THE BLUES

THE BLUES is the oldest and most basic form in jazz. Frankie and Johnnie dates back to the 1840's. In its simplest form THE BLUES is twelve bars long: 4 bars I, 2 bars IV, 2 bars I, 2 bars V, 2 bars I. Many rock and roll tunes of the fifties and sixties used this format.

Concert F has been the most common key for THE BLUES in jazz from New Orleans (St. Louis Blues, Royal Garden Blues) to swing (Creole Love Call, Sepia Panorama, Jeeps Blues, Kansas City) to bebop (Straight No Chaser, Blue Monk, Blues for Alice, Au Privave, Now's the Time, Billie's Bounce, Bag's Groove, Dance of the Infidels) to Post-bop (Stratusfunk, Walkin', Birdlike, The Second Race, Nancy Jo, Eighty-One). Some tunes lengthen the blues (Watermelon Man); some shorten it to eight bars and add a bridge (Confirmation). There are many common substitute changes used when playing THE BLUES.







Next to The Blues, I GOT RHYTHM is the most popular set of changes in jazz, Bb being the most frequent key. In its most basic form RHYTHM is two 8-measure phrases in Bb, an 8-bar bridge based on the circle of fifths, and another 8-bar section in Bb. In order to break up the static Bb sections, many different substitute progressions are employed. The test of a good jazz player is if and how he makes the change from Bb7 to Eb in measures 5 to 6 in the Bb sections.

RHYTHM was popular in the Swing Era (Cottontail, Every Tub, The Lunceford Special, Lester Leaps In, The Jeep is Jumpin'), the Bebop Era (Anthropology, Moose the Mooche, The Theme, Dexterity, Little Benny [aka Crazeology and Bud's Bubble], Shaw 'Nuff, Rhythm-a-ning [aka Haig and Haig]), and in the Post-Bop Period (Oleo, Swing Spring, Rocky and His Friends, The Flintstones). Many tunes use only the Bb sections and add a different bridge (Room 608, Pec-A-Sec, Gertrude's Bounce, Brilliant Corners, Good Bait [the bridge is Eb RHYTHM], Blue Moon, Tuxedo Junction). Get Happy is 8 bars F RHYTHM, 8 bars Bb RHYTHM, an 8-bar bridge, and 8 bars F RHYTHM.



HONEYSUCKLE ROSE

Fats Waller's HONEYSUCKLE ROSE was a standard vehicle for soloists in the '30's. Listen to Lester Young's solo with Count Basie and Basie's recording of John's Idea. Charlie Parker's Marmaduke and Clark Terry's Tete à Tete also have excellent solos. The form of HONEYSUCKLE ROSE is very similar to RHYTHM; both are AABA (bars 5 through 8 of both A and B sections are identical from one tune to the other. Some tunes use the A section but with a different bridge (Sweet and Lovely, It's Glory, Scrapple from the Apple [Rhythm bridge]). Incidentally, the out choruses of Basie's Time Out and Roseland Shuffle are HONEYSUCKLE ROSE even though the rest of the arrangements are not. The HONEYSUCKLE ROSE bridge is used with many other A sections (Confirmation, Room 608, Tail Feathers, Pec-a-sec, Hit Me With a Hot Note).



TAKE THE "A" TRAIN

Billy Strayhorn's TAKE THE "A" TRAIN is another standard from the Ellington book that transcends all styles. The original recording (1941) contains Ray Nance's classic solo. The version on Ellington Uptown (1951) is notable for wonderful bebop choruses by vocalist Betty Roche and tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves. The simple progression in the A section is the same as many other tunes before and since (Exactly Like You, I'm Checking Out Goombye, I've Got to be a Rug Cutter, Boo Dah, Milo's Other Samba). The first 8 bars of A TRAIN have the same chord progression as the first 4 of Mood Indigo. The second, fourth and eighth 8's of Cherokee also utilize this progression.

