

# TRANSCRIBED SOLO

## Cannonball Adderley's Solo on "Cherokee"

From *Sarah Vaughan: In the Land of Hi-Fi*  
EmArcy 826 454-2

By Matthew James

Recorded on October 25, 1955, *In the Land of Hi-Fi* includes legendary alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley in a 7-member "little big band" backing the great Sarah Vaughan. Sarah's remarkable singing aside, this is an exceptional opportunity to hear Cannonball as a sideman, blowing on that familiar workout for improvisers, *Cherokee*.

### Background

*Cherokee* was a hit for Charlie Barnet in 1939 and later served as the inspiration for such tunes as *Blue Serge*, *Ko Ko*, *Marshmallow*, *Warming Up a Riff* and *The Injuns*. The tune is closely associated with Charlie Parker, who professed to have practiced *Cherokee*, the blues progression and *I Got Rhythm* changes in 12 keys as a regular regimen. In fact, Bird claimed that his practice on *Cherokee* resulted in a new-found ability to hear higher chord extensions.

Sarah Vaughn's rendition of *Cherokee* on this session is the first by a female, complete with altered lyrics: "Sweet Indian maiden" is replaced with "brave Indian warrior." This performance of the tune strays from the typical key of concert Bb, and is instead in Ab.

### Cannonball's Approach

Cannonball enters for one exciting chorus, providing us with 64 measures of succinct ideas on this AABA standard. Despite the brevity of his solo and the swift tempo, Cannonball weaves effortless lines, displaying a mastery of the changes. To summarize, he makes it sound easy, even over the intimidating bridge!

Cannonball adopts an assertive approach, playing almost continuous forte 8<sup>th</sup>-note passages throughout and pausing for no longer than 6 beats at a time. His 8<sup>th</sup>-note lines are almost entirely scalar, and remain largely "inside" the changes.

Repeated ideas can be the ill-prepared player's bread and butter on up-tempo tunes like this one. But repetition is not rampant within Cannonball's solo, occurring only twice. He treats the Eb7 identically in measures 7-8 and measures 23-24, displaced by two beats. A lengthier repetition is observed when comparing measures 11-13 with measures 27-29, beginning with the descending G bebop scale.

Top-line F becomes the target of almost every chromatic lick Cannonball plays, illustrated in measures 2, 6, 10, 17-18, 45-46 and 57.

## Phrasing & Rhythmic Highlights

Cannonball navigates through this chorus as if he's avoiding beat one intentionally! None of his ideas begin on the first beat of any measure. Instead he prefers beats two and four: Of the 19 significant motives or phrases, five begin on beat two (measures 4, 8, 42, 48, 53) and five begin on beat four (measures 1, 19, 25, 35, 59).

Interestingly, most of Cannonball's passages begin exactly, or within a whole step, of where the previous ones finish. Eight out of 19 begin on the *exact note* that Cannonball finishes the previous phrase on, and seven of them begin within a whole step of the previous idea.

Cannonball "shifts the barline" in a few instances, anticipating the chord that follows. Shifting occurs in measure 2, where the Eb's over the Fmaj7 serve to anticipate the Cm7. In addition, listen to the way he anticipates the chord changes in the last beat of measures 44, 54 and 60.

The "interrupted" passages where Cannonball abandons running 8<sup>th</sup>-note ideas occur in measures 5, 19-25, and during the last A section, measures 49-52. Measures 50-52 are a sequence of the playful 3-note triad first played in 49. This is the only clear evidence of motivic development found in the solo. Otherwise Cannonball sticks to longer phrases, especially measures 25-32, 35-41 and 42-47.

## Saxophone Observations

Cannonball uses less than two octaves of the saxophone's standard 2-1/2 octave range during this solo, ignoring the lowest half-octave (low Bb-F) and the upper three half steps (D# to F). "Doodle tongue" or "doo-n tongue" articulation is prevalent throughout, which involves using the tongue against only half of the reed. This articulation device indirectly accents the highest notes of phrases by muffling the lower notes before them. For example, Cannonball doodle tongues the notes D# and E on beat two of measure 6, which causes the F on beat three to stick out of the phrase.