

DAVID CLAYTON-THOMAS (Sep. 13, 1941 – Jun. 24, 2026) The British-Canadian singer died at age 84. Early on he performed in Toronto’s Yorkville Village coffeehouse scene, immersing himself in jazz and blues and visiting legends such as Lenny Breau and Oscar Peterson. He then formed The Bossmen, a rock band that integrated jazz musicians. From 1968-72 (and then again from 1984-2004), he was leader (and lead singer) for Blood, Sweat & Tears. His hit song for the band, “Spinning Wheel”, has been covered by a wide-range of artists including Mongo Santamaria, Nancy Wilson, Ted Heath, Chet Baker, Maynard Ferguson, Peggy Lee, Erroll Garner, Ran Blake, Jaki Byard, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Lionel Hampton, Manhattan Jazz Orchestra and many others.

JOHN DEFFERARY (Mar. 27, 1941 – Jul. 10, 2026) The London-born clarinetist-saxophonist died at age 85. He developed a passion for classic New Orleans style jazz, studying under Duke Ellington/Louis Armstrong clarinetist Barney Bigard. Defferary had tenures with the bands of Keith Smith, Trevor Richards, Papa Bue and Chris Barber. In later years he worked with Lars Edegran, Peter “Banjo” Meyer and Reimer von Essen. Defferary also had credits with Preston Jackson, Benny Waters, Albert Nicholas and Don Ewell and worked with Mike Casimir, Louis Nelson, Sammy Price, Alton Purnell, Louis Barbarin, Superjazz and others.

EARL DUMLER (Sep. 20, 1942 – Jul. 6, 2026) The Kansas-born, LA-based oboist and woodwinds player, who worked in genres ranging from orchestral performance, chamber music, opera, and commercial recording for film, TV and popular music, died at age 83. He recorded with Stan Kenton (his 1968 recording debut), Frank Zappa, Dom Minasi, Norman Connors, Gene Harris, Quincy Jones, Tony Williams, John Patitucci and Brad Mehldau, as well as a wide range of vocalists: Barbra Streisand, Tony Bennett, Nina Simone, Leonard Cohen, Dolly Parton, Diane Schuur, Carmen Lundy and Pharrell Williams.

PETE ECKFORD (May 1963 – Jun. 29, 2026) The British percussionist died at age 63. In 1991, he co-founded jazz group Soul Station with pianist Conal Fowkes, performing the catalog of ‘60s soul-jazz music originally released on labels such as Blue Note and featuring arrangements of tracks by artists such as Donald Byrd, Horace Silver, Cannonball Adderley and Joe Zawinul. Eckford joined the acid jazz and indie pop band Freak Power in 1994, which disbanded in the late ‘90s. He had credits with The Beaujolais Band, System X, Vibraphonic, Dave O’Higgins and others.

RODNEY FRANKLIN (Sep. 16, 1958 – Jul. 8, 2026) The pianist-composer died at age 67. At age 14 he was leading funk-jazz band One Piece, and by age 20 he signed with Columbia to release his debut jazz fusion album, *In the Center*. His *You’ll Never Know* (1980) featured the hit single “The Groove”. Throughout the ‘80s, Franklin continued to release a series of well-received albums for Columbia before transitioning to Novus, then Northsound. His credits include Bill Summers (whose *Cayenne* on Prestige was Franklin’s 1977 recording debut), Phil Upchurch, Gerald Albright, Doc Powell, Paul Jackson and others.

RODNEY HOLMES (Aug. 24, 1966 – Jul. 11, 2026) The Bronx-born drummer, composer, producer and clinician died at age 59. Holmes moved easily across genres, including jazz, fusion, rock and funk. Notable fusion achievements included work with The Brecker Brothers, performing on their GRAMMY-winning *Out of the Loop* (GRP, 1994) and performing with Wayne Shorter on the DVD release *Live at Montreux* 1996. His drumming was notable for complex, interlocking polyrhythms with a deep, pocket-centric groove. Holmes’ sole leader date was the self-released *Twelve Months of October* (2005). His credits include Michael Gregory Jackson, Special EFX, Jean-Paul Bourelly, Leni Stern, Bob Belden, Michał

Urbaniak, Don Byron, Philip Catherine, George Colligan, Carlos Santana and Randy Brecker.

JIM HYNES (Sep. 15, 1954 – Jun. 18, 2026) The trumpeter-conductor died unexpectedly at home in Tennessee at age 71. He performed with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra before relocating to NYC where he began subbing in Broadway pit bands. He also became a session musician, playing on movie soundtracks, radio jingles and TV themes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Hynes and his wife relocated to Tennessee where he joined the Knoxville Jazz Orchestra. He had credits with Terence Blanchard, New York Voices, Rachel Z, Bob James, Gato Barbieri, Richard Bona, Dennis Chambers, Jane Monheit, Nancy Wilson, The Manhattan Transfer and others.

PLAS JOHNSON (Jul. 21, 1931 – Jul. 15, 2026) The Louisiana-born, self-taught saxophonist, with feet in soul-jazz and hard bop, died at age 94 in Granada Hills, CA. He’s widely known as the tenor soloist on Henry Mancini’s “The Pink Panther Theme”. With a move to LA in 1954, he established himself as a prolific session musician, becoming a member of Southern California’s renowned The Wrecking Crew, which backed acts such as The Beach Boys, Frank Sinatra, Nancy Sinatra, Nat “King” Cole, Sam Cooke and many others. In 1970, Johnson joined the studio band for *The Merv Griffin Show*, and recorded several albums alongside fellow saxophonist Red Holloway. Johnson recorded for Tampa (his self-titled 1956 leader debut), Capitol, Concord, Milestone and Mojo, and had credits with Ray Anthony, Charlie Barnet, Lionel Hampton, Earl Hines, Benny Carter, Bobby Troup, Neal Hefti, Ella Fitzgerald, Quincy Jones, Les McCann, Jimmy Smith, Johnny Hartman, Oliver Nelson, Della Reese, Blue Mitchell, Bobby Hutcherson, Nancy Wilson, Hubert Laws, Milt Jackson and possibly thousands more, including non-jazz acts such as Ike & Tina Turner, Dick Dale, Duane Eddy, Harry Belafonte, Joni Mitchell and B.B. King.

NAOHIRO KAWASHITA (Apr. 20, 1954 – Jun. 25, 2026) The Tokyo-born, free jazz saxophonist died at age 72. Kawashita worked extensively with Fedayien, for which he was a founding member and recorded with throughout the ‘90s, as well as with bassist Daisuke Fuwa, leader of the jazz orchestra Shibusashirazu. He had his own or collaborative albums on Chitei (including his 1997 leader debut *I Guess Everything Reminds You of Something*), Off Note, Aurasia, Taruho Farm and Maneki Neko Trading Company, plus credits with New Jazz Syndicate (his 1980 recording debut), Shin Yamamoto/Maneki Neko, Itaru Oki and others.

ROBERT KIMBALL (Aug. 23, 1939 – Jul. 1, 2026) The NYC-born music historian, editor and critic, who dedicated his life to preserving the legacy of American popular song, died at age 86. Kimball served as *New York Post*’s music critic and collaborated with composer William Bolcom on the landmark *Reminiscing with Sissle and Blake*. In the *Complete Lyrics* series (published by Knopf), he compiled lyrics of those by Cole Porter, Lorenz Hart, Ira Gershwin and Frank Loesser. He also wrote liner notes for albums by Bobby Short, Eubie Blake, Dick Hyman, Ella Fitzgerald and Bunky Green, on such labels as Atlantic, New World, Columbia, Vanguard, Verve, RCA, Nonesuch, Musicmasters and Sony Masterworks.

GÜNTER LENZ (Jul. 25, 1938 – Jun. 26, 2026) Born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, the bassist, who began as a self-taught guitarist playing jazz in US Army clubs during the mid ‘50s, died at age 87. In 1961, trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff recruited Lenz to join his quintet; Lenz would contribute to such landmark albums as *Tension* (1963) and *Now Jazz Ramwong* (1964)—his studio recording debuts. In the late ‘70s, he founded jazz-fusion band Springtime, and in this century became a professor at the State University of Music and Performing Arts Stuttgart. His credits include Tomasz Stanko, Emil Mangelsdorff, Don Menza, Volker Kriegel, Barney Wilen,

George Gruntz, Jimmy Owens, Rolf and Joachim Kühn, Sal Nistico, Manfred Schoof, Alexander von Schlippenbach, Wolfgang Dauner and Lajos Dudas, among others.

JEFF SCHLANGER (Nov. 2, 1937 – Jun. 23, 2026) The NYC-born, New Rochelle, NY-based visual artist (painter, sculptor, ceramicist) and jazz and peace activist, died at age 89. In the mid ‘50s, Schlanger began to sketch jazz musicians as they performed, leading to a professional signature of the musicWitness® Project. He was frequently seen at music events of every sort, nationally and internationally, including the Guelph Jazz Festival and NYC’s Vision Festival, the latter which gave him a Lifetime Recognition Award (2014). He also created the logo for Vision’s presenting umbrella organization, Arts For Art. Schlanger’s work has been frequently used on album covers by artists including the World Saxophone Quartet, Billy Bang, Roscoe Mitchell, Charles Gayle, William Parker, Julius Hemphill, Joseph Daley and David S. Ware, for labels including Black Saint, Soul Note, Music & Arts, Knitting Factory Works, Homestead, Thirsty Ear, Mutable Music, Barnyard, New Artists, Jazzwerkstatt, NoBusiness, AUM Fidelity, Intakt, Not Two, New World and others.

TENNYSON STEPHENS (Dec. 11, 1944 – Jun. 29, 2026) The Texas-born soul-jazz pianist and songwriter died at age 81 (note: an early clerical error gave his birth year as 1939 and his name variously as Tennison). Moving to Chicago, Stephens released a number of singles on arranger James Mack’s Aries label. His debut album was vocalist Rheta Hughes’ *Introducing An Electrifying New Star (with Tennyson Stephens)* (Columbia, 1965). Stephens recorded in the ‘70s with Phil Upchurch (*Lovin’ Feeling*, 1973) and the co-led *Upchurch/Tennyson* (Kudu, 1975), as well as with James Moody, Sonny Stitt, Oscar Brown Jr., Natalie Cole and Bo Diddley, before eventually moving to Hawaii following chronic health issues. His later career credits include Minnie Riperton, Harvey Mason, Bernie Ostrowski and others.

RENÉ URTREGER (Jul. 6, 1934 – Jul. 15, 2026) The Paris-born bebop pianist-composer died at age 92. Winning an amateur piano contest in 1953 prompted him to pursue music professionally, and he would become the preferred accompanist for American expats such as saxophonists Don Byas and Nathan Davis, guitarist Jimmy Gourley and drummers Kenny Clarke and Philly “Joe” Jones, as well as touring musicians such as Buck Clayton and Lester Young. Most notably, he collaborated with Miles Davis in 1957, providing the improvised piano accompaniment on the soundtrack of Louis Malle’s *Ascenseur pour l’échafaud (Elevator to the Gallows)*. Throughout his career, he recorded highly-regarded trio albums and performed with Stan Getz, Chet Baker, Dexter Gordon, Lionel Hampton and Sonny Rollins. He had his own or collaborative albums on Barclay (*Joue Bud Powell* was his 1955 leader debut), Versailles, Carlyne Music, Sketch, Universal and other labels. Additional credits include countrymen Hubert Fol, Bobby Jaspar, René Thomas, Stéphane Grappelli, Jean-Luc Ponty, Didier Lockwood and others.

HAROLD WHEELER (Jul. 14, 1943 – Jun. 24, 2026) The keyboardist, composer, arranger and orchestrator, whose jazz-informed career spanned Broadway, TV, film and popular music, died at age 82. Born in St. Louis, MO, Wheeler broke barriers in the ‘60s by becoming the first Black music director of a major white pop act while working with Burt Bacharach. His Broadway work was noted for jazz elements in vocals and in utilizing big band horn sections and syncopated rhythms instrumentally. As the music director for *Dancing with the Stars*, he led a 17-piece live band that regularly performed jazz, swing, Latin jazz and big band arrangements. Wheeler’s credits include Nina Simone, Lena Horne, Billy Taylor, Grady Tate, Bernard “Pretty” Purdie, Michel Legrand, Buddy Rich, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Tommy Dorsey Band and Ann Hampton Callaway.