

Jim Novak 9.29.20

Listening Example Discussion for Week 6: Cool Jazz

Cool Jazz vs. Bebop? Cool Jazz compared to earlier styles? Who are some of the performers that contribute? Why the name and who started it?

In general, it seems like all of the musicians play in a smaller dynamic range than in bebop. The soloists tend to play in the mid to low range of their instruments more than in the upper range of bebop. I also really appreciated the use of silence in the solos, as it helps to define the musical ideas they were conveying.

Some of the most well-known musicians that contributed to cool jazz are pianist Dave Brubeck, trumpeter Chet Baker (a personal favorite of mine), saxophonist Gerry Mulligan, and the Modern Jazz Quartet. The first and most influential musician of cool jazz is trumpeter Miles Davis, with *Birth of the Cool* being the first notable cool jazz album.

Gerry Mulligan - Walking Shoes (1956)

This style diverges greatly from the bebop that proceeds it. I enjoy both styles, but while bebop has a general sense of tension and dissonance, this piece was just relaxing both in terms of tempo, style, and chordal structure. It sounds like there are far fewer extended and altered chords, and the dissonances written into the horn parts are fewer and less intense.

The structure of the piece doesn't deviate from what one would expect. The head is followed by a bari sax solo, tenor sax solo, a group solo, and it concludes with the head again. Everything about the piece is relaxed and laid back, from the articulation of the horns to the more straight-ahead playing of the drumset, to the more scalar lines of the bass. It really does create a different sense in the listener than the bebop style did, and I suspect it was well-received by the public in the 1950's.

Stan Getz - Autumn Leaves

While familiar with this jazz standard, I hadn't ever heard this version of it. The first thing that struck me was the guitar voice. I like how prominent it was in the beginning, almost serving as a countermelody to the saxophone melody. After the head, it moves slightly back from the foreground. This piece also follows the traditional structure of head / solo / head. This performance includes tenor saxophone, guitar, piano, bass and set.

Everything about this piece is more subdued than Walking Shoes. The rhythm section really supports Getz with their subdued playing. The set plays pretty straight ahead without playing out of the texture. The piano and guitar comp without taking away from

the tenor solo. The bass supports the combo with a half-note feel, which fits the mood of the performance.