

Jazz Composition and Theory Week 1
MUS 198 - Manricks

Modal Jazz

: Brief Overview

Became more popular in Jazz in late 50's and 60s through Miles Davis & Bill Evans and the album 'Kind of Blue', John Coltrane's - Impressions etc (Bill Evans Peace Piece is basis for Flamenco Sketches).

But was being done by likes of Duke Ellington and 20th Century Classical Composers such as Debussy, Ravel etc well before this

: What is Modal Jazz?

Modal music as opposed to tonal music has extended duration in one mode (scale); for example 8 or more bars for each mode/chord/scale before changing to another.

This led to a more horizontal approach to melody within compositions and improvisations rather than the vertical mentality often assimilated with frequent chord changes

See quotes and definition below

Melodies usually are diatonic though sometimes have chromatic notes off the beat. In general though they usually are non-chromatic and emphasize the characteristic tones (and root) of the mode. *See diagram pg 62 Pease*

Common use of voicings in 4th and inversions to avoid tonal implications associated with voicings in 3rds (particularly occurrence of tritone). 'So What' voicings and *see pgs 64-69 Pease*. Note modern jazz sound created by use of 4ths, Can invert 4th voicings too

One of the most important things about establishing a mode is the emphasis of the root of the mode in the bass and melody.

: Major Scale Modes

-Modes of Major scale handout

-Each mode has characteristic notes which make it minor, major or dominant and differentiate it from other similar modes.

-Modal Approach Chords (parallel & chromatic) used to embellish (not supplant) chords diatonic to the mode create a harmonic 'universe' for modal music much like dominants and secondary dominants do in tonal music.

Modal interchange when repetitive chord progressions need variety, often used in tonal much (i.e-borrowing from parallel Major/minor/mode)

: Flamenco sketches analysis

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:Scalar analysis

: in class composition assignment

Imagine a tempo and rhythmic feel for a piece

Pick 4 modes from the major scale and write a 16 measure chord sequence. Try not to use modes exclusive to the same 'parent scale' (ie- D Dorian, F Lydian, G Mixolydian are all from C Major 'parent scale') Make each chord duration 4 or more bars long.

Now write a melody that emphasizes diatonic notes (including those that are characteristic/defining) to each mode.

Think about phrasing and antecedent and consequent phrases (pg 37)

Now write a bass figure emphasizing the root and that reinforces the rhythmic feel/tempo

Write at least one voicing of 4ths for each mode, experiment with other diatonic voicings for each mode, chromatic and parallel approach voicings, and inverted 4th voicings.

: recommended listening

Kind of Blue 'So What' 'Flamenco Sketches' Miles Davis

'Peace Piece' Bill Evans

'Impressions' John Coltrane

'Little Sunflower' Freddie Hubbard

'Cantaloupe Island' Herbie Hancock

: recommended reading

xiii-Chapter 1 Jazz Composition-Ted Pease

Chapter 1 (or part of) Jazz Composition-Ted Pease

Pg62-79 Jazz Composition-Ted Pease

Pg 37 Jazz Composition-Ted Pease

"Modal" (or its synonym "scalar") literally means "of scales."

"When Gil [Evans] wrote the arrangement of "I Loves You, Porgy," he only wrote a scale for me. No chords. And that... gives you a lot more freedom and space to hear things.

When you go this way, you can go on forever. You don't have to worry about changes and you can do more with the [melody] line. It becomes a challenge to see how melodically inventive you can be. When you're based on chords, you know at the end of 32 bars that the chords have run out and there's nothing to do but repeat what you've just done—with variations." - Miles Davis

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