

VIS Open Call #5 - One More Time, Let's Do It Again

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An Examination of the Music and Performance Practice of Miles Davis, 1960 - 1969

When examining the live Columbia recordings and the songbook that Miles Davis performed from 1960 - 1969 two things become evident, 1) the songbook was very concise at approximately 30 tunes that were performed night after night for both club and concert settings and 2) the music made a dramatic transition that affected the original music being composed for the Columbia studio albums. Miles directed his sidemen to "practice on the bandstand" resulting in the music and their playing to forge new directions in improvisation and collective group performance.

In examining the live recordings during this period, I will present mp3 recordings of two compositions (Walkin' and 'Round Midnight) that were some of the most frequently performed and demonstrate the changes the music went through and how those changes affected the original music that was being performed on the studio recordings (1964 - 1969). This examination will include how the cadre of musicians he performed with were at the forefront of many of these new directions in music.

Miles Davis said, "It's not about standing still and becoming safe. If anybody wants to keep creating they have to be about change" and his system to push change in himself and the musicians that performed with him was to continually find new ways to navigate the music by developing new approaches to the familiar.

It has been said that Miles Davis changed the trajectory of music at least four or five times during his lifetime. His influences can be felt not just in Jazz, but in commercial music, world music, ambient settings and among other divergent styles some thirty years after his death. His own words echo his actions; "Always look ahead, but never look back."