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HAMMOND B3 ORGAN TRIOS AND SOUL JAZZ 1955-1965

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Hammond B3 Organ Trios and Soul Jazz 1955-1965

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Abstract

Hammond B3 organ trios (organ, guitar, and drum set) were a distinctive part of the jazz soundscape from the mid-1950s and throughout the 1960s. Stylistically they tended to play in a genre termed "soul jazz" and incorporated elements of black popular music such as the blues, R&B, and gospel. Drawing on archival and secondary sources, I provide a history of the Hammond organ and its role in the music we can call jazz as well as an analysis of the critical discourse surrounding the Hammond B3 and soul jazz. I use Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s theory of signifyin(g) and the trope of call and response as a framework to analyze transcribed excerpts of Hammond organ groups and discuss some of their salient musical characteristics. Finally, I aim to situate them within a larger history of African American music, particularly with regard to the relationships between the sacred, the secular, and art.

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Introduction

Hammond B3 organ trios (organ, guitar, and drum set) were a distinctive part of the jazz soundscape from the mid-1950s and throughout the 1960s. Stylistically they tended to play in a genre termed "soul jazz," and while drawing on big band music and the innovations of the beboppers, they also incorporated black popular music such as the blues, R&B, and gospel. In this thesis, I provide a history of the Hammond organ and its role in the music we can call jazz, an analysis of the critical discourse surrounding the B3 and soul jazz, and discuss several musical characteristics of these groups. I also aim to situate them within a larger history of African American music, particularly with regard to the relationships between the sacred, the secular, and art.

To better contextualize the organ trios within this history, I begin with a brief history of African American music and the themes pertinent to this thesis. In traditional African cultures[1] there weren't rigid distinctions between the sacred and the secular or between the material and the spiritual. The divine, the human and the natural world were distinct, but ultimately indivisible parts of a sacred whole. Musicking was often a communal process and one of its chief goals was to "translate the experiences of life and the spiritual world into sound"[2]. When the Atlantic slave trade forcibly brought Africans to America, this sacred worldview manifested in the

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[1] See Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery To Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 30-33; Samuel Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History From Africa To The United States* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 14-23*;* Karlton Hester, *African Roots of the "Jazz" Evolution* (San Diego: Cognella, 2017), xv-xxii.
[2] Floyd, *The Power Of Black Music*, 32.

African slaves' conversion to Christianity (or perhaps more accurately their conversion *of* Christianity). Through the spirituals, the slaves "created a new world by transcending the narrow confines of the one in which they were forced to live."[3] The creation and singing of spirituals was a communal process and they were sung in religious meetings (one of the only semi-autonomous facets of slave-life), while working, and in the slaves' limited free time. The spirituals expressed an appeal to the divine for impending justice and freedom, and even veiled advice on escaping bondage. Through their unique conception of Christianity and their music, the slaves maintained the sacred worldview of their African forebears also incorporated more political secular concerns.

In the wake of emancipation a number of factors began to affect the sacred worldview of African-Americans. Whereas in African culture sound and spoken word provided a sense of dynamic living substance to the actions and meanings they conveyed, growing literacy rates amongst African-Americans following emancipation began to abstract ideas from the symbols that represented them. Religious meetings were no longer necessary to justify social gatherings, giving African-American social life a more secular nature. Exemplified by the novels of Horatio Alger, a sense of individual determinism permeated American popular culture in the late 19th century and influenced the outlook of African-Americans. Class divides began to form at the turn of the century and, in a "separate but equal" America, black intellectuals began to engage in a politics of representation.

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[3] Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness,* 32.

These changes also manifested in music. The blues emerged as a more individualistic secular form of African American music. Where the spirituals featured communal singing or call and response, blues musicians sang from the perspective of an individual and performed both call and response by responding to their vocals with their instrument. The lyrics of the blues tended to comment on more secular experiences of daily life such as work, incarceration, natural disasters, and amorous relationships. At the same time the blues still maintained a sacred worldview albeit in a different form. Lawrence Levine has noted:

> Blues gatherings… [have] sacred overtones [because they] combine the elements of charisma, catharsis, and solidarity in the same manner a church service does: common problems are enunciated, understood, shared, and frequently the seeds of a solution to them are suggested… Church music is directed collectively to God; blues are directed individually to the collective… Viewed in this light, blues performed some of the functions for the secularized masses that religion did: it spoke out of a group experience; it made many individual problems – dislocation, loneliness, broken families, economic difficulties – seem more common and converted them into shared experiences.[4]

However, class divisions and the politics of representation created a schism with regard to the blues. With the exception of Langston Hughes, the writers of the Harlem Renaissance largely ignored the blues[5] and instead championed concertized versions of the spirituals similar to the project of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Similarly, some churches in the black community began to turn away from "shouting," adopted more sedate hymns, and decried the blues as blasphemous in the name of respectability.[6]

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[4] Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness,* 234-235.
[5] Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), xiii
[6] Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness,* 179-180.

We also can see these changes and schisms in the music that came to be called jazz. In the early 20th century the collective improvisation of New Orleans style bands was gradually supplanted by big band music, which still featured a collective but also had a more pronounced emphasis on soloists. The music labeled "bebop" in the early 1940s would further emphasize the role of individuals within a collective by featuring smaller ensembles, freer accompany in the rhythm section, and by focusing more on individual improvisation. Bebop played a complicated role with regard to the politics of representation. On one hand, its bohemian nonconformist (and for many delinquent) connotations were incongruent with the New Negro philosophy of becoming a conscious contributor, collaborator, and participant in American society. On the other hand the discourse around bebop paved the way for jazz to be constructed not as folk art, not as popular music, but as autonomous art. This notion of autonomous art (divorced from any function other than to be listened to and appreciated) created in small groups with a more pronounced emphasis on individual expression may appear to be a binary opposition to a musical cosmology characterized by collectivity, ritual functionality, and a lack of rigid distinctions between the quotidian and the sacred. However, I propose that these two notions are in a dialectic which pervades the discourse around jazz after bebop and is a central theme of this thesis.

Chapter 1 provides a brief history and description of the Hammond organ and Leslie speaker, a summary of organ in jazz for the first half of the 20th century, and a synopsis of pertinent black American music genres that preceded soul jazz and the

proliferation of Hammond organ ensembles. Chapter 2 examines the critical discourse around soul jazz and Hammond organ, drawing specifically from the prominent jazz magazine *Downbeat* from 1955 to 1965. I begin by presenting a series of binary oppositions that framed the critical discourse around jazz (e.g. art-commerce, authenticity-artificiality, black-white, folk culture-refined culture, modern-traditional). I then explore how critics situated organ trios with regard to these binary oppositions and draw on Amiri Baraka's essay "Jazz and the White Critic" to examine the critical discourse surrounding art and race as it pertains to soul jazz. Chapter 3 discusses the unique ways in which organ trios employ musical techniques from jazz and the larger body of Afro-diasporic music including call and response, rhythmic tension and resolution, and signifying.[7] I conclude by reflecting on jazz historiography and the power of genre as they relate to soul jazz and Hammond organ.

[7] See Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

Chapter 1: Jazz Organ History

History of the Hammond B3 Organ and Leslie Speaker

The Odyssey of Hammond B3 organ trios began with Laurens Hammond in 1933. Hammond was an inventor whose patents included an automatic bridge table, 3-D spectacles, and a 60-cycle synchronous motor. After inventing a silent spring-driven clock he left his job at the Gray Motor Company to move to New York and started the Hammond Clock Company. In 1933 the tone-deaf Hammond began experimenting with a discarded piano in hopes of creating an electric organ. In 1935 he would reveal the Model A at the Industrial Arts Exposition and within a year his organ could be heard on radio soaps and variety shows. The instrument also soon found its way into skating rinks, theaters, malls, and sporting events, but Hammond's primary market was the church. Early advertisements for the Hammond organ marketed it as a cheap, reliable, easier to maintain replacement for pipe organs. Pipe organ manufacturers felt threatened and in 1937 they convinced the Federal Trade Commission to prosecute Hammond for marketing his instrument as an "organ" instead of an "electrotone." This culminated in a blindfold test at the University of Chicago's chapel in which a panel of students and experts were unable to distinguish the Hammond Model A from a $75,000 pipe organ, resulting in the FTC legally allowing Hammond to market his instrument as an organ. Hammond would continue to develop his electric organ and release dozens of different models before his death in 1973, including the B3 in 1954. Though he would later introduce more compact models that catered to home-based hobbyists he would never actively market to

performers of popular music, even after the explosion of B3 in jazz, R&B, and rock music during the sixties. Hammond also actively discouraged outside modifications or possible improvements to his organs and it was company policy to receive defective parts before sending replacements. This attitude would result in the separation of the two components of the Hammond B3 sound – the organ itself and the Leslie speaker cabinet.

In 1937 Don Leslie was working as a radio service engineer at the Barker Brothers Department store in Los Angeles, one of the first stores to sell the Hammond organ. He decided to purchase the instrument after hearing it in the acoustically designed Hammond showroom, but was disappointed with its sound upon returning home. Leslie decided not to purchase the Hammond speakers, believing that he could get a better sound and save money by building his own. After several years of experimentation he finished his speaker prototype and got in touch with Hammond to see if they'd be interesting in purchasing his design. However, Hammond took little interest in Leslie's speaker despite the favorable impression it left on the organists his company had sent to try it. Leslie went into business on his own in 1940 and the two companies would compete with one another and remain separate for the next fifty years. At one point Hammond even released a "Leslie-proof" organ that only worked with Hammond speakers, though Leslie would quickly develop an adapter to counteract Hammond. Eventually, after ownership of each company had already changed hands several times, Leslie and Hammond were united under Hammond Suzuki in 1992. Though the two companies maintained an acrimonious relationship

throughout the heyday of the Hammond B3 in jazz, the two pieces of equipment are virtually synonymous for most jazz organists.

Organology of the Hammond and Leslie

In many ways the Hammond organ was modeled on the pipe organ, but there are a number of crucial differences. Instead of creating sound by pushing air through pipes, Hammond organs use a system of 96 steel "tone wheels," each roughly 2 inches in diameter. These tone wheels have different numbers of small notches or "teeth" depending on the octave they're meant to reproduce (the wheels for the lowest octave have 2 teeth, the next lowest have 4, etc.). These wheels rotate at a constant speed determined by a system of 12 different sized gears. The speed of a wheel's rotation determines its pitch, and the number of notches determines its octave. Next to the edge of each tone wheel is a rod-shaped permanent magnet wound with a coil of wire. When a peak in the notched tone wheel passes the magnetic tip of the rod, a change in the magnetic filed induces a small voltage in the coil. The sizes of the magnetic rods and coils vary depending on pitch, growing smaller as the pitch of the intended note grows higher. The signal output of each tone wheel is very close to a sine wave and analog filter circuits stifle unwanted harmonics.

Pipe organs use a system of "stops" or "registers" which direct the passage of air to different sets of pipes. These different sets of pipes, or "ranks," are designed to create different timbres by emphasizing different harmonics. Each pipe in a rank produces a different pitch determined by the length of the pipe. Organ stops are classified by the instrument they are attempting to imitate (e.g. flute, reed, string,

etc.). The Hammond organ takes the concept of organ stops and instead uses a system of nine "drawbars," each of which emphasize different harmonics. The drawbars are labeled based on the length of organ pipes. The 8', 4', 2', and 1' drawbars are white and correspond to the fundamental and its subsequent octaves. The 5 1/3', 2 2/3', and 1 1/3', drawbars are black and correspond to the 5th below the fundamental and its subsequent octaves. The 16' and 1 3/5' drawbars are brown and correspond to the octave below the fundamental and the 17th of the fundamental (two octaves and a major 3rd) respectively. Each drawbar can be pulled out at various lengths ranging from one to eight, depending on how much one wants to emphasize a given harmonic.

Hammond adopted the pipe organ's expression pedal for his electric organ, which enables the organist to control dynamics. He also included the pipe organ's foot pedals for playing bass notes, but only used 25 pedals instead of the pipe organ's 32 after determining that pipe organists rarely played in the third octave. After WWII Hammond organs also featured a scanner delay-line vibrato that electronically produced chorus and vibrato effects, each with three possible gradations. The feature that was introduced with the B3 model was the percussion effect. When one plays a note on the piano, the hammer striking the string gives the note a percussive initial "attack." The percussion effect enables the Hammond organ to have a percussive attack as well as controls for the loudness of the attack and the length of its decay. The percussion effect is a single-triggering effect, meaning that one needs to fully release the keyboard before they're able to retrigger the effect.

While pipe organs rely on the spatial separation of the pipes and the acoustics of the church to achieve a big multidirectional sound, Hammond organists use the Leslie speaker. The Leslie works by splitting the signal from an internal 40 watt-tube amplifier into two different speakers. Frequencies below 800 Hz are routed to a 15" bass speaker mounted facedown above a spinning drum shaped horn. Frequencies above 800 Hz are routed to a treble speaker component attached to two smaller rotating horns. The horns in the Leslie can rotate at two different speeds –chorale (slow) and tremolo (fast). The rotating horns cause the source of the sound to fluctuate and produce slight variations in pitch and amplitude due to the Doppler effect.

Aside from Fats Waller, most jazz organists were originally pianists and it is important to note the differences between the two instruments. For one, the organ is capable of sustaining notes at a constant volume for as long as one presses a key. Organs manuals lack touch sensitive dynamics and volume is instead controlled using the expression pedal. The drawbars as well as the vibrato, chorus, and percussion effects allow organists to shape their timbre in real time and create a unique identifiable voice on the instrument. Drawbar settings in particular are the source of much experimentation and secrecy, with some players refusing to divulge their preferred settings to discourage imitators. Hammond organs challenged former pianists to grow accustomed to the lighter action of the keys and to learn to play bass lines on the foot pedals. The organ could also be more exacting with regard to technique. For example, if an organist wants to play a tremolo using two notes and

have the percussion effect sound for both, they need to be extremely precise in removing their fingers after each key is played or the percussion effect won't sound. Thus the jump from piano to organ is not necessarily intuitive and places new demands on one's technique and expressive abilities.[8]

History of the Organ in Jazz

One of the first known musicians to play jazz on organ was Fats Waller. Waller's father was a pastor and he learned to play the pipe organ well before the piano. Waller had begun playing jazz on pipe organ at least since the late 1920s when he recorded a number of sides for the Victor label in an abandoned church in Camden, New Jersey. He was also an early adopter of the Hammond organ and would travel the around the country with a portable model. In 1942 he recorded his hit song "Jitterbug Waltz" on the Hammond Model A. Count Basie admired Waller's pipe organ playing and studied with him informally, eventually recording with it in 1939 on the sides "Nobody Knows" and "Live and Love Tonight." Over a decade later Basie would also record with the Hammond Organ on the track "K.C. Organ Blues." Milt Herth, another early Hammond adopter, recorded several sides for the Decca label starting in 1938. Herth's trio tended to play more in a pop style and included a drummer as well as the legendary stride pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith. Also in 1939, organist Glenn Hardman recorded six sides for Columbia as "Glenn Hardman and His Hammond Five," which featured Count Basie's legendary rhythm section as well as Basie's star tenor player Lester Young. This was Hardman's only recording

[8] For more on the Hammond history and organology see Mark Vail, *The Hammond Organ: Beauty in B* (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 1997).

session, which appears to be more the brainchild of record producer John Hammond (no relation to the organ company) than that of the musicians involved.

After Waller's death in 1943, the organ in jazz was virtually dormant until 1949 when "Wild" Bill Davis began to take an interest in the Hammond. Davis had worked as a pianist and arranger with the popular R&B singer and saxophonist Louis Jordan starting in 1945. In 1947 he left Jordan's outfit after purchasing a Hammond organ. His first job after leaving Jordan was playing organ at a Chicago roller skating rink. Reflecting on this decision Davis stated, "[The Hammond] cost me $2,290 and it was a gamble – absolutely. I was making $175 a week when I left Louis, but when I returned to Chicago…I started out on the organ making about $45 a week. But I was happy."[9] Shortly thereafter Davis began playing organ at nightclubs in Chicago where he caught the attention of John Hammond (the same record producer that put together the Glenn Hardman group). Hammond was impressed and made arrangements for Davis to travel to New York. Upon arriving Davis made an impression on Duke Ellington who recorded Davis on his record label with a drummer and guitarist. Davis would remain in New York and gradually secured engagements at well-known jazz establishments such as Birdland and the Savoy Ballroom.

Davis was a crucial link between Fats Waller and the proliferation of organ trios in the late 1950s and 1960s. His working band with guitarist Bill Jennings and drummer Chris Columbus became the model for organ trio instrumentation. Davis was also the first organist to play walking bass lines with the Hammond's foot pedals,

[9] Bill Davis quoted in Stanley Dance, "Organ-ic Formation: The Bill Davis Story," *DownBeat*, April 8, 1965, 21.

eliminating the need for a bassist and allowing him to use both hands in his soloing and accompaniment. Davis's recordings and club dates paved the way for the organ to be regarded as "jazz instrument," not just a gimmick or novelty.

Davis also embodies two key stylistic influences on jazz organ playing – Kansas City style big bands and R&B. As the pianist and arranger for Louis Jordan, Davis played a role in developing the music that would come to be known as Rhythm and Blues. Bill Doggett and Jackie Davis, two other pianists who were inspired to take up the organ after Davis, were also alumnus of Louis Jordan's band and Doggett would go on to play a critical role in the proliferation of R&B with his 1955 single "Honky Tonk." In interviews Davis has recounted that his true love was arranging and that his "main approach all along has been from the standpoint of arranging for a band and trying to duplicate its sound."[10]

Nowhere is this link between B3 and big bands more evident than in Davis's arrangement of Vernon Duke's "April in Paris," particularly the shout chorus that concludes the song. Davis had recorded and released the arrangement with his organ trio in 1953 with little fanfare. Several years later Davis and Count Basie were playing opposite of each other at Birdland and, after some encouragement from the Basie band, Davis adapted his arrangement for a big band. Basie would go on to record the arrangement in 1955 (Davis's recording company prohibited him from playing on this recording) and it would become one of his biggest hits. The biggest difference (besides the instrumentation) between Basie and Davis's recordings is

[10] Bill Davis quoted in Stanley Dance, "Organ-ic Formation: The Bill Davis Story," 20.

Basie's repetition of the concluding shout chorus. Each subsequent iteration is verbally announced with the phrase "one more time" and "one more once." After the success of Basie's record Davis would go on to perform and rerecord the song on organ with the repeated shout choruses and "one more time" announcements. The Hammond organ with its ability to toggle vibrato, control dynamics with the swell pedal, and change timbre with the drawbars certainly lends itself to comparison with the expressive capabilities of big bands.[11]

If Wild Bill Davis cracked the door for the Hammond organ in jazz, Jimmy Smith blew it wide open. Today his name is virtually synonymous with organ jazz. Throughout the forties and early fifties Smith worked as a pianist in different R&B outfits in his hometown of Norristown, PA and Philadelphia. Sometime between 1953 and 1955 (scholars and Smith himself have given conflicting dates), Smith heard Will Bill Davis and, sick of the out of tune pianos he encountered at clubs, quickly purchased a Hammond B3. Smith set to work learning how to navigate the instrument in the warehouse where he worked during the day. He created a diagram of the foot pedals, put it on the wall in front of him, and would practice playing bass lines along with his favorite records. Once Smith achieved competence on the instrument he began playing at a Philadelphia supper with a drummer. After expanding his group to include guitar and playing an engagement in Atlantic City, Smith took his band to

[11] Bill Davis history compiled from Stanley Dance, "Organ-ic Formation: The Bill Davis Story," *DownBeat*, April 8, 1965, 20-21, 38; Leonard Feather, "The Organ in Jazz," *DownBeat,* October 24, 1963, 15-17, 42; George Hoefer, "The Coming of Organ to Jazz: A History of Discreet Infiltration," *DownBeat*, October 29, 1959, 26-27, 44.

New York where they played at Small's Paradise. By this time word about Smith was spreading and vocalist Babs Gonzelez, who had seen Smith in Atlantic City, urged the owners of the Blue Note record label Alfred Lion and Francis Wool to see Smith at Small's Paradise. Woolf recounted the night as follows:

> He was a stunning sight. A man in convulsions, face contorted, crouched over in apparent agony, his fingers flying, his foot dancing over the pedals. The air was filled with waves of sound I had never heard before. A few people sat around, puzzled but impressed. Jimmy came off the stand, smiling… 'So what do you think?' he asked. 'Yeah!' I said. That's all I could say. Alfred Lion had already made up his mind.[12]

A little over a month later Blue Note released Smith's first album, *A New Sound… A New Star*, marking the beginning of his long and lucrative association with the label. While Bill Davis's playing was influenced by his love for arranging, Smith's primary influences were horn players especially Charlie Parker.[13] One of Smith's major contributions to jazz organ was his incorporation of the bebop language in his single note playing though he also had a strong command of the blues and a knack for mixing the two seamlessly. Following Smith's success, dozens of other former pianists made the switch to organ including Brother Jack McDuff, Big John Patton, Don Patterson, Richard Groove Holmes, Jimmy McGriff, Baby Face Willette, Freddie Roach, and Shirley Scott. With the exception of the more obscure Les Strand (who played a Baldwin organ and was called "the Art Tatum of

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[12] Francis Woolf quoted in David Rosenthal, *Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music 1955-1965*, (Oxford University Press, 1992), 112.
[13] For more on Jimmy Smith see Rosenthal, *Hard Bop*, 111-114; Kenny Mathieson, *Cookin': Hard Bop and Soul Jazz, 1954-1965*, (Edinburgh, UK: Canongate Books, 2002), 53-68.

organ" by Jimmy Smith) virtually all of the jazz organists to emerge in the late fifties and sixties were black.

Aside from Smith, Shirley Scott was one of the most prolific and well-received organists of the era. A native of Philadelphia and originally a pianist, Scott heard Jimmy Smith's group at a local club in 1954. Inspired, and taking note of the new craze for organ groups in the area, she began to learn the mechanics of the instrument at a downtown studio. She quickly picked up work in the Philadelphia area including a four-month stint with a band called the Hi Tones that also featured John Coltrane. In late 1955, established saxophonist Eddie Lockjaw Davis's drummer recommended Scott as a replacement for the band's previous organist who had left abruptly before a scheduled engagement. Scott later reflected, "I don't believe [Eddie Davis] really went for the idea of a girl, but he had no choice really, so I was hired out of desperation."[14] Unable to find fault with Scott's musical ability, Davis quickly shifted gears and attempted to capitalize on her gender. He made sure she was well lit in front of the stage and played up her beauty and talent from the microphone. Scott was less than thrilled, later commenting, "All that business with the lights and things was Eddie's idea… All I was interested in was playing."[15] Scott's partnership with Davis would dissolve four years later, but not before recording over a dozen albums together as well as several in her own name. Scott's success inspired a second wave of female organists including Gloria Coleman, Trudy Pitts, and Rhoda Scott. In 1958,

[14] Shirley Scott quoted in Barbara Gardner, "Shirley Scott: A Woman First," *DownBeat,* October 25, 1962, 21.
[15] Shirley Scott quoted in Ibid.

shortly before Scott left Davis, critic Barry Ulanov commented, "Women have not yet won a fair hearing [as jazz musicians], except as singers or pianists with male assistants and colleagues. They are still more looked at than listened to."[16]. Though one might argue that the organ is an extension of the piano as a keyboard instrument, the role these women played in expanding the recognition of female artistry in jazz (especially in the "soul jazz" genre which carried with it masculine connotations) should not go unnoted.

Black American Music Before Soul Jazz

Before examining organ trios and soul jazz, it is important to understand the developments of black American music that preceded them. In the early 1940s a group of young musicians who had come up in big bands began experimenting in after hours jam sessions in uptown New York. The music that resulted from these jam sessions has come to be known as bebop and is characterized by its use of chromaticism, harmonic tensions, chordal substitutions, off-beat piano accompaniment, polyrhythmic drumming, and asymmetric phrasing. In contrast to the swing and big band music that preceded it, bebop made use of smaller ensembles and the majority of a given song was dedicated to improvisation. On the implications of bebop Eric Porter writes:

> …Amid rising African-American political demands and increasingly visible American youth cultures, bebop garnered new capital for jazz as a music that spoke to observers of social and cultural resistance. At the same time, bebop gave jazz unprecedented capital as art music and signified its move into its

[16] Barry Ulanov, "Women in Jazz: Do They Belong?" *DownBeat*, Jan 9, 1958, 13.

> current albeit precarious, position at the intersection of high art and popular culture.[17]

The art discourse surrounding bebop began to distinguish jazz from the popular/commercial and folk discourses surrounding other forms of black music such as gospel and the blues. Blue Note records, formed in 1938, subscribed to this notion of jazz as an art music; an aesthetic form that transcends the topical, the current, and the commercial. Blue Note records also served as a model that influenced subsequent labels such as Prestige and Riverside. This sphere of influence is even more notable when one recalls that prior to 1949 most music produced by black artists was marketed under the single banner of race records.

Developing alongside bebop's development in the 1940s was the beginnings of what would become R&B. Louis Jordan's unique synthesis of the blues, boogie-woogie piano, swing drums, and horn riffs characteristic of the Basie band was tremendously popular and he counted bebop progenitors Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker amongst his admirers. Another important figure in the development and dissemination of R&B was saxophonist Paul Williams, particularly his 1949 hit song "The Hucklebuck." The song takes a large portion of its melodic content from the bebop standard "Now's the Time," albeit slower and with a shuffle groove.[18] Also coinciding with the birth pangs of bebop was Mahalia Jackson's championing of an emerging style of gospel music created by Thomas Dorsey. Dorsey was originally a

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[17] Eric Porter, "Dizzy Atmosphere: The Challenge of Bebop," *American Music,* Vol. 17, No. 4 (Winter 1999): 422-423.
[18] For More on these "Now's the Time" and "The HuckleBuck" see Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*, 144-145.

blues pianist and singer and throughout the 1920s he worked with Ma Rainey as her pianist, bandleader, and songwriter. In the early thirties Dorsey began writing and promoting music for churches drawing on his experience as a blues musician. Dorsey has stated, "I was a blues singer, and I carried that with me into the gospel songs. I started putting a little of the beat into gospel that we had in jazz. I also put in what we called the riff. These songs sold three times as fast as those that went straight along the paper without riffs or repetition."[19] Thus throughout the forties gospel, the blues, R&B, and jazz (including bebop) intersected and influenced one another. Lawrence Levine links this cross-pollination of musical styles to larger continuity in African American music:

> Put simply, the antebellum songs of the praise house and field strongly influenced the works songs, blues, and jazz of the postbellum years which were incorporated into the gospel song that in turn helped to shape the secular rhythm and blues, jazz, and soul music of the post WWII era.[20]

Bebop's influence on jazz that followed it cannot be overstated and to this day it remains the lingua franca of jazz musicians. Nonetheless, by the early 1950s its prominence began to wane as subsequent developments emerged. In the late forties and early fifties Miles Davis's *Birth of the Cool* marked the beginning of a genre dubbed "cool jazz." Samuel Floyd characterizes cool jazz as "a highly structured, highly calculated music, low-intensity music"[21] that tended to emphasize composition and arranging over melodic improvisation. Compared to bebop, it "used slower and more moderate tempi, fewer notes, less rhythmic activity, evenly spaced eighth notes,

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[19] Thomas Dorsey quoted in Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness,* 183.
[20] Ibid 185-186.
[21] Floyd, *The Power of Black Music,* 164.

more timbral variety, and European-derived textural conceptions."[22] Musicians typically associated with cool jazz include Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, Dave Brubeck, Paul Desmond, and Chico Hamilton. On the one hand, the art discourse surrounding bebop paved the way for the cool school's orientation around Western art music's concern with form and composition. On the other hand, cool jazz was a major break from bebop's intensity, emphasis on improvisation, and associations with rebellious youth culture.

In the mid-1950s hard bop, another musical development that drew on bebop came to the fore on the east coast. Hard bop is often characterized as reaction or at least a foil to cool jazz. While cool jazz is painted as west coast, white, intricately arranged, and mellow, hard bop is viewed as east coast, black, earthy, and rhythmically driving.[23] Though both styles are not so easily stereotyped, there were marked identifiable differences between the two. Hard bop drew extensively on black popular music including the blues, R&B, and gospel. Though hard bop occasionally featured more intricate head arrangements, it tended to emphasize improvisation. Hard boppers capitalized on the growing popularity of LPs in the early 1950s and captured the jam session ethos that produced bebop by recording albums that featured more soloists and more time devoted improvisations than previous jazz records.

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[22] Ibid.
[23] E.G. Mark Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 2nd Edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 191; Floyd, *The Power of Black Music,* 164-167; Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: The Negro Experience in White America and the Music that Developed From It,"* (New York: William Morrow, 1963), 211-223; Mathieson, *Cookin,* 3; Rosenthal, *Hard Bop,* 23-24.

Musicians often associated with hard bop include Horace Silver, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Cannonball Adderley, and Lee Morgan.

Hard bop occupies an interesting place in jazz history. Writing in 1963 Amiri Barak stated:

> The hard boppers sought to revitalize jazz, but they did not go far enough. Somehow they lost sight of the most important ideas to be learned from bebop and substituted largeness of timbre and quasi-gospel influences for actual rhythmic or melodic diversity and freshness… What results is a self conscious celebration of cliché and an actual debilitation of the most impressive ideas to come out of bebop (217).[24]

As we shall see, the notion that hard bop failed to fulfill bebop's promise of a new revolutionary art music permeates the discourse surrounding jazz. Especially when compared with the nascent free jazz movement, hard bop was viewed as stifling and conservative – a step backward from the modernist drive for innovation and progress. However, many hard boppers either positioned themselves outside of the "art" discourse surrounding jazz, or didn't subscribe to a notion of art that implied radical innovation and revolution. In the same way that the boundaries of black musical genres were blurred in the 40s (both commercially under the heading of "race records" and with regard to the intermingling of musical styles) the hard boppers refused the constraints imposed by the notion of "art music." Instead of a regression from bebop, or a reaction to cool jazz, hard bop was simply a more pronounced synchronization of African American musical idioms that had been in dialogue with one another over the past thirty years.

[24] Baraka, *Blues People*, 217.

No instrument embodied this synchronization better than the Hammond organ. The instrument was a central component of gospel music (especially in black sanctified and holiness churches) and converted pianists Bill Davis and Bill Doggett's work with Louis Jordan tied the instrument to the development of R&B. While Fats Waller, Count Basie, and others set a precedent for organ in jazz, Jimmy Smith and the organists that followed pushed the Hammond to the forefront of the jazz world. However, as we shall see the expressive capabilities of the Hammond and its links to other styles of African-American music were not universally admired.

Chapter 2: Soul Jazz and the Critic

Modernists vs. Revivalists

Much of the debate in the jazz press surrounding organ trios and soul jazz in the 1950s and 1960s is framed by earlier critical discourse in jazz from the 1930s. In the late 1930s a press war was ignited between the revivalists, proponents of New Orleans style jazz, and the modernists, who championed swing music. The modernists accused revivalists of being exclusionary purists and of advocating for a music that was backwards and corny while revivalists countered with charges that swing was too commercial, a passing fad, and Eurocentric. Both discourses helped to codify a series of interconnected binary oppositions that would frame critical evaluations of jazz for the next several decades including: art-commerce, authenticity-artificiality, black-white, folk culture-refined culture, modern-traditional.[25]

The revivalists believed that the unparalleled commercial success of swing was a sure sign of its impurity and that authentic jazz was an African-American folk art untainted by commercial demands and passing fads. They conceived of jazz as a music of the American proletariat that resisted both commercialism as well as the elitist and Eurocentric connotations of "high art." This same line of criticism would be taken up once again by revivalists in the late 1940s, only this time their target was bebop instead of swing. One of the tactics employed by the revivalists in this debate was to attempt to delimit the term "jazz" to refer only to collectively improvised folk

[25] Bernard Gendron, "Moldy Figs and Modernists: Jazz at War (1942-1946)," *Discourse*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Spring 1993)

music and to define swing as its antithesis. The modernists, on the other hand, alleged that the two terms referred to the same music and to support this line they engaged in another tactic, using sympathetic musicians to support their view. One example is the modernist publication *Metronome* drawing on an interview with Louis Armstrong:

> To me as far as I could see it all my life – Jazz and swing is the same thing… In the good old days of Buddy Bolden… it was a called Rag Time music... Later on in the years it was called Jazz Music – Hot Music – Gut Bucket – and now they've poured a little gravy over it, called it Swing Music... No matter how you slice it – it's still the same music.[26]

The debates over what constitutes good jazz, or even jazz as a coherent musical genre, as well as terms associated with it such as "swing," (or for this thesis "soul" and "funk") would echo in the press in the era of soul jazz and hard bop. These definitions were substantiated by likeminded musicians and informed by entrenched ideas of art, commerce, class, and race.

The modernists, driven by swing-boom euphoria and in accordance with their moniker, began to push the notion of inevitable progress in jazz from its crude early stages in New Orleans. This vision was to an extent borrowed from discourses of modernism in European art music and carried with it the implication that jazz's progress was in part tied to its Europeanization. It is worth noting that both factions of this debate (and the jazz press in general during this period) were virtually all white. While generally purporting to hold racially progressive attitudes, critics occasionally

[26] Louis Armstrong quoted in Gendron, "Moldy Figs and Modernists," 135.

derided other critics for being preoccupied with racial politics, holding the view that, "Music magazines should concern themselves with music, and that's all."[27]

Jazz and the White Critic

In 1963 Amiri Baraka's essay "Jazz and the White Critic" was published in *DownBeat*, the predominant jazz publication of its era. Written during the same period that organ trios and soul jazz were in vogue, Baraka's essay is an indictment of earlier jazz criticism, white critics, and the black middle class.

> Most jazz critics were (and are) not only white middle-class Americans but middle-brows as well… It is only natural that their criticism, whatever its intention, should be a product of that society or should reflect, at least, some of the attitudes and thinking of that society, even if such attitudes were not directly related to the subject they were writing about, i.e. Negro music… The major flaw in this approach to Negro music is that it strips the music too ingeniously of its social and cultural intent. It seeks to define jazz as an art (or a folk art) that has come out of no intelligent body of sociocultural philosophy.[28]

For Baraka, the claim that "music magazines should concern themselves with music" doesn't preclude black culture and racial politics because black music is "an expression an attitude, or a collection of attitudes, about the world and only secondarily an attitude about the way music is made."[29] He asserts jazz is a "skeleton in the closet" for the black middle class and accuses them of assimilationism.[30] Finally, Baraka portrays jazz history as a series of reactionary movements.

> Bop was, at a certain level of consideration, a reaction by young musicians against the sterility and formality of swing as it moved to become a formal

[27] "So You Want to Read About Jazz," *Metronome,* Decemeber, 1943, 21.
[28] Amiri Baraka, "Jazz and the White Critic: A Provocative Essay On the Situation of Jazz Criticism," *Downbeat,* August 15, 1963, 16-17.
[29] Ibid, 16.
[30] Ibid

> part of the mid-stream U.S. culture. The "new thing," as recent jazz has been called, is to a large degree a reaction to the hard-bop-funk-groove-soul camp, which itself seemed to come into being in protest against the squelching of blues elements in cool and "progressive" jazz.[31]

Baraka's essay is both a critique of jazz criticism and a testament to the durability of its discursive formation in that he reproduces the binary oppositions from the debate between the revivalists and modernists. His description of swing being "sterile and formal" as it "entered mid-stream U.S. culture" recalls the charges of inauthenticity at the hands of commercialism and Europeanization levied by the revivalists. His animosity towards the middle class beckons toward the revivalists' rejection of jazz as "high culture." Hard bop as a "protest against the squelching of blues elements" implies that authentic jazz, or at least good jazz, maintains an element of its roots in folk music. By characterizing jazz as series of reactionary movements Baraka adheres to the modernists' teleology of progress. Finally, by portraying new musical developments as reactions to some form of inauthenticity or dilution, Baraka engages in the tactic of defining jazz to suit his own ideology.

Baraka concludes his essay by calling for a new aesthetic criteria rooted in "the underlying philosophies and local cultural references that produced jazz and the blues."[32] An example of the relevancy of Baraka's argument is found in *DownBeat's* review of Ray Charles' album *The Genius After Hours*, in which Frank Kofsky writes, "A survey of his instrumental work refutes the often-held assumption that soul can be equated with primitiveness. A typical blues line laid down by Charles may not

[31] Ibid, 17.
[32] Ibid, 34.

have the harmonic complexity of a 12-tone composition, but rhythmically it is a very highly sophisticated body of music."[33] Though Kofsky gives the album a stellar review, his choice to compare the complexity of Charles' music to a 12-tone composition exhibits his frame of reference for what characterizes complexity and sophistication. His comparison is, in part, an attempt to legitimize Charles's music as "high art" by drawing from the criteria of Western art music.

Hammond Organ and the White Critic

Nowhere is this schism between aesthetic standards based on different cultural and musical backgrounds more apparent than in reviews of Hammond organ groups. In the following sample of *DownBeat* reviews spanning five years we see a pattern of critics' unabashed distaste for the Hammond organ:

> In fairness to Smith, I should point out as a preface to this review and to my previous comments on his work that I found it very difficult to listen to an electric organ, no matter who's playing it. Its sound to my ear is excruciatingly unlovely and after 12" of neon organ, it's some time before I can repair my aural wounds sufficiently to listen to anything.[34]
>
> Although the electric organ is a rough instrument to swing, it's an even rougher one on which to sound individual on ballads. There's a danger that much of the slower-tempo work can end up sounding like background music at a roller-skating rink.[35]
>
> As a jazz creator, and a meaningful one, Smith is hampered by the oppressive sound of the instrument. I'd like to her him play piano.[36]

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[33] Frank Kofsky, "Review of *Genius After Hours*," *DownBeat*, October 26, 1961, 28.
[34] Nat Hentoff, "Review of *A New Sound… A New Star… Vol. 1*," *Downbeat,* August 8, 1956, 25.
[35] Dom Cerulli, "Review of *Jimmy Smith Plays Pretty Just For You,*" *Downbeat,* November 14, 1957, 30.
[36] Don Gold, "Review of *A Date with Jimmy Smith Vol. 2*," *DownBeat*, March 6, 1958, 33.

> There is a shrill whining, empty quality to the electric organ, which may be all well for the shrill, whining, empty albums of mood music that are bought by shrill, whining, empty people. But for jazz, no – it doesn't work. With all the will in the world – and McDuff appears to have plenty – there seems to be nothing that can be done to disguise that dreary sound.[37]

> Organ has negative connotations to me (weddings, funerals, inept church organists, rock and roll, cocktail lounges, soap operas, and community singing) that I've found it hard to accept seriously in jazz.[38]

These reviews tell us a number of things about the critics who wrote them and the discourse of jazz criticism. First, we see that critics were prejudiced in their evaluations of organ jazz and that their listening was informed by their experiences of hearing organ in supermarkets, skating rinks, cocktail lounges, supermarkets, and church services. Several of them engage in the tactic of defining jazz by placing the organ outside of what is considered the music's acceptable or "serious" instrumentation. However, while critics derided the Hammond organ, the instrument enjoyed immense commercial success. Organ groups dominated the 45-rpm singles list for major jazz labels Blue Note and Prestige from 1955 to 1970.[39] In 1963, after recording roughly 30 albums for Blue Note, Jimmy Smith signed a contract with Verve that reportedly guaranteed him more than $200,000, the largest guarantee any jazz musician had received at that point.[40] Smith would go on to be

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[37] John S. Wilson, "Review of *Brother Jack,*" *Downbeat*, September 29, 1960, 44.
[38] Don DeMichael, "Review of *Crazy Baby!*" *DownBeat,* February 16, 1961, 37.
[39] See Rosenthal, *Hard Bop*, 64.
[40] "Jimmy Smith Signs with Verve – And How!," *Downbeat,* March 14, 1963, 12.

the best selling jazz artist of the 1960s with no fewer than ten of his albums reaching the Top Forty pop charts.[41]

This commercial success was driven primarily by black radio, jukebox sales, and record buyers. Joe Fields, a former employ of Prestige records, recalled, "our records sold to some white college kids, but our sales were overwhelmingly to blacks – not just tenor and organ stuff but hard bop too."[42] In 1965 Wild Bill Davis frankly commented on this racial divide in a 1965 *Downbeat* feature, "Generally, the organ has not been accepted by the white audience as it has been by the Negro."[43] In 2011, four decades after "Jazz and the White Critic," Amiri Baraka offered an explanation for this difference that speaks to his argument for critical standards based in the local cultural references of the musicians being evaluated:

> If you go to the black church, what they play for the regular service is close to jazz organ so for the black community there was not much difference in the first place… the organ was close to what black people were used to musically, so to put in the hands of Jimmy Smith or Larry Young was not totally alien.[44]

Though the Hammond would find its way into a multitude of churches after 1935, the jazz and blues influenced gospel music developed by Thomas Dorsey was primarily played in black churches, especially those in the south. This exposure to gospel music and its intersections with jazz, blues, and R&B gave young black audiences an

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[41] Bob Porter, "The Blues in Jazz," in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, ed. Bill Kirchner (Oxford University Press, 2000), 76.
[42] Joe Fields quoted in Rosenthal, *Hard Bop*, 62.
[43] Bill Davis Quoted in Dance, "Organ-ic Formation: The Bill Davis Story, 20.
[44] Amiri Baraka quoted in Radam Schwartz, "Organ Jazz," (MA Thesis, Rutgers Newark, 2012), 50.

alternative set of connotations for the Hammond and perhaps less of an investment in creating and maintaining rigid genre boundaries.

Soul, Funk, and Authenticity

Displeasure with the sound of the Hammond isn't the only recurring pattern in *DownBeat's* reviews of organ groups. Critics often commented that their music and the manner in which it was presented was part of a commercial, contrived "soul/funk" fad. One example of this can be found in the review for Shirley Scott's *Soul Searching*:

> I wonder if anyone shares this 'soul' saturation feeling that I'm acquiring? Frankly, I've had it up to *here* with the wild covers, the contrived groove, and the symbolic soul title which, for some reason assumes an immunity to adverse criticism.[45]

The term "soul jazz" became a popular marketing tool in the late 1950s beginning with Cannonball Adderley's quintet in the late 1950s. The soul genre of music that was established by artists such as Ray Charles, Etta James, and Sam Cooke was immensely popular with young consumers and it is likely that jazz record labels felt they could capitalize on this success. Soul jazz is generally conceptualized as a subgenre of hard bop, but with an even more pronounced influence of the blues, gospel, and R&B. The genre's aesthetic was not limited to the musical. Album and song titles, record covers, and advertisements all tend to use cultural signifiers of African American life including food, the church, social events, vernacular phrases,

[45] Barbara Gardner, "Review of *Soul* Searching," *Downbeat*, October 27, 1960, 42.

and the concurrent civil rights movement.[46] From 1955 to 1965 virtually all Hammond organists performed in this aesthetic, and the instrument is often considered synonymous with the genre. *Downbeat* writer Leonard Feather commented, "It is almost the only instrument that has suffered from being associated with a particular school of jazz," but "there is no need to assume that the rhythm-and-blues funk of the present-day organist… represents the last and only context for the organ."[47] For our purposes the critical discourse surrounding the more general term "soul jazz" is also applicable to the Hammond organ ensembles.

The terms "soul" and "funk" or "funky," besides referring to genres of music, also hold other meanings (note that the period we're discussing predates the formation of funk as a genre a la James Brown). In a 1960 cover article discussing soul and funk *DownBeat's* John Tynan defines them separately as they apply to music. Whereas funk is "broad use of the blues tonality," soul "simply means heart and conviction, an unconscious feeling for jazz roots that emerges in a musician's playing and makes it authentic."[48] Thus:

> Funky playing… is nothing more than a technical device employed to achieve a desired emotional response in the listener. Without the conviction of soul supporting it, funk can only be spurious.[49]

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[46] E.G. Jimmy Smith's *The Sermon, Prayer Meetin', Home Cookin',* and *House Party*; Jack McDuff's *Hot Barbeque* and *Hallelujah Time!;* Freddie Roach's *Mo' Greens Please* and *My People (Soul People)*; Shirley Scott's *Hip Soul* and *Soul Shoutin'*; Grant Green's "The Selma March."
[47] Leonard Feather, "The Organ in Jazz," *DownBeat*, October 24, 1963, 15.
[48] John Tynan, "Funk Groove Soul," *Downbeat*, November 24, 1960, 19.
[49] Ibid.

Musicians and other critics broadly adhere to Tynan's definitions though the two terms were sometimes used interchangeably. The most important part of Tynan's definition of soul with regard to the discourse around soul jazz is its association with authenticity.

Critics regularly charged soul jazz artists with blatant commercialism and playing "homogenized" and "contrived" funk. Pianist Bobby Timmons and trumpeter Nat Adderley, often credited as key figures in soul jazz through their work with Cannonball Adderley, both acknowledged that soul jazz was being overdone, but at the same time pushed back against accusations that their music was contrived.

> People get the idea that this kind of feeling can be contrived. It *can't*. Hell, I *lived* with it all my life. I happen to be a part of the whole social scene of the south. Cannonball and I play the way we feel… Now I don't expect a man who has not had the experience of standing outside the Tabernacle Baptist church, and waiting for the fish fry, or listening to the unfortunate brothers crack rock, to totally understand the playing of a man who has. But I do expect him to be tolerant of that which he doesn't understand solely because of his own shortcomings.[50]
> -Nat Adderley

> You can't take a thing like soul… and wrap it up in packages and sell it and say this is soul and that is not soul… Soul is an innate thing in people. Some people do have it, and some don't… In order to appreciate soul you must have some of your own… [The critics] are predominantly white, and there is further incompatibility. They don't really know the music.[51]
> -Bobby Timmons

Both musicians argue that authentic soul cannot be contrived. Adderley, citing his experiences as a black man from the south, suggests that the way he feels (and by extension the way he plays) is informed by a uniquely African-American cultural

[50] Nat Adderley quoted in "Nat Talks Back," *DownBeat*, August 4, 1960, 10.
[51] Bobby Timmons quoted in Barbara Gardner, "Timmons in Tempest," *Downbeat*, November 24, 1960, 14.

experience. Timmons does not go as far as to make the essentialist claim that soul is an exclusive property of black musicians outright, but there is a sense that the ability to express oneself with "soul" is inherited at birth. He walks the line between a cultural and a biological essentialism. Though they predate "Jazz and the White Critic" by three years, both Adderley and Timmons' comments resonate with Baraka's essay in that they emphasize white critics' inability to responsibly evaluate their music because they lack knowledge of its cultural referents.

In two separate articles discussing the pervasiveness of soul jazz, *DownBeat's* John Tynan suggests that the term soul has become synonymous with social justice for African-Americans, and even anti-white Black Nationalism.

> The handmaiden of nationalism is often bigotry, and if the extreme example of this is the anti-white Muslim movement, it may also be found (to a much lesser degree) in the subtlety of this "soul society" attitude among Negro musicians.[52]

Tynan sees soul music as a defensive reactionary movement that serves more as a mark of ethnic exclusivity than music that will aid jazz's elevation to art music.

> It is not difficult to understand why Negro jazzmen have infused the "holiness" influence into their music. The motivation, in my opinion, can be traced more to racialistic feelings as Negroes than to the further development of jazz as art. It as if they hurl the challenge at their white colleagues: "Copy this, if you can." The Gospel feeling is indisputably theirs and they know it.[53]

Tynan depicts soul as an essential and exclusive property of black musicians and reads it as a form of reverse racism and Black Nationalism. It is important to recall the historical context of soul jazz. Its beginning and the peak of its popularity roughly

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[52] John Tynan, "Les McCann & 'The Truth,'"*DownBeat*, September 15, 1960, 20.
[53] Tynan, "Funk Groove Soul," 19.

coincides with the African-American freedom movement beginning with Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954 and followed by the Montgomery bus boycotts, the rise of Martin Luther King Jr., the founding of the SCLC and SNCC, student-led sit ins across the south, and the 1963 March on Washington. Beginning in the late 50s jazz artists began releasing albums and songs that expressed solidarity with the freedom movement including Sonny Rollin's *Freedom Suite,* Max Roach's *We Insist!: Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite,* and Charles Mingus's "Fables of Faubus." What ultimately came to fruition in the critical discourse surrounding jazz during this period was a debate around art framed as follows: Can music that is produced by or makes reference to specific social circumstances be considered art or does true art transcend it's own era as something timeless?

Art and Soul

This question is highlighted in a 1962 multi-issue panel discussion on racial prejudice in jazz. The panel was prompted by Ira Gitler's review of Abbey Lincoln's album *Straight Ahead* in which he accuses her of being a "professional negro,"[54] - of tying her music too directly to the freedom movement and directing her album to an exclusively black audience, thereby engaging in anti-white Black Nationalism. Gitler stated, "I dislike propaganda in art when it is a device. Billy Holiday's *Strange Fruit* had a social message, but it was art first."[55] Tynan's article on soul jazz contains a similar line of thinking:

[54] Ira Gitler, "Review of *Straight Ahead,*" *DownBeat,* March 15, 1962, 21.
[55] Ibid.

> The role of the Gospel, or "holiness," influence in today's jazz will be short-lived for two reasons: first, it is musically limited; secondly, it takes its inspiration (or "soul if you like) from a socially and culturally limited area, that of church worship. This is not the same as saying that all so-called church music is artistically limited. Art, when perfect, soars timelessly beyond all boundaries – as J.S. Bach's cantatas and Handel's oratorios eloquently attest. The difference is this: Bach, Handel, Stravinsky, and others wrote their religious works primarily and objectively as works of art. That they desired to worship their God in so creating was a sublime fulfillment of their spirits and eternal testimony to the nobility of man. But in objective terms it is as art that their works exist, just as it is as art that their works are evaluated.[56]

Tynan's claim that Bach's work was conceived primarily as an art object and secondarily as church music is spurious. Walter Benjamin tells us that before the era of "pure art" and the era of mechanical reproduction, the aura of a piece of art was never divorced entirely from its ritual function.[57] For Bach composing music was part of his duties as Kapellmeister and his personal relationship with God. His religious music wasn't separated from its ritual purpose of devotion to god and wasn't evaluated as high art until years after his death. Similarly, Gitler's claim that *Strange Fruit* was "art first" is perplexing. What characterizes Holiday's song as art, and how is that separate from its social message?

In the panel discussion, Lincoln responds to Gitler by making the claim that "all art must be propaganda; all art must have an attitude; and all art must reflect the times you live in."[58] To an extent this point-of-view reflects the Benjaminian claim that art in the era of mechanical reproduction is no longer based on ritual but instead

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[56] Tynan, "Funk Groove Soul," 18-19.
[57] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 6.
[58] Abbey Lincoln quoted in "Racial Prejudice in Jazz," *Downbeat*, March 15, 1962, 22.

based on politics.[59] While Lincoln and other jazz musicians might agree that the mass production of their albums are political at least to the extent that they are the products of the attitudes and times that they live in, the separation of their music and its ritual functions might be more contentious.

Immediately following Lincoln's response in the panel discussion, Max Roach interjected that art should also be entertaining. Ray Charles, an artist *Downbeat* consistently praised and was seemingly immune to accusations of soul faddism, commented in a 1963 interview with Leonard Feather, "To me, music is entertainment - what else can it be? ...It's an art that entertains."[60] For Charles and Roach, art and entertainment weren't restricted to separate spheres. Given soul jazz and hard bop's gospel influence, it wasn't uncommon for musicians to perform and record spirituals. This was controversial for some members of the black clergy as well as gospel's biggest star, Mahalia Jackson, who asserted that the Gospel was not meant to entertain.[61] At the same time, in response to a bishop that claimed spirituals were being desecrated by singers in jazz form, Jackson retorted, "What difference does it make where people hear God's music, as long as they get the message?"[62] Louis Armstrong, criticized by the same bishop, similarly responded, "These songs can be sung on the secular stage with as much religious effect as in the church."[63]

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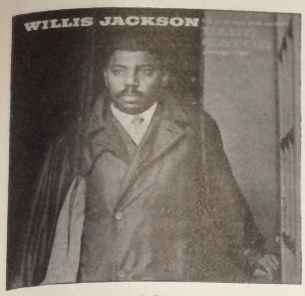
[59] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 6.
[60] Ray Charles quoted in Leonard Feather, "Free Flow: A Conversation with Ray Charles, *DownBeat*, September 12, 1963, 18.
[61] "Mahalia Jackson: 'Gospel Isn't Pop," *DownBeat*, August 15, 1963, 12.
[62] Mahalia Jackson quoted in "To Swing or Not to Swing," *Downbeat*, September 1, 1960, 13.
[63] Louis Armstrong quoted in Ibid, 14.

The larger takeaway from this discourse surrounding jazz and its relation to racial politics, art, entertainment, and religious music is that for musicians these were all valid constituents of the music that didn't negate one another. Jazz could, all at the same time, be an art that reflects the times and attitudes of its producers, a religious ritual that expresses the message and glory of God, as well as the most profane form of entertainment. This rejection of distinctions between ritual and propaganda, art and entertainment, sacred and secular is further embodied by musicians' distaste for labels such as "jazz," which itself eludes a concise definition. Eric Porter notes that "one of the striking ironies of definitions of the jazz tradition is that valued components of jazz's ontology (experimentation, black vernacular practices, populism, etc.) become a problem when used in excess."[64] We can see how soul jazz became a problem for critics, due its use of black vernacular practices, allusions to racial politics, popular music, and its failure to comply with *DownBeat's* conception of art.

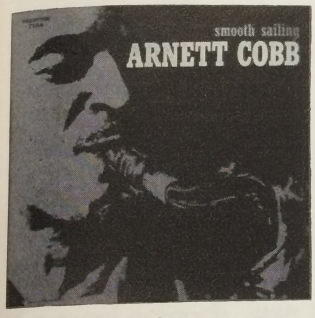
The marketing of soul jazz also engaged in this debate surrounding the nature of art. This 1961 full-page ad[65] for the Prestige record label, which includes pictures of six albums, four of which include Hammond organ, is exemplary:

[64] Eric Porter, "Incorporation and Distinction in Jazz History and Jazz Historiography," in *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries*, eds. David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, Daniel Goldmark (University of California Press, 2012), 17-18.
[65] "Prestige: First With The Great Jazzmen," *DownBeat*, May 25, 1961, 31.

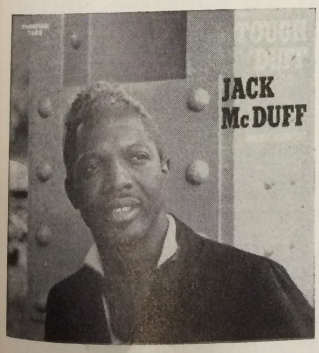
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FIRST WITH THE GREAT JAZZMEN



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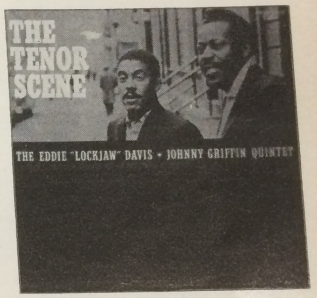


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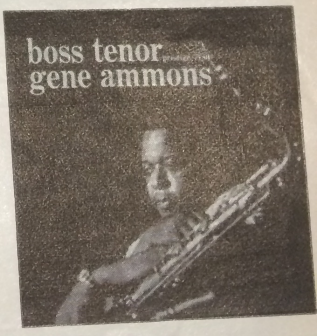
The people whose pictures are on this page are the prime representatives of one of the most important and neglected areas in jazz. On the left, from top to bottom, are tenormen Willis Jackson and Arnett Cobb, and organist Jack McDuff. On the right is organist Shirley Scott, and tenormen Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Gene Ammons. They play some of the most vital music being heard in America today. They personify, if we may say so, the *true* mainstream of jazz. It is not music that is created for critics, but music that is created by people, a direct expression of the social situation from which it comes. It is not music in the abstract, but music that is a reflection of its time and place—music that people have lived to. By that we do not mean that it is pale, diluted mood music — it is anything but that. It is direct, forceful, virile music, music that communicates directly to the emotions. It blazes no new paths and points no new directions —we do not claim that. But because the music these people play is not *avant garde* or intellectual, it has been unaccountably overlooked by jazz writers, and, in too many cases, by jazz fans. These six people have made too many albums to permit us to list them individually, but we believe sincerely in the power and force of what they have created, and respectfully direct your attention to their music.



PRLP 7182



PRLP 7191



PRLP 7180

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May 25, 1961 •

Prestige portrays soul jazz as the *true* mainstream, not created for critics, and as a direct expression of the artists' social situation. It positions their records as music for the masses, not the elitist critics who demand that music be innovative, avant-garde, and cerebral. The working class anti-elitist connotations of this advertisement are also adopted in a 1962 *Downbeat* feature article discussing Jimmy Smith and his fans. According to the article, the average Smith fan is a

> Direct, plain-talking citizen who pays his way and brings his own bottle to the club. He does this not to avoid the cost of the house liquor, for usually the minimum is clamped on anyway, but to be sure of what he is drinking; he wants to drink it his way. He is vocal, loud in appreciation, polite in disgruntlement.[66]

The Smith fan is portrayed as a rugged individualist who knows what he likes and harbors a distrust of the establishment. Smith himself in the article acknowledges that he "bows to the masses." In the wake of the critical disapproval of soul jazz and the Hammond organ - Smith, record labels, and even *Downbeat* sought to emphasize that this music wasn't intended as some grand innovation, or as art that transcends the moment and exists outside the sphere of commerce. This was music for *the people.*

Reprise: Revivalists vs. Modernists

We can draw some parallels between the discourse around soul jazz and the war between revivalists and modernists in the late 1930s. Like the revivalists, *Downbeat's* critics railed against the commercialism in soul jazz. Discussions surrounding soul authenticity and the incorporation of popular music mirror the revivalists' claim that swing music wasn't authentic jazz. However, while the

[66] Jimmy Smith quoted in Ibid.

revivalists asserted that jazz was a folk tradition, critics of soul jazz were weary of musicians drawing on spirituals, blues, gospel, and other music that predated bebop. In this sense, advocates for soul jazz resemble the revivalists in their valorization of folk elements and their characterization of the music as working class and anti-elitist. Similar to the modernists of the 1930s, critics of the soul jazz era pushed for a progressive music that didn't look back for inspiration.

If the critics' attitude toward the place of racial politics in jazz and criticism in the 30s was "let the music magazines concern themselves with music, and that's all," in the late 50s and early 60s it shifted to "let the musicians only concern themselves with the music." Despite regular progressive commentary on the state of Jim Crow, critics' refusal to acknowledge music as a product of the time and society from which it emerged resulted in a paranoia over anti-white Black Nationalism and unfounded charges of reverse racism. Thus, in the discourse around soul jazz we see the same set of binary oppositions that permeated the debate between modernists and revivalists: art-commerce, authenticity-artificiality, black-white, folk culture-refined culture, modern-traditional. Though these binaries, genre names, and the jazz press do hold power (and jazz musicians themselves have engaged in debates on these terms), Hammond organ groups didn't allow themselves to be constrained by them. Though they may not have conformed to *DownBeat's* notion of artistic innovation, their distinct manifestation of jazz and African-American musical tropes pioneered new means for musical expression.

Chapter 3: Musical Characteristics

In this chapter I focus on the musical characteristics and improvisational devices commonly used by organ trios. Some of these are unique and draw on the technical capabilities of the Hammond organ, but many are shared within the larger constellation of African American musical styles.

Rhythmic Tension

Our first example shows how both organists and the guitarists that played with them made use of rhythmic tension and resolution. Though the concept of tension and resolution is not applicable in all music under the umbrella of "jazz" it is one way to develop a sense of motion and to build a narrative in one's improvisation. Jazz musicians often discuss the importance of "saying something" or "telling a story" when improvising. Employing a sense of tension and resolution can give listeners the sense that they're moving somewhere.[67] By building tension or uncertainty, musicians create the anticipation of resolution. Their ability to withhold resolution and resolve tension in unexpected ways is part of what creates interest, stimulation, and narrative in the minds and ears of listeners. In my own experience jazz theory and pedagogy tends to focus more on creating harmonic tension (e.g. by playing dissonant tensions such as the b9, #9, #11, and b13, using tritone substitutions, and drawing from the diminished and whole tone scales over dominant chords). While musicians that

[67] See Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction,* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1-2.

played in organ combos were certainly capable of building complex harmonic tension there is perhaps more of an emphasis on using rhythm.

Our example of building rhythmic tension in a solo comes from guitarist Grant Green's debut record for Blue Note in 1961, *Grant's First Stand.* The record features an organ trio including Green, organist Roosevelt "Baby Face" Willette, and Ben Dixon on drumset. The example comes from Green's second solo on the track "Miss Ann's Tempo," an uptempo twelve bar blues in Bb. Beginning at 4:05 Green begins to develop a six beat blues motif (show in figure 1.1) that can be divided into two smaller three beat fragments (A and B).

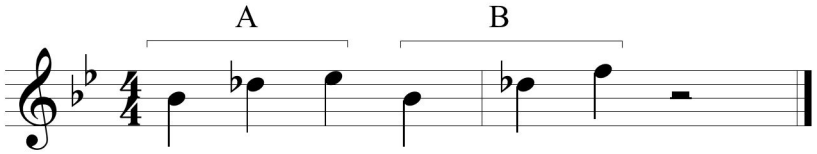


Figure 1.1: Primary Motif

The phrase already creates a certain amount of rhythmic tension due to the groupings of thre quarter notes over 4/4. Green then takes this phrase and shortens one of the quarter notes to an eighth note, repositioning the phrase so that it occurs on the offbeats of each quarter note (figure 1.2).

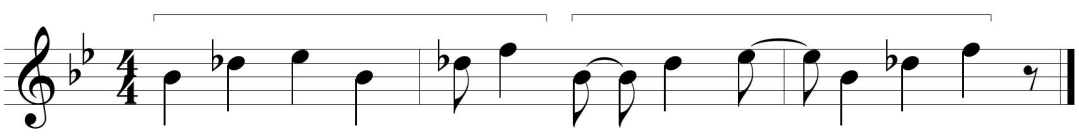


Figure 1.2: Transition from on the beat to syncopation

I will now include the full transcription of Green's rhythmic development (figure 1.3). I've labeled the fragments of Green's motif based on the number of eighth notes that occur in a given fragment. Note that the groupings of six perpetuate the motif's relation to the beat while the groupings of five displace it.
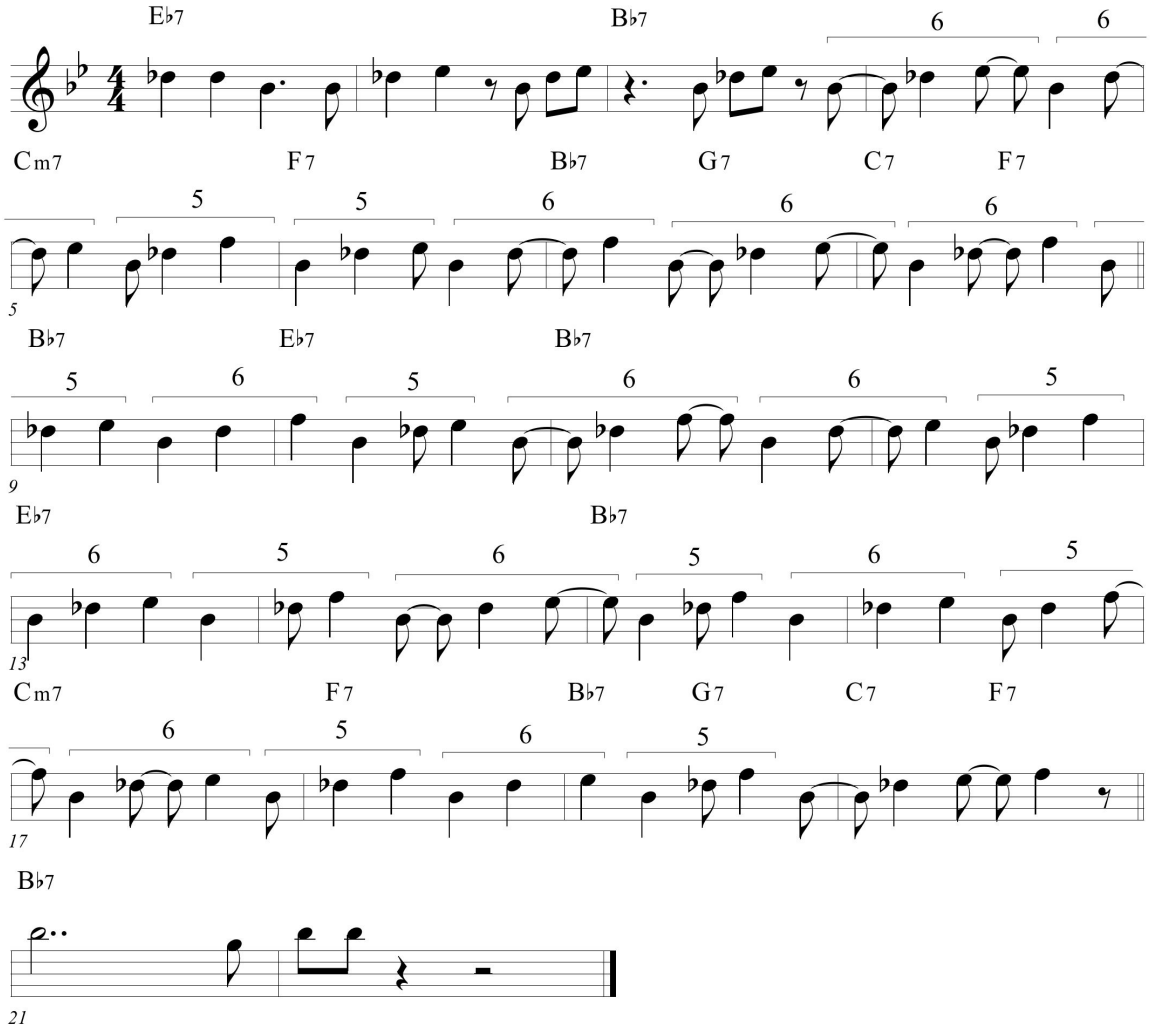


Figure 1.3: Full Transcription

We first note fragment A of the motif starting on the last eighth note of measure 1. Green diminishes the fragment from quarter notes to eighth notes in the

following two measures, and then proceeds to play fragment A in syncopated quarter notes starting on the final eighth note of measure 3. After repeating fragment A once, he introduces fragment B in measure 5 and then alternates between the two for the remainder of the excerpt. The rhythmic development and tension that Green achieves is partially due to the lack of periodicity in which he alternates between groupings of five and six. For the first five iterations of the full motif there's no discernable pattern behind when he chooses to position the motif on or off the beat. Beginning on the "and" of beat three in measure 11 he begins steadily alternating between groupings of six and five, but still engenders a lack of periodicity by changing where he places the eighth note in fragment B (e.g. in measure 12 he places the 8^{th} note on Bb, but in the following measures he places it on Db). Green adds an F to the last iteration of fragment A in the excerpt, turning it into a four-beat phrase. After this four-beat phrase Green plays a strongly articulated Bb on beat one at the top of the twelve bar blues form. By forcefully emphasizing the tonic note, the downbeat, and the top of the form in measure 21 Green provides a clear sense of rhythmic resolution to the tension he had developed over the previous twenty measures. Green creates a sense of rhythmic ambiguity and tension by taking a simple identifiable melodic phrase and playfully positioning it on and off the beat without a readily identifiable pattern. When Green strikes the Bb in measure 21 we feel as though we've safely surmounted an obstacle in our path or that he has led us home after going somewhere distant and unknown.

Call and Response

In addition to the importance of "saying something" as a soloist, the metaphor of conversation is also frequently employed to describe jazz improvisation.[68] This conversation occurs between the members of a given ensemble during the course of improvisation and, for our purposes, is primarily between the soloist and the rhythm section. While the soloist may be the centerpiece of an ensemble, the quality of a group's performance is also determined by the extent to which the rhythm section reacts to the soloist and vice versa. For example, if an organist hears a guitarist employ a specific tension or chord substitution in their solo, they might react by including it in their chordal accompaniment. If a drummer hears an organist play a repeating rhythmic phrase, they might choose to play it along with them, accent certain notes, or respond with their own phrase. This interaction works both ways in the sense that the soloist is also listening to the rhythmic section for new ideas. The conversation between rhythm section and soloist is an example of call and response, which scholars such as Paul Gilroy and Samuel Floyd have referred to as a "principal formal feature" or "master trope" of African American musical traditions.[69] The following musical excerpts provide examples of call and response characteristic of organ groups.

Our first excerpt comes from Grant Green's "Blues in Maude's Flat" off of his 1962 album *Grantstand* featuring organist Jack McDuff, drummer Al Harewood, and

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[68] See Monson, *Saying Something,* 73-96.
[69] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic and Double Consciousness,* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 78; Floyd, *The Power of Black Music,* 95.

tenor saxophonist Yusef Lateef. The song is a fifteen-minute long medium-slow twelve bar blues in the key of Bb. After the head is played twice, each ensemble member's solo begins with two choruses of much sparser accompaniment. McDuff and Green use dominant 7(#9) voicings (see figures 2.1 and 2.2) for every chord and sustain each chord for two measures with the exception of measures 9 and 10. Harewood keeps time by playing beats two and four on the hi-hat, and accenting beat one every two measures with McDuff and Green. By the standards of Western art music, the 7(#9) chord is dissonant and unstable. The voicing used by Green and McDuff include the intervals of a tritone as well as a major seventh. Yet, Karlton Hester has noted that the "blues introduced a harmonic orientation based on an Afrocentric attitude regarding tonal resolution (unstable dominant seventh chords became stable harmonically)."[70] This orientation includes "the ability to support both the major and minor third within a single chord."[71] The 7(#9) chord is a perfect example of this sort of "unstable stability" as it features both the minor and major third of the tonic. On the one hand the Leslie's tremolo effect could be said to accentuate the dissonance of the chord due to the oscillation we perceive between the major and minor third. On the other hand, the Hammond's ability to sustain chords indefinitely emphasizes the stability and anchoring effect that the chord can have.

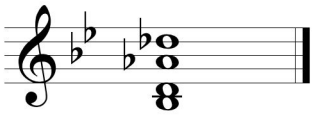


Figure 2.1 Bb7 #9

[70] Hester, *African Roots of the "Jazz Evolution*, xviii.
[71] Ibid.

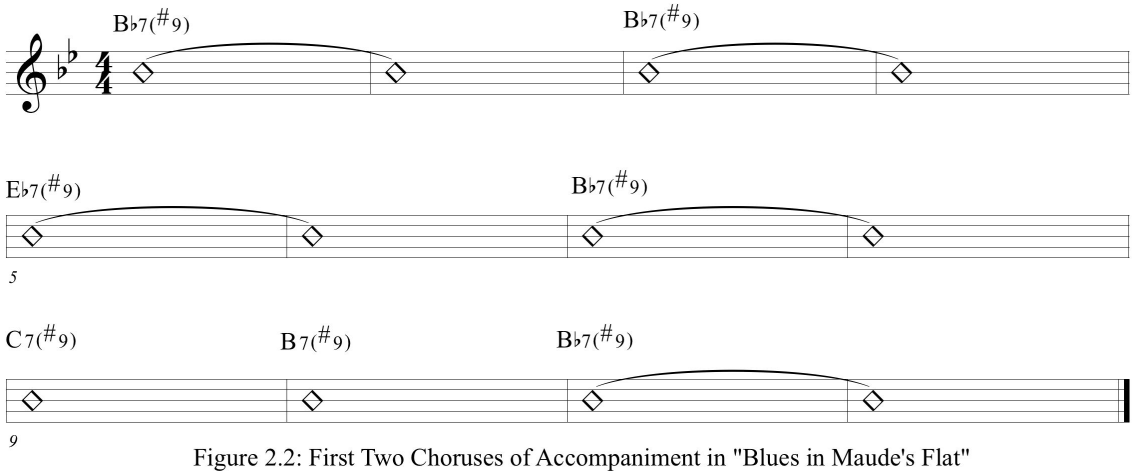


Figure 2.2: First Two Choruses of Accompaniment in "Blues in Maude's Flat"

In each of the band members' first two choruses of improvisation they take advantage of the sparser rhythmic accompaniment and the sonic texture of the 7(#9) chord. They tend to hold notes for longer and play sparser phrases. In addition to employing more conventional phrases from the blues scale, they also stretch out and search for more colorful note choices over the more open framework of the 7(#9) chord. Following the opening two choruses of each solo, the accompaniment becomes brighter, more rhythmically varied, and the 7(#9) chord is used more sparingly. However, after four choruses with more varied rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment during Yusef Lateef's solo, Jack McDuff sustains a 7(#9) chord for four measures at the beginning of Lateef's fifth chorus (figure 2.3).

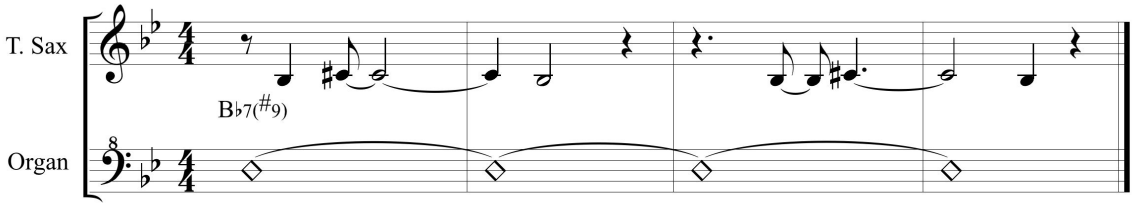


Figure 2.3: Yusef Lateef and McDuff at 3:16

Though he's serving as accompanist at this moment in the transcription, McDuff can be said to have issued a "call" to Lateef and the other members of the band to which they all respond. Beckoning to the sparseness of the opening two choruses, Harewood minimizes his accompaniment on the snare drum and Green lays out entirely. Lateef responds by playing a sparser phrase that emphasizes the #9 and employing a more gravelly timbre, perhaps responding to the tremolo of the Leslie. At the end of the fourth measure of the form McDuff releases the chord and Lateef's solo continues to build as it did before McDuff's dynamic and texture altering "call." By drawing on the Afrocentric attitude of tonal stability using the 7(#9) chord, heightening its effect with the Hammond, and employing the trope of call and response, McDuff creates a unique moment in the arc of Lateef's solo. He tones down the dynamics and alters the sonic texture of the band to provide a sense of contrast, providing a platform that Lateef can build up from.

Our next excerpt also features a "call" from an accompanying organist, but to a much different effect than our previous example. It comes from the track "James and Wes" from Jimmy Smith and Wes Montgomery's 1966 album for Verve, *Jimmy and Wes: The Dynamic Duo,* also featuring drummer Grady Tate. The song is a medium tempo 12 bar blues in F. After two statements of the head, Montgomery begins soloing using single note lines. During the second chorus of Montgomery's solo, Smith begins accompanying him using the Charleston, a popular dance rhythm from the 1920s (see figure 2.4). This rhythm is often employed by organists in accompaniment and alludes to the influence of big band music and "riffing" on early

organists such as Wild Bill Davis. After one chorus of using the Charleston, Smith issues his call by changing the drawbar and volume settings of the organ and sharply attacking and sustaining an F7(#9) chord (see figure 2.5). Montgomery responds by deviating from single note lines to playing a more rhythmic figure using a three note a F7 voicing that omits the third. This smoother voicing as, well as Montgomery's rounder attack (with his thumb), compliments Smith's more punchy abrasive call. Smith then repeats the same rhythm he used for his initial call, setting up another recurring "riff," albeit with 13th chords instead of 7(#9) chords. In measure 6 Montgomery repeats the rhythm of his first response, but alters his three-note voice to emphasize the change to the Bb13 chord. Two bars later he returns to playing a busier single note line. Smith heeds Montgomery's return to single note lines and responds by cutting off his riff to give Montgomery more space. He does this by using a device unique to the Hammond organ in measure 9. He draws on the instrument's percussion effect by hitting a short staccato "chord," in which the notes of the chord barely register. What results is a unique sound that is more of a chirpy rhythmic punctuation than a chord with discernable harmony. While Jack McDuff's call with the 7(#9) chord brought the dynamics of the band down, Smith's call adds fire to Montgomery's solo. Instead of instilling a more subdued, open, dissonant yet stable basis for improvisation, Smith draws on the abrasiveness of the 7(#9) chord to more forcefully assert the tonic, resulting in an intense stimulating dialogue between himself and Montgomery.

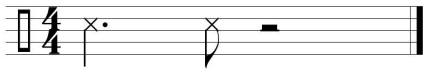


Figure 2.4: The Charleston Rhythm

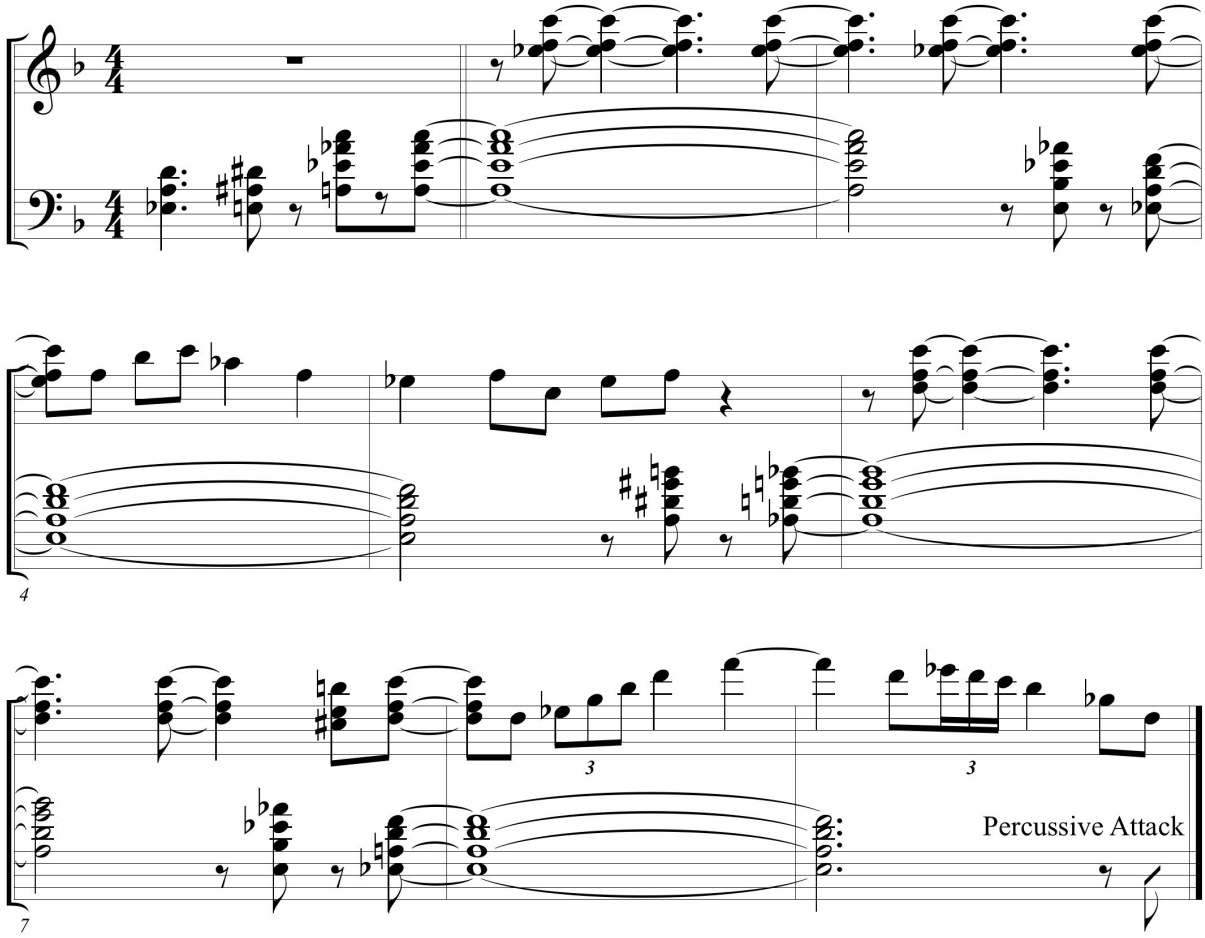


Figure 2.5: Smith and Montgomery at 1:12

Signifyin(g)

The trope of call and response in African-American music is not limited to specific musical moments in a song. For example, a jazz musician might draw on or

make reference to other pieces of music from different time periods or stylistic genres. By taking preexisting musical material and reworking it, musicians "respond" to a "call" that exists outside of the moment of performance. Samuel Floyd posits that call and response is an element of Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s larger concept of "signifying,"[72] a methodology for reading black rhetorical figures rooted in the African-American vernacular tradition.

> Signifyin(g) is figurative, implicative speech… [It] is a way of saying one thing and meaning another; it is a reinterpretation, a metaphor for the revision of previous texts and figures; it is tropological thought, repetition with a difference, the obscuring of meaning – all to achieve or reverse power, to improve situations, and to achieve pleasing results for the signifier… Call-Response, the master trope, the musical trope of tropes, implies the presence within it of Signifyin(g) figures (calls) and Signifyin(g) revisions (responses, in various guises)… [73]

> Musical Signifyin(g) is the rhetorical use of preexisting material as a means of demonstrating respect for or poking fun at a musical style, process, or practice through parody, pastiche, implication, indirection, humor, tone play or word play, the illusion of speech or narration, or other troping mechanisms.[74]

While signifying isn't unique to organ trios or soul jazz, I would like to draw on an excerpt in which saxophonist Lou Donaldson musically signifies on the sacred-secular binary in the context of soul jazz.

The title track from Jimmy Smith's 1959 album, *The Sermon*, is a twenty minute medium tempo twelve bar blues in F and occupies a whole side of the LP. The song features Smith, guitarist Kenny Burrell, trumpeter Lee Morgan, alto saxophonist

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[72] Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism.*
[73] Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*, 95.
[74] Ibid, 8.

Lou Donaldson, tenor saxophonist Tina Brooks, and drummer Art Blakey. It begins with Smith playing something of a theme statement over the first two choruses. However, while he plays a similar figure for the first four bars of each head chorus, he improvises for the remaining eight bars of each chorus. The remainder of the song features lengthy solos from each band member and concludes with a brief shout chorus followed by a fadeout while Smith riffs on a blues phrase. The length of the solos, the lack of a detailed arrangement (or even a concrete melody played at the beginning and end of the song), all exemplify the jam session-style approach of recording that typifies much of Smith and other organists' output. The choice of a religious-themed album title is not unique to *The Sermon*. Smith's first recording for Blue Note included Horace Silver's "The Preacher," and he would later record the album *The Prayer Meeting* with Stanley Turrentine. In addition to the organ's liturgical connotations the title also makes references to Smith's approach to performance.

> It's just like in church, the preacher's got to have that Amen corner going for him. The more they say Amen, the better he can preach. Well, it's the same in a club. A lot depends on the people and their response to what you do.[75]

At 18:03 in "The Sermon," Lou Donaldson plays a phrase that's strikingly similar to the melody of George Gershwin's "It Ain't Necessarily So" from his 1935 opera *Porgy and Bess* (see figures 3.1 and 3.2).

[75] Jimmy Smith quoted in Barbara J. Gardner, "Jimmy Smith: Reaching the People," *DownBeat*, July 5, 1962, 17.
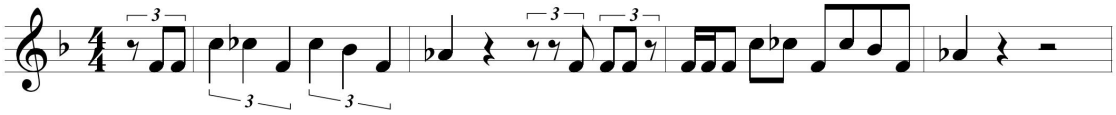


Figure 3.1 Lou Donaldson at 18:03 in "The Sermon"
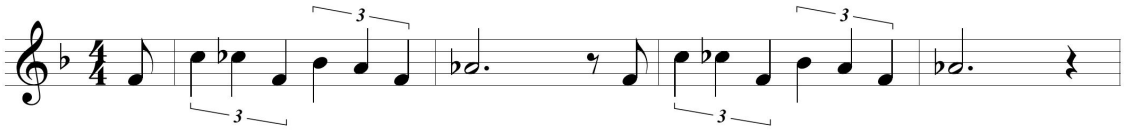


Figure 3.2: Melody of "It Ain't Necessarily So"

In *Porgy and* Bess, "It Ain't Necessarily So" is sung by the drug dealing trickster character Sportin' Life and features the lyrics:

It ain't necessarily so
It ain't necessarily so
The things that you're liable
To read in the Bible,
It ain't necessarily so

To get into heaven, don't snap for a seven
Live clean forget your faults
I take the gospel whenever I'm able
But with a grain of salt

Gershwin's melody may have been influenced by the *aliyah* blessing, a Hebrew prayer sung before the reading of the Torah (see figure 3.3).[76]
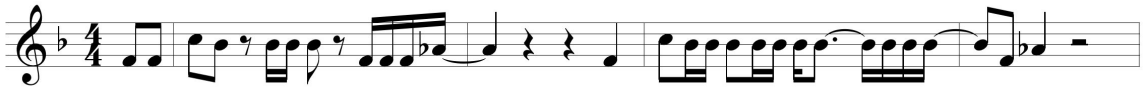


Figure 3.3: Melody of Aliyah Blessing

All three of the provided excerpts draw on the minor pentatonic scale. They all start with a pickup on the tonic note followed by a leap to the fifth, a descent to the fourth, and conclude with the minor third approached from the tonic. The excerpts

[76] Note that this transcription is approximate. The *aliyah* blessing sung slightly differently in different synagogues and without strict regard to meter.

from Gershwin and Donaldson both include the augmented 4th, commonly referred to as the "blue note." All three examples also make use of call and response. In the *aliyah* prayer the first two measures of the excerpt are sung by the Torah reader and the second two measures are sung by the congregation. In "It Ain't Necessarily So," the initial two measures sung by Sportin' Life are repeated verbatim by the congregation. In "The Sermon," Lou Donaldson repeats his initial phrase (or call) with a slight rhythmic variation (or response).

Beyond the fact that Gershwin was Jewish and that the two melodies are similar, there is no hard evidence to support the claim that "It Ain't Necessarily So" was influenced by the *aliyah* prayer. However, if we entertain the notion that it was, we can say that Gershwin was musically signifying. By slightly altering a phrase from the *aliyah* blessing with the blue note and quarter note triplets, Gershwin invokes "repetition with a difference." Signifying differs from simple musical quotation in that the preexisting music material is revised and its meaning is interpreted in a new context. Signifying goes beyond straightforward homage and employs an element of parody, humor, and/or critique. In using liturgical music for lyrics that express religious cynicism Gershwin's juxtaposition may have served as an ironic inside joke, as musical commentary on similarities between the blues and Hebrew cantillation, or as an expression of his own religious doubts. Regardless of his possible motivation (or whether he consciously drew from the *aliyah* blessing at all) the only listeners likely to pick up on Gershwin's signifying would be practicing Jews. This requirement of insider knowledge is characteristic of signifying. In order to derive the

meaning of musical signifying, one must be familiar with the musical material that serves as the basis for its revision.

As with Gershwin and the *aliyah* prayer, we can't know for certain whether Lou Donaldson consciously quoted "It Ain't Necessarily So" in "The Sermon," or whether he simply improvised a blues line that bears a resemblance to it. It is probable that Donaldson was familiar with the song, as countless jazz musicians have covered repertoire from Gershwin, especially *Porgy and Bess*. His decision to repeat the phrase twice (like the call and response of "It Ain't Necessarily So") offers further circumstantial evidence that it was indeed a conscious quotation. Whereas Gershwin signified using a religious melody for cynical lyrics, Donaldson plays an instrumental melody that implies religious cynicism over a song with an explicitly religious title. Once again insider knowledge is required in order to take meaning from Donaldson's quotation, which in this case implies that his intended message was likely intended for other jazz musicians, jazz fans, or listeners familiar with Gershwin's work. But what is this message, what was Donaldson trying to signify? Perhaps like Gershwin it was a meant as an ironic joke. Perhaps he was critiquing more submissive hegemonic Christian dogma…

Or perhaps he was signifying on the sacred/secular binary discussed in the previous chapter. This is where the question of origin (whether or not his phrase was a blues lick or a Gershwin quote) becomes somewhat irrelevant. It's possible that Donaldson's employment of the phrase was simply further reiterating what the whole song implies, that the blues and sacred music can be one and the same. Perhaps he

wasn't expressing religious cynicism by quoting Gershwin, but instead attempting to show that the idea of religious cynicism, of profane rational critique, can coexist with religion in an Afrocentric conception of spirituality. In the same way that Smith modeled his performances on the reciprocity between a preacher and congregation; that Louis Armstrong claimed spirituals could have as much religious effect on the secular stage as in the church; Lou Donaldson is signifying an attitude or feeling that transcends binaries or distinctions. Even Mahalia Jackson, who refused to perform black secular music or sing the gospel on secular stages, recognized the false binary:

> What some people call the 'blues singing feeling' is expressed by the Church of God in Christ. Songs like 'The Lord Followed Me' became so emotional… [they] almost led to panic. But the blues was here before they called it blues. This kind of song came after the spirituals. The old folk prayed to God because they were in an oppressed condition. While in slavery they got a different kind of blues. Take these later songs like 'Summertime'[;] it's the same as "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child"… which had the blue note in it. The basic thing is soul feeling. The same in blues as in spirituals. And also with gospel music. It is soul music.[77]

The genealogy of the melodic line we've been discussing – from prayer, to religious cynicism, to binary exploding jazz quotation– can be said to mirror Jackson's genealogy of "soul." The slave spirituals expressed collective solidarity, the trials that the slaves faced, as well as hope that justice would ultimately prevail. The blues drew on the spirituals, but adopted a more secular individualistic point of view addressing the challenges African Americans faced as a postbellum "free" people. The musical material of the blues and spirituals converged in the church with gospel music, and in the nightclub with soul (jazz). Our melodic line began in a sacred space,

[77] Mahalia Jackson quoted in Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*, 203.

took on more secular connotations, and later made reference to both when played by Donaldson. The melodic line maintained its identity through various guises in the same way that, for Jackson, "soul feeling" maintains its identity throughout black American music. Soul jazz and organ trios simply emphasized the fact that the "soul feeling" isn't beholden to a singular origin or context. Hammond organ groups' emphasis on rhythmic tension, their use of the 7(#9) chord in call and response, and their spiritual affect in non-religious venues all speak to the unique way that they innovated within a larger continuity of African-American music.

Conclusion

The organ trios occupy a unique position in the dialectic between an Afrocentric sacred worldview and a modernist conception of jazz as secular autonomous art. Through their representation (song titles, albums, etc.), performance practice (recall Jimmy Smith looking for his "amen corner"), and musical influences (spirituals, gospel) they beckoned toward a sacred worldview. Though they may have performed in decidedly non-religious, these facets further speak to a view that's capable of evoking a spiritual affect no matter the context. Furthermore, their music inspired people to dance, clap, shout, and cut loose. They appeared to have no qualms about their music giving *something* to people. Album titles such as *House Party*, *Prayer Meetin'*, and *Cookin' Together* further reinforce that organ trio's music was *functional*. Though it could be appreciated on its own, it was also to be enjoyed at parties, in religious meetings, at cookouts, etc. While the form of their music was generally modeled on bebop and featured rotating individual soloists, the emphasis on groove in organ music and soul jazz perhaps beckons to a more collective approach. By groove I mean the euphoric interpersonal phenomenon that occurs when all of the members of an ensemble are locked in to the same sense of time. For Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr:

> 'in the pocket' groove rivals in importance to the conventions of bebop's complex and perhaps more open-ended rhythmic approaches. Each imperative – the calculated-freedom of modern-jazz rhythm sections and the spontaneity-within-the-pocket funk approach – represents on of the most influential musical designs to appear in 20th-century American culture.[78]

[78] Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr., *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop,* (University of California Press, 2003), 154.

I'm inclined to agree with Ramsey and would further posit the organ trios and soul jazz especially embraced the "spontaneity-within-the-pocket-funk approach."

The organ trio's positioning in the dialectic I've discussed has created repercussions with regard to their music and jazz historiography. David Ake has noted that despite his enormous popularity Louis Jordan is largely excluded from jazz history.

> Louis Jordan's fame, however, coincided almost perfectly with the emergence of bop, and I argue that the seeming lightheartedness of Jordan's music flags him as a problematic figure for critics attempting to paint jazz since the 1940s as a serious art form.[79]

Mark Gridley's *Jazz Styles*, one of the best-selling jazz textbooks, argues that jazz is primarily not "utilitarian in nature" (i.e. it is primarily appreciated on an intellectual aesthetic basis and not as dance music, music for wining and dining, etc.).[80] Gridley also draws explicit boundary lines between jazz and popular music. This line of thinking is symptomatic of a pervasive view that constructs jazz as a tidy evolution from folk music to prestigious art music. Scott DeVeaux argues that this historical narrative:

> … is a pedigree, showing contemporary jazz to be not a fad or a mere popular music, subject to the whims of fashion, but an autonomous art of some substance, the culmination of a long process of maturation that has in its own way recapitulated the evolutionary progress of Western art.[81]

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[79] David Ake, *Jazz Cultures,* (University of California Press, 2002), 43.
[80] Gridley quoted in Ibid, 48.
[81] Scott DeVeaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum,* Vol. 25, No. 3 (Autumn 1991), 526.

Though critical distaste for Hammond organ may have abated over the years, jazz historians still tend to write about soul jazz and organ trios with an air of dismissiveness due to their commercial success and their intersections with gospel and R&B. A footnote in Gridley's book is telling:

> What little impact gospel music made on modern jazz was usually felt in only the simplest jazz styles, those containing characteristics similar to the black popular music known as rhythm and blues. These jazz styles were created by commercially successful players who, although possessing jazz skills, remained only on the periphery of important jazz developments: organ and saxophone combinations such as those of jimmy Smith and Stanley Turrentine…[82]

Why do organ trios' place in jazz history and their association with the genre matter? Though genres may be historical and cultural constructs, they have material repercussions for musicians.[83] Narratives of jazz that portray its ascendancy to a sophisticated art music or labels such as "America's classical music" have afforded the music a certain amount of cultural prestige. For those performing and writing about jazz this translates into enhanced opportunities including teaching jobs in universities, fellowships and government grants, and access to more prestigious (and more financially rewarding) venues. These same opportunities may not be open to R&B singers, funk saxophonists, or blues guitarists, etc. By drawing boundary lines in the music we call jazz and creating a tidy teleology from folk to art, we do a

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[82] Mark Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 2nd Edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 313.
[83] See Ake, *Jazz Cultures,* 44-46; David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, Daniel Goldmark, *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries* (University of California Press, 2012), 3-4.

disservice to the complex hybrid nature of jazz and African American music as exemplified by the Hammond B3 and soul jazz.

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