

KAMAL ABDUL-ALIM (Jul. 9, 1941 – May 2, 2026) The Cleveland-born trumpeter died at age 84. His best-known work, 1987's groove-based *Dance* (52 Rue Est-Stash) – reissued on Record Store Day 2021 – was his sole leader date (featuring an allstar cast of James Spaulding, Bobby Watson, Rahn Burton and Idris Muhammad). His credits include The Brass Company, Milton Marsh, Jeffery Smith, Archie Shepp, Frank Wright, Spirit of Life Ensemble and others.

BENGT BERGER (Aug. 31, 1942 – May 15, 2026) The Swedish drummer-percussionist, composer and ethnomusicologist, whose work since the early '70s bridged jazz with Indian and West African music, died at age 83. Berger studied tabla and mridangam, underpinning the subsequent rhythmic foundation of his work. He collaborated with trumpeter Don Cherry (*Organic Music Society*, 1971-72 and *Eternal Now*, 1973), who was a Swedish resident for many years. He was also a member of Rena Rama (with Bobo Stenson and Palle Danielsson) and Arbete & Fritid. His 1981 ECM album *Bitter Funeral Beer* featured a large ensemble performing arrangements based on traditional Ghanaian funeral music. Berger's credits include Gunnar Lindqvist, Sven-Åke Johansson, Bernt Rosengren, Christer Bothén, Per Tjernberg and Anders Jormin.

MICHEL DENIS (May 1, 1941 – Apr. 28, 2026) Born in Boulogne-Billancourt, France, the jazz and blues drummer, highly influenced by Sam Woodyard and Sonny Payne, died at age 84. His career began in 1961, and throughout the '60s he performed with swing and Dixieland musicians such as Bill Coleman, Michel de Villers, Earl "Fatha" Hines, Stuff Smith and Rex Stewart, also later establishing an 18-year association with blues pianist-singer Memphis Slim. Denis was a fixture in Parisian jazz clubs and his sideman work included collaborations with Paul Gonsalves, Johnny Griffin, John Lee Hooker, T-Bone Walker, Big Joe Williams, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Roosevelt Sykes and François Rihac's Harlem Jazz Ensemble. Other credits include Michel Sardaby, Gerard Badini, Wild Bill Davis, Spanky Wilson and the Paris All Stars.

STANTON DAVIS (Nov. 10, 1945 – Apr. 18, 2026) The New Orleans-born trumpeter-educator, who attended Berklee College of Music and New England Conservatory (NEC) and who earned a Master's in Ethnomusicology from Wesleyan University, died at age 80. His first four records were in the early '70s with composer-arranger and NEC professor George Russell (he would continue his association with Russell through the '90s). Davis formed his Ghetto/Mysticism, which recorded *Brighter Days* (1975-76), an album of uptempo funk and experimental soundscapes. He would go on to teach at Wellesley College, Southeast Massachusetts University, Bennington College and NEC. He additionally worked with Jazzmobile and was a radio program director at MIT. His credits include Ray Anderson, Muhal Richard Abrams, Oliver Lake, Jimmy McGriff, Earl McIntyre, Errol Parker, Bob Stewart, Mario Bauza, Steve Turre and Randy Weston, as well as Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, Sun Ra Arkestra, Gil Evans Orchestra, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra and others.

BILLY GAULT (Dec. 28, 1941 – Apr. 19, 2026) The pianist, who later changed his name to William Kalim Zarif, died at age 84. In 1959, after high school, he moved from Buffalo to Harlem, working as a performer and mentor who taught music to homeless individuals. In 1975, he released his only album as leader, *When Destiny Calls* (The Music of Billy Gault), released on SteepleChase, featuring Billy Skinner, Bill Saxton, Michael Carvin and Joe Lee Wilson. After moving to Connecticut, he founded The Artist's Collective in Hartford with Jackie McLean (with whom he recorded three SteepleChase albums) and was an instructor for the Hartford All City Jazz Ensemble at the University of Hartford. Gault's credits include

Art Blakey, Joe Lee Wilson, Roberto Magris and Donald Byrd.

KATE HAMMETT-VAUGHAN (May 1, 1957 – May 7, 2026) The Nova Scotia-born vocalist died at home at age 69. She began singing jazz while a student at Acadia University, moving to Vancouver after graduating. The singer opened the first Vancouver Jazz Festival and appeared every year until illness prevented it. She released four albums in the new millennium on Maximum Jazz and her own label, was a member of the NOW Orchestra (with featured artists Barry Guy and Marilyn Crispell) and had additional credits with René Lussier, Susan Frykberg, George Lewis and others.

DANIEL HUCK (Mar. 22, 1948 – Apr. 25, 2026) The French alto saxophonist, clarinetist and vocalist, noted for his scat singing, died at age 78. He had a long collaboration with pianist-organist Eddy Louiss and credits with Orpheon Celesta, Cat Anderson, Les Primitifs Du Futur (with Robert Crumb), Miss Lulu White's Red Hot Creole Jazzband and a co-leader date with Dave Burrell (*Esquisses for a Walk*, 1997).

KIYOSHI KITAGAWA (Dec. 5, 1958 – Apr. 28, 2026) The Osaka-born bassist died at age 67, active until his final months. Kitagawa immigrated to NYC in 1988, joining the Harper Brothers and subsequently collaborating with a "who's who" of jazz. He was a longtime member of Kenny Barron's trio and quintet, and as a leader released ten solo albums, including *Ancestry* (2003) – with Barron and Brian Blade. His other credits include Makoto Ozone, Satoshi Inoue, Akira Sakurai, Kenny Garrett, Jimmy Heath, Tete Montoliu, Miki Hayama, Ben Riley, Terell Stafford, Dayna Stephens, Andy Bey, Jon Faddis and others.

PAUL MCKEE (Mar. 10, 1958 – Apr. 28, 2026) The big band trombonist, composer and educator died at age 68 after a long battle with cancer. In 1991 he became an Associate Professor of Jazz Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder, teaching theory and composition. The Paul McKee Jazz Festival in Indianola, IA, was established in his honor to foster competitive jazz performance. He had a 1995 album on Corridor and credits with the Woody Herman Big Band, University of Texas Two O'Clock Lab Band, Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, Kansas City Jazz Orchestra, Colorado Jazz Repertory Orchestra, Frank Mantooth Jazz Orchestra, Ben Markley Big Band, Socrates Garcia Latin Jazz Orchestra and Kevin Mahogany Big Band, as well as with Clay Jenkins, Bob Mintzer, Brad Goode and Von Freeman.

LINC MILLIMAN (c. 1940 – Apr. 25, 2026) The bassist-tubaist died at an estimated age of 86. He began his career in the early '60s, joining the Maynard Ferguson Orchestra, with which he recorded his first four albums. In 1969, he worked as a duo with pianist Marian McPartland (*Interplay*, Halycon) and, in addition to jazz, was active in Broadway pits during the '90s. His credits include Warren Vaché, Bill Watrous, Ken Peplowski, Don Ewell, Phil Wilson, Butch Miles, George Masso, Derek Smith, Johnny Blowers, Randy Sandke and others.

DANNY MIXON (Aug. 19, 1949 – May 1, 2026) The Harlem-born, Brooklyn-raised pianist-organist, notable as the Music Director at the since-defunct Lenox Lounge in Harlem, as well as for his long association with vocalist Antoinette Montague, died at age 76. With albums on Cinderella and his own label, his credits include Pharoah Sanders, Joe Lee Wilson, The Piano Choir (with fellow pianists Harold Mabern, Stanley Cowell, Hugh Lawson, Nat Jones, Sonelius Smith and Webster Lewis), Betty Carter, Charles Mingus, Frank Foster, Dannie Richmond, Count Basie Orchestra, Bill Easley, Lionel Hampton, Joe Williams, Max Roach, Savion Glover, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Chaka Khan, Cassandra Wilson, Hank Crawford, Lou Rawls, Art Blakey and many more.

YUJI OHNO (May 30, 1941 – May 4, 2026) The Japanese pianist, perhaps best known for his soundtrack work, died at age 84. His first two albums as sideman were auspicious outings with Hideo Shiraki (Ohno's 1966 recording debut) and Terumasa Hino (*Alone, Alone and Alone*, 1967). In the early '70s, he transitioned from session work to full-time composition for TV and film (including the *Lupin III* franchise), integrating jazz with rock and funk. Beyond his extensive commercial success in animation, Ohno remained a dedicated jazz musician with his own or collaborative albums on Liberty, CBS/Sony, Victor, Columbia, King Canyon, RCA Victor, Invitation and Vap.

RYAN PORTER (Jul. 31, 1979 – May 16, 2026) The trombonist, who had struggled with health issues and homelessness, died at age 46 following complications from injuries sustained in a traffic accident. He was a member of the LA-based musical collective the West Coast Get Down (with frequent collaborator Kamasi Washington) and had albums on Alpha Pup, World Galaxy and Rings, in addition to credits with Miles Mosley, Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, Diana Krall, Cameron Graves, Quincy Jones, Henry Franklin, Gladys Knight, Queen Latifah and Kendrick Lamar.

JESPER THILO (Nov. 28, 1941 – Apr. 25, 2026) The Copenhagen-born reed player, who studied classical clarinet at the Royal Danish Academy of Music and later added alto and tenor saxophones (and occasional flute) to his arsenal, died at age 84. Winner of the Danish Jazz Musician of the Year award (1971) and Ben Webster Prize (1977), he was a member of the Danish Radio (DR) Big Band (1966-89) and Ernie Wilkins Almost Big Band and had his own or collaborative albums on Storyville, RCA Victor, Music Mecca, Sackville, Stunt and Nagel Heyer. His credits include Europeans Palle Mikkelborg and Hugo Rasmussen, as well as Americans and American ex-pats Clark Terry, Alvin Queen, Wild Bill Davison, Hank Jones, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Kenny Drew, Duke Jordan, Miles Davis and Tommy Flanagan. He frequently performed and recorded with fellow saxophonists, such as Ben Webster, Johnny Griffin, Oliver Nelson, Scott Hamilton and tenor saxophonist-clarinetist Ken Peplowski.

GEORG WADENIUS (May 4, 1945 – May 1, 2026) The Swedish multi-instrumentalist died at age 80. Throughout his career, Wadenius utilized a variety of instruments to achieve his signature sound, bridging jazz, rock and R&B. He played with Blood, Sweat & Tears (1972-75), had extensive NYC session work and was noted for a unique ability to "scat" his solos – vocalizing the melody lines in unison with his playing. He recorded for Luther Vandross, Donald Fagen and Steely Dan, then moved to Norway. Wadenius released new millennium jazz albums on Gazell, EMI, Parlophone and his own label and had 300+ credits, including with Åke Persson, Rune Gustafsson, Arild Andersen, Don Cherry, Joe Henderson, Jeremy Steig, Dexter Gordon, Paquito D'Rivera, Ronnie Cuber, George Benson, New York Voices, Howard Johnson's Gravity and others.

GEORGE YOUNG (Oct. 7, 1937 – Apr. 23, 2026) The Philadelphia-born woodwinds player, who established himself in the NYC jazz scene during the '60s, died at age 88. A prolific session musician, Young was also a member of the *Saturday Night Live* Band, led several quartets, was a founding member of the Manhattan Jazz Quintet (with Lew Soloff, David Matthews, Steve Gadd and Charnette Moffett, later Eddie Gomez) and released albums on Columbia, Chancellor, Electric Bird, Paddle Wheel, Bellaphon and Chiaroscuro. Among his many credits were sessions with Marvin Stamm, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Idris Muhammad, Eddie Palmieri, Quincy Jones, Herbie Mann, Jaco Pastorius, George Benson, Carla Bley and Jon Faddis.