

Miles Davis: 1950's



- Led various groups in early 50's
- "The" quintet was born on 9/28/55 in Baltimore
- Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Red Garland, Philly Joe Jones, Paul Chambers

Miles Davis Quintet 1955-57

- John Coltrane: a relatively newcomer on the jazz scene from Philadelphia
- Red Garland: (piano) similar to style of Ahmad Jamal (i.e., rarely played root w/left pinkie, voicings in the middle, melodic understatement)
- Paul Chambers: only 20 years old, known more as a soloist
- Philly Joe Jones: had strong musical interaction & rapport with Miles

Miles Davis Quintet 1955-57

- Series of recordings for Prestige and some for Columbia
- Main gigs were at the Café Bohemia in NYC, L.A., and the Blackhawk in San Francisco
- With Miles in the lead, the ensemble established a unique musical rapport during performance with communication among musicians
- Among several other recordings during this time, 4 records recorded in May and October of 1956 stand out (Cookin', Workin', Relaxin', and Steamin')
- Listening (Prestige): Four (Workin'); Well You Needn't (Steamin'), Oleo Relaxin'), Airegin (Cookin')
- Listening (Columbia): Sweet Sue & 'Round Midnight (arr. by Gill Evans)

Miles Davis Quintet 1955-57

- The quintet disbanded several times for various reasons (Miles' larynx operation, trip to Europe, and the group's drug problems)
- Drug problem rampant in jazz and the quintet
- Miles the only "straight" musician
- Philly Joe was making the "connections" for the musicians
- Affected all, but mainly Coltrane
- Culminated in 1957 when Miles fired Philly Joe and Coltrane
- Philly Joe was to be reinstated, but Coltrane to play with Monk at the "Five Spot" and to "dry-up"

Miles Davis Sextet 1957-59

- After a trip to Paris, Miles re-establishes the quintet with Cannonball Adderley on alto saxophone in December 1957
- “Davis knew, as everyone else would soon know, that Coltrane had what Davis called ‘that thing,’ the indefinable spirit that ‘speaks in the music’....and he wanted it back in the band.”
- Coltrane re-joins Miles late December 1957
- Arguably the best sextet in the history of jazz

Miles Davis Sextet 1957-59

Milestones: 2-3 April 1958

- Miles, Cannonball, Coltrane, Garland, Chambers, and Philly Joe
- Tunes: Two Bass hit, Billy Boy, Straight No Chaser, Milestones, Dr. Jeckyll (Jackle), Sid's Ahead (Walkin')
- Notes of interest: Garland solos disappear; PC solos increase; Miles plays piano on Sid's Ahead; Coltrane's force being felt
- Miles (aka Milestones) is modal tune (Cannon, Miles, Trane)
- Sid's Ahead & Two Bass Hit (Trane, Davis, Cannonball)
- Billy Boy & Straight No Chaser only tunes w/piano solos
- Dr. Jeckyll: Miles, Trane & Cannonball eventually trading; Cannonball assimilates Trane

Miles Davis Sextet 1957-59

Kind of Blue: 2 March 1959

- Miles, Trane, Cannonball, Paul Chambers, Jimmy Cobb, Bill Evans/Wynton Kelly
- Musicians received \$64.67/session and bass/drums received \$66.67
- Miles wanted to add Bill Evans, but forgot to inform Wynton Kelly (both are on the date)
- Miles' music or Bill Evans?
- Mainly sketches of music used for spontaneity
- 7 mics (one on each instrument and two on the drums) on 3 tracks balanced by musicians volume and not isolation
- The record included all of the full takes. All other takes were incomplete

Miles Davis Sextet 1957-59

Kind of Blue: 2 March 1959

- Freddie the Freeloader: uses Kelly so as not to keep him waiting and also for band to warm-up
- So What: inspired by African folk and American gospel; intro by Gil Evans?; time needed to coordinate opening; melody is in the bass
- Blue in Green: w/out Cannonball; could've been Bill Evans' tune; unpredictable 10-bar structure
- Master takes used for records were a quarter tone high because machine ran slow, back-up tape was correct and used for the CD's

Miles Davis Sextet 1957-59

Kind of Blue: 22 April 1959

- Flamenco Sketches: much influenced by Bill Evans; five scales and five harmonies (length to be determined by the improviser)
- All Blues: 6/8 12-bar blues, instead of 3/4, to evoke traditional African rhythms and to maintain 12-bar form; bar 5, traditionally IV7 in the blues, is played with a minor I chord (i.e., gm7)