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(Note: *Joshua* is not included. It was performed by Jim McNeely on the recording.)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Levine has performed with Woody Shaw, Cal Tjader, Freddie Hubbard, Bobby Hutcherson, Joe Henderson, Milt Jackson, Dizzy Gillespie, Blue Mitchell, Harold Land, Charlie Rouse, Johnny Griffin, Art Farmer, Sonny Stitt, Donald Byrd, George Coleman, Wallace Roney, Odean Pope, Stan Getz, Chet Baker, Eddie Henderson, Mongo Santamaria, Frank Morgan, Bruce Foreman, Willie Bobo, Poncho Sanchez, Tito Puente, and Moacir Santos. He currently leads a trio and is active on the San Francisco jazz scene.

Mark's compositions have been recorded by Joe Henderson, Joanne Brackeen, Cal Tjader, Tito Puente, Poncho Sanchez, Don Menza, Pete Escovedo, and Moacir Santos.

Mark has recorded three albums as a leader, the most recent being "*Smiley & Me*" on Concord Jazz. In addition, he recorded five albums with Cal Tjader, one of them a Grammy winner, and has appeared on albums recorded by Joe Henderson, Bruce Foreman, Carmen McRae, Houston Person, Moacir Santos, Gabor Szabo, Poncho Sanchez, Richie Cole, Ray Pizzi and many others.

Mark has taught privately in the San Francisco area since 1974. He has taught at Jamey Aebersold's Summer Jazz Workshops, and has been on the faculty of both Jazz Camp Santa Cruz (formerly Cazadero Jazz Camp), and the Stanford Jazz Workshop, since 1982. He is currently on the faculty at Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, California, The San Francisco Conservatory Of Music, Mills College in Oakland, California, and Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill, California.

Mark is an ongoing contributor to the jazz piano magazine *The Piano Stylist*. His book, *The Jazz Piano Book*, published by Sher Music, is acknowledged as one of the best jazz piano education books on the market.

### Some Thoughts On Comping

by Mark Levine

**Comping** (short for accompanying), is what you as the pianist play behind soloists. Your first priority is to LISTEN to the soloists, stimulate them harmonically and rhythmically, and almost as important, stay out of their way.

I try to keep four things in mind when comping:

- 1) Swing
- 2) Choose the appropriate harmony
- 3) Balance when to play sparsely and when to play more actively
- 4) Play melodic fills when the soloist "breathes"

Let's take each one of these points separately:

1) **Swing.** First and foremost, you should set and keep a groove with the bassist and drummer, which often means making subtle adjustments to accommodate their styles. As an example, if I'm playing with a bassist who plays right in the middle of the beat, and a drummer who plays on top of the beat, I'll have to adjust my own sense of time to strike a balance between them.

Playing with a sense of forward motion is critical to swinging. I try to play chords mostly ahead or on beats one and three, less often behind those beats. Listen to Red Garland's comping on the Miles Davis recordings of the 1950s for inspiration.

2) **Choose the appropriate harmony.** This topic could be called "when and how to alter the chords." Listening carefully to the soloist and your own good taste are the final arbiters, but I find the following guidelines (not rules) to be helpful:

#### Major chords:

You can almost always raise the 4th on a major chord.

You can often raise the 5th on a major chord.

If the soloist is playing very chromatically, you can sometimes play chords as complex as B/C (B major triad over C in the bass).

#### Tonic minor chords:

You can often raise the 7th.



### Minor seventh chords:

You can often play a  $\emptyset$  (half-diminished) chord as the II chord in a minor II-V-I progression.

### Dominant seventh chords:

You can often play a b9 or altered scale voicing if the V chord resolves down either a 5th or a minor 2nd.

You can usually play a +11 voicing if the V chord goes somewhere else other than down a 5th.

You can sometimes substitute sus and susb9 voicings for V chords.

Thick or harmonically complex voicings, such as combination diminished chords or drop 2 block chords, should be used sparingly.

3) Balance your 'comping between playing sparsely and playing more actively. This is common sense. If the soloist is playing lots of notes, don't play so much. On the other hand, if the soloist uses lots of space, comp more actively. Listen to Wynton Kelly's comping on "Freddie Freeloader." Hear how much less active his playing is behind Cannonball Adderley's and Coltrane's solos than behind Miles, who plays far fewer notes.

4) Play melodic fills when the soloist breathes. Wynton Kelly was the acknowledged master in this department. Listen to Wynton's fills behind the soloists on Miles' album *Someday My Prince Will Come* for guidance.

Above all, as you play, *LISTEN*.

## Discography

The following records include first recordings of all the tunes on Volume 50, "*The Magic Of Miles*," plus a few other notable versions, mostly by Miles.

*"Freddie Freeloader"* was recorded by Miles in 1959, on the historic *Kind Of Blue* album. Wynton Kelly plays piano on this track. Bill Evans plays on all the other tracks on the album.

*"So What,"* also from *Kind Of Blue*, features Bill Evans on piano. Miles recorded several other versions of "So What," most of them at much faster tempos. The most notable are Saturday Night In Person at the Blackhawk, Vol 2, with Wynton Kelly, and two versions with Herbie Hancock, *Four & More* and *Live at the Plugged Nickel*.

*"All Blues,"* also from *Kind Of Blue*, has Bill Evans on piano. Several later versions feature Wynton Kelly, including Miles & Coltrane, and Miles Davis & Sonny Stitt, and a couple feature Herbie Hancock, including *My Funny Valentine*, and *Four & More*. Another version to check out is Steve Turre's 6/8 arrangement on his album *Viewpoint*, featuring pianist Mulgrew Miller.

*"Milestones"* was first recorded in 1958, on Miles' album of the same name. The song is listed as "Miles" on the original recording, and the pianist is Red Garland. Two later versions of note, both with Herbie Hancock on piano, are on *Live at the Plugged Nickel* and *Miles In Europe*.

*"Blue In Green,"* also from *Kind Of Blue*, features Bill Evans on piano. Another excellent version is on Wallace Roney's album *Verses*, with Mulgrew Miller on piano.

*"Seven Steps To Heaven,"* written by Victor Feldman, was first recorded in 1963 on Miles' album of the same name. Herbie Hancock is the pianist. A couple of great versions that followed later, also with Herbie on piano, are *Miles in St. Louis* and *Four and More*.

*"Nardis"* was never recorded by Miles, and some sources credit Bill Evans with at least co-authoring the song. An early version, with Bill on piano, is on Cannonball Adderley's *Cannonball Adderley & 8 Giants*. Another great recording of the song is on Joe Henderson's album *The Kicker*, with Kenny Barron on piano.

*"Eighty One,"* written by Ron Carter, was first recorded on Miles' album *ESP*.



9th      Bb7  
chorus

B7

[illegible]

E♭7

B7

Musical score for the piano accompaniment of "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. The score is written for piano (p) and includes a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a time signature of 4/4. The piece is in the key of Bb major (F minor). The score is divided into two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system is marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The second system is marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The score includes a key signature change from Bb to Bb7 in the second system. The score is written for piano (p) and includes a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a time signature of 4/4. The piece is in the key of Bb major (F minor). The score is divided into two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system is marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The second system is marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The score includes a key signature change from Bb to Bb7 in the second system.

F7

E♭7

Ab7

The image shows a musical score for the piano accompaniment of the song "The Girl on the Train" by Rachel Watson. The score is written for piano (p) and features three distinct harmonic sections: F7, Eb7, and Ab7. The music is in 4/4 time and uses a key signature of one flat (Bb). The piano part is characterized by a steady, rhythmic accompaniment, often using triplets and sustained chords. The melody is primarily in the right hand, with some instances of the left hand playing a more active line. The overall mood is somber and reflective, consistent with the song's themes.

10th      B $\flat$ 7  
chorus

Bb7

10th Chorus

Bb7

The musical score for the 10th Chorus of 'The Sound of Music' is presented in a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The piece is in common time. The melody is primarily in the treble clef, featuring a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets indicated by a '3' over the notes. The bass clef provides a harmonic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes, also including triplets. The score is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines. The first measure has a whole rest in the treble and a half note in the bass. The second measure has a whole rest in the treble and a half note in the bass. The third measure has a whole rest in the treble and a half note in the bass. The fourth measure has a whole rest in the treble and a half note in the bass.

E♭7

Bb7

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in two systems. The first system is in E-flat major (one flat) and 2/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The second system is in B-flat major (two flats) and 2/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The score includes a variety of musical notations, including eighth notes, quarter notes, and chords.

A- F $\Delta$  E $\Delta$  E-

A- F $\Delta$ +4 A- F $\Delta$ +4

D- D-/G G7 C $\Delta$  F $\Delta$ +4

E- F $\Delta$  B7 C $\Delta$

A- F $\Delta$  E $\Delta$  E-

6th chorus E- F $\Delta$  B7 C $\Delta$