



## COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

**PAUL DESMOND**

BORN: November 25, 1924    ERA/STYLE: Cool/West Coast Jazz  
DIED: May 30, 1977            HOMETOWN: San Francisco, California

Paul Desmond was an American jazz alto saxophonist and composer. He is best known for his years with the Dave Brubeck Quartet, as well as his composition of the jazz standard "Take Five." He made the piece famous with the Dave Brubeck Quartet in the early 1960s.

Paul Desmond was born Paul Emil Breitenfeld in 1924 in San Francisco. His father, Emil Breitenfeld, was a pianist, organist, composer, and arranger. Paul began playing the clarinet at age 12, and continued to study through high school. He had wanted to be a violinist, but his father convinced him to stick with the clarinet, since clarinetists were less common than violinists. Paul began playing the alto saxophone in college. He was drafted during World War II and played for the Army band for a time, but never saw combat.

After the war ended, Paul began working as a musician in San Francisco. He changed his last name to Desmond, after a famous singer from the time. He met pianist Dave Brubeck and began playing full time in the Dave Brubeck Quartet in the late 1950s. It was during this time that he composed his now famous "Take Five," which was a surprise smash hit in 1961. Paul played with the Dave Brubeck Quartet until 1967, when the group disbanded. Paul and Dave remained good friends until Paul's death in 1977.

In addition to his work with Dave Brubeck, Paul Desmond performed with a number of other well-known jazz musicians during his time, including trumpeter Chet Baker and fellow saxophonist Gerry Mulligan. He composed, performed, and recorded regularly until his death. He appeared on countless stages and on dozens of albums over his decades-long career. "Take Five" remains one of the most famous jazz standards ever written.