

EL ACOMPAÑAMIENTO CREATIVO DE JIM HALL: RECURSOS ÚTILES PARA LA GUITARRA DE JAZZ

Juan Rodrigo Santaolalla Galán
Conservatorio Superior de Música de Málaga

Resumen

La mayoría de los guitarristas de jazz dedican demasiado tiempo a estudiar improvisación con el objetivo de convertirse en grandes solistas algún día. Esta frenética carrera hacia la adquisición del complejo lenguaje jazzístico nos puede hacer olvidar el rol esencial de la guitarra que, en sus orígenes, fue el del acompañamiento. Desde un punto de vista profesional podría llegar a ser contra-productivo. En muchas formaciones musicales se recurre a la guitarra por sus posibilidades armónicas y de acompañamiento. Otros instrumentos del jazz como la voz, el saxofón o la trompeta, ya tienen la función solista claramente definida, debido a las limitaciones del propio instrumento u otras razones culturales. Esta investigación surge de la necesidad de buscar recursos útiles con los que poder desarrollar un acompañamiento creativo con la guitarra de jazz. Jim Hall es uno de los referentes de la guitarra de jazz actual. Por medio de la escucha activa de su discografía, intentaremos obtener tantas formas diferentes de acompañamiento como nos sea posible, con idea de poder categorizarlas.

Palabras clave: *strumming*, contra-melodía, pedal, guiado por el bajo, notas guía

CREATIVE ACCOMPANIMENT OF JIM HALL: USEFUL RESOURCES FOR JAZZ GUITAR

Abstract

The majority of the jazz guitarists spend too much time studying melodic lines for improvisation wishing to become good soloists one day. This frantic race towards acquiring complicated language makes us forget the essential role of a guitar, the accompaniment. From a professional point of view this appears counter-productive. In many bands the guitar is needed for its harmonic and accompanying functions. Other instruments of jazz music such as voice, saxophone or trumpet already have this function of soloist defined due to different reasons e.g. cultural, etc. This research arose from the necessity to look for useful resources which could develop the creative accompaniments of jazz guitar. Currently we can be inspired by many guitar players depending on what we like. In this case, the idea was to look for one of the «fathers» of the jazz guitar in order to get to the root of the matter. Jim Hall is one of the references of the modern jazz guitar. Listening through his discography we will attempt to obtain as many examples as possible of different ways to accompany. Then try to find more than two or three vamps of each one to be transcribed and analyzed.

Keywords: *strumming*, counter melody, pedal, guided by bass, guide notes

Recepción: 3-02-2022

Aceptación: 9-04-2022

BIOGRAPHY AND GENERAL TRAJECTORY OF JIM HALL

Jim Hall was born in 1930 in Buffalo, New York. His family introduced him to music «the first music I heard was my uncle playing the guitar singing country songs»³⁶¹. After some years moving around, the family settled in Cleveland where Jim started playing with local groups and decided to become a professional musician.

After school, he studied music theory for five years at Cleveland Institute of Music. At that time, the guitarist Charlie Christian was an important influence to him: «I heard Charlie Christian on a record with Benny Goodman and that, I didn't even know what that was but I knew I wanted to be able to do that so I started trying to learn how to improvise, how to be, what we call Jazz, a Jazz player»³⁶². Jim Hall moved to Los Angeles with Ray Graziano, a musician and friend of his, and studied classical guitar with Vicente Gomez while working in a sheet music store. It was later that Jim met the French hornist John Graas who recommended him to Chico Hamilton for his quintet. From that point on, Jim began to be musically recognized.

After the period with Chico's group, Jim started playing in Giuffre's trio, where he met the trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, who would join Jim in other projects. Jim also traveled to tour around Europe and South America, with Ella Fitzgerald and Yves Montand. After the tour, Jim continued playing with Jimmy Giuffre Trio for a while until he moved back to Los Angeles. Once there, Jim joined Ben Webster's group together with the pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Frank Butler. In that period Jim met Bill Evans and recorded *Undercurrent*: «I think the way I approach chord voicings in the accompaniment was really influenced a lot by the way Bill's accompany»³⁶³. Jim came back to New York where he started playing in a duo with Lee Konitz and met other important musicians in his career, Sonny Rollins with whom he recorded *The Bridge*: «He (Sonny Rollins) had a way of talking a tune apart and putting it back together again right in front of your eyes...his loose and adventure some way of playing influenced my playing»³⁶⁴.

³⁶¹ Jim Hall, *A Life In Progress*, 1998.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

After Sonny Rollins finished with the group, Jim continued playing with Bill Evans, Lee Konitz, Stan Getz, Sonny Stitt, Red Mitchell, Art Farmer, Steve Swallow, Pete LaRoca, Helen Merrill and Zoot Sims together with the guitarist Jimmy Raney.

Also in New York, Jim began playing in Merv Griffin Show and passed three and a half years without touring «probably became a group leader after I did the Merv Griffin show»³⁶⁵. After that time, Jim moved his own projects and recorded with Gerry Mulligan, Quincy Jones, Herbie Hancock and Ornette Coleman. He also performed and recorded with different bass players in a duo with Ron Carter, Red Mitchell, Michael More, etc.

Jim Hall participated in an innumerable list of projects but it is worth mentioning the group with the saxophonist Paul Desmond with whom he recorded four cds; a remarkable lyrical, the live *Power of Three* with Michael Petrucciani on piano and Wayne Shorter on saxophone, and JVC Jazz Festival where he played the second half of the concert with the guitarists Pat Metheny, John Abercrombie, Peter Bernstein, Mick Goodrick and John Scofield. After a life dedicated to music and leaving us a valuable legacy Jim Hall died in 2013 at the age of 83 years old.

CATEGORIES OF COMPING

In this research we will look into several comping categories:

1. Countermelody or counterpoint: it is a line or melody under the soloist's solo. Sometimes it is played in the space that the soloist leaves such an answer of the discourse. Other times it is played like a harmonic function to define the chords.
2. Folk strumming patterns: it consists in alternating movements down and up with the right hand and using a pick.
3. Two notes: it is an accompaniment composed of two guide notes. Most of the times are 3rd and 7th belonging to the current chord. These notes can be played simultaneously or may appear consecutively.

³⁶⁵*Ibid.*

4. Freddie Green Style: it consists in playing the four bits of a bar with quarter notes rhythm and using generally two guide notes without bass. That leaves space to the music and does not interpose with other instruments.
5. Pedal: it consists in playing the same note (bass or another note) throughout the changes.
6. Guided by bass: it is called that way because the bass is played before the chord or guide note. Most of the cases, the bass is played in the upbeat of the measure to badge up the chord in the downbeat of the next beat.

1. Countermelody

The Song is You, Jim Hall with Jimmy Giuffre, min. 2:30

In bar 1 Jim plays the same Ab note with 3rd and 4th strings simultaneously. From here on he is moving the voices by contrary motion in a fourth's cycle. While the down voice is moving chromatically, the upper voice is moving diatonically.

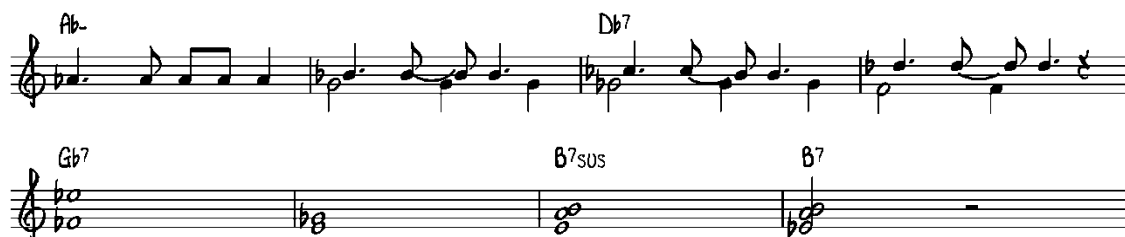


Image 1. Example of countermelody

Nancy, Jim Hall with Paul Desmond Quartet, min. 1:20

A descending Fm line *cliché* that works like a counter melody is playing in the first two bars. From bar 6 on, he is also playing another counter melody as an answer to the rhythmical idea from Paul Desmond's solo.

In the next example we can appreciate how Jim accompanies with a combination of single lines, two notes, chords without basses and full chords.

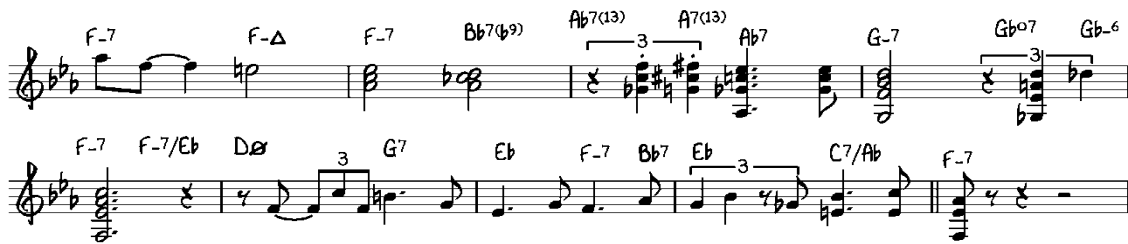


Image 2. Example of countermelody

With a Song in my Heart, Jim Hall ‘These rooms’, min. 0:29

The countermelody below defines the changes resolving in the 3rd most of the times: bars 4, 5, 8 and 9.

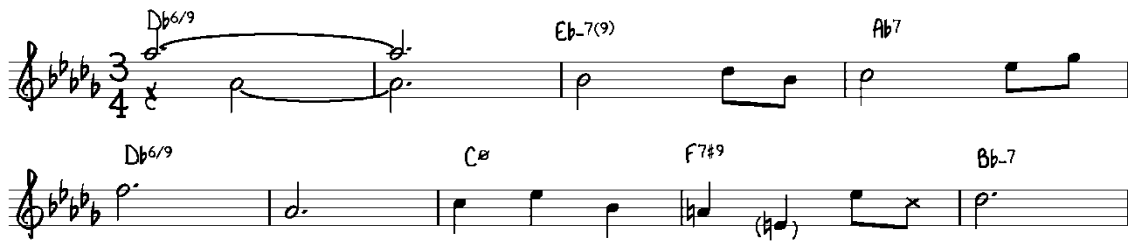


Image 3. Example of countermelody

2. Folk strumming patterns

Bag’s Groove, Jim Hall with Bill Frisell ‘Hemispheres’, min. 0:44

The example below displays the first eight bars of an A Blues in which Jim plays alternating movements down and up with his right hand and using a pick. Not always he is playing the chords. Sometimes he mutes (x) the strings with the left hand in the way funk guitarists used to do.



Image 4. Example of folk strumming pattern

Limbo, Jim Hall ‘Power of Three’, min. 1:06

In that trio made up of sax, piano and guitar, Jim is accompanying Shorter’s solo without the bass because Petrucciani is playing the bass line.

Jim keeps repeating the rhythmical pattern below, playing in the upbeat of the measure to badge up in the downbeat of the next beat. It is the same pattern he uses to play in the «guided by bass» category.

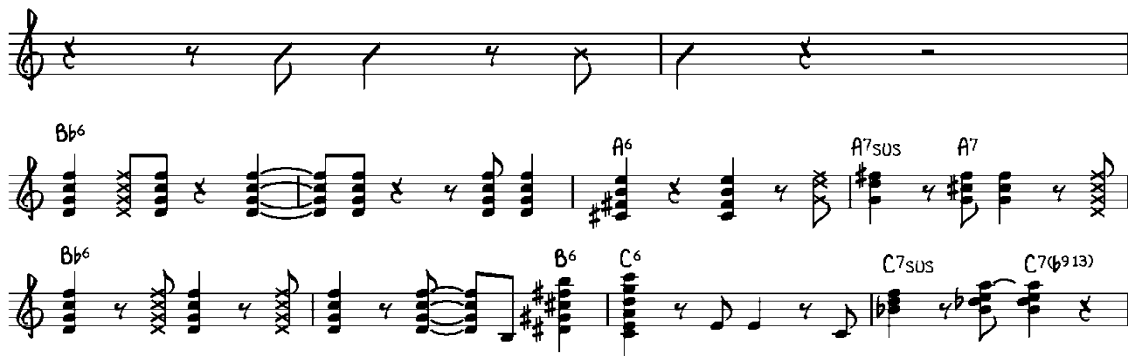


Image 5. Example of folk strumming pattern

I’ve Got You Under My Skin, Jim Hall with Bill Evans ‘Intermodulation’, min. 1:51

The example below is transcribed in another way. The melody written is the top note of the chord and the cross means mute.

Jim Hall is accompanying Bill Evans solo. In that case Bill does not play with the left hand so Jim can emphasize in the bass line. There is a descending movement of the bass line in the first two bars and also a Bb pedal in bars 6 and 7.

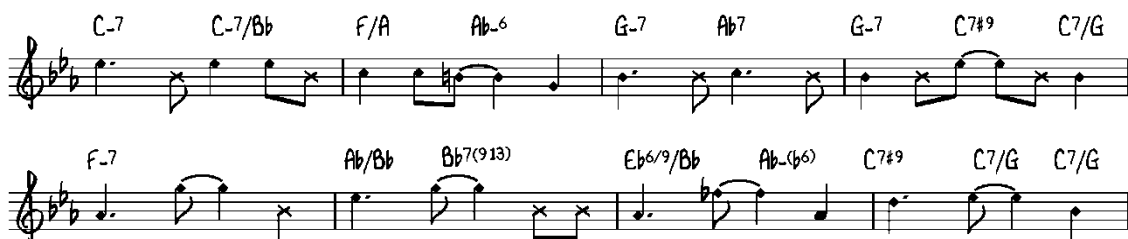


Image 6. Example of folk strumming pattern

3. Two notes

***Black Orpheus*, Jim Hall with Paul Desmond Quartet, Vol. 2, min. 1:22**

Jim plays this latin rhythm basically with two notes. He moves rhythmically free inside this style that usually has a more static rhythm with the guitar. He implies another harmony different that is written down the stave. In bar 1 he plays Eb7 instead of D7 directly in such a way to create an effect of retarded resolution. In order to create dissonance he is playing the notes A and Bb simultaneously in bars 3, 4, 5 and 7.



Image 7. Example of two notes strumming pattern

***The Song is You*, Jim Hall with Jimmy Giuffre, min. 1:30**

In the beginning of the B part of this tune Jim moves into harmony playing two notes. The upper note works like a B pedal and the other is moving chromatically becoming 3rd of E or 7th of B. The last two bars finish with the same idea but D# pedal is down voice first and upper voice in the last bar.

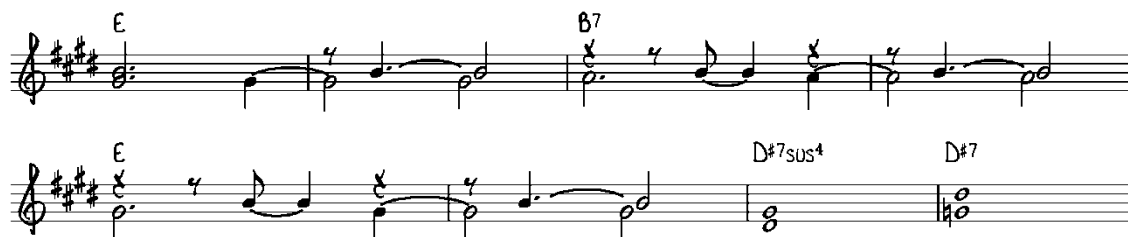


Image 8. Example of two notes strumming pattern

***O Gato*, Jim Hall with Paul Desmond Quartet, Vol. 4, min. 0:41**

In the next example, we find a clear melody created by guide notes 3rd and 7th of each chord such as the standard *All the things you are*³⁶⁶ was composed. He plays two

³⁶⁶ It was composed by J. Kernand Oscar Hammerstein for the musical «Very Warm for May» (1939).

notes simultaneously or one single note that becomes an interval when he is playing the other one below.

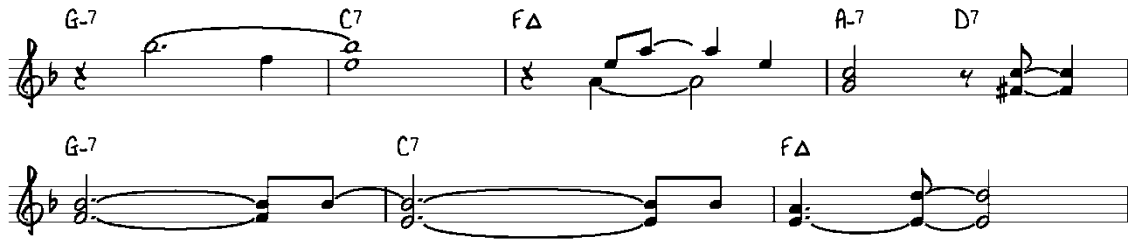


Image 9. Example of two notes strumming pattern

My Funny Valentine, Jim Hall with Bill Evans ‘Undercurrent’, min. 0:02

While Bill Evans is playing the melody in octaves without harmony nor bass, Jim is accompanying him until bar 7 with a combination between a chromatic bass line, starting in C, and the 5th of each chord.



Image 10. Example of two notes strumming pattern

With a Song in my Heart, Jim Hall ‘These Rooms’, min. 2:33

The example below Jim is accompanying Steve LaSpina (bass player) with a mix between chords with and without bass. In the last three bars a clear, two guide notes, 3rd and 7th are played simultaneously.

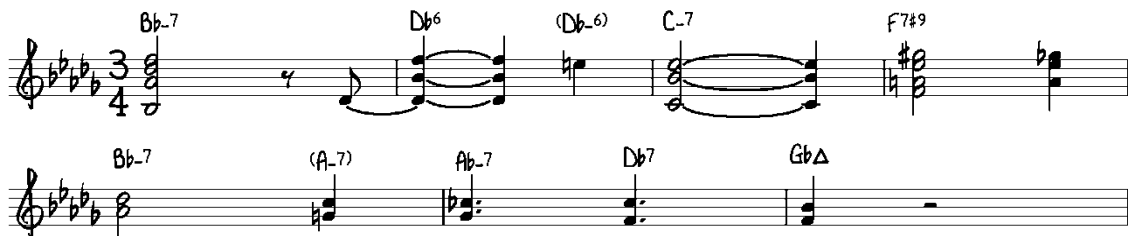


Image 11. Example of two notes strumming pattern

You Go to my Head, Jim Hall with Paul Desmond Quartet Vol. 1, min. 0:08

The next example combines two notes accompaniment, following the same rhythmical pattern with a single line in the 6th bar and guided by bass in the last bars.



Image 12. Example of two notes strumming pattern

4. Freddie Green Style

Alone Together, Jim Hall with Ron Carter, min. 0:18

Jim Hall said: «During my hours on the road behind the wheel of the Jimmy Giuffre Trio Volkswagen van, I used to think how can I make my driving like Freddie Green's playing? Comfortable, no bumps, pleasant. His playing makes you smile»³⁶⁷.

In the example below Jim does not play exactly what we mentioned, but we have to consider that he is playing a duet and in that kind of situation we have more space than usual. Because of that, the playing is different and is more common to include at least the bass line. He implies a different harmony and different bass line. In bars 1 and 2 he plays a bass pedal; in bar 3 he plays Eb7 tritone substitution of A7 with the 5th on the bass to go chromatically to D7/A instead of play two times D7 to resolve in G-7; in bar 4 he plays chromatically from A-7 to B-7; In bar 5 he plays II- V instead of the original diminished chord.

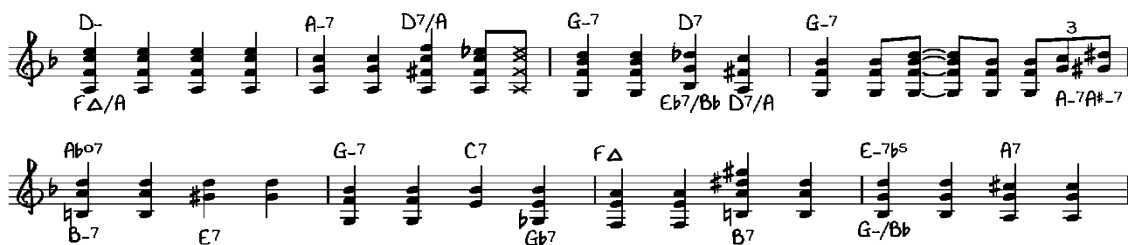


Image 13. Example of Freddie Green style

³⁶⁷Jim Hall, *Exploring Jazz Guitar*. Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation, 1990, p. 63.

Stompin' at the Savoy, Jim Hall with Carl Perkins and Red Mitchell, min.

2:00

In the next example Jim is accompanying a piano solo playing around a cycle fourths cycle using chromatic ascending movements by the chords. Sometimes the chords are played in the last beat of the bar, other times in the second half of the bar.

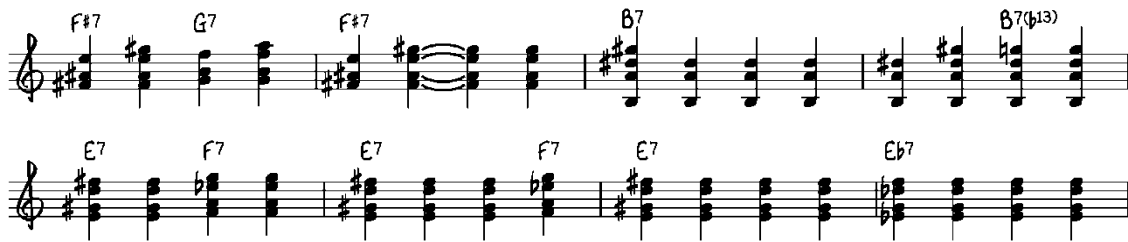


Image 14. Example of Freddie Green style

Tangerine, Jim Hall 'Deep in a Dream', min. 1:48

The example below is proof of an authentic Freddie Green's accompaniment. He is playing a guide's notes line without bass. The notes used to be 3rd, 7th for most of the chords and sometimes the 1st and the 3rd appear in the resolution such as G- in this case.

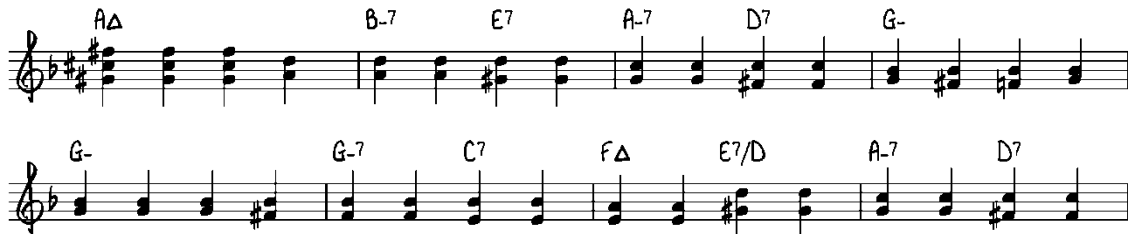


Image 15. Example of Freddie Green style

5. Pedal

My Funny Valentine, Jim Hall with Bill Evans, 'Undercurrent', alt. take
min. 4:01

In the example below Jim plays a Bb pedal strumming with the 6th, 3rd and 1st strings. While the upper voice (1st string) and the bass (6th string) do not change, there is a chromatic movement between Bb and C played with the 3rd string.

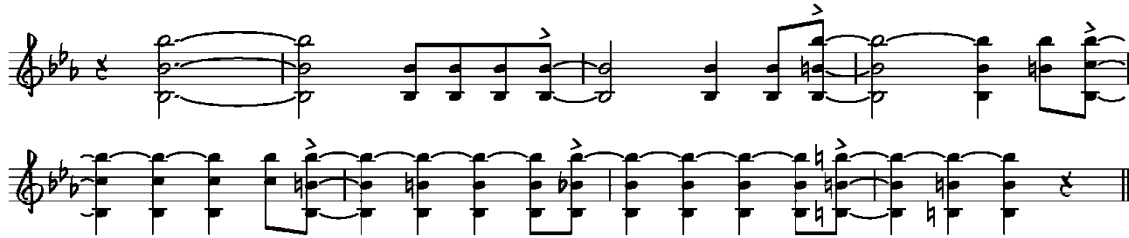


Image 16. Example of pedal

***I Should Care*, Jim Hall ‘Where would I be’, min. 0:00**

In the next example Jim is playing *I Should Care* rubato with auto accompaniment. The time is flexible and sometimes we can feel like he is playing before the beat and after the beat.

He is moving around the harmony with an A pedal and looking for dissonances like the first chords of the bars 1st, 5th and 6th.



Image 17. Example of pedal

***I’ve Got You under My Skin*, J. Hall with Bill Evans ‘Intermodulation, min 1:42**

The next example is transcribed with the upper voice like reference. He is playing a Bb pedal instead of playing the typical II – V - I, that in that case would be | F- | Bb7 | Eb |. Rhythmically he is using the same pattern. This resource together with the pedal works such a contrast with the current accompaniment.



Image 18. Example of pedal

6. Guided by bass

O Gato 1:48 (Paul Desmond Quartet with Jim Hall vol. 4)

In the first five bars the bass is played in the upbeat of the measure to badge up to the chord in the downbeat of the next beat. For one more time, Jim is playing rhythmically free, out of conventionalism inside this *Bossa Nova* style that usually uses to have a more static rhythm with the guitar.

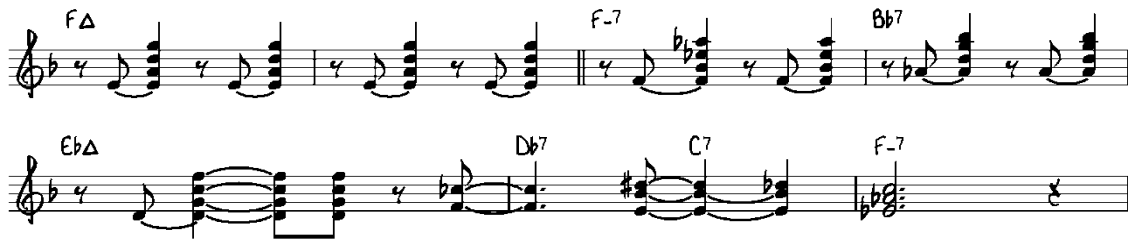


Image 19. Example of guided by bass

Hold me 1:36 (Two Jims and Zoot)

In the example below the resource is used guiding a single note instead of a chord. It causes a softer effect on the listener. Once again, he is using a rhythmical pattern.



Image 20. Example of guided by bass

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE IN AESTHETICS OF JIM HALL'S MUSIC

One of the things that I personally like about Jim Hall's music is the simplicity and clarity. He is not a vain player. He is not trying to impress an audience with ornamentation and banal resources like other people of his time used to do. By that I do not mind that I am against or undervalue other aesthetics, simply I feel admiration for people that can say more with less.

Maybe, this minimalistic way of playing came as a result of a lack of technique in his first steps of his career as a guitar player. Other recognized musicians such as Thelonious Monk were considered the same by some people, but he found an aesthetic in his playing very appreciated. It also may all arise just as a kind of reaction of his time. It is also worth mentioning the frankness and naturalness of his sound. He played many times in small groups in which we can appreciate the taste for the natural and mellow tone of an acoustic jazz guitar.

CONCLUSION

After listening and analyzing Jim Hall's music in his different musical periods, we could not find out a huge evolution in the way he accompanies. The resources were quite the same from the beginning on. The only thing that could make him use some resources instead of others was the situation. For example, when he was playing in duo with Michael Petrucciani or Bill Evans, and some of them were doing a single line solo, without left hand (bass), Jim put more attention to the bass line and the rhythm instead of playing a countermelody or guide notes line, but this is not a general rule. He only appears to use what the music requires in each moment.

The way he accompanies can change in the same solo or in the same chorus, playing strumming like folk guitarists used to do; working such a melodic instrument creating single lines or countermelodies; putting attention to the bass line leaving freedom to the soloist; defining clearly the harmony with two guide notes or playing into Freddie Green style to remark the rhythm. All the musical examples of this research have been selected, transcribed and edited by the researcher. Those did not follow any chronological pattern. It was just the result of listening throughout Jim's music to look for different resources.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RESEARCH

- BARTH, Joe, Exploring the complete RCA Victor Recordings of Paul Desmond with Jim Hall. *Jazz Guitar Today*, (13/7/2021)
<https://jazzguitartoday.com/2021/07/exploring-the-complete-rca-victor-recordings-of-paul-desmond-with-jim-hall/>
- CARLES, P., CLERGEAT, A. y COMOLLI, J.L. *Diccionario del jazz*. Madrid: Anaya, 1996.
- FORDHAM, John. Jim Hall Obituary. *The Guardian*. (12/12/2013).
<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/dec/12/jim-hall> (Consulted 3/2/2022).
- HALL, Jim (1990). *Exploring Jazz Guitar*. Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation, 0-7935-0392-2.

DISCOGRAPHY OF RESEARCH

- DESMOND, Paul & HALL, Jim (1965). *Bossa Antigua*. RCA Bertelsmann Music Group, 74321221102 [CD].
- DESMOND, Paul & HALL, Jim (1959-1965). *The Complete Recordings of The Paul Desmond Quartet with Jim Hall*. Mosaic Records, B000M49NXY [CD].
- EVANS, Bill (1962). *Undercurrent*. Blue Note, CDP 7 90583 2 [CD].
- EVANS, Bill & HALL, Jim (1966). *Intermodulation*. Verve Records, 833771-2 [CD].
- GIUFFRE, Jimmy (1957). *The Jimmy Giuffre 3*. Atlantic Jazz, 7567-90981-2 [CD].
- HALL, Jim & FRISELL, Bill (2008). *Hemispheres*. ArtistShare, B0001NFSC3S [CD].
- HALL, Jim & CARTER, Ron (1991). *Alone Together*. Ojc, B000000YQ3 [CD].
- HALL, Jim (1988). *These Rooms*. Denon COCB- 53873 [CD].
- _____ (1991). *Where Would I Be*. Ojc, B000000YUY [CD].
- _____ (2006). *Jazz Guitar*. Toshiba EMI Japan, B000FPX0AM [CD].
- _____ (2013). *Deep in a Dream*. Jazz Musts, B00BD67WB0 [CD].

PETRUCCIANI, Michel (1987). *Power of Three*. Blue Note, CDP 7 46427 2, 0777 7 46427 2 [CD].

RANEY, Jimmy & HALL, Jim (1991). *Two Jims and Zoot*. Mainstream Records, B002IEW6XA [CD].

VIDEOGRAPHY OF RESEARCH

HALL, Jim (1998). *A Life In Progress*. Eforfilms, B0002475F2 [DVD].

WEB OF INTEREST ABOUT JIM HALL

HALL, Jim [online] <http://www.jimhallmusic.com>. (Consulted 03-02-2022)