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If You Can't Play the Blues, You've Got Holes in Your Shoes: An Examination of the  
Musical Detail of Blues Aesthetic Theory

by

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Abstract of the Thesis

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This thesis explores the musical specifics of cultural theories that propose a blues aesthetic. Additionally, it examines the strengths and weaknesses of applying a blues-aesthetic lens to musical analysis, including a detailed investigation of Junior Mance's 1961 solo on "Light and Lovely" and a discussion of Ingrid Monson's analysis of Jaki Byard's 1964 recording of "Bass-ment Blues."

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## **If You Can't Play the Blues, You've Got Holes in Your Shoes:**

### An Examination of the Musical Detail of Blues Aesthetic Theory

The blues aesthetic is a distinct part of writings on American culture. Its origins lie in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Americans began to acknowledge the important role African Americans played in the cultural development of the United States. Music became useful as a way to highlight the originality and value of African American culture in these early years; as W.C. Handy's compositions and sheet music drew wider attention to the folk elements of African American music, writers like W.E.B. Dubois discussed these same musical features in their own cultural treatises. During the 1920's Harlem Renaissance, the trend continued; writers like Langston Hughes and Ralph Ellison promoted the prioritization of music in discussions of African American culture.

The formulation of specific aesthetics in relation to African American culture appeared later, in the more turbulent 1960's. Writers like Larry Neal and Amiri Baraka (then known as LeRoi Jones) were some of the earliest to develop the "Black Aesthetic" concept, searching for a way to define African American culture in such a manner that kept it separate from white culture, its own unique topic for study. This attempt to separate African American culture from "whiteness" was tied to the goals of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the time (especially in Neal's case). This early version of the blues aesthetic continued the tradition of using music as an intermediary to

help accentuate the uniqueness of African American culture. By the 1960's, the chosen music for this debate had changed; spirituals and delta blues had given way to jazz. In *Blues People*, Baraka claims that "Jazz, as it emerged and developed, was based on this new widening of Afro-American culture."<sup>1</sup>

Baraka links jazz deeply to the Black aesthetic; he writes under the assumption that it is reflective of African American culture as a whole. *Blues People* was very popular, and his early association between jazz and the aesthetic stuck. Albert Murray continued this connection, making a similar point in his own book *Stomping the Blues* a few years later. "... the fundamental function of the blues musician (also known as the jazz musician) ... is not only to drive the blues away and hold them at bay at least for the time being , but also to evoke an ambiance of Dionysian revelry in the process."<sup>2</sup>

Here, Murray is claiming that jazz has social function, a purpose outside of entertainment or some other more classical, lofty intention. The idea of art music having a social function was considered to be inherently separate from the Western canon, and this specificity of African American culture was often highlighted in writing about the Black aesthetic. In fact, the same idea exists in Baraka's book. "If we think of African music as regards its intent, we must see that it differed from Western music in that it was a purely functional music."<sup>3</sup>

There are many examples of writers linking jazz to cultural elements of Black aesthetic literature, but like all theoretical ideas, the concept of the Black aesthetic was

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<sup>1</sup> Baraka, 140.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Baraka, 28.



bound to change. In the 1980's, Houston Baker, conducting his own research, realized the inherent problem of using the Black aesthetic to describe African American culture.

My quest during the past decade has been for the distinctive, the culturally specific aspects of Afro-American literature and culture .... I was also convinced that the symbolic—and quite specifically the symbolically anthropological—offered avenues to the comprehension of Afro-American expressive culture in its plentitude. I discovered that the symbolic's antithesis— practical reason, or the material—is as necessary for understanding Afro-American discourse and the cultural-in-itself.<sup>4</sup>

Baker is recounting a balancing act, elaborating his own struggle with defining African American culture, unsure whether to privilege the physical elements of culture, or the cultural patterns that bridge this material. The materials Baker discusses here are the basic elements of culture: recordings, literature, interviews— essentially, physical accounts of the African American experience. Baker argues that these artifacts are connected to cultural patterns that bridge the whole of African American culture. These are the same cultural patterns developed and described by writers like Baraka and Murray: the social function of art, a symbolic struggle for freedom, etc. Baker concludes

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<sup>4</sup> Baker, 1-2.

that both of these elements are necessary when describing African American culture, not just the latter.

Baker studied anthropology, and it is likely that this idea came from his studies. Anthropologists unearthed a similar issue (near to when Baker was writing) when discussing African American culture in their own field. In their landmark theory *The Birth of African American Culture*, Sidney Mintz and Richard Price highlight the challenge of pointing to specific characteristics as representative of the whole of African American culture: “Treating culture as a list of objects or traits or words is to miss the manner in which social relations are carried on through it—and thus to ignore the most way in which it can change or be changed.”<sup>5</sup>

These scholars further augment this idea: “There must exist underlying [cultural] principles (which will often be unconscious) that are amenable to identification, description, and confirmation.”<sup>6</sup> Essentially, Mintz and Price are concerned about the “poverty of conceptual tools” used by anthropologists, and use their book to express “the need to define and describe these deeper-level aspects of the African heritage even if we still remain quite remote from this objective.”<sup>7</sup> However, these scholars still understand the value of the material, and deeply value ethnographic research, thereby balancing their argument. While coming from an excess of material rather than cultural patterns, they come to the same conclusion as Baker: a balance must be made between these two variables.

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<sup>5</sup> Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 12.

Baker, in his 1984 work *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* (likely influenced by his own studies of anthropology) posits his own model to create this balance, defining African American culture as

“... a complex, reflexive enterprise which finds its proper figuration in blues conceived as a matrix... The matrix is a point of ceaseless input and output, a web of intersecting, crisscrossing impulses always in productive transit. African American blues constitute such a vibrant network.”<sup>8</sup>

Baker has outlined his conceptual tool, a blues matrix. The benefit of positing a matrix is that it provides room for a multiplicity of “input and output,” the physical manifestations of culture. At the same time, a matrix can be observed at different levels of hierarchy (columns, rows), which allows for a deeper and more organized way of understanding the data inside the matrix—an overarching method for sifting through the never-ending stimuli of African American cultural creation. Baker’s use of a blues matrix balances the material and cultural patterns of African American culture effortlessly.

The matrix is Baker’s personal blues aesthetics model, a relatively broad manifestation of this conceptual tool. Other models of the blues aesthetic have been constructed by writers who wish to balance a description of African American culture in

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<sup>8</sup> Baker, 3-4.

their own way, and do so in a highly detailed manner.<sup>9</sup> As with all previous manifestations of this aesthetic, many writers have strongly linked this new aesthetic to music. Many writers since Baker have used the newly named “blues aesthetic” in their own work, imagining blues music as a microcosm of African American culture, a naturally occurring balance of material and cultural patterns. In this way, the blues aesthetic is an aid—a perfectly balanced tool which writers and scholars use to observe and comment on African American culture.

As a jazz musician, I examine these writings that engage music and the blues aesthetic from an inherently musical perspective. It is often the case that scholars forgo or misinterpret the music that forms the underpinning of their aesthetic model. My curiosity lies in the balance of these conceptual ideas to actual music, musicians, recordings, transcriptions, interviews, and other material sources. This being said, it should be clear that my research focuses specifically on writings about African American culture that include actual musical discussion, and not the plethora of writing that only hints at musical detail. To observe this movement more broadly would elicit volumes of text.

The point here is not to determine the validity of these models, but to begin a discussion about how music is actually used in these circumstances. I believe that my musical background can bring new light to this subject. Additionally, I would like to explore my own model of the blues aesthetic with a detailed observation of a particular

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<sup>9</sup> Baker does this himself in “Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature,” but I am not going to discuss that here; the specifics of Baker’s model have no jazz connections and have not influenced jazz scholars.

musical event, and propose my own method for implementing a blues aesthetic infused analysis. I find that Junior Mance's solo on "Light and Lovely" from 1961 is the perfect outlet for this discussion.

### Important Questions

As discussed above, most writers craft a particular model of the aesthetic that suits their needs. I imagine these writers drawing from a pool of assumptions about African American culture. These assumptions are a combination of two variables: physical manifestations and cultural patterns. When aestheticians reach into this pool, they sift out the particular ideas that hold true to them, and use them to frame the whole of African American culture. Baker's matrix is perhaps one of the most overarching and broad models; other writers have been much more selective in their own use of the blues aesthetic, choosing to highlight particular variables out of Baker's matrix they view as essential and extant. When observing a particular model, it is of key concern to acknowledge three valuable questions.

First: *what is the musical source?* Is the author drawing inspiration from a particular artist or musical movement? This is a valuable insight for several reasons. First, by examining the musical sources of many of these ideas I have noted that much discussion of the blues aesthetic and African American culture that arises in academia often involves jazz recordings, *not* early blues recordings. This is an interesting distinction, and will inevitably elicit different conclusions about African American culture than a concept based around Pete Johnson or Blind Lemon Jefferson. It also shows us that this aesthetic concept evolved with a generation of *jazz* listeners, *not* blues listeners.

Second, *to what level has the author engaged in the musical material of his or her source?* If authors cite specific recordings or interviews, we may assume they have spent a significant amount of time examining and listening to the musical source, whether a trained musician or not. Observing these writers' musical analyses, whether notated or otherwise, is crucial to this study. In many cases, engagement with a recording or artist beyond the surface level is uncommon or flawed, which I will illustrate later in this thesis. Again, the point here is not to determine writers' validities as listeners, but to see how thoroughly each concept is actually permeated by material detail.

Third, *how is the author using musical terminology?* Peter Townsend's harsh look at the literary use of the term "riff" highlights the need to approach this issue with careful detail.

"The uses of 'the riff' in literary criticism ... have moved steadily away from its usage in jazz performance .... The end result of this process is a gradual drift away from a basis in jazz culture itself, and a consequent difficulty in judging ... the nature of the relationship between jazz and any literature that may be influenced by it."<sup>10</sup>

This is another important insight when measuring a writer's engagement with musical material. Musical terminology is a key component of some of these models, and

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<sup>10</sup> Townsend, 145.

in fact a key component of general musical knowledge. Exploring the relationship between these terms and their “proper” uses in this context is essential. All of these questions should be addressed in a concise study of a blues aesthetic model.



## **Chapter 1: Henry Louis Gates**

Gates's depiction of African American vernacular culture in his book, *The Signifyin(g) Monkey* relates significantly to the blues aesthetic, as it is derived from the same need for balance as in Baker's work. Gates even admits, "Baker's use of the black vernacular inspired my own approach to theory by assuring me that I was on the right path."<sup>1</sup> The goal of Gates's book is to "identify a theory of criticism that is inscribed within the black vernacular tradition and that in turn informs the shape of the Afro-American literary tradition."<sup>2</sup> As with countless other authors, Gates is trying to describe some part of African American culture, in his case, the literary tradition. However, it was the specific method of Gates's hermeneutical exploration that influenced jazz scholarship. Gates describes his method as follows.

I have turned to two signal trickster figures, Esu-Elegbara and the Signifying Monkey, in whose myths are registered certain principles of both formal language use and its interpretation. These two separate but related trickster figures serve in their respective traditions as points of conscious articulation of language traditions aware of themselves as

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<sup>1</sup> Baker, x.

<sup>2</sup> Gates, xix.

traditions, complete with a history, patterns of development and revision, and internal principles of patterning and organization.<sup>3</sup>

Essentially, Gates's book begins by examining the patterns of revision involved in the translation of one literary figure from Africa (Esu-Elegbara) to the African American black vernacular under a different name (The Signifyin(g) Monkey). Gates highlights the beginnings of this process of revision and its fundamental place in African American culture, while illustrating how frequently it occurs. This concept of Signifyin(g) is the crux of Gates's own blues aesthetic model.

Gates analogizes his literary theory of Signifyin(g) using jazz, believing it to contain the same natural balance of material and cultural patterns present in African American literature. He does not offer jazz as a "proof" or basis for his theory, but as another equally valid picture, even stating that "in the blues and in Signifyin(g)<sup>4</sup> were to be found the black tradition's two great repositories of its theory of itself, encoded in musical and linguistic forms."<sup>5</sup> Gates examines this same process of revision in respect to jazz, and the results are fascinating. This analysis specifically has sparked much debate in the jazz world.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xx–xxi.

<sup>4</sup> Gates uses this spelling to distinguish between the standard use of signifying and his own use.

<sup>5</sup> Gates, x.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Walser's "Out of Notes" will be discussed later in the chapter. Other notable works include Samuel Floyd Jr's article "Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies, and Black Music Inquiry," John Murphy's article "Jazz Improvisation: The Joy of Influence," Paul Machlin's book, *Life and Times of Fats Waller*, and Gary Tomlinson's article "Cultural Dialogics and Jazz: A White Historian Signifies."

Gates uses a variety of musical sources within these analogies. Though jazz is only an analogy to his actual work, he manages to include discussion of John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, Jelly Roll Morton, Count Basie, Charlie Parker, and Oscar Peterson. These musicians are covered in varying detail, but it is obvious that Gates does have some familiarity with jazz music.

Gates only writes about jazz in depth three times in *The Signifyin(g) Monkey*. However, Gates's acknowledgement of jazz as an equally valid depiction of African American culture highlights the critical nature of these analogies. Signifyin(g) theory is not based in jazz, but Gates's discussion of the music has sparked enough debate in jazz scholarship to be imperative to any discussion of the musical detail of the blues aesthetic. To my knowledge, nowhere in writing has a scholar looked into the musical detail of Gates's analogies. Rather, most have used Gates's statements as a springboard for their own ideas. I propose that a detailed look at these observations is necessary to truly understand the value of Signifyin(g) in a musical context.

Gates's Signifyin(g) method is used by academics in the music world as an analytical tool to elucidate some aspects of jazz and blues music that are difficult to describe using the accepted canon of Western musical analysis. Gates himself sought to remove himself partially from his grounding in Western theory, and says so: "My desire has been to allow the black tradition to speak for itself about its nature and various functions, rather than to read it, or analyze it, in terms of literary theories borrowed whole

from other traditions, appropriated from without.”<sup>7</sup> Separating oneself in some way from the Western canon has become the calling card of many Gates contemporaries, including Robert Walser in the oft-cited work “Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis.” Walser critiques the Western musical canon, claiming that current

analytical methods ... radically reduce musical activities to formal abstractions that often shed little light on how music is experienced .... overall, academics (and some jazz musicians) seem increasingly drawn to what I will call ‘classicizing’ strategies for legitimating jazz.<sup>8</sup>

We can see that though Walser’s wording is more vitriolic, his stance is easily comparable to Gates. Gary Tomlinson also distances himself from Western canonical practices in his work, “Cultural Dialogics and Jazz: A White Historian Signifies.” He criticizes the Western Classical canon and jazz canon for achieving the same negative result: “Like the canon of European music, the jazz canon is a strategy for exclusion ...”<sup>9</sup>

It is obvious these authors agree with Gates’s opinions about breaking in some way from the Western canon. As mentioned above, they additionally acknowledge that sometimes the canon lacks the ability to describe certain musical phenomena, and that it

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., i.

<sup>8</sup> Walser, 347.

<sup>9</sup> Tomlinson., 87.

would be advantageous to incorporate new analytic methods when discussing jazz.

These authors elect to include elements of a blues aesthetic model in their analyses.

Houston Baker explains that this type of analysis requires “the employment of ideology as an analytical category [which] begins with the awareness that ‘production’ as well as ‘modes of production’ must be grasped in terms of the sign.”<sup>10</sup> Essentially, these writers wish to more deeply emphasize the cultural patterns discussed in a blues aesthetic as opposed to relying entirely on musical specifics (material).

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<sup>10</sup> Baker., 3.

### Repetition and Revision

Gates's Signifyin(g) theory is multifaceted, but his short discussion of repetition and revision in a jazz context is important to this thesis. Gates's first jazz analogy includes a somewhat specific musical reference.

The most salient analogue for this unmotivated mode of revision in the broader black cultural tradition might be that between black jazz musicians who perform each other's standards on a joint album, not to critique these, but to engage in refiguration as an act of homage. Such an instance, one of hundreds, is the relationships between the two jazz greats on the album they made together, *Duke Ellington and John Coltrane*. This form of the double-voiced implies unity and resemblance rather than critique and difference.<sup>11</sup>

Here in particular Gates is analogizing a specific form of Signifyin(g) that he first defines in the introduction: unmotivated, double-voiced Signifyin(g). Gates is using this Ellington and Coltrane recording to describe an example of repetition and revision in jazz. Gates's repetition occurs in the performance of previously recorded standards on this record ("In A Sentimental Mood," "Take the Coltrane"). In his language, this

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., xxvii.

example is additionally an unmotivated form of revision/refiguration<sup>12</sup>, where the songs are reworked with the absence of negative critique; essentially, these musicians are not reworking this music to criticize earlier performances. Gates claims this album is double-voiced due to the presence of two narrative voices, in this case, John Coltrane and Duke Ellington.

This latter point is probably the most difficult to clarify. In African American literature there may be several narrators in a novel. Gates often cites Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. as a perfect example of the double-voiced in his theory. Rather than clarifying his ideas, Gates instead draws attention to the difficulty of describing narrative in jazz music. While the record is an eponymous tribute to the two leaders on the recording, unlike Hurston's novel, they do not simply exchange voices. On another level, we could maintain that the bass player is continuously narrating the harmony, and that the drummer is narrating the pulse. Even if we imagine that the soloist is the sole narrator, how do we approach fast exchanges between the drums, Ellington, and Coltrane, specifically during a trading of fours? It is important to acknowledge that music and language are not identical; an understanding of the levels of hierarchy in a musical ensemble complicates the language of this analogy.

Another potent issue lies in the idea of revision/refiguration. In Gates's theory, refiguration involves the slight alteration of a common trope for the purpose of critique or positive affirmation. In general, this is a broad abstraction, but in the context of music, the analogy becomes unwieldy. Refiguration of a piece of music could involve

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<sup>12</sup>By my reading, the terms (refiguration/revision) are used interchangeably in this work.

arrangement, compositional process, improvisation, and countless other factors.

Additionally, the multiplicity of “In a Sentimental Mood” recordings makes it impossible to know what source these musicians are drawing from, and so actually tracing any sort of finite revision becomes impossible. If refiguration is observed this broadly, all jazz becomes Signification.<sup>13</sup> In fact, this is how Gates views the music: “There are so many examples of Signifyin(g) in jazz that one could write a formal history of its development on this basis alone.”<sup>14</sup> An analytical tool this broad is difficult to use, which partially explains its subsequent revision by Gates’s contemporaries, something I will discuss later on in this thesis.

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<sup>13</sup> “Walser says that Davis is signifyin’ on all of the versions of the song he has heard, but for his audience, Davis is signifyin’ on all of the versions each listener has heard... This chain of signifyin’ spins out indefinitely.”

<sup>14</sup> Gates, 63.



Gates' Signifyin(g) Downbeat

A more detailed jazz analogy with the potential for application occurs later in Gates's work.

it would perhaps be useful to summarize my use of Signifyin(g) as the trope of literary revision .... In the jazz tradition, compositions by Count Basie ("Signify") and Oscar Peterson ("Signifying") are structured around the idea of formal revision and implication. When a musician "signifies" a beat, he is playing the upbeat into the downbeat of the chorus, implying their formal relationship by merging the two structures together to create an ellipsis of the downbeat. The downbeat then, is rendered present by its absence."<sup>15</sup>

He affirms this same statement later

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 123.

Basie, in his composition, creates phrases that overlap the underlying rhythmic and harmonic structures of the piece, so that he does not have to play the downbeat, which is the first beat of the twelve-bar chorus ....<sup>16</sup>

In these two quotes, Gates highlights the idea of Signifyin(g) in the context of a 12-measure blues chorus. He mentions specifically that a musician (presumably Basie or Peterson) could Signify on the beat by playing the “upbeat into the downbeat of the chorus.” Gates calls this phenomenon an “ellipsis,” where a grammatical device needed for comprehension is avoided but understood as being present. The type of event Gates discusses here could be more aptly described as a hit on the “and” of four in the twelfth measure of a blues, held through the downbeat of the next chorus. Even more clearly, Fig 1. depicts a theoretical notation of what this event would look like.

Fig. 1



<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

The first measure in Fig. 1 is the final of a 12-measure blues chorus, and the second measure is the first of a subsequent chorus. This is a purely rhythmic example, key and pitch is arbitrary and therefore ignored here.

Gates cites recordings in his Signifyin(g) downbeat reference: Oscar Peterson's "Signifying," and Count Basie's "Signify." I have chosen to examine the Count Basie tune for the presence of this Signifyin(g) downbeat. My decision to do so involves his second clarification of Basie's work as quoted above, something he does not do with Peterson. This is perhaps Gates's most significant and detailed musical analogy.

"Signify" (listed as "Signifying"<sup>17</sup> on the Pablo LP *Kansas City Shout* from 1980) is a 12-measure blues. It is performed by a trio—Basie on piano, Cleveland Eaton on upright bass, and Duffy Jackson on drums, Basie's typical trio of this era. The recording begins with an odd seven measure introduction. It is unclear whether this is intentional; Basie seems to stumble from 0:03–0:04<sup>18</sup> of the song. I believe it is likely that Basie was actually attempting to perform a standard 8-measure introduction and failed.<sup>19</sup> Basie clears up the confusion at 0:08 with a riff to signal the band entrance, and the tune begins.

But *is* "Signifying" a tune? To my ear, it is an impromptu jam. Even its placement as the last track of the LP seems suspect. First, the lack of a clearly defined melody at 0:11 (the start of the first blues chorus) immediately distorts our view of this performance as a composition. No subsequent chorus contains any other obvious sense

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<sup>17</sup> I will refer to this tune as "Signifying" for the rest of this thesis.

<sup>18</sup> All timing references relate to the Pablo CD reissue of *Kansas City Shout* listed in the discography.

<sup>19</sup> Basie suffered from some form of arthritis late in life, it is possible this effected his playing. (Kliment, 194)

of melody. Basie instead solos in his typical fashion, and the piece continues on without a single element of arrangement. While one idea is repeated at the top of two choruses (0:30 and 1:12), it is considerably altered, enough to discredit a possible melody source. In addition, the distant and seemingly random placement of this repetition makes it even more difficult when attempting to find compositional material. Furthermore, the last chorus contains no repetition of any earlier melodic ideas.

The ending (3:01), which appears to be the single composed moment in this recording, is actually a common Basie tag. It is mimicked exactly on the same LP at 3:56 in “Blues for Joel,” and hence is clearly not a true element of composition. It also appears in slight variation at 3:05 of “Standing on the Corner,” and 3:41 of “Apollo Daze.” The tag is a common one in jazz, but the particular use in “Signifying” is often associated with Basie’s band. Acknowledging this, we can assume that this ending is *not* composed, but rather that the band was familiar with Basie’s lick and responded together to complete the piece.

This type of impromptu performance was in fact something Basie did often. For example, in his 1968 Jazz Casual appearance, Basie begins the show with a rhythm changes lacking a clear melody.<sup>20</sup> After the piece is over, the host (Ralph Gleason) asks Basie, “Now, what was the name of that?” Basie replies, “I don’t know.” This is because the band was essentially jamming on a rhythm changes form without any compositional basis. To summarize, it is likely that the last track of this album is in fact a

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<sup>20</sup> Thank you to Bart Grooms for introducing me to this specific performance of an unnamed rhythm changes.

jam recorded in the studio, and not a composition at all. The discrepancy between this analysis and Gates's description is something that should be carefully considered.

Interestingly, there are no examples of Gates's ellipsis of the downbeat in Basie's recording of "Signifying." It is important to remember that in a trio performance, it is likely the bass player will be playing each downbeat continuously while walking the bass. Occasionally, a bass player may skip a beat to create a certain effect, but that does not happen in this recording. Eaton continues to play on each downbeat throughout the performance, and Jackson's hi-hat retains a stable pattern throughout. Even if we ignore the other players in the band and focus on Basie alone, there is only one chorus in which Basie himself does not play on the downbeat. Still, Gates's Signifyin(g) downbeat does not come to fruition, as the "and" of 4 syncopation does not occur in this chorus. Fig. 2 is a transcription of this event.

Fig. 2

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for Basie, the middle for Eaton, and the bottom for Jackson. Measures 11 and 12 are shown, followed by the start of the next chorus. In measure 11, Basie has a whole rest, while Eaton and Jackson play eighth notes. In measure 12, Basie has a whole rest, Eaton plays a half note, and Jackson plays a half note. The start of the next chorus begins in measure 13, where Basie plays a triplet of eighth notes (F#, A, G) and Eaton and Jackson play eighth notes. A box labeled 'Start of next chorus:' is placed above measure 13.

This musical fragment begins at 1:09 of “Signifying.” The first two measures of this figure are the last two measures of a blues chorus; the third measure begins the next blues chorus. If we observe Basie alone, it is clear that he avoids the downbeat at the start of the chorus. Instead, he enters with an F# and A on the second eighth note of an eighth-note triplet on the first beat. Though these notes are very close to the downbeat, we differentiate them mostly due to Jackson’s strong bass drum on the downbeat in the same measure. According to Gates, we should see a Signifyin(g) downbeat in measure 12, but instead, Basie plays a lick that ends on the “and” of 2 in measure 12, *not* on the “and” of 4. Additionally, Basie does not hold any notes over the measure line into the next chorus. In the only place that the Signifyin(g) downbeat could have occurred, it does not appear. Additionally, as the tune is just a blues jam, it is likely the performance

was titled much later by Norman Granz, and in fact has nothing to do with the performance.

Gates's analogy does not cogently link jazz and his literary theory. By listening to the recording, it is clear that not only is "Signifying" not a composition, but that there are too many variables to understand jazz in the context of revision/refiguration without being more finite. Moreover, the Signifyin(g) downbeat that Gates cites in Basie's recording does not exist. Gates's idea that musicians Signify on the original context of the beat by performing syncopated rhythms *is* a useful concept, but this particular example does not work, and is missing too much musical detail.<sup>21</sup>

Though Gates's jazz analogy disappoints, *why* Gates chose these tunes is relatively transparent. With two leaders, *Duke Ellington and John Coltrane* is an obvious match for a double-voiced analogy, and the renown associated with the record makes it a logical choice. "Signifying" is an obvious first choice with which to draw an analogous example, as the term is both crucial in Gates's writing and a piece of the title of his book.<sup>22</sup>

Another possible motive for Gates's selection of these songs is their feature of African American jazz musicians steeped in the blues tradition. Gates believes the blues is analogous to his vernacular theory, and would clearly find value in discussing recordings made by musicians with a strong background in this "vernacular" music.

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<sup>21</sup> Walser's article "'Out of Notes': Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis." does an excellent job developing this concept, and I will discuss it later on in this thesis.

<sup>22</sup> It is likely that Basie did not name this tune in the first place, and that the producer, Norman Granz, is responsible for this title.

Gates's specificity of African American jazz musicians as opposed to white musicians in his writing is an important distinction. "African American musicians" is perhaps one of the important qualifications Gates chose to sift out of the plethora of ideas in Baker's matrix to use in his personal aesthetic model.



### Gates' Dialogue of Expectation

Gates continues to explore the concept of Signifyin(g); more jazz analogies appear to elucidate his theory. In another passage, Gates discusses the supposed dialogue between musicians and their audience.

Because the form is self-evident to the musician, both he and his well-trained audience are playing and listening with expectation. Signifyin(g) disappoints these expectations; caesuras, or breaks, achieve the same function. This form of disappointment creates a dialogue between what the listener expects and what the artist plays.<sup>23</sup>

Gates is asserting that a disappointment of audience expectations elicits dialogue between a performer and their audience. In his mind, this resembles a form of literary Signifyin(g), where the reader expects a common trope and instead is met with a surprise, creating a dialogue between the author and the reader.

In this case, Gates leaves his analogy open to interpretation, choosing not to specify a particular composition or musical moment. He seems to imply that these disappointments occur at the level of form, just like with his Signifyin(g) downbeat. This

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<sup>23</sup> Gates, 123.



In this instance the bass player “ghosts”<sup>26</sup> the C in the second measure, but I believe it is audible, and with the shape of the line, clearly implied. Most competent jazz musicians today are familiar with this tag. It has become a staple when performing tunes without pre-arranged endings, often in the context of a jam session. Undoubtedly, Basie was acquainted with this tag,<sup>27</sup> along with most musicians of this era.

Basie uses many variations of this tag throughout his career,<sup>28</sup> but “Signifying” contains one of the most obvious changes. Fig. 4 is a transcription of the tag from this recording, followed by a “normalized.” version; essentially, the Kansas City Stride ending transposed to G Major. This normalized tag is what Gates’s “well-trained audience” would expect.

It is clear that these two passages are similar. There are only three major differences, the first being the missing eighth notes at the beginning of the second measure in Count Basie’s the actual tag. Secondly, the length of the final note (G), which is short and punctuated in the normalized ending, is held out for a considerable length of time in the actual ending. Lastly, the final G occurs a beat and a half earlier on the recording than in the normalized version. These three things radically alter the sound of the Signifyin(g) tag. It is clear the listener would expect the normalized ending, as the first measure is identical in both examples and audibly sets up the normalized tag.

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<sup>26</sup> In this case, a ghosted note is a note that does not speak but can be inferred in some way.

<sup>27</sup> Basie talks familiarly (and comically) about performing at jam sessions in his autobiography: “Sometimes a guy would come in and you might let him sit in for a couple of numbers, and then he would cut on out and you would forget all about it. But when you came to work the next night, you’d find that everybody else was already there and the new cat is sitting in your chair.” (Murray 42)

<sup>28</sup> This is especially true in small group settings.

Basie's "Signifying" performance essentially "disappoints" the outcome expected by the listener, creating a sort of musical surprise.

Fig. 4

## Actual Tag

Musical score for "Actual Tag" in 4/4 time. The score is for three instruments: Piano, Upright Bass, and Drum Set. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The Piano part consists of two measures of whole rests. The Upright Bass part plays a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C#5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, followed by a quarter rest in the second measure. The Drum Set part is marked "TACET" in a box, indicating it is silent throughout the tag.

## Normalized Tag

Musical score for "Normalized Tag" in 4/4 time. The score is for three instruments: Piano, Upright Bass, and Drum Set. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The Piano part consists of three measures of whole rests. The Upright Bass part plays a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C#5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, followed by a quarter rest in the second measure. The Drum Set part is marked "TACET" in a box, indicating it is silent throughout the tag.

Robert Walser addresses this same concept in his article “‘Out of Notes’: Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis.” As discussed above, Walser empathizes with Gates’s dissatisfaction with the Western canon. Walser believes that the canon of Western music theory is not capable of explaining certain aspects of jazz performance. To elaborate he points out Miles Davis’s recording of “My Funny Valentine” from 1964.

Davis’s consistent and deliberate use of risky techniques and constant transgression of genre boundaries are antithetical to “classicism” and cannot be explained by formalism; from such perspectives, unusual content looks like flawed form.<sup>29</sup>

He uses Gates’s Signifyin(g) theory to rectify these concerns, adopting what he considers a non-Western analytical method to discuss an unexpected gap of almost three measures in Davis’s solo. Walser points out that “To create a pause of such length during one of the most tense harmonic moments of the song, is, among other things, Davis’s confident assertion of his stature as a soloist. Would an audience wait eagerly through such a gap for a lesser musician?”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Walser, 172.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 177.

Walser is essentially showing that unexpected pauses in the context of form disappoint the audience's expectations of a flowing solo. It is important to note that the idea of musical surprise is completely explainable in the context of Western theory. However, envisioning that this creates a dialogue between audience and performer falls outside of traditional Western canon. Walser does agree with this assertion, and continues on. "Signifyin'"<sup>31</sup> works through ... dialogue to suggest multiple meanings through association."<sup>32</sup> He is further claiming that these disruptions allow the audience to attach meaning to these musical moments. In this case, Walser believes the audience associates these gaps with Davis's confidence as a soloist.

It is important to acknowledge that musical interaction is a very broad concept, and that there are many ways in which a listener can interact with an artist: live recordings, concert attendance, watching a film, etc. Additionally, the musicians themselves share their own interactions. The idea that musicians Signify in order to defy expectation and surprise others is very valuable in jazz analysis, as shown in Walser's and others' work. I will explore the concept of musical interaction at various hierarchical levels more specifically later in this thesis.

Signifyin(g) theory is Gates's own model of the blues aesthetic, his own depiction of African American culture. He uses jazz analogously in *The Signifyin(g) Monkey* because he privileges it as an equally valid expression of this culture, one that balances the material and cultural patterns necessary for a valuable analysis. Though jazz is not

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<sup>31</sup> Walser uses "Signifyin'," as he finds Gates's spelling "a rather precious and unwieldy alteration of the vernacular term ...."

<sup>32</sup>Walser, 168.

his central focus, it is clear that concepts from Gates's blues aesthetic model have seeped into jazz scholarship, and though the musical material of his ideas is sometimes circumspect, there are very valuable tools for jazz analysis present in his work, some of which I will exhibit in my own analysis.



## **Chapter 2: Tough Tenors**

In building my own model of the blues aesthetic, I have elected to discuss the Tough Tenors. In the two years they spent together (1960–1961) the Tough Tenors group recorded enough material to release seven albums. The leaders of the group were Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis and Johnny Griffin. In this thesis I will discuss their work with the specific rhythm section including Larry Gales on bass, Ben Riley on drums, and Junior Mance on piano. However, Davis and Griffin recorded many more times together as the Tough Tenors with different rhythm sections from 1960–1984. Their work was very popular among jazz listeners, which prompted them to record *Tough Tenors Again N’ Again* in 1970, and *Tough Tenors Back Again!* in 1984.

During the 1960–1961 period, Tough Tenors was the primary group for these two tenor leaders. Though their time together was relatively short, it is clear from interviews that the musicians felt as if the two year period was extensive. Davis, interviewed in *Down Beat*, claimed, “Larry and Ben have been with us for a long while now—you know, we’re almost a year old now.”<sup>1</sup> In a working musician’s world, it is often true that every small group gig a musician plays will be with a different collection of musicians. Davis would be aware of this, and is therefore emphasizing the amount of time this group has spent together, in some ways bragging about their consistency as an ensemble.

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<sup>1</sup> Welding, 21.

Besides the length of time the group spent together, their musical output also shows their dedication to this ensemble. During the Mance, Gales, and Riley period, neither saxophone leader recorded a single record outside of Tough Tenors, a period from November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1960 to February 7, 1961, slightly over three months. For well-known musicians like Davis and Griffin, who can swap out rhythm sections and horn players whenever they please, it is very interesting to see their investment in this group. Davis claimed in an interview during this time, “I’d like to keep the group together as long as I can.”<sup>2</sup> Disregarding the shift from Mance to Lloyd Mayers on piano, he managed to do just that. The dedication of these leaders to recording Tough Tenors, coupled with the consistency in the members of the ensemble presents a view of this ensemble as a cohesive unit. This is of course essential to how we perceive this band’s output, and in fact ties this group and their music intimately to the blues aesthetic, which I will explore later in this chapter.

During Junior Mance’s time with Tough Tenors the band released three records from the studio under the Jazzland label, and four were compiled from a live show at Minton’s club in Harlem on January 6, 1961, released on the Prestige label. The live Prestige recordings are perhaps the most representative recordings of the group with Junior Mance. While the studio recordings reveal a swinging, well rehearsed ensemble, the live recordings from Minton’s more accurately capture the intense energy this group was capable of producing, and additionally present us with some arrangements from studio recordings that are stretched out during the solo sections. These Minton’s records

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

give us the chance to observe the group stretching and creating on the spot, feeding off the loud, enthusiastic audience, and freed from a possibly uninspiring studio atmosphere. Most of the tracks from this Minton's date are indicative of live jazz at its finest and most moving.

Interestingly though, these recordings were reviewed unfavorably in *Down Beat* after their release in 1961. *Tenor Scene*, one of these releases, received a rating of only two and a half stars from Don DeMicheal. DeMicheal claims that Griffin "sounds sometimes as if he is playing to stir the audience"<sup>3</sup> in a very negative manner.

DeMicheal hints that rousing the audience is an emblem of bad jazz, but according to the musicians, performing to stir the audience was most of the point. Davis, who was the most consistently interviewed during this period, claimed "We don't want that space music; we don't want to get too far away from the public."<sup>4</sup> Davis obviously privileges the creation of something that captures the interest of his audience. Additionally, he worried about the way the band looks on stage. "I want the audience to feel I'm in complete command .... the visual impression is quite important."<sup>5</sup> Davis even described the importance of good stage presence: "The guy who acts as though the keys don't work properly, or as though he has a bad reed, gives the public a poor impression."<sup>6</sup> Davis obviously views the audience as a primary concern in jazz recording and performance. This point is lost on DeMicheal, who seems to privilege jazz that conforms to some sort of "high art" perspective, which would never observe jazz as a

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<sup>3</sup> DeMicheal, 35.

<sup>4</sup> Liner notes to *Tough Tenors*, Jazzland JLP 76, 1960. LP.

<sup>5</sup> Gold, liner notes to *The Midnight Show*, Prestige 7330, 1964. LP.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

form of entertainment. However, jazz *is* entertainment, and it is performed in front of others in such a manner all the time.

DeMicheal also claims that the record “suffers from repetition and too-muchness.”<sup>7</sup> Though I can only speculate as to what “too-muchness” means, DeMicheal’s criticism of repetition deserves some discussion. First, all of the tunes recorded by this group range from medium to fast; in fact, the band did not record a single slow ballad. Again though, Davis addresses this as a deliberate decision regarding audience interest. “We very rarely play slower ballads. It’s not that we have anything against them. It’s just that they don’t seem to fit into our approach .... The patrons don’t really want us to slow down.”<sup>8</sup> Additionally, another matter of repetition is the solo order they typically performed, which almost never changed. This consistency is expressed graphically below in Fig. 5.

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<sup>7</sup> DeMicheal, 35.

<sup>8</sup> Gitler, liner notes to *Griff and Lock*, Jazzland JLP 942, 1960. LP.

Fig. 5

Tune	Solo Order
Light and Lovely	Davis, Mance, Griffin
Straight No Chaser	Davis, Mance, Griffin, Saxes Trade with each other
Woody N' You	Davis, Mance, Griffin
Bingo Domino	Gales
I'll Remember April	Davis, Mance, Griffin
Billie's Bounce Ver. 1	Davis, Mance, Griffin, Saxes Trade with each other
Epistrophy Ver. 1	Davis, Mance, Griffin, Gales
In Walked Bud	Davis, Mance, Griffin, Griffin and Riley trade
Well You Needn't	Davis, Mance, Griffin, Gales
Land of Dreams	Davis, Mance, Griffin
Bean-o	Davis, Mance, Griffin
Robbin's Nest	Davis, Mance, Griffin
Our Delight	Davis, Mance, Griffin
Dee Dee's Dance	Davis, Griffin, Mance
Epistrophy Ver. 2	Davis, Mance, Griffin, Gales
Billie's Bounce Ver. 2	Davis, Mance, Griffin, Saxes Trade with each other
The Theme	Davis, Griffin

Fig. 5 depicts the solo order from each live performance recorded at Minton's. We can see that the solo order is almost always ordered as Davis, Mance, and Griffin. Even over four recorded sets at Minton's the band never relents from this particular solo order. When it *was* altered in any way, it almost always retained a core that follows the

Davis, Mance and Griffin mold.<sup>9</sup> I asked Mance whether Davis's role as a leader affected the order, or whether it was a natural occurrence from consistent performance.

Both! See, Lockjaw had more experience than we had. Lockjaw had been with the Basie band. Johnny Griffin was pretty much the same age [as Mance]. We were just the guys that hung out and played with everybody, sat in with everybody, you know, liked to play.<sup>10</sup>

This comment highlights that Davis was definitely considered the leader of this group. Mance implies that by sitting in with Davis at jam sessions and gigs, this solo order happened as a natural byproduct of their deference to him.<sup>11</sup> Knowing what we do about Davis's sensitivity to the audience, I think that we can assume that this solo order predictability is also a concern for creating a clear presentation of form. Any repetitive elements of form could potentially aid the listener's comprehension of the music and create a more enjoyable experience.

In Tough Tenors arrangements, repetition is also an important factor. Almost every recording from the live date at Minton's starts with the theme, follows with solos, and then ends with a restatement of the theme. Part of the tight ensemble work from this

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<sup>9</sup> Notable exceptions include "Bingo Domino," "Dee Dee's Dance," and "The Theme." "Bingo" is almost entirely a bass feature, "Dee Dee's Dance" could be a mistake or hesitation, and "The Theme" is a through composed set ending piece that barely contains any solo material at all.

<sup>10</sup> Mance, Junior. Interview by the author, 4 October 2013, New Jersey. Digital Recording.

<sup>11</sup> Mance often cited Lockjaw's age as an important factor in the group dynamic.

group resulted due to this predictable and practiced order of form. Avoiding complex arrangements and through compositions allowed these musicians to focus on stirring the audience as Davis intends. In fact, according to my interview with Mance, Tough Tenors never used written music on the bandstand.

**Mance:** Nothing was written, if that's what you mean. Nothing. We just got together and put a song together. That's another thing, it's not like that anymore. Guys now are more esoteric I might say. They fill out their arrangements, I guess looking for something new. Most of the time when we were recording we just went in to the studio and recorded.

**Sanders:** You just worked them out in the studio?

**Mance:** Yeah, well that's what we were playing to. Every gig we just worked them out.<sup>12</sup>

Interestingly, this is the kind of arrangement one would expect at a jam session without preexisting rehearsals. When I asked Mance whether Tough Tenors were

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<sup>12</sup> Mance, Junior. Interview by the author, 4 October 2013, New Jersey. Digital Recording.

rehearsing during this time, he replied that “Sometimes we were, sometimes we didn’t.” This group seems to have practiced a more organic form of arrangement, where pieces are crafted over time. Mance informed me in my interview that this group played together often outside of these recordings at jam sessions and gigs; it is likely that in all of these musical situations arrangements slowly took shape, sometimes with deliberate intention, and sometimes almost subconsciously through repetition.

Indeed, the band was not performing tunes they were not comfortable with. Some of the tunes this group recorded had been performed by members in the recent past. When the band started recording in 1960, many of the tune selections were taken from recent recordings sessions in which band members had participated. For instance, Griffin brought several of Monk’s compositions from his 1957–1958 position with Monk, Mance likely brought “Woody’n You” from his work with Gillespie, and Davis had recently recorded “Last Train From Overbrook” with a different group. The familiarity each member had with these tunes could perhaps explain the ease with which Tough Tenors organically developed their arrangements without music and possibly without rehearsal.

Don DeMicheal’s review conjures the needless dichotomy of jazz criticism, pitting high/low and art/entertainment against each other as if they are inherently separate. However, through criticizing *The Tenor Scene*, DeMicheal has inadvertently highlighted the deliberateness with which Davis designs this music. Davis’ focus on simplicity to enliven the audience is one of the cultural elements that some writers tie to the notion of a blues aesthetic.



In his book, *Blowin' the Blues Away*, Travis Jackson approaches a blues aesthetic definition by combining cultural patterns and direct musical experience as Baker suggests in his own work. Jackson interviews many jazz musicians on the New York scene, meticulously analyzes their statements, and then observes the phenomena they discuss in live musical situations. In an interview Jackson conducted with Joshua Redman, Redman hits on the importance of connecting to the audience. "Music to me is... about sharing a part of yourself... with somebody else. [With] the other musicians, ultimately the audience."<sup>13</sup> Redman highlights the value of sharing this connection. He also discusses his methodology for doing so.

There have been many times that I've, you know, that I have gotten into things ... because of interaction with the audience .... maybe I made a slight sacrifice in terms of not being 100 percent genuine .... sometimes you can establish a bond, and once you've established that bond, you know, then that gives you, in a certain way, the license of the freedom to do ... you know, they trust you more.<sup>14</sup>

Redman is essentially stating that by establishing a connection with the audience in some way, a musician can open up a realm of musical creativity and freedom that is not attainable without this connection. He is deeply valuing the importance of audience

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<sup>13</sup> Jackson, 129.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 190.

participation and communication in the creation of good jazz. Interestingly, Redman also experienced the same prejudice against this type of musical interaction from critics, and says so. “A lot of critics assume ... where it’s an *obvious* thing that, you know, something that that crowd can really get into ... they say, ‘Oh,’ you know, ‘they were playing down to the crowd,’ which really upsets me.”

Exciting the audience to unlock creative potential is one of the cultural variables that exists inside of a blues matrix, and in fact, the same concept Gates briefly mentions in his Signifyin(g) theory. Jackson has expanded his idea by involving interviews (material) that explain the value of this type of interaction. Examples of the necessity of audience participation and interaction have existed long before Redman, and even before Davis. Engaging and interacting with the audience to promote musical creativity has been an essential part of African American music since its beginnings. Davis’s deliberate work with simplicity of form, presentation, and tempo speaks to a tradition whose main purpose is to entertain and create excellent music. Perhaps critics who lack the proper interpretive lens (a blues-aesthetic lens) through which to examine these cultural characteristics cannot help but struggle in making sense of these performances.

As time went on, the live records on Prestige received higher reviews. The CD reissue of *The Tenor Scene* received 4.5 stars in *Down Beat*, the same magazine that condemned the original. Often, press focused on the two tenor leads. Davis was interviewed the most, as he held more sway in the jazz world at this point.<sup>15</sup> This makes

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<sup>15</sup> I say this based on my observation of magazine materials. Additionally, remember that Davis was fresh from his tenure with Count Basie, who was experiencing a high point in his career with the

sense, as Davis was signed to a respectable label and the rest of the ensemble often worked as sidemen—even Griffin’s solo career had not taken off at this point.

The way the interactions between these two saxophonists were perceived in press shows us something interesting. In many of the liner notes from these records, writers acknowledged the long though seldom recorded history of tenor battles, and how they considered Tough Tenors to be a departure from that history. Ira Gitler discusses several tenor saxophone pairings in the liner notes to one of the Jazzland releases, *Griff and Lock*. Gitler compares Davis and Griffin to Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt: “While Gene and Sonny were dedicated to a heated (even though not vicious) saxophone swordplay, Eddie and Johnny are always enhancing each other.”<sup>16</sup>

Instead of envisioning the classic “tenor battle” between two tenors, Gitler views these performances as excellent examples of two tenors working together, inspiring each other to new heights. *Metronome* claimed that “The two horns seem to fire each other .... when they trade *fours* they stay together, elaborating on each other’s ideas and often indulging in gruff humour.”<sup>17</sup> Another author commented on the same thing. “To be sure, it is a kick to hear Lockjaw and Griffin trade fours—the one repeating complex figures of the other, virtually verbatim.”<sup>18</sup> Trading is often considered a space for competition, friendly or unfriendly, especially between two players performing on the same instrument. Universally however, I discovered that these writers view Davis’s and

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Orchestra. Griffin had worked with Monk in the recent past, but I think it is safe to assume that Basie claimed a wider audience at this time. Mance’s interview offers even more testament to this fact.

<sup>16</sup> Gitler, liner notes to *Griff and Lock*, Jazzland JLP 942, 1960. LP.

<sup>17</sup> No author given, “Griffin-Lockjaw,” *Metronome*, October 1961, 30.

<sup>18</sup> Lees, 54.

Griffins solos and trading as a communal effort, separating them in many ways from the tenor battle tradition. As usual, this eccentricity is explained by Davis himself in an interview:

No, it's really not a battle at all. What we are doing is presenting, side by side, two different styles of playing tenor—a contrast—a contrast, not a contest. The idea is to stimulate creation, not hinder it. And that's what a tenor duel would eventually do. Besides, how long can a battle last?<sup>19</sup>

Davis views their pseudo tenor battles as a presentation, again highlighting his valuing of audience enjoyment. He more succinctly expresses his point later. “I think the patron gets pleasure from making comparisons between two tenors where he wouldn't be able to compare the musicianship of say, a trumpet and a tenor.”<sup>20</sup> Davis acknowledges that there is a tradition of competition between two instruments of the same type, but that it can limit creativity, which could in turn bore the audience. Instead, he chooses to balance two different saxophone styles, and allow the audience to enjoy their interplay. The positive response from reviewers shows us that the technique is indeed effective, and the cries of the crowd on the live recordings from Minton's are an even more obvious testament.

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<sup>19</sup> Welding, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Levin, liner notes to *The Late Show*, Prestige 7357, 1965. LP.

If the two tenors were not captivating enough, when joined by their rhythm section, it sparked some of the most awe-inspiring ensemble work of the time.

DeMicheal even admitted as such: “The group shows the effects of working together over a period of time: the ensembles are clean, and everyone seems to know what the others are doing and where they’re going.”<sup>21</sup> Though most reviews focused on the leaders, some writers did acknowledge the uncanny ability of the rhythm section.

Metronome simply explained that “Mance, Gales, and Riley work together as a unit and always keep things moving.”<sup>22</sup> Another writer more passionately praised the rhythm section as well: “Junior Mance, [with] his authentically funky piano and his strongly rhythmic cohorts ... Larry Gales and Ben Riley ... help to make this album a delight from start to finish.”<sup>23</sup> Another writer gives them their due. “A lot of credit must be given to the rhythm section. Mance, Gales, and Riley whip up a storm driving in the front line wailing and screaming ....”<sup>24</sup> These critics and writers are clearly responding to some sort of driving energy surrounding this rhythm section, but their lack of detail is perturbing. In some cases, these critics *were* able to narrow their focus, acknowledging the supportive and interactive nature of these musicians.

Ben Riley ... and Larry Gales ... adapt themselves well to the hard-punching styles of the two tenormen as well as to the light dancing piano

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<sup>21</sup> DeMicheal, 35.

<sup>22</sup> No author given, “Griffin-Lockjaw,” *Metronome*, October 1961, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Gitler, liner notes to *Griff and Lock*, Jazzland JLP 942, 1960. LP.

<sup>24</sup> Riker, liner notes to *The Tenor Scene*, Original Jazz Classics OJCCD-940-2, 1997. Compact Disc.

of Junior Mance .... notice how Riley has all the rhythmic variegations at his disposal, without his being prone to overplaying or becoming so loud as to drown out his co-workers.<sup>25</sup>

And on the liner notes to *The First Set*

Something should be said in praise of the musicians comprising what is ordinarily termed the “rhythm section,” though this expression, somewhat misleading in any circumstances, seems especially so inadequate when applied to Mance, Gales, and Riley. Each of them, and Mance especially, does far more than keep time, and none of them is any more responsible for the ‘rhythm’ than are Davis and Griffin.<sup>26</sup>

These writers are remarking about something more intricate than a tenor battle, something that unquestionably helps lift Tough Tenors to the level of excellence that they achieve as a group. The critics are touching on a sort of interplay within the group that elicits a force far exceeding each member’s individual output. This is a different type of musical interaction; we *do* hear this in the music, but what is lacking is an analysis of this

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<sup>25</sup> Gold, liner notes to *The Midnight Show*, Prestige 7330, 1964. LP.

<sup>26</sup> Squibb, liner notes to *The First Set*. Prestige 7309, 1961. LP.

type of interplay happening in real time. The specific ways in which this group reacts and interacts within is never commented on in writing, and only the effect it produces is discussed. The effect *is* in fact stirring as Davis wishes, and as I will argue, an analysis of this music shows the ways in which a blues aesthetic informs these musicians their interactions.

### **Chapter 3: Light and Lovely**

There are many moments in these recordings that display the ingenuity of the Tough Tenors. Besides the excellent solos, wonderful tune selection and head performances, there is deeper level interplay at work here. The interactions that occur between each member of the group in real time are the truly astounding displays of communication and wit. On the first track of *The Tenor Scene*, “Light and Lovely,” Junior Mance takes a solo that most clearly accentuates these interactions. It is particularly awe-inspiring at first listen and beyond; and in fact, many critics discuss this event in their reviews of the Minton’s recordings. In the liner notes for *The Late Show*, the writer tells the listener about “The rhythm section of Junior Mance (listen especially to his driving, building, block chords solo in ‘Light and Lovely’ ...”<sup>1</sup> In the *Tenor Scene* liner notes, the writer brings attention to “such startling work as Junior Mance’s blues-based solo on ‘Light and Lovely.’”<sup>2</sup>

These critics are reacting strongly to something in this solo—something that has enough impact to be isolated specifically in the liner notes of several issues of these recordings. Don Riker’s notes on the reissue of *The Tenor Scene* by Original Jazz Classics at least give us a clearer picture of this musical event.

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<sup>1</sup> Levin, liner notes to *The Late Show*, Prestige 7357, 1965. LP.

<sup>2</sup> Goldberg, liner notes to *The Tenor Scene*, Prestige 7191, 1961. LP.



Mance executes a marvelous solo (his best of the album) warming up gradually until he hits extended keyboard rolls backed up solidly by Riley. Then he unexpectedly quotes that familiar Basie hit “Everyday” (you don’t get this kind of playing everyday)....<sup>3</sup>

Riker essentially tells us that Mance builds up to some sort of climax before quoting the Basie composition. However, a single listen to this portion of the solo elicits a much more complex analysis than Riker’s. For instance, the keyboard rolls Riker claims he “hits” (5:47– 6:28) are the not the actual climax of the solo, but a build *to* the climax, which occurs at 6:32, a point that Riker does not mention. Next, he skips ahead and discusses a later blues chorus in which Mance does indeed quote Basie’s tune. Riker’s description is perhaps more accurate than others, but my own look into parts of this solo will give the reader a more interesting and detailed depiction of his solo. In addition, I will be including analysis of the interactions between Larry Gales and Ben Riley *with* Junior Mance, something Riker obviously does not discuss. There are in fact many fascinating moments in this solo, but I believe my point can be most concisely expressed by observing the chorus including the Basie quote that Riker highlights, which occurs from 7:15–7:32.

There are several climax points throughout, but the most important occurs in this last chorus. This is where Mance quotes the Basie recording. I will spend some time on

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<sup>3</sup> Riker, liner notes to *The Tenor Scene*, Original Jazz Classics OJCCD-940-2, 1997. Compact Disc.

this quote, as I believe its inclusion at this crucial last chorus in Mance's solo is informed by the blues aesthetic. The tune is an old one, entitled "Everyday I Have the Blues." *The Encyclopedia of the Blues* lists claims the tune was first recorded in 1935 by the Sparks Brothers, but I disagree. There are actually two tunes by the same name, one recorded by the Sparks Brothers, and one composed by Memphis Slim and recorded in 1949. I believe that the Sparks Brothers composition is often mistaken for the same composition Memphis Slim recorded due to the identical song titles and the initial lyric. However, besides the first phrase, no other lyrics match, or even contain similar themes.

Additionally, the pieces are in different keys, and their melodic contours and numbers of stanzas do not match.<sup>4</sup> This essentially leaves us with the lyric as the main basis for comparison, and in this case, they do not seem related. An excerpt of these different lyrics is displayed in Fig. 6. Aside from its blues form and first line, this is not the same song that Mance quotes in his solo, and therefore will be excluded from our discussion.

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<sup>4</sup> This of course brings up the difficult topic of blues melodies, and to what extent they are improvised. If in fact these melodies are improvised, the melody does not factor into our discussion of compositional differences at all. If we imagine that these melodies *are* specifically composed, these melodies still do not match.

Fig. 6

SPARKS BROTHERS (G MAJOR)	MEMPHIS SLIM (C MAJOR)
<p>Everyday, everyday I have the blues</p> <p>Everyday, everyday I have the blues</p> <p>And it would give me (time?) lover, if I had you to lose</p> <p>Sometimes, sometimes I just don't know</p> <p>Sometimes, sometimes I just don't know</p> <p>My baby wants to quit me, but I love her more and more</p>	<p>Everyday, everyday I have the blues</p> <p>Everyday, everyday I have the blues</p> <p>Ain't bout the girl I got, you babe I hate to lose</p> <p>Nobody loves me, nobody seems to care</p> <p>Nobody loves me, nobody seems to care</p> <p>Speaking of bad luck people, you know I've had my share</p>

Memphis Slim's version from 1949 is definitely the first that resembles the Basie version Riker claims Mance is quoting. Additionally, Slim retains composer credits on Basie's recording, and in fact on all versions following his own. Lowell Fulson recorded the tune later the same year; he acknowledged the validity of the composition by using the same melody and following the same order of stanzas. Interestingly, Fulson removed the instrumental choruses and solos from the original, breaking the composition down to its simplest form. Fig. 7 includes a graphical representation of these formal differences.

Fig. 7

EVERYDAY I HAVE THE BLUES VERSIONS			
Memphis Slim- "Everyday I Have the Blues"	Lowell Fulson	King Kolax	Count Basie
4-measure Intro	12-measure Intro	4-measure Intro	4 blues choruses + 8-measure Intro
Blues Chorus w/ Lyric A	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric A	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric A	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric A
Blues Chorus w/ Lyric B	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric B	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric B	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric B
Instrumental Blues Chorus (Sax solo)	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric C	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric C	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric C
Blues Chorus w/ Lyric C		Blues Chorus w/ Lyric D	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric D
Instrumental Blues Chorus (Piano solo w/ horn background)		Blues Chorus w/ Lyric B	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric B
		Blues Chorus w/ Lyric D prime	Blues Chorus w/ Lyric C
			Blues Chorus w/ Lyric D
			Blues Chorus w/ Lyric D
			4-measure tag

Also included in Fig. 7 are two later versions of the composition, a 1953 version from King Kolax, and the Basie version quoted by Mance. Joe Williams (featured in this band) and Kolax himself sing the melody in unison; because the melody matches Slim's version several years later, we can further verify that the melody is unquestionably an integral part of the composition. Besides their closeness in years, we can make many other connections between Kolax's version and Basie's. First, both versions use the same singer: Joe Williams. Perhaps the tune became a staple for Williams, prompting Basie to record it again a few years later; Williams did record this tune often throughout his

career, even into the 1990s; we can assume it was definitely an important part of his career.

There are other connections between these recordings. Formally, we can see that after the intro, the two latter versions match their first five stanzas lyrically. This formal arrangement did not exist before Kolax; Basie is drawing directly from this version. Also, at the moment where Williams and Kolax sing “Nobody loves me, nobody seems to care,” (1:49) his vocal embellishment is repeated exactly note for note in Basie’s later version (2:55).

Some subtler elements of the arrangement remain the same in Basie’s version as well. When Williams sings “every day I have the blues/ when you see me worried baby, ‘cause it’s you I’d hate to lose” there is a horn figure filling in behind him (1:23), and Basie mimics this texture (2:48). However, the figures do not match, and Basie adds the same chorus again later with more flair. Additionally, the Kolax version has a 4-measure piano intro before entering the lyrics, whereas Basie expands his intro with his band to 42 measures.

The riff that Mance borrows in his solo is from the Count Basie arrangement from 1955. This version actually hit the R&B Billboard charts at number two for a period of time; it was unquestionably popular.<sup>5</sup> Mance acknowledged he did hear the recording at the time, and when asked whether he was a Basie fan, Mance made his most animated exclamation of the interview: “Hell yes! You better believe it!”<sup>6</sup> Mance claims his father

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<sup>5</sup> Whitburn, Joel, *Hot R&B Songs 1942-2010* (eBook: Records Research Inc., 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Mance, Junior. Interview by the author, 4 October 2013, New Jersey. Digital Recording.

had a strong interest in Basie, and that Mance himself has collected Basie records all his life.

Interestingly, the riff that Mance quotes tune is not the melody or one of the main chorus backgrounds. A more likely quote might be the background or melody at 3:43, probably the most recognizable part of the tune. In fact, when I spoke to Mance, he recalled the song by singing this portion. The riff Mance elects instead occurs at 0:42 of the Basie version. It is over a 12-measure blues form, and exists in the middle of the introduction. I find it fascinating that Mance chose this less highlighted moment of the song as a quote.

This choice is important because of its connection to the idea of Signifyin(g). In fact, tracing the morphing formal structure and acknowledging the new stanzas from Kolax speaks to the process of revision/refiguration that Gates discusses in his theory. These new stanzas, alterations to form, and later adoption of swing feel in these different versions of “Everyday I Have the Blues” speak to the extent with compositional revision is a part of jazz and African American culture as a whole. Basie’s version of “Everyday I Have the Blues” is in Gates’s world, an example of this revision in an unmotivated sense—free from critique.

What is more fascinating here though, is that Mance quotes a chorus from the introduction of Basie’s recording before the melody is heard, and which did not exist in any previous version before Basie. By inserting this moment into his solo, he has successfully enabled the audience to recall “Everyday I Have the Blues” without

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performing the melody.<sup>7</sup> As Mance does this, in the Signifyin(g) tradition, he revises the original composition, fastening Basie's introduction to the melody understood by the audience. In the Gatesian tradition, Mance is creating new associated meanings around "Light and Lovely," potentially highlighting his acknowledgement of the tune as a continuation of and homage to the blues tradition.

Even more interesting and enlightening is how the other band members react to his quote. In fact, both instrumentalists respond by performing these same hits, reacting almost instantly after Mance initiates the quote. A detailed look at how they do this results in some interesting details about this performance.

Fig. 8

The musical score for Fig. 8 is written for Piano, Bass, and Drums in 4/4 time. The Piano part is in the treble clef and features a G7 chord. The Bass part is in the bass clef. The Drums part is in the bass clef. The score consists of four measures, each labeled with a Roman numeral (i, ii, iii, iv). The Piano part plays a sequence of eighth notes in each measure. The Bass part plays a sequence of eighth notes in each measure. The Drums part plays a sequence of eighth notes in each measure.

<sup>7</sup> Don Riker in fact names the tune in his liner notes to the OJC reissue.

Figure 8 is a transcription of the last four measures of the 12-measure blues chorus preceding the one I discuss here. I have labeled each measure with a roman numeral so as not to confuse them with the start of the next chorus. In this example, I have only focused on Mance's left hand to illustrate the fact that he hits G octaves on the "and" of every beat. To my ear, I hear these four bars a signal to Gales and Riley (and the audience) that Mance plans to do something interesting at the start of the next chorus. Often in this context, a pedal such as this is used as a way to bring intensity to the start of the next chorus. Mance is signaling for the rest of the rhythm section to get ready. This also gives him a chance to bring the musicians together, to show that each is listening to the other. Gales begins pedaling G in measure ii, signaling his understanding of Mance's intentions. In an interesting display of creativity, Gales invents a complementary figure in measure iii that complements Mance's figure, thereby creating rhythmic diversity. Riley also picks up on this pedal, and by the second half of measure i has already created his own response to the Mance's pedal. By measure iii, each musician is listening and committed to whatever is going to happen in the next chorus, though Gales and Riley are likely unaware of what Mance has planned.

The next crucial moment occurs in measure 1 (Fig. 9). This measure marks the beginning of a new chorus, just after Mance has signaled to the band that he is planning on doing something new. This is of course, the moment where Mance quotes Basie's version of "Everyday I Have the Blues." To avoid cluttering the transcription, the remainder of the musical examples only includes the melody of the quote, as it is the only part of Mance's playing that we will concern ourselves with here. Measure 1 demonstrates how quickly the rest of the ensemble can catch an idea and mimic it in real



time. Mance's lick in this measure consists of a half note, a quarter note, and two eighth notes.

Fig. 9

The musical score for Figure 9 is written for Piano, Upright Bass, and Drum Set in 4/4 time. A first ending bracket labeled '1' spans the entire measure. The Piano part (treble clef) plays a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and two eighth notes B4 and A4. The Upright Bass part (bass clef) plays a half note G2, a quarter note A2, and two eighth notes B2 and A2. The Drum Set part (drum clef) plays a quarter note G, a quarter note A, and a quarter-note triplet of B, A, G. The triplet is marked with a '3' and a bracket.

Riley, who is unaware at the beginning of the measure what Mance is going to play, first hits his ride and snare on beat one. He is not yet reacting, but simply marking the beginning of this chorus, a typical technique to help support and unify where the ensemble feels the pulse. Gales does the same, and so the band hits the beginning of the chorus together, as Mance's quote also begins on beat one. However, in the second and third beats, Riley plays a more complex figure. Though his ride cymbal continues with quarter notes, his snare beats quarter-note triplets. The quarter-note triplets are not

particularly strange, but they do conflict with Mance's Basie quote. The Bb that Mance places on the third beat does not fall evenly with Riley's snare pattern. Riley, a very musical drummer, would probably not play something that conflicted with Mance's quote unless he was not yet sure what Mance's musical goal was. We can assert that he has not yet had a chance to react to this quote. This is not that surprising, as Mance only started the lick at the beginning of the measure.

It is surprising that by beat four, Riley knows *exactly* what Mance is doing. Riley plays two eighth notes, matching Mance's quote rhythmically. Though this could be a coincidence, but the fact that Riley hits the bass, snare, ride, and crash simultaneously makes this seem very unlikely.<sup>8</sup> In the same moment, Gales also performs two eighth notes on beat four. Considering he walked quarter notes the rest of the measure, it is likely Gales has also recognized the quote at this point. The fact that both musicians accurately identify and begin mimicking this quote immediately is a testament to their abilities as listeners. As both musicians have grasped Mance's quote, I will next examine their efforts in comparison to Mance's individually. This is because Mance is the soloist; I think it is likely that Gales and Riley are paying the most attention to what he is playing, not each other. Additionally, the quote Mance performs is so recognizable and effective that Gales and Riley are more likely preoccupied with negotiating their relationship to the quote than to each other in this chorus. This is not to say that they are not paying attention to each other, but that their main priority is to support Mance, and therefore that this is the most essential level at which to observe this chorus.

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<sup>8</sup> I am omitting the toms and hi hat from most of this transcription because, like the piano chords, they will clutter the transcriptions.

Fig. 10

The musical score is for Piano and Drums in 4/4 time, spanning 12 measures. The Piano part is written on a treble clef staff, and the Drums part is on a bass clef staff. The score is divided into three systems of four measures each.

- Measures 1-4:** The Piano part starts with a  $C^7$  chord. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The Drums part features a steady eighth-note pattern with accents on measures 1, 3, and 4.
- Measures 5-8:** The Piano part continues with a  $F^7$  chord in measure 5, followed by a  $C^7$  chord in measure 7, and an  $A^7$  chord in measure 8. The Drums part maintains the eighth-note pattern with various rhythmic accents.
- Measures 9-12:** The Piano part features a  $Dm^7$  chord in measure 9, followed by  $G^7$  chords in measures 10 and 12, and a  $C^7$  chord in measure 11. The Drums part continues with the eighth-note pattern and accents.

Fig. 10 is a transcription comparing Mance's quote to Riley's comping. Riley's crash cymbal holds over from his last eighth note in measure 1 until he hits the bass and crash on beat two of the next measure, accenting the same beat as Mance's quote. In measures 3 and 4, Riley performs the quote with the least amount of embellishment, again, using three pieces of his kit to accent Mance's line. Besides the time keeping ride cymbal, Riley includes no rhythmic embellishment here, only the time-keeping ride

continues throughout. In fact, up to this moment, Riley has almost completely avoided embellishing the quote.

Next, Riley seems to have grown confident in his ability to mimic the quote, and begins to supplement and revise it instead. For instance, in measure 5, Riley matches Mance's part exactly, but then fills in the gap between the "and" of four of measure 5 (C6) and the "and" of 2 in measure 6 (C5) with an exciting triplet figure. The triplets between his ride, snare, and bass are not inimical to the quote here as they were in measure 1; their inclusion in a space of melodic pause supports the validity of the line. Additionally, though they do not match on paper, Riley's triplet fill ends with a crash and bass drum hit that falls evenly with Mance's C5 in measure 6.<sup>9</sup> Riley has essentially become comfortable with the quote, and is able to supplement and revise it in his own way, adding variety to the performance.

Riley's elaborations around the quote continue until the end of the chorus, where he signals an end to the quote by returning to its basic rhythm in measure 11 on the "and" of 1, though there is a slight rhythmic discrepancy between the two musicians in measure 12.<sup>10</sup> Removing the ride cymbal pattern and emphasizing the quoted rhythms with all three aspects of his drum set creates the feeling that the chorus is winding up, which of course, it is.

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<sup>9</sup> Just like swing rhythm, this connection between Mance's and Riley's rhythms cannot easily be expressed using Western notation.

<sup>10</sup> Mance plays the quote as Basie does.

Fig. 11

The musical score for Fig. 11 consists of two staves: Piano (treble clef) and Bass (bass clef). The time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into 12 measures, numbered 1 through 12 above the staves. The chords and melodic lines are as follows:

- Measure 1:** Piano: C7 chord, quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 2:** Piano: quarter rest, quarter note C5. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 3:** Piano: quarter rest, quarter note C5. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 4:** Piano: quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 5:** Piano: F7 chord, quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 6:** Piano: quarter rest, quarter note C5. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 7:** Piano: C7 chord, quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 8:** Piano: A7 chord, quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 9:** Piano: Dm7 chord, quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 10:** Piano: G7 chord, quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 11:** Piano: C7 chord, quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.
- Measure 12:** Piano: G7 chord, quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4. Bass: quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2.

Gales's approach to this chorus (Fig. 11) follows the same path as Riley's in many ways. Gales also avoids beat one of measure 2, and hits an Eb3 on beat two instead. It is important to note that Gales is matching the rhythmic aspect of the quote here like Riley, but that he does not match pitch. Interestingly, his bass line descends until measure 3, when Gales finally matches the pitches of Mance's quote, performing the Bb3, B3, and C3 with Mance starting on beat two. I think it is likely that Gales recognized the quote in measure 1 of this chorus as previously discussed, but that it takes

him longer than Riley to match the quote exactly, as he has the additional element of pitch to address.

Now that Gales has found the proper pitches, he performs the rest of measures 2 and 3 with Mance before leaping upwards to Gb3 in beat four of measure 4. At this point, we can see that Gales has identified how the quote fits within the context of the chorus. Like Riley, once Gales becomes confident with the quote, he moves away from these pitches, instead filling in space rhythmically, while following the underlying harmonic plan.

For instance, following this measure 4 leap to Gb3, Gales walks the first two beats of measure 5 (outlining a Gb chord) before rhythmically matching Mance's figure in the second half of the measure. Notice that harmonically, Gales has moved away from Mance's exact pitches, instead playing F2, F2, C3, F2. The underlying chord is an F7 here, and it is obvious that Gales is outlining the harmony of the measure while still supporting Mance rhythmically. In measure 6, Gales inserts an appropriate fill that outlines a G7 chord (the V chord of the C7 in measure 7), effectively filling the gap rhythmically and harmonically before Mance's next melodic statement.

Gales continues his elaborations in measures 7 and 8. The sixteenth and eighth notes of Mance's quote are mimicked here, but Gales again outlines the harmony instead of matching pitch, playing a descending C Major triad through the first three notes of the quote before diverting his path downwards to a somewhat dissonant B2 over the C7 harmony. However, Gales quickly slides down by half step to Bb2 and A2, arriving on the tonic of A7 on beat two, exactly as Mance's quote does.

Gales continues to inventively embellish throughout this chorus, contributing another interesting musical idea in measure 11. Gales, again matching Mance rhythmically, creates contrary motion that consonantly harmonizes Mance's quote through the first beat of measure 12. Not only is this a beautiful and interesting musical moment, but the contrary motion signals to the listener that the chorus is coming to an end.

Both Riley and Gales had no idea that Mance was planning on quoting "Everyday I Have the Blues," especially not a part of the Basie introduction. Regardless, they are each able to separately mimic the quote and add their own elaborations in real time. This level of musical interaction and creativity is perhaps one of the most astounding things about Tough Tenors. By recognizing, reacting, and revising, these musicians display their ability to synthesize blues concepts they have absorbed over years of performance and practice and apply them instantaneously in musical performance. Jackson discusses this process in his book, *Blowin' the Blues Away*.

Musicians and other scene participants become acquainted with the aesthetic through their engagement with and understanding of African American musics and African American culture .... Through verbal and performative communication ... participants tap into and shape different

aspects of this aesthetic, learning how to make, interpret, and respond to the sounds and other stimuli in musical events.<sup>11</sup>

These different aspects include all the material and cultural patterns discussed above in the Tough Tenors performance: audience interaction to elicit musical creativity, group interaction and elaboration, formal revision, etc. All are simply cells inside Baker's blues matrix. In an interview with the author, Mance described his own discovery and absorption of some of these elements of the blues aesthetic.

But you know, then, they had those old time recordings and things. And I used to listen to all of them. See, I started working young, like when I was out of high school I had more gigs than most of my friends, like Johnny and Jaws. And that's how we learned to play. I call them the old masters.<sup>12</sup>

Mance is highlighting his initial exposure to elements of the blues aesthetic through recordings and the act of gigging with musicians at a young age. He came to the conclusion that the blues was "a big part of everybody's recordings, and don't let nobody

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<sup>11</sup> Jackson, 135.

<sup>12</sup> Mance, Junior. Interview by the author, 4 October 2013, New Jersey. Digital Recording.



lie to you ... If they were around then, they'd know everything about the blues.”<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, Mance claimed

I got so steeped in playing the blues—a friend of mine who was a college teacher- he said—“You can’t lose with the blues, if you can’t play the blues you’ve got holes in your shoes,” and that stuck with me you know. After a while everybody was saying that. But that’s true. The blues is the foundation for jazz. To me it is. Everything was built on the blues. Change-wise it can change, but you’re still gonna hear that blues trickle through. Even the younger guys that are playing now, there’s a blues influence whether they admit it or not.<sup>14</sup>

Mance highlights the way the blues permeates his and others’ performance, but does not simply refer to the blues in a basic sense. He mentions the changing nature of jazz harmony, and that somehow, the blues is still there; Mance knows the blues goes deeper than a scale or lick. In this analysis of the formal arrangements and rhythm section interactions of *Tough Tenors*, it is clear that there are techniques that are integral in the music that are informed by an absorption the material and cultural patterns associated with the blues aesthetic. In *Tough Tenors*—and more clearly in Mance’s

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

channeling of Basie—we can see the rhythm section brilliantly balancing these variables initially theorized by Baraka, Gates, and Jackson.

My goal here is to show that rather than attempting to force a blues aesthetic model into a musical analysis (Gates's application in many aforementioned analyses), it is much more valuable to examine the material aspect of the analysis first. Then, by experimenting with the many variables in Baker's blues matrix, we can construct a more accurate picture of the motives and details behind the creative output of these musicians. This is essentially a more natural and applicable approach to a blues aesthetic infused musical analysis. While I have demonstrated that it is important to be cautious about how heavily we rely on the cultural patterns of the blues aesthetic, I believe that by balancing these concepts properly, we can augment our understanding of jazz performance, and supplement our ideas surrounding musical analysis.

## **Chapter 4: Other Approaches**

Several scholars have also noticed the importance of interaction in jazz performance as I have above in “Light and Lovely.” Robert Hodson highlights the lack of scholarly research into interactive performance in jazz in his book, *Interaction, Improvisation, and Interplay in Jazz*. “I noticed that ... authors tended to focus on single improvised lines, rarely considering members of the ensemble could have an effect on the solo line they were analyzing.”<sup>1</sup> He (along with other writers) acknowledges the fact that jazz involves the collaboration of multiple musicians simultaneously, and that observing an improvised solo on its own does not satisfy the need for the description of jazz performance practice.

In some cases, these studies of the interactive nature of jazz performance are strictly theory based. However, as discussed earlier in this thesis, cultural, blues aesthetic oriented analyses inevitably appear in jazz scholarship. Writers began observing interactive processes in musical performance through the cultural lens of the blues aesthetic. Ingrid Monson’s book, *Saying Something*, is perhaps one of the first that does this in detail; her ideas are supplemented by musical analysis and notation. Monson’s particular blues aesthetic model intimately ties theoretical musical examples to cultural studies and linguistics. Monson justifies her inclusion of linguistic theory by citing Terence Turner’s discussion of metaphors and metonyms.

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<sup>1</sup> Hodson, viii.

Turner argues that a metaphor (such as improvisation is conversation) links cultural domains by selecting an attribute in one domain (improvisation as part of music) similar to an attribute from another (conversation as a part of language). Turner argues that a metonymic (part-to-whole) relationship is therefore implicit in any metaphoric association. The metaphoric association of contrasting domains may in turn construct a more encompassing, higher-level category that “assumes the essential character of its parts” .....<sup>2</sup>

By engaging the idea of metonyms, Monson is able to appropriate as much language theory into her discussion of musical interaction as she wishes, leading her to claim, “...if improvisation is like conversation (subsets of music and language), then sociable, face-to-face communication (subset of communication) may be the larger category at stake.”<sup>3</sup> Monson continuously highlights the importance of conversation in jazz, eventually concluding that in “musical aesthetics informed by African American cultural aesthetics, the idea of response is just as important as in verbal communication.”<sup>4</sup> Monson wishes to examine these face-to-face, conversational interactions in music,

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<sup>2</sup> Monson, Ingrid. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 76.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 88.

illuminating their ability to convey “cultural meaning, cultural critique, and... communities of emotional feeling and moral sensibility.”<sup>5</sup>

In order to do so, Monson borrows conceptual ideas from linguists and literary theorists, using them to probe the musical examples included in her book. Monson begins by introducing the concept of intertextuality. In literary theory, intertextuality refers to the conviction that texts only gain meaning when they are examined in reference to other texts—In essence, that all texts enter into “conversation” with one another across time. Monson refigures this literary definition into “intermusical,” which she defines as “aurally perceptible musical relationships that are heard in the context of particular musical traditions.”<sup>6</sup> This mimics intertextuality, except that referenced texts become live musical performances and recordings rather than actual, written text.<sup>7</sup> Monson explains that the

recognition of familiar rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, textural, or gestural ideas (the intermusical conversation over time) underlies a social process of developing musical ideas between individuals in performance (the conversation in the present) .... This combination of reference and

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>7</sup> Monson is expanding on the ideas of Hanks, who first conceptualized that music was a specific mode of intertextuality. Monson differentiates scores from this discussion, explaining that “musical relationships observable only with the aid of a score might best be called intertextual musical relationships.” (128)

interactive musical responsiveness is something particularly characteristic of improvisational musics.<sup>8</sup>

Monson explains that by experiencing and/or recognizing specific musical ideas in a performance, one is involved in a “conversation” comprised of moment-to-moment musical interactions between players, and referential comparisons with other “texts.” She explains that immersion in these two types of intermusical conversations involves musicians and listeners in social process, one that can convey cultural meaning or critique. Critique in Monson’s case is mostly directed at the status of race in America.<sup>9</sup> In *Saying Something*, Monson refers to the dialogic nature of race—black and white as “two separate worlds clearly demarcated yet inextricably entwined.”<sup>10</sup>

Monson relates this wider racial issue to music, explaining that “the cultural knowledge of African American musicians includes familiarity with both “black” and “white” music, and it is upon *all* of this knowledge that a musician draws in the act of performance.”<sup>11</sup> Monson is referring to the often cited “black” and “white” musics, which have been a dichotomous topic of debate since the inception of jazz. As is known to be the case today, these musics do not exist separately in jazz, and are in fact often undistinguishable from each other. Monson sees this musical phenomenon as

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 129.

<sup>9</sup> Monson has written another book that mostly focuses on race titled *Freedom Sounds: Jazz, Civil Rights, and Africa, 1950-1967*.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 100.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 130.

representative of the dialogic nature of African American culture in general, another testament to her blues aesthetic influenced perspective.

Monson explains that musicians, aware of this black/white cultural struggle—and more specifically, its existence in the music press—comment and critique the issue by evoking “ironic reversal,” manipulating these opposites into statements about race. Monson traces John Coltrane’s manipulation of groove, harmony, and melody of the Broadway tune “My Favorite Things,” as he morphs it into a fantastic vehicle for improvisation. Monson explains that to many jazz listeners, these types of transformations of Broadway tunes elicit a sense of pride, and are considered “superior” to the originals.

In asserting a musical superiority, even when measured against the white hegemonic standard, musicians make ironic the presumption of racial inferiority.... My Favorite Things ... articulate[s] an independent improvisational aesthetic that draws on African American cultural sensibilities and is the taken-for-granted standard against which non-African American music is evaluated.<sup>12</sup>

Monson explains that by combining supposedly demarcated black and white aesthetics in a musically brilliant display, Coltrane critiques the idea of racial inferiority and expresses pride in African American culture. Monson further elaborates that the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 120.

ironic reversal of the tune could have been provoked by Coltrane's acknowledgement of the Civil Rights movement in 1960. This idea is Gatesian in nature; Monson is highlighting a process of Signifyin(g) on a Broadway tune to show how the revision evokes some sort of new and distinct meaning—what Gates calls “repetition with a signal difference.”<sup>13</sup>

Whether believable or not, Monson's ability to synthesize specific musical examples with African American culture is undoubtedly an expression of her own blues aesthetic model. The previous example involves a conversation between texts across time: two versions of the same Broadway tune. Monson also delves into face-to-face conversation between musicians, the other half of her linguistics metonym, examining three major moments of musician interactions in a theoretical analysis of Jaki Byard's “Bass-ment Blues.” As in the Coltrane example, she discusses these moments using her previously established blues-aesthetic lens. The next chapter will discuss her analysis in detail, examining the musical detail of her argument, in addition to the ways in which a blues aesthetic influences the analysis. In doing so, I hope to further highlight the underlying themes of my thesis while additionally expanding Monson's exploration of “Bass-ment Blues.”

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<sup>13</sup> Gates, 66.



## **Chapter 5: Bass-ment Blues Analysis**

*Saying Something* includes thirteen transcribed choruses of “Bass-ment Blues.”

The sheer volume of choruses for analysis in this book is uncommon; very few analyses of jazz involve more than one chorus at a time. This is partially due to the difficulty of examining such a large excerpt of music in any useful detail. Secondly, the deep-rooted presence of chorus and phrase structure in jazz is of concern to theorists. In his 2012 article *An Approach to Phrase Rhythm in Jazz*, Stefan Love discusses the hypermetrical structure of the jazz chorus.

Meter is a regular pattern of strong and weak beats, superimposed on the musical surface by the listener on the basis of informed expectation.

These beats form a nested hierarchy of metrical levels, centered on the tactus, the “level of beats that is conducted and with which one most naturally coordinates foot-tapping and dance steps” (Lerdahl and Jackendoff) ... Below the tactus are various divisions and subdivisions; above the tactus are half-notes, measures, and hypermeasures (groups of multiple measures that seem to begin with a relatively strong beat; two- and four-measure hypermeasures are ubiquitous in jazz.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Love, 5–6.

Love essentially describes listeners experiencing music in blocks of measures at a time, most commonly in 2 and 4-measure increments. He additionally explains that musicians can experience the formal structure of music up to the chorus level of an AABA, 32-measure form. The important consideration here is that Love does not extend his idea beyond the chorus level. While this omission may be accidental, it holds true of listeners, who do not often make aural connections beyond the level of a single chorus. By the same reasoning, it is highly unlikely that a musician would successfully connect themes, motives, and rhythms over a thirteen chorus span.<sup>2</sup> Robert Hodson delves into this same concept in his book, *Interaction, Improvisation, and Interplay in Jazz*. “Because the form of a tune is what keeps each musician in the right place at the right time, musicians place a strong emphasis on ‘keeping the form,’ that is, on making one’s improvisation consistently and accurately conform to a tune’s harmonic progression and phrase structure.”<sup>3</sup> Essentially, the importance of a band staying together at the section and chorus level does not often leave room for musicians to develop ideas that can be aurally observed as referential or motivic above the chorus level.

The issues of examining thirteen choruses is further emphasized in transcription errors of rhythm and pitch in George Tucker’s bass line, which I will not spend time correcting here unless they directly affect my own analysis. Regardless, Monson mostly focuses on choruses three through six and a part of chorus nine. Her choice of these choruses derives from her assertion that George Tucker loses the form several times

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<sup>2</sup> There are obviously exceptions to this rule, including the work of Joe Henderson, Miles Davis, Bill Evans, and Sonny Rollins. The point is, the average musician does not attempt this in jazz improvisation.

<sup>3</sup> Hodson, 91.

during his solo, and that following each occurrence, the band members engage in a musically social process to help guide Tucker back to the form. These examples fit perfectly into Monson's book, as each one demonstrates face-to-face conversation between musicians who have deeply absorbed the interactive nature of African American musics. However, in my own examination of the piece, I have come to a different conclusion regarding these musical events, which I will discuss below.

Before accepting the idea that Tucker becomes lost in the form, it is important to first consider the actual possibility of losing the form in a blues. A 12-measure blues form is by no means complex, and the average jazz musician is extremely comfortable and familiar with it, perhaps equally or more so than with the standard AABA song form; the blues form has asserted its presence in jazz since its earliest days. Even today, many musicians begin their improvisational studies by learning to play the blues, whether through comping, soloing, or just playing melodies. Junior Mance explained that "You got to learn how to play the blues before you learn how to play jazz. Jazz is built mainly around the blues—I won't say it is the blues, but it's built mainly around the blues." Later, he clarified his point, claiming that "If they [musicians] were around then, they'd know everything about the blues."<sup>4</sup> Tucker's confusion in such a familiar and canonical form seems worth questioning and examining closely—even given the somewhat free nature of this particular performance.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mance, Junior. Interview by the author, 4 October 2013, New Jersey. Digital Recording.

<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that musicians do not get lost. It is simply important to note that it is uncommon, especially within a simple twelve bar form such as "Bass-ment Blues."

Monson highlights Tucker's first moment of confusion, explaining that "by the beginning of the fourth chorus, Tucker is out of phase with the 12-measure chorus structure being kept by Byard and Dawson."<sup>6</sup> She cites the mistake beginning in chorus three, where Tucker adds two beats to the eighth measure of the chorus, setting him out of phase with the rest of the group. This is one of three examples in which Monson highlights a phasing issue in Tucker's bass line; she later demonstrates that the musicians make up for these formal problems by dropping or adding several beats or measures to the form in order to begin subsequent choruses together. These types of corrections occur in measures 71–73, 105–107, and 129–131 of Monson's transcription. Monson describes measures 105–107 as an adjustment by all three musicians (which further confuses the form); the other examples both consist of Byard and Dawson's adjustments to Tucker. However, in my own observation of Monson's first example, I have determined that Tucker is not lost, but instead outlining the form in a subtle manner. In fact, each phasing problem Monson discusses in the form can be resolved within the proper chorus structure; the musicians never make formal adjustments to resolve issues.

Chorus three begins at 0:58 of the recording.<sup>7</sup> In measure 8 of the chorus, Monson misappropriates the rhythmic placement of Tucker's line due to the complex, syncopated nature of his phrase, notating a measure of 6/4 time in measure 32 of her transcription.<sup>8</sup> However, if we examine this same passage from a position of confidence in Tucker's musical abilities, we hear that his phrase fits perfectly within the construct of

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<sup>6</sup>Monson, Ingrid. *Saying Something*, 156.

<sup>7</sup> Jaki Byard, *Jaki Byard Quartet: Live!*. Prestige PCD-24121-2, 1965, compact disc.

<sup>8</sup> Monson's original transcription can be found on p. 148 of *Saying Something*, mm. 31–34.

a standard 12-measure form. Rather than add extra beats or measures, I have edited Monson's transcription as if Tucker never made a mistake in the first place.

Fig. 12



Fig. 12 is my edited version of measures 7–10 of the third chorus of Monson's transcription, audible in the recording at 1:12. I have chosen to number the measures as they would fit into a 12-measure chorus, as this will aid our understanding of how this phrase fits into the overall blues form. While these four measures provide context for this passage, measures 8 and 9 specifically include an interpretation of Tucker's "mistake." Instead of altering the time signature in measure 8 as Monson does, Tucker's phrase has been normalized into the 12-measure form, demonstrating a highly syncopated moment rather than a mistake. To understand the context of this syncopation, we must first explore the phrase structure of a blues chorus.

A blues is normally organized in three 4-measure phrases. The beginning of each phrase is structurally important; musicians often mark the beginning of these phrases with some sort of musical signal, using these moments as signposts to help collectively

negotiate the formal structure of the chorus. Contrarily, jazz musicians sometimes choose to obscure these same signposts in performance. Hodson explains that as a soloist, one has the option to “improvise a line that either conforms to a tune’s phrase structure or de-emphasizes it by overlapping its formal boundaries.”<sup>9</sup>

Measure 9 in Fig. 12 marks the beginning of the third and final 4-measure phrase of a blues chorus. In this example, Tucker *does* choose to obscure the important structural signpost in his improvised line. His phrase continues through to the “and” of four in measure 10, overlapping the beginning of the final 4-measure phrase in measure 9. Tucker further blurs the phrase structure by avoiding the downbeat in measure 9 entirely. While obscuring the very formal structures that hold a composition together may seem strange, it is a common practice in jazz composition and improvisation. John Coltrane’s composition “26-2” begins with a similar syncopation, notated in Fig 13.<sup>10</sup>

Fig. 13



<sup>9</sup> Hodson, 95.

<sup>10</sup> It is well known that “26-2” is a harmonically altered version of “Confirmation” by Charlie Parker. Though Parker’s tune is not composed with the same syncopation as in the beginning of “26-2,” I have often heard musicians perform the beginning of the melody of “Confirmation” with this same syncopation at jam sessions, further illustrating its common use in jazz vocabulary.

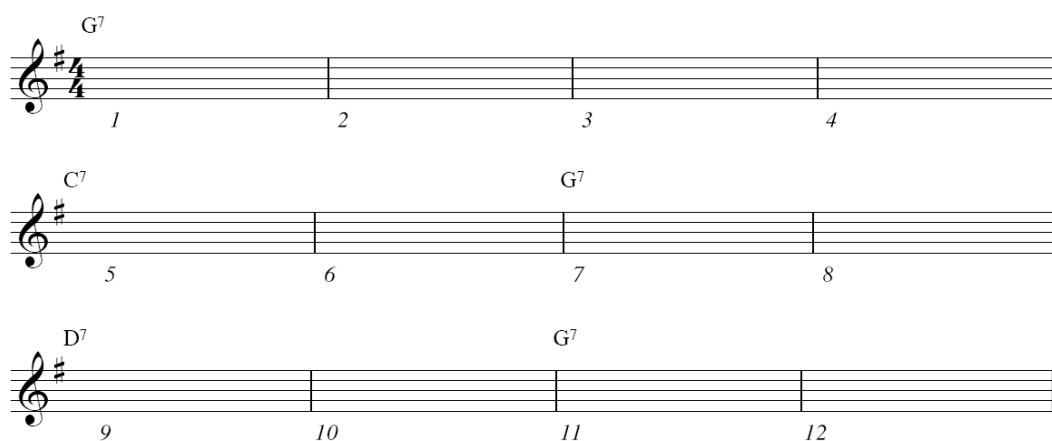
In Fig. 13, we can see syncopation similar to that in measures 8 and 9 of Fig. 12. In “26-2,” the syncopation occurs around the structurally significant measure 1, similarly avoiding an important downbeat. While the melody does not so strongly overlap the phrase structure as in Tucker’s solo, it is clear that syncopations that avoid important structural signposts in jazz are not exceedingly rare. A quick survey of jazz performances would reveal countless examples; I believe Tucker’s choice to perform in this manner is more a testament to his rhythmic sense than a sign of musical confusion.

Most importantly, this edit of Monson’s transcription is audibly valid. Tucker’s phrase *feels* completed at the end of measure 10 whether it obscures the formal structure of the chorus or not. The double stop A2 and D3 is the lowest point in the line, and Tucker’s pause here seems significant. Monson’s original placement of this phrase, ending in the middle of measure 11 of the chorus, seems counterintuitive to jazz phrasing. Additionally, the edited transcription in Fig. 12 more strongly reinforces the harmonic structure of a blues chorus. I will argue that beyond the syncopated rhythm discussed above, there are basic features of Tucker’s line that demonstrate awareness of his place in the form. To make these assertions however, it is important to first confront the harmonically fluid nature of blues form in performance.

Hodson examines this harmonic ambiguity in his own work, citing varied performances of a blues form. “The blues form is extremely malleable, existing in countless variations, yet each of these variations is identifiably ‘the blues.’ The paradox of the blues is that even though the many variations seem very different, they are

somehow the same.”<sup>11</sup> Hodson goes on to theorize that each variation of the blues is relatable to another due to an underlying “deep structure.”<sup>12</sup> Hodson asserts that below the “surface level” of a blues, which can contain as many as two chords per measure (and occasionally more), there is basic harmonic underpinning that all blues performances maintain.<sup>13</sup> He notates this deep structure of the blues in his book, which I have recreated in Fig. 14. I have additionally transposed Hodson’s original from F Major to G Major, putting this structural diagram in the same key as “Bass-ment Blues.”

Fig. 14



<sup>11</sup> Hodson, 53.

<sup>12</sup> The use of this term by Hodson is borrowed from Chomsky’s *Cartesian Linguistics*.

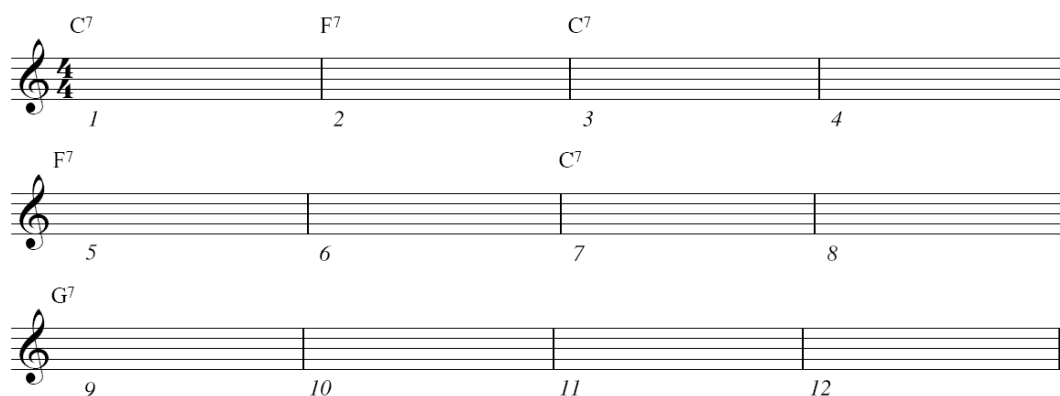
<sup>13</sup> There are many exceptions to blues deep structure in modern jazz, but for the purposes of the average blues performance, deep structure works quite well.



Hodson's diagram is interesting, and does accurately portray a sense of the underlying structure of a basic blues as most listeners and performers hear it. Below, I will explore this structure in relation to Tucker's performance. However, I will additionally alter this structure in several ways, illuminating my own ideas about the nature of harmonic ambiguity in jazz performance practice. While Hodson's deep structure of the blues is a valuable theoretical tool, it is important to note that musicians often approach the blues from *below* its deep structure, *not* singularly above as Hodson describes. In less abstract terms, while surface level additions are clear embellishments to the deep structure of a harmonic form, deep structure can also be altered through subtraction.

Subtraction from deep structure is observable in Junior Mance's solo on "Light and Lovely," explored in the previous chapter. The harmonic structure of the chorus beginning at 6:32—directly before the "Everyday" chorus—is notated in Fig. 15, derived from a synthesis of Mance's piano playing and Gales's bass line.

Fig. 15



There are two differences between Hodson's deep structure and this chorus of "Light and Lovely." First, the F7 in the second measure of the chorus is definitely a surface level inclusion; Hodson acknowledges the possibility of this specific addition in his book in his example 2.10b.<sup>14</sup> More importantly, the last four measures, beginning in measure 9, are harmonically different from Hodson's structure in Fig. 14. Mance emphasizes a G pedal in measure 9, which is picked up rhythmically and harmonically by Gales, as discussed in the previous chapter. Rather than resolving to C7 in measure 10 as Hodson's deep structure would suggest, these musicians project some sort of G harmony through all four measures of the final phrase of the chorus.

The last four measures of Fig. 15 represent an alteration to Hodson's deep structure of the blues, but not at the surface level. Instead, the harmony is altered below the level of Hodson's deep structure, subtracting the expected harmonic movement to C7

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<sup>14</sup> Hodson, 54.

in measure 10 from the form. It is possible that this permanently alters Hodson's diagram, as harmonic changes occur even less often than in his example. This requires some attention, but I will not spend time parsing the perfect deep structure diagram here. For our purposes, it is only important to acknowledge the possibility of this particular type of harmonic subtraction, as it is present in George Tucker's solo on "Bass-ment Blues."

By editing Monson's transcription in Fig. 12, I have shown that Tucker's phrase fits rhythmically within the 12-measure chorus. Borrowing Hodson's deep structure concept helps demonstrate that Tucker's phrase fits harmonically as well. Fig. 16 is a transcription of the last four measures of chorus three and the first measure of chorus four, beginning at 1:14 of the recording. Note that Fig. 16 overlaps Fig. 12; this is still the chorus that includes Tucker's first "mistake." Additionally, Fig. 16 includes a Hodson-influenced deep structure harmonic overlay.

Fig. 16



Tucker's emphasis of D through and octave in measures 10 and 11 is easily audible as a statement of some sort of D harmony, complimented by a bebop style lick beginning on beat four of measure 11, leading back to G at the start of the next chorus. The lick beginning in measure 9 is more ambiguous, but it appears that Tucker is performing in the key of G.

It is possible that Tucker is strongly altering the deep structure by substituting a G harmony in measure 9, but highly unlikely. I would argue that a deep structure D harmony in measures 9 or 10 is essential to preserve the audible signature of a blues.<sup>15</sup> Performing a lick in G over a D harmony is not uncommon; in fact, soloists often use a G blues scale throughout the entire form. Tucker's line in measure 9 even includes "blue" pitches. This being the case, Tucker is likely approaching the ending of this chorus by subtracting from the deep structure exactly as Junior Mance does in "Light and Lovely," prolonging the dominant harmony through the last four measures of a blues chorus. Tucker does not make a mistake as Monson suggests; instead, he is subtracting harmony from Hodson's deep structure, while additionally obscuring the same phrase with complex syncopation. The harmonic ambiguity of this passage is definitely daunting, and could easily be interpreted as a mistake on paper.

Another example of supposed formal confusion occurs at the ending of chorus four.

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<sup>15</sup> There are exceptions to this rule. Some blues forms never reach the dominant, and instead remain on the tonic for the entirety of mm. 9-12. However, in listening to this performance, I would argue that dominants are present throughout.

Fig. 17



Fig. 17 is comprised of the last four measures of chorus four and the first measure of chorus five, audible at 1:37 of the recording. Here, it is important to make a simple correction in transcription to assist this analysis. In Monson's measure 44, she has notated Tucker's pitch on beat one as a D3, but in fact, it is an A2, which I have notated on beat one of measure 9 in Fig. 17. Tucker's oscillations between A and E audibly emphasize A as a root in measures 9 and 10. In the key of G, A is the ii chord. If we consult Hodson's deep structure diagram, it is clear that the placement of a ii chord in measure 9 of a blues matches Hodson's placement in Fig. 2.10b.

According to Hodson's diagram, measure 10 should next include a D harmony, followed by G in measures 11 and 12, a simple ii-V-I. Interestingly, though D's are sounded in measure 9, there is no placement of D in measure 10 where it would be expected. However, I would argue that the placement of the ii harmony in measure 9 coupled with the sounding of D in the same measure, implies a D harmony in measure 10. As discussed above, the presence of a D harmony somewhere in measures 9 and 10 is essential to convey the audible character of a blues; the listener and performer "hear" a dominant following the A harmony.

In fact, the A harmony is simply a surface level addition in the first place. Example 2.10a of Hodson's diagram—his deepest structural level—removes the embellishing ii chord and instead includes only the dominant (V) in measures 9 and 10, as in Fig. 14. I would argue that the A harmony, being a surface level embellishment typical resolved to the dominant, evokes the dominant sound expected by the listener in these measures, although an actual dominant is not present. Tucker's return to tonic G in measures 11 and 12 of the chorus matches Hodson's deep structure in example 2.10a, further emphasizing the need for a dominant function in measure 10; a harmonic move from A to G at this point in the form would be audibly unconvincing.

In Monson's transcription, the G on the "and" of 2 in measure 11 is notated as the start of chorus five. Monson likely assumed that because Tucker began chorus three with a similar figure, it would likely be placed in the same hypermetrical position in the form. However, though Tucker does often place this figure at the top of a 4-measure hypermeter, this is not always the case, as in measures 11 and 12 of chorus one of Monson's transcription.<sup>16</sup> In chorus 1, Tucker places the figure in the last two measures of the chorus, just as in Fig. 16. Monson also probably guessed that a ii-V followed by G harmony in this position would have to be the start of a new chorus, and so notated the start of the chorus at the first obvious statement of G harmony. As we have observed in Hodson's deep structure diagram, a tonic harmony in the last two measures of a blues chorus is also possible; Fig. 16 matches Hodson's diagram. Again, without a familiarity

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<sup>16</sup> The chorus-one transcription is on p. 144 of *Saying Something*.

and understanding of the variety of harmonic plans available in a blues chorus, Tucker's harmonic choices could easily be observed as mistakes.

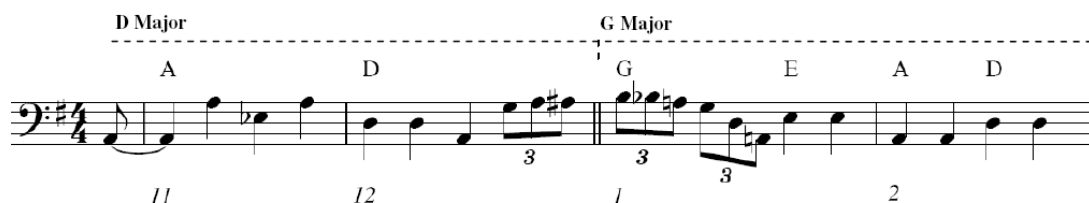
The resolution of chorus 9 into the beginning of chorus 10 presents more opportunities to observe the relationship between surface and deep structure. Monson explains that Tucker “gets off again by beginning a two-measure turnaround ... two measures earlier than its expected location” and that he “plays a second turnaround... which was the correct location for the turnaround in the chorus structure established in chorus 7.”<sup>17</sup> Monson explains that Tucker is trying to correct his earlier mistake by restarting the turnaround that ends the chorus.

Fig. 18 is a transcription of these two turnarounds beginning at 3:37, consisting of the last two measures of chorus 9 and the first two measures of chorus 10. In this figure, rather than assuming that Tucker is correcting his own line, I have placed it over the normal chorus structure implied by Byard and Dawson. This transcription includes another Hodson-influenced overlay, and I have also added supplementary surface level chords written directly above the notated music.

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<sup>17</sup> Monson, 172.

Fig. 18



Monson hears two turnarounds in this passage. These are definitely observable—the A harmony in measure 9 moves to D before resolving to G at the start of measure 1 of chorus ten. Then, Tucker initiates a chain of chords separated by fourths: E, A, and D—a second turnaround. While according to the other musicians in the group, measure 1 marks the top of the form, Monson claims that Tucker is lost due to the turnaround in measures 1 and 2, assuming that these measures are in fact measures 11 and 12 of Tucker's blues chorus. However, close analysis of this passage reveals something different.

If we imagine that Tucker is not lost, and in fact aware of his place in the form, measures 11 and 12 of Fig. 18 depict a simple surface-level change to the deep structure of the blues. First, where Hodson would expect a G chord over these two measures, we are instead presented with a measure of A and a measure of D. As before, the A chord is a surface level embellishment of the deep structure D harmony. The presence of dominant harmony in the last two measures of the blues form matches the altered deep structure diagram in Fig. 14, which delays the resolution to the tonic until the start of the next chorus.



Tucker's turnaround in measures 1 and 2 presents more surface level additions to deep structure. Measure 1 begins with a B3, not arriving at the tonic G3 until the start of beat two. However, the collection of notes from the first two beats of this measure unquestionably revolve around G. Tucker next initiates the turnaround starting on E in beat three of measure 1, completing the chain with A and D. While this turnaround (I-vi-ii-V) is common at the end of a blues form as Monson suggests, it works equally well as a surface addition over the static four measures of tonic harmony at the top of the chorus. Adding this turnaround here (especially in the bass part) creates much needed harmonic variety and forward motion, as simply playing a G chord for four measures can be quite boring. Tucker's insertion of these changes in this moment is actually a more musical and creative approach to the first four measures of a blues, not a signal of being lost in the form.<sup>18</sup> The surface level harmonies here are simply another example of the variety of harmonic choices possible within a blues form, which are essential to an understanding of Tucker's solo.

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<sup>18</sup> In an email to me, Dr. Lewis Porter also explained that Monson's claim that Byard shouts "one" in her measure 107 (to help Tucker find the form) is incorrect. Byard is actually saying "walk," and Tucker obliges almost immediately.

## Conclusion

Monson attempts to show that Tucker's loss of form, coupled with the efforts of Byard and Dawson to draw him back in, is demonstrative of the value of communication in jazz performance. "The repair of these moments—having the poise to take problems and make aesthetic virtues of them—is one of the most highly prized skills of an improviser."<sup>1</sup> In Monson's mind, conversation related to problem solving is emblematic of the immense amount of trust held between these musicians. Trust *is* important in jazz performance, as working through a blues as abstract as "Bass-ment Blues" contains an element of risk. Pieces like this require musicians to "trust the musical abilities of other band members in performance, especially if they are taking musical risks."<sup>2</sup> Monson additionally attributes trust with a social function, "involved not only in the production of performances but in the establishment and maintenance of human and/or spiritual relationships."<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the analysis above clearly shows that conversations developed around Tucker's mistakes are not present in "Bass-ment Blues." Hodson's deep structure concept clarifies that Tucker is simply addressing the form of the tune in a more complex manner. This makes the discussion of blues aesthetics in this analysis somewhat problematic. However, the tune does perhaps illustrate an alternate type of conversation. By manipulating Hodson's deep structure idea, we can observe Tucker's persistent

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<sup>1</sup> Monson, 176.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 181-182.

harmonic alterations as revisions that Signify on alternate texts—in this case, other versions of the blues form. Tucker could perhaps be entering into a conversation between himself and the formal structure of the blues as it has been performed throughout history, complementing Monson’s discussion of intermusical, historical reference.

If this abstraction is allowed, it further complicates the metonym present in *Saying Something*. Just as in Gates’s use of Signifyin(g) in jazz, the application of conversational metaphors in Monson’s musical analysis is a challenge. If music is like conversation, we must then be aware of the amalgam of possible conversation parties in performance. The nature of these parties can vary widely; Tucker’s potential intermusical conversation with the form above is exemplary. Next, we must observe these intermusical relationships between parties as potential statements of cultural comment and critique, fusing them to cultural abstractions influenced by a blues aesthetic. The amount of variables involved in this type of analysis makes for a difficult study; balancing these cultural narratives with the actual detail of musical performance is not a simple task. In the case of *Saying Something*, the blues-aesthetic lens subtracts from the specific details of musical performance, just as in the *Signifyin(g) Monkey*.

Further study of “Bass-ment Blues” should examine the musical relationships between Tucker and other members of the band. These were avoided in this analysis to favor the harmonic alterations to deep structure in Tucker’s playing, which were essential in arguing Tucker’s awareness of the blues form. Investigating the interactive process between these musicians could shed some much needed light on the improvisational element of form in jazz performance discussed above, perhaps eliciting the use of a

blues-aesthetic lens. After all, this process does involve a sort of conversation requiring trust between these musicians.

Monson's analysis of "Bass-ment Blues" recalls the principal argument of this thesis. A musical analysis influenced by the blues aesthetic can highlight some features of musical performance previously ignored in analysis, but the complexity and breadth of the aesthetic can often cloud a theoretical argument. An analysis infused with blues aesthetic reasoning must be balanced; the cultural abstractions of blues aesthetic theory must be joined with an accurate picture of the music being analyzed. Blues aesthetic should naturally appear to the observer if he or she begins with a complete and thorough examination of the music involved.

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, jazz and other African American music has been linked to the advocacy, description, and dispersal of African American culture. Music is considered by many scholars and writers to be a microcosm of this same culture; in turn, theorists have reflected this same aesthetic back into the theoretical analysis of music. Many have discovered that the use of a blues-aesthetic lens allows for the illumination of aspects of performance that go unnoticed in traditional, Western musical analysis. At the same time, the application of a wide, cultural lens into musical analysis presents problems. Without a proper balance between a theoretical detail and cultural abstraction, many analyses tend to become unfocused, unable to link blues aesthetic concepts to musical specifics.

In this thesis, I have shown that it is possible to balance these concepts in an analysis using "Light and Lovely," but additionally demonstrated the issues with such a

strategy in “Signifying” and “Bass-ment Blues.” Regardless, this aesthetic is undeniably valuable in musical analysis, and while it is difficult to negotiate, practiced theorists understand its potential to expand and evolve the practical applications of music theory.

### **Appendix: Interviews**

My interview with Junior Mance took place on October 4, 2013. It was conducted over the phone, and lasted approximately 35 minutes. The recording has been preserved as a .wav file. Junior Mance is a professional jazz pianist, born October 10, 1928 in Evanston, Illinois. Though most of his career he worked as a sideman, his trio recordings of the late 1960s gained some popularity among jazz listeners. His playing has graced hundreds of recordings, including those of Lester Young, Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, Gene Ammons, Johnny Griffin, and Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis.

**DS:** I saw you’re playing in Newark next week for your birthday.

**JM:** Uh, man, my schedule is such—I don’t know. They got me lined up here. Thanks to the New School and other places. They got me busy man, I don’t know what.

**DS:** I’m studying the interactions between you, Larry Gales and Ben Riley when you were in the Tough Tenors group in 1960 through 1962. I have some questions about that group if that’s ok.

**JM:** I tell you, it’s one of the best groups I ever played with, and we’re still great friends.

**DS:** I know you had met Lockjaw at some clubs in New York. Is that how you ended up in the group?

**JM:** No, we just found each other before I ever started recording. We're like artists you know. Johnny's from Chicago as I am. Johnny and I played together when we were getting out of high school.

**DS:** Wow, so it was actually a long time. How long did you play with them?

**JM:** Oh man, let me see. I've been living here in New York since—I can't even remember! I'm 85 years old now you know. I don't know. Johnny's close to the same age.

**DS:** How long were you with that specific group though, that configuration with you, Larry Gales and Ben Riley?

**JM:** On and off for as more years as you can count or imagine.

**DS:** So the recordings don't really cover that amount of space—

**JM:** We were friends forever. We worked a lot of clubs together.

**DS:** Before all the recordings were done?

**JM:** Yeah, and after too. I can't even remember all of them.

**DS:** I was able to find a couple old newspapers clippings from you guys.

**JM:** Oh yeah? I have to say, that was one of the greatest groups I played for. And not only that, we were friends too. We were friends before we started working so many gigs together. We were tight.

**DS:** Speaking of that by the way, you guys were insanely tight as a group. Were you rehearsing as a group?

**JM:** Sometimes we were, sometimes we didn't.



**DS:** Did you guys rehearse to work out things for the audience or would you run down arrangements? How did it work?

**JM:** We just played. Lockjaw was a little older than I. Johnny and I were the same age, and so most of the stuff that we played we got from Jaws. And it was just a thing. We all just thought alike. We did everything together. We were just a tight group of friends actually. It's a thing now that doesn't happen too much. Guys get all into themselves and want to record, you know. But back then we got together and made recordings. And we were offered recordings more from the record companies. They would come and hear us play at a club. The clubs booked more trios. Now everybody's a star booking and he picks his own people to work with. That's why I don't get into it much.

**DS:** I see what you mean.

**JM:** Yeah, because this thing—you know, the certain people that we played with lasted and lasted forever. Those are the days I remember fondly.

**DS:** You and Ben Riley really catch a lot of hits together. You do a lot of riffing.

**JM:** We had things that we do.

**DS:** Why do you think you guys worked so well together? Was that because of your long term connection?

**JM:** No we just happened to—Ben wasn't from Chicago, Ben is a New Yorker. Only Johnny and I were from Chicago. We went to different high schools and we were that age. It just happened. In those days, those kind of things just happened. If you played together with somebody, well, there were no questions asked. We just played tunes—"Hey man that's good, let's see if we can record that." It was just a natural thing that we did.

**DS:** It seems like you guys built your own language in that group.

**JM:** Yeah, we did!

**DS:** It's interesting how in a lot of the recordings you seem to have a very specific order of things. It would always be the head, and then Lockjaw would solo, and then you would solo, and then Griffin. Was that a chosen thing or did that just happen naturally over time?

**JM:** Well, both. See, Lockjaw had more experience than we had. Lockjaw had been with the Basie band. Johnny Griffin was pretty much the same age. We were just the guys that hung out and played with everybody, sat in with everybody, you know. Liked to play.

**DS:** So he always goes first because he's the best. (laughing)

**JM:** Well, it so happened, that was the first time Jaws and I played together. We just got together in the clubs in New York and went on from there. Yeah, we were known as the Tough Tenors in those days. That was the name they gave us.

(referencing earlier question)

Nothing was written, if that's what you mean. Nothing. We just got together and put a song together. That's another thing it's not like that anymore. Guys now are more esoteric I might say. They fill out their arrangements, I guess looking for something new. Most of the time when we were recording we just went in to the studio and recorded.

**DS:** You just worked them out in the studio?

**JM:** Yeah! Well that's what we were playing to. Every gig we just worked them out on the gig.

**DS:** So you would stand up on the stage and work out the arrangement, and then you'd keep using them if you liked them?

**JM:** How old are you?

**DS:** I'm 23, I'm young.

**JM:** Oh man (laughs), I was gonna say—Yeah, I think I was a little older than 23.

Lockjaw was older than all of us, because he had been with Basie, and he'd been with all the guys that worked with Basie before then.

**DS:** Are you a big Basie fan?

**JM:** Hell yes!

**DS:** I thought so.

**JM:** You better believe it!

**DS:** I'm a big fan too, I try to collect all the recordings.

**JM:** That's what I did to, because my father was a big Basie fan. He listened to music, he didn't play it professionally.

**DS:** Yeah, you said he played stride piano for fun, right?

**JM:** Yes he did, when I started playing piano. We were very close. I didn't have to say "Dad, can I do that, can I do this gig"—He was in the corner, the whole time I played. In fact, he passed away this year Dave, at 101.

**DS:** 101! That's crazy!

**JM:** Well, he was from the South, he's from Georgia. But when I was born, he lived in Chicago. The last thing he told me before he died—I went to see him in Augusta,

Georgia. And he mentioned to me, “Son, if you really believe in what you do, don’t retire.”

**DS:** Wow.

**JM:** So retire is not a word in my vocabulary anymore.

**DS:** Well, it doesn’t seem like it.

**JM:** Oh, he was serious. He wasn’t a professional, he played piano for his own good. He could’ve been a great stride piano player. When I started playing, that’s how he played. I’ll tell you how it happened. I remember when I was a kid, about 10 or 11 years old. You know times were kind of hard, you move into an apartment and then that’s it, the way it is. We moved into an apartment where the previous people that lived there had this old upright that they just left in the apartment. So would you believe, the guy that owned the house and the piano was our landlord. And he was also a music teacher, and he was my first music teacher. He started me before I started getting other guys. He was just like a basic music teacher.

**DS:** Like chords or theory?

**JM:** Yeah well, chords, scales, and everything, from the beginning. That's all he could play! He sounded like an old time piano player.

**DS:** Like James P. Johnson or something like that?

**JM:** Yeah that was all typical. I told you, I'm 85 now, so imagine what the guys were playing back then.

**DS:** That stuff was a huge influence on Basie too!

**JM:** That was an influence on all of us. I started working gigs back then because the law didn't shut down dances or private parties. People were always hiring us [piano players] and other musicians too. We worked as much as musicians now, there just weren't as many clubs. People would have house parties with our group, the three of us.

**DS:** So you started doing that way in the beginning of your life.

**JM:** Yeah, I think it was before I went to high school. I started taking lessons—I must have been about 10 or 11.

**DS:** That's about when I started.

**JM:** Oh yeah? Great. Keep at it, and you'll be surprised at how fast you go. There's so much happening now. You will try to grab it all, and you will. You'll grab it all.

**DS:** I hope so.

**JM:** Be glad that you started that age, that's exactly about the age I started.

**DS:** You have many, many years on me though. (laughs)

**JM:** Oh, I got a whole lot of years on you. (laughs) In a few days I'll be 85. I was born 1928.

**DS:** I saw your birthday a couple different things, what is it actually?



**JM:** Oct. 10, 1928. I was born the same day as Monk. He was one of my good friends, Thelonious. When we found that out, guess what, he looks at me and says, “No wonder you’re so weird.”

**DS:** He said that to you?

**JM:** We were just standing around, a bunch of guys, talking about age, and he said that. Well he was kidding, he laughed. That was after I came to New York and we were talking about birthdays. I told him I was born October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1928. And he looks at me and says, “No, wonder you’re so weird.” Can you imagine Thelonious saying that to somebody?

**DS:** I can’t even imagine him saying that.

**JM:** And we’re best friends now.

**DS:** You know, one of my favorite solos you took with that group? I don’t know if you even remember your specific recordings.

**JM:** I can remember most of them.

**DS:** Do you remember that solo from “Light and Lovely” that you took?

**JM:** That was nothing but the blues. With Lockjaw and Johnny.

**DS:** Wasn’t that the time with Lockjaw and Johnny? With the trio?

**JM:** No, that’s the quintet. Yeah, that was during the same time we had the trio. “Light and Lovely.” With Jaws and Johnny.

**DS:** You quoted “Every Day I Have the Blues” in that. Did you know that?

**JM:** What do you mean, the melody?

**DS:** Yeah, you quoted that Basie tune.

**JM:** Yeah, well that was when the tune first come up. That was about the first time they heard it. I wouldn't quote them now—well I would probably. I don't think about those things, they just come to mind and I just play them.

**DS:** So that just exploded in your brain all of a sudden?

**JM:** It's just a thing to probably come up—(sings the melody)—that's an old time blues singer's line. (Sings again) That's an old time blues.

**DS:** It's cool because the rhythm section catches you so fast—they catch all the hits. It's totally amazing.

**JM:** That's why the blues singers followed the rhythm. I'm telling you, they all had rhythm, all those blues singers back then. They didn't have trios or groups to work with. They had more gigs by themselves than us with groups!

**DS:** It seems like the blues was a big part of that group's recordings.

**JM:** That's a big part of everybody's recordings, and don't let nobody lie to you, 'cause some people played the blues so much better than others—and some guys lie, they don't know that much about the blues. If they were around then, they'd know everything about the blues.

**DS:** So then do you think one of the reasons you guys played together so well it because everybody in the band—

**JM:** That's the reason everybody plays together. You got to learn how to play the blues before you learn how to play jazz. Jazz is built mainly around the blues. I won't say it is the blues, but it's built mainly around the blues. James P. Johnson and all those guys, they used to get a solo gig and play the hell out of the blues, there'd be dancing going on.

**DS:** It's evident in your playing that you're knowledgeable about how the blues works.

**JM:** I know it, I couldn't sing it. Guys started calling me a blues player even before I graduated high school.

**DS:** I bet you you could sing.

**JM:** No I can't sing. (laughs) No, no. If I was a singer I'd be doing something else now. No, I could never sing. See, then they had those old time recordings and things. And I used to listen to all of them. See, I started working young. When I was out of high school I had more gigs than most of my friends, like Johnny and Jaws. And that's how we learned to play. I call them the old masters.

**DS:** Who would you say are the old masters?

**JM:** All them guys from back then.

**DS:** So you listened to a lot of blues recordings besides just jazz music?

**JM:** Yes, that was before jazz as it is known now existed. Everything was the blues.

**DS:** Yeah, I think it seems like a lot of players today don't check out that earlier stuff.

**JM:** Thank you. You know, you're the first person I've heard say that. I got so steeped in playing the blues, a friend of mine who was a college teacher, he said, "You can't lose

with the blues. If you can't play the blues you've got holes in your shoes" and that stuck with me, you know. After a while everybody was saying that. But that's true. The blues is the foundation for jazz. To me it is. Everything was built on the blues. Change wise it can change, but you're still gonna hear that blues trickle through. Even the younger guys that are playing now—there's a blues influence whether they want to admit it or not.

**DS:** Yeah, it's just permeated into the vocabulary so much that sometimes you don't even notice anymore. It's just there.

**JM:** Yeah, that's true that you mention that because that's all that it is—blues. They couldn't find another name for it.

**DS:** Did Lockjaw ever give you any blues tips about how to perform?

**JM:** Oh yeah, Lockjaw was with Basie at a young age. He was older than Johnny and I both.

**DS:** So did he give you any instructions when you were playing in that group? The Tough Tenors?

**JM:** Not really. He just set a riff to play, and this is the melody we want, and we'd play it. That's the way the music went then, we didn't write no charts and all of that. It was written for larger groups, but for the three of us? What do we need with a chart?

**DS:** So what about when there were five of you?

**JM:** What did we need charts for then? We'd been playing without them all the time. And even now man, you'd be surprised at the number of bands that never use charts anymore. The blues is a natural form of music, and a lot of guys won't admit that because they're afraid of the blues—they're afraid to try it. But most of the guys now around here, they can play some blues. And they're lying if they say they can't.

**DS:** Who was a big piano blues influence for you? Like a pre-jazz kind of person that you really liked.

**JM:** Pete Johnson and Albert Ammons.

**DS:** Yeah, I remember you mentioning Pete Johnson in an interview.

**JM:** Yeah, see I knew Albert's son, Gene Ammons. He's from Chicago also. And he gave me one of my first gigs.

**DS:** Wait, he's the sax player, right?

**JM:** Yeah, with Billy Eckstine. He's older than both Ben and me.

**DS:** So he hooked you up with some gigs early on?

**JM:** Oh yeah. See Chicago was never New York as far as getting gigs and everything. I mean they were both good but they both had their own styles and things. Chicago went more for the—I'm not gonna get into that but it was a little different sound. It was great. That's the one good thing about jazz music. You can go to different places in this country and find they're playing different.

**DS:** That's so true. It's an incredible music.



**JM:** I'll tell you, most of the blues players even my age, we never stopped listening to what the other guys were doing. We listen to everybody. I'm trying to think of who it was, the great player—oh, I did a gig. This is more recent than that, this is about five years—no about ten years ago. A gig on a cruise ship where they feature jazz groups. And one of the players on the thing was Benny Carter. So Benny had to play with all the saxophone players, like himself and Flip Phillips. It wasn't us that put them together, they just put names together. So the group I was with, you know, we were all around my age. Johnny and a few of the cats, you know. So every night, the other big names would go on first and before we were through, guess who would come up and ask could sit in with us? Benny. Benny Carter. I just said one night, "You have to ask?" I said, "Stop asking, just get up here and play." That stuck with me, and we became great friends after that. And every night during the cruise he'd play with Flip Phillips and all those cats, and they only did one set on a jazz cruise. A jazz cruise was a thing to draw people in, they pick their own artists so to speak. So Benny wanted to play with us! I forget who was playing, Johnny may have been playing with us, but we had then what would be known as an All Star group, and Benny would play one set with them guys, and then he would come over to us. He'd say, "So are you guys fine if I sit in with you?"

(on Lester Young)

**JM:** It was a shock to me when he asked me to play with him. I'll tell you what the shock was. I was working a gig in Chicago through Gene Ammons. So Prez was working one night in there, so after this gig he came by the little club we was working and listened to us. So I whispered something to Gene, and then during intermission—Prez had a funny way of talking too, you know—Prez says, "I don't know how you'd feel

about it, but if you'd like the gig with me the slave is yours." So I told Gene about it, you know, we talked it over. And Gene says, "Man, you should take it." And he told me why. Gene that same day had an offer from Woody Herman. One of the Four Brothers was a junkie. You know, they let him go. And Gene took that gig. Gene told me, he says, "I'm gonna take this gig with Woody Herman, why don't you take that one." He said, "We'll be back together sooner than you think." 'Cause those bands change guys a lot. So sure enough, he stayed with Woody about a year, and I stayed with Prez a little longer than a year. And we got back together. And I must have been with Gene about 15 years after that. And I stayed with Prez about five years.

**DS:** That was what, '49? Yeah. You're on that complete Savoy session.

**JM:** Yeah, that's who he recorded for. I was on cloud nine to play with Prez. He's the one named me June Bug, that was the name of one of the tunes. Yeah, we were doing the record date, and all it is is blues. Prez started playing some blues changes, and swingin', you know. So the guy doing the records—the guy in the booth—he asked Prez, "Prez, what's the name of that?" He looked around the room, and it took about 5 minutes to say, "The name of that tune is 'June Bug.'" And that's why it got that name, it stuck. 'Cause June Bug is a name that most father's—who can't think of a name for their son, you know. June Bug is really a slang way of saying Junior.

**DS:** I wouldn't even have caught that reference.

**JM:** Yeah, that's what it is. Anybody called June Bug was originally a Junior. So during that record date, he hadn't thought of a name for it, and he just looked at me and told the guy in the booth, "The name of that record is 'June Bug.'" It stuck. And it was very beneficial to me, 'cause you know the following Prez had. And all the cats started calling me June Bug.

**DS:** It seems like your career blew up after that. You were playing with everyone.

**JM:** Yeah I did, I was lucky then, because I had played with Prez, it was easy. I never had to ask for a gig.

**DS:** Mr. Mance, thank you so much for talking to me.

**JM:** Listen, you are quite welcome.

**DS:** This is like a dream come true for me.

**JM:** Yeah, well, anytime. Come by and make yourself known, I'll remember you.

### **Ben Riley Interview**

My interview with Ben Riley took place on March 9, 2014. It was conducted over the phone, and lasted approximately 20 minutes. The recording has been preserved as a .wav file. Ben Riley is a professional jazz drummer, born July 17, 1933 in Savannah, Georgia. Riley is most famously known as a member of Thelonious Monk's trio through a large part of the 1960's. Additionally, he performed often with the Tough Tenors and Alice Coltrane. Throughout his career, he has taken part in countless performances with the most prominent musicians in jazz.

**DS:** You were with Junior Mance for a lot of years. How did you guys meet originally?

**BR:** Dizzy Gillespie. He was working with Dizzy, and I was working with another group and we met that way. And then Dizzy had us do a set with him.

**DS:** So then did Junior call you to play together or did you just agree that you should record together?

**BR:** Well, we got hooked up. I forgot how it happened, it was so long ago.

**DS:** You mentioned in a previous interview that everyone in the Tough Tenors group had different playing styles. What did you mean by that?

**BR:** Yeah, everybody was independent. They all had a style of their own that they created.

**DS:** Why do you think you guys blended so well as a unit? Those recordings from Minton's and a couple other things—

**BR:** We always tried to enhance each other and listen to each other. And play for each other.

**DS:** It seems like you are a very supportive drummer. That your style is about enhancing the other musicians in the group.

**BR:** That's how we came up.

**DS:** You feel like you were taught that way initially?

**BR:** We came up through the era where that's what was happening. All the super stars had their own identity and passed on what they had to another person, and another person would use what they could from that. So what you do is you listen to a lot of people, and they play something you like. So you try to use some of that for you, and you play it the way you feel comfortable doing it.

**DS:** So that's the kind of advice you'd give to someone who was trying to learn be a good accompanist?

**BR:** Yeah. You listen to a lot of people, and fortunately in those days we played coming out of the church and what not. You had an opportunity to understand how to accompany. You learn lyrics, and you understood how—for me, I was lucky to work with all those singers I worked with, because I heard different styles and different lyrics, and different ways that they would approach maybe the same song, but they would all have their own style. So that's what you look for. What you can do and what you like, take some of the stuff from each person and put it in your book.

**DS:** Are there any particular lessons you remember learning from a singer you worked with about how to properly accompany them?

**BR:** Well, you learn the lyrics and you learn the way she phrases. That's what you do, you listen to each person you playing with and you learn how they phrase and you accompany that.

**DS:** You say that you were very influenced by church music early on. How do you think that is reflected in the music you and Junior Mance were playing, or even any of your work in general?

**BR:** 'Cause we all came out of the church. We all learned the singing and the phrasing in churches.

**DS:** So would you consider the music coming out of the church to be a blues style or something else?

**BR:** Well, it gave you a feeling, it gave you a thought of how to phrase and how to think about what was going on in their choirs and things.

**DS:** You also mention that you took a trip to African with Abdullah right? You mentioned that that was a really great experience for you. Can you explain to me what that was like?



**BR:** Opportunity to find out playing drums where the drums came from. They were *the* [his emphasis] drummers.

**DS:** Did you bring a drum set to Africa or did you play drums they brought for you?

**BR:** It's been so long, but I think I was probably travelling with drums. In those days we were travelling with our drum sets.

**DS:** That's a lot of stuff to carry around.

**BR:** Well, in those days every band had drums and basses that they all travelled with.

**DS:** It seems like a lot of gigs now are duet gigs with one chordal player and maybe a horn, or maybe a piano player and a singer or something. It's too bad we can't get as many large group gigs now.

**BR:** Well, it depends on I guess who hires you. Actually, a lot of clubs today have drums there. And some of them even have basses there.

**DS:** In the club?

**BR:** Yeah, the club has the instrument and you just come in and sit in on them.

**DS:** That's nice, especially if you have to take the subway.

**BR:** Well that depends on what kind of instrument and how it's tuned, and you've got to go through all of that.

**DS:** You've mentioned that you really liked Junior Mance's playing. You said he filled the proper role in the group. What do you think is the role of a piano player in a group like the trio you guys played in, or even in Tough Tenors?

**BR:** Well, we all accompanied each other, and we learned how each other played, and we accompanied that. How the person played, we would accompany them. Make whatever they're doing sound good.

**DS:** It's cool that you listen so intensely to someone's style and then emulate it.

**BR:** That's what you—try to make it even better and let him relax.

**DS:** When I hear you play with Lockjaw or someone, it's incredible how you set up their next phrase. It's so organic!

**BR:** All of those were good lessons. I had two saxophones with Griffin and Lockjaw, so it was two different ways of phrasing, and so it made you play for each person.

**DS:** There are not that many recordings of Tough Tenors as a group. I talked to Junior Mance and he told me that you played together a lot besides the recordings that you made. All around New York, years before.

**BR:** That's right. They had more jobs then. More clubs around in the area then, so you had a chance to maybe walk two blocks and there'd be a different trio there or a different quartet. So you could listen to different music every block or every other block. We had music going 24 hours a day.

**DS:** You must have had a late schedule!

**BR:** Well, they had after hours clubs.

**DS:** Yeah, what's the deal with that? Nowadays you can't have a bar open past 2 AM, maybe a couple things later than that, but the after hours joints would be open very late right?

**BR:** Oh yeah, right. That's where you would go and hang out, and that's where you met a lot of people.

**DS:** You guys played at Minton's for awhile. Was that a jam session?

**BR:** No.

**DS:** It was just you guys playing every night?

**BR:** Yes, I was working.

**DS:** What a gig.

**BR:** Yeah, yes indeed.

**DS:** It was always the Tough Tenors group?

**BR:** No, there were different groups there, but we were one of the major house groups.

**DS:** I went back into the newspapers from that time, and you guys were all over the newspapers. Did you ever used to see yourself in the newspaper?

**BR:** Well I've seen a few things, yeah.

(in reference to New York scene again)

It was good because in those days, we all associated with each other, and we all went to hear each other play. And everybody who wasn't working—you would go to the club and listen to somebody else and see how what they were doing, and how they were doing it. I tell people, those were the lessons.

**DS:** So not even playing, just listening.

**BR:** Listening, that's right. You learn from listening, but you have different styles.

**DS:** When you sit down with people you haven't played with before, what's the first thing you listen for in order to lock in the band?

**BR:** You listen to everything, to see how they phrase. Get what they're doing so you try to accompany that.

**DS:** You've mentioned that you believe blues is a fundamental part of jazz music, and actually, when I talked to Junior Mance, he said the same thing. My thesis is actually a lot about the blues and its influence in jazz. How do you think it specifically influences you? Is it the singing and the phrasing?

**BR:** Well, that's what it is all about. Each person has a different understanding and a different style, and different ways of phrasing the same music. That's like when I was with Thelonious, it was really something. We could play the same song, but what he did was that he would never play it at the same tempo. We played in different tempos so that

you never got to the point that you would say, “This is what I’ll do here,” because the tempos would change.

**DS:** That’s gotta be so tough.

**BR:** No, that makes you think and do things more.

**DS:** Was he one of the people that taught you to listen like that?

**BR:** He was one. All of the people, but he was one because I was the only drummer with him for five years.

**DS:** Yeah, he must have really liked you.

**BR:** Well, we were friends, and that’s what really made it so beautiful. We were friends. We became friends.

**DS:** There’s nothing better than making music with friends.

**BR:** It was enjoyable because we could socialize with each other. Most of the people that I worked with, we would mostly socialize. In those days, we even involved our families with each other.

**DS:** What do you mean?

**BR:** We would go to certain cities, and all of the guys there would bring their families to meet us. So we'd do the same thing when they came, we'd bring our families. And Thelonious and I, our children knew each other.

**DS:** So you guys really had a multi-generational friendship.

**BR:** Yeah, we really knew each other. So that made the music even more wonderful because you felt lovely and easy when you were doing it.

**DS:** You said you were involved in the church. Did you check out any recordings back then that really influenced you? Something you liked?



**BR:** Mostly all of the music I liked!

**DS:** But what about outside of the jazz world, what did you like to listen to?

**BR:** Well, I listen to some classical that was going through the school. We had blues singers and regular jazz singers. A whole lot of different styles that you could listen to. And it was nice because you enjoy being off, 'cause you went somewhere and you heard something else you like. So that made you say, "Oh, let me try that."

**DS:** Do you have your record collection still?

**BR:** Yeah, I've got some old LPs that I've had for a long time. What I do now is get some tapes of different people that they send me. Tapes of different groups to listen to. And I do.

**DS:** Have you heard anything recently that you like?

**BR:** Actually, I've been here in this hospital trying to get myself together, and I'm slowly doing that so I just haven't thought about too much of nothing right now.

**DS:** Are you feeling good?

**BR:** I'm feeling much better. I'm waiting to see what I gotta do to get out of here and start playing again. Ok, I've got to cut on out now.

**DS:** Thanks a lot for talking to me.

**BR:** All right buddy, you have a good evening. God Bless.

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## Discography

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# David Sanders

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## EDUCATION

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**Rutgers University**, Department of Arts, Culture and Media, Newark, NJ May 2013  
*Candidate, Masters of Arts, Jazz History and Research.*

**Temple University**, Boyer College of Music, Philadelphia, PA May 2012  
*Bachelor of Music, Jazz Performance (Guitar), 3.69 GPA*

## EXPERIENCE

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**Instructor, Rutgers University, Newark** Fall 2013

- Taught “Fundamentals of Music,” an elementary music theory course for non-music majors at Rutgers University, Newark.

**Research Assistant, Rutgers University, Newark** 2012-2013

- Research assistance for Lewis Porter, director, Jazz History and Research M.A. program at Rutgers University.

**Music Instructor, Philadelphia Community Arts Network, Philadelphia, PA**  
 2008-2012

- Taught 7-14 students weekly, private beginner piano and guitar lessons, incorporating theory, notation, and listening skills. Students ranged from age 6-14.

## RESEARCH GRANTS

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**Morroe Berger-Benny Carter Jazz Research Fund Award, Institute of Jazz Studies**  
 Fall 2013

- A research grant awarded to students chosen by professors and other scholars to support their work.

**Creative Arts, Research and Scholarship Grant, Temple University** 2011-2012

- Presented a concert/lecture commemorating George Shearing, who passed away in 2011. Researched, transcribed, and arranged Shearing's music for the concert, rehearsed it with an ensemble, and performed it in a concert hall for the Philadelphia public.

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**PUBLICATIONS/ RECORDINGS**

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**"Lil Wayne: Rebirth," Ethnomusicology Review Sounding Board** August 2013

- An online article examining how drastic changes in Lil Wayne's musical aesthetic resulted in critical backlash.

**Guitarist on "Reboot," by Danny Jonokuchi Experiment** August 2011

- Self released. Original music recorded at Robert Irving Studios in Woodland Hills, CA.

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**HONORS AND AWARDS**

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**Katz Scholarship, Temple University, Boyer College of Music** 2012

- Awarded to academically and musically dedicated Boyer College of Music students.

**Merit Scholarship, Temple University** 2008-2012

- A four-year academic scholarship.

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**PERFORMANCES**

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**Temple University Big Band:** Apollo Theater (May 2011), Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola (May 2010 and May 2011), Kimmel Center (December 2010).

**Personal Performances:** Philadelphia: Chris' Jazz Café, Kimmel Center, Ortlieb's Jazz House, Clef Club, Moonstone Arts Center. Washington D.C.: Twins Jazz Club. NJ: Warped Tour, Starland Ballroom, Stone Pony.