

Playin' Outside.

New melodic and harmonic strategies in
jazz improvisation after John Coltrane

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Miles Davis and John Coltrane at 90: Retrospect and Prospect
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Overview

1. Playing outside in post-bop improvisation
2. *Distant reading*: Comparing John Coltrane, David Liebman and Michael Brecker
3. Case study 1: side-stepping / side-slipping
4. Case study 2: constant structure
5. Case study 3: Superimposed chord changes
6. Case study 4: symmetric scales
7. Conclusion and outlook

Approach

MIXED METHODOLOGY

- musical analysis by listening experience and close reading of transcriptions
- computational analysis of digital solo transcriptions → „distant reading“ (Franco Moretti)
 - explorative : looking for interesting patterns within a larger repertoire / corpus of solos
 - evaluative: comparing results of close reading with a larger repertoire / corpus of solos

see *Jazzomat research project*: jazzomat.hfm-weimar.de

Playing outside in post-bop improvisation

- *melodic*

Chromaticism in the melody

- *harmonic*

reharmonisation and substitution of the underlying chord progression

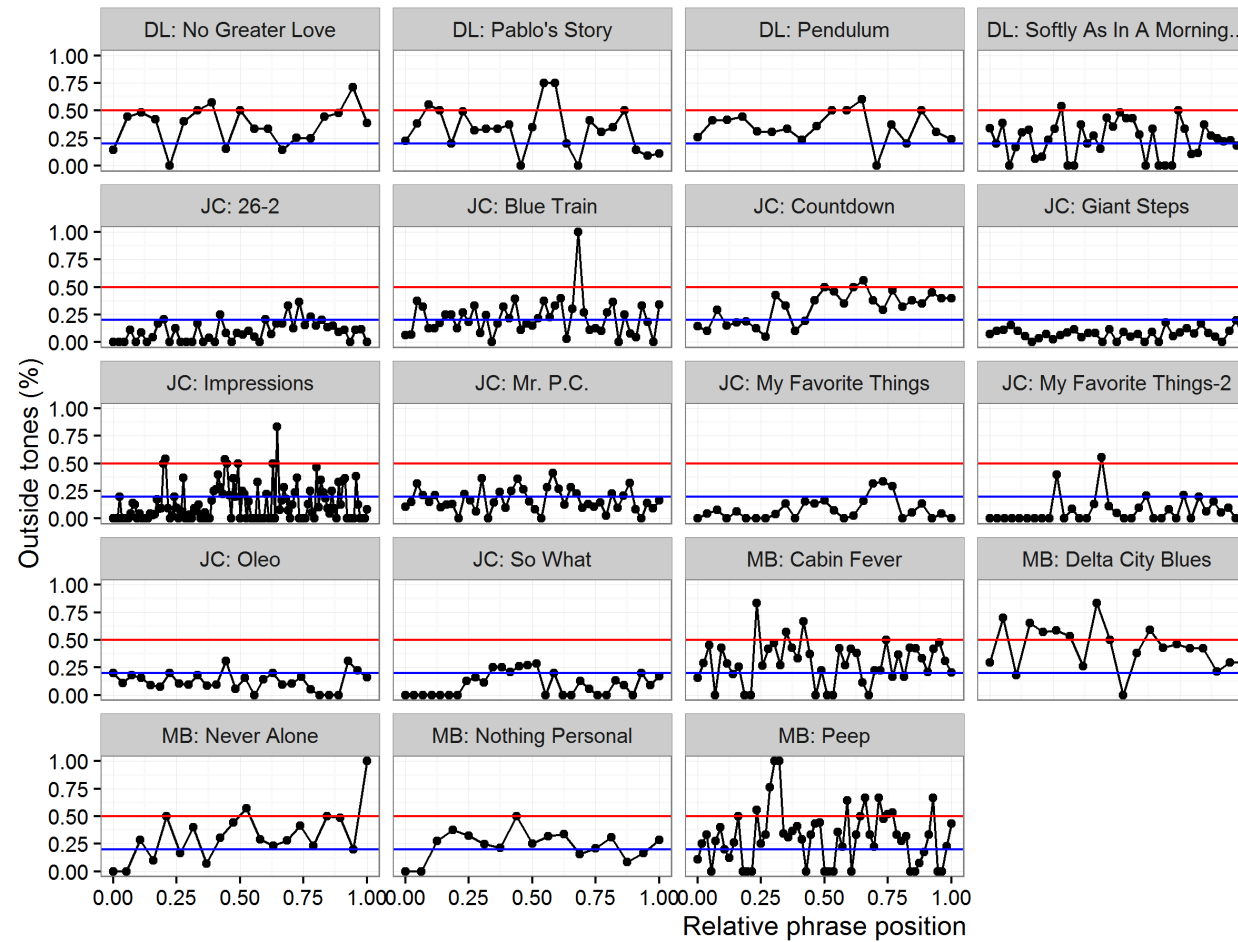
Contemporary strategies of playing outside

Concrete concepts

- tonal displacement: side-stepping / side-slipping
- reharmonisation (Coltrane-changes, directional units)
- constant structure
- ‚outside scales‘: chromatic scales, symmetric scales

Distant reading

Outside playing in solos by Coltrane, Liebman, and Brecker



Side-stepping, side-slipping I: David Liebman

Musical score for "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise" by David Liebman. The score is written in treble clef, 4/4 time, and B-flat major. It features a tempo marking of quarter note = 261 and a starting chord of C- (C minor). The piece includes a first ending bracket and several triplet markings.

Tempo: ♩ = 261
Chord: C-

1

3

7

3

3

3

David Liebman, „Softly As In A
Morning Sunrise“,
Quest/Standards (1988)



Side-stepping, side-slipping II: Michael Brecker

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Delta City Blues" by Michael Brecker. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 282. The score is divided into four staves, each with a starting measure number (8, 4, 11, and 18) and a final measure number (8, 8, 8, and 8). The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs. Chord changes are indicated by labels such as F⁷, B^b7, E^b7, C⁻⁷, and F⁷. A first ending bracket labeled "1" is present at the beginning of the second staff. The score is annotated with various colored background blocks: a large red block covers the first staff and the first half of the second staff; a green block covers the second half of the second staff and the first half of the third staff; a pink block covers the second half of the third staff; and an orange block covers the first half of the fourth staff.



„Delta City Blues“, *Two Blocks From the Edge* (1998)

MICHAEL BRECKER

Constant structure

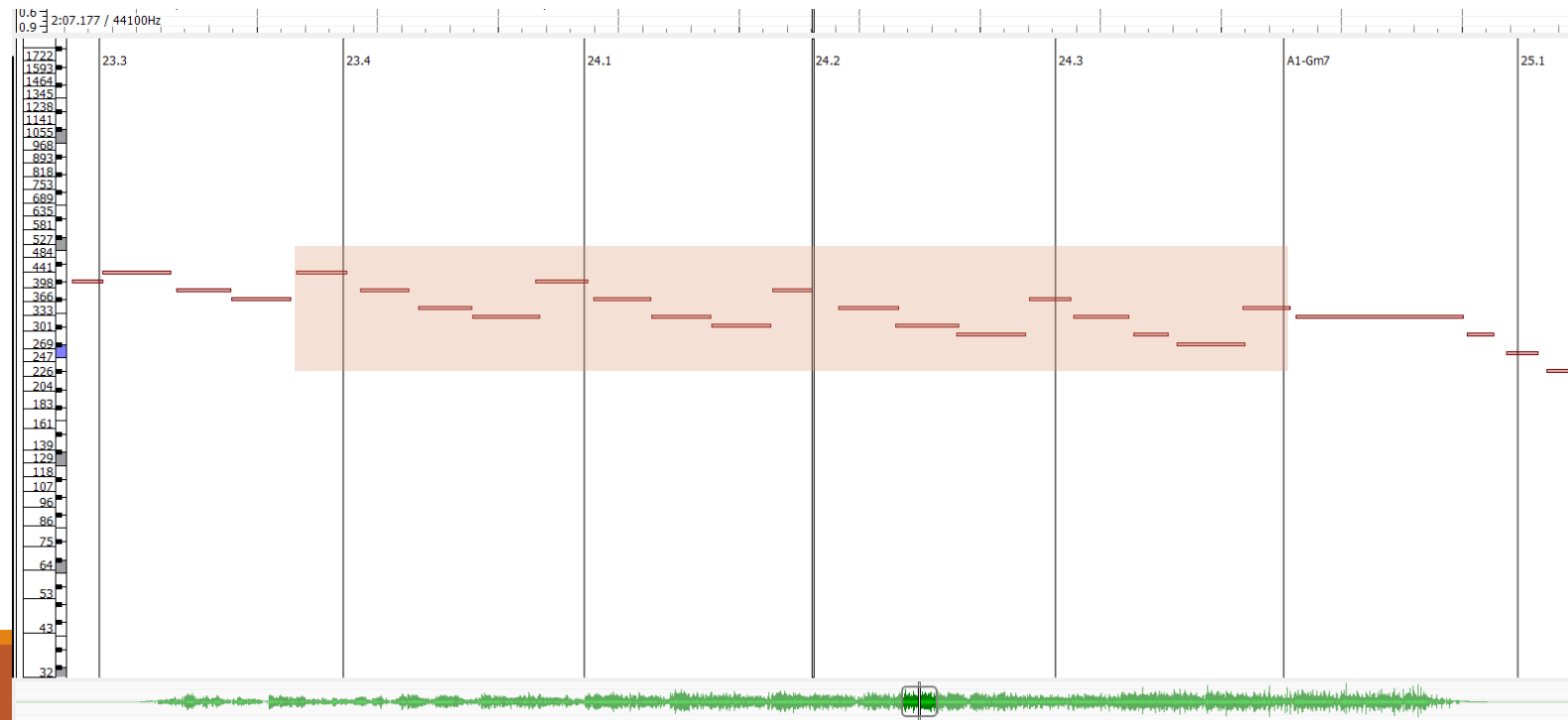
Musical score for Michael Brecker's "Constant structure" from "Tales From The Hudson". The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat major/D minor). It consists of five staves of music, with measure numbers 169, 172, 175, 178, and 181 indicated at the beginning of each staff. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many triplets and slurs. Chord symbols are placed above the staff: Bb7, Eb7, Bb7, Eb7, Bb7, G7, C-7, F7, Bb7, F7, Bb7, Eb7, and Bb7. A box containing the number 15 is positioned above the first staff, and a box containing the number 16 is positioned above the fifth staff. A speaker icon is located to the left of the score.

„Cabin Fever“ (Michael Brecker,
Tales From The Hudson, 1996)

MICHAEL BRECKER

Constant structures

Musical notation for Michael Brecker's "Nothing Personal". The first staff (measures 70-72) is labeled with a Gm7 chord and contains a triplet of eighth notes. The second staff (measures 73-75) is labeled with a D7 chord and contains a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of quarter notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. A red shaded area highlights the triplet of eighth notes in measure 73.

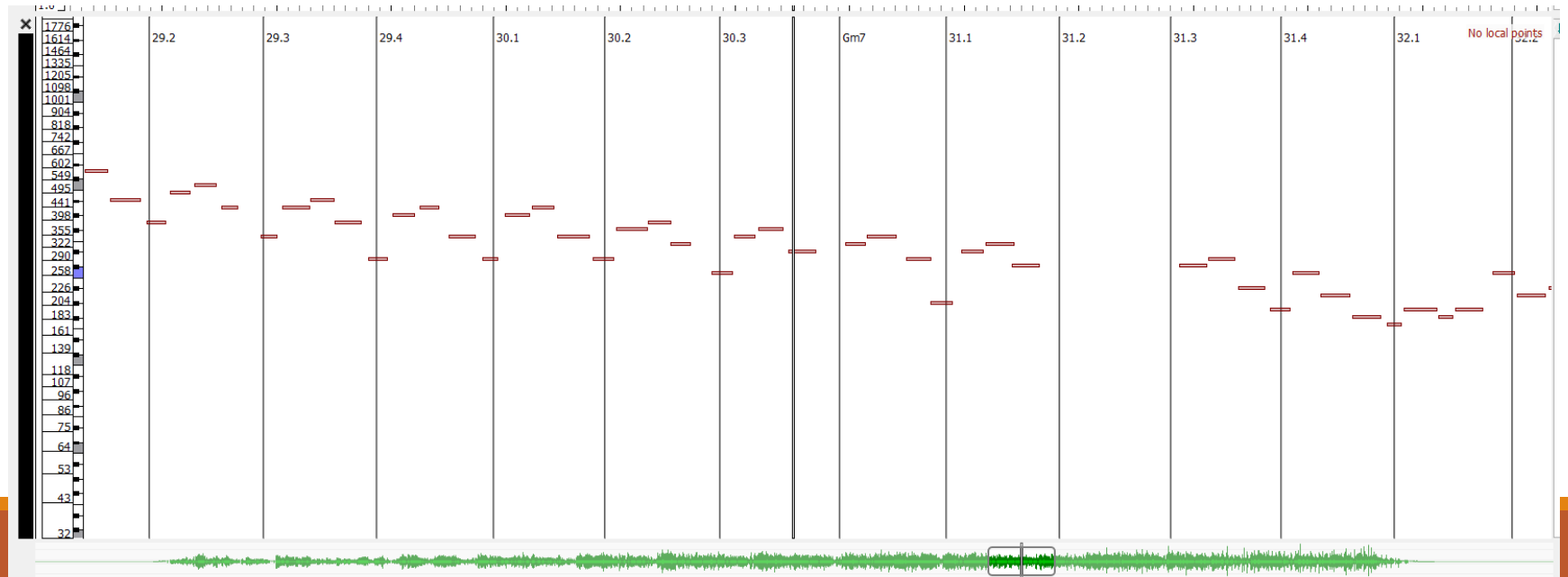


„Nothing Personal“, Michael Brecker (1987)

MICHAEL BRECKER

Constant structures

Musical score for Michael Brecker's "Nothing Personal" (1987). The score is in 3/4 time and features a complex melodic line with various rhythmic patterns and accidentals. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into measures 80, 83, and 86. Measure 80 is annotated with a C-7 chord. Measure 83 is annotated with a G-7 chord. The score includes various rhythmic markings such as triplets and sixteenth notes.



„Nothing Personal“, Michael Brecker (1987)

MICHAEL BRECKER

Constant structures as inside and outside



Musical notation for 'Delta City Blues' (1998) showing a sequence of notes on a treble clef staff. The notation includes a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. A red box highlights a sequence of notes from approximately measure 110.2 to 110.4. A green box highlights a sequence of notes from approximately measure 111.2 to 111.3. A grey box highlights a sequence of notes from approximately measure 112.1 to 112.3. Above the staff, the chord F⁷ is indicated above measure 111.1, and B^b7 is indicated above measure 112.1. A triplet symbol (three notes under a bracket with a '3' below) is present under the first note of measure 111.1. The number 90 is written at the beginning of the staff.

„Delta City Blues“, *Two Blocks From the Edge* (1998)



„Nothing Personal“, *Michael Brecker* (1987)

Chord progression diagram for 'Nothing Personal' (1987) showing a sequence of chords across measures 110.2 to 112.3. The chords are: 110.2:Cm7, 110.3, 110.4, 111.1, 111.2:F7, 111.3, 111.4, 112.1, 112.2:Bb7, 112.3, and 112.4:No local point. The diagram shows a descending line of red horizontal bars representing the pitch contour of the melody. A vertical bar labeled 'x' is at the beginning. A green waveform is visible at the bottom of the diagram. A small box at the bottom right contains the text '1:24.642' and '53'.

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Superimposed chord changes: Coltrane-Changes

Ari Poutiainen, *Brecker and Patterns. An Analysis of Michael Brecker's Melodic and Instrumental Devices*, 1999, p. 27f

The image shows a single staff of music in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. Above the staff, the following chords are indicated: F#mi7, B7, Ema, G7, Cma, Eb7, and Abma. The final measure of the staff contains a complex chord structure with a plus sign (+) and a flat (b) symbol, likely representing a tritone substitution or a specific voicing.

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Superimposed chord changes



Michael Brecker, „Peep“, *Now You See it... Now You Don't* (1990)

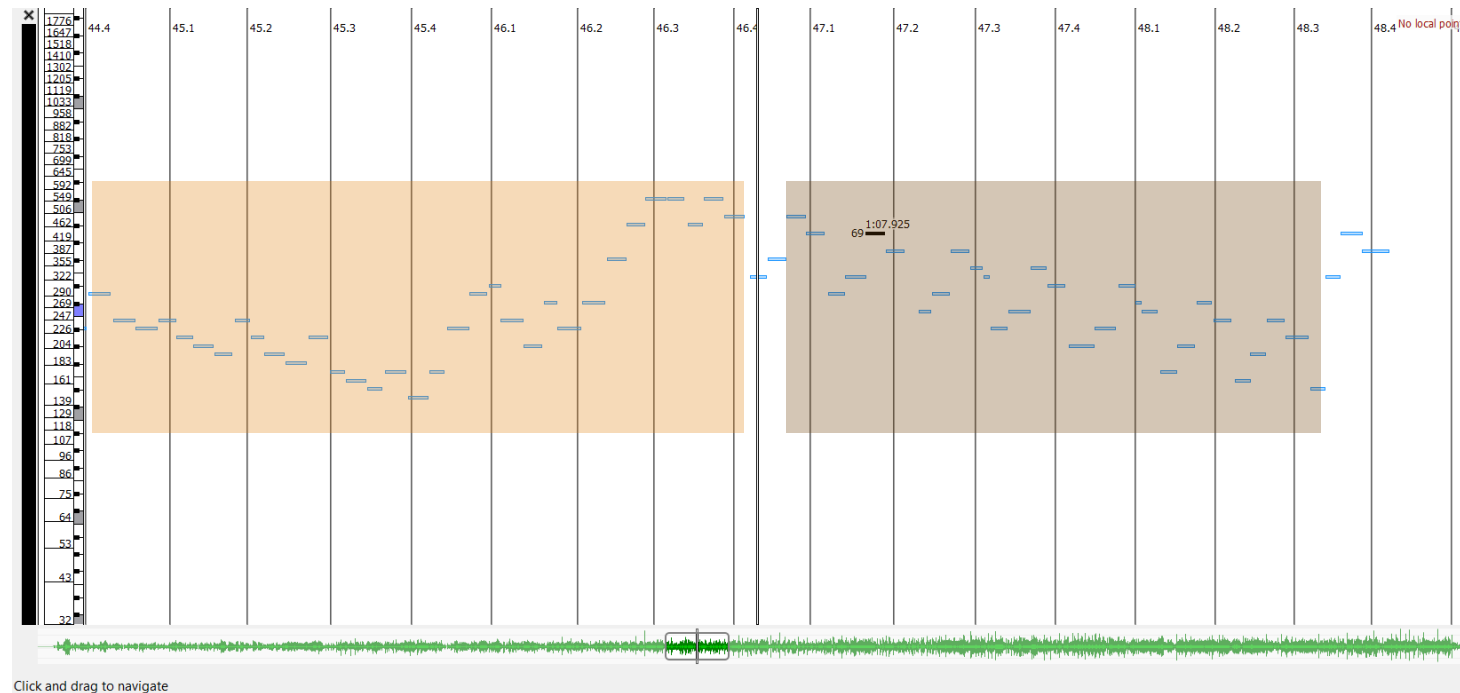
$B\flat^{-11}$

80 $E\flat^9 \text{ sus}4$

83

86

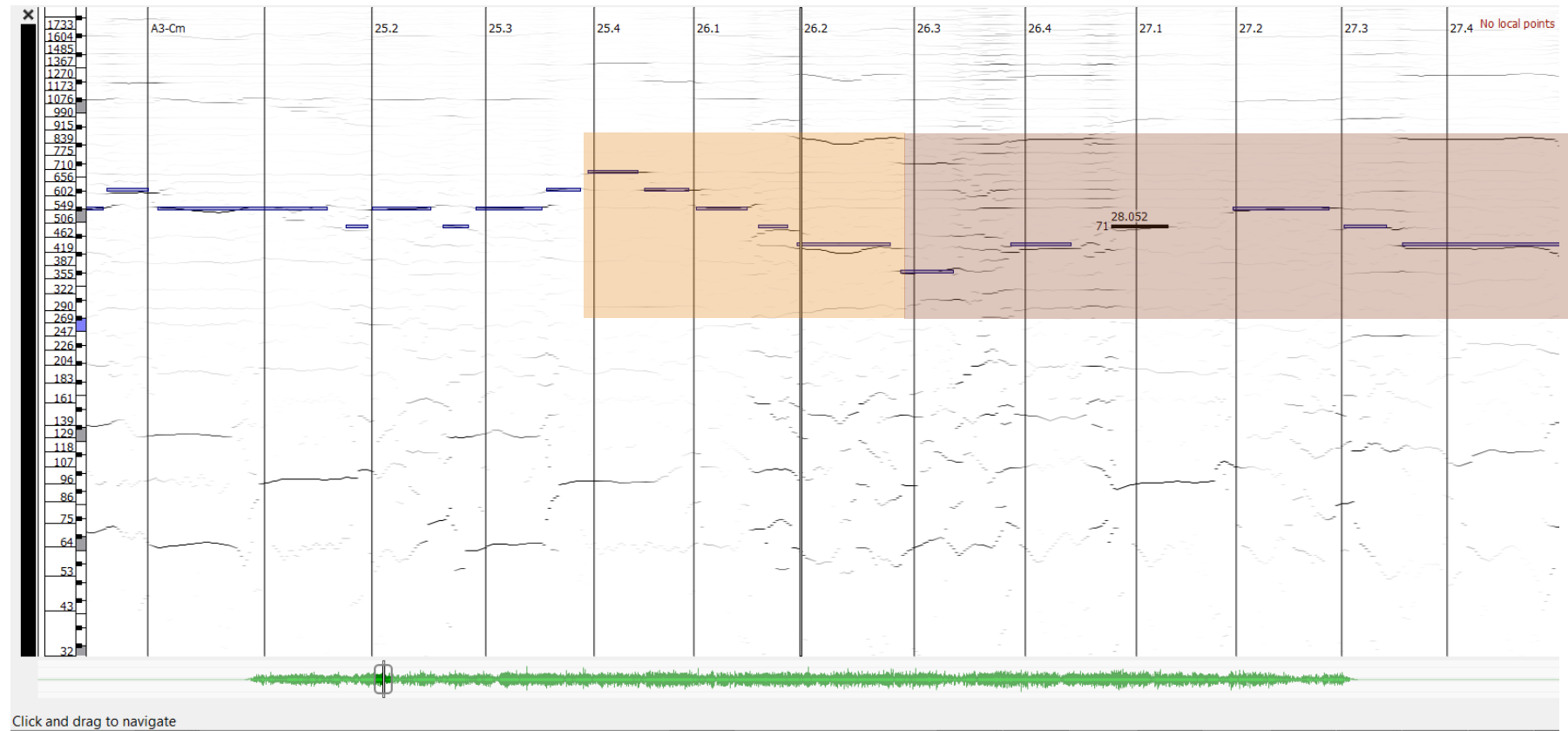
89



Symmetric scales: Whole tone scale



David Liebman, „Softly As In A Morning Sunrise“,
Quest/Standards (1988)



Symmetric scales: dominant diminished scaöe

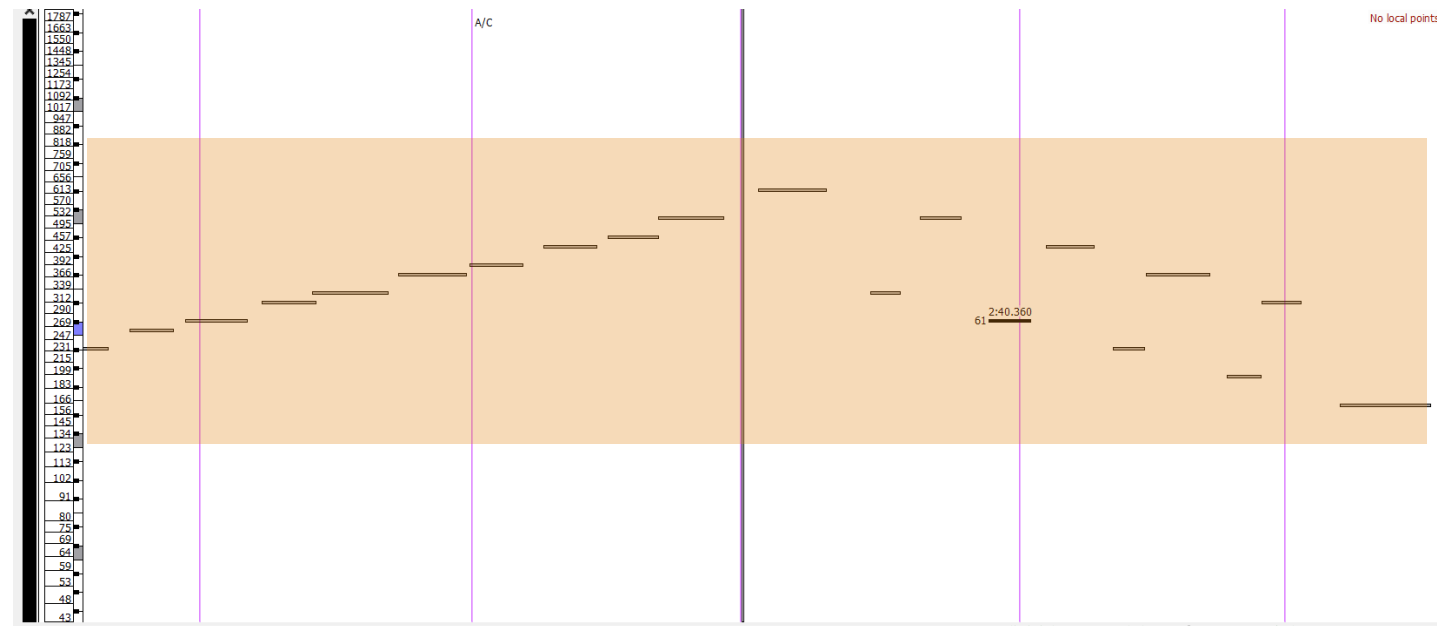
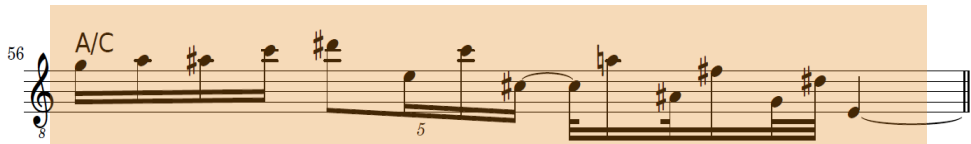


John Coltrane, solo on „Moment’s Notice“, end of
2nd chorus, bars 34-35
C-dominant diminished



Michael Brecker, solo on „Peep“, 3rd chorus, bar 8
C-dominant diminished

Symmetric scales



Michael Brecker, „Naked Soul“,
Tales From The Hudson (1996)

Conclusion

- strategies of playing outside prominently established by John Coltrane became standard devices of post-bop improvisation

- Tonal displacement: side-stepping/side-slipping, intervallic denial
- Reharmonisation: Coltrane-changes, superimposed chord changes
- Constant structure
- 'outside scales': chromatic scale, symmetric scales

- connecting several strategies in one phrase became an important tool to create drama and express creativity

Outlook

- further analysis of post-bop and contemporary saxophonists with close and distant reading
- question of context:
 - rhythmic precision, metric and formal placement of outside strategies
 - Context of the band: interplay and harmonic freedom
- constant structures – motivic improvisation - interplay of melody and rhythm: superimposed harmony and rhythm

Thank you for your attention!

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