

Gene Krupa

Background information

Birth name	Eugene Bertram Krupa
Born	January 15, 1909 <div>Chicago, Illinois, U.S.</div>
Died	October 16, 1973 (aged 64) <div>Yonkers, New York, U.S.</div>
Genres	Jazz, swing, dixieland, big band
Occupation(s)	Drummer, composer, bandleader
Instruments	Drums
Years active	1920s–1973
Associated acts	Eddie Condon, Benny Goodman, Louie Bellson, Anita O'Day

Eugene Bertram "Gene" Krupa (January 15, 1909 – October 16, 1973) was an American jazz and big band drummer, band leader, actor, and composer, known for his highly energetic and flamboyant style.

Early life

He was born in Chicago, the youngest of Anna (née Osłowski) and Bartłomiej Krupa's nine children. Krupa's father was an immigrant from Poland, and his mother, Anna, was born in Shamokin, Pennsylvania, also of Polish descent. His parents were very religious Roman Catholics and had groomed Gene for the priesthood. He spent his grammar school days at various parochial schools and upon graduation, attended Saint Joseph's College for a year, but later decided it was not his vocation. He studied with Sanford A. Moeller and began playing drums professionally in the mid-1920s with bands in Wisconsin. He broke into the Chicago scene in 1927, when he was picked by MCA to become a member of "Thelma Terry and Her Playboys," the first notable American Jazz band (except all-girl bands) to be led by a female musician. The Playboys were the house band at The Golden Pumpkin nightclub in Chicago and also toured extensively throughout the eastern and central United States.

Career

He made his first recordings in 1927, with a band under the leadership of guitarist Eddie Condon and Red McKenzie: along with other recordings beginning in 1927 by musicians known in the "Chicago" scene such as Bix Beiderbecke, these sides are examples of "Chicago Style" jazz. The numbers recorded at that session were: "China Boy", "Sugar", "Nobody's Sweetheart" and "Liza". The McKenzie-Condon sides are also notable for being some early examples of the use of a full drum kit on recordings. Krupa's big influences during this time were Tubby Hall and Zutty Singleton. In Chicago, one drummer to influence Gene in this period was Baby Dodds, whose use of press rolls was highly reflected in Gene's playing.

Krupa also appeared on six recordings made by the Thelma Terry band in 1928. In 1934 he joined Benny Goodman's band, where his featured drum work made him a national celebrity. His tom-tom interludes on their hit "Sing, Sing, Sing" were the first extended drum solos to be recorded commercially. He appears in the 1941 film, *Ball of Fire*, in which he and his band perform an extended version of the hit "Drum Boogie", sung by Barbara Stanwyck (whose singing was dubbed by Martha Tilton), which he had composed with trumpeter Roy Eldridge. As an 'encore', he then plays a 'tamer' version of the same song using matchsticks as drumsticks and a matchbox as a drum, while Stanwyck and audience sing along.

As the 1940s ended, large orchestras fell by the wayside: Count Basie closed his large band and Woody Herman reduced his to an octet. Krupa gradually cut down the size of the band in the late 1940s, and from 1951 on led a trio or quartet,

often featuring the multi-instrumentalist Eddie Shu on tenor sax, clarinet and harmonica. He appeared regularly with the Jazz At the Philharmonic shows. Along with Ball of Fire, he made a cameo appearance in the 1946 screen classic *The Best Years Of Our Lives*. His athletic drumming style, timing methods and cymbal technique evolved during this decade to fit in with changed fashions and tastes, but he never quite adjusted to the Be-Bop period.

In 1954, Krupa returned to Hollywood to appear in such films as *The Glenn Miller Story* and *The Benny Goodman Story*. In 1959, the movie biography, *The Gene Krupa Story*, was released; Sal Mineo portrayed Krupa, and the film had a cameo appearance by Red Nichols. "

During the 1950s he often appeared at the Metropole, near Times Square in Manhattan. He continued to perform in famous clubs in the 1960s including the legendary Show Boat Lounge in NW Washington DC (which burned to the ground in the DC/Adams-Morgan race riots following the assassination of MLK in 1968, shortly after Krupa's last appearance there). Increasingly troubled by back pain, he retired in the late 1960s and opened a music school. One of his pupils was KISS drummer Peter Criss, whilst Jerry Nolan from The New York Dolls was another, as evidenced by the drumming similarities between KISS's "100,000 years" and The New York Dolls' "Jet Boy".

He occasionally played in public in the early 1970s until shortly before his death. One such late appearance occurred in 1972 at a jazz concert series sponsored by the New School in New York. Krupa appeared onstage with other well-known musicians including trumpeter Harry James and the younger jazz star-saxophonist Gerry Mulligan. A presumption was

that the 500 or so audience members were drawn by Mulligan's contemporary appeal. Nevertheless, when, during the second tune, Krupa took a 16 bar break, the room essentially exploded, the crowd leaping to its feet creating a deafening roar of unanimous affection; in effect, he remained a seminal performer up to his death, even while playing for a huge audience perhaps half his age.

Krupa-Rich 'drum battles'

Norman Granz recruited Krupa and fellow drummer Buddy Rich for his Jazz at The Philharmonic concerts. It was suggested that the two perform a 'drum battle' at the Carnegie Hall concert in September 1952, which was recorded and later issued on vinyl (a CD edition called *The Drum Battle at JATP* appeared courtesy of Verve in 1999).

Further drum battles took place at subsequent JATP concerts; the two drummers also faced off in a number of television broadcasts and other venues. During the 1950s he often appeared at the Metropole in these drum battles with Rich, near Times Square in Manhattan, and often played similar duets with drummer Cozy Cole.

Krupa and Rich recorded two studio albums together: *Krupa and Rich* (Verve, 1955) and *Burnin' Beat* (Verve, 1962).

Personal life

Krupa married Ethel Maguire twice: the first marriage lasted from 1934–1942; the second one dates from 1946 to her death in 1955. Their relationship was dramatized in the biopic about him. Krupa remarried in 1959 to Patty Bowler.

In 1943, Krupa was arrested for possession of two marijuana cigarettes and was given a 90 day jail sentence, of which he served 84 days. He was also charged with, but acquitted of, contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Krupa died of leukemia and heart failure in Yonkers, New York, aged 64. He was buried in Holy Cross Cemetery in Calumet City, Illinois.

Legacy

In the 1930s, Krupa became the first endorser of Slingerland drums. At Krupa's urging, Slingerland developed tom-toms with tuneable top and bottom heads, which immediately became important elements of virtually every drummer's setup. Krupa developed and popularized many of the cymbal techniques that became standards. His collaboration with Armand Zildjian of the Avedis Zildjian Company developed the modern hi-hat cymbals and standardized the names and uses of the ride cymbal, the crash cymbal, the splash cymbal, the pang cymbal and the swish cymbal. He is also credited with helping to formulate the modern trap kit, being the first drummer to use a bass drum in a recording session in December of 1927. One of his bass drums, a Slingerland inscribed with Benny Goodman's and Krupa's initials, is preserved at the Smithsonian museum in Washington, D.C.

The 1937 recording of Louis Prima's "Sing, Sing, Sing (With a Swing)" by Benny Goodman and His Orchestra featuring Gene Krupa on drums was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1982.

In 1959, The Gene Krupa Story was released theatrically in America.

In 1978, Krupa became the first drummer inducted into the Modern Drummer Hall of Fame.

Rhythm, the UK's best selling drum magazine voted Gene Krupa the third most influential drummer ever, in a poll conducted for its February 2009 issue. Voters included over 50 top-name drummers.

Gene Krupa is tributed during a drum solo by Neil Peart on Rush's "Snakes and Arrows" live DVD. "Malignant Narcissism" segues to a Peart solo titled "De Slagwerker" (Dutch for "The Drummer") during which videos play on the stage screen behind him. Near the end, short clips of Gene Krupa performances are shown.

Actor Gary Burghoff, of the TV series M*A*S*H, had been a friend of Krupa. In the episode "Showtime", the finale to Season One recorded in March 1973, Burghoff played a drum solo on the kit using a playing style modeled after Krupa. When Krupa died, he left a drum kit to Burghoff.

Discography

Krupa's version of Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay released as a 78 rpm shellac record (Brunswick)

Benny Goodman: The Complete RCA Victor Small Group Recordings (RCA Victor, 1935-39 [1997])

Benny Goodman: The Famous Carnegie Hall Concert 1938 (Columbia)

Drummin' Man (Charly, 1938–41) with Roy Eldridge, Anita O'Day, Benny Carter, Charlie Ventura

Drum Boogie (Columbia, 1940–41)

Uptown (Columbia, 1941–1949)

Lionel Hampton/Gene Krupa (Forlane, 1949) with Don Fagerquist, Frank Rehak, Frank Rosolino, Roy Eldridge

The Exciting Gene Krupa (Enoch's Music, 1953) with Charlie Shavers, Bill Harris, Willie Smith, Ben Webster, Teddy Wilson, Herb Ellis, Ray Brown, Israel Crosby

Krupa and Rich (Verve, 1955) with Roy Eldridge, Dizzy Gillespie, Illinois Jacquet, Flip Phillips, Oscar Peterson, Herb Ellis, Ray Brown, Buddy Rich

Gene Krupa Big Band: Drummer Man featuring Anita O'Day & Roy Eldridge (Verve, 1956)

Gene Krupa Plays Gerry Mulligan Arrangements (Verve, 1959)

Big Noise From Winnetka (Live at the London House (Verve 1959)

Guard Sessions-Tony Bennett and The Gene Krupa Quartet (60's)

Burnin' Beat: Gene Krupa – Buddy Rich (Verve, 1962)

Gene Krupa / Louis Bellson – The Mighty Two (EMI Columbia 1963)

The Great New Gene Krupa Quartet featuring Charlie Ventura (Verve, 1964) also Nabil Totah and John Bunch

Book Revue, the 1945 Warner Brothers' Looney Tunes cartoon, included a rendition of "It Had To Be You," featuring caricatures of Harry James, Benny Goodman, and Gene Krupa.

Gene Krupa Quartet- Live At The New School (1973)

Gene Krupa-Charlie Ventura Trio (3 selections) Town Hall Jazz Concert 1945 (Commodore Records: re-issue Atlantic, 1973 SD2-310)

Compositions

Gene Krupa wrote or co-wrote the following songs: "Some Like It Hot" (1939) with Frank Loesser and Remo Biondi, "Disc Jockey Jump" with Gerry Mulligan, "Manhattan Transfer" with Elton Hill, "Drum Boogie" with Roy Eldridge, "Drummin' Man", "Bolero at the Savoy" with Jimmy Mundy, "Feelin' Fancy", "He's Gone", "Wire Brush Stomp", "Jam on Toast", "The Big Do", "Murdy Purdy" with Jimmy Mundy, "Hard, Hard Roxy", pt. 2, "Full Dress Hop", "Swing is Here" with Chu Berry, "To Be or Not to Be-Bop", "Quiet and Roll 'Em" with Sam Donahue, "Sweetheart, Honey, Darlin' Dear", "Boogie Blues", "I Should Have Kept on Dreaming", "Apurksody", "The Babe Takes a Bow", "Blues of Israel", "Blues Krieg". "Some Like It Hot" has been recorded by Charlie Barnet, Red Norvo, Nat King Cole, and Judy Ellington.