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Welcome

My intention is to publish this newsletter quarterly. Unfortunately, I missed publishing an edition last quarter. Hopefully I will be back on track with a regular schedule starting with this issue.

The main focus of this issue is the analysis of the four solos recorded on "Tenor Conclave" on the album of the same name. There is a wealth of knowledge to be gained by studying the solos of these four masters as they blow on Rhythm Changes.

Tenor Conclave

Recorded in November, 1956, this album features the contributions of tenor saxophonists Al Cohn, John Coltrane, Hank Mobley, and Zoot Sims. The album offers a chance to hear four masters stretch out on standard material (the blues, I Got Rhythm, "Just You, Just Me", and "How Deep Is The Ocean?"). Each track is a fascinating study in the similarities and differences in their approaches to soloing on these tunes.

I recently transcribed all four soloists playing on the title track. "Tenor Conclave" is Hank Mobley's composition on I Got Rhythm changes. All four transcriptions are available at my website: <http://scooby-sax.com/transcriptions.aspx>

In the sections that follow, I have some suggestions on how to practice the solos and include analysis of each of the four solos.

Practice Ideas

When practicing transcribed solos, the goal is to internalize the material to such an extent that you can play along with the solo

and match the time-feel, articulation, etc. of the soloist. Here are some suggestions to achieve this goal:

1. Have a recording of the tune available and listen to it as much as possible. Have a copy on your iPod, on your laptop, on your computer at work, burn a CD for the car, etc. While concentrated listening without distractions is best, even having the tune on in the background while driving helps you absorb it. I like to have a copy available on my nightstand that I can listen to just as I'm nodding off to sleep.
2. Use a program like Audacity or Transcribe! to create a half-speed version of the tune. At approximately 240 bpm, "Tenor Conclave" moves along pretty quickly. Having the slower version available both for listening and practicing allows you to absorb the details more easily.
3. With consistent listening, you will eventually be able to sing along with the solos. Again, match the time-feel, etc. as carefully as possible. There are solos I can sing along with where I can match when Bud Powell grunts in the rhythm section or I know when a glass will clink in the background during a live Charlie Parker recording. Strive to learn all the details.
4. Practice the solos slowly! Set your metronome to 60 bpm to give your brain, ears, and fingers a chance to synchronize. Start with small sections at first (e.g. the first 8 bars of Hank Mobley's solo). Work up to playing through the entire solo of one soloist (each tenor saxophonist plays 3 choruses). Eventually, you should be able to play through all choruses of all players. While you may initially need the printed solo in front of you, begin to work from memory as soon as possible.
5. A quick mathematical interlude - each soloist plays 3 choruses of a 32 bar form. That's 96 bars. There are four soloists, so that's 384 bars total. There are 4 beats per measure, so that's 1536 beats. At 60 beats per minute (bpm), that works out to ~25 ½ minutes to play through all four solos slowly. Trust me, this is the best use of a half hour you can make while practicing! Dedicated focus on a concentrated amount of material will yield far more benefits than 5 minutes of one thing, 5 of another, etc.
6. Set up a reasonable schedule to learn all four solos. This isn't a race. If you are a more advanced player, perhaps one soloist per week is a good goal (meaning that you will have

all four done in a month). If that schedule is too aggressive, perhaps one chorus per week is better (meaning you will have all four solos learned in 3 months). If that's still too aggressive, work on 8 bars at a time. Whatever pace you think is best for your skill level at this time, set your goal appropriately and strive to meet it each week.

7. Once you have the solos mastered at 60 bpm, play through them at 120bpm (which is approximately ½ speed of the original). Once you have 120bpm mastered, move up to 240bpm. If you have been serious about your practice at 60 bpm and really taken the time to master the nuances of the solos at that speed, you will be amazed at your ability to play at the faster tempos. James Moody gave me great advice in a masterclass once when he said, "In order to play fast, you have to practice slowly."

Analysis

The four solos make a fascinating study in the similarities and difference among the soloists. While you might initially think that Coltrane's solo would be radically different from Zoot's, careful analysis shows there are similarities in their approaches.

In order to follow along with the analysis, I would suggest printing out each solo for your reference. For my transcriptions, I try to lay out the solos using a consistent 4 bars per staff. Each chorus is numbered and the bars are numbered every four measures.

I will analyze each solo in turn and then have a summary at the end. By no means is this analysis meant to be exhaustive - the ideas I point out are meant to inspire your own analysis and generate additional ideas to practice.

Hank Mobley's solo:

Chromatic Approach:

Examples of Hank approaching a chord tone with one or more chromatic steps can be found in measures 4-5, 10, 16-17, 43-45, 73, etc. Chromatic approaches are idiomatic to bebop and add interest to a diatonic line. Chromatic approaches are a study unto themselves - perhaps a good topic for a future newsletter.

Alterations:

A few examples of alterations can be found in measures 13, 14, and 36 (which emphasize the b13 or #5 chord tone on the dominant). Bars 26, 37, 42, 74 contain b9 and #9 alterations to the dominant, either alone or in combination.

Bebop Scales:

Bebop scales have been extensively discussed by Barry Harris and David Baker (among others). Examples can be seen in bars 21-22, 24, and 54.

Quotes:

Some players use quotes from other tunes more extensively than others. Bar 59 is a figure that Dexter Gordon used extensively. Bar 67 is a quote from Charlie Parker's "Cool Blues."

Blues Scale:

Again, different players use blues scales to a greater or lesser degree when playing Rhythm Changes. One example of a blues scale-based phrase is seen in bars 61-62.

Guide Tones:

Another topic worthy of its own Newsletter, guide tones emphasize the 3rds and 7ths of chords. Well-constructed guide tone lines demonstrate an ability to really play the changes. One example can be seen in measures 76 and 77 where the 3rds are targeted.

Sequences:

Sequences feature a melodic fragment that is then moved up or down intervallically. An example of a diatonic sequence is seen in bars 96-98. The arpeggios descend diatonically and resolve nicely at the top of the chorus. Hank plays a similar sequence to conclude his "Room 608" solo that he recorded with Horace Silver (transcription available at my website). Bird plays a similar sequence at the end of his solo on "Dexterity."

Zoot Sims' Solo:

Chromatic Approaches:

Zoot's solo contains many examples of chromatic approaches including bars 11, 18, 29, 36, 37, 38, and 68. I particularly like the line in bar 11 with the double approach from above, followed by the single approach from below, concluding with another double approach from above.

Alterations:

Zoot shows a fondness for the b9, #9 in combination on dominant chords. Examples can be seen bars 12, 24, 56, and 96.

Guide Tones:

Bars 94-97 show Zoot targeting the 3rds as he weaves his melodic line.

Al Cohn's Solo:

Riffs:

Al's solo features a device not found in the other solos - the riff. Riffs were common in the big band era in which an arrangement of a blues or I Got Rhythm tune was assembled the spot. A simple melodic fragment started in one section. Other sections would either pick up that theme or supply a contrasting melody that works with (or against) the original theme. A tune like "Lester Leaps In" is an example of what I think of as a riff tune featuring a simple, repeated melodic line.

Examples of a riff-type approach are found in bars 9-12, 57-72, 89-96. The latter two examples also show Al's use of blues scale material to create the riff he's using.

Substitutions:

There is a great variety of chord substitutions that can be used when playing I Got Rhythm. For all of the transcriptions, I have notated what are one common set of changes that are used. The soloists however may have another set of changes in mind in places. One example is what Al plays in bars 73-74. He outlines the changes to a variation that Jimmy Heath used in his composition "CTA."

John Coltrane's solo:

Chromatic Approach:

Examples of chromatic approaches can be seen in bars 20, 38, and 52.

Alterations:

Bars 13 and 52 feature the $b13$ or $\#5$ alteration to the dominant chords.

Sequences and substitutions:

Bars 11-12 and 39 show a combination of a sequence that also outlines passing chord substitutions.

Digital Patterns:

I first heard this term either from Jamey Aebersold or David Baker in reference to Coltrane's solo on "Giant Steps". Digital patterns are simple patterns that outline a chord change. "Giant Steps" makes extensive use of 1-2-3-5 (where the number refers to the scale degree). While they don't make up the solo to the same extent as "Giant Steps," there are several examples in Trane's solo:

Bar 5, 25, 29: 1-2-3-5

Bar 6, 46: 5-3-2-1

Bar 6, 28: 1-2-3-1

Tenor Conclave Summary:

- Again, the above analysis isn't intended as exhaustive. I wanted to introduce some common approaches used when soloing and pick out a few examples in the four solos of these techniques. There are many directions to take the analysis from here and many ways to incorporate the ideas into your playing. For example, you can focus on a specific technique such as chromatic approach. Find all of the examples in all of the solos (I've given several, but there are others). Find which ones appeal to you the most and learn them in 12 keys. Then pick another technique - perhaps study how the soloists alter dominant chords. Find your favorite altered lines and learn in 12 keys. These four solos should keep you busy for quite a long time!

Updates to the website

In addition to the four transcriptions of the Tenor Conclave solos, I added the following solos to the website since the last Newsletter:

George Coleman's solo on "Billie's Bounce"

Frank Wess' flute solo on "There Is No Greater Love"

Steve Grossman's solo on "There Will Never Be Another You"

I try to add at least one new solo per month.

In addition, I contributed an article to Doron Orenstein's site (<http://www.bestsaxophonewebsiteever.com/>) entitled, "Improve Your Sax Playing - With Flute Exercises!" that discusses using some of the methods from classical flute playing to improve your saxophone tone and technique. I would suggest that you bookmark Doron's site - he has a number of interviews, podcasts, articles, etc. and frequently updates his site with a wealth of great information contributed by a number of people.

I hope you enjoyed this issue of the Scooby-Sax Newsletter and that you've got plenty of material to practice now! Your comments and questions are always welcome. Send me an email at scooby@scooby-sax.com to let me know what you thought of this issue, suggestions for future issues, etc.

Sincerely,

Jeff Rzepiela
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