

Stompin' At The Savoy - Session 1 (Bb)

'Stompin' At The Savoy' is a 32 bar song with an AABA form. Below is the A section, which is what we will focus on in session 1.

To get a feel for the rhythmic emphasis of this piece it's a good idea to break it up into three parts: 1 - The repeated 'call' or opening two notes. 2 - The repeated 'answer' or following six note phrase. 3 - Beat 1.

The next step is to transfer this to our instruments. For the lowest part, it's a good idea to start with the root notes of the chord, which means adding some notes on beats 3 of bars 2, 4, 7 & 8. More parts could be added (accents on 2 & 4, or a clava) to increase the complexity. If your instrument allows, you can incorporate 2 or more of the rhythmic lines simultaneously. It's also great to practice this exercise with a metronome on different beat placements, e.g. the + of 2 & + of 4.

The harmony is very straight forward in this section. The I V7 I giving an almost pre jazz feel. However the diminished chord stands out. I like to think of this as another way of spelling C7(b9)/E. If we think of the chord as a Bb dominant, that makes more sense functionally (C is chord VI, rather than E being chord bII).

Because some important chord changes happen for only 2 beats, it's really useful to be able to improvise some quaver lines over this section, to include all the information to outline the harmony. A fun way to practice this is by playing constant quavers with the 4 note arpeggios - similar to a walking bass line, but quavers instead of crotchets.