

EDWARD "SONNY" STITT:
ORIGINAL VOICE OR
JAZZ IMITATOR

by

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ABSTRACT

Edward “Sonny” Stitt, (1924-1982), was an American jazz saxophonist active from 1941 until his death in 1982. There is a paucity of information written about Stitt’s life and the music he created. Stitt was often cast as a clone of jazz saxophonist Charlie “Bird” Parker, in both the popular press and academic sources. To date, just one academic document analyzes Stitt’s approach to improvisation and that work is drawn from Stitt’s performances as a tenor saxophonist. Additional research on Stitt is imperative to understand how the music known as bebop developed and to evaluate Stitt’s role in jazz history. A comparison of the alto saxophone solos of both Charlie Parker and Sonny Stitt will examine the development of Stitt as a jazz saxophonist and the extent of any musical influence Parker may have on Stitt.

Three of the earliest recorded Parker solos and the two earliest Stitt solos, plus one solo from Stitt’s mature oeuvre, were transcribed to compare and contrast the bebop techniques employed by Stitt and Parker. Parker’s solo “Honey and Body” dates from 1940. “Swingmatism” and “Hootie Blues” were recorded with Jay McShann and date from 1941. Two of Stitt’s solos, “That’s Earl Brother” and “Oop Bop Sh’Bam” date from 1946 and “Ray’s Idea” was recorded in 1972. The analysis of these solos will include consideration of melody, harmony, timbre, and rhythm.

DEDICATION

I would not have had the opportunity to complete this document or the DMA degree without the help of my wife, Dr. Jennifer Campbell-Meier. Your support and help have always been there and appreciated. And to my sons, Thomas and John, you keep me young and challenge me, I could not have done this paper without your inspiration.

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PART I INTRODUCTION

“I’m no Bird, man. And Cannonball Adderley isn’t either. Nobody’s Bird! Bird died.”¹

These words, which conclude a 1959 *Down Beat* interview, express the frustration that Edward “Sonny” Stitt must have felt when asked about the unending comparisons of his music to that of Charlie “Bird” Parker.

Stitt was always considered the imitator in these comparisons with Parker, not the other way around. Thomas Owens, and Barry Kernfeld, in their article on Stitt in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* states:

Stitt’s early recorded solos show clearly that he was a disciple of Charlie Parker; he used Parker’s favorite melodic formulas and imitated his tone quality and vibrato. Only small details of phrasing and articulation—an occasional slight hesitation in connecting notes in a Parkeresque phrase, or a subtly different way of tonguing—betray the imitator.²

The case for Stitt being original, however, is a strong one. Answers to questions of his originality lie in a comparison of Stitt’s playing to that of Parker, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, and Johnny Hodges. A comparison of Parker and Stitt reveals both differences and similarities. While similarities exist, Stitt matured as an improviser and developed his own style.

In this document, I will demonstrate Stitt as an original artist. He said it best in a 1965 interview:

¹ David B. Bittan, "Don't Call Me Bird," *Down Beat*, 1959, 19.

² Thomas Owens and Barry Kernfeld, "Stitt, Sonny," *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd Ed., *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, no. 02/2009 09/01/2011.

We all have our own way of playing. You can't tell somebody how to live, how to play, or how to feel. Anybody who tries to tell me that, I tell 'em to go straight to you-know-where. I'm going to have a free mind. How are you going to play if you can't be free. That ain't saying nothing. Everyone should want to be themselves. I'm always going to be myself. Like, when they talk about me and Charlie Parker. Me and Charlie Parker sounded the same way years and years and years ago. He said: "You sound like me." I said: "Well, you sound like me." And we agreed: "We can't help that, can we?" Then we'd go off and get some beer, play some music, or something.³

Sonny Stitt was nominated for a Grammy, in the category of Best Jazz Performance by a Soloist, for his 1972 album *Tune-Up!*. He also won the *Down Beat Magazine* 1973 co-album of the year with *Constellation*. Despite this critical acclaim, Stitt has been ignored in academic research. However, Jazz educators have embraced Stitt's music.

Saxophone students are frequently given the assignment to transcribe and perform Stitt's solos as they assimilate the structural intricacies of bebop. While jazz educators have embraced Stitt's playing, information about his music is limited. An artist of Stitt's stature requires better understanding, and his music has yet to be analyzed carefully and thoroughly for its contributions to jazz. Comparisons of his style to that of Parker have yet to take into account key biographical and historical information about Stitt in the 1940s, nor have studies carefully analyzed the improvisational solos of Stitt to compare with those of Parker. In this project, I will examine "Oop Bop Sh'Bam," "That's Earl Brother" and "Ray's Idea" for their use of harmony and other bebop tropes. I will also compare these solos to Parker's solos on "Swingmatism," "Hootie Blues," and "Honey and Body." These comparisons show that Stitt developed his style independently of Parker and that simplistic conclusions on his "copying" Parker need reconsideration, and that his contribution to jazz, on the whole, needs revision.

³ Les Tomkins, "Sonny Strikes Back," *National Jazz Archive*, <http://www.nationaljazzarchive.co.uk/stories?id=20> (accessed 03/04, 2014).

PART II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although Stitt was a prolific recording artist, very little about his life and musical development is available in print. The majority of the information available on Stitt was published in the popular music media; only one scholarly article or peer-reviewed writing has appeared. In popular media sources, his playing was routinely likened to his contemporary, Charlie Parker, but the majority of these sources lack analysis, which makes such comparisons troublesome at best.

Stitt is referenced in several general jazz history texts. In *Jazz*, Tanner, Megill, and Gerow list Stitt by name in two articles, neither of which elaborate on his life in any way.⁴ Gridley writes a paragraph about Stitt and his contributions to bebop in his *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*. Stitt's name appears in additional entries, as a member of an ensemble, and in an article that discusses saxophonists influenced by Parker.⁵ Neither source details Stitt's career or impact on jazz, in general, or bebop in particular.

Stitt was known as a bebop player; however, entries in reference sources about bebop on Stitt also lack detail about his development as a saxophonist, or about his musical legacy. Thomas Owens, in *Bebop: The Music and Its Players*, and Scott Deveaux, in *The Birth of Bebop*, both discuss the history and makeup of bebop as a jazz subgenre. Deveaux mentions him in an entry discussing the personnel in Dizzy Gillespie's band, identifying him simply as having

⁴ Paul Tanner, David W. Megill and Maurice Gerow, *Jazz*, 11th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 181-308.

⁵ Mark C. Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History & Analysis*, 8th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 2003), 442.

played with Gillespie from 1948–49. Unfortunately, the information in this article fails to correlate with other articles about Stitt. In *The Complete Sonny Stitt on Roost*, Zan Stewart notes that Stitt was incarcerated from March 1948 to September 1949.⁶ Owens provides a brief overview of Stitt’s career, and a brief musical comparison between Stitt and Parker. However, the comparison and information provided on Stitt are inadequate for the substantial conclusions of an in-depth analysis.

The entry on Stitt in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, one of the most influential sources of jazz history and music in general, written in English, provides a basic overview of his career. In the article, Thomas Owens and Barry Kernfeld echo comparisons of Stitt to Parker that appeared in Owens’s *Bebop*, noting him again as “a disciple of Charlie Parker.”⁷

In his DMA document, Woodrow Witt traces Stitt’s life. Witt confines his musical analysis to Stitt’s tenor saxophone playing; he does not delve into Stitt’s alto saxophone performances.⁸

The popular jazz press, such as *Down Beat*, *Melody Maker*, and *Metronome*, have included articles on Stitt. Most of these are interviews with Stitt, and concentrate on his relationship with Parker, reinforcing yet again the idea of Stitt as Parker’s disciple. The interviews discussing the “facts” of Stitt’s life differ from one article to another. The tone of the interviews vary, in terms of the viewpoint of the interviewer, and, over time, the details of the “stories” Stitt tells prove inconsistent. Consequently, among myriad interviews, the thread of Stitt’s story remains difficult to trace, along with his fluctuating disposition from one interview

⁶ Stitt and Roost (Firm), *The Complete Roost Sonny Stitt Studio Sessions*.

⁷ Owens and Kernfeld, *Stitt, Sonny*, 09/01/2011.

⁸ Woodrow Witt, "Sonny Stitt: His Life and Music" (D.M.A., University of Houston. 2000).

to the next. Stitt's music is only tangentially discussed in such writing, if at all, underscoring the need for this current study.

Stitt's philosophy toward jazz and improvisation remained basically unchanged throughout his life. Stitt summed it up best in a 1980 interview:

I'll tell you the truth. The way I see it, there's only one way to go, and that's the true way. You've gotta play the melody, you've gotta stay inside the limits, or you'll be what you might call [an] "outlaw." But it goes deeper than that. It goes to what goes through a man's mind. You see, to me a musician is an artist, and he is painting a portrait or a picture with musical notes, with time which has gotta be there, or you've lost all continuity, the whole aspect of playing jazz. It's gotta have a pulsing rhythm, it's gotta have soul-feeling, colors, and you must be able to keep the audience's interest. That's what it boils down to. But when you play somethin' way over the people's head and they say, "Where is he? He's on Mars," you know [laughter].⁹

⁹ Quoted in Wayne Enstice and Paul Rubin, *Jazz Spoken here: Conversations with Twenty-Two Musicians* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

PART III EARLY LIFE OF SONNY STITT

Edward Hammond Boatner, Jr. was born February 2, 1924, in Boston, Massachusetts. His parents, Edward Boatner, Sr. and Claudine Wicks, were both musicians. Claudine was an instructor of piano and organ. Edward, Sr. would become a professor of music at Sam Houston and Wiley colleges in Texas. An influential composer and arranger of Negro spirituals, Edward, Sr. also authored plays and published music instruction books. In 1925, a year after Edward, Jr. was born, Edward, Sr. left his family to complete his undergraduate degree at the Chicago Conservatory of Music.¹⁰ It is uncertain that Stitt had much contact with his father after this move. Although the facts remain unclear, it appears that Claudine took young Edward to Saginaw, Michigan, and married Robert Stitt. Edward, Jr. adopted his stepfather's last name, and started using "Sonny" as a nickname.

Stitt's siblings were also musicians. His half-brother, Clifford Boatner, was a concert pianist and his half-sister, Adelaide, was trained as a contralto. Unsurprisingly, given this early musical environment, Stitt was soon taking piano lessons. Clarinet and saxophone lessons followed shortly thereafter. Stitt's beginning instruction on the saxophone came from Wardell Gray, a well-known saxophonist, who was forced to "rent"¹¹ Sonny's room when he performed in Saginaw. Stitt also took lessons from local saxophonist, George "Big Nick" Nicholas, who was a local legend in Saginaw and influenced John Coltrane as well. Stitt likely made contact

¹⁰ Gisele Glover, "The Life and Career of Edward Boatner and Inventory of the Boatner Papers at the Schomburg Center," *The American Music Research Center Journal* 8–9 (1998/1999, 1998), 89–106.

¹¹ In smaller communities, it was common practice, during segregation years, to rent a room from a local African American family when no black hotels were available in the community.

with these and other musicians through his adoptive father, Robert, a nightclub owner in Saginaw.¹²

In his solography¹³ of Stitt, Dieter Salemann states that the saxophonist began performing professionally in his own band with Thad Jones sometime around 1941–1942. By 1942, Stitt was touring with the Bama State Collegians, with whom he eventually landed in New York City. In the summer of 1943, he jammed at various clubs on 52nd street, as well as Minton's Playhouse.¹⁴ All of these clubs incubated the evolving style of jazz called bebop. Located on 52nd Street, also known simply as "The Street," were numerous nightclubs where a small cadre of like-minded musicians experimented in taking jazz in new and unexpected directions. The core musicians in the group included Thelonious Monk, Kenny Clarke, Dizzy Gillespie, Coleman Hawkins, and Charlie Parker.

Stitt went on the road with the Tiny Bradshaw band, touring the Midwest in the summer of 1943. During this tour, he met Parker for the first time in Kansas City.

"When I was 19, playing with Tiny Bradshaw," Mr. Stitt told Robert George Reisner, author of "Bird," a book about Parker, "I heard the records he had done with Jay McShann and I was anxious to meet him. So when we hit Kansas City, I rushed to 18th and Vine, and there, coming out of a drug store, was a man carrying an alto, wearing a blue overcoat with six white buttons and dark glasses. I rushed over and said belligerently, 'Are you Charlie Parker?' He said he was and invited me right then and there to go and jam with him at a place called Chauncey Owenman's. We played for an hour till the owner came in, and then Bird signaled to me with a little flurry of notes to cease so no words would ensue. He said, 'You sure sound like me.'"¹⁵

¹² Sonny Stitt and Roost (Firm), *The Complete Roost Sonny Stitt Studio Sessions*, Sonny Stitt, CD With Booklet, 2001 Mosaic Records.

¹³ A list of solo performances.

¹⁴ Dieter Salemann, *Sonny Stitt: Solography, Discography, Band Routes, Engagements: In Chronological Order* (Basel, Switzerland: Jazz Circle, 1986), 1.

¹⁵ John S. Wilson, "Sonny Stitt, Saxophonist, is Dead; Style Likened to Charlie Parker's," *New York Times*, July 24, 1982.

Some variations of this story end with Stitt retorting, “No, you sound like me.”¹⁶ This meeting was possibly the only time these saxophonists played together.

During the next two years, Stitt would continue to play with Tiny Bradshaw. During this time period, many bands played live on late night AM radio. Listeners sometimes recorded these informal late night broadcasts. If recordings were offered for sale, they were identified as an air shot recording. In January 1944, the Bradshaw band did a live show from which an air shot was later released. Salemann claims that the alto saxophone solos from the air shot recording in January 1944 were, however, performed by Donald Hill.¹⁷ To date, it is unclear whether any recordings of Stitt soloing with Tiny Bradshaw exist.

In April 1945, Stitt was asked to join the Billy Eckstine Orchestra.¹⁸ The Eckstine ensemble was considered one of the most influential environments for musicians engaged in exploring this new evolution of jazz. Previous to Stitt’s invitation, Parker had held the chair in Eckstine’s band. Stitt joined a section of like-minded saxophonists: John Jackson, Dexter Gordon, and Leo Parker. Together they were known as the “unholy four,” for their hijinks on and off the bandstand. During his tenure with the Eckstine Orchestra, comparisons of Stitt and Parker began to emerge; fueled in part by Stitt’s entry into the ensemble as Parker’s replacement.¹⁹

John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie, one of the acknowledged creative forces of the bebop era, subsequently asked Stitt to join his band, and their relationship would culminate in Stitt’s first commercially recorded solos. The Gillespie band was one of the first to dedicate itself entirely to

¹⁶ Frederick I. Douglass, "Stitt Recalls Charlie Parker—in More Ways than One," *The Sun (1837–1987)* Aug 31, 1979.

¹⁷ Dieter Salemann, *Sonny Stitt: Solography, Discography, Band Routes, Engagements: In Chronological Order* (Basel, Switzerland: Jazz Circle, 1986), 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Witt, *Sonny Stitt: His Life and Music*, p.4.

bebop. Stitt likely started performing with Gillespie in early 1946—again, as a replacement for Parker, who was in Los Angeles at this time.²⁰ It is not known if Stitt was featured as a soloist in Gillespie's big band. However, on May 16, 1946 he made a series of recordings with the Dizzy Gillespie Sextet. The session was recorded for the Musicraft label and included the following musicians: Dizzy Gillespie, Trumpet; Sonny Stitt, Alto Saxophone; Milt Jackson, Vibraphone; Al Haig, Piano; Ray Brown, Bass; and Kenny Clarke, Drums.

These musicians were at the forefront of the transformation from swing to bebop in jazz. Thus, Stitt's inclusion on this date demonstrates Gillespie's respect for his abilities in the new genre.

The selections recorded on this early bebop session were as follows:

- A) "One Bass Hit Pt. 1" – Musicraft 404; Dizzy Gillespie composer and leader. Pt. 2, on the "B" side of this recording, featured the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra.
- B) "Oop Bop Sh'Bam" – Musicraft 383; Dizzy Gillespie and Gil Fuller composers.
- C) "A Hand Fulla Gimme" – Musicraft 485, Dizzy Gillespie composer, addition of Alice Roberts on vocals.
- D) "That's Earl, Brother" – Musicraft 383; Ray Brown, composer.

Stitt's musical activity from 1947 to 1949 is sketchily documented. Most accounts of his history include this period. One story suggests that he was incarcerated in the Fort Leavenworth federal penitentiary, presumably for a heroin use violation, as part of a poisoned heroin incident in Chicago that claimed the life of bebop trumpeter Freddie Webster.²¹

²⁰ Salemann, *Sonny Stitt: Solography, Discography, Band Routes, Engagements: In Chronological Order*, 16.

²¹ Robert White, "Remembering the Musical Genius of Sonny Stitt Saginaw's Lone Wolf," *The Review*, <http://www.newreviewsite.com/articles/Remembering-the-Musical-Genius-of--Sonny-Stitt-Saginaw--039-s-Lone-Wolf/1186> (accessed 03/01, 2014).

Another version of this period explains that, in early 1947, just after winning the *Esquire Magazine* New Star award, Stitt stayed in Chicago “woodshedding” (practicing intensely). According to this account, after recording as "Lord Nelson," Stitt was incarcerated for the sale of narcotics in the Federal Medical Center in Lexington, Kentucky, also known as the United States Narcotic Farm, from March 10, 1948, to September 9, 1949.

Although the details of Stitt’s activities between 1947 and 1949 are disputed, clearly he was a sought-after musician. During this time Miles Davis recorded his classic album, *The Birth of the Cool*. Davis wanted Stitt for the sessions, but because he could not be found, Davis hired Lee Konitz in his place.²²

Once he re-emerged from prison, Stitt continued to perform constantly until his death. He crisscrossed the United States, most often performing with local rhythm sections, rather than traveling with his own group. Dan Morgenstern dubbed him “The Lone Wolf of Jazz” for his constant traveling.²³ During these years Stitt spoke often about his need to play, create music, and support his family.

²² Stitt and Roost (Firm), *The Complete Roost Sonny Stitt Studio Sessions*.

²³ Dan Morgenstern, noted jazz historian and a former editor of *Down Beat Magazine*.

PART IV INFLUENCES AND COMPARISONS OF STITT AND PARKER

1 Parker – Stitt Literary Comparisons

It is likely the numerous comparisons of Stitt's playing to that of Charlie Parker caused him to reexamine his role in the bebop movement. As with Parker, Johnny Hodges, Benny Carter, and many others, Stitt was exclusively an alto saxophonist at the beginning of his career. Unlike them, however, Stitt later added the tenor and baritone saxophones to his performances, extended his range into the altissimo register, and even experimented, briefly, with the Varitone, an early type of electronic attachment for the saxophone. His choice to perform and record on the other instruments was undoubtedly influenced by the relentless comparisons to Parker.

Ideally, a comparison of Parker's and Stitt's playing would employ recordings from their formative years, within the narrowest time frame as possible. Unfortunately, little recorded material from this period exists. The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) instituted a commercial recording ban in August 1942, which remained unresolved until November 1944. The AFM sought to compel the recording companies to pay royalties to the AFM to support those musicians, who, in theory, were put out of work by the increased use of recordings in jukeboxes and commercial radio stations. In addition, the war effort restricted the amount of shellac that was available for recording disc production. The result was a dearth of recorded material at a critical time during Parker's and Stitt's improvisational development.²⁴

²⁴ Scott DeVeaux, "Bebop and the Recording Industry: The 1942 AFM Recording Ban Reconsidered," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 41, no. 1 (Spring, 1988), 126–165.

In a 1976 interview in *Cadence Magazine*, Stitt remarked that he was playing like Parker before he heard or met him:

But you see, I was playing like that before I'd even met or heard him. It was just my style. Bird was about four or five years older than me. Brilliant man. I'll tell you something that happened. There were about a thousand people at this concert. Ever see how a mother bird feeds her young, that's how the people's mouths were after they saw Bird play. I saw this myself. Everybody including Dizzy. There was a time when people used to laugh at him when he was trying to earn to play. But I never heard nobody play like that in my life. Nobody plays like Charlie Parker.²⁵

Conflicting dates have emerged as to when Stitt first heard Parker on record. In a 1959 interview, Stitt stated that he first heard Parker when he was 15, or in 1939.²⁶ However, no commercially available recordings of Parker's playing had been made available by that year, so he would have had to hear him performing live. If the story of his first meeting with Parker in 1943 is held to be factual, he could not have heard Parker live in 1939. The first commercially available recordings of Parker, with Jay McShann, date from 1942.²⁷

During Parker's lifetime many young alto saxophonists were considered his "children," musically speaking. Stan Levey, a onetime roommate of Parker, who recorded with Stitt in the 1950s, said of Stitt: "He was a copyist."²⁸ This comparison was seemingly magnified because Stitt was also Parker's replacement in several bands.

Stitt often acknowledged his admiration of Parker and claimed that Parker's groundbreaking improvisations influenced not only saxophonists, but also all jazz

²⁵ Robert Fleming, "Sonny Stitt Interview," *Cadence: The Review of Jazz & Blues, Creative Improvised Music*, 08, 1976, 12.

²⁶ Bittan, *Don't Call Me Bird*, 19.

²⁷ Carl Woideck, *Charlie Parker: His Music and Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

²⁸ *Stan Levey: The Original Original*, DVD, directed by Stan Levey and Arthur Shelby Pritz (Hollywood, CA: StanArt Productions, 2004)

instrumentalists. David Bittan's interview with Stitt sheds light on the saxophonist's admiration for Parker, and how he also distanced himself from Parker's influence:

Bird was one of my favorite musicians. . . I haven't heard anyone better. Of course he had an influence on my playing. He influenced everyone in jazz today—brass, piano, even bass. Even veterans like Coleman Hawkins borrowed something from Bird. I don't think I sound that much like Bird. Nobody has Bird's fluency of mind, imagination, technical ability—or his great big heart and soul. I hate to be compared to him. He was incomparable. He had a different kind of mind. Sonny Rollins plays as much like Bird as anybody, and he plays tenor. I may have a few of Bird's clichés, but I can only be myself.²⁹

Although some comparisons attribute negative motives to Stitt or dismiss his contribution, others challenged the notion that he was simply Parker's mimic. Kenny Clarke, a founding father of bebop, and an innovator on the drum set, remarked that:

Even if there has never been a Bird, there would have been a Sonny Stitt Although he's the essence of Bird, he is quite individual in his style.³⁰

After hearing the Bradshaw band in 1942, Miles Davis commented that Stitt had his own voice then.³¹

In a 1960 article in the *Jazz Monthly*, Michael James wrote about the originality of Stitt's improvisations:

Nor, indeed, need degree of originality determine a man's manner, its aloofness or otherwise. Sonny Stitt's case is the first to spring to mind. To mention his playing without invoking Parker's name is a luxury few reviewers seem able to afford; one can only lament their parsimoniousness. Even leaving aside structural differences—Stitt's style has been far more symmetrical, never so adventurous rhythmically. I fail to see how the meanest intelligence could mistake his playing for anything but the act of impassioned creation it is. Many of the devices, agreed, are secondhand, but they are completely fused with the original melodic thoughts, no more separable from them than flesh is from bone.³²

²⁹ Bittan, *Don't Call Me Bird*, 19

³⁰ Stitt and Roost (Firm), *The Complete Roost Sonny Stitt Studio Sessions*

³¹ Jim Burns, "Early Stitt," *Jazz Journal* xxii, no. 10 (1969), 6.

³² Michael James, "Stitt, Parker, and the Question of Influence," *Jazz Monthly*, 1960, 9.

In fact, Stitt was very influential as a musician in his own right, and continues to be so. His artistry was immediately and enthusiastically recognized by John Coltrane, who said of Stitt's playing:

He sounded something between Dexter [Gordon] and Wardell [Gray], an outgrowth of both of them. All the time, I thought I had been looking for something, and then I heard Sonny [Stitt] and said 'Damn! There it is! That's it!'³³

In an astute observation Coltrane heard Gray's influence on Stitt's playing; not surprising, as Gray was one of Stitt's first saxophone mentors. Coltrane also heard the influence of Stitt's "unholy four" section mate, Gordon, from the Eckstine band. Coltrane took saxophone lessons from Stitt, and eventually became one of the most influential jazz soloists of the twentieth century.³⁴

Nonetheless, even after death, Stitt's unique achievements have yet to be recognized. His obituary, from *The Boston Globe*, implied that Stitt was unable to free himself from perceptions of himself as a Parker copycat: "The Sax Artistry of Sonny Stitt Shone Despite Bird's Shadow."³⁵ The *New York Times* obituary proclaimed the following: "Sonny Stitt, Saxophonist, Is Dead: Style Likened to Charlie Parker's."³⁶ These simplistic comparisons, and the expectations of the press that he be the "New Bird," caused many to see him as a copyist rather than an original voice.

Stitt was, perhaps, not the artist he mentioned in his interview with Enstice and Rubin: one who painted his canvas in a new and revolutionary manner. Rather, his brush strokes are

³³ Lewis Porter, Michael Ullman and Ed Hazell, *Jazz from its Origins to the Present* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1992).

³⁴ Douglass, *Stitt Recalls Charlie Parker—in More Ways than One*, *The Sun*, B2.

³⁵ Ernie Santosuosso, "The Sax Artistry of Sonny Stitt Shone Despite Bird's Shadow," *The Boston Globe*, sec. ARTS/ FILMS, Jul 30, 1982.

³⁶ Wilson, *Sonny Stitt, Saxophonist, is Dead; Style Likened to Charlie Parker's*, *New York Times*, 1.28.

readily identifiable, putting the finishing touches on a music that has landed in the center of jazz innovation. In the following sections, I examine his individual and unique achievements for the purpose of distinguishing his style from Parker's and to note Stitt's contributions to the art form.

2 Saxophonist Role Models of the Swing Era

The term "Swing" described the era in jazz that coincided with the great depression in the United States. The development of Swing, like virtually all musical evolution, took place over a number of years. Starting in the mid-1920s, small groups of the New Orleans style jazz, bands began using arrangements of Tin Pan Alley tunes. Arrangers, such as Fletcher Henderson orchestrated these tunes for a big band, using three to five saxophones, three to four trombones, three to five trumpets, and a rhythm section of piano, bass, and drums.

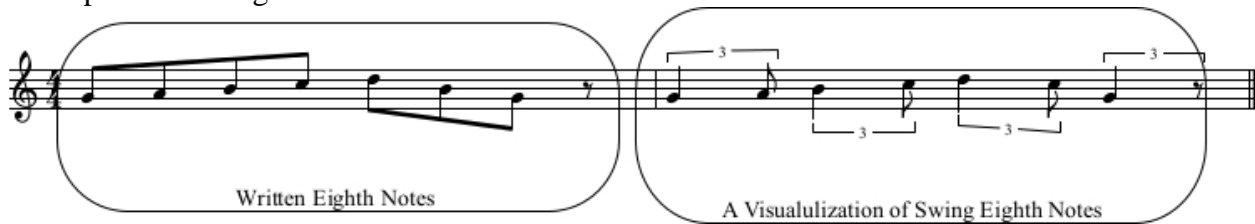
In their arrangements of Tin Pan Alley songs, Henderson and others used structured sections to state the melody, adding riffs and ensemble playing as desired. They incorporated space for improvised solos into the structure of their arrangements to showcase important performers in the band. Celebrated soloists of the swing era included Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins and Johnny Hodges. Important big bands, in terms of popularity and innovation, include, among others, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Fletcher Henderson, Chick Webb, and Benny Goodman.

A brief historical background is necessary to consider how Parker and Stitt themselves were influenced, and to demonstrate aspects of their musical training in styles preceding bebop. Thus we can compare their musical and stylistic development in parallel.

- 1) Arrangements for big band became the norm.
- 2) The ensemble grew to 12–18 musicians, as opposed to the smaller *Hot Five* group of Louis Armstrong, for example.

- 3) In playing consecutive eighth notes musicians used a triplet-based rhythm instead of the dotted-eighth-sixteenth rhythm of Dixieland. Demonstrating how swing eighth notes are presented is an inexact process at best. Every performer has his or her eighth-note feel. In general, though, swing-style eighth notes are performed in a 2 to 1 ratio. (Ex. 1.1)

Example 1.1. Swing Feel.



- 4) The harmonic rhythm moved faster.
- 5) The tuba of Dixieland was essentially replaced by the double bass.
- 6) The heterophonic collective improvisation of Dixieland was replaced with the homophonic texture of the big band.
- 7) Musicians of the swing era tended to be better trained in terms of European harmonic knowledge, reading music fluently, and better technique and tone quality.³⁷

Mark Gridley has observed that the use of the saxophone became more common during the Swing era, before which it had been considered more or less a novelty.³⁸ A traditional big band employed various soloists during the presentation of a musical number. These soloists became important role models for Parker and Stitt in their developmental years. A relatively small number of role models improvised on the saxophone—alto or tenor—so Stitt and Parker shared musical influences. From his “six most influential jazz improvisers”—Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane—Jerry Coker identifies Coleman Hawkins (1904–1969) and Lester Young (1909–1959) as role models for

³⁷ Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History & Analysis*, 442.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

both Stitt and Parker, even though they were tenor saxophonists.³⁹ Alto saxophonist, Johnny Hodges has also often been named as an influence on Stitt and Parker.

Coleman Hawkins is credited with changing the image of the saxophone, specifically the tenor, to a more respected and prominent role within the big band, and in the jazz community. In July 1939, Hawkins recorded what was to become his most celebrated improvisation, on Johnny Green's "Body and Soul." His treatment of this Tin Pan Alley tune was noted for its relaxed virtuosity, warmth of sound, harmonic ingenuity, consistent use of double time, foreshadowing the bebop era by rarely referencing the melody and focusing instead on improvisation. Hawkins had not prepared this piece for the recording date, but used it often to—as he put it—"get off the stand," (the tune played before the set break). His 1939 improvisation on "Body and Soul" is considered so important that in 2004 it was added to the National Recording Registry at the Library of Congress.⁴⁰

The "Body and Soul" recording shows Hawkins at his improvisatory best. His trademark performance presentations appear in abundance and have influenced jazz musicians for generations. The performance was to be marketed as a 78-rpm recording. Therefore it could only be approximately three minutes in length. With this in mind, Hawkins referenced the melody to "Body and Soul" sparingly so as to leave more time for improvisation. Interspersed into the melody are his harmonic and chromatic decorations, precursors to the bebop movement. Measures 41–42 show Hawkins's musical gesture of incorporating a C harmonic minor mode over a Dm7b5. This gesture implements two improvisational techniques. At the same time

³⁹ Jerry Coker, *Improvising Jazz* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

⁴⁰ The Library of Congress, "The National Recording Registry 2004," <http://www.loc.gov/rr/record/nrpb/registry/nrpb-2004reg.html> (accessed February 4, 2014). The National Recording Registry is a list of culturally, historically, or aesthetically important sound recordings, or those that inform or reflect life in the United States.

Hawkins implies a harmonic minor harmony and the foreshadowing technique. Parker and Stitt adapted this improvisational technique in differing ways. Parker used the inference of the harmonic minor scale, over a different chord, in “Swingmatism.” Stitt used the foreshadowing technique in “Ray’s Idea.” (Ex. 2.1)

Example 2. 1. "Body and Soul" Coleman Hawkins, 1939.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The melody starts on measure 41 with the chord Fm7. On measure 42, the chord changes to Dm7b5, and a callout box points to a B natural note, stating: "B natural infers harmonic minor and foreshadows the G7b9 that follows." The melody continues on measure 43 with the chord G7b9.

Hawkins’s tone and vibrato on this recording are hallmarks of his playing. He uses vibrato on most pitches over one beat in length. Stitt tends to use vibrato only at the end of long tones, and Parker tends to strip vibrato away altogether. Hawkins’s tone is generally big, gruff, and sometimes is considered harsh. Both Stitt and Parker use a leaner and more focused tone. Hawkins employs a swing eighth-note style with more of the dotted-eighth–sixteenth model. Stitt and Parker lean towards a triplet model of swinging eighth notes.

Lester Young, who played with the Count Basie orchestra starting in 1934, continued an off-and-on relationship with this ensemble over the next twenty years. His style lay in stark contrast to that of Hawkins, with notable differences in timbre, rhythmic sense (swing feel), and melodic conception. On September 5, 1939, as part of a small group Count Basie organized, he recorded for *Count Basie's Kansas City Seven*. For the recording, Young wrote a contrafact, “Lester Leaps In,” on George Gershwin’s “I Got Rhythm.”⁴¹ (This Gershwin vehicle became

⁴¹ A contrafact is composition that consists of a new melody over a familiar harmonic progression. It was used often by jazz performers in the 1940’s for producing songs quickly without any royalty infringements. Under copyright law, a melody can be owned, whereas a harmonic progression requires proof of prior use, a challenging matter in jazz, where progressions are similarly employed.

integral to every jazz performer’s repertoire, with hundreds of variations replacing the melody, and subtle changes in its harmonic schema.) Young’s approach to playing the saxophone appears to defy the norm, as presented by Hawkins. His tone is noticeably less robust.

Parker’s sound directly relates to Young’s. Contrastingly, Stitt’s sound is rooted in the more robust Hodges’ sound. Young employs more conjunct melodic lines that generate a horizontal quality, rather than the more disjunct, vertical approach of Hawkins. Young’s vibrato is employed sparingly and is, at times, barely noticeable. He alters the saxophone’s timbre slightly on longer pitches. He also uses this subtle vibrato throughout the improvisation, on pitches one or one half beats and longer. Both Parker and Stitt adopted Young’s limited use of vibrato.

Young’s performance is a study in phrasing, harmonic application and swing style: “Almost a perfect three minutes in music.”⁴² He was a forward thinker in terms of harmonic applications. He sparingly uses the sharp-5 dominant chord alteration. (G7#5) (Ex. 2.2)

Example 2. 2. “Lester Leaps In,” Classic Columbia, Okeh and Vocalion Lester Young with Count Basie (1936-1940), 2008.



In measures 19–20, Young implies disregard of the traditional A7 chord, instead using the first two beats of measure 19 to continue his presentation of the E7 chord. On beat 3 he implies or foreshadows the D7 chord, playing a C natural. Stitt, in particular, uses the foreshadowing technique in his solos. (Ex. 2.3)

⁴² Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History & Analysis*, 442.

Example 2. 3. “Lester Leaps In,” Classic Columbia, Okeh and Vocalion Lester Young with Count Basie (1936-1940), 2008.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The notation includes measures 17 through 21. Above the staff, chords are indicated: E7 above measure 17, A7 above measure 19, and D7 above measure 21. A box labeled 'D mixolydian scale' encompasses measures 19, 20, and 21. A separate box points to the G# note in measure 19, stating 'G# is part of the E mixolydian scale.' The notes in measure 17 are F# and G#. Measure 18 contains a triplet of eighth notes: G#, A, and B. Measure 19 contains a triplet of eighth notes: B, C, and D. Measure 20 contains a triplet of eighth notes: D, E, and F#. Measure 21 contains a triplet of eighth notes: F#, G, and A.

Parker embraced Young’s triplet feel swing. Stitt used a similar approach, but based his swing on a quintuplet division of the beat.

Johnny Hodges (1907–1970) was thought to be the quintessential alto saxophonist of the period leading up to the bebop revolution. He performed with the Duke Ellington Orchestra from 1928 until 1970. Mostly self-taught, Hodges had a few lessons on the soprano saxophone from jazz legend, Sidney Bechet. He recorded “Whoa Babe” (another contrafact of “I Got Rhythm”) with the Lionel Hampton Orchestra on April 14, 1937. Hodges plays a 4-measure “break” on “Whoa Babe,” and solos over the first sixteen measures of the form. His tone is pure and rich, never bright or edgy. Although a bit brighter, Stitt’s tone resembles that of Hodges. By contrast, Parker’s tone, on his early recordings, tends to sound thinner, more like Young. Even at the fast tempo on “Whoa Babe,” quarter = 188–192, Hodges employs a very distinctive vibrato on virtually every pitch lasting a beat or longer. The vibrato is wide and fast, with almost four undulations per quarter note at the recorded tempo. Both Stitt and Parker eschewed this rapid, wide timbre inflection. Hodges also employed a distinctive pitch bending gesture that bordered on portamento in his solos. In measures 9–11 Hodges uses this pitch bending gesture. (Ex. 2.4)

Example 2. 4. “Whoa Babe,” *Swing Classics* – Lionel Hampton, 1937.



Stitt does not employ Hodges’ pitch bending technique. However, Parker does employ an upward version on “Hootie Blues.” Hodges’ swing is based on the triplet division of the beat. His rhythmic approach is on the beat, not the slightly-behind feeling that Young employed. Stitt’s rhythmic feel resembles more that of Hodges, both players possessing a crystal clear technique, and an “in the pocket” swing. Hodges’ musical style was considered by many to be the best ever heard in jazz. “King of Swing,” Benny Goodman, remarked about Hodges:

I know, for example, that our concert in Carnegie Hall would had lost a lot if we didn’t have the co-operation of fellows like Johnny Hodges, who is the greatest man on alto sax that I have ever heard.⁴³

As the new generation of jazz musicians fully assimilated the music of their predecessors, the evolution of swing into bebop was inevitable. This transformation was gradual and engaged many players looking for change, Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Kenny Clarke, Charlie Christian, and Parker were all at the forefront. Parker, not present at the beginning, came to New York slightly later to share in the exploration.

A great debate continues as to what recordings first displayed the bebop influence. Coleman Hawkins, Cootie Williams, and others led recording sessions that employed musicians who were bebop oriented. Most, if not all, of these early recording sessions, however, were “marred” by the inclusion of one or more musicians whose style was not always compatible with

⁴³ Benny Goodman and Irving Kolodin, *The Kingdom of Swing* (New York: Council on Books in Wartime, 1945).

bebop. Parker's Savoy Records session, on November 26, 1945, was one of the first that featured bebop players exclusively. This recording also features new tunes as vehicles for the new improvisational style. The musicians on this recording were: Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Dizzy Gillespie, piano and trumpet; Max Roach, drums; Curley Russell, bass; Sadik Hakim, piano (not on all tunes); and Miles Davis, trumpet (not on all tunes). The tunes—"Warming Up A Riff," "Billie's Bounce," "Now's The Time," "Thriving On A Riff," "Ko-Ko," and "Meandering"—demonstrate many of the new music's revolutionary practices.

The change to bebop from swing was dramatic. Many older players and audiences found the speed and complex harmonies of bebop difficult to follow. The transformation included several factors:

- 1) The medium of the small group was now favored over the big band; the quintet was the most popular instrumentation.
- 2) The range of tempos increased to be much faster or much slower. Thus, bebop was not as suitable for popular dancing, and musicians viewed themselves as artists rather than entertainers.
- 3) The technical demands of the performer increased, the ability to improvise at extremely fast tempos became mandatory.
- 4) The clarinet of the Swing era was not often used.
- 5) Harmonies were more complex than those of the Swing era.
- 6) Melodies were more complex, reflecting the more complex harmonies.
- 7) Drummers moved to a more agitated, less predictable rhythmic presentation.
- 8) Vibrato used less frequently.
- 9) The improvisers searched for more surprising statements than those found in Swing.

Parker and Stitt borrowed precursor styles of Young, Hodges, and Hawkins. Each saxophonist used differing elements from the role models. Parker used the rhythmic swing feel,

the lack of vibrato and the tone quality from Young in his playing. He also used the sophisticated harmonic substitutions that Hawkins employed. Stitt preferred the swing feel and tone of Hodges. He also used the lack of vibrato of Young, however, he does not use the chord substitutions of Hawkins as often as Parker did. Thus, one cannot say definitively that one copied the other.

PART V ANALYTICAL DEVICES IN STITT AND PARKER IMPROVISATIONS

A comparison analysis of solos by Charlie Parker and Sonny Stitt requires a concise and well-executed analytical system. Such a system, in jazz analysis, is not standardized and systems vary from person to person. For clarity, the following definitions will be used throughout the comparison process.

When improvising, the jazz musician often associates a specific scale type with a specific chord type. This concept is often called a chord/scale relationship. The following are some of the more common pairings.

- 1) Major scale: may be paired with a major or major seventh chord (F/Fmaj⁷) (Ex. 3.1).

Example 3. 1. Major Scale and complementary chords.

- 2) Mixolydian scale: may be paired with the V7 dominant chord (G7) (Ex. 3.2).

Example 3. 2. Mixolydian Scale and complementary chord.

- 3) Dorian Scale: may be paired with the ii minor chord (Dm7) (Ex. 3.3).

Example 3.3. Dorian Scale and complementary chord.

- 4) Half-whole diminished scale: may be paired with the altered 9th dominant chord (G7b9/G7#9) (Ex. 3.4).

Example 3.4. Half-whole Diminished Scale and complementary chords.

Musical notation for Example 3.4. The scale is shown in 4/4 time, starting on G4. The notes are G, A, B \flat , B, C, D, E \flat , E. The complementary chords are G7 \flat 9 and G7 \sharp 9.

- 5) Whole-tone Scale: may be paired with the altered 5th dominant chord (G7b5/G7#5) (Ex. 3.5).

Example 3.5. Whole-tone Scale and complementary chords.

Musical notation for Example 3.5. The scale is shown in 4/4 time, starting on G4. The notes are G, A, B, C, D, E, F \sharp . The complementary chords are G7 \flat 5 and G7 \sharp 5.

- 6) Aeolian Scale: may be paired with the minor vi. (Am7) (Ex. 3.6).

Example 3.6. Aeolian Scale and complementary chord.

Musical notation for Example 3.6. The scale is shown in 4/4 time, starting on A3. The notes are A, B, C, D, E, F, G. The complementary chord is Am7.

- 7) Locrian Scale: may be paired with the minor-seventh flat-5 chord (Bmin7b5) (Ex. 3.7).

Example 3.7. Locrian Scale and complementary chord.

Musical notation for Example 3.7. The scale is shown in 4/4 time, starting on B3. The notes are B, C, D, E, F, G, A. The complementary chord is Bmin7 \flat 5.

- 8) Bebop Scale: a Mixolydian scale (Ex. 3.2) in which the performer has added a chromatic passing tone between $\hat{7}$ and $\hat{8}$ to create symmetry (G7) (Ex. 3.8).

Example 3.8. Bebop Scale and complementary chord.



- 9) Cyclical Pattern: most often a four-note cell in which the first and last notes are the same (Ex. 3.9).

Example 3.9. Cyclical Pattern.



- 10) Pianistic Arpeggio: an arpeggio, including any number of pitches, preceded by a half-step approach below the first pitch of the arpeggio (Ex. 3.10).

Example 3.10. Pianistic Arpeggio.



- 11) Pitch Link: phrases are linked, following a rest, by repeating the same pitch with octave displacement (Ex. 3.11).

Example 3.12. Pitch Link.



- 12) Enclosure: non-chord tones that approach from both above and below on (C chord) (Ex. 3.12.)

Example 3.12. Enclosure.



13) Sawtooth Line: broken diatonic or chromatic scales (Ex. 3.13.)

Example 3.13. Sawtooth Line.



14) Stop and Go: where the performer uses parallel running eighth notes and intermittent rests (Ex. 3.14.)

Example 3.14. Stop and Go.



15) Wedge Shape: extended rotation of the enclosure technique. The wedge shape approaches its goal note from above and below. The pitches are not specifically non-chord tones (Ex. 3.15)

Example 3.15. Wedge Shape.



I will also include the highly personalized performance practices of each musician, considering their articulation, pitch, vibrato, phrase length, and the use of repeated phrases.

These analytical concepts were presented to the author through private and group study with:

- A) James Riggs, Regents Professor Emeritus of Saxophone and Jazz Studies, College of Music, University of North Texas in Denton, Texas.⁴⁴
- B) Dr. David Baker, Distinguished Professor of Music and Chairman of the Jazz Department at Indiana University School of Music in Bloomington, Indiana.
- C) Rich Matteson, Professor of Jazz, College of Music, University of North Texas in Denton, Texas.
- D) Dan Haerle, Regents Professor Emeritus of Jazz Studies, College of Music, University of North Texas in Denton, Texas.

1 The Recordings

The following recordings will be used for analysis:

- A) “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940.
- B) “Swingmatism” – *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann. 1992.
- C) “Hootie Blues” – *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann. 1992.
- D) “Ray’s Idea” – *Cobblestone*, Sonny Stitt, 1972.
- E) “Oop Bop Sh'Bam” – *Groovin High: The Guild-Musicraft Sessions*, Dizzy Gillespie, 2008.
- F) “That’s Earl, Brother” – *Groovin High: The Guild-Musicraft Sessions*, Dizzy Gillespie, 2008.

These are the earliest recorded examples of both Parker and Stitt, with the exception of “Rays Idea” (composed by bassist Ray Brown) an example of Stitt’s mature style and one of the most celebrated of his recordings. Coincidentally, Brown played with the Dizzy Gillespie sextet

⁴⁴ James G. Riggs, Private Saxophone Lessons, North Texas State University, 1981-83, 1983.

when Stitt made his solo recording debut. The bridge of “Ray’s Idea” uses an altered 5th gesture that Stitt employed on his “That’s Earl Brother” solo.

2 Transcription Method

I present each transcription, and the examples of analytic devices, in alto saxophone transposition. (Transcriptions for Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins solos (see Chapter 1), I present in tenor saxophone transposition.) The full transcriptions can be found in the appendices. I used *Transcribe!*, a program that incorporates digital technology, and allows the transcriber to slow down various passages while retaining the original pitch level. *Transcribe!* also features an “A-B” repeat function, which facilitates easy repetition of any section. The recordings used are listed in the bibliography.

PART VI TRANSCRIPTION ANALYSIS

1 Charlie Parker: “Honey and Body”

“Honey and Body” is considered Parker’s earliest known recording. As it was not originally intended for commercial release, the recording reveals his playing in a setting unencumbered by the three-minute limitation of the 78-rpm format. Clarence Davis, a trumpeter from Kansas City, who had performed with Parker in 1937, recorded it. Davis used an amateur recording device, which would account for the limited fidelity of the recording.. Given its origins, the exact date of the recording is difficult to pinpoint. Parker scholar Carl Woideck places the date around 1940.⁴⁵

The “Honey and Body” recording is a combination of the well-known standards, “Honeysuckle Rose” and “Body and Soul,” on which Parker improvises, starting with “Honeysuckle Rose” and segueing into “Body and Soul.” Thus, these tunes form the templates for Parker’s performance; “Honey and Body” was simply the label Clarence Davis gave the disc.⁴⁶

Parker performs unaccompanied (without a rhythm section), which affords him more rhythmic and harmonic freedom. The accompanying chord progression to “Honey and Body” is a combination of the lead-sheet progression and other harmonic implications as performed by Parker.

⁴⁵ Woideck, *Charlie Parker: His Music and Life* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996, 68.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

1) *Tone and Vibrato:*

Although the recording fidelity is of a lesser quality, many aspects of Parker's playing can be gleaned from "Honey and Body." Vibrato is employed, however sparingly, usually at the end of notes longer than 1.5 beats in length. Unlike the deep vibrato of Hodges or Hawkins, Parker's is rapid with a nervous quality. The tone of the young Parker sounds rather thin and underdeveloped, verging on very bright, contrasting the rich, robust sounds of Hodges and Hawkins.

2) *Tempo and Rhythm:*

"Honey" is performed at quarter note = c. 190. Parker's melodic presentation is based on an eighth-note swing feel. Faster rhythmic presentations are generally reserved for ornamentations of a steady stream of eighth notes (Ex. 4.1).

Example 4.1. "Honey and Body," *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, melody presented in eighth-note swing feel, with faster rhythms as ornamentation.



The image shows a musical score for a section of "Honey and Body" by Charlie Parker. It is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is presented in eighth-note swing feel. The notation includes chord symbols: E7b9 above measure 9, Em7 above measure 10, A7 above measure 11, and A7#5 above the final measure. Measure numbers 9, 10, and 11 are indicated below the staff. The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes, with some faster rhythmic ornamentations.

The longest note value used in the "Honey" section of the recording is a half note, occurring once in measure 118. Parker employs the eighth note as the basic unit for the bulk of "Honey". The swing feel is well developed and gives the listener a feeling of forward motion. A few discrepancies appear in terms of metric continuity. For example, Parker takes liberties with the 4/4 pulse by shortening some of the measures by one or two beats (Ex. 4.2).

Example 4.2. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, meter shift.



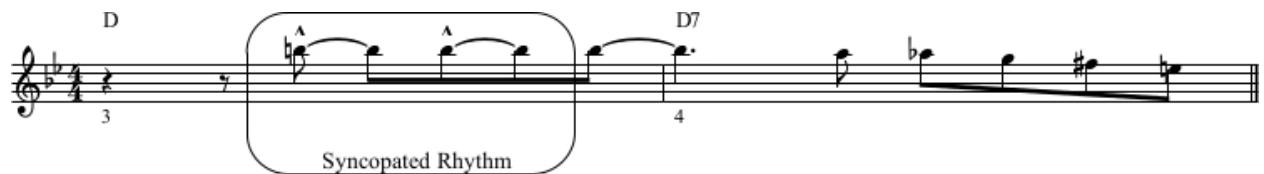
In contrast, Parker uses sixteenths interspersed with triplets as the basic rhythmic unit of “Body” (Ex. 4.3).

Example 4.3. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, sixteenth presentation.



He also uses a syncopated rhythm throughout “Honey,” occurring in measures 3, 17, 36, 83, and 99 (Ex. 4.4).

Example 4.4. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, syncopation.



Parker tends to start his phrases on the offbeat (Ex. 4.5).

Example 4.5. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, off beat phrase entrances.



3) *Melodic and Harmonic Material:*

Parker's first notes played on this recording comprise a motive he used often in his career. In his research on Parker's melodic motives, Thomas Owens labeled this motive 2A (Ex. 4.6), and cataloged it as having been used by Parker approximately 1,400 times.⁴⁷

Example 4.6. "Honey and Body," *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, Owens motive 2A.



Parker uses an alteration of the dominant chord in the Em7–A7 progression. In "Honey" this progression occurs fifty-three times. In twenty-one of those occurrences Parker alters the dominant seventh chord. One alteration employed is the #5 (Ex. 4.7).

Example 4.7. "Honey and Body," *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, #5 alteration.



Parker also incorporates the flat-9 alteration (Ex. 4.8).

Example 4.8. "Honey and Body," *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, flat-9 alteration.



⁴⁷ Thomas Owens, "Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation" (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA), 1974.

Parker implies a series of chromatic-chord substitutions that employs a melodic fragment of the namesake tune, “Honeysuckle Rose” (Ex. 4.9).

Example 4.9. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, chromatic chord substitutions.

Parker also employs an upward, half-step sequence of melodic and harmonic material heard in the preceding measure (Ex. 4.10).

Example 4.10. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, sequential material.

Parker modulates into “Body and Soul” at measures 115–116. He uses a cartoonish melodic statement that ends “Honey” on a humorous note and segues into “Body” at that point (Ex. 4.11).

Example 4.11. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, humorous segue to “Body.”

With the arrival of “Body,” the tempo is simultaneously cut in half (roughly) to quarter note = c. 84. The abrupt, dramatic tempo change effectively shifts the basic rhythmic unit from an eighth to a sixteenth, implying a double-time feel. Phrase lengths in “Body” are in two- or four-measure increments, mimicking the melody of the tune’s phrase structure.

Parker uses a trademark bebop harmonic alteration, the tritone substitution, in measures 117–118 (Ex. 4.12).

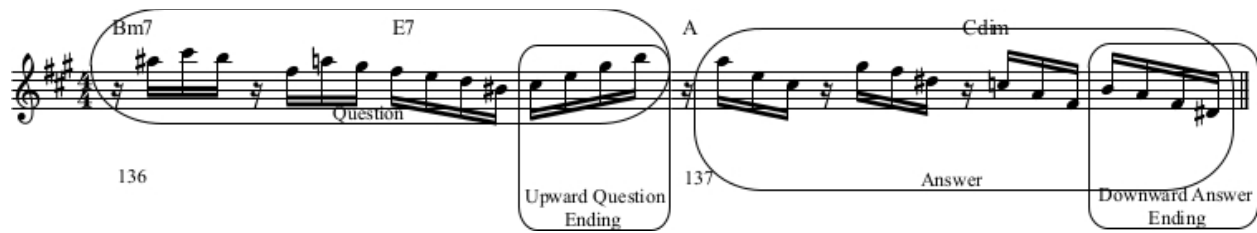
Example 4.12. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, tritone substitution.

As in the preceding “Honey” portion, Parker is apt to use alterations to various dominant chords. He implies the flat-9, and #11 alterations in “Body” (Ex. 4.13).

Example 4.13. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, flat-9, #11 alteration.

Parker also uses a question-answer statement with reverse melodic motion in the answer portion (Ex. 4.14).

Example 4.14. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, reverse melodic motion.



Although Parker uses other improvisation techniques in “Honey and Body,” these techniques, such as cyclical pattern and sawtooth, occur too seldom to deserve more than a passing mention.

2 Charlie Parker: “Swingmatism”

On April 30, 1941, Parker recorded for the first time in a commercial setting—with the Jay McShann orchestra for the Decca record label. Decca marketed the McShann band as a blues band, so this album was titled *Blues from Kansas City*. According to Carl Woideck, these were the only commercially available recordings of early Parker until 1974.⁴⁸ Parker was given very little solo opportunity in the 78-rpm recordings, only one chorus in the tune, “Swingmatism,” a 16-bar D-minor blues.

1) *Tone and Vibrato:*

Parker’s tone shows more richness and depth than in “Honey and Body,” a year earlier. His improved tone quality could be attributed to the superior recording equipment of the Decca studio. He uses vibrato, again, sparingly, and on the longest notes only.

2) *Tempo and Rhythm:*

The tempo of “Swingmatism” is quarter = c. 174. Parker uses an almost strict application of eighth notes and displays none of the double-time passages that would mark his later, mature

⁴⁸ Woideck, *Charlie Parker: His Music and Life*.

work. The occasional forays into faster note values occur as ornamentation of the basic eighth-note melodic material. Parker’s swing feel is strong, never wavering (Ex. 5.1).

Example 5.1. “Swingmatism,” *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann, 1992, eighth note presentation with ornamentation.



3) *Melodic and Harmonic Material:*

Parker presents some notable melodic material. In the two-measure pickup he uses the 5th mode of the ascending D-melodic-minor scale, descending with the harmonic form of the same scale. In measure 18, he repeats the scale, except this time in descending motion. Yet, in measure 18, he avoids the lone note that could identify the scale as harmonic or melodic, the $\hat{6}$, or B and Bb, in this case (Ex. 5.2).

Example 5.2. “Swingmatism,” *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann. 1992, harmonic minor gesture.



In measures 10–11, Parker uses a fully diminished seventh-chord arpeggio in descending motion, with the added note G (Ex. 5.3).

Example 5.3. “Swingmatism,” *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann. 1992, diminished 7th chord gesture.



Parker uses a sawtooth pattern (measures 14–17) as a drive to the cadence. This pattern is also sequential. Example 5.4 also shows the flat-9 dominant Parker is fond of using.

Example 5.4. “Swingmatism,” *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann. 1992, sawtooth pattern flat-9 gesture.



In this solo, Parker uses variable phrase lengths of three, four, and six measures.

3 Charlie Parker: “Hootie Blues”

“Hootie Blues” was recorded on the same session as “Swingmatism,” although in C major, with the more traditional 12-bar form. Parker is given twelve measures for his improvisation. There is some debate as to whether Parker was co-composer/arranger of this tune.⁴⁹

1) *Tone and Vibrato:*

Parker’s employment of tone and vibrato is similar to that of “Swingmatism,” although he uses vibrato more often, perhaps to emphasize the blues feeling of the tune.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

2) *Tempo and Rhythm:*

With the quarter note = c. 110, Parker employs double time, as a rhythmic and melodic device; thus he plays twice as fast as the basic eighth-note rhythm. The tempo is slow enough that he can execute these difficult figures with ease (Ex. 6.1).

Example 6.1. “Hootie Blues,” *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann. 1992, double time gesture.



3) *Harmonic and Melodic Material:*

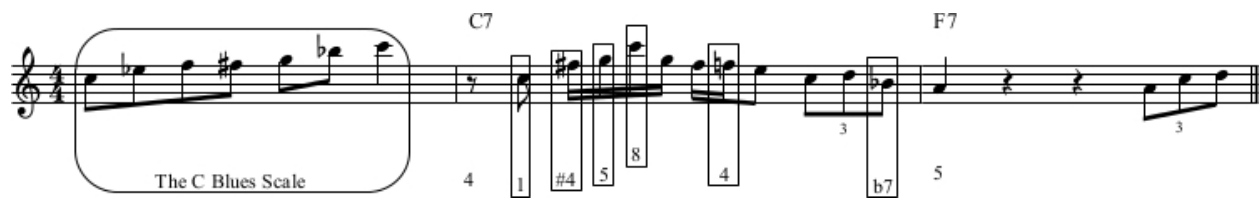
Parker begins his solo with a “blue note.” From the flat-3, he uses a portamento like gesture into the major third of the dominant chord. This upward movement reverses the usual downward portamento like gesture of Hodges (Ex. 6.2).

Example 6.2. “Swingmatism,” *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann, 1992, blue note gesture.



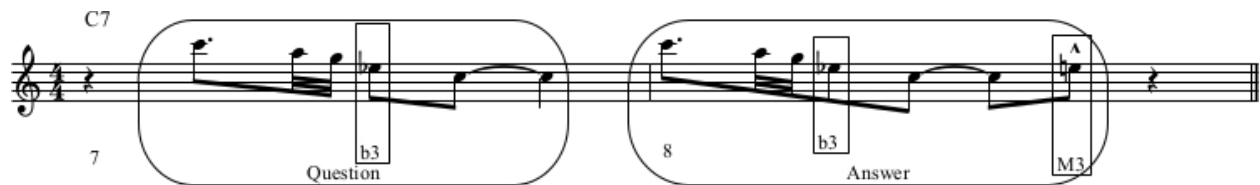
In measure 4, Parker employs a double-time figure with some of the elements of the blues scale. (A blues scale consists of pitches 1, b3, 4, #4, 5, b7, and 8, as compared with a major scale in the same key.) Parker plays a pattern that includes pitches 1, 4, #4, 5, and 8 (Ex. 6.3).

Example 6.3. “Swingmatism,” *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann, 1992, blues scale application.



Parker also employs a blues statement (measures 7-8). The two, arpeggiated motives form a question-answer phrase. In measure 7 the question ends on the tonic and incorporates the flat-3. For the answer in measure 8, likewise, Parker employs the flat-3. However, he ends the phrase with an upward leap to the major third of the dominant-seventh chord (Ex. 6.4).

Example 6.4. “Swingmatism”. *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann, 1992, question and answer gesture.



Stitt’s first recordings coincide with Parker’s west coast trip and subsequent hospitalization. In fact, Gillespie probably employed Stitt as Parker’s replacement after the latter failed to return to New York City with Gillespie. This gave Stitt his first recorded solo opportunities in May 1946.

4 Sonny Stitt: “Oop Bop Sh’Bam”

“Oop Bop Sh’Bam” was recorded on May 15, 1946. The accompanying musicians were all sympathetic performers, schooled in the intricacies of the new style. With its small group, this

recording diverged from the big band recordings of Parker with the Jay McShann band.⁵⁰ The intimate setting of like-minded musicians allows the soloists greater flexibility towards their improvisations, far from the more rigid arrangements of the big band setting.

1) *Tone and Vibrato:*

Stitt's tone is rich and full. The richness demonstrates the considerable influence Hodges had on his sound concept. Stitt employs vibrato, but unlike Hodges, he uses it sparingly. Stitt's vibrato occurs only at the end of longer notes, such as the quarter note in measure 3, where he applies vibrato at the very end of the pitch.

2) *Tempo and Rhythm:*

Stitt plays perfectly at ease at the tempo of quarter = c. 150–156. He uses a wide variety of rhythmic gestures, including complicated double-time passages. Note values range from a dotted quarter to the fastest duration of a sixteenth triplet. Stitt disperses these rhythms evenly throughout the improvisation. No single measure is entirely constructed of eighth notes, although measure 15 is entirely sixteenths.

3) *Harmonic and Melodic Material:*

In measures 1–2, Stitt uses two melodic devices to move the improvisation forward to a cadence. He foreshadows the alteration of the ensuing dominant chord, playing Ab over the Dm chord. He then plays Ab, over the G7b9, using a wedge shape to move the line towards the G of the C-major chord (Ex. 7.1).

⁵⁰ Salemann, *Sonny Stitt: Solography, Discography, Band Routes, Engagements: In Chronological*, Basel: Jazz Circle, 1986.

Example 7.1. “Oop Bop Sh’Bam,” *Groovin High: The Guild-Musicraft Sessions*, Dizzy Gillespie, 2008, foreshadowing and wedge shape techniques.

1
Dm7
Foreshadows Ab in Next Measure

2
G7b9

3
CMaj
Wedge Shape

Stitt executes two double-time gestures in the body of the improvisation. In measure 5 he uses a sixteenth gesture that features a chromatic passing tone (Bb) A–Bb–B over an Em7 chord. He then presents the enclosure technique in measure 6 of D–Eb–F#–E, over an A7 chord, and a repetition of the A–Bb–B passing tone over the A7 chord. In measure 6 Stitt again foreshadows the upcoming Am7, playing the #9 (or C) before the tune moves to the Am7 chord (Ex. 7.2).

Example 7.2. “Oop Bop Sh’Bam,” *Groovin High: The Guild-Musicraft Sessions*, Dizzy Gillespie, 2008, enclosure technique.

5
Em7
Chromatic Passing Tone

6
A7
Wedge Shape

7
Am7
Chromatic Passing Tone
Foreshadows The Next Chord

In measures 5–6 Stitt uses a pianistic arpeggio and a sawtooth chromatic pattern to cadence on the A of the D7 chord (Ex. 7.3).

Example 7.3. “Oop Bop Sh’Bam,” *Groovin High: The Guild-Musicraft Sessions*, Dizzy Gillespie, 2008, pianistic arpeggio.

7
Am7
Pianistic Arpeggio

8
D7
Sawtooth Pattern

In general, Stitt intersperses scalar, arpeggiated, and chromatic gestures to drive to the cadence, and to propel the improvisation forward throughout the piece. He starts the improvisation on an A, cadences on the same pitch in measures 3, 8, 9, and 16. Throughout the improvisation he also employs the chromatic pitches Bb and Ab immediately prior to his goal note; thus he move towards an important cadence pitch chromatically. In addition, he uses E to denote the cadence point in measures 7–10, which also leads back to the A he had chosen as a fixed point in his improvisation.

4) *Phrase Lengths:*

Stitt consistently constructs phrases in even, two- and four-measure lengths. Cadence pitches of these phrases are primarily As and Es, with a G mixed in once for variety.

5 Sonny Stitt: “That’s Earl Brother”

“That’s Earl Brother” was recorded on the same Musicraft session as “Oop Bop Sh’Bam.” The tune is a 32-bar AABA song form, with a four-measure introduction. Gillespie opens the solos by improvising over the first two A sections. Stitt follows, by playing over the B section and the last eight measures of the tune, for a total of 16 measures.

1) *Tempo and Rhythm:*

The tune is played at quarter = c. 160. Stitt’s rhythmic vocabulary is similar to that used for his improvisation on “Oop Bop Sh’Bam.” The longest pitch duration is an eighth tied to a half note (measure 2); the shortest is a sixteenth triplet. Stitt’s swing feel is driving and perfectly executed. Again, he employs the double-time gesture, showing a well-developed sense of rhythm and a stunning technique.

2) *Tone and Vibrato:*

“That’s Earl Brother” is from the same session as Oop Bop Sh’Bam, so Stitt’s tone is similarly full and rich. He applies vibrato in the same manner, a shimmering addition to the ends of long pitches.

3) *Melodic and Harmonic Material:*

Stitt begins his improvisation using traditional material: the A-Dorian scale in a descending gesture. The addition of the chromatic C# transforms this mode into the bebop scale, again, foreshadowing the ensuing dominant chord (Ex. 8.1).

Example 8.1. “That’s Earl Brother,” *Groovin High: The Guild-Musicraft Sessions*, Dizzy Gillespie, 2008, bebop scale.



In measures 3–4, Stitt uses the enclosure formula to drive to the cadence on the $\hat{6}$ of the G7 chord (Ex. 8.2).

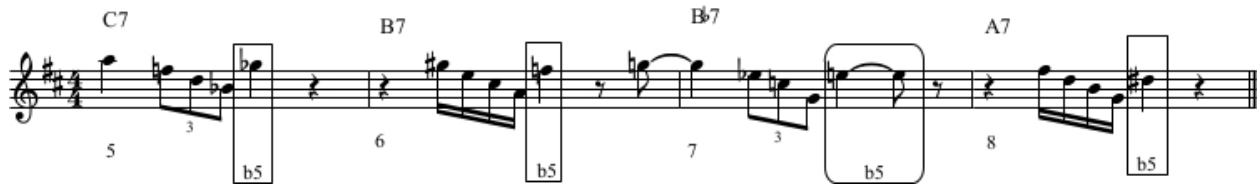
Example 8.2. “That’s Earl Brother,” *Groovin High: The Guild-Musicraft Sessions*, Dizzy Gillespie, 2008, enclosure technique.



Starting in measure 5, and continuing through measure 8, are a series of chromatically descending, altered dominant chords. On beats 1 and 2, Stitt treats the chord in standard fashion. On beats 3 and 4 of each measure in the series, however, he includes the flat-5. Bebop musicians

were fond of using the flatted fifth theoretical concept, especially Dizzy Gillespie. This concept helped introduce chromaticism and dissonance to the music⁵¹ (Ex. 8.3).

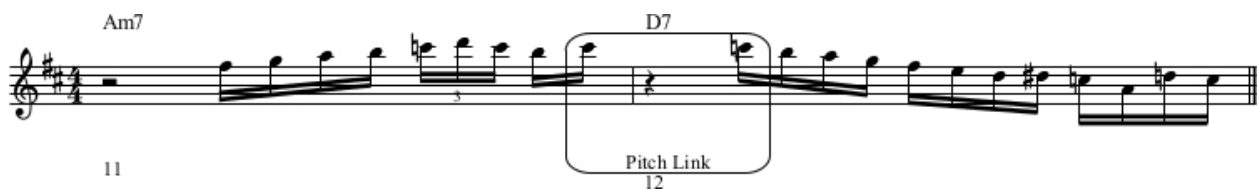
Example 8.3. “That’s Earl Brother,” *Groovin High: The Guild-Musicraft Sessions*, Dizzy Gillespie, 2008, flat-5 gesture.



In measures 11–12 Stitt uses a pitch-linking device between two double-time gestures.

(Ex. 8.4).

Example 8.4. “That’s Earl Brother,” *Groovin High: The Guild-Musicraft Sessions*, Dizzy Gillespie, 2008, pitch linking technique.



4) *Phrase Length:*

Stitt uses a variety of phrase lengths, ranging from a simple 1-bar statement to 4-bar statements, and one 6-bar statement.

6 Sonny Stitt: “Ray’s Idea”

On June 27, 1972, Sonny Stitt recorded what could be considered his finest session as a leader. The title of the album, *Constellation*, refers to a Parker composition. Jamey Aebersold

⁵¹ Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 572.

3) *Harmonic and Melodic Material:*

By virtue of the longer record format available to Stitt at the time of this session, he was able to take a longer solo than on the earlier 78-rpm recordings. Stitt improvises for 2.5 choruses (or 80 measures) on “Ray’s Idea,” as compared with the 16-measure solos of his “Oop Bop Sh’ Bam,” and “That’s Earl Brother.”

The significantly longer solo space offers Stitt more opportunities to explore harmonic and melodic diversity. In measures 34–36, he employs several devices that generate forward momentum. On the upbeats of 3 and 4 (measure 34), he uses the enclosure device to emphasize the importance of the Ab on the downbeat of measure 35. However, the Ab is the flatted fifth of the Dm chord; thus Stitt moves chromatically down to the 3rd of the Dm chord. He then moves to the cadence using cyclic and sawtooth patterns (Ex. 9.2).

Example 9.2. “Ray’s Idea,” *Cobblestone*, Sonny Stitt, 1972, chromatic gesture.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time, spanning measures 34, 35, and 36. The key signature has one flat (Bb). Measure 34 starts with a Cm7 chord and contains an enclosure figure. Measure 35 starts with an F7#5 chord, followed by a Dm7b5 chord, and contains a cyclic pattern. Measure 36 starts with a G7 chord, followed by a Cm7 chord, and contains a sawtooth pattern. The final note of measure 36 is an F7 chord. The staff ends with a double bar line.

The standard harmonic progression for the 8-bar bridge of “I Got Rhythm” begins on the III7 and proceeds cyclically through VI7–II7–V7—each chord lasting two measures. Although a contrafact on “Rhythm” changes, the harmonic progression for the bridge of “Ray’s Idea” has been altered to support its unique melody. So, rather than soloing on a progression of D7–G7–C7–F7, Stitt improvises over a progression of Fmin7–Bb7b9#5–Ebmin7–Ab7 b9#5–Dbmin7–Gb7 b9#5–Cmin7–F7 b9#5—each chord lasting one measure. In his improvisation Stitt often

ignores the altered dominant chords, playing instead a simple, descending scale that fits the unaltered versions of the dominant chords (Ex. 9.3).

Example 9.3. “Ray’s Idea,” *Cobblestone*, Sonny Stitt, 1972, diatonic chord/scale gesture.

Stitt uses the cyclical pattern device in several places throughout the improvisation. This is illustrated in measures 42–43 (Ex. 9.4).

Example 9.4. “Ray’s Idea,” *Cobblestone*, Sonny Stitt, 1972, cyclical pattern.

On the F7 chord, used often in the A and B sections of the tune, Stitt varies the quality of the chord. In measures 34, 38, 44, 58 66, 74, 76, 78, and 104, he implies a #5 or flat-9 dominant alteration. In other areas he uses the standard dominant-chord scale relationship (Ex. 9.5).

Example 9.5. “Ray’s Idea,” *Cobblestone*, Sonny Stitt, 1972, #5 gesture.

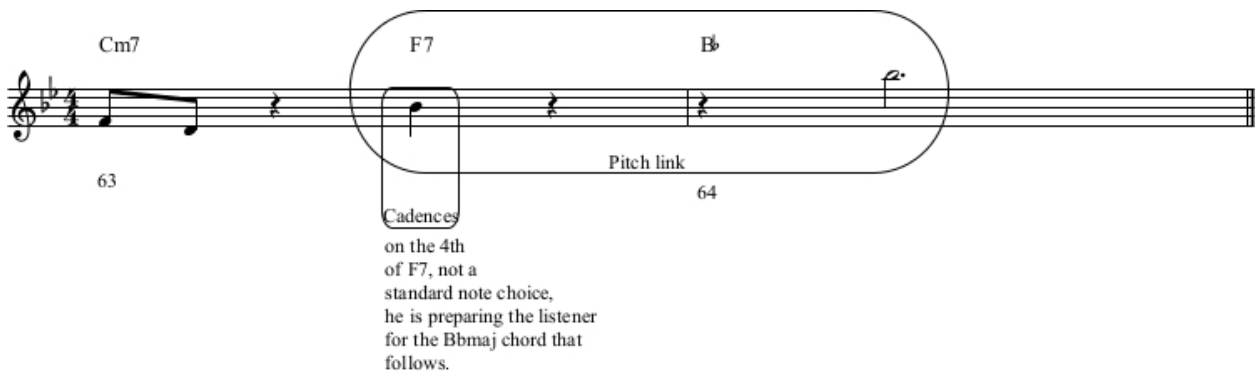
In measure 52, Stitt uses a wedge-shaped melodic pattern, a device not found in any Parker solo (Ex. 9.6).⁵³

Example 9.6. “Ray’s Idea,” *Cobblestone*, Sonny Stitt, 1972, wedge shape technique.



In measures 63–64, Stitt uses the melodic pitch-linking technique. In this instance, he displaces the pitch by octave (Ex. 9.7).

Example 9.7. “Ray’s Idea,” *Cobblestone*, Sonny Stitt, 1972, pitch linking technique and foreshadowing gesture.



⁵³ At least, not in any solos that have been transcribed thus far in this document.

PART VI SUMMARY OF STITT – PARKER IMPROVISATIONAL STYLES

In this chapter, I summarize detailed evidence of Stitt's and Parker's differing styles presented in Chapter 2. I also offer further examples distinguishing their approaches to show how we might get beyond simplistic and condescending depictions of Stitt as Parker's offspring or mimic.

In a chapter on influential alto saxophonists of the bebop movement, Owens lists Stitt as a "child" of Parker. He claims that Stitt, in his 1946 debut, played very little that Parker had not already played. Yet, within the same writing, Owens contradicts himself with the following:

In his earliest recordings Stitt did not copy any of Parker's solos, or even any complete phrases from Parker's solos.⁵⁴

The musical examples that Owens provides for this comparison are two four-measure phrases that do not provide an in depth comparison that is needed on the subject.

1) *Tone and Vibrato:*

Evidence from his transcribed recordings demonstrates that Stitt plays with a lean, focused sound. It is rich and vibrant, tending towards what would be considered a bright sound. On the two Gillespie recordings, Stitt uses a narrow vibrato at the end of the longer pitches, those 1.5 beats or longer. Vibrato, when applied, is very narrow, almost imperceptible, more a slight timbre change at the end of pitches than a conscious application of vibrato. By the time of "Ray's Idea," Stitt has virtually eliminated vibrato from his playing. His tone quality reflects more Johnny Hodges than the thicker sound of Hawkins. However, Stitt avoids the intense and

⁵⁴ Thomas Owens, *Bebop: The Music and its Players* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 49-51.

pervasive vibrato characteristic of both Hodges and Hawkins. His vibrato use demonstrates the influence of Lester Young, although it lacks the laconic quality Young produces.

By comparison, Parker’s sound is thinner. Young’s tone has had a decidedly greater impact here. Parker also tends to apply his vibrato earlier on long pitches than does Stitt. Parker’s vibrato, when used, is played at six undulations per quarter note, at approximately 60 bpm. Young’s vibrato, likewise, has been shown as a role model for Parker.

2) *Rhythm:*

Parker employs a more sophisticated application of rhythm than Stitt. In “Honey and Body,” Parker integrates moments of rest in his melodic material, such as in measures 92–96 and measures 107–110; the longest rest occurring is a dotted quarter note (Ex. 10.1).

Example 10.1. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, rests as part of melodic gesture.

Parker tends to start his phrases on any beat but one, preferring the offbeat entrance to the downbeat. In the “Honey” portion of the 1940 recording, he uses only six on-the-beat phrase entrances, versus twenty-six off-beat entrances. Syncopation forms the primary mode of his melodic presentation. In “Honey,” measure 99 (and elsewhere), Parker plays a syncopated quarter, repeated-note cell six times as a unifying element in the improvisation (Ex. 10.2).

Example 10.2. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, repeated rhythmic gesture as unifying element.

An important element of style revealing the differences in Parker’s and Stitt’s improvisational styles is swing. Swing feel proves difficult to quantify, but Parker’s swing lies slightly behind the beat—consistently, so the tempo never seems to drag. Still, in eighth-note passagework, Parker’s first eighth is consistently longer than his second. He tends to employ a triplet-based swing rhythm. Downbeats receive $\frac{2}{3}$ of the beat duration and upbeats $\frac{1}{3}$.

Stitt’s rhythmic application is less complex. He avoids incorporating moments of rest into a melodic statement. Rather, he uses them to demarcate phrase endings, as in “Oop Bop Sh’ Bam,” measures 6–8 (Ex. 10.3).

Example 10.3. “Oop Bop Sh’ Bam,” *Groovin High: The Guild-Musicraft Sessions*, Dizzy Gillespie, 2008, rests incorporated into cadence points.

Stitt uses more on-the-beat phrase beginnings than Parker. In “Rays Idea,” he starts phrases on the beat seventeen times, versus only seven offbeat entrances. Stitt does not employ syncopated melodic figures to the same extent as Parker. In “Rays Idea” (measure 46), Stitt employs a syncopated figure, but as a drive to the cadence rather than a unifying thematic device (Ex. 10.4).

Example 10.4. “Ray’s Idea,” *Cobblestone*, Sonny Stitt, 1972, syncopated gesture and pitch-link technique.

For his syncopated entrances, Stitt also tends to use the upbeat of beat 4 as a pickup to a phrase starting on the downbeat. His swing feel fits what jazz musicians would call “in the pocket”: eighth notes tend to be very evenly centered in the pulse, and rarely does he slow or speed up his melodic lines. Stitt implies a quintuple-based swing rhythm, where downbeats receive $3/5$ of the beat and upbeats $2/5$.

3) *Articulations:*

Articulations are a personal inflection in jazz. The way a jazz improviser approaches the articulation of a pitch, or group of pitches, is an individualistic process, often proving a means for differentiating one performer from another. Yet, within a given style period, different performers will share some articulation conventions, as do Stitt and Parker. By accenting the melodic points where the line changes direction, both avoid blanketing a melodic line with the systematic “do-bah-do-bah” eighth-note articulation used by less experienced players. Rather, they articulate notes based on phrase direction, or change of direction. A performer might have a plethora of articulation devices at his or her command, to fit any expressive moment. In general, however, Stitt’s short quarter notes are not quite as percussive as Parker’s. And Parker tends to play phrases ending with a shorter, articulated eighth note. His syncopated quarter notes are also played with a harder attack on the note. Unsurprisingly, Parker and Stitt have some articulation vocabulary in common; they performed and fraternized with many of like-minded musicians, Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Art Tatum, Kenny Clarke, Bud Powell, and Ray Brown, among others.

4) *Phrase Lengths:*

Phrase lengths constitute another individualistic element in improvisation. Parker uses varying phrase lengths, including asymmetrical lengths. In “Honey and Body,” he plays phrases

of two and six measures in length. On “Swingmatism” and “Hootie Blues” he uses phrase lengths of between one and five measures. Parker also cuts across imaginary phrase lines in the structure of the tune. In “Honey and Body,” organized around 8-bar sections, Parker delays his phrase until measure 9, three measures before the end of the first A section; he ends this idea two measures into the second A section (measure 13; Ex. 10.5).

Example 10.5. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, phrasing across formal sections of tune.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody starts at measure 9. Above the staff, chords are indicated: E7b9 at measure 9, Em7 at measure 10, A7 at measure 11, A7#5 at measure 12, Em/A at measure 13, and A7 at measure 14. A box highlights measures 12 and 13, with the text "Phrasing across tune section line" below it. Measure numbers 9, 10, 11, and 12 are written below the staff.

By comparison, Stitt’s phrases are more consistently symmetrical in length throughout his solos. He uses primarily 1-, 2-, 4-, 6-, and 8-bar phrases. Although one 3-bar phrase appears at the beginning of “Oop Bop Sh’Bam,” the measure of rest that follows lengthens the phrase to four bars. Stitt’s phrasing clearly leads to cadence points and never cuts across the form of the tune.

5) *Melodic Material:*

Stitt and Parker use several melodic formulas, but also original material in their improvisations. Although they sometimes used similar techniques, the individuality of their execution renders even the same melodic techniques slightly different.

Parker tends to incorporate more chromaticism in his melodic lines than does Stitt. In measure 16 of “Swingmatism,” Parker plays C# over a Dm7 chord. This suggests a D-harmonic minor sonority, a non-traditional application over this chord (Ex. 10.6).

Example 10.6. “Swingmatism,” *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann. 1992, Parker solo fragment implying harmonic minor.

Chromatic tones are used to emphasize almost every scale degree. In measure 10 of “Hootie Blues,” Parker uses two chromatic passing tones to resolve to the third and seventh of the G7 chord. He also applies the same technique to resolve to the 2nd of the C7 chord. (Ex. 10.7).

Example 10.7. “Hootie Blues,” *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann. 1992, chromatic tones in Parker solo.

In “Honey and Body,” Parker uses chromatic pitches more extensively throughout the improvisation, perhaps because of the freedom of playing without a rhythm section. He uses melodic “quotes”⁵⁵ in his improvisations to grab the attention of the listener. In “Honey and Body,” Parker takes a melodic fragment from the melody of “Honeysuckle Rose” and manipulates it through several keys. He also inserts a humorous melodic fragment used in cartoons.

⁵⁵ A quote is a technique of inserting a familiar melody or rhythm into a solo as a form of musical wit, sometimes simply to get attention from the audience, but also to joke with fellow musicians.

Parker uses several melodic formulas as part of his solo construction. In summing up the uses of formulaic ideas in all of the transcriptions in this document, we can count six-cycle patterns, seven sawtooth patterns, six stop-and-go patterns, three enclosure patterns, and one pianistic arpeggio.

Stitt also uses chromaticism in his improvisations. However, he approaches chromatic pitches in a slightly different manner. Most often Stitt uses a chromatic melody alteration to lead to chord or scale pitches. In measures 44–45 of “Ray’s Idea,” he uses chromatic pitches to lead to the root and 5th of the chord (Ex. 10.8).

Example 10.8. “Ray’s Idea,” *Cobblestone*, Sonny Stitt, 1972, chromatic pitches in solo.

The musical notation shows two measures of music. Measure 44 is marked with Cm7 and contains a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 45 is marked with F7b9 and contains a chromatic line of eighth notes. A box highlights the chromatic lower neighbor to the 5th of the chord (F7b9), and another box highlights a chromatic passing tone to the root (Bb), which is also noted as a fragment of the bebop scale.

In general, Stitt uses fewer chromatic pitches in his improvisations than Parker. Stitt avoids quoting, and only one, brief, restatement of the tune’s melody appears, perhaps as a reference point for the listener. Stitt uses the following number of harmonic formulas in the transcriptions presented here: eight enclosure patterns, four cycle patterns, five pianistic arpeggios, six pitch-link patterns, two sawtooth patterns, and one stop-and-go pattern. In “Ray’s Idea,” measures 41–42, Stitt also uses a variation of Owens’s 2A melodic pattern, introduced by Parker in the first phrase of “Honey and Body.” Woideck observes that this melodic fragment is derived from Lester Young⁵⁶ (Ex. 10.9).

⁵⁶ Woideck, *Charlie Parker: His Music and Life*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996, 70.

Example 10.9. “Ray’s Idea,” *Cobblestone*, Sonny Stitt, 1972, pitch-link technique and Owens’s 2A Parker pattern.

As a general rule, Stitt plays more diatonically than Parker, who uses more chromatic pitches in his melodies.

6) *Harmonic Material:*

Parker uses both common and unusual harmonic practices in his performances. In “Honey and Body,” he alters the V7 chord—in the alto key of D (A7)—twenty-one times, with most of the standard dominant alterations, #5, #9, flat-9, ALT, #11 and flat-13. Oddly, he avoids the trademark dominant alteration of the bebop era—the flat-5—from which, according to some, the term bebop hails. In “Swingmatism,” Parker plays C# to imply D-harmonic minor as the tonic. In “Honey and Body” (measure 44) he states a melodic idea, then repeats it a half step higher (measure 45) to create a chromatic sequence both melodically and harmonically (Ex. 10.10).

Example 10.10. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, chromatic sequential melodic and harmonic gesture.

In measures 84–87, Parker again manipulates the harmony and melody through chromaticism. He states a melodic fragment from “Honeysuckle Rose” in the tonic key, restates

it up a half step then down a half step from the tonic key; finally he moves it to a whole step below the tonic, resolving to the tonic via another half step (C#–D using G7#11). Very creative indeed! (Ex. 10.11).

Example 10.11. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, chromatic sequential melodic and harmonic gesture.

The musical notation for Example 10.11 shows a sequence of five measures (84-88) in the key of D major. The chords are: Em7 (m. 84), A7 (m. 85), Fm7 (m. 85), Bb7 (m. 85), Ebm7 (m. 86), Ab7 (m. 86), Dm7 (m. 87), G7#11 (m. 87), and D (m. 88). Annotations include: 'One half step higher melodic and harmonic gesture' for measures 85-86; 'One half step lower melodic and harmonic gesture' for measures 86-87; 'One whole step lower melodic and harmonic gesture' for measures 87-88; and 'Chromatic lower neighbor to tonic' for the final measure (88).

In measure 95 of “Honey and Body,” Parker implies a lower neighbor, fully-diminished chord substitution (G#dim) in place of the traditional Em7 chord. This diminished chord temporarily tonicizes the dominant while simultaneously creating a compound melody, the upper voice of which rises chromatically from G to A (Ex 10.12).

Example 10.12. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, diminished chord substitution.

The musical notation for Example 10.12 shows measure 95 in the key of D major. The chord is G#dim, which is a diminished chord substitution for the traditional Em7 chord. The annotation reads: 'Neighbor diminished chord substitution'.

In “Hootie Blues,” Parker uses portions of the blues scale to create a blues-inflected melody and altered harmony. In measure 7 he implies a flat-3 (only one of the pitches found in the blues scale). In measure 4 he also uses the #4, 4, and 5 and flat-7, all belonging to the blues scale (Ex. 10.13).

Example 10.13. “Hootie Blues,” *Blues from Kansas City*, Jay McShann. 1992, blues scale gestures.

In “Honey and Body” (measure 117), Parker uses the tritone substitution for F7 (B7), then resolves to Bb (Ex. 10.14).

Example 10.14. “Honey and Body,” *Honey and Body*, Charlie Parker, 1940, tritone substitution.

Stitt is more conservative in his harmonic implications. In “Ray’s Idea,” he alters the F7 chord (part of the ii7–V7–I progression of tonic). He also uses several of the common alterations, #5, flat-9, and #9.

In “That’s Earl Brother” (measures 5–8), Stitt uses the flat-5 alteration to increase tension and foreshadow the next chord. The flat-5, in this example, is also the perfect 5th of the next chord. He continues this sequence, descending chromatically until D#, then resolves, descending by half step to the following D7 chord (Ex. 10.15).

PART VII CONCLUSION

Stitt has been compared to Parker during his lifetime and after, but these players developed from the same role models, and in performing with the same musicians. Analysis of Stitt's and Parker's early solos indicates that copying in a systematic manner never occurred, but that both men were influenced by the saxophonists who laid the foundation for bebop—namely Young, Hawkins, and Hodges. This is not to diminish the importance of Parker's tremendous influence on bebop, but more accurately assesses Stitt's contributions in American music, giving him credit for his role as an original voice in the development of the idiom.

My examination of the Parker and Stitt solo transcriptions supports the following conclusions:

- A) Stitt's tone is more robust than Parker's.
- B) Stitt uses diatonic gestures more often than Parker.
- C) Parker is more rhythmically adventurous than Stitt.
- D) Parker uses chromaticism to move between both chord tones and non-chord tones; Stitt prefers chromatic movement to chord tones.
- E) Parker applies chord substitutions and alterations more often than Stitt.
- F) Stitt uses more predictable, symmetrical phrase lengths.
- G) Both players use at least one phrase (2A) that can be attributed to Lester Young.⁵⁷

While this comparison of Parker and Stitt might stand on its own, the historical context in which Stitt and Parker developed as musicians also influences their improvisational styles. For

⁵⁷ Ibid.

example, from 1940–1946 the recording industry still used extremely fragile 78-rpm records, not readily available in the United States during World War II because of limited access to the raw materials needed to produce them. In addition, the AFM recording ban, from August 1942 to November 1944, virtually stopped the production of commercially distributed recordings. While it has been noted that Stitt had the opportunity to acquire Parker's recordings, the technology for playing those recordings was not well suited for traveling musicians. (Portable record players were developed to entertain soldiers in World War II, thus not manufactured until 1943.⁵⁸) The average record player cost approximately \$50 at a time when the average salary in the US was \$1,725 per year. The idea of Stitt employing this technology as part of a practice routine prior to his 1946 recording debut—i.e., as a means of studying and copying Parker's style—seems dubious at best. In *Jazz is Spoken Here*, Stitt confirms this point, commenting on learning to play from records.

He [Wardell Gray] and Big Nick were really my teachers, 'cause you can't learn much from records. Nowadays you can, because they're more extensively played. The solos are drawn out; or at least I think mine are, like kinda laid out.⁵⁹

Parker is reputed to have assimilated some of the music of Lester Young during a three-month gig at a resort in the Ozarks.⁶⁰ Stitt never had the same lengthy employment at one location for an extended period of time. On the contrary, he was on the road when Parker's first recordings were released, and continued to be so when Parker's earliest recordings were available.

⁵⁸ "Portable Radio-Phonograph-Library Kit is Developed for Army Troops Abroad," *Broadcasting, Broadcast Advertising (Archive: 1936-1945)*, May 4, 1942, 49.

⁵⁹ Enstice and Rubin, *Jazz Spoken here: Conversations with Twenty-Two Musicians*.

⁶⁰ Brian Priestley, "Introduction," to *The Life and Legacy of Charlie Parker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 20–21.

Stitt and Parker sound similar, both of them original, even iconic, with highly personal styles of improvising. Importantly, Parker recognized Stitt's importance to bebop's evolution;

Stitt recalls their conversation:

I saw him two weeks before he died. He came by and made a statement in front of people and I wished he hadn't, because that's where this "throne" business comes from. He said "I'll give you the keys to the kingdom." I said "All right now. Come on Bird, be cool."⁶¹

Stitt always claimed to be an original, despite the refrain of the music press and critics. Although he used some of the techniques and devices that Parker is credited as introducing to jazz, Stitt certainly never copied these note-for-note in his early solos. It is more reasonable to describe Stitt's playing as we might any contributor whose time comes after the first, or prototype, innovators of a style period. Is there only one composer whose work comprises or reflects all the permutations of the Baroque or Classical, or Romantic period? Or is the style of a given period more properly defined by the similarities in practice of several original talents? Stitt helped codify the language of bebop through the musical material he heard, then assimilated into his performances. His language forms the essence of bebop, as a first language, not as a second-generation performer. He was an original musician and constantly strived to express the music within him.

⁶¹ Les Tomkins, "There's No Successor to Bird," *Melody Maker*, May 16, 1959.

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APPENDICES

"Body and Soul"

1939

An Improvised Tenor Saxophone Solo by Coleman Hawkins

Chord changes and measure numbers:

- Measures 1-4: Rest
- Measure 5: Fm7 (triplet)
- Measure 6: C7
- Measure 7: Fm7
- Measure 8: Bb7
- Measure 9: Ebmaj7
- Measure 10: Gm7
- Measure 11: F#dim7
- Measure 12: Fm7
- Measure 13: Dm7b5
- Measure 14: G7b9
- Measure 15: Cm7
- Measure 16: Fm7
- Measure 17: Bb7
- Measure 18: Ebmaj7
- Measure 19: Gm7
- Measure 20: F#dim
- Measure 21: Fm7
- Measure 22: Dm7b5
- Measure 23: G7b9
- Measure 24: Cm7
- Measure 25: Fm7
- Measure 26: Bb7
- Measure 27: Ebmaj7
- Measure 28: B7
- Measure 29: Emaj7
- Measure 30: B7
- Measure 31: Emaj7
- Measure 32: Am7
- Measure 33: D7
- Measure 34: Emaj7
- Measure 35: B7

B&S pg 1

Emaj7 Em7 A7

Dmaj7 Fdim Em7 A7

D7 C#7 C7b9

Fm7 Bb7

Ebmaj7 Gm7 F#dim

Fm7 Dm7b5 G7b9

Cm7 Fm7 Bb7 Eb7 C7

Fm7 Bb7

39 Ebmaj7 G7 F#dim

41 Fm7 Dm7b5₅ G7b9

43 Cm7 Fm7 Bb7

44 Ebmaj7 C7b9 Fm7

46 Bb7 Ebmaj7

48 Cm7 F#dim Fm7

50 Dm7b5 G7#9 Cm7 Fm7 Bb7

52 Ebmaj7 F#m7₃ B7 Emaj7 B7

54 Emaj7 Am7 D7 Emaj7 F#m7 B7

56 Emaj7 Em7 A7

58 Dmaj7 Fdim Em7 A7

60 D7 C#7 C7 Fm7

62 Bb7#5 Ebmaj7

64 Gm7 F#dim Fm7

66 Dm7b5 G7b9 Cm7 Fm7 Bb7

68 F# Fm E Eb

"Lester Leaps In"

September 1939

An Improvisation on Tenor Saxophone by Lester Young

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of eight staves of music. The notes are written in a treble clef. Chord markings are placed above the notes. The score is numbered 1 through 38. The chords used are: C, Am7, Dm7, G7, F, Fm7, C, Am7, Dm7, G7, C, Am7, Dm7, G7#5, C, C(7), F, C, Am7, Dm7, G7, E7, A7, (D7), D7, G7#5, G7, C, Am7, Dm7, G7, C, C7, F, Fm, C, G7, C, Am7, Dm7, G7, C, Am7, Dm7, G7, C, C7, F, Fm7.

Lester Leaps In PG 1

C Am7 Dm7 G7 C Am7 Dm7 G7 C Am7
 39 40 41 42 43
 Dm7 G7 C C7 F C Am7
 44 45 46 47
 Dm7 G7 E7 A7
 48 49 50 51
 D7 G7
 52 53 54 55 56
 C Am7 Dm7 G7 C Am7 Dm7 G7 C C7
 57 58 59 60 61
 F Fm7 C G7
 62 63 64

Lester Leaps In PG 2

"Whoa Babe"

April 1937

An Improvisation on Alto Saxophone by Johnny Hodges

Break

1 2 3

4 5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12 13

14 15 16 17 18

19 20

A F#m7 Bm7 E7 A F#m7 Bm7 E7

A F#m7 Bm7 E7#5 A F#m7 Bm7 E7 A F#m7

Bm7 E7 A F#m7 Bm7 E7 A F#m7 Bm7 E7

A

"Honey and Body"

Approximately 1939 or 40

An Improvisation on Alto Saxophone by Charlie Parker

Em7 A7 D G E7 E7b9 E7 A7 (A7#5) Em7 A7(#9) Em7 A7 Em7 A7(b9) D Em7 A7 D Em7 A7 Em7 A7 D Em7 A7 Em7 A7 D

Honey and Body PG 1

Em7 A7b9 A D7 G

D D7

D7b13 G E7

A7alt A7

Em7 A7 Fm7 Bb7 Em7 A7

Em7 A7 D Em7 A7#9

D Em7 A7 Em7 A7

Em7 A7(b9) Em7 A7 D Em7 A7

Honey and Body PG 2

D Em7 A7b9

Am7 A7 Em7 A7b13 Em7 A7#9 D

Em7 A7 D D7

D7b13 G

E7 Em7

A7b9 Em7 A7 Em7 A7 Em7 A7#5

Em7 A7 D Em7 A7b9

D Em7 A7 Fm7 Bb7

86 Ebm7 Ab7 Dm7 G7#11 D

89 Em7 A7 A7#5 D Em7 A7

93 Em7 A7 Em7 A7 G#o7 A7 D

97 Em7 A7alt D D7

100 D7alt G7

103 E7 Em7

106 A7 Em7 A7 Em7 A7(#5) Em7 A7 Em7 A7

112 D Em7 A7 Em7 A7 D G9b13

Cm7 G7b13 Cm7 B7 Bb Cm7
 117 118
 Dm7 C#dim Cm7
 120
 D7b9 Gm7 C7 Cm7 F7
 122 124
 G7b13 Cm7 G7
 124
 B7 Bb Cm7
 126
 Dm7 C#o Cm7
 128
 D7b9 Gm7 C7 Cm7 F7
 130
 Bb C#m7 F#7
 130

13

13

13

13

13

13

14

14

14 Fades Out

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The staff begins with a measure containing a Cm7 chord (C4, Eb4, G4, Bb4) indicated by a bracket and the label 'Cm7'. The melody consists of eighth notes: C4, Eb4, G4, Bb4, C5, Eb5, G5, Bb5. The next measure contains a dotted quarter note C5, followed by a quarter note Eb5, and another quarter note G5. The final measure contains a quarter note Bb5, a quarter note C6, and a quarter rest. The staff ends with a double bar line. The text 'Fades Out' is positioned above the staff.

"Swingmatism"

An Improvisation On Alto Saxophone by Charlie Parker

1941

1 A7 2 3 Dm 4

5 6 7 Gm7 8 9 Dm 10

11 Ddim 12 13 Em7 14

15 A7b9 16 Dm 17 Em7b5 18 A7b9 19 Dm 20 A7

21 Dm 22 A7 23 Dm 24

May 1946

"That's Earl Brother"

An Improvisation on Alto Saxophone by Sonny Stitt

Am7 D7 G

C7 C7b5 B7 B7b5 Bb7 Bb7b5

A7 A7b5 D7 G G7b9

Am7 D7

G7 F#7b9 B7

Em7 A7 D

That's Earl Brother PG 1

"Oop Bop Sh'Bam"

May 1946

An Improvisation on Alto Saxophone by Sonny Stitt

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of six staves of music, numbered 1 through 16. The chords and their positions are as follows:

- Staff 1: Measure 1 (Dm7), Measure 2 (G7b9)
- Staff 2: Measure 3 (C), Measure 5 (Em7)
- Staff 3: Measure 6 (A7), Measure 7 (Am7), Measure 8 (D7)
- Staff 4: Measure 9 (G), Measure 11 (Bm7), Measure 12 (E7)
- Staff 5: Measure 12 (Am7), Measure 13 (D7b13), Measure 13 (G7), Measure 14 (C)
- Staff 6: Measure 15 (G7), Measure 16 (Am7), Measure 16 (D7), Measure 16 (G)

Oop Bop Sh'Bam PG 1

"Rays Idea"

June 1972

An Improvisation on Alto Saxophone by Sonny Stitt

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in 4/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The piece consists of 32 measures, with measures grouped into lines of four. Chord changes are indicated by letters above the staff, and melodic lines are indicated by numbers below the staff. The score includes various musical notations such as accents (^), slurs, and triplets (3).

Chord progression and measure numbers:

- Measures 1-4: Bb[^], Bb[^], Gm7, Cm7, F7b9, Dm7, G7
- Measures 5-8: Cm7, F7, Bb7, Cm7, F7, Bb7, C7b5, Cm7, F7[^]
- Measures 9-12: Bb[^], Gm7, Cm7, F7b9, Dm7, G7, Cm7, F7
- Measures 13-16: Bb7, Cm7, F7, Cm7, F7#5, Bb
- Measures 17-20: Fm7, Bb7#5, Ebm7, Ab7#5
- Measures 21-24: C#m7, F#7#5, Cm7, F#m7, B7[^]
- Measures 25-28: Bb[^], Gm7, Cm7, F7b9, Dm7, G7, Cm7, F7
- Measures 29-32: Bb7, Cm7, F7, Cm7, F7#5, Bb

Ray's Idea PG 1

Bb [^] Gm7 Cm7 F7#5 [^] Dm7b5 G7
 Cm7 F7 Bb7 Cm7 F7#5 Dm7 G7
 Cm7 F7 Bb [^] Gm7 Cm7 F7 Dm7 G7
 Cm7 F7b9 Bb Cm7 [^] F7
 Cm7 F7 Bb7 Fm7 [^] Bb7
 Ebm7 Ab7 C#m7
 F#7 Cm7 F7 F7#5
 Bb [^] Gm7 Cm7 F7#5 Dm7 G7 Cm7 F7#9

Ray's Idea PG 2

Bb7 Cm7 F7b9 Cm7 F7 Bb

61 62 63 64

Bb Gm7 Cm7 F7#9 Dm7 G7b13 Cm7 F7

65 66 67 68

Bb7 Cm7 F7 Dm7 G7#9

69 70 71

Cm7 F7 Bb Gm7 Cm7 F7#5 Dm7 G7

72 73 74 75

Cm7 F7#5 Bb7

76 77

Cm7 F7b9 Cm7 F7 Bb7

78 79 80

Fm7 Bb7b9 Ebm7 Ab7b9

81 82 83 84

C#m7 F#7 Cm7 F7

85 86 87

Ray's Idea PG 3

88 Cm7 F7 Bb7 Gm7 Cm7 F7 Dm7 G7alt

92 Cm7 F7#9 Bb7 Cm7 F7

95 Cm7 F7#5 Bb Barry Harris Piano Solo Bb Gm7

30

130 Cm7 F7 Dm7 G7 Cm7 F7 Bb

134 Cm7 F7b9 Dm7 G7 Cm7 F7 Bb

138 Cm7 F7 Dm7 G7 Cm7 F7

142 Bb7 Cm7 F7#11 Cm7 F7

144 Bb Fm7 Bb7#5 Ebm7

Musical score for a piece in B-flat major, measures 148-162. The score consists of four staves of music with various chords and melodic lines. Chords include Ab7#5, C#m7, F#7#5, Cm7, F7#9, Bb, Gm7, Cm7, F7b9, Dm7, G7, Cm7, F7, Bb7, G7b5, Bb, Gm7, Cm7, F7b9, and Bbmaj7. Measure numbers 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 159, 161, and 162 are indicated below the notes.