

**Andy Middleton: *Melodic Improvising*** [Advance Music, \$29.95]  
Recommended for: intermediate to advanced jazz saxophonists

Saxophonist Andy Middleton is a great example of a “best kept secret,” a wonderful, ingenious, melodic musician whose playing is often “under the radar” and under-recognized by the media. This book is the result of his work to bring more of a melodic basis into improvisation. Melody, of course, is the original basis of any composition, but it is a crucial element which is often overlooked in today’s study of jazz which is so much based on harmony, chord substitutions, etc.

Middleton addresses the elements of jazz melody that are identical to any other musical style: intervallic ideas and their repetition, inversion (the inverting of intervals), melodic augmentation (the increasing of rhythmic and intervallic ideas) and diminution (the compacting, reduction or decrease in length of those ideas).

To accomplish this, the first half of the book outlines some of the central scale, harmonic and melodic elements, such as pentatonic scales and their alterations, the modes of the melodic minor, upper structures (triads played on top of triads), thinking in key centers over cadential progressions, using common tones to connect key areas in such chromatic tunes as Dizzy Gillespie’s “Con Alma” and John Coltrane’s “Giant Steps.” One fascinating element is his creation of variations on melody excerpts from Stephen Foster’s “Oh Susanna” and J.S. Bach’s Flute Sonata BWV 1034 using bebop vocabulary, but outlining the same harmonic structure. Another interesting feature is Middleton’s reliance upon some of his well-known New York jazz artist colleagues to compile their own lists of favorite melodic solos. Contributors include bassist John Hebert, trumpeter-arranger Bill Mobley, trombonist Pete McGuinness and others.

The second half of the book contains fourteen of Middleton’s original tunes, transposed for concert pitch, B-flat, E-flat and bass clef. Excerpts from several of Middleton’s solos on these tunes are transcribed and analyzed – not with the usual concentration on harmony only, but focusing mostly on his use of motives and their variations. If only other transcription books devoted themselves at all to this area! But that, after all, is Middleton’s point: to focus upon melody and its qualities, to attempt to analyze as we listen, not to hip harmonies but to melodic development. This is a valuable book, hopefully along with the author himself, to find a larger audience.

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