

hear it and sing it exploring modal jazz vocal collection

Hear it and sing it is a phrase that resonates deeply within the realm of modal jazz, particularly when it comes to vocal interpretations and collections. This genre, characterized by its innovative use of modes rather than traditional chord progressions, has given rise to a rich tapestry of musical expressions, allowing vocalists to explore complex emotional landscapes and intricate improvisations. In this article, we will delve into the essence of modal jazz, its historical significance, and the unique contributions of vocalists who have embraced this style. We will also explore notable modal jazz vocal collections that showcase the versatility and creativity of artists in this genre.

The Essence of Modal Jazz

Modal jazz emerged in the late 1950s as a departure from the more rigid structures of bebop and traditional jazz. It introduced a new framework for improvisation, focusing on modes—scales that offer a different emotional quality than the major and minor scales commonly used in Western music. This shift allowed musicians and vocalists to explore new melodic possibilities and create a more liberated form of expression.

Defining Characteristics

The defining characteristics of modal jazz can be outlined as follows:

1. Use of Modes: Modal jazz relies on scales derived from modes, such as Dorian, Phrygian, and Mixolydian, which provide a broader palette for improvisation.
2. Extended Harmonies: Musicians often employ extended chords and harmonies that add depth and complexity to the music.
3. Improvisation: There is a strong emphasis on improvisation, allowing vocalists to interpret melodies in personal and innovative ways.
4. Atmospheric Quality: Modal jazz tends to create a more atmospheric sound, often evoking a sense of introspection and contemplation.

Historical Context

The roots of modal jazz can be traced back to the work of influential musicians such as Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Davis's 1959 album, *Kind of Blue*, is often cited as a cornerstone of modal jazz, featuring tracks like "So What" that utilize modal scales to create a unique sound. John Coltrane

further expanded on these ideas in his work, particularly in albums like *A Love Supreme*, where he explored spiritual themes through modal improvisation.

The impact of modal jazz extended beyond instrumentalists; vocalists, too, began to experiment with these new musical landscapes. Artists like Billie Holiday and Nina Simone, while not strictly modal jazz singers, laid the groundwork for future generations to infuse jazz with personal and emotional interpretations.

Vocalists in Modal Jazz

Vocalists in modal jazz have made significant contributions to the genre, bringing their unique perspectives and emotional depth to the music. The following sections highlight some of the most influential modal jazz vocalists and their works.

1. Sheila Jordan

Sheila Jordan is a pioneering figure in jazz vocal improvisation known for her innovative approach to melody and rhythm. Her collaboration with pianist George Russell, particularly on the album *Emanon*, showcases her ability to navigate modal structures effortlessly.

- Key Album: *Emanon*
- Notable Tracks: "You Are My Sunshine," "The Peacocks"

Jordan's vocal style is characterized by her use of scatting, which allows her to explore the nuances of the modal scales while maintaining a strong emotional connection to the melodies.

2. Abbey Lincoln

Abbey Lincoln was not only a remarkable vocalist but also a powerful lyricist and social activist. Her work often reflected her commitment to civil rights and personal expression. Lincoln's album *Straight Ahead* features modal jazz elements, with arrangements that highlight her rich vocal timbre and poignant lyrics.

- Key Album: *Straight Ahead*
- Notable Tracks: "Throw It Away," "A Sleepin' Bee"

Lincoln's ability to convey deep emotion through her interpretations of modal jazz standards has left a lasting impact on the genre.

3. Carmen McRae

Carmen McRae was known for her distinctive voice and phrasing, which allowed her to deliver complex melodies with ease. Her interpretations of jazz standards often incorporated modal elements, particularly in her collaborations with other jazz musicians.

- Key Album: Carmen Sings Monk
- Notable Tracks: "Round Midnight," "Well, You Needn't"

McRae's ability to blend her vocal style with the improvisational nature of modal jazz has made her a revered figure in the genre.

4. Betty Carter

Betty Carter was a groundbreaking vocalist known for her adventurous spirit and improvisational prowess. She often embraced modal jazz in her performances, pushing the boundaries of vocal jazz.

- Key Album: Betty Carter
- Notable Tracks: "Tight," "I Can't Help It"

Carter's fearless approach to music allowed her to create a unique identity within modal jazz, making her an influential figure for aspiring vocalists.

Notable Modal Jazz Vocal Collections

Several vocal collections have emerged over the years that highlight the modal jazz genre and its vocalists. These collections serve as a testament to the innovation and creativity found within modal jazz, showcasing a range of interpretations and styles.

1. The Vocal Jazz Scene: A Modal Perspective

This collection features a range of vocalists who have embraced modal jazz, offering a comprehensive overview of the genre. It includes tracks from both legendary artists and contemporary vocalists, illustrating the evolution of modal jazz.

- Featured Artists: Sheila Jordan, Abbey Lincoln, Carmen McRae, and more.
- Highlights: Rare tracks and live recordings that reveal the improvisational nature of modal jazz.

2. Modal Jazz: The Essential Vocal Collection

This compilation focuses on the modal jazz standards that have been reinterpreted by various vocalists. It serves as an excellent introduction to modal jazz for those unfamiliar with the genre.

- Key Tracks: "So What" (various vocal interpretations), "My Favorite Things" (vocal versions).
- Artists Included: Various notable jazz vocalists who have contributed to the modal jazz landscape.

3. Jazz Voices: A Modal Journey

This collection emphasizes the emotional depth and complexity of modal jazz through vocal performances. It includes live recordings from some of the most respected names in jazz.

- Key Features: Live performances that capture the spontaneous nature of jazz improvisation.
- Notable Performers: A mix of established artists and emerging talents in the modal jazz scene.

The Future of Modal Jazz Vocals

As modal jazz continues to evolve, new generations of vocalists are emerging, bringing fresh interpretations and perspectives to the genre. The accessibility of technology and the global reach of music platforms have allowed aspiring artists to explore modal jazz in innovative ways.

Emerging Artists to Watch

1. Jazzmeia Horn: Known for her dynamic vocal range and improvisational skills, Horn is making waves in the jazz scene with her unique interpretations of modal jazz standards.
2. Cécile McLorin Salvant: A multi-talented vocalist and composer, Salvant's work often incorporates modal elements and showcases her deep understanding of jazz tradition.
3. Kandace Springs: Springs blends jazz with soul and R&B influences, often exploring modal harmonies in her compositions.

Conclusion

In summary, the phrase hear it and sing it encapsulates the essence of modal jazz vocal collections that invite listeners to experience the music deeply and personally. Through the exploration of modes and innovative improvisation, vocalists have enriched the modal jazz genre, contributing to its evolution and complexity. As we move forward, the legacy of modal jazz and its vocalists will undoubtedly continue to inspire and influence future generations, ensuring that the emotional depth and creative spirit of this genre remain alive and well.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is modal jazz and how does it differ from traditional jazz?

Modal jazz is a style of jazz that uses musical modes rather than chord progressions as a harmonic framework. Unlike traditional jazz, which often revolves around complex chord changes, modal jazz allows for more improvisation and exploration of scales, giving vocalists more freedom to express emotions.

What can listeners expect from the 'Hear It and Sing It' vocal collection?

Listeners can expect a rich compilation of modal jazz pieces that highlight the unique vocal techniques and improvisational styles of various artists. The collection showcases how vocalists interpret modal themes, often blending intricate melodies with emotional storytelling.

Which artists are featured in the 'Hear It and Sing It' exploring modal jazz collection?

The collection features a diverse array of artists, including renowned modal jazz vocalists like Jeanne Lee, Sheila Jordan, and Mark Murphy, along with contemporary interpretations by newer artists. Each artist brings their own unique perspective and style to modal jazz.

How does modal jazz influence vocal improvisation?

Modal jazz encourages vocal improvisation by allowing singers to explore different scales and modes without being restricted to a specific chord progression. This results in more innovative and expressive vocal lines, as singers can experiment with rhythm, pitch, and phrasing.

What role do lyrics play in modal jazz vocal

performances?

In modal jazz, lyrics often serve as a vehicle for emotional expression rather than a strict narrative. Vocalists may prioritize the musicality of their voice, using lyrics as a means to enhance the overall mood and feel of the piece, sometimes even opting for wordless sounds.

Why is the 'Hear It and Sing It' collection significant for jazz enthusiasts?

The 'Hear It and Sing It' collection is significant for jazz enthusiasts as it not only showcases the evolution of modal jazz but also serves as an educational resource. It allows listeners to appreciate the nuances of vocal jazz and encourages them to engage with the music by singing along or improvising themselves.

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