Female singers who think "out of the box"

In this session, we will explore female singers who bridged the gap between being a popular entertainer that was just a pretty face in front of a large ensemble and that of a full-fledged "instrumentalist" member of the band. Given the cultural imperatives of the time, the former was better received in the marketplace. However, jazz players were often pushing the conventional envelope musically while simultaneously piercing social norms.

This activity will largely be focused on listening and mentally comparing and contrasting musical approaches of female singers. Time permitting, we will field questions and comments at the end.

As we listen, see if you can identify how the singer is engaging in an out-of-the-box approach by:

- Functioning outside a traditional singing role (how does she fit in into the band structure?)
- Thinking like an instrumentalist (how does she perform and interact with members of the band?)
- Altering/rewriting/inverting melody, scatting, performing vocalese
- Employing vocal inflections such as vibrato, pitch bending, dynamics, etc.

① A Pretty Face - Old Devil Moon, Jo Stafford – Swingin' down Broadway (1958) Columbia Records CL 1124 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oi1gSonLUfc

Vocals – Jo Stafford Big Band – Paul Weston and His Orchestra

American Songbook "pop" approach: very pure melody, harmonies, chord changes; AKA legit "stock" charts, strictly by the book (no improvisation and the original chord changes). In this track, we have a singer, and a backing band, and they stay away from each other. Aiming for the tastes of middle America, however, there was effort evident in the craft. Seth MacFarlane would borrow this styling for his many endeavors.

2 Hard Bop Instrumental - That Old Devil Moon, Miles Davis – Blue Haze (1956) Prestige Records LP 7054 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6FWBW-hX6c

Trumpet – Miles Davis Piano – Horace Silver Bass – Percy Heath Drums – Art Blakey

Small combo, with a fairly "straight" head for the initial A section, chord progressions grow in complexity as the tune moves along. The 2nd A section of the head has Miles straying from the pure melody and Horace Silver's playing embraces more complex chord voicings and changes. Davis' improvised solo features interaction and counterplay with the rhythm section, ideas stated, then restated. The final head takes only 2nd endings.

3 A Naughty Face - Old Devil Moon, Anita O'Day – Anita Sings the Most (1957) Verve Records MG V-8259 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92Ec7lm8160

Vocals – Anita O'Day Guitar – Herb Ellis Piano – Oscar Peterson

Bass – Ray Brown Drums – Milt Holland

Small combo, with a faster tempo (not surprising given the session players). In this track, we have a singer who is clearly an instrumental member of the band, yet Anita seemingly strays from others. The melody is subject to interpretation from the get-go. It has a very fluid, rubato treatment, almost floating above the combo, if not two different sets of phrasing at play. Anita's improvisation is limited to interpretations of the melody, but this entire track is improvised, especially the garnishment by Oscar and solo by Herb.

4 Post Bop Vocal - Old Devil Moon, Michèle Hendricks – Carryin' On (1987) Muse Records MR 5336 http://jazzstreams.ddns.net/www/class/01%20-%20Old%20Devil%20Moon.mp3

Vocals – Michèle Hendricks Tenor Saxophone – Stan Getz Piano – David Leonhardt

Bass – Ray Drummond Drums – Marvin "Smitty" Smith

Small combo traditional tempo, classic Hard Bop feel, a swingin' groove that lags the beat, with call and answer response between Stan and Michèle from the start. Clearly, Michèle is a member of the band, not just a front. Complex chord voicings and changes with considerable interaction/counterplay with the rhythm section are found throughout. Note the instrumental solos and how Michèle sings and improvises with the same exploratory nature. Bonus points for recognizing "Killer Joe" references throughout. In the final head, Michèle still covers all the lyrics but substitutes melody and inflection just as an instrumentalist would. There is some scatting evident here, but mostly it is lyric alterations.

(5) Classic Scat Soloing – All of Me, Sarah Vaughan – Swingin' Easy (1957) EmArcy Records MG 36109 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ejziczu1fg

Vocals – Sarah Vaughan Piano – Jimmy Jones Bass – Richard Davis Drums – Roy Haynes

Small combo traditional tempo, classic Hard Bop feel, swingin' groove that lags the beat. Melody starts out "straight" but soon begins to undergo interpretation and then delves into scatting. Note how her solos sound just like a woodwind or brass player; it is easy to imagine these coming out of an instrumental bell. The final head is loose subject to considerable variation with eventual melody substitution.

6 Classic Scat Soloing (big band) – It Don't Mean a Thing (If it Ain't Got that Swing), Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington – The Ed Sullivan Show (March 7, 1965) CBS https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myRc-3oF1d0

Vocals – Ella Fitzgerald Piano – Duke Ellington Backing Band – Duke Ellington Band

Classic American Big Band approach: pure melody (at first), embellished harmonies (upper partials/second octave scales), strictly by the book for woodwinds and brass punches, but soloists and rhythm section improvise almost from the start driving chord changes and harmonies. Note that the scatting in the verse is the brass parts in the original 1930s recording which is doubled by the brass in later in this performance. This is one of the earliest songs in which scatting manifests. The final head varies the traditional melody with scat improvisation.

7 Bebop Instrumental – *Nostalgia,* Fats Navarro – Nostalgia (1958, recorded 1947) Savoy Records MG-12133 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbsxDOgVzFI

Trumpet – Fats Navarro Tenor Sax – Charlie Rouse Guitar – Huey Long Piano – Tadd Dameron

Bass – Nelson Boyd Drums – Art Blakey

Small combo with a classic bebop formation and execution. Initial head is pretty "straight" (for bop). Chord changes in bebop are not particularly wild (rarely beyond a minor 7th or major 9th, but the melodies and solos are filled with accidentals that provide complexity, especially when surrounding and "stinging" a note. Just dig Fats on his horn. Bebop is all about the melody (or solo) line and rhythmic inflection, whereas Hard Bop brought the harmonic complexity (and adventure!) straight into the chord changes.

8 Vocalese – *Nostalgia (The Day I Knew),* Samara Joy – Linger Awhile (2022) Verve Records B0036472-01 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvUidbMTKkU

Vocals – Samara Joy Guitar – Pasquale Grasso Bass – David Wong Drums – Kenny Washington

Small combo, very "straight" heads (but listen for Samara's vocal inflections), chord voicings and changes are more complex (Hard Bop style), and interaction and counterplay with the rhythm section starts immediately. Vocalese takes a recorded improvised instrumental solo and adds lyrics to it which are then sung exactly as the original solo. The vocalese begins with the line "I think that after all this time and all these years..." Listen for vocal inflection. Do you hear Fats? Samara and her band are leveraging about eight decades of jazz development, effortlessly integrating bebop, hard bop, post-bop, scatting, vocalese, and beyond.

Further Reflection/Exploration

How did the role of female singers reflect the cultural norms of the time?

How has the changing role of the female jazz singers come to reflect cultural norms/aspirations of the present?

What corollaries can be found between the roles of jazz performers within their craft and the civil rights movement at large from the mid-1950s onwards?

Jazz can be described as a musical democracy where each player stands (or sits-out) based upon his/her merit. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

How do you believe Broadway musicals have impacted jazz singers?

What did you learn today and how it will affect your listening to female singers going forth?

Other Resources

Sound Ideas, a thematic radio series that explores the broad pallet of jazz performance. http://jazzstreams.org/soundideas/

Sound Ideas, episode #40, Female Vocalists http://jazzstreams.org/soundideas/Episode-040.php (F lead)

Sound Ideas, episode #104, Tightknit Vocal Harmonies http://jazzstreams.org/soundideas/Episode-104.php (harmonized M and mixed group M/F)

Sound Ideas, episode #306, Vocals on Tap http://jazzstreams.org/soundideas/Episode-306.php (M or F lead)

How High the Moon, Rita Payes (Ella Fitzgerald), Magali Datzira (Billie Holiday), Eva Fernandez (Dinah Washington), and Andrea Motis (Sarah Vaughan), recorded in 2014. Four young women illustrate four legendary jazz singers under the guidance of Joan Chamoro as part of his Sant Andreu Jazz Band program for kids aged 12 to 20 in Barcelona, Spain. Keep in mind that English is likely a third or fourth language for these musicians. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNHa2580Kwo

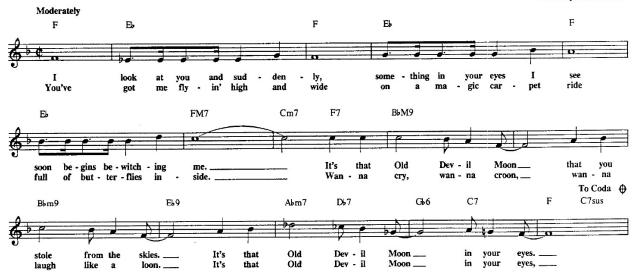
Jazz Etiquette, a humorous exploration of the often-bewildering imperatives that guide the behavior of the jazz player, band leader, club owner, and artistic recipient, AKA the audience. http://jazzstreams.org/jazzetiquette/

(For musicians) A comparison of a "stock" vs. "jazz" chart of Old Devil Moon is found on the next two pages.

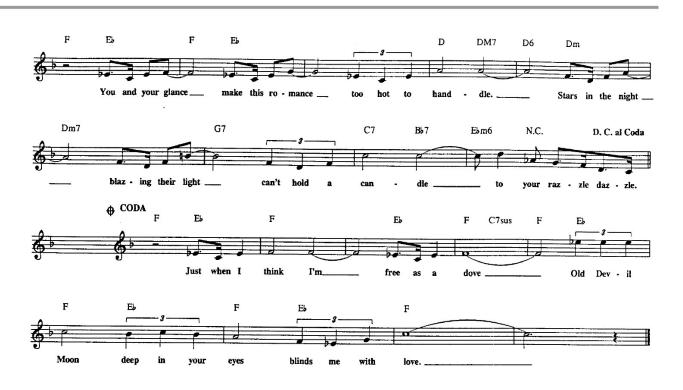
OLD DEVIL MOON (From "FINIAN'S RAINBOW")

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Words by E.Y. Harburg Music by Burton Lane



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This is a "stock" melody and chord changes for Old Devil Moon as heard in the 1947 Broadway play, *Finian's Rainbow*. While considerably more complex than many 3 or 4 chord rock/pop tunes of the past decades, it is classic Great American Songbook, which would be built upon or reinterpreted by those in the jazz idiom. Note the 48-bar ABAC song form, a slightly less common variation as opposed to the 32-bar AABA song form typically found in the GAS.



This version of Old Devil Moon is likely more familiar to jazz players. It's from the Real Book volume II while amidst an ongoing argument about its accuracy, is still the starting point for many jazz performances. (Zoot Sims, *Warm Tenor*)

Note how the meter is common time (4/4), and phrasing as swing 8th notes (2:1 time ratio) as opposed to the cut time (2/2) and dotted 8ths (3:1 ratio) of the original Broadway tune. This generates that hipper, lagging, feel that swings so nicely.

Also note chord substitutions for Eb (C-7, the relative minor); Eb13 for the $Bb-7 \rightarrow Eb9$ phrase; a modulation with $Db\Delta7$; and a "sting" of the tonic with $Eb \rightarrow Gb7 \rightarrow F$. Plus, there is a more complicated turnaround (prior to DC al Coda). This replaces the original ii-V-I progression (D-7 \rightarrow G7 \rightarrow C7) with D-7 \rightarrow G7, a ii-V on a secondary dominant (V7/V), i.e. G7/C), that modulates to its parallel minor (G-7) to yield a ii-V-I (G-7 \rightarrow C7 \rightarrow F) and leads us back to the tonic at the end (and top) of the form. Jazz players just can't ignore the opportunity to create endless altered ii-V and ii-V-I progressions. Check out John Coltrane's *Giant Steps* for the ultimate ii-V-I challenge (or personal practice hell).