



EAST SIDE PRIDE

NEWS AND VIEWS

A New Community Newsletter

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CLIFFORD BROWN *Wilmington's Favorite Son*



Clifford Brown's life was brief, but his brilliance reshaped the world of jazz forever. Born in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1930, "Brownie," as he was affectionately known, combined technical mastery, lyrical sensitivity, and moral discipline in a way that set him apart in an era often marked by chaos and self-destruction.

His death in a tragic automobile accident at the age of 25 remains one of the greatest losses in the history of jazz — a silencing of genius just as it was reaching full bloom. Brown began playing trumpet at the age of fifteen, showing extraordinary promise under the mentorship of Wilmington's legendary music educator **Robert "Boysie" Lowery**. By 1948, he was performing regularly in Philadelphia's vibrant jazz scene, already catching the attention of some of the genre's most accomplished players.

One night, **Dizzy Gillespie** was performing in Wilmington when his second trumpeter, Little Benny Harris, failed to appear. Gillespie asked Boysie if there was a local player good enough to fill in. Boysie didn't hesitate: "Call Clifford." That night, Brown's remarkable talent astonished Gillespie, who immediately began spreading word throughout the jazz world of the prodigy from Delaware.

Encouraged and mentored by greats such as **Fats Navarro**, **Charlie Parker**, and **Gillespie** himself, Brown refined a style that blended the fire of bebop with a warm, round tone and a sense of melodic grace that few have ever matched. His solos sang with intelligence and heart, his phrasing balanced passion with precision, and his sound — full, golden, and confident — became instantly recognizable.

In 1954, Brown joined forces with drummer **Max Roach** to form one of the most acclaimed groups in modern jazz: the **Clifford Brown–Max Roach Quintet**. Featuring tenor saxophonists **Harold Land** and later **Sonny Rollins**, the quintet became a cornerstone of the **hard bop** movement — recording timeless sessions for the EmArcy label such as *Study in Brown* and *Clifford Brown and Max Roach*.

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Clifford Brown's Impact on Jazz and Its Culture



Clifford Brown was more than a trumpet virtuoso — he was a moral compass in a culture that had too often equated genius with self-destruction. In an era when jazz musicians were romanticized as tortured souls fueled by cigarettes, alcohol, and heroin, Brown stood as a luminous contradiction: clean-cut, disciplined, and entirely devoted to his craft.

He neither drank nor smoked, and his wholesome lifestyle had a profound influence on those around him — perhaps none more so than the young tenor saxophonist **Sonny Rollins**, who joined the Brown–Roach Quintet in December 1955, shortly after emerging from rehabilitation for substance abuse. Rollins would later reflect on this turning point in his life:

"When I came across Clifford, it was 'Wow, this guy can play so much music, and yet he's clean living.' He ended up being a perfect model — such a light to me."

That light extended far beyond Rollins. Clifford Brown's artistry shattered one of jazz's most tragic myths — the idea that creative brilliance demanded personal chaos or chemical dependence. After **Charlie Parker**, whose genius was often misinterpreted as a byproduct of his heroin addiction, many young musicians internalized the false belief that drugs and inspiration were intertwined. Brown disproved it completely.

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Clifford Brown ... continued

The band's recordings remain benchmarks for musicians and listeners alike.

Clifford Brown was more than a musician — he was a model of integrity. In a time when substance abuse claimed many of his peers, Brown lived clean, focused, and devoted to his art and family. His example inspired others, including Sonny Rollins, who later said, "When I came across Clifford, it was 'Wow — this guy can play so much music and yet he's clean living.' He became a light to me."

Though his career lasted barely five years, Clifford Brown's legacy continues to illuminate generations of musicians. His influence echoes through the work of every trumpeter who followed — from Freddie Hubbard and Lee Morgan to Wynton Marsalis.

Each year, the **Clifford Brown Jazz Festival**, held in downtown Wilmington, stands as a living monument to his genius, his discipline, and his everlasting swing — celebrating the life and music of a man whose brief time on earth continues to inspire the rhythm of the world.

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Brownie's Impact...continued



His playing was precise yet passionate, technical yet soulful — a testament to what mastery could achieve when discipline replaced despair. Through his example, a generation of musicians realized that one could swing, soar, and innovate without self-destruction. Brown's clean life became as revolutionary as his horn. He restored dignity and professionalism to jazz musicianship, showing that artistic greatness could co-exist with integrity, balance, and self-respect. Tragically, his life was cut short in a 1956 car crash at just 25 years old — but even in that brief span, Clifford Brown redefined what it meant to be a jazz artist: proof that the music, not the madness, was the source of true genius.

TRIBUTES TO CLIFFORD BROWN

ORIGINATED AND/OR PRODUCED

BY HARMON R. CAREY

CLIFFORD BROWN MEMORIAL CONCERT AT THE GRAND

CLIFFORD BROWN MEMORIAL ALBUM

CLIFFORD BROWN MEMORIAL CONCERT AT RODNEY SQUARE (1991)

CLIFFORD BROWN JAZZ FESTIVAL (1992)

CLIFFORD BROWN 80TH BIRTHDAY MEMORIAL CONCERT (2010)

NAMING OF CLIFFORD BROWN WALK

CLIFFORD BROWN WOODEN STATUE BY DENNY BURTON

"ALL ABOUT CLIFFORD" BUS TOUR

EAST SIDE PRIDE

You Are Invited To The Clifford Brown 95th Birthday Tribute

Dr. Harmon Carey has been an advocate for many vital programs in our community throughout the years. He recently initiated the vision for the 95th birthday tribute to Clifford Brown this year, which is finally coming to fruition. His reason for curating this historic tribute is solely because of his love and respect for the legendary Jazz Trumpeter/composer Clifford Brown. He also deems it beneficial to continue his quest for preserving his legacy, especially to educate our youth and the new generation of Jazz musicians. Harmon is known for putting action to his convictions and has been a huge part of helping to preserve Clifford Brown's legacy in Wilmington.

Mr. Carey had many chance encounters with Clifford Brown: in September, 1947 when he graduated from Number 29 Elementary School at 12th & Poplar St. and moved on to the 12th grade at Howard High School at 13th and Poplar. The first encounter resulted when they both joined the band. Clifford played first trumpet and Harmon was accepted into the third. Want to know more about this story and his other encounters? Join us for the Clifford Brown 95th Birthday Tribute on October 30, 2025 at his alma mater: the old Howard High School located at 13th St. & Clifford Brown Walk. Doors open at 5:30pm and festivities will commence 6pm-9pm, with a phenomenal lineup celebrating the essence of our local Jazz hero: Clifford Brown.

Clifford Brown

DRAWING

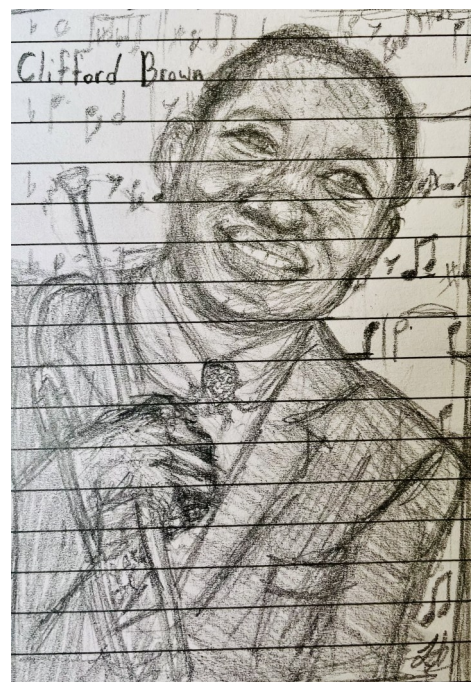
By 15 year old ARTIST

Lihlo Hollins

You will witness a film screening of "BROWNIE SPEAKS", a panel discussion led by Clifford Brown Jr., Reflections/Memories of Clifford Brown and how his career affected others musicians in Wilmington, The Clifford Brown All Stars led by trumpet player Gerald Chavis, Alfie Moss with Allen Williams singing "I Remember Clifford" and a jam session finale.

Purchase your tickets for \$12 at buytickets.at/afroamericanhistoricalsocietyofdelaware now! Students and musicians with instruments are admitted free (registration required). This program is sponsored by THE AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DE, INC. and FLUX Creative Consulting. It is supported, in part, by a grant from the Delaware Division of the Arts (a state agency) in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and media partners WHGE 95.3FM. For information about the Clifford Brown 95th Birthday Tribute call (302) 562-4718.

Samatha Hollins





WHGE 95.3 **CLIFFORD BROWN 95TH**
Media Partner **BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE**



**SCREENING OF EXCERPTS FROM "BROWNIE
SPEAKS | PANEL DISCUSSION | PERFORMACE
BY THE CLIFFORD BROWN ALLSTAR QUINTET**

Thursday, October 30

DOORS OPEN AT 5:30PM | Old Howard High School

13th and Clifford Brown Walk

Tickets \$12

(Students and musicians with instrument free)

buytickets.at/afroamericanhistoricalsocietyofdelaware

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