

RONALD ATKINS (Jun. 1, 1936 – Mar. 19, 2025) The British writer and critic, whose life experience in jazz ranged from bebop to free jazz, died at age 89. Atkins grew up in the post-World War II trad jazz revivalist era, wherein he played clarinet in his school band. While holding a civil service day job, he began writing for *Jazz Monthly* magazine in 1957 and went on to build a career as a writer, contributing to *The Guardian*, *Jazz Express*, *The Jazz Review* (cofounded by Nat Hentoff and Martin Williams in NYC in 1958) and *Tribune* to various jazz guides such as *Jazz On CD* and *Jazz - The Ultimate Guide*. Atkins also wrote liner notes for Esquire, Verve, Elektra, Ogun and other labels.

FRANCIS DAVIS (Aug. 30, 1946 – Apr. 14, 2025) The Philadelphia-born and based writer, who passed away at age 78, is best known as the jazz critic for *The Village Voice* and as a contributing editor for *The Atlantic* and other outlets. Davis also worked in radio and film and taught courses on jazz and blues at the University of Pennsylvania. A 1969 graduate of Temple University, his jazz career emerged and blossomed in the early '80s when he became the jazz critic of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. In addition to books, including *Outcats: Jazz Composers, Instrumentalists, and Singers; Bebop and Nothingness: Jazz and Pop at the End of the Century* and *In the Moment: Jazz in the 1980s*, he also wrote about other aspects of popular culture, such as profiles of Johnny Cash and Jerry Seinfeld. In the jazz arena, Davis interviewed/wrote about musicians such as Betty Carter, Sonny Rollins, Wynton Marsalis and Sun Ra. He was a multiple recipient of the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award, and was nominated for a GRAMMY in 1989 for his liner notes to *Jazz Piano* for the Smithsonian Collection of Recordings. He won the 2008 Best Album Notes GRAMMY for the Miles Davis album, *Kind of Blue 50th Anniversary Collector's Edition*. Davis also contributed liner notes for many labels, including 32 Jazz, Arabesque, Black Saint/Soul Note, Columbia Legacy, Concord, El Saturn, Evidence, GRP, hatHUT, Impulse!, Koch, Muse, Music & Arts, Postcards, Savant, Savoy, Stash, Uptown, Verve and West Wind. He was also the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1992, a Pew Fellowship in 1993 and founder of what is widely acknowledged as the most accurate annual critics' jazz poll in existence (first published in *The Village Voice*, later for NPR Music and most recently with ArtsFuse). The results of the 19th edition of the Francis Davis Jazz Critics Poll (now helmed by Tom Hull) were released earlier this year.

JULIEN FAVREUILLE (1973 – Apr. 12, 2025) The French saxophonist died at around age 51. He was a member of Surnatural Orchestra, Intradécorum, Happy House, Circum Grand Orchestra and Muzzix collective, and had a 2018 co-led release on Circum-Disc. Favreuille was also passionate about the circus world, founding Les Productions Perchées (slang for “crazy”) in 2010, which combined clowning with extreme sports. Often playing the sax along with daredevil activities, Favreuille and his troupe were based in the Vercors Mastiff mountain range, known for its difficult terrain.

ROBERTA FLACK (Feb. 10, 1937 – Feb. 24, 2025) Although highly jazz-influenced, the charting singer crossed many genres, including R&B and blues, passing away at age 88. At 19, Flack graduated from Howard University (to which she received a music scholarship at age 15). With a degree in music education, she taught for seven years in the Washington, DC school system, while also performing as a singer-pianist in local venues. In 1968 she was discovered by pianist-vocalist Les McCann, who connected her to Atlantic Records. Her rendition of “The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face” (included on her 1969 debut album, *First Take*) propelled her to stardom. Along the way, Flack earned four GRAMMY awards and regularly appeared at jazz festivals, including Montreux, Barbados and Newport. She received a lifetime achievement award from the Jazz Foundation of America in 2018 and the GRAMMY Lifetime Achievement award in 2020. In 2012, she released her 15th studio release and what would be

her last album, *Let It Be Roberta* (subtitled “Roberta Flack Sings the Beatles”), which was performed as jazz-based contemporary rhythm and blues. Flack suffered a stroke in 2016, yet two years later recorded “Running” for *3100: Run and Become*, a documentary about a paperboy from Finland who attempted the world's longest race around a 1/2 mile sidewalk loop in NYC. In 2022 it was announced that Flack had been diagnosed with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), which made it impossible for her to sing. She died at home (in her 40-year apartment in The Dakota) from cardiac arrest, surrounded by family.

GEORGE FREEMAN (Apr. 10, 1927 – Apr. 1, 2025) The guitarist was scheduled to play gigs at Chicago's Green Mill, but a few days short of the dates, the Windy City guitar legend passed away just over a week shy of turning 98. His stature as Chicago jazz royalty included his brothers, saxophonist Von Freeman and drummer Eldridge (“Bruz” or “Buzz”) Freeman, as well as nephew, saxophonist Chico Freeman. Through his pianist father, young George met the likes of Fats Waller and others, but was inspired to take up guitar by T-Bone Walker and electric guitar pioneer Charlie Christian. In the late '60s/early '70s he played and toured with Chicago tenor sax great Gene Ammons. Although recognized for his skills, greater fame eluded him, owing to his often-jarring solo meanderings, in which he deliberately played notes that clashed with a tune's key signature—a technique he called “going outside.” Freeman was a leader on more than a dozen albums, including his last, *The Good Life* (2023), the same year that he played his final Chicago Jazz Festival. Freeman had dates on Giant Step, Bam-Boo, Delmark, Groove Merchant, Southport, Savant, ears&eyes, Blujazz and HighNote, and collaborated with Charlie Parker, Richard “Groove” Holmes, Les McCann, Billy Mitchell, Sonny Stitt, Shirley Scott, Buddy Rich, Johnny Griffin, Illinois Jacquet and others.

MILES GRIFFITH (May 13, 1969 – Apr. 2, 2025) The vocalist, who played a major role in saxophonist John Ellis' ambitious extended works *The Ice Siren* and *MOBRO*, died at age 55 in Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx. Griffith worked with Max Roach, Reggie Workman, Carl Allen, Bill Lee, T.S. Monk, Barry Harris, Tommy Campbell and others, and co-led the Griffith-Stevens Group with pianist Michael Jefry Stevens. He was also the lead, “Jesse,” in Wynton Marsalis' Pulitzer Prize- and GRAMMY-winning *Blood On The Fields* (1994). Griffith had a pair of self-released albums and also credits with James Williams, Bill Mobley, Mark Elf, Tony Reedus, Jack Walrath, Ahmed Abdullah, Shakers N' Bakers, Joe Fiedler and others.

PETER JACQUES (May 17, 1935 – Mar. 27, 2025) The long-time director of the Swiss Radio DRS Big Band, and keyboard player, died at age 89. He was born in Franzensbad, Czechoslovakia, the son of a Swiss mother and a Belarusian father, a solo violinist and concertmaster. An experimentalist, Jacques made his first appearance on the classical circuit at age of eight, dabbling in jazz as he got older, and appearing at the Zürich Jazz Festival (1953). After a brief stint with Chet Baker, in the '60s he produced a series of recordings with singer Ruth Linn and then also arranged jazz workshops for German TV. He was musical director at the Bavaria Filmstudios as well as working on TV specials in Rio de Janeiro for the American Broadcasting Company. As a performer, Jacques worked with Åke Persson, Foss Trio, Ernie Englund, Kurt Weill Band, Harry Arnold Radioband and Victor Burghardt/Mike Barone Orchestra, sang background on productions of Alice Babs and Povel Ramel, and did arranging for Horst Jankowski, Horst Fischer, NDR Big Band, Arne Domnérus, Bill Ramsey, Ernie Englund and others. He had albums on Harmonic, Fan, Center, EMI, Quadriga, Pan and JMP.

LESTER LASHLEY (1935 – Apr. 13, 2025) The composer, bassist, trombonist and banjoist, who passed at around age 90, was an original/charter member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and appeared on such significant albums during the late '60s/

early '70s as Roscoe Mitchell's *Sound*, Joseph Jarman's *As If It Were The Seasons*, Muhal Richard Abrams' *Young At Heart/Wise In Time* and George Freeman's *Birth Sign* (all released on Delmark, the legendary Chicago label). Lashley was depicted in Wadsworth Jarrell's acrylic painting, *Coolade Lester* (1970), and was a filmmaker, painter and sculptor in his own right, having studied at the American Academy of Art in Chicago and at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

JEAN-CLAUDE MONTREDON (Sep. 23, 1949 – Apr. 6, 2025) The Martinique-born, France-based drummer, died at age 75 in a Parisian hospital after a long illness. At age 12, he began with congas. He built an amplitude modulation radio receiver and began listening to the Voice of America, where he discovered jazz, and began to widen his experience with percussion. In 1967 while playing with the Tropicana Orchestra he met pianist and mentor Marius Cultier, which led to concert dates and meeting Miles Davis. Montredon worked as a sideman with the likes of Chris McGregor, Bobby Few, Randy Weston and Archie Shepp. After a 50-year career, in 2016, Montredon released his own leader date, *Diamant H2O* (Q-Mix).

ESA PETHMAN (May 17, 1938 – Mar. 18, 2025) The Finnish flutist-saxophonist, born in Kuusankoski, Kouvola, Finland, died at age 86 in his native country in Hämeenlinna, Kanta-Häme. Pethman was not only a musician and composer, but also an actor, known for *Lauantaileikit* (1963), *Septet* (1966) and *The Collector* (1997). He also crossed genres, playing in various pop and folk groups. Pethman had releases on RCA Victor, Odeon, Polydor, Olarin Musikki and We Jazz in addition to credits with Heikki Sarmanto, Eero Koivistoinen, Vesa-Matti Loiri, Esko Linnavallin and Jazz Society Big Band.

NINO TEMPO (Jan. 6, 1935 – Apr. 10, 2025) The saxophonist, who was born Antonino LoTempi in Niagara Falls, NY, died at age 90. Tempo was a musical prodigy, learning the clarinet and tenor as a child, winning a talent show at age four and appearing with Benny Goodman by age seven. His family relocated to California where Tempo was featured on the Horace Heidt radio show. Tempo also became a child actor in film, with roles in *The Red Pony* and *The Glenn Miller Story*. He would play and record with Maynard Ferguson (*Live at the Peacock*, 1956) and was a duet partner with April Stevens, his older sister. During a Bobby Darin recording session, he made a connection with Atlantic Records, contracting with its subsidiary, Atco: the 1963 duet date with Stevens, *Deep Purple* (1963), charted number one on Billboard's Hot 100 and won a 1964 GRAMMY for Best Rock and Roll Recording. He formed the funk band Nino Tempo and 5th Ave. Sax in 1973 and had another hit with “Sister James”, an instrumental disco record classified as “Northern Soul,” reaching #53 on the Hot 100. He was a featured soloist on *The Kenny Rankin Album* (1976) and a member of the Jazz at The Movies Band, with additional credits that include the Modern Jazz Quartet, Diane Schuur and Rosemary Clooney.

TERJE VENAAS (Mar. 30, 1947 – Apr. 9, 2025) Known as one of Norway's most prominent jazz musicians, the bassist passed away at age 78. He had dozens of recordings and a number of international collaborations, beginning in 1962 when he started playing with several local bands in the Molde area and with his brother's Åge Venås Orchestra and with Moldejazz. In 1967, Venaas moved to Oslo where he joined the music scene and began performing with musicians including Jan Garbarek, Espen Rud and Carl Magnus Neumann, debuting on record with Terje Rypdal (*Bleak House*, Polydor) in 1968. Venaas also recorded with the Per Husby Trio (featuring Chet Baker), and performed with Dexter Gordon, Toots Thielemans and Michel Petrucciani as well as Finn Eriksen, Ketil Bjørnstad, Pål Thowsen, Laila Dalseth, Christian Reim, Bjarne Nerem, Thorgeir Stubø, Per Nyhaug, Magni Wentzel, Jon Gordon, Louis Stewart, Karin Krog, Einar Iversen and Staffan William-Olsson, among others.