

IRENE AEBI (Jul. 27, 1939 - Aug. 11, 2026) The Zurich-born avant garde, free jazz cellist, violinist and vocalist died at age 87. Married to soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, her primary collaborator, she contributed to dozens of notable recordings by Lacy, from the mid '60s until his death in 2004. The two lived and worked in Rome, before settling in Paris for decades, then moving to Boston (where Lacy was on faculty at New England Conservatory) two years prior to his passing. Her few credits outside of her work with Lacy include Alan Silva, Takashi Kako, Christoph Gallio, Art Song Trio and Zlatko Kaučič.

GENE BERTONCINI (Apr. 6, 1937 - Aug. 30, 2026). The prolific studio musician passed away at age 89 at the Lillian Booth Actors Home in Englewood, NJ. Raised in a musical household, Bertoncini began playing the guitar at age seven. He attended the University of Notre Dame, where he played clarinet in the marching band, and after service in the Marines immersed himself in the Chicago jazz scene, principally working with vocalist Carmen McRae, before returning to his native NYC. Bertoncini was a master of the nylon-string guitar and appeared on hundreds of albums, including those by Clark Terry, whose *Tread Ye Lightly* was the guitarist's 1963 recording debut. His other credits include Benny Goodman, Duke Pearson, Paul Desmond, Hubert Laws, Wayne Shorter and vocalists Nancy Wilson, Tony Bennett, Sylvia Syms, Morgana King, Mark Murphy and Melissa Stylianou, plus collaborations with fellow guitarists such as Jack Wilkins, John Pisano, Frank Vignola, Roni Ben-Hur and bassist Michael Moore.

HARRY BROWN (Aug. 21, 1974 - Sep. 3, 2026) The British trombonist and educator, whose work encompassed jazz, classical music, West End theatre and club appearances, died at age 52. As a first-call musician he could adapt effortlessly to most musical settings and appeared on more than a hundred recordings. He was a member of The Chineke! Orchestra, The Vince Dunn Orchestra and The Brit Funk Association, and was professor of trombone at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Brown's credits include Denys Baptiste (Brown's 2001 recording debut), Jazz Jamaica, Soweto Kinch, Jazz Warriors (with Shabaka Hutchings), Courtney Pine, Kenny Wellington, Barry Adamson, The Spike Orchestra, Julian Siegel, Tindersticks, Ezra Collective and others.

ELLIOTT CALLIER (Jan. 12, 1943 - Aug. 21, 2026) The saxophonist, nicknamed "Stackman," who was rooted in the music of New Orleans, died at age 83. He performed and recorded alongside Fats Domino, Ray Charles, Dr. John and Wardell Quezergue, among others, and was a member of Dejan's Olympia Brass Band, Magnificent Seventh's Brass Band, Tremé Brass Band, Tuba Fats' Chosen Few Brass Band, Preservation Hall Jazz Band and Eddie Boh Paris & The Funky 7 Brass Band.

LAURENCE COOK (Jun. 8, 1939 - Sep. 1, 2026) The drummer, who died at age 87, first studied painting at Boston's Museum School of Fine Arts and later learned to play piano, vibraphone and drums. A major figure in the free jazz movement of the '60s, he appeared on dozens of recordings, including with Paul Bley, Alan Silva, Bobby Naughton, Jemeel Moondoc, Jacques Coursil, Perry Robinson, Steve Tintweiss, Bill Dixon and Annette Peacock. He also worked with Sam Rivers and The Brecker Brothers, and led his own experimental ensemble, the Disaster Unit.

MAT FIELDS (Jan. 9, 1975 - Aug. 8, 2026) The New Zealand-born cross-genre bassist died unexpectedly at age 51 from complications following a stroke. Upon graduating from The Juilliard School, Fields remained in NYC before returning to New Zealand, forming The Committee, an Auckland-based progressive jazz collective. Fields returned to NYC where he played both electric and acoustic bass, from chamber groups such as the Absolute Ensemble to Broadway pits, but frequently

returned to New Zealand to perform local club dates and make festival appearances. Fields' credits include Ornette Coleman, Joe Zawinul, Kitty Brazelton, Matt Herskowitz and Gene Pritsker.

FRANCO FONTANA (Dec. 9, 1933 - Aug. 29, 2026) The Italian photographer, who died at age 92, had his images used on many mid '70s ECM albums, including by Art Lande (*Rubisa Patrol*), Terje Rypdal (*After the Rain*), Keith Jarrett (*Staircase*) and Jan Garbarek (*Dis*), as well as for other labels such as JAPO, Electric Bird, Arcana and MMC.

DAVE KARR (Sep. 4, 1930 - Jul. 19, 2026) The Canada-born saxophonist-flutist, who was raised in London and New York, died at age 95. Karr served in the US Army Band during the Korean War and settled in Minnesota in 1954 after studying at Manhattan School of Music. Over a seven-decade career, Karr was also a prolific commercial composer, winning a Clio Award in 1986 for his radio jingles. He had credits with Herb Pilhofer, Bob Davis (whose 1958 *Jazz in Orbit* also includes Johnny Frigo), JazzMN Big Band (with Buddy DeFranco and Dave Weckl), Natural Life, Billy Peterson, Steve Wright, Sanford Moore, Debbie Duncan, Connie Evingson and others.

TOMÁS IMPROTA (Sep. 24, 1948 - Aug. 23, 2026) The Brazilian pianist died following complications from throat cancer at age 77. Born in Rio de Janeiro into a musical family, Improta won the Musical Initiation Contest at the Brazilian Conservatory of Music at just five years old, and in his childhood years was already composing and improvising. In the late '70s he joined A Outra Banda da Terra, formed by Caetano Veloso, recording landmark albums such as *Muito (Dentro da estrela azulada)* (1978), *Cinema transcendental* (1979) and *Outras palavras* (1981). Improta also had credits with Celso Mendes, Perinho Santana, Sérgio Boré, José Carlos Barroso, Ronaldo Diamante, Sincronia Carioca, Sérgio Benevenuto, Jorge Bonfá, Gal Costa, Djavan, Maria Bethânia, Gilberto Gil and others.

JAY MAISEL (Jan. 18, 1931 - Aug. 20, 2026) The NYC-born photographer died at age 95. Among his most widely-recognized works is his portrait of Miles Davis, which served as the album cover for Davis' *Kind of Blue* (Columbia, 1959). Maisel's images were also used on albums by Mabel Mercer, Lennie Tristano, Chris Connor, Modern Jazz Quartet, Duke Ellington, Erroll Garner, Dave Brubeck, Sarah Vaughan, Milt Jackson, Ruby Braff, Urbie Green, Dwiki Mitchell/Willie Ruff, Count Basie, Sharkey Bonano and Johnny Hodges.

DAVE MORGAN (Sep. 10, 1957 - Aug. 15, 2026) The Ohio-based bassist, composer and educator died at age 68. He earned his Bachelor of Music in composition (1990), Master of Music in music theory (1993) and Doctor of Musical Arts in music composition (1996) and had a 25-year tenure as a professor of composition and bass at Youngstown State University. Morgan worked across genres, performing jazz, pop and classical music, notably with The Cleveland Orchestra and the Baroque ensemble Apollo's Fire. He also played with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra and the Jazz Unit. Morgan had a 2010 leader date alongside credits with Alex Coke, JAMAD, Cliff Habian, Paul Ferguson and others.

DIETRICH RAUSCHTENBERGER (Sep. 23, 1939 - Aug. 9, 2026) The German drummer, saxophonist, author and actor died at age 86. He began as a Dixieland and swing player, but in 1960 converted to free jazz after meeting legendary saxophonist Peter Brötzmann, with whom he played and recorded in 1964. Rauschtenberger also performed in theatrical productions and wrote autobiographical prose, essays, short stories and novels.

PAT SENATORE (Aug. 19, 1935 - Sep. 8, 2026) The Newark, NJ-born bassist, who located to LA in 1960, died at age 91. He briefly attended The Juilliard School

and upon arriving in CA began working at Wallich's Music City. Senatore toured with the Stan Kenton Orchestra—recording notable albums such as *Adventures in Jazz* (Capitol, 1961)—and played with Les Brown's band before becoming a member of Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass (1965-69); he would later become Musical Director for Alpert's venue Vibrato Grill Jazz. Senatore had new-millennium albums on Fresh Sound and Explosive, and worked with Michael Cain, Mose Allison and others.

NICOLAS SIMION (Jun 15, 1959 - Aug. 29, 2026) The Romanian saxophonist, clarinetist and composer, who received his early formal training at the Music High School in Braşov before pursuing classical music studies at the Music Academy in Bucharest, died unexpectedly at age 67, just a day after a final live performance. He bridged contemporary European jazz with the folkloric musical and traditional rhythms of Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Transylvania, and in the '80s, established his jazz ensemble, Opus 4, alongside Mircea Tiberian and Dan Mândrilă. In 1988, he left communist Romania, relocating to Vienna, seizing opportunities to collaborate with Western jazz figures such as Art Farmer, Leo Wright, Idris Muhammad, Jim Pepper, Harry Sokal and Christian Muthspiel. His leader debut, *Black Sea* (Tutu, 1992), was a quartet with American sidemen—Graham Haynes (cornet), Lonnie Plaxico (bass) and Ronnie Burrage (drums). Simion also became a member of and recorded with pianist Mal Waldron's quartet, performed alongside legendary Polish trumpeter Tomasz Stańko and worked extensively with alto saxophonist Lee Konitz. Moving to Cologne in 1997, he began merging jazz improvisation with chamber music and folk idioms. In 2004, he established and recorded for his own independent label, 7Dreams Records. Simion also had his own or collaborative albums on labels such as Tutu, GM, Intuition, Portik Jazz, ORF and Institut Français de Bucarest alongside credits with Johnny Răducanu (his *Jazz Made in Romania* was Simion's 1986 recording debut), Gerhard Reiter, Gunther Schuller, Piotr Wojtasik, WDR Big Band, Bojan Assenov, Krzysztof Popek, Florian Weber and others.

CASSANDRA WILSON (Dec. 4, 1955 - Sep. 2, 2026) Born Cassandra Fowlkes and raised in Jackson, MS, the two-time GRAMMY-winning singer died there at age 70. An immediately recognizable vocalist since the mid '80s, her father was a jazz bassist and with an encouraging mother, she began formal piano lessons at age six. She later played clarinet in school bands before taking up the guitar as a teenager. Wilson graduated from Jackson State University with a degree in mass communications, but during her college years performed in local coffeehouses, R&B cover bands and bebop ensembles. Seeking further immersion in jazz, in 1981 she relocated to New Orleans to work with Ellis Marsalis Jr. and Earl Turbinton, before making a move to NYC in 1982 where she studied ear training and vocal phrasing, immersing herself in the avant garde and bebop scenes. Meeting alto saxophonist Steve Coleman led to Wilson becoming a founding member of the M-Base Collective, which reimagined the complex rhythms of funk, soul and avant garde jazz. Honing wordless improvisation, she began a solo career, releasing *Point of View* (JMT, 1986), followed by five more for the Germany-based label. A turning point came when in 1993 she signed with Blue Note, for which she released nine albums, starting with her breakthrough album *Blue Light 'Til Dawn* (1993), followed by what became another quintessential Wilson recording, *New Moon Daughter*. Wilson was named a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Jazz Master in 2022. She also had albums on Black Saint (recording with Henry Threadgill's New Air in 1986), Bamboo, eOne and Sony alongside credits with Greg Osby, Courtney Pine, Robin Eubanks, Javon Jackson, Dave Holland, Steve Turre, David Murray, Pat Martino, Kurt Elling, Wynton Marsalis, Regina Carter, David Sanborn, Terence Blanchard, Olu Dara, Lonnie Plaxico, Terri Lyne Carrington, Nicholas Payton and others.

**see In Memoriam Special Feature (pg. 14-15)*