



The Jazz Loft
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BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT THE JAZZ LOFT
The Jazz Loft Brings Charlie ‘Bird’ Parker
Memorabilia Back Home from Across the Pond
New acquisitions are from a sale at Christie’s of Rolling Stones
Drummer Charlie Watts’ collection

Stony Brook, NY—Black History Month will be extraordinarily special this year at The Jazz Loft, as a new Charlie Parker exhibit is unveiled and Parker is celebrated in several ways, through music, film and memorabilia.

The Jazz Loft, 275 Christian Avenue in Stony Brook, has recently acquired a collection of more than 50 memorabilia items from jazz saxophonist legend Charlie ‘Bird’ Parker, that includes master acetates from some of his most important recording sessions; a personalized instrument case; his union card; numerous notes, letters and correspondence; and his Birdland contracts. An exhibit highlighting Parker and the newly acquired memorabilia, will open in February, along with numerous events and concerts centered on Parker’s music. The concert series will culminate in several performances of “Charlie Parker with Strings,” one of his most well-known recordings. (For full schedule see below)

Some of the correspondence documents his challenge with the union as he often had his union card revoked for drug offenses. The letters, from him, his agents, promoters, and friends, show Parker’s struggle to stay clean and work. Parker struggled with a heroin addiction and died at the age of 34.

The items were purchased at a Christie's of London auction which showcased a vast collection of music memorabilia belonging to the late Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts. Watts, who had been a beloved member of the Stones since 1963, passed away in August 2021.

Watts was a huge jazz fan, with a special love of Charlie Parker.

"I heard Charlie Parker and that was it. It was all over," Watts had said.

According to David Green, a childhood friend, through the years, Charlie's "collection of jazz memorabilia, which he started in his teens, and built up during his years with the Stones is truly astonishing; it reflects his enduring love of the music and the musicians who made it."

Tom Manuel, founder and president of The Jazz Loft, said he was determined to bring the collection to The Jazz Loft because Parker had deep roots in New York. Birdland, the famous jazz club located on 52nd Street in New York City, was named for Parker, who had a residency there for four years.

"Charlie Parker holds a place on that shelf that few get to join; Jazz musicians like Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday and Ella are all up there. Parker is there because he, along with his bebop colleagues gave us an entirely new way of speaking the language of Jazz," Manuel said. "Parker's short-lived life meant that he left us little in terms of personal items related to his career. The sale of the Charlie Watts collection which took him decades to assemble literally was a once in a lifetime opportunity and I just knew that The Jazz Loft needed to mobilize all our resources and support to bring Bird home. I'm still in awe that we are now the only Jazz museum in the world with such an extensive collection of items relating to the life and career of one of the most important figures in Jazz- Charlie Parker. It's beyond description."

Through a fundraising campaign called Operation Bring Bird Home, Manuel raised over \$150,000 from over 30 donors to purchase the Parker collection. Lead donors were Dawn and Dan Oliveri and Cynthia and David Lippe, with additional support from the Jazz Loft's Board of Directors.

"The acquisition of this Charlie Parker collection will be a game changer for The Jazz Loft," said Ms. Lippe. "We have amazing collections of artists who are significant to the history of jazz and well-known among jazz aficionados, but we haven't had such a household name in jazz until now. Everyone knows 'Bird,' and we now have one of the largest collections of Charlie Parker memorabilia anywhere!"

The Charlie Parker collection will be exhibited at The Jazz Loft in February 2024. The kickoff will include a reception for donors and special programming that will include two performances of "Charlie Parker with Strings," on April 4 & 6, 2024 and a special performance at The Staller Center on April 5. In addition, Perhaps the Charlie Parker exhibit opening events in February will include a screening of Clint Eastwood's award-winning film "Bird".

Marc Kass, Executive Chair and CEO of the National Jazz Archive, UK, said:

“Bringing back the Charlie Watts Jazz Collection from the London auction was a wonderful endeavor. This collection holds immense value, not only for jazz enthusiasts but for music lovers worldwide. Charlie Watts, renowned for his incredible drumming skills with The Rolling Stones, had an insatiable passion for jazz, and his collection reflects his discerning taste. The opportunity to bring these treasures back would not only preserve a significant piece of musical history but also allow future generations to delve into the mesmerizing world of jazz. With careful planning, a dedicated team, and the support of passionate individuals, this endeavor has the potential to unite music lovers, celebrate the legacy of Charlie Watts, and keep the magic of jazz alive for Glenn Mitchell, senior specialist at antiquarian bookseller Peter Harrington of London, said:

“I count myself as extraordinarily fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Charlie Watts in building his jazz collection. He was a passionate and informed collector in a range of areas, but deep down it was jazz that was closest to his heart, and in his heart, he held Bird dearest of all: ‘I heard Charlie Parker, and that was it. It was all over.

“Charlie didn’t buy a single thing that didn’t mean something to him, and his jazz collection was carefully composed of material that takes you there, puts you in the room, brings alive not just the sounds but the whole scintillating variegated culture of jazz.

“He’d often say to me, ‘when I’m gone, who’s going to care about all this stuff?’, well evidently quite few people! It was a great pleasure to meet Dr. Thomas Manuel ‘backstage’ at the Christie’s sale and to be able to share the stories behind some of Charlie’s trophy pieces; Charlie would have been delighted to see that many of these have now found a home in a place where jazz truly still lives, and the story is being told for generations to come.”

- Donor/VIP/Friends Circle Event on Feb. 8, 6:30-8 p.m.

- Clint Eastwood film Bird showing, Feb. 20, 6 p.m.

- Celebrating Bird: A Concert presenting the Music of Charlie Parker, Feb. 22, 7 p.m. Tom Manuel will be giving a brief tour and talk in the Parker exhibit before showtime, during intermission and at the end of the concert.

- Charlie Parker with Strings at The Jazz Loft April 4, April 6, 7 p.m., featuring Chris Donohue and Dayna Sean Stephens.

- Charlie Parker with Strings at The Staller Center for the Arts, April 5, 7 p.m., featuring Chris Donohue on alto saxophonist.

The “Strings” recordings were Parker’s attempt to bridge the gap between jazz and classical music. He received quite a bit of criticism during his lifetime for making his 'with Strings' recordings, but they are now universally recognized as masterpieces.

For more information, visit <https://www.thejazzloft.org> or call **631-751-1895**. **Ticket prices for all events are \$40 for adults; \$35 for seniors; \$30 for students and \$25 for children.**



Photo Courtesy of The Jazz Loft

This poster is one of the many items acquired by The Jazz Loft from a collection of Charlie Watts' Charlie Parker memorabilia.

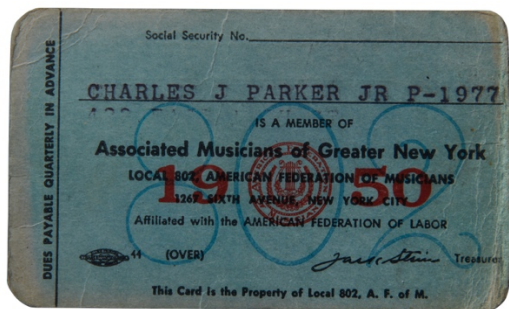


Photo Courtesy of The Jazz Loft

This union card is one of the many items acquired by The Jazz Loft from a collection of Charlie Watts' Charlie Parker memorabilia.



Photo Courtesy of The Jazz Loft

This instrument case is one of the many items acquired by The Jazz Loft from a collection of Charlie Watts' Charlie Parker memorabilia.