

For immediate release  
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### **The Sound of Jazz Evolves**

Jazz as a genre is often difficult to define, but improvisation is a key element of the form. Improvisation has been an essential element in African and African-American music since early forms of the music developed, and is closely related to the use of call and response in West African and African-American cultural expression.

Improvisation has changed over time. Early folk blues music often was based around a call and response pattern, and improvisation would factor in the lyrics, the melody, or both. In Dixieland jazz, musicians take turns playing the melody while the others improvise countermelodies. In contrast to the classical form, where performers try to play the piece exactly as the author envisioned it, the goal in jazz is often to create a new interpretation, changing the melody, harmonies, even the time signature. If classical music is the composer's medium, jazz is able to stand up for the rights of the performer too, to *adroitly weigh the respective claims of the composer and the improviser*.

By the Swing era, big bands played using arranged sheet music, but individual soloists would perform improvised solos within these compositions. In bebop, however, the focus shifted from arranging to improvisation over the form; musicians paid less attention to the composed melody, or "head," which was played at the beginning and the end of the tune's performance with improvised sections in between.

Later styles of jazz, such as modal jazz, abandoned the strict notion of a chord progression, allowing the individual musicians to improvise more freely within the context of a given scale or mode (e.g., the Miles Davis album *Kind of Blue*). The avant-garde and free jazz idioms permit, even call for, rhythmic variety as well.

When a pianist, guitarist or other chord-playing instrumentalist improvises an accompaniment while a soloist is playing, it is called comping (a contraction of the word "accompanying"). "Vamping" is a mode of comping that is usually restricted to a few repeating chords or bars, as opposed to comping on the chord structure of the entire composition. Most often, vamping is used as a simple way to extend the very beginning or end of a piece, or to set up a segue.

In some modern jazz compositions where the underlying chords of the composition are particularly complex or fast moving, the composer or performer may create a set of "blowing changes," which is a simplified set of chords better suited for comping and solo improvisation.

Today, jazz continues to evolve with the addition of the younger, more risky musicians to the seasoned performers. To see a combination of the new and old genres do not miss any of the free concerts at the Newburgh Jazz Series 2008 which is held at the Newburgh waterfront in July and August. For more details visit [www.newburghjazzseries.com](http://www.newburghjazzseries.com) and [www.ferrygodmother.com](http://www.ferrygodmother.com) or call 845 568-0198. The complete line-up will be available for review after June 1