



Breakthrough to Improv is an inspiring, insightful, and enjoyable video designed for any musician interested in learning to improvise. The lessons are clear, precise, well-paced, and easy to follow. This video will open new vistas of musical freedom for players worldwide!
—Dr. Willie Hill, President, International Association of Jazz Educators [IAJE]

TOPICS COVERED INCLUDE:

- Breaking free from the written page
- Structuring an improv practice session
- Universal principles of improvisation
- Adopting the improviser's attitude
- Voicing the 12-bar blues progression
- Developing a solo
- Creating and connecting phrases
- "Feeling in fours" – improvising in the flow of rhythm
- Using your "inner-ear guide"
- Adding triplet and double-time lines to your solos

Produced by
Dave Frank and John Amaral

Guest performer: Wynton McCurdy, trumpet

For more info and tour schedules,
send email to Dfrankjazz@aol.com

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Breakthrough to Improv: The Secrets of Improvisation is intended for players of all instruments as a way to *break through* to the creative approach to playing music. Hosted by Berklee professor Dave Frank, author of Hal Leonard's popular *Joy of Improv* series, this video outlines a unique step-by-step series of "practice points" designed to guide you effortlessly into the process of improvisation. This video will get you jammin'!

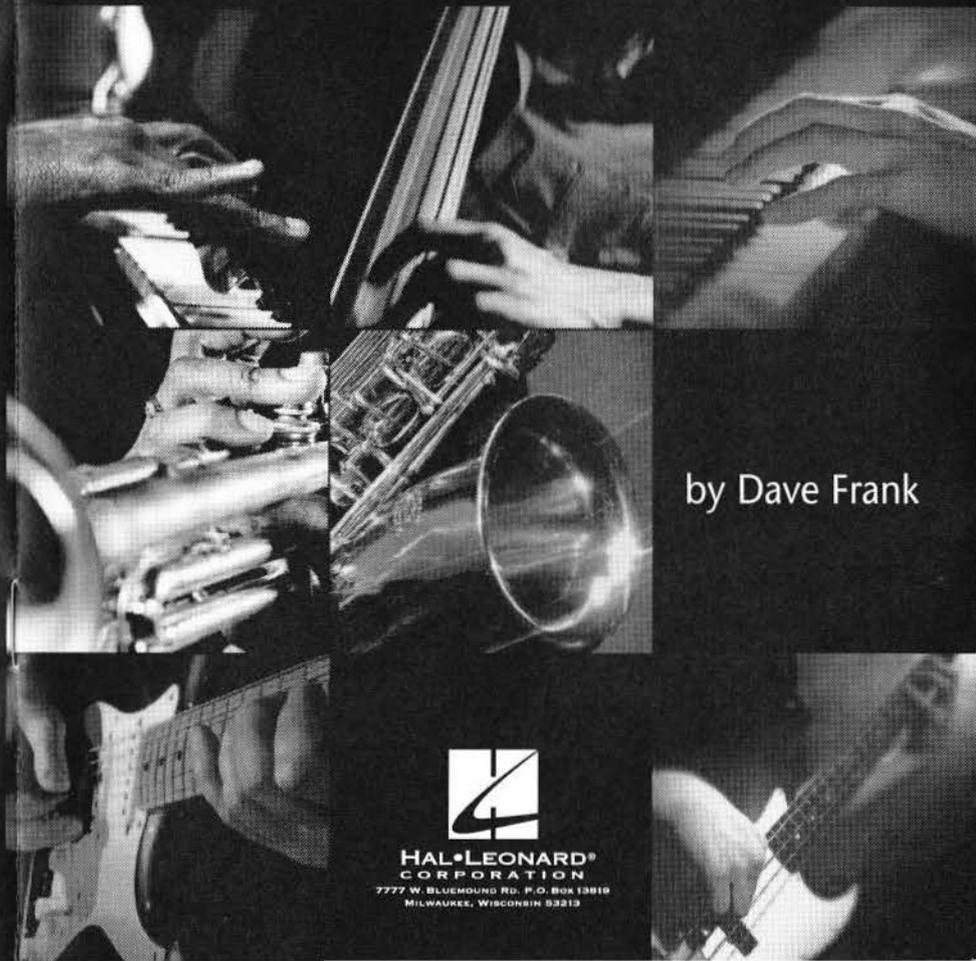
Whether you're a traditionally trained musician looking to break free from written music, an improviser looking to expand your creativity, or a music teacher looking for a way to begin teaching improvisation, *Breakthrough to Improv* is a *must* to help you discover the infinite flow of music within you!

Dave Frank is a renowned jazz concert artist and celebrated music educator. He is an Associate Professor of Piano at Berklee College of Music, presents solo concerts and improv master classes worldwide, and is a regular guest artist/clinician at major festivals including the Montreux Jazz Festival, the Winnipeg Jazz Festival, and the Jamaica Jazz Festival. Combining discussion, demonstrations, and performances, and concentrating on the blues form, Dave has distilled 25 years of teaching into this inspiring and user-friendly DVD. This video is guaranteed to change your musical life!

DVD
VIDEO

BREAKTHROUGH TO IMPROV: THE SECRETS OF IMPROVISATION

15 STEPS TO MUSICAL FREEDOM FOR ALL MUSICIANS



by Dave Frank



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BREAKTHROUGH TO IMPROV: THE SECRETS OF IMPROVISATION

15 STEPS TO MUSICAL FREEDOM FOR ALL MUSICIANS

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My goal in this video is to help you to *break through* to the ability to improvise music. For beginning improvisers, this session is designed to lead to the experience of blues improvisation. Those musicians with prior improv experience will find that applying the concepts in *Breakthrough to Improv* will deepen and expand their improv ability.

The key to getting the most out of this session is to spend the time necessary to master the material of each section as outlined by the *practice points*. The abilities learned in the first four practice points provide the foundation for the process of blues improvisation. Free blues improvisation truly begins in the section titled "Improvising with quarter-note riffs."

In *Breakthrough to Improv*, we're concentrating on limited musical elements—the blues progression and the blues scale. We're combining these elements using various musical concepts, including riffs, "feeling in fours," question-and-answer, and others. These concepts are the *secrets* of improvisation. The most important thing to remember as you explore the process on this video is to generate your music from the *feeling of the flow of swing eighth notes* (once you've got that far). The mechanics of improv, although important, are secondary. As you improvise, always base your music in the flow of legato (connected) swing eighth notes—it's a natural rhythm, a bouncy feeling. If you let your music coast on the wings of these swinging eighth-note rhythms and apply the concepts introduced in each section to the notes of the blues scale, you'll be *jammin'*!

The following is a review of the practice points for each section with some additional comments for you to use as you play:

PRACTICE POINT #1: Practice the blues scale alone.

Keyboardists should play this progression in the left hand alone, metronome ♩=72. *Note: keep the metronome at 72 as you work through all the practice points. As you feel comfortable with the material at slower tempos, gradually increase the speed. You should also practice at times without a metronome, to prevent developing a reliance on an external pulse. Guitarists, instrumentalists, and vocalists should play and/or tape the progression and listen to the chord cycle. This progression is the framework for blues improvisation. Practice this progression until the sequence is second nature to you.

The image shows three staves of bass clef music, each with four measures. The first staff has chords C7, F7, C7, C7. The second staff has chords F7, F7, C7, C7. The third staff has chords G7, F7, C7, C7. Each measure contains a single chord symbol above a bass line with a single note.

PRACTICE POINT #2: Practice the blues scale against the blues progression; change directions freely.

First play the scale up and down in quarter notes, then continue to play notes from the blues scale, but play them in any order you feel. Ascend and descend the scale freely in quarter notes, creating simple melodies as you play.

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are: C4, Bb4, D4, Eb4, E4, Fb4, G4, A4, G4, Fb4, E4, D4, C4. Below the notes are the fingerings: 1, b3, 4, b5, 5, b7, octave, b7, 5, b5, 4, b3, 1.

PRACTICE POINT #3: Repeat one riff against the blues progression, then alternate the placement of the two riffs.

The image shows two musical staves with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. Riff 1 consists of the notes: C4, Bb4, D4, Eb4, E4, Fb4, G4, A4. Riff 2 consists of the notes: C4, Bb4, D4, Eb4, E4, Fb4, G4, A4.

PRACTICE POINT #4: Improvise the order of the two riffs against the blues progression.

Combine these riffs in any spontaneous order that you feel. Your inner ear will continuously prompt you to play one riff or the other. This exercise will teach you to respond quickly to your inner ear while following the blues progression.

PRACTICE POINT #5: Improvise freely and create short eighth-note riffs followed by a rest.

This is the beginning of free blues improvisation. One additional technique that can be used to at this level is to make up a simple story as you improvise, matching each word with a note. Speak and play, for example:



Let the words lead the music and simultaneously create a short word phrase with a short musical phrase made up of blues scale notes. This easy technique connects the "musical brain" with the "language brain." Try it—it works!

PRACTICE POINT #6: Improvise freely and create short swinging eighth-note riffs.

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This is similar to step 5, only faster. The key to keeping your cool as you speed up is to consciously relax as you play at faster tempos.

PRACTICE POINT #7: Improvise using notes of the blues scale to create long swinging eighth-note lines, "feeling in fours."

Playing at this level, your improvisations will sound authentic! "Feeling in fours" is one of the unique improvising concepts presented in *Breakthrough to Improv*. It's the most effective improv technique I've found to guide the creative process. "Feeling in fours" opens you to the magic and mystery of improvisation. It places your music directly into the flow of rhythm. Place a small accent on the first note in each group of four eighth notes and consciously improvise in regular, defined groups of four swinging eighths. Start slowly, creating longer musical sentences and maintaining this focus.

PRACTICE POINT #8: Improvise freely using your inner ear guide to combine short riffs and longer lines.

Balance and variation are the principles here. Follow the promptings of your inner ear, as it will tell you when to change elements in your playing—in this case, when to switch from creating long lines to short lines and vice versa.

PRACTICE POINT #9: Consciously incorporate the three question-and-answer approaches into your improvisations.

Using these approaches will help you to develop your musical ideas, and will create a relationship between your ideas. This will help your improvisation to tell a story.

PRACTICE POINT #10:

Add eighth-note triplets into your swing lines and create lines composed entirely of triplets.

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Here is an example of a blues line composed entirely of triplets:

* excerpted from the *Joy of Improv: Book 2* (Lesson 52).

PRACTICE POINT #11: Write out and improvise sixteenth-note lines.

Start slowly! A sixteenth-note line at ♩ = 50 is the same speed as an eighth note line at ♩ = 100. Think melodically. Your sixteenth-note lines should be similar your eighth-note lines, only twice as fast!

If at any time you lose your focus and/or the chord progression, relax and begin again. Try not to over-react to “wrong notes.” Many of the greatest recordings by the greatest improvisers contain missed notes or incomplete phrases. Improvisation is a process of discovery, not a quest for note-perfect performances. Over time, the ability to improvise becomes a marvelous process—original music will flow endlessly from your soul through your fingers to your instrument. Once you learn to improvise, a lifetime of creative expression will be within your grasp!

I sincerely hope that *Breakthrough to Improv* will offer you a way to begin tapping the infinite source of music within you, and I encourage you to keep studying, keep practicing, and keep swingin’!

—Dave Frank

Special thanks to: Yogi Bhajan, Dr. Michael McGee, Gurucharan Singh Khalsa, my wife Hari for her patience and support, Charlie Banacos for his valuable advice and feedback, John Amaral for his ongoing partnership and collaboration, John Cerullo for his belief in this project and for our association with Hal Leonard Corporation, Phil Gay for his excellent direction, Mark Steele for his fine editing, Wynton McCurdy for his great job in the studio, and to the many students worldwide who, through their interest and enthusiasm, gave me the opportunity to develop the teaching approach presented on this video.



JOY OF IMPROV

By DAVE FRANK with JOHN AMARAL

Joy of Improv is a complete curriculum for the aspiring improviser, containing 52 lessons for all instruments in two volumes.

Volume 1: *Developing the Foundation* contains lessons 1-26. Each lesson is comprised of exercises in vocabulary, technique, 1000 basic modern jazz chord voicings, blues and jazz tunes, and recommended listening. Hundreds of written blues riffs and jazz lines will give you unlimited ideas to inspire your own improvisations. A *must* for any serious beginning improviser!

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Volume 2: *Completing the Foundation* contains lessons 27-52. The curriculum in volume 2 is more advanced, the chord voicing lists more complex, and the blues and jazz lines more challenging. A special section is included describing techniques to organize the voicings studied into hip arrangements. Every aspect of your playing will improve by studying this inspirational book!

Both books contain thirty pages of insightful text discussing many aspects of improvisation as well as an audio CD, enhanced for PC and Mac, containing valuable verbal teaching by Dave Frank, recordings of all the lessons, and previously unissued solo piano performances. These books are highly recommended as companions to the *Breakthrough to Improv* video.

To order, contact your local Hal Leonard dealer or music store.

To schedule a Dave Frank solo concert and/or master class in your area, or for product and/or touring information, send email to Dfrankjazz@aol.com.

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