Updated December 24, 2001

- **Frames**: Toggle side menu on or off.
- **Updates**: Announcements, and the latest additions to this site.
- **Biography**: A summary of Charlie's brief but productive life.
- **Discography**: A partial list of Charlie Christian recordings.
- **Tutorial**: A beginner's guide to Charlie's improvisational method.
- **Solos**: Transcriptions and Real Audio files of some of Charlie's solos.
- **Licks**: Examples and analyses of Charlie's favourite licks.
- **Gallery**: Charlie, his fellow musicians, and his guitar.
- **Bibliography**: Books and videos about Charlie.
- **Miscellaneous**: Interviews, essays, reviews, contributors, and more.
- **Trivia Challenge**: Take the Charlie Christian trivia quiz. JavaScript required.
- **FAQ**: Frequently asked questions about this site.
- **Links**: Other Charlie Christian and jazz guitar related sites.
- **Contributors**: Credits and thanks.
- **Discussion**: Discuss Charlie and his music with other fans and researchers.
- **Search**: Search for more information on Charlie.
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- **E-Mail**: Contact Garry Hansen (hansen@nbnet.nb.ca).
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Announcements

Nothing major yet, although I'm anxiously awaiting Vol. 9 of Media 7's Masters of Jazz Charlie Christian series.

December 24, 2001

- With regret, revised Jerry Jerome's biography to report his death on November 17, 2001.
- Updated the Links section.

April 16, 2001

- Corrected notation and tab for the "Rose Room" transcription in the Solos section.

April 9, 2001

- Created a new Charlie Christian discussion group.

January 5, 2001

- "Revisiting Charlie Christian" added to the Miscellaneous page.

September 29, 1999

- Updated Contributors page.

June 16, 1999

- Updated Links section.
May 2, 1999

- Added transcription and Real Audio of "Dinah" to the Solos section.

Webpage designed and maintained by Garry Hansen (hansen@nbnet.nb.ca)

Printed on 100% recycled electrons
"Charlie was Something"

An Interview with Jerry Jerome

The following interview with tenor sax veteran Jerry Jerome was conducted by guitarist and Charlie Christian researcher Kevin Centlivre in 1993. As a key member of the Benny Goodman Orchestra from 1938 to June 1940, Jerome witnessed the introduction and meteoric rise of the young electric guitarist from Oklahoma. Jerome's amazing extended jam with Charlie at the Breakfast Club in Minneapolis on 24 September 1939, recorded by an amateur enthusiast, has achieved legendary status.

After a long and distinguished career, Jerry Jerome retired to Florida, where he continued to perform regularly until his death on November 17, 2001.

The original audio recording of Kevin's phone interview with Jerome was transcribed and edited by Garry Hansen specifically for the use of this site. It is used with permission but remains the copyright of Kevin Centlivre and should not be reproduced in any form without explicit permission from the copyright owner. - GH

Benny went crazy when he heard him...

KC: How did you get the job with Benny Goodman?

JJ: Benny Goodman? Well I started off with a band called Harry Reser and his Clicquot Club Eskimos, and then I went from him to Red Norvo, from Red Norvo to the WNEW staff band in New York, and from there to Benny Goodman. Oh, Glenn Miller after Harry Reser. After Glenn's first band, I went from him to Red Norvo. And then from Benny Goodman I went to Artie Shaw. And then I decided to leave the name bands, you know, big bands, and settle down in New York and do my own thing. So I did.

KC: When did you first meet Charlie Christian?

JJ: When I was with the band. He didn't have that kind of guitar player with the band prior to that, just regular rhythm guitar.

KC: He had Allan Reuss?

JJ: He was in the beginning.
KC: And Arnold Covarrubias?

JJ: Arnold Covarrubias was in the band when I was with the band. Benny Heller, he was the guitar player. They had great bassmen and rhythm players, but none of them ever did a solo, because guitars were not solo instruments in those days. And then John Hammond prevailed upon Benny to give Charlie Christian a hearing, and Benny went crazy when he heard him, because he'd never heard a guitar player that could sound like a tenor saxophone. And it was great. The solo work was wonderful.

KC: There's a story about opening night, where they snuck his stuff on stage.

JJ: Yeah, they had to put his amplifier on stage, and Benny was teed off because he was forced to hear him.

KC: Were you there that night?

JJ: Yeah, sure. The Coconut Grove.

KC: The whole band was playing?

JJ: Oh yeah.

KC: And they were just going to feature the quartet?

JJ: Yeah, and all of a sudden John Hammond took a well-calculated risk. If he'd confronted Benny he wouldn't get by, which he did.

KC: What kind of guy was Hammond?

JJ: Very nice. He gave the appearance of being aloof, but he came from a society background -- sort of talking through his teeth kind of thing -- and very well read. Obviously a society guy. You know, Hammond was raised on Park Avenue, but he was very much into the cause of poor people, and giving blacks a chance to move up in the ladder of success.

They'd just find how to do their own thing...

KC: So nonetheless, Charlie got the job after that night. What was that? The Camel Caravan Show?

JJ: Well we were doing a Camel Caravan all through that period. It was a weekly show. And so Charlie got the job. He started working with us. He worked the Coconut Grove with us and then we did a tour of
the Pacific Northwest. Meanwhile the Camel show was going on all this time.

KC: Was that done in a studio?

JJ: No, remote. We never went to a studio except in New York.

KC: How did you travel through the Northwest?

JJ: Bus, because there was no other way of going. Ordinarily we would go by train.

KC: Where would you all stay?

JJ: We stayed in hotels, you know, things like that.

KC: Did the black members have to stay in separate hotels?

JJ: Yes, at that time they were segregated.

KC: Where would they have to eat?

JJ: Same thing.

KC: Did they have to eat in the kitchen, or just different hotels?

JJ: They'd just find how to do their own thing. It was unfortunate, but in those days it wasn't a question of us saying "What can we do?" That's the way it was.

KC: How did Charlie react to this kind of thing? Did he just accept it, or did he ever express any....?

JJ: He accepted it, totally.

KC: He really didn't have much choice in those days.

JJ: Not much choice. And also, he came from Oklahoma, I believe, wasn't it? How could you go from Oklahoma to up North and suddenly have everything change? The whole country was racist.

---

He just blew like hell...

---

KC: So the radio shows were all remotes? You never did any in a studio anywhere?
JJ: Not on the road. But truthfully I don't think the studio facilities were that much better unless you got to the big cities.

KC: How many mics would they have on one of those remotes?

JJ: On remotes? Not many. They'd have one for the brass, one for the saxes, one for piano, one for rhythm. That's four mics. You'd never multi-mic the drums.

KC: Was Charlie really familiar with his equipment? Did he experiment with it any, or did you ever hear him do things that weren't allowed, so to speak?

JJ: No. He just had that one guitar, I think it was a Gibson, and he just blew like hell out of it.

KC: Was he loud?

JJ: No. Very tasteful, very wonderful. I don't think the amplifiers in those days were very loud. I think they were very self-contained.

KC: The "Spirituals to Swing" concert, 1939 at Carnegie Hall -- were you at that?

JJ: In '39? Yeah.

KC: How did that go over?

JJ: It went very well. People loved it. It was very entertaining.

KC: John Hammond wrote something about him and Benny having a little problem with John introducing Charlie with Count Basie's group.

JJ: Well, you know. Benny and John very often... not ever came to blows, but they really came nose-to-nose. John had very, very strong feelings about musicians, and I don't think that Hammond cared for any white musicians other than Benny. Really, he thought you had to be black to know how to swing.

KC: How did Charlie get along with guys like Hampton and Henderson?

JJ: Charlie got along beautifully with everybody.

KC: Hampton just had a biography come out a few years ago, and I think he mentions Charlie once. Dizzy Gillespie has done the same thing. Somehow he's overlooked. Surprisingly, one of the people in their biography who gives Charlie the most credit is Miles Davis. The two never even met, and Miles
Jerry Jerome Interview

credits him with getting him started in playing, that he was just so turned on by the music that he wanted to play.

JJ: I don't know, but from what you tell me it almost sounds like an ego problem more than anything else. They probably were jealous of Charlie's great musicianship and just didn't want to dwell on it.

KC: How did Charlie handle all that? All of a sudden here he is, he's number one in Downbeat and Metronome. Did it go to his head?

JJ: Not at all. He was just lovely. He played baseball on the team, you know. Just one of the guys. Very sweet. Never overbearing, never pushy. He was great, lovely. Very much like Teddy Wilson. Very laid-back.

Some session...

KC: How was it, working for Goodman?

JJ: I loved it.

KC: How was the money?

JJ: The money couldn't be better. The best money that I made was with Benny, with the big band. I don't know the exact specifics of how much money I made, but when you put together the Camel program and RCA recordings and the transcripts, it got to be a pretty damned good salary.

KC: I had one that I found at a garage sale once. It was Spring Song. You were on that one.

JJ: Yeah.

KC: As a matter of fact, you were the first I ever heard. A friend of mine played me "I Got Rhythm" and "Tea for Two," and that blew me away. I put the guitar in the closet and I quit. I gave up.

JJ: Oh that was some session.

KC: I still try to learn that line on "Tea for Two."

JJ: Well, I'll tell you, I think there's something wrong with the way they...I think they edited that thing.

KC: They did the "I Got Rhythm." They tore that up.
JJ: Yeah, some things that I remember seem to me a little different. I think they did it for time or something like that.

KC: I think at the time they didn't really realize that the music is more important than the player.

JJ: Well, they're getting around to doing that now -- that it's more important.

KC: Now, Charles played guitar with the orchestra for a while.

JJ: Not when I was in the band.

KC: That was after you'd left?

JJ: Yeah.

KC: Did Charlie ever express any musical desires or dreams or ideas that he'd like to do?

JJ: No. I got the total feeling that he was very content with life, just playing guitar, and with Benny. He loved it.

KC: Did he ever tell you who he liked? Django, or Louis Armstrong?

JJ: Lester Young.

KC: Did you ever cross paths with Jimmy Blanton?

JJ: No, I didn't.

KC: Minton's, in New York. When did that start?

JJ: Well, I don't know too much about Minton's because I never bothered going. I went there a few times, but I wasn't one of the steadies because I would find the jams on 52nd Street.

KC: There were other jams going on?

JJ: Oh yes, and much closer to home.
KC: Was the music really new, or was that just what was going on?

JJ: The only thing new was bebop.

KC: What do you think Charles' contribution was to that? I listen to a lot of jazz records. I have a hard time finding a lot of difference between Charlie and Charlie Parker.

JJ: You find that he's very much alike?

KC: Oh yeah.

JJ: Well you're not necessarily off-base on that, because I think even Lester was in that same area of chord invention. You know, getting away from the standard blues chords.

KC: Do you think that the war overshadowed any contributions made by anybody around that time?

JJ: It could've. Oh, it certainly did with Lester Young.

KC: What kind of hangouts were there in New York?

JJ: Kelly's Bay. The 52nd Street joints were a hangout. White Rose Bar was very popular -- drinks were only 15 cents a shot and you could eat food for nothing. That was very popular.

KC: How was Charlie received in these places?

JJ: Oh, with open arms. You have to understand that 52nd Street in those times was quite bohemian. They'd never tell a black guy he couldn't get in there. They'd always serve him, because it was a mixture of black and white. But that was the only true place I know...those kind of places, musicians' hangouts, were geared primarily to accepting white, black, brown, green, whatever. They wanted to make a living. They had no [prejudice], and if you did they didn't want your business if you felt that way.

KC: And how were the girls? Were the groupies about the same as they were in the Roxy?

JJ: Oh absolutely. They'd go for a guy and they'd go crazy about him. We had them all over the place. Honest.

KC: There were no rivalries as far as you could tell between anyone in the band? Any jealousies?

JJ: Yeah, sure there were jealousies. Like anything else, you know? Usually if one guy was sort of the designated hot player the guy that was not the hot player would be resenting the hot player playing his solos, so he'd be mad at the leader and mad at the guy playing the solos. I was very happy because I was
the solo player then. Benny gave me an awful lot to play, and the only time I didn't get to play was when we had short shows, because of timing. Like the Camel program, Benny would probably take my solos because he'd have to get in tunes, and talk and stuff like that.

KC: How many records did you make overall with the band?

JJ: With Benny? I don't know the actual numbers, but I did record with him from October '38 to June '40. I did all the stuff in there. Most of it was RCA and a lot of it was Columbia. But I don't know how many. I could never keep track of it.

KC: Where did you live when in New York?

JJ: In apartments. We rented an apartment. Or wherever we were we'd rent. A hotel....

KC: How long would you be up there at a time?

JJ: In New York? Well, if we stayed in the Waldorf it would be for the winter. We'd go in for a season. If we had go out to California we'd go for six weeks or two months.

KC: Did you fly or take a bus?

JJ: No, we'd fly out, or take a train. If we took a train we'd stop and play a gig on the way up. But with Benny we basically travelled by train, and bus if we couldn't get to the gig. If it was just a long haul we'd go by plane.

He had a perpetual smile on his face...

KC: Just a few more things. Did Charlie pay particular attention to the way he dressed?

JJ: Yeah, he was an immaculate dresser.

KC: His brother told a story that once he caught him putting his shoes on standing on the bed because he said didn't want to get his shoes dirty.

JJ: [Laughs] I know he was immaculate. I didn't know it was to that extreme. But he really was an immaculate dresser.

KC: Did he ever show signs of being sick when you knew him?
JJ: No. The time I knew Charlie he played baseball. He was in great shape.

KC: You said he smoked a lot of pot, though. How much? All the time?

JJ: Well, I never watched him, but I know he had a perpetual smile on his face. It looked like a pot smile, you know.

KC: And you never did that?

JJ: Nah, I just drank.

KC: How much would Charles drink?

JJ: Charlie? I don't know. He didn't drink much. I'd say he was more of a social drinker.

KC: There were no other drugs?

JJ: No. I'm sure not. In our day I think marijuana was just about as wild as you'd get.

KC: And where would you have to get that?

JJ: I don't know. Guys always found a connection somewhere. Groupies'd come around and say, "Hey, I know where we can get some shit." No matter where we'd go you'd always find people that would seek out the guys in the band and say, "Suck! We're smokers." They'd say, "Hey, I know where you can get some good suck," and they'd get it.

KC: How about the best job? Anything memorable?

JJ: Any great job? I don't remember anything of that, because every gig with Benny was great.

KC: There a record that's put out by Jazz Archives and it's some live remote recordings. Have you heard that one?

JJ: No.

KC: Well, you can hear people screaming. Were a lot of gigs like that? Were the kids just nuts?

JJ: Oh, absolutely. There would be very little dancing, mostly just listening and reacting. That's true.

KC: You can hear them yelling at Charlie even. They're yelling, "Go, Charlie, go!"
JJ: Just like the Beatles.

KC: Would Charlie play with the orchestra when you were on the road?

JJ: In the band itself? No, we always had a guitar player.

KC: Was the technological thing...did that bother anybody? Did somebody say, "Well that's not a real guitar" or did people just accept it?

JJ: Oh they absolutely accepted it. It's the player.

KC: He was loved by audiences everywhere he went?

JJ: Everywhere he went. That's it. Charlie was something.
Related Links

**Charlie Christian**

**Legend of the Jazz Guitar**

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**Other Charlie Christian Pages**

- [Solo Flight: The Charlie Christian Home Page](#)
- [The Ultimate Charlie Christian Page](#)
- [Classic Jazz Guitar](#)

**Biographical Entries**

- [WWW Rock Hall of Fame](#)
- [Guitar Greats](#)

**Reviews and Summaries of Published Material**

- Description of Peter Broadbent's [Charlie Christian biography](#)

**Various Jazz and Guitar Sites**

- [All About Jazz](#)
- [Just Jazz Guitar magazine](#)
- [Jazz Guitar Online](#)
- [Vintage Guitar magazine](#)
- [The Gibson Guitar Website](#)
- [Swing Chords](#)

**Pre-1950's Jazz History**

- [Classic Jazz Guitar](#)
- [The Thelonious Monk Website](#)
- [Kenny Clarke, Droppin Bombs!](#)
- [The Django Reinhardt Swing Page](#)
- [The Benny Carter Website](#)
Temporarily offline for revision.
The following discography lists the most commonly available recordings featuring Charlie Christian. It does not identify alternate takes or include any of the numerous radio broadcast recordings of the Benny Goodman Sextet. A more detailed and comprehensive discography is available in Peter Broadbent's Charlie Christian: the Seminal Electric Guitarist (see Bibliography).

Click on any of the underlined song titles to hear a Real Audio file of Charlie's solo. Information on Real Audio, as well as transcriptions (notation and tab) and Charlie's solos, are available in the Solos section.

- Benny Goodman Sextet Studio Sessions
- Benny Goodman Orchestra Studio Sessions
- Goodman/Basie All-Star Octet Session
- 2nd Spirituals to Swing Concert
- Metronome All-Star Sessions
- Guest Studio Sessions
- Jam Sessions
Most of Charlie's best-known recordings were with the Benny Goodman Sextet (which retained the Sextet name even after it became technically a Septet). On the studio cuts, Charlie's solos are inventive, but generally briefer and more reserved than on the jam sessions or live broadcasts. A fascinating rehearsal recording of the 7/11/40 "Benny's Bugle" session (shortened version available on Charlie Christian Vol. 5 from Media 7) illustrates the creative exchange that produced the Sextet's original tunes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Location</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 October 1939</td>
<td>Flying Home</td>
<td>Clarinet: Benny Goodman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rose Room</td>
<td>Piano: Fletcher Henderson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stardust</td>
<td>Guitar: Charlie Christian</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Bass: Artie Bernstein</td>
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<td>Drums: Nick Fatool</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vibes: Lionel Hampton</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 November 1939</td>
<td>Memories of You</td>
<td>Same as 2 Oct 1939</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Soft Winds</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seven Come Eleven</td>
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<td>20 December 1939</td>
<td>Shivers</td>
<td>Clarinet: Benny Goodman</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AC/DC Current</td>
<td>Piano: Johnny Guarnieri</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I'm Confessin'</td>
<td>Guitar: Charlie Christian</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vibes: Lionel Hampton</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 February 1940</td>
<td>Till Tom Special</td>
<td>Clarinet: Benny Goodman</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gone with &quot;What&quot;</td>
<td>Piano: Count Basie</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wind</td>
<td>Guitar: Charlie Christian</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vibes: Lionel Hampton</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 April 1940</td>
<td>The Sheik of Araby</td>
<td>Clarinet: Benny Goodman</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor Butterfly</td>
<td>Piano: Johnny Guarnieri</td>
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<td></td>
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| 10 April 1940 | Los Angeles   | I Surrender Dear  
Boy Meets Goy (Grand Slam) | Same as 3 April 1940                                                                 |
| 11 June 1940  | Los Angeles   | Six Appeal  
These Foolish Things  
Good Enough to Keep | Clarinet: Benny Goodman  
Piano: Dudley Brooks  
Guitar: Charlie Christian  
Bass: Artie Bernstein  
Drums: Nick Fatool  
Vibes: Lionel Hampton |
| 7 November 1940 | New York      | Wholly Cats  
Royal Garden Blues  
As Long As I Live  
Benny's Bugle | Clarinet: Benny Goodman  
Piano: Count Basie  
Guitar: Charlie Christian  
Bass: Artie Bernstein  
Drums: Harry Jaeger  
Trumpet: Cootie Williams  
Tenor Sax: George Auld |
| 19 December 1940 | New York      | Breakfast Feud  
I Can't Give You  
Anything But Love  
Gilly | Clarinet: Benny Goodman  
Piano: Kenny Kersey  
Guitar: Charlie Christian  
Bass: Artie Bernstein  
Drums: Harry Jaeger  
Trumpet: Cootie Williams  
Tenor Sax: George Auld |
| 15 January 1941 | New York      | Breakfast Feud  
Gone With What Draft  
I've Found a New Baby  
On the Alamo | Clarinet: Benny Goodman  
Piano: Count Basie  
Guitar: Charlie Christian  
Bass: Artie Bernstein  
Drums: Jo Jones  
Trumpet: Cootie Williams  
Tenor Sax: George Auld |
| 13 March 1941  | New York      | Airmail Special  
A Smo-o-o-oth One | Clarinet: Benny Goodman  
Piano: Johnny Guarnieri  
Guitar: Charlie Christian  
Bass: Artie Bernstein  
Drums: Dave Tough  
Trumpet: Cootie Williams  
Tenor Sax: George Auld |

Benny Goodman Orchestra Studio Sessions
The Goodman Orchestra had its own rhythm guitarist, so Charlie rarely recorded with the full band. Two notable exceptions are "Honeysuckle Rose," which features an extended Christian solo, and Charlie's famed composition, "Solo Flight," which became a popular hit after his death.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Location</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Honeysuckle Rose</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clarinet: Benny Goodman</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alto Sax: Toots Mondello, Buff Estes</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Tenor Sax: Bus Bassey, Jerry Jerome</td>
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<td>Piano: Fletcher Henderson</td>
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<td>Bass: Artie Bernstein</td>
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<td>Drums: Nick Fatool</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 March 1941</td>
<td>Solo Flight</td>
<td>Trumpets: Alex Filo, Irving Goodman, Jimmy Maxwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trombones: Cutty Cutshall, Lou McGarity</td>
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<td>Alto Sax: Gus Bivona, Skippy Martin</td>
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<td>Tenor Sax: George Auld, Pete Mondello</td>
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<td>Baritone: Bob Snyder</td>
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</table>

Goodman/Basie All-Star Octet Session
This historic session blended Benny and Charlie with key members of Basie's band, each a legend on his own instrument. It also paired Christian with his idol, Lester "Prez" Young. Ironically, Goodman was dissatisfied with his own playing and the cuts would go unreleased for over three decades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Location</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Metronome All-Star Sessions

Each year, winners of the annual Metronome poll would be gathered together for a all-star session. Christian was, of course, inevitably at the top of his category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Location</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### 2nd Spirituals to Swing Concert

After the success of John Hammond's "Spirituals to Swing" concert in 1938, a second concert was held on Christmas Eve 1939, bringing together many of the country's greatest blues, gospel, and jazz artists. Although there has been some confusion about the identity of the guitarist with the Kansas City Six at this concert (Eddie Durham has claimed the role), it was indeed Charlie Christian. In fact, Hammond's placement of Christian with Basie's group raised the ire of Benny Goodman.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Location</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 24 December 1939 Carnegie Hall New York | Pagin' the Devil Good Morning Blues Way Down Yonder | **The Kansas City Six**  
Piano: Count Basie  
Guitar: Charlie Christian, Freddy Green  
Bass: Walter Page  
Drums: Jo Jones  
Trumpet: Buck Clayton  
Tenor Sax: Lester Young |
| 24 December 1939 Carnegie Hall New York | I Got Rhythm  
**Flying Home**  
Memories of You  
Stompin' at the Savoy  
Honeysuckle Rose | **The Benny Goodman Sextet**  
Clarinet: Benny Goodman  
Piano: Fletcher Henderson  
Guitar: Charlie Christian  
Bass: Artie Bernstein  
Drums: Nick Fatool  
Vibes: Lionel Hampton |
24 December 1939  
Carnegie Hall  
New York  

Lady Be Good (Jam)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jam Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Trumpet: Buck Clayton, Shad Collins, Harry Edison, Ed Lewis  
Trombone: Dickie Wells, Benny Morton, Dan Minor  
Alto: Earle Warren  
Tenor: Lester Young, Buddy Tate  
Bari: Jack Washington  
Piano: Count Basie, Pete Johnson, Joe Sullivan  
Guitar: Charlie Christian  
Bass: Artie Bernstein, Walter Page  
Drums: Jo Jones, Nick Fatool |

Guest Sessions

Charlie's first studio session was for BG Sextet bandmate Hampton. The "Orchestra" assembled by Hamp featured some legendary names, including a young Dizzy Gillespie on trumpet. Christian would back the vibraphonist again one month later in a swinging, light-hearted session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date and Location</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra | 11 September 1939  
New York | When Lights are Low  
One Sweet Letter from You  
Hot Mallets  
Early session Hop | Trumpet: Dizzy Gillespie  
Alto Sax: Benny Carter  
Tenor Sax: Chu Berry, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster  
Vibes: Lionel Hampton  
Piano: Clyde Hart  
Guitar: Charlie Christian  
Bass: Milt Hinton  
Drums: Cozy Cole |
| Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra | 12 October 1939  
New York | I'm On My Way From You  
Haven't Named It Yet  
The Heebie Jeebies | Trumpet: Red Allen  
Trombone: J. C. Higginbotham  
Alto: Earl Bostic  
Vibes: Lionel Hampton  
Piano: Clyde Hart  
Guitar: Charlie Christian  
Bass: Artie Bernstein  
Drums: Sidney Catlett |
Charlie and three other members of the BG Sextet join the band accompanying blues singer Ida Cox. On this lengthy session Christian eschews his usual style in favour of a more traditional blues approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ida Cox and her All Star Band</th>
<th>31 October 1939 New York</th>
<th>Deep Sea Blues</th>
<th>Death Letter Blues</th>
<th>One Hour Mama</th>
<th>Four Day Creep</th>
<th>Pink Slip Blues</th>
<th>Hard Times Blues</th>
<th>Take Him Off My Mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Charlie plays mainly rhythm as he backs crooner Eddy Howard on these cuts. "Stardust" features a brief solo virtually identical to the first chorus of the Jerome session version.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eddy Howard</th>
<th>4 October 1940 New York</th>
<th>Old Fashioned Love</th>
<th>Stardust</th>
<th>Exactly Like You</th>
<th>Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clarinet: Edmond Hall</td>
<td>Bass: Billy Taylor</td>
<td>Drums: Yank Porter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This unusual session features Charlie playing blues riffs on acoustic guitar, accompanied by "Lux" Lewis on the celeste.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Location</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 September 1939 Harlem Breakfast Club Minneapolis, Minn.</td>
<td>I Got Rhythm Stardust Tea for Two</td>
<td>Tenor Sax: Jerry Jerome Piano: Frankie Hines Guitar: Charlie Christian Bass: Oscar Pettiford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 March 1941 Studio New York</td>
<td>Waitin' for Benny I Can't Believe That You're in Love With Me Rose Room I Hadn't Anyone 'Til You Blues in B</td>
<td>Piano: Johnny Guarnieri Guitar: Charlie Christian Drums: Dave Tough Trumpet: Cootie Williams Tenor Sax: George Auld</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This classic jam session with Jerry Jerome, recorded in a private Minneapolis home serving as an after-hours club, features some of Charlie's most exciting playing. The "drummer" many listeners hear is actually Charlie tapping his foot.

The engineer had the recorder running as the Sextet jammed while waiting for Goodman before the 13/03/41 studio session. On "Waitin' for Benny" the musicians jam on the head riff of "A Smo-o-o-oth One," one of the two cuts they were about to record.
The nightly jam sessions at Minton's Playhouse and Monroe's Uptown House are often hailed as the birth of bebop. The recordings captured by jazz buff Jerry Newman include some of Charlie's most energetic and imaginative playing. Incidentally, despite misleading liner notes and releases, Thelonious Monk did not play with Charlie on any of the recorded sessions. Nor did Charlie play on "Kerouac."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 12 May 1941| Minton's Playhouse     | Trumpet: Joe Guy
              Piano: Kenny Kersey
              Guitar: Charlie Christian
              Bass: Nick Fenton
              Drums: Kenny Clarke |
|            | New York               | Swing to Bop (Topsy)
              Stompin' at the Savoy                            |
| May 1941   | Minton's Playhouse     | Trumpets: Joe Guy, Dizzy Gillespie (?)
              Tenor Sax: Don Byas
              Piano: Unknown
              Guitar: Charlie Christian
              Bass: Unknown
              Drums: Unknown          |
|            | New York               | Up on Teddy's Hill
              (Honeysuckle Rose)
              Down on Teddy's Hill (aka Pagin' Dr. Christian) (I Got Rhythm) |
| May 1941   | Monroe's Uptown House  | Trumpets: Joe Guy
              Tenor Sax: Don Byas
              Piano: Al Tinney
              Guitar: Charlie Christian
              Bass: Ebenezer Paul
              Drums: Taps Miller      |
|            | New York               | Guy's Got To Go (I Got Rhythm)                      |
| May 1941   | Monroe's Uptown House  | Trumpets: Joe Guy, Hot Lips Page
              Alto Sax: Rudy Williams
              Tenor Sax: Don Byas
              Piano: Al Tinney
              Guitar: Charlie Christian
              Bass: Ebenezer Paul
              Drums: Unknown          |
|            | New York               | Lip's Flips (Stompin' at the Savoy)                 |
Online Resources

Please see the Links section.

Biography


Paperback biography with photos, comprehensive discography. Read the publisher's description here.


A primary source on Christian's placement with Goodman. Unfortunately, also the origin of the questionable but oft-repeated "large hat,...purple shirt and yellow shoes" anecdote.


Discography


See above.

**Transcriptions**


Twenty transcriptions, including As Long as I Live, Dinah, Good Morning Blues, Guy's Got to Go, Honeysuckle Rose, I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Ida, I surrender Dear, I've Found a New Baby, Lips Flips, Pagin' the Devil, The Sheik of Araby, Stardust, Swing to Bop, and Up on Teddy's Hill. Also includes a useful section on Charlie's style. In general the selections are rather obscure, however, with a focus on radio and other non-studio recordings rather than the more familiar Columbia material. Widely distributed at one time, but e-mail me for the address of the distributor if necessary.


18 pages. Transcriptions of the Harlem jams: Swing to Bop (nine choruses); Lips Flips (three choruses); Guy's Got To Go (two choruses), and Up on Teddy's Hill.


Includes: A Smooth One, Wholly Cats, Six Appeal, Seven Come Eleven, Gone With What Wind, Air Mail Special, Benny's Bugle, Breakfast Feud, Shivers, Till Tom Special, Grand Slam, Solo Flight


Ten transcriptions, some with all instruments. Includes a complete score of the Fletcher Henderson arrangement of "Honeysuckle Rose"! Difficult to find in North America, but look in university libraries.

**Scholarly Articles and Theses**


**Foreign Language Articles**


**Selected Magazine Articles**


Undoubtedly ghostwritten.


**Special Issues**

*Guitar Player* 16.3 (March 1982).

**Newsletter**

*Solo Flight: The Charlie Christian Newsletter*
Unquestionably the resource for Charlie Christian researchers and fans. Contains the latest news of CC-related recordings, publications and events, accompanied by photos, transcriptions, and exceptionally well-informed commentary and reviews. Currently includes 3 annual issues, beginning in 1995. Published by Leo Valdes.

Video


Video documentary of Charles' life and music. Read [Leo Valdes' review](http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/ccbib.htm) here. The video can be purchased online from [CD-Now](http://www.cdnow.com).

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Video Review

Solo Flight: The Genius of Charlie Christian

Written and directed by Gary Don Rhodes

by Leo Valdes

The following review was originally published in Solo Flight: The Charlie Christian Newsletter, Issue 3 (Summer 1997) and is reprinted with permission. The video can be purchased online from CD-Now. -GH

Just a few months prior to the release of Peter Broadbent's book, Gary Don Rhodes' film on Charlie Christian was finally released on videocassette in late 1996.

Rhodes, the filmmaker from Norman, Oklahoma, has also done a considerable amount of research on Charles' life and times in Oklahoma City and on jazz in OKC during its heyday -- probably more than anyone else. This video is a re-edited version of the original film that premiered to a live audience at the Fannin County Museum of History in Bonham, Texas, on April 20, 1992 to raise money for the Texas historical marker now at Charlie Christian's grave site. Exactly a month later it was telecast over Oklahoma PBS station OETA.

The thirty-one minute documentary presents CC's life, his influences, and the considerable impact that he had on the history of jazz. The influence that he had on the racial desegregation in jazz, especially before he gained national prominence, is well covered. Since there is no extant movie footage of CC, the narration is backed by many photos of Charles, his fellow musicians, and OKC's Second Street area (both from the 1930s and the present day) where he grew up and played in the local clubs. Rhodes was wise not to film his work in color -- it comes together with the featured photographs much better this way.

Film time is shared just about equally by John Jones' narrative and more than a dozen interviews with people who new Charles in OKC and Bonham. The updated version has added interviews with "legendary jazz vibraphonist" Lionel Hampton and "legendary jazz guitarist" Herb Ellis. Throughout the video, the recordings of Charlie Christian can be heard in the background.

Although Charles' daughter was very young at the time and moved away from the OKC area before her father joined Goodman, I would have liked to have seen an interview with Billie Jean Christian Johnson -- she could have given a broader insight by discussing later events and telling about the honors she has accepted on his behalf. There's a wonderful interview with her mother, Margretta Christian Downey, though.

Incidentally, Rhodes had no input on the notes on the back of the video box cover which, to his consternation and embarrassment, incorrectly list Charlie Christian's year of birth. If you haven't seen Gary's film yet, you need to sit down and order a copy of this videocassette ASAP.

By the way, Gary, that was an ingenious opening with the sextet's Carnegie Hall broadcast coming over the vintage radio.
Introduction

This brief tutorial is intended as an introduction to the improvisational method developed by Charlie Christian. Although it is aimed at amateur guitarists just beginning to explore jazz, it assumes a basic knowledge of musical notation and chord composition. It also assumes a familiarity with fundamental jazz guitar technique, such as playing "swing eighths."

Note: Please keep in mind that this method of jazz improvisation is only one of many. It is not intended as a substitute for learning about scales, modes, or improvising on melodies. Absorbing the style of any single guitarist, even one as influential as Christian, is only a beginning. Most successful jazz guitarists blend a variety of improvisational methods into a personal style.

Playing Over Chord Shapes

The fundamental principle of Christian's style is surprisingly simple: visualize chord shapes.

If you're like most electric guitarists, one of the first things you learned was the two-fingered "power chord." You soon realized what a simple and effective tool that was, since you could play hundreds of songs just by moving
The same simple chord shape up and down the fretboard, rather than learning a new fingering for every major chord.

The same basic principle applies to Charlie Christian's improvisational method. By basing solos on movable chord shapes rather than scales or melodies, Charlie could play effortlessly in any key. Improvising in 5 flats (Db) may be daunting for the beginning guitarist, but it's simple if you position your fingers in a familiar shape at the 9th fret.

Once your fingers become accustomed to soloing over shapes, it will be almost impossible to play a "wrong" note, no matter what the key (you may play boring notes, but not "wrong" ones). Eventually, you'll develop a vocabulary of licks and runs that will see you through most situations.

**Shape 1**

**The Basic Position:** We'll begin with a simple example. Let's say you're soloing over a "G" chord. You might visualize this familiar shape for a major triad (composed of the root, 3rd, and 5th):

You already know that you can move this shape up and down the fretboard to play any major triad: an Ab would be positioned at the fourth fret, a Db at the ninth, and so on. As long as you know where the root is, you'll at least have the triad notes at your fingertips. Although a solo limited to these tones would be stunningly boring, even a simple major triad arpeggio can be interesting with the proper phrasing. For example, Charlie often played the following arpeggio lick:

**Example:** An arpeggio played in the typical Christian style
Adding Chord Tones: Now let's build up the tonal possibilities by adding a few of the notes most often associated with "the jazz sound": the 6th, b7th, and 9th. We'll add to our shape any of these notes within easy reach of the third position.

Exercise 1.1 To familiarize yourself with this shape, play the following exercise until your fingers bleed:

Adding Approach Notes: We can build further on the same shape by adding chromatic and scalewise approach notes such as the b3, the b9, and the 11th (or 4th). Since these are all passing or approach notes (indicated by the white crosses), they are typically used to lead in to the nearest chord note, and usually are sustained only for special effects. Note that the 4th/11th (a C, in the case of our G major chord) is an unusual case, and Charlie generally uses it in an appoggiatura: 4-b3-3 (C-Bb-B, over the G major).
Exercise 1.2 Now practice the following exercise, which demonstrates the use of passing tones:

An Example: The following fragment of Charlie's solo in "Grand Slam" is based on the above shape positioned at the first fret (i.e. the familiar "F" shape). Note the use of passing tones as well as the appoggiatura (Bb-G#-A) between bars 2 and 3.
Practice Break

Before we go on, here are some ideas for practicing what you've just learned:

- Lock your hand in position and experiment. Try creating licks based solely on this shape in one position. Resist the temptation to move your hand up or down the fretboard.
- Play a lick at the first fret (in an "F" position), then play it one semitone up (i.e. at the second fret). Continue until you reach the 12th fret.
More Chord Shapes

Now that you've mastered one chord shape, it should be easy to apply the same principle to others. Note that in the examples below I haven't selected all of the possible chord tones and passing or approach notes for each shape. Instead, I've tried to limit the notes to those Charlie played most often.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Shape 2 (Maj Triad)</th>
<th>With Added Tones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/tutorial/cctut2.htm" alt="Basic Shape 2 (Maj Triad)" /></td>
<td><img src="http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/tutorial/cctut2.htm" alt="With Added Tones" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example**

![Example](http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/tutorial/cctut2.htm)

Listen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Shape 3 (Maj Triad)</th>
<th>With Added Tones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/tutorial/cctut2.htm" alt="Basic Shape 3 (Maj Triad)" /></td>
<td><img src="http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/tutorial/cctut2.htm" alt="With Added Tones" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example**

![Example](http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/tutorial/cctut2.htm)

Listen
**Other Shapes:** The few shapes we've seen so far are, of course, only a beginning. I'll be adding more as time
permits, but for now (in the time-honoured tradition of textbook writers) the rest are left "as an exercise for the student." See if you can construct similar shapes on minor triads or diminished chords. Eventually, you'll build up a vocabulary of licks and shapes similar to Charlie's own.

An Example in Tab: To familiarize yourself with Christian's use of shapes, you may want to study his Grand Slam solo in tab format.
Grand Slam

Trans. G. Hansen
WCO 26744-B
10 April 1940

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/grands_f.htm [14/03/2003 22.56.35]
Charlie Christian  Legend of the Jazz Guitar

Transcriptions and audio files of selected solos by Charlie Christian

Listening to the Audio Files For best results, the transcription section requires a browser supporting frames and RealAudio 3.0 or later. Click here to test if your browser supports streamed RealAudio 3.0 files. If not, go here to download a free copy of the appropriate RealAudio player or plugin.

Printing the Transcriptions The transcriptions are in .GIF graphics format, and can be saved to disk and printed with any graphics program. To print directly from a browser, MSIE and Netscape users should left click in the window containing the transcription before clicking the browser's Print button.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Matrix</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Bpm</th>
<th>Transcribed</th>
<th>Notation</th>
<th>Tab</th>
<th>Real Audio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Got Rhythm</td>
<td>Take 2, Chor. A</td>
<td>24 September 1939</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Got Rhythm</td>
<td>Take 2, Chor. B</td>
<td>24 September 1939</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flying Home</td>
<td>WCO 26132-A</td>
<td>2 October 1939</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose Room</td>
<td>WCO 26133-A</td>
<td>2 October 1939</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rose Room</td>
<td>Broadcast</td>
<td>9 October 1939</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Haven't Named It Yet</td>
<td>042942-1</td>
<td>12 October 1939</td>
<td>Db</td>
<td>216</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seven Come Eleven</td>
<td>WCO 26286</td>
<td>22 November 1939</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>Mark Smart</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinah</td>
<td>Broadcast</td>
<td>16 December 1939</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Concert</td>
<td>24 December 1939</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>Guido Deimel</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>All-Star Strut</td>
<td>WCO 26490-B</td>
<td>7 February 1940</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>Clay Moore</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Track</td>
<td>Catalog</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Key/Scale</td>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Played</td>
<td>Tapped</td>
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<td>Till Tom Special</td>
<td>WCO 26494-A</td>
<td>7 February 1940</td>
<td>Fm</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>Marco Sabattini</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Slam</td>
<td>WCO 26744-B</td>
<td>10 April 1940</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six Appeal</td>
<td>WCO 26940-A</td>
<td>11 June 1940</td>
<td>Fm</td>
<td>144</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good Enough to Keep</td>
<td>WCO 26942-A</td>
<td>11 June 1940</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stardust</td>
<td>CO 28795-1</td>
<td>4 October 1940</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Never Knew</td>
<td>Unreleased</td>
<td>28 October 1940</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wholly Cats</td>
<td>CO 29027-2 (6)</td>
<td>7 November 1940</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>198</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royal Garden Blues</td>
<td>CO 29028-1 (3)</td>
<td>7 November 1940</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breakfast Feud</td>
<td>CO 29512-1</td>
<td>15 January 1941</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
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<td>On the Alamo</td>
<td>CO 29513-1</td>
<td>15 January 1941</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>92</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Found A New Baby</td>
<td>CO 29514-1</td>
<td>15 January 1941</td>
<td>Dm</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Smo-o-o-oth One</td>
<td>CO 29942-1 (3)</td>
<td>13 March 1941</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
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<td>Airmail Special</td>
<td>Broadcast</td>
<td>17 March 1941</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>G. Hansen</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</table>
I Found a New Baby

Trans. G. Hansen
CO 29514-1
15 January 1941

I Found a New Baby

On the Alamo

Trans. G. Hansen
CO 29513-1
15 January 1941

Wholly Cats

Trans. G. Hansen
C0 29027-2 (6)
7 November 1940

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/wholly_f.htm [14/03/2003 22.57.35]
I Never Knew

Trans. G. Hansen
28 October 1940

I Never Knew

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

(Basie Solo)

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]

\[ Bb7 \]

\[ F \]
Till Tom Special
Trans. Marco Sabattini
WCO 26494-A
7 February 1940

same chords each 2 bars to end

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/tillto_f.htm [14/03/2003 22.58.05]
Flying Home

Trans. Guido Deimel
2nd Spirituals to Swing Concert
24 December 1939

Bridge

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/flyin2_f.htm [14/03/2003 22.58.18]
Trans. G. Hansen  
Broadcast  
16 December 1939

Dinah

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/dinah_f.htm [14/03/2003 22.58.23]
Seven Come Eleven

Trans. Mark Smart
WCO 26286
22 November 1939

Ab

G7

slide C7

F7

Bb7

Eb7

Ab

bend

bend

bend

29
Rose Room

Trans. G. Hansen
Broadcast
9 October 1939

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/rose2_f.htm [14/03/2003 22.58.44]
I Got Rhythm (take 2, chorus B)

Trans. G. Hansen
Jerome Session take 2
24 September 1939
Trans. Marco Sabattini
WCO 26494-A
7 February 1940

Till Tom Special

Fm7
Db7
C7

same chords each 2 bars to end

5

9

13
Trans. Marco Sabattini
WCO 26494-A
7 February 1940

Till Tom Special

Fm7 Db7 C7

same chords each 2 bars to end

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/tillo_n.gif

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/tillo_n.gif

[14/03/2003 22.59.22]
All-Star Strut

Trans. Clay Moore

WCO 26490-B

7 February 1940
SORRY

The requested item is not yet available.
Trans. Guido Deime!
2nd Spirituals to Swing Concert
24 December 1939

Flying Home

Bridge

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/flyin2_n.gif (1 of 2) [14/03/2003 22.59.43]
Trans. G. Hansen

Broadcast
16 December 1939

Dinah
Trans. G. Hansen
Broadcast
16 December 1939

Dinah

[Music notation image]

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/dinah_n.gif [14/03/2003 22.59.54]
Seven Come Eleven

Trans. Mark Smart
WCO 26386
22 November 1939
Seven Come Eleven

Trans. Mark Smart
WCO 26286
22 November 1939
Rose Room

Trans. G. Hansen
Broadcast
9 October 1939

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/rose2_t.gif
Flying Home

Trans. G. Hansen
WCO 26132-A
2 October 1939

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/flying_n.gif [14/03/2003 23.00.59]
Trans. G. Hansen

Airmail Special

Broadcast
17 March 1941
Airmail Special

Trans. G. Hansen
Broadcast
17 March 1941

\[
\begin{array}{c}
C & C/E & F & G7 & C & A7 & Dm & 3 & G7 \\
5 & C & C/E & F & F\#dim & C/G & G7 & C \\
9 & C & C/E & F & G7 & C & A7 & Dm & 3 & G7 & 3 \\
13 & C & C7/E & F & F\#dim & C/G & G7 & C \\
17 & Cdim & & & & & & & & & \\
21 & Cdim & Bdim & Bbdim & Adim & Ab7 & G7 \\
25 & C & C/E & F & G7 & C & A7 & Dm & & G7 \\
29 & C & C7/E & F & F\#dim & C/G & G7 & C \\
\end{array}
\]
A Smo-o-o-oth One

Trans. G. Hansen
CO 29942-1 (3)
13 March 1941
I Found a New Baby

Trans. G. Hansen
CO 29514-1
15 January 1941

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/ifound_t.gif [14/03/2003 23.01.51]
I Found a New Baby

Trans. G. Hansen
C0 29514-1
15 January 1941
On the Alamo

Trans. G. Hansen
CO 29513-1
15 January 1941
On the Alamo

Trans. G. Hansen
CO 29513-1
15 January 1941

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/alamo_n.gif
Breakfast Feud

Trans. G. Hansen
CO 29512-1
15 January 1941
Royal Garden Blues

Trans. G. Hansen
C0 29028-1 (3)
7 November 1940

(bend & rel.)

(Auld) (Cootie) (Benny) (Basie)

(doot doot)

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/royal_t.gif
Royal Garden Blues

Trans. G. Hansen
C0 29028-1 (3)
7 November 1940

Bb7

5

Gm7

C7

F

9

(Auld)

(Cootie)

(Berry)

(Basie)

13 (doot doot)

Bb7

F7

17

Gm7

C7

F

21

3

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/royal_n.gif
Wholly Cats

Trans. G. Hansen
CO 29027-2 (6)
7 November 1940

G7  C9   C9  C#dim  G

Am7  D7  G

G

G7  C9  C9  C#dim  G

Am7  D7  G

3
I Never Knew

Trans. G. Hansen

28 October 1940

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/inever_n.gif

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/inever_n.gif

[14/03/2003 23.03.08]
Good Enough to Keep

Trans. G. Hansen
WCO 26942-A
11 June 1940

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/good_n.gif

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/good_n.gif [14/03/2003 23.03.42]
Six Appeal

Trans. G. Hansen
WCO 26940-A
11 June 1940

Fm

Gm

C7

Fm

C#dim

Fm

Fm
I Got Rhythm (take 2 chorus A)

Trans. G. Hansen
Jerome Session take 2
24 September 1939

Yes Charlie!

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/solos/rhyt2a_t.gif [14/03/2003 23.04.37]
I Got Rhythm (take 2, chorus A)

Trans. G. Hansen
Jerome Session take 2
24 September 1939

Bb G7/D Cm7 F7 Bb G7/D Cm7 F7

Bb D7 Eb7 Edim Bb F7

Yes Charlie!

straight G7/D Cm7 F7 Bb G7/D Cm7 F7

Bb D7 Eb7 Edim Bb F7 Bb

G7

C7

F7

Eb G7/D Cm7 F7 Bb G7/D Cm7 F7

Bb D7 Eb7 Edim Bb F7

Bb
Although Charlie’s solos were always fresh and interesting, he relied heavily on a few simple licks or runs based on standard chord constructions and positions. Since the positioning remains the same, Christian could solo effortlessly in any key by linking these basic forms.

Some of the most common licks are described below. All have been transposed to the key of C. Remember, however, that the fingering remains the same in any key.

Note: in the following, numbers above the staff represent fingering; numbers below indicate strings.

Lick 1: Descending on a Dom7

By far the most common lick in Charlie's solos is a simple descending run beginning on the first string with the 3rd of a dom7th chord. Master this one and you'll start sounding like Charlie in no time.

The basic notes are: 3 9 b7 5 3 9 R

But Charlie usually includes chromatic passing tones: 3 (b3) 9 b7 5 3 9 (b9) R

He also frequently leads into the next chord by continuing the chromatic descent to the b7.
Lick 2: Arpeggio on a 13th

Another very common Charlie Christian lick is played over a 7th, 9th, or 13th chord beginning with the 3rd on the 4th string. In addition to the example below, look for this lick in "Solo Flight," "I Found a New Baby," "Six Appeal," and many others.

The basic notes are: 3 5 b7 9 13 5

---

Lick 3: Ascending on a Dom7

Beginning on the b7 gives this simple run an interesting diminished sound.
The basic notes are: **b7 3 5 6 b7 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Lick</th>
<th>Listen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Lick Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Listen Button" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eg.3a Rose Room

![Rose Room Lick](image3)

Eg.3b I Found a New Baby

![I Found a New Baby Lick](image4)

**Lick 4: Up and Down the Dom7**

Another simple but common Christian lick.

Basic notes are: **5 6 b7 6 5 4 3 2 R**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Lick</th>
<th>Listen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Lick Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Listen Button" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/cclicks.htm (3 of 4) [14/03/2003 23.05.02]
Lick 5: Chorus Tag

It sounds a bit corny to modern ears, but Christian often used a variant of this lick to end a chorus.

The basic notes are: b3 3 5 4 b3 3 R 6 R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Lick</th>
<th>Listen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>1 2 1 3 1 2 3 1 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Putting it All Together

Charlie’s real genius lay in seamlessly linking these simple licks. In this example from his "Seven Come Eleven" solo, Charlie uses most of the above licks while playing through a cycle of fifths.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charlie Christian</th>
<th>Waldorf Astoria</th>
<th>Waldorf Astoria</th>
<th>Waldorf Astoria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legend of the Jazz Guitar</strong></td>
<td>Sept. 1939</td>
<td>Sept. 1939</td>
<td>Sept. 1939</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Charlie Christian</strong></td>
<td>320x312 (68K)</td>
<td>249x346 (12K)</td>
<td>237x262 (9K)</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Image 107x494 to 221x605]</td>
<td>[Image 275x486 to 367x614]</td>
<td>[Image 418x500 to 510x602]</td>
<td>[Image 114x274 to 214x361]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Metronome All Star Band</td>
<td>Metronome All Star Band</td>
<td>Eddy Howard Session</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 7, 1940</td>
<td>Feb. 7, 1940</td>
<td>Oct. 4, 1940</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>256x222 (13K)</td>
<td>255x275 (15K)</td>
<td>265x296 (19K)</td>
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(Click on thumbnails to view fullsize pictures)
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Recording session with Basie, Young et al</td>
<td>Oct. 28, 1940</td>
<td>561x425 (44K)</td>
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<td>2nd Metronome All-Star Session</td>
<td>Jan. 16, 1941</td>
<td>262x294 (12K)</td>
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<td>Edmond Hall Celeste Quartet</td>
<td>Feb. 5, 1941</td>
<td>600x441 (75K)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Benny Goodman Sextet</td>
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<td>250x133 (8K)</td>
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<tr>
<td>With Benny Goodman</td>
<td></td>
<td>340x365 (25K)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles, Don Redman, and Basie</td>
<td></td>
<td>413x341 (36K)</td>
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</table>
Original Gibson advertisement for the ES150 and amp
464x350 (57K)

A vintage Gibson ES150
212x293 (10K)
(L-R) Lester Young (sax), Jo Jones (dms), Buck Clayton (tpt), Freddie Green (gtr), Benny Goodman (clar), Walter Page (bass), Charlie Christian (gtr), Count Basie (pno)
(L-R) Charlie Christian, Don Redman, Count Basie
ES-150 MODEL

Another guitar miracle by Gibson—a true unimpaired tone amplified by electricity.

The guitar itself is a full-sized Gibson—you hold it, tune it and play it just as you would any guitar, and in appearance it is only slightly different—but strike the strings lightly and you have a tone that can be amplified to any volume you desire. Adjust the tone control and you change the tonal color from a rich bass to a brilliant treble.

The pick-up unit is built inside the guitar and perfectly cushioned at the Gibson factory for balanced tone.

PICK-UP UNIT

With the exception of the attractively bound coil and tone and volume controls, the entire unit is built inside the guitar body—stainless steel mesh plate which gives the maximum in power and long life—the super-sensitive pickup piece in chrome plated—tone and volume controls conveniently placed for instant regulation.

15 foot shielded cord with fool-proof shielded plugs and spring protector—demarces tone guitar when not in use.

INSTRUMENT

Grand auditorium body—carved spruce top—solid maple back and rim—mahogany neck and fingerboard—chocolate brown finish with golden sunburst—white pearl binding on top and bottom of body—aluminy inlaid stainless bridge—brown celluloid fingerboard—individual nickel machine heads with white names—exclusive Gibson Adjustable Trust Rod neck—19 frets.

PRICE: Instrument and 15 foot cord $175.00

CASE: No. 134 Heavy Felt-lined construction—waterproof insulation—black leather covering—purified Kalamazoo $14.00.

No. 154 Acoustic cloth covering—Heavy Felt-lined construction—purple Kalamazoo $14.00.

CARO COVER: Tan zipper waterproof cover—leather bindings—metal bumpers $11.00.

AMPLIFIER: The ES-150 is designed to be used with the ES-150 amplifier illustrated on page 35. Price $75.00.
Revisiting Charlie Christian

Kevin Centlivre's essay on the influences and legacy of Charlie's music.

Video Review

Leo Valdes' review of Solo Flight: The Genius of Charlie Christian, the Charlie Christian documentary now available on video.

Bonham, Texas

Kevin Centlivre's personal account of his quest for Charlie Christian's gravesite.

Interview with Jerry Jerome

Exclusive! The Benny Goodman veteran describes life on the road with Charlie.

Contributors

The CC fans, collectors, and experts who have helped develop this site.
Revisiting Charlie Christian

by Kevin Centlivre

Music is one of the oldest things in the world. There is always someone that will come along and revise - and you take something a hundred years old and you make it fresh. In explaining this to a lot of people that are not musically inclined, you can confuse them. So, music is educational and confusing. That's my philosophy. You get a head full of something - the first thing you want to know - there has got to be an explanation for this, but what? When someone starts explaining it to you, yee gods, ya don't have anything, cause you get caught off base. And when you get caught off base, you out! (Clarence Christian, 1978)

It was the spring of 1976 when my friend Craig McKinney introduced me to what has become known as the "Minneapolis Sessions," Charlie Christian's after-hours jamming with Jerry Jerome and Oscar Pettiford from September 1939. At the time, I had been playing guitar for about six years, and my limited knowledge of pentatonic blues figures was confounded by what I had heard. I had an even more limited knowledge of jazz, and what I considered to be "old music" suddenly came alive. I began to learn guitar all over again, this time with the help of Charlie Christian.

It is not surprising that I still listen to these sessions, and am still as awestruck as the first time I heard them, yet now I have a greater understanding of the music and that makes it all the more impressive to me.

Charles Christian was one of the few musical geniuses of our departing century, and the music still possesses a freshness and originality almost unachieved by any other artist. Much of the popular music of the Twentieth Century seems dated after even a few years, but the soaring solos and harmonic clarity of Charles Christian is still challenging and daring. But, many people wonder, where did it come from?

It seems funny that now there is more information available than there was in 1976, when Christian was still shrouded in mystery. It seems the opposite should be true, that old knowledge should be lost rather than discovered. More thorough biographies and complete discographies exist now that were unheard of in 1976, when I was introduced to Mr. Christian. The release of the French Media 7 Masters of Jazz "Charlie Christian - The Complete Edition 1939 - 1941" (1994) was like a dream come true to all Christian fans. The excellent liner notes by Claude Carriere, although flawed in a few areas, more than complement the set, and add even more wonderment to the inspiring guitarist's work. A person discovering CC now has a lot more at hand than I did, and I had to seek out the answers through interviews with Charlie's last surviving brother, Clarence, and critical analysis of the work then existing, much of which was full of errors and misleading information. Most analogies ran thus: Christian was a blues "natural" inspired by Lester Young and his Texas background. His musical knowledge was limited to the blues, and he probably had no formal musical education.

The Early Years

One of the worst essays was the accompanying liner notes to Columbia CL652, "Charlie Christian with the BG Sextet," by Al Avakian and Bob Prince. In it they say "Charlie Christian's Texas birthplace and Oklahoma home were areas relatively untouched by more sophisticated forms and expressions than the blues. Charlie's father played guitar and so did Charlie." (1)
The truth is, Charlie's father played many instruments and knew more than the blues. His mother too, was a musician and singer. Clarence "Henry" Christian employed himself as a musician, and taught his 3 sons to play a variety of instruments and popular songs of the day. When Charles was a baby, his father would lie small stringed instruments next to the child and let him explore the sonority. As the child grew, so would the size of the instrument, so Charles learned music as a normal part of life, and truly his greatest influence came from his own home. The sons would accompany their father through the more well-to-do white neighborhoods of OKC and serenade the residents in return for cash, clothing, or food. By the time he was 13, his father had died, and his older brother Edward, 10 years his senior, had his own band in OKC.

Charles attended Douglass Elementary School at OKC, and the music instructor, Miss Zelia Breaux, taught the children music appreciation, the classics, and personal instruction. I have in my possession handwritten manuscripts of the Christian brothers that attest to this. No doubt influenced by Louis Armstrong, Charles wanted to learn the trumpet, but after a few lessons and finding out you get a disfigured upper lip, he quit.

Louis Armstrong would become the next greatest influence. He demonstrated to young blacks that they could achieve financial, if not racial, equality. And jazz was the vehicle that made this possible.

Charles also learned baseball from his father, and it too became a passion that would remain with him the rest of his life. The "Negro Leagues" also offered a chance at financial freedom, and many thought the young Charles was destined to become a baseball great.

On any pleasant afternoon, Charles was "off to hit the stick" (2) as he would say. But a practical joke played on his older brother by a bandmate that included Charles would have a great impact on the young ballplayer.

Local trumpeter James Simpson and guitarist Ralph "Bigfoot Chuck" Hamilton (who played a chordal style that we may hear hints of in "Stardust," "Soft Winds," "One Sweet Letter" or "I'm Confessin'") taught Charles three songs, "Rose Room," "Tea For Two," and "Sweet Georgia Brown," that he would play at a jam session. Indeed, Charlie was already an "adequate" musician at this time, or Simpson wouldn't have recruited him for his "trick." The older Edward, not knowing of his brother's ability, was astonished as well as the rest of the clientele. Thus, the springboard to jazz musician from baseball hopeful took place. The young guitarist immersed himself in jazz, as well as marijuana, which too, had become associated with Armstrong. Louis was the king, and if you wanted what he had you did what he did, like also wearing fine clothes, which also became an obsession to Charlie Christian.

Another young trumpeter may have also had an impact, although indirectly. Bix Biederbecke was featured on a recording from 1927 along with guitarist Eddie Lang, "Singin' the Blues." Lang's diminished arpeggios must not have escaped the young guitarist, for he utilized them incessantly. But they are also present in the classics, and the now very famous "Maple Leaf Rag," by Scott Joplin. It is without doubt that the young musician was also familiar with the work of guitarist Lonnie Johnson, who had been featured on some Armstrong recordings. Later he would become familiar with Django Reinhardt, but in general, guitarists would not have the dominating influence on Charlie Christian. By the late '20's, the "Hot Jazz" that had evolved from Ragtime and the blues would take another turn, and Kansas City would be it's home.

"Boogie Woogie" and "Jump" Swing

Charles' brother Edward played piano and it is reported that Charlie also played the piano, although evidently there was not enough room for two pianists in the Christian household. But the piano would become the next
important influence, for by the late 1920's a "new" piano music had developed that seemed to incorporate Bach, Mozart, classical harmony, ragtime, blues and the steam locomotive! It was called "boogie-woogie." It was a freer form than the two-beat Dixieland style and incorporated "eight to the bar," that is, an ostinato bass figure that usually played eight beats per measure, juxtaposed by right hand phrasing. Another development about the same time was the bass violin replacing the tuba as the bass instrument of choice, possibly because it was better suited to the four-beat rhythmic feel of boogie woogie, which would have left the "two-beat" tubaist too beat! It had started in New Orleans, and spread from there. Abe Bolar, former tubaist for the Blue Devils recalled, "I had to learn the string bass if I wanted to keep my job."(8) Swing and jump emerged as a result of the shift from 2/4 to 4/4, and the pure form of boogie piano disappeared for a short time, only to re-emerge in the last half of the 1930s. Needless to say, the rhythmic feel and phrasing of the music transcended the instrument it was created on, and soon many "Hot Jazz" musicians were learning boogie woogie riffs and phrasing.

And there was one musician who seemed to do it better than the rest, a saxophonist named Lester Young. Young's ability to weave through eighth-note phrasing and boogie woogie meter was indeed a new music by itself. The saxophonist wanted his horn to sound like a human voice, and traces of Armstrong's scat singing can be heard in his solos, as well as other Satchmo tricks, such as hanging on one note. He later joined the Blue Devils in Oklahoma City, circa 1930, which no doubt had a stunning influence on the budding genius Christian. In the next few years Lester would become a king of sorts, although not experiencing the popularity of Armstrong. Charlie had found his mentor. Now he wanted his guitar "to sound like a saxophone."

There were two other innovations that would also influence the young Charlie: the radio and the phonograph. Both brought the whole world of music right into your own home, something that had until then only been available in sheet music. A new industry was born, and a new jazz talent was being created alongside it.

Jerry Jerome, a saxophonist with the Goodman band in 1939-40, recalled how Charlie bought a portable Victrola and would buy the Basie records, and learn every solo, especially the Lester Young. I have a feeling this was something Charlie had been doing for a while, and not just Basie records. He appears familiar with Mary Lou Williams' "Roll 'Em" and "Walkin' and Swingin'" by Andy Kirk, Django's "St. Louis Blues," Duke Ellington's "Steppin' into Swing Society" and Jimmie Lunceford's "Avalon," just to name a few, and of course, anything by Louis Armstrong! And every trumpet player knew King Oliver's solo on "Dippermouth Blues," which contains a hint of "Seven Come Eleven."

By 1932, Charles Christian was becoming an impressive musician, and by 1934 he was travelling the mid and southwest in touring orchestras. Oklahoma City was a frequent stop for many of the popular bigger name bands, and Charles was exposed to a variety of musicians and styles always on the fringe of development. One of the bands had a guitarist named Eddie Durham, who was experimenting with electronically amplyfying his instrument. Charles soon was doing the same, as were many others. By 1934, in Downbeat magazine the Christiansen Music Co. in Chicago was advertising its "Vivi-tone Power Guitar" with "thirty times more volume" -- the electric guitar age had begun. (4) In 1935, KVOO-AM in Tulsa, Oklahoma began to broadcast the "Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys Show." Wills band featured amplified steel guitar and later (1937) amplified six-stringer Eldon Shamblin, who demonstrated a great feel for swing and blues. Charles had also befriended Aron "T-Bone" Walker, and the two began to find crude ways to amplify their instruments. And by 1936, Charles was already a local star.

Boogie woogie had changed to "jump" and soon would come "swing." "Jump" incorporated 4-beat syncopation and boogie blues riffs -- statements repeated over and over, usually in a 12 bar format. Kansas City had become its home, where bands like Count Basie's were developing it into an art form, with the help of Lester Young. But Charles didn't rely solely on the saxophone for his inspiration -- trumpet players seemed to have as
great an impact. Indeed, Armstrong and CC's own desire to learn the trumpet make that a fact, as well as learning from trumpeter James Simpson. And the impact CC's music would later have on trumpeters like Miles Davis and Clifford Brown shows the trumpet-like qualities of his playing did not fall on deaf ears.

Indeed, the trumpeters with the Basie band, Shad Collins, Harry Edison, Ed Lewis, and Buck Clayton and fellow saxophonist Herschel Evans gave equal contributions to the music of CC. I would like to point out one recording in particular by Count Basie in 1938 (16 Feb.), "Every Tub." On a close listen, isn't that "Flying Home" on Edison's trumpet (beginning with the lick from "Blues in B"), "Wholly Cats" on Basie's piano and what about those whole note bends on Evan's tenor sax? I believe Charlie knew this whole record by heart. On another recorded that same day, "Sent for You Yesterday," we hear CC's signature lick in the closing riff statement, the sixth with a sharp nine on top. And "Swinging the Blues" (again the same date) offers a plethora of information. Listen to the first three bars of Lester Young's solo, reminiscent of one of CC's takes on "Breakfast Feud," or Jack Washington's baritone solo on "Topsy" or "1:00 Jump" or "Boogie Woogie" and "Roseland Shuffle." The riffs and the licks became part of Charlie Christian's repertoire.

Charles' brother Clarence claimed Charles was just as fascinated with the music of Duke Ellington, yet I believe it had a different influence -- the sophistication, the elegance and intricate harmonic structuring were more profound than the musicians themselves. And of course, the "jungle" feel, the blackness that was Ellington, as in "Black and Tan Fantasy," and "Koko" can be heard in "Swing to Bop," "Till Tom Special," "Soft Winds," and of course the intro to "Sheik of Araby." One wonders how much influence Charlie had in getting Cootie Williams to join the "New" Sextet of November 1940 (They had already raided the Basie band of it's leader, and the coziness that led to the sessions of Oct. 28, 1940 led to rumors of a Basie - Goodman supergroup.).

Charles Christian himself said, "Copycats are a dime a dozen, but an original is hard to find." (5) Instead of copying the music, Charles redeveloped it, as Clarence tried to describe -- "You take something old and make it fresh." Apparently, to CC, it didn't have to be that old - the current Basie records were old enough!

By the time John Hammond heard Christian in August 1939, Charles had fused and developed his own style with these and other elements. But, as Jerry Jerome pointed out, he continued to research and develop new ideas. Clarence Christian said that when CC was home on a break from touring with Goodman, he listened to his own records and said, "I should have played this," and showed his brother the revised line on his guitar.

By now, the music of Charlie Christian was a unique, original new music. He no doubt heard and studied other Basie tracks like "Taxi War Dance," "Lester Leaps In," or "Tickle-Toe." Much like Lester Young's development of boogie-woogie created a whole new music, Charles' redevelopment of Lester Young, too created a whole new music. Charlie was on the fringes of bebop, if not in it. Another young musician in Kansas City had been redeveloping the music of Young as well. His name was Charlie Parker, who's solo on the Jay McShann 1941 recording "Swingmatism" reeks of Young's solo on the 1938 Basie track "Congo Nights." While many musicians simply copied Young, Christian and Parker re-created him, although Lester seemed to be the glue that held it all together. Young himself once said, "There's so many people who sound like me I don't sound like myself anymore." (6)

By the time his career was coming to a close, Charles' development seemed unceasing. "Volume 8" of the Media 7 Masters of Jazz "Charlie Christian" CD shows the long, flowing lines get longer and more flowing. "Air Mail Special," "Ida, Sweet as Apple Cider," and "Stompin' at the Savoy" are the sounds of a virtuoso, not just a guitarist. On "Lips Flips" CC quotes back part of Lips Page's solo, almost note for note. It is nothing short of miraculous and nothing rare for Christian.
Revisiting Charlie Christian

The Legacy

Had he lived, what would have been his accomplishments? Well, in the brief time he did have, he left a wealth of accomplishments we must be happy with. By the time Charlie Christian passed, modern jazz was in its development, and music much different than that before August 1939. Listen to the music of Thelonious Monk, who played with Charlie at Minton's, and you can hear him in Cootie and Monk's "Round Midnight," and "Rhythm-a-ning," "Criss Cross," "Well You Needn't," "Let's Cool One," and Kenny Clarke claims much of "Epistrophy" is actually Charles'. Listen to Miles Davis, who in his self-titled autobiography admits he modeled himself after Christian, and you will hear the direction to which CC may have been pointing - "Serpent's Tooth," and "Freddy the Freeloader," and even "So What" seems to have echoes of Charlie. He was not the sole catalyst of modern jazz, but perhaps the most important. He was revolutionary just by being there with a new instrument and a new music to go with it. No other musician of the time seems comparable to Christian, save Lester Young and Jimmy Blanton (who was listening to Walter Page). By 1942, Christian and Blanton were dead, and in '44, Lester was headed for an Army brig. But listen to any of the early bop recordings such as "Blue 'n Boogie" or "Dizzy Atmosphere" (1945) and you can hear the influence of all three.

So, we have a boogie woogie trumpet-playing saxophonist armed with an electric guitar and a head full of music and marijuana. Yes, Charlie not only knew the blues but lived them, and had American society been different then, he may have had a more fruitful life. He was not a hick or an ignorant black puppet, as some have surmised, but a man with a purpose and vision, truly one of the greats of this century. As Duke Ellington told Clarence Christian in 1942, "People will be listening to your brother's music 20 years from now."(7) I am sure that as long as there are people around to listen, Charlie's music will be heard.

1. Columbia 652.

2 and 3. Author's interview with Clarence Christian, 1978


5. Same as 2 & 3.


7. Same as 2,3, and 5.

Bonham, Texas

by Kevin Centlivre

Being a guitarist myself, I will never forget the first time I heard some of Charlie Christian's recordings; I put my guitar in the attic. "Solo Flight" was the most impressive. Recorded in 1941, it featured Charlie riding high on the crest of a wave provided by the Benny Goodman Orchestra. Never in the history of jazz had a guitarist been able to accomplish such a feat. But now, with the advantage of technology, Charlie's amplified guitar found an equal position amongst the pounding volume of Swing Era brass. And swing it did; Charlie's precise execution of eighth note phrases and the lyrical articulation of the human voice left no doubt that he was telling his story, an intense, passionate ode in a bold, yet accepting manner. I felt like there was wind coming out of the speakers. And then it was over. I had been humbled by a musician that died fifteen years before I was born. Who was this guy, I wondered, and where did he come from? A few days later, I dragged my guitar back out, learning how to play all over again one note at a time along with Charlie's records.

It was my friend Craig McKinney who had introduced me to the music. We began to inquire about the musician's life. It seemed odd that such an important contributor to modern music had been lost somewhere in time. We began to check out the jazz biographies and essays at the local library. We lived in Topeka, the capital of Kansas, and also had access to the state library. Nearly all of the writers on Charlie contradicted one another. Some had him born in Dallas in 1919, some in Oklahoma City in 1918. Some said he was a frustrated sax player that turned to the guitar. Some said his musical knowledge was limited to the blues. Others praised and analyzed his style. Some said he copied Lester Young, some said it was Django Reinhardt, and some claimed to have been his teacher. All agreed that he grew up in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and died in New York in 1942 of tuberculosis.

One of the most respected essays was one written for the Saturday Review in 1958 by Ralph Ellison. Ellison had grown up in Oklahoma City, and knew the Christian family. In his essay, he stated that there were three Christian brothers: Charlie, Edward and Clarence. Craig looked up the names in an Oklahoma City phone book. He found a listing for a "Christian, Clarence." Nervously, he called it. "Are you Charlie Christian's brother?" he asked the voice on the other end. "Yes," it replied. Craig asked if he would agree to an interview. He agreed. We had finally found someone who would know the truth.

In the winter of 1978 we drove to Oklahoma City to meet with him. We ended up with a couple of hours of taped interview, photographs, and the most concise biographical information ever gathered on the innovative, pioneering musician. My friend Craig and I returned later that spring, and after a brief visit with Clarence and his wife, Ella Mae, we were now headed to Charles' birthplace and final resting place.
Clarence had informed us that Charles was not born in Dallas, but in Bonham, a small northeast Texas town, in 1916, July 29 to be exact. He told us how he learned to play, something assumed by other biographers. Most of them had claimed that this information was unknown, forgotten, and ungatherable. We knew who he loved and when he triumphed. We knew the boy that longed to play baseball, but ended up playing music because of a practical joke played on his older musician brother, Edward. We felt that we had learned about all we could, that we were now the most informed experts on the life of Charlie Christian. But we were about to learn the most important lesson of all.

Clarence Christian, a sturdy, weathered, black man in his mid-sixties, was the most impressive part of the research thus far. He overflowed with wisdom, a kind of aging patriarch. You could tell that he was confounded that a couple of white boys in their early twenties would at all be interested in his brother, now thirty-six years dead. But he told them, with a graceful, flowing, melodic tone, the very essence of his beloved brother’s life. A large marquee publicity photo of Charles hung in the living room of his modest, well-kept, older wood-frame home. It was signed at the bottom right, "I'm still carrying on." This misspelling only added to the authenticity. A cherished guitar pick was under the glass on the bottom left of the frame. And he was "Charles," not "Charlie." "Charlie" was the name given to him in 1939 by renowned bandleader Benny Goodman, with whom he achieved his fame. "Charles" was Clarence’s brother.

There was something different about Clarence that morning we left Oklahoma City on our sojourn to Bonham, Texas. The always overly informative spirit appeared subdued by sentiment. We knew that the house they lived in was on West Johnson Street. "Bonham's a small town," he said. "You'll find it." The response was the same when we inquired about the location of the cemetery, "You'll find it." Cemeteries are easy to find in a small town. They are usually somewhere on the edge of town, pristine, revered holy ground to the town’s inhabitants. This is their heritage, their history, their loved ones.

Bonham is a little town nestled in mild hills in northeast Texas, about sixty miles northeast of Dallas. As we drove in on that lush, warm and sunny spring afternoon, the green hills seemed to boast of their fertility. A huge billboard announced that we were entering the birthplace of favorite son-statesman, Sam Rayburn. You could even see the Rayburn home, if you so desired. And there on our right, on the edge of town, was a glistening, well-kept cemetery. We pulled in.

There were a couple of maintenance workers near a small, white wooden building. "We're looking for someone. May we look through the register?" "Sure," one of them said and led us inside the small building. We combed through the list of names. No "Christian, Charles." Clarence had told us that his father and Edward were buried there too. "Are there any other cemeteries in town?" I asked. They directed us to another down the road.

We encountered the same result at the other cemetery, again a glistening monument to its inhabitants. We asked if there were any other cemeteries in Bonham. They directed us down the road to where we had already been. This didn't make any sense. It didn't register. We began to question the value of all the detailed, fascinating evidence we had been presented with. We began to question its presenter. We barely knew Clarence. What if he wasn't telling the truth?

Bonham was the county seat, so we went downtown to the courthouse. Downtown Bonham was a typical southern town built around a square. The courthouse was housed in a brown brick building on the southern end of it. We entered the building and walked in down the corridor to the registrar's office. "We're looking for all the cemeteries in Bonham," Craig said. A thin, pert, middle-aged white woman, with her glasses resting...
Bonham, Texas

comfortably on the edge of her nose, responded, "Well, there is one northeast of town." We'd been there. "And there is one northwest of town," she said. "That's it?" we asked. "Yes," she replied. "Does that help you?" she asked in her smooth Texas drawl. "No, but thank you," as we both shook our heads and headed out the door down the hallway. "Say!" we heard her call from behind. We stopped and turned around. "There's an old colored cemetery south of town, but I'm sure that's not the one you're looking for." We looked at each other, our eyes meeting in disbelief. That was the one we were looking for.

It was now late afternoon, rapidly heading towards dusk. We had spent the better part of the day driving from Oklahoma City and hunting in the wrong cemeteries. After receiving directions to the "old colored cemetery," we headed to the south part of Bonham. We were sure that this was the end of our hunt.

The southern part of Bonham was "Tank Town." Immediately one could see the contamination of this sterile little community: run-down buildings, neglected property and shabby little businesses. We made the proper turn according to our directions, anxiety running high for both of us. What we saw will never leave my mind. There it was, the "old colored cemetery." An old arched iron gate, bent and twisted by time and elements, stood as an aged guard. Beyond it, fallen and leaning tombstones competed for their place among the weeds. There was no maintenance shed. There was no register.

We got out of the car and went through the broken down fence. If we wanted to find Charles, we would have to look at every single stone. This was further complicated by the fact that some of them were so weathered that the reading of them was nearly impossible. Others, you could tell, were homemade. Some had nothing but sunken ground with which to claim their occupants.

As we searched, the sun neared its course for the horizon. Frantically, we ran from stone to stone, all to no avail. In some places we looked twice. It didn't make any sense - this genius, this artist, lost in a human trash heap. It was getting too dark, so we decided to call it off. As we walked back to the car, I was trying to hold back tears. We stopped and turned for a final look. The sunset cast a purple and orange-red hue behind the silhouette of overgrown trees and weeds. The darkness creeping into the lot only emphasized the degradation of leaning tombstones. Strains of "Solo Flight" ran through my mind. Misty eyed, we climbed back into the car to find a place to spend the night. We would come back the next day only to the same result. If Charles was there, he didn't have a marker, or someone had taken it.

After interviewing some of the residents of Bonham we drove back to Oklahoma City, with plenty of new questions to ask. Clarence didn't hesitate to give some answers. "You didn't find it, did you?" he asked, obviously knowing the answer. "Charles' grave isn't marked. But I can find it. Our uncle poured a cement slab over the top of it to keep them from burying anybody on top on him. Space is pretty filled up in there." He went on to tell us where it was, but I found it hard to concentrate. I kept seeing that sunset, that silhouette. One of the most crucial elements of Charles' life was that of any black man in the south in the 1940's. Though hailed in New York and lauded by contemporaries and fans, in Bonham, Texas, Charlie Christian was just another nigger.

Postscript: In 1994 a headstone and historical marker were erected at Charles' gravesite during a ceremony sponsored by the Texas Historical Society and the Fannin County Museum of History. The headstone was donated by the Black Liberated Arts Council of Oklahoma City and the marker funded by proceeds from the premiere of "Solo Flight," a video documentary on Charlie Christian (see http://personal.nbnet.nb.ca/hansen/Charlie/bonham.htm (3 of 4) [14/03/2003 23.09.13]
Bibliography. The premiere was held in Bonham, Texas.

Clarence Christian died on January 28, 1979. - G.H.
Since this website went online in May, 1997 it has expanded from a modest source of Charlie Christian transcriptions to a more extensive collaborative effort. My thanks are extended to the fine folks listed below who have contributed material and expertise, and to all those who have offered suggestions and encouragement.

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Search News Groups for

"Charlie Christian"

"Charley Christian"

"Benny Goodman Sextet"

Minton's

Search the Web for

"Charlie Christian"

"Christian, Charlie"

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Phrasing

The Speed Trap: The question I'm most often asked by budding jazz guitarists is "How can I play as fast as Charlie?" This obsession with speed is understandable, but it's probably a mistake. If you're just learning jazz, it's best not to place undue emphasis on getting up to speed, at least not at the expense of accuracy and taste in phrasing. Jam sessions everywhere are already full of technically competent but unimaginative jazz guitarists playing tedious solos composed of unending lines of meaningless notes.

In fact, compared to many contemporary guitarists, Charlie was not a particularly fast player. He did play with imagination, drive, and energy, however, which is always more effective than raw speed. Much of that drive is a product of phrasing.

Anticipation: Since Christian's improvisational method of playing through shapes naturally revolved around chords (as opposed to melody, for instance), his phrasing was strongly shaped by chord changes. Among other things, this has the effect of reinforcing the musical structure of the tune. However, Charlie was famous for giving extra drive to a tune by anticipating changes, often as early as two beats before the bar.

An example: For example, consider this solo, based on a 12-bar "blues" progression (I-IV7-I-V7-I). The anticipations help give the solo considerable drive.
Another trick Charlie used to create drive and energy was extending the length of phrasing. This is particularly noticeable in solos of two or more choruses. Typically, Charlie would play two-bar phrases in the first chorus and longer phrases of four or more bars in the second and subsequent choruses. This creates a strong sense of “build” or rising energy. He also used this strategy with alternating choruses and bridges. For example, note the length of phrasing in the following:
Although Charlie Christian's method of improvisation may seem somewhat mechanical, keep in mind that, like any good musician, he was ultimately guided by his ear and creative imagination. When he stumbled onto an interesting riff or rhythmic pattern while soloing, he was quick to build on it. Analysing Charlie's solos is interesting and useful, but listening to them underscores the fact that they're more than the sum of their parts.

What Next? Once you've absorbed the simple principles described above, see them in action in Charlie's common licks and solos. If you jumped to the tutorial directly from another site, start at the main page.
This file addresses the questions most frequently asked about this site. It does not address questions about Charlie Christian himself.

Trouble Shooting

1. Why does only the side menu print when I try to print the transcriptions from my browser?
2. Why don't the Real Audio files play?
3. Why don't the MIDI files play?

Technical Questions

1. What software did you use to produce the chord diagrams?
2. What software did you use for the notation and tab?

General Questions

1. Which Charlie Christian CD should I buy?
2. Would you send me a tape of Charlie Christian songs?
3. Any tips on playing like Charlie?
4. Do you want to swap links?
5. Are there any sites like this on Wes Montgomery?
6. I found a mistake in one of your transcriptions. What should I do?
7. I transcribed a Charlie Christian solo. Do you want it?
8. I'd like to send you something. What's your snailmail address?
9. Can I advertise my product or service on your website?

Trouble Shooting

Q. Why does only the side menu print when I try to print the transcriptions from my browser?

A. The Solos page uses frames, and most browsers print only the frame that "has focus" (i.e. the frame you last clicked on). To print the transcriptions, click anywhere in the transcription window to give that frame the focus before clicking on the Print button.
Q. Why don't the Real Audio files play?

A. You may not have the proper Real Audio plugin installed. For a free download of the latest plugin, go to the Real Audio download page. Some systems, such as WebTV, do not seem to support the particular Real Audio format used on this site.

Q. Why don't the MIDI files play?

A. Most soundcards now support MIDI files, either through an FM synthesis chip or (for more realistic sound) a wavetable. However, your system must be configured with the proper drivers. If you can't play MIDI files, even from your hard drive, please check the configuration instructions in your soundcard manual. If you can play MIDI files from your hard drive but not over the web, you may need to configure your browser to associate the .MID extension with your MIDI player or download a MIDI player browser plugin. Check your browser's online help for assistance.

Technical Questions

Q. What software did you use to produce the chord diagrams?

A. The chord diagrams were painstakingly created by hand in a graphics program (Paint Shop Pro), beginning with a template borrowed from another site.

Q. What software did you use for the notation and tab?

A. Most of the notation and tab was created using an excellent shareware notation program called Lime, available from the Cerl Sound Group.

General Questions

Q. Which Charlie Christian CD should I buy?

A. If money is no object, and you're a very serious fan, the French company Media7 has released a comprehensive 9-vol collection of Charlie Christian recordings under its Masters of Jazz series. This includes the vast majority of known recordings on which Charlie solos. Vols. 1-4 (1939-40) are available in a box set; the last 5 volumes are only individually packaged. Some of the volumes may still be available online from CD-Now.
If your funds are more limited, the best single introduction to Charlie Christian is *Charlie Christian -- The Quintessence* (FA 218), released by Fremeaux & Associes in 1996. This 2-CD set has the most representative selection of CC recordings, including studio takes, air checks, and jam sessions.

**Q. Would you send me a tape of Charlie Christian songs?**

**A.** Sorry, but no, for a variety of obvious reasons. See "Which Charlie Christian CD should I buy?"

**Q. Any tips on playing like Charlie?**

**A.** Please see the [Tutorial section](#) and [Licks](#) section.

**Q. Do you want to swap links?**

**A.** Although I appreciate links to my site, and I'm happy to receive urls of other jazz-related sites, I prefer not to "swap links." In order to keep the Links page as manageable and useful as possible, I list only specific categories of sites: a) those directly related to the music and life of Charlie Christian or his contemporaries b) high quality, high content jazz sites. If you feel your page meets these criteria, please feel free to send me the url.

**Q. Are there any sites like this on Wes Montgomery?**

**A.** This site is a member of the [Jazz Guitar Ring](#), which includes many fine jazz guitar related sites. Other sites are listed in the [Links](#) section.

**Q. I found a mistake in one of your transcriptions. What should I do?**

**A.** If you're sure it's a mistake, by all means tell me about it. Although I make every effort to ensure the accuracy of my transcriptions, I'm not perfect. I will be grateful, not insulted, to have errors pointed out. However, out of respect for the original work, I might choose not to correct transcriptions submitted by other contributors.

**Q. I transcribed a Charlie Christian solo. Do you want it?**

**A.** Sure! Just [e-mail it](#) as a Lime file or .gif. If possible, the notation should be accompanied by tab. The only criteria are that the transcription be your own work and as accurate as possible. I reserve the right to make changes if necessary.

**Q. I'd like to send you something. What's your snailmail address?**
A. I prefer not to put my snailmail address on the web, but if you e-mail me and tell me what you're sending, I'll be glad to tell you.

Q. *Can I advertise my product or service on your website?*

A. No. Such advertising is prohibited by my service provider.
How much do you know about Charlie Christian? Select your answers below, then press the "Results" button to see your score. Questions were contributed by Garry Hansen, Kevin Centlivre, and Leo Valdes. Many of the answers can be found somewhere on this site.

1. **Where was Charlie born?**

   - Dallas, Texas
   - Bonham, Texas
   - Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

2. **In what year was Charlie born?**

   - 1916
   - 1912
   - 1919

3. **What was the alternate title of "Seven Come Eleven"?**

   - "Rollin' Bones"
   - "Charlie's Chance"
   - "Roast Turkey Stomp"

4. **On what tune is "Swing to Bop" based?**

   - "I've Found a New Baby"
   - "Topsy"
   - "How High the Moon"

5. **What's unusual about the 5 February 1941 recording of "Profoundly Blue"?**

   - Charlie plays acoustic guitar
   - Charlie sings
   - Charlie plays bass
6. **What was Charlie's favourite sport?**

   football  
   basketball  
   baseball

7. **What prepared solo did Charlie dedicate to his mother?**

   "Stardust"  
   "Solo Flight"  
   "Memories of You"

8. **Where was the Harlem Breakfast Club?**

   New York  
   Oklahoma City  
   Minneapolis

9. **Which instrument did Charlie study in grade school?**

   trumpet  
   piano  
   saxophone

10. **Who played drums on the Breakfast Club session of 24 September 1939?**

    Gene Krupa  
    Charlie Christian  
    noone; Charlie just tapped his foot

11. **What was the alternate title of "A Smo-o-o-th One"?**

    "Bourbon Blues"  
    "Moppin' It Up"  
    "Pieces of Six"

12. **Including alternate takes and live broadcasts, approximately how many recorded CC solos exist?**
13. **Which famous actress declared herself a fan of Charlie's playing?**

- Bette Davis
- Betty Grable
- Doris Day

14. **Who played trumpet on Charlie's first studio session?**

- Dizzy Gillespie
- Hotlips Page
- Buck Clayton

15. **According to John Hammond, what did Benny Goodman ask when he told him about Charlie?**

- "Charlie who?"
- "Can we get him cheap?"
- "Who the hell wants to hear an electric-guitar player?"

16. **Who recommended Charlie to John Hammond?**

- Billie Holiday
- Mary Lou Williams
- Mary Osborne

17. **What kind of pick did Charlie use?**

- A large, stiff, triangular one
- A small, hard teardrop
- He didn't use a pick

18. **Which of the following is an alternate title of "Solo Flight"?**

- "Boy Meets Goy"
- "Charlie's Dream"
19. **On which recording does Charlie play harmonics?**

"Solo Flight"
"Gilly"
"Breakfast Feud"

20. **What was the output wattage of Charlie's Gibson EH150 amp?**

15W
25W
100W

21. **What was Charlie's big #1 Billboard hit in 1944?**

"Flying Home"
"Solo Flight"
"Seven Come Eleven"

22. **Who had a hit in 1956 with Charlie's "Soft Winds?**

Lionel Hampton
Cootie Williams
Dinah Washington

23. **Christian's first known recording was of a broadcast from which show?**

Camel Caravan
What's New? -- The Old Gold Show
Monte Proser Dance Carnival

24. **Charlie took great pride in his...**

    guitars
    stature as a jazz great
    shoes
25. **What was Charlie's favourite "Breakfast Feud"?**

- cornmeal mush and orange juice
- pancakes, sausage, and maple syrup
- grits and jowls

Results

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