

JAZZ MASTERS

Sonny Rollins

by Charley Gerard

VASASKOLAN
JER
GAYLE

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Sonny Rollins | 4 |
| Notes on the Solos | 5 |
| Symbols and Terms | 6 |
| You Don't Know What Love Is | 7 |
| Alfie's Theme | 11 |
| On Impulse | 17 |
| Blessing in Disguise | 23 |
| East Broadway Run Down | 29 |
| The Everywhere Calypso | 31 |
| Playin' in the Yard | 35 |
| Keep Hold of Yourself | 38 |
| An Analysis of Sonny Rollins's Style | 40 |
| Chordal Improvisation: Arpeggios | 41 |
| Scalar Improvisation | 46 |
| Sequences | 47 |
| Playing out of the Changes | 49 |
| Thematic Improvisation | 51 |
| Rhythmic Devices: Syncopation and Delay | 55 |
| Phrase Repetition | 59 |
| Anticipation | 63 |
| Delayed Resolution | 65 |
| Chord Chart | 66 |
| God Bless the Child (annotated) | 67 |
| Discography | 72 |

A Note on the Transcriptions

In this edition, for all C instruments, the solos have been transcribed one octave above concert pitch to make them easily readable for any nontransposing instrument, such as piano, guitar, flute, violin, etc. A separate edition (Music for Millions Series 200/040200) is available, containing the same material transposed for B \flat tenor saxophone.

Sonny Rollins

For three decades the music of Sonny Rollins has impressed audiences, including many jazz greats. He is a legendary figure who has twice disappeared from the jazz scene. Rollins has put his personal stamp on ballads, blues, bebop, calypso, modal jazz, free jazz, and jazz-rock. He is a virtuoso tenor saxophonist, composer, and the leading exponent of thematic improvisation.

Sonny Rollins was born on September 9, 1929 in NYC. In 1944, while studying music in high school, he took up the alto sax, switching to tenor two years later. While still in his teens he started working professionally in the New York area. He stayed with the tenor sax, although he can be heard on alto and soprano on some of his recent recordings. His first recording was with singer Babs Gonzales in 1948, and soon after, he recorded with pianist Bud Powell, trumpeter Fats Navarro, and trombonist J.J. Johnson—all highly influential bebop players. After working with drummer Art Blakey, pianist/arranger Tadd Dameron, and trumpeter Miles Davis (with whom he recorded some records which are now collectors' items), he began his famous collaboration with drummer Max Roach in 1956. Subsequently Rollins formed his own group, using Max Roach as a featured sideman on many of his recordings. In the mid-fifties he also performed and recorded with pianist/composer Thelonious Monk.

As with most saxophonists who began playing in the bebop era, Rollins's first recordings are reminiscent of Charlie Parker. By 1956, possibly by a natural maturation process or because Rollins had had the opportunity to play with the most influential jazz musicians of his time, his music took on the distinctive sound for which it is now famous. At this time he recorded *Jazz Colossus*, one of the all-time great jazz albums. After the release of this record his reputation began to grow internationally. In 1959, at the height of acclaim, he dropped out of the jazz scene. During this period a few passersby had the luck to hear him practicing early in the morning on the Williamsburg Bridge in NYC.

Rollins emerged from obscurity two years later with *The Bridge*, an album which turned a generation of tenor players around. On this album Rollins concentrates on the difficult lower tones of the sax, adding a whole new dimension to his playing. Up to the time of this recording, the beauty of the lower register had been greatly ignored. Although revolutionary in this respect, the album basically held to the hard bop tradition of the late fifties. For this reason his first public appearance on returning to the scene was a surprise. Rollins fronted a group of Ornette Coleman sidemen including trumpeter Don Cherry and played free form. This began a series of avant-garde performances followed by his second disappearance from public life.

Rollins's tenacious creativity was bound to resurface again and as the jazz scene changed it did just that, but in a new form. On returning, he recorded *Next Album* on which he used electric instruments for the first time. Since then, his performances have demonstrated his ability to bring a distinctive sound to many types of jazz. His playing is no longer confined to any one tradition. Rollins has not only survived three decades and several eras of jazz, but he has played an important role in all of them.

I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it. I couldn't have done it without the invaluable aid of my wife, Judith Weinstock.

CHARLEY GERARD
Tampico, Tamaulipas
Mexico
May 1979

Notes on the Solos

You Don't Know What Love Is (1956)

With Tommy Flanagan, piano; Doug Watkins, bass; Max Roach, drums. This is a good example of Rollins's ballad style. Parts of the second and third choruses are in double time.

Transcription in this book: complete first solo.

Alfie's Theme (1966)

With a big band arrangement by Oliver Nelson, including solos by pianist Roger Kellaway and guitarist Kenny Burrell. The music was written for the film *Alfie*. It contains one of Sonny Rollins's most famous solos, large excerpts of which appear in this book.

On Impulse (1966)

Same personnel as above. Rollins is featured here in a fast jazz waltz. The piece concludes with a cadenza against held chords, which comes to a surprisingly abrupt end.

Transcription: complete solo.

Blessing in Disguise (1966)

With Jimmy Garrison, bass; Elvin Jones, drums. The pianoless group is a favorite of Rollins. This piece is an excellent example of thematic improvisation, and I have transcribed several sections of the solo to show how it develops.

East Broadway Run Down (1966)

Same personnel as above with Freddie Hubbard, trumpet. This is one of Rollins's most avant-garde performances. It gives the feeling of a run-down part of lower Manhattan. After a strange tune arranged for trumpet and tenor saxophone mostly in fourths, the piece starts out as a blues and then becomes totally free. Every time the listener thinks it's going to end, Rollins starts up again. In parts of this long piece, Rollins plays only on the mouthpiece.

Transcription: five blues choruses.

The Everywhere Calypso (1972)

With George Cables, piano; Bob Cranshaw, bass; David Lee, drums; Arthur Jenkins, conga drums and percussion. This is one of many calypso tunes recorded by Rollins, whose heritage is West Indian. The most famous one is Rollins's "St. Thomas."

Transcription: complete first solo.

Playin' in the Yard (1972)

Same personnel as above, with drummer Jack de Johnette replacing David Lee. Rollins is in a funky rock mood here.

Transcription: complete first solo.

Keep Hold of Yourself (1962)

Same personnel as above without Arthur Jenkins. This is a minor modal blues.

Transcription: four choruses.

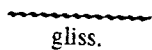
God Bless the Child (1962)

With Jim Hall, guitar, and others. See the transcription for more information.

Symbols and Terms



Lip slurs or glides going up to or down from a note. Rollins uses these a lot.



gliss.

Glissando: a rapidly played chromatic scale.



Clipped attack: one of the main ingredients of Rollins's individualistic style.

vib.

Vibrato.

Chord Symbols

- Ma. no symbol used: major
- m, -: minor
- aug. +: augmented
- o, dim 7: diminished seventh
- dim. -: diminished interval
- Ma 7: major seventh
- 7: dominant seventh
- m 7, - 7: minor seventh
- ø 7: half-diminished seventh
- sus: suspended

You Don't Know What Love Is

Don Raye
Gene de Paul

Slow ballad tempo
introduction

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in 4/4 time, featuring a key signature of three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The introduction consists of eight staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of three flats, and a 4/4 time signature. It includes dynamic markings of *mp* and *p*, and a triplet of eighth notes. The subsequent staves continue the melodic development, incorporating various chords and triplet patterns. The chords are labeled as follows: Ebm, Cb6, Bb7, Ebm, Fb7, Cb7, Ab7, Fb7, Cø7, Cb6, Bb7, Ebm, Cb7, Ab7, Fb7, Cø7, Cb6, Bb7, Ebm, Ab-7, G7-5, Gb6, Ab-7, Db7, Gb6, C-9, F7, and Bb6. The score also includes measure numbers 10, 15, and 20. The final staff ends with a double bar line.

Chords: Ebm, Cb6, Bb7, Ebm, Fb7, Cb7, Ab7, Fb7, Cø7, Cb6, Bb7, Ebm, Cb7, Ab7, Fb7, Cø7, Cb6, Bb7, Ebm, Ab-7, G7-5, Gb6, Ab-7, Db7, Gb6, C-9, F7, Bb6

Dynamics: *mp*, *p*, *mf*, *mp*

Measure numbers: 10, 15, 20

Cb6⁻ Bb7 Ebm

p 25

Cb6 Bb7 Ebm Fb7 Cb7

3 3 3 3

Ab7 Fb7 Cb7 Cb6 Bb7

30 *p* 3 3 3 3 *gliss.* *gliss.*

2nd chorus
Eb- Eb- Cb6 Bb7

mp *mf* 35 *mp*

Eb- Fb7 Cb7 Ab7 Fb7

mf *p* *mp* *gliss.*

Cb7 Cb6 Bb7

p *p* 40 3 3

Ebm Cb6 Bb7

mf 3 3 3 3 *mf*

Ebm Fb7 Cb7

mf *mp* 45

Ab7 Fb7

p 5 5

Co7 5 p p p

Cb7 10 Bb7 mp

Ebm 50 mf gliss. G7-5 7

Gb6 3 Ab-7 mp Db7

Gb6 C-9 6 mf F7

Bb6 55 Cb6 mf

Bb7 gliss. Ebm gliss. 3 sfz 3

Cb6 5 mf Bb7 60 mf Ebm 3 f Fb7

Cb7 3 3 Ab7 f Fb7 3 3

Cø7 Cb6 Bb7 gliss. Ebm

mf 3 65 mp

3rd chorus Ebm Cb6 Bb7 Ebm Fb7

gliss.

Cb7 Ab7 gliss. Fb7

mf 70

Cø7 5

Cb6 Bb7

mf 5

Ebm Cb6 Bb7 gliss.

f 3 75 mf

Ebm Fb7 Cb7

sfz 3 p

Ab7 Fb7 Cø7

3 3 mp

Cb6 Bb7 Ebm piano solo

80 pp

Alfie's Theme

Sonny Rolli

Medium swing tempo
drum solo 3

bass notes: B \flat A \flat G G \flat

mp 5

rib.

F G C F C A \flat G E:

10 3

big band
B \flat m B \flat m/A \flat G \emptyset 7 G \flat 6

F G C F B \flat

f

B \flat m/F G \emptyset 7 C7 F7 B \flat m B \flat m/A \flat G \emptyset 7 E \circ

15

B \flat m/F G \emptyset 7 C7 F7 B \flat m B \flat m A \flat 6 G \flat 6 F7

20 *sfz p*

B \flat m A \flat 6 G \flat 6 F7 B \flat m A \flat 6 G \flat 6 F7

sfz p 25 *f* *sfz p*

B \flat m A \flat 6 G \flat 6 F7 B \flat m B \flat m/A \flat G \emptyset 7 G \flat 6

f *sfz p* 30 *f*

B \flat m/F G \emptyset 7 C7 F7 B \flat m B \flat m/A \flat G \emptyset 7 E \circ

Bbm/F Gø7 C7 F7 Bbm guitar solo 32 piano solo 40

(Sax solo is in Bb minor with bass and drum accompaniment)

109 *f* 110 *vib.*

mp *f* *mf* 115

p 118 121 *mp*

125

mf *p*

130 *mf* *p* *mf* *vib.* 3

3

135 *mp* 3 *mf*

140 *f*

p *mp*

145 *mf* *f*

vib. 150

f

155 *f* *mf* *f*

5

This page of musical notation contains ten staves of music. The key signature consists of four flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble clefs, key signatures, time signatures, dynamics (mf, mp, f, vib.), articulation (accents), and fingerings (triplets, slurs). Measure numbers 160, 165, 170, 175, and 180 are indicated. The music is written in a single system across ten staves.

This page contains ten staves of musical notation for a piano piece. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble clefs, key signatures, dynamics (*mf*, *mp*, *f*, *vib.*), articulation (accents), and fingerings (triplets). Measure numbers 160, 165, 170, 175, and 180 are indicated at the bottom of their respective staves.

The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. It features a melody with triplets and an accent on a B-flat note. The dynamic *mf* is marked. Measure 160 is indicated.

The second staff continues the melody with triplets and slurs. Measure 165 is indicated.

The third staff starts with a *mp* dynamic, followed by a *f* dynamic. It includes triplets and a triplet with an accent. Measure 165 is indicated.

The fourth staff begins with a *mf* dynamic and features triplets. Measure 170 is indicated.

The fifth staff starts with a triplet and a *f* dynamic. It includes triplets and a triplet with an accent. Measure 170 is indicated.

The sixth staff begins with a *vib.* (vibrato) marking and a *f* dynamic. It features triplets. Measure 175 is indicated.

The seventh staff continues with triplets and a *mp* dynamic. Measure 175 is indicated.

The eighth staff starts with a *f* dynamic and includes triplets. Measure 180 is indicated.

The ninth staff begins with a triplet and a *f* dynamic. It includes triplets and a triplet with an accent. Measure 180 is indicated.

The tenth staff continues the melody with triplets and slurs. Measure 180 is indicated.

185 *mf*

190 *mf* *vib.*

195

200 *vib.*

205

210 *f* *mf*

(accompanied by
piano, bass, drum)

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a single melodic line, likely for a trumpet or saxophone, in the key of E-flat major (three flats). The score consists of eight staves of music, numbered 185 through 210. The notation includes various musical symbols such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, often grouped in beams. There are several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a group of notes) and dynamic markings including *mf* (mezzo-forte), *f* (forte), and *vib.* (vibrato). The music is written in a standard staff with a treble clef. The overall style is that of a professional musical manuscript.

215 *f* *vib.* 3

220 3 3 3 3

(solo continues) *ff* *f*

225 *ff* *Bbm Bbm/Ab Gø7 Eø Bbm/F Gø7*

C7 F7 Bbm big band Bbm Ab6 Gb6 F7 Bbm Ab6
f sfz p f sfz 230

Gb6 F7 Bbm Ab6 Gb6 F7 Bbm Ab6 Gb6 F7
p f sfz p f sfz p f 235 *Rollins*

Bbm Bbm/Ab Gø7 Gb6 Bbm/F Gø7 240

C7 F7 Bbm Bbm/Ab Gø7 Eø Bbm/F Gø7

C7 F7 Bbm Bbm Bbm11 Bbm11 Bbm11
mf ff 245

On Impulse

Sonny R

Fast jazz waltz
piano introduction

piano introduction

7 8 *mp* 10 15 20 25 30 *p* 35 *mp* 40 *mf*

Chord progression: G7, Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Cmaj7, Cmaj9, Cmaj7, Cmaj9, Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Ebm7, Ab7, Ebm7, Ab7, Ebm7, Ab7, Ebm7, Ab7, Dm7, G7.

Measure numbers: 7, 8, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40.

Dynamic markings: *mp*, *p*, *mf*.

Dm7 G7 G7(+9)
 G7(-9) G7(+9)

G7(-9) Cmaj7 C⁹₆ Cmaj7 C⁹₆

2nd chorus
 Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7

Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7

Ebm7 Ab7 Ebm7 Ab7 Ebm7

Ab7 Ebm7 Ab7 Dm7 G7

Dm7 G7 Abm7 D^b7 Gm7

C7 Fmaj7 Cb7-5 Bbmaj7 Fb7-5 Ebmaj7

A7-5 Abmaj7 G7 3rd chorus
 Dm7 G7 Dm7

45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80 85

mf

This page contains ten staves of musical notation for guitar, written in G minor. The notation includes various chords and melodic lines.

- Staff 1:** Chords: G7, Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Ebm7. Measure 90.
- Staff 2:** Chords: Ab7, Ebm7, Ab7, Ebm7, Ab7. Dynamics: *p*, *mf*. Measure 95.
- Staff 3:** Chords: Ebm7, Ab7, Dm7, G7, Dm7. Measure 100.
- Staff 4:** Chords: G7, Abm7, Db7. Measure 105.
- Staff 5:** Chords: Gm7, C7, Fmaj7. Measure 110.
- Staff 6:** Chords: Cb7-5, Bbmaj7, Fb7-5. Measure 110.
- Staff 7:** Chords: Ebmaj7, A7-5, Abmaj7. Measure 115.
- Staff 8:** Labeled "4th chorus". Chords: G7, Dm7, G7, Dm7. Measure 120.
- Staff 9:** Chords: G7, Dm7, G7, Dm7. Measure 120.

G7 Ebm7 Ab7 Ebm7

125

Ab7 Ebm7 Ab7

130

Ebm7 Ab7 Dm7 G7

135

Dm7 G7 Abm7 Db7 Gm7

140

C7 Fmaj7 vib. Cb7-5 Bb7

140

Fb7-5 Ebmaj7 A7-5 Abmaj7 G7

145

f

5th chorus Dm7 vib. G7 Dm7 G7 Dm7

150

G7 Dm7 vib. G7 Ebm7 Ab7

155

Ebm7 Ab7 Ebm7 Ab7

160

mp

Ebm7 Ab7 Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7

165

Abm7 Db7 Gm7 C7 Fmaj7

mf 170

Cb7-5 Bb7 Fb7-5 Ebmaj7 A7 Abmaj7-

mf 175

G7 Dm7 piano solo 7 3 G7

180 182 189 192 *mp*

Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7 G7(+9) G7(-9)

195

G7(+9) G7(-9) Cmaj7 C6

200

Cmaj7 C6 Dm7 G7 Dm7

205 *mf*

G7 Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7

210

Ebm7 Ab7 Ebm7 Ab7 Ebm7

f 215

Ab7 Ebm7 Ab7

mf 220

Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7

G7(+9) G7(-9) G7(+9) G7(-9)

225

Cmaj7 C6 Cmaj7 C6 vib.

230

cadenza
G13sus4

233

G13sus4 Ab13sus4

Ab13sus4 G13sus4

G13sus4

G13sus4

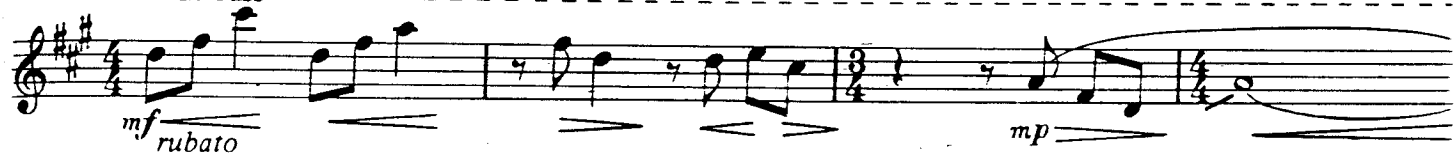
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Blessing in Disguise

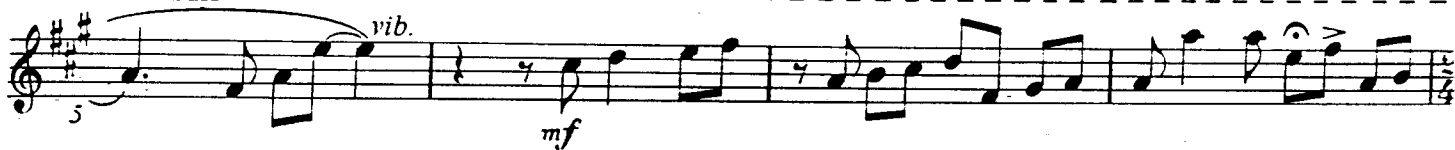
Sonny Rollins

Moderato with a blues feeling

E in bass

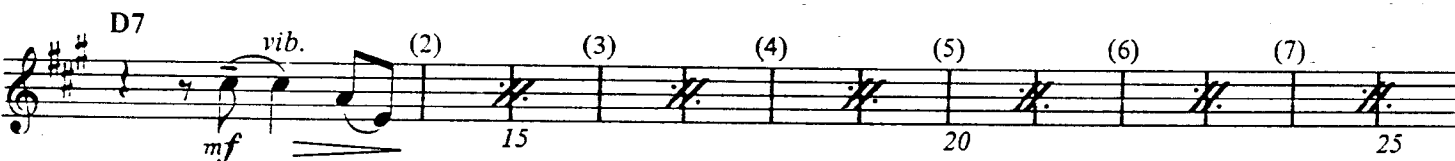


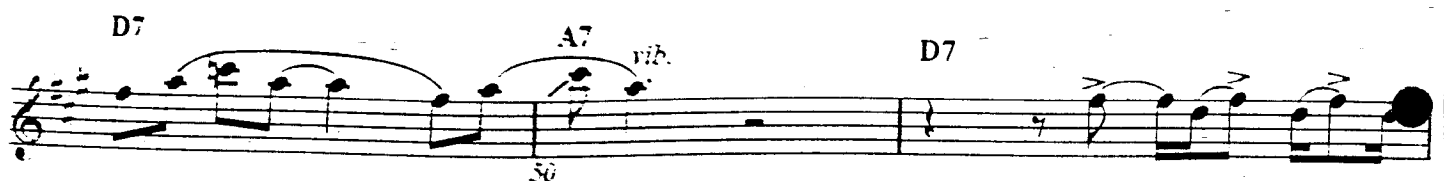
E in bass



E in bass

a tempo





E in bass

slight pauses

E in bass

a tempo

(1) A7

80 simile

D7

(2)

(3)

A7

D7

short drum solo

D7

A7

D7

A7

D7

A7

D7

A7

D7

A7

D7

A7

D7

A7

D7

A7

D7

A7

D7

A7

D7

vib.

A7 D7 A7
 110 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

D7 A7 E7 A in bass
 < *f* 115 *mf rubato*

A in bass
 120 *vib.*

meno mosso
 E in bass
 125

(without bass) tempo I G in bass
 125 *rit.*

a tempo (1) A7 D7 (2)
 130 *simile*

(3) (4) (5) (6) A7 D7 A7
 135 140 *mp* 145

D7 A7 D7 A7 D7
mp 150 *p*

A7 D7 A7 D7
ppp 3

A7 D7

155

A7 D7

159

long bass solo

(without drums)

D7 A7 D7 A7

160

mp

rubato

C in bass E in bass

165

a tempo (with drums)

(1) A7 D7 (2) (3) (4)

mf

simile

170 175

A7 D7 A7 D7 A7

f

180

D7 A7 D7 A7 D7

f

185

A7 D7 A7 D7 A7 D7

ff

190

f

A7 D7 A7 D7

mp

195

mf

A7 D7 A7 D7

f 3 3 3 *mf* 200

A7 D7 A7

vib.

D7 A7 D7 A7

mp 205 *mf* *rit.* *accel.*

a tempo D7 A7 D7 A7

f 210 *mf*

D7 A7 (solo continues) A in bass

214 215 *mf* *rubato*

E in bass

mp 220

a tempo E in bass A7 D7 A7 D7 A7

225

D7 A7 D7 A7 D7

vib. 230

A7 D7 A7 D7

vib. *mp* 235 12 *fade out*

East Broadway Run Down

Sonny Rollins

Uptempo
F# in bass

trumpet:

sax:

mf

5

10

15

12-bar blues choruses
sax solo

B

B

3

E7

E7

18

21

gliss.

f \rightarrow *mf*

B7

B7

C#-7

F#7

3

25

B

F#7

B

B

30

B

B

E7

E7

B

35

*Trumpet sounds one octave lower than written.

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B C#-7 F#7 B F#7

The Everywhere Calypso

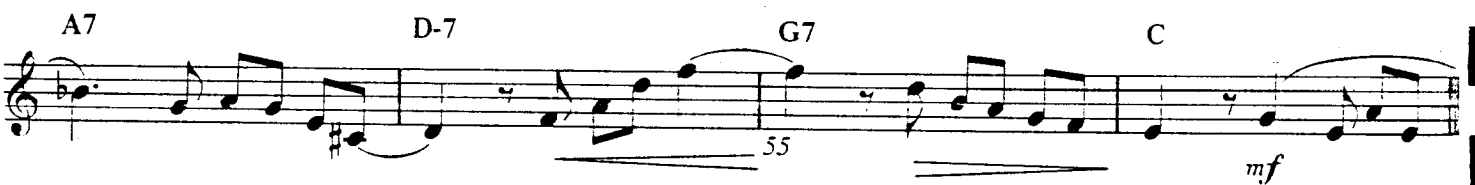
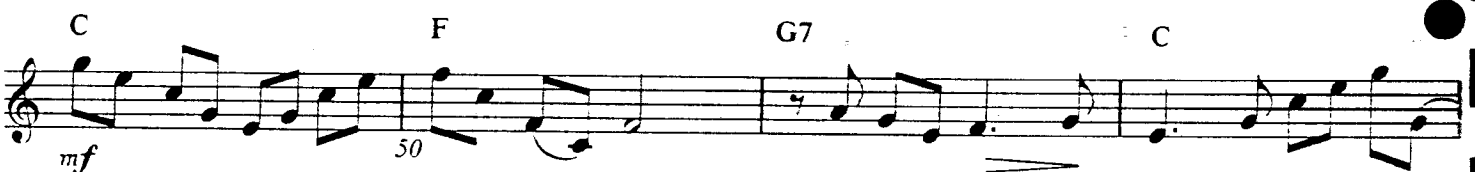
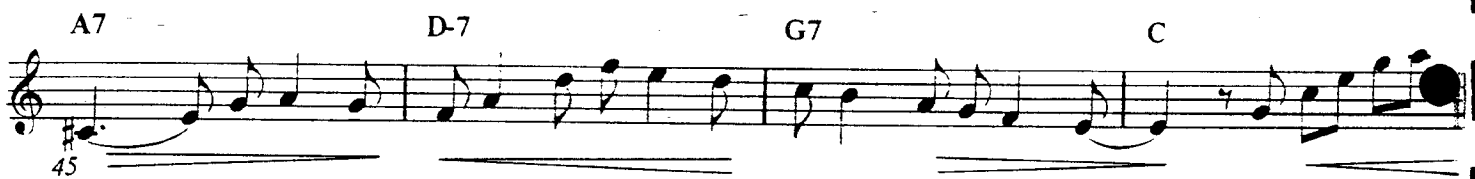
Sonny Rollins

Calypso
unaccompanied solo



(with the group)





Sheet music for guitar, featuring ten staves of music. The notation includes chords (C, F, G7, A7, D-7), dynamics (mf, f, vib.), and measure numbers (75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100, 105).

Staff 1: C, F, G7, C. Measure 75. *mf*

Staff 2: A7, D-7, G7, C. Measure 80.

Staff 3: C, F, G7, C, A7 vib. Measure 85. *mf*

Staff 4: D-7, G7, C, C. *mf*

Staff 5: F, G7, C, A7. Measure 90.

Staff 6: D-7, G7, C, C. Measure 95.

Staff 7: F vib., G7, C, A7. Measure 100.

Staff 8: D-7, G7, C, C. Measure 105. *mf*, *f*

Staff 9: F, G7, C, A7. *f*, *mf*

D-7 G7 C C

110

F G7 C

115

A7 D-7 G7 C

120 *mf*

C F G7 C

125

A7 D-7 G7 C

125 *mf*

C F G7 C

130

A7 D-7 G7 C

135

C F G7 C

140

A7 D-7 G7 C

145 (piano solo begins)

Playin' in the Yard

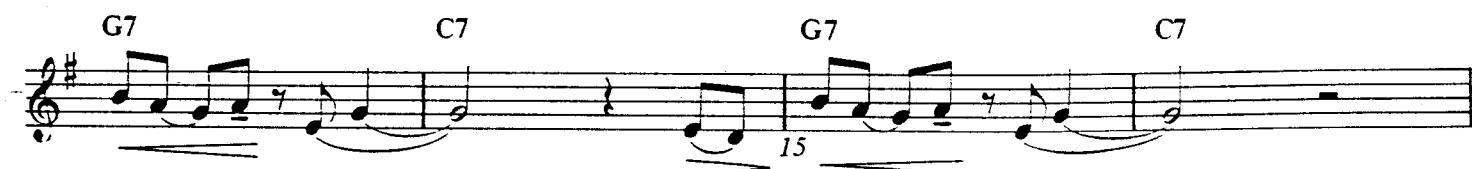
Sonny Rollins

Rock

solo (without rhythm section)



(with rhythm section)



Sheet music for guitar, featuring ten staves of music in G7 and C7 chords. The key signature is one flat (Bb). The music includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *f* (growl tone). Measure numbers 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, and 65 are indicated. The notation includes slurs, ties, and triplets.

Staff 1: G7, C7, G7, C7. *mf*. Measure 35.

Staff 2: G7, C7, G7, C7. Measure 40.

Staff 3: G7, C7, G7, C7. *f*. Measure 45.

Staff 4: G7, C7, G7, C7. Measure 50.

Staff 5: G7, C7, G7, C7. *mf*. Measure 55.

Staff 6: G7, C7, G7, C7. Measure 60.

Staff 7: G7, C7, G7, C7. *f*. Measure 65.

Staff 8: G7, C7, G7, C7. Measure 65.

Staff 9: G7, C7, G7, C7. Measure 65.

Staff 10: G7, C7, G7, C7. *f* (growl tone). Measure 65.

This page of musical notation is for guitar, written in G major (one sharp). It consists of ten staves of music. The notation includes various chords (G7, C7, G6, A-7, D7), dynamics (p, mf, f, ff), and performance markings like 'vib.' and '(piano solo begins)'. Measure numbers 70, 75, 80, 85, and 90 are indicated.

Staff 1: G7, C7, G7, vib., C7. Dynamics: p, mf, f. Measure 70.

Staff 2: G7, C7, G7. Dynamics: ff. Measure 75.

Staff 3: C7, G7, C7.

Staff 4: G7, C7, G6, A. Dynamics: f. Measure 80.

Staff 5: C7, G6, A-7, D7.

Staff 6: G6, C7, G6. Dynamics: f. Measure 85.

Staff 7: A-7, D7, G7, C7. Measure 90.

Staff 8: G7, C7, G7. Dynamics: mf.

Staff 9: C7, G7, C7. Dynamics: (piano solo begins). Measure 95.

Keep Hold of Yourself

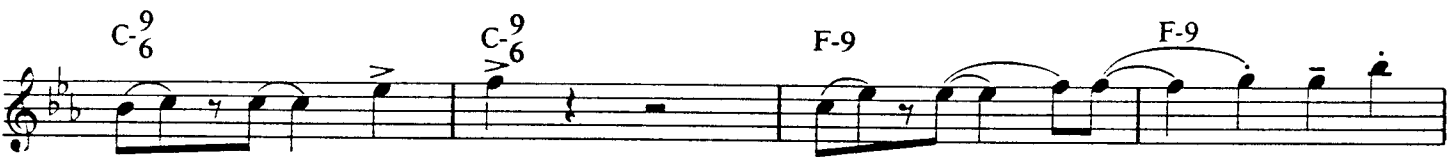
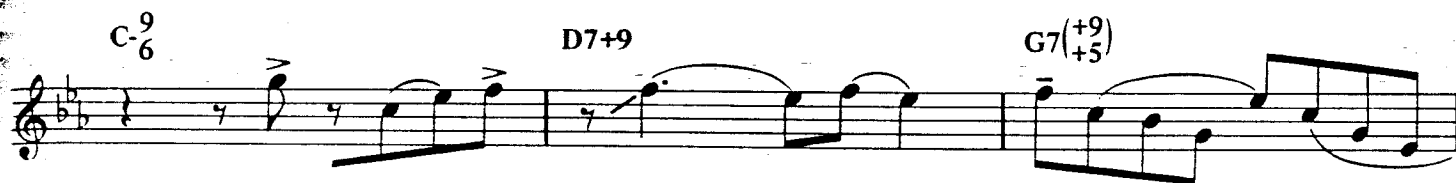
Sonny Rollin

Fast minor blues

The musical score is written in 12/8 time, key of C minor (three flats). It consists of 32 measures, divided into eight systems of four measures each. The tempo/style is 'Fast minor blues'. The dynamics start with *mf* (mezzo-forte) at measure 1.

Chord progressions and melodic details:

- Measures 1-4: C-9, C-9, C-9, C-9. Melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes.
- Measures 5-8: C-9, F-9, F-9, C-9. Measure 5 has a '5' below the staff. Measure 6 has a triplet of eighth notes.
- Measures 9-12: C-9, D7+9, G7(+9/+5), C-9. Measure 10 has a '10' below the staff.
- Measures 13-16: C-9, C-9, C-9, C-9. Measure 15 has a '15' below the staff.
- Measures 17-20: C-9, F-9, F-9, C-9. Measure 19 has a triplet of eighth notes.
- Measures 21-24: C-9, D7+9, G7(+9/+5), C-9. Measure 20 has a '20' below the staff.
- Measures 25-28: C-9, C-9, C-9, C-9. Measure 25 has a '25' below the staff.
- Measures 29-32: C-9, F-9, F-9, C-9. Measure 31 has a '30' below the staff.



An Analysis of Sonny Rollins's Style

As with all great jazz musicians, Sonny Rollins's sound is instantly recognizable. The main features of his music are cello-like tone with little vibrato, rhythmic complexity, harmonic sophistication, sarcastic wit, and an overriding sense of form. Many of his compositions—"St. Thomas," "Doxy," and "Alfie's Theme" come to mind—are singable melodies with simple harmonies which allow him the freedom to improvise variations. It's very common for Rollins to repeat the melody verbatim or in an altered but recognizable form. In his solos he also plays melodies evocative of the twenties and thirties, sometimes quoting old tunes.

Rollins takes several approaches to chord changes: chordal, scalar, playing out of the changes, or a combination of these. The approach he takes has a lot to do with the chord changes or mood of the tune. For example, the solo on "The Everywhere Calypso" is almost entirely a chordal improvisation, which Rollins might have chosen in order to suggest a traditional West Indian feeling. On the other hand, Rollins's solo on "Alfie's Theme" contains large-out-of-the-changes passages. Playing out of the changes almost automatically gives a solo an avant-garde quality since it rejects the harmonic limitations of the chord changes. Another factor is the instrumentation of the group. In general, a soloist working in front of a pianist, big band, or (to a lesser extent) guitar, has less harmonic freedom than one working without this chordal background. For this reason, Rollins's earlier recordings, made with just bass and drums, provided him with a setting in which he could explore certain ideas freely.

The endings of Sonny Rollins's pieces are very unpredictable. Just when one thinks he's stopped, he starts up again, providing an anticlimax. The pieces either trail off, leaving us with the feeling that the music could continue forever, or terminate without warning. Although Rollins's propensity for anticlimax might be attributed to a sarcastic nature, he also has the ability to be highly romantic, as can be heard in the ballads he has recorded, such as "You Don't Know What Love Is," "'Til There Was You," and many others. He is an inventive player and is just as creative at lightning fast speeds as at slow tempos. In fact, he is so versatile a musician that he is as comfortable with avant-garde music as he is with something more standard. But no matter what he plays, he always sounds like Sonny Rollins—fabulous!

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Chordal Improvisation: Arpeggios

In a totally chordal improvisation each note is part of the chord which is indicated. In other words, where there is a Dm7, the main notes are D, F, A, and C, and all non-chord notes must resolve to them. The most basic way of playing chord changes is restricting oneself to the chord tones alone. Sonny Rollins frequently takes this approach. The following are the kinds of arpeggios (broken chords) which Rollins plays:

1. Arpeggios containing only simple chord tones.
2. Arpeggios containing tones from more complex (higher-number) chords.
3. Arpeggios containing non-chord tones which clash with the indicated chord.

In this section I have listed major, major seventh, minor, and minor seventh arpeggios, minor arpeggios with ninth added, dominant seventh, dominant ninth, and diminished seventh arpeggios, and several miscellaneous ones. Where no explanation appears, the arpeggios contain only chord tones.

Major

This E^b major arpeggio clashes with both E^b m7 and A^b 7.

"On Impulse"



"Blessing in Disguise"



"East Broadway Run Down"



The B major arpeggio clashes with E7 in the fifth measure.

"East Broadway Run Down"



"The Everywhere Calypso"



"The Everywhere Calypso"



The C arpeggio extends an eighth note into the F measure.

"The Everywhere Calypso"



Major Seventh

A Dm7 arpeggio is followed by a B^b Ma7 arpeggio.

"You Don't Know What Love Is"



A G^b Ma7 arpeggio is used with A^b 7 to form A^b 13.

"On Impulse"



An FMa7 arpeggio is used with Dm7 to form Dm9.

"On Impulse"



"Blessing in Disguise"



Minor

An E minor arpeggio is followed by a D minor arpeggio, both being chords that naturally occur in the key of C.

An Am7 arpeggio combines with Dm7 to form Dm11.

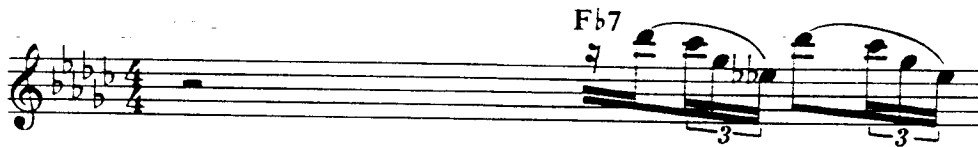
"On Impulse"



Minor Arpeggios with the Ninth Added

This C^b minor arpeggio with the ninth added combines with F^b 7 to form F^b 7(13₉).

"You Don't Know What Love Is"



When this D minor arpeggio with the ninth added combines with G7 it forms G7(13₉).

"On Impulse"



Dominant Seventh

"Blessing in Disguise"



"The Everywhere Calypso"



Dominant Ninth

"The Everywhere Calypso"



Diminished Seventh

A C \sharp dim7 arpeggio combines with A7 to form A7(-9) in the following examples.

"The Everywhere Calypso"



"The Everywhere Calypso"



Miscellaneous

This G \flat m9 (ma7) combines with C \flat 7 to form C \flat 7(+ $\frac{13}{9}$).

"You Don't Know What Love Is"



This E \flat augmented arpeggio combines with F \flat 7 to form F \flat 7(+ $\frac{11}{9}$).

"You Don't Know What Love Is"



Major, minor, and diminished arpeggios are consecutively used against E \flat minor.

"You Don't Know What Love Is"



An E \flat m6 with the ninth added used dissonantly on G7.

"Keep Hold of Yourself"



Scalar Improvisation

Since the late fifties jazz musicians have been interested in scalar improvisation. Using this technique Sonny Rollins restricts himself to the notes in a particular scale, and plays them over one or several chords. The scale notes may go nicely with the chords (consonant) or may be very jarring (dissonant). The scales and Rollins's placement of them is worth analyzing. I have added Roman numeral chord symbols to facilitate transposition.

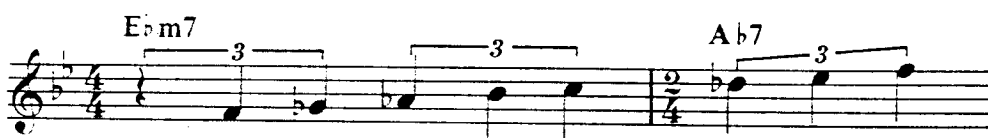
1. Whole-tone scale based on B \flat (V) on B \flat 7 (V7) preceding E \flat minor (I minor).

"You Don't Know What Love Is"



2. Phrygian scale on F (III) with E \flat m7 (IIIm7) to A \flat 7 (V7).

"On Impulse"



3. Pentatonic scale with occasional blues note—D \flat (\flat V)—with G7 (I7) to C7 (IV7).

"Playin' in the Yard"



4. Pentatonic scale used with a minor blues.

E34

"Keep Hold of Yourself"

The musical notation consists of three staves. The first staff has a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a pentatonic scale starting on C4, with notes C4, Eb4, F4, G4, and Bb4. Above the staff are five C9/6 chords. The second staff continues the melody with F-9 and F-9 chords, followed by two C9/6 chords. The third staff features D7+9, G7(+9/+5), and two C9/6 chords. The notes are written in a rhythmic pattern typical of bebop.

5. Scales containing notes that are dissonant with the chords on which they are played. (Dissonant notes are circled.)

"On Impulse" whole tone scale

The musical notation is on a single staff in 3/4 time. It shows a whole tone scale starting on G4. The notes are G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, and E5. Above the staff are G7 and D-7 chords. The notes G4 and D5 are circled, indicating they are dissonant with the G7 and D-7 chords respectively.

"On Impulse" major scale

G13sus4

The musical notation is on a single staff in 4/4 time. It shows a major scale starting on G4. The notes are G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, and G5. Above the staff is a G13sus4 chord. The notes G4 and G5 are circled, indicating they are dissonant with the G13sus4 chord.

Sequences

Sonny Rollins, like many other bebop and hard bop saxophonists, often plays a riff and then transposes it. This technique is called sequence.

Type 1: The phrase is transposed with the same rhythms. Of this type there are *real sequences*, those that are unaltered, and *tonal sequences*, those where the intervals are slightly altered to stay within the key.

Type 2: The phrase is transposed as a *real sequence* or a *tonal sequence*, but with different rhythms.

Type 3: The phrase is not transposed note-for-note, although it is very similar to the original and the melodic contour and rhythms are maintained.

"You Don't Know What Love Is"



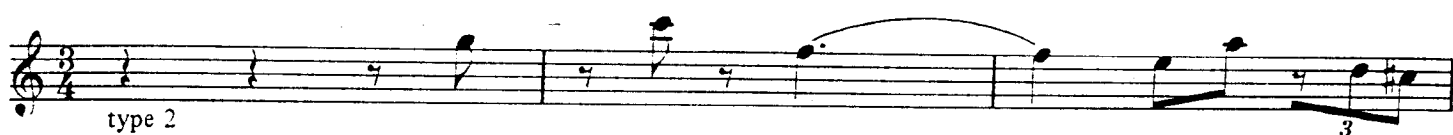
"You Don't Know What Love Is"



"Alfie's Theme"



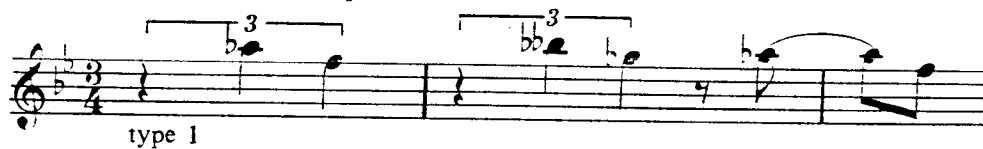
"On Impulse"



"On Impulse"



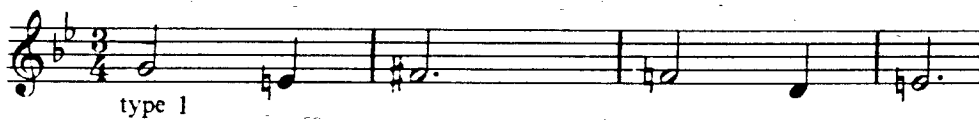
"On Impulse"



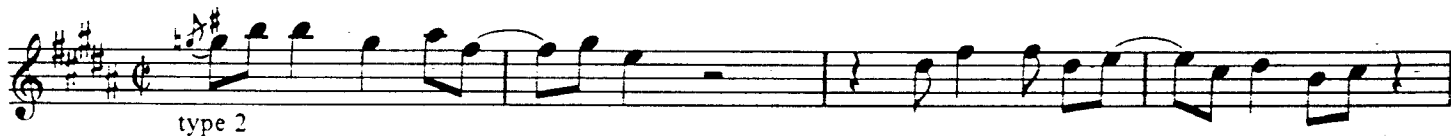
"On Impulse"



“On Impulse”



"East Broadway Run Down"



“The Everywhere Calypso”



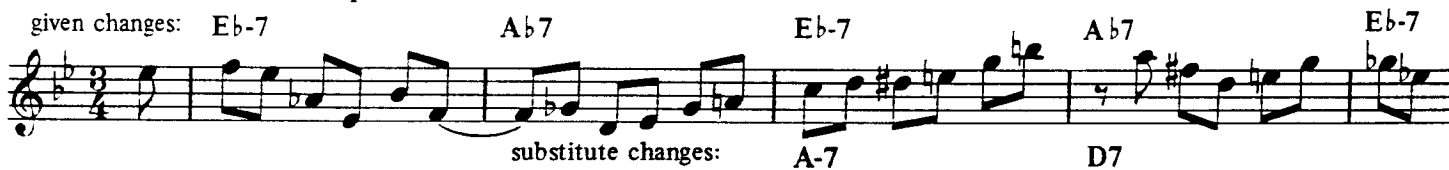
Playing out of the Changes

In any solo where the harmonic structure is limited, it is possible to leave the chords behind for a while and then return to them. This is called playing out of the changes. Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane are perhaps the two best-known saxophonists who have mastered this technique. When playing out of the changes, Rollins may employ one of the following:

1. Substitute changes a fixed interval from the original
2. Melodic devices such as repetition and sequence
3. Free playing

Example of No. 1. In the excerpt below, Rollins plays substitute changes a diminished fifth higher than the original.

“On Impulse”



Example of No. 2. The following passage consists of a motif which Rollins repeats or alters several times. The passage is not related harmonically to the chords with which it is played.

You Don't Know What Love Is



Rollins also uses sequences in his out-of-the-changes sections, as in this excerpt.

"Alfie's Theme"



Example of No. 3. The following three passages are from Rollins's solo on "Alfie's Theme," which is based on one chord, Bb minor. In these out-of-the-changes passages he leaves Bb minor for a couple of measures and then returns.





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Thematic Improvisation

In this type of improvisation, the theme, not just its harmonies (as in regular jazz improvisations) is used as the basis of the solo. Rollins's solos are logically constructed and integrated rather than being a string of unrelated choruses. The following are the themes from "Alfie's Theme," "Blessing in Disguise," and "Keep Hold of Yourself." Each theme is followed by several variations, which demonstrate Rollins's incredible ability to sustain a mood by using slightly altered repetitions of a theme. Thus, Rollins uses a minimum of musical material for a sustained effect. In these next excerpts, the variations on the theme are bracketed.

Most of these variations are based on the last two measures of the tune. The last variation is on the entire theme.



Var. 1

Var. 2

Var. 3

Var. 4

Var. 5

Var. 6

Var. 7

This next is an example of a rubato (out-of-tempo) theme. Rollins uses a lot of rhythmic regrouping here: The same tones are used with different rhythmic values. For example, compare the first few notes of the theme and the beginnings of several variations. You'll notice the notes are similar but the rhythms are totally different.

“Blessing in Disguise”

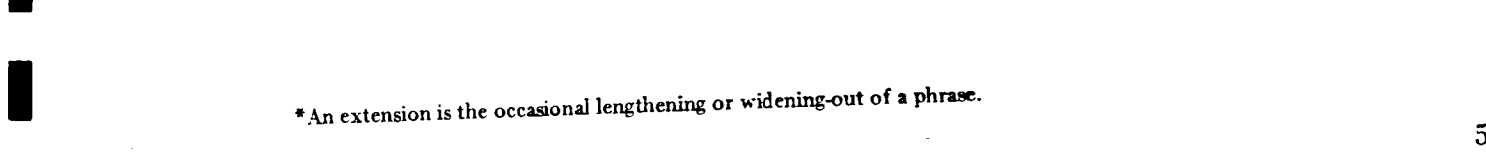
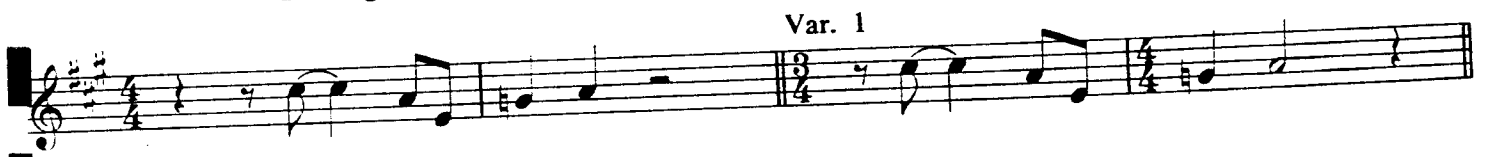
Var. 1

slight pauses

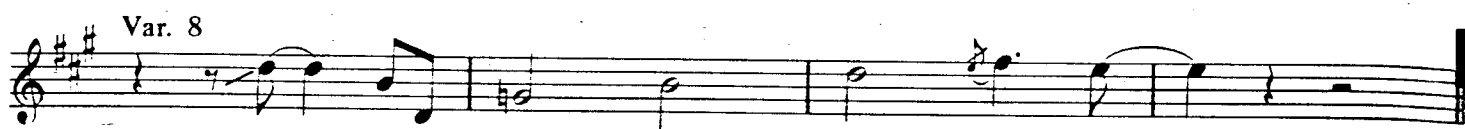
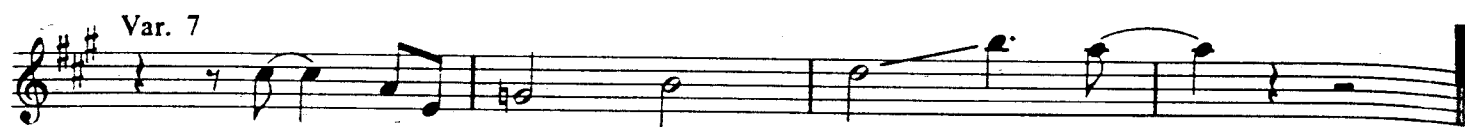


"Blessing in Disguise" is an "*a tempo*" theme. Variation 1 is the same as the original theme but with a slightly longer last note. (Not printed below are differences in articulation in otherwise identical reproductions of the theme.) In variations 2 through 5, new pitches are often substituted, but the melodic contour and rhythmic quality of the original is the same. Variations 6 through 8 are four measures long instead of two, and each successive variation shows more alterations.

"Blessing in Disguise"

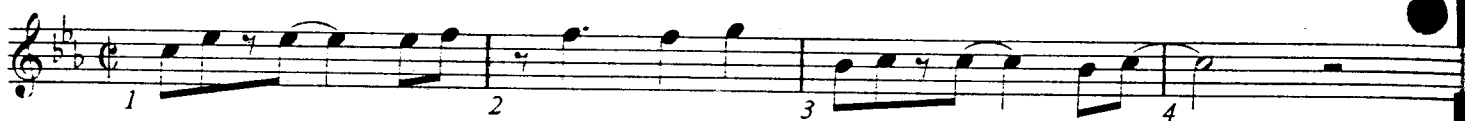


*An extension is the occasional lengthening or widening-out of a phrase.



This twelve-measure blues is followed by only one variation in which slight rhythmic and note changes are worth comparing measure by measure.

"Keep Hold of Yourself"



Rhythmic Devices: Syncopation and Delay

Syncopation is a cornerstone of jazz and popular music, and delay—playing behind the beat—is a device you're likely to hear on a lot of jazz albums. Other rhythmic devices like displacement and regrouping can be found in the section on Repetitive Phrases.

In music having a steady basic meter ($\frac{4}{4}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$, for example) syncopation is when a normally unaccented beat (2 and 4 in $\frac{4}{4}$) or a subdivision of the beat (an eighth note or a sixteenth note) is accented.

accent on 2 and 4:



accent on a subdivisions of the beat:



Often, syncopated music gives the effect of a series of different meters.



sounds like:



The following are examples of syncopation taken from Sonny Rollins's solos.

"You Don't Know What Love Is"



"Alfie's Theme"



"Alfie's Theme"



"On Impulse"



"Blessing in Disguise"



"Blessing in Disguise"



"East Broadway Run Down"



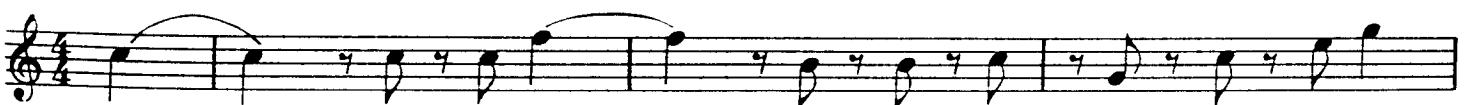
"East Broadway Run Down"



"The Everywhere Calypso"



"The Everywhere Calypso"



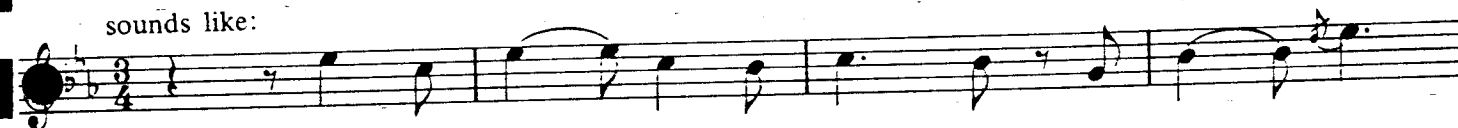
"Keep Hold of Yourself"



"Keep Hold of Yourself"



sounds like:



"Keep Hold of Yourself"



"Delay" is the term I use for playing behind the beat. In ballads, Rollins often drags the tune behind the beat, playing the notes after we expect to hear them. He usually slows down the tune by playing a lot of grace notes and lip slurs, amply demonstrated in the following examples from "You Don't Know What Love Is." I have written the delayed passage first, then re-written it the way we expect to hear it due to our memory of the tune. We expect the B \flat to fall on F \flat 7 instead of an eighth note later.



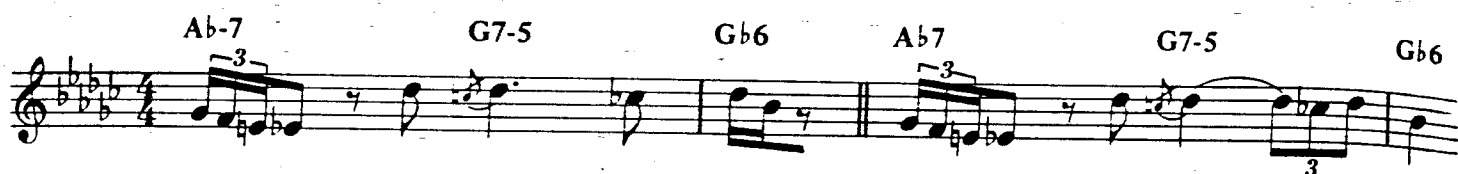
We expect the F \flat s to fall on the first beats of both measures. Both are delayed.



We expect the B \flat to fall on F \flat 7, and the last E \flat to fall on the first beat on C \flat 7.



We expect the final B \flat to fall on G \flat 6, not later.

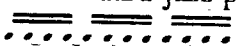


We expect the melody to begin with F on the first beat on E \flat minor, instead of on the third beat.



Here we expect the C \flat to fall on the third beat on F \flat 7.



In fast tempos Rollins sometimes slows down his sixteenth notes to form triplets. Since the triplets retain the standard jazz phrasing (I call it "reverse slurring") for sixteenth notes—  —they consequently sound like them.

"On Impulse"



sounds like:



"On Impulse"



sounds like:



"Blessing in Disguise"



sounds like:



Phrase Repetition

Repetition fixes the listener's attention on a melody and lodges it in his mind. It has always been an important aspect of popular music and jazz. Sonny Rollins uses repetition in the following ways:

Type 1: Real, note-for-note repetition, such as in "Blessing in Disguise."

Type 2: Rollins is an expert juggler of rhythms, and often uses rhythmic displacement to syncopate his music. That is, he repeats a phrase beginning off the beat if the phrase started on the beat, and on the beat if it started off the beat. Many jazz and rock musicians playing in $\frac{4}{4}$ use repeated figures $1\frac{1}{2}$ beats long, beginning on different parts of the beat with each repetition.



This gives a polyrhythmic feeling suggesting triple time, although the meter is $\frac{4}{4}$.

Type 3: Repetition of one note.

Type 4: Alternation between two notes.

Type 5: Rhythmic regrouping. The tones, but not the rhythms, are maintained in the repetition.

"You Don't Know What Love Is"



"Blessing in Disguise"



sounds like:



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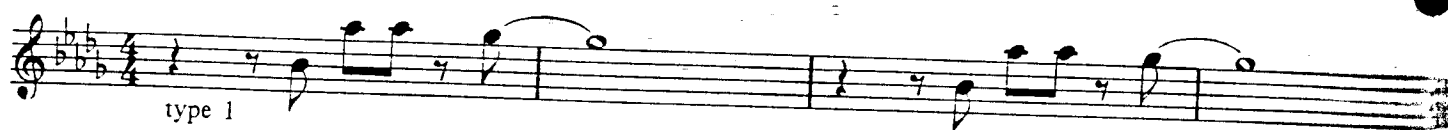
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"You Don't Know What Love Is"





"Alfie's Theme"

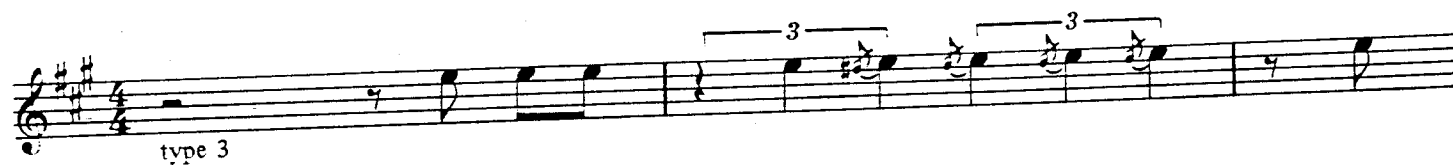
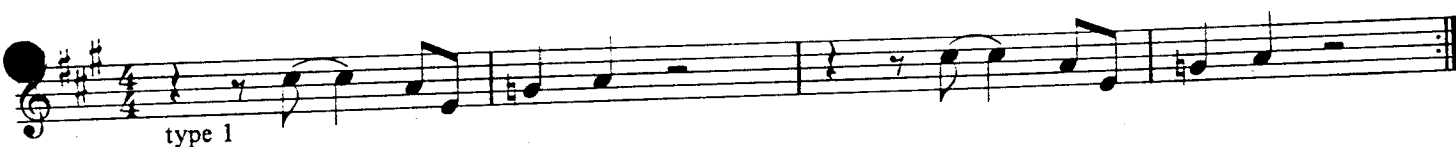


"On Impulse"





"Blessing in Disguise"





type 3

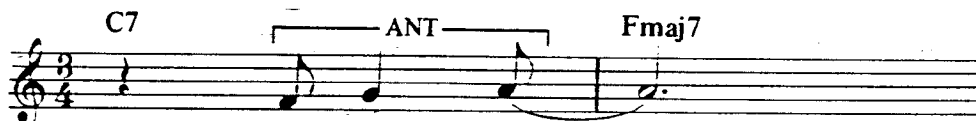
type 1



Anticipation

Anticipation (ANT) is the sounding of a note or notes before the chord to which it belongs. This device is most common in dominant to tonic (V to I) or subdominant to tonic (IV to I) progressions. The anticipating notes usually occur directly before the anticipated chord.

"On Impulse"



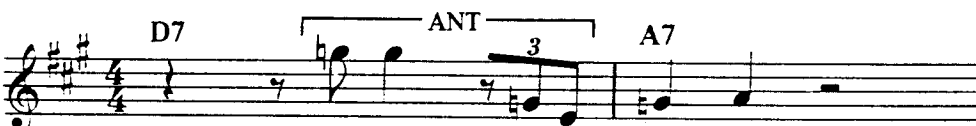
"Blessing in Disguise"



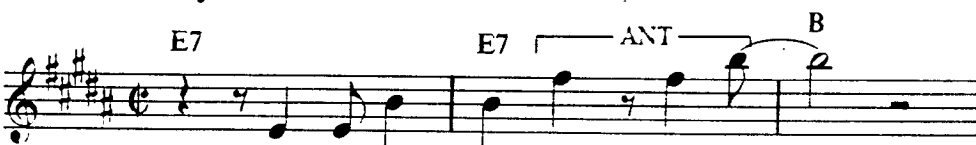
"Blessing in Disguise"



"Blessing in Disguise"



"East Broadway Run Down"



"East Broadway Run Down"



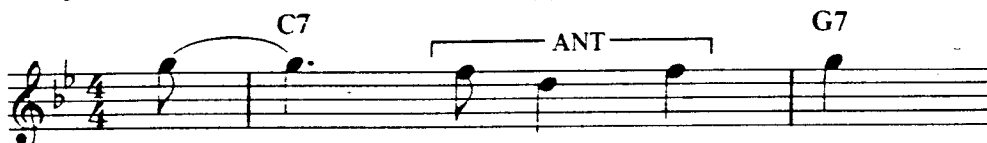
"The Everywhere Calypso"



"The Everywhere Calypso"

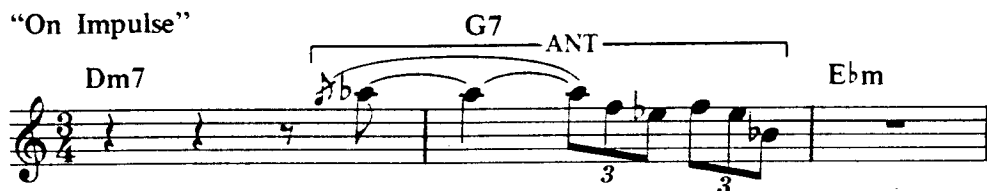


"Playin' in the Yard"



The following are three anticipations which occur in progressions other than dominant or subdominant to tonic, and are more dissonant than anticipations which occur there.

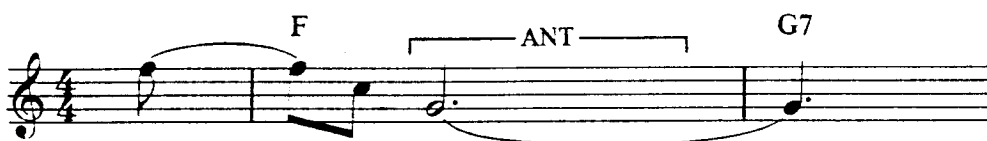
"On Impulse"



"East Broadway Run Down"



"The Everywhere Calypso"



Sometimes Rollins continues to play in a harmony after it has changed (DR). The B \flat in the second measure belongs with A \flat 7. Although it is not a chord member of A \flat 7 it is a common added tone to A \flat 7 forming A \flat 9. It resolves down to A, the fifth of Dm7.

"On Impulse"

On impulse

Ab7 D-7 ANT G7

DR

A musical staff in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. Above the staff, the chords Ab7, D-7, ANT, and G7 are indicated. A bracket labeled 'ANT' spans the notes corresponding to the D-7 and ANT chords. The letters 'DR' are written below the staff at the end of the phrase.

"Blessing in Disguise"

[illegible]

Chord Chart

| Root | Major | Minor | Augmented | Diminished | Sixth | Minor Sixth | Seventh | Minor Seventh | Major Seventh | Sus 4 |
|-------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| C | C | Cm | C+ | C° | C6 | Cm6 | C7 | Cm7 | C Ma 7 | Csus4 |
| D \flat (C \sharp) | D \flat | D \flat m | D \flat + | D \flat ° | D \flat 6 | D \flat m6 | D \flat 7 | D \flat m7 | D \flat Ma 7 | D \flat sus4 |
| D | D | Dm | D+ | D° | D6 | Dm6 | D7 | Dm7 | D Ma 7 | Dsus4 |
| E \flat (D \sharp) | E \flat | E \flat m | E \flat + | E \flat ° | E \flat 6 | E \flat m6 | E \flat 7 | E \flat m7 | E \flat Ma 7 | E \flat sus4 |
| E | E | Em | E+ | E° | E6 | Em6 | E7 | Em7 | E Ma 7 | Esus4 |
| F | F | Fm | F+ | F° | F6 | Fm6 | F7 | Fm7 | F Ma 7 | Fsus4 |
| G \flat (F \sharp) | F \sharp | F \sharp m | F \sharp + | F \sharp ° | F \sharp 6 | F \sharp m6 | F \sharp 7 | F \sharp m7 | F \sharp Ma 7 | F \sharp sus4 |
| G | G | Gm | G+ | G° | G6 | Gm6 | G7 | Gm7 | G Ma 7 | Gsus4 |
| A \flat (G \sharp) | A \flat | A \flat m | A \flat + | A \flat ° | A \flat 6 | A \flat m6 | A \flat 7 | A \flat m7 | A \flat Ma 7 | A \flat sus4 |
| A | A | Am | A+ | A° | A6 | Am6 | A7 | Am7 | A Ma 7 | Asus4 |
| B \flat (A \sharp) | A \sharp | B \flat m | B \flat + | B \flat ° | B \flat 6 | B \flat m6 | B \flat 7 | B \flat m7 | B \flat Ma 7 | B \flat sus4 |
| B | B | Bm | B+ | B° | B6 | Bm6 | B7 | Bm7 | B Ma 7 | Bsus4 |

God Bless the Child (annotated)

Billy Holiday
and A. Herzog

Sonny Rollins recorded Billy Holiday's "God Bless the Child" with guitarist Jim Hall in 1962 on his first record after rejoining the music scene (*The Bridge*, RCA Victor). This unusual arrangement alternates *a tempo* with out-of-tempo sections. The accompaniment on bass and guitar is carefully arranged and I have tried to transcribe the substitute changes as accurately as possible.

One of Rollins's talents is taking timeworn standards and revitalizing them. In fact, some of his most beautiful recordings are old tunes that other jazz musicians wouldn't touch. He accomplishes this in a number of ways. One of the things that makes this recording unique, for instance, is the instrumentation: guitar, bass, and drums. Jim Hall's playing is particularly beautiful on this cut, and it would be worthwhile to listen once just to his solos. (Catch that wonderful *tremolo* he uses at the end.)

Another special quality of Rollins's ballad playing is his tone. Notice that he rarely plays the notes directly on pitch, but rather slides lazily on and off them. His lack of sharp attacks gives the pieces a hip, laid-back feeling which can make an otherwise corny tune sound like sophisticated jazz.

Very slow ballad
Out of tempo
bass solo

1 (A) Amaj7 A7

D G7 E in bass E-7 A7 vib.

a tempo Dmaj7 D- Db- Gb7

p mf mf mf

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1 (B) and (C) are repetitions of (A) with rhythmic regrouping, added notes, and a different accompaniment. Guitar enters at (B).

1 A little faster and loosely

B-7 E7-9 **B** Amaj7 A7 D G7

p *mf*

E in bass *vib.* E-7 A7-9 a tempo D⁹₆ *mp*

D-9 G in bass D^b-7 G^b7-9 B-7 E7-9

pp *mp*

2 Fmaj7/G Emaj7/A^b Gmaj7/A B^o F[#]- *sub. p*

guitar solo 6 B-7 E7 **1** Out of tempo **C** Amaj7 A7 *mp*

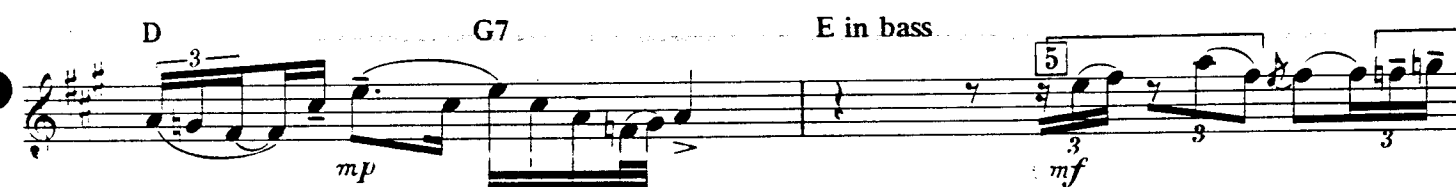
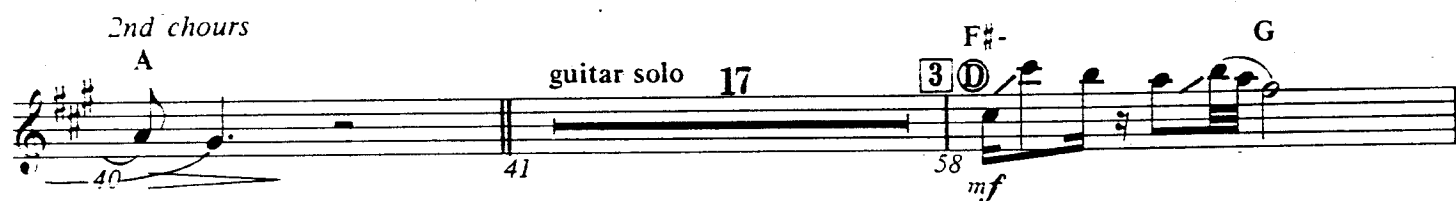
23 29 30 3

D G7 E in bass E-7 A7 *vib.*

a tempo D⁹₆ D-9 G in bass D^b- G^b7

35

- 2** This passage contains many highly dissonant notes. The first note, F[#], clashes with the F of the F[#]Maj7/A. The A^b that follows clashes with the A^b of the E[#]Maj7/A^b with which it is played. In essence, Rollins sticks to the notes of B major with which the first two chords conflict. This satisfies the expectation of A major while the guitar and bass play an elaborate chordal substitution.



[3] ① is Rollins's improvisation on the bridge of "God Bless the Child."

[4] Diminished seventh run.

[5] Sequence.

D- 75 3

6 12 G7

7 Db- 3

Gb7

B-7 5 3

E7

Fmaj7/G

Emaj7/Ab 3

Gmaj7/A

B° 3

F#-

(sax accompaniment omitted)
guitar solo 7

D-7 84

G7 85

Cmaj7

C7

F

Bb7 3

G in bass

G-7

C7

Fmaj9 3

Bb7(+11) 90

E-7

A7 3

vib.

Out of tempo

D-7

G7-9

vib.

[6] A major scale run.

[7] Harmony: Rollins jumps up a major seventh from the third of Db minor to the ninth. This note is then, briefly, the thirteenth of Gb7 before it descends stepwise to Db, the flat thirteenth. Excellent voice-leading. Rhythm: repetition of one note.

Fmaj7 E-7 Eb9 D-9 Db7+9 Dbmaj7 G13 Cmaj9

Cmaj9

mf repeat and fade

[8] These are all multiphonics, most likely played by overblowing the notes an octave plus a fifth below each note. (See *Improvising Jazz Sax* by Charley Gerard, Consolidated Music Publishers.) The F \sharp is the diminished fifth of Cmaj9. The diminished fifth is frequently added to a major seventh or major ninth at the end of a jazz or pop arrangement.

[9] Here Rollins lets the upper octave sound occasionally.

GALE

Discography

These are the recordings of the solos I have transcribed in this book. Most of the albums are still in print, or the selections have become available on other albums.

Saxophone Colossus

Prestige PR7326

"You Don't Know What Love Is"

Reevaluation: The Impulse Years

Impulse ABC AS92362

"Alfie's Theme" "On Impulse," "East Broadway Run Down,"

"Blessing in Disguise"

Next Album

Milestone MSP9042

"The Everywhere Calypso," "Playin' in the Yard," "Keep Hold of Yourself"

The Bridge

RCA Victor AFL10859

"God Bless the Child"

—SASKOLAN
JBR
GAYLE