“Well, You Needn’t”: Harmonic Challenges for the Jazz Improviser in Thelonious Monk’s Music

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Some of Thelonious Monk’s compositions are notoriously problematic for the improviser. His use of unconventional harmonic movements and unique voicings make them difficult to accurately encapsulate in the 32-bar lead sheet format often used in jazz education. This article provides an in-depth study of the harmony in “Well, You Needn’t” and some strategies that jazz masters such as Monk, John Coltrane, Ray Copeland, Gigi Gryce, Coleman Hawkins, Miles Davis, Horace Silver, Wilbur Ware, and Paul Chambers have used to improvise on it with a creative approach. The transcriptions and analyses in this research reveal a pragmatic approach to Monk’s music that provides the improviser with more tools to overcome harmonic challenges.

Keywords: Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Coleman Hawkins, jazz improvisation, jazz harmony, jazz theory.

“Well, You Needn’t”: los desafíos armónicos para el improvisador en las composiciones de Thelonious Monk

Algunas de las composiciones de Thelonious Monk son notoriamente problemáticas para los improvisadores. Debido a su uso de movimientos armónicos no convencionales y a sus *voicings* personales, es difícil sintetizarlas en el formato tradicional de *lead sheet* de 32 compases usado en la enseñanza del jazz. Este artículo proporciona un estudio en profundidad de la armonía de “Well, You Needn’t” y de algunas de las estrategias llevadas a cabo por figuras del jazz como Monk, John Coltrane, Ray Copeland, Gigi Gryce, Coleman Hawkins, Miles Davis, Horace Silver, Wilbur Ware y Paul Chambers para improvisar con un enfoque creativo. Las transcripciones y análisis en este estudio revelan un enfoque pragmático para las composiciones de Monk que proporciona al improvisador más herramientas para superar retos armónicos.

Palabras clave: Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Coleman Hawkins, improvisación en el jazz, armonía de jazz, teoría del jazz.

musikene

“Well, You Needn’t”: Jazz-inprobisatzailearen erronka harmonikoak Thelonious Monken musikan

Thelonious Monken konposizio batzuk nabarmen zailak dira inprobisatzaileentzat. Konbentzionalak ez diren mugimendu harmonikoak eta bere *voicing* pertsonalak direla eta, zaila da jazzaren irakaskuntzan erabiltzen den *lead sheet*en 32 konpasetako formatu tradizionalean sintetizatzea. Artikulu honek “Well, You Needn’t”en harmonia sakon aztertzen du, bai eta Monk, John Coltrane, Ray Copeland, Gigi Gryce, Coleman Hawkins, Miles Davis, Horace Silver, Wilbur Ware eta Paul Chambers bezalako jazz maisuek ikuspuntu sortzaile batetik inprobisatzeko erabili dituzten estrategia batzuk ere. Ikerketa honetako transkripzio eta analisiek Monken konposizioentzat ikuspuntu pragmatikoa erakusten digute, inprobisatzaileari baliabideak emanez erronka harmonikoak gainditzeko.

Gako-hitzak: Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Coleman Hawkins, jazz inprobisazioa, jazz harmonia, jazz teoria.

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The artistry, contributions, and innovations of Thelonious Monk, both as a composer and pianist, have been discussed extensively by critics, historians, and academics. Robin D.G. Kelley's *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (2009), a biography about Monk, is an invaluable resource for any further research on this artist. Rob Van Der Bliek reviewed in his article "A Selection of Monk Sources" (1999) some of the most relevant literature about Monk, including works by jazz writers Whitney Balliett (1982), Nat Hentoff, André Hodeir, Amiri Baraka (1968), Martin Williams (1983), Gunther Schuller (1964), Leslie Gourse (1997), among others, and fellow pianists Ran Blake (1982) and Laurent de Wilde (1997). These and other relevant writings were compiled by the same author and published later in the book *The Thelonious Monk Reader* (2001). Van Der Bliek points out that monographs and analyses of Monk's work were not made until the 90s. Academics such as Scott DeVeaux (1999), Benjamin Givan (2009), Gabriel Solis (2014), and Douglas R. Abrams (2015) have studied certain aspects of Monk's music using transcriptions and analyses. These analytical approaches to Monk's recordings show evidence that an in-depth study of his music is still necessary in order to resolve some of the controversies over the artist, develop new arguments, and overcome certain challenges presented by some of his compositions.[1]

Some of Thelonious Monk's compositions are notoriously problematic for the improviser. When recalling his experiences at Minton's Playhouse[2] (and Dizzy Gillespie has corroborated this), drummer Kenny Clarke says Monk and Gillespie would invent chordal variations to keep away the "non-talent guys." Gillespie admitted that eventually they became "more involved with their musical experiment for its own sake" (Gitler, 1966, p. 69).[3] Harmony is among the different musical elements

1. Critic Gary Giddins observes that "rummaging through *The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Thelonious Monk*, I find that even the most familiar pieces unveil new mysteries and reveal new charms" (1998, p. 309). The work of these scholars demonstrates that further research on Monk's music using advanced analytical tools has the potential to result in important contributions to jazz scholarship.

2. Historians have reached agreement that the bebop aesthetics and innovations were made by some jazz masters such as Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Kenny Clarke, and Charlie Christian, among others. Baraka talks about "a myth" when discussing this subject, and quotes Monk to clarify the controversy: "It's true that modern jazz probably began to get popular there, but some of these histories and articles put what happened over the course of ten years into one year. They put people all together in one time in one place. I've seen practically everybody at Minton's, but they were just there playing. They weren't giving lectures" (Monk, as cited in Jones [Amiri Baraka], 1968, p. 24).

3. Jones [Amiri Baraka] corroborates this: "A lot of musicians would leave Minton's after one of the Monday sessions claiming Monk, Bird [Charlie Parker], Dizzy [Gillespie], Klook [Kenny Clarke] and the others were purposely 'playing weird,' just so they could keep the bandstand to themselves" (1968, pp. 24-25).

that make Monk's compositions difficult for improvisation. This article will focus on the harmony, providing an in-depth study of "Well, You Needn't" as a case study highlighting some strategies that jazz artists such as Monk, John Coltrane, Ray Copeland, Coleman Hawkins, Gigi Gryce, Miles Davis, Horace Silver, Wilbur Ware, and Paul Chambers have used in their performances, demonstrating a creative approach and therefore overcoming the challenges presented by this tune. This study may inspire jazz educators and performers to continue investigating Monk's repertory through similar analyses and pursue new leads in their quest to understand the composer's music at a higher level of sophistication.

1. The challenges in Thelonious Monk's compositions

The complexity in Monk's compositions has made them demanding and defiant, even for the jazz masters of his time. According to Miles Davis:

> The thing that Monk must realize is that he can't get everybody to play his songs right. Coltrane, Milt Jackson, and maybe Lucky Thompson are the only ones I know that can get that feeling out of his songs that he can. And he needs drummers Denzil Best, [Art] Blakey, Shadow [Wilson], Roy Haynes, and Philly [Joe Jones] (quoted in Goldberg, 1965, pp. 35-36).

Goldberg's (1965) reaction to this assertion suggests that the reason may be found in that each individual tune presents specific challenges: "Monk himself apparently knows this, for he has, reportedly, consistently looked more for knowledge of his tunes than solo abilities in a prospective sideman" (p. 36). He suggests this complexity is the result of a combination of different elements: "One of the things about Monk's compositions, setting them apart from the vast slew of 'jazz originals,' is that they are compositions, in which harmony, melody, rhythm, and instrumental sound are all part of a carefully conceived whole" (p. 29). Mathieson (1999) describes the subject with precision:

> As many musicians have discovered to their cost, the kind of harmonic fudging which can carry a player through a bop structure without a precise knowledge of the underlying harmonies does not work with Monk's music, where it is not only essential to know the melody and the harmony intimately but also to comprehend fully the way in which they relate to each other and to the essential rhythmic scheme which fits them (...) A failure to understand and integrate all of the essential elements leads with unerring certainty to a failure of the performance and there are few worse things in jazz than a badly played Monk tune (p. 168).

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Jazz historian and journalist Ira Gitler, in his conversation with Monk in 1957, observed:

> Miles plays "Well, You Needn't," but not many musicians pick up on them [Monk's compositions]. I was discussing this recently with a musician, one who does play your works, and he felt that it was because they can't play it or they don't want to take the time to really work on it (Gitler, cited in Van Der Bliek, 2001, p. 79).

This complexity in Monk's compositions does not necessarily mean to be a synonym for difficulty, in the way it was difficult for jazz musicians at the time to improvise over fast Rhythm Changes or "Cherokee," but it means that they are sophisticated and demand deep knowledge and thorough understanding.[4]

Harmony may be the most mysterious aspect of most of Monk's songs for various reasons. Firstly, Monk had his own harmonic vocabulary ("I wanted to play my own chords," as cited in DeVeaux, 1997, p. 222), and this was one of his main contributions to modern jazz as a composer and pianist ("if any of my own work had more importance than any others, it's because the piano is the key instrument in music. I think all styles are built around piano developments," cited in Gottlieb, 1947).[5] Secondly, Monk did not accompany at the piano conventionally: he played chords very sparsely and abstractly (this aspect influenced other pianists from the bebop movement and resulted in a characteristic feature of this period).[6] In some cases, even a study of Monk's voicings is necessary in order to understand the harmony: "[his compositions] demand rhythmic and harmonic precision, even down to the way each chord is structured (or voiced). Monk's compositions are intended not as songs or tunes, but as pieces to be rendered with unerring accuracy" (Lyons, 1989, pp. 35-36).[7] In

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4. Saxophonist Steve Lacy, one of Monk's sidemen in the late 50's and early 60's, asserted that "they are not [hard to play], really" (quoted in Goldberg, 1966, p. 29).

5. The term modern jazz has been associated with bebop and the music and innovations of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk, in an attempt to differentiate their music from the music of their predecessors in the jazz tradition. Ran Blake (2002) uses this term in the Thelonious Monk's entry on Barry Kernfeld's *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*: "[...] both his playing and compositions had a formative influence on modern jazz" (p. 789). According to jazz pianist Richie Beirach, "Monk was a very unique stylist that through his great compositions, brought something innovative to the instrument and to the bebop language" (Beirach, 2021, p. 17).

6. Dizzy Gillespie's observation about Monk as an accompanist: "Bebop pianists didn't lay down the changes; some, like Monk, just embellished them. If you're playing with Monk and don't know the changes, shame on you. You'll never hear them from him" (Gillespie & Fraser, 2009, p. 207).

7. A good example of this can be found on "Evidence." Even though Monk wrote this contrafact based on the changes to "Just You, Just Me" (Solis, 2007, p. 117), it is necessary to transcribe and analyze some of Monk's voicings over the bridge in order to understand not only the harmony but the variations he introduces on each chorus.

other cases, Monk leaves out for long periods,[8] or accompanies with single-note lines that reference the melody of the song rather than the harmony. This applies as well to his self-accompaniment approach on the left hand while he improvises. Thirdly, Monk would encourage his sidemen to conceive their improvisations based on the melody, rather than the harmony.[9] That means that there are sections in some tunes where the soloists' lines may not correspond to how harmony is played by the rhythm section (bass, piano). This sort of harmonic independence requires conviction from the soloists, and studying some historical performances of Monk's compositions may build the aspiring performer's confidence in this aspect. Finally, the last reason why harmony may be the most controverted element in Monk's music, is that he encouraged his sidemen to experiment with the chords and implement harmonic variation in his solos. Charlie Rouse, one of his most frequent associates (recorded with his group from 1959-69), said: "[Monk] wanted you to play the melody just the way he created it, but with the chords, he wanted you to know them, but he didn't want to hear you just play them in that way, he wanted to hear you experiment with them, not to be confined with them" (Mathieson, 1999, p. 168). This is crucial to understand Monk's music, since the harmony of his tunes may vary from one chorus to another and from one performance to the next, not only during the soloists' improvisations, but in the rhythm section accompaniment.[10] His motto, "Jazz is Freedom" (Giddins, 1998, p. 309) may refer to harmony more than melody or rhythm. These four arguments will be strengthened by my later analyses of "Well, You Needn't."[11]

2. "Well, You Needn't"

The song "Well, You Needn't" was selected for this study not only because it illustrates the four arguments previously discussed but also because, besides being extensively recorded by Monk himself, it is one of his most recorded tunes (Mathieson, 1999, p. 166). It was composed during his first few years at Minton's (DeVeaux, 1997,

8. According to Solis (2014), Coltrane said on this regard that playing with Monk would be "like stepping into an elevator shaft" or "being thrown" (p. 33). For a longer discussion on Monk and Coltrane, see Porter, 1999 (pp. 107-113).

9. "Monk told a musician who insisted on playing the usual string of changes: 'If you know the melody you can make a better solo" (Goldberg, 1965, p. 29).

10. Trumpeter Lonnie Hillyer observed that Monk's groups varied their performances of Monk's music "each time they played them" (quoted in Berliner, 1994, pp. 65-66).

11. All the transcriptions and analyses included in this article and appendices have been made by the author. Listening to these examples is strongly encouraged.

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p. 223), and first recorded in a piano trio setting in 1947, with Eugene Ramey on bass and Art Blakey on drums.[12] According to Owens (1995), "a much-displayed theme in *AABA* form. As in 'Blue Monk,' the theme is more than a simple frame for solo choruses. It provides the soloists, especially Monk, with material for improvising" (p. 215). It is written in the key of F Major.

2.1. Monk's interpretations of the A Section

The A section is cyclical and it is made of just two chords, a half-step away (F-Gb). Most available charts from *fakebooks* and other educational methods emphasize the repetitiveness of the harmonic framework:

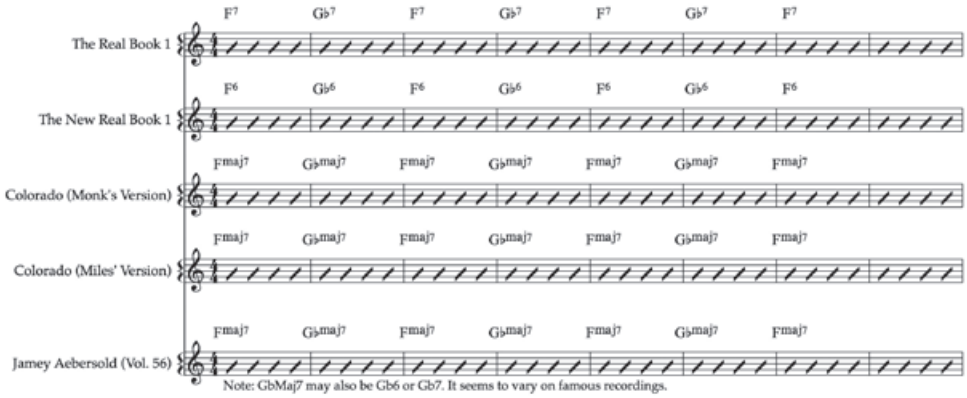

Figure 1: Graphic representation of the harmony to the A section of "Well, You Needn't" commonly found in fakebooks and educational methods.

The only differences among these lead sheets are that, one of the versions classifies the qualities of both chords as dominant 7, while the others list them as Maj7 or Maj6. Jamey Aebersold's chart clarifies that the chord qualities vary depending on famous versions. These common representations of the harmony of "Well, You

12. Monk, T. (1947). *The Complete Blue Note Recordings*. [4 CD] Los Angeles: Blue Note. All the discographic data in this article has been taken from: Thelonious Monk, Discography. In jazzdisco.org. Accessed from https://www.jazzdisco.org/thelonious-monk/discography/

Needn't" can be limiting for the student and performer, since they may accurately represent only what happens during the head of the tune, and not the solos. In the 1947 version,[13] the bassist plays a repetitive bass line during the head (that seems to be part of the composition), alternating the root and the 5th of each chord. Monk plays the melody as a single line, without any chordal accompaniment:

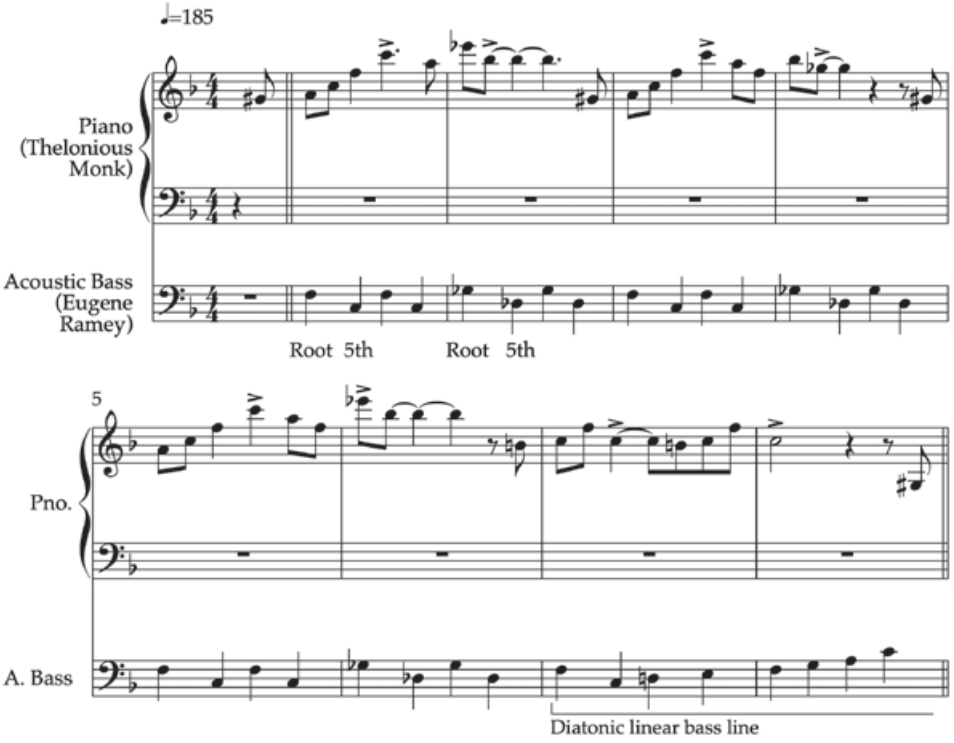

Figure 2: First A section of "Well, You Needn't," 1947 (0:04 - 0:13).

During the second A section, Monk plays the melody an octave lower, and introduces a tenor line in the left hand that provides new information about the possible harmony:

13. *The Complete Blue Note Recordings*, 1947.

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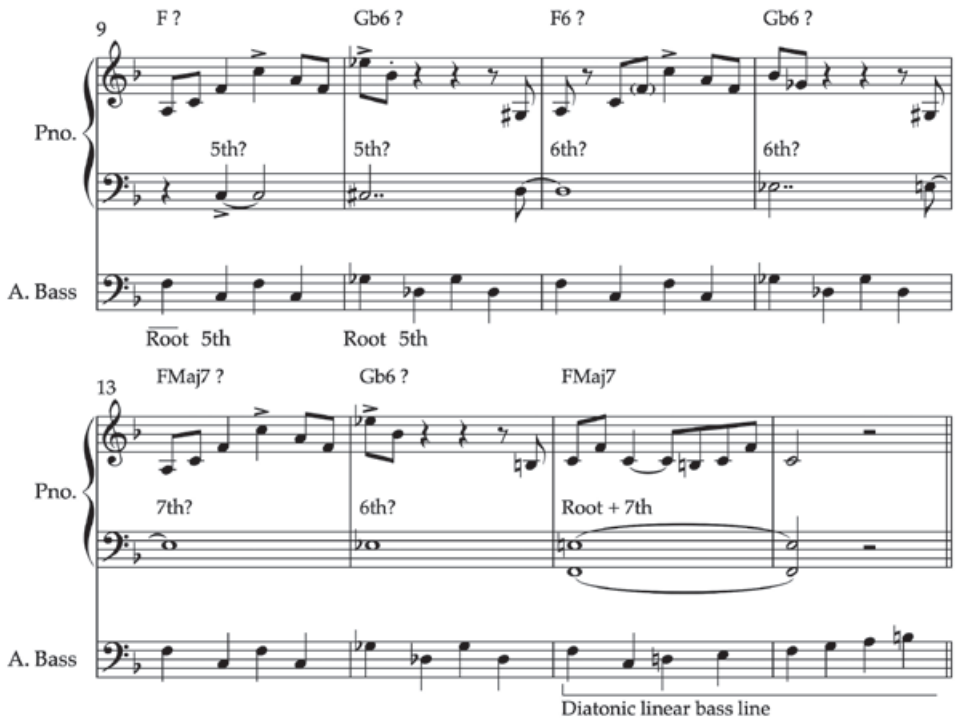

Figure 3: Second A section of "Well, You Needn't," 1947 (0:14 – 0:24).

Once arrived at the solo section, it becomes evident that, because of the four arguments discussed in the previous section of this article, it is very difficult to accurately encapsulate this composition in the 32-bar lead sheet format often used in jazz education. To produce an accurate harmonic analysis of what happens during the solos, Monk's and Ramey's playing has to be analyzed independently looking for the logic behind their performances, in order to evaluate their musical choices and the musical outcomes. The balance is to not fall into the temptation of analyzing the harmonic meaning of Monk's notes in relation to the roots implied by Ramey on bass because of what the visual representation (a transcription where time is frozen) suggests. Physical time and tempo have to be considered, together with sound perception.

Monk starts his solo implying the original harmony of the song (outlining the FMaj7-GbMaj7 harmonic movement). However, he starts generalizing soon (from measure 5 of Figure 4), playing a boogie-woogie bluesy motif based on the key center [F]. It is also noteworthy to see how Ramey uses the second inversion of the Gb chord, in order to construct more smooth bass lines, avoiding the parallel structure in half steps (F to Gb). It is a common feature during the performance and in future performances:

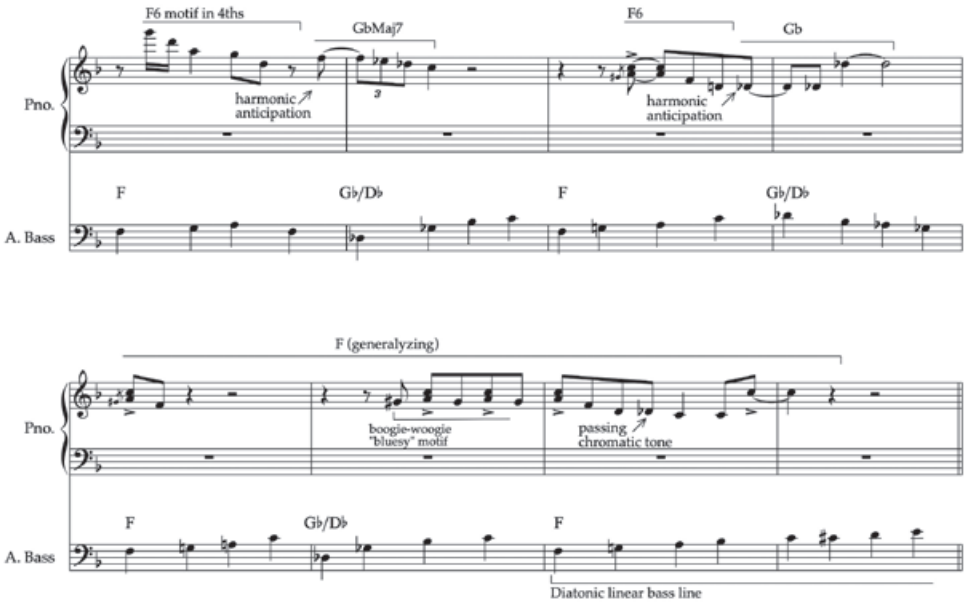

Figure 4: "Well, You Needn't," 1947 (0:45 - 0:54).

During the next A section, Monk keeps generalizing and improvising melodies based on the key center [F], which allows him to have a more rhythmic approach, without worrying about the chord changes, which helps him blurry the bar lines.[14] Ramey plays the first F chord as a dominant 7 chord, maybe because of the bluesy motif Monk played before (see Figure 5).

On the third A (after the bridge), Monk brings his left hand back in, playing the original countermelody (the tenor line, see Figure 3) to accompany himself, and seems to outline the song's harmonies at certain times. Ramey keeps playing vertically, implying the original changes, using inversions again to avoid parallel motion (F to Gb) (see Figure 6).

14. See Appendix D for more examples of Monk's generalizing over the A sections.

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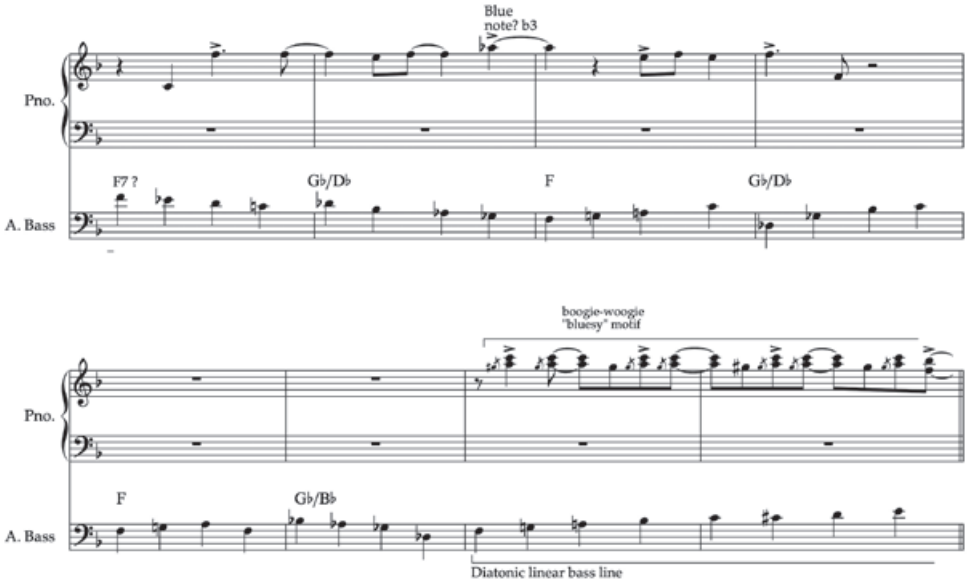

Figure 5: "Well, You Needn't," 1947 (0:55 - 1:06).

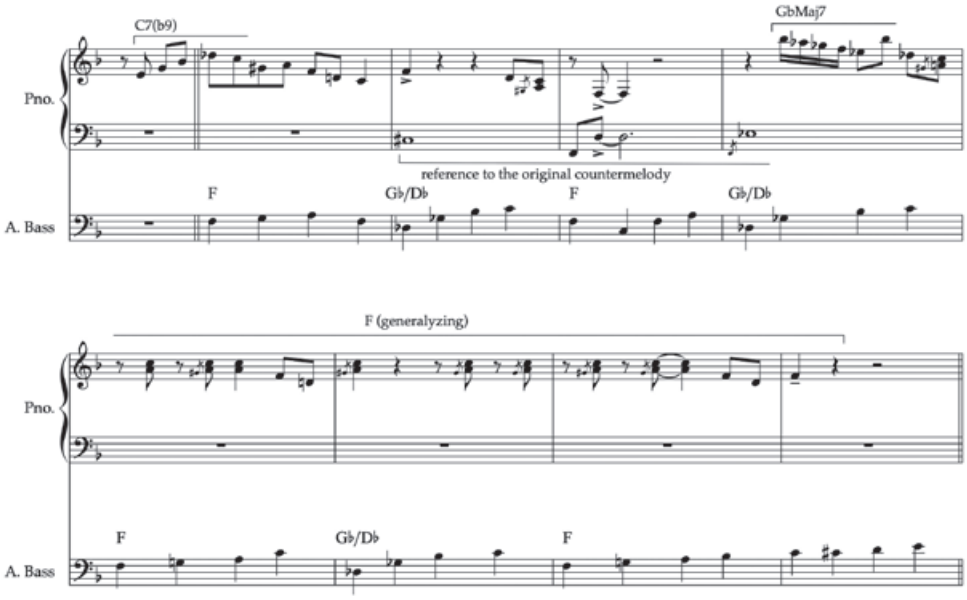

Figure 6: "Well, You Needn't," 1947 (1:15 - 1:25).

On the next A (top of the second chorus), Monk seems to have abandoned completely any focus on the harmony, playing bluesy [in F] and using motivic development and repetition.[15] Ramey reacts to Monk's playing on two different levels: by using repetition as well (playing a two-measure motif), and by playing the F chord as a dominant 7, to enhance Monk's bluesy motifs:

Figure 7: "Well, You Needn't," 1947 (1:26 - 1:35).

Monk's consistency in developing bluesy motifs allows Ramey the opportunity to leave the harmony of the tune and play linear and generalize as well. Both Monk and Ramey seem now to manage release (I) and tension (iim7, V7) at their will, not necessarily following the song's original harmonic rhythm:

15. This motif recalls idiomatic boogie-woogie riffs. This may be the passage that Robin D.G. Kelly describes as "a series of locomotive-like phrases that bring his [Monk's] futuristic music back to early [Count] Basie and Duke [Ellington]" (2009, p. 128). Basie's inherited some boogie-woogie influences during his tenure with Bennie Moten.

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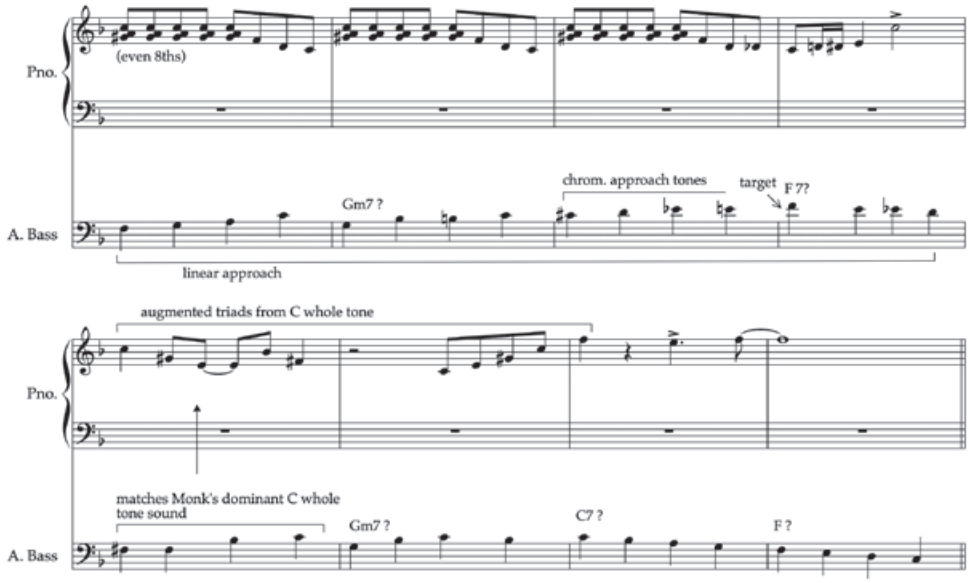

Figure 8: "Well, You Needn't," 1947 (1:36 - 1:46).

Monk sometimes generalizes (bluesy melodies based on the key center, F) while Ramey outlines the original changes. This is not heard as a harmonic conflict, but emphasizes Monk's ability to cross the bar lines using motivic development and rhythmic displacement.[16] From 1:57 to 2:02, Monk uses a three-beat motif that he repeats starting it on different beats (2, 1, 4, 3, 2). The fact that Ramey is playing vertically emphasizes the bar lines, and it increases the rhythmic tension created by the pianist, which is resolved in the following four-bar phrase, where he plays a simple bluesy statement to provide contrast:

16. These two are among the pianists' qualities that have been praised by critics and scholars.

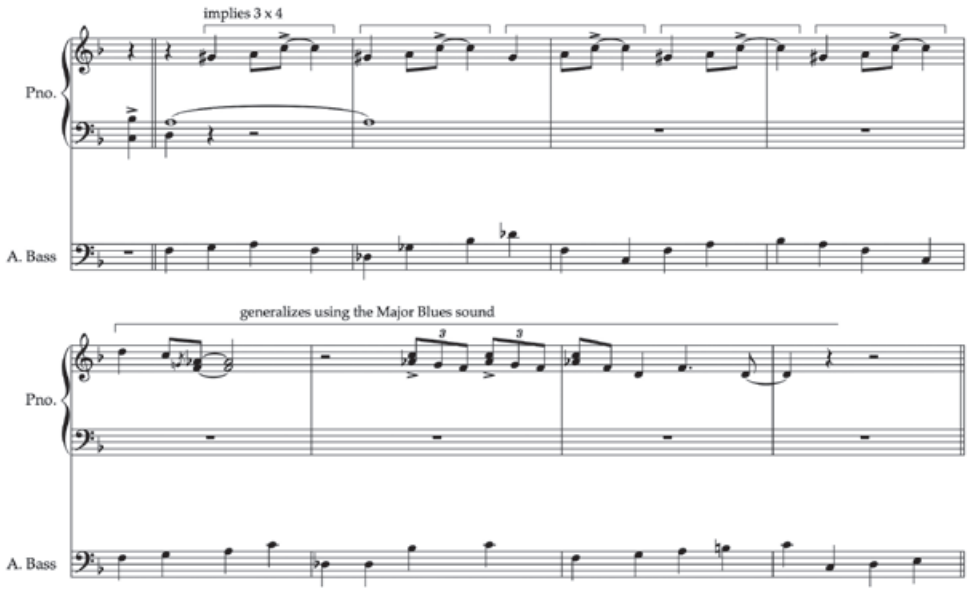

Figure 9: "Well, You Needn't," 1947 (1:56 - 2:06).

The sections where Monk appears to reference the harmony, are the ones where he quotes the melody as well (Figure 10), suggesting this symbiotic relationship that Monk himself used to point out to his fellow musicians, and other authors have remarked:[17]

17. See Mathieson, 1999, p. 166.

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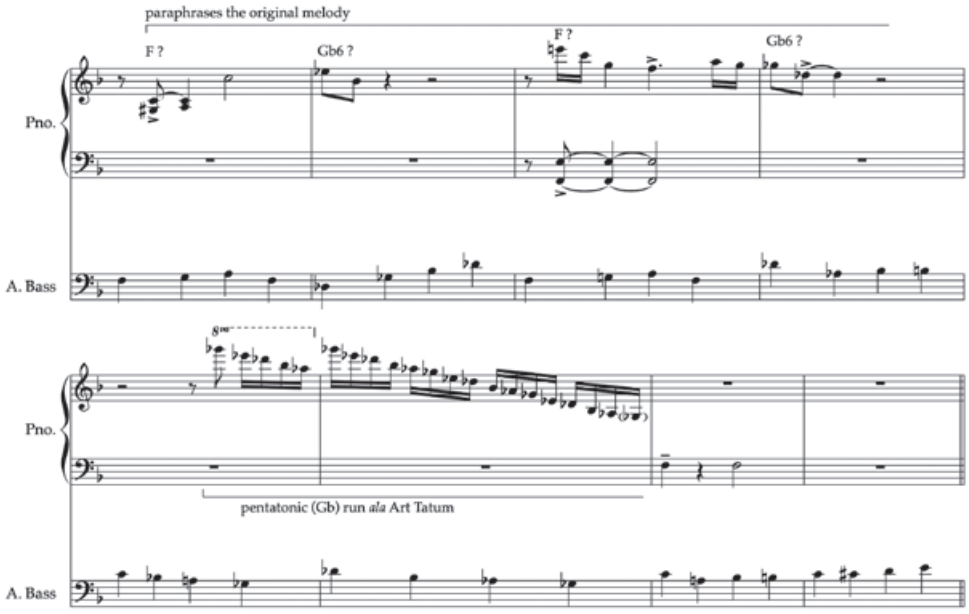

Figure 10: "Well, You Needn't," 1947 (2:07 - 2:16).

2.2. Monk's interpretations of the B Section

The bridge of this tune is constructed with a melodic sequence that uses material from the last two measures of the A section, a common trait in his compositions (Williams, 1983, p. 154). The harmony features chromatic movement in half steps, as in the A section. It does not settle in a particular key. The chords do not seem to have any apparent function other than resolving back to F. Commonly used lead sheets of this song for educational purposes list all the chords on the bridge as dominant 7. It is impossible to determine the chord quality in the 1947 version since Monk plays the melody in a single-note line, and Ramey repeats the roots in quarter notes, therefore without providing any harmonic information. In a solo piano version recorded in 1954, the pianist plays two perfect 5ths from the chord's root. The melody is in 4ths, and the combination of left and right hands suggests a Maj6 sound.[18] In the 1947 version, Monk shows a preference during the first chorus of his solo to play these chords as Maj7 or Maj6 well:

18. *Piano Solo*, 1954.

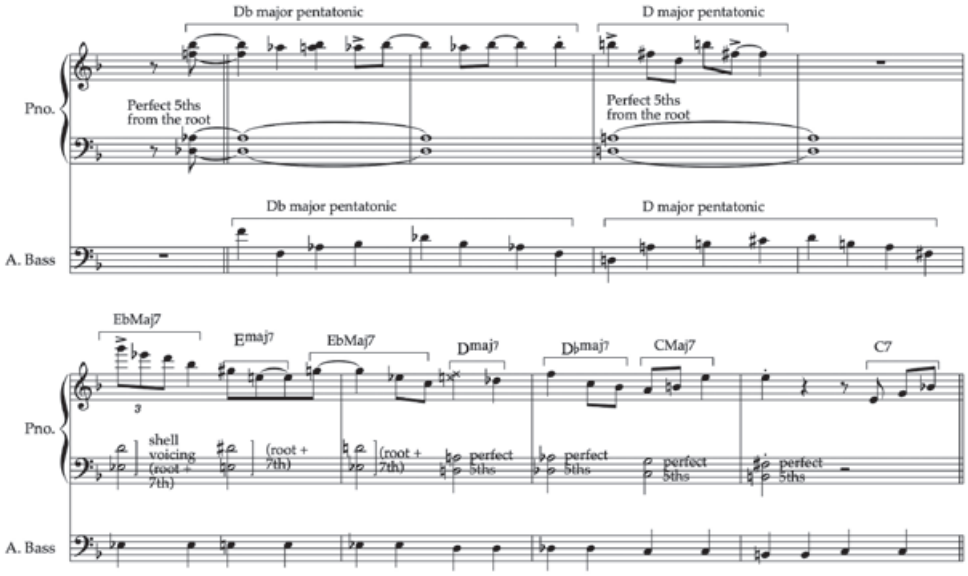

Figure 11: Monk's solo over the bridge of "Well, You Needn't" (1:06 - 1:15).

The reason why some musicians may interpret these chords as dominant may be found in the recorded version on *Monk's Music* (1957). Alto saxophonist Gigi Gryce wrote this arrangement and the alto voice plays the b7 on each chord. Compared to the A section, it seems like Monk prefers to improvise over the bridge based on the melody rather than the chords. Still, the fact that the original melody outlines the harmonies in a vertical way results in a vertical approach to improvisation as well.

The melodic and harmonic analyses and the study of the interaction between Monk and Ramey presented in these sections (2.1, 2.2) were necessary to prove my previous claims about the challenges of learning the harmonic traits found in Thelonious Monk's "Well, You Needn't."

2.3. Other historical performers' interpretations of "Well, You Needn't"

The study of Monk's recordings is crucial in order to reveal the intricacies of his compositions, especially if done in chronological order, to study how these songs have evolved throughout the years. Chick Corea, a self-declared Monk admirer, affirmed: "From every composer (Monk, like Mozart, or like Wayne [Shorter], or like Scriabin), there's something...in order for me to play that music the way I would like to, there's

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something of the composer that I want to keep putting into it. So, when I play Monk's music, I try to make it sound a little bit like Monk" (quoted in Herzig, 2017, p. 72). It suggests Corea probably did some research on how Monk approached his compositions. However, Monk's music can be approached in different ways other than his own way. The composer's creativity is reflected in the many options (rhythm, melody, and harmony) that his songs provide the improviser for exploration. A thorough study of how other jazz masters have approached his compositions is necessary, for these masters' spontaneous choices clarify the strategies and solutions they found in them.

Coltrane's solo over the A sections of "Well, You Needn't"[19] suggests the saxophonist was thinking of alternate changes, or reinterpreting some of them to find other options to use his bebop vocabulary:

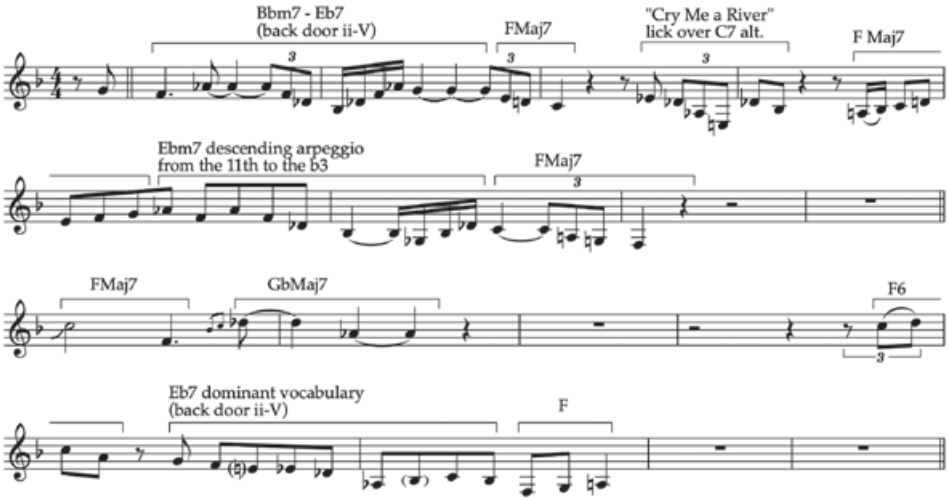

Figure 12: Coltrane's solo over "Well, You Needn't," 1957 (2:22 - 2:43).

Thinking of alternate harmonies helps Coltrane to avoid overemphasizing the parallel structure in half-steps (F to Gb), and to find variety, not only in his note-choices, but in his phrasing, as shown in Figure 12. Coltrane demonstrates an outstanding capacity to cross the bar lines mainly using harmonic materials. His

19. *Monk's Music*, 1957.

insistence on some of these substitutes (Bbm7 - Eb7, or Ebm7 - Ab7 as a reinterpretation of the GbMaj7 as the IV chord of DbMaj7) and even the literal repetition of some melodic material suggests he practiced these devices over this tune (Figure 13):

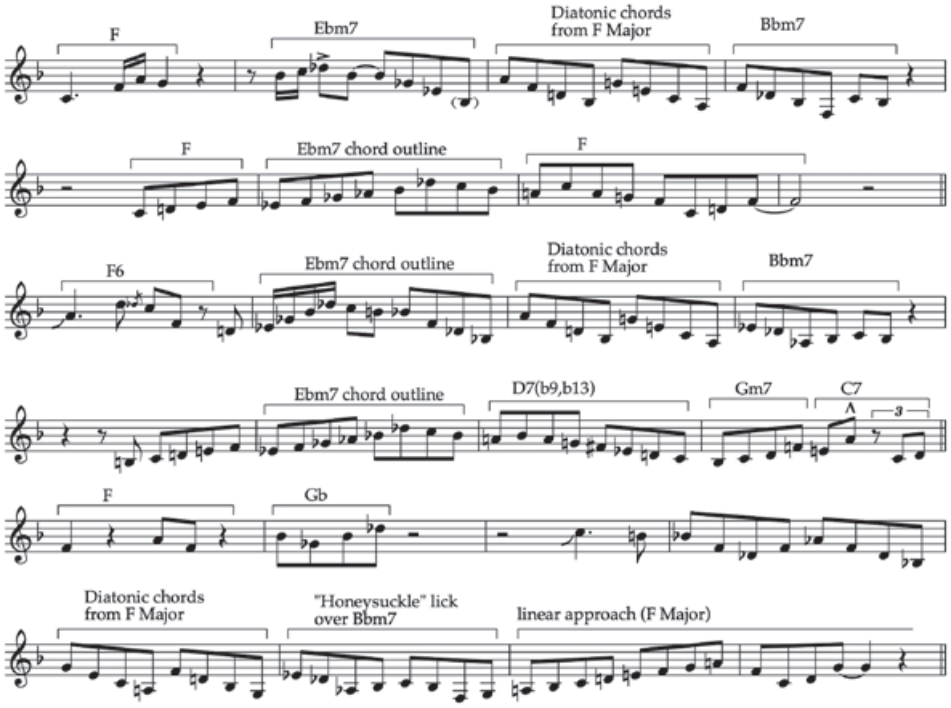

Figure 13: Coltrane's insistence on chord substitutes and melodic materials over "Well, You Needn't," 1957 (2:54 - 3:25).

In contrast to Coltrane's vertical approach, trumpeter Ray Copeland tends to generalize by playing bebop vocabulary in the key of F (Major and dominant 7 movements)[20] and some blues vocabulary. The chords symbols on Figure 14 have

20. For an in-depth discussion on the application of horizontal and vertical approaches to bebop, check Barry Harris' method for improvisation (see Harris and Rees, 1994, and Harris and Rees, 2005, in the references list).

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been left out to emphasize his use of diatonicism and generalizing technique. The only moment where he seems to improvise over the usual changes is when he does a sequence transposing literally a major pentatonic lick over F6 to Gb6:

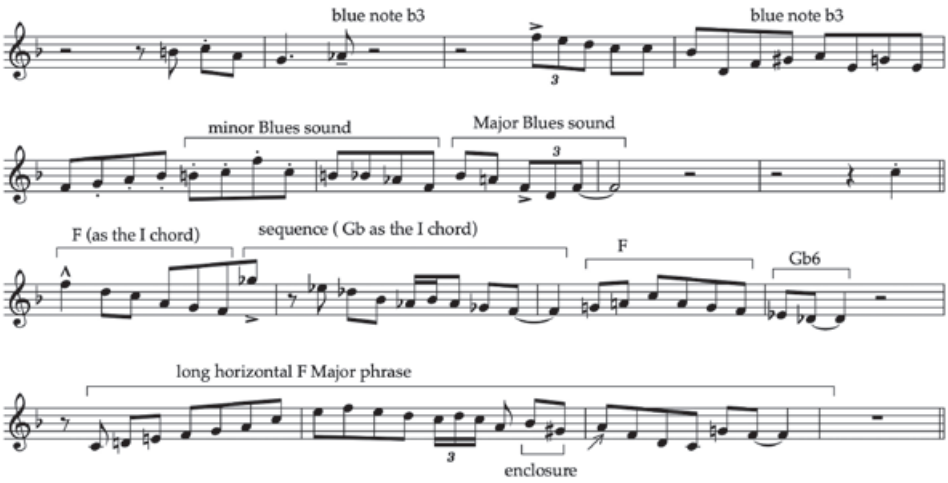

Figure 14: Ray Copeland's improvisation on "Well, You Needn't," 1957 (3:46 - 4:08).

As in Coltrane's case, Copeland's insistence and consistency in using some of these techniques denotes conviction. The chord symbols in Figure 15 correspond to the usual harmony played during the melody of the A sections, and the analyses below the lines show Copeland's strategies to navigate this progression:[21]

21. Coleman Hawkins uses a similar approach to Copeland's in his solo. See some transcribed excerpts in Appendix A.

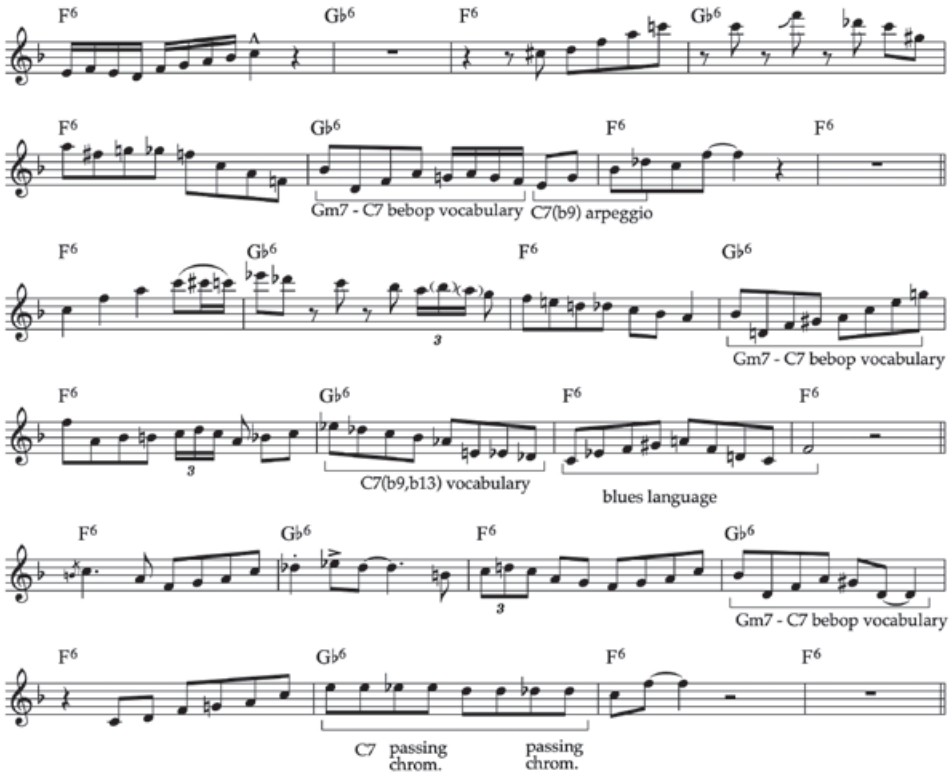

Figure 15: Ray Copeland's improvisation on "Well, You Needn't," 1957 (4:18 - 4:50).

Schuller (1964) discusses this recording (*Monk's Music*) in his essay "Thelonious Monk" (in Williams' *Jazz Panorama*). While praising Monk's performance, he is highly critical of Coltrane, Copeland, and Gryce. He admits the difficulty of the bridge on "Well, You Needn't" ("difficult-to-be-interesting-on parallel chord-changes"). However, he says Coltrane "doesn't fare too well on the bridge," Copeland "manages to skate through with plain up-and-down arpeggios," and Gryce "gets badly hung here" (p. 227). These appreciations may be excessive;[22] when the background presents a layer of complexity (as it happens in the rhythm section accompaniment during the bridge), adding another complicated layer to the foreground (solo) may result in loosing balance. Copeland's simplicity (using arpeggiated triads) sounds pleasant to the ears in

22. Schuller's evaluation of Hawkins' contribution to this recording is also very critical: "One has to say, with great reluctance, that Hawk has considerable trouble finding his way around Monk's music" (p. 227).

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combination with the sophisticated background, and convincing (Figure 16). Coltrane's statements over the first four measures of the bridge are lyrical, and when the harmonic rhythm gets busier, he is still able to play some extensions of the chords (9ths, 7ths) and to vary their chord quality (switches from dominant 7 to Maj7. See Figure 17). The visual representation (in the form of a transcription) of Gryce's improvisation over the bridge does not pay him justice; it is noticeable that he tends to be delayed (he is two beats delayed on the last four measures, see Figure 18). However, this may not be as evident when hearing the track, and he still acknowledges somehow the melody and harmony of the bridge with some interesting lines.

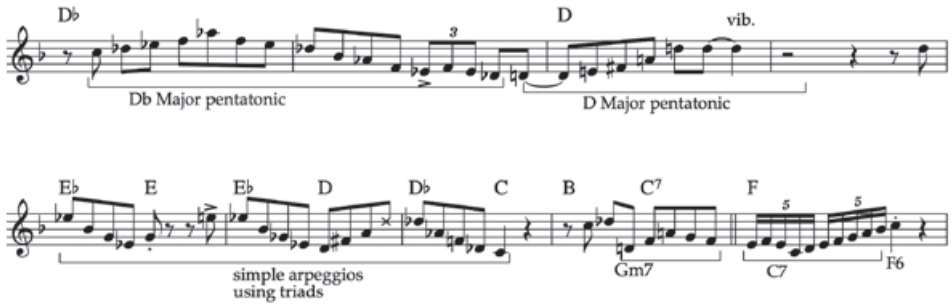

Figure 16: Copeland's solo over the bridge of "Well, You Needn't," 1957 (4:08 - 4:18).

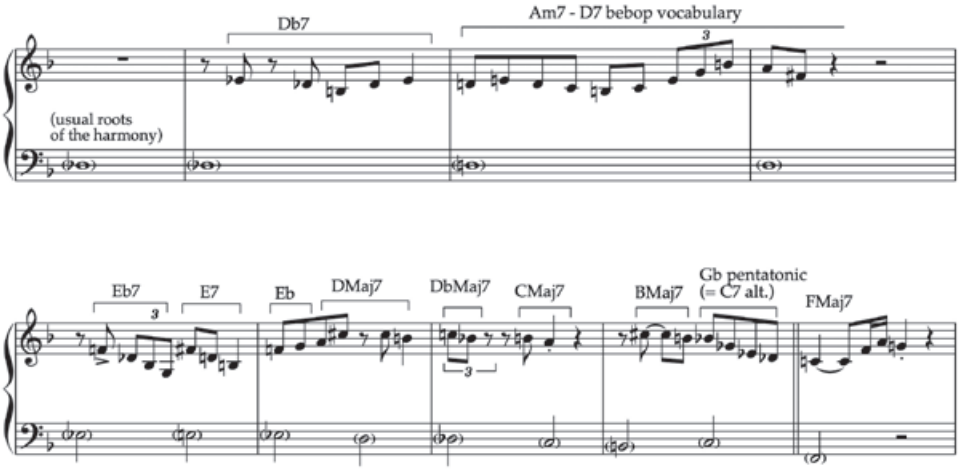

Figure 17: Coltrane's solo over the bridge of "Well, You Needn't," 1957 (2:44 - 2:54).

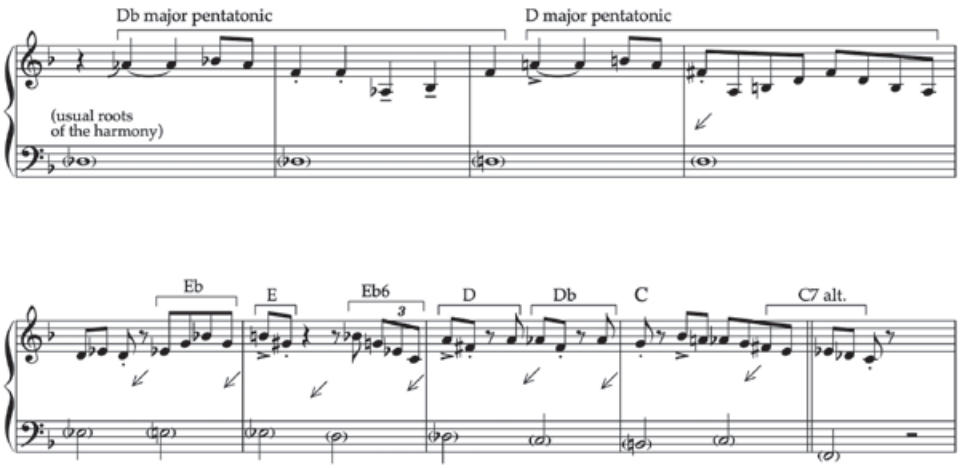

Figure 18: Gryce's solo over the bridge of "Well, You Needn't," 1957 (8:51 - 9:01).

From a compositional standpoint, the purpose of the bridge on an *AABA* song in the American Songbook has been traditionally to provide contrast to the A section (most of them modulate to a different key). It is a feature that not every soloist takes into consideration when improvising in jazz. Monk achieved with this composition a structure that somehow forces the soloist to change approaches between the A (horizontal approaches)[23] and the B (vertical approaches) sections, therefore emphasizing the traditional aspect of this compositional device. There are other recordings by jazz masters such as Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley, Phineas Newborn, Kenny Barron, Barry Harris with Tommy Flanagan, and Bobby Hutcherson, among others, that contributed to expanding the community's knowledge of this particular tune through their creative solutions to the problems discussed in this article.

Conclusions

Monk's music does not only provide a source for creativity and musical satisfaction; his pedagogical role goes back to the early 40s, sharing his insights with jazz innovators Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, and Dizzy Gillespie (Giddings, 1998, p. 313; Gillespie & Fraser, 2009, p. 106). He may have had some responsibility for further develop-

23. Vertical approaches to the A section can also be applied successfully and in creative ways, especially at faster tempos. Listen to Miles Davis' versions from 1954 (See Appendix B) and 1956 (See Appendix C), and Cannonball Adderley's version from 1961.

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ments in jazz or at least inspired and encouraged the next generation of jazz composers such as Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane. Miles recognized that "if I hadn't met Monk shortly after I came to New York around 1945, I wouldn't have advanced as quickly as some say I did. He showed me voicings and chord progressions" (quoted in Goldberg, 1965, p. 30). Coltrane said "if you work with a guy that watches the finer points, it kind of helps you to do the same" (Goldberg, 1965, p. 36).

Monk's compositions can prove challenging for many musicians from an improvisational standpoint, and there are many valuable lessons within each one of them waiting to be discovered. The analyses of "Well, You Needn't" presented in this article prove that harmony may be the most mysterious element in his compositions due to his unusual and unique chord progressions, voicings, and approach to comping. The fact that Monk encouraged his musicians to both improvise based on the melody, and experiment with chord substitutions and harmonic variations on each chorus and performance, makes the recordings of his compositions even more abstract. For these reasons, the 32-bar lead sheet format often used in jazz education can be limiting. It is noteworthy that despite these challenges, experienced soloists have been able to stay true to their own style while improvising on Monks' music. Kelley (2009) observed in his appreciation of the 1957 recorded version of "Well, You Needn't" that it "stands out for the way each soloist [Coltrane, Hawkins, Copeland, Gryce] asserts his individual voice" (p. 223).

An in-depth study of Monk's and other jazz masters' recordings of his compositions reveals not only crucial elements that help better understand the composers' features, innovations, and creative strategies for improvisation. Still, it results in a sophisticated learning process that can be reproduced again in the study of other modern jazz compositions. Although Monk has been often discussed as a contributor to the bebop aesthetic, he represents a link between bebop and post-bop jazz composers such as John Coltrane, Benny Golson, Herbie Hancock, Bill Evans, Joe Henderson, and Wayne Shorter, among others. The methodology used in this study may hopefully inspire further research on modern jazz repertory and recordings.

In memory of saxophonist and ethnomusicologist John Patrick Murphy (1961-2022), former chair of the Division of Jazz Studies at the University of North Texas.

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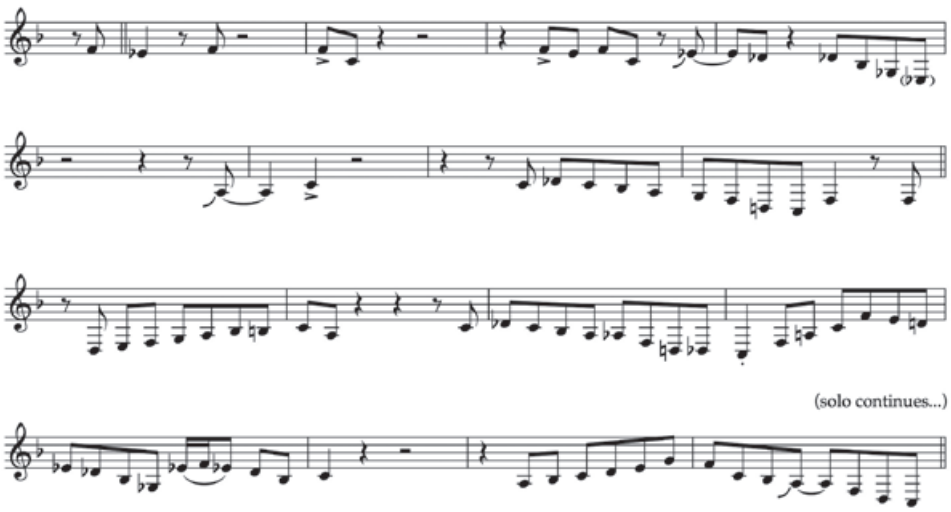
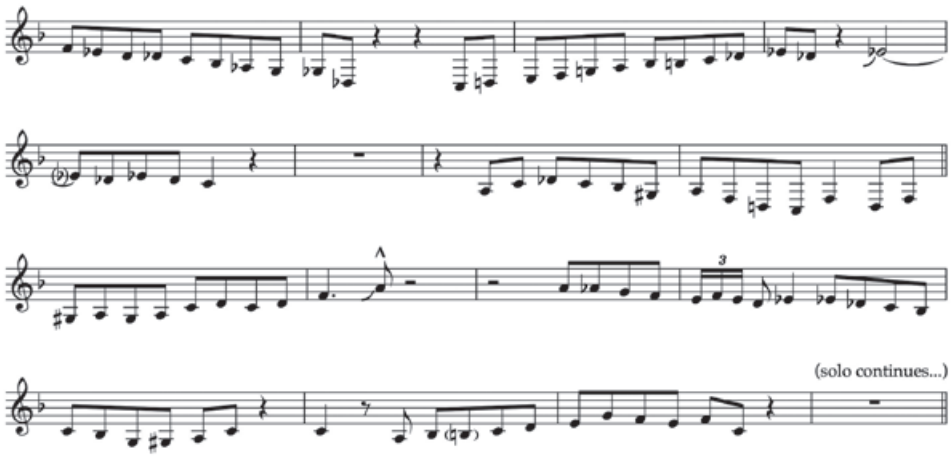
Appendix A

Coleman Hawkins' Improvisation Over the First Two A Sections of "Well, You Needn't" from *Monk's Music* (1957), 1st Chorus. Combination of Vertical and Linear Approaches (7:11-7:31)



Coleman Hawkins' Improvisation Over the First Two A Sections of "Well, You Needn't" from *Monk's Music* (1957), 2nd Chorus. Combination of Vertical and Linear Approaches (7:51-8:12)



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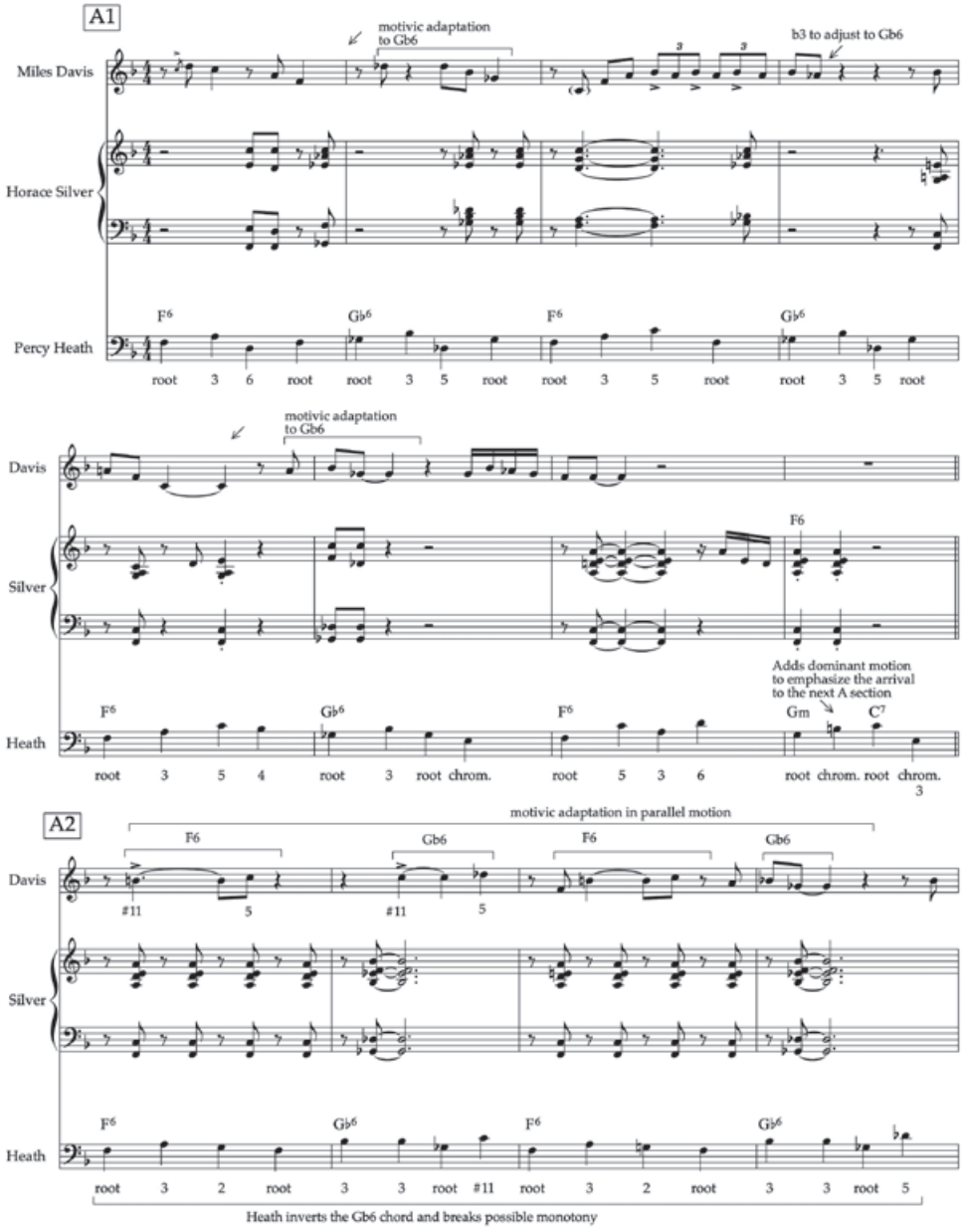
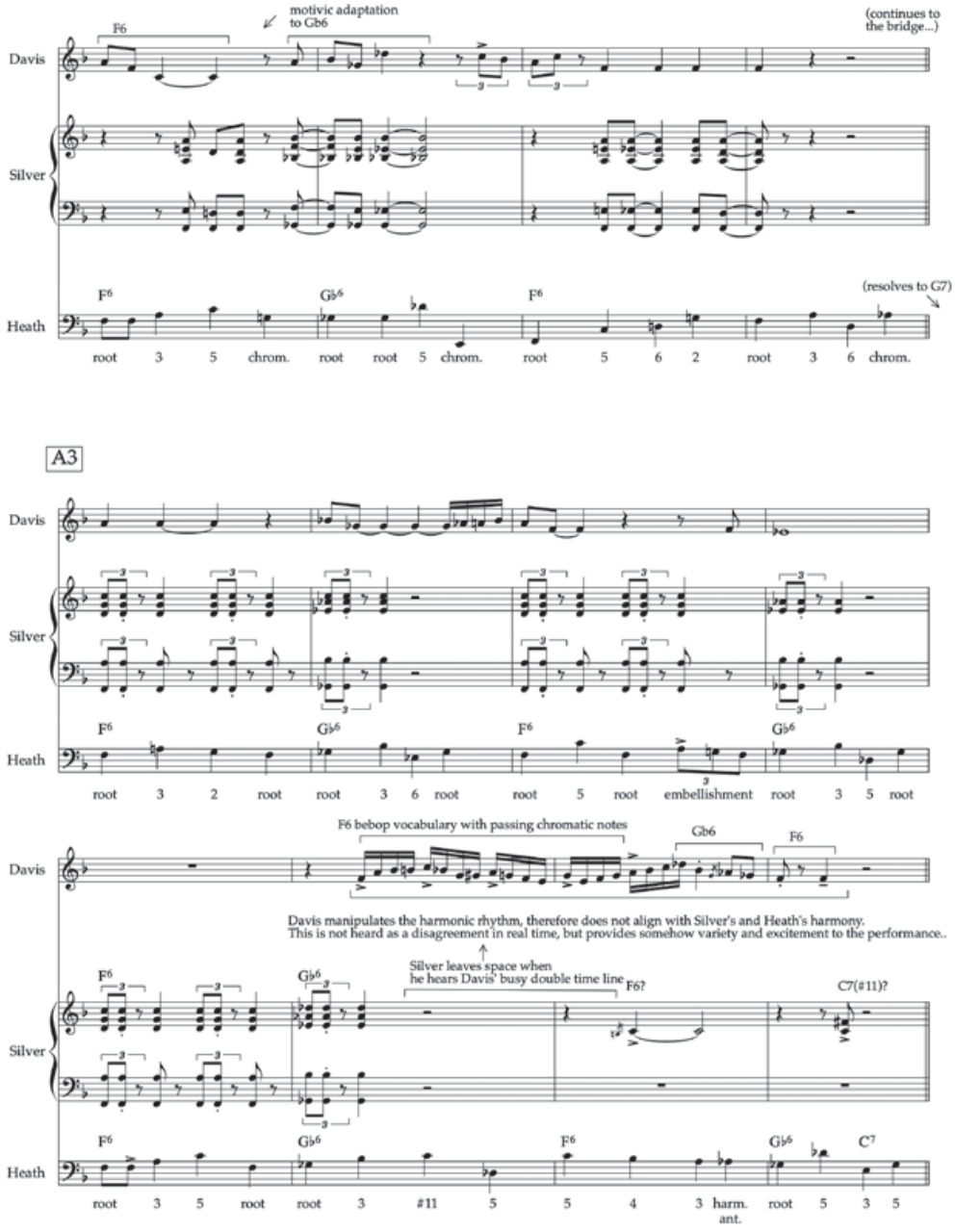
Appendix B

Miles Davis' Solo Over the A Sections of "Well, You Needn't" from *Miles Davis, Vol. 3* (1954), 1st Chorus. Example of Vertical Approach (1:01-1:32, 1:48-2:03)





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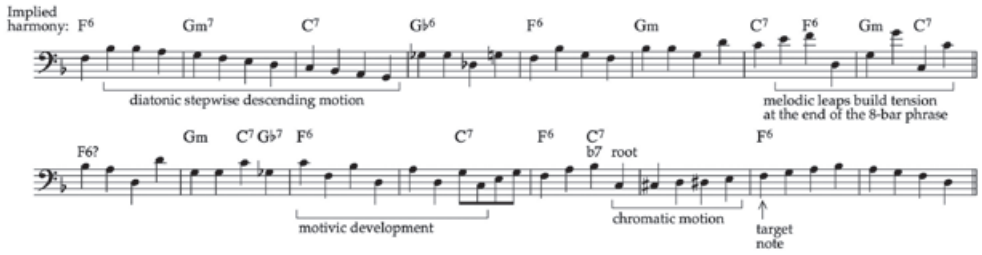
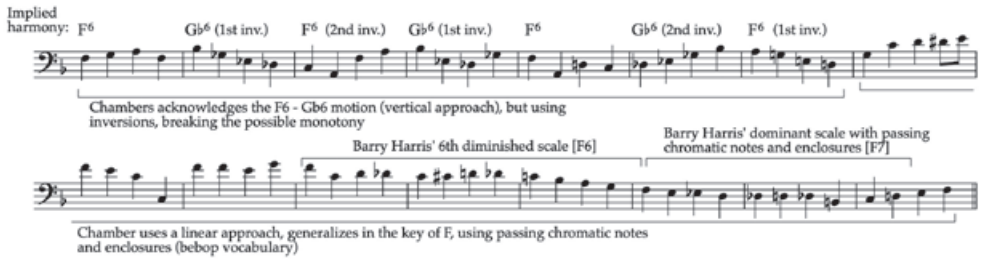
Appendix C

Examples of Bass Lines Over the A Sections of "Well, You Needn't"

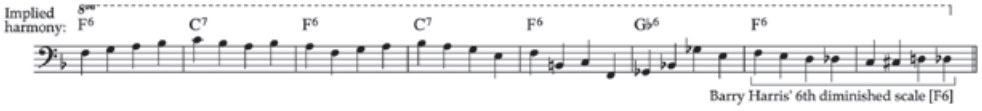
Wilbur Ware's bass lines on "Well, You Needn't," (A sections) from Monk's Music (1957). Ware generalizes in the key of F, and creates "his own" harmony (0:56-1:18)



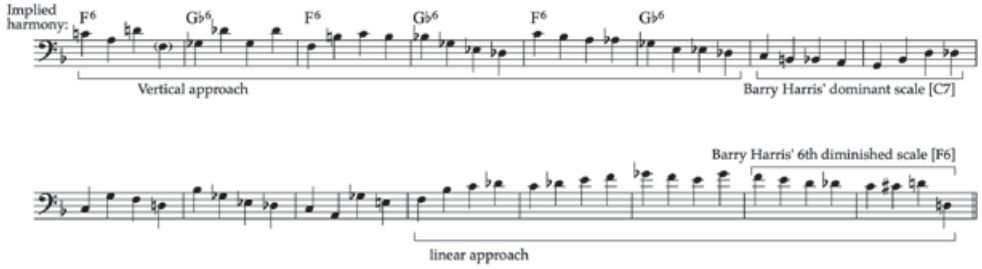
Paul Chambers' bass lines on "Well, You Needn't," from Steamin' with the Miles Davis Quintet (1956) During Davis' solo, 1st chorus (first two A sections), (0:32 - 0:48)



Chambers, during Davis' solo, 1st chorus (third A section). Chambers substitutes sometimes Gb6 for C7 and avoids parallel motion. (0:57 - 1:04)

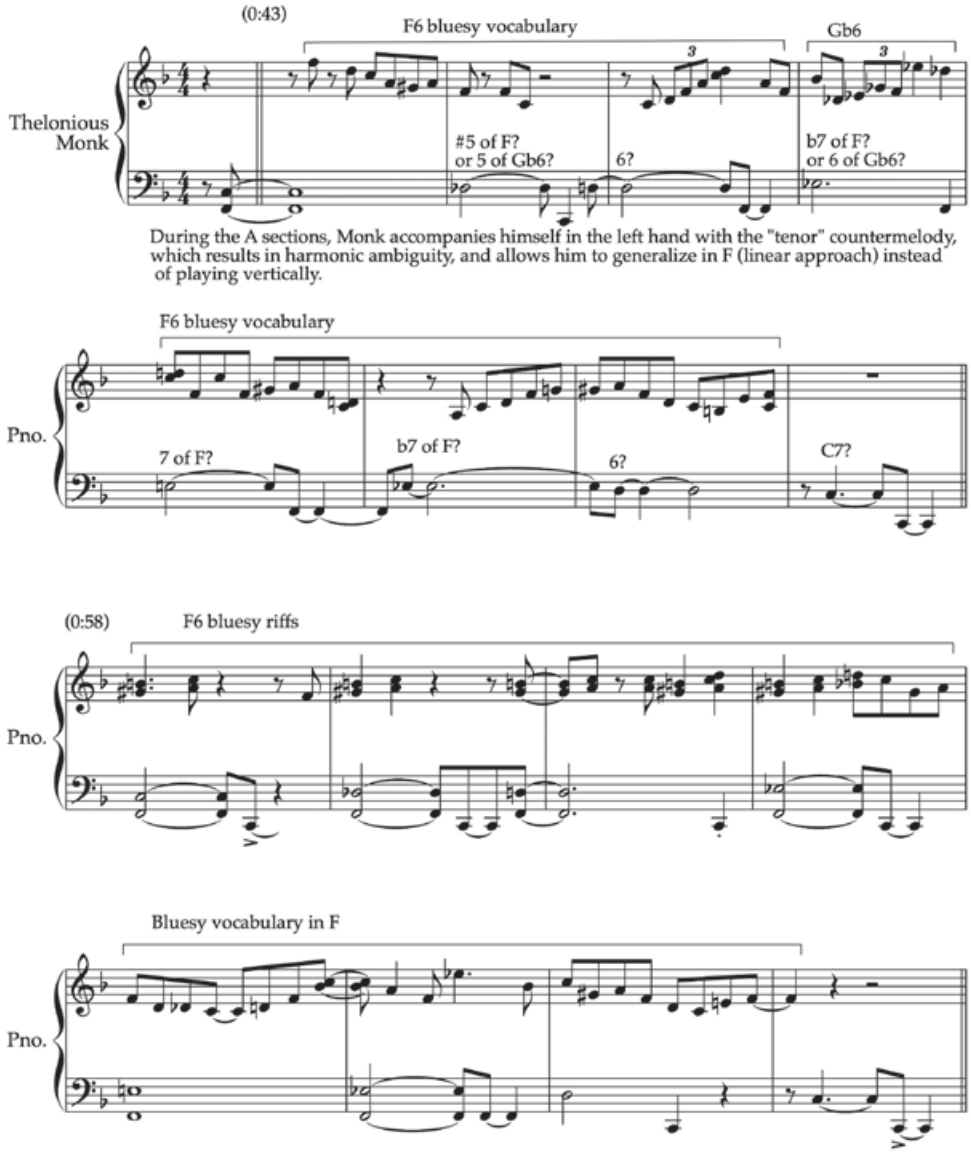


Chambers, during Davis' solo, 2nd chorus (first two A sections). Combination of vertical and linear approach. (1:05 - 1:21)



Appendix D

Thelonious Monk's Improvisation on "Well, You Needn't" from *Piano Solo* (1954). Example of Linear Approach.



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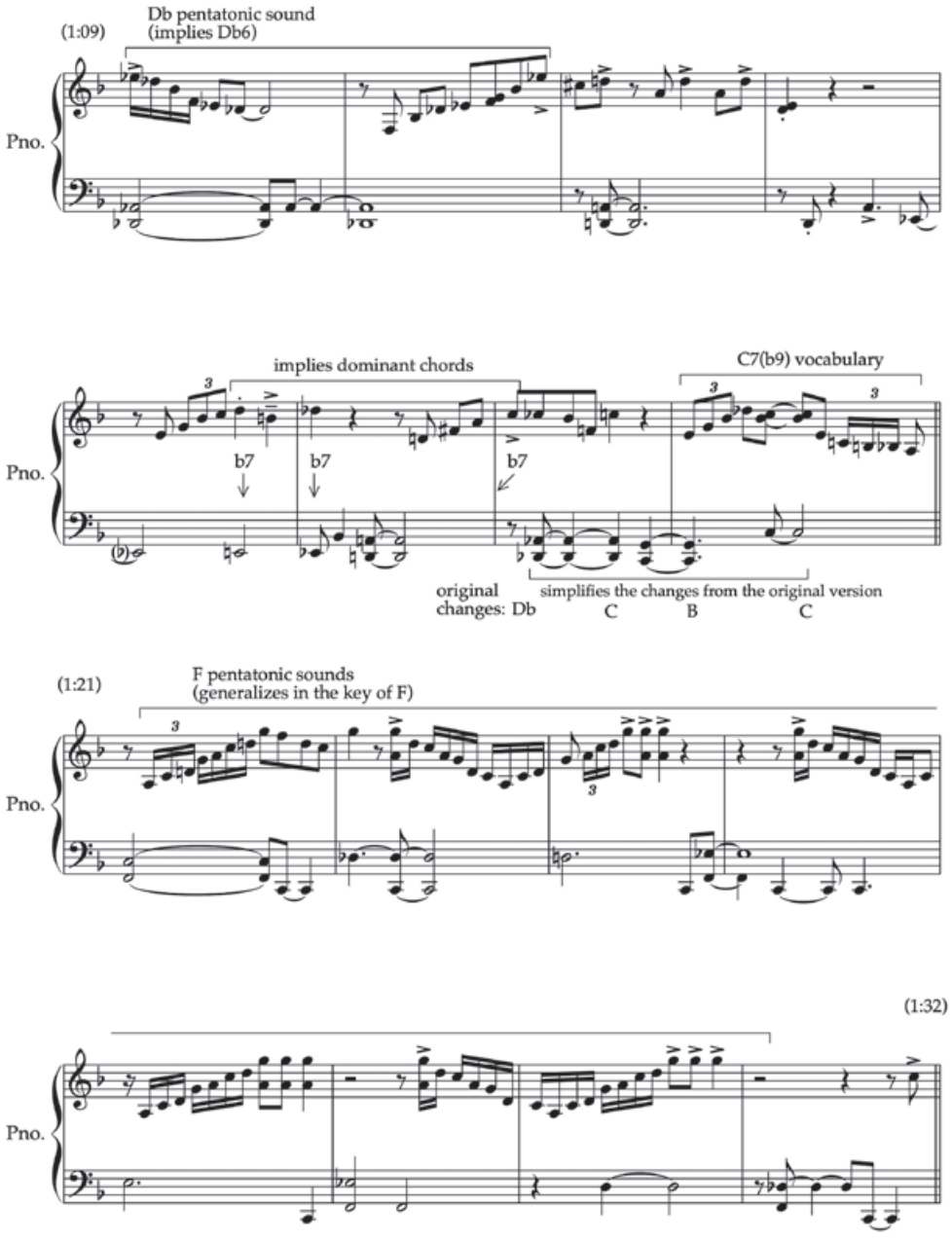
(1:09)
Db pentatonic sound
(implies Db6)
Pno.
implies dominant chords
C7(b9) vocabulary
b7
b7
b7
original changes: Db
simplifies the changes from the original version
C
B
C
(1:21)
F pentatonic sounds
(generalizes in the key of F)
Pno.
(1:32)
Pno.