

A close-up, black and white photograph of Charlie Parker playing the saxophone. He is wearing a dark, pinstriped suit jacket over a white shirt and a patterned tie. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and the instrument against a dark background. The name "Charlie Parker" is overlaid in white text across the center of the image.

Charlie Parker



- Charlie Christopher Parker Jr. was born on August 29, 1920, in Kansas City, Kansas
- His father, Charles Parker, was an African American entertainer and his mother, Addie Parker, of Native American heritage; Charlie was an only child.
- He moved to Kansas City, Missouri when he was 7 where it was considered a lively center for African-American music such as blues, jazz, and gospel music.



Early Life

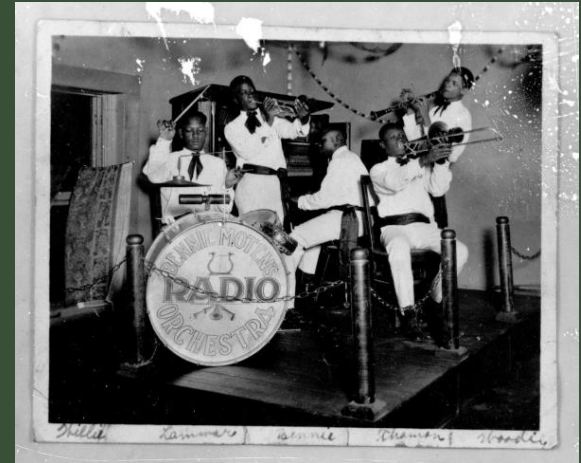
- He started playing the alto saxophone at age 11 and joined his high school band at age 14.
- When he was still in school, he started to play with bands at clubs and dropped out of school in 1935 to pursue a full-time music career.
- Spent the next 3-4 years practicing roughly 15 hours a day.



Alto sax owned and used by Charlie Parker

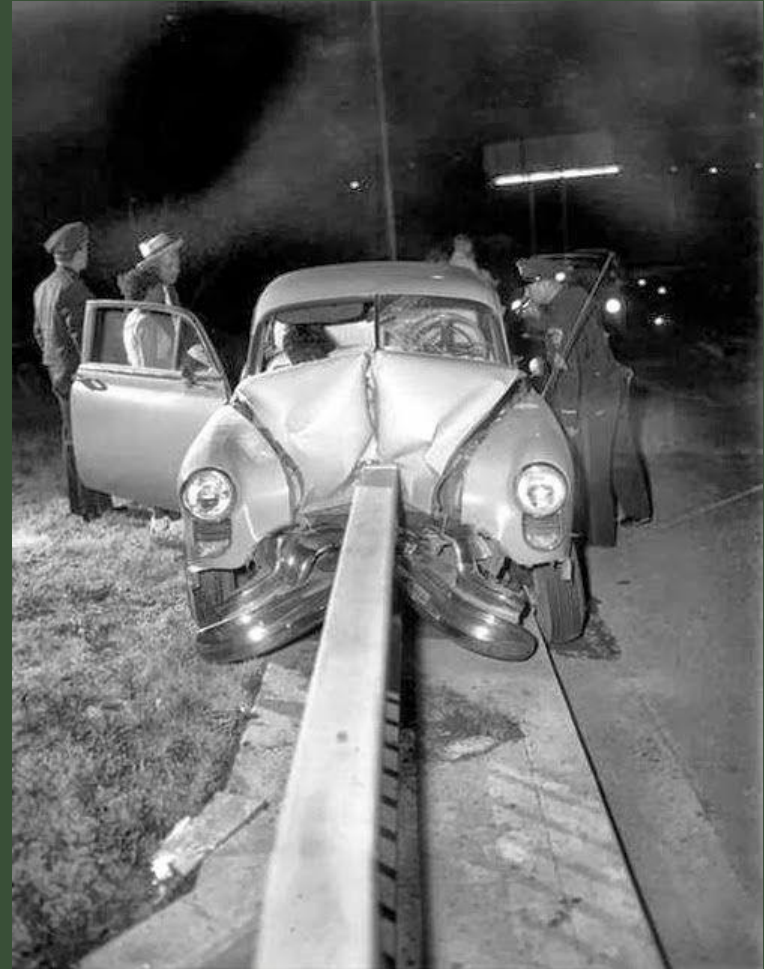
Early influences

- Bands led by Count Basie and Bennie Moten certainly influenced Parker.
- Spent many of his early years playing around the Kansas City area in many different bands.
- Mastered the art of improvisation.



Car Accident and Drug Addiction

- In 1936 while touring in the Ozarks, Parker was in a car accident. He broke three ribs and fractured his spine.
- In the hospital he was given morphine for the pain. This would lead to a lifelong addiction to opiates.



Jay McShann

- Started to play with pianist Jay McShann's band in 1938, with whom he toured Chicago and New York.
- He would play with McShann off and on for 4 years and establish himself in the Jazz scene.



Creating Bebop

- By the early 40s, Parker starts his own band and creates a new style of Jazz.
- Be-Bop Jazz is characterized by a fast tempo, complex chord progressions with rapid chord changes and numerous changes of key, instrumental virtuosity, and improvisation



Later Years

- Parker played in ensembles and solo at a number of venues, including clubs and radio stations, from 1947 to 1951
- Parker also recorded for a lot of record labels, including one called Dial from 1945 to 1948.
- Played with many early Be Bop greats like Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk.





Personal Life

- Charlie Parker had 4 serious relationships in his lifetime that produced 4 children.
 - Rebecca Ruffin was Charlie Parker's wife until 1939, and Francis and Leon were their two daughters.
 - Married again to a woman named Geraldine Marguerite Scott, but later left her.
 - His third marriage was with Doris Snyder but also ended abruptly within a year.
 - His live-in girlfriend Chan Richardson adopted Parker's surname and fathered two children: daughter Pree, who lived just two years, and son Baird, who was born a year and a day before Parker died.

Heroin Addiction

- Parker's struggles with drug addiction, depression, and mental disease wreaked havoc on his career and intimate relationships in his adult life.
- Parker's cabaret card was suspended in 1951
- Parker died of lobar pneumonia and the debilitating effects of long-term drug abuse on March 12, 1955, in the baroness' New York City flat.



Significance

- Founder of Bebop Jazz
- Miles Davis once said: “You can tell the history of Jazz in four words:
- Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker”

