

**Objective**

- Introduction to the life of Miles Davis through student reading and listening example

**Materials**

- **PowerPoint:** Lesson 13 – *Miles Davis* page 39
- **JAZZ CLUB Listening Example:** *So What?* page 40
- **Student Worksheet:** Lesson 13 - *Lesson and Listening Assessments* page 41

**I. PowerPoint Miles Davis**

1. Show the students PowerPoint Lesson 13 and have students take turns reading the slides.
2. Have students complete the Lesson ASSESSMENT individually or as a class.

**Miles Davis** was born in 1926 in St. Louis, Missouri. Miles would become one of the most influential musicians in jazz history. Miles studied trumpet with members of the St. Louis Symphony. Davis learned quickly and began playing in local bands. After high school, Miles headed for New York City to attend the Julliard Conservatory. Miles only lasted one year at the famous classical music university for he had found Charlie Parker and bebop. Davis soon joined Parker's group.

In 1950 Miles' own group began the cool style with the record "Birth of the Cool." The group had nine musicians including the French horn and tuba. The music, in contrast to bebop, was more melodic and easier to sing and was arranged more like big band music. Miles would often completely forget about the audience, turning his back to them while playing to the band.

Miles popularized another new style of jazz called modal jazz in 1959. The "Kind of Blue" album featured two of the greatest jazz musicians, saxophonist John Coltrane and pianist Bill Evans. Miles changed his style, playing fewer notes but making each note sound more important. He also often played with a **mute** that fit in the bell of his trumpet.

In the sixties Miles played with saxophonist Wayne Shorter and pianist Herbie Hancock experimenting with new original songs instead of the older jazz songs that many jazz musicians were playing.

In 1969 Davis changed again using rock rhythms, electronic instruments and extremely harsh sounding chords to popularize the new style of fusion jazz. Miles mellowed in the 1980's playing "pop" instrumental music called smooth jazz until his death in 1991.

**ANSWER KEY Student Reading Lesson ASSESSMENT**

1. When and where was Miles Davis born? (*1926 in St. Louis, Missouri*)
2. Why did Miles come to New York City? A. To play with Charlie Parker  
B. To form his own band C. To study at the Julliard Conservatory (C.)
3. Which style of music did Miles Davis **NOT** make popular?  
A. Fusion B. Swing C. Cool D. Modal (B. *Swing*)
4. Describe Miles soloing style after he started playing modal music.  
(*Fewer notes with each note being more important, used a mute*)
5. What did Davis do that seemed like he was ignoring the audience?  
(*Turn his back and play to the band*)

## II. JAZZ CLUB Listening Example

Title: "So What"

Composer: Miles Davis

Performer: Miles Davis Sextet

available on: Miles Davis Sextet *Kind of Blue* (Columbia/Legacy CK 64935)

YouTube [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wot1hK87nhc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wot1hK87nhc) [9:26 Process/Assessment below]

iTunes Ken Burns "Jazz" CD 4 track 6 [Process/Assessment below]

Suggested YouTube Search Kind of Blue - Miles Davis 1959 - [So What] [3<sup>rd</sup> video - other choices: 1, 2, 5, 6, 8]

## SUGGESTED TEACHING PROCESS JAZZ CLUB Listening Example

1. Explain that the piece is modal jazz and that students will hear:

*Brass section: trumpet - Miles Davis*

*Woodwind section: alto sax - Cannonball Adderley, tenor sax - John Coltrane*

*Rhythm section: piano - Bill Evans, bass and drum set*

2. Explain that after the rubato (not in strict tempo) the melody will be played by the bass. The entire song uses only two different chords that are based on modal harmony. This is an excellent example of Miles Davis' (and Bill Evan's) very sparse "laid back" soloing style (Davis changes his soloing style often).
3. Review tempo and meter (conduct examples - include allegro)
4. Instruct students to listen for the instruments, tempo, meter, mood, the style of jazz and which instruments improvise a jazz solo.
5. Play recording while conducting an allegro tempo in a 4/4 meter. *Video locations:*  
0:05 piano & bass Introduction rubato, 0:34 A section bass melody (only one chord), 1:02 B section (only one chord ½ step higher), 1:15 AS section, 1:31 trumpet solo, 3:26 tenor sax solo, 6:16 alto sax solo, 7:06 piano solo, 8:16 A section bass melody, 8:31 B section, 8:43 A section
6. Teacher gives Listening and Lesson Assessments to students.

## ANSWER KEY JAZZ CLUB Listening ASSESSMENT

1. Identify the instruments you hear. (6) (*Trumpet - Miles Davis, tenor saxophone - John Coltrane, alto saxophone - Cannonball Adderley, piano - Bill Evans, bass, and drum set*)
2. Determine the tempo and the meter. (*Allegro [fast], 4/4*)
3. Which instruments improvised a jazz solo? (4) (*Trumpet, tenor sax, alto sax, piano*)
4. Which instrument plays the melody of the song? (*Bass*)
5. The song uses how many different chords? (2)
6. Name the style of this piece. (*Modal jazz*)

## Related Activity *JAMMIN' WITH THE JAZZ CATS* Orff Improvisation Songbook *COOL CAT STREET* Pages 21-23

- Orff mallet instrument (recorder) song G A B<sup>b</sup> B C
- Hip-hop/Fusion jazz style
- *Performance and Accompaniment* tracks
- Improvisation lesson

