

FIRST STEPS FOR IMPROVISING IN JAZZ BAND

WHY IMPROVISE

- ▶ Written solo vs. improvisation
- ▶ Gets the band listening
- ▶ Better understanding of musical concepts: melody, rhythmic feel, phrasing, etc.
- ▶ Taking risks
- ▶ Everyone/anyone can have a solo (not just the 1sts or 2nds)
- ▶ Historical aspect: it's a HUGE part of jazz music

STYLES

Swing

- characterized by a triplet subdivision and uses 'uneven' eighth notes
- subtle stress of beats 2 and 4

Rock

- relies on a solid backbeat (emphasis on beats 2 and 4)
- straight eighth subdivision
- repeated patterns

Shuffle

- a cross between swing and rock styles by stressing the backbeat and using the triplet subdivision
- groove primarily created by bass and drums

Mambo

- Afro-Cuban style with stress on the 'and of 2'
- straight-eighth subdivision

THE RHYTHM SECTION

The rhythm section (drums, bass, piano and optional guitar) is key. These players keep the time, provide the harmony and create the groove for each piece.

TIME - keeping the time steady; creating the pulse

GROOVE - providing the sub-division for the style; creating rhythmic interaction with the band

HARMONY - providing the harmonic progression for the melody or improvisation

Drums

- supply the stylistic foundation
- lock in the groove with the bass
- embellish the rhythm with the guitar and piano

Samba

- a light, Brazilian-based style with stress is ON beat 3
- relies on straight-eighth subdivision

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Funk

- sixteenth note subdivision and syncopation, particularly in the bass, are prevalent
- beats 2 and 4 prominent in snare drum
- often complex, unison lines performed by horns

Ballad

- a slow tempo, jazz ballad flows seamlessly through various subdivisions (straight-eighth, triplet, or double time)
- needs space; laid back feel

Bass

- creates the groove with the drums
- provides the harmonic progression

Guitar

- creates a harmonic groove by providing the progression, while playing a rhythmic groove
- has a delicate relationship with the piano

Piano

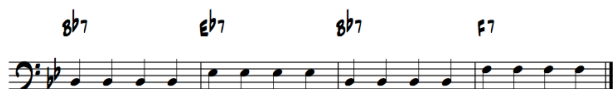
- creates harmonic groove with the guitar, but the two should not conflict with each other
- uses comping rhythms

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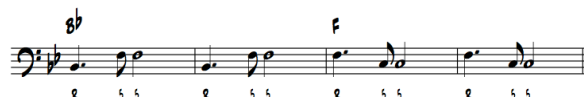
BASS PLAYER

- ▶ Start vamping on a single chord
- ▶ keep patterns simple (single pitch walking bass, root-5th motion for latin)
- ▶ lock in the groove/feel before fancy

Simple Walking Bass



Samba/Bossa



Mambo



SAMPLE DRUM RHYTHMS

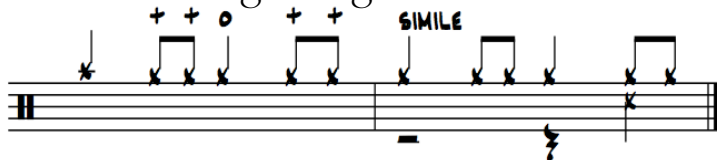
Simple Swing



Complex Swing



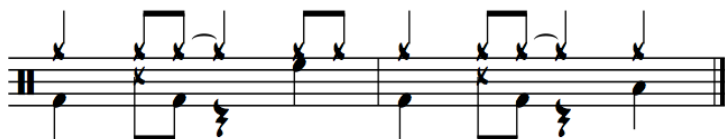
Swing using Hi-Hat



Basic Krupa



Mambo



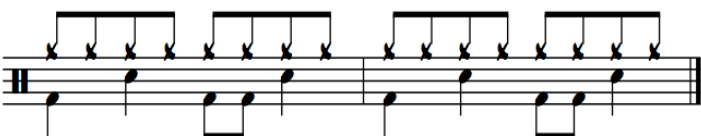
Samba/Bossa



Funk



Rock



FIRST STEPS FOR IMPROVISING IN JAZZ BAND

SAMPLE VAMPS

SWING

SCORE SWING ♩ 's
C MIN⁷ MEEBOER

CHANGES

GUITAR

PIANO

BASS GUITAR

DRUM SET

LATIN

SCORE BOSSA/SAMBA WITH STRAIGHT ♩ 's
C MIN⁷ MEEBOER

CHANGES

GUITAR

PIANO

BASS GUITAR

DRUM SET

FUNK

SCORE FUNK WITH SWING ♩ 's
G MIN⁷ MEEBOER

CHANGES

GUITAR

PIANO

BASS GUITAR

DRUM SET

FIRST STEPS FOR IMPROVISING IN JAZZ BAND

THE FIRST SOLO

- ▶ Rhythm sections vamps on a single chord
- ▶ Start with a single pitch (tonic), improvising rhythm to understand the feel
- ▶ Use various rhythms from warm-up exercise
- ▶ Have each student play 8 measures
- ▶ Repeat exercise using different styles

EXPANDING

- ▶ Repeat exercise adding pitches: b7, 1, 2, b3
- ▶ explain 'safe notes' (chord tones - b7, 1, b3) can be held or repeated
- ▶ non-chord tones can be held for flavor, but need to be followed by a 'safe note'
- ▶ add more pitches as students become more comfortable with pitch

PHRASING

- ▶ 4 bar phrases
- ▶ Give the solo form, not just random notes being played
- ▶ Come to a 'rest' at the end of a phrase
- ▶ use drummer as a signal: fill for end of phrase, crash for beginning of new one

CHORD CHANGES

- ▶ Use modal tunes (focus on scale)
- ▶ Change 'safe notes', not scale (avoid modes)
- ▶ In minor, still use b7 during dominant 7th chord (sounds like a V7#9 chord)
- ▶ Have backgrounds, where possible

THE BLUES SCALE

- In major, sound bluesy (b3 against a 3)
- ▶ In minor, is a pentatonic scale with the tri-tone pitch (#4/b5 which sounds bluesy)
 - ▶ Have tri-tone pitch be followed by 4th or 5th (to resolve)
 - ▶ Benefits: students with rarely play 'a wrong note'.