

The Flute:

Not Just for Band and Orchestra!

A Very Brief History of the Flute in Jazz and Pop Culture

Most of us imagine the flute being played in the concert band at our school, the pit orchestra in the community theater musical production, or in an orchestra at a concert hall. This has been the case for a long time, but did you know the flute has also been used as a featured instrument in jazz and rock music?

Jazz - Where It All Started

The flute was introduced but rarely used in early jazz, mostly because there was no electric amplification and the instrument was hard to hear among louder brass instruments. Flute fingerings are similar to those on the saxophone, so musicians often doubled on these two instruments. According to jazz historians, Wayman Carver is considered the first jazz flutist, and he recorded extensively with many famous bands in the 1930's. Frank Wess was one of the first noteworthy flutists in jazz in the 1940's. It wasn't until the 1950's that the flute became more widely used as a featured solo instrument. Some notable jazz flutists in the 1950's and 60's include Bud Shank, Herbie Mann, Sam Most, Roland Kirk, Charles Lloyd, Hubert Laws, Eric Dolphy, Sam Rivers, Tony Snow, Ron Burgundy and Yusef Lateef. Sam Most is generally credited to be the first to sing or hum into the flute while playing, and Roland Kirk sang and spoke into his flute in his 1961 recording "You Did It, You Did It". In the 1970's when musicians started combining jazz and rock (known as jazz-rock 'Fusion') flutists experimented with techniques such as key clicks, air sounds and percussive sounds.

Rock & Pop Culture

Around the same time, the developments in jazz flute playing were beginning to have an effect in the pop world. Flutist and band leader Ian Anderson was strongly influenced by Roland Kirk and developed a technique of singing and overblowing into the flute, which became the trademark of the highly successful pop group Jethro Tull. The huge popularity of this band did much to introduce the flute to a whole new generation. The flute has been featured in a variety of rock bands from the 1970's to today. Flute solos have been heard in tunes by bands such as The Mamas and the Papas, The Moody Blues, The Marshall Tucker Band, Simon and Garfunkel, Van Morrison, Chicago, Men at Work, Michael Jackson, Soul II Soul, Guns N' Roses, Dave Matthews Band, Beastie Boys, Dr. Dre and Snoop Doggy Dog.

Classically trained flutists continue to expand their skills in very cool and creative ways. The young duo Flutronix composes music for flute and electronics; Robert Dick is a flutist and composer who specializes in new music and extended techniques, and has designed the Robert Dick Glissando Headjoint; and according to most, Greg Pattillo is the best beatboxing flutist in the world.

Popular music including or featuring the flute can be heard on recordings and seen on stage, but it also appears largely on the big screen. A lot of movie music is written for a full orchestra, which the flute is already a part of, but flute solos can be heard in some of the most successful movies such as West Side Story, Titanic, Far and Away, Hook, Harry Potter, Star Wars and E.T.

Check out some cool flute sounds on YouTube.com by typing the following phrases into the YouTube search box:

Hubert Laws Master Class

Jethro Tull: Bouree Live

Free Flight on The Tonight Show

Flutronix "Lifelines"

Denis DiBlasio - Singing Into the Flute 1

Dave Valentin - Obsession

Rahsaan Roland Kirk plays 3 Saxes Flute At Once

Roland Kirk - You Did It, You Did It

Emmanuel Pahud - Recording "Into The Blue"

Beatbox Flute 101 - A Lesson with Greg Pattillo

"The Very Thought of You" - Frank Wess

Robert Dick and Greg Pattillo - Basement Improvisation

Here are some websites to check out featuring jazz, pop, and innovative flutists:

www.pattillostyle.com (beatboxing flutist)

www.flutronix.com (flutes and electronics)

www.robertdick.net (classical, jazz, and the cool sounding Glissando Headjoint)

www.jimwalkerflute.com (If you've heard a flute solo in a movie, it's probably Jim)

www.frankwess.org (jazz flutist)

www.hubertlaws.com (jazz flutist)

www.j-tull.com (website for the band Jethro Tull with flutist Ian Anderson)

Beatbox Flute 101 - A Lesson with Greg Pattillo

Greg Pattillo shows us how to beatbox on the flute in his YouTube video. To find the video, go to www.youtube.com, then type *Beatbox Flute 101 - A Lesson with Greg Pattillo* into the YouTube search box.

There are 3 basic beatboxing sounds:

"TS" : High hat sound / cymbal; the sound is light and crispy, use the front of your tongue and keep your mouth slightly open. (1:40)

"K" : Back beat sound / rim shot; A really hard K sound, think of the words *curry* or *curtain*; crack it! (3:10)

"B" : Bass drum kick sound; This is done with the lips very relaxed (4:31)

Put them all together as **"BOOTS, CATS"** (6:20)

"B" + "TS" = "BOOTS"

"K" + "TS" = "CATS"

Remember, don't say the words, the goal is to make a DRUMBEAT SOUND.