

HOW TO PLAY MY MUSIC

The title makes me sound big-time. It's not meant to be. I just want to clear up some points which might be confusing. A lot of the same points will also apply to other people's music.

CHORD SYMBOLS

I use the following symbols: The examples here will apply to a C chord:

C^Δ means C major seventh
C[∅] means Cm7-5 (Cm7b5)
C[◦] means C diminished
Cm7 means C minor seventh
Cm^Δ means C major minor seventh
C5 means C major triad
Cm5 means C minor triad

Where a 9th or 5th is altered I use + (to sharpen it) or - (to flatten it),
eg. C7+9-5 If a note is to be added I write "add Bb" or whatever.

Regarding scales which can be played:

Cm means minor scale, which is the same as C major scale with a minor 3rd
CmH means C harmonic minor
CmM means C melodic minor

VIBRATO

Unless I want vibrato for a special effect (where I would write *vib*,
fast vib, *slow vib*, or some such), I do not want any vibrato. To me it sounds dated and can cause problems where there is close voicing. Of course, when players have a solo they can use vibrato, but not when playing with others. Leave vibrato to opera singers.

TUNING / INTONATION

I don't know what the difference is between these 2 terms, so I'll use tuning which is shorter and less pretentious. Please pay attention to tuning. Close voicings sound awful if instruments are out of tune and the whole band can sound bad if just 1 or 2 instruments are out of tune.

DYNAMICS

Dynamics are very important to me. Think of a piece as being comprised of the build-up to a series of climaxes with the biggest one usually near the end. Dynamics help to achieve this. They are also used to blend one section with another. You can achieve wonderful things with dynamics. Don't ignore them.

INDIVIDUAL OR SECTION WORK

Players are often guided by others in a section as to when to make an entrance.

Be aware that sometimes I treat every instrument differently, coming in at different times, playing different rhythms and combining with instruments from other sections. Don't be caught out by this. I'll try and think of a way to warn you in future.

SOLOS FOR EFFECTS

In writing classical music, composers may write millions of notes to convey what a jazz player can do ad lib with just a bit of guidance. Where I write *WILD - with others* it is to obtain an effect, so even if you are a very restrained player usually in solos you will have to play wildly to create the effect that is needed. Apologies to non-English-speaking players. I suppose I should write everything in Italian.

BANDLEADERS

Please be kind to depts. I don't want to embarrass anyone if they have to sight-read a difficult part without any chance to look at the music beforehand. I've gone through that experience myself and know what it's like. If you have downloaded an arrangement, why not tell others in the band to download the leadsheet so they get an idea of how their own part fits in to the whole thing.

PIANISTS

Piano parts are a devil to write. You spend a long time writing a part that no-one hears. Be assured then that a lot of the time in a big band arrangement you needn't play at all. So take some time off - but don't forget to count like fury,

GUITARISTS

I don't use a guitar player in my own big band, so the guitar part is an added on part after I've written the arrangement. I hope they fit. Just in case they don't, play quietly. And please don't play 4 to a bar. It fits the Count Basie Band, but not my stuff.

BASS PLAYERS

It is essential that you play the written notes when given them. Don't try and second guess the chords from the notes - I might change the chord at irregular intervals, such as dotted crotchets (dotted whole-notes). The bass has to provide the root-notes to chords at times, so don't play too quietly (and not too loudly either).

DRUMMERS

Drum parts can be very elaborate or very simple. Sorry if I've done the wrong kind for you. Do remember that fills in ensemble passages are usually more important than the written phrasing.