

The Impact of Technology on the Role and Function of the Bass in Jazz

Peter Dowdall

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Elder Conservatorium of Music

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

The University of Adelaide

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ABSTRACT

The thesis explores the critical impact of technology on the bass, and the extent to which that has fundamentally influenced the course of jazz. It does so according to a three-tiered framework involving technologies that are intrinsic to the instrument, including its eventual electrification; technologies extrinsic to the bass, most notably evolving recording technologies; and an evaluation of the ways in which the implementation of these technologies has transformed jazz as an art form. Topics include: the impact of organological changes brought about by the transition from tuba to string bass and the adoption of the electric bass; audio technology's role in the presentation of the jazz bassist's performance; and the influence of technical developments in the recording studio on the advancement of jazz bass style. The study also considers the challenges facing the bassist as a result of the increasing power of the recording engineer. Finally, it assesses the ways in which emerging technologies might threaten the security of the bassist within the jazz ensemble.

Among the conclusions drawn is that the technological empowerment of the bassist is largely responsible for the innovations of jazz's more celebrated soloists. In this regard the study describes the stylistic evolution of jazz from the bass player's perspective – that is, from the musical foundation up. A clear and valid link emerges between the emancipation of the bass in jazz and the role of technology in delivering its full potential.

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

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