About JazzStandards.com

JazzStandards.com is the first and only centralized information source for the songs and instrumentals jazz musicians play most frequently.

Here you'll find fascinating origins, musical analyses, jazz histories, anecdotes, biographies, and much more. Currently the Top 1000 jazz standards are ranked and the Top 300 are fully documented.

What is a jazz standard? Find the answer to this and other questions in the Site Overview.

Site Overview

You are at JazzStandards.com, a website dedicated to the preservation of information for the musical compositions known as Jazz Standards.

The information at this site has been assembled from hundreds of reference books and historical documents with additional commentary by jazz performers, historians, and musicologists.

In one location you can find:

- A list of the 1000 most-frequently recorded jazz standard compositions (Click on Songs)
- Detailed information on the top 300 jazz standards including origins, historical notes, musical analyses, CD suggestions, and much more (Click on Songs)
- Concise Biographies for the writers and introducing performers
- A decade-by-decade look at Jazz History through the trends, events, and people who shaped the jazz standards canon
- A seven-part series on Jazz Theory.
- References on hundreds of songs to help you in your research (look in Songs, Biographies and the Jazz Standards Bookstore)

Reading and Research

We have *Reading and Research* information on over 600 of our song pages. Each of these song pages tells you where to go for more information and what type of information you'll find there: historical, anecdotal, biographical, music analysis, lyric analysis, song lyrics, sheet music, and more. Here is an example:

"I Can't Get Started"

Additionally you can browse through the JazzStandards.com Bookstore, which has a catalog of 200 books associated with the jazz standards. Organized by category, each entry has an editorial comment to aid you in your research and guide you in your recreational reading. Many of our books may be found at Amazon for two or three dollars! The primary focus of these books is not always the jazz standards per se, so each entry is annotated indicating the book's relevance to the subject.

Overview Contents

Site Overview
What is a “jazz standard”?
What tunes become jazz standards?
What makes a good jazz standard?
How are the jazz standards ranked?
What dataset was used for the ranking?
How many jazz standards are there?

What Is a Jazz Standard?

The terms “standard” and “jazz standard” are often used when one is referring to popular and jazz music compositions. A quick search of the internet reveals, however, that the definitions of these terms can vary widely. So what is a standard? Comparing definitions from a number of dictionaries and music scholars (see *External Definitions*, below) and basing a definition on the points on which they are in agreement, it is reasonable to state:

A “standard” is a composition that is held in continuing esteem and is commonly used in musical repertoires.

And,

A “jazz standard” is a composition that is held in continuing esteem ***and is commonly used as the basis of jazz arrangements and improvisations.***

Sometimes the term “jazz standard” is used to imply a jazz composition that has become a standard. Words and phrases often have multiple valid meanings and this term is no exception. At this site we will use the definition having the more general acceptance, one that allows compositions from any origin. To better understand our decision, consider the contents of the following sheet music collection titled *Jazz Standards*:

Jazz Standards: Melody Line, Chords and Lyrics for Keyboard, Guitar, Vocal (Hal Leonard Publishing, 1998

All the Things You Are
Autumn in New York
Bewitched
Cry Me a River
Don’t Get Around Much Anymore
A Fine Romance
I Can’t Get Started With You
I’ve Got You Under My Skin
The Lady Is a Tramp
Manhattan
Misty
My Funny Valentine
Old Devil Moon
Prelude to a Kiss
Route 66
Smoke Gets in Your Eyes
There’s a Small Hotel
(and more)

Clearly the majority of these “jazz standards” were not originally jazz compositions. When music publishers include the term “jazz standards” in a description or title they almost always are referring to compositions used as the foundation for jazz arrangements or improvisations, regardless of whether or not they were written by a jazz composer.

In general, music authors and theorists also favor the broader definition. Will Friedwald, in his book *Stardust Melodies*, comments how Coleman Hawkins did more than anyone else to establish Johnny Green’s “Body and Soul” as an all-time jazz standard. In *Listening to Class American Popular Songs*, Allen Forte, author and Battell Professor of the Theory of Music at Yale University, refers to Jerome Kern’s ”The Way You Look Tonight” as a jazz standard, a song that was introduced by Fred Astaire in the RKO musical *Swing Time.*

External Definitions

“A composition that is continually used in repertoires.”

American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, Houghton Mifflin company 2000 ISBN 0-395-82517>p>

“A musical piece of sufficiently enduring popularity to be made part of a permanent repertoire, especially a popular song that is held in continuing esteem and is commonly used as the basis of jazz arrangements or improvisations.”

The Unabridged Random House Dictionary 1967 Random House, Inc.

“A standard is a popular song that is well known, frequently performed, and remains in the popular repertoire for at least several years.”

Enjoying Jazz by Henry Martin Schirmer Books, 1986 ISBN 0-02-873130-1

“Composition or song that has, by dint of its lasting memorability and general worth, become a regularly used item in some field of music -a jazz standard, for example.”

The Oxford Companion to Popular Music 1991, Peter Gammond, Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-311323-6

standard (1. – 10.) **11.** a musical piece of sufficiently enduring popularity to be made part of a permanent repertoire, especially a popular song that is held in continuing esteem and is commonly used as the basis of jazz arrangements or improvisations. (**12. – 28.**)

Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (Gramercy New York 1986)

What Tunes Become Jazz Standarda?

The most common categories of origin are:

- Tin Pan Alley*
- Broadway musicals and Hollywood movies
- Jazz composers

In the broadest sense of the definition one might also include:

- Traditional (folk, church, Christmas)
- Rock and roll
- International popular and folk music

* "Tin Pan Alley" may need some explanation. In the first half of the twentieth century many popular compositions were written by the composers and lyricists who worked for publishing houses on West 28th Street in Manhattan. Originally "Tin Pan Alley" referred to a segment of that street. Later it became a generic term for all publishers of American sheet music.

What Makes a Good Jazz Standard?

If you can't put your finger on the appeal of a good song or instrumental, you're in good company. In his book titled Lyrics, Oscar Hammerstein II comments on the most popular of all jazz standards...

"Star Dust" rambles and roams like a truant schoolboy in a meadow. Its structure is loose, its pattern complex. Yet it has attained the kind of long-lived popularity that few songs can claim. What has it got? I'm not certain. I know only that it is beautiful and I like to hear it.

Even without knowing what makes a good composition, we can still answer the question, "What Makes a Good Jazz Standard?" Based on our definition of a jazz standard,
A "jazz standard" is a composition that is held in continuing esteem and is commonly used as the basis of jazz arrangements and improvisations.

the types of compositions that become "good" jazz standards are simply those that the jazz performers esteem, play and record the most.

To better understand why performers pick certain compositions, consider some comments by musicians and musicologists:

"Prelude to a Kiss": The melody has a lot of beautiful chromatic movement, and there are enough key centers and resolutions to keep things interesting when soloing.

"Yesterdays": The melody is strong and easily played or sung, and the tune works at any tempo.

"Body and Soul": The unusual changes in key and tempo are highly attractive and provide a large degree of improvisational freedom ... it is attractive to jazz musicians because of its challenging chord progressions.

Many jazz musicians like to improvise on compositions with familiar chord progressions and others take advantage of relatively flat melodies. Repeated notes, for example, are said to build melodic tension while emphasizing rhythm and holding the door open for harmonic ingenuity.

If you then surmise that jazz performers like both flat and interesting melodies, both familiar and unusual harmonies, and both easy to play and challenging compositions, you're right. The types of compositions that are interesting to jazz performers are as varied as the performers' interests, their backgrounds, and their moods.

So, the answer to the question, "What makes a good jazz standard?" is simply a composition that jazz vocalists and musicians often choose to play, perform, and record. The reasons they choose

compositions are varied and sometimes contradictory. To provide more insight into their reasoning we have included musicians' comments in many of the composition abstracts.

Also, from time to time we will conduct interviews with instrumentalists, vocalists, and musicologists. The first two interviews are with alto saxophonist **Bud Shank**, who talks to JazzStandards.com about his favorite standards, composers and more and with professor, musician, composer and author **Randy Halberstadt**, who discusses why he chooses compositions to play, record, and write about. Click here for the interviews...

How Are the Jazz Standards Ranked?

Before continuing, we should say that jazz music, by its very nature, resists definitions and categorization. It is a given that some visitors to this site will take issue with the ranking system we have devised and we respect their points of view.

We hope the majority will understand that without an underlying structure there would be no way to move forward with our primary and long-term goal: To centralize and preserve information for the compositions jazz artists most frequently record.

When we are done, surely the majority of jazz standards on anyone's list will be included.

The JazzStandards.com ranking system is based on conservative definitions and merely reflects the compositions jazz artists choose to include on their CD recordings. There is no editorial judgment. Simply put, a composition is ranked highest because it has been included most often on currently issued CDs by the greatest number of jazz artists(by "jazz artists" we mean artists whose main body of work is jazz music.) This premise is based on our definition,

A "jazz standard" is a composition that is held in continuing esteem and is commonly used as the basis of jazz arrangements or improvisations.

One area where we considered editing our results was the inclusion of jazz Christmas collections. After some lengthy deliberation, we decided to be true to our "hands-off" editing policy. If we start excluding theme collections should we exclude theme songs from non-theme collections? Should all holiday songs be excluded or just Christmas songs? So while "Jingle Bells" is not usually thought of as a jazz standard, it satisfies our definition and has been recorded by dozens of mainstream jazz artists. As a result, it is on our list.

CD performances have been chosen as the yardstick because the compact disc is currently the most popular medium for the demonstration of a musician's repertoire, style, and performing ability. The compact disc is also an indispensable medium for the listener as few jazz fans are able to attend live performances on a regular basis.

We do not rank a composition higher for multiple performances by the same artist. It would not make sense to call a composition a "jazz standard" simply because one performer has included it on a dozen CDs.

No value is placed upon CD sales figures. The phrase *"commonly used as the basis of jazz arrangements or improvisations"* implies the jazz artist's choice of composition is what is important, not popularity amongst consumers. Based on a sampling of hundreds of thousands tracks on currently available CDs by 700 jazz artists,

- The number one ranked song, “Body and Soul,” was found on CDs by well over 100 different jazz artists
- Compositions having a rank of 750 or higher were found on CDs by at least 10 different jazz artists
- The number 1000 ranked composition was found on CDs by 6 different artists

If CDs by all jazz artists were tallied, the numbers would be much higher, but the ranking would remain virtually the same.

What Dataset Was Used for the Ranking?

Over 1000 jazz artists were identified using various respected jazz music guides. Only the artists who appeared in all of the guides were retained and only artists whose main body of work is jazz -- not pop artists who have dabbled in jazz. This restriction reduced the number of artists to 700. Next, all of the currently available CDs by the 700 artists were identified. Hundreds of thousands of tracks were then tabulated and sorted using extensive rules-based algorithms to normalize the names for programmatic matching purposes. For example, “little” may also be spelled several ways including “li’l” and “lil’”. And “in” “in’” and “ing” may be equivalent as long as “in’” isn’t part of “ain’t”. “Old” may be spelled “Ol’” or “Ol” or “Ole”. “Ghost of a Chance” may be titled “(I Don’t Stand) A Ghost of a Chance (With You)” with or without the parenthesis and with or without either of the parenthetical phrases. Many compositions have two seemingly unrelated titles and different compositions may share the same title. The list of rules goes on and on.

Out-of-print media (CDs, sheet music, and vinyl records) were not included and are not of concern as they are inconsistent with our definition’s phrase “held in continuing esteem.”

How Many Jazz Standards Are There?

The top 750 compositions on JazzStandards.com are routinely found in jazz standard collections and are often referred to as jazz standards in liner notes and reviews. Oscar Levant once characterized his composition “Blame It on My Youth” as a *minor standard. Minor Jazz Standards* may be a good term for the compositions that rank toward the bottom of the list.

Note that the values given above for “number of different artists” performing a given composition are relative values derived from a data set based on 700 jazz artists. It should be noted that there are many jazz artists who were not included in the survey so the “number of different artists” values are actually very conservative.

An astounding fact that came out of this analysis is that **40 percent of the compositions included on Jazz CDs today are arrangements of the 1000 compositions found on JazzStandards.com.**

Jazz Theory

Overview

By Peter Spitzer - Jazz Author, Musician, and Instructor

Peter Spitzer has designed this seven-part series for musicians, students, and fans of the jazz standards. Peter is the author of Jazz Theory Handbook and the Easy Classics series (Mel Bay Publications).

“Music theory” endeavors to explain how music is structured, and why we hear it in the way we do. “Jazz theory” adds another purpose: to provide information that is of practical use to improvisers. This group of theory articles is aimed at readers who are jazz players - student, amateur, or professional. I will assume that you have some basic background in music theory, but at the same time I’ll try not to be too technical.

The songs defined on this site as “jazz standards” come mostly from four sources: Tin Pan Alley, Broadway musicals, Hollywood movies, and from jazz artists. Composers in all of these genres have tended to use a similar approach to harmony, following certain standard harmonic procedures. While harmony will be our main concern in these articles, we will also include some observations about melodic practice, rhythmic practice, form, and history.

What Makes a Song Come across as “Jazz”?

In the 1920s and 1930s, when jazz was taking shape as cutting-edge popular music, factors were: a danceable swing beat, blue notes, characteristic rhythms, and vocal/instrumental timbre. Improvisation was a factor too, but we should remember that songs were marketed as ”jazz” well before improvised solos became important in performances. The rise of the soloist’s role was a process that began in the 1920s, notably with Louis Armstrong, and gathered momentum through the big-band years, culminating in the primacy of the soloist in the bop years (late 1940s - 1950s). This latter outlook, in which improvised solos are the focus of the performance, is current today.

Following are some introductory comments on harmony, melody and rhythm (you will find more detail in the other articles in this section).

Harmony

The songs in the “Jazz Standards Canon” are musical compositions with a short form (usually 12, 16, or 32 measures). Most have chord progressions that have proven to be interesting to improvisers - a major factor in their longevity. The basic harmonic approach is that of “common practice” classical music, adapted to these short forms.

Jazz performers will frequently alter the composer’s original harmony.

Some jazz composers of the last 50 years or so (e.g., John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter) have employed harmonic devices that push the boundaries of traditional common practice.

Melody

Many jazz standards began as popular songs, with melodies and/or lyrics that mass audiences found appealing. In the original sheet music, and in modern fake books, melodies are usually stated in simple note values. Melodies will almost always be altered in pitch, rhythm, or both, when interpreted by a jazz artist.

Any melody - pop tune, folk song, Christmas song, even classical theme - can become "jazz," if it is played with a jazz interpretation. This can be accomplished by using a beat identified with jazz, by using an instrumental or vocal timbre that is associated with jazz, by altering the melody in ways associated with jazz, and/or by featuring improvised solos in the setting.

Rhythm

Swing is, of course, the basic rhythm in mainstream jazz, but various Latin American rhythms are also important in the "Jazz Standards Canon."

Many standards (e.g., "All The Things You Are") were not originally intended to be played or heard as jazz, but became "jazz" after a popular recorded performance in a jazz setting. On the other hand, many others were conceived as "jazz," or even as improvisation vehicles, from the start (e.g., "Take the 'A' Train," or "Anthropology").

Standards are almost always in 4/4 time; a few are in 3/4, and just one on our list is in 5/4 ("Take Five"). Although older sheet music often shows songs in cut time, this is generally disregarded in modern performance. A bass player may choose to play "in two," but this has little to do with any original printed indication.

A Word About Sources

The most common references for standards these days are *fake books*: collections of *lead sheets* showing the melody of the tune, with chord symbols above the melody. One should never take it on faith that any one fake book version is "correct."

When performing, it is essential that all members of the band be "on the same page" - that is, using the same version as a starting point. Different fake books may disagree in chords, melody, or even the key of the tune. If you are using fake books, you cannot assume that charts from different books will be compatible with each other.

When compiling fake books, editors must decide what to use as their source material. This could be:

- Published sheet music
- The original version from a movie or Broadway musical
- A classic recorded performance
- Common practice in the jazz world
- Another fake book
- The editor's personal take on the song
- Some combination of these sources

Editors' choices are subjective; the result will not necessarily be definitive. As a musician, you will have to make your own decision about which source is best. (For my own opinions on the best sources for 100 "must-know" standard tunes, please check out this article at the author's website.)

What Music Theory Doesn't Do

Of course, theory doesn't come close to explaining music. If music is a language, theory is just grammar. More important than grammar is knowing the vocabulary - that comes from listening, with awareness, to great players, and playing as much as possible. Beyond grammar and vocabulary is the ability to communicate with listeners - to "tell a story," and to reach an audience on an emotional, or even spiritual, level.

The videos selected for the playlists on the "Overview" and "Harmony and Form" pages feature prominent jazz artists discussing learning, practicing, and the creative process - subjects deeper than the "nuts and bolts" of theory.

Performance Practice vs. Composer's Intention

Did the composers of tunes that were to become jazz standards originally conceive of them as vehicles for improvisation? Judging from many songs' original settings, it seems that the answer is "sometimes yes, sometimes no."

Certainly many composers in the "Golden Age" of the Great American Songbook (1920s to 1940s) conceived their songs with fashionable, jazz-signifying features like blue notes, syncopation, or swing beat - but in those years, most popular composers were not writing their songs as vehicles for jazz improvisation.

Songs were often first presented as part of Broadway shows or movies, or as sheet music intended for popular use. New songs were marketed by publishers' "song pluggers" to band leaders and arrangers, who, it was hoped, would then turn them into pop hits - meaning sheet music sales, record sales, and radio play.

Bands often re-interpreted these songs, presenting them in danceable, jazzy arrangements. Many of these arrangements featured improvised solos, but for the composers, that was incidental. As jazz history progressed through the 1930s and 1940s, improvisation became increasingly important; today we think of improvised solos as the central part of a "jazz" performance.

One might make a case for classifying jazz standards into three categories:

- Tunes that were not originally intended to be played as jazz, but took on on a jazz character through subsequent recordings,
- Tunes with jazz-signifying features (blues licks, blues chords, swing beat) written into the melody, harmony, or rhythm, meant from the start to be heard as "jazz" (though not necessarily meant for improvisation), and
- Tunes written specifically for improvisers. These are generally later additions to our list of "jazz standards."

Looking just at the top ten jazz standards as defined on this site, the first category might include "All the Things You Are," "I Can't Get Started," "My Funny Valentine," "Yesterdays," and "Stella by Starlight." The second category might include "Body and Soul," "Summertime" and "What is This Thing Called Love." Into the third category we could put "Round Midnight," and probably "Lover Man."

Composers like Jerome Kern, George Gershwin, and Cole Porter were very much aware of jazz and blues, and wrote jazz-signifying melodic and harmonic devices into their compositions, beginning as

early as the mid-1910s. But these composers did not necessarily consider themselves part of the jazz world. Jerome Kern expressed displeasure with nearly all jazz interpretations of his songs. On the other hand, George Gershwin, more of a jazz fan, reportedly was fascinated by Art Tatum's extensive improvisations on Gershwin's tune "Liza."

Original Sheet Music vs. Modern Fake Books

The sheet music version of a "Golden Age" song, marketed to amateur musicians, may not always have accurately represented the song's original Broadway or movie setting, but presumably it at least had the approval of the composer. Sheet music format consisted of words and melody, with a fully written-out piano accompaniment. The piano part often included countermelodies, voice leading, or bass lines that were meant to be part of the tune. Above the staff would often be tablatures and chord symbols for guitar (or ukelele), usually representing a much-simplified harmonic accompaniment. These publications were not aimed at improvising musicians.

In the swing and early bebop years, sheet music would have been musicians' printed reference for standards; fake books did not appear until perhaps the late 1940s (and those were rather crude).

Jazz musicians would also often have learned songs by listening to records, or from each other - with or without notating the music. It's easy to see how details of melody, harmony, and rhythm could end up being changed in musicians' common practice.

Over the last half century, fake books have come to replace sheet music as the most common printed reference used by jazz musicians. Fake book versions of "Golden Age" standard tunes often differ considerably from their original sheet music versions.

Fake Book Harmony

While sheet music generally had a written-out piano part, modern fake books show only melody and chord symbols. Subtleties in the original piano accompaniment have often been lost. However, the chord symbols are generally an improvement on the original sheet-music chord symbols. Harmonies are usually adjusted to fit modern performers' preference for standard harmonic devices such as II V progressions. Chord voicings are rarely specified; it is assumed that the performer will improvise the details. This presentation is geared to the needs and practices of contemporary jazz musicians.

Tunes are often presented in reharmonized versions that reflect either modern standard practice, or occasionally a reharmonization by an artist like Bill Evans. To get a sense of how differently a song may be reharmonized, try comparing versions of "Round Midnight," "Embraceable You," or "Like Someone in Love" from different fake books. Which version is best? It's your decision!

Fake Book Melody

In fake books, as in sheet music, melodies are usually presented in very simple note values (whole, half, quarter, eighth). It is assumed that performers will supply a personal interpretation.

Verses (introductory "lead-in" sections) are usually left out, with just a few exceptions (e.g., "Star Dust," "Lush Life"). The *Standards Real Book* (published by Sher Music) includes verse sections, but that does not mean that performers will include them.

Fake Book Rhythm

Many standards were not originally conceived in "jazz" rhythm - but a popular recorded arrangement could quickly turn a song into a swing tune. Some tunes originally conceived as ballads are now usually played at medium or fast tempos (for example, "Somebody Loves Me," "Cherokee," and "Oh, Lady Be Good!"). Sometimes the reverse happens, and a tune written with a faster tempo will become a ballad ("Star Dust," "Someone to Watch Over Me," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes").

Some songs' original melodic rhythms have been altered significantly in modern fake books ("A Foggy Day," "Have You Met Miss Jones").

A classic recorded performance may result in the beat being changed: A swing tune might be played Latin ("Tea for Two"), or a Latin tune might be played as swing ("I've Got You Under My Skin"). A tune originally in 3/4 might be played in 4/4 ("Fly Me to the Moon").

Drum, bass, piano, and guitar rhythms are usually not specified in fake books, beyond the time signature and a notation at the top of the page like "swing," "Latin," or "bop." Occasionally some important kicks will be notated. As with melody and harmony, it is understood that the rhythmic details of drum, bass, piano, and guitar parts will be improvised.

More modern tunes may also be altered or simplified in fake books. Introductions, shout choruses, and other parts of the original arrangement may be left out. For example, see Joe Henderson's "Recordame" (abbreviated in both the bootleg and the Hal Leonard Real Books, but shown in a more complete version in the "New Real Book," under the name "No Me Esqueca"). And of course, performers will add their own arrangements and interpretations to this repertoire, just as they do with "Golden Age" standards.

In their extended life as "jazz standards," then, songs have often acquired characteristics not intended by the composer. It is a tribute to the craftsmanship of composers like Jerome Kern, George Gershwin, and Cole Porter that their melodies and chord progressions have endured so well, and have proved so consistently inspiring. But jazz has always valued "newness." For this reason, and for the historical reasons discussed here, it is only natural that modern performances often take melody, harmony, and rhythm far beyond the composer's original intent.

Jazz Standards: Harmony and Form

The basic harmonic vocabulary of jazz standards derives from "common practice" classical music, but is adapted to fit the short forms (usually 12, 16, or 32 measures) of popular songs. Over the last century or so, this harmonic vocabulary has evolved into a set of practices that is ideally suited to the needs of contemporary jazz performers.

Development of Chord Symbols

Until approximately the 1960s, songs were marketed in print form primarily as sheet music, including a composed piano accompaniment. Beginning around 1930, chord symbols were often also provided, for guitarists and for pianists who did not read music well enough to play the written-out accompaniments.

Jazz musicians have always tended to reduce song arrangements to a basic harmonic framework, in order to create the space needed for improvisation - and chord symbol notation would have helped

them to do this. In the early 1940s, a commercial product called "Tune-Dex Cards" presented songs with just melody and chord symbols, suggesting a general acceptance by musicians of what we now call "lead sheet" format. When jazz musicians of the 1940s (and later) wrote their own tunes, they probably would have used lead-sheet format, notating the harmonic accompaniment with chord symbols, rather than with a piano arrangement. Early, illegal fake books used this format as well.

Since the 1960s, jazz education, once nearly non-existent, has become widespread. This has created a market for lead-sheet versions of standards, intended for improvisers. At the same time, amateur music-making no longer means gathering around the piano to read through sheet music arrangements. In the print music market, sheet music has now been almost entirely supplanted by fake books.

The quality of fake books has improved considerably over the last half-century. In the 1950s and 1960s, fake books were generally encountered as poorly-edited bootleg collections; they are now produced legally, and publishers usually make at least some effort at accuracy. The current approach to indicating harmony is the approach that jazz musicians favor: reduction to a basic functional framework. Chord progressions are often altered, and stated in terms of "harmonic cliches" - standard devices that are easy for improvisers to work with.

For better or worse, fake books using this approach to chords are now the commonly-accepted reference for jazz standards. In deference to this fact, this article will not address harmony as expressed in sheet music, but rather as it is currently presented in fake books - the "common practice" of contemporary jazz performers.

Harmonic Devices

At the risk of oversimplification, we can say that the basic harmonic unit for jazz musicians today is the seventh chord. Performers will then alter and voice chords according to their personal inclination. Ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths are routinely added; notes may also be omitted.

Following are some of the main "harmonic cliches" used in our current harmonic vocabulary:

- Tonic/dominant harmony: As with nearly all forms of European-derived music, the basic harmonic force is V (tension) moving towards I (resolution).
- II V I in major or minor: In common-practice classical music, V is often preceded by various "dominant preparation" chords. Our "streamlined" harmony often prepares V with II, creating the familiar II V I progression. In the key of C major, this would be Dm7 G7 Cmaj7. In the key of C minor, II V I appears as Dm7b5 G7b9 Cm6.
- Secondary dominants: Any chord may be preceded by its V. For example, one common progression is D7 G7 Cmaj7. Here the D7 is a secondary dominant, called "V of V."
- Local key centers: Composers may use progressions that set up brief, temporary changes of key. This is often accomplished with a II V I sequence. For example, a song in the key of C major might include the sequence Fm7 Bb7 Ebmaj7, causing the listener to perceive a temporary shift to the key of Eb major.
- Circle of dominants: This is another device that is common in classical music. An example would be D7 G7 C7 F7. Each dominant chord resolves into the next; roots move up a perfect fourth with each change, following the "circle of fourths." This is also called a "chain of dominants."
- Circle within a key: This is a related device. Roots move up by fourth, but the notes stay entirely within a key. In C major, this would be: Cmaj7 Fmaj7 Bm7b5 Em7 Am7 Dm7 G7 Cmaj7 (In roman numerals: I IV VII III VI II V I). Note that to stay within the key, one of the root movements (IV to VII) has to be by augmented fourth rather than by perfect fourth. In actual practice, you will usually see sections of this circle, rather than the whole sequence.

- IVm and/or bVII7: You may see these chords used in a major key context - for example, Fm6, Fm7, or Bb7, in the key of C. The purpose is to import notes, especially the b6 of the key, from the parallel minor key (in the key of C, b6 would be the note Ab, borrowed from the key of C minor). The effect is to add color, often accentuating an emotional moment in the song. Occasionally, bVII7 may also be used as a substitute for V.
- Turnarounds: A turnaround is a I VI II V sequence, or some variation, often used at the end of a section to set up a repeat to the I chord.
- Blues chords: These are chords that harmonize a blue note (b3, b5, b7) in the melody. Examples are IV7, bVI7, bVII7 (in the key of C these would be F7, Ab7, Bb7). This is a uniquely American device, developed in the 1910s-1940s. In a sense, these chords are borrowed from the parallel minor, since they import minor-related notes.
- Tritone substitution: Where a V7 would go, a dominant seventh chord built on the b2 scale degree may be substituted (Db7 would be used in place of G7). This is another device that was developed in the "Golden Age." Tritone substitution became a basic jazz technique beginning in the bebop years.

These harmonic devices explain a large proportion of the chord sequences in modern print versions of jazz standards.

Evolving Harmonic Practice

Beginning in the 1910s, we can see a gradually increasing harmonic sophistication in the tunes that were to become "jazz standards." Popular devices in the early years were secondary dominants and blues chords. By the late 1920s, we find more frequent use of brief modulations to secondary tonal centers. The early 1930s saw an increasingly creative use of harmony by state-of-the-art songwriters like George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, and Richard Rodgers.

In the 1940s, our list of "jazz standards" shows a growing number of tunes composed by jazz performers. These compositions in many cases never appeared in printed form, but were marketed to the public only as recordings. If they ever were notated, it would probably have been in lead sheet form, for the benefit of the composer and his fellow musicians. The harmonic language was basically that of the previous decade, with the addition of some "modern" devices (e.g., tritone substitution, and increased use of ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords.)

In the 1950s, our list of standards shows a drop in Broadway/Tin Pan Alley/movie tunes, and a continuing increase in pieces written by jazz performers. Through the 1950s, compositions by jazz players further explored the "II V I" approach. The late 1950s saw an exploration of new harmonic approaches, reflected in compositions like John Coltrane's "Giant Steps," and Miles Davis' modal pieces. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, some performers like Cannonball Adderley and Horace Silver chose to return to the roots of jazz, with blues-related compositions and improvisation styles ("Work Song," "The Preacher"). The late 1950s also saw the development of bossa nova, a Brazilian style that fused American harmony with the melodic/rhythmic styles of samba (notably in the compositions of Antonio Carlos Jobim).

In the 1960s, new approaches included a further effort to break out of the "II V I" mold by composers like Wayne Shorter, and the beginnings of rock/jazz fusion (often using what might be called a modal approach in soloing).

It is interesting to note the figures for the number of tunes among the top 1000 jazz standards as defined on this site that were composed in different decades:

pre-1910	24
1910s	36
1920s	164
1930s	312
1940s	267
1950s	131
1960s	58
1970s	7
1980s	1

There are undoubtedly many reasons why these numbers are distributed this way. But one major factor, at least, has to be the relative interest that these songs' harmonic structures hold for contemporary performers.

Reharmonization

As discussed in the article *Performance Practice vs. Composer's Intention*, jazz performers often reharmonize standards, moving beyond fake book and sheet-music settings. Basic harmonic landmarks are usually preserved.

Form

Both "Golden Age" songs and those written by jazz players tend to use simple forms - usually 12, 16, or 32 measures long, with melodies written in 4-bar phrases. Within these short forms, harmonic events tend to happen in a relatively short space of time.

The classic American song form is the 32-measure AABA. It begins with an 8-measure "A" section, which is then repeated, perhaps with some variation. An 8-bar "B" section ("bridge") follows, providing some tonal contrast, often moving to a different key. The A section then returns to finish the song. This form had become quite common by the 1930s. Often the song was prepared with a lead-in section, or "verse." Verses are generally omitted by modern performers.

Alternate terms, not used much anymore, are: "refrain" or "chorus" for the A section, and "channel" or "release" for the bridge (B section).

Other common forms include ABAB[1], ABAC, and ABA. Composers may take liberties with these forms, extending or shortening them, generally by 2- or 4-bar units. The 12-bar form is usually identified with blues (see the Blues article in this website).

Lyrics

For songs written in the "Golden Age" of standards - when these songs were popular music - lyrics, melody, and harmony are interrelated parts of the whole. Each helps the expressive message. For a rather obvious example, see the verse (introduction) to Cole Porter's "Night and Day." The lyrics compare the beat of a drum, the tick of a clock, and the drip of raindrops to a voice in the singer's head saying "you, you, you." The melody consists of repeated notes, pointing up the theme of incessant repetition. The accompanying harmony mostly repeats the dominant chord, with just enough

harmonic movement to maintain interest. The main body of the song carries forward the repeated-note motif.

Songwriters in this period were quite aware of the effectiveness of supporting the lyrics with appropriate harmony, melody, and rhythm. However, it is interesting to note that the music was often written before the words - meaning that a good lyricist would fit the lyrics to the emotional gestures contained in the melody. (For our example, "Night and Day," Cole Porter wrote both the words and the music.)

Today, instrumental interpretations of these songs are probably more common than vocal versions. Nevertheless, jazz instrumentalists often express the opinion that in order to interpret a song properly, one should know the lyrics.

Most jazz standards that were written by jazz instrumentalists were conceived without lyrics. The above comments do not apply in these cases, even though singers may later write words for these tunes.

For a more detailed look at contemporary jazz harmony, see Peter Spitzer's *Jazz Theory Handbook*, or any of the other theory books shown in the panel on this page.

Blues

Blues as a genre took shape around or shortly before the beginning of the 20th Century, at about the same time as jazz. As with jazz, the details of its origins are hazy, since the music was not recorded, and was barely documented in any way. It is safe to say that blues grew out of various antecedent African American music forms (spirituals, work songs, "songster" styles, church music, ragtime).

Blues as popular music has its own history and evolution, from sheet music tunes of the 1910s, to the first recordings of female blues singers in the early 1920s, to the Delta players recorded in the late 1920s and early 1930s, to boogie-woogie piano styles, to the Chicago players first recorded in the 1940s, to the R&B of the 1950s, to the vocal and guitar styles of rock and funk. Although it is a distinct genre, blues has always been a tremendous influence on jazz, and an integral part of it (jazz, in turn, has also influenced blues). Most musicians would say that jazz is not jazz without blues.

Jazz has historically incorporated a "sophisticated" blues style, from W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues" (1914), to big band arrangements of the 1920s and 1930s, to bebop blues in the 1940s, to Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Ornette Coleman's modal and "free jazz" work in the 1950s and 1960s.

In a theory sense, blues has two aspects: a 12-measure harmonic structure, and a melodic vocabulary that includes traditional licks and certain performance practices ("blue notes," bent notes, instrumental/vocal timbre).

Melody

The melodic characteristics of blues have, from the beginnings of both genres, had a great deal to do with defining a performance as "jazz." These melodic factors include, but are not limited to, use of the b3, b5, and b7 scale degrees ("blue notes"), usually in an otherwise-major tonal context. Beginning in the 1930s, music theorists have attempted to discover a "blues scale" that would explain this. A number of different "blues scales" have been suggested over the years; the one that is generally accepted today is: 1, b3, 4, #4, 5, b7, 1 (in the key of C this would be the notes C, Eb, F, F#, G, Bb, C). This scale has proved to have a lot of practical utility in soloing, although it doesn't explain or

incorporate all the traditional blues licks, by any means. It is important to remember that the vocabulary of blues was mostly established long before the concept of a “blues scale” existed.

In a traditional 12-bar blues, lyrics (and melody) will often be in the form of a 4-bar phrase, repeated, with the final 4 bars a concluding statement. Here is an example from “St. Louis Blues”:

If I feel tomorrow, like I feel today,
If I feel tomorrow, like I feel today,
I’m gonna pack my trunk and make my getaway.

Later jazz-oriented blues tunes often have through-composed melodies, although traces of this early format can be heard in pieces like Charlie Parker’s “Now’s the Time,” or Sonny Rollins’ “Tenor Madness.”

One related variety of blues, “riff blues,” became quite popular during the big-band years. This consists of a 2-bar or 4-bar melodic pattern repeated over the 12-bar form, with the chords changing under it. Sometimes a note may be changed to make the riff fit the supporting chord. Examples of “riff blues” include Count Basie’s “One O’Clock Jump,” Woody Herman’s “Woodchopper’s Ball,” and Charlie Parker’s “Cool Blues.”

Harmony: The 12-bar Blues Form

The 12-measure blues form can be played with a great many harmonic variations. Here is the most basic form, shown in the key of C, with roman numerals above.

C: I | - | - | I7 |
‖ C | C | C | C7 |
-
- IV7 | - | I | - |
| F7 | F7 | C | C |
-
- V7 | - | I | - |
| G7 | G7 | C | C ‖

You will rarely encounter blues played in this simple a form, though. One very common basic version is the following pattern, using all dominant chords:

C:I7 | IV7 | I7 | - |
‖ C7 | F7 | C7 | C7 |
-
- IV7 | - | I7 | - |
| F7 | F7 | C7 | C7 |
-
- V7 | IV7 | I7 | V7 |
| G7 | F7 | C7 | G7 ‖

Jazz players, since the 1940s, are more likely to use a progression more or less like this “bop” version:

C:I7 | IV7 | I7 | - |
‖ C7 | F7 | C7 | C7 |
-
- IV7 | #IVdim7 | I7 | D: II V7b9 |
| F7 | F#dim7 | C7 | Em7 A7b9 |
-
C:IIm7 | V7 | I7 | V7 |

| Dm7 | G7 | C7 | G7 ||

[Charlie Parker] introduced a more sophisticated harmonic variation in "Blues for Alice," interpolating a number of cleverly-placed II V progressions. This harmonic structure is quite current and well-known among today's jazz musicians.

The use of dominant-structure chords for the I (tonic) and IV (subdominant) chords has some interesting ramifications:

- The tonic chord, when played with a b7, becomes a V of IV, providing a strong push towards the resolution in bar 5. Soloists often accentuate the b7 note in bar 4, to enhance this effect. A similar device is to add tensions such as #5, b9, or #9 to the I7 chord in bar 4.
- A "guide tone line" (voice-leading line) is created, following the third of the I7 chord (if we are in the key of C, this is the note E in the C7 chord) to the seventh of the IV7 chord (the note Eb in the F7 chord), as the chords move through bars 1-7. Improvisers often incorporate this line into their solos. You can hear this guide tone line at work in some blues heads (e.g., "Tenor Madness").

Blues is sometimes written in minor keys (John Coltrane's "Equinox," Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments"). Here is one version of a minor blues progression:

Cm:Im7 Cm7	- Cm7	- Cm7	V of IV C7
IVm7 Fm7	- Fm7	Im7 Cm7	- Cm7
bVI7 Ab7	V7 G7	Im7 Cm7	- Cm7

When playing a standard 12-bar blues, jazz musicians are likely to add chord variations on the spur of the moment, as they see fit. This might be done either by chording instruments or by soloists, without prior discussion. Although this may cause momentary harmonic conflicts, it doesn't really bother the listener. The creativity is part of the fun. This improvisational reharmonization can happen in the performance of non-blues tunes as well.

The basic 12-bar blues form may be extended or otherwise altered. For example, Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man" is a blues extended by four measures; Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Wave" is in AABA form, with the A section a blues progression reharmonized to the point that it doesn't sound much like blues.

Many jazz standards are blues-inflected, without using the 12-bar harmonic structure. Composers accomplish this melodically by using blue notes and blues phrases, and harmonically by backing these notes with appropriate chords. Blues-implying chords, harmonizing b3, b5, or b7 in the melody, include IV7, bVI7, and bVII7 (these are all dominant chords). Some "Great American Songbook" composers were particularly adept at writing blues elements into their songs (Harold Arlen, George Gershwin, Duke Ellington). For an example of a 32-bar AABA tune with extensive blues usage, see Matt Dennis' "Angel Eyes."

Jazz performers frequently employ melodic blues gestures in their interpretations of non-blues tunes (a classic example is Ray Charles' performance of Hoagy Carmichael's "Georgia On My Mind"). This can done with any material at all, even Christmas songs.

Some tunes achieve a bluesy feel simply by being in a minor key, played with an appropriate interpretation ("Afro Blue," "Nature Boy").

See more examples in the adjacent panel.

For a closer look at blues harmony see Peter Spitzer's *Jazz Theory Handbook* (below).

You can find a brief discussion of Charlie Parker's approach to blues, and his favorite chord substitutions, in this article: *An Analysis of Charlie Parker's "Billie's Bounce" Solo*.

Examples

12-bar blues tunes in the top 300 jazz standards:

Rank	Title
20	"St. Louis Blues"
92	"Things Ain't What They Used To Be"
112	"Billie's Bounce"
148	"C Jam Blues"
163	"Straight No Chaser"
175	"One O'Clock Jump"
185	"Blue Monk"
204	"Royal Garden Blues"
207	"Blues in the Night (12-bar blues A section, with a non-blues bridge)"
248	"All Blues"

Non-blues tunes from the top 300 standards that include melodic and/or harmonic blues elements:

Rank	Title
1	"Body and Soul"
3	"Summertime"
7	"Lover Man"
13	"Willow Weep for Me"
22	"Oh, Lady Be Good"
51	"Come Rain Or Come Shine"
67	"Angel Eyes"
69	"Lover Come Back to Me"
84	"It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)"
90	"Do Nothin' Till You Hear from Me"
105	"Undecided"
106	"Stormy Weather"
182	"Basin Street Blues"
200	"Jitterbug Waltz"
216	"Wave"

Rhythm Changes

The term “Rhythm changes” refers to a chord progression that derives from George Gershwin’s song “I Got Rhythm” (1930). The song became quite popular, and within a few years jazz musicians began to borrow its chord structure for some of their own compositions. However, it should be noted that “Rhythm changes” evolved into a chord progression that was not exactly Gershwin’s. As was often the case with other songs, jazz musicians streamlined the progression, reducing it to a simpler, more improv-friendly harmonic framework.

Songs employing Rhythm changes became a common staple at jam sessions, and are today still an essential part of jazz repertoire. The chord progression is a “must-know” for any aspiring jazz player.

Rhythm changes are almost always played in the key of Bb (Gershwin’s original key). As played by contemporary musicians, the chord structure is more or less as shown here:

Bb:I	V of II	II	V	I	V of II	II	V
‖ Bb6	G7b9	Cm7	F7	Bb6	G7b9	Cm7	F7

I	V of IV	IV	IVm6	I	V of II	II	V
Bb	Bb7	Eb	Ebm6	Bb6	G7b9	Cm7	F7 ‖

I	V of II	II	V	I	V of II	II	V
‖ Bb6	G7b9	Cm7	F7	Bb6	G7b9	Cm7	F7

I	V of IV	IV	IVm6	I	V	-I
Bb	Bb7	Eb	Ebm6	Bb6	F7	-Bb6 ‖

G:V	-	C: V	-
‖ D7	D7	G7	G7

F: V	-	Bb:V	-
C7	C7	F7	F7 ‖

Bb:I	V of II	II	V	I	V of II	II	V
‖ Bb6	G7b9	Cm7	F7	Bb6	G7b9	Cm7	F7

I	V of IV	IV	IVm6	I	V	-I
Bb	Bb7	Eb	Ebm6	Bb6	F7	-Bb6 ‖

The chord sequence may be broken down this way:

Measures 1-2 and 3-4: These are two 2-bar turnarounds.
m.5: The I chord is made dominant, turning it into a V of IV.
m.6: Resolution to IV, followed by IVm6.
mm.7-8: Another turnaround, setting up the second A section.
mm.9-16: This is the second A section, an exact repeat of the first A except for the I V I cadence in mm. 15-16.
mm.16-24: Circle of dominants, two bars per chord. Each dominant chord resolves into the next, leading to mm. 23-24, which is the V of the original key, setting up the last A section.
mm.25-32: An exact repeat of the second A section.

Gershwin’s “I Got Rhythm” also added a two-bar tag as part of the melody and the harmonic

structure; the tag is omitted in most other “Rhythm” tunes.

Variations

As with blues changes, musicians often apply certain standard variations to the basic chord progression, either by previous arrangement or on the spur of the moment. Here are some of these variations:

- Turnarounds in the A sections may include substitutions. For example,

| Dm7 G7b9 | Cm7 F7b9 | , or

| Dm7 Db7 | Cm7 B7 |

- m.5 might be: | Fm7 Bb7 |
- m.6 might be: | Eb6 Edim7 |
- In the bridge, each dominant chord might be prepared with its respective II chord:

|| Am7 | D7 | Dm7 | G7 | Gm7 | C7 | Cm7 | F7 ||

or tritone substitutions might be used in mm. 19-20 and mm. 23-24:

|| D7 | D7 | Db7 | Db7 | C7 | C7 | B7 | B7 ||

Tunes using Rhythm Changes

Some of the better-known tunes that employ Rhythm changes are: “Anthropology,” “Dexterity,” “Oleo,” “Steeplechase,” “Cottontail,” “Moose the Mooche,” “Lester Leaps In,” “Shaw ‘Nuff,” “The Theme” (Miles Davis), the theme to “The Flintstones,” “Allen’s Alley,” and “Rhythm-A-Ning.” “Scrapple From The Apple” uses a Rhythm bridge with a “Honeysuckle Rose” A section; “Good Bait” has a Rhythm A section, with a bridge that uses the same chords, transposed up a fourth. The majority of these tunes date from the bebop years (1940s to early 1950s).

Modal Jazz

In musical parlance, the word “mode” simply means “scale”; it is often used to describe a scale other than major or minor. Our present-day major and minor scales derive from the “modes” of medieval music, which in turn derive from the music of ancient Greece. Modes were used as a resource by some relatively modern classical composers like Debussy and Bartok, who felt the need to go beyond traditional major/minor tonality. In the 1950s, jazz musicians also began to work with modal approaches.

The term “modal jazz” refers to improvisational music that is organized in a scalar (“horizontal”) way rather than in a chordal (“vertical”) manner. By de-emphasizing the role of chords, a modal approach forces the improviser to create interest by other means: melody, rhythm, timbre, and emotion. A modal piece will generally use chords, but the chords will be more or less derived from the prevailing mode.

History

Miles Davis, always a trend-setter in jazz, utilized this approach in his composition "Milestones" (1958), on the album of the same name. The structure of this tune is AABBA. The A sections are based on the G dorian scale; the B sections are based on the A aeolian scale (see "The Classical Modes," below).

His next album, *Kind of Blue* (1959), is the definitive example of modal jazz, and was a pivotal moment in the evolution of jazz.

Miles' modal work was preceded by a number of contributing influences. As we have noted, modal resources had been used in classical music of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Jazz and popular music had also seen the occasional use of what could be seen as "modal" usage, in the suggestion of non-major/minor tonality (e.g., Burton Lane's "Old Devil Moon," or Ary Barroso's "Bahia,"), and in the use of extended solos with minimal harmonic movement (e.g., Benny Goodman's version of Louis Prima's "Sing, Sing, Sing," or the open *montuno* solos in mambos of the 1940s-1950s). In addition, American audiences in the 1950s were becoming aware of scale-based, non-chordal Indian classical music through album releases by Ali Akbar Khan (1956) and Ravi Shankar (1957).

George Russell's *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization* was a mode-based approach to music that influenced certain New York jazz musicians in the 1940s-1950s, notably Miles Davis, pianist Bill Evans, and arranger Gil Evans (both Bill Evans and Gil Evans worked closely with Miles, and contributed to "Kind of Blue").

The *Kind of Blue* album represented an intersection of these influences, and a further expression of the "cool" style that Miles had explored for much of his career. It abandoned the virtuosic, densely-chorded branch of 1950s jazz that led to John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" and "Countdown" (recorded at about the same time in 1959), in favor of simplicity and harmonic space. The album's personnel (Davis, trumpet; Coltrane, tenor sax; Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, alto sax; Bill Evans and Wynton Kelly, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; and Jimmy Cobb, drums) interpreted the compositions with a pensive, impressionistic ambience.

The compositions on the album ("So What," "Freddie Freeloader," "Blue in Green," "Flamenco Sketches," and "All Blues") are by Miles Davis, with the exception of "Blue in Green," which was written by Bill Evans, and "Flamenco Sketches," probably co-written by Evans and Davis. "So What," "All Blues," and "Flamenco Sketches" are conceived modally. The other pieces are not exactly modal, but share the same mood. The making of *Kind of Blue* is documented in two excellent books, by Ashley Kahn (*Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*) and by Eric Nisenson (*The Making of Kind of Blue: Miles Davis and His Masterpiece*).

The modal approach was pursued further in subsequent recordings by Miles and by other jazz artists. John Coltrane's work in the 1960s with pianist McCoy Tyner advanced the modal concept in an intense, even spiritual direction (e.g., his albums *My Favorite Things*, *Impressions*, *A Love Supreme*), and deeply affected the subsequent development of jazz.

By the late 1960s the use of modal resources had become widely accepted in jazz. The modal approach also became a common feature in popular rock, funk, and jazz-funk genres, in the form of extended scale-based soloing over a harmonic support of only one or two chords.

The Classical Modes

The modes that we have inherited from the classical tradition are listed below, with some brief

comments. Many "modal jazz" tunes use these scales, though soloists will not always limit themselves strictly to the notes of the mode.

- Ionian: This is another name for the major scale. From C, the notes would be C D E F G A B C. This scale is built with half steps between degrees 3-4 and 7-8; the other tones are separated by whole steps.
- Dorian: Like a natural minor scale, but with a major sixth. From C, the notes would be C D Eb F G A Bb C. Half steps are between 2-3 and 6-7. This is one of the most-used modes in jazz. The b3 and b7 notes allow for a "blue" sound in solos. "So What" is in 32-bar AABA form, with each A section using a D dorian scale, and the B section using an Eb dorian scale. Coltrane's "Impressions" uses an identical structure, with a different melody.
- Phrygian: Like natural minor, but with a minor second. From C, the notes would be C Db Eb F G Ab Bb C. Half steps are between 1-2 and 5-6. This scale conveys a "Spanish" sound.
- Lydian: Like major, but with a raised fourth. From C, the notes would be C D E F# G A B C. Half steps are between 4-5 and 7-8. This scale was taken by George Russell as the basis of his "Lydian Chromatic Concept."
- Mixolydian: Like major, but with a minor seventh. From C, the notes would be C D E F G A Bb C. Half steps are between 3-4 and 6-7. Like dorian, this scale can be used to produce a "blue" sound.
- Aeolian: Another name for natural minor. From C, the notes would be C D Eb F G Ab Bb C. Half steps are between 2-3 and 5-6.
- Locrian: Like natural minor, but with a minor second and a diminished fifth. From C, the notes would be C Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb C. Half steps are between 1-2, 4-5. Not used much.

These modes are often taught as the "modes of major," as they can be generated by using the major scale interval pattern, but with different starting points. For example, using the white notes of the piano, C to C produces C major (ionian): D to D produces D dorian; E to E produces E phrygian; F to F produces F lydian; G to G produces G mixolydian; A to A produces A natural minor (aeolian); B to B produces B locrian.

The Chord Scale Approach

One contemporary (and widely-taught) approach to improvisation views every chord as having one or more scales that can be played over it. Although it involves the use of modes, this approach to soloing does not necessarily make a tune "modal."

Scale resources in this system include the classical modes listed above, as well as the set of modes generated by ascending melodic minor (C D Eb F G A B C), whole tone scales, diminished scales, and pentatonic scales. This set of scales will provide at least one mode that will fit almost any given chord. Historically, this approach owes quite a bit to George Russell.

For more information on modes and chord scales, see Peter Spitzer's "Jazz Theory Handbook," or virtually any other jazz theory book.

Bossa Nova

Latin American styles have played a part in jazz since its earliest days. The habanera rhythm is occasionally present in ragtime piano pieces; "St. Louis Blues" (1914) includes a tango section, reflecting the popularity of that dance in the 1910s. "The Peanut Vendor (El Manisero)" (1928), "Green Eyes (Aquellos Ojos Verdes)" (1929), and "Besame Mucho" (1941) achieved hit status in

their time. Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine (1935)," and "I've Got You Under My Skin (1936)" were originally set to Latin rhythms. Stan Kenton's band used Latin rhythms in the early 1940s; Charlie Parker recorded Latin tunes; and Dizzy Gillespie was a pioneer in the development of "Latin jazz" (this term is generally used to refer to Afro-Cuban jazz).

The popularity of Latin music in the U.S. has generally been linked to the popularity of dance steps (tango, rhumba, conga, samba, mambo, cha-cha-cha). Until the late 1950s, the Latin styles influencing American popular music were predominantly Cuban (two exceptions were tango in the 1910s and samba in the early 1940s).

Bossa nova originated in mid-1950s Brazil, a fusion of the melody and rhythm of samba and *samba-cancao* with the harmonic vocabulary of American standards and the feel of "cool" jazz. Beginning in the early 1960s, bossa nova became an important influence on both jazz and American popular music. Bossa nova did not evolve or achieve popularity as a dance, but rather as a musical form.

Bossa is largely defined by the compositions of Antonio Carlos (Tom) Jobim, and by the vocal and guitar styles developed by Joao Gilberto. The most prominent lyricist in the genre was Vinicius de Moraes, although original Portuguese lyrics were lost on American audiences, who only heard translations of varying quality.

Jobim was the most accomplished composer of bossa nova, and the most prolific; he left a legacy of over 300 songs. His hits included "Desafinado," "Chega de Saudade (No More Blues)," "A Felicidade," "One Note Samba," "Corcovado (Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars)," "Meditation," "The Girl from Ipanema," "How Insensitive," "Once I Loved," "Dindi," "Triste," "Wave," "Waters of March," "Agua de Beber," and others. Other songwriters wrote in this style - for example, Roberto Menescal ("My Little Boat") and Luiz Bonfa ("Black Orpheus," "Samba de Orfeu," "Gentle Rain") - but it is fair to say that when we talk about bossa nova compositions, we are talking mostly about Jobim. His composing style was influenced not only by American and Brazilian genres, but also by his classical training (particularly Chopin and Debussy). Beyond these influences, Jobim had a profound gift for melody.

Bossa nova received worldwide recognition with the release of the film "Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro)" in 1959, featuring a soundtrack with songs by Jobim and Luiz Bonfa.

Harmony

The harmony of bossa nova derives to a great extent from American standards; all of the "harmonic cliches" listed in the article "Jazz Standards: Harmony and Form" are applicable here. Jobim was certainly familiar with the work of Gershwin, Kern, and Porter. American music was popular in Brazil in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and as a young pianist, Jobim had spent many long nights playing jazz standards in Rio de Janeiro nightclubs. He employed this harmonic vocabulary with sophistication, building on the achievements of his predecessors.

Some harmonic features of Jobim's work:

- He used diminished chords more freely than American jazz composers of the same period (e.g., "Once I Loved" or "How Insensitive").
- He was as fluent in using melodic and harmonic blues devices as any American "Golden Age" songwriter ("Agua de Beber").
- Jobim used various substitutions for the V7 chord. For example, in "Girl From Ipanema," note the bII7 tritone-substitute chords in the A section. In "Dindi," note the bVIImaj7 and Vm7 chords substituting for V in the verse and in the A section, and the bVIm6 chords substituting

for V in the bridge.
- He occasionally wrote in a modal style ("Favela").

Harmonically, bossa nova was an extension and further development of the "Great American Songbook" approach, at a time when the general public in the U.S. was beginning to lose sight of the musical world of Gershwin, Kern, and Porter. This may be one reason that bossa was so well-received by jazz musicians.

Melody

Melodies in major-key tunes often emphasize the major seventh and major ninth scale degrees over tonic maj7 or maj9 chords.
Melodic rhythms sometimes make use of the patterns of samba instruments.
Joao Gilberto's vocal performing style is an integral part of bossa nova. His phrasing is subtle, but rhythmically complex. Gilberto's vocal delivery is soft and understated, and has been compared to that of Chet Baker (perhaps an early influence). Gilberto's repertoire also includes older sambas and boleros; in his interpretations they become bossa nova.

Rhythm

Gilberto developed the definitive bossa guitar comping style, reducing the rhythmic patterns of samba to the essence of its *tamborim* patterns (the *tamborim* is a small hand drum used in samba ensembles, not to be confused with the American "tambourine"). As with his vocal approach, his guitar style is understated and "cool."
Bossa nova bass patterns suggest the *surdo* (low drum) part in a samba group.
Drum set parts are also understated. Constant eighth notes on the high hat or ride cymbal suggest the *pandeiro* or the shaker part in a samba ensemble; the cross-stick on the snare plays a simple clave pattern or *tamborim* pattern. In a purist approach, a bossa nova drummer would play in a more reserved fashion than a typical American jazz drummer.
The samba influence may be more or less pronounced, depending on the performer and the song.

Influence On American Pop and Jazz

Bossa nova tunes or albums were recorded by many major jazz performers in the early 1960s, including Stan Getz, Cannonball Adderley, Coleman Hawkins, Dave Brubeck, Ella Fitzgerald, and others. Getz's recordings of "Desafinado" (with Charlie Byrd, 1962) and "The Girl From Ipanema" (with Astrud Gilberto, 1963) became pop hits, rising to #15 and #5 on Billboard Magazine's charts.

Bossa nova rhythm found its way into American-composed top 40 as well (e.g., "I Say a Little Prayer," "Walk on By," "I'll Never Fall in Love Again," "Goin' Out of My Head"). The bossa drum pattern can even be heard in the Doors' "Break On Through (To the Other Side)."

A number of classic jazz standards composed by non-Brazilian musicians employ a bossa nova beat - e.g., "Blue Bossa," "Recordame (No Me Esqueca)," "Ceora," "Pensativa," "The Shadow of Your Smile," "Song for My Father," "Watch What Happens," "Forest Flower." Bossa nova today remains one of the prevalent rhythms in American jazz and popular music.

A few of Jobim's tunes have chord progressions that may have been borrowed in part from American jazz standards. Some of these songs are discussed in these articles (at the author's website):

- Jobim's "Out of Nowhere" Tunes
- More Jobim Tunes With Borrowed Chords

http://www.jazzbiographies.com/Contents.aspx

Contents A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Abate, Greg
Abbasi, Rez
Abbey, Leon
Abbs, Tom
Abbuehl, Susanne
Abdullah, Ahmed
Abercrombie, John
Aberle, Alexander
Ablanedo, Pablo
Abou-Khalil, Rabih
Abrams, Muhal Richard
Acox, Clarence
Acuna, Alejandro
Acuna, Alex
Acuna, Claudia
Adair, Beegie
Adair, Thomas
Adair, Thomas Montgomery
Adair, Tom
Adams, George
Adams, Park
Adams, Pepper
Adamson, Harold
Adderley, Cannonball
Adderley, Julian
Adderley, Julian "Cannonball"
Adderley, Julian Edwin
Adderley, Nat
Adderley, Nathaniel
Adler, Larry
Adler, Lawrence Cecil
Aerts, Philippe
Affif, Ron
Ahbez, Eden
Ahlert, Fred
Ahlert, Fred E.
Airto
Akiyoshi, Toshiko
Akst, Harry
Albam, Emmanuel
Albam, Manny
Alden, Howard
Aleman, Oscar
Alessi, Ralph
Alexander, Aaron
Alexander, Alger "Texas"
Alexander, Eric
Alexander, Montgomery Bernard
Alexander, Monty
Alexander, Texas

Alexandria, Lorez
Ali, Bardu
Ali, Rashied
Alias, Charles Donald Sr.
Alias, Don
Allemano, Lina
Allen, "Red"
Allen, Bob
Allen, Carl
Allen, Geri
Allen, Harry
Allen, Henry “Red”
Allen, Henry James Jr.
Allen, Marshall
Allen, Marshall Belford
Allen, Robert
Allen, Steve
Allison, Ben
Allison, Mose
Allison, Mose John Jr.
Allred, Bill
Allred, John
Allyson, Karrin
Almeida, Laurindo
Alpert, Herb
Alter, Myriam
Altschul, Barry
Alves, Carlos "Zingaro"
Amadie, Jimmy
Amaro, Dionisio Ramon Emilio Valdes
Amendola, Scott
Ammons, Albert
Ammons, Eugene
Ammons, Gene
Ammons, Gene "Jug"
Amram, David
Amram, David Werner III
Amy, Curtis
Andersen, Arild
Anderson, Cat
Anderson, Clifton
Anderson, Ed
Anderson, Edmund
Anderson, Ernestine
Anderson, Fred
Anderson, Ivie
Anderson, Ivie Marie
Anderson, Ivy Marie
Anderson, James Maxwell
Anderson, Maxwell
Anderson, Ray
Anderson, Roberta Joan
Anderson, Wessell
Anderson, Wessell "Warmdaddy"

Anderson, William Alonzo
Andrews, Ernie
Anselvitz, Benjamin
Aoki, Tatsu
Apfelbaum, Peter
Appleyard, Peter
Archer, Vicente
Ardley, Neil
Arlen, Harold
Arluck, Chaim
Arluck, Hyman
Armacost, Tim
Armstrong, Lil
Armstrong, Lil Hardin
Armstrong, Lillian Hardin
Armstrong, Louis
Armstrong, Louis Daniel
Arnheim, Gus
Arnold, Harry
Arriale, Lynne
Arshawsky, Arthur Jacob
Ascione, Joe
Ashby, Dorothy
Ashby, Hal
Ashby, Harold
Ashby, Harold Kenneth
Asmussen, Svend
Assad, Badi
Astaire, Adele
Astaire, Fred
Atwood, Eden
Austerlitz, Adele Marie
Austerlitz, Frederick
Austin, Lovie
Avenel, Jean-Jacques
Avital, Omer
Ayers, Roy
Ayler, Albert
Ayler, Don
Ayler, Donald
Azzara, Pat

Directory

Recommended websites with jazz biographies:

- AllAboutJazz.com
- AllMusic.com
- Downbeat.com
- DrummerWorld.com
- HardBop.com
- IBDB.com
- IMDB.com
- Jazz.com
- JazzDiscography.com
- JazzReview.com
- Parabrisas.com
- PBS.org
- RedHotJazz.com
- Scaruffi.com
- SongwritersHallofFame.org
- Wikipedia.org