

Music

Buddy Deppenschmidt, Whose Drumming Brought Bossa Nova Into the Mainstream, Is Dead at 85

WBGO | By David Adler

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Courtesy Of The Artist

Buddy Deppenschmidt, who played drums on Stan Getz and Charlie Byrd's 'Jazz Samba.'

Buddy Deppenschmidt, a drummer and educator who co-conceived the landmark 1962 album *Jazz Samba* by [Stan Getz](#) and [Charlie Byrd](#), died in hospice on March 20 near his home in Doylestown, PA. He was 85.

Marjorie Danciger, a close friend, said the cause was complications of COVID-19, according to Deppenschmidt's daughter Allyson.

Despite his relative obscurity, Deppenschmidt had a big story to tell: he was instrumental, if uncredited, in launching the bossa nova craze in America during the early 1960s.



Charlie Byrd, Keter Betts and Buddy Deppenschmidt filming a television show during a 1961 tour of Latin America.

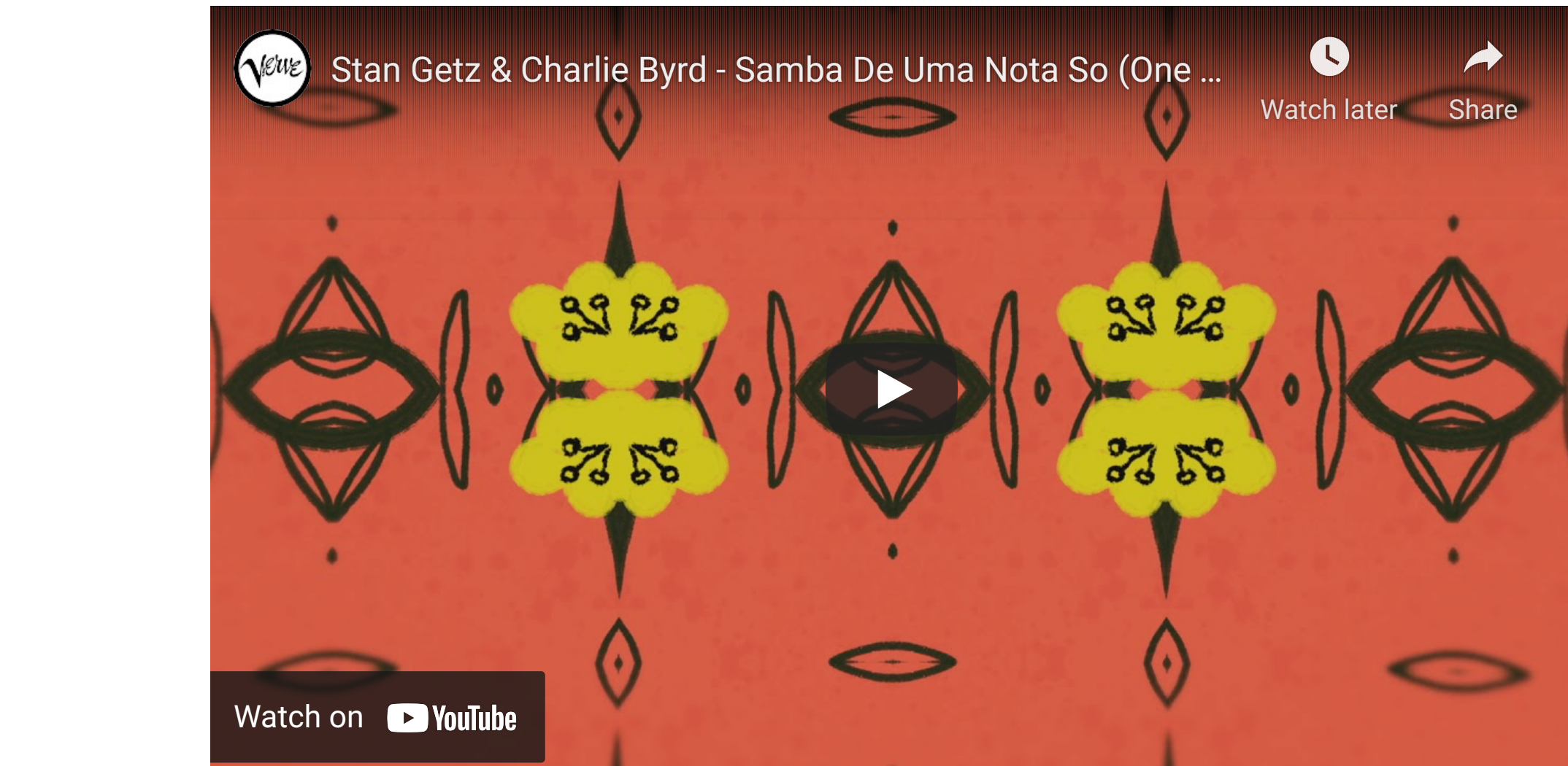
With bassist Keter Betts, Deppenschmidt anchored the rhythm section of the Charlie Byrd Trio. In early 1961 they accompanied Byrd on a three-week State Department tour of Brazil and 17 other Central and South American countries.

In Brazil's Bahia region, Betts and Deppenschmidt made local friends and immersed themselves in the sounds and rhythms of bossa nova — a musical journey that led directly to the February 1962 recording of *Jazz Samba* for Verve.

Thrown down hastily in a church in Washington, D.C., *Jazz Samba*, now in the Grammy Hall of Fame, "was my conception," Deppenschmidt argued firmly when

we spoke in 2004 for [an article in JazzTimes](#), "and would not have happened without the combined efforts of Keter Betts and me." In 2001 he sued Verve and the Universal Music Group for back and future royalties on the only jazz album ever to hit No. 1 on the *Billboard* pop chart.

Jazz Samba earned Getz a Grammy Award in 1963. It also bolstered Creed Taylor's reputation as a producer, and shaped the course of both Getz and Byrd's careers. Its tracks have been anthologized more than three dozen times. Verve settled with Deppenschmidt for a modest sum.



William Henry Deppenschmidt was born on Feb. 16, 1936, in Philadelphia. His father, also known as Buddy, was a saxophonist who performed as Buddy Williams; he also wrote arrangements for Paul Whiteman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, and Glenn Miller, and taught reeds at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music. He and Deppenschmidt's mother, Alice, divorced when Buddy was four, at which point mother and child moved to Richmond, Va.

Deppenschmidt took up drums and went pro by age 17, touring with Swing Era trumpet great Billy Butterfield and others. As a member of the Newton Thomas Trio, he shared a festival bill with Byrd, who heard the young drummer and hired him shortly thereafter. Byrd's trio had a fruitful three-year run at the Showboat Lounge in D.C. On albums like *The Guitar Artistry of Charlie Byrd* and *Blues Sonata* (featuring Barry Harris), you hear Deppenschmidt and Betts laying down supple, interactive swing for the famed nylon-string stylist.

In the period after *Jazz Samba*, Deppenschmidt put down roots in Bucks County, studied with Dave Brubeck Quartet drummer Joe Morello in New Jersey, and grew into a valued and dedicated teacher himself, spending 40 years at Pennsylvania's Newtown School of Music.

"Buddy was really a phenomenal teacher, above all else," Marjorie Danciger said. "It was a mission for him. His students always loved him, and some of them did very well. He was a father figure and a mentor, and that was really important to him. He was an extremely generous person in every way. He never dragged, he never rushed."

Deppenschmidt is survived by his daughters, Laura and Allyson, and a number of grandchildren, great-grandchildren and siblings.

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