



Bill Evans

August 16, 1929 - September 15, 1980

New York, New York

William John "Bill" Evans, the jazz pianist whose trios redefined how harmony and touch could sound in postwar American music, died in New York City on September 15, 1980, of a bleeding ulcer and related collapse after years of addiction and touring. He was fifty-one. From Plainfield, New Jersey, classrooms and Army bands to Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* and a succession of trios that taught pianists to leave space, Evans made quiet intensity a public fact.

Born August 16, 1929, he studied classical piano, absorbed impressionist harmony, and then rebuilt jazz accompaniment so that left-hand voicings and right-hand lyric lines felt conversational rather than athletic. "Waltz for Debby," "Peace Piece," and the Village Vanguard recordings became curricula. Partners - Scott LaFaro, Paul Motian, later Eddie Gomez and others - learned that his listening was as fierce as his playing. Students still slow down transcriptions to catch what he declined to force.

The last years were shadowed by loss and chemical dependence that friends could not romanticize away. New York hospitals and clubs had both known him; the city that made his reputation also recorded his ending. Colleagues who loved the music hated the cost and said so without turning the obituary into a sermon.

He died in New York on September 15, 1980. Jazz education still assigns his records as if they were etudes.

Evans's gift was inwardness made audible - a refusal to shout when a chord could lean. Notice Nearby keeps the death date so September 15 remembers a New Jersey pianist who changed how America hears the spaces between notes.

Services

Died in New York City, September 15, 1980. Jazz pianist and composer; influential trio leader; recordings include work on Miles Davis's Kind of Blue.

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