

All Blues

Miles Davis

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- Born in Illinois, in 1926
- Started trumpet lessons at an early age
- Studied at Juillard School of Music (New York), but dropped out after one year to play in the jazz circuit
- Played in several bands, including that of saxophonist Charlie Parker
- Formed his own ensemble in 1948, as he wanted to play jazz that was more laid back than the fast bebop
- Formed a new ensemble in 1955, and this group became the ensemble used for the recording of *Kind of Blue*
- Died in California, in 1991

Jazz

- Started as a 'coming together' of musical styles in the early 20th century, in New Orleans.
- African slaves brought their musical heritage (rhythmic, pentatonic music) and also work songs developed in slavery.
- Pentatonic scales and Western 7-note scales fused, causing the popularisation of blue notes.
- 'The Blues' comes from singers lamenting their poor situation in life.
- Initially, jazz was mainly improvised with elements of call and response. This moved into the 'Big Band' style as bands got bigger, where notated parts were given to soloists at specific points in the music. This became known as swing.
- In the 1940s, Bebop was developed, in response to the way jazz had become more dance-orientated over time. This style featured difficult chord changes and a fast tempo, relying on a small group of virtuosic performers.

Jazz

Jazz Musicians
Charlie Parker
Louis Armstrong
Dizzy Gillespie
John Coltrane

Kind of Blue

- Released in 1959.
- Davis wanted to explore modal jazz, as he thought Bebop was too restrictive on soloists, forcing them to play over the changes.
- Recorded in New York.
- The entire album was recorded over 3 three-hour long sessions.

Key Musical Elements

- Lots of improvisation
- Most sections are polyrhythmic
- Syncopation and swung quavers

Instrumentation

Section	Instrument	Performer
Frontline	Trumpet	Miles Davis
	Alto Saxophone	Julian 'Cannonball' Adderley
	Tenor Saxophone	John Coltrane
Rhythm Section	Piano	Bill Evans
	Bass	Paul Chambers
	Drums	Jimmy Cobb

Instrument = Solo Instrument

Structure and Melody

- INTRO > HEAD 1 > SOLOS > HEAD 2 > OUTRO (known as a head arrangement)
- Based on the 12 bar blues chord sequence (called a chorus)
- Each head and solo is separated by a 4 chord link (C⁷, C⁷, G⁷, G⁷)
- Order of solos:
 - TRUMPET (4 choruses) - Short and syncopated.
 - ALTO SAX (4 choruses) - More angular and rhythmic, with more leaps and shorter phrases. Some fast and technical runs, using more chromatic notes than Davis. Uses wide vibrato.
 - TENOR SAX (4 choruses) - Very fast, several runs, followed by sustained phrases.
 - PIANO (2 choruses) – Starts with RH based solo, moving to chordal solo in second chorus. Uses only a few notes in the middle of the piano.
 - ALL SOLOS ARE VIRTUOSIC
- Chorus is repeated 19 times in total.

Texture

- Mainly homophonic
- Starts with just the drums, bass and piano, and is built up.
- The head is composed of riffs, with the saxophones playing in 3rds and the bass playing the same riff throughout.
- The soloists do not solo together (i.e. only one solo instrument and the rhythm section play during the solos)
- Drum keeps a steady beat

Harmony and Tonality

- An example of modal jazz, using the G mixolydian mode (G A B C D E F)
- Slow harmonic rhythm
- Chords are altered and extended, and use different voicings.

Changes

Bar 1	Bar 2	Bar 3	Bar 4
G ⁷	G ⁷	G ⁷	G ⁷
Bar 5	Bar 6	Bar 7	Bar 8
C ⁷	C ⁷	G ⁷	G ⁷
Bar 9	Bar 10	Bar 11	Bar 12
D ⁷ #9	E ^{b7} #9	G ⁷	G ⁷

Rhythm, Metre and Tempo

- ♩ = 156
- In 6/4 time, known as a jazz waltz
- Swung quavers
- Syncopated throughout
- Uses cross rhythms and polyrhythms
- Some rhythmic displacement

Instrumental Techniques

- Trumpet is played with a harmon mute (but not during the solo) to soften the sound and give a 'wah wah' quality
- Drums are played with brushes, and keep time mainly using the ride cymbal
- Bass is played pizzicato
- Piano plays a tremolo at the beginning.