

Beat: Miscellaneous

Legendary jazz bassist Charlie Haden dead at 76

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USPA News - Charlie Haden, the Grammy-award winning bassist who helped change the shape of jazz through Ornette Coleman's groundbreaking quartet in the 1960s, died in Los Angeles on Friday after a long illness, his family said. He was 76. Publicist Tina Pelikan of ECM Records said Haden died in Los Angeles at 10:11 a.m. local time on Friday after a prolonged illness.

Ruth Cameron, his wife of 30 years, and his children, Josh Haden, Tanya Haden, Rachel Haden and Petra Haden, were all by his side when he passed away. Haden began working with Ornette Coleman in 1959 and became an original member of the ground-breaking Ornette Coleman Quartet that turned the jazz world on its head in the early 1960s. Haden revolutionized the harmonic concept of bass playing in jazz and is widely considered to be among the greatest ever jazz bassists. "His ability to create serendipitous harmonies by improvising melodic responses to Coleman's free-form solos - rather than sticking to predetermined harmonies - was both radical and mesmerizing," music journalist Joachim-Ernst Berendt wrote in his book `The Jazz Book.` "His virtuosity lies ... in an incredible ability to make the double bass `sound out.` Haden cultivates the instrument's gravity as no one else in jazz. He is a master of simplicity which is one of the most difficult things to achieve." Haden played a vital role in this revolutionary new approach, evolving a way of playing that sometimes complemented the soloist and sometimes moved independently. In this respect, as did bassists Jimmy Blanton and Charles Mingus, Haden helped liberate the bassist from a strictly accompanying role to becoming a more direct participant in group improvisation.

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