

## The Jazz Saxophone

Satyajit Roychaudhury

The saxophone is a musical instrument invented in the 1840s in Belgium by Adolphe Sax. Although it uses the single reed of the clarinet family, it has a conical tube and is made of metal. By 1846 there was a double family of 14 saxophones, seven in F and C for orchestral use and seven in E flat and B flat for bands. The latter are by far most common today, the alto, tenor, and baritone being used most frequently. The saxophone has a powerful tone, between woodwind and brass in quality and blending well with both. Valuable to bands and occasionally used in the orchestra, it is now best known for its extensive use in dance and jazz music. It has a small serious solo literature. All saxophones except those in C are transposing instruments.



Adolphe Sax (1814-1894) – inventor of the saxophone

## The Saxophone Timeline (1814 – 2002)

1814 - Antoine-Joseph (Adolphe) Sax born 6 November, Dinant, Belgium, studies instrument-making with his father, Charles-Joseph.

1834 - Adolphe Sax perfects bass-clarinet design; \*improves keywork and construction

1842 - Sax arrives in Paris

1842 - 12 June--Sax's close friend Hector Berlioz writes article in Paris magazine Journal des Debats describing Sax's newest invention--the saxophone

1844 - 3 February--Berlioz conducts concert which features an arrangement of his choral work Chant Sacre which includes saxophone

1844 - December--Saxophone makes its orchestral debut in Georges Kastner's opera Last King of Juda; Paris Conservatory

1846 - Sax granted patent for saxophone

1894 - Sax dies

1911 - Tom Brown and the Brown Brothers saxophone sextet popularize saxophone with American public with recordings of such songs as: Bullfrog Blues, Chicken Walk, et.al.

1922 - Saxophone used in Mussorgsky/Ravel Pictures at an Exhibition

1923 - Rhapsody in Blue by George Gershwin (2 altos, tenor)

1927 - Ravel uses saxophone in his Bolero (sopranissimo, soprano, tenor)

1928 - An American in Paris by George Gershwin (alto, tenor, bari)

1928 - Symphony No. 1 Aaron Copland (alto)

1949 - Jazz saxophonists Gerry Mulligan and Lee Konitz feature, along with other artists, on Miles Davis' album Birth of the Cool

1954 - The Selmer Mark VI Saxophone begins to be produced

1955 - Charlie "Bird" Parker dies in New York City on March 12

1957 - Saxophone Colossus released by jazz tenor man Sonny Rollins

1958 - John Coltrane is jazz tenor saxophonist and quartet leader on the album, Giant Steps

1959 - Jazz tenor legend Lester Young dies in New York on March 15

1963 - The Art of Saxophone Playing is published by Larry Teal

1964 - John Coltrane's A Love Supreme issued

1967 - Coltrane dies, July 17

1969 - May 19, Coleman Hawkins dies

1969 - December - 1st World Saxophone Congress Meeting, Chicago; organized by

1970 - 2nd World Saxophone Congress Meeting, Chicago

1971 - 3rd WSC Meeting in Toronto

1973 - Fourth WSC Meeting in Bordeaux, France

1975 - Cannonball Adderly dies

1976 - Mark VII introduced with standard high F# key

1976 - Selmer's square-chamber mouthpieces marketed

1977 - 30 May, Desmond dies

1981 - Selmer S80 introduced

1982 - 7th WSC in Nuremburg, Germany

1986 - Selmer S80 Series II introduced

1991 - Stan Getz dies

1996 - Gerry Mulligan dies

1997 - 11th World Saxophone Congress in Italy

1997 - Chris Potter wins Jazz Par Prize

1997 - Joshua Redman wins Thelonious Monk Competition

1998 - William Albright dies

1999 - Branford Marsalis releases Requiem

2000 - 12th World Saxophone Congress in Montreal, Ontario, CANADA

2001 - Joe Henderson dies

2002 - Nick Brignola dies

2002 - America's Tribute to Adolphe Sax, Vols. 1-7 is released in box set. (AUR)

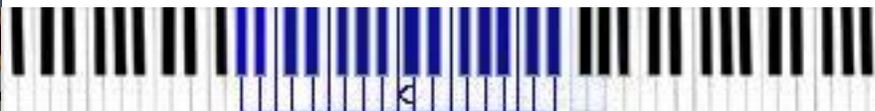
## The Saxophone Family



Seattle musician Jay C. Easton with 10 members of the saxophone family (from largest to smallest: contrabass, bass, baritone, tenor, C tenor, alto, F mezzo-soprano, soprano, C soprano, sopranino). Photo by Adrienne Easton. Reproduced from the Jay C. Easton official website with the kind permission of Jay Easton ([www.jayeaston.com](http://www.jayeaston.com))



Alto Saxophone in Eb and its range



Tenor Saxophone in Bb and its range

The alto and the tenor saxophones are the two most popular saxophones used in jazz.

## The Masters of Jazz Saxophone

### Jimmy Dorsey



1904–57, and his brother **Tommy Dorsey** (Thomas Francis Dorsey, Jr.), 1905–1956, both b. Shenandoah, Pa., American jazz musicians and bandleaders during the Big Band era. Jimmy Dorsey played the clarinet and alto saxophone, his brother the trombone. Toward the beginning of their careers in the late 1920s both were part of the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, and by the early 1930s both were successful pick-up and studio musicians. The two briefly had two bands together, the swing group of 1933–35 and another from 1953–56. Most of the time, however, each had his own band—Jimmy's a dance-oriented group and Tommy's more of a hot and sweet jazz ensemble that for awhile (1939–42) featured Frank Sinatra. The Dorsey bands were popular during the Big Band era (late 1930s to early 50s). Dorsey bands were featured in several Hollywood movies, and the brothers starred in a fictionalized film biography, *The Fabulous Dorseys* (1947).

### Coleman Hawkins



1904–69, American jazz musician, b. St. Joseph, Mo. He began playing saxophone at the age of 9. He was part of Fletcher Henderson's band from 1924 until 1934. Hawkins established the tenor saxophone as a major jazz instrument. His enormous tone, vigorous attack, and improvisatory genius both in ballads and up-tempo pieces made his influence pervasive. Because his style constantly evolved, Hawkins was distinguished even in the company of avant-garde jazz musicians from 1945 until 1969.

### **Lester Young**



1909–59, American jazz musician, b. Woodville, Miss. He played the tenor **saxophone** with various bands (1929–40), including those of Fletcher Henderson and Count Basie, with whom he first recorded in 1936. Young and Coleman Hawkins are considered the major influences on tenor-**saxophone** playing, and Young's style was important in the development of progressive, or cool, jazz, which arose in the late 1940s. He won several jazz polls and made a number of records, including a series with Billie Holiday, who gave him his nickname, "President," later shortened to "Pres" or "Prez." "Goodbye Porkpie Hat" was written by Charlie Mingus in his memory after Lester Young passed away.

### **Charlie "Bird" Parker**



1920–55, American musician and composer, b. Kansas City, Kans. He began playing alto **saxophone** in 1933, and after shifting from one band to another he met Dizzy Gillespie in New York City. They formed a quintet, which in 1945 made the first bop (or bebop) records and thus became the leaders of the bop movement in jazz. Parker's brilliant improvisations, noted for their power and beauty, soon earned the admiration of innumerable musicians. He composed several instrumental quartets and made many recordings. For many years Parker was addicted to drugs, which hastened his death.

## John Coltrane



1926–67, American jazz musician, b. Hamlet, N.C. He began playing tenor saxophone as an adolescent. Coltrane worked with numerous big bands before emerging in the mid-1950s as a major stylist while playing as a sideman with Miles Davis. Originally influenced by Lester Young, Coltrane displayed in his playing a dazzling technical brilliance combined with ardent emotion and eventually a kind of mysticism. His style, which was at once sonorous and spare, was influenced by the rhythms of African and Asian music. Coltrane made a number of influential recordings, among them the modal-jazz classics *My Favorite Things* (1961) and *A Love Supreme* (1964), and the later exemplars of free jazz, *Ascension* and *Interstellar Space*, his final album. From the late 1950s until his death he was considered the outstanding tenor and soprano saxophonist of the jazz avant-garde, and his music continues to be a strong source of inspiration to contemporary jazz and pop musician.

## Stan Getz



1927–91, American jazz tenor saxophonist, b. Philadelphia, Pa., as Stanley Gayetsky. As a mature musician he was especially known for his "cool" jazz style. He began playing as a teenager in Jack Teagarden's band, later appearing with bandleading greats Stan Kenton, Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and Woody Herman. His early playing was heavily influenced by Lester Young, and he recorded a number of singles with the likes of Dizzy Gillespie and Gerry Mulligan. During the 1960s Getz experimented with the Brazilian bossa nova sound, which was particularly suited to his breathy style and resulted in such hit records as "Desafinado" and "The Girl from Ipanema." His later work continued to be improvisational, expressive, emotional, and highly melodic, but with a somewhat harder edge.

## Ornette Coleman



1930–, African-American saxophonist and composer, b. Fort Worth, Tex. Largely self-taught, he began playing the alto saxophone in rhythm-and-blues bands. He later developed an unorthodox and impassioned style of free jazz characterized by broken rhythms, atonal harmonies, and improvised melody, which made him an enduringly controversial figure in the jazz avant-garde. Coleman made his first real impact in the commercial jazz world in 1959 and has since played in a number of small groups with various musicians. In the mid-1970s he formed the Prime Time band. Coleman has written several modernist concert pieces, notably the orchestral *Skies of America* (1972).

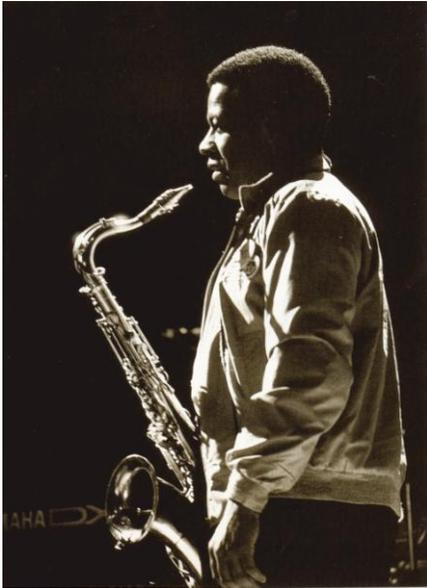
## Sonny Rollins



1930- , American jazz tenor saxophonist, b. September 7, 1930 in New York City. Sonny Rollins has had a long, productive career in jazz, beginning his career at the age of 11 and playing with Thelonious Monk before reaching the age of 20. Rollins is still touring and recording today, having outlived several of his contemporaries such as John Coltrane, Miles Davis. He was first recorded in 1949 began to make a name for himself by recording with Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk. Rollins' most widely acclaimed album "Saxophone Colossus" was recorded in 1956. In 1957 he also pioneered the use of just bass and drums as accompaniment for his saxophone solos, a texture that came to be known as "strolling". He is well-known as a composer; and compositions such as "St. Thomas", "Doxy", "Oleo" and "Airegin" have become standards. By 1959, Rollins took his first sabbatical. Upon his return he named his "comeback" album "The Bridge". Throughout the '60s Rollins remained one of the most adventurous musicians. Each album he recorded differed radically from the previous one. He also provided the soundtrack to the 1966 version of *Alfie*. Rollins took his second sabbatical to study yoga, meditation, and Eastern philosophies. His bands throughout the '70s and '80s featured electric guitar, electric bass, and funk-oriented drummers. Rollins' most famous appearance to rock music fans was his appearance on the 1981 Rolling Stones album "Tattoo You" in which he plays saxophone several tracks. Although his recordings in the '70s, '80s, and '90s were not as critically acclaimed as his earlier recordings, he continues to be known for his powerful live performances. On September 11, 2001, Rollins, who lived several blocks away, heard the World Trade Center collapse, and was forced to evacuate his apartment, with only his saxophone in hand. Although he was

shaken, he traveled Boston five days later, to play at Berklee College. That concert was released on CD in 2005, *Without a Song: The 9/11 Concert*. Rollins was presented with a Grammy Award for lifetime achievement in 2004. After a highly successful Japanese tour in late 2005, Rollins returned to the recording studio for the first time in five years to record, "Sonny, Please." At the same time, he launched his own website, and started his own label, Doxy Records. The city of Minneapolis, MN officially named Tuesday October 31st, 2006 after him in honor of his achievements and contributions to the world of Jazz.

## Wayne Shorter



1933 - ,American jazz composer and saxophonist, b. in Newark, NJ. In 1956 Shorter played briefly with Horace Silver and Maynard Ferguson. In 1959 Shorter joined Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. He stayed with Blakey for five years, and eventually became musical director for the group. In 1964, Miles Davis persuaded Shorter to join the Miles Davis Quintet alongside Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams. Davis chose him to replace John Coltrane. Shorter composed extensively for Davis ("Prince of Darkness", "ESP", "Footprints" etc). Herbie Hancock said: "The master writer to me, in that group, was Wayne Shorter. He still is a master." Davis said: "Wayne is a real composer. He writes scores, writes the parts for everybody just as he wants them to sound. He also brought in a kind of curiosity about working with musical rules." While with Miles Davis, Shorter recorded several albums, featuring almost exclusively his own compositions. *JuJu* and *Speak No Evil* are two of the most well known recordings. He also recorded occasionally as a sideman with Donald Byrd, McCoy Tyner, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, and bandmates Hancock and Williams. In 1969 he played the soprano saxophone on the Davis album *In a Silent Way* and on his own *Super Nova*. By the early 1970s, however, he chiefly played soprano saxophone. Shorter remained in Davis's band after the breakup of the quintet in 1968, playing on early jazz fusion recordings including *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew* (both 1969). His last live dates and studio recordings with Davis were in 1970. In 1970, along with keyboardist Joe Zawinul formed Weather Report. A great variety of excellent musicians that would make up Weather Report alumnus over the years (most notably the revolutionary bassist Jaco Pastorius). Shorter also recorded critically acclaimed albums as leader, notably *Native*

*Dancer*, which featured Brazilian composer and vocalist Milton Nascimento. Concurrently, in the late 1970s and the early 1980s he toured in the V.S.O.P. quintet. This group was a revival of the 1960s Miles Davis quintet, with Freddie Hubbard playing trumpet. After leaving Weather Report, Shorter continued to record and lead groups in jazz fusion styles. He continued to work with Herbie Hancock, including a tribute album recorded shortly after Davis's death with Hancock, Carter, Williams and Wallace Roney. In 1995 Shorter released the album *High Life*, his first solo recording for seven years. It was also Shorter's debut as a leader for Verve Records. Shorter composed all the compositions and co-produced it with the Marcus Miller. *High Life* received the Grammy Award in 1997. Shorter's wife Ana Maria and their niece Dalila were both killed on TWA Flight 800 in 1996, and he married Carolina Dos Santos, a close friend of Ana Maria, in 1999. Shorter would work again with Hancock in 1997, on the much acclaimed album *1+1*. Both Hancock and Shorter won the Grammy award for this album. Shorter formed his current band in 2000. The other members are pianist Danilo Perez, bassist John Patitucci, and drummer Brian Blade. Two albums of live recordings featuring this quartet have been released (*Footprints Live* (2001) and *Beyond the Sound Barrier* (2005)). The quartet has received great acclaim from fans and critics, and the musicians have come to consider themselves family on and off stage. Shorter's 2003 album *Alegria* received the 2004 Grammy Award; it features the quartet with a host of other musicians. *Beyond the Sound Barrier* received the 2006 Grammy Award for Best Instrumental

## Jazz Styles and some of their Saxophonists

### PRE-SWING [NEW ORLEANS]

**Sidney Bechet**

### SWING

**Coleman Hawkins**

**Harry Carney**

**Lester Young**

**Herschel Evans**

**Johnny Hodges**

**Ben Webster**

**Willie Smith**

**Benny Carter**

**Buddy Tate**

**Illinois Jacquet  
Chu Berry**

**BEBOP**

**Charlie Parker  
Don Byas  
Sonny Stitt  
Dexter Gordon  
Sonny Rollins  
Wardell Gray  
James Moody  
Sonny Criss**

**COOL**

**Lee Konitz  
Gerry Mulligan  
Warne Marsh  
Art Pepper  
Paul Desmond  
Stan Getz  
Al Cohn  
Zoot Sims  
Jimmy Giuffre**

**HARDBOP**

**Sonny Rollins  
John Coltrane  
Wayne Shorter  
Hank Mobley  
Jackie McLean  
Harold Land  
Johnny Griffin  
Benny Golson  
John Gilmore  
Junior Cook  
Tubby Hayes  
Phil Woods  
Stanley Turrentine  
Joe Henderson  
Cannonball Adderley  
Lou Donaldson**

**FREE JAZZ**

**Ornette Coleman  
Arthur Blythe**

**Archie Shepp  
Albert Ayler  
John Coltrane  
Pharoah Sanders  
Anthony Braxton  
Sam Rivers  
Dewey Redman  
Evan Parker  
Steve Lacy  
Eric Dolphy  
Henry Threadgill  
Joseph Jarman  
Roscoe Mitchell  
Marion Brown  
Pharaoh Sanders**

**CONTEMPORARY**

**Branford Marsalis  
Kenny Garrett  
Joshua Redman  
Wayne Escoffery  
James Carter**