

Play Better Sax Solos

(Student Copy)

By Snake Davis

Take a sequence/tune that you know pretty well, that is well within your capabilities something like 12 bar blues, Watermelon Man etc. By 'a chorus' I mean once round the sequence - or substitute '16 bars or so'

Off you go:-

1. Play some choruses with no notes shorter than whole bars. Then minims. Then crotchets. The minim drill gives you SO much time. Time to ask 'Where next?' or 'Why did I choose this note?'
- 2a. Play some choruses only playing in alternate bars.
- 2b. Record the above then jam with yourself, filling in the spaces. You don't need fancy technology; the recorder on your phone is sufficient for the task.
3. Play some choruses as though you are very sad and down. You may find yourself playing many flattened thirds and fifths and tending to wards the lower register. Actually 9ths and 6ths are even more poignant and reflective.
4. The opposite! Happy, smiley, major thirds and Bouncy optimistic riffs.
5. Play some choruses using syncopation and stabby riffs more like a pop brass section
6. Play some very bluesy and bendy choruses.
7. Compose a new tune. Make it as good or better than the original.
8. Hint at the written melody but with your own variations.
9. Use the rhythmic form of the written melody but re-write the actual notes.
10. Use only your lower register.
11. Use only your high register.
12. With your teacher or colleagues help if necessary, pick an appropriate scale/s and use only notes from it/them. Typically pentatonic and blues scales are the ones to kick off with.
13. Angular and disjointed, staccato, syncopated.
14. Smooth and flowing and dreamy and legato.
15. Use as many octave jumps/movements, as you can.
16. Link as many of your notes with glissandos as you possibly can, that is chromatic runs.
17. As swingy as possible.
18. As straight and square as poss.
19. Sing a phrase then copy it on sax-this may take some trial and error, getting used to. Persevere, get the played phrase to sit and groove as well the sung one.
20. Whole chorus starts ppp ends fff and vice versa.
21. Starts bottom note ends top, only upward moves allowed, and vice versa.
22. One note only. (But you may switch octaves) Then 2, 3 etc.

Last Drill... To finish off have a good old 'free blow'. I don't mean carefully combining the drills you've been working on, quite the opposite really. 'Clear your mind', close your eyes and go for it.

Then onwards. Write your own briefs from here on.

Some of that is fun, some not, some of it is quite musical, some not very, some is easy, some very demanding and this will vary from one individual to another. But, it is all doing you a lot of good and helping you achieve your goal of being great soloists.

NOW GO AWAY and DO IT!

Just possessing this sheet won't make you solo better!

Youtube- snakedavistv 'how to play better sax solos'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3i5umRnCeDo>

www.snakedavis.rocks