A photograph of three jazz musicians playing saxophones, overlaid with a cyan color filter. The musicians are arranged in a vertical stack, with the top one playing a tenor saxophone, the middle one playing an alto saxophone, and the bottom one playing a soprano saxophone. The background is dark, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting the musicians and their instruments.

# JAZZ LESSONS WITH GIANTS

THREE OF JAZZ'S FOREMOST ARTISTS  
SHARE TECHNIQUES, EXERCISES, AND  
CONCEPTS GUARANTEED TO TAKE  
YOUR PLAYING TO NEW HEIGHTS.

By **Doron Orenstein** with:  
*Bob Mintzer* · *David Liebman* · *Bob Sheppard*

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## Legal Mumbo Jumbo

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## Amazon.com Links

Throughout the book, you’ll notice a “find on Amazon.com” link whenever an educational resource is recommended. In the interest of full disclosure, I do get a small commission every time you buy something using that link, and that fee helps offset some of my costs such as online advertising, credit card processing, paying of royalties, and other costs that are *not* insignificant.

That said, when it came time to select which products to recommend, **the sales commission was not a factor in any way, shape, or form**. I would have gladly recommended those products regardless, as they offer the most effective means of delving deeper into concepts outside the scope of this book.

## IMPORTANT: Included E-book Audio Example MP3’s

To help illustrate some of the contents in this book, I have included some audio examples. Most of them can be played from within this e-book, but some of them will have to be played using the mp3 player on your computer, or an external mp3 player such as an iPod.

**These mp3s are located in a folder called “E-book\_mp3\_examples”.**

## Special Thanks

My most sincere appreciation to David Liebman, Bob Mintzer, Bob Sheppard, Mel Martin, Ben Wendel, Ted Nash, Charles McNeal, Bill Harrison, Zach Sollitto, Bill Plake, Sam Sadigursky, Randy Hunter, Crystal Berg, Jamie Simmerman, Jeff Rzepiela, Rick Margitza, Steve Wilson, Gary Smulyan, Michael Cain, Kei Akagi, Bill Green, Vince Trombetta, John Moseley, Dr. David Demsey, Rufus Reid, Steve Nixon, Monica Shriver, the other jazz giants who've inspired me throughout my musical journey (too many folks to attempt to list here), and my awesome readers at BestSaxophoneWebsiteEver.com.

Extra special thanks go out to my exquisite wife, Agatha, for inspiring me to play a much bigger game and become the best man I can possibly be, and my perfect baby boy (3 months old at the time of writing!), Aiden Parker.

## Audio Master Class Interviews

As you may know, this book is the companion to the *Jazz Lessons with Giants* audio master class interviews. Although I strongly feel that this books stands up on its own, the interviews are where the majority of this information was taken from and bring this information to life in a way that will allow to digest it even deeper while also getting the sense that you're hanging out and having an impromptu lesson with Liebman, Mintzer, and Sheppard.

If you don't have the audio, you can purchase the audio alone at <http://www.JazzLessonsWithGiants.com>.

## Introduction

Throughout musical history, the term, “jazz” has been the source of vigorous discourse. Some hold the word as absolutely sacred while others feel it fails to encompass the enormous breadth of music that has transmuted itself from a seemingly distant ancestry. It’s an ancestry of music immediately recognizable as that borne of masters such as Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, and myriad other greats who most obviously occupy “the house that jazz built.”

As for me, I’m not even going to attempt to get in on this debate. But from a musician’s perspective, I can say this much:

**A tremendous amount of deep access to nearly all forms of modern music becomes available when we acquire the skills necessary to play what is considered “straight ahead jazz”.**

Musicians who can convincingly play straight ahead jazz are known to be highly competent in the areas of improvisation, rhythm, harmony, articulation, phrasing, music memorization, live interaction with other musicians, and many other skills.

Learn how to play jazz and you’ll have the “keys to the kingdom” inside of a wide spectrum of other styles including funk, pop, and rock, to name just a smattering. The process of learning jazz represents the “heavy lifting” one needs to do in order to tackle those other styles, which often require the same basic skills, but in much more basic applications. Keep in mind, the basic skills I’m referring to are the technical and theoretical skills. Each style of music is like another language, and just because you speak bebop convincingly, it doesn’t mean you’re going to be able to speak funk convincingly. But by learning to speak bebop, you’ll be in possession of the level of technique as well as knowledge of music theory necessary to speak funk. For the skilled jazz musician, it would be a matter of listening to and performing lots of funk music to really embody that style, but the “nuts and bolts” would be there.

For this reason, a very large percentage of “hired-gun” studio musicians (in other words, musicians charged with the task of playing just about any style of music) have a predominantly jazz background.

So now that I’ve established myself as what some people might consider a jazz snob (which, as anyone who knows me can tell you, I most certainly am not), let’s talk a bit about this book and what you can expect to learn here.

## What this Book Is

This book is the product of hours of interviews with three greats who represent the uppermost echelon of modern jazz’s greatest voices: saxophonists Dave Liebman, Bob Mintzer, and Bob Sheppard. I’ve also included information and insights based on my own twenty-five-plus years as a jazz musician.

## Your Jazz Lessons with Giants Master Class Teachers

As you'll hear if you picked up the audio master class interviews that come as a companion to this e-book, over the course of the interviews, the three jazz giants featured in this program delve deep into tips, techniques, exercises, and concepts which, *if applied*, will ultimately take your jazz playing places it would never have gone otherwise.

Now, if you've been living on the moon, you may not have heard of these three giants, so for those of you who might not have the details on these masters, here's the quick rundown:

### *David Liebman*

Mr. Liebman has been featured on nearly 400 recordings, of which he's been the leader or co-leader on 150. As a sideman he's played with Elvin Jones, Miles Davis, Chick Corea and many more. He's performed and recorded extensively with his own groups, which have featured people like John Scofield, George Mraz, Richie Beirach, Billy Hart, Al Foster, and Vic Juris, among many others. In 1989 he founded the International Association of Schools of Jazz, which is an organization dedicated to networking jazz educators and students around the globe. He's released numerous classic instructional books and DVD's, and in 2011 he was named a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master.

### *Bob Mintzer*

Mr. Mintzer is currently saxophonist for the legendary jazz fusion group the Yellowjackets. He's played with Art Blakey, Jaco Pastorius, Gil Evans, The New York Philharmonic, James Taylor, Steve Winwood, Queen, Donald Fagan, Milton Nascimento, and many more. He's written over 200 big band arrangements and his highly influential big band music is played all over the world. He's had 30 solo projects and was awarded a Grammy for Best Large Jazz Ensemble Recording in 2001. He's on the music faculty at USC, does workshops all over the world, writes books on jazz, composes for orchestras, concert bands as well as other types of ensembles, travels with his own quartet, and plays with numerous other bands around the globe.

### *Bob Sheppard*

Mr. Sheppard has played with Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, Freddie Hubbard, Horace Silver, Joni Mitchell, Steely Dan, Stevie Wonder, and many more. In addition to leading his own groups, he's been a member of the Billy Childs' ensembles as well as the Peter Erskine trio for over a decade. As a first call multi-woodwind studio sideman, he's played on over 100 movie and television soundtracks. He's on the part-time faculty at USC and with his latest album (at the time of publishing this book), *Close Your Eyes*, he features Antonio Sanchez, John Beasley and Alan Pasqua along with other greats.

## Not a "How to Play Jazz" Book

We're not going to be spending too much time here on the fundamentals of playing jazz. Now don't get me wrong, regardless of the type of music we're learning, we've all got to learn the fundamentals. But this book assumes that you have at least a basic understanding of jazz theory.

If you're completely new to playing jazz, I'll be sharing some basic refresher information, and where applicable, I'll also list some great resources to get you up to speed with the fundamentals you'll need in order to get the best results from this program.

But the goal here is to add to your existing knowledge of the basics and include concepts and *techniques that you probably won't find in the "how to play jazz" books*. I want to share some truly potent information that will challenge and enrich you as we deal with things encountered in the realm of advanced jazz musicianship.

## Getting up to Speed with Jazz Basics

As I just mentioned, this book assumes that you understand the fundamentals of jazz musicianship. Ideally readers of this book should have a basic understanding of which scales go with major, minor, dominant, diminished, and half-diminished chords. It also assumes that you've played through some of jazz's common chord progressions including the "ii-V-I" progression as well as the blues, as well as some simple jazz standards, and maybe even "rhythm changes." So getting through medium-tempo tunes such as, for example, *Freddie Freeloader*, *All Blues*, *Blue Bossa* or *Maiden Voyage* should be doable.

If what I'm describing here is beyond your current level of experience, that's totally cool. However, I will advise that you skip over whichever parts of *Jazz Legends with Giants* don't make sense yet, and make sure to come back to those parts once you've got a few more of the fundamentals under your belt. Here are some resources that can help you get going with jazz basics.

### Overview of the Fundamentals

- ***Jazz Improvisation, Revised***  
by David Baker ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- ***Vol. 1, How To Play Jazz & Improvise! (Book & CD Set) (Play- a-Long)***  
by Jamey Aebersold ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- ***Major & Minor: Learn to Improvise Jazz In Every Key (Play-a-long Book & 2 CD Set)***  
by Jamey Aebersold ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- ***Vol. 21, Gettin' It Together: Learn to Improvise Like the Jazz Masters! (Book & CD Set) (Play- a-Long)***  
by Jamey Aebersold ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- ***Alfred's Essentials of Jazz Theory, Book 1***  
by Shelly Berg ([find on Amazon.com](#))

### Putting the Fundamentals into Practice

- ***Vol. 2, Nothin' But Blues: Jazz And Rock (Book & CD Set) (Play- a-Long)***  
by Jamey Aebersold ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- ***Vol. 54, Maiden Voyage: Fourteen Easy-To-Play Jazz Tunes (Book & CD Set) (Play- a-Long)***  
by Jamey Aebersold ([find on Amazon.com](#))

### Learning the Jazz Repertoire

***The Real Book***

(you can find all volumes for all instruments on Amazon.com, start with Vol. 1)

## A Modern Slant

As most of you know, David Liebman, Bob Mintzer, and Bob Sheppard absolutely embody the sound of modern jazz playing, with its advanced harmonies, angular melodic shapes, and its explicit high-intensity. For this reason, much of the content in this book (especially in the chapter titled “Developing Your Improvisational Vocabulary”) centers on sounds straight out of the post-Coltrane vocabulary. Of course, being able to play in the bebop style is extremely helpful (some would even say crucial), but we’re going to focus mainly on the vocabulary of the 1960’s and later.

## By the Time We’re Done Here...

You will have downloaded into your consciousness information that has been one hundred percent proven over the course of generations of jazz greats. By putting this stuff into practice, you are putting yourself in a prime position to find the musical freedom and unadulterated joy that lured us into the world of jazz in the first place.

But that freedom and joy comes with a price. It takes a lot of discipline and love, mixed in with years of experience. The good news is that this journey makes for a truly exhilarating adventure, an adventure that extends into an infinite stratosphere of creative fulfillment. But the best news is that no matter what level you’re at with your jazz playing, the fun part can start **right now**.

If you’re ready to follow a proven path to jazz greatness, you’ve come to the right place. So let’s dive right in and make some absolutely killin’ music, shall we?

## Characteristics of Great Jazz Musician

On the subject of what constitutes masterful jazz musicianship, Bob Sheppard says, “I think that ultimately the hardest thing to get is something that is yours, a real identity, and something that speaks from the person’s heart, and from their mind and their intellect. That combination becomes your personal identity and travelling that pathway to try and find that identity is what we’re all trying to do.”

On the same topic, Bob Mintzer adds, “There’s the whole philosophical aspect of what’s involved in playing jazz. What are you trying to say in this abstract way with your instrument? Yes, it’s a series of notes, but the way that you join the notes together and form melodies and ideas should be something that’s deliberate and premeditated, thought out, worked out on some levels so that you’re very clear in what you’re doing and can communicate this thing to others.”

David Liebman describes a great jazz musician as follows: “In general, as part of their *modus operandi* [also known as “method of operation” – Ed.] or their personality, this is a person that is flexible, loose, open, wanting to communicate, and ready to deal with the moment. As we know, improvisation is one of the keys to jazz. Just that aspect of one’s personality is part of you. Some have more than others; but in a perfect world, those are some of the qualities that would be present, because we need a certain kind of personality to be adaptable and ready to communicate with the other musicians. We need a natural curiosity, an openness. I think that’s an important part of it.”

Liebman continues, “Obviously, there’s a great amount of discipline required to master your instrument, which is understood. You must be a virtuoso on your chosen instrument and to learn the vocabulary of jazz, harmony, melody and all that. The repertoire is over 100 years and just continues to grow. The research continues to get deeper and deeper. It’s a big job to take on jazz music, and to want to play it and be part of it.”

Of course, that may sound like a tall order, especially the part about being a virtuoso on your instrument, since most of you reading this are not full-time professional musicians. However, the takeaway here is that although jazz music is a highly intuitive art form, we need to realize that a crucial part of mastering this music is mastering our instrument. There’s more to this than “just playing what I feel.” Practicing improvisation, learning tunes, transcribing great solos – these things are all crucial for any jazz musician. However, we must strike a balance between those jazz-specific skills with our efforts towards developing as much control of our instrument as possible.

Find me a single great jazz musician who didn’t have impeccable skills on their instrument, and I’ll give you... - well, I probably won’t give you anything, but I’ll be extremely shocked!

But seriously, for those musicians who are relatively new to jazz, I’d recommend spending more time practicing your instrument than practicing jazz. It’s no fun trying to fly through a tune at 300bpm when your fingers are sloppily skipping and tripping all over themselves.

## The Good News

There's no law that says we can't build technique and tone on our instrument while also expanding our skills as jazz musicians. In the accompanying workbook, you'll find exercises that will challenge your brain *and* your ears, all the while boosting your technique. And if you practice slowly and consciously, these exercises will even boost your tone on your instrument as well just about any other area of your playing that could use improvement (i.e.: *every* area, whether you're a beginner, or Bird).

## Chapter 1: Rhythm and Phrasing

On the topic of jazz rhythm, David Liebman explains, “The essence of this music is the rhythm, and the rhythm is very specific. It’s a combination of Western African with a whole bunch of other stuff put in. Jazz is like a giant bouillabaisse; it’s a music of mixtures of all kinds of influences. Rhythmically it really begins with the African rhythm, but it got transferred here and it made its own way.”

### Swing Rhythm Crash Course and/or Refresher

As many of you know, the essence of jazz rhythm is in the eighth notes. The eighth notes are the basis for the rhythmic style we know as “swing.” And eighth notes played in the swing style are always uneven in their timing. To be precise, each group of two eighth notes alternates between longer and shorter notes.

Although jazz, or *swing*, eighth notes are not notated any differently than eighth notes in any other style of music, swung eighth notes can be subdivided as an eighth-note triplet with the first two notes tied and the third note articulated on its own.



or...



Another practical use for this subdivision is to think of triplets when you’re in an ensemble setting, playing written swing music at a very slow tempo. If you can subdivide the rhythms you’re playing into eighth-note triplets, you will have a much better chance of not rushing or dragging the timing during those long gaps between the downbeat and the off-beat.

We could go into much more detail on this rhythm and its origins, but you can find a ton of basic information on swing eighth notes online in places such as Wikipedia’s article on swing:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swing \(jazz performance style\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swing_(jazz_performance_style))

So now, let’s talk about some of the more subtle aspects of the swing rhythm and what we can do to make our own rhythmic feel as swingin’ as possible.

## Good Timing – A Prerequisite for a High-Level Jazz Musicianship

I've heard it so many times before – amazingly cool melodic and harmonic content in a solo – completely destroyed by excessive rushing or dragging of the beat.

### Relationship to the Beat

#### Behind or Ahead

Of course, playing behind the beat is a very common technique - Dexter Gordon being a classic example. However, some of jazz's greats such as Coleman Hawkins, Charles Mingus and Art Blakey would, on the other hand, play on top of the beat.

For example, a horn player playing behind the beat will play a bit behind the rhythm section, but will not play so far behind that he or she loses their place in the song.

Likewise, a bassist playing on top of the beat will play a bit ahead of the drummer, but the timing between the bassist and the drummer will remain consistent.

#### Alternating Between Playing Behind and Ahead of The Beat

Another powerful rhythmic device is to move between dragging and rushing. For example, a melodic phrase may be played ahead of the beat initially but complete itself behind the beat. This gives one's solos a very expressive feeling, like the rhythmic ebb and flow of an impassioned speech.

Legendary avante garde saxophonist Ornette Coleman is a great example of someone whose time feel moves beautifully between rushing and dragging.

#### “Floating” Over the Beat

This is pretty similar to alternating between playing behind and ahead of the beat, and one could argue that it's the exact same thing.

To me, floating over the beat takes variation of rhythmic placement to the next level, where the solo is anchored to the beat in a very abstract way. This is a fairly modern effect employed famously by sax titan, Joe Lovano as well as other free-spirited musicians, some of them playing in the “free jazz” idiom.

To illustrate, if you were to transcribe one of Joe's solos, you'd see many groupings of quintuplets or septuplets, or generally speaking, groups of notes that didn't land precisely on an quarter, eighth, or sixteenth of a measure. You could argue that he was simply playing standard quarter, eighth, or sixteenth notes but employing a fluctuating time feel. But for a more accurate record of what was being playing, you'd probably want to subdivide his rhythms as they relate to the overall tempo of the song. And in doing so you'd end up with a whole lot of advanced rhythms.

### **Always Anchored to the Tempo**

Regardless of whether a jazz master plays ahead of or behind the beat, their tempo remains steady for the most part. I say “for the most part” because it is extremely common, even in classic recordings, for tunes to gradually increase in tempo as the tune progresses. But regardless of what the band’s tempo is, the seasoned soloist remains anchored to the current tempo of the group, and doesn’t let the beat get completely away from her to the point that she loses the rest of the band.

### **Finding Your Relationship to the Beat**

Most great jazz musicians have the ability, as well as a tendency, to incorporate a wide variety of relationships to the beat, and this ability is essential for any us playing this music.

That said, you may find that you prefer approaching the beat most of the time in one specific way. Throughout jazz history, there have been examples of players who tended to favor one approach over the others.

For example, Dexter Gordon and Lester Young tended to play predominantly behind the beat, while Michael Brecker and Johnny Griffin leaned more towards playing ahead of the beat.

The point is, be conscious of your relationship to the beat, as this relationship is a crucial part of your individual style. You may find it interesting to experiment with different approaches in order to find the one that best fits the feeling you are trying to invoke.

## TAKE ACTION

Generally speaking, as much as possible, practice playing alone with the metronome on just beats two and four.

From there, to get yourself even more anchored to the beat, a technique that Liebman teaches is to play along with the metronome only clicking on one subdivision of the measure. For example, have the metronome click on beat four, or as another example, the “and” of three, etc etc.

To do this you’d need to set the metronome to a very slow tempo. To practice at 120 beats per minute, you’d set the metronome to 30 beats per minute.

However, before starting to practicing playing this way on your instrument, you may want to try simply *clapping* along with the metronome, clapping only on beat four.

From there, you can get more abstract, clapping with the metronome, clapping on any one of the off-beats in a bar. So that would be an eighth-note off-beat (aka the “and” in “one-and-two-and-three-and-...”) or even a sixteenth-note offbeat (aka the “ee” or the “a”, as in “one-ee-and-a-two-ee-and-a-three-...”).

Once you are clapping along at least somewhat accurately, you can start practicing your instrument, whether it’s long tones (if you’re not a horn player, just for rhythmic practice), scales, arpeggios, etudes, or anything really using the metronome in the manner described above.

## Drums - Taking Your Rhythmic Practice to the Next Level

One thing I noticed with all three of our master class teachers here was that they all played drums. And it’s not only these non-drummer jazz musicians who play drums. It’s a pretty common practice among many, many great jazz musicians. A great example of a non-drummer playing drums is Chick Corea’s drumming alongside Michael Brecker on the Charlie Parker tune, “Confirmation” off of Chick’s album *Three Quartets* ([find on Amazon.com](#)).

It’s not like you have to be Buddy Rich or anything like that. But if you can get a basic swing beat going, you’re going to benefit tremendously.

Here’s what David Liebman has to say on the topic of playing drums:

“Jazz is rhythmic music. If there’s anything that’s really unique and important about jazz it’s the rhythm. You have to have an understanding of what it is to play jazz rhythm not just on your instrument, but also from the standpoint of percussion. The drummer is the fire engine, the caboose of a jazz group. Drums is where you really hear what jazz is about.

“I tell my students to get a rudimentary understanding of being able to sit on the drum stool and play with your right or left hand a ride beat and its variations. If you can sing that, why not play it?”

“Just ask a drummer how to hold the sticks and what to do, and then just start playing along with records; turn it up to 11 and have a good time. It’s a lot of fun.”

Bob Mintzer echoes the sentiment, “With my students at USC – everybody plays drums. To just practice getting a nice quarter note pulse on the ride symbol, put the high hat in 2 and 4, have the cross stick on the snare on 4, just get a little bit of interdependence of limbs going and see what that feels like, it feels wonderful.”

And when it comes to playing in odd meters such as 5/4, 7/4, 11/8, etc, practicing on the drums is one of the most effective things you can do.

### **Getting Access to a Drum Set**

Of course, getting a drum set in your practice space may not be very practical or even doable. You may need to find some practice space at a local music school or university. That’s usually pretty inexpensive to do.

Another option would be to invest in an electronic drum set. Although some might disapprove of this option (drummers in particular), this would allow you practice without disturbing anyone while getting, in my opinion, just about everything that the drumming non-drummer needs. Since you probably wouldn’t be using this set for live performances with an acoustic jazz group, I personally don’t see a problem with it.

Here are two highly rated electronic drum sets you may want to look into:

- **Alesis DM6 USB Kit Performance Electronic Drumset** - \$335 on Amazon.com (at time of writing). ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- **Yamaha DTX500 Series DTX500K Electronic Drum Set Pre-assembled Rack System** - \$600 on Amazon.com (at time of writing). ([find on Amazon.com](#))

If a new electronic drum set is financially out of your reach at this time, you might want to check Craigslist.org and eBay.com where you will almost certainly be able to find a good quality used electronic drum set.

All in all, I wouldn’t say that playing drums is an absolute requirement for great jazz musicianship. However, I thought I’d mention it anyhow, since it is a very significant piece in the musical journey of many jazz greats, and I’d be remiss to ignore it completely.

## TAKE ACTION

For those of you who are able to get with a drum set, acoustic or electronic, try playing along with a great medium-tempo jazz recording, or anything with Elvin Jones at a middle to slow tempo. Here are some tunes that would work wonderfully for this purpose:

- **“Freddie Freeloader”** off of the album *Kind of Blue* by Miles Davis  
([find on Amazon.com](#))
- **“Pfrancing”** off of the album *Straight No Chaser* by Joe Henderson with the Wynton Kelly Trio  
([find on Amazon.com](#))
- **“Dolphin Dance”** off of the album *Maiden Voyage* by Herbie Hancock  
([find on Amazon.com](#))

## Bringing Rhythm to Life with Articulation and Phrasing

So assuming you’ve got a solid understanding of the rhythmic foundation of swing eighth notes and steady timing, you’ve got to do a lot more than play rhythmic figures accurately in order to generate a solid swing feel. In fact, when you’re in a “real-life” playing situation (i.e.: performing outside of the practice room), being overly accurate with your rhythm can be the kiss of death.

One could argue that articulation and phrasing are the only aspects of your solo that can be 100% improvised. As we’ll learn in the upcoming chapter on ear training, while improvising, it’s not really possible to know every single note you’re playing before you play it. Even with the greatest players, muscle memory, memorized licks, and patterns work their way into the mix. However, when it comes to *the way* you play your notes, that is something that, with practice, can realistically be fully spontaneous each time you play.

I like to equate rhythmic feel to the rhythmic patterns of speech. If you were make a rhythmic transcription of someone speaking, you would notice that there’s a certain ebb and flow to the rhythm of the words. Some of the syllables are held out while others fly by quickly. Some words are emphasized while other words come out almost inaudibly.

Guess what happens if all of your words follow an exact pattern of rhythm and syllabic emphasis? That’s right - you sound like a robot. And there’s a reason no jazz musician would want rhythmic feel to be described as “robotic.” (i.e.: “*Hey man, that was a seriously robotic pocket you had going up there – awesome!*”)

So what we need to do is to make our playing feel as human as possible.

## Things to Work with in Bringing Your Rhythm to Life

- **Timing**  
On a note-to-note basis, manipulating your own personal tempo within the tempo of the song, rushing or dragging your notes
- **Attack**  
The way a note begins, whether it begins with a sharp, focused attack or whether it emanates seamlessly from the previous note, or whether it's somewhere in between the two aforementioned options
- **Note Length**  
How long each note is held, whether the note is held out all the way into the next note, or whether the note is being played short and staccato, with a noticeable gap between the notes
- **Dynamics**  
The volume of an individual note, often achieved by the use of “ghosting” – or playing notes at a nearly inaudible volume so that they are “felt” more than heard (execution of ghosting varies from instrument to instrument, of course)
- **Timbre** (*aka tonal color*)  
The balance of frequencies and shape of the sound waves that make up your sound, moving between different tonal characteristics from note to note, a good example being the way a trumpet player moves her mute in front of and away from the bell of the horn within the span of a musical phrase.

## TAKE ACTION

Although many of you have already transcribed a good number of solos, transcribe a solo played by one of your favorite jazz masters, perhaps something at a slower tempo. However, go into as much detail as possible with regards to capturing your artist's *exact* timing, articulation, attack, note lengths, dynamics, changes in timbre, and every other nuance you can possibly pick up from the recording.

Then play the transcription back along with the solo, emulating the recording as much as you possibly can.

Next, play the solo alone, and record yourself so that you can compare your rendition with the recording you've transcribed.

And don't feel as though you need to do this exercise with a huge number of artists. Liebman actually suggests 5-7 solos on well-known formats such as blues, rhythm changes, and standards. You could also even work with tunes that have no chord progressions, such as much of the music of Ornette Coleman. The point is to get *deep* inside the voice of a few great jazz artists, and use that as the basis for forming your own unique voice.

(We'll delve deeper into transcription in the upcoming chapter on ear training.)

## Let the Melody Guide You

Once you've got a strong sense of rhythm and phrasing, try to bring those aspects into *everything* you play. And a great place to start applying your newfound command of rhythm and phrasing is in the art of playing a melody – but playing that melody *like you mean it*.

We all want to focus on learning to improvise playing “the hip stuff” over changes, and that's all fine and good. But there's an incredible power that comes from just being able to bring a melody to life. And once you can bring a melody to life, a fountainhead of “hip stuff” will grow out of that gorgeous melody you're playing.

Here's what Bob Sheppard has to say on the subject:

“This is going to sound a little simplistic but when I practice, I play a tune, the first thing I do when I pick up the horn is play a tune. I don't start playing long tones for 20 minutes or doing whatever the default routine is; I want to get to the music. When I pick up my horn I can't wait to play a tune. I imagine that I'm on stage right from the get go. I am playing to people, I imagine the rhythm section, I have a little practice drum track that just keeps time at different tempos. Or I'll put on a drum machine with just a click or something.

“I will just imagine that I'm performing, and during the course of playing a tune I'm just trying to relate to the tune, trying to play it pretty, trying to get into the tune in different ways. Just from a melody alone, playing a tune will inform you of what to play next. This is a very inspiring way to

start practicing; just play a tune. It doesn't have to be *Giant Steps*. It can be just blues, it doesn't matter what it is. It could be *Happy Birthday*, it doesn't matter. *Happy Birthday* has some chord changes.

“It's amazing how many kids, when I go to play a clinic and I tell them to play happy birthday, can't do it. It's in their head, they've known the tune since they were one year old, but somehow they can't play it. They finally figure it out and then I tell them to change the key. Ask yourself how you play something, such as *Happy Birthday* and using it as a framework to actually play as if you performing it in front of people. That's a good thing, but it's not so easy. When I play it, it's still *Happy Birthday*, but I made it swing [Bob's referring to his performance of *Happy Birthday* on the companion master class interview audio- Ed.], and I embellished the melody, and I can do that a 100 times and play it differently each time - very important.

“I suggest to people that are trying to play jazz, to take a melody – I don't care if it's *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, *When You Wish Upon a Star*, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* or a hip jazz tune. If you really know it, it has to be engrained in your head so you don't have to think about it. You just play it and make it swing, and make it sound good. Some people say – ‘I'm not just going to practice that. That's not really practicing.’ But practicing a melody gives you strength. So all the intervallic stuff you might be playing in your solos, all the scales and chords, arpeggios, all the stuff that you're playing is all really cool; we all know that's stuff that we need to execute on the instrument. But by playing a song with strength you will find places to put that hip improvisational stuff that you've been practicing, and apply it within the context of the tune.”

## **Chapter 2:**

# **Jazz Harmony**

One of jazz's major innovations was its use of harmony. Of course, long before jazz there was classical music that incorporated very advanced harmonic sounds and chord progressions. In fact, there is to this day an ongoing musical "conversation" between jazz and classical music. Composers like Stravinsky, Debussy, Gershwin, Milhaud, along with more recent composers such as Philip Glass and Steve Reich, were heavily influenced by jazz music.

Thanks to jazz's spirit of perpetual innovation as well as the influence of other styles, jazz harmony has progressed quite a bit over the course of its history.

### **Swing, Swing, Swing**

After the earliest days of jazz during the early 1900's, things got a bit more advanced in the swing era. Composers such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Artie Shaw, and many others took their harmonic approach further than was done previously, adding more dissonance in their arrangements. In their charts, you'd hear a healthy helping of flat 5's, sharp 9's, and other more colorful sounds.

### **Ooh-Bop Sha-Bam!**

With the bebop era, jazz harmony once again made a giant leap. Thanks to the genre's innovators, folks like Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, and Bud Powell, sharp 9's, flat 13's, sharp 11's and other colorful sounds became the new landscape for not only the rhythm section and written-out arrangements, but also for the formation of both written and improvised melodies.

### **Modal Voyage**

From there we move to the 60's era with the modal approach made famous by Miles and Coltrane. In the modal era, the chord progressions got a lot simpler than what we hear in bebop, but what was played over those simple chord progressions was much more complex. Innovators like Coltrane and McCoy Tyner weaved melodies whose relationship to the original tonality of the chord changes was far more abstract than what was heard in the bebop era. But make no mistake - all of the harmonic principles of the bebop era were still in place. It's just that the rules were being extended.

Whereas dissonances in bebop would generally last no more than a half note at most, dissonances in the modal style could last for bars on end – in some cases, through an entire solo.

Mintzer describes modes as "a nice way of organizing different sound qualities." With modes, we have a way of utilizing the same 7 notes to be reframed seven different ways.

## Crash Course and/or Refresher on Modes

If you're new to the concept of modes, take a look at page 1 in the workbook to see all seven modes (ie: scales) corresponding to the key of C major. Once you've memorized these, transpose them into all twelve keys.

To explain the concept of modes a bit, let's talk about chords for a second. If you take the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes of a scale and play those at the same time, you'll get a chord that most directly corresponds to that group of notes.

So the first mode, Ionian, starts on the first degree of C major, so what we're looking at here is a set of notes identical to those in a simple C major scale, and this set of notes implies a C major seventh chord. This is due to the fact that the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes of this scale spell out a Cmaj7 chord.

The second mode – Dorian, starts on D, and also contains a set of notes identical to those in a C major scale. However, rather than implying a C major chord, the Dorian scale implies a D minor seventh chord.

So try taking the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes of each mode, and see what chord they spell out.

Keeping this in mind, let's look at a practical example of using modes to determine what to play over an E-7 chord:

After looking through all of the major keys that contain the notes in an E-7 chord (those notes being E, G, B, and D), there are 3 major keys that contain all of those notes:

1. C major gives us an E-7 chord when we start on the third mode – also known as the *Phrygian* mode.
2. D major gives us an E-7 chord when we start on the second mode – also known as the *Dorian* mode.
3. G major gives us an E-7 chord when we start on the sixth mode – also known as the *Aeolian* mode.

So what this tells us is that when we see an E-7 chord, we can improvise using notes from the keys of C major (*the E Phrygian scale*), D major (*the E Dorian scale*), and/or G major (*the E Aeolian scale*).

Each mode carries with it a different melodic sound, some of them a bit dissonant. But by getting familiar with all of the modes that correspond with all of the basic major, minor, dominant, and half-diminished chords, we open ourselves up to a very wide array of melodic and harmonic possibilities.

## TAKE ACTION

Bob Mintzer shares some exercises that will get those modes engrained deeply into your brains, your ears, and your fingers. The exercises are written out in the key of C, but it's strongly suggested that you transpose these into all twelve keys to get the true benefits.

1. See the exercise starting on page 3 of the workbook. Here all we're doing is moving scularly (is that a word?) through the modes, playing up through the first four notes of the mode, continuing up to the fifth note, then moving down three notes, and then starting the pattern again from the last note of the previous set of four. (If this is confusing, just check out the sheet music.) This pattern spans 7 different exercises (Exercises #1-7) that take us through all of the modes.
2. See the exercise starting on page 12 of the workbook. Here we're simply playing the modes in thirds.
3. See the exercise starting on page 14 of the workbook. In this exercise we are using the pattern of 1, 3, 4, 2. So you skip 1 scale degree, go up 1, skip 1 back down, and then continuing a whole step up to the next four notes. In C Ionian that would be C, E, F, D and then E, G, A, F. Do this all the way up as high as you can on your instrument.

Once you have taken this pattern up as high as possible, then descend using the pattern, 1, 3, 2, 7 – and then start the pattern again starting a whole step below. (Again, just check out the sheet music).

4. Now try creating your own patterns and transposing them into all twelve keys. You'll notice that these patterns will start sounding more like actual music and that these are things that you can incorporate into your own solos - as long as you use them tastefully and don't fall into the trap of sounding like a machine.

## The Sounds of Today

The jazz harmony of today seems to be an outgrowth of harmony from every period of jazz. In fact, the harmony you hear in many jazz tunes nowadays can come from entirely different styles of music. You'll hear someone like Pat Metheny including pop and folk harmony in his music. Or how about avante-garde saxophonist John Zorn and his forays into the world of traditional Eastern European Jewish Klezmer music?

You'll hear progressions that stray far from the confines of the ii-V-I-based progressions that come out of traditional swing, as well as the American show tunes from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

You'll hear chords notated with a note in the base other than the root, such as a B/Cmaj, for example.

Really, at this point in music history, the sky's the limit when it comes to harmony. You've got a modern legacy of "heroes of harmony" such as Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Michael Brecker,

George Garzone and many other great current jazz musicians who are not married exclusively to the sounds of the past. And that's not to mention our esteemed interviewee, David Liebman who's organized his own truly modern approach to harmony – an approach that warrants an entire book on its own:

- *A Chromatic Approach to Jazz Harmony and Melody - Book + CD* by David Liebman ([find on Amazon.com](#))

And as far as modern chord progressions go, if you'd like to see the some of these more modern chord progressions in action, you might want to check out the following books:

- *Chick Corea Collection* ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- *Pat Metheny Songbook: Lead Sheets* ([find on Amazon.com](#))

## The Toll Booth

In my opinion, **the price of admission to competence in each of jazz's harmonic approaches is competence in the styles that came before.**

In other words, to play using the harmony of bebop, you've got to be able to play using the harmony of the swing era. To master the modal approach, you've got to have bebop nailed.

## Playing the Piano

And while we're talking about prerequisites for solid improvisational skills, we must include in our discussion the topic of the piano and why it's necessary for every dedicated jazz musician to play it.

The ability to play through chord progressions of the popular jazz standard repertoire will work wonders for our sense of harmony. The more we can familiarize ourselves with different chord progressions, the more insight we'll have into how songs are put together, and what the different harmonic options are when either framing a melody, or even directing the melody outright.

The way Liebman puts it, "When you see a piano it's all in front of your eyes. You can see what you hear, you can hear what you see, it becomes visual. It becomes another aspect of the learning process at your disposal. There's the verbal aspect, the intuitive aspect, the mental aspect, and this is the visual aspect, which is a good thing to be able to use."

And just *listening* to and analyzing piano players (and guitar players as well, for that matter) can have a tremendous impact on your abilities as an improviser. Bob Mintzer gives us a great example of the power of getting deep into the piano. Here's what he said when asked about what one should do on the instrument:

"I'd learn how to play the piano, that's what I'd do first; then I'd listen to other piano players. I used to hear Herbie Hancock play a certain way when he was in Miles Davis's band and I didn't just let it go by. I would get inside a bar of music to see what he was doing, how he was voicing that chord, why did it sound so amazing (?). And I found that, for example, he would stack a series of fourth

intervals with a third interval at the top of the series (ex: C – F – Bb – Eb – G). Even if you play it on a saxophone there's a certain color aspect to that."

***"How Good do I Have to be at this Piano Thing?"***

You don't have to be Keith Jarrett or Art Tatum, but you do need to be able to, at the very least, play chord progressions to tunes, be it standards, blues, rhythm changes, modern original music, and just about anything else that's got a chord in it somewhere.

Ideally, you'll spend some time building some actual technique on the instrument. Liebman advises his students, "For the next couple of months put the horn down except to do your rudimentary stuff, and get two hours in on Czerny or Hanon exercises, the very basic classical stuff to get your fingers rolling. Get a voicing book, there's a million books of voicings, cop the voicings, do it in twelve keys, and see if you can play it in time. If you do that for 2-3 months, you'll be fine. Now go back and do whatever is next on the list for your primary instrument.

"I wouldn't obsess about these extracurricular things like drums and piano, but I would definitely say that at one point I'm going to have to devote time. What I'm talking about doesn't apply so much to drums. With drums, you just pick up some sticks, put a record on, and go play and have a good time. Piano demands time."

## TAKE ACTION

Embark on a piano-centric phase of your musical development for 2-3 months. You may not have two hours a day as Liebman suggests, but if you can spend two-thirds of your normal practice time on the piano, that will be great.

**Spend 50% of your piano practice time learning piano technique using the following two books:**

- ***Practical Method for Beginners, Op. 599: Piano Technique***  
by Carl Czerny ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- ***Hanon: The Virtuoso Pianist in Sixty Exercises for the Piano for the Acquirement of Agility, Independence, Strength, and Perfect Evenness: Complete (Schirmer's Library of Musical Classics, Vol. 925)***  
by C.L. Hannon ([find on Amazon.com](#))

**Spend another 50% of your piano practice working on jazz voicings and the basics of jazz piano accompaniment.**

Here is a great piano voicing book to get you started:

- ***Playing Jazz Piano***  
by Bob Mintzer ([find on Amazon.com](#))

Take a stab at transcribing some piano comping as played by one of jazz's piano masters. Start with just one measure at a time.

### **FOR BONUS POINTS:**

Find something at a slow or medium-slow tempo such as Wynton Kelly or Bill Evans' playing on Miles Davis's album, *Kind of Blue*. Doing this will work your ears tremendously, and give your playing a harmonic dimension that's missing from the vast majority of musicians.

## Chord Substitutions and Reharmonizing

I realize for some of you, the chord substitutions I'm going to be outlining here are "old hat." However, I feel that for many of you this is fairly new material that would be worth going over "crash-course" style.

**NOTE:** I'm writing out the chords in this section using both root position as well as using jazz voicings. The reason for this is that while it's important to know all of the chords in root position, the reality is that unless you also learn how to construct the chords using upper extensions (9ths, 13ths, etc), leaving out the root (except for in the bass/bottom note, of course), then it's going to be more difficult to familiarize yourself with the sound of these progressions as they would appear in a "real-life" jazz setting. I've also included audio samples of some of the progressions, so look for the name of the corresponding mp3 file beneath each notated progression.

## Minor Third Substitution

In his interview, Bob Mintzer shares another harmonic device that may be new to some of you. Says Bob, “If you study the music of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie there’s a lot of ii-V motion where these things happen a minor thirds apart and are sort of interchangeable.”

In other words, you can try transposing ii-V chord changes up a minor third.

So this:

Root Position			Jazz Voicings		
D-7	G7	Cmaj7	D-9	G13	Cmaj9



(or find with included audio files: [01\\_ii-V\\_simple.mp3](#))

Becomes this:

Root Position			Jazz Voicings			
F-7	B $\flat$ 7	Cmaj7		F-9	B $\flat$ 13	Cmaj9

The musical notation shows a 4/4 time signature. The first three measures are labeled 'Root Position' and contain chords F-7, B $\flat$ 7, and Cmaj7. The next three measures are labeled 'Jazz Voicings' and contain chords F-9, B $\flat$ 13, and Cmaj9. The bass line consists of quarter notes: F2, B $\flat$ 2, C3, F2, B $\flat$ 2, C3.



(or find with included audio files: [02\\_ii-V\\_minor\\_thirds\\_whole.mp3](#))

Or, you could squeeze in both of the ii-V7 progressions back-to-back:

Root Position					Jazz Voicings					
D-7	G7	F-7	B $\flat$ 7	Cmaj7		D-9	G13	F-9	B $\flat$ 13	Cmaj9

The musical notation shows a 4/4 time signature. The first five measures are labeled 'Root Position' and contain chords D-7, G7, F-7, B $\flat$ 7, and Cmaj7. The next five measures are labeled 'Jazz Voicings' and contain chords D-9, G13, F-9, B $\flat$ 13, and Cmaj9. The bass line consists of quarter notes: D2, G2, F2, B $\flat$ 2, C3, D2, G2, F2, B $\flat$ 2, C3.



(or find with included audio files: [03\\_ii-V\\_thirds\\_half.mp3](#))

## The Tritone Subs

A good number of you may already know about this, but to give a quickie lesson for those who don't – the tritone substitution is nothing more than a V7 (dominant) chord transposed up a tritone (also known as a sharp fourth) from where that V7 chord was originally intended to be. In most cases, the V7 chord resolves to the I of the original key.

So, again, here's your normal ii-V7-I chord progression:

Root Position			Jazz Voicings		
D- <sup>7</sup>	G <sup>7</sup>	Cmaj <sup>7</sup>	D- <sup>9</sup>	G <sup>13</sup>	Cmaj <sup>9</sup>



(or find with included audio files: **Prog01\_ii-V\_simple.mp3**)

And here's a tritone sub in action. Notice how the G7 that you see in the normal ii-V7-I progression has been substituted for a Db7 chord:

Root Position			Jazz Voicings		
D- <sup>7</sup>	D <sup>b</sup> 7	Cmaj <sup>7</sup>	D- <sup>9</sup>	D <sup>b</sup> 13	Cmaj <sup>9</sup>



(or find with included audio files: **04\_ii-V\_tritone\_simple.mp3**)

Want to get a bit fancier? How about including the ii chords as well?:

Root Position D-7 G7    A $\flat$ -7 D $\flat$ 7    Cmaj7	Jazz Voicings D-9 G13    A $\flat$ -9 D $\flat$ 13    Cmaj9
--	--

The musical notation shows two systems of chords in 4/4 time. The first system shows root positions for D-7, G7, A $\flat$ -7, D $\flat$ 7, and Cmaj7. The second system shows jazz voicings for D-9, G13, A $\flat$ -9, D $\flat$ 13, and Cmaj9. The bass line consists of quarter notes: D, G, A $\flat$ , D $\flat$ , C.



(or find with included audio files: [05\\_ii-V\\_tritone\\_more.mp3](#))

As you can see, we're in the key of C, but taking a harmonic detour as we transpose the ii and the V of C (D-7 and G7) up a tritone.

If we wanted to, we could replace the D-7 and the G7 in their entirety by just stretching the tritone sub (A $\flat$ -7 and D $\flat$ 7) across the entire first two bars.

Root Position A $\flat$ -7    D $\flat$ 7    Cmaj7	Jazz Voicings A $\flat$ -9    D $\flat$ 13    Cmaj9
---	--

The musical notation shows two systems of chords in 4/4 time. The first system shows root positions for A $\flat$ -7, D $\flat$ 7, and Cmaj7. The second system shows jazz voicings for A $\flat$ -9, D $\flat$ 13, and Cmaj9. The bass line consists of quarter notes: A $\flat$ , D $\flat$ , C.



(or find with included audio files: [06\\_ii-V\\_tritone\\_sub5.mp3](#))

*“Hmm, this has a sort of weird sound to it - what’s the logic here?”*

Well, as you may or may not know, in jazz and most of western harmony, the third and the seventh are what determine what type of chord it is. For example, a D chord with just D and A in it is not really a minor or major chord until you actually put the third in there. If that third is an F, you have a minor chord, and if that note is an F#, then you have a major chord.

So ok, let’s say that we’ve got the F# as our third degree of our D chord. Now we’ve got a major chord. But if we want this to be a seventh chord (and the vast majority of chords in jazz are basically seventh chords of one type or another), we need to determine what the fourth note of this chord will be. Adding a C to this chord gets us a dominant 7 chord while C# gets us a major 7 chord.

Once we’ve determined the third and the seventh, then any other notes we add to the chord are just additional extensions, or “color tones” such as, for example, a sharp 11, 13, flat 13, sharp 9, etc, etc, etc.

So why am I telling you all of this (*for some of you very basic*) stuff?

Well, answer me this – what do a G7 and a Db7 have in common?

Besides the fact that they’re both dominant 7 chords, they *also* **share the two most crucial notes** – B and F.

In the G7, the **B is the third**. In Db7, the **B (Cb, technically) is the seventh**.

In G7, the **F is the seventh**. In Db7, the **F is the third**.

The image shows three chords in 4/4 time on a grand staff. The first chord is G7, with its 3rd (B) and 7th (F) labeled. The second chord is Db7, with its 3rd (F) and 7th (B / Cb) labeled. The third chord is Cmaj7, with its 3rd (Eb) and 7th (Bb) labeled. The bass line shows the root notes: G, Db, and C.

So both chords share the same notes for their respective thirds and sevenths, just in reverse order. And **it’s this similarity that makes the chords interchangeable**.

In fact – you want to sound hip? Next time you come across a dominant 7 chord that leads into a I chord, improvise over the dominant 7 chord a tritone away. So if you’ve got a G7 chord, improvise over C#7 for the duration of that G7 chord.

## Patterns in Chord Progressions

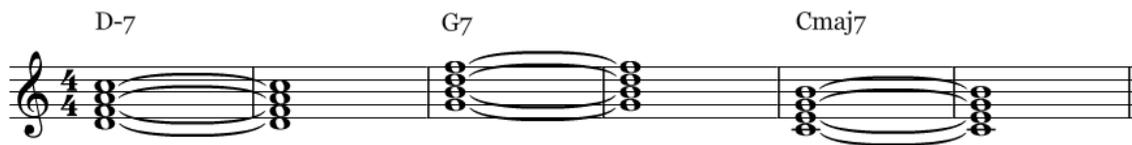
Continuing onwards, now that we've looked at minor third and tritone relations, let's take things to the next step, shall we?

The ear loves patterns. Ok, ok, don't everyone get all upset with me, I know that patterns in jazz are often overused and can result in music that sounds, well, just plain un-musical.

But what if we arrange a series of chords in a manner that clearly spells out to the ears a pattern that the ears can follow, and capitalize on the symmetrical progression of those chords so that we're actually creating something fresh and original?

OK, that probably sounds cryptic and possibly confusing.

But let's just say you have a very simple ii-V7-I chord progression:



From there, let's decide that our only harmonic goal is to arrive at Cmaj7 in a manner that's at least somewhat intuitive for the ear to follow. How we get to that Cmaj7 is totally up to us. We can transpose the ii-V7 up a minor third, we can replace the ii-V7 with a tritone sub, or we can go even further, and create a pattern that contains chords that seem completely unrelated to our target of Cmaj7. But the key here is that the pattern does indeed resolve to our target chord.

Let's look at a pattern whereby a ii-V7 progression is played once and then transposed down a whole step until we land on a clearly defined Cmaj7:

Root Position  
 $A\flat^{-7}$   $D\flat^7$   $F\sharp^{-7}$   $B^7$   $E^{-7}$   $A^7$   $D^{-7}$   $G^7$   $Cmaj^7$

Jazz Voicings  
 $A\flat^{-9}$   $D\flat^{13}$   $F\sharp^{-9}$   $B^{13}$   $E^{-9}$   $A^{13}$   $D^{-9}$   $G^{13}$   $Cmaj^9$



(or find with included audio files: [07\\_ii-V\\_cycle.mp3](#))

What we're doing here is working backwards. We know that we want the pattern to end with a ii-V7-I in the key of C major, but we want to use the whole step ii-V movement to get us there.

So with four measures to get us to our Cmaj7 chord, we work backwards to keep transposing our ii-V7 progression up in whole steps until we reach the beginning of this four bar lead-in to our I chord.

Of course, if you were soloing over an accompaniment consisting of D-7 to G7 to Cmaj7 and you disregarded the original chords and played over this progression instead, you could end up with a pretty dissonant sound.

But...if you were to outline in your solo very clearly which chord changes you were playing over, a seasoned rhythm section could pick up on what you're playing and shift right along with you. However, even if the rhythm section has no clue what you're doing, if you know how to truly play *inside* the chord changes that you're implying, then a melodic pattern will emerge. And out of the harmonic friction will emerge a sense of order that guides the ear to where the harmony needs to go.

## “Giant Steps” / Coltrane Changes

Almost no two words strike utter fear in the hearts of jazz musicians as do the words, “Giant Steps.” For those of you who don’t know, *Giant Steps* is the name of John Coltrane’s seminal and harmonically complex masterpiece.

So why don’t we take a look below at the first eight bars of the chord progression to *Giant Steps*? You’ll notice that I’m no longer writing out the chords in root position. Although, as I mentioned earlier, you need to know how to spell out all of the chords in a progression using the root position, with a progression such as this one, playing these chords in root position would sound very odd. If you like, you could always try to write out all of these chords in root position yourself if you think it might be helpful.

### chord changes to opening bars of Giant Steps

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the opening bars of "Giant Steps". The first system is labeled "Piano" and "Bass". The second system is labeled "Pno" and "Bs".

**System 1 (Piano/Bass):**

- Chords: Bmaj7, D7, Gmaj7, Bb7, Ebmaj7
- Time signature: 4/4
- Staff 1 (Piano): Shows chord voicings in the right hand.
- Staff 2 (Bass): Shows the bass line with single notes.

**System 2 (Pno/Bs):**

- Chords: A-7, D7, Gmaj7, Bb7, Ebmaj7, F#7, Bmaj7
- Time signature: 4/4
- Staff 1 (Pno): Shows chord voicings in the right hand.
- Staff 2 (Bs): Shows the bass line with single notes.



(or find with included audio files: [08\\_Giant\\_Steps.mp3](#))

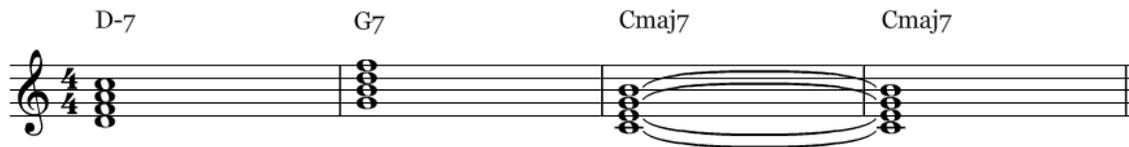
As you can see in the music above, in the first 4 bars, Coltrane is aiming for an Ebmaj7. The cool thing is how he gets there. There’s a clear pattern you can see where he’s going from the I of B to the V of G, then to G to the V of Ebmaj7, and then smoothly gliding into Ebmaj7.

And if Coltrane were to continue the pattern, after the Ebmaj7 he would go up a minor third to an F#7 and then right back to where he started, Bmaj7.

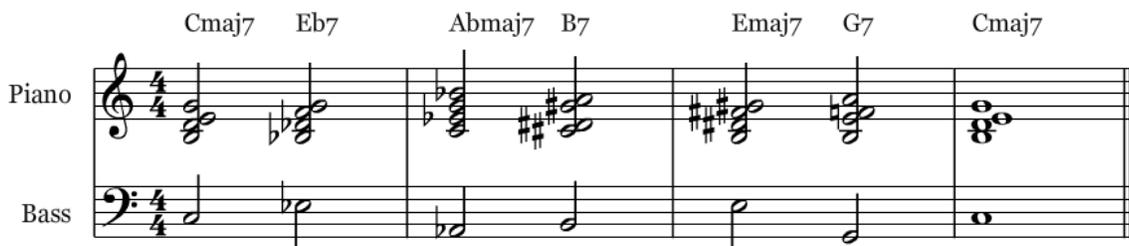
So we've got a cycle that can take you from your starting chord and through a serious detour, get you right back to where you started.

Now, let's see how we can apply this to the basic ii-V7-I. Just like Coltrane's changes, a ii-V7-I progression is basically a path (albeit a much simpler path) to get us to the I chord. And as long as we end up at the right chord, we can take many, many liberties when it comes to *how* we get there.

Keeping in mind the goal of getting to Cmaj7, *this*...



...can become, *this*



(or find with included audio files: **09\_Coltrane\_Substitutions.mp3**)

## Voice Leading

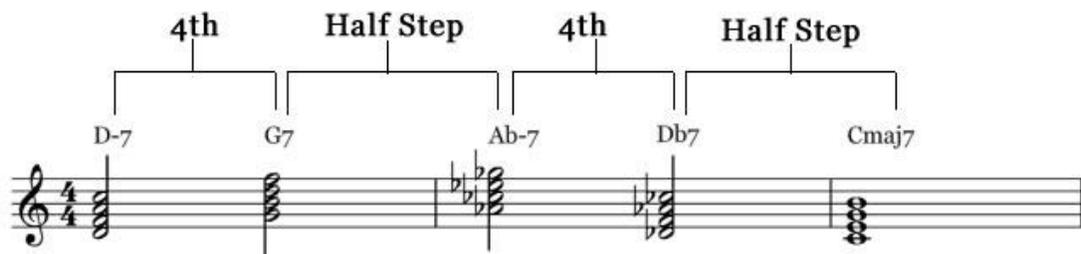
One thing you'll notice with some of the more complex chord changes we've gone over is the fact that even though the changes may be moving through seemingly disparate tonal centers, the intervals between the roots of the chords flow pretty nicely.

You see, (and I'll probably say it many times over the course of this book) although there are no 100% hard and fast rules when it comes to jazz harmony, there are certain intervals between the roots of chords that sound more natural than other.

Here are some of the root movements that are common in jazz music:

- No interval / in parallel (same root, different type of chord, such as Gmaj7 to G-7)
- Half step
- Whole step
- Minor third
- Perfect Fourth

So going back to the ii-V7 tritone sub example, you can see that the progression uses some of the more intuitive chord movements.



#### TAKE ACTION

Take two jazz standards out of the *Real Book* or anywhere you might have the chord changes to the tune notated, and label the intervals between the root notes of each chord as shown in the example with the ii-V7 example above.

The point is to begin seeing patterns of how chords are strung together in jazz progressions.

What I'm trying to do here is give you some basis to eventually be able to come up with **your own variations** on a tune's written chord changes so that regardless of what's going on in the background, you can come up with exciting and highly coherent new material, *as long as you clearly outline the alternate progression you're playing over.*

And the ability to clearly outline an alternate chord progression is something that comes out of learning the bebop vocabulary. Bebop requires you to be able to improvise in a way that makes the chord progression quite clear, so there's an especially urgent need for your bebop powers when "getting fancy" with the harmony.

Although we're not going into the details of how to play bebop here, a good place to start is to study the solos and compositions of the bebop legends including Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis (his work during the 1950's), Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Sonny Stitt, and Tadd Dameron, to name just a handful.

## Chord Substitutions in Action

Keeping in mind what's been discussed here, let's take a look at just a few ways we can substitute many of the chords in the ubiquitous "Rhythm Changes" progression (i.e.: the chord changes to the Gershwin classic, *I've Got Rhythm* and the basis for countless jazz tunes such as Charlie Parker's *Salt Peanuts*, Thelonious Monk's *Rhythm-a-Ning*, and even the theme to the classic cartoon, *The Flintstones*).

Check out pages 35-37 in the included workbook to see the chord progression to rhythm changes in its most standard form, transposed for C, Bb, and Eb instruments. Of course, even when we're talking about the standard rhythm changes progression, there is no 100% definitive version that all jazz musicians adhere to, but this one is definitely right-square in the middle of what just about any jazz musician would consider "standard" rhythm changes.

After you've checked out the standard rhythm changes, hop on over to pages 38-43 in the workbook to see a chord chart containing multiple variations on this progression.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, you'll notice the alternate changes usually involve the roots of the chords moving in intervals of half steps, whole steps, minor thirds, perfect fourths, not to mention parallel root (non)movement. And although these progressions may appear to be drastically different than standard rhythm changes, in most cases they do eventually take the listener to the same harmonic ending points as the standard rhythm changes.

### Crash Course and/or Refresher in Jazz Chords on the Piano

I realize that many of you may be new to the piano. While I strongly recommend checking out at least one of the books listed earlier in this chapter, I thought I'd also include some jazz piano basics here as a "crash course" or refresher for those who need it.

Obviously, this is not a "how to play jazz piano" course, so I would recommend studying and practicing jazz piano as much as you can outside of this program, and I guarantee you that you will see your abilities as an improviser skyrocket to new heights.

To get started with some of the very basics required to start playing some of these fancy chord progressions on the piano, jump into the workbook beginning on page 44 and we'll get you going with some of the basics.

\*\*\*\*\*

These basic jazz piano lessons come courtesy of **Dr. Stephen Lias**, SFA Associate Professor of Music, Theory and Composition at Stephen F. Austin State University.  
(You can learn more about Steven by visiting <http://www.StephenLias.com>).

## TAKE ACTION

1. Assuming that you have gained enough basic piano ability to play through chord changes, practice playing through the chord changes to both the standard and alternate rhythm changes progressions as laid out in the workbook (*starting on page 35 for the basic changes and page 38 for the alternate changes*).
2. Next, start mixing and matching chords from the various alternate chord progressions to create your own progressions.
3. Now, create your own alternate chord progressions from scratch – and it doesn't have to be a "rhythm changes" progression. You can start with a simple ii-V7-I progression, or you can start with basic blues (Charlie Parker's *Blues for Alice* is a classic example of a reharmonized blues). If you're more advanced, you can take the changes to a tune like *There Will Never Be Another You* or *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* and see what kind of (tasteful) harmonic mayhem you can produce.
4. When starting to harmonize a tune from scratch, first try to come up with changes that work with the melody. So that means every single chord you put in the progression corresponds to the notes that are happening in the melody while that chord is playing. Try to choose chords where the prominent notes in the melody serve as "color tones" such as sharp 9's and flat 5's.

For example, if there is a C being played in the melody, then, depending on how musical it sounds in context, consider putting a chord underneath it such as A7#9 (where the C would serve as the sharp 9) or and F#-7b5 (where the C would serve as the flat 5).

No matter which chords you choose, try to use one of the common root relationships we discussed earlier (remember, half steps, whole steps, minor thirds, perfect fourths, and no interval at all?).

In the end, ***you'll have to use your musical intuition.*** With practice, and by paying attention to the chord changes when listening to music, you'll develop a sense of what works and what doesn't. And once you know what works, you'll be able to crank out more imaginative progressions with less obvious, yet extremely colorful, and highly expressive chord choices.

## Chapter 3: Developing Your Improvisational Vocabulary

### How to Not Run Out of Things to Play

Almost all jazz musicians, even the greatest of the great, are often faced with the challenge of avoiding playing the same stuff over and over again in their solos. The good news is, you don't necessarily need to have a ton of licks and patterns stored away in your memory bank.

What many of the top jazz musicians and teachers advocate doing is, in effect, "remixing" whatever it is you're playing over the course of your solos.

According to Liebman, the way to continually come up with new material is the concept of theme and variations. He also recommends listening to the music of J.S. Bach. Bach's music, in particular, makes explicit use of variations in melodic ideas. Each of his phrases grows organically into the next phrase, and it's this technique that allows us improvisers to continually come up with new material.

When it comes to melodic development in improvised jazz solos, Miles Davis is one of the very best people you can check out. If you listen to him closely, you'll hear that it's uncanny how each of his phrases flows organically out of the phrase that came before it. Lester Young is a master at this as well.

It can be said that virtually all great jazz solos are a series of dots that are up to the soloist to connect. Although there are those greats whose solos are denser in terms of notes, and more abstract in general (Coltrane being a prime example), the common thread is much more subtle, but it is almost always there if you pay close attention.

#### TAKE ACTION

Pick out **three notes** you'll be using to create multiple melodies. Write out ten variations on those three notes. Try varying:

- rhythm
- order of notes
- range
- articulation and phrasing

Try making one or two of your variations include a few neighboring tones (notes that are a half to a whole step away from any one of the three notes you're using as your basis).

## Using Melodic Material from the Melody

In our master class interview, Bob Mintzer shared a very interesting, and very fun approach to coming up with great new material that you probably would not have come up with otherwise.

Let me preface Mintzer's technique with an idea I got from a Joe Lovano interview in which Joe says something I absolutely love. He talks about how the first chorus of our solo should really be the second chorus of the melody. In other words, the solo comes out of the melody and as such needs to be musically connected to that melody.

You see, most of the time, your average jazz musician plays the melody and then just launches off into a solo that has little or nothing to do with the melody they just played. In doing so, they miss out on a great opportunity to create some truly inspired improvised material.

The technique that Bob shares has us taking a phrase from the melody, and simply adapting that phrase to the chord progression. This creates a very interesting effect where we're harmonically reframing the same material, which really hooks the listener's ear, and gets us away from the rut that comes out of digging into our usual bag licks and devices that fall familiarly under our fingers.

Bob describes the benefits of this technique, "You're accomplishing multiple things. One is you're taking a particular shape and learning how to incorporate it throughout a tune; and two, you're learning about cohesiveness because there's connection. You're taking this one rhythmical and melodic motif and repeating it throughout the tune by altering the notes to conform to the harmony, which is something that the listening ear really picks up and goes 'Oh, I heard him do that. And he did again. And he did it again.' So that's where some level of continuity comes - from repetition and from some sort of motific development, either rhythmic, melodic or harmonic."

You can hear an example of this by listening to the included mp3, *10\_Donna\_Lee\_Riff\_Development.mp3*. On this recording, you'll hear Bob Mintzer's demonstration of this technique. The tune he's using for this example is Charlie Parker's, *Donna Lee*.

### TAKE ACTION

Pick out a tune to solo over, and take one of the phrases from the melody, and repeat it, but each time you repeat the phrase, alter the notes so that they fit harmonically with the chord.

## Expanding Your Vocabulary with Patterns

We humans love patterns. Consider how much we're drawn to pattern-based visuals such as kaleidoscopes, ornate Persian rugs, or even Uncle Hank juggling grapefruits at Thanksgiving dinner.

Taking a few "giant steps" back (bad pun intended), we see that our entire world is based on patterns - whether it's the pattern of the earth rotating around the sun once a year, the pattern of the seasons, the pattern of night and day, and of course, the pattern of birth, death, and all of the stages of life that

come in between, as well as our individual day-to-day patterns. In other words, we are hardwired to respond to, and in fact, rely upon, patterns.

That being the case, it's no wonder why listeners respond in such a primal manner when they hear someone like Michael Brecker or Eddie Van Halen zipping through a pattern and clearly outlining a well-defined melodic shape.

### **Pattern Pitfalls**

Of course, it's more than possible to go overboard with patterns. Remember, the goal here is to make creative, spontaneous, and heartfelt music, not to do party tricks and execute musical mathematics. In fact, David Liebman warns against practicing patterns.

Here's what he has to say on the topic:

“I would say that [overuse of patterns] is a trap that can easily be fallen into. This happens because the fingers lead the way. I call it ‘Fingeritis.’ In other words, your fingers become what you hear, and what comes out of your instrument is your fingers moving in patterns that you have practiced.

“I think you do need to do a certain amount of pattern practice, because the patterns provide a lot of finger agility. But it's predictable. For example, you know that you're going to be going up by 3rds, or 4ths, etcetera.

“I think it's important to do that at a certain stage, but I would be leery of over-practicing patterns because inevitably those patterns will appear in your music; so you have to be careful. How do you avoid that? You have to be in the moment, and in the moment means not letting the fingers get ahead of the ear, and brain and soul.”

### **Making a Case for Patterns**

While Liebman's position on the topic of patterns makes complete sense, our other two esteemed jazz giants, Bob Mintzer and Bob Sheppard, seem to put a bit more emphasis on practicing patterns. However, when you listen to either of these two men play, you'll hear their use of patterns serves to create a kaleidoscopic melodic picture while stirring up raw sonic energy. When done properly, this effect is used *tastefully*, and does not dominate the entire solo or make the whole thing sound artificially manufactured.

So if we're going to explore the practice of patterns, let's just agree from the get-go that we're not going to let them turn us into finger-based musicians rather than ear and heart-based musicians.

## Breaking Out of Patterns – With Patterns

Now that you've been warned about the dangers of pattern-based playing, I'd like to suggest practicing certain patterns and melodic shapes can actually open up your ears and your mind to new material you would have never come across just practicing scales, arpeggios, and memorized licks.

Chances are, you haven't thought of every single possible permutation of the notes within the basic scales used in jazz improvisation. It's when you start to mix up the order of the notes in a given scale that you really begin to unlock the key to an unlimited supply of melodic material. With enough of these melodic variations under your belt, you can mix and match these variations endlessly, breaking up the patterns rhythmically, and intertwining them with non-pattern-based melodic material.

You can use these patterns to tie together two phrases, or you can use them to generate excitement and energy. You can also use these melodic shapes as a basis for your entire solo, inventively developing a pattern over the course of the solo.

Taking a cue from the modal exercises given in the early part of the last chapter, let's explore some ways to create a ton of melodic material based on just a small number of notes.

### Scalar Patterns

#### Crash Course and/or Refresher in Scales

In a moment, we'll be going over what to do with these scales, but in the meantime, if you need to brush up on these, check out page 50 of the workbook:

- major
- melodic minor
- harmonic minor
- minor seventh (Dorian)
- dominant seventh (Mixolydian)
- half diminished (Locrian)
- half diminished #2 (Locrian #2)
- diminished
- diminished whole tone
- whole tone

## TAKE ACTION

Try taking the patterns taken from Bob Mintzer's master class interview, and apply them to the scales listed in the "Crash Course and/or Refresher in Scales" section above. Make sure that you can **sing** these as well as play these. Practice **not** playing every third or fourth note on your instrument, and instead *singing* that note, then playing it on your instrument to check whether or not you sang the correct note. This will improve your ear-finger connection, and allow you to use these patterns more organically in your solos.

**NOTE:** The following exercises are based on patterns that come out of major scales, so as I just mentioned, try to apply these to other scales as well.

1. On page 25 of the workbook, take a look at pattern #20A. It is nothing more than 1-4-5 in triplets moving up in whole steps. So if we start on a G, that would be G, C, D, A, D, E, B...
2. On page 20 of the workbook, check out the pattern #15. Notice that it goes, in scale degrees, 1, 4, 5, 2 and then up a half-step to repeat the pattern up a minor third. So if we start on a G, that would be G, C, D, A, Bb, Eb, F, C, C#...
3. On page 21 of the workbook, check out pattern #16. Notice that this one also starts with 1, 4, 5, but continues a bit differently than the previous exercise. It goes 1, 4, 5, (down to) 6, and then down a whole step. This means that the pattern as a whole is moving downwards in perfect fourths. So in the key of C major, that would be C, F, G, (down)A, G, C, D, E, D...
4. Take a look at pattern #18 on page 23 of the workbook. Once again, we're starting on 1, 4, 5, 2 but then adding 3, 6 and then going down a minor third to repeat the pattern again. So in G major that would be G, C, D, A, B, E, C#, F#, G#, D#, E#A#, G... You'll notice that this is a 6-note pattern, and it moves upwards in tritones.

Now start writing your own patterns based on scale degrees. For example, you could play any of the four patterns listed above, but replace the "4" with a "3", so instead of going C, F, etc... you could start C, E, etc.... Just start changing the scale degrees around, going through all of the scales and in all twelve keys. So from now on, you'll never be able to say you have nothing to do on a Saturday night!

## Intervallic Patterns

As you just learned, mixing things up with our scales can be a great challenge and a lot of fun. But we can also generate patterns by thinking about intervals and the melodic shapes they create.

## TAKE ACTION

Let's look at some intervallic exercises taken from the Bob Sheppard master class interview. Starting on exercise #1, page 27:

### **Exercise #1**

Perfect fourths going *up* in half steps  
(ie: C, F, C#, F#, D, G, D#, G#...)

### **Exercise #2**

Perfect fourths going *down* in half steps  
(ie: F, C, E, B, Eb, Bb, D, A...)

### **Exercise #3**

Perfect fourths going *down* in whole steps  
(ie: F, C, Eb, Bb, Db, Ab, B, F#...)

### **Exercise #4**

One perfect fourth *upwards* followed by another perfect fourth a half step up moving *downwards* and continuing the pattern up by half steps  
(ie: C, F, F#, C#, D, G...)

### **Exercise #5**

One perfect fourth *downwards* followed by another perfect fourth starting a half step down, moving *upwards* and continuing the pattern down by half steps  
(ie: F, C, B, E, Eb, Bb, A, D...)

### **Exercise #6**

One perfect fourth followed by another a tritone up, going down to the note a half-step above the first perfect fourth  
(ie: C, F, F#, C#, D, G, Ab, Db, Eb...)

### **Exercise #7**

One downwards perfect fourth followed by another downwards perfect fourth starting a half step below the second note in previous pair. This group of four notes is repeated in descending half steps  
(ie: F, C, B, F#, E, B, Bb, F...)

### **Exercise #8-15**

Rather than causing your mind to go numb by having you read my verbal summaries of these exercises, I suggest you go through the remaining exercises yourself, taking note of the intervallic patterns.

Patterns such as the ones shared in this chapter can be found in other jazz educational materials out there. But the goal is to be able to create *your own* collection of intervallic patterns.

You can take any interval, or for that matter, any lick, and practice transposing it in all of the intervals, as well as intervallic combinations.

### TAKE ACTION

Create your own intervallic patterns. Make sure you can *sing* everything you're playing. A good way to do this is to randomly *not* play certain notes and sing those pitches instead, "filling in the blanks."

1. Practice transposing any group of notes by all of the intervals, up the range of the instrument. (ie: the two notes in a perfect fourth transposed by half-steps, whole steps, minor thirds, etc)
2. Practice reversing the direction of the notes within your two-note group and once again, take that group up through all of the intervals (i.e.: a two-note perfect fourth grouping would change from second octave C up to second octave F to become second octave C down to first octave F)
3. Practice reversing the direction of the two-note pattern as a whole (i.e.: perfect fourths in whole steps would move down instead of up, so instead of playing C-F-D-G..., you would play C-F-Bb-Eb...)
4. Create a sequence of intervals and transpose a two-note group through that sequence (i.e.: A perfect fourth being transposed up a half-step, a whole step, and then a minor third before starting the sequence over again, so it could be C-F-C#-F#-D#-G# then E-A-F#-B-A-D...)
5. Now, instead of transposing two-note patterns, try transposing different licks or melodic ideas.

### How to Use Patterns in Your Solos

Now that you've got these things under your fingers, there are two basic approaches when it comes to applying intervallic patterns:

1. Playing patterns exactly as has been described so far, in strict consistent intervallic relationships, independent of any key or tonal center.
2. Modifying the patterns as needed in order to fit a set of chord changes. This approach could be better described as playing intervallic *shapes* than patterns, since the intervallic relationships between the notes you'll be playing are flexible and not 100% set in stone.

### **Approach #1: Playing Strict Symmetrical Patterns**

This approach refers to the practice of playing a pattern 100% symmetrically, regardless of the chord playing beneath it.

So, for example, let's say you have a D-7 chord and you want the sound of perfect fourths moving up in whole steps. If you play the exact pattern, at a certain point, you'll find that the notes in the pattern are no longer a part of the group of notes that fit diatonically within the a D-7 chord.

In the notated music below, notice how playing the pattern exactly symmetrically causes us to stray from the notes diatonic to D-7:



Although we're straying from the tune's key center, the lick works because perfect fourths in succession sound very hip. The key is to resolve the pattern into a note that works over the chord you're landing on. In this case, since we're staying with the D-7, the ending note of G resolves nicely.

This approach works nicely if you're looking to stretch the listener's ear a bit by playing "outside." However, since you're outlining a very clear pattern, you're still creating a very clear and coherent melodic statement, taking the listener "along for the ride" until you land on an "inside" note. Of course, there are no rules here, and you could choose to keep the tension going by not resolving at all. It's really up to you – this is where the "art" part of improvisation comes in.

### **Approach #2: Playing Diatonic Patterns**

If you're going for the general sound of a particular intervallic pattern, but don't want to go outside of the chord changes, you could modify a pattern so that it's not 100% symmetrical, and instead lives clearly within the changes.



You'll notice that these fourth groupings are not all perfect fourths, as the F-B interval is a tritone. You'll also notice that not all of the fourth groupings move up by a whole step, as the E-A pair moves up a half-step to F-B instead of moving up a whole step.

This approach works well if you're going through a chord progression and want to clearly outline the harmony while also implying an intervallic pattern.

## TAKE ACTION

On page 52 of the included workbook is an example of thirds moving through the chord changes to the jazz standard, *Blue Bossa*. Because we're restricted to notes that fit strictly within the chord changes, sometimes these intervals are major thirds, sometimes minor thirds. In addition, these third groupings are moving up through the range of the instrument sometimes in whole steps, sometimes in half steps. So in order to hit the changes, a perfectly symmetrical pattern will not work.

You'll also notice that once we hit the top of our given instrument's practical range, we're dropping down as far as we can go on the instrument while keeping the pattern intact. Of course, where the pattern will drop down to a lower octave depends completely on the range of the instrument as well as the ability of the musician. But the trick here is to stick to the chord changes even if we're not playing the root of the chord on beat one of that chord's first measure.

The three patterns you see on page 52 are just examples of what can be done with the melodic shapes based on the patterns we've explored earlier in this chapter.

Taking things to the next level, try playing through the changes to *Blue Bossa* (or any other tune, for that matter) in any of the patterns you'd be playing as part of the other "Take Action" modules in this chapter.

## Making Patterns Sound Like Music, Not Mathematics

At first, we need to simply get used to incorporating these new shapes and patterns into our solos, even if we don't yet have a crystal clear concept of how to best fit them into the music. Bob Sheppard shares, "At first you're just adding these intervals at random, no rhyme or reason. You're just forcing them in. At first it's very uncomfortable, so just make sure that you don't lose the time. If it's an 8 bar phrase just try and keep the time together.

"Let's say I'm playing the blues. I've got my blues licks going, but I'm just starting a minor 3rd interval, on maybe chord tone and just going chromatically, not sure where it's going to end up. You could end up on a funky note, but it doesn't matter, don't worry about it. You're just taking this exercise and superimposing it onto this tune that you know really well and won't get lost on. I know it's non-specific, and I'm not saying there's any one way to do it, but you already know the interval, so simply play it and see where it takes you.

"This minor third, for example, interval is strong and you're just going to try it out, maybe with a Jamey Aebersold record or something like that. Your ears will tell you how to get in and out of it, and your musical sensibility will eventually be able to take this minor 3rd and figure out a way to use it. You will gain confidence that you can play something that you would never, ever play and stick it in a tune."

But eventually, we need to be able to use these devices tastefully. When asked about the prospect of an entire solo comprised of the types of intervallic shapes we're discussing here, Bob Sheppard says,

“It would be totally boring. That’s why you have to have a lot of these things down and you can’t play them as straight patterns. At first you have to, don’t get me wrong. You have a pattern and you just stick it in; you have to learn how to use it. It’s sort of like, if, for a year you’re in class trying to learn French, and you simply start repeating words – you never actually speak to anyone in French. Then you take a trip to France, and all of a sudden you’re going to actually try to use this thing and it’s scary as hell; you don’t know what’s going to happen with it. You’re scared to use it. But you do, and it’s ok - you survived and it happens again; and you use it again. Four or five times later it’s ok. I’m alright with that one. It’s not so scary.”

In other words, you’re basically opening up your ears and your mind to new ways of generating material. Especially when we’re talking about making modal patterns. Using patterns based on a variety of melodic shapes moving in a variety of directions by a variety of intervals, you end up with an endless supply of things to play over any given chord.

But as far as using these shapes and patterns to craft powerful melodies, that’s where we really need to apply the lessons learned by listening to and transcribing the greats as well as learning as many tunes as possible.

If there was another formula I knew of that you could follow and automatically end up with beautifully crafted and powerful melodic material, then I’d be rich - and we’d all be much better improvisers!

Here are a few things we can do to use patterns to create organic-sounding lines:

- Experiment by varying the rhythm of the pattern.
- Play the pattern leaving out certain individual notes, or even certain groups of notes.
- Use only small snippets of patterns as a means of tying together non-pattern-based phrases.
- Within the span of a musical phrase, mix and match different patterns to the point where the listener is no longer hearing what sounds like a pattern, but instead sounds like an interesting melody.

## TAKE ACTION

### Taking it to the next level...

1. Find a simple tune such as a blues or a standard without too many chord changes to it. (Some simple standards would be tunes such as *Blue Bossa*, *Bye Bye Blackbird*, or *Summertime*, to name just a very few.)
2. Write out a solo over that tune where you use your normal improvisational vocabulary, but also work in some intervallic patterns, either symmetrical or diatonic.
3. The goal here is to work in these patterns in a way that sounds tasteful and organic, so do not overuse the patterns. When you do use them, make sure to vary the rhythm and try to mostly use snippets of patterns, mixing and matching patterns as much as possible. There are no hard-and-fast rules here, and you may very well choose to run through a pattern over a wide range of the instrument. The point is to practice using patterns as a means to enhance your improvisational vocabulary without pushing you toward robotic and uncreative playing.

### BONUS:

Re-harmonize the tune you're using for this exercise utilizing the techniques and principles you learned in Chapter 3 and write your solo over those changes.

## Hearing Patterns in Action

Lucky for us, during his audio master class interview, Bob Sheppard was kind enough to demonstrate the application of patterns in the context of an actual solo. Check out the following two tracks from the accompanying example mp3 files to hear him bringing to life the techniques we've been discussing:

- **11\_Patterns-Blues.mp3:** A standard blues - first chorus is regular blues vocabulary, second chorus brings in patterns)
- **12\_Patterns-Softly.mp3:** Chord changes to *Softly as in a Morning Sunrise*

## Giant Steps = The Golden Key to the Modern Jazz Vocabulary

Now that we've thoroughly explored how we can use patterns and melodic shapes to increase our vocabulary, I thought we'd take a look at an approach to playing over complex changes – whether those changes are being superimposed on a simple standard, or whether those changes are part of an original composition, such as *Giant Steps*, that monster of a tune we discussed in the last chapter. Because the changes to *Giant Steps* outline many different tonal centers within a very brief span of time, it becomes quite important to outline the chord changes very explicitly.

Oftentimes, musicians improvising through these changes will stick to very basic scalar or arpeggio-based melodies over each chord. And it's this simplified approach that had a major impact on the modern jazz vocabulary.

Of course, there are no 100% hard-and-fast rules when it comes to improvisation, and there are tons of players who play very complex melodies over these changes. But a huge influence on the sound of modern players ranging such as Joe Henderson, Woody Shaw and Michael Brecker (not to mention all three of our esteemed Jazz Lessons with Giants teachers!) was Coltrane's melodic approach of outlining complex chord progressions in an extremely explicit manner.

To illustrate, here is a simple micro-etude that works over the Coltrane turnaround we just went over:

The musical notation shows a single staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The chord progression is Cmaj7, Eb7, Abmaj7, B7, Emaj7, G7, Cmaj7. The melody is written in eighth notes, primarily using chord tones with some passing tones. The notes for each chord are: Cmaj7 (C4, E4, G4, Bb4), Eb7 (Eb4, G4, Bb4, D5), Abmaj7 (Ab4, C5, Eb5, G5), B7 (B4, D5, F#5, A5), Emaj7 (E4, G4, B4, D5), G7 (G4, B4, D5, F#5), and Cmaj7 (C4, E4, G4, Bb4).

Check out the note choices – what do you see? That's right, nothing out of the ordinary at all. Mostly chord tones with a few passing tones thrown in.

Of course, what I've written here is quite simplistic compared to the melodic flurries you might hear from someone like Joe Lovano or Brad Mehldau playing over these changes. But the more you get these simply structured lines into your brains and ultimately, into your ears, the more complex you'll be able to get with your melodic content.

As you can see, you can certainly kick some serious booty on Giant Steps by just playing very basic chord and scale tones over each chord (Coltrane certainly did!). And if you're kicking serious booty over Giant Steps, that means that you've become pretty darn good at spelling out seemingly disparate tonalities. And once you can clearly spell out seemingly disparate tonalities, then you're equipped to play just about *anything* you want – as long as you can clearly take the listener's ear back home - or purposely steer them away from "home" in a compelling manner.

The point is, you want to be able to *consciously* take the listener's ear on a journey, and not to just play a bunch of random nonsense and call it "modern jazz." So when approaching a difficult set of changes – start simple! You'll be surprised at just how hip simple can sound.

## Chapter 4: Using Your Ear

I think that most musicians would agree that developing your musical ear is the most important thing you can do when learning to play.

In this chapter, we're of course going to go over how to train your ears to not only guide you when playing your instrument, but also when you're learning about and absorbing music while *away* from the instrument.

### Playing what we hear

How many of you have heard one jazz master or another playing these incredible lines and wondered to yourself, "Is this guy hearing everything he's playing before he plays it, or is he simply playing licks, or is he simply moving his fingers in familiar movements?"

I know I've asked myself these questions.

David Liebman debunks some of the mythology of the superhuman-one-hundred-percent - spontaneous jazz genius: "This is a little controversial and it depends on who you're talking to. I think it's a little bit of a myth that you hear what you play before you play it. If we played all quarter notes at a slow tempo ok, I'll grant you that. But if we're playing a fast moving line, then there's no way that I'm going to hear that before I play it. It's out of the question.

"Do I hear the beginning and end of the shape? Absolutely. Do I hear it as it goes on? Yes. Is it a certain amount of finger digital memory? Absolutely, that's what we're practicing. Is there something that is mechanical about it? Absolutely, but what's not mechanical is my phrasing.

"In other words, I could talk to you right now and read a script. If I read, I'm putting a book in front of me here that's actually full of rhythms. The underlying beats I'm reading could be quarter notes, 8th notes, or anything else. I could read it to you fifty different ways. So even though my script is written, the way I deliver it is in the moment, which makes what's under your fingers come alive.

"I don't expect to come up with a new line, or a new way of playing every minute. Dizzy Gillespie, in his biography, he said he could count on one hand the times that he played something, I don't know the word he used, fresh or new, something that wasn't predictable to him. That is something that you have to be aware of. We're not just sitting up there making up pearls of wisdom that have never been heard before. I wish we were, and in an ideal world we would be, but the truth is that we are reciting a poem that we know already.

"Now of course, we ear train, yes. You should be able to recognize chords, you should be able to recognize intervals. It's obviously going to help me on the bandstand if I'm playing and a guy plays something and my ear gives me the ability to respond to him. That's of course, normal ear training

that you get at a university. That's standard and that's necessary. But hearing exactly what you're going to play before you actually play, I'm not sure if that's really real."

Bob Mintzer's describes what leads him to the notes he plays as a *feeling*: "There's definitely muscle memory. Am I hearing everything that I play? Yes, I am on some level but I'm also feeling what I'm playing. I sort of hear the note and feel where it is and have the sense of where it is on the instrument.

"If I were to sing the note, I kind of know where it is. I just know where my D is, where my C is, etc. I just know that it's right there. So if I wanted to build a melody around that D, I know where it is and I can find my way there and work around it. It's a question of feeling, and hearing on some level, but very quickly. I would say more feeling than hearing.

"I think I've considered, and listened to and tried to hear things in a practice situation. For example, what do you play over D minor and what kind of things can you do? I think it's a matter of considering your options, practicing them, getting them under your fingers, and then the last step is playing with people and seeing how you integrate these things you've practiced into a playing situation.

"It's not only the choice of notes it's the timing of the notes, the interaction between players. When do you breathe, when do you not play, when do you play, do you respond to the other players? A piano player might throw down a chord that takes the music in a specific direction and you have to know what that sonority is, what the sound is, what are the notes and be in the moment with great immediacy and hear what that is and respond accordingly; just so that there's some sense of connection and interaction and agreement with where the music is going."

## The Art of Simply Listening to Music

Up until now, we've discussed some techniques and principles that can be put into play to create solos that "sound good on paper."

It is not enough for a solo to simply meet a checklist of rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic rules and guidelines. In fact, you could have a solo that's technically correct from a jazz theory point of view, but that solo is going to sound like absolute doo-doo unless it's played with a certain sensibility – a sensibility that can only be expressed via music, and not in words.

Sure, you could play a solo where you're hitting the most colorful chord tones and the most unique rhythms, but there's more to it than that. Otherwise, don't you think that there would be a jazz improvisation video game with clear-cut procedure for "winning"? Wouldn't it be a simple matter of plugging in the right data and witnessing musical perfection unfold before your very ears?

Unfortunately, there is no such magic bullet (big shock, I know).

I can offer, however, some insights from our master class teachers.

On the topic of listening to great players, Bob Mintzer advises, "See what the components are. Notice the detail in their solos. See how their solos develop. See what that is and recognize what it is and see

if you can't find a way to make it your own; incorporate some aspect of what you're observing. The devil is in the details.

“What constitutes a good phrase? How does a good chorus wind up being a series of phrases? How are the phrases put together? When do they play and when do they not play? What's happening with articulation, with pitch, with timbre, with all the other details in the music that come into play?”

“You want to wind up at a place where you can sort of hear the whole thing simultaneously. But there's a lot of ingredients to listen for, so before you get to be astute at that way of listening, it's advisable to listen to specific things.

“You might listen for a space. What's the spacing like on a tenor player's solo? When does he *not* play? How long are the phrases? Listen for note length. Is he playing 8<sup>th</sup> notes, 16<sup>th</sup> notes, triplets, or quarter notes? What is he doing with pitch? Is there glissando, is there vibrato?”

“You can also divide notes into attack, sustain, and decay. How do the notes start? What happens once the note is started? How does the note end? By organizing what you hear and listening specifically to each one of these details at a time, you really get to ingest the music and see what it is. And from there you can consider how you might implement that specific thing in your playing.”

## TAKE ACTION

Working towards the goal of eventually hearing simultaneously most of the elements in a musical performance, put on a recording of one of the masters, and listen to as many of the following individual aspects of that master's performance:

- Notice how the solo develops. See if you can identify a specific melodic or rhythmic motif, and listen to see how it is altered and developed over the course of the solo.
- Listen for spacing in the solo. When does the soloist play, and when do they not play?
- Listen for the solo's relationship to the beat. Is the soloist playing behind the beat, ahead of the beat, right in the middle, or all over the court?
- Listen for the soloist's use of dynamics. Are certain phrases, or perhaps, certain individual notes played louder or softer than the notes around them? Are there prominent crescendos or decrescendos over the course of a phrase, or over the course of a held out note?
- Listen closely to the soloist's articulation.
- Listen to how the soloist uses pitch. Are they bending notes, playing glissandos, or using vibrato?
- Along the lines of listening for the use of pitch, listen for other aspects of musical inflection such as trills and grace notes.
- Listen to the timbre (tonal color or characteristic) of the soloist's instrument. Does their tone sound even across the range of the instrument, or are certain notes made to sound brighter or darker than others?
- Listen closely to the rhythms of the solo. On a phrase-by-phrase basis, is the soloist playing mostly quarter notes, eights notes, sixteenth notes, or any other rhythmic grouping?
- Pay attention to the general approach to the attack, sustain, and decay of the notes. How does the note start? What happens once the note is started? How does the note end?
- For those of you whose ears are a bit more on the advanced side, listen to the player's use of harmony. On a phrase-by-phrase basis, is the soloist playing inside or outside of the changes? Do you hear any alternate chord progressions that the soloist may be superimposing upon the tune? What chordal or modal sounds are being outlined?

## The Art of Transcription

In his master class interview, Bob Sheppard tells us that much of what we hear in the playing of the masters is not teachable via spoken or written language. Instead, he says we must saturate ourselves in the music by listening, but also by playing along. This is a sentiment strongly echoed by David Liebman earlier in this book.

In fact, Liebman has his own extremely comprehensive method for transcription, which he was kind enough to share with us here. Here it is in all its glory.

### THE COMPLETE TRANSCRIPTION PROCESS by DAVID LIEBMAN

#### WHY TRANSCRIBE?

How does one learn tone, nuance and develop a true and believable jazz sense of rhythm? Certainly there are exercises and method books that can help a student attain these goals, but there is a built-in elusiveness to these concepts, since they are virtually impossible to notate in any convincing fashion. The best approach is exact aural and tactile imitation - the first stage of all artistic growth. For jazz, the most valuable form of imitation is a direct master-apprentice relationship in which the live model (master) demonstrates directly to the student, demanding immediate and exact repetition until mastered before moving on. Learning in this way becomes a natural outgrowth of constant exposure and reinforcement on the spot. But without that opportunity, I have found transcription is the next best method.

Some musicians object to transcribing as stealing other people's ideas. My contention is that in one way or another, whether it be as detailed as I will describe, or as casual as Charlie Parker supposedly standing outside of a club in Kansas City hearing Lester Young and then going home with phrases in his ear and mind to practice and recall, most artists have done something of this sort. And the best players are usually the ones who will tell you immediately that so and so was their main inspiration and they began by copying him. This is a process - a means to an end, and to my mind very necessary.

I have a DVD titled [\*The Improviser's Guide to Transcription\*](#) (Caris Music Services) that describes the process in detail with actual demonstrations.

#### A THREE PART PROCESS

Transcribing involves a three part learning process: body, mind and spirit - in that order. Being an auto didactic system, the process involves a student 100% in their own work with tangible and measurable rewards. If present, the teacher can serve as a guide, but in any case this process can all be accomplished without the aid of an institution. It is exhaustive, complete and very satisfying with results immediately perceived in most cases via an improved time feel and more subtle use of nuance for starters.

Transcribing is like learning how to speak a language, similar to the experience of traveling to a foreign country whose language may have been studied in school. Finally a student can hear the way the language is actually used and pronounced rather than written by being immersed in a foreign culture on a day-to-day basis.

### **BEYOND WORDS**

The so-called intangibles in jazz, outside of the specific notes and rhythms, cannot be notated exactly. This includes but is not limited to the subtleties of rhythmic feel and how the artist interprets the beat, as well as the use of expressive nuance in one's sound, aspects of which are usually lumped under the word "phrasing."

In transcribing, a musician is forced to hear and duplicate everything. As well, with the notes written out, it becomes possible to analyze the thought process of the improviser. This can help the student initiate his or her own ideas and inspire one to go further in their own research.

In my opinion, it is the most efficient and productive technique for learning to improvise in the jazz tradition, or in any tradition for that matter. It is the closest one can come to the age-old master-apprenticeship system that existed for centuries as the accepted method for learning the arts and crafts. As mentioned above, transcribing a master is the next best thing to having an accomplished improviser present in real time in front of a student as a model to copy and inspire.

Transcription is an unbeatable tool as a means to an end. The end being artistic creation, musical freedom, and hopefully, a recognizable style of playing. Knowing what came before is the only way to realize what there is left to do. Imitation as a stage of learning is timeless and inevitable.

### **THE THREE PARTS**

#### **1. Listening and Singing**

In general, the three-part process involves, at first, saturated listening to the chosen solo with the first goal being to sing along in scat fashion. A student should arrive at the point that with or without the recording playing he can reasonably sing the solo. The important musical skill acquired and honed in this process is pitch control without the crutch of the instrument at hand, which will come later. This also reinforces a strong sense of rhythm as we expect the student to keep the correct pulse without the aid of a metronome or having the recorded version to reference at all while singing.

#### **2. Writing Out and Playing**

Next is the time consuming process of writing out and playing the solo. In some cases, depending upon the proposed solo and individual skills of the student, the exact sequence of events can be changed accordingly, meaning learning the solo first on the instrument followed by notation. But in any case the goals are exact duplication of every aspect of the solo including all nuances besides the pitches as well as having it written down accurately. It is in this stage of imitating the solo that the subtleties such as tone color, nuance, variations of time feel, etc are subconsciously absorbed while technique is improved as well. It's like a reservoir being filled for eventual use by the student in the real world of his own playing. This is the most important stage. There should be little or no difference to one's ears between the original and the student's version when this stage is completed.

### **3. Analysis**

Aside from the obvious technical rewards of having to carefully and accurately notate the specifics of rhythm and pitch, I have the student write out the solo so that it can be analyzed and used for further study. This third part of the process is where, depending upon the solo, a certain amount of harmonic and possibly compositional knowledge may be necessary for understanding what was played. Certainly a teacher can be of benefit at this point with their experience.

The goal here is to first try and understand the thinking, rationale, and concept of the improviser under study as much as can be deduced after the fact about an improvisation. Though there are of course inexplicable events that occur musically, with analysis, at least some patterns and repetitive ideas reflecting the thinking process of the artist in question can be discerned.

#### **What is Actually Improvised?**

To digress for a moment, the uninitiated might consider improvisation in jazz as what it appears to be completely spontaneous and in the moment. But we know what is actually being played (outside rare moments of fresh inspiration) is a result of habit and experience to a large degree, albeit cast in the moment. Though one's phrasing may alter from idea to idea or day to day depending upon the player's temperament and response in relation to the surroundings, audience, venue, accompanists and more, the content itself will be less sensitive to change.

Of course, content hopefully evolves with time as in the case of great innovators like John Coltrane, Duke Ellington and Miles Davis, whose styles changed monumentally in different ways over varied amounts of years. For other artists it may be more gradual and at a slower rate. In any case this analysis procedure is crucial to understanding the intellectual component of the musical material being played.

#### **What are we specifically looking for in the analysis stage?**

A short list might include specifics of scales and chord types used, melodic motifs and their variations, overall structure of the solo in regards to both content and emotion, rhythmic diversity, uses of patterns and other repetitive devices, passages of lyricism versus harmonic complexity and much more.

We are trying to put ourselves into the mind of the improviser who is far removed from present time without any concrete idea of what was on his mind that day. This "second guessing" can have far reaching consequences for the student.

Following this analysis we get more involved with the tools that were discovered. The student isolates melodic lines which belong to certain harmonic progressions - at first those that are most common in jazz like the ii-V-1 or I-V1-ii-V, etc., and then compose variations that still retain the integrity and core of that particular chosen line.

Also with the aid of a teacher, if needed, we try to sort out qualitative differences between lines that were played. For example noticing the differences between those lines that used only chord tones or blues notes compared to more complex examples using harmonic substitutions and more.

In other words, we try to develop within a student an objective way to judge the musical sophistication of a line in order to get his mind and ear up to a level of knowing the difference between merely good lines and great ones. Criteria such as contour, rhythmic variation, varied pitch choices are some elements that are involved in these evaluations. The student should choose some of the better lines to use as models for composing variations as well as transposing them to other keys and tempos. Other extended exercises consist of taking lines from different sections of the solos and cross-referencing them, in a sense, constructing several alternative versions of the original material.

### **Building Upon the Work of the Masters**

I will also have the student compose several “perfect” choruses, meaning within the style using the best material that he has developed in the line variation exercises. Then, of course, the student must play spontaneously along with a rhythm track or accompanist (even with drums only) in the style of the original solo, but using his own material, which by now should be considerable.

By the way, vocalists and percussionists should also be doing some form of this transcription process. All of this work will hopefully result in absorption of the feeling and content of the solo. The student has not only observed what was played, but after spending so much time with the solo, should naturally feel akin to the spirit and temperament of the soloist him or herself. This in-depth study can be revealing on many levels. There is something very honest and validating about studying the past in this manner. It gives a student a sense of being connected to the tradition and of having earned his or her way.

### **WHAT SOLOS / WHICH ARTISTS**

For the first solo, the student will probably spend a few months involving several hours a day [Or as much time as reasonably possible- Ed.] to go through the entire process. This will speed up with each solo. A student can eventually work concurrently on several solos, possibly singing one while playing another, and analyzing a third. With this much commitment it is important that the correct choices of material and soloist be carefully thought about for the obvious reason of maximizing time.

It is beneficial to have the student transcribe material that can be of practical use in the future. For example, transcribing a blues, rhythm changes, and well known standards will be of more benefit at this stage than an original tune played only by a particular artist. At the least what will be gleaned from the process will be of use in the real playing world on these types of tunes that are so common in the repertoire.

Concerning which artists to transcribe, I have found the metaphor of a tree is an effective tool in trying to organize the prodigious amount of recorded history available for a student to discover. Where does a student begin?

### **The Tree Metaphor**

A tree has six parts: root, trunk, limb, branches, twigs and leaves. As we progress up a tree we get further away from the source, which is made up of the actual roots in the ground. In any field of

endeavor there is a similar historical architecture. Simply put, without the roots (originators) there would be no further story; the trunk symbolizes the main sources of discovery and stylization; the limbs are people who created their own direction stemming from the sources and spawning a whole other area; whereas the branches go off in their own singular direction. Twigs are less dramatic developments, while leaves fall to the ground each season, to be forgotten.

If we trace the history of jazz or even just the saxophone or piano, for example, we could have some very interesting discussions filling in parts of this metaphorical tree. Suffice to say, if we had unlimited time it would be best to transcribe from the root up, but this is not realistic. So I urge my students to begin with the bebop tree and work their way through hard bop into modal and free jazz. This span of music consists largely of the music of the 1950s and 1960s, a period rich in recordings and innovations. What we are after at the beginning stages of transcription is a solo with good eighth note lines and a great rhythmic feel.

There are abundant examples on blues, rhythm changes and standards to choose from during the recommended historical period. The student should choose a solo that he loves and, if he could, would play tomorrow. This is important in order to keep inspiration fresh.

### **First Foray**

I don't choose a solo for my students but I direct them to the group of artists who would fit under the guidelines described. The solo need not be complex or fast. It should be something challenging but not so much above the student that it will frustrate him. Early Miles Davis through "Kind of Blue" is a great place to start as is Chet Baker, Dexter Gordon, Wynton Kelly, Wes Montgomery and others of that ilk. Beginning with artists playing the student's instrument is advisable at first because at least pitch recognition will be more directly related to this familiar sound and sonority of his instrument. Eventually other instruments are important to transcribe because the technical aspects of transferring material to one's own instrument will challenge the student to come up with different responses, fingerings, and techniques hopefully all aimed at trying to be free of clichés.

### **HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?**

With any massive study project it is important to see a light at the end of the tunnel. After a few transcriptions, most students feel really great about the undertaking, and certainly sound better at least on the tunes they transcribed, and probably on a lot of similar material. A tremendous sense of reinforcement and accomplishment is felt.

But there is a danger of using transcription as a source of ideas rather as a means to an end. After all, the goal as an artist is to find an individual voice. There is a point where it isn't artistically honest to keep using other people's material, even with the transformation process described in detail below. My recommendation is that students transcribe a blues, rhythm changes, a standard, a modal and free tune with possibly a few more of particular interest. But in any case, two years is the maximum amount of time one should transcribe, assuming it is done as described.

As stated, when the process speeds up and becomes routine, the student will be able to devote less hours to transcription and return to other studies. Selective transcription on the other hand goes on forever. That is taking off a few bars or chorus of something that intrigues you. The same goes for all

the transcription books available in that they should be used like an encyclopedia for reference, sight reading and to satisfy one's curiosity.

In summary, transcription involves three basic areas of our musical faculties:

1. **Notation** - Through saturated listening to the selected solo, the student internalizes (by singing at first) the notes and undertakes the painstaking, necessary craft of notating the rhythms and pitches of the solo.
2. **Playing** - With repeated instrumental practice, the solo is exactly imitated in every way, including dynamics, articulation, nuance, time feel, tone coloring and of course, the rhythms and pitches.
3. **Analysis** - using the classic methods of theme and variation study, motivic analysis and form structure concepts, etc., the student deduces to the best of his ability the thought processes represented in the work. By isolating passages and phrases, learning them in different keys and tempos, creating variations and using them in other comparable harmonic situations, the student begins to transform the transcription process from imitation to creation.

## TAKE ACTION

### Playing and duplicating the solo

1. Use half-speed for practicing synchronization with the original as well as for study of nuance and expressive techniques used. You may also benefit from transcription software such as *Transcribe*, which you can learn more about here: <http://www.seventhstring.com/xscribe/overview.html>.
2. Eventually, try to play the solo along with the original at regular speed.
3. After playing with the original, play without using a metronome, with an accompanist, or a play-along of the same track to check how well you know it. You can even make your own play-along recording if you like.
4. Play the solo in different keys and tempos.
5. Use the solo as a point of departure to improvise on your own within the chord progression. Stay close to the style and feel of the original, but initiate your own thoughts.

### Creating your own ideas

1. Transpose it to other keys and play (maybe even memorize it) at different tempos. Put the line into a tune at the same harmonic place.
2. Categorizing, transposing and composing original lines. Put all the lines that are from the same progression or chord change type on one page. This is to see the similarities and differences when a soloist encounters a specific chord or progression. With the help of an experienced musician choose the “best” lines using criteria of choice of notes, rhythmic interest and overall shape.
3. Place it at the top of a page and write variations using typical theme and variation techniques (augmentation, diminution, syncopation, sequence change, displacement both melodically and rhythmically, neighboring tones, etc.). Do these “new lines” in other keys and at other tempos. Try to place them in other contexts where the same progression appears.
4. Use a graph of the solo written out horizontally with all the same bars lined up vertically from the top of the page down. In this manner, you can see what was played on each chorus in a particular bar. By skipping around between choruses, you can create new and unique combinations from what the soloist did. See “Transcription Graph” below.
5. Using the Transcription Graph, replace a few selected measures of the transcribed solo with your own melodic material. This way you’ll be creating vocabulary that fits within the context of the transcribed vocabulary that you’re in the process of internalizing.

- Compose an original solo. By the time you are done with all of the above, not only will everything be naturally memorized, but the process of internalizing will have begun. This means that what you practice today find its way into your playing without having to think about it in the near future. Depending upon the material, its difficulty and your ability to absorb the information, this process can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months, but you can be sure that eventually it will occur if you have done the work.

**Transcription Graph**  
*(First 4 Bars of Transcribed Solo)*

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a jazz solo, each consisting of four staves labeled Chorus 1 through Chorus 4. The music is in 4/4 time.

**System 1:**

- Chorus 1:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord: Fmaj7. Notes: F4, A4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4.
- Chorus 2:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord: E-7b5. Notes: E4, G4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4.
- Chorus 3:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord: A7#5#9. Notes: A4, C#5, E5, G#5, F#5, E5, D5, C#5, B4, A4.
- Chorus 4:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord: E-7b5. Notes: E4, G4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4. Chord: A7. Notes: A4, C#5, E5, G#5, F#5, E5, D5, C#5, B4, A4.

**System 2:**

- Chorus 1:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord: D-9. Notes: D4, F4, Ab4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Chord: G7. Notes: G4, B4, D5, C#5, B4, A4, G4.
- Chorus 2:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord: C-9. Notes: C4, Eb4, Fb4, Gb4, Fb4, E4, C4. Chord: F7#5#9. Notes: F4, Ab4, C#5, B4, A4, G4, F4.
- Chorus 3:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord: C-9. Notes: C4, Eb4, Fb4, Gb4, Fb4, E4, C4. Chord: F7#5#9. Notes: F4, Ab4, C#5, B4, A4, G4, F4.
- Chorus 4:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord: C-9. Notes: C4, Eb4, Fb4, Gb4, Fb4, E4, C4. Chord: F7#5#9. Notes: F4, Ab4, C#5, B4, A4, G4, F4. Triplet markings are present over the notes F4, Ab4, C#5 in the first two measures.

## TAKE ACTION

Sax legend, Joe Henderson’s approach to transcription does not involve paper. Just like Joe did, find a solo you want to learn – and if you’re new to transcription, make it a simple solo – and memorize that solo using only your ear. This means you’ll be learning one short phrase at a time, and building upon that.

Here are a few ideas for simple solos you may want to start with:

- ***Blue Lester*** by Lester Young, from the album, *Blue Lester: The One & Only Lester Young* ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- ***Godchild*** by Miles Davis, from the album, *Birth of the Cool* ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- ***Unchain My Heart*** by Ray Charles (David “Fathead” Newman’s alto sax solo), from the album, *The Very Best Of Ray Charles, Vol. 1* ([find on Amazon.com](#))
- ***Girl from Ipanema*** by Stan Getz, from the album, *Getz/Gilberto* ([find on Amazon.com](#))

## Simple Songs

Here I’d like to share some ear-training wisdom from a jazz heavy other than one of the three masters headlining this program, jazz saxophonist and recording artist Sam Sadigursky (<http://samsadigursky.com>).

“One of the most important concepts that I try to have all my students understand is that any melody they hear, regardless of complexity, is not a set of notes, but instead a set of musical (or intervallic) relationships. No matter which note you start on, if you preserve the relationships found in a song, it’s still going to be the same song, even if the notes you play are completely different.

“Taking simple songs and playing them in all twelve keys is a great way of learning to identify and hear these relationships. It’s an incredibly effective way of training your ear to hear intervals while gaining fluidity in different keys. It can also be a refreshing break from practicing scales. If the song is a slow one (and if you’re new to this, you should be doing any song slowly), then it can also be your warm-up for the day as well.

“A lot of students learning jazz are told to take specific licks or riffs that they like and then take them through the keys, but many of these riffs are quite complicated. It can be much more beneficial to take simple, mostly diatonic folk-type songs and get good at transposing them before moving on to

more difficult vocabulary. In most cases, once you start transposing these songs, you'll find some of the intervals in them more difficult and varied than you might have once thought.

## TAKE ACTION

Below you'll find a list of songs you might want to start transposing by ear into all twelve keys. You can do this with any song you ever come across. Another bonus is that once you've taken a song through the keys, you'll find you know it much better than when you started, since you'll have a grasp on how it was actually constructed.

Unless you see otherwise, all songs start on the tonic (or root note) of whichever key you are playing it in.

- *The Can Can* (this song is mostly a scale, so it's a great alternative to practicing your Major scale and basic patterns)
- *Happy Birthday* (be careful – the opening note of this is the 5th degree of whatever key you're in)
- *Old McDonald*
- *Home on the Range* (starts on the 5th degree)
- *Auld Lang Syne* (starts on the 5th degree)
- *Somewhere over the Rainbow*
- *America the Beautiful* (starts on the 5th degree)
- *The Flintstones Theme* (starts on the 5th degree)
- *The Star Spangled Banner* (starts on the 5th degree)
- *Love theme from Cinema Paradiso* (one of the most haunting melodies ever written in case you don't know it)
- *Oleo* (Sonny Rollins)
- *Brahms Lullaby* (starts on the 3rd degree)
- *Rythm-a-ning* (Thelonious Monk)
- *When the Saints Go Marching In*
- *The Star Wars Theme*
- *Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen* (starts on the 3rd degree)
- *The First Noel* (starts on the 3rd degree)
- *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (starts on the 3rd degree)

## Picking Notes Out of a Cluster

### TAKE ACTION

Of course, almost every group of notes can be interpreted as a chord of some sort. But the technique here is sit at a keyboard instrument, select four notes that are not obviously related, and hold them down simultaneously, listening very closely, and singing each note individually.

Try to avoid groups of notes that clearly imply a “normal” chord such as a major seventh chord or a dominant seventh chord.

So for example, hold down D, Eb, G, and G#. First, sing the D and then, to confirm that you’ve hit the correct note, re-attack the D on the piano.

Follow that with the second note, which would be the Eb followed by the Eb alone on the piano to make sure you’re on the right note.

And you can go through all of the notes in this “non-chordal” group of notes one at a time, mixing up the order of the notes to keep you on your toes.

## Keeping Your Ears “On-Call”

And to conclude this chapter on ear training, check out what Bob Sheppard did to help bridge the gap between his ears and his instrument:

“I learned how to play by playing along to the TV set, literally. My parents were always arguing and stuff in the background, and the television was always on. It was part of the family; and I would have my clarinet, flute, or my alto and I would just be playing along with all of the themes of the TV shows and the underscoring. I would be listening for it all. Am I in tune? Am I embellishing? I’d hear the same stuff over and over again on television and I just got to know it. Then I started improvising over it.

“You can play along with the TV or the radio, Pandora or one of those online services that plays randomly. Play along with everything, everybody. Just play! Keep your instrument out of the case. Don’t put it in the case. Pick it up. Try to play a melody. Play along with music. It’s a really important practice. That’s practice, too. Learning how to relate your instrument to music, and copy.”

## TAKE ACTION

Take on Sheppard's approach to ear training by leaving your instrument outside of its case at all times and play along with any and all music you hear inside your home. Play along with:

- the TV set (TV show themes, underscore to TV shows, commercial jingles, etc.)
- the computer (Pandora, YouTube, etc.)
- your own music collection – in *all* styles, not just jazz

## BONUS

This might sound a bit wacky, but try playing along with sounds generated by things other than musical instruments. Playing along with a helicopter or the gardener's leaf blower, using them as a drone to solo over. Jam along with birds chirping or jackhammers hammering. You get the picture, the sky's the limit, let your musical freak flag fly!

## Chapter 5: Playing with Others

Perhaps saxophone colossus Sonny Rollins says it best:

*“One performance on stage is worth maybe six months of practicing at home.”*

As we all know, the art of playing jazz comes with lifetimes of practice room fodder, but in the end, jazz music is largely about collaborating spontaneously with other musicians, and ideally, the audience, in real time. Even if you’re playing solo piano or any instrument acapella for that matter, you’re still required to come up with original material and interpretations in real time, and react to whatever’s happening in the moment, whether it’s happening within you, or whether it’s a result of audible and/or visual feedback as well as an overall “vibe” from the audience.

So if it’s jazz you want to learn, at some point, you need to find other musicians to play along with. And there’s no rule that says you have to stick to traditional jazz instrumentation. While the most common group configuration in jazz is the keyboard or guitar, bass, and drums rhythm section along with a possible horn player or two, this is by no means a hard-and-fast rule.

You can put together a saxophone trio or a drums and guitar duo or a trombone, bass, and drums trio, or really, any type of group you can put together. The point is to interact spontaneously and form a cohesive group sound.

### Learning Tunes

Within just about every major genre of music is a repertoire of songs that are commonly known by musicians in that genre, and it’s the knowledge of this repertoire that allows those musicians to play along with each other without having to prepare beforehand. In jazz music, our standard repertoire consists of songs taken largely from American musicals written during the 1920s-1950s. There are a good amount of standards that started as original compositions written by jazz greats such as Thelonious Monk, Joe Henderson, Lee Morgan, and a hefty list of others.

So in order to play with other jazz musicians in a jam session or formal gig setting, historically speaking, jazz musicians have always needed to speak this common language of jazz standards.

As we all know, jazz music is heavily focused innovation and constantly moving the music forward, just like innovators such as Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, Ornette Coleman, and many others did. In fact, the emphasis on breaking through boundaries can be so great that it begs the question – do we still need to know jazz standards?

In a word – yes. Here’s what Bob Mintzer has to say on the topic:

“It’s essential. If you want to master English, then you’re going to need to read James Joyce and Shakespeare along with other great authors. Jazz standards, the popular songs of the 20’s, 30’s, 40’s and 50’s, they comprise the bible of the jazz sound; particularly as it pertains to improvising. Why do you think somebody like Keith Jarrett is playing standards a good deal of the time? It’s just very potent, important music.”

### *How many tunes do we need to know?*

On the topic of how many tunes, Bob says, “As many as you can; but by all means have a repertoire and have 100, 150 or 200 that you really have played over, and over and over and have maybe rearranged, or reharmonized. You should have a really solid grasp on how you approach playing those things.”

On the same topic, Dave Liebman sees things a bit differently: “I have my bunch of standards that I’ve been playing for decades. I don’t know a million tunes. There are many guys who do. I play mostly original tunes, my own included.

“The way we used to learn tunes was we did it a lot. When I played with Elvin, after six nights a week for three weeks, I didn’t need the music anymore. I never said anything; it was just obvious that I didn’t need it.

“The best and the only way of learning standards I can think is to use the great reservoir of play-alongs, Aebersold, of course and whoever else is putting play-alongs out now, there are many. Just put that tune on and play that tune for a week; play it for 15-20 minutes a day, and believe me, after a while you won’t have to look at the music. Go to the piano and play the chords and the bass line to help you enhance your understanding of the tune; but I think that one tune per week is plenty. That means 3 months, 12 tunes - that’s enough for a lifetime. If you pick 12 good tunes that everybody does, you’ll be able to handle most jam sessions.

“Then, of course you can work towards being able to play a tune by ear after you’ve heard it a few times. That’s going to get better with experience and time, depending on what the tunes are. I think a lot of it is experience, but you can sit and practice a tune every day. The play-alongs are usually 4-5 minutes each selection, and in 30 minutes you’re playing through the tune 6 times. At that rate, I think you’ll learn the tune in a couple of days.”

### *Do we need to be able to transpose tunes into all twelve keys?*

On this point, Liebman and Mintzer both seem to be of the opinion that being able to transpose your repertoire of standards into all twelve keys is a good discipline, but that it’s also not 100% necessary.

Says Liebman, “The discipline of doing something in all 12 keys is obvious. On the other hand, aesthetically, remember, just because you can do 12 keys doesn’t mean you have anything to say in one key.

“So as a discipline, if you have enough time that you can do something like *Giant Steps* in all twelve keys, it’s certainly going to help you. It’s going to be a help to you finger-wise and for your ear. Is this an important aspect of your artistic message? I’m not sure. But is it a discipline? Absolutely.”

## Principles of Live Performance

According to Bob Mintzer, one of the fundamental practices to apply when playing in a small group is to leave space. Mintzer explains, “It’s the same as having a conversation; if you’re talking incessantly, you’re not giving the person you’re talking *at*, a chance to respond.” Without leaving space, we assume the role of the proverbial student-level jazz musician eager to cram everything they know into a single solo - and that usually means a lot of notes. When our solos consist of a steady stream of nothing but eighth notes, it can be difficult for the rhythm section to respond to what you’re playing.

Of course, as I always try to add, there are no rules set-in-stone here. I’ve heard some of the greatest jazz musicians in the world play solos with almost no space. In those cases, it’s up to the rhythm section to continually be framing and re-framing the note-packed solo while that soloist paints an amazing soundscape, usually employing powerful melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic material played with great conviction.

Ultimately, it’s a matter of trying to paint a compelling musical picture. So if you’re going to paint your picture without the benefit of the perspective and dimension you get by leaving space, you’d better be playing some pretty remarkable stuff.

When asked about the most important things to keep in mind while playing with a small group, Dave Liebman shares, “It’s the general shape of things. We use the word communication a lot, and of course there’s communicating, but it’s just being sensitive to the situation. It’s just like any group activity. Take any conversation had while sitting around the table - if you’re sitting a table with three other people, you’re not just going to bogart and take over; you’re also not just going to sit in the corner and not talk. It’s possible you might, but you’re going to interject when there’s something to say of interest that you have to offer to the conversation.

“In a certain way that’s really what this is about. Do I have something that’s of relevance, first of all, of importance (in my opinion) that needs to be stated musically? We are conversing with each other and we’re trying to make something artistic; bringing on a group of people to the same conversation, so it’s being sensitive, being open and being flexible.

“It’s all about openness, flexibility, and ability to change on the spot without any kind of judgment. You must suspend judgment. That little critic on your shoulder, you’ve got to get him out of the picture. You cannot judge what you’re doing while you’re doing it. You can talk afterwards about how it worked. Did it work as well as it could have? Could it be improved? Of course, but in the process, when you’re in the midst of improvising, there’s no time to monitor yourself, or anybody else. Just dive in, get in the water, and then get out of the water and worry about what happened after you’re done playing. It means being really free from judgment, and that’s not easy for people to do.”

## Responding to The Reality of Live Playing Today

It doesn't take a music business major to see that the opportunities for live jazz performances are not what they once were. And because of that reality, in order to compensate for the lack of time required to foster an environment of purely intuitive group interaction, we may have to get a bit verbal.

Once again, Liebman explains, "Some musicians feel that suggestions and questions regarding musical interaction are better left unspoken, that it should come all through the music, through the vibration of the music. I'll tell you, if we had all the time in the world I'm totally in line with that philosophy.

"Jazz used to have a lot of time, meaning if we were talking 1965 up to even the 70's, I'd be working gigs 6 nights a week, 39-45 weeks a year. Elvin Jones told me that the Coltrane group worked 40-45 weeks a year. Miles worked all the time. And worked means they played every night.

"We don't live in that era any more, for obvious reasons, and therefore I feel that the only way to compensate for the loss of the naturalness of regular live playing is for us to say something.

"You have to gauge your fellow musicians' personalities correctly without getting personal, without judging. But if my fellow musicians believe in talking, I will say, for example, to the drummer, 'Man, I'd really like it if you played a little bit more active. You could just do more.' The drummer probably never thought anyone would ever say that to him because we're always putting the handcuffs on the drummer because of the volume.

"Or to the piano player, you might say 'Those chords you're playing, can you show me what they are? I wasn't quite sure we were in the same harmonic realm.' Or something like that. I'm all for verbal interaction. It's not the same as conversing 100% via the music itself, since obviously music is beyond words. But there's nothing wrong with trying, as much as possible, to talk and discuss what has transpired, or what could transpire."

## Getting in "The Zone"

When it comes to powerfully creative musical self-expression in a real-time performance setting, it's been my experience the role of the analytical mind is quite limited.

Sure, we need to go deep into analysis when we're in the practice room or working through a transcription, but when it comes to performing live in front of an audience, or even just jamming for our own enjoyment, the objective is to enter what's known in many disciplines (sports, dance, painting, etc.) as "the zone."

As musicians in "the zone" – we are totally present and focused on the job at hand. We're not thinking about what we're going to have for dinner or whether or not we sound good. In fact, in many cases we're not even really thinking. We're simply observing as the music passes through us. It's almost like we're an audience to ourselves. And at this point, the countless hours spent practicing and absorbing music bear their richest fruits, as we're effortlessly performing at our best. In fact, I would say it's the experience of being in this zone that draws us so powerfully to music in the first place.

Dave Liebman shares some pretty heavy insights on arriving at this sacred zone:

“For those moments when I, as a horn player, am playing in front of a good rhythm section I’m simply ‘the king of the world’, wonderfully expressed in French as ‘le roi du monde.’ Everything is perfect. One has complete control. You can do whatever you want within that inhabited space in the moment. You are truly the master of the universe...not the cliché, the real deal.

“Getting to that place takes years of experience and observing those who are ahead of you on line in that way...the masters. There is a confidence, an unseen swagger and assertiveness, even if the music is gentle. It’s so good that all you want to do is repeat it like a junkie hooked forever. Hopefully this happens to varying degrees every time you play.

“Sometimes it’s really amazing while other times it’s ok, and on occasion, it just doesn’t happen. You have to be ready to accept that and be on board for an ever-changing situation concerning the ‘zone.’ When it’s right, it means that you’re at the top of the mountain, hopefully with everyone on the bandstand and the audience there with you in a team effort, in some ways much like sports. Everyone is ready to play and ‘talk’ with the people who are listening, which is an important element.

“People always want to know what effect the audience has on a performance. Without kowtowing, without putting on pink hair and smoke bombs, I want the audience to love it, and I can feel when they do. If they don’t, I go on, but I would certainly rather have them like it than not, all of which adds to the excitement of the moment.

“We’re all in it together. In a way it’s a communal act and almost religious - however you think about that aspect of life. By that I mean it’s a calling to the higher spirits, referred to differently depending on the culture and religion.

“That’s what we’re doing when we’re together with four people. Not more than four, five maybe, because then it’s another story. I’m not discounting a sextet or a big band, but five people on one mission is plenty of activity, plenty to get pretty high off of, towards traveling to the cosmos. That’s really the zone we reach for.

“I’ve got to tell you something...I think that’s why we play this music. If a twelve year old kid gets interested, he or she doesn’t understand the details we have been discussing, but somewhere in their being, they want to go to that place, making them ready to practice and accomplish all the mechanical and technical aspects to get there. It’s beautiful.”

On the topic of the zone, Bob Sheppard tells us, “All I can say is that it’s like the carrot that hangs out there. When it’s really happening you’re not thinking about it, it’s just happening.

“You’re just sort of not thinking about anything except for the fact that you’re in the music. It’s very much like on an out of body experience. The tune, the structure, they still exist, and you’re feeding off of each other. When it’s happening, it’s a lot of fun, and it’s what sort of keeps us all going - to try and get to that place.”

### *How to Get Into “The Zone”*

Sure, this heightened state of consciousness where we’re all floating in the jazz stratosphere as the spirits of Bird and Trane overtake us as we create history-making music sounds great. But as just about all of you know, this musical phenomenon doesn’t happen every time we play – and that goes for the jazz masters as well.

As Bob Sheppard reports, “It’s elusive; and it has a lot to do with conditions. The band you’re playing with - do you play with these guys a lot, or is it just guys that you’re not familiar with and you don’t know each other’s playing that well?”

“I react to the acoustics and the overall sound of what’s going on. If I can hear my horn nicely and I’m not thinking about how I can’t stand the way that my horn sounds because the monitor sucks – if things are just right and everyone is playing and not just into trying to impress – these things that happen in the moment make it really fun.

“A lot of it is not thinking. And if everybody is not thinking and they’re just listening, and playing, that’s when it happens. As soon as you start thinking about what you’re playing, then it’s going to go away.”

“You can be at a place and think you’re in this zone, but some of the other guys might not be; it’s possible. It’s a perception thing, too.”

Mintzer’s route to the zone is deeply rooted in having mastered the fundamentals of your instrument and music in general. He says, “It’s a function of experience, fortitude and tenacity, and just staying with the music and learning as much as you can. When you get to a place where you’re very well versed in what you’re doing, that thought process and judging process kind of goes away, and you can just get lost in the ether, if that makes sense. I honestly don’t feel like I’m playing when I play. It’s sort of an automatic response, it’s like breathing.

“You don’t really think about breathing in and out all the time. You may for specific purposes, but once you’ve practice and played, and considered and worked things out, and get to a certain level of proficiency, it just comes. I can stick the horn in my mouth and things come out, I don’t know where they’re coming from. I don’t even know what they are sometimes.

“It’s the same with speaking, I think. If you’re somebody that’s very gregarious and you spend a lot of time with people and you spend many years engaged in stimulating conversation, you’re going to be somebody who can really talk from the heart and soul and say profound things - just by virtue of the fact that you’ve done it a lot and that you’re not tripped up in your thought process. There’s a flow, there’s a certain connectivity to what you do.

“Again, I think that comes from experience, comes from connection with people, playing with people, learning tunes, writing tunes, playing in bands, all that kind of stuff.”

Liebman offers a good number of things you can do to create an atmosphere of optimal musical creativity and connection: “Certainly there are some artists who do things, anything from a prayer to a chant, to a drink, to a pill, to whatever it is for the day or for who you are. I’ve been around; I’ve

tried and done everything in that respect. Our generation was the tester for many of these things. Whatever works, works. Obviously you don't want to harm your body or anyone else. If you find something that helps you, I say use it on your own in moderation and privately, meaning it's nobody else's business. Whatever makes you ready for the stage to search for those 'king of the world' moments is fine. I don't like when anybody (in authority) 'suggests' to others to follow some particular method or whatever. I've had that confrontation on occasion with some people who were, in my opinion, a bit over the top in that respect. The bottom line is that if you find something that works and once again, is not harmful, you have the keys to the kingdom!!

“For me, at this point in my life, I like to have a glass of wine or a drink, hang out with the guys while keeping the atmosphere light, maybe mentioning something about the music (although by then there's not much to say). Just try to make the coming event, the performance, as natural as possible.

“I think it's an extension of life. In other words, I'm there and I'm ready to follow the natural path of discovery...no big deal, no smoke bombs, nothing fancy or stuff like that – ‘straight ahead with a big tone’ as a friend of mine used to put it.

“Jazz is a very understated music without pretension. I think that is what appealed to me above all the first time I saw the Coltrane Classic Quartet...no show, just the music. When I see or hear someone or a group going the ‘show-biz’ or phony way it upsets me - I just can't stand it. In the final analysis we are basically 4 or 5 folks in a bar, against a wall, in the corner, playing. That's the reality of it. If it happens to be a different setting, fine; but it's not any more or any less than that. It's the natural pursuit of group activity towards a common goal. That's what human beings do. We build cities, we make bombs, and we play music. That's what we do.”

## Final Thoughts

Whew, it's been a bit of a journey, no?

By this time, we've explored a wide array of topics within the realm of jazz musicianship including the characteristics of a great jazz musician, rhythm, time, articulation, phrasing, harmony, improvisational vocabulary, listening to music, transcribing, learning tunes, and playing in a small group, to name just a few topics.

All of this information is great in theory, but it's all meaningless unless we actually *consistently and repeatedly apply* what we've learned here.

But for those who do apply this information, the rewards are great. You see, faithfully applying this information will result in one of the "holy grails" in jazz musicianship. And the Holy Grail I'm referring to is the emergence of your own original style as a jazz artist.

By internalizing the fundamentals, as well as the work of jazz masters past and present, it's nearly impossible to not end up with your own way of applying this powerful information. I find that players who sound like clones of other players usually put a concerted effort towards imitating one specific player to a T. So as long as you don't put excessive emphasis on emulating one musician, and instead, open yourself up to as much music as possible, then you need simply trust that your own voice will emerge.

The key is to see jazz music as a bona-fide art form with no real boundaries. Just like in any art form, the greatest practitioners knew the rules, but then went on to challenge them and ultimately create their own rules. So follow your intuitions and chase after those sounds you hear in your head. If you do so, you'll find that something unique will have no choice but to emerge.

### **The Purpose of Playing Music**

When asked about why the world's great musician's play music, many of us will respond with something like, "to express creativity" or "to advance the art of music" or something heady like that.

But in the end, I strongly believe that all musicians play music for the same reason – that is, to HAVE FUN. So if your purpose in playing jazz is to "sound good" and "create great art", then you may very well be missing the point.

So no matter how far you choose to take the info you've read here, make it your goal to use these techniques and principles for the purpose of experiencing the fun and joy of music, no matter how good or bad it might sound to someone else.

We have no control of how others perceive our playing. The best we can do is to practice and study as much as our particular life situation allows, and to see what we're doing with music as a means of uplifting our fellow man. Like all great artists, we should see ourselves as being of service to our audience, but first we must be true to ourselves.

So with all of that said, put down this e-book, pick up your instrument, and go have some FUN using the hidden treasures you'll find as you discover your own inner jazz genius!

## **BONUS: Free play-along tracks from PlayJazzNow.com**

I know that a lot has been thrown at you, so to help you put some of it to practice, there are four free play-along tracks for you to download, courtesy of PlayJazzNow.com.

### **FIND THE TRACKS HERE:**

<http://playjazznow.com/JazzLessonsWithGiants.html>

## *Jazz Lessons with Giants*

### Master Class Interviewees

#### David Liebman



David Liebman was born in Brooklyn, New York on September 4, 1946. He began classical piano lessons at the age of nine and saxophone by twelve. His interest in jazz was sparked by seeing John Coltrane perform live in New York City clubs such as Birdland, Village Vanguard and Half Note. Throughout high school and college, Liebman pursued his jazz interest by studying with saxophone guru Joe Allard as well as jazz musicians Lennie Tristano and Charles Lloyd. Upon graduation from New York University (with a degree in American History), he began to seriously devote himself to the full time pursuit of being a jazz artist.

In the early 1970s, Liebman took the leading organizational role as Founder and President of *Free Life Communication*, a cooperative of several dozen young musical. Free Life became an integral part of the fertile New York "loft" jazz scene in this period and was funded by The New York State Council of the Arts with a residence in the Space for Innovative Development with several other famous performing groups (the Alwin Nicolais Ballet Company).

After one year spent with *Ten Wheel Drive*, one of the early jazz fusion groups, Liebman secured the coveted saxophone/flute position in the group of John Coltrane's ex-drummer, Elvin Jones. Within two years, Liebman reached the zenith of his apprenticeship period when the legendary trumpeter Miles Davis hired him. These years from 1970 thru 1974 were filled with tours, recordings and the incredible experience gained by being on the bandstand with two masters of jazz. At the same time, Liebman began exploring his own music-first in the *Open Sky Trio* with Bob Moses and then with pianist Richie Beirach in the group *Lookout Farm*. This group recorded for the German based ECM label as well as A&M Records and touring the U.S., Canada, India, Japan and Europe.

In 1977, Liebman did a world tour with pianist Chick Corea followed by the formation of the *David Liebman Quintet* with John Scofield as featured sideman. After several world tours and recordings by the quintet over three years, he reunited with Richard Beirach in the duo format and formed the group *Quest* in 1981. Beginning with bassist George Mraz and drummer Al Foster, the group solidified with the addition of bassist Ron McClure and drummer Billy Hart. Through 1991 the group recorded seven CDs, toured extensively and did many workshops with students worldwide, garnering high critical praise worldwide. The group has reunited for special tours and recordings since 2005.

From 1991 through 2012, the Dave Liebman Group featuring guitarist Vic Juris toured and recorded nearly twenty CDs representing a very eclectic direction that ranged from jazz standards to Puccini arias, adaptations from the John Coltrane and Miles Davis repertoires, as well as original compositions in styles

ranging from world music to fusion and free jazz, always maintaining a repertoire that balances the past, present and future.

Over the past several decades, Liebman has often been featured with top European musicians such as Joachim Kuhn, Daniel Humair, Paolo Fresu, Jon Christensen, Bobo Stenson, Michel Portal, Wolfgang Reisinger and Jean-Paul Celea among others. His reputation in Europe has led to big band and radio orchestra performances with the WDR in Koln, Germany; Metropole Orchestra, Netherlands; “new music” groups *Klangforum*, Vienna, and the Ensemble Intercontemporain from Paris, Avanti from Helsinki, Finland playing music specially commissioned to feature Lieb's unique soprano saxophone style.

David has been featured on nearly three hundred and fifty recordings, of which he has been the leader or co-leader on one hundred fifty with several hundred original compositions written and recorded. His artistic output has ranged from straight ahead classic jazz to chamber music; from fusion to avant garde and world music. Other ongoing performing/recording combinations include the group “Different But The Same” featuring saxophonist Ellery Eskelin, drummer Jim Black and bassist Tony Marino; the “We3” trio with bassist/composer extraordinaire Steve Swallow and long time Lieb associate Adam Nussbaum on drums; duo work with both pianists Phil Markowitz and Marc Copland.

His newest group formed in 2013 features musicians from the new generation of jazz players living in New York; Bobby Avey on piano, Matt Vashlishan on reeds, Alex Ritz on drums along with the perennial Tony Marino on bass. The music for this group reflects current trends and styles being played by the new crop of jazz players.

Lieb's published materials include a wide variety of books considered classics in the field as well as instructional DVDs and chamber music (Aebersold Publications, Caris Music and Advance Music): *Self Portrait of A Jazz Artist*, *A Chromatic Approach to Jazz Harmony And Melody*, *Developing A Personal Saxophone Sound*, several of which have been translated into multiple languages. Liebman's biography is titled “What It Is”-The Life Of A Jazz Artist in conversation with Lewis Porter (Scarecrow Press).

His teaching activities at universities and in clinic settings have taken him literally around the world as a result of his varied musical directions and expertise on several instruments, along with an ability to articulate the intricacies of the jazz language, aesthetic and technique. Over the years, he has regularly received grantees to study with him funded by the NEA (U.S.), the Canadian Arts Council, as well as arts councils of numerous European countries. In 1989 he founded the *International Association of Schools of Jazz* (IASJ), an organization dedicated to networking educators and students from international jazz schools through periodic meetings, exchange programs and newsletters. Liebman presently serves as the Artistic Director of the IASJ and is Artist in Residence at the Manhattan School of Music, NYC. He has consistently placed among the top three finalists of the Downbeat Critics Poll since 1973 in the Soprano Saxophone category, gaining the top place in 2011 as well as placing first in the Jazz Times Critic's Poll in the same year.

**For more info on Mr. Liebman go to <http://www.DavidLiebman.com>.**

## Bob Mintzer



*"Playing music is a life long commitment. There are always new things to consider and develop. I'm exhilarated and humbled by music on a daily basis, and plan to continue on this path until my last day on earth."*

These words pretty much sum up Bob Mintzer's approach to music.

Bob leads several musical lives that, at times, seem humanly impossible for one person to sustain. He is a 20 year member of the Grammy award winning Yellowjackets, leads his own Grammy winning big band, is the recipient of the Buzz McCoy endowed chair of jazz studies at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, does workshops all over the world, writes books on jazz, writes for orchestra, concert band, and big band, travels with his own quartet, and plays with numerous other bands around the globe. He is equally active in the composing, performing and educational fields.

Bob has written over 200 big band arrangements. His big band music is played over the world, and has influenced numerous big band writers. He honed his big band writing and playing skills in the bands of Tito Puente, Buddy Rich, Thad Jones-Mel Lewis. He has also written works for the National Symphony Orchestra, Metropole Orchestra of the Netherlands, WDR Big band in Cologne, HR Big Band in Frankfurt and was commissioned to write a piece for concert band and tenor sax (Go) by a consortium of 50 universities.

As an instrumentalist Bob has worked with Art Blakey, Jaco Pastorius, Sam Jones, Randy Brecker, Gil Evans, the Yellowjackets, GRP All Star Big Band, Mike Manieri, The New York Philharmonic, to name a few. He has done session work for James Taylor, Steve Winwood, Queen, Donald Fagan, Milton Nascimento, and countless others.

Bob has recorded some 30 solo projects and was awarded with 4 Grammy nominations and a Grammy award for best large jazz ensemble recording in 2001 for **Homage to Count Basie** on the DMP label.

Bob currently resides in Los Angeles in the former house of composer Arnold Schoenberg (his first LA residence, 1934-1936), teaches at USC, travels four months out of the year, and, when at home, writes and practices constantly. He is generally considered one of the tenor saxophonists who came out the school of New York players in the 70's, which includes Michael Brecker, Bob Berg, David Liebman and Steve Grossman.

**For more info on Mr. Mintzer go to <http://www.BobMintzer.com>.**

## Bob Sheppard



Over the course of an extraordinarily diverse career that has made him a first call musician in the realms of jazz, pop and the studio worlds, multi-woodwind specialist Bob Sheppard has always let his array of saxophones, flutes and clarinets do the talking. Superstar names highlight his resume, and jazz critics have been raving about him as both a sideman and leader for years, but such praise is simply a byproduct of Sheppard's years of steady work and dedication to his craft - a tradition that continues on *Close Your Eyes*, his latest release as an artist and the debut CD for the BFM Jazz label.

Going into the recording session for *Close Your Eyes*, Sheppard simply wanted to create a sonically rich interactive jazz experience. One of the distinct advantages of dividing his time between his home base of Los Angeles and New York is he has forged working relationships with the best musicians on both coasts. Anchoring this session is top NYC drummer Antonio Sanchez (renowned for his

work with Pat Metheny, among others), who Sheppard met while collaborating with him on the Billy Childs Jazz Chamber Sextet and Michael Brecker's Quindectet tours. Completing a powerful rhythm section Sheppard chose the young bassist, Gabe Noel, and split the piano and organ duties between longtime friends John Beasley and Alan Pasqua. Other key contributors on this inspired CD are trumpeter Alex Sipiagen, percussionist Walter Rodriguez and guitarist Larry Koonse.

Sheppard has been a steadfast member of the Billy Childs Ensembles and the Peter Erskine trio for over a decade. Additionally over the years, he has toured with Steely Dan and Boz Scaggs, and brought his diverse talents to more recent performances with James Taylor, Natalie Cole and Queen Latifah and most notably with the legendary Joni Mitchell on her current four-disc set and her 2007 Grammy-winning, *Shine*. He also played on a live studio video with Mitchell and Herbie Hancock.

Other distinguished collaborations include eight years with Freddie Hubbard, and tours and performances with Chick Corea's ensemble *Origin*, Mike Stern, Randy Brecker, Horace Silver, Lyle Mays, Nat Adderly and Toshiko Akiyoshi/Tabackin Big Band. Some of his more significant recording credits include Scott Henderson, John Beasley, Mark Isham, Otmaro Ruiz, Bill Cunliffe, vocalist Kurt Elling, Marilyn Scott, Michael Franks and Diane Reeves, while including pop icons Steely Dan, Rickie Lee Jones, Rod Stewart, Randy Newman and Stevie Wonder. As part of America's newest past time, you can occasionally catch Sheppard soloing on the hit TV show *American Idol*.

Bob Sheppard has honed his intuitive personal style through collaborations with this remarkable range of artists as well as playing on over a hundred movie and television soundtracks. Having earned his Master's from the Eastman School of Music, Sheppard draws upon his diverse musical

background delivering musical intellect, commanding technique with a warm inviting sound to every performance.

As a passionate music educator, Sheppard is a part-time faculty member at the USC Thornton School of Music, and frequently a guest clinician at colleges around the country.

**For more info on Mr. Sheppard go to <http://www.BobSheppard.net>.**