

## Parallels. Comparison of Jazz Standards between Old and New School of Jazz Players

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**Abstract:** *The evolution of jazz over time is an inevitable phenomenon! From an analytical point of view, the resulting forms and compilations have a special weight. The perception and vision of jazz instrumentalists is different, related to age, experience, or personal approach to the elementary notions of expression of specialized language. All these particularities lead to creative progress necessary for artistic development, the legacy left by the previous creators of the styles uses as an inexhaustible pool of inspiration and creativity. His own vision regarding the interpretive stylistic approach, the ways of reevaluation, reharmonization, reconstruction of the standard reference pieces of tonal, modal, atonal, free jazz, etc., leads to the appearance of the metatonal, which represents nothing more than the modern stylistic compilation of the legacy left, reported and in accordance with current artistic claims/requirements. The resulting surprises inspire new creative solutions beneficial to artistic evolution. Each success has its charm and particularities, following the possibility of re-expression in a certain (new) context, meaning a (new) step towards a (new) evolutionary step.*

Key-words: *modal jazz, scales, voicings, constructing melodic improvisation lines, Miles Davis, modern ways of musical thinking*

### 1. Introduction

Once upon the time ...in august 17, 1959 at Colombia Records was released the studio album named *Kind of Blue*... A man with his horn named Miles Davis, a beautiful saxophone player named Charlie Parker, a huge piano player named Bill Evans, an inventive base player named Paul Chambers and the drummer „machine” Jimmy Cobb all together on 2 march and April 22 recorded in two sessions in New York 30<sup>th</sup> Street Studio the entire album.

*Kind of Blue* (Nisenson 2000, 23-45) is regarded by many critics as Miles Davis's masterwork the greatest jazz album ever recorded, and one of the greatest

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albums of all time. Its impact on music, including jazz, rock and classical music has led writers to also deem it one of the most influential albums ever made. The album was one of fifty recordings chosen in 2002 by the Library of Congress for the inaugural year of the National Recording History, being deemed „culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant”. In 2003, it was ranked number 12 on *Rolling Stone* magazine's list of the „500 Greatest Albums of all the time”, repositioned to number 31 in the 2020 revision. In 2019, *Kind of Blue* was certified 5x Platinum by the Recording Industry American Association (RIAA) for shipments of at least five million copies in the United States.

Why does *Kind of Blue* possess such a mystique? Perhaps because this music never flaunts its genius. ...It's the pinnacle of modal jazz – tonality and solos build from the overall key, not chord changes, giving the music a subtly shifting quality. ...It may be a stretch to say that if you don't like *Kind of Blue*, you don't like jazz – but it's hard to imagine it as anything other than a cornerstone of any jazz collection, Gary Burton of Berklee College of Music noted the consistent innovation present throughout the album, stating: „It wasn't just one tune that was a breakthrough, it was the whole record. When new jazz styles come along, the first few attempts to do it are usually kind of shaky. Early Charlie Parker records were like this. But with *Kind of Blue* [the sextet] all sound like they're fully into it”. Along with *Time Out* by the Dave Brubeck Quartet (1959) and Coltrane's *Giant Steps* (1960), *Kind of Blue* has often been recommended by music writers as an introductory jazz album, for similar reasons: the music on both records is very melodic, and the relaxed quality of the songs makes the improvisation easy for listeners to follow, without sacrificing artistry or experimentation.

In 1953, the composer and theorist George Russel (Russel 2001, 64-76) published his *Lydian Chromatic of Tonal Organisation* which offered an alternative to improvisation based on chords. Abandoning the traditional major and minor key relationships, his concept introduced the idea of chord/scale unity and was the first theory to explore the vertical relationship between chords and scales. These insights helped lead the way to modal jazz. Influenced by Russell's ideas, Davis implemented his first modal composition with the title track of his studio album *Milestones* (1958). Satisfied with the results, Davis prepared an entire album based on modality. Bill Evans, who had studied and recorded with Russell had left the Davis group to pursue his own career, was drafted back into the project. Bill Evans wrote in the LP liner notes, „Miles conceived these settings only hours before the recording dates”. Bill Evans continued with an introduction concerning the modes used in each composition on the album. „*So What* consists of two modes: sixteen measures of the first, followed by eight measures of the second, and then eight again of the first”.

## 2. Miles Davis old school, great masterpiece from 1959

Influenced in part by great Bill Evans, who had been a member of the ensemble in 1958 and was called back for this album, Miles Davis departed further from his early hardbop style in favor of greater experimentation with musical modes, as on the title track of his previous album, *Milestones* (1958).

Basing *Kind of Blue* (Gluck 2016, 87-103) entirely on modality, Miles Davis gave each performer a set of scales that encompassed the parameters of their improvisation and style and consequently more creative freedom with melodies, Coltrane later expanded on this modal approach in his own solo career.

Here is a brief structuring (Cole 2005, 43) of the original *So What* in the above-mentioned component, the Real Book version or the concert version.

**So WHAT GENERAL**

MILES DAVIS

TROMPRETA

PACHET SUFLATORI

Fig. 1. General view of "So What by Miles Davis"

These improvisational lines (Figure 1) illustrate the multiple variety of possibilities for chromatic enrichment and consolidation here in full accordance with short-lived intervallic imitations, additionally the emergence of the phenomenon of rhythmic cumulation in abundance through the elaboration of exceptional subdivisions.

Next, an analytical reduction close to the Schenkerian style of the improvisational line gives us the image of some stylistic cells composed (Figure 2), however somewhat easy to catalog due to the stairs, the previously encountered structures, treated.

**So WHAT ANALIZA SOLO**

MILES DAVIS

The musical score consists of two staves of piano music. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom is in bass clef. Above the notes in the first measure, the label 'Aux Blues Mics' is written. In the second measure, 'Lidic' is written above the notes. In the third measure, 'Lidic mărit' is written. In the fourth measure, 'Lidic' is written again. In the fifth measure, 'Auxiliar micsorat blues' is written. The title 'So WHAT ANALIZA SOLO' is centered above the staff, and 'MILES DAVIS' is written to the right of the staff.

Fig. 2. *Elements of improvisational language of Miles Davis, So What*

The analysis of this (and many other) improvisational lines, respectively gradation as well as structural compilations, brings to mind *The Lydian Chromatic Concept* the ways of melodic organization in modal jazz.

The main idea (Magee 2007, 133-147) is how the improvising instrumentalist, focusing on the local or global tonal orientation, respectively the way of return, or paradoxically the possibility of oscillating between the 2 planes during the solo. By following thoroughly Miles Davis' solo respectively both improvisational cycles in their entirety, one can systematize a course in alternation with a return to one of the planes when in the other, undiscovered and inexperienced system by musicians of previous styles.

### 3. Yohan Kim, *So What* interpretation, creational analysis

Today's work does not outline (for the umpteenth time....) the excellent characteristics of the creation that appeared in 1959 under the exceptional magic wand of the listed musicians. The title of the work *Parallels* should induce the hypothesis of a parallel between two expressions, stylistic visions. Yohan Kim is a representative of the young generation of jazz musicians, among many others such as Jacob Collier, Ruslan Bulatov, Jesus Molina, Justin Lee Schulz, Valeriyi Stephanov, Henry Corry, Snarky Puppy, a lot of established artists with whom I met during the pandemic, the recordings posted on YouTube being edifying in this sense.

For me, the idea of perceiving jazz standards in the vision of young instrumentalists, is a phenomenon with a special relevance, an aspect that I try to analyze in today's exposition. I am particularly interested in the cognitive approach as well as the stylistic expression of the new generation, regarding traditional jazz standards, to what extent the characteristic elements of the original version are still preserved or replaced, if so, with what other elements, or the compilation form resulting in time after the 65 years since the appearance of the album.

The reference piece *So What* performed by the pianist Yohan Kim (born in 2002 in Seoul, South Korea) is today subject to analysis, the elements discovered, the resulting artistic expression being edifying for the conclusion.

Moving on to Yohan Kim's creative vision, we find in the introductory part measures 1-8, (Figure 3) the appearance of modal chords structured by overlapping quartets typical of the cool style, as well as arpeggios preceding the voice distributions in the mentioned structure. For support and consolidation, apart from the brief rhythmic support, the bass line appears.

## SO WHAT

Composer MILES DAVIS Version Yohan KIM

INTRO

Dm11      Fm9/Eb      Dm11

Fm11      Dm11      Fm11      Dm11

Fig. 3. Introductory part, "So What", by Yohan Kim

The harmonic structures (Brent 2011, 33-56), voicings, distributions on the piano illustrate the previous modal structure in a different expression. Thus the structure (Figure 4a) of superimposed 4th, with a 3rd in discant (E A D G B) becomes a line only of superimposed 4th intervals in ascending orientation starting from the left hand (A D G -G C F) (Figure 4b).

45 VOICINGS SO WHAT

E min pentatonic      D min pentatonic

Fig. 4a. Original voicings by Bill Evans & Miles Davis



Fig. 4b. *Voicings new structured by Yohan Kim*

As an additional element (Figure 5), the transient upward chromatic harmonic movements stand out in measures 4-5, in this case with an immediate return to tonic, distributions with new structuring to strengthen the sound spectrum. (Ab, Eb, Ab -F, G, C).



Fig. 5. *Harmonic, chromatic movement*

The theme is exhibited by the bass line starting with measure 10, (Figure 6) the procedure taken from the original version, the difference consisting in the exhibition at the ascending 5th, the electric piano expresses the harmonic support in the basic tonality chord D min 11, with chromatic extension to the descending semitone in measure 12.

Continuation in measure 13 denotes a tense, complex harmonic structuring (D 4#/9/13) that anticipates a phrase ending or increases attention to the emergence of a segment, new ideas. It should also be noted the rhythmic structure supported by the chromatic elements, the dense expression by sixteenths notes values mainly on time parts, representing a/ that new element often used compared to the version of 1959.

Fig. 6. *Theme, new harmonic structure by Yohan Kim*

Taking over the theme in measure 13 in structural alternation with the harmonic-rhythmic counterpoint of the left hand, completes the sound image of the South Korean pianist. Voice distributions on the left hand further in the tense modal structure, again with transient chromatic movement in measure 16 and the change of the tonal center to Eb min starting with measure 18.

Absolutely new process (Figure 7) starting with measure 19 where the exhibition of the theme in the Eb min tonality is abandoned, the concise rhythmic structuring achieved by supporting the percussion and the bass line replacing the idea of the exhibition which is again a surprise element in creative expression.

Measure 22-23 outlines a cluster starting from note F (F G A B C D E G), thus marking the end of the exhibition moment, increasing the attention for the next segment. The immediately following color elements, preceding the improvisational moment, represent a structure in the form of an arpeggio of the previously mentioned agreement D 4#/7 /9/13.

The beginning of the improvisational moment (essential for the proposed analysis) starts on the structure of the D minor pentatonic (D F G A C) elliptical of 3rd step in our case, the intensity of the accumulation of notes being reduced in improvisational expression, typical of instrumentalists who completely master the art of grading the moment creative.

19 Ebm11 Em11 Ebm11

21 Ebm11 Em11 Cluster F

24 IMPROVISATION SWING FEELING

Fig. 7. The second part of the exposing theme, with new rhythmical development

Measures 28-29 (Figure 8) the improvisatoric idea is moving away from the Doric mode by implementing the 7th step half step raised, or the natural 7th, a new element in expression, supporting the left hand with modal structures in rhythmic alternation with the improvisatory moment, the resulting dynamics being beneficial and strictly necessary *swing* pulsation in the classical concertant formula often found in the constellation drums, bass and piano.

Measure 30 by implementing the note Ab and the arpeggio G# C# F (enharmonic Ab, Db, F) leads us to the idea of the *tritonus substitution* procedure (D-Ab), with return in measure 31 to the standard form of the pentatonic minor (D F G A C) elliptical here of 7th degree (minor) element previously used in measures 28-29.

Measures 31-32 preserve the pentatonic structure started in measures 28-29 dynamic expression by interpolating the left hand in dialogue, ingenious completion of the swing groove necessary for the unitary finality of the analyzed segment.

Fig. 8. *Pentatonic ideas in alternance with left hand*

Measure 33 (Figure 9) implements in expression the note E which does not actually belong to the mentioned minor pentatonic system, but here has the function of superior sensitivity towards the new tonal center Eb in measure 34, the 7th and 4th steps in the ordered sequence of the tonal structure.

The rhythmic harmonic completion of the left hand continues on offbeats, constitutes a dynamic expression with modal structures or with harmonic consolidation through formations of 4 sounds (with maj 7 extensions) or even added sounds over the octave (9, 11, 13).

Fig. 9. *Compilation of Blues & Bebop elements*

Measure 35 outlines a transient expression in blues style by implementing the IVth degree (Ab major) with an immediate return towards the end of the measure to the initial Eb min tonality (Gb, F, E as a natural chromatic function, Eb).

Measure 36 denotes *bebop*-style patterns characteristic of saxophonist Charlie Parker with the so-called *approach notes*, the 3rd beat again having a transient expression of IVth degree in anticipation for chromatization to the ascending semitone the tonality Eb min9 to E min9.

Measure 37 returns to the basic tonality Eb min 9/13 with extension in downward motion towards Dm9/11, ascending towards Emaj7/9 then at Dmin 11. The *arpeggio* of the Eb min 9 range stands out improvisationally, followed by the chromaticism formed by the E D C# C natural, notes again in ascending/descending motion.

Measure 38 returns to the stylistic expression of the pentatonic system (D F G A C) towards the end of the measure beat 3 and 4 with the influence of the blues style (Ab-D, F, G).

Fig. 10. *Old school jazz elements combined with tensioned chords*

Measures 39-41 (Figure 10) denote an ingenious compilation between minor pentatony and elements characteristic of the blues style, combined with the same dynamic modal support of the left hand.

Measures 42-43 again approach the previous *cluster*-type structuring of the phrase/fragment ending, distribution in the medium register separated by the

interval of the a 4th (E-A) between the constellation of the left hand (D min 9) and that of the right hand (D min 11).

#### 4. Conclusion

| Question  | Miles Davis  | Yohan Kim                |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| 1.Using 2 or 3 note melodic statements?                   | Yes, both of them  | Yes, both of them        |
| 2.Using modes with direction, rhythm, target or contrast? | Yes, both of them  | Yes, both of them        |
| 3.Using triads from chord/ mode structure?                | Yes, both of them  | Yes, both of them        |
| 4. Using the V7 pair of the II min chord?                 | Yes.<br>Almost every modal tune is put together with primarily minor chords. The little bebop trick of using the V7 chords will give a alternative way to think about this chords for chainging the character. | Not really               |
| 5. Using pentatonic ideas                                 | Yes, both of them  | Yes, both of them        |
| 6. Use of blues elements                                  | Inevitable, both of them   | Inevitable, both of them |

#### NEW ELEMENTS, NEW WAYS OF EXPRESSION ?

1. Cromaticism in abundance
2. Concise rhythmical structure in unisono or simultaneous with other instruments
3. Giving up on melodic exposition, for creating the dynamic resolution
4. Cluster to the end of idea, for increasing tension, curiosity
5. Harmonic figuration in the form of arpeggio, extended range on the piano
6. Melodic exposition in other keys

7. So What chords construction with only ascending 4th intervals in tower form, no 3rd on the top, as used in the original version.

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