

Bebop

New World NW 271

Jazz historians explain the coming of bebop—the radically new jazz style that established itself toward the end of World War II—as a revolutionary phenomenon. The motives ascribed to the young pioneers in the style range from dissatisfaction with the restrictions on freedom of expression imposed by the then dominant big-band swing style to the deliberate invention of a subtle and mystifying manner of playing that could not be copied by uninitiated musicians. It has even been suggested that bebop was invented by black musicians to prevent whites from stealing their music, as had been the case with earlier jazz styles.

Yet when Dizzy Gillespie, one of the two chief architects of the new style, was asked some thirty years after the fact if he had been a conscious revolutionary when bebop began, his answer was

Not necessarily revolutionary, but *evolutionary*.

We didn't know what it was going to evolve into, but we knew we had something that was a little different. We were aware of the fact that we had a new concept of the music, if by no other means than the enmity of the [older] musicians who didn't want to go through a change.... But it wasn't the idea of trying to revolutionize, but only trying to see yourself, to get within yourself. And if somebody copied it, okay!

Were he able, the other great seminal figure of bebop, alto saxophonist Charlie Parker, would probably amplify Gillespie's opinion that the new music arose from inner needs rather than external factors. His often quoted statement, “Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom —if you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn,” certainly implies such an outlook. But Parker died too young to reflect in tranquility on the genesis of bebop.

At first, the new style had no name. It was labeled “bebop” after it had begun to appear in late 1944 on “Swing Street,” the two-block stretch on Manhattan's West 52nd Street that was then the jazz center of the world.

Bebop was the title of a Gillespie composition recorded in early 1945. The phrase was an onomatopoeic rendering of a rhythmicmelodic figure characteristic of the new style. Other, similar words —“rebop,” “mopmop,” “klook-mop”— had limited currency, but “bebop,” later shortened to the more pithy “bop,” was preferred by the jazz publicists and journalists who championed the new music.

Though bop began in many places, its most celebrated incubator was Harlem— then still an important jazz venue— specifically a club named the Play House but better known as Minton's, for its owner, a former saxophonist who had become an official of the American Federation of Musicians.

Henry Minton wanted musicians to feel at home in his West 118th Street establishment, and hired former band leader Teddy Hill as manager. Hill's band had included some excellent players, great stars of the swing era like trumpeter Roy Eldridge, trombonist Dicky Wells, and tenor saxophonist Chu Berry, and, a bit later, a young Eldridge-inspired hornman named Dizzy Gillespie and a nonconformist drummer named Kenny Clarke.

Though Hill had fired Clarke from his band, feeling that his unorthodox playing was bothering the dancers, the drummer was one of the first musicians he hired for Minton's house band.

Born in 1914, Clarke was the oldest of the musicians who were to become the founding fathers of bop. In addition to his work with Hill he had seen service in the big bands of Edgar Hayes and Claude Hopkins and played and recorded with the great New Orleans veteran Sidney Bechet. He had also played with fellow Pittsburgher Roy Eldridge who, Clarke later said, was the only musician to understand and encourage his new ideas about the function of the drummer.

Clarke's approach was an extension of the style of Jo Jones, the drummer with Count Basie's influential band, which came roaring out of Kansas City in 1930. Jones moved the main timekeeping function of the drum set from the bass drum to the hi-hat (two cymbals placed opposite each other on a rod and brought into sounding contact by a pedal) and, to a lesser extent, the large "ride" cymbal. Clarke made the large cymbal the focal point of the beat. In addition he developed a repertoire of accents on the snare and bass drums and tom-toms (it was this accenting that had disturbed Hill) that later became known in jazz parlance as "dropping bombs"—a term no doubt affected by the war.

In addition to Clarke, Minton's house band included trumpeter Joe Guy, a moderately gifted Eldridge disciple with a penchant for "battling" with other trumpeters that made him the perfect jam-session host (the practice of jamming, playing for one's own amusement and edification after regular working hours, had been standard practice among jazz musicians since the early 1920s and still thrived in Harlem's many after-hours spots, which served liquor after legal closing time); bassist Nick Fenton, a solid, unselfish rhythm player; and pianist Thelonious Monk.

Monk had changed his given name from Thelious and invented the middle name Sphere. He was born in 1919 in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, but raised in New York. A young man of eccentric habits, Monk had held few steady jobs. One was touring with an evangelist and faith healer ("She healed, I played," he said later in his typically terse manner); another was in a small Harlem club with drummer Keg Purnell.

The Minton's job was made to order for Monk, who sometimes stayed in the club around the clock, sleeping in the back, playing for hours by himself before the rest of the band had arrived or long after they had quit for the night. At other times he would disappear for several days, offering no explanation or excuse when he returned.

Monk's odd behavior was something he could indulge in, according to Hill, because he "was living at home with his own people. Dizzy had to be on time to keep the landlady from saying, 'You don't live here any more.' Monk never had that worry."

In 1941 Monk was not yet fully developed as a musician; though readily recognizable in retrospect, his playing showed few of the characteristics for which he became famous after he began to record with his own groups in 1947. But he did have a fine ear for unconventional harmony and a completely open mind.

We can hear what Monk sounded like in 1941 (and also have samples of Minton's house band with guests—among them Dizzy Gillespie—in full cry) because a young Columbia student, Jerry Newman, frequently brought his portable recording equipment to the club. In those pretape days, such equipment was cumbersome, expensive, and rarely seen. The musicians were attracted by its novelty and the chance to hear their efforts played back, and Newman was welcome to record what he pleased. In later years much of Newman's material was released commercially and offers a fascinating glimpse of bebop's incubation.

Unfortunately, Newman didn't care for Charlie Parker's playing and would turn his machine off when the young altoist was soloing. Parker, however, was an infrequent guest at Minton's. He was still working with Jay McShann's big band in 1941, and only when the band played in or near New York did he have the chance to visit. When he left McShann in 1942, Parker took up residence at Monroe's Uptown House, a famous Harlem after-hours club, where he had a featured spot in the floor show. After the formalities there was jamming at Monroe's, and the Minton's crew, who got off earlier, sometimes sat in.

Parker and Gillespie had met casually on such occasions, but it wasn't until 1943, when the trumpeter joined Earl Hines's big band, of which the saxophonist already was a member, that the two key personalities in the creation of bop had a chance to work together regularly. They were of quite different background and personality and often clashed when collaborating, yet had profound affection and respect for each other.

Dizzy was born—as John Birks Gillespie—in 1917 in Cheraw, a South Carolina hamlet. The family was large (Dizzy was the last of nine siblings, six of whom survived past infancy) and close. The father, a bricklayer, was an amateur musician and band leader and kept many instruments around the house. He died when the boy was ten. A few years later, Dizzy got a scholarship to Laurinburg Institute, a black industrial school in North Carolina, where he received formal instruction in musical fundamentals, though not in trumpet.

He taught himself the instrument well enough to join a ten-piece youth band specializing in such early swing pieces as the Casa Loma Orchestra's "Wild Goose Chase." When the family moved to Philadelphia in 1935, Gillespie had to quit school some months before graduation. With his trumpet in a paper bag, he landed a job with Frank Fairfax's band, which included such other budding talent as Charlie Shavers, the brilliant swing trumpeter, and Jimmy Hamilton, later to become Duke Ellington's featured clarinetist but then also a trumpet player.

Listening to Teddy Hill's band broadcasting from the Savoy Ballroom, Harlem's famous "home of happy feet," Gillespie first heard Roy Eldridge who immediately became his model and idol. Less than two years later, Gillespie was holding down his idol's former chair in the Hill band and making his first records. He was nineteen, full of exuberance and high spirits, and already nicknamed "Dizzy," but as Teddy Hill recalled, he was "dizzy like a fox." Despite such antics as mimicking other soloists, playing with his chair turned backward, putting the metal trumpet derby on his head, or taking a solo with gloves on, Dizzy, on the Hill band's European tour in the summer of 1937, persuaded free-spending members of the band to borrow money from him so he would be unable to spend his own salary and have substantial savings after returning home.

In May, 1938, he met a dancer, Lorraine Willis, whom he married in 1940. Unlike the great majority of young musicians marriages, the union lasted.

Dizzy joined the Cab Calloway band in late 1939. At its musical peak then, it included a splendid rhythm section—pianist Benny Payne, guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Cozy Cole—and featured Chu Berry, perhaps Coleman Hawkins' most gifted disciple, on tenor sax.

In his two years with Calloway, Gillespie had a good share of the solo space, was able to contribute several compositions and arrangements to the band's library, and gradually developed his distinctive style of playing. Among the fifty or so pieces recorded while he was in the band, at least a dozen contain interesting examples of his playing, and his own "Pickin' the Cabbage," recorded in 1940, shows an original musical mind at work within the swing tradition.

A notorious incident separated Dizzy from the Calloway band. Wrongly accused of throwing a spitball during a stage show (it landed right in the spotlight while trombonist Tyree Glenn was playing), he had a brief argument and scuffle with the leader. When Cab got back to his dressing room, he discovered that he had been slightly nicked in the rear end by a knife. Dizzy was promptly fired, but Milt Hinton recalls that Gillespie was on hand to greet the band a week later when it returned to

New York and that Calloway couldn't resist returning the smile Dizzy flashed at him.

For the next year the trumpeter played with a number of excellent bands, including Benny Carter's, Charlie Barnet's, and Les Hite's. With Hite's band he played a solo on "Jersey Bounce" that is the first example of full-fledged bebop on record. Though unconventional in its harmonic and rhythmic structure, the solo does not clash with the otherwise unremarkable modern swing setting.

There would be few further opportunities for the record listening public to acquaint itself with the new ideas of Gillespie and others. In August, 1942, the American Federation of Musicians declared a ban on all recording—the result of a long feud between the union and the major record companies regarding compensation for recording services. No instrumental recordings were made between August 1, 1942, and the fall of 1943, when one of the major labels, Decca, signed with the union. The other giants, Columbia and Victor, did not follow until more than a year later, and, as a result, an unprecedented number of small, independent record companies came into existence.

The recording ban contributed to bop's difficulties when, fully fledged, it entered the jazz marketplace in early 1945. Had there been the normal number of new recordings in a period so crucial to jazz development, the new ideas might not have fallen on such unaccustomed ears. Thus the Earl Hines band that included Dizzy and Parker never did record—even for broadcast transcriptions or private sources. Other artists' noncommercial recordings from the ban period have since come to light, enabling the historian to trace the gradual spread of the new ideas in jazz. But while these developments were taking place, perhaps the most important public outlet for the music was temporarily cut off.

On the other hand, the ban had some beneficial effects. If it had not been for the new independent companies, very little early bop might have been recorded. By far the majority of the significant 1944-48 bop records were made for small companies, which catered to a specialized audience. Unfortunately, their product was technically inferior to that of the major companies, but the essentials of the music were captured.

When Parker and Gillespie met in the Hines band, the saxophonist did not have the trumpeter's assurance or experience. Born in Kansas City, Kansas, in 1920, Charles Parker was the only child of a practical nurse and a sometime vaudevillian (he played piano and sang), who also worked as a railroad cook and who played only a peripheral role in the household. When Charlie was nine his father disappeared altogether, and the boy did not see him again until he was brought home for burial eight years later, stabbed by a jealous woman.

Addie Parker adored her handsome son. When he was in his early teens she took a night job cleaning Western Union offices to make ends meet. Thus the boy, who had been given an old alto saxophone when he was eleven (his mother didn't care for the way he looked playing the cumbersome baritone horn the high-school-band leader had assigned him), was able to sneak out to participate in the booming Kansas City nightlife at an age far too tender to resist its many temptations.

Kansas City, Missouri (the Parkers had moved across the river when the boy was seven), was then the jazz center of the United States. The corrupt rule of Boss Tom Pendergast had no use for closing hours, enforcement of prohibition laws, or control of prostitution and drugs, as long as illicit activities were confined to designated areas, most of them in black neighborhoods. Music—especially jazz—flourished. In even the meanest place where drinks were served there were at least a singer, a pianist, and a drummer. Musicians were able to work around the clock; when some places closed, others would just be opening. The jam sessions were legendary; members of every band, black and white, that passed through Kansas City would make sure to stop in at a session after work. (Kansas City had long been a provincial capital of considerable standing, serving as the commercial center for the wheat and cattle industries of a huge section of America, from Texas in the south to Wyoming and South Dakota in the north; from Missouri in the east to New Mexico in the west. And it was the focal point of the routes traveled by the many often excellent “territory bands” that provided the dance music for this area, as well as a stopover for the big-time orchestras that toured nationwide.)

Charlie Parker at first showed no great aptitude for music. He had little formal instruction, and when he joined a boys' band known as the Deans of Swing he had only been playing saxophone for a year. Bassist Gene Ramey remembers him as “the saddest thing in the band.”

He was intrepid, however, and though he only knew bits of two tunes (“Honeysuckle Rose” and “Lazy River”) he decided to sit in: “I was doing all right until I tried doing double tempo on *Body and Soul*. Everybody fell out laughing. I went home and cried and didn't play again for three months.” Doubling the tempo on one of the harmonically most complex tunes in the jazz repertoire was not common in 1935, when this incident took place. In 1938 Roy Eldridge astonished the jazz public by doing the very same thing on a record. If nothing else, young Parker already had guts and imagination.

At another time before he found his form, Parker was jamming with members of the Basie band when drummer Jo Jones threw his big cymbal across the dance floor in a gesture of violent contempt. This time Charlie didn't cry. He packed his horn quietly, took a summer job with a band at a resort in the Ozark Mountains, carried with him the few records then in existence by tenor saxophonist Lester Young (the hero of Kansas City jam sessions before he left town with Count Basie's band in 1936 and the founder of a new sound and sensibility in jazz), and came back a few months later a professional.

According to his contemporaries, Charlie would have been brilliant in school if not for his chronic truancy. When he went to the Ozarks, for the first time in his life he applied his full abilities to a task requiring discipline. He was already handicapped: though not yet seventeen, he had been addicted to heroin for two years. As he put it himself: "I began dissipating as early as 1932, when I was only twelve years old; three years later a friend of the family introduced me to heroin. I woke up one morning soon after that, feeling terribly sick and not knowing why. The panic was on." (The panic remained on for most of Parker's short life, but it was not his fault that some of his admirers imitated his bad habits, hoping that they might thus become privy to the secrets of his musical genius. Parker consistently warned that drugs did nothing to improve one's playing; quite the contrary. But the Parker mystique was not definable by logic. Heroin addiction became an issue for the first time in the history of jazz during the bebop era, but Parker's habit was not the cause.)

Charlie got married in 1937 and was soon a very young father. The marriage, the first of four, was brief.

Also in 1937 Parker joined the band of Buster Smith, one of Kansas City's outstanding saxophonists. If one listens to the few solos Smith recorded in his prime, his strong influence on young Parker's tone and conception is clear. But by Smith's own admission, pupil soon overtook master: "After a while, anything I could make on my horn he could make too—and make something better out of it."

Parker decided he had learned what he could at home and headed east after a few months of playing with the new band of pianist Jay McShann. He rode the rails to Chicago, arrived ragged and instrumentless at a breakfast dance in a small Southside club, and amazed all present by what he played on a borrowed horn. The musician whose alto sax he had used took him home, gave him some clothes, lent him a clarinet, and recommended him for a job. Parker thanked him profusely; a few days later he left town, clarinet and all, for New York.

Things didn't go well. There are conflicting reports about his activities, but it seems likely that he worked for a while as a dishwasher in a Harlem café featuring Art Tatum (1910-1956), technically and harmonically the most advanced of all jazz pianists, who profoundly influenced the young experimenters of Parker's and Gillespie's generation. Parker also worked in a taxi-dance-hall band; if nothing else, the experience contributed to his knowledge of tunes, since such bands were instructed to play each number for just one minute—the length of a dance.

But the trip was worth the trouble, for while jamming at a Harlem chili parlor with guitarist Biddy Fleet, Parker hit on something that had been eluding him. He had been getting bored with the way most jazz harmony was restricted by convention. "I kept thinking there's bound to be something else," he said. "I could hear it sometimes, but I couldn't play it." While playing with Fleet, he found that one could play "a relative major, using the right inversions, against a seventh chord [sic], and we played around with flatted fifths." In other words, the world of altered chords opened up to Parker, and when he combined these new discoveries with his already amazing speed of execution and highly developed sense of rhythmic contrast he began to find himself.

Returning to Kansas City, he rejoined McShann, who now had the best band there since Basie. Within a year it was recording for Decca. "Confessin' the Blues," with a long vocal by Walter Brown, became a hit with black audiences and set the pattern for 5 the band's future recordings. A preponderance of vocal blues was recorded during Parker's tenure; he soloed briefly on the band's only two recorded instrumentals. He also arranged (and recorded) "Hootie Blues," on which he took a short but telling solo. But his feature in the band's live performances, a lengthy excursion on "Cherokee," a tune famous for its harmonic pitfalls, was never recorded.

The blues, of course, was part of the Kansas City tradition, and Parker was one of the great masters of the idiom. Though the blues remained an important undercurrent in all jazz, swing had relatively deemphasized blues elements. It is ironic, then, that when bop surfaced it was accused of decadence and over-Europeanization.

Unlike Dizzy Gillespie, who found big-band work stimulating, Parker soon tired of McShann's music. When he left the band in 1942 and began to play with small groups and in Harlem jam sessions, musicians soon took notice. (Some, to be sure, had already admired his distinctive recorded solos with McShann, and Parker had been singled out for praise in reviews of McShann and in the jazz press. But he was an ephemeral presence until he worked in New York.)

Playing at Monroe's, however, was not a living, and Parker took the least stimulating job of his career, playing alto and doubling clarinet in Noble Sissle's orchestra, one of the most commercial and least jazz-tinged black big bands.

In early 1943 singer Billy Eckstine and other members of the Earl Hines band took their leader to Harlem to hear Parker, who was again out of work. The band needed a tenor saxophonist, and Eckstine, who had been a fan since he heard Parker at that Chicago breakfast dance in 1939, as well as such young bandsmen as trumpeter Benny Harris, a chum of Gillespie's, wanted Charlie in the band. Hines, impressed, hired Charlie and bought him a tenor sax.

When Dizzy joined Hines he paid little attention to Parker until Harris played him the alto solo from a McShann record, which he had copied out and memorized. "You like that?" he asked. "Well, it's Bird's." (Parker had acquired his nickname by then, based on his fondness for chicken. Chickens were known as "yardbirds," and "Yardbird" was his nickname until shortened.)

Parker and Gillespie became companions. Between stage shows or dance sets they would often practice complicated exercises from advanced trumpet and saxophone books, playing them in unison as fast as possible, transposing them, and so on. Hines believed that these exercises formed the basis of what became bebop.

Gillespie and Parker found that they shared an interest in expanding the harmonic universe of jazz. They were fascinated with what could be done with such basic jazz patterns as the blues or the thirty-two-bar sequence known as "Rhythm changes" (after George Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm," whose chord structure became a popular base for improvisation).

The blues became increasingly sophisticated harmonically during the swing era, but there was a tendency to reduce everything to riffs (short phrases, typically of two or four bars, reiterated for twelve or even twenty-four measures, then perhaps slightly altered). Such riff-blues themes were used by Kansas City bands like Basie's and Jay McShann's.

The boppers (as they were soon called, with or without affection) preferred to invent continuous melodic lines on the blues chord structure. Such themes (and Parker was particularly ingenious at devising them) were initially not recognized by uninitiated listeners as blues, though the ensuing improvisations usually offered clues to what was being played. ("Relaxin' at Camarillo" is a good example.)

Similarly, bop themes based on "I Got Rhythm" were not simple riff structures but convoluted and intricate melodies based on the chords of the song but having nothing else in common with it. ("Shaw 'Nuff," a brilliant Gillespie-Parker collaboration, is a prime instance.)

It was not only the pieces' harmonic nature but also their rhythmic component that set them apart from earlier jazz styles. Bebop phrasing is rhythmically much more varied than most of what had gone before. To be sure, Louis Armstrong's most fanciful flights (such as the muted solo on "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," 1931) or Lester Young's unique transformations of standards like "Lady be Good" (1936 and 6 1939) into abstract structures freely floating above the pulse of the rhythm section were as advanced as almost anything devised by the bebop practitioners. But what had been the exception now became the rule.

The pulse of swing music is an even and explicit 4/4. The pulse of bop is implicitly 4/4, but there are all sorts of off-beat accents from the drummer, who, in the tradition established by Kenny Clarke, uses the ride cymbal to establish the beat and his other instruments to color and vary the rhythmic pattern. An additional feature of bop rhythm is the frequent use of Afro-Cuban and other hitherto exotic elements.

The bassist has become the main timekeeper. The pianist no longer marks the chords regularly but feeds the soloist irregularly accented and stimulatingly voiced chords. The rhythm guitar is largely eliminated; if a guitar is present, it may be used in the rhythm section like the bop piano.

The melody instruments do not play on top of the rhythm in the established swing manner. Bebop melodic phrasing is irregular, asymmetrical, and much more varied than that of earlier styles. (Charlie Parker's phrasing is more than that of any other jazz musician, as his astonishing improvisation on "Embraceable You" bears out.) Double-time is used consistently, and upbeats are accented more than downbeats. Sixteenth and thirty-second-note patterns occur with great frequency.

When Parker and Gillespie were running through their exercise books during their Hines days, such practices had not yet crystallized. But the trumpet-saxophone unison lines that became a bebop formula certainly began here.

The mainstay of the Hines band's popularity was Billy Eckstine (b. 1914), who later became the first black male with a romantic image to gain a large white following. He played trumpet and valve trombone a little and loved Dizzy's and Bird's music.

Eckstine left Hines in 1944 for a solo career; but it was still the age of big bands, and the singer's manager thought he should have such a band of his own. Eckstine set about to enlist his favorite musicians. Having decided on an uncompromisingly modern musical policy, he had no trouble persuading even Parker, as well as a number of players who later became famous. It became the first big bebop band, with Gillespie as musical director.

There was not yet a pure bop style of arranging for big jazz band, but Gillespie had laid the groundwork with such pieces as "A Night in Tunisia" for the Hines band (and titled by the leader). Composer Tadd Dameron, whose harmonic ideas were similar to Parker's and Gillespie's, was hired, and the band's pianist, John Malachi, proved proficient in the new idiom, as did trombonist Gerry Valentine.

Eckstine also convinced Sarah Vaughan (b. 1924), an extremely gifted young singer for whom he had earlier found a job with the Hines band, to join him. Her presence assured the band a strong commercial base, which Eckstine hoped would cushion his adventurous instrumental policy.

The band made its debut in June, 1944. Eastern audiences responded to the bop-flavored music, but the Midwest was indifferent and the South wanted nothing but blues. Eckstine's singing, with assistance from Sarah Vaughan, always saved the day. As with McShann, the band's recordings were overwhelmingly vocal, but Eckstine made sure they were peppered with instrumental solos. Thus his vocal on "Blowin' the Blues Away" launched a tenor-sax duel between Gene Ammons and Dexter Gordon, two bright young comers.

Gordon was born in 1923 in Los Angeles. He was the first tenor saxophonist to fashion a bop style for the instrument. A professional musician at eighteen, he was of the generation of jazzmen who, as a result of the wartime draft of established players in their twenties and thirties, found work in first-rate big bands while still very young. Gordon had played with Lionel Hampton and Louis Armstrong before joining Eckstine and had learned from Lester Young and Illinois Jacquet (his section mate with Hampton). After exposure to Parker and Gillespie, Gordon achieved a personal coherent style that later was an important influence on John Coltrane, among others.

The rapidity with which brilliant players in the new idiom surfaced is an indication of its evolutionary nature. When Gillespie decided to leave Eckstine he recommended twentyone-year-old Theodore "Fats" Navarro for his replacement. Eckstine recalled: "Fats played his book and you'd hardly know that Diz had left the band"—no mean accomplishment, especially in early 1945. The somewhat older Howard McGhee (b. 1918), who had been Navarro's section mate in the Andy Kirk band, was an Eldridge follower who adapted some of Gillespie's innovations to his style and partnered Charlie Parker in California in 1946.

An expansion of the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic potential of jazz had been in the air since the late 1930s. Charlie Christian (1916-1942), the Texas-born, Oklahomabred guitarist who pioneered electric amplification for his instrument and became famous when he joined Benny Goodman's sextet in 1939, had been a regular participant at Minton's jam sessions, and his style, similar to Lester Young's and as steeped in the blues as Charlie Parker's, was a significant influence on the formation of bop.

Both Christian and his contemporary, bassist Jimmy Blanton (1918-1942), were victims of tuberculosis, had meteoric careers, and profoundly influenced their instruments' future role in jazz; and Blanton joined Duke Ellington's orchestra the same year Christian joined Goodman. Blanton was the first to exploit the solo potential of the string bass, and his huge tone and great command of the instrument gave it a much more prominent role in both small and large ensembles than the purely supportive one it had heretofore been assigned.

We have mentioned the impact of Lester Young and the influence of Art Tatum and Roy Eldridge. Such musicians, representative of the most fully developed swing style, began the evolutionary process that culminated in bop, and young geniuses like Christian and Blanton furthered the process.

There were distinctions, however, and some of them proved crucial to the future of jazz. Bebop had its origins not only at Minton's but at dozens of places in the larger cities of America where musicians got together to jam, playing music for its own sake. In the past, such experimentation yielded results that were absorbed into the mainstream, but within the traditional boundaries of jazz as dance music and entertainment. In bebop, for the first time, jazz became music played for its own sake. (A listening audience had gradually evolved for jazz, but it was the exception. And even on 52nd Street entertainment notions prevailed. Public or staged jam sessions began to take place at the same time bop was rising: the Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts in California, Eddie Condon's Town Hall concerts in New York, Milt Gabler's Sunday jam sessions at Jimmy Ryan's on 52nd Street.)

Bebop is also the first jazz style based exclusively on instrumental techniques that can only be described as virtuosic. While late swing encompassed such techniques, no big band was made up entirely of virtuosos; there was a role for the less technically gifted player within them. Poorly played bebop, on the other hand, was without doubt the worst jazz ever heard, and unfortunately many lesser players tried their hand at it. This further alienated listeners not well disposed toward such modernist bop attributes as dissonance, polytonality, and irregular rhythm.

It was a music that didn't compromise with audience tastes. Many considered the bop habit of disguising standard tunes—devising new melodies on the chords of well-known songs and playing ballads (slow pieces) at fast tempos—imprudent or irreverent.

Social changes went hand in hand with what were basically artistically motivated developments. Young musicians—blacks first of all, but also whites (from the start the committed white jazz musician was to some extent alienated from society because of his admiration and emulation of black behavior, means of expression, and artistry)—were profoundly affected by the social and political currents of the war and postwar period, which tended to reject traditional racist expectations.

Bebop's musical irreverence thus found its counterpart in new social attitudes. Not many boppers had Dizzy Gillespie's showmanship, but it is not true that most of them took a belligerent public stance, as some recent jazz writers would have it. Charlie Parker, for example, was usually pleasant enough on the bandstand: he introduced the members of his groups, announced the tunes they were playing, and even made little jokes at times. But he was not an entertainer, and he played what he wanted to play. The first bop group made its debut on 8 52nd Street in late 1943; it consisted of Gillespie; bassist Oscar Pettiford (1922- 1960), one of Jimmy Blanton's first and best followers; the white pianist George Wallington (b. 1924 as Giorgio Figlio in Palermo but brought to the United States in infancy); the brilliant young drummer Max Roach (b. 1925); and the established Coleman Hawkins disciple Don Byas (b. 1912) on tenor saxophone. The battle lines were drawn.

Ironically, the rise of bop coincided with another unprecedented movement within jazz, the New Orleans revival. Furthered by jazz historians and critics (a budding group in itself) and given momentum by the discovery in 1939 of trumpeter Bunk Johnson (b. 1879), who had worked with the legendary Buddy Bolden, the movement was a reaction against the increasing commercialization of swing but inevitably became pitted against bop.

The traditionalists were the first jazz ideologists, with often poorly thought out but strongly held beliefs about the unspoiled pure and primitive nature of “true” jazz, a folk art that had ostensibly become corrupted by sophistication and commercialization. Aside from the older musicians it served to resurrect from inactivity or obscurity, the revival attracted no support among black players, but it did appeal to some young whites and also attracted considerable publicity. (Among its chief early supporters was Orson Welles, who featured the first genuine revivalist band on his national radio program.)

Even before the advent of bop, jazz journalists had been feuding about traditionalism versus modernism. As bop grew in visibility, especially after Gillespie and Parker began to perform and record together in small groups and created a canon of pieces and recordings comparable in their impact on young musicians to that of Louis Armstrong's classic Hot Five and Savoy Ballroom Five recordings of 1925-28, it became the prime target of the revivalists and found vociferous supporters among the most influential modernist critics. The ensuing critical warfare was silly, if only for its extreme positions, and destructive.

Bunk Johnson, brought to New York in 1945 with great fanfares from the press, was a mediocre musician at best, and his supporting band was even more limited (with the exception of the great drummer Baby Dodds), but that he was in his sixties and still could play was considered some sort of miracle, and he was held up as the incarnation of pure jazz. From the perspective of 1976 this seems absurd, but jazz was a young art in 1945, and Bunk reached back to its very roots.

On the other hand, the strident modernists hailed almost every innovation, no matter how ephemeral, as the work of genius. In the scuffle, swing players still in their prime were often dismissed and disregarded, with the exception of lip service paid to such figures as tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, who was sympathetic to bop and in his groups employed exponents of the style (among them Thelonious Monk, whom Hawkins gave his first and only 52nd Street job and first commercial record date).

Additionally, bop was frequently blamed for the waning of the big bands after the war, though many factors were responsible, such as the increasing expense of keeping a large group traveling all over the country, the abrupt decline in ballroom dancing, the sagging economy, the rise of television, the decadence of the big-band idiom (ever larger bands, the addition of string sections, pretentious and undanceable arrangements, etc.), and above all the growing popularity of singers over instrumentalists.

Irresponsible journalists often tricked musicians into making hostile statements. Louis Armstrong was quoted about “modern malice,” while boppers labeled him an Uncle Tom and branded his music old-fashioned. Established players sometimes flirted with bop (Benny Goodman was one), only to find that the new idiom was unsuited to their style and alienated their fans.

The trappings of bop (sunglasses, string ties, and berets; bop slang; bop handshakes; bop jokes, which were really pot smokers' jokes), which only proved that the new style had something in common with the carefree jazz tradition, were exploited by mass magazines such as *Life*, to the disgust of both serious bop followers and embittered bop opponents.

And then, unhappily, there was widespread drug addiction among the practitioners of the new music. Charlie Parker's career was widespread drug addiction among the practitioners of the new music. Charlie Parker's career was interrupted by six months in a California mental institution (the Camarillo of the song title) after he had suffered a complete breakdown. (He and Gillespie had gone to California in late 1945; their music met with a generally hostile reception. The other musicians went back to New York, but Parker stayed, having cashed in his return plane ticket to obtain money for drugs.) Trumpeters Sonny Berman, twenty-two, and Freddie Webster, twenty-nine, died of a heroin overdose in 1947. Fats Navarro, a victim of tuberculosis and addiction, died at twenty-six in 1950. These were only some.

Though Parker was the most celebrated addict, he didn't invent the affliction. But hard drugs became more popular during the war years, and jazz musicians were the most visible addicts. The profession was traditionally vulnerable: among older musicians, the incidence of alcoholism was high, and jazz musicians and fans were pioneers of marijuana use. Late working hours, a nomadic existence, and exposure to illicit activities were contributing factors. Furthermore, as we have pointed out, the generation of jazzmen that grew up with bop was the youngest to reach the top of the profession. It is hardly surprising that quite a few of the very young men exposed to the jazz environment with time on their hands and money in their pockets should fall victim to an affliction the nature and consequences of which were not nearly as well understood in those days.

Withal, bop developed with great creative energy after the breakthrough of 1945. Dizzy Gillespie's first attempt to lead his own big band failed that year, mainly due to an ill-considered Southern tour (the Southern black audiences were the least hospitable to bop), but his second, 1946-50, was a success. The band visited Europe in 1948, scoring a great hit in Paris.

It spawned a number of important players, and its rhythm section became the Modern Jazz Quartet, the longest-lived and one of the most consistently productive groups in jazz history. Gillespie himself, mostly at the helm of small groups but intermittently leading the big bands he loved so well, continued to develop and refine his amazing artistry. By the mid-1970's he had become the revered elder statesman of bop—a music once considered unlikely to ever produce a venerable figure.

Charlie Parker, back from his unhappy but productive California sojourn, formed the best group of his career in New York in 1947. It comprised Max Roach; the sensitive pianist Duke Jordan (born 1922); the bassist Tommy Potter (born 1918), a former member of the Billy Eckstine band, which broke up in 1947; and Miles Davis (born 1926), a trumpeter of uncommon lyrical gifts, also an Eckstine alumnus, and not much later one of the founders of the successor style to bop, so-called cool jazz. With this group Parker embarked on the most satisfying period of his life, making a series of brilliant recordings and working regularly in clubs and concerts. He was a star of the 1949 Paris Jazz Festival—the first event of its kind—where for the first time he was honored as a great artist.

After 1950 he appeared mostly as a soloist, touring with Jazz at the Philharmonic and often playing with directing a string section similar to the one with which he first recorded in the fall of 1949. Parker with strings, playing undisguised standard ballads, seemed an anomaly in light of the attitudes ascribed to bop. But in fact it was a dream come true for Parker, who shared with older jazzmen a reverence for string sections no doubt caused by an inferiority feeling toward classical music, as well as by a fondness for the string sound. His playing in this setting, condemned by purists as commercial, was often inspired and resulted in at least one masterpiece, "Just Friends," the only recording he made with which he was truly satisfied.

To this point in his career, Parker's incredible constitution had been able to withstand not only the abuse of hard drugs but also the immoderate consumption of drink, food, barbiturates, and anything else ingestible. Eventually, Parker became increasingly prone to physical and mental breakdowns but nevertheless was capable of magnificent playing until the end. That came in March, 1955, apparently of a combination of ulcers, cirrhosis of the liver, pneumonia, and heart disease. The physician who performed the autopsy estimated his age as fifty-five; he was thirty-four.

The death of Charlie Parker signaled the end of the bebop era. The intricacies of its style had been truly mastered by only a few, but the music of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, the pianist Bud Powell (1924-1966), and a few others had an effect far beyond stylistic boundaries.

The brilliance and longevity of Gillespie notwithstanding, it was Parker's music that reached furthest. Only Louis Armstrong has had a comparable widespread effect on not only jazz but, twentieth-century music as a whole. No musician who heard it remained unaffected by the power of Parker's song, whether or not he accepted its message.

In its relatively short reign, bebop changed the course of jazz. From bebop on, for better or worse, jazz was both popular and serious music, in the best sense of both terms.

Bop produced a body of music of lasting value, among it some of jazz's greatest works. Some of these are on this record. Art proceeds at an accelerated pace in the twentieth century, and what seemed strange and abrasive to the ears of 1945 sounds logical and clear in 1976. Yet the unison flights of Gillespie and Parker have never been equaled, not even by Clifford and Sonny Rollins of the last great pure bop group. And no jazz improviser has surpassed the authority, imaginative sweep, and emotional impact of Parker's "Embraceable You" or his heartrending "Parker's Mood." Such works will stand the test of time.

Bebop is a uniquely American creation, the result of an outburst of creative energy rare even in the history of that uniquely American and energetic music called jazz. Invented by members of what sociologists define as an oppressed minority, it is nonetheless an affirmation of the life force, revolutionary in impact but evolutionary in essence.

Side One

Band 1

Congo Blues (Red Norvo)

Red Norvo and His Selected Sextet: Dizzy Gillespie, trumpet; Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Flip Phillips, tenor saxophone; Teddy Wilson, piano; Red Norvo, vibraharp; Slam Stewart, bass; J. C. Heard, drums.

Recorded June 6, 1945, in New York. Originally issued on Comet T-7.

An all-star session joining the two main creators of bop with swing-era veterans (Norvo, Wilson, and Stewart) and younger players in the swing tradition (Phillips and Heard). Though differences in the approach to harmony and rhythm are evident, there are no clashes; the performance has sustained unity.

After the introductory drum figure, trumpet, alto saxophone, piano, tenor saxophone, vibraharp, and bass each play two solo choruses of fast twelve-bar blues preceded by an ad-lib modulation and break. A unison riff played by the horns concludes the performance.

Gillespie's solo, played muted, is joyous and exuberant yet perfectly poised and controlled. Parker (it was only his ninth recording session) is fiery but less assured. Wilson is graceful and harmonically fluent, but his rhythmic conception is strictly prebop. Phillips, one of the stars of the Woody Herman band, shows traces of Lester Young and Ben Webster and swings strongly. With his typically delicate sound, Norvo plays an effective figure against the beat in his second chorus and demonstrates his sophisticated sense of chord changes. Stewart, in his unique meld of bowed bass and octave humming, is not just a musical humorist but a thoughtful improviser.

The concluding riff is typical of 52nd Street in 1945, and the rather abrupt ending is characteristic of bop.

Band 2

You're Not the Kind (Will Hudson and Irving Mills)

Sarah Vaughan with Tadd Dameron's Orchestra: Sarah Vaughan, vocal; Freddie Webster, trumpet; Leroy Harris, alto saxophone and flute; Leo Parker, baritone saxophone; Bud Powell, piano; Ted Sturgis, bass; Kenny Clarke, drums; unknown string section.

Recorded May 7, 1946, in New York. Originally issued on Musicraft 398.

Sarah Vaughan has the best singing voice in jazz. Most jazz singers have unimpressive vocal equipment from the standpoint of classical singing, but Sarah Vaughan would surely have done well had she turned her talents to opera or the concert stage. Her gifts as an improviser are also uncommon, and she was the first singer to master bop. At the time of this recording her talent had not fully matured, but under the musical direction of Tadd Dameron (1917-1965), who had written arrangements for the Billy Eckstine and Dizzy Gillespie big bands, she was in good hands. The playfulness in evidence here remained a characteristic of her style.

Sarah Vaughan had already recorded with Parker and Gillespie. Here she has Kenny Clarke, Bud Powell (whose lyrical support contrasts strikingly with his "Un Poco Loco" approach), and Freddie Webster in one of his few solo opportunities on record. Webster was much admired for his pure, singing (almost legitimate) tone and had some influence on Miles Davis and other young bop trumpeters.

Band 3

Shaw 'Nuff (Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker)

Dizzy Gillespie All Star Quintet: Dizzy Gillespie, trumpet; Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Al Haig, piano; Curly Russell, bass; Sid Catlett, drums.

Recorded May 11, 1945, in New York. Originally issued on Guild 1002.

The masterpiece from the second Gillespie-Parker date under the trumpeter's leadership.

The piece is named for Billy Shaw, then Dizzy's booking agent, and is based on the "I Got Rhythm" chord progression. The misterioso introduction is followed by a well-executed break by Al Haig (b. 1923), one of the leading bop pianists and perhaps the most gifted accompanist in this style. The breakneck tempo, beyond the capacity of most players, is the occasion for brilliantly executed unison work by the horns; they sound like one. Parker plays with trumpet-like attack and begins his solo head-on. The bridge, though slightly imperfect, is a staggering display of high-speed thinking and execution. The trumpet enters with a characteristically Gillespian shout; the last eight bars of the splendid solo, blending rapid tonguing and lightning valve action, are inimitably Dizzy. Haig's solo is typically clear, a distillation of Bud Powell and Teddy Wilson. The closing unison passages are even tighter than their opening counterparts, and the misterioso theme returns.

Sid Catlett (1910-1951) was a leading swing-era musician noted for his adaptability as well as his impeccable time and musicianship.

Band 4

Parker's Mood (Charlie Parker)

Charlie Parker All Stars: Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; John Lewis, piano; Curly Russell, bass; Max Roach, drums.

Recorded September 1948, in New York. Originally issued on Savoy 936.

"Parker's Mood" is one of the greatest blues performances in recorded jazz. It opens with a stark, haunting saxophone cadenza. The introduction proper, for piano, leads to Parker's slow blues, which is an improvisation superior to many written pieces. The first four bars of his second chorus are the Bird cry that entered the jazz language (like Louis Armstrong, Parker invented beautiful phrases that became part of jazz speech). The lyrical solo by John Lewis (b. 1920), one of his most inspired early efforts, sustains the atmosphere. When Parker returns, he again combines the most basic blues feeling with the most individualistic conception. The opening cadenza comes back, and the piano, unresolved, ends a performance in which not a note could be changed.

Band 5

Things To Come (Dizzy Gillespie and Walter Fuller)

Dizzy Gillespie and His Orchestra: Dizzy Gillespie, Dave Burns, Raymond Orr, Talib Daawud, and John Lynch, trumpets; Gordon Thomas, Alton Moore, and Leon Comegys, trombones; Howard Johnson and John Brown, alto saxophones; Ray Abrams and Warren Luckey, tenor saxophones; Pee Wee Moore, baritone saxophone; John Lewis, piano; Milt Jackson, vibraharp; Ray Brown, bass; Kenny Clarke, drums. *Recorded July 9, 1946, in New York. Originally issued on Musicraft 447.*

A big-band adaptation by Walter Fuller (b. 1910) of Gillespie's "Bebop," which the trumpeter's small group had recorded in January, 1945. "Things to Come" retains Dizzy's opening cadenza, here scored for five trumpets. Saxophones carry the theme with trumpet stabs until the bridge, when the order reverses (a standard swing procedure). An interlude, again from the original recording, leads to Dizzy's solo, launched by a perfectly poised break. The tempo proves fast even for Dizzy but poses no problems for Milt Jackson (b. 1923), the master of the vibraharp. Listen carefully to bassist Ray Brown (b. 1926) behind Jackson. An ominous trumpet figure answered by trombones enters under Jackson's second chorus. Another interlude launches John Brown's unremarkable half chorus. A recapitulation of the introduction leads to the dramatic ending with its slow sustained pyramid chords and final glissando shout.

Though its futuristic effects sometimes bring this exciting performance uncomfortably close to the pretentious aspects of the Stan Kenton or Boyd Raeburn bands, drive and jazz spirit win out. And it is remarkable to hear five trumpets play Gillespie in 1946.

Band 6

Relaxin' at Camarillo (Charlie Parker)

Charlie Parker's New Stars: Howard McGhee, trumpet; Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Wardell Gray, tenor saxophone; Dodo Marmarosa, piano; Barney Kessel, guitar; Red Callender, bass; Don Lamond, drums.

Recorded February 26, 1947, in Los Angeles. Originally issued on Dial 1030.

One of the most incisive of Parker's many transformations of the blues, the theme of "Relaxin' at Camarillo" "contains shifting accents quite unlike any blues from the past," according to bebop historian Ira Gitler in *Jazz Masters of the Forties*. He also quotes Kenny Clarke:

"[Camarillo]" shows exactly how Bird felt about the blues and the odd sets of progressions he'd devise to prove that he knows more about the blues than any living musician.

The introduction by the gifted Dodo Marmarosa (b. 1925) is effective. The unison head is not perfect: the musicians had a good deal of trouble learning the line at the session, and five takes were made, of which four survive. There are two solo choruses by Parker, two by Wardell Gray (1921-1955)— the first showing his strong Lester Young roots, the second approaching Dexter Gordon's style (Gray and Gordon often played together at this time). Barney Kessel (b. 1923) plays two good Charlie Christianstyle choruses, and Howard McGhee's single muted chorus is a highlight of the piece. Piano and bass have twelve bars each; Callender (b. 1918) is one of the most melodic bass soloists. Don Lamond (b. 1920), from Woody Herman's band, is a bit heavy on the bass drum, a common trait of bop drummers. The unison line and the piano introduction return to round out this bop excursion into the blues.

Band 7

Embraceable You (George and Ira Gershwin)

Charlie Parker Quintet: Miles Davis, trumpet; Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Duke Jordan, piano; Tommy Potter, bass; Max Roach, drums. *Recorded October 28, 1947, in New York. Originally issued on Dial 1024.*

An object lesson in the art of improvisation. (Much in jazz that is called "improvisation" is merely paraphrase.) Though Parker completely transforms the fine Gershwin tune, he retains its spirit. No jazz soloist exhibited more variety and contrast in his playing, and here the variety of phrase lengths and the contrasts in internal rhythms are uncommonly rich, even for Parker. Martin Williams has noted that the solo "begins simply and ends simply, so that its general contours describe a rise and fall, a curve upward, then quickly downward. But within the beautiful intricacies of its middle portion, Parker 'airs out' his more complex phrases with effectively contrasting simple ones." The melodic richness of the solo is extraordinary.

Duke Jordan was a master at devising mood-setting introductions. Max Roach is of necessity subdued, but note his brush work at the end. And twenty-one-year-old Miles Davis, faced with the unenviable task of following the master at his most masterly, plays simply and lyrically, with a sense of rhythm and legato phrasing that foreshadow the cool conception.

The closing unison line, no doubt invented by Parker, is lovely.

Band 8

Ko-Ko (Charlie Parker)

Charlie Parker's *Reboppers*: Dizzy Gillespie, trumpet and piano; Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Curly Russell, bass; Max Roach, drums. *Recorded November 26, 1945, in New York. Originally issued on Savoy 597.*

“Ko-Ko” was originally titled “Cocoa” but is no relation to Duke Ellington's blues of the same name. Rather, it is based on the chord structure of “Cherokee,” the tune that was Parker's feature with the McShann band and later at Monroe's Uptown House. “Ko- Ko”—from Parker's first record date as leader—is one of the most awesome recorded demonstrations of his prowess at fast tempo. Neither the trumpeter (Miles Davis) nor the pianist (Argonne Thornton) hired for the date was able to perform this music at this speed. There is a torrent of notes, but also order and structure. Parker's two solo choruses are perfectly clinched (this continuity has eluded most of his emulators, including the impressive Sonny Stitt), and the second bridge is staggering. Max Roach's solo is also remarkable in its continuity and as an example of the musical sound he elicits from the drums. There are no cymbals in his solo, but they are evident behind the opening and closing trumpet-alto cadenzas and unison passages, in which Dizzy plays brilliantly. Gillespie also accompanies—on piano— Parker's solo flight.

Side Two

Band 1

Lemon Drop (George Wallington)

Woody Herman and His Orchestra: Ernie Royal, Bernie Glow, Stan Fischelson, Red Rodney, and Shorty Rogers, trumpets; Ollie Wilson, Earl Swope, Bill Harris, and Bob Swift, trombones; Sam Marowitz, alto saxophone; Woody Herman, clarinet; Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, and Stan Getz, tenor saxophones; Serge Chaloff, baritone saxophone; Lou Levy, piano; Terry Gibbs, vibraharp; Chubby Jackson, bass; Don Lamond, drums. Vocal by Jackson, Rogers, and Gibbs. *Recorded December 29, 1948, in Los Angeles. Originally issued on Capitol 15365.*

After Duke Ellington and Count Basie, Woody Herman (b. 1913) is the leader with the longest service record in the tough field of big jazz bands. He started in 1936, but his first great band was the “First Herd” of 1945, the last important and convincing big band of the swing era.

The “Second Herd” (formed in 1947) was one of the best— some would claim the best—of big bop bands. It contained the cream of white bop (some black players, including trumpeter Ernie Royal, tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons, vibraharpist Milt Jackson, and bassist Oscar Pettiford, also passed through its ranks) and had a drive and spirit equaled by few big bands in jazz history.

“Lemon Drop,” devised by George Wallington, pianist in the first bop band on 52nd Street, is yet another piece based on the “I Got Rhythm” changes. The arrangement is by Shorty Rogers, a trumpeter who wrote especially well for his own instrument. The amusing vocal, in the Gillespie tradition of bop-style scat singing, follows an opening Dizzy-inflected shout by the trumpets.

The saxophone solo—a full chorus—is by the master of bop baritone, Serge Chaloff (1923-1957), whose father played with the Boston Symphony and whose mother is a famous piano teacher at the New England Conservatory. Elements of Charlie Parker, Lester Young, and Harry Carney combine in Chaloff's very personal and attractive style. Earl Swope (1922-1968) is a bebop extension of Bill Harris. Red Rodney (b. 1927) was among the first fluent bop trumpeters and later played extensively with Parker. Terry Gibbs (b. 1924) is a happily extroverted player in the Lionel Hampton tradition, with bop added. Herman's clarinet passage is well conceived and executed, though his tone doesn't quite fit the bop phrases. (Trombone and clarinet were dominant in earlier jazz styles but not treated very kindly by bop. On the former, J. J. Johnson [b. 1924] was preeminent, almost the only practitioner able to transfer the intricacies of bebop style to the instrument. On the clarinet, Buddy De Franco [b. 1923] had breathtaking technique and speed, and great inventiveness in a Parker mold, but the character of the instrument did not seem well suited to the idiom.)

The three tenorists, who do not solo here, were among the leading Lester Young disciples. All played prominent roles in cool jazz and beyond.

This was quite a band.

Band 2

Un Poco Loco (Bud Powell)

Bud Powell Trio: Bud Powell, piano; Curly Russell, bass; Max Roach, drums.

Recorded May 11, 1951, in New York. Originally issued on Blue Note 1577.

Bud Powell was the bebop pianist par excellence. Though Art Tatum and Thelonious Monk (who befriended him early) are discernible influences, Charlie Parker dominates. Beyond influences, Powell created his own widely imitated style, marked by a hornlike conception, great rhythmic drive, and extraordinary intensity.

Powell was a prodigy and a professional musician from the age of fifteen. He suffered his first nervous collapse six years later, in 1945, after having been beaten on the head by a Philadelphia policeman, supposedly for public drunkenness. His mental health was precarious from then on, and he spent almost a year (1947-48) in an institution, the first of many long stays. Intermittently he worked with Parker, Gillespie, and other leading modernists. Powell settled in Paris in 1959 but returned to New York in 1964. His condition soon deteriorated, and he made only a few public appearances until his death two years later.

“Un Poco Loco”—the title is grimly ironic, but the music is dead serious—is one of Powell's masterpieces. The ominous theme leads to a brilliant improvisation over Latinesque polyrhythms. The interplay between Powell and Roach is almost symbiotic: at times their roles are equal, at others the drummer supports with total empathy. Roach's solo, in the Latin spirit of the piece, is played almost wholly on the rims of the snare drum, making a timbale-like sound.

Despite the violent climate of the piece, the performance is always controlled by Powell's sense of contrast and structure.

Band 3

Jahbero (Tadd Dameron and Fats Navarro)

Tadd Dameron Septet: Fats Navarro, trumpet; Allen Eager and Wardell Gray, tenor saxophones; Tadd Dameron, piano; Curly Russell, bass; Kenny Clarke, drums; Chino Pozo, bongo drums.

Recorded September 13, 1948, in New York. Originally issued on Blue Note 559.

The boppers, Dizzy Gillespie in particular, were fond of Latin rhythms (they preferred to call them Afro-Cuban). In 1947 Dizzy hired the great Cuban drummer Chano Pozo (1915-1948) to play in his big band, and Pozo put the requisite fire under such performances as “Manteca,” “Cubano Be—Cubano Bop” (the first important recorded score by the gifted composer George Russell), and “Afro-Cuban Suite” until he was accidentally gunned down in an East Harlem bar.

There was only one Chano Pozo, but his cousin Chino, a graduate of Machito's popular big band, plays very well on “Jahbero,” a Latinization of “All the Things You Are.”

This group and others similar to it, most of them with Navarro, Eager, and Clarke, were among those Tadd Dameron led during the happiest period of his career, 1948-49. One of the great melodists of the bebop era, Dameron was essentially a romanticist; his arrangements are full and rich.

Navarro, of mixed Cuban, African, and Oriental ancestry, was also a melodist, with a warmer, darker tone than Dizzy's. His solo here is impressive in its instrumental command and musical authority; it is the kind of statement that immediately invites repeated hearing. Wardell Gray, whom we met on “Relaxin' at Camarillo,” is the first tenor soloist. Allen Eager (b. 1927), also a Lester Young follower, came as close to the master's prewar style as anyone in sound and phrasing (but not in rhythmic freedom or imagination). Kenny Clarke's drumming is better recorded here than on his several other appearances in this collection; though he is somewhat restricted by Pozo's prominent role, his work bears close listening.

The ubiquitous Curly Russell (b. 1920), a graduate of the big bands of Benny Carter and Don Redman, became the most in-demand and frequently recorded bassist of vintage bop. Russell rarely soloed, but his firm beat and good but unobtrusive sound were sufficient reason for his popularity. Not much was heard from him after the late fifties.

Band 4

Misterioso (Thelonious Monk)

Thelonious Monk Quartet: Thelonious Monk, piano; Milt Jackson, vibraharp; John Simmons, bass; Shadow Wilson, drums. Recorded July 2, 1948, in New York. Originally issued on Blue Note 560.

“Misterioso” is a blues. Monk's sense of form and highly personal approach to rhythm and harmony are evident throughout. The theme is stated percussively; Monk's compositions are defined as much by their rhythm as by their melody. Monk loves dissonance; it is a unique harmonic color in his music. Voicings that are academically wrong sound good to him.

The interplay between Monk and Milt Jackson is exemplary. The vibraharp is a percussive instrument, and Jackson's ear is attuned to Monk's harmonic universe. He does not mind being guided by Monk's manner of accompanying. Monk's approach is compositional: whoever solos on a piece of his must play the piece, not just an invention on its chord structure.

In an interview during the peak of the bop era, Monk stated that most bop sounded “like Dixieland” to him. What he meant was that the musicians were just running the changes, not playing the pieces. Though a contemporary of the leading boppers and an important collaborator in the development of the style, Monk is not of bop but a musical entity unto himself.

Band 5

What Is This Thing Called Love? (Cole Porter)

Clifford Brown-Max Roach Quintet: Clifford Brown, trumpet; Sonny Rollins, tenor saxophone; Richie Powell, piano; George Morrow, bass; Max Roach, drums. Recorded February 16, 1956, in New York. Originally issued on EmArcy MG 36070.

The Brown-Roach Quintet was the last fine flowering of the bebop era. The group's great promise was never fulfilled: Clifford Brown, the most gifted trumpeter to arise in the wake of Fats Navarro, by whom he was greatly influenced, was killed in a car crash on the Pennsylvania Turnpike along with the band's pianist, Bud Powell's younger brother Richie (b. 1931), not long after they made this record. Brown was twenty-five.

He had played with Tadd Dameron, Lionel Hampton, and Art Blakey before teaming up with Roach in 1954. His bright tone, sunny disposition (both musical and personal), and fluent virtuosity made him a more lyrical counterpart of young Dizzy Gillespie.

When Sonny Rollins joined the group in December, 1955, it finally had a tenor saxophonist who was the trumpeter's equal. Rollins (born 1930 in New York) was coming into his own. He had worked or recorded with Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Tadd Dameron, and Art Blakey, but though he was decidedly an original player there was an unfinished quality to his playing before joining Brown-Roach. Now his big dry tone, angular phrasing, and strong sense for motivic development were joined by a new assurance, no doubt encourage by Max Roach's inspiring support and Brown's infectious joy.

On “What Is This Thing Called Love?,” after the atmospheric opening with trumpet-and-tenor sax embroidery over a Latin vamp, the melody of a standard is for once presented undisguised, here in a fast 4/4. A suspension of the accompanying rhythm catapults Brown into his solo; the exuberance of his work recalls Gillespie, but he has his own sound and ideas. Rollins takes chances; he is a real improviser and went on to become one of the foremost extended soloists in jazz. Powell is not strong rhythmically, but his solo is nicely conceived. The bass spot is just a walk along the roots of chords.

Unison ensemble figures lead to Roach's solo. The most melodic and imaginative of drummers then joins in exchanges with the horns until a new unison figure and a eight-bar drum interlude bring on the concluding theme statement and cadenza over the Latin vamp.

This performance demonstrates how impressively Roach had developed and how firmly bop procedures had become established in the work of the younger musicians. Clifford Brown's sudden death was a loss from which neither Roach or bebop recovered.

Band 5

***Stop Time* (Horace Silver)**

The Horace Silver Quintet

Horace Silver (born 1928) and Art Blakey (born 1919) were among the founders of the hard-bop school that sprang up in reaction to the dominance of cool jazz. Hard or not, it was still basically bop, with a strong injection of rhythm and blues (originally a record-company and trade magazine euphemism for black popular music), the style then most popular with black audiences. Silver, equally gifted as pianist, composer, and leader, was a master of funky piano, though he first came to attention as Al Haig's successor in Stan Getz's group. He was present on some of the most important records of the mid-fifties (Miles Davis' "Walkin'," for one) but really came into his own with the group heard here, a collaborative venture originating in the Jazz Messengers, a quartet he also led.

Eventually, Silver and Blakey went their separate but equally hard-boppish ways, the drummer retaining the Messenger tag. Both groups, among the most popular of the late fifties and early sixties, played a kind of simplified and rhythmically driving bebop overlaid with blues and even gospel elements.

"Stop Time" is a typical Silver piece and arrangement, its compact theme underlined by his jabbing piano punctuations. Kenny Dorham (1924-1972), with a lyrical, mellow conception, was among bop's leading trumpet stylists. He had worked with Eckstine, Parker, and Rollins, among others. His solo here is fluent and distinctive. Hank Mobley (born 1930) could be called the prototypical bop tenor saxophonist. His smooth tone and long-lined phrasing are superficially related to the vocabulary of the Lester Young disciples, but on closer listening subtle differences reveal themselves. In later years Dorham and Mobley often teamed up again.

Silver's driving solo has his typically jagged offbeat patters. Bud Powell, Monk, and boogie-woogie pianists are among his primary sources, but his rhythm and his voicings are his own.

Dorham leads off a series of exchanges with Blakey. The drummer is one of the most elemental rhythmic forces in jazz, a dynamo who can drive with merciless energy a band of any description. He swings mightily, as his work behind Mobley's second chorus particularly well demonstrates. After the exchanges he launches a crisp solo with an opening figure as personal as signature. Through the sixties and into the seventies Blakey continued to lead various editions of his Messengers, collecting most of the notable young players in the mainstream of jazz.

"Stop Time" concludes with a restatement of the theme (some claim the tune is based on "Sweet Georgia Brown," but to me it sounds like the even older "Ballin' the Jack").

This is hard bop before the style became worn out.

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THE BLACK IN AMERICA, 1941-1951

1941 April 28. Supreme Court ruled that separate facilities for Negroes must be substantially equal, in modification of "Plessy V. Ferguson" (1896).

1941 June 25. Threatened by a march on Washington of 100,000 blacks, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, forbidding racial and religious discrimination in defense industries.

1941 July 19. President Roosevelt appointed Fair Employment Practices Commission to enforce prohibitions against racial discrimination in defense industries.

1942 June. Congress of Racial Equality organized by black and white non-violent activists in Chicago.

1943 June 16. Federal troops called out to Detroit race riots, during which thirty-four people killed.

1944 April 24. Establishment of United Negro College Fund.

1944 August 1. Adam Clayton Powell elected by New Yorkers as first black congressman from an Eastern state.

1944 August 20. Phillip Yordan's "Anna Lucasta" one of Broadway's greatest stage successes.

1945 March 12. New York State established first state Fair Employment Practices Commission.

1945 September 18. At Gary, Indiana, 1,000 students left classes to protest the integration of schools.

1946 June 3. Supreme Court prohibited segregation on interstate buses.

1947 April 10. Jackie Robinson became the first black on a major-league baseball team when he was accepted by the Brooklyn Dodgers.

1947 October 29. In its formal report, "To Secure These Rights," the President's Committee on Civil Rights condemned racial injustices.

1948 May 3. In "Shelly v. Kraemer," Supreme Court declared restrictive housing agreements unenforceable in the courts.

1948 July 26. President Truman issued Executive Order No.9981, prohibiting discrimination in the armed forces on the basis of "race, color or national origin."

1949 October 3. First black-owned radio station in United States, WERD, formed in Atlanta, Georgia.

1950 September 22. Dr. Ralph Bunche was first American black to win Nobel Peace Prize.

1951 University of North Carolina admitted its first black student.

Side One

Total time 25:08

Band 1

Red Norvo: Congo Blues

(publ. Edwin H. Morris) -Red Norvo and his Selected Sextet 3:52

Band 2

Will Hudson and Irving Mills: You're Not the Kind

(publ. Belwin-Mills) -Sarah Vaughan with Tadd Dameron's Orchestra 2:43

Band 3

Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker: Shaw 'Nuff

(publ. Music Sales) -Dizzy Gillespie All Star Quintet 2:57

Band 4

Charlie Parker: Parker's Mood

(publ. Sereen-Gems Columbia Music) - Charlie Parker All Stars
. 3:02

Band 5

Dizzy Gillespie and Walter Fuller: Things to Come

(publ. Music Sales) - Dizzy Gillespie and his Orchestra 2:42

Band 6

Charlie Parker: Relaxin' at Camarillo

(publ. Duchess Music) -Charlie Parker's New Stars 2:51

Band 7

George Gershwin and Ira Gershwin: Embraceable You
(publ. Warner Bros.) -Charlie Parker Quintet3:39

Band 8

Charlie Parker: KKo
(publ. Criterion Music)—Charlie Parker's Rehoppers2:54

Side Two

Total time 25:39

Band 1

George Wallington: Lemon Drop
(publ. Belwin-Mills) -Woody Herman and his Orchestra 2:51

Band 2

Bud Powell: Un Poco Loco-Bud Powell Trio4:44

Band 3

Tadd Dameron and Fats Navarro: Jahbero - The Tadd Dameron Septet2:50

Band 4

Thelonious Monk: Misterioso - Thelonious Monk Quartet 3:18

Band 5

Cole Porter: What Is This Thing Called Love?
(publ. Warner Bros. Music) - Clifford Brown-Max Roach Quintet 7:31

Band 6

Horace Silver: Stop Time - Horace Silver Quintet4:05

NOTE: Full archival information and a complete list of the performers of each selection may be found within the individual discussion of each work in the liner notes.

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