

Jazz listening 10/3/2011: Blues in Jazz Solos I

Due Date: 10/14/2011

1. Oh, Lady Be Good

Composer:

Album: The Ultimate Charlie Parker or Charlie Parker, 1946 Jazz at the Philharmonic Concert

Artist(s): Charlie Parker

Soloists: Arnold Ross – piano, Charlie Parker – alto sax, Billy Hadnott – bass, Lester Young – tenor sax, Howard McGhee – trpt, Buster Smith – alto sax, Al Killian - trpt
Recorded: 1946

Personnel: Charlie Parker – alto sax, Buster Smith – alto sax, Lester Young – tenor sax, Howard McGhee – trpt, Al Killian – trpt, Arnold Ross – piano, Billy Hadnott – bass, Lee Young - drums

Notes:

The second soloist is Charlie Parker on alto sax. This is an amazing solo for many reasons. 1) Bird uses authentic Blues style and inflection. His playing is as soulful as it can get. He learned Blues style growing up in Kansas City where he would regularly hang out and listen to the Count Basie Band which had incredible soloists such as: Lester Young – tenor sax, Hershal Evans – tenor sax, Buster Smith – alto sax, Jo Jones – drums, and Buck Clayton – trumpet. Kansas City in the 1930's was also home to a good number of fantastic Blues singers which Bird heard regularly as well. He was steeped in authentic Blues style. When he went to New York it was widely accepted that he had the most authentic Blues vocabulary of any of the Be-Boppers; 2) Bird managed to mix this great Blues style with fantastic Be-Bop double time lines that outlined the upper harmonics of the chords; 3) It's interesting to hear Charlie Parker's playing next to his boyhood idols Lester Young and Buster Smith.

This performance is from a "Jazz at the Philharmonic" concert. Concert Promoter Norman Granz organized tours of all-star groups of musicians and booked them into concert halls so that large audiences could attend. Granz usually had an outstanding group of musicians on these performances and this one is no exception.

2. Like a Lover

Composer:

Album: Like a Lover

Artist(s): Gene Harris Quartet

Soloists: Gene Harris – piano, Ron Eschete – guitar

Recorded: 1992

Personnel: Gene Harris – piano, Ron Eschete – guitar, Luther Hughes – bass, Harold Jones - drums

Notes: This performance is unique because it includes a soulful, Bluesy vamp in between sections of a song form (which has an unusual number of measures in its phrases). Both Gene Harris and Ron Eschete show off their considerable Blues vocabulary. This one is just plain fun to listen to!

3. The Sidewinder

Composer: Lee Morgan

Album: The Sidewinder

Artist(s): Lee Morgan

Soloists: Lee Morgan – trpt., Joe Henderson – tenor sax, Barry Harris -piano, Bob Cranshaw - bass

Recorded: 1963

Personnel: Lee Morgan – trpt, Joe Henderson – tenor sax, Barry Harris - piano, Bob Cranshaw - bass, Billy Higgins – drums

Notes: The recordings made by the Blue Note record label during the late 50's and 1960's are famous for the quality of musicians and playing. They also often featured attractive grooves, which helped these fine musicians reach a wider audience. Here drummer Billy Higgins lays down a groove that is irresistible. Lee Morgan's composition and solo are very funky and soulful (which is what the Blues is all about).

4. How Long Has This Been Going On?

Composer: George and Ira Gershwin

Album: How Long Has This Been Going On?

Artist(s): Sarah Vaughan

Soloists: Sarah Vaughan – vocals, Oscar Peterson – piano

Recorded: 1978

Personnel: Sarah Vaughan – vocals, Oscar Peterson – piano, Joe Pass – guitar, Ray Brown - bass, Louie Bellson – drums

Sarah Vaughan is one of the greatest jazz vocalists ever. She played piano and had an incredibly wide range. Her pitch was always dead on even when singing very difficult improvisations. Oscar Peterson plays a great solo and many Bluesy/Be-Bopish fills in between Sarah's vocal phrases. I love Joe Pass' sound and comping on guitar.

5. Splanky

Composer: Neal Hefti

Album: Blues Groove

Artist(s): Hank Crawford & Jimmy McGriff

Soloists: Hank Crawford – alto sax, Jimmy McGriff - organ

Recorded: 1995

Personnel: Jimmy McGriff – Hammond XB3 organ, Hank Crawford – alto sax, Wayne Boyd – guitar, Vance James – drums

Notes: Splanky was composed by Neal Hefti for the Count Basie Band. The group here incorporates a Basie groove. Notice the guitar playing quarter notes in the introduction and during the solos. Also notice how softly the drums play, making the guitar comping very prominent even though it is soft as well. Jimmy McGriff uses a few different sounds through his organ for variety, not sure I like them all but it does create variety. Hank Crawford, who had played alto with Ray Charles for many years, and the other soloists use Blues vocabulary almost exclusively! These solos are a great source of licks to steal (transcribe). What side of the line are you on?

6. Blue Soul

Composer: Blue Mitchell

Album: Blues on My Mind

Artist(s): Blue Mitchell

Soloists: Blue Mitchell – trpt, Wynton Kelly – piano, Sam Jones – bass

Recorded: 1959

Personnel: Blue Mitchell – trpt, Wynton Kelly – piano, Sam Jones – bass, Philly Joe Jones – drums

Notes: Blue Mitchell is a unique trumpet player in that he was able to play in a very soulful way and still express a lot of joy every time he played. He was the first trumpet player to record in a quartet setting with just trpt and rhythm section. I think his expression is very beautiful. I love this groove. Notice how the hi-hat snaps and the bass sound is very warm and woody during the solos. Master ensemble drummer, Philly Joe Jones, does an interesting job of answering the phrases on the head. Blue played with a nice mix of authentic Blues and be-bop lines sort of similarly to Charlie Parker in "Oh, Lady Be Good," but with much more happiness in his expression. There is some very nice double time used by Blue and by the Wynton Kelly in their solos.

7. Fuller Bop Man

Composer: W. G. Fuller

Album: Cannonball's Sharpshooters

Artist(s): Julian "Cannonball" Adderley

Soloists: Nat Adderley – trpt, Sam Jones – bass, Julian "Cannonball" Adderley – alto sax

Recorded: 1958

Personnel: Nat Adderley – trpt, Julian "Cannonball" Adderley – alto sax, Junior Mance – piano, Sam Jones – bass, Jimmy Cobb – drums

Notes: Dig Nat Adderley's opening solo. He is a very fine player who never really received the recognition he deserved. His playing is both soulful and exciting. He

does a great job of shaping his solo starting slow and easy then using volume, tone quality, range, space and speed to create tension and release. Cannonball's playing is very bopish with some interesting harmonic tricks, using substitute harmony to sound outside of the harmony that the rhythm section is playing. He also uses syncopation to create tension as well. Nobody swung harder than Cannonball and you can hear why in the first few bars of his solo.

8. Doxy

Composer: Sonny Rollins

Album: The Complete Prestige Recordings

Artist(s): Miles Davis- leader w/Sonny Rollins

Soloists: Miles Davis - trpt, Sonny Rollins - tenor sax, Horace Silver - piano

Recorded: 1954

Personnel: Sonny Rollins - tenor sax, Miles Davis - trpt, Horace Silver - piano, bass ?, drums ?

Notes: Notice how simply Miles begins his solo, he uses double time for contrast at the beginning of his second chorus and then at the end of his solo just before a sign off that eases things into the tenor solo. Miles' sound is so personal, you can't help but be drawn in by him. He creates an intimacy that is nearly impossible to resist. Sonny uses a lot of space in his solo, which punctuates his statements very eloquently. Every lick or gesture is recognizable as a clear thought. This allows the drummer and the piano player to do some very interesting yet subtle interaction in between his lines.

9. Jaylock

Composer: J.J. Johnson

Album: Kansas City 7

Artist(s): Count Basie

Soloists: Count Basie - piano, J.J. Johnson - trombone, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis - tenor sax,

Recorded: 1980

Personnel: Count Basie - piano, J.J. Johnson - trombone, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Joe Pass - guitar, John Heard - bass, Jake Hanna - drums

Notes: Count Basie plays two typically laid back solos in which every single note is exactly in the pocket time wise. J.J. Johnson takes his soulful time on trombone.

Next comes Joe Pass on guitar in a very laid back style. Basie interacts simply and tastefully with him. Lockjaw's tenor solo is simultaneously conversational and Bluesy. Basie's closing solo is very sparse actually using an old Blues line for the which the lyrics are: "I ain't mad at you pretty baby, don't be mad at me..." The other players enter with independent riffs to close things out. There is never a melody stated, it's just a Blues jam.

10. C.C. Rider

Composer: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey

Album: The 20th Concord Festival All Stars

Artist(s): The 20th Concord Festival All Stars

Soloists: Ray Brown - bass, Harry "Sweets" Edison - trpt, Red Holloway - tenor sax, Gene Harris - piano, Ray Brown - bass

Recorded: 1988

Personnel: Harry "Sweets" Edison - trpt, Red Holloway - tenor sax, Gene Harris - piano, Ray Brown - bass, Jeff Hamilton - drums

Notes: The trumpet of Harry "Sweets" Edison was very influential as a trumpet soloist with the Count Basie Band for many years. Red Holloway is one of the most blatantly bluesy tenor players of the past few decades. Gene Harris gives a great sample of his Bluesy/Boogie Woogie/Stride style during his solo. Ray Brown's bass solo at the beginning and during the fade out are very simple yet cool.