

“The Wailing Boat” Detailed Musical Analysis

Segment Start Time - min:sec (approximate)	Length: min:sec (approx.)	Part of AABA song form	Description
00:00 - 00:03	00:03		Blank screen and no sound.
00:04 - 00:09	00:05	Introduction	Entire screen consists of credits using graphics. “The Wailing Boat” starts with a short, exuberant introduction by the full band with swinging accented impacts by the great drummer Mel Lewis.
00:10 – 00:15	00:05	First “chorus”- The MELODY! A	The first “chorus” (start of the melody) starts with fast melodic phrases in the sax section, led by lead alto saxophonist Herb Geller’s splendid fluid phrasing. The brass enter with loud punches that end the segment.
00:16 - 00:22	00:06	A	Immediate repeat of the previous 8 bars with a slight variation at the end that leads directly to . . .
00:23 - 00:29	00:06	B (“bridge”)	The brass section taking over with sets of three high, loud “dahs” as the drums add “kicks” and “bombs” for maximum excitement.
00:30 - 00:35	00:05	A (final A segment completes the 32-bar melody – first chorus)	The recap of the first phrase that started at 00:10, ending with a slightly different brass figure: this time it ascends to a high point that is a “send-off,” which introduces the first improvising soloist.
00:36 - 00:46	00:10	Second “chorus”- Improvisations A A (starts at 00:42)	Trombonist Bob Burgess starts miming his prerecorded improvisation on the 32-bar form, while the sax section plays smooth, connected phrases beneath him. The band finally appears onscreen at 00:41. Burgess finishes . . . for now.
00:47 -00:58	00:11	B (“bridge”) A (starts at 00:53 - final segment of second “chorus”)	The brass stand up for the first 4 bars of the B “bridge” and loudly herald that something new is coming, with a double-tongued descending send-off that introduces MF as he joyfully mimes his prerecorded improvisation, not on trumpet but on valve trombone. His first 4 bars complete the B section followed by 8 bars of the final A section, completing this second “chorus.”
00:59 – 01:10	00:11	Third “chorus” A A (at 01:05)	Burgess comes back in for 4 bars as he and MF will continue to “trade fours,” a musical conversation where 4 bars are improvised by one player followed by the other player improvising for 4 bars, over and over, while continuing to follow the AABA form.
01:11 – 01:21	00:10	B (“bridge”) A (starts at 01:16 - final segment of third “chorus”)	Burgess and MF continue “trading fours.” As the bridge starts, there is a lack of harmonic definition in the rhythm section and/or the phrase that Burgess plays, which may not reflect the actual chords at that point.
01:22 – 01:28	00:06	Interlude	Full band: AC wrote an exciting, syncopated 8-bar interlude full of surprises that involves a gradual and thrilling ascent, which suddenly drops off, serving its purpose as it sends off to . . .

01:29 – 01:39	00:10	Fourth “chorus”- Improvisations A A (starts at 01:34)	Joe Burnett’s trumpet improvisation. He plays technical phrases, then on the second A (01:34) he uses blues scale phrases. MF puts down the valve trombone and picks up his trumpet . . . watch out, folks!
01:40 – 01:45	00:05	B (“bridge”)	Full band: AC composed a send-off that is repetitive and rhythmically displaced, which is very typical of technically demanding bebop melodies/phrases since the mid-1940s. At 01:43, MF starts a trumpet improvisation.
01:46 – 01:51	00:05	A (final segment of fourth “chorus”)	MF continues improvising.
01:52 – 02:03	00:11	Fifth “chorus”- Improvisations A A (starts at 01:58)	Joe Burnett postures himself closer to MF and starts the music dialogue of “trading fours” with him. At 02:01, MF executes one of his signature high-register flourishes.
02:04 – 02:16	00:12	B “bridge” A (starts at 02:10 - final segment of fifth “chorus”) 02:16 - a cut, with a preplanned 2-bar extension that Mel Lewis “drums through” (4 bars)	Burnett and MF continue “trading fours,” eventually working their way into yet another high point, where at 02:10 (final A of fourth “chorus”), they “trade twos” (one set, with MF up an octave from Burnett). Finally, together (02:13) they play a technical display previously worked out to the pitch of the dominant (MF’s high G), giving an effect of frenzy but not completion. At 02:14, segments of music are cut from the original arrangement when the great Mel Lewis is heard, then seen (02:15) playing a swinging lead-in drum fill in bars 7 and 8. This completes the 8 bars of the A (2 bars), then continues 2 extra bars in an edit of the original arrangement. This preplanned extension of the A gives Lewis a little more time (4 bars total) to build the excitement as the band cuts to . . .
02:17 – 02:29	00:12	A (variation: The Coda)	The tag or coda, where AC composed a final rollicking full-band variation of previous material. The band is “shouting” (a short “shout chorus”), yet Maynard’s power allows him to “scream” over the band on his high G, then playing a very technical phrase along with the band, BUT up an octave. The high G and this phrase set our ears up for one more tasteful drum fill, which has Mel Lewis “applying the brakes,” followed by a split-second pause, leading into MF ending on his sustained double high C (concert Bb, arriving home to the starting key of the piece, giving satisfying closure).
02:34			After MF and band have totally exhausted the viewer with excitement, lukewarm applause segues to a SHOCKING contrast: Ladies and gentlemen, the Sabres.

Chart constructed by Patrick Dorian