



photo credit: Billy Vera

## *Charlie (Bird) Parker*

(August 29, 1920 – March 12, 1955)

Charlie Parker should have also been known as The Father of the Solo Runs. He could effortlessly play a series of notes in such a fast pace, that sounded like someone was running one finger up and down the keys of a piano. It was a new sound and so radical that many simulate it to this very day no matter what instrument they are playing. The style was so light and flexible, Charlie could play it in the most sophisticated swing pieces and switch on a dime to a slow ballad using the same technique.



### **Charlie Parker – Bird And Diz, The Genius Of Charlie Parker #4**

Genre: **Jazz**

Style: **Bop**

Year: **1957**

Notes: Originally booked as performed by the "Charlie Parker Quintet," these tracks were recorded on June 6, 1950 in an unknown recording studio, New York City. Personnel is Parker (as), Dizzy Gillespie (tp), Thelonious Monk (p), Curley Russell (b) and Buddy Rich (d).

During those days other musicians struggled to match Parker's style. It was so hot that if you could not play like Charlie Parker, you did not have much to contribute. He was always in demand as his light playing runs (sounding sometimes like a bird tweeting) would drop any jaw who heard him.



Unfortunately, with such fame comes issues. The only thing holding Charlie Parker back from even greater greatness was himself. His addiction to morphine (and later heroine) after an auto accident was the beginning of the end. As much as he played those great sounds and runs, he would let people down. Owing money for drugs and such, many times he played just to get his next fix. When he was straight, he was a sight and sound to behold.



### Charlie Parker – Bird On 52nd St.

Genre: [Jazz](#)  
Style: [Bop](#)  
Year: [1955](#)  
Notes: The Charlie Parker Quintet recorded in performance at the Onyx, New York City, July 1948.

My early records were of him and even though swing was an older tradition of Jazz, Charlie could make it sound modern. My jaw dropped too as I listen to him run those notes in such unison with the background cords of the music. I was no where as good as he was on the sax. I had good tone, but those runs switch from key to key would always get me. Later when I thought I mastered the style, other who were in the game longer than I, had it down to a science.

Charlie performed on many tours with some of the greats ([Dizzy Gillespie](#), [Miles Davis](#), [Buster Smith](#), [Max Roach](#), [Thelonious Monk](#) and [Bud Powell](#)) just to name a few. He was not gifted with this style. Charlie spent many hours (as much as fifteen) per day working on double and triple time notes that he would merge with just about anything that was played in any key.



### Charlie Parker – Charlie Parker No. 2

Label: [Dial Records \(3\) – 202](#)  
Format: [Vinyl, LP, 10", Album](#)  
Country: [US](#)  
Released: [1949](#)  
Genre: [Jazz](#)  
Style: [Bop](#)

He hit the mother load when He discovered that the twelve tones of the [chromatic scale](#) can lead melodically to any key, breaking some of the confines of simpler jazz soloing.

But those issues kept getting in the way. When the doctor was called to his home after he collapsed. The doctor though Charlie Parker was at least 68 years old, he was only 36. Despite the drug demons he faced, Charlie's playing style has become legend and has stood the test of time as more and more musicians enhance his style. Miles Davis once said, "You can tell the history of jazz in four words: Louis Armstrong. Charlie Parker."

*Bill Sommerville*