

## Female singers who think “out of the box”

In this session, we will explore female singers who bridged the gap between being a popular entertainer that was just a pretty face in front of a large ensemble and that of a full-fledged “instrumentalist” member of the band. Given the cultural imperatives of the time, the former was better received in the marketplace. However, jazz players were often pushing the conventional envelope musically while simultaneously piercing social norms.

This activity will largely be focused on listening and mentally comparing and contrasting musical approaches of female singers. Time permitting, we will field questions and comments at the end.

As we listen, see if you can identify how the singer is engaging in an out-of-the-box approach by:

- Functioning outside a traditional singing role (how does she fit in into the band structure?)
- Thinking like an instrumentalist (how does she perform and interact with members of the band?)
- Altering/rewriting/inverting melody, scatting, performing vocalese
- Employing vocal inflections such as vibrato, pitch bending, dynamics, etc.

① **A Pretty Face** - *Old Devil Moon*, Jo Stafford – Swingin’ down Broadway (1958) Columbia Records CL 1124  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oi1gSonLUfc>

Vocals – Jo Stafford      Big Band – Paul Weston and His Orchestra

American Songbook “pop” approach: very pure melody, harmonies, chord changes; AKA legit “stock” charts, strictly by the book (no improvisation and the original chord changes). In this track, we have a singer, and a backing band, and they stay away from each other. Aiming for the tastes of middle America, however, there was effort evident in the craft. Seth MacFarlane would borrow this styling for his many endeavors.

② **Hard Bop Instrumental** - *That Old Devil Moon*, Miles Davis – Blue Haze (1956) Prestige Records LP 7054  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6FWBW-hX6c>

Trumpet – Miles Davis    Piano – Horace Silver    Bass – Percy Heath      Drums – Art Blakey

Small combo, with a fairly “straight” head for the initial A section, chord progressions grow in complexity as the tune moves along. The 2<sup>nd</sup> A section of the head has Miles straying from the pure melody and Horace Silver’s playing embraces more complex chord voicings and changes. Davis’ improvised solo features interaction and counterplay with the rhythm section, ideas stated, then restated. The final head takes only 2<sup>nd</sup> endings.

③ **A Naughty Face** - *Old Devil Moon*, Anita O'Day – Anita Sings the Most (1957) Verve Records MG V-8259  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92Ec7lm8l6o>

Vocals – Anita O'Day      Guitar – Herb Ellis      Piano – Oscar Peterson  
Bass – Ray Brown      Drums – Milt Holland

Small combo, with a faster tempo (not surprising given the session players). In this track, we have a singer who is clearly an instrumental member of the band, yet Anita seemingly strays from others. The melody is subject to interpretation from the get-go. It has a very fluid, rubato treatment, almost floating above the combo, if not two different sets of phrasing at play. Anita’s improvisation is limited to interpretations of the melody, but this entire track is improvised, especially the garnishment by Oscar and solo by Herb.

④ **Post Bop Vocal** - *Old Devil Moon*, Michèle Hendricks – Carryin' On (1987) Muse Records MR 5336  
<http://jazzstreams.ddns.net/www/class/01%20-%20Old%20Devil%20Moon.mp3>

Vocals – Michèle Hendricks      Tenor Saxophone – Stan Getz      Piano – David Leonhardt  
Bass – Ray Drummond      Drums – Marvin "Smitty" Smith

Small combo traditional tempo, classic Hard Bop feel, a swingin' groove that lags the beat, with call and answer response between Stan and Michèle from the start. Clearly, Michèle is a member of the band, not just a front. Complex chord voicings and changes with considerable interaction/counterplay with the rhythm section are found throughout. Note the instrumental solos and how Michèle sings and improvises with the same exploratory nature. Bonus points for recognizing "Killer Joe" references throughout. In the final head, Michèle still covers all the lyrics but substitutes melody and inflection just as an instrumentalist would. There is some scatting evident here, but mostly it is lyric alterations.

⑤ **Classic Scat Soloing** – *All of Me*, Sarah Vaughan – Swingin' Easy (1957) EmArcy Records MG 36109  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ejziczu1fg>

Vocals – Sarah Vaughan      Piano – Jimmy Jones      Bass – Richard Davis      Drums – Roy Haynes

Small combo traditional tempo, classic Hard Bop feel, swingin' groove that lags the beat. Melody starts out "straight" but soon begins to undergo interpretation and then delves into scatting. Note how her solos sound just like a woodwind or brass player; it is easy to imagine these coming out of an instrumental bell. The final head is loose subject to considerable variation with eventual melody substitution.

⑥ **Classic Scat Soloing (big band)** – *It Don't Mean a Thing (If it Ain't Got that Swing)*, Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington – The Ed Sullivan Show (March 7, 1965) CBS <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myRc-3oF1d0>

Vocals – Ella Fitzgerald      Piano – Duke Ellington      Backing Band – Duke Ellington Band

Classic American Big Band approach: pure melody (at first), embellished harmonies (upper partials/second octave scales), strictly by the book for woodwinds and brass punches, but soloists and rhythm section improvise almost from the start driving chord changes and harmonies. Note that the scatting in the verse is the brass parts in the original 1930s recording which is doubled by the brass in later in this performance. This is one of the earliest songs in which scatting manifests. The final head varies the traditional melody with scat improvisation.

⑦ **Bebop Instrumental** – *Nostalgia*, Fats Navarro – Nostalgia (1958, recorded 1947) Savoy Records MG-12133  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbsxD0gVzFI>

Trumpet – Fats Navarro      Tenor Sax – Charlie Rouse      Guitar – Huey Long      Piano – Tadd Dameron  
Bass – Nelson Boyd      Drums – Art Blakey

Small combo with a classic bebop formation and execution. Initial head is pretty "straight" (for bop). Chord changes in bebop are not particularly wild (rarely beyond a minor 7<sup>th</sup> or major 9<sup>th</sup>, but the melodies and solos are filled with accidentals that provide complexity, especially when surrounding and "stinging" a note. Just dig Fats on his horn. Bebop is all about the melody (or solo) line and rhythmic inflection, whereas Hard Bop brought the harmonic complexity (and adventure!) straight into the chord changes.

⑧ **Vocalese** – *Nostalgia (The Day I Knew)*, Samara Joy – Linger Awhile (2022) Verve Records B0036472-01  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvUIdbMTKkU>

Vocals – Samara Joy      Guitar – Pasquale Grasso      Bass – David Wong      Drums – Kenny Washington

Small combo, very “straight” heads (but listen for Samara’s vocal inflections), chord voicings and changes are more complex (Hard Bop style), and interaction and counterplay with the rhythm section starts immediately. Vocalese takes a recorded improvised instrumental solo and adds lyrics to it which are then sung exactly as the original solo. The vocalese begins with the line “I think that after all this time and all these years...” Listen for vocal inflection. Do you hear Fats? Samara and her band are leveraging about eight decades of jazz development, effortlessly integrating bebop, hard bop, post-bop, scatting, vocalese, and beyond.

### **Further Reflection/Exploration**

How did the role of female singers reflect the cultural norms of the time?

How has the changing role of the female jazz singers come to reflect cultural norms/aspirations of the present?

What corollaries can be found between the roles of jazz performers within their craft and the civil rights movement at large from the mid-1950s onwards?

Jazz can be described as a musical democracy where each player stands (or sits-out) based upon his/her merit. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

How do you believe Broadway musicals have impacted jazz singers?

What did you learn today and how it will affect your listening to female singers going forth?

### **Other Resources**

*Sound Ideas*, a thematic radio series that explores the broad pallet of jazz performance.

<http://jazzstreams.org/soundideas/>

*Sound Ideas*, episode #40, *Female Vocalists* <http://jazzstreams.org/soundideas/Episode-040.php> (F lead)

*Sound Ideas*, episode #104, *Tightknit Vocal Harmonies* <http://jazzstreams.org/soundideas/Episode-104.php> (harmonized M and mixed group M/F)

*Sound Ideas*, episode #306, *Vocals on Tap* <http://jazzstreams.org/soundideas/Episode-306.php> (M or F lead)

*How High the Moon*, Rita Payes (Ella Fitzgerald), Magali Datzira (Billie Holiday), Eva Fernandez (Dinah Washington), and Andrea Motis (Sarah Vaughan), recorded in 2014. Four young women illustrate four legendary jazz singers under the guidance of Joan Chamoro as part of his Sant Andreu Jazz Band program for kids aged 12 to 20 in Barcelona, Spain. Keep in mind that English is likely a third or fourth language for these musicians.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNH2580Kwo>

*Jazz Etiquette*, a humorous exploration of the often-bewildering imperatives that guide the behavior of the jazz player, band leader, club owner, and artistic recipient, AKA the audience. <http://jazzstreams.org/jazzetiquette/>

(For musicians) A comparison of a “stock” vs. “jazz” chart of *Old Devil Moon* is found on the next two pages.

**OLD DEVIL MOON**  
(From "FINIAN'S RAINBOW")

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Words by E.Y. Harburg  
Music by Burton Lane

Moderately

F Eb F Eb F

I look at you and sud - den - ly, some - thing in your eyes I see  
You've got me fly - in' high and wide on a ma - gic car - pet ride

Eb FM7 Cm7 F7 BbM9

soon be - gins be - witch - ing me. It's that Old Dev - il Moon that you  
full of but - ter - flies in - side. Wan - na cry, wan - na croon, wan - na

Bbm9 Eb9 Abm7 Db7 Gb6 C7 F C7sus

stole from the skies. It's that Old Dev - il Moon in your eyes.  
laugh like a loon. It's that Old Dev - il Moon in your eyes,

To Coda ⊕

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F Eb F Eb D DM7 D6 Dm

You and your glance make this ro - mance too hot to hand - dle. Stars in the night

Dm7 G7 C7 Bb7 Ebm6 N.C. D. C. al Coda

blaz - ing their light can't hold a can - dle to your raz - zle daz - zle.

⊕ CODA F Eb F Eb F C7sus F Eb

Just when I think I'm free as a dove Old Dev - il

F Eb F Eb F

Moon deep in your eyes blinds me with love.

This is a "stock" melody and chord changes for Old Devil Moon as heard in the 1947 Broadway play, *Finian's Rainbow*. While considerably more complex than many 3 or 4 chord rock/pop tunes of the past decades, it is classic Great American Songbook, which would be built upon or reinterpreted by those in the jazz idiom. Note the 48-bar ABAC song form, a slightly less common variation as opposed to the 32-bar AABA song form typically found in the GAS.

# OLD DEVIL MOON

Handwritten musical score for "Old Devil Moon" in 4/4 time. The score consists of eight staves of music with various chord voicings and phrasings. The chords are: F6, Cmi7, F6, Cmi7, FMaj7, Cmi7, F9sus, F7, BbMaj7, Eb13, Abmi7, Db7, Gb, C13, F6, Cmi7, F6, Cmi7, DMaj7, Dmi, Dmi7, Dmi7, G7, L 3/4, Gmi7, C7 (D.C. al CODA), F6, Cmi7, DbMaj7, FMaj7, Cmi7, FMaj7, Eb, Gb7, F6, (Gmi7 C7).

This version of Old Devil Moon is likely more familiar to jazz players. It's from the Real Book volume II while amidst an ongoing argument about its accuracy, is still the starting point for many jazz performances. (Zoot Sims, *Warm Tenor*)

Note how the meter is common time (4/4), and phrasing as swing 8<sup>th</sup> notes (2:1 time ratio) as opposed to the cut time (2/2) and dotted 8ths (3:1 ratio) of the original Broadway tune. This generates that hipper, lagging, feel that swings so nicely.

Also note chord substitutions for Eb (C-7, the relative minor); Eb13 for the Bb-7 → Eb9 phrase; a modulation with DbΔ7; and a "sting" of the tonic with Eb → Gb7 → F. Plus, there is a more complicated turnaround (prior to DC al Coda). This replaces the original ii-V-I progression (D-7 → G7 → C7) with D-7 → G7, a ii-V on a secondary dominant (V7/V), i.e. G7/C, that modulates to its parallel minor (G-7) to yield a ii-V-I (G-7 → C7 → F) and leads us back to the tonic at the end (and top) of the form. Jazz players just can't ignore the opportunity to create endless altered ii-V and ii-V-I progressions. Check out John Coltrane's *Giant Steps* for the ultimate ii-V-I challenge (or personal practice hell).