

= Eddie Costa =

Edwin James " Eddie " Costa (August 14 , 1930 ? July 28 , 1962) was an American jazz pianist , vibraphonist , composer and arranger . In 1957 he was chosen as Down Beat jazz critics ' new star on piano and vibes ? the first time that one artist won two categories in the same year . He became known for his percussive , driving piano style that concentrated on the lower octaves of the keyboard .

Costa had an eight @-@ year recording career , during which he appeared on more than 100 albums ; five of these were under his own leadership . As a sideman he appeared in orchestras led by Manny Albam , Gil Evans , Woody Herman and others ; played in smaller groups led by a diverse range of musicians , including Tal Farlow , Coleman Hawkins , Gunther Schuller , and Phil Woods ; and accompanied vocalists including Tony Bennett and Chris Connor . Costa died , aged 31 , in a car accident in New York City .

= = Early life = =

Eddie Costa was born in Atlas , Pennsylvania , near Mount Carmel , in Northumberland County . He was taught and influenced on piano by his older , musically trained brother , Bill , and a local piano teacher . Eddie took paid jobs as a pianist from the age of 15 . In contrast to his piano training , he was self @-@ taught on vibes . In 1949 Costa played and toured for a few months with violinist Joe Venuti . He then worked for his brother in New York until , in 1951 , Eddie was drafted into the army . During his time in the armed forces , Costa performed in Japan and Korea . Upon release after two years , Costa again worked around the New York area , including for bands led by Kai Winding , Johnny Smith , and Don Elliott .

= = Playing and recording career = =

= = = 1954 ? 1957 = = =

In 1954 Costa made his first recordings , with guitarist Sal Salvador , to whom he had been recommended by trombonist Winding . The first of these sessions , in July , featured one of Costa 's compositions , " Round Trip " . The following year , Costa recorded a series of piano duets with John Mehegan ; differences in playing style meant that several rehearsals were required to organize which pianist would be responsible for what aspects of the performances .

Costa 's first recording as leader was in 1956 , with his trio featuring bassist Vinnie Burke and drummer Nick Stabulas . This was released under slightly differing titles by Josie Records and Jubilee Records , and was well received : critic John S. Wilson , for instance , commented on the " roaring , spitting piano solos by Eddie Costa " . Around this time , Costa was nicknamed " The Bear " by Burke for his powerful playing . Also in 1956 , Costa and Burke joined guitarist Tal Farlow , forming a resident trio to play at the Composer , a club on West 58th Street in New York . Farlow 's comment on the absence of a drummer from the trio was that " Eddie 's feeding , comping or whatever you want to call it was so fierce that there was no doubt at all where the time was , so I didn 't miss the drums at all " . The trio stayed together , recording several albums under Farlow 's name , until , in 1958 , the Composer closed . Costa was often in recording studios as a sideman around this time : he appeared on approximately 20 albums in both 1956 and 1957 . These included small group settings with Herbie Mann , Oscar Pettiford , and Phil Woods , and accompanying vocalists such as Tony Bennett and Chris Connor .

In 1957 Costa was again leader , recording Eddie Costa Quintet with Woods , Art Farmer , Teddy Kotick , and Paul Motian . Their repertoire featured interpretations of " I Didn 't Know What Time It Was " and Dave Brubeck 's recent composition " In Your Own Sweet Way " ; the latter focused on Costa 's vibes and Farmer 's muted trumpet , with Woods switching from his usual alto saxophone to the piano . The Billboard review was positive , calling it " a first rate jazz set " on which " Costa

swings as ever on piano " . A trio appearance at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival also brought Costa greater attention . Some of his playing at the festival ? as a trio with Ernie Furtado (bass) and Al Beldini (drums) , and as a quintet with the addition of Rolf Kühn and Dick Johnson ? was released later in 1957 as part of a Verve album . Billboard commented that " Costa [...] will attract many new endorsers with the musicianship displayed " .

= = = 1958 ? 1962 = = =

Costa 's next recording as leader , this time exclusively on vibes , was 1958 's *Guys and Dolls Like Vibes* , recorded over three sessions in January , with Bill Evans , Wendell Marshall and Motian . This album contained six songs from the show *Guys and Dolls* , which was familiar to listeners from the musical and film versions that had opened a few years earlier . From 1958 to 1959 Costa was with Woody Herman 's band on and off , including as part of a sextet . Over these two years , Costa continued recording prolifically , including in orchestras led by Herman , Manny Albam (one album , *A Gallery of Gershwin* , included a piano quartet of Costa , the unrelated Johnny Costa , Hank Jones , and Dick Marx) , Michel Legrand , and Ernie Wilkins . Costa 's final recording as leader was *The House of Blue Lights* , a piano trio album with Marshall and Motian , in 1959 . Billboard was again positive , highlighting Costa 's " highly inventive and imaginative piano stylings " . After this , although he continued to play in clubs such as the Half Note on Hudson Street , Costa concentrated mainly on studio work , on both piano and vibes , for other leaders . He was much in demand for recording sessions because of the excellence of his sight @-@ reading and playing on both of his instruments .

The quantity of studio work created a conflict between Costa 's need and desire to support his family , sometimes achieved through working day and night in studios , and his belief in developing his jazz talents , which would have required playing more in clubs and dealing with the people ? agents , club owners , artists and repertoire men , and so on ? whose goals seldom matched those of creative musicians . Notable examples of Costa 's studio work from this period are being part of Gigi Gryce 's final recordings as leader , appearances on Gunther Schuller 's *Third Stream* album *Jazz Abstractions* , a series of small @-@ group recordings with saxophonist Coleman Hawkins , and two tracks of Shelly Manne 's *2 @-@ 3 @-@ 4* , with Costa featuring on piano for one track and vibes on the other , both with just George Duvivier and Manne . Costa also contributed on vibes to Gryce 's music for Fred Baker 's short dance film *On the Sound* . A long association with pianist and arranger Ralph Sharon meant that Costa was the vibraphonist in the Sharon orchestra on June 9 , 1962 , when it played with Bennett at Carnegie Hall . Costa 's final recording session was on July 12 , 1962 , as part of a group assembled by saxophonist Al Cohn mainly from the Benny Goodman band that had toured the Soviet Union earlier that year .

Late at night on July 28 , 1962 , Costa was killed in a car crash , involving no other vehicles , on New York 's Westside Highway at 72nd Street . He was survived by his wife and four children . This loss to music was summarized years later in the liner notes to one of his recordings : " No pianist with his combination of strength , humor , and drive has developed in the sixties or seventies , and as the years go by it becomes more apparent that we lost a unique creative musician " . In his eight @-@ year recording career , Costa appeared on more than 100 albums . He never recorded a solo album .

= = Playing style = =

Costa 's overall style allowed him to play in a great variety of settings . According to critic Alun Morgan , " his mind was never cluttered up with thoughts of stylistic divisions . He was at home with any jazz group , provided it swung and generated a feeling of happiness " . On piano , his " trademark sound " , remarked Ken Dryden , " was the emphasis of the middle and lower registers while nearly ignoring the top two octaves " . Some of Costa 's more linear , right @-@ hand playing was influenced by his listening to Bud Powell records while in the army . Costa 's playing was more than just one @-@ handed lines : during a period when the typical approach to jazz piano was to

concentrate on right @-@ hand solos while adding only basic left @-@ hand support , Costa used both hands in creating his own vigorous sound . His piano playing on the informally recorded album Fuerst Set is typical of his style ; it was later described by critic Whitney Balliett :

Each improvisation resembled an excellent drum solo in its rhythmic intensity , pattern of beats , and elements of surprise . Costa liked to use octave chords in the left hand and single @-@ note lines in the right , and he liked to thunder endlessly down in the lower registers of the piano . At such times , he played chords in both hands and with stunning effect . He would let loose a staccato passage and then an impossible two @-@ handed arpeggio , or he would deliver on @-@ the @-@ beat or offbeat chords ? seesawing them , making them into sixty @-@ fourth notes , somehow slurring them , and developing great drive and momentum .

On vibes , Costa 's style was somewhat different . John S. Wilson commented in 1959 that " In contrast to the stirring forays into the lower register that he is fond of making on piano , Costa 's vibraphone style is light and dancing , closer to the Red Norvo manner than most current vibists . " After Costa 's death , Alun Morgan also compared his playing on the two instruments : " As a vibraphonist Eddie carried over the pulsating elements of his piano style but also continued to employ a sensitive gradation of touch where necessary " .

= = Recognition = =

Costa was chosen as Down Beat jazz critics ' new star on piano and vibes for 1957 ; this was the first time that one artist had won two categories in the same year . In 1962 he was invited to play at the first International Jazz Festival in Washington , D.C. by the President 's Music Committee of the People to People program . An indication of the esteem in which Costa was held by musicians is the caliber of those who performed at his memorial concert at The Village Gate on October 8 , 1962 : Cohn , Benny Golson , Zoot Sims , Charlie Byrd , Jim Hall , Mundell Lowe , Farmer , Clark Terry and Hawkins were among those who played . The playing of the bands led by the last two was recorded and released as an LP . Hawkins did not usually play at benefit concerts , but his feelings for Costa meant that he did what he could to make the seven @-@ hour event a success .

= = Discography = =

= = = As leader = = =

= = = As sideman = = =

Costa played piano , vibes , or both on the albums listed in the table below . Other recordings , where his presence is disputed or the music is classical , are not listed .

Sources :