Joshua Redman’s Tenor Sax Solo On ‘The Turnaround’

by Trent Kynaston

Joshua Redman’s tenor sax solo on the Ornette Coleman tune “The Turnaround,” from Redman’s album Wish (Warner Bros.), is a standard blues in C, transcribed here in the tenor key of D. As with many of Redman’s solos, the seven choruses presented here are very musical, highly motivic and masterfully developed.

The prominent motivic ideas are derived from Coleman’s composition, like the first three notes of Redman’s solo, which come from the last three notes of the melody. This lick returns with regularity after the first chorus (in measures 18, 23, 31, 32, 36, 72, 74, 75, 79, 82 and 83, to point out a few).

A second prominent theme is derived from the turnaround of the tune. This 5-3-2-1 minor-scale line is heard first in bar 15, and then is more highly developed in the opening section of the fifth chorus, starting in measure 48.

Redman plays a wide variety of influences and styles throughout the solo. These range from an opening laid-back style reminiscent of Dexter Gordon, to cleanly articulated double-time lines à la Sonny Stitt, to a more contemporary approach as demonstrated in the metric modulation used at the beginning of the third and fifth choruses.

Finally, as with any study of solo transcriptions, you must listen to the recording in order to truly investigate, appreciate and enjoy the creativity, subtleties and integrity of the artist. Check it out!