

EVIDENCE FOR MASTERY OF STYLE: BEYOND THE SUBJECTIVE

DR. ROLYND DELLA SYLVAN

Ph.D. New York University (U.S.A.); Ph.D. Candidate, University of Oradea (Romania); Adjunct
Faculty, New School of Music, NYC

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4934-7353>

<https://doi.org/10.61215?MA?2025.vol.2.iss.2.05>

Abstract

There are occasions when artists and students need information based on objective rather than merely subjective claims and anecdotes. Scott Hamilton, a living artist (jazz tenor saxophonist), has been praised by critics, artists, and pedagogues for his extraordinary mastery of the bygone swing era style. Hamilton has been heralded as a "master," deemed "the real thing," and called an outright "reincarnation" and helped spearhead an era-defining movement with aimed to return to pre-John Coltrane and pre-Charlie Parker eras. Not only an iconoclast, Hamilton's recordings are among the best jazz recordings of all time and draws praises of the current leaders of jazz saxophone performance regardless of their own style. Hamilton, though aware of the styles that lie outside the genre of the swing era style, has purposefully avoided incorporating any of those "newer" characteristics.

My research moves beyond the subjective and into the objective via standard analytical practices within the field of jazz research and pedagogy. Split-second note choices over cadential points within the improvisations of Hamilton are investigated and compared to the improvisations of exemplary tenor saxophonists from the actual swing era and eras that followed up until, and overlapping, Hamilton's career. The same formal areas were investigated and compared and contrasted to the improvisations of non-swing era tenor saxophone improvisations of influential/change-of-era masters that followed the swing era. It also critically examines Hamilton's improvisations for evidence and mastery of characteristics he holds in common with the improvisations from the swing era.

Keywords

Jazz pedagogy, Jazz theory, Jazz improvisation, Swing era, Jazz saxophone pedagogy

Bibliography

1. Baker, D. *David baker's jazz improvisation: A comprehensive method for all musicians*. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Pub. Co., 1988.
2. Bauer, S. M.. *Structural targets in modern jazz improvisation: An analytical perspective*. (unpublished thesis) University of California, San Diego, 1994.
3. Bergonzi, J. *Inside improvisation series. vol. 1. melodic structures*. Germany: Advance Music Publishing Co. 1992
4. Bergonzi, J. *Developing a jazz style*. Germany: Advance Music Publishing Co., 2003.
5. Bergonzi, J. *Jazz line*. Germany: Advance Music Publishing Co., 1996.

6. Blancq, C. *Melodic improvisation in American jazz: The style of Theodore "Sonny" Rollins, 1951-1962*. (unpublished thesis) Tulane University, 1977.
7. Blumenthal, B. *Jazz: An introduction to the history and legends behind America's music*. New York: Collins, 2007
8. Braff, R. *A first* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1985.
9. Braff, R. *A sailboat in the moonlight* [CD]. Concord CA: Concord Jazz, 1986.
10. Braff, R. *Controlled nonchalance at the regattabar. vol. 1* [CD]. Tierra Verde, FL: Arbors Records, 1994.
11. Braff, R. *For the last time* [CD]. Clearwater, FL: Arbors Records, 2008.
12. Bruno, J. *Live at birdland. II* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1999.
13. Carlson, W. R. *A procedure for teaching jazz improvisation based on an analysis of the performance practice of three major jazz trumpet players, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis*. (unpublished thesis: Ph.D.) Indiana University, 1981.
14. Carter, B. *A gentleman and his music* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1985.
15. Christiansen, C. *Essential jazz lines: The style of Charlie Parker*. MO: Mel Bay Pub., 2001.
16. Clooney, R. *Everything's coming up Rosie* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1977.
17. Clooney, R. *Tribute to Billie Holiday* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1979.
18. Clooney, R. Arlen. *Rosemary Clooney sings the music of Harold Arlen* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1983.
19. Clooney, R. *Rosemary Clooney sings the music of Irving Berlin* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1984.
20. Clooney, R. *Rosemary Clooney sings ballads* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1985.
21. Clooney, R. *Sings the lyrics of Johnny Mercer* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1987.
22. Clooney, R. *For the duration*. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1991.
23. Coker, J. *Improvising jazz*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964.
24. The Concord All Stars. *Ow!* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1988.
25. Concord Jazz. *The concord sound. volume I* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1985.
26. Defaa, C. *Expanding the Tradition*. Downbeat magazine, 208, 32-38, 1985.
27. Della Chiesa, Ron. *Radio My Way: Featuring Celebrity Profiles from Jazz, Opera, the American Songbook and More*. Pearson, 2011.
28. Della Sylvan, R. personal communications, 2000-present.
29. DeVaux, S. K. *The birth of bebop a social and musical history*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
30. Dunscomb, J. R. *Jazz pedagogy: The jazz educator's handbook and resource guide*. CA: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 2002.
31. Elliot, G., & Bielderman, G. *Scott Hamilton discography* [CD]. NY., 2007.

33. Feather, Leonard. *The Pleasures of Jazz: Leading Performers On Their Lives, Their Music, Their Contemporaries*. Horizon Press, 1977.
34. Fitzgerald, E. *Love letters from Ella* [CD]. Beverly Hills, CA: Concord Jazz/Starbucks Entertainment, 2007.
35. Fraser, D. *A certain respect for tradition: Mark Miller on jazz, selected writings 1980-2005*. Toronto: The Mercury Press, 2008.
36. Fraser, W. A. *Jazzology: A study of the tradition in which jazz musicians learn to improvise*. (unpublished thesis) University of Pennsylvania, 1983.
37. Galper, H. *Forward motion: From Bach to Bebop: A corrective approach to jazz phrasing*. IN:1st Books Library, 2003.
38. Gardiner, R. A. *Stylistic evolution of jazz saxophone performance as illustrated through selected improvisations by ten master improvisers*. University of South Carolina, 2009.
39. Gelly, D. *Masters of jazz saxophone: The story of the players and their music*. London: Backbeat Books, 2000.
40. Giddins, G. *Jazz*. NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009.
41. Gioia, T. *The History of Jazz*. London: Oxford University Press, 2011.
42. Goldstein, G. *Jazz composer's companion*. NY: Consolidated Music Publishers, 1981.
43. Gridley, M. C. *Jazz styles: History and analysis*. NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009.
44. Grigson, L. *Practical jazz: A step-by-step guide to harmony and improvisation*. London: Stainer & Bell, 1988.
45. Hamilton, S. *A tribute to duke* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1977.
46. Hamilton, S. *Scott Hamilton* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1977.
47. Hamilton, S. *Scott Hamilton, 2* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1978.
48. Hamilton, S. *Live at the 1977 Concord summer festival* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1978.
49. Hamilton, S. *Scott Hamilton and Warren Vaché with Scott's Band in New York City* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1978.
50. Hamilton, S. *The swinging young Scott* [CD]. NY: Famous Door, 1978.
51. Hamilton, S. *Back to back* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1979.
52. Hamilton, S. *The grand appearance* [CD]. Tifton, GA: Progressive Records, 1979.
53. Hamilton, S. *Skyscrapers* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1980.
54. Hamilton, S. *Tenorshoes*. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1980.
55. Hamilton, S. *Apples and oranges* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1981.
56. Hamilton, S. *In concert* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1984.
57. Hamilton, S. *The right time* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1987.
58. Hamilton, S. *European tour* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1988.
59. Hamilton, S. *Take 8* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1988.

60. Hamilton, S. *Groovin' high* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1992.
61. Hamilton, S. *East of the sun* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1993.
62. Hamilton, S. *Scott Hamilton with strings* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1993.
63. Hamilton, S. *After hours*. Concord , CA: Concord Jazz, 1997.
64. Hamilton, S. *The Red door*. Concord, CA: Concord Records, 1997.
65. Hamilton, S. *Blues, bop & ballads*. Concord, CA: Concord Records, 1999.
66. Hamilton, S. *Late night Christmas eve romantic sax with strings* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 2000.
67. Hamilton, S. *Jazz signatures* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Records, 2001.
68. Hamilton, S. *Live in London* [CD]. Beverly Hills, CA: Concord Records, 2003.
69. Hamilton, S. *From the beginning* [CD].. Concord, CA: Concord Records, 2002.
70. Hamilton, S. *Heavy juice* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Records, 2004.
71. Hamilton, S. *Back in New York* [CD].. Beverly Hills, CA: Concord Jazz, 2005.
72. Harris, G. *At Last* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1990.
73. Hachenberg, F. *The Mississippi Rag*, xviii(5), 1991.
74. Heen, C. L. *Procedures for style analysis of jazz: A beginning approach*. University of Miami, Florida, 1981.
75. Herman, W. *Woody Herman presents a great American evening* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1983.
76. Hester, M. L. *The Mississippi Rag*, xvii(5), 1990.
77. Hodgett, T. *Coda*, (no.236), 1991.
78. Hodson, R. *Interaction and improvisation: Group interplay in jazz performance*. (unpublished thesis: Ph.D.) University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2000.
79. Ingham, R. (Ed.). *The Cambridge companion to the saxophone*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
80. Isacoff, S. *Solos for jazz tenor sax*. NY: Carl Fischer, 1985.
81. Jazz [CD]: *The first 100 years*. NY: Sony, 2002.
82. Larson, Thomas E. *History and Tradition of Jazz*. Kendall Hunt Publishing, 2019.
83. Larson, T. *Modern sounds: The artistry of contemporary jazz*. IA: Kendal Hunt Publishing. 2011.
84. Levine, M. *The jazz theory book*. CA: Sher Music, 2005.
85. Liebman, D. *A chromatic approach to jazz harmony and melody*, 1991.
86. Ligon, B. *Jazz theory resources: Tonal, harmonic, melodic, & rhythmic organization of jazz*. TX:Houston Pub., 2001.
87. Marvin, E., & Hermann, R. *Concert Music, Rock, and Jazz Since 1945: Essays and Analytic Studies*. New York: University of Rochester Press, 2002.
88. McCorkle, S. *Sabia* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1990.

89. McKenna, D. *Double play* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Records, 2002.
90. Merod, J., & Hamilton, S. *Wait for the chord: An interview with Scott Hamilton*. *Boundary* 2,22(2), 207-234, 1995.
91. Morgenstern, Dan E. *Annual Review of Jazz Studies 10:1999 (Volume 10)*. Scarecrow Press, 2002.
92. Morton, Brian. *The Penguin Jazz Guide: The History of the Music in the 1001 Best Albums*. Penguin Books, 2010.
93. Nettles, B., & Graf, R. *The chord scale theory & jazz harmony*. Germany: Advance Music, 1997.
94. Nicholson, S. *Jazz: The 1980s resurgence*. NY: Da Capo Press, 1995.
95. Norvo, R. *Red in New York* [CD]. NY: Famous Door, 1977.
96. Porter, C. *Rosemary Clooney sings the music of Cole Porter* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1982.
97. Porter, L. *Lester Young*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2005.
98. Price, T. *Great tenor sax solos*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1995.
99. Schuller, G. *The swing era: The development of jazz, 1930-1945*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1989.
100. Segell, M. *The devil's horn: The story of the saxophone, from noisy novelty to king of cool*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.
101. Shipton, A. *A New History Of Jazz*. New York: Continuum, 2008.
102. Sullivan, M. *Uptown* [CD]. Concord, CA: Concord Jazz, 1985.
103. Vaché, W. *Jersey Jazz*, xii(7), 1984.
104. Vaché, W. *The Mississippi Rag*, xxi(5), 1994.
105. Webster, B., 1909-1973. In Alexander J. (Ed.), *Ben webster's greatest transcribed solos*. IN: Houston Publishing, distributed by Hal Leonard, 1995.
106. Werenchuk, G. *A Comparative Analysis of Improvised Solos Based on the Popular Songs "Body and Soul, Night and Day" and "out of Nowhere" as Performed by Selected Jazz Tenor Saxophonists Representing Different Styles*. University of Miami, Florida, 1999.
107. Wilber, B. Bob Wilber & the Scott Hamilton quartet. [CD]. NY: Chiaroscuro, 1977.
108. Witherspoon, J. *Spoon's blues* [CD]. Alberta: Stony Plain, 1995.
109. Yanow, S. *Swing*. CA: Backbeat Books. 2000.