

Guidelines for the Improv Prep exercises - Phil Dwyer

The Improv Prep exercises are derived from things that I developed over the years to help students get their fingers and brains wrapped around some of the concepts that can be used to help build technical fluidity in the context of improvising. Each series of exercises is specifically geared to the range of the saxophone, and deals with a major/relative minor key centre.

There are a variety of different scale and chord exercises, as well as some stylistically typical II-V-I lines in the 8th note bebop style that makes up a lot of jazz improvising.

If you aren't familiar with some of the terms (i.e. diminished scale) that doesn't matter. The main thing is to play through the exercises at your own speed, focusing on evenness playing with a solid sense of rhythm and gradually increase the tempo as you get more comfortable with each one. Even if you aren't feeling ready to play an improvised solo yet, if you play through these pages and get the sound in your ear the ideas will come out when you are ready to take the plunge.

Of course learning to be an improviser involves more than playing exercises, and probably the most important thing to do is listen to great players and get familiar with what they are doing. But you will hear most of the great players using ideas and techniques similar to the ones contained in the Improv Prep Exercises.

There are very few articulations marked, but experiment with playing everything slurred, or using combinations of tongue/slur. One common approach with swing rhythms is to articulate on the upbeats (the 'ands' of the beats) but feel free to try different things (tongue two, slur two etc) because getting used to a variety of articulations will give your soloing more interest.

Have fun!!

Phil Dwyer