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## Kenny Clarke: The First Modern Drummer in Jazz: Annotated Bibliography

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## Kenny Clarke: The first Modern Drummer in Jazz

### Annotated Bibliography

Kenny Clarke, born in 1914, is considered a pioneer of an improvised style of Afro-american music known today as Jazz. Clarke grew up in an era before that word. The soundtrack of his youth consisted of military bands, dixieland, and blues music. The role of the percussionist in these settings were fixed and rigid. They were there to keep the time. Whether it be with a snare drum, bass drum, or small set of cymbals, the drummer's role in an ensemble was not a dynamic role in any sense. Through the medium of an exciting new style of music later named Bebop, Kenny Clarke liberated not only the role of a drummer from time keeping role, he also developed a new style of "Modern" drumming both sonically and rhythmically through the implementation of the ride cymbal. More specifically, Clarke began taking syncopated rhythms played by horns and the piano, and distributing them around the drum kit while also keeping the time with the ride cymbal. This paper seeks not to distinguish Clarke as a pioneer of Bebop and Jazz drumming, this much has been established already. Instead, the argument will be made that Kenny Clarke developed a method of drumming that develops along with the development of Improvised music of the times, therefore introducing an ever-developing ideology and method of playing that demands constant evaluation in order to achieve the status of "Modern".

Encyclopedia Britannica s.v. "Jazz," March, 2000, <https://www.britannica.com/art/jazz>.

1. Jazz Music is Afro-American high art. It is a style of music developed and curated in the midst of Slavery and injustice. Unlike Classical music, where the origins, and music itself has been so thoroughly documented, Jazz music has a uniquely ambiguous origin story and aural tradition which makes contextualizing it, challenging. This article published by Britannica is thoroughly peer edited and reputable. This article doesn't attempt to engage with other authors or propose an argument of any kind. It covers the fundamentally important historical background and musical/ cultural influences that have culminated into what the world considers "Jazz" music. Scholars and educators can use articles such as this for a wide variety of study regarding this musical tradition. This article will be referenced because it offers an insight into the state of this music before, during, and after Kenny Clarke.

*Encyclopedia Britannica* s.v. "Bebop," October 6, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/art/bebop>.

2. Kenny Clarke was a pioneer and developer of a brand new style of Improvised music in the 1940's known today as bebop. Though there is now an abundant amount of scholarship on this style of music, bebop was neither accepted or appreciated during its infancy. Something not

often highlighted in academic works is how unreliable some information is about information regarding the specific dates of compositions and who the composers of this music were. Like all Britannica articles, the information published is rigorously fact-checked and peer reviewed to ensure accurate and reliable information. This article does not attempt to make an argument and does not engage with other scholarship on Bebop. It aims to provide a timeline of the rise of Bebop and include the music's most reputable pioneers and innovators. Due to bebop not being recorded heavily in the first years of its creation, a lot of information is less reliable than it seems. This article does not attempt to outline specific dates and quintessential jam sessions but gives a comprehensive historical, socio-cultural, and stylistic evaluation of this music. This article will be used to contextualize Kenny Clarke's influence on drumming in an improvisational setting.

Asukile, Thabiti. "J.A. Rogers' 'Jazz at Home': Afro-American Jazz in Paris During the Jazz Age." *The Black Scholar* 40, no. 3 (2010): 22–35.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41163931>.

3. This Journal article is in response to historian J.A Rogers' essays on the spread of Jazz in Paris during the 1920's. Asukile argues that select bandleaders such as James Reese Europe during the final stages of WW1 were responsible for the gradual acceptance and admiration of Jazz music in Europe that remains today. Utilizing historical evidence, the author creates a comprehensive timeline that examines the rise of Jazz music in Paris, and eventually many other European countries. This article refutes the claims of European scholars such as Andre Coeuroy that rejected Jazz as African American music and considered it African American interpretation of European music. Thabiti Asukile is a professor of African American & African History at the University of California, Berkeley. This article showcases the initial introduction of Pre-Jazz music to European cities, specifically Paris. As a result of this, bebop musicians such as Kenny Clarke were able to successfully record, perform, and innovate Jazz music with European musicians fascinated by this music idiom.

Braggs, Rashida K. "Kenny Clarke and the Desire for More Inclusive Black Music" (*Palimpsest*, no. 4, Albany, N.Y 2015:), 155–168,  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/636717/figure/img01>.

4. This article highlights what most biographical pieces on Jazz musicians do not. Rashida Braggs, an author who has published books on Jazz and other Race music, explains why Kenny Clarke moved to Paris in 1956 and led innovative Jazz groups that spread the influence and relevance of Jazz that remains today. Defeated by the idea that his music was being exploited by white record labels and musicians, Kenny moved to Europe to escape this injustice and did not intend on continuing a career in music after in France, though he did end up doing just that. Braggs argues using biographical information and primary source material from Clarke, that the injustices that African American musicians such as Clarke faced, indirectly led to the rise of Jazz music in Europe today. She also argues that Clarke's steady residency in Paris provided the critical link for hundreds of America's finest Jazz musicians to spread their music and influence in France and all of Europe. This article is critical in explaining how the socio-cultural elements of life as an African American man in the cities of America directly contributed to the stylistic development and promotion of bebop on a global scale.

Brown, Anthony, "Modern Jazz Drumset Artistry", no.18, (*Black perspective in music*, 1990) 39–58: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1214857?origin=crossref>.

5. Anthony Brown successfully, along with comprehensive biographical information, uses recordings and different musical groups predating bebop to shed light on the momentous development that the rhythm section made during the bebop era. Brown, aside from being an accomplished scholar, is a professional Jazz drummer as well as an ethnomusicologist. As a result of his extensive knowledge of the drumset, he is able to articulate exactly how Kenny Clarke innovated the drum kit and the sound/role of the drumset within a small group in the bebop style. As a result of the leaps in innovation that Clarke made in the early development of Bebop, music scholarship tends to focus heavily on the individual development of the rhythm section roles. Brown makes the claim that the rhythm section as a whole (Piano, Bass, and Drums), developed together to better accompany a soloist as transcending the role of accompanists to become soloists as well. This article will be utilized when describing how Kenny Clarke innovated the drum set initially, but more importantly, how he continued to rapidly develop the style of drumming to fit the ever-changing style of improvised music known as Jazz.

Brown, Anthony L. 1997. "The Development of Modern Jazz Drum Set Performance 1940-1950", <https://search-ebscohost-com.du.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ram&AN=A40743&site=ebscohost-live&scope=site>.

6. This doctoral dissertation is a comprehensive historical work that distinguishes the innovations of Bebop drummers in the 1940's such as Kenny Clarke and Max Roach, from the big band drummers of the 1930's. It also highlights the specific stylistic developments from bebop drummers from 1940-1950. This work argues that the innovations such as rhythmic interaction between soloists, polyrhythmic ideas, and pushing tempos, have become integral in the playing great drummers of American popular music such as Funk, Rock, Pop, etc. Anthony Brown is an Ethnomusicologist, Jazz drummer, and author of many works related to early Jazz traditions. This article will be referenced when describing the specifics of how Kenny Clarke influenced not only other bebop drummers, but all drummers of popular American music.

Dent, Cedric Carl. "The Harmonic Development of the Black Religious Quartet Singing Tradition" (1997): <https://search-ebscohost-com.du.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ram&AN=A140327&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

7. This doctoral dissertation successfully links Bebop and later iterations of Jazz to African American religious vocal groups. Using harmonic analysis and basic arranging structural comparison from popular vocal groups of the early 1900's such as Mitchell's Christian Singers, there are many common threads between the two styles. Jazz scholarship seldom credits gospel music as an equal influence on Jazz as Blues and Dixieland. Though Blues and Dixieland are prevalent, the spirit and worship qualities of Gospel greatly influenced some of the most prolific jazz compositions and styles such as John Coltrane. This article doesn't deny that Blues, Dixieland, and military bands influenced Jazz music, but it does highlight that the harmonic and spiritual concepts of

Jazz performance and composition are largely a result of gospel influence. The author, Dr. Carl Cedrick Dent is a vocal professor at The University of Tennessee. He is also an acclaimed pianist and composer. This article is essential in linking the harmonic development of bebop and some Big Band music to that of African American gospel. This will be used to support claims that Kenny Clarke along with other bebop musicians, not only brought gospel harmony to the secular world, but also a style of playing that closely parallels that of worship music.

Dylan, Gareth *Clarke, Kenny: New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*(Oxford University Press, 2014).Published Jan 31 2014

8. This biographical article highlights not just Clarke's musical upbringing, but covers in detail, his early professional experience. This article argues that Kenny Clarke's greatest musical influences were those of Duke Ellington, Roy Eldridge, and Milt Jackson. All of whom he shared stages with. Scholarships around bebop often fail to mention the importance of the "Working" bands that these musicians came from. Expectations concerning strong time and clean articulate drumming were extremely high during the many tours and performances Clarke played as a young man with the legends such as Duke Ellington. Scholarship focuses heavily on the "Liberation" from the current musical conventions without properly giving credit to skills that musicians like Clarke developed in these bands. Bebop demands a high level of command of your instrument and a level of discipline and focus that exceeds the music of a lot of the popular Swing music that preceded it. Gareth Dylan has been a touring professional drummer for over 25 years and is a professor at Boston University. This article will be utilized to convey how it was possible for bebop musicians to have created the music that they did and where their skill sets came from. The inner circle of bebop giants came from very specific groups and cities. That is why the music to this day is very esoteric and exclusive.

Hartigan, Royal. "The Heritage of the Drumset." *African American Review* 29, no. 2 (1995): 234–36. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3042298>.

9. This Journal article is an informative scholarly work describing the origins and development of the drumset. This article argues that the primary causes of the creation of the Trap drum set were economic. Percussionists beginning in the late 1890's, began incorporating the roles of multiple percussionists. This article uniquely offers an argument rarely talked about in musical scholarship that the drum set was heavily influenced by Orchestras of West Africa. The Article refers to this idea, as "Spiritual Heritage". Historical as well as biographical data is used to support such claims. Royal Hartigan is a drummer/ percussionist specializing in world music. He has a ph. D in ethnomusicology and teaches at Wesleyan University. Understanding how and why the drum kit developed is essential in order to appreciate the momentous leap that innovators such as Kenny Clarke made in drum set playing.

Honing, Henkjan, and W. Bas de Haas. "Swing Once More: Relating Timing and Tempo in Expert Jazz Drumming." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 25, no. 5 (2008): 471–76. <https://doi.org/10.1525/mp.2008.25.5.471>.

10. This Journal attempts to explore Jazz swing patterns numerically and by calculating the space between the “Skip Notes” of Expert Jazz drummer’s ride cymbal pattern. This empirical study used software to measure the variability in drummer’s recording to the same passage. This differs from other studies of this kind because the majority of scholarship trying to quantify swing patterns use recordings from different drummers performing different pieces artists. The indirect argument being made here is that Jazz drummer’s ride cymbal feel can be recorded, quantified, and compared to one another and all produce functional but different effects. Henkjan Honing is a professor of Music Cognition at the University of Amsterdam. W.Bas de Haas ph.D is the CEO and founder of Music Informatics Researcher. Though the numerical analysis of swing patterns is not a popular or respected topic among musicians, this article does reinforce that the variety in the way that expert Jazz drummers play the ride cymbal is undeniable and unique to the individual.

Stewart, Jesse, No Boundary Line to Art: Bebop as Afro-Modernist Discourse (*American music: Champaign, Ill*, 2011), 332–352:  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236719328\\_No\\_Boundary\\_Line\\_to\\_Art\\_Bebop\\_as\\_Afro-Modernist\\_Discourse](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236719328_No_Boundary_Line_to_Art_Bebop_as_Afro-Modernist_Discourse).

11. This article argues that Bebop is a separate art form than all music that came before it. Though it has elements of Blues, Gospel, and Dixieland music, it is an art form that dissolves the restrictions of earlier musical forms and promotes experimentation and spontaneous creativity. To support these claims and indirectly refute the popular idea that bebop was a rigid structural labyrinth of dissonant harmony, the author provides quotations from interviews with bebop’s undisputed father, Charlie Parker. This piece of scholarship directly refutes that just because bebop has been heavily analyzed and recognized as highly intellectual, doesn’t mean that it wasn’t an art form created to dissolve musical boundaries and limitations. Author ph.D Jesse Stuart is an award-winning composer and percussionist who has published many scholarly works related to Jazz. This article is uniquely helpful linking the unprecedented harmonic innovations of Charlie Parker, to the rhythmic innovations made by his contemporary, Kenny Clarke.

Mackin, James. 2010. “Maintaining the Groove: A Drummer’s Insight.” <https://search-ebscohost-com.du.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ram&AN=A819802&site=ehost-live> score=site.

12. This dissertation, attempts to reveal through transcriptions of notated jazz charts during the Big Band, bebop, and contemporary era, how “Groove” relates to melody. Multiple drum set charts are analyzed to highlight the challenges and disconnections between drum parts of these eras, specifically the Big Band era, and the expectations of the drummer. This article uses historical information and recordings how grooves in Jazz music must accompany melodies that are more dynamic than preceding styles such as Blues music, and that the notation especially for drummers, were never adequate in relaying all necessary information for a drummer to fulfill his role in a large Jazz Ensemble. This source agrees with contemporary opinions that because Jazz is an aural tradition, there does not need to be significant development in chart writing and notation for drummers in this context. Author James Mackin is

a composer, audio technician, and scholar teaching at the Dublin Institute of Technology. This source provides a useful recording list of relevant Bebop and Big Band transcriptions that can be used to further explain the role of the Bebop and Big Band drummer.