

# **The Language of Improvisation: Using Phrases to Create Melody**

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The great jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie once said that melody comes from rhythm. When teaching/studying jazz improvisation, we sometimes concentrate so much on chords, scales and key signatures that we neglect the rhythmic aspect of the music.

Using spoken phrases can jumpstart melodic improvisation and build musical vocabulary.

Advantages of using phrases:

- They are language-based, so come naturally
- They are easier to remember than musical rhythms
- They are easy to convert into different rhythms
- Results in strong phrasing that involves the other musicians in the solo, as well as the audience

Exercises

- Demonstrate example phrase, repeat with another option
- Show melodic structure over a blues by repeating the phrase 3 times
- Show how phrase can reflect chord changes by either transposing or adapting phrase
- Demonstrate rhythm as the unifying concept, using random pitches
- Expand example phrase with answering phrase – can be antecedent and consequent phrases
- Examine from the other side: putting lyrics to solos (Cannonball Adderley – Straight, No Chaser) or tunes (Road Song) and use technique to aid in memorization

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