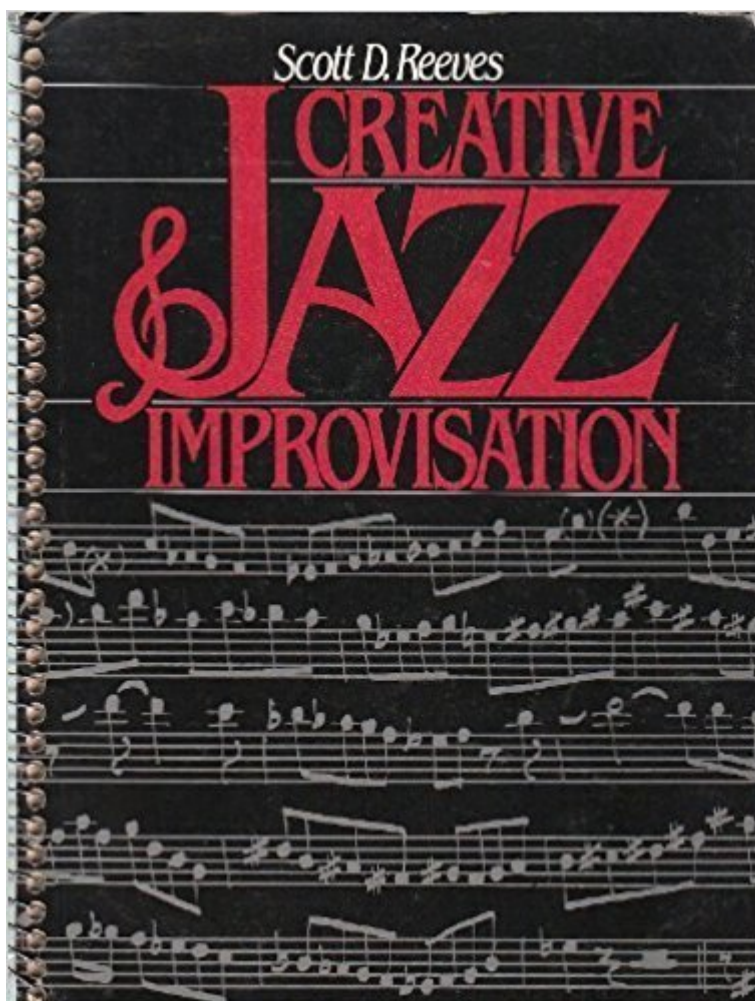


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# Creative Jazz Improvisation



## Synopsis

This well-organized book combines all of the techniques that jazz musicians practice into a comprehensive whole. It covers practice patterns and scales in all keys and tempos, transcribing solos of master improvisers, learning the jazz repertoire, and playing with other musicians. Chapter topics include how to practice, creatively improvise, and teach improvisation; major innovators; important contributors; women in jazz; chord substitutions; scales; and form. Each chapter also contains theory and ear exercises. Applicable to any instrument or a classroom of varied instruments, this book is for jazz students and professionals at all levels of proficiency.

--This text refers to the Spiral-bound edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book covers practice patterns and scales in all keys and tempos, transcribing solos of master improvisors, learning the jazz repertoire, and playing with other musicians. Students and professionals at any level of proficiency will find the material beneficial. The text may be applied to any instrument, or a classroom of varied instrumentation. --This text refers to the Spiral-bound edition.

**Preface** It is gratifying that, since the publication of the first edition in 1989 and the second in 1995, many college educators, private instructors, and students of jazz have found *Creative Jazz Improvisation* to be a valuable aid in their musical growth. This text is a direct outgrowth of over

twenty-one years of experiences teaching jazz improvisation at the college level, as well as my own personal quest to develop as a jazz artist. I believe there is a direct parallel between life and art. The pursuit of understanding in any art form can teach us much about ourselves and serve as a catalyst for a lifetime of learning. My own musical perspectives have evolved since the second edition of this text was written, and much of this new information has been incorporated into the present volume. Therefore, I believe this edition to be much more than a minor reworking of the previous one. However, all of the same features that made *Creative Jazz Improvisation* a popular choice for classroom use are retained, including:

The philosophy that there are several paths to the same goal and that each student learns in his or her own unique way. An orientation in difficulty toward college-level and intermediate-to-advanced musicians. For students at the high-school or community college level or adult beginners, I strongly recommend the entry-level companion to this text, *Creative Beginnings*, which comes with a play-along compact disc. The division of the majority of chapters into sections devoted to jazz theory, exercises over a specified chord progression, a list of relevant compositions, and a transcribed solo which has been transposed and edited for concert pitch treble clef, B6, E6 and bass clef instruments. A thorough discussion of all facets of jazz theory, including major scale modes, forms and chord substitutions, melodic minor modes, diminished and whole-tone scales, pentatonic scales, and intervallic and "free" improvisation. The keying of the chord progressions to either the widespread Jamey Aebersold series or the compact disc accompanying *Creative Beginnings*. Exercises that include not only basic scales and arpeggios but also melodic ideas taken directly from cited recordings by master improvisers, arranged in order of relative difficulty. The indexing of the list of compositions to legal fake-books, particularly the *New Real Book* and the Aebersold play-along series. The correlation of half of the transcribed solos with the widely available anthology, *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*. The convenience of allowing a classroom of mixed instrumentation to work simultaneously from the text. Differences between the second and third editions include:

The addition of a new chapter, "Whom to Listen To," which lists major innovators, important contributors, and women in jazz. The expansion of the chapter on "Rhythm," with considerable new information and exercises. Replacement of two transcriptions with more readily playable examples, including Miles Davis's "Solea" solo (in place of Wayne Shorter's "Masqualero" solo), and Bill Evans's "Autumn Leaves" solo (in lieu of Dizzy Gillespie's "Stardust" solo). In addition, J. J. Johnson's solo on "Aquarius" has been renotated in long meter to make it easier to read. An expansion of the list of compositions in each chapter to reflect the ever-increasing number of play-along recordings by Jamey Aebersold. The third edition is now keyed to the first eighty-five volumes in his series, *A New Approach to Jazz Improvisation*. An

extensive reworking of all portions of the text to improve readability and reflect recent information. A reappraisal of all exercises, with selected replacements and additions. The incorporation of inspirational epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter. A continued investigation of the how to bridge the gap between the technical and intellectual aspects of jazz with the creative and intuitive state of mind. Many of these ideas may be traced to my exposure to the concepts of pianist Kenny Werner, and I am indebted to his willingness to allow me to incorporate some of his ideas into this volume. This text reflects the influences of my previous teachers, particularly David Baker, Woody Shaw, and Kenny Werner, the many jazz artists whose work I have studied and transcribed, and the pedagogical concepts of Jamey Aebersold. I gratefully acknowledge these people, as well as the staff at Prentice Hall, particularly my acquisitions editor, Christopher Johnson and my production and copy editor, Laura Lawrie. I sincerely hope the readers of this text will find it a valuable aid in their growth as musicians. --This text refers to the Spiral-bound edition.

When I took an improvisation class a few years back at the local college, we used Jazz Improvisation by Dan Haerle, which stressed learning a bunch of scales to be applied to soloing. This is hardly a bad approach, it was just, for me, a little too dry and disassociated from what I thought of as teaching of an inherent skill. Imagine my surprise, then, when I picked up this book and found the approach to be also heavily oriented toward the understanding and usage of a number of different jazz scales. I suddenly felt like I had wasted my money and walked down a dead end street until I started reading. Because this book is so much more. In addition to introducing the scales, it also explains where and why you might use them, based on which jazz musicians have used them in the past when improvising over certain songs or phrases. That is to say, the author here ties the scale to specific performances, which makes the scale not so much a tool, as a model. And for the first time, I started to really understand how one would go about picking a scale for a song or a certain portion of a song. I even got some ideas for composing original songs of my own by utilizing certain scales and tonalities in the melodies and harmonies, which hopefully will make the song more vital when other musicians solo over it. What I did not like about this book, however, is that most of it is geared to learning, practicing and playing in a classroom, or at least a teacher-student, setting. I bought this as a self-study guide, which the author even claims early on it can be used as, but I found it basically impossible to work the exercises on my own, and the suggestions for playing and practicing, are not practical at all. Sure, another, more talented student might be able to do that, but left to my own devices, I am far too likely to revert to familiar phrasing and bad habits that sound good, as opposed to actually learning improvisation.

The exercises also are mostly just repetitive chord structures, and the instruction for using them are pretty much, "Set your metronome, and play." I suppose if you have somebody sitting nearby to announce "Nice" or "Crap" when you are finished, that would work as a constructive way to improve one's playing, but otherwise, I don't see it's use. Still, the scale and mode explanations alone were different and unique enough that they really did make me think about certain aspects of the music in a new light. I also have just enough knowledge of most of the songs, and access to all of the recordings (thankfully), that I can open the book, put on the music, and learn something. Is my improvisational ability getting better? Maybe not? Am I learning some new things about jazz? Most definitely. By skipping the exercises and things that I couldn't utilize on my own, I got through this book pretty quickly, and by buying the out of circulation edition instead of the current textbook, I obtained a modified and productive mini-education for minimum dollar and time investment. In the end, there were too many large chunks of the book that were simply no use to me, so I can't give it five stars, but the remainder was plenty interesting and helped me expand my musical knowledge, making it easily four star worthy.

I haven't read the whole thing yet, so this is sort of cursory. My main reason for not giving it 5 stars is how peculiarly organized this book is. Chapter 1 "Practicing Jazz, Constructing Solos, Playing with Other Musicians, Creative Improvisation, Performance Anxiety, and Teaching Jazz" is more of a potpourri than a true overview of the book of about 6 different and somewhat unrelated topics that each could have their own chapter. Perhaps he improvised a structure for the book to illustrate a point that will be made later in the book? Most of the rest of the chapters seem to highlight a particular scale or mode with its uses, context, musical examples. I'm surprised that he devotes only 12 1/2 pages to rhythm, and the whole rest of the book to scales given the importance of rhythm. That said, maybe there's more to say about notes, and rhythms are something learned more outside of the book than notes. You don't need the supplemental musical material because you can find all of this stuff on YouTube or iTunes at this point.

Excellent jazz textbook for individual or classroom use

The approach in this book is like most of the other books on jazz; there are a bunch of scales and

modes that "work" over chords with no explanation of how to make them work. This is a good reference book and that is really all and if you already studied music at all it is really basic stuff. There are a number of transcribed solos which are nice, but most of the other transcribed ideas are a few bars long and relatively useless. There are a couple of decent chapters that get into some common chord substitutions but this book is pretty useless as a guide in learning how to structure and build a solo.

Wonderful resource for improv study. It covers many levels and aspects of jazz improvisation, you can use it and find new things each time.

Right off the bat, if you are a beginner in jazz improvisation and are looking for some help in learning about the theory behind jazz from a more basic point of view, you will want to use "Creative Beginning" — Creative Beginnings: An Introduction to Jazz Improvisation also from Scott Reeves. The CD included with that text can also be helpful with this one. This book is about developing your understanding about jazz improvisation and the chord progressions on which they are most commonly based. However, Reeves wants you to develop a practical facility with this material rather than being satisfied with an abstract intellectual understanding. Everything about the text is designed to help you become so familiar with the material that you can use it without conscious thought. It becomes your language and as normal for you as speech. The book can be used in a variety of ways depending on how many terms (1 to 4) you are studying jazz improvisation. Of course, you can also use it on your own. The book has twenty-one chapters grouped into five parts. Part 1 - The Art of Improvisation has three chapters. They cover how to practice jazz and perform jazz (including performance anxiety). How to listen to jazz, who the major historical jazz figures are and what they contributed. And a discussion of rhythm in jazz. Part 2 - Diatonic Chords and the Modes of the Major Scale. This is a language that jazz uses and while somewhat related to the traditional language you would learn in your core theory curriculum, it is used quite differently. And it certainly has nothing to do with your studies of historical counterpoint. But, if you want to play jazz, this is important material to know and understand. This part has six chapters. You learn about major scales and major 7th chords, mixolydian and bebop, 7th scales, and dominant 7th chords. Dorian scales and minor 7th chords, the ii-V-I progression, Locrian and Aeolian scales, the minor ii diminished 7th - V7- i progressions, and the Lydian and Phrygian scales, major 7th chords with a flat fifth. Part 3 - Chord Substitutions, Harmonic Structures, and Forms. You are shown the form and scales for Blues and how jazz musicians use "substitutions" to add color and make more interesting

musical constructions. This means that you use different chords and harmonies to stand-in for more traditional progressions. Seeing them has substitutions rather than as something new and different helps the jazz musician understand their function and relation to the core progressions you learned earlier. You also are shown about sectional forms and rhythmic variants, harmonic structures, and the substitutions John Coltrane created. The author also takes you into free improvisation. Part 4 - Altered Chords, Diminished Modes, Whole-tone and Harmonic Minor Scales, and Melodic Minor Scales. These are more advanced topics, but are not substantively harder than what you have learned before. Rather, it is just providing you with a richer palette to call on in your music making. Part 5 - Pentatonic Scales and Intervallic Improvisation. These are simply more advanced topics. Again, not because they are harder, but because they are more specialized in use and something you can learn after you have mastered the constantly used core material. I like the way the book is spiral bound so it can be laid flat on your music rack or stand so you can practice the exercises until you have them memorized. It is a durable and thoroughly practical book that will provide you with rich returns if you use it intelligently and put in as much work as you need to truly master the material. Reviewed by Craig Matteson, Ann Arbor, MI

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