

# The Golden Age of Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

FYS 129

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## Various Quotes

These slides contain a collection of some of the quotes largely from the musicians that are studied during the course.

The idea is to present “musicians in their own words”.

# Colin Stetson



**American saxophonist (date unknown, 1977 - )**

## Stetson on Circular Breathing Techniques

**Stetson:** The breathing continues to develop, because you just want to continue to do more and more things while you're doing it. So a number of years ago when I first started to develop new ways to breathe in and out of my nose while playing even when on low volume things where you're not expelling enough air, you want it to be continuous for a very long time, but you're not expanding enough air, you reach a point where it's all CO<sub>2</sub> and you need to exhale. I could trick myself into breathing out through the nose and into the nose at the same time as my mouth. That was a milestone; I was really happy about that one.

## Stetson on the breadth of his music

**Interviewer:** With your music, you crossed over and found audiences that might not normally listen to the kind of music you play and are influenced by. Is that a testament to your own abilities to traverse genre lines or do you think it is simply the result of a culture shift in music today?

**Stetson:** I'd start by saying that I've never approached my music with the intention to traverse genre lines. It's simply not how I think about things. Not to be overly simplistic, but on a basic level, I write music for solo saxophone. All of it comes from and is entirely dependent on the saxophone, but I don't consider this music to be jazz, essentially. I don't listen to jazz music exclusively, far from it, and so I see my music as coming from a place that reflects my experience, and although that certainly includes jazz, it includes much more as well.

Interview with Imran Khan, on the PopMatters website, *posted Aug 20, 2013.*

## Stetson on the “New History Warfare” Trilogy of Ip’s

**Stetson:** Ultimately, the idea of the title track (on Vol. III) [“To See More Light”] is talking about exploring our instinctual need for the wish fulfillment of an eternity, or an afterlife and once that’s turned on it can’t be turned off again once we’ve spun around that need.

There’s definitely an incessant need to understand everything, especially what can’t be understood.

That’s what we do for everything. There’s an effect for everything, and there’s this notion that we have to find a cause, the root of all things. So we’re out there assigning that to all things, and that’s curious to me. That’s how our brains work, and the name of the game. Perpetual figuring.

## Stetson on Advice from Roscoe Mitchell

**CT:** Has there ever been a piece advice from another artist that stuck with you over the years?

**CS:** Oh, several. [laughs] I once had a day with Roscoe Mitchell, taking a lesson at his house. There were two things that really stuck out. One, just talking about how important it was to be aware of time and to understand its passage while you're playing... because among young musicians especially, there's always this idea that you zone out and get completely lost in it.

You can think a minute has passed but really it's seven. There's a natural instinct to incentivise that but, actually, it's the wrong way to go about things. You should be aware of the passage of time so you can manipulate it for the people who are there listening to the music.

He also explained that the most important thing in collaboration is to make sure that those you're working with are good people – that they're friends and that you love them – rather than just making music with people who either antagonise or mislead you in some sense. That's always been something that I've taken close to heart.

Interview with Cian Traynor, on the Huck website, *posted Apr 7, 2016.*

## Stetson & Neufeld on Narrative

**RP:** You have said that in making the album you were guided by the narrative of a girl who ages as slow as mountains, searching for a world that resembles her experience. Was this a preconceived theme or one that emerged as being dictated by the music?

**CS/JN:** The shell of the idea was a starting point for the whole process. We were exploring concepts around the perspective of time. Even as simple as something like the aging process creating the illusion that time speeds up is fascinating. We were immersing ourselves in nature and feeling how fleeting our existence is in comparison to a mountain or a tree. The character of the girl who ages as slow as a mountain began to emerge, and as we continued writing, this narrative continued to unfold.

**RP:** Is that narrative necessary for people to understand the music? How much free ground do you regard listeners as having to configure their own interpretations?

**CS/JN:** Not at all. We wish the listener to be free of any preconceived ideas. This includes the age old “but what kind of music is this” question, and it includes our own narrative that we’ve attached to the music. We hope that the listener can take in the music that they’re hearing and create their own stories, have their own experience.

Interview with Ryan Price, on the Vanguard website, *posted June 27, 2015.*