

The Dave Brubeck Quartet – Take Five

Written by bluesever

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Dave Brubeck has long served as proof that creative jazz and popular success can go together. Although critics who had championed him when he was unknown seemed to scorn him when the Dave Brubeck Quartet became a surprise success, in reality Brubeck never watered down or altered his music in order to gain a wide audience.

Take Five

Dave Brubeck (born December 6, 1920) had classical training from his mother, but fooled her for a long period by memorizing his lessons and not learning to read music. He studied music at the College of the Pacific during 1938-1942. Brubeck led a service band in General Patton's Army during World War II and then, in 1946, he started studying at Mills College with the classical composer Darius Milhaud, who encouraged his students to play jazz.



Dave Brubeck

During 1946-1949, Brubeck led a group mostly consisting of fellow classmates, and they

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recorded as the Dave Brubeck Octet; their music (released on Fantasy in 1951) still sounds advanced today, with complex time signatures and some poly-tonality.



Darius Milhaud

Joe Goldberg declared in *Jazz Review*: *"that jazz is not [Brubeck's] natural form of expression, but he is determined to play jazz, as if a man who knew five hundred words of French were to attempt a novel in that language."*



Dave Brubeck

In 1951, Brubeck was persuaded by altoist Paul Desmond to make the group a quartet. Within two years, the band had become surprisingly popular. Desmond's cool-toned alto and quick wit

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fit in well with Brubeck's often heavy chording and experimental playing; both Brubeck and Desmond had original sounds and styles that owed little to their predecessors.

Paul Desmond (born Paul Emil Breitenfeld; November 25, 1924 – May 30, 1977) played clarinet at the age of twelve at San Francisco Polytechnic High. It was not until he became a freshman at San Francisco State College that he picked up the alto saxophone.



Paul Desmond

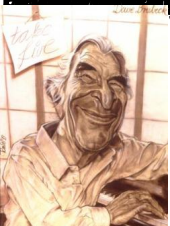
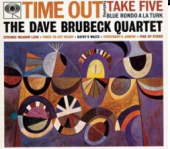
Desmond started working in Palo Alto, California at the Bandbox. He also worked some with Brubeck at the Geary Cellar in San Francisco. Desmond soon hired Brubeck, but cut his pay in half and then replaced him altogether after taking him along to Graeagle at The Feather River Inn for gigs; this was done so Desmond could gamble in nearby Reno. In 1950 Desmond left for New York City playing alto and clarinet for Jack Fina, but returned to California after hearing Brubeck's trio on the radio.

The story of their encounter is somewhat humorous. Brubeck — married with three children and holding a grudge from his earlier experience with Desmond — instructed his wife **lola** not to let him set foot in his house. But Desmond came to his home in San Francisco one day while Dave was out back hanging diapers on a laundry line, and lola let him in and took him to Brubeck. Apparently all the begging in the world would not convince Brubeck to hire him, at least not until Desmond offered to babysit Brubeck's children.

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