



Charlie Christian was born in Bonham, Texas on the 29th of June, 1916. His family moved to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma when he was a small child. In 1939, Christian auditioned for John Hammond, who recommended him to bandleader Benny Goodman. It has been claimed that Goodman was initially uninterested in hiring Christian because the electric guitar was a relatively new instrument. However, Goodman was so impressed by Christian's playing that he hired him on the spot. Christian was placed in Goodman's new sextet, which included Lionel Hampton, Fletcher Henderson, Artie Bernstein and Nick Fatool. By February 1940 Christian dominated the jazz and swing guitar polls and was elected to the Metronome All Stars.

Christian's solos are frequently referred to as *horn-like*, and in that sense he was more influenced by horn players such as Lester Young and Herschel Evans than by early acoustic guitarists like Eddie Lang and jazz/bluesman Lonnie Johnson, although they both had contributed to the expansion of the guitar's role from "rhythm section" instrument to a solo instrument. In an interview in 1940 Christian admitted he wanted his guitar to sound like a 'hot tenor'.

Charlie Christian was an important contributor to the music that became known as "bop" or "Bebop". He influenced not only guitarists, but other musicians as well. The influence he had on "Dizzy" Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk and Don Byas can be heard on their early "bop" recordings "Blue'n Boogie" and "Salt Peanuts". Other musicians, such as trumpeter Miles Davis, cite Christian as an early influence. Indeed, Christian's "new" sound influenced jazz as a whole.

In the late 1930s Christian had contracted tuberculosis and in early 1940 was hospitalized for a short period. In June 1941 he was admitted to Seaview, a sanatorium on Staten Island in New York City. He was reported to be making progress, and Down Beat magazine reported in February 1942 that he and Cootie Williams were starting a band.

After a visit that same month to the hospital by tap dancer and drummer Marion Joseph "Taps" Miller, Christian declined in health and died March 2, 1942. He was 25 years old.