

Moanin'

Written by bluesever

Monday, 26 September 2016 15:16 -

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Benny Golson cajoled Jazz Messengers pianist Bobby Timmons into expanding a funky little lick into what would become one of the signature tunes of hard bop: *"...I said, 'OK, Bobby, that sounds good.' And Lee [Morgan] and I learned it. Lee and I, for some reason, had the extraordinary ability to play and think and breathe exactly the same. And we never practiced it. I wasn't aware of it myself 'til somebody pointed it out. We played exactly as one. I said, 'OK, we've got it down. Now we're gonna play it tonight, and I'm going to pay particular attention to the audience and see what it does to them. We played it and laid them out. Boy, they loved it. The name of the tune was 'Moanin'."*

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Throughout its history, jazz has constantly evolved, developing from and reacting against its earlier incarnations. The mid-1940s saw bebop reinvent jazz as an artist's genre, distinct from the swing style that was the popular music throughout the 1930s and '40s. Bebop was music for listening, not dancing, and the emphasis became virtuosic improvised solos instead of memorable tunes and arrangements. However, the advent of bebop itself led to further reactions and developments within jazz during the 1950s. The newer genre again divided; cool jazz became a reaction against bebop, while hard bop maintained much of the bebop aesthetic.



Art Blakey

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Hard bop players continued in the bebop idiom by emphasizing improvisation, swinging rhythms, and an aggressive, driving rhythm section. Hard bop artists retained bebop's standard song forms of 12-bar blues and 32-bar forms as well as the preference for small combos consisting of a rhythm section plus one or two horns.



Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, 1958

One of the premier hard bop artists and, in fact, the one who coined the term with the 1956 album *Hard Bop*, is drummer and bandleader **Art Blakey**. His band, the **Jazz Messengers**, was an extremely talented and influential group from its conception. Blakey formed the Jazz Messengers in 1953 with pianist Horace Silver, but, with the group's personnel constantly changing, few artists spent an extended period. This frequent turnover resulted in Blakey consistently working with the talented youth on the jazz scene.



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On October 30, 1958 Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers recorded the album “**Moanin'**” at Van Gelder Studio in New Jersey for the Blue Note label. Moanin' is one of the most influential and important hard bop albums due to its outstanding compositions, arrangements, and personnel. The quintet at this time consisted of Pittsburgh native Art Blakey on drums, trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, bassist Jymie Merritt, and pianist Bobby Timmons, all from Philadelphia. Benny Golson wrote the arrangements and contributed four of the album's six tracks. The title track, "Moanin'," composed by 22-year-old pianist Bobby Timmons, became the greatest hit of Blakey's lengthy career.



Moanin', album

Robert Henry "Bobby" Timmons (1935 – 1974) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Timmons was strongly associated with the soul jazz style that he helped initiate. Timmons became best known as a member of Art Blakey's band the Jazz Messengers, which he was first part of from July 1958 to September 1959, including for a tour of Europe. He was recruited for the Messengers by saxophonist Benny Golson, who said that *"He was inventive, [...] He could play bebop and he could play funky – he could play a lot of things, and I thought it was the element that Art needed. He hadn't had anybody quite like Bobby, who could go here or go there, rather than walking in a single corridor."*

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