

# **Jerry Bergonzi Solos**

## ***Setting Standards***



Transcription And Analysis  
By  
Miles Osland

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# Jerry Bergonzi Solos

## Setting Standards

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#### NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I would like to thank Tom Christensen (*On the Brink, Tilt*) and Rick DiMuzio (*Red's Blues*) for their dedicated assistance in the transcription process. I would also like to thank Larry Nelson and David Henderson for the painstaking job they accomplished in transferring the notes, chords and articulations into the music printing software, Finale, for this project. And finally, Jerry Bergonzi for his thoughts on each transcribed solo in the introductory remarks of this book. These are in regular type, and my additional remarks follow Jerry's, in italics.

*Miles Osland*



**M**iles Osland is currently Director of Jazz Studies and Professor of Saxophone at the University of Kentucky where he teaches jazz arranging, jazz pedagogy, studio saxophone, and saxophone quartets. He is also the director of the University of Kentucky Jazz Ensemble and MEGA-SAX.

An active performer, his credits include appearances with Doc Severinsen, Mel Torme, Clare Fischer, The Temptations, the Rochester (NY) and Lexington (KY) Philharmonic Orchestras, and many others. As a clinician for the Selmer Company, he is highly sought after around the country as a guest conductor, arranger, composer and performer.

He has received numerous awards and grants including fellowships from the Kentucky Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts for his original arrangements and compositions which are published by Walrus Music.

A busy recording artist, his debut recording *Saxercise* was recommended for a Grammy nomination by NightLife Records, and was chosen as the featured recording for the Jazzsouth radio show, which is broadcast on over one hundred twenty-five radio stations nationally. A recording by the Miles Osland Little Big Band will be available on the SeaBreeze label in late 1994. He also records and tours nationally with the Top Brass Quartet, and they have recently released their first recording titled *Artistic Growth*.

Mr. Osland received his education at two of the finest music schools in the country. At California State University, Northridge, he received his Bachelor's degree in woodwind performance, and from Eastman School of Music he received his Master's degree in Jazz and Contemporary Media. Miles blends his bi-coastal experience as a performer/educator with great success. Under his direction the UK Jazz Ensemble, UK Saxophone Quartet, and MEGA-SAX have won critical acclaim with their recordings and performances. Three recordings by the UKJE have received "four-star" reviews from *Downbeat* magazine, and the UK Studio Orchestra and the UK Saxophone Quartet won top honors in their categories in the 14th Annual Student DeeBee Awards presented by the same publication.

In the field of research, his endeavors are varied. He writes for *Saxophone Journal* and *Jazz Player*, penning regular popular articles titled "Creative Jazz Improvisation," and "Expressive Techniques," respectively.

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## THE TUNES

While playing, I'm not thinking in a conventional way, I'm inviting what I play. I'm not conscious of most of the following parameters that are discussed. The concepts or ways of thinking of these tunes are usually done after the fact. The following statements are afterthoughts, and are certainly valid in that light.

*Jerry Bergonzi*



### **McCoy**

This tune is a blues in two different keys: F and Ab (concert pitch). What I tried to accomplish with this tune and solo was make the piece flow as if it

were a blues in one key. I tried to make it sound seamless, in a way. When I'm in the key of F and going to Ab, I use a lot of the blue notes in F, one of which is Ab. Blue notes in the key of F are great notes in the key of Ab, and the blue notes in the key of Ab can also work in the key of F. There are a lot of common tones between the two keys which I try to get. Even though I play a lot of notes in this solo, I'm trying to get the sound of playing seamless.

Jerry states the melody very freely in the beginning, which is the first twenty-four bars of the transcription. After the head, there are four choruses of blowing.

### **JAB**

There's a lot of diminished harmonies in this tune. For example, in the second bar on the D $\flat$ 13 b9 chord (concert pitch), you can think of using the symmetrical diminished scale (whole-step/half-step scale). You can do the same with the fourth (F#13 b9) and eighth (A13 b9) bars. Ninety percent of the time, if I see a diminished chord, I'll think

down a major third and use the symmetrical dominant scale (half-step/whole-step). For example, if I see a C# diminished chord I can think A dominant. I'm really not a diminished

thinker. As soon as I see a diminished chord I think, "What dominant chord does this function as? Do I feel like playing a symmetrical diminished, altered, or harmonic minor starting on the fifth?" All of those scales work. After awhile, when you know all the different structures, you don't even have to think about it anymore. You just go where your line takes you. On the bridge I have a short vamp, then in the fifth and sixth bars I go into *Giant Steps* type changes (cycle of descending major thirds).

On this recording, there's not much of the original melody in my statement, I'm just playing it fairly freely. A ballad is my favorite tempo to play, because I can feel totally free rhythmically. I can float the time, or I can articulate it.

The form of this entire track on the recording (and transcription) is AABA, BA, plus a short cadenza. I notated the A sections in slow 4/4 ballad tempo. The rhythm section goes into a double-time feel on both of the bridges, so I notated the B sections as such. I've included a lead sheet of "JAB" because Jerry only hints

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at the melody in his AABA statement. Use the lead sheet to compare the melody in it's original form to his improvised statement of the tune.

### **ARBONIUS UNT**

This tune was named after my deaf cat. He's been adopted by somebody else now because I've been out on the road so much. This is one of the few tunes I've composed where I wrote the melody first. I used to hear *Arbonius Unt* jump on the piano, walk all over the keys, and make some of the strangest melodies you'd ever want to hear. He wouldn't even know he was making a sound because he's one hundred percent deaf. I thought I would try to write a melody that sounded like what he was doing on the piano. The melody during the A section is very disjunct sounding, and it's 14 bars long (which breaks down to 8 + 6). The bridge, which is 8 bars long, is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the tune *Jeeper's Creeper's*. The changes are fun to play on. It's circular, you can never really get a hold of this tune. The progression keeps going and you can't grab it. With that in mind, it's fun to play on. It's also very challenging.

After an AABA statement of the head (also included), Jerry plays three choruses on an AAB form. He then follows those three choruses with one final chorus back on an AABA form. Changing the structure of a tune from AABA to AAB and back is another improvisational device that Jerry likes to exploit in live and recording situations.

### **CONJUNCTION**

The A section of this tune is also 14 bars in length (like the A section in *Arbonius Unt*). I don't start out thinking "I'm going to write a 14-bar section here," it just happens that way. While soloing over this 14 bar phrase I'm not thinking about the phrase structure, I'm thinking about soloing from melody to melody and playing circular. This piece was composed at a particularly trying period in my life, so it's kind of a dark tune. During this period the planet Saturn was conjunct with Pluto. Speaking in astrological terms, the planet Saturn at this time was fourteen degrees in Leo, which is exactly where my Pluto was when I was born. That's why I

titled the piece *Conjunction*. Pluto and Saturn are both dark, mysterious planets. While writing this piece I was trying to compose something that sounded mysterious and nebulous. I wouldn't actually say dark, even though it sounds dark. With this recording I also tried to convey the aspect of being magical.

On this recording, after a statement of the bridge by the rhythm, Jerry plays the melody which is the first 44 bars of the transcription. The form of "Conjunction" is AAB (14+14+16). After a piano chorus, Jerry plays two choruses.

### **A DIFFERENT LOOK**

I wrote this tune about a month before the recording session for no particular reason. I wanted this tune to sound very casual and easy going. I achieved an interesting harmonic structure with this piece by using a lot of different major tonal centers. When I play this tune with a rhythm section I have the bass play in two and the drums in broken four. I tell the guys "let's take it easy, don't get too excited."

This piece is a perfect example of how Jerry approaches a statement of a melody followed by an improvisation on the form. He thinks of the melody and his improvisation as one unit. His melodic statement flows perfectly into his chorus. The form of this composition is AABA. The A sections are 16 bars in length, and the B's are 8. The transcription is comprised of a statement of the melody plus one improvised chorus.

### **I CHING READING**

The challenge to this piece was making my solo sound horizontal. There is a lot of vertical motion in the changes. For example, during the A sections in bars 1-3 & 5-7, the roots of the minor seventh chords move in ascending major thirds, while in the bridge between bars 1 & 2, 3 & 4, and 5 & 6, the roots move in descending major thirds. The melody is also very vertical, so the challenge was to make my improvisation sound horizontal. During my solo I'm trying to get my lines to go in the same direction, and when the chord changes I'm trying to keep the same idea going through the progression instead of having to go with the changes.

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The form of the tune is AAB, and I've found I enjoy soloing over that type of structure.

I've included Jerry's statement of the melody so you can take note of the vertical nature that he mentions. His solo is three choruses of AAB. The A sections are 12 bars in length, the B's are 8. During the period of this session Jerry was heavily into playing over the bar lines using cross-rhythms. This solo is a good example of how he would execute this technique.

### **ON THE BRINK**

This head is based on the changes of Charlie Parker's *Confirmation*, which is a blast to play on. This tune fits a lot of bills. In the course of an evening, if I feel like playing a medium tempo piece, it fits. It also works as up tempo or latin. Of course this is hindsight, but what strikes me about this solo, is that I'm just trying swing a little bit and have fun doing it. I play a little theme that you'll find in the introduction (bars 1-6) and in the solo (beginning of the fourth chorus). I also have a lot of freedom harmonically and rhythmically throughout this track because I'm playing with just bass and drums.

On this recording Jerry is swingin' hard for six and a half minutes non-stop. This cut is another great example of how Jerry conceptualizes a tune in relation to an improvisation. The transcription consists of an unaccompanied introduction, the head, and five choruses of blowing. Each idea flows perfectly into the next as if it was one complete six and a half minute thought. The unaccompanied introduction is four choruses long. Jerry vamps on the first two bars of the progression, which extends the first A section of the intro by four bars. This is also where the reoccurring improvised theme originates. The fourth chorus of the intro is ABA.

### **TILT**

This tune is a 24-bar minor blues which gets tilted when the progression goes from a minor 7 chord to it's parallel half-diminished chord in bars 3, 7, 11 & 15. Thinking in concert pitch, the progression goes to a Bbmi7 (the minor four chord of the key) in the ninth bar and turns into a Bbmi7b5 in bar 11, which is really functioning as an

altered C7 (V7 of the key) that gets us back to Fmi7 in the 13th bar. The Fmi7 then gets tilted into another Fmi7b5, but this time it is functioning as an altered Db7 which resolves to the GbMAJ7b5 in bar 17. I chose take two to be transcribed because on the recording it felt like that version flowed better. This was because on take two I played the melody twice, which put me more in the mood of the piece.

After two statements of the melody, which is the first twenty-four bars of the transcription (repeated once), Jerry plays four choruses.

### **RED'S BLUES**

I wrote the melody to get a real bluesy feeling, because the progression is complex. *Red's Blues* is basically a blues in Bb, but by bar three I'm in a different key. In bar five I get to the four chord, but it's a MAJ7. To finish out the progression, I go into a *Giant Steps* (ascending major thirds) type groove. After the EbMAJ7, there's a IImi7-V7 into G, then a IImi7-V7 to B, which functions as a bIIMAJ7, that leads us back to the IImi7-V7 to Bb7. After I wrote this complicated, almost awkward progression, I intentionally wrote a melody that sounded simplistic.

On this recording, after the statement of the melody (included in lead sheet form), Mulgrew Miller plays 13 choruses, followed by Jerry's eleven choruses of Coltrane-type changes on the blues.

## THE RECORDINGS

### **STANDARD GONZ**

(McCoy, JAB, Arbonius Unt, Conjunction)

I didn't get a contract from Blue Note to record *Standard Gonz*, we just submitted a demo tape. Joey (Calderazzo), Dave (Santoro), Adam (Nussbaum), and I recorded the demo tape in three hours. We went into the recording studio and punched out all the tunes. We did not expect the demo to be released. I sent the demo to Matt Pierson at Blue Note, and he really liked it. He told me he would send the tape to his affiliate in Japan, and they liked it as is. Except for McCoy and JAB, everything on the recording is from the original demo session. We went back into the studio to record those two, because Blue Note wanted some more mu-

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sic. Some people have told me that the saxophone has a varying sound quality to it throughout the recording. This is because we recorded the original demo at 15 ips (inches per second), and then we went back into the studio and recorded *McCoy* and *JAB* at 30 ips. This change in the recording process created a slight variance in the recorded saxophone sound. Both sessions were held at the Outpost Studio in Stoughton, Massachusetts.

**SIGNED BY**

*(A Different Look & I Ching Reading)*

It was really a lot of fun for me recording this CD. The thing that was unusual about the date was that I had never played with this piano player before. His name is Joachim Kuhn. He really exemplifies the artist type persona. He gave me a copy of a couple of his tunes that we wanted to record. I copied them out in Bb (his handwriting is truly something to behold), and by that time we were in the studio recording. I was very happy about the way the date came out because it was so spontaneous. We really didn't work anything out, and most of what is on the recording are first takes. The French engineer Philippe Laffont used two microphones on the sax, one to the right of the bell, the other to the left. The only problem with the recording is that when it was released on CD, the pitch came out slightly lower than a half step from where it's supposed to be. It makes the music sound labored, and the piano sound dull. It just makes the tenor sound weird. The new pressing of the CD has the music in the correct key.

**TILT!**

*(On the Brink & Tilt)*

For this recording I decided that I wanted to do some quartet tunes, and a few trio tunes. I wanted to record some tunes without piano because I thought from a creative standpoint it would be a nice change for me. Unfortunately, the original piano player on the date took that as a personal attack, which imposed a negative dark charma on the session. But you know what? I love the music that came out of the session. On the day of the recording I felt so powerful musi-

cally, that there was nothing that could have gotten in the way of being creative.

**LINEAGE**

*(Red's Blues)*

This was recorded live in concert at the 1st & 2nd Church in Boston. We had never played together as a group (Mulgrew Miller, piano; Dave Santoro, bass; and Adam Nussbaum, drums). Mulgrew came over earlier in the day and we went over some of the tunes. The sound was really echoey in the church. Everything blended in together and sounded blurry. There was no definition to the sound on stage. I couldn't hear anyone very well, so I thought the concert wasn't going the way it should. But low and behold I got the tapes back, and I was shocked that the music actually came out! Sonically, during the performance, the concert was weird. Sometimes you think the music is terrible and it ends up sounding okay and other times vice-versa. Luckily, this performance was an example of the former and not the latter. I got a performance grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to do this concert.

OTHER THOUGHTS

ON RECORDING

Once I get through making a recording, I never listen to it. Editing these transcriptions is the first time I've listened to *Standard Gonz* since it's been out. Some records I've never heard once. Some recordings I listen to before they're released because I'm thinking about what takes to put on, what mix on the tunes I would like, or fixing endings. But as soon as a recording is out I hardly ever listen to it. It just feels past tense to me. I am usually listening to tapes of my most recent recordings. You can really learn a lot about your art by listening to yourself, even though it can be real work at times.

ON ARTICULATION

Articulation has been a priority of mine, not because somebody told me, it's just the way I hear music. People ask me "what do you practice?" I practice time feels, I practice playing time and swinging. That's priority

number one. It's the articulation that makes me sound like me. I'll practice articulating one way for a day, another way the next, all kinds, a whole variety. I don't want to have just one way of playing. Depending on the rhythm section I play with, I'll play a different way. I might be the only one who notices that I'm playing differently. Somebody else might think I sound the same, but to me it sounds different. I have a student who says there's an expression that states, "God is into details," and I feel that way about music. You listen to the great players, and they're really detailed about what they do. Even if they haven't thought about something that they do for a long time, at one time they practiced a lot to get a certain sound.

Whenever I felt that Jerry's articulation in some way affected his phrasing, I made note of it on the transcription. I believe that notating articulation is an important step in the transcription process. For a full understanding of Jerry's phrasing and time feel, the next step for the listener is to write in each and every one of Jerry's articulations. This is part of the detailed method of practicing that he talks about.

### ON PRACTICING

I learned how to play from playing along with records. I would play along with records for four hours, and then go practice for another four. I can remember playing along with Hank Mobley, Wayne Shorter, Dexter Gordon, Sonny Stitt, Sonny Rollins, Cannonball Adderley, Joe Henderson, John Coltrane, Stanley Turrentine, and many others. I would play along with all the solos, not just the saxophone, but the trumpet and piano solos, also. One time I would just listen to the bass line, another time I'd just listen to the piano. I was trying to listen in a very particular way, to get my ears so they could hear things. I didn't write down many of the solos I learned, maybe 20 or 30.

### ON TRANSCRIPTION BOOKS

I think they're great. When I wanted to study jazz there wasn't any teachers, so I had to learn how to play it my way. Jazz musicians would tell me, "Just listen to records and learn tunes." So that's what I

did. Now, years later, there's a lot of very fine jazz educators around. If I had the opportunity to study with these teachers when I was younger, I would have definitely taken advantage of it. Instead of getting from point A to point B in ten years, I could have cut it down to two years. As far as transcription books go, I don't get a lot out of just looking at notes on a piece of paper, so you must do the listening homework. Even to an accomplished musician the transcription is lifeless unless he hears the artist articulate it and listens to his time feel.

I adamantly concur with Jerry's thoughts on transcription books. Do not take his words lightly.

### DO YOUR LISTENING HOMEWORK!

#### DISCOGRAPHY OF TRANSCRIPTIONS

CD TITLE <i>Standard Gonz</i>
RECORD LABEL and NUMBER Blue Note CDP 7 962562
TUNES <i>McCoy, JAB, Arbonius Unt and Conjunction</i>

CD TITLE <i>Signed By</i>
RECORD LABEL and NUMBER ZZ DeuxZ ZZ 84104
TUNES <i>A Different Look and I Ching Reading</i>

CD TITLE <i>TILT!</i>
RECORD LABEL and NUMBER Red RR 123245-2CD
TUNES <i>On the Brink and Tilt</i>

CD TITLE <i>Lineage</i>
RECORD LABEL and NUMBER Red RR 123237-2CD
TUNE <i>Red's Blues</i>

# McCOY

from *STANDARD GONZ* : Blue Note CDP7962562

Jerry Bergonzi

♩=106

## Melody

1

5

10

13

17

21

## Solo-First Chorus

24

Db7/G

28

C7

30

E7

32

C7

34

Ab7

36

Bb7

39

Eb7

41

G7

44



65

Chords: Eb7, Eb7, Bb7

Fingerings: 3, 3

68

Chords: G7, F7

Fingerings: 3, 7, 6, 6, 6, 6

70

Chords: Eb7, Db7

Fingerings: (bx), (x), (x), (bx), (x), (x), (x)

72

**Solo-Third Chorus**

Chords: C7, G7, C7

Fingerings: (x), (x), (bx), (x), (x), (x)

75

Chords: G7, Db7/G St., C7

Fingerings: (x), (x)

78

Chords: C7, St., G7

Fingerings: (bx), (x), (bx), (x), (x), (x)

80

Chords: E7, D7

Fingerings: 6, 6, 6, 6

82

Chords: C7, Bb7

Fingerings: 6, (x)

2 Play with L.H. Low "B" key

84  $A\flat 7$   $B\flat 7$   $E\flat 7$

87  $B\flat 7$   $E7/B\flat$   $E\flat 7$

90  $E\flat 7$  12 3

91  $B\flat 7$  7  $G7$  3

93  $F7$  3  $E\flat 7$

95  $D\flat 7$  3  $C7$

97 **Solo-Fourth Chorus**  $G7$  6  $C7$  3

99  $G7$  4  $D\flat 7/G$   $C7$

3 Multiphonics

4 While playing high "D" rapidly depress 1 2 3/1 2 3 Eb at random

C<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> E<sup>7</sup>

102

D<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup>

105

B<sup>b</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup>7

107

B<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>b</sup>7 St. B<sup>b</sup>7

109

E<sup>7</sup>/B<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>7

1

E<sup>b</sup>7 B<sup>b</sup>7 G<sup>7</sup> F<sup>7</sup>

1

E<sup>b</sup>7 D<sup>b</sup>7

1

C<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup>

120