

MILES DAVIS: THE ROAD TO MODAL JAZZ

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The fact that Davis changed his mind radically several times throughout his life appeals to the curiosity. This thesis considers what could be one of the most important and definitive changes: the change from hard bop to modal jazz. This shift, although gradual, is best represented by and culminates in *Kind of Blue*, the first Davis album based on modal style, marking a clear break from hard bop. This thesis explores the motivations and reasons behind the change, and attempt to explain why it came about. The purpose of the study is to discover the reasons for the change itself as well as the reasons for the direction of the change: Why change and why modal music?

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Miles Davis can be rightfully labeled as one of the canonical figures in jazz. Known by some as a virtuosic trumpet player, he stood out for and was characterized by the quality and uniqueness of his sound, as well as his great ability in improvisation. Davis advanced jazz through his constant search for new musical expressions. His achievements are testament to his musical genius and dedication — his level of excellence.

The fact that Davis changed his mind radically several times throughout his life appeals to the curiosity. This thesis considers what could be one of the most important and definitive changes: the change from hard bop to modal jazz. This shift, although gradual, is best represented by and culminates in *Kind of Blue*, the first Davis album based on modal style, marking a clear break from hard bop. This thesis explores the motivations and reasons behind the change, and attempt to explain why it came about. The purpose of the study is to discover the reasons for the change itself as well as the reasons for the direction of the change: Why change and why modal music?

Need for Research

The major characteristics at issue include Davis's ability to look beyond the moment, to innovate and create the future. The analysis focuses on Davis's activities during the years that led up to *Kind of Blue* in the 1950s, and pays close attention to those who inspired him and motivated him professionally and personally. Attention is also given to his sidemen and their characteristics, as well as to the young musicians that he brought into his circle.

Additional foci include the search for patterns and signs that may have led to modal jazz, which focuses more on melodic development because of a slower harmonic rhythm; how scales became more important because of melodic development rather than repeated variations of patterns and licks over a harmonic progression; and what directly influenced these changes.

Treatment

In order to see the development and change in Davis's music through time, the music, events, and people who played important roles in Davis's transition will be studied in chronological order, beginning with a musical historical context encompassing the main musical movements in jazz during the early 1950s: bebop, cool, and hard bop. Then, several periods of Davis's life and characteristics about him that played a role in his journey to modal jazz will be analyzed. Transcriptions of solo excerpts, as well as compositions by various musicians, including Davis, will illustrate the analysis and discussion, and show how musical elements such as tempo, harmonic rhythm, and melody changed as jazz musicians improvised their way toward the modal jazz style.

CHAPTER 2

THE MUSICAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND MAIN MUSICAL MOVEMENTS IN JAZZ DURING THE 1940s AND 1950s

Understanding jazz during the two decades before the release of Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* (1959) can set a clear, general musical context for works and music directly related to this album. Knowledge of the music and musicians that built the roots of the musical styles before and around the time that Davis appeared on the musical scene leads to a better understanding of the general aspects of Davis's music.

Jazz musicians of the 1940s and 1950s incorporated several influences that resulted in styles such as bebop, cool, hard bop, and modal. One such influence was the classical Western music of the twentieth century, which influenced the jazz scene beginning in the 1940s. Elements of harmony, texture, and timbre, as borrowed from classical Western music, were becoming an ever greater influence on the big bands of this period, and started helping to transform the mainstream swing style of the early 1940s.

The vanguard musicians such as Lester Young, Lenny Tristano, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Jimmy Blanton, and Kenny Clarke, among others, influenced the transformation and evolution not only of the music itself but also the functions and participation of each musician in the group. Moreover, the harmonic and formal inclusion of the blues was an important approach to finding new types of expression in jazz. These new types of expression are seen in Davis's music.

During these two decades the foundations of Davis's expressions found in *Kind of Blue* were laid. However, some of these concepts can't be seen directly in the album. The important process in this general musical context is how these influences and concepts of the classical

music, bebop, and blues were becoming part of Davis's language, and how he transformed those concepts and adapted them to achieve his purposes—the modal style.

General Characteristics of the 1940s

In the 1930s, the swing era was led by big bands, and jazz and the big band music functioned primarily for dance. Throughout the 1940s jazz was changing its format from big band to small group. Among the reasons for this change was the musicians' strike against record labels, for "economics dictated that the future of the music lay in small groups rather than large ensembles,"¹ according to James Collier. Nightclubs did not have the money to have big bands as steady groups. As a result, new styles, such as bebop, cool, and modal, were more the focus of small groups. Bebop grew up and became strong mainly in New York during the middle 1940s. This city started to become the center of art and vanguardism and, in this case, the point of convergence of some of the best jazz musicians. People started to look at jazz not just as entertaining music for dance but as concert music, "a form of art."

The Bebop Style: Main Influences, Characteristics, and Musicians

With bebop, jazz showed the highest level of virtuosity in its history and became a strong influence mainly in musical language that would be used in later styles such as cool, hard bop and modal jazz, including bebop style elements, such as the borrowed popular song form AABA 32-bar (sometimes with 4 or 8 bars of intro), the inclusion of blues, and the fast unison melodies. More basic, however, were the harmony, rhythm, and the function or role of each instrument in bebop style.

¹ James Collier: 'Bop and Modern Jazz', *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed. B. Kernfeld (London: Macmillan, 2002), ii, 378.

- Harmony

The use of harmonic extensions in thirds above the 7th of the chord, such as sharped and flatted ninths, raised elevenths, and flatted thirteenth, opened more melodic and harmonic options. Melodically, these alterations and extensions started to affect the soloist's creativity by opening doors to new sonorities, colors, and possibilities to create new patterns and melodic formulas with unexpected accents closely related to the bebop style.² This was a big step along the road to modern jazz and influenced the development and extension of solos, which started to be longer than those of the swing era.

On the other hand, the harmonic extensions and alterations opened doors to using polychords and polytonality (see example 1.1), thus making it easier to reharmonize harmonic progressions, a method used by beboppers to transform compositions of previous periods. Gillespie explained how bebop musicians approached pop music and how they transformed it to sound as they wanted to sound: “ We didn't attempt to destroy it [. . .] we simply built on top of it by substituting our own melodies, harmonies, and rhythms over the pop format and then improvised on that,”³ he said. These harmonic extensions were used to increase vocabulary and modernize the jazz language, which would be fundamental to modal jazz in the next decade.

- Tempo and harmonic rhythm

The use of fast tempos in the bebop style made it more difficult for the player to perform and improvise. However, it was the increase of harmonic rhythm that demanded increased virtuosity. As jazz harmony went from one chord per measure, usual in the swing style, to two

² New scales were created and developed to fit into the new style such as the bebop scale. Complete bebop scales, patterns, and how to use them are found in David Baker, *How to Play Jazz* (Bloomington, Ind.: Frangipani Press, 1985) Vol. 1.

³ Dizzy Gillespie, and Al Fraser, *To Be, or Not...to Bop: Memoirs* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1979), 294.

chords per measure in most of the composition (see example 1.2), harmonic progressions such as ii-V-I and I-vi-ii-V-I, among others, became a signature for bebop style.⁴ These progressions appeared not just in the 32-bar AABA forms but in the blues as well. The increase in tempo as well as in the harmonic rhythm helped musicians to approach the piece differently by developing a full technical capacity on the instrument. In the next decade, any jazz musician, whether playing in the cool, hard bop, or modal style, had to be able to play bebop. As a result, jazz players' performances and techniques reached the highest levels yet, in some cases achieving the level of virtuosity.

This technique, developed by jazz musicians playing bebop, was fundamental in creating new styles such as modal jazz. While the musicians involved in creating *Kind of Blue* used the advanced techniques and harmonies they learned from the bebop style in modal jazz, on the other hand, modal jazz could be the antithesis of bebop in tempo and harmonic rhythm. A good example of the strongest contrast between bebop and modal styles is that in almost the whole A section of a AABA 32-bar form there are two chords per measure in bebop style. Modal style, in contrast, in the same form and section, has just one chord in the whole section, as is seen in “So What” (1959). In fact, during the 1950s tempo and harmonic rhythm continued to become slower throughout the decade, compared with how they were played in bebop, and Davis was one of the main initiators.

- Rhythm section's roles

Bebop was the point of convergence of many of the new approaches that were developing since the beginning of the 1940s. The roles of the pianist, bassist, and drummer – the rhythm

⁴ Meadows discusses in depth the harmonic development and characteristics of bebop. Eddie Meadows, *Bebop to Cool: Context, Ideology, and Musical Identity* (Westport, Conn, London: Praeger, 2003), 116-123.

section – were changing. The new way of comping (accompaniment) was more dynamic, interactive, and supportive within the rhythm section, and between the rhythm section and the soloist. This evolutionary process opened the doors to modern jazz.

- Bud Powell: The pianist's new role

Count Basie and Teddy Wilson were two pioneers of the transformation of the pianist's role at the beginning of the 1940s. However, Bud Powell is credited with some of the main innovations for piano, which coincided and fitted perfectly with the new style, bebop. Powell brought in the freer use of the left hand in the accompaniment, which was characterized by the use of staccato in syncopated rhythms. Eddie Meadows discussed how the new way of accompaniment or comping was attributed to Powell: "relieving it [the left hand] from its straight time-keeping duties [. . .] made the piano an equal in the rhythm section," and discussed how the piano was moving far and transforming from earlier styles by "eliminat[ing] the "oom-pah" stride- and ragtime-inspired left-hand stylings. His style fit the new bebop music." Meadows also described Powell's playing as "short, syncopated" and "punctuating chords."⁵

The new voicings used in the left-hand accompaniment changed between two, three, and four notes. They were normally the root, third, sixth, or seventh of the chord (see example 1.3). Later, the root of the chord was omitted because it was already played by the bassist. The harmonic extensions helped to make the comping more varied by using chords substitutions and some reharmonizations of a progression or, in some cases, of a whole section. The left-hand accompaniment went to the low register used by pianists such as Powell to the middle register with Bill Evans and Wynton Kelly at the end of the 1940s. This transformed way of comping was a conjunct evolution wherein one instrument required the other players to adjust and adapt in

⁵ Meadows, 93-97.

response. The rhythm section that emerged from these modifications found a better way to play together and sound as one.

- Kenny Clarke: The drummer's new role

The new piano concept fit perfectly with the drummer's revolution that occurred during these years. Kenny Clarke, Max Roach, and Roy Haynes were some of the most important drummers helping to conceive a new role for the jazz drummer in this period. The gradual shifting of the bass drum from its time-keeping role of swing style to the ride cymbal was one of the biggest changes that was closely related with bebop and was mostly attributed to Clarke. Anthony Brown noted how Clarke "synthesized the musical achievements of his predecessors" such as Jo Jones by changing articulations and the role of the ride cymbal, bass and snare drums, and how the drummer increased the role of supporting the soloist by creating a new approach to the drumset:

[Clarke] liberated the drummer from having to keep the time for the ensemble on the bass drum [. . .] by regularly employing the ride cymbal to maintain the beat [. . .] minimized and distilled Jo Jones style by changing the referential beat from a legato, shimmering presence into a pointillistic flow of cymbal taps [. . .] the resulting textural change left more sonic space in the lower and modal register, while reinforcing the cymbal's inherent timbral relationship with the brass wind instruments [such as alto saxophone and trumpet main brass instrument in the bebop style . . .]

Clarke, and then other modernist drummers, utilized the snare drum and bass drum to punctuate the music with rhythmic accents [. . .] engaged in a responsorial as well as an instigative role in supporting the soloist, while simultaneously keeping the jazz rhythm on the ride cymbal and pedaling the hi-hat on beats two and four.⁶

With these new approaches drummers started experimenting, trying to get their own sound by textural and color experimentation, and by playing around more with the role of accompanist, which was totally relevant for coming jazz styles. This might have been the

⁶ Brown has a complete analysis and discussion of the evolution of the jazz drumset in the 1940s and 1950s. Anthony Brown, *The Development of Modern Jazz Drumset Performance, 1940-50* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Dissertation Services, 1998), 102-135.

beginning of what was so important to Davis, who was looking for musicians whose styles and ways of thinking would inspire and challenge him. He was constantly searching for new colors and new textures in his music as is clear in his later styles such as cool and modal.

- The bassist's new role

At this point the new function or role of the bassist was to play the root of the chord, and to play quarter notes to keep the time steady. The pianist did not play the root of the chord any more; his role as a timekeeper had ended in the sense of playing quarter note “stride- and ragtime-inspired left-hand stylings.” The drummer also stopped playing the four beats of the bar on the bass drum. As a result, the bassist liberated both pianist and drummer, and gave steadiness and balance to the rhythm section by assuming most of the time-keeping role, playing a harmonic line in a stable rhythm, that is, a walking bass. He also allowed the pianist and drummer to have more freedom to go with the soloist.

The evolution that came with bebop definitely helped to maximize the function of each instrument in the rhythm section harmonically as well as rhythmically; this development in the first half of the 1940s propelled jazz into a higher musical level. The new style, bebop, pulled together all these new approaches to develop a new harmonic and rhythmic concept, especially within the rhythm section, and between the rhythm section and the soloist. The new role of each instrument standardized patterns and rules to follow, and at the same time gave the musicians more possibilities to interact. The players could play more freely depending on the momentum or what was happening at the moment of playing. This motivated musicians to create their own identities as each individual took a different approach to melody, harmony, rhythm, space, and interaction within the group.

Davis is a good example of how a musician creates his own identity when playing. One of the strongest relationships between bebop and modal styles was that Miles Davis grew up as a musician with the best representatives of the bebop style, such as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk. Davis learned from the best how to get his own identity not just in his trumpet but also in the sound of his band and music. Davis understood what was happening at that moment in jazz, and was able to continue evolving with it.

The Road to Cool Style 1940s: Main Influences, Characteristics and Musicians

As with most of the jazz styles, cool jazz was a convergence of several approaches to performing jazz. Although it was mostly a small-group style, its first appearance was attributed to Davis's nine-piece project (nonet) later called *Birth of the Cool* (1949-50). It was in big bands, at the beginning of the 1940s, that changes started to take that direction, due in part to the efforts of Gil Evans, Gerry Mulligan and Lee Konitz, all of whom were closely related with Davis. Moreover, it could be said that this was the beginning of Davis's search for different sound and color in his trumpet, and in the bands that he created during these two decades, including his nonet project. Later, with his quintet and sextet, the search resulted in the album *Kind of Blue* and the birth of the modal style.

One of the first characteristics that started changing and going in the direction of cool style was the influence of classical Western music on some big band leaders such as Claude Thornhill and Woody Herman. Jazz found approaches different from bebop by using compositional techniques such as counterpoint and static harmonies or pedal points; and by including instruments common in classical music practice, such as horn, oboe, and tuba, which were not used as much in jazz before this time.

- Claude Thornhill and classical Western music influence

In 1941, the bandleader Claude Thornhill, a pianist, composer, and arranger, was one of the first to include some of these instruments in his big band, and with Gil Evans helping him as an arranger, started creating new colors and textures different from those of the big band era or the traditional swing style. Evans would later become one of the first to introduce classical music into Miles Davis's life and one of the most important arrangers in Davis's nonet. Now, he is considered as one of the best jazz arrangers and composers in jazz history.

Thornhill was influenced in orchestration and arrangement concepts of bandleaders such as Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson and Billy Strayhorn,⁷ and the classical composers Igor Stravinsky and Claude Debussy. The mixture of these jazz and classical influences, the inclusion of a horn to give new possibilities of timbral colors to the band, and the talent and innovative arrangements of Evans made it possible for Thornhill to bring those impressionistic colors and textures into his jazz band. A good example is Thornhill's "Snowfall" (1941), in which he started the A section with a pedal point F as part of an Fmaj7 which then progressed in the upper voices to create different colors closely related with the harmony of the Impressionistic period of classical Western music at the beginning of the twentieth century (see example 1.4). This would later be important not just for cool jazz but also for modal jazz.

- Woody Herman and more classical influences

The influence of classical Western music did not stop with the use of instruments. Both Stravinsky, who had developed an interest in jazz even before this point, and the big band arranger Ralph Burns started composing longer pieces, as in classical Western music. Jazz

⁷ Meadows researched the aesthetic and socio-cultural development of bebop and cool jazz since 1920s. According to Meadows, Thornhill's style concept was strongly influenced by Duke Ellington's and Fletcher Henderson's works. Meadows, 248-250.

compositional form started having more diversity by using sections with contrasting tempos and textures to divide the piece and distinguish it from the traditional swing big band style.

Herman helped cool jazz develop by recording two pieces closely related with classical music. “Ebony Concerto” (1946) by Stravinsky was a piece exclusively composed for Herman’s band, where the composer added a harp and a horn and combined his neo-classical style with elements of jazz such as its syncopated rhythm. This piece is more closely related with a movement of the 1950s called the Third Stream. Most of these pieces were completely written out rather than allowing as much improvisation as was usual in jazz.

The other composition was “Summer Sequence” (1946) by Ralph Burns, which Burns divided the piece into four contrasting sections by using bridges to unite them, and used counterpoint in some of those sections in a manner similar to its use in classical music. Herman’s band had, in those works, a lighter sound that fell between the swing tradition and the new exploration toward modern jazz. The slow tempo sections, like a ballad, helped in the development of cool style, which started to be characterized as going in a direction different from that of bebop style.⁸ These two compositions helped at this point to make classical Western music more intriguing to jazz musicians.

- Lester Young’s strong influence on the cool style

Bandleaders such as Thornhill, Herman, Stan Kenton, and Gene Krupa were trying to find approaches to playing jazz that differed from the bebop style. The saxophonist Lester Young was one of the main influences for these bands, and for musicians and saxophone players, such as Gerry Mulligan, Lee Konitz, Stan Getz, Art Pepper, and Zoot Sims, who were strongly

⁸ Meadows discusses why the cool style is considered the antithesis of bebop style, not just in the music itself but as a socio-cultural matter. Meadows, 337.

influenced by the aesthetic and performance of his style. Mulligan and Konitz were fundamental parts of Davis's nonet project. Young's solos on "Oh, Lady Be Good" and "Shoe Shine Boy," recorded with Count Basie's band (1936), were some of the most influential works for musicians in modern jazz for the next decades.

Some characteristics in Young's playing, such as logical phrasing, articulation, relaxed rhythm sense, and long flowing lines with his own particular tone, made him the perfect figure to emulate. All these characteristics are in complete accord with what Davis was looking for and with what he later adopted. The essence of cool style – and of Young's style as well as Davis's style – is characterized by a relaxed tone with no vibrato, softer attacks, and a smoother timbre.

- Lennie Tristano's influence

In this period, pianist Lennie Tristano made an important contribution not just to cool style but also to the whole of modern jazz. Because of his classical training he was one of the main contributors to a theoretical foundation of jazz in the 1940s and 1950s. He helped musicians to start thinking differently about harmony, melody, and rhythm, and his tendency was to integrate classical Western music into jazz. Shifting tonalities and meters, and sometimes ignoring bar lines were some of Tristano's techniques that were later used and developed by musicians like Dave Brubeck, Charles Mingus, and Ornette Coleman. His rhythmic approach on solos influenced young musicians by using syncopation and cross-rhythms to create the feeling of other meters. Lee Konitz, Billy Bauer, and Warne Marsh were some of his most famous students and helped him to create and develop his new approaches. Good examples of his style are the pieces "Digression" and "Intuition" (1949) that Tristano recorded with some of his

students, and which were controversial because of their free jazz approaches, not common at that time.

- Miles Davis's *Birth of the Cool*: the creation of a new style

At the end of the 1940s, the Miles Davis nonet unified all the experimental approaches in the 1949-50 recording sessions that later became the album *Birth of the Cool* (1954). Davis brought together some of the most talented and vanguard jazz musicians, such as Gil Evans, Gerry Mulligan, John Lewis, and Lee Konitz, to create the new style.

Most of the bases of the cool style were not common in jazz small ensembles: the classical Western music influence; the instrumentation and orchestration; the fusing of varied tones of the instruments. The influence of classical composers such as Stravinsky and Debussy helped Evans, Mulligan and Lewis, arrangers on this project, to create that sound density and color richness in their arrangements that started to be identified as the sound of the cool style. Moreover, all the musicians who performed in this project had their particular and personal features, which were extremely important to the creation of a new jazz style. Each had his own tone color, articulation, rhythm, and an individual approach to improvisation. Their playing also featured the plain sound with no vibrato, smoother timbre, and dry tone. Most of the players had been formed by Thornhill's and Herman's bands, and had been influenced by musicians like Young and Tristano, which gave them the perfect tools to start a new style.

On the other hand, Miles Davis came from the best of the bebop school. After being in New York for a while, he started working with Parker's quintet where he was playing trumpet with some of the masterminds that created and developed bebop: the alto saxophonist Charlie Parker and the trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. They taught him how to approach the virtuosic

features of the style. At the same time, Davis was jamming and hanging out with musicians such as Evans, Mulligan, and George Russell, a theorist and composer who started introducing Davis to classical Western music. At that time, Davis's project was the best approximation of cool style. "Davis's nonet was originally seen as the smallest unit capable of reproducing the flavor of Thornhill's big band of the mid-1940s," according to Mark Gridley.⁹ This was the starting point for Davis to pull together musicians and concepts to create a new way to play jazz in his quest for new colors, textures, and a new sound.

The 1950s: Musicians Who Continued the Cool Style

During the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s, bebop became mainstream jazz. It influenced every jazz musician, helping them to develop parallel styles such as cool and to create new styles such as hard bop and modal.

The 1950s were in general a good decade for jazz. Critics became more serious and specialized; jazz became an art; and groups started playing not just in nightclubs but in concert halls, theaters, colleges, and festivals. Since the beginning, Miles Davis profoundly influenced the direction and ramifications that jazz took in the 1950s while some of the musicians who participated in his nonet project became important figures in the cool style.

- Gerry Mulligan: The piano-less quartet

The baritone saxophone player Gerry Mulligan was one of the main leaders of cool style in the early 1950s. His piano-less quartet featured Chet Baker on the trumpet. Added drums and bass made it a cool jazz band so that from its beginning (1952). The bass took a preponderant

⁹ Mark Gridley: 'Cool Jazz', *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed. B. Kernfeld (London: Macmillan, 2002), i, 509.

part in this ensemble, because of the lack of harmonic instruments and the relaxed tone in the general sound of the group, and gave it a sound and color different from those of the bebop style. Some other characteristics of this group's style were melodic clarity, and the use of counterpoint in melodies and sometimes in solos, as in eightieth-century music. Some examples of the style of this group in the early years is clear in pieces such as "Bernie's Tune," "Lullaby of the Leaves" (1951), and "Line for Lyons" (1952).

- The Modern Jazz Quartet in the cool style

The Modern Jazz Quartet also helped the cool style consolidate and establish itself as a jazz style. The quartet director, John Lewis, had the background to be one of the leaders of this style. Lewis attended the University of New Mexico, the Manhattan School of Music, and later was in Europe writing music and studying piano, which gave him his classical background. After he came back, he established himself in New York, started playing with the best jazz players, such as Parker, Gillespie and Young, and participated as a pianist and arranger in Davis's nonet. He had learned the basis of the bebop style, which influenced the new jazz styles; the classical approach from the traditional music schools; and different approaches to playing jazz by playing with musicians who were exploring new pathways of jazz, such as Lester Young, Miles Davis, and quartet vibraphonist Milt Jackson.

The Modern Jazz Quartet brought eightieth-century counterpoint into the twentieth century and mixed in the jazz rhythms more than any other group to date. "Django" (1954) is one of the first examples of this group's style of dividing the piece into sections and mixing classical, jazz, and blues concepts. Later, in "Vendome" and "Concorde" (1956), he combined eightieth-

century counterpoint with jazz polyphonic harmony to get closer to classical music and help to develop another new style, the Third Stream movement.

- Dave Brubeck: His style and influences

In the 1950s another jazz musician involved in the cool jazz style was Dave Brubeck, who was as popular on college campuses as the Modern Jazz Quartet. He studied with the classical composer Darius Milhaud. Along with saxophone player Paul Desmond, Brubeck experimented with improvising in different meters such as 5/4 and 9/8, as heard in Desmond's "Take Five" (1959). Brubeck used counterpoint as a compositional tool in most of his music, such as "Blue Rondo à la Turk" (1959). The sound of the group was not similar to Davis's nonet, but the classical elements that Brubeck used in his music, mixed with the particularly smooth tone of Desmond's alto saxophone, made this group a part of the cool style. An example of his music is "Brandenburg Gate" (1958), on which Brubeck used counterpoint in the same way as the Baroque composer Johann Sebastian Bach, which made jazz closer to classical music and part of the Third Stream movement.

Third Stream Movement: Characteristics, Influences, and Musicians

The music of Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, and Miles Davis helped connect jazz to classical music. With "Ebony Concerto" (1946) by Stravinsky, and "A Bird in Igor's Yard" (1949) by George Russell, jazz started blurring the lines between jazz and classical music. Later in the 1950s, some cool groups such as the Modern Jazz Quartet and Dave Brubeck started getting closer to classical music, but it was Gunther Schuller, composer, conductor, and horn player, who officially started what was called the Third Stream movement. Schuller, a

classically-trained musician, had his first formal performance of jazz with Miles Davis, who invited him to play horn, not usually a jazz instrument, in his nonet project.

The Third Stream movement was characterized by the use of complex harmony and form from the contemporary classical music, with the complement, in some sections, of jazz rhythm and sometimes improvised sections. Most of the pieces in this style are completely written out as in classical music, and solos generally are small sections within the whole structure of the composition. Examples of this style can be heard in Schuller's "Transformation" (1957) and Lewis's "Three Little Feelings" (1956). Both were clearly influenced by contemporary classical composers such as Mahler, Stravinsky and Debussy. Other jazz musicians involved in this movement were Jimmy Giuffre, Charles Mingus, J.J. Johnson, Lee Konitz, and Miles Davis, who was invited to solo on the album *Music for Brass* (1956) by the Jazz and Classical Music Society.¹⁰ This shows how much Davis was interested and involved in new approaches. This movement continued into the next decades because of Schuller's effort.

These pillars of jazz of the 1950s, including Davis, and *Birth of the Cool*, were simultaneously the mainstream of jazz (bebop) and the vanguard for the next stages of development: cool, Third Stream, hard bop, and modal. Each took a different direction. However, they influenced each other as they looked for new ways to express themselves and develop jazz.

Hard Bop: Characteristics, Influence and Musicians

At the beginning of the 1950s, a new style called hard bop started growing up under the strong influence of the bebop style. The new style kept the same language, vocabulary, and

¹⁰ The Brass Ensembles of the Jazz and Classical Music Society - *Music for Brass* was created for Gunther Schuller and John Lewis to support the Third Stream movement.

standardized head-solos-head form initiated in bebop. In the search of new approaches, jazz players brought back the riff themes that linked jazz with the swing era. They also started making small transformations to the bebop concept such as slowing down the tempo and simplifying melodies and harmonies. As a result, the music was more relaxed and solos started getting longer and more developed.

The rhythm section emphasized more its functions brought from bebop. The rhythm section became more active within itself, and also with the soloist. These updates came with more flexible accompaniment in the piano and as a result, more interaction between the drummer and the soloist. The slower tempos of the compositions, compared with bebop, influenced and helped along this development. During this time Davis became more and more concerned about the musicians playing with him. Davis became more selective, choosing those who accommodated themselves better with his style and concepts.

One of the main aspects of hard bop was its deeper relationship with the blues than earlier styles. The roots of the African-American blues and work songs were transformed in urban music and were seen in church as gospel music. Jazz musicians added this music as a main soulful element to the hard bop style. Harmonies and chord progressions were taken from blues to give hard bop a different approach than bebop and cool. An example of this feature is Horace Silver's "Señor Blues" (1956), a minor-key blues. Some musicians who brought bluesy style to their compositions and solo performances were Charles Mingus, Horace Silver, and the alto saxophone player Julian "Cannonball" Adderley.

This last jazzman made an appreciable contribution to hard bop and modal jazz by the use of his perfect rhythm and knowledge of blues. Adderley worked with Davis's sextet and as a leader with his own quintet, stamping the music of the group with his instrumental technique his

bluesy sense of style. Some of his style is shown in the albums *Somethin' Else* (1958), featuring Davis on the trumpet, and *Kind of Blue*, on which Adderley was an important part of the sound and style of the group.

- Miles Davis in the hard bop style

Miles Davis was also a main figure in this style. Once again he was one of the first to put this concept into albums such as *Blue Haze* (1953-54) with pieces like “Four,” “Old Devil Moon,” “Blue Haze,” and *Walkin’* (1954) with compositions such as “Walkin’” and “Solar.” These pieces clearly show where the jazz was going in the 1950s by means of characteristics such as slower tempos, more interaction within the group, and freer accompaniments. The mixture of all these elements helped the soloist to create and develop better ideas. Davis worked in these projects with some of the best jazz musicians who were deeply involved in this new approach, such as the bassists Percy Heath and Charles Mingus, drummers Max Roach and Kenny Clarke, and pianists John Lewis and Horace Silver. They were looking for new ways of expression beyond bebop and helped to develop this concept through the beginning of the 1950s, and all of them becoming some of the main figures in hard bop style.

- The Jazz Messengers and its significance for young musicians

In the autumn of 1954 Silver and drummer Art Blakey created a new quintet called the Jazz Messengers. This group would be one of the most representative groups of hard bop and one of the best schools for young talented musicians such as trumpet players Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw; saxophonists Hank Mobley, Jackie McLean, Johnny Griffin, and Wayne Shorter; and pianists Bobby Timmons and Cedar Walton. From its beginning, the

Jazz Messengers was clearly marked by its bluesy style and a strong rhythm section with pieces such as Silver's "The Preacher" (1955) and "Doodlin'" (1955), and "Moanin'" (1958) by Bobby Timmons.

In 1956, Silver left the Jazz Messengers to create his own group and continued establishing his style through compositions such as "Nica's Dream" (1956) and "Sister Sadie" (1959), both of which became jazz standards for practice and study in the hard bop style.

Conclusion

The 1940s and 1950s definitely opened doors to modern jazz with musicians such as Parker, Tristano, Clarke, Evans, and Davis, vanguard musicians who brought many innovative ideas into jazz. The beginning of a new style such as bebop worked as an excuse to put new elements together and transform jazz, not just in the rhythmic and harmonic concepts but also in the role of each instrument in the rhythm section. This section became more compact and effective because each player's functions were more specific, which allowed more interaction among all the players, including the soloist. Moreover, the increase of tempo and harmonic rhythm helped to develop one of the highest levels of performance up to that time. This evolution helped jazz to be heard as an "art music," and encouraged musicians to be more creative and to continue the search for new forms of expression.

Beboppers made this style an example to follow and a challenge for those looking for different ways to play jazz. The jazz branch that started at the beginning of the 1940s created a contrast to bebop via vanguard big bands, and culminated with the birth of a new style called cool at the end of this decade. This would be Davis's first big project, resulting in *Birth of the Cool* (1949-50).

The main characteristic of the cool style was a strong influence of the classical Western music in aspects such as instrumentation, orchestration, and harmony. Instruments not previously used in jazz, such as horn and oboe, gave the arranger tools to create new colors and textures, which were the signature of the cool style. This was the start of the search for new sounds for groups and musicians on their own instruments, including Davis.

In the first half of the 1950s, a new style started to develop in response to cool style. The hard bop style was closer to the bebop in concept, format, vocabulary, and language. However, the tempo and harmonic rhythm started slowing down in a closer approximation to blues, creating elements for a new style. Once again Davis took advantage of his ability to pull appropriate people together with their concepts and talent to create a new style, thus getting closer to what would be one of his biggest accomplishments in his life: the modal style.

The musicians around Davis gave him knowledge, ideas, skills, experience, and encouragement he needed to feed his creativity and visionary sense. After 1954, he started down the road to modal jazz through recording sessions and the search for the right musicians to complement his playing and help him to develop his vision of the future of jazz.

CHAPTER 3

1954-1955

Many events that took place between 1954 and 1955 were related to *Kind of Blue*. Davis's recording sessions in 1949-50 were later released as *Birth of the Cool* in 1954. In the same year, a series of recording sessions were organized by Davis and concluded with the release of albums such as *Blue Haze*, *Walkin'*, and *Bags' Groove*. Static harmonies, the use of the cup and Harmon mute, and a new general sound – more relaxed and bluesy – were some of the main characteristics, directly related with the modal style, of these recording sessions. On these albums Davis had the opportunity to play with different musicians who gave him the chance to choose who would better adapt to his ideas, concepts, and style of playing. Although most of these great musicians, such as Thelonious Monk, Horace Silver, and Sonny Rollins, were not the ones on *Kind of Blue*, they helped Davis to know what he wanted in musicians for the music he was trying to create, so that he was better able to find the right musicians for his recording sessions. In 1955, two other events were significant for Davis in his development as a leader and visionary looking for the right people to work with. He got a record deal with Columbia Records and brought in the tenor saxophone player John Coltrane as a new member of his band. Coltrane would prove to be an important player in the modal jazz development.

Davis's Birth of the Cool

During the time he was playing in Parker's group in the second half of the 1940s, Davis was conscious of his limitations and virtues, and he used that information to maximize his talent. "Davis realized early on that he [was] not another Gillespie in Parker's quintet [. . .] Davis's

performance with Parker was in a complementary, rather than competitive manner,”¹¹ Meadows said in his discussion about how quickly Davis understood his function during the time he was playing in Parker’s group. His understanding of his function in Parker’s group helped him to start searching his identity not just as a trumpet player but also as a musician and a leader. At the end of the 1940s, Davis showed his desire to move ahead with the nonet project, his need for knowledge, and his search for new ways to express himself.

Although the cool concept was developed throughout the 1940s by arrangers such as Gil Evans, Gerry Mulligan, and John Lewis, all of whom helped to develop this new movement, it was in the nonet recording sessions (1949-50) that the cool style began. Near the end of the 1940s, Davis, with Evans and Mulligan, was involved a new project that was different from bebop, and which brought out his leadership and his ability to pull in suitable people to achieve his purposes.

“In 1949 Miles, at twenty-three, demonstrated for first time his legendary strength as a visionary and persistent organizer,”¹² Giddins explained. This project clearly showed his open mind about concepts that were different from bebop, as well as about his approach to classical Western music, both of which were fundamental characteristics in the movement toward modal jazz.

Although the nonet project was recorded in 1949-1950, some singles were released in those years with no success. It was not until May 1954 that the album called *Birth of the Cool* was released, and critics finally recognized it as an important new course in jazz, comparable in importance with bebop. “The critical consensus was that *The Birth of the Cool* sessions constituted a seismic shift in jazz [. . .] Miles had effectively introduced the first major

¹¹ Meadows, 337.

¹² Gary Giddins, “Miles to Go, Promises to Keep,” in *A Miles Davis Reader*. Bill Kirchner, ed (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 252.

movement in jazz since the bebop revolution,”¹³ according to Kahn.

The startling transformation of Davis’s sound on this album is clear when he is leading and soloing as is heard in “Venus de Milo” (1949). The smooth sound with no vibrato, compared to previous bebop recording sessions with Parker, such as “Now’s the Time” (1945) and “Billie’s Bounce” (1945), shows a big step in the search for his own identity. His phrasing also shows a clearly different direction from bebop by the use of long lines with generous spacing¹⁴ – one of his best solo qualities (see example 2.1).

In *Birth of the Cool*, the influences of compositional techniques from classical Western music are clear in elements such as counterpoint and form. An example of this influence can be heard on the head of John Lewis’s “Rouge.” The head starts with the trumpet and the alto saxophone melody accompanied by the horn, trombone, tuba, and the baritone saxophone in mm. 5-10. Then, the melody becomes unified at the end of the A section, mm. 11-12. The B section is a call-and-response between the trumpet and alto, while the rest of the brass section creates counterpoint between the melody and the countermelody. The same happens in the last A section, in mm. 21-28, where the divided brass section mixes melody and countermelody by the low register instruments creating a countermelody against the trumpet and the alto.¹⁵

The form’s Western classical music influence is also heard in this piece as on most of the pieces of this album. This influence appears in the form of the head-in of “Rouge,” which is intro-ABA; the head-out is similar except that Lewis recapitulates just the A section and composes eight bars ending in 3/4, something not common in the usual AABA, bebop-style form.

¹³ Ashley Kahn, *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000), 32.

¹⁴ Davis’s solo on “Venus de Milo” is in Miles Davis, *Birth of the Cool* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2002), 77-79.

¹⁵ Davis’s solo on John Lewis’s “Rouge” is in Davis (scores) *Birth of the Cool*, 94-97.

In *Birth of the Cool*, a new color and environment are created by the influence of classical Western music mixed with the relaxed tempo, and the smooth and clear sound with no vibrato, as heard in pieces such as “Rouge,” “Boplicity,” and “Deception.” Carr commented that the album is “notable for the marvelous relaxation of the whole ensemble.”¹⁶ All these elements are vital to the concept of modal jazz, which is improvised not just on one chord but in individual and group sound, articulation, phrasing, language, and vocabulary.

One of the few static harmonies found in *Birth of the Cool* is on Davis’s “Deception,” on which the bass plays a six-bar G pedal point. It is used as an introduction to the piece and is characterized by an ostinato held by the alto saxophone and the trumpet. Then a counterpoint between the alto saxophone and the trumpet is placed on this static harmony as a part of the melody, which is accompanied with long notes by the baritone saxophone, horn, and trombone. This pedal point balances the piece by creating tension, which is liberated in the next section by a harmonic progression. Davis’s solo on “Deception” is one of the first times he improvises in a static harmony and shows how Davis, just months after quitting Parker’s band, was thinking about a much slower harmonic rhythm.

Gil Evans’s arrangement on “Moon Dreams” has the other pedal point found in *Birth of the Cool*,¹⁷ where the F# middle-register pedal point in m. 40 is played by the alto saxophone. Through mm. 42-48, the trumpet and the horn develop this colorful static section by making a descending chromatic phrase, in parallel thirds, with some embellishments. The tuba alternates ascending chromatic movements with descending minor sixth leaps. At the same time, the trombone plays a countermelody with a faster rhythm (mostly eighth notes, some quarter or sixteenth notes) where the first two measures show an ascending seconds motive. Then, in m. 44,

¹⁶ Ian Carr, *Miles Davis: The Definitive Biography* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1998), 55.

¹⁷ Gil Evans’s arrangement of “Moon Dreams” is in Davis (scores) *Birth of the Cool*, 113-115.

the trombone starts a descending chromatic phrase full of embellishments. In the last eleven measures, the piece takes on an impressionistic color due Evans's use of counterpoint. Two rhythmic motives, one used by the alto saxophone and the other rotated between the trumpet and the horn, are used as a call-and-response, creating a tense, colorful ending to the piece. The classical Western music influence is represented by Evans's exceptional use of counterpoint within the whole brass section at the ending of the piece. Although this section does not involve any kind of improvisation, this was one of the first times that Davis was in contact with a piece featuring pedal point as well as full colors and textures.

The 1954 Recording Sessions

After *Birth of the Cool*, Davis continued his transformation and evolution as a trumpet player as well as a musician and a leader. In the first years of the 1950s, Davis went through a hard period in which he fought to beat his heroin addiction. At the beginning of 1953, he was not working permanently and he did not have a steady group. However, in 1954, Davis returned to New York with his approach to the trumpet fully matured and increasingly more original.¹⁸ Through this year a series of recording sessions enabled Davis to show the maturity that he had acquired in the last few years. These sessions gave him the opportunity to try new approaches to jazz, sound, and interaction with different musicians, thus starting his search for musicians who identified more with his musical approach: Percy Heath, Kenny Clarke, and Horace Silver, for example. At this point Davis started to visualize another direction different from bebop and cool.

The first two sessions already showed, according to Ian Carr, "a general movement away from bebop and towards a much sparer style [. . .] the interest at these points becomes not so

¹⁸ Carr, 75.

much linear and harmonic as rhythmic and spatial.”¹⁹ On March 6, Davis recorded two pieces with pedal points and one ballad played with the cup mute. This was the first time, at least in a recording session, that Davis improvised in a section with one chord, and the first time he recorded with a cup mute. These two techniques would prove to be important in Davis’s development of modal jazz.

The first pedal-point piece is “Take Off,” a fourteen-bar form, not usual at this time, divided in two sections, A B, six and eight bars respectively. After every third chorus is an eight-bar interlude. This up-tempo piece has a pedal point G in the A section, which Davis uses in his solo to release the tension created with the harmonic changes in the B section. Something different occurs in “The Leap,” a forty-bar piece, ABAC, in which the last sixteen bars of the C section feature a Csus pedal point. This static section works to create tension, which is released, after the two-bar rhythm section break, at the top of the form. These two up-tempo pieces contrast with the ballad “Never Entered My Mind,” on which Davis introduced the use of a cup mute in what would be his signature sound and tone.

These three pieces were released on the album *Miles Davis Volume 1* and were a good starting point for Davis in his search for a new concept in aspects such as harmony, sound, and musicians to play with. In this case, Davis played with the pianist Horace Silver and the bassist Percy Heath, both of whom would be pillars of Davis’s recording sessions for that year.

In the second recording session on March 15, Davis recorded a third piece with pedal point, “Old Devil Moon.” At this time, Davis treated the form in a different manner (see example 2.2). The piece starts with a twelve-bar introduction. After the first six bars, Davis starts playing the melody over a static harmony. The first chorus is twenty-four bars divided into small sections of pedal points and harmonic changes, followed by a twenty-bar interlude divided in the same

¹⁹ Carr, 76-77.

way. This is followed by one more chorus before the section finale, which is mainly a pedal point on Fmaj7/C and Ebmaj7/C, the same as the other static sections in the piece. An important aspect of this piece was that the tempo started slowing down, compared with the two pedal-point pieces recorded in the earlier session; this made the general sound of the piece more relaxed and closer to what would be the hard bop style.

Davis started getting confident and closer to his new approach to sound and solos. He showed in “Old Devil Moon” a new clear and relaxed sound. His solo included well-developed variations on the melody²⁰ during which the rhythm section backed him with a unified time feeling. Moreover, Davis uses space in his solo to give the drummer and pianist the opportunity to interact more with him. This piece is included on the album *Blue Haze* where Davis clearly showed the way he was taking. *Blue Haze* contains characteristics that lead directly to modal music. It shows how Davis was envisioning his music and his gradual implementation of elements that fit the characteristics of modal style.

In the next recording session, April 3, 1954, Davis recorded four pieces with cup mute. “I’ll Remember April” was included in the album *Blue Haze*, and “Solar,” “You Don’t Know What Love Is,” and “Love Me or Leave Me” went onto the album *Walkin’*. Davis realized that the cup mute sound was moving him closer to the sound he was looking for. This discovery was to be crucial for his career; even today, this sound is continuously emulated and sought by young players. It would be the beginning of an original and characteristic sound unlike anything that had preceded him. Through the mute sound, Davis began to come into his own musically; color, timbre and even atmosphere began playing more prominent roles in his musical identity.

The album *Walkin’* is considered by many to be the beginning of hard bop. It is also a

²⁰ Davis’s complete solo is in Miles Davis, *Standards. Volume 1* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2001), 60-65.

hint of better things to come. As Kahn wrote, “Walkin’” became the anthem of hard bop and revitalized Davis’s career. Not coincidentally, it was also a rough blueprint for his culminating performance of the decade: *Kind of Blue*.²¹

On the album *Walkin’* the pieces “Walkin’” and “Solar” are characterized by a relaxed feeling, and a slower harmonic rhythm that creates a perfect atmosphere for a new style, hard bop. These elements lead to a calmer improvisation in which space is better used within the phrases (see example 2.3). Kahn says that “Walkin’” “incorporated most of the elements that would define many of Miles’s later fifties’ recordings. It was an extended (13:54), mid-tempo blues structure balancing a simple melody line with soulful solos that swung insistently in a relaxed mood.”²² Moreover, the cup mute sound in “Solar,” the relaxed feeling, and the slower harmonic rhythm are perfect examples of elements working together toward a more relaxed kind of music.

This more relaxed sound was not at all characteristic of bebop. In fact, one might argue that it went against the fast changes found within the bebop harmony. Modal style, and the hard bop that preceded it, however, fit perfectly with the calm sound produced by Davis’s new discovery. This sound helped in the pursuit of melodic development, constantly sought by Davis and perfect for modal style.

“Oleo” and “Bags’ Groove” on the Album *Bags’ Groove* (1954)
with Horace Silver, Sonny Rollins and Thelonious Monk

On June 29, Davis set up another recording session, this time including Sonny Rollins. They recorded some of Rollins’s compositions, including “Oleo,” “Doxy,” and “Airegin.” This recording session was part of the album *Bags’ Groove*, and one of the hits was Rollins’s “Oleo.”

²¹ Kahn, 38.

²² Kahn, 38.

Although this piece was based on “I Got Rhythm,” a bebop feature, Davis treated the AABA 32-bar piece differently with new approaches to texture, sound, and soloing. The A sections on the head were accompanied by bass, and the melody was played in unison by Davis with muted trumpet and Rollins on tenor. This ensemble and mixture of the two timbres turned out to be just what Davis wanted. The pianist led the B section, accompanied by bass and drums.

Davis’s solo on the A sections is accompanied by bass and drums. In the B section, the piano comps discreetly. Throughout the solo, the two accompaniments gave different textures, and a fresh and smooth sound to the piece. Davis’s improvisation also shows another characteristic for which he is recognized, his phrasing. The exploration of the open and muted sound resulted in an expressive and smooth tone that led Davis to developed, more coherent melodic and rhythmic phrases. The use of space also contributed to his phrasing approach by the use of long notes or rests in and between his melodic lines (see example 2.4). The mixture of elements such as texture, sound, and timbre gave to this piece a new color that was different from bebop.

After his success with the cup mute sound in the preceding recording sessions, Davis next tried the metallic Harmon mute, which finally gave him that expressiveness in the sound that would be his signature and one of his major contributions to jazz. Carr explained how this mute works:

Davis introduced a new sound to jazz: the amplified sound of the metallic Harmon mute with its stem removed. The mute has to be placed very close to the microphone, and the resulting sound is full and breathy in the low register and thin and piercing in the upper. The two registers can therefore be played off against each other in a dramatic way [. . .] this muted sound is much more expressive than, for example, that of the bland cup mute which Miles had been using early in the year [. . .] like so many of his innovations, it sounded so right, and was so immediately attractive, that it spawned imitators everywhere.²³

²³ Carr, 81-82.

This recording session came together well because all of the musicians had played together for years. The bassist Percy Heath and the drummer Kenny Clarke had been playing with Davis in almost all of his recording sessions of that year, and also were playing in their own band, the Modern Jazz Quartet, which made it possible for them to know each other quite well. Rollins was one of the best tenor saxophone players, partly because he had been playing with Davis for several years. At that time he brought his soloing creativity and his strong sound, which mixed perfectly with Davis's trumpet. Years later Davis noted, "He [Rollins] was an aggressive, innovative player who always had fresh musical ideas." Davis always had in mind who the suitable people were to share and develop his ideas.

An important detail of *Bags' Groove* was the participation of the pianist Horace Silver, a well-known musician renowned for his blues influence. Silver also had been Davis's pianist for almost the whole year partly because of his rhythmic approach when comping, and the simple and bluesy sense of his solos. When talking about the recording sessions of that year, Davis stated, "I wanted to take the music forward into a more funky kind of blues, the kind of thing that Horace would take us to."²⁴ This statement not only proves how Davis constantly sought to surround himself with those musicians who would help his vision, but also shows the direction in which his vision was moving at this time. Davis was looking to slow the beat and return to the roots of jazz, that is, the blues.

During his last recording session of 1954, on December 24, Davis recorded vibraphonist Milt Jackson's "Bags' Groove," a piece that later shared the name of the album. This 12-bar blues was the kind of sound Davis sought; it was characterized by a relaxed tempo, bluesy feel, and a generally smooth sound obtained this time, in part, from the vibraphone's timbre. Davis's solo was accompanied once again by bass and drums, and he was getting more confident in the

²⁴ Miles Davis and Quincy Troupe, *Miles: The Autobiography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 177.

way he was approaching his solos. He started understanding how to use his low register sound and develop a musical idea melodically as well as rhythmically, and to create cohesive phrases linked by the space necessary to hold the attention of the listener.²⁵ In his autobiography Davis commented about that recording session, saying, “I started to understand how to create space by leaving the piano out and just letting everybody stroll. I would extend and use that concept more later; in 1954, going to 1955, it wasn’t as clear in my mind as it would be later.”²⁶

The pianist for this final recording session of 1954 – out of which came the album *Miles Davis and the Modern Jazz Giants* – was Thelonious Monk. He is one of the most influential piano players in jazz history because of his enormous contribution to modern jazz harmony, for innovations in the role of the piano in the 1940s and 1950s, and for his original approach to improvising. Monk was one of the best piano players around when Davis settled in New York for the first time in the mid-1940s. It is possible that some of Davis’s ideas could have been influenced by Monk, such as the way Davis used his low register on his solos, and the inclusion of space into the musical construction of the phrases; both were characteristic of Monk’s playing. The pianist as well as Davis learned how to use his deficiencies as tools. According to Carr, “Monk, like Miles, had converted his technical limitations into assets, creating a sinewy, economical style with no superfluties [. . .] His use of space – his pauses and his melodic and rhythmic interpolations – was dramatic in the extreme.”²⁷

Davis did not like how Monk comped during brass players’ solos, especially during those of trumpet players. Davis explained: “A trumpet player needs the rhythm section to be hot even if he is playing a ballad. You got to have that kicking thing, and most of the time that wasn’t

²⁵ An excerpt of Davis’s solo on “Bags’ Groove” from the album *Bags’ Groove* is on Carr, 582-584.

²⁶ Davis and Troupe, 188.

²⁷ Carr, 84.

Monk's bag."²⁸ As a result, Davis told Monk "not to play behind [him]" on his solos. As Davis said, "I wanted to hear the rhythm section stroll without a piano sound. I wanted to hear space in my music. I was just starting the concept of space breathing through the music [. . .]"²⁹ It cannot be said that Davis took that approach only at this recording session because he did almost the same thing with Silver on "Oleo," where Silver played lightly on the B section in the solos as Davis instructed. However, this situation helped Davis to get closer to what was important for him: space not just for him but also for the musicians who were accompanying and making music with him.

Davis's First Quintet and the Record Deal with Columbia Records

In 1955, Davis was getting recognition thanks to the success of the recording sessions of the previous year, and his musical ideas were evolving from one type of jazz to the next. In the summer of 1955, events helped Davis reach maturity as a trumpet player and as a bandleader: recording sessions helped Davis start his search for a steady group; and the Newport Jazz Festival helped him get a contract with Columbia Records, a major recording company for jazz at that time.

The problem for Davis was that he still did not have the financial resources and enough promotion to keep a band together. It was difficult to keep the musicians that he had used in most of the recording sessions the previous year. They already had created their own names, partly because of their work with Davis, and had formed their own bands or had contracts with bands that worked regularly. However, an outstanding Davis performance at the Newport Jazz Festival opened new possibilities for him in the search for his dream.

²⁸ Davis and Troupe, 187.

²⁹ Davis and Troupe, 187.

On July 17, 1955, Davis was invited to play in an all-star jam session at the second Newport Jazz Festival with musicians such as Thelonious Monk, Gerry Mulligan, and Percy Heath, with whom Davis had been working in his recording sessions. The performance that opened doors for Davis was his solo on “Round Midnight,” in which he used his Harmon mute to create the smooth sound that attracted the attention of general audiences as well as the critics. Coss said, “Miles was superb, brilliantly absorbing, as if he were both the moth and the probing savage light on which an immolation was to take place [. . .] whatever Miles did was provoking enough to send one major record label executive scurrying about in search of him after the performance was over.”³⁰

After his success at the jazz festival, Davis was finally able to sign a record deal with Columbia Records, something that he had been seeking for a while. The only problem was that Davis had still a contract with Prestige. George Avakian, an executive producer for Columbia Records, made a deal with Prestige to allow David to record with Columbia.

“Bob Weinstock at Prestige knew as much about Davis’s potential as Avakian did, and he made it clear that any settlement would have to be attractive,” according to Chambers.³¹ Weinstock made a deal that these sessions with Columbia would be released just when the contract with Prestige finished. Avakian also signed a contract with Davis based on the promise that Davis would have a working band.

“Avakian heard the unexpected walk-on solo at Newport as a sign. He made a qualified offer. He would sign Miles if Miles went on the road supporting his future releases on Columbia, backed by a steady band,”³² Kahn wrote. This provided the opportunity and even a demand for

³⁰ Bill Coss (editor of *Metronome* magazine) quoted in Jack Chambers, *Milestones: The Music and Times of Miles Davis* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 206.

³¹ Chambers, 207.

³² Kahn, 43.

Davis to have a steady group. This in turn was to provide the setting necessary for him to develop his ideas and focus on his vision.

Before the Newport Jazz Festival, Davis had signed some concert dates at Café Bohemia, a jazz club in New York. Davis's popularity was passing through his best moment because of his success at Newport and his record deal with Columbia. His hard work the preceding year with albums such as *Birth of the Cool* and *Walkin'* gave Davis the perfect excuse to achieve his dream of starting his first band. Two recording sessions before the Newport Jazz Festival helped Davis start a search for musicians who were not well recognized, but whose personalities would mesh as well as their musical styles.

Although the first recording session of 1955, on June 7, was not as successful as the others made the year before, Davis found the drummer he would play with for the following two years. "Philly" Joe Jones had the rhythm and blues experience that Davis liked; Davis had played with Jones on the road years before, sometime in 1953. Although Jones tended to play too loudly, possibly because of the rhythm and blues experience, Davis loved the way they were connected and how Jones anticipated Davis's playing with perfect comping. Later Davis said, "Philly Joe has the fire that was making a lot of this shit happen. See he knew everything I was going to do, everything I was going to play; he anticipated me, but felt what I was thinking."³³ Jones had still many things to learn about the modern style, but Davis saw his potential, and believed that he would adapt and transform his talent to the benefit of the band.

At the same recording session Davis brought in pianist William "Red" Garland, who also had played with him years earlier, and whose strengths and weaknesses Davis knew well. Garland had the balance Davis was looking for between rhythmic and delicate playing.

"In the recording studios, Miles's pianists had ranged from the powerful and rhythmic

³³ Kahn, 41.

Horace Silver, to the flowing delicacy of Ray Bryant [. . .] Davis plumbed for Red Garland, who was more rhythmic than Bryant and more delicate than Silver,” Carr noted.³⁴ Although Davis was always looking for musicians with natural abilities that needed development, this time one of the qualities that Davis saw in Garland’s playing was his ability to emulate. Davis knew that Garland liked and emulated Ahmad Jamal, a pianist who attracted Davis because of his use of space and music.

Percy Heath would have been the ideal bass player but at that time he was so popular it would have been hard to keep him in Davis’s group. Therefore, Davis followed a recommendation of a friend to call Paul Chambers, a bassist who had arrived in New York a couple months earlier from Detroit, and whom Davis had met in Detroit in 1953.

As a wind instrument partner, Davis always had in mind Sonny Rollins because, Davis said, “I want this group to sound the way Sonny plays, the way all of the men in it play—different from anybody else in jazz today.”³⁵ Nevertheless, Rollins went to Chicago, thus opening the opportunity for John Coltrane. Davis had played with Coltrane years before on a gig, but was not sure Coltrane had the sound or the abilities that Davis wanted for his band. However, Coltrane was highly recommended by the drummer “Philly” Joe Jones, who had played with him in Philadelphia, Jones’s hometown.

Although some people did not believe that the Davis-Jones-Chambers-Coltrane-Garland quintet could work together, because of the different characteristics of the members, Davis saw the potential and figured out the way to put together all the elements and players to create his ideal band.

1954 and 1955 were some of the best years for Miles Davis. His image was reestablished

³⁴ Carr, 91.

³⁵ Carr, 91.

after he quit his heroin habit. In these years, Davis grew as a musician and a leader. Through the release of important albums such as *Birth of the Cool*, *Blue Haze*, and *Walkin'*, musicians, critics, and the public started to consider Davis a main protagonist who was taking jazz in a direction different from bebop, first to the cool style at the end of the 1950s, and second to the hard bop style in 1954. He found his identity and his signature sound with and without the Harmon mute. He used his band as an instrument, attracted the best new musicians, and transformed both into his vision of what jazz could be.

CHAPTER 4

1956-1957

The years 1956 and 1957 were some of the most productive in Davis's career because of his recording contracts with Prestige and Columbia Records, and because his band kept working most of the time. Davis was rewarded for the hard work of the preceding years. The quintet played almost every week across the country; between October 1955 and October 1956, Davis's group recorded six albums that confirmed him as a leader and as an artist.

Davis let people know his style and concept not just with his trumpet but also with the entire band, something that critics compared with Armstrong's Hot Five three decades before. Carr noted that, "like Louis Armstrong's classic small-group recordings of the later 1920s [the Hot Five], these performances of the Miles Davis Quintet are full of moments of genuine inspiration, full of surprises, full of collective and individual magic."³⁶ Davis took advantage of every aspect of the musicians he was working with to balance weaknesses with strengths in the process of bringing his musical ideas to life. He would repeat the process several times in the next decades, including the next sextet that recorded *Kind of Blue*, and which included musicians such as John Coltrane and Paul Chambers.

Other aspects that marked these years were the strong influence of Ahmad Jamal in Davis's concept about space, and his travel to Paris, where he wrote the music for the film *Ascenseur pour l'Échafaud*, in which the modal concept appeared more clearly. When he returned to New York, Davis reunited his band and added a new member, alto saxophonist Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, who helped the group continue to develop the modal style.

³⁶ Carr, 103.

Consolidation of Davis's Quintet

A relevant characteristic about Davis, crucial to the creation of the modal style, was his vision about distinctiveness of musicians that he needed to fit into the concept he was creating. At the beginning, his band did not sound like a good ensemble because of the different styles and hidden talents of each of the members of the quintet. "So Miles has formed a brand-new quintet of virtually unknown musicians."³⁷ However, with maturity, Davis knew what he wanted from the musicians he had chosen: "[the band's] role was enhanced by Davis's conception of how a small group should sound. All the sidemen were assigned a function that both challenged the player and drew attention to his work. It has become a cliché to say that for a bandleader such as Duke Ellington the band is his instrument. The cliché works almost as well for Davis."³⁸

- John Coltrane

Davis did not know Coltrane well when he chose him as his tenor saxophonist but Davis knew that he needed someone, such as Sonny Rollins, with different characteristics from his own to balance the trumpet and the tenor. The main soloists of this quintet, Davis and Coltrane, had contrasting styles that mixed perfectly, which Davis discovered in a short time. Davis had a smooth and relaxed sound with well-developed phrases, but at the same time he showed his presence as a brass lead instrument, which contrasted with Coltrane's still undefined sound and style. However, a transformation soon happened in which Coltrane's aggressive sound of solos full of heavily laden runs started creating contrast that Davis was looking for. Davis's position of letting his musicians develop their creativity was one of his most positive attributes as a bandleader, and this attitude started letting Coltrane get the confidence to create his own style.

³⁷ Carr, 92.

³⁸ Chambers, 221.

Davis influenced Coltrane profoundly in both the musical and the professional aspects. “Many years later Coltrane recalled that he was pretty much content to sound like anybody else until he joined the Davis band, that Miles had the ability to relax you while keeping you professional at the same time.”³⁹ The responsibility of playing with Davis was the starting point that helped Coltrane to develop his own style. “It was the constant professional pressure to produce that sparked the level of ingenuity in Coltrane’s playing that would soon set him apart from the rest of the tenor players.”⁴⁰ Coltrane started developing his own strong sound and rhythmic feel in the same way Davis had started seven years before. Coltrane became most comfortable on ballads and mid-tempo repertory where he started creating his own style by interpolating motives from the melody in complex ornaments as is heard in “Round Midnight” (1956).

- “Philly” Joe Jones

Space, an important tool in Davis’s solos and arrangements, was sometimes filled up by the pianist, William “Red” Garland, and sometimes by his drummer, “Philly” Joe Jones, with whom Davis developed a strong musical communication. The drummer knew and even could anticipate what Davis was going to play. Jones noted that “most band leaders and drummers, they have a marriage. We feel each other [. . .] After a few weeks it comes that he [Davis] can’t make a move without I know he is going to make it – and I anticipate it. A lot of time Miles would say, ‘Don’t do that with me, do it after me.’”⁴¹ Some examples can be heard in pieces such as “Well, You Needn’t” and “Four” on the albums *Steamin’* and *Workin’*, respectively, both recorded in 1956.

³⁹ Quoted by Andrew White Coltrane expert cited in Chambers, 218.

⁴⁰ Chambers, 219.

⁴¹ Chambers, 221.

In “Well, You Needn’t” Jones actively participated not just in the head, helping in getting into the climax of the melody, but also in the Davis and Garland solos where the drummer took advantage of the space made by the solos. Jones also showed his sense of perfect timing and his later masterful technique with the brushes on the bass solo. Through his time with Davis, Jones obtained recognition for the style that he developed, and he was among the top jazz drummers, along with Max Roach and Kenny Clarke, helping and influencing young musicians. Davis started to be characterized for creating and helping to sculpt new talent, which was what happened with most of the musicians that he used on *Kind of Blue* and later on in his career.

- Paul Chambers

Because Davis knew the potential he had in his new group, the young Chambers quickly fit quite well into the rhythm section with “Philly” Joe Jones and William “Red” Garland, who knew each other from playing together in Philadelphia, Jones’s hometown. Chambers did not have too much experience, although he had already played with bandleader Thad Jones, and trombonist J. J. Johnson. The rhythm section soon started to work as a unit mainly because of Chambers and Jones, who established a seamless groove of their supportive roles. Chambers’s stable and secure beat became fundamental to Davis’s quintet, giving enough freedom to the pianist and drummer to comp and play closer to the soloist. An example of Chambers’s creativity is heard in “My Funny Valentine” on the album *Cookin’* (1956), where he creates a countermelody that becomes a dialogue between him and Davis that helps to create tension in the trumpet solo. His skill as an improviser is heard in “Trane’s Blues,” where Chambers demonstrates his knowledge of bebop and blues. During his time with Davis, Chambers refined a

bounce with the bow that few players came close to matching and younger bassists still try to emulate.

- William “Red” Garland

Garland’s style was characterized by a soft and smooth touch. However, one of his most valuable characteristics for Davis was that Garland could be versatile in the way he played. Davis saw he could influence that talent and how it fit into his concept. “Davis discovered also that Garland was not only a very capable piano player but that he was malleable, in contrast to Horace Silver and Thelonious Monk,” Chambers noted.⁴² This quality gave Garland the chance to emulate different piano styles, as was the case with pianist Ahmad Jamal. Both Davis and Garland admired Jamal for the space he created on solos and music.

Garland was an important addition to Davis’s quintet because of the contrast he created between himself and the main soloists, Davis and Coltrane, and between himself and the rest of rhythm section, Chambers and Jones. Garland provided contrast with his smooth and relaxed solos created mostly of quiet melodies with soft chordal accompaniment, and the space he used between his lines. Garland’s relaxed style created this contrast to follow Davis’s stark, piercing trumpet solos with the Harmon mute, intense in its upper register, and Coltrane’s rapid-fire mixture of scales, arpeggios, and licks in his improvisations. “Red Garland, with his smooth rhythms and sprightly single-line melodies or his suave block chords, brought a welcome relief from the intensity of the two horns.”⁴³

Garland’s function did not just give a contrasting calm mood against the Davis and Coltrane solos, as is heard in “Surrey with the Fringe on Top” on the album *Steamin’* (1956), but

⁴² Chambers, 200.

⁴³ Carr, 102.

also, when comping, he complemented the explosive and sometimes intense beat on the drums and the steady pulse of the bass by his outstanding left-hand comping. “Garland’s pronounced, rhythmically driving left-hand work behind the soloist would become an inherent part of the quintet’s sound,”⁴⁴ Kahn explained.

“So Miles has formed a brand-new quintet of virtually unknown musicians,”⁴⁵ Carr noted. This group gave Davis the chance to prove to the audience and himself how capable he was in transforming and sculpting the talent of young musicians, then pulling all those qualities, as well as ensemble techniques, together into a new concept of music. The sound Davis created with this quintet was the beginning of what would be modal jazz. The process that Davis started with this first quintet was totally related to the sound he was looking for, and that he finally obtained on *Kind of Blue*.

Ahmad Jamal’s Influence on Davis’s Music

Beginning in the 1950s, Jamal strongly influenced Davis, who admired Jamal for the sound he got out of his trio with his original music and arrangements, and for his soloing style. Ahmad Jamal’s sound appealed to Davis because of his “concept of space, his lightness of touch, his understatement, and the way he phrased notes and chords and passages,”⁴⁶ Davis said. This explains why Garland’s ability to emulate Jamal’s style was decisive when Davis chose Garland as pianist for his quintet. It also explains why Davis later chose Bill Evans and Wynton Kelly for the recording sessions of *Kind of Blue*. While these three pianists had their own styles, they were similar to Jamal’s. These characteristics, again, fit perfectly with the concept of modal jazz.

Jamal’s influence on Davis showed up in the repertory he was playing with his quintet.

⁴⁴ Kahn, 42.

⁴⁵ Carr, 92.

⁴⁶ Davis and Troupe, 218.

Davis used some of Jamal's pieces after hearing them played by Jamal's trio. In the second half of the 1950s, Davis started to include in his repertory pieces recorded by Jamal's trio, including "Surrey with the Fringe on Top" and "All of You," and Jamal's compositions, such as "Ahmad Blues" and "New Rhumba."⁴⁷

Jamal, who started playing piano at three years of age, was influenced by classical Western music of the Impressionists of the beginning of the twentieth century, such as Debussy and Ravel. This strongly influenced him not just as pianist but also as composer, in that he commonly used pedal points and static harmonies on his pieces and arrangements. About this concept Jamal told Lyons, "I like pedal points and I was influenced by it very early in life [. . .] I'm from the impressionistic school. Some of it [pedal points] came from my classical sources – I lean heavily toward Ravel. He's one of my favorite composers."⁴⁸ Referring to the strong jazz piano influence of Errol Garner, Jamal noted: "[H]e [Garner] is from the impressionistic school and of the rank of Ravel or Debussy."⁴⁹

Jamal's trio was one of the first small groups to work on static harmonies and pedal points, similar to what Davis did on *Kind of Blue*. In the late 1950s, Davis stated, "All my inspiration today comes from the Chicago pianist Ahmad Jamal."⁵⁰ While Jamal was not the first to introduce Davis to modal music, or to pass along the influence of early twentieth century impressionists, Jamal's music was a strong influence on Davis and definitely helped Davis to get closer to modal concept. Some examples of Jamal's approach to modal jazz can be heard in his original "New Rhumba" (1955), and his arrangement, "On Green Dolphin Street" (1956), which

⁴⁷ Carr's book lists recording dates of Jamal and Davis repertory where it is clear how Davis borrowed repertory from Jamal. Carr, 593.

⁴⁸ Leonard Lyons, *The Great Jazz Pianist Speaking of Their Lives and Music* (New York: Quill, 1983), 118.

⁴⁹ Lyons 116.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Chambers, 201.

have similar harmonic and melodic aspects to Davis's "So What," one of the most representative pieces of the Davis's modal style included in the album *Kind of Blue* (1959).

"New Rhumba" is a typical intro-AABA, 32-bar piece on which Jamal produces static harmonic atmosphere in the A section by using two chords, C7 and Gmin7. The relation of these two chords is I7-vmin7 in a C Mixolydian mode. The B section is a conventional ii-V-I where the tonal center is F major. In the last two measures of the final A section, Jamal uses a traditional ii-V7sus (Dmin7-G7sus) to return to the top of the head on C Mixolydian. The arrangement in "New Rhumba" is comparable to what Davis would do in "So What" (1959) (see example 3.1). The piano starts playing syncopated, riff-like blocks of chords in the first bar, and the bass makes improvisational and always different responses in the second bar, beginning with an eighth-note rest, the same as in "So What." This happens throughout the intro and the A sections where the pianist starts playing the melody. The piano and guitar solo within the static harmony in the A section.

In May 1957, Davis included Jamal's "New Rhumba" on his album *Miles Ahead*. Davis recorded once again a large ensemble project, the first time since the nonet project (1949), and once again with another of his big influences, arranger Gil Evans. Evans transcribed and adapted "New Rhumba" for the nineteen-piece ensemble from Jamal's arrangement for his trio.

Space became a fundamental part of Davis's concept in aspects such as improvisation and rhythm section's comping. Davis also imitated how the pieces were arranged and played by Jamal's trio. "Melodic understatement, harmonic inventiveness, and rhythmic lightness were part and parcel of Jamal's style and became central to Davis's style and the style of his finest bands,"⁵¹ Chambers noted. It is not possible to say how deep Jamal's influence on Davis about modal music was because at that time Davis already had a background and knowledge about it.

⁵¹ Chambers, 201.

However, it is clear in Davis's music that the similarities, not just in the modal music concept but also in the arrangement and style of the pieces, show that Davis borrowed from Jamal's repertory.

Davis originals such as "So What," one of the most classic examples of the modal style, strongly suggest Jamal's influence, which Davis confirmed in statements such as, "Ahmad is one of my favorites . . . I live until he makes another record."⁵²

Julian "Cannonball" Adderley: A New Member in Davis's Group

In spring 1957, Davis fired Coltrane and Jones because of drug-addiction problems. For the next few months, Davis focused on the nineteen-piece project with Gil Evans. After finishing this project, Miles started trying to find musicians to fill the spots left by the departing tenor player and drummer. Through the summer, Davis had conversations with alto saxophone player Julian Adderley, who was originally from Florida but had recently moved to New York.

Davis had met Adderley in the summer of 1955 when Adderley was playing with the Oscar Pettiford Quartet. The unknown saxophonist greatly impressed the audience and critics, who compared him with Charlie Parker because of his instrumental technique and his bluesy style. "Adderley spun out paragraphs of blues-based improvisations on the alto, which looked like a toy up against his bulk,"⁵³ Chambers commented. At that time, Davis was part of the audience. Although he heard some deficiencies in Adderley such as the chords he used when improvising, Davis tried to persuade Adderley to join his new band because Davis was not sure how long Sonny Rollins, his saxophonist at that time, would stay with him. Adderley had a contract as a high school teacher in Florida and he had to return at the end of that summer.

⁵² Quoted by Davis in Chambers, 201.

⁵³ Chambers, 212.

While Adderley established himself in New York, he and his brother Nat, a trumpet player, created their own band. However, the financial situation was not good, so the saxophone player had to look for better opportunities. Davis loved Adderley's bluesy style, and the saxophonist liked Davis at the beginning for "the benefit of Miles's exposure rather than Miles's musical thing,"⁵⁴ he told Ira Gitler. However, Adderley realized really soon the musical advantages of playing for Davis. "I noticed that Miles could do some things naturally that I had difficulty doing, and so we started finding out why,"⁵⁵ Adderley said. As leader, Adderley took advantage of the chance to learn by observation when playing for Davis. "I learned by watching Miles, how to bring new material into a band without changing the style of the band."⁵⁶ Davis knew Adderley was a great replacement for Coltrane. Davis saw a perfect counterpart in Adderley and also started thinking about forming a sextet if Coltrane came back.

Davis's vision was right concerning Adderley as well as the other members of the band. Adderley's technique, full sound, and that bluesy inflection on his solos gave Davis another valuable ingredient in the creation of the modal style.

The Music for the Film *Ascenseur pour l'Échafaud*

At the end of 1957, and after almost two years of Davis focusing mostly on his quintet and recordings projects, while in Paris, Davis received an offer to compose the music for the film *Ascenseur pour l'Échafaud* by Louis Malle. This thriller is about a murderer who is trapped in an elevator after killing his lover's husband. In this medium, Davis had the chance to explore creating musical descriptions of several different atmospheres for various scenes of the film, all the while getting closer to the modal style.

⁵⁴ Chambers, 264.

⁵⁵ Quoted by Adderley in Chambers, 264.

⁵⁶ Quoted by Adderley in Carr, 122.

This completely unexpected project gave Davis the perfect excuse to explore and experiment with new possibilities about color, texture, and improvisation on modes in a new manner not worked by Davis until then, such as improvising on a pedal point for a whole piece. For this film, he recorded small pieces as background music by creating different environments. The music shows influence from bebop and hard bop. However, there are modal characteristics that show how Davis was influenced by starting to slow down the harmonic rhythm in his music. In fact, two of the pieces were completely composed in modal style. In “Julien dans l’Ascenseur” and “L’Assassinat de Carala,” Davis used static harmonies and pedal points throughout these small pieces in which he improvised freely, trying to create an atmosphere, rather than developing a theme. The atmosphere is also augmented by the Harmon mute sound, already a Davis signature.

“Julien dans l’Ascenseur” is a sixty-five measure piece in which the first twelve bars work as an introduction played by the rhythm section. In m. 13, Davis starts soloing and continues the solo until the end of the piece. The bass plays a whole-note pedal point in A, supporting the four-measure whole-note piano pattern through the whole piece. The pianist plays two voicings, of two bars each (see example 3.2), on which the first contains A2, E3 and A3 in the left hand while the right hand is playing E4. In the next two bars of the pattern, the only change is that A3 turns into Bb3. The trumpet solo is mainly playing long notes on D, Ab, F and Bb with some embellishment. The mixed sonorities of the trumpet and the rhythm section creates a sense of Phrygian mode, due to the minor second relation created by the A-Bb in the piano pattern and the long notes, mainly the Bb, F, and D, played by Davis. Those fit with the signature notes of the Phrygian mode (see example 3.3) -- lowered second, lowered sixth, and the perfect fourth – which give the color to the mode.

The second piece in which Davis uses the modal style is “L’Assassinat de Carala.” This is a sixty-measure piece also based on Phrygian mode. The pianist plays a two-bar pattern during the whole piece, in which the first bar is a whole-note voicing on A2 and E3; in the second bar, he moves the upper voice to F3 (see example 3.4). The bassist supports the lower piano voice, A2, by playing whole notes throughout the piece. Although Davis’s solo this time is more rhythmic, he also uses long notes to create and release tension. The impressionistic color created by the simple voicing in the piano, supported by the bass and the solo trumpet, creates an environment similar to that in “Flamenco Sketches,” also a characteristic piece in the modal style included in *Kind of Blue* (1959).

There are two more pieces based completely on modal style; even the pieces based on bebop and hard bop styles include modal elements. Analysts and writers have concurred that the music of this film constituted an important step for Davis on the road to modal jazz. *Ascenseur pour l’Échafaud* was “a pivotal step in the evolution of Davis’s modal style,”⁵⁷ Pejrolo noted. “The results, far from being a finished masterpiece, were in fact like sketches and notes for some bigger work,” Carr noted, adding that considering the direction Davis’s music was taking, “they [the sketches] pointed to a completely new direction, opening up avenues of exploration which seemed to offer inexhaustible possibilities for improvisation.”⁵⁸

Upon returning from this trip, Davis stated, “When I got back to [New York] in December 1957, I was ready to move forward with my music again.”⁵⁹ Coltrane summarized it well when he said,

On returning . . . I found Miles in the midst of another stage of his musical development.

⁵⁷ Andrea Pejrolo, *The origins of modal jazz in the music of Miles Davis: A complete transcription and a linear/harmonic analysis of Ascenseur pour l’Échafaud (Lift to the Scaffold), 1957 (Louis Malle, France)* (Ann Arbor, MI: New York University, 2001).

⁵⁸ Carr, 118-119.

⁵⁹ Davis and Troupe, 218.

There was one time in his past that he devoted to multi-chorded structures. He was interested in chords for their own sake. But now it seemed that he was moving in the opposite direction, to the use of fewer and fewer chord changes in songs. He used with free flowing lines and chordal directions. This approach allowed the soloist the choice of playing chordally (vertically) or melodically (horizontally).⁶⁰

This direction that Coltrane is referring to is modal in that it is a change from fast and complicated, and very ornate, to total simplicity; the most important aspect is a freer melodic development. There is no thought applied to harmonic changes. It is clear that from this point on, Davis's vision in music was toward the modal style.

⁶⁰ Carr, 121-122.

CHAPTER 5

1958-1959

In December 1957, Davis returned from Paris with new musical ideas and decided to call upon the group that he had formed upon signing with Columbia: Coltrane, Garland, Jones and Chambers, plus the alto saxophonist Julian “Cannonball” Adderley, who had been playing with Davis the previous fall before Davis went to Paris. While Davis was regrouping the musicians, he saw that Coltrane, the tenor saxophone player, had kicked his drug addiction and had been playing with Thelonious Monk. This was important because Monk had an excellent knowledge of harmony and good use of space. From Monk, Coltrane learned to develop his melodic concept by finding different ways to approach each chord. This appealed to Miles, who saw in this process a key element that he wanted to incorporate into his vision. This melodic development was to be a key element in Davis’s modal music.

Before March 2, 1959, the first *Kind of Blue* recording session, Davis recorded two important albums closely related with modal music: *Milestones*, on which for first time Davis recorded a complete piece in modal style, and one more collaboration with composer and arranger Gil Evans, an adaptation of George Gershwin’s opera *Porgy and Bess*. On this Gershwin adaptation, Evans wrote in some of the pieces static harmonies and instead of chord changes just a scale for Davis on which to improvise. In an interview later that year Davis stated, “In ‘Summertime’ there is a long space where we don’t change the chord at all [. . .] When Gil wrote the arrangement of ‘I Loves You, Porgy,’ he only wrote a scale for me to play. No chords.”⁶¹ This comment illustrates Davis’s and Evans’s shared ideas and concepts: fewer chords, more melodic development.

Soon after the album *Milestones*, pianist Bill Evans came on board. Evans, who became

⁶¹ Carr, 147.

the main pianist in *Kind of Blue*, recorded an original composition called “Peace Piece” (1958) that was closely related with the modal style and similar to “Flamenco Sketches,” one of the signatures of the modal style. Another important influence on Davis’s music that was becoming more obvious through the whole decade, but appeared clearly in this last period and on the album *Kind of Blue*, was the modal element of classical Western music of the beginning of the twentieth century. Davis borrowed from composers such as Satie, Ravel, and Khachaturian, all of whom composed pieces closely related to Davis’s modal style. This relationship is most clearly heard in chord disposition and colors generated by piano and horn voicings as is found in *Kind of Blue* on pieces such as “So What” and “Flamenco Sketches.”

The Album *Milestones*

At this point Davis realized what had happened during the preceding decade with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Parker and Gillespie had what Louis Armstrong had passed along to them through Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins, and which they transformed and adapted to their musical characteristics. Davis knew that the way Parker and Gillespie played was the way they felt and heard the music. Davis stated, “Diz [Gillespie] and Bird [Parker] played a lot of real fast notes and chord changes because that’s the way they heard everything; that’s the way their voices were: fast, up in the upper register. Their concept of music was more rather than less.”⁶² Davis was clear that whatever he had done until then, it was still was closely related with the heritage of bebop, and that the new music he was creating should be adapted to the great potential he had in his band. He needed a new concept that better accommodated his characteristics and those of the members of his band, such as Coltrane. He started realizing that the key to transforming the music was to slow the tempo, and to play fewer notes more focused

⁶² Davis and Troupe, 219.

in the melodic line, something that worked better with his style and that of Coltrane as well. Davis said, “I personally wanted to cut the notes down, because I’ve always felt that most musicians play way too much for too long . . . But I didn’t hear music like that. I heard it in the middle and lower register, and so did Coltrane.”⁶³

Davis started putting together the elements he had learned through the years. The sound Davis got from his sextet, as a result of ideas brought from Paris, was reflected in his first album of 1958, *Milestones*. “Amazingly, *Milestones*, which appears to be simple, highly accessible, and above all swinging, also represents a structural innovation of great consequence not only for the music of Miles Davis but also for jazz in general,” Chamber noted.⁶⁴ Simplicity started to be reflected on this album recorded in two sessions, February and March, 1958. The modal concept came through clearly in pieces such as “Milestones,” where harmony, melody, and melodic development in the solos started showing some main aspects of the style. “This was the first record where I started to really write in the modal form and on ‘Milestones,’ the title track, I really used that form,” Davis said.⁶⁵ While *Milestones* is a mixture of hard bop and modal style, there is no doubt that “Milestones” is completely modal.

This piece is a forty-bar, AABBA-form, and in each section there is only one chord. In its formal AABBA structure, Davis uses minor chords in each section: Gmin7 on the A sections, first sixteen and last eight measures, in Dorian mode; and Amin7 on the B section, sixteen measures, in Aeolian mode (see example 4.1). This is closely related with what Davis did in “Julien dans l’Ascenseur” and “L’Assassinat de Carala” for the film *Ascenseur pour l’Échafaud*, where the coupled voicings, played by the pianist and supported by the bassist, create the color of the mode, Phrygian, on which Davis improvised.

⁶³ Davis and Troupe, 219-220.

⁶⁴ Chambers, 279.

⁶⁵ Davis and Troupe, 225.

The simple melody of the A section is played in root position triads in short rhythmic notes as riffs by the horns and doubled by the pianist. The B section is played in half notes starting on the downbeat by the saxophones and the pianist when Davis displaces his melody voice with an eighth-note rest (see example 4.1). On the B section the triads are in first inversion (6/3), with the ninth in the top-voice. The color Davis got with these voicings started giving his music the sound he obtained in *Kind of Blue* with the assistance of pianist Bill Evans.

Something special in the arrangement is that in the A section, the bassist plays a walking bass, while in the B section, he plays a pedal point (see example 4.2). This pedal point, in the midst of the piece, creates the space for a freer melodic development, and builds tension that is released in the last A section when the bass brings back the walking bass line.

The piano and the bass parts of the A section raise uncertainty about the G Dorian mode in that section. Garland plays a pedal point on C while the bassist frequently plays F on the downbeat at the end of this section, which opens the possibility to hear the passage as C Mixolydian rather than G Dorian. However, in Davis's solo, it is clear that he establishes the G Dorian mode by playing most of the time around the tonic, G, and the mode color tones such as D, Bb, and A.

Once again it is clear that modal jazz is not just improvising in one mode or scale, but is a mixture of elements that give that color that is related to or labeled as modal jazz, and that color is created not by playing the pure mode clearly enough to be identified as such, but by creating ambiguity that gives the music the flavor called modal jazz. The color created in "Milestones" is closely related with what Davis got on *Kind of Blue*. Moreover, this will be related with what Davis did on "So What" and "Flamenco Sketches" on *Kind of Blue* because of the simplicity of the melody and the harmonic treatment.

In bebop the challenge was to play fast in a fast harmonic rhythm. As explained by Davis, “[playing over chord changes] you know at end of thirty-two bars that the chords have run out and there’s nothing to do but repeat what you’ve just done—with variations.”⁶⁶ Something different happens when improvising over static harmonies because the melodic possibilities are more open and challenge the creativity of the player. “You don’t have to worry about changes and you can do more with the musical line. It becomes a challenge to see how melodically inventive you are.”⁶⁷

The last months before *Kind of Blue* was recorded clearly showed where Davis’s music was going. He was more conscious that simplicity in music was the formula to match his style and that of the musicians he had transformed. “Milestones” represented the direction Davis’s music was taking by slowing the harmonic rhythm to let the improviser be freer to challenge his melodic creativity.

The Classical Western Influence in Modal Jazz

The influence of early twentieth-century French composers on Davis’s modal concept is clear in pieces such as Erik Satie’s *Trois Gymnopédies* and Maurice Ravel’s Concerto for the Left Hand and Orchestra. Evans and Davis borrow elements from these two pieces, making the French compositions closely related and quite similar to Evans’s “Peace Piece” and the general sound of *Kind of Blue*. The Franco-American musical relationship is heard most clearly in Davis’s “Flamenco Sketches.”

Erik Satie’s music was characterized by originality and his early interest in medieval music, which led him to compose with simplicity, innovative harmonies, and forms that clearly

⁶⁶ Nat Hentoff interview with Davis (1958) in Martin Williams, ed. (*Jazz Panorama*. New York: NY: Da Capo Press, 1979), 166-167.

⁶⁷ Williams, 166.

influenced composers such as Debussy and Ravel, and later Poulenc and Milhaud. All of these adherents to or students of the Impressionistic School strongly guided the Davis and Evans modal concept; *Trois Gymnopédies* is an example of this influence.

Satie's *Trois Gymnopédies* is a compendium of three small pieces called first, second and third "Gymnopédie." The three small pieces are like movements in a larger composition, and the sound is Impressionistic. All of them have the same harmonic and rhythmic treatment, where the relationship with the modal style is most obvious. For instance, in the "Première Gymnopédie," the harmony is oscillating between Gmaj7, in the first bar, and Dmaj7, in the second bar, implying G Lydian mode and creating that smooth and relaxed sound. This pattern continues through the first sixteen measures as the exposition of the theme is presented (see example 4.3). After this the tonal center starts moving. However, the rhythmic pattern in every measure -- quarter note (bass) followed by half note (upper voices) -- continues through all three pieces as does the 3/4 meter. This rhythmic pattern supports the harmony to create a static atmosphere, just as rhythm and harmony work together in the modal style. Intermittent melodic phrases played throughout the pieces help to determine the harmonic movement.

The harmonic and rhythmic treatment of the pieces, as well as the slow tempo, are elements that are easily recognized as musical cousins of Evans's "Peace Piece" and Davis's "Flamenco Sketches," along with aspects such as oscillation between two chords that define the modal sound. Rhythmically, the relatively static patterns and relaxed tempos also contribute to the modal atmosphere Davis wanted.

Bill Evans: New Pianist in Davis's Group and Strong Influence in the Modal Style; Evans's "Peace Piece" (1958)

After "Red" Garland left the group, Davis turned to George Russell to find pianist Bill

Evans. In the mid-1940s, Russell was one of the first friends who introduced Davis to classical Western music during Davis's first years in New York. Russell was exploring the modal concept at that time, and had been influenced by early twentieth-century Impressionists such as Debussy and Ravel. Davis knew Russell was interested in the music theory concepts more when Russell's book, *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization* (1953), was published. As a result, Russell recommended Bill Evans, who had been his pupil and played piano for Russell on some of his albums.

The influence of Evans on Davis's music was obvious, mostly because of Evans's classical training. Evans was also strongly influenced by Ravel and Debussy, as was Davis, who wanted to know even more about the composers. "In Bill Evans, Miles had with his group a pianist with the same inward-looking and self-examining approach as himself," Carr noted.⁶⁸

Evans modified the jazz piano role by playing chords without the root and experimenting with voicings to create new colors and sonorities influenced by Impressionist music. "Evans's intellect and his own artistic imagination could make connections between the harmonic practices of earlier twentieth-century composers—from Debussy, Satie and Ravel through Scriabin to Bartok and Milhaud—and their application to improvised music. Particularly adept in his manipulation of minor-seventh progressions and in moving between tonalities, Evans learned from the ambiguities of tonality perfected by Debussy and Ravel."⁶⁹ The influence is clear not just on Evans's solos but also on compositions such as Satie's *Trois Gymnopédies* and Debussy's Preludes, which are quite similar to Evans's "Peace Piece" and "Epilogue," respectively. Both pieces are on the album *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* (1958).

Evans gave Davis the opportunity to listen to a piano played in different ways. In late

⁶⁸ Carr, 135.

⁶⁹ Keith Shadwick, *Bill Evans: Everything Happens to Me, a Musical Biography* (San Francisco, Ca.: Backbeat Books, 2002), 64.

1958, Davis said, “I’ve sure learned a lot from Bill Evans. He plays the piano the way it should be played. He plays all kind of scales; can play 5/4 and all kinds of fantastic things.” And comparing Garland with Evans Davis said, “There’s such a difference between him and Red Garland whom I also like a lot. Red carries the rhythm, but Bill underplays, and I like that better.”⁷⁰ Although Evans stayed with Davis just a few months, April to October, that was enough to allow Davis call him to participate in *Kind of Blue*, on which Evans was a fundamental part in the creation of the modal concept. Carr noted, “In this short time, however, he [Evans] made a great impact on the music and on Miles himself [. . .] the following year Evans was temporarily reassociated with Miles Davis when the sextet made the historic album *Kind of Blue*.”⁷¹

At the end of 1958, Evans recorded his composition called “Peace Piece” on the album *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*. At this point Evans started working with modality and color, sound and sonority; this was the foundation of what is found in “Flamenco Sketches” and “So What,” which are intimately related to Impressionist composers.

“Peace Piece” is a piano solo composition based on one-bar ostinato played by the left hand, in quarter notes, and a harmonic pattern of two chords, Cmaj7 and G9sus, which creates a static rhythmic and harmonic environment in C Ionian mode. The quartal sonority of the two chords, B, E and C (Cmaj7) on the first, and G, C, F and A (Gsus9) on the second, and the parallel movement of the quartal sonority played insistently every bar (see example 4.4) generates the color and atmosphere typical of the modal style and which is heard in Davis’s music. Moreover the omission of the B, on the second chord, helps take away the feel of the traditional V-I relationship and emphasize the modal feel.

⁷⁰ Williams, 164.

⁷¹ Carr, 133.

With the right hand, Evans starts improvising after four measures of introduction, when the ostinato pattern establishes the tonal center. Evans's solo also helps to consolidate the modal characteristics of the piece by insinuating a different important tonal center. At the beginning of the solo, G is implied tonic, in mm. 6-28, and he emphasizes G and D (and later B and E) giving the sense of G6. Then, C becomes the implied tonic, starting in m. 30, by playing C and G, parallel fifths, and by playing C, B, G, and E, in mm. 36-43. After m. 43, Evans goes away from C, by use of chromaticism and parallel seconds, to create contrast in the piece. Subsequently, he returns to the C tonal center, m. 68, by playing arpeggiated quartal parallel chords, which give stability to the ending of the piece. Parallel fifths, a compositional device that became a fundamental tool in the Davis modal style, help to create the modal mood of the piece in mm. 20-23 and 30-34.⁷²

Evans was definitely an important part of the foundation of Davis's modal concept. In Evans, Davis found the perfect interpreter to transform his ideas into music as Gil Evans did with large ensemble projects. The atmosphere Evans created in his search for new colors and sounds, influenced by composers such as Debussy, Satie and Ravel, gave Davis the basis to develop the freer and more creative melodic improvisation he was looking for. This similarity of ideas and musical taste between the two musicians made it easier for Davis get the results he wanted on *Kind of Blue*.

The Album *Kind of Blue*

Davis's vision was now evident and clear, and what followed was the culmination of this journey. In two sessions that took place on March 2 and April 22, 1959, Davis recorded *Kind of*

⁷² The complete Evans composition is in Brend Edstrom, *Keyboard signature licks: Bill Evans*. (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2003), 27-31.

Blue. It is in *Kind of Blue* that a completely new form of jazz is presented, a clear change of style from hard bop to modal. *Kind of Blue* has been for experts and fans one of the most important albums in jazz history because of the important turn that jazz took with this album. Chambers describes it in this way:

Davis's major contribution to jazz form, of which *Kind of Blue* stands as the most influential example, involves a principled shift from the constraints of chordal organization to the different constraints of scalar organization. Instead of constructing melodies by selecting a few notes from each consecutive chord, Davis's music forced him and the other players to create melodies from a single scale for long stretches.⁷³

Kind of Blue confirmed Davis as an innovator and visionary not only because of the new musical concept but also because of the development of both the small-group concept and of young talent such as Coltrane, Adderley and Chambers.

Although the whole album is characterized by the smooth and relaxed sound, "So What" and "Flamenco Sketches" best exemplify the complete change in style. These pieces clearly show the use of pedal points, simple harmonic structures on which the soloist improvises, and more focus on the melodic development rather than on where to place notes in fast chord changes. The harmonic approach was based mainly on oscillation of parallel chords of open voicing in quartal disposition, mainly fourth and seventh chords, and chords arranged in clusters of seconds, both of which were taken from the Impressionistic style.

Beginning with the first track of the album, "So What," Davis's new concept is evident. The introduction is played, in rubato style, by the pianist and the bassist, over which Evans plays mainly second inversion triads (6/4) supported by Chambers, who most of the time is doubling the lower voice of the piano.⁷⁴ The resulting sound brings immediately to mind the impressionist colors as heard in Satie's "Première Gymnopedie" and Evans's "Peace Piece," the sound that

⁷³ Chambers, 309.

⁷⁴ "So What" score is in Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*. (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2001), 2001.

will be the signature of the modal style, thanks to the fourth interval included in the voicing. The first two bars of Evans's voicings imply the two major tonal centers on which the piece is going to be based: Eb Dorian in the first bar and D Dorian in the second. Later, in bars 7 and 8, Evans plays consecutive parallel triads (6/4 inversion) to reaffirm the impressionistic sonority.

"So What" is a 32-bar AABA form piece in which the A sections are in D Dorian (Dmin7), and the B section is a half step up in Eb Dorian (Ebmin7). The melody is a call-and-response pattern wherein the bass plays a phrase emphasizing the notes of the mode and, as a response, trumpet, alto saxophone, and tenor saxophone play two oscillating chords as a riff, in 6/4 inversion, supported by the pianist playing an open voicing in fourths (F-Bb-Eb-Ab-C) in which the right hand copies the wind instrument voices. The structure idea in "So What" is similar to Jamal's "New Rhumba," in which the melody is also a call-and-response pattern between the bass and, in this case, the pianist, with the impressionistic color created by two chords voiced mainly in fourths. Another piece that could be related to "So What" is "Milestones," recorded the previous year, on which Davis uses one minor chord per section in the harmonic structure: G Dorian (Gmin7) in the A section, and A Aeolian (Amin7) on the B section.

In "Flamenco Sketches" innovation went farther than in "So What." The form of this piece is open and the melody is the improvised solos. The piece is based on five sections, each of which is based on a different scale or mode (see example 4.5) where the soloist improvises by cycling through the five modes. The harmony works the same as in Satie's "Première Gymnopédie" and Evans's "Peace Piece," where the piano comping is based on two chords that create the sonority of the mode. The voicings are mainly open fourths and fifths and are supported by the bassist playing the first and fifth notes of the mode or scale.

The five sections are organized with contrasting modes to create the tension and release that sustain unity in the piece: the first section, Cmaj7 and Gsus9 implying C Ionian mode; the second, Gbmaj7/Ab and Fmin7/Eb implying Eb Dorian; the third section, Bbmaj7 and Fsus9 implying Bb Ionian; the fourth, Ebdim/D and Ebmaj7 implying the fifth mode of G harmonic minor; and the fifth section, Gmin9 and Amin/D implying G Dorian.

One of the main characteristics of *Kind of Blue* is the strong influence of blues, not just in the blues-based pieces such as “All Blues,” “Blue in Green” and “Freddie Freeloader,” but also in most of the solos, which include the bluesy feel given by the so-called “blue notes” that give the characteristic color of the style (see example 4.6).⁷⁵

Davis’s phrasing and personal sound, with and without the Harmon mute, are also characteristics of this album. Davis consolidates the open and muted sounds with which he was related his whole life. The sound he achieved on his solos with and without the Harmon mute is as much a signature of his music as the compositional effect of his trumpet improvisations. Davis’s ability to create cohesive and coherent solos, thanks to his lyricism, rhythmic space and mature phrasing, was becoming legendary, as heard in “So What.”

At the end of the fifties, Davis created a turning point in the development of jazz with *Kind of Blue*. His decade-long search for new ways of expression culminated in the album that became synonymous with modal jazz, and that assured Davis his place in jazz history. With “So What” and “Flamenco Sketches” as the fundamental works in the modal style, Davis concluded the 1950s by opening a new world of options for the next generations to explore.

⁷⁵ *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* gives complete characteristics and origin of blue notes. Bradford Robinson and Barry Kernfeld: ‘Blue Note’ *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed. B. Kernfeld (London: Macmillan, 2002), i, 246.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Everything that is part of one's personal history plays a role in the development of a person, and therefore in any decision or event that occurs in relation to that person. Miles Davis's, decision to venture into modal music was the result not of any one isolated event or person but rather the logical destination of a whole series of events, thoughts, people and choices over numerous years. A combination of coincidence and conscious planning led the way and turned his visions into reality.

The 1940s were decisive in the road to modal jazz because the bases of modern jazz were initiated by innovative musicians such as Parker, Gillespie, and Monk, some of the bebop leaders. Moreover, they were mentors, at this time, of young Davis and gave to him not just the musical foundation but also the leadership skills to start his own journey. Davis learned from the best how to form his own identity, not just in his trumpet playing but also in the sound of his band and music. Davis understood what was happening at that moment in jazz, and was able to continue evolving with it.

The 1940s culminated with the birth of a new style called cool, which resulted in Davis's first big project, *Birth of the Cool* (1949-50). In response to cool, yet another new style started to develop in the first half of the 1950s: hard bop. Closer to bebop in concept, format, vocabulary, and language, hard bop was more like blues in its slower tempo and harmonic rhythm. This is clearly seen on "Walkin'" and "Solar" on Davis's album *Walkin'* (1954), where he also started his identity and his signature sound with and without the Harmon mute.

In the second half of the 1950s, Davis had the chance to prove to audiences and to himself how capable he was of transforming and sculpting the talent of young musicians, then

pulling all those qualities, as well as ensemble techniques, together into a new concept of music. The sound Davis created with his quintet was the beginning of what would be called modal jazz, and brought him closer to the biggest accomplishment in his life: the modal style.

The realization of modal style is the brainchild of an open-minded man, an innovator, a man of excellence. Davis did not conform to the norm and was always looking ahead. His life was full of events that exemplify his character, such as the way in which Davis was aware of, permitted, and even encouraged the influence that each of his musicians was to have on his band. He picked the players with this influence in mind, and was careful that their vision and style were what he wanted to explore – he always looked for the best.

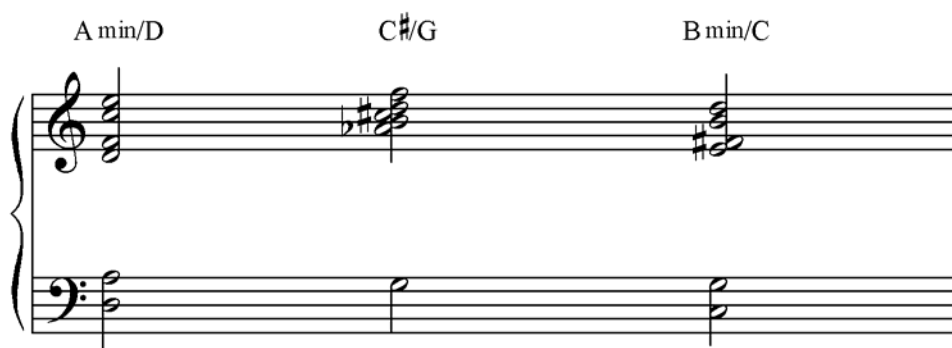
Davis was a visionary who was always looking beyond and searching further. He was continuously planning the means and channels to make his ideas reality. This can clearly be seen by the way in which he surrounded himself with those whom he considered equally talented: Gil Evans, Ahmad Jamal, and Bill Evans, for example.

Davis was intrigued with the idea of taking jazz in a completely new direction. Rather than follow the tendency to ornament and speed up the style, which was what bebop had accomplished, Davis became curious about what the opposite direction would add to this genre. He sought to return to the roots of jazz, the blues, and his interest in the elements that eventually merged to become modal music can be seen early in his career.

At the end of the next decade, Davis again was moving forward with yet another generation of musicians. This time, he was involved with more funk-based rhythms and with more electric instruments. Davis was in constant change; it was what he aspired to and worked to achieve. Not surprisingly, change was never a sudden or casual event, but always the consequence of gradual and constant work. In a man willing and able to adapt and learn as

required, the resulting infinite thought process, unlimited vision and creativity evolved into modal jazz, a completely new form of music appreciated for itself and as a starting point for the next generation of visionary jazz musicians.

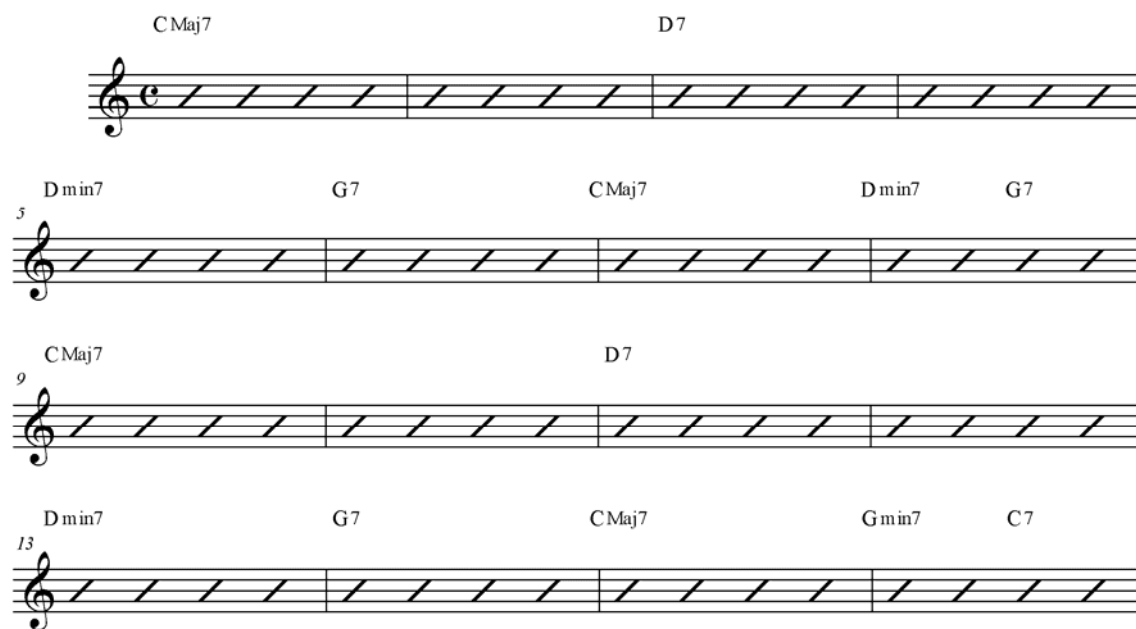
Ex. 1.1 Polychords.



A min/D C#/G B min/C

The image shows three polychords on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first chord is A min/D, with A, C, and E in the treble and D in the bass. The second chord is C#/G, with C#, E, and G# in the treble and G in the bass. The third chord is B min/C, with B, D, and F in the treble and C in the bass.

Ex. 1.2a Billy Strayhorn's "Take the 'A' Train," A section.



C Maj7 D7

5 D min7 G7 C Maj7 D min7 G7

9 C Maj7 D7

13 D min7 G7 C Maj7 G min7 C7

The image shows the A section of "Take the 'A' Train" with four staves of chords. The first staff has C Maj7 and D7. The second staff has D min7, G7, C Maj7, D min7, and G7. The third staff has C Maj7 and D7. The fourth staff has D min7, G7, C Maj7, G min7, and C7.

Ex. 1.2b Charlie Parker's "Confirmation," A section.

Chord progression for Ex. 1.2b:

- Staff 1: FMaj7, Emin7b5, A7, Dmin7, G7, Cmin7, F7
- Staff 2 (starting at measure 5): Bb7, Amin7, D7, G7, Gmin7, C7
- Staff 3 (starting at measure 9): FMaj7, Emin7b5, A7, Dmin7, G7, Cmin7, F7
- Staff 4 (starting at measure 13): Bb7, Amin7, D7, Gmin7, C7, FMaj7

Ex. 1.3 Piano voicings.

ii-V-I progression G

Piano voicings for the ii-V-I progression in G major:

- Amin7:** Treble clef: G4, F#4, E4, D4; Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3.
- D7:** Treble clef: D4, C#4, B3, A3; Bass clef: D2, E2, F#2, G2.
- GMaj7:** Treble clef: G4, F#4, E4, D4; Bass clef: G2, A2, B2, C3.

Ex. 1.4 Harmonic sketch of Claude Thornhill's "Snowfall," A section.

Different chords over F pedal point

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the A section of Claude Thornhill's "Snowfall." Both systems are in 2/4 time and feature a constant F pedal point in the bass line. The first system shows four measures with the following chords: Fmaj7, Gsus9/F, Fmaj7, and Fmin9. The second system shows four measures with the following chords: FMaj7(#9), F7, BbMaj9/F, C6/F, and Csus/F. The treble clef staff contains complex chord voicings, while the bass clef staff maintains a steady eighth-note F pedal point.

Ex. 2.1 Davis solo on “Venus de Milo,” mm. 59-66.

16

20

Ex. 2.2 “Old Devil Moon,” form as recorded on the album *Blue Haze* on March 15, 1954.

Intro	C	6 bars Pedal point rhythm section		6 bars Trumpet melody over pedal point		2 bars break					
1st Chorus	C	6 bars harmonic changes		4 bars pedal point		6 bars changes transposed		6 bars Pedal point		2 bars break	
Interlude	C	6 bars harmonic changes		6 bars pedal point		6 bars pedal point		2 bars break			
2nd Chorus	C	6 bars harmonic changes		4 bars pedal point		6 bars Changes transposed		6 bars pedal point		2 bars break	
Ending	C	6 bars Harmonic changes		16 bars pedal point							

Ex. 2.3 Davis solo on “Walkin’” from the album *Walkin’* : solo chorus number five.

Three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff contains four measures of music. The second staff contains four measures, with the first measure being a whole rest. The third staff contains four measures of music.

Ex. 2.4 First eight bars of Davis solo on “Oleo” from the album *Bags’ Groove*, mm. 33-40.

Two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff has eight measures of music with chord symbols: Cmaj7, A7, Dmin7, G7, Emin7, A7, Dmin7, G7. The second staff has eight measures of music with chord symbols: Gmin7, C7, Fmaj7, F#dim7, Emin7, A7, Dmin7, G7.

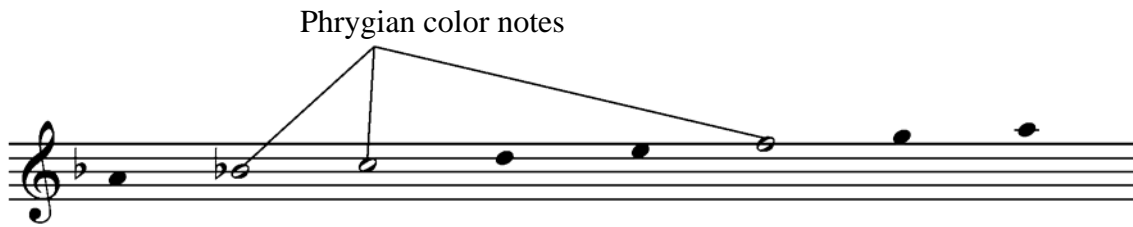
Ex. 3.1 First four bars of Jamal’s “New Rhumba” (1955), introduction (same as A section).

Introduction C 6 C 9 G min7 C 6 C 9 G min7

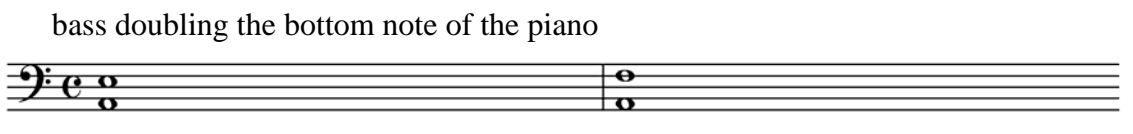
Ex. 3.2 “Julien dans l’Ascenseur” piano pattern (Phrygian mode).

bass doubling the bottom note of the piano

Ex. 3.3 A Phrygian.



Ex. 3.4 “L’Assassinat de Carala” piano pattern (Phrygian mode).



Ex. 4.1 First four bars of the A and B sections of “Milestones” forty bars, AABBA-form, horns and piano melody.

A section

Gmin7 (G dorian)

Ex. 4.2 Bass line: A section walking bass, B section pattern (pedal point).

A section

Gmin7 (G dorian)

B section

Amin7 (A aeolian)

Ex. 4.3 Erik Satie's "Première Gymnopédie" piano pattern mm 1-2.



Musical notation for Ex. 4.3, Erik Satie's "Première Gymnopédie" piano pattern mm 1-2. The notation is in treble and bass clefs, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The piece begins with a whole rest in the treble and a half note in the bass. The second measure consists of a whole note chord in the treble and a whole note chord in the bass.

Ex. 4.4 "Peace Piece" left-hand piano pattern.

♩ = 50

Quartal relationship



Musical notation for Ex. 4.4, "Peace Piece" left-hand piano pattern. The notation is in bass clef, with a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 50. The pattern consists of a series of quarter notes and dyads, with brackets indicating the quartal relationship between the notes in the dyads.

Ex. 4.5 “Flamenco Sketches” five cyclic modes and chords.

C ionian		Eb dorian		Bb ionian		Fifth mode of G harmonic minor		G dorian	
Cmaj7	Gsus9	G ^b maj7/A ^b	F min7/E ^b	B ^b maj7	Fsus9	E ^b dim/D	E ^b maj7	G min9	A min

Ex. 4.6 A blues scale.

blue note

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