Hit the Ground Running

GORDON GOODWIN

INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor
1st Eb Alto Saxophone
2nd Eb Alto Saxophone
1st Bb Tenor Saxophone
2nd Bb Tenor Saxophone
Eb Baritone Saxophone
1st Bb Trumpet
2nd Bb Trumpet
3rd Bb Trumpet
4th Bb Trumpet

1st Trombone
2nd Trombone
3rd Trombone
Bass Trombone
Guitar Chords
Guitar
Piano
Bass
Drums
Auxiliary Percussion
NOTES TO THE CONDUCTOR

Funk music is totally cool. There are some people who don’t like this type of groove and think it’s too frantic, but not me. If it’s played right, it’s tons of fun to play and listen to. This chart was commissioned by the Westlake High School Jazz Ensemble, directed by Brian Peter, and I knew when I heard them play it that this chart would also be a great vehicle for the Big Phat Band. So we recorded it and it is track 1 on our new CD, Act Your Age (Immergent Records).

It begins with the piano (or use a Fender Rhodes if you have access to one) and it’s really important that the pianist establish the rhythm with authority. Practice that opening lick until it is comfortable because it’s the bedrock of the groove. Everybody in the rhythm section has a fairly busy part, so each person must listen closely to one another so that the parts fit together perfectly—but, easier said than done. Spend some time on the groove with a rhythm section sectional. This accuracy goes for the horns as well. Everybody must agree on the placement of all those sixteenth notes, or else this groove will start to seem messy.

When the horn section plays these kinds of sixteenth note licks, the key to getting the figure to really pop is to keep the air stream flowing from the first note to the last. Push through to the end of the lick. This will give your phrases a good rhythmic pulse, which is really important in this kind of groove. If you listen to the Big Phat Band play this chart, you will hear how the horns exaggerate the phrasing throughout. The short notes are really short, lean into the accents, and most importantly, you will hear everybody listening to each other and working as a unit. That’s the primary goal as an ensemble; on this, or any chart.

This chart requires a commitment from everybody and it will require energy. In the rhythm section, this translates into focusing on a solid and forward-moving groove. Every note you play must fit into the context of that groove. In the horn section, it translates into playing with accuracy and unity and, once again, focusing on that air stream. Air is the lifeblood of music and every great horn player moves a ton of air when they play.

I hope you have a good ol’ funky time with Hit the Ground Running.

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Visit: gordongoodwin.com

Gordon Goodwin is a three-time Emmy Award winner and GRAMMY® winner. His band’s debut album Swingin’ for the Fences (Silverline Records) received two GRAMMY® nominations and is the best-selling jazz item in the DVD® Audio 5.1 surround-sound format.