

A Step-by-Step Approach to Becoming a Jazz Musician

Part 5. In the previous chapters I have outlined the 'Improvisors basic tools' and how to develop improvisational skills using the blues and pentatonic scales.

In the recent 2020 'Young Musician of the Year' competition, judges were asked what they were looking for in the winning contestants. At that advanced level of playing, all the candidates have a formidable technique but the judges were also looking for other dimensions. Notably, can the candidates portray their own interpretation into the performance and are they willing to take risks?

To quote Miles Davis “Don't play what's there, play what's not there” “Don't play what you know, play what you don't know”.

Transcribing solos (as mentioned in Part 1) is an effective tool at this stage of development.

Analysis of your chosen soloists can unlock the key to all the other aspects of creating improvised solos. Think about how much more you learn during practical science experiments instead of passive note taking.

Choose someone who appeals to your taste in jazz and also someone you can understand musically.

Transcribing solos does get easier with practise and there are devices on the market to slow the tempo down or repeat a segment.

Always play the selected phrase back on your instrument before writing it down. Doing this will help you discover other features incorporating attack or delay, bending, false fingering or ghost notes.

I have selected a number of transcribed solos by different jazz musicians with observations and analysis of their solo (See solos 1, 2, 3, 4, pages 2-5)
Solos 5 and 6 are for you to analyse.