

Groove and Blues in Jazz



by Michael Erlewine

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INTRODUCTION

This is not intended to be a finely produced book, but rather a readable document for those who are interested in my particular take on dharma training and a few other topics. These blogs were from the Fall of 2019 posted on Facebook.

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GROOVE AND BLUES IN JAZZ

Music is good for the soul. It is one of the best medicines that I know of and the better the music, the better I feel. Hearing the good stuff makes all the difference. And that is what this article is all about -- how to locate the best blues music. Blues is so radical -- such a root music -- that it fuses with and gives rise to other music genres with ease. Jazz critics point out that the roots of jazz can be found in the blues. This article is about where in jazz blues lovers can hear and feel those roots -- the blues in jazz.

A little background on where I am coming from: I have been a blues and jazz lover for over fifty years. In the late 1950s and very early 1960s there was a strong jazz scene in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where I grew up.

This was before liquor by the glass became legal in 1963, after which a lot of the jazz scene moved into the clubs. Most any night of the week, but in particular on weekends, there was live jazz played in houses and apartments. Teenagers like myself were tolerated and we hung out. Players like Bob James, Ron Brooks, Bob Pozar, and Bob Detwiler were playing straight-up bop and exploring some cool jazz. The music and the parties often went on all night. On occasion, I heard Cannonball Adderley and others play in one of the many Detroit clubs like the Minor Key. Jazz records were big too. I can remember staying up all night listening to John Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" album over and over when it first came out. This was about 1960.

I fell in with the folk scene in the early 1960s and managed to hitch-hike all over the country several times. A fantastic guitarist by the name of Perry Lederman, a young singer/songwriter by the name of Bob Dylan, and I hitched together for a stretch. Later I helped to put on the first Bob Dylan concert in Ann Arbor. During that time, I hung out with the New Lost City Ramblers, Ramblin' Jack Elliot, the Country Gentlemen, Joan Baez, and some other great folk artists that you may never have heard of.

It was in those years that I got introduced to blues and gospel music. The Swan Silvertones, an a capella gospel group of infinite beauty had an enormous effect on me in 1964 when I first heard their records. I had also been listening to classical music for a number of years, but had no real guidance. I spent all of 1964 listening to and learning in depth about classical music from a real expert. Then in 1965 I helped to form a band called the Prime Movers.

Although we never recorded much (one album is now out), we were no slouch. Iggy Pop was our drummer, avant-garde composer "Blue" Gene Tyranny our keyboardist, music-columnist Dan Erlewine played lead Guitar, Jack Dawson (later in the Siegel-Schwall Blues Band) on bass, and I sang and played amplified harmonica.

Sometime in 1965 we heard the Paul Butterfield Blues Band live. That changed my life. We got to know those guys and they introduced us to all of the blues we had not yet found on for ourselves. We became, in an instant, the Prime Movers Blues Band. That was a time.

The net effect of all of this was that, during the 1960s, I listened to blues records day and night trying to learn to play the licks. And I just loved the music. In the mid-1960s, thanks to Bob Koester of Delmark Records, I heard players like Little Walter, Magic Sam, Junior Wells, Howlin' Wolf and many others live in the Chicago clubs. Later, working with various blues and jazz festivals, I had the good fortune to interview (audio and video) just about any blues player you could name (scores of them) that was around back then, and most of them still were.

This article is about blues in jazz, and I am getting to that. My first love is the blues and it took me some time to get much into jazz. At first, about the only way I could hear jazz was through a blues filter, so any jazz I got into had to have those blues elements. Now that I know my way around the jazz catalog, I know that it contains some real treasures for blues lovers. Yet, don't expect the standard 12-bar blues progression.

Blue notes are found in jazz, but seldom in the form we are used to in blues recordings. It is the blues as a feeling, the soul-full experience of the blues and gospel elements that can be found in jazz. So, I am writing this for blues lovers who may want to explore jazz through the same blues doorway I went through.

The jazz I love is the blues in jazz, whether that means bluesy jazz, funky jazz, original funk, soul jazz -- terms which I will explain in due course. I tend not to like (very much) jazz that does not have some kind of blues or modal element in it. Swing and bop, to the degree that they lack the roots sound of blues and

gospel, fail to hold my attention. I like my jazz with blues, please.

Something I realized some time ago is that jazz (and most kinds of music) are either energizing or calming in their overall effect. If you are the kind of person who needs something to get you moving (to energize you), then you will be attracted to music that is agitating and energizing like: marches, Dixieland, bop, free jazz, and other forms of progressive jazz. It appeals to those who need that cup of coffee in life -- get a move on! It stirs you up.

However, if you are a person (like me) who tends to be very active and sometimes even hyper, then you need music to relax and calm you like blues, original funk, soul jazz -- groove music. It helps to get me in a soothing groove that dissipates energy -- relief!

Regardless of the fact that as a person we may (in general) be drawn to music that either stimulates or calms us, at times all of us may need some pick-me-up music and at other times some slow-me-down stuff.

You will find that the above (admittedly simplistic) concept works very well. Blues and the blues that is in jazz (for the most part) has to do with the release and expression of feelings. The effect is calming to the system. It is "get down" and relaxin' music. Here is a brief tour of the bluesy stuff in jazz.

AN ABBREVIATED HISTORY OF BLUES IN JAZZ

This is an abbreviated history because I want to just skip over the standard playing-the-blues-progression in jazz stuff. There is not much of it anyway. If you like blues, you already know that by now. So here, we will also pass on all of the old-time blues found in traditional jazz -- the early New Orleans jazz. There is plenty of great old blues and blues-like music to hear there and you will want to hear it someday. But, it is just too much like the blues that we already know.

The same goes for what few blues tunes came out of the swing and big-band era. You don't need a guide to check swing-blues tunes out because there are not that many of them. When you can find them, they are pretty much straight-ahead blues songs or tunes played with a big band. Further, the arranged feeling of the big band is not up to the impromptu kind of blues feeling you may be used to, so let's pass on that too.

When I speak of blues in jazz, I mean some get-down funky blues sounds in the jazz that you have not heard before, so let's just get to that. If this history stuff bores you, skip over it and just read the recommended albums list. Start finding and listening to some of the picks. As mentioned, we will pass over the earlier forms of jazz including the New Orleans varieties, Dixieland, and swing. However, since a lot of the bluesy jazz that may interest you grew out of bop (bebop), you will need to know what bop is and how this music style came to be. We will start there.

BOP (BEBOP)

Bop distinguished itself from the popular big-band swing music out of which it emerged by that fact that it is most often played in small groups. You can hear each of the players as separate sounds. And while swing can have a groove that soothes you, bop is wake-me-up music. It's faster tempos, more elaborate melodies, and complex harmonies do not tend to establish a groove. It is more frenetic, even frantic, than swing. In other words, this is not relaxin' music. Bop has an attitude.

Unlike the large swing bands, where there were a few featured soloists, most members of the small combo could and did solo -- democratically. In addition to an increase in improvisation and solo virtuosity, there was little dependence on arrangements. And fast tempos too. Bop is more energetic (read agitating) than swing, with the rhythm section keeping the time on the ride cymbal. Bop tunes can be very fast, often with elaborate harmonies and complex chord changes that take an expert player to negotiate. In fact, fluency in bop became the benchmark of the young jazz musician. Bop is a sophisticated music that can be, for many, somewhat of an acquired taste. In this respect it resembles classical music. Here are some bop artists and a sample album of them at their best:

BOP ORIGINATORS:

Charlie Parker (just about any album; the box sets are the best)

Dizzy Gillespie, "Dizziest"/Bluebird

Thelonious Monk, "Thelonious with John Coltrane"/OJC

Bud Powell, "Genius of Powell Vol. 1"/Polygram
Dexter Gordon, "Our Man in Paris"/Blue Note
Miles Davis, "First Miles"/Savoy

Fats Navarro, "The Fabulous Fats Navarro, Vol 1-2"/Blue Note

Sonny Stitt, "Constellation"/Muse

J.J Johnson, "The Emminent Jay Jay Johnson Vol 1"/Blue Note

Max Roach, "Freedom Now Suite"/Columbia
Lucky Thompson, "Lucky Strikes!"/Prestige
Tad Dameron, "Mating Call"/Prestige

1950s Bop Players:

Sonny Rollins, "Newk's Time"/Blue Note
Jackie McLean, "Let Freedom Ring"/Blue Note
Oscar Peterson, "The Trio"/Pablo

Clifford Brown, "Brownie"/Emarcy

Phil Woods, "Pairin Off"/Prestige
Kenny Dorham, "Una Mas"/Blue Note
Barry Harris, "Live in Tokyo"/Xanadu
Tommy Flanagan, "Thlonica"/Enja

1970-1980s BOP REVIVAL:

Richie Cole, "New York Afternoon-Alto
Madness"/Muse

Chris Hollyday, "Ho, Brother"/Jazzbeat Blues in Bop:

Thelonious Monk, "The Thelonious Monk
Trio"/Prestige

Miles Davis & Milt Jackson, "Bag's Groove"/Prestige
Miles Davis, "Walkin'"/Prestige

Horace Silver, "Senor Blues"/Blue Note

HARD BOP

Hard bop was a reaction to the somewhat brittle and intellectual nature of straight bop. Hard bop distinguished itself from bop by its simple melodies, slower tempos, and avoidance of the (by then) cliched bop chord-changes. The constant up-tempo frenetic quality of bop pieces is absent. Tunes are often in the minor mode, much slower paced, and often moody -- more feeling and thoughtful. Hard bop reaches into the blues and gospel tradition for substance to slow the up-tempo bop music down, stretch the time out, and imbue the music with more feeling. It was as if jazz had once again found its roots and was nourished. The public thought so too, because it was more approachable than bop. Hard bop is one big step toward establishing a groove, but it lacks what has come to be known as a groove, as in "groove" music. Blues lovers will appreciate the more bluesy

nature of hard bop, but probably still yearn for more blues yet.

HARD BOP PIONEERS

Horace Silver, "Pieces of Silver"/Blue Note

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, "Moanin"/Blue Note

Cannonball Adderley Quintet, "Quintet at the Lighthouse"/Landmark

Nat Adderley, "Work Song"/Riverside Art Farmer, "Meet the Jazztet"/Chess Crusaders, "Freedom Sounds"/Atlantic Lou Donaldson, "Blues Walk"/Blue Note

Kenny Dorham, "Trumpet Toccata"/Blue Note Donald Byrd, "House of Byrd"/Prestige Coltrane-Influenced Hard Bop:

Wayne Shorter, "Native Dancer"/Columbia Freddie Hubbard, "Hub-Tones"/Blue Note McCoy Tyner, "Sahara"/Milestone

Herbie Hancock, "Maiden Voyage"/Blue Note Joe Henderson, "Page One"/Blue Note

Weather Report (Joe Zawinul), "Mysterious Traveler"/Columbia

MAINSTREAM HARD BOP

Sonny Rollins, "Saxophone Colossus and More/OJC

John Coltrane, "Blue Trane"/Blue Note Wynton Kelly,
"Kelly Blue"/Riverside

Clifford Jordan, "Glass Bead Game"/Strata-East
Booker Ervin, "The Book Cooks"/Affinity

George Coleman, "Amsterdam After Dark"/Timeless
Charlie Rouse, "Two Is One"/Strata-East

Harold Land, "The Fox"/Contemporary Blue Mitchell,
"The Thing to Do"/Blue Note Kenny Dorham, "Afro-
Cuban"/Blue Note Oliver Nelson, "Soul
Battle"/Prestige

Hank Mobley, "Soul Station"/Blue Note

Wes Montgomery, "Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes
Montgomery"/Riverside

FUNKY JAZZ

Some hard-bop players like pianist Horace Silver began to include even more feeling in their playing by adding blues riffs and various elements from gospel music to their playing. Silver, considered by many to be the father of funk, describes funk: "Funky means earthy, blues-based. It may not be blues itself, but it has that down-home feel to it. Playing funky has nothing to do with style; it's an approach to playing... "Soul" is the same basically, but there's an added

dimension of feeling and spirit to soul -- an in-depthness. A soulful player might be funky or he might not be.”

The hard bop jazz that they were playing became in Silver’s hands still more earthy, bluesy or, as it was called, “funky”. This was jazz, but with a funky flavor.

It is quite easy to distinguish this funky jazz from the all-out jazz funk described below. I really like funky jazz because it sometimes has a groove, but I love jazz funk better because in that music there is a total groove.

Horace Silver, “Song for My Father”/Blue Note

Cannonball Adderley “Somethin’ Else”/Blue Note

Nat Adderley “Work Song”/Riverside

Bobby Timmons, “Moanin”/Milestone

THE BLUES GROOVE - GROOVE MUSIC

The whole thing about groove music is that everything exists to establish and maintain the groove. Solos, egos, instruments -- what have you -- only exist to lay down the groove and to get in it. There is a steady constant beat that can become drone-like or trance-like. You get in a groove and you stay in the groove and that feels good. There are no absolute rules about what makes groove music. Anything can happen as long as the effect is to put you in and keep you in the groove. It often has a Hammond organ in

the sound, but not always. It can have any number of instruments doing all kinds of solos and what-not, as long as these things don't break the groove.

Everything exists to create and maintain the groove. Blues lovers tend to like groove music because the blues is nothing but a groove.

Groove music can be up-tempo or slow, bright or dark, but the net effect of getting in a groove is always to satisfy and relax. There is always a constant rhythm section driving the groove, invariably danceable. Grooves always have a funky, earthy flavor, and blues and gospel elements are essential.

All grooves are bluesy, by definition. It can be as funky and nasty as you want to be, but groove is not stir-it-up music. It is always cool-you-down music. If it is not relaxing, then it is not groove. Which is not to say that groove is not energetic or fast paced. It may sound wild, but the final effect is: a groove. Although I hesitate to characterize it this way, groove music is always a little trance-like. The result of the funkier, baddest piece of groove music is a bit of clear sailing -- relaxation. Get in the groove! That's the place to BE.

ORIGINAL FUNK/SOUL-JAZZ

The transformation of bop did not always stop with hard bop or even funkified jazz. Some players dove rather than dipped into the roots music and an even more bluesy music was born that came to be called

funk or soul jazz. For the first time, we are talking real groove music.

Funkified Jazz, also called soul jazz, jazz funk, original funk, or just plain funk is a form of jazz that originated in the mid-1950s -- a type of hard bop. It is often played by small groups -- trios led by a tenor or alto sax, pianist, guitar and the Hammond organ.

Funk music is very physical, usually 'down and dirty'.

Funk or soul jazz emerged as a reaction to the bop/cool jazz (cool, intellectualized) prevalent at the time. Funky music is everything that bop/cool jazz is not. It is hot, sweaty and never strays far from its blues roots. The term "soul" is a link to gospel roots; "funk" links to blues roots. This fusion of jazz with blues and gospel elements became known as "soul jazz" during the 1950s, partly through the promotion of the Cannonball Adderley Quintet as a "soul-jazz" group.

Fast-paced funk pieces have a bright melodic phrasing set against a hard, percussive dance rhythm. Funk ballads are never more than a few steps from the blues. Above all, this is dynamic relaxin' music that is easy to listen to -- the groove. Those of you who like blues and R&B (and gospel), but find some jazz just a touch remote, may well like original funk. There is no better music to kick back to than this. It is my favorite music.

Jazz funk is sometimes called "original funk" to distinguish it from the contemporary funk sound of the James Brown/George Clinton variety. Along with blues and gospel, original funk or soul jazz had some

R&B (soul music) elements thrown into the mix and the resulting fusion was even more to the public's taste. Soul jazz has remained one of the most popular and successful forms of jazz to this very day. Bop is stir-it-up music while funk or soul jazz (no matter how up tempo or percussive) is at heart calm-you-down or groove music. Here are some classic funk albums:

Eddie Lockjaw Davis, "Cookbook"vol. 1-3/OJC

Gene Ammons, "Gene Ammons Story: Organ Combos"/Prestige

Arnett Cobb, "Smooth Sailing"/OJC

Red Holloway, "Cookin' Together"/OJC

Willis Jackson, "Bar Wars"/Muse

Ike Quebec, "Blue and Sentimental"/Blue Note

Jimmy Forest, "All the Gin is Gone"/Delmark

Bobby Timmons, "Soul Man"/Prestige

Johnny Hammond Smith, "Breakout"/Kudu

Harold Vick, "Steppin' Out)/Blue Note

Harold Mabern, "Rakin' & Scrapin'"/Prestige

Stanley Turrentine, "Comin' Your Way"/Blue Note

Houston Person, "Soul Dance"/Prestige

Grover Washington, "Mister Magic"/Motown

Harold Maybern, "Rakin' and Scrapin'", OJC-330

Cornell Dupree, "Coast to Coast"/Antilles

Les McCann, "Swiss Movement"/Atlantic (soul jazz)

ORGAN COMBOS

At the heart of original funk and soul jazz sits the Hammond Organ, 400 pounds of musical joy. This unwieldy piece of equipment can do it all -- work by itself, as a duo, trio, quartet, or with a full band. It is a full band. More important, is the fact that the Hammond-organ sound pretty much defines real funk. There is something about the percussive sound and the adjustable attack/decay effects that, coupled with the famed (rotating horns) Leslie speakers, epitomizes that music called funk.

Whatever the reason, you will find a Hammond organ at the center (or as backup) of the majority of soul jazz recordings, not to mention contemporary funk and R&B recordings. Jimmy Smith is the man who tamed the great beast and turned the Hammond from a roller-rink calliope into a serious jazz instrument. I have owned two Hammond organs in my life.

The story is that Jimmy Smith locked himself in a warehouse with a Hammond for almost a year and came out playing that sound we all love.

And Smith is just the tip of the top. There are many great Hammond players that are every bit as great in

their own way, names like Richard Groove Holmes, Jimmy McGriff, Shirley Scott, Charles Earland, John Patton, Larry Young, and others. Put a Hammond organ and some drums together with a tenor sax or guitar and you have all you need for some real funky music. This is groove music par excellence.

Jimmy Smith, "Back at the Chicken Shack"/Blue Note

Jimmy McGriff, "At the Appollo"/Collectables

Jack McDuff, "Live!"/Prestige

Richard Groove Holmes, "After Hours /Pacific Jazz

Don Patterson, "Genius of the B-3"/Music

John Patton, "Let em' Roll"/Blue Note

Shirley Scott, "Blue Flames"/OJC

Charles Earland, "Black Talk"/Prestige

Charles Kynard, "Reelin' with the Feeling"/Prestige

Larry Young, "The Complete Blue Note

Larry Young"/Mosaic

Joey DeFrancisco, "All of Me"/Columbia

The Commercialization of Soul Jazz

Soul jazz sometime gets a not-so-great rap. Anything so potent and popular lends itself to misuse and a great many so-called soul jazz albums were recorded that had no "soul" -- bad commercial funk. On the theory that you never know what is enough until you have more than enough, artists sought to increase their popularity by making their music more and more commercial until, in the end, they lost touch with the roots of the music -- the soul.

To make matters worse, the advent of bop and the various forms of progressive jazz that grew out of bop, gave birth to a somewhat elitist, conservative, and overly intellectualized attitude -- the jazz purist.

This purist looks down on jazz that partakes too much of its blues and gospel roots, and any R&B influences are really frowned upon. These mainstream jazz purists used the overt commercialism aspect of soul jazz as grounds to dismiss the entire music off hand. Funk and soul jazz was somehow (in their opinion) not as worthy of respect as the bop or progressive jazz they admired.

The fact that soul jazz is the most successful and popular form of jazz was cited as further proof of its commonness. This elitist attitude is now on the decline and soul jazz is beginning to take its place in the history of jazz as a legitimate form of the jazz. Soul jazz reissues are a hot item. It is a fact that most great jazz performers also have a funky or soul side and albums to prove it. Often very little is written about the soul jazz side of these artists.

Well, there you have a quick tour of the funkier side of jazz -- groove music. It is important to point out that

soul jazz, although always popular with the people, has received short shrift from the jazz elite. The attitude is that groove music is something, like the blues, which should be kept in the closet -- keep back. That time has passed.

GROOVE MASTERS

We are coming out of a time when jazz has been measured by how outstanding the soloist is -- how high can they fly? Critics only seem to know how to rate what stands out. This won't work for groove music. In groove, the idea is to lay down a groove, get in it, and deepen it. Groove masters always take us deeper into the groove. These artists are our windows into the groove, and their hearts become the highway over which the groove can run. They reinvest. And we ride the groove.

This is why jazz critics have either passed (never got it) over groove masters like Grant Green and Stanley Turrentine or heard something, but did not know what to make of what they heard (and felt). If music is not viewed as such an intellectual thing (something to see) but more of a feeling kind of thing, then groove masters can be appreciated. You may not see the groove masters, but you sure can feel them. In groove, the solo (and all else) only exists if it adds to the groove. Witness Grant Green's incredible single-note repetitions. Who would ever think to do that?

You wouldn't dare think of that. It is done by pure feeling. It feels good and you keep doing it. Nothing to think about.

Stanley Turrentine has been laying down grooves for many a year for all to hear. I am surprised at how many books don't even mention him. Grant Green has received even shorter shrift. There have been a few voices crying in the wilderness of soul jazz criticism. Producer Bob Porter of Atlantic Records and Bob Rusch of Cadence Magazine have always known and told us about the groove. Recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder is another pre-eminent groove expert. More than half of all great soul jazz sessions were recorded by Van Gelder. The next time you hear some real groove music, in particular if there is a Hammond organ on it, just check the album for this engineer's name.

GRANT GREEN: THE GROOVE MASTER

All that I can say about Grant Green is that he is the groove master. Numero uno. He is so deep in the groove that most people have no idea what's up with him. Players like Stanley Turrentine, Jimmy Smith, Kenny Burrell, and many other really great soul jazz artists are also groove masters. But the main man, IMO, is Grant Green. He is so far in the groove that it will take decades for us to bring him out in full. He is just starting to be discovered.

To get your attention and make clear that I am saying something here, consider the singing voice of Bob Dylan. A lot of people say the guy can't sing. But it's not that simple. He is singing. The problem is that he is singing so far in the future that we can't yet hear the music. Other artists can sing his tunes and we can

hear that all right. Given enough time... enough years... that gravel-like voice will sound as sweet to our ears as any velvet-toned singer. Dylan's voice is all about microtones and inflection. For now, that voice is hidden from our ears in time so tight that there is no room (no time) yet to hear it. Some folks can hear it now. I, for one, can hear the music in his voice. I know many of you can too. Someday everyone will be able to hear it, because the mind will unfold itself until even Dylan's voice is exposed for just what it is -- a pure music. Yet, by then our idea of music will also have changed. Rap is changing it even now.

Billy Holiday is another voice that is filled with microtones that emerge through time like an ever-blooming flower. You (or I) can't hear the end or root of her singing, not yet anyway. As we try to listen to Holiday (as we try to grasp that voice), we are knocked out by the deep information there. We try to absorb it and before we can get a handle on her voice (if we dare listen!) she entrances us in a delightful dream-like groove and we are lost to criticism. Instead we groove on and reflect about this other dream that we have called life. All great musicians do this to us.

Grant Green's playing at its best is like this too. It is so recursive that instead of taking the obvious outs we are used to hearing, Green instead chooses to reinvest -- to go in farther and deepen the groove. He opens up a groove and then opens up a groove and then opens a groove, and so on. He never stops. He opens a groove and then works to widen that groove until we can see into the music, see through the music into ourselves. He puts everything back into the groove that he might otherwise get out of it. He knows

that the groove is the thing and that time will see him out and his music will live long. That is what grooves are about and why Grant Green is the groove master.

I hope that some of what I have written here will help blues lovers push off from the island of blues out into the sea of jazz. You can always head back to the solid ground of blues if you can't get into the jazz.

Blues and jazz are not mutually exclusive. Blues in jazz has been a thrilling ride (groove) for me and I have found a whole new music that satisfies much like the blues satisfy. I listen to groove music all the time. If you find some great groove tunes that I have not mentioned here, drop me a line. I want to hear them.

BLUES IN JAZZ AND R&B

There are forms of blues in jazz other than the groove music presented above. Here are a few notes on some of the major styles:

BLUES SHOUTERS AND SINGERS -- There are blues singers who tend toward jazz and almost all jazz singers sing some blues. This is not the place to point these out since they are more-or-less straight-ahead blues singers when they sing blues. The one exception, of course, is Billie Holiday. Holiday is probably the most seminal singer ever recorded. But is her music the blues? Everything she sings is way beyond blues and blues is supposed to be the root music. Holiday is the equivalent of Delta blues singer

Robert Johnson in that she is seminal -- pure source. Period.

If you have not listened to Billie Holiday and gotten into her music to the point of real distraction (being moved!), then you have missed one of the premiere music experiences of a lifetime. Enough said.

BLUESY JAZZ

There is also a style of blues-laden jazz that is not so much funky as downright bluesy. Kenny Burrell is perhaps the chief exponent of this style of jazz.

Bluesy jazz has a slow or mid-tempo and is easy to listen to -- relaxing. It makes great background or dinner music and yet is integral and stands on its own merits as a music. A lot of artists play bluesy jazz; some play it often. Much bluesy jazz can establish a groove.

Kenny Burrell, "Midnight Blue"/Blue Note

The Three Sounds (Gene Harris), "Introducing the Three Sounds"/Blue Note

Ron Carter, "Jazz: My Romance"/Blue Note

Grant Green, "Born to be Blue"/Blue Note

Ray Bryant, "All Blues"/Pablo

Red Garland, "Soul Junction"/Prestige

Wynton Kelly, "Kelly Blue"/Riverside

BLUES/FUNK SAX

HONKERS, SCREAMERS, & BAR WALKERS

Although the emergence of blues sax can be traced all the way back to the great Ben Webster, the honkin', screaming tenor sax of the bar-walking variety originated with Illinois Jacquet and was carried to its logical conclusion with the R&B sax of King Curtis. The term "bar walkin'" came from the habit of emotionally driven sax players walking on the top of a bar among the customers playing at a frenzied pitch -- often in contests with another sax player walking from the other end of the bar. This honkin' blues-drenched sax style was as much performance bravado as sheer music.

As Cannonball Adderley said about the funky big-toned sax, "It's the moan inside the tone." Since many of the main players in this style hailed from the Southwest, players in this style are often referred to as "Texas tenors." Some of the main artists in this style include Al Sears, Big Jay McNeely, Willis Jackson, Sill Austin, Lee Allen, Rusty Bryant, Hal Singer, and Sam "The Man" Taylor. Most of these players came out of the large swing bands and either formed their own groups or found work in various R&B settings. This raunchy honkin' music scratches that blues itch and satisfies. This is often groove material.

Since many of these sax players can (and often had to) play it all -- blues, R&B, honkin' sax, soul jazz, straight jazz, etc. , they are listed here together. I have made some notes to guide you as to their main directions. If you can find the 3-CD called "Giants of the Blues and Funk Tenor Sax"/Prestige (3PCD-2302-2), you will get a superb 23 cut collection with many extended solos and liner notes by Bob Porter. Worth ordering or searching for.

SAX: BLUES, R7B, FUNK, HONKERS AND BAR-WALKERS

Lee Allen (R&B)

"Walkin' with Mr. Lee"/Collectables (R&B)

Gene Ammons (R&B, bop, soul jazz)

"Boss Tenors -- Straight Ahead from Chicago 1961"/Verve

Sil Austin (blues)

"Slow Rock Rock"/Wing Earl Bostic (R&B)

"Best of Earl Bostic"/Deluxe

Rusty Bryant (R&B, soul jazz)

"Rusty Bryant returns", OJC

Arnett Cobb (blues, soul jazz) "Smooth Sailing", OJC-323

King Curtis (R&B, soul jazz) "Soul Meeting"/Prestige

Hank Crawford (soul jazz) "Soul Survivors"/Milestone

Eddie Lockjaw Davis (blues, soul jazz) "Cookbook, Vol. 1-3"/OJC

Jimmy Forrest (blues, bop, soul jazz) "Out of the Forrest"/Prestige

Frank Foster (blues) "Soul Outing"/Prestige

Johnny Griffin (bop, hard bop, blues)

"Big Soul Band"/OJC Eddie Harris (soul jazz) "Best of"/Atlantic

Coleman Hawkins (blues, hard bop) Red Holloway (soul jazz)

"Cookin' Together"/Prestige

Joe Houston R&B Honker (Honker, blues) Willis Jackson (R&B, funk)

"Bar Wars"/Muse

Illinois Jacquet (Honker, blues, R&B) "Blues: That's Me!"/OJC

Big Jay McNeely R&B (Honker, blues)

Wild Bill Moore (blues)

(Look for him as a sideman)

Oliver Nelson (blues, out) "Soul Battle"/OJC

David Fathead Newman (R&B, soul jazz) "Lonely Avenue"/Atlantic

Harold Ousley (blues, soul jazz) Sweet Double Hipness"/Muse

Houston Person (soul jazz) "Goodness"/OJC-332

Ike Quebec (blues, soul jazz) "Blue and Sentimental"/Blue Note

Al Sears (blues)

"The Swingville All-Stars"/Swingville

Hal Singer (blues)

"Blue Stompin"/Prestige
Sonny Stitt (bop, soul jazz)
"Soul Summit"/Prestige

Buddy Tate (blues)

"Tate's Date"/Swingville

Sam "The Man" Taylor (blues, R&B)

Eddie Cleanhead Vinson (blues) "Kidney Stew"/Black & Blue

Ernie Watts (blues, bop, soul jazz) "Ernie Watts Quartet"/JVC

BLUES IN FREE JAZZ

Blues in free jazz are present; the notes are there. The problem is that the constant beat is missing and thus the groove never gets laid down. More important, most free jazz is stir-it-up music rather than cool out. While this is great music, it is not groove music. Here are some outstanding examples of some blues in free jazz.

Archie Shepp, "Attica Blues"/Impulse

Oliver Nelson, "Screamin' the Blues"/New Jazz

Charles Mingus, "Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus"/Candid

John Coltrane, "Love Supreme"/Impulse

Sun Ra, "The Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra"/ESP

Ornette Coleman, "Tomorrow is the Question"/Contemporary

BLUES IN JAZZ-ROCK & FUSION

The Same is true for most jazz rock as for free jazz. The notes occur but the energy is more agitating than not, and the groove is seldom established.

Crusaders, "Crusaders 1"/Blue Thumb

David Sanborn, "Backstreet"/Warner Brothers

Mahavishnu Orchestra, "The Inner Mounting Flame"/Columbia

Miles Davis, "Star People"/Columbia

THE GROOVE GUIDE TO BLUES IN JAZZ

Here is something that I wished I had when I first started to get into groove and blues jazz -- a quick guide to the best recordings. It can save you both time and money. These are some of the main jazz (and R&B) artists with a strong blues content. You will want to hear them out. In each case I have tried to point out key albums that are worth a listen from a blues or groove perspective.

The albums are rated and reviewed, (where possible) to give you insight into why these might or might not interest you. A short biography is also included and sometimes additional notes on how to approach the artist from a blues perspective. We would need a whole book to do this right, and the All-Music Guide to Jazz (2nd edition) is available when you are. I am sorry to say that many of the albums listed below are not available on CD. Some probably never will be. Although I love CDs, I have had to get back into vinyl to hear a lot of this music. Many of you will also -- back to the old record bins. It's worth it if the music is there. And it is. I hope you enjoy this short guide to groove music.

LANDMARK JAZZ ALBUMS

Putting aside the blues in jazz aspect, here is a list of landmark jazz albums that every jazz lover should hear. And this does not just represent my personal opinion. Any serious jazz listener would agree that these are classic albums that should be heard at least once. Whether you like them or not does not matter. It will show you the wide world of jazz and help you figure out what you do like, which directions to take, etc. One thing is certain: if you don't like these albums, it is not because they are lousy performances, but because it is not your kind of music. This list is admittedly weak in traditional, swing, big-band jazz, and fusion.

Air, "Air Lore"/Arista

Mose Allison, "I Don't worry About a Thing"/Rhino/Atlantic

Louis Armstrong, "Hot Fives and Sevens Vol 1-3"/JSP

Art Ensemble of Chicago, "Jackson in Your House"/Affinity 9

Count Basie, "The Original American Decca Recordings"/MCA

Sidney Bechet, "The Bluebird Sessions"/Bluebird

Art Blakey, ""Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk"/Atlantic

Anthony Braxton, "For Alto Saxophone"/Delmark

Clifford Brown, "Jazz Immortal"/Pacific Jazz

Dave Brubeck, "Take Five"/Columbia

Ornette Coleman, "The Shape of Jazz To Come"/Atlantic

John Coltrane, "A Love Supreme"/MCA

Chick Corea, "My Spanish Heart"/Polydor

Charlie Christian, "Solo Flight"/Columbia

Miles Davis, "Kind of Blue"/Columbia

Eric Dolphy, "Out to Lunch!"/Blue Note

Duke Ellington, "Blanton-Webster Band"/Bluebird

Bill Evans, "Sunday at the Village Vanguard"/OJC

Keith Jarrett, "The Koln Concert"/ECM

Erroll Garner, "Concert by the Sea"/Columbia

Stan Getz, "Getz/Gilberto"/Verve

Dizzy Gillespie, "In the Beginning"/Prestige

Herbie Hancock, "Maiden Voyage"/Blue Note

Billie Holiday, "The Quintessential Billie Holiday Vol. 1-9"/Columbia

Milt Jackson "Bag's Groove"/Prestige

Roland Kirk, "Rahsaan"/Mercury

Shelly Manne, "At the Blackhawk"/OJ

Charles Mingus, "Mingus at Antibes"/Atlantic

Thelonious Monk, "Genius of Modern Music Vol. 1-2"/Blue Note

Wes Montgomery, "Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery"/Riverside

Fats Navarro, "The Fabulous Fats Navarro, Vol 1-2"/Blue Note

Oliver Nelson, "Blues and the Abstract Truth"/Impulse

Herbie Nichols, "The Art of Herbie Nichols"/Blue Note

Oregon, "Out of the Woods"/Electra

Charlie Parker, "The Charlie Parker Story"/Savoy

Bud Powell, "The Amazing Bud Powell Vol. 1-2"/Blue Note

Sonny Rollins, "Saxophone Colossus"/OJC

Sun Ra, "The Heliocentric World of Sun Ra Vol 1"/ESP

Cecil Taylor, "Unit Structures"/Blue Note

McCoy Tyner, "The Real McCoy"/Blue Note

