

Thoughts on Dexter Gordon's solo on: "It's You or No One"

By Don Aliquo

Recorded May 6, 1961 on the Blue Note recording Doin' Allright BST-84077, Dexter Gordon's solo continues to be a personal inspiration! The first of seven great records he did for Blue Note the recording also features a 23 year old Freddie Hubbard.

Historically, Gordon can be looked upon as a combination of the huge, robust sound of Coleman Hawkins, the swing and sophistication of Lester Young and the harmonic ingenuity and wit of Charlie Parker. Certainly, Gordon's place in jazz history as one of the first bebop voices on the tenor and as a major soloist is secure.

Major Solo Characteristics

1. **FEEL:** As is true of all Dexter Gordon's playing, this solo swings ridiculously hard! In fact, at times it feels like the "train is about to go off the tracks" Notice how on top of the beat he plays!
2. **PHRASING/ARTICULATION:** Gordon's internal time and sense of swing can be further examined by looking at how he combines legato phrasing with well-placed accents. Measures 11-14 illustrate this well.
3. **TONE:** Gordon's huge, robust sound and at times raw tone quality are prevalent throughout and add intensity to the solo.
4. **MELODIC SEQUENCES:** The use of sequences and clever manipulation of melody at various pitch levels is common to Dexter Gordon's soloing. There are many examples in this solo including mm#3-4, #6-7, #19-20, #75-76.
5. **USE OF REPETITION:** Bebop and bop influenced artists frequently play repeated phrases in solos that help them realize the changes at fast tempos. These are also advantageous because they add unity to the overall solo. Examples include: mm#17, 22, mm# 31-44 and #63-66.
6. **CHARLIE PARKER:** Gordon plays many phrases that show the influence of Bird. Mm#31 of the solo was often used by Parker including his solo on "Moose the Mooche. The "double chromatic" passage in mm# 112 is used by Parker on his solo on "Ko Ko". (coming out of the bridge, first chorus)
7. **LONG MELODIC PHRASES:** The solo features Gordon's ability to play long, primarily eighth note driven lines that weave through the chord changes creatively, musically and melodically! Like his contemporaries of the bop tradition, he combines arpeggiated chord ideas with scale fragments. **Scales in thirds, bebop scales, pentatonic scales, and major scales are all present.** Find them!
8. **EXPRESSION/HUMOR :** His great sense of humor comes through in everything he plays. Check out the shake in mm#103, 104, his vibrato and other uses of expression.

