

dizzy gillespie



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IMPORTANT FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT JOHN “DIZZY” GILLESPIE

Born:	October 21, 1917, Cheraw, South Carolina
Died:	January 6, 1993, Englewood, New Jersey
Period/Style of Jazz:	Bebop, Afro-Cuban Jazz
Instrument:	Trumpet, bandleader and composer
Major Compositions:	<i>A Night in Tunisia</i> , <i>Con Alma</i> , <i>Groovin' High</i> , <i>Manteca</i>
Interesting Facts:	Dizzy Gillespie invented the modern approach to jazz trumpet playing, which included extending the range of the instrument, improvising in a more linear fashion and playing with dramatic bursts with large interval leaps. He was among the first to use Afro-Cuban music in jazz.



Track 9

Included Listening: *A Night in Tunisia*

■ The Story of Dizzy Gillespie (1917–1993)

John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie was one of the most important and influential jazz trumpeters, after Louis Armstrong. Dizzy Gillespie, along with his colleagues Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk, are considered to be the “fathers” of the fast-and-furious style called bebop. Dizzy Gillespie was known for his soaring trumpet lines, his puffed cheeks and the tilted bell of his trumpet. He was loved by musicians and fans for his engaging personality and showmanship.

Gillespie was inspired to play music by his father who was a bricklayer and part-time musician. Gillespie began playing the piano at the age of 4. He taught himself to play the trumpet by trial and error, with the help of a few friends at the age of 12. In 1935, Gillespie moved to Philadelphia with his mother, after the death of his father. Upon Gillespie’s arrival in Philadelphia he joined the Frankie Fairfax Band. Gillespie was always the prankster and was not above joking with his fellow band members. Soon after, he received his nickname when drummer Norman Dibble asked, “where’s Dizzy?” The name stuck with him for the rest of his life. Around this time Gillespie also met his mentor, Roy Eldridge a trumpet player known for his rapid-fire arpeggiated playing and incredible range.



Photo: © Lee Tanner

Roy Eldridge, trumpet player extraordinaire, was a mentor to Dizzy Gillespie.



Photo: © Lee Tanner

After his trumpet bell was bumped and tilted during a concert, Dizzy decided he liked it and had his trumpets custom-made in that fashion.

Gillespie began playing a “new” kind of music that would later be known as bebop. Unfortunately his bandleader, Cab Calloway, hated it. Gillespie was eventually fired from Cab Calloway’s group which really proved to be a blessing in disguise. For the next three years Gillespie did great work with some of the most popular jazz musicians of the time, such as Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald and tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins. From the performances with those musicians, Dizzy also met alto saxophonist Charlie Parker and pianist Thelonious Monk. Gillespie and Monk became partners in jazz, and they worked on jazz theory for hours, which led to the bebop era.

Late in 1942, pianist Earl Hines brought Dizzy into his band along with Charlie Parker. “A Night in Tunisia” was their first bebop hit. Later, Dizzy teamed with Charlie Parker and the recordings that resulted from this band became extremely popular, such as “Salt Peanuts,” “Shaw Nuff,” “Groovin’ High,” and “I Can’t Get Started.”

Meet the Great Jazz Legends

In 1946 Gillespie put together a jazz orchestra that included Milt Jackson (vibes), John Lewis (piano), Ray Brown (bass), Kenny Clarke (drums), James Moody (saxophone), J. J. Johnson (trombone) and Chano Pozo (percussion), who shared Gillespie's growing love of Afro-Cuban/Latin jazz. Gillespie continued to play innovative music throughout the 1950s and 1960s, recording with a wide assortment of jazz greats.

Dizzy Gillespie had a love for teaching and sharing his knowledge of jazz with younger musicians. He formed a big band for overseas tours and inspired countless young musicians around the world.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Gillespie toured and performed with the great contributors of jazz. He was invited to the White House by President Jimmy Carter after returning from a tour in Cuba where he celebrated his love for Afro-Cuban music in 1977. In the late 1980s, Gillespie was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer which ultimately led to his death on January 6, 1993 in Englewood, New Jersey.

Minton's Playhouse: The House of Bebop

Minton's Playhouse is regarded as the sanctuary where bebop had its beginning. Minton's Playhouse was located in Harlem and opened its doors in 1940. The owner and visionary of the club was Henry Minton, an accomplished musician on the clarinet. The club was special because the jam session policies were set up to allow many musicians to participate, leading to much experimentation.

Henry Minton hired Teddy Hill to manage the club. Hill was also a successful bandleader who was very personable and well-liked by musicians. Minton's Playhouse provided fertile ground for creativity, expanding a positive environment to share and nurture ideas. It was operated like an "after hours joint." This was good because many of the musicians would visit the club around

3 a.m., after their gigs (jobs), and would generally play music until 9 a.m. Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Kenny Clarke, and Dizzy Gillespie were among the many regulars at the club.



Thelonious Monk, Howard McGhee, Roy Eldridge and Teddy Hill at Minton's Playhouse

Photo: © William P. Gottlieb

gillespie **scramble**



Unscramble the letters to spell the words that will complete each sentence.

1. Dizzy Gillespie, along with Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk, helped to create a jazz style known as _____ (BPEBO).
2. Gillespie learned to play the trumpet as the age of 12. His trumpet mentor was _____ (ERELODIGRYD).
3. A popular composition written by Gillespie was _____ (STSPAUATLEN).
4. When Gillespie returned from Cuba, he was invited to perform at the White House for President _____ (ETRARC).
5. Gillespie collaborated with several musicians during his musical career. His major collaborator with the Afro-Cuban style was _____ (ZCAHONPOO).
6. Gillespie's nickname: _____ (ZIDYZ).
7. In 1917, Gillespie was born in _____ (RHCEWA), South Carolina.

z i d l i g p e
y p i s e



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