



INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT MILES DAVIS

1. Miles Davis is from East St Louis, Illinois, where he heard all kinds of music. They lived across the river from St. Louis, Missouri. He first lived on Broadway in a very busy area where people from many ethnic groups lived. Many bars, restaurants, and markets filled the neighborhood. He could hear live music at night from the bars and clubs.
2. Miles had a sister named Dorothy and a brother named Vernon. They liked to put on shows at home.
3. He was a small, skinny and a very shy kid who loved sports. He was very good at baseball. Boxing was another favorite sport that he continued into his older years.

4. Miles's father was a successful dental surgeon.
5. He was proud of his family background. His ancestors played classical music for the owners of plantations and his father and uncles were all college educated, which was unusual for African Americans during that time period.
6. He listened to the radio every morning to hear a radio show called "Harlem Rhythms", he heard Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and other jazz musicians. It sometimes made him late for school.
7. His first job was delivering newspapers. He used the money to buy records and sometimes clothes.
8. In the summer, Miles, his sister Dorothy and brother Vernon traveled by train to visit their grandfather's farm in Arkansas. He rode horses and went fishing. At night he heard the blues, country and gospel music while walking around the backwoods roads. It was the first time Miles heard authentic gospel music.
9. He got his first trumpet at age 13. Before that his father's friend gave him a coronet.
10. He practiced all the time. He was determined to be better than everyone else.
11. His teacher Elwood Buchanan helped Miles develop his sound on the trumpet. He encouraged him to play his horn without vibrato.
12. He spit dried rice to and from school every day to get his mouth ready to play the trumpet.
13. He got a job playing music (Eddie Randall and the Blue Devils) while still in high school. He made good money and kept the band organized.
14. He heard Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker for the first time when they came to St Louis. He was still in high school. Listening to them play bebop changed his life. Jazz was all he wanted to play.
15. After playing with Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington offered him a job, but Miles turned him down. Miles had new ideas he wanted to work on.
16. After Miles and Gil Evans created the Birth of the Cool sound, they couldn't get enough work since the group consisted of nine members.

17. Miles played in Paris, France for the first time in 1948. He loved Paris because he was treated with respect. There wasn't as much racism as there was in America.
18. When Miles returned to NY he was depressed and got hooked on heroin at the age of 27. He stayed at his father's farm in Arkansas and kicked the habit cold turkey. In his later years he had more problems with drugs.
19. In his lifetime Miles Davis changed music at least four times. Miles remains one of the most influential trumpet players.
20. Miles Davis, always interested in clothes, became a fashion icon.



Companion piece to BIRTH OF THE COOL: HOW JAZZ GREAT MILES DAVIS FOUND HIS SOUND by Kathleen Cornell Berman and illustrated by Keith Henry Brown.