

Modern Jazz Improvisation: Analyzing the Music of Oz Noy

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Hillel Field

Mentor: Professor Daniel Beliavsky, Music

Table of Contents

I. Spontaneous Narrative in Oz Noy's Music	3
II. Oz Noy's Recording of <i>Evidence</i> : A Vision of a New Jazz Aesthetic	22
Bibliography	49
Appendix A- Transcription of <i>You Dig</i> Solo	50
Appendix B- Transcription of <i>Evidence</i> Solo	53

Chapter I:

Spontaneous Narrative in Oz Noy's Music

Oz Noy's solos are characterized by an interplay between tension and release that results in climaxes defined by a variety of melodic and rhythmic motives. Noy forms a real time narrative by employing harmonic and rhythmic variation using both Blues and Jazz vocabularies in order to set up and subvert expectations. For listeners, how Noy manipulates their expectations creates the sense of tension that is necessary to establish a coherent narrative. In the next two chapters, I will provide in depth analyses of improvised solos by Noy, and I will demonstrate how he uses specific musical devices to form these narratives.

These analyses are also informed by an interview I conducted with Noy, in which he provided insight into how he approaches improvisation. It has been fascinating to examine the intersection between Noy's perspective and my own. For instance, I have asked Noy about specific elements of his music about which he admitted not having an explanation; interestingly, I later arrived at a logical explanation for some of Noy's choices. Additionally, there were other moments that I found easily explained by one musical idea, while Noy himself had a different approach in mind. This tension is inevitable in any analysis of a work of art: while the artist does not feel a need to justify every choice, the analyst seeks to explain most events.

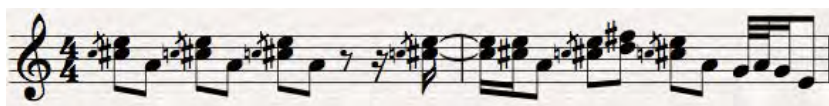
The composition *You Dig* has thematic elements borrowed from Blues, Country, Funk, and Jazz. The majority of the tune features melodies that are clearly derived from Blues music. The drums feature a strong backbeat characteristic of Funk, with a syncopated bassline accordingly fitted to this rhythmic context. Interestingly, Noy uses a Fender Telecaster guitar, known for its "twangy," treble-heavy tone to play this piece. This adds a country-esque timbre to this tune, which makes sense given the broader project of the *Twisted Blues Vol 2* record for

which this track was written: in this record, Noy applies an improvised Jazz vocabulary to Blues and Folk musical forms.¹

In *You Dig*, the introduction of the tune is a repetitive rhythmic figure in A major, called a "vamp" by Noy on his handwritten chart, that plays with the half step relationship between the major and minor third of the tonic triad.² This figure is repeated at length for eight measures at the beginning of the tune, making the vamp harmonically static yet rhythmically propulsive against the strong backbeat. Following a standard Rock drum beat, this rhythm features the bass drum on beats one and three of the measure, and the snare on beats two and four.

Fig. 1

A Major Vamp:



Harmonically, the A sections follow the same basic structure, as shown above in Figure 2. Noy plays a set of altered dominant and minor chords starting from the dominant chord in A major. These chords function as extensions of the first E altered dominant chord with a chromatically descending bassline before returning to the main vamp. Noy returns to the modally ambiguous vamp without the original figure's opening three eighth-notes, once again emphasizing the static and repetitive quality of the vamp: it can be played starting from any point in its original two-bar presentation.

The eight-measure B section in *You Dig* is characterized by the guitar and bass outlining the subdominant chord in A major, D major. The first six measures generally stay within the key of D major, with the addition of the flatted seventh scale degree from D Mixolydian. The final two measures have syncopated chord stabs that are rhythmically similar to those in the A sections, with an additional progression of major chords whose roots are separated by a tritone. This progression ends on a Bb major chord with a flatted fifth, before Noy once again plays the abbreviated version of the vamp mentioned above.

The solo that I transcribed comes from a live performance of *You Dig* from 2014.⁴ In this specific improvisation, Noy subverts expectations primarily through the use of chromatic "sidestepping" around the key center of A by emphasizing the neighboring tonal centers of both Bb and G#. At the same time, Noy intensifies the solo by increasing the subdivision of notes within each beat, and by articulating vibrato in an expressive way by vigorously bending the string vertically on the fingerboard. His solo climaxes in a section marked by a constant repeating motive in a call-and-response texture that I hear as having been foreshadowed throughout the entire improvisation, as I will explain in the next section.

⁴ YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49xpR3hpb0g>

Structure

Initially, the structure of the solo section in *You Dig* seems basic. It is essentially static, as the bass, played by Oteil Burbidge, outlines a single A dominant seventh chord throughout, while the drummer, Keith Carlock, plays an unchanging Funk beat with heavy emphases on beats two and four. This section also no longer follows the harmonic and rhythmic formats of the composed A and B sections, allowing Noy to freely improvise around the key center of A.

While the underlying structure is simple, Noy is able to shape his solo with a clear narrative structure through his musical interactions with Carlock and Burbidge. Noy organizes his 65 measure solo into sections punctuated by variations on a Blues-based line derived from the A major pentatonic scale, which appears eight times. The line's skeletal structure includes the notes E, F#, A, and C or C# (the C and C# create the "blue note" motive of the A major vamp), and its variations employ different melodic and rhythmic patterns using these tones. These riffs are appropriate to the piece and its Blues idiom: they are characterized by frequent string bending and the related wavering relationship between the major and minor mediant scale degree, a central modal feature of the Blues. Noy states this motive, shown in Figure 3, fairly consistently, as it initially appears every four measures. To a seasoned guitarist such as myself, whose musically formative years were spent listening to and playing Blues-influenced Rock, this motive stands out as a memorable statement. Furthermore, as a careful listener, I would expect Noy throughout his solo to continue to quote this lyrical phrase every four measures.

Fig. 3

Pentatonic Motive, mm. 1-2

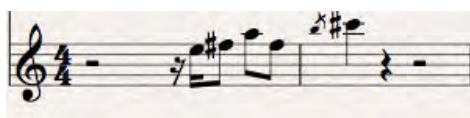


Fig. 4**Pentatonic Motive, mm. 9-10**

Nonetheless, these expectations are thwarted as early as m. 14, when Noy plays a melodic figure based on the Mixolydian mode that extends the length of this pentatonic phrase (shown in Figure 14), throwing off the established pentatonic pattern through the "blues note." The line of sixteenth notes Noy plays in m. 15 starts on C#, the mediant of A major, but immediately ventures into foreign harmonic territory, using a whole tone fragment, followed by notes outlining Bb Mixolydian. This demonstrates an important technique in Noy's arsenal: by playing notes from the scale a half step away (Bb) from the key center of the tune (A), he creates tension. Noy's use of the whole tone scale is consistent with his approach to improvising over dominant chords: he uses any scale that includes a major third and a flatted seventh, including the whole tone scale, the octatonic scale,⁵ and the altered dominant scale.⁶

Fig. 5

Measures 15 and 16:

⁵ This is a symmetrical scale with the octatonic mode: HWHWHWH.

⁶ This scale is synonymous with the seventh mode of melodic minor, or when the scale is notated beginning on the seventh degree.

Throughout this solo, drummer Keith Carlock plays the previously mentioned backbeat rhythm, and emphasizes sixteenth notes with unpitched ghost notes⁷ played on the snare drum. Noy utilizes these subdivisions, playing sixteenth-note runs that would be more at home in a Jazz improvisation than in a Blues solo because he uses both the Mixolydian mode and chromaticism.

Noy continues to play pentatonic-based motives that are generally four measures long, and these feature a major pentatonic tonality as in the examples above. These motives, in turn, are interrupted by less frequent, yet lengthier harmonically exploratory areas like those in mm. 14 and 15, where he introduces chromatic notes borrowed from various scales (see below where I explain the various harmonic tools Noy employs in these sections). In m. 33, Carlock switches from his hi-hat to the ride cymbal, adding a layer of urgency to the rhythm. This seems to inspire Noy to experiment rhythmically, as he launches into a heavily syncopated phrase starting in m. 37. Still, Noy conforms to the musical expectations that he had established earlier, returning to the bluesy pentatonic motive after four measures of tonal complexity. Noy sets up the call-and-response climax of his solo at m. 46 with a series of sixteenth-note arpeggios that modulate through key centers derived from "Coltrane changes," upon which I will elaborate below.

Noy finally reaches the tonic again in m. 50 with much emphasis: he repeatedly strikes the highest A on the guitar, A6, with a heavy vibrato to stress the pitch. The last eight bars of the solo introduce a final motive that embraces an antiphonal call-and-response technique reminiscent of African-American folk music. Noy executes this by first playing a rhythmic figure articulated solely on A6, followed by a similar rhythmic pattern harmonized with chords

⁷ According to *The Drummer's Bible: How to Play Every Drum Style from Afro-Cuban to Zydeco*, the purpose of a ghost note is to "...be heard under the main sound of the groove. This produces a subtle 16th-note feel around a strong back beat or certain accents."

borrowed from A Mixolydian. This final section is a response to the entire solo's pentatonic motive: the motive that Noy plays to punctuate each section of the solo functions as a beckoning call, which is finally answered by the chord stabs consisting of two sixteenth notes and an eighth note that accompany each single note line⁸ from m. 57 onwards. This creates the sonic illusion of another instrument joining Noy in his improvisation, amplifying the energy of the moment.

Fig. 6

Measures 57-60



Single note "call"... Followed by a chordal "response"



Call

Response

Having outlined the general arch of Noy's solo and how he builds tension leading to a climax, it is helpful to take a closer look at the harmonic tools at his disposal. Noy's use of both familiar and more chromatic harmonies indicate to me as a listener the degree to which he intends to build tension. In addition, his harmonic choices highlight his influences from the Jazz

⁸ The term "line" is used generally in Jazz texts to refer to any single note passage. In Bert Ligon's textbook, he associates the term with linear improvisation, as opposed to chordal, vertical improvisation (Bert Ligon, *Jazz Theory Resources*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2001, 69).

tradition as a whole, namely Bebop, and John Coltrane's innovative method of chord substitution.

Harmony

Blues guitarists have traditionally used the major and minor pentatonic scales interchangeably, despite the fact that this would be unorthodox in traditional Western harmonic practice. Noy makes use of similar pentatonic ambiguity outside a strictly Blues style. While the motives shown above in Figures 3 and 4 that demarcate the solo's structural sections use the major pentatonic scale, many of the faster runs are from the minor pentatonic scale (see mm. 24 and 36).

While using the minor pentatonic is common in Blues, Noy goes even further by using the diatonic harmonic minor on A in his solo, further blurring the lines between major and minor by introducing the flatted submediant. Similar to his Bebop predecessors, Noy employs the harmonic minor scale in a neoclassical manner, relying on arpeggios to outline the fully diminished seventh and the minor tonic chords (see mm. 29 and 39). While one would expect a minor sound to clash with the A major chord outlined by the bassline, Noy makes the juxtaposition of major and minor sound unforced. This may be explained by the highly staccato bassline; notes such as the chordal third do not linger, allowing Noy to introduce new harmonic colors in quick succession.

It is important at this point to describe Noy's own take on his use of unorthodox harmonic juxtapositions. I asked Noy for an explanation of what compels him to use diatonic tonal material as opposed to "outside" harmonies.⁹ In his answer, he stressed the fact that he does not think in

⁹ In my courses at NYU, my professors would commonly use the language of "inside" versus "outside" to describe how strictly an improviser's solo follows the harmonic world implied by a piece's chord changes.

terms of "inside" or "outside" harmonies, to use Noy's own terminology. For him, Noy explained, the scales at his disposal are merely different harmonic "colors" with which he can play improvised melodies over a chord whose root is the tonic of these various scales. He explores the harmonic possibilities of a given chord to the farthest extent he is able.

Interestingly, Noy uses modulation to minor keys as a launching point to explore harmonic colors foreign to A, primarily the key centers of Bb and G#, the chromatic tones that neighbor A. When Noy ventures into these foreign key areas, he often uses a chord progression that differs from the progression the rhythm section is already playing. Although this new progression may sound dissonant in relation to the sound of the band as a whole, it functions like a side narrative to the band's larger harmonic narrative. For example, mm. 30-31 feature a harmonic excursion to the key center of Bb major, which is preceded by an E7 arpeggio with C natural as a neighbor tone. While the overall key center is modally ambiguous because Noy uses the Bluesy mediant in the pentatonic motives (C#/C natural), the presence of the leading tone (G#) in the E7 indicate further mode mixture, as Noy freely borrows from both the A major and natural minor scales. Noy then arpeggiates through the Bb and G# major triads, using the respective dominant of each chord to transition from one to the other, as shown in Figure 7.

Fig. 7

Measures 29- 34:

29

30

A Harmonic Minor Bb Major D# Major (Dominant of G#)

31

32

G# Major D# Major C major (V of V)

33

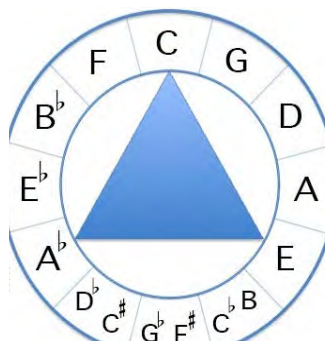
34

F Major (Dominant of Bb) Bb Major (Root) Return to A Major tonal material

A major pentatonic motive

Detailed description: The figure shows a musical score in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measures 29-34 are analyzed. Measure 29 features a triplet of eighth notes. Measures 29-30 are circled in blue, with arrows pointing to labels: 'A Harmonic Minor' (under measure 29), 'Bb Major' (under measure 30), and 'D# Major (Dominant of G#)' (under measure 30). Measure 31 is circled in blue with an arrow pointing to 'G# Major'. Measure 32 is circled in blue with an arrow pointing to 'D# Major'. Measure 33 is circled in blue with an arrow pointing to 'C major (V of V)'. Measure 34 is circled in blue with an arrow pointing to 'A major pentatonic motive'. A large blue arrow points from measure 34 to the text 'A major pentatonic motive'. Below measure 34, three circles highlight specific notes, with arrows pointing to labels: 'F Major (Dominant of Bb)', 'Bb Major (Root)', and 'Return to A Major tonal material'.

Noy also employs different tools to modulate to key centers other than those that neighbor A. For example, mm. 46-49 outline a chord progression starting on chord rooted a minor third above the tonic, C natural. In my interview with Noy, he explained that this sort of improvised progression is usually loosely based on a chord progression made famous by John Coltrane, specifically in his compositions "Giant Steps" and "Countdown." These progressions are essentially sequences of dominant seventh chords that resolve to tonics by following a cycle of arpeggiating thirds through roots that spell the augmented triad (see Figure 8).

**Fig. 8**

John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" features three key centers, all separated by major thirds. This diagram demonstrates the symmetrical relationship on the Circle of Fifths of these chords. In the key of C, Coltrane's progression, covering all three tonal centers, would be:

C Major- Eb7- Ab Major- B7- E major- G7- C Major.

While Noy does not follow this progression to a tee in the example below in Figure 9, he is clearly inspired by Coltrane's sequential progression in order to explore distant tonal centers before returning to A. As indicated in the illustration, since the tune is in A, Noy uses Coltrane's progression to also outline the keys of F and Db, since these three keys are related by major thirds, and their tonics outline an augmented triad.

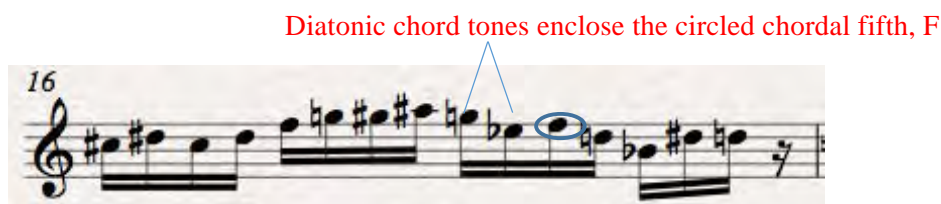
Fig. 9, mm. 46-47

C Major- ↓P5 - F Major- ↑m3- Ab Major- ↓P5- Db Major- ↓P5- Gb/F# Major- ↑m3- A Major

Similarly, Noy also makes use of Bebop vocabulary to build lines that indicate foreign key centers foreign to the home key. An example that occurs at multiple points in the solo is the enclosure technique: Bebop musicians often construct long flowing eighth-note melodies by "enclosing" chord tones with neighboring chromatic or diatonic tones. For example, in m. 8, Noy plays a line outlining an A dominant seventh chord, and anticipates the fifth of the chord by

playing D# followed by F# before playing E.¹⁰ Noy also uses this concept in harmonically denser areas of the solo: for example, in m. 16, he implies a Bb major triad, and precedes it by playing the diatonic tones adjacent to the chordal fifth F, namely G and Eb.

Fig. 10, m. 16



With these techniques, note choice is of the utmost importance, and the improviser must be aware of how such a line will fit rhythmically in the musical context. Given these facts, the task of learning the Bebop style was always daunting to me when I started listening to Jazz records as an adolescent; I thought I needed to acquire the ability to instantly hear these lines and execute them on my instrument in order to be a competent Jazz musician. However, I have learned from my experience in NYU's Jazz Department that skilled improvisers rarely have such instantaneous acumen. Most of my fellow students will spend hours in the practice room carefully constructing Bebop lines so that chord tones fall into place in a rhythmically organized way. Once an improviser has an arsenal of material that he or she has created, or transcribed from another performer, the art behind an improvisation is to connect these different pieces in a coherent and natural manner. In our conversation, Noy agreed that he has a similar process; for

¹⁰ This example is consistent with common Bebop practice: the lower neighbor tone will usually be chromatic, while the upper neighbor tone is diatonic to A major. For reference: Bert Ligon, *Jazz Theory Resources: Tonal, Harmonic, Melodic, & Rhythmic Organization of Jazz* (United States: Houston Publishing, 2001), 72.

him, an improvisation is made up of, at best, twenty percent completely spontaneously created material, and eighty percent pre-planned and painstakingly composed lines.

Noy makes use of other ubiquitous Bebop tools such as arpeggiation, chromatic approach tones, and chromatic passing tones. All these tools are used by Jazz improvisers in ways similar to those utilized in traditional tonal settings: when they are used, they typically emphasize chord tones on the strong beats of a measure. Jazz improvisers, however, often use "stock licks" that well known musicians have played, and that can easily be quoted in a variety of contexts. In order to avoid the cliché nature of these lines, improvisers will sometimes deliberately offset these techniques rhythmically so that the chord tones land on the metrically weak parts of a measure.

Measures 38 and 39 feature instances of arpeggiation and chromatic approach tones. In the first and second beats of m. 38, Noy chromatically encircles F#, and then plays a B minor seventh arpeggio, which ends on the chordal seventh, A. He then proceeds with a chromatic approach, playing F#, G, and finally landing on his target note G# precisely on beat four of the measure. If we look at the melodic contour of this measure, there is clearly a compound line formed, where two melodic ideas are emphasized contrapuntally. There is a primary enclosure melody formed by the target notes, all leading to G#, while the approach notes and arpeggiation are secondary:

Fig. 11, mm. 38-39

Primary Melody (F#, A, G#)

38 39

Chromatically encircling F# B minor Arpeggio Chromatic Approach to G#

Noy also utilizes chromatic passing tones to construct this triadic sequence:

Fig. 12

Measures 40 and 41:

CPT between the third and fifth of C CPT between third and fifth of Ab

CPT between third and fifth of Bb

Noy is also able to create harmonic movement without straying far from the tonal center of A. At numerous points, he ends phrases with the pitch G natural, the subtonic scale degree of A Mixolydian. However, this also has the effect of creating tension when the bass outlines an A major chord, because of the tritone relationship between G and C#, the major mode mediant. Noy resolves this tension several times by emphasizing the notes A and C# in the measures that follow (see mm. 9-10). In addition, he sometimes ends phrases on the note D. This could represent either a brief plagal movement to the IV chord, or the VII chord, G major, borrowed from the parallel A minor key before resolving to the tonic (mm. 17 and 29).

As I mentioned earlier, an important aspect of Noy's real time creation of a narrative is his use of rhythm to intensify areas of a solo. In an instructional video that Noy released in 2012,

multiple places at which to play the same pitch, the fingering of this pattern can also differ depending on the precise fret used. The result is a sequence that is difficult to execute smoothly on guitar. Still, Noy makes these patterns sound natural and fluid, especially impressive in this uptempo tune.

For Noy, sequencing patterns also function as a method of adding rhythmic interest to a solo. For example, Noy plays a four note sequence starting in m. 14 that outlines an A dominant seventh arpeggio with upper and lower neighbor tones decorating the chordal third and seventh, C# and G natural, respectively. The continuation of this sequence breaks the phrase length regularity that Noy establishes up to this point. This delays the reoccurrence of the major pentatonic lick every four measures (see Figures 3 and 4).

Fig. 14, mm. 13-14

Fig. 15, mm. 37-38

Since the E and C# are chord tones in A major, we would expect to hear either one on the downbeat of the next measure. Instead, Noy plays them one and two sixteenth notes early, creating the subsequent syncopation that follows in m. 38.

In mm. 39-41, Noy plays another sequence (see Figure 12). He plays a motive that starts from the root of a major triad, ascends by a major third, and climbs chromatically to the chordal fifth. He cycles this pattern through the key centers of C, Bb, and G#, once again sidestepping his target key center of A major. As though to parallel the tension of these sequences avoiding A, Noy's rhythmic phrasing in this line is also heavily syncopated: all three parts of the sequence are broken up in varying ways by sixteenth-note rests, displacing each phrase's beginning.

This sequence is particularly effective, since Noy plays it right before returning to his major pentatonic motive after a lengthy harmonic detour. Because of the harmonic obscurity relative to the static bassline only outlining A major, Noy's rapid sequencing of these C, Bb, and G# major triads prepares a welcome return to familiar tonal material.

Genre Bending as an Emotive Tool

Noy uses structural pentatonic motives, modulation to foreign key areas, and rhythmic variation through sequencing to manipulate musical and stylistic expectations. By playing Bebop-influenced material within the context of a tune that timbrally nods to country music, Noy

blurs the lines between these styles. This element of genre bending is present within the composed sections of *You Dig*. The A sections, for instance, sound like they were written by a Funk influenced fusion group from the 1970s.

There is actually one point in this performance that is somewhat humorous: at the end of the B section, there is another passage in the odd time signature of seven-eight that ends abruptly with a dissonant sounding Bb7(b5). The entire band is silent for a few seconds, before launching into the main vamp with razor sharp precision. The humor comes from the fact that even to an amateur, the contrast between the traditional sounding vamp and the complex B section, with its dissonant cadential chord, is striking. However, Noy does not combine elements from different genres merely to show off his musical proficiency and broad knowledge of many varied styles. Rather, he uses the most effective elements from each style to create narratives with legitimate emotional impact.

I believe that this is what makes Noy a unique Jazz musician. He is so adept at synthesizing various styles that he does not sound like a Jazz musician who happens, for instance, to be playing a bluesy song. A significant factor that contributes to his authentic sound is his willingness to rely on equipment and guitar effects to accurately convey the sonic nuances of various styles. For example, in the solo I have analyzed in this chapter, although Noy uses a classic overdriven¹³ Blues guitar tone throughout, whenever he plays denser lines in the Bebop style, he uses a noticeably softer vibrato and a subtler attack with his picking hand.

As a developing musician with eclectic tastes, I am inspired to see a likeminded musician who coherently synthesizes his love of different musical styles in his own compositions. Noy's

¹³ This term is used to describe the tonal characteristic of adjusting the volume level of an amplifier to the point where it produces a subtle distortion, allowing a guitarist to sustain notes for longer periods.

playing gives me new perspectives on a question that vexes countless struggling musicians: how do you write music that satisfies your own nuanced and possibly quite obscure musical tastes, while at the same time appealing to enough people in order to make a living as an artist?

From Noy's point of view, this question has become irrelevant. As he pointed out to me in our discussion, when he released his first few albums for a major label,¹⁴ he was highly concerned that his listeners perceive him as an iconoclastic and experimental artist. This point is justified by the general sound of these records: Noy seems to go out of his way to insert the quirky and humorous sounds achievable with effects pedals at almost every tune. However, more recently, especially since the release of his Blues-themed records,¹⁵ Noy claims that he has stopped caring about his artistic image, and has wholeheartedly embraced composing music that he enjoys playing.

With this current mindset, I think that Noy maintains an ideal position regarding the question I posed above, and his solo in *You Dig* is a good example. As Noy told me, he spent many years studying Jazz vocabulary by transcribing solos and learning the nuances of Bebop phrasing. Still, he does not limit himself to playing the lengthy chromatic sixteenth-note runs that characterize Bebop. One thing to which an audience can relate is the sense of urgency and excitement created by playing such fast melodic lines. When Noy uses Bebop vocabulary in this solo, he employs it to achieve this exciting effect. It creates an accumulation of energy before Noy gives his listeners something that most can appreciate: lyrical and cathartic call-and-response Blues melodies inspired by Bebop, Funk, and Country sounds and techniques.

¹⁴ Namely, *Fuzzy* from 2007 and *Schizophrenic* from 2009.

¹⁵ Namely, *Twisted Blues Vol 1*(2011) and *Vol 2* (2014).

Chapter II

Oz Noy's Recording of *Evidence*: A Vision of a New Jazz Aesthetic

Evidence is the final track on Oz Noy's 2007 record *Fuzzy*. This piece is unique because it is the only track on the album, otherwise full of original compositions, that is a Jazz standard of the same name, written by the prolific composer and pianist Thelonious Monk. At the same time, it fits comfortably into the sonic character of the record, which is laden with effects that radically alter Noy's guitar sound. On almost every track, Noy employs devices such as delay pedals to create ambient soundscapes (for example, the arpeggiated loop that is present throughout *Which Way is Up?*) and effects that evoke nature sounds, like the birdlike cacophony in *Epistrofunk*.

The experimental nature of this album makes it difficult to associate it with a specific style of music. From listening to the albums Noy recorded at this early point in his career, it is clear that these compositions primarily draw their rhythms from Funk influences, while their harmonic content borrows from Rock, Pop, Blues, and Jazz equally. In contrast, while the tracks from Noy's *Twisted Blues* project push the stylistic boundaries of Blues music, they still retain the overall technical and aesthetic qualities of Blues pieces. On *Evidence*, Noy changes certain key characteristics of the original tune so dramatically that the average informed listener would be unlikely to identify it as a Jazz standard. His version of this song makes for a fascinating study, where a piece that was originally progressive in its own right becomes a vehicle for further interpretation and subversion of traditional Jazz aesthetics. While Noy's improvised melodies are clearly inspired by traditional Jazz vocabulary, the aggressive and at times acerbic qualities of Oz Noy's guitar sound and playing style are a far cry from the purist vision of Wynton Marsalis's Jazz at Lincoln Center interpretations.

Monk's Composition

Noy's recording of *Evidence* is not the first time it was radically reinterpreted. When I brought up this recording in my conversation with Noy, he advised me to analyze his take on this standard by comparing it with its musical precursors. Thelonious Monk's composition actually uses the same chord changes as another Jazz standard, *Just You, Just Me*, composed in 1929 by Jesse Greer.¹⁶ This practice is known as writing a "contrafact," and has been widely used in the Jazz tradition. In a typical contrafact, a composer will use the chord progression from an earlier piece and compose a new melody that fits the harmony, while usually retaining the piece's form. Pioneers of the Bebop style such as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie employed this mode of composition numerous times to reframe the familiar harmonies of older standards with the new and more complex melodic language of Bebop.

In this case, both pieces are in the key of Eb major, and feature an AABA structure. The A section of *Just You, Just Me* is comprised of eight measures; the first four form a I-VI-ii-V progression, where the VI, C7, tonicizes the minor ii chord. The next four measures include a tonicization of the IV chord, Ab, in m. 6, which is followed by a return to the Eb major tonic preceded by the ii and V chords, a standard Jazz device.

The B section begins by setting up a tonicization of the IV chord.¹⁷ Measure 20 features the interesting use of the bVII dominant chord, Db7. This is a chord that appears in many Jazz standards, and functions to support a voice-leading technique: the chordal third of Ab major goes down a half step to the flatted seventh of Db7, which in turn descends a half step to the fifth of

¹⁶ <http://www.jazzstandards.com/compositions-0/justyoujustme.htm>

¹⁷ The available versions of sheet music differ slightly on whether the IV chord is set up solely with its dominant, or with an additional predominant ii chord.

Eb major (Cb to Bb). In the final four measures of the section, the V chord, Bb major, is tonicized by the preceding chords Cm7 and F7. This creates a sense of tension that is quickly relieved by a return to the tonic chord in m. 25.

The melody of *Just You, Just Me* is primarily diatonic, and using upper and lower neighbor tones, emphasizes and decorates the tones of each measure's harmonic content.

Fig. 1

First eight measures of Greer's "Just You, Just Me":

The C natural anticipates the root of the next measure, a common device in tunes from the swing era

The Ab is decorated by upper and lower neighbor tones

Chromatic approach tone to an Eb6 arpeggio

Evidence, a contrafact of *Just You, Just Me*, was written by Monk in 1948. Its title is actually a clever nod to the original tune, as Monk originally named the tune *Just Us*, which he then changed to *Justice*, before finally deciding on *Evidence*. This composition exemplifies Monk's quirky composition characteristics; the tune's melody is formed by a succession of syncopated close-voiced chords on piano. In several recorded versions of the tune, the drummer accents the syncopated melody with the bass drum, emphasizing its unpredictable rhythm. In Monk's typical quartet setting consisting of piano, bass, drums, and tenor saxophone, the tenor plays the highest note of each chord to highlight the melody. The B section features similar syncopation; each chord is played on the "and" of beat one.

Monk's harmonies sound more dissonant compared to *Just You, Just Me* because of the chord substitutions Monk employs and the extensions he plays on seventh chords. Many musicians from the Bebop era such as Monk frequently preceded the dominant with a ii chord, and Monk uses this progression in the second measure of *Evidence* with the addition of a Gmin7 chord, a ii7 in F. This technique appears again in m. 6 with the progression Abmin7-Db7, a ii-V in the key of Gb major.

One of the major harmonic differences between the original and Monk's contrafact is the presence of the A7 in m. 5. This is another characteristic Bebop technique known as tritone substitution (TTS). In most instances, a dominant V7 chord will be substituted for another dominant seventh chord whose root is a tritone away. This allows the substituted chord to serve the same harmonic function: both dominant chords share their major thirds and flatted sevenths (these notes switch places between the two chords). This results in similar voice leading tendencies for the major third and flatted seventh of the original and substituted chord: these elements resolve by step in contrary motion.

In this tune, Monk plays an A7 where the Eb7 is played in the original piece. This progression tonicizing Ab, ii in Gb major, creates a tension that is resolved by the downward half step motion in the bass when the Abm7 is played m. 6.

While the altered dominant chords featured in this tune are standard fare in Jazz harmony (see Figure 2), Monk emphasizes these altered tones in the melody to create tension. In the B section, Monk retains the harmonic structure of *Just You, Just Me*. He heightens tension in this section with a chromatic stepwise melodic ascent toward the tonic. Monk upsets this resolution by playing an E natural in the last measure of the B section, a half step above the expected tonic.

Fig. 2
A and B sections of *Evidence*¹⁸

TTS for Eb7

Flatted fifth in melody emphasizes dissonance

Chromatic stepwise motion in upper voice

Flatted ninth in melody

Flatted fifth in melody, a half step above the tonic

As indicated above, this tune's melody features heavy syncopation. While many Bebop tunes have melodies emphasizing the weak beats in a measure, this tune's lack of rhythmic consistency has made it harder for me to understand it as both a listener and a player. During my spring semester in the Jazz Studies department at NYU, I was required to perform this piece with my ensemble. When I learn most Jazz tunes, I have an intuitive sense of the melody's rhythm after listening to a recording of the work. For this piece, however, I was only able to play the melody precisely after memorizing where each chord stab lies rhythmically in each measure. This tune is difficult to play by "feel" because each pair of successive chord stabs is separated by varying amounts of time. For example, there is a duration of three quarter note rests between when the first and second chords are played, while less than two quarter note rests pass between the second and third stabs. This asymmetry is prominent throughout the A section. The B section

¹⁸ Since Monk's voicings differ among the recorded versions of this piece, my notation reflects the notes he most often emphasizes in each measure.

is more rhythmically consistent; every chord stab is played on the "and" of beat one, which contributes to a sense of building tension formed by the chromatic melody.

Noy's Interpretation

It is against this harmonic and rhythmic backdrop that Noy's reimagining of *Evidence* takes place. Like the original piece, the form of the tune is AABA; the repeated A section spans mm. 1-8, and mm. 9-16 comprise the B section. Noy makes minor harmonic adjustments that differ from Monk's version. For instance, Noy plays the second chord in m. 1 as a Cm7 instead of Monk's Gm7, with the chordal subdominant, F, in the highest voice. Accordingly, this chord may also be analyzed as a G minor chord over a C natural in the bass. With this understanding, Noy's tritone substitution of F#7 for C7 in the following measure makes more sense: the downward chromatic root motion between G minor and F#7 is typical in a TTS.

Fig. 3

A and B sections of Noy's recording of *Evidence*:

Can also be analyzed as Gm7/C, descending by chromatic root motion to F#7

The image shows a musical score for Noy's recording of *Evidence*. The score is written in 3/4 time and consists of three staves. The first staff is labeled 'A' and contains measures 1-8. The second staff is labeled 'B' and contains measures 9-16. The third staff is labeled 'A' and contains measures 17-24. Chord symbols are written above the notes. A blue arrow points from the Cm7 chord in measure 2 to the F#7 chord in measure 3. A red arrow points from the Cm7 chord in measure 2 to the F#7 chord in measure 3. A red arrow points from the Cm7 chord in measure 2 to the F#7 chord in measure 3. A red arrow points from the Cm7 chord in measure 2 to the F#7 chord in measure 3.

Contrapuntal motion between roots and upper voices of chords (see paragraph below)

Noy's harmonic alterations in the B section are further instances of TTS. This creates a fascinating contrapuntal effect: the roots of the first four chords descend by half steps, while the upper voice in the melody ascends by half steps. Interestingly, in m. 13, Noy chooses to omit the Eb chord present in the original, and skips ahead to a Cmin7 chord (the equivalent to the C7 in Monk's version). Relative to Monk's version, this results in an earlier arrival at the dominant Bb7 chord in m. 15; Monk plays the chord in m. 16, the last measure of the section. For this last measure, both Noy and his bassist Jimmy Johnson instead imply an E7 chord. This is an extension of the V chord from the previous measure; the notes of the E7 chord are all part of a Bb7 altered chord, creating a tension that is resolved by the tonic's return in the first measure of the A section.

Fig. 4

Comparison between Monk and Noy's last four measures of the B section:

Monk

Noy

Noy skips the Eb chord, allowing him to extend the V chord in the last two measures

These notes function enharmonically as the flatted fifth (Fb) and flatted nine (Cb) of Bb7

The differences between these two versions do not make Noy's cover stand out as noteworthy when compared to any other Jazz artist who has covered this tune. These are changes that Monk himself would have applied to a standard. Thus, the most glaring and important

difference between Noy and Monk's versions is rhythmic: Noy plays the piece in an entirely different time signature, three-four instead of four-four. Noy's band, consisting of veteran session musicians Vinnie Colaiuta (drums) and Jimmy Johnson (bass), plays a straight eighth-note rhythm, diverging from the swing feel of the original. Framing this tune in a different time signature forces Noy to change the rhythmic profile of the melody in order to keep it in sync with the tune's harmonic rhythm.

When I play Noy's version on guitar, I find its rhythm easier to feel than in Monk's piece. Noy evidently "smoothed out" the uneven chord stabs near the beginning of the A section: the first four hits of the melody are all separated by dotted quarter note rests. At the same time, this choice adds a layer of complexity to this recording. Since the first stab is played on the "and" of beat one, and the next few stabs are rhythmically equidistant, it sounds like the tune is actually in four-four, with the stabs played on the "and" of beats two and four in the implied quadruple meter. Vinnie Colaiuta's drumming in the A section further supports this metric reframing, as he refrains from emphasizing the downbeat of each three-four measure. He plays an eighth-note rhythm on the hi-hat, utilizing the bass drum, snare, and crash cymbals to mimic Noy's guitar part (similarly to how Monk's drummers used the bass drum in this tune). Because of the metric ambiguity, I assumed that this recording was in four-four until I saw Noy's handwritten chart. For the B section, the implied duple compound meter is more obvious; although Noy indicates a three-four time signature, the drums sound like they are in six-eight.

Fig. 6, Evidence Melody

Chords are evenly separated by dotted quarter rests

The B section melody is adjusted to begin on the downbeat of each measure

The absence of a swing feel in Noy's recording gives this tune a prominent Funk rhythmic edge. One major reason for this is related to the point I made above about the illusory metric effect created when the first chord stab is played on the "and" of beat one. A major characteristic of Funk rhythm guitar playing is to play syncopated sixteenth-note figures, and Noy's phrasing of the melody deceptively sounds like he is playing such a figure, even while he plays only eighth-note patterns. Noy also achieves a Funk guitar sound by striking the guitar strings with his right hand while muting them with his left hand, another classic Funk technique. He does this at various points during the melody, adding a sense of propulsion to his playing, like a drummer playing unpitched ghost notes on the snare.

When I discussed this piece with Noy, he strongly confirmed the tune's Funk associations. In his words, "Before going into the studio, my concept was to make it a 'Tower of Power' tune in three. Jimmy [Johnson] wasn't really sure what to do with it, he played stuff that was more fusion-y. It didn't come out the way I really heard it in my head." Apparently, Noy had a vision of an even stronger Funk influenced cover; I imagine that he would have preferred the

bassist to play more consistent and repetitive basslines instead of the improvised, constantly varied techniques that Johnson employed on the recording. It is fascinating to keep this in mind while listening to the recording, and leads me to speculate that this miscommunication might have been caused by Johnson recording his bass track separately after Noy and Colaiuta recorded their parts.

Jazz Techniques in Noy's Solo

Having traced the history of *Evidence* and how Noy's take on the composed section of the tune relates to its predecessors, I can now discuss Noy's improvised solo, which begins in m. 25, and goes through four full choruses until m. 152. Noy's improvisation introduces even more significant innovations of this tune than the changes I have described above.

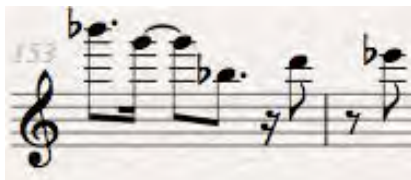
In his solo, Noy expands the dynamic and expressive capacity of the guitar in a Jazz context. There are elements of Noy's improvisation that place him in the Jazz tradition, including specific harmonic and rhythmic tools that he uses to create tension and anticipation. On the other hand, there are also elements of his solo that are rarely practiced in the tradition, such as the heavy use of effects and Blues guitar stylings that Noy blends with his Jazz language. This showcases Noy's Jazz aesthetic, something that not only can be elegant and subtle, but loud and emotional.

Noy plays a motive at the end of each chorus throughout his four-chorus solo, with slight variation at each juncture, in order to frame the solo's various stylistic elements in a unified musical context. The motive itself is cadential; generally, Noy will play a descending Eb major triad arpeggio ending on the root, ascend by the major third, and resolve up a half step to the tonic.

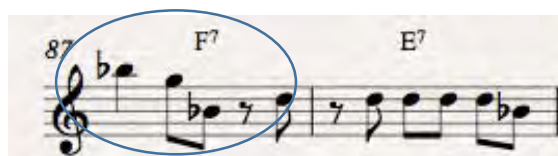
Fig. 7

Cadential arpeggio motive:

Measure 55:

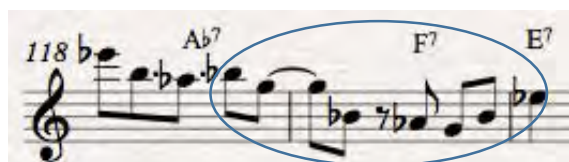


Measures 87-88:



Does not resolve to the tonic in this case

Measure 118-120:



Extended version, descends to the major third of tonic

Measures 151-152:



Slightly modified, plays an F instead of a G

To an avid listener and player of Jazz, this motive serves the function of a musical landmark. Throughout all the rhythmic and harmonic variations that Noy uses, this melody signals that we have arrived at the end of the chorus. Furthermore, the motive sounds decidedly jazzy because improvisers frequently use arpeggiated figures to outline chord changes. To me, the use of this motive emphasizes the Jazz origins of this tune, despite Noy's Blues vocabulary and effects-heavy sound.

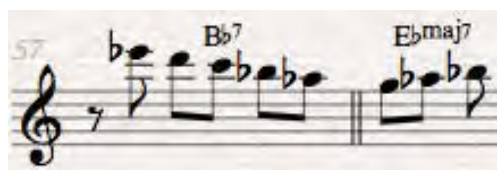
Another technique Noy uses to give a sense of continuity to this solo is playing phrases that continue from the end of one chorus through the beginning of the next one, specifically near the beginning of an A or B section. For example, in mm. 55-56, Noy ends the first chorus with the cadential motive, yet uses the last note of the motive to pivot into a line that descends down

the Eb major scale. This line continues into the first measure of the second chorus, providing a sense of forward propulsion. This is a key technique in improvisation because a performer can easily fall into the trap of making each improvised chorus sound like a separate solo instead of forming a singular musical statement transcending every chorus.

Fig. 8

Example of across-the-barline phrasing:

Measures 56-57



These techniques serve as the glue that keeps Noy's improvisation cohesive, as it draws from Blues and Jazz vocabularies. Without some connective elements, such an improvisation runs the risk of sounding random and unmusical.

As established in the previous chapter, Noy studied Jazz intensively during his formative years as a guitarist. Although Noy tells me that he never attended a formal music school, he clearly learned primarily the old-fashioned way: by listening to Jazz records and applying the harmonies and techniques he heard to his instrument. One of the most important skills a Jazz musician must acquire is the ability to improvise over chord changes. As opposed to *You Dig, Evidence* features a constantly modulating chord progression; there is no single scale that can be fitted over every chord in the progression.

Noy demonstrates his adeptness at highlighting the chord tones in a measure at several points in this solo. One representative example is the constant eighth-note line that Noy plays

over the A section in mm. 89-96. This line is rife with classic Bebop techniques, including passing-tone scales and anticipatory tones.

Fig. 9, mm. 89-96

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff, labeled '89', contains measures 89-91. It features a sequence of chords: Ebmaj7, Cm7, and Fm7. Annotations include 'CT' (Chromatic Tone) pointing to specific notes in the Ebmaj7 and Cm7 chords, and 'Chromatic Approach Tone' and 'CAT' (Chromatic Approach Tone) pointing to notes between the Ebmaj7 and Cm7, and between Cm7 and Fm7 respectively. The second staff, labeled '92', contains measures 92-96. It features a sequence of chords: Bb7, A7, Ab7, F7, and Bb7. Annotations include 'CT' pointing to notes in the Bb7 and Ab7 chords, 'Chromatic enclosure' pointing to a group of notes in the Bb7 chord, 'Chromatic PTs' (Chromatic Passing Tones) pointing to notes between the Bb7 and A7 chords, and 'Anticipates Ab' pointing to a note in the A7 chord. A red text box at the bottom right explains that the line is repeated an octave lower in the next measure and that Noy is anticipating the V chord, treating the II7 applied dominant chord like an extension of the dominant.

In this example, Noy's playing is highly precise as he melodically outlines almost every chord change. It is helpful to characterize this way of playing as "harmonic specificity," to borrow the term coined by Bert Ligon in his Jazz textbook.¹⁹ Alternatively, Jazz musicians also traditionally approach an improvisation with frequent chord changes in a way that emphasizes the key center, ignoring chords that are functionally less important. Ligon conceptualizes this

¹⁹ Bert Ligon, *Jazz Theory Resources*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2001, 179.

view as the polar opposite of harmonic specificity, calling it "harmonic generalization."²⁰ Noy also employs this latter technique, mainly through the use of Eb pentatonic scales. In mm. 130-133, specifically, he plays notes from both the Eb major and minor pentatonic scales, vacillating between the two as is common in Blues practice:

Fig. 10, mm. 130-133

Flatted fifth, or "blue note," typically used with minor pentatonic

Flatted third is used to approach the natural third, typically used with major pentatonic

130 Cm7

Compared to the example in Fig. 9, Noy's note choices remain consistently tied to a single scale throughout these four measures. He is essentially playing a figure that descends through the minor pentatonic scale through these few measures. Noy ends the line at m. 133 with Eb major chord tones while the bass outlines an A7 chord. I would expect this choice to create a dissonant effect, yet Noy makes it sound coherent because he plays a "harmonically general" Eb pentatonic statement in the previous few measures. An Eb major triad within Eb pentatonic material sounds fitting here, even if the underlying A7 harmony would imply an otherwise whole tone context.

Noy's Blues phrasing in this solo serves a similar role to the Bebop phrasing he uses in his solo on *You Dig*. As I will highlight in my discussion of Noy's tone, Noy's Blues melodies are highly expressive because of their vocal quality. It serves as a foil to the quasi-Classical

²⁰ Ibid.

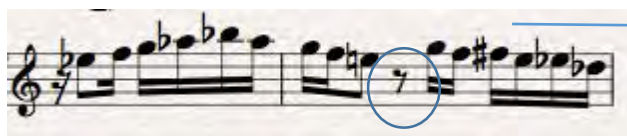
sounding, "harmonically specific" soloing approach that Jazz improvisers often use. Even to a knowledgeable listener like myself, this one-dimensional approach often comes across as uninspired. In this tune, these Blues phrases provide cathartic relief after sections where energy is slowly built up.

However, even within the Jazz tradition, musicians have utilized rhythmic tools to break the potential monotony of single-note, arpeggio-laden soloing. In this solo, Noy demonstrates that these techniques are also part of his arsenal. In general, there is an abundance of rhythmic variation in this solo, even when compared to the solo on *You Dig*. One way this tune lends itself more easily to rhythmic manipulation is the rhythm section's focus on quarter-note and eighth-note patterns, allowing Noy to play figures with a sixteenth-note emphasis. This kind of rhythmic contrast between soloist and accompanists serves to amplify intensity in an improvisation.

One particular passage in mm. 121-129 is one the fastest I have heard Noy play among his recorded catalog, so my transcription is bound to be an approximation, both rhythmically and melodically. I was still able to hear Noy's general harmonic journey in this line; it once again emphasizes the important chord tones in the A section, and is consistently "harmonically specific." One prominent Bebop technique that appears in the passage is the use of a major seventh arpeggio starting on the third of a minor seventh chord, in this case, Fm7. This enables an improviser systematically to target the upper extensions of a seventh chord such as the ninth and eleventh, by treating chordal thirds and fifths as roots.

Fig. 11, mm. 121- 129

121



These last four notes imply an F#7 chord, which appeared in the section during the melody

Major seventh arpeggio from the third of Fm7

Circled rests indicate areas of the passage where Noy abruptly stops and starts the line again. This results in a highly syncopated sound that obfuscates the triple meter of the tune.

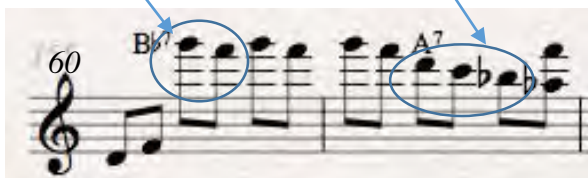
Similar to my analysis of the cadential motive in Figure 7 above, Noy also uses rhythmic gestures that signal his current location in the piece's form. This is most clearly applied to distinguish between A and B sections: Noy consistently plays more rhythmically complex material over A sections that obscures the tune's triple meter, while his playing over B sections tends to emphasize the triple meter. I speculate that this tendency was inspired by a similar dichotomy Noy practices within the piece's rhythmic-harmonic structure: the A section features chords primarily played on off-beats, while the chords in the B section are played on downbeats.

From my point of view as a listener, these gestures are helpful, especially because Vinnie Colaiuta's drumming becomes increasingly complex during the second chorus of Noy's solo. While the time signature is in triple meter throughout the solo, Colaiuta superimposes a duple pattern at the beginning of the second chorus; he plays an open hi-hat on every other quarter note, creating the illusion that the tune is in four-four. In an instance of interaction common to musicians in a Jazz setting, Noy seemingly picks up on Colaiuta's concept of rhythmic deception and metric reframing, and plays syncopated patterns during the first A of the second chorus. These patterns further obscure the downbeat, in this way similar to Noy's use of sequencing in

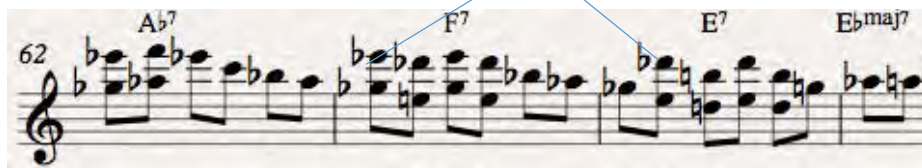
his improvisation on *You Dig*. In mm. 60-65, Noy uses a pattern consisting of repeatedly played notes separated by whole steps, or enharmonically related diminished thirds, followed by a three-note descending line. Noy modulates this pattern in order to fit the chord progression.²¹

Fig. 12, mm. 60-65

Repeated whole-step figure Three-note descending line



Pattern restarts on different parts of the measures, creating syncopation



Note how the pattern sequences down by whole tone in each repetition in order to fit the piece's harmonic motion

When we reach the B section in m. 73, Noy clearly changes his rhythmic phrasing to stress the downbeats of each measure, a stark contrast to the previous measures. This tempers the disorienting effect of Colaiuta's metric syncopation by firmly establishing the downbeats. Noy also outlines the chord changes of the B section with smooth, primarily stepwise voice leading and with arpeggiation. These tendencies help me, as a listener, by serving as landmarks highlighting the tune's division into choruses in Noy's solo.

²¹ In other patterns found in mm. 29-32 and 99-103, Noy uses his technique of playing notes a half-step above the key center, upon which I elaborated in the previous chapter.

Fig. 13, mm. 73-80

Second chorus, B section:

Noy plays the downbeat of each measure, and every note falling on the downbeat in this passage is a chord tone

These examples of rhythmic variation in Noy's solo point to his grounding in the lineage of iconic Jazz musicians. When I brought up the topic of Noy's musical influences in our conversation, he mentioned pianist Chick Corea and guitarist Pat Metheny, both of whom were pioneers of the Fusion movement in the 60s and 70s. From the relatively little experience I have had listening to these musicians, one outstanding feature was their tendency to use sequences and patterns to create rhythmic and harmonic complexity.²² This makes me fairly certain that Noy was inspired to adopt such techniques from these practices.

Based on my analysis thus far, Noy's application of harmonic and rhythmic tools places him squarely within the Jazz tradition. His use of both "harmonic specificity" and "generalization" point to his adoption of methods pioneered by Jazz musicians from the Bebop and Hard Bop eras.²³ Noy's techniques for rhythmic manipulation apparently come from his study of improvisation practiced during the Fusion era, which was still in full swing during Noy's youth in the 70s and 80s. Noy's embrace of such a vast swathe of Jazz history, coupled with his

²² Corea's solo on *Matrix* from his 1968 album *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* serves as a telling example for the application of this pattern-based playing to a traditional form like the 12-bar Blues.

²³ This is roughly the period from the late 40s to early 60s.

other major stylistic influences, has placed him in an ideal position to contribute his own voice to the Jazz tradition. This comes in the form of utilizing techniques belonging to various genres, as I detailed in the previous chapter, and his developing a personal sonic aesthetic, as I demonstrate below.

Tone and Dynamics

From the opening chords of *Evidence*, the listener is hit with an abrasive, almost obnoxious sound that resembles a heavily distorted synthesizer.²⁴ Such effects are commonplace for Noy; one can hear his penchant for creating psychedelic soundscapes in his earliest released record from 2002. At a typical gig, Noy will use massive pedalboards, consisting of up to twenty effect pedals. These effects typically fall into the categories of overdrive/distortion, filter (such as a wah pedal), modulation, and delay pedals.

Fig. 14

Oz Noy's typical pedalboard:



²⁴ I asked Noy how he achieved this sound, and he told me that it comes from a fuzz pedal, which is a type of overdrive pedal.

At its most basic level, Noy achieves his guitar sound with a Fender Stratocaster guitar plugged into a tube-powered amplifier. He almost always has a light overdrive effect activated, one that allows his guitar to cut through a typically loud and driving rhythm section. Noy takes advantage of the volume control on tube amplifiers: as the master volume increases, the sound character gains a warm overdriven character. This gives Noy a guitar tone that is most reminiscent of the iconic Blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan. Vaughan similarly played a Stratocaster, and Noy has unsurprisingly cited him as a major influence.

Noy's equipment choices put him in a unique category within the Jazz world. From the earliest days of electric guitar Jazz recordings in the 40s and 50s, guitarists almost exclusively used hollow body instruments instead of guitars like the Stratocaster, which became associated with Rock and Blues guitarists. The hollow bodies gave a darker tonal quality to a typical Jazz guitar sound, one with a bass-heavy character. Only in the 60s was there any innovation in the Jazz guitar sound; Fusion guitarists such as John McLaughlin and Al di Meola were inspired by Rock musicians to experiment with distortion. While some Jazz guitarists like Pat Metheny applied synthesizer technology to the guitar to imitate the sounds of other instruments, mainstream Jazz guitarists to this day embrace the unaffected tone of a hollow or semi-hollow body guitar. Fusion guitarists McLaughlin and di Meola primarily used their experimental sounds to play original compositions; they rarely played traditional Jazz standards. From my own experience, any guitarist playing in a club offering "Classic Jazz" for musical entertainment is sure to be playing some kind of hollow body guitar, without the aid of pedals.

One guitarist who has gone against the grain while still playing music that falls under the traditional Jazz umbrella is John Scofield. Scofield became well-known as the guitarist in Miles Davis's band in the 1980s, and has since released a wide body of music as a bandleader. I had the

unique opportunity to participate in a guitar workshop at NYU taught by Scofield in the spring of 2018. This gave me firsthand exposure to a Jazz legend, as the workshop primarily consisted of participants playing Scofield's original compositions. His tone has been unique since his days playing with Davis; like Noy (who has cited him as an influence), Scofield prefers a bright overdriven sound, which he achieves even while playing a semi-hollow guitar. In the workshop, Scofield explained that he favors this tone because of his love for horn instruments, which have broader dynamic capabilities than a traditional Jazz guitar sound. His own technique of utilizing such dynamics speaks to this affinity: he often employs legato phrasing that allows him to play chromatic passages in ways that are traditionally more characteristic of saxophone lines.

Another guitarist whose sonic influence is noticeably palpable in Noy's music is Wayne Krantz. Although he rarely plays traditional Jazz tunes, he considers himself part of the mainstream Jazz world, and also teaches in the NYU Jazz Studies Department. Krantz was one of the first renowned Jazz guitarists to play a Stratocaster almost exclusively. Krantz's music is heavily Funk-oriented and rhythm based, and he takes advantage of the percussive quality of the Stratocaster's tone. His bright guitar tone can sound like a piano at times, and he makes frequent use of the guitar's open strings to create rich and sustaining chord voicings.²⁵ Krantz is also a heavy effect pedal user, and he often goes from a pristine clean sound to roaring distortion within the same piece. His repertoire often crosses genre boundaries, as he frequently plays instrumental versions of pop songs, using them as a framework for improvisation. Krantz's overall performance aesthetic is noticeably different from the average Jazz musician; he typically dresses very casually, and gives off a sense of reckless abandon more commonly associated with

²⁵ This aspect of Krantz's style may be the one most obviously adopted by Noy. Many of Noy's pieces, such as *Get Down*, feature these open-string voicings. For a clear comparison between Noy and Krantz, see this clip of Krantz playing his composition *Six*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6k85pSv0SQg>

Rock musicians. Interestingly, Noy has a similar sense of style, usually wearing a T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers when performing. Noy has cited Krantz as the musician whose style made the greatest impression on him when Noy first moved to New York from Israel.

Noy's guitar tone was a topic I made sure to bring up in my interview, and it was fascinating to hear his own perspective. In his view, solid body guitars have become more popular among Jazz guitarists in recent years, yet some still manage to achieve a traditional Jazz sound from these nontraditional guitars. When I asked why he thought Jazz guitarists shunned the use of distortion to achieve a more horn-like sound akin to Scofield, he said: "I like the traditional sound, and I think people just played those guitars because that's the tone they heard on Jazz records. But I can't play with that sound; it doesn't work for the way I phrase [based on the way Noy uses an overdrive pedal]." Interestingly, Noy is of the opinion that there is no inherent reason why the guitar sound associated with Jazz tradition remained pervasive; people simply used the same guitar that they heard the greats playing. When I asked if he ever faced criticism for his unique tone, Noy said,

No, and someone who gives that kind of criticism wouldn't stand a [expletive] chance in the Jazz world. Guys like Scofield, [Kurt] Rosenwinkel use distortion, and even Pat Metheny's tone was traditional, yet really dark with a lot of reverb. Maybe people would tear me apart if I made a record playing standards, but that hasn't happened yet.

As I also pointed out in the last chapter, Noy clearly is not concerned with public opinion or how people perceive his artistic image: he plays his music in his own way because he enjoys it that way.

Beyond the most elementary version of his sound, Noy's use of a vast array of effects remains unparalleled. Many guitarists in the Rock world also have gargantuan pedalboards, but few will utilize effects within a work the way Noy does. Beyond the concentration Noy requires

to execute complex passages on his guitar, he constantly turns various pedals on and off throughout a piece. By employing certain effects at specific moments, whether creating an ambient drone over which to solo, or activating a tremolo effect that changes an eighth-note rhythm into a sixteenth-note figure, Noy uses these effects as orchestration. This ability stands unique among many effect-using guitarists, for whom effects sound interesting, without serving as anything more than decoration.

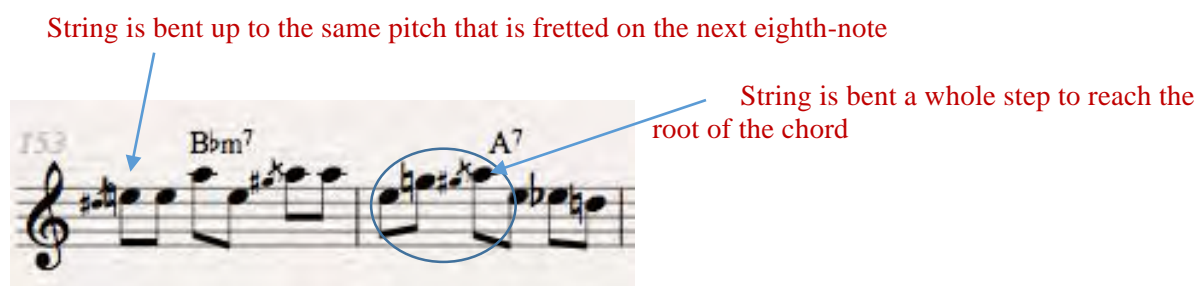
Within his improvisation on *Evidence*, Noy uses the dynamic capabilities offered by his pedals to create an unfolding and coherent narrative throughout the solo. He begins the solo by using a wah pedal, which adds a human vocal quality to his lines.²⁶ Noy also plays lines that are more rhythmically sparse during the first chorus. In tandem with his use of the wah pedal, I get a sense of timidity from Noy's playing in this opening section, perhaps because of the wah's vocal nature. The next dynamic shift in the solo occurs at m.73 (see Fig. 13), where it sounds like Noy activates a modulation effect, specifically one known as a "Uni-vibe," which adds a wavering quality to his tone. When used in combination with the wah, it results in a longer sustain time for each note played. This thickens the texture of Noy's sound, and Vinnie Colaiuta's busy drum fills during these measures build anticipation. From that point forward, Colaiuta intensifies his performance by switching from playing the hi-hat to the ride cymbal, much like Keith Carlock did halfway into Noy's solo on *You Dig*.

Perhaps spurred by Colaiuta's change of intensity, Noy employs yet another dynamic shift at the beginning of the third chorus by engaging a pedal with a heavier overdrive effect and by no longer using the wah pedal. Since Noy begins this chorus by playing a longer eighth-note

²⁶ It is hard to tell whether Noy is using a manual wah pedal or an auto-filter, which engages the effect at a constant rate.

line (see Fig. 9), his sound has an overall fuller textured and more confident quality when compared to the sparser lines from the first chorus. This overdrive effect also allows him to play in a bluesier vein, as the corresponding extra sustain is ideal for the gradual string bending common in Blues that Noy first employs here in m. 98. Noy plays a cliché pentatonic Blues lick in m. 105, which sounds like it could have come from a B.B. King or Stevie Ray Vaughan solo.

Fig. 15, mm. 105-106



Because Noy is using a classic overdriven Blues tone, this lick carries the same emotionally expressive sentiment as in a typical Blues or Rock setting. The presence of this type of phrase in a Jazz improvisation is a departure from the typical emotional aura of a Jazz performance. That is, most people probably associate feelings such as intimacy or tranquility with Jazz, and rarely the emphatic emotional declaration made by this bluesy lick.

Noy also employs this overdrive effect to execute the rapid Bebop-esque line in mm. 121-129 (see Fig. 11). While Jazz guitarists using a traditional tone regularly play fast lines like this, the definition that the distortion adds to each note gives the passage a driving momentum more naturally executed by horn players. As a listener, I get a sense of aggression from this line played with Noy's tone, something that I have only heard among Rock and Metal guitarists who regularly adopt such a guitar sound (albeit, usually with much more distortion than Noy uses in this recording.)

During the closing section of the solo, Noy uses a musical technique that has an interesting textural effect. He is a frequent user of octave displacement, a task that is difficult to execute on guitar at the faster tempos common to Jazz. This is because in order to play a note an octave below or above a starting note, a guitarist must quickly shift his or her picking hand across the strings. In a YouTube lesson from 2010, Noy demonstrates his facility with this technique, playing various scales in patterns featuring octave displacement.²⁷

In mm. 137-150, Noy stays true to his tendency to clearly outline the chord changes of the B section, and likewise maintains the feel of the triple meter. To me, this harmonic and rhythmic clarity indicate a sense of completion as the solo ends. Similar to the example in Figure 13, Noy outlines the chord changes by playing chord tones on the strong beats of the measure. In this passage, however, he also creates the effect of a compound melody with two voices moving in contrary motion. Noy manages to make it sound like the two voices are coming from separate instruments by sustaining a note in one voice by holding it down on the fretboard with one finger while playing a line in the other voice. The notes displaced by an octave are usually part of a single arpeggio.

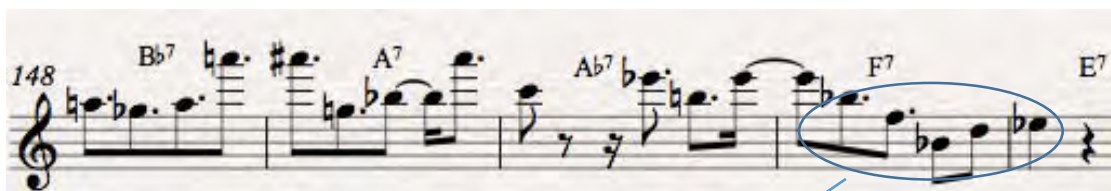
Fig. 16, mm. 137-150

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). The notation covers measures 137 to 150. Chord changes are indicated above the staff: Bbm7 at the start of measure 137, A7 at the start of measure 138, Abmaj7 at the start of measure 139, and G7 at the start of measure 140. The notes are written in a way that suggests two voices moving in contrary motion. Annotations include:

- A blue arrow pointing to a note in measure 137 with the text "Sustained through m. 138".
- A blue arrow pointing to a note in measure 140 with the text "Displaced notes belong to the G7 arpeggio".
- Red text at the bottom left: "Voices move in contrary motion".

²⁷ Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoLfskrdsZk>

Noy sustains all the notes in this upper voice by holding the note down with one finger, creating a sense of tension leading toward the tonic



Solo ends with the cadential motive

Similar to Noy's Blues licks, the sustain Noy incorporates into this displacement and resulting compound melody technique is made possible by his use of an overdrive pedal. In this case, Noy is able to achieve a pianistic sound, which reminds me specifically of Bach's lush cascading arpeggios in the C major Prelude from Book I of the Well-Tempered Clavier (BWV 846). Throughout the whole solo, Noy takes the listener on a far-reaching dynamic and textural journey, something that is challenging to execute with the limitations of a traditional Jazz tone. While purists may argue that Noy relies on effects too heavily to sustain structural coherence, I would point to his solo on *You Dig*. There, he barely uses any effects besides his standard overdrive, yet still creates an improvisation that undergoes narrative development on par with an iconic Jazz guitarist like Jim Hall, revered for his thematic manner of improvising. Noy uses different tools to achieve this end on *You Dig*; namely, he relies on a pentatonic motive that climaxes with a call-and-response riff. In *Evidence*, narrative development stems from Noy

synthesizing the tools coming from Jazz tradition that provide melodic and rhythmic variation with the wide dynamic range enabled by his pedal effects that do not necessarily fit the standard Jazz aesthetic.

As a musician who was inspired to play guitar from Rock-based music, I find that the aesthetic and tonal features of Noy's artistry have a powerful emotional appeal. In live performance settings, I have always appreciated the sense of freedom and energetic release that Rock music communicates so strongly. Noy, through his music, seems to adhere to this sensibility. As a result, listening to and analyzing Noy's music has given me the perspective that there is no single aesthetic mold to which Jazz music must conform. His artistry motivates and inspires me as I work to create iconoclastic and genre-defying music.

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Evidence

Chord progression: Ebmaj7, Cm7, F#7, Fm7, Bb7(b5), A7, Abm7, Db7, Fm7, Bb7alt., Bbm7, A7, Abmaj7, G7, Cm7, F7alt., Bb7, E7, Ebmaj7, Cm7, F#7, Fm7, Bb7(b5), A7, Abm7, Db7, Fm7, Bb7, Ebmaj7, Cm7, Fm7, Bb7, A7, Ab7, F7, Bb7, Ebmaj7, Cm7, Fm7, Bb7, A7, Ab7, F7, Bb7, Bbm7, A7, Abmaj7, G7, Cm7, F7, Bb7, Ebmaj7, Cm7, Fm7, Bb7, E7, Ebmaj7, Cm7, Fm7.

Staff 1: Ebmaj7, Cm7, F#7, Fm7, Bb7(b5), A7, Abm7, Db7

Staff 2: 7 Fm7, Bb7alt., Bbm7, A7, Abmaj7, G7, Cm7

Staff 3: 14 F7alt., Bb7, E7, Ebmaj7, Cm7, F#7, Fm7, Bb7(b5)

Staff 4: 21 A7, Abm7, Db7, Fm7, Bb7, 1 Ebmaj7, Cm7

Staff 5: 27 Fm7, Bb7, A7, Ab7, F7, 3

Staff 6: 32 Bb7, Ebmaj7, Cm7, Fm7, Bb7

Staff 7: 37 A7, Ab7, F7, Bb7, Bbm7, 3

Staff 8: 42 A7, Abmaj7, G7, Cm7, F7, 3

Staff 9: 47 Bb7, E7, Ebmaj7, Cm7, Fm7, 3, 3, *

2
52 (x) Bb7 A7 Ab7 F7 Bb7

Musical staff 52-56: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Measure 52 starts with a circled 'x' and a double bar line. Chords: Bb7, A7, Ab7, F7, Bb7. Rhythmic patterns include eighth and sixteenth notes with rests.

57 2 Ebmaj7 Cm7 Fm7 Bb7 A7

Musical staff 57-61: Treble clef. Measure 57 starts with a boxed '2' and a double bar line. Chords: Ebmaj7, Cm7, Fm7, Bb7, A7. Rhythmic patterns include eighth and sixteenth notes.

62 Ab7 F7 Bb7 Ebmaj7 Cm7

Musical staff 62-66: Treble clef. Chords: Ab7, F7, Bb7, Ebmaj7, Cm7. Rhythmic patterns include eighth and sixteenth notes.

67 Fm7 Bb7 A7 Ab7 F7 Bb7

Musical staff 67-72: Treble clef. Chords: Fm7, Bb7, A7, Ab7, F7, Bb7. Rhythmic patterns include eighth and sixteenth notes.

73 Bbm7 A7 Abmaj7 G7 Cm7 F7 Bb7 E7

Musical staff 73-77: Treble clef. Chords: Bbm7, A7, Abmaj7, G7, Cm7, F7, Bb7, E7. Rhythmic patterns include eighth and sixteenth notes.

81 Ebmaj7 Cm7 Fm7 Bb7 A7 Ab7

Musical staff 81-86: Treble clef. Chords: Ebmaj7, Cm7, Fm7, Bb7, A7, Ab7. Rhythmic patterns include eighth and sixteenth notes.

87 F7 Bb7 3 Ebmaj7 Cm7 Fm7

Musical staff 87-91: Treble clef. Measure 87 starts with a boxed '3' and a double bar line. Chords: F7, Bb7, Ebmaj7, Cm7, Fm7. Rhythmic patterns include eighth and sixteenth notes.

92 Bb7 A7 Ab7 F7 Bb7

Musical staff 92-96: Treble clef. Chords: Bb7, A7, Ab7, F7, Bb7. Rhythmic patterns include eighth and sixteenth notes.

97 Ebmaj7 Cm7 Fm7 Bb7 A7

Musical staff 97-101: Treble clef. Chords: Ebmaj7, Cm7, Fm7, Bb7, A7. Rhythmic patterns include eighth and sixteenth notes.

102 Ab7 F7 Bb7 Bbm7 A7

Musical staff 102-106: Treble clef. Chords: Ab7, F7, Bb7, Bbm7, A7. Rhythmic patterns include eighth and sixteenth notes.

107 *Abmaj7* *G7* *Cm7* *F7* *Bb7* *E7*

Musical staff for measures 107-112. Chords: *Abmaj7*, *G7*, *Cm7*, *F7*, *Bb7*, *E7*.

113 *Ebmaj7* *Cm7* *Fm7* *Bb7* *A7*

Musical staff for measures 113-117. Chords: *Ebmaj7*, *Cm7*, *Fm7*, *Bb7*, *A7*.

118 *Ab7* *F7* *Bb7* **4** *Ebmaj7* *Cm7*

Musical staff for measures 118-122. Chords: *Ab7*, *F7*, *Bb7*, **4**, *Ebmaj7*, *Cm7*.

123 *Fm7* *Bb7* *A7*

Musical staff for measures 123-125. Chords: *Fm7*, *Bb7*, *A7*.

126 *Ab7* *F7* *Bb7* *Ebmaj7*

Musical staff for measures 126-129. Chords: *Ab7*, *F7*, *Bb7*, *Ebmaj7*.

130 *Cm7* *Fm7* *Bb7* *A7* *Ab7*

Musical staff for measures 130-134. Chords: *Cm7*, *Fm7*, *Bb7*, *A7*, *Ab7*.

135 *F7* *Bb7* *Bbm7* *A7* *Abmaj7* *G7*

Musical staff for measures 135-140. Chords: *F7*, *Bb7*, *Bbm7*, *A7*, *Abmaj7*, *G7*.

141 *Cm7* *F7* *Bb7* *E7* *Ebmaj7* *Cm7* *Fm7*

Musical staff for measures 141-147. Chords: *Cm7*, *F7*, *Bb7*, *E7*, *Ebmaj7*, *Cm7*, *Fm7*.

148 *Bb7* *A7* *Ab7* *F7* *Bb7*

Musical staff for measures 148-152. Chords: *Bb7*, *A7*, *Ab7*, *F7*, *Bb7*.