

GLOSSARY

Axe – Your instrument. Also horn. I have heard people refer to a piano as both an axe and a horn. I’ve never heard anyone refer to a drumset as a horn, though.

Book – Usually a folder of custom arrangements (as in “Billy Henway’s three-horn book”). Also sometimes means “book”.

Changes – This is an abbreviation for “chord changes” and is used to mean “chords”. For example, if someone says tell me the changes in the coda, they are asking for the jazz chords.

Chart – Can be used a number of ways. The most common is to mean “song” in the printed music sense. For example: “Pull up that chart by Charlie Parker”. It can also be used as an abbreviation for “chord chart”.

Chops – A performer’s level of ability on their axe. Practice a lot. You want people to compliment you on your chops.

Chord Chart – A page of extremely abbreviated musical shorthand for players in a rhythm section. It would typically only include slash notation, some general rhythms, and jazz chord symbols. It is extremely helpful to develop the skill of creating a chord chart as quickly as possible as this impresses people at parties and makes you feel like all that hard work in Aural Skills was not in vain. It also pays well.

Comping – A strange short version of “accompanying” used in all pop music styles, but especially in jazz. Comping means to play background material, usually from a lead sheet or chord chart.

Diamonds – Used to mean long notes in a chord chart. The term comes from the shape of whole notes in slash/rhythm notation.

Fake Book – A fake book is a large volume of lead sheets. These are used for gigging. The best ones were made in the 60’s 70’s and 80’s and were flagrant violations of all copyright laws and common decency. The fake books available today are completely legal and usually contain 600 songs you don’t want and are missing 400 songs you need. The 23 good songs that are included will have the wrong changes.

Gig – A single or longstanding playing engagement.

Gigging – Used to mean “playing gigs”. People often say “I think I need to stop gigging”. They never do, though.

Head – The beginning of a piece. This comes, believe it or not, from da capo.

Job – A single gig. You can’t use this to mean a long-standing gig. I don’t know why.

Lead Sheet – A form of musical shorthand that includes only the melody, lyrics, and jazz chords for a piece. It provides more information than a chord chart, but less than a fully notated arrangement. Fake books are filled with lead sheets.

Real Book – The Real Book is a fake book.

Slash Chords – A chord where the chord is listed along with a specific note for the bass player. The bass note is provided under a slash.

Slash Notation – Musical shorthand used in chord charts that indicates number of beats, and some general rhythms.

Swing – Lengthening the first 8th note of each beat and shortening the second 8th note so that the effect is a triplet long-short feel. “Let it Snow” is a good example of what this sounds like. Try singing it “straight, and you’ll hear the difference. Most traditional jazz uses swing, whereas pop styles rarely do and Latin styles never do.