

● JIMMY RANEY'S IMPROVISED LINE (ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1986, EDITED & UPDATED: 2012)

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CHAPTER 10: THE RANEY APPROACH – CREATING A COMPLETE SOLO

We've covered quite a bit of ground in the last two chapters of typical Raney techniques. Now comes the hard part: to utilize all the techniques discussed together to build a complete and coherent solo; a difficult proposition given coherency and completeness was the hallmark of Jimmy's artistry. However, the best way to solve this issue is to simply jump and do it and keep making improvements. In preparation for these exercises, let's review a cross section of the important things we've covered so far.

Jimmy's key phrases:

- A. The II-V licks.
- B. The Inverted arpeggio
- C. The multiple neighbor tone lick
- D. The b9#9 V7 (suspensions) phrase
- E. The b5 blues lick

Jimmy's favorite harmonic tricks

- F. bVIIm7 –bII7 sub for V7
- G. Upper Structure harmony: V13b9 (VI/V); V7b9b5(bV/V)
- H. Io7 (bIIIo) sub for V7
- I. Embellished Major (#11, #5)

Jimmy's favorite phrasing approaches

- J. The "undercurrent of three"/polyrhythm
- K. Idea, related idea, unifying idea
- L. Diminution
- M. Asymmetrical joins
- N. Weak beat starts/ displacement
- O. Harmonic dislocation
- P. Hidden counter-melody

Let's approach the problem in two steps. In the first exercise we will make a solo that includes key phrases in Jimmy's vocabulary – in essence constructing a solo that sounds like him by incorporating his typical lines. This helps confirm your literal absorption of the materials presented to you thus far. In the second step we are going to try to use his concepts for a solo without as much of the phraseological thievery. I think this approach echoes the process of assimilating and absorbing the style of a master player: you emulate literally first, then conceptually. The latter process is more challenging because it asks more of your own conception while at the same time trying to have the player's best practices rub off on you. I have purposely chosen songs that Jimmy has never recorded. I think this helps conceive of Raney ideas as if you were him approaching the tune for the first time. Key concepts are labeled where they occur with its associated letter from the outline on the previous page.

Exercise 10-1 over "The Lady is a Tramp" contains several recognizable Raney clichés. Continue the process through the bridge (review previous chapter materials if necessary). When continuing the solo, see if you include some of the phrase concepts I didn't manage to get in it; however, don't force it – be musical and try to make the whole thing hang together stylistically. If you feel boxed in, you may also elect to start your own solo from scratch on the same or different tunes you are familiar with.

Exercise 10-1 Jimmy Raney style solo on "The Lady is a Tramp" in C (first 32 bars)

end of melody..... 2 bar break (I.) (C.)

(K.)

Cmaj Eb- Ab7 D-7 G7 (D.)

Cmaj (J.) Eb-7 Ab7 D-7 G7

G-7 (A.) C7 Fmaj (J.) F- 3

(N.)

E-7 A7 D-7 G7 (H.) Cmaj7 A7 D-7 G7

Cmaj (N.) Eb-7 Ab7 D-7 Ab-7 Db7 (F.)

Cmaj Eb-7 Ab7 D-7 G7 (D.)(M.)(B.)

In ex 10-2, I have purposely tried to avoid literal Raney clichés while still maintaining some of the key concepts. I also tried to integrate phrases that have similarities to those of recent artists. Continue the 2nd chorus of solo as seamlessly as you can or start your own solo from scratch using the same principles. I personally found this process interesting because it confirmed my belief that Jimmy’s early innovations in modernizing jazz guitar have a great deal of relevance to later styles. (If you doubt this, I remind you of example 8-40 played nearly 60 years ago). *Note. I have taken a few liberties with harmonies here and there.

Exercise 10-2 Jimmy Raney “influenced” contemporary solo on “Star Eyes” in Eb (1st chorus)

G^bmaj7(#5) (I.) F.7 Eo F.7 B^b13b9 (G.)
 E^bmaj#11 (I.) E^b-7 (K.) D¹³
 D^bmaj#11 G-7b5 C7 Fmaj7 F.7b5 B^b13b9
 E^bmaj D7 D^b7b5 C7#5 Bmaj7 Emaj7 E^bmaj7 (P.)(J.)