Individualism and Audibility in Jazz: The Music of Bunky Green

by

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Abstract

This dissertation explores questions of influence, individualism, style, and innovation in jazz and their stakes through the music of Vernice “Bunky” Green. Green is an American saxophonist who, I argue, has made a significant impact on the present-day jazz landscape, if not directly, then through the work of other prominent saxophonists like Steve Coleman and Greg Osby. In addition to exploring Green’s musical development and legacies, I discuss the stakes for his approach, which broke away from the dominant paradigm of alto performance established by Charlie Parker. Despite his many new contributions to saxophone soloing, Green was not embraced as an innovator in the eyes of many of his contemporaries, critics, or audiences. To better understand Green’s seemingly contradictory place in jazz history, I discuss his difficulties in getting support from record companies as well as other factors that would have contributed to his relative obscurity. I suggest that Green’s “inside/outside” concept of playing, placing him somewhere between bebop and free jazz, may have been one reason his music was difficult to market to a wide audience.

In addition to discussing these concepts in a general manner, this dissertation provides commentary from Coleman, Osby, and others that point towards the too often overlooked
importance of Green’s work and its influence on particular, but nevertheless, notable performers within today’s jazz community. Although Green has received some recognition from his collaborations with some of these performers, his work continues to be relatively unknown outside of a handful of jazz musicians and enthusiasts. My dissertation therefore contributes to a more complete picture of saxophone performance practices and history by looking at the work of a creative musician who has been overlooked by many musicians and most scholars and critics. Moreover, it points to the importance of engaging with the music and perspectives of jazz saxophonists who have been excluded from the canon of jazz writing and music. Beyond its importance for jazz historians, such attention to other jazz histories offers vast possibilities for young jazz musicians to diversify their musical practice and engender new directions in jazz.
Dedicated to Elise and Ewan
Acknowledgments

This dissertation is the culmination of much study and hard work that began long before my enrolment at the University of Toronto in 2012. Previous to my return to Toronto and to graduate study, my time at McGill University in Montreal helped prepare me for many of the challenges that arose while working through the DMA program at U of T. Jan Jarczyk, helped to form many of my ideas about musical analysis, structure, and form. He continuous to be a major source of inspiration for many of the players and teachers in Montreal and is deeply missed. Professors Rémi Bolduc, Joe Sullivan, and André White, who have since become great friends and colleagues, were always willing to listen to my ideas related to individuality, improvisation, and jazz history. I am thankful for their guidance, both on and off the bandstand, for it has greatly influenced the way I think about and hear music.

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In addition to my mentors, I have benefitted from the experience of several of my colleagues. I thank Noam Lemish, Ian Sinclair, Ben McConchie, Steve Sang Koh, and Ali Berkok for much healthy discussion and debate that served to illuminate alternate points of view and help solidify my position on a number of issues related to my dissertation. James Ross has been a terrific friend, and, in addition to speaking at length about Bunky Green and his music, he and his wife Molly have been exceptionally generous in opening their home to me and my family whenever we visit Toronto. I am grateful to James Rhodes, another close friend in Toronto, for checking a large part of my transcription work and speaking about Green’s music.

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Chapter 1 ~ Introduction

THE TROUBLE WITH MOST MUSICIANS TODAY IS THAT THEY ARE COPYCATS.
—LESTER YOUNG

Creating an individual approach to jazz improvisation is widely regarded as the most important aspect of the art form. Although it may seem counterintuitive, jazz musicians usually go about doing this through the imitation of several revered soloists from the core canon of jazz players. In jazz, this is an important stage in learning to improvise and has become standard practice in jazz education. Saxophonist and educator David Liebman explains that the imitation stage of learning to play jazz involves transcribing solos, through which students acquire knowledge of “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 addition to time feel and nuance, “phrasing” includes dynamics (both loud and soft accents), and articulation. Nuance, Liebman explains, consists of but is not limited to note inflections (i.e. fall-offs, scoops, smears, voice effects, etc.), vibrato, and timbral effects like growling and flutter tonging. He describes nuance, alongside one’s tone, as “the major vehicle for portrayal of an artist’s personality.” In other words, more important than what one “says” is how it is spoken.

Naturally, students learn vocabulary and rhythmic phrasing from solo transcription as well. Jazz vocabulary has been described by ethnomusicologist and jazz scholar Paul Berliner, in part, as a collection of idiomatic phrases an individual soloist internalizes through the process of

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listening to, singing, transcribing, and/or reading solos of established jazz masters. Berliner notes that the improviser stores and then draws upon this “complex vocabulary of conventional phrases and phrase components” when constructing his or her improvised solos.\(^3\) Once the student has assimilated a substantial amount of material, s/he may begin to negotiate various idioms or jazz styles. Eventually, with much introspection and continued practice that combines stylistic elements from different sources, a player may find that they begin to develop an individual approach that reflects his or her own personality.\(^4\) Vocabulary normally stems from several different sources of influence. Ideally, common and uncommon influences are combined, filtered through the soloist’s experiences and ultimately manifest themselves into an individual voice.

The individual approach developed by Charlie Parker (1920-1955), one of the principal creators of bebop, influenced virtually all jazz musicians who would follow.\(^5\) Alto saxophonists in particular were affected by Parker’s vocabulary and stylistic approach and many found it difficult to escape his long shadow.\(^6\) Some of these musicians were eventually recognized by

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\(^5\) The orthodox view is that bebop was developed at various after-hours clubs in Harlem by a number of musicians, the principal musicians being Dizzy Gillespie, Howard McGhee, Don Byas, Budd Johnson, Tadd Dameron, Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Oscar Pettiford, Max Roach, and Kenny Clarke, Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, (New York: Continuum, 2007), 321. Parker, however, is said to have had a greater influence than any other musician of his generation. “Young musicians transcribed his improvised solos and studied his vocabulary. Many of his short phrases were adopted by instrumentalists and used as raw material for navigating chord progressions.” Carl Woideck, ”Parker, Charlie,” Grove Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed May 24, 2016, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2224954.

\(^6\) For a cursory list of players who sought to emulate aspects of Parker’s voice, see Thomas Owens, *Bebop: The Music and Its Players* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 46-71. Owens’ list includes Sonny Stitt, Sonny Criss, Phil Woods, and Lou Donaldson, among several others. In certain cases, such as Frank Morgan’s, musicians attempted to emulate all aspects of Parkers playing as well as certain of his more unsavory lifestyle choices, underlining the fact that Parker’s influence extended beyond music. “During the 1940s and 1950s, bebop alto saxophonists could have been listed as “Charlie Parker and others,” but tenor saxophonists had no comparable single influence. Instead most tenor players drew in varying degrees from three players: Parker… Coleman Hawkins, and Lester Young.” Owens, Bebop and its players, 71. Further observations related to this discussion are included in Chapter 3.
peers and scholars as individualistic stylists who worked within the bebop or hard bop idioms to develop strong, identifiable voices. Although they helped solidify the sonic characteristics of bebop, the common view is that these players have not significantly extended jazz vocabulary beyond anything Parker achieved.\(^7\) However, it is clear that by the early 1960s, some alto saxophonists began to break away from their near exclusive reliance on bebop language by incorporating other sources of influence. The limited explorations of new approaches are said to have injected new life into a music that had become somewhat predictable and constraining.\(^8\)

My dissertation examines some of the ways in which one of these alto saxophonists, Vernice “Bunky” Green (b. 1935), developed an individual voice that relied less on the influence of Parker and bebop vocabulary than did many of his contemporaries. I aim to show how developments at the heart of Green’s approach helped subsequent saxophonists to be less reliant on Parker’s influence and to form unique voices of their own. To further illustrate the impact of Green—an influential musician whose work is considerably less studied than people like Parker—I will explore how Green’s conceptual approach and stylistic developments inform the work of several prominent, active saxophonists including Steve Coleman (b. 1956), Greg Osby (b. 1960), Rudresh Mahanthappa (b. 1971), and Joe Lovano (b. 1952), each of whom are regarded to retain individual voices of their own. In addition to discussing ways in which Green created his own identity and has influenced others, this dissertation works through the some of the challenges he faced as well as the rewards involved with taking a comparatively more individualized approach to jazz saxophone playing. Green’s story stands as a case study that

\(^7\) See for, example, Thomas Owens, Bebop: The Music and Its Players, 49. Owens claims, for example, that stylistic differences between Parker and his followers are generally limited to tone, phrasing, and articulation.

\(^8\) David Rosenthal, Hard Bop, 27. Rosenthal suggests by the early 1950s: “Bebop, which had begun as a promise of freedom, had turned into something of a straitjacket, an increasingly codified form of expression.” Hard bop musicians sought to breathe new life into the music by incorporating elements of black music genres listed above (blues, black gospel, and rhythm and blues) although vocabulary was very much bebop-based.
allows critical engagement with the complex relationship between individuality and audibility in jazz performance, an issue that often deeply informs how musicians are placed within narratives of jazz history and whether they fall inside or outside of the canon of influential jazz musicians. Further, my dissertation explores ways in which younger jazz musicians can benefit from looking beyond the core group of players included in the jazz canon. Beyond postulating why Green may have had difficulty getting his music heard throughout his career, and remains relatively unknown today, I question whether Green’s position within jazz history may be slowly changing due to increased attention from some of the elite players who have been influenced by him.

PARAMETERS & METHODOLOGY

As of 2016, Green is still actively performing. Thus, his recording career spans nearly six decades and extends far beyond the scope of this dissertation. To provide greater detailed analysis and a more concise evaluation of his improvisatory approach, I have decided to focus on recordings from three specific time periods within the overarching timeframe of 1960-1979: Green’s “early period” or recording debut (1960), an “in-between developmental stage” (1965-66), and his “post-sabbatical period” (1974-1979), in which he exhibits a redeveloped individual approach. I have made every effort to choose solos that are exemplary of Green’s individualized voice and that have not yet been presented in an academic setting. In addition to providing a window into Green’s stylistic influences (as evidenced through interviews and recordings made during this time) and illustrating some of his unique musical developments, such as his personal

9 “Counterpunch” and “Blues Holiday” have been transcribed and analyzed by Chris Miller and included in “Bunky Green: A Career of Harmonic Evolution” (Masters Thesis: Purchase College, 2009). I have included excerpts (my own transcriptions) of the same solos because they are excellent examples of Green’s early approach. The Bb blues “Blues Holiday” is especially valuable as it allows for comparison of examples from Green’s later recordings on the same Bb blues form.
rhythmic approach, my transcription and analysis highlight aspects of Green’s individual voice that were particularly influential for many who followed.\textsuperscript{10} It is my conviction that, through the identification of these particular aspects of Green’s voice, we begin to better understand his contributions to the music and, therefore, his legacy, which grows and changes through the music of younger saxophonists.

I begin with an analysis of Green’s earliest commercially available recordings in order to establish some of his initial influences and to point to unique aspects of his voice that appear in embryonic form. I focus on two 1960 recordings in particular: \textit{My Babe} (1965) and \textit{Blues Holiday} (1961). I draw attention to a number of stylistic influences including black gospel, blues, and Latin music that, while providing foundations that helped Green stand apart from the bebop idiom, actually align his music with that of hard bop musicians. It has been well-documented that Charlie Parker and John Coltrane (1923-1967) were sources of influence for Green. However, my analysis emphasizes particular ways in which these two canonic innovators impacted Green’s approach to rhythm and phrasing. While my study of Green’s playing from this period highlights examples of these formative influences, it also aims to show ways in which he was laying the groundwork for a completely “new” approach.

My analysis of Green’s early recordings is followed by an investigation of what I refer to as his “transitional period.” This phase of his career shows Green was moving away from certain conventions of bebop prior to realizing a fully-formed voice of his own. Green has stated: “at first I simply tried to be different without having any base to work from.” It seems he struggled

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item The major focus of Miller’s 2009 thesis was to trace Green’s musical transformation over the span of his career. In contrast, I focus on a smaller timeframe and focus on certain influential aspects and musical contributions. In addition, my dissertation discusses many of the stakes involved with breaking away from established norms in jazz. Moreover, I situate my arguments that question the importance of musical canons among many widely recognized scholars.
\end{itemize}
to remove himself from his earliest influences and was caught between using conventional bebop vocabulary and his original concept of improvisation. “I was sort of wedged in-between. I would go out there but was afraid to totally let go. Being insecure, I’d go back into my stock phrases a la Charlie Parker and Trane.”

Recordings from the mid-1960s show that, although Green was still deeply rooted in bebop traditions, several “new” stylistic aspects began to appear. These include angular intervallic playing; idiosyncratic rhythmic variations on bebop phrases; and the use of alternate and overtone fingerings to nuance his timbre or “colour” notes, thereby adding various vocal qualities to his sound. Such key stylistic features of Green’s playing, which are less evident in the straight-ahead bebop vocabulary that was predominant at the time, serve to set his approach apart from Parker’s and other alto saxophonists who closely copied many stylistic aspects of his approach. Particular focus in this section is given to a 1966 recording led by Sonny Stitt (1924-82) entitled Soul in the Night, which positions Green in somewhat of a cutting contest against the bebop pioneer. This recording is particularly valuable because it captures some of Green’s more adventurous playing of the mid-1960s, most likely as a reaction to the competitive atmosphere of the recording session. Indeed, it seems Green reached down for something extra to match the intensity of one of his formative idols. Moreover, Stitt’s presence on the recording may have caused Green to steer away from bebop vocabulary and much of Parker’s language altogether in order to stand out against the veteran bebopper. Regardless, the perspective provided by Soul in the Night allows us to measure Green’s deviations from the bebop language and catch a glimpse of the direction in which he was headed.

12 Chris Miller, “Bunky Green: A Career of Harmonic Evolution” (Masters Thesis: Purchase College, 2009), 18 / Bunky Green, interviewed by Bob Bednar, This is Jazz, Stereo 90 (Jacksonville), quoted in Miller, “Bunky Green,” 92.
The final period this dissertation examines is what I refer to as Green’s “post-sabbatical period.” After an extended period of independent study (approximately 1968-1974) that coincided with limited performance exposure and virtually no contact with the recording industry,\(^{13}\) Green made a new association with Vanguard Records and began to make several recordings that presented him in an entirely new light. Although Green retains several aspects of his earlier stylistic approaches, in many ways, the recorded work during this period clearly shows a decidedly transformed improvisatory approach. One of the more striking differences between Green’s earlier periods and this one is the presence of a unique melodic vocabulary that uses far fewer bebop conventions while relying more on intervallic construction of melodic lines. Moreover, unique stylistic aspects evident in Green’s earlier periods appear much more developed and confident. These include vocal effects such as note inflection, vibrato, alternate fingerings and overtones that nuance his timbre; harmonic superimposition, termed by Green as his “inside/outside” approach;\(^{14}\) as well as a unique approach to rhythm that includes variations in eighth-note feel and irregularities in rhythmic phrasing.

Interviews with Green have shown that his “new” voice was partly the result of synthesizing various musical influences from outside of the realm of jazz and its dominant influences. In a 2006 interview with Steve Coleman, Green tells of going to the library during his sabbatical and listening to musics of all different places and cultures. He states that he tried to

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\(^{13}\) During the years 1968-1974 it seems that Green made one recording in 1970: *Jumbo* (Leonard Productions – 7110): a collaborative project Green led with trumpeter John Priola. Green played on the recording and wrote arrangements and compositions for large ensemble. Further discussion is found in my biographical sketch (below) and in Chapter 6.

\(^{14}\) To describe this concept briefly, Green uses groups of notes from outside of the tonal key centre and intersperses these with ideas that are tonal, giving the impression that he is both inside and outside of the key. Green describes his process to Ed Bland: “I generally play the essential shape of the harmony rather than the harmony of the tune. However, I make periodic token visits to the standard chords. This is what makes me an inside/outside player. The listener wonders “Where is he?” And then when I intersect with the more standard features of the tune, the listener says, “Oh there he is; he’s not lost. And neither are we” (Bland, 1989). Quoted in Miller, “Bunky Green: A Career of Harmonic Evolution,” 35.
absorb as much of these influences as possible in an organic sort of way, by letting it “all fade into what I was trying to do.”¹⁵ The same interview shows that he was, at the same time, moving away from his biggest influences.

I stopped listening to... the players that I loved so much... I just stopped listening to my jazz records... because I became so influenced by them yet I was hearing some other approach. And I said I’ll never get it together if I just keep listening to Trane because he’s so in my head, Bird is so in my head. I’ve got to have time to sort out this little thing.¹⁶

This is similar to what Green has stated previously in an earlier interview, conducted in 1977:

Now what’s happened is that I have kind of forgotten how to play the way I used to play. It’s funny but I had to sort of mentally discard things in order to bring in a new concept. The things that you’ve played... you can’t utilize them anymore. You can only use the technique that you have but can’t employ the figuration – the lines. It is no longer applicable to the new situation. I shouldn’t say new... let’s say fresh tonality because after investigation, I found that it existed in other harmonic forms. I had to discard Bird phrases, Sonny Stitt-type phrases and find the Bunkyism. Now I sound like myself, finally, and I’m kind of happy about it.¹⁷

From this last statement, it is clear that Green felt he had achieved independence from bebop vocabulary and was closing in on something resembling his own unique vocabulary for the very first time in his career.

This period of playing, where Green was finally able to “sound like himself,” extends to a number of recordings made for Vanguard Records in the late 1970s, both as a leader and as a contributor to groups led by drummer Elvin Jones. Perhaps most important among these recordings is the 1979 recording Places We’ve Never Been, noted as being influential to the development of several prominent present-day saxophonists including Steve Coleman—who

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¹⁶ Ibid.
encouraged Green to record a follow-up to the landmark recording in 2004 entitled *Another Place* (2006). In addition to the Vanguard recordings, I have included transcription excerpts and analysis of Green’s solos from a significant Blue Thumb Records release entitled *Don’t Let Go* (1974), Green’s first recording following his sabbatical. My analysis of all of Green’s solos from this period shows less reliance on bebop language and points to several devices that contribute to his new concept.

Attention to the playing and perspectives of a less canonic yet influential musician will help lend richness to conceptions of jazz history while also providing players a better understanding of the politics and stakes for imitation and innovation as well as the importance of diversification. Providing Green’s accounts of his music and career helps contextualize the stylistic changes he helped to pioneer as well as provide insight into some of the challenges he faced in getting his music heard. Coleman, Osby, Lovano, and Mahanthappa have previously acknowledged Green as a major influence, however, interviews with some of these musicians shed further light on the impact Green had on each of their conceptualizations of forming an original voice. Some of these musicians’ personal experiences with respect to maintaining individuality and meeting the demands of the recording industry are included as well. Their perspectives help confirm Green as a figure who offers an alternative path to other more influential saxophonists. To this end, I utilize past interviews from various online resources, magazines, and dissertations to augment my own research.

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PREEXISTENT WORK ON GREEN

While Green is absent from most writing on jazz, Chris Miller made him the focus of his 2009 MMus thesis, “Bunky Green: A Career of Harmonic Evolution.” A former student of Green, Miller outlines his knowledge of Green’s music acquired through transcription, analysis, and personal interviews as a way to uncover aspects of Green’s philosophical and improvisational approach. In addition, he provides an in-depth biography of the saxophonist’s life and career, which at the time Miller wrote his thesis was already in excess of fifty years. The interviews and historical overview are especially important as they detail several sources of influence, formative experiences, pivotal career moments, and other key factors in understanding Green’s individual approach. One of the goals of my dissertation is to build on Miller’s work, therefore, I often refer to aspects of his research that relate to my own theoretical framework and concerns. Miller’s thesis attempts to cover the entirety of Green’s career from 1960-2009.

Regardless, this big picture approach considers a relatively small sample of recordings, drawing from a limited number of years: 1960, 1989, and 2004. Miller’s thesis compares early recorded works with later ones, noting changes and drawing parallels between the two periods in an effort to “chart the path of Mr. Green’s musical development from his earliest influences to his current approach to improvising.” In contrast, my dissertation provides a more detailed look at smaller periods of Green’s career within a shorter time frame: 1960-1979. Considering Green was absent from the recording scene for approximately six of these years, this focus is further reduced to

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20 Two shorter interviews with Green associates, Keven Bales and Randy Brecker allow further perspective.
21 In fact, Miller’s in-depth biography of Green covers the years leading up to his first recordings in 1960, beginning from the year of Green’s birth in 1935.
22 In addition, Miller provides analysis for two written solos Green composed in his book, Green, Shortcut to Jazz: Essential Jazz Licks (New Albany: Jamey Aebersold Jazz Inc., 2010), 11-12.
approximately twelve or thirteen years. In addition to providing greater detail of Green’s improvisatory approach, this dissertation provides analysis for some of Green’s most important recordings made between 1974 and 1979. Moreover, the tighter focus of this dissertation allows for a more in-depth discussion of Green’s absence from the jazz canon as well as the importance of individuality and creativity in jazz.

Miller’s thesis establishes Green as a musician with a unique improvisatory approach who has continually worked towards achieving his musical vision throughout his career. Through analysis of Green’s recorded and written solos, a study of his published text on improvisation, as well as through conversations and private lessons, Miller has uncovered the following salient features of Green’s individual voice:

- Inside/outside approach to harmony.
- Bebop phrasing and vocabulary.
- “Flexible time” concept.
- Presence of blues material and vocal effects.
- Anticipation and suspension of the harmonic rhythm.
- Use of tritone substitution.
- Sequential organization.
- Rhythmic motifs to provide consistency.
- Incorporation of large intervals, dependence on fourths, and use of space.

While some of these improvisational features are only alluded to or mentioned in passing within Miller’s thesis, others are covered in more depth, including Green’s “inside/outside” approach; his penchant for the tritone sub (or dominant b2 chord substitution); suspension (delayed resolution) and anticipation of harmonic rhythm; as well as his “elastic” sense of rhythm. Inside/outside is Green’s own term for the way in which he uses intermitted patches of phrases that lie outside of the key, while still making reference to the underlying harmony. He is not what you might call a free jazz musician, nor does he simply play changes. Rather, Green’s
system promotes freedom over changes, what he has referred to in the past as “fresh tonality.”

The inside/outside concept forms the basis of Green’s harmonic language, following his hiatus from recording and live music scenes. Further, his use of rhythmic motifs, sequential organization, and innovative “flexible time concept” are introduced as well. For example, Miller describes Green’s ability to “lay back” on the time, in order to create tension within a particular line, as well as a type of “snapping back” into place that would sometimes follow.

The transcription and analysis portion of my dissertation seeks to build on many of the insights presented by Miller. This becomes increasingly evident in chapters 4-6, where I analyze Green’s improvisatory approach in detail.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The central goals of this dissertation are to explore questions of influence, style, individualism, and innovation in jazz and their stakes as exemplified through the music of Bunky Green. Building on the existing scholarship on Green, the next two chapters explore important terms and introduce larger themes that carry through the rest of the dissertation and support deeper understandings of Green’s music, career, and place in jazz history. This is followed by a detailed analysis of Green’s music and a discussion of his legacy.

Based on scholarship that focuses on the relationship between music and language (by Charles Seeger, Steven Feld, Paul Berliner, Steve Coleman, and Ingrid Monson), Chapter 2 begins with an investigation of the meanings and implications of some common terms used by

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24 Benjamin, “Bunky Green,” 12. As he states above in the Bill Benjamin article (page 8), Green uses “fresh” in place of “new” to describe aspects of his voice that fall outside of expected norms because his concepts have been used “in other harmonic forms.”


26 Ibid., 31, 61-62.
jazz performers, teachers, and scholars. These include “vocabulary,” “language,” and
“conversation,” among others. It is important to establish meanings for these terms early on in
the dissertation, as I will rely on them to explain ways that musicians organize sound, including
ways jazz musicians develop individual voices that nevertheless incorporate traditional aspects
of the music’s history. In addition, I look at ways in which Berliner, Henry Louis Gates Jr., John
Murphy, Travis A. Jackson, and other scholars use linguistic concepts to speak about jazz. These
investigations help to explain further how jazz musicians build their vocabularies, how they
interact with musicians onstage, and how they connect to musical predecessors and audiences.
Moreover, this research helps to establish how musicians like Green synthesize their influences
into an individual expressive approach that is particular only to them, what I call an individual
“voice.”

Chapter 3 enters into discourse on notions of genre, “innovation,” the “creation of
genius,” and individualism in jazz as well as some of the effects these issues have on players,
audiences, and scholars. This discussion is prefaced with a brief historical outline of the major
stylistic developments that were taking place while Green was emerging as a new recording artist
in 1960. Among other factors, it looks at how Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane were effecting
great change within the art of jazz improvisation through their unique approaches to
improvisation, their vocabularies, and the makeup of the rhythm sections who accompanied
them. I suggest that the tenor saxophone took prominence over the alto at this time due to an
influx of influential tenor saxophonists (who were intent on pushing the boundaries of jazz
music) as well as the inclusion of the tenor in Miles Davis’ most influential quintets.²⁷ I argue

²⁷ These include Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Joe Henderson, George Coleman, Wayne Shorter to name a few.
that the majority of alto saxophonists, on the other hand, retained obvious ties to Parker and were committed to continuing his legacy.

Following this brief summation of the musical climate in the 1960s, I explore questions related to individual personality, music genres, and timing that may pertain to Green’s difficulty succeeding within the recording industry. I explore the roles certain subgenres of jazz may have played in determining which musicians were accepted into dominant jazz historical narratives and which were left by the wayside. My argument is based on ideas expressed by Keith Negus in *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* and takes into account his view that musicians who are not attached to any strongly defined genres are more likely to be overlooked. This dovetails with a discussion on timing, “the creation of genius” and the jazz canon, throughout which, I present the views of several scholars who question the usefulness of these value-laden concepts including Tia DeNora, Leonard Meyer, and Gabriel Solis. In addition to exploring some of the pros and cons related to the jazz canon (as it is commonly conceived), this section considers the roles that jazz musicians themselves lead in the writing of jazz history, through performances and recordings of music that may validate or pay tribute to certain influential musical predecessors. Moreover, this chapter examines some of the non-musical competencies musicians rely on and the impact they can have on careers by looking at Jeff Packman’s article “Musicians’ Performances and Performances of ‘Musician’ in Salvador da Bahia.”

This discussion leads to an investigation into the relationship between influence and individuality, two contrasting ideas that work together to form a symbiotic relationship that enables jazz improvisers to find their own voice while incorporating influences from musical predecessors. In this light, qualities that make a player unique are not completely separate from

traditional aspects of the history of the music. Rather, improvisers shape, alter, and integrate influences with personal experiences to create unique individual voices. In addition to investigating a number of issues related to this process, this section explores the stakes for the individuals involved, as well as for the jazz community at large. Commentary from Osby, Coleman, Lovano, and Green is added to underline the degree to which the jazz community places importance on individuality with respect to jazz improvisation.

The focus then shifts to discuss how one’s environment (where you come from) and intrinsic musical relationships (who you come up with) affect the outcome of an improviser’s personal playing style. I also discuss learning processes musicians take in order to become competent improvisers within the jazz tradition and develop their own voice through listening, transcribing, and analyzing master players. This discussion is situated in relation to writings on the topic by Berliner and saxophonist, composer, and educator, David Liebman. From here, I explore the role of so-called “innovators” in determining stylistic trends among jazz musicians and discuss some of the benefits and dangers of following innovators too closely. To complement scholarship by Berliner and Travis Jackson, I provide commentary from Liebman, Osby, Lovano, and Coleman. These ideas work together to illustrate the complex and at times contradictory basis by which jazz musicians are labeled “clones,” “original improvisers” who possesses a fresh perspective, and “innovators,” capable of influencing others and creating new idioms.

The following three chapters shift attention away from general conversations concerning vocabulary, influence, individualism, and the jazz canon in order to focus on the music of Green. Each of these chapters focus on a distinct period of Green’s development, three distinct phases within the overarching time frame of the dissertation. Viewed independently, these phases show very different sides of Green’s identity. When pieced together, they reveal a progression of his
improvisational approach from its bebop and hard bop beginnings to his newer, fully-formed individual approach.\(^{29}\) The analysis builds on previous work done by Miller but in a slightly different light. In analyzing certain identifiable characteristics of Green’s improvisatory approach within each of the three periods, I have attempted to outline some possible sources of influence Green has drawn on to develop his voice. Further, I highlight other aspects of his approach that I consider to be part of his legacy and, therefore, his major contributions to jazz.

Chapter 4 provides a snapshot of Green’s stylistic approach as it was in the fall of 1960. Analysis is based on a number of solos that originate from his two earliest recordings: *My Babe* and *Blues Holiday*.\(^{30}\) I highlight aspects of these solos that illustrate a correlation between Green and some of his early influences, including Parker and Coltrane, in order to show where Green was coming from stylistically. These early recordings provide a starting point from which to assess Green’s development in later years. Some characteristics of Green’s later more defined approach are visible to some degree within this early stage including his emphasis on continuity, approach to rhythmic phrasing, and flexible eighth-note feel. While Green’s playing on these early recordings is very much rooted in post-bop or hard bop styles—similar to what many other bebop influenced altoists were doing at the time—this chapter also looks to identify various idioms beyond bebop that contribute to Green’s musical personality both in improvisation and composition. The repertoire on *My Babe* alone, for example, shows Green was influenced by black gospel and the blues. The heavy blues-influence found in his improvisations is one aspect

\(^{29}\) Certain aspects of Green’s fully formed voice appear in embryonic form within his earlier recordings, as hinted at in Miller, “Bunky Green,” 52, 151.

\(^{30}\) Green’s debut recordings as a leader and as a sideman, respectively.
of his voice that never really subsides and one that kept his music closely related to early African-American music and, thus, African music traditions as well.\textsuperscript{31}

The goal of Chapter 5 is to demonstrate ways in which Green began to deviate from bebop in the mid-1960s. My transcriptions from the album \textit{Soul in the Night}, which situates Green and Sonny Stitt in somewhat of a cutting contest, highlight what appear to be the beginnings of Green’s individual approach. Some of the techniques he uses are an augmentation of those discussed in Chapter 4 and some appear for the first time. They include (what Coleman and Osby refer to as) Green’s “elastic” time feel—a kind of pushing and pulling or uneven rhythmic approach—third-based and other types of harmonic pathways, as well as the use of overtone fingerings and other colourations of timbre. As Stitt is one who helped define or standardize notions of bebop—therefore stays within such standard conventions of phrasing aspects, rhythm, and vocabulary—his solo work provides a reference point for Green’s individual approach and thus, a clear indication as to areas in Green’s playing that deviate from the bebop idiom.

Chapter 6 examines solos from the mid to late 1970s that followed Green’s six-year sabbatical and hiatus from public performance and the recording industry. My analysis of a number of solos and compositions from this period draws attention to aspects of Green’s approach that appear to have been influential to his followers. Of the recordings from this period, I pay particular attention to \textit{Don’t Let Go} (1974), \textit{Summit Meeting} (1977), \textit{Time Capsule} (1977), and \textit{Places We’ve Never Been} (1979). These recordings are exemplary of Green’s more developed individual voice and some have been cited by Coleman, Mahanthappa, and Osby as

being influential to the development of their own improvisatory concepts.\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Don’t Let Go}, on the other hand, is an album that is rarely (if ever) mentioned. I include it here because it signals Green’s return to the recording industry and introduces his newly redefined voice. \textit{Places We’ve Never Been} deserves special recognition as it is the last of Green’s recordings within this period and seems to be his most critically acclaimed work.\textsuperscript{33} Incidentally, Green has said that it represents the only recording from this period of which he himself had full artistic control.\textsuperscript{34}

Chapter 7 summarizes the main points of the dissertation as they relate to Green’s music and his career. Despite the fact that Green is portrayed by some as “the embodiment of what it means to play improvised jazz music,”\textsuperscript{35} jazz histories have not recognized his achievements or contributions to the music. Thus, in addition to a concluding argument, the final chapter of my dissertation emphasizes the importance of Green’s work by indicating ways in which he has influenced the unique musical approaches of musicians such as Osby, Coleman, and Lovano. Commentary from these players underlines the fact that there is indeed a disconnect between the importance of certain individuals as measured by jazz musicians and the overriding jazz narrative. While scholars like Scott DeVeaux and Gabriel Solis call for the destruction of (or less emphasis to be placed on) the jazz canon by scholars,\textsuperscript{36} it is also important, if not somewhat

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\textsuperscript{32} “An Interview with Bunky Green,” by Steve Coleman, M-Base Ways Members Website. / \textit{Destination Out} Blog; “Guest Post: A Bunky Green Primer,” blog entry by Rudresh Mahanthappa. / Osby, telephone interview.
\textsuperscript{35} Joe Lovano, telephone interview by the author, December 2015.
\end{flushright}
risky, for jazz musicians to look outside of the most common influences—who are also typically the most celebrated performers—in order to widen the spectrum of jazz music.

Speaking as a jazz musician, I certainly see value in the canon as it pays homage to some of the music’s most influential and important players and helps establish certain key foundations in how we perform. However, problems arise when the canon, as well as notions of “genius” and “innovators,” begin to limit our view of other less recognized yet important historical influences, therefore, limiting our perceptions of the music, its history, and our sense of freedom to create. For example, while Parker and Coltrane are revered for being important innovators (and rightly so), the degree of importance we continue to place on their contributions has resulted in somewhat of a homogenization of the “jazz language.”

This comes at the expense of the legacies of other contributors to the music that deserve our recognition. In addition, the condition of the music itself suffers in the absence of creative individual voices, needed to ensure its survival as a living and breathing art form.

Liebman has expressed a similar view regarding tenorists of the 1980s and 1990s, stating “with our culture’s emphasis upon and rewarding of conformity rather than originality, much creative energy has been increasingly stifled in the past decade or so.” Although, it could certainly be argued that this state of affairs has improved in recent years, in my opinion, these sentiments still hold true today. If the cost of individuality, one of the most important aspects of playing improvised jazz music, is in fact lack of audibility, success, or recognition, then perhaps we do need to reevaluate the importance of the canon (as several historians have suggested) as


37 Greg Osby, telephone interview by the author, September 2015. I discuss this point further in Chapter 3.

well as revisit the importance of individual “voices” through a wider variety of influential sources.

THE TRANSCRIPTIONS

It is important to note that transcriptions of jazz improvisations are approximate representations of recorded solos. Although I have done everything possible to ensure that the transcriptions are accurate, one can only get so close, especially when it comes to notating rhythm. For example, swung eighth notes are impossible to notate correctly with standard notation. Even if this problem is overlooked, which it must be to notate jazz—barring an in-depth analysis that measures Beat-Upbeat Ratio (BUR)\(^{39}\)—another difficulty presents itself when attempting to convey variations in the time feel such as pushing ahead of or laying back behind the basic underlying quarter note pulse that is given by the rhythm section. For these reasons, it is important for the reader to listen to the recorded examples (whenever possible) in conjunction with looking at the transcriptions. Although they may be difficult to find, many of the recordings referenced in this dissertation are available for purchase or available on popular streaming sites. In order to be as accurate as possible, however, I have marked the following nuances in the chart below. It is important to note that all transcriptions are notated in Eb for alto saxophone. I occasionally, make reference to certain notes within the text using scientific pitch, which specifies octave (e.g. A\(_4\)). While notes for alto saxophone are transposed up a major sixth, the number refers to the octave as it sounds on piano. For example, the note A in the staff written for alto saxophone sounds as middle C or C\(_4\), one ledger line below the staff. Thus, the same number is assigned to the transposed pitch for alto (A\(_4\)).

Figure 1.1  Notation used to indicate nuance within the transcriptions.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Because Miller has provided a thorough biography, there is no need for this dissertation to go beyond a certain biographical depth; however, a brief biography is given to provide some context for the reader. I begin by looking at some of Green’s early childhood influences and musical training situations he experienced while growing up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Following these early influences, I present a number of associates and teachers who impacted Green’s musical development and philosophical approaches leading up to his first recordings in 1960 in order to establish a point of departure for my analysis of the music. Details of these early recording dates are provided as well as others that fall within this dissertation’s time frame. A brief look at Green’s hiatus from the recording scene and an outline of his teaching career follows. Finally, I provide recent information, essentially picking up where Miller’s biography ends around 2008.

Green was born into a musical family on April 23, 1935 and named Vernice Green (the nickname “Bunky” was attributed early-on). The elder family members were involved with the local church choir and (Bunky) Green would have likely taken part as well from a young age. Other musical activities were subsequently encouraged including saxophone in junior high school. Initially attracted to the tenor saxophone, Green decided on alto upon hearing the music...
of Charlie Parker at around 16 years of age. Similar to many young alto saxophonists, the attraction to Parker’s playing quickly developed into an obsession: “When I was 16 or 17, I was playing everything Bird had. I could play every Bird solo verbatim!”\(^{40}\) The ability to play the solos on the saxophone was enriched by an uncanny analytical understanding, as evidenced by the teaching sessions he often held for younger students.

We’d get into my father’s car and drive out to the lake. There, with my little blackboard, they’d all sit around while I’d analyze Charlie Parker. I’d say, ‘Now here is a minor seventh. Here’s the extension of this dominant seventh chord. See? What Bird is doing is paying on the top of this chord.’ And I’d repeat them over and over again on my saxophone.\(^{41}\)

This in-depth undertaking of Parker’s music informed much of Green’s early understanding of jazz vocabulary, phrasing, (swing feel, dynamics, articulation), and nuance (vibrato, fall-offs, and note-bends). Green would later incorporate many other influences, one of the most prominent being John Coltrane, but Parker is clearly the major influence early in Green’s career.\(^{42}\) Regardless of his affinity for Parker’s music and its effect on his vocabulary, phrasing, and nuance, Green realized that Parker’s greatest lesson was showing (by example) that all musicians have the ability to discover their own musical paths and should strive to develop their own unique musical personalities. In other words, Green understood that to truly follow Parker’s teachings meant more than simply becoming an imitator of his language and style.

I worshipped Parker. I still do, in fact. It’s just that I learned from Parker that if you want to be different you have to be yourself. And in order to do that I knew I couldn’t play like Parker anymore because Parker didn’t play like anyone, he played like himself. So as I came into Chicago I started to experiment, and I

\(^{40}\) Benjamin, “Bunky Green,” 11.

\(^{41}\) Ibid.

\(^{42}\) Green has stressed the importance of learning from elders (in interviews and within his written work) and is always careful to site many of his influential teachers. Early influences include: Charlie Parker, Sonny Stitt, Bud Powell, Billy Wallace (who he says taught him theory), Donald Garrett, Nicky Hill, Charles Mingus, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, and various musicians involved with the Latin music scene in Milwaukee, among others.
even took some down time, a time of about five years, where I wasn’t on the jazz scene but I was actually reshaping my style.\(^{43}\)

Above all else, Green understood the importance of developing an individual voice, a concept that was reinforced years later by legendary bassist and composer Charles Mingus.

Green was hired by Mingus (on the recommendation of Lou Donaldson) for a number of concert dates on the east coast in 1956.\(^{44}\) As one might expect, the famed composer and bassist made a critical impact on Green’s musical approach and, although Green was with Mingus for only a short time, he came away with some determining lessons that defined his improvisatory approach.

He always stressed being yourself and how a cat couldn’t really be Bird – it’s impossible to be Bird! Charlie Parker had made a definitive statement in his area, so the only possible thing to do was to move to another area.\(^{45}\)

Although the realization had dawned on Green before his stint with Mingus, it was Mingus who emphasized its importance, encouraging Green to pursue a more individual approach. This gave the young saxophonist “cause for a lot of thinking and re-evaluation of style.”\(^{46}\) In a later interview, Green confirms that the message took some time to sink in: “I love John Coltrane and Charlie Parker so much I think I finally got their message and enough courage to be me.”\(^{47}\)

In addition to underlining the importance of developing an individual voice, another key concept that Mingus instilled in Green is the idea that there are no wrong notes, that any note can

\(^{43}\) Bunky Green, interviewed by Bob Bednar, *This is Jazz*, Stereo 90 (Jacksonville), quoted in Miller, “Bunky Green,” 92.

\(^{44}\) Miller, *Bunky Green*, 32.

\(^{45}\) Benjamin, “Bunky Green,” 11.

\(^{46}\) Ibid.

fit any chord so long as it is treated in the proper way. These two concepts came together to form the core of Green’s philosophical approach to improvisation.

[Mingus'] statement that there was no such thing as a wrong note made a deep impression on me, and I started to develop my theories about tension and release, where I would stretch the harmony to a point where it alerts the listener and then provide a certain amount of release with respect to consonance.  

Regardless, much of Green’s work from the early to mid-1960s tends to be conceived by most critics and musicians as falling within the confines of hard bop idioms. Although the seeds had been planted, it would take years to develop them into a unique voice.

Following his association with Mingus, Green moved back to Milwaukee and, in 1957, relocated to Chicago. Initially encouraged to make the move by jazz impresario and jazz club owner Joe Segal, Green stayed in the city for several years, making lasting musical relationships with a number of musicians. Green has listed some of these as Ira Sullivan, Von Freeman, Paul Serrano, Muhal Richard Abrams, Eddie Harris, Donald Garrett, and Nicky Hill. Others have noted that he played with Andrew Hill, Louie Bellson, and Yusef Lateef during this time.

Chicago is also the place where Green’s recording career began, with three back-to-back sessions between October 10th and November 8th, 1960, as well as two more in April of 1961. Unfortunately, many of the resultant recordings were either shelved for later release or never released at all. This includes My Babe, his debut recording as a leader that featured confident

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49 Segal began promoting jazz in Chicago in 1947 and his jazz club, The Jazz Showcase, continues to present live jazz seven days a week.
50 “An Interview with Bunky Green,” by Steve Coleman, M-Base Ways Members Website.
52 An in-depth discussion of these recordings can be found in Chapter 4.
playing from Green and some of the most prominent musicians of the day, including Wynton Kelly, Jimmy Cobb, Donald Byrd, and Jimmy Heath. An important first step for many recording artists, this formidable debut certainly had the potential to establish Green as an important newcomer to the scene. Unfortunately for Green, it seems that Vee-Jay Records waited several years for its release, thereby denying him an opportunity to make a big splash as a new voice in the jazz market. The two subsequent sessions (as a leader) for Vee-Jay and others under the leadership of Willie Thomas, however, never saw the light of day. In fact, the only album that came to fruition during this recording period was _Blues Holiday_, released by Riverside Records in 1961 and presents Green in a supporting role under the leadership of local jazz trumpeter Paul Serrano. Green’s disappointing experience with Vee-Jay Records effectively derailed his early recording career and prevented serious recognition beyond that of the local Chicago scene. In this light, it is understandable that Green names 1965 as the year in which he began his recording career, essentially writing off his time with Vee-Jay Records.

Green enjoyed improved success as a leader and as a sideman in the Chicago Chess studios from 1965-1968. In addition to working a number of sessions for vocalists Fontella Bass, Herb Lance, and Billy Stewart, Green continued to record as a leader and released three albums during this time: _Testifyin’ Time_ (1965), _Playin’ for Keeps_ (1966), and _The Latinization of Bunky Green_ (1967). 1966 brought _Soul in the Night_, a landmark album for Green and undoubtedly his most important recording from the mid-1960s as it paired him with one of his idols, Sonny Stitt, and exhibits some of Green’s most impressive recorded work up until this point in time. Green’s

53 The album was rereleased on the Exodus Record label in 1966 (a subsidiary company of Vee-Jay). Vee-Jay Records was facing bankruptcy during this time, which may be why they decided to release the album again separately under Exodus. Nevertheless, Exodus was deemed by the court to be “part of the same company for all practical purposes. “Exodus Album Discography,” Mike Callahan and David Edwards, Both Sides Now Publications, November 11, 2009, accessed June 16, 2016, http://www.bsnpubs.com/veejay/exodus.html.
negative experiences with the recording industry persisted however, and he struggled to maintain artistic control of his own projects. Following the release of Latinization in 1967, a particularly commercial enterprise, Green retreated from the jazz world, embarking on a period of study and development of his personal improvisational concept.\textsuperscript{55} This was the beginning of what would become a nearly six-year hiatus from the recording and public performance scene.

It has proven difficult to definitively establish dates for Green’s hiatus, however, I propose 1968-1974 as the basic timeframe. This is in line with what Green has stated in various interviews.\textsuperscript{56} Meanwhile, through his discussions with Green, Miller has defined it as occurring between 1967 and 1976. Miller tells us the hiatus ends with the release of Transformations (1977),\textsuperscript{57} though he does not indicate the rationale for his proposed starting date. I suspect his timeframe is based on either the release of The Latinization of Bunky Green, Green’s final album as a leader in the 1960s, or on Groovin’ with the Soulful Strings, another album recorded that same year. Green played a significantly smaller role in this recording, credited with playing alto sax and flute, although he had nothing invested in the project in terms of expressing a unique soloing voice. He was but one of a number of Cadet Records house musicians involved in a studio session for notable arranger Richard Evans, who capitalized on what was growing trend: soul jazz or easy listening orchestrations of popular hits for strings, horns and rhythm section. Groovin’ with the Soulful Strings was one of seven immensely successful recordings made between 1967 and 1970, but Green is not featured as a soloist. As exemplified by Groovin’,

\textsuperscript{55} Green apparently recorded a studio session for arranger Richard Evans in the summer of 1967 for an album entitled Groovin’ with the Soulful Strings. However, he does not seem to perform any major role and plays no solos.

\textsuperscript{56} Green defines the sabbatical as five years in the Bob Bednar radio interview from “This is Jazz” radio show (C 1997) and as around six years in the Steve Coleman “Meet the Masters” interview.

\textsuperscript{57} Transformations was actually released in 1977 according to jazzdiscography.com. The recording date is listed as November 1976.
Green’s recordings were becoming further removed from his bebop beginnings and moving in the direction of popular or commercial music. I have the impression that record producers were pushing him in this direction in an effort to market his music to a wider audience, and that both *Latinization* and *Groovin’* may have contributed to his disillusionment with the recording industry. In any case, these recordings immediately preceded his retreat from the performing and recording scenes.

While Green’s frustrations with the recording industry were one reason for the hiatus, he also points to the general attitudes of jazz musicians he was involved with around this time as additional motivation for the break:

> Because guys wouldn’t let you [develop your craft]. Because when you’re out there playing nobody wants to hear it. You know, all I used to hear was “man let’s playing something that swings, man let’s get a groove.” And I can understand where they were coming from - “let’s get a groove man, let’s play some tunes.” And I’d say, “well here’s a tonal center and let’s just play this phrase here, and then let’s play…” Nobody wanted to hear that. They wanted tunes with changes, you know, the whole nine yards. So *that’s* why I had to get away from [the scene], because I couldn’t [further develop]. They wouldn’t let me use it.\(^{58}\)

Partially as a result of these types of attitudes, Green retreated from public performance and recording and enrolled in graduate school in 1968. During this time, he says he stopped listening to the musicians that had, up until this point, informed his musical approach and concentrated instead on investigating musics of other cultures. Thus, his hiatus from recording and performance is probably best described as being more closely related to a sabbatical.\(^{59}\)

There may be one exception to Green’s self-inflicted recording ban. In 1970, around the time he would have graduated with his masters degree, Green was part of a collaborative project

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\(^{58}\) Miller, “Bunky Green,” 21, my edits.  
\(^{59}\) This term is used by Coleman in his “Meet the Masters” interview with Green.
co-led by John Priola. Sonically reminiscent of his prior commercially-oriented recordings, this album aimed to fuse traditional jazz big band horns with a rock rhythm section. The band released one album—*Jumbo: Bigger and Better, The New Sound of John Priola and Bunky Green* (1970)—to which Green contributes two compositions and arrangements. His solos on *Bigger and Better* exhibit flashes of what was to come, however, he stays well within the harmonic and stylistic confines of the then emerging jazz/rock idiom.

Green meanwhile accepted a teaching position at Chicago State University in 1972. This helped to further stabilize his life. It also allowed him to focus on developing his individual musical vision and become independent from the everyday rigors of a working jazz musician. His next recording did not come until 1974. Again, we find Green involved with a big band jazz/rock format, this time under the direction of pianist and singer Ben Sidran on *Don’t Let Go* (1974). Whether or not he was allowed more freedom under the direction of Sidran and more direction in the Jumbo band is difficult to say. A comparison of these two recordings, however, reveals how much Green accomplished during his sabbatical by 1974. His solos on *Don’t Let Go* exhibit an improvisational approach that is in line with the Vanguard recordings that would follow.

Green emerged from his sabbatical with a clear concept of his individual voice and within two years embarked on a lasting association with producer Ed Bland (1926-2013), then with Vanguard Records. The recordings they subsequently produced are arguably Green’s most important and influential recordings to date. These include: *Transformations; Places We’ve

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61 Miller, *Bunky Green*, 32.
Never Been; as well as *Summit Meeting and Time Capsule* with Elvin Jones.\(^6^2\) These recordings have been noted as being instrumental in shaping the musical philosophies of young Steve Coleman and Greg Osby, among other influential saxophonists.\(^6^3\)

In addition to being a film maker and producer, Bland was a musician and contributed compositions to each of the recordings he produced for Green and Jones. Bland is perhaps best known for his work as a director on *The Cry of Jazz* (1959), a short “semi-documentary” film that proclaims jazz as being representative of black culture in America long before formal African American studies existed.\(^6^4\) Green’s association with Bland is intriguing: after a disappointing career in the recording industry up until his sabbatical, Green would have been careful about any new record deals. Bland’s reputation as a controversial filmmaker may have played a part in the decision-making process and helped to bring Green onboard. At any rate, the two developed a fruitful and positive relationship while at Vanguard Records. Their relationship continued beyond Vanguard years when, years later, Bland had a hand in producing *Healing the Pain* on Delos Records (1990). The Vanguard years turned out to be Green’s most prolific period due to the volume of high quality material released in a short time. Before the end of the decade, Green had released three albums as a leader, and played on two more as part of Elvin Jones’ band. Green’s most notable project since has been Apex, his collaborative project with Rudresh Mahanthappa. This group toured Europe and North America extensively around the time the

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\(^6^2\) See further discussion in Chapter 6.


album appeared in 2010, which initiated somewhat of a revival of Green’s performing career and notoriety. Green retired from teaching at the University of North Florida in 2012.

One of the central goals of this dissertation is to open an investigation into the central roles that influence and individuality play in shaping unique voices in jazz. Observing some of the problems that arise when disproportionate emphasis is placed on an orthodox jazz narrative and canonic players, I emphasize the benefits a wider spectrum of influence brings about for jazz musicians and jazz historians. Prior to addressing these issues, Chapter 2 looks at some of the ways in which jazz musicians talk about improvisation, interaction, and communication. In particular, it addresses the relationship between speech about music and linguistic terminology as well as the significance this relationship holds for musicians and scholars. Addressing these issues and establishing some important terms will help bring about an understanding of how musicians internalize various influences; form individual voices; and interact (or carry on a dialogue) with musicians onstage, with their audiences, and with jazz history.
Chapter 2 ~ Speaking Jazz: A Selected Literature Review of Language & Music

Music is a world within itself with a language we all understand.

—Stevie Wonder

The inclination of humans to relate music and language is apparent throughout history, from Platonism to modern cognitive science. Both areas are intrinsic elements of all human cultures and for many, including ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl, they are what “define us as human.”¹ Our tendency to associate music with language seems only natural, as the two share many similarities including duration, timbre, tone, pitch, accents, and phrasing structure. Cognitive neuroscientist Aniruddh Patel compares them in a more general way: “… the central role of music and language in human existence and the fact that both involve complex and meaningful sound sequences naturally invite comparison between the two domains.”² Of course there are significant differences as well and are part of what makes these comparisons so attractive. For one, language contains specific rules of grammar and parts of speech such as nouns and verbs that enable semantic meaning. While music can not communicate semantic meaning, it does have the capacity to communicate a deeper emotional effect on the listener.³

In jazz, as in other areas of musicology, language and music are often related to better understand and speak about the music. Musicians, for example, borrow linguistic terms such as “vocabulary,” “voice,” and “conversation” to describe and categorize certain expressive or

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³ Ibid., 4.
structural elements of jazz and its performance practices. Consequently, many musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and scholars in other fields—including Steven Feld, Paul Berliner, Ingrid Monson, and Steve Coleman—have noted the importance of these types of metaphors in bringing about a better understanding of jazz practices for non-jazz musicians. Although linguistic metaphors are used in part to circumvent the difficult nature of speaking (or writing) about music, their frequent use by musicians also points to the social aspects of jazz music making.

This chapter begins with an investigation into some of the ways in which jazz musicians and scholars have used linguistic terminology and other modes of analysis as alternatives to Western analytical methods in order to illuminate such processes as improvisation (including learning to improvise and developing an individual approach); interaction among musicians; and other pathways of communication between musicians and their audiences. Following a brief exploration of some of the scholarly work that addresses structural similarities and differences between music and language, I focus on the importance (and difficulty) of speech about music.

Attention shifts thereafter to some of the linguistic concepts that are routinely used by jazz musicians and scholars including “jazz as a language,” “improvisation as conversation,” and “saying something” to talk about ways in which musicians construct a solo, interact with other musicians onstage (or from the past), and contribute something meaningful to the music. In addition to looking at how these metaphors and others help us talk about jazz and jazz performance practices, I investigate various scholars’ perspectives on ways in which African-American and broader African Diasporic cultures are represented in jazz through feeling and tone as well as rhythmic and conversational attitudes. This leads to a discussion of ways musicians develop and incorporate what they call “vocabulary” into their own individual voices. Moreover, I discuss various ways they use vocabulary to align themselves and communicate with
particular idioms, musicians, and knowledgeable audience members. I then examine ways in which literary scholar Henry Louis Gates’ “Signifyin(g)” theory has been adopted by a range of scholars and musicologists to explain jazz performance practices “on its own terms.”

Finally, I look to discover how linguistic metaphors might be of further use in considering aspects of a jazz musician’s individual voice (often referred to as a musician’s style) which I see as encompassing a player’s timbre, vocabulary, and stylistic aspects. While there is clearly an overlap between style and voice, I argue that style leans more towards idiom and genre, while voice, indicates a more personal, individualized approach.

JAZZ AS A MUSICAL LANGUAGE

One of the many contributions Ferdinand de Saussure made to linguistics was his distinction between language as a system and language in practice, which distinguishes the individual speaker from the words and rules that are the basis for each act of speaking. As musicologist Charles Seeger explains, there are in fact three French nouns (“langage,” “langue,” and “parole”) for the two we have in English (“speech” and “language”). Seeger provides the following definitions in Speech, Music, and Speech about Music:

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\begin{align*}
\text{langage} & = \text{speech, the universal cultural system of predominantly symbolic auditory communication.} \\
\text{langue} & = \text{language, the particular spoken subsystem that is one of the many languages of man.} \\
\text{parole} & = \text{the speaking of a language by the individual speaker(s) of it.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{4 Ferdinand de Saussure,}\ Cours in Literary Theory: An Anthology\ ed. by Michael Ryan and Julie Rivkin (Blackwell Publishers, 2001).}\]

Seeger relates Saussure’s linguistic definitions to his own musicological analogs. Although there are three corollary analogs for what we call music—music as any system of organized sounds, a particular type of music, and the sounds that are performed by a musician, music is the only English noun available to refer to all three. Thus, Seeger provides the following qualifiers that must be used in order to distinguish between the three different analogs:

speech = the concept music, as the universal cultural system of predominantly asymbolic auditory communication.

language = the percept music, as the particular sung and played subsystem that is one of the many music’s of man.

the speaking of a language by individual speakers = the singing and playing of a music by individual musicians.6

Ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson relates these musicological analogs to jazz music:

“When musicians speak of the “jazz language,” they are talking about a musical and aesthetic system that contrasts with others—a usage comparable to langue. When they refer to playing music as “talking,” they emphasize communication through the act of performing music—a usage akin to parole.”7 Seeger’s and Monson’s interventions are helpful. However, they still leave a great deal of room for ambiguity. The following sections investigate some of the shortcomings of this type of referential language in its ability to describe certain aspects of music. It also explores certain related metaphors musicians have adopted in order to facilitate speech about music.

7 Ingrid Monson, Saying Something (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 85.
THE IMPORTANCE & DIFFICULTY OF SPEECH ABOUT MUSIC

The “linguocentric predicament” is a term that was coined by Seeger and first appeared in his essay “Speech, Music, and Speech about Music” (1977). Within his essay, Seeger questions language’s ability to effectively express a musical experience, arguing that speech, or the written word, represent the intellectualization of the world, whereas music represents the feeling that speech communicates. These sentiments are reminiscent of the well-known quote, “Talking about music is like dancing about architecture;” that no matter how eloquently one may speak, certain qualities of music cannot be put into words. Seeger was not the first to doubt the capabilities of language in this respect. John Dewey in 1958 expressed a similar point of view.

If all meanings could be adequately expressed by words, the arts of painting and music would not exist. There are values and meanings that can be expressed only by immediately visible and audible qualities, and to ask what they mean in the sense of something that can be put into words is to deny their distinctive existence.

While the idea that language cannot represent music was by no means novel, Seeger looks to explain why this may be so and how can it be resolved. He argues that the application of linguocentric terminology—language intended to describe language—cannot adequately express certain intricacies of music due to its inherent biases towards rules of language. Moreover, he proposes that the use of linguocentric terminology actually distorts our perception of what actually takes place within a musical event. An example of this type of distorted perception is the tendency of linguocentric speech to favour the finished product rather than the process of

9 The origin of this quote is often contested but it seems as though it first appeared in print in 1979 and is generally believed to have originated from comedian Martin Mull.

You can “just play,” but it’s odd to speak of “just performing”: the basic grammar of performance is that you perform *something*, you give a performance “of” something. In other words, language leads us to construct the process of performance as supplementary to the product that occasions it or in which it results; it is this that leads us to talk quite naturally about music “and” its performance…  

Seeger urged musicologists to help develop and use music-specific terminology in order to arrive at a more accurate view of musical events: “while during the last one hundred fifty years linguists have developed a superb discipline of speech about speech, musicologists have done nothing at all about a discipline of speech about music.” Throughout his career, Seeger strived to create a terminology capable of describing music and musical events without resorting to linguocentric concepts. However, since its inception, the new metalanguage has been met with resistance, as many of Seeger’s definitions have been seen as overly cumbersome and difficult to grasp for nonprofessionals and academics working in other fields. Further, music scholars have argued that some of his language is misrepresentative of the very nature of what it tries to define. Ethnomusicologist Steven Feld, for example, brings into question Seeger’s definition of communication, which Seeger defines as “the transmission of energy in a form.” Beyond the confusing nature of this definition, it defines the term as a physical object, rather than (what Feld sees as) an action. Thus, this definition of communication overlooks process and instead promotes the idea of product, one of the linguocentric biases Seeger was trying to avoid!! Feld

argues that communication does not refer to the information that is being transferred nor the medium used to transfer such data. Rather, he says, “Communication is... the process of interaction whereby objects and events are, through the work of social actors, rendered meaningful or not.”

In his article, “Communication, Music, and Speech about Music (1984),” Feld engages with many of the ideas that Seeger presents in “Speech, Music, and Speech About Music.” Like Seeger, he advocates for discussion about music, arguing that an ongoing dialogue is key to understanding the process of making music. Further, he urges that, since music represents a “fundamentally social life,” music scholars should engage it as such. Although his article agrees with Seeger that musical experiences are essentially untranslatable, he also believes Seeger places far too great an emphasis on the referential function of language without recognizing its figurative value. While Seeger devotes much time and energy toward outlining a “logical and philosophical distinction between the speech and music modes,” Feld explores ways in which the two are connected. These inquiries led him to investigate ways in which people “routinely talk about music” using certain metaphors. Feld found this approach to be a more effective way to speak about music as it employs firmly established, or common modes of discussion.

Here is where I most obviously diverge from Seeger. By equating the referential domain of the speech mode with primary verbal communication, he left aside much of how people routinely talk and certainly how they routinely talk about music. It was this emphasis on the referential that led him to assert that speech about music communicated “world view as intellection of reality.” On the contrary, I think speech about music represents an attempt to construct a

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15 Ibid.,” 77.
16 Ibid., 77-96.
metaphoric discourse to signify awareness of the more fundamental metaphoric discourse that music communicates in its own right.¹⁷

I would like to highlight two key phrases from the above quotation: “how people… routinely talk about music” and “the more fundamental metaphoric discourse that music communicates in its own right.” The first point underlines the importance of acknowledging informal ways of speaking about music. In fact, musicians themselves often use such methods to describe aspects of music and performance practices.¹⁸ In the second phrase, Feld indicates his belief that, beyond providing an easier way to speak about music, the use of these metaphors emphasizes the social aspects of certain musical events. Since the publication of his article in 1984, this point of view has been developed by many scholars operating in certain areas of music. In jazz studies, the work of ethnomusicologists Paul Berliner and Ingrid Monson build on these ideas through their own investigations into how jazz musicians speak about improvisation.

Berliner conducted dozens of interviews with jazz musicians—yielding over 3000 pages of material—in order to collect data needed to produce his colossal *Thinking in Jazz* (1994), an important work that Monson says has “demonstrated beyond any doubt the centrality of the musical perspectives of professional jazz musicians in rethinking our understanding of improvisation.”¹⁹ In fact, Berliner’s motivation for exploring jazz and improvisation originally stemmed from his desire to include perspectives of jazz musicians within academic discussions of jazz improvisation. He thus uses ethnomusicological methods in order to accomplish this and develop his perspectives on the music. It is worthwhile to include fragments of his introduction to *Thinking in Jazz* here as they clarify his position on the importance of musicians’ perspectives

¹⁸ As shown by interviews conducted by Berliner and Monson, among others.
¹⁹ Monson, *Saying Something*, 73.
with respect to jazz discourse, the importance of speech about music, and his goal to write about jazz within the context of the larger African Diaspora and African-American culture. These perspectives helped to separate Berliner’s work from other jazz scholars and have been immensely influential within certain areas of jazz scholarship that have followed.

Given what is perhaps the most fundamental finding of ethnomusicology—that the basis for music and musical knowledge in aesthetic values, goals, and outlook can differ substantially from one culture to the next—understanding how the artists themselves viewed the issue, how they defined their musical practices, was of central importance.  

Similar to Feld’s position on the subject, Berliner argues that it is possible to speak about music effectively by looking at ways people routinely talk about music. However, he limits his investigations to include only the perspectives of jazz musicians. He explains further:

As their comments indicate, there may be elements of creativity that are destined to remain mysteries, but it is possible to talk effectively about many aspects of the subject that previously had eluded articulation by scholars. My approach in the presentation of this study’s data has been to quote and paraphrase liberally from interviews, elucidating many salient issues by allowing artists to speak for themselves. 

Through these interviews, Berliner confirmed that metaphor is a primary device jazz musicians use to speak about the improvisation process.

Despite the difficulties of verbalizing about essentially nonverbal aspects of improvisation, artists favor two metaphors in their own discussions about the subject that provide insight into unique features of their experience. One metaphor likens group improvisation to a conversation that players carry on among themselves in the language of jazz. The second likens the experience of improvising to going on a demanding musical journey.

The “demanding journey” metaphor, Berliner says, still promotes the idea of interaction or group effort to reach a shared destination.

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22 Ibid., 348.
The use of metaphors can make difficult concepts easier to understand as they bypass academic terminology and, therefore, communicate ideas more clearly to people outside the realm of music scholarship. However, Berliner indicates that the use of metaphor goes beyond this simple matter of convenience. Rather, because jazz musicians use metaphoric speech to describe what it is they do, this speech must also be an appropriate approach for scholars. In this light, the use of metaphor in Berliner’s analysis actually promotes a better understanding of jazz, as it approaches the music using emic methods.

Steve Coleman addresses the difficulty of speaking about certain aspects of jazz in his online article for Jazz.com, “The Dozens: Steve Coleman on Charlie Parker.” Within the article, Coleman relates elements of interaction and other rhythmic aspects of Parker’s (and his associates’) music with linguistic and movement-related approaches from other disciplines found within African-American culture and the larger African Diaspora. While he acknowledges that language is equipped to describe tonal events, or harmony, Coleman suggests it is far less capable of handling descriptions of rhythm. Thus, he says, it is not surprising that there exists a serious lack of scholarship in the analysis of rhythmic aspects of Parker’s music (and others). Like Berliner, he suggests that the key to talking about these aspects of music lie in the way musicians informally speak about music.

Not a lot has been written about the rhythmic aspects of this language, and for good reason—there are no words and developed descriptive concepts for it in most Western languages. Western music theory has developed primarily in directions that are great for describing the tonal aspects of music, particularly harmony. However, the language to describe rhythm itself is not very well developed, apart from descriptions of time signatures and other notation-related devices. But over the years, musicians themselves have developed a kind of

Indeed, Coleman relies on this “insider’s language” and “informal slang” to describe certain rhythmic and conversational elements of Parker’s phrasing—what he refers to as Parker’s “rhythmic language.” Much of the “informal slang” takes the form of metaphoric language, which Coleman uses to relate musical events to aspects of linguistics and movement. I discuss these metaphors in detail in the following section.

In addition to the scholars mentioned above, Monson acknowledges the challenge of speaking about music. In fact, she refers to the translation of musical experiences as being “one of the most fundamental frustrations of musical scholarship.”25 Like the other scholars above, however, she believes that relaying vernacular information from musicians is useful for people in other academic fields or walks of life, including academia, as it can help them better understand what happens when musicians make music. She argues, further, that metaphors are central to ethnomusicological study, noting that they “point to similarities between contrasting cultural domains or activities.”26 She further justifies the use of these metaphors in jazz scholarship by pointing to anthropologists, who constantly use metaphor to explain cultural activities and systems, some of whom go so far as to say that metaphor represents “the very nature of [anthropological] inquiry.”27 The next section explores ways in which metaphors have been used by musicians and scholars to discuss jazz improvisation, especially its sociability.

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25 Monson, Saying Something, 74.
26 Ibid., 76.
MUSIC AS CONVERSATION & OTHER METAPHORS IN JAZZ

Monson develops the relationship between linguistic metaphor and jazz performance practices in her groundbreaking book on jazz improvisation and interaction, *Saying Something* (1996). Similar to Berliner’s approach, her methodology includes the prioritization of the performers’ point of view, the use of metaphor when speaking about jazz, and the examination of the process (rather than product) of jazz improvisation. Her work explores the process of jazz improvisation and group interaction through interviews with jazz musicians, through transcription and analysis of the soloist and rhythm section, and through the study of African and African-American cultural practices outside of music, including speech and literature. Monson distinguishes her work from that of Berliner by focusing primarily on interaction within the rhythm section and between rhythm section and soloist. To this end, she provides multi-stave transcriptions that clearly outline examples of these kinds of interactions. While Berliner explores a number of different kinds of metaphor (i.e. comparing music to a long journey, cooking, movement), Monson focuses mainly on linguistic metaphors to demonstrate a deep connection between the two domains (i.e. “saying something,” and “conversation”).

Monson highlights the most common language metaphors used by musicians in her interviews. Of particular importance are “music as language” and “improvisation as conversation.” She says both of these metaphors were broadly used to describe the process of building a solo as well as interaction amongst musicians. She also noted musician’s frequent use of the phrase “saying something” when referring to a musician who plays very well, understands the idiom, and interacts well with others. On the surface, these metaphors may not seem

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28 Monson notes in the introduction to *Saying Something* that she and Berliner have been exchanging information since the early 1990s.
particularly complex, however, they represent an important departure from traditional evaluative views of jazz improvisation that stem from Western art music.\(^{29}\)

Monson’s explorations into instances of interaction between musicians, such as the trading of musical ideas, have uncovered certain similarities between jazz performance and verbal conversation. She cites sociolinguist Stephen Levinson’s description of conversation as “talk between two or more participants who freely alternate turns.”\(^{30}\) She provides additional detail drawing from anthropologist Marjorie Goodwin, who states that, speakers need to pay attention, listen to what the other participants say, and contribute meaningful ideas, or “next moves” that fit in with the general flow of discussion.\(^{31}\) Monson’s research shows that, similar to participants in a verbal conversation, improvisers indicate what sense they make of the “discussion” and help it to move forward. When improvisers “converse” on a high level they often take turns or pass around certain musical ideas that have been presented by other musicians onstage. The following quote, from an interview with drummer Ralph Peterson, seems to substantiate these claims:

> A lot of times when you get into a musical conversation one person in the group will state an idea or the beginning of an idea and another person will complete the idea or their interpretation of the same idea, how they hear it. So the conversation happens in fragments and comes from different parts, different voices.\(^{32}\)

Other similarities between jazz improvisation and a conversation Monson points to are the absence of a pre-arranged script or score, as well as some of the implications that stem from this. Although improvisers may be working within a chorus structure, there is

\(^{29}\) I would include in this category views expressed by Frank Tirro, Gunther Schuller, and Milton Stewart, among others.


\(^{32}\) Monson, *Saying Something*, 78.
still quite a lot of freedom within the set frameworks that they use, allowing the
conversation to develop in unpredictable ways. The open-ended aspect of this kind of
group improvisation requires that musicians listen to what other participants say.

In jazz improvisation, as we have seen, all of the musicians are constantly
making decisions regarding what to play and when to play it, all within the
framework of a musical groove, which may or may not be organized around a
chorus structure. The musicians are compositional participants who may say
unexpected things or elicit responses from other musicians. Musical
intensification is open-ended rather than pre-determined and highly
interpersonal in character – structurally far more similar to a conversation that to
a text.\(^{33}\)

Similar to participants in a discussion, she asserts, that in order to be effective performers, jazz
musicians must listen to other participants to ensure that their contributions to the music are
meaningful and pertinent to the ongoing conversation.\(^{34}\) Listening in an active sense—being able
to respond to musical opportunities or to correct mistakes—is implicit in the way that musicians
use this term. It is a type of listening much like that required of participants in a conversation,
who have to pay attention to what is transpiring if they expect to say things that make sense to
the other participants. In this light, listening affects what musicians decide to play at a particular
moment and can easily determine how meaningful a musician’s contributions to the conversation
are seen by others in the group.\(^{35}\) These types of evaluative attitudes that emphasize the
conversational aspects of jazz improvisation again emphasize the interconnectivity of music and
language.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{33}\) Monson, *Saying Something*, 81.

\(^{34}\) Monson states these are necessary aspects of “good” jazz based on her research, which involved talking to a
number of respected jazz performers.

\(^{35}\) Monson, *Saying Something*, 84.

\(^{36}\) Travis Jackson discusses the idea in his conversations with Steve Wilson in his book on individualism and jazz
scenes *Blowin’ the Blues Away*, however, he refers to this as “bringing something to the music.” Jackson, *Blowin’
As noted earlier, jazz musicians often describe a particular soloist as “saying something,” if they feel that musician is playing in a way that is meaningful, either by engaging with aspects of the “jazz tradition” or with the musicians onstage (or both). Since jazz musicians view improvisation as a social activity, interactive just like a conversation, the kinds of qualities that go into making a good conversation are often used to evaluate the quality of a musical performance. Performances that contain a higher degree of interaction between musicians are deemed to be better than those with musicians performing to serve only their own interests. Moreover, the moments that contain the greatest amount of give-and-take between participants often represent “aesthetic high points of performances.”

Further, musicians will refer to a musician as “talking” or “saying something,” when they are contributing something of importance and may even consider someone who does not communicate onstage as unmusical.

Steve Coleman uses many of the same linguistic metaphors, as well as others, to indicate ways in which Parker and his cohorts improvise and interact onstage, create structure, invent rhythmic phrasing, and are expressive within (what Coleman calls) “spontaneous compositions.” While he uses “slang,” “conversation,” and “discussion” to discuss interactions between the musicians, he also uses these kinds of metaphors to describe dialogistic ways Parker constructs his solos when there is little interaction from the other musicians onstage stating: “the conversational aspect of Yard’s playing is always on display, the way he is always in dialog with himself.”

Coleman indicates Parker’s approach to structuring a solo usually consists of

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37 Monson, Saying Something, 80.
38 Coleman bases his concepts on Charles Mingus’ notions of “new melodic concepts” and “spontaneous composition” within his liner notes for the album Let My Children Hear Music (1972). I suspect one reason for the use of the term, rather than the generally agreed upon term “solo,” is that solo implies one person as opposed to a group. Also, “composition” implies greater importance. Mingus and Coleman argue improvisations by greats such as Charlie Parker and Bud Powell are on par with other “pencil composers” like Beethoven and Bach even though they were based on often simple forms created by others.
“exclamations, dialog, linguistic phraseology, and common sense structure that is contained in everyday conversation” in order to “tell a story” and offer certain “explanations.”\(^{40}\) Moreover, he uses descriptors such as “explanation,” “symmetry,” “rhyming,” and “sentence structure,”\(^{41}\) to further indicate aspects of form in Parker’s music. Further, Coleman points to particular musical phrases—he refers to as “linguistic rhythmic devices” —he believes Parker uses to imply words and even entire phrases based on the rhythmic makeup of his line. For example, the repeated word “perhaps”—within Parker’s composed melody of the same name—and even longer phrases that complete a chorus or a section of a song form such as “do you know what I mean?” and “understand what I'm sayin’?” he says are evident throughout Parker’s work.\(^42\)

Coleman uses another group of allusions that likens different types of rhythmic phrasing structures and interaction to various types of movement. However, some of these metaphors can also be interpreted as linguistic in a sense. For example, he uses the terms “hesitation” or “a stuttering effect”\(^{43}\) to describe the kind of unpredictable small rhythmic groupings of eighth-notes (such as 2-2-1-3), within the melody of Ko-Ko. This hesitation technique also uses accents to emphasize its syncopated rhythm and is sometimes referred by Coleman as representing a clave pattern that is independent of the underlying pulse. Matthew Clayton has previously noted the use of accents to emphasize Coleman’s use of syncopation in his dissertation “M-Base: Envisioning Change for Jazz in the 1980s and Beyond” (2009).\(^44\) Clayton describes how the use


\(^{41}\) Ibid.

\(^{42}\) Coleman’s description of “Perhaps” is particularly insightful when considering his view of Parker’s rhythmic compositional approach in relation to the rhythm of speech.

\(^{43}\) While stuttering can also be related to speech, I have the sense it is more movement-related here because of its associations with backpedaling and stratification.

of accents contribute to the kind of hesitation effect that might also involve the practice of turning the beat around or playing over the bar line:

This rhythmic approach consisted of placing accents on various beats in the metric structure to accentuate the syncopated nature of the melody. An ambiguity exists between the underlying timeline and the melody, which gives the melody the hesitating quality that Coleman noticed.\textsuperscript{45}

Another movement-related metaphor is the term “backpedaling,” which Coleman uses to refer to a mirror image or a retracing of steps, “the way that the rhythmic pattern seems to reverse in movement (3-3-2, then 2-3-3).”\textsuperscript{46} Backpedaling is a defensive move in boxing and one of a number of sports-related metaphors Coleman uses to describe conversational interactions between Parker and drummer Max Roach. The term is also used when a speaker or changes or softens his or her position in an argument, usually as a defensive move.

Other metaphors Coleman uses to describe the kind of back-and-forth interjections between the two musicians are less easily linked to language. These include allusions to specific types of movements of certain professional African American athletes across a number of various sports. For example, Coleman refers to a series of unpredictable punches delivered by Floyd Mayweather, Jr. and “ankle breaking,” (cross-over) moves by Allan Iverson.\textsuperscript{47} Coleman brings some of these specific conversational moments to light in his discussion of the interaction that takes place between Parker and Roach on the 1948 live recording of “Ko-Ko.”\textsuperscript{48}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[46] Again, this kind of rhythm could be related to speech. Coleman himself uses a palindrome later in the same article to describe a similar “rhythmic symmetry” in Parker’s phrasing. He refers to this particular approach to phrasing as an “Able Was I Ere I Saw Elba form.”
\item[47] While it is not entirely clear, it seems as though some of these metaphors came about through conversations with other musicians. Miles Davis, for example, had knowledge of boxing techniques and used them as analogies as well.
\item[48] In addition to “Ko-Ko,” Coleman offers two other Parker compositions that had a significant impact on his individual approach: “Moose the Mooche,” for it’s jarring intervals and start-and-stop phrasing, and his solo on “Klactoveedsedstene,” because of Parker’s expert development of a simple motive and his artistry in manipulating rhythm.
\end{footnotes}
In my opinion, the work of Max Roach in this performance of “Ko-Ko” is very similar to the smooth, fluent, unpredictable groove that elite fighters like Mayweather Jr. employ. The interplay of Max’s drumming with Bird’s improvisation sets up a very similar feel to what I saw in Mayweathers’s rhythm. Near the end of “Ko-Ko,” at 2:15, Max does exactly this same kind of boxer motion, accompanying the second half of Miles’ interlude improvisation and continuing into Bird’s improvisation, only in this case it is like a counterpoint, a conversation in slang between Yard and Max. This is a technique that is both seen and heard throughout the African Diaspora.

Coleman emphasizes the rhythmic grooves that can come about due to these kinds of exchanges:

Mayweather was throwing body shots (i.e. punches) and head shots, all coming from different angles: hooks, crosses, straight shots, uppercuts, jabs, an assortment of punches in an unpredictable rhythm. But it’s not only that Mayweathers’s rhythm that was unpredictable, it was also the groove that he got into.

Clayton draws a similar relationship between Coleman and particular athletes. With respect to certain boxers, he says: “Steve Coleman observed their styles—the way they would bob and weave, jab, and evade punches. He liked the motion of the boxer in the ring.” Moreover, Clayton refers to Coleman’s admiration of the “cuts, shakes, and quickness of changing direction” of Chicago Bears football running back Gale Sayers.

In addition to providing a mode of analysis for jazz performance practice, metaphors have helped to form certain conceptual ideas that are central to Coleman’s improvisatory approach. In his interview with Clayton, Coleman describes one of these concepts, which he calls “hovering.” This time it was the movement patterns of bees that inspired Coleman’s thinking, particularly hovering around something. This would eventually morph into Coleman’s

49 Clayton, “M-Base,” 48
50 Ibid.
“Symmetry Theory.” Coleman likens hovering to a technique that Coltrane, among others, would often employ:

There’s this thing that we used to call “hanging,” where people would hang on a note, like Coltrane would, breaking up an eighth-note rhythm in a certain way that sounded hip, usually on upbeats. These bees were doing that but on a real advanced level. Bunky [Green] and people were doing it too, but the bees were doing it more, and better. I wanted to play like that, rhythmically and melodically.

As we have seen, the types of metaphors used by Coleman provide an illustrative way of speaking about interaction among jazz musicians and some of the rhythmic sensibilities that are particular to certain sub-genres of jazz. Indeed, Coleman and Clayton rely on such language to describe musical events wherever referential language and music notation fall short. Moreover, Greg Osby used similar language in my conversations with him, which I explore in the next chapter. Although this way of describing aspects of rhythm and interaction may have originated as a type of musicians’ “insider’s language,” the descriptive imagery seems to go beyond a strict technical language and can be useful in communicating meaning to non-musicians. I have chosen to use some of these descriptive terms in my analysis of Green’s improvisatory voice throughout chapters 4-6. Most notably, these are linguistic metaphors related to conversation, symmetry and sentence structure, as well as Coleman’s descriptions of rhythm that use metaphors related to movement (hesitation, backpedaling and hovering.) Since the use of these terms promotes clarity and consistency with Coleman’s work, I also use them to move towards what I hope is a more widely accepted way of speaking about these particular aspects of jazz performance.

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51 Clayton, “M-Base,” 56. Very simply put, the theory calls for symmetry above and below a particular note. For example, if you play two notes above a certain note, you must follow with a phrase that goes two notes below. For more information, see “Symmetrical Movement Concept,” by Steve Coleman, M-Base.com, http://m-base.com/essays/symmetrical-movement-concept/, accessed October 11, 2016.
52 Clayton, “M-Base,” 47.
STYLE, SOUND & VOICE

In an effort to form recognizable musical personalities of their own, musicians study and absorb aspects of admired musicians’ styles through the process of transcribing solos: listening, singing along and playing with recordings, as well as writing them down for analysis. As demonstrated in several books and articles, as well as in perennial master classes on the subject, saxophonist and educator David Liebman has done admirable work in defining these kinds of processes.  

Liebman describes transcription, or imitation, as one of the first stages of learning to play jazz. In addition to the notes and rhythms, Liebman says, musicians learn about timbre, also referred to as tone or colour; time feel, or eighth note feel; articulation; dynamics, including hard and soft accents and ghosted notes; as well as expressive devices or nuances such as vibrato, fall-offs and note bends. With the exception of tone, all of these stylistic elements are often grouped together under the umbrella term “phrasing.”

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. 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.

While notes and rhythms are often what receive emphasis in a transcription (or score), according to Liebman, “it is [actually] the nuances that make the language come alive.” Thus, he urges

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54 Ibid.  
55 Ibid.  
56 David Liebman, Master Class, March 26, 2013.
his students to look beyond notes and rhythms, explaining that nuance and phrasing are the real motivation behind transcription. He describes transcription as “a means to an end,” indicating that tone, articulation, use of dynamics, eighth-note feel, and nuance combine to form an artist’s “recognizable style of playing.” Since such aspects of a player’s “style” are difficult to convey using musical notation, Liebman says that students cannot learn this information from a book, rather, it must be learned aurally “in order to sound authentic in this music.” Liebman’s view of what makes an individual style, then, directs attention away from notes and rhythms on the page and redirects emphasis to details within the sound, or some of the actual sonic qualities of what I refer to as a player’s “voice.”

In his book, *Blowin’ the Blues Away*, ethnomusicologist Travis A. Jackson includes musicians’ perspectives on jazz improvisation and the New York City jazz scene. He says that “perhaps the chief concern of every musician I interviewed, whether formally or informally, is having an immediately distinguishable individual sound.” Jackson says that “sound,” in this context, “refers not only to timbre but also to particular usages of harmonic, rhythmic, and textural resources in performance and composition.” A player’s sound can consist of, Jackson says, a number of aspects such as particular chord substitutions, voicings, melodic fragments, rhythmic patterns, and personal approaches to group interaction. Thus, a soloist can be recognizable for the way he or she makes each sound and the way these sounds are combined in

58 Ibid.
59 David Liebman, Master Class, March 26, 2013.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 111.
unique ways to build musical statements. Similar to Liebman’s point of transcribing a number of instrumentalists, Jackson remarks that “the possession of an identifiable musical persona is the product of having considered a number of approaches and synthesized them into a concept.”

I argue that the term “voice” performs a couple of functions that the idea of a recognizable sound leaves behind. As alluded to earlier, voice places the idea of individuality within the arena of linguistic metaphor, aligning it with scholarly work already put forth by Feld, Berliner, Monson, and Coleman. Further, the singular nature of “voice” likens it to values of individualism within jazz and other African Diasporic musics in general. Moreover, as in jazz performance, voice implies the importance of sonic characteristics over textual ones. Although my use of “voice” includes things an improviser might say (i.e. vocabulary, chord substitutions, voicings etc.), the very nature of the term puts emphasis on the way such things are said. This can include timbre, phrasing aspects, rhythmic phrasing, as well as certain intangibles such as tone and emotion.

Thus, while musicians are able to adjust stylistic parameters in order to play within various styles, imitating a particular player’s voice is much more difficult. In his book *Developing a Personal Saxophone Sound*, Liebman explores a number of the aspects that contribute to an individual’s sound. He relates saxophone sound manipulation (timbre) to that of a human voice, which he says is “like a set of fingerprints, unique and one of a kind. The tone of one’s voice while speaking is evidence of this fact, as well as when singing, which is an

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64 Jackson, *Blowin’ the Blues Away*, 112-113. This is similar to what Liebman calls an artist’s personal or individual approach.

65 Jackson speaks about these ideas as related to soulfulness and his idea of “blues feeling,” part of what he calls a “blues aesthetic,” *Blowin’ the Blues Away*, 114-115, 118-119, 127, 199-200 / Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, 126-127.
He continues to illustrate some of the more specific similarities between the two:

In both activities it is apparent that pitch can be changed by movement in the voice box located in the laryngeal area. Even when speaking there are rises and falls of pitch. These laryngeal manipulations, coupled with the necessary and minimal movements at the reed, can be executed in infinitesimal and subtle ways resulting in the ability to artistically control the shape and color of the sound.67

The particular observations made by Liebman reinforce the non-transferability and uniqueness of an artist’s individual timbre. However, just as subtle are individual differences in articulation, time feel, and expressive devices such as note-bends, vibrato, and vocal effects.

As well as underlining individuality; the sonic character of a player’s sound, the way musical statements are delivered in addition to what is being said; and continuing the notion of “music as language;” voice (as opposed to style or sound) is indicative of the interaction that takes place during a conversation. In this light, rather than see an improvised solo as the representation of a musician’s style or sound, perhaps this is better described as a number of voices engaged in conversation. This is an idea Monson seems to leave unexplored in her discussion of linguistic metaphor yet one that seems to fit with her other theories. With respect to her investigations of musical conversations and the trading of musical ideas, for example, I would argue that each improviser’s interpretation of the theme or idea that is being passed around is immediately coloured by the individual voices. This idea adds some nuance to Monson’s idea of individuals in conversation. It seems that Coleman approaches this idea as well in his descriptions of what he calls Parker’s “language” or “style.” This is especially apparent when Coleman emphasizes particular ways jazz musicians such as Parker deliver their musical

66 Liebman, Developing a Personal Saxophone Sound, 5.
67 Ibid.
statements and interact with others. This comes across in his descriptions of the “slick” way Parker plays a line or the “slang” he and Roach “speak” in their interactions with each other.68

LINGUISTIC INFLUENCES FROM THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Many of the implied rhythmic and conversational aspects of jazz, Coleman says, are inherent to African Diasporic culture and therefore intuited or felt. He relates rhythmic examples from Parker’s solos to clave rhythms found within Afro-Cuban music and to the rhythms of master drummers in West African traditions. In addition to basketball and boxing, he points to other African Diasporic practices that contain similar rhythms to bebop including “dancers and the timing of most of the various activities that go on in the hood.”69 Coleman emphasizes however, that “this same rhythmic sensibility can occur on various levels of sophistication, and with the music of Bird and his cohorts, it occurs on an extremely sophisticated artistic level.”70

Like Coleman, Monson uses metaphors as a means of uncovering connections between jazz and African-American cultural practices both within and outside of music. She argues that, while these cultural practices may lie beneath the surface, they nevertheless bear an influence on the underlying tone, rhythmic feel, and other aspects of performance practice. In this light, she suggests that a more nuanced understanding of the improvisation process can be achieved through the study of African-American literature, speech practices, and scholarship about them. In particular, she asserts that the metaphors therein provide context and a way of analyzing jazz music “on its own terms.”71 This reinforces the notion that jazz improvisation cannot be

69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Monson, Saying Something, 85.
explained using traditional Western European methods. Moreover, conceptualizing jazz improvisation as conversation emphasizes how it (and jazz itself) is considered more as process rather than as a finished product. In other words, in addition to helping non-musicians understand the way jazz musicians interact, the metaphor of conversation also says “something very significant about musical process.”

The metaphor of conversation directs our attention not only to the structural aspects of interactive music making but also to the feeling and tone of particular styles of conversation. Because the musical leadership of jazz has been primarily black, African-American cultural sensibilities and ideas of sociability have defined the ideal social and interactional values within multi-ethnic performing and listening communities.

Many of the aesthetic sensibilities that we think of as being a vital part of jazz practice come from African cultural values, typically understood to originate from the western sub-Saharan region. These include but are not limited to swing feel, timbre, call and response, and improvisation. Indicative of Monson’s belief in the relationship between music and language, and specifically, how it is spoken, is her suggestion that it is possible to arrive at a deeper understanding of jazz practices through the study of non-musical African and African-American language traditions.

Based on her extensive interviews with a multitude of jazz musicians, Monson argues that jazz musicians use metaphor to describe the improvisation process and interaction within a group setting, not because they are unable to speak in Western analytical terms but because such terms are inadequate descriptors of jazz (even when used with the best intentions). This is not to say that jazz musicians do not talk about melody or harmony using Western “Classical” terminology. However, it is difficult to discuss the process of jazz improvisation using terms

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72 Monson, *Saying Something*, 81.
73 Ibid., 90.
designed for Western art music since this practice has for some time been strongly rooted in the performance of pre-composed and fully notated music. Monson’s justification for using metaphor to describe the process of improvising is worth repeating here:

Jazz musicians stand in a particularly betwixt and between relationship to standard musical analysis. Most are quite able to talk about harmony, scales, melodic ideas, and rhythmic precision in terms familiar to students of Western music theory; many, in fact, have had extensive training in classical music and music theory. When describing the effective deployment of these musical resources with other musicians in the context of jazz performance, however, they often prefer metaphorical description for its ability to convey the intangible social and aesthetic dimensions of music making. The analytic vocabulary of Western musical theory seems “soulless” to many.74

Thus, while jazz musicians are often trained in and able to speak in terms of Western musical theory and analysis, their musical training includes other perspectives as well, notably, those tied to the African Diaspora and African-American culture. For Monson—and indeed the majority of jazz scholars and musicians—the African-derived aspects are especially important. She goes as far as arguing that Non-African Americans must also tap into this world in order to play jazz music in an authentic way. Monson asserts “when musicians use the metaphor of conversation, they are saying something very significant about musical process.”75 Strictly speaking, jazz musicians use conversation metaphors because they are key factors in interpreting notions of jazz performance practice and emphasize the “sociability of jazz performance.”76

To this end, Monson highlights a couple of linguistic practices among jazz musicians that she links to African language sensibilities. For example, she notes how African-American jazz musicians became infamous for using slang beginning as early as the 1930s. During this time, they developed a manner of speaking that was not obvious and was most likely created as a way

74 Monson, *Saying Something*, 93.
75 Ibid, 81.
76 Ibid., 73-96.
to keep the uninitiated out of the conversation. Phrases and vocabulary were indirect in quality and often were used as a roundabout way of saying something. Lester Young is often credited with coining or (at least) popularizing several terms or phrases commonly used among jazz musicians including “cool” and “dig.”\textsuperscript{77} Lewis Porter writes that Young would say that he “felt a draft” when he detected racism from whites\textsuperscript{78} (an example of metaphoric speech) and call fellow male musicians “Lady.”\textsuperscript{79} This could be seen as a reversal of meaning (the same way that “bad” is used to refer to something good). Young has also said “anyone with music in his heart is a Lady.” This kind of speech bears similarities to certain West African sensibilities, which are said to include “indirect, multisided, and metaphorical modes of speaking.”\textsuperscript{80} Conversely, Western culture typically emphasizes “nonambiguous and non-playful delineation of ideas in intellectual discourse as well as the separation of these ideas from emotions.”\textsuperscript{81}

Monson also references The Dozens, or the trading of verbal insults, as an example of an African-American game that draws on traditional (indirect) modes of discourse. She lists variations of verbal dueling as “sounding” “woofing,” “capping,” “marking,” and “jiving.”\textsuperscript{82} Insults traded in The Dozens often involve family members, intelligence, financial, and social status. Participants’ skill is judged on their ability to transform their opponent’s phrase in a clever way that involves an inventive, creative response. This manner of spoken engagement is,

\textsuperscript{77} These would eventually become part of mainstream slang although they were at first limited to within jazz circles.
\textsuperscript{78} Lewis Porter, \textit{Lester Young} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 27.
\textsuperscript{79} Porter states, for example, Louie Bellson was referred to as “Lady Bellson.” Billie Holliday was reportedly one of the few women that Young called “Lady” or “Lady Day.”
\textsuperscript{80} Monson, \textit{Saying}, 92.
\textsuperscript{82} Monson, \textit{Saying}, 86.
according to Monson, following Henry Louis Gates Jr., a form of Signifyin(g) that originated in black communities in the United States.\textsuperscript{83} Therefore it is much more common among African Americans than it was among whites. Neil Leonard points to some of the politics of this manner of discourse: “the black community grants special recognition to the skillful talker who in the white world might be discounted as a backyard lawyer, conman, or fabricator. For this or other reasons, many whites could not hold their own in jive talk. They knew the right terms but not how to use them.”\textsuperscript{84} Call and response type speech, like that between a clergymen and his congregation, is another example of an African tradition that many scholars associate with jazz that further emphasizes the sociability of jazz and an African-American cultural influence, “as found in Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal, Apostolic, and Holiness congregations among others.”\textsuperscript{85}

Charlie Parker said, “Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don’t live it, it won’t come out of your horn.”\textsuperscript{86} I take this statement to mean that the way a musician makes music—his or her voice—results from more than just learned notes and phrases. A number of other environmental and personal qualities must factor into one’s voice as well, including but not limited to speech styles, personality traits, sense of humour, and cultural surroundings. As numerous scholars have noted, African and African-American culture has been a major contributor to jazz performance practices, if for no other reason than the majority of the leading musicians have been African American and have grown up in predominantly African American contexts. Monson argues that a greater understanding of some of the cultural

\textsuperscript{83} Monson, Saying, 86.
\textsuperscript{85} Monson, Saying, 96.
practices familiar to the experiences of African Americans offers insight into some of jazz
music’s most important qualities that lie beneath the surface.

**JAZZ VOCABULARIES**

Based on his interviews with well-established jazz musicians, Berliner found that
his subjects often would invoke the term “vocabulary” to refer to a collection of phrases
an individual soloist internalizes through the process of listening to, singing, transcribing,
or reading solos of established jazz masters. He asserts that the improviser draws upon
this “complex vocabulary of conventional phrases and phrase components” when
constructing his or her improvised solos, often reworking the material to make it function
within various contexts or to convey a more personalized statement. Berliner has found
that musicians also refer to these learned phrases as “ideas, licks, tricks, pet patterns,
crips, clichés, and, in the most functional language, things you can do.”

The accumulation of vocabulary by the student is a preliminary step towards becoming
an accomplished improviser and not as an end within itself. Dan Haerle, for example, associates
chords and scales with grammar, vocabulary and phrase structures (in language). Just as children
learning to speak a language must have a working vocabulary in order to communicate ideas,
Haerle advocates that students internalize the “basic building materials” of chords and scales so
they may deal principally with aspects of expression. Within his chapter on some of the

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87 Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, 95.
88 Ibid., 102.
89 Dan Haerle, *Jazz Language* (Miami: Studio 224, 1980), 1. Although I agree with Haerle’s statement about
internalizing basic building material, I would argue that chords and scales are another step removed from any kind
of jazz vocabulary. Instead, I see these as having more to do with learning the basics of one’s instrument, perhaps
something more akin to an alphabet or basic vowel sounds in language.
practice routines and learning methods used by several performers, Berliner discovered that learned phrases should be “used flexibly,” as a way for players to develop an individual voice. He outlines several ways in which musicians looking to absorb new approaches can alter phrases in their repertoire to produce fresh material through what he terms the “process of interpretive extraction.” These practices include “truncation,” “contraction,” “augmentation,” rhythmic displacement, changing pitches while retaining the rhythm, and altering timbre or articulation to personalize a learned phrase.

At the same time that improvisers draw upon a common language, manipulating it as the basis for formulating ideas, their activity involves coining new musical words as much as applying conventional ones. To a greater degree than for verbal expression, the two are integrally related processes for jazz musicians.

The young jazz musician reconciles these two processes in order to find a balance between influence and individuality when developing his or her individual voice. The internalization of musical elements from the jazz language that serve to make up a player’s vocabulary may seem at odds with that player’s goal in creating a voice that is unique and recognizable but the two processes actually support one another. Both enable the improviser to interact with other musicians and express meaningful thought, adapt musical material while in the moment of creation, and shape learned phrases in such a way as to produce meaningful musical statements.

Berliner identifies the base of a player’s vocabulary as originating from four main sources: “the common language of jazz,” popular songs, influential soloists, and educators. He describes his first source, “the common language of jazz,” as characteristic kinds of things that are commonly associated with its various related idioms.

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90 Berliner, Thinking in Jazz, 186-187. Berliner defines several methods of transforming melodic phrases. Among them: “Truncation occurs when the deletion of the last chunk of the original phrase leaves a remaining chunk that can stand on its own as a viable pattern.” Contraction occurs when the midsection is omitted leaving “two remaining segments that couple comfortably.” Augmentation extends a phrase.

91 Ibid., 185
These include short melodic figures like traditional blues licks and repeated riffs known as shout patterns. Such patterns were once associated with particular soloists or repertory genres like the blues but have since been passed anonymously from generation to generation and put to more general use. From the earliest days of jazz, artists absorbed these and other patterns in the context of performance. Although many originated in solos, others originated in a band’s musical arrangement—their introductory figures, musical interludes, and background lines that accompany singers and instrumental soloists. Artists sometimes identify anonymous patterns with their respective jazz idioms; for example, they characterize them as swing figures, bebop licks, and free jazz gestures.

Berliner says this kind of vocabulary makes up a kind of commonly understood language among jazz players and knowledgeable audiences. However, it seems that “swing figures, bebop licks, and free jazz gestures” might also be thought of as their own distinct languages—or perhaps these might be better understood as dialects—which musicians can draw on to more closely position themselves to a specific idiom.

The practice of incorporating popular songs from a variety of sources (including movies, musical theatre, or nursery rhymes) can create a playful, lighthearted aspect to a solo. However, it also creates an opportunity for the improviser to demonstrate their skill at superimposing these melodies over an existing framework. Some of the best-known exemplars of this tradition were Ella Fitzgerald, Dexter Gordon and Charlie Parker. Fitzgerald is well known for her ability to switch from one melody to another while scatting, Gordon, for his oft-quoted nursery rhymes and other commonly known themes. In some cases, such quotation demonstrates the improviser’s knowledge of a particular type of music, thereby, elevating his or her status among musicians and audience members. For example, in addition to Parker’s well-known use of “In an English Country Garden” and parts of the well-known Alphonse Picou solo on “High Society,”

92 Thomas Owens, “Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation (Volumes I and II)” (PhD dissertation University of California, 1974, 102-103.)
he was indeed known to insert themes from Western Classical music, including themes from Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* and selections from Bizet’s *Carmen*.93

Before addressing Berliner’s next source of influence, “individual soloists,” I would like to look briefly at his fourth and final source of jazz vocabulary and look at some of the ways educators influence the formation of vocabulary. Since teachers develop their own storehouse of vocabulary and individual improvisatory characteristics such as signature licks and other aspects of the common jazz language, Berliner says a portion of these are inevitably passed down to the student. A musician’s peers could also be included in this group, as they are constantly sharing and exchanging information during throughout the process of learning to play.

For many experts in jazz education including Patricia Shehan Campbell, jazz improvisation cannot be taught; it can only be learned. However, even she concedes that, “the vast store of musical information that builds from infancy onward requires the stimulation, motivation and nurturing facilitation of a strong model, mentor and/or master.”94 She states that teachers often fill the important role of helping students to develop the kinds of skills or learning habits that facilitate better learning including focused individual practice.

A final source of vocabulary that I will point to are the more unique statements jazz musicians make during solo improvisation. Berliner refers to these as “unique patterns” or “signature licks.” The most famous study that pursues identifying signature licks and patterns in jazz is quite possibly Thomas Owens’ analysis of Charlie Parker’s solos in “Charlie Parker:

Techniques of Improvisation.” Owens transcribed approximately 250 solos and catalogued about 100 motives, or “building blocks for his improvised melodies,” that Parker played repeatedly in various contexts and combinations.  

It is one of the most well-known pieces of scholarship that outlines a jazz musician’s vocabulary. Many of the motives identified by Owens have become recognizable as belonging to bebop idioms and have subsequently (although in most cases, not as a direct result of his dissertation) been adopted into the playing of countless musicians.

Although Owens refers to the individual phrases as motives, I would argue that his work is essentially a study of Parker’s vocabulary. Owens makes several references to the existence of various jazz vocabularies including a “melodic jazz vocabulary” and “harmonic jazz vocabulary,” as well as “Parker’s musical vocabulary.” Moreover, as evidenced in his statement, “Elements of his style of improvisation were widely copied by jazz musicians, and have made up a large part of the musical vocabulary of jazz for the past thirty years,” Owens clearly believes Parker contributed to a larger pool of existing jazz vocabulary. I suppose that the “elements of his style of improvisation” that were widely copied could be equated with what Berliner calls “unique patterns” or “signature licks.” In addition to Parker’s unique musical statements, his vocabulary certainly included signature licks from musicians he idolized—including several well-documented examples of Lester Young’s influence—as well as from “the common language of jazz.”

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96 Ibid., 2, 15.
97 Ibid., 16.
98 Ibid., 21. Also, Parker’s circa 1942 recordings—with Efferge Ware (guitar) and Little Phil Phillips (drums)—pay tribute to Young in several ways. The melody of “Tickle Toe,” and segments from Young’s improvisation on “Shoe Shine Boy” are quoted in Parker’s solo on “I Found a New Baby,” for example.
While Owens acknowledges the existence of particular vocabularies, the majority of his dissertation is devoted to the study of motives, which he says help to “explain the process by which [Parker] actually put his improvisations together.” While he does touch on sonic characteristics of Parker’s voice—including articulation, dynamics (including accented and unaccented notes), vibrato, and tone quality—the bulk of his research centers around the melodic fragments Parker combines to form his vocabulary. Because Parker was one of the musicians who created and remains most strongly associated with bebop—one might say he was one of bebop’s defining voices—his vocabulary, his stock phrases, licks, and the like as identified by Owens, in many ways became synonymous with it.

Owing to bebop’s powerful and lasting influence on jazz, nearly all musicians that followed draw on at least some, if not many of the motives identified by Owens. Thus, audiences’ expectations of what jazz alto saxophone “should” sound like were affected as well. I argue that the repercussions of this widespread influence in some ways worked against musicians like Green, who were looking to form musical identities of their own by looking to sources of influence outside of Parker, transforming aspects of his approach, or attempting to avoid its most recognizable features. Musicians who stray from the established norm in order to forge a voice of their own, usually are forced to make certain sacrifices. Indeed, Osby touched on this point in our conversation:

I’m taking great measures to not have any kind of referential sound posts in my playing. And I think that Bunky Green and Steve [Coleman] and… people that we mentioned [Rudresh Mahanthappa, Kenny Garrett, and Gary Thomas, among others]: they also did that. They recognized the value and the benefit of identity— for better or for worse. Of course, you don’t get the calls for the gigs, you live in relative obscurity, you live a pauper’s lifestyle or you have to live very humbly and… from hand-to-mouth but you have the respect of the people who are in the

know. And no matter what people say, they can’t take away from you the fact that you forged… you did what this music was designed to do.\footnote{Osby, interview by the author, 2015.}

In this view, musicians like Parker, and Coltrane after him, are in many ways the embodiments of the ideal jazz musician. However, because their individual voices were so incredibly strong and attracted such a wide following, they in essence signaled a shift away from notions of individuality and inspired more homogenized styles of jazz. Coleman describes his view of the effects Parker had on the jazz world:

Parker's time in the physical plane was brief. However, in a short period of time he served the function of a modern griot, an avatar for the prototypical spontaneous composer. In the process, his creations turned the musical world upside down.\footnote{“The Dozens: Steve Coleman on Charlie Parker,” by Steve Coleman, Ted Panken (ed.), Jazz.com, accessed May 30, 2016, http://www.jazz.com/dozens/the-dozens-steve-coleman-on-charlie-parker (site discontinued).}

As a result of Parker’s widespread influence on the jazz community, there arose a number of alto saxophonists who closely copied his vocabulary and stylistic approaches. Green himself was highly influenced by Parker’s music until he “found the courage enough to be [himself].”

Musicians like Green are important if for no other reason than to serve as a reminder of the central importance that individuality holds in jazz improvisation. Osby reflects on the importance of Green on his own playing.

From a fundamental perspective, I look at Bunky more or less as a beacon of hope because… he validates the trials and the sacrifices of trying to forge a style, an approach and a definition of self. He represents the reward that all sacrifice yields. More so than a lot of people in his peer group. A lot of established veterans, as facile and accomplished as they may be, they still don’t represent the level of identification that he does for me.”
Further discussion of the fine line between influence and individuality continues in Chapter 3. At this point however, I would like to look at additional ways musicians can communicate meaning through the allusion to particular musicians and events.

INTERMUSICALITY & SIGNIFYIN(G)

A number of scholars claim that music has the ability to refer to extra-musical events and, therefore, communicate meaning to other musicians onstage and to a knowledgeable audience.\(^{102}\) Monson calls this act of referring to other musicians or past events within an improvised solo as “intermusicality.”

I am interested in how music functions in a relational or discursive rather than an absolute manner… the topic of interest here is the musical quotation or allusion, which embodies the conflict between innovation and tradition in jazz performance as well as the larger question of how instrumental music conveys cultural meaning.\(^{103}\)

In one respect, this practice is a way for the soloist to show where his or her allegiances lie, a kind of tip of the hat to particular musical predecessors. For example, an improviser may allude to an influential master by imitating his or her tone or phrasing—by stating a certain familiar pattern such as John Coltrane’s “Giant Steps” harmonic sequence—or by playing a particular composition that is associated with that player. Further, quotations played by a soloist are sometimes interpreted as “conversing” with his or her predecessors. The following remark from guitarist Arthur Rhames highlights the importance of this practice.

The great players always give homage to their predecessors by recalling certain things that they did. They give it in appreciation and in understanding of the

\(^{102}\) Including John Murphy, Berliner, and Monson.

\(^{103}\) Monson, *Saying*, 97.
validity of their predecessors. Being able to quote from songs and solos is always part of a mature artist because he’s aware of the contribution of others and its impact, how valid it is. Something that is really valid is timeless.\textsuperscript{104}

Sometimes players go as far as quoting another soloist’s entire solo as a sign of respect. A well known example is Joe “King” Oliver’s solo on “Dippermouth Blues,” which, according to some accounts, he played note-for-note each night. Louis Armstrong began playing the same solo while still a member of Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band in the 1920s. Other trumpet players followed suit, including Sharkey Bonano, Rex Stewart, Bobby Stark, J.C. Higginbotham, and Harry James.\textsuperscript{105} To this day, it remains common practice to include the solo when performing the piece. Similar chains of events took place within the Ellington organization over a period of several decades. Bubber Miley’s solo on “Black and Tan Fantasy” was passed down through successive trumpet players\textsuperscript{106} as well as Barney Bigard’s original clarinet solo on “Mood Indigo.”\textsuperscript{107}

In his article, \textit{The Joy of Influence} (1990), John P. Murphy investigates several themes that are in accordance with Monson’s idea of intermusicality. The title of his piece, which is itself an allusion to a past work, refers to a book written by literary critic Harold Bloom entitled \textit{The Anxiety of Influence} (1975)\textsuperscript{108}. Bloom explores the concept of influence within areas of Western European based poetry of the 1800s, a period where poets strived to conceal their influences. Bloom suggests that this anxiety of influence may have contributed to stifled

\begin{footnotes}
\item[104] Quoted in Berliner, \textit{Thinking in Jazz}, 103.
\item[105] Ibid., 781.
\item[106] This lineage is listed as moving from Miley to Cootie Williams to Ray Nance to Cat Anderson. Berliner, \textit{Thinking}, 781.
\end{footnotes}
creativity among some poets during this time. Conversely, Murphy explains that jazz musicians, “rather than anxiously concealing their influences,”\(^{109}\) are applauded for making references within an improvisation. This practice is viewed as a way of paying homage to particular predecessors and a way of communicating meaning to the other musicians onstage as well as towards their audience. Murphy states that the primary goals of his paper are to determine “what relationships exist between an individual jazz musician and his or her precursors in the jazz tradition” and to find “possible sources of the meaningfulness that performers and audiences find in the process of playing and listening to jazz.”\(^{110}\) To this end, Murphy explores two solos by tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson in which segments of “Buzzy,”\(^{111}\) are quoted. Although the two Henderson solos were recorded sixteen years apart (recorded in 1965 and 1981), over different compositions, and with different personnel, they nevertheless contain several similarities. For starters, “If” and “Bird Like” are both 12-bar blues compositions in the key of F. In both solos, Henderson quotes the “Buzzy” melody in obvious fashion. Moreover, he begins by playing a somewhat altered version of the motive near the top of the form and develops the theme over the following twelve bars.

It seems apparent that, rather than anxiously concealing his stylistic debt to Charlie Parker, he emphasizes his knowledge of, and admiration for, Parker's work by beginning two blues choruses, recorded sixteen years apart, with a well-known Parker motive—which he not only repeats, but transforms so as to imprint his style on Parker's. There are other aspects of Henderson's style which recall Parker, but here he uses a motive which the knowledgeable but not necessarily specialist jazz listener would be likely to understand. The transformation is enough to make it clear that it is Joe Henderson who is playing, not Parker, but not so much that it entirely obscures the Parker motive.\(^{112}\)

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110 Ibid., 7.
111 “Buzzy” is a 12-bar riff blues in the key of Bb that was composed by Charlie Parker and recorded in 1947 with Miles Davis, Bud Powell, Tommy Potter, and Max Roach.
Murphy argues that sufficiently knowledgeable listeners are able to identify certain cues conveyed by the performer that make reference to performers, certain solos, or compositions from the past. These references are not purely musical as they denote allegiances to certain traditions or schools of thought. An informed audience can recognize these extra-musical references that add to their enjoyment of the performance. The references Henderson makes to “Buzzy” are easily discernible to the educated jazz listener. Murphy contests that, through the process of quoting and transforming an easily-recognizable (although somewhat obscure) Parker composition, Henderson communicates meaning to his audience: “by invoking and reworking music that is familiar to the audience, the jazz performer involves the audience in the process and makes it meaningful for those who recognize the sources.” Finally, part of what makes these events exciting for the listener is the performer’s reworking and transformation of the original motive.

Berliner, Monson, and Murphy (among others) argue that the use of musical quotes or other allusions have been used by performers throughout the history of jazz. They also show—through transcription and interviews with musicians—that they are central aspects of the music and continue to be a relevant common practice. In addition to allowing for performers to pay homage to certain predecessors, these allusions are used to communicate meaning to musicians onstage and knowledgeable listeners. None of the scholars listed above (nor the musicians whom they interview) view a performer’s use of existing material as signs of being unoriginal. Rather, players are evaluated more so on the inventiveness they display through the act of combining and transforming influences in unique ways. In effect, this becomes part of their “voice” and is evidence of how they “speak” the vocabulary they have acquired. In many ways, this is similar to

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how jazz performances are often evaluated according to musicians’ conversational abilities in manners congruent to African-American language traditions. As opposed to trading ideas back and forth with musicians on stage, however, improvisers are engaged in dialogue with influential musical ideas from the past.

The connections musicians make with the past—either by alluding to a particular player through stylistic measures or in less subtle ways such as recording their compositions—can also have other serious implications. In fact, by emphasizing the importance of a particular individual’s music, musicians have the power to change his or her role in jazz history, thereby effectively rewriting historical texts. Gabriel Solis talks about this phenomenon in his work related to Thelonious Monk in which he recognizes the effect that significant attention from several musicians throughout the 1980s had on Monk’s status within jazz history.114

Another question to consider may be to ask what happens when an improviser references too little from the jazz tradition. Can one stray too far from the history of the music or make the allusions so removed from the sources that audiences then have difficulty recognizing them for what they are? Certainly, jazz audiences invoked this kind of argument when Coltrane changed his approach to incorporate less-recognizable vocabulary, as well as repertoire, towards the end of his life. Davis suffered similar backlashes from his audiences—especially those who may have been expecting something similar to his 1958 version of “Stella by Starlight” for example—following the release of particular albums that show a reworking of his approach. These kinds of instances suggest that audiences require some kind of connection to the music’s history. If this is not clear, a kind of communication breakdown can take place between performers and audiences.

114 See Chapter 3 for more discussion on dynamic views of jazz history.
Murphy may be the first scholar to use Henry Louis Gates’ literary theory as a way to understand the aesthetics, politics, and processes of jazz improvisation. He explains that his reasons for applying the theory to jazz are three-fold: (1) the origins of the theory are musical, (2) it is “attentive to the context and process of both literary creation and musical process,” and (3) its “critical criteria are drawn from African-American expressive culture.” Gates grounds his theory in West African traditional language practices that demonstrate ways in which the “vernacular informs and becomes the foundations for formal black literature.” Part of his motivation for developing his theory is based on a desire to engage with African-American literature on its own terms. His analytical model is based on the concept of a black literary trope known as the “Talking Book”: “a distinct literary tradition in which black writers spoke to, and among, one another, a practice of intertextual allusion, revision, pastiche, and parody.” Although he is not the first to explore signification as it relates to literature, Gates developed the model of Signifyin(g) and our current understanding of the term as “repetition with a signal difference.”

Musicologist Robert Walser discusses the cultural difference between a Western European or North American version of signification, which Gates links with absolute (or at least more direct) meaning and “Signifyin(g)” (referred to as signifyin’ by Walser), an African-American literary theory that has been influential in the study of jazz.

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115 His article “The Joy of Influence” was published in 1990 and was a revised version of a paper he presented in 1988 to the Society for Ethnomusicology in Tempe, Arizona.
American model that contains hidden or double-meanings. His definition of the contrasting modes introduced by Gates is worth repeating here:

Signification is logical, rational limited; from this perspective, meanings are denotative, fixed, exact, and exclusive. Signifyin’ conversely, works through reference, gesture, and dialogue to suggest multiple meanings through association. If signification assumes that meanings can be absolute, permanent, and objectively specified, signifyin’ respects contingency, improvisation, relativity – the social production and negotiation of meanings… signification assumes that meaning can be communicated abstractly and individually, apart from the circumstances of exchange; signifyin’ celebrates performance and dialogue engagement.  

In *Out of Notes: Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis* (1993), Walser argues that the use of traditional musicological methods does not account for the magical artistry of Miles Davis. He uses as an example, Davis’ famous solo on “My Funny Valentine” from 1964.

Prevalent methods of jazz analysis, borrowed from the toolbox of musicology, provide excellent means for legitimating jazz in the academy. But they are clearly inadequate to the task of helping us to understand jazz and to account for its power to affect many people deeply—issues that ought to be central for critical scholarship of jazz. They offer only a kind of mystified, a historical, text-based legitimacy within which rhetoric and signifyin' are invisible. Such methods cannot cope with the problem of Miles Davis: the missed notes, the charged pauses, the technical risk-taking, the whole challenge of explaining how this powerful music works and “how” it means.

Walser attempts to define elements of Davis’ solo that have previously confounded scholars—who rely on conventional Western “Classical” modes of interpretation—as instances of Signifyin(g). He includes within this group elements of Davis’ voice that do not translate well to the score: cracked or half-valved notes; alternate fingerings that produce fuzzy or out of tune notes; entire passages of indiscriminate pitches; and long periods of rests between phrases. What Davis is Signifyin(g) on, Walser suggests, is “proper” trumpet tone and technique, as well as

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playing “correct” notes that fit the chord. Walser argues that, just as Davis’ creativity is unaffected by abstractions such as notes that fit the chord, scholars too should “not allow such concepts to constrain their work.”121 His appeal to scholars is to embrace this concept of Signifyin(g), which he refers to as “never grounded in a foundational epistemology, but always grounded in a web of social practices, histories, and desires.122 By demonstrating that traditional analytical modes fall short in explaining the artistry and the effectiveness with which Davis communicates feeling, Walser shows that alternative methods of analysis must be incorporated into modes of jazz analysis in order to arrive at a closer understanding of jazz music.123

The problem of Miles Davis again brings to light the idea of an individual “voice” and the difficulty of notating specific sonic aspects such as timbre, rhythmic subtleties, and feeling. This chapter has been largely concerned with assembling a vocabulary with which I can use to talk about such notions, in particular, with respect to the music of Bunky Green. The final section of this chapter outlines additional terminology I will use throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

SUMMARY OF LANGUAGE AND MUSIC

Speaking about music performance is one of the most difficult aspects of musical scholarship. In the jazz world, musicians and scholars use metaphor as a way of relating central aspects of their performance practices—as well as ways in which they develop individual

121 Walser, “The Problem with Davis,” 360.
122 Ibid.
123 Leroi Jones (now Amiri Baraka) makes this this same point in his comparisons of Charlie Parker and Paul Desmond. Jones uses the two saxophonists as an analogy to explain differences in value judgments that are placed out of their cultural context. Amiri Baraka, Blues People: The Negro Experience in White America and the Music that Developed from It. (New York, NY: William Morrow & Co., 1963), 30.
voices—in speaking among themselves and to people less familiar with the music. Linguistic metaphors are useful in particular because of the many similarities music and language share, including types of structure, expressive intent, and communicative goals and devices. Thus musicians and music scholars borrow linguistic terms such as “voice,” “language,” and “vocabulary” in order to differentiate and describe what happens between jazz musicians and their audiences during a performance. Further, when jazz musicians use linguistic metaphors to describe improvisation and interaction that takes place among band members, they are actually saying something quite significant about the process of playing jazz, emphasizing the social aspects of the music. Moreover, the types of linguistic metaphors used often relate the music to African-American language practices.

Although linguistic metaphors help to bring about a common understanding of some of the processes involved in jazz performance and the development of an individual voice, musicians and scholars continue to use them in ways that are often inconsistent with each other. A prime example is the term “style,” which can be particularly confusing, especially when using it to refer to individual approaches as well as specific genres or idioms. A player’s style could be conceived as pertaining mostly to his or her phrasing and expressive devices (time feel, articulation, dynamics, note-bends etc.). As Dizzy Gillespie has said “What makes the style is not what you play but how you play it.”¹²⁴ In other words, if we consider a player’s vocabulary to represent what is said, the stylistic aspects of his or her phrasing indicates how it is spoken. While style and voice are clearly related, it seems to me that style is more deeply connected to certain idiomatic forms of expression (i.e. schools of playing, regional kinds of blues playing, or styles related to an innovator), while “voice” promotes a better understanding

¹²⁴ John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie, and Al Fraser. To Be or Not... To Bop: Memoirs (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1979) 177.
of an individual speaker, one who encompasses an individual sound. While style may indicate the way a musician plays something, my notion of voice encompasses the entire package of a musician’s approach: timbre, vocabulary, and all aspects of phrasing. As Walser’s discussion of Miles Davis indicates, a soloist’s timbre and stylistic expressive techniques are important aspects of a musician’s style. In fact, they are often the aspects that speak to listeners most. However, just as a speaker relies on particular sentence structures, arrangements of fragments or things they like to say, jazz players utilize their vocabularies—their learned licks, motives, and the like in particular ways that make their approach recognizable. Thus, I treat timbre, vocabulary, and phrasing as the qualities that combine to form a musician’s voice. In addition to things being said (i.e. vocabulary) and all of the subtleties of timbre and manners of expression (i.e. phrasing and nuance), a player’s voice includes those intangible sonic elements, like emotion and tone, that are communicated when an individual plays or “speaks.”

Thus, while musicians can play in various styles, combine them, or move fluidly across them (as session players do), I propose the notion of “voice” is a more encompassing and helpful term for describing jazz musicians’ individual identities. That is, “voice” implies something which cannot be (or is less likely to be) imitated completely as no two voices are exactly alike. Style brings to mind textual elements such as those found in composition or in writing. Moreover, it is reminiscent of the countless pages of transcription/analysis that exists in jazz scholarship that attempt to define a musician’s approach. The term “voice,” I propose, helps to reposition evaluations of players’ individuality back into a purely sonic framework.

125 Travis Jackson notes that several musicians he interviewed frequently used the term “sound” to describe individual approaches in jazz. Jackson, *Blowin’ the Blues Away* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 110. I prefer the use of “voice” (a term also used by musicians) as a way to gain a deeper understanding of a player’s “sound” or personal approach. Both terms work if we subscribe the same meaning, however, Jackson’s description stops short of explicitly including phrasing, nuance, and more intangible elements of expression. This is discussed below in detail in the section “Style, Sound, and Voice.”
In addition to these aspects of a musician’s sound and in order to promote a common language for talking about rhythm, I also rely on terminology put forth by Steve Coleman within his various discussions about rhythm (i.e. rhythmic phrasing, backpedalling, hovering, hesitation, and hanging). These are terms I use in my analysis of Green’s music in chapters 4-6.

The linguistic terminology discussed in this chapter relates to the idea of “musical language.” However, the term language implies a system involving multiple speakers and listeners who understand them. The term is invoked when speaking about the “bebop language” or the “jazz language.” Yet, as I suggested, these languages change, often because of certain players and the vocabulary and/or voice they develop. Thus, like many other jazz musicians and scholars, I acknowledge the influence of these key performers and their contributions when discussing such instances, as exemplified by the frequently-used discourse of “Parker’s language.”

One could perhaps argue that Green’s style and vocabulary do not constitute a language since they are so particular to him. Certainly, the changes he made to jazz language are not shared on nearly the same scale as Parker’s. As I have argued, however, aspects of Green’s voice do appear in the approaches of several other well-known altoists. Thus, while it may be difficult to advocate for Green as a musician who developed a new language, his impact on the broader language of jazz merits consideration.

**FINAL THOUGHTS ON CHAPTER 2**

Incorporating ethnomusicological methods of research, the use of metaphor, as well as ideas related to viewing music as a process rather than a finished product (similar to a score) are
some of the important shifts that have occurred in music scholarship within the last few decades. Gates’ Signifyin(g) theory is especially important, as it allows us to analyze jazz in a manner that is, owing to its foundation in black literary practice and theory, a kind of emic method. In this way, it helps to understand jazz, as an African Diasporic practice, on African Diasporic terms rather than those based on Western European standards. Of particular importance is the way that it accounts for the individual, individual voice, and individual performance, in relation to a larger tradition and other things other people have said, or in jazz, performed. The applications of this concept to jazz by Berliner, Murphy, Walser, and Monson (among others) have provided scholars and laypeople with a more accurate and deeper understanding of the jazz improvisation process, and especially their meanings in a way that deals more closely with social and cultural values rather than purely “textual” ones.

Clearly, there is much room for further exploration as I have surveyed only a handful of major studies that deal with the use of metaphor and other analytical methodologies related to jazz discourse and analysis. However, considering the difficulty in speaking about music performance, the sources I have investigated clearly show that these methods are useful tools in explaining some of the subtler aspects of jazz performance. I will continue to refer to concepts established in this chapter throughout the remainder of the dissertation in order to better understand and appreciate elements of Green’s performance practice. The next chapter begins with a discussion on aspects of jazz historiography—including the jazz canon and some established jazz narratives—and Green’s position within jazz history. This is followed by a closer look at the relationship between influence and individuality as well as some of the dangers of transcription.
This chapter is best thought of as divided into two parts. The first part examines some of the arguments put forth by Gabriel Solis, Keith Negus, and Tia DeNora, among others, which call into question the importance of the jazz canon as well as common conceptualizations of notions such as “genius” and “innovator.” I examine Green’s place in jazz history and question whether his current relative obscurity may, in fact, be ending due to some recent attention from a small group of recently, influential saxophonists. I argue that Green’s newly emerging legacy and the developments it has helped to inspire is evidence of the benefits that can come from placing attention towards a wider pool of musical influences beyond the tried and true canonic musicians. The second part of this chapter discusses individuality within the art of jazz improvisation. Particularly, it considers how some important musicians and scholars view the relationship between influence and individualism, as well as some of the ways in which jazz musicians go about achieving an individual voice through the study of a wide spectrum of musicians, including those that are less typically cited as influences. In order to provide a frame of reference, the entire discussion is preceded with a brief illustration of some of the developments in jazz that were occurring around the time Green was recording his debut album in 1960.
A RAPIDLY CHANGING (FRACTURED) SCENE

Toward the end of the 1950s, a number of jazz artists made significant innovations that resulted in recognition for their individualism and several new sub-genres of jazz. The sea change Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, and Miles Davis effected through various explorations in modal and free music made it possible for other jazz soloists to take increasing liberties with harmony by playing outside of the tonal key centre. Coleman moved away from using traditional harmony, focusing instead on his harmolodic approach, which strived to remove musical compositions from the restrictions of tonality. Coltrane built on existing bebop vocabulary by incorporating pentatonic scalar patterns, melodic four-note structures, intervallic playing, third-based harmonic cycles, increased use of symmetrical scalar material, and odd rhythmic grouping. Rhythm sections, like those who supported Davis and Coltrane, began using fourth-based voicings, clusters, and pedal points as ways to further explore possibilities behind soloists (and perhaps to avoid harmonic clashes with these soloists who strayed further and further away from the tonality of the piece). Harmonically complex improvisational forms of the bebop period were steadily receding, while other models, such as open modal and free forms, were becoming more and more common. Often, this type of approach involved little more than a pedal point to establish a tonal centre.

Between the double quartet of Ornette Coleman on his 1960 album Free Jazz and John Coltrane’s Ascension in 1965, musicians in several parts of the United

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1 Coleman defined harmolodics as “the use of the physical and the mental of one's own logic made into an expression of sound to bring about the musical sensation of unison executed by a single person or with a group.” Applied to the particulars of music, this means that “harmony, melody, speed, rhythm, time and phrases all have equal position in the results that come from the placing and spacing of ideas.” Coleman, Ornette. Prime Time for Harmolodics. Down Beat, July 1983, pp. 54-55. Quoted in Gioia (1990), p.43.

States began to examine ways in which new improvisational ground could be broken by dispensing with many of the elements that had hitherto been part of the music’s structure. There would be no need to rely on chordal instruments such as the piano or guitar, the double bass did not have to supply a continual pulse or underlying harmony, and drummers could play intricate polyrhythms, or move toward coloristic shadings rather than “keeping time” as earlier drummers had done.³

Further to these developments, static bass riffs, which had been used in funk and rock genres, began to appear in jazz near the end of the decade, beginning with Davis’ *In a Silent Way* in 1969.

Excluding Ornette Coleman’s prominent position as leader of the free jazz movement, it is my impression that alto saxophonists were relegated to a secondary role behind tenor players in many of the developments that took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I argue that this shift in influence and popularity is due to a number of factors: Miles Davis, widely regarded as a leader in jazz, more often than not employed a tenor saxophonist in his group after the departure of Cannonball Adderley from his sextet in 1959.⁴ The innovative voice of tenorist John Coltrane went on to become one of the most influential of all time.⁵ Moreover, Stan Getz’s association with the Bossa Nova craze pushed the tenor further into the mainstream. As the decade progressed, other influential tenor voices followed, including Wayne Shorter and Joe Henderson, who were among the musicians who were pushing the boundaries of accepted harmony in jazz.⁶

While many tenor players were at the forefront of new developments in jazz, many alto

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⁴ This included Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, George Coleman, Sonny Stitt (on tenor and alto), Hank Mobley, and Wayne Shorter, among others.
⁵ Coltrane played tenor with Davis’ group and added soprano saxophone only after forming his own groups, releasing his first recording featuring himself on soprano saxophone in 1961 with *My Favorite Things*.
⁶ A recording of note that features Shorter is the 1965 *Live at the Plugged Nickel* recordings. These show there is significant change taking place within the language of jazz. While Davis’ quintet primarily performs the standard repertoire of Davis’ earlier groups i.e. “Stella by Starlight” and “If I were a Bell” etc., much of Shorter’s playing resides outside the tonality of the key (as does the other musicians on the date).
saxophonists remained married to bebop-influenced genres. Some of these players tried to recreate Parker’s style—by using his melodic vocabulary, phrasing, tone, and nuance—almost exclusively while others developed more personal musical voices that nevertheless pointed to certain aspects of his approach to varying degrees. Although Parker passed away in 1955, the vocabulary he helped to develop remained alive and well, embedded within the playing styles of several prominent alto saxophonists who continued to play music described as bebop or hard bop (thus further solidifying bebop conventions). Alto saxophonist Phil Woods speaks about the impact that Parker had on him and others during the height of bebop’s popularity:

Yeah, I’m one of Bird’s children, absolutely… You’ve got to remember, I was in New York in 1947; it was impossible to be in that milieu—especially if you were an alto player—and not be touched by Bird… We’re all a result of all the people we’ve ever heard… but Bird was the Beethoven of our time…

Bebop scholar Thomas Owens lists several alto saxophonists that he considers to be descendants of Parker, including Woods (1931-2015), Cannonball Adderley (1928-1975), Sonny Stitt (1924-1982), Sonny Criss (1927-1977), Gigi Gryce (1925-1983), John Handy (b. 1933), and Jackie McLean (1931-2006). I would add to this list Lou Donaldson (b. 1926), Frank Morgan (1933-2007), Frank Strozier (b. 1937), and Charles McPherson (b. 1939). Many of these players were present during the transition from swing to bebop and witnessed Parker’s quick ascent to demi-god status. Many of them modeled their approaches on Parker’s voice and, considering the comment from Woods, some of them would have found it difficult to break away.

Although influenced by Parker, the majority of these players should not be cast as mere imitators. Even though some made little attempt to hide Parker’s influence, all of them had identifiable voices that often go unrecognized. Stitt, for example, was often criticized for copying

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Parker too closely and, while there is no doubt he was influenced by Parker’s music, he was always adamant that he developed much of his vocabulary and individual voice independently.

We all have our own way of playing. You can’t tell somebody how to live, how to play, or how to feel… Everyone should want to be themselves. I’m always going to be myself. Like, when they talk about me and Charlie Parker. Me and Charlie Parker sounded the same way years and years and years ago. He said: “You sound like me.” I said: “Well, you sound like me.” And we agreed: “We can’t help that, can we?” Then we’d go off and get some beer, play some music, or something.

The last sentence above indicates Stitt was content with who he was and how he played music. He had found his voice early on and was less interested in “pushing the envelope” than laying bare his soul within blues and bebop idioms. A similar situation existed between Greg Osby and Steve Coleman around the time Osby moved to New York in 1982. Although the two altoists developed individual voices apart from one another, audiences and critics were quick to draw connections between their two approaches. In my conversations with Osby, however, he was quick to point out that he has taken—and continues to take—“great measures to not have any kind of referential sound posts in my playing.” It is clear that for players like Osby, Green, and Coleman, even Stitt to some degree, individuality is a source of pride and was something they all worked hard to develop, having recognized “the value and the benefit of identity—for better or for worse.”

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11 Osby says that, soon after moving to New York City, Coleman and Cassandra Wilson came to hear him play at the Village Vanguard. After Wilson left, he and Coleman had a “very long conversation outside until nearly daybreak. That's when Bunky's (and other influential players) names came up again and again.”
12 Greg Osby, interview by the author, September 24, 2015.
13 Ibid.
Based on his playing in 1960, Bunky Green could easily be included in the “Bird’s Children” group of altoists mentioned above. By his own admission, Green could play all of Parker’s recorded solos during this time. Further, while Green was indeed influenced by other musicians, his recordings during this period clearly show Parker as the dominant influence. However, while he was clearly continuing Parker’s legacy in terms of his harmonic vocabulary and aspects of rhythmic phrasing, Green was also becoming more individualized in terms of his own concepts of phrasing. At this point in 1960, Green had already established his own voice in terms of the way he used particular aspects of phrasing—i.e. timbre, eighth-note feel, vibrato etc.—to vitalize his lines and express himself through the music (see Chapter 4). Moreover, as I show in subsequent chapters, Green eventually began to rely less on bebop vocabulary as he developed his own vocabulary, derived from a number of musical sources that fall outside the realm of jazz.

**CHOICE, TIMING & THE CREATION OF GENIUS**

The issue of Green’s obscurity begs the question: how is it that some of the bop-influenced “Bird’s children” alto saxophonists have been accepted into the jazz canon, while others were largely overlooked? Leonard Meyer poses a similar question about Western art music composers in his article, “Innovation, Choice, and the History of Music” (1983). Rather than accept music history at face value as a parade of distinct genres, as it is often presented, Meyer chooses to view it as the result of “a succession of choices.”

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15 Ibid, 517.
made in “specific cultural and compositional circumstances.”\textsuperscript{16} Further, he maintains that, in order for a particular work or style of work to be considered as historically significant, it must be repeated by others, stating “only choices that are replicated by a number of composers, thereby becoming part of a shared dialect, are the proper province of history.”\textsuperscript{17} Since composers are constantly creating new ideas, many of which are discarded in the writing of a new piece of music, Meyer suggests that the idea of novelty is much less important than coming to an understanding of why certain innovations endure while others, “however aesthetically satisfying they may have been, disappear, apparently without historical consequences?\textsuperscript{18}

Why, out of all the possible alternatives that he [sic] might have imagined or considered for use at this point in his piece, did the composer choose this one rather than some other? And why did particular kinds of patterns, forms, or genres (rather than others equally available) appeal to some specific compositional/cultural community so that they were replicated by repeated performances of a work (or group of works) or as a consequence of current compositional consensus?\textsuperscript{19}

To answer this question, Meyer says we must investigate certain factors including, (1) the personality of the composer, (2) the musical circumstances that surround the innovation, and (3) what he calls “external constraints,”\textsuperscript{20} which he says can be both “specific (patronage, available performers, acoustical environment, and so forth) and general (cultural beliefs and attitudes, theories of music, and so forth).”\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Leonard Meyer, “Innovation, Choice, and the History of Music,” 517. In this light, at least part of what constitutes our idea of an innovator is constantly changing.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 528.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 518.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
Thus, Meyer suggests that while certain choices are made by individuals, at least some of the choices they make are politically charged and/or influenced by the dominant culture of their time and place. Strictly speaking, compositions that are viewed to be influential, then, rely partially on a number of factors that lie outside of purely musical aspects. Meyer even goes as far as to say that, some compositions became “exemplary” for cultural reasons alone.\textsuperscript{22} Even with respect to purely musical influences, he says “the constraints that seem most to influence the compositional choices that shape the course of music history are not those peculiar to the individual composer’s psyche but those of the prevalent musical style and the cultural community.”\textsuperscript{23} Thus, rather than view “innovations” as inherently better choices than others, Meyer urges us to instead ask why they in fact resonated within the larger musical community and the general public of a particular time and place.

At this point I would like to return to my original question posed at the beginning of this section: Why was Green overlooked by musicians and scholars during the time he was especially active as a performer? One of the vital issues, from my point of view, is timing. Many alto saxophonists with stylistic similarities and ties to bebop established their careers before the fragmentation of sub-genres began near the close of the 1950s. In this context, the established players were somewhat protected from new musical innovations, as they had already acquired followings and been afforded record deals, often through major record companies with comprehensive promotion and distribution networks. Although some prevailed, fledgling recording artists in 1960 would have struggled to compete amongst this old guard of established bop-influenced musicians. In addition, the rapidly changing musical climate would have made it

\textsuperscript{22} Meyer cites Carl Maria von Weber’s Der Freischutz as an example, which is generally considered to be the first important German Romantic opera. Ibid., 529.

even more difficult to establish a foothold within the jazz recording industry. While the subject is undoubtedly much more complex, it is difficult not to wonder how Green might have fared if, say, he was born roughly five years earlier (say in 1930).

Looking at the above list of “Bird’s children,” the musicians born before 1932, secured more major record deals with Blue Note Records, Prestige, and Verve. Adderley, Stitt, Woods, McLean, and Donaldson were all born in the 1920s, with the exception of McLean and Woods, both born in 1931. In contrast, Green (b. 1935), Strozier (b. 1937), and Morgan (b. 1933) signed with Exodus, Vee-Jay, Chess, and GNP Crescendo Records. Thus, it seems that several highly talented bebop-based alto saxophonists, including Green, missed their window of opportunity to land a major record deal and, therefore, failed to attract as much attention as those “beboppers” who secured reputations before them. This would have led to a lack of recognition on several levels (e.g. music critics, magazine editors, and promoters) and ultimately within the annals of jazz history. With respect to Green, I do not think timing is the only reason for his obscurity. However, it might at least partially explain his difficulties with recording companies and consequential underrepresentation from critics and jazz scholars.

Those alto saxophonists during this period who were able to distance themselves from the influence of Parker, maintain a strong presence on recordings and in live concerts, and thus secure a place in conventional jazz histories, seemed to do so through the creation of new paradigms of jazz performance rather than individual voices within existing ones. Ornette Coleman (1930-2015) and Eric Dolphy’s (1928-1964) innovations contributed to the rise of free jazz, a dramatic break from prior approaches. Similarly, “the three most prominent non-members

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24 Granted, there are exceptions: McPherson (b. 1939), for example, who played in Mingus’ group for over a decade, recorded many albums as a leader for Prestige Records.

25 As mentioned above, Green did record as a leader in 1960, however, a disastrous blow to his career took place when Vee-Jay Records held off on its release—for reasons unknown—until five years later.
of the Parker school,” 26 Paul Desmond (1924-1977), Lee Konitz (b. 1927), and Art Pepper (1925-1982) 27 capitalized on variations to bebop phrasing, swing-feel, and tone in ways that helped to form the Cool or West Coast schools of playing in the 1950s. All of these musicians have received considerable recognition for their contributions in creating new subgenres of jazz rather than developing a unique voice within an existing one. While Green was not an established bebop artist from the previous decade, neither does his early improvisational bebop-influenced style stray far enough from the bebop or hard bop idioms to constitute a new sub-genre of jazz.

The notion that alto players credited with the creation of new genres or sub-genres are more revered than those who remained within existing ones plays into the notion that we as a society are infatuated with the idea of newness. Meyer suggests reasons why this may be so in the aforementioned article, “Innovation, Choice, and the History of Music:”

Influenced both by the scientific model which, rightly or wrongly, emphasized the importance of the discovery of new data and the devising of new theory, and by nineteenth-century notions that stressed the value of innovation (as progress), our age has conceived of creativity almost entirely in terms of the need for, and devising of, novel relationships. 28

While not quite imitative of Parker’s approach, perhaps Green’s music exhibited too much of his “immeasurable respect for the past” 29 and, therefore, did not stand out as being novel, compared to altoists with decidedly new conceptions.

While Green eventually deviated from the bebop idiom and developed a decidedly unique voice, his most convincing work does not come about until the mid 1970s (following his hiatus

27 These musicians were older and more established as well, closer in age to Parker than to Green.
29 Ibid.
from the jazz scene and a reassessment of his bebop-influenced style). In my evaluation, due to Green’s reverence for traditional aspects of the music and because the changes he implemented progressed much more slowly alongside other major developments, it is understandable to see how he was overlooked by critics and record companies looking to profit from new genres within such a dynamic period.

Often when people speak of “making it” in music, there is reference to the familiar cliché “being at the right place at the right time.” The music of Jerome Kern, for example, is considered to be innovative for a number of musical reasons. It did not hurt his chances of discovery, however, that American audiences were eager to listen to something besides the Viennese and German waltzes around the onset of World War I. 30 In his article “Jerome Kern Innovator/Traditionalist,” (1985) theatre historian Gerald Bordman observes that “Kern, then, was the right man at the right time. His melody for “They Didn’t Believe Me” seemed totally free of Europeanisms and its 4/4 rhythm responded to the new American dancing craze.”31

Similar notions of time and place appear in Tia DeNora’s work, Beethoven and the Construction of Genius (1997), in which, among other goals, she attempts to expand the “potential for thinking about talent and genius as fundamentally social achievements.”32 Being careful not to undermine Beethoven’s musical abilities, DeNora emphasizes the exceptional economic and social advantages he enjoyed in the salons of Vienna in the 1790s and the role they played in his continued success. Further, she makes the case that the social and cultural

31 Ibid., 469.
creation of genius and its recognition often spawn from “micropolitically charged” resources.\textsuperscript{33} In Beethoven’s case, his serious approach and complex compositions were promoted by powerful families within the aristocracy in order to benefit their own interests.\textsuperscript{34} DeNora says:

“It is precisely during Beethoven's life that new ideas about the identity of musical works, the musical canon, instrumental music, poetic content, and musical seriousness come to the fore.” In this sense, Beethoven was most definitely in “the right place at the right time,” as certain aristocratic groups were looking to promote the qualities that he represented.

Another point DeNora argues is that by establishing Beethoven as the benchmark of greatness, and the greatness of his works as being transcendent, the historical importance of other possible “great” men and women are left unexamined. To this end, she discusses at length the case of Joseph Wölffl, one of Beethoven’s greatest musical rivals, who was known to play in a noticeably lighter, less-serious, more “dilettante” style.\textsuperscript{35} Although Wölffl was said to have matched Beethoven’s musical skill, DeNora argues he has gone unrecognized in music history due to the fact that his particular “style” was not useful to the powerful groups that supported Beethoven. Rather than simply accepting a “great man” or “great woman” at face value, DeNora reminds us to consider how his or her work was perhaps important to particular groups of people in its own time and place. By rethinking current notions of genius in this way, DeNora argues we can better understand how certain choices made by Beethoven are now deemed to be “better” musical ones.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} The aim of these groups was to separate themselves from the values of middle-class society by promoting music with a more serious agenda.
\textsuperscript{35} DeNora, \textit{Beethoven}, 154.
Another common cliché that routinely surfaces in conversations about musical success or failure is the idea “it’s not what you know, but who.” While this statement may be true, simply knowing the right people does not preclude failure. In his article “Musicians’ Performances and Performances of Musician in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil,” ethnomusicologist Jeff Packman describes numerous ways in which musicians in Salvador create opportunities for themselves to successfully work within the diverse local music scene that is both highly competitive and decidedly political. Packman says that, while certain musical “competences” must be met, musicians in fact engage in a wider encompassing “complex of activities” in order to build musical careers—what he calls “working to work.”

My research suggests that in many instances working to work is just as—if not more—crucial to earning a living as a musician as more conventionally conceived musical competences. This is because success and often survival depend not only on what and who you know, but also on how others know you.

In this light, Packman claims Salvadorian musicians are very aware of maintaining professional reputations amongst scene members. A key part of this, he says, is the creation of a “professional identity,” constructing an image as someone who can play within diverse musical contexts, a complicated issue in Salvador due to widely different aesthetics across several genres. Musicians need to think carefully about how they associate themselves with particular musicians as well as certain kinds of music with very different aesthetic sensibilities, and how they balance between economics (jobs that pay well) with cultural capital (e.g., more respected music).

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37 Ibid., 414.
38 Ibid., 438.
While Packman’s article is specific to people who live and play music in Salvador, many of the activities involved with “working to work” are transferrable to other musical scenes in larger North American cities. Most notably, these include musicians’ willingness and ability to create networks, maintaining a presence on the scene, as well as the creation of a “professional identity” or “musical self.” More specifically, this can include performing live, going to other musician’s performances, as well as interaction among others at local venues and musician haunts. Packman says ways in which musicians present themselves in these types of situations can greatly impact the amount of work they acquire within the local music scene.

These ideas relate back to DeNora’s argument surrounding Beethoven’s ongoing success. While he certainly held financial and social advantages over his contemporaries and was in the right place at the right time for his work to be recognized, part of his genius may have also come from his musical self, which resonated so soundly with aristocratic groups looking to further their own objectives. Indeed, Packman seems to suggest this by asking by asking “Could this all mean that artists such as Veloso, Coltrane, and Beethoven might not be simply makers of great music or even great musical creators, but also great performers of “musician?”

In addition to his slow development of a highly personalized voice and the absence of any major recording/distribution deal, another factor that would have contributed to Green’s unknown stature were his various periods of absence from the jazz world. His time spent underground developing his craft at schools or on his own did little to promote Green as an important leader in the field or establish any kind of a following at the time. This is despite the fact that several notable artists then and especially now consider his development period highly

40 Ibid, 438.
successful in an artistic sense. Further, his teaching career kept him close to home and away from touring the country and developing a larger following. Although his teaching commitments may have kept him away from the spotlight somewhat, they were not without benefits. The consistent work allowed him to pick and choose his playing opportunities and afforded him time to develop his identifiable musical voice.\footnote{Chris Miller, “Bunky Green: A Career of Harmonic Evolution” (Masters Thesis: Purchase College, 2009), 24.}

A musician’s personality would greatly affect his or her success in this area and thus their ability to make a living playing music in particular scene e.g. whether or not the person is outgoing, comfortable in social situations etc. Green seemed to avoid “hanging out” after performances, attending other musicians’ gigs, or socializing/creating networks at jam sessions.

In his interview with Bill Benjamin, Green stated:

I used to play a lot alone and would avoid my friends. I liked to play alone so that I could create my own images. And to this day, I’m somewhat of a loner. I am not a hanger-outer. You’ll never find me on the scene unless I’m playing. If I’m working, then you’ll see me, otherwise, I’m home and in bed by 9 o’clock. I’m that type of cat.\footnote{Bill Benjamin, “Bunky Green,” \textit{Coda}, September, 1975, 12.}

While this did not seem to affect Green’s reputation as one of the elite players on the Chicago scene, it may have contributed to a kind of underground or mystique surrounding his character.

While a university position has become a highly sought after career path for many jazz musicians, this was not the case when Green started teaching at Chicago State University. University and college jazz programs were quite rare during this time and there was a lot of stigma attached to anyone involved with teaching or studying at an academic institution. Green has said, “When I first went to college everybody said, ‘Well man, you’re going to kill your soul—you’re going to lose it. You should be out here playing, you are wasting your time.’”\footnote{Herb Nolan, “Alto Transformer,” \textit{Down Beat}, October, 1977, 17.} It is
hard to imagine that these kinds of attitudes among jazz players would not have affected Green’s career. In particular, it is notable how a musician’s ability to play with soul was conflated with misconceptions about the specific environment in which he or she played and how he or she earned a living: “If you don’t stay out here and eat out of garbage cans you’re not going to have any soul.”

Moreover, these attitudes can extend to how musicians are represented—or not—within the media. In his 1997 interview with Michael Jacks on, Green laments: “It’s a stigmatization, if a person is busy as an educator, then they don’t deserve to be written up as a major player.” Green continues to say “But often in the thick of it, it gets so that you can’t see the wood for the trees, and only certain calling cards are accepted: the ones that look familiar.” These two notions—the stability that results from a steady teaching income and stigmas among working jazz musicians and the media—worked together to separate Green from a jobbing lifestyle and a possible increase in notoriety.

Perhaps, then, Green—as well as the record companies who represented him—failed to make the kinds of choices Meyer speaks of above, that would have ensured him a more prominent place in jazz history. Certainly, record company personnel attempted to find various commercial markets for Green, achieving various levels of success. Some, like Ed Bland

\[\text{Consider, for instance the benefits of networking and maintaining a presence on the scene within Bahian cultures, outlined by Packman above.}\]
\[\text{Nolan, “Alto Transformer,” 17.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{This is not to say that Green’s career was not a success. There are many definitions of what that word means. As Joe Lovano reflected in my conversation with him: “A lot of the time, what success means in the business world is really commercial and telling someone else’s story and just fitting into a program of a record company or a producer or something… anybody could go that path. Bunky didn’t go that way because that wasn’t him,” telephone interview, December 18, 2015.}\]
(producer at Vanguard Records), seemed to have their own interests in mind by ensuring a personal stake in each of the albums produced i.e. a composition of his own on every recording. In contrast, the choices Green made seemed to be about benefitting the music and achieving something beyond monetary success. This is reflected in the following statement that shows Green was perhaps more interested in leaving something behind for future generations to learn from, rather than making a little bit of extra money in return for selling out: “another kind of immortality is to make a difference, that’s all… not by making a lot of money but by creating something stylistically where people say ‘oh yeah, this cat was different. He had his own take on things.’” Green also inferred that he did not really give these kinds of non-musical choices much thought, “I just do what I do and try to keep the picture in mind of the highest level.”

GENRE CULTURES

Another related perspective on musicians we might consider to be innovators is offered by sociologist Keith Negus in his study of recording industries in popular music. Using the term “genre cultures” Negus describes some of the distinct music categories within popular music and their meanings for listeners and the people who work for record companies. His book, Music Genres and Corporate Cultures describes various ways in which these “genre cultures” help to “inform the organization of music companies, the creative practice of musicians, and the perceptions of audiences.” His work also looks at how the economics of the corporate

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49 Perhaps this was the arrangement Green talks about above, which gave Green a greater amount of artistic control by recording. Miller reads into this as well in his thesis: Miller, “Bunky Green,” 25-26.


51 Ibid.

production of music interacts with the cultures that produce music, including the structures that make up many of the larger record companies. Negus examines all of this in order to look closely at how genre and corporate strategy influence what we see as creativity.

One important observation Negus makes in his work is that artists who make music within strongly defined genres tend to be more commercially successful. He states that in his experience, the most successful bands “knew exactly what genre they were playing, recognized its musical and social boundaries and understood what their audience wanted to hear, see and be told.” This complicates the conventional narrative that views genre categories as being beneficial primarily for record companies and the corporations that own them. The symbiotic relationship between the industry and the artist is central to Negus’ claim that “an industry produces culture and culture produces an industry.”\textsuperscript{53}

By using the term industry produces culture I am referring to how entertainment corporations set up structures of organization and institute distinct working practices to produce identifiable products, commodities and “intellectual properties.” This approach draws ideas from political economy and organization studies and uses these to integrate the various corporate strategies and business practices of music and media companies. Writers who have followed this broad line of reasoning have tended to narrate a tale of the “production of culture” during which the practices, form and content of popular music (and other cultural forms) are influenced in various ways by a range of organizational constraints and social criteria.\textsuperscript{54}

These structures of organization help to present music in a clear manner to listeners as well. Both artists and record company personnel in these circumstances work together to create various genre cultures, which then provides the listener with a framework—or set of expectations—with which they can then use to approach the music.

\textsuperscript{53} Negus, \textit{Music Genres and Corporate Culture}, 3.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 14.
Artists who find themselves outside of particular genre cultures—or who create music that seem to belong to more than one genre categorization—often find it difficult to succeed in the music industry. A central part of Negus’ argument discusses how “the music industry and broader social networks act to divide and constrain these potentially fluid, multiple influences and genre crossings.” Osby is of the opinion, as well, that genre categories play a significant role in the success or failure of an artist.

A lot of people are openly dismissive of anything that’s alternative, that’s different. And that’s usually their insecurity speaking because they can’t identify it, they can’t put a label on it. You can’t say… with all certainty that Bunky is a bebop player. You can’t say that he’s an avant-garde player… I would like to call him maybe an “intervalist” [or a] “rhythmicist”… he is not wed to any of those genres but he can liberally cross the line or straddle the fence. He has one foot solidly implanted on the yard of… bebop and jazz… but he can have his foot across the fence in another yard and flourish.

It is conceivable, then, that Green’s fluid approach, which defied genre categorization, contributed to his difficulties with recording companies at key points during his career. I have already discussed Green’s difficult start with Vee-Jay Records but the problems did not end there. For example, in a move to produce higher record sales, Cadet Records executives attempted to capitalize on the success of Latin music sales by forcing him into a similar category on The Latinization of Bunky Green. I can only assume it was their idea as well to include the popular singing group The Dells and to have Green playing the Varitone saxophone on four of the eight tracks. These marketing techniques translated to the cover art as well. In an interview that appeared in Down Beat Magazine, Green recalls: “Yeah, they had me on the album cover

56 Osby, telephone interview.
57 An electronic effects unit and pick-up made by the Selmer company for the saxophone, flute, and clarinet. Other prominent saxophonists associated with the device around this time include Sonny Stitt and Eddie Harris.
wearing a big straw hat, holding a pineapple!” The interviewer, Michael Jackson, observed that Green was marketed “shortsightedly by the blatantly commercial Cadet label” as well.

Many writers, who emphasize the importance of Coltrane, Davis, Ornette Coleman, Charles Mingus, and Dave Brubeck, for example, expound upon the musical developments that effectively changed the course of jazz music. One reason they were able to make such an impact, however, was the fact that they had the support of record companies and critics who (realized the value of and) supported their cause. The new sub-genres, or “genre cultures,” would have been a result of collaborations between musicians and people who work in the record industry. In other words, while these new sub-genres are seen as innovations that helped shape the course of jazz music, one reason they became so highly influential was because of strong support from record companies like Capitol and Atlantic. Further, musicians and listeners benefitted from genre cultures—including methodically invented music labels such as “Cool” and “Free Jazz,” — as they helped to define categories for listeners to explore.

Green seems to have been squeezed between the established bebop musicians and musicians who were effecting change by creating new sub-genres of jazz. Because his music was influenced by multiple sources and had less defined genre borders, I argue record companies

60 My focus in this chapter has been heavily weighted to that of the recorded album because it is the medium, outside of local scenes, that jazz audiences used to discover new artists, purchase, and share music. The “Album Era” has been defined by some as lasting from the mid-1960s until the early 2000s and was represented by the 33 1/3 rpm—12-inch long playing (LP) album—phonograph record, the cassette tape and the compact disc. However, the first LPs were issued much earlier, in 1952, by Columbia Records. The dominant medium of music sales in general during the 1950s and into the 1960s were the 45 rpm seven-inch “single” recordings. However, jazz artists often used the larger format. Television, Juke boxes and live radio broadcasts were still common enough, however, these seemed to be in decline and the market relied on record sales as its chief source of sales. Further, musicians depended on record companies much more heavily than they do today because of the need for access to distribution markets. Wikipedia, s.v. “Album Era,” last modified August 13, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Album_Era#The_LP_era:_The_golden_age_of_the_album.
would have had difficulty defining his music in a way that corresponded to other established sub-genres of jazz. Failing to establish Green’s music as a distinct category—or placing it within existing ones—would have limited his visibility on the national jazz scene and, therefore, led to difficulties establishing a large following and branding himself as a creative leader. These tensions, combined with difficulties with the release and distribution of his recorded material help to explain Green’s relatively unknown stature. Similar problems with record companies continued to plague Green throughout his career and, to this day, several of his records are difficult to acquire and many remain out of print.

DERIVING THE PAST

While some of the aspects discussed above help to explain some of the possible reasons Green was originally denied a place in jazz history, “recent” attention to his unique improvisatory approach, compositions, and recordings may change our perception of his importance to the music. His influence on Steve Coleman in particular has been well-documented in magazine articles and recorded interviews. Coleman has recorded “Little Girl, I’ll Miss You,” one of Green’s compositions, on (at least) two occasions: Phase Space (DIW-865), a 1992 duo recording with Dave Holland, and his own 1993 ground breaking release, The Tao of Mad Phat (Novice-01241 63060 2). This evidently inspired Holland to include the same composition on his solo recording One’s All (VeraBra VBR-2148 2), recorded that same year. Since these early instances of Signifyin(g), Coleman has encouraged Green to record on other significant recordings. Another Place (2006), which the altoist produced and engineered, makes overt reference to Green’s 1979 release Places We’ve Never Been. Coleman has stated that he wanted to recreate some of the magic that was present on the original Places, obviously an important, formative recording for him. In addition, Coleman featured Green in his group,
Renegade Way, which also included John Handy and Joe Lovano. The group toured parts of Europe and made at least one live recording, however, it has never been commercially available.

The idea that jazz musicians share the responsibility of writing jazz history through their own performances has been explored by several scholars. Historian and ethnomusicologist Gabriel Solis, for example, has discussed this idea in his article “Genius, Improvisation, and the Narratives of Jazz History.” In addition to writing about jazz, he states that, “the model that emerged for the “jazz concert” was a sonic history that placed the music in a lineage from the old to the new.” He continues to make the case that “these concerts were, in a sense, a systematization of the more general practice found in most jazz improvising—often glossed, following Henry Louis Gates, Jr. as “Signifyin(g)”—in which jazz performers tell a version of their music’s history in performance.” Citing a number of infamous concerts that have presented the history of jazz in such a way including Ellington’s Black, Brown, and Beige, Solis remarks that, “It is my impression that this explicitly historical aspect of jazz music making at least partly accounts for the extensive historical jazz literature by nonmusicians.”

Rudresh Mahanthappa, another alto saxophonist inspired by Green, convinced Green to record Apex (2010), a collaborative album featuring compositions from both leaders. The pair subsequently toured parts of Europe and North America and garnered much attention from the press. Although both Green and Mahanthappa supplied compositions for the project, similar to Green’s greatest recordings, a decidedly larger emphasis was placed on improvisation and interaction. Mahanthappa speaks about this in a 2011 interview:

It was interesting because Bunky made it very clear from the beginning that he didn’t want to play any odd meters, or play in 5, 11, or 13. What he said was “I

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62 Ibid., 92.
could practice and get it together, but it’ll never feel comfortable. And if I don’t feel comfortable, it’s not about making music anymore.” For him, it was more important to find vehicles to highlight what we do, and our interaction as improvisers. So, we agreed we would each write four or five tunes for the project. I thought to myself “How can I write a blues, a rhythm changes tune and a “modal” tune at this point, when I haven’t written anything like that since my early college or late high school days? How can I do that and still have my voice present in that?”

In many ways, then, *Apex* seems less of a collaboration between two artists and more of a tribute album to Green, as the general direction of the project, including idioms and song forms, were inline with Green’s past work. Mahanthappa was willing to meet Green’s conditions, however, in order to create the kind of dynamic required for healthy interaction.

I also needed to create something that leads to a lot of healthy, productive interaction within the ensemble as well. So, that’s exactly what I did. I wrote a blues, a rhythm changes tune, a modal tune, and a couple of other things. [laughs] Bunky’s tunes very much have form and chords and all that, but there’s a little bit of looseness in how we can play the melodies and how they dovetail off each other. They are very dialog-oriented, like we’re talking to each other within them. It was also really about trying to bring the band as a unit to life.

In addition to these studio albums, both Coleman and Mahanthappa have featured Green on several live performances. Some recordings exist but are not commercially available. However, the growing interest and attention directed towards Green through the performance of his music, tribute recordings and performances, suggests that his place in jazz history is undergoing change. Solis’ book, *Monk’s Music: Thelonious Monk and Jazz Music Making*, explores Monk’s legacy, including the way present-day performers listen to and perform his works. Moreover, Solis presents Monk’s historicity as largely “subjective and contingent” on the musicians who followed and continued his legacy. One of the central questions he asks is how did Monk—who at one time was delegated to the peripheries of jazz historiographies—

64 Ibid.
eventually take on more of an historical importance? He makes the case that Monk arrived at his current place of prestige, as one of the music’s greatest members, only after a significant number of jazz musicians brought recognition to his music through the performance and recording of thousands of renditions of his works in the 1980s and 1990s. In this light, this younger generation of jazz musicians, who were interested in the history of acoustic jazz, were responsible for creating their own historical version of the music’s history and changed the overriding perception of jazz history.

In a similar way, then, Coleman and Mahanthappa, among others who perform Green’s works or make reference to his legacy, have begun to write their own version of jazz history, one that places significantly more weight on the importance of Bunky Green. While it is not to the degree that musicians have elevated Monk’s status, the shift in historical importance is significant because it calls for increased attention to musicians who fall outside of the music’s core canon, as well as (what Solis refers to as) “everyday performance,” and local jazz scenes.

INFLUENCE & INDIVIDUALISM

During the formative years of New Orleans jazz, the quality of the music was judged largely on how well individual musicians performed together as an ensemble. Since the appearance of Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet, however, the jazz soloist has come to reign supreme in histories and discourse about the music and musicians. This notion, the great soloist as great jazz musician, is inseparable from an emphasis on individuality and particular ideas about it. In this light, all jazz soloists who have come to be embraced as great have developed

an identifiable expressive persona, or individual voice. To continue the discussion of voice, which began in Chapter 2, it is arguably the most valuable quality a jazz player can possess, as it is what separates him or her from others. Search any number of jazz textbooks for a definition of “jazz improvisation,” and you will find that most include the notion of individuality as a necessary component. Nevertheless, statements such as “being original is very important to jazz musicians,” or the more encompassing “the personal expression of the improviser and of his or her musical, spiritual, and emotional situation,” do little to demystify the notion of individuality or how one should go about developing an individual approach.

In *Thinking in Jazz*, however, Paul Berliner does an admirable job of championing the benefits of individualism and noting some of its challenges by outlining various processes involved in creating what he calls a “personal musical style.” He lists a number of traits that form an individual player’s sound including timbre, vibrato, articulation, and pitch inflections that resemble vocalized expression. In addition to these sounds, choices a soloist makes with regard to “phrase formulation” help create an identity as a soloist. These can include their approach to the division of the beat (i.e. symmetrical or assymetrical rhythmic phrases), accentuation and articulation, phrase lengths, horizontal or vertical concepts of melody and harmony, and particular melodic and rhythmic aspects of vocabulary. Finally, Berliner examines ways in which players amalgamate certain aspects of the playing of select players from the lineage of their instrument to enable them to “move in the direction of forging personal styles, while at the

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70 Further, individual players can be identified by particular performance practice techniques like free jazz drummers who avoid conventional cymbal patterns and approach timekeeping using the entire kit. Ibid., 127-129.
same time operating confidently within the bounds of the jazz tradition.”

This approach, further, has been codified as part of jazz pedagogy within numerous institutions, private lessons, and self-directed study.

Many musicians and scholars have emphasized the importance of investigating a wide range of soloists, in order to develop an individual musical identity, recognizing that the path towards a distinct musical “voice” that is part of the jazz tradition involves much dedicated study of the various people who created this music. As noted earlier, Travis Jackson remarks “the possession of an identifiable musical persona is the product of having considered a number of approaches and synthesized them into a concept.” According to saxophonist and noted jazz pedagogue Dave Liebman, the long process involves four major steps: 1) listening, 2) transcription (of a multiplicity of soloists while paying particular attention to nuance), 3) analytical understanding of the motivation behind players’ musical lines and 4) assimilation and formulation of nuance into a personal, highly recognizable sound.

Beyond the development of an enhanced perception of nuance and a wider perspective of improvisational approaches, Liebman’s transcription and analysis process ultimately leads students to the creation of individual voices. His teaching process involves six to seven transcriptions of improvised solos. He says the first two should consist of musicians who play the same instrument as the student. Afterwards, the student is expected to branch out to include solos form other types of instrumentalists. (For example, saxophonists will transcribe trumpet players and trumpet players will transcribe saxophonists.) Liebman urges that the intensive study of a variety of performers provides the student with more possibilities within their own

71 Berliner, Thinking, 138.
72 Jackson, Blowin’ the Blues Away, 112-113.
improvisations. He or she will have a clearer idea of how certain players combine nuances from various sources to personalize their playing and can thereafter choose the kinds of nuances that suit their own unique personality. They are thereafter free to choose what elements of improvisation they wish to use to create their own distinct voice. For instance, they may have a special affinity for Sonny Stitt’s powerful, expressive tone, Dexter Gordon’s behind-the-beat time-feel, Clifford Brown’s articulation, and Coltrane’s harmonic palette. Combining nuances from this special combination of players will allow the student to arrive at a truly unique sound.\(^{73}\)

It is clear by now that improvisers, although not expected to be “innovators”, are expected to bring something personal to the music, something that is unique to them that they may have experienced in their own lives. In the interviews with Jackson, pianist Bruce Barth speaks on “saying something that’s original. I’m not saying necessarily ground-breaking or revolutionary, but something that isn’t just… like a, like a generic rehashing of things that you’ve heard before.”\(^{74}\) Further, saxophonist/flautist Steve Wilson had this to say regarding individuality:

That’s the litmus test. That’s how you can identify Lester Young, Johnny Hodges, Coleman Hawkins, Sonny Rollins, Coltrane: by one note. Because they knew how to play a whole note… that’s how I try to approach my teaching. It’s to really have your own sound after all is said and done, after studying everyone. Have your own identity, you know?\(^{75}\)

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\(^{73}\) One other reason to transcribe solos originally played on instruments other than one’s own is to achieve greater technical facility. For example, it is difficult for a tenor saxophone player to play a solo that was originally conceived on alto saxophone; it therefore pushes the tenor saxophonist to extend his or her technique beyond perhaps what they were previously capable of, advancing even beyond the common language of their particular instrument.

\(^{74}\) Jackson, *Blowin’ the Blues Away*, 112.

\(^{75}\) Ibid., 111.
Recognition by one note is one reason wind players practice long tones, to manipulate the sound in order to find something unique in their timbre and to bring it out. Jackson notes other ways various instrumentalists bring out their individuality including, again, a statement from Barth, who says he is constantly absorbing ideas and techniques from the playing of other musicians. When he sits down to practice, however, he focuses on those ideas and techniques that seem “unique to him,” that is, the ones that are most appealing to him, and he tries to “amplify them and develop them.”

Steve Coleman and Green discuss this idea further in their 2005 “Interview with Bunky Green,” wherein Coleman speaks about the idea of identifying and nurturing the “little kernel inside of you,” the individuality that lives inside all jazz improvisers. Coleman discusses some of the difficulties in expanding truly original aspects of one’s voice as these ideas are not fully formed and may sound weak in comparison to the fully formed, and therefore confident, voices of Coltrane or Parker, for instance. Although taking a developed idea from someone else is much easier, Coleman says nurturing your own “creative spirit” is far more rewarding.

Osby has said that, for him, Green embodies this important concept of creating your own voice. Further, his greatest legacy, perhaps, is to inspire and spread confidence to those who are involved in similar efforts.

I use Bunky… as an inspirational catapult—he inspired me to forge an identity. I guess that would sort of embody the bulk of the conversations that I’ve always had with him because he never really gave up the goods… I never asked him anything specifically but I learned from some of his former students that he never told you about his thing. He just gave you components that would set you on your own course. He never broke down… the parameters of where he was coming from because… he worked hard on it and he didn’t want someone else to benefit from it like that, which I understand.

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76 Jackson, Blowin’ the Blues Away, 111.
77 Osby, telephone interview, 2015.
Lovano noted a similar sentiment as well, in my conversations with him on the subject of Green’s influence. He described Green as, “a storyteller that tells the truth about who he is and where he’s travelled in the music.” Lovano continued to say that Green “recognizes what it’s about to deal in the art of improvising and play with your own feeling. He learned that from listening to Bird and everybody… that influenced him…that told him the truth and he found it for himself… to be around cats like Bunky, for me, gives me the confidence to be my own player.”

The next section explores what can happen when players avoid developing any kind of individualism, limit themselves to the influence of only a few players (or less), and understand transcription, not as a means to an end, but rather in only the most literal sense of mimicking a particular player’s stylistic devices, timbral aspects, and vocabulary.

THE ANXIETY OF TRANSCRIPTION

Whether self-taught or formally trained at a college or university, most jazz musicians at some point in their development transcribe recorded solos of master improvisers in order to reproduce them on their own instruments. As mentioned earlier, one of the main reasons for this act of imitation for the young musician involves acquiring vocabulary. Further, accessing sound recordings gives the student detailed information regarding particular soloists’ timbral qualities, as well as aspects of phrasing, including nuance. Yet for many critics, problems arise when too many students begin to draw from the same four or five sources and end up sounding more or less the same. Greg Osby warns that unless young jazz musicians diversify their source of influence, jazz will continue to decline further and further in popularity among audiences. He
describes the kind of young alto players he would like to see appearing on the jazz scene as something similar to:

equal parts Charlie Parker [and] Sonny Stitt with a twist of Bunk Green, maybe a little bit of Rudresh, maybe just a sprinkle of Kenny Garrett, but then he can go back to Frank Strozier, and James Moody and some Cannonball for the bluesy effects… maybe some Johnny Hodges to sweeten up the sound… maybe Earl Bostic for the intervals. So, now he’s like a Frankenstein’s monster of these crazy hybrids and he doesn’t sound like any of them. [He or she has created an individual voice] through bits and pieces of obscure players. That’s what we need to get back to… instead of the tried and true and the expected. 

While some of the saxophonists Osby mentions in the above quotation are generally considered to be part of the core jazz canon, many are not. What he is suggesting in fact is for younger jazz players to widen their scope to include players outside of the canon in order to promote variety within the music. Moreover, he suggests learning from a multitude of saxophonists in order to encourage a unique sound and discourage the practice of cloning. In this way, the learner has a better hope to develop a highly recognizable sound, an important aspect of the jazz tradition, as we have already established.

Yet many students of jazz improvisation have one particular player whom they idolize above all others. They may devote hundreds of hours to transcribing solos performed by this individual because they like the way he or she sounds and have a desire to recreate that sound as well as perhaps the feeling they get when listening to them. This process, Berliner says, is usually a means to an end. “They copy that idol’s precise vocabulary, vocabulary usage, and tone treatment, striving to improvise in the idol’s precise style.” Although it is true that one of the
goals of transcription is to imitate the soloist completely, musicians who sound like “clones” of their idols usually draw unfavourable criticism from music critics and improvisers with more experience. 80 “Although encouraging students initially to follow a particular musical master and acknowledging the discipline required of faithful understudies, seasoned improvisers ultimately view such achievements as limited.”81 Speaking of his early experiences, Max Roach reveals, “We had all been instructed that to make an imprint of your own, you had to discover yourself… We fed off each other, but encouraged each other to do things that were individual.”82 In fact, improvisations are so inextricably tied to personalities that they cannot be separated. Even a technically superior musician cannot recreate Miles Davis’ solo on “My Funny Valentine.”

Although the learning methods of jazz improvisers as described by Berliner and others are widely accepted by jazz educators and students alike, the idea of amassing a large storehouse of jazz vocabulary is seen as dangerous by those whose primary interest lies in creating a truly unique individual voice. Osby, for example, has always tended to shy away from transcribing his favourite players because of his awareness of “the damage that somebody like Charlie Parker [or] Coltrane could possibly do to one’s playing, if you became consumed with the variables that they represent.”83 Indeed, many musicians (termed “clones” by musicians in the jazz world) become consumed with imitating these and other innovative players to the point that they never advance to the stage of developing their own individual voices.

A case in point is the effect saxophonist Kenny Garrett has had on the diversity of alto saxophonists in New York. Osby suggests that that “So many players are caught up in the

80 Jackson also addresses this point in Blowin’ the Blues Away, 110-112.
81 Berliner, Thinking, 120.
82 Ibid., 121.
83 Osby, telephone interview.
‘Kenny Garrett vortex’ that they have ruined the language.” In order for improvised jazz music to be healthy and to thrive, Osby indicates there needs to be variety of sources of influence. When the scope of influence becomes too narrow, musicians become more concerned with copying a certain style rather than focusing on self-expression, the language stagnates. He adds that this narrowing of the scope of influence has happened several times in the past. “It’s the same thing [that] happened with [other influential players] Michael Brecker, Coltrane, and Parker.”

Although Osby listened intently to Green’s music as a young improviser, he made sure to refrain from imitating him outright.

I never transcribed a solo in terms of writing it down and analyzing it and labeling things… because I recognized early on and—I think it’s to my benefit that I recognized that somebody that strong, that solid, that powerful, could be beneficial and/detrimental to my development… as young as I was and as impetuous as I was, I recognized the damage that somebody like Charlie Parker or Coltrane could possibly do to one’s playing if you became consumed with the variables that they represented.

Regardless, Osby let the music of Green influence his own concept in a less formal way, mentally transcribing “through osmosis, through association, and through identification,” allowing the fruits of these processes to morph into “something that is now part of my regular vocabulary.” He elaborates later in the same interview:

His thing is so strong, so much him that I… dared not decrypt it. That’s how I felt about him. And that’s the same idea that I had about Charlie Parker…” Even discussing it now, I’m able to and when I listen to a lot of things that I do I’m able to pinpoint a lot of things that were directly influenced by him but it wasn’t a lift from a solo (it wasn’t an extraction from a solo). It’s more of a conceptual variation.

This “Bloomian” notion of the dangers of influence is strikingly similar to Green’s (and Mingus’) realizations of Parker’s legacy. It is similar to the point made above as well: while it is

84 Osby, telephone interview.
85 Ibid.
necessary to study solos of master musicians in order to learn the phrasing, nuance, and history of the music, focusing on one player’s style can be detrimental to one’s playing. The following quote from Lovano outlines the importance that he places on individuality.

A lot of guys play but they’re not players. Bunky’s a player. When you’re around a player, you’re around the truth and that’s what influences you to get yourself together. You don’t try and tell someone else’s story or imitate somebody… 90 percent of the players today do that. There’s a lot of cats who play amazing but they’re not players. A lot of people now on the scene.

The idea of contributing to the existing pool of information already in place is an extremely important concept to musicians like Green, Coleman, and Osby, who see themselves as part of a continuum of musicians interested in moving jazz forward. They are very much aware of their relationships to musicians like Parker and Coltrane (their influence and the debt they are owed). However, they feel that their contributions to the music hold more weight than showing their indebtedness through strict imitation. Green expresses a similar point of view in a 2008 interview with Steve Coleman.

There’s so many people (players) that play great… in terms of technically and … I mean, some guys are scary, just killing it. But most of the things that they play I’ve heard before and you’ve heard before (knowing the way you play) … we’ve heard before. So, that’s not the greatest contribution. I respect them from a technical standpoint… in terms of digital dexterity [they are] marvelous. But in terms of a contribution: if you’re going to sound exactly like Trane and be a wonderful replica—fine, I’ll go home and put on my Trane records… and listen to the master.

One has to wonder as well, if an “improviser” is reciting material that is already worked out in advance, how much listening and interaction is happening onstage. Osby talks about his disinterest in these types of players, as opposed to Green’s approach:

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86 Lovano, telephone interview.
Most saxophonists succumb to *total recall*. They transcribe and absorb material and then they recall it at the proper times the execution of thought phraseology… at the right moment or a memory of an idol of theirs who did that at that time (well this is what Joe Henderson would do or this is what Gene Ammons would do/ John Coltrane…) to me that’s not improvisation. Bunky Green, he excels beyond that expectation. He created his own lexicon and trajectory to which he adheres to exclusively. He’s in that rare category of someone who’s forged his own voice. He’s exploited things that are available to everyone but few actually make the best uses of: interval sets, stacking of rhythms, compound meters, and… disjunct[ed] rhythms without them being inappropriate, compression/expansion, metric modulation (as a melodic device – not necessarily playing static rhythm over a moving progression). He has made these staples of his content and as far as I’m concerned, it’s mission accomplished because I can recognize him in… one or two notes. Not only that but sonically, his sound is so refined I can tell who he is by just one or two notes and that doesn’t happen anymore.

This is similar to the notion of leaving “enough room” that saxophonist Sam Newsome talks about in *Blowin’ the Blues Away*. This was a concept imparted to him by his then professor, Donald Brown, while attending the Berklee College of Music. When speaking about a player using “too much harmony,” Newsome says:

> He felt there wasn’t enough room... if he wanted to be musical... to have too much harmony ‘cause that doesn’t leave much room for melody or, dealing with rhythmic ideas. It doesn’t leave room for, for maybe if you wanted to develop ideas... for dealing with the blues, the blues aspect of harmony.

I argue that the same ideas related to leaving “enough room” to encourage balance and development of ideas could be applied to group interaction. When a soloist leaves space within a solo, he or she is essentially creating a space that is conducive for conversation, thereby inviting others in the group to complete ideas, develop an idea from another member of the band, or interject their own ideas. The notion of developing ideas related to the blues, as well, can be a highly interactive process (and is explored further in the next chapter.) Memorizing musical phrases, or phrase components, and plugging them into a solo like the “total recall” process Osby describes above certainly seems contrary to the creation of this kind of environment or space.
Interestingly enough, in a 1977 interview, Green speaks about leaving space within his solos of the “post-sabbatical period” as a relatively new characteristic of his approach.

You’ll find on Transformations that there is a great deal of space... “Europa” is a very simple, almost rustic tune... on that tune I play spaces. I never did that before, and now I’m finding out that in music the spaces are as important as the notes. I’m learning how to deal with space and space is part of music—but nobody told me that before. 87

It seems like there is a fine line between studying someone’s style as part of the jazz improvisational learning process and becoming a mere imitator of someone else’s stylistic approach. And while part of playing jazz is knowing and relating to the history of the music, how much one incorporates into his or her playing is a difficult measure to gauge. As we have seen above, some players are quite careful about the amount of influence they consciously incorporate into their personal improvisational approach. Incorporating stylistic influences can make a performance enjoyable and enriching for audience members, (as we saw in the Henderson example). The key, as identified by Leonard Meyer, is understanding the “rules and strategies” well enough to manipulate others’ phrases and morph them with one’s own musical statements.

In order for a pattern to be replicated in a significant way—rather than being merely mimed or parroted—it must be understood as part of a known (but probably internalized) set of rules and strategies. Mere parroting involves presenting the lineaments of a pattern without comprehending the underlying constraints that generated the relationships. 88

So, while merely repeating learned phrases from others’ solos is deeply frowned upon within jazz communities, a deep understanding of the language of the music enables one to forge a unique improvisatory approach. Under the right circumstances, with enough knowledge and sensitivity, musicians’ voices interrelate in ways similar to a conversation with logical structure

and give and take. An important aspect, as in conversation, is the element of the unknown or lack of a definite plan before saying anything. Only then can true improvisation take place.

**FINAL THOUGHTS ON CHAPTER 3**

Although the terms “influence” and “individualism” may at first seem to represent two contrasting ideas, with respect to jazz improvisation they, in fact, have or should have, a symbiotic relationship. Part of what makes jazz engaging for musicians and audiences is the “dialogue” that takes place between the musicians onstage and those who have come before. Qualities that make a player unique are not necessarily separated from traditional aspects of the music (influence); the improviser’s ability to shape, alter, and integrate influences with their personal experiences allow them to develop an individualistic voice that is part of the jazz tradition.

Bunky Green is in many ways the embodiment of what the above musicians and scholars have suggested. Although he is steeped in the tradition and heavily influenced by certain musicians like Parker and Coltrane, he emerged with his own voice, a product of many years of research and self-discovery. He made contributions to jazz that include melodic and harmonic vocabulary that differ from his predecessors and his contemporaries and a unique approach to rhythmic phrasing, while still in dialogue in many ways with what and who came before. However, it would seem that either the dialogue with tradition was not clear enough; or conversely, his approach did not break hard enough from prior conventions; or it wasn’t appealing or achievable enough for other musicians to follow and thus form a new jazz sub-genre; or maybe his timing was off. In all likelihood, it was some combination of all of the above. What is notable now, however, is that as players like Coleman etc. are now drawing on
the overlooked branch of the alto tradition developed by Green as a way to create their unique voices.

The next three chapters are dedicated to presenting my analysis of certain aspects of Green’s individual voice. I begin in Chapter 4, to outline Green’s improvisatory approach as it is represented by the recordings he made at the close of 1960. In addition to identifying a number of sources of influence, I point to aspects of Green’s approach that seem to be unique. Often, these are kind of embryonic forms of later developments.
Chapter 4 ~ Early Recordings: A Point of Departure

I BECAME QUITE PROFICIENT ON THE ALTO AT THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN AND COULD PLAY JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING CHARLIE PARKER HAD RECORDED. WELL, MAYBE THAT WASN’T THE MOST ORIGINAL THING TO DO, BUT YOU’VE GOT TO START SOMewhere.

—BUNKY GREEN

The central goal of this chapter is to provide a rough sketch of Green’s early improvisatory voice in order to better understand his musical roots and establish a point of departure for my analysis of his later developments. While much of this analysis focuses on Green’s vocabulary—something comparable to words, phrases or things he might “say” —it also looks at additional aspects of Green’s individual “voice,” in an attempt to describe the way in which he says these things. As discussed in the preceding chapter, these qualities can include timbre, aspects of phrasing (including manners of expression),¹ and rhythm (hesitation, backpedaling, etc.). To this end, I draw on recordings made at the close of 1960 from two separate sessions that produced the albums My Babe and (Paul Serrano’s) Blues Holiday. While a cursory exploration of these early recordings shows Green’s voice as being very much rooted in blues and bebop idioms—perhaps largely due to his in-depth studies of Parker’s music—it is also apparent that he had already developed a distinct, recognizable approach towards melody, harmony, and rhythm despite being just 25 years old.²

¹ I use David Liebman’s definition for the term “phrasing” to indicate time feel (or eighth note feel), articulation, dynamics (including hard and soft accents and ghost notes) as well as expressive devices (or nuances) such as vibrato, fall-offs and note bends.

² A point hinted at by Chris Miller in his 2009 thesis. He cites trumpeter Randy Brecker, who played on Places We’ve Never Been (1979), as saying Green “had something different from the get go.” Quoted in Chris Miller, “Bunky Green: A Career of Harmonic Evolution” (Masters Thesis: Purchase College, 2009), 151.
Rather than subscribing to one particular formal method of analysis, I have opted to use various approaches in my examination of Green’s music. And, while I do reference certain methods used by known jazz scholars, I have more-or-less endeavored to describe Green’s music in what could be termed “informal ways” or—to Signify on Steven Feld’s expression—“how people routinely talk about music.” Thus I draw on the kinds of metaphors explored in the preceding chapters as the chief method in describing various aspects of Green’s voice, including musical concepts, phrasing (including nuance), timbre, and rhythm.

Through the examples provided, my analysis seeks to highlight some of the major sources of influence within Green’s music and therefore, connect him to certain traditions from the past. In addition, I point to other aspects of his approach that appear to be unique, or at least have less-defined origins of influence. Influences that connect him with the past include stylistic devices of players he greatly admired, idiomatic conventions, and other traditional aspects from the “language of jazz.” Certainly, some speculation has come into play in drawing some of these connections. In many cases, however, I have been led to many of my assumptions by remarks Green has made in past interviews and articles about influential sources that have impacted his approach. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, these aspects of Green’s voice seem to diminish, as his individuality becomes more carefully defined in later years. Rather than speculating further on possible origins of influence that may have contributed to these more “unique areas” of Green’s playing, my goal in this chapter is to simply point to examples of these individualistic aspects in embryonic form. While it is certainly possible Green was unaware of

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3 Lewis Porter has noted that the use of various analytical methods is one of the most important aspects of Lawrence Gushee’s analysis of Lester Young. Lewis Porter, *Jazz: A Century of Change*, (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 76.

any such underlining process, nevertheless, these kinds of examples show that Green was laying the groundwork for his future musical developments.

THE BLUES

While Green’s music from this period could be easily described as falling within bebop or hard bop genres, a more nuanced look reveals the influence of blues and black gospel idioms. Less evident, I would argue, are the Latin styles he says always fascinated him (since playing with Manny Garcia’s groups during his formative years in Milwaukee). Green has stated:

> Latin [music] turned me onto rhythm. Rhythmically they really cook. That’s the first way I learned to play that staggered rhythm over a metronomic sound… playing all sorts of counter-rhythms against a relentless pulse. I’ve got so much of the Latin rhythms that, if you listen to some of my things, you’ll find that I sound like a saxophone player playing timbales.”

As noted in Chapter 2, Steve Coleman compares Parker’s rhythmic phrasing to clave rhythms present within Afro-Cuban music with some interesting results. I discuss Green’s idea of “staggered rhythm” later in Chapters 5 and 6, which examine some of Green’s approaches to phrasing and articulation. At this point, however, I would like to consider the more evident influence of the blues that permeates Green’s solos (and there is a lot of it).

Critics in the past have mentioned Green’s “expressive” or “emotional” side, when describing qualities of his particular voice that initially attracted them to his music. Certainly, these types of evaluations are difficult to isolate, let alone define, however, I suggest that descriptions such as these often refer to particular ways in which players shape and colour notes in a blues-influenced or vocal manner. These may include nuance—including timbre variations,

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vibrato, note-bends, scoops and falls—and/or aspects of phrasing such as accents and dynamics that are used in combinations to represent a kind of blues attitude. In his book *Blowin’ the Blues Away*, Travis Jackson explores the extent that blues-derived playing can communicate feeling and elicit emotion. Jackson uses the term “blues feeling”\(^7\) to refer to a way of playing that incorporates a kind of blues-based conception, one he says is of “crucial importance to artists trying to make a connection with audiences by expressing a type of ‘soulfulness.’”\(^8\) In seeking further evidence to support this idea, Jackson says we need look no further than to jazz audiences, who generally respond well to this type of playing.

Further to its expressive qualities and ability to speak to audiences, the idea of a blues-based conception or “blues feeling” also implies an overall kind of assertiveness or gritty attitude that exemplifies ways musicians “dig in,” or establish a groove with the rhythm section. Jackson explains how this type of playing extends beyond the confines of the blues genre:

> Blues-derived playing and expression, then, are not a function of harmony or rhythmic complexity. Neither, however, are they merely a function of simplicity. Rather, they are concerned with the projection of strength and power, with laying down a groove, through the way in which one approaches whatever rhythmic, harmonic, or other sonic resources are being utilized. Implicit in both statements is the assumption that other participants in a musical event can aurally identify such moments and effectively respond to and contribute to the engendered feelings.\(^9\)

It was through interviews with jazz musicians that Jackson discovered that many of the qualities represented by a “blues feeling” are fairly consistent among great musicians. He also found that many older jazz musicians tend to emphasize its importance, suggesting it is one of the aspects that is often underdeveloped and underappreciated in the playing styles of many younger jazz musicians.

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\(^7\) Part of a larger group of “normative and evaluative criteria” that he refers to as a “blues aesthetic,” 109-135.


\(^9\) Ibid., 116.
musicians. In essence, then, Jackson suggests that a “blues feeling” may be what audiences are referring to when they describe a player as playing with “soul,” “assertiveness,” or “emotion.” As indicated in many of the early reviews of his music, this is one of the most attractive aspects of Green’s voice.

Green’s use of blues material provides the additional function of connecting him to certain musicians from the past. In his article “The Importance of the Past in Deriving the Future,” (1985), he discusses his “immeasurable respect for the past,” its importance in the creation of new music, and the role he believes it must play in the education of young musicians. As opposed to buying into the notion that the term “old” should be equated with “obsolete,” he considers the concepts “old” and “new” as being “two sides of the same coin” that work together to bring “freshness into existing systems” and urges artists to incorporate “old” music traditions in order to create something “new.” Current trends, he says, have been inspired by “Organum, Modality, Pentatonic concepts, Drones, and imitations of primitive cultures through the use of whistles, chains, rattles, gourds performances coupled with the burning of incense and monophonic chanting to drum accompaniment.” Moreover, he states that the practice of looking to the past is, in part, what defines jazz “as we know it.” Although it is not as ancient as these other practices just mentioned, the prominence of the blues within Green’s music certainly connects him to more traditional jazz idioms, and therefore, music traditions from Africa. That blues-derived playing comprises an integral part of Green’s improvisatory voice and compositional style, emphasizes the importance he places on traditional aspects or the roots of the music.

11 Ibid.
The influence of Parker and Coltrane, “bluesmen”\textsuperscript{12} themselves, would have been primary sources of blues material, although certainly there were others that found their way into Green’s circle of influence—including his upbringing and social life. In addition to a “blues feeling,” what others might refer to as a kind of assertiveness or soul, I suspect that Green’s unapologetic, overblown (at times), spread-out tone on alto drew from a number of other jazz, blues and/or R&B oriented saxophonists (or perhaps even gutsy blues singers). In addition to tone, I hear a strong connection to players like Hank Crawford and David “Fathead” Newman, for example, in terms of the prominence of blues vocabulary, a “blues feeling,” nuance, and a wide expressive vibrato. Granted, Green has a wide range of expression and, at other times, I find his vibrato similar to Coltrane’s in its narrower width, its speed, and placement near the ends of notes. In addition to these kinds of performance practices, Green’s repertoire choices reveal a strong connection to traditional aspects of the music, especially if we consider (for example) both his earthy blues composition “Step High” and his gospel treatment of the traditional composition “My Babe.”\textsuperscript{13} All of this points to the fact that Green’s voice seems to have developed from, or was deeply influenced by, the blues in ways that extend beyond his choice of vocabulary.

This chapter demonstrates some of the specific ways Green tended to use blues vocabulary within his improvised solos at the close of 1960. Some of these examples could be seen as falling within genre-specific performance practices or simply coming from “the common

\textsuperscript{12} Many musicians, historians, and authors describe Parker as a such. In his 2005 “Meet the Masters” video interview with Green, Steve Coleman describes Parker as having all of the feeling of a blues player in addition to all of the more harmonically sophisticated lines. “An Interview with Bunky Green,” by Steve Coleman, M-Base Ways Members Website, August 22, 2005, http://members.m-base.net/meet-the-masters-series/meet-the-masters-an-interview-with-bunky-green/. Green describes Parker as “one of the last great Bluesmen,” adding that he was also “much more than that.” Ed Bland, liner notes for Healing the Pain, 1990, 4.

\textsuperscript{13} Both of which appear on his debut recording as a leader.
language of jazz." Nevertheless, I do not believe that the following examples of blues-related material should be considered to be merely “licks” or predetermined formula that Green plugs into his solos so much as a reflection of his personality, formed in part by where he came from as well as the players he learned from and came up with as a developing musician. And while it is clear there are certain melodic devices, or “licks,” that Green relies on from time to time, I am much more interested in how the blues relates to his particular voice, part of the way he “talks” and hears music. In addition to showing examples of blues vocabulary, I show that the blues influence presents itself in areas of timbre, vibrato, scoops and fall-offs, and rhythmic phrasing aspects, therefore, permeating Green’s voice in other ways. I have attempted to notate these particular stylistic aspects within the following transcriptions to various degrees of success.

Finally, my analysis of Green’s use of blues-related material attempts to show ways in which he may have conceived of creating structure and continuity within his solos in other idioms.

ANALYSIS

Figure 4.1 shows a superimposition of a single tonality over an extended passage containing a number of chord changes.

Figure 4.1  Green on “Little Niles,” measures 17-21.

This kind of playing is sometimes referred to as horizontal, as opposed to vertical. It could also be viewed as being a more melodic approach to improvisation and a way of promoting continuity over a number of measures rather than arpeggiating up and down over each chord. This is a

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14 Berliner’s term, see Chapter 2.
common use of blues material among jazz players. One of the reasons it works so effectively here, however, is because of the sharp contrast with the preceding 16 measures. The preceding section consists of eight measures of Fdim/E followed by eight measures of F#dim/F (concert pitch). These chords could also be heard as particularly “crunchy” dominant seventh chords (E7♭9 and F7♭9). The accompaniment from the other musicians is quite thick: Donald Garrett is playing an ostinato pattern on the bass, there is heavy dense chordal accompaniment from Jodie Christian, as well as heavy snare and bass drum accompaniment from Pete LaRoca. Adding to the tension is Green, who plays angular diminished scalar material over the entire section. As the music leads into the Bbm section (ex. i), the entire band immediately lightens up in texture and locks into place. The simplicity of Green’s blues line helps to calm things down and solidify the groove, which continues throughout the rest of Green’s solo. This melodic, horizontal method or way of playing helps unify the section and provide a sense of cohesiveness, a quality of Green’s playing that I address further below.

In addition to providing cohesion within an improvisation, Green uses blues-related material to signal the end of a solo, phrase or chorus and therefore, provide a sense of emphasis and finality. A good example of this approach can be found at the end of his solo on “Everything’s Coming Up Roses,”²¹ from Paul Serrano’s Blues Holiday. While Green’s final note—a resounding whole-note on the tonic—leaves little doubt that the solo has ended, the blues material that precedes it helps make it understood that the solo is coming to a close. I see the use of blues material in this way as a compositional tool²² improvisers use to wrap-up their

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²¹ A somewhat well-known jazz standard written by Steven Sondheim and Jule Stein from the 1959 Broadway musical Gypsy: A Musical Fable.

²² As mentioned above, Steve Coleman refers to jazz musicians’ improvisations (or solos) as “spontaneous compositions.” I see this term as operating on several levels: First, it indicates that he believes that musicians use thought and logic in the construction of their musical statements. Further, the term “solo” implies the involvement of just one person whereas, the “soloist” is actually making music with the rhythm section as well.
solos, such that they provide a sense of closure or resolution (as opposed to simply ending abruptly at the end of the 32-bar form). This kind of resolution, it would seem, provides a similar function as the third (and final) four-bar phrase of the 12-bar blues form. In his book Shortcut to Jazz: Essential Jazz Licks, Green suggests that imitating blues singing traditions is an “excellent way to acquire a good feeling for the blues,” and thus the phrasing structure of the form. He offers the following example to help with the comprehension with this structure:

I may be wrong but I won’t be wrong always / I may be wrong but I won’t be wrong always / Gonna’ find me a gal to chase my blues away.

As demonstrated by this example, the last four measures of the 12-bar blues are generally seen as “a logical conclusion to the previous material” i.e. phrase one and phrase two. This kind of logical linguistic phrasing is useful in delivering meaningful musical statements over blues forms. Green is one of many players who extends this kind of linguistic phrasing to song forms outside of the blues such as in the last five measures of his solo on “Everything’s Coming Up Roses.”

Figure 4.2 Green on “Everything’s Coming Up Roses,” last five measures (141-145).

This phrase creates for me the climax of this solo, mostly because of the expressive blues-related statement in combination with the altissimo note (in 141-142) and the three-over-

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17 The blues is commonly thought of as being constructed of three 4-bar phrases. The first phrase is generally considered to be a “statement,” and the second, a repetition of the first (although there is often some variation within this repetition). The third phrase concludes the preceding phrases in a logical linguistic way. This type of construction stems from vocal traditions in the blues that tell a story.

18 Green, Shortcut to Jazz: Essential Jazz Licks (New Albany: Jamey Aebersold Jazz Inc., 2010), 19.

19 Ibid.
four polyrhythms (in eighth-notes, beginning on beat 2 of measure 143 and continuing until beat 3 of measure 144). The other musicians, as well, play with added verve in these brief (four-measure) G7 vamps. The pianist Jodie Christian, who basically provides what I would consider non-intrusive accompaniment patterns throughout Green’s solo, switches to a typical Latin pattern of the day, which was part of the arrangement. Garrett, as well, maintains his consistent approach and continues to walk through this section. Pete LaRoca, however, steps it up a notch in support of Green and helps bring the solo to a peak. He does this in part by raising the intensity, both dynamically and in terms of the amount of notes on snare and crash cymbals. The cymbal crashes that continue into the trumpet chorus (on beat four of measure one and three of measure two) act as the final exclamation points to Green’s solo.

In addition to using blues material to end a solo, Green often uses the blues to compose his opening statements. I would argue this is even part of Green’s “voice” or part of how he goes about telling a story. The beginnings of his solos on “Step High” and “Blues Holiday” use a similar blues phrase that might even be considered to be the same lick, although Green’s variations in the phrasing create the illusion of two distinct ideas. Both phrases are simplistic and seem to pose a question, important characteristics for an opening phrase whose function it is to pique the interest of the listener and draw them into the music. The basic construction of the lines is the same: G₄-E₄-Bb₄-E₃-G₃, with emphasis placed on the fundamental pitch. Also characteristic of each line is the tritone between the E and Bb that effectively outlines the C7 chord in the second measure or the Gmin6 (tonic minor or blues-related) sound.

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20 This is a typical Latin jazz pattern, however, it is my understanding that it became increasingly popular after the Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet included its use as an intro and outro to their 1958 recording of “I’ll Remember April.”

21 According to Joe Segal’s liner notes to the original release, LaRoca was visiting from New York City and was a last minute replacement for Serrano’s regular drummer (who could not make the session).
Because of the similar nature of their construction and the fact they are repeated in two separate solos, figures 4.3 and 4.4 could be considered to be what music scholars like Henry Martin refer to, as “formulaic improvisation,” or “ideas that are repeated from solo to solo.” Because of the difficulty in categorizing formulas and establishing what constitutes a formula from a motive etc., I would like to avoid leaning too heavily on this kind of approach. However, I would like to recognize the fact that Green’s use of what seems to be predetermined phrases says something significant about the importance of these particular areas of his improvisations as well as the importance he placed on blues material. It should be noted as well that Serrano ends his solo with a line ending on the root and containing the Bb-E tritone (Eb-A on trumpet), immediately preceding Green’s entrance in “Blues Holiday.” In my opinion, this only reinforces the argument that a lot of players during this time were using this kind of blues-related material to begin and end their improvisations.

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23 In contrast, Miller argues that Serrano’s line feeds Green the idea for his opening line, in Bunky Green, 36.
An opening statement draws a listener into a story while the final statement is something a listener often remembers most clearly. This may be one reason Green (among others) takes a simple approach to these areas with blues material that is memorable, sing-able, and effectively resonates with listeners. Indeed, Lawrence Gushee addresses similar notions in his assessment of Lester Young’s approach to solos with the Count Basie Orchestra in an article entitled: “Lester Young’s ‘Shoe Shine Boy’.” By comparing multiple versions of Young’s recorded solos on the number, Gushee suggests that Young may have had a “kind of rhetorical plan, serving not only to give ‘meaning’ to these performances but also to forge two choruses together.”

The first move is a move out of the band or in juxtaposition to another soloist or both. It must catch the attention, and in Lester Young’s case—who at this point in his career was not satisfied with rhetorical gestures alone—must be an intelligible musical idea. It will generally fill the first four measures.

Gushee continues, noting that, following a “demonstration of mastery, technique identifiable to the instrument, normal harmony, or rhythmic construction,” there is generally a “return to the band, ‘wrapping it up,’ an expressive peak reached by using common property, a riff, or a well-known lick.” Since many of Green’s solos from this period seem to begin and end in ways that fit Gushee’s description of telling a story, I suggest that Green was either consciously or unconsciously following a similar kind of plan on “Step High” and “Blues Holiday.” In fact,

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24 One of my earliest saxophone teachers, Stan Karp, once explained to me that you should always end a solo well, otherwise, “it can leave a bad taste in the listener’s mouth.” This idea can be extended to the ending of phrases and even notes.
26 Ibid.
27 Gushee, “Lester Young’s ‘Shoe Shine Boy’,” 250.
28 While the beginnings and endings seem to follow Gushee’s pattern, the middle section does not correspond with what I know about Green’s approach. Rather than concern himself with displays of technical mastery, I would argue that Green’s approach is based more on connecting with musicians onstage and making an individual, meaningful statement.
his solos on “Don’t Blame Me,” “My Babe,” and “Dream of Igor” take on a similar structure as well. Further, when Green plays more than one chorus, he often repeats a similar pattern for each chorus, using blues material to connect the two. The climax of these solos sometimes corresponds to the final phrase (as in “Don’t Blame Me”).

This kind of “rhetorical plan” described above—with its beginning, middle, and end type of structure—lends itself well to comparisons to a story. According to Gushee, Young indeed thought of playing a solo as telling a story, and the same has been said of Green’s approach. For example, Lovano described Green in my conversations with him: as “a storyteller that tells the truth about who he is and where he’s travelled in the music.” Following the solo’s “first move,” to borrow Gushee’s term, there are melodic statements, or motives, which are developed and grow in intensity, usually building to a climax near the end. Green may or may not have been overly concerned with “demonstrations of mastery” but they are indeed present within this middle, “development,” section. Of course, blues-related statements are present as well and, in fact, help to build excitement and intensity. As Jackson describes above, blues-related material often represents the climax of many solos because of its expressivity and its ability to speak to listeners.

The following segment exemplifies what I would describe as the climax of Green’s solo on “Step High,” from his album My Babe. To begin with, ascending chromatic lines, like the one Green plays in measures 23-24, are generally thought of as a good way to build excitement. This particular phrase seems to draw on the melody yet could also be considered to be part of “the language of jazz.” As discussed in his book Charlie Parker and Thematic Improvisation, Henry

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29 Gushee, “Lester Young’s ‘Shoe Shine Boy’,“ 250.
30 Joe Lovano, telephone interview by the author, December 2015.
31 Travis Jackson, Blowin’ the Blues Away, 115-116, 136-154.
Martin would most likely consider this particular phrase to be thematic material, in the sense that it is related to the melody. However, as Martin says himself, when this material is at all obscure, “how can a listener know when the player intends the connection?” Chris Miller cites a similar chromatically ascending line in his thesis, from Green’s solo on “Blues Holiday,” although he identifies it as as coming straight from Parker’s vocabulary. This may be true, but it is (again) difficult to confirm. The fact that Green repeats the chromatic ascending line several times in his solo and that it is essentially played again in his solo on “Blues Holiday,” recorded just a couple of weeks later, suggests that it was simply a part of Green’s vocabulary, or storehouse of licks. More important to me is that this line is an example of Signifyin(g) on conventional or cliché blues themes, what seems to be a form of tribute or an aligning with the blues and the people who helped define its stylistic parameters. Whether it is from Parker’s vocabulary, the melody, or the “common language of jazz,” I see this example as a way for Green to connect with a particular type of music from the past (and the musicians with which it was associated) while at the same time inciting a kind of emotional response from his own audience.

At the beginning of the bridge in figure 4.5 (measures 25-26), Green maintains the intensity of his opening line with a busy triplet eighth-note phrase that is almost completely out of time with the band. However, he lands back in sync by beat one of measure 27, and the subsequent phrases continue to lock in rhythmically for the remainder of the bridge. This kind of feeling of locking, or “digging in,” is aided by a return to familiar material from the head arrangement, a Charleston rhythmic figure played by members of the rhythm section. Pianist Kelly plays the figure beginning on the first beat of measure 25 (first measure of the bridge) and

32 Martin, Charlie Parker and Thematic Improvisation, 35.
Cobb follows by adding snare and bass drum by measure 27. Green catches the idea as well and adjusts his rhythmic phrasing and accented notes to fit alongside and, while he is late with his note A₅ in measure 27, the rest of his phrasing is locked in. Bassist Ridley, on the other hand, refrains from jumping onboard and continues to walk throughout this section.

Figure 4.5  Green on “Step High,” measures 23-32 (leading into the bridge).

While vocabulary can easily show the influence of the blues, it is not the only aspect of the voice that can indicate it. In addition, tone, phrasing and rhythm are also key. In his solo on “Cecile,” for example, Green avoids anything that can be described as strictly blues “vocabulary,” even though the composition is based on the 12-bar blues form. Instead, he plays content that relates to the melody, i.e. whole-tone and Lydian dominant material. Yet his playing retains its blues feeling particularly because of the way he composes and delivers his lines. Although the pitches may sound somewhat foreign to the blues (even for today’s listeners), I would argue that certain aspects of his phrasing indicate blues influences. Chief among these are
his use of scoops, fall-offs, bends, and vibrato. Further, Green’s phrasing structure follows the linguistic 4-bar narrative structure similar to his solos on more traditional blues solos.

Throughout Green’s solo on “Cecile,” there is almost no reference to what one might call typical blues vocabulary. Near the end of his second chorus, Green sort of slips into more conventional blues vocabulary for about a measure and a half when he outlines an A minor triad over D in measures 6-7 of his second chorus. (This is a kind of echo of the A major triad he plays over the G7 chord in measure five.) However, he quickly recovers by following the blues-like motive with whole-tone scalar material using “sequential imitation” (beginning on beat four of measure seven). He continues to use whole-tone and Lydian dominant material until the end of his solo. Although blues vocabulary is minimal, we still get the sense of rhythmic phrasing or logical sentence structure that goes hand in hand with telling a story. For example, Green uses a sequence pattern in measures nine and ten that descends by half-step. This seems to outline A7+ to Ab7+. This kind of downward sequence at this point in the form references the original V-IV-I chord motion of the 12-bar blues form in an oblique way. That is, even though the rhythm section hangs on the C7(#11), Green’s sequence maintains the general shape of the original blues changes.

In addition to rhythmic phrasing, Green shapes and colours notes in particular ways that imply blues or gospel influenced vocalizations. As mentioned above, these can include variations in timbre, vibrato, note-bends, scoops, falls, accents, and dynamics, used in combinations to

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34 I actually see this as part of Dmi(maj7)/G7. The reason is the preceding three beats to measure four imply an A7b9 kind of sound, which resolves naturally to Dm. Triad shapes are useful, however, because they are easier to talk about and locate in the transcription.
35 Green, *Shortcut to Jazz,* 6. I explore this concept and other related concepts below under “Motivic Development.”
36 Chords transposed for Eb alto saxophone.
imbue such vocal qualities. His scoops up to G# in the pick-up measure to his second chorus and in the second measure, for example, invoke a feeling of the blues. In addition, the vibrato on E₄ (5th measure, second chorus) invokes a particular singing quality.

Below, I have provided the melody as well as part of Green’s solo that, while not containing much blues-related material from a vocabulary standpoint, still contains a “blues feeling” owing to his soulfulness, phrasing aspects—such as timbre, vibrato, scoops and fall-offs—as well as the confident and assertive way he “digs in” and plays the material.

**Figure 4.6** Melody and harmony of “Cecile.”
Figure 4.7  Green’s second chorus on “Cecile.”
This primary goal of this section has been to show a multitude of ways and the degree to which Green’s improvisational “voice” draws on the blues or blues-related material. While I show some specific ways Green uses blues vocabulary, I contend that the blues permeates his playing in a more general sense, expressed through his tone, inflections—like note-bends and vibrato—and in the kind of “blues feeling” (to use Travis Jackson’s term) he conveys with his confident approach and the way he digs in with the rhythm section, aspects often cited as expressive or emotional aspects of his playing. Further, a look at Green’s use of blues material provides a window into certain improvisational practices such as providing continuity over a series of changes; clarity at the beginnings and endings of solos and phrases; as well as ways to raise the intensity of a solo and establish a connection with audiences. Beyond simply using blues material to achieve these specific goals, blues material is an essential quality of Green’s identity that comes across in his phrasing, nuance, and rhythmic figures.

The next section points to similarities in vocabulary and phrasing between Green and Charlie Parker and bebop language. Moreover, it explores ways in which Green may have been trying to move away from typical aspects of Parker’s playing.

BEBOP, INVISIBLE PATHS & VOCABULARY

During the early period of his career, presumably while Green was still involved in a kind of “imitation stage” of learning, he was often cast as a young, fiery hard bop musician who played in the tradition of Parker. Green himself substantiates these assessments to some degree declaring in a 1977 interview: “I could play all Bird’s classic things, typical things, phrases like Bird, tone like Bird.” While I point to a few instances within his 1960s recordings where Green

may have been trying to move away from more orthodox ways of playing, most of his harmonic material seems typical of what other Parker-influenced musicians were playing during this time. Although Parker’s influence is perhaps not as overt as in Green’s previous stages (that he refers to above), it nevertheless retains its presence in several ways. Besides stylistic aspects of phrasing (i.e. ghosted notes and accents, scoops, etc.) and vocabulary, Green implies certain harmonic progressions Parker once played that, in my opinion, were important aspects of his voice. While these implied harmonic progressions sometimes follow commonly accepted substitute chord changes (often used by rhythm sections), they may also stray into less familiar territory and do not require that the rest of the band follow.

In order to gain a better appreciation of these kinds of harmonic forays, I suggest looking at Green’s tonal approach through the lens of an analytical device used by Steve Coleman: what he has referred to as “Invisible Paths.” In his article “The Dozens: Steve Coleman on Charlie Parker,” Coleman uses his concept of Invisible Paths to analyze the music of Charlie Parker, offering the following explanation:

Following up on what Mingus referred to as *new melodic concepts*, many times musicians use what I call *Invisible Paths*, meaning that they are not necessarily following the exact path of the composed or accepted harmonic structure for a particular composition, but instead follow their own melodic and harmonic roads which functionally perform the same job.\(^{38}\)

In a related way, I use Mingus’ and Coleman’s ideas of the implication of harmony through a player’s melodic lines to identify and speak about about such instances found within Green’s solos. While this is a useful tool in showing similarities to Parker’s influence, it proves useful in subsequent chapters as well when speaking about Green’s inside/outside approach.

Although Green has acknowledged Parker’s influence on multiple occasions, scholarly work has left the area largely unexplored. One reason for this might lie in the difficulty in finding learned Parker phrases or “licks” within Green’s solos. In order to identify aspects of Parker’s phrasing and vocabulary, I look beyond exact replications of notes and rhythms to locate the presence of similar harmonic roadways or “Invisible Paths” that both saxophonists follow. In this way, traces of bebop and Parker’s influence can be shown to exist within Green’s approach. A comparison of the two players shows that, while Green’s deep understanding of Parker’s language allowed him freedom to construct unique lines there are, nevertheless, similarities in implied harmonic pathways, phrasing, and voice-leading techniques. Moreover, establishing similarities between Green and Parker help to recognize some of the differences inherent in their respective voices.

One common harmonic pathway, or chord substitution, in bebop idioms—one which Parker was known to make regular use of—consists of ii-V patterns that descend by half-step. These descending chord patterns often appear in sequences and are inserted into existing chord progressions to add interest or help give forward motion to the music. One of the most famous examples of this chord substitution appears in the third and fourth measures of the well-known and often recorded standard “I Can’t Get Started,” where a chain of chromatically descending ii-Vs—beginning viim7-III7—resolves to the tonic. Another common example of this substitution can be found in in measures 7-9 of the typical jazz 12-bar blues form. At this particular place in the form, musicians typically play I7 for a measure followed by iiim7-VI7⁹, essentially ii-V of ii. However, a common practice since the bebop era has been to condense the harmonic rhythm

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⁹ Thomas Owens, “Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation (Volumes I and II)” (PhD dissertation University of California, 1974, 16.)
to two beats each and add an additional chromatic ii-V: the biiim7-bVI7. It is this particular part of the blues form I would now like to examine more closely.40

Figure 4.8    Typical 12-bar bebop-blues reharmonization (measures 7-8).

Regardless of whether or not the band played the biii-bVI7 substitution, Parker implied the substitution quite a lot. For example, in the following excerpt from his solo on “Bird Feathers,” he clearly indicates Bbm7 (biiim7) before resolving to the Am7 (iim7) chord.

Figure 4.9    Charlie Parker on “Bird Feathers,” chorus 3, measures 7-9.

In figure 4.10, Green outlines a similar harmonic pathway, implying Bm (or Gma7) and Bbm before resolving to Am7 on beat one of measure nine.

40 These are in the key of G (for alto saxophone).
Green on “Blues Holiday” chorus 4, measures 7-9.

Green uses the same chromatic ii-V chord substitution in his fifth chorus of the same solo. This time, however, the harmonic rhythm is anticipated by an entire measure. This particular phrase is similar in construction to the Parker example above, whereby he creates momentary tension by outlining Bbm7 over the Am7 chord. In Green’s case, Bm7 is played over G (in measure seven), followed by Bbm7-Eb7 (in place of Bm7-E7). The Am7 (Am9) chord is anticipated by one beat. Chris Miller explores these anticipations as well in his thesis on Green, in which he states that Green uses this practice as “another technique of creating tension.” While anticipation of this kind can be seen as a way of adding harmonic tension, it also adds rhythmic tension or rhythmic displacement of (our perception of) the downbeat. The effect of this displacement “breaks-up” what might otherwise be considered to be monotonous eighth-note lines. I suggest this is one method Green uses to incorporate the element of surprise or spontaneity within his playing, effectively catching his listeners off-guard.

Another practice Green relies on heavily during this period is tritone substitution. Although this is a common device used by many of Green’s bebop predecessors, Parker is believed to be the major proponent of its acceptance into the jazz vocabulary. The next

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41 Miller, *Bunky Green*, 40. Miller also shows Green anticipating the following chord change by one beat.
42 David Liebman, Master class, 2014.
examples focus around Green’s use of this substitution, with particular attention aimed at the
tonic dominant chord in measure four of the 12-bar blues form. Figures 12-15 illustrate my
theoretical explanation for arriving at the tritone substitution often used by Green.

Figure 4.12  12-bar blues in G, measures 1-4.

Figure 4.13  The iim7-V7 in measure 4 expanded to encompass two bars.

Figure 4.14  Long iim7-V7 in bars 3-4 replaced with two shorter iim7-V7s.

Parker often replaced iim7-V7s with their tritone substitution (e.g., Abm7-Db7 in place of Dm7-
G7). Many variations of this basic concept are possible and improvisers might omit, stretch,
condense, or displace any of these chord changes. Green has expressed that the overarching goal
in using chord substitutions is to find the “color,” or tension notes over the V7 chord that outline
a clear pathway to the I chord.  

Figure 4.15  Tritone substitution, measures 1-4 of the G blues.

43 Bunky Green, Shortcut to Jazz, 3.
When using these kinds of tritone substitutions to find the tension notes in the chords, it seems Green would often play lines that outline the ii7m chord while avoiding the V7. In his second chorus on “Blues Holiday,” for example, Green outlines Dm in measure three, followed by Abm7 in measure four (a tritone away), yet avoids the Db7.

Figure 4.16  Green on “Blues Holiday,” chorus 2, measures 1-4.

Two other instances of tritone substitution are found within Green’s solo on “Counterpunch.” Again, these phrases outline a minor shape, a tritone away from the ii7m chord. In place of Gm7-C7 (in measure three) Green clearly outlines C#m resolving to Fmaj7.

Figure 4.17  Green on “Counterpunch,” measures 1-4.

Similarly, he plays F#m7 in place of Cm7b5, resolving to Bbmaj7.

Figure 4.18  Green on “Counterpunch,” measures 23-24. Green plays F#m7 over Cm7b5 F7b9.

Green sometimes used multiple tritone substitutions in the same phrase, for instance, when modulating through a number of keys. In the following example, he plays C#7 over G7, F#m7-B7 (over F7), and Bm7 or E7 over Bb7.
of some of Green’s lines bear an uncanny similarity to those played by Parker. A comparison of phrases by Green and Parker on a blues form reveals just how similar Green could come to incorporating stylistic aspects of his idol’s phrasing. Take, for example, the opening phrase of Parker’s solo on “Bloomdido,” recorded in 1950.\(^{44}\) The important markers of this phrase could be broken down and described as the following: an ascending G arpeggio, followed by a descending scale to the root of the IV7 chord (C), a return to the tonic (in measure three), an ascending line to the flat seventh degree (beat one of measure four), and a tritone substitution that leads to the IV7 chord in measure five.

Compare Parker’s line on “Bloomdido” to Green’s first four bars of his second chorus on “Step High” and it quickly becomes evident just how much the two phrases have in common. The above description of Parker’s line might have easily been written about Green’s—the contours

are the same. In essence, Green follows similar voice-leading techniques as outlined by Parker. The obvious difference between the two is the rhythm. The complexity of Green’s phrase is already a step away from Parker’s stream of eighth notes that was typical of much of his playing.

Figure 4.21 Green on “Step High,” measures 33-36.

Another aspect of Green’s improvisatory voice that is similar to Parker’s is his use of certain typical types of voice-leading techniques over measure 9-10 of the 12-bar blues form (over the II7-V7 or iiim7-V7 chords). The following examples are taken from Green’s solo on “Step High,” a 12-bar blues composition with a couple of significant alterations. Most notably, it has an 8-bar bridge, which is inserted after two choruses of the 12-bar blues and followed by one more 12-bar section, creating a 44-measure AABA form. Another important, although more common modification, is the use of a secondary dominant in measure nine, the A7 that resolves to the subsequent D7 in measure ten. The use of a secondary dominant, as it is used in this situation, for me usually indicates a connection to gospel idioms or other more traditional folk-based music. In a practical sense, this secondary dominant—or dominant of the dominant—has a stronger pull to the subsequent V7 chord because of the presence of the tritone between its third and seventh. Both of these notes (in this case C# and G) resolve to the inherent tritone of D7 (C and F#) by semitone, thus, creating a stronger resolution and greater forward motion.

In “Step High,” Green often emphasizes the major third, natural ninth, and natural thirteenth of A7. The F# and B often resolve downwards by half-step to the sharp nine and sharp five (F and Bb) over the following D7 altered dominant chord. The next three examples show

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45 “Step High” is in the key of Bb, G for alto saxophone. The secondary dominant in question, then, is A7.
evidence of this kind of treatment of the II/7 chord. In measure 9 of figure 22, Green implies Em7-A7 or (A7sus-A7). In other words, he employs 4-3 voice-leading, resolving the suspended fourth degree to the major third of A7 on beat three. Over D7, I suggest he is outlining Ebm6, although this is unclear.

Figure 4.22 Green on “Step High,” measures 9-10.

In figure 23, Green outlines a more typical A13 sound, something closer to what Parker would play over such dominant seventh chords. The B in the first measure that resolves to A# in the second could arguably be seen as another 4-3 voice-leading, this time down a semi-tone (in the key of F#). Green’s line over D7 certainly seems as though it is in the key of F# before he resolves to his C on beat four.

Figure 4.23 Green on “Step High,” measures 21-22.

Finally, figure 4.24 shows Green clearly outlying the A13 sound (in measure 41, figure 24). The F# in measure 41 resolves down by semitone to F natural (beat one of measure 42). This could be seen as another instance of 4-3 voice-leading, this time in the key of Db. However, it is also likely Green was simply thinking Cm7-F7 over D7 (measure 42).

Figure 4.24 Green on “Step High,” measures 41-43.
In each of these examples, Green follows the A7 secondary dominant harmony with some kind of D7 altered dominant harmony or tritone substitution material (Ab7).

The practice of outlining the secondary dominant built on two as a thirteenth chord (V13 of V) was a well-known characteristic of Parker’s vocabulary. In fact, Parker often used the harmonic device even when the rhythm section played iim7. The following excerpts from Parker’s solo on “Klaatoveedsdstene” show that this indeed happened on occasion. “Klaatoveedsdstene” is a Parker composition (in the key of Bb concert) that uses minor seventh chords in the A sections and secondary dominants in the bridge. At least this is what the rhythm section played on the most well-known recording Parker made for Dial Records in 1947 (Dial 1040). Parker, meanwhile, emphasized C# and F#, thereby implying A13 over most of the Am7 chords.

Figure 4.25 Parker on “Klaatoveedsdstene,” measures 13-16 of his solo. Parker’s harmonic path seems to follow E7b9-A7, Am7-D7, G.

Figure 4.26 Parker on “Klaatoveedsdstene,” emphasizing the major third and thirteenth of A(m)7, measures 29-33.

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46 Original Charlie Parker Quartet. Miles Davis (t), Parker (as), Duke Jordan (p), Tommy Potter (b), Max Roach (d). WOR Studios, NYC, Nov. 4, 1947. Dial 1040.
The following two excerpts, from the same recording, show Parker’s treatment of the A7 chord in the second half of the bridge. Figure 4.27 shows Parker again emphasizing the thirteenth of A7, as it is the highest note of the phrase (measure 22, third beat).

Figure 4.27 Parker on the improvised bridge to “Klactoveedsedstene,” measures 21-24 of the melody chorus.

Figure 4.28 Parker on “Klactoveedsedstene,” measures 21-24 of the solo chorus.

While these examples suggest Green’s use of secondary dominant chords was similar to Parker’s, they also show he used different voice-leading measures to resolve them to the subsequent dominant chord. Whereas Parker outlines Am9 and D7b9 shapes over the D7 chord in his solo on “Klactoveedsedstene,” Green seems to imply Ebm7-Ab7; G#m7-C#7; and Cm7-F7.

**MOTIVIC DEVELOPMENT**

Green has stated that continuity is one of the most important aspects of improvisation. He says continuity can be provided through repetition and development of melodic and rhythmic motives over the harmonic framework of a tune. This in turn helps to shape and lend structure to an improvised solo, giving the impression that several individual phrases are in fact one complete artistic statement. In his book *A Shortcut to Jazz: Essential Jazz Licks*, Green introduces various kinds of motivic development techniques he labels as sequential imitation (of

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47 Green, *Shortcut to Jazz*, 6.
short motives), scale-wise imitation, and broken chord imitation.⁴⁸ Each technique relies on repetition, however, not of an exact kind. Green says the repetitions mimic the “rhythmic and melodic shape” of a motive and can involve transposition in ways that fit each subsequent chord.⁴⁹ It is evident from his recordings that he is much looser in the production of these kinds of sequences in practice than the examples in his book might have us believe. In practice, these imitation techniques are combined with others such as displacement, transposition, elongation, and truncation. Another way Green enhances a sense of unity and coherence within his music is through the use of reoccurring thematic motives which might appear throughout the entirety of a solo, oftentimes in similar parts of the form.⁵⁰

Green’s emphasis on motivic development is similar to the idea of “compositional development” in Western music. In his article “Charlie Parker and ‘Honeysuckle Rose’: Voice Leading, Formula, and Motive,” Henry Martin describes a similar process of what he calls “motivic improvisation.”

Motivic improvisation relates to the idea of compositional development in Western music, in which “motives”—typically conceived of as brief musical ideas exhibiting some combination of melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic characteristics—undergo a process of transformation that provides an underlying organization to the music. When listeners or analysts claim that a jazz soloist is “improvising motivically,” it usually means that the solo unfolds as an audible process of motivic elaboration assumed to be engaged in consciously by the player.⁵¹

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⁴⁸ Green, Shortcut to Jazz, 6.
⁴⁹ Ibid. Miller also refers to this in his thesis “Bunky Green,” 44.
⁵⁰ This may have been one of the many lessons he learned from listening to Parker. Green refers to Parker’s solo on “Embraceable You”—in “Meet the Masters – Interview with Bunky Green” with Steve Coleman—as being one that uses motivic development particularly well. Other alto saxophonists during this time who I consider to be “melodic” players are Paul Desmond, Lee Konitz, Phil Woods, Frank Strozier, among others.
Green has stated that continuity is one of the specific aspects he admires most of his favourite players and musical performances.\textsuperscript{52} He describes continuity as “that most essential element,” that “no matter which brand of jazz is being played, the one thing that all the superior players from these various schools seem to have in common is a remarkable feeling for continuity.”\textsuperscript{53} Furthermore, this concept is one that has seemed to stay with him throughout his career, reflected in his statement from the liner notes to Healing the Pain (1989): “The thing I should stress most is that my first responsibility as an improviser is to create a continuity, a continuity that generates its own logic.”\textsuperscript{54}

I turn now to identifying some of this “imitation” and motivic playing within Green’s solo on “Blues Holiday.” Many of his melodic lines in this solo seem to be built using minor seventh chords or a kind of tetrachord that uses the first 4 (sometimes five in this case) notes of a minor scale. The following 4-bar excerpt is built using what I would describe as three separate motives. The first is a short, one-bar statement in the first measure that is then transposed up a fourth in measure 2. The second is the descending minor figure (5-3-2-1) with a chromatic upper neighbour note (in measure 3). This is followed by a minor shape I see as Abm7, which resolves to the C7 chord in measure 5.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example.png}
\caption{Green on “Blues Holiday,” chorus 2, measures 1-4.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{52} A significant experience listening to an Algerian bagpipe player and describing the improvisational abilities of Freddie Hubbard are two instances that stand out. Miller, “Bunký Green,” 116, 138.
\textsuperscript{53} Green, Shortcut to Jazz, 6.
\textsuperscript{54} Ed Bland, liner notes to Healing the Pain, 5, quoted in Miller, “Bunký Green,” 51.
I would like to focus on the second of these motives—the descending minor figure (5-3-2-1) with a chromatic upper neighbour note—as Green uses it again and again throughout his solo. This motive can be described as having three outstanding identifiable characteristics: a rhythmic element, a primarily descending direction and, as it stands alone, a minor tonality. Essentially, the rhythmic element consists of an eighth-note on a downbeat, followed by two sixteenth-notes (or triplet eighths), followed by additional eighth-notes. After its initial use in measure three of chorus two, the motive appears next in measure three of chorus four and is immediately repeated a semitone above in the following measure. The motive’s rhythmic contour is extended over the C7 chord in measure five and six.\footnote{With regard to this particular sequence of events, Miller makes more-or-less this same observation. Miller, “Bunky Green,” 41. However, I mention (my version of) the phrase here as well because of its relation to the other examples in this section.} This repetition contributes to a sense of continuity within the solo. Also worth noting is how Green connects seemingly disjointed phrases together by beginning one phrase with the same note as the ending note of the previous phrase. For example, the notes on A\(_4\) (above the staff) in measures 1, 2, and 3 help to provide further continuity by making it seem as if the short phrases are in fact joined together.

Figure 4.30 Green on “Blues Holiday,” chorus 4, measures 1-7.

Green plays the motive again beginning in measure 4 of his fifth chorus. This time, however, he opts for staying inside the changes, playing the Dmi shape over the G7 (rather than Ebm). Again we see the idea extended to the following measure, although now the motive has been
transformed to a major tonality to fit over the C7 chord. This helps to provide continuity and give structure to the solo as a whole.

Figure 4.31  Green on “Blues Holiday,” chorus 5, measures 1-6.

In addition to providing continuity in his solos through motivic development, Green also uses, what I refer to as, reoccurring thematic material. The following examples demonstrate Green’s ability to slightly alter these reoccurring phrases to prevent them from becoming too stagnant. In his solo on “Everything’s Coming Up Roses,” for instance, he plays a reoccurring theme several times over the $E7(b9)$ chord. The phrase first appears in measure four of Green’s solo.

Figure 4.32  Green on “Everything’s Coming Up Roses,” measures 1-8.
This is a variant of a motive Parker relied on heavily, categorized by Owens as “M. 3A.”

Although he repeats it in nine separate instances, Green never plays it exactly the same way twice. Comparatively, there is much more variation between the examples over the D7 chords, resolving to Gma7. Nevertheless, each of the following examples follows a similar contour and voice-leading pattern, especially over the E7♭9 and Am7 chords where Green almost always outlines a 4-3 resolution.

Figure 4.33 Measures 14-17.

Figure 4.34 Measures 20-23.

Figure 4.35 Measures 36-39.

Figure 4.36 Measures 52-55.

Figure 4.37  Measures 92-95. One of the more interesting variants is given below where, instead of using the flat thirteens as a tension note, Green plays flat five, or the tritone substitution.

Figure 4.38  Measures 120-122.

Figure 4.39  Measures 123-127.

Figure 4.40  Measures 137-140.

There are certainly practical reasons for reusing material in the case of “Everything.” The incredibly fast tempo makes it almost impossible to imagine new lines on the spot. Rather than making invention the focus of their approach, players generally focus on “making the changes” and keeping the tempo, at speeds over and above 300 beats per minute, for even musicians as remarkable as Parker use repetition at such tempos. It seems obvious that Green had certain phrases worked out for his solo on this number, yet, it is still remarkable he was able to vary his lines in ways that limited any obvious repetition.
OTHER VOCABULARY

One final similarity between Green and many of his contemporaries/predecessors that I would like to draw attention to is his use of the diminished scale (specifically the half-whole diminished scale). On his early recordings, Green often plays long stretches of various diminished scalar patterns over the top of a moving chord structure. Many players were using diminished scalar patterns in similar ways during the 1950s and 60s, including two of Green’s idols: Stitt 47 and Coltrane. Green mentions in several interviews that Coltrane was someone in particular who made a definite impression on his musical conception from a spiritual and philosophical point of view. “I haven’t heard anything to turn me on since Trane… not the late, late Trane thing but sort of mid-Trane.” 58 It is highly likely that Green would have heard Coltrane play diminished scalar ideas on albums released in the late 1950s and early 1960s including Blue Train (1957) and Lush Life (1961). Stitt uses this scale on recordings made during this time as well, including Sonny Stitt Sits in with the Oscar Peterson Trio (1959) and Sonny Side Up (1960).

One of the most common diminished patterns that was circulating amongst jazz players around this time appears briefly in Green’s first chorus of “Mr. Lucky.” This pattern demonstrates a connection to other players of the period, the strongest example being Coltrane. However, Green touches on the pattern only briefly and even then, the rhythm is altered to lend a kind of loping quality.

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48 Bunky Green, interviewed by Bob Bednar, This is Jazz, Stereo 90 (Jacksonville), quoted in Miller, “Bunky Green,” 92. “And, [Parker] was my mentor, him and of course Sonny Stitt.”
Figure 4.41  Green on “Mr. Lucky,” measures 17-18.

Green alternates rhythmic stresses of the pattern more clearly in his solo on “Little Niles.” He begins the diminished pattern on the downbeat of two, thereby emphasizing the C# diminished chord on each subsequent downbeat of the phrase. This accenting of downbeats is exaggerated with the use of accents. Green turns the phrase around in measures 4 and 5, placing the same chord on upbeats (and the D diminished chord on downbeats). He then returns to his original stressing of C# diminished on downbeats beginning on beat 4 of measure 7. Green begins the next eight-bar phrase (now up a half-step) by placing the D diminished chord on upbeats, beginning on the upbeat of beat one of measure 8. In measure 12, he again turns the accent around and emphasizes downbeats. The pattern in general sounds further displaced as it is a duple-based rhythm superimposed over the 3/4 time of “Little Niles.”

Figure 4.42  Green on “Little Niles,” chorus 1, measures 1-16.
During this period Green was also apt to emphasize diminished-like material that I deem to be much more idiosyncratic. Although it has the character of a diminished scale, the inclusion of notes outside of the scale—used as chromatic approach tones—give the line a more “slippery” feel and makes it less of a stock jazz phrase. This could perhaps be interpreted as a bebop-based line over Gm7 C7 or a tritone substitution for F#7\(^9\), which spills into the Bm7. It should not be dismissed simply as such, however, because of the six-note diminished chord laid out on downbeats, beginning with Bb 3 on beat two in measure ten and ending with G1 on beat three of measure eleven.

Figure 4.43 Diminished sound with chromaticism in Green’s solo on “Dream of Igor,” chorus 1, measures 10-11.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON CHAPTER 4

In this chapter, I examined Green’s recorded works from 1960 to identify possible sources of influence and therefore define some basic stylistic parameters of his early improvisatory style. Moreover, I indicated aspects of this early period that, in hindsight, seem to show ways in which he was already moving towards a unique improvisatory approach. Many stylistic characteristics that permeate his playing during this time seem to stem from various kinds of traditional or “folk” music, such as blues and black gospel, but also show a heavy reliance on bebop idioms. Based on Green’s comments and as evidenced within his music, it is clear that Parker is the primary source of influence, although there is much evidence that indicates Coltrane made an impact as well. Green’s recordings form 1960 show a mature player with a solid understanding of the jazz language. Examples from Chapter 4 show Green followed
similar harmonic pathways or voice-leading paths as Parker. However, he was highly skilled at altering his storehouse of vocabulary, thereby, many stock bebop ideas to fit his own personality. Combined with his idiosyncratic approach to rhythm and phrasing, this helped to distinguish Green from his contemporaries during this period.

An examination of Green’s recorded solos reveals a voice steeped in traditional blues and bebop vocabulary and phrasing. While he employs much of the same harmonic material and “pathways” as Charlie Parker, Green shows flashes of individuality even at this young age. It is clear that Green has fully absorbed every lesson from Parker and others, as evidenced by the ease with which he reinterprets stock bebop phrases. However, these early recordings show he was already in the process of finding his own unique ways to approach harmonic changes. While these early recordings may hint at ways in which Green’s recognizable tone, his original sense of phrasing, and his flexibility within the eighth-note feel help to separate his approach from those of his contemporaries, these aspects of his playing become more evident in later recordings. In the next chapter, I look more closely at several of Green’s solos form 1966, what I respectfully refer to within this dissertation as his “transitional period,” in order to identify specific ways in which he moved further away from bebop styles. In particular, I discuss ways in which stands out amongst his contemporaries including one of his mentors, Sonny Stitt.
Chapter 5 ~ Soul in the Night: A Departure from Bebop

You got two painters—they’re going to paint the same picture. Each sees it in his mind’s eye his own way. So you got two different pictures.

—Sonny Stitt

This chapter examines Bunky Green’s recordings from the mid-1960s in order to show ways in which he continued to develop certain techniques that helped separate his music from the influence of bebop. It places particular focus on his solos from Soul in the Night, a 1966 Sonny Stitt release that presents Green and Stitt in a head-solo-head type of recording, sometimes referred to as a “blowing session.” The repertoire, however, consists of standards that are decidedly scarcer than the typical fare for such situations, as well as two original compositions by Stitt. These are two compositions based on the 12-bar blues: “Soul in the Night” and “Home Stretch.”

Green’s performance on the recording shows him wrestling with his performance concept. On one hand, it is clear that he was striving to implement newly developed aspects of his individual voice. On the other hand, he still relied on the internalized material of his primary influences. Speaking about his playing at this point in his career, Green says he was “sort of wedged in-between” two personas. He continues, “I would go out there but was afraid to totally let go. Being insecure, I’d go back into my stock phrases a la Charlie Parker and Trane.” I take these comments into careful consideration as I contrast and compare various solos by Green and

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1. The two saxophonists are accompanied by organ trio, consisting of Odell Brown (organ), Bryce Robertson (guitar), and Maurice White (drums).
3. Ibid.
Stitt from the *Soul in the Night* sessions. While I point to several similarities between the two alto players, particularly with respect to vocabulary, I also bring to light several stylistic aspects of Green’s approach that differentiate his voice from that of Stitt.

ON STITT

Sonny Stitt (1924-1982) is generally represented in jazz histories as a mimicker of Parker’s vocabulary and stylistic aspects, who developed more of an individual voice only later in his career and on the tenor saxophone. 4 Although Stitt asserted that his improvisatory approach was (for the most part) created independently of Parker’s, his first recordings in 1946 reveal a heavy reliance on several of Parker’s more identifiable melodic formulas. 5 Although Stitt is not credited as one of the creators of bebop, he is nonetheless seen by jazz scholars as an important historical figure, a virtuoso, and a contributor to current notions of bebop styles. 6

While certain critics and historians suggest that Stitt developed more of an individual voice on tenor saxophone, 7 others suggest that his improvisatory approach on alto saxophone did not endure much change. Steve Coleman, for example, has expressed the idea that Stitt remained closely tied to his original improvisatory conception on alto throughout his career. 8 My own analysis of Stitt’s solos resonates with Coleman’s perspective. For this reason, and because much

5 Owens, *Bebop*, 47.
6 Ibid., 47-48.
of Stitt’s work helped to “establish the norms of the bebop vocabulary,” Stitt’s playing on Soul in the Night serves as a useful reference point to help identify aspects of Green’s playing that deviate from bebop models.

Stitt was known to be a fierce competitor and, according to Green, his demeanor during this particular recording session was intimidating and even verged on confrontational. It seems plausible that the charged atmosphere that day would have contributed to the intense, competitive feeling that permeates the album. This may have been a factor in pushing Green to record some of his most exciting solos of this period. At the time Soul was recorded, Green was only 30 years of age and still a relative newcomer to the international jazz scene. In contrast, Stitt was 42 and considered by many to be a living jazz legend.

OVERVIEW OF SOUL IN THE NIGHT

On the recording, Green does not try to “out-bebop” Stitt (probably because he knew he couldn’t win that battle) and instead seems committed to playing in a manner that best represents his individual voice. As a result, two very different alto players are presented: the proven veteran—who stays within himself, plays perfectly right down the middle of the beat, and never hesitates—and the “new kid on the block” with nothing to lose—who takes all kinds of musical chances in an effort to not only prove himself against one of his idols, but also to exhibit aspects of his personal voice.

9 Owens, Bebop, 48.
10 It should be noted that Stitt’s voice is in itself unique because of the degree of its consistency, balance, and (somewhat) predictable nature.
12 It should also be noted that Green has said he is not a competitor and that making music is more about communicating than grandstanding. See
Indeed, it is Green’s individuality that helped to see him through this particular recording session and is what makes the session a memorable affair. Speaking about Green’s confident approach, Joe Lovano has said, “You can’t [waver] if you’re telling the truth. He ain’t gonna waver because he’s not trying to play like somebody else.” This is very much a reference to the idea of finding an individual voice. Moreover, it implies that this voice should be identifiable within any musical genre or subgenre of jazz. In keeping with this understanding of voice, it could be argued that, if Green had relied more on bebop vocabulary, the recording probably would not have been as effective in establishing Green as a formidable alto player. In effect, then, Green uses Stitt as a foil to highlight some of the qualities that made him sound like Bunky Green rather than so many other Parker followers that were active at the time. In further support of this kind of approach, Lovano continues: “You’re in this multi-generational, multi-cultural world in jazz and you have to embrace that and when you do, all the sudden, you’re playing in all these generations of players and being yourself… Just like Bird was playing with Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster and Lester Young. That’s what makes all those players so great because that’s how they are.” This statement suggests that Green has indeed achieved his goal of expressing his individuality through his own voice, exemplary of this important defining aspect of what it means to play jazz music.

Through the following examples, I aim to show aspects of Green’s voice that differ from Stitt’s and, therefore, the bebop-influenced style Green was attempting to distance himself from. These include Green’s “inside/outside” approach, in particular, the sequencing of motives that

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13 Joe Lovano, telephone interview by the author, December 2015.
14 Ibid.
follow third-based harmonic paths; idiosyncratic rhythmic variations on phrases that draw on bebop vocabulary; angular intervallic playing; and the use of overtone fingerings to create variation in timbre.

**INSIDE/OUTSIDE & INVISIBLE PATHS**

While bebop is the basis of Green’s vocabulary, at this point in his development, there are many instances that exemplify—what he has termed—his inside/outside approach. Generally, such phrases are easy to identify as they often involve sequences of melodic material from outside of the tonal key centre. In his thesis on Green, Miller suggested that the altoist’s study of fourth-based piano voicings and the music he experienced in Algiers were both central to the development of this approach. While this may be so, Miller admits that much about the concept remains shrouded in mystery. I suggest that this would have had less to do with Green’s ability to describe his improvisation process than it did with a desire to protect his methods.

The goal of this section is to expand on some of the work accomplished by Miller with respect to Green’s inside/outside approach. To this end, I have added newly transcribed material and analysis, as well as my own observations on several key examples of it. In a move that I believe provides a better understanding of Green’s inside/outside approach, I have also applied

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16 Miller, “Bunky Green,” 16.

17 Ibid., 67.
Steve Coleman’s idea of “Invisible Paths”\textsuperscript{18} to several instances in which Coleman’s conceptualization helps to clarify what Green was doing. I suggest that these paths of departure from the established chord progression indicate that Green periodically followed such alternate harmonic pathways, creating the impression of playing in two tonalities at the same time.\textsuperscript{19}

Green has stated on several occasions that Algerian bagpipe players he heard while in Algiers in 1964 were instrumental in the formation of his inside/outside concept.\textsuperscript{20} He describes his experience of hearing such music one night during his four-week stay in the North African city:

And I heard this bagpipe player playing like that with such continuity and knowing what he was doing and put it together—it was a package, just a wonderful package. And I remember sitting there trying to play with him and things coming into my head. I said, “some of those things that he’s playing there are kind of around the fifth, that’s still kind of got that quatro-perfect fifth perfect fourth thing,” you know. And he was using all that as that kind of interval and playing within it and resolving different ways that we don’t—making the flat two like a leading tone, like a lower leading tone, and going to those wonderful places in his music and I was just trying to hang in there, you know, trying to hang in there.\textsuperscript{21}

From this description, it seems there was a drone underneath melodic lines that used varying degrees of tension and release. The flat two “lower leading tone” obviously made an impression on Green—and may have been one of the tenser sounding resolutions—though certainly there were many others that seemed to travel in and out of the tonal centre. Another important aspect of this experience for Green is the “continuity” of the performance. The term “continuity” could

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\textsuperscript{18} Coleman bases his concept on one put forth by Mingus called “new melodic concepts.”


\textsuperscript{20} Green does not mention a specific type of bagpipe, just that it was small with “only one [drone] pipe,” and common in this particular region. Bill Quinn, “The Testimony of Bunky Green,” \textit{Down Beat}, December, 1966: 20-21.

\textsuperscript{21} Green, quoted in Miller, “Bunky Green,” 15.
be defined in various ways, however, Green has described it as being primarily about sequence, repetition, and the development of motives.22 A final point concerning the quotation above is Green’s mention of fourths and fifths, which the bagpipe player used to create some of his melodies.23

Green has said that this musical experience in particular, and his North African musical experiences in general, inspired him to compose the introduction to his version of “On Green Dolphin Street,” which first appeared on Testifyin’ Time (1965). The first four measures of which are presented below. Similar to the Algerian bagpipe music Green describes, the melody is played over a drone. In Green’s introduction this is achieved using a moving eighth-note line built using the root and fifth. Both the melody and the bass line are based on a small amount of musical material and are thus quite repetitive; however, the melody is less so and is built primarily using sixteenth-notes rather than eighth-notes. The repetition and unbroken rhythm of both lines promote the idea of continuity, presumably something similar to what Green heard in Algeria. The eight beats of the bass figure are divided as 3-3-2, with the first note of each grouping accenting the lowest Eb on the bass. This rhythmic pulse is reflected in the saxophone line as well through the use of accents that line up with the accompaniment figure. Similar to Green’s description of the bagpipe music, the melody is created primarily of fourths and fifths.

22 Green, Shortcut to Jazz: Essential Jazz Licks (New Albany: Jamey Aebersold Jazz Inc., 2010), 6.
23 An additional source of fourth and fifths in addition to the “book on piano voicings” mentioned by Green in Miller, “Bunky Green.”
The result of the two lines diverging and meeting in a steady rhythmic pulse is effective in creating music that is kind of trance-like. Further, the sound of the saxophone takes on Eastern “notes” in timbre, especially due to the harmonics used to achieve the notes G4 and C5. I mention this particular example in part because similar ideas are presented within Green’s solos on Soul in the Night, recorded the following year.

On “Home Stretch,” the altoists start the solo section by trading choruses. Stitt takes the first solo, with a first chorus that is flawless in terms of his precise placement of notes in time and in relation to the chord structure. Green follows and, judging from the use of this particular statement, it seems as though he wanted to play something equally as impressive without attempting to beat the elder statesman at his own game. What he plays is essentially the line from his introduction to his 1965 recording of “On Green Dolphin Street.” Thus, Green refrained from leaning too heavily on his bebop roots and instead was drawing from his (already somewhat developed) personal improvisational vocabulary and expressive devices as if to say “I am not you and here is proof!!”
This is an important instance in which Green deviates from the bebop-oriented playing exemplified by Stitt. Although Stitt uses overtone fingerings at several points throughout the recording session, his use of the fingerings is only limited to one pitch. This practice of overtone fingerings adds color (nuanced timbre) and accents (similar to articulation) that give rhythmic impetus his lines. While Green does this as well at times, his use of the overtone fingering in these examples alternates between two notes (or partials). This technique exploits the naturally occurring perfect fourth interval present in the harmonic series based on the fundamental pitch C. Further, a more complex polyrhythmic figure is possible with the added notes. My feeling is that Green realized the value of this phrase as something he could use that was truly unique and, therefore, would provide separation between his voice and Stitt’s. This is evident in the way he uses the material to “lead off” his first chorus of trades with Stitt. Its importance is further emphasized by its repetition at the top of chorus eight, which, incidentally, reinforces Green’s commitment to continuity. It is likely Green thought about using this phrase at the beginning of blues choruses in Bb since both times he uses the phrase to lead into a similar bebop-like pattern over measure four of the form.
Figure 5.3  Green on “Home Stretch,” chorus 8, measures 1-5.

While these examples correspond to Green’s description of the Algerian bagpipe player in terms of continuity and intervalllic make-up, they do not represent a departure from the tonality of the piece. For instance, none contains the harmonic motion of flat two leading to the tonic that had made such a profound effect on Green. Thus, while these examples fulfill part of the criteria for Green’s inside/outside approach, they leave others unexplored and thus, as Miller suggests, shrouded in mystery.24

In an interview for the French Publication Jazz Magazine, Steve Coleman offers what appears to be his own perspective on Green’s inside/outside approach. Because of the inherent strength of Green’s melodic lines, Coleman says they suggest their own tonality. Rather than understanding the harmonic material as being either “inside” or “outside” of the key, Coleman interprets Green’s harmonic approach as the creation of two tonalities existing simultaneously. He describes this as a kind of dual modality or polytonality that allows Green to flow from one “dimension” to the other, resulting in a dynamic relationship between Green and the rest of the musicians.25

24 Miller, “Bunky Green, 67.
As previously noted, Coleman refers to certain players—like Parker—as using types of implied harmonic passages, what he refers to as “Invisible Paths.” Parallel to my application of his concept in Chapter 4 to identify sources of Charlie Parker’s influence, this Chapter uses Coleman’s notion of Invisible Paths to gain a more complete understanding of Green’s innovations with respect to his individual approach to tonality. From my own observations of Green’s playing, I have found that the melodic material he uses to outline various harmonic paths often employ sequences that appear in four-note groupings. When following a harmonic pathway such as descending minor thirds, however, Green’s motivic sequences are not exact repetitions. Rather, like his development of other scalar material explored in Chapter 4, his sequences relate to the general shape or contour of the original motive.

The following excerpts from Green’s solo on “Home Stretch” illustrate ways in which Green utilized other harmonic paths by implying root movement based on the diminished seventh chord—or a group of descending minor thirds. Figure 5.4 shows descending minor thirds on downbeats beginning with Ab on beat three, followed by F on beat four. In the second measure, C# begins a new string of minor thirds on downbeats (followed by Bb and G).

![Figure 5.4](image)

Certainly, this line is sequential in makeup and follows a harmonic path that differs from the chord changes played by the rhythm section. While the specific harmony of this harmonic path could be interpreted in various ways, it seems clear that each four-note group of sixteenth-note sequence is constructed in a similar way to the original motive and that root motion descends by minor thirds. This motive—found on beat two of the first measure—is in fact one of the most
typical melodic fragments in bebop language, constructed of notes that encircle the dominant (in this case: G in the key of C). Although Green retains the basic shape of the motive, the sequences appear as: skip↓-step↓-skip↑ (rather than follow the original pattern: step↓-step↓-skip↑). The chords (or alternate modality) that I interpret as being implied within this phrase are Dm, G7, Fm(maj7), Cm, A, F#7b9, and Eb.

Similar sequences built around this same kind of diminished-based sequence are found at other parts of the same solo. Even more interesting are the flat two resolutions that resolve to “one” of the subsequent chord, as indicated in some of the following examples. While, the descending thirds are again present. Interpretation of the exact chord changes and the timing of these is up for debate. However, one possible Invisible Path I put forward is C7, A7b9, F#7b9, Eb7, C7. Notice the 9-1 resolutions into A7b9 and F#7b9 as well as b9-1 resolutions into Eb and C.

Figure 5.5 Green on “Home Stretch,” chorus 4, measures 3-5.

The harmonic path in figure 5.6 seems to follow A7b9, F#7b9, Fm6/9 (for two beats), G7, and C7. Over the C7, there are fragments of vocabulary that are typical of Coltrane’s playing in the late 1950s. Similar material can be found in Giant Steps (1959) and “Four,” from Miles Davis recording *Workin’ with the Miles Davis Quintet* (1955), for instance.

Figure 5.6 Green on “Home Stretch,” chorus 4, measures 10-11.
I suggest the harmonic path in figure 5.7 follows Dm, A7+, A7, F#7(b9), Eb, F, Cm, G7, and C.

The first three beats could also be seen as D melodic minor.

Figure 5.7  Green on “Home Stretch,” chorus 6, measures 9-10.

These examples of descending minor third harmonic motion can be related to another instance found within within an earlier solo of Green’s from the Blues Holiday recording (1961). Although far less indicative of his approach during this period, the following example from his solo on “Everything’s Coming Up Roses” shows Green followed a similar harmonic path.

Beginning on beat one on the D7 chord, Green plays four-note groupings that indicate Am, F#m, and Ebm. The descending harmonic movement by minor thirds is really just another way of getting from the iim7 to its tritone substitute, bVIm7. In other words, Green plays the Am7 and its tritone sub (Eb), with a stepping stone in-between (the F#m7).

The practice of “stacking” multiple chords that move by major or minor thirds has been addressed by Coltrane. In his interview with *Down Beat* in 1960, he stated:

After leaving Monk, I went back to another great musical artist, Miles. On returning, this time to stay until I formed my own group a few months ago, I found Miles in the midst of another stage of his musical development. There was one time in his past that he devoted to multi-chorded structures. He was interested in chords for their own sake. But now it seemed that he was moving in the opposite direction to the use of fewer and fewer chord changes in songs. He used tunes with free-flowing lines and chordal direction. This approach allowed the soloist the choice of playing chordally (vertically) or melodically (horizontally). In fact, due to the direct and free-flowing lines in this music, I found it easy to apply the harmonic ideas that I had. I could stack up chords - say, on a C7, I sometimes superimposed an Eb7, up to an F#7, down to an F. That way I could play three chords on one. But on the other hand, if I wanted to,
I could play melodically, Miles’ music gave me plenty of freedom. It's a beautiful approach.  

Whether Green borrowed this idea from Coltrane is unclear although entirely possible. Although the root motion in the earlier example is the same, each 4-note grouping is more clearly defined in structure, outlining 5-b3-2-1. Unlike the previous examples, recorded over five years later, there are no b2 resolutions.

Figure 5.8 Green on “Everything’s Coming Up Roses,” chorus 2, measures 33-35.

The following example shows that Green continued to use stock jazz patterns, at times during this “in-between” period. Here, he uses a sequence using whole-tone scalar material. While I have indicated one possible harmonic pathway, this passage could easily be conceived as simply F+7 or B7alt, resolving to Em7 on beat three of measure six.

Figure 5.9 Whole-tone scalar material in Green’s solo on “Home Stretch,” chorus 9, measures 5-6.

Another example of Green’s use of whole-tone scales (or augmented material) is found within his solo on “The Spies.” In figure 5.10, I suggest he superimposes a B+7 sound (or F+7) over Emi (measures 11-12). While using augmented triads/whole-tone scales is by no means novel,

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Greens application here is a somewhat unorthodox because of the F natural over Emi. Through the lens of Invisible Paths, we can easily see this as F+7 resolving to Emi7. Again, this shows his affinity for the flat two – tonic resolution that made such an impression on him as a young man in Algiers. Green uses F naturals over the B7⁹ chord in measure 10 as well. However, in this case he seems to outline a different harmonic pathway because of his resolution of the F to E natural. I see this voice-leading as C7, B7, C7, B7 (beginning on beat three of measure nine below). Although this may not appear to be groundbreaking on paper, the sonic effect is quite jarring, especially compared to Stitt’s line in the same part of the form, which follows the original chord changes quite closely.

Figure 5.10 Green on “The Spies,” measures 9-12.

Green has stated that much of his focus around this time was centered around harmonic “innovations,” or deviations from the norm that might separate his approach from his contemporaries:

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27 Stitt uses diminished and augmented ideas, however, they appear in exceedingly strict and balanced patterns that were (and still are) common among many jazz players. I highlighted certain of these patterns used by Green in Chapter 4 in the section entitled “Other Vocabulary.” In contrast, this chapter shows Green’s mixture of chromaticism with tonal material help to lend a much more unpredictable character to his lines.
Everybody was dealing with changes, thinking about changes. But I can remember part of the thing about Sonny Stitt, that recording, was the fact that I was kind of trying to bring another way of approaching the changes. And so you see the beginning of it there, solidifying.\textsuperscript{28}

As the examples in this chapter have shown, Green does indeed seem to be trying a new approach to harmony at certain points in his solos. At other times, however, as in his solos on “One Alone,” “Sneakin’ Up on You,” and “Soul in the Night,” Green seems to remain completely within the harmonic confines of blues and bebop. While these instances are less remarkable from a harmonic standpoint, they are of interest due to Green’s rhythmic eighth-note feel or conception. In the following section, I look at this rhythmic approach, which is possibly the most striking difference between the two musicians on \textit{Soul}.

A UNIQUE APPROACH TO RHYTHM: ELASTIC TIME, HANGING & HESITATION

As mentioned above, Green said that his focus around the time \textit{Soul in the Night} was recorded was directed primarily towards harmonic aspects of the music.\textsuperscript{29} However, to my ear, the most striking difference between this recording and those from 1960 is Green’s flexible eighth-note approach and other broken-up or “staggered”\textsuperscript{30} types of rhythmic phrasing.\textsuperscript{31} The flexible eighth-note approach\textsuperscript{32} involves moving the eighth-note slightly behind or ahead, as

\textsuperscript{28} Miller, “Bunky Green,” 123.
\textsuperscript{29} Miller, “Bunky Green,” 123. / Herb Nolan, “Alto Transformer,” 50.
\textsuperscript{30} As noted in Chapter 4, Green attributes part of his rhythmic concept to timbales rhythms in Latin music: “That’s the first way I learned to play that staggered rhythm over a metronomic sound... playing all sorts of counter-rhythms against a relentless pulse.” Interview with Bill Benjamin, “Bunky Green,” \textit{Coda}, September, 1975, 12.
\textsuperscript{31} Although I refer to this as “eighth-note” time feel, all of the same principles apply to sixteenth-notes if they are the primary unit of measure.
\textsuperscript{32} Miller refers to this as his “flexible time concept” in his thesis “Bunky Green,” 39.
opposed to consistently playing straight down the middle of the beat (a la Stitt).\(^{33}\) These inconsistencies in the eighth-note feel are what Osby refers to as “laying back” and “cramming,” respectively.\(^{34}\) Similar to notions of harmonic consonance and dissonance—what Green refers to as tension and release—rhythmic tension is added as Green’s eighth-notes move ahead and behind the underlying pulse.\(^{35}\) Although Green is more apt to pull back on the time, he often crams in notes towards the end of a phrase in order to catch-up or finish his line in time with the rhythm section.\(^{36}\) Osby describes his and Coleman’s understanding of some of Green’s rhythmic techniques as “elastic time” or a kind of “compression/expansion” technique.

We scratched up a lot of records by going back and forth re-listening to phrases and saying, ‘Listen to that. That’s actually a Charlie Parker line but look at the way he shifted it.’ He mutates the line it’s almost like some kind of … [time] zone – like a[n alternate] dimension. Like, where he’s hovering over the time or he’s proceeding without regard to what’s going on around him but he emerges victorious. And so we made studies of that so that we can actually apply it to our own ways of thinking—which are widely different.\(^{37}\)

I have found that this type of flexible time concept becomes increasingly evident as Green’s career progresses. More importantly, it was proposed by Coleman, in his 2005 interview with

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\(^{33}\) Fernando Benadon’s article “Slicing the Beat: Jazz Eighth-Notes as Expressive Microrhythm,” measures microrhythmic timing in jazz solos in order to “assess its expressive function, its relationship to melody and harmony, and its accordance with the "swing triplet" concept.” (74) His findings are informed by the Beat-Upbeat Ratio (BUR), which basically measures the proportional distance between a pair of swung eighths. among other discoveries Benadon’s findings show, in accordance with what was already presumed, how various BUR values play a role in defining individual voices. While Benadon shows there is BUR variation within the eighth-note lines played by virtually all jazz player’s, variation in Green’s lines appears to be more exaggerated. Benadon, “Slicing the Beat: Jazz Eighth-Notes as Expressive Microrhythm,” Ethnomusicology, 50, no. 1 (2006): 73-98.

\(^{34}\) Greg Osby, telephone interview, September 2015.

\(^{35}\) Miller, “Bunky Green.”

\(^{36}\) I have notated the subtler manipulations in time using forward and backward facing arrows; however, when there is an exaggerated pushing or pulling of the time, I have attempted to represent the rhythm as accurately as possible through the use of standard notation.

\(^{37}\) Osby, telephone interview, 2015.
Green, that the exaggerated nature of this particular approach to time-feel is one of the most unique features of Green’s improvisatory voice.\(^{38}\)

When I first heard you play, I mean obviously I heard … cause some cats would hear you play and they couldn’t even hear the roots…but I heard the roots right away because I was really into Bird so I heard all of that right away… but what I heard was where you would take it – what you were doing… two things that stuck out to me: the tonal thing was obvious to me the thing that I dug that a lot of cats that I talked to couldn’t hear that much was the rhythmic thing… it’s not just what the cat’s doing in terms of harmonically and melodically… tonally… but it’s the placement… Like sometimes it would pull things back and then it would snap back like a rubber band… and it was exaggerated… I heard Bird and them doing that but it wasn’t to the extent that you did… and that was something that I didn’t hear Trane doing… so I only associate that with you because I didn’t really hear… I heard it a little bit with cats but you had your own way of doing it.\(^{39}\)

Thus, Coleman and Osby have both recognized that rhythm—and in particular this “elastic time”—is an aspect of Green’s playing that was particularly influential in the formation of their own voices.

Both Stitt and Green primarily play double-time phrases on “The Spies,” using sixteenth-notes as the basic rhythmic unit. There is not much variation from this basic unit and phrases are typically arranged in even and—to borrow another term from Coleman—“common sense structure that is contained in everyday conversation.”\(^{40}\) However, when comparing Green’s double time to that of Stitt, there is a noticeable difference. This is due, in part, to Green’s flexibility within the eighth-note time. I believe this is what Coleman and Osby refer to as “elastic time.” This technique is, in part, what helps distinguish Green’s musical statements from what otherwise could be interpreted as typical bebop lines. While Stitt is exceptionally consistent

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with his placement of sixteenth-notes, Green will often push and pull the time to create rhythmic tension within the beat. This concept is addressed briefly in Miller’s thesis, although it is in fact Kevin Bales who describes the process, in his interview with Miller:

Bunky's time concept is very fluid. He definitely swings, and widely varies the placement of his eighth-notes. Some may hear this as rushing, or dragging. In my many conversations with him about music, he references the rhythmic complexity of both Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday. I hear the same thing in Bunky's playing; he can play a flurry of notes that may appear out-of-time, and then place one or two notes perfectly in place, focusing the contrast of all the others. So many musicians think of swing as only being between two eight notes; Bunky does it over whole phrases.\(^{41}\)

Thus, further to varying the eighth-note feel, Bales suggests Green creates contrast on a macro level. Within his solo on “The Spies,” Green shows he does indeed intersperse long stretches of evenly-played sixteenth-notes with other sections that are more varied and unpredictable, setting up contrasting sections of rhythmic consonance and dissonance, or tension and release.

Figure 5.11 is my attempt to show how Green would sometimes interchange groups of evenly subdivided rhythms with this so-called elastic time that effectively creates larger tension and release situations within his solos. The first four measures demonstrate even groups of sixteenth-notes akin to the manner of Stitt. The rhythm is much more varied in the four measures that follow. To further illustrate the rhythmic complexity of Green’s “distorted” bebop line, I compare the second half of the example with a more linear version that might have been played instead. The visual representation of the music helps us understand the difference in, however, I would like to remind readers at this point that the effect is lost without the sonic experience.

\(^{41}\) Chris Miller interview with Kevin Bales, in “Bunky Green: A Career of Harmonic Evolution,” 147.
Steve Coleman describes it as eight good visual representation of ways in which Green plays with rhythm. This kind of "transformation" of Green’s line in a passage composed in one style in such a way that it resembles some other style modifies a passage composed in one style in such a way that it resembles some other style—usually only one that differs on dialect.” Leonard Meyer, Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

As mentioned above, this kind of elastic rhythmic phrasing is something that is, in a way, particular to Green. Steve Coleman describes it as being sometimes slightly behind and sometimes in front of the basic pulse but always in the groove.” As noted above, he elaborates in his 2005 conversation with Green: “sometimes it would pull things back and then it would

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42 “Transformation” is a term coined by Leonard Meyer: “a kind of do-it-yourself paraphrase in which the analyst modifies a passage composed in one style in such a way that it resembles some other style—usually only one that differs on dialect.” Leonard Meyer, Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

snap back like a rubber band… and it was exaggerated… I heard Bird and them doing that but it wasn’t to the extent that you did.”

It is commonly known that certain players, such as Dexter Gordon, pulled the time back in an exaggerated manner—sometimes almost to the point of absurdity—but it did not include the snapping back effect displayed by Green.

The following segment from Green’s solo on “Soul in the Night” is an excellent example of this type of event. The presence of the triplet on beat three of measure 10 shows where Green begins to lay back. However, there is a feeling of speeding up (or cramming) already within the next beat, in order to arrive in time for the downbeat of the following bar. This happens again beginning on beat 3 of measure 11. Green pulls back on the time before snapping back in time on beat one of measure 12.

Figure 5.13  Stitt and Green on “Soul in the Night,” measures 9-12.

Although both Green and Stitt construct harmonically simple lines in this example, using notes that outline the basic triads, Stitt’s line (which he repeats in the following chorus at the same point) sits comfortably in the rhythmic pocket established by the rhythm section. As a result, the

phrase sounds more “swinging” than Green’s to most listeners, who are accustomed to more conventional be-bop time-feels. Green speaks about this kind of phenomenon in the 1977 Down Beat Magazine article, saying: “The way I’m playing now, I tend to conflict with rhythm sections. It’s my fault in a way because I play outside the changes a lot and rhythmically, I play against the rhythm.”45 Of his playing on Elvin Jones’ 1976 recording, Summit Meeting, Green goes on to say his playing is:

not swinging like Moody and Clark. Rather than ride the rhythm like they do, I’ll purposefully set up rhythmic conflicts. If the drummer is playing 1-2-3-4, I will start playing three against two. Where there is a natural strong accent, I will change the accent.46

This statement leads me to believe that much of this pushing and pulling that exists in 1965 was intentional. Further, it suggests that Green used this technique as a way to add additional tension and release points within his solos. He was also clearly aware that not everyone would appreciate what he was trying to do. His choice to pursue an individual voice might well have cost him work, acclaim, and even inclusion in conventional narratives of jazz history.47

Figure 5.14 illustrates another example of Green’s use of cramming. Green is outlining a typical descending voice-leading line in two different octaves—which incidentally, Stitt has been know to use on occasion—over Em7: E, D#, D, and C#. These are Green’s target notes for the downbeats in measure 33. Notice how he cram notes in order to arrive at these points in time with the rhythm section (although, he is pulling back on the time here).

47 Again, this is not to say that no one else was playing with eighth-note feel around this period of time. Coltrane’s solo on “Resolution” from A Love Supreme (for example, his short solo that follows the first melody chorus) and Sonny Rollins on “I’ll Remember April” from Live at the Village Vanguard show there were canonic players using a similar technique and stretching the time. Green’s flexibility with the time, however, seems more exaggerated, as noted by Coleman in “An Interview with Bunky Green.”
Figure 5.14  Green on “The Spies,” measures 33-37.

Notice as well (in figure 5.15) the anticipation of the D7 in the following phrase where Green lands his high D on beat three, rather than on the downbeat. Clearly, this phrase also exemplifies Green’s continued use of blues material as a mode of expression. Although it may seem like typical use of the G blues scale (with the addition of the ninth), Green turns this traditional figure around so that the three G’s that ordinarily precede the downbeat actually fall on beat two.

Figure 5.15  Green’s blues lick on “The Spies, measure 35.

Another important aspect of Green’s phrasing is the “hanging” technique, which Coleman has described as an aspect of Coltrane’s improvisatory approach. Hanging is essentially a kind of pausing technique that Coltrane and others would insert into the middle of a line of eighth or sixteenth-notes. According to Coleman, this break in the consistency of the line helped instill an air of hipness. It is yet another rhythmic approach that he and Osby have incorporated into their own unique voices.

In the following example, Green’s sixteenth-note line is driving forward and building momentum. By the middle of the dominant seventh chord (measure ten), our expectations (as

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conditioned by numerous more conventional examples) are for the line to continue in a similar manner until its resolution. However, Green’s dotted eighth-note on beat three breaks this momentum, thereby creating a suspended kind of effect that thereby destroys the conditioned expectations of the listener. To continue using sports-related metaphors in a manner similar to Coleman, this could be described as “hang time” in a basketball, the amount of time a player is in the air after jumping with the ball on say, a slam dunk approach.

Figure 5.16  Green on “The Spies,” measures 9-11.

Several of these kinds of disruptions within the eighth or sixteenth-note line occur throughout Green’s solos during this period and are one of the most recognizable aspects of Green’s approach to rhythmic phrasing.

Figure 5.17 shows what I would call a hybrid of laying back, cramming, and hanging (although I can see how aspects of this example might be interpreted in a number of other ways). A particularly striking note Green chooses to hang on is the G# at the end of the third measure, an effective blue note in the key of D minor yet also part of what outlines Green’s tritone substitution in measure 4 (Bbm7-Eb7 in place of Em7♭5- A7♭9). Other examples of hanging are the Eb over A7♭9 chord (measure 4, beat 3); the A (measure 7, beat 2); and the E over G7 (measure 8, beat 2). Also evident in this example is the contrasting eighth-note feels between measures 1-4 and 4-8. The first four measures, Green is pulling back and snapping into place, where in the the following measures he plays much more evenly until the final three notes of the phrase.
In contrast, Stitt’s lines on this song do not contain the same type of these rhythmic variations in the time feel. While he still uses syncopation, he instead, relies more heavily on rhythmic continuity to help produce his polished sound. In other words, once Stitt begins an eighth-note or sixteenth-note line, he tends to let the momentum of the basic rhythmic pulse continue until the end of the phrase.
As I discussed in Chapter 2, Coleman has noted additional rhythmic devices related to hanging that define Green’s voice. These include “hesitation,” “backpedaling,” and “hovering.” These are explored further in the next chapter, which investigates what I refer to as Green’s post-sabbatical years.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON CHAPTER 5

While Green clearly broke new ground in terms of his harmonic inside/outside approach, his approach to rhythm is in many ways a more remarkable aspect of his improvisatory voice. The fact that he doesn’t mention it as something he was working on in particular at the time of these recordings could mean it was an aspect of his playing that developed naturally and was simply the way in which he heard music. Another possibility I entertain is that it was a secret that Green kept close to his heart. Whether it is a product of his experiences with Latin music or a combination of a number of influences, this flexible time feel and approach to phrasing is perhaps seen by Coleman and others as his most important contribution to their playing and indeed, to jazz.

In November of 1966, not long after the release of Soul in the Night, Green recorded music for The Latinization of Bunky Green (1967). As mentioned above, this album seems to have been an attempt to increase Green’s record sales by piggy backing on the success of “Latin” music. Green’s music was molded to fit a genre category that hardly represented his own artistic vision and it is possible that it was what signaled the end of his association with Chess and Cadet Records. Following its release and the recording of Groovin’ with the Soulful Strings, Green started a six-year hiatus from the recording industry. 49 This sabbatical period allowed him

49 Minus the Jumbo recording released in 1970. Again, the recording date is not clear and I do not rule out the possibility that it was recorded much earlier.
sufficient time for deep introspection needed to develop some of the unique stylistic aspects of his individual voice. In addition, this period of study allowed Green to distance himself from his primary influences (Parker and Coltrane) and focus instead on ones that lay outside of jazz. Chapter 6 discusses some of the more drastic musical changes that resulted from Green’s sabbatical including aspects of phrasing and expression; rhythmic phrasing; and vocabulary.
Chapter 6 ~ Alto Transformer: The Return from Hiatus & a Solidified Approach

I love John Coltrane and Charlie Parker so much I think I finally got their message and enough courage to be me.

—Bunky Green

Don’t Let Go is the album that ended Green’s four-year recording hiatus that followed the 1970 Jumbo project he co-led with trumpeter John Priola. If we set the Jumbo project aside, and consider it an isolated event, Green’s hiatus from performance and recordings is closer to the six-year time frame he has given in past interviews and conversations. In this light, and especially because this time was used for research, study, and career development, it might be preferable to refer to Green’s six-year absence from these scenes as his “sabbatical period,” rather than a hiatus. He did not take a break from music, only recording and performing. Indeed, the beginning and ending “markers” for this period coincide with his enrollment in music graduate school (1968) and his return to making records with a major label (1974). The academic environments of Northwestern University (where Green attended as a student) and Chicago State (at which Green accepted his first teaching position in 1972) would have been instrumental in providing Green the necessary time and resources required to undertake his radical transformation. In particular, the stability of a teaching career allowed Green to turn down

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2 Which is how Steve Coleman terms it as in his “Meet the Masters” interview with Green.
3 A case could also be made for 1970-1976 rather than 1968-1974. This scenario would begin after the release of Jumbo: Bigger and Better and end the year of Transformations—Green’s first album as a leader in eight years and the beginning of a successful period of album production with Vanguard Records. However, the fact that Green begins graduate school in ’68, as well as the drastic decline in recordings from thereon, strengthens the case for the earlier time period. Further, I argue that of the two, Don’t Let Go is a more significant recording than Jumbo: Bigger and Better as it is exemplary of Green’s newly defined voice. There is also the issue of the recording date of Jumbo. Although it was released in 1970, there is actually no evidence of a recording date that I can see.
engagements he otherwise may have needed to accept in order to make a living. Because he was able to detach himself from many of the daily rigors of a working jazz musician, Green was able to devote much time and effort towards his studies of musical genres and performance practices outside of jazz, the implementation of many of these concepts to the alto saxophone, and their internalization as part of his conceptualization of jazz.

Six years is a significant amount of time to devote to the focused study and honing of one’s craft, especially to the exclusion of much performance. Even when considering the protracted length of time, however, the degree to which Green’s musical approach was transformed is remarkable. In comparing the music from Green’s “in-between period” and his “post-sabbatical period,” I perceive a radical difference in the development of musical expression and nuance; rhythmic concepts; and major advancements in the creation of his own vocabulary. In fact, I would go as far as to suggest that Green’s reassessed approach is so different from his previous recordings that the old and new examples could easily be mistaken for two different players.

Similar to early developments in bebop, which took place during the recording bans of the early 1940s, gradual developments in Green’s voice that occurred during these interim years were never documented. As a result, Green’s “new” approach was unleashed on the public in a fully formed capacity, which would have made the changes seem even more drastic. The media attention that Green’s reemergence garnered at this time seems to support this notion, as much of it is focused on aspects of his new approach and general comparisons to previous recordings. Further, Green is often quoted as describing his voice as one that finally represents his individual

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personality. While there is certainly evidence of some of the “new” concepts within Green’s earlier recordings—although in embryonic form—Don’t Let Go and the recordings that subsequently followed finally show a clearer representation of Green’s individual conception, revealing a highly expressive player with a melodic vocabulary independent from bebop, as well as a unique approach to rhythm and phrasing.

Even by today’s standards, Green’s post-sabbatical improvisational approach seems groundbreaking on many levels. Thus, it is important to take into account how his music might have been interpreted by listeners in the mid-1970s. Greg Osby, in my conversations with him, retells the story of hearing him for the first time playing his version of “Feelings,” from the 1976 album Transformations, Green’s subsequent release. On the recording, Green plays the melody fairly straight-ahead. However, the introduction is something that, even in the present day, sounds otherworldly. Osby recounts:

I first heard him I guess around 1977 when I was still in high school in St. Louis. I was in the eleventh grade or something like that and I heard his rendition of “Feelings.” The DJ in St. Louis, he played that every single day. I mean, he was like a Bunk Green fan and liked the way he interpreted it and so I got a snapshot of that approach and kind of... like a branding iron in my brain... during my developmental stages to hear somebody play like that because at the time I was... a two-bit soul and funk player... it was something other than the standard fare of the day [i.e.] Grover Washington, Hank Crawford, Maceo Parker...

The fact that Osby can recall hearing Green for the first time—as well as the powerful language he uses to describe the experience (i.e. “like a branding iron in my brain”) speaks volumes about the impact Green’s music had on the younger altoist’s musical point of view.

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5 As already shown, Green has stated such sentiments in a number of interviews including Bill Benjamin, “Bunky Green,” Down Beat, September 1975 and Herb Nolan, “Alto Transformer, Coda, October, 1977.
Steve Coleman too had a particularly moving experience upon hearing Green live for the first time in Chicago in 1976. Both Coleman and Osby indicate that they immediately heard an individuality and freshness in the playing of Green that stood out from a lot of other musicians at the time. In an interview for Jazz Magazine, Coleman speaks about being immediately attracted to the vitality and the element of surprise he heard in Green’s playing. Later, upon closer study and listening of Green’s music, Coleman says he found Green’s rhythmic approach to be one of the truly original aspects of his voice. Green’s influence on Coleman has been well documented and, in addition to interviews, Coleman has expressed his indebtedness to Green through the performance and recording of Green’s compositions and by featuring him various on projects that bring about further recognition of Green’s work.

Judging from the number of recordings, as well as the caliber of musicians Green was recording with during this time, it would seem that his performance career was benefitting from his reevaluated approach, which culminated into a more closely defined individual unique voice. In fact, Green is arguably at the height of his career during this fruitful period. In addition to appearing on two recordings as a member of Elvin Jones’ groups, Green unleashed Places We’ve Never Been, his most critically-acclaimed work by far. According to Coleman and Osby, it is around this time they were both first exposed to Green and his music, the experience of which created a lasting impact on their own individual approaches.

Using methods similar to those found in chapters 4 and 5, this chapter highlights some of the outstanding musical aspects of Green’s unique voice. It provides musical analysis of several

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7 Steve Coleman, “Lecons de Von Freeman et Bunky Green,” Jazz Magazine, 30. Coleman’s comments from this article have been translated by me and paraphrased here to reflect the original meaning as closely as possible.
8 As previously mentioned in Chapter 3 i.e. Green’s “Little Girl, I’ll Miss You” was recorded on The Tao of Mad Phat (1992) and Phase Space with Dave Holland (1985). Also, Coleman produced the Other Places recording (2006) and describes Green’s influence in particular ways in several interviews and on MBae.com and MBase.net.
of Green’s solos from various recordings between 1974 and 1979 as well as commentary from Green and some of the major followers of his legacy. While I do not consider this to be an exhaustive study, I believe that a focused reading of this particular group of solos will lead towards a fundamental understanding of Green’s transformed individual voice.

**EXPRESSION (NUANCE)**

As Green states in his book *Shortcut to Jazz*, one of his chief goals as a performer is to convey emotion through music, “to imitate the entire range of human emotions.”\(^9\) In working towards this central goal, Green devoted much study during his sabbatical to (primarily vocal-based) folk musics from a number of different cultures.\(^10\) His attention to detail—including particular rhythmic aspects and vocal inflections—within several of these vocal traditions clearly impacted his conception of his own alto saxophone tone and nuance. I maintain that this process was, in many ways, similar to the influence of vocal traditions in African-American genres already felt in Green’s music.

Perhaps these connections are what attracted Green to his research of other vocal folk traditions. Such study could provide new ways to incorporate vocal qualities into instrumental performance as exemplified by bends and smears that sound like laughing or other vocal inflections in the blues, which was already a foundation of Green’s playing.\(^11\) More importantly, sounds that emulate the voice are effective in communicating emotion and establishing a


\(^10\) “An Interview with Bunky Green,” by Steve Coleman, M-Base Ways Members Website, August 22, 2005, http://members.m-base.net/meet-the-masters-series/meet-the-masters-an-interview-with-bunky-green/. In the interview, Green says he spent a significant amount of time during his sabbatical period listening to recorded music from various cultures from all over the world. In particular, he mentions East African, Chinese, Javanese, and Jewish music although it is implied that he listened to a wide variety of folk musics.

connection with listeners. Green has discussed his goal of making the horn “speak” in his interview with Chris Miller in 2009. While discussing his album Visions (1978), Green says he tried to make his instrument “talk and become a voice.” This is significant because, rather than using language as a metaphor, Green says he was “trying to create some real dialogue, not just dialogue like they talk about. I was trying to make the horn sound like it was speaking.”

Through the development of new techniques inspired by vocal music outside of the realm of jazz, Green expanded his expressive approach to include a wider range of nuance than is evidenced on his earlier recordings. Green has described some of the vocal techniques that most inspired him as “in-between tones” as well as “various rhythmic effects” that are presented within Eastern African Islamic singing traditions. In his 2005 interview with Green, Coleman conceded that he learned a lot of the alternate fingerings used to produce these types of vocal effects from watching Green play: “little things with the bis key,” “playing the upper register [without] using the octave key,” as well as ways to achieve “split sounds,” or splitting a note to achieve two pitches at once.

Green’s treatment of the melody and his solo on “Tension and Release,” from Places We’ve Never Been (1979), is exemplary of the kinds of techniques described above. The “split sounds” heard in the melody near the wide interval leaps are achieved by playing overtones of a

12 Ibid. Monson says that one meaning of the “talking horn image” is: the ability of horn players to mimic a vocal quality through articulation, attack, and timbre.”
13 Miller, “Bunky Green,” 134.
14 Ibid. This is further evidence of “process over product” that is inherent within Green’s approach.
15 By “nuance,” I am referring to Liebman’s use of the term that refers to expressive techniques that alter the colour or inflection of the tone. These include note-bends, fall-offs, vibrato, as well as overtone or other alternate fingerings that alter the colour of the note.
fundamental pitch as well as playing upper register notes without the octave key. Both
techniques essentially result in kind of half-sounding of two notes at the same time. I believe
Green may have used a regular fingering for the first palm D (above the staff) on beat one of
measure one. However, the second D seems as though it was achieved by overblowing a low G
fingering (low G without the octave key) because of the way he slides off the note and lands on
the low G (an interval of a 12th!). Although I have not confirmed this theory with Green, after
experimenting with various fingering combinations on my own and comparing them to the
sounds on the recording, these are the closest approximations I have found that produce sounds
like the ones heard on the recording.

Figure 6.1  Split tones in “Tension and Release” melody, measures 1-8.

These timbral effects are followed by more “split” sounds, two notes that are kind of sounding at
once. To my ear, Green is oscillating between octaves by tapping the octave key and letting the
upper note fall back to the lower pitch. Alternatively, he may be playing the notes without the
octave key and getting the two notes to sound using variations in embouchure. It is difficult to be
certain of the specific techniques of production without actually seeing the performance.
However, more important to the interests of this dissertation is the resulting timbral effect, which
is a kind of “gargling” sound that alternates between the two notes (measures 7-8).

In the subsequent bridge section, Green continues to vary the timbral colours of his voice
in various ways that contribute to an overall effect of tension and release. The bridge is
essentially one four–bar idea played twice. Each four-bar section can be divided into smaller two-bar sections, clearly meant to communicate competing forces of tension and release: an angular atonal eighth-note line played at a strong dynamic level is played in the first two measures, followed by its resolution to a consonant longer-held note (perfect fifth). Vibrato and a softer dynamic level on the final note contribute to the overall level of contrast. The repetition of the first four measures is not exact. Rather, the eighth note line is extended on the repeat, thereby increasing the tension before its eventual resolution. To my ear, Green hints at a kind of alternate tuning system in the “tension” part of the phrase through the use of alternate fingerings and variations in embouchure. These techniques certainly denote a character of the Eastern singing traditions noted above and emphasize the otherworldliness character of the line.

Green’s colourations of these notes are subtle, however, a careful listening shows they are indeed shaded differently than the notes surrounding them.\footnote{While it is not my intention to address each timbral effect throughout the track’s entirety, I highlight some in order to underline the effectiveness of aspects of expression which Green uses to communicate emotion.} I have attempted to indicate some of these differences in figure 6.2. Some of the more exaggerated colourations are in measures 13-14 where Green “lips down” between D and Db, by relaxing the embouchure. The effect is an airier, hollow, “out of tune” sound. It sounds as though Green may have used an alternate fingering for his “middle” D, likely achieved by using a palm key fingering.\footnote{This fingering was used by Cannonball Adderley, Charlie Parker and other players who played before him.} He achieves a similar kind of airy sound in the subsequent phrase for a span of several notes where, in combination with embouchure effects, other notes seem to be played using alternate fingerings including Bb and B above the staff. Because both are approached from the G below, logical fingerings are ones based on the G fingering. For B, I suggest Green used the first and third fingers of the left hand and the octave key (as opposed to the regular fingering which involves...}
only the first finger and octave key). The same fingering could have been used for Bb, only with the added bis key.

Figure 6.2 Contrasting expressive ideas on “Tension and Release,” measures 13-20.

Through this example, I have demonstrated several ways Green’s phrasing and expression communicates meaning through tension and release: through changes in timbre (using split tones and gargled sounds as opposed to a more traditional tone); dynamics (loud and soft); rhythmic phrasing (busy or static); as well as the use of harmony (consonance and dissonance). These aspects of Green’s voice, I argue, put less emphasis on what is played and instead focus on the sonic qualities of the voice or how music is played or sounded. This idea is reflective of African Diasporic values that place emphasis on process over product; implied meaning over stated absolutes; and individualism and creativity (within the group) over conformity. So, while one could say these aspects of expression add to the piece, I would even go as far as to suggest that they are the piece, especially since there is no tension and release without them.

In addition to creating a more expressive human element and placing emphasis on sonic features of the individual voice, Green’s voice presents a sound that is a far cry from normal expectations of what the instrument “should” sound like.\footnote{A similar argument is put forth in: Robert Walser, “Out of Notes: Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis,” The Musical Quarterly 77, no. 2 (1993): 345-46. See Chapter 2.} In this light, Green could be said to be Signifyin(g) on “proper” alto tone and the many voices of “Bird’s Children,” effectively
playing with certain audience expectations and turning them upside down. As noted above, these kinds of vocal techniques are quite effective at communicating emotion and are, therefore, engaging for listeners. However, references to vocal practices from other cultures—if we can say Green is in fact Signifyin(g) on Eastern African vocal practices—would have also challenged his listeners to question and perhaps expand their own interpretations of what are essentially “acceptable” parameters for jazz performance practice.

By drawing on folk music that lies outside of African-American music traditions, one could say Green is Signifyin(g) on these vocal influenced musics, albeit from an outsider’s perspective. Regardless, my interpretation is that he recast aspects of his voice—including what to play and how to play it—by limiting his exposure to canonic jazz players and turning instead to music from other folk (mostly vocal) traditions that “spoke” to him, thus, incorporating material in similar ways that early jazz instrumentalists imitated their own African-American vocal music traditions. In other words, while his expanded approach would have been created in similar ways as his earlier Parker-influenced period (i.e. listening, imitating, and internalizing vocabulary and nuance), the source material was changed to include a wider, world view.

The recording of “Little Girl, I’ll Miss You,” from Places We’ve Never Been (1979), is perhaps one of the most comprehensive examples of the number of ways in which Green utilized expressive techniques in order to bring a humanness or emotional quality to his music. The melody is in a range that is quite high for alto saxophone often extending into the altissimo register, inducing a powerful yet fragile side of the horn not often used in ballad situations. Further, the song includes some unexpected groupings of the harmonic rhythm that add to its intrigue. As I have attempted to indicate in the transcription below, essentially, every note that is longer than a quarter note is inflected or coloured by Green in some way. More remarkable still,
is that the repetitions of the melody are all significantly different, indicating an incredible depth of flexibility in Green’s approach.

In addition to the note-bends and other types of nuance he uses in the melody, notice Green’s use of overtones and alternate fingerings within the intervening, vamp sections. I find particularly effective his use of overtone fingerings (in measures 17, 23-24, and 47-48) and his use of an alternate palm-key fingering (in measures 21-22). Green’s varied use of vibrato is also effective. At times it is wide and expressive, while at other points it is narrow and quick near the ends of notes.
Figure 6.3   Green plays “Little Girl, I’ll Miss You,” first and second choruses of the melody and interlude vamp sections.
A final point I will mention with regard to this solo is Green’s use of space (e.g. measures 49-52). Green has mentioned that, “Before, I seldom thought about rhythm. I just played changes—played lines—and that was it. I gave more thought to lines than I did to rhythm. My playing was kind of a continuous flow of lines, but now the lines are more broken.” It is an important point, however, one that Miller made in his thesis, that at least we know that Green is attentive to his use of rhythm and actively trying to change the way he conceptualizes and uses rhythmic phrasing to separate his new voice from the old.

DYNAMICS, ACCENTS & RHYTHMIC PHRASING

One of the most effective ways jazz soloists can express feeling through music is through the use of dynamics. Effective dynamics can show sensitivity, help communicate a particular mood, or add forward motion to an otherwise “flat-footed” phrase. While dynamics may seem to be one of the most widespread aspects of phrasing, it tends to be overlooked by most players. In his book, Shortcut to Jazz, Green tries to correct this unfortunate trend in young players by championing the benefits of dynamics, specifically, what he has termed “contour phrasing.” Contour phrasing is a natural approach to dynamics that follow a line’s contour by increasing volume as the line ascends and decreasing volume as the line descends. This particular use of dynamics, Green says, give the line “a highly desirable human characteristic of breathing.” Further, it can add what Green refers to as the “rhythmic vitality” of a phrase, without changing the rhythmic make-up of the line.

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20 Nolan, “Bunky Green,” quoted in Miller, Green, 35.
21 Green, Shortcut to Jazz, 10. Miller has also addressed this point in his thesis.
22 Ibid.
23 “Rhythmic vitality” is a term of Green’s which he essentially uses to mean variation, while also it gives the sense that the line comes alive. The term encompasses a number of techniques used to break-up long strings of eighth-note
Green’s first solo (there are two) on “Ben Sidran’s Midnight Tango,” from Don’t Let Go (1974), is a good example of his use of “contour phrasing” and its ability to add another element of expressivity to a phrase. His solo begins with a flourish of notes that crescendo and lead up to a bold and vibrant high E, near the top range of the instrument. The power of the tone and the dramatic vibrato are quite effective in terms of communicating emotion. They also serve to draw the listener in, in a way similar to Green’s opening blues phrases from his earliest recordings. While the high E is clearly the central focus of the line, the crescendo that leads up to it greatly enhances its effectiveness. Following a development section that features some rhythmic complexity in the middle part of the phrase (which I address below), Green tapers his dynamic level down to a whisper before beginning a 4-bar crescendo (measures 9-12) that grows until the vocals reenter at the Am7 chord in measure thirteen. This 4-bar crescendo is especially effective in regaining and even surpassing the intensity of the opening phrase. After the vocals reenter, Green shifts to a lower dynamic level. Most of what Green plays at this point sits underneath the vocals, yet the dynamic level continues to be adjusted to fit the contour of the line. The relative volume of notes in the lower register continue to be much softer than those above, so much so, that some become essentially inaudible (as indicated by the bracketed noteheads).

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passages. In addition to contour phrasing, these include “placing accents (some call it phrasing or articulation)” and changing the rhythm by speeding up or slowing down some part of the line “until you reach the point where it catches up with itself.” Ibid. Green’s notion of “rhythmic vitality” is similar in many ways to my use of the term “voice,” in that it places as much or more importance on aspects of phrasing and nuance rather than the notes and rhythms on the page.

24 See Chapter 4.
25 Of course, this may have been done in the mixing process.
Accents are another key aspect of phrasing that jazz musicians use to add “rhythmic vitality” to a line. In *Shortcut to Jazz*, Green talks about the degree to which accents can impact eighth-note swing-feel, mainly through variations in the placement of accented and ghosted (loud and soft) notes. Green declares: “There are people who can play eighth-note patterns and constantly swing. The secret lies in the accents.”

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book include accents and students are advised to “observe them religiously.” I maintain that Green not only attends to accents meticulously, but he uses them in unconventional ways as well, especially in conjunction with other kinds of techniques that (deliberately) disrupt the conventionally accented flow of an eighth-note line. Accents are used to accompany these particular kinds of “disruptions” to emphasize their polyrhythmic effect. In jazz, this is often referred to as a “turned around” or “over-the-barline” feeling.” However, Green’s variations of this kind of technique is enough to distinguish aspects of his rhythmic phrasing from those typical of bebop idioms.

In the remainder of this section, I endeavor to provide a better understanding of such instances of idiosyncratic rhythmic phrasing. Green’s placement of accents helps divide phrases into smaller groupings of notes, therefore offers clues as to their rhythmic makeup. In a manner akin to my application of Steve Coleman’s idea of “Invisible Paths” to instances of Green’s “inside/outside” concept in the previous chapter, I use Coleman’s conceptualizations of “hesitation,” “hovering,” and “backpedalling” in ways to clarify Green’s approach to rhythmic phrasing. Meanwhile, this section also brings attention to instances of motivic development and sequences that have remained central to Green’s improvisatory approach.

The following excerpt is from “Tee Pee Music,” a Bb blues with a “rhythm changes” bridge, from Elvin Jones’ 1977 release Summit Meeting. The excerpt below is of Green’s improvisation over the bridge of his second chorus. To begin with, there are several aspects of

28 As noted above in Chapter 5, Green does hint at this in the 1977 Down Beat article by Nolan, “Bunky Green,” 56. Green says “where there is a natural strong accent, I’ll change the accent.” There is an irony here because Parker has been said to have done similar things with rhythm and accents. See Mathew Clayton’s discussion of three of the most defining influential sources of Parker on Steve Coleman, in which he talks about the way Parker intentionally played with a “jagged and cutting style” and played with rhythm in a way that “turned the beat around” as exemplified by his composition “Ko-Ko and “Moose the Mooche,” as well as his solo on “Klactoveedsedstene.” Clayton, “M-Base,” 49-56.
the music that provide continuity, already noted as one of Green’s chief concerns. The repetition of high A (in the first half of the bridge) and F# (in the second half) help foster this effect, as they provide a kind of focal point around which the other notes encircle. To my ear, this appears to be an instance of “hovering,” Coleman’s concept inspired by the flight patterns of bees as well as things he heard Green playing. Further to the idea of continuity in the music, the rhythm section seems occupied with locking in and maintaining a steady groove for the soloist. Therefore, they do not contribute so much to the “conversation” at this particular point—beyond some jabbing chordal accompaniment by guitar and Fender Rhodes—as they do to providing an uninterrupted bed for Green to play over.

Figure 6.5  Green on “Tee Pee Music,” chorus 2, measures 15-23.

Green’s first phrase contains a motive that centres around A, G#, and F#. The notes are subsequently repeated using various rhythms, spinning the original motive around into a kind of musical tongue-twister. Green mentions a technique that sounds similar to the one I describe in his interview with producer Ed Bland in 1990. Green says:

I select several notes, clothe them in various rhythmic patterns which I constantly modify. I play these motifs against the form of the piece. This excursion makes for a formal tension as well as a harmonic/melodic tension.29

In the next four measures, the dialogue continues, using different pitches but retaining the basic melodic structure and rhythmic makeup of the original motive.

Green’s rhythmic phrasing juxtaposes small unpredictable rhythmic groupings of two and three beats that imply a pulse separate from the time signature of the piece a pulse, I believe, allude to Cuban son clave. This effect is what Coleman has referred to as “hesitation” or a “stuttering effect.” Based on the melodic construction of the phrase and Green’s placement of accents, I have divided the 34 beats of the bridge (including the two pick-up beats) as such: 2-3-2-3-2-3-2-3-2-4-4.

Figure 6.6  Rhythmic groupings in Green’s solo on “Tee Pee Music,” measures 15-23.

I argue it is the placement of the groups of three that contribute to the line’s attractive yet disorienting or peculiar sound. However, upon closer inspection there are patterns that emerge. The first three measures, for instance, show a repeated 5-beat pattern, shown as 2-3-2-3 (beginning on beat three of the pick-up measure). I have divided the phrase that follows (measures 3-6 of the bridge) into what I feel are the implied accents of the clave: 2-2-3-2-3-2-2. This pattern constitutes a mirror image, with 2 its centre and 2-2-3 on each side. This appears to be an example of what Coleman refers to as “backpedaling,” or “the way that the rhythmic patterns seem to reverse in movement.”

Green makes the hesitation phrasing even more

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exaggerated because of the staccato articulation he uses on the upbeats in measure 20 (measure 5 of the bridge). To my ear, it is the staccato articulation in conjunction with the groupings of three-beat figures that creates the immediately recognizable quality of the phrase. Phrases like these are very particular to Green, although I have heard Coleman use this kind of “stuttering” effect in his own improvisations and compositions.

Other instances of the kind of rhythmic motif Green uses to “play against the form” can be heard within his solo on “Time Capsule.” The first of these is similar to the excerpt above from “Tee Pee Music” in that it shows how Green varied the rhythm using a small group of notes. In the following example, the motif is built using notes from the B minor pentatonic scale. The next four measures Green expands the range of notes to include others from B Dorian before a foray into other tonalities. Below is my transcription of Green’s improvised line with Jones’ ride cymbal pattern notated underneath for reference.

Figure 6.7  Green (with ride pattern) on “Time Capsule,” measures 113-122.
Figure 6.8 shows another way Green develops a rhythmic motif. Again, Green uses a limited number of notes, which he develops thematically using rhythmic variation and repetition. However, in this example he develops two melodies independent of each other, an upper line and a lower line as in a compound melody. However, the lower line is clearly in support of the one above, more similar to a bass line than another melody as found in Baroque music for example.

Figure 6.8   Green on “Time Capsule,” measure 96-105.

Another more direct approach to rhythmic phrasing is repetition without rhythmic variation. Green demonstrates this kind of playing on “Summit Song” from the Elvin Jones album *Summit Meeting*. While such repetition can promote continuity within a solo, it also promotes continuity or interaction within the group of musicians. The following example shows a particular repeated rhythm that divides each measure in two. The dotted quarter rhythms (that Green’s rhythmic phrasing implies) essentially serves to unify the ensemble and promote interaction. As one might expect, then, it is one of the more exciting sections of the piece.
EIGHTH-NOTE FEEL

This section provides further observations on Green’s flexible eighth-note feel.\(^\text{31}\) While some of the rhythmic concepts I address here are present on some of his earlier recordings, they become much more evident in his post-sabbatical period. These include his “elastic time” concept that includes “laying back,” “cramming,” as well as the juxtaposition of these concepts with more even representations of eighth-notes used to create large-scale patterns within his music. I have attempted to convey several of the rhythmic subtleties in the following transcriptions, however, it must be stressed again that these transcriptions are approximations of the recorded solos and are to be used as an aid to compliment the recordings.

The juxtaposition of eighth-notes down the middle of the beat against the more idiosyncratic “laying back” and “cramming” is a way for Green to create rhythmic balance on a

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\(^{31}\) Chris Miller uses the term flexible time concept to describe pushing and pulling of the time, “Bunky Green,”
larger scale. This kind of rhythmic tension and release is pointed to in Chapter 5, although there are more examples of Green using the technique in this later period and on a more exaggerated scale. Green’s solo on “Ben Sidran’s Moonlight Tango,” for example indicates a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end of his solo using variations in his eighth-note feel. This basic structure effectively moves from consonance to dissonance and back to consonance. The sextuplet sixteenth line leading up to the downbeat of A is absolutely fluid and firmly in time. In contrast, the middle part of the phrase (over Dm7) is divided into unexpected groupings that serve to throw the listener off balance. This is then followed by a return to the smoother type of phrasing (in conjunction with a well placed diminuendo) that completes the phrase and restores balance.

Figure 6.10 Green on “Ben Sidran’s Midnight Tango,” first solo, measures 1-8 (with pick-up).

The second phrase contains a similar type of larger scale rhythmic juxtaposition. The rhythm is relatively even until beat two of the third measure, where it becomes ambiguous across the bar line until beat three of measure 10. Here, after pulling back throughout the phrase, Green’s line snaps back into place. To add another wrinkle to the complexity of this rhythmic tension and release, Green plays outside of the tonal harmony during the middle “out of time” section.
BEBOP ROOTS

While there is clearly a drastic change in the amount of intervallic and pentatonic-based vocabulary, bebop vocabulary remains an important part of Green’s “voice.” Coleman mentions the presence of “roots” music in his 2005 “Meet the Masters” interview. By “roots,” I understand Coleman is referring primarily to aspects of Parker’s vocabulary and stylistic approach.

When I first heard you play… cause some cats would hear you play and they couldn’t even hear the roots… but I heard the roots right away because I was really into Bird… but what I heard was where you would take it – what you were doing… 32

A look at a few examples of Green’s use of some typical uses of bebop vocabulary—or voice-leading—will help orient those who are not sure what to look for. I have noticed that Green gravitates towards this kind of vocabulary when playing over ii-V-I harmony in particular and that is where the bulk of the following examples are found. Figure 6.12 (measure 10) shows the use of descending chromatic lines over minor chords from the root to the major sixth (or third of the following dominant seventh chord). Although the chord is G7, Green superimposes Dm7 over the first two beats. Although this example can be described as a “lick,” or learned phrase from bebop vocabulary, it may make more sense to view it as voice-leading technique that

Parker and others used in their own improvisations. With respect to G7, the 4-3 resolution is C-B (sometimes viewed as the seventh degree of Dm7, resolving to the third of G7).

Figure 6.12 Green on “Ben Sidran’s Midnight Tango,” second solo, measures 9-10.

Another element indicative of Green’s bebop roots is the chromatic passing tone between the root and seventh of dominant chords (or between four and three of minor chords). Green plays this particular melodic fragment several times in this solo, three times in the following phrase, once over G7 and twice over Am (superimposing D7). This scale is commonly known as the bebop scale or mixolydian passing tone (P.T.) scale, and one I discussed in Chapter 5.

Figure 6.13 Green on “Ben Sidran’s Midnight Tango,” second solo, measures 12-13.

Figure 6.14 Green on “Tee Pee Music,” chorus 2, measures 9-12.

My main goal in these last three chapters has been to examine different periods of Green’s improvisatory voice in order to gain insight into his some of his unique concepts and give attention to an alternative approach to jazz saxophone playing. One of the chief ways I have gone about achieving this goal is to locate some of the differences as well as the similarities that exist between them. In addition to Green’s rhythmic approach and the pervasiveness of the blues, a reliance on bebop vocabulary has been one of the stronger aspects that traverses all three
However, just as idiosyncratic aspects of Green’s improvisatory voice intensify as time passes, his use of bebop vocabulary seems to diminish as it is slowly replaced by other types of vocabulary. So, although the influence of Stitt and Parker (for instance) can be detected within his post-sabbatical period, it is clear that, by this time, Green has devised an entirely new set of rules he uses to create his new melodic vocabulary. Not only does his new vocabulary contribute to a more recognizable voice, it also allows for freedom of expression within a number of musical situations and across various genres. Around the same time Green’s vocabulary undergoes this drastic change, there is also a shift in the direction of the material he records. While he continues to record compositions based on the 12-bar blues and rhythm changes, for the most part, dense chord progressions are replaced with modality, usually one-chord solo sections. In addition, R&B, Pop, and Rock influences become more common.

GREEN’S “NEW” VOCABULARY

It has been well documented that much of the basic structural elements of Green’s melodic vocabulary are interval-based, with a heavy reliance on perfect fourths and fifths. Following a discussion of particular ways in which Green implements some of these interval-based structures, I look at other aspects of his vocabulary—including pentatonic scale fragments and the use of regularly occurring phrases—and ask how they may further relate to his inside/outside concept.

33 Miller uses the term “Quartal Movement” to refer to these kinds of structures: “The use of building chords in intervals of fourths is an integral part of Bunky Green’s vocabulary. This is often achieved by slightly altering the harmony, or exploiting the upper structures of the chords. Movement of chords around the circle of fourths is also a commonly used substitution.” Miller, Bunky Green, 69. Examples of fourth-based language is provided throughout the thesis (e.g. 16, 38, 47, 54-56).
Green has said that his concept of interpreting harmony from a fourth-based perspective came about through his explorations of 12th Century organum, a type of medieval polyphony. In the interview with Miller, he stated that he came across the concept in “a book on piano voicings.”

I was utilizing voicings, piano voicings, that I found in this book, that were voiced in fourths. And I recognized them I said “well this is fourths and that’s fourths and that’s fourths, oh my god, as far as tertian harmony is concerned you can really do all this in fourths.

In his interview with Bill Benjamin, Green also mentions the influence of fourths:

I became involved with things like older musical forms such as organum, which goes back to the 10th century. In organum, I found quartal harmony (i.e. chords by fourths rather than thirds as in fundamental harmony) existing that early! I started listening and trying to simulate this sound. I’ve worked on it for about eight good years, off and on, and have really intensified my study during the past three years.

In the following examples, I point to some of the more common ways in which Green utilizes perfect fourths in his improvisations. This type of intervallic playing seems to work best and is most evident in Green’s solos over open vamp improvisatory structures, as well as modal and pedal point solo sections. Green’s note choices do not always “fit the chord” but instead follow “Invisible Paths.” Further, the intervallic structures themselves help to lend inherent strength to Green’s lines, rather than the individual pitches themselves.

The identification of stacked fourths is one of the more obvious ways Green uses perfect fourths. In the following example, from the album Don’t Let Go (1974), there are two instances

35 Miller, “Bunky Green,” 16.
of stacked perfect fourths (beat 4 of measure 8 and beats 2-3 of measure 9). Notice as well the
group of fourths separated by a whole tone on beat 4 of measure 9.

Figure 6.15  Stacked perfect fourths in Green’s solo on “The Chicken Glide,” measures
8-9.

This is one of the earliest instances of this kind of intervalllic playing following Green’s
sabbatical. However, several others follow including these next examples from the 1976
recording, Summit Meeting (figures 6.16-6.18). One important observation is that the top note of
the stacked perfect fourths structure is often the highest note of the phrase and therefore, a
central point of the line.

Figure 6.16  Stacked perfect fourths (measure 2) in Green’s solo on “Summit Song,”
chorus 2, measures 1-6.

Figure 6.17  Stacked perfect fourths (measures 8, 10, 11-12, and 13) in Green’s solo on
“Summit Song,” chorus 3, measures 6-16.
Figure 6.18  Stacked perfect fourths (measure 7) in Green’s solo on “Summit Song,” chorus 5, measures 5-8.

The following four excerpts are taken from the title track of Elvin Jones’ *Time Capsule* (1977). Figure 6.19 shows groups of fourths ascending by whole step (or descending minor thirds depending on your perception of the beat). The pattern is not entirely strict, as there are slight variations on beat 3 of the first measure and upbeat of 1, in measure 3. A new idea—that includes two intervals of a perfect fourth—is introduced in measures 14-15 with the note sequence E-C#-G#-F#-B-G#. This is an important reoccurring figure that continues throughout the next several examples.

Figure 6.19  Fourths ascending by whole-tone in Green’s solo on “Time Capsule,” measures 11-16.

Green plays fourths ascending by whole-tone again later in the same solo (figure 6.20, measure 27). This time, however, the ascending fourths begin on downbeats rather than upbeats as in the previous example. Moreover, although the rhythm has been altered, the E-C#-G#-F#-B-G# sequence of notes is repeated in measures 28-29. This small detail confirms that Green had some preferred fourth-based patterns worked out ahead of time and “under his fingers,” so to speak. The figure uses notes from the E major pentatonic (or C# minor pentatonic scale). Outlined over
a B pedal, this scale implies a Bm6 sound (no third) or E7sus. Although the rhythmic phrasing is often altered, it seems that Green enjoyed playing this particular sequence of notes.

Figure 6.20  Green on “Time Capsule,” measures 27-32.

The same figure appears in figure 6.21 as well, repeated verbatim in measures 46-47. Notice too how Green plays with the rhythmic placement of stacked perfect fourths groupings in measures 41-43, first by placing them on upbeats, then downbeats, and again on upbeats, before changing direction with the interval in measure 44.

Figure 6.21  Stacked perfect fourths in Green’s solo on “Time Capsule,” measures 41-47.

The following excerpt again shows variations of the C#m7/B figure. It seems in this case that Green may be implying a number of minor shapes (or harmonic pathways) over the B minor tonality including F#m7, Ebm7, Fm7, and Gm7. This is also exemplary of how these kinds of pentatonic shapes can effectively provide relief from the inevitable monotony of a purely fourth-based line.

37 Miller looks at these kinds of patterns in “Bunky Green: A Career in Harmonic Evolution,” 47. He underlines the fact this figure is very similar in construction to one Green uses to generate an entire etude over the chord changes to Miles Davis’ composition “Tune-Up.” The figure (in minor) is 5-4-7-5-3-1. The etude is found in: Green, Shortcut to Jazz, 11.
INSIDE/OUTSIDE & INVISIBLE PATHS PART II

Much attention has been given to Green’s inside/outside approach and its resonance with Coleman’s “Invisible Paths” concept, particularly in Chapter 5. However, I would like to show ways in which Green continued to develop his ideas related to polytonality, particularly how he combined them with his fourth-based vocabulary. I have selected four excerpts from Green’s solo on “Tee Pee Music,” from the album *Summit Meeting*, which I see as exemplary of his inside/outside concept. As in some of the previous examples provided, I have indicated my interpretation of the implied alternate tonality using smaller chord symbols below the actual chord changes of the composition. Like all musical analysis of improvisations, it is impossible to know what Green was thinking at the time he recorded the solo. However, my analytical interpretation of what was played is based on things Green has said in past interviews; my informed understanding of the bebop language; as well as the way certain lines lie on the alto saxophone and how they relate to “the language of jazz.”

As mentioned above, “Tee Pee Music” is a repeated Bb blues form with a “rhythm changes” bridge. This means each chorus contains 44 measures. The form is AABA where A

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38 See Berliner’s meaning in Chapter 2.
39 Meaning it borrows the same chord changes from the song “I Got Rhythm” by Ira and George Gershwin.
represents the 12-bar blues section and B represents the 8-bar bridge. The larger form is not immediately important however, since the following four examples are taken from the 12-bar blues (A) sections. The opening phrase component in figure 6.23 is similar in structure to the minor pentatonic figures mentioned above (in figures 6.19-6.22), only here it is transposed to Am7/C. Another pattern Green was using during this time (5-4-7-5-3-1)\(^{40}\) is played a tritone away (Ebm7) and morphs into a kind of F7 (or D7 altered) line. Ebm7 works well in this situation as it is a tritone away from the iim7 chord. Finally, Green resolves the line using a typical 4-3 voice-leading resolution (beat three of the final measure).

Figure 6.23 Green on “Tee Pee Music,” chorus 1, measures 5-7.

![Figure 6.23](image)

Figure 6.24 shows a similar phrase played later in the same chorus. This time it appears in the last four measures of the 12-bar blues form rather than measures 5-8. Since both of these examples resolve to the tonic through alternate pathways, the underlying harmony is not overly important. While the harmonic pathway is similar, Green temporarily resolves his line to A major before finally resolving to G in the last note of the last measure. Thus the pathway I suggest is: G7, Ebm7, F7, A, G.

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\(^{40}\) Bunky Green, *A Shortcut to Jazz*, 11-12 / explored by Miller in “Green,” 47-48, 60.
Figure 6.24 Green on “Tee Pee Music,” chorus 1, measures 40-44 (last four measures of the 32-bar form).

The following examples show my interpretation of how Green combines his inside/outside approach with intervallic playing. I indicate C# over C7 in figure 6.25, although this could be thought of as G7+5 as well. This leads into the by now familiar Ebm7 descending arpeggio, which then leads to intervallic fourth-based material, ascending by whole step.

Figure 6.25 Green on “Tee Pee Music,” measures chorus 2, measures 5-7.

The “5-4-7-5-3-1” fourth-based pattern is embedded within figure 6.26 as well. Here, the lines that separate intervallic patterns from harmonic paths become scrambled, though there does appear to be several implied key centers: Cm7, D7, Ebm7, Bbm7, C#m7, and G.

Figure 6.26 Pentatonic and fourth-based phrases. Green on “Tee Pee Music,” chorus 2, measures 13-16.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON CHAPTER 6

Green’s post-sabbatical period combines a number of idiosyncratic techniques, which he combines to create his individual voice. His attention to rhythmic phrasing is one of the aspects
of his playing that separates him most from his contemporaries. This includes both the large-scale patterns and his exaggerated flexibility within eight-note or sixteenth-note feels. Moreover, Green uses far more vocal-inspired tonal effects—including scoops, fall-offs, alternate fingerings, accents, and dynamics—to produce a more human sound, which I believe helps to make a stronger connection with listeners. More definitively, they further separate his music from Parker’s. In addition to these developments, the inside/outside approach, combined with the transformations in his vocabulary made Green one of the most unique saxophonists of his time.

While certain elements of bebop phrasing and language remained intact, his melodic material from this period shows a heavy reliance on Pentatonic concepts, and fourth-based structures that strayed from bebop clichés.

Green was able to create a new voice of his own only because this “basic framework was in place… from playing Bird and Trane.”41 Even so, Green was able to remove himself from idiomatic constraints to break new musical ground and stand out as an individual. As he states: “That’s really what it’s all about, all the great players—or artists, not just music—are never harnessed by the medium they are working in, they stretch that medium, they push it, and they make it fit their own personal feelings.”42

Chapter 7 ~ Conclusion: Green’s Legacy

Jazz is ultimately about self-expression, or playing with your own style, dealing in the art of improvising, and playing with your own feeling.
—Joe Lovano

The central goal of this dissertation has been to examine questions of influence, individualism, style, and innovation in jazz and their stakes through the music of Vernice “Bunky” Green. One of my central arguments is that jazz histories have failed to recognize Green’s achievements or contributions to the music, despite the fact that several of today’s most highly regarded alto saxophonists, Steve Coleman, Greg Osby, Joe Lovano, and Rudresh Mahanthappa, have identified him as as one of their key defining influences. While there are a number of possible explanations for Green’s relative obscurity, I have put forth the argument that Green’s individual voice deviated too far from many of the acceptable norms of jazz performance for him to fit well with dominant historical narratives. Further, I have argued that the misunderstanding and misuse of Green’s talent by record company personnel, poor marketing strategies, and “bad timing,” came together to limit Green’s commercial success. Thus, while the new creative directions in Green’s playing that I have highlighted show us some of the ways listening to and incorporating aspects of music from outside of the jazz canon can breathe new life into jazz, Green’s relatively unknown stature is exemplary of some of the dangers jazz musicians face if they stray too far from accepted norms. Meanwhile, players who later embraced aspects of Green’s individual voice in combination with other influences as a way to create their own voices, have been more successful in propelling their own careers, suggesting that either audiences and the music industry are more accepting of unique cross-genre
approaches, that these current artists are somehow more savvy in their musical choices and voice creation, or that they are more proactive and successful at self-promotion. Likely it is some combination of several or all of these factors.¹

Nevertheless, if the cost of individuality is indeed related to a lack of audibility, commercial success, or recognition, as seems to have been the case with Green, perhaps this is an indicator there is a problem with the level of importance we place on recordings as the primary way to evaluate players (or allow them to be overlooked). More importantly, Green’s case exposes one of the drawbacks of the emphasis musicians and scholars have placed on a jazz canon and the importance we tend to place on only a few central figures—those that have for whatever reason been consecrated as “geniuses,” the “great men” of music history. Ironically, this approach to history has been critiqued within musicology, a discipline that arguably provided the template for the writing of jazz history. This dissertation furthers the case that some of the attention focused on these “great men”—the tried, tested, and true—needs to be redirected towards lesser-known contributors in order to promote diversity of listening and influence as a way to promote a rejuvenation of the language of jazz.

INFLUENCE

Green has made several notable contributions to saxophone playing and to jazz music in general throughout his nearly sixty-year career. And while he has not yet received his due recognition on a grand scale, his followers are quick to point out ways in which the elder saxophonist has influenced particular aspects of their own unique voices. Green’s most

¹ Some avenues of self-promotion/representation that are available to today’s artists that were unavailable or uncommon during the early stages of Green’s career are the use of social media for the promotion of performances, recordings, and lessons (for example), as well as self-producing and/or releasing recordings on artist-operated labels. In addition, it is much more common for today’s artists to retain the rights to recorded work.
significant contributions are cited as pertaining to areas of rhythm. In particular, Coleman and Osby have noted Green’s “elastic” time feel—or freedom within his eighth-note line—as being a unique aspect of his voice that was particularly influential on them. In addition to this rhythmic technique, which has since become much more widespread among contemporary players, I have also explored other unique and influential aspects of Green’s playing. Among them is the combination of staccato and accented notes with “hesitation” rhythms. This same type of phrasing combination is recognizable in later solos by Coleman. Another technique that could arguably be included as a contribution to later alto masters is Green’s use of large-scale tension and release patterns that juxtapose multiple-bar sections of elastic time against contrasting sections in which he uses an even eighth-note approach.

Although he would not abandon them completely, Green says he stopped listening to recordings of Parker and Coltrane during his sabbatical in an effort to separate himself from the musicians who influence his playing most strongly early in his career. In their place, he began listening to and researching various types of early and non-western musical practices in an effort to inform his new improvisational approach. Green says it was various traditions of vocal-based folk musics that inspired him to develop particular saxophone techniques that mimic qualities of the human voice, including scoops, fall-offs, alternate fingerings, accents, and dynamics, as well as other timbral effects such as “split sounds” and ways to play (what Green calls) “in-between tones.” These techniques, described by Coleman as “little things with the bis key” and “playing the upper register [without] using the octave key,” were also later adopted by Coleman and Osby, among others.

In addition to non-western vocal traditions, I note two sources of influence, previously cited by Miller, which Green says informed his “inside/outside” approach. These are the traditional Algerian bagpipe music he heard as a young man in Algiers, and Twelfth Century
Organum. Both informed the use of fourths and fifths that make up Green’s “new” intervallic vocabulary. Yet the bagpipe influence also inspired many other qualities that tie Green’s music together including the harmonic aspects of his inside/outside approach (or various ways of resolving to the tonic); some of the Eastern melodies and inflections so present in Green’s voice; as well as Green’s fundamental concept of continuity.

In an effort to achieve a more nuanced understanding of Green’s inside/outside approach, I incorporated Coleman’s theory of “Invisible Paths” within my analysis of Green’s solos throughout Chapters 4-6. My analysis shows that Green employed a methodical approach beyond the simplicity that inside/outside might imply. To this end, I show the presence of harmonic pathways and note groupings to imply (what Coleman refers to as) a kind of dual tonality within Green’s improvisations. Further, I underline certain note groupings and pathways that Green seemed to have favoured, as suggested by the fact that he used them within various solos and across different recording projects. Green’s inside/outside playing primarily appears in his “post-sabbatical” period, however, I point to instances within earlier periods as well.

While certain elements of bebop phrasing and vocabulary remained intact throughout his career, bebop’s influence on Green began to wane, replaced by his “new” improvisational approach which was characterized by more “expressive” or vocal ways of playing and a distinct intervallic-based vocabulary. Green has stated that he was able to abandon particular Parker phrases and other aspects of bebop vocabulary only because he understood the basic framework of the music. One could say that Green understood the language of jazz and was, therefore, able to deviate from it in order to create meaningful melodic statements using his own vocabulary. One of the benefits of creating one’s own voice, therefore a unique avenue of personal expression, is freedom from one particular genre or style. While he is certainly the product of
jazz traditions, Green’s individual voice is not harnessed by any particular genre, therefore, recognizable in any musical situation.

INDIVIDUALISM

Part of the intent behind Chapter 2 was to develop some of the central concepts of the dissertation and define key terms for better understanding and appreciating Green’s performance practice. To this end, it investigated a number of ways in which the relationships between music and language have been theorized by scholars as well as how people, including jazz musicians, “routinely talk about music.”² In particular, it examined common metaphors for speaking about jazz and jazz performance practices.

In addition to the ways jazz musicians structure their improvisations (often in relation to linguistically-informed logic) and interact with other musicians onstage—commonly discussed as in participants in a conversation, Chapter 2 explained ways in which players refer to extra-musical events through the use of particular melodies, vocabulary, harmonic progressions, timbre, rhythms, and the like. Through an examination of scholarly work by John Murphy and Ingrid Monson, among others, I showed that, through this process, jazz players align themselves with various influences including genres, schools, cultures, and other musicians. Both of these scholars underline the importance of Henry Louis Gates’ Signifyin(g) theory, as a way to better understand this aspect of jazz improvisation. Gates’ Signifyin(g) theory is especially significant because it allows us to analyze and understand jazz as an African Diasporic practice on African Diasporic terms rather than those rooted in Western European thought. Moreover, Signifyin(g)

emphasizes individual performers, individual voices, and individual performances, in relation to those that have come before.

Building from this understanding of the individual in relation to history and past influence, Chapter 2 also investigated some of the ways in which jazz musicians develop their own “voices” through the internalization, reworking, and synthesis of musical aspects, ideally taken from a number of sources. Relying on concepts borrowed from David Liebman, I described matters such as vocabulary, phrasing techniques (including nuance), timbre, and rhythmic phrasing. This, in turn, led to another of the key concepts of this dissertation: the idea that an individual “voice” extends beyond “style” or even “sound”—terms that are generally used by scholars and musicians interchangeably with “voice.” While I understand timbre, rhythm, and vocabulary to be the defining qualities of a musician’s “sound” (to use Travis Jackson’s term), I proposed that the term “voice” can mean much more: in addition to nuance, it can be used to talk about certain intangibles such as emotion and feeling. Also, as opposed to style which can be more commonly associated with idiom, voice implies a more personal approach, one that cannot be imitated easily, something that, like a fingerprint, is far less replicable. I relate this concept of voice to ideas put forth by Walser that argue for the implementation of non-Western analytical modes when explaining jazz playing. In sum, my notion of voice combines the more textual aspects of jazz performance (i.e. vocabulary) with timbre and typically noted performative aspects (i.e. style) in order to further emphasize the individuality of a player in performance, akin to an act of speaking. That is, vocabulary and style as “spoken” by an individual musician amount to his or her voice.

The relationship between influence and individuality and the “dialogue” that takes place between the musicians onstage and those who have come before is again addressed in Chapter 3. However, here the focus shifted to particular processes musicians use to forge individual playing
styles and ultimately, voices. It explored some of the ways jazz musicians go about achieving individuality in performance. It also makes the point that while players draw on traditional aspects of the music, their ability to shape, alter, and integrate influences with their own personal experiences allow them to develop individual musical personalities. Specific methods detailed by Paul Berliner, Travis Jackson (gleaned from their interviews with several jazz musicians), Greg Osby, and David Liebman are given. Among other points, they emphasize the common belief that the transcription process should be viewed as a means to an end, and that the actual goal is to develop a recognizable, personal voice. Further, they urge that jazz musicians developing their voices need to do so through the study of a wide spectrum of musicians, including players from outside of the jazz canon. A failure to do so can result in too much mimicking of another’s personal voice and becoming what many musicians describe as a “clone.” This amounts to a critical discussion of transcription—a widely accepted pedagogical tool in jazz—including the cautionary viewpoints of those that do not subscribe to it despite its many benefits.

All of this discussion supports what could easily be the most significant aspect of Green’s legacy, specifically, the importance of self-expression and individuality in jazz improvisation. Indeed, according to experts in the art of improvisation like Joe Lovano and Osby, Green is the embodiment of what it means to “find your own voice.” In fact, both have stated that the greatest impact of Green’s music on them was to inspire them to follow their own path, tell their own story, and forge identities, indeed, voices, of their own. Although Coleman offers specific ways Green has influenced his music—rhythm, soul, and compositionally—clearly, Green’s model of individuality made its impact on him as well.

In addition to reaping the benefits that come from creation of an individual voice, players such as Coleman, Lovano, Osby, and Green faced risks when deviating from normally accepted parameters within jazz. Developing an individual improvisatory voice has long been a priority
for Osby and, as a result, he admits to having suffered criticism from critics and contemporaries. He also acknowledged that the cost of individuality can include financial repercussions, translating into living “hand-to-mouth or a “pauper’s lifestyle.” Although he listened again and again to details in Green’s playing that excited him, Osby did not transcribe any of Green’s solos in order to internalize specific lines or licks. Rather, he affirms, Green’s influence manifested in such a way as to help inspire the confidence to persevere and overcome these obstacles and others.

Indeed, playing in a manner that was contrary to the mainstream definitely came at a cost for Green, resulting in fewer recording opportunities, less exposure, limited recognition, and lower earnings. However, he was successful in other ways. Green’s success was playing music the way he wanted to, which is for many, the way jazz is meant to be played. For saxophonists like Osby, Coleman, Mahanthappa, and more, Green’s success is his example of dedication and courage.

INNOVATORS & THE JAZZ CANON

Chapter 3 looked at issues related to the importance of “innovators” and the jazz canon, genre, as well as “the creation of genius.” Drawing on scholarly work by Gabriel Solis, Tia DeNora, Keith Negus, and others, I looked to discover possibilities that might explain Green’s obscurity outside of a select few. I suggest the notion of timing and how it may have affected a number of bebop-oriented alto saxophonists who were launching careers around 1960. My argument proposes that this group of musicians would likely have had difficulty (more than those who came before) establishing themselves within a marketplace that included many new musical

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Osby, telephone interview, 2015.
directions, as well as established bebop veterans with record deals already in place. Further, I argued that Green’s personal improvisatory voice took longer to develop than others, like Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy. In contrast to these kinds of players who seemed to explode onto the scene, Green presents an approach that he said was “finally me” around 1974, with *Don’t Let Go* and (as a leader) in 1977 with *Transformations*. Further to these explanations, I mention other possibilities put forth by Chris Miller. Miller correctly suggests that Green’s “hiatuses” from recording and performing, as well as his dedication to a long and successful teaching career, would have also affected his commercial success and notoriety among critics, audiences, and historians.

I also suggest that Green’s difficulties with record companies may have been partially due to genre constraints that record company personnel use to organize and promote their artists. Perhaps because they found it difficult to label or categorize Green’s music or purely as a ploy to increase sales (I suspect it was a combination of both), record companies attempted to tap into wider markets by squeezing Green into certain genre categories with greater audience appeal, including Latin or R&B. These kinds of moves resulted in highly commercial recordings that represented Green as something very different from his own artistic vision. This was the primary cause behind his self-removal from the recording and performance world.

In an attempt to understand Green’s curious absence from jazz history, I included the perspectives of scholars who have questioned the importance of canons, “innovators” and “the creation of genius.” Notable among these is the work of sociologist Tia DeNora, who argues that some of the musical geniuses we so revere are as much a product of economic and social advantages as they are about musical contributions. DeNora makes the case that the social and
cultural creation of genius and its recognition often spawn from “micropolitically charged”\(^4\) resources. I argue that record company personnel would have held a similar position of influence in Green’s career as did the eighteenth century Viennese aristocrats DeNora argues championed Beethoven. Resonant with DeNora’s assertions, Gabriel Solis makes the case that musicians play a significant part in the recognition of jazz musicians—including whether they are included in the jazz canon—through the performance of their music, tribute concerts and recordings, as well as musical references to aspects of their playing. In his study of Thelonious Monk, Solis notes that musicians during the late 1980s and continuing throughout the 1990s were largely responsible for bringing attention to the importance of Monk’s music and ultimately, his inclusion in the jazz canon as a central figure rather than a supporting player.

Green’s legacy reminds us of the importance of individuality that began with Jazz’s first celebrated soloists, Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet. Yet, ironically, because the individual voices of players like Parker and Coltrane were so incredibly strong, and thus influential, they informed a shift away from notions of individuality and inspired more homogenized styles of playing. This pattern has been repeated with more recent players such as Michael Brecker and Kenny Garrett.\(^5\) However, I argue that Green’s newly emerging legacy and the developments it has helped to inspire is evidence of the benefits that can come from placing attention towards a wider pool of musical influences beyond the tried and true canonic musicians.

It remains to be seen whether Green will become part of the dominant jazz historical narrative, however, examples such as Monk suggest it might be possible. Recent attention from a growing number of influential saxophonists continues to bring about awareness of Green’s


\(^5\)Greg Osby, interview by the author, 2015.
musical contributions, making it increasingly difficult to ignore his importance to jazz saxophone playing and to jazz music in general. In addition to his musical contributions, Green should be seen as more than just an alternate path to that of Parker or Coltrane. Rather, as in Osby’s description, he is a “beacon of hope” for those intent on the formation of their own individual voice in the context of what has already been said in the past.
Works Cited

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Selected Discography

This discography includes primarily Green’s recordings that are discussed within this dissertation. A complete discography of Green’s recordings has been compiled by Ronald Lyles as part of the jazzdiscographies.com project.¹


¹ http://www.jazzdiscography.com/Artists/Green/green-disc.php. His research has been instrumental in forming this partial discography.


Groovin’ with the Soulful Strings. Cadet – LPS-796, 1967, LP. Recorded June/July 1967, Chicago, IL. Personnel: Richard Evans (ldr), Lenny Druss, Bunky Green (f, as), Charles Stepney (vib, org), Ron Steele, Phil Upchurch (g), Cleveland Eaton, Louis Satterfield (b), Morris Jennings (d), Philip Thomas (bgo, cga), Sol Bobrov, David Chausow (vn), Arthur Ahlman, Harold Kupper (vl), Karl B. Fruh, Emil Mittermann, Theodore Ratzer (vc), Richard Evans (arr, con). Available as: Evans, Richard. *Groovin’ with the Soulful Strings*. Cadet – MVCJ-19193, 1999, CD.


Don’t Let Go. Blue Thumb Records – BTS 6012, 1974, LP. Recorded in Madison, Chicago and Los Angeles. Personnel: Ben Sidran (ldr), Jerry Alexander (h), Bunky Green (as), Sonny Seals (ts), James P. Cooke (g), Phil Upchurch (g, b, d, per), Ben Sidran (p, per, v), Jim Peterman (org), Randy Fullerton, Kip Merklein (b), George Brown, Clyde Stubblefield (d, per), Tom Piazza (d). Strings arranged by Les Hooper. Horns arranged by Sonny

*Transformations.* Vanguard – VSD 79387, 1977, LP. Recorded November, 1976, New York, NY. Personnel: **Bunky Green (ldr),** Bunky Green (as), Clark Terry (t), Billy Butler, Carl Lynch (g), Albert Dailey (p), Jeff Bova (syn), Wilbur Bascomb, Jr. (b), Jimmy Johnson (d), Al Chalk (per). May be available as Green, Bunky. *Transformations.*
Comet/Universe (Italy) – UV 062, 2003, CD.

Personnel: **Elvin Jones (ldr),** Frank Wess (f), Frank Foster (ss), Bunky Green (as), George Coleman (ts), Ryo Kawasaki (g), Kenny Barron (ep), Milt Hinton, Juni Booth (b), Elvin Jones (d), Angel Allende (per). Elvin Jones’ last recording for Vanguard Records. May be available as Jones, Elvin. *Time Capsule.* Universe – UV 038, 2002, CD.

*Summit Meeting.* Vanguard – VSD 79391, 1977, LP. Recorded November 18, 1976, New York, NY. Personnel: **Elvin Jones (ldr),** Bunky Green (as), James Moody (ts), Clark Terry (t, fh), Roland Prince (g), Albert Dailey (p), David Williams (b), Elvin Jones (d), Angel Allende (per). Out of print.

*Visions.* Vanguard – VSD 79413, 1978, LP. No recording date listed, New York, NY. Personnel: **Bunky Green (ldr),** Bunky Green (as), Hiram Bullock (g), Mark Gray (p, ep, syn), Jeff Bova (syn), Wilber Bascomb Jr., Bob Cranshaw (b), Michael Carvin, Steve Jordan (d), Angel Allende (per). Out of print.

Healing the Pain. Delos – DE 4020, 1990, CD. Recorded December 13 and 14, 1989, Hollywood, CA. Personnel: **Bunky Green (ldr)**, Bunky Green (as), Billy Childs (p), Art Davis (b), Ralph Penland (d).

Another Place. Label Bleu – LBLC 6676, 2006, CD. Recorded November 27 and 28, 2004, Brooklyn, NY. Personnel: **Bunky Green (ldr)**, Bunky Green (as), Jason Moran (p), Lonnie Plaxico (b), Nasheet Waits (d).

Appendix A: Transcriptions

Alto Saxophone

Recorded October 28, 1960 - Chicago, IL
My Babe, Vee Jay/Fresh Sound, FSR-CD 301
Transcription by Jason Stillman

Bunk Green's Solo on

"Step High"

Bunk Green (as), Jimmy Heath (ts), Donald Byrd (t), Wynton Kelly (p), Larry Ridiley (b), Jimmy Cobb (d)
Alto Saxophone

Bunky Green's Solo on

"Cecile"

Bunky Green (as), Jimmy Heath (ts), Donald Byrd (t), Wynton Kelly (p), Larry Ridley (b), Jimmy Cobb (d)

Recorded October 28, 1960 - Chicago, IL

My Babe, Vee Jay, Fresh Sound, FSR-CD 301

Transcription by Jason Stillman

\[ j = 120 \]

D\(^7\)

G\(^7(\#11)\)

D\(^7\)

C\(^7(\#11)\)

D\(^7\)

G\(^7(\#11)\)

C\(^7(\#11)\)

D\(^7\)

D\(^7\)

C\(^7(\#11)\)

D\(^7\)

C\(^7(\#11)\)

D\(^7\)
Alto Saxophone

Bunky Green's Solo on "Counter Punch"

Bunky Green (as), Jimmy Heath (ts), Donald Byrd (t), Wynton Kelly (p), Larry Ridley (b), Jimmy Cobb (d)

$J = 120$

Am$^7$ D$^7$ Gmaj$^7$ Gm$^7$ C$^7$ Fmaj$^7$

Bm$^7(b5)$ E$^7(b9)$ Amaj$^7$ Gmaj$^7$ Fmaj$^7$ E$^7(b9)$ Bm$^7(b5)$ E$^7(b9)$

Am$^7$ D$^7$ Gmaj$^7$ Gm$^7$ C$^7$ Fmaj$^7$

Bm$^7(b5)$ E$^7(b9)$ Amaj$^7$ Gmaj$^7$ Fmaj$^7$ E$^7(b9)$ Bm$^7(b5)$ E$^7(b9)$

Dm$^7$ G$^7$ Cmaj$^7$ Cm$^7$ F$^7$ Bb$^7$maj$^7$

Em$^7(b5)$ A$^7(b9)$ Dm$^7(b5)$ G$^7(b9)$

Cm$^7(b5)$ F$^7(b9)$ Bb$^7$maj$^7$

Am$^7$ D$^7$ Gmaj$^7$ Gm$^7$ C$^7$ Fmaj$^7$ Bm$^7(b5)$ E$^7(b9)$

Amaj$^7$ Gmaj$^7$ Fmaj$^7$ E$^7(b9)$ Bm$^7(b5)$ E$^7(b9)$
Alto Saxophone

Recorded November 8, 1960 - Chicago, IL
Blues Holiday, Riverside - RLP 359
Transcription by Jason Stillman

"Dream of Igor"

Paul Serrano (tp) Bunk Green (as) Jodie Christian (p) Donald Rafael Garrett (b) Pete La Roca (d)
"Blues Holiday"

Paul Serrano (p), Bunky Green (as), Jodie Christian (p), Donald Rafael Garrett (b), Pete La Roca (d)
Recorded November 8, 1960 - Chicago, IL

*Blues Holiday*, Riverside - RLP 359

Transcription by Jason Stillman

**"Little Niles"**

Paul Serrano (tp), Bunky Green (as), Jodie Christian (p), Donald Rafael Garrett (b), Pete La Roca (d)

Bunky Green's Solo on

\[ j = 160 \]

\[ D^9/C^\# \]

\[ D^\#5/D \]

\[ G^7 \]

\[ G^m/E \]

\[ A^m7(b5) \]

\[ D^7(b9) \]

\[ G^m \]

\[ G^m/E \]

\[ A^m7(b5) \]

\[ D^7(b9) \]

\[ G^m/E \]

\[ G^m/Eb \]

\[ G^m/E \]

\[ G^m/Eb \]

\[ B^7(b5) \]

\[ E^7(b9) \]

\[ A^7(b9) \]

\[ D^7(b9) \]
Alto Saxophone

Bunk Green's Solo on

"Mr. Lucky"

Paul Serrano (tp), Bunk Green (as), Jodie Christian (p), Donald Rafael Garrett (b), Pete La Roca (d)

\[ J = 140 \]

\[ \text{Dm7} \quad G^7(b9) \quad Cm \quad Cm7 \quad F^7 \]

\[ B^7 \quad Am^7 \quad Am^7 \quad D^7 \]

\[ Bm^7 \quad G^7 \quad Cm^7 \]

\[ Am^7 \quad D^7 \quad Dm^7 \quad G^7 \]

\[ C^7 \quad D^7 \quad D^7 \]

Recorded November 8, 1960 - Chicago, IL
Blues Holiday, Riverside - RLP 359
Transcription by Jason Stillman
Alto Saxophone

Dm\(^7\) G\(^7\) Cm\(^7\)

F\(^7\) Bb\(_\#\)maj\(^7\) Fm\(^7\) Bb\(^7\)

Eb\(_\#\)maj\(^7\) Am\(^7\)(b5) D\(^7\) Bm\(^7\)(b5) E\(^7\)(b9)

Am\(^7\)(b5) D\(^7\) Gmaj\(^7\)

D\(^7\)(sus4) Am\(^7\) D\(^7\) Dm\(^7\)

G\(^7\)(b9) Cm

Cm\(^7\) F\(^7\) Bb\(_\#\)maj\(^7\)

Am\(^7\) Am\(^7\) D\(^7\)

Gmaj\(^7\)
"Everything is Coming Up Roses"
Paul Serrano (tp), Bunk Green (as), Jadic Christian (p), Donald Rafael Garrett (b), Pete La Roca (d)
Alto Saxophone

33. Am\(^7\) D\(^7\) G\(\text{maj}\)\(^7\) C Bm\(^7\) E\(\text{7(b9)}\) Am\(^7\)

38. D\(^7\) G\(\text{maj}\)\(^7\) E\(\text{7(b9)}\) Em\(^7\)

42. A\(^7\) D\(\text{maj}\)\(^7\) B\(^7\)

45. Em\(^7\) A\(^7\) Am\(^7\) D\(^7\) Bm\(^7\) E\(\text{7(b9)}\)

49. Am\(^7\) D\(^7\) G\(\text{maj}\)\(^7\) C Bm\(^7\) E\(\text{7(b9)}\)

53. Am\(^7\) D\(\text{7(b9)}\) G\(\text{maj}\)\(^7\) C\#m\(\text{7(b5)}\) F\#(\text{7(b9)}\)

57. Bm\(^7\) Dm\(^7\) G\(^7\) C\(\text{maj}\)\(^7\) Cm\(^7\) F\(^7\)

61. Bm\(^7\) E\(\text{7(b9)}\) C\#m\(\text{7(b5)}\) Cm\(^6\)

65. Bm\(^7\) E\(^7\) Am\(^7\) D\(^7\) G\(^7\)

71. G\(^7\) (Green is possibly turned around here) Am\(^7\)
"Soul in the Night"

Bunky Green, Sonny Stitt (alto sax), Odell Brown (organ), Bryce Robertson (guitar), Maurice White (drums)

Recorded April 15, 1966 - Chicago, IL
Soul in the Night, Cadet Records - LPS 770
Transcription by Jason Stilman
"Home Stretch"

Bunky Green, Sonny Stitt (alto sax), Odell Brown (organ), Bryce Robertson (guitar), Maurice White (drums)
"The Spies"

Bunky Green, Sonny Stitt (alto sax), Odell Brown (organ), Bryce Robertson (guitar), Maurice White (drums)

J = 132

Recording:
Recorded April 15, 1966 - Chicago, IL
Soul in the Night, Cadet Records - LPS770
Transcription by Jason Stillman
"One Alone"

Bunk Green and Sonny Stitt

Bunk Green, Sonny Stitt (alto sax), Odell Brown (organ), Bryce Robertson (guitar), Maurice White (drums)
"Sneakin' Up on You"

Bunky Green, Sonny Stitt (alto sax), Odell Brown (organ), Bryce Robertson (guitar), Maurice White (drums)

Recorded April 15, 1966 - Chicago, IL
Soul in the Night, Cadet Records - LPS770
Transcription by Jason Stillman

* add right hand plus low C
** add RH 1st and 2nd fingers
"Ben Sidran's Midnight Tango"

Ben Sidran (ldr), Jerry Alexander (b), Bunky Green (as), Sonny Seals (ts), James 'Curley' Cooke (g), Phil Upchurch (g, b, d, per), Ben Sidran (p, per, v), Jim Peterman (org), Randy Fullerton, Kip Mercklein (b), George Brown, Clyde Stubblefield (d, per), Tom Piazza (d)
Alto Saxophone

\[ \text{Dm}^7 \quad \text{G}^7 \quad \text{Am} \]

\[ \text{Am} \quad \text{Dm}^7 \quad \text{G}^7 \]

\[ \text{Am} \quad \text{Dm}^7 \quad \text{G}^7 \]

\[ \text{Am} \quad \text{Dm}^7 \quad \text{G}^7 \]

\[ \text{Am} \quad \text{Dm}^7 \quad \text{G}^7 \]

\[ \text{Am} \quad \text{Dm}^7 \quad \text{G}^7 \]

\[ \text{Am} \quad \text{Dm}^7 \quad \text{G}^7 \]
Alto Saxophone

Recorded 1974 - Los Angeles/Chicago
Don’t Let Go (Ben Sidran), Blue Thumb Records - BTS 6012
Transcription by Jason Stillman

Bunk Green's Solo on "The Chicken Glide"

Ben Sidran (ldr), Jerry Alexander (h), Bunky Green (as), Sonny Seals (ts), James 'Curley' Cooke (g), Phil Upchurch (g, b, d, per),
Ben Sidran (p, per, v), Jim Peterman (org), Randy Fullerton, Kip Mercklein (b), George Brown, Clyde Stubblefield (d, per), Tom Piazza (d)
Alto Saxophone

"Tee Pee Music"

Bunky Green (as), James Moody (ts), Clark Terry (t, fl), Roland Prince (g), Albert Dailey (p), Elvin Jones (d), Angel Allend (perc)

Recorded November 18, 1976 - New York City
Summit Meeting, Vanguard - VSD 75390
Transcription by Jason Stillman

285
Alto Saxophone

Bunk Green's Solo on "Summit Song"

Bunky Green (as), James Moody (ts), Clark Terry (t, fl), Roland Prince (g), Albert Dailey (p), Elvin Jones (d), Angel Allend (perc)

\[ j = 200 \]

Gm7 D7 Gm7 D7 Gm7

D7 Gm7 Gm7 F#m7 Fm7 Bb7 Ebmaj7

Cm7

1. D7 Gm7 D7

2. D7 Gm7 D7

Gm7 D7 Gm7 D7 Gm7 D7 Gm7

Gm7 F#m7 Fm7 Bb7 Ebmaj7

Eb7

Am7(b5) D7

Gm7

D7
"Little Girl, I'll Miss You"

Bunky Green (as), Albert Dailey (p), Eddie Gomez (b), Freddie Waits (d)
 Alto Saxophone

Dm\textsuperscript{11}  

A\textsuperscript{7}(sus\textsubscript{4})  A\textsuperscript{7}(\#\textsubscript{9})  Dm\textsuperscript{7}

C\textsuperscript{7}  E\textsuperscript{maj\textsubscript{7}}  B\textsubscript{5}maj\textsuperscript{7}

Em\textsuperscript{7(b\textsubscript{5})}  A\textsuperscript{7(b\textsubscript{9})}  Dm\textsuperscript{7}  Cm\textsuperscript{7}  F\textsuperscript{7}  B\textsubscript{5}maj\textsuperscript{7}  E\textsubscript{b}maj\textsuperscript{7}

B\textsuperscript{maj\textsubscript{7}}  E\textsuperscript{7(sus\textsubscript{4})}  E\textsuperscript{7}  D\textsuperscript{\#\textsubscript{7}(sus\textsubscript{4})}  D\textsuperscript{\#\textsubscript{7}}  D\textsuperscript{7(sus\textsubscript{4})}  D\textsuperscript{7}

lip bend  lip bend

2  p