

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Objectives of the Present Study

Michael Brecker is one of the most influential jazz tenor saxophonists of our time. His live performances are praised all over the jazz music world and his album releases always draw the attention of jazz audiences and the media. Michael Brecker's enormous recording catalogue encompasses a variety of pop, rock, and jazz styles. He has won numerous Grammy awards.

Michael Brecker is a technically brilliant player with an extraordinary command of his instrument. His approach is original in its conception, although it still employs elements from within the framework of the traditional jazz idiom. Michael Brecker is celebrated, among other things, for his melody lines, for his time feel and phrasing, for his sound quality and for his classic collaborations with other significant jazz artists. For a long time Brecker's solos have featured in the studies of younger saxophonists, but students of other instruments have also found it valuable to familiarize themselves with his improvisations.

On a practical level, several musicians have extensively studied Brecker's solos and playing. However, on a more theoretical level, it seems that only a few scientific studies or articles have been conducted. This present work approaches Michael Brecker's style and playing through analysis. The aim is to define and describe certain melodic and instrumental devices which are characteristic of Brecker's improvisation and then to investigate more carefully how he uses these devices. Discussion is focused on Brecker's improvised melody lines and their harmonic component. Rhythmic analysis is excluded from this present study.

Primary consideration has been given here to that improvisation which is based on scales. This is an improvisational approach thoroughly typical of jazz. For example, the theory books "Patterns for Jazz" (Coker, Casale, Campbell & Greene, 1970), "Jazz Theory and Practice" (Lawn & Hellmer, 1993), "The Jazz Piano Book" (Levine, 1989), and "The Jazz Theory Book" (Levine, 1995) all approach improvisation and harmony through scales. Usually the major scale, the melodic minor scale, the diminished scale, the whole-tone scale, and the pentatonic scale harmonies are discussed as the basis of the jazz scale vocabulary. Furthermore, some of the more specific scale harmony categories, like the harmonic minor scale and the augmented scale, are to be found in jazz literature.

The present study does not attempt to cover Brecker's style as a whole but concentrates on his more advanced harmonic and scalar devices, and the specific devices originating from his principal instrument, the tenor saxophone - for example, the use of multiphonics, alternative fingerings and