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**ELVIN JONES' INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO JAZZ
DRUMMING**

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ABSTRACT

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In the 1960s, Elvin Jones made radical changes in jazz drumming that affected the tradition of drumming. This thesis attempts to explain the innovative approach and the essential contributions that Elvin made to jazz drumming. Jones' major contributions were using all four limbs to express a musical idea, expanding the role of a drummer in a group setting and expanding the function of time-playing by using a new system of cymbal phrasing. This thesis is achieved through an examination and analysis of performances, selected recordings, video materials and existing literature as research tools. Some recordings are also transcribed to support the analysis of Elvin's drumming approach and to provide examples for the mentioned innovations.

Keywords: Elvin Jones, jazz drumming, drum set history, drum history

ÖZ

ELVIN JONES'UN CAZ DAVULCULUĞUNA YENİLİKÇİ YAKLAŞIMI

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Ağustos 2022

1960'larda, Elvin Jones caz davulculuğunda davul geleneğini etkileyen radikal değişiklikler yaptı. Bu tez, Elvin'in caz davulculuğuna getirdiği yenilikçi yaklaşımı ve yaptığı temel katkıları örneklerle açıklamaya çalışmaktadır. Jones'un yaptığı katkılar arasında müzikal bir fikri ifade etmek için dört uzvun tamamını kullanmak, müzikal bir grup ortamında davulcunun rolünü genişletmek ve yeni bir zil çalım sistemi kullanarak zamanı taşıma işlevini genişletmek vardır. Bu tez, performansların, seçilmiş kayıtların, video materyallerinin ve mevcut literatürü bir araştırma aracı olarak kullanarak oluşturulmuştur. Elvin'in davul yaklaşımının analizini desteklemek ve uygun örnekler ortaya çıkarmak için bazı kayıtlar da notaya dökülmüştür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Elvin Jones, caz davulculuğu, davul seti tarihçesi, davul tarihçesi



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Korhan OGAN

İzmir, 2022





TEXT OF OATH

I declare and honestly confirm that my study, titled “ELVIN JONES’ INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO JAZZ DRUMMING” and presented as a Master’s Thesis, has been written without applying to any assistance inconsistent with scientific ethics and traditions. I declare, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that all content and ideas drawn directly or indirectly from external sources are indicated in the text and listed in the list of references.

Korhan Ogan

22.08.2022



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Elvin Jones is well known figure in the history of jazz. With different points of emphasis, many writers have acknowledged his importance and positioned him as an important link between the “bop” and “free” schools of jazz drumming. Some writers define Elvin as a socio-musical revolutionary and a leader in the polyrhythmic school. There seems to be an agreement that Jones made very important contributions to drumming but in my view there is a lack of documentation and analysis about what these contributions are. Even more significant is the fact that none of the existing articles are broad enough to explain Elvin’s significance which have impacted many areas of jazz such as performance, analysis, methodology, ethnography and pedagogy. This thesis will attempt to identify and explain the radical contributions that Elvin Jones made to jazz drumming. It also attempts to analyze his accompaniment style. The main function of jazz drumming has always been accompaniment therefore Elvin’s most significant contributions are in that aspect of his drumming. This thesis attempts to give brief information about the history of drums, drum-set and the biography of Elvin Jones in the first and second chapters.

The research for this thesis includes three connected activities such as studying Elvin’s recordings and films, analyzing and transcribing selected performances and reading available literature on Jones. In addition to Elvin, recordings of contemporary drummers were also studied for stylistic comparison to Elvin. Some of these names are: Art Blakey, Dannie Richmond, Shelly Manne, Connie Kay, Vernell Fournier, Frankie Dunlop, Louis Hayes, Billy Higgins, Max Roach, Ed Blackwell, Frank Butler, Paul Motian and Roy Haynes. Billy Higgins has been chosen to compare with Elvin. Because Billy’s recording career is closely parallel to Elvin’s. He is a traditional bob drummer whose style is completely different than Elvin. They both played for Coltrane. He was replaced with Elvin in 1960. The styles of Higgins and Elvin are compared in Chapter III.

The function of transcriptions in this study is to provide visual support to observations and analysis of recordings. The 1964 recording of “Bessie’s Blues” was chosen for transcription. Billy Higgins transcriptions are also included in this study in order to compare two different styles. *Sibelius* software program was used to write the

transcriptions. In the conclusion part, Elvin Jones' innovative approach to jazz drumming, his impact on jazz world and the way he changed the accompaniment style with his phrasing concept and dynamic range has been summarized.

CHAPTER 2

THE DRUM

The drum is a musical instrument and a member of percussion family. It is also called Membranophone. The drums consist of one or two membranes called a drum skin or a drumhead which is stretched over a shell. It is played directly with the hand or with a stick to produce sound. The stick is also called a percussion mallet. On the underside of the drum there is a resonant head. The drums are the oldest and most widespread musical instrument. Some drums are played individually like djembe and some drums are made up of sets, such as timpani and timbales. The modern drum set is formed by gathering different drums together with cymbals. (Blades, 1984).



Pic.1 Old Drums



Pic.2 Goblet Drum



Pic.3 Old Wooden Drums



Pic.4 Taiko Drum

The drums have a leading role in the history of music. Before the first civilizations even existed, music started with primitive percussion instruments. It is believed that people used to beat on bodies and objects or stomp to produce sounds. Those sounds were used for communication and as an accompaniment for dancing. The desire for rhythm developed over the years to the modern drum sets we have today.

Throughout the history, drums were used for various purposes. By imitating the tone and sound patterns of spoken language, Africans used their talking drums to communicate over great distances. The Sri Lankan drums which are over 2500 years old were used to communicate between the community and the state.

The drums were also used for military purposes. Taigu drums were used to call out orders and to motivate troops in China. An early version of a snare drum which is carried over the player's shoulder was used by the Swiss mercenary soldiers. The English word 'drum' was first used for this instrument. During the English Civil War junior officers carried a rope tension drum to relay commands over the noise of battle. Aztec nations also used drums to send signals to warriors during pre-Columbian warfare. The oldest scriptures in the world such as Rig Veda also contains references to the use of war drums. (Dean, 2012).

Over the millennia drumming has evolved into a powerful art form. It is viewed as the root of music. It concentrates on training the mind to convey, punctuate and explicate musical rhythmic intention to listener and to performer himself. Drumming is an expression of emotion for communication, spiritualism and entertainment. (Blades, 1984).

2.1. The History of Drums

The first drum manufacture was found in neolithic China in 5500 BC. It was made up of a wooden shell covered with alligator skin. This model of drums became a template for the entire Africa, Asia and Middle East, where drums were used for many years. This period is followed by the creation of Bronze Dong Son Drums in Vietnam in 3000 BC. (Blades, 1984).



Pic 5. Bronze Dong Son Drum

Later, the drums were discovered by Sri Lanka and African people which they used for spiritual purposes and communication. The drum culture spread to Europe during the reign of Rome and ancient Greece in 200 and 150 BC. The drums that were traded from Africa dispersed across central and Western Europe. Drums were rarely used in Europe while Japan and Asia have created many drum design. After the Europeans returned from crusades, the history of the drums significantly changed. When European armies came back, they brought knowledge and technology which enabled the beginning of the Renaissance. With the trades streaming from the Genoa and Venetian ports, Europe started to recover from the Middle Ages. The music is also affected by this recovery. The drums were widely accepted and used as main or secondary instrument in both classical and folk music. With the geographical discoveries, the drums arrived in America in 1500 AD. (Dean, 2012).

The cymbals which are a part of percussive instruments were originated from ancient Anatolia or China in 1100 BC. They were also used in Middle East and Egypt during the same period. The first cymbals were made from brass and produce a dinging, tinkling sound. In today's music, the cymbals often establish the time signature. This instrument has undergone so many improvements to what we have today. Today the cymbals are made from copper-based metals such as bell bronze, malleable bronze, brass and nickel silver.



Pic 6. Cymbal

In most drum sets today, the snare is the most important instrument. The snare drums were developed around 1300 AD. It was made from animal skin or any material that people could find. The first snare was developed in medieval Europe. It was called tabor. It was a double-headed instrument used by the fife and drum corps. In the 1600s, better methods of manufacturing the drum emerged. These methods made it easier to adjust the tension on the head with screws. This helped the snares to produce brighter sounds.



Pic 7. Tabor



Pic 8. Snare Drum

Around 1400s, bass drum emerged in Europe. Its ancestor was the Turkish davul. It was used for motivating troops in battle field because of their unique and deeper tone than to other drums. (Blades, 1984).



Pic 9. Turkish Davul



Pic 10. Bass Drum

The percussion was evolving as well as the civilizations. Even in the 1800s, the drums were used mainly for military purposes. In these orchestras, different drums such as bass drum, snare and cymbals were played separately. Classical orchestras consisted of percussion instruments that are parts of drum sets today, such as a bass drum, snare, cymbals etc. Like in military orchestras, those instruments were played separately, by different players. In the following years, musicians started to combine two or more instruments. By 1900, many attempts were made for creating something new that would involve less people in the percussion section of an orchestra. In the first decade of the 20th century, one of the most revolutionary things happened in drum history. The Ludwig Company came up with a huge invention. It was a foot pedal for playing bass drum. After this invention, the drummers started to use both hands to play multiple instruments that will soon become a drum set. The drum set took its form after the invention of bass pedal. (Dean, 2012).



Pic 11. First Drum Pedal

2.2. The Drum Set

The drum set is a living blend of Asian, African and European influences. The snare and cymbals from Europe, the tom-toms from Asia and cowbells from Africa come together to form a vital part of American heritage. Other than being a timekeeping device, the drum kit has evolved over the past 100 years to become a piece of the American musical tradition.

After the American civil war, percussionists were employed in classical orchestras or in marching bands. The instruments were limited to a snare drum, bass drum and

cymbals to be played by a separate player. However, the rise of live theater acts in a postwar nation increased the need for both spectacle and economy. (Norris, 2013).



Pic 12. Marching Band



Pic 13. Marching Band

The demand for less people and more instruments, caused the style of double drumming to emerge. Players would set a snare on a stand or a chair, then set a bass drum on the floor across the snare drum so both can be played with sticks. The bass drum usually contained a modified cymbal on top of the drum. This setup allowed one person to play an entire percussion section.



Pic 14. Double Drumming



Pic 15. The First Set Drummer

From that moment on, the drummers began to search for newer sound sources to add to their sets such as tack toms from China, Turkish cymbals and African cowbells. Eventually bass drum pedals were invented in early 1900s. This invention allowed the players to play with both hands simultaneously. In the early 1900s, companies like Ludwig and Gretsch began developing drum set equipment such as snare, bass drum, brushes and full drum kits. And, as drums developed, so did the music. With the new gears, the drum kit began to take shape. A snare drum on a stand and a cymbal mounted with a pedaled bass drum so the player could play seated. This set up allowed the drummers to play the common time keeping pattern which is beats 2 and 4 on snare,

beats 1 and 3 on the bass drum and the cymbal playing along. This time keeping rhythm is still being used heavily today. (Dean, 2012)

With new styles of music becoming popular associated with nightlife, the drum set began to earn its place on the band stage. As the drum kit began to change, other instruments were added to the kit such as Chinese rounded tom-toms and a contraption tray for holding various sound makers like horns and whistles to be used for creating effects for silent movies and musical theaters.



Pic 16. Antique Drum Set

In 20s, like the bass drum the cymbal received a pedal too. It was a new instrument called the low boy. It was a pair of cymbals oppositely facing each other, mounted off the ground, that crashed when the pedal was depressed. Soon the low boy evolved into the hi-hat we use today. (Blades, 1984).



Pic 17. The Low Boy



Pic 18. The Hi-Hat

In the 30s, legendary drummer Gene Krupa changed the old drum kit into a modern four-piece kit. It was bass drum, snare drum, a tom mounted to the bass drum and two large toms on the floor, completed with a ride cymbal, a hi-hat and crash cymbals. This setup made Krupa a glossy soloist and opened the way for a modern era.



Pic 19. Gene Krupa and His Drum Set

The modern set allowed players to play polyrhythms at fast tempos and in the 40's. A complex new jazz idiom called bebop was developed. With the creation of ride cymbals, the players moved the time keeping from snare to cymbals. Such innovative changes started the next era of drumming, the modern era. (Brennan, 2020).



CHAPTER 3

ELVIN JONES

Elvin Ray Jones was born in Michigan on September 9, 1927. He had a musical family. One of his brothers Hank Jones was a jazz pianist and his other brother Thad Jones was a band leader and trumpet player. When Jones was growing up, he started to play gigs around Michigan. Then he joined the army at the age of 18 and spent 3 years there. Later, Jones started to play around Detroit. He found a job in Bluebird Club's house band. He played many gigs. Before moving to New York, he toured with pianist Bud Powell and bass player Charles Mingus.



Pic 20. Elvin Jones

When Jones came to New York in 1956, he started playing with musicians like Donald Byrd, Miles Davis, Paul Chambers, J.J Johnson and Stan Getz. His over the bar line figures weren't easy to play on or listen to. But there were also some musicians interested in this new approach of drumming such as the saxophonist Sonny Rollins. When Rollins and Elvin trade fours, you hear blasting tom rolls, abstract polyrhythms and a dramatic range of dynamics. They overlap phrases at the same time like one solo. You hear the drums becoming a musical conversation partner rather than a time keeping instrument. (Stryker, 2019).

In 1960, Elvin joined forces with saxophonist John Coltrane and the John Coltrane Quartet became one of the most influential bands in the history of jazz. Finally, Elvin found the perfect setting for his style of drumming. His never-ending energy, ever changing dynamics and unorthodox phrasing developed a style that in which every instrument in the drum set contributed to the forward motion of the music. Each limb became equal partners in rhythmic accompaniment, solo phrasing and in time keeping. Elvin became the most influential drummer of the '60s. (Riley, 2007).



Pic 21. Elvin Jones and John Coltrane

During the Coltrane years, with his new rhythmic voice and newfound popularity he quickly became a prolific drummer, appearing in post-bop albums by artists like Ornette Coleman, Larry Young, Joe Henderson and Grant Green. Elvin also took his first steps to band-leading. (Stryker, 2019). Coltrane began to enlarge his band by adding another drummer, Rashied Ali, in late 65's. After a while, Elvin left the band in early 1966. Coltrane died about a year later. After leaving Coltrane, Elvin kept on playing as a sideman with artists like Duke Ellington and Kenny Clarke. He spent some time in Paris. After he returned home, Elvin formed his own trio with bassist Jimmy Garrison and saxophonist Joe Farrell and recorded the album called 'Putting' It Together', which is considered by many as one of his finest recordings ever. (Shinn, 2014).

Over the years Elvin's band included many musicians like George Coleman, Frank Foster, Dave Liebman and Gene Perla. Elvin started to call his group The Jazz Machine. In the '80s, his band included saxophonist Pat La Barbera bassist Chip Jackson and guitarist Jean Paul Bourelly. The band remained active well into the 2000s and Elvin kept on pushing himself forward musically inviting young musicians to tour

and record regularly with the Jazz Machine. On May 18, 2004 he passed away. (Berendt, 2009).



Pic 22. Elvin Jones





CHAPTER 4

JONES' CONTRIBUTIONS TO JAZZ

Elvin Jones' contributions to jazz can be expressed in two general statements:

- a. He expanded the role of drumming by changing the drum set's function, with interactive participation and expanded rhythmic phrasing into a greater musical role in a small ensemble, sharing dialogue with other instruments.
- b. He revolutionized drumming by introducing an expanded, integrated approach to accompaniment and time-keeping.

These two broad achievements can be heard on Coltrane's recordings such as the 1964 album *A Love Supreme*¹ especially in the section "Resolution". The album became an icon of modern jazz and still remains the bestselling Coltrane album¹. It is one of the best examples of Elvin's matured accompaniment style and it marks the highest point of Elvin's playing style.²

The "Resolution" is a great example of Elvin's style but the tune "Bessie's Blues" on the album *Crescent*, reveals all the details of his accompaniment style more clearly. That is why "Bessie's Blues" transcription is used. "Bessie's Blues" demonstrates four individual processes and elements that creates Elvin's style of accompaniment and his playing time in swing feel:

1. Phrasing: Dictating the quarter-beat pulse with more musical and longer phrases³ played on the ride cymbal in lengths of two and four bars;
2. Triplet system foundation: Supporting both fills and accompaniments using an internalized eight-note triplet system;
3. Four- limb system: Using the whole drum set to support the cymbal phrases. Expressing one musical idea using all four limbs.
4. Broadened dynamic range; Using wider dynamics to support the ride cymbal phrases.

¹ Since its creation, the popularity of the album has been discussed by many writers.

² In his following recordings, there seems to be no evidence of conceptual development or technical progress.

³ The term phrase is "A melodic line which is generally regarded as longer than a motif but shorter than a period".

Each of these four elements represents a separation from the accepted ‘bop’ or ‘hard bop’ drumming used by all of Elvin’s contemporaries in 1950s and 1960s. These four elements form a revolutionary approach to jazz drumming accompaniment. (Shinn, 2014).

Before the style of Elvin became widely known, the main concept for jazz drumming accompaniment was played as follows:

- a) With little or no dynamic range, time played on the ride cymbal and hi-hat played on beats two and four⁴.

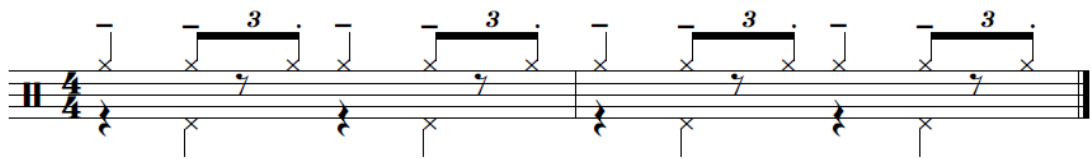


Fig 1. Jazz Ride Pattern

- b) Figures played on the snare to complement the line played by the soloist.

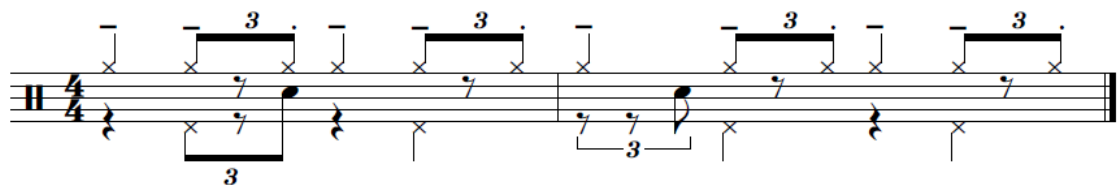


Fig 2. Jazz Ride Pattern with Snare

- c) Dependent upon the drummer’s performance experience, training and the requirements of the music determined by an ensemble or composition.

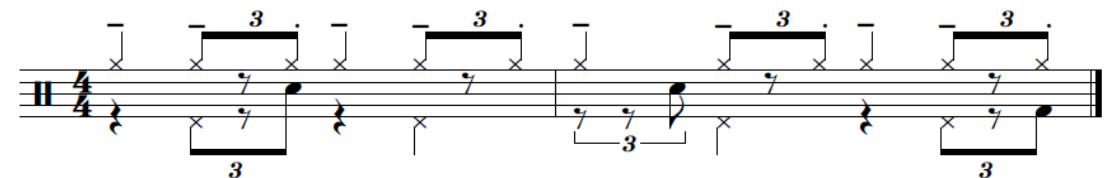


Fig 3. Jazz Ride Pattern with Snare and Bass Drum

⁴ Refer to Appendix C for drum set notation.

Elvin introduced a playing style which changed the characteristics of the ride cymbal accompaniment. He built a style that expanded the timekeeping vocabulary of the ride cymbal into a much longer series of rhythmic phrases. In the bop style, any departure from the basic ride pattern can be regarded as embellishment rather than time keeping. The two following transcriptions show the differences between the bop style represented by the drumming of Billy Higgins⁵ and the new approach of Elvin Jones. In Elvin's method, the snare, the bass and the hi-hat are used to support the ride cymbal. (Riley, 1997).

Table 1 shows the comparison of the two styles by listing of observation and information.

- i. playing a soft quarter-beat pulse on the bass drum played by big band drummers and small ensemble players
- ii. playing the bass drum for accents only is a style played by Kenny Clarke and early bebop drummers
- iii. playing the comping patterns between snare and bass drum is an approach played by Max Roach and other drummers.

⁵ Elvin Jones was hired by Coltrane to replace Billy Higgins in 1960.

Table 1. Details for fig 4 and fig 5.

Figure	1	2
Drummer	Elvin Jones	Billy Higgins
Song	Bessie's Blues	Hocus Pocus
Date	27 April 1964	21 December 1963
Transcription	Drum set accompaniment to the first eight bars of Coltrane's solo	Drum set accompaniment to the first eight bars of Lee Morgan's solo
Album	Coltrane, Crescent. (1987 Coltrane)	Lee Morgan, Sidewinder. (1989 Morgan)
Playing Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distinct cymbal phrases. - Cymbal phrases accompanied by other drum parts using eight-note triplets. - At least four dynamic ranges evident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No distinct cymbal phrasing, constant ride cymbal pattern. - Figures played independently from the ride cymbal line. - No significant dynamic range in snare drum or ride cymbal.

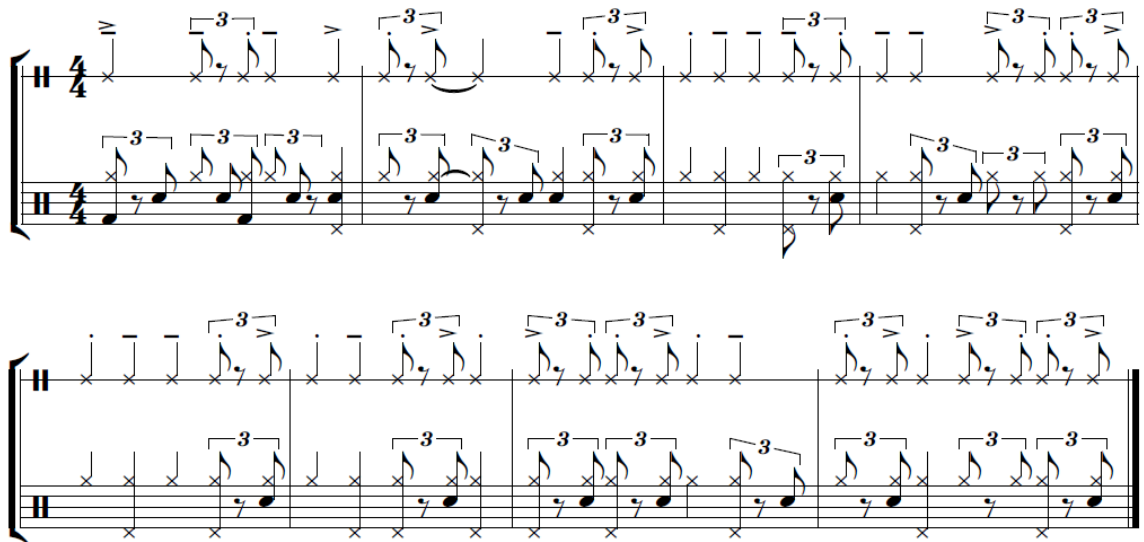


Fig 4. Bessie's Blues Elvin Jones' Transcription

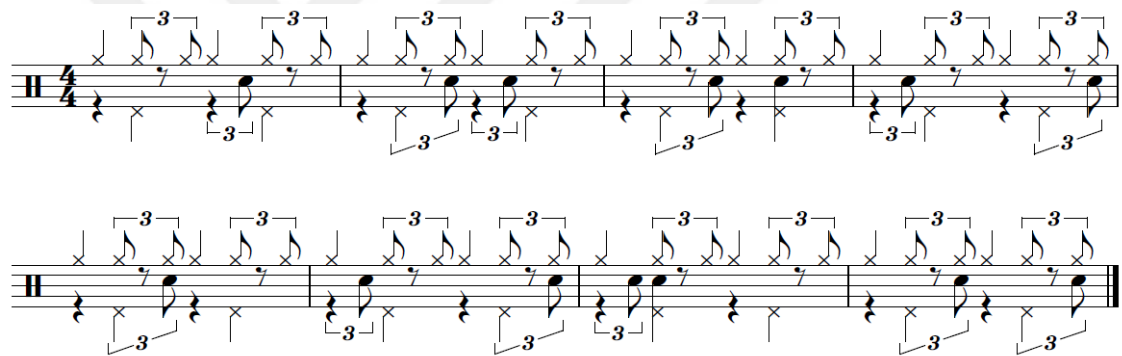


Fig 5. Hocus Pocus Billy Higgins' Transcription

Figure 4 gives us a lot of information about Elvin's approach. The ride cymbal alone itself shows us the difference in playing styles. In Elvin's style, there is a wider dynamic range in ride cymbal playing. The drum part shows how the drum set fulfills the ride cymbal and how Elvin uses the eight-note triplet system as the framework for supporting and filling this cymbal line.

Figure 5 shows us a traditional '*bop style*' accompaniment. The ride cymbal is constant with less dynamic variation. The constant ride cymbal line is not supported by any other instruments. In Elvin's approach the drum set functions as one instrument but in Billy's approach it is the ride cymbal and other drums.

Between 1957-1960, Coltrane hired different drummers for recordings, including: Albert Heath, Art Taylor, Joe Jones, Jimmy Cobb, Louis Hayes, Ed Blackwell and

Billy Higgins. When Elvin replaced Billy Higgins in 1960, it seems that John Coltrane had found his drummer to express his musical ideas. The innovative style of Elvin had such an impact on the overall sound of the band, that Coltrane re-recorded some of the music that had featured Billy Higgins. The song “Mr. Day” was recorded with Billy Higgins on September 8, 1960 and then again with Elvin on October 24, 1960. (Shinn, 2014).

Some of the changes that Elvin brought to the band is distinct in the transcription of the two different performances of “Mr. Day”. Fig 6 shows how Elvin and Higgins take very different approaches to state the basic rhythmic phrase with the bassist. While keeping the ride cymbal steady with the hi-hat on 2 and 4. Elvin expands upon the bass figure dynamically, tonally and rhythmically by introducing wider dynamics and phrasing into his line and using the whole drum set to accompany his phrasing. In figure 6. first rhythmic line is played by Elvin, second line played by Higgins and the third line demonstrates the bass line.

The image displays a musical score for the song "Mr. Day" in 4/4 time, featuring three distinct rhythmic lines. The score is organized into two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass line staff. The key signature consists of four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#).

- System 1 (Elvin's performance):** The top two staves show a complex, syncopated rhythmic pattern with frequent triplets and accents. The bass line (bottom staff) is a simple, steady pattern of quarter notes: D4, G4, D5, G4.
- System 2 (Higgins' performance):** The top two staves show a more straightforward, steady eighth-note pattern with triplets. The bass line (bottom staff) is identical to the first system.

Fig 6. Mr. Day, Elvin Jones and Billy Higgins Transcriptions

4.1. Phrasing

Elvin Jones made his main contribution to jazz with his system of playing time using phrases. He was the master of accent placing in odd places. This gave him the ability to create an illusion of modulation by placing accents in odd places over the triplet and sixteen notes. His aim was to connect logical phrases to each other. All other aspects of his playing is based around this concept. To understand the depth of Elvin’s system, one needs to try to identify the processes that Elvin went through during performances to implement and create these phrases. (Moses, 1984).

4.2. The Ride Cymbal

Listening to Elvin play, you immediately hear the importance of the ride cymbal. Regardless of the dynamics of the band, it is audible at all times. Within an ensemble setting, it is always in the foreground of the music. Instead of the usual ride cymbal pattern or the quarter-beat pulse, Elvin plays lines made up of eight-note phrases with dynamic and rhythmic variations. These phrases are formed similar to a melodic soloist: using quarter and eighth notes placed on upbeats or downbeats. Elvin expresses his phrases mainly on the ride cymbal. The other parts of the drums are used to express the accented beats of the phrase. (Riley, 2007). In 1940s, the use of the ride cymbal had already been established by the bop style drummers. Therefore, it was logical for Elvin to exploit the ride cymbal playing as he expanded the method of time keeping. Unlike bop drummers, Elvin used the whole drum set to express his phrases and always took this concept for the basis of his approach. (Berendt, 2009). Other than dictating the pulse for the band, Elvin's ride cymbal function goes far beyond. It gives more flexibility to the rest of the band especially to the soloist. Elvin's phrases contain three-beat figures and five-beat figures⁶, tied over bar lines, thereby changing the compartmentalization of rhythm into individual bar-long units. To resolve Elvin's rhythmic statements of call and response, two-bar phrases seem to be the minimum length required. (Gottlieb, 2010). The traditional bop cymbal playing shows very little change in volume to promote solid expression of the pulse. In general, all quarter beats which are down beats are played at one volume and all upbeats are played at another volume. The main goal of the bop drummers is to have a dynamically consistent sound level on the ride cymbal. By contrast, Elvin played various dynamic levels within the cymbal line to add more colors to his playing and giving a forward momentum to the rhythm with more powerful upbeats. (Riley, 2004).

⁶ Rhythmic phrases composed of eighth or quarter notes that have a duration of three pulse beats or five pulse beats.

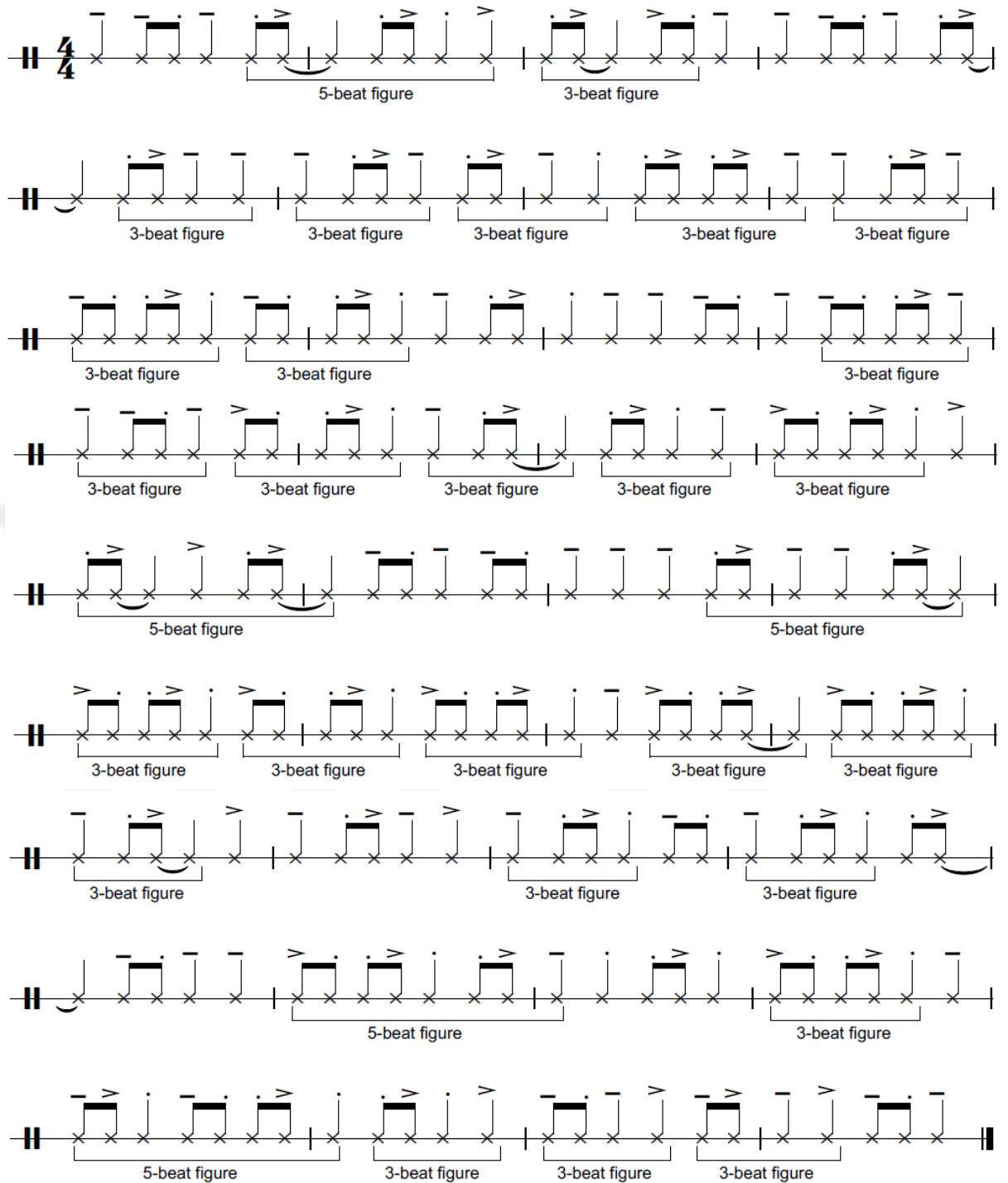


Fig 7. Bessie's Blues Elvin Jones' Ride Patterns

Figure 7 shows the ride cymbal line of three choruses of the tune “Bessie’s Blues”. Several examples of three-beat and five-beat figures are indicated. In order to create a two over three feel, Elvin accented two of the notes in three-beat figures. This feature is seen in every three-beat figure. The cymbal phrasing itself shows the melodic quality of Elvin. One can also observe that all of the variations are unique and never repeated. Elvin’s way of using cymbal phrasing as a tool for time expression changed the

perception of the time feel. It is better understood by listening to recordings rather than transcribing. There is much more forward motion in cymbal phrasing with the drums supporting it. Today, most of the drummers use cymbal phrasing as a tool for expressing time. It became a part of the jazz drumming concept. For many years, Elvin's style was considered as a separate style but today it became the mainstream approach to drumming. (Moses, 1984).

4.3. Triplet System Foundation

To create a layer of sound Elvin uses not just the quarter-beat pulse as the basic foundation of his timekeeping, but the full eight-note triplet system. While other drummers relate their concept of swing feel to the rhythmic positioning of upbeats, downbeats and to eight note triplets, Elvin built his entire accompaniment style on the full triplet system. (Gottlieb, 2010).

Figure 8 is a four-bar accompaniment transcription from "Bessie's Blues" and it shows how every beat Elvin plays fits into the triplet system.

The image displays a musical score for a four-bar accompaniment in 4/4 time. The score is written on two staves, with the top staff representing the snare drum and the bottom staff representing the bass drum. The time signature is 4/4. The music is characterized by a consistent triplet feel. In the first two bars, the snare drum plays a pattern of eighth notes in triplets, with the first note of each triplet being an eighth rest. The bass drum plays a steady eighth-note triplet pattern. In the last two bars, the snare drum pattern changes to eighth notes in triplets, with the first note of each triplet being an eighth rest. The bass drum continues with the eighth-note triplet pattern. The notation includes triplet markings (the number '3' above a bracket) and eighth notes with stems pointing up or down. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the fourth bar.

Fig 8. Bessie's Blues Elvin Jones' Triplet Accompaniment

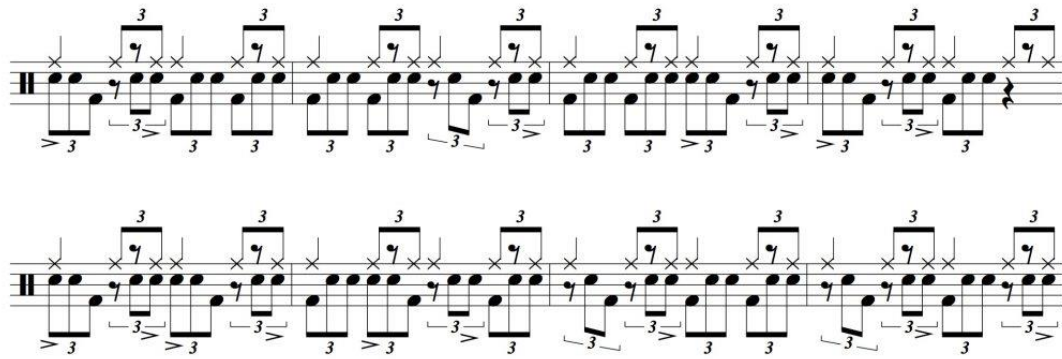


Fig 9. Triplet Accompaniment

Figure 9 is an example of Elvin style triplets. The success of Elvin’s busier and thicker approach to timekeeping is due to his reliance on the eight-note triplet system. The system helps to lock everything into place. By feeling the pulse as a stream of triplets, there is no room to modify the placement of the quarter beat. With such a consistent time feel, Elvin’s playing always feels and sounds relaxed.

4.4. The Four-Limb System

Elvin’s ride playing is not independent from the other parts of the drum set. By this approach, Elvin created a unique approach that combined the function of all limbs into the expression of rhythmic phrases. With Elvin, the “four-limb independence” became a system for expressing musical ideas rather than being a technical exercise. (Erskine, 1998).

Drum methods back in the day, are designed to develop a measure of coordination exercises between the feet and the hands for playing rhythmic phrases against the standard cymbal pattern. (Gottlieb, 2010). The cymbal line is always constant in the exercises. Elvin’s integrated approach involves using different drum parts to draw more attention to certain accents in the phrases. Like the concept of ‘stroke and tap’⁷ on the cymbal, Elvin has at least two dynamic levels for each component of the drum set. At tempo, most of the lighter beats on snare act as eight-note triplets, barely audible. The louder snare shots are reserved for highlighting accented notes in the phrase. Elvin rarely plays the bass drum to dictate the pulse. This approach alone puts

⁷ The term ‘stroke’ is used for accented beats and the term ‘tap’ for unaccented beats.

him aside from his contemporaries (Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, Jo Jones and others) known to play the quarter notes softly on the bass drum. Elvin played the bass drum like a snare drum, using two dynamic levels for accenting distinct notes. In addition to dynamic ranges on the drum set, Elvin is aware of using varieties in drum tonalities. (Ramsay, 1998).



CONCLUSION

By many music critics, Elvin is regarded as the most influential drummer in the history of jazz music. With his multilayered and rhythmic approach, Elvin transformed the drums from a traditional time keeping instrument into a dynamic interactive instrument. Elvin's playing style involves playing the drums with a wider dynamic range as opposed to the ride cymbal that's why the listeners might focus on the drums and not to the ride cymbal phrases. Without listening them together, the drums can sound complex. In order to understand Elvin's drumming approach, the listener needs to do more than analyzing transcriptions and listening to albums. The key element in musical research is that it can only be discovered through personal performance.

Elvin's most important contribution to jazz drumming is his concept of expressing and organizing the pulse in phrases. Elvin's playing style reached its maturity by 1965 and since then he did not develop it further. Until his death in 2004, he performed the same style that he played with John Coltrane forty years earlier. Some other aspects of Elvin's approach seem to be reserved by drummers for special moments in a performance or specific kinds of playing. Particularly, Elvin's notion of playing the drum set loudly (in relation to the cymbal) is used for adding power or drive to particular parts of a performance, used only as a reaction to a soloist who has increased intensity and volume.

The second most important contribution Elvin made to jazz drumming is the expansion of drummer's role in an ensemble. The relationship between band members and the drummer has completely changed after this contribution. Drummer's responsibilities have increased. They started to lead the band and the music into new directions dynamically and rhythmically. The unity of Elvin and Coltrane created a new model for operating the drums in an ensemble. Some band leaders may not want to play with louder and busier drummer but this style of playing added another model to the list as a different approach. The more a player goes imitating Elvin, the more other members of the ensemble get stronger in order to perform effectively. Elvin's innovative approach opened the gate for drummers to expand their skills, ideas and imaginations. This type of playing can be heard in Keith Jarrett Trio recordings. Other players kept on adding new things over Elvin's achievements. It seems that Elvin's playing style forms the basis of the many modern drumming styles.

Today, Elvin leaves behind a much-acclaimed jazz legacy. His impact on contemporary music has been profound. A gifted and a unique individual whose innovative and improvisational style has helped to lay the foundation for the fusion and avant-garde jazz movements which fuses different instruments and styles of play. Elvin believes his revolutionary style comes from the fact that he could never follow the standard form. This rebellious spirit continues to compel drummers to devote their lives to the pursuit of creative expression and infinite rhythmic variations.



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Stryker, M. (2019). *Jazz from Detroit*. University of Michigan Press.

Steinel, M. (2000). *Essential Elements for Jazz Ensemble*. Hal Leonard Corp.

Pickering, J. (2015). *Studio: Jazz Drum Cookbook*. Mel Bay Publications, Inc.



APPENDIX A

This selected discography attempts to create a collection of recordings that shows the diversity of the bands with whom Elvin Jones recorded and the development of his style over time.

Mitchell, B. (1948). Billy Mitchell Quintet. Savoy SV0188.

Davis, M. (1955). Collector's Items. Prestige 24022.

Farmer, A. (1956). Farmer's Market. Prestige VICJ-23745.

Johnson, J. J. (1956). J is for Jazz. Mosaic CL935.

Burrell, K. (1957). Blue Moods. Prestige 7088.

Jones, T. (1957). Mad Thad. Period OJCCD-1919-2.

Johnson, J. J. (1956). Dial J.J. 5. Mosaic CL1084.

Jones, T. (1957). Olio. Prestige OJCCD-1004-2.

Jones, T. (1957). The Complete Blue Note/ UA/ Roulette Recordings of Thad Jones
Mosaic 72438-19531-2-9.

Johnson, J. J. (1957). Jay Jay Johnson Quintet: Live at Café Bohemia 1957. Fresh
Sound Records FSRCD-143.

Rollins, S. (1957). A Night at The Village Vanguard – Vol.1. Blue Note CDP746517-
2.

Flanagan, T. (1957). Overseas (CD recording). Prestige OJCCD-1033-2 (Stockholm
1957).

Jaspar, B. (1957). Tenor and Flute (CD recording). Riverside OJCCD-1788-2 (New
York 1957).

Chambers, P. (1957). Paul Chambers Quintet (CD recording). Blue Note
CDP724385244124 (Hackensack, 1957).

Rodney, R. (1991). Red Arrow, Box 2000, Ubas. On Fiery (CD recording). Savoy
SV-0148 (New York, 1957).

Adams, P. (1992). The Cool Sound of Pepper Adams (CD recording) Savoy SV-0198 (New York, 1957).

Rollins, S. (1957). A Night at The Village Vanguard-Vol.2 (CD recording) Blue Note CDP746518-2.

Adams, P. (1958). Pepper Adams with Jimmy Knepper Quintet (LP recording). Metrojazz E-1004 (New York, 1958)

Lacy, S. (1958). Reflections: Steve Lacy plays Thelonious Monk (CD recording). Prestige OJCCD-063-2.

Flanagan, T. (1959). Lonely Town (LP recording). Japan: Blue Note GP3186 (New York, 1959).

Fuller, C. (1959). Slidin' Easy (CD recording). United Artists UAL4041 (New York, 1959).

Forrest, J. (1959). Black Forrest (CD recording). Denmark DD-427.

Jones, T. (1959). The Complete Blue Note/UA/Roulette Recordings of Thad Jones-III (CD recording). Mosaic 72438-19531-2-0.

Geller, H. (1959). Gypsy (LP recording). New York: ATCO-LP33-109 (New York, 1959).

Coltrane, J. (1960). My Favorite Things (CD recording). Atlantic SD 1361. New York.

Coltrane, J. (1960). Coltrane Plays the Blues (CD recording) Atlantic 1382-.2. New York.

Coltrane, J. (1960). Coltrane's Sound (CD recording). Atlantic 1419-2 (New York 1960).

Priester, J. (1960). Keep Swingin' (CD recording). Riverside OJCCD-1863-2. New York.

Jones, E. (1961). Philly Joe Jones & Elvin Jones Together (CD recording). Rhino Collectables COL-CD-6264.

Harris, B. (1961). *Preminado* (CD recording). Riverside OJCCD-486-2 (New York,

Coltrane, J. (1961). *Africa/Brass* (LP recording). Impulse MCA-29007. Englewood Cliffs

Jones, E. (1962). *Elvin!* (LP recording). Riverside OJC-239. New York.

Konitz, L. (1961). *Motion* (CD recording). Verve 821553-2. New York.

Coltrane, J. (1961). *The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings – Vol. 1-4 CD* (recording). Impulse IMPD4-232. New York.

Jones, E. (1974) *Elvin Jones – The Impulse Years* (LP recordings) ABC-Impulse ASH 9283-2 (Various locations, 1961 to 1968).

Coltrane, J. (1962). *Ballads* (CD recording). Germany: Impulse 254607-2 (Englewood Cliffs, 1962).

Lateef, Y. (1961). *Into Something* (CD recording). Prestige/New Jazz OJCCD-700-2 (Englewood Cliffs. 1961).

Coltrane, J. (1963). *Inchworm. On John Coltrane* (LP recording). Impulse A(S)21 (Englewood Cliffs, 1962).

Coltrane, J. (1962). *Impressions. The Very Best of John Coltrane* (CD recording). Toronto: Impulse 3145499132 (Englewood Cliffs, 1962).

Coltrane, J. (1962). *Duke Ellington & John Coltrane*. Universal City: Impulse MCDAD-39103. (New York, 1962).

Coltrane, J. (1963). *Afro Blue Impressions* (CD recording). Berkeley: Pablo 2PACD-2620-101-2 (Europe, 1963).

Coltrane, J. (1963). *John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman* (LP recording). Universal City: Impulse MCA-21903.

Woods, J. (1963). *Conflict* (CD recording). Berkeley: Contemporary OJCCD-1954-2 Los Angeles.

Evans, G. (1963). *The Individualism of Gil Evans* (CD recording). New York: Verve 833804-2. New York.

Coltrane, J. (1963). Live at Birdland (CD recording). Toronto: Impulse MCAMD 33109.

Coltrane, J. (1965). Creation (LP recording). England: Blue Parrot AR 700 (San Francisco).

Henderson, J. (1964). Punjab, El Barrio. The Best of Joe Henderson (CD recording). Hollywood: Blue Note CDP7956272.

Coltrane, J. (1964) Crescent (CD recording). Toronto: MCA/Impulse MCAMD-5889.

Green, G. (1964). Solid (CD recording). Hollywood: Blue Note CDP724383358021 Englewood Cliffs.

Shorter, W. (1964). Juju (CD recording). Blue Note CDP724383358021. Englewood Cliffs.

Green, G. (1964). Talkin' About (CD recording). Blue Note CDP724352195824 Englewood Cliffs.

Coltrane, J. (1964). A Love Supreme (CD recording). Impulse GRD-155 Englewood Cliffs.

Shorter, W. (1964). Speak No Evil (CD recording). Blue Note CDP7465092. Englewood Cliffs.

Green, G. (1965). I Want to Hold Your Hand (CD recording). Blue Note CDP724385996221.

Green, G. (1965). Matador (CD recording). Blue Note CDP7844422 (Englewood Cliffs, 1965).

Coltrane, J. (1965). The John Coltrane Collection: A Retrospective (CD recording). Déjà vu 5037-2.

Coltrane, J. (1976). John Coltrane Featuring Pharoah Sanders: Live in Seattle (LP recording). Toronto: Impulse 2027-9202. (Seattle, 1965).

Young, L. (1965). Unity (CD recording). Blue Note CDP7-84221-2. (Englewood Cliffs, 1965).

Hines, E. (1966). Once Upon A Time (CD recording). Impulse A-9108 (New York, 1966).

Hines, E. (1966). The Indispensable Earl Hines, Volumes 5/6 (CD recording). New York: RCA 66499-2 07863 (New York, 1966).

Rollins, S. (1966). East Broadway Rundown (LP recording). Toronto: Impulse 9027-9121 (Englewood Cliffs, 1966).

Jones, E. (1967). Heavy Sounds (CD recording). New York: Impulse 314547959-2. (New York, 1967).

Jones, E. (1968). Live at The Village Vanguard (LP recording). Munich: Enja 2036 (New York, 1968).

Jones, E. (1968). Puttin' It Together (CD recording). Blue Note CDP7842822. (Englewood Cliffs, 1968).

Coleman, O. (1971). Love Call (LP recording). Blue Note BST-84356 (New York, 1968).

Jones, E. (1968). The Ultimate Elvin Jones (CD recording). Blue Note BST-84305 (Englewood Cliffs, 1968).

Adams, P. (1968). Encounter! (CD recording). Prestige OJCCD-892-2 (New York, 1968).

Newborn, P. (1969). Please Send Me Someone to Love (CD recording). Contemporary OJCCD-947-2 (Los Angeles, 1969).

Newborn, P., Brown, R. & Jones, E. (1991). Harlem Blues (CD recording). Contemporary OJCCD-662-2 (Los Angeles, 1969).

Jones, E. (1972). Live At the Lighthouse (LP recording). Blue Note BN-LA015-G2 (Hermosa Beach, 1972).

Pepper, A. (1977). *The Trip* (LP recording) Contemporary S7638 (Los Angeles, 1976)

Brown, R. (1986). *Something for Lester* (CD recording). Tokyo: Contemporary VDJ-1555 (Los Angeles, 1977).

Wallace, B. (1983). *Big Jim's Tango* (Lp recording). Munich: Enja 4046 (New York, 1982).

Jones, H. (1993). *Upon Reflection* (CD recording). France: Gitanes Jazz- Verve 514898-2 (Englewood Cliffs, 1993).

Lovano, J. (1998) *Trio Fascination* (CD recording). Blue Note CDP724383311422 (New York, 1997).

APPENDIX B

The following discography represents some recordings by other drummers contemporary with Elvin Jones.

1. Art Blakey

Silver, H. (1954). The Horace Silver Trio. Blue Note 5034.

Blakey, A. (1955). Orgy in Rhythm. Blue Note. BLP 1555.

Mobley, H. (1960). On Soul Station. New York: Blue Note
CDP7465282.

Blakey, A. (1960). Art Blakey's 1960 Jazz Messengers.

Mosaic MD6-141

Blakey, A. (1987). Mosaic. Hollywood: Blue Note CDP7465232

Blakey, A. (1961). Buhaina's Delight. Blue Note 84104.

Blakey, A. (1965). Soul Finger. Limelight LS 86018.

Blakey, A. (1966). Buttercorn Lady. Limelight LM 82034.

Blakey, A. (1966). Hold On. I'm Coming. Limelight LS 86038.

Blakey, A. (1981). At Bubba's Jazz Restaurant. Philips 6313 211.

Blakey, A. (1990). Moanin'. LRC Ltd. CDC 9052.

2. Ed Blackwell

Coltrane, J. (1960). John Coltrane & Don Cherry – The Avant Garde New Atlantic
790041-2.

Coleman, O. (1960). This is Our Music. Atlantic SD-1353.

Dolph, E. (1961). The Great Concert of Eric Dolphy. Prestige P-34002.

Berger, K. (1969). Karl Berger & Company. Milestones MSP 9026.

Cherry, D. (1969). Mu. BYG Records 529.301.

Cherry, D. (1977). Old And New Dreams. Black Saint BSR 0013.

Cherry, D. (1982). El Corazon. ECM Records 1-1230.

Waldron, M. (1982). You And the Night and The Music. Paddle Wheel K28P-6272.

Ruiz, H. (1985). Crosscurrents. Slash Records Inc ST 248,

Redman, D. (1985). Red and Black in Willisau. Black Saint BSR 0093.

Berger, K. (1987). Transit. Black Saint BSR 0092.

Berger, K. (1992). Crystal Fire. ENJA Records 7029-2.

Haden, C. (1994). The Montreal Tapes. Verve Records 314 523 260-2.

Redman, D. (2009). The Key of Life. Vineyard Records VNY 405.

3. Frank Butler

Land, H. (1958). Grooveyard. Contemporary S7622.

Land, H. (1959). The Fox. Contemporary S7619

Pepper, A. (1960). Smack Up. Contemporary S7602.

Amy, C. (1961). Groovin' Blue. Pacific Jazz ST-19.

Butler, F. (1978). The Stepper. Xanadu Records 152.

Butler, F. (1980). Wheelin' and Dealin'. Xanadu Records 169.

Drew, K. (1981). For Sure. Xanadu Records 167.

Webster, B. (1989). At The Renaissance. Contemporary OJCCD 390-2.

4. Jimmy Cobb

Kelly, W. (1959). Kelly Blue. Riverside OJCCD-033-2.

Davis, M. (1959) Kind of Blue. Columbia VCK40579.

Pepper, A. (1960). Gettin' Together. Contemporary S 7573.

Davis, M. (1961). Miles Davis in Person Friday Night at the Blackhawk, San Francisco Vol. 1. Columbia LE10018.

Sleet, D. (1961). All Members. Jazzland JLP 45.
Wynton, K. (1968). Full View. Milestones 9004.
Cobb, J. (1983). So Nobody Else Can Hear. Contempo Vibrato CV003.
Schwaller, R. (1997). Some Changes in Life. Staff Records 003.
Henderson, J. (1998). Straight, No Chaser. Verve Records POCJ-2423.
Ashby, H. (1999). Just For You. Mapleshade Records 06232.
Worth, Monica. (2000). Never Let Me Go. Mapleshade Records 06732.
Eisenman, M. (2004). Sweet & Lovely. Cornerstone Records Inc CRST CD 125.
McBride, C. (2006). New York Time. Chesky Records SACD314.

5. Frankie Dunlop

Hampton, L. (1977). Lionel Hampton and His Jazz Giants. Black and Blue 33.107.
Goodman, B. (1958). Benny Goodman Big Band. Curcio VDJ-5.
Monk, T. (1961). April in Paris / Live. Milestone M-47060.
Monk, T. (1962). Monk's Dream. Columbia CS8765.
Monk, T. (1963). Live at the Village Gate. Xanadu FDC5161.

6. Vernell Fournier

Jamal, A. (1958). Ahmed Jamal at the Pershing. Vogue 651 600049.
Jamal, A. (1958). Poinciana. Cadet CA-719.
Jamal, A. (1960). Listen to the Ahmad Jamal Quintet. Chess-Argo LP673.
McKinley, C. L. (1955). Strange Girl / She's Five Feet Three. Vee Jay Records VJ 133.
Simmons, N. (1955). Norman Simmons Trio. Argo LP 607.
Pate, J. (1956). Jazz Goes Ivy League. King Records 561.
Alexandria, L. (1958). Lorez Sings Pres. Federal 565.
Reed, J. (1959). Boogie In the Dark. Top Rank International RES 101.
Alexandria, L. (1962). Deep Roots. Argo LP-694.
Shearing, G. (1962). Jazz Moments. Capitol Records ST 1827.

Jamal, A. (1962). All Of You. Argo LP-691.

7. Louis Hayes

Adderley, C. (1959). The Cannonball Adderley Quintet in San Francisco. Riverside RCD-1157-2.

Lateef, Y. (1960). Contemplation. Vee-Jay VJS-3052.

Adderley, C. (1961). Nancy Wilson and Cannonball Adderley. Capitol CDP077778120421.

Adderley, C. (1963). Nippon Soul. Riverside OJCCD-435-2.

Montgomery, M. (1960). Montgomeryland. Pacific Jazz PJ-5.

Hayes, L. (1960). Louis Hayes. Vee Jay Records LP 3010.

Gibbs, T. (1964). Take It from Me. Impulse AS-58.

Peterson, O. (1972). Reunion Blues. MPS Records 21 20908-5.

Hayes, L. (1974). Breath of Life. Muse Records MR 5052.

Hayes, L. (1978). The Real Thing. Muse Records MR 5125.

8. Roy Haynes

Haynes, R. (1958) We Three. Fantasy QJC-196.

Nelson, O. (1961). Blues and Abstract Truth. Impulse 9027-5.

Haynes, R. (1962). Out of the Afternoon. Impulse AS-23.

Jones, J. (1951). The Rodgers and The Hart Song Book. Music Minus One 8.

Haynes, R. (1954). Busman's Holiday. EmArcy MG-26048.

Adderley, N. (1955). Introducing Nat Adderley. Wing Records MGW-60000.

McCoy, T. (1963). Reaching Fourth. Impulse A-33.

Haynes, R. (1963). Cymbalism. New Jazz NJ 8287.

Haynes, R. (1964). People. Pacific Jazz PJ-82.

Haynes, R. (1972). Senyah. Mainstream Records MRL 351.

Mitchell, B. (1974). Booty. Mainstream Records MRL 413.

Haynes, R. (1975). Togyu. RCA-RCA- 6311.
Haynes, R. (1976). Sugar Roy. Kitty Records MKF 1002.
Haynes, R. (1977). Thank You Thank You. Galaxy GXY-5103.
Williamson, C. (1978). New Departure. Interplay Records IP-7717.
Haynes, R. (1979). Vistalite. Galaxy GXY-5116.

9. Billy Higgins

Coleman, O. (1958). Something Else! The Music of Ornette Coleman. Contemporary S7551.

Coleman, O. (1959). Change of the Century. Atlantic 1327.

Coltrane, J. (1960). Like Sonny. Roulette CDP 793901-2.

McLean, J. (1961). A Fickle Sonance. Blue Note BST84089.

Gordon, D. (1962). A Swingin' Affair. Blue Note CDP7841332.

Morgan, L. (1963). The Sidewinder. Blue Note CDP7841572.

10. Philly Joe Jones

Pepper, A. (1957). Art Pepper Meets the Rhythm Section. Contemporary S7532.

Davis, M. (1958). Milestones. Columbia PC9428.

Griffin, J. (1958). Way Out!. Riverside SMJ-6067M.

Hubbard, F. (1961). Here to Stay. Blue Note BN-LA496-H2.

Evans, B. (1962). Interplay. Riverside VDJ-1546.

11. Connie Kay

Jackson, M. (1959). Bags & Trane. Atlantic 1368-2.

Jackson, M. (1961). Statements. Impulse GRD-130.

12. Shelly Manne

Rollins, S. (1957). Way Out West. Berkeley: Contemporary OJCCD-337.

Coleman, O. (1959). Tomorrow is the Question. Contemporary S7569.

Manne, S. (1962). 2-3-4 . Impulse A-20.

13. Paul Motian

Evans, B. (1959). Portrait of Jazz. Riverside OJCCD-088.

Evans, B. (1961). Spring Leaves. Berkeley: Milestones M47034.

Evans, B. (1961). The Village Vanguard Sessions. Milestones 47002.

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APPENDIX C

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff, labeled 'Drum Set', shows a sequence of five eighth notes. The first note is marked with an 'x' and labeled 'Ride cymbal'. The second note is marked with an 'x' and labeled 'Hi-hat (pedal)'. The third note is a solid black dot labeled 'Snare drum'. The fourth note is a solid black dot labeled 'Bass drum'. The fifth note is a solid black dot labeled '1.tom' and 'Floor tom'. The bottom staff, labeled 'Ride cymbal', shows a sequence of four eighth notes, each marked with an 'x'. The first note is labeled 'Soft tap lowest volume'. The second note is labeled ''Natural' weight normal volume'. The third note is labeled 'Heavy stroke louder volume'. The fourth note is labeled 'Heaviest weight loudest volume'.

The ride cymbal notation shows the four different dynamic levels. All the music is in swing feel which means that all the eighth notes are played as triplets.