Freedom Through Discipline: the use of rhythmic devices in the music of Mark Simmonds

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I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Signed: ....[redacted].....

Date: .....[redacted].....

ABSTRACT

This thesis will examine the use of rhythmic devices employed in compositions from the CD *Fire* by the Australian jazz saxophonist Mark Simmonds. Revered by his peers, Simmonds has not received a commensurate response reflecting his true stature in Australian jazz from within academic circles. The composer's most well known rhythmic concept, termed 'rhythm cycles', has not been investigated at all. This thesis seeks to redress that imbalance by focusing on rhythm cycles more than the other rhythmic devices. Under investigation here is the idea of polymeter created from the phrasing of polyrhythms. Other rhythms examined include repetition, displacement, symmetrical and asymmetrical phrasing as well as the 'dotted crotchet figure' which is used to divide polyrhythms.

These rhythmic ideas, particularly when employed in combination with one another, function to disrupt a sense of the pulse and thus represent a form of 'freedom'.

The thesis will include a biography of the artist's career, a brief glossary of terminology as well as the methodology and background. The latter includes the discovery of video footage showing the artist rehearsing and explaining the very same rhythms under investigation here.

PREFACE

Primary source material for this thesis derives mainly from interviews with Mark Simmonds and transcriptions made from videotapes archived at Sydney University. I would like to thank Mark Simmonds for his consent to the interviews and the Human Research Ethics Committee for their approval. HREC approval also covers the musicians involved in the CD *Fire* who I would also like to acknowledge. These are, apart from Mark, Scott Tinkler, Steve Elphick and Simon Barker. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Russell Emerson, School's Technical Director at the Department of Performance Studies, Sydney University, for allowing me unlimited access to the videotapes. To the musicians involved in the videotaped project, my thanks for your consent in allowing me to document and use this material for my research. They are, apart from the bandleader, Scott Tinkler, Chris Abrahams, Mike Sheridan, Steve Hunter and Duncan Archibald. Bassists Steve Elphick and Steve Hunter have also been very helpful by providing original and transcribed sheet music of Mark Simmonds' compositions.

The publication of John Shand's *Jazz: The Australian Accent* during this research was an unexpected and helpful addition to scarce secondary source material concerning this artist.

Finally I would like to thank my supervisor, Phil Slater, for encouraging me to research one of the great and truly original artists of Australian jazz.

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Introduction

This thesis will examine the use of rhythmic devices employed in compositions by the Australian jazz saxophonist Mark Simmonds. These include repetition, displacement, asymmetrical and symmetrical phrasing as well as two concepts described as 'rhythm cycles' and the 'dotted crotchet figure'. The author will then show how these rhythms disrupt the pulse, creating music that alludes to the word 'freedom' in the title. This effect is enhanced by the combination and juxtaposition of these rhythmic ideas with one another. 'Discipline' refers to the conscious, predetermined intention to distort or conceal the pulse, creating the impression of rhythmic freedom while in essence maintaining a strict relationship to the original meter.

While presenting a critical summary of these various rhythms, particular attention will be paid to rhythm cycles as they represent the most effective rhythmic device used to disrupt the meter. The author will examine how their application leads to polymeter, or the feeling of two or more simultaneous meters.

Nonetheless, the focus for this thesis will be the varied means by which the composer employs rhythmic ideas in the compositions from the CD *Fire*. Discovery of videotape footage of a week- long workshop featuring the bandleader explaining and rehearsing these specific rhythms considerably enhances this analysis. These two sources, in addition to personal interviews with the artist, will comprise the primary source material for this thesis.

Chapter 1

Biographical Overview

Mark Bentley Simmonds, born in Christchurch New Zealand in 1955, moved to Australia in 1965 and began playing the saxophone in 1972.

Described by Shand as "the most potent musician Australian jazz has seen" (82), the artist was based in Sydney with the exceptions of two years in Brisbane from 1982 to 1984, and four years in Melbourne from 1990-1994.

The saxophonist performed both jazz and more commercial forms of music (rock, pop, funk and soul) throughout the seventies and eighties. With a genuine regard for the latter, the artist explains how "With rock, you learn how to get the maximum value out of the minimum amount of notes" (Shand 16). Learning this minimalist approach from the Chris Turner Band in the mid-seventies (Simmonds, M.B. June 28), the saxophonist then worked with R'n'B group Ol' 55 and glam rock outfit the Silver Studs. The early eighties found the artist backing the rock singer Jeff St. John before joining soul group The Dynamic Hepnotics. By the mid eighties, Simmonds had begun an association with Jackie Orszaczky that had a profound influence on the saxophonist's polyrhythmic development[1] (Simmonds, M.B. 28 June). By the time Simmonds parted ways with Orszaczky in 1990, the saxophonist had collaborated in several of the iconic Hungarian's projects, namely, The Mathew Talbot Singers, Industrial Accident and the popular funk group Jump Back Jack.

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[1] Orszaczky was renowned for his independent rhythms on bass and vocals.

Within the jazz community let alone the wider musical scene, the saxophonist soon acquired a reputation as a cross-stylist, claiming "I always had a foot in every camp" (Shand, 86). Simmonds command of both traditional and free jazz merged into an immediately identifiable style that characterises the music on *Fire*.

In the following excerpt, the artist tells Shand of an unusual background in jazz:

> I played trombone in this jazz band, and we were playing all the early New Orleans pieces by the Hot Five and Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver, and also listening to Graeme Bell...I ended up with about three thousand 78s from the 20s, 30s and 40s, including a lot of Australian ones (84).

Switching to saxophone and "in his last year at high school, (Simmonds) attended the earliest days of the jazz course at the N.S.W. Conservatorium" (Shand 84). The artist had already performed on trombone with the Dick Bradstock Quartet whilst being influenced by blues stylists such as Lonnie Johnson and Charlie Patton. The young saxophonist was immediately drawn to 1930s tenor giant Lester Young (Simmonds, M.B. June 28) and gained further experience playing swing era jazz with the Terry McCardell Band and Jack Allen's Brown Derbies. Both bands featured a saxophone, trumpet, bass and drums lineup playing Count Basie, Benny Goodman and Gerry Mulligan tunes.

In the mid seventies the artist joined the Keys Music Association (KMA), a collective of amateur and semiprofessional musicians exploring free collective improvisations. The saxophonist then joined experimental jazz groups The Jazz Co-op and the Phil Treloar

Quintet. At the same time Simmonds played bebop with Joe Lane, Dave Martin and Dave Levy. By the early eighties the artist was performing with groups led by Serge Ermoll and Bernie McGann before briefly playing with The Benders. The saxophonist was part of the collectively led Australian Art Ensemble, and joined the Australian Art Orchestra in the latter half of the eighties.

The Australian Art Ensemble (percussionist Phil Treloar, pianist Bobby Gebert and Mark Simmonds) won a study grant enabling them to travel to New York in 1980. After studying with Karl Berger, Marion Brown, James Emery, Bakaida Carroll and George Coleman, Simmonds returned to Sydney and formed the Freeboppers[2]. Inspired particularly by Coleman, Simmonds began writing the material for *Fire* while investigating polyrhythms with Phil Treloar, a process that continued until the mid-1980s. John Clare notes that "Simmonds recalls sitting at a table for hours with Treloar, tapping out rhythms together" (165).

Jazz recordings by the artist as a sideman include two Serge Ermoll recordings, *Jungle Juice*, with Steve McKenna (which was nominated for an Aria award), and *Dedication to Horst Liepolt*, by the Serge Ermoll Concert Ensemble. This album featured a string section with Dale Barlow (sax) and James Morrison (trombone). A tribute album, *Notes From The Underground*[3], featured the Mark Simmonds' Space Society Orchestra performing the artist's "Duality of Opposites". The CD *Beyond El Rocco* features the saxophonist with the Freeboppers on "Kings Cross Drag" and Phil Treloar's group Feeling to Thought on "Shades

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[2] This band performed, with varying lineups, until the saxophonist ceased playing in 1997.

[3] This album was compiled by Michael Sheridan and Martin Jackson as a tribute to Jamie Fielding.

of Bhairau".

The *Official Jackie Orszaczky Website* lists two recordings with the artist. The first is a 1987 LP titled *Blue Cover* by Jump Back Jack while the other is available only on cassette, labelled *Industrial Accident.*

Fire was recorded at Electric Avenue Studios in the second half of 1993 and released early in 1994 on Birdland Records. Engineered by Phil Punch and co-produced by Mark Simmonds and Kieran Stafford, the saxophonist is joined by Scott Tinkler (trumpet), Steve Elphick (bass) and Simon Barker (drums). The CD won an Aria Award for best jazz album in 1995. *Fire* features in Emma Franz's documentary film *Intangible Asset Number 82.*

The Freeboppers appear in the film *Beyond El Rocco* which begins with an unaccompanied solo by the saxophonist. The bandleader also performs "King's Cross Drag" with Mike Bukovsky (trumpet), Steve Elphick and Greg Sheehan (drums). This segment appeared on the ABC-TV program *Transitions.*

While reviews of the band appeared in the press with some frequency, particularly after *Fire* was released, literature about the artist is scarce. Although John Clare's *Bodgie Dada and the Cult of Cool* contains some relevant information, the book covers a wide range of topics and avoids specificity. Conversely, John Shand's *Jazz: The Australian Accent* is the first publication to provide substantive information about the saxophonist. The many index references allude to the bandleader's influence on many of the other musicians covered by Shand. The demonstrative saxophonist heads a section called "The Firebrands" with a chapter entitled "Mark Simmonds: *Volcano".*

There are two theses written about the artist, both emanating from Sydney University.

These are "Australian Jazz Saxophonists-A folio of Transcriptions" by David Theak, which includes a transcription of the sax solo from "On The Road", and Ian Jones' "Observations of Processes of Jazz Improvisation" concerning the saxophonist's thoughts on improvising. Jones' thesis mentions rhythm cycles without going into any detail.

Contemporary musicians influenced by Simmonds include drummers Simon Barker and Will Guthrie, saxophonist Julien Wilson, trumpeter Scott Tinkler, and the 'McNelis Barbaro Quartet', a Melbourne band that performs under the topical subtitle 'The Mark Simmonds Project'.

At a lecture at the Sydney Conservatorium, Tinkler discussed polymeter and phrasing at some length (Tinkler, 2007)). The trumpeter attributed Simmonds with providing the inspiration for these ideas. Tinkler added that this investigation into polymeter had its origins in an extensive study of rhythm cycles initiated during the saxophonist's time in Melbourne. This in turn was a result of Simmonds' training, as previously mentioned, with percussionist Phil Treloar in polyrhythms. The relationship between this rhythmic discipline and musical freedom is discussed here by Treloar:

> In playing music with him I've always felt free. This is not meant in the sense of 'anything goes'. In fact, far from it. Mark is a stickler for precision and detail. The discipline of precision leads to freedom. This Mark understands in absolute essence. One doesn't just 'be free' (Shand 87).

In the following excerpt, Julien Wilson describes to John Shand the power of the artist's playing and its significance.

> I was shaking the first time I heard him. I walked in, and he played a solo for about 20 minutes, and I looked at my hands and they were shaking. It was a new experience. Apart from the way he plays the saxophone, he's an incredible composer, really unique...[There is an unreleased trio recording] with Phil Treloar and Bobby Gebert, and it is absolutely astounding. It's up there with any of the best music I've ever heard in my life. I was going to relate it to those classic Coltrane Quartet recordings, because the energy of it is the same as that, and the beauty of it as well - and it's not just the energy sounds aggressive or whatever; there's all this love in it...This stuff should be available. Whoever has to approve it and sign the right things should definitely get this stuff available, because it's a really exciting part of our history that's just vacant at the moment. (142)

A brief acknowledgement should be made here concerning the author's relationship with the artist. After sharing the bandstand with Simmonds in 1972 and playing together in numerous jam sessions, the author succeeded the artist in The Benders as well as bands led by Jeff St. John and Jackie Orszaczky (Jump Back Jack and Industrial Accident). Both parties were also members of the K.M.A., which the artist led during the author's tenure.

Chapter 2

Methodology

As the sole recording under the artist's name, *Fire* represents an excellent focus for analysis. Primary source material will also be drawn from footage of a 'Freeboppers' week-long workshop (August 21-25, 1994). Filmed just six months after the release of the CD, this incarnation of the 'Freeboppers' represents a new lineup from the one on the CD. While Scott Tinkler remains on trumpet, Steve Elphick is replaced by Steve Hunter on bass and Duncan Archibald replaces Simon Barker on drums. Mike Sheridan is added on guitar while Chris Abrahams makes an appearance only on the Thursday afternoon session. In this rehearsal environment, the composer introduces the tunes and the rhythmic devices under investigation here for the new (and final) lineup to digest and analyse in 'real' time, with no prior preparation (apart from Scott Tinkler). This aspect highlights the process of discovery within the band, a fortuitous circumstance for research purposes. There are thirty videotapes archived at Sydney University's Department of Performance Studies in the John Woolley building under the care of the School's Technical Director, Russell Emerson. As the cameras were continuously recording, there are 'dead' spots where nothing happens. The researcher has transferred the videotapes to DVD format and labelled and edited them to denote the day and morning (a.m.) or afternoon (p.m.) session.

Archived for the last fifteen years, these tapes reveal the rhythmic construction of the tunes from *Fire*. The constant exchange of relevant musical information between composer and musicians contributes a wealth of data for research purposes. The workshop provides an ideal format for analysis since the same material that this thesis will address is examined by the bandmembers themselves. The more manufactured setting of the personal interview, however advantageous, suffers in comparison from several perspectives. Questions asked by the researcher differ from those that occur in the 'real' context of playing or rehearsing this music, as do the answers in the two different formats. Although there are benefits to be gained from the interview scenario, comments such as the following regarding the perception of time tend to arise naturally from the verbal interplay between musicians. They also reinforce Monson's point "that the only ethical point of departure for work in jazz studies and ethnomusicology remains the documentation and interpretation of vernacular perspectives, contemporary or historical" (6).

> If it's done clearly it only takes a fraction of a second of a glimpse...It's obvious to everyone one of us where it is, but maybe not...to the audience. Audiences won't know by counting when we get out but believe me a lot of them know by the feel in their bodies when it gets out...when it doesn't feel balanced. (Monday a.m. 37' 55"-38'20")

The following is part of the opening address by Tim Fitzpatrick, the Head of the Department of Performance Studies, where he explains the rationale for the workshop:

> I'm Tim Fitzpatrick. Chris is a postgraduate student of mine and he set it all up with you...Through the week there'll be a few more (students) drifting in and out on Wednesday and Friday-there'll be quite a lot of them here. There should be twenty or thirty students coming in for that. The idea of the project as far as we're concerned is if you guys do what you want to do. It's not a demonstration for us or anything. There'll be people watching... following the process. They want to see how you actually get to where you're going but in no sense are they expecting you to put on a show for them (Monday p.m. 07"-1' 19").

"29th St Hop" features prominently throughout the workshop as its structure contains two independent rhythm cycles. In fact, the Monday session is devoted almost entirely to this tune alone. "The Spotted Dog" was also favoured for the incorporation of rhythm cycles within its written form. "29th St Hop", however, distinguishes itself by the degree of this integration and, as such, was a perfect vehicle for the musicians to practice rhythm cycles and the dotted crotchet figure. While both these rhythmic devices appear throughout *Fire*, the significance of their compositional (as opposed to improvisational) integration into "29th St Hop" will be reflected by its prominence in this thesis. Although seven tunes will be investigated, the analysis of "29th St Hop" will, for these reasons, contain the most detail.

There are sections of *Fire* that seem to be 'free' with no discernible regular pulse. The videotape sessions reveal these to be highly organized structures created by the musicians

employing specific and independent rhythms that, when combined, can emulate the feeling of freedom.

The videotaped sessions and the CD recording complement each other as the former reveals the machinations of the latter. The opportunity to observe the construction and deconstruction of these complex rhythms is an obvious benefit to the researcher.

The personal interviews with the artist complete this methodology. As the interviews all took place in 2009, citations in the text shall only show the day and month. Transcriptions of tapes, CD and interviews with the artist will combine to create a taxonomical rhythmic analysis of the compositions from *Fire*.

Transcription method

Transcriptions from *Fire* will accompany the relevant text and will be made aurally. When verbal transcriptions from the videotape footage appear they will be followed by a time code which will refer to the DVD. For expedience sake and relevancy, all but one of the transcripts in this thesis will come from the Monday morning session. Reference will therefore be made in the text by the abbreviated word "Mon." followed by "a.m." or "p.m." with the time code. A copy of the Monday morning ("a.m.") DVD accompanies this thesis.

Primary source material includes lead sheets (manuscripts) written in the composer's hand, aiding the transcription process.

Analytic Vocabulary

"Backbeat" is a rhythmic term that is defined in *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* as "a sharp attack on beats two and four of a 4/4 measure, often sounded continuously on the snare drum" ("Backbeat").

In this thesis, the term "horns" refers to the tenor saxophone and trumpet.

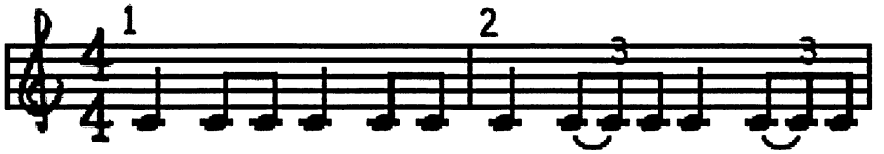
"Pivot points" are the coinciding beats of two different rhythms, primarily used by the composer to explain where the dotted crotchet and polyrhythms meet. The dotted crotchet acts as an anchor at this pivot point, providing a convenient division for the most commonly used polyrhythms. The artist often preferred this rhythmic construct (dotted crotchet) when employing rhythm cycles rather than the swing feel. Consequently, it will be shown that there is an absence of a synchronous convergence (pivot point) between the commonly used polyrhythms and the swing feel.

"Rhythm and Blues", abbreviated to "R'n'B", is a style of "Black American popular music from the late 1940s through the early 1960s...with a prominent, honking tenor saxophone" ("Rhythm and Blues").

A "shout chorus" is simply "a loud, spirited, climactic chorus" ("shout chorus").

The term "swing" can be interpreted as a stylistic reference, that is, music from or similar in character to that of the swing era. It can also be used as an abbreviation of the term 'swing feel', which is a rhythmic interpretation. This is often described in terms of the drummer's ride cymbal pattern, the most common example being a 4/4 bar comprising

a crotchet on beat one, two quavers on beat two, another crotchet on beat three and two quavers on beat four. Example 1 shows the difference between this figure as written (bar 1) and played (bar 2)[4].



Example 1. Swing feel, as written (bar 1) and played (bar 2).

Finally, the composer would often query rhythmic terminology, as in the following comment: " A lot of books about music...call displacement polyrhythm" (Simmonds, M.B. June 28). Ambiguity within musical terminology is addressed by Daoust, specifically regarding the definitions of polymeter and polyrhythm (3). Both these terms will be discussed in the next section as they are fundamental to understanding "rhythm cycles".

[4] Bar 2 is a generalization of the interpretation of swing feel. For example, the faster the tempo, the more the pattern in bar 2 approaches that in bar 1.

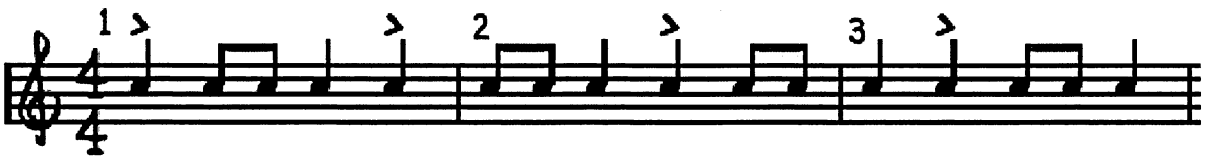
Chapter 3: Rhythmic Devices

Rhythm Cycles

This chapter will examine rhythms that are intrinsic to the music of Mark Simmonds. These are, to use the composer's terminology, rhythm cycles, velocity, and the dotted crotchet.

While explaining rhythm cycles as "How you accent...to give the illusion of... another meter" (Simmonds, M.B. June 28), Simmonds was concerned that a clear distinction be made between polyrhythm and polymeter. While polyrhythm is explained as "The simultaneous use of two or more rhythms" ("Polyrhythm"), polymeter is described as the coexistence "of two or more meters" ("Polymeter"). A polyrhythm distinguishes itself from polymeter by generating rhythms from within a singular time signature. However, even these definitions seem momentarily inadequate when Simmonds states that "A bar is a rhythm cycle. A 4/4 bar is a rhythm cycle of four where you put a stress on a beat every fourth beat." The composer also points out that a 3/4 bar is a three crotchet rhythm cycle (Simmonds, M.B. February 2). Although these analogies seem simplistic and their function as rhythmic devices questionable, the artist then resolves this dilemma by explaining that "where it comes into play is where it becomes a counter-rhythm-where you put 3/4 over 4/4" (Simmonds, M.B. February 2).

The term rhythm cycle is complimented by a unit of measure. Example 2 shows a three crotchet rhythm cycle played with a swing feel. This division represents the 3/4 over 4/4 counter-rhythm mentioned above. This rhythm appears in both "29th St Hop" and "The Spotted Dog" while being a characteristic pattern of the drummer Elvin Jones. The composer made many references to this pattern while mentioning Jones' influence in the discovery of rhythm cycles [5] (Simmonds, M.B. February 2).



Example 2. Elvin Jones subdivides 4/4 into a three crotchet rhythm cycle.

The three crotchet rhythm cycle, when expressed as a polyrhythm, can be thought of as dotted minims in 4/4. It is the internal pattern of a crotchet, two quavers (swung) and a further crotchet which gives it the feeling of 3/4 time coexisting with the original 4/4 meter. This inner structure (pattern) provides a counter-rhythm, or the sense of polymeter.

In a chapter entitled "Against the Time", saxophonist Dave Liebman describes the process by which polyrhythmic subdivision can generate polymeter:

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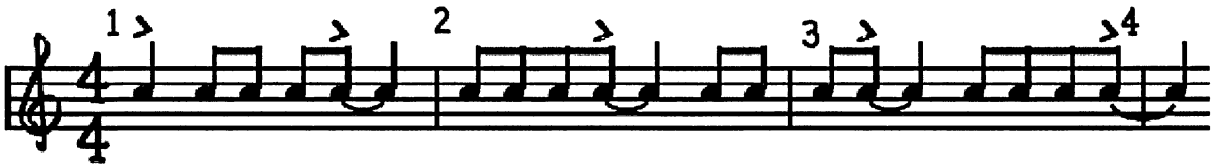
[5] Sonny Rollins was the other artist credited with being an influence.

> Although eighth notes remain the main backbone of jazz time, the greatest improvisers demonstrate a rhythmic flexibility that can be mind boggling using inventive ways of playing permutations, subdivisions and metric modulations that can go so far as to suggest another tempo against the ongoing pulse. I call this "against the time" meaning that a polyrhythm is created by a musician playing a subdivision with such clarity and consistency that another pulse has been created. A most basic against the time rhythm is three against two (quarter note triplets) and then even further divisions of that (2009).

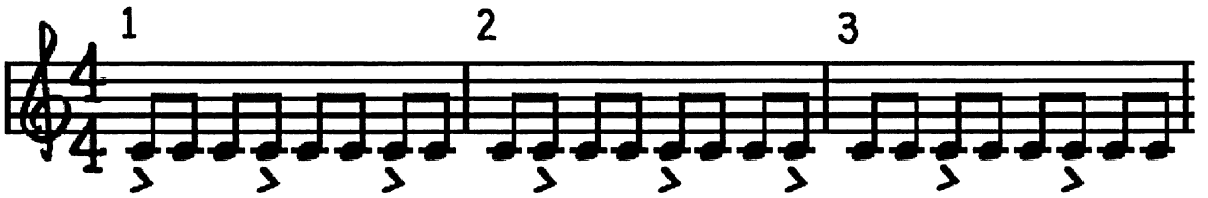
Example 3 depicts how Elvin Jones would push the accents in the three crotchet rhythm cycle as notated in Example 2.



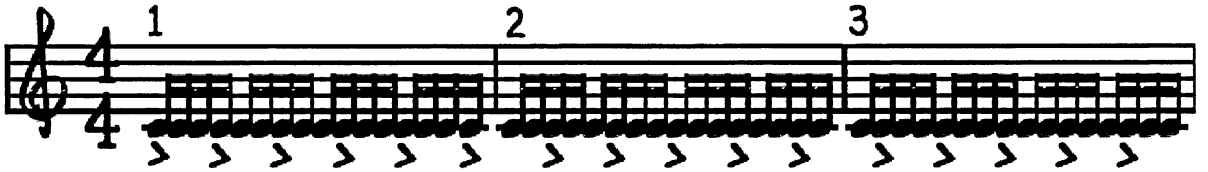
Ex. 3. Jones pushes the accents on a three crotchet rhythm cycle by one quaver.

Example 4 is a 'three by quaver' rhythm cycle. Example 5 is a semiquaver subdivision with the notes accented in groups of three. This is a 'three by semiquaver' rhythm cycle, sometimes notated on the composer's charts as a '3' with a semiquaver. All of these

examples (2,3,4, and 5) are based on a three over four subdivision and consequently resolve after three bars of 4/4.[6]



Example 4. A three quaver rhythm cycle.

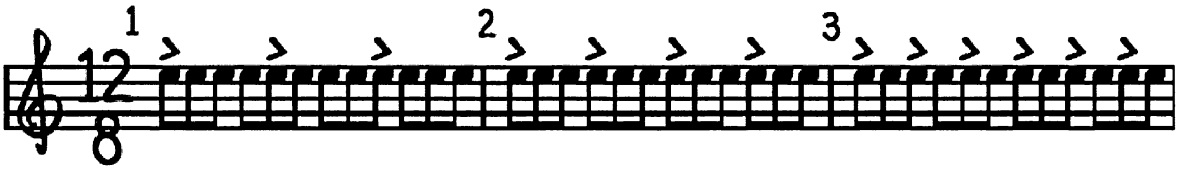


Example 5. A three semiquaver rhythm cycle.

The first bar in Example 6 shows triplet quavers accented in fours, creating three main pulses. Bar 2 is simply triplet quavers in 12/8 with the accents occurring on the downbeats, and is neither polyrhythmic nor polymetric. Bar 3 represents the subdivision of the triplets

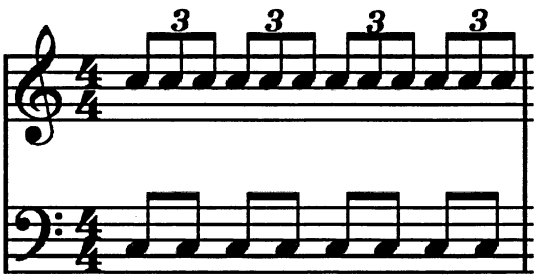
[6] This is based on common factors. For example, a three crotchet rhythm cycle in 4/4 has a common factor of twelve crotchets (three times four) which is three bars. This equation is applicable to the other subdivisions based on three over four.

into groups of two, creating six "main pulse beats." So the 12/8 bar has been subdivided into three in bar 1, four in bar 2 and six in bar 3.



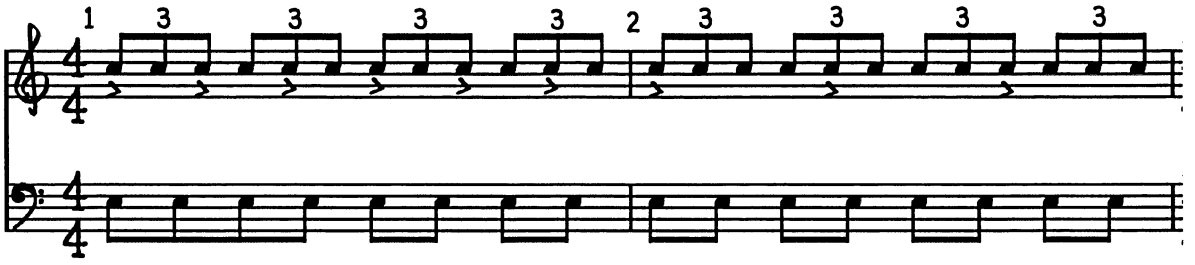
Example 6. Triplet quavers in 12/8, accented in three (bar 1), four (bar 2), and six (bar 3).

Triplet quavers are the natural subdivision of 12/8. When stating that "a triplet is a polyrhythm, probably the simplest there is" (Simmonds, M.B. February 2), the reference would be to 4/4 rather than 12/8 meter as the triplet quavers would form a three over two relationship with quavers in 4/4 (Example 7). Bar 2 from Example 6 now becomes polyrhythmic in 4/4.



Example 7. Triplet quavers (polyrhythm) and quavers in 4/4.

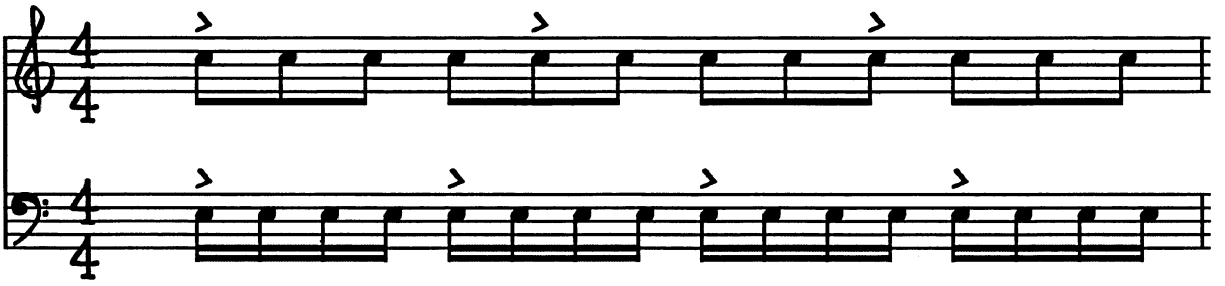
Although Example 7 depicts quavers as a polyrhythm (triplet quavers in 4/4), it cannot be described as a rhythm cycle. The composer describes rhythm cycles as polymeter, or the coexistence of more than one time signature. It is therefore the phrasing of the polyrhythm that produces this effect. In the following example (Example 8), bar 3 and bar 1 from Example 6, originally in 12/8 are now reconfigured in 4/4, creating both polyrhythm and, due to the phrasing, polymeter. The lower line represents the 'natural' subdivision of quavers in 4/4.



Example 8. Triplet quavers pulsed in six (bar 1) and three (bar 2) over quavers in 4/4.

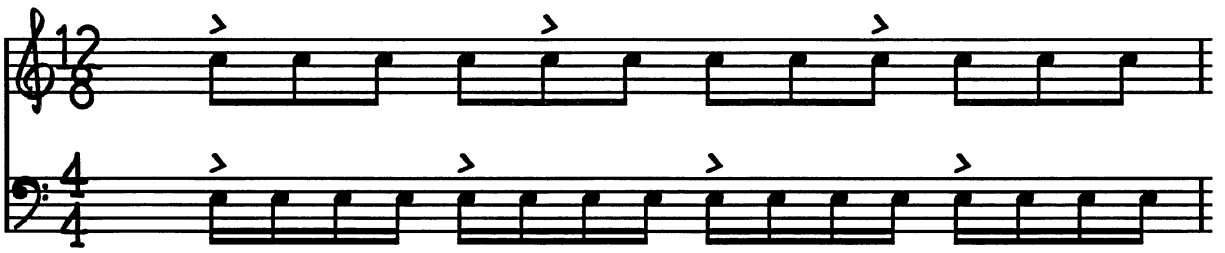
Example 9 shows triplets grouped in fours (top line) contrasting with the slightly faster four note accented semiquavers. The phrasing of the triplets creates three main pulse

beats contrasting with the four accents of the semiquavers.



Example 9. Triplet quavers pulsed in four over semiquavers in 4/4.

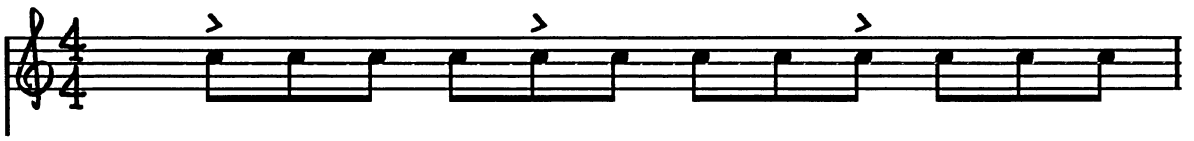
Example 10 presents the same subdivisions notated in their respective time signatures, in the process removing the polyrhythmic element of the triplets. Although this shows polymeter, the efficacy of rhythm cycles becomes more apparent when the numerical relationship and phrasing of the notes in both meters is closer.



Example 10. Triplet quavers in 12/8 accented in four and semiquavers in 4/4.

Simmonds explains how playing rhythm cycles transformed his playing into a style more reminiscent of Charlie Parker:

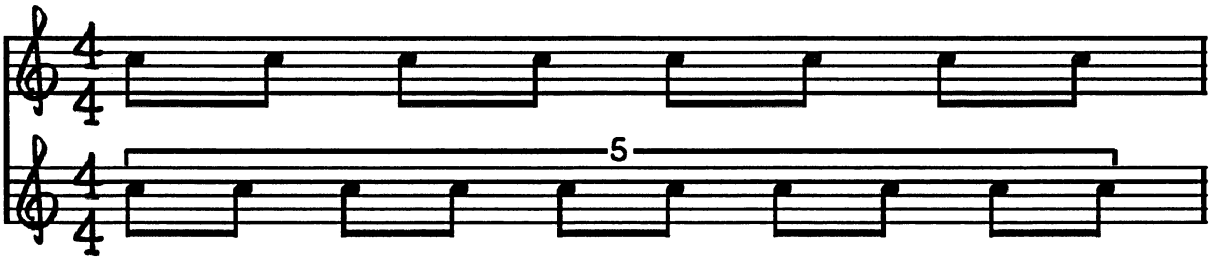
> You can even do it with bars. It's something I worked on a lot because listening back to myself on tapes playing bebop I didn't like the fact that I was too symmetrical and too much on the beat. Then I discovered a kind of trick with bebop which is that although you're phrasing in fours, eights, and sixteens you play your phrases in lots of threes. You play three bar rhythm cycles and you instantly sound like Parker. Triplets are a polyrhythm-but where they really come into play is when you put a rhythm cycle on a polyrhythm. A classic example is what Elvin (Jones) does on the drums. It's pretty much what I picked up from Phil Treloar years ago. Elvin Jones will come up to the next phrase (Example 11):



Example 11. Elvin Jones' three over four feel.

> So you're doing three lots of four rather than four lots of three. The whole idea of it is that you're not landing on 'one' all the time. It's like another tempo going on at the same time because you've got to play in such a way that it creates a feel. You can do triplets within triplets. A thing I do a lot is, you're starting a phrase-you can speed up or slow down on a phrase within the phrase without actually changing your relationship to the original tempo, particularly if you're playing groups of four and you start playing in quintuplets [see Ex.15] (Simmonds, M.B. February 2).

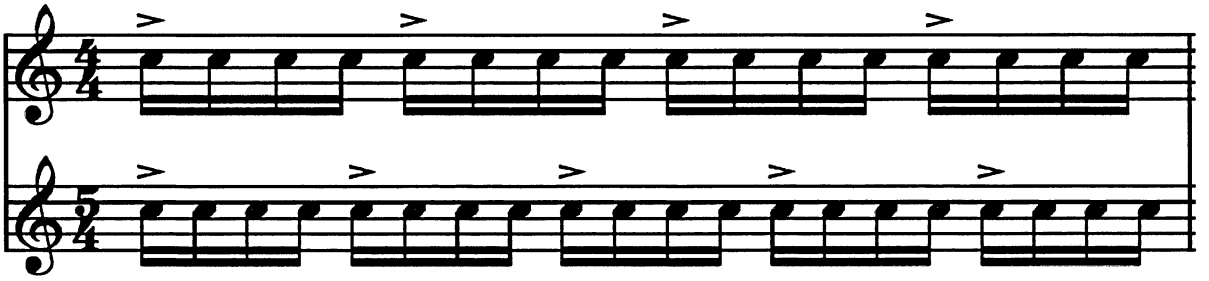
The effect of polymeter and rhythm cycles is enhanced by a similarity in the number of notes and subsequent phrasing. *By* comparing the number of notes in 12/8 and 4/4 (Example 10) a ratio of 3:4 (12:16) is revealed. If this ratio were closer, the polymetric effect increases. The following diagram (Example 12), although written in 4/4 and therefore a polyrhythmic notation, clearly shows the proximity of the temporal relationship of quavers in 4/4 to those in the five over four bar. The closer ratio of 8:10 quavers (4:5) is more conducive to creating the feeling of polymeter, which is the essence of rhythm cycles.



Example 12. Polyrhythm- Eight and ten quavers in 4/4.

The two bars in Example 13 have the same temporal duration while the ratio of the semiquavers in each bar is the same as the quavers in Example 12 (16:20 = 8:10). The 5/4 bar in Example 13 functions similarly to the second line of Example 12, which is simply a five over four figure in 4/4. The 5/4 bar in Example 13 could also have been notated in 4/4 as

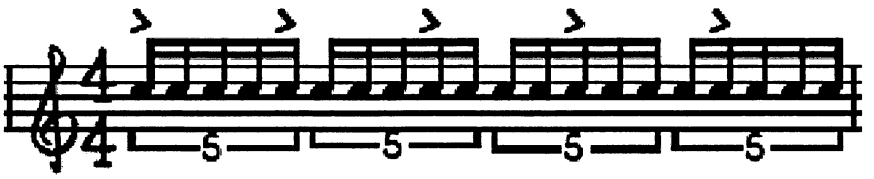
semiquaver quintuplets grouped in fours. Although this produces the same result, the notation below is not only easier to read but is a more accurate depiction of rhythm cycles as it is polymetric.



Example 13. Polymeter: Two simultaneous time signatures.

> If you're in 5/4 you can write that underneath 4/4. Stravinsky does it all the time. Have scores that are all in alignment but with people in different time signatures. That's what people call polyrhythm but to me that's wrong. It's polymeter, it's poly- time signatures (Simmonds, M.B. June 28).

Example 14 shows quintuplets grouped in fours played in 4/4 (polyrhythm). Although the result is the same as the example above, it is easier thinking of semiquavers in 5/4 rather than re-phrasing quintuplets in the original meter (4/4) as shown below.



Example 14. Quintuplets accented in fours.

To sum up, the subdivision of a polyrhythm, which derives from the original meter, can be phrased to emulate another meter. Thinking of these phrased subdivisions as being in another tempo is the fundamental idea of rhythm cycles. In Examples 12 a five over four polyrhythm can be interpreted as 5/4 in 4/4 time. In this instance, the alternate time signature derives from a crotchet subdivision (polyrhythm). The subsequent quaver and semiquaver subdivision should be thought of as being in the new meter rather than thinking in the original time signature (polymeter). That is why Examples 13 functions more effectively than Example 14, which, with its phrasing, has a complex rhythmic relationship to the original meter. It is then the subsequent phrasing of the subdivided polyrhythm which

reinforces the feel of a new meter.

When the polyrhythm is close to the original tempo, such as five over four, then the resultant phrased subdivision can create a great deal of rhythmic friction with the 4/4 feel. The effect is that of an incremental accelerando when the phrasing in the alternate time signature is the same as that in the original tempo, enhancing the impression of two different tempi. The five crotchet rhythm cycle would sound just slightly ahead of the original (4/4) tempo, coinciding only on the downbeats of each bar. This is precisely what Simmonds was referring to when stating how "you can speed up or slow down on a phrase within the phrase without actually changing your relationship to the original tempo, particularly if you're playing groups of four and you start playing in quintuplets" (Simmonds, M.B. February 2).

> You can't tap your foot with the rhythm cycle. You've got to tap your foot with where the feel (pulse) is. (10' 34"- 10' 38" Mon. p.m.)
> With these rhythm cycles, you've never going to get them unless you tap your foot with where the time is. (13' 09"- 13' 14" Mon. p.m.)

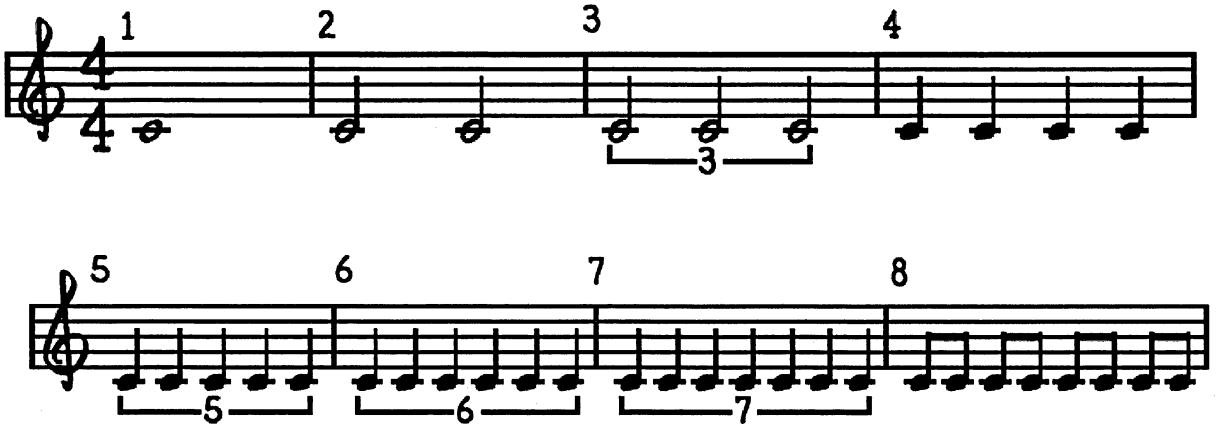
Velocity

The composer describes 'velocity' as the relationship between any two tempos. For example, comparing the tempo being played by the rhythm section with the soloist's tempo denotes velocity, which may, obviously, be faster or slower. If the soloist were to play the two lines in Example 14 one after another, the velocity would increase. Using this five crotchet rhythm cycle as a reference, Simmonds explains the relationship between velocity, polyrhythms, rhythm cycles and polymeter in the following:

> Five over four is increasing your velocity against the pulse which to me is polyrhythm. Rhythm cycles are how you accent that to give the illusion of there being another meter as well...you've actually sped up in 4/4 (Simmonds, M.B. June 28).

The next diagram (Example 15) represents a subdivision of a 4/4 bar from a semi-breve in bar 1 up to a division of eight quavers in bar 8. This progressive sequence of subdivisions, from a breve to quavers, was actually notated by Simmonds for the author to demonstrate velocity, with the exception of Bar 7. This particular subdivision, although

included here, was omitted by the composer as it would feature to a lesser extent due to its rhythmic complexity.

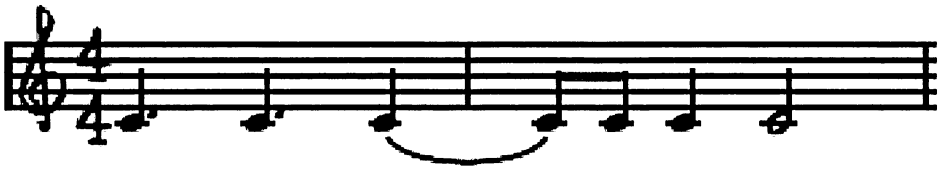


Example 15. Velocity from a semibreve to quavers in 4/4.

Subdivisions can be applied to all of these units of measure and, depending upon the phrasing, can create an increase or decrease in relation to the original meter, which is velocity. This in turn relates to both rhythm cycles and polymeter. Examples 12, 13 and 14 represent an increase in velocity (accelerando).

The Dotted Crotchet

While the composer uses the dotted crotchet rhythm in "29th St Hop", it also functions as a pivot point for polyrhythmic subdivision, which is the subject of interest here. This rhythm is heard in many folk musics, including the well known Bo Diddley riff (Example 16), and the Latin 3:2 clave (son clave).



Example 16. The dotted crotchet rhythm in the classic Bo Diddley riff.

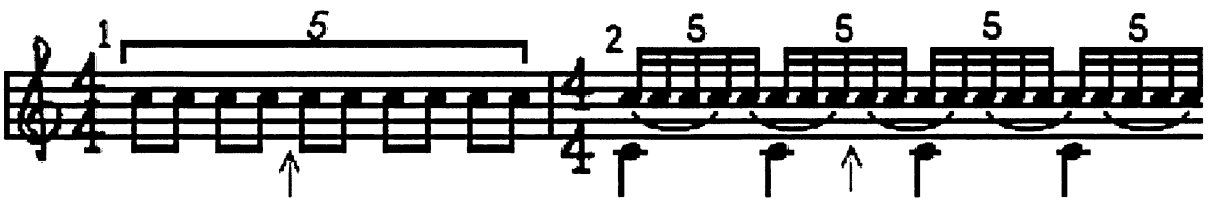
> None of these things are foreign to...commercial or conservative forms of the music...they're very common things. Whether it be a jazz thing, Philly Jo Jones does those three rhythm cycle things all the time on his swing feels, or if it's blues... Bo Diddley (Monday a.m. 40'14"-41').

The dotted crotchet rhythm in 4/4 subdivides the bar at a point that is very close to the

beats of commonly used polyrhythms such as three over four, five over four and six over four.

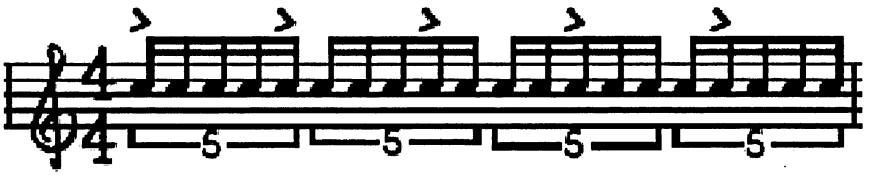
> The placement of the dotted crotchet is very close to what that middle beat would be in five and three. It's very close to the third beat of a five over four (Ex. 20) and very close to the second beat of a three over four (Ex. 21) as well as the third beat in six (Ex. 22). You get that kind of rhythm a lot. That sets up the 3 rhythm cycle which Philly Jo-Jones was so famous for with Miles-McCoy Tyner (played it) all the time (Simmonds, M.B. February 2).

Bar 1 in Example 17 is a five over four rhythm in quavers while bar 2 is the same subdivision except in semi-quavers. The dotted crotchet pivot point is indicated with an arrow, occurring a fraction before the third beat in five.



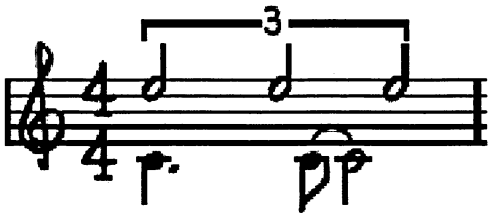
Example 17. The dotted crotchet pivot point in five over four.

Bar 2 shows how beats two and four of the 4/4 bar are very close to beats two and five of the five crotchet rhythm cycle. The rhythmic friction is more pronounced than at beats three and four in the five crotchet rhythm cycle, which are near the 'and' of beats two and three (in 4/4). The point here is that it is the proximity to the downbeats rather then the offbeats that causes the greater rhythmic conflict. In Example 18, the first accent in five is on the beat, the second just before the beat, the third near the offbeat, the fourth again near the offbeat, and the fifth just after the beat. Thus the second and fifth accents cause the most instability or friction.

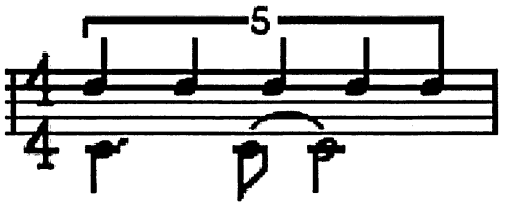


Example 18. Proximity of second and fifth accents to downbeats.

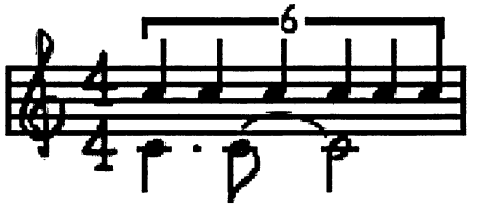
Examples 19, 20, and 21 denote the relationship between the dotted crotchet and three over four, five over four, and six over four respectively.



Example 19. Dotted crotchet and the second minim triplet.



Example 20. Dotted crotchet and the third beat of five over four.



Example 21. Dotted crotchet and the third beat of six over four.

The proximity of the dotted crotchet to these particular polyrhythms provides a pivot point. This is the main reason Simmonds preferred the drummer to use the dotted crotchet rhythm rather than a swing feel on the ride cymbal, as the second quaver of the swing feel occurs after this pivot point. The following two bars (Example 22) show the point where the the dotted crotchet pivot point (arrow) coincides with the straight and then swung quavers.

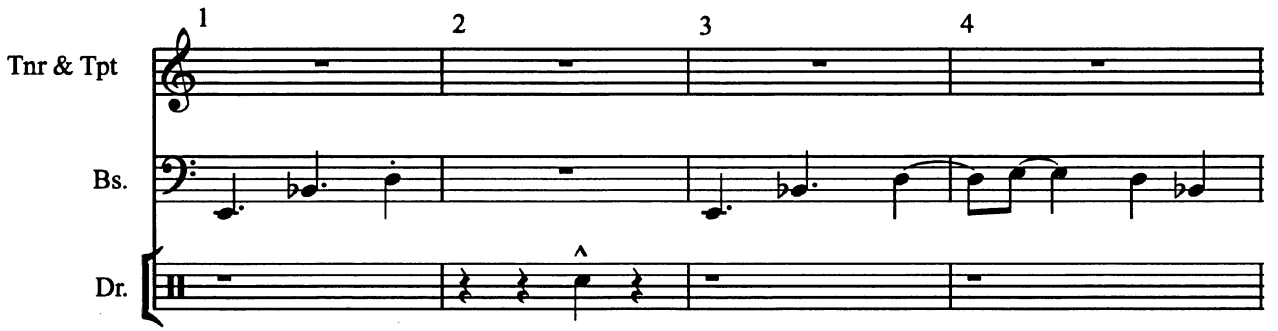
Example 22. Dotted crotchet (arrow) with straight and swung quavers.

Chapter 4: Compositional Analysis

29th Street Hop

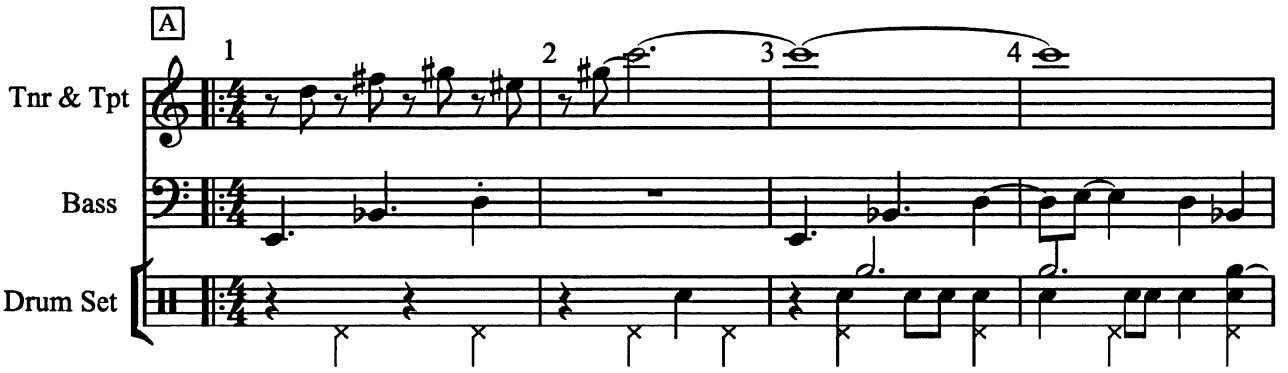
Fundamental to this composition are rhythm cycles based on the dotted crotchet and dotted minim. These are performed by the bass and drums respectively.

Example 23 shows the introductory four bars. The bass begins with a three note motif, answered by the drums playing a forceful, solitary backbeat on the snare drum in bar 2, beat three. The effect of the snare drum is highlighted by the bass articulating the third note in bar 1 as a staccato crotchet. After a tacit second bar the bass repeats the three note motif in bar 3 and then augments it in bar 4 by inversion and rhythmic variation. This last two bar bass motif is a precursor to the dotted crotchet rhythm cycle, although here it functions simply as a polyrhythm.



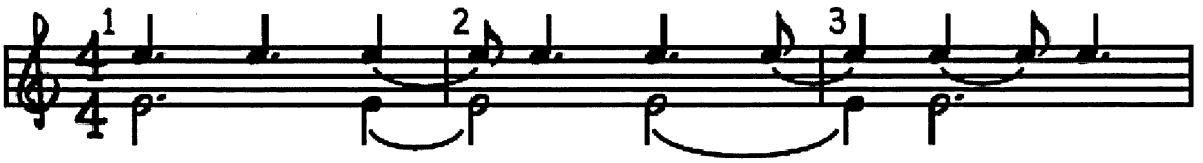
Example 23. "29th St Hop" - First four bars.

After the introduction, the bass repeats the four bar passage from Example 23 while the drums add offbeat hi-hats and tom fills. The tenor saxophone and trumpet begin to solo over this pattern before the drums start playing a dotted minim rhythm cycle. This initial use of polymeter, occurring quite early in the composition, is anchored by the bass repeating the four bar introductory phrase. As mentioned earlier, the bass pattern is polyrhythmic, as it derives from and reinforces the 4/4 feel. The dotted minim rhythm cycle is, however, polymetric as it distinctly implies a 3/4 meter. This relatively early climax of solos and cross rhythms is settled by the introduction of the melody (Section A) accompanied by a reprisal of the original bass and drum feel from Example 23. The next figure (Example 24) shows the first four bars of the melody. The first five notes of the melody are displaced from the outset by a quaver beat. This syncopation finishes and contrasts with a held note on beat two of the second bar extending the phrase to four bars in length.



Example 24. "29th St Hop"- Section A - Introduction of the melody.

The three note bass motif (E, Bb and D) anticipates an eight bar phrase comprised of dotted crotchets (with the addition of a B natural). As both the dotted crotchet and dotted minim rhythm cycles do not resolve within eight bars, they are asymmetric. They resolve every three bars in 4/4 while Section A itself is made up of three eight bar segments. Example 25 shows the resolution of eight dotted crotchets and four dotted minims every three bars. The presentation of these two rhythm cycles as synchronous is simply to show this resolution point.



Example 25. "29th St Hop"-Dotted crotchets and dotted minims resolve after three bars.

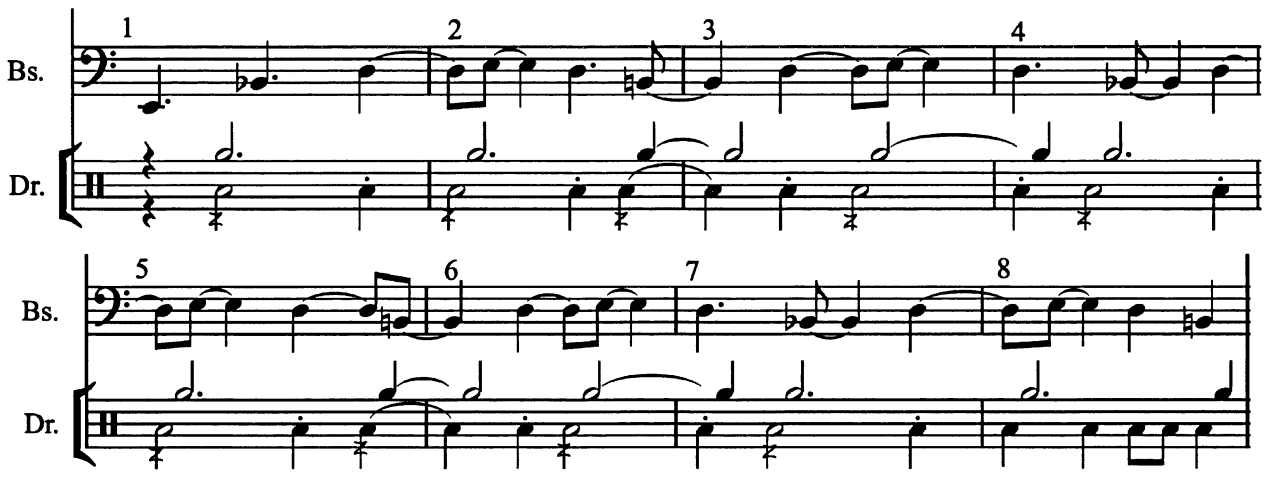
Doubling this phrase to six bars leaves two bars to account for in an eight bar section. The composer deals with the non resolution of the dotted crotchet cycle by adding another bar and a half, a further four dotted crotchets, followed by two crotchets. These last two bars reprise the two bar bass phrase in the introduction as shown in bar 3 and bar 4 from Examples 23 and 24.

If the two cycles were concurrent as in Example 26, the figures would be synchronous but non-resolving. For this reason, the composer has displaced the dotted minim figure by one beat, as

shown beginning on beat two, bar 3, Example 24. The dotted crotchet cycle begins on the downbeat, so it is non-synchronous with the dotted minim cycle. Even though both cycles can be thought of as being in a 3/4 time signature, they are displaced from one another by one crotchet beat and so function independently.

M.S. So you're doing a three rhythm cycle of quavers starting on the downbeat.
He's (the drummer) doing a three rhythm cycle of crotchets starting on the two.
S.H. And they're all supposed to go like that (places fingertips together)
(Mon. a.m. 1hr. 21' 52" - 1hr. 22' 07")

The next diagram (Example 26) shows this eight bar section with the two independent rhythm cycles in counterpoint. In the drum part, the dotted minim figure is played on the cymbal while the lower line of minims (rolls) and staccato crotchets represent the snare drum pattern.



Example 26. "29th St Hop"- Independent cycles in an eight bar phrase.

In the ensuing dialogue between Mark Simmonds and drummer Duncan Archibald, there is a reference to a moment when, due to effect of these composite rhythms, there is uncertainty within the band. The composer responds by talking about how a momentary reference to the 'one' at a 'phrase point' can provide the bandmembers with the confidence that they are all in accord with the pulse.

M.S. You should have resolved back to a phrase point again.
D.A. I've lost it too. Once everyone starts going, then all of a sudden you're right out there, aren't you into something else?
M.S. Yeah but there's nothing to say that you can't come back and touch ground again... If I stay out there, once you've touched ground again and said "Everybody, we know where we're going"...you can go straight out again so that we've all still got the confidence...When you come back, it doesn't mean you have to..reach that stage that you have to go through all that process again. You can ...touch ground and then just go 'bang', straight back out there again (Mon. a.m. 34'55"-36'00").

`One technique for dealing with this sort of rhythmic complexity, apart from repetitious rehearsing, is visual communication. The bandleader alludes to the importance of this for the bassist and drummer when he advises "using visual contact as well. You two are in the best position" (Mon. a.m. 35'40").

The improvised section of the tune is an open form, meaning the length of the solo is not tied to the form of the song. This allows the soloist the freedom to dictate the length of the solo. Rather than this being arbitrary, Simmonds thinks in symmetrical units, contrasting an open approach with a sense of the form.

S.H. Do you have a specific amount of time that you're thinking about, not necessarily in terms of sixteen bars...

M.S. Definitely... (with) symmetrical phrases...in groups of eight, sixteen, thirty two, sixty four. For instance, I would never finish a solo in the fortieth bar even though it's the end of an eight bar phrase. To me that would be as wrong as thinking one was three (Mon. a.m. 35'55"-36'33").

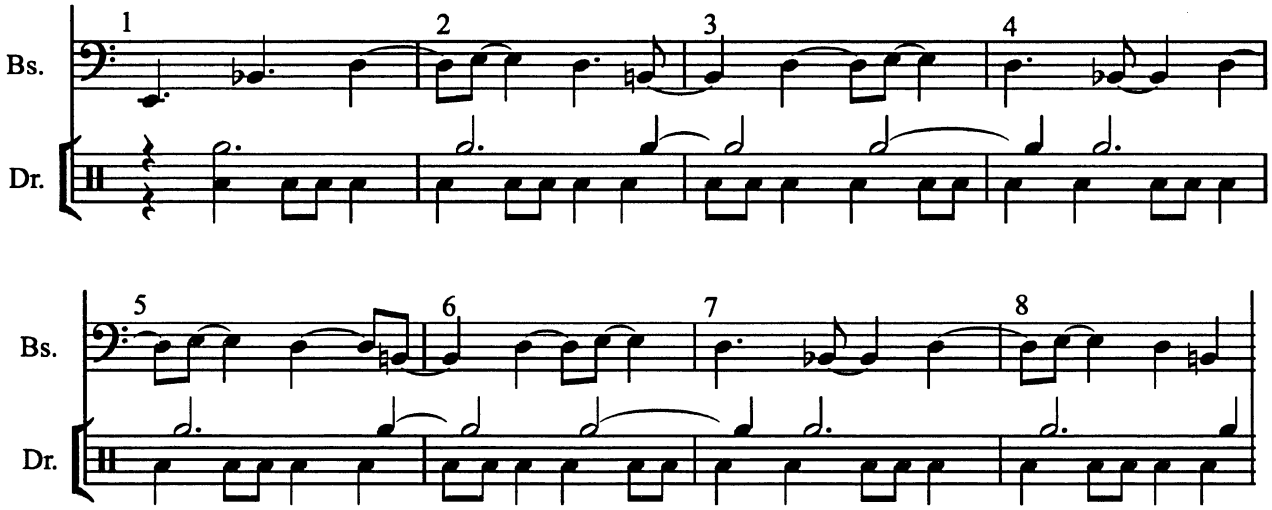
Rhythmic density created by composite rhythms is the idea behind these two simultaneous rhythm cycles. It is used by the composer to reinforce the idea that "The pulse has to be played as little as possible: it is something we all feel rather than play." This feeling "meant that we didn't have to state the beat, because as long as the metre (sic) was strongly enough inside us, we could jump over bars at a time without having to state it obviously" (Shand 89, 91). The process by which this is achieved is articulated by the bandleader in the following dialogue with the drummer. While technical aspects are addressed, an emphasis is made on the ability to deal with these issues on the 'gig'. This refers to the ability to absorb complex rhythms into the subconscious (rehearsal and memory) and to recognize rhythmic cues in order to trigger them rather than have the musician trying to think too much during the performance.

D.A.: It's this stuff with the 5's and the 3's and how they all swap... To get them down properly would take some time.

M.S.: Yeah it does. If you and I can sit round and actually just tap some stuff out you'll start to see how it's...It's not so difficult, what we were doing out there, it's when you start extending the phrases by taking quintuplets and doing them in groups of four, like a four rhythm cycle on the five, that's when those things start. But we can go via triplets, which you already

> do... I see it as a long-term thing...when we get to the gig, its really got to be a process where it sinks into your subconscious, so that when you play at the gig you don't have to think very much about that stuff. You can, maybe, to trigger it off. That's what I do.(Monday 0'00'-1'05')

During the videotaped session, Simmonds would have the drummer (Duncan Archibald) subdivide the dotted minim into crotchets, and then transform them into a three by crotchet rhythm cycle with a swing feel. This was used for practicing the two different rhythm cycles together and also forms part of the composition (Example 27).



Example 27. "29th St Hop"- Adding a swing pattern to the dotted minim rhythm cycle.

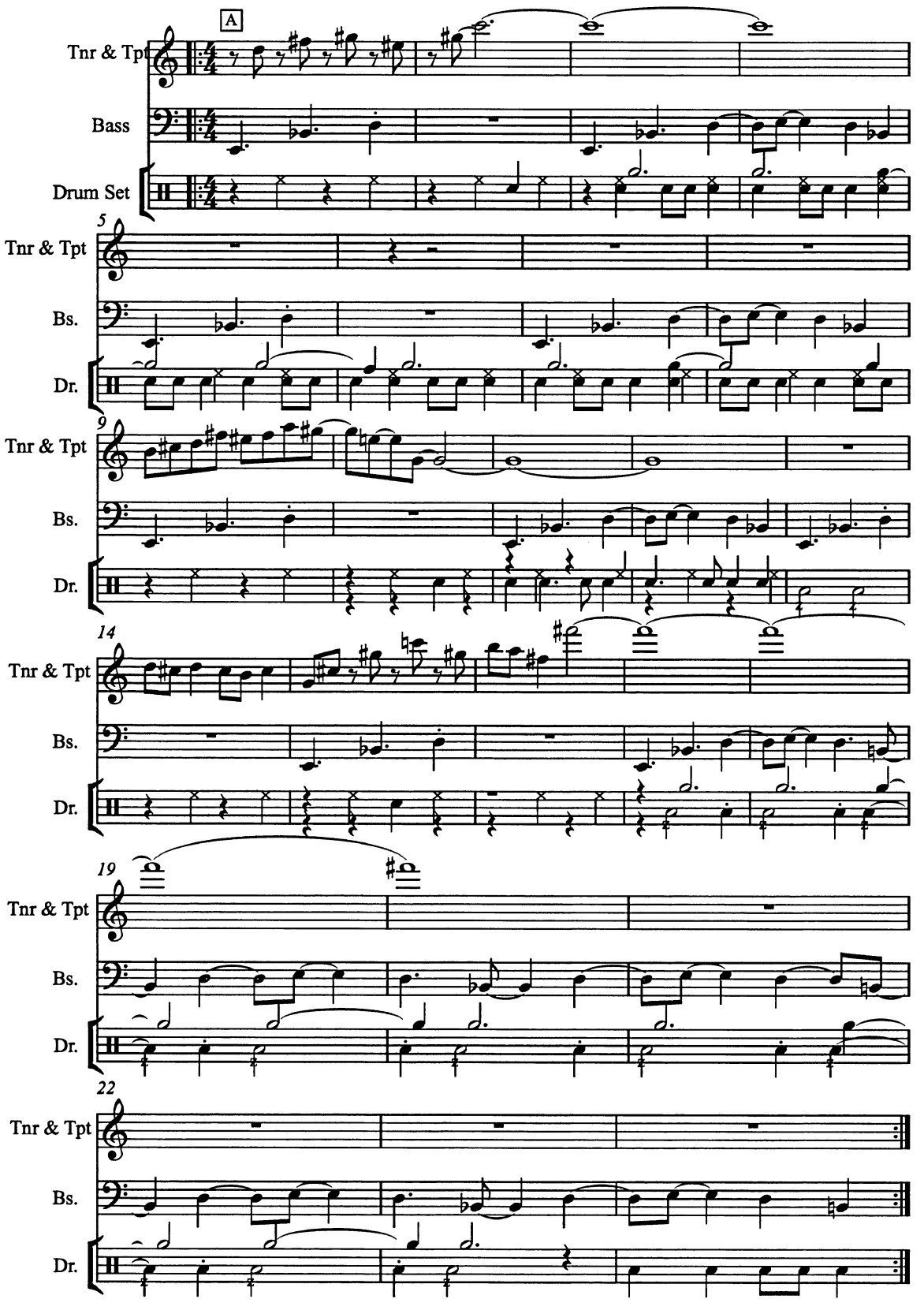
This eight bar passage occurs three times in the composition. It appears for the first time in the third eight bar section of Section A, notated below in Example 28. The second is on the repeat of Section A. Finally it features in the eight bars of Section C as presented in Example 30.

The first eight bars of Section A contrast a four bar melodic phrase (bars 1 through 4) with four bars comprising just the rhythm section (bars 5 through 8). The opening bar of the melody is, as previously mentioned, displaced, consisting of offbeat quavers. The second eight bars contain a variation of the original motif by the horns, still four bars long but this time beginning on the downbeat (bar 9). Instead of an expected four bar interlude following this second melodic statement, the horns enter prematurely in the second bar (bar 14). The melodic symmetry is further undermined by the third variation of the four bar motif starting in the next bar, bar 15. These motifs occur three times: at bar 1, bar 9 and bar 15. If symmetrical, they would be expected to appear at bar 1, bar 9, and bar 17 (eight bar intervals).

The minims tied to breves are sequentially displaced by a quaver. The first occurs on beat two, bar 2, the second on the 'and' of two in bar 10, and the third on beat three, bar 16.

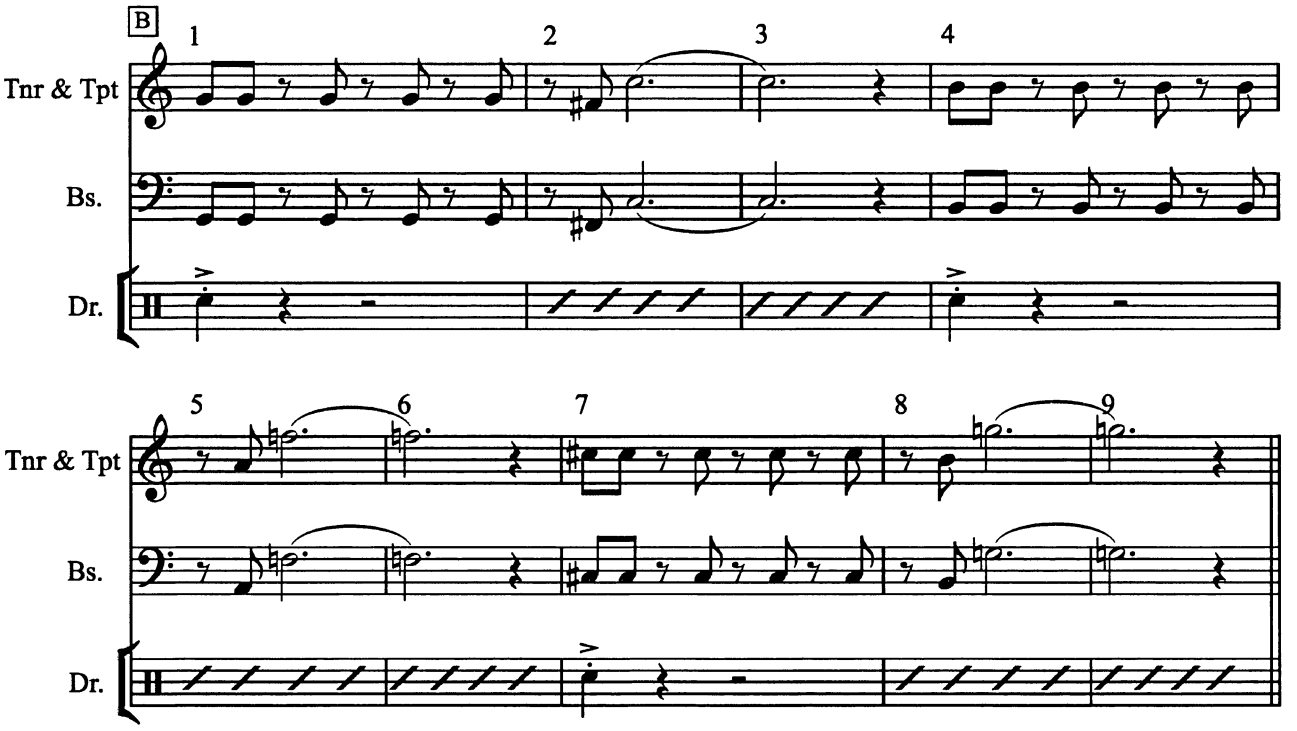
The third eight bar section starting at bar 17 introduces the dotted minim and dotted crotchet rhythm cycles as shown in Example 26. At this juncture the horns are sustaining a held note, which is an example of contrasting complex and simple forms.

Until bar 17 of Section A, the bass plays only the original four bar phrase (Example 23) while the drums play six bars of the dotted rhythm cycle from bar 3 to bar 8. Even though this is a six bar phrase, the figure is non resolving as the cycle begins, as previously mentioned, on the second beat.



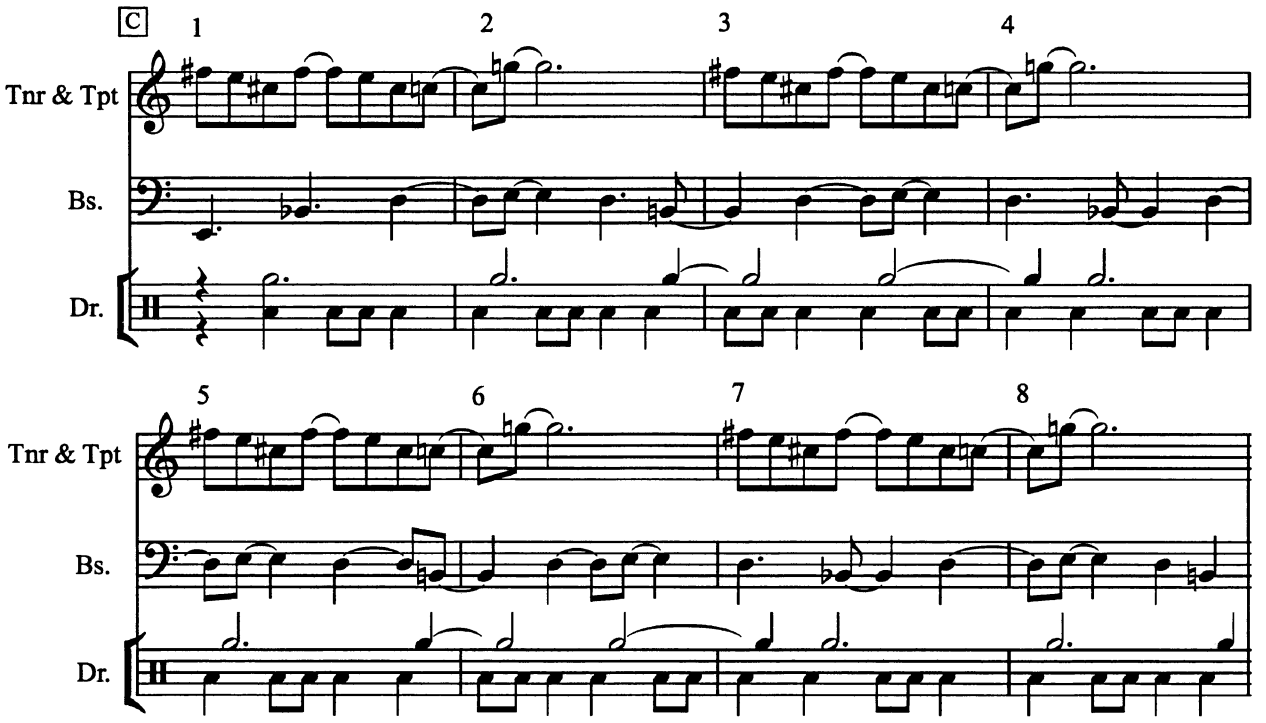
Example 28. “29th St Hop” - Section A.

Section B, presented below in Example 29, begins with unison riffs which provide not only a strong rhythmic stability but function like a 'stop' chorus, in that the drums stop on the downbeat of the first bar of each phrase. The nine bar form of this section contrasts with the four and eight bar phrase lengths from Section A and is constructed of three unison riffs made up of three bars each. The second and third bars of each phrase highlight improvised fills by the drummer. These phrases function in a question and answer format. This is achieved by the horns and bass playing a syncopated unison riff to which the drums respond.



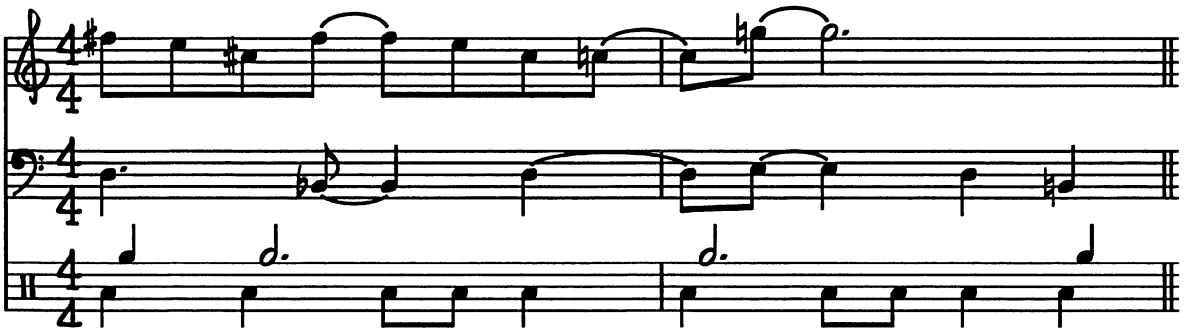
Example 29. "29th St Hop" - Section B.

The following transcription (Example 30) is the last section, Section C, an eight bar 'shout' chorus. This section re-establishes the eight bar phrasing that was momentarily disrupted by Section B. The two bar repeated riff, with its orientation on the downbeat, contrasts with the variation in the melody of Section A. It is more similar in its symmetry and recurring syncopation to the three bar unison riffs of Section B. Significantly, Section C reprises the two independent rhythm cycles from the last eight bars of Section A, and, unlike the earlier section, combines them with a syncopated riff by the horns. In Section A the two cycles are offset by held notes played by the saxophone and trumpet. In Section C, the composite rhythms of cycles and riff create a climactic effect similar to a 'shout' chorus.



Example 30. "29th St Hop" - Section C - Riff over rhythm cycles.

As mentioned earlier, neither the dotted crotchet nor the dotted minim cycles resolve within an eight bar phrase with both requiring additional beats to complete the sequence. The following figure, Example 31, shows the last two bars of Section C, bar 7 and bar 8 from Example 30, with both the drums (dotted minim) and bass (dotted crotchet) out of rhythmic alignment with the end of the phrase. These last two bars reveal how the bass cycle is out by two crotchet beats while the drum pattern needs one extra crotchet to complete this eight bar section. The asymmetrical phrasing of these two independent rhythm cycles increases the disruption to the pulse.

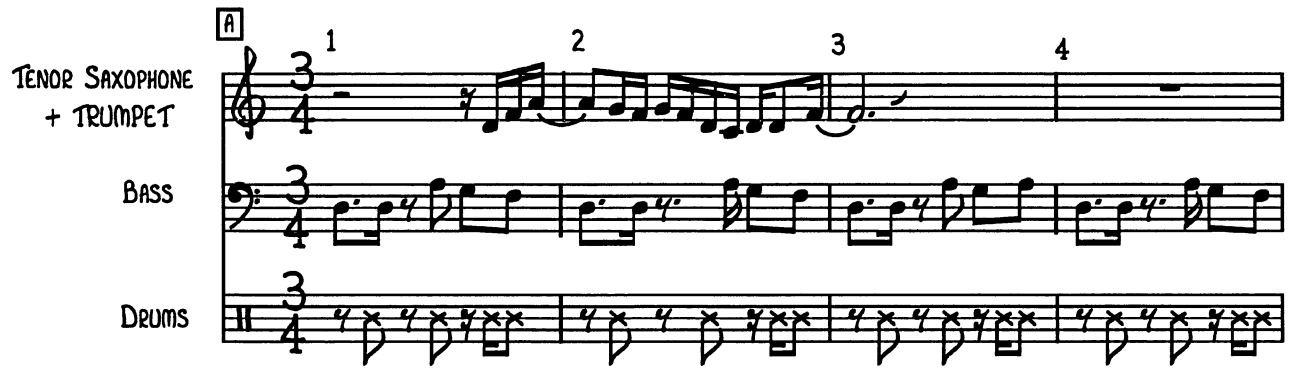


Example 31. "29th St Hop"- Last two bars - non-resolution of the bass and drum rhythm cycles.

On The Road

The following excerpt (Example 32) shows the first four bars of the melody from "On The Road". The bass and drums play the thirty two bar form unaccompanied before the saxophone and trumpet enter.

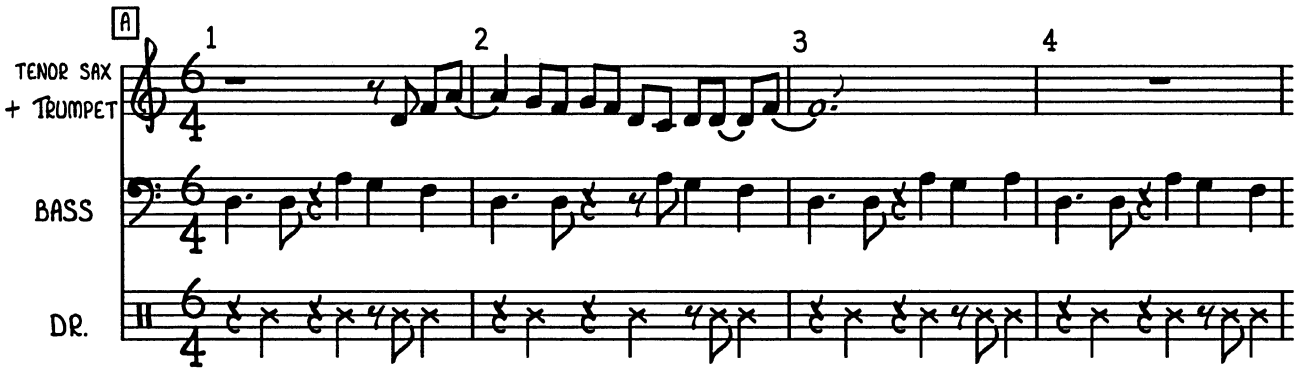
Made up of four eight bar sections, the first sixteen bars of the melody comprise four variations of the simple blues-like motif notated below. Although there is modulation from D minor in the first eight bars to an F7 in the second eight, the thematic repetition and symmetry within these sixteen bars implies the one repeated section (A). The third and fourth eight bar sections, however, are quite distinctive, so the form can be expressed as AABC.



Example 32. "On The Road" - First four bars of Section A.

The opening melodic statement is rhythmically displaced by anticipating the downbeat of the second bar with a three semiquaver pickup. The significant factor here is that this pickup would normally be expected to occur before the downbeat of the first bar. Following a chorus of just drums and bass, this phrasing of the melody immediately disrupts the rhythmic orientation set up by the rhythm section.

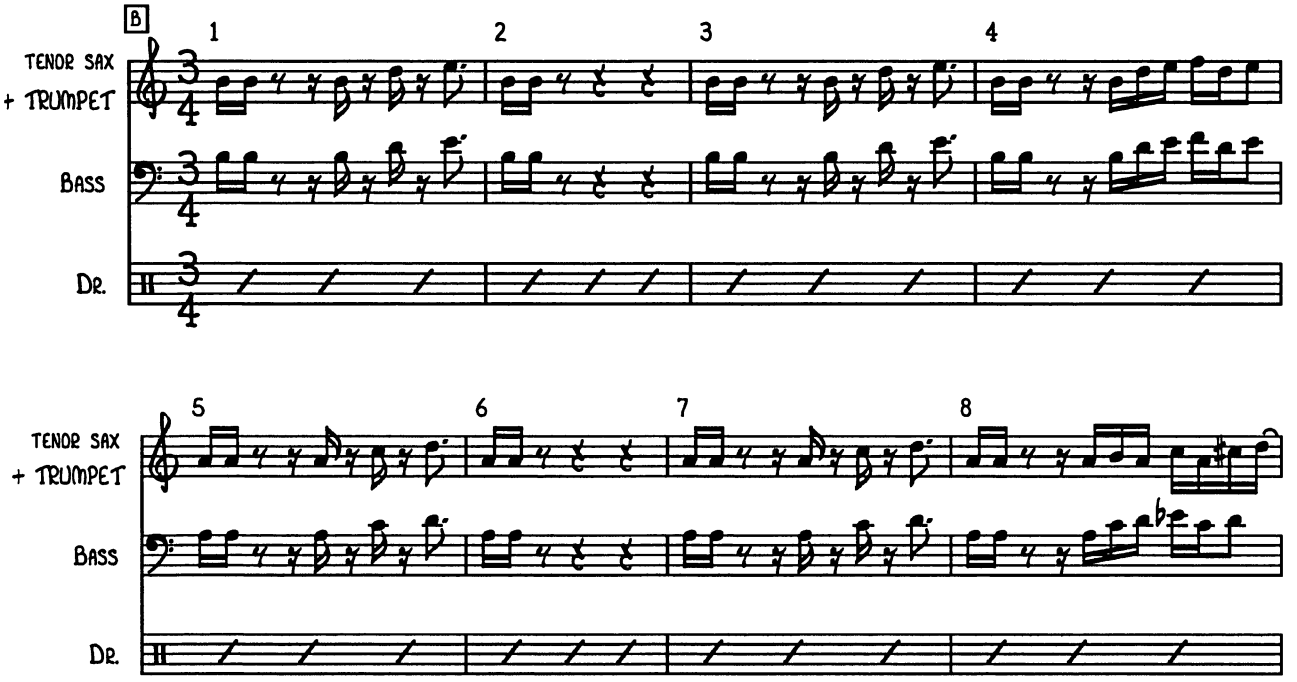
The composer would notate the drum part with a 4:2 time signature to let the drummer know the importance of the last two beats in each bar. Therefore Example 33 is rewritten to show the same four bar excerpt notated in 6/4.



Example 33. "On The Road"- 6/4 notation.

Section B is an eight bar unison riff by the saxophone, trumpet and bass (Example 34). As the drummer begins to improvise more freely with the pattern, which is a New Orleans second line feel, the offbeats become more emphasized. In comparison with the displacement of the motif in

Section A, this section realigns the melody, a unison riff, with the downbeat.

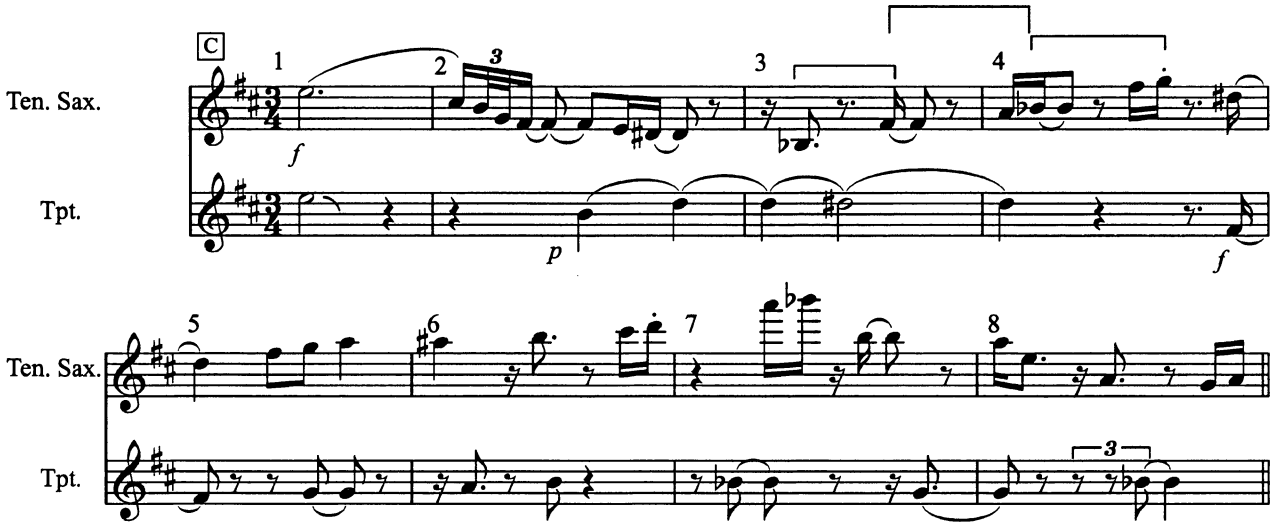


Example 34. "On The Road" - Section B - Unison riff.

This is followed by Section C, a dual trumpet and saxophone solo notated here in the key of Bb (Example 35). The focus in this section is on the improvised interplay between the horns, particularly the saxophonist's displacement of the beat which anticipates the progressive rhythmic devolution of this composition. Although it has no melody per se and is part of the composition as an improvised section, its function is to initiate the rhythmic deconstruction of the piece. The saxophone and trumpet solo over the ensuing three choruses while the rhythm section gradually

loosens the time feel. Generally speaking the AAB sections adhere more to a rigid metric interpretation while Section C, the improvised section, becomes progressively looser and, eventually, quite free. .

This process begins with rhythmic displacement in the first Section C. In bar 3 of Example 35, the saxophonist plays a semiquaver after the downbeat and follows this with a semiquaver anticipation of the third beat. In bar 4 the first semiquaver note A is a leading note into Bb which, again, is a semiquaver after the downbeat. The following staccato note G is also played a semiquaver before beat three. These four notes over two bars (bracketed) represent a four over six figure (or two over three) displaced by a semiquaver.



Example 35. "On The Road" - Section C.

Having outlined the basic structure of this piece, it is the way in which the rhythmic sections of the composition are then progressively deconstructed by the performers that makes this piece intriguing. "On The Road" concerns itself mainly with this idea, both in a rhythmic and harmonic sense. From the initial statement of the form by the bass and drums through to the final chorus, the feel changes from a traditional New Orleans style blues piece into a free jazz rendition. This occurs over six choruses while adhering to the different metric interpretations of the AABC form. As it is in the first chorus with the melody, Section C is more open to rhythmic variety than the other sections. In each successive chorus, there is an escalation in rhythmic delaying and anticipation, in across the bar phrasing and odd meter phrasing, smears, glissandi and notes from the extreme registers. While some of these elements can be observed in the first Section C (Example 35), the rhythm section's dedication to the time and second line groove place the interplay within a traditional, albeit exciting, feel. What follows is three improvised choruses where, even though sections A and B maintain more structure than Section C, they all progressively start to lose the symmetrical rigidity and second line feel. This is quite apparent in the drums during the fifth and sixth choruses in Section C. The bass begins to abandon its role as a time keeper even earlier, playing less notes and avoiding the downbeat. The fifth chorus and the sixth chorus contrast stylistically with the earlier choruses. In particular, Section C following the recapitulation of the melody (sixth chorus) is so free harmonically and rhythmically that it represents the complete deconstruction of the piece. Stylistically at opposite ends of the spectrum, the early choruses and the last Section C sound like two different bands as the playing evolves from traditional to free.

Afghanistan

"Afghanistan" is polymetric as it is composed in two different time signatures; a 4/4 melody over a 5/4 ostinato bass line. The resultant rhythmic displacement of the two parts means they resolve after five bars of 4/4 or four bars of 5/4. The following transcript, written in both meters, shows bar numbers only in 4/4 for purposes of clarity.

The composer explains how "that's a rhythm cycle thing, because it's a twenty beat cycle and the melody's in four and the rhythm section's in five. You get a melody that doesn't touch base until the end of the phrase" (Simmonds, M.B. February 22).

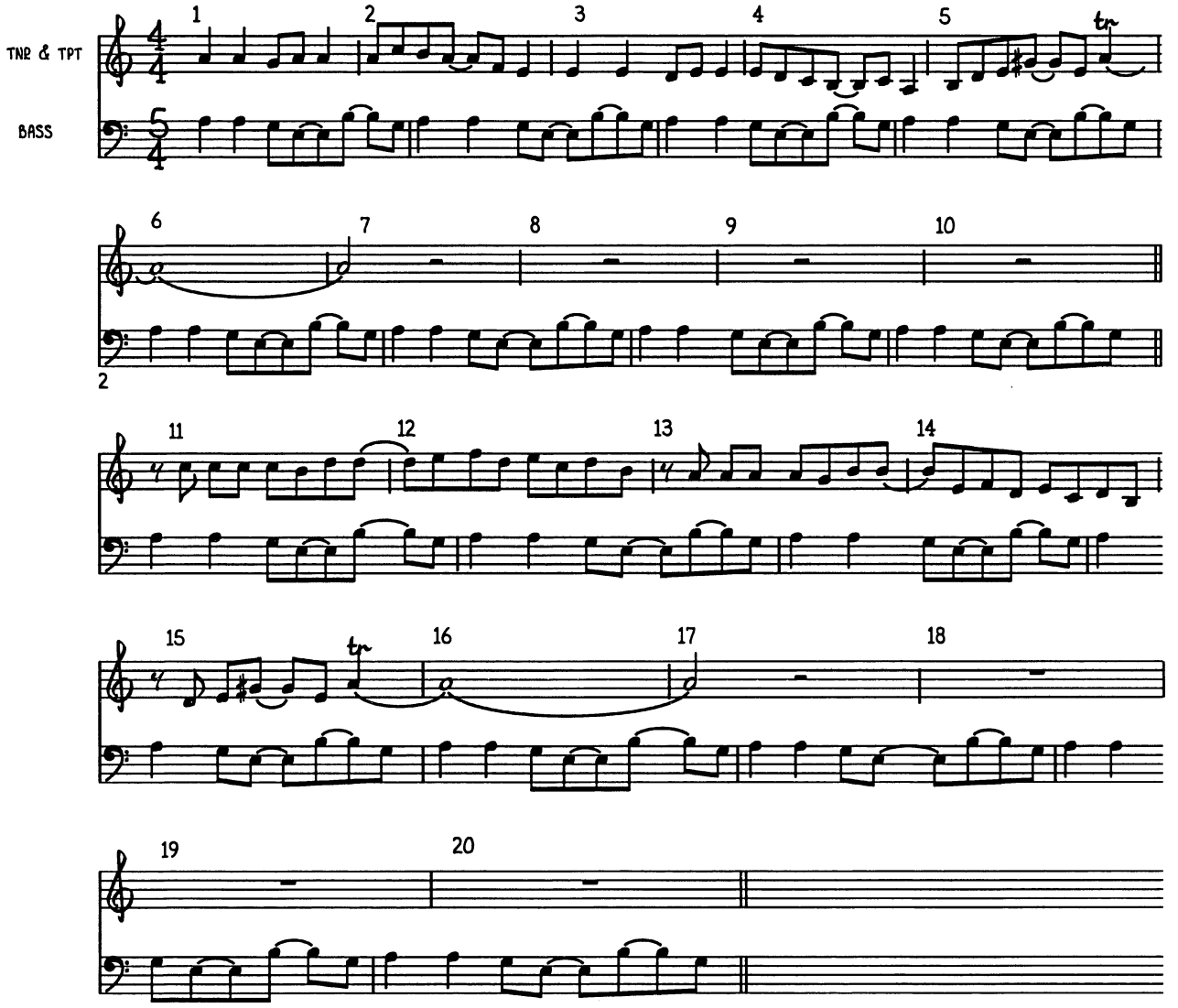
Simmonds learnt about 'phasing' and 'additive' processes at the Creative Music Studios (Woodstock) in 1980, explaining to the author that "when I first came back here I wrote pieces based on those ideas. That's when I wrote "Afghanistan", which was originally titled "Ayatollah's March" " (Simmonds, M.B. February 22).

The 5/4 bass part repeats a one bar motif throughout the piece, creating a hypnotic 'drone', while the drums colour the proceedings with mallet 'fills' on toms and cymbals. The drums maintain an independence from either one meter or the other by accenting across the 4/4 and 5/4 bars.

Despite the melody being in 4/4, it sounds asymmetrical as it is out of alignment with the repetitive and symmetrical bass figure in 5/4. As the cycle is twenty crotchet beats in length, the sequence finishes on the last beat of the fifth and fifteenth bar in 4/4 with a crotchet tied to a breve. This trilled crotchet anticipates the start of the next phrase point at bars 6 and 16. Bar 1 is the only bar where the melody and bass coincide on the downbeat. The next cycle begins at bar 11 where the

melody is delayed by a semiquaver. The composer's use of anticipation and delay in the melodic phrase accentuates the asymmetrical nature of this piece.

The following transcription, Example 36, is one chorus length, a twenty bar figure.



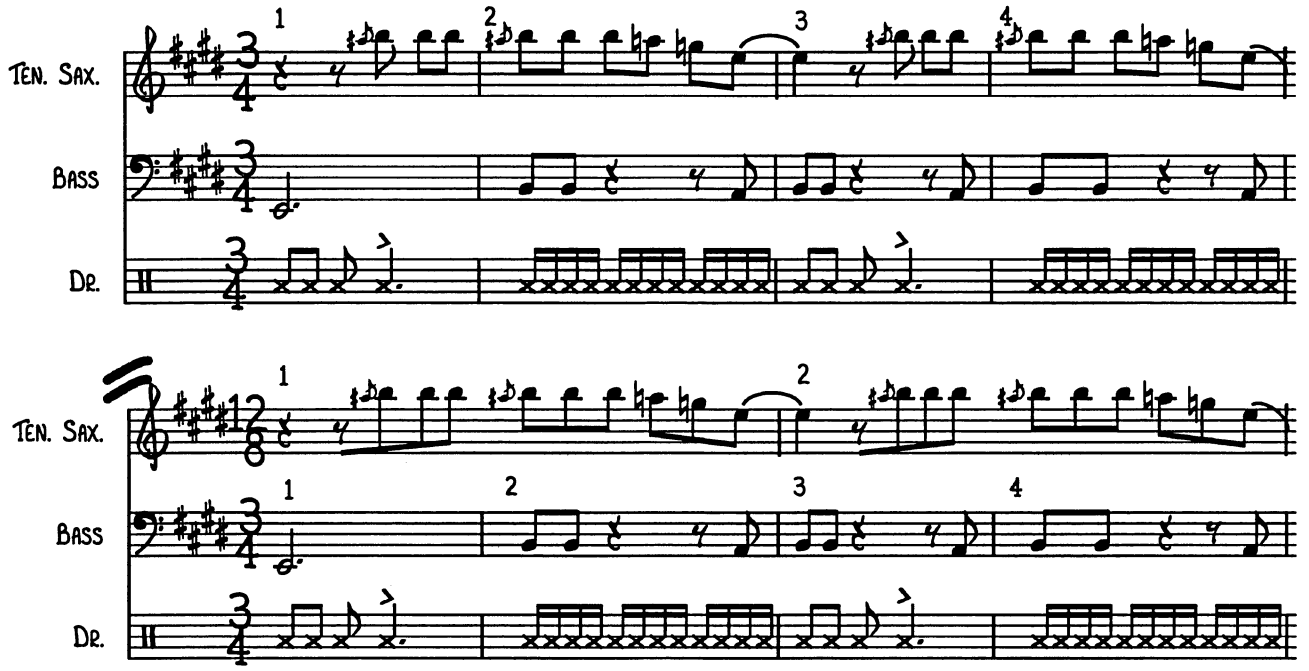
Example 36. "Afghanistan" - A twenty beat cycle.

The Jazz Waltz

The absence of "The Jazz Waltz" from the videotaped sessions is somewhat perplexing. One reason could be that, according to Simmonds, it is "the hardest tune of the lot to play" (Simmonds, M.B. February 30). Nevertheless, it reveals some of the composer's key compositional rhythmic ideas. In a recent interview with the composer, a theme of duality emerged, represented in this piece by the juxtaposition of swing and R'n'B feels. When asked about the rhythmic ambiguity within the piece, Simmonds stressed that "it's mainly about turning 3/4 into 12/8 and having a sense of instability" (Simmonds, M.B. February 30).

Here the composer is referring to an eight bar section of "The Jazz Waltz" that recurs between statements of the theme. Each successive thematic statement is sequentially displaced. The following excerpt shows four bars of these eight bar interludes. There are two versions of the same passage notated in two meters. The drums and bass stay in 3/4 while the saxophone is notated in both 3/4 and 12/8. The drums actually infer the 12/8 feel as well, adding to the metric instability by implying both meters, but in this instance, the notation of the drum part will stay in 3/4. The composer states that "You have to be able to play four over three" (Simmonds, M.B. February 30).

The first notation below shows four bars in 3/4 immediately followed by the same passage with the melody notated in 12/8.



Example 37. "The Jazz Waltz" - Melody in 3/4 and 12/8.

The saxophonist describes this deliberate metric ambiguity in the following:

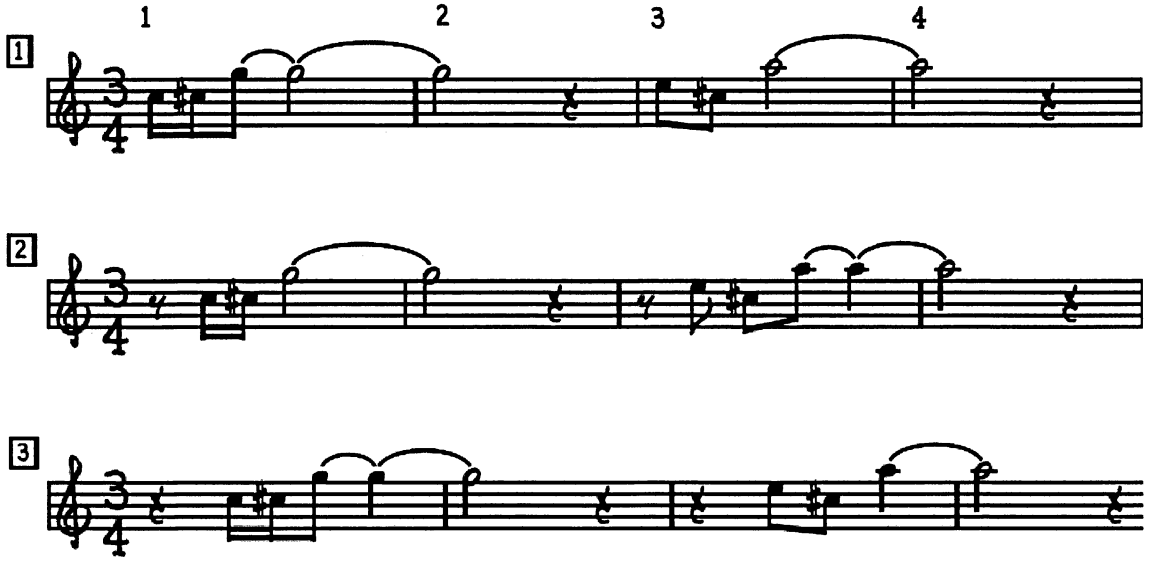
> It's just a blues really, not a twelve bar. Without changing what you play, you can infer one or the other (time feels) and it works best when it's never stable in one or the other. It can hinge on the back- beat. You're...reaching the end of a phrase and everything is like free jazz almost and you get out of the blue... [claps hands] It can hinge on that backbeat (Simmonds, M.B. February 30).

While the drummer shifts between the two meters, the backbeat on the snare implies a 12/8 feel by emphasising a four feel rather than 3/4. The bass part can be interpreted as either a four bar riff in 3/4 or a two bar riff in 6/4. The 6/4 meter would accord with the 12/8 feel (at least for notational purposes).

The melody to "The Jazz Waltz" is a sequence of motivic rhythmic displacement, at first introduced as a saxophone and bass duet. This section is then reprised and extended with the rhythm section playing an uptempo feel. The four bar motif initially occurs in both the introduction and the tutti section on the downbeat, as notated in Figure 1, Example 38, below.

The displacement of this motif is cleverly integrated into the piece by several means. There is the simplicity of the motif itself and the context in which this displacement occurs, namely, the sections between the motifs. These sixteen bar sections contain the dual meter passage for eight bars followed by another eight bars in 3/4. The duration of these sections and the repetitive bass and drum patterns affect the perception of the motifs' placement. The rhythm section is also playing an aggressive double time feel behind the horns which contrasts with the simplicity of the motif. The overall effect of this is to disguise the bar line shift of the second and third motifs, masking the displacement rather than making it obvious.

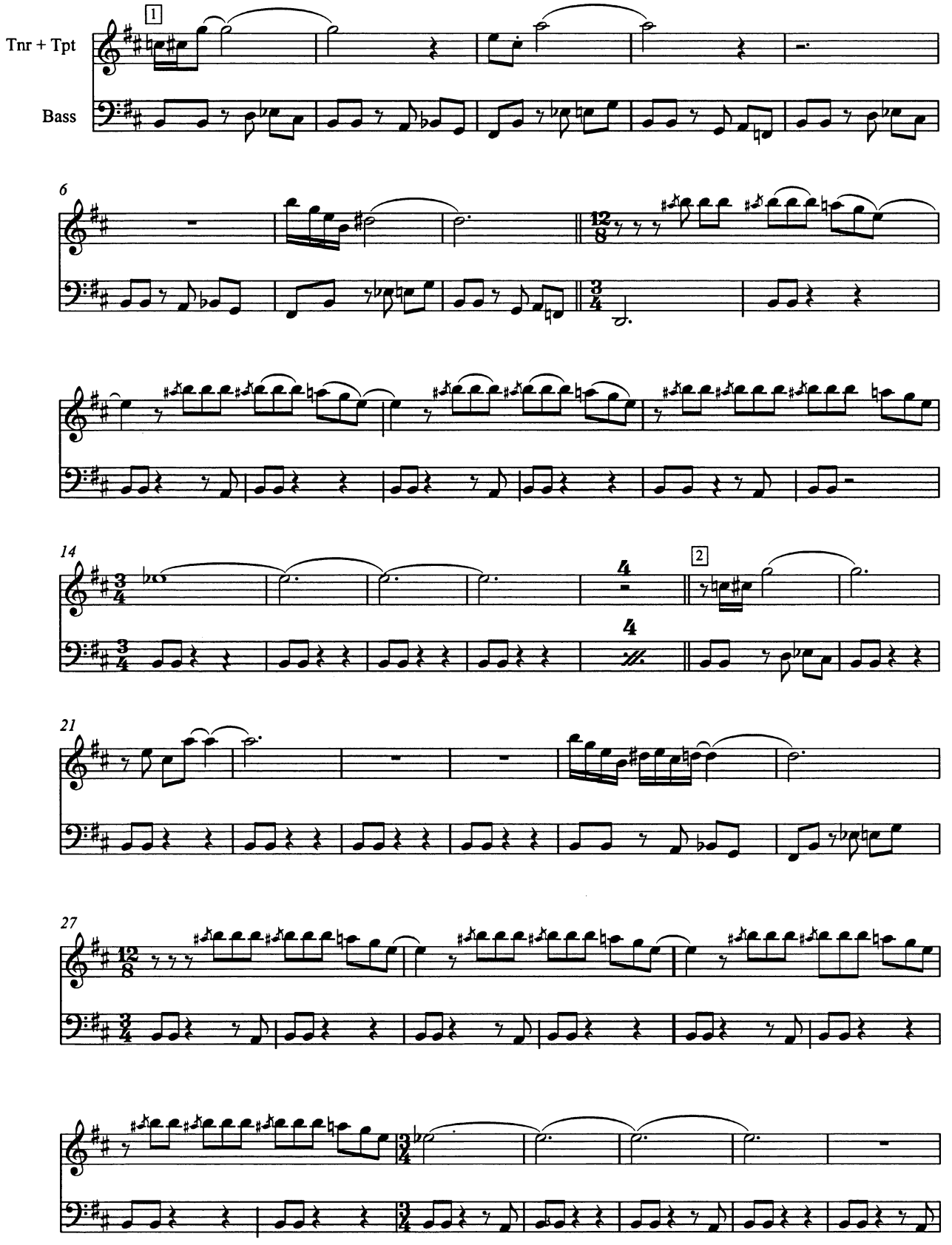
The motif is presented here in Example 38 as Figures 1, 2 and 3, and shows a sequential rhythmic displacement of one quaver beat. Figure 1 begins on the downbeat while the second phrase (Figure 2) begins a quaver after the downbeat, continuing this displacement throughout the four bars. The third four bar motif (Figure 3) begins on the second beat of the bar, again continuing with the quaver displacement for the entire phrase, this time creating a crotchet beat displacement from Figure 1.

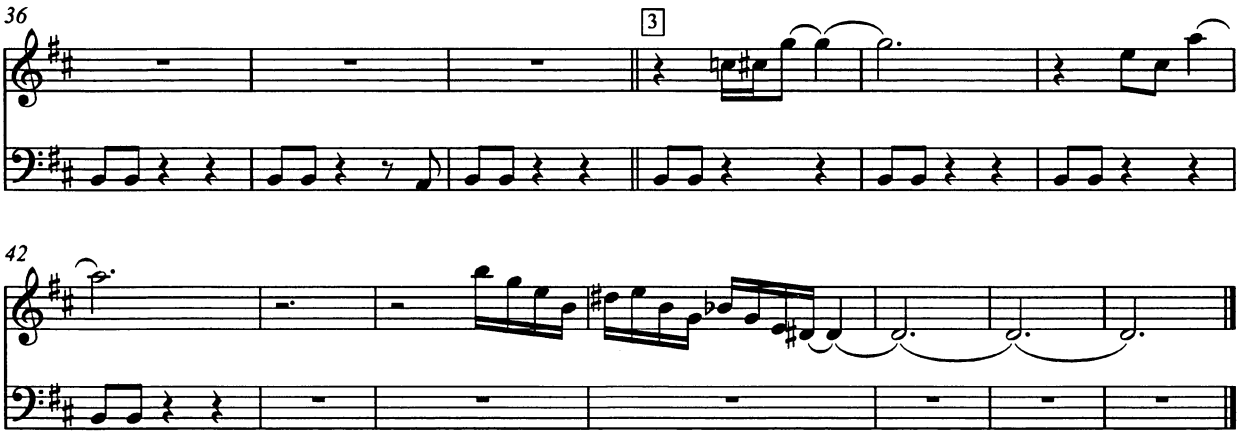


Example 38. "The Jazz Waltz"- Successive rhythmic displacement of the motif by a quaver.

The following transcription (Example 39) shows how these three motifs, themselves part of an eight bar phrase, are separated by a sixteen bar section (in 3/4) which features the 12/8 over 3/4 feel that was partly shown in Example 37.

The saxophone and trumpet parts are notated in 3/4 for the three eight bar motif sections. Each of these sections is in turn followed by eight bars in 12/8, or sixteen bars in 3/4. Thus each figure (1,2 and 3) is comprised of twenty four bars in 3/4.


Tnr + Tpt
Bass
1
6
14
2
21
27



Example 39. "The Jazz Waltz" notated in two meters.

This systemic approach to metric displacement and alternate meters reveal the composer's preoccupation with duality as expressed in both improvisation and composition[1]. This is expanded upon in the following exchange with guitarist Mike Sheridan where the bandleader first addresses this binary concept from the aspect of accompaniment and then improvisation.

Sheridan: When the rhythm section starts doing something rhythmically unusual, I feel obliged to dig in and follow them... (which) kind of contradicts what you said... if I play one chord and left X amount of bars space (and the bass and drums are playing rhythm cycles), I've been feeling obliged to drop my role and go with them rather than just staying...

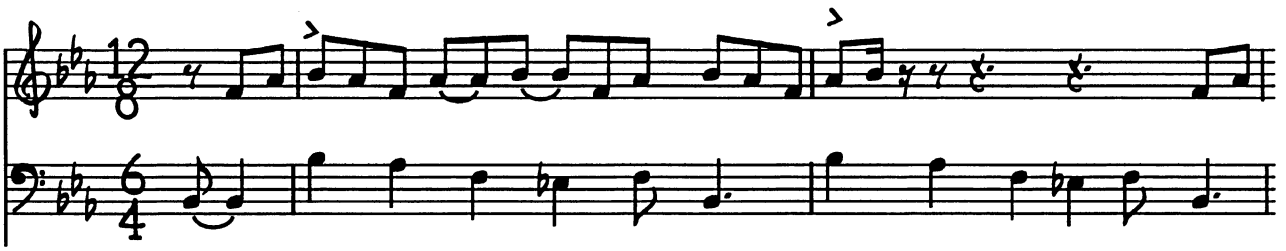
Simmonds: No, you can't drop your role. You can go with them but you can't drop your role...You do both...Actually, juxtaposing two ideas is what should be happening from all of us... It's the natural way to play. You can't really build a climax unless you've got two things playing off each other. Whether you're intellectually aware of it or not is another thing. (Monday a.m. 1 hr. 14' 48"-1 hr. 17' 11")

[1] This interest is expressed in the title of one of the composer's tunes, "*The Duality of Opposites*".

Paradise Blues

Regarding "Paradise Blues", the composer explains that "I wanted it to come back in tempo so it's like, is it ever going to hit that backbeat?" (Simmonds, M.B. February 2).

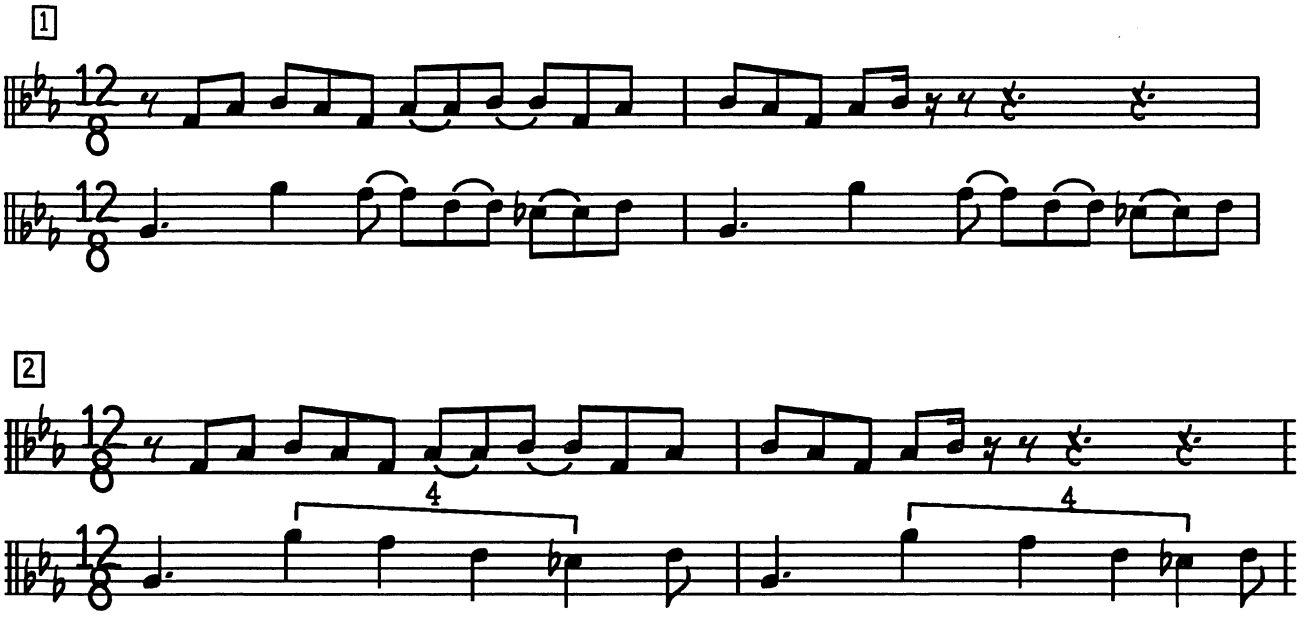
"Paradise Blues" is a good example of the way the composer builds rhythmic ambivalence into the structure of a composition. A sense of more than one time feel occurring is orchestrated by the context in which the symmetrical phrases are placed. The melody can be heard to be in at least two different places, one beat apart from each other. Example 40 represents one of these.



Example 40. "Paradise Blues" with opening motif purposely displaced.

This version (Example 40) is deliberately notated to show how the melody and bass can be reoriented. It is written one beat later than where it should be, the first triplet beat here acting as a pickup with the bass part supporting this new positioning. The bass would normally be written in

triplet quavers, like the melody, but has been notated in crotchets to reinforce the new 'one' in the melody. Played by the saxophone and trumpet in unison, this line has been accented to highlight the downbeat and, in combination with the descending four crotchet phrase in the bass, sits comfortably in this alignment. The correct version will now be shown below in Example 41 using both triplet (Figure 1) and crotchet (Figure 2) phrasing in the bass. The triplet phrasing will reflect the 12/8 feel, while the crotchet phrasing in the bass in the second example emphasizes the cross rhythm between the melody and bass lines. The artificial accent in the melody from Example 40 will disappear.

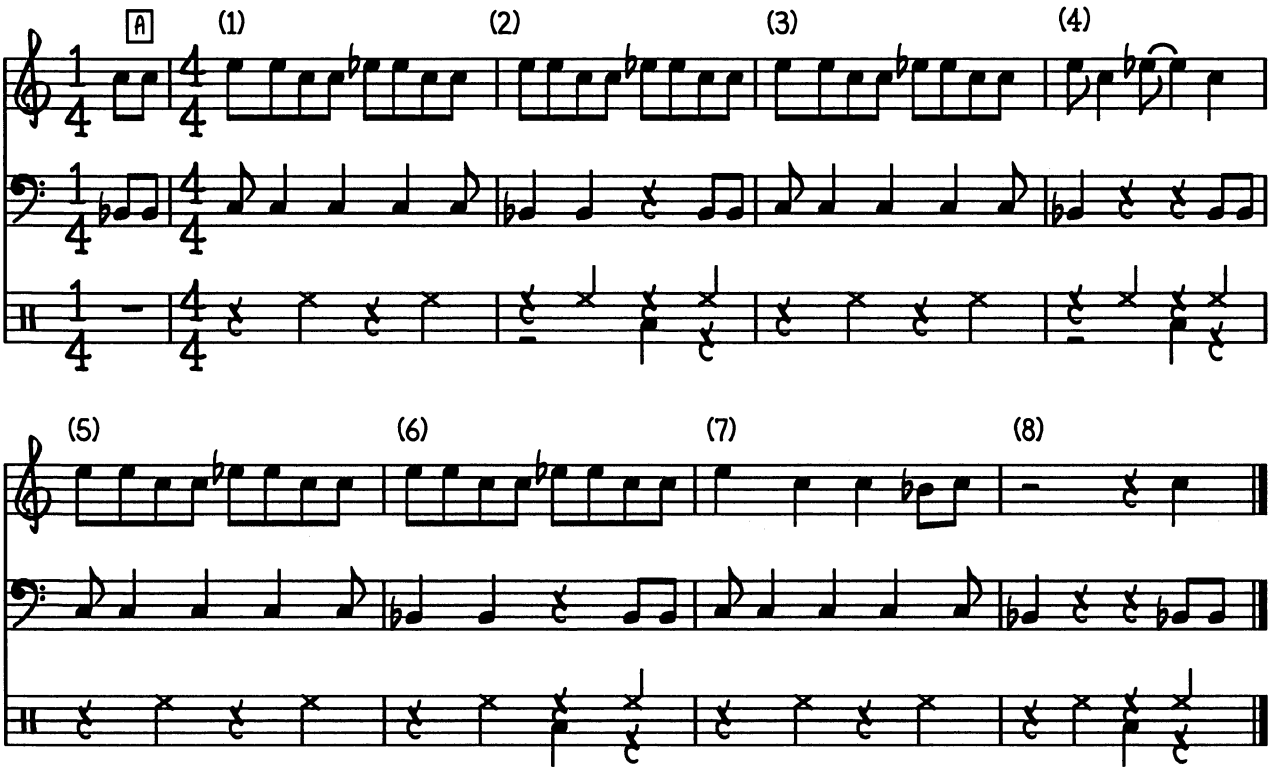


Example 41. "Paradise Blues" (correct notation).

The melody starts after the downbeat, on the second triplet quaver beat. At beat two the bass begins its descending line, creating four main pulse beats. With these two events occurring at the introduction of the melody, there is an immediate possibility for inferring two different meters. Although the melody is predominantly in a triplet feel, the time feel can easily be affected by the crotchet feel in the bass (Figure 2) inferring the 6/4 interpretation from Example 40.

The composer, whose love of early blues forms the inspiration for this slow 12/8 tune, explained how this particular feel "didn't really come into jazz in a big way until Elvin and Coltrane" (Simmonds, M.B. February 2).

The Spotted Dog



Example 42. "The Spotted Dog" - First eight bars of the melody.

This eight bar excerpt from "The Spotted Dog" shows the opening statement of the theme played in unison by the horns. The simplicity of the melody is reinforced by the recurrence of repeated quavers comprised of three different pitches (apart from the 'Bb' note in bar 7). This

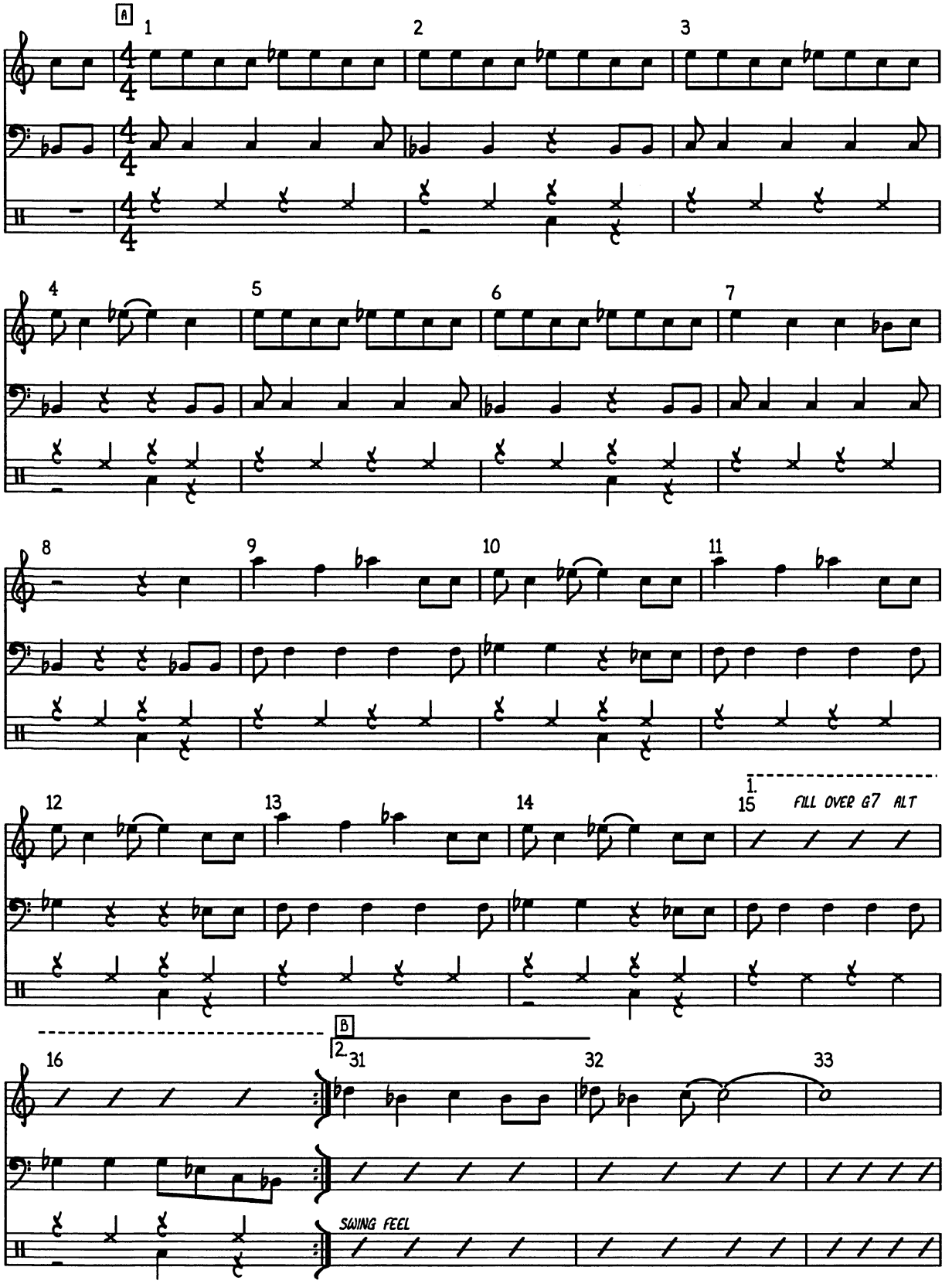
three note motif consists of the tonic, the major third and the minor third. With two quavers on each pitch, the pattern repeats from tonic to major third then tonic to minor third. This sequence occurs seven times in the above excerpt (Example 42) with rhythmic variations occurring in bar 4 and bar 7. The horns and bass begin on the anacrusis whereupon the bass plays an offbeat rhythm on alternate bars that contrasts with the quavers in the horn riff. The bass line is displaced by half a beat; a quaver downbeat followed by three crotchets. The horn riff contains two quavers on each pitch (E, C and Eb) for three bars. The repetitive nature of this riff from bars 1 to 3 reinforces its non-syncopation and is relieved by an offbeat rhythm in bar 4.

This layering of two independent symmetrical lines (bass and melody) is reminiscent of "On the Road".

Example 43 shows all of Section A with the first three bars of Section B, where a new riff appears (bar 31 to bar 33). This is the only motif played by the horns in Section B. From observing the workshop it seems Simmonds was ambivalent about whether to play this riff once or four times. Either way, the significant aspect of this section is that it comes in two bars earlier than expected. Since Section A is sixteen bars to the end of the first time bar, there is an expectation of a thirty two bar sequence. As it is, Section A is thirty bars long with Section B starting at bar 31. In other words, the repeat of Section A has only fourteen bars. So the form, expressed as AAB, is sixteen bars for the first A, fourteen bars for the truncated second A followed by a sixteen bar Section B. There is, at the unexpected arrival of Section B, an immediate change of feel from the highly symmetrical figures in Section A to (on the CD) a swing feel or (in the workshop) a series of rhythm cycles. This latter swing feel also turns into rhythm cycles as the bass and drums abandon and contrast the feel in Section A with a less rigid and freer rhythmic interpretation. The rhythmic displacement of the form with the unexpected anticipation of Section B also highlights the contrasting feels.

This juxtaposition of simple content and complex context is another binary theme (duality) that runs throughout the composer's music. Content, context and style are, as the composer explains in the following excerpt, about taking an idea (content) and placing it in a different context from which emerges a style. For example, a simple idea (content) can be transformed by a complex context.

> Complex content is not what my music is about. Simple content, but the complexity is the context- how you place your lines against symmetrical phrasing. You get the idea out of the style and that's your content, and you create your style by the context you put that content in. That's not always the case. Style can be an idea in itself. For instance, in "The Spotted Dog", going into a swing feel is style. That is an idea in that context. (Simmonds, M.B. February 22)



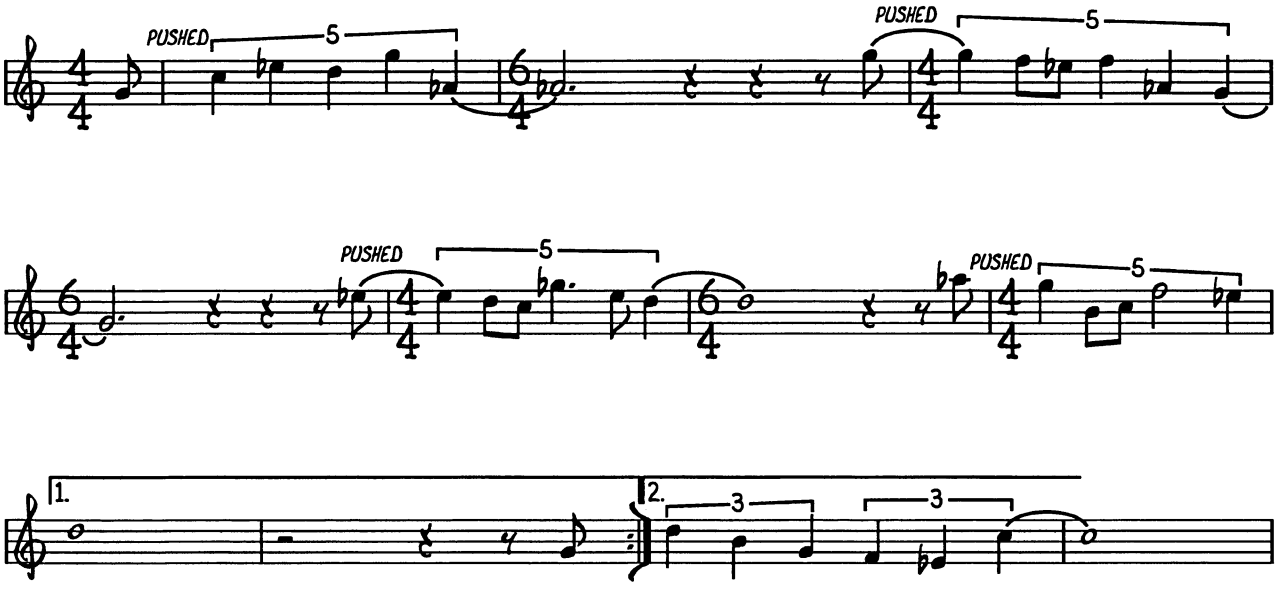
Example 43. "The Spotted Dog" - Section A and first three bars of Section B.

Underground

"Underground" features alternating time signatures and polyrhythms that rhythmically separate the melody from a regular pulse provided by the bass and drums. The repetitive nature of the bass and drum figure, virtually a drone effect, provides a strong pulse across alternating 4/4 and 6/4 bars. The combination of the phrasing of the quintuplets, which is asymmetric, with the rhythm section's symmetrical patterns (over two different time signatures) creates a rhythmic ambiguity that makes the phrasing of the melody feel as though it were independent of the beat.

"Underground" contrasts with "Afghanistan" in the way that polymeter is expressed. The two voices in "Afghanistan" (horns and bass) are in constant metric imbalance as they remain independent of each other for twenty beats. However, there is a symmetry within the lines themselves that differs from the manner in which polyrhythms are used in "Underground". "Afghanistan" is comprised mostly of crotchets and quavers (in both parts), while the meters, though independent of each other and therefore polymetric, remain internally consistent. The ostinato figure played by the bass, a single repeated bar in 5/4, is entirely symmetrical.

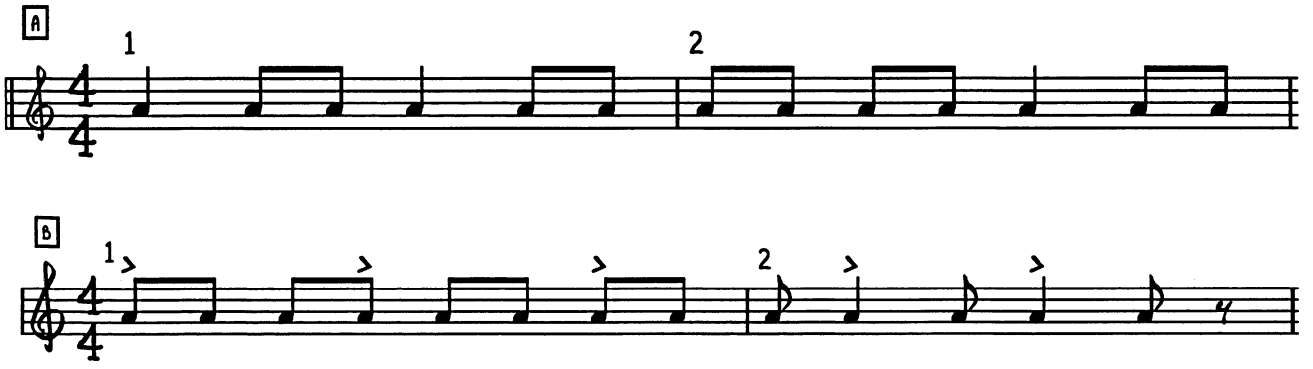
When the composer saw the notation below (Example 44), the comment was made that the crotchet quintuplet figures in the first bar should be a quaver earlier than where they are written. The composer then decided that this notation was satisfactory, given the degree of difficulty in reading offbeat quintuplets, and expressed it satisfactory if the instruction "pushed" was inserted before the quintuplets. However, this notation is the same as that found on all of the bass charts for this tune and suggests readability was a major factor in choosing this particular phrasing.



Example 44. "Underground" - Polymeter and polyrhythm.

Example 45 shows two figures from one of the composer's bass charts for "Underground". They show the symmetrical, repetitious underpinning to the melody and appear under the heading "Bass-Drum Rhythm". This indication reinforces the drone -like quality beneath the metrically freer melody. Both figures are interpreted as one or two bar phrases by the bass and drums. Rather than unison phrasing, each bar represents a pattern that each instrument may play independently of each other. For example, the bass begins, after a solo statement of the theme, with a vamp on bar 1 of

Figure A. The drums then enter with the two bar pattern of Figure A underneath this vamp.



Example 45. "Underground"- Bass and drum rhythms.

Conclusion

The author's intent has been to show how the composer has created the feeling of rhythmic freedom by using a variety of means. One is by the deconstruction of rigid symmetrical patterns, as exemplified in *"On The Road"*, or displacing them, as in "The Spotted Dog". In "29th Street Hop" this effect is achieved by the juxtaposition of non resolving, independent rhythm cycles. While Simmonds employs polymeter in both "Underground" and *"Afghanistan"*, their application differs significantly. Alternatively, the composer creates rhythmic ambiguity by inferring two simultaneous time feels in both "Paradise Blues" and *"The Jazz Waltz"*. The sense of these two time feels fluctuating between one another is due to their metric relationship. In "The Jazz Waltz" this occurs in the eight bar sections between the melody that shift into a four over three feel while in "Paradise Blues" an uncertainty as to the orientation of the phrasing begins with the first bar of the melody. The use of a bass ostinato is a common device employed by Simmonds. In "Underground" it provides a symmetrical backing for asymmetrical phrasing in the melody.

With the use of composite rhythms, symmetrical and asymmetrical structures, the employment of simple and complex ideas and the contrast of content with context, there emerges a binary theme that the composer terms 'duality'.

With these rhythmic devices functioning individually and in combination with one another, the composer has been able to create degrees of temporal ambiguity. At one end of this spectrum, their is a disassociation from the pulse similar to the kind of rhythmic freedom heard in 60s free jazz where, despite the perception, the beat and structure are maintained. That is freedom within the form. It is also freedom through discipline.

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Appendix

1. HREC Approval

EMBED Word.Picture.8

NSW 2006 Australia**Human Research Ethics Committee**
HYPERLINK "http://www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human" www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human
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Human Secretariat
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17 June 2008

Associate Professor P Dunbar-Hall
Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Building C41
The University of Sydney

Dear Professor Dunbar-Hall

I am pleased to inform you that the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at its meeting on 3 June 2008 approved your protocol entitled ***"A stylistic analysis of the 'Freeboppers' D.D. 'Fire'".***

Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref No.:	***06-2008/11024***
Approval Period:	***June 2008 to June 2009***
Authorised Personnel:	***Associate Professor P Dunbar-Hall***
	Mr J Morphett

The HREC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans-March 2007* under *Section 5.1.29*

The approval of this project is **conditional** upon your continuing compliance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.* We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed.

2. Participant Consent Form

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, [redacted] ..... give consent to my participation in the research project

A stylistic analysis of the Freeboppers' CD, 'Fire'

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) now or in the future.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity unless I agree to my identity being made known.
5. I agree to an interview being recorded. YES/NO

Signed: [redacted] .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

3. Videotape Consent Form

This is an example of the consent forms signed by bandmembers who participated in the workshop videotaped by the Department of Performance Studies, Sydney University. Consent forms were sought and received from Mark Simmonds, Scott Tinkler, Milke Sheridan, Steve Hunter, Duncan Archibald and Chris Abrahams.

Friday, September 05, 2008

Duncan Archibald
60 Careel Head Roac
Avalon, NSW 2107
Tel: 0430 182 186

I hereby give permission for a copy to be made of the Freeboppers rehearsals, filmed by the Dep. of Performance Studies in 1997, for Jason Morphett to use as he sees fit in his research on Mark Simmonds. I also give permission for a copy to be made for the use by the Conservatorium library, Faculty of Music, Sydney University, for students and staff.

Duncan Archibald