web site*

Jazz musicians can reach out to music fans and keep the profits from their work by building their own Web sites, where they market and sell CDs inexpensively. You can save even more money by figuring out how to build your own site instead of hiring someone else to do it.

Web sites are good places for visitors to hear your music. Most musicians post short clips (say, 30 seconds) from the songs. If fans want to hear more, they can order a CD.

Web sites aren't just for selling CDs, either; you can advertise other products, such as books, T-shirts, posters, and so on, and advertise upcoming events just as easily.



Spread the word about the availability of CDs on your Web site with smart publicity (see Chapter 16 for details on publicizing your band). Talk up your site at gigs, for example. Sprague has built his loyal core following by developing a computerized mailing list over the course of 2,000 or so names. Fans can sign up via the Web site or at his gigs, and he adds media types whenever he meets them. He e-mails a weekly newsletter about his music and gigs, interspersed with personal stories and musings. It's a refreshing change from the Internet popups that rain down every day.

### ***Spreading the word about your music on other Web sites***



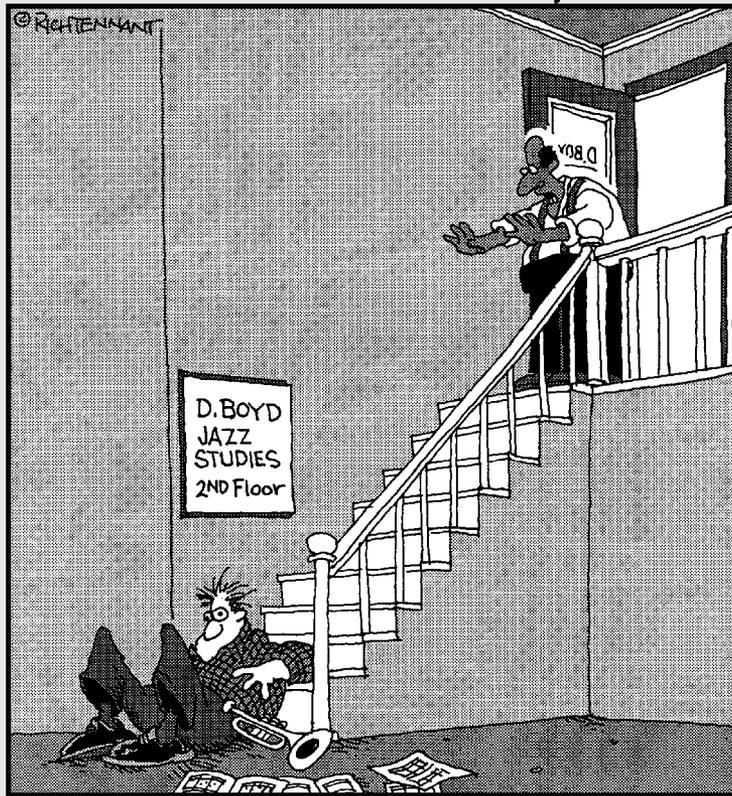
An offshoot of having your own entire Web site (see the previous section) is building a single Web page on a larger, independent site designed to help market and sell music. For instance, you can market your music with a Web page on [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com), which is an online record store selling music by independent artists. Other sites where you can sell your music include [ind-music.com](http://ind-music.com), [cdarmy.com](http://cdarmy.com), and [indietunes.com](http://indietunes.com).

# Part V

## The Part of Tens

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Okay did you feel that rhythm on the way down?  
That's the syncopation I'm looking for."

## *In this part . . .*

**T**he Part of Tens is a quick reference tool that gives you ten items of key information in basic areas. Summing it all up in this part, I give you two important lists: top cities to visit for a sampling of great jazz and ways to build your collection of music.

## Chapter 18

# Ten Great Cities for Jazz

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Hearing great live jazz in city clubs
  - ▶ Discovering other cultural venues and jazz resources
- 

**T**o truly experience jazz, you have to hear it live. While dozens of American cities offer a lot of live jazz, the ten cities in this chapter stand above the rest for their excellent mixes of local, national, and international talent; the quality of their venues; and a larger context that's rich in arts and aesthetic attractions. So take a plane, train, or automobile and get out of here!

## *Austin*

Known as the “Live Music Capital of the World,” Austin has one of the highest per capita club ratios of any American city — more than Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Memphis, Nashville, or New York City — according to the city's Web site ([www.ci.austin.tx.us](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us)). This music madness infuses the jazz scene.



When you arrive in Austin, one of your first priorities is to dial in some music courtesy of several radio stations that feature jazz, including Paul Trachtenberg's weekday afternoon “Jazz, Etc.” on KUT-FM (90.5), a long-running local favorite ([www.kut.org](http://www.kut.org)). Small local radio stations are into music for love, not money, and they tend to be great sources of information about bands and clubs. They announce upcoming performances, they interview performers, they give away tickets, and you may even get a deejay on the phone to make a personal recommendation for a venue or concert.

Some fun jazz venues that you may want to check out include the following:

- ✓ Austin Java Café & Bar ([www.austinjava.com](http://www.austinjava.com))
- ✓ Manuel's ([www.austincityguide.com/content/manuel's-austin-restaurant-downtown.asp](http://www.austincityguide.com/content/manuel's-austin-restaurant-downtown.asp))

- ✓ Threadgill's ([www.threadgills.com](http://www.threadgills.com))
- ✓ Jazz Kitchen Austin ([www.austincityguide.com/content/jazz-austin-bar.asp](http://www.austincityguide.com/content/jazz-austin-bar.asp))
- ✓ Reed's Jazz and Supper Club ([www.sgrg.com/reeds](http://www.sgrg.com/reeds))
- ✓ The Elephant Room ([www.natespace.com/elephant](http://www.natespace.com/elephant))

Top jazz players from around the world often perform in Austin when they're on the road, usually at a couple of the city's larger venues. One World Theatre promotes jazz education and presents concerts at its headquarters in west Austin — a romantic compound that resembles an Italian villa. Featured artists have included Herbie Hancock, Pat Metheny, and McCoy Tyner. The Paramount Theatre, once a great movie house, is an architectural *grande dame* where jazz is perfectly suited to the 1930s-era Art Deco design.

For those of you who like your jazz New Orleans style, the Austin Traditional Jazz Society ([www.atjs.org](http://www.atjs.org)) presents live music. And if you like it modern or far-out, the University of Texas at Austin's music department is home to small and large jazz groups as well as the Alternative Improvisation Music Ensemble (AIME). Visit the University of Texas at Austin on the Web at [www.music.utexas.edu](http://www.music.utexas.edu).

## Chicago

Trace the history of jazz and it makes an essential stop in Chicago during the '20s and '30s when Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke were two kings of cornet here and when the white Austin High School jazz gang mingled with the black South Side crew to swap licks. (See Chapter 5 for more about early jazz in Chicago.) Today, Chicago is still a fine place for jazz. Rising jazz vocalist Kurt Elling lives there, and the city has a solid stock of local players.

The Jazz Institute of Chicago ([www.jazzinstituteofchicago.org](http://www.jazzinstituteofchicago.org)) is an essential hub that offers education through youth jam sessions and artists in residency at local schools, archives of local jazz history, and live music including a tour of jazz clubs and the annual Winter Delights Jazz Fair. Another worthy annual gathering is the Elmhurst College Jazz Festival, with top college bands and established stars. Visit [www.ecjazzfest.org](http://www.ecjazzfest.org) for more info.

The Chicago Jazz Orchestra ([www.chicagोजazzorchestra.com](http://www.chicagोजazzorchestra.com)) offers an annual subscription series that might include a tribute to Ella Fitzgerald or another great. And look out for local trumpet legend Orbert Davis and his 55-piece Chicago Jazz Philharmonic ([www.chicagोजazzphilharmonic.org](http://www.chicagोजazzphilharmonic.org)), which merges classical music with jazz.

Cool venues to check out include

- ✔ **The Cotton Club:** Decorated in the spirit of Cab Calloway, the club features jazz at least one night per week. Surf the site at [www.cottonclubchicago.com](http://www.cottonclubchicago.com).
- ✔ **Green Dolphin Street:** Big-name players like Christian McBride are often featured at this restaurant/bar. Visit the venue's site on the Web at [www.jazzitup.com](http://www.jazzitup.com).
- ✔ **MoJoe's Hot House:** Jazz plays a big part in the performing arts schedule at this coffeehouse. Check the place out online: [www.rockabilly.net/honeybees/MojoesFront.html](http://www.rockabilly.net/honeybees/MojoesFront.html).
- ✔ **The Jazz Showcase:** Dizzy Gillespie and other greats have sustained this venue's reputation since the late 1940s. Go online and check it out at [www.jazzshowcase.com](http://www.jazzshowcase.com).



And if you're looking to pick up a few records when you're in town, Chicago's Jazz Record Mart, which claims the title "world's largest jazz record store," is notable not only for the sheer size of its inventory, but also for a knowledgeable staff that always includes actual jazz musicians. The store also has a huge Web store at [www.jazzmart.com](http://www.jazzmart.com).

## Kansas City

Prohibition didn't come to Kansas City, Missouri, in the 1930s. When Boss Tom ran the town, liquor flowed and jazz prospered. Many clubs stayed open all night long, which might explain the popularity of the cutting contest — a duel to the death between two or more jazz giants. Clubs like the Panama, the Reno, and the Sunset, and ballrooms such as Pla-Mor and El Torreon, were their arenas. Musicians who lived in or passed through Kansas City on their way to greatness included Count Basie, Andy Kirk's Twelve Clouds of Joy, the Jay McShann Orchestra, and Walter Page's Blue Devils. And during their late-night jams, budding young players like Charlie Parker got their first chances to play with the big boys.



Those places are gone or no longer feature jazz, but the music lives on in Kansas City today. The Kansas City Jazz Ambassadors online is a good resource for information about clubs and concerts ([www.jazzkc.org](http://www.jazzkc.org)), and the organization hosts an annual Jazz Lovers Pub Crawl, with proceeds supporting jazz education and concerts.

Venues featuring jazz include

- ✔ **The Cup and Saucer:** Sunday afternoon jazz jams are here, powered by espresso. [www.thecupandsaucer.com](http://www.thecupandsaucer.com).
- ✔ **Ernie's Steakhouse:** Sunday jazz jams are featured. For more information, call 816-254-9494.
- ✔ **Fairmount on the Plaza:** Every Thursday night, Joe Cartwright hosts the "Best of Kansas City Jazz" series. For details, contact the club at 816-756-1500.
- ✔ **Harling's Upstairs:** Diane "Mama" Ray and Rich Van Sant host Saturday afternoon jazz/blues jams, and a big band performs Tuesday nights. Call 816-753-0884 for concert information.
- ✔ **Ivy's Jazz Club:** Top K.C. bands play jazz Thursday through Saturday nights. Visit [www.ivysjazz.com](http://www.ivysjazz.com) for entertainment info.
- ✔ **Mutual Musicians Foundation:** The longest-running K.C. jazz jam runs from 11:00 p.m. Saturday through dawn on Sunday. Call 816-471-5212 for information.

Kansas City also is home to the American Jazz Museum ([www.americanjazzmuseum.com](http://www.americanjazzmuseum.com)), which calls itself "the premier jazz museum in the United States." The building is full of jazz photos, album covers, and memorabilia; presents live jazz at its Blue Room nightclub and 500-seat Gem Theater; and showcases art related to jazz, baseball, and African-American life in The Changing Gallery. The John H. Baker Collection consists of more than 5,000 jazz films.

If you want to flash back to how jazz first reached a mass market, the University of Missouri Kansas City has 250,000 rare recordings in its Marr Sound Collection, including jazz LPs, 78s, 45s, and even old cylinders. Highlights include "Nat King Cole The Early Years (1936–1942)," when he was more of a jazz musician than a pop star, and "The Wilbur 'Buck' Clayton Collection" of photos documenting the career of the jazz trumpeter. You can't check out items, but you can do research on site. Check out the Web site at [www.umkc.edu](http://www.umkc.edu).



Visit in fall and you can take in the Kansas City Blues and Jazz Festival. The two genres are siblings, especially in a town where early jazz was built on blues. Research the festival at [kansascitymusic.com/festival](http://kansascitymusic.com/festival). And check out Chapter 14 for more about jazz festivals.

## Los Angeles

Considering its wealth of talent, Los Angeles doesn't have the kind of vital jazz scene that thrived along Central Avenue, where Buddy Collette, Howard McGhee, and many others set the pace in the '40s and '50s. Still, jazz clubs today feature great music and larger venues like the Walt Disney Concert Hall ([wdch.laphil.com/home.cfm](http://wdch.laphil.com/home.cfm)).



Disney's venue is one of the world's architectural wonders, and jazz plays a small but essential role in its programming. Wynton Marsalis, the Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra, and Wayne Shorter have all performed there, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic hosted a Django Reinhardt Festival. Because the Disney hall was designed primarily for acoustic performances (it's the home of the Los Angeles Philharmonic), it's a great place to hear live jazz.

In warmer months, the Greek Theatre ([www.greektheatre.la.com](http://www.greektheatre.la.com)) and the Hollywood Bowl ([www.hollywoodbowl.com](http://www.hollywoodbowl.com)) are spectacular places to hear jazz under the stars (the Hollywood Bowl is home to the Playboy Jazz Festival, which I cover in Chapter 14).

Other great venues for hearing live jazz include

- ✓ **Catalina Jazz Club:** The Los Angeles Jazz Society hosts a jazz brunch at this leading club, where evenings feature talent like guitarist Kenny Burrell, vocalist Tierney Sutton, and Coltrane's onetime bassist Dr. Art Davis. Check out the Jazz Society at [www.lajazzsociety.org](http://www.lajazzsociety.org) and the Catalina Jazz Club at [www.catalinajazzclub.com](http://www.catalinajazzclub.com).
- ✓ **The Jazz Bakery:** This venue is the only seven-night-a-week nonprofit jazz venue. This place features touring stars like pianist Billy Childs, guitarist Bill Frisell, and saxophonist Benny Golson. Visit the Web site at [www.jazzbakery.com](http://www.jazzbakery.com).
- ✓ **The Lincoln:** Sizzling jazz and grilled T-bone steaks make a great combination at this steakhouse in beachfront Santa Monica. Call 310-828-3304 for more information.
- ✓ **The Mint:** This venue has great blues and jazz, mixing national and local acts. Check out [www.themintla.com](http://www.themintla.com).
- ✓ **Steamers Jazz Club and Café:** Latin jazz is an essential part of this place's weekly menu of jazz. [www.steamersjazz.com](http://www.steamersjazz.com).

The Los Angeles Jazz Institute is a lively focal point with a great Web site ([www.lajazzinstitute.org](http://www.lajazzinstitute.org)), extensive archives, and a solid concert season. If you're a jazz writer, a historian, or just a fanatical fan, this is *the* source of West Coast jazz history. The archives include personal collections from Gerry Mulligan, Art Pepper, Shorty Rogers, Bud Shank, and other L.A. heroes.



Orange County isn't technically Los Angeles, but it's only a short cruise down the 5 or 405 freeway, and the Orange County Performing Arts Center is known for primo jazz. Orange County's wealth and prestige shows in its collection of performing arts venues. The Center's intimate Jazz Club series is especially fine, presenting James Carter, Kurt Elling, and other marquee attractions. Visit online at [www.ocpac.org](http://www.ocpac.org).

## Miami

If there's a capital of jazz with a Latin twist, it has to be Miami — enough of a jazz city that the JVC Jazz Festival ([www.festivalproductions.net/jvcjazz.htm](http://www.festivalproductions.net/jvcjazz.htm)) makes a stop there, and touring acts like Wynton Marsalis book into the Jackie Gleason Theatre ([www.gleasontheater.com](http://www.gleasontheater.com)).

Pull yourself away from South Beach's stunning array of Art Deco hotels and go hear some live jazz at one of these venues:

- ✔ **The Jazziz Bistro:** In Boca Raton (42 miles up the coast from Miami), this club was founded by a partnership including the owners of *Jazziz* magazine, and it's a jazz-themed club in the Hard Rock Hotel. Check out the nightly line up at [www.jazzizbistro.com](http://www.jazzizbistro.com).
- ✔ **Upstairs at the Van Dyke:** Voted Best Jazz Club by several local media, this club is the prime spot to hear prominent players like Mose Allison, Richie Cole, David Frishberg, Tom Harrell, and Bobby Watson in a historical building. Visit [www.thevandykecafe.com](http://www.thevandykecafe.com) for more details.

Salsa is hot jazz and dance music that's splashed liberally throughout Miami, at dozens of clubs including the following:

- ✔ **Bongos Cuban Café:** Owned by pop singer Gloria Estefan and her hubby, and decorated with tropical touches, this is a great place to have a meal and hear some Latin music. Check out [www.bongoscubancafe.com](http://www.bongoscubancafe.com).
- ✔ **Café Mystique:** The salsa dance known as "Rueda de Casino" was born here, but if you don't know how to dance, lessons are offered. Visit [www.cafemystique.net](http://www.cafemystique.net).
- ✔ **Cristal:** Shake it up on the spacious dance floor to live Latin music. Call 305-604-2582 for more information.
- ✔ **Rancho Gaspar:** This sprawling Latin music mecca is off the Florida Turnpike at Okeechobee. Call 305-827-1659 for more information.

At many of these places, there's an array of cross-cultural cuisine to go with the music.

As in many other cities, local radio is a great way to tap the jazz scene in Miami. Radio hosts usually give a rundown of what's coming up the next weekend, and they play a lot of good music (often including CDs by local musicians).



Latin jazz musician Sammy Figueroa is a Miami institution; he hosts the “Latin Jazz Quarter” radio show on WDNA-FM (88.9), and he can tell you which Miami clubs and music are hottest. His CD . . . *And Sammy Walked In* was nominated for a Grammy in 2006 for Best Latin Jazz Album. Figueroa also provided percussion for Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, and other greats.

For more about Latin jazz, check out Chapter 9.

## New Orleans

It's a tough time to write about jazz in the essential jazz city, as it recovers from Hurricane Katrina, which struck in 2005. But as the once and future Queen of Jazz, New Orleans earns its place in this chapter.

Jazz was born (at least publicly) in Congo Square, where the cultures and music that merged into jazz mixed in public at a time when that couldn't happen in most American cities. Buddy Bolden made some of the earliest jazz here, then came Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Johnny Dodds, King Oliver, Kid Ory, and most all of jazz's early greats (see Chapter 5 for details). New Orleans also is the hometown of the prolific Marsalis family: pianist and father Ellis, sons Branford (saxophone), Delfeayo (trombone), Jason (drums), and Wynton (trumpet).

Jazz is an essential ingredient of the public party known as Mardi Gras, but for serious listening on a large scale, consider the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, which serves up dozens of bands over several days every spring. See Chapter 14 for details on this festival and check out [www.nojazzfest.com](http://www.nojazzfest.com).

In addition to ornate buildings and jazz bars that look much the same as they did in Armstrong's era, New Orleans has many places where you can discover the music's history, including New Orleans Jazz Historical Park (performances, lectures, walking tours of historical sites, and exhibits such as “A New Orleans Jazz Funeral”). The park's tours include neighborhoods such as the Canal Street, Lafayette Square, and the Vieux Carré. Visit [www.nps.gov/jazz/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/jazz/index.htm) for more info.

As for jazz clubs, they're everywhere:

- ✓ **The Creole Queen:** Take an old-school cruise on the Mississippi with live jazz. For information, call 504-529-4567.
- ✓ **Fritzel's European Jazz Pub:** Stiff German beer and authentic New Orleans jazz make a satisfying merger here. Call 504-561-0432 for details.
- ✓ **Preservation Hall:** The popular center for authentic New Orleans jazz was badly damaged by Katrina but reopened in April 2006. The Preservation Hall Jazz Band sustains its busy performing schedule, including dates in New Orleans. Check this venue's status online at [www.preservationhall.com/2.0/](http://www.preservationhall.com/2.0/).
- ✓ **Snug Harbor Jazz Club:** One of the city's leading jazz venues has live music seven nights a week, including pianist Ellis Marsalis most Fridays. Check out [www.snugjazz.com](http://www.snugjazz.com).
- ✓ **The Spotted Cat:** This club has two bands or more every night, including jazz, blues, and Latin music. Call 504-943-3887 for more information.



Visit this Web site to check the post-Katrina status of clubs: [www.neworleansonline.com/neworleans/music/musicclubs.html](http://www.neworleansonline.com/neworleans/music/musicclubs.html).

## New York City

Read the *New Yorker* and weep, if you're a jazz fan who doesn't live there. In one issue, its calendar lists an all-star band led by saxophonist James Carter, dueling pianists Bill Charlap and Bill Mays, guitarist Jim Hall's trio, saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman, trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, and, from Berlin, Max Raabe and the Palast Orchester. Maybe not as impressive as bebop's 52nd street hey-day, but magnificent by any other standard.

Jazz legends tend to play at the following noteworthy clubs:

- ✓ Birdland, [www.birdlandjazz.com](http://www.birdlandjazz.com)
- ✓ The Blue Note, [www.bluenote.net/newyork/index.shtml](http://www.bluenote.net/newyork/index.shtml)
- ✓ Dizzy's Club, [www.jalc.org/dccc/c\\_calendar.asp](http://www.jalc.org/dccc/c_calendar.asp)
- ✓ Iridium, [www.iridiumjazzclub.com](http://www.iridiumjazzclub.com)
- ✓ Village Vanguard, [www.villagevanguard.net](http://www.villagevanguard.net)

Jazz's heritage in New York City is sustained on many fronts:

- ✓ World-renowned authors and critics such as Francis Davis, Gary Giddins, and Ben Ratliff cover the music with sensitivity and intelligence.

- ✔ Prestigious jazz labels such as Blue Note, Columbia (Sony), and Verve are based there (see Appendix B for details on them), as is the JVC Jazz Festival (at Carnegie Hall and other venues), formerly the Newport Jazz Festival (there's a JVC festival in Newport, Rhode Island, too). Chapter 14 has the full scoop on this festival.
- ✔ Between his musical career and his other job as artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis creates critical mass for the city's jazz scene almost single-handedly. Get more info online at [www.jalc.org](http://www.jalc.org).
- ✔ New York University, the Manhattan School of Music, and Juilliard infuse the scene with academic juice and young musical talent. These schools can be researched at their respective Web sites: [www.nyu.edu](http://www.nyu.edu), [www.msmnyc.edu](http://www.msmnyc.edu), and [www.juilliard.edu](http://www.juilliard.edu). See Chapter 15 for more details about music schools.
- ✔ Carnegie Hall ([www.carnegiehall.org](http://www.carnegiehall.org)) presents jazz and improvisational music, along with its classical fare, and there's almost always something jazzy playing on Broadway, like "His Royal Hipness Lord Buckley in the Zam Zam Room," or some jazz-based dance by companies like Alvin Ailey.
- ✔ Jazzmobile, founded by pianist Billy Taylor, is in its fourth decade presenting jazz concerts in New York City neighborhoods, as well as jazz workshops in its building at 2230 Fifth Avenue. Look into this organization online at [www.jazzmobile.org](http://www.jazzmobile.org).

Harlem has a healthily pumping heart again, including jazz venues such as the following:

- ✔ **The Arka Lounge:** This neighborhood lounge has dancing and live jazz (and Latin music). For information, call 212-567-9425.
- ✔ **Bill's Place:** This spot features hard-driving old-school jazz in an atmosphere where audiences pay serious attention. For information, call 917-837-6540.
- ✔ **Copeland's Restaurant:** Soul food and jazz are featured several nights a week, and there's a Sunday gospel brunch. For more information, visit [www.copelandsrestaurant.com](http://www.copelandsrestaurant.com).
- ✔ **The Cotton Club (not the original one):** This spot reopened in 1978 with Cab Calloway as the headliner and continues to present live jazz and a Sunday gospel brunch. Visit [www.cottonclub-newyork.com](http://www.cottonclub-newyork.com).
- ✔ **EZ's Woodshed:** This is a jazz music store and café. Check out [www.bigapplejazz.com/ezwoodshed.html](http://www.bigapplejazz.com/ezwoodshed.html).

The Jazz Museum in Harlem, where bassist Christian McBride is co-director, also presents an engaging array of lectures and performances. You can visit the museum online at [www.jazzmuseuminharlem.org](http://www.jazzmuseuminharlem.org).



When you get into town, find an Internet café (if you don't have the Internet at home or in your hotel room) and log on to [www.nybluesandjazz.org](http://www.nybluesandjazz.org), an encyclopedic source of everything jazz in New York City.

## Philadelphia

Philadelphia is only 100 miles from New York City, and that's not a great distance for jazz's spark to jump. Philly jazz dates back to early legends Eddie Lang (guitar) and Joe Venuti (violin), both born in the Windy City (Chicago). Later, guitarist Jimmy Bruno, saxophonist John Coltrane, bandleader and saxophonist Charlie Ventura, and drummers Philly Joe Jones and Tony Williams were among important players from this scene. Bootsie Barnes and Larry McKenna are recent mainstays.

Good clubs to hang out in include the following:

- ✓ Chris's Jazz Café, [www.chrisjazzcafe.com](http://www.chrisjazzcafe.com)
- ✓ J.J.'s Grotto, 215-988-9255
- ✓ The North Star, [www.northstarbar.com](http://www.northstarbar.com)
- ✓ Ortlieb's Jazzhaus, [www.ortliebsjazzhaus.com](http://www.ortliebsjazzhaus.com)
- ✓ The Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz and Performing Arts, Inc., [www.clefclubofjazz.com](http://www.clefclubofjazz.com)
- ✓ The Smoked Joint, [www.smokedjoint.com](http://www.smokedjoint.com)
- ✓ Zanzibar Blue, [www.zanzibarblue.com](http://www.zanzibarblue.com)

Most of these clubs feature national and international names like Eric Alexander, Jimmy Bruno, Winard Harper, Javon Jackson, Kevin Mahogany, Pat Martino, and Mickey Roker — it's rare to have so many blue chip clubs in one city.

The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts complex designed by prominent architect Rafael Vinoly houses major entertainment including a regular agenda of jazz on the order of vibraphonist Gary Burton and pianist Brad Mehldau. Check out the astounding venue at [www.kimmelcenter.org](http://www.kimmelcenter.org).

Other cultural venues that feature jazz include the following:

- ✓ Philadelphia's International House is center for arts around the world, with an eclectic array of music including African, improvisational, and jazz — sometimes played all together. Violinist Leroy Jenkins and saxophonist Henry Threadgill are among those who have performed there. Visit [www.ihousephilly.org](http://www.ihousephilly.org) for more info.
- ✓ The Philadelphia Chamber Music Society is grounded in classical music but branches into jazz with prominent players like saxophonist Joe Lovano. Log on to [www.pcmsconcerts.org](http://www.pcmsconcerts.org).
- ✓ Philadelphia Museum of Art ([www.philamuseum.org](http://www.philamuseum.org)) is a great place to experience fine visual art along with occasional concerts by jazz greats like Avishai Cohen.



National Public Radio (NPR) affiliate station WRTI-FM (90.1) combines jazz and classical programming from its studios at Temple University, with several hours of jazz hosted by real people every day. And while we're talking about Philadelphia culture and jazz, check out America's leading lady of arts interviewers: Terry Gross. She hosts her nationally syndicated public radio program "Fresh Air" from WHYI-FM (91). She's married to jazz critic Francis Davis and often interviews jazz musicians.

## San Diego

My own fair city doesn't rank among the top five American cities for jazz, but I include it here out of loyalty and a love of the underdog, and to prove that great jazz exists in most mid-size and larger American cities, if you search it out.

One recent winter, you could choose from the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra in La Jolla, vibraphonist Charlie Shoemake and pianist Bill Mays in Balboa Park (our Central Park), the San Diego State University Jazz Ensemble featuring recording artist Christopher Hollyday on saxophone, the San Francisco Jazz Collective (vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson and other big names) sharing a bill with the University of California San Diego's Jazz Ensemble, and the Rebirth Brass Band at a club called Canes.



Dizzy's provides excellent local and regional jazz most every night, and the club is an all-ages venue just a short walk from dozens of restaurants in the historical Gaslamp Quarter and the San Diego Padres' new ballpark. Dizzy's has become a local institution, and owner Chuck Perrin is a product of the Beat Generation who still records and performs spoken word. Perrin's tastes in jazz were formed in the '50s and '60s. A typical month of music includes

- ✓ A mambo night
- ✓ Boogie woogie pianist Sue Palmer
- ✓ Gretchen Perlato (winner of the 2004 Thelonious Monk Jazz Competition for vocals)
- ✓ A jazz celebration on Bob Marley's birthday
- ✓ The Miles Davis tribute band, ESP

Seats are all close to the performers, and the show exudes a familial vibe. Without alcohol, audiences come mostly for the music, which creates a respectful atmosphere. For more information on Dizzy's, check out the Web at [www.dizzyssandiego.com](http://www.dizzyssandiego.com).

Flipping through the *San Diego Reader* — the independent weekly that is the authoritative source for arts events — you might find dates for top locals like trumpeters Burnett Anderson and Gilbert Castellanos, Latin jazz band Agua Dulce, and saxophonists Daniel Jackson and Chris Klich.



Another way to tune into the jazz scene in San Diego is by listening to Jazz 88 — the FM radio station broadcasting from San Diego City College. Its signal can be found in most parts of town.

San Diego lures its share of “name” jazz artists. The California Center for the Arts in Escondido (about 20 minutes from downtown San Diego) presents jazz ranging from guitarist Pat Metheny to the Juilliard Jazz Orchestra and the touring stage show “American Big Band.” The 1,500-seat hall is one of the region's finest, in an architecturally magnificent complex designed by architect Charles Moore. To see a stunning picture of the complex and for more info, visit [www.artcenter.org](http://www.artcenter.org).

As if that ain't enough, jazz giants who call San Diego home include saxophonists Charles McPherson and James Moody, and once in a while, you can hear them in San Diego, when they're not touring Europe or performing in New York City.



If traditional jazz is your thing, try the San Diego Thanksgiving Dixieland Jazz Festival with more than 100 bands, produced by the America's Finest City Dixieland Jazz Society ([www.dixielandjazzfestival.org](http://www.dixielandjazzfestival.org)). See Chapter 14 for more details on this festival.

## San Francisco Bay Area

Big time jazz here dates back to clubs like Barbary Coast, where Jelly Roll Morton performed in the 1910s, and to jazz in San Francisco's North Beach, where clubs were jumping in the '50s and '60s.

The region has been home to jazz musicians including pianist Dave Brubeck (who grew up on a ranch in Concord), saxophonist John Handy, vibraphonists Bobby Hutcherson and Cal Tjader, and pianist Earl Hines, who moved to the Bay Area in 1951 to take advantage of the area's traditional jazz revival. For years the Church of St. John Coltrane ([www.coltranechurch.org](http://www.coltranechurch.org)) held forth in San Francisco, using the saxophonist's music as the centerpiece of its services.

Leading places for jazz today include



- ✔ **Yoshi's:** Yoshi's, in Oakland's Jack London Square, is one of the finest clubs in the world, with a comfortable, contemporary interior, great acoustics, and a consistently strong calendar featuring artists like Roy Hargrove, Ahmad Jamal, Chris Potter, Russell Malone, the Mingus Big Band, and McCoy Tyner — sometimes for a residency of a week or more. Not long ago, Tyner played a week with a group including saxophonist Joe Lovano, and a second week had Ravi Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, and other prominent players. You don't often see those kinds of residencies outside of New York City. Check out the hype online at [www.yoshis.com](http://www.yoshis.com).
- ✔ **Pearl's:** Sit down and dine and dig the jazz at this 1930s-style supper club with crystal chandeliers and crisp tablecloths. For more information, visit [www.jazzatpearls.com/jazz/index.html](http://www.jazzatpearls.com/jazz/index.html).
- ✔ **Savanna Jazz:** Owned by educators committed to sustaining jazz, this venue, with soft lighting and rich wood finishes, is a great place to hear live music. Go to [www.savannajazz.com/aboutus.htm](http://www.savannajazz.com/aboutus.htm).

Larger venues with regular jazz include University of California Berkeley's Zellerbach Hall ([tickets.berkeley.edu](http://tickets.berkeley.edu)). Bay Area saxophonist Joshua Redman is curator of San Francisco Jazz, which presents jazz at places such as the following:

- ✔ The Herbst Theatre, [www.sfwmpac.org/herbst/ht\\_index.html](http://www.sfwmpac.org/herbst/ht_index.html)
- ✔ The Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, [www.palaceoffinearts.org](http://www.palaceoffinearts.org)
- ✔ The War Memorial Opera House, [www.sfwmpac.org/operahouse/oh\\_index.html](http://www.sfwmpac.org/operahouse/oh_index.html)

The Bay Area is also strong when it comes to sub-genres of jazz, such as free and Latin jazz. Formed in the '70s, the Rova Saxophone Quartet invented new modes of composition with improvisation. Their famous collaborators include Anthony Braxton, the Kronos Quartet, and John Zorn, while their influences range from John Cage, Charles Ives, and Edgar Varese to Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor. You can catch Rova at a variety of Bay Area festivals and venues and visit their site at [www.rova.org](http://www.rova.org).



If you crave unchained improvisation, the Bay Area has a strong scene you can explore online at [www.bayimproviser.com](http://www.bayimproviser.com).

Thanks to Alice Waters of Chez Panisse (in Berkeley) restaurant fame, the Bay Area has some of the West Coast's best eateries, many of which feature jazz:

- ✓ **Bistro Clement:** The bistro serves French food and light jazz. Call 415-387-6966 for more information.
- ✓ **Enrico's:** This sidewalk café has excellent meals in the tradition of Waters (lots of fresh local ingredients) and jazz most every night. Surf its Web site at [www.enricosidewalkcafe.com](http://www.enricosidewalkcafe.com).

Some of the area's classy old hotels also have jazz, these include

- ✓ Hotel Rex at Union Square, [www.jdvhospitality.com/hotels/hotel/13](http://www.jdvhospitality.com/hotels/hotel/13)
- ✓ Top of the Mark (high in the Mark Hopkins Hotel in downtown San Francisco), [www.topofthemark.com](http://www.topofthemark.com)
- ✓ The View Lounge high in the Marriott Hotel, [www.sfmarriott.com](http://www.sfmarriott.com)
- ✓ Jazz Brunch at the Ritz-Carlton, 415-773-6198

And don't forget the Bay Area's Mother Lode of nearby cities that offer jazz with other adventures, such as the small surf and hippie town of Santa Cruz, known for the waves at Steamer Lane ([www.coastimages.com/spots/steamer.htm](http://www.coastimages.com/spots/steamer.htm)) and the music at Kuumbwa Jazz Center ([www.kuumbwajazz.org](http://www.kuumbwajazz.org)), which catches big name players between Los Angeles and San Francisco. San Jose has the Hedley Club at Hotel de Anza ([www.hoteldeanza.com/hedley.html](http://www.hoteldeanza.com/hedley.html)) and the Temple Lounge (408-288-8518).

## Chapter 19

# Ten Tips for Building and Enjoying a Jazz Collection

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Capturing the story of your life with jazz
  - ▶ Choosing your media and assembling a sound system
  - ▶ Moving with portable music and headphones
  - ▶ Setting up a music space
  - ▶ Caring for your collection
  - ▶ Expanding your collection
- 

**C**ollecting music is, to me, one of life's great pleasures — the hunt, the find, the purchase, the payoff: playing it for the first time. I can't describe what a rush I felt when I stumbled across a vinyl version of the Duke Ellington Orchestra's famous live *Fargo, N.D. 1940* album.

There's only one rule about assembling a great collection of jazz: There are no rules. The music you select is a means of expressing your own emotions, personality, and tastes. The albums and artists you choose, the way you store or display them, the equipment you use, the way you integrate music into your life — these elements help make your personal statement. In this chapter, I give you ten tips for starting a jazz collection and enjoying it to the fullest.

## *Tell Your Own Story with Jazz*

My collection is like a diary of my life. I started collecting music in the '60s. In orange crates is my adolescent vinyl, acquired between the ages of 10 and 20. These records are a mix of rock and jazz: Ahmad Jamal, Miles Davis, Herbie

Hancock, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones, and authentic African Pygmy music on a Smithsonian Jazz Collection my mom gave me.

I can look through my collection and recall with surprising detail the places or emotions associated with certain albums:

- ✔ Miles Davis was the first jazz musician who hooked me. I was 15, and I listened to *Bitches Brew* over and over, mesmerized by Davis's trumpet, fascinated with the dense layers of instruments and sounds around it. New details constantly revealed themselves. Most of my friends had little interest in jazz, or even in Davis's electric jazz rock, and those of us who loved it felt like we were part of a special underground.
- ✔ *Miles in the Sky* was another college revelation. I heard it for the first time in a friend's comfortable wood-paneled living room with hanging spider plants. We were in a mellow mood — listening, not talking — and the music had me floating.
- ✔ Saxophonist Sam Rivers released *Involution* when I was in college, too. *Involution* was a reissue of music recorded in the late '60s, and it took me deep into improvised acoustic jazz.
- ✔ Pianist McCoy Tyner's double album *Atlantis* was partially recorded during a performance I heard at Keystone Korner in San Francisco, and I didn't realize until much later that Tyner was carrying the spirit of his mentor John Coltrane.



If you're just starting a collection, such memories will come to you one day. I find that the music that retains significant meaning to me came into my life in organic, natural ways — I never set out to build a collection. Something I heard on the radio struck a chord, and I went out and bought it. A friend recommended an album, and I took a risk. I started to like an artist, so I worked my way deeper into his history with additional albums. Follow your instincts and find music that speaks to you.

## *Listen to Jazz in Any Medium*

Although most jazz is available on CD, some has never been released in digital format — one good reason to keep an open mind to vinyl LPs and 78s, and even cassettes. I still play cassettes in my car (it handles both cassettes and CDs), although the quality isn't great. As you build your collection, be open to any medium.



Cassettes are delicate. Sound quality fades with too much heat and sun, and tapes get tangled or broken. But cassettes are dirt cheap at garage sales, and you can get a lot of music for your dollar. If you want to add a lot more music to your collection quickly, cassettes are a good way to do it, but they really aren't collectible like vinyl or good-sounding like CDs.



Clean vinyl albums on a decent stereo sound *really* good. Many purists believe that pristine vinyl on a decent turntable amplified by old-school vacuum tubes gives a more real representation of music than CDs or downloaded songs. CDs contain music in digital form, whereas records have a natural range of sound. I think good vinyl sounds better than CDs.

The key to getting good sound from a record is having a clean record, a reasonably good sound system, and a fresh cartridge in your turntable. Some used turntables are collector's items and expensive, but there are affordable new and used units; most new sound systems have a place to plug in a turntable. The cartridge I bought recently (from an online store that specializes in cartridges) cost less than \$50. See the next section for details on assembling a good sound system, including turntables.

Rare vinyl is expensive, but great bargains can be found through garage sales, radio stations, and relatives. A radio station recently sold several boxes of vinyl to a collector for \$100 (I wish I'd been there first), and I inherited a quirky (though not jazz) collection from my grandparents (think Burl Ives and Lawrence Welk) when they moved to a smaller home.

Here are more reasons to build a portion of your music collection with vinyl recordings:

- ✓ **Cost:** Vinyl is cheap. Sometimes you only pay \$2 or \$3 for a vintage jazz album.
- ✓ **Looks:** Vinyl looks great! Many albums are worth buying just for the cover art. In fact, I display my old albums with their black and white photos and cool type styles all over my house. I don't believe that music collections should be hidden away. Visitors to your home should be able to examine your collection.
- ✓ **Mood:** Records hold less music than CDs, and the music is divided into two sides of the album. Often, the two sides have different moods, or the music has been put in a certain order to create a mood or tell a story. If you want a truly authentic experience of music originally released on vinyl, then you should hear it on vinyl.

You also can buy inexpensive hardware that lets you upload vinyl music to your computer, although the process is time-consuming. From there you can download it to your digital player. Some musicians simultaneously release new music as vinyl, CDs, and online digital downloads.



When shopping for CDs, watch for the word *remastered* on the cover. It means the sound of the original record has been cleaned up and optimized for CD. If a title you want isn't on a major label, read a review in a jazz magazine before you buy it. You'd think that digital music on CDs would all sound pristine, but a surprising number of bad CDs with muddy sound are out there.

As with records, your keys to getting good CD sound are a decent sound system and a quality CD. Most of the music released on CDs by major labels sounds good. Specialty labels like Proper and Rhino (see Appendix B for more about them) do a great job of re-releasing vintage jazz in the beautifully packaged box sets with extensive liner notes.

College age or younger music lovers gather most of their music digitally. A laptop computer or mp3 player holds thousands of songs. They can be arranged into categories by style or artist or into playlists by mood or theme. CDs offer better quality sound than digital downloads, but most listeners can't tell much difference.

## *Put Together a Good Sound System*

You can get decent sound on a budget starting from \$100. I've heard turntables that cost \$20,000 and systems that run well into six figures. On the other hand, an mp3 player or portable CD player plugged into one of those \$50 computer speaker kits from a discount store pumps out surprisingly good sound, too.

Here are some basic sound system options:

- ✓ **20–60gb mp3 player, with computer or mp3 speaker system:** Computer sound systems with a subwoofer for bass are designed for loud video gaming, which means they also have good volume and range for music. An mp3-based system has huge capacity and is very portable if you buy a compact speaker module made for your player. See the next section for more details on mobile music systems.
- ✓ **All-in-one compact stereo:** Sony, Pioneer, and other companies make these systems, and the sound is surprisingly good. They have enough power to pump out bass, and they come with decent speakers. I had a system with a built-in 25-CD changer, and it lasted for several years.



Set your multi-CD changer or mp3 player on random or shuffle, and enjoy the sound of a radio station programmed by you. My 300-CD changer in this mode comes up with combinations I never could have imagined. French pop to Art Ensemble of Chicago to Outkast to punk rock? Anything's possible.



- ✓ **Component system:** Buy a receiver, CD/DVD player, two or more speakers, and a subwoofer. If you're willing to do some research, you can handpick each item and get great deals from online sources. I bought a refurbished Denon receiver for about \$400 (less than half the list price), JBL bookshelf speakers and subwoofer for about \$400 online, and a 300-CD changer from a discount chain for less than \$200.

Stereo or multi-channel? If your system is only for music, get a really good stereo receiver. If the system doubles as your home theater for high-definition television programs and DVDs, get a multi-channel receiver. For music only, you get more bang for the buck with stereo. You need only two speakers (and maybe a subwoofer for full bass).

How much power do you need? Like mileage ratings for cars, power ratings for audio equipment aren't accurate or comparable. Generally speaking, though, more power produces better sound. Even at modest volumes, you need some oomph to push out good sound across the range from low bass to high trumpet squeals.

- ✓ **Old-school system:** The best sound I've ever heard came from an analog and tube-driven system (glass vacuum tubes look like cylindrical light bulbs with a filament that glows inside). I'm not an expert, but you can buy vintage or new equipment. There are Web sites, books, and magazines devoted to this equipment. Most cities have at least one store that specializes in this "audiophile" equipment. Before you even think of buying it, take some of your favorite records and CDs and go listen to them in a store. If the sound doesn't blow you away, stick with less expensive and more reliable digital equipment.



As if you don't already have enough sources of music, here are three more:

- ✓ **Cable television:** My cable provider streams 40 channels of music that I can run through my sound system.
- ✓ **Satellite radio:** A subscription to XM or Sirius satellite radio costs about \$13 a month, and portable receivers bring music into your car, living room, or hotel suite.
- ✓ **Web sites:** Web sites such as [live365.com](http://live365.com) offer free Internet radio you can stream through your computer and into your sound system.



Avoid those bargain price package-deal home theater systems. They're okay for watching movies at modest volume but not if your primary purpose is to play jazz, with all of its nuances, at all sorts of volumes.



In my opinion, you *must* own a turntable. If you're assembling a sound system from scratch, be sure it can accommodate a turntable. Some of the less expensive systems don't have a place to plug in a turntable, but most component systems do. You can pick up a used turntable at a garage sale or

swap meet for about \$25. You might also find one in classified ads or in a store specializing in used equipment. Throw on a new cartridge for \$50 or so (replace the cartridge at least once a year because moist air, dust, and regular use take their toll), and you're set. If you want a quality turntable, expect to pay \$400 or more.

## Go Mobile

If you want to live with music, you can take it anywhere. A laptop computer lets you listen while you log onto the Internet and get some work done in a coffeehouse. An mp3 player lets you carry up to 15,000 songs (depending on memory size) in your pocket, to the gym, on a walk, and in your car (with a special transmitter, it plays wirelessly through your FM radio).



Large-capacity mp3 players store music on hard drives with moving parts that can fail. Entry-level models, on the other hand, use flash memory with no moving parts. It's a more stable medium, and the capacity of flash memory cards is growing.

Now that you have your player for music on the go, check out online music stores that are actually quite reasonable sources for all your music downloads. You pay about \$1 per song, and you buy only the songs you like. I've purchased one or two tunes from an album that would have cost \$12. The downside to some online music stores is they make it difficult to transfer music from an old computer to a new one or to store a copy of your library in case your computer crashes. But there are books that explain these tech tricks; I recommend *iPod & iTunes For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, by Tony Bove and Cheryl Rhodes (Wiley).

## Use Quality Headphones



There are at least two reasons why you need a good set of headphones: to hear music loud and clear without ruining your ears, and to have a more intimate experience of jazz. Believe me; you notice details in the music that you never heard before.

Research is showing that kids who listen constantly to mp3 players are already losing some hearing. Online, you can find information about the maximum volumes tolerated by human hearing and headphones that produce clean, healthy sound. Use a search engine like Google or Yahoo! to get some information on digital players and the risk of hearing loss.



Cordless headphones are great for wandering around while you listen. If you buy a set, be sure the wireless frequency doesn't interfere with your wireless phone or wireless Internet connections. When in doubt, ask the salesperson at the local audio store which headphones are best for your needs.

## *Create a Music Space*



With all the new compact and portable audio equipment, there's hardly a need to have a dedicated space in your home for music, but I recommend that you create one because it's easier to organize your music and arrange the space and equipment for perfect sound. Here are some ideas to start you off:

- ✓ Get shelves to house your current collection with room for expansion. Online sources including [www.boltz.com](http://www.boltz.com) sell some great shelving systems.
- ✓ Collect posters, photos, and albums with cool covers and display them.
- ✓ Print high-resolution photos — some of them by famous photographers — of jazz musicians from the Internet.
- ✓ Use a space that doesn't get too much through traffic, that's not close to other noisy parts of the house, such as the children's television room or an exercise room.
- ✓ Add comfortable seating — a couple of recliners or modern chairs are better than a squishy sofa.

## *Discover New Finds from Other Jazz Fans*



Building your collection is all about communication and awareness. Every day brings opportunities to find out about another jazz musician or a great band. And everyone you meet has a different take on music. Here are some tips on how to discover jazz:

- ✓ Communicate with family, friends, and coworkers who share a love of jazz. I work in a university music department where professors and students tell me about an album, artist, or song almost every day. I write it down or order it online immediately, before I forget. When someone says they like a certain artist, ask them to recommend a specific album.
- ✓ When you hear a live band in a club, go up afterward and ask what they're listening to.

- ✓ At the record store, find out what's new on a clerk's mp3 playlist.
- ✓ Call your local jazz radio station and ask a deejay or program director to recommend a few artists or titles.
- ✓ Surf the Web and when you find a fan or musician Web site, e-mail them, and ask for recommendations. Sometimes a well-known jazz musician may even respond.

## Do Some Research for Jazz Gems



I hate to say it, but you've got to do some homework to build your collection and your knowledge of jazz. If you love jazz, it's not really work, and the detailed facts you find in books and magazines greatly enhance your enjoyment of jazz. It's one thing to love an album and be able to name some of the tunes. It's a more profound experience to know when and where the album was recorded, what that artist was up to at that point in his life and career, how he connected with a particular producer or player, or why he had difficulty getting the album made. Try the following tips:

- ✓ Research includes extensive reading. I collect books obsessively, even if I never read them all the way through. Some books are great quick references. I have several books about individual artists. Sometimes there's one chapter that makes the book worth having. My mom works in a public library's used bookstore and finds used gems for me. I troll used bookstores for books on jazz history, styles, and theory.
- ✓ In most cities colleges, adult schools, music societies, libraries, and other groups present lectures about jazz. Sometimes they have a musician talk about his music. Look in your local paper or call your local jazz radio station to find out about them. Hearing someone explain jazz out loud, with his own personal opinions, adds another dimension to your appreciation.
- ✓ Colleges that offer a music major usually have great music libraries. Sometimes a non-student can get a library card. Even without a card, you can spend time there reading books or listening to CDs from their collection. Libraries that check out CDs offer a great (cheap!) way to hear more music.
- ✓ Jazz magazines are a good way to keep up with what's new. I also order old magazines from eBay, like the French periodical from the '50s with Louis Armstrong on the cover that I recently purchased for \$7.
- ✓ Millions of Web sites feature jazz playlists and reviews. Radio station and music Web sites offer reviews. Searching for an artist on a Web site like

Google or entering a name on eBay may turn up titles you never knew about. For instance, Barney Kessel is one of my favorite guitarists, and I constantly discover more recordings he plays on.

- ✓ Many albums include lengthy liner notes about an artist. Read this fine print and you may discover other artists and albums.

Appendix C is full of jazz resources like books, magazines, and Web sites.

## Edit and Upgrade Your Collection with Care



A collection is only as good as your ability to edit and upgrade. Build a collection that is as finely tuned from top to bottom as an expensive sports car. The only way to do this is to constantly edit and upgrade.

- ✓ Go through a section of your music every few weeks and find the stuff you don't listen to at all. Trade it in at your local record store or sell it online, and use the money to buy new music that suits your evolving tastes.
- ✓ Acquire some famous recordings for each musician as well as rarities and albums by other musicians that feature your musician. Include some live recordings too. There's no vibe like the live vibe, and these can capture an artist at his or her best. (See Appendix A for more than 100 titles that I recommend.)
- ✓ Use your growing knowledge of jazz to expand your collection at lower cost. For instance, you might score a prized CD or record at a bargain price, and resell it at a profit or trade it for something else you want.
- ✓ Keep your eyes open. A lot of recordings are out of print; sometimes you can get a collector to make a recording for you, or you can find the album if you keep a lookout for weeks or months.
- ✓ Keep a wish list of titles. Some Web sites allow you to keep a wish list, and then they notify you if a title comes in.

## Protect Your Stuff



I confess: I'm a chronic CD abuser. I say this with a smile, but the truth is I've ruined dozens of CDs by letting them slide around in my car or shoulder bag. You need a system for organizing and transporting your collection, and for keeping it safe from the elements. Try out these suggestions:

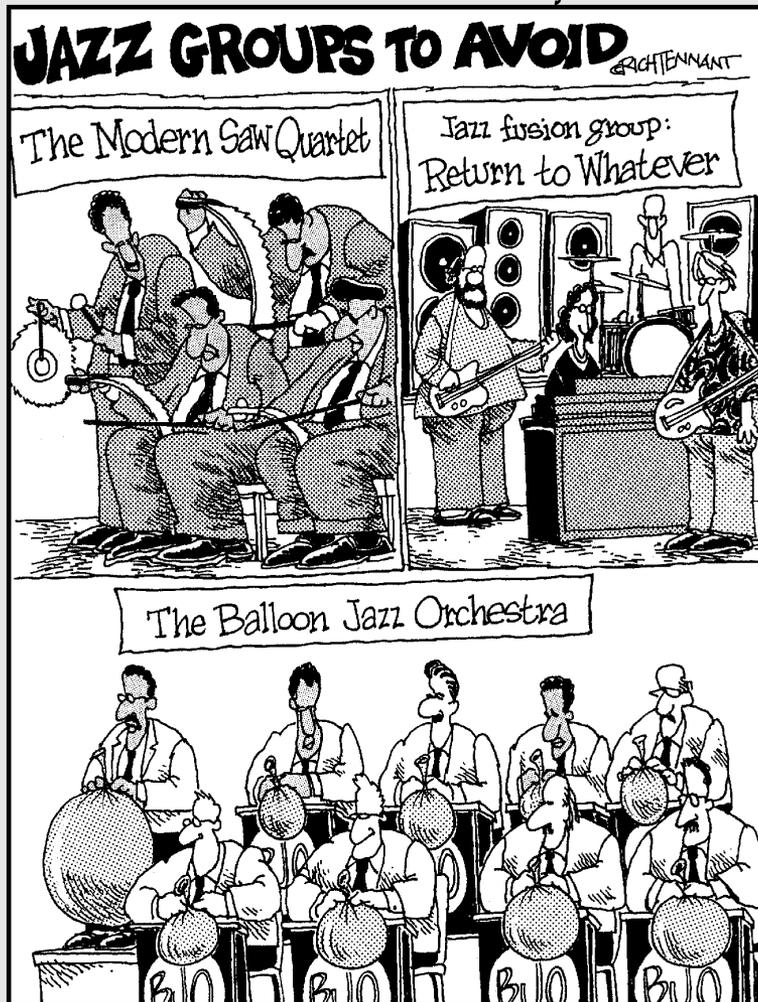
- ✔ Records and CDs need individual protection. Store them in their original jackets, or buy a CD case with sleeves for each disc.
- ✔ Don't expose CDs or records to direct sunlight or to extreme heat or cold. In the old days, the sun warped many of my records.
- ✔ Dust is your enemy. Keep it away from discs and records and your sound system.
- ✔ If you live near the ocean, don't put your equipment near an open window. The salty moisture takes its toll by corroding metal parts.
- ✔ Keep your turntable covered. Never plug in or unplug components while the system is on. Don't crank the volume up all the way. The distortion may shred your speakers. I've done it.
- ✔ Clean CDs and records with water and a clean cloth, or purchase a special solution made for this purpose. Some CD scratches can be buffed out with inexpensive disc-repair tools. I've brought many CDs back to life.

# Part VI

# Appendixes

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



## *In this part . . .*

**Y**ou've come a long way, baby, and you deserve a reward. To tantalize your musical palate even further, I present the appendixes — my gift to you. You unwrap a list of more than 100 recommended recordings, a guide to trustworthy jazz labels, and resources for furthering your love of jazz.

## Appendix A

# More Than 100 Recommended Jazz Titles

Your jazz collection should reflect your personal tastes and path into the music, but in this appendix, I suggest more than 100 titles worthy of inclusion in any collection that can get you started on building your music library. Multi-CD sets of up to three CDs count as a single title, and I haven't even included larger box-set compilations. If you can afford them, box sets are often a good place to start because you're getting more music at one time.

I've tried to include several less-common choices here that demonstrate jazz's richness and a significant amount of early jazz performed on clarinet and cornet (the trumpet's predecessor) — jazz's original leading instruments. (Chapter 4 has general information about the instruments of jazz.) I leave the newest music up to you and the critics. The selections in this appendix have stood the test of time.

## *Early Jazz and New Orleans Jazz*

Gathering CDs from jazz's formative years gives you a chance to build your collecting skills. You need foundation titles by key players like Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton and ragtime composed by Scott Joplin and others, but after you have a dozen or so CDs of music by well-known heroes, you can explore musicians such as guitarist Eddie Lang and clarinetist Jimmie Noone. Check out Chapter 5 for more details about early jazz.

- ✓ Louis Armstrong, *The Hot Fives and Sevens Box Set* (JSP)
- ✓ Sidney Bechet, *Centenary Celebration — 1997: Great Original Performances 1924 to 1943* (Louisiana Red Hot Records)
- ✓ Bix Beiderbecke, *Bix Beiderbecke, Vol. 1: Singin' the Blues* (Columbia)
- ✓ Johnnie Dodds, *Wild Man Blues* (ASV Living Era)
- ✓ Earl Hines, *The Early Years: 1923–1942* (Jazz Legends)
- ✓ James P. Johnson, *King of Stride Piano 1918–1944* (Giants of Jazz)
- ✓ Scott Joplin, *Greatest Hits* (RCA)

- ✓ Eddie Lang and Joe Venuti, *The New York Sessions 1926–1935* (JSP)
- ✓ Jelly Roll Morton, *Birth of the Hot* (RCA/Bluebird)
- ✓ Jimmie Noone, *Apex Blues* (GRP)
- ✓ King Oliver, *The Quintessence/1923–1928* (Fremaux & Associates)
- ✓ The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, *The First Jazz Recordings* (Timeless)
- ✓ Fats Waller, *The Fats Waller Piano Solos/Turn On The Heat* (RCA)

## Swing and Big Band

Great big bands ruled the golden era of the 1930s and 1940s; within each of them were incredible soloists. The swing era was also important as the era in which small groups emerged as a streamlined format for soloists. Head to Chapter 6 for details about this type of jazz.

- ✓ Count Basie Orchestra, *The Essential Count Basie* (Delta)
- ✓ Jimmy Blanton, on Duke Ellington's *Solos, Duets and Trios* (RCA)
- ✓ Cab Calloway, *Are You Hep to the Jive?* (Sony)
- ✓ Charlie Christian, *Solo Flight (1939–1941)* (Jazz Classics)
- ✓ Roy Eldridge, *Little Jazz: Trumpet Giant* (Proper)
- ✓ Duke Ellington, *The Blanton-Webster Band* (RCA)
- ✓ Slim Gaillard, *Slim's Jam* (Drive Archive)
- ✓ Benny Goodman, *Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert* (Sony)
- ✓ Coleman Hawkins, *Body and Soul* (RCA)
- ✓ Fletcher Henderson, *The Fletcher Henderson Story, A Study in Frustration* (Sony)
- ✓ Woody Herman, *Thundering Herds 1945–1947* (Sony)
- ✓ Johnny Hodges, *Passion Flower* (RCA)
- ✓ Lonnie Johnson, *Steppin' on the Blues* (Sony)
- ✓ Jo Jones, *Essential Jo Jones* (Vanguard)
- ✓ Jimmie Lunceford, *Rhythm Is Our Business* (ASV Living Era)
- ✓ Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli, *Quintette du Hot Club de France: 25 Classics (1934–1940)* (ASV Living Era)
- ✓ Artie Shaw, *Greatest Hits* (RCA)
- ✓ Chick Webb and His Orchestra, *Standing Tall* (Drive Archive)
- ✓ Ben Webster, *Big Ben* (Proper)
- ✓ Lester Young, *The Lester Young Story* (Proper)

## Bebop and Hard Bop

Bebop was invented in the 1940s by gifted soloists who performed in small groups. From that point forward, jazz shifted toward small groups (a few big bands explored the new styles too). See Chapter 7 for more details about bebop and its offshoots.

- ✓ Cannonball Adderley, *Things Are Getting Better* (Original Jazz Classics)
- ✓ Art Blakey, *Orgy in Rhythm* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Clifford Brown, *The Beginning and the End* (Sony)
- ✓ Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, and Max Roach, *Money Jungle* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Art Farmer and Benny Golson, *Meet the Jazztet* (Universal)
- ✓ Erroll Garner, *Body and Soul* (Sony)
- ✓ Dizzy Gillespie, *The Complete RCA Victor Recordings: 1937–1949* (RCA)
- ✓ Dexter Gordon, *Bouncin' with Dex* (Steeplechase)
- ✓ Jimmy Hamilton, *Sweet But Hot* (Drive Archive)
- ✓ Bobby Hutcherson, *Dialogue* (Blue Note)
- ✓ J.J. Johnson, *The Eminent Jay Jay Johnson, Vols. 1 and 2* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Barney Kessel, *The Poll Winners* (OJC)
- ✓ Yusef Lateef, *Every Village Has a Song: The Yusef Lateef Anthology* (Rhino)
- ✓ Joe Marsala, *Joe Marsala 1936–1942* (Classics)
- ✓ Pat Martino, *All Sides Now* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Jackie McLean, *Jackknife* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Charles Mingus, *Mingus Ah Um* (Sony)
- ✓ Thelonious Monk, *Best of the Blue Note Years* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Oliver Nelson, *The Blues and the Abstract Truth* (GRP)
- ✓ Charlie Parker, *Boss Bird* (Proper)
- ✓ Joe Pass, *Virtuoso* (Pablo)
- ✓ Oscar Pettiford, *Another One* (Rhino)
- ✓ Bud Powell, *The Amazing Bud Powell, Vol. 1* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Max Roach, *Percussion Bitter Sweet* (GRP)
- ✓ Sonny Rollins, *Saxophone Colossus* (OJC)
- ✓ Sonny Stitt, *Kaleidoscope* (OJC)

## Cool Jazz

Cool jazz was largely a West Coast phenomenon named for its understated, relaxed sound. Check out Chapter 7 for the scoop on cool jazz.

- ✓ Chet Baker, *My Funny Valentine* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Miles Davis, *Birth of the Cool* (Capitol)
- ✓ Miles Davis, *Miles and Coltrane Live* (Sony)
- ✓ Lou Donaldson, *Blues Walk* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Bill Evans, *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* (OJC)
- ✓ Jimmy Giuffrè, *Complete 1947–1952 Master Takes* (Definitive Classics)
- ✓ Herbie Hancock, *Takin' Off* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Wes Montgomery, *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery* (OJC)
- ✓ Gerry Mulligan, *The Original Quartet with Chet Baker* (Blue Note)

## Singers

The best jazz singers are sensitive interpreters of songs and brilliant improvisers. Of course, singers are only as good as the songs they sing. Luckily, they can choose from hundreds of jazz standards with catchy melodies and lyrics. Also make sure to include music by blues-flavored 1920s vocalists like Bessie Smith, as well as bebop-era music by vocal innovators such as Jon Hendricks. Finally, add some examples of great singers collaborating with great musicians, such as Sarah Vaughan with trumpeter Clifford Brown. Chapters 6 and 7 have information about talented singers.

- ✓ Ella Fitzgerald, *The Best of the Songbooks: The Collection* (Polygram)
- ✓ Billie Holiday, *The Quintessential Billie Holiday, Vol. 5: 1937–1938* (Sony)
- ✓ Sheila Jordan, *Portrait of Sheila* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, *Everybody's Boppin'* (Sony)
- ✓ Carmen McRae and Betty Carter, *Carmen McRae–Betty Carter Duets* (Polygram)
- ✓ Anita O'Day, *Anita O'Day Sings the Winners* (Polygram)
- ✓ King Pleasure, *Moody's Mood for Love* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Frank Sinatra, *Come Fly with Me* (Capitol)
- ✓ Bessie Smith, *The Complete Recordings, Vol. 1* (Sony)
- ✓ Mel Tormé, *That's All* (Sony)
- ✓ Sarah Vaughan, *The Ultimate Sarah Vaughan* (Polygram)

## Avant Garde Jazz and Free Jazz

Beginning in the 1960s, jazz broke free from earlier conventions. Even if you don't like some of this music at first, I suggest that you keep listening. You may eventually relate to the pure waves of emotion. Go to Chapter 8 for the lowdown on these jazz genres.

- ✓ Art Ensemble of Chicago, *Nice Guys* (ECM)
- ✓ Alvin Batiste, *Late* (Sony)
- ✓ Anthony Braxton, *3 Compositions of New Jazz* (Delmark)
- ✓ Ornette Coleman, *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (Atlantic)
- ✓ John Coltrane, *Giant Steps* (Atlantic)
- ✓ Duke Ellington and John Coltrane, *Duke Ellington and John Coltrane* (GRP)
- ✓ Pierre Favre, *Singing Drums* (ECM)
- ✓ Charlie Haden, *Liberation Music Orchestra* (Impulse!)
- ✓ Marc Johnson, *Bass Desires* (ECM)
- ✓ Sam Rivers, *Contours* (Blue Note)
- ✓ Sun Ra, *Atlantis* (Evidence)
- ✓ Henry Threadgill and Very Very Circus, *Spirit of Nuff . . . Nuff* (Black Saint)
- ✓ World Saxophone Quartet, *Plays Duke Ellington* (Nonesuch)

## Electric Jazz

Electric jazz blossomed in the late 1960s and 1970s. This list consists of musicians who made dramatic electric jazz with the subtlety and complexity of earlier unplugged jazz. Check out Chapter 8 to plug into electric jazz.

- ✓ Philip Catherine, *Moods Vols. 1 and 2* (Criss Cross)
- ✓ Chick Corea and Return to Forever, *Light as a Feather* (Polygram)
- ✓ Miles Davis, *Bitches Brew* (Sony)
- ✓ Herbie Hancock, *Thrust* (Sony)
- ✓ Mahavishnu Orchestra, *Birds of Fire* (Sony)
- ✓ Grover Washington, Jr., *Mister Magic* (Motown)
- ✓ Tony Williams and Lifetime, *Emergency!* (Polygram)

## Latin Jazz

Some of my favorite jazz is Latin jazz. The combination of beautiful melodies, smart improvisations, and exotic rhythms is irresistible. Find more details about Latin jazz in Chapter 9.

- ✓ Airtó Moreira, *Virgin Land* (CTI)
- ✓ Astrud Gilberto, *Look at the Rainbow* (PGD/Verve)
- ✓ João Gilberto, *Amoroso/Brasil* (Warner Brothers)
- ✓ Machito and His Afro-Cuban Orchestra, *Mucho Macho Machito: The Complete Columbia Masters* (Sony)
- ✓ Chico O'Farrill, *The Heart of a Legend* (Milestone)
- ✓ Tito Puente, *El Rey* (Concord Picante)
- ✓ Poncho Sanchez, *Para Todos* (Concord Picante)

## Jazz from the '80s and '90s

Seasoned musicians continued to make great jazz late in their careers, while younger players took the torch from them. Head to Chapter 10 to find out more about the recent past, present, and future of jazz.

- ✓ Ray Anderson, *Alligatory Band* (Enja)
- ✓ Louie Bellson, *Their Time Was the Greatest* (Concord)
- ✓ Benny Carter and Phil Woods, *My Man Benny, My Man Phil* (Music Masters)
- ✓ James Carter, *Conversin' with the Elders* (Atlantic)
- ✓ Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, *Groove Shop* (Capri)
- ✓ Eddie Daniels, *Beautiful Love* (Shanachie)
- ✓ Kenny Garrett, *Songbook* (Warner)
- ✓ Charlie Haden and Hank Jones, *Steal Away* (Polygram)
- ✓ Milt Hinton, *Old Man Time* (Chiaroscuro)
- ✓ Branford Marsalis, *Trio Jeepy* (Sony)
- ✓ Wynton Marsalis, *Blood on the Fields* (Sony)
- ✓ James Moody, *Young at Heart* (Warner)
- ✓ Marcus Roberts, *Alone with Three Giants* (Novus)
- ✓ Steve Turre, *Steve Turre* (Polygram)

## Appendix B

# Trustworthy Jazz Labels

This list is by no means complete, but it includes a few labels you can count on for high-quality liner notes, packaging, recording, and reproduction. As you build a jazz collection and gain knowledge of the music's history, you may want to peruse the catalogs of these labels. You may find one or two that are especially well stocked with the kind of music you crave.

All labels have Web sites that list titles and let you order a catalog; I've included the addresses in this appendix. Many of these sites are multimedia events, with plenty of photos, samples of music, and artist bios.

## *Black Saint*

Leave it to those tasteful Europeans to make the most of some great American music. The Italian label Black Saint, based in Milan, Italy, has released first-rate jazz (and improvisational and experimental music) for more than 30 years. Today it's run by Flavio Bonandrini, son of its longtime chief Giovanni.

A leader in free and avant garde jazz (see Chapter 8 for details about these genres), Black Saint has released fringy jazz by several key players:

- ✓ The World Saxophone Quartet
- ✓ Lester Bowie, trumpeter
- ✓ Anthony Braxton, saxophonist
- ✓ David Murray, saxophonist and bass clarinetist
- ✓ Hamiett Bluiett, saxophonist
- ✓ George Russell, composer
- ✓ Archie Shepp, saxophonist
- ✓ Sun Ra, bandleader

For more information on the Black Saint label, visit [www.blacksaint.com](http://www.blacksaint.com).

## Blue Note Records

Founded in 1939 by Alfred Lion, Blue Note has a long, illustrious track record when it comes to delivering blue-chip jazz. The label has also closely kept to Lion's original mission of capturing the essential "impulse" of "hot jazz or swing" — not its "commercial adornments." In other words, Lion was a purist who worshipped authentic jazz and wasn't interested in modifying it for broader commercial appeal.

Lion's earliest recordings include pianists Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis. Blue Note later recorded several famed artists:

- ✓ Sidney Bechet, clarinetist
- ✓ Earl Hines, pianist
- ✓ Charlie Christian, guitarist
- ✓ Tadd Dameron, pianist
- ✓ Fats Navarro, trumpeter
- ✓ Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk, pianists

Blue Note hit a high mark during the '50s and '60s with big names:

- ✓ Drummer Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers
- ✓ James Moody, Dexter Gordon, and Sonny Rollins, saxophonists
- ✓ Horace Silver, pianist
- ✓ Miles Davis and Clifford Brown, trumpeters

Revived and restored to its original mission in 1985, the Blue Note label has developed new talents such as singers Kurt Elling and Cassandra Wilson. Check out Blue Note online: [www.bluenote.com](http://www.bluenote.com).

## Bluebird Jazz

Bluebird made its mark with bargain Depression-era prices (35 cents per record) at a time when the going rate was 75 cents. Today the label (revived in the 1970s after being dormant since 1950) is flying high with an ongoing stream of reissues from its vast catalog.

Artists who have a history with the label include

- ✓ Benny Goodman, clarinetist
- ✓ Jelly Roll Morton, pianist
- ✓ Artie Shaw, clarinetist
- ✓ Frank Sinatra, singer
- ✓ Louis Armstrong, trumpeter
- ✓ Fats Waller, pianist
- ✓ Eliane Elias, pianist and singer
- ✓ Tom Harrell, trumpeter

Visit [www.bluebirdjazz.com](http://www.bluebirdjazz.com) for a look at this label and for recent news about its artists.

## *Concord Music Group*

Founded by late jazz lover Carl Jefferson, Concord now also includes the labels of Fantasy, Milestone, Pablo, and Prestige, making it one of jazz's prestige labels, with a catalog that includes hundreds of artists, including

- ✓ Ray Brown, bassist
- ✓ Dave Brubeck, pianist
- ✓ Jesse Davis, saxophonist
- ✓ Eric Dolphy, saxophonist
- ✓ Chris Potter, saxophonist
- ✓ Django Reinhardt, guitarist

The label also includes Concord Picante, the Latin division, which offers music by Tito Puente, Poncho Sanchez, and Cal Tjader (see Chapter 9 for details on Latin jazz). This label's Web site is [www.aent.com](http://www.aent.com).

## *Proper Music*

Proper is a U.K. label that's become a leader in handsome boxed sets devoted to Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, Ben Webster, and other greats. The boxes and CD jackets come in bright colors with '50s-inspired designs that look like something from the Jetsons. They feature fun photos of the artists — often they're smiling, which is a pleasant alternative to the

usual brooding portraits. Proper's box sets include booklets that set the industry standard. They're often 50 pages or more and contain biography, colorful stories, musical notes, and band lineups.

Check out the great graphics and extensive catalog at Proper's online store: [www.propermusic.com](http://www.propermusic.com).

## *Rhino Records*

Rhino's debut release was a live performance at its Los Angeles record store by singer Larry "Wild Man" Fischer who recorded on a \$29 cassette tape machine. Since then, the label has found its niche by releasing previously unavailable recordings by important artists, sometimes acquiring cuts from a variety of other labels.

Rhino Records is known for great packaging and liner notes that give biographical and musical details. This valuable source of reissues includes music from Mose Allison, Art Blakey, Gary Burton, Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry, John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, Art Farmer, and Roswell Rudd.

Head to [www.rhino.com](http://www.rhino.com) to see if it has the CD you've been hunting for.

## *Sony Music USA*

Sony wasn't around in the early years of jazz (the company was founded in 1946), but it has become a major jazz label by acquiring Columbia, the long-time home of Miles Davis, and Legacy, a major jazz label founded in 1990 to reissue classic jazz from old labels like Brunswick, Okeh, and Vocalion. Today, Sony offers music by dozens of jazz musicians, from Count Basie, Chet Baker, and Sidney Bechet, to Machito, Mahavishnu Orchestra, Wayne Shorter, and Art Tatum.

Visit [www.sonymusic.com](http://www.sonymusic.com).

## *Telarc International*

In recent years, Telarc has become one of the leaders in releasing both historical and new jazz, with a catalog that includes

- ✓ Count Basie, bandleader and pianist
- ✓ Ray Brown, bassist
- ✓ Dave Brubeck, pianist
- ✓ Michel Camilo, pianist
- ✓ Cyrus Chestnut, pianist
- ✓ Dizzy Gillespie, trumpeter

Go to [www.telarc.com](http://www.telarc.com) and check out the list of artists on their jazz label.

## Ubiquity Records

Hip music including acid jazz (by original groove masters from the '60s and '70s, as well as new young players) and Latin jazz. Ubiquity also issues the Cubop series (including *Viva Cubop, Vols. 1-3*) highlighting the Cuban-bebop connection (check out Chapter 9 for details on Cubop). Ubiquity's compilations are a great way to score some rare tracks and get a taste of some fantastic artists before committing to entire albums.

Ubiquity artists include

- ✓ Eddie Harris
- ✓ Ivan "Boogaloo" Jones
- ✓ The Pharaohs

Check out [www.ubiquityrecords.com](http://www.ubiquityrecords.com) to see if you can locate the rare finds you've been craving.

## Verve Music Group

Verve, a longtime leading jazz label, is a part of Universal Music Group. Verve includes the GRP and Impulse! labels. The combined catalog is thick with phenomenal jazz, primarily from the 1950s forward.

Verve Records was founded by Norman Granz in 1956 to oversee his past and future jazz recordings. In the '40s, Granz had made his name by creating the Jazz at the Philharmonic series, which presented jazz in classical concert halls. His first recordings were of Philharmonic concerts (the *Complete Jazz*

*at the Philharmonic on Verve* is a 10-CD set that captures the best of this music, with performances by Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, Lester Young, and countless others). Granz was the first to realize the market for live recordings that would bring the excitement and extended solos of concert performances to home listeners.

After Granz sold Verve to MGM in 1960, producer Creed Taylor kept the creative vibe going, recording jazz by saxophonist Stan Getz (including Getz's popular bossa nova collaborations with Brazilian singer Joao Gilberto), guitarist Wes Montgomery, and vibraphonist Cal Tjader.

Other stellar names under the Verve umbrella include

- ✔ Cannonball Adderley, saxophonist
- ✔ Louis Armstrong, trumpeter
- ✔ Benny Carter, saxophonist and trumpeter
- ✔ Betty Carter, singer
- ✔ John Coltrane, saxophonist
- ✔ Dizzy Gillespie, trumpeter
- ✔ Shirley Horn, singer
- ✔ Bud Powell, pianist

Visit these musicians and more at [www.vervemusicgroup.com](http://www.vervemusicgroup.com).

## Appendix C

# Resources for Further Jazz Enlightenment

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**I**f you've read the rest of this book (or even if you haven't), you may want to expand on your jazz basics and start building a collection by seeking new sources of information. Check out this appendix for starters!

### Books

***The All Music Guide to Jazz, Fourth Edition (Backbeat):*** Edited by Michael Erlewine, with Vladimir Bogdanov, Chris Woodstra, and Scott Yanow. The authoritative guide to recorded jazz with reviews of more than 18,000 albums, as well as essays, lists of key players, profiles, and timelines.

***American Musicians: 56 Portraits in Jazz (Oxford University):*** By Whitney Balliett. Published in 1978, Balliett's initial survey of top jazz players. Out of print but worth hunting for in used bookstores.

***American Musicians II: Seventy-Two Portraits in Jazz (Oxford University):*** By Whitney Balliett. More great writing on jazz musicians from the gifted *New Yorker* magazine writer.

***American Singers: Twenty-Seven Portraits in Song (Oxford University):*** By Whitney Balliett. Balliett, longtime writer for the *New Yorker* magazine, profiles 27 of jazz's leading vocalists. Balliett is a solid and sensitive writer whose essays attain a literary quality seldom found among music scribes.

***Bass Line: The Stories and Photographs of Milt Hinton (Temple University):*** By Milt Hinton and David Berger. Hinton is one of the music's most prolific and inventive bassists with a career spanning seven decades. This book proves that he's also an excellent photographer. The black-and-white photos capture dozens of jazz greats in private, behind-the-scenes moments that only a fellow jazzman would be privileged to observe.

***Beneath the Underdog: His World as Composed by Mingus (Vintage):*** By Charles Mingus. Wild, colorful, possibly part figment of the great bassist's imagination, this book is nonetheless an all-time literary classic of jazz loaded with sweat, tears, passion, sex, and the struggles of one of the 20th century's most inventive jazzmen.

***Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker (Da Capo):*** By Robert Reisner. Passionate, colorful memories of Parker and his music from dozens of folks who heard and/or knew Parker.

***Bird Lives! The High Life & Hard Times of Charlie (Yardbird) Parker (Da Capo):*** By Ross Russell. Russell, who also produced some of Parker's best recordings (on the Dial label), shares an insider's view of Parker.

***Bird's Diary (Sanctuary):*** By Ken Vail. Some fascinating details about Parker's extraordinary, 10-year-long creative prime.

***The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History (University of California):*** By Scott DeVeaux. Containing more details than most beginning jazz listeners may comprehend, this book is an essential in your library if you pursue an in-depth knowledge of jazz. DeVeaux, a music professor at the University of Virginia, gives one of the most thoughtful social, musical, historical, and theoretical accounts of this vital form of jazz.

***Celebrating Bird: The Triumph of Charlie Parker (Da Capo):*** By Gary Giddins. Focusing on music (instead of Parker's self-destructive habits), this book looks at the man who some say was jazz's greatest creative force.

***Coltrane: Chasin' the Trane (Da Capo):*** By J.C. Thomas. A sensitive chronicle of the life of the late great jazz saxophonist. Thomas's biography includes comments from several of Coltrane's contemporaries, as well as insightful sections from various letters.

***Django: The Life and Music of a Gypsy Legend (Oxford University):*** By Michael Dregni. Fat, rich bio of the genius guitarist.

***Django Reinhardt (Da Capo):*** By Charles Delaunay. Who better to tell the story of the great Belgian gypsy guitarist (whose career was based in France) than one of France's leading jazz critics?

***Drummin' Men: The Heartbeat of Jazz: The Bebop Years (Oxford University):*** By Burt Korall. If you want to learn a bunch about top timekeepers and lesser known legends of drums, this is the book for you. Korall is a jazz drummer whose writing keeps you spellbound.

***Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development (Oxford University):*** By Gunther Schuller. Schuller, who's written several excellent books analyzing jazz, gives one of the most thorough accounts of jazz's birth. His cool, logical dissection of the music rings true and accurate.

***Encyclopedia of Jazz (Da Capo):*** By Leonard Feather, et al. This work spans several volumes covering various periods. Feather, a musician and composer who was one of the first to write intelligently about jazz, was also among the first to publish authoritative reference books on the music.

***Good Morning Blues: The Autobiography of Count Basie (Da Capo):*** By Albert Murray. Detailed chronicle of this top big-band leader and pianist.

***The History of Jazz (Oxford University):*** By Ted Gioia. The author's version of the music's development is thoughtful, detailed, and well written.

***In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz (Louisiana State University):*** By Donald Marquis. Beginning in the 1890s in New Orleans, trumpeter Bolden led what many historians say was the first jazz band. Marquis's book is a fascinating look at Bolden and his music and at New Orleans during jazz's formative years.

***Jazz Anecdotes (Oxford University):*** By Bill Crow. A funny, wild, provocative collection of short stories about jazz's great players, grouped under headings like "Prejudice," "Louis Armstrong," and "The Word Jazz."

***Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence (Grove):*** By Andre Hodeir. A *must* in your book collection covering the history of jazz.

***The Jazz Makers (Rinehart):*** By Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff. Top writers profile top jazz musicians. A solid resource for rounding out your knowledge of jazz's players and their music.

***Jazz: New Perspectives on the History of Jazz by Twelve of the World's Foremost Jazz Critics and Scholars (Da Capo):*** Edited by Nat Hentoff and Albert J. McCarthy. A collection of good essays by top writers including Hentoff and Gunther Schuller.

***John Coltrane: His Life and Music (University of Michigan Press):*** By Lewis Porter. The latest biography by an author who's written several books about jazz. At 448 pages, it's meaty, with extensive details about Coltrane's life and detailed analysis of his music.

***Latin Jazz: The Perfect Combination/LA Combinacion Perfecta (Chronicle):*** By Raul A. Fernandez. Well researched and written. A beautifully designed book that traces jazz history from a Latin perspective.

***A Lester Young Reader (Smithsonian)***: By Lewis Porter. A collection of colorful stories of the legendary saxophonist, his music, and his troubled life.

***Lester Leaps In: The Life and Times of Lester “Pres” Young (Beacon)***: By Douglas Henry Daniels. A new, critically acclaimed biography of the tenor saxophonist, including his duel with Coleman Hawkins in a Kansas City club.

***Louis Armstrong: A Cultural Legacy (University of Washington)***: By Marc H. Miller, et al. Assembled by top writers and academics, this book takes a broad view of Armstrong and his music within the context of African American culture.

***Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life (Books on Tape)***: By Laurence Bergreen. A thick and thorough account of Armstrong’s music, passions, and personality quirks.

***Miles, The Autobiography (Simon & Schuster)***: By Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe. Getting inside Davis’s head, Troupe, a renowned poet, puts Davis’s story down on paper in language that rings true to the brooding, colorful personality of one of jazz’s great trumpeters.

***The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz (Grove)***: Edited by Barry Kernfeld, PhD. The Big Daddy of them all, this monster from Grove Press is the authoritative source of basic info on jazz and its players.

***The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD: Seventh Edition (Penguin)***: By Richard Cook and Brian Morton. Different opinions than the *All Music Guide to Jazz*; lists of players on each album that are extremely useful.

***Pres: The Story of Lester Young (University of Arkansas)***: By Luc Delannoy. A detailed account of the saxophonist’s life, loves, music, and self-destructive habits.

***Really the Blues (Carol Publishing)***: By Mezz Mezzrow with Bernard Wolfe. An insider’s account of life as a musician and white Harlem hustler, by the clarinetist who was friends with Louis Armstrong and other greats.

***Satchmo: The Genius of Louis Armstrong (De Capo)***: By Gary Giddins. A well-written account of Louis Armstrong’s life and music, plus dozens of great photos of Armstrong.

***Sidney Bechet: The Wizard of Jazz (De Capo)***: By John Chilton. Chilton takes a close look at the great reedman’s life, music, and jazz scenes in New Orleans and Paris.

***Singing Jazz: The Singers and Their Styles (Backbeat)***: By Bruce Crowther and Mike Pinfold. A useful, detailed history of jazz’s great vocalists.

***The Story of Jazz (Oxford University):*** By Marshall W. Stearns. Another *must* for your overall-history-of-jazz selection, Stearns's book is a classic that traces the music's development from Africa through bebop (it was first published in 1956).

***Tonight at Noon, A Love Story (De Capo):*** By Sue Graham Mingus. A color, emotional, and exceptionally well-written memoir of her life with husband Charles Mingus, the great jazz bassist, from their meeting until his death from Lou Gehrig's Disease.

## Magazines

***Downbeat:*** Jazz's oldest magazine has recently hit hard times. It's thin and extremely dated in terms of graphic design, but it still contains some of the best writing on jazz. Its Web site is [www.downbeatjazz.com](http://www.downbeatjazz.com).

***Jazz Times:*** Thick and prosperous-looking, *Jazz Times* counts renowned jazz writers Gary Giddins and Nat Hentoff among its contributors and is currently the king of jazz magazines. Its Web site is [www.jazztimes.com](http://www.jazztimes.com).

***Jazziz:*** Well-written profiles of jazz players, as well as CD reviews that can help you decide what to buy next. Its Web site is [www.jazziz.com](http://www.jazziz.com).

## Web Sites

**[www.allaboutjazz.com](http://www.allaboutjazz.com):** The site has accumulated an impressive archive of interviews, profiles, and reviews. It's a great place to keep up with events and to track down details.

**[www.cmgworldwide.com/music/parker](http://www.cmgworldwide.com/music/parker):** Charlie Parker's official Web site (under the backing of the late saxophonist's estate) has a brief bio of "Bird," great photos, quotes from the bebop legend, and a list of his recordings.

**[www.elrarecords.com](http://www.elrarecords.com):** Sun Ra's official Web site has a thorough bio of the late, far-out jazz musician and bandleader, as well as current information about his Arkestra. (Check out Chapter 8 for more info on the Arkestra.)

**[www.jazzphotos.com](http://www.jazzphotos.com):** Genius jazz photographer William Gottlieb's photos are archived online here along with Gottlieb's essays about some of the famous jazz folks he photographed.

**[www.jazztimes.com](http://www.jazztimes.com):** The Web site for *Jazz Times* magazine looks cool, is easy to navigate, and is packed with CD reviews, interviews, profiles and other great information.

**www.jass.com:** Dozens of bios, photos, sound clips, memorabilia — this site maintained by New Orleans writer and radio host Tom Morgan is loaded with information about early jazz.

**www.mariaschneider.com:** The big-band leader's site includes everything you'd want to know about Maria, audio interviews, and it can even stream the artist's own "Maria Schneider Radio."

**www.metacritic.com:** Opinions from dozens of critics across the country are gathered here; it's a great way to get a range of opinions about a new album. Singer Diana Krall's *The Girl in the Other Room*, for example, received ratings ranging from 40 to 91 (out of 100), and you can find out why.

**www.nytimes.com:** When it comes to music (and really, just about anything else), the *New York Times* is America's best newspaper, and it's situated in the leading city for jazz. Free registration gives you access to a lot of information; for \$49.95 per year, you can access the entire archive.

**www.redhotjazz.com:** Devoted to pre-1930 jazz, this site is encyclopedic in its details about early bands, musicians, and styles. You can spend days just reading excellent biographies of hundreds of early jazz greats.

## Television and Movies

***Anatomy of a Murder:*** Duke Ellington penned the music for this mystery movie.

***Art Blakey: The Jazz Messenger:*** Inside look at one of jazz's top drummers, also a mentor to countless younger players; includes old footage and interviews with peers, including Dizzy Gillespie.

***Barney Kessel In Concert:*** An account of 30 years of performances by the master of bebop jazz guitar.

***Ben Webster: Brute and the Beautiful:*** In-depth look at the great tenor saxman, whose hushed, whispery tone gave ballads amazing power.

***Benny Goodman: Adventures in the Kingdom of Swing:*** A look at the great clarinetist and big-band leader.

***The Benny Goodman Story:*** Comedian Steve Allen, a jazz fanatic, plays the famous bandleader in this 1955 dramatization of Goodman's life. Good entertainment but not good as history or at capturing Goodman and his music.

***BET:*** Black Entertainment Television, a cable channel, features regular programming on jazz.

**Billie Holiday: *The Many Faces of Lady Day*:** A look at the gifted and tragic jazz diva.

**Billy Eckstine/Dizzy Gillespie: *Bebop Big Bands*:** Forties footage of two hard-driving big bands in action, led by a pair of bebop pioneers.

**Bird:** Director Clint Eastwood's look at the life of Charlie Parker with the legendary saxman played by Forrest Whittaker and with musicians including Bird-disciple Charles McPherson adding some new Bird-like music. Worth a look but not completely faithful to history — Dirty Harry and Forrest don't, in my estimation, capture the true essence of the man and his music.

**Bix: *Ain't None of Them Play Like Him Yet*:** The title comes from a quote by Louis Armstrong. This video covers the life and music of early jazz cornetist Bix Beiderbecke, who achieved mythical status due to the fact that he lived hard, played hard, and died at age 28 — having already made a major contribution to the music.

**Blow Up:** An artsy black-and-white British flick from the 1960s, with David Hemmings playing a photographer who solves a murder by blowing up — that is, enlarging — one of his photos. Score by jazz pianist Herbie Hancock.

**Cab Calloway and Friends 1935–1950:** The “Hi-De-Ho” man in action with Milt Hinton, Doc Cheatham, Chu Berry, Tyree Glenn, and other legends from jazz's golden years.

**Cannonball Adderley/Teddy Edwards:** Footage of two jazz masters from the 1962 “Jazz Scene USA” series.

**Cecil Taylor: *Burning Poles*:** Great intro to the avant garde jazz pianist.

**Celebrating Bird: *The Triumph of Charlie Parker*:** Based on the book by Gary Giddins, this high-quality documentary includes interviews with Bird's female entourage as well as numerous musicians who knew him and played with him — plus great footage of the bebop giant making some hot music.

**Charlie Christian: *Solo Flight*:** The story of jazz's first great guitar soloist — the only drawback is that the video includes no performance clips.

**The Cotton Club:** Francis Ford Coppola's spectacular musical set in Harlem during its swing-jazz heyday, when stylish patrons hit the hippest clubs to hear the hottest jazz being made by African American players.

**Count Basie: *Swingin' The Blues*:** Video about the legendary pianist and big-band leader includes performances from the 1930s.

**Dizzy Gillespie: Jivin' In Bebop:** Vintage footage of the trumpeter during his hipster days.

**Duke Ellington: On The Road:** The title says it all.

**Elevator to the Gallows:** Dramatic movie directed by Frenchman Louis Malle — with a haunting soundtrack by Miles Davis.

**Eric Dolphy: Last Date:** Dolphy's final performance in June 1964, before he died too early — in his 30s. The saxman and flutist is joined by Buddy Collette, Jaki Byard, and others.

**Elvin Jones: Different Drummer:** A look at the powerful drummer who powered some of saxophonist John Coltrane's best performances.

**Gene Krupa: Jazz Legend:** A lot of performance footage is included in this profile of the charismatic jazz drummer.

**The Gene Krupa Story:** Movie dramatization of the great drummer's life and music, released in 1959 with actor Sal Mineo playing Krupa.

**The Glenn Miller Story:** Worth seeing because it stars Jimmy Stewart as the bandleader who disappeared in a plane over the English Channel in 1944.

**A Great Day in Harlem:** Documentary that gives a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the famous 1958 Esquire magazine portrait of 57 jazz greats by photographer Art Kane.

**Great Guitars: The Jazz Guitar Supergroup:** Barney Kessel, Herb Ellis, and Charlie Byrd team up to make some rare music not available on CD. A must for guitarists, as the video gives a close look at the finger work of these seasoned jazz players.

**Harlem Harmonies (Vol. 1 & 2):** Duke, Cab, Louis Jordan, Noble Sissle, and other leading jazzmen in action.

**Harlem Jazz Festival:** This 1955 blowout featured Cab Calloway, Lionel Hampton, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and other famous players.

**Illinois Jacquet: Texas Tenor:** Profile of one of jazz's under-sung heroes, featuring his famous solo on Lionel Hampton's "Flying Home."

**Jazz:** Documentarian Ken Burns' multi-part PBS series is rich in atmosphere, content, and music, but gives short shrift to jazz from the '60s on.

**The Jazz Singer:** The first movie to use sound, it stars the white Al Jolson in blackface, capturing the spirit of the times, but not the true spirit of genuine 1920s jazz.

**Jazzball:** Performance footage of Artie Shaw, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Gene Krupa, and others.

**John Coltrane: The World According to John Coltrane:** Profile of the sax legend, directed by *The New York Times* music critic Robert Palmer.

**Kansas City:** Those who view this Robert Altman film expecting epic treatment of Kansas City's legendary "territory" band scene of the '20s and '30s may be disappointed. But the soundtrack album contains some great music by top players including several of jazz's Young Lions.

**Lady Sings The Blues:** Diana Ross stars as Billie Holiday in this musically decent dramatized version of the singer's life. Ross's portrayal of the singer as weak and dependent is considered by many people to be way off the mark, but the film has one of Ross's best performances as an actress nonetheless.

**Lester Young: Song of the Spirit:** Interviews and rare footage are included in this profile of the troubled and talented tenor saxman.

**Let's Get Lost:** A gritty documentary about jazz trumpeter Chet Baker that follows him during the late phase of a life troubled by chronic heroin addiction. Although the emaciated Baker is a sorry sight, his soul, charisma, and musical genius come across, even in his final months.

**Louis Armstrong: Satchmo:** Includes rarely seen home movies of Armstrong relaxing, as well as performances, TV appearances, and interviews.

**Mambo Kings:** Latin jazz master Tito Puente makes a cameo in this excellent dramatization of Latin jazz and culture — a movie with a genuine plot, great acting, and interesting characters (mainly two brothers who lead a hot Latin big band), as well as mucho fine music.

**Minnie the Moocher:** Cab Calloway leads viewers on a tour of Harlem, reminiscing about the jazz scene of the 1930s and 1940s, with performance footage of Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong, and others.

**Mo' Better Blues:** A hip, lively movie by director Spike Lee, starring Denzel Washington as a jazz musician.

**Mystery, Mr. Ra:** A video portrait of a jazz interloper — Sun Ra claimed he came from outer space, and his music was plenty spacey. Surprisingly, he began his career in Fletcher Henderson's big band, and that's only one of the revelations about the avant garde keyboardist.

**Nat King Cole: Unforgettable:** Portrait of the great crooner — who was also a first-rate pianist.

**Oscar Peterson: Life of a Legend:** Performance footage, plus coverage of a Peterson family reunion.

**Piano Legends:** An insider's look at several great pianists, hosted by pianist Chick Corea.

**Reed Royalty:** Great men of woodwinds, from Sidney Bechet to Ornette Coleman, and several in between.

**Round Midnight:** Saxophonist Dexter Gordon stars in this dramatization of the life of a jazzman, dedicated to Bud Powell and Lester Young.

**Sarah Vaughan: The Divine One:** Profile of the gifted jazz singer with the operatic range.

**Space is the Place:** A 1972 movie featuring Sun Ra and his Arkestra, it's an odd science fiction film made when *Superfly* and *Shaft* were all the rage.

**Sweet Love Bitter:** Comedian and social commentator Dick Gregory stars in this fictionalized account of saxophonist Charlie "Yardbird" Parker's final tragic years. In the movie, Bird becomes Richie "Eagle" Coles — although the name is different, some music aficionados prefer this flick to many others that attempt to translate jazz to the big screen.

**Tenor Titans:** Hosted by Branford Marsalis, this one takes a look — and listen — to several great saxmen including Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, and John Coltrane.

**The Ladies Sing the Blues:** Several greats, together on one video: Billie, Bessie, Dinah, Lena, Ethel, Sarah, and others.

**The Man with the Golden Arm:** Frank Sinatra gives a great performance as a jazz trumpeter who kicks his heroin habit. Fantastic score by Elmer Bernstein.

**The Trumpet Kings:** Hosted by trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, a look at great jazz trumpeters from Louis Armstrong to Dizzy Gillespie.

**Thelonious Monk: American Composer:** Portrait of the quirky jazz pianist, including lots of rare footage of the master in action.

**Thelonious Monk: Straight No Chaser:** A profile of the pianist, executive produced by jazz lover Clint Eastwood.

**Vintage Collection: (Volume 1: 1958–59, Volume 2: 1960–61):** Dozens of jazz giants are captured in action in this video. This two-tape set offers a rare look at Coleman Hawkins, Count Basie, Thelonious Monk, Ben Webster, Roy Eldridge, Jo Jones, Milt Hinton, Jimmy Giuffre, Jim Hall, and others.

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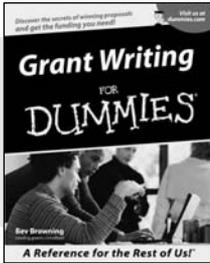
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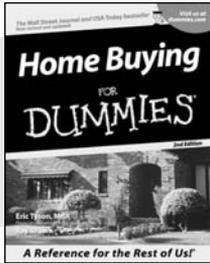
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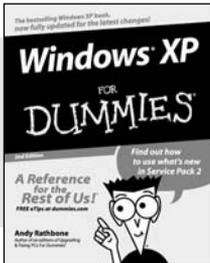
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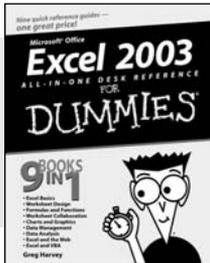
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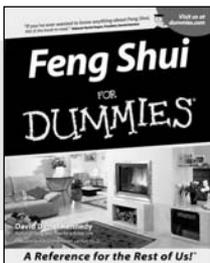
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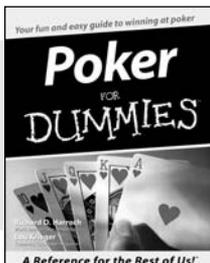
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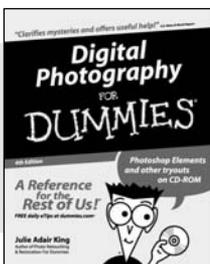
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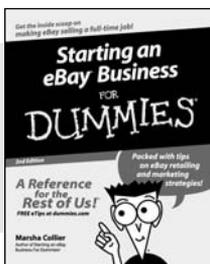
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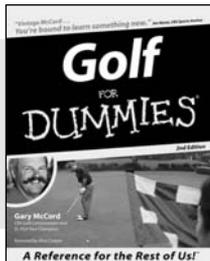
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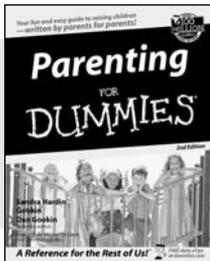
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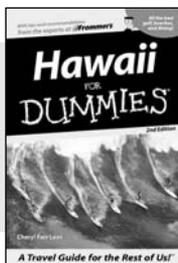
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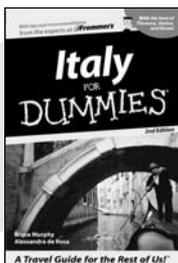
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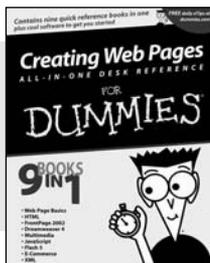
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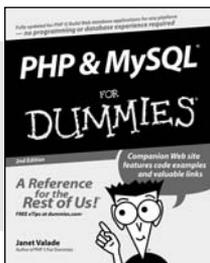
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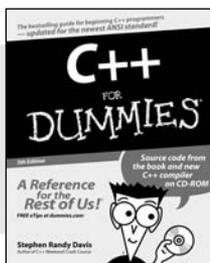
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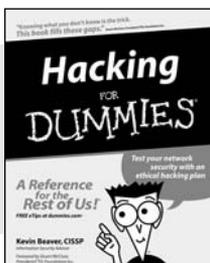
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