

# DEXTER

# GORDON

- AND HIS STYLE

-EARLY INFLUENCES

-THE INSTRUMENTAL SOUND

-THE IMPROVISATION

-THE COMPOSITIONS

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## Introduction

Jazz – a musical language.

When listening to the duet between Charles Mingus and Eric Dolphy on *What Love*<sup>1</sup> it soon becomes obvious that there is more at stake here than just music. During Eric Dolphy's solo Mingus enters on bass and goes into a dialogue with Dolphy's bass-clarinet, and gradually this conversation develops into a regular verbal fight with Mingus in the role of the aggressive masculine voice and Dolphy as his hysterical and sobbing female counterpart. This whole event is clearly *not* to be understood purely as music, but rather as a veritable verbal argument.

Within these few minutes the distinction between music and the spoken language is broken down, the duet has turned into a spoken dialogue, but –mind you- a *musical* dialog without any specific meaning. All the parameters that we normally associate with music –melody, harmony, rhythm, instrumental sound- have been replaced with the ways of expression associated with the human voice, the sound and modulations of the voice, the violent emotional outbursts and the timing of the dialogue between the two people involved.

This analogy between jazz as a musical expression and the spoken language has received greater focus in the field of jazz research within the past ten years. Based on a large number of interviews two young musicologists, Ingrid Monson and Paul F. Berliner, have surveyed the musicians own perceptions of the improvisational praxis within the jazz tradition, and the result of their research has extensive consequences for our understanding of the inner dynamics of jazz improvisation.<sup>2</sup>

This analogy between language and improvisation is deeply rooted in the spoken language of Black Americans, which in a number of ways differs from Anglo-American norms. In general one may characterize the Black American oral language as a humorous and indirect ambiguous playing with words, as opposed to the Western ideal which to a larger extent is focused on the intellectual discourse:

"In the Western classical music tradition, this preference has manifested itself in the long tradition of separating musical theory from practice, which is perhaps fitting for a musical tradition in which composition has in principle been separated from the moment of performance. In improvisation, composed through face-to-face interaction, however, the separation of sounds from the human beings who produce them makes far less sense."<sup>3</sup>

What further separates the Black American spoken language from Anglo-American is its special melodious aspects and its timing as one finds it in the Black churches of America; a good preacher will always build up his sermon gradually in such a way that he invites the congregation into a dialogue in call-response patterns, as exemplified in the following excerpt of 'The Beloved Prostitute'.<sup>4</sup> Here Rev. Williams interprets the text in a rhythmically and melodically 'chanted sermon' applying short and emphatic statements, which allows the congregation to respond with a singing "Yeah" or powerfull shouts like "Tell it!" og "Say it!"

*Preacher**Congregation:*

"And I heard him saying – to Israel	
Ah you have forgotten about God;	Yeah
You <i>have</i> forgotten aboutah	
The <i>man</i> who brought you – across the Red Sea	Yeah
Ah <i>you have</i> forgotten <i>about</i> the God	Ah
Whoah fed you for forty years	Yeah
In the wilderness.	Yeah
Andah you're <i>servin</i> Gods now,	Yeah!
Whoah <i>have</i> eyes and cannot see.	Yeah
Nnnh <i>have</i> ears and cannot hear	Tell it! Yeah
Andah you <i>know my</i> brother and sister	Yeah
Oh <i>Lordah</i> , we today have sold ourselves.	Yeah
Nnnh so <i>many of us</i> today have prostituted our souls	Yeah
Oh <i>Lordah</i> , we <i>sold our</i> souls – to Satan and all of hisimps.	Yeah
Nnh, we <i>prostituted ourselves</i> – to envy.	Yeah, Say it!
Nnh, and we <i>sold ourselves</i> – to hate.	Yeah (gradually more
Oh <i>Lordah</i> , we <i>sold ourselves</i> – to jealousy.	Yeah turbulence)
Aaandah, we <i>sold ourselves</i> – to all crime.	Yeah
Praise God, we <i>sold ourselved</i> – to bootleg.	Yeah
Nnh, and we <i>sold ourselves</i> – to the numbergame.	Yeah"

Monson's and Berliner's many interviews with jazz musicians unambiguously points towards the understanding of improvisation as a musical language which is deeply rooted in Afro-American culture and language. This fact has far reaching implications for our understanding of the musician's individual style of playing and the overall principles for the construction of the improvised solo-lines, and for our understanding of the interaction within the combo.

A jazz musician's personal *tone and phrasing* is closely related to qualities of the human voice known from the vocal artikulation of the blues which is unmistakable in the playing of for instance Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker or Miles Davis, or the imitation of speech articulation heard in the Charles Mingus-Eric Dolphy dialogue mentioned above.

But also the *construction of the solo improvisation* is to be understood as more than just a musical phenomenon with a close relationship to the spoken word. Lester Young referred to the act of improvisation as *storytelling*, applying words (musical licks or smaller motives), which were tied together syntactically into coherent melodic phrases and in the end making a whole story (the overall disposition of the solo):

"if a guy plays a beautiful solo and he's playing from the heart or he's talking with his horn, we say, 'He's telling a story.' " <sup>5</sup>

The improvising musician –our storyteller- thus builds his solo from smaller musical ideas or fragments, which are combined logically to create continuity and coherence in the solo line:

"After you initiate the solo, one phrase determines what the next is going to be. From the first note that you hear, you are responding to what you've just played: you just said this on your instrument, and now that's a constant. What follows from that? And then the next phrase is a constant. What follows from that? And so on and so forth. And finally, let's wrap it up so that everybody understands that that's what you're doing. It's like language: you're talking, you're speaking, you're responding to yourself. When I play, it's like having a conversation with myself." <sup>6</sup>

To understand jazz improvisation as a musical language also has implications for the understanding of the collective interaction in the combo, the interaction between the musicians in the rhythm section and between the soloist and the rhythm section:

"it is not enough for a musician to play through a tune with only its melody and harmonic structure in mind, as many jazz pedagogy books would have us believe; the player must be so thorough familiar with the basic framework of the tune that he or she can attend to whatever everyone else in the band is doing." <sup>7</sup>

"Good jazz improvisation is sociable and interactive just like a conversation: a good player communicates with the other players in the band. If it doesn't happen, it's not good jazz." <sup>8</sup>

This *internal musical dialogue* in the combo can assume many different forms. The soloist may take the lead –'tell a story'– and possibly invite the rhythm section to make comments, much in the same way as in the 'chanted sermon' above. Or the musical dialogue may take the form of an open discussion, where everybody in turn joins in and comments on each other –as jive talk, discussion, friendly conversation or maybe common gossip. Also the dialogue may take certain forms analogous to the spoken dialogue, like a heated argument, quarrel, competition ("anything you can do, I can do better!") or maybe a tender love duet.

### The two tenors.

While studying musicology at the University of Aarhus back in the seventies I was fortunate to hear Dexter Gordon live on many occasions. In those years Dexter had his residence in Denmark and often played with the local rhythm sections or fellow American musicians who were stopping by, friends like Red Rodney, Hampton Hawes, Barry Harris, Sonny Stitt, Johnny Griffin or Jackie McLean.

On one particular night, September 19, 1976, at *Jazzhus Tagskægget* in Århus, a puzzling incident occurred, which over the next few days gave me an occasion to reflect on the particular improvisational style of Dexter. Dexter was playing with the locals, and among them Lars Rørbeck, a fine pianist who happened to be a good friend of mine. At one time during the first set Dexter announced a blues, it might have been *The Jumpin' Blues*, and after the theme Lars strolled, leaving Dexter alone with bass and drums. We were all expecting Lars to come back in after the first four or five choruses, but nothing happened, he was just sitting up there looking down at his keys.

A while later Dexter began to signal over his back that *Now Was The Time*, but still nothing happened. After what seemed to be an eternity (probably somewhere around 20-25 choruses, Dexter always took long solos) Lars finally came back and stayed in there for the remainder of the tune.

During intermission, when I asked Lars why he didn't come back from his stroll, he replied: "I couldn't, I tried desperately, but I couldn't! Everytime I would think up something to take me back in, I found that whatever I could come up with would conflict with Dexter's lines, *because his playing was so strong!*"

This of course puzzled me, because Lars was a generally known as a very strong pianist with a good comp and an extraordinary sense of harmony. But the incident made me realize that Dexter's solo improvisations were not merely improvisations, but intelligent melodic lines in rhythm *being carefully constructed*, brick by brick, out of a profound knowledge of harmony and the chordal foundation of the tunes. Dexter's highly intellectual process of improvisation dealt first of all with the coherence of his own musical statements. His well known laid back rhythmical phrasing might be seen as an additional indication of a musician, who was entangled in his own work of construction, more or less regardless of the musical surroundings. Therefore, for the strolling pianist to re-enter it would be necessary first to understand the musical logic of Dexter's line completely in order to anticipate its requisite continuation.

Years later, when I told Maxine Gordon about this incident, she said, "Oh yeah! A lot of the pianists had difficulty coming back from a stroll with Dexter, Kenny Drew always complained about that, and Dexter would just say, Well, then *don't stroll!*"

Another concert, the date is July 6, 1987, Stan Getz is playing at *Jazzhouse Montmartre* in Copenhagen with his quartet, Kenny Barron on piano, Rufus Reid on bass and Victor Lewis on drums. The quartet style is primarily characterized by a constant internal musical conversation between these four excellent and attentive musicians. Everything that Getz would come up with that night seemed to be reflecting the playing of Barron, Reid and Lewis. And on the other hand the rhythm section seemed to follow Getz closely, whenever he would change mood or dynamics during his solos on such standards as *Stella by Starlight* or *I Can't Get Started*.<sup>9</sup>

The inner dynamics of the Dexter Gordon and the Stan Getz quartets and the balance between the two soloists and their respective rhythm sections as described above seemed light years apart. When I later asked bassist Rufus Reid, who also played regularly with Dexter between 1977 and 1979, how he experienced the difference in playing with these two tenor giants, he would compare the American Dexter Gordon Quartet (with George Cables on piano and Eddie Gladden on drums) with a freight train starting off at full power, leaving Dexter out there to do his thing. Whereas Getz preferred to have more colours on his palette, inviting the rhythm section to interact with his playing. Where the dialogue between the soloist and the rhythm section was essential to the Stan Getz Quartet, it was almost non existing with the Dexter Gordon Quartet (again according to Reid, "Dexter didn't really interact that way.")

Although there were similarities in the playing of Dexter Gordon and Stan Getz (both were heavily influenced by Lester Young, both were extraordinary melodic

inventive, they both demonstrated a thorough knowledge of harmonic theory and had an untroubled instrumental technique), they were widely different in their instrumental sound and single note attack. But the main difference in style had to do with the two different approaches they required from the rhythm section.

In the following chapters I will attempt to elucidate the components of Dexter Gordon's style and some of its most prominent influences, succeeded by an analysis of how this style is reflected in Dexter's solo improvisations and his original compositions.

## Dexter Gordon's tenor sax style

### The first musical foundation, learning theory.

Dexter Gordon about Lloyd Reese: "He plays trumpet - all brasses - piano, sax. A lot of people out there studied with him. I got a musical integrity from him that has been invaluable to me." <sup>10</sup>

When Dexter joined The Lionel Hampton Big Band in 1940 he was still attending Jefferson High School in Los Angeles. For a young boy, only 17 years of age, to be joining the band of one of the most exposed and popular musicians of that time, Dexter certainly must have had solid instrumental skills and knowledge of elementary theory already at that time.

He had started out at the age of 13 on clarinet. The clarinet, being a difficult instrument to master, was - and is - generally regarded as a good place to start for laying down a good technical foundation for saxophone players. The father, who was a doctor with close connections to the jazz community, was undoubtedly responsible for supplying Dexter with one of the best teachers in the L.A. area at the time, John Sturdevant from New Orleans, who gave the young boy a solid embouchure and tone control:

"He was one of the local guys in L.A. and a very nice cat who had that big fat clarinet sound like Bigard's. I remember asking him about that which knocked him out. I said "How ya get that sound, man?" <sup>11</sup>

When shifting to alto sax at the age of 15, and tenor at 17, the young Dexter would probably already have overcome the most elementary technical obstacles, by the time he started imitating his main teenage idol, Lester Young.

The most prominent and influential teacher, who was to provide Dexter with the best possible all-round musical foundation, was no doubt Lloyd Reese, whose teaching would also have a lasting influence on musicians like Charles Mingus, Buddy Collette and Eric Dolphy.

"Lloyd Reese and his wife, a classical pianist, had a conservatory on McKinley Avenue in Los Angeles. He was considered the greatest all-around teacher and a fine instrumentalist himself." <sup>12</sup>

Reese was a saxophonist and trumpeter, who had been playing with Les Hite's Band. He was frequently offered jobs with known and established bands, but he preferred to stay in Los Angeles to teach at his own conservatory. All Reese's students were taught piano concurrently with their own instrument for better understanding of music theory. Reese taught his students harmony by the system of Roman numerals, which enabled them to understand how specific chord progressions functioned in different keys. On Sunday mornings he would have a rehearsal band for his students, giving them a chance to learn some of the discipline required for playing in larger



groups. But Reese's influence stretched far beyond the instrumental teaching and awareness of theory, in the words of Buddy Collette:

"The ones who went to Lloyd Reese all did very well, because they could go anywhere. It wasn't just that they could play the instrument well. They had to be able to meet with people, conduct themselves properly. They knew how to make time. They were concerned about the whole orchestra. It wasn't just "Well, I played mine" but "Yeah, guys, could we all get an A? Could we all tune up again? Could we all maybe play a little easier?" That was a Lloyd Reese-type student. Everybody had to play piano. Most of us could write, most could conduct. You were getting all that other knowledge. He was opening our minds.

He also had a workshop or rehearsal band once a week. All of his students were in it. It was not so much how much you played, it was how you played it. And we were aware of it. He was into reality and calling it like it is. And when you do that, you can really get it. This guy was preparing you to be a giant." <sup>13</sup>

Another influential teacher was Sam Brown (nicknamed 'Count'), who conducted the school bands at Jefferson High. In this school swing band Dexter played stock arrangements of Benny Goodman and Count Basie together with other youngsters such as Chico Hamilton, Jackie Kelso, Vi Redd, Frank Morgan, Ernie Royal and Melba Liston.

When Dexter came to New York in the mid-forties after having played with Lionel Hampton and Billy Eckstine, he was confronted with the evolving bebop movement. Given his solid theoretic foundation already as a teenager he was ready to cope with the new musical language of Bird, Dizzy and the rest:

"I came to New York at the exactly the right time, when the music changed from swing to bop. I remember that some of the older musicians were rather indignant because we played in a new fashion, used new chords and so on. Fortunately I had studied theory and harmony, I had some knowledge of musical theory, which enabled me to grasp what was going on. I have always had a keen interest in harmony, if I hadn't been so lazy I might have been a reasonable good arranger." <sup>14</sup>

Already on Dexter's first recordings as a leader dating from 1945-47 <sup>15</sup> he reveals this superior mastery of harmonic theory in his improvised melody lines and in his own compositions, which will be illustrated later on.

## Learning the language and telling a story.

"Listen to that, Francis! The swing bands used to be all straight tonics, seventh chords; and then with the Basie band I heard Lester Young, and he sounded like he came out of the blue, because he was playing all the coloured tones, the 6th, the 9th and major 7th, - you know - like Debussy and Ravel. Then Charlie Parker came on, and he began to expand, and he went into 11ths, 13ths and flat-7ths. Luckily I was going in the same direction already.

You just don't go out and pick a style off a tree, the tree is inside you, growing naturally." <sup>16</sup>

Like many other tenor saxophonists who emerged in the late thirties and early forties Dexter was highly influenced by the playing of Lester Young with the Count Basie Orchestra. Young's playing struck a deep resonance in the young Gordon:

"But then I got my first Basie record and that was it. I feel in love with that band - Lester, Herschel Evans, the whole band. Duke was just fantastic, but the Basie band really hit me." <sup>17</sup>

"When Basie and Young came to Los Angeles in 1939, Dexter ditched school to hear the opening 11 a.m. show. More than thirty years later, Gordon recalled: "They opened with 'Clap Hands Here Comes Charlie,' and Lester Young came out soloing - and he was fantastic. I really loved the man. He was melodic, rhythmic, had that bittersweet approach....It felt so good to hear him play." <sup>18</sup>. In justification of the day's truancy, Gordon explained: "Prez was like going to school for us." <sup>19</sup>

Indeed Prez was like going to school, Prez was *the* schoolmaster who set the standard for the language, vocabulary, syntax and phrasing on the instrument for Dexter as well as a whole new generation of young saxophonists in the late forties.

When listening to Dexter's first recordings as a sideman and his first as a leader one detects an instantly recognizable influence on Dexter's phrasing and his whole melodic approach from the playing of Lester Young. The language of Prez included a predilection for those chordal notes, which Dexter in later interviews would refer to as *colored tones*:

"In the 30's, cats were playing harmonically, basically straight tonic chords and 7th chords. Lester was the first one I heard that played 6th chords. He was playing the 6th and the 9th. He stretched it a little by using the same color tones used by Debussy and Ravel, those real soft tones. Lester was doing all that." <sup>20</sup>

For many years to come Dexter would put particular emphasis on those *colored tones* in his improvisations and his compositions, which will be illustrated later on.

Another feature of Dexter's playing, the carefully calculated *use of vibrato* as an effect and thereby creating a terrific sense of swing, also came out of Prez' playing.

Other specific fingerprints of Prez' style, which has been an integral part of Dexter's playing right from the early beginnings, were the use of *false fingering* on the concert B<sup>b</sup> for one note riffs, *deep honks* at the bottom notes of the saxophone and the use of personal formulas <sup>21</sup>, *riff-like figures*, which was of vital importance both to the playing of Lester Young and the Basie style of the thirties and forties:



Lester Young's opening statement in *Shoeshine Boy* <sup>22</sup> is one of Prez' typical formulas. This melody line was later to become model for Dexter's own composition, *Dexter Digs In* <sup>23</sup>, and Dexter frequently applied this lick in his own improvisations (listen to the final chorus of *Blooming for Dootsie* <sup>24</sup> or Dexter's solo on *Ain't Misbehavin'* with Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra <sup>25</sup>. Indeed many of Dexter's compositions from 1945-55 were based on Lester Young formulas such as this one.

The single most important aspect of Prez' playing - which also had a vital impact on the young Dexter Gordon - is perhaps what might be called the *syntax of improvisation*, the way Prez connected his melodic phrases in a way *that made sense*:

"When Lester came out he played very melodic. Everything he played you could sing. He was always telling a story and Bird did the same thing. That kind of musical philosophy is what I try to do because telling a story is, I think, where it's at." <sup>26</sup>

### Lester Young's solo in *Lester Leaps In*.

The following analysis of Lester Young's solo in *Lester Leaps In* <sup>27</sup> will serve as an illustration of Young's innovative storytelling style, which was later to have a vital impact on the early Dexter Gordon.

The theme of *Lester Leaps In* is based on *Rhythm*-changes, vamps in the A-sections and with an improvised bridge over a circle of fifths. Young more or less disregards the chord changes in the A-sections and plays around the B<sup>b</sup>6-chord. This transcription contains Young's first two solo choruses, omitting his later chase with Basie.

As a fine storyteller Young is in possession of *an unmistakable voice*, a personal sound on the instrument and with emphasis on the melodic aspect of improvisation, making use of many characteristically licks or formulas and his predilection for the colored notes of the chords.

Young's eminent *musical syntax* is evident in the way he constructs his solo-lines, alternating between shorter statements and longer melody-lines, all connected into a whole by the development of shared motivic material.

The *overall rhetorical plan* of the solo is well thought out. In the first chorus he starts out gradually, stating the main ideas for the solo. He then gives each 8-bar section its own profile, gradually building up the intensity, climaxing with the riffs of A3 and settling down again for the second chorus. In the first two sections of the second chorus Young pushed towards a greater intensity with more dense and intricate

melody-lines, loosening up a bit on the bridge, and again making a riff-climax in the last eight bars and finally returning to the theme. Truly a perfectly executed story.

A1: A simple motivic statement referring back to the theme is exposed and left open [ms. 1-2] with a long pause, followed by a descending line with a Young characteristic, the 6th and 9th of the B<sup>b</sup>-chord, leading into another statement based upon a well known Young formula [x in ms. 5], which is repeated and varied; the first eight bars ends with a pause, where Basie's little piano figure inspires Young to:

A2: a new riff-like statement (another well known Young formula), which goes into a long descending melody line, wrapped up with the x-formula; after a pause this section is concluded with another descending line (again emphasising the 6th and 9th); last note leading directly into:

B: new statement (A-E) landing on the 9th of the D7-chord, which -after pause- is expanded into a longer phrase [2-4], then transposed (G-D) to the C7 chord, repeated after another pause, and the bridge is concluded with a descending phrase of which the last two notes becomes the starting point for:

A3: a new short riff on the 6th and 9th of the B<sup>b</sup>6-chord, repeated and varied twice, going into the x-formula, last notes repeated, and after a short pause this first chorus is concluded with a short theme statement.

A1

RIFF EXPANDED REPEATED VARIED

(FORMULA)

A2

9TH 6TH 9TH 6TH 9TH

REPEATED AND VARIED

x

A1: In duet with Basic, Young is building up tension again with a polymetric and chromatic riff-like figure, which is expanded and varied (1-4); a short pause is followed by a long descending wave-like phrase, applying a couple of well known Young formulas.

A2: Over the rhythm sections stops Young plays a short descending line (1-2), previously heard in A2 (7-8) and B (7-8), again involving the 6th and 9th of the  $B^b$ -chord, the line is repeated and expanded into a 6 bar phrase, which is built on a long ascending chromatic outline (D-Eb-E-F-F#-G) and concluded with the x-formula.

B

ONE NOTE RIFF REPEATED WITH THEME STATEMENT

A3

ONE NOTE RIFF REPEATED WITH THEME STATEMENT

x

B: With the rhythm section back in 4/4-time Young's playing in this bridge is loose and relaxed with two separate melody lines based on the circle of fifths (1-3 and 4-7),

A3: back to stop time, a well known Young idiom, the one-note riff using the false fingering on the concert  $B^b$  (1-2), repeated and expanded with a theme statement, the second chorus being concluded with a long descending line, the x-formula of course having the final word.

Lester Young's emphasis on the necessity of knowing the lyrics to a song from the standard repertoire in order to play it right, serves as another illustration of how to apply a song-like approach to the act of improvisation, which will make musical statements assemble into a coherent whole. This was another lesson which Dexter learned from Lester Young

**Malone:** Dexter, you have always, ever since I've been listening to you sprinkled or began a melody, if it's a ballad, with reciting the lyrics to that ballad. Could you tell me why you do that?

**Dexter:** Well, yes. You know, it's something I learned from Lester Young, that in knowing the lyrics to a ballad, to a composition, to a song, in playing it you're inside of the tune, and if you don't know the lyrics (...) you're missing something. (...) So I learned that lesson early on, and I still apply that. <sup>28</sup>

The whole idea of being 'inside the tune' is to enable the musician to phrase the melody in accordance with the lyrics and provide the melody with an overall expression, which is related to the content of the lyrics. In this way the rendering of the tune will be authentic and "make sense" in the same way, as for instance, the singing of a Billie Holiday.

### Finding your voice.

"...And there's a jazz sound. You can't describe it - recognize it, feel it, yes. No, not everybody can get that sound. The sound has to do with what you hear. What you hear in your mind, in your ear. And that has to do with what you're brought up with, many things, the tradition, and what you yourself as an individual hear. It's your voice. It's your speaking voice....." <sup>29</sup>

While there seems to be no doubt about his debt to Lester Young concerning the musical vocabulary, Dexter's personal sound on the tenorsax was in no way derived from his idol. From the earliest known recordings Dexter has always spoken with a bigger and fuller sound, which seemed to owe more to Young's antagonists, Coleman Hawkins or Ben Webster. For Dexter himself though - as indeed for all great jazzmusicians - the personal sound is first of all something which is achieved by what you hear in your mind, combined with your own personal taste and musical influences on your early musical training in general.

Dexter's concept of sound might have been moulded by his early teacher, New Orleans clarinettist John Sturdevant, but it was most likely heavily influenced by his innumerable encounters with fellow tenor players during his early career. Playing with the Lionel Hampton Big Band from December 1940 until early 1943 Dexter was featured with Illinois Jacquet in a duel on *Porkchops*, and Jacquet - being a robust Texas tenorsax - of course had a big and hourse sound.

"And, yeah, I learned a lot of shit from Jacquet too. He was also young, a few years older than me, but he was already playing, already a soloist, with his shit together. A lot of people don't seem to understand that Jacquet's a hell of a tenor player. We used to sit next to each other which was great and we used to do a two-tenor number called *Porkchops*. It wasn't extensive, you know, but we played a few choruses together.

**Interviewer:** Did you and Illinois ever sit down together and play or talk about improvisation?

**Gordon:** Constantly. Everyday, man. On the bus, off the bus, in the hotel, on the stand. We talked about what we wanted to do, who we liked. And he showed me a lot of shit like altissimo fingerings, playing over the high F." <sup>30</sup>

Jacquet also claims having had an major influence on Dexter's tenor sound when the two of them at one time tried out each other mouthpieces and both, satisfied with the outcome, decided to make the swap permanent. Jacquet's successor in the band, Arnett Cobb, another a robust Texas tenorsax, most likely had a continuous influence on the young Gordon.

The leader of Hampton's sax-section was Marshall Royal, who never hesitated to correct and mould his young protégé:

"It was really my school. I learned so much. Marshall (Royal) stayed on my ass all the time. He'd say, "Hold that note down, hold that note down." It was something else, you know, because we were holding phases of four, five, six bars and breathing in specific places together. Marshall forced me to learn about crescendo, decrescendo, piano, forte and all those things I didn't know anything about when I was in high school. (...) I used to get so mad because it seemed like it would never be right, but later I told him thanks a mil. He taught me so much. Unbelievable." <sup>31</sup>

Playing with alongside Jacquet and Cobb in Hampton's powerful and swinging band ("a roaring, take-no-prisoners saxophone section, topped by a team of leather-lunged trumpet players screaming collectively through a succession of triumphant finales" <sup>32</sup>) undoubtedly had a major influence on the young (not yet twenty) Gordon's development of a big and solid sound.

Later influences from fellow tenormen would include the duels with Sonny Stitt (and later Gene Ammons) on *Blowing The Blues Away* with the Billy Eckstine Orchestra, and also the teaming up with Wardell Gray (on *The Chase*), Teddy Edwards (On *The Duel*) and Don Byas in New York on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street.

"one night at the Deuces I played his [Byas'] horn, and I dug his mouthpiece so much I asked him about it. (...) So the next day I went down to Link and told them I wanted a 'Don Byas Special.'" <sup>33</sup>

When Dexter made his first recordings as a leader for Savoy in the mid-forties his basic instrumental sound, tonal attack and melodic phrasing were already unmistakably apparent. But in those days Dexter was living a turbulent life with a heavy

drug and alcohol abuse, and it would take him some years yet to get complete control over his everyday life and consistency and balance into his playing.

### Consolidation.

In the fifties Dexter was arrested for heroin possession on a number of occasions, and he spent a couple of years in the beginning of the decade in Chino, an open prison in California. Later he spent time in Fort Worth, Texas and Lexington, Kentucky, and in 1959 he served several months in Folsom Prison, California on grounds of a parole violation.

These long periods in jail in the late fifties offered Dexter an opportunity to step out of the turbulent life of drug and alcohol abuse and provide him with periods of peace and quiet to get in physical shape, practice on the instrument and get hold of his own playing. Dexter said himself:

"I probably owe my life to the fact that I had a few enforced 'vacations', in order to build my body back and to lead a fairly normal type of life - meaning, you know, uninvolved. With regular hours, regular meals. So, each time this would happen, my body would rebuild. (...) I was playing all the time. Because they always let me have my horn with me." <sup>34</sup>

Around 1960 there were two factors which played a vital role in boosting Dexter's career; first, his involvement with the Hollywood production of the Broadway play, *The Connection*, and second, his signing up with Alfred Lion's Blue Note label in 1961.

In 1959 Dexter was engaged to play the part of an addicted musician in Jack Gelber's play, *The Connection*, a story concerning a group of heroin addicts, who were waiting around for their heroin dealer. The production ran for about a year. Dexter acted as a musical director as well as a play-actor in the play, which also featured Charles 'Dolo' Coker (piano), George Morrow (bass) and Lawrence Marable (drums). Furthermore he provided original compositions to be played live on stage, among those *Ernie Tune*, *(For) Soul Sister*, *Landslide* and *I Want More*. To Dexter this engagement meant a chance for a long and steady period of regular work, playing the saxophone and furthermore employing his natural talent for acting.

His own compositions for the play were later recorded for the Blue Note company. During 1961-62 he recorded five highly successful albums for the company, namely *Doin' Alright*, *Dexter Calling*, *Landslide*, *Go* and *A Swingin' Affair*. <sup>35</sup>

These recordings reveal the surfacing of the mature artist, where all the early influences have been balanced into a perfect mix. The strong early influence of Lester Young was of course still apparent in Dexter's melodic conception, but here he definitely stepped out of Prez' shadow and spoke with his own voice and did so with great confidence.

"It is not fanciful to say that there was also a sense of maturity about it, in practically every area, and an almost triumphant aura pervaded both session, providing a



positive statement-of-intent for the future. It was as if Dexter himself was proclaiming, to all and sundry, his intention to re-establish himself on the jazz scene." 36

The basic style he revealed in the early sixties sessions was never to change over the years to come. During his 'exile years' in Copenhagen from 1962 to 1977 Dexter was experiencing great appreciation and love from his many fans and given living and working conditions, which enabled him to consolidate his style to perfection.

int.: "What has it meant musically to live in Europe?"

DG: "Well, for me, it has been very good because my whole lifestyle is much calmer, much more relaxed. I can devote more time to music, and I think it is beginning to show. It's not that everyday scuffle, and I'm able to concentrate more on studying." 37

"So in the sixties I worked, I was, like the house band [in the old Montmartre], where every summer -you know- for three or four months, and then in the winter for a couple of months, and in between outside, traveling around. And for myself it was a great learning experience, how to do this and also to become self-dependent. To be that strong that I could go on the bandstand with people, that didn't really, you know...It built myself up, I mean it was mutual. That experience became very, very important..." 38

After his triumphant return to the States in 1976, encouraged by his old friends Woody Shaw and Maxine Gregg (later married to Dexter), he settled down in NYC permanently in 1977 and started working for the first time with his own regular trio (George Cables, Rufus Reid and Eddie Gladden). The encounter of this dynamic trio first of all meant a further expansion of the dynamic and sound in Dexter's own playing and an introspection in his enchanted ballad playing, which over the years grew slower and slower.

## Dexter Gordon and the rhythm sections.

### *"Keeping time.*

This was at a party for Herluf Kamp Larsen<sup>39</sup>. We had gathered a spectacular tribute band consisting of jazz critics, Herluf fans and Dexter. As we all stood there and he looked over this parade of dilettants, he shouted at me - I was to take care of the drums and had some blame for the whole arrangement: "I do this for you, Albrechtsen!" And then he began to play as if we weren't there. I sat behind the drums and tried to keep time, and I felt his enormous toughness, how far behind he floated, how he, consciously and all the time, put his own beat in relation to the beat, tightened, pulled, tugged, I was sitting in the middle of a hurricane, trying desperately to hang on to the beat, dammit how I admired Alex Riel at that moment!"<sup>40</sup>

Dexter Gordon's famous rhythmical laid back phrasing most likely had its roots in the playing of Lester Young. Prez' off beat-phrasing was quite opposite to Coleman Hawkins' heavily playing *into* the beat, grooving each note and making it swing as hard as possible. Prez would always let his phrases fly above the beat and only hit into the groove of the rhythm section when playing his riff-like figures. Whether or not the heavy laid back phrasing was actually intentional on Dexter's behalf is doubtful. In 1977 he commented:

"Yeah. I've been told that I do that. I'm not really that conscious of it. I think I more or less got it from Lester because he didn't play right on top. He was always a little back, I think. That's the way I felt it, you know, and so it just happened that way."<sup>41</sup>

It goes without saying that Dexter's laid back phrasing would cause difficulties for members of his rhythm sections. Attempting to adapt your playing to Dexter's rhythmic phrasing might easily cause an unbalance or mess up the musical flow.

According to Maxine Gordon there were only two rhythm sections which completely satisfied Dexter over the years. The first consisted of Sonny Clark (p), Butch Warren (b) and Billy Higgins (dr), who performed on the classic Blue Note recordings, *Go!* and *A Swingin' Affair* (both recorded in August 1962), the second being his first regular American trio from 1977 to 1979 with Georges Cables (p), Rufus Reid (b) and Eddie Gladden (dr).

The 1962 constellation was indeed a happy one, Warren and Higgins laying down a beautiful and easy-going groove with Clark's sympatic and well balanced percussive comp. All three were perfectly balanced against each other, Higgins' crisp ride cymbal and discrete fills leaving plenty of room for Clark's comp.

"Billy Higgins was always Dexter's favorite drummer. He regarded "Smilin' Billy" as the "swingiest" drummer in the world, saying that the beat was always there with him and *you could just lay back and play and never have to worry about the feeling.*" <sup>42</sup>

The Dexter Gordon Quartet of the 1970's had a different internal balance, Gladden being a more powerful drummer than Higgins and Cables a heavier orchestrator on the piano than Clark. However with Reid and Cables working in perfect tandem, the internal chemistry of the group was unique. Reid says,

*"We did make him comfortable and he felt he could do what he does with no worry. I do think our band had a special chemistry that just clicked, even when Kirk Lightsey joined us, it was, in some ways, more interactive in the rhythm section."* <sup>43</sup>

Both rhythm sections had, in Rufus Reid's words, a chemistry that just clicked with a steady groove in bass and drums and a pianist with a laid back comp. In relation to Dexter the key word in the two quotes above is 'worry', "you could just lay back and play and never have to *worry about the feeling*", and "We did make him comfortable and he felt he could do what he does *with no worry*". When the members of the rhythm sections were able to hold and maintain a groove and interactive play on their own, Dexter would be able to balance his own sound, feeling and phrasing against it and thereby enable him to concentrate on the construction of his solo lines.

Naturally the internal balance of the two quartets were somewhat different, but then again, Dexter's playing had also evolved over the years. By 1962 his mature tenorsax style had come together and all the important ingredients were there. By the late seventies his sound had gotten bigger and his dynamic playing even more powerful, and the dynamic power generated by the Cables-Reid-Gladden constellation was necessary to balance the playing of a heavyweight-Dexter, Rufus Reid again:

*"...the power of Dexter would not project like it did without the rhythm section being like a huge train or truck moving at full throttle. That was the style."* <sup>44</sup>

When Kirk Lightsey replaced Cables in 1979 and Reid was replaced with John Heard (later again replaced by David Eubanks), this naturally caused some unbalance and turbulence at first. David Eubanks, who joined the quartet in 1980, was constantly faced with remarks from the other members like, "Rufus (Reid) used to do this" or "Rufus used to do that", until he finally got fed up and exploded: "I don't give a SHIT about Rufus, I'M ME!!". Reid also told the following story about Eubanks, who had previously played with Betty Carter, who had taught him to play on top of the beat:

"Gordon would say, "Now, look, you sound real good, man, but just relax, lay back." Then, the next night, he would play more laid back, or what felt to him like more laid back, and Dexter would say, "Relax, man. Just let it flow." That kept happening until, one day, the bass player got sick of Dexter coming to him with this and decided he was really going to lay back to the point where there was going to be no doubt about his laying back. So, that night they were playing ballads, and

he laid back so far that he knew [that] when he got off the bandstand and got into the dressing room they were going to say that it was too far back. He laid back so far that it hurt to do it, like he was becoming completely unglued with it. He knew they were going to have to say, "Not that much." So, he goes into the dressing room after the set, and everyone came into the room grinning from ear to ear. "That's it!" they said. "You got it now!" [Reid laughs.] He couldn't believe it." 45

### The solo line, Dexter's storytelling.

To tell a story -and how to tell a story- was the lesson that Dexter Gordon learned from Lester Young. Although they spoke with different voices (they had widely different conceptions of sound on the tenorsax) they both shared the same overall melodic conception when it came to improvisation. One might say that their musical dialects were very similar with a common vocabulary, syntax and overall rhetorical plan for the construction of the solo improvisation.

The *vocabulary* of Dexter Gordon owed a great deal to Young, the use of colored tones (the 6th, major 7th and 9th of the chord), simple riffs, false fingering and the whole concept of basing the improvisation on a strong foundation of personal licks or formulas; a great number of Dexter's licks were actually inherited from Young. Also Young's well-known praxis of alternating between shorter thematic statements and longer melody-lines became an integral part of the Dexter Gordon style. For these short statements Dexter would frequently made use of quotations from the standard repertoire or the classical repertoire (and often from the solos of e.g. Young or Parker). Dexter's longer melody lines would often be typical bebop-lines based on the underlying chord structure, alternating with sequences based on major or minor pentatonic scales. It is worth noticing that in his bebop lines Dexter would often attach greater weight to the internal structure of the melody lines than the underlying harmonic foundation.

In his *syntactical* approach Dexter always demonstrated great skills in creating coherence in the improvisation. Phrases would be connected in call/response patterns, e.g. by letting a phrase take its starting point in a tone or motive from the phrase preceding it. Or phrases would be connected through the harmonic sequencing of motives. For instance, his extensive use of quotations were not merely humorous and unexpected whims, often they would be the starting point of motivic development, this way creating unity and coherence in the solo over a period of time. Scale-wise accordance between phrases, i.e. phrases sharing the same scale, is another syntactical vehicle often applied by Dexter.

Other ways of establishing coherence in the improvisation within a chorus might be to build each chorus upon a specific idea, give it a certain direction or a specific purpose. For instance, a chorus could be given a thematic identity of its own in the form of a riff or blues head; or a chorus could be given a tonal identity, basing the improvisation on e.g. the major or minor pentatonic scale. The identity of a chorus could be established through the direction of the melody line, e.g. in the form of long ascending or descending lines. Or a chorus might have the purpose of

boosting energy into the rhythm section in form of ascending lines or explosive, repeated 3/4 figures; many of Dexter's long pre-composed bebop lines actually served such a purpose.

Finding ways of connecting choruses or sections is of vital importance in the syntactical process. Dexter would connect choruses by making his melody line continue into the next chorus; or he would start a chorus by applying the same musical material which ended the previous one. Whatever Dexter had in his fingers or his mind at the end of a chorus would become the starting point for a new development in the next chorus, whether it would be just one note, a scale or a lick.

The following analysis will attempt to transmit an insight into the vocabulary and syntax of Dexter's solo improvisation, as it appears in his solo on *Blues Up and Down*<sup>46</sup>. In this solo Dexter demonstrates his ability to create powerful and strong melody-lines, which he would always deliver with great confidence and employing the whole range of the instrument. Following the analysis I shall account for Dexter's *overall rhetorical plan* for this solo, i.e. the principles involved in the organizing of the solo into a coherent and consistent whole.

*Blues Up and Down* [chorus 1-3]:

The image displays three choruses of a blues piece, each with three staves of music. Chorus 1 (measures 1-4) is a simple blues head. Chorus 2 (measures 5-12) is more complex, featuring a broken chord figure and a long, unbroken bebop line. Chorus 3 (measures 13-20) continues the speeding up with triplet figures and a rocket in triplet 16ths.

chorus 1: [1-4]: Dexter starts out in Lester Young fashion with a simple and powerful 4-bar blues head going from  $f'$  to  $b^b$  (false fingering) and repeated [5-8] over simple blues harmony; [9-12]: a 2-bar phrase in reverse movement ( $b^b$  to  $f'$ ), which is repeated with variation, the whole phrase continuing into the first bar of

chorus 2: [2-3]: a broken chord figure derived from previous chorus [12], signals the speeding up the solo with a long, unbroken bebop line [9-12], which is based on some irregular chord sequences being held together by ascending/descending chromatic lines within the broken chord structure (a similar technique was applied by Coleman Hawkins in his famous *Body and Soul* solo, see also the analysis of Lester Young's *Lester Leaps In*, [2nd chorus, A2:4-6]).

chorus 3: the speeding up continues with the triplet figure [2-4]; the rocket in triplet 16ths [5] takes the solo to a temporarily high ( $b^b'$ ), motive at [8] is repeated over a chromatic descending line.

The range of the melody line is limited to a fifth in chorus 1, being gradually expanded in chorus 2 (an octave + a fifth), while it spans an octave in chorus 3, hitting on the high  $b^b'$  for the first time.

*Blues Up and Down* [chorus 4-6]:

The image shows three choruses of a blues piece, each with three staves. Chorus 4 (measures 1-12) has a vocal line (top staff) with a 4-bar blues head and a descending chromatic line. Chorus 5 (measures 13-24) includes Lester Young licks and a descending blues line. Chorus 6 (measures 25-36) features a blues head and a long descending line.

chorus 4: Dexter returns to a 4-bar blues head on simple blues harmony [1-8] (quotation from Rodgers/Hart's *Thou Swell*), but the chorus ends with a long chromatic descending line [9-12], a well known Dexter lick, which once again boosts up the solo line and continues well into

chorus 5: [1-2]: a Lester Young lick, in [4] another Young lick referring back to the previous chorus is stated again and repeated at [5-8] in a 3/4 pattern. The last figure of 8ths is used as a rhythmic pattern on a descending blues line [9-12]. The last tone (f') starts off

chorus 6: [1-4]: a 4 bar blues head built on the same blues-pentatonic scale as before. [5-9]: a rhythmical figure (four descending 8ths) is repeated into a long descending line, ranging two octaves (from b<sup>b</sup>' to A<sup>b</sup>), followed by a short statement on the same scale [10-11].

*Blues Up and Down* [chorus 7-9]:

The image displays three choruses of a blues piece, each consisting of three staves of music. Chorus 7 (measures 7-12) is marked with a circled '7'. It features a long melodic line in the treble clef, a bass line in the bass clef, and a middle staff with various musical notations like slurs and accents. Chorus 8 (measures 13-19) is marked with a circled '8' and shows a dramatic melodic lift in the treble clef, with a bass line and a middle staff. Chorus 9 (measures 20-26) is marked with a circled '9' and includes a new melodic statement, a bebop line on the whole tone scale, and a rhythmic riff in the bass clef.

chorus 7: [1-6]: a long melody line based upon a rhythmical figure (four 8ths), which is repeated and transposed chromatically, going into the minor pentatonic scale [5-6] on the  $E^b$  chord. [7-12]: measure 5 is repeated as starting point for the long bebop line, which finishes the second half of the chorus. This whole chorus contains several Lester Young licks and it is in fact a "precomposed" and well known Dexter lick, which he often used for speeding up energy.

chorus 8: [1-7]: Dexter gives the solo line a dramatic melodic lift, which ranges two octaves and a quart (from  $B^b$  to  $e^{b''}$ ), applying a one bar motive, at ms. 5-7 returning to the minor pentatonic scale, which is used for the remainder of the chorus. The melodic figure at ms. 6-7 is repeated and transposed [9-10], and the final tone ( $f'$ ) leads into

chorus 9: [1-2]: a new melodic statement, followed by a bebop line on the whole tone scale; another two bar statement [5-6] follows, is transposed [7-8], and the chorus ends on a rhythmical  $b^b$  riff (false fingering), leading into



*Blues Up and Down* [chorus 10-12]:

chorus 10: [1-4]: a 4-bar blues head, based on the major pentatonic scale, which is repeated [5-12]. The speed and energy of the previous choruses is slowed down, and here Dexter plays in the lower register with special emphasis on the 6th of the B<sup>b</sup>-chord (Lester Young fingerprint). The last four notes constitute a basis for

chorus 11: [1-2]: a typical Dexter lick, where a two bar motive, also on the major pentatonic scale, is transposed [3-4] and varied on the minor pentatonic scale [5-8]. [9]: A small motive on the same scale is transposed [10], and Dexter concludes with the opening figure; these last three tones are applied to

chorus 12: [1-4]: a dramatic falling 3/4 figure, another Lester Young lick (listen to Prez' solo in the beginning of *Riff Interlude*, rec.: November 6, 1939) is boosting up the solo line, which falls two octaves and then slowly rises again to c' [5-8]. [9-12] A rhythmic Lester Young-type riff on c', leading into

*Blues Up and Down* [chorus 13-15]:

The musical score is presented in three systems, each containing three staves. The first system (measures 1-12) is labeled '13' and shows a melodic line with a chromatic ascent from C4 to G4, followed by a broken chord motif. The second system (measures 13-21) is labeled '14' and features a blues head, a dramatic fall over two octaves, and a return to a higher pitch. The third system (measures 22-30) is labeled '15' and consists of a two-tone riff repeated three times with variations. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

**chorus 13:** [1-4]: a Lester Young-type rhythmical riff on  $c'$ , which is gradually lifted chromatically to  $g'$  [5-8];  $g'$  becomes starting point for a broken chord motive [9-10] (quotation from J.S. Bach's *Bade-nerie* from *Orchestral Suite i B-minor*), which is transposed [11-12] and lands on  $b^b$  in

**chorus 14:** [2-3]: a simple blues head. [5-9]: Another lift to the melody line in an upward movement in fourths, followed by a dramatic fall over two octaves and a fifth (from  $e^{b''}$  to  $A^b$ ) on the minor pentatonic scale. [10-11]: a small figure brings the melody line back up to  $b^{b'}$ , which becomes starting point for

**chorus 15:** a two tone riff played three times with small variations takes the solo to a temporarily high ( $f''$ ).

*Blues Up and Down* [chorus 16-18]:

The musical score consists of three systems, each with three staves. System 16 (measures 16-18) shows a melodic line with a high note (g'') and a bass line with a triplet. System 17 (measures 19-21) shows a melodic line with a descending contour and a bass line with a triplet. System 18 (measures 22-24) shows a melodic line with a fast run over two octaves and a bass line with a triplet.

chorus 16: The same riff is repeated three times with further rhythmic variations, reaching the high point of the solo (g'').

chorus 17: Dexter eases the turbulent dynamics of the last two choruses back down again, using a familiar and bizarre quotation from Julius Fučík's *Entry of the Gladiators* [1-8]; this is followed by a simple blues phrase [10-12]; the melodic contour gradually declines from  $b^{b'}$  to  $d^{b'}$ .

chorus 18: Dexter is once again giving the solo a boost of energy with a fast run over two octaves [1-2] and gradually climbing back up into the highest register again ( $e^{b''}$  and  $f''$ ) with two blues phrases on the minor pentatonic scale [8-12]. The last tone ( $f''$ ) leads into

*Blues Up and Down* [chorus 19-20]:

chorus 19: With a repetitive high  $f''$  [1-4] Dexter whips up the rhythm section one last time, again falling dramatically two octaves and a sixth [4-7]. Two small rhythmic figures on  $b'$  [9-12] concludes this chorus and leads into

chorus 20, where Dexter definitively eases down the action to hand over the stage to Johnny Griffin. The minor pentatonic scale is used throughout, first a long decline (from  $b'$  to  $f$ ) based upon a small rhythmic figure [1-5], followed by another rhythmic figure (an irregular placed clave-beat) [6-7], and two small melodic figures, ascending and descending (from  $b^b$  to  $f'$  to  $b^b$ ), which refers back to the beginning of the solo. In his final statement Dexter breaks away from the minor pentatonic scale, using a couple of Lester Young's coloured tones, the 6th and major 7th of the  $B^b$ -chord.

### Expanding the music.

This analysis reveals some of the main characteristics of the Dexter Gordon style, first of all how much it owed to Lester Young even at this late stage of his career. Young's personal vocabulary and syntax, as accounted for in the analysis of *Lester Leaps In*, is without any doubt the primary foundation of Dexter's mature style. This is apparent not only in Dexter's many loans from the Young vocabulary, but also in the way that he deliberately connects phrases and choruses into a meaningful and organic whole, insisting on never to break the flow and logic of the melody line.

In his overall disposition of the solo Dexter also relies on a well known Young routine, starting out at a slow-speed and gradually building towards several climaxes during the improvisation. Expansion becomes the keyword in this process, as Dexter himself explained in the film *Round Midnight*, where Dale Turner (i.e. Dexter Gordon) is talking to a psychiatrist about his dreams:

"Well, it's always about music, and playing the saxophone. The sound, hearing it, expanding the music, you know, more and more." <sup>47</sup>

In *Blues Up and Down* the improvisation is going through various stages of steaming up the dynamic energy to great climaxes of intensity followed by phases of cooling down again, reaching the final climax in choruses 15-19. Dexter has at his disposal different artistic means, which he applies in order to achieve this kind of long-term development.

The *strong declamatory statement*, typically a Lester Young-type lick (on the major pentatonic scale and including the 6th and 9th of the tonic chord) is strategically applied as fixed points during the solo, as a strong starting point (chorus 1), preliminary climax (chorus 4), cooling down phase (chorus 10) and overall climax (choruses 15-16).

*Generating power and energy* into the collective playing is achieved by the *motion of the longer bebop lines* based on chord sequences or chromatic movements (choruses 2, 3 and 6-8), by using *repeated 3/4-figures* (choruses 5 and 12) or Lester Young-type *one note riffs* with the use of false fingering (choruses 9, 12, 13 and 19). In the *cooling down* phases Dexter takes off steam by using *long descending lines, chromatically* (choruses 3 and 17) or *based on scales* (chorus 20).

An important factor in the build-up of the improvisation is the special use of the *instrumental registers* and *general dynamics*. Dexter gradually extends his playing from the middle register in the beginning into the altissimo register, chorus 3 (b<sup>b'</sup>), chorus 4 (c<sup>"</sup>), chorus 8 (e<sup>b"</sup>), chorus 14 (e<sup>b"</sup>), chorus 15 (f<sup>"</sup>), chorus 16 (g<sup>"</sup>), choruses 18-19 (f<sup>"</sup>). *Longer lower register periods* (chorus 10) will let off steam, while *longer altissimo register periods* will boost up the energy (choruses 15-16 and 18-19). Likewise *long ascending lines* (chorus 8) and *descending lines* (choruses 6,12 and 19) will give a general boost to the music. In the final turbulent stages of the solo Dexter makes some *fast and dramatic ascending/descending lines*, employing the whole range of the instrument, which gives associations to a champion rodeo cowboy riding on a bucking bronco (choruses 14 and 18).

## Dexter Gordon's compositional style

### Early style.

The early compositions dating from 1945 to 1960 gives evidence of the early influences on Dexter's playing in general. The strong overall influence of Lester Young is apparent in many different ways, first of all in the construction of the melody lines. The extended use of well known Lester Young riffs is a prominent feature of many of these originals, and a great deal of the melodies also feature the special predilection that Young had for the coloured tones of the chords. Secondly, the chief part of these compositions were based on well known standards (or the 12-bar blues), most of them known from the repertoire of the Lester Young and The Count Basie Orchestra.

The influence of Charlie Parker and his contemporaries is apparent in the many melody lines based on chromatic chord progressions. And the harmonic foundation of some of the tunes, especially the bridges of the 32-bar songforms, reveals Dexter's profound knowledge and mastery of the innovative bebop harmony, which goes back to the teaching of Lloyd Reese.

A distinctive characteristic of the early compositions is the frequent use of short riffs, a finger-print of Lester Young (*Blow Mr. Dexter, Long Tall Dexter, Dexter Digs In, The Chase, Dexter's Riff, Index, Dexterity, Bonna Rue*).

Other characteristics from the Lester Young style are of course the emphasis on the 6th, major 7th and 9th in the melody line (*Dexter's Deck, Blues Bikini, Rhythm Mad*) and the false fingering single note riff. (*Blow Mr. Dexter*, the intro).

The melody lines of other Dexter originals appears to be more representative of the bebop style of Bird and his contemporaries. These melodies are normally less singable or riff-like, and they are often in the shape of broken chords with emphasis on the alterations ( $b^5$ ) of the chords (*Mischievous Lady, Dexter Rides Again, Chromatic Aberration, Settin' the Pace, The Duel* and the bridge of *The Chase*).

Up until 1955 there exists 26 known titles by Dexter, most of them written between 1945 and 1947 for the Savoy recordings. Among these 26 titles were 8 blues compositions and 18 compositions in 32-bar songform. As it was common practice among the bebop generation the themes were for the most part based upon standard changes such as *I Got Rhythm* (*The Duel, Silver Plated* and *Settin' the Pace*, the A-sections), *Christopher Columbus* (*Dexter's Deck, Number Four* and *Dexter Digs In*, the A-section), *Oh, Lady Be Good* (*Dexter's Riff*), *Honeysuckle Rose* (*Settin' the Pace*, the bridge), *I Found a New Baby* (*Dexter's Minor Mad*), *Exactly Like You* (*Dexterity*, the A-section), *Jumpin' at the Woodside* (*Rhythm Mad*), *Rose Room* (*Dexter's Mood*) and *Fine and Dandy* (*Dextrose*). Often Dexter would combine standard chord changes for the A-sections with a different set of changes for the bridge (*Dexter Digs In, Dexter Rides Again, Settin' the Pace, Dexterity* and *Silver Plated*).

Dexter's knowledge and command of modern bebop harmony becomes quite apparent when examining his solo improvisations. It also shows clearly in the harmonic outline of his originals as exemplified below.

**Chromatic Aberration, A and B sections (key: Db):**

<b>A</b>	Em7	A7	Fm7	Bb7	F#m7	B7	Fm7	Bb7
	(II)	II7a	(II)	VI7	(II)	III7a	(II)	VI7
	Em7	A7	Ebm7	Ab7	Db6			
	(II)	II7a	II	V	I			
<b>B</b>	Gbm6				Db6			
	IVm				I			
	Gbm6				Db6			
	IVm				I			

An original chord scheme, where a dense circle of fifths (in IIm7-V7 progressions) goes chromatically up from A7 to H7 and down again to Ab7, leading into the tonic, Db. As a contrast (and contrary to normal practice) the bridge here is stable around the tonic, using only two chords.

**The Duel, bridge (key: Bb):**

Am7	D7	Abm7	Db7
(II)	III7	(II)	VI7a
Gm7	C7	F#m7	B7
(II)	II7	(II)	V7a

a bridge based on *Rhythm* changes (D,G,C,F) with tritonus substitutions and inserted IIm7 chords.

In the following examples Dexter has constructed some intrigue chord sequences to be applied for the beginning of his solos on *Long Tall Dexter* (a 12 bar Bb-blues) and *Dexter's Deck* (based on *Christopher Columbus*-changes):

**Long Tall Dexter (key: Bb)**

	B7	E7	A7	D7	G7	C7	F7	Bb7	Eb7
new									
changes									
original	Bb7		Eb7	E°	Bb7				Eb7

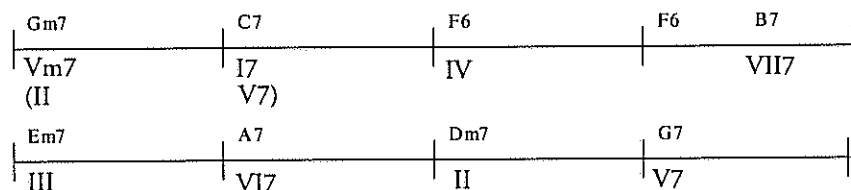
**Dexter's Deck (key: Bb)**

	F#7	B7	E7	A7	D7	G7	C7	F7	Bb6	Bb7/D
new										
changes										
original	Bb6	Bb7/D	Eb6	E°	Bb6/F	Gm7	Cm7	F7	Bb6	Bb7/D

In both these examples a dense, full circle of fifths over 4 bars substitutes the normal changes, leading directly into the chord of measure 5.

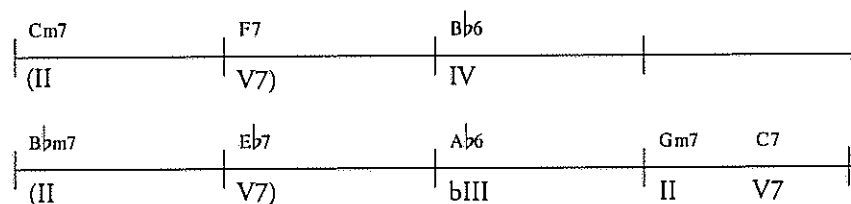
In some compositions based upon standard changes the bridge has been supplied with alternative changes. Many of such alternative bridges are based on *Honeysuckle Rose*-changes in the first 4 bars (Vm7 - I7 - IV6), combined with different ways of returning to the tonic of the last A-section:

*Dexterity*, bridge (key: C):



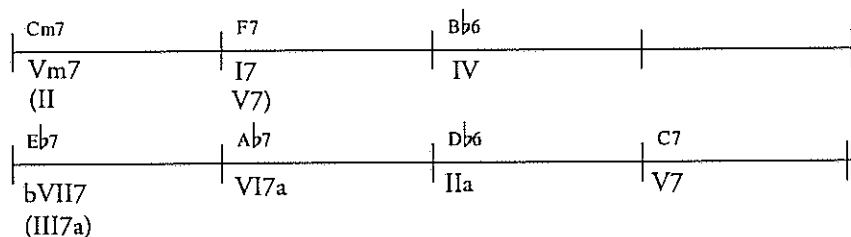
a full circle of fifths (G,C,F,H,E,A,D,G) returning to the tonic C.

*Rhythm Mad*, bridge (key: F):



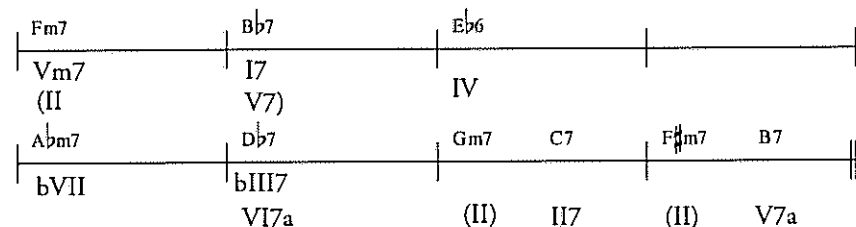
ms. 5: continued II-V sequence to bIII, II-V sequence to tonic F.

*Dexter Rides Again*, bridge (key: F):



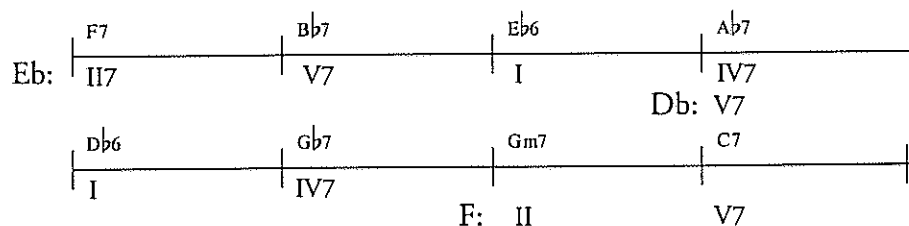
a full circle of fifths (C-F-Bb-Eb-Ab-Db-C) returning to the tonic F.

*The Chase*, bridge (key: Bb):

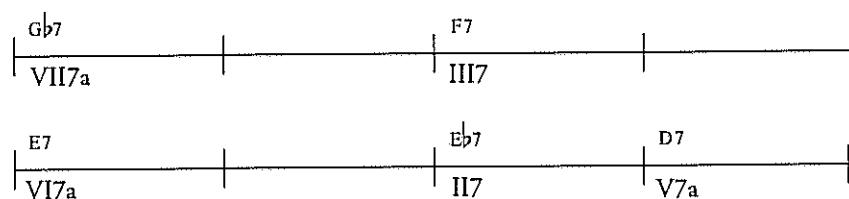


an extended and altered circle of fifths (F,Bb,Eb,Ab,Db,C,H) returning to the tonic Bb.



*Silver Plated*, bridge (key: F):

full circle of fifths ( $F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb$ ), returning by II-V7 to the tonic F.

*Dexter Digs In*, bridge (key:  $D^b$ ):

a chromatic circle of fifths leading into the tonic  $D^b$ .

These examples give a general picture of a musician who was in possession of a thorough knowledge of standard changes, which he could combine with the innovations of bebop harmony. Dexter's harmonic foundation was apparent in his compositions from the very beginning of his career, and for the many years to come it remained to be the solid basis of his personal style, never to change radically, although Dexter never ceased to incorporate later harmonic innovations into his vocabulary. The later compositions differ from the early style, first of all in the respect, that a greater number of these have original changes, while most of the early melodies are contrafacts on known standards.

## Mature style.

Around 1961, while working on 'The Connection' in Los Angeles and starting his recording career with the Blue Note Company, Dexter's personal tenorsax style was firmly established. The compositions originating from this period bears the same stamp of a musician, who has finally stepped out from the shadows of the idols of his formative years and found his own speaking voice, his own style. And for the next 20-25 years this compositional style was to remain unchanged.

Every composer within the jazz idiom has a compositional style of his own. Duke Ellington was an ingenious song writer, combining a sophisticated sense of harmony with a melodic ore which seemed without end. One of the most intriguing jazz composers that we know, Thelonious Monk, would work extensively on his compositions (and indeed on standards like *Just a Gigolo* and *Body and Soul*), until they - as he described it - had "a specific sound". This 'sound' was a result of Monk's unique voicings and attack on the piano, but also the way he would change the groove throughout the rendering of a melody. Charles Mingus, another great jazz composer, would often express himself in etended forms with frequent changes of tempo, groove and chord foundation.

As a mature composer Dexter was first of all a creator of good and strong melodies. The lesson learned from Young was always to tell a story, and with Dexter's compositions one always senses that certain vocal quality of a good song, only the lyrics are missing.

When it comes to the formal build up of the tunes Dexter worked mainly within the traditional format. 14 of the titles are 12-bar blues compositions and 29 are composed in 32-bar songform (23 in AABA-form and 6 in AA'-form), although some of the tunes in songform have an unusual formal build up, like *I Want More* (AA'-form, 24 + 16 bars), *Cheese Cake* (AABA-form, 16-bar A-sections and 8-bar bridge), *Le Coiffeur* (AABA-form with a 4-bar extension of the last A), *Tivoli* (AA'-form, 24 + 34 bars), *Valse Robin* (AABA-form, 4x16 bars), *The Group* (ABA-form, 12-bar A-sections and 8-bar bridge) and *Nursery Blues* (16-bar chorus).

Within jazz composition in general from the thirties to the sixties George Gershwin's *Rhythm*-changes set the standard for the formal build up of the 32-bar AABA-song form. The main significance behind the *Rhythm*-changes lies in the harmonic contrast between the A-sections (harmonically stable around the tonic) and the bridge (harmonic progression, circle of fifths: III7-VI7-II7-V7 going back to the tonic of the last A.) Many of Dexter's originals in the AABA-format possess that same kind of contrast (or balance) between the two formal units.

In *Catalonian Nights* the A-sections are stable around the tonic (B<sup>b</sup> minor), while the bridge is one long circle of fifths going contemporarely to B<sup>b</sup> minor and D<sup>b</sup> major.

In *Soy Califa* the contrast is even greater, as it also involves two contrasting rhythm grooves. The A-sections have a B<sup>b</sup>-mixolydian modal foundation on a latin beat, while the bridge is a circle of fifths on 4-beat swing groove.

Dexter reverses this norm in *Kong Neptune*, where the A-sections have some unstable harmonic progressions within the key of B<sup>b</sup>. In contrast the bridge is stationary, constantly returning to the temporary key of D<sup>b</sup>.

Balancing the A- and B-sections against each other by changing grooves can be heard in *The Rainbow People* (A: 2-beat with short 2-bar melody phrases, B: 4-beat with longer melody lines), *Mrs. Miniver* (A: stop rhythm and 1-bar repetitive phrases, B: 4-beat and 2-bar phrases in call/response pattern) and *The Group* (A: 12 bars, 2-beat and stop time, harmonic stable on tonic (D-minor), B: 8 bars, 4-beat, circle of fifths).

In the actual performance of his compositions (and indeed of the tunes from the standard repertoire as well) Dexter would take great pains in controlling the total performance from start to end, including the opening up with carefully arranged intros, making interludes to go from the theme presentation to the solos and also including special chase themes, shout choruses and extended codas. (Dexter would apply the same thoroughness to his playing of solo-kadenzas in ballads, these extended kadenzas were to a great extent planned out in advance).

Among the compositions with extended intros are: *I Want More*, *For Regulars Only*, *Landslide*, *Kong Neptune*, *Evergreenish*, *A la Modal* and *Fenja*. Compositions containing interludes are *Ernie's Tune*, *Montmartre*, *For Regulars Only* and *Soy Califa*. Compositions with special chase themes and shout choruses are *Landslide*, *McSplivens*, *Evergreenish*, *For Regulars Only*, *Dexter Leaps Out* and *Stanley the Steamer*. Extended codas are found in *Landslide*, *Soy Califa*, *Kong Neptune*, *Fried Bananas*, *Mrs. Miniver* and *Evergreenish*, while the following compositions have codas, which are merely tag-endings: *Cheese Cake*, *Hanky Panky*, *The Panther*, *The Apartment*, *The Girl with the Purple Eyes*, *Winther's Calling* and *Catalonian Nights*.

Dexter's own expression was that "a tune must have an ending". Starting out on a melody, standard or original, the musicians should first be aware of (and have a common agreement on) the different phases of the performance, from intro and theme presentation, sequence of solos and chases to the final recapitulation of the theme and coda. Before playing a tune in public Dexter would always have a plan for the performance of a tune worked out in advance, this way taking full command of the total performance. Bassist, Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, remembered it this way:

"Well you got your openings from Dexter. (...) with Dexter, it was like an opening - it was in the tune. It was like there should be a good long piano solo. Where you would hopefully get into something. And there should be a bass solo - if I wanted it. There should be extended eights with the drums - all that sort of thing. In other words, he wasn't looking at the rhythm section and saying: 'Well, let's get this over with!' Not to say that a lot of people thought like that. But he had a positive attitude towards us, really trying to make this a groove: make this sound like something." 48

A prominent characteristic of Dexter's mature compositional style was the concordance that always seemed to exist between a strong melody line and the underlying groove of the rhythm section. This counterbalancing of the melody against the

rhythmical groove was primarily a result of the way Dexter would conceive the rhythmical structures of his themes.

When examining Dexter's compositions dating from 1961 closely it is apparent that these melodies all had strong rhythmical profiles, which are achieved mainly by means of balancing the on-the-beat-notes against the well placed off-beat accentuations. When delivered with Dexter's characteristic rhythmical weight and unique sense of phrasing (including the shifts in tonguing and slurring of the notes) the result is that of a melody, where the single phrases are perfectly balanced against each other to make a strong and coherent line. All of Dexter's finest melodies possess that certain quality within the melody line: *Landslide*, *Cheese Cake*, *Soy Califa*, *McSplivens*, *Kong Neptune*, *Clubhouse*, *Montmartre*, *Fried Bananas*, *The Panther*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *Evergreenish*, *The Apartment*, *Benji's Bounce*, *A la Modal*, etc.

Dexter would from time to time require many different types of grooves from his rhythm sections. Apart from slow, medium and up tempo swing grooves these would also include waltz grooves (*Valse Robin*, *Tivoli*), latin grooves (*A la Modal*, *Soy Califa*, the bossa nova-beat of *Catalonian Nights* and the pop-latin groove of *Le Coiffeur*), funk grooves characteristic of the Blue Note recordings from the 1950's and 60's (*Sticky Wicket*, *The Panther* and *What it Was*).

Many tunes are kept throughout in straight 4-beat (e.g. *Fried Bananas*) or 2-beat (e.g. *Catalonian Nights* or *Nursery Blues* (B-theme)). In other compositions Dexter often combined shifting grooves within the theme, as known from standards such as *On Green Dolphin Street* or *Love for Sale*. In *For Regulars Only*, *The Rainbow People* and *Apple Jump* (AABA-song forms) the rhythm section plays the A-sections in 2-beat in contrast to the bridges in 4-beat. In a similar way *Cheese Cake* and *Evergreenish* (AA'-song forms) starts in 2-beat at ms. 1-8, and then goes into 4/4 in ms. 9-16. In *Soul Sister* Dexter creates contrast between the gospel waltz groove and a slow blues groove. In *Soy Califa* the latin beat of the A-sections contrasts to the swing groove of the bridge, much in the manner of *Love for Sale* or *Dizzy's Manteca* and *Night in Tunisia*. And the unisone (sax/bass) and childlike melody starting and ending *Nursery Blues* is balanced against the gospel groove in 2-beat of the second theme and the solos.

Often Dexter would have the rhythm section go into a rhythmic interplay with the theme by means of some well calculated accentuations, which made either a lock with the melody or a call/response pattern to the melody.

In the bridge of *Hanky Panky* (ms. 1-2 and 5-6) this rhythmic stop-time makes a contrast to the 4-beat of ms. 3-4 and 7-8:

8

Chords: F-11, E7(b9), EbΔ, C-7, F-11, Bb+7, Eb7(b9), G-11, Gb7(b9), FΔ, D-7, G-11, C+7, C-7, B7(b9)

In the interlude of *Montmartre Dexter* Dexter makes use of this same kind of rhythmic support of the melody:

Chords: G7(b9), F13, Eb9, Db9, CΔ, B7(b9), Bb9

(SOLO PICK-UP)

In *Mrs. Miniver* the rhythm section accentuates the theme in all the A-sections, while going into a contrasting 4-beat in the bridge:

Chords: Bb-7, Eb7, Bb-7, Eb7, Eb7/G, Ab-7, Db7, Ab-7, Db7, F-7, Bb7, F-7, Bb7, EbΔ, F-7, Bb7, B-7, E7

In the first 8 bars of each A-section of *Evergreenish* the rhythm section plays a stop-time rhythm in a call/response pattern to Dexter's melody, the last 8 bars of the A-sections once again contrasting with 4/4-time:

System 1: Treble clef staff with melody; Bass clef staff with chords  $A-9$ ,  $D7$ ,  $G_9$ ,  $G_6$ ,  $B_9$ ,  $E7(b_9)$ .  
 System 2: Treble clef staff with melody; Bass clef staff with chords  $A-9$ ,  $D7$ ,  $B_9$ ,  $E7$ .  
 System 3: Treble clef staff with melody; Bass clef staff with chords  $A-11$ ,  $D7$ ,  $G_9$ ,  $B_9$ ,  $G7$ .

Regular stop-time is used in the stop chorus of *McSplivens* before going into the recapitulation of theme:

(EVEN 8THS)  
 Treble clef staff: Melody with triplet of eighth notes.  
 Bass clef staff: Chords  $Bb_9$ ,  $Eb_9$ ,  $Bb_9$ ,  $Eb_9$ ,  $Bb_9$ ,  $E7(b_9)$ ,  $Eb_9$ ,  $Bb_9$ ,  $G7$ ,  $C7$ ,  $F7$ ,  $Bb_9$ , and (2.x).

### Harmony and melody.

Among the early compositions only a small handful had original changes, the rest were either blues heads or artifacts on known standards. In contrast only 8 tunes among the 45 compositions dating from 1961 to 1980 are artifacts on known standards, namely *Dexter Leaps Out*, *Benji's Bounce* and *Apple Jump* (based on *Rhythm-changes*), *Soy Califa* (*So What-changes*), *Fried Bananas* (*It Could Happen to You-changes*), *Boston Bernie* (*All the Things You Are-changes*), *Candlelight Lady* (*I Can't Get Started-* and *Body and Soul-changes*) and *Fenja* (*I'm Gettin' Sentimental over You-changes*). The rest of the titles all have original changes by Dexter.

These original chord schemes are generally based on advanced bebop harmony with  $IIm7-V7$ -sequences in diatonic and chromatic circle of fifth-patterns. Dexter's preoccupation with the harmonic theory of bebop and its later harmonic innovators is also revealed in his compositions. Such influences can be found in, for example,

*Hanky Panky* (Benny Golson's *Blues March*), *A la Modal* (Miles Davis' *So What*), *Candlelight Lady* (John Coltrane's *Giant Steps*) and *Benji's Bounce* (Thelonious Monk's *Rhythm-A-Ning*).

A prominent characteristic of Dexter's melody lines is their perfect balance against the harmonic foundation. One way of connecting and balancing melody and harmony is to link the shifting IIm7-V7-sequences to equivalent thematic sequences. Dexter's compositions are pervaded with this feature, as illustrated in the few examples below.

In the bridge of *For Regulars Only* a small melodic figure is being transposed through a chromatical circle of IIm7-V7 progression:

The image shows two systems of musical notation for the bridge of *For Regulars Only*. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a melody line and a bass clef staff with a harmonic line. The first system has a key signature of three flats (B-flat major) and a 4/4 time signature. The second system has a key signature of two flats (D-flat major) and a 4/4 time signature. The harmonic progressions are as follows:

- System 1: G-7, C7, G-7, C7, F#-7, B7, F#-7, B7
- System 2: F-7, Bb7, F-7, Bb7, E-7, A7, Eb-7, Ab7

The 16 bar bridge of *Valse Robin* consists of an 8-bar melody being played twice in the keys of E and G:

The image shows two systems of musical notation for the bridge of *Valse Robin*. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a melody line and a bass clef staff with a harmonic line. The first system is in the key of E major (three sharps) and the second system is in the key of G major (one sharp). The harmonic progressions are as follows:

- System 1: F#-9, B7, F#-9, B7, F#-9, B7, Eo9
- System 2: A-9, D7, A-9, D7, A-9, D7, G15

Both the A-sections and the bridge of *Clubhouse* consists of two 4-bar phrases being transposed through circles of fifths:

**A**

Chords for Section A:  
 System 1:  $A\flat-7$ ,  $D\flat7$ ,  $G-11$ ,  $C7$ ,  $F\sharp-11$ ,  $B7$   
 System 2:  $F\sharp-7$ ,  $B7$ ,  $F-11$ ,  $B\flat7$ ,  $F-9$ ,  $B\flat13$ ,  $E\flat\Delta$

**B**

Chords for Section B:  
 System 1:  $A\sharp$ ,  $D7(b9)$ ,  $G\Delta$   
 System 2:  $F\sharp$ ,  $B7(b9)$ ,  $E\Delta$ ,  $F-7$ ,  $B\flat7$

Dexter frequently applied another way of balancing melody and harmony, creating the highest possible tension between the two, by way of using the higher extensions and alterations of the chords in the melody line, a device well known from the writings of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn.

In *The Girl with the Purple Eyes* the melody hits either the  $b5$ th or the 9th of the chord:

**A**

Chords for Section A:  
 System 1:  $B\flat7$ ,  $E\flat7(b5)$ ,  $B7(b5)$ ,  $B\flat7(b5)$ ,  $A\flat7(b5)$   
 System 2:  $G-9$ ,  $G\flat9$ ,  $F\Delta$ ,  $B\flat-7$ ,  $E\flat7$ ,  $A7(b9)$



Ms. 5-8 of *Candlelight Lady* illustrates a favourite fingerprint of Dexter's, the melodic use of the #9th and b9th of the dominant 7th chord:

the same idea is shown here in the bridge (ms. 5-8) of *Catalonian Nights*:

In the bridge of *Mrs. Miniver* (ms. 7-8) the melody line is landing on all the alterations and high extensions of the chords in this beautiful line:

A similar example taken from the bridge of *Landslide* (ms. 7-8), where the melody lands on the 13th and #11th of the dominant seventh chords:

## The balance.

*Creating balance* seems to be the overall most important aspect of Dexter Gordon's mature compositional style. The concept of balance can be applied equally well to the composition and to the actual live performance, which means to literary every conceivable musical parameter.

In relation to *Dexter's style of composition* as shown above, this angle was applied to the following parameters: Balancing the A- and B sections in the 32-bar song form by means of changes in harmony structure, groove foundation and the structure of the melody lines, balancing the melody line against the groove of the rhythm section, creating balance between the melody line and the rhythm section by applying rhythmical locks or call/response patterns, which would tighten up the rhythmic flow, creating balance between Dexter's melodic figures and the harmonic sequences of the rhythm section, creating tension between Dexter's melody line and the harmonic foundation by the use of the alterations and higher extensions of the chords.

In relation to *Dexter's style of performance* the angle of balance can be applied to the way he would always arrange and control the total performance of a tune from start to end (intro, interlude, chase theme, shout choruse, coda, etc). Likewise, Dexter would always take great pains in balancing the 3-4 titles being played during a concert set against each other, covering contasting keys, blues/ballad and original/standard compositions, latin/swing grooves, modal/bebop harmony, fast/medium/slow tempos, etc.

The concept of balance was evident in every aspect of Dexter Gordon's perception of musical creation, in the composition, the solo-improvisation, the relationship to the playing of the rhythm section and even in his general stage appearance. This balance was first of all obtained through hard work, studying and woodshedding, pre-rehearsing his large stock of licks, the solo-kadenzas to his favourite ballads, the phrasing and arrangements of the standard repertoire, etc. This thoroughness in preparing his performance is further emphasized, when looking closely at Dexter's repertoire during the last 20-30 years of his career. Next to his own originals the repertoire mainly consisted of a chunk of well tested tunes from the standard repertoire, some jazz standards, blues heads and a fairly limited number of his favourite ballads. All in all Dexter's book changed very little over this span of years, while his playing became still stronger and his instrumental sound larger and his rhythmical perception even more grounded.

As a small example of how the perception of balance could be applied to the performance, listen to the beginning of Dexter's live recording of *As Time Goes By*.<sup>49</sup> Cables makes an ad lib piano intro (the last 4 bars of the A-section), then Dexter enters with a long descending scale, slowly accelerating at first and then slowing down again before going into the beginning of the melody, while - at the same time - Reid makes a wonderful downward three tone phrase on the bass, landing on the root of the first chord of the melody, four measures of perfect balance.

## The compositions.

Dexter is listed as composer to 72 titles in his recorded works. 4 of these titles are merely improvisations without pre-composed themes, which gives a total of 68 Dexter Gordon originals.

According to Maxine Gordon all of the compositions were made for specific recording sessions in mind with the exception of the 4 titles made for *The Connection* around 1960 (*I Want More*, *Soul Sister* and *Ernie's Tune*, *Landslide*), and another 4 compositions that were made in Denmark around 1968-1971 (*Montmartre*, *Fried Bananas*, *The Rainbow People* and *Tivoli*).

A great number of these originals were - as far as one can tell from the discography of Thorbjørn Sjøgren- never played again in other recordings or concerts, while some later became embodied into Dexter's concert repertoire. The originals most frequently played in concert were *Fried Bananas*, *Montmartre*, *Long Tall Dexter*, *The Panther*, *The Rainbow People*, *Backstairs*, *Cheese Cake*, *Soy Califa*, *A la Modal*, *Sticky Wicket* and *Antabus*. Less frequently played were *Clubhouse*, *Society Red*, *Boston Bernie*, *Tivoli*, *Ernie's Tune*, *Stanley the Steamer*, *Kong Neptune*, *Soul Sister*, *The Apartment*, *Hanky Panky*, *The Chase* and *Dexter Digs in*.

In the following listing Dexter's compositions will be presented in chronological order. The whole body of work falls naturally into the following phases:

- a. **Early compositions**, (Savoy and Dial sessions 1945-47), 19 titles.
- b. **Intermediate years**, (Bethlehem, Dootone and Prestige sessions 1955, 1960), 9 titles.
- c. **'The Connection'** (1959), 4 titles.
- d. **Breakthrough**, (Blue Note sessions 1961-65), 9 titles.
- e. **The Copenhagen compositions**, (1968-71), 4 titles.
- f. **Prestige compositions**, (1969-72), 10 titles.
- g. **SteepleChase compositions**, (1973-76), 10 titles.
- h. **Last compositions**, (1973-80), 6 titles.

Each chapter will start out with a chronological listing of the recording sessions containing the originals being recorded here for the first time. For each composition is listed title references (if known) and a short analysis of form, melody, harmony etc; the information on later recordings of each composition refers to the discography at p. 68.

## a. Early compositions

### *The Savoy and Dial sessions (1945-47)*

During the first two years of Dexter's recording career he produced no less than 19 originals. In general these compositions were either blues heads or contrafacts on known standards, only 5 compositions having original changes, namely *Dexter Rides Again*, *Mischievous Lady*, *The Chase*, *Chromatic Aberration* and *Blues Bikini*.

October 30, 1945 - Savoy session.

#### Blow Mr. Dexter.

A 12-bar blues head in B $\flat$ . The melody has a minor resemblance with Coleman Hawkins' 32-bar composition, *Bean and the Boys*, recorded some 7 months prior to this session. Dexter's solo introduction is a Lester Young-type riff, in which he makes use of the false fingering on the concert B $\flat$ .

Nearly all of Dexter's compositions recorded for the Savoy Record Company have allusions to his first name in the titles. These titles were not Dexter's own inventions, but seem to originate from Savoy producer Teddy Reig.

#### Dexter's Deck.

*Dexter's Deck* is based on *Rhythm*-changes (Fletcher Henderson's *Christopher Columbus*-version). The melody is typical Lester Young-style, especially in the A-section.

In the first solo chorus Dexter plays over a full circle of fifths in ms. 1-4 of each A-section:

Other recordings:    October 27, 1965/live Prestige recording  
                               September 2, 1971/live Arista-Freedom recording.

#### Dexter's Minor Mad.

*Dexter's Minor Mad* is based on *I Found a New Baby*-changes. The melody of the A-sections is fairly loose, probably a head arrangement, and the bridge is most likely improvised.

#### Dexter's Cutting Out.

*Dexter's Cutting out* is improvisation (without precomposed theme) based on *Oh, Lady Be Good*-changes in F-major.

January 29, 1946 - Savoy session.

**Long Tall Dexter (aka LTD).**

*Long Tall Dexter*, a 12-bar blues in B $\flat$ , was to become Dexter's theme song in later years. In the beginning of each of his two solo choruses on *Lonesome Lover Blues* with The Billy Eckstine Orchestra <sup>50</sup>. Dexter outlined the two main ideas which nine months later were to be recorded as *Long Tall Dexter*. The opening theme bears a strong resemblance to Bird's *Now's the time*:

Following the first theme of *LTD* is a 4-bar melody line, which is used for kicking off the solos. It has an intriguing chord sequence, starting on B7 and going through a perfect circle of fifths before landing on the E $\flat$ 9-chord of ms. 5.

Instead of recapitulating the opening theme at the end, Dexter closes with a new theme which has some minor resemblance with the opening. The 1978 recording has some minor melodic changes of this second theme:

ms. 3 and 7:

ms. 11:

In later years Dexter would only make use of the final blues theme, as documented in the 1978 recording. In this form and in a relaxed medium tempo *LTD* would be used for closing the set, while he would do his little jive for the audience, thanking them for a wonderful evening and presenting all the musicians in turn. Listen to *Nights at the Keystone vol. 1*.

Other recordings: July 1970/live J for Jazz recording  
May 3, 1978/Columbia session  
March 24, 1979/live Blue Note recording.

### Dexter Rides Again.

*Dexter Rides Again* in AABA-form is credited to both Dexter and Bud Powell. The A-sections have the same chord structure as Thelonious Monk's *Well, You Needn't* (probably presented at the session by Bud Powell), while the bridge is built on a full circle of fifths (C-F-B<sup>b</sup>-E<sup>b</sup>-A<sup>b</sup>-D<sup>b</sup>-C).

### Dexter Digs In.

The A-sections of *Dexter Digs In* is based upon *Rhythm*-changes (*Christopher Columbus*-version) while the bridge is open for solos over a chromatic circle of fifths. The riff-like theme of A is inspired by Lester Young's opening statement on *Shoeshine Boy* (recorded November 9 1936):



Other recordings: July 20, 1973/live SteepleChase recording  
January 26, 1979/Columbia session.

In the 1973 live recording with Jackie McLean *Dexter Digs In* is played in B<sup>b</sup>, while the 1979 recording is transposed to the key of G, adjusting it to Eddie Jefferson's vocal range.

June 5, 1947 - Dial session.

### Mischievous Lady.

*Mischievous Lady* has a bebop melody line over what is probably an original chord scheme (AABA). The extra 4-bar tag to A3 is omitted during the solos. Instead of the recapitulation of the theme Dexter introduces a new melody line in the closing two A-sections. The title of course refers to Melba Liston, the trombone player of the session.

June 12, 1947 - Dial session.

### The Chase.

*The Chase* in AABA-form grew out of Dexter's numerous tenor battles with Wardell Gray around 1947 in Los Angeles, in the beginning at the after-hours club called *Jack's Basket*. Dexter recalls in a conversation with Ira Gitler:

*"Wardell was a very good saxophonist who knew his instrument very well. His playing was very fluid, very clean. Although his sound wasn't overwhelming he always managed to make everything very interesting, very musical. I always enjoyed playing with him. He had a lot of drive and profusion of ideas. He was stimulating to me."*<sup>51</sup>

The theme in the A-section is of course built on Alphonze Picou's famous clarinet solo from *High Society*, known to every clarinet or saxophone player. Dexter also starts his solo by quoting Picou's solo. Noteworthy is the rhythmic displacement of melody and chords in the bridge, which is omitted in the solos.

In the final solo chorus Dexter and Wardell Gray uses the following Lester Young-type riff in the A-sections, while the piano solos on the bridge:

**A** (CHASE THEME)

The musical notation shows the A-section and bridge of "The Chase". The A-section is in G-flat major and consists of two staves. The first staff is the melody, starting with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes G-flat, A-flat, B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F, G-flat, A-flat, B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F, G-flat. The second staff shows the bass line with chords Bb6 and Eb9. The bridge consists of two staves. The first staff is the melody, starting with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes G-flat, A-flat, B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F, G-flat, A-flat, B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F, G-flat. The second staff shows the bass line with chords Bb6, Eb-7, Ab7, and Bb6.

Other recordings: February 2, 1952/live recording with Wardell Gray  
July 26, 1970/live Prestige recording with Gene Ammons.

### Chromatic Aberration (aka Iridescence).

*Chromatic Aberration* in AABA-form has original changes by Dexter. As implied in the title this composition is a vehicle for improvisation on a chromatic harmonic foundation, the A-sections being based upon IIm7-V7 progressions on the following harmonic sequence: A7-Bb7-B7-Bb7-A7-Ab7-Db. Contrary to normal practice the bridge is considerably more relaxed, applying only two chords, Gbm7 and Db.

In the final chorus Dexter paraphrases the theme on BA and then goes directly into the coda in slow tempo.

### Blues Bikini.

*Blues Bikini* in AABA-form is subtitled *All Men Are Cremated Equal*, referring to the american nuclear bomb tests on the Bikini Islands in 1946.

*Blues Bikini* has an A-section with a 12-bar minor blues theme and an 8-bar improvised bridge based upon *Broadway* changes. This mixture of blues and songform is modeled after Lester Young's *D.B. Blues*.

The theme of A is played only once at the beginning, not to be repeated at the end.

December 4, 1947 - Dial session.

### The Duel (aka Hornin' In).

The Duel has a bebop melody line based upon *Rhythm*-changes with a chromatic cycle of fifths in the bridge, and an alternative melody line on the second A-section. The recording features Dexter in combat with his fellow tenorsaxophonist, Teddy Edwards, exchanging 8-, 4-, 2- and 1-bar phrases.

December 11, 1947 - Savoy session.

### Settin' The Pace.

*Settin' The Pace* has a bebop melody line which is based upon *Rhythm*-changes in the A-sections and *Honeysuckle Rose*-changes for the bridge.

The arranged intro to *Settin' the Pace* goes like this:

#### Intro

Other recordings: October 27 1965/live Prestige recording with Booker Erwin.

### So Easy.

*So Easy* is an easy going blues in Eb. The chromatic melody line at ms. 10-11 is a typical Lester Young lick.

### Dexter's Riff.

*Dexter's Riff* is based upon *Oh, Lady Be Good*-changes. The melody of the A-section is a Lester Young-type riff, while the bridge is open for solos.



December 22, 1947 - Savoy session.**Dexter's Mood.**

*Dexter's Mood* is credited to both Dexter and Tadd Dameron. Strangely enough this title has no theme, but is merely one long improvisation on *Rose Room*-changes:

Chord changes for *Dexter's Mood* improvisation:

Staff 1: G7, G $\flat$ 7, F $\flat$ , A $\flat$ 8 D7, G7, G $\flat$ 7, F $\flat$ , Cm7 F7

Staff 2: B $\flat$ 6, B $\flat$ 7 Eb9, F $\flat$ , Eb7, D7, 1. G7, G-7, Cm7

Staff 3: 2. G7, G $\flat$ 7, F $\flat$ , D7

**Dextrose.**

*Dextrose* is based upon the chord changes of *Fine and Dandy* in 32-bar songform (AA'). The simple theme, based on the clave beat, covers the first 8 bars of each A-section, while the second half is improvised by Dexter (A) and Fats Navarro (A'). Dexter seems to be playing over F7-B $\flat$ 6 in ms. 9-10 instead of Cm7-F7, probably a mistake. The chromatic melody line of the coda is another Lester Young trade mark.

**Index.**

Index is a 12-bar blues in B $\flat$ . The theme is a simple Lester Young-type blues riff.

**Dextivity.**

*Dextivity* is partly based on *Exactly Like You*-changes. The riff like theme of A has obvious Lester Young traces with a few hints from bebop harmony (the flatted fifths in ms. 7 and 8).

## b. The intermediate years

### *The Bethlehem, Dootone and early Prestige sessions (1955 and 1960)*

The 9 compositions from the intermediate years (three sessions in 1955 and one in 1960) are an uneven mix of loose jamsession-type blues heads and contrafacts, representative of the early style, and a few thoroughly prepared compositions, which points towards the more mature style of the sixties.

#### September 18, 1955 - Bethlehem session.

##### Daddy Plays the Horn.

This title is a medium tempo 12-bar blues improvisation in F-major without a pre-composed theme.

##### Number Four.

*Number Four* is a composition in 32-bar songform with *Rhythm*-changes in B<sup>b</sup> (A-sections) and E<sup>b</sup> (bridge). The theme of A is a simple 4-bar riff-like figure; the bridge is improvised in the first presentation of the theme, while Dexter transposes the theme to E<sup>b</sup> in the recapitulation.

#### September 27-28, 1955 - Bethlehem session.

##### Stanley the Steamer.

*Stanley the Steamer*, named after Stan Levy, the drummer of the session, is a 12-bar blues in B<sup>b</sup> with a funky beat. The April 4, 1969-recording has some minor changes of the theme (the melody starting off F-G-E<sup>b</sup> instead of F-B<sup>b</sup>-E<sup>b</sup>), and for the drum chase is used this well known Dexter lick:

The musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B<sup>b</sup>). The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B<sup>b</sup>). The melody line features a 12-bar blues structure with various notes and rests. The bass line includes a drum solo section marked 'DRUM SOLO' in a box. The chord progression for the bass line is: B<sup>b</sup>7, E<sup>b</sup>7, E<sup>o</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>7/F, F-11, B<sup>b</sup>7(11<sup>b</sup>), E<sup>b</sup>9.

Other recording: April 4, 1969/Prestige session.

#### November 11-12, 1955 - Dootone session.

##### Silver Plated.

*Silver Plated* is a composition in 32-bar songform (AA'BA) in the key of F (the second A starting out in B<sup>b</sup>), based on *Rhythm*-changes in the A-sections and a long circle of fifths in the bridge. A short 4-bar interlude leads into the solos.

### Rhythm Mad.

*Rhythm Mad* is a 32-bar songform based on *Jumpin' at the Woodside*-changes except for the last 4 bars of the bridge which continues the circle of fifths of the first 4 bars. The melody of the A-sections shows clear traits of the Lester Young influence with special emphasis on the 9th and major 7th of the tonic chord, while the melody of the bridge is more bebopish in style (probably improvised over a full circle of fifths).

### Bonna Rue.

The melody of *Bonna Rue*, a mediumtempo 12-bar blues composition in B<sup>b</sup>, is a simple blues head based on the repetition of a 2-bar Lester Young-type riff with slight harmonic variations.

### Blowin' for Dootsie.

The title of *Blowing for Dootsie* refers to Dootsie Williams, the director of Dootone Records. *Blowin' for Dootsie*, an up tempo 12-bar E<sup>b</sup>-blues, has a loose theme which is not repeated at the end, where Dexter instead states the melody line of *Dexter Digs In*. The opening theme statement shows the usual Lester Young traces (a diatonic theme with emphasis on the major 7th and the 6th of the tonic chord.)

October 13, 1960 - Jazzland session.

### Home Run.

*Home Run* is an up tempo 12-bar blues composition in C with two themes, a uni-sone riff in tp/ts/tb in a call-response pattern with the bass, and another riff alternating between ts and tb. The last theme in three part voicing is likewise a chase with the bass, kicking off the bass solo.

The solos are based on normal blues-changes in C-major.

### Jodi.

*Jodi* is one of the few ballad compositions from Dexter's hand and named after Jodi Gordon, the wife of Dexter around 1960. The ballad is in 32-bar songform (AABA) with an unusual repetitious harmonic outline: Am7-D7-D<sup>b</sup>. In spite of the somewhat limited harmonic foundation Dexter none the less succeeds in creating a strong and coherent melody line.

Dexter recorded *Jodi* later at the Blue Note session in May 1965. Although the two recordings are separated by only five years they are widely different. (For a complete transcription of the two versions of *Jodi*, see p. 92)

In 1960 *Jodi* is played in a fairly bright ballad tempo (♩ = 69) over a 2-beat in the first 2 A-sections, and a 4-beat for the rest of the tune, similar to Hawkin's famous *Body and Soul*-recording from 1939. Dexter stays close to the melody throughout the first chorus and the last A, except for the first 3 bars of A3, where the theme is transposed an octave

up, taking over from the high melody of the bridge. The solo kadenza is a long elaboration on chord changes remote from the Db-tonic.

In 1965 the tempo is slowed down considerably ( $\downarrow = 56$ ) and the rhythm section remains on the 2-beat throughout the entire take. Freddie Hubbard takes over the melody of the bridge. There are some slight modifications of the chords, most noticeable in ms. 5-6 of the bridge, which have been corrected to make a chromatic sequence to ms. 7-8. Dexter is taking full advantage of the slower tempo which enables him to paraphrase on the theme in his particular sauntering ballad style, where his phrases seem rhythmical independent of the underlying background <sup>52</sup>. The solo kadenza is short, starting out with a traditional harmonic extension in the last bar of A3 and then going directly back to the tonic (F $\emptyset$  - B $\flat$ 7 - E $\flat$ m7 - D7 - Db).

Other recording: May 27, 1965/Blue Note session.

### c. "The Connection" (1959)

Dexter's participation in *The Hollywood Connection* meant a great deal to his career, musically and in terms of steady working conditions after a decade of great personal problems and turmoil,

"Reactions - both audience and critics' - were great. The play ran for about a year. One reviewer called me "a great actor" - I'm serious. Me, with no formal training. *The Connection*, that was my pass-mark." <sup>53</sup>

In the play Dexter was in charge of the music being performed live on stage with the musicians also taking part of the actual stage performance with spoken lines. Dexter's rhythm section consisted of Charles 'Dolo' Coker (p), George Morrow (b) and Lawrence Marable (dr).

At least four of Dexter's original compositions were written for the play and later recorded for the Blue Note Company. Whether or not there were actually more compositions by Dexter being performed in the play is uncertain.

#### I Want More.

*I Want More* is basically in 32-bar songform (AA') with an unusual 8-bar extension of the first half, making A 24 bars and A' 16 bars. These additional 8 bars are a slight variation of the preceding 8 bars. This composition is a fine example of Dexter's mature compositional style, where the sequencing of the melody follows the harmonic sequencing closely. Another special feature of this mature style is the prominent use of the

higher extensions and alterations of the chords (11ths, major 7ths, b5s, b9ths and #9ths) in the melody line.

In the quintet recording with Freddie Hubbard the theme is played in unison with Dexter doubling the trumpet an octave below. In the first 8 bars Dexter adds a secondary voice to the melody:

Recordings: May 6, 1961/Blue Note session  
 May 9, 1961/Blue Note session  
 July 9, 1964/live SteepleChase recording.

### Soul Sister.

The title of *Soul Sister* refers to one of the characters in the play, Sister Salvation, and this tune is one of Dexter's rare gospel compositions. The theme is a gospel waltz with tripple feel and gospel changes. The theme is repeated, but this time over a slow 4/4-swing foundation, applying more or less the same chord changes, but this time 'bluesyified'.

Dexter recorded this tune several times. For the last recording in 1982 the gospel atmosphere was further emphasized by Shirley Scott's organ playing.

Recordings: May 9, 1961/Blue Note session  
 July 23 & August 20, 1964/live SteepleChase recordings  
 March 8, 1982/Elektra/Musician session.

### Ernie's Tune.

This title also refers to one of the main characters of the play. *Ernie's Tune* is a wonderful ballad over a rich and changing harmonic background. The tune is in 32-bar AABA-form with an eight bar interlude before the final BA and coda. The 1961 recording captures Dexter in a particularly lush mood. Dexter's use of the full range of the instrument, his big warm sound and profound sence of melodical and rhythmical phrasing, all is combined here in this unique example of Dexter's highly personal ballad style. For a complete transcription of the two versions of *Ernie's Tune*, see p. 95.

Recordings: May 9, 1961/Blue Note session  
 February 21-23, 1975/live SteepleChase recording.

### And Here I Am Still Waiting For You (aka Landslide).

When this tune was recorded on May 9, 1961 it was retitled *Landslide*, referring to Texas tenorsaxophonist Harold Land. This composition shows all the characteristics of Dexter's mature style as stated earlier. Noteworthy is the use of 'kicks' in the rhythm section (ms. 3-4 of the intro and 3-4 of the bridge) and the brilliant coda. This bridge seems to me to be one of Dexter's finest.

Recording: May 9, 1961/Blue Note session.

## d. Breakthrough

### *The Blue Note sessions (1961-65)*

When Dexter definitively emerged as a mature soloist with the Blue Note recordings this also became apparent in his compositions. Within these four years Dexter recorded the four titles from *The Connection* plus another 9 originals, often in quintet format with an added trumpet, giving him the opportunity to arrange for two horns. Except for the two blues compositions all the tunes have original changes, and they are all fine examples of the mature compositional style which has been laid down in a previous chapter.

May 6, 1961.

#### For Regulars Only.

*For Regulars Only* in 32-bar songform is another fine example of Dexter's mature style with the use of extensions and alterations of the chords (intro and the A-sections) and the melodic sequencing of the bridge. The harmonic foundation of the A-sections is somewhat similar to *Jeepers Creepers*, while the bridge is based on a long chromatic sequence (C7-B7-B<sup>b</sup>7-A7-A<sup>b</sup>7). For solos is used a slight modification of the chords of the theme:

The image shows a musical staff with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). Above the staff, a sequence of chords is written: G-7, C7, F#-7, B7, F-7, Bb7, E-7, A7, Eb-7, Ab7. The staff itself contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with a double bar line at the end of the sequence.

#### Society Red.

The title *Society Red* was an alias of Dexter's. The composition is a 12-bar minor blues with two themes, the first being played over a funky rhythm and the second in 4/4 swing.

After the trumpet solo Hubbard and Dexter plays the following line for kicking off Dexter's solo:



Dexter often played this blues in concerts, but only two recordings are known to exist, the first being the classic quintet recording from 1961 with Freddie Hubbard on trumpet. 25 years later when Dexter played the role of Dale Turner in Bertrand Tavernier's *Round Midnight* and Freddie Hubbard was called upon to join Dexter on a New York gig *Society Red* was chosen for that particular scene.

In the *'Round Midnight* recording the above 4-bar line is used for kicking off the bass and drum solos.

Other recordings: August 5, 1967/live Storyville recording  
August 20-21, 1985/Blue Note session  
August 23, 1985 Blue Note session.

### I Want More.

(see previous chapter)

May 9, 1961.

### Landslide.

### Soul Sister.

### Ernie's Tune.

### I Want More.

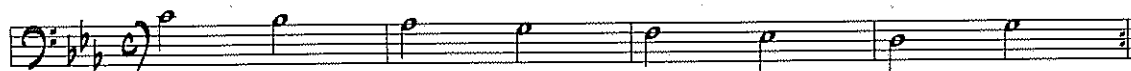
(see previous chapter.)

August 27, 1962.

### Cheese Cake.

*Cheese Cake* is based on original chord changes. The theme is in AABA-form with a 16-bar A-section and 8-bar bridge. Characteristic is the 2-beat in the first 8 bars of A followed by a regular 4-beat in the last 8. The melody of the bridge is based on a chord sequence on a whole-tone scale: C13 - B<sup>b</sup>13 - A<sup>b</sup>13 - G13. The coda is a simple double repetition of the last frase of the theme.

The intro (8 bars) is for bass solo:



The solo changes are slightly simplified compared to the changes of the theme:

**A**

**B**

**A**

Other recordings: June 11, 1964/live SteepleChase live session  
 June 29, 1967/live Blue Note recording  
 September 23, 1978/live Columbia session.

August 29, 1962.

### Soy Califa.

*Soy Califa* (Spanish for "I am a Californian") in AABA-form is one of Dexter's modal compositions. The A-sections have a latin beat on the B $\flat$ -mixolydian mode, going into 4/4 swing in the bridge over a circle of fifths, the same kind of formal build up as Gillespie's and Pozo's *Night in Tunisia*. A 14-bar interlude separates the theme from the solos, and a 16-bar coda follows the recapitulation of the theme.

Other recordings: August 5, 1967/live Storyville recording.

### McSplivens.

*McSplivens*, a 12-bar blues in B $\flat$ , was entitled after Dexter's dog. The intro and theme of *McSplivens* is based on the B $\flat$ -minor pentatonic scale:

*McSplivens* is a masterpiece of composition, where Dexter combines the limited tone material with a profound sense of rhythmic phrasing. This apparently simple blues theme is a unique example of Dexter phrasing at its very best, where every note is being placed exactly where it belongs and attacked just right.

Before returning to the final recapitulation of the theme, Dexter goes into two stop choruses with a 4-bar theme fragment in even 8ths played staccato.



June 2, 1964.

### Kong Neptune (aka King Neptune).

*Kong Neptune* ("kong" being Danish for King) is in traditional AABA-form in the key of B<sup>b</sup>, going into D<sup>b</sup> in the bridge. Unlike usual practice, the A-sections are harmonic complex, while the bridge is harmonically stable in D<sup>b</sup>. In the final recapitulation of the theme Dexter trades 4ths with the drummer for 16 bars, going into the theme in the final BA, followed by the magnificent 14-bar coda.

Other recording: June 25, 1964/live SteepleChase recording.

May 27-28, 1965.

### Hanky Panky.

*Hanky Panky*, a 32-bar AABA-songform in B<sup>b</sup>-minor with original changes, has a march-like rhythmical foundation, much in the same fashion as Benny Golson's *Blues March*, recorded in 1958 with Blakey's Jazz Messengers.

### Clubhouse.

*Clubhouse* is another 32-bar AABA-songform with original changes. The melody is constructed in four bar phrases being sequenced through chromatic circles of fifths. This harmonic structure, which is typical of Dexter, proves to be a beautiful vehicle for improvisation.

For the final chorus Dexter and Hubbard exchanges fours with the drummer for the first 16 bars, using the first 4 bars of the theme.

The intro is played by the rhythm section only:

(INTRO)

The musical notation for the intro of *Clubhouse* consists of two systems of treble and bass staves. The first system contains five measures, and the second system contains five measures. The chords are: Eb<sup>9</sup>, Eb<sup>9</sup>, Db<sup>-9</sup>, Ab<sup>13</sup>, Cb<sup>9</sup>, Cb<sup>9</sup>, Cb<sup>-9</sup>, Eb<sup>9</sup>, Eb<sup>9</sup>, Db<sup>-9</sup>, Gb<sup>13</sup>, Cb<sup>9</sup>, Cb<sup>9</sup>, Bb7(b9).

### Le Coiffeur.

*Le Coiffeur* in traditional songform (AABA with a 6-bar extension of the final A-section) has a beautiful melody with an easy going French pop-latin feeling to it. The solo choruses are 32 bars without the 6-bar extension. *Le Coiffeur* (French for 'the hairdresser') was a slang expression among musicians for the drug dealer.

## e. The Copenhagen compositions (1968-71)

These 4 tunes were all composed in Copenhagen between 1968 and 1971 and later recorded for Prestige and SteepleChase, and they were among the few Dexter-compositions which were not made for specific recordings in mind. The two up tempo-tunes were among Dexter's favoured originals for live sessions. The lovely ballad is unique in Dexter's production, as is the delightful *Tivoli* waltz.

### Montmartre.

*Montmartre* is entitled after the famous jazzclub in Copenhagen, where Dexter had his base of operations in the sixties and seventies.

The composition starts off with an 8-bar drum solo. The theme is in traditional 32-bar songform (AABA) with an additional 8-bar interlude before the solos. The melody is unusually static for a Dexter composition, but with a beautiful rhythmical kick to it. The melody of the interlude is centered around *f*, but with changing chords underneath it, much in the same fashion as Dizzy's interlude to *Night in Tunisia* or Waller's bridge to *Ain't Misbehavin'*.

For the final drum chase the following 4-bar motive is used in the A-sections, in the bridge Dexter improvises his 4 bars.

The musical notation shows a 4-bar drum solo motive. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with accents and slurs. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a simple rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Chords are indicated below the staff: Bb-6, Cs, F7(b9), Bb-6, Gb13, F13, Bb-6. A circled 'A' is above the first bar, and a circled 'DR-SOLO' is below the last bar.

Recordings: April 2 & 4, 1969/Prestige session  
August 1970/live Chiaroscuro recording  
August 23-24, 1975/live SteepleChase recording.

### Fried Bananas.

*Fried Bananas* is the original which Dexter recorded and played most frequently during his career. The theme has a very strong melody-line which displays Dexter's unique sense of phrasing and his total command of the full range of the tenor sax, the range of the theme being almost two octaves. *Fried Bananas* is based on the chord changes of van Heusen and Burke's *It Could Happen To You* with a magnificent 12-bar coda by Dexter.

Recordings: February 5, 1969/live Catfish recording  
April 4, 1969/Prestige session  
June 18, 1970/live Prestige recording  
August 1970/live Chiaroscuro recording

February 16, 1973/live GER recording  
 December 11-12, 1976/live Columbia recording  
 June 21-22, 1977/Columbia session  
 July 24, 1977/live Columbia recording  
 June 19-20, 1982/live Elektra/Musicians recording

### The Rainbow People.

This beautiful medium ballad is in regular 32-bar songform (AABA). The coda for bass solo is also used as an intro. In the first two A-sections of the final chorus Dexter would play a counter-melody to the theme being played by the pianist before returning to the original theme for the final BA.

Recordings: April 4, 1969/ Prestige session  
 August 1970/live Chiaroscuro recording.

### Tivoli.

*Tivoli* is one of Dexter's rare waltz compositions and a tribute to Tivoli Garden in Copenhagen. The two existing recordings of *Tivoli* gives no clue as to how Dexter intended to end the tune, Palle Mikkelborg's arrangement let Dexter ad lib on the opening statement while the '*Round Midnight*' recording faded out in Cedar Walton's piano solo.

Dexter's intended ending is revealed on an earlier recording of *Tivoli* from June 26, 1971 made by Swedish television. This early version, which is played at a considerably slower tempo, also shows Dexter's original conception of the tune, which was slightly altered in the last 12 bars by Mikkelborg.

Recordings: February 21-23, 1975/SteepleChase-session  
 August 23, 1985/Blue Note session.

## f. The Prestige compositions (1969-72)

This group of originals consists of an uneven mix of some of Dexter's finest compositions with some uninspired and loose blues-heads. The three originals from *The Panther*-album, *The Panther*, *Valse Robin* and *Mrs. Miniver* together with *Evergreenish* are prime Dexter, as good as they come.

April 2 & 4, 1969.

### Sticky Wicket.

*Sticky Wicket* is a 12-bar blues in B<sup>b</sup>. There are slight differences in the phrasing of the theme in the four known recordings by Dexter. For solos are used normal blues changes.

Other recordings: February 5, 1969/live Catfish recording  
 July 1970/live J for Jazz recording  
 March 23, 1972/live Storyville recording  
 August 23, 1975/live SteepleChase recording  
 March 16, 1982/Elektra/Musician session.

### Boston Bernie.

*Boston Bernie* is named after Bernie Moss, a photographer and Dexter fan from Boston, and it is based on the chord changes of Jerome Kern's *All The Things You Are*. The middle 8 bars are open for solo on a latin beat in the rhythm group.

In the coda Dexter and the rhythm section fades out on Dizzy Gillespie's intro/coda to *All The Things You Are*.

Other recording: May 4, 1969/live Prestige recording.

### Montmartre.

### Fried Bananas.

### The Rainbow People.

(see previous chapter.)

July 7, 1970.

### The Panther.

When Bobby Seale and Masai Hewitt visited Copenhagen in 1969 Dexter was present at one of their meetings, and he later had a chance to meet the panthers at a private party. Dexter also participated in beneficial concerts for the black revolutionary movement and the anti-Vietnam movement in Copenhagen on several occasions in the late sixties. According to the Dexter biography, "More Than You Know" <sup>54</sup>, *The Panther* was a tribute to The Black Panther Party.

*The Panther* is based on a funky rhythmical foundation. The solo-bass starts off, repeating a 2-bar phrase which accentuates the off beats. After 8 bars piano and drums enter:

The image shows the musical notation for the beginning of the piece 'The Panther'. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a double bar line and a repeat sign. The bass staff starts with a melodic line in 4/4 time, featuring eighth and quarter notes. The second system continues the bass line and adds a treble staff with block chords. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

This funky foundation continues throughout the solos. The theme is built on a 12-bar blues with two themes, the first being repeated.

The theme is slightly altered in the 1975-recording, where ms. 5-8 of the second A goes:

Ms. 1-8 of the second theme is altered like this:

Other recordings: June 18, 1970/live Prestige recording,  
August 23-24, 1975/live SteepleChase recording,  
May 16, 1978/live Blue Note recording.

### Valse Robin.

*Valse Robin* is one of Dexter's rare waltz-compositions and named after Robin Gordon, Dexter's daughter of his first marriage. It carries a beautiful melody line on original chord changes with some unusual modulations (A: B $\flat$  - A $\flat$  - B - A $\flat$ , bridge: E - G). Noteworthy is the effectful use of inserted chords in ms. 4, 8 and 15 of the theme, which follows the melody chromatically into the following chords. These inserted chords are omitted in the solos, where the following changes are used:

### Mrs. Miniver.

*Mrs. Miniver*, a 32-bar songform (AABA) is named after a young British woman, Hillary Miniver. It is played in a relaxed medium tempo with beautiful laid back phrasing by Dexter. His articulation of the theme over the stop rhythm is a contrast to the bridge, where the melody gets wings over a 4-beat. Noteworthy is also the altered chords in a whole-tone sequence in the final two bars of the bridge where Dexter lets the melody line hit down upon the alterations and higher extensions of the chords.

August 27, 1970.

### Evergreenish.

*Evergreenish* in 32-bar songform (AA') has -as implied in the title- an evergreenish air to it, the chord progression being somewhat similar to the old standard, *It could happen to you*. The theme has a wonderful rhythmic stop time for the first 8 bars, going into a straight 4/4 for the final 8. Before the recapitulation of the theme Dexter sends the drummer Roy Brooks on an 8-bar chase with a little sequenced motive.

In spite of the refined harmonic and melodic structure of *Evergreenish*, played beautifully by Dexter and the rhythm section, there is no indication that Dexter should ever have played this composition live.

June 22, 1972.

### The Group.

*The Group* has an unusual ABA-form. The harmonic foundation of A is basically a repetition of a 4-bar progression (Gm7-C7-Fm7-Bb7-Em7(b5)-A7-Dm), while the bridge is based on *One Note Samba*-changes.

The solos are based on the following chord scheme:

**A**

**B**

**C**

June 28, 1972.

### Oh, Karen O.

*Oh, Karen O* is a slow 12-bar blues in F major without theme, and it is probably named after the Norwegian singer Karin Krog with whom Dexter recorded the LP *Some other spring - Blues and Ballads* in 1970.

### August Blues.

*August Blues* is a 12-bar blues in F with a loose theme, played slightly different the second time. Instead of recapitulating the theme at the end Dexter and Thad Jones improvises a duet with reminiscences of the melody line.

### What it Was.

*What it Was* is a 12-bar blues in G over a funky rhythmical foundation.

## g. The SteepleChase compositions (1973-76)

The SteepleChase recordings produced 10 originals of genuine quality. No new ground covered, the tunes are mainly based upon changes from known standards, other jazz originals or blues changes.

September 8, 1974.

### The Apartment.

*The Apartment* (the title might refer to a jazz club in Chicago's South Side) is a 32-bar songform (AA') with original chord changes. The strong melody has all the genuine qualities of Dexter's compositional style.

### Candlelight Lady.

*Candlelight Lady* is a 32-bar ballad composition (AABA) which is based on the chord changes of two different standards. The A-section is basically Vernon Duke's *I Can't Get Started* from 1935 with Dizzy Gillespie's chromatic alterations of bars 3-4 (see example):

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the chord changes of 'Candlelight Lady'. The top staff is labeled 'Dizzy changes' and the bottom staff is labeled 'original changes'. Both staves show a sequence of chords over 8 measures. The chords are: C, A7, D-7, G7, B-7, E7, Bb-7, Eb7, A-7, D7, Ab-7, Db7. The Dizzy changes staff shows chromatic alterations in the 3rd and 4th measures (B-7 and E7), while the original changes staff shows the standard chords for those measures (E7 and A7).

The first bar has been altered to make a complete circle of fifths for the two first bars. Note also how the melody of *Candlelight Lady* follows the melodic outline of Vernon Duke's original melody.

For the bridge Dexter lended an ear to John Green's *Body And Soul* in John Coltrane's version from 1960 (see example below). (Dexter himself made use of Coltrane's version of *Body And Soul* in his 1970 recording on *The Panther*-album.) Ms. 3-5 of the bridge are almost identical to Coltrane's *Body and Soul*-bridge applying the unique *Giant Steps*-changes:

The image shows a musical score for the bridge of 'Candlelight Lady'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. Above the top staff, a series of chords are written: D<sup>6</sup>, A7/E, D<sup>6</sup>/F#, G<sup>6</sup>, D<sub>9</sub>, F7, B<sup>b</sup><sub>9</sub>, D<sup>b</sup>7, G<sup>b</sup><sub>9</sub>, A7, D<sub>9</sub>. Below the top staff, a series of chords are written: D-7, G7, C<sub>9</sub>, E<sup>b</sup>7, A<sup>b</sup><sub>9</sub>, B7, E<sub>9</sub>, G7, C<sub>9</sub>, B7, B<sup>b</sup>7. The notes on the staves correspond to these chords, showing a chromatic descending line in the bass staff and a more complex line in the treble staff.

For a complete transcription of *Candlelight Lady*, see p. 97.

### Antabus.

*Antabus* is a fast 12-bar minor blues in C which Dexter first played back in 1971 in a concert date at the 'Arts Center' in Albany NY. Since this recording Dexter played *Antabus* regularly in concerts. The melody possesses a dorian quality with the use of the raised 6th, which -together with the special emphasis on the 9th of the chords- links back to the early influence of Lester Young.

Other recording: May 13, 1978/live Blue Note recording.

February 21-23, 1975.

### The Girl with the Purple Eyes.

*The Girl with the Purple Eyes* is in 32-bar songform (AABA) with original changes and a tribute to Elizabeth Taylor with whom Dexter shared birthday. It is noteworthy how the skipping melody line always hit down on the alterations of the chords.

### Tivoli.

(see chapter e. The Copenhagen compositions.)

September 13, 1975.

### Winther's Calling.

*Winther's Calling*, a fast 12-bar blues in D-minor, is a tribute to Nils Winther, the founder and director of SteepleChase Records. The melody line is based on fourths (ms. 1-8), contrasted by the chromatic line of ms. 9-12, an unusual melodic structure compared to other blues heads from Dexter's hand.



September 14, 1975.

### Benji's Bounce.

*Benji's Bounce* is named after Dexter's Danish son Benjamin Gordon, Jr, who again was named after Ben Webster.

The composition is mainly based on Thelonious Monk's *Rhythm-A-Ning*. In the recording of *Rhythm-A-Ning* three weeks prior to this recording <sup>55</sup> Dexter played the entire theme of *Benji's Bounce* after having presented Monk's theme.

Monk's *Rhythm-A-Ning* is buildt on *Rhythm*-changes. In his improvisations on *Rhythm-A-Ning* Monk would always at one time play a thematic sequence over a long circle of fifths in the A-section. It is precisely this idea that Dexter implied in *Benji's Bounce*, where the harmonic progression goes: B<sup>b</sup>7 - E<sup>b</sup>7 - A<sup>b</sup>7 - D<sup>b</sup>7 - G<sup>b</sup>7 - B7 - B<sup>b</sup>.

The theme of *Benji's Bounce* is composed in a Monk'ish fashion where the thematic material in the A-section is limited to one small motive (ms. 1-2), which is transposed through the full circle of fifths, and with the second motive (ms. 7) being applied to the bridge. Notice how Dexter hits upon the alterations in the dominant chords of the bridge (the <sup>b</sup>9ths and <sup>b</sup>5ths).

For soloing Dexter made use of the normal *Rhythm*-changes.

In the recapitulation of the theme Dexter would often reverse the second half of the motive in A:

(REVERSE THEME)

### Catalonian Nights.

*Catalonian Nights*, a 32-bar composition in songform (AABA) upon a bossa nova-beat, is named after the pianist of the session Tete Montoliu, who originated from Catalonia in Spain. For intro the rhythm section plays a small headarranged theme.

June 15, 1976.

### Nursery Blues.

*Nursery Blues*, probably written for Benji Gordon born in 1975, has two themes. The first which is played by Dexter and Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen in unison bears a strong resemblance to the childrens song *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*. The second theme is based on gospel changes, and this section is used for the solos. Except for the earlier *Soul Sister* this is Dexter's only gospel-type composition.

November 9, 1976.

### Apple Jump.

*Apple Jump* is a 32-bar composition in songform (AABA) based on *Rhythm-changes* (*Christopher Columbus*-version). Dexter varies the theme of A slightly every time it occurs. The title of course refers to Dexter's return to New York in 1976.

### A la Modal.

*A la Modal* is a 32-bar composition in songform over a modal harmonical foundation which follows the outline of Miles Davis' *So What*. For soloing is used the G-mixolydian mode in A, the bridge being transposed a half step up to the A<sup>b</sup>-mixolydian mode.

## h. The last compositions (1973-76)

The last 6 compositions are all -except for *Fenja* and *Gotham City*- loose heads made for specific live sessions. Only *Fenja* and *Dexter Leaps Out* are in songform, all the rest are blues heads. These last compositions do not rank among the finest of Dexter's work.

February 16, 1973 - live at 'Ecole Normale Superieure', Paris.

### Dexter Leaps Out.

*Dexter Leaps Out* is a composition in 32-bar songform (AABA) based on *Rhythm-changes* in analogy to Prez' *Lester Leaps In*. The melody bears all the typical Lester Young characteristics, the emphasis on the 6th and 9th of the tonic in the A-sections, and the riff-like counter-rhythm of the bridge with reminiscences of the *Dexter Digs In* melody.

A small riff is used for chase theme in the A-sections:

The musical notation shows a riff in F major. The melody line in treble clef consists of eighth notes: F4, A4, Bb4, G4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, G4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, G4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, G4, F4. The bass line in bass clef consists of eighth notes: F3, A3, Bb3, G3, F3, G3, A3, Bb3, G3, F3, G3, A3, Bb3, G3, F3, G3, A3, Bb3, G3, F3. The chord progression is: Bb6, G-7, C-7, F7, Bb6, F7, Bb6, F7.

July 7, 1973 - live at 'Montreux Jazz Festival', France.

### Blues á la Suisse.

This simple 12-bar blues theme in F was apparently made for the 1973 Montreux concert where Dexter teamed up with his old friend Hampton Hawes.

July 20, 1973 - live at 'Jazzhus Montmartre', Copenhagen.

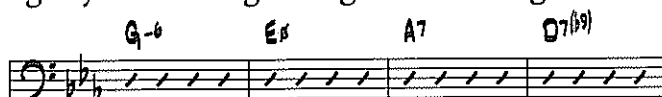
### All Clean.

The title of *All Clean*, another 12-bar blues theme in F made from a 4-bar riff refers of course to Jackie McLean.

December 11-12, 1976 - live at 'Village Vanguard', New York City.

### Fenja.

The melody of *Fenja* is based on the chord changes of George Bassman's *I'm Getting Sentimental Over You*, a 32-bar songform (AABA). The changes have been altered slightly at the beginning of the bridge, which originally said:



*Fenja* is entitled after Dexter's Danish wife Fenja Halberg, mother of Benjamin Gordon, Jr.

### Backstairs.

*Backstairs*, a 12-bar blues theme in B<sup>b</sup> based on a 4-bar pentatonic riff, was to become one of Dexter's favourite up tempo blues vehicles during the last years. The title refers to the Village Vanguard where the live recording took place.

Other recording: March 24, 1979/live Blue Note recording  
May 5, 1981/live Storyville recording.

August 11, 1980 - Columbia session.

### Gotham City.

The title of *Gotham City*, another fast 12-bar pentatonic blues theme, is of course a reference to New York City.

## Notes

1. *Charles Mingus presents Charles Mingus* (America 30 AM 6082), recorded October 20 1960.
2. Monson 1996 and Berliner 1994.
3. Monson 1996, p. 92.
4. Reverend Jasper Williams, [Jewel Records – LP 0006], this quotation is from Putschögl 1993, p. 249.
5. Doc Cheatham in Berliner 1994, p. 255.
6. Max Roach in Berliner 1994, p. 192.
7. Monson 1996, p. 83.
8. Monson 1996, p. 84.
9. This concert is available on the CD *Anniversary* [EmArCy 838769-2]
10. Gitler 1966, p. 203.
11. Berg 1977, p. 13.
12. Mingus 1975, p. 57.
13. Bryant 1998, p. 142-43.
14. Interview with Ib Skovgaard in Malone 1996, p. 81.
15. on the LPs: *Dexter Rides Again*, *Long Tall Dexter* and *The Dial Sessions*.
16. Dexter Gordon as Dale Turner in Bertrand Tavernier's film "Round Midnight". The quotation at the bottom of this page (see note 20) indicates that this line is one of Dexter's own contributions to the film script of Tavernier.
17. Berg 1977, p. 13.
18. Gitler 1987, p. 38.
19. Gioia 1992, p. 39.
20. Berg 1977, p. 42.
21. On Lester Young's personal formulas, read Gushee 1977 and Porter 1985.
22. Take one, recorded November 9, 1936.
23. The Savoy sessions, recorded January 29, 1946.
24. The Dootone session, recorded November 11-12, 1955.
25. Recorded June 7, 1944.
26. Berg 1977, p. 42.
27. *Lester Leaps In* take 2, recorded september 5, 1939 with Buck Clayton (tp), Dicky Wells (tb), Lester Young (ts), Count Basie (p), Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b) and Jo Jones (dr).
28. Dexter Gordon interviewed in Malone 1988.
29. Grime 1979, p. 180.
30. Berg 1977, p. 38.
31. *ibid.*
32. Britt 1989, p. 32-33.
33. Gitler 1966 p. 215.
34. Britt 1989, p. 75-76.
35. These recordings are compiled in the box set, *The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* [CDP 7243 8 34200 2 5].
36. Britt 1989, p. 81
37. Dexter Gordon interview in Armstrong 1972, p.17.
38. Dexter Gordon interviewed in Malone 1988.
39. Herluf Kamp Larsen was the founder and owner of the legendary Jazzhouse Montmartre in St. Regnegade, Copenhagen.
40. The Danish jazz aficionado and newspaper cartoonist, Klaus Albrechtsen, about an incident in Copenhagen back in the 1960's, from Malone 1996, p. 134.
41. Berg 1977, p. 42.
42. Gordon 1996, p. 15.

43. Interview with the author.
44. *ibid.*
45. Berliner 1994, p. 424-25.
46. Recorded live at Carnegie Hall on September 23, 1978, where Dexter teamed up with his fellow European soul-tenor Johnny Griffin. The rhythm section was Dexter's own, George Cables (p), Rufus Reid (b) and Eddie Gladden (dr). From *Dexter Gordon Live at Carnegie Hall* [Columbia/Legacy CK 65312].
47. Dexter Gordon as Dale Turner in the movie *'Round Midnight* interviewed in Malone 1988, Dexter stated, "Actually I wrote that part of the script."
48. Britt 1989, p. 95.
49. *Dexter Gordon nights at the Keystone* vol. 3 (recorded March 14, 1979).
50. recorded May 2, 1945.
51. Gitler 1966, p. 209.
52. Dexter's old friend Hampton Hawes described this style of ballad playing in the following way: "at very slow tempos the beat has to swell: It's like taking a mouthful of good wine, swishing it around, savoring it before you let it go down; the swallow is that beat finally dropping." (Hawes 1972, p. 34.)
53. Britt 1989, p. 80.
54. Malone 1996, p. 115.
55. from *Swiss Nights* vol. 3, recorded August 23-24, 1975.

## Discography

This selective discography lists all recording sessions and live-recordings of Dexter Gordon's original compositions known up until November 2003. The specific information on dates, personnel, takes etc. are primarily based on Thorbjørn Sjøgren's discography from 1986.

Dexter Gordon All Stars: NYC, October 30, 1945.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Sadik Hakim (p), Gene Ramey (b), Eddie Nicholson (dr).  
 Blow Mr. Dexter (tk.2) Savoy SJL 2211, Masters Of Jazz MJCD 128  
 Blow Mr. Dexter (tk.3) Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12130, SVY-17027, MJCD 128  
 Dexter's Deck Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12130, SVY-17027, MJCD 128  
 Dexter's Cuttin' Out Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12130, SVY-17027, MJCD 128  
 Dexter's Minor Mad Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12130, SVY-17027, MJCD 128  
Issues: *Dexter Rides Again* (MG 12130)  
*Long Tall Dexter* (SJL 2211)  
*Settin' The Pace* (SVY-17027)  
*Young Dex Vol. 2, 1944-46* (MJCD 128)

Dexter Gordon Quintet: NYC, January 29, 1946.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Leonard Hawkins (tp), Bud Powell (p), Curly Russell (b), Max Roach (dr).  
 Long Tall Dexter (tk.1) Savoy SJL 2211, SVY-17027, MJCD 128  
 Long Tall Dexter (tk.2) Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12130, SVY-17027, MJCD 128  
 Dexter Rides Again Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12130, SVY-17027, MJCD 128  
 Dexter Digs In (tk.1) Savoy 2211, SVY-17027  
 Dexter Digs In (tk.2) Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12130, SVY-17027, MJCD 128  
 Dexter Digs In (tk.3) MJCD 128  
 Dexter Digs In (tk.4) Savoy SVY-17027  
Issues: *Dexter Rides Again* (MG 12130)  
*Long Tall Dexter* (SJL 2211)  
*Settin' The Pace* (SVY-17027)  
*Young Dex Vol. 2, 1944-46* (MJCD 128)

Dexter Gordon Quintet: Hollywood, June 5, 1947.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Melba Liston (tb), Charles Fox (p), Red Callender (b), Chuck Thompson (dr).  
 Mischievous Lady (tk.4) Spotlite(E) SPJ 130, SPJ-CD 130, MJCD 156  
 Mischievous Lady (tk.5) Spotlite(E) SPJ 133, SPJ-CD 130, MJCD 156  
Issues: *The Chase* (SPJ 130)  
*Move* (SPJ 133)  
*Dexter Gordon on Dial* (SPJ-CD 130)  
*Young Dex Vol. 3, 1946-47* (MJCD 156)

Dexter Gordon & Wardell Gray: Hollywood, June 12, 1947.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Wardell Gray<sup>1</sup>(ts), Jimmy Bunn (p), Red Callender (b), Chuck Thompson (dr).  
 The Chase<sup>1</sup> (tk.3) Spotlite(E) SJP-CD 130, MJCD 156  
 The Chase<sup>1</sup> (tk.4) Spotlite(E) SJP-CD 130, MJCD 156  
 Chromatic Aberration (tk.2) Spotlite(E) SJP-CD 130, MJCD 156  
 Iridescence (aka Chromatic Aberration (tk.3) Spotlite(E) SJP-CD 130, MJCD 156  
 Blues Bikini Spotlite(E) SJP-CD 130, MJCD 156  
Issues: *Dexter Gordon on Dial* (SJP-CD 156)  
*Young Dex Vol. 3, 1946-47* (MJCD 156)

Dexter Gordon Quintet: Hollywood, December 4, 1947.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Teddy Edwards (ts), Jimmy Rowles (p), Red Callender (b), Roy Porter (dr).  
 Hornin' In (tk.3) Dial SPJ 130, 204, 1028, SPJ-CD 130  
 Hornin' In (tk.3) Dial SPJ 130, 204, 1028, SPJ-CD 130  
 The Duel (tk.4) Dial SPJ 130, 204, 1028, SPJ-CD 130  
 The Duel (tk.4) Dial SPJ 130, 204, 1028, SPJ-CD 130  
Issues: *The Chase* (SPJ 130)  
*Dexter Gordon Quintet* (204)  
*The Duel* (1028)  
*Dexter Gordon on Dial* (SPJ-CD 130)

Dexter Gordon Quintet: NYC, December 11, 1947.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Leo Parker (bs), Tadd Dameron (p), Nelson Boyd (b), Art Blakey (dr).  
 Settin' The Pace (tk.3) Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12130, SVY-17027  
 So Easy (tk.2) Savoy SJL 2211  
 So Easy (tk.3) Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12130, SVY-17027  
 Dexter's Riff (tk.1) Savoy SJL 2211  
 Dexter's Riff (tk.2) Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12130, SVY-17027  
Issues: *Long Tall Dexter* (SJL 2211)  
*Dexter Rides Again* (MG 12130)  
*Settin' The Pace* (SVY-17027)

Dexter Gordon And His Boys: NYC, December 22, 1947.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Fats Navarro<sup>1)</sup>(tp), Tadd Dameron (p), Nelson Boyd (b), Art Mardigan (dr).  
 Dexter's Mood (tk.1) Savoy SVY-17027  
 Dexter's Mood (tk.2) Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12133, SVY-17027  
 Dextrose<sup>1)</sup> (tk.1) Savoy SVY-17027  
 Dextrose<sup>1)</sup> (tk.2) Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12133, SVY-17027  
 Index<sup>1)</sup> (tk.1) Savoy SVY-17027  
 Index<sup>1)</sup> (tk.2) Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12133, SVY-17027  
 Dextivity<sup>1)</sup> (tk.1) Savoy SVY-17027  
 Dextivity<sup>1)</sup> (tk.2) Savoy SJL 2211, MG 12133, SVY-17027  
Issues: *Long Tall Dexter* (SJL 2211)  
 Fats Navarro: *Nostalgia* (MG 12133)  
*Settin' The Pace* (SVY-17027)

Wardell Gray: 'Pasadena Civic Auditorium', February 2, 1952.  
 Wardell Gray (ts), Dexter Gordon (ts), Conte Candoli (tp), Bobby Tucker (p), Don Bagley (b),  
 Chico Hamilton (dr).  
 The Chase Giants of Jazz CD 53064  
Issue: Wardell Gray: *The Chase*

Dexter Gordon Quartet: Hollywood, September 18, 1955.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Leroy Vinnegar (b), Lawrence Marable (dr).  
 Daddy Plays The Horn BCP 36, BCP 6008, FSR-CD 154  
 Number Four BCP 36, BCP 6008, FSR-CD 154  
Issues: *Daddy Plays The Horn* (BCP 36)  
*The Bethlehem Years* (BCP 6008)  
*Dexter Gordon Plays* (FSR-CD 154)

Stan Levy Sextet:

LA, September 27-28, 1955.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Conte Candoli (tp), Lou Levy (p), Leroy Vinnegar (b), Stan Levy (dr).

Stanley The Steamer

Bethlehem BCP 37, FSR-CD 154

Issues: Stan Levy: *This Time The Drum's On Me* (BCP 37)*Dexter Gordon Plays* (FSR-CD 154)Dexter Gordon Quintet/Quarter:

LA, November 11-12, 1955.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Jimmy Robinson<sup>1)</sup> (tp), Carl Perkins (p), Leroy Vinnegar (b), Chuck Thompson (dr).Silver Plated<sup>1)</sup>

Dootone DLP 207

Rhythm Mad<sup>1)</sup>

Dootone DLP 207

Bonna Rue<sup>1)</sup>

Dootone DLP 207

Blowin' for Dootsie

Dootone DLP 207

Issue: *Dexter Blows Hot And Cool*Dexter Gordon Sextet:

LA, October 13, 1960.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Martin Banks<sup>1)</sup>(tp), Richard Boone<sup>1)</sup>(tb), Charles 'Dodo' Coker (p), Charles Green (b), Lawrence Marable (dr).Home Run<sup>1)</sup>

Jazzland JLP 29, JLPS 929, Riv(Eu)RM006

Jodi

Jazzland JLP 29, JLPS 929, Riv(Eu)RM006

Issues: *The Resurgence of Dexter Gordon* (JLP 29)*Resurgence* (JLPS 929)*Pulsation* (Riv RM006)Dexter Gordon Quintet:

NJ, May 6, 1961.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Freddie Hubbard (tp), Horace Parlan (p), George Tucker (b), Al Harewood (dr).

For Regulars Only

Blue Note BST 84077, 34200

For Regulars Only (alt.)

Blue Note 34200

Society Red

Blue Note BST 84077, 34200, 80685

I Want More

Blue Note B2 84077, 34200

Issues: *Doin' Alright* (BST 84077, CD: B2 84077 )*The Classic Blue Note Recordings* (80658)*The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* (34200)Dexter Gordon Quartet:

NJ, May 9, 1961.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Paul Chambers (b), Philly Joe Jones (dr).

Soul Sister

Blue Note BST 84083, 34200

I Want More

Blue Note BST 84083, BN-LA 392-H2, 34200, 23514

Ernie's Tune

Blue Note BST 84083, 796579, 34200, 80685

Landslide

Blue Note LT 1051, 34200

Issues: *Dexter Calling* (BST 84083)*Landslide* (LT 1051)*Dexter Gordon* (BN-LA 392-H2)*Ballads* (796579)*Jazz Profile* (23514)*The Classic Blue Note Recordings* (80658)*The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* (34200)



Dexter Gordon Quarter: NJ, August 27, 1962.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Sonny Clark (p), Butch Warren (b), Billy Higgins (dr).  
 Cheese Cake Blue Note BST 84112, 34200, 80658  
Issues: *Go!* (BST 84112)  
*The Classic Blue Note Recordings* (80658)  
*The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* (34200)

Dexter Gordon Quarter: NJ, August 29, 1962.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Sonny Clark (p), Butch Warren (b), Billy Higgins (dr).  
 Soy Califa Blue Note BST 84133, BN-LA 393-H2, 34200, 80658  
 McSplivens Blue Note BST 84133, 34200, 23514, 80658  
Issues: *A Swingin' Affair* (BST 84133)  
*Dexter Gordon* (BN-LA 393-H2)  
*Jazz Profile* (23514)  
*The Classic Blue Note Recordings* (80658)  
*The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* (34200)

Dexter Gordon Quintet: Paris, June 2, 1964.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Art Taylor (dr).  
 Kong Neptune Blue Note BST 84176, 34200  
Issues: *One Flight Up* (BST 84176)  
*The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* (34200)

Dexter Gordon Quarter: 'Jazzhus Montmartre' Copenhagen, June 11, 1964.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Tete Montoliu (p), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Alex Riel (dr).  
 Cheese Cake SteepleChase SCC 6008  
Issue: *Cheese Cake*

Dexter Gordon Quarter: 'Jazzhus Montmartre' Copenhagen, June 25, 1964.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Tete Montoliu (p), Benny Nielsen (b), Alex Riel (dr).  
 King Neptune (aka Kong Neptune) SteepleChase SCC 6012  
Issue: *King Neptune*

Dexter Gordon Quarter: 'Jazzhus Montmartre' Copenhagen, July 9, 1964.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Tete Montoliu (p), Niels Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Rune Carlsson (dr).  
 I Want More SteepleChase SCC 6015  
Issue: *I Want More.*

Dexter Gordon Quartet: 'Jazzhus Montmartre' Copenhagen, July 23, 1964.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Tete Montoliu (p), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Alex Riel (dr).  
 Soul Sister SteepleChase SCC 6018  
Issue: *Love For Sale*

Dexter Gordon Quartet: 'Jazzhus Montmartre' Copenhagen, August 20, 1964.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Tete Montoliu (p), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Alex Riel (dr).  
 Soul Sister SteepleChase SCC 6028  
Issue: *Billie's Bounce*

Dexter Gordon Quintet: NJ, May 27, 1965.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Freddie Hubbard tp), Barry Harris (p), Bob Cranshaw (b), Billy Higgins (dr).  
 Hanky Panky Blue Note LT 989, 34200, 80658  
 Clubhouse Blue Note LT 989, 34200  
 Jodi Blue Note LT 989, 34200  
Issues: *Clubhouse* (LT 989)  
*The Classic Blue Note Recordings* (80658)  
*The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* (34200)

Dexter Gordon Quintet: NJ, May 28, 1965.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Bobby Hutcherson (vi), Barry Harris (p), Bob Cranshaw (b), Billy Higgins (dr).  
 Le Coiffeur Blue Note BST 84204  
Issues: *Gettin' Around* (BST 84204)  
*The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions* (34200)

Dexter Gordon - Booker Erwin Quintet: Munich, October 27, 1965.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Booker Erwin (ts), Jaki Byard (p), Reggie Workman (b), Alan Dawson (dr).  
 Setting the Pace Prestige PR 7455  
 Dexter's Deck Prestige PR 7455  
Issue: *Settin' the Pace*

Dexter Gordon Quartet: 'Jazzhus Montmartre' Copenhagen, June 29, 1967.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Bo Stief (b), Art Taylor (dr).  
 Cheese Cake Blue Note 7243 8 573 02 2 1  
Issue: *The Squirrel*

Dexter Gordon Quartet: Magleås Højskole, August 5, 1967.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Al 'Tootie' Heath (dr).  
 Soy Califas Storyville 8356  
 Society Red Storyville 8356  
Issue: *Jazz at Highschool*

Dexter Gordon Quartet: 'Paradiso' Amsterdam, February 5, 1969.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Cees Slinger (p), Jacques Schols (b), Han Bennink (dr).  
 Fried Bananas Catfish(Du) 5C 188.24 336/37, Fuel 200 061292  
 Junior (aka Sticky Wicket) Catfish(Du) 5C 188.24 336/37, Fuel 200 061292  
Issues: *Live at the Amsterdam Paradiso* (5C 188.24 336/37)  
*Our Man in Amsterdam* (Fuel 200 061292)

Dexter Gordon Quartet/Quintet: NYC, April 2, 1969.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), James Moody<sup>1</sup>(ts), Barry Harris (p), Buster Williams (b), Al 'Tootie' Heath (dr).  
 Montmartre<sup>1</sup>) Prestige PR 7623, P 24087  
 Sticky Wicket<sup>1</sup>) Prestige PR 7680, P 24087  
 Sticky Wicket<sup>1</sup>) (alt) Prestige PR 11003  
 NYC, April 4, 1969.  
 Stanley The Steamer Prestige PR 7623, P 24087  
 The Rainbow People Prestige PR 7623, P 24087  
 Boston Bernie Prestige PR 7680, P 24087  
 Fried Bananas Prestige PR 7680, P 24087  
Issues: *The Tower of Power* (PR 7623)  
*More Power* (PR 7680)

*Power* (P 24087)

*Blue Dex: Dexter Gordon Plays the Blues* (PR 11003)

Dexter Gordon Quartet: 'The Famous Ballroom, Baltimore, May 4, 1969.  
Dexter Gordon (ts), Bobby Timmons (p), Victor Gaskin (b), Percy Brice (dr).  
**Boston Bernie** Prestige 11018  
Issue: *XXL Live at the Left Bank*

Dexter Gordon Quartet: 'Montreux Jazz Festival', June 18, 1970.  
Dexter Gordon (ts), Junior Mance (p), Martin Rivera (b), Oliver Jackson (dr).  
**Fried Bananas** Prestige P 7861  
**The Panther** Prestige PCD 7861-2  
Issue: *Dexter Gordon with Junior Mance at Montreux*

Dexter Gordon Quartet: NYC, July 7, 1970.  
Dexter Gordon (ts), Tommy Flanagan (p), Larry Ridley (b), Alan Dawson (dr).  
**The Panther** Prestige PR 7829, PR 11003  
**Valse Robin** Prestige PR 7829  
**Mrs. Miniver** Prestige PR 7829  
Issues: *The Panther* (PR 7829)  
*Blue Dex: Dexter Gordon Plays the Blues* (PR 11003)

Gene Ammons & Dexter Gordon: 'North Park Hotel' Chicago, July 26, 1970.  
Dexter Gordon (ts), Gene Ammons (ts), Jodie Christian (p), Rufus Reid (b), Wilbur Campbell (dr).  
**The Chase** Prestige PR 10010, CD 24166  
Issue: Gene Ammons & Dexter Gordon: *The Chase*

Dexter Gordon Quartet: Chicago, July 1970.  
Dexter Gordon (ts), John Young (p), Rufus Reid (b), Wilbur Campbell (dr).  
**Long Tall Dexter** J for Jazz JFJ 802  
**Sticky Wicket** J for Jazz JFJ 802  
Issue: *Charlie Mingus / Dexter Gordon / Charlie Parker*

Dexter Gordon Quartet: 'Both/And' San Francisco, prob. August 1970.  
Dexter Gordon (ts), George Duke (p), Raphael Garrett (b), Oliver Johnson (dr).  
**Jive Fernando** (aka Fried Bananas) Chiaroscuro CR 2029, Bizarre Planet 6101  
**Bon Macha** (aka Montmartre) CR 2029, Everest FS 360, Bizarre Planet 6101  
**The Rainbow People** Everest FS 360, Bizarre Planet 6101  
Issues: *Jive Fernando* (CR 2029)  
*Gordon's Gotham* (FS 360)  
*Live at the Both/And San Francisco* (Bizarre Planet 6101)

Dexter Gordon Quartet: NYC, August 27, 1970.  
Dexter Gordon (ts), Wynton Kelly (p), Sam Jones (b), Roy Brooks (dr).  
**Evergreenish** Prestige PR 10020  
Issue: *The Jumpin' Blues*

Hampton Hawes: 'Jazzhus Montmartre' Copenhagen, September 2, 1971.  
Dexter Gordon (ts), Hampton Hawes (p), Henry Franklin (b), Michael Carvin (dr).  
**Long Tall Dexter** (real title: *Dexter's Deck*) Arista-Freedom AF 1043  
Issue: Hampton Hawes: *A Little Copenhagen Night Music*

- Dexter Gordon Quartet: Flensburg, March 23, 1972.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Thomas Clausen (p), Bo Stief (b), Alex Riel (dr).  
 Sticky Wicket Storyville STCD 8288  
 Issue: Dexter Gordon and Ben Webster: *Tenor Titans*
- Dexter Gordon Quintet: NJ, June 22, 1972.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Freddie Hubbard (tp,flh), Cedar Walton (p), Buster Williams (b), Billy Higgins (dr).  
 The Group Prestige P 10069  
 Issue: *Generation*
- Dexter Gordon Quintet: NJ, June 28, 1972.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Thad Jones (tp,flh), Hank Jones (p), Stanley Clarke (b), Louis Hayes (dr).  
 Oh, Karen O. Prestige PR 10051, PR 11003  
 August Blues Prestige P 10091  
 What It Was Prestige P 10091  
 Issues: *Ca'purange* (PR 10051)  
*Tangerine* (P 10091)  
*Blue Dex: Dexter Gordon Plays the Blues* (PR 11003)
- Dexter Gordon - Sonny Grey: 'Ecole Normale Superieure' Paris, February 16, 1973.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Sonny Grey (tp), George Arvanitas (p), Jacki Samson (b), Charles Saudrais (dr).  
 Fried Bananas Futura GER 41, Spotlight 10  
 Dexter Leaps Out Futura GER 41, Spotlight 10  
 Issues: *Parisian Concert* (GER 41)  
*Dexter Gordon-Sonny Grey with the George Arvanitas Trio* (Spotlight 10)
- Dexter Gordon Quartet: 'Montreux Jazz Festival', July 7, 1973.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Hampton Hawes (ep), Bob Cranshaw (elb), Kenny Clarke (dr).  
 Blues á la Suisse Prestige P 10079  
 Issue: *Blues á la Suisse*
- Jackie McLean featuring Dexter Gordon: 'Jazzhus Montmartre' CPH, July 20-21, 1973.  
 Jackie McLean (as), Dexter Gordon (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Alex Riel (dr).  
 All Clean SteepleChase SCS 1006  
 Dexter Digs In SteepleChase SCS 1020, SCCD 37001/2  
 Issues: *The Meeting* (SCS 1006)  
*The Source* (SCS 1020)  
*Montmartre Summit 1973* (SCCD 37001/2)
- Dexter Gordon Quartet: Copenhagen, September 8, 1974.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Al 'Tootie' Heath (dr).  
 The Apartment (tk.1&2) Steeplechase SCCD 30010/17  
 The Apartment (tk.3) SteepleChase SCS 1025, SCCD 30010/17  
 Candlelight Lady (tk.1&2 ) SteepleChase SCCD 30010/17  
 Candlelight Lady (tk.3) SteepleChase SCS 1025, SCCD 30010/17  
 Antabus (tk.1&5) SteepleChase SCCD 30010/17  
 Antabus (tk.4) SteepleChase SCS 1025, SCCD 30010/17  
 Issues: *The Apartment* (SCS 1025)  
*The Complete Trio & Quartet Studio Recordings 1974-76* (SCCD 30010/17)

Dexter Gordon and Orchestra: Copenhagen, February 21-23, 1975.

Dexter Gordon (ts,ss), Danish Radio Big Band, Palle Mikkelborg (arr,cond).

Ernie's Tune SteepleChase SCS 1030

Tivoli SteepleChase SCS 1030

March 27, 1975.

The Girl With the Purple Eyes SteepleChase SCS 1030

Issue: *More Than You Know.*Dexter Gordon Quartet: 'Zürich Jazz Festival', August 23, 1975.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Kenny Drew (p), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Alex Riel (dr).

Montmartre Steeplechase SCS 1090

Sticky Wicket Steeplechase SCS 1090

The Panther Steeplechase SCCD-31050

Montmartre/The Theme Steeplechase SCCD-31050

Montmartre/The Theme Steeplechase SCCD-31090

Issues: *Swiss Nights vol 1* (CD: SCCD-31050)*Swiss Nights vol 2* (SCS 1090, CD: SCCD-31090)Dexter Gordon Quartet: Copenhagen, September 13, 1975.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Philip Catherine (gt), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Billy Higgins (dr).

Winther's Calling (or Winther's Callin') SteepleChase SCS 1136, SCCD 30010/17

Issues: *Something Different* (SCS1136)*The Complete Trio & Quartet Studio Recordings 1974-76* (SCCD 30010/17)Dexter Gordon Quartet: Copenhagen, September 14, 1975.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Tete Montoliu (p), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Billy Higgins (dr).

Benji's Bounce SteepleChase SCS 1060, SCCD 30010/17

Catalonian Nights SteepleChase SCS 1060, SCCD 30010/17

Issues: *Bouncing with Dex* (SCS 1060)*The Complete Trio & Quartet Studio Recordings 1974-76* (SCCD 30010/17)Dexter Gordon Trio: Copenhagen, June 15, 1976.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (b), Alex Riel (dr).

Nursery Blues (tk. 2) SteepleChase SCCD 30010/17

Nursery Blues (tk. 3) SteepleChase SCS 1156, SCCD 30010/17

Issues: *Lullaby for a Monster* (SCS1156)*The Complete Trio & Quartet Studio Recordings 1974-76* (SCCD 30010/17)Dexter Gordon Quartet: NYC, November 9, 1976.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Barry Harris (p), Sam Jones (b), Al Foster (dr).

Apple Jump SteepleChase SCS 1080, SCCD 30010/17

A la Modal SteepleChase SCS 1080, SCCD 30010/17

Issues: *Biting the Apple* (SCS 1080)*The Complete Trio & Quartet Studio Recordings 1974-76* (SCCD 30010/17)Dexter Gordon Quintet: 'Village Vanguard' NYC, December 11-12, 1976.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Woody Shaw (tp,flh), Ronnie Matthews (p), Stafford James (b), Louis Hayes (dr).

Fenja COL PG 34650, Tristar 35247

Backstairs COL PG 34650, Tristar 35247

Fried Bananas Tristar 35247

Issue: *Homecoming* (Col PG. 34650, CD: Tristar 35247)

Dexter Gordon Orchestra:

NYC, June 21-22, 1977.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Woody Shaw, Benny Bailey (tp,flh), Slide Hampton (tb,arr), Wayne Andre (tb), Frank Wess (as,fl,picc-fl), Howard Johnson (bs,tu), Bobby Hutcherson (vi), George Cables (p), Rufus Reid (b), Victor Lewis (dr).

Fried Bananas

COL JC 34989

Issue: *Sophisticated Giant*Montreux Summit:

Montreux, July 24, 1977.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Woody Shaw (tp), Slide Hampton (tb), George Duke (p), Gordon Johnson (b), Billy Brooks (dr).

Fried Bananas

COL JG 35005

Issue: *Montreux Summit vol.1*Dexter Gordon Quartet:

NYC, May 3, 1978.

Dexter Gordon (ts), George Cables (p), Rufus Reid (b), Eddie Gladden (dr).

LTD (aka Long Tall Dexter)

COL JC 35608

Issue: *Manhattan Symphonie*Dexter Gordon Quarter:

'Keystone Korner' San Francisco, May 13, 1978.

Dexter Gordon (ts), George Cables (p), Rufus Reid (b), Eddie Gladden (dr).

Antabus

Blue Note BABB 85112, CDP 7 94848 2

May 16 1978.

The Panther

Blue Note CDP 7 94849 2

March 24 1979.

Backstairs/LTD

Blue Note CDP 7 94848 2

Issues: *Nights at the Keystone vol. 1* (BABB 85112, CDP 7 94848 2)*Nights at the Keystone vol. 2* (CDP 7 94849 2)Dexter Gordon Quartet & Johnny Griffin:

'Carnegie Hall', September 23, 1978.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Johnny Griffin (ts), George Cables (p), Rufus Reid (b), Eddie Gladden (dr).

Cake (aka Cheese Cake)

COL JC 35978, CK 65312

NYC, January 26, 1979.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Woody Shaw (tp), Curtis Fuller (tb), Eddie Jefferson (vo), George Cables (p), Rufus Reid (b), Eddie Gladden (dr).

Diggin' In (aka Dexter Digs In)

COL JC 35978

Issues: *Great Encounters* (JC 35978)*Live at Carnegie Hall* (CK 65312)Dexter Gordon Quintet:

NYC, August 11, 1980.

Dexter Gordon (ts), George Benson (gt), Cedar Walton (p), Percy Heath (b), Art Blakey (dr).

Gotham City

COL JC 36853

Issue: *Gotham City*Dexter Gordon Quartet:

E.J.'s, Atlanta, Georgia, May 5, 1981.

Dexter Gordon (ts), Kirk Lightsey (p), Rufus Reid (b), Eddie Gladden (dr).

Backstairs

E.J. 603, Storyville 8363

Issues: *Backstairs* (E.J. 603)*Atlanta 1981* (Storyville 8363)

Dexter Gordon Quartet: Philadelphia & NYC, March 8 & 16, 1982.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Grover Washington (ss), Shirley Scott (org), Eddie Gladden (dr).  
 For Soul Sister (aka Soul Sister) Elektra/Musician E1-60126  
 Sticky Wicket Elektra/Musician E1-60126  
Issue: *American Classic*

Dexter Gordon Quintet: 'Hollywood Bowl' LA, June 19-20, 1982.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Woody Shaw (tp), Kirk Lightsey (p), David Eubanks (b), Eddie Gladden (dr).  
 Fried Bananas Elektra/Musician MUS 96.0298-1  
Issue: *In Performance at the Playboy Jazz Festival*

Dexter Gordon Group: Paris, August 20-21, 1985.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Freddie Hubbard (tp), Cedar Walton (p), Ron Carter (b), Tony Williams (dr).  
 Society Red Blue Note BN 7463972  
 Paris, August 23, 1985.  
 Dexter Gordon (ts), Wayne Shorter (ss), Palle Mikkelborg (tp), Herbie Hancock (p), Mads Vinding  
 (b), Ron Carter (b), Billy Higgins (dr).  
 Tivoli Blue Note BN 7463972  
Issue: *The Other Side of Round Midnight*

## List of Dexter Gordon issues containing his own originals:

Hampton Hawes: A Little Copenhagen Night Music	Arista-Freedom AF 1043
American Classic	Elektra/Musician E1-60126
The Apartment	SteepleChase SCS 1025, SCCD 31025
Atlanta 1981	Storyville 8363
Backstairs	E.J. 603
Ballads	Blue Note 796579
The Bethlehem Years	Bethlehem BCP 6008
Billie's Bounce	SteepleChase SCS 6028, SCCD 36028
Biting the Apple	SteepleChase SCS 1080, SCCD 31080
Blue Dex: Dexter Gordon Plays the Blues	Prestige 11003
Blues á la Suisse	Prestige P 10079
Bouncin' with Dex	SteepleChase SCS 1060, SCCD 31060
Ca'purange	Prestige PR 10051
Charlie Mingus/Dexter Gordon/Charlie Parker	J for Jazz JFJ 802
The Chase	Spotlite(E) SPJ 130
Wardell Gray: The Chase	Giants of Jazz CD 53064
Gene Ammons & Dexter Gordon: The Chase	Prestige PR 10010
Cheese Cake	SteepleChase SCS 6008, SCCD 36008
The Classic Blue Note Recordings	Blue Note 80658
Clubhouse	Blue Note LT 989, CD: B2 84445
The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions	Blue Note CDP 834200-2
The Complete Trio & Quartet	
Studio Recordings 1974-76	Steeplechase 30010/17
Daddy Plays the Horn	Bethlehem BCP 36, CD Charly 57
Dexter Blows Hot and Cool	Dootone DLP 207, CDBOP 006
Dexter Calling	Blue Note BST 84083, CD: B2 46544
Dexter Gordon	Blue Note BN-LA 393-H2
Dexter Gordon on Dial	Spotlite Jazz SPJ-CD 130
Dexter Gordon Plays	Fresh Sound FSR-CD 154
Dexter Gordon Quintet	Dial 204
Dexter Gordon with Junior Mance at Montreux	Prestige P 7861, PCD 7861-2
Dexter Gordon-Sonny Grey	
with the George Arvanitas Trio	Spotlite 10
Dexter Rides Again	Savoy MG 12130
Doin' Allright	Blue Note BST 84077, CD: B2 84077
The Duel	Dial 1028
Generation	Prestige P 10069, OJCCD 836-2
Gettin' Around	Blue Note BST 84204, CD: B2 46681
Go!	Blue Note BST 84112, CD: B2 46094
Gordon's Gotham	Everest FS 360
Gotham City	Columbia COL JC 36853
Great Encounters	Columbia COL JC 35978
Happy Birthday	Storyville 8365
Homecoming	Columbia PG 34650, Tristar 35247
I Want More	SteepleChase SCS 6015, SCCD 36015
In Performance at The Playboy Club	Elektra/Musician MUS 96.0298-1
Jazz at Highschool	Storyville 8356
Jazz Profile	Blue Note 23514
Jive Fernando	Chiaroscuro CR 2029



The Jumpin' Blues	Prestige PR 10020, OJCCD 899-2
King Neptune	SteepleChase SCS 6012, SCCD 36012
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Landslide	Blue Note LT 1050
Live at Carnegie Hall	Columbia CK 65312
Live at The Amsterdam Paradiso	Catfish(Du) 5C 188.24 336/37
Live at the Both/And San Francisco	Bizarre Planet 6101
Long Tall Dexter	Savoy SJL 2211
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Lullaby for A Monster	SteepleChase SCS 1156, SCCD 31156
Manhattan Symphonie	Columbia COL JC 35608
Jackie McLean: The Meeting	SteepleChase SCS 1006, SCCD 31006
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Montreux Summit	Columbia COL JG 35005
More Power	Prestige PR 7680
More Than You Know	SteepleChase SCS 1030, SCCD 31030
Move	Spotlite SPJ 133
Nights at The Keystone vol. 1	Blue Note BAAB 85112, CDP 7 94848 2
Nights at The Keystone vol. 2	Blue Note CDP 7 94849 2
Fats Navarro: Nostalgia	Savoy MG 12133
One Flight Up	Blue Note BST 84176, CD: B2 84176
Our man in Amsterdam	Fuel 200 061292
The Other Side of Round Midnight	Blue Note BN 7463972
The Panther	Prestige PR 7829, OJCCD 770-2
Parisian Concert	Futura(F) GER 41
Power	Prestige P 24087
Pulsation	Riverside RIV RM006
Resurgence	Prestige JLPS 929
The Resurgence of Dexter Gordon	Jazzland JLP 29
Jackie McLean: The Scource	SteepleChase SCS 1020, SCCD 31020
Settin' the Pace	Savoy SVY-1727
Dexter Gordon-Booker Erwin: Settin' the Pace	Prestige PR 7455, PCD 224123
Something Different	SteepleChase SCS 1136, SCCD 31136
Sophisticated Giant	Columbia COL JC 34989
The Squirrel	Blue Note 7243 8 573 02 2 1
A Swingin' Affair	Blue Note BST 84133, CD: B2 84133
Swiss Nights vol. 1	SteepleChase SCS 1050, SCCD 31050
Swiss Nights vol. 2	SteepleChase SCS 1090, SCCD 31090
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Ben Webster & Dexter Gordon: Tenor Titans	Storyville 8288
Stan Levy: This Time The Drums's on Me	Bethlehem BCP 37
The Tower of Power	Prestige PR 7623
Young Dex, vol. 2, 1944-46	Masters of Jazz MJCD 128
Young Dex, vol. 3, 1946-47	Masters of Jazz MJCD 156

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# Music manuscripts in Dexter Gordon's handwriting.

**PIANO** **FRIED BANANAS** **D. GORDON**

Chord progressions and markings include:

- Staff 1: Eb, Gm7, C7, Fm7, Bb7
- Staff 2: Am7, D7, Bb7, Eb7, Ab7, Db7, Gm7, C7
- Staff 3: Fm7, Ab7, Db7, Eb, Fm7, Dm7, G7
- Staff 4: Cm7, F13, Fm7, Bb7
- Staff 5: Fm7, Ab7, Db7, Eb, Gm7, C7
- Staff 6: Fm7, Fm7, E7, Eb, C9+, Fm7, Bb7
- Staff 7: Eb, Gm7, C7, Fm7, E9-
- Staff 8: Eb, Fm7, E9-, Eb
- Staff 9: Gm, F#0, Eb0, C0, A0
- Staff 10: OCTAVES, E7, Eb7

*Fried Bananas*, Dexter's best known original composition from 1969, based on *It Could Happen To You*-changes and with an extended coda.

5. Trp

Clubhouse

Handwritten musical score for trumpet titled "Clubhouse". The score consists of ten staves of music with various chord annotations above and below the notes. The chords include G7+9, C7, F#-7, B7, F7+9, Bb7, Eb, A-7, D7, G, F#-Ab7, B7, F#Maj, F Maj, F- Bb7, G7+9, C7, F#-7, Ab-7, B7, F7+9, Bb7, F-7, Bb7, and Eb.

Clubhouse dates from Dexter's last Blue Note session in 1965, a songform composition with original changes.



BOSTON Bernie By  
Dexter  
Gordon

*ANO*

F-7 Bb-7 Eb7  
 Abmaj7 Dbmaj7 D-7 G7 C D-7  
 C C-7 F-7 Bb7  
 Ebmaj7 Abmaj7 A-7 D7 G A-7  
 Bb7 G A-7 B-7 A-7 Ab7(b9) Gmaj7  
 Gmaj7 Gb-7 Ab-7 Gb7 F7(b9) Emaj7  
 Emaj7 C+7 F-7 Bb-7 Eb7  
 Abmaj7 Dbmaj7 Db-7 Gb7 C-7  
 C-7 F7 Bb-7 A7 Ab  
 Ab

*Boston Bernie* from 1969 is based on *All The Things You Are*-changes and named after Bernie Moss, a Dexter fan from Boston.

Dexter  
Gordon

The Panther

Intro C7 b9 b7 C7 b9 b7 -4-


(bass figure)

Piano - 8 -

Bill IN

BMI Dex Music © 1970

*The Panther* with the intricate pattern for the rhythm section dates back to 1970. This composition is a tribute to The Black Panther Party.

ENO  IN AND OUT CHORUSES ONLY! MONTMARTRE D. GORDON

Handwritten musical score for "Montmartre" by D. Gordon. The score is written on seven staves of music. It includes various chord notations such as  $B^b_m$ ,  $Cm^{7.5}$ ,  $F7_+$ ,  $B^b$ ,  $B7$ ,  $Cm$ ,  $F7_+$ ,  $B^b_m$ ,  $G7$ ,  $Fm7$ ,  $B^b9$ ,  $B^b7$ ,  $E_m$ ,  $A7$ ,  $E^b$ ,  $A^b7$ ,  $Fm7$ ,  $B^b9$ ,  $B^b7$ ,  $Cm^{7.5}$ ,  $F7$ ,  $E^b9$ ,  $D^b7$ ,  $Cm$ ,  $B^{7.5}$ , and  $F9^-$ . The score also features a section labeled "(Interlude - END)" and a section labeled "BREAK". The music is written in a style that appears to be for guitar or piano, with a focus on chord progressions and melodic lines.

Montmartre is named after Jazzhouse Montmartre in Copenhagen and dates back to 1968.

And Here I AM Still Waiting  
For You

MUSIC BY  
Dexter Gordon

Intro

♯9 (69) E<sub>7</sub> 671097

C-7 F7#9 D-7 Eb-7 C-7 F+11

E<sub>b</sub>7#9 C-7 Eb7 A B<sub>b</sub> C-7 D-7 G7

C-7 E<sub>b</sub>-7 D-7 C-7 Eb Eb7#9

C-7 Eb A7#9 D-7 B-7

*And Here I Am Still Waiting For You* was composed for 'The Connection' in 1959, and when later recorded for the Blue Note Company in 1961 it was retitled *Landslide*.

F#7 F#7 F#7 A7 A D7

G#7 D-7 G#7b5 C-7 F#9b5

C-7 D-7 G#7 C-7 Eb-9

D-7 G#9 Eb-7 C-7 F#9

Bb Eb C-7 F#9 Blow 1-3 2 -

Coda D-7 G#9 C-9 F#9 Eb major

Fin

# TOOT

- DEXTER GORDON

(INTRO) SLOW BALLAD TEMPO

1960 Eb-9 Bb13 F-7 Bb-7 Eb-9 A+7 D9 DbΔ 3 Bb-7

(A1)

1960 F-7 Bb-7

1965 A-7 D9 DbΔ 3 Bb-7 A-7 D9 DbΔ Bb-7

1960 FΔ Bb7(b9) Ab13 D7

1965 A-7 D9 DbΔ Cb7 Bb7(b9) Eb-7 Ab13 DbΔ Cb7 Bb-7

(A2)

1960 F-7 Bb-7

1965 A-7 D9 DbΔ Bb-7 A-7 D9 DbΔ Bb-7

1960 FΔ Bb7(b9) G7(b9)

1965 A-7 D9 DbΔ Cb7 Bb7(b9) Eb-7 3 Ab13 DbΔ (HUBBARD/TP)

**B**

1960 Gb-6 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> Gb-6 A-7 D<sup>9</sup>

1965 Eb-7 Ab7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ Eb-7 Ab7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ

1960 C<sup>13</sup> B<sup>13</sup> BbΔ Bb7(b<sup>9</sup>) Eb-<sup>9</sup> D7(b<sup>9</sup>) Bb7(b<sup>9</sup>) Bb-7

1965 E-<sup>9</sup> A<sup>13</sup> DΔ Eb-<sup>9</sup> Ab7 DbΔ Bb-7 (DEXTER/TS)

**A3**

1960 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ Bb-7 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ Bb-7

1965 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ Bb-7 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ Bb-7

1960 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ FΔ Bb7(b<sup>9</sup>) Bb-7

1965 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ Cb7 Bb7(b<sup>9</sup>) Eb-7 Ab<sup>13</sup> D7(b<sup>9</sup>) DbΔ Cb-7 E7

**A3**

1960 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ Bb-7 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ Bb-7

1965 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ Bb-7 A-7 D<sup>9</sup> DbΔ Bb-7

1960  
1965

Chord symbols:  $F_0$ ,  $Bb7(b9)$ ,  $D_9$ ,  $Bb\Delta$ ,  $Bb-7$ ,  $A-7$ ,  $D_9$ ,  $D_9\Delta$ ,  $F_0$ ,  $Bb7$ ,  $E A7$ ,  $Eb-7$ ,  $A_9$ ,  $D_7(b5)$ ,  $F_0$ ,  $Bb7(b9)$

(KAOENZA)

1960

Chord symbols:  $Eb-7$ ,  $A_9$ ,  $F-7$ ,  $E7(b9)$

1960

Chord symbols:  $A_9$ ,  $D_7(b5)$

1960

Chord symbols:  $F-7$ ,  $Eb-9$ ,  $D_7(b5)$ ,  $D_9\Delta$

(KAOENZA)

1965

Chord symbols:  $Eb-9$ ,  $D_9(\#11)$ ,  $D_9\Delta$



# ERNIE'S TUNE

- DEXTER GORDON

**A1**

SLOW BALLAD TEMPO

**A2**

**B**

**A3**

F#-7 B7 Eb-11 Ab7 Db9 Db9 Bb-7

(INTERLUDE)

Eb7(b9) Ab7(b9) Eb7(b9) Ab7(b9)

(SOLO)

Eb7(b9) Ab7(b9) Eb7(b9) Ab7(b9)

(B)

Gb6 G#7 C7(b9) F#7 Bb7(b9) G7(b5)

Gb6 G#7 C7(b9) F-7 Bb7 F#-11 B7 D7(b9)

(A)

Db9 Bb-7 G#7 C7(b9) F#7 B6 Ab-7 F#7 Bb7(b9)

F#-7 B7(b9) Eb-7 Ab7 Db6 Db6 Bb-7

(CODA)

Eb7(b9) Ab7(b9) Eb7(b9) Ab7(b9) Db9

# CANDLELIGHT LADY

- DEXTER GORDON

**A1**

SLOW BALLAD TEMPO

F#-11 B7 E-11 A7 D-11 G<sup>15</sup> B-7 E7 B<sup>b</sup>-7 E<sup>b</sup>7 A-7 D7 A<sup>b</sup>-7 D<sup>b</sup>7

E<sup>6</sup> A7(<sup>b</sup>9) D<sup>6</sup> G7(<sup>b</sup>9) E-7 A7(<sup>b</sup>9) D<sup>6</sup> G<sup>15</sup>

**A2**

F#-11 B7 E-11 A7 D-11 G<sup>15</sup> B-7 E7 B<sup>b</sup>-7 E<sup>b</sup>7 A-7 D7 A<sup>b</sup>-7 D<sup>b</sup>7

E<sup>6</sup> A7(<sup>b</sup>9) D<sup>6</sup> G7(<sup>b</sup>9) C E<sup>b</sup>7 D<sup>6</sup> D<sup>b</sup>9 C

**B**

E-11 F-11 E-11 A7 D F B<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup> G<sup>b</sup> E-11 A7 D E-7 A7

D-9 G7(<sup>b</sup>5) D-9 G7 E-7 E<sup>b</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup> D<sup>6</sup> D<sup>b</sup>7(<sup>b</sup>5)

**A3**

F#-11 B7 E-11 A7 D-11 G<sup>15</sup> B-7 E7 B<sup>b</sup>-7 E<sup>b</sup>7 A-7 D7 A<sup>b</sup>-7 D<sup>b</sup>7

(SOLO)

Chords: E<sub>6</sub>, A7(b9), D<sub>6</sub>, G7(b9), C<sub>6</sub>, A-7, D-7, G7

(TO SOLOS)

(B) (LAST CHORUS)

Chords: E-11, F-11, E-11, A7, D<sub>6</sub>, F<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>b6</sub>, D<sub>b6</sub>, G<sub>b6</sub>, E-11, A7, D<sub>6</sub>, E-7, A7

Chords: D-9, G7(b9), D-9, G7, E-7, E<sub>b7</sub>, A<sub>b6</sub>, D<sub>6</sub>, D<sub>b7</sub>(b9)

(A3)

Chords: F#-11, B7, E-11, A7, D-11, G<sub>13</sub>, B-7, E7, B<sub>b7</sub>, E<sub>b7</sub>, A-7, D7, A<sub>b7</sub>, D<sub>b7</sub>

Chords: E<sub>6</sub>, A7(b9), D<sub>6</sub>, G7(b9), E<sub>6</sub>, A7(b9)

(SOLO-KADENZA)

Chords: F#-11, B7, E-11, A7, D-11, G<sub>13</sub>(b9), C<sub>6</sub>