

# **VALUABLE JAZZ INFORMATION**

by Jamey Aebersold

The basic ingredients in music are SCALES, CHORDS, MELODY, RHYTHM, and HARMONY. Jazz education's purpose is to give you the basics you need in learning to play jazz or to improvise. The jazz musician is an instant composer! The melodies which come from their instruments are conceived in their mind just before they play them. The difference between the improviser and the traditional composer is this: that the "jazzier" has no eraser to instantly correct mistakes. They practice long and hard trying to make their physical body and their mental frame of mind an appropriate vehicle to execute the ideas formulated in their mind.

The GOAL of every jazz musician is to play on their instrument (or vocally sing) what is heard in their mind. Practicing scales, chords (arpeggios), exercises in all keys will help gain facility which will help unlock the ideas that are now being held prisoner in your mind. As soon as possible, try playing what you HEAR mentally in your head! In other words, sing a short melody mentally, or sing with your mouth, and then play those exact pitches and rhythms on your instrument. This is the same procedure the jazz player uses when improvising.

To play requires discipline. It is good to establish a practice routine. Improvisation should be a part of your daily practice. Play whatever you hear in your head. It could be something from TV, radio, or just some melodies that you hum to yourself. This is also a form of EAR TRAINING. You are training your inner ear to direct your fingers to the notes it hears, instantly. Gradually train your ears to really HEAR music and all of the components that make the final product. Listen carefully to anyone playing jazz or improvising. You can learn much from live performances as well as records and tapes. Start a record collection and listen to what has been recorded over the past 70 years. Write for FREE "Double-Time" Jazz discount catalog, P.O. Box 146, Floyds Knobs, IN 47119-0146.

The old myth that says, "You either have it or you don't," is strictly a myth founded on ignorance and the inability (or unwillingness) of those who can play to share what they do verbally with those who think they can't learn.

The mind is the originator of ALL musical thoughts. The mouth (singing) usually can approximate the pitches, rhythms, and nuances of what the mind hears better than actual instruments (sax, trumpet, etc.) can do. Since the instrument we have chosen is a learned device, it is the least able to reproduce the musical thoughts of our mind. It stands to reason that the person who is better equipped technically will come closer to playing on their instrument the thoughts of their mind.

One of the reasons the jazz greats sound different than you is the fact they have so many sounds (scales, chords, patterns, ideas) at their disposal. The SCALE SYLLABUS can help you uncover new sounds. Practicing, using the exercises found in this booklet or in Vol. 1 "How To Play Jazz And Improvise" will give you a good foundation to play ANY style of music.

"JAZZ IS FREEDOM!" Thelonious Monk said this. Too often we refuse to take advantage of an opportunity which will allow us a measure of growth and freedom in our musical expression. Listening to jazz greats is inspirational and rewarding. Keep this in mind: practicing exercises, patterns, licks, scales, and chords should lead to more expressive creativity, not boredom.

HOW DO YOU BEGIN IMPROVISING? Many people begin by playing by ear (letting their inner musical ear guide their choice of notes and rhythms). This is a hit-or-miss process that most jazz players (before 1965) had to use to learn their trade. However, this method strengthens the player's ear and is extremely valuable. Everyone should spend time each day playing by ear. The sooner you train your ears to discern, the sooner they can HELP YOU in making music. By using your ear, and knowledge of the needed scales and chords, you will feel much more comfortable with beginning improvisation.

IMPORTANT: Don't get hung up practicing exercises and more exercises without ever attempting to improvise. Avoid becoming a person who plays great exercises, but delays using their creative energy until tomorrow. DO IT NOW! -- IMPROVISE. Even if you only use a few notes of the scale, begin right there. START! Don't put it off until tomorrow or until you have the scale under better control. DO IT NOW! The longest journey begins with a single step. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. The longest musical phrase begins with a single note.

Just because you practice scales, chords, patterns, and exercises doesn't mean you will sound stiff and mechanical, OR that you will become a jazz great! But it's a means to an end. More than any other ingredient, the JAZZ TRADITION is based on LISTENING. Listening to jazz records/tapes should be part of every musician's daily routine. Not only is it fun to listen to, but you can absorb many musical ideas and incorporate them into your own solos. Recorded music contains most answers you seek.

Having "good ears" means having the ability to hear the roots to the various chords or scales that are being played; having the ability to hear the quality of the chord or scale--major, minor (what kind of minor?), pentatonic, dim.whole tone, etc.); it means having the ability to tell what tone of the scale or chord is being played at any point in the solo--"ah, that note was a #4 resolving to the 6th and then resolving to the 5th!"; it means hearing the piano, bass, soloist, drums, etc. individually as well as collectively.

There are many levels of hearing. Some people hear. Other people can really HEAR! And some can seem to hear and identify almost anything that is being played. They can seem to sing or play back portions of solos right after the performer has played. How can they HEAR, and we can't seem to find the roots, scale, qualities, or what time signature the piece is in? They have worked hard at identifying all the various sounds they hear daily. Since they want to improvise, they take the time to apply on their instrument the things they are hearing. They also use their mind and their free time to figure out things harmonically, melodically, and rhythmically. Using a small chromatic pitch pipe is real helpful in identifying pitches when you are not at a piano or don't have your instrument. You can carry it with you and train your ear "on the go." No one knows or could truly imagine the amount of thought each jazzier has put into their art/craft.

## **PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS**

1. Play with good sound/tone. Wind players -- support your sound. Don't play staccato.
2. Make phrases flow naturally; even when playing scales and exercises.
3. Mentally sing the exercises, scales, patterns as you play them.
4. If an exercise is hard, slow it down. Then gradually increase the tempo.
5. Listen to every note you play. Match your mind's ideas.
6. Be patient. You're not the first to make mistakes.
7. Use jazz articulations on exercises and scale/chord practice.
8. Improvise some every day. That's the REAL YOU. Play what you hear in your head.
9. Make a habit of practicing in all twelve keys. Volumes 21 and 24 are excellent.
10. Learn the Blues in Bb & F concert keys.
11. Memorize everything you can. Know what it is you are trying to play.

If we all waited until we were perfect musicians before we played an instrument, there would be no music in the world. . Play on the best instrument you can afford and study with the finest teachers available who will give you guidance in jazz and traditional music.

***Use your imagination. Experiment- take chances! You deserve to be creative! Treat yourself.***

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