

The Saxophone and Jazz

by Jeff Pipher

While the saxophone has a short history compared to its single and double reed counterparts, there is no doubt the “devils horn” has stated its claim in both the jazz and classical world. Born of Belgian decent, the saxophone was developed under the watchful eye of Adolph Sax. He nurtured and pushed the instrument from the workshop floor to the conservatory classroom. Numerous talented soloists brought the new instrument from obscurity to the orchestra to small clubs and eventually the world stage. It was not until the saxophone craze of the roaring twenties that the instrument found a real permanent place in American culture. Through the assimilation of the saxophone into mainstream America by such early jazz soloists as Sidney Bechet, Frankie Trumbauer, and Lester Young, the saxophone’s lineage in the jazz world began with great promise. The swing era and the birth of the big band catapulted the saxophone as well as harmonic and melodic vocabulary to new heights. Now, progressive composers and arrangers such as Don Redman and Duke Ellington were establishing the saxophone’s roll in larger ensembles. Coleman Hawkins gained followers with the recording of *Body and Soul* and helped to pave the way for such harmonic revolutionaries as Charlie Parker and John Coltrane. The stylistic changes that evolved from Sidney Bechet to Ornette Coleman are vast and may almost seem not connected, however upon closer examination one can find a clear relationship through the lineage of the saxophone.

Born on November 6, 1814 to Charles and Maria Sax, Adolph Sax was plunged into the world of engineering, acoustics, and instrument making. The family laid roots in Brussels and continued the family business of cabinet making until Charles Sax’s intrigue of instrument making could no longer be suppressed. He began making clarinets and brass instruments and soon gained the attention of government officials. Charles then became instrument maker to the Court of the Netherlands and Adolph was now around his father’s workshop as well as the successes and not so successful. It is believed that during this time, Adolph most likely did the brunt of the experimenting. This would have allowed for his father Charles to keep the shop running and producing lucrative instruments. Adolph received his formal musical training at the Brussels Conservatory and became a decent clarinetist. He also studied flute and voice and perhaps could have pursued a career as a performer. After completing his studies, Adolph spent most of his time improving existing instruments as well as his own creations. He worked on creating a valved bugle and soon after, a family of saxhorns. The saxophone followed and was to become his life’s work (Thomas Liley. 1998. Pp. 2-3).

It was the bass clarinet, not the saxophone that brought Adolph to Paris in 1839. As was custom then and is now, the instrumental performers have great influence on the market for instruments. Sax was well aware of this and sought out performers such as Dacosta to promote his new and improved bass clarinet. After much consideration, Dacosta agreed Sax’s version was superior, but later Sax would find not all were as easy to convince. Paris was a city infused with musical personalities such as Berlioz, Halevy, Kastner, and Meyerbeer. Sax grew to know such influential musicians and most notably

befriended Berlioz. In 1842, Adolph moved to Paris for good. Soon after, he was approached by an influential aide to the French king Louis Philippe and lieutenant General Comte de Rumigny; They consulted about the future of military bands. The French government was extremely interested in taking the military music of the time in a new direction and believed Sax held the answer. The business arrangement allowed Sax to continue shopping his invention around in hopes of a widely accepted instrument that donned his name (Liley. 1998. p. 3).

With friends such as Berlioz, doors were opening for Sax. He was asked to perform with the saxophone at the Paris Conservatory and soon a following was formed. A factory was opened at No. 10 Rue Saint Georges and Adolph began producing saxophones at an increased rate. His new fortune came with its misfortunes. He was seen as a threat to the successful instrument makers in Paris. This led to numerous threats, theft and legal battles. Many of the liaisons to the more successful instrument makers made it their job to make sure Sax's instruments did not find their way into the orchestra and other playing situations. Donizetti was inspired by Sax's bass clarinet, but because of a possible walk out, he could no longer endorse the instrument. With pressure from the French government to move forward in a new direction, musical, military, and acoustical personnel were assembled in order to hold a contest between two bands. The winner would receive the commission. On April 22, 1845, the two bands played arrangements by Adolph Adam and one selection chosen by the conductor. Each band consisted of 45 persons, but the band under the direction of M. Fessy utilized Sax's instruments, including the saxophone. Sax's new and improved instruments gave the ensemble a clear advantage and were declared the winner. This weighed heavily with the French government and led to the mandatory inclusion of Sax's instruments in the military bands (Liley. 1998. pp. 4-5).

The *L'Association generale des ouvriers en instruments de musique* (the United Association of Instrument Makers) was established to protect the rival instrument makers' interest. Several attempts by the UAIM at bringing Sax down were made. One attempt was to prove that the saxophone could not be patented because there were other instruments that already existed that were too similar (English tenoroon, like a bass clarinet, by Desfontenelles and the German bathyphone by Weiprecht). It was also said that because the instrument had been played and exhibited at the Champs du Mars event, it was not eligible for patent. Sax withdrew his request for a patent for one year and challenged his rivals to reconstruct or build a better saxophone. They were unsuccessful. The saxophone was patented on June 22, 1846. The Association became stronger with the downfall of the current royals as well as Sax's biggest supporters. The previous commission from the military was pulled and Sax was going under. A seemingly generous business associate "lent" Sax 30,000 francs to pay his workforce. When the man died in 1852, Sax was left to repay the missing funds from the man's estate. Sax fled to London only to be forced to return to Paris destitute. (Liley. 1998. pp 5-7).

In 1847, Sax was appointed Musical Director of the stage brass band at the Opera. He held this position until he died. It was also his last reliable source of income. By 1849, Sax's patents on the *bugles-a-cylindres* and saxotrombas were declared void. This

was made possible by an appeal by the Association. The sax patent was still upheld. In 1854, eight years after the original suit brought against Sax, the Imperial Court at Rouen ruled in favor of Sax. Compensation and damages were also awarded by the court and to be paid by the Association. At this time, Sax was appointed Musical Instrument Maker to the Household Troops of Emperor Napoleon III. With favor from Napoleon, Sax was able to reopen his factory on Rue Saint Georges now at No. 50 (Liley. 1998. pp. 5-7).

Such trials and tribulations are suspected to have taken a substantial toll on Sax's mental and even physical health. Sax had discovered and worried about a dark spot or growth found on his lip. In time, it grew in size and was diagnosed as malignant. It was suggested that the growth as well as part of his jaw be removed. By this time a tube was already feeding him. The cancer had almost completely blocked his throat. After having to wait because of legal issues, Sax found an Indian doctor by the name of Dr. Vries. The doctor had a reputation of being able to cure the incurable. In 1859, Sax's growth began to shrink until it was completely gone. Between the years 1857 and 1870, Sax taught a saxophone class at the Paris Conservatory. The class ended due to the war between France and Prussia. Sax fathered 3 children, one of which continued the family business until it was sold to the Henri Selmer Company in 1928. In 1867, Sax was awarded the Grand Prize at the Paris International Exhibition. He had his life's work were on display including a gold plated alto saxophone. Sax lost status with the government due to a clerical error in the bookkeeping and by 1860 was no longer affiliated with the Legion of Honour. By the mid 1860's, Sax's patents had expired and rival instrument makers jumped at the chance to make their version of the saxophone. This caused a decline in business at Sax's factory. (Liley. 1998. pp 7-9).

In 1873, Sax was once again bankrupt. By the 1880's, the Association and Sax had still not resolved their battle extending almost 20 years prior. Sax never saw the reparations that he was originally awarded. At the age of 72, Sax make one last attempt to gain what was rightfully his. He wrote a letter to the journal *La Musique des Familles* without success. The letter did however, spark interest with many of the musicians that read it. These musicians led by Paul Lacomme made their own appeal on the behalf of Sax. They were successful and Sax received a small pension. While the exact date of Sax's death is debatable, it is certain that it occurred in 1894. (Liley. 1998. pp 9-10).

Sax had his own publishing house in Paris in the late 1850's that he used to influence the development and demand of his new creation. He published almost 200 works with nearly 35 for saxophone and piano. The Paris Conservatoire for their final examinations utilized a large number of these compositions. "The majority of the works are harmonically and structurally conservative; most often an increasingly virtuosic set of variations or a *fantaisie* follows a brief piano introduction" (Liley, 1998, p. 53). This was all apart of Sax's plan to ensure there was a repertoire and players to extend the saxophones longevity. Debussy was the most widely known composer to write for the saxophone. His work *Rhapsodie Mauresque for Orchestra and Principal Saxophone* brought the saxophone into the mainstream of the orchestral world. (Liley. 1998. pp. 51-54).

Henri Wuille (b. 1822 d.1871) was a Belgian born musician that played both clarinet and saxophone. A contemporary of Sax, Wuille was also a huge supporter of the instrument and its repertoire. Wuille would travel throughout Europe and the United States as the earliest solo performer on the saxophone. Louis-Adolphe Mayeur (b.1837 d. 1894) was an accomplished saxophonist that studied with Klose and Adolph Sax. Starting his career as a prize winning clarinetist, Mayeur went on to perform regularly with the Paris Opera and became a strong proponent of the method book *Grande Methode* published for saxophone in 1867. Edouard Lefebre (b. 1834 d. 1911) had an illustrious career throughout the United States from 1870-1890. He is most widely known for his years with the Patrick Gilmore Band as well as the John Philip Sousa Band. Jean Moeremans of Belgium was to follow Lefebre from the 1890's to early 1900's. Benjamin Vereecken joined Sousa's band around 1910 and wrote the book *Foundation to Saxophone Playing* published by Carl Fischer in 1917. This book became a staple in the saxophone method book repertoire. H. Benne Henton was to take Vereecken's place as a soloist in the Sousa Band. Getting his start with another well know touring ensemble the Conway Band, Henton went on to set a new standard in tone quality and technical prowess. The "Heifetz" of the saxophone, Jascha Gurewich gave the first "serious" saxophone music concert in the United States in 1926 at New York City's Aeolian Hall. Rudy Weidoeft is perhaps one of the most influential classical players of the saxophone. His technical mastery, use of nuance, and delivery on the saxophone helped to catapult the instrument into many musical circles. During the 1920's, the saxophone's popularity skyrocketed due in part to Weidoeft's undeniable flare. Often he would play the C melody saxophone. It is thought that Weidoeft influenced one of the earliest influential jazz saxophonists Frankie Trumbauer. Until the market crash of 1929, the production of high caliber musicians, repertoire, and the instrument itself soared and perhaps planted its roots for centuries to come (Thomas Dryer-Beers. 1998. Pp 37-38). While the saxophone began to flourish in the classical world, a new and unique sound was beginning to emerge throughout America's cities.

Vaudeville played a crucial role in the general acceptance of the saxophone. Many of the early influential saxophonists came out of this form of entertainment. Also, the Sousa and Gilmore Bands' saxophone stars would break off from their respective band and tour with or form their own smaller ensembles. The ensemble had a front line and a rhythm section back line. The front line consisted of cornet, clarinet, and trombone. The rhythm section consisted of a chordal instrument (usually banjo, piano or guitar), a bass instrument (tuba or string bass), and drums. The cornet's place in the ensemble was that of playing the melody. The clarinet provided more flowing obbligato lines that were typically ornamentation of the melody. The trombone provided the outline of the chords as well as counter-melody. Soon the saxophone was added to the front line, but only as an optional addition. Around 1917, jazz musicians began moving out of the New Orleans jazz scene in hopes of more playing opportunities and deeper pockets. Many of the cities to receive one of New Orleans's most unique commodities were strategically located on the Mississippi River or another large body of water.

Kansas City is one of these port cities that proved to be a tremendous “breeding ground” for influential jazz saxophonists. (Richard Ingham. 1998. pp 125-126).

While not the most popular saxophone with today’s musicians, one of the most influential saxophonists played the soprano saxophone. Sidney Bechet (b. 1897 d. 1959) was a New Orleans clarinetist that was also an influential saxophone player. After trying to use the soprano saxophone early in his career, Bechet decided the intonation problems were too difficult or too much work to handle. He continued to play clarinet until a visit to London in 1920. His sound is unmistakable. With an intense and penetrating sound surrounded by a wide and unforgiving vibrato, Bechet stated his claim to influential saxophone playing with graceful and musical prowess. His extremely wide vibrato was used as both an expressive device as well as a way to cover up and manage the difficult intonation issues of the soprano saxophone. Because the soprano saxophone can reach higher volumes and project farther than the clarinet, Bechet could compete with the cornet on the front line. (Ingham. 1998. p. 126).

Through the work of his own group and talented cornet player Bix Beiderbecke, Frankie Trumbauer or “Tram” as he is often referred to as, led a movement in the tone possibilities of the saxophone. Trumbauer played the C melody saxophone. One of Adolph Sax’s original creations, the C melody saxophone is between the alto and tenor saxophone in size and range. Popular at the time and large contributor of the saxophone craze in the roaring 1920’s, the C melody saxophone is now almost non-existent. Because of several logistical issues including its ability to match pitch, the C melody saxophone’s last and most well known performer (Lester Young started on C melody saxophone but quickly changed to the tenor saxophone) was perhaps Trumbauer. He was born in Carbondale, Illinois in 1901 and early on was already exposed to the sounds of Rudy Weidoeft and his band mates, Bix Beiderbecke, unstable personality. By 1925 he was making a name for himself along side Bix Beiderbecke in one of Jean Goldkette’s bands. Soon after both moved to the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. Through the enhanced and meaty middle register of the C melody saxophone, Trumbauer squeezed a well bodied, higher harmonic heavy tone that sounded not like an alto or tenor saxophone. It was this attribute that began to turn heads and open ears especially in Kansas City. Trumbauer was a much more rational and cerebral musician than many of his contemporaries including Bix. After twenty plus years as a jazz civilian, Trumbauer became a test pilot in World War II and left music for good (Ted Gioia. 1997. pp. 85-86).

Johnny Hodges (b. 1906 d. 1970) was a unique sound and a perfect addition to the jazz saxophone lineage. He was greatly influenced by Sidney Bechet especially when playing soprano and had a wide and quavering vibrato. Hodges was part of the Duke Ellington’s ensembles and was often a featured soloist. Ellington would compose around his players and their specific voices. Hodges was no exception. His use of extreme but elegant glissandi, rich tone, and evenness throughout the registers are on full display in *I Got it Bad and That Ain’t Good* as well as *Black Butterfly*. Ingham (1998) stated, “His early solos were well balanced contrasts of pace and movement, using smooth melodic lines interspersed with rapid arpeggio patterns, with the addition of

dynamic layering” (p. 126). Hodges was a member of Ellington’s elite band from 1928 until 1970. Such a long tenure especially with a jazz group is impressive to say the least, but even more spectacular are the number of saxophone players that have been directly influenced by his legacy. (Ingham. 1998. p. 126).

Coleman Hawkins (b. 1904 d. 1969) was one of the original influential players from Kansas City. His career started to take off in 1921 when he became a sideman for Mamie Smith. Smith was a blues singer of relatively small stature until her hit single “Crazy Blues” which sold over a million copies. This afforded Hawkins the opportunity to branch out on his own. He left the singer’s side and had already started recording by 1923. Hawkins began by playing the C-melody saxophone and most likely was greatly influenced by Weideoft and his virtuosity. Hawkins like Hodges, loved to use the full range of the horn and milk every note. He joined the Fletcher Henderson band in 1924 for a ten-year stint and then traveled to Europe with Jack Hylton until 1939. After his return to New York, Hawkins became one of the stand out tenor voices of the time. He dropped the use of many vaudeville and novelty techniques such as slap tonguing and focused more on melodic development and interpretation. His rendition of *Body and Soul* gives countless examples of his astounding harmonic language and melodic development (Ingham. 1998. p. 127).

Not intending to record *Body and Soul* on his record date in October of 1939, Hawkins thought he had used up his time only to have the song requested because of a recent performance of the tune at a club. Hawkins’s goes on to say: ‘I didn’t even have an arrangement on it. I didn’t want to play it at all, so I just played through it once and made up the ending when it got to it. The ending, as it turned out, was one of the funniest things I ever played in my life. Like the way the horns came in on the last chord (John Chilton. 1990. p. 163).’ *Body and Soul* was a hit with the general public or “squares” as Hawkins put it and the critical jazz world. (Chilton, 1990. p. 164). His use of tri-tone substitutions, altered dominants, chord extensions, and effortless execution make this spontaneous track a masterpiece. He tended to lean on beats 1 and 3 which dated his style, but Hawkins was all about evolution and eventually began to lengthen his eighth notes and in turn, his swing feel became closer in feel to the next generation of players. With such a vast bag of intricate musical abilities, Hawkins was able to carry his career into the difficult 1940’s and hook up with Dizzy Gillespie in 1944 to record and release what is considered the first bebop album. He continued to forge ahead with those that were younger and was able unlike many of his contemporaries to witness and live through those that imitated and followed (Ingham. 1998. p. 127).

Like Hawkins, Lester Young (b. 1907 d. 1959) started his career playing the C-melody saxophone in Kansas City. His main influence was Frankie Trumbauer. Young was trying to recreate the sound that he and Trumbauer got on the C-melody saxophone but on the tenor saxophone. Young produced a higher tessitura and lighter sound, which was in direct contrast to the then sought out sound of Hawkins. Young coined the word “cool” as to describe a voice or style of playing. Questions of why he didn’t play alto with such a high tessitura began to surface as his sound began to be recognized. He would reply, ‘Some of you guys are all belly (Ingham. 1998. p. 128). Young often

would play across the bar line and use tonal or timbral effects. The use of false fingerings would become one of Young's trademarks. It is believed that he began to utilize these techniques with his work with Jimmy Dorsey. It wasn't until 1934 and various tours throughout the Midwest that Young started playing with perhaps one of the most influential jazz bands of all time, Count Basie. He replaced Hershel Evans who sounded much like Hawkins. Young was on and off with the Basie band from 1934 until 1943. Young also like Hawkins played with the Fletcher Henderson Band. Young was to replace Hawkins but the fit did not take because of the vast difference in sound between the two. It is said that he stayed at the Henderson home and Henderson's wife would wake Young every morning and play Hawkins in an attempt to have him assimilate Hawkins' sound (Ingham. 1998. pp. 127-129).

In his formative years, Young was known for his precise and well defined articulation. He seemed to dance on the reed and let his full-bodied tone do most of the storytelling. By the end of his stint with Count Basie, Young had fully developed what was to be known not only as "his" sound, but also the poster child for the "cool" school. Tone quality and timbre were perhaps Young's most influential attributes. Great saxophonists of a later generation such as Stan Getz and Zoot Sims took special notice of "the prez" and soon also became part of the cool sound. In the early 1940's, just prior to World War II, Young's tone and articulation began to shift to a more lackadaisical and legato feel. His vibrato became almost non-existent at times and the weight of his tone increased. Young's tone was consistently changing throughout his career. Lester confirms this in a 1959-taped interview with Francois Postif. "I developed my saxophone to play it, make it sound just like an alto, make it sound like a tenor, make it sound like a *bass*, and everything, and I'm not through working on it yet" (Lewis Porter. 2005. p. 45). Young also experimented with different combinations of mouthpieces and reeds. Early in career, he mostly used a metal mouthpiece with standard cane reeds. Later, he is seen playing a hard rubber mouthpiece and was believed to use plastic reeds. (Porter. 2005. p. 45)

Young was a master at utilizing many of the unique qualities and sounds the saxophone can produce. Although he preferred to solo in the middle register of the horn, he frequently used the full range available to carouse the reaction he was looking for. At this time, the altissimo range of the saxophone was not commonly used and even that well understood by most players. Young would often utilize the upper register of the horn when searching for the climax of a solo as well as the lowest of lows. It is not uncommon to hear a solo by Lester accompanied by low foghorn like honks. The use of glissandi was not uncommon in jazz and other genres of music however; Young extended the range with which the glissandi spanned. Often, a glissando was used as decoration. In Young's case, many times a glissando would be used melodically or as a motif and the interval between the two pitches would span an octave or greater. This was an old device used in a new way and became utilized by many soon after. *Jumpin' at the Woodside* and *Lester Leaps In* are perfect examples of another device so commonly associated to the style of Lester Young. During these solos, Young makes use of alternate fingerings on the saxophone. Alternate fingerings produce a different timbre while keeping relatively

the same pitch as the desired note. A favorite of Young's was the middle 'C' alternate fingering and he often used it when playing medium to fast tempos (Porter. 2005. pp. 48-54).

Towards the end of his career, and after his tour of duty in World War II, Young 's playing took a turn for the worse. Some attribute his less than stellar performance attitude to a new and distained outlook on humanity after a troublesome experience in the army. Also, he was getting older and less sympathetic to those around him. In any case, the later output of Young's discography shows a downward spiral in sound production, control of the instrument and even interest on his own behalf. However, after over two decades of influential sounds and devices, Lester Young proved to be an original tenor saxophone titan.

While Lester Young was playing with great bands such as Count Basie, other big bands were carving their place in history. Paul Whiteman experimented with a variety of personnel and instrumentation. The use of larger ensembles by Whiteman greatly influenced bandleaders such as Duke Ellington. His work with arranger Ferde Grofe allowed for a special blend of talented musicians and a talented arranger. The concept of 'symphonic jazz' came to fruition under Whiteman and Grofe. This style and sound became popular with the general public and in an attempt to utilize this new setup, bands leaders such as Ellington and Henderson adopted a larger front line saxophone section. The separation of three distinct horn sections allows the composer and or arranger to pit the separate sections against each other, play off each other, or blend with unique tumbrel results. It wasn't until Benny Carter's band began to use two altos, two tenors, and one baritone saxophone that the standard five-saxophone section became common. Carter was Hodges opposite. He was a successful arranger and he "preferred a lighter approach to Hodges's sultry sounds and being recognized as one of the finest melodic improvisers" (Ingham, 1998, p. 131). Willie Smith was a featured soloist with the Jimmy Luceford Band. He liked to use broken chords and sometimes branch out into unfamiliar harmonic territory (Ingham. 1998. pp. 129-131).

Ben Webster (b. 1909 d.1973) was greatly influenced by Coleman Hawkins. His tone was lush and full of low-end overtones. Often he would use the subtone technique. Webster became known as the featured soloist with Duke Ellington in the mid-thirties, 1940 and 1943. In 1940, Webster recorded *Cottontail* with Duke Ellington's jazz orchestra. This proved to be one of his most famous cuts. Duke's band was a smorgasbord of strong personalities and prolific talent. Harry Carney (b. 1910 d. 1974) joined the band in 1927 and helped to redefine the roll and sound of the baritone saxophone. Often Ellington would write specifically for his players and Carney was no exception. Along with a meaty malleable sound, Carney also was one the first jazz players to use circular breathing. Though there were a vast number of changes occurring with big band composition, arranging, and instrumentation, the harmonic and melodic vocabulary had not created a movement. It was an all-star line up of "young lions" in the years to come that challenged much of the foundations that had already been laid (Ingham. 1998. pp. 131-132).

Charlie Parker (b. 1920 d. 1955) made his presence known first in Kansas City and then around the world. Parker was greatly influenced by Lester Young. In his early years, he would spend much of his time following Lester around and trying to imitate and learn all that he could. Buster Smith was also of much interest and influence to Parker. Between the years 1935 and 1939, Parker stimulated the Kansas City music scene with an early version of the icon he was to become. He joined the Jay McShann Band and toured with the outspoken leader from 1940-1942. During this time, Parker recorded for the first time. It was not until Parker began to play with the Earl Hines's band and met a vivacious and colorful trumpet player, Dizzy Gillespie, that he could share and build upon a new direction in jazz. Soon after in 1944, both Parker and Gillespie joined the Billy Eckstine band and by 1945, Parker was leading his own small groups and relying on his new style of playing. With this new bebop style, Parker began to gain attention especially in the jazz community. Players such as Miles Davis were now seeking out Parker in hopes some of his soulful blues playing, lightning fast technique, or eloquent ballad playing would rub off. Fortunately much of these musical attributes were passed on, however the overall output by Parker was a mere blink in the evolution of jazz and saxophone playing (Ingham. 1998. pp. 132-133).

Parker's style of composition was not much different than his soloing. Often at a medium or up-tempo, the classic pieces associated with or by Charlie Parker are eighth note heavy, fragmented, contrafacts (a song with a different melody composed using the same harmonic sequence of chord changes). Some of the more recognized pieces include *Donna Lee* (based on the chord changes to *Indiana*), *Anthropology* (based on the chord changes of *I Got Rhythm*), and *Ko Ko* (based on the chord changes to *Cherokee*). Parker also created new harmonic platforms with compositions like *Confirmation*, and *Blues for Alice*. The chord changes (or partial sequences of chord changes) that accompany these pieces became known as "bird blues".

Addiction plagued the alto saxophonist from an early age. His drug of choice was heroin. There is no question that drugs were assimilated into the jazz culture well before Parker had his first taste, but Charlie Parker has become one of the classic examples of a genius dying young. He died in 1955 after 35 years of fast living and even faster jazz. Parker had a prolific career with a fairly large body of work considering his age when he died. The years 1947-51 are considered to be his most productive and influential. Characteristics of his playing were little vibrato, and formulaic phrases appropriate to the context. He could play in any key, and off beat tonguing influenced jazz articulation. He also utilized diminished and diminished whole tone scales, a far more vast and intricate melodic vocabulary, the use of double time, and extensive emphasis on the blues (Ingham. 1998. pp. 132-133).

Shortly after bebop was taking small clubs by storm, new and young talent was also continuing the big band tradition. Glen Miller and Woody Herman were at the forefront of the big band craze of the 1940's. It was the latter and the members of his band that had a significant impact on jazz saxophone. A saxophonist and clarinet player, Woody Herman was greatly influenced by Johnny Hodges. His strong gravitation to these instruments is perhaps one reason his big band had numerous soon to be legends

play in the front line. An interesting use of instrumentation set the 'Four Brothers' band apart from the traditional small group of the time. Most small groups during the forties were modeled after the bebop style instrumentation consisting of two melodic horns and a rhythm section (piano/guitar, bass, drums). The 'Four Brothers' however, consisted of three tenor saxophones (Stan Getz, Herbie Steward, and Zoot Sims) and a baritone saxophone (Serge Chaloff who was replaced by Al Cohn after one year). The group had competitive yet cooperative dynamic and often would engage in trading improvisations that would result in a battle to the finish. Chaloff became one of Harry Carney's (baritone saxophone in Duke Ellington's band) closest rivals and proponents of the instrument. Later in Herman's career, he fostered other talented saxophonist such as Jimmy Giuffre and Gene Ammons (Ingham. 1998. pp. 134-135).

With the vivacious, up tempo, and almost dizzying melodies of bebop being popularized mainly on the East coast, a reaction of much the opposite was accruing on the West coast. By the late 1940's, Miles Davis had been making his presence know with a few albums and strong sideman. In 1948, Lee Konitz and Gerry Mulligan were sidemen involved in a monumental recording project that was to be released as Miles Davis's *Birth of the Cool*. The instrumentation was more unorthodox and reminiscent of Claude Thornhill's conception. The ensemble consisted of Konitz on alto saxophone, Mulligan on baritone saxophone and Gunther Schuller on French horn along with trumpet, tuba, piano, bass, and drums. With his full, relaxed and confident tone, Gerry Mulligan was instantly recognizable. He could negotiate chord changes with the best of the bebop players and simultaneously create exquisite melodic content. At times, it is almost difficult to distinguish the melody of the song Mulligan is playing and his thoughtfully developed solo melodic material. Mulligan went on to become one of the most influential voices on the baritone saxophone (Ingham. 1998. pp. 134-136).

The other saxophonist on *Birth of the Cool*, Lee Konitz, had a lot to live up to. At the time of the recording, Charlie Parker was still king of the alto saxophone and perhaps jazz to many in his circle. Konitz had to become unique in order to rise from underneath Parker's shadow. He did this with his characteristic sound and almost whimsical approach to improvisation. He uses very little vibrato and a dry sound adds to the floating statements over the chord changes. Konitz was greatly influenced by Parker and was often a source and subject for study at the recommendation of Lennie Tristano. Tristano had his own "school" of jazz education and many including Konitz and his contemporary Warne Marsh (tenor saxophone) were well schooled in jazz vocabulary, rhythmic displacement, thorough melodic development, and composition.

Like Konitz, Paul Desmond had a light and dry alto sound. They both received a great amount of attention during the 1950's however, Desmond composed an international jazz hit, *Take Five*, with the Dave Brubeck Quartet; this catchy swing tune written with a 5/4 time signature catapulted Desmond and Brubeck into the history books. Other players such as Art Pepper, Bud Shank, and Herb Geller were emerging and giving the jazz listener more options to extend their palettes. Pepper was a West coast alto saxophonists steeped in the tradition of Charlie Parker and bop language. The 1950's saw the emergence of many legendary saxophonists including one of the most celebrated

alto saxophonists Julian “Cannonball” Adderley (b. 1928 d. 1975). Cannonball, as he is referred to as (most likely because of the shape of his body), made tidal waves in the jazz world after being picked up by Miles Davis. His energetic and virtuosic melodic lines cascade out of his horn with the utmost of ease. The use of alternate fingerings, (fingerings not typically used for a specific note often resulting in a tumbrel change), explosive articulation and phrasing coupled with the heavy use of the blues, made Cannonball Adderley an insurmountable force on the alto saxophone perhaps even today. Miles Davis used Cannonball in his quintet from 1957-1959. During this time the group recorded a number of highly acclaimed albums but it is the album *Kind of Blue* that etched their names as well as John Coltrane, Jimmy Cobb, Bill Evans, and Paul Chambers into the music hall of fame (Ingham. 1998. pp. 135-136).

After a notable career with Stan Kenton, Woody Herman, and Benny Goodman, Stan Getz (b. 1927 d. 1991) began headlining his own shows with his own small groups. Most notably his bossa nova recordings struck a chord with the general populace and helped jazz with Latin American elements become more explored and sought out. One can trace Getz’s influences to Lester Young among others. Like Young, Getz had a sound on the tenor saxophone that had a tessitura more like an alto saxophone. Also, both players were more devoid of vibrato (tail vibrato was still common) than most of their contemporaries. Getz no doubt relied on the material and vocabulary of the swing period and utilized his creamy yet poignant tone to move audiences when playing a brooding ballad or up tempo rhythm changes (Ingham. 1998. p. 136).

Like many saxophonists, Dexter Gordon (b. 1923 d. 1990) started his musical career on clarinet. He soon moved to the alto saxophone and eventually the tenor saxophone. Thought of as one the first bop players on the tenor saxophone, Gordon was devoid of the acclaim he deserved much through his career. He spent the 1960’s and 1970’s living in Europe with a relatively small following in the States. In the 1980’s he returned to his home country and jazz roots. This led to a resurgence of his music and fame. In 1986, Gordon starred in the motion picture “Round Midnight” and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Leading Actor. It was Gordon’s predominant middle register and thick fundamental harmonics that made his sound so recognizable. He liked to play well behind the beat and milk the swing eighth note. Like Gordon, Sonny Rollins had a truly unique sound, but it is Rollin’s solo style that allowed him to become recognizable and sought out even in his formative years (Gioia. 1997. pp. 286-287).

With the release of hit albums such as *Tenor Madness*, and *Saxophone Colossus*, Sonny Rollins (b.1930) climbed his way to the top of the hard bop scene. Like Dexter Gordon, Rollins’s tone is ample in lower harmonics and husky undertones. This is not doubt due in part to the influence of Coleman Hawkins and the swing band players of the previous decade (Ingham. 1998. pp. 136-137). Rollins is a master at melodic development and his opening statement on the track *St. Thomas* is a perfect example. Rollins grew to know success at an early age and was already a star in his mid twenties. He moved from record date to record date recording with the likes of Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk. He was seemingly unchallenged in the tenor saxophone world when

word began to spread of a less known, and older, saxophonist. John Coltrane changed the world of jazz.

In the mid 1950's, John Coltrane was making only small ripples throughout the jazz world while Sonny Rollins and Stan Getz were on top. He had done a slew of sideman gigs none of which gave him his big break and was now playing in Johnny Hodges band. In 1955, Miles Davis needed to replace Rollins and settled on the little known talent. Miles had heard Coltrane play a few years prior and took notice. Now, while Rollins was incognito and breaking his heroin habit, Coltrane stepped into the limelight and shifted the jazz continuum for good.

A descendent of the south, John William Coltrane was born in 1926. After leaving his roots in North Carolina, he eventually made his way from Philadelphia to New York City. Some of his greatest influences were Lester Young, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Sidney Bechet, and Johnny Hodges. He played with a number of artists as a sideman. First, Eddie Vinson, Howard McGhee, and later, Dizzy Gillespie, Earl Bostic and Johnny Hodges (Frank Tirro. 1993. p. 384). It was not until his stint with the rising star Miles Davis that jazz fans and critics alike started to take notice. Coltrane was not very well received by the jazz audience at first. Constant criticisms of his tone, articulation, and time feel were not uncommon. It is true that Trane had a unique and as one could imagine startling sound as well as non-refined articulation, and a stiffer almost straight swing feel (as compared to players of the time), but he also had the determination, foresight, and confidence to allow his own musical interpretations to unfold. By 1958, Coltrane had risen with Davis to a status Rollins would never surpass and by 1959 and the recording of Davis's album *Kind of Blue*, Coltrane had cut a notch in the jazz history tree. It was not until his death and seven years of influential music later that one would realize how deep that notch would be cut.

Like most jazz musicians of the time, Coltrane had a substance abuse problem that eventually began to hinder his musical ability. This was the majority of the problem at the end of his career with Davis. Coltrane was pushed in another direction, which led to Thelonious Monk. It was during his years with Monk that Trane really was able to pursue his own voice without the constant thought of editing and tailoring to the needs of the group. There is no doubt that Trane was musical and fostered an open and artistic relationship with Monk but one of the stipulations when joining Monk was that Monk did not care how many notes he played or how long he played. Coltrane learned a great deal from Monk and perhaps this was the most nurturing and stimulating period of his early career. It is through Monk that interplay and rhythmic awareness by Coltrane becomes apparent. Around this same time, Coltrane began recording his own albums. One of his first highly successful albums was *Blue Trane*. On it he displays his technical virtuosity, solid harmonic foundation, and memorable song writing ability. It is not until 1959 and the release of *Giant Steps* that Trane becomes immortal in the eyes of saxophonists and a larger blip on the radar screen to the rest of the jazz world.

The harmonic relationships used in his title track *Giant Steps* were not new to Coltrane. He had been experimenting with minor and major third relationships and their use as a sequence for a few years. One can hear examples of this on his album *Coltrane*

Jazz and more specifically the track *Fifth House*. It is the extreme virtuosity with which he plays over the rapidly moving and almost seemingly unrelated chord changes that made Coltrane's exercise entitled *Giant Steps* an instant classic. Other notable songs on the same album include *Naima*, *Mr. P.C.*, and *Countdown*. With the beginning of a new decade approaching, the musical possibilities that Coltrane explored proved to be his most influential work.

By 1962, a shift in Coltrane's musical thought was well underway. He now had a group comprised of McCoy Tyner (piano), Jimmy Garrison (bass), and Elvin Jones (drums). One year prior an unusual sound entered the and left the musical spectrum of Coltrane's group (Tirro. 1993. pp. 390-391). Eric Dolphy, toured with the group (Reggie Workman was on bass rather than Garrison) from 1961-1962 and produced the seminal recordings *The Complete Live at the Village Vanguard Recordings*. With these recordings, one can hear both Coltrane and Dolphy take chances on Trane's standard repertoire of the time. Dolphy holds nothing back in these recordings and was criticized for being too "out" and more attune to the styling's of a newer movement that was led by a somewhat radical of the jazz world Ornette Coleman. Dolphy went on to continue experimenting leaving Trane to once again find his own path.

In 1965, Coltrane released most likely his most influential recording. *A Love Supreme* is a unique blend of spirituality and spontaneity. Here, Coltrane's verity of characteristic elements is on full display. Each track changes in mood but the ever-present intensity of Trane's sound helps to keep an easily desirable connection. By the late 1960's John Coltrane had almost single handedly changed the face of jazz both inside and out. He released a series of recording with ensembles of varying sizes. His next group including three tenors, two trumpets and two bass players among others and recorded the album *Ascension* in 1965 (Tirro. 1993. pp. 390-391). The album stretched and captivated listeners into the future. He died at the age of forty, and left the jazz world with a monumental body of work, but like in the past, jazz never steeps too long.

Unlike most, but not all of the influential jazz saxophonist up to the 1960's, Ornette Coleman was born in 1930 and not a formally trained musician. He grew up in Texas and was heavily influenced by the blues. He used his own resourcefulness and experimentation in order to discover his own voice. Coleman played rhythm and blues gigs in his formative years and in 1958 went into the studio. He was an early bloomer when it came to finding his own sound. and was already causing whispers before the release of his first three albums *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, *Change of the Century*, and *Free Jazz* all of which hit the streets between 1959 and 1960. A short residency in New York allowed him to gain attention on the scene and thrust upon the jazz world his concept of melodic development (Ingham. 1998. pp. 138-139).

Unlike the traditional context and structure of improvising over a repeating harmonic platform (players also improvised over "through composed" compositions but much less often), Coleman chose to forego the restraints of harmony and delve into a much more organic and spontaneous approach. His melodic endeavors were to dictate the harmonic interplay and freely shape a composition. Also, metric time would bend and often-standard forms would be extended to accommodate melodic material.

Vocabulary is often recycled from almost all previous sub-genres of jazz and superimposed over this more liberated feel (Ingham. 1998. pp. 138-139). It is not uncommon to hear a Charlie Parker infused blues lick followed by a scream in the upper register followed by a foghorn like Lester Young honk at the lowest spectrum of the horn. Coleman was never afraid to chase the ever elusive meaningful melody and through the 1980's and even today he captivates audiences with his relentless approach.

With key jazz figures such as Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, and Ornette Coleman, the saxophone has been at the forefront of both melodic and harmonic development in jazz. A discernable connection can be made between the early jazz giants such as Sidney Bechet and Lester Young to Stan Getz and his contemporaries of the big band era. Dexter Gordon and Sonny Rollins spearheaded a reaction to Charlie Parker's bop movement called hard bop while Lee Konitz and Paul Desmond were leaving their own tracks on the West coast in the form of "cool" jazz. Jazz and the addition of the saxophone is perhaps a result Adolph Sax could not foresee, but after an exhausting battle that spanned most of his entire adult life, one can say it was worth it.

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Jazz saxophonists are musicians who play various types of saxophones (alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone etc.) in jazz and its associated subgenres. The techniques and instrumentation of this type of performance have evolved over the 20th century, influenced by both movements of musicians that became the subgenres and by particularly influential sax players who helped reshape the music. Relaxing Background Jazz Caf   Piano and Saxophone Jazz Bar Classic 02:30. Classic Restaurant Jazz    Stomping Saxophone 01:11. Dinner Jazz Orchestra    Classic Saxophone Bossa Nova - Vibe for Cafe Lattes 02:13. Classic Relaxing Jazz    Magical Tenor Saxophone Solo - Vibe for Work 01:57. Classic Relaxing Jazz    Number One Tenor Saxophone Solo - Vibe for Spring Break 01:58. Classic Restaurant Jazz    Saxophone Restaurant Bossa Nova Jazz 01:27. Jazz Rilassante    Classic Saxophone Bossa Nova - Vibe for Cold Brews 02:09. Chilled Background Jazz    Chilled out Classic Saxophone Jazz 03:17. Bossa Nova M See more ideas about jazz, saxophone, jazz saxophonist.    Do Nothing   til You Hear from Me is an album by jazz saxophonist Johnny Griffin which was recorded in 1963 and released on the Riverside label. Johnny Griffin    tenor saxophone Buddy Montgomery    vibraphone, piano Monk Montgomery    bass Art Taylor    drums #jazz #saxophone #JohnnyGriffin #nowplaying. Bolivia Jazz Composers Jaz Z Saxophone. Album. Jazz Saxophone for Beginners. 14,745 likes    201 talking about this. Learn how to play the saxophone and jazz with my extensive series of video and...    I  ve been teaching and playing the saxophone professionally since 1983. I love creating video saxoph See More.