



## MILES DAVIS

Born in 1926 when a new form of music known as jazz was just beginning to make waves in big urban cities, Miles Dewey Davis III arrived like a prophet to the burgeoning genre. At age 13 he picked up a trumpet and within four years was performing with legendary musicians Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. His rise was meteoric, his talent grandiose.

At 18 Davis left Illinois, the city of his birth, for New York to enrol at the prestigious Julliard school. The institution lacked the dynamism that the jazz scene provided and it was in the heated nightclubs of Harlem that Davis found his true expression. It was there that he would meet his future band mates and there, in supple smoke-scented bars, that Davis would find the inspiration for bebop, the fast-paced virtuosic musical form influenced by 1930s swing. A year into his time at Julliard, Davis left to become a full-time musician joining the Charlie Parker Quintet which ended in unceremonious fashion as Parker fell foul to a drug addiction, foreshadowing Davis's fate.

Davis nonetheless continued to make musical waves with his nonet, a nine-piece group that included a French horn and a tuba. Davis was so smitten by this group that he turned down an opportunity to play with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, and despite the group's commercial failure, they would be retrospectively remembered as the pioneers of cool jazz. The nonet was Davis's first recording contract granted by Capitol Records, a milestone moment in his career.

From the early 1950s, Davis began struggling with a heroin problem that he would not recover from until 1955. The stresses of Davis's various relationships with women and his lack of acclaim in the music industry contributed to the development of his addiction. He continued to play, but mainly in Detroit where drugs were harder to come by. He recorded albums and music for both Prestige Records and Blue Note Records in this period, yet his personal manner became erratic and he was known to be withdrawn. His relationship with the press and music critics in particular was problematic, and they reciprocated this frustration by publicising his near fight with Thelonious Monk and other similar instances of unpredictable behaviour.

After his recovery, Davis continued to flit between bands with varying formations including his own quintet. It was however with his sextet that he would create what is widely considered to be one of the best albums ever made—not only in the genre of jazz. *Kind of Blue*, Davis's magnum opus, is the largest selling jazz album ever recorded, having