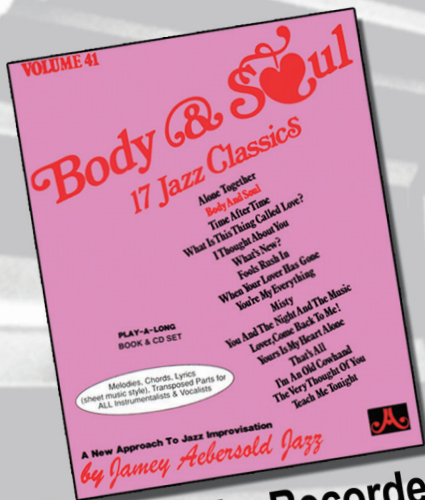


For ALL Musicians...



# Jazz Piano Voicings



Transcribed from  
Volume 41  
'Body & Soul'

Exactly As Recorded!

by Dan Haerle

*Jamey Aebersold Jazz®*



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# Some Thoughts On Comping

by  
Dan Haerle

Many pianists are praised because of the way they "comp," that is, complement a soloist. A good pianist is especially able to tune in on a soloist and show sensitivity and taste in his accompaniment. To attain this sensitivity, a good question to ask yourself periodically would be: What did the soloist just play; could I sing it back? This will often reveal whether or not you are listening carefully enough! Also, it is essential that a pianist not force the soloist into any situation such as playing loudly when the soloist would rather play softly, or by creating alterations in the harmony that the soloist did not expect. However, in some situations, a soloist may enjoy being "fed" unexpected alterations or substitutions in the spirit of a kind of harmonic sport. This is only a good idea when you are well-acquainted with a player or are pretty certain that he or she is very secure as a improvisor.

Comping for an imaginary soloist, as is done on the Aebersold play-a-long recordings, can be a tricky business. It is very easy for the comping to turn into a piano chord solo which is far too busy and cluttered up rhythmically or melodically. The soloist is left with no space in which to play. The goal should be to supply the harmony and play something that feels good so that any soloist will be comfortable playing with the prerecorded rhythm accompaniment. The problem is that the element of interaction is removed. Since there is no soloist playing as the track is recorded, there is no possibility of reacting to rhythmic or harmonic elements that he might employ. One solution is to play simple, somewhat repetitive figures that create a good feel but that don't get too busy. Generally, my approach is to comp as though I were an arranger creating a sax or trombone background behind a solo in a jazz band chart. This is a very similar situation to play-a-long records since, when the chart is arranged, there is no soloist playing and the background has to be created in advance. A good background would generally have some melodic interest (though restrained) and would sound the harmony to support the solo. Also, there would be enough rhythmic life in it to inject some energy into the music and hopefully stimulate the soloist.

Personally, I have never enjoyed solo or trio piano playing as much as playing with at least one "front line" instrument. I'm sure that is because I would miss the interaction of comping for a soloist for whom I felt I could be both supportive and stimulating. The practical reality is that rhythm section players in general spend most of their musical lives accompanying and a very small percentage of the time soloing. As a matter of fact, though you will be expected to be a competent soloist, people will probably ask you to play because you are a good accompanist and they think you will make the group and them sound good. So, I would encourage all aspiring pianists to see the fun in accompanying and to involve themselves in as many situations where they can learn to comp as possible. Creating interesting yet tasteful accompaniment is very challenging but can easily be as enjoyable as soloing, with the right kind of attitude!

**Dan Haerle can be heard on these volumes of the  
Jamey Aebersold Play-a-long Series:**

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Dan Haerle's piano comping to the chords of  
*Alone Together*

1

0 D- E $\phi$  A7<sup>+9</sup> D- E $\phi$  A7<sup>+9</sup>

5 D- A $\phi$  D7<sup>+9</sup> G- G-

9 B- E7 G- C7 F $\Delta$  E- A7

13 D $\Delta$  D $\Delta$  D- E $\phi$  A7<sup>+9</sup>

17 D- E $\phi$  A7<sup>+9</sup> D- A $\phi$  D7<sup>+9</sup>

21 G- G- B- E7 G- C7

25 F $\Delta$  E- A7 D $\Delta$  D $\Delta$

29 A $\phi$  D7<sup>b9</sup> G- G-

33 G $\phi$  C7<sup>b9</sup> F $\Delta$  E $\phi$  A7<sup>+9</sup>

37 D- E $\phi$  A7<sup>+9</sup> D- E $\phi$  A7<sup>+9</sup>

41 D- B $\flat$ 7<sup>+4</sup> A7<sup>+9</sup> D- E7<sup>+9</sup> A7<sup>+9</sup>

2 45 D- E $\phi$  A7<sup>+9</sup> D- E $\phi$  A7<sup>+9</sup>

49 D- A $\phi$  D7<sup>+9</sup> G- G-

53 B- E7 G- C7 F $\Delta$  E- A7