



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1066-1999, Version: \*

Res. No. 1066

Resolution mourning the death and celebrating the life of jazz legend Milt Jackson, who passed away on October 9, 1999.

By Council Members Michels, Perkins, Reed and Foster

Whereas, Widely acknowledged as one of the greatest jazz improvisers of all time, Milt Jackson quietly reinterpreted his instrument of choice, the vibraphone and created a sound that helped to define modern jazz; and

Whereas, Milt Jackson, affectionately known as "Bags," started something unique when he slowed down his Deagan Vibraharp's oscillator and created a smoky new sound; and

Whereas, A prolific performer and recording artist, his immense talent drew the praise and admiration of the great pioneers of jazz and blues; throughout his career, he performed with Dizzy Gillespie, Ray Charles, Thelonius Monk, Max Roach, Charlie Parker, Ray Brown, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane and Quincy Jones, to name but a few; and

Whereas, Born and raised in Detroit, Mr. Jackson began playing music when he was very young and by the age of sixteen, he had already become proficient in guitar, piano, drums, tympani, violin, xylophone, vocals and his trademark instrument, the vibraphone; and

Whereas, After Mr. Jackson served two years in the military, he returned to Detroit and started a jazz quartet called the Four Sharps; during one of the quartet's gigs at a Detroit bar, Dizzy Gillespie happened to be in the audience and was immediately impressed by the young Milt Jackson and invited him join his band in New York; and

Whereas, Milt Jackson and Dizzy Gillespie forged a long and fruitful partnership that resulted in the recordings of classics like "A Night in Tunisia," "Anthropology," and "Two Bass Hit," and led to the co-founding of the spin-off group, the Modern Jazz Quartet, which brought Mr. Jackson's career to a new level and elevated jazz music to new heights; and

Whereas, The Modern Jazz Quartet was formed in 1952 and featured Mr. Jackson on vibraphone, the pianist John Lewis and the drummer Kenny Clarke, who were both members of Dizzy Gillespie's rhythm section as well as Percy Heath on bass and later Connie Kay, who replaced Mr. Clarke in 1955; and

Whereas, The Modern Jazz Quartet embraced and brilliantly executed the talent and distinct style of Milt Jackson, who became the first bona fide bebop musician on the vibraphone; and

Whereas, Milt Jackson was a vital member of the Modern Jazz Quartet, one of the longest running jazz groups in history and his work with the Quartet and with various other leading jazz players, remains highly influential in the jazz world; and

Whereas, Milt Jackson was also a great bluesman and wrote several blues pieces including the widely popular "Bags' Groove," "Bluesology," "Ralph's New Blues" and "The Cylinder;" and

Whereas, A consummate gentleman, Milt Jackson considered jazz to be more than just notes, but a dynamic that needed class and style to be in its truest form; his own humble demeanor brought a sense of dignity that perfectly complemented his music; and

Whereas, Mr. Jackson's passing is truly a loss, not only to the jazz community but to the people of the City of New York, who, for many, many years, have been touched by his inspiring musicianship and his heart, which was as warm as the music we remember him by; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York mourns the death and celebrates the life of jazz legend Milt Jackson, who passed away on October 9, 1999.

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LS#2380MiltJackson  
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