

# World is celebrating Bird at 100

By Frances Scanlon  
office@irishecho.com

"You can tell the history of jazz in four words: Louis Armstrong. Charlie Parker."

Thus spoke Miles Davis, the terrifically talented trumpeter, who knew jazz inside and out.

Not surprisingly therefore millions of this planet's inhabitants will celebrate the Centennial of the Arrival of the Angel of the Alto Saxophone, Charlie Parker, on Saturday, Aug. 29, 2020.

If you can't travel to the birthplace — Kansas City, Mo., — of this avant-garde jazz genius - you can still virtually (and otherwise) raise the scales with him on your very own "Bird Suite" chase.

Across the pond, although the Guinness Cork Jazz Festival 2020 has been canceled, Diageo recently announced that they are fully committed to sponsoring the festival in October 2021.



Charlie Parker at the Three Deuces in New York in August 1947.

Meanwhile "3G and Chris Engel" will play "Bird," recreating Ronan Guilfoyle's *Lingua Franca BIRD* that debuted in 2000. Join the Stream from

Arthur's by visiting [www.jazz-ireland.ie](http://www.jazz-ireland.ie), and purchasing a ticket link (valid for 24 hours) to the live Birthday performance at 8:00pm, Saturday night.

The arc of Parker's life is an out-of-his control cyclone, within which he explores unique and advanced approaches to harmonic ideas, punctuated by introducing bebop fast tempos, electric passing chords and other virtuoso technique into the jazz idiom.

During a professional career as musician and composer that spanned the late-1930s through the mid-1950s, Parker's prodigious output appeared on the Savoy, Dial, Verve and Mercury labels, to name but a few, breaching some time-honored formulaic jazz soloing strictures.

Although his star turn as improviser extraordinaire surely earned him time-honored status as the Bull of Bebop, curiously there were eight leaders - inclusive of Jay McShann, Dizzy Gillespie and Sarah Vaughan — on recording sessions on which he appeared —

before Parker himself took the helm as the music was made.

That slow upward incline belies the razzmatazz of his seemingly meteoric starry fame — more popular and renowned in 1950 than Bing Crosby — that the facts reveal.

Charlie Parker paid his dues to and for himself. In the Fall of 1936 while traveling to a gig in the Missouri Ozarks, during which time a car accident resulted in three injured ribs and a fractured spine, the-then-16-year-old was treated with pain killers and opioids (including heroin), which precipitated a life-long addiction.

Ultimately after a spectacular flop performance in the spring of 1936 the soon to emerge semblance of the icon he became flowered after close to four years of fifteen hour daily self-induced practice sessions.

During the recent National Endowment for the Arts 2020 Jazz Masters post-Tribute Concert Q&A - a live on-line session - an honoree, Bobby McFerrin, reflected on jazz improvisation stating that "each person gets to bring their universe of influence."

If as opined during that discussion "improvisation is a very risky act of faith" then Charlie Parker was for jazz the risk-taker in chief. He played the Gospel of a Bird in flight with a destination known only to the Creator.

No matter how you decide to acknowledge this monumental moment in the history of jazz - whether partaking in the 92Y - Charlie Parker "Now's The Time" extravaganza of activities ([92y.org/charlieparker](http://92y.org/charlieparker)), tuning in to 89.9FM (WKCR.org) for the marathon "Charlie Parker Centennial Festival" (all day from tomorrow through all day Thursday, Sept. 3), or enjoying the entire month-long Birdman homage on 88.3FM (WBGO.org), one thing's for sure: Charlie Parker transitioned 65 years ago with music he still had not yet composed but was playing nonetheless in his head.

Come Aug. 29, 2020, wherever you may be, open a window and your heart. A bird will appear.

Listen carefully for what you'll hear is a song that got away.

If you haven't yet had your fill of Pandemic to Pandemic capstones, visit [NY1920.com](http://NY1920.com) and you'll discover almost daily posts featuring milestone maker/events in New York's culture and history a la 1920.

## Getting to know McCaul

The Doorway Gallery in Dublin is hosting weekly online exhibitions called "Getting to Know."

"We feel that people now have time to get to know our artists," Doorway said in a statement. 'Some of our artists haven't had solo shows with the gallery yet, so we thought it would be nice to provide an insight into the typical lifestyle of our artists. and to be able to really get to know the Doorway Gallery artists.

"We want you to experience the journey that the painting makes before it hits the gallery setting," the statement continued.

Padraig McCaul, whose studio is a former schoolhouse on Achill Island, will be the artist featured for the week beginning next Monday, Aug. 31, at 3 p.m. (Irish time).

McCaul is a landscape painter but also does figurative and semi-abstract work. For more information about the series, and a Facebook Q&A with McCaul on Thursday evening, Sept. 3, at 8 p.m. (3 p.m. EST), go to [thedoorgallery.com](http://thedoorgallery.com).



"A Western Road."



"The Dalkey Boaters."



Artist Padraig McCaul on Achill Island.