

## Chronology

- 1909** Lester Willis Young born in Woodville, Mississippi, August 27. Shortly after, the family moves to New Orleans.
- 1919**– Young moves to Memphis, then to Minneapolis. Plays drums, later  
**1927** alto saxophone in family band.
- 1928** Tours with Art Bronson’s Bostonians, adopts tenor saxophone.
- 1929** Returns to family band; probably plays with Eli Rice’s Cotton Pickers toward the end of the year.
- 1930** Plays with Walter Page’s Blue Devils, returns to Bronson’s Bostonians from June until November, then moves to Minneapolis.
- 1931** Plays at Nest Club in Minneapolis under Eddie Barefield, Frank Hines, and Leroy White. Works in Eugene Schuck’s Cotton Club Orchestra in summer, then returns to the Nest Club; also plays with Paul Cephias at South Side Club.
- 1932** Signs with “Thirteen Original Blue Devils” early in the year; plays with them in spring at Ritz Ballroom in Oklahoma City, then tours extensively.
- 1933** Blue Devils disband around May. Young tours with King Oliver around May to November, then plays around Kansas City with Clarence Love and the Bennie Moten–George E. Lee band. In December, plays with the visiting Fletcher Henderson Orchestra for one night, taking the place of Coleman Hawkins, and plays against Hawkins at a marathon “jam session.”
- 1934** Joins Count Basie early in the year. Transfers to Fletcher Henderson Orchestra in late March; leaves in July and plays with Andy Kirk in Kansas City, then with Rook Ganz and Boyd Atkins in Minnesota.

- 1935** Stays in Minneapolis except around March to May, when he freelances in Kansas City.
- 1936** Plays with Count Basie at the Reno Club in Kansas City. In September, visits sick father in Los Angeles. Makes first recordings in Chicago including [*Oh*] *Lady Be Good* and *Shoe Shine Boy*. John Hammond arranges contract for Basie with Music Corporation of America, which begins with an engagement in Chicago, November 6 to December 3; Buffalo, December 7; New York City debut, December 24.
- 1937** First recordings with full Basie band for Decca, New York City, January 21; first recordings with vocalist Billie Holiday, January 25—she dubs him “President” or “Pres.” Performs with Basie in and around New York City, also in Pittsburgh in February. At the Savoy (New York) in April and June, Ritz-Carlton of Boston in July, Meadowbrook (New Jersey) in November.
- 1938** Plays with Benny Goodman at Carnegie Hall concert, January 16. Performs with Basie at Famous Door, New York City, July through October, then on tour, Nashville, St. Louis, and elsewhere; at “From Spirituals to Swing” concert, Carnegie Hall, December 23.
- 1939** January, Geneva Armory, New York. Herschel Evans dies on February 16. Performs with Basie at Southland Café, Boston, between February and March; Hotel Sherman, Chicago, in June, with many broadcasts; Famous Door, New York City, in July and August. Records *Lester Leaps In*, September 5. Probably to California in October. Performs with Charlie Christian at second “From Spirituals to Swing” concert, Carnegie Hall, December 24.
- 1940** Basie band in New York City, January; in Boston, February 13 into March (mostly at Southland Café); in New York City, April to June; in Chicago in July; in California, August to October. Records informally with Benny Goodman and Charlie Christian, October 28 in New York. Leaves Basie band in December.
- 1941** Leads band at Kelly’s Stables in New York, February 27 through March 17. Moves to Los Angeles in May to join band of brother Lee; debuts at Billy Berg’s Club Capri.
- 1942** Lee and Lester Young at Capri from February 24; to Trouville Club in spring, then residence at Café Society Downtown, New York City, from September 1.
- 1943** Lee goes to Los Angeles after death of father on February 6; stepmother dies soon after and band is dissolved. Lester plays at Minton’s

- Playhouse and Village Vanguard in New York. Joins Al Sears band in spring for U.S.O. tour and other performances. Plays with Count Basie in October, then rejoins Basie in December at Lincoln Hotel.
- 1944** Performs with Basie on one-nighters in Northeast in January, February; New York in March, and at Hotel Lincoln, New York City, April and May; in Chicago June 12 to 22; Ohio, Kansas City, in July. Opens in Los Angeles on August 1. Appears in film *Jammin' the Blues* in August. Inducted into the army on September 30 and stationed at Fort McClellan, Alabama, on December 1. Wins first place in *Down Beat* poll at end of year.
- 1945** Court-martialed for possession of drugs, February 16. Sent to detention barracks, Fort Gordon, Georgia; discharged from army in December. Returns to Los Angeles. Wins *Esquire* Silver Award.
- 1946** Signs personal management contract with Norman Granz, appears at Granz-produced JATP concerts in Los Angeles, January and April, Chicago, May 14, and Carnegie Hall, New York City, on three Mondays beginning May 27. Back to Chicago, June 22. Records in Los Angeles in August; performs with own group in Chicago, October 3 through December 1, then in Manhattan, December 3 through 24.
- 1947** Records *Jumpin' with Symphony Sid*, February 18. On tour—one or two weeks each in St. Louis, Detroit, Washington, D.C., New York City (May 11 through 17 at the Savoy), Boston, and so on. Records in New York City at end of year. Wins *Esquire* Silver Award.
- 1948** January to February 16, Seattle; February 17 to March 1, San Francisco; March to November, tour of East Coast. Cleveland, November 11 through 17. Performs at Royal Roost, New York City, November 25 to December 8.
- 1949** On tour in January. Performs in Chicago, February 14 to March 13, then New York's Royal Roost, March 17 to mid-April. JATP tour begins with Carnegie Hall concert, September 17. Birdland (newly opened), from December 15.
- 1950** Continues at Birdland through January 25 and for most of March and the first half of May. JATP tour begins with Hartford concert, September 15.
- 1951** Performs at Birdland, New York City, throughout the year. Also at Carnegie Hall, February 21; Chicago, August 10 to 23; JATP tour begins with Hartford concert, September 14.

- 1952** First tour of Europe for Young and for JATP leaves March 26, returns April 21. Young then appears at Birdland through June; Washington, D.C., June 30 through July 5; Philadelphia, July 7 through 12. Back to Birdland, July 13 to August 25, including guest appearances with the Basie band. JATP American tour begins with Hartford concert, September 12.
- 1953** Performs at Birdland in January, with own groups and as guest of Count Basie band; JATP in Europe from mid-February, including concerts in London and Paris in March; back at Birdland in July; JATP tour begins with Hartford concert, September 11.
- 1954** Performs in San Francisco, March 9 to 29; at first festival in Newport, July 18. Makes guest appearances with Basie at Carnegie Hall, September 25, and at Birdland in December.
- 1955** Plays with Birdland All-Stars in February and at Charlie Parker Memorial Concert, April 2, Carnegie Hall. Performs with Billie Holiday at Carnegie Hall, May 6; at Birdland most of May; in Chicago from July 22 to August 11. JATP tour begins with Hartford concert, September 16. Hospitalized in winter.
- 1956** Reunites with Teddy Wilson at recording sessions, January 12 and 13; Chicago, April 20 to May 4; tours Europe with Birdland All-Stars in November. Plays in December in Washington, D.C., then at Café Bohemia, New York City.
- 1957** Hospitalized again. Birdland tour begins February 15 at Carnegie Hall, through March. Appears with Count Basie band at Newport Jazz Festival, July 7; Granz concerts include Hollywood Bowl, August 22, and JATP tour opening September 14, Carnegie Hall, ending in Los Angeles in October. Appears on television program "The Sound of Jazz" with Basie and Billie Holiday, December 8.
- 1958** Hospitalized again; moves to Alvin Hotel in Manhattan in spring. Has birthday tribute at Birdland, June 2; appears at Newport Jazz Festival, July 5. Then begins to perform more frequently, including two weeks at the Five Spot, New York City, in November, and a return there for most of December.
- 1959** Begins engagement at the Blue Note, Paris, on January 14; makes last commercial recordings, March 2. Returns to New York City, March 14, and dies at three a.m., March 15. Posthumously elected to *Down Beat* Hall of Fame.