



Miles Davis

(May 26, 1926 – September 28, 1991)

Amongst the giants, there are few whom you can say were the Man and that's it. Miles Davis was one of them.

Even though Miles had been playing years before I was even born, I quickly caught up when many of my friends were carrying his albums. Of the many collections, *So What* (<http://www.allmusic.com/video/vevo/USSM20804535/So%20What>) was there and last but not least *Bitches Brew*. In fact your collection of Miles was not complete if you did not have *Bitches Brew*. Few know this but there was a time when Miles was the highest paid musician period, no matter the color. In the early and mid fifties, Miles was getting paid 20 grand a pop and he could only blow 10 notes if he wanted to.



Miles was able to live a long life and boy was it a life. From musician to pimp and back again, there is no doubt, Miles had it all. Miles mere present commanded such respect that many musicians coming up the ranks behind him was pure de ass nervous around him. Marcus Miller tells this story of how he had wrote a piece for Miles. The rehearsal was not going so well because Marcus was nervous and was afraid to tell the great Miles Davis of what to do. Sensing this Miles stop the rehearsal and told Marcus to get past this and tell everyone what needs to be done, even him sense Marcus had wrote it. It was only after that Marcus got comfortable and conducted the

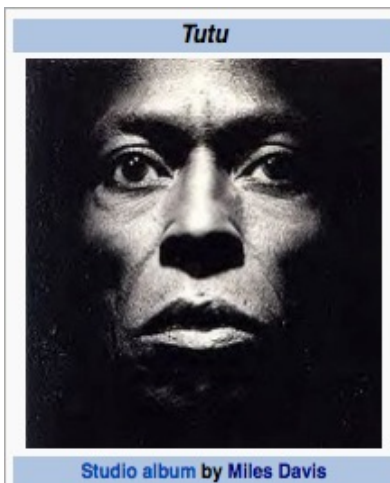
piece accordingly.

Based upon my research, I believe Miles was in awe of the attention he was getting. He did not see himself as anyone special. He considered himself a man like anyone else so when the attention came his way, he did not refuse it, taking it for all it was worth. If anyone understood the boundaries



of life and to live it for all its worth, it was Miles. In those early days, many did not understand that on that Jazz ride, there were other elements that became a part of Jazz as well. Alcohol became a part of Jazz, tobacco became a part of Jazz, drugs became a part of Jazz, sin became a part of Jazz and integrity as well.

How many times you have seen pictures or scenes in movies or on television of smoked filled clubs while a performer were on the stage? The scene was not real without it.



There was no way Miles and the others were not going to be affected by this phenomenon. They had to be affected. Why you ask? Because no matter what baggage of good and evil came along for the ride, one thing Jazz was and those of that time to this day know. Jazz is truth.

Their playing was the search of Jazz in that truth. Like truth itself, since Jazz is ever evolving, so did the continuation of the search. Did many put themselves in a different state in that search, of course. During my playing days, I knew a baritone saxophone player who could not play squat sober, but high, he was one of the best

players you ever heard. It was when I saw this, I decided that I would just become a fan of Jazz I quit the entertainment scene and for me, I can say it was one of the best decision I even made.

I did not need to get high or drunk to enjoy Jazz. The mere playing the music was enough for me. I did not learn until much later after my decision that there were others out there like me. I guess that is what makes Jazz so special. There are so many different methods and ways.





Miles was one of the first Jazz artist to explore other aspects of Jazz. He said because the so called traditional way was to hard and I guess if he had to get high to achieve that level, I understand. Yet many feel that Miles kept going on the high scene to levels unimaginable during those time. They specially felt this way when he came out with Bitches Brew. Bitches Brew is not for the faint of heart when it come to hearing it. Other than the name of the album, you do not hear cuts from it being played to this very day.

I think Miles last comeback was his best ever. With the struggles of the past and present he put out some good stuff (TuTu, Amanda <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-iN4CcdsZQ> etc) and like Jazz itself, he evolved. Many say the only reason Jazz changed was because of the times and those musicians changed as well due to income needs. That may be true, but there were many whom stuck with their own style and played to the audience that supported them no matter how small they were as well.



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvtjA7_EqY

With all the challenging elements of history, Miles Davis was one of the most potent forces that ever took the stage representing Jazz. As a descendant from the Jazz greats himself, he knew exactly who they were. As he said himself, “You can sum up Jazz in four words, Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker.”

Bill Sommerville