DEVELOPING JAZZ IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS WITH THE USE OF MUSIC SEQUENCING SOFTWARE

Summary

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There is an exciting potential aid for the aspiring jazz improviser, music sequencing software. These software programs, which normally are used for multi-track MIDI recording, can be used to advantage in aiding the young player by emulating a professional jazz rhythm section. This rhythm section can be transposed to any key, played at any tempo and be at the students' beck and call anytime.

A more common academic use of music sequencing software (outside of the traditional sequencing role as a recording, editing and compositional tool) is developing and evaluating motor skills at both the high school and college level. Students can play their exercises, anything from scales to an etude, on a MIDI keyboard. The teacher and student can then study the performance of the exercise by looking at the sequencer parameters. These parameters can be as simple as evaluation of key stroke evenness to issues as complex as polyphonic aftertouch. Taking the sequencing software a step further, the teacher can use this computer program to help develop improvisational skills in a real-time environment. Staying within the MIDI domain, the teacher can set up a rhythm and bass track which can be placed in any tonal center and at any comfortable tempo for the student. A chord progression can be isolated.
placed in a continuous loop and the student can practice improvising over this pattern. The improvisational practice can be tailored to any style of jazz by careful design of the accompanying figures of bass and rhythm tracks.

This presentation will center on the scalar motives of pianist McCoy Tyner. Examples of common jazz chord progressions using MIDI derived bass and drums will be used within the sequencing software and different procedures to practice improvisational motives will be explored. A detailed transcription of sections of Mr Tyner's improvisation will be projected overhead while listening to the original recording. These transcriptions will be analyzed and then used within the sequencing environment to develop realtime improvisational skills.