

Principles of Improvisation

If it's about creating a melody, what do melodies do?

1. Are composed of motives derived from chords. (Tulsa Town)
2. Use variation techniques of

- A. repetition
- B. sequence
- C. inversion
- D. retrograde inversion
- E. augmentation
- F. diminution
- G. others (not nearly as important)

Also notice the use of time, silence, rhythm or lack of it, minimalism, notes left out, etc to unify a piece.

3. Begin to study melodies by playing (memorizing) them & noticing the use of the above techniques of variation. They are EVERYWHERE.

Apply the same techniques in your improvisation. Teach & live by these!

1. Continue the composer's flow by using variation technique on the given melody!
2. How then do I create my own motive?
 - A. Use pattern material from the chords.
 - B. Notice the patterns used in "real" melodies.
 - C. Make up your own beginning with chord tones. Yes, you can teach (learn) simple chords from the start but DON'T make it a prerequisite.
3. What do I do with this motive?
 - A. The same things the composer did: see above list.
 - B. Sequence the motive (pattern) to the interval of the chord (Tulsa Town, Satin Doll, Doxy) Chord moves a 2nd, motive moves a 2nd.
 - C. Repeat the motive changing ONLY the notes needed for the next chord. (Blues in the Closet, A Train, Doxy)