

## Introduction

Red Garland was one of the great jazz pianists of the 1950's. He had a distinctive, elegant style that influenced many pianists at the time, and continues to exert a large influence on jazz pianists today. Garland was not only a favourite of other pianists but also the pianist of choice for many horn players of the time including Miles Davis and John Coltrane. He led several excellent piano trios, notably the trio with Paul Chambers on bass and Arthur Taylor on drums, one of the best piano trios on record.

William "Red" Garland was born in Dallas, Texas on May 13, 1923. Not a piano prodigy by any means, Red did not take up the piano until he was 20. However, prior to that time, he had played clarinet and had studied the alto saxophone with Buster Smith, between 1939 and 1943. He also had aspirations as a professional boxer, but this career was cut short by the draft.

It was during his Army service that Garland became interested in the piano. On his discharge in 1944 he was ready to play professionally, starting with the Hot Lips Page Band, with whom he played until 1945. In 1946 he joined the Billy Eckstine Orchestra, which at the time included many of the key players of the emerging bebop movement, including Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis. After leaving the Eckstine Band he worked as a house pianist at the Downbeat Club in Philadelphia (1947-1949). In the early 1950's he toured with Coleman Hawkins and Roy Eldridge and led his own trio in clubs around Boston, accompanying many of the leading players of the day, including Charlie Parker.

Although Miles Davis had attempted to form a quintet with Garland as early as 1953 (with Sonny Rollins, Oscar Pettiford and Max Roach), it was in 1955 that Garland became a charter member of the Miles Davis Quintet, which included Paul Chambers on bass, Philly Joe Jones on drums and, on Garland's recommendation, John Coltrane on tenor sax. Garland stayed with Davis on and off until January 1959, participating in several of the key recordings of the 1950's. It was during this period that Red also recorded his first trio albums and also led several excellent quintets on recordings with John Coltrane and Donald Byrd. Following his stay with Davis' group, Garland led a trio for a number of years, and in 1965 retired from active playing altogether, moving back to his home town of Dallas. Between 1965 and 1975 Red played only occasionally, and he stopped playing altogether in 1975. He re-emerged from retirement in 1978 and began to successfully perform

and record again. Garland died of a heart attack in Dallas on April 23, 1984.

## Red Garland's Style

Garland's importance as a jazz pianist was rooted in his elegant synthesis of two of the most important jazz pianists of the 1940's, Bud Powell and Nat "King" Cole. Red's advanced harmonic and melodic conception is obviously derived from Powell, while his superlative touch and phrasing is very reminiscent of Cole's. Other early influences were Count Basie and Art Tatum, the latter singling out Red as a pianist of great promise in the late 1940's. Red was also steeped in the blues tradition, which permeates all aspects of his playing, and which made up a large part of his repertoire. All of these influences, combined with his individual style of "locked hand" block-chord solos, his impeccable time and wonderful sense of swing, produced a distinctive and very sophisticated piano voice.

Garland's relationship to Bud Powell's music was very direct. Red recalled that he first heard Powell in 1946. Initially overwhelmed by Powell's playing, Garland said that "I went over to Bud's house and he showed me some things. In fact, I came back day after day to learn from him, and we became buddies. He was really friendly to me and the greatest influence on me of any pianist, except for Art Tatum."<sup>1</sup>

Garland also said that he began listening to Nat Cole when he started playing piano in the Army (1941-1944), and he "used to copy Nat's solos note for note."<sup>2</sup> In regards to Cole, Garland also said that "I was very impressed by his touch and conception, especially by the way he phrased. People don't give Nat the credit due him as a pianist."<sup>3</sup> Garland was often compared to his brilliant contemporary Ahmad Jamal, and one of the reasons that Miles Davis liked Red's playing so much was its similarity to Jamal's style. In fact, both pianists were heavily influenced by Nat Cole and it is in this influence that many of the similarities can be traced. Garland was much closer to Powell and the blues than Jamal was. However, the influence of Jamal during Garland's tenure with the Davis quintet cannot be denied, and it has been suggested that this may have been largely at the urging of Davis who said "Red Garland knew I liked Ahmad and at times I used to ask him to play like that. Red was at his best when he did."<sup>4</sup> Garland's famous version of *Billy Boy* is in fact, almost exactly the same as Jamal's earlier recording of the

piece. Red also recorded the Jamal piece *Ahmad's Blues* with Davis, playing it very much like the original trio version by Jamal. Like Cole (and Jamal), Garland often favoured the upper registers of the keyboard for many of his single line solos during this period, although a recording of Red playing with Charlie Parker in Boston in 1953 shows Garland playing exclusively in the lower and middle register of the piano, like most piano players influenced by Bud Powell.<sup>5</sup>

## Right-Hand Style

Garland had a beautiful light touch, superb control of dynamics and articulation, and a great consistency of swing at all tempos, which he used to great effect in his single line solos. A look through the solos in this book will quickly underline the fact that Red was an extremely virtuosic pianist. It was this high degree of control, general refinement and poise in his playing that confused some critics at the time, who mistook this polish for a "coolness" in his approach. These transcriptions also show that Garland had a very sophisticated melodic conception. Garland felt that "instead of just running a lot of notes, choosing certain phrases is inherently tastier and leads to greater swing," and these transcriptions show just how phrase based his soloing was. In fact, there are almost no extended scale passages in any of the solos.

Also of particular interest is the high degree of chromaticism in his solo lines. Garland usually went out of his way to avoid obvious chord tones, often emphasizing the chord extensions on dominant chords (sharp and flat 9th degrees, sharp 11th and flat 13th) as well as making use of many chromatic passing and neighbour tones. Like many jazz pianists, Red was often fairly flexible with the chord quality of a progression. He often changed the modal quality of a particular chord from one chorus to the next (i.e., minor to dominant or even major seventh to dominant seventh, etc.), which led to many interesting melodic possibilities within a solo. Also of interest is the way that Garland often seemed to anticipate a chord melodically in his solos, starting to outline the chord before it was actually played. This adds another degree of interest and tension to his lines.

## Left-Hand Style

Garland was a transitional pianist, his style falling

between the players of the 1940's and later players like Bill Evans and Wynton Kelly. This is most evident in his left-hand voicings and styles. Perhaps the best known element of his left-hand style is his consistent use of a "Charleston" rhythm which he perfected to a high degree of independence in supporting his right-hand solos.

### Example 1

Example 1 shows two different left-hand voicings for a 4/4 progression. The first staff shows chords Dm7, G7, Cmaj7, A7, and Dm7 with specific voicings. The second staff, labeled "or:", shows an alternative voicing for the same progression.

This device was also used extensively by Ahmad Jamal, although Jamal's use of it usually involved a less percussive approach, with more sustained chords. In any case, this technique actually attempts to imitate the rhythm section of a band, vamping behind a soloist, much in the way that Erroll Garner's steady left-hand rhythms imitate a big band rhythm section.

In adopting this particular left-hand style, Garland was one of the earliest pianists to use rootless chord voicings, voicings which all jazz pianists since have adopted (see **Example 1**). Red also mixed these voicings with major, minor and diminished seventh chords in root position and various inversions (see the *Appendix of Left-hand Chords*, page 108).

Garland was also fluent in using Bud Powell style "shell voicings", voicings which mostly used only sustained, open 7th's and 10th's (3rd's).

### Example 2

Example 2 shows three different left-hand voicings for a 4/4 progression. The first staff shows chords Gm, C7, and Fmaj with specific voicings.

Note that Red is very consistent about his use of these two different left-hand styles and will normally only use one style for a particular piece, and did not usually mix the two types of voicings together.

## Block Chords

One of the best known elements of Red's style was his distinctive use of block chords or "locked hand" style in his solos. His playing of *Billy Boy* on the Miles Davis recording *Milestones* is a famous example of his use of such voicings. Garland stated that he discovered this type of voicing by accident. Becoming frustrated while practising, "he dropped his hands on the keyboard in despair and they fell into place to produce a sound that he instantly liked".<sup>7</sup> The recording of Red playing with Charlie Parker in 1953 shows no sign of Garland using block chords, so he seems to have perfected them between then and 1955, when he uses them extensively with the Davis group.

Basically, this style consists of a melody played in octaves in the right hand, with a 5th placed in the middle of the octave (a 5th above the lowest note of the octave). This is normally used in the register one or two octaves above middle "C" on the keyboard. In this register of the piano, the 5th played in the middle of the octave becomes virtually inaudible when the chord in left hand is played simultaneously, but the added 5th gives the voicings a particularly rich, distinctive and slightly out-of-tune character.

### Example 3

Example 3 shows a piano accompaniment with block chords in the left hand and a melody in the right hand. The right hand plays octaves with a 5th in the middle. Chords are Gm7, C<sup>b</sup>9, and Fmaj7. A '3' indicates a triplet in the right hand. A 'with pedal' instruction is at the bottom.

Sometimes the fifth within the octave in the right hand may be "outside" of the supporting chord or harmony, but this often sounds "better" than a more correct relationship.

### Example 4

Example 4 shows a piano accompaniment with block chords in the left hand and a melody in the right hand. The right hand plays octaves with a 5th in the middle. A '3' indicates a triplet in the right hand.

In his left hand, Garland supported this octave plus a fifth line in exact rhythmic unison with rootless voicings or major, minor and diminished seventh chords. As a rule, all chords should be carefully pedalled. In ballads only, the 3 notes in the right hand are sometimes arpeggiated upwards, very quickly. Unlike many pianists, Garland seldom "rolls" these chords. The transcription of the introduction to *You're My Everything* is a good example of the use of block chords in a ballad, while several of the other transcriptions have block chord solos at faster tempos. When using this technique, it is very important that the right hand and left hand are always played together rhythmically (hence the term "locked hand" style). Unlike pianists such as Erroll Garner, the octave plus a 5th is almost never played without the supporting left-hand chord. Note that the "Red Garland block-chord sound" depends to a large extent on the quality of the left-hand voicings. Generally, these voicings are in the higher register of the left-hand (see **Example 3**).

## Using The Solos

The transcribed solos are from the period 1955-1960, when Garland's playing was at its peak and his performing situations were of the highest calibre. Most of the solos are readily available on recordings, and all, with the exception of *Tweedle Dee*, are also available on compact disc. Although much can be learned just by reading through these solos, to get the most benefit from them you should listen carefully to the recordings, to fully grasp Red's phrasing, articulation and wonderful sense of time. Much can also be learned from playing these solos through more slowly and analyzing the sophisticated way in which Red navigates his way through the changes.

In all of the solos, with the exception of the ballads *The Very Thought of You* and the introduction to *You're My Everything*, eighth-notes are played as swing eighth-notes. Two and three-note chords with grace notes, as well as block chords with grace notes should be played in a blues manner, with the grace note played on the beat and resolving later.

### Example 5

Example 5 shows two examples of chords with grace notes. Each example shows the chord in the left hand and the grace note in the right hand, with the word "Played" between them.

Wherever possible, I have tried to show with chord symbols, the chord changes and chord qualities that Garland actually used in his left hand on the recordings, or when it was obvious from his solo, what he was thinking about harmonically. Dominant chords are always played with a 9th or a 13th (see the *Appendix of Left-hand Chords*, page 108). Note that when there is a “Charleston” left-hand pattern supporting a solo, the harmonic changes actually occur an eighth-note ahead of beat 1 or beat 3. Sometimes the chord changes will differ from those commonly associated with these pieces, and it is advisable and instructive to compare them to the harmonies found in the original music, which is readily available in “fakebooks” and other sources.

I have tried to deal with a few uncertainties in the transcriptions, such as ghost-notes, as best as possible, based on a knowledge of Red’s style. The few notes that were unclear have been placed in brackets. However, I have tried very hard to make the transcriptions as accurate as possible, as this is the only way that a player can derive any real benefit from them.

Ultimately, I hope that these transcriptions will shed some light on the fine art of this important jazz pianist and contribute to a further interest and appreciation of Red Garland’s music.

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<sup>1</sup>Len Lyons. *The Great Jazz Pianists* - Da Capo Press, New York, 1989

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in the liner notes for the recording *A Garland Of Red* - Prestige 7064 (1956)

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in the liner notes for the recording *Soul Junction*- Prestige 7181 (1957)

<sup>4</sup>Jack Chambers; *Milestones*, Vol. 1 - University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1983

<sup>5</sup> *Charlie Parker at Storyville* - Blue Note B2-85108

<sup>6</sup>Cited in the liner notes for the recording *A Garland Of Red* - Prestige 7064 (1956)

<sup>7</sup>Cited in the liner notes for the recording *A Garland Of Red* - Prestige 7064 (1956)

# Notes On The Solos

- **A Foggy Day**

This is the first piece on Red's first, and arguably his best trio recording, *A Garland of Red* (Prestige 7064). It was recorded on August 17, 1956, with Paul Chambers on bass and Arthur Taylor on drums. The level of performance and interplay of this trio was exceptional, yet interestingly this was never a working unit, but only a recording group. At the time, Garland and Chambers were members of the Miles Davis Quintet. The Gershwin tune **A Foggy Day** is a 34 bar composition, although in reality it is a 32 bar A/B form with an additional 2 bar extension added to the second half of the piece. Red's solo is 3 choruses long, including one chorus following the bass solo. Notice the way that Garland's solo always emphasizes the chord extensions on the dominant chords. This solo is also a good example of the consistency of Red's articulation and swing at faster tempos. Garland uses a "Charleston" left-hand rhythm throughout to support his solo.

- **Oleo**

**Oleo** is from the recording *Relaxin'* by the Miles Davis Quintet (Prestige 7129), made in October 1956, with Paul Chambers on bass, Philly Joe Jones on drums and John Coltrane on tenor sax. This is a very virtuosic solo on the 32 bar (A/A/B/A) Sonny Rollins composition, which is based on the chord changes to *I Got Rhythm*. Garland's solo is exclusively in the lower register of the instrument with no left-hand chords. This was not a usual stylistic trait of Red's, although he did record other solos in a similar style, such as his solo on *Well You Needn't* (*Steamin'* - Prestige 7200) with the same group. It is quite possible that this style of playing was inspired by the work of Lennie Tristano, who used a similar stylistic idea on occasion. In Red's 2 chorus solo notice how, like Tristano, Garland cross-phrases in groups of 3 eighth-notes in measures 40-43, and also how his intricate solo lines last for 8 or 16 measures at a time. He gradually simplifies the texture of his solo towards the end, finishing with a simple major scale in quarter-notes. The high A natural in measure 13 should probably be a G natural. Anyone playing this passage will see how this could easily happen!

- **You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To**

This solo is from the recording *Art Pepper Meets The Rhythm Section*. Pepper recorded this for Contemporary Records (S7532) in 1957, using the Miles Davis rhythm section (Garland, Chambers and Jones). According to Pepper, this was a very impromptu recording session, but the playing is of a very high quality. Garland's solo is only on one chorus of the 32 bar (A/B) piece. Notice the virtuosic 16th-note passage in the second half of the solo and the bluesy feeling throughout. Garland supports this solo with Bud Powell-style shell voicings.

- **What Is This Thing Called Love**

This solo is from *A Garland of Red*. **What Is This Thing Called Love** is 32 bars long (A/A/B/A) and Red takes a 2 chorus solo. Interestingly, the 2 bar pickup to this solo is exactly the same as the pickup for *A Foggy Day*, although the opening chord for the two pieces is different. Again, notice the particularly long, chromatic solo lines. Garland uses a "Charleston" left-hand pattern throughout.

- **You're My Everything**

This transcription is of the solo piano introduction to the ballad recorded on the Miles Davis Quintet's *Relaxin'*. Both hands are transcribed. Garland originally starts out playing a single-note solo introduction, but is cut off by Davis, who asks Red to play block chords, which he does. This is a good example of the use of block chords in a ballad. Notice how the right-hand chord notes are slightly arpeggiated throughout. There is no actual piano solo on this number.

- **Blues In the Closet**

This is a 12 bar blues in the key of F, which was released on the “two-fer” album *Rediscovered Masters* (Prestige 24078-August 1959), with Doug Watkins on bass and Specs Wright on drums. This Oscar Pettiford blues is also sometimes known as *Collard Greens and Black-Eyed Peas*, attributed to Bud Powell. Red’s solo is 4 choruses long and then (following the bass solo), 6 choruses of “fours” alternating with the drums and a final full 12 bar chorus. Notice how Garland usually uses descending minor chords as a substitution for a **III-VI-II-V** progression (i.e., measures 8-10), and how in the third chorus of the “fours” he makes use of triple arpeggiated octaves in his solo

- **All Of You**

**All Of You** is from the first Columbia recording by the Miles Davis Quintet ‘*Round About Midnight* (CK 40610). This is a 32 bar composition (A/B) and Red takes a 2 chorus solo, followed by an extended vamp section on a **II-V-III-VI** turnaround, a device which Davis often used and which he may have borrowed from Ahmad Jamal. This is a beautifully melodic and completely controlled solo. Notice how Red ends the solo by gradually moving into the highest register of the piano. Garland begins the first 8 measures of the second chorus with a block-chord solo. Otherwise, he supports this solo with a “Charleston” left-hand pattern.

- **Billy Boy**

This is Garland’s most famous performance, and it is a featured trio number on the otherwise sextet Miles Davis recording *Milestones* (Columbia CK 40837 - 1958). In club dates, Davis would give the rhythm section its own feature number (see also *Ahmad’s Blues* on the Prestige recording *Workin’*) and this is an example of such a feature. As mentioned above, Red’s arrangement of this children’s tune was modelled very closely on the version recorded earlier by Ahmad Jamal, and other pianists, including Oscar Peterson, also recorded similar versions of this number. Garland’s performance (with Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones) is extremely driving and blues tinged. The piece is 56 bars long (A/A/B/A), and Garland’s solo is 2 choruses long. Notice how Red harmonizes the end of the bridge in the second chorus as a series of descending minor seventh (or dominant 11th) chords, and how he ends the solo with block chords (measures 108-112) which use a sixth in the right hand instead of a fifth. Garland recorded this number again on *Red Garland Revisited* (Prestige 7658) with Paul Chambers and Art Taylor, in a version which is slower in tempo and much more relaxed in feel.

- **If I Were A Bell**

This solo is also taken from *Relaxin’* by the Miles Davis Quintet. **If I Were A Bell** is a tune which was introduced to the band’s repertoire by Garland, who had a vast knowledge of American popular songs. This piece is 32 bars in length (A/B) and Garland’s bluesy solo lasts for 3 choruses and, like *All of You*, is followed by an extended **II-V-III-VI** turnaround vamp. Again, it is interesting to compare this version to the one Red recorded on his trio album *Red Garland’s Piano* (Prestige 7086 - 1957) which is more relaxed and uses slightly different chord changes. Garland uses a “Charleston” left-hand pattern throughout.

- **Blues By Five**

**Blues By Five** is a 12 bar blues in B Flat from the recording *Cookin’* by Miles Davis (Prestige 7094 -1956). Red’s solo is 5 choruses long and is mostly in the upper register of the instrument. Note his imaginative use of triplets in the third chorus of this solo.

- **Tweedle Dee**

*Tweedle Dee* a 64 bar novelty tune from 1955, was released on the recording *The P.C. Blues* (Prestige 7752), with Paul Chambers and Art Taylor. This is a superb extended solo by Garland showing off his pianistic control, melodic inventiveness and his virtuoso technique. Red's solo lasts for 5 choruses, 3 before and 2 following the bass solo. Notice in particular the incredibly virtuosic, long 16th-note phrases (i.e., measures 120-127) and also the extended triplet lines (measures 203-217).

- **It Could Happen To You**

**It Could Happen to You** is a 32 bar tune (A/B) from *Relaxin'* and is played throughout in an Ahmad Jamal inspired half-time feel. Garland's relaxed solo is 2 choruses long. Notice how Red exploits the chromatic potential of the chords in his solo lines and how he uses substitute chords throughout his solo, sometimes soloing on diminished chords and at other times on dominant chords. Garland also recorded this number in a trio setting on the recording *Red Garland Revisited* (Prestige 7658).

- **Traneing In**

This is a 12 bar blues in B Flat with an 8 bar bridge of descending dominant chords, for a total chorus form of 44 measures. It is from the John Coltrane Quartet album *Traneing In* (Prestige 7123). Although the form of the tune is nominally A/A/B/A, this form is treated rather loosely throughout the cut. For example, Red's second chorus in this transcription has an extra A section (A/A/A/B/A). There is no real melody for this piece, just improvisation. Garland plays an 8 bar introduction in block chords (based on the bridge of the tune) and then takes a solo on 3 choruses. The final 44 bar chorus is a block chord solo. Notice how Red uses shell voicings in his left hand during the blues sections of the piece, and then switches to rootless voicings for the bridge.

- **The Very Thought of You**

This ballad solo, a good example of Garland's ballad style, is from the second trio album *Red Garland's Piano* (Prestige 7086). Both hands are transcribed for the 16 bar, half-chorus solo. Rhythmically, the right-hand line is very free and rhapsodic while the left hand plays steady half-note and quarter-note chords.

- **Bye Bye Blackbird**

The introduction and solo are from Miles Davis' *'Round About Midnight*. **Bye Bye Blackbird**, a 1926 vintage composition revived by Davis, is 32 bars long and Garland's solo is for one and a half choruses. This solo is so melodic that it sounds as if had been worked out ahead of time. The solo in the second chorus uses block chords, and it paraphrases the melody beautifully. Interestingly, a live radio recording of the Davis group in 1959 at the Spotlight Club in Washington D.C. (Jazz Band EBCD2101-2/1990) shows Garland quoting his own recorded solo extensively, including a block-chord solo which is almost the same as the one transcribed here.

- **I Could Write A Book**

The transcribed introduction and solo are from the Miles Davis recording *Relaxin'*. This is an up-tempo solo on 2 choruses of a 32 bar form (A/B) followed by a **II-V-III-VI** turnaround vamp. The introduction, for which both hands are transcribed, is a good example of Red's use of a "Charleston" left-hand pattern.

- **Will You Still Be Mine ?**

This solo, from the trio recording *Groovy* (Prestige 7113) is a *tour de force* on a 56 bar composition (AABA). Garland's solo lasts for 3 choruses, including one following the bass solo. This solo, on a tune associated with Ahmad Jamal, can be compared to Red's solo on the same piece, recorded on Miles Davis' *Musings of Miles* (Prestige 7007).