



Donald Byrd

[Byrd In Hand](#)
(Blue Note)

Byrd In Hand

Donald Byrd, trumpet; **Pepper Adams**, baritone sax; **Charlie Rouse**, tenor sax;
Walter Davis, Jr., piano; **Sam Jones**, bass; **Art Taylor**, drums.

1. Witchcraft (Coleman--Leigh) 8:25
2. Here I Am (Donald Byrd) 8:23
3. Devil Whip (Donald Byrd) 4:39
4. Bronze Dance (Walter Davis) 6:40
5. Clarion Calls (Walter Davis) 5:39
6. The Injuns (Donald Byrd) 6:08

Produced by ALFRED LION
Cover Photo by FRANCIS WOLFF
Cover Design by REID MILES
Recording by RUDY VAN GELDER
Recorded on May 31, 1959

Joe Goldberg, in his notes for *Off To The Races*, [Donald Byrd](#)'s last Blue Note album, spoke of Donald's coming of jazz age despite the obstacles created by excessive, extravagant praise being poured on him prematurely. Here in *Byrd In Hand*, Donald affirms his maturity.

If you listen to the surety with which Donald Byrd plays here, you will have a perfect example of that maturity. In fact, all the players here speak out boldly and vigorously, but not blatantly, in an assertive, masculine, muscular kind of jazz. Some have tagged it "hard bop," hard driving in the same sense a topflight professional football fullback is when he moves in high gear. As a refutation of the implications cast by the "hard bop" tag, there is the lyricism-with-guts of performances like "Witchcraft" and Byrd's "Here Am I."

[Pepper Adams](#)' deep-throated sound leaves no room for imagination as to what instrument he is playing. His baritone sax pays no debt to either Chaloff or Mulligan, the two main names in the modern development of the instrument. Pepper is very much his own man; his bittersweet, sometimes tart, always swinging lines are provoking to be influential in themselves. He and Byrd have worked together quite a lot in 1958-59; in elongating and deepening a musical friendship that began in Detroit, they have strengthened their work together.

[Charlie Rouse](#), influenced by Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker and [Sonny Rollins](#), but author of a somewhat unorthodox, personal representation of his thoughts, makes it a full, rich-sounding three in the front line.

Pianist [Walter Davis Jr.](#), first active on the New York scene when [Max Roach](#) brought him over from Newark, New Jersey with [Hank Mobley](#) to play with Roach's quartet at the Down Beat club in the early '50s, has just now really begun to achieve some recognition. In the interim, he played with Dizzy Gillespie but it wasn't until his appearance with [Jackie McLean](#) in *New Soil*, that his talents as a player and composer were fully exposed. Here he displays a warmth in the Bud Powell idiom and two melodically and harmonically attractive compositions in "Bronze Dance" and "Clarion Calls."

Two of Rouse's group-mates in the [Thelonious Monk](#) Quartet during 1958-59, were Sam Jones and [Arthur Taylor](#). Their experience as a team is evident and indispensably helpful throughout.

Leader Byrd, with all these excellent supporters and imaginative, well executed scores, shines in his finest, most polished effort to date. His compositions have substance: "Here Am I" a plaintively beautiful piece; "Devil Whip" crackling with an undertone of impending evil; "The Injuns" a fleet scouting expedition which lets everyone ride out on the plains. His playing has that hot sweetness and pungence which characterized the best of the late [Clifford Brown](#). Donald has attained real stature with this album.

A Byrd in hand is worth two on the record store shelf.

--IRA GITLER, from the liner notes.



Donald Byrd

**Trumpet
December 9, 1932 --**

Donald Byrd

"Donald Byrd is practically a household name. He possesses a big tone and plays from the heart. He is an Afro-American history scholar and connoisseur of African Art. He's truly an amazing man."

--Kenny Washington

Donald Byrd. Born in Detroit in 1932, his studies at Wayne State University (1954) were interrupted by military service, during which he played in an Air Force band. He then attended the Manhattan School of Music (MA in music education). At the same time he was

the favourite studio trumpeter of the bop label Prestige (1956-58), though he also recorded frequently for Riverside and Blue Note.

He gave performances with George Wallington (1955), [Art Blakey](#) (1956), and along with [Gigi Gryce](#) was a member of the [Jazz Lab Quintet](#) (1957). He also performed with [Max Roach](#), [Sonny Rollins](#), [John Coltrane](#), and others, before settling into a partnership with [Pepper Adams](#) (1958-61). After studying composition in Europe (1963-63) Byrd began a career in black music education, teaching at Rutgers, the Hampton Institute, Howard University, and (after receiving a law degree, 1976) North Carolina Central University; in 1982 he was awarded a doctorate by Columbia Teachers College.

Following the death of [Clifford Brown](#) in 1956, Byrd was for a few years arguably the finest hard-bop trumpeter. He had not only a masterful technique, displayed on all his albums from this period, but also a beautiful tone. He resumed playing in the 1970s and made several pleasant recordings in a jazz-rock style. His best-selling album *Black Byrd* led to the formation of his students into the Blackbyrds, a hit group of the mid-1970s.

--BARRY KERNFELD, *The New Grove Dictionary Of Jazz*
