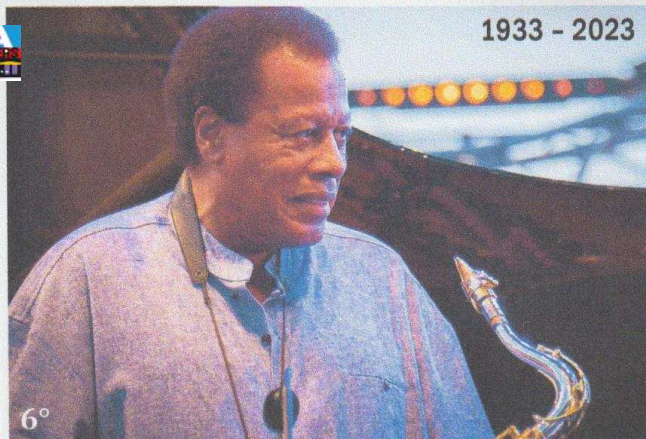


SAXOPHONISTS cont.



KENNEDY CENTER HONORS

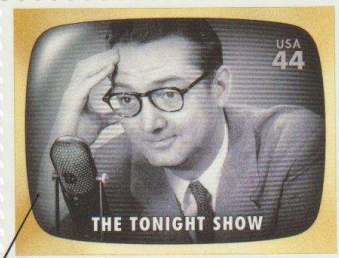
Recipients honored at this 41th annual national celebration of the arts included Wayne Shorter who has been called a genius, a trailblazer, a visionary, and one of the world's greatest composers. He was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1933, and later studied music at New York University. In 1959, Shorter joined Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers as a saxophonist, eventually composing for the group and becoming its music director. After four years, Miles Davis invited him to join his second historical quintet, with Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, and Ron Carter. This marked the beginning of Shorter's exploration of un-chartered territories that led him to form—with pianist Joe Zawinul—the world's first fusion band, Weather Report. Over the next decade, Shorter produced a succession of jazz albums for the Columbia label. In 1996, he released *High Life*, which received the Grammy® for best contemporary jazz album. Two years later, he reunited with longtime friend Herbie Hancock for an intimate duet recording entitled "1+1," winning another Grammy® for their collaboration. In 2000, he formed his first acoustic group under his name, The Wayne Shorter Quartet. Shorter is the recipient of the NEA Jazz Masters Award (1998), the Grammy® Lifetime Achievement Award (2015), and most recently, the prestigious Polar Music Prize (2017). With a total of 11 Grammy Awards® under his belt, Shorter refuses to slow down. Currently, in collaboration with Esperanza Spalding, he is composing his first opera, *Iphigenia*, his ultimate expression honoring the nobility of humanity—to awaken one's inherent power. Wayne Shorter believes that there are no limits: "To me, jazz means: I dare you." The Kennedy Center Honors gala was held December 2, 2018, and broadcast on CBS December 26, 2018, the first day of Kwanzaa.



WAYNE SHORTER

In his youth, the jazz saxophonist Wayne Shorter (August 25, 1933 - March 2, 2023) was awarded the nickname "Mr Gone," in recognition of his distant, otherworldly air. Shorter came to prominence in the late 1950s as a member of, and eventually primary composer for, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. In the 1960s, Shorter joined Miles Davis's Second Great Quintet, with Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, and Ron Carter. He then co-founded with pianist Joe Zawinul the jazz fusion band Weather Report. Eventually Shorter succeeded to the title of jazz's greatest living improviser: a musician, composer, and bandleader universally admired for his originality and breadth of vision. His sense of cool detachment helped him to create a musical microclimate that was unique and immediately identifiable. From 1977 through 2002, he appeared on ten Joni Mitchell studio albums. He played an extended solo on the title track of Steely Dan's album *Aja* and played the sax solo on Don Henley's song "The End of the Innocence." Shorter toured with guitarist Carlos Santana, keyboardist Herbie Hancock, bassist Marcus Miller, and drummer Cindy Blackman Santana under the name Mega Nova. He can be heard on the soundtrack of the Harrison Ford film *The Fugitive*. During his career, Wayne Shorter recorded over 20 albums as a bandleader. He is the recipient of the NEA Jazz Masters Award, the prestigious Polar Music Prize, the Kennedy Center Honors Award, the Grammy® Lifetime Achievement Award, and a total of 12 Grammy Awards®, the most recent awarded just last month. His last album release, a triple-CD set titled *Emanon*, featured music for a chamber orchestra and live recordings of his quartet from a London concert, accompanied by a lavishly produced comic book reflecting his lifelong interest in science fiction. In 2018, Shorter retired from his near 70-year performing career due to health issues. He continued working as a composer, creating a "new operatic work" titled *Iphigenia* with Esperanza Spalding which premiered on November 12, 2021, at the Cutler Majestic Theatre. Wayne Shorter was born in Newark, New Jersey, as was legendary vocalist Sarah Vaughan.



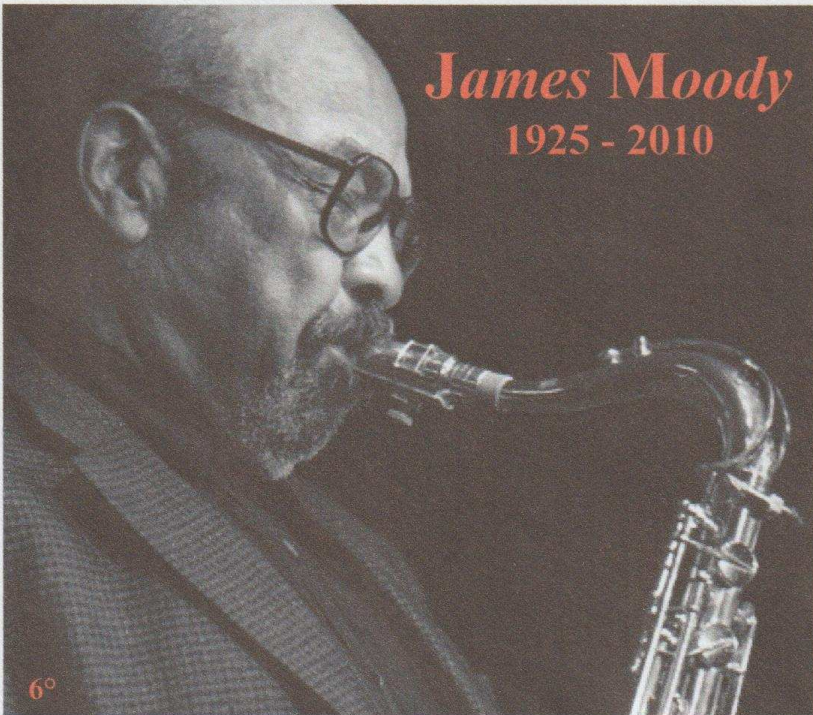


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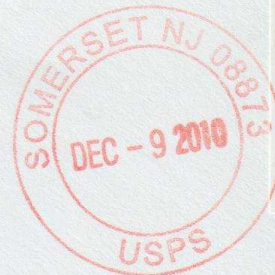
EARLY TV MEMORIES

AUGUST 11, 2009 • NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA 91605

Steve Allen (1921-2000) was the first host of the venerable *The Tonight Show* (1954-1957). His late-night variety show spawned stardom for talents like Sammy Davis, Jr. and exposed Americans to jazz on TV for the first time, introducing such performers as Coleman Hawkins, Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Lionel Hampton, Billy Eckstine, Sarah Vaughn, Bobby Short, W. C. Handy, Lena Horne, T-Bone Walker, Earl Hines, Count Basie, and Billie Holiday. Steve Allen was honored with numerous awards from Black organizations for his trailblazing.



James Moody 1925 - 2010



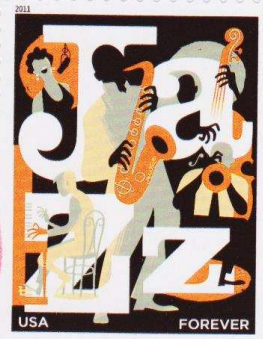
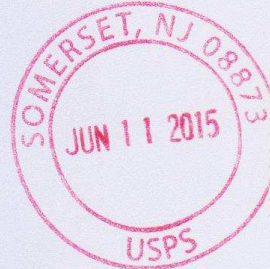
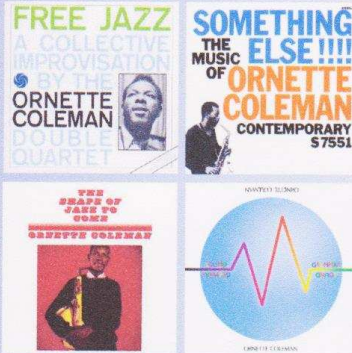
Jazz saxophonist and flutist James Moody (b. March 26, 1925) was celebrated for his virtuosity, his versatility, and his onstage ebullience. He started his career with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, recorded more than 50 solo albums, and was best known for his 1949 hit "Moody's Mood for Love," an interpretation of the 1935 ballad "I'm in the Mood for Love." In 1998, the National Endowment of the Arts named Moody a Jazz Master. His last album, *Moody 4B*, was released August 25, 2010. He died December 9, 2010.





Ornette Coleman

1930-2015

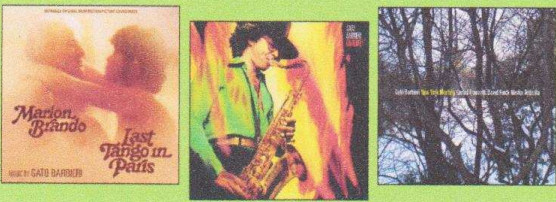
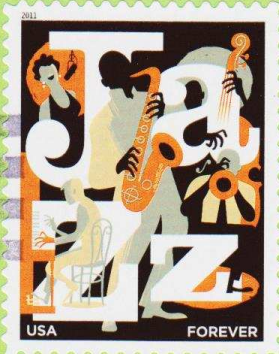
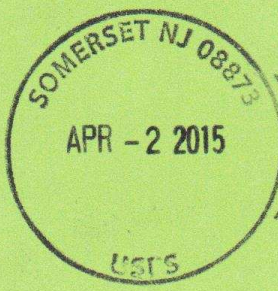
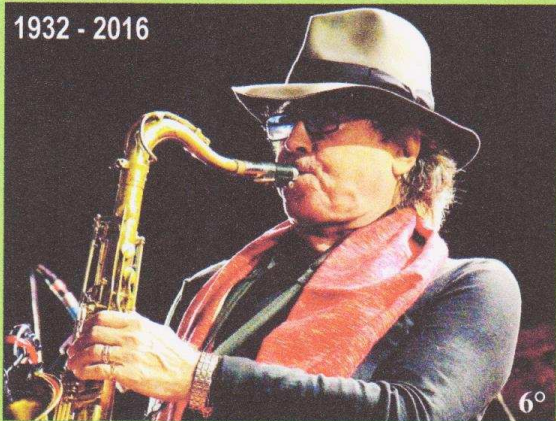


Randolph Denard Ornette Coleman, born March 9, 1930, in Fort Worth, Texas, was a jazz saxophonist, violinist, trumpeter, and composer. He was one of the major innovators of the free jazz movement in the 1950s and early 1960s, a term he invented with the name of an album. He led his first recording session for Contemporary, *Something Else!!!!: The Music of Ornette Coleman*, in 1958 with trumpeter Don Cherry, drummer Billy Higgins, bassist Don Payne, and pianist Walter Norris. Coleman signed with Atlantic Records in 1959 and released *The Shape of Jazz to Come* whose composition revolutionized the genre. He was awarded a National Endowment of the Arts Jazz Master fellowship in 1984, and was made a MacArthur Foundation fellow in 1994. Mr. Coleman formed a new quartet in 2004, with two bassists and his son Denardo Coleman on drums, and started a new record label, Sound Grammar. In 2006, the album *Sound Grammar* received a Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Instrumental Performance. The following year, it won the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Music. In 2007, he also received a Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award and performed at the Bonnaroo festival in Tennessee. Coleman's final public performance was at Prospect Park in Brooklyn in June 2014. He died of cardiac arrest in Manhattan on June 11, 2015.



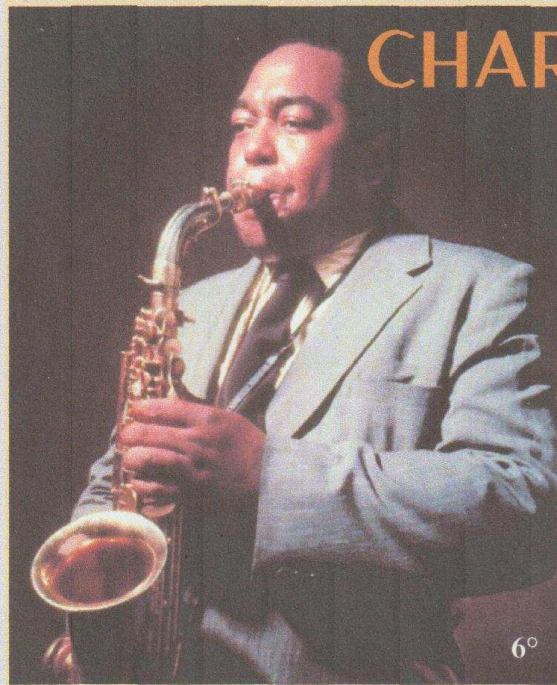
GATO BARBIERI

1932 - 2016

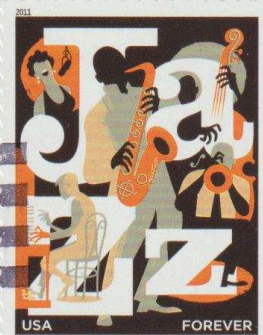
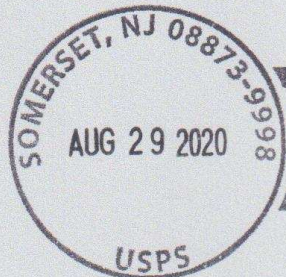


Gato Barbieri, a bandleader and tenor saxophonist whose highly emotional playing helped expand the audience for Latin jazz, and whose score for the steamy Marlon Brando film *Last Tango in Paris* won a Grammy Award, was born Leandro Barbieri on November 28, 1932, in Rosario, Argentina. He earned the nickname Gato, which means "cat," in the 1950s because of the way he scampered between clubs in Buenos Aires with his saxophone to make it to his next gig. He rose to fame during the free jazz movement in the 1960s. By the mid-70s, he moved his music towards soul-jazz and jazz-pop with albums like *Caliente!* He continued to record and perform well into the 1990s still wearing his trademark fedora and playing music that would fall more into the arena of smooth jazz. Barbieri's final LP was 2010's *New York Meeting*, which featured covers of Miles Davis' "So What" and Thelonious Monk's "Straight, No Chaser." In 2015, Barbieri received a Latin Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award for his musical contributions. He died April 2, 2016, in New York.



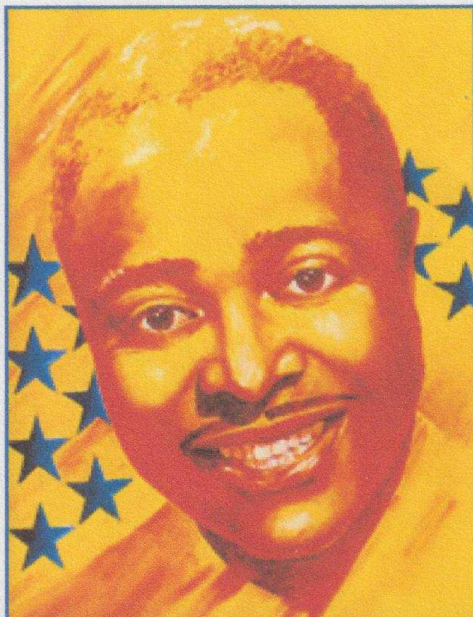


CHARLIE PARKER



1920 – BIRTH CENTENNIAL – 2020

Charles "Charlie" Parker, Jr. (August 29, 1920 – March 12, 1955), also referred to by his nicknames Yardbird or simply Bird, was an American jazz saxophonist and composer. Parker was a highly influential soloist and leading figure in the development of bebop, a form of jazz characterized by fast tempos, virtuosic technique, and advanced harmonies. Parker was a blazingly fast virtuoso and introduced revolutionary harmonic ideas into jazz, including rapid passing chords, new variants of altered chords, and chord substitutions. Recordings of Charlie Parker were inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame, which is a special Grammy award established in 1973 to honor recordings that are at least twenty-five years old, and that have "qualitative or historical significance."

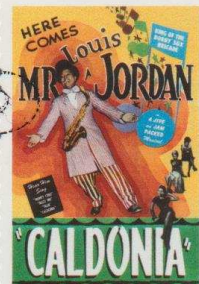


Louis Jordan



vintage BLACK CINEMA

First Day of Issue
July 16, 2008 • Newark, NJ 07102

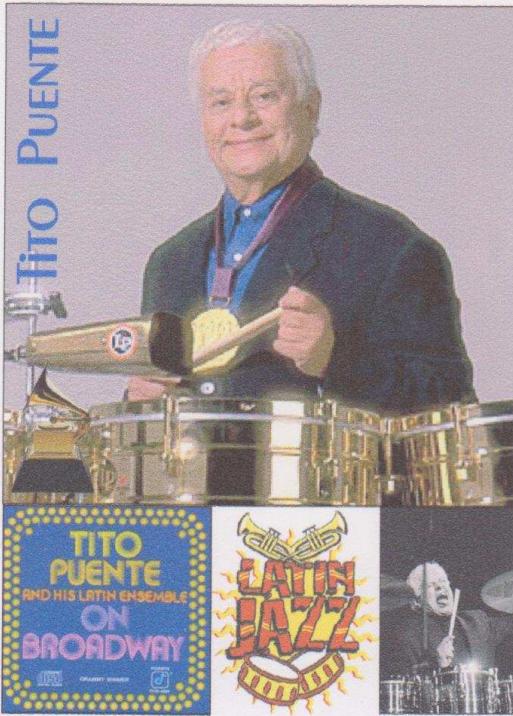


BLACK CINEMA USA 42

Louis Jordan (1908-1975), known as "The King of the Jukebox," was a pioneering jazz, blues, and rhythm & blues musician, songwriter, and bandleader who became famous as one of the leading practitioners, innovators, and popularizers of "jump blues," a swinging, up tempo, dance-oriented hybrid of jazz, blues, and boogie-woogie. Jordan specialized in the alto sax but played the piano and the clarinet as well. His first million-seller, in 1944, was "Is You Is or Is You Ain't Ma Baby?" His second million-seller was "Caldonia (What Makes Your Big Head So Hard?)," followed by his biggest hit "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie." Jordan also was a major Black film personality, appearing in dozens of "soundies" (promotional film clips, akin to today's music videos) and starring in two musical feature films.

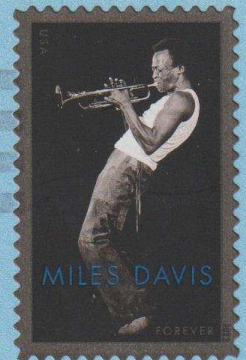
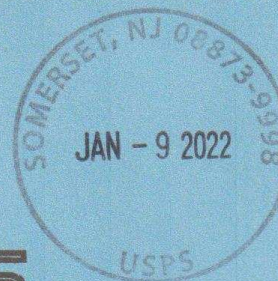
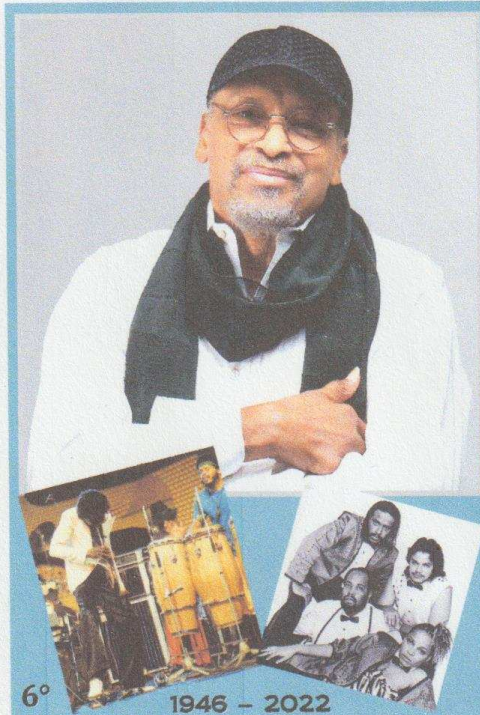


ALSO Noteworthy



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

As a boy, Tito Puente (1923-2000) was inspired by Gene Krupa and began to study percussion. He soon became the most famous timbales player on the scene and one of the world's leading Latin jazz musicians. Born Ernest Anthony Puente, Jr., he worked continuously since 1937 and recorded more than 100 albums. Puente began his career as a drummer in Noro Morales' orchestra and played briefly with Machito's Afro-Cubans before he was drafted into the U.S. Navy. He played in a band led by the famed swing bandleader, Charlie Barnet. After his discharge, on the G.I. Bill, Puente studied at the Julliard School of Music while working with a variety of Latin bands in New York. In the early 1980s, he moved into more traditional Latin jazz, earning a Grammy Award for "Tito Puente and His Latin Ensemble on Broadway."

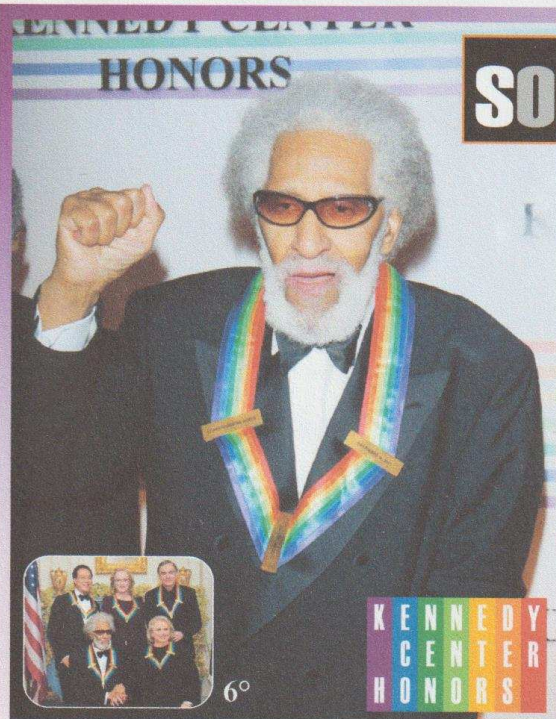


JAMES MTUME

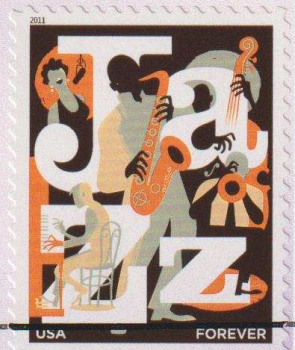
James Mtume was born on January 3, 1946, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In the '60s, after becoming a Black nationalist, he took the Swahili name "Mtume," or "messenger." The legendary musician started out as a jazz percussionist playing with greats from Duke Ellington to McCoy Tyner to Miles Davis. He then formed the band Mtume with guitarist Reggie Lucas, working with singer Tawatha Agee, and wrote and produced for a number of artists in a style he called "sophistifunk." They scored hits with Phyllis Hyman's "You Know How To Love Me," Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway's "The Closer I Get To You" and "Back Together Again," Stephanie Mills and Teddy Pendergrass' "Two Hearts," and Mills' "Never Knew Love Like This Before," which won a Grammy in 1981. The band Mtume hit it big with "Juicy Fruit" in 1983 and "You, Me and He," the next year. "Juicy Fruit" became one of the most sampled songs in history, used in recordings by Notorious B.I.G., Mariah Carey, Snoop Dogg, and Alicia Keys among others. The Mtume band split up, but Mtume stayed productive. He scored the network TV drama *New York Undercover* and the film *Native Son*. He also was a talk-radio co-host and political commentator in New York City.

6° 1946 - 2022





SONNY ROLLINS

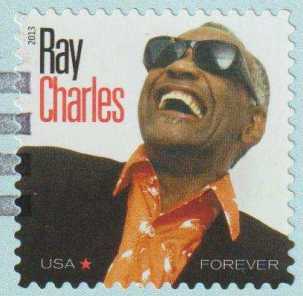
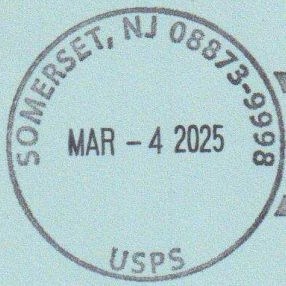
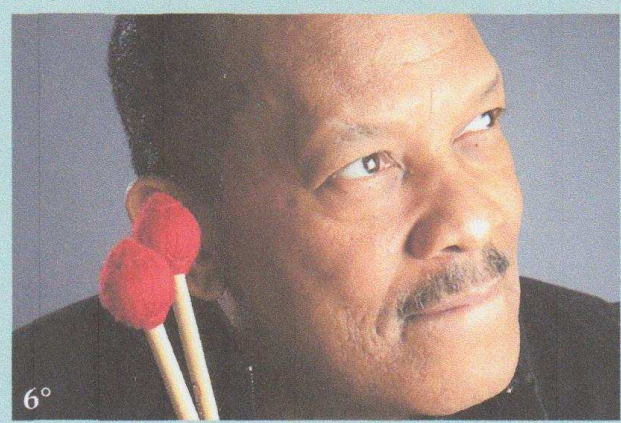


FIRST DAY OF ISSUE



KENNEDY CENTER HONORS

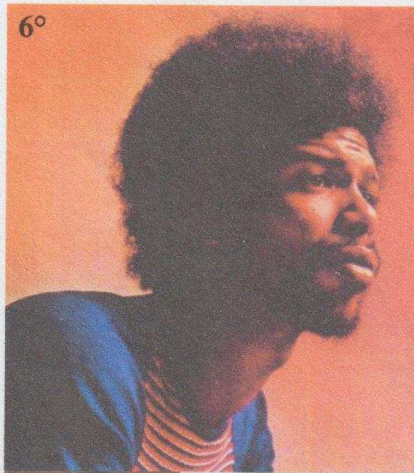

Theodore Walter "Sonny" Rollins (b. 1930) often is recognized as one of the most important and influential jazz musicians. On December 4, 2011, he, along with actress Meryl Streep, pop singer Neil Diamond, Broadway singer Barbara Cook, and famed cellist Yo-Yo Ma, was given an all-star salute at the 34th annual Kennedy Center Honors celebration in Washington, D. C., receiving the nation's top award for those who have influenced American culture through the arts.



ROY AYERS


Roy Edward Ayers, Jr. (September 10, 1940 - March 4, 2025) was born in Los Angeles and grew up around a musical background and loved music from a young age. He was inspired to take up the vibraphone at the age of five after seeing Lionel Hampton's Big Band. Ayers later studied music theory at Los Angeles City College before launching his professional career in the early 1960s. Often called the "Godfather of Neo Soul," he left an indelible mark on jazz, funk, R&B, and hip-hop. With a career spanning over six decades, Ayers released his first album *West Coast Vibes* in 1963, followed by records like *Virgo Vibes* (1967) and *Stoned Soul Picnic* (1968), among dozen others, and became known as a pioneer in jazz-funk, with a slew of musicians sampling his music. His composition "Everybody Loves the Sunshine," from his 1976 album of the same name, has been sampled nearly 200 times by artists including Tupac Shakur, Dr. Dre, Mary J. Blige, and Snoop Dogg. Ayers' other hits include "Running Away" and "Don't Stop the Feeling." The electric piano hook from "Love," on the album *Ubiquity*— which introduced his group of the same name — was used in Deee-Lite's 1990 dance hit "Groove Is in the Heart." Ayers would go on to collaborate with various artists like Alicia Keys, Erykah Badu, The Roots, Fela Kuti, and Tyler, the Creator. He also made guest appearances on albums by Rick James, Whitney Houston, George Benson, the rapper Guru, and others. Ayers also made a name for himself in film soundtracks, composing the score for the 1973 blaxploitation classic *Coffy*, starring Pam Grier. In addition to being one of the masters of the jazz vibraphone, Ayers was a leader in the movement that added electric instruments, rock, and R&B rhythms, and a more soulful feel to jazz.

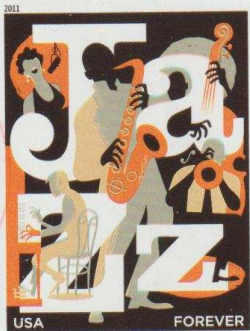
Jazz poetry is poetry that “demonstrates jazz-like rhythm or the feel of improvisation” or poetry that takes jazz music, musicians, or the jazz milieu as its subject and is designed to be performed. Gil Scott-Heron was a master in the art form. His poem “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised,” delivered over a jazz-soul beat, is considered a major influence on Black music genres, including hip hop and neo soul. Check it out.

Gil Scott-Heron


1949-2011





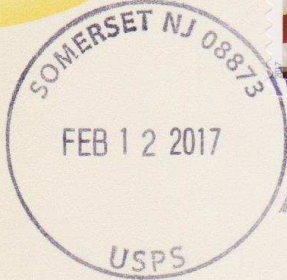
Gilbert “Gil” Scott-Heron was born in Chicago, Illinois, on April 1, 1949. He was raised in Jackson, Tennessee, and in the Bronx in New York City before attending college at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He referred to his signature mix of percussion, politics and performed poetry as “bluesology.” Throughout his musical career, Scott-Heron took on political issues of his time, including apartheid in South Africa and nuclear arms. He had been shaped by the politics of the 1960s and the Black literature, especially of the Harlem Renaissance. Scott-Heron recorded the song that would make him famous, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised,” which critiqued mass media, for the album *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox* in Harlem in the 1970s. His most recent album was *I’m New Here*, which he began recording in 2007 and was released in 2010. Gil Scott-Heron died Friday, May 27, 2011, in New York City after becoming sick upon returning from a European trip.






Al Jarreau

1940 - 2017

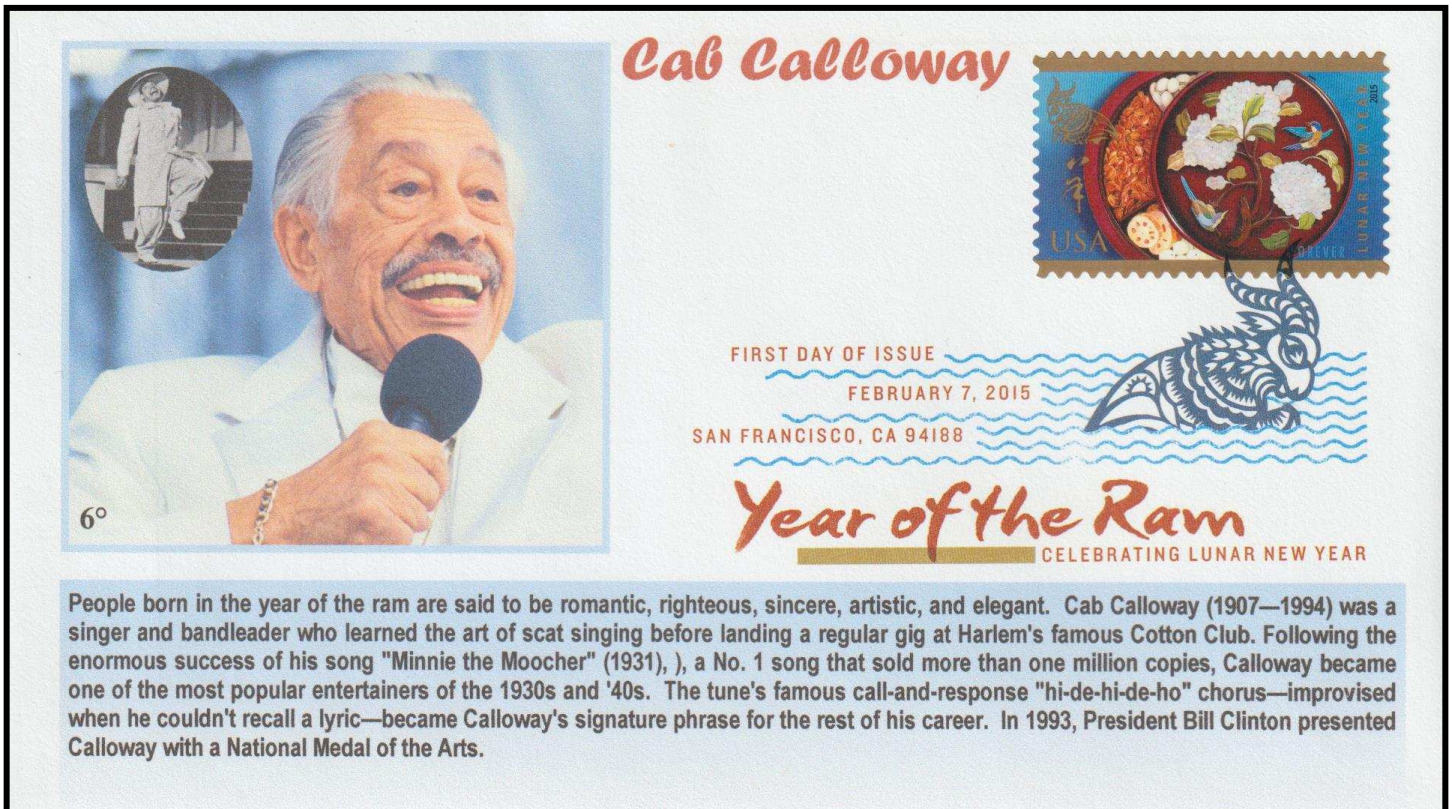




Alwyn Lopez Jarreau was born March 12, 1940, in Milwaukee. He had listened from an early age to Nat King Cole, Billy Eckstine, Sarah Vaughan, and Ella Fitzgerald, but his two greatest influences were jazz scat artist Jon Hendricks and the smooth balladeer Johnny Mathis. Jarreau sang gospel in church and doo-wop on street corners and was loosely classified as a jazz singer, but his eclectic style, which blurred the lines between jazz, soul, and pop music, was entirely his own, and he had a particular gift for mimicking almost any kind of musical instrument or sound. He did not release his first album until 1975, when he was 35, but within two years, he had won the first of his seven Grammy Awards. His 1981 album *Breakin’ Away*, which sold more than 1 million copies and included a Top 20 hit, “We’re in This Love Together,” won Grammy Awards in the jazz and pop vocal categories. Jarreau explored rock, reggae, and international music and recorded the theme song for the TV series *Moonlighting*. His 1992 album *Heaven and Earth* won a Grammy for best R&B vocal performance, giving Al Jarreau Grammys in three categories, the only vocalist to do so.



Cabell Calloway III (December 25, 1907 – November 18, 1994) was an American jazz singer, songwriter, and bandleader. He was a regular performer at the Cotton Club in Harlem, where he became a popular vocalist of the swing era. His niche of mixing jazz and vaudeville won him acclaim during a career that spanned over 65 years. Calloway was a master of energetic scat singing and led one of the most popular dance bands in the United States from the early 1930s to the late 1940s. His band included trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie, Jonah Jones, and Adolphus "Doc" Cheatham, saxophonists Ben Webster and Leon "Chu" Berry, guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Cozy Cole. Calloway had several hit records in the 1930s and 1940s, becoming the first Black American musician to sell one million copies of a record. He became known as the "Hi-de-ho" man of jazz for his most famous song, "Minnie the Moocher," originally recorded in 1931. Calloway also was the first Black American to have a nationally syndicated radio program.



Cab Calloway



USA LUNAR NEW YEAR 2015

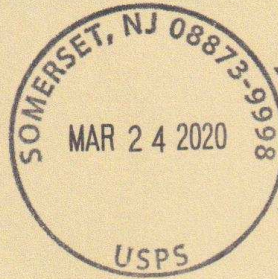
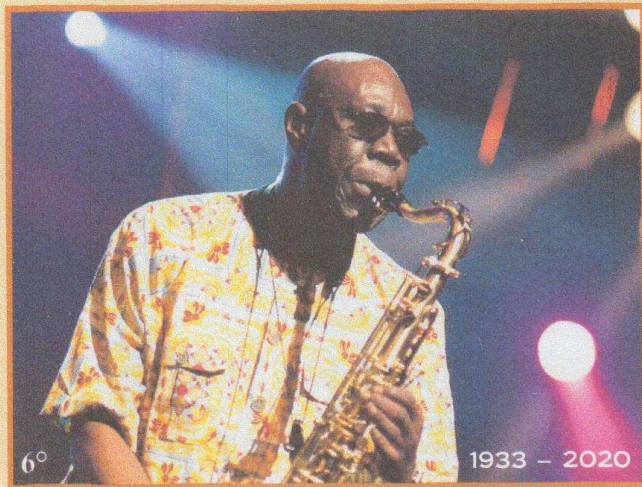
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
FEBRUARY 7, 2015
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94188

Year of the Ram
CELEBRATING LUNAR NEW YEAR

6°

People born in the year of the ram are said to be romantic, righteous, sincere, artistic, and elegant. Cab Calloway (1907–1994) was a singer and bandleader who learned the art of scat singing before landing a regular gig at Harlem's famous Cotton Club. Following the enormous success of his song "Minnie the Moocher" (1931), a No. 1 song that sold more than one million copies, Calloway became one of the most popular entertainers of the 1930s and '40s. The tune's famous call-and-response "hi-de-hi-de-ho" chorus—improvised when he couldn't recall a lyric—became Calloway's signature phrase for the rest of his career. In 1993, President Bill Clinton presented Calloway with a National Medal of the Arts.





Manu Dibango

Pioneering Cameroonian jazz musician Emmanuel N'Djoké "Manu" Dibango (December 12, 1933 - March 24, 2020) was well-known for his trademark infusion of indigenous music with funk and jazz and best known for the international 1972 hit "Soul Makossa," which features an unforgettable sax line and his own spoken vocals. The single was sampled by Michael Jackson and Rihanna for their chart-topping songs, "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" and "Please Don't Stop the Music." Dibango sued both musicians for sampling the song's popular "Ma-ma-se, ma-ma-sa, ma-ma-kossa" hook without his permission. Both settled out of court. Dibango enjoyed a long and fruitful career, collaborating with Fela Kuti, Herbie Hancock, Hugh Masekela, and many others. He continued to record and tour into the present day, releasing his final album *Balade En Saxo* in 2013 and performing live as recently as last year. Dibango was one of the first worldwide stars to die as a result of COVID-19.

The Queens of Jazz: Women Artists Bringing the Genre Back to Life

by Janell Hazelwood, MAOL

Women long have shaped the heart and soul of jazz, bringing fearless expression, storytelling, and innovation to one of the world's most influential musical traditions. From smoky clubs and juke joints to global concert halls and Kennedy Center Honors, these artists helped define the sound and spirit of the genre.

Legends Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Hazel Scott, and Nancy Wilson transformed jazz singing with unmatched phrasing, emotional depth, extraordinary musicianship and improvisational brilliance. Their recordings, which garnered multi-platinum sales, broke racial barriers, and made them global sensations, set the standard for vocal jazz and continue to influence generations.

Others expanded jazz's artistic boundaries in powerful ways, including visionaries like Nina Simone, Betty Carter, and Jeanne Lee, infusing the music with activism, daring improvisation, and avant-garde exploration.

Instrumentalists and spiritual innovators such as Alice Coltrane and contemporary artists like Jill Scott and Michelle Farrell demonstrate that the lineage continues to evolve. And today, a class of bold performers carries forward the tradition, proving the era of the queens of jazz is far from over.

Samara Joy

At just 26, Samara Joy has become one of modern jazz's brightest voices. Known for her warm tone and classic phrasing inspired by legends like Ella Fitzgerald, she's a six-time Grammy winner, with the most recent being Best Jazz Vocal Album for *Portrait* this year, continuing her rapid rise as a forerunner in jazz. The Obamas have raved about her talent, and this year, she heads to perform in Las Vegas for the first time, among other tour stops through the spring and fall.

Jazzmeia Horn

She's a powerhouse jazz vocalist known for her virtuosic scat singing and bold compositions, and she blends classic vocal jazz traditions with modern storytelling and original songwriting. A Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocal Competition winner in 2015, she would go on to be nominated for several Grammys and win the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Jazz Album for her second album, *Love & Liberation*, in 2020. Her most recent album, *Messages*, showcases deeply personal material and further solidifies her influence.

Veronica Swift

Swift is a dynamic vocalist celebrated for her range and theatrical stage presence. She effortlessly blends jazz, opera, rock, and cabaret influences, pushing the boundaries of genre. Her self-titled album *Veronica Swift* highlights her stylistic versatility and fearless interpretations of both standards and contemporary material.

Daymé Arocena

This Grammy-nominated and Juno award-winning Cuban singer, composer, and choir director is known for combining Afro-Cuban rhythms with spiritual jazz and soul. Her rich voice channels both jazz improvisation and traditional Cuban music. International tours and critically praised albums have expanded her global reputation as a powerful ambassador of modern Afro-Latin jazz.

Roxy Coss

A highly respected saxophonist, composer, and bandleader who has a Grammy and an ASCAP Young Jazz Composer Award under her belt, she has a talent for lyrical yet adventurous improvisation. Coss blends modern harmony with social awareness. She has released several acclaimed albums and also is an advocate for gender equity in jazz through leadership roles in musician organizations.

Emily Bear

Bear gained recognition early as a child prodigy and later would study at Julliard and New York University. A legendary TikTok team-up would take her *Bridgerton*-inspired work viral (which would earn her a Grammy win in 2022) and lead to a bit of notoriety in the aftermath. Her compositions and collaborations across genres showcase her virtuosic technique, modern arrangements, and unique ability to blend cinematic storytelling with jazz improvisation.

Ego Ella May

London's Ego Ella May is a MOBO award-winning artist who merges jazz harmony with neo-soul and hip-hop textures. Her expressive vocals and poetic lyrics explore identity, spirituality, and Black British culture. Through albums and collaborations within the vibrant UK jazz scene, she has emerged as one of the movement's most distinctive and thoughtful voices.

Ledisi

This singer-songwriter and actress is a Grammy-winning veteran in the music business who also has been honored at the NAACP Image Awards, the Soul Train Music Awards, and the NAACP Theater Awards, to name a few. Along with her recent tribute album for legendary jazz vocalist Dinah Washington (with a previous completed for Ella Fitzgerald), she is celebrated for her soaring vocal range and her blends of jazz, soul, gospel, and R&B. She starred as gospel phenom Mahalia Jackson in a 2022 biopic and continues to tour globally.

Bonus: Moonchild

Moonchild is a Grammy-nominated modern jazz-soul trio known for lush arrangements, dreamy production, and the airy lead vocals of Amber Navran. Navran is a songwriter who also plays saxophone, flute, and keyboards with the band. Moonchild's music has been featured on popular TV favorites like *And Just Like That...*, *Black Lightning*, and *Queen Sugar*. The band continues to tour worldwide, and their latest work, *Waves*, includes collabs with Jill Scott and Lalah Hathaway.

This article [The Queens of Jazz: Women Artists Bringing the Genre Back to Life](#) originally was published on [HerAgenda.com](#)

Support jazz. Revel in its history and be part of its future. Let the rhythm take over and remember – in the words of jazz legend, Duke Ellington, “It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing!”