BLUES SCATITUDES

Vocal Improvisations on the Blues

Bob Stoloff

Cover design by Bill Lessner and Erin Klauk

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Introduction

Thank you for adding *Blues Scatitudes* to your music collection! In case you're wondering, the title was playfully created to represent a fusion of two important musicianship skills presented in this book: vocal improvisation (scat) and time feel interpretation (attitude). All serious musicians who are pursuing a career in voice should consider both skills essential to their training as performers. If you want to learn to improvise using your voice, *Blues Scatitudes* will demonstrate what notes and syllables to use and how to interpret them using easy-to-challenging blues solos with different time feels.

Beginning with Louis Armstrong, vocal improvisation was developed by a potpourri of both vocalists and instrumentalists. Today, the field of vocal improvisation is represented by four genres: solo a cappella, vocalese, free vocal improvisation and scat singing. Solo a cappella is limited to those with unusual vocal proficiency and is best exemplified by Bobby McFerrin. McFerrin is one of the few artists in the world who can manage a one-man show with no accompaniment! Vocalese refers to actual text assigned to the melodic pitches of a solo that often tells a story. There are many solo artists and groups who still use this technique including Jon Hendricks, Nneena Freelon, Kurt Elling, Manhattan Transfer and the New York Voices. Free vocal improvisation is unwritten, entirely spontaneous and unpremeditated. Best used as a learning tool for student Jazz vocal groups, this style is rarely performed live and is most successful when one singer initiates a repeated pattern (groove) which is then embellished with additional improvised motivic layers. The only group I know that performed this style of improvisation was Jazz Vocal Summit during the mid 80's. Finally, scat singing is the application of syllables that have no particular meaning to melodic pitches that are improvised. Despite stylistic differences all these types of vocal improvisation require the skillful articulation of notes with syllables.

Consider, for example, the contrasting styles of contemporary vocalists Bobby McFerrin, Al Jarreau, Jay Clayton and George Benson. Although their individual modes of expression differ, all four master improvisers learned how to "play" their voices like musical instruments without valves, strings, slides, bows or mallets! To articulate notes, whether in the Pop, Jazz, R&B or even classical idioms, each artist created his or her own vocabulary of vocal syllables.

Choosing syllables is entirely subjective but one can learn a lot by listening to the masters of scat beginning with Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. Armstrong, like many other "instruvocalists" who followed, unconsciously used scat syllables that emanated from his trumpet style. Other scat singers who may not have played a horn most likely had a particular musical instrument in mind when they improvised. Ella, for example, often used trombone-like hand motions while scatting "du-wah" type syllables. McFerrin, a former Juilliard pianist, is still the master of using his entire body to support his vocal antics on stage!

Blues Scatitudes is an excellent primer for scat singing, but keep in mind that the syllables I prescribe are derived from my own musical experiences as a multi-instrumentalist who learned how to articulate rhythms and scales with sticks, valves and keys! I also listened to a lot of Ella's work, idolized Jon Hendricks and Dave Lambert for many years and had the opportunity to work with McFerrin for a minute in the group, Jazz Vocal Summit.

I want to emphasize the importance of spontaneous improvisation and encourage students not to think too much about what syllables to use. *Blues Scatitudes* purposely uses an instrumental approach to articulation, as I have discovered that well-constructed syllable combinations are the stepping-stones toward creating one's own vocabulary. Use the written syllables in this book as a learning tool but don't be afraid to invent your own! And if you ever think your syllables are boring check out the simplicity of Chet Baker's scat!

While Jazz is still the choice idiom for many aspiring scat singers, it is important that career-minded musicians consider a palette of contemporary musical styles for their vocal improvisations. This might include Pop, Rock, R&B, Gospel, Country, Bluegrass, Hip Hop, Ska, Folk, Cajun, Latin and the list goes on! True, scat singing originated from Jazz but it

can also be performed in any style by simply interpreting the beat with a "straight" or "swing" feel. In fact, all contemporary music styles fall into only three categories of beat subdivision: straight 8th (or 16th), swing 8th (or 16th) and 12/8 (or triplet feel).

Straight or "even" feel indicates that 8th notes should be interpreted exactly as written. Swing feel indicates that a group of two 8th notes should be performed as follows:

12/8 can be written as such or "with a 12/8 feel" can be indicated in common (4/4) time as a triplet groove for the rhythm section. The word "feel" means "interpreted as" or "sounds like." It's really a shorthand way to write rhythms without all the little 3's above the notes. Indicating straight and swing beat subdivisions is essential when writing rhythm section parts. Rhythm players need to know what patterns to play in order to establish the "groove" or "time-feel" of a song. For these musicians the most important consideration in selecting a drum beat, bass line or piano/guitar comping pattern is how the quarter note is interpreted. That's why the best rhythm parts indicate style, tempo and feel. Here are some good examples of clear groove indications for rhythm section:

Pop: medium straight 8th

Rock ballad: straight 16th feel

Slow R&B: swing 16ths

Bright Jazz: swing 8th shuffle

50's Rock ballad: 12/8 feel

Style indications are helpful but sometimes confusing when you consider hybrid grooves like

Pop-Rock, Jazz-Funk or Country-Swing. It is best to further identify the style with a particular decade and artist if possible.

The groove can also be altered by changing the back-beat or harmonic rhythm. Both can be accomplished without rewriting a single note on the page! Half-time feel, for example, means rhythm players should continue reading the chord changes at the same rate of speed but play slower groove patterns to create the effect of playing at half the tempo. In most contemporary grooves the back-beat is played by the snare drum on beats 2 and 4 in one measure of common time (a normal back-beat cycle consists of 2 snare hits). In halftime feel, however, the snare hits occur only on beat 3 of each measure so it takes 2 measures to complete the back-beat cycle! On the other hand, half-time means the harmonic rhythm is cut in half while comping patterns are reduced so that the whole song, including the groove, harmonic rhythm and melody, is performed exactly half as fast as the original tempo.

There are other indications in Scatitudes that change the groove including stop-time, brokentime, 2-beat feel, walking and shuffle feel. The rhythm section players choose appropriate accompaniment patterns to create each feel. To avoid confusion, all of these time feel descriptions are listed on a separate page preceding the lead sheet. There are two recorded versions of each scatitude which employ a different sequence of time feels. The purpose of including these groove variations is to provide alternate solo interpretations for each song. The rhythm section accompaniment is MP-3 formatted in order to include a variety of versions of each blues including vocal melody (sung by myself and Christy Bluhm), instrumental melody and accompaniment without melody. All tracks are in the key of C because of range considerations, but you can easily transpose to any key of choice by using a sound processor such as Sony Superscope.

> Bob Stoloff Boston, 2003

Musical Terms

back-beat accented snare or kick drum beats on 2 and 4 in 1 measure of 4/4 time. In half time feel beat 3 is accented only.

broken-time an approach to playing a time feel where the rhythm section implies the pulse and feel without directly stating it by using comping patterns that are "broken up" and sometimes rhythmically ambiguous. There is a steady underlying pulse. Broken time is common in contemporary Jazz styles but can also be found in the R&B and Rock idioms.

count-off meter, tempo and beat subdivision that rhythmically set up tune one or two measures "outside" the tune (before the actual form of the song begins).

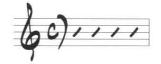
double-time feel a variation of the original time feel. The harmonic rhythm stays the same but the rhythm section creates the effect of sounding twice as fast by playing a 2-bar comping pattern over 1 measure of time.

half-time feel a variation of the original time feel in which the harmonic rhythm stays the same but the rhythm section creates the effect of sounding half as fast by stretching a 1-bar comping pattern over 2 measures of time. In Pop and Latin feels, the most significant change is implemented by the drummer who switches the emphasis from

a strong back-beat (2 and 4) to one back-beat on beat 3 of every measure.

stop-time rhythmic figures that interrupt the groove while the harmonic rhythm continues. Rhythm players suspend their patterns when playing stop-time figures written inside or above the measure.

time slashes representations of beats of time according to the time signature. 4/4 time would have 4 slashes; 3/4 time, 3 slashes, while 6/8 would have 6 slashes.



2-beat feel written in 4/4 time but interpreted with swing eighth notes (triplet feel). 2-beat feel is used to describe Jazz and Country-Swing styles only. Bass plays mostly half notes with strong triplet embellishments, ride cymbal pattern is a more abbreviated triplet pattern and piano uses light triplet comping with a lot of stylistic accents.

walking used mostly in Jazz and Country-Swing styles. The bass plays embellished quarter notes, drummers use a typical swing pattern on the ride cymbal and pianists intensify their comping with a more excited triplet feel using stylistic accents.

Scat Syllables

While spontaneous syllables are ultimately best for scat singing there are specific musical elements to consider for those in training who are trying to develop a scat vocabulary. The first and most important consideration for syllables is the use of vowels. My suggestion is to start with short "a" as in "tuba," long "e" as in "me" and long "u" as in "flute." To articulate these vowels use consonants B, D, W and Y. For melodic scat where there is a sequence of different notes I recommend placing a's and u's on the lower notes and e's on the higher pitches. Also useful are long "a" (pronounced "aye") and long "o" (pronounced "oh") especially on sustained pitches. I added an "h" after vowel "o" (e.g., boh and doh) to avoid any confusion with the short vowel pronunciation. To represent the "oo" vowel I decided to use vowel "u" as in syllable "du." Similarly, I added the letter "y" to vowel "a" (e.g., "way") to make sure it is not pronounced with the short "ah" sound.

The short quarter note is pronounced with the written vowel but rhythmically reduced to about an 8th note duration. It is similar to staccato but a bit longer and marked with a small upside-down "v." Vocally this is achieved by lifting the tongue to the roof of the mouth or closing the throat. I used to spell these notes with a "t" or "p" ending (e.g., "bop" or "dut") but my students would pronounce the extra consonant as an additional rhythm making the quarter sound like two 8th notes!

Two scat syllables I like to use are "dn" and "dl." Both are unaccented and do not contain a specific vowel. "Dn" is pronounced with an almost silent "d" and more of the "n" sound. This syllable works best with rhythmic figures in slow to medium tempos. "Dl" also leans more on the "l" and is perfect for fast scat lines. Another favorite of mine is the syllable "dwe."

SYLLABLE ARTICULATION EXERCISES





INTRODUCING 8TH NOTES WITH ACCENTS





INTRODUCING SYLLABLE "ON"





INTRODUCING SYLLABLE "YA"





12-BAR EXERCISES



INTEODUCING THE DOTTED QUARTER NOTE















Using Accents in 8th, Triplet and 16th Figures

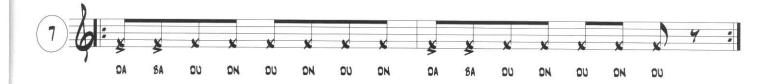
One of my best decisions as a student of music many years ago was studying the drums. From etude books, particularly Ted Reed's *Syncopation for the Modern Drummer*, I learned how to effectively use accents with a variety of rhythmic figures including 8ths, triplets and 16ths. With the addition of ties, I extended my rhythmic vocabulary with hundreds of permutations of syncopated patterns. Internalizing rhythmic

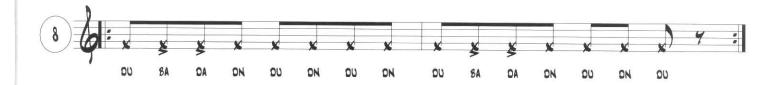
patterns is essential for creating interesting scat solos, since rhythmic variety is often a vocalist's weakest skill.

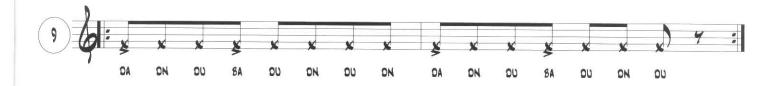
The following exercises are non-pitched rhythmic patterns using 8th, triplet and 16th figures with added accents and ties. You can practice to a metronome or over any of the rhythm section tracks on the CD's without worrying about pitch!

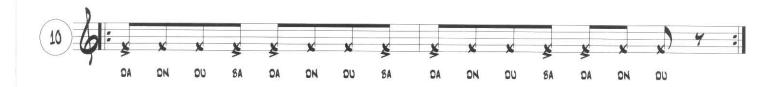
EIGHTH AND TRIPLET FIGURES WITH ACCENTS

SWING OR EVEN 8THS (REPEAT AS NEEDED) (BREATH) טט OU DN ON 20 20 טט DN OU טם 00 NO 20 20 טט DN ٥٥ 00 ON טט BA טם BA 20 NC ٥٥ ٥٥ BA 00 DN DN 00









SWING TEIPLETS







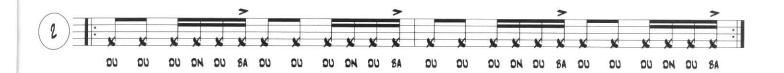




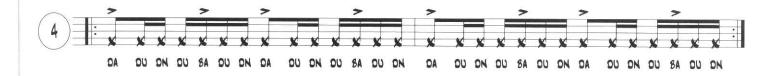
16TH NOTE FIGURES WITH ACCENTS AND TIES

(SWING OF STEAIGHT 16TH)







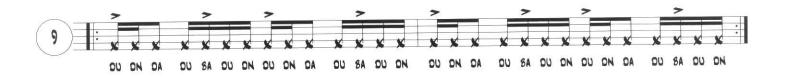


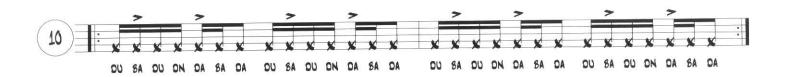




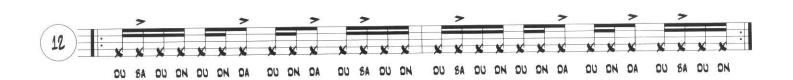


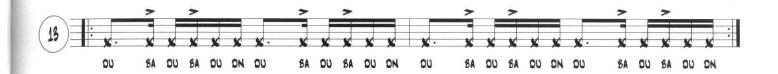




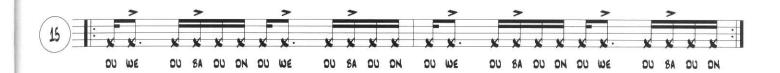




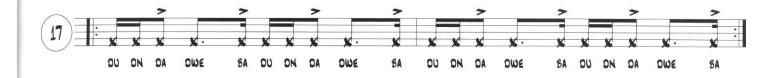




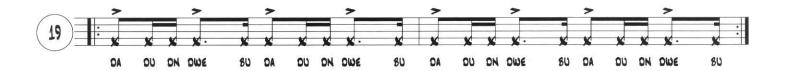


















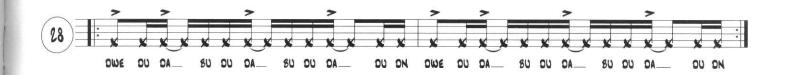




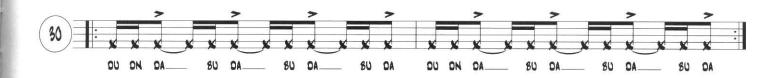














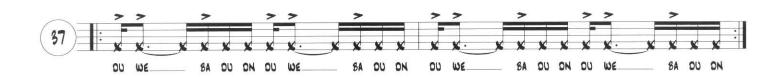






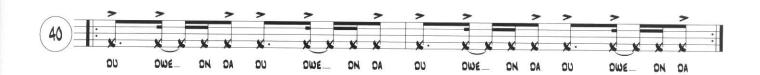


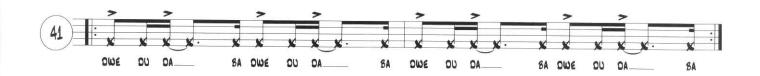


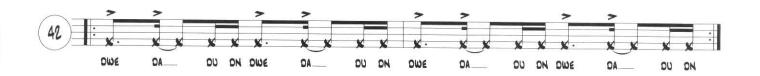




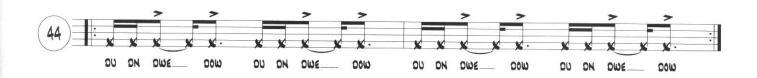














Major and Pentatonic Scales

While you are working on your rhythmic patterns it is important to begin applying melodic pitches derived from specific scales. I recommend three essential scales for novice scat singers who want to learn how to improvise over blues changes: major (*do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do*), pentatonic (*do-re-mi-sol-la*) and, of course, the blues scale covered in Chapter 4.

MAJOR AND PENTATONIC SCALES

MAJOR SCALE EXERCISES





DU SA DU ON DWE SA DU ON DE A DU ON DWE SA DU ON DU SA DU ON DWE SA DU ON DE A DU ON DWE SA DOW





DU WE DU WE DU WE DE YA DE YA DE YA DE YA DE YA DU WE DU DN DU WE DU DN DE YA DA DN DE YA DU DN DOW







DU WE DU WE DU WE DU WE DU WE DU WE DOW DE YA DE WE DOW













PENTATONIC SCALE EXERCISES







DU WE DA SA DE YA DA SA DU WE DA SA DE YA DA SA DU WE DA SA DU WE DU DN DU WE DU DN DOW



DE YA DU ON DU WE DA BA DE YA DU ON DU WE DA BA DE YA DU ON DE YA DA BA DU WE DU ON DOW



DU WE DA SA DE YA DU DN DE YA DU DN DU WE DA SA DE YA DU DN DE YA DU DN DE YA DU DN DOW



DE YA DU DN DU WE DA SA DU WE DA SA DE YA DU DN DU WE DA SA DU WE DA SA DE YA DU DN DOW

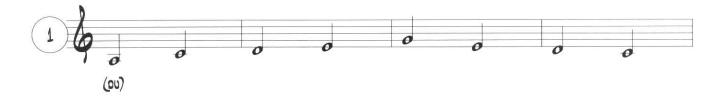


DU WE DA SA DE YA DU DN DE YA DU DN DE YA DU DN DE YA DU DN DE YA DU DN



DU WE DA SA DU WE DA SA DE YA DU DN DE YA DU DN DU WE DA SA DE YA DU DN DOW

MINOR PENTATONIC







DU WE DU ON DE YA DU ON DE YA DU ON DE YA DU ON DU WE DU ON DU WE DU ON DU WE DU ON DOW

16-BAR PENTATONIC EXERCISES

EVEN 8TH FEEL (OVER C MAS OR A MIN)









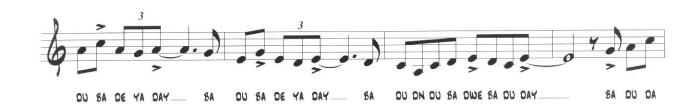
swing 8th feel

(OVER C MAS OR A MIN)



DU WE YA DU DN DAY 8A DU DN DU WE DAY ___ 8A DU DN DU 8A DA DWE 8A DU DAY ___

BA







DWE DU WE YA DU DA BA DWE DU WE YA DU DA BA DE YA DU DN DWE YA DU WE YA DA DU DAY

The Blues Scale

The blues scale (*do-me-fa-fi-sol-te*) is a versatile scale for improvisation because it is easy to learn, sounds "cool" and will work over chord progressions other than standard blues. Practice the following blues scale exercises to any of the enclosed CD tracks.

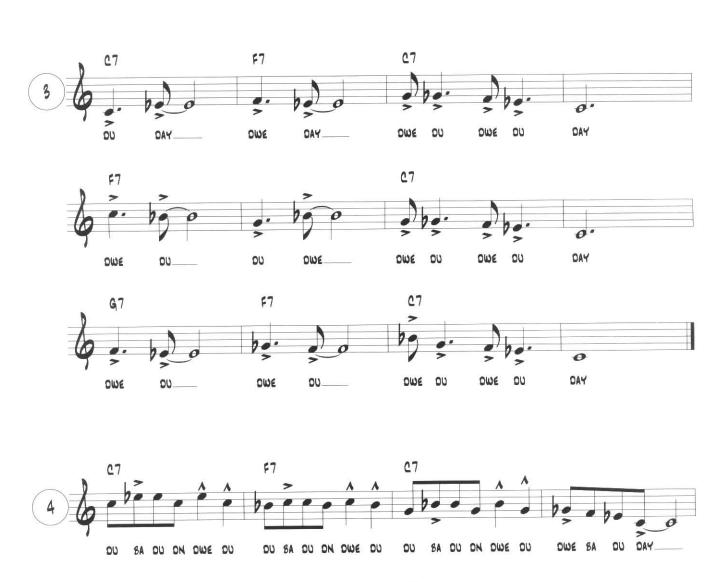
BLUES SCALE EXERCISES



12-BAR BLUES EXERCISES



















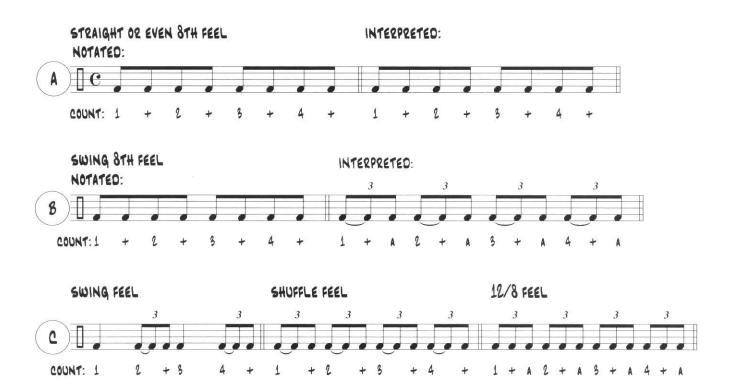


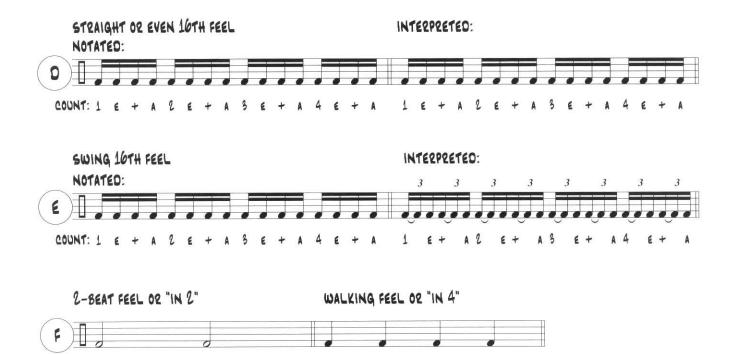




Blues Scatitudes

The following solos were written to standard blues chord progressions and are complete with syllables, accents and articulations. The background rhythm section tracks provide a variety of grooves including Jazz, Latin, Rock, R&B, Funk, Cajun and Reggae styles. In addition there are contemporary time feels added to each solo including straight (even), swing, shuffle, half-time, double-time, 2-beat, walking and stop-time. Read the definitions of these terms to get a clear understanding of how these subtle changes affect the music.





Blues For The Bean

(Tracks 1-6)

Version A

JAZZ SWING

track 1 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)

track 2 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 3 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th with two-beat feel at letter A walking feel at letter B shuffle feel at letter C

Version B

R&B

track 4 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)

track 5 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 6 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th with half-time feel stop-time at letter C (4 bars only)

BLUES FOR THE BEAN

(TRACKS 1-6)







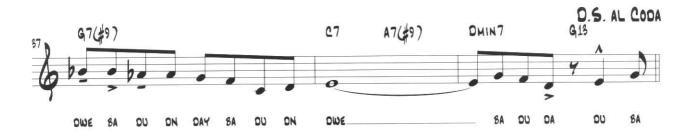
















Blues For Bootz

(Tracks 7-12)

Version A

JAZZ SWING

track 7 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)track 8 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 9 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th with two-beat feel at letter A walking feel on intro and letter B shuffle feel at letter C and coda

Version B

REGGAE

track 10 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)track 11 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 12 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th with half-time feel

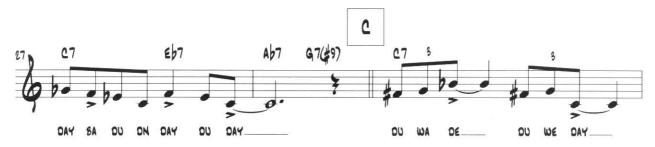
BLUES FOR BOOTZ

(TRACKS 7-12)





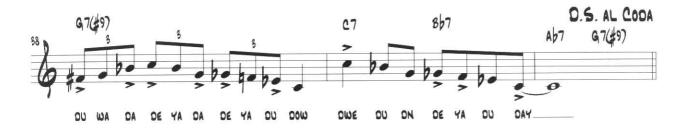


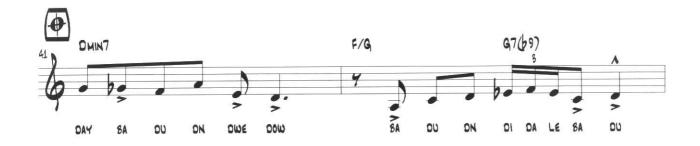




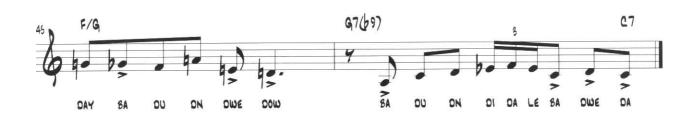












Blues For Mr. Hardy

(Tracks 13-18)

Version A

JAZZ SWING

track 13 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)track 14 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 15 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th with walking feel at letter A shuffle feel at letter B stop-time at letter C (4 bars only)

Version B R&B

track 16 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)track 17 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 18 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th with half-time feel stop-time at letter D

BLUES FOR MR. HARDY

(TRACKS 13-18)









SWE SA DU SA DAY YA DU SE DU DN DU DN DWE SA DAY DI DI LA DU WE DU DN DWE SA DU DN DU WAY



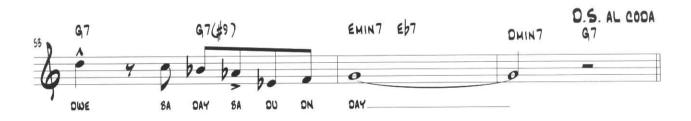


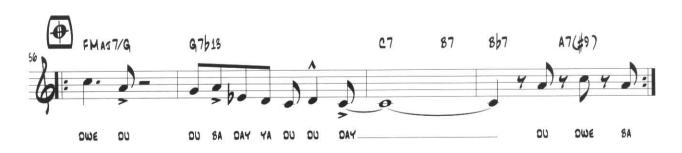














Lord Paddington Blues

(Tracks 19-24)

Version A

JAZZ SWING

track 19 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)track 20 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 21 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th broken-time feel at letter A walking feel at letter B

Version B

Rock

track 22 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)track 23 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 24 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th shuffle feel half-time feel at letter D

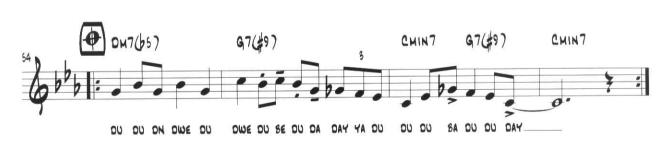
LORD PADDINGTON BLUES

(TRACKS 19-24)











Columbo Blues

(Tracks 25-30)

Version A

MEDIUM JAZZ SWING

track 25 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)track 26 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 27 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th with 2 beat feel at letter A stop-time at letter C (4 bars only) walking feel at letter C-35

Version B

SLOW JAZZ SWING

track 28 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)track 29 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 30 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th ballad feel stop-time at letter D (4 bars only)

COLUMBO BLUES

(TRACKS 25-30)







Blues For Kramer

(Tracks 31-39)

Version A

R&B STRAIGHT FUNK

track 31 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)track 32 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 33 rhythm section only without melody

straight (even) 16th feel

Version B

R&B SWING FUNK or "SWUNK" track 34 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob) track 35 rhythm section with instrumental melody track 36 rhythm section only without melody

swing 16th feel

Version C

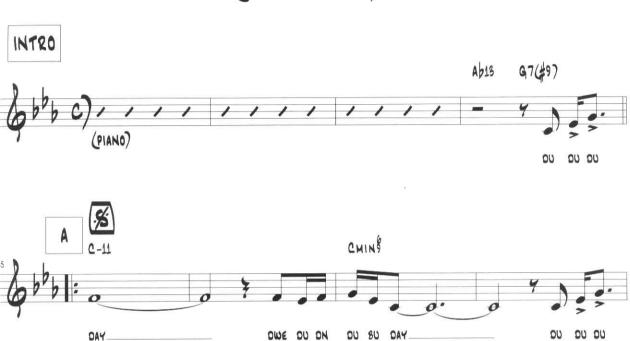
LATIN SAMBA

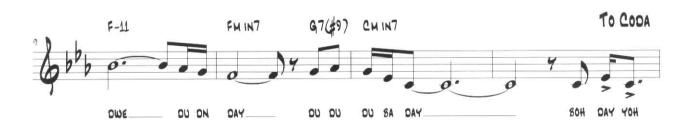
track 37 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)track 38 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 39 rhythm section only without melody

straight (even) 16ths with double-time feel

BLUES FOR KRAMER

(TRACKS 31-39)









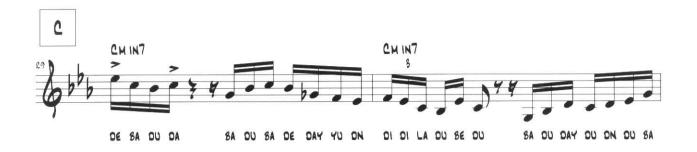










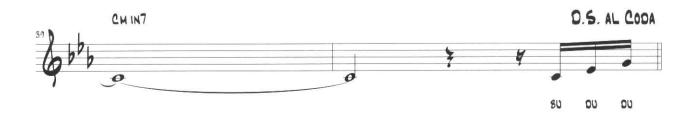


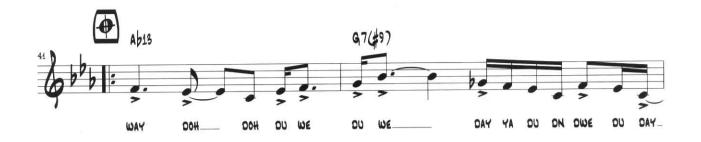


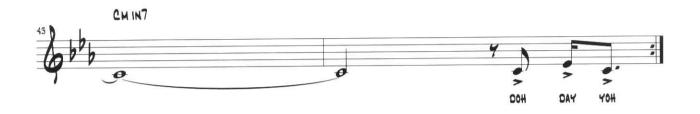


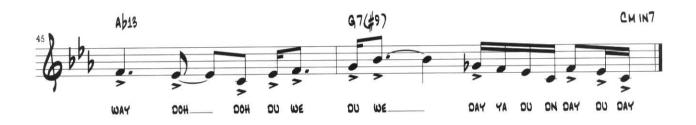












Blues For Mr. Mason

(Tracks 40-45)

Version A

Cajun

track 40 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)track 41 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 42 rhythm section only without melody

straight (even) 8th feel

Version B

Rock

track 43 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)track 44 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 45 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th shuffle feel half-time feel at letter C (m. 31)

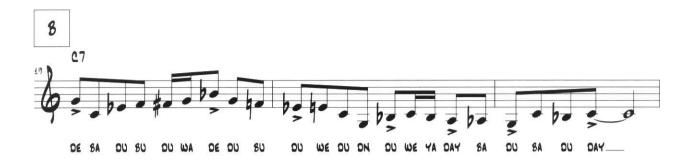
BLUES FOR MR. MASON

(TRACKS 40-45)

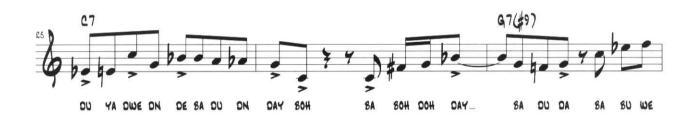


DWE

200



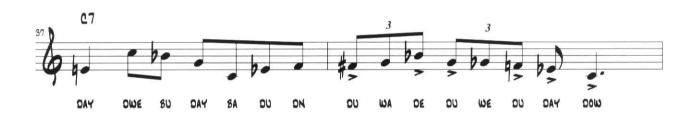


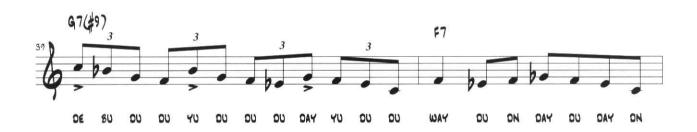


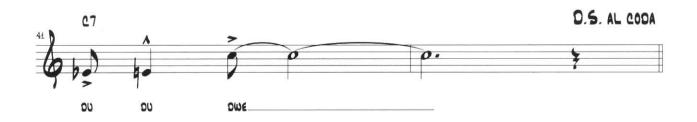




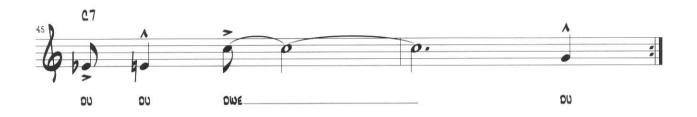
















Blues For Mon Ami

(Tracks 46-51)

Version A

Cajun

track 46 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)track 47 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 48 rhythm section only without melody

straight (even) 8th feel

Version B

Rock and Reggae

track 49 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)track 50 rhythm section with instrumental melodytrack 51 rhythm section only without melody

swing 8th Rock shuffle feel half-time Reggae feel at letter B-17 original Rock shuffle feel at letter C-29

BLUES FOR MON AMI

(TRACKS 46-51)





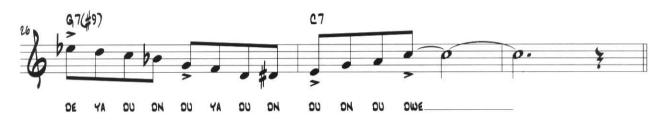
























What's on the CD

I. Blues For The Bean (TRACKS 1-6)

Version A: Jazz Swing

track 1 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)

track 2 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 3 rhythm section only without melody

Version B: R&B

track 4 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)

track 5 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 6 rhythm section only without melody

II. Blues For Bootz (Tracks 7-12)

Version A: Jazz Swing

track 7 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)

track 8 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 9 rhythm section only without melody

Version B: Reggae

track 10 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)

track 11 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 12 rhythm section only without melody

III. Blues For Mr. Hardy (TRACKS 13-18)

Version A: Jazz Swing

track 13 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)

track 14 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 15 rhythm section only without melody

Version B: R&B

track 16 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)

track 17 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 18 rhythm section only without melody

IV. Lord Paddington Blues (Tracks 19-24)

Version A: Jazz Swing

- track 19 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)
- track 20 rhythm section with instrumental melody
- track 21 rhythm section only without melody

Version B: Rock

- track 22 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)
- track 23 rhythm section with instrumental melody
- track 24 rhythm section only without melody

V. Columbo Blues (Tracks 25-30)

Version A: Medium Jazz Swing

- track 25 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)
- track 26 rhythm section with instrumental melody
- track 27 rhythm section only without melody

Version B: Slow Jazz Swing

- track 28 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)
- track 29 rhythm section with instrumental melody
- track 30 rhythm section only without melody

VI. Blues For Kramer (TRACKS 31-39)

Version A: R&B Straight Funk

- track 31 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)
- track 32 rhythm section with instrumental melody
- track 33 rhythm section only without melody

Version B: R&B Swing Funk or "Swunk"

- track 34 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)
- track 35 rhythm section with instrumental melody
- track 36 rhythm section only without melody

Version C: Latin Samba

- track 37 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)
- track 38 rhythm section with instrumental melody
- track 39 rhythm section only without melody

VII. Blues For Mr. Mason (Tracks 40-45)

Version A: Cajun

track 40 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)

track 41 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 42 rhythm section only without melody

Version B: Rock

track 43 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)

track 44 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 45 rhythm section only without melody

VIII. Blues For Mon Ami (Tracks 46-51)

Version A: Cajun

track 46 rhythm section with vocal melody (Bob)

track 47 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 48 rhythm section only without melody

Version B: Rock and Reggae

track 49 rhythm section with vocal melody (Christy)

track 50 rhythm section with instrumental melody

track 51 rhythm section only without melody

Bob Stoloff: vocals and drums

Christy Bluhm: vocals

Brad Hatfield: keyboards and keyboard arrangements

Recorded at Brad Hatfield Productions, Westwood, MA Vocals, drums and final mixes recorded by Peter Kontrimas at PBS, Westwood, MA MP-3 files prepared by Sean Kelly