

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with William "Buddy" Collette

PERSON

Collette, Buddy, 1921-2010

Alternative Names: William "Buddy" Collette; "Buddy" Collette

Life Dates: August 6, 1921-September 19, 2010

Place of Birth: Los Angeles, California, USA

Residence: Los Angeles, California

Occupations: Jazz Musician

Biographical Note

Jazz musician William "Buddy" Collette was born on August 6, 1921 in Los Angeles, California to Willie Hugh and Goldie Marie Collette. Collette cultivated his love for music at a young age, taking up the alto-saxophone and forming his first group at age twelve. This group included Britt Woodman on the trombone and Charles Mingus on the bass. By age seventeen, Collette was performing professionally and soon thereafter, he served in the U.S. Navy as a bandleader during World War II.

After returning from the war, Collette began playing with the Stars of Swing, a jazz quartet featuring saxophonist Dexter Gordon, bassist Charles Mingus, and drummer Chico Hamilton. The group helped to keep bebop music alive in Los Angeles during the mid-1940s in the historic Center Avenue neighborhood. In 1949, Collette performed around Los Angeles with a variety of jazz musicians including Edgar Hayes, Louis Jordan, Benny Carter, and Gerald Wilson. By 1950, Collette was working as a studio musician, and became the first African American musician to perform on television on the Groucho Marx show *You Bet Your Life*. In 1954, Collette worked as a disc jockey under the pseudonym of Sleepy Stein and released an album entitled *Tanganyika*, with a group consisting of Collette, drummer Chico Hamilton, trumpeter John Anderson, pianist Gerald Wiggins, guitarist Jimmy Hall, and bassist Curtis Counce. In 1955, Collette gained national recognition after he became a founding member of Chico Hamilton's legendary quintet. In 1956, Collette recorded his first album, *Man of Many Parts*, as a bandleader. Later that year, Collette followed his debut album with *Nice Day with Buddy Collette*, which led to a string of albums throughout 1958 and 1959 including *Calm Cool and Collette*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *Jazz Loves Paris*.

By 1966, Collette had become a noteworthy educator in Los Angeles. He also freelanced, worked in the studios, played in clubs and taught aspiring jazz musicians.

Collette's students included such renowned woodwind players as Eric Dolphy, Charles Lloyd, Frank Morgan, Sonny Criss and James Newton.

In 1988, Collette recorded Flute Talk, his first album as a bandleader since 1964. Collette also produced a spoken word record on his experiences with jazz in 1994, Jazz for Thousand Oaks in 1996, and Live from the Nation's Capital in 2000.

Collette passed away on September 19, 2010 at the age of 89.

Related Entries

David Starr Jordan Senior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Diploma

Los Angeles City College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

96th St. Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Loyola Marymount University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Professor

California State University, Long Beach [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Professor

California State University, Dominguez Hills [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Professor

'You Bet Your Life' [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Musician

California State University, Los Angeles [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1969 to ?]

Head of Music Department

Flip Wilson show (Television program) [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1972 to ?]

Musician

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1980 to ?]

Professor

Community Symphony Orchestra [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Founder

American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada [MEMBEROF]

[from 1980 to ?]

Board of Directors

JazzAmerica [MEMBEROF]

[from 1994 to 2010]

Founding member, Board of Directors