

Mike Vax Music Productions

THE ROLE OF THE TRUMPET IN TRADITIONAL JAZZ STYLES

The trumpet has always been the “lead” instrument in both New Orleans and Chicago styles of traditional jazz playing. It is the instrument that carries the melody of most tunes, whether it is a written out arrangement or a tune that everyone knows and is “faking.” This is largely because the trumpet is a loud and cutting instrument. It allows for the melody to be heard, regardless of what the other “front line” instruments are doing.

Most music in the more traditional or Dixieland idiom has the clarinet playing an “obligato” part over the trumpet melody, or playing a parallel second part to the trumpet. The trombone is playing in a “tail-gate” style that in many cases combines part of a bass line and part of a counter melody to the trumpet.

JOBS OF THE TRUMPET PLAYER

1. Set musical instructions
 - Phrasing
 - Backgrounds
 - Endings
 - Dynamics, articulations
 - Shout choruses

2. Set the stylistic approach
 - Swing or even 8th notes
 - Length of notes
 - Types of accents
 - Type of phrasing for a certain era (i.e. early Jazz, 20's, swing)
 - Type of phrasing for a certain place (i.e. New Orleans, Chicago, New York)

NEW ORLEANS TRUMPET STYLE (THE STREET TRADITION)

- Played with a march-type feel (either a “flat four” or a two beat feel)
- Melody is angular and “punched”
- Improvisation is based largely on the melody
- Shakes are common on longer notes
- Much of the music is played together, rather than extended sections for individual improvisation
- When solos are taken, many times the other front line instruments will play a background
- LOUIS ARMSTRONG, BUDDY BOLDEN, BUNK JOHNSON, KING OLIVER, FREDDY KEPPARD, HENRY “RED” ALLEN, NICK LA ROCCA

CHICAGO TRUMPET STYLE (THE BEGINNINGS OF SWING AND INDIVIDUAL IMPROVISATION)

- Played with a more straight-ahead, swing feel.
- Melody is more flowing
- Improvisation is based more on the chord changes
- More room for extended individual solos
- Less background playing behind the solos
- Shakes are still used on some longer notes
- BIX BEIDERBECKE, BUNNY BERRIGAN, MAX KAMINSKY, WILD BILL DAVISON, CHARLIE SHAVERS, ROY ELDRIDGE, RUBY BRAFF

PO Box 8337* Pittsburg, CA* 94565
Booking:(925)427.6666 * Cell:(925)872-1942
Vaxtrpts@aol.com * www.mikevax.net
www.bigbandjazz.net