

Saxophone Necessities

Basic skills and topics that are a must

In the course of teaching and getting students ready for many situations, I thought this lesson would open some eyes to some of the elements and instrumental requirements I feel are necessary for a good proficiency level to function in jazz study. Or for that matter, some general strong saxophone skills. The student should have all these aspects together if they want to get into a good music school, or function as a professional, or just make their basic skills as strong as possible. These are elements that everyone should have under their belt at some point. I'll share them with you.

1. All major scales
 2. All minor scales (natural, harmonic, ascending melodic)
 3. All (2) whole-tone scales
 4. Pentatonic scales
 5. Blues scales
 6. All diminished scales
 7. Chromatic scales
 8. Bebop scales (ionian add #5; mixolydian add Maj.7; melodic minor add #5; mixolydian b2 b6 add Maj.7; dorian add Maj.7; locrian add Maj.7)
- All of the above scales in 15 keys (7 sharp keys, 7 flat keys and the key of C)
9. All dom 7th, min 7th, maj 7th, half dim 7th, dim 7th (and in versions)
 10. Dominant 7th arpeggios chromatically
 11. ii-V progression arpeggiated from the root
 12. ii-V pattern chromatically
 13. ii-V pattern moving up in minor thirds
 14. Flat 5 substitutes in all keys
 15. Scale fragments (i.e. 1231/1235/1b761/1b765) - play in cycles of 5ths, chromatically, minor 3rds, etc.

- Continued on page 2 -

Saxophone Necessities (Continued)

Basic skills and topics that are a must

Repertoire for performance goals

1. play "basic blues" in all keys (i.e. Bags Groove, Blues In The Closet, Buzzy, Bluebird, Now's The Time, Cool Blues, Straight No Chaser, and other melodies)
2. Play "rhythm changes" at least three keys
3. Memorize three jazz standards, other than the blues, which are of a complex nature, i.e. "Donna Lee", "Confirmation", etc.
4. Be able to play with other musicians, keeping consistent time, keeping track of song form, and interacting.

Articulation and Dynamics

Be able to read and perform jazz written articulations for saxophone, differentiating between accents, short and long tonguing, staccato, spills, gliss, subtone, etc.

Be able to read and perform classical etude style articulations that emphasize accuracy of tonguing, dynamic markings, with even eighth and sixteenth note execution.

Intonation

Have the ability to play solo melodic passages with accurate intonation as well as unison lines and duets with instructor with attention to blend.

Intervals

Have fluency performing intervals on the entire register of the instrument from minor 2nds to 7ths by ascending and descending chromatically.

Ear training

Have the ability to imitate short melodic phrases on the instrument by ear.

- Continued on page 3 -

Saxophone Necessities (Continued)

Basic skills and topics that are a must

Sight reading and Concentration

Be able to read and perform parts, both classical and jazz idioms with accuracy of tempo, intonation, dynamics and articulation.

Be able to read melodic lines that emphasize continuous 16th or 8th note passages with varying intervallic movement and swing feeling.

Sound

Be able to perform throughout the entire register of the instrument with full and even sound at any dynamic level.

Harmonics

Be familiar with the fingering and performance of harmonics up to high G.

If you take each of these topics, and make a lesson out of it, and learn one thing at a time, within a short period of time depending on how much you want to work, your instrumental proficiency will improve greatly. Before anyone gets into working on advanced things improv wise, and working on styles, these points of study are of the ultimate importance, no matter what style of playing your doing. Take each one, and work on it until you can play it. Start at quarter note = 60. Your goal is to be able to play these at a tempo of quarter note = 120 or more. There's a lot of work here, but once you do it, it's done and it's under your fingers.

I hope this helps. Enjoy.
Tim Price (November 3, 2005)

- End -