

Key Takeaways for Kenny Dorham's recorded rendition of "Mack the Knife"

Overall:

The song itself and the arrangement take precedent over the improvised solo, almost as if KD was taking on the role of a singer.

Melodic Techniques:

KD's lines frequently incorporate tritone substitutions at cadence points. These lines add drama and suspense to an otherwise familiar and diatonic tune.

- Examples: m8, m17-18, m24, m40.



KD's phrases establish continuity by sustaining a particular theme for a significant portion of the tune (e.g. 8 measures):

- Examples: m11-18 is built on 1/8th note triplets, m26-m33 is built on bluesy riffs and tropes.

KD's solo primarily uses the middle register of the trumpet but generates forward momentum by starting high and descending into the cadence

Example: m39-41



KD's solo has a slick sense of humor - performing cliché melodies in a highly articulated fashion. These moments also add textural contrast. At this tempo KD seems to tongue most of his 1/8th notes.



KD frequently begins phrases with an arpeggio spanning more than one octave, to launch into the upper register. This shape is also combined with an unusual placement of the triplet. I suspect this may reflect the influence of the saxophone on KD's trumpet concept.

- Example: m6, m14, and m22



