

The Golden Age of Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

FYS 129

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Various Quotes

These slides contain a collection of some of the quotes largely from the musicians that are studied during the course.

The idea is to present “musicians in their own words”.



Albert Ayler

American
saxophonist
(July 13, 1936 –
November 25, 1970)

Ayler on the Ideology of his Music

Ayler: To begin with, we are the music we play. And our commitment is to peace, to understanding of life. And we keep trying to purify our music, to purify ourselves, so that we can move ourselves—and those who hear us—to higher levels of peace and understanding. You have to purify and crystallize your sound in order to hypnotize. I'm convinced, you see, that through music, life can be given more meaning. And every kind of music has an influence—either direct or indirect—on the world around it so that after a while the sounds of different types of music go around and bring about psychological changes. And we're trying to bring about peace. In his way, for example, that's what Coltrane, too, is trying to do.

Interview by Nat Hentoff, Downbeat Magazine, 1966

Ayler on the Nature of his Music

Ayler: This music is good for the mind. It frees the mind. If you just listen, you find out more about yourself.

It's really free, spiritual music, not just free music. And as for playing it, other musicians worry about what they're playing. But we're listening to each other. Many of the others are not playing together, and so they produce noise. It's screaming, it's neo-avant-garde music. But we are trying to rejuvenate that old New Orleans feeling that music can be played collectively and with free form. Each person finds his own form.

Interview by Nat Hentoff, Downbeat Magazine, 1966

Ayler on Moving Beyond Bop

Ayler: I'm an artist. I've lived more than I can express in bop terms. Why should I hold back the feeling of my life, of being raised in the ghetto of America? It's a new truth now. And there have to be new ways of expressing that truth. And, as I said, I believe music can change people. When bop came, people acted differently than they had before. Our music should be able to remove frustration, to enable people to act more freely, to think more freely.

Interview by Nat Hentoff, Downbeat Magazine, 1966