

*Smokin' at the Half Note* (abstract)

In general, we are interested in the subculture of jazz. In particular, our aim is to look at how the identity of that subculture is derived partly, but not insignificantly, from the evolved, appropriate vernacular of its musicians, composers, audiences, promoters, critics, etc. Our contention is that a formidable factor in the evolution of that vernacular is the use of metaphors—in particular temperature metaphors, which will be the primary focus of this paper, although we also recognize, without addressing, other kinds of metaphors in the jazz vernacular. In short, we wish to address the temperature metaphors members of the jazz community live by.

The conceptual framework on metaphor, on the basis of which we elucidate the idioms of the jazz vernacular and its *temperature metaphors*, is adopted from and finds its primary source in Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*, 2nd edition.

The following are examples of temperature metaphors that can be found in remarks made by famous jazz musicians:

- “I lit my fire, I greased my skillet, and I cooked.” Charlie Parker
- “It was the height of the perfection of our music, on fire all the time.” Dizzy Gillespie
- “Bird was like fire, you couldn't get too close.” John Lewis.

The following examples are drawn from titles of jazz albums and a venue which incorporate or subsume temperature metaphors:

- Steamers, a jazz club
- “Smokin' at the Half Note,” an album by Wynton Kelly and Wes Montgomery
- “Turn up the Heath [sic],” an album by Jimmy Heath
- “Cookbook” vol. 1 & 2, albums by Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis
- “Blue Flames,” an album by Shirley Scott and Stanley Turrentine

We find that there are two significant strains of temperature metaphors in the jazz vernacular: one relating to the domain of the hot, the other to that of the cool. In the first case, metaphors characterize what is typically referred to as East Coast jazz and bebop. In the second instance, locutions are used to describe West Coast jazz and bossa nova.

The physiological effects of a hot temperament are increased body heat, increased internal pressure, agitation, and interference with accurate perception. Bebop and East Coast jazz exemplify technical virtuosity, lightning tempos, high energy, and intense dynamic ranges, all of which are metaphors for what can be identified as “hot” in jazz.

The physiological effects of a cool temperament are reduced body heat, reduced blood and muscular pressure, increased calmness and inducement of a meditative state. Musical qualities that are metaphors for the cool temperament include cool, soft (concepts of musical dynamics); moderate, easy, light, airy, relaxed (as in musical tempos); subtle, sophisticated (as relating to harmonic, melodic and rhythmic character).

Noting these physiological effects helps to ground some kinds of musical metaphors of temperature. This is the case we will try to make in this paper, and part of its defense will derive from assumptions drawn from Lakoff's *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*.