

Improvisation Guide

Ten ways to improve your Improv Skills

- **Listen** - Before you play a note, listen to the music you are about to play with, try to analyze what the chord progression is, feel the tempo, what the style is.
- **Improvisation is basically composing** - one just happens spontaneously while the other happens more slowly.
- **Have confidence in your playing** - if you can hear it, if you can hum or sing it, you can PLAY it.
- **Practice playing along with records that you are familiar with** - Simple music, or a least simple chord changes works best. Try blues records or hip-hop to start. These types of music have repetitive patterns and so are more fun to improv over.
- **Learn the melody** - once you have the melody under your fingers, then you will have the ability to change it, making small changes to the original tune can be cool, eventually you can make bigger changes which leads to new melodies! Remember to bring it back home every so often, audiences love melodies they've heard before.
- **Change the rhythm** - Once you have the melody, the rhythm can be changed as well. That leads to an almost infinite amount of possibilities for new material. There are only twelve notes in the western scale but changing the rhythm can really enhance the music.
- **Practice improv** - that might sound weird but just like you practice scales, arpeggios and your current pieces you can practice to improvise! Play often with your favorite songs, with your friends, start a band and have fun.
- **Learn musical theory** - You might not need it but it sure helps...
- **The "accident"** - Miles Davis said that in improvisation there aren't mistakes. If you play a "wrong" note, simply play it again and suddenly it will sound "right." Our ears are funny things.
- **Don't judge yourself** - Improv is about expression, about living and playing in the moment but more importantly about having fun! Try not to think too much about what or why you are playing. Relax!