



Where jazz is more than a legend.

Listening: A Guide to Recorded Material for the Serious Jazz Improviser

By Billy Kerr

The key ingredient in music performance is listening, for if there was no one to hear one's music, there would be no reason for the existence of the music in the first place. In other words, listening is kind of the point. For the musician, for any type of music, listening is the means by which we learn and keep in touch with our art. For the jazz musician, listening should be an integral part of his or her daily regimen, just like practicing. We live in a time in which portable devices allow us to have music with us at all times. Portable CD players, CD players in our cars and iPods® give us amazing flexibility when it comes to what, where and when we listen.

Aspiring jazz players ask, "What should I listen to?" The short answer is, listen to good music. Determining what is good is very subjective, although certain musicians and their music do enjoy, more or less, universal approval. Be that as it may, deciding what is good is a subject that is still up for (as Lawrence Welk used to say) "debation!"

For our purposes here, I will attempt to provide some guidelines for navigating through the vast amount of material available. This music I is not meant to be considered a complete or absolute list. My recommendations are purely a reflection of what I think is good and important. The musicians chosen provide a historical perspective to the music; consequently, younger names may not be included. I have restricted my recommendations to saxophone, clarinet and in some cases, flute recordings, since we are dealing with woodwind players in this forum. It goes without saying that the serious jazz musician should listen to all instrumentalists including Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Bill Evans, as well as all genres of music.

The list below is arranged by instrument (i.e. Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone etc.) and artists within the instrumental category (i.e. Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, Benny Carter etc.). Under each artist's name I have listed either a specific "tune/song", an entire CD/album or in certain cases, anything the artist recorded; or any combination of the above. If you find yourself drawn to a particular musician, by all means, go out and get as much of his/her music as you can.

There are categories of CDs that include more than one saxophone player (i.e. two altos, Phil & Quill; two tenors, Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt). I have included these recordings because I feel the interplay between these great players, particularly in the "battle field," illustrates what good jazz playing is all about.

Certain items may be out of print, but the savvy and determined sleuth will find a way to get what they need; I have faith in you.

Finally, the gathering of this information and your subsequent collecting of any or all of it hopefully will lead you to discover a world you did not know. This discovery will in turn help you gain knowledge that will lead to your improvement as a jazz player and more importantly, help you to enjoy and appreciate this wonderful art form.

In closing I have three pieces of advice: listen, listen, listen; or to coin a phrase, "Listen early and often." And now, the envelope please!

NOTE: Single tunes are in "quotes", CD/Album titles are in *italics*.

ALTO SAXOPHONE:

Julian "Cannonball" Adderley

1. *At the Lighthouse*
2. *Cannonball's Bossa Nova*
3. *Nancy Wilson/Cannonball Adderley*

Benny Carter

1. *Benny Carter: His Best Recordings, 1929-1940*

Ornette Coleman

1. *The Shape of Jazz to Come*

Hank Crawford

1. *True Blue/Double Cross CD*

Paul Desmond

1. *Take Ten*
2. *Time Out* (The Dave Brubeck Quartet)

Eric Dolphy

1. *The Blues and the Abstract Truth* (Oliver Nelson)
2. *Last Date*

Charlie Mariano

1. "Django" (*Standards in Silhouette* - Stan Kenton)
2. *Dear John C* (Elvin Jones)

Johnny Hodges

1. "I Got it Bad" (*Ellington at Newport 1956/Complete* - 2 discs)
2. "Jeep's Blues" (*Ellington at Newport 1956/Complete* - 2 discs)

Lee Konitz

1. *Birth of the Cool* (Miles Davis)
2. *Lee Konitz with Warne Marsh*

Charlie "Bird" Parker

1. Anything by Bird
2. *Bird with Strings*
3. Anything with Dizzy Gillespie

David Sanborn

1. *Taking Off*
2. *Pearls*

Phil Woods

1. "The Quintessence" (*The Quintessence* - Quincy Jones)
2. *Mile High Jazz/Live in Denver*

TENOR SAXOPHONE:

Gene Ammons

1. *Boss Tenor*

Jerry Bergonzi

1. *Standard Gonz*
2. *Tritonis* (The Dave Brubeck Quartet)

Michael Brecker

1. *Michael Brecker*
2. "In a Sentimental Mood" (EWI), (*Steps Ahead - Magnetic*)
3. *Cityscape* (with Claus Ogerman)

George Coleman

1. *Maiden Voyage* (Herbie Hancock)
2. *Miles Davis in Europe* (Miles Davis)

John Coltrane

1. *Blue Train*
2. *Giant Steps*
3. *A Love Supreme*

Stan Getz

1. *Focus*
2. *Sweet Rain*
3. *Bossas and Ballads: The Lost Sessions*

Paul Gonsalves

1. "Diminuendo in Blue & Crescendo in Blue" - 27 chorus solo on the blues (*Ellington at Newport 1956/Complete* - 2 discs)

Dexter Gordon

1. *Dexter Rides Again*
2. *Daddy Plays the Horn*

Coleman Hawkins

1. "Body & Soul"
2. *The Hawk Relaxes*

Joe Henderson

1. *Page One*
2. *Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn*

Joe Lovano

1. *Landmarks*
2. *I'm All for You*

Chris Potter

1. *Traveling Mercies*

Sonny Rollins

1. *Saxophone Colossus*
2. *A Night at the Village Vanguard (Volumes 1&2)*
3. *Way Out West*

Wayne Shorter

1. *Speak No Evil*
2. *Adam's Apple*

Lew Tabackin

1. *Desert Lady*
2. *Tanuki's Night Out*

BARITONE SAXOPHONE:

Pepper Adams

1. *10 to 4 at the 5-Spot*
2. *The Master*
3. *Mean What You Say (Thad Jones/Pepper Adams Quintet)*

Nick Brignola

1. *Raincheck*
2. *Plays Mulligan (The Three Baritone Band - w/Ronnie Cuber & Gary Smulyan)*
3. *Baritone Madness (w/Pepper Adams)*

Harry Carney

1. *"Sophisticated Lady" (Ellington at Newport 1956/Complete - 2 discs)*

Ronnie Cuber

1. *Plays Mulligan (The Three Baritone Band - w/Nick Brignola & Gary Smulyan)*

Gerry Mulligan

1. *At the Village Vanguard*
2. *The Birth of the Cool (Miles Davis)*

Gary Smulyan

1. *The Real Deal*
2. *Plays Mulligan (The Three Baritone Band - w/Ronnie Cuber & Nick Brignola)*
3. *The Way (Vanguard Jazz Orchestra)*

SOPRANO SAXOPHONE:

Sidney Bechet

1. Anything you can find

John Coltrane

1. *My Favorite Things*
2. *Coltrane Plays the Blues*

Steve Lacy

1. *Evidence*
2. *Concert Solo*

David Liebman

1. *The Loneliness of a Long Distance Runner*
2. *In A Mellow Tone*

Wayne Shorter

1. *Alegria*
2. *Beyond the Sound Barrier*

CLARINET:

Eddie Daniels

1. *Memos From Paradise*
2. *The Five Seasons*

Buddy De Franco

1. *Free Sail*
2. *Lush Life*

Benny Goodman

1. *1938 Carnegie Hall Concert*
2. *Centennial Collection* (Benny Goodman)

Artie Shaw

1. *"Stardust"*
2. *Centennial Collection* (Artie Shaw)

FLUTE:

Hubert Laws

1. *The Rite of Spring*
2. *In the Beginning*

Lew Tabackin

1. *The Rites of Pan*
2. *Dual Nature*

Frank Wess

1. *The Frank Wess Quartet*
2. *Surprise, Surprise*

PAIRS:

Two Altos:

1. *Phil & Quill* (Phil Woods & Gene Quill)
2. *Bouncing with Bud & Phil* (Bud Shank & Phil Woods)

Two Tenors:

1. *You & Me* (Al Cohn & Zoot Sims)
2. *Apogee* (The Pete Chrislieb/Warne Marsh Quintet)
3. *Tenor Gladness* (Warne Marsh & Lew Tabackin)
4. *Sonny Side Up* (Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins & Sonny Stitt)
5. *Boss Tenors: Straight Ahead from Chicago 1961* (Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt)

Two Baritones:

1. *Baritone Madness* (Pepper Adams & Nick Brignola)

Two Flutes:

1. *Flute Talk* (Sam Most & Joe Farrell)

Alto & Tenor:

1. *Phil Woods/Lew Tabackin*
2. *The Titans* (Stan Getz, Sonny Stitt & Dizzy Gillespie)
3. *Cannonball & Coltrane*

Alto & Baritone:

1. *Two of a Mind* (Paul Desmond & Gerry Mulligan)

Tenor & Baritone:

1. *Getz Meets Mulligan in Hi-Fi*
2. *Gerry Mulligan Meets Ben Webster*