

The Individual Voice of Simon Spillett

"I want an individual voice where people can say this guy sounds like Simon Spillett, but you can obviously hear that he listens to Dick Morrissey, Tubby Hayes, Hank Mobley, Johnny Griffin, whoever, thats what I want. I want an individual voice out of things that I love and inspire me." (Interview with author: April 2007, p.6)

Every musician seeks for an individual voice on their instrument, and tenor saxophonist Simon Spillett is no exception. Performing as a professional musician since he was twenty one, it is only now eleven years later that a jazz audience is starting to recognise his individual voice on the instrument.

What makes Simon's voice individual is reflected through his refined directness and attack towards his melodic statements. This style has been developed from his musical background, and by listening to Hard Bop/Bebop jazz musicians of both the British and American lineage. His melodic techniques reflect conventions used by these artists, including triplet phrasing and melodic repetition. Both his albums present his compositional techniques that have been devised through listening to Hard Bop and the saxophonist Tubby Hayes, particularly Tubby's *Mexican Green* album, and all pieces from both albums are connected to him in some manner. These two saxophonists have similar conventions in saxophone techniques, although Simon is not a replica, not least in the difference in their lifestyles and jazz environments. He is a postmodern artist using Tubby as an inspiration, reflecting a British Bebop tradition by using conventions used in that period of time, including recording techniques, clothing, and stage presence.

When listening to Simon for the first time, you initially become aware of his extraordinary technique. His style is quickly established with his direct melodic lines, presented in an even fast flowing swing manner. This style is reminiscent of Tubby Hayes and Johnny Griffin, both containing fast triplet motifs, although they have a more relaxed approach to their melodic lines. Simon's style has a more refined attack in articulation than these two players that is often found in many post-John Coltrane players, including Frank Catalano and Alan Skidmore. Although, his phrasing is more precise by placing melodic lines within an established amount of bars, and is more Bebop orientated. This style has been developed over a period of time, beginning with his musical background.