

# POTTER ON STANDARDS

## CHRIS POTTER ON STANDARDS

Ten Note-For-Note Transcriptions of Improvisations  
Over Standards and Standard Style Tunes



TRANSCRIBED BY A.J. KLUTH

# CHRIS POTTER ON STANDARDS

TEN NOTE-FOR-NOTE TRANSCRIPTIONS OF IMPROVISATIONS  
OVER STANDARDS AND STANDARD STYLE TUNES  
2ND EDITION

BY AJ KLUTH

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# INTRODUCTION

The tunes transcribed and presented here were chosen, not only for their being standard tunes and common chord progressions, but because they were improvisations I kept wanting to hear again and again. I wanted to take them apart to discover just what Chris does to make them so exciting. I've found it quite fruitful to study Chris' fantastic improvisational style in the context of these standard and standard-style tunes as the chord changes, forms, and melodies are familiar. It is instructive to follow along, listen, practice with, and observe how he effectively dissects and manipulates these familiarities into something new and fresh. Though the majority of these transcriptions are for tenor or alto saxophone, *Body And Soul* was performed on bass clarinet. Happily, other than a few of the exceedingly low notes, it can be played on the tenor saxophone or Bb clarinet. It was included due to the tune's obvious importance in the repertoire and fact that the solo is simply fantastic and certainly deserves study. Any difficulty of playing it on the tenor is worth the trouble.

The transcriptions are presented to the best of my ability regarding rhythmic notation and pitches. I've made no generalizations of rhythm but rather have tried to represent exactly what was played. I've also taken pains to make sure that every tone, no matter how quickly it was played, is correct. Regarding formatting, I've tried to make them easy to read while including helpful notes like the minute and second markings for each staff, chord changes, and some analytic remarks. The chords represented are most often the traditional chords of the tune, and are those usually played by the rhythm section. Even when Chris is superimposing different harmonies the bass most often sticks to the original changes. However in some places, *Stella By Starlight* for example, I've included much of the re-harmonized changes offered by the rhythm section. This offers a look into the spontaneous creative process occurring within the group and manifests the incredible listening and musicianship being displayed.

When playing these transcriptions be sure to listen and play along carefully with the recordings. Keep in mind that Chris' phrasing, articulation, swing feel, and saxophone sound are all significant in contributing to his overall improvisational style. Copying these things will not necessarily turn you into a Potter "clone", but will inform your own style and improvisations. To just practice playing the notes in these solos without taking note of the other nuances would be to miss the mark. Finally, like with any other transcription exercise, identify particular phrases and patterns you like and put them in all twelve keys, turn them upside down, take them apart and figure out how and why they work and why you like them. With time these can become springboard ideas in your own playing while informing your theoretical understanding.

These transcriptions have greatly influenced my own playing and understanding of the saxophone opening some new windows in my improvisational style while helping to develop better technique. I hope they contribute to your own musicianship as they have mine.

\* Note: In addition to removing the melodies from the solo transcriptions, this second edition replaces Chris' interpretation of *Lotus Blossom* from *Lift: Live at the Village Vanguard* with *Solar* from *Introducing Chris Potter*.

# BIOGRAPHY

Chris Potter was born in Chicago on New Year's Day, 1971. But he was not long for Chicago as, while he was still an infant, his family left the windy city and relocated to Columbia, South Carolina. He began experimenting with the guitar and piano as early as the age of three but didn't take up the alto saxophone until the age of ten. Chris cites his early musical education beginning with his parents' record collection which included everything from Bach to Schoenberg, gamelan music to the Beatles. At age twelve, Chris had already been recognized for his young musical talent with the International Association of Jazz Educators' (IAJE) Young Talent award for saxophone. His skills and reputation continued to grow.

Three years later, piano legend Marian McPartland heard Chris play on her way through Columbia. She was impressed with the young saxophonist and told his father that he was mature enough to go on the road with a group like Woody Herman's Big Band but, rather than rush into touring and a professional career at such a young age, it was decided that Chris would finish school. Chris graduated from High School in 1989, the same year he was given an opportunity to play with bebop legend Red Rodney at Columbia's annual Main Street Jazz Festival. Red was so impressed with his playing that he encouraged the young saxophonist to call him when he got to New York – an invitation Chris would take up soon after. In addition to graduating from High School and meeting Red Rodney in 1989, it was also the year Chris was named a Presidential Scholar for academic and musical excellence, received the Hennessey Jazz Search scholarship, and was voted America's top high-school jazz instrumentalist by DownBeat Magazine.

Chris was eighteen when he moved to New York to study at the New School on a Zoot Sims scholarship before later switching to The Manhattan School of Music. While at the New School he formed a musical friendship with pianist Kenny Werner, then one of his professors. Werner relates this story about first playing with Chris: "Chris was in my composition class at the New School for about a year. When he called me for a private lesson, I had no idea how he played. We started with a bebop tune; but he went further out on the second thing we played, and on the third tune he was playing in the language of my contemporaries, guys who grew up following all of Miles' bands and aspiring to the kind of spiritual strivings that defined Coltrane's music. By the fourth tune, I wanted to take a lesson from Chris." The two later made a duet recording together and a transcription of Chris' half of their performance of "Giant Steps" appears in this book. Upon arriving in New York, Chris contacted Red Rodney and, as luck would have it, learned that Red's tenor player had just left and he needed a replacement. Chris soon joined the band and stayed on for four years until shortly before Red's passing in 1994.

After graduating from the Manhattan School of Music in 1993, Potter began a series of sideman activities with top names like the Mingus Big Band, Paul Motion, Ray Brown, Jim Hall, James Moody, Dave Douglas, and many others. Chris performed as a sideman on Marian McPartland's 1993 Concord Jazz recording, *In My Life*, and was soon after signed to the label – a surprising move for Concord, a primarily traditional label not known for signing artists with experimental leanings. Though his first record

as a leader was *Presenting Chris Potter*, on the Criss Cross label in 1994, he released another record the same year, *Concentric Circles*, on Concord Jazz. His final Concord release, 1998's *Vertigo*, was named one of the year's top ten CDs by both *Jazziz* and *The New York Times*. Chris performed on Steely Dan's Grammy-nominated gold album, *Two Against Nature* and toured with them in 1994 which also resulted in the live recording, *Alive in America*. He also earned his own Grammy nomination for *Best Instrumental Jazz Solo* for his work on Joanne Brackeen's, *Pink Elephant Magic*. In 2000, Chris was awarded the Danish Jazzpar Prize, an award which is "awarded to an internationally known and fully active jazz artist who is specially deserving of further acclaim." He was the youngest recipient ever to receive the honor.

Chris appeared on the Dave Holland Quintet album *Prime Directive* on ECM records in 2000 which led to more notoriety and helped to grow his name's marquee value, eventually leading to performances all over the world with his own group upon the release of his own album *Gratitude* in 2001. The date is a quartet record consisting of his own compositions, each in reference to a master saxophonist. Potter released *Traveling Mercies* in January, 2002, which included many more overdubs and electronic elements than his previous recordings. In 2004 he released *Lift: Live at the Village Vanguard*, a quartet recording with piano, drums, and bass which returns to a more traditional quartet sound. His 2006 release, *Underground*, drops the bass entirely and utilizes guitar, Fender Rhodes, and drums along with his tenor to navigate long form compositions, uncommon time signatures, and fantastic grooves. Both his 2007 release, *Follow the Red Line: Live at the Village Vanguard*, and 2009's *Ultrahang* continue to explore the concept and instrumentation of the *Underground* band. His 2007 release, *Song For Anyone*, is a radical departure and instead features a ten piece chamber-jazz ensemble with compositions and arrangements by Potter. His first recording for ECM as a leader is 2012's moody *The Sirens*, which takes programatic inspiration from the Greek epic poem, *The Odyssey*.

Chris has stated, "My aesthetic is based in Bird and Lester Young and Sonny [Rollins]. I want my music to have that emotional impact. What I learned from them in terms of phrasing, sound, and approach to rhythm will never be outdated. I would like to basically use the same aesthetic sensibility with more contemporary harmonic and rhythmic concepts, being influenced by classical, world music, funk, rock, rap, country, whatever...digesting new ideas, new influences to keep the freshness alive." Potter's virtuosic command of the saxophone, sophisticated and prolific compositional prowess, knowledge of his instrument's past, remarkable time-feel, ability to navigate and swing *hard* through untraditional forms, and fertile imagination, seem to promise that he'll have no trouble keeping that "freshness" alive.



# DISCOGRAPHY

<b>Title</b>	<b>Catalog #</b>	<b>Recording</b>	<b>Date Recorded</b>
Solar	Criss Cross Jazz 1067 CD	Introducing Chris Potter	Dec 29, 1992
You And The Night And The Music	Concord Jazz CCD 4595	Concentric Circles	Dec 17 & 20, 1993
Giant Steps	Concord Jazz CCD 4695-2	Concord Duo Series Vol. 10	Oct 9, 1994
The Source	Verve 3145494332	Gratitude	Sept 27-28, 2001
High Noon	Verve 3145494332	Gratitude	Sept 27-28, 2001
Body and Soul	Verve 3145494332	Gratitude	Sept 27-28, 2001
Star Eyes	Verve 3145494332	Gratitude	Sept 27-28, 2001
Children Go	Verve 4400182342	Traveling Mercies	Jan 27-29, 2002
7.5	Sunnyside SSC3022	Lift: Live at the Village Vanguard	Dec 13-14, 2002
Stella By Starlight	Sunnyside SSC3022	Lift: Live at the Village Vanguard	Dec 13-14, 2002

Chris Potter's Solo Improvisation on the Changes of:

# Solar

by Miles Davis

From *Presenting Chris Potter*, 1994 Criss Cross Jazz #1067

Transcribed by AJ Kluth

Chris Potter - Alto Saxophone  
Christian McBride - Bass  
Lewis Nash - Drums

$\text{♩} = 240$

E $\flat$  Alto Saxophone Key of A minor

(0.24) B m7(b5) E7 A m7 E m7 A7

*1st chorus*

Musical staff for the first chorus of 'Solar'. It begins at measure 6 and ends at measure 13. The key signature is one flat (E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 240. The first measure (measure 6) contains a B m7(b5) chord. The second measure (measure 7) contains an E7 chord. The third measure (measure 8) contains an A m7 chord. The fourth measure (measure 9) contains an E m7 chord. The fifth measure (measure 10) contains an A7 chord. The sixth measure (measure 11) contains an A7 chord. The seventh measure (measure 12) contains an A7 chord. The eighth measure (measure 13) contains an A7 chord. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests.

(0.29) D M7 D m7 G7

Musical staff for the second chorus of 'Solar'. It begins at measure 14 and ends at measure 21. The key signature is one flat (E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 240. The first measure (measure 14) contains a D M7 chord. The second measure (measure 15) contains a D m7 chord. The third measure (measure 16) contains a D m7 chord. The fourth measure (measure 17) contains a D m7 chord. The fifth measure (measure 18) contains a D m7 chord. The sixth measure (measure 19) contains a D m7 chord. The seventh measure (measure 20) contains a D m7 chord. The eighth measure (measure 21) contains a G7 chord. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests.

(0.33) C M7 C m7 F7 B $\flat$ M7 B m7(b5) E7

Musical staff for the third chorus of 'Solar'. It begins at measure 22 and ends at measure 29. The key signature is one flat (E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 240. The first measure (measure 22) contains a C M7 chord. The second measure (measure 23) contains a C m7 chord. The third measure (measure 24) contains a F7 chord. The fourth measure (measure 25) contains a B $\flat$ M7 chord. The fifth measure (measure 26) contains a B m7(b5) chord. The sixth measure (measure 27) contains an E7 chord. The seventh measure (measure 28) contains an E7 chord. The eighth measure (measure 29) contains an E7 chord. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests.

*2nd chorus*  
A m7 E m7 A7

(0.37)

Musical staff for the fourth chorus of 'Solar'. It begins at measure 30 and ends at measure 37. The key signature is one flat (E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 240. The first measure (measure 30) contains an A m7 chord. The second measure (measure 31) contains an A m7 chord. The third measure (measure 32) contains an A m7 chord. The fourth measure (measure 33) contains an A m7 chord. The fifth measure (measure 34) contains an E m7 chord. The sixth measure (measure 35) contains an E m7 chord. The seventh measure (measure 36) contains an A7 chord. The eighth measure (measure 37) contains an A7 chord. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests.

(0.41) D M7 D m7 G7

Musical staff for the fifth chorus of 'Solar'. It begins at measure 38 and ends at measure 45. The key signature is one flat (E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 240. The first measure (measure 38) contains a D M7 chord. The second measure (measure 39) contains a D m7 chord. The third measure (measure 40) contains a D m7 chord. The fourth measure (measure 41) contains a D m7 chord. The fifth measure (measure 42) contains a D m7 chord. The sixth measure (measure 43) contains a D m7 chord. The seventh measure (measure 44) contains a D m7 chord. The eighth measure (measure 45) contains a G7 chord. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests.

(0.45) C M7 C m7 F7 B $\flat$ M7 B m7(b5) E7

Musical staff for the sixth chorus of 'Solar'. It begins at measure 46 and ends at measure 53. The key signature is one flat (E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 240. The first measure (measure 46) contains a C M7 chord. The second measure (measure 47) contains a C m7 chord. The third measure (measure 48) contains a F7 chord. The fourth measure (measure 49) contains a B $\flat$ M7 chord. The fifth measure (measure 50) contains a B m7(b5) chord. The sixth measure (measure 51) contains an E7 chord. The seventh measure (measure 52) contains an E7 chord. The eighth measure (measure 53) contains an E7 chord. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests.

*3rd chorus*  
A m7 E m7 A7

(0.49)

Musical staff for the seventh chorus of 'Solar'. It begins at measure 54 and ends at measure 61. The key signature is one flat (E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 240. The first measure (measure 54) contains an A m7 chord. The second measure (measure 55) contains an A m7 chord. The third measure (measure 56) contains an A m7 chord. The fourth measure (measure 57) contains an A m7 chord. The fifth measure (measure 58) contains an E m7 chord. The sixth measure (measure 59) contains an E m7 chord. The seventh measure (measure 60) contains an A7 chord. The eighth measure (measure 61) contains an A7 chord. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests.

(0.53) DM7 D m7 G7

30

(0.57) CM7 Cm7 F7 BbM7 B m7(b5) E7

34

4th chorus  
(1.01) Am7 Em7 A7

38

(1.05) DM7 D m7 G7

42

(1.09) CM7 Cm7 F7 BbM7 B m7(b5) E7

46

5th chorus  
(1.13) Am7 Em7 A7

50

(1.17) DM7 D m7 G7

54

(1.21) CM7 Cm7 F7 BbM7 B m7(b5) E7 <sup>8va</sup>-----

58

6th chorus

(1.25) Am7 Em7 A7

62

*Finger bottom note and overblow to produce top note*

DM7 (1.29) Dm7 G7

66

CM7 (1.33) Cm7 F7 BbM7 Bm7(b5) E7

70

7th chorus

Am7 (1.37) Em7 A7

74

DM7 (1.41) Dm7 G7

78

CM7 (1.45) Cm7 F7 BbM7 Bm7(b5) E7

82

8th chorus

Am7 (1.49) Em7 A7

86

DM7 (1.53) Dm7 G7

90