

The Healing

By Ed Saindon

I'd like to use one of my original compositions as a vehicle for this article. "The Healing" is on my latest recording, *Depth of Emotion* (featuring Dave Liebman on soprano sax), as well as up on YouTube with clips from past concert performances. I'll outline the scenario and details of the *Depth of Emotion* recording session as well as the compositional and improvisational aspects related to the composition.

Before we delve into the compositional and improvisational areas, here are some details and overall direction of the session. I wrote most of the music for the session with the players in mind. Regarding Dave, he has a well-deserved reputation as one of the most creative improvisers and has been on the jazz scene for many years (including important tenures with Miles Davis and Elvin Jones). With that in mind, I wanted to write music that stylistically fit Dave's loose and spontaneous way of playing. As a result, the compositions were basically melody and chords as opposed to intricate arrangements that had to be rehearsed. In addition, we didn't have a lot of time for the session since Dave was in town subbing for saxist Joe Lovano at Berklee and didn't have much time available while he was here.

Previous to the recording session, I had rehearsed with Mark Walker (drums) and David Clark (bass) several times. Most of the compositions had a loose, broken eighth-note feel. The chord changes to most of the compositions were fairly open and contemporary and designed for Dave's style of improvisation. He's a very advanced harmonic player and his long association with pianist Richie Bierach in their group Lookout Farm was an important band in terms of advanced harmonic and adventurous group playing. In that band, the chords were rich and dense with a variety of interesting

chords such as Maj 7 #5 chords and polytonal stacked triads. The melodies and improvisation would stress unusual tensions such as a #9 on a Maj 7 chord or a #11 on a Minor 7 chord.

Regarding the compositional details of "The Healing," here are a few points:

- Form: Through-composed 46-measure composition.
- Tonality: Varies throughout the composition.
- Harmony: Contemporary harmony. Absence of traditional harmonic patterns such as II-7 V7s. The chord progression contains a variety of harmonic textures that include dense 7th chords to simple triads. The Maj 7 #5 chords juxtaposed with simple triads create a sense of balance and harmonic variety. As I mentioned, Lieb and Beirach used Maj 7 #5 chords quite extensively in their compositions. Keith Jarrett also uses Maj 7 #5 chords in many of his compositions as well as an alteration for a Maj 7 chord when he's playing standards. For example, check out the bridge of Jarrett's version of "All The Things You Are."
- Melody: Motives are incorporated, developed, and transposed throughout the course of the melody. The overall shape of the melody is also an important consideration. The melody suggest specific climaxes in the composition where the intensity builds, reaches a climax, and then tapers off. Notes in the melody feature varying levels of tension from stable chord tones to rich tensions (D triad outline over the C Maj 7, G triad outline over the A-6). The melody also exhibits varied degrees of rhythmic density from dense rhythmic phrases to long whole notes.

Regarding the improvisational aspect of the session, the main focus was to avoid forcing anything, let the music evolve, and allow

enough space for the constant interaction among the players. Dave is an inspiration as an improviser. He has that "go for it" approach. It's all or nothing. His solos bring a great deal of emotion and energy to the music. Regarding his note selection, his lines contain many unconventional and unusual notes. He is also deft at the use of chromaticism, whereby his lines weave in and out over the underlying chord changes. Another very important facet of Dave's playing is the way he phrases the lines in terms of nuance and expressive techniques.

On these types of through-composed tunes, it's important when improvising to play the shape of the tune in terms of the harmonic phrases as well as follow the dynamic shape of the composition's melody. The use of chord scales is an effective approach in soloing over this composition, and playing motives derived from chord scales lends a compositional approach to the improvisation. Another technique for playing over the triads is to simply outline the triads using passing notes or tensions, which then resolve to chord tones. This approach can create very melodic phrases as beautifully illustrated by Keith Jarrett. (Check out his brief but intense solo on his composition "Country").

Other considerations in the improvisation include the use of space, dynamics, and pacing, which Lieb skillfully utilizes in his improvisation. His dramatic use of space is an effective technique in creating a sense of surprise, which can draw the listener in. It also serves as an effective balance in offsetting the more intense and dense sections of the improvisation.

The session went by very quickly and was over in about three hours. After the session, we hung out a bit and then Dave headed out with his wife Caris back to the Poconos in Pennsylvania. It was a very productive (and memorable) day, and I feel fortunate that we got the music documented.

Ed Saindon is a Professor at Berklee College of Music in Boston and clinician for Yamaha and Vic Firth. Vic Firth recently released the Ed Saindon Signature Mallet for Vibraphone and Marimba. For more information on Ed's recordings, YouTube videos, and free audio downloads (including a live *Depth of Emotion* concert featuring Dave Liebman and drummer Matt Wilson), visit www.edsaindon.com



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THE HEALING

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B \flat MAJ7 \sharp 5 A- F/A A \flat MAJ7 \sharp 5 G-

E \flat /G F- G- B \flat /A \flat A \flat E \flat /B \flat E/B \flat BMAJ7

DMAJ7 \sharp 5 BMAJ7 B/A

G \flat /A \flat GMAJ7 D/F \sharp B-9,11 GMAJ7 D/F \sharp

E-9,11 CMAJ7 \sharp 11 B- G/B A-

E-9 CMAJ7 \sharp 11 B- G/B

A- BMA9 (NO3RD)

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