

# Clifford Brown

Biography

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Clifford Brown was born October 30, 1930 in Wilmington, Delaware. As a young high school student Brown began playing trumpet and within a very short time was active in college and other youth bands. By his late teens he had attracted the favourable attention of leading jazzmen, including fellow trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis and Fats Navarro. At the end of the 40s he was studying music at Maryland University and in 1952, following recovery from a serious road accident, he made his first records with Chris Powell and Tadd Dameron. In the autumn of 1953 he was a member of the big band Lionel Hampton took to Europe. Liberally filled with precocious talent, this band attracted considerable attention during its tour. Contrary to contractual stipulations, many of the young musicians moonlighted on various recordings and Brown in particular was singled out for such sessions. Back in the USA, Brown was fired along with most of the rest of the band when Hampton learned of the records they had made. Brown then joined Art Blakey and in mid-1954 teamed up with Max Roach to form the Clifford Brown-Max Roach Quintet. The quintet was quickly recognized as one of the outstanding groups in contemporary jazz and Brown as a major trumpeter and composer. On June 26th, 1956, while driving between engagements during a nationwide tour, Brown and another quintet member, pianist Richie Powell, were killed in a road accident.

The early death of musicians in jazz, and of talented artists in other fields, has often led to the creation of legends. Inevitably, in many cases the legend greatly exceeds the reality, and speculation on what might have been relies more upon the imagination of the recounter than upon any hard evidence. In the case of Clifford Brown, the reality of the legend is impossible to refute. At a time when many modern jazz trumpeters sought technical expertise at the expense of tone, Brown, in common with his friend and paradigm, Navarro, had technique to spare but also developed a rich, full and frequently beautiful tone. At the same time, whether playing at scorching tempos or on languorous ballads, his range was exhaustive. He was enormously and brilliantly inventive but his search for original ideas was never executed at the expense of taste. In all his work, Brown displayed the rare combination of supreme intelligence and great emotional depths. His playing was only one aspect of his talent; he was also a fine composer, creating many works that have become modern jazz standards. Although his career was brief, Brown's influence persisted for a while in the work of Lee Morgan and throughout succeeding decades in that of Freddie Hubbard. Fortunately for jazz fans, Brown's own work persists in the form of his recordings, almost any of which can be safely recommended as outstanding examples of the very best of jazz. Indeed, all of his recordings with Roach are classics.

*From:  
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