

DIRECTOR'S NOTES FOR SOUTHERN CITY SHOUT

INTRO - As with many of Count Basie Orchestra's iconic big band pieces, this chart starts with a chance for the piano player and rhythm section to set the mood before the horns enter. Focus on the rhythm section locking in and nailing bars 9 - 12 in time. The drummer should be playing hi-hat using a "cross-stick" or "rim-click" on the snare on beat 4. It's important throughout the chart that the drummer uses a gentle "feathering" approach on the kick drum with the exception of accents on ensemble hits. The groove will be established by ensuring that the bass player is locking in with the feathered bass drum. Bass should aim to play on the front edge of the beat to create forward motion as exemplified by the great bass player Ray Brown. The bass line included is merely a suggestion and with the chord changes included bass players may prefer to simplify or get more adventurous.

Guitarists should be reminded that the great Freddie Green played mostly with an un-amplified acoustic guitar with sparse voicing usually including only the 3rd and 7th of the chord, strumming downward on all four beats and importantly muting most of the lower strings to create a "chunk" sound. Excellent lessons on Freddie Green's guitar style can be found on Youtube (links [1](#) & [2](#)) and a PDF sheet (link [3](#)) offers some voicing examples. When using an amplifier, it is important to set the volume of the amp to the level where the guitar is being felt but not necessarily heard.

HEAD / MELODY - The trumpet melody at bar 13 features some "ghost notes" notated with a "x" note-head. These notes should be barely audible and may be omitted by any students who find them overly difficult (replace them with a rest in this case). The ghost notes should always be slurred to and certainly never tongued. Saxes and trombones take it in turns with responses to the trumpet call at bar 14 and bar 16 before joining forces at bar 18. The sax and trombone sections should work on shaping the *forte-piano* crescendo and blowing through the three bar passage (bars 18-20) in a single smooth phrase. Bar 21 has the trombones and bari sax a quaver later than the rest of the saxes and rhythm section which may take some work to gel. The first and second time endings (bars 23-26) give the drummer a chance to setup each of the trombone off-beat hits and fill into the next section.

SAX SOLI - Bar 27 is the first bridge section of the piece and is a great chance for the saxes to show off their dynamic shaping of the phrases, making use of breath accents to pop out certain notes and being sure not to tongue excessively or leave inappropriate gaps. A smooth sound is the goal with the volume following the melodic rise and fall of the lead alto line. It is important that all players pay attention to the length of "hat" (marcato) accents as well as the unwritten rule in Big Band of keeping short any quavers before a rest. Encourage the lead alto player in rehearsals to play expressively, exaggerating the dynamics and making use of vibrato and scoops. You might like to direct them to experiment and exaggerate and that you will let them know if they reach the point of excessive cheesiness. A good listening reference would be the great saxophone section of Count Basie's big band on Queen Bee (link [4](#)) from the *Straight Ahead* album.

SOLO SECTION - Bar 47 starts with a *forte* falloff by the horns and then it is very important for the rhythm section to get right down to *mp* to mark the start of the solo. The rhythm section should follow the lead of the soloist with regard to dynamic shaping of their solo and when a different soloist starts it's a good idea to get back down to a low level to allow that new soloist to develop their solo.

There are essentially 3 sections for improvised solos over the 12-Bar blues progression and here are several suggestions as to how you could divide these up:

- Have 3 different soloists take 12 bars each
- Give one player all 36 bars
- Have two players take 12 bars each and then "swap twos" over the trombone backing figures after the bridge
- Have several players "swap fours" for all of the solo sections
- Have two players "swap fours" for the first 24 bars and then after the bridge "swap twos"

These are just a few examples of the myriad ways in which you could approach the solo sections and I would encourage band directors during rehearsals to share around the solos and encourage all members to have a go at improvising before arriving at a plan of attack for the performance.

B SECTION from bar 61 features trumpet quavers that should move from an inaudible whisper through to a forte "DAT!" accent. It's important that the trumpeters play this phrase with smooth airflow throughout and make use of "Doo" tonguing rather than classical "Tah" tonguing. I would suggest that Bar 60 leading into this section would be a nice place to give your permission for the trombonists to have a little fun with some extreme slide vibrato on the long note marked *vib*.

BAR 69 features a 3 over 4 feel by the trombones and drums which should build from *piano* towards the *forte* ensemble section.

ENSEMBLE SECTION from bar 81 is another great chance for the horns to show their dynamic contrast within each phrase. The sax section may find that they need to omit some notes every four bars as marked with brackets on their part if they struggle to squeeze in enough breath after the crotchet marcato hats in bar 84 to get them through the next phrase. The trombone and rhythm sections will have to count carefully through this section and it is vital that the saxes keep their tempo steady for the ensemble to stay together.

THE STOP CHORUS from bar 93 requires steady counting by all members of the band and it is important that the trombones and rhythm section lock in together and the saxes and trumpets keep a steady tempo throughout their call and response phrases.

DRUM FEATURE - At 105 the drummer fills in and sets up the hits and helps to build towards the shout chorus at bar 117. This section is a great chance for the drummer to display their ability to be creative without sacrificing their number one responsibility of keeping the tempo rock steady. If tempo suffers when the drummer gets too flashy it is better for them to simplify their fills.

SHOUT CHORUS - From bar 117, encourage the drummer to bring out the snare on 2 and 4 and have them "chop wood" i.e. rim-shot. A Youtube video (Link 5) is a good lesson to remind drummers of the difference between a rim-shot and a rim-click / cross-stick implemented in the intro. They should also be feathering the kick on all four beats of the bar and clapping the hi-hat on 2 and 4.

HEAD OUT - The main trumpet melody returns at 129 and the drummer returns to the original high hat and cross-stick snare approach with all players dropping dynamics right back down to *mp*.

TAG - The 3-time tag at the end is a good chance to show off dynamic contrast and the pianist has another chance to shine with a classic Count Basie ending. You may choose to have your drummer display their "gospel chops" over the final chord or you might prefer the idea of cymbal colours while the pianist or another player fills out the last chord with some improvisation. Another option is a simple and tasteful held chord with cymbal colours at a dynamic of your choice.

Wishing you the best and hope you enjoy playing Southern City Shout

 **Chris Weber**

LINKS

1. Freddie Green guitar video 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqtbFg0RNIO>
2. Freddie Green guitar video 2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7i6S4_v3g-
3. Freddie Green guitar PDF file from Shedthemusic.com
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57c9744dc534a5c7c89a78c5/1/57d55e0b197aea516930bea2/1473601038255/Freddie+Green+Chord+voicings.pdf>
4. Count Basie Orchestra – Queen Bee <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0GQaJQ5DXw>
5. Rim-shot video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwjldD0gbQ4>

