



# Melodic Power

*Essential Exercises For  
The Jazz Improviser*

*Learn to improvise STRONG and  
LYRICAL melodic lines, with over 200  
exercises and 5 hours of VIDEO demos!*

**Jazzadvice.com**

# WELCOME

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Welcome to *Melodic Power*.

You're about to embark on a journey that will transform how you think about jazz improvisation. It's not easy and it will take time and dedication, but if you have the desire, it will be a lot of fun.

The goal of this course is to teach you melodic techniques that you can begin to use nearly *instantly* to craft strong melodies over the most common chords that you'll encounter. We extracted each technique from the playing of some of the best players of this music, and we distilled all the techniques into useable, easy to apply melodic tools. This course in fact is not the product of weeks or months, but *years* of study, transcription, and ideas that we've learned and discovered.

In this course you're going to be introduced to a whole new way of thinking and playing, so take your time and practice each step along the way.

## Who this course is for

This course is for anyone who has a desire to improvise jazz, but it's especially for the folks that have been trying to improvise for a while and are simply not getting the results they want. If that sounds like you, then this course will remedy many of the problems you've been facing with clear easy to apply techniques and exercises.

Now, you do need a basic understanding of chords and scales to most effectively navigate through this course. If something is confusing, make sure to look it up or search [jazzadvice.com](http://jazzadvice.com) for the answer, or you can even [shoot us an email](#).

The course is streamlined to include only what you need to improve fast and as you progress through this course, you will improve every single day.

# ***BEFORE WE BEGIN...***

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## **Some Important Things to Understand**

- 1** The Big Problem and What To Do About It
- 2** How To Use This Course and Get The Most Out Of It
- 3** How To Practice The Exercises
- 4** Melodic Concepts Vs. Techniques
- 5** Terms

# 1 - The Big Problem and What to Do About It

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*I want you to do a quick test...*

Take the chord Ab major. Ok. Got it? Now what comes to mind?

A scale? A chord arpeggio? Perhaps a lick or two?

**Now, this is where the problem is...**

When you think of a chord, you need to have a few things in mind. *First*, the sound. You want to be familiar with the chord's sound on an intimate level and understand how each chord-tone sounds in the context of the particular chord quality. This is the focus of our course [\*The Ear Training Method\*](#).

*Second*, you need to have a *mental map* of the chord and all its chord tones. This mental map allows you to easily conceptualize chords, progressions, and chord-tones, and how they're all intricately related. Essentially, this mental map turns theory into accessible knowledge you can use, and it's the focus of our course [\*Visualization for Jazz Improvisation\*](#).

*Third*, and what we're working on in this course, you need melodic ways of playing over the chord: concrete techniques that you have at your fingertips, that you can access and improvise with in real-time to craft meaningful melodies.

And if you're saying, *hold up, I don't have any of those*, that's okay.

That's what this whole course is all about.

Not only will it give you some of the most powerful melodic tools used by some of the greatest performers of this music, it will teach the underlying thinking process that you can use to discover and develop your own melodic techniques.

# WHEN YOU THINK OF A CHORD

## YOU NEED...

### AN AURAL PERSPECTIVE (EAR)

*What does the chord sound like? What does each chord-tone sound like in context? Where is this chord headed?*

### A MENTAL PERSPECTIVE (MENTAL MAP)

*What's the root of the chord? The 3rd, the 5th, the 7th, the 9th, the 11th, 13th? Any common alterations? Can I think of these with no effort in real-time? Do I know where they are on my instrument with no thought required?*

### A PRACTICAL MELODIC PERSPECTIVE (MELODIC TECHNIQUES)

*Do I have clearly defined strategies to play over this chord sound? How do my heroes play over this chord? How can I use each chord-tone to make a strong melodic statement over this chord?*

These 3 perspectives—there are of course many more useful perspectives—give you a fundamental understanding of how to play over a chord in a melodic and lyrical way by connecting your ear, mind, and fingers. This is the path to hearing what you want to play, and playing what you hear.

## Scales and theory are just the beginning

When we first learn to improvise, even over the course of the first several years, scales and theory seem to dominate how we're told to think about improvising. We think along the lines of: "Every chord implies the use of a particular scale. When we improvise over that chord, we simply play notes from that scale."

This mode of improvising will eventually leave you feeling lost or stagnant. Why? Because aimlessly mixing up notes and wandering around a scale is *not* jazz improvisation. Scales give you a framework, a starting point, for how to think about the chord-tones of a chord in a linear fashion instead of a "stacked" chordal view. They also give you a framework for understanding a chord progression and how chords progress from one to the next within a specific key, or how they move through multiple keys.

## Focusing on melody and acquiring melodic techniques

Theory and scales are incredibly useful and necessary, however, they're just the beginning. You must get beyond "thinking in terms of scales," and acquire *specific* strategies from your favorite jazz improvisors to playing over chords. In other words, scales are very general: the possibilities and combinations of notes you can make with them is very large. That's why when you think of an entire scale over a chord it's pretty difficult to make a clear beautiful melody.

Instead, if you were to focus on a triad, several specific notes, or a piece of the scale, it would be much easier to craft a strong melody, and that is what jazz improvisation is actually all about: creating strong improvised melodies in real-time.

It sounds counterintuitive, but by *thinking* of less and understanding how the great players of this music use a particular melodic device, you actually can express *more*. And that's what jazz melodic techniques are—specific melodic strategies from legendary jazz improvisers that you can utilize over a specific chord.

With each lesson in this course, you'll add to your melodic toolbox, giving you more and more melodic power with each newly acquired musical device.

## 2 - How To Use This Course and Get The Most Out Of It

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### Take your time

- There are 8 Lesson Groups, each containing between 5 and 10 individual lessons. Each of these lessons is packed with important concepts and practice exercises and could take anywhere from a week to several months to learn depending upon the individual. It's okay to go slowly and at your own pace.

### Use your judgement and creativity throughout the course

- Don't be a robot! Use all the material to decide how you can best use it.
- Be creative. Make the concepts your own and apply them to the tunes you're working on. Feel free to use any background tracks you already own.

### Understand the role of rhythm in this course

- In general, the techniques we're working on in this course are melodic, however, rhythm and harmony are directly connected to melody. You must vary the rhythms you use. To improve in this area, emulate your favorite players and study their rhythmic choices and pay close attention to how I use rhythm in the video demos.

### Understand the 8 melodic concepts and their techniques

- In Section 4 of these Introduction Pages, there's a list of the eight concepts. Make sure they all make sense to you.

### Understand the terms used

- In Section 5 of these Introduction Pages, there's a list of terms. Make sure you're clear on all of them.

### Understand how to practice the exercises

- On the following several pages we explain the format of the exercises and how to practice them. It's *vital* you understand how the course is laid out and why.

## 3 - How to Practice The Exercises

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Practicing the exercises in this course is *the point*.

This eBook is not meant to be read in an armchair, it's meant to be studied and put to work in your practice room! That goes for the video demos too. To make fast improvement, all you have to do is follow the lessons and do the exercises, while having fun and applying your own creativity.

### The Format

Each of the eight groups of lessons has a single overarching concept. The group will begin by giving you an introduction to the overarching concept. Then, you'll dive into the specific techniques as you get into each lesson.

Each lesson will begin with an overview of the techniques you're about to learn including examples of the techniques from legendary players. Study these sections *before* approaching the exercises so you have a solid understanding of the techniques before you begin to practice them.

After the explanatory material, the lesson will denote the specific practice exercises required to learn a particular technique. The exercises are progressive, so make sure to master one before moving on to the next.

And don't forget to watch the video demos of each exercise. The videos will help you tremendously as they showcase exactly what it is you're supposed to practice.

**\*Note that you must be connected to the internet to watch the videos and to play the audio samples throughout the eBook.**

### A note about range

Don't be married to the notated range written for each exercise. Feel free to adjust the range either up or down as needed to accommodate your instrument and ability. Make sure, however, to spend extra time in the extreme ranges of your instrument, as these tend to be the most difficult to execute.

## The Chord Symbols

All the chord symbols are illustrated in the briefest possible manner, meaning they will not be notated even with the “7” symbol unless it’s a dominant chord. If you’re interested why we make this choice, we go deeper into it in our [Jazz Visualization eBook](#). In short, things like the 7th, 9th, 11th, and 13th are implied in jazz chord voicings and to visualize chords more effectively, it helps to eliminate these from the chord symbol. Also, sometimes we’ll say half diminished and other times, minor 7 b5. You should be familiar with both of these variations.

## Enharmonic Spellings

Throughout the course, we use a variety of enharmonic chord spellings and chord-tone spellings. Some may be standard and others less common. It’s our belief that you should be able to think in terms of any enharmonic spelling, so for example, you should be able to think of the 3rd of Ab minor as “Cb” or “B” without it giving you a headache. In reality, you want to do away with the written page altogether, as it’s really a crutch.

## Thinking in numbers

We’ll refer to each chord-tone as a number—the root is “1”, the third is “3” etc. Get used to always thinking of chord-tones as a number. It’s incredibly advantageous.

## A quick overview of practicing a technique

Take your time with each exercise and make sure to watch the videos over and over to thoroughly understand what it is that you’re trying to accomplish. And, use the eBook as a guide. Remember, **the whole point is to use the techniques you’re learning.**

So, with each technique:

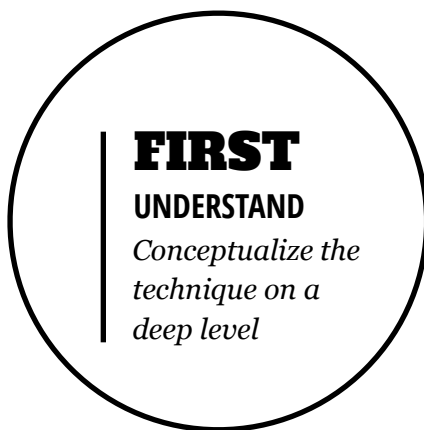
- Watch the video lesson and study the eBook
- Listen to the audio clips of the written examples from jazz masters
- Master the “Introduction” exercises
- Work on the “Limit” and “Mix” improvisation exercises
- Use the techniques on the tunes you’re already working on

## The Process: Introduce, Limit, Mix (ILM)

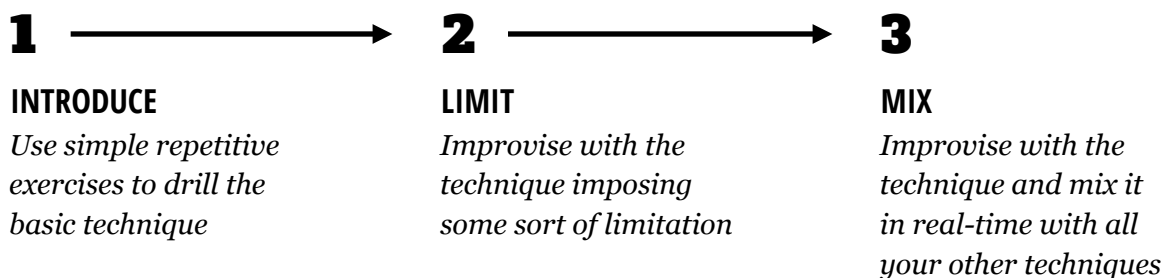
How you practice improvisation is how you will perform it. What you DRILL over and over is what comes out when you go to improvise. It's not magic. The process you will learn and utilize in this course teaches you how to practice in a way that *actually* makes the techniques come out in a creative way when you improvise.

One you conceptually understand a technique, you will introduce the technique through a series of simple exercises in all keys either around [The Cycle](#) or in half steps—these two root movements are the essential ones to practice. Master the simple exercise in all keys because they lay the groundwork for being able to truly improvise with the technique. Do not underestimate these exercise even though they're simple and repetitive! It's *exactly* these qualities that speed up your learning.

Then you'll improvise with the technique in a *limited* fashion. This constitutes either improvising ONLY with the technique, or STARTING all your melodic lines with the technique. Once you can improvise within this limitation in a creative and lyrical manner, you'll lift the limitation and mix all your techniques that you've already learned with the current technique you're practicing.



## THEN USE ILM (INTRODUCE, LIMIT, MIX)



## 4 chords, 4 background tracks, and the tunes you're working on

When most people practice improvising, they turn on background tracks (play alongs) of tunes and practice soloing over and over. Unfortunately, through this process, they're reinforcing mistakes, rather than improving in one or several areas.

To improve you must practice with purpose and isolate the variables so you can zoom-in on exactly what you want to work on. To do this, the best way is not to work on a tune, or even a progression, but one repeated chord sound that lasts a while—a chord vamp.

A main part of this course is to REALLY learn every chord. The way you do this is to hangout on a chord for a long time and get comfortable with it. Making the harmony easy let's you instead focus your mental energy on melody and rhythm. And we won't deal with every possible chord, we'll work on the four most common chords you'll encounter in jazz tunes: major, dominant, minor, and half diminished (minor 7 flat 5). The chord symbols will be as basic as basic can be, often leaving out the "7" for sake of visual simplicity.

If you study these four chords in depth as you do in this course, you'll be able to easily play over the many variations of these chords, and understand how to adapt your techniques to other chords. From focus and limitation, comes freedom. There are only four background tracks, one for each chord type. They move at a slow tempo around The Cycle, giving you 16 measures to hangout and practice your techniques on each chord.

Drilling a technique over and over is very important. Just understanding something intellectually is completely useless. You must practice and drill the technique until it requires no thought or effort. That's the only way you can use it in real-time when you go to improvise.

Once you drill the techniques over the four background tracks, MAKE SURE to apply the techniques to the tunes you're working on. Consciously use them over the chords within a tune where they're supposed to be used. Over time, you'll naturally be able to freely use all your techniques over your favorite tunes.

## **Get away from the written page!!!**

To get you going on each exercise, we write out every exercise in all keys, but using the music in front of you is a tremendous crutch, one that you eventually need to break free of.

In the activity of improvisation, your memory is your greatest asset.

With every technique, aim to be able to play it and have a clear mental image of it, without using the written sheet music. Only use the written exercises as a stepping stone toward this goal.

## **Using the video demos**

Every single exercise is demonstrated for you via streamable links.

**Make sure you're connected to the internet to view these and all the audio samples throughout the course.**

For the videos, we wanted to give you as realistic an experience as possible to taking a lesson with us. The videos were recorded with no effects, not even reverb, in my practice room with nothing more than an inexpensive Shure microphone and an iPad.

There's nothing tricky or fancy about them. Yes, we could have waited until we had the money and resources for a posh studio setup, but who knows if that day will ever come. We decided that it was more important to get this information in your hands today so you could start using the concepts and improving.

All the demos use the actual background tracks you get with the course so you can hear and see exactly how to use the resources you have. And, I try to play as clearly and simply as possible, so you can easily hear the techniques in action.

The demos also use text to explain the techniques as I play. This text will walk you through exactly what you're hearing as I play it, giving you a better idea as to what's going on as you're watching the videos.

## 4 - The Melodic Concepts Vs. Techniques

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There are 8 melodic concepts we will explore in this course:

- 1.) Triads
- 2.) Arpeggios
- 3.) Scales
- 4.) Approach Notes
- 5.) Enclosures
- 6.) Chromaticism
- 7.) Cells
- 8.) Harmonic Perspective

*Where do these melodic concepts come from?*

The 8 melodic concepts were defined by studying the “jazz language” within many solos. Are there more concepts? Of course, infinite really, but these are 8 fundamental concepts that will be the most effective to your rapid growth as an improviser.

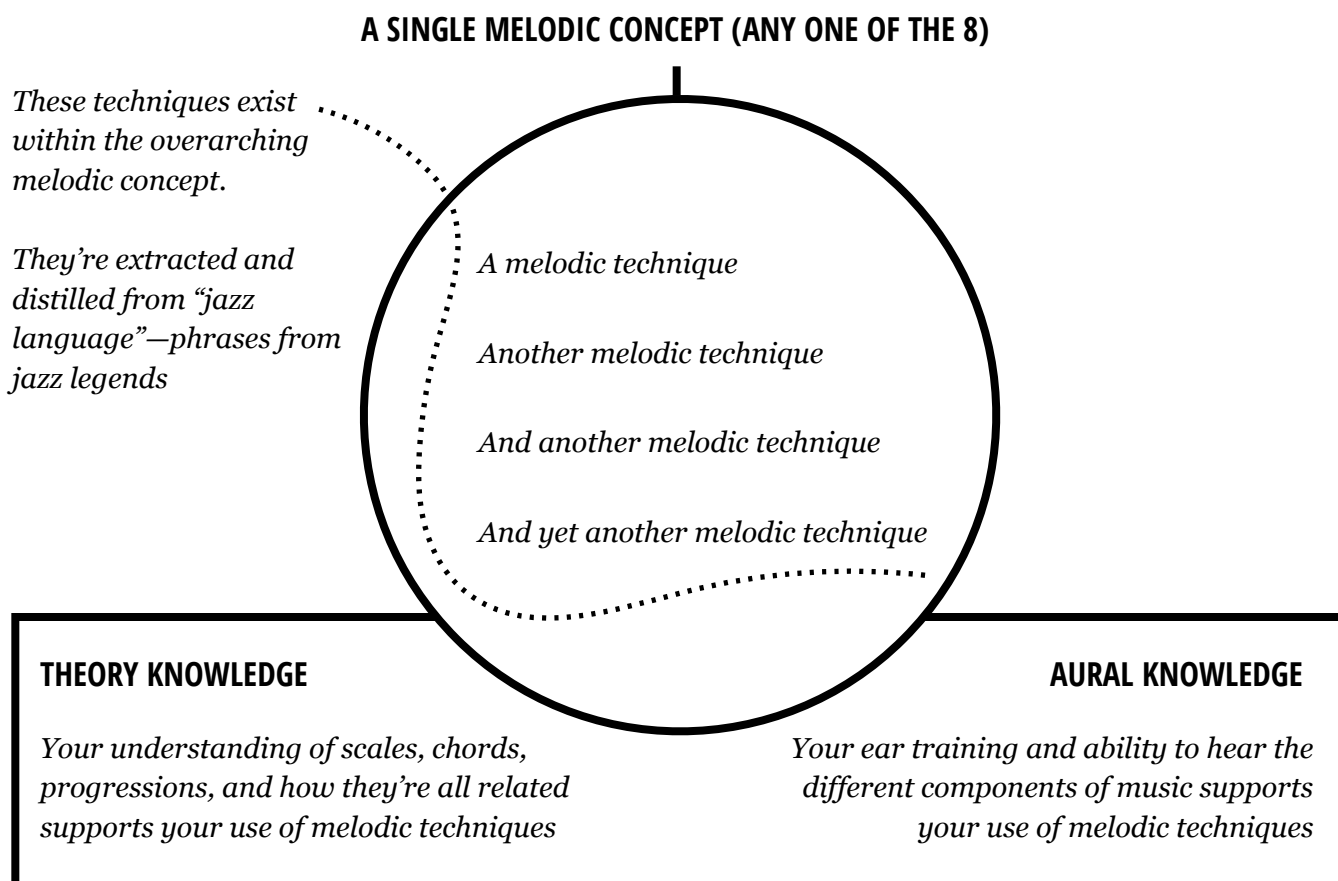
Now, these concepts alone won't help you. You need to know specific techniques that use the concept: techniques that apply the concept in a direct way. That's a very important point.

For example, if you use a specific enclosure technique that Chet Baker used, and learn to use it like he did in the same harmonic context, and study the inner workings of the technique, you're learning an accessible technique that you can apply. *You're learning jazz language.*

Now when you go to play in that harmonic context, you're not thinking of just a scale or chord arpeggio, but a specific melodic technique as well. Combining your theoretical scale and chord knowledge with these techniques gives you the tools you need to improvise true melodies.

Bringing melodic techniques into your improvisational thinking is a subtle part of the process in practicing jazz improvisation, but it makes all the difference in the world. Melodic techniques help you start your lines with purpose and direction, guide your ear and fingers, and give you clear ways to musically think, learn, and understand.

# A MELODIC CONCEPT AND ITS TECHNIQUES



Acquiring melodic techniques is the key to learning how to use your theory and aural knowledge in a musical way within the context of jazz.

You don't abandon your scale knowledge, but use it to support and conceptualize the new things you're learning. The more melodic techniques you acquire and practice, the more melodic power and freedom you'll attain.

## 5 - Terms

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These terms are defined by us for our purposes. If you think of any of them differently that's perfectly okay, we just want to be clear with you what we're talking about. We use many words to describe the same thing—these words are grouped together.

**Lines, melodic line, phrase, melody, statement, melodic statement** - In all these cases we're referring to the improvised succession of notes you're playing while you improvise. These notes create a "melodic line." Think of these melodic lines like a sentence. Your goal is to improvise strong melodic lines, one after the other, combining these "sentences" into an overall "story."

**Harmonic context** - the chord or chord quality

**Concept, melodic concept** - the overarching category that a specific technique fits in. For example, a technique that uses an enclosure, uses the concept of enclosure. In this course, all the techniques fit into 1 of 8 melodic concepts.

**Technique, tool, melodic technique** - a very specific melodic strategy

**Exercise** - specific instructions of how to practice a technique so that it becomes a part of your improvisational arsenal

**Drill** - to repeat an exercise over and over until you don't have to think to use it

**This Concludes the preview of**  
***Melodic Power***

[Purchase the complete course](#) for 42 step-by-step lessons,  
over 200 exercises, and 5 hours of video demos