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SCOOPY-SAX NEWSLETTER (February, 2015)



Welcome

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2015. I'm looking forward to a musical year. Lots of interesting things planned including playing, arranging, transcribing, updating the website, and a very special project to be completed by the end of the year (more about that project in future newsletters).

In this newsletter, I will examine the solos of Wardell Gray on the blues, "Twisted." For the longest time, I thought there were only 3 alternate takes, but someone recently contacted me about a 4th version. I transcribed that solo and have updated a lesson that is available on my website to include an analysis of all 5 versions (the Master take along with all four alternates).

Wardell Gray

Wardell is one of my favorite tenor players. He combines all the best qualities of Lester Young with those of Charlie Parker. He has such a clear approach to harmony that I have found transcriptions of his solos to be a goldmine of information on how to play changes fluently.

For more information about Wardell, you can check out this website: <http://www.wardellgray.org/>

Twisted

Wardell Gray's solo on his blues tune, Twisted, is one of the more famous solos in jazz history (aided by Annie Ross adding a vocalise to the solo). In addition to the famous master take, Wardell recorded four alternate takes that are available on recordings. Examining the master and alternate takes gives an understanding of how Wardell crafted a multi-chorus solo and how he was able to develop new material while retaining other ideas from previous takes.

To begin, you should download and memorize the five solos from the Transcriptions page: <http://scooby-sax.com/Transcriptions.html>

"Twisted" analysis

Once you have learned the solos individually, there are two analysis tools that may be used to further examine the construction of a solo. I learned of the first tool from Lawrence Gushee's analysis of the available versions of Lester Young's solos on "Shoe Shine Boy" (reprinted in [A Lester Young Reader](#)). By stacking alternate takes of a solo one above the other in score format, the similarities and differences among different takes becomes more apparent. A stacked version of Wardell's solos is available on my website: [Twisted Analysis 1](#)

Such a stacked version allows you to see how Wardell

shaped his solo over multiple choruses. It also highlights similarities and differences among the various takes. For example, the double time runs that conclude the JRC46C take do not appear in other takes. The other takes focus primarily on the eighth note as the main rhythmic unit, with 16th notes appearing only occasionally. Comparing the master take to JRC46D, one can see how successful ideas are retained and refined from take to take. For example, JRC46D begins with a similar phrase to the master take (itself a quote from Bird's solo on Now's The Time). Also, the second chorus of both solos begins with the same quote from "Swinging on a Star". This analysis is designed to present the technique rather than an exhaustive comparison, so study the versions carefully and develop your own analysis of the similarities and differences.

Another tool that is similar to the first one shown above takes individual choruses of each solo and stacks each chorus one above the other. I first learned of this technique from David Liebman's DVD "[The Improvisor's Guide to Transcription](#)". A stacked version of Wardell's solos is available on my website: [Twisted Analysis 2](#) .

While similar to first analysis tool, this method of stacking multiple choruses also suggests a way to expand on Wardell's vocabulary by combining phrases from different choruses. The possibilities are endless, but at first, find a phrase that approaches the same chord tone in different choruses. To give just one example, examine bars 9-11 of the third chorus of the master take and the fourth chorus of JRC46D. Both phrases start on the tonic of the minor 7th chord and approach the tonic of the dominant chord. The trick to doubling the amount of material to be drawn from these solos is to start with the first phrase on the minor 7th chord but complete it using the second phrase on the dominant (and vice versa). [This worksheet](#) illustrates the concept. Again, this analysis is designed to illustrate the technique rather than to provide

a complete set of all the possible combinations so look for other permutations that appeal to your ear.

As a final thought, this technique can be extended to analyze solos of more than one musician. For example, you could stack one chorus of "I Got Rhythm" from Charlie Parker, Phil Woods, Jackie McLean, and Sonny Stitt. You could examine how each soloist approaches a given chord tone and look for ways to extend the vocabulary by beginning with a phrase from Sonny Stitt and completing it with a phrase from Jackie McLean, etc. Now, of course, pushing this idea to an extreme can result in the jazz equivalent of Frankenstein's monster (and may result in the villagers chasing you off the bandstand with torches and pitchforks). You have to use taste and good judgement to combine phrases from different players. The next step after that would be starting a phrase with a quote from Phil Woods and completing it with your own improvised idea. This is the ultimate goal of analyzing transcriptions -- to absorb the language of the jazz masters, internalize it, and then expand upon it using your own phrases.

Interesting Sites

In each Newsletter, I try to highlight a few interesting sites that have useful material for players. Here are 3 that are worth checking out:

1). Saxophonist, Alex Terrier, has a great educational website: [Jazz Video Lessons](#). Alex is a great player as well as a great teacher. His videos cover a wide variety of topics, including some in-depth analyses of solos by Cannonball and Hank Mobley, methods for learning and internalizing tunes, ear training, and much more. He has several [free videos](#) available. If you like his approach,

you can subscribe to access the subscriber-only content on his site.

2). Greger Hillman is a Swedish saxophonist that has a website with a number of videos: <http://saxhub.com/>.

3). This blog has quite a few interesting articles: <http://thewoodshedmusic.com/>. I particularly liked [this article](#) on learning tunes.

4). I recently had the chance to meet saxophonist, [Craig Buhler](#). A fine tenor saxophonist, he runs big band workshops in Washington state and down in Carmel, CA while also leading the Stardust Big Band up in Washington. In addition to his great playing, he is a great teacher. I highly recommend his ear training method, "[New Ears Resolution](#)."

Until Next Time ...

I hope you enjoyed this issue of the Scooby-Sax Newsletter and that it gives you plenty of material to practice. 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.

I would also appreciate it if you could forward this email to others that may be interested, share it on Facebook, etc.

Sincerely,

Jeff Rzepiela
www.scooby-sax.com

