JAZZ

Episode Eight
Risk
[1945-1956]

FINAL DRAFT

A Film by Ken Burns
Written by Geoffrey C. Ward

A Florentine Films Production

[MX: Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker "Salt Peanuts" 1945]

> JON HENDRICKS (Singer): I was on a troop ship coming home from Bremerhaven Germany to New York harbor in 1946 and I suddenly heard this song over the ship's radio.... And it was frenetic and exciting and fast and furious and brilliant and I almost bumped my head jumping off my bunk.... So I ran up to the control room and said to the guy, "What was that?" He said, "What?"... I said, "That last song you just played, the one you just played." He said, "I don't know." I said, "Where is it?" He said, "It's down there on the floor." I looked down there on the floor, the floor's covered in records. I said, "Come on. What color was the label?" He said, "It's a red label." So I begin to sort out and I would come across red labels and I would ask him, "Was it this one?" And he said, "No." Finally I found it, it was a Music Craft label and it was called "Salt Peanuts." And it was Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. And I gave him thirty dollars and I said, "Play this for the next hour."

JAZZ

[MX: Charlie Parker "Dexterity"]

NARRATOR: After the second World War, America achieved a level of growth and prosperity unimaginable just a few years earlier. But the Cold War and its nuclear threat lurked always in the background, and the human race found itself haunted by the specter of instant annihilation.

Millions of white Americans began to move to brand-new, safe suburbs. The cities -- and the people of the inner-cities -- were left to fend for themselves.

There was a growing frustration in the black community as young men returned once again from defending freedom abroad to confront discrimination at home, while a new plague -- narcotics -- swept through black neighborhoods, dimming hopes and destroying lives.

Jazz music would reflect it all.

Jazz had always involved risk. To create art on the spot-- to step forward and express oneself -- had always meant taking enormous chances.

But now, for some young musicians, the time seemed right for freeing jazz from what they considered the tyranny of popular taste, building a new musical world in which only their virtuoso talents would matter.

The new music -- that had been incubating during the war -- was intricate, fast-paced — and filled with danger -- a perfect mirror of the complicated world from which it sprang.

The singular genius whose startling innovations came to epitomize the new music was Charlie Parker.

NARRATOR: But those innovations came at a great cost: the jazz audience shrank as young people -- both black and white -- found other forms of music to dance to.

And a generation of aspiring young musicians would have to come to terms with Parker's twin legacies -- the terrible addiction that threatened to ruin their lives even as it was destroying his, and the musical accomplishments for which he would never be forgotten.

OSSIE DAVIS (Actor): Charlie Parker, to me, was a golden cleaver that could cut to the bone and release forces that we didn't know were there. He would ride the horses of extreme danger, even if they pulled him apart. And his anguish as a ... man and as a black man was all folded into his, his relationship to the saxophone.

Episode Eight
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[MX: Frank Sinatra "All of Me" 1946]

NARRATOR: The end of World War II marked the beginning of the end for the ... swing bands.

Tastes had changed. Instrumentalists were forced to retreat to the background as popular singers took center stage -- and young people flocked to see and hear them, including the skinny young baritone from Tommy Dorsey's orchestra, Frank Sinatra.

The big bands struggled to survive.

Duke Ellington and Count Basie managed to stay on the road, but by Christmas of 1946, eight of their best-known rivals would announce that they were at least temporarily leaving it, including Harry James, Stan Kenton, Benny Carter, Tommy Dorsey, Woody Herman,— even the "King of Swing" Benny Goodman.

[MX: Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker "Groovin' High" 1945]

Great jazz soloists abandoned dreams of heading up big bands of their own, formed small groups instead, and retreated to nightclubs--places too small for dancing.

All kinds of jazz were being played at the war's end, in clubs from 52nd street in Manhattan to Central Avenue in Los Angeles. But whatever the style, the jam session had become the model--freewheeling, competitive, demanding -- the kind of jazz musicians had always played to entertain themselves after the squares had gone home.

The swing era was over. Jazz had moved on.

And here and there across the country, in small clubs and on obscure record labels, the new and risk-filled music was finally beginning to be heard.

It was called bebop.

JON HENDRICKS (Singer): ...the melodies that that they were playing had been altered drastically and the chords underneath those melodies

had been altered drastically, for example, they used songs like, "Whispering" da da deed a love you, da da da dee da da da da, wha da da dee dee da da da, " popular songs, like "Whispering," but the way Charlie Parker would rephrase these songs, it became, da dup, da dup, badoo be doo be ooby doodley oo day dup, du bup da bup, be dooby doo whey bup etc.... It was so exciting, so inventive, so creative, so artistic that your soul just swelled up with the possibilities for what you could do with it, with whatever limited aspect you had.

STAN LEVEY (Drums): They played very, very fast. They had great technique, great ideas. They ran their lines through the chords changes differently than anybody else. Prior to them, it was Roy Eldridge, Coleman Hawkins, you know, that type of thing. This was a complete left-hand turn with the music. It was wonderful.... When I heard this thing, I said it was for me. I'm connected. And I got connected.

[MX: Dizzy Gillepsie and Charlie Parker "Dizzy Atmosphere" 1945]

NARRATOR: Bebop was as much evolutionary as it was revolutionary. It had grown out of after-hour wartime jam sessions at places like Minton's Playhouse in Harlem, among musicians schooled in swing music– Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Christian, Kenny Clarke, and the eccentric genius of the piano -- Thelonious Monk.

In bop, the old steady rhythm of the dance band was broken up by new ways of drumming.... The rhythm section was freer now to interact with the horns.

Musicians used unexpected intervals that created dissonant sounds. Classical musicians once called them "the devil's interval." Boppers called them "flatted fifths."

"Bebop emerged from the war years and it reflected those times," said the trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, who would become bop's finest teacher and most articulate champion. "It might have looked and sounded like bedlam," he said, " but it wasn't."

[Archival performance: Charlie Parker "Celebrity" 1950]

NARRATOR: The man who spoke the language of bebop most eloquently was Charlie Parker -- Bird.

JON HENDRICKS (Singer): He was a genius. He could discuss any subject you'd bring up. Nuclear physics. The quantum theory. You know, anything, God that guy was amazing. His favorite composer was Stravinsky and his favorite work was "Le Sacre de Printemps." He loved that. He was, he was a real intellectual. Huge mind. This big.

[MX: Charlie Parker "Dewey Square" 1947]

NARRATOR: On the bandstand, Parker risked everything, furiously pouring out fresh ideas as if his very life depended on it, shocking everyone who heard him -- with his speed, his fire, his ferocious concentration.

> STAN LEVEY (Drums): Charlie Parker, his sound, his music, to me, when I first heard him, first night, was the Pied Piper of Hamlin. I would have followed him anywhere, you know? Over the cliff, wherever.
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> ...I was working on 52nd Street with different people, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins.(#6c) And this guy walks out, he's got one blue shoe and one green shoe ... rumpled, he's got his horn in a paper bag with rubber bands and cellophane on it and there he is, Charlie Parker. His hair standing straight up. He was doing the Don King back then. Well, I says, "I can't believe this.... This guy looks terrible. Can he play? What?" You know. And he sat in and within four bars, I just fell in love with this guy, the music, you know. And he looked at, back at me, you know, with that big grin, with that gold tooth and we were just like that. From that moment on, we were together. We moved in together, we got a, a room together and we were together for a couple of years, we lived together.

NARRATOR: Off the bandstand, Parker's private life was also filled with risk -- he had been addicted to heroin since the age of seventeen.

> STANLEY CROUCH (Writer): Charlie Parker was ... a man who could never outrun his appetites. His appetites always outran him. So, his appetites were kind of like a, a wagon that he was tied to, that dragged him down the street at different velocities. If they dragged him slowly, he didn't get, he didn't get too cut up. If they dragged him quickly, he got badly hurt.

[MX: Fats Navarro and Kenny Clarke "Boperation" 1948]

NARRATOR VIII-10.1: In December of 1945, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and a group of musicians including the drummer, Stan Levey, set out for California. Gillespie had been invited to put together a group to play the new music at a Hollywood nightclub called Billy Berg's.

Gillespie was reluctant to bring along the often unreliable Parker and from the start the trip was a disaster.

> STAN LEVEY (Drums): when we left Chicago to go to California was the long trip,... Through the desert and he ... got desperately ill, I mean really, really ill.... You had to stop for water in the desert.... And I look out the window and I see this spot out there carrying like a little grip and I'm saying, "What the hell is that?" And I look closer; it's Charles Parker.

NARRATOR: Parker had wandered off into the desert in search of a fix.

> STAN LEVEY (Drums): Dizzy turned to me, he says, "What's that?," and I said, "I think it's your saxophone player." So he said, "Go get him."... So

I ran out real quick and grabbed him and I says, "Where are you going?" He says, "I, I got to get something out here somewhere." I says, "There's nothing there." And I helped him back into the train. Well, needless to say, he was so sick when we got to Union Station it was a mess, you know?

[MX: Charlie Parker "Moose the Mooche" 1946]

NARRATOR: When the group, including the strung out Parker, finally reached Los Angeles, young west coast musicians, who had already begun to experiment with the same sorts of sounds Gillespie and Parker were playing, flocked to Billy Berg's. Howard McGhee, Charles Mingus and Dexter Gordon were among those dazzled by their sound.

But most jazz fans seemed baffled by their music. It struck a good many listeners as frantic, nervous, chaotic, and the audience dwindled away.

JON HENDRICKS (Singer): They were trying to say to the audience, look, lift yourselves up to where we are, we we're not that far out there, you know. We're just a little more hip than the average person so, come on, get hip, you know, dig this, dig this. Take that wax out of your ears.

WYNTON MARSALIS (Trumpet): ...when an art form is created, you, the question is how do you come to it? Not how does it come to you. Like, Beethoven's music is not going to come to you. Or the art of Picasso won't come to you. Shakespeare, you have to go to it. And when you go to it, you get the benefits of it.

NARRATOR: It took Charlie Parker weeks to locate a steady source for heroin in Los Angeles -- the proprietor of a shoe-shine stand, known as "Moose the Mooche."

Parker was so grateful, he named a tune in his new dealer's honor.

On the eve of the band's return to New York, Parker sold his plane ticket for heroin and disappeared, and Gillespie -- who had once called Parker "the other half of my heartbeat," -- left for home without him.

Parker was now stranded in Los Angeles, without a steady job. He managed to record several sides on his own for Dial Records -- a small specialty label — and signed a document giving one half his earnings to Moose the Mooche in exchange for heroin.

When "the Mooche" was arrested Parker began drinking as much as a quart of whiskey a day to compensate for the heroin he craved. Soon he was living in an empty garage, with only his overcoat as bedding.

PHIL SCHAAP (Historian): he's going through withdrawal symptoms. He's a heroin addict who doesn't really have a home. Who's intentionally cut himself off from the one place where he feels he can maneuver in society on equal footing which would be New York City.... His main colleague, Dizzy Gillespie, is off doing completely different things in his career and is not in full contact with Bird, if in any contact, and Bird is in trouble.

[MX: Charlie Parker "Lover Man" 1946]

NARRATOR: On July 29, 1946, he turned up so drunk for a recording session the record producer had to hold him up in front of the microphone.

A doctor gave him six tablets of Phenobarbital to bring him around, and he managed to stumble through single takes of "Bebop" and "Lover Man."

Parker himself later said the recording should be "stomped into the ground," but the producer released it anyway— and some of Parker's admirers dutifully committed it to memory, note for tortured note.

The night of the recording session, he completely fell apart: He wandered naked into the lobby of his hotel and later fell asleep while smoking and set his bed ablaze.

The firemen had to shake him violently to wake him, and when he resisted the police beat him and threw him in jail.

Charlie Parker was committed to Camarillo State Mental Hospital.

There, the man who had helped launch a musical revolution, spent the next six months, tending a lettuce patch, putting on weight, and playing his saxophone in the hospital band.

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[Archival performance: Dizzy Gillespie "Oh Bop Sha-bam" 1947]

Announcer: Now let me lay a question on you.

Dizzy Gillespie: Shoot.

Announcer: How long was Cain made at his brother?

Dizzy Gillespie: As long as he was Abel.

Announcer: You dig me Jack, you dig me.

Dizzy Gillespie: You better dig this next number.

Announcer: Owww, take it!

NARRATOR: After Dizzy Gillespie got back to New York from California, he put together his own big band, in part to show the world that bebop could be every bit as entertaining -- and dance-able -- as swing music.

ALBERT MURRAY (Writer): ...he was the guy most responsible for the dissemination of Bop, Charlie Parker was as important as he was in terms of what was actually happening in the music, but the person who was the mentor ... and from whom other people learned was Dizzy.

STANLEY CROUCH (Writer): the thing about Dizzy that was so important was that he was both an extraordinary intellectual and he was a guy who had this real ... love of life and great sense of humor and the unfortunate thing for him in the over arch of his career was that, the fact that he seemed to have so much fun and tell so many jokes and dance on stage and all that caused people to, to not really realize that he had been the central organizing figure in the bebop era.

[MX: Dizzy Gillespie "Manteca" 1947]

NARRATOR: Dizzy Gillespie became the public face of bebop -- everything about him provided colorful copy: his dark-rimmed glasses, his berets, the cheeks that puffed so alarmingly when he played.

Gillespie broke all kinds of conventions.

One of his trombonists was a woman, Melba Liston — whom he hired simply because he loved her sound and found the arrangements she wrote as challenging as his own.

Then, he added an extraordinary conga player from Cuba named Chano Pozo to the band.

With tunes like "Cubana Be, Cubana Bop" and "Manteca," Gillespie helped revive the link between jazz and the infectious rhythms of the Caribbean that New Orleans musicians had first incorporated when the music was born.

STAN LEVEY (Drums): ...he shared everything he knew. He never held back. Lotta guys are secretive about what they know and what they do and the this, I don't, and this chord goes there, but I'm not going to tell you. He would give you whatever you needed to know. He was just wide open, giving. But it, he would get back what he wanted from you.

NARRATOR: Gillespie struggled always to make bebop accessible to everyone, but for all his showmanship, his brilliant playing, and the drive and precision of his music, he failed to attract a wide audience.

"Dancers didn't care whether we played a flatted fifth or a ruptured 129th..." he said, "They'd just stand around the bandstand and gawk."

[MX: Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie "Salt Peanuts" 1945]

FRANKIE MANNING (Dancer): I was in the army for five years, I came out in 1947, and I come out of the army and I hear "blll, blll, ddd, ddd,...." I just could not get accustomed to that. I, I said, "Well what is this, what, I mean what's going on, you know? And I hear all this be-bop music. I work with Dizzy's band, I, I formed my own group called The Conjurers. I worked with Dizzy's band in 1947, Dizzy Gillespie's band, in Washington, D.C. We went on the stage, I gave him my music, "Jumping at the Woodside," Count Basie, and he's got this drummer up there, and he's giving me all this "chuck a bong pim, chick a pim" and I'm usually hearing "chick a chu, chick a chu, chick a chu." And he's playing this stuff. When we finished the act and I come off, I said to Dizzy, now can I say these words? I said to Dizzy, "What the... is this your doing, you

know?"... it was different from when I used to see,... kids out there on the floor swinging.... I just could not understand it.... eventually, I got to understand the music.... but it was not music for dancing.

Trying To Play Clean

[MX: Charlie Parker "Scrapple from the Apple" 1947]

NARRATOR: By April of 1947, Charlie Parker was out of the hospital, at least momentarily free of heroin, and back on 52nd Street, playing at the Three Deuces with his own quintet, featuring Max Roach on drums, and a gifted young trumpet player named Miles Davis.

Parker discovered that while he had been away, a host of younger musicians had begun to emulate his style.

WYNTON MARSALIS (Trumpet): ...everybody wants to play like Charlie Parker after a while. Bass players, doom doom doom doom duh doom be doom doom doom. Drummers, rah tah n dat tah oonka oonka du du du doo de dee dee. Piano players, doodle oo boodle dee etc. Trumpet players, diddly doo be doo be doob. Everybody playing the vocabulary of Charlie Parker.

JACKIE MCLEAN (Saxophone): as a very young musician, that's how I wanted to play, exactly. I didn't care if someone said I sounded like him , that's what I wanted to do. And that was all I dreamt of doing. I didn't want to be original; I wanted to play like Charlie Parker.

[MX: Charlie Parker "Yardbird Suite" 1946]

JACKIE MCLEAN (Saxophone): ...this week that he was playing at the Apollo was perfect for me and the only way I could get to see him would be not to go to school. So, a few of my friends and I, we would leave home in the morning,... and go down in the subway, but instead of going to the Bronx to our school, we would go down to 125th Street and put our books in one of those lockers in the subway and go get in front of the theater and ... we would sit and watch the movie and then we would wait until it was time for the show and then the curtain would come back and there he'd be... And of course, we heard all of this great music that we had heard on these recordings ... we would enjoy that show and then we get up ... and ... sneak out of an exit on the side, and run backstage so we could see Bird when he came out to get a breath of air ... and he would just say, "How you guys doing?" You know? "Aren't you supposed to be in school today?"... We'd say, "Yeah, Bird, but, but like, we came down here to see you." He said, "Okay. Well, you guys be careful."

NARRATOR: Day after day, Parker continued to refine and push and experiment with the sounds the critics insisted on calling "bebop."

Parker himself hated the word: “It's just music,” he said. “It's trying to play clean and looking for the pretty notes.”

He was rarely satisfied with his own work and embarrassed, too, by the acolytes who were now beginning to follow him from bandstand to bandstand, hiding recorders which they turned on whenever he stepped forward to solo — and clicked off again the moment he had finished.

> HARRY EDISON (Trumpet): ...when Charlie Parker came on the scene he made such an impression on the musicians he would play a melody wrong, and if you told if you told one of his disciples that melody was wrong, you might get knocked out.

[MX: Hank Williams “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry” 1949]

NARRATOR: His admirers were sometimes scornful of earlier jazz and popular music, but nothing musical was alien to Charlie Parker.

> NAT HENTOFF (Critic): He used to hang out at Charlie's Tavern, which was a place ... jazz musicians, hung out at in mid-town New York.... they had a juke box. And along with jazz records, there was some country music records. And that's all that Bird would play. And the guys, didn't know what to make out of this. They didn't have the courage to ask the great man why he was playing this awful music, until finally one of them did. "Bird, why do you play those recordings, the country stuff?" And Bird looked at him and said, "Listen, listen to the stories." And of course that's true.

[MX: Dodworth Saxhorn Band “The Baseball Quaderille” 1993]

NARRATOR: A friend remembered leaving Parker transfixed in a Manhattan snowstorm late one night, unable to tear himself away from the thump and blare of a Salvation Army band.

[MX: Charlie Parker “Chi Chi” 1953]

Another friend told of driving with him through the countryside when someone remarked idly that livestock loved music. Parker asked the driver to stop, assembled his horn, stalked into a field, and gravely played several choruses to a bewildered cow.

[MX: Jackie McClean “Confirmation” 1956]

[MX: Charlie Parker “Confirmation” 1947]

> JACKIE MCLEAN (Saxophone): ...one day, I came home from school and my mother said to me, she said, "You will never, you're not going to believe this but I got a phone call from Charlie Parker today." And I said, "What?" You know, I was very excited, you know, I said, "Well, what did he say?" She said, "Well, he wants you to come down to this place called

Chateau Gardens tonight and wear a blue suit, shirt and tie, and play for him until he gets there man, I immediately went in the room, began to practice and get ready for this big night for me.... And when the curtain went back, the people were very disappointed, I might add (laughs) ... when they looked up there and saw me up there.... and so I began to play through the tunes that I knew like "Confirmation" and "Now's the Time" and "A Night In Tunisia" and "Don't Blame Me" and the things that Bird played.... then ... I looked and saw this crowd surge to the back and I saw Bird come in.... I saw a saxophone case up in the air. The people were so close around him that he was holding his saxophone case over his head. And, and, and then, they followed him all the way to the stage.... He took out his horn and walked out there and he said, "Play one with me," and we did one together, and then he told me to go sit down. You know, played the rest of the night.

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[Archival performance: Louis Armstrong with Jack Teagarden performing "Rockin' Chair" 1947]

NARRATOR: On May 15, 1947, exactly one month after Jackie Robinson broke the color line in Major League Baseball, Louis Armstrong appeared with a small integrated group at New York's Town Hall. Armstrong's old friend Jack Teagarden played trombone.

It was still rare to see blacks and whites touring together, and Teagarden worried that his presence might cause trouble. Armstrong told him not to worry.

The show was a triumph. It led to the formation of "Louis Armstrong and His All-Stars;" they would continue to perform for nearly a quarter of a century.

For millions of people who either didn't like or hadn't heard of Charlie Parker and bebop, Louis Armstrong's brand of music was the very definition of jazz.

[MX: Louis Armstrong and his All Stars "When the Saints Go Marching In" 1956]

NARRATOR: Two years later, Armstrong was chosen to be the "King" of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, the oldest African-American organization in the annual Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans.

As a proud son of the city, Armstrong felt honored to be King; it had been, he said, his "lifetime ambition."

ARVELL SHAW (Bass): I'd never seen anything this beautiful in my life,... here come the King of the Zulus with the band playing (vocalizes) sing you know 'Saints' in there and they would meet and drink champagne them and and it was a this a beautiful thing you know.

NARRATOR: But to many <u>younger</u> African-Americans, increasingly impatient with segregation -- and unaware that the Zulus had been formed in part to mock <u>white</u> social clubs -- Armstrong in blackface seemed especially grotesque.

[MX: Louis Armstrong "Rockin' Chair" 1939]

GERALD EARLY (Writer): I think he was perceived ... mistakenly, I think, in retrospect, as an Uncle Tom.... He came out, he was grinning. He had this handkerchief, he was sweating. He's, you know, he sang in this gravely voice that at the time we didn't understand that he was a great singer, he just seemed like an old guy singing with a gravely voice. And um, and we were disturbed because white people loved him so much. And that made him that made him very suspect to us. And then he came out and he sang these corn, tunes that seemed rather corny to us. And uh, so I think to uh a new generation, a post-World War Two generation, a more militant African-American community, he seemed like a throwback. He seemed like something from an earlier time. He seemed like um a link to minstrelsy that I think that many of us at that time were rather ashamed of.

NARRATOR: After the parade, Armstrong and his All Stars were scheduled to give a concert in New Orleans, but when the city fathers learned that Jack Teagarden was in the band, they refused to let the All Stars play.

"I don't care if I never see that city again...," Armstrong told a friend. "Jazz was born there and I remember when it wasn't no crime for cats of <u>any</u> color to get together and blow."

ARVELL SHAW (Bass): ...and that hurt Louis so he never he never forgave.... That's why Louis is not buried in New Orleans right now, because the city of New Orleans would not let us play the concert because we had a white man in the band.... Well he refused to be buried in New Orleans.... That hurt him so...

<u>This</u> is My Home

[MX: Charlie Parker "Klaunstance" 1947]

NARRATOR: In May of 1949, a delegation of American musicians landed in Paris for one of the first international jazz festivals ever held.

The best-known musician was Sidney Bechet, who had been one of the first to spread New Orleans jazz around the world. Charlie Parker had been invited as well: the French had been listening to his obscure recordings for years. And to Parker's surprise, they now hailed him as a worthy successor to Bechet and Ellington and Armstrong.

GARY GIDDINS (Critic): And when he went to Europe, that was probably the one time where audiences and critics and the public really greeted him as heroic figure. In New York and in the United States, it was mostly within the musical community. But he never won any of the big, you know, the the trinkets of celebrityhood. He never was on the cover of any major magazine. He never recorded for a major label, not once in his

career. He was never invited to, you know, be in films. He, he was a musician's musician.

NARRATOR: When Parker returned from Europe, he intentionally tried to broaden his audience.

[MX: Charlie Parker and Strings "Just Friends" 1949]

He made a series of recordings -- popular love songs -- with a string orchestra.

Though some purists detested them, they sold better than any other records he had ever made.

BRANFORD MARSALIS (Saxophone): ...a lot of people at the time hated that record 'cause they're saying Charlie Parker had sold out. But what he did was absolutely revolutionary because he played these songs, he played them in a way that they had never been played before, he was still Charlie Parker. It's not like he sold out his identity to play these songs, and he played songs that people knew and people bought these records and they loved hearing Charlie Parker playing these records.... there's a song called "Just Friends" and, "Just friends, lovers no more, da da da da da duh." I mean, if he had just picked up his horn and played (plays), then I think they would have a point.... And he would come in and he played this lick: (plays) when you hear that, I mean, it's... (laughs) it's unbelievable when you put this record on for the first time and you hear this guy floating across the instrument that way.

[MX and radio recording: Symphony Sid introducing Charlie Parker's "White Christmas" 1948]

<u>Symphony Sid</u>: This is Christmas morning and the Bird's got a little surprise for you on "White Christmas".

NARRATOR: In December of 1949, a new jazz club, dedicated to bebop, opened in New York just off 52nd Street. It was named "Birdland" -- after the new king of bop -- and Parker appeared regularly on its bandstand.

His fame was beginning to grow, and he seemed finally to have found a little domestic peace as well. He had moved in with a dancer named Chan Richardson and adopted her daughter.

CHAN PARKER (Former Wife): ...He had ... an incredible life force.... He was above all other facets of men that I had ever known. He was, had a maturity beyond his years. In fact, he said to me one day, "I'm not one of those boys you're used to."... He had ... a command.

NARRATOR: He and Chan would have two children together -- a son, Baird, and a daughter named Pree.

But <u>nothing</u> was quite as it seemed.

GARY GIDDINS (Critic): Parker had multiple personalities, not a disorder, but he just had a lot of personalities.... the time he was in New York at the peak of his renown, he was leading three lives.... He had the life of a jazz musician, which would be a full-time job for most people, perfecting your art and performing night after night. He had the, the job, as it were, of a junkie, which is also a full time place which led him, a full time job which led him into, you know, terrible places where the musician might not want to be.... And then he led this middle-class life ... as a father and a husband living in the East Village of Manhattan where he was known by all of his neighbors as,... somebody who always had a smile on his face and was friendly. A lot of people didn't know who he was or what he did. But he was liked, very well liked. And he managed to play these three different roles simultaneously.

STAN LEVEY (Drums): ...well he's a con artist. Charlie could con your pants off you. You know, he was that way. Always on the go. Like a moving target, you know, you couldn't, couldn't get him. And that intrigued me. Plus the music, the music. What came out of his horn was incredible.

[MX: Charlie Parker "Don't Blame Me" 1947]

NARRATOR: On the bandstand, Parker disciplined his furious talent. "More than four choruses," he told a young Milt Jackson," and you're just practicing."

But off the bandstand he was often out of control, insatiable, always wanting more food, more liquor, more women — and more drugs. "This is my home," he told a friend as he rolled up his sleeve to inject himself.

STAN LEVEY (Drums): A day in the life of Charlie Parker.... He would play all night in the club, then you'd go up to Minton's at nine in the morning or whatever and play there 'til about noon. Then you had to get more drugs. If you could get a few hours sleep in between, it would be OK, but then you had to get the money for the drugs. It was a constant merry-go-round, 24 hours a day. Twenty four hours a day. Hocking things, finding money, getting guys to help you with money, a total waste of time. A complete waste of time. If he had put that time into his music, into his writing, think what would have come out of it, you know?

CHAN PARKER (Former Wife): ...he tried to kick many times while he was with me. Sometimes very successfully. But he told me once, you know, you can get it out of your body but you can't get it out of your brain.

VOICE: Heroin was our badge... the thing that made us different from the rest of the world. It was the thing that said, "We know. You don't know." It was the thing that gave us membership in a unique club, and for this membership we gave up everything else in the world. Every ambition. Every desire. Everything. It ruined most of the people.

Red Rodney

(Anthony LaPaglia)

NARRATOR: "Jazz was born in a whiskey barrel," said Artie Shaw, "grew up on marijuana, and is about to expire on heroin."

Marijuana had always been a part of jazz. Louis Armstrong smoked it almost every day.

But heroin was different — "drastic stuff," Armstrong called it — and soon it seemed to be everywhere, dumped into black neighborhoods by organized crime.

Heroin's effect was devastating.

JACKIE MCLEAN (Saxophone): it came on the scene like a tidal wave, I mean, it just appeared after World War Two .// I began to notice guys in my neighborhood nodding on the corner, you know, and so we all began to find out that this is what they w..., they were nodding because they were taking this, this thing called 'horse'; we called it horse at that time.

[MX: Charlie Parker "Bebop" 1949]

BERTRAND TAVERNIER (Filmmaker): ...jazz was a very risky music when you were playing it well.... it's a music which is demanding. Where people are sometimes very, very, very severe. Are very, they, they have a lot of, they look for a certain kind of urgency. They, they they risk their life. They risk their life.... it's a music where people are living on a, tightrope. So, they want sometimes to, forget that. They want to fight against that. they want to be even higher than the tightrope.

WYNTON MARSALIS (Trumpet): when you have that type of extreme relationship to the world that's around you, it's very difficult not to need stimulation.... And when you're playing music, jazz, you, you could lose track of time. You just playing ... the world that you're in is perfect.... Well now, as soon as that music is over, that too is over.... But that dope is always there for you... And the dope is going to make you maintain that high.... The dope is there to tell you, "It's all-right, man."

NARRATOR: It was always risky business to try and match Charlie Parker's dazzling technique, his frantic tempos, and his overflowing ideas, but now worshipful musicians began to emulate his addiction as well as his music, in the hope that by sharing it they could somehow share his genius, too.

"Bird was like fire," the pianist John Lewis remembered. "You couldn't get too close."

JACKIE MCLEAN (Saxophone): ...a lot of guys in my community that idolized and worshipped Charlie Parker began to experiment with this drug, including myself.... for, I had 18 years of addiction; that's why I can speak about it and I'm a family man, and I'm a musician, so my life wasn't that different from Bird's, you know, but it has to do with who your wife is and who your family is and if they can tolerate what goes on and it's

terrible, you know. I mean, I had my mom and my family and my wife and my children and then, I also has this gorilla on my back...

[MX: Charlie Parker Quintet "The Hymn" 1947]

NARRATOR: One by one, many of the most gifted musicians in jazz would be lost for a time to narcotics: Stan Levey, Gerry Mulligan, Art Blakey, John Coltrane, Dexter Gordon, Sonny Stitt, Anita O'Day, Tadd Dameron, Red Rodney, Chet Baker, Sonny Rollins, Art Pepper, Fats Navarro, and eight of the sixteen men in Woody Herman's band.

The tenor saxophonist Stan Getz tried to support his habit by holding up a drugstore, spent six months in jail — and returned to drugs and alcohol almost the moment he got out.

Heroin changed the dynamics of performance.

WYNTON MARSALIS (Trumpet): ...dope really took a lot out of the development of the music ... because the musicians would be playing in jam sessions and you don't rehearse for that.... everybody was high and they didn't want to spend that time working on the music.... And then also, the,... social relationship between the musicians changed because a dope addict is trying to get money all the time and they create this clannish environment where if you're not a part of that dope crowd, they don't want to hang with you.... And the network of houses musicians used to stay in during segregated times, the houses of black families, well they can't do that now because musicians will come and they're stealing from the people and they just having a negative influence.... And the musicians themselves become harder and more guarded. And less, there's less love to go around. Because that dope is sucking all the love up.

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[Archival performance: Louis Jordan "Caldonia" 1956]

NARRATOR: Louis Jordan loved playing jazz with an orchestra, loved singing the blues, too.

But after the big band craze died away and the bop era began, "jazzmen played mostly for themselves," he said, "I wanted to play for the people... not just hep cats."

He did just that, taking the simplest, most crowd pleasing aspects of swing and producing hit after novelty hit.

"With my little band," he said, "I did everything they did with a big band.

"I made the blues jump."

Millions of black fans who had once followed jazz, were now dancing to a new kind of music.

It was called Rhythm and Blues.

Sustained Intensity

[MX: Miles Davis Nonet "Bobplicity" 1949]

NARRATOR: In the autumn of 1949, a steady stream of musicians filed in and out of an apartment building next to a Chinese laundry on West 55th Street in New York City.

In its basement was the one-room apartment of Gil Evans, a brilliant free-lance arranger. His door was open 24 hours a day, and among the men who stopped by to jam were some of the most gifted musicians in jazz -- Gerry Mulligan, Lee Konitz, John Lewis.

Evan's closest collaborator was the young trumpet-player Miles Davis, an impatient, relentless innovator, who, over the next quarter century, would continually push the boundaries of jazz.

He had been born in East St. Louis, Illinois in 1926, the son of a well-known dentist and gentleman farmer.

Dr. Davis raised his son in the kind of cushioned isolation few jazz musicians ever knew — a handsome house in a white neighborhood, a cook, a maid, and a 300-acre farm with riding horses.

As a boy, Davis was small and shy and so good-looking that classmates called him "pretty" just to embarrass him.

To win acceptance, he would adopt an exaggerated toughness that he never abandoned.

He took up the trumpet at thirteen, and by the time he was eighteen was good enough to sit in with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie when they passed through St. Louis.

When he first heard Parker, Miles Davis said, "I decided right then and there that I had to leave St. Louis and live in New York," and he soon found himself playing regularly with his idol.

> GARY GIDDINS (Critic): ... Miles ... He ... was 19 years old when he first was working with Charlie Parker, and he had the job that every trumpet player would have killed for, which was to play in Parker's band. And he was different ... most of the serious people, the musicians recognize right away that he had a wonderful lyricism that was quite unusual and he didn't sound like anybody else. But he had to invent a style because he didn't have the virtuosity of Dizzy Gillespie.... So he started to create a style that was based more on timbre and melody. Play very few notes, but make them the right notes. Create a sense of mood.

NARRATOR: Davis was just 23 years old in 1949, when he began turning up at Gil Evans's apartment. He was eager to find a new showcase for the distinctive, introspective style he was developing.

[MX: Miles Davis Nonet "Venus DeMilo 1949]

> WYNTON MARSALIS (Trumpet): Well, Miles has ... to find a sound and a style that has the more delicate side of his nature. Now, he still has that toughness and that blade up in there, so his sound is not weepy or weak. But it has another type of delicacy and ... it has a sentiment that draws the romance out of the music and presents it to people.... his sound is very, very tender to come out of a man. Lester Young was like that before

him.... Miles has a vulnerability that he's not afraid of sharing with people that are listening to him. Once ... he allowed that vulnerability to come into his sound well ... then his sound became irresistible.

NARRATOR: Davis and Evans formed an unconventional nine piece group that included both tuba and French horn. They played just two engagements, but a major label, Capitol Records, invited them into the studio to record several of their arrangements.

Capitol eventually released their tunes on a long playing album called Birth of the Cool.

"Bird and Diz were great but they weren't sweet," Davis remembered. "We shook people's ears a little softer ... took the music more mainstream."

WYNTON MARSALIS (Saxophone): Now, the "Birth of the Cool" was just a lot of different musicians coming together.... A style that's soft, but intense. That's like the best encounters that you have out here. Soft, but intense and sustained intensity. I always say, that the sustained intensity equals ecstasy. And that's the hard thing, to sustain that intensity.

[MX: Miles Davis Nonet "Moondreams" 1950]

GERALD EARLY (Writer): It was a kind of a piercing sort of a sound. It was piercing and mellow at the same time and I think that that's what really struck me about just the loneliness of the human condition. And for some reason, I rather thought that black people actually captured that very well in in in music, was this kind of loneliness in the human condition that no matter how much you yearn for community and yearn for community and in the end there is this loneliness and there's no way you can escape it. And that's ... to me what the best jazz, when you hear a soloist often, especially in a slow piece or ballad piece. That's sort of what the best jazz, to me, has always felt like.

NARRATOR: Like Sidney Bechet and Charlie Parker, Miles Davis had also gone to Paris in 1949.

The trip "changed the way I looked at things forever....," Davis remembered. "Paris was where I understood that all white people weren't the same..."

He met Picasso, haunted cafés with Jean-Paul Sartre, had a brief, heady romance with the singer, Juliette Greco.

"I had never felt like that in my life," he said. "It was the freedom ... of being treated like a human being, like someone important."

But that feeling did not last long.

QUINCY TROUPE (Biographer): ...I think Miles' demons started in 1949 ... when he went to France ... and he was treated so royally ... and he comes back and he's treated just like another black person over here, just like a little colored boy.

MARGO JEFFERSON (Writer): No one quite knows what Miles Davis's demons were.... Growing up in that very carefully secluded world, where you are taught that you are a privileged creature. You are at the same time taught that that is very fragile, and that it might be snatched away from you at any moment. But ... you are a prince or a princess within it. I think the combination of entitlement and bigotry, assault, the assaults of bigotry and caste prejudice set something absolutely poisonous loose.... Also, the need in some way, to turn himself into his dramatic image of what a really tough street Negro would be.... If you're brilliant and Miles Davis, you're going to do it in a very compelling but kind of murderous way.

NARRATOR: Within weeks of his return from Europe, unable to shake the feeling that he belonged back in Paris and unable to find work, Miles Davis, too, turned to drugs — first snorting heroin, then injecting it directly into his veins.

NARRATOR: To support his habit — "to feed the beast," as he remembered -- he stole from friends, pawned his horn, even became a pimp.

Davis was jailed for possession in Los Angeles — but managed to beat the charge.

Then his own father, desperate to make him quit his habit, had him arrested in the hope that he would check into a hospital for treatment.

Davis refused, cursed his father, and returned to drugs.

Like Charlie Parker, he was earning a reputation for unreliability.

"People started looking at me another way, like I was dirty or something," he remembered, "They looked at me with pity and horror, and they hadn't looked at me that way before."

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[Archival footage: 1952 Downbeat awards, presented by Leonard Feather and Earl Wilson to Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie]

Earl Wilson: Here they are. This is Charlie Parker .

Charlie Parker: Thank you.

Earl Wilson: ...and the famous Dizzy Gillsepie.

NARRATOR: In 1952, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, who still played loved to play together, accepted awards from Downbeat Magazine on the new medium of television.

Earl Wilson: Now Fellas. Leanoard says I'm supposed to be the toast master or the sort of the Georgie Jessel of jazz. So Charlie, I want to award you now the Downbeat Award for the best alto sax man of 1951. Congratulations to you.

Charlie Parker: Thank you Earl. Thank you.

Earl Wilson: And ah Diz, this is to you from Downbeat for being one of the top trumpet men of all time. Congratulations Diz, I mean Dizzy -- I got a little informal there. You boys got anything more to say?

Charlie Parker: Well, Earl, they say music speaks louder than words, so we'd rather voice our opinion that way, if you don't mind.

Earl Wilson: I think that'd be all-right with everybody if you really want to do it.

Charlie Parker: Good.

[Archival performance: Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie "Hot House" 1952]

NARRATOR: Throughout the live broadcast, Parker's face remained impassive, his fierce eyes and the movement of his fingers on the keys the only outward signs of the effort required to yield such brilliant music.

Bebop's influence seemed to be everywhere now, altering jazz in ways even Parker and Gillespie could not have imagined:

[Archival performance: Bud Powell "Get Happy" 1960]

NARRATOR: Bud Powell, one of the most influential musicians of the era, brought all the intricacies of bebop to the keyboard.

One pianist said, that Powell even "outbirded Bird," and "out dizzied Dizzy."

[Archival performance: Ella Fitzgerald "Lady Be Good" 1957]

Bebop seemed unsingable at first, but Ella Fitzgerald, who had started her career recording pop ballads, embraced it completely -- "Bop musicians have more to say than any other musicians playing today," she said — and bop musicians loved the way she sounded.

[Archival performance: Modern Jazz Quartet "Animal Dance" 1963]

NARRATOR: The pianist John Lewis also loved Charlie Parker's music, but loathed the corrupting influence of his dissipation and drug-use. In 1952, he and other former members of Dizzy Gillespie's bebop big band formed a group of their own -- the Modern Jazz Quartet.

The Quartet rehearsed meticulously, often wore tuxedoes on-stage, refused to banter with the audience, preferred the quiet concert hall to raucous nightclubs.

"A lot of people think jazz musicians are dope addicts," the vibraphonist Milt Jackson said. "But we've proved it isn't so."

Like his idol, Duke Ellington, John Lewis insisted that his music be presented always with dignity. "I am an American Negro," he once said. "I'm proud of it and I want to enhance that position.

The Apostle of Hipness

[MX: Charlie Parker "Charlie's Wig" 1947]

> **VOICE**: Charlie Parker's] greatest significance was for the educated white middle-class youth whose reactions to the inconsistencies of American life was the stance of casting off its education, language, dress, manners and moral standards: a revolt, apolitical in nature, which finds its most dramatic instance in the figure of the so-called white hipster.
>
> Ralph Ellison
> (Delroy Lindo)

NARRATOR: In the midst of the conformity of Cold War America, Charlie Parker seemed the apostle of hipness, and his admirers convinced themselves that he was a kindred spirit.

> ALLEN GINSBERG (Poet): I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness,... starving, hysterical, naked, dragging themselves through the Negro streets at dawn,... looking for an angry fix.... Angel-headed hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night.... Who poverty in tatters in hollowed-eyed and high,... sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold water flats,... floating across the tops of cities, contemplating jazz.
>
> GERALD EARLY (Writer): Whites have always listened to this music, but now you have whites who have a certain kind of intellectual pretension listening to this music, you have whites like the Beats who suddenly are attracted to jazz because they think of it as a k..., kind of analogy for what they're doing in literature, You have whites who are bohemian, who want to adopt a certain kind of lifestyle. Jazz always attracted those kind of people before, but now with bop, it really, it really has become almost kind of institutionalized in jazz, that these, that, it will attract these kind of elements.

[MX: Charlie Parker "Ornithology" 1946]

NARRATOR: Parker and his fellow be-boppers were flattered by the attention of the Beats -- but bewildered by it, too. Bebop was intricate, sophisticated, demanding -- only the most highly-skilled musicians were capable of playing it. Yet the Beats insisted it was simple, spontaneous self-expression – <u>anybody</u> could do it.

> ALLEN GINSBERG (poet): ...jazz gives us a way of expressing,... the spontaneous motions of the heart,... It's like a fountain of instantaneous inspiration that's available to everybody. All you got to do is tune on your radio or put on your record or pick up an ax yourself and blow.

NARRATOR: It was not the first time that jazz enthusiasts had misunderstood both the music and the musicians who made it. It would not be the last.

[Archival footage: Eddie Fisher and Louis Armstrong at the Hollywood Bowl, Armstrong performs "Wiffenpoof Song" 1953]

Eddie Fisher: How can you describe jazz? Well there are all sorts of definitions, but mainly, mainly it sounds like this. Louis Armstrong!

Eddie Fisher: Man that really comes on Louis. Really. You know I've got a request -- I want to hear the "Whippenpoof song.

Louis Armstrong: Oh yeah? You want to hear one of those good" old Birdland versions?

Eddie Fisher: Yes, I'm ready Louis because I've taken those extra vitamins for the occasion.

Louis Armstrong: Well, looky here.

Eddie Fisher: I heard those real gone lyrics that Gordon wrote for you, for the record, and well, Gordon are you ready?... Go.

Louis Armstrong: Lay it on me Daddy, lay it on me. Yes siiirrr. Oh, tell me about it.

NARRATOR: To a good many bebop musicians, Louis Armstrong's music seemed hopelessly out of date. Dizzy Gillespie himself had once dismissed him as a has been.

But bebop had its critics, too, and Armstrong, in a famous appearance at the Hollywood Bowl, made fun of Gillespie's trademark beret -- and the new music.

Bebop -- and the reaction to it -- opened a huge schism in jazz, politicizing the music as never before.

Tommy Dorsey denounced Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker as "musical Communists."

Sidney Bechet said bebop was already "as dead as Abraham Lincoln."

Roy Eldridge was more practical and perhaps more honest: The be-boppers are "good," he said, "but they close more clubs than they open."

[Archival footage: 1952 bebop Cartoon]

King: My beloved subjects, I bring you terrible news, terrible! From now on, the official music of Squarsedale is Bebop.

Subjects cheer

King: Take it away Sherwood Trio.

King: Man this really bugs me!

Monk

[Archival performance: Monk "Blue Monk" 1959]

WYNTON MARSALIS (Trumpet): Well, now when you get to Monk.... he's my favorite musician.... it's like somebody who's the oldest and most wisest sage that ever lived. But somebody who's five years old.... Then you have a superior musical mind of organization and logic, a mathematician. Like of all the bebop musicians, any musician in jazz, really to me, Monk's solos are the most logical. They are masterpieces of logic. And extremely consistent, a great composer, liked to wear those hats, very funny, you know. Monk had a lot of wit, his music is very very funny very extremely syncopated.

OSSIE DAVIS (Actor): Thelonious Monk, the professor with the hat who did strange things with the piano.... He is able to conjure out of the keys some strange thing and then he looks at what he has done and chuckles and says to me, "Oh, that's good." And he, he tremendously enjoys his own capacity but he doesn't hesitate to share it with you.

NARRATOR: No more mysterious man ever played jazz than Thelonious Sphere Monk.

And few created more memorable music.

[MX: Thelonious Monk "Bolivar Blues" 1948]

Born in North Carolina in 1917, he was raised on the West Side of New York and steeped himself in gospel music as the teen-aged accompanist for a traveling evangelist.

By 1941 he had become the presiding pianist at Minton's Playhouse in the days when bebop was being born.

CASSANDRA WILSON (Singer): Thelonious Monk is one of the jazz pianists who came along and just found the cracks in the middle of the diatonic scale, which is what ... western music is based on. For me, Thelonious Monk dug inside of that and was able to communicate these smaller intervals that existed between.

NARRATOR: He was a big reticent man who played with splayed fingers in a unique percussive style.

LORRAINE GORDON (Club Owner): ...and those fingers were so splayed they never curved. I was always used to pianists having beautiful curved han ... but Thelonius would go like this and wait a minute before he hit that key and I'd say, "Oh, my God. Is he going to make it?" And there, you know, it was never a continuity of flowing music but it was straight fingered, he's thinking ... I'm going to hit that. And I used to sit there

saying, "Oo-o. Where's it going to land? Where's it going to...?" And it was always right. He always landed on the right note.

NARRATOR: At first, casual listeners noticed only Monk's eccentricities.

He had his own way of dressing.

He often went for days without speaking to anyone.

He used his elbows on the keys from time to time, and sometimes got up in mid-performance to dance in apparent ecstasy.

[Archival performance: Monk "Five Spot Blues" 1968]

NARRATOR: Blinded by his odd ways and disconcerted by the novel sounds he made, most critics failed to hear the echoes of the musicians he most admired: the master of Harlem stride, James P. Johnson, and his greatest influence, Duke Ellington.

NAT HENTOFF (Critic): Critics are sometimes extraordinarily obtuse. They claim to want to hear new things, but new things bother them because they can't categorize them. And Monk was really very badly criticized in "Downbeat" and oth, other other of the jazz journals. And that affects the work you get.

GEORGE WEIN (Promoter): ...he and Ellington are the two greatest individual composers that jazz has ever, has ever had. And if Thelonius Monk had a different personality, and had the ability to organize and the strength to hold an organization together the way that Duke Ellington had that strength, he would be much more famous and his music would be much more well-known.

NARRATOR: He rarely played anyone else's music, he explained, because he was determined to create a demand for his own.

Over the years, many of his tunes became standards — "52nd Street Theme," "Straight, No Chaser," and "'Round Midnight."

WYNTON MARSALIS (Trumpet): Man, some classic Monk would be like "Epistrophy" um (plays) you know and then then he gets to the bridge, he says uh (plays) um (plays) um(plays) It's just Monk, you know, just deeply rooted in the blues. Soulful, he's a little into dee dee dee do the half steps do dee dee uh deeop gives you then he takes away. Then he takes you down into the gutbucket, doondeloodelee dee dee do, leave some space, do be do dit dit dit dee do, give it to you another way, do do doodle leedo bee dee do, back to the original theme, doboo do dit oo dooboo doo dee oo, that's the two half steps, doo doo dee dee, that's the same half step, you know. It's hard to describe, really what, 'cause Monk is so logical and beautiful and just pure.

[Archival performance: Thelonious Monk "Epistrophy" 1948]

NARRATOR: In 1951, New York police found narcotics in a parked car in which he and the pianist Bud Powell were sitting.

The drugs actually belonged to Powell, and when Monk refused to testify against his friend, he was denied a cabaret card. He would not be able to perform in any New York club where liquor was served.

> NAT HENTOFF (Critic): He he had been in a, in a sense, banished by both the police, because he didn't have the card, and by the critics. Musicians knew how good he was, but that didn't help.

NARRATOR: Monk refused to consider leaving New York. Nor would he take a day job.

He stayed at home in his crowded apartment for six long years, bent over the keyboard, working on the music that was his obsession.

Finally, Riverside Records issued an album of him playing his own compositions. This time, the critic Nat Hentoff gave it an enthusiastic review in Downbeat.

When Monk finally obtained a new cabaret card, he took a quartet into a club in the East Village called the Five Spot.

Big crowds followed, suddenly eager to hear the man the critics had once scorned.

> NAT HENTOFF (Critic): ...the musicians were lined up two and three at the bar.... I never was in Chicago when Louis Armstrong played with his Hot Five, but it must have been comparable to this. It was just, it was exhilarating, 'cause you never knew what was happening, but you know whatever was happening would never happen again and you'd remember it for the rest of your life.

NARRATOR: Monk had not changed.

He still lapsed into long silences, still broke into dance on the bandstand, still played tunes so intricate, one saxophone player remembered, that when his musicians got lost, it was "like falling into an empty elevator shaft."

It no longer mattered. After fifteen years of obscurity and refusal to compromise, Thelonious Monk was at last hailed as a giant of jazz.

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[MX: Billie Holiday "Autumn in New York" 1952]

> GERALD EARLY (Writer): Without question, my favorite Billie Holiday song is "Autumn In New York." When I hear her sing that, I'm ready to cry.... it's the most beautiful rendition of "Autumn In New York" I've ever heard in my life. Told my wife, "When I die, I want you to play that." Her version of "Autumn In New York" is just beautiful.

NARRATOR: Like Thelonius Monk, Billie Holiday had lost her cabaret card because of a narcotics conviction. For most of the 1950s, she was barred from singing in New York City clubs.

But she was still able to sing in other cities and on the concert stage. Her audience grew, and year after year, even in the bebop era, critics named her the best vocalist in jazz.

JIMMY ROWLES (Piano): Oh She worked at it and she would give it all... she'd get her hand going with that finger and she'd just, when she sang a ballad you just comped almost, like you didn't have to lead her, you just did something behind her that you thought maybe she'd like. And if she liked it, she'd turn and grin at you, you know, and she used to turn and grin at me and that made me feel good. I said, "Lady Day likes this."

GERALD EARLY(Writer): ...her voice was already, diminished but it hadn't diminished to the point where she couldn't sing anymore. she had lived inside her voice long enough and experienced so that at this point, her limitations turned out to make her the, the the greatest kind of virtuoso.

Cool

[MX: Gerry Mulligan "Walking Shoes" 1952]

NARRATOR: Hundreds of thousands of Americans moved to California after the war, eager to start new lives in a new land of opportunity. They would find a new variation of jazz there, as well.

Not long after the baritone saxophone player Gerry Mulligan played on the "Birth of the Cool" sessions with Miles Davis, he got himself a regular Monday night gig at the Haig, a small nightclub on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles.

GARY GIDDINS (Critic): ...Gerry Mulligan put together a quartet with Chet Baker on trumpet, Chico Hamilton on drums, and Bob Whitlock on bass.... And the band was so serene and it it just sounded like the Pacific Ocean, that that the waves, you know, the the the air wafting over the West coast and young people loved it. It became very popular on campuses. *Time* magazine did a piece about it and in no time at all, there was a new movement, "cool jazz" or "West coast" jazz.

[MX: Dave Brubeck "Blue Rondo Ala Turk" 1959]

NARRATOR: The best-known West Coast group was the quartet headed by Dave Brubeck. He had led an integrated army band during the Second World War, then had gone back to school, to study music with the French composer Darius Milhaud.

DAVE BRUBECK (Piano): ...Darius Milhaud said, 'Travel the world and keep your ears open and use everything you hear from other cultures, bring it in to the Jazz idiom.'... so, when I was in Turkey, and heard Turkish musicians playing this rhythm.... I said to them, ' What is this rhythm? One two - one two - one two - one two three.' Before I finished

the bar they're all going, yah yah yah - yah da da da - don don don - don da da and they were playing in 9/8 all improvising, just like it was American Blues. And I thought Jeez a whole bunch of people can improvise in nine? Why don't I learn how to do that...

NARRATOR: Brubeck's career had very nearly ended in 1951, when he seriously injured his neck in a swimming accident. From then on he was forced to change his keyboard style, using driving block chords instead of single-note passages.

That style would be perfectly complemented by the playing of his alto saxophonist, Paul Desmond -- light, lyrical, romantic -- like the sound, Desmond himself said, of a dry martini.

NAT HENTOFF (Critic): Paul had this lovely, singing kind of sound on the alto. I mean, for example, he was, he was in love with Audrey Hepburn, not that anything ever happened. But his music was like she appeared on screen, this sort of lightness but yet substance underneath the, the very. Just very, very lyrical stuff.

NARRATOR: Each man made the other better.

DAVE BRUBECK (Piano): I wanted to do an album, it was called 'Time Out'. Where we would get into a lot of different time signature that weren't used in Jazz like, (plays) that's - one two- one two - one two - one two three - one two - one two - one two - one two three.... And I asked Paul to do something in five.

NARRATOR: At their next rehearsal, Desmond brought in several original melodies.

[Archival performance: Dave Brubeck "Take Five" 1959]

DAVE BRUBECK (Piano): ...And I looked at him and I said, 'Paul ... if you take the first theme...' which was (plays) and started with the bridge ... instead of (plays), so I said now ... put that ... theme first, repeat it and then go to the bridge.'... that's kind of how 'Take Five' was born.

NARRATOR: When Brubeck released the album Time Out, it would sell more than a million copies — something no other jazz LP had ever done.

Black as well as white fans followed the Brubeck quartet — it was named the favorite group of the readers of the Pittsburgh Courier. And Brubeck never forgot that when Willie the Lion Smith heard one of his records without being told who was playing, Smith said, "He plays like where the blues was born."

No one understood better than Dave Brubeck himself the debt he owed to earlier generations of black musicians. In November of 1954, he was on tour with Duke Ellington -- a man he considered the greatest of American composers and a friend -- when Brubeck's portrait appeared on the cover of Time.

DAVE BRUBECK (Piano): ...I heard a knock on my hotel room at seven o'clock in the morning and it was Duke, and he said. 'Dave, you're on the cover of Time magazine.' And my heart sank because I wanted to be on the cover, after Duke, I didn't want to be on the cover before Duke, because they were doing stories on both of us. The worst thing that could have happened to me was that I was there before Duke and he was delivering the magazine to me saying, "here."

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[Archival performance: Jazz At The Philharmonic with Dizzy Gillespie "Blues After Dark"]

Announcer : On trumpet is Dizzy Gillespie

VOICE: Jazz is America's own.... It is played and listened to by all peoples – in harmony, together. Pigmentation differences have no place … As in genuine democracy, only performance counts.

Norman Granz
(Kevin Conway)

NARRATOR: Year after year, Norman Granz, a California-born promoter, led his integrated all-star "Jazz at the Philharmonic" troupe all over the country and overseas, as well.

Some of the greatest names in jazz were part of his group — Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker; Ella Fitzgerald, Stan Getz, Max Roach, Oscar Peterson, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Coleman Hawkins, and Lester Young.

Granz had two goals in mind: to broaden the audience for jazz and to do so without compromising equal treatment for all musicians, black and white.

[Archival footage: Martin Luther King pledging his support of the Montgomery bus boycott, 1956]

Martin Luther King: We feel that we are right and that we have a legitimate complaint. And also, we feel that one of the great glories of America is the right to protest for rights.

Throughout the 1950s, as a nationwide Civil Rights movement began to build momentum, Norman Granz was quietly fighting for change in the world of jazz.

If airlines or hotels or restaurants, anywhere Granz's people played, dared try to discriminate against any of them, he did not hesitate to cancel.

STAN LEVEY (Drums): the guy who really started to break it up was Norman Granz. We would tour, he would just check everybody into the Hilton Hotel; we'd all show up in the lobby and they (clears his throat), a lot of, you know, throat-clearing and he'd say, "This is our group. Let's have our rooms." He was terrific. Norman really broke a lot of barriers. Really great. We just showed up. Here we are.

The Future Unlived

[MX: Charlie Parker Sextet "Out of Nowhere" 1947]

> **VOICE**: While Charlie Parker slowly died (like a man dismembering himself with a dull razor on a spotlighted stage) ..., his public reacted as though he were doing much the same thing as those saxophonists who hoot and honk and roll on the floor. In the end he had no private life and his most tragic moments were drained of human significance.
>
> Ralph Ellison
> (Delroy Lindo)

> PHIL SCHAAP (Historian): If you're going to die at the age of 34, I'm pretty sure, you're not positive you're going to die at the age of 34 and you may even be thinking you'll live to be seventy just like the Bible says.... So Bird's later career is not just the end of a short run, it's an examination of the future unlived.... He's determined to create a new revelation in music that would have the magnitude of his bebop breakthrough. And he is on the hunt and he's doing well.... and then the rug gets pulled out from under him...

NARRATOR: In March of 1954, Charlie Parker was playing the Oasis Club in Hollywood. He was temporarily off drugs, but bloated and chronically disheveled, his health undermined by the vast quantities of alcohol he was now consuming.

Then, he got a telegram from Chan in New York.
Their two-year-old daughter, Pree, had died of pneumonia.

> CHAN PARKER (Former Wife): At the time that Pree was born, she was always ill. And no doctor could find out why. And I had a heart specialist, a pediatrician, who discovered she had an opening in, in her heart. And this was before open-heart surgery.

NARRATOR: The night he got the news, Parker sent four telegrams from Los Angeles to Chan -- each more incoherent than the last.

> **VOICE**: MY DARLING. MY DAUGHTER'S DEATH SURPRISED ME MORE THAN IT DID YOU. DON'T FULFILL FUNERAL PROCEEDINGS UNTIL I GET THERE. I SHALL BE THE FIRST ONE TO WALK INTO OUR CHAPEL. FORGIVE ME FOR NOT BEING THERE WITH YOU WHILE YOU ARE AT THE HOSPITAL. YOURS MOST SINCERELY, YOUR HUSBAND, CHARLIE PARKER.
>
> MY DARLING, FOR GOD'S SAKE HOLD ON TO YOURSELF. CHARLES PARKER.
>
> CHAN, HELP. CHARLIE PARKER.

MY DAUGHTER IS DEAD. I KNOW IT. I WILL BE THERE AS QUICK AS I CAN. MY NAME IS BIRD. IT IS VERY NICE TO BE OUT HERE. PEOPLE HAVE BEEN VERY NICE TO ME OUT HERE. I AM COMING IN RIGHT AWAY. TAKE IT EASY. LET ME BE THE FIRST ONE TO APPROACH YOU. I AM YOUR HUSBAND. SINCERELY, CHARLIE PARKER.

[Charlie Parker]
(Samuel L. Jackson)

CHAN PARKER (Former Wife): For me, getting those telegrams was horrific. I was in shock They were giving me tranquilizers. I wouldn't let loose of her bathrobe that she went to the hospital in and then every hour, another telegram and I, you know, it was horrible for me. Horrible. I'm sure Bird didn't realize it; I'm sure he was going through his horror.

[MX: Charlie Parker Quintet "Embraceable You" 1947]

NARRATOR: He managed to get through the funeral but now seemed unable to hold himself together.

An engagement with a string section at Birdland ended in disaster when he drank too much and tried to fire the band.

The manager fired him, instead.

He went home to Chan, quarreled with her — and tried to kill himself by swallowing iodine.

Ambulance workers saved him.

His drinking got worse.

He began riding the subways all night.

He seemed frightened now — "on a panic," he called it — suspicious even of his admirers. "They just came out . . . to see the world's most famous junkie," he told a friend.

One evening, he made his way into a New York club where his old friend Dizzy Gillespie sat listening to the band. Parker was rumpled, overweight, disoriented: "Why don't you save me, Diz?' he said over and over again. "Why don't you save me?"

"I didn't know what to do," Gillespie remembered. "I just didn't know what to say…"

Parker stumbled back out onto the street.

NAT HENTOFF (Critic): ...I ran into him one night about three in the morning. I was going downstairs into Birdland. Bird was coming up.... And tears were streaming down his face. He said, "I've got to talk to you, I've got to talk to you." I said, "Fine, there's an all-night coffee shop right on the corner." "No, no. I'll call you tomorrow." Well, he never called. I cou, and I could have been anybody, I think.

JACKIE MCLEAN (Saxophone): And he tried, I'm sure, many times to get his self together,... but he was drinking and that didn't help ... and I had rented this horn and used it, and one night I was getting in a cab and I, I

had been drinking a lot and Bird was helping me to get in the cab with some other people and he said, "Here. Let me take this." And he took the horn. And of course, about two or three days later, when I saw him, he didn't have the horn; it was in the pawn shop. And, and I was a little angry at him about that. So, I was playing in the Open Door that Sunday night and he came by ... to see me play. And I remember that night. He invited to drop me home after the job was over and I said, "No, that's OK. I'll get a cab," 'cause I was still a little angry at him, you know

NARRATOR: On March 9, 1955 Parker was scheduled to take the train to Boston for an engagement.

On the way, he dropped by the Stanhope Hotel on upper Fifth Avenue. It was the home of his friend the Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter, a member of the Rothschild family and a generous patron of jazz.

Parker was clearly ill and she called a doctor.

CHAN PARKER (Former Wife): ...she called the doctor and the doctor said, "This man needs to be hospitalized," and Bird refused to go to the hospital. And I think he'd just given up. His heart just gave up. I think, you know, life had been too heavy for him, really.

NARRATOR: Parker agreed to stay with the Baroness until he felt better.

[Archival footage: Stage Show, Tommy Dorsey "Getting Sentimental Over You"]

Three days later, on Saturday, March 12, Charlie Parker turned on the Dorsey Brothers' variety show.

He'd always liked the sound of Jimmy Dorsey's saxophone.

The first act was a juggler.

Parker laughed, choked, then collapsed.

By the time the doctor got there, he was dead.

The official cause was pneumonia, complicated by cirrhosis of the liver.

But he had simply worn himself out.

The coroner estimated his age at between fifty-five and sixty.

He was really just 34 years old.

JACKIE MCLEAN (Saxophone): I bought a New York Post and I sat down on the bus and I rode for several blocks before I opened it and then when I opened the paper and looked inside, I saw the article where it said that Bird was dead, that he had passed away at the Baroness's house.... It was awful you know? It was, it was terrible, especially, I felt especially bad because I had just seen him the, 2 or 3 nights before that at The Open Door and, and being angry about the, the horn, I had missed the moment that I could have had one more moment with him, you know.... Everybody was crushed ... when Bird died. I didn't go to his funeral. I couldn't, I just couldn't go,... I couldn't be, couldn't be a part of that.

NARRATOR: When Parker was finally buried in his hometown of Kansas City, his mother ordered that no jazz was to be played during the services.

[MX: Charlie Parker Quintet "Now's the Time" 1945]

By then, his most avid followers had already covered walls in Greenwich Village with the slogan, "Bird Lives."

GARY GIDDINS (Critic): I think the real legacy of Charlie Parker is the uncorrupted humanity of his music, that's why it lives. You can analyze it all you want, but ultimately it's the, it's the beauty and the perfection and the the refusal to compromise in any way that moves us and will continue to move us.

Coda

[MX: Miles Davis "Generique" 1957]

NARRATOR: Middleweight champion Sugar Ray Robinson was Miles Davis's hero. Davis admired the elegance with which he dispatched his opponents, admired Robinson's clothes, his good looks, and the women who seemed always to be on his arm.

"When he got into the ring," Davis remembered," ...he never smiled, ... he was all business."

Inspired by Robinson's seriousness about his craft and finally weary of the life his own addiction was forcing him to lead, Davis resolved in 1954, to kick his habit.

Characteristically, he decided to do it on his own.

He had just finished an engagement with Max Roach in Hollywood and rode the bus half-way across the continent to his father's farm outside East St. Louis.

His father told him he could do nothing for him except offer his love: "The rest of it," he said, " you've got to do for yourself."

Davis did.

He moved into a two-room apartment on the second floor of his father's guest house and locked the door.

For seven days, as the craving for drugs raged, he neither ate nor drank, shivering with cold and struggling to keep from screaming with the pain that tortured his joints.

Then, he remembered, "one day it was over, just like that.... I walked outside into the clean, sweet air over to my father's house and when he saw me he had this big smile on his face and we just hugged each other and cried."

"All I could think of...," Miles Davis recalled, "was playing music and making up for all the time I had lost."

END CREDITS

[MX: Charlie Parker and the Dizzy Gillespie Sextet "Groovin' High" 1945]