

Analyzing Free Jazz



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Abstract

More than thirty years after the first experiments in free jazz, this style of music is still little known outside of a small circle of admirers. In spite of its influence on the larger field of jazz and on the foundation of jazz studies programs in many institutions, free jazz does not yet enjoy a long tradition of serious attention in scholarly circles, due perhaps to the improvised nature of the music, the tendency of free jazz practitioners to defy categorization, and difficulties in separating the music from historical events, particularly the civil rights movement and the development of black nationalism. *Analyzing Free Jazz* is not intended to be a comprehensive history of the free jazz movement or of the work of any individual artist, but rather an examination of several stylistically diverse works within their respective cultural contexts, as well as a documentation of the process of examination. The first two chapters provide a background to the analyses and address a variety of topics, including the origin and influence of free jazz and its relationship to the blues and earlier jazz styles; early innovators and a general description of various musicians' methodologies; later and current free jazz practitioners, including some of the lesser-known figures; the black nationalist movement and other political factors surrounding the development and criticism of free jazz; the treatment of free jazz in scholarly literature and brief descriptions of important publications; the techniques of traditional jazz; and a discussion of analytical techniques appropriate to jazz. Chapters 3 through 5 provide analytical treatment of three works: Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" (1959), John Coltrane's "India" (1961), and Cecil Taylor's "Second Layer" (1973). Each composition is examined in its entirety, utilizing transcriptions, diagrams, and some graphic representations. Emphasis is placed on rhythmic treatment, method of development, formal structure, and the use of contrast. Also discussed is Coleman's concept of harmolodic theory, Coltrane's adaptation of Indian aesthetic and technique, and the poem which accompanies Taylor's work.

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How to Analyze Chord Progressions in Jazz Standards. Being able to breakdown the harmony of a tune is essential for any musician and/or improviser. Knowing the role of certain chords in the scale and why they do the things they do is what will make you able to navigate chord changes effectively. We will be discussing these things and more in this lesson on harmonic analysis for jazz guitar.