

Coleman Hawkins
BODY AND SOUL

Coleman Hawkins, known as "Bean," was born in Missouri in 1904, and served as a transitional force from "swing" to "bebop." Hawkins was noted for his attention to the harmonic structure of a tune, and developed his solos with a good deal of "vertical" material (arpeggiated harmonies). His melodic flair, however, was unfailing, as can be seen in his classic 1939 solo on "Body and Soul."

The "swing" elements of Hawkins' style are reflected in the regular harmonic motion and steady rhythmic pulse which underlie his improvisations, as well as in the thick, vibrating tone he produced. His flow of notes is non-stop, but the rhythmic variety within that flow creates a jagged feeling very different from the smooth eighth-note approach of the beboppers. The downbeat of almost every measure is strongly reinforced, making for short, clearly defined phrases within the overall kinetic rhythm.

Hawkins sticks very strictly to the harmonies of a tune, and emphasizes the changes both rhythmically and melodically:



His selection of pitches often involves arpeggiated harmonies, although this will vary. In the example below, arpeggiated phrases alternate with phrases in which the chord tones are ornamented by non-chord tones to create weaving melodic lines:



This "weaving" device is close to the bebop style of improvisation; Hawkins also uses chromatics as a colorful ornament:



His phrases are often organized through variation of a melodic germ:



This device occasionally leads to wide skips, which increase the feeling of verticalness:

