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**Global Jazz: Pushing its Boundaries
with Harmonic, Metric, and
Instrumental Devices**

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Abstract

This paper will explore devices used by musicians/composers Bob Mintzer (Yellowjackets), Michael Brecker, Chick Corea, and Hank Hehmsoth to provide a snapshot of current jazz techniques in harmony, rhythm, and fresh orchestration.

Keywords: Harmony Meter Instrumentation Rhythm Parallel Jazz Hehmsoth

Introduction

Contemporary Jazz in the twenty first century, is tumbling ahead and absorbing, introducing, and synthesizing elements. New techniques are being developed to broaden and expand the vision of contemporary improvisation, composition, and arranging, to include precision in harmonic structure, organizing rhythm and phrasing, and unconventional instrumentation. Particular attention is given to music examples and detailed analyses of:

- harmonic explorations
- odd meter groupings
- and unique choices in instrumentation.

The future of jazz is a broad topic, and subject to multiple interpretations. These examples are compositional techniques that I have incorporated in my own work. Of course the proof is in the pudding, so to speak, and the best way to understand these concepts is to hear them, and if you read music, examples are contained in this paper.

Harmonic Explorations

2.1 In this example from Bob Mintzer, simple pentatonic “*anthem*”-like melodic shapes are harmonized in a unique colorful “*pandiatonicized*” (I use this term loosely, to refer to various complete use of chord/scale possibilities), *nontertial* voicing structure, with simultaneous sus-4 and Maj3s, on Is and Vs; lots of *cluster shapes*, with 2nds providing a constant dissonance “*sizzle*” (my own term to when referring to the dissonance of mi 2nds and maj 2nds) to harmonization; also “*omit*”-*type voicings* that imply upper structures with missing more fundamentals like Maj 3rds (another way of categorizing these types are as “*slash chord combinations*”) with intervallic content in chord structures yielding resonance and interest with complete harmonic information in fresh shapes and structures.

Figure 1. ex. Why Is It?

Why Is It? Bob Mintzer © 2011

Gadd⁹/B Cadd⁹/E G/A

¹Mintzer, Bob, 2011. Why Is It?. *Timeline - Yellowjackets* (audio CD Mar. 2011), Label: Mack Avenue ASIN: B004KBSQMYI

2.2 The melody itself is a D pentatonic scale, over a G in the bass, which generates an overall G maj7.

Figure 2. Simple Pentatonic “Anthem”-Like Melodic Shapes

2.3 The harmonization of this simple melody displays several unique and fresh chord voicings used in contemporary jazz

Figure 3. *Non-Tertial Voicing Structure with “Omit”-Type Voicings that Imply Upper Structures with Missing more Fundamentals Like Maj3. Notice Also The Predominant Parallel Motion*



2.4 Another good harmonic example comes from another YellowJackets tune. With a simple melody, a fresh harmonization using these typical structures provides an almost compendium of current voicing structures with omit type voicings, sus+3 colors, and quartal instead of tertial interval dominance. Since many have not seen these extended harmony structures, which have been codified in jazz over the last 30 – 40 years, it is also worthwhile to note that these newer fresh structures are seen in isolation since the 60’s Miles Davis era, but is now more and more frequently used since the 1990’s.

Figure 4. *Sus13 and with Omit Type Voicings, Sus+3 Colors mixed with Tertial Structures*



² Ferrante, Russell, 2010. Spirit of the West. *Club Nocturne –Yellowjackets* (audio CD Mar. 2010) Label: Warner Bros. ASIN: B0046WOXHO

Odd Meter/Phrase Groupings

3.1 One of the primary components of jazz is rhythm, and more sophisticated uses of phrasing across meter. Groupings and phrasings are under development all the time.

Figure 5. *Odd Meter Groupings – Rhythmic Diminution - 3 Phrases In 4 Bars*

³ Corea, Chick. The Chick Corea Elekrik Band *Elektrik City*, Hal Leonard Pub. Corp., ©1987.

3.2 In this 1986 Chick Corea example, rhythmic displacement groups three phrases in 4 measures, the first is 6 beats, the 2nd is 5 beats, and the 3rd is compressed and ends on beat 4 of measure 4, an odd grouping inside of 4 measures.

3.3 I used this same idea in my piece *Freedom Stomp* 2012 for a 10 piece ensemble, with variation:

Figure 6. *Freedom Stomp*

⁴ Hehmsoth, Hank. *Freedom Stomp*, Time Space Fabrics, ©2012.

3.4 The first four bars consist of three phrases, each using *rhythmic / melodic / motivic diminution*.

Figure 7. *Freedom Stomp*



3.5 The first phrase is 6 beats, the 2nd is 5, and the 3rd is 5, $6+5+5=16$ beats=4 bars of 4/4. Also each phrase beginning is truncated from the original. The 2nd phrase has only 5 eighth notes before the triplet turn, and the 3rd phrase has only 4 eighths.

3.6 There is a long 60+ year heritage of interesting metric phrasing in jazz. A great early master was Thelonious Monk:

Figure 8. *Odd Meter Groupings – Cross - Rhythms*



⁵ Monk, Thelonious. *Ba-lue Bolivar Ba-lues-Are (aka Bolivar Blues)*, 1956 (Riverside LP12-226), ©copyrighted by Thelonious Music Corp.

3.7 The interesting “cross-rhythms” are an early example from the 1950’s. I always return to Monk’s work for creative *across the barline* phrasings.

Fresh Choices In Instrumentation

Here are two examples of fresh choices in instrumentation, and the number of players.

Figure 9. *Carlos ‘n Charlie’s*, 2011 Hank Hehmsoth - *A Piece For Steel Drums*

⁶ Hehmsoth, Hank. *Carlos ‘n Charlie’s*, Drop6 Publications, ©2011.

4.2 In Michael Brecker’s “*Wide Angles*” released 2003, instrumentation and arranging techniques show many of contemporary jazz’s influences, including orchestral instruments, and free forms. (score not available)

⁷ Brecker, Michael. *Wide Angles*, 2003 Audio CD Label: Verve ASIN: B0000AKQ96

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