

Volume 3

C VERSION

THE REAL EASY BOOK

A SHORT HISTORY OF JAZZ



TRAD JAZZ · SWING ERA · CLASSIC BEBOP · CONTEMPORARY JAZZ
"GROOVE" JAZZ · WEST COAST JAZZ · LATIN JAZZ · BLUE NOTE ERA

SHER MUSIC Co.

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25

Volume 3

THE
REAL EASY BOOK
A SHORT HISTORY OF JAZZ

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Educational Material - Stanford Jazz Workshop
www.stanfordjazz.org
Cover Art - "Jazz" by Alexander Zadorin

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ISBN 1-883217-51-2

Section 3 ♦ CLASSIC BEBOP

THE ERA

Bebop is so much a part of the jazz vocabulary today that it's hard to image why the music was so controversial when it was introduced in the mid-1940s. Most of the innovations in jazz seem a natural outgrowth of what had been played before, but bebop was nothing short of a revolution—both musically and culturally.

Swing era bands were big bands, with riff-based melodic tunes and limited time for soloing. The arrangement was as important as the tune, and there was relatively little room for harmonic experimentation, since the music was primarily for entertainment and dancing. The beboppers found this too confining and were seeking new avenues of artistic expression.

The architects of bebop were almost all African Americans who largely came out of the black big bands, meeting in clubs after hours to jam, and to explore new musical ideas. These were exciting times of big musical breakthroughs! Bebop was played predominantly by small groups, with plenty of room for the innovative improviser. Charlie Parker (known as "Bird") was one of the most gifted of all improvisers, and he became an icon to many in the jazz community. Dizzy Gillespie was the master theoretician and teacher, as well as a brilliant trumpeter. Thelonious Monk, who was the house pianist at a club in Harlem called Minton's, was another key figure, but his style is so unique that it really defies categorization. Bud Powell was the quintessential bebop pianist.

Bebop polarized the jazz community, with many 'traditional' players pitted against the so-called 'modernists.' To the old guard, bebop was not as melodic, the improvisations were harder to follow, and it was hard to dance to. But bebop musicians felt that their music was an art form, and that their primary responsibility was to the music itself. History has proved them right, because bebop has been the foundation of jazz for the past half century, and many of the bebop pioneers became senior citizens enjoying worldwide acclaim.

THE MUSICAL INNOVATIONS

1. Composition - What made bebop sound so radical at the time? First, the melodic lines were quite different. Gone were the solos that stayed close to the melody that were so prevalent in the swing era. The swing era tunes often featured complex arrangements, but the bebop musicians largely did away with them, opting instead for extended improvisations based on the chord changes. The melody was stated at the beginning of the tune, but then it would be lost in the complex harmonic possibilities offered by the chord structures of the music.

Some bebop musicians would write whole new tunes based on the chord changes of standards, or pop tunes of the day. These contrafacts, as they are called, include Bird's "Donna Lee," based on the standard tune "Indiana," "Ornithology," based on "How High The Moon," and Thelonious Monk's "Evidence," based on "Just You, Just Me."

2. The Rhythm Section - Some of the most radical innovations of the bebop era were rhythmic. The bebop drummer moved the time-keeping duties from the bass drum to the hi-hat and played in a more polyrhythmic style, with asymmetric accents that were called 'bombs.' The approach was developed by the two master bebop drummers, Kenny Clarke and Max Roach, and their new concepts have forever altered jazz drumming. The bass player became the main keeper of the quarter note pulse, with virtually all classic bebop tunes played in 4/4. The pianist's role gradually became one of pushing the soloist to new heights, in addition to outlining the chord progressions.

3. Harmonic Advances - Bebop players liked to improvise on difficult chord progressions, at breakneck tempos, with bursts of eighth and sixteenth notes. They also altered existing chords, frequently utilizing the lowered, or flatted, fifth, and other more dissonant notes against the basic harmony. Bird was quoted as having said that he came up with bebop one night as he was playing a solo on the tune "Cherokee" and found himself

using just the upper extensions (9ths, 11ths, and 13ths) of the original chord changes. The end result of all this stretching of previous limits was that the music sounded too abstract and jagged to some, but gorgeous and artistic to others.

Today, the advances of bebop are standard practice throughout the jazz world, but people still scratch their head in amazement when they hear Bird at the peak of his form, swirling out chorus after chorus of genius improvising.



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CHARLIE PARKER

Au Privave

Medium Up Jazz

Charlie Parker

A F⁶ F⁶/_A B^{b6} B^{o7} F⁶

F⁷ F^{7(#5)} B^{b7} B^{b7} B^{o7} F⁶

A_{MI}⁷ D^{7(b9)} G_{MI}⁷ G_{MI}⁷ C⁹_{SUS} (2nd x) ⊕

F⁶ G_{MI}⁷ 1. F⁶ C^{7(b9)} 2. F⁶ C^{7(b9)}

(Solos) (F Blues)

B F⁶ F⁷ B^{b6} B^{o7} F⁶ F⁷ F^{7(#5)} B^{b7}

F⁶ A_{MI}⁷ D^{7(b9)} G_{MI}⁷ G_{MI}⁷ C^{7(#5)} F⁶ G_{MI}⁷ C^{7(b9)}

Repeat letter B for solos.
After solos, D.C. al Coda
(with repeat).

⊕ F⁶ F⁶ F_{MA}⁷

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL - Au Privave

Scales for Soloing (for chords with alterations)

Sample Piano Voicings

Sample Bass Line

Sample Guitar Voicings