

Below is a list of important names that one must be familiar with as they embark upon the journey of learning the language of jazz. These artists are leaders and vocalists for pivotal groups that also include very important sidemen to the evolution of jazz. Checking out the albums by the artists below will lead the listener to the pivotal musicians that were members of these ensembles. This is a very basic list, and should be a place to start from.

1. Julian "Cannonball" Adderley
2. Louis Armstrong
3. Count Basie
4. Art Blakey
5. Michael Brecker
6. Clifford Brown
7. Ray Brown
8. Dave Brubeck
9. Charlie Christian
10. Nat "King" Cole
11. Ornette Coleman
12. John Coltrane
13. Miles Davis
14. Tommy Dorsey
15. Duke Ellington
16. Bill Evans
17. Ella Fitzgerald
18. Dizzy Gillespie
19. Benny Goodman
20. Dexter Gordon
21. Grant Green
22. Jim Hall
23. Herbie Hancock
24. Woody Herman
25. Billie Holiday
26. Freddie Hubbard
27. Amhad Jamal
28. Antonio Carlos Jobim
29. J.J. Johnson
30. Thad Jones
31. Stan Kenton
32. Mel Lewis
33. Wynton, Branford, & Ellis Marsalis
34. Carmen McRae
35. Charles Mingus
36. Thelonious Monk
37. Wes Montgomery
38. Charlie Parker
39. Joe Pass
40. Bud Powell
41. Buddy Rich
42. Max Roach
43. Sonny Rollins
44. George Russell
45. Woody Shaw
46. Horace Silver
47. Nina Simone
48. Frank Sinatra
49. Jimmy Smith
50. McCoy Tyner
51. Dinah Washington
52. Joe Williams
53. Sarah Vaughan