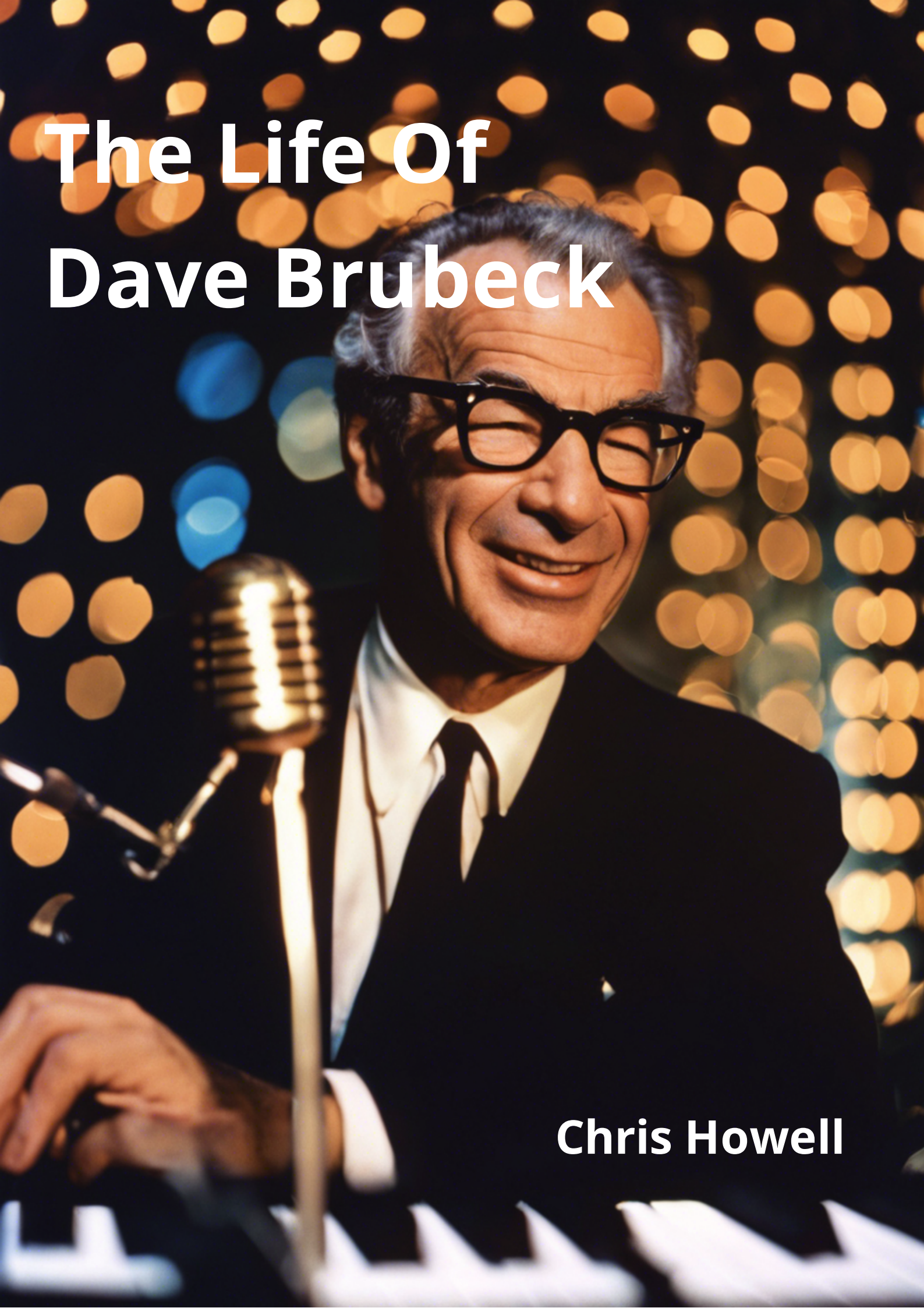


The Life Of Dave Brubeck



Chris Howell

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Early Years and Influences	01
Musical Education and Beginnings	03
Forming The Dave Brubeck Quartet	05
Composing 'Take Five' and Other Hits	07
Innovative Rhythms and Harmonies	10
Collaborations and Friendships	12
Challenges and Triumphs	14
Legacy and Influence	16

Early Years and Influences

Dave Brubeck's early years were a fascinating prelude to a life that would forever change the jazz landscape. Born on December 6, 1920, in Concord, California, David Warren Brubeck was the third son of Peter Howard 'Pete' Brubeck and Elizabeth Ivey Brubeck. His father was a cattle rancher, and his mother, a classical piano teacher, ensuring that his childhood was deeply rooted in both Western and musical traditions.

Growing up on a ranch, young Dave spent his days amidst the serene beauty of nature and the constant rhythm of ranch life. These early experiences fostered a sense of discipline and an appreciation for the simple, natural order, elements that would later become evident in his music. Despite living in a largely rural environment, Dave was introduced to music early on, courtesy of his mother, who instilled a love for classical music in her children. Brubeck's mother attempted to teach him piano, but he had trouble reading the sheet music due to poor eyesight. Despite this obstacle, he quickly developed an impressive ability to play by ear.

Brubeck's rustic childhood was complemented by the cultural richness his mother brought into the household. Elizabeth Brubeck had studied piano under the famous French musician Darius Milhaud at Mills College and was determined to pass on her knowledge and passion to her children. The necessity to play by ear rather than read music sharpened Dave's natural ability to improvise, an invaluable skill in jazz. He was also exposed to the works of classical composers like Beethoven and Chopin, which laid a strong foundation for his later achievements in music.

Throughout his formative years, Brubeck's environment stimulated a curiosity that extended beyond the realm of music. His father's work on the ranch often involved interactions with cowhands and Native Americans, and these cultural exposures undoubtedly played a role in shaping Brubeck's worldview. Additionally, the frequent visits from friends and family to the ranch provided young Dave with a rich tapestry of human interactions that would later reflect in his collaborative approach to music making.

The influence of jazz began to permeate Brubeck's life during his teenage years. The seeds were sown by listening to the local radio stations, which occasionally played jazz genres. However, Brubeck's formal introduction to jazz happened quite serendipitously. It was at Stockton High School, where he met musicians and became acquainted with the works of Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, and other pioneers of the genre. His fascination with jazz started taking a more defined shape when he attended the College of the Pacific in Stockton, California.

At college, Brubeck initially intended to study veterinary science, following in his father's footsteps. Yet, the lure of music was too strong to ignore. Eventually, he switched his major to music, much to the initial reluctance of the college, given his inadequate sight-reading skills. But his sheer talent and the support from his professors saw him through. It was at college that Brubeck began to develop a more formal understanding of music theory and composition.

Another significant influence came when Brubeck was drafted into the army during World War II, where he led one of the first racially integrated military bands, 'The Wolfpack'. This period broadened his musical exposure and deepened his understanding of racial dynamics, which would later influence his work as a musician and an advocate for social justice.

The combination of a disciplined upbringing, early classical training, exposure to diverse cultures, and the eventual immersion in jazz created a unique musical prodigy in Dave Brubeck. All these formative experiences laid the groundwork for the innovative and genre-defying musician he was destined to become. The early years of Dave Brubeck's life were not just a prelude to his future; they were a crucible, shaping him into a musician whose work would resonate through the corridors of jazz history.

