

Week 1 - May 2, 2026

"Young Miles" - The Bird Years

At 17 years of age Miles would travel across the river from his home in East St. Louis, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri to hear well-known jazz musicians play in clubs. Mesmerized by their talent and style, he would listen to their all night jam sessions until Charlie "Bird" Parker arrived in St. Louis with the Billy Eckstine Band in 1944. Bird was the creative force behind a new form of jazz later to be dubbed "bebop" and the young Miles would become fascinated with its complex melodic and harmonic structure leading Miles to follow Bird across the country until he was allowed to substitute for his trumpet player at the time - Dizzy Gillespie. His tenure as Bird's sideman would most exemplify this hard-swinging period of his life.

Brownman Ali - trumpet
Tymish Koznarsky - alto saxophone
Scott Metcalfe - piano
Chris Banks - upright bass
Morgan Childs - drums

Boston 1954

Interview with John McLellan and Paul Desmond on station WHDH; Parker is booked at the Hi-Hat Club for a week (January 18-24), during which time several performances are broadcast on station WCOP. The interview appears on Philology Volume 8 (W 80).

"I had the pleasure to meet Miles, for the first time, in St. Louis, when he was a youngster. He was still going to school. Later on he came to New York. He finished Juilliard, Miles did, he graduated from Juilliard and, at the time, I was just beginning to get my band together, you know, five pieces here, five pieces there. So I formed a band and took it into the Three Deuces for maybe seven to eight weeks, and at the time, Dizzy -- after the next time the organization broke up -- Dizzy was about to form his own band. There was so many things taking place then, I mean, it's hard to describe it, because it happened in a matter of months. Nevertheless, I went to California in 1945 with Dizzy, after I broke up my band, the first band I had, then I came again back to New York in '47, the early part of '47, and that's when I decided to have a band of my own permanently, and Miles was in my original band. I had Max, I had Tommy Potter, I had Al Haig and I had Miles."

SERIES FRAME (FIVE WEEKS FOR MILES)

- **Five consecutive Saturdays (2026 run)**
- Five different quintets
- Each week = a **distinct era** of Miles Davis
- Concept: follow Miles' **chronological evolution** across styles

TONIGHT is Week 1: "YOUNG MILES" – the Bird Years (c. 1941–1948)

- Focus: **teen years** → **bebop apprenticeship** → **early NYC period**
- Ends just before **Birth of the Cool sessions (1949–1950)**

EARLY LIFE / BACKGROUND

- **May 26, 1926** – Born in Alton, Illinois
- **c. 1927–1928** – Family settles in East St. Louis
- Father: Dr. Miles Dewey Davis Sr. (dentist)
- Mother: Cleota Mae Davis (music teacher)
- **1939 (age 13)** – Begins trumpet
- Teacher: Elwood Buchanan (anti-vibrato approach)

EARLY PLAYING / LOCAL SCENE

- **1941–1943 (ages 15–17)**
 - Playing locally in East St. Louis
 - Sitting in with touring bands passing through
- **1943–1944 (age 17)**
 - Crossing into St. Louis regularly at night
 - Attending late jam sessions, hearing national acts

1944 TURNING POINT (BEBOP CONTACT)

- **Summer 1944** – Billy Eckstine Orchestra in St. Louis
- Band includes Charlie Parker
- First direct exposure to **bebop in real time**
- Parker already developing the new language (early 1940s NYC)

MOVE TO NEW YORK / JUILLIARD

- **Fall 1944 (age 18)** – Moves to New York City
- Enrolls at **Juilliard School of Music**
- Simultaneously seeks out Parker in Harlem clubs (Minton's, 52nd Street scene)
- Leaves Juilliard by **1945** to focus on playing

ENTRY INTO BEBOP SCENE

- **1945** – Begins performing and recording with Charlie Parker
- Joins early Parker recording sessions (Savoy/Dial era)
- Replaces / shares trumpet role previously held by Dizzy Gillespie

PARKER SIDEMAN PERIOD

- **1945–1948** – Regular collaborator with Parker
- Participates in key bebop recordings and live dates
- Context:
 - End of WWII (**1945**) → explosion of NYC modern jazz scene
 - Bebop firmly established by **1946–47**

STYLE (MID-1940s)

- Contrasts with Gillespie's virtuosic approach
- Emphasis on:
 - Tone
 - Space
 - Phrasing
- Already showing early signs of a **non-bebop-centered aesthetic**

TRANSITION OUT OF “YOUNG MILES”

- **1948** – Begins organizing own nonet
- Leads directly into **Birth of the Cool sessions (recorded 1949–1950)**
- Marks end of pure bebop apprenticeship phase

So Tonight we'll take you on a journey through that bebop period of Miles' career, exploring his time with the great Charlie Parker. Welcome to YOUNG MILES!

2026 Week 1 band

Brownman Ali - trumpet

Tymish Koznarski - alto

Scott Metcalfe - piano

Chris Banks - bass

Morgan Childs - drums