

Learn to Burn

Hi, my name is Dave Frank. Welcome to my 24th internet master class. I'm coming to you tonight from Hari NYC, at 140 E 30th St. in New York City. Tonight I'm pumped to offer you a master class entitled "Learn to Burn: - Strategies for Playing Fast". This class is intended for intermediate to advanced improvisers as a way to develop the ability to improvise fast lines and at fast tempos. As usual, you can download the notes for this class at my website, www.davefrankjazz.com

Burning

The ability to Burn is a coordinated combination of your ability to feel, hear, and transmit new musical ideas at a rapid pace. This flow of improvisation has its origins in your inner ear. With practice your newly created musical ideas can move like lightning from your inner ear through your fingers into your instrument, where your ideas are transformed into physical sound to be heard by yourself and the listener. The transformation of musical thought into musical sound is ultimately a mystery and a miracle. Spirit –your musical ideas- becomes Flesh –fingers producing physical sound. This is far out! Not only can we as human beings connect ourselves to a spontaneous flow of original music, but with practice we can do it at lightning speed! To burn effectively, your feelings, your inner ear, and your fingers must work together seamlessly as a machine to rapidly realize the music of your soul using the physical mechanism of your fingers and your instrument.

The definition of burning as we are considering it tonight will be defined as being equal to or above 200 bpm on the standard metronome. We will study a number of specific exercises that will help you to gradually but surely increase the speed of your creative playing to the point of burnin'! I'd like to thank you for joining me for tonight's class, let's put on our spacesuits and have some REAL FUN!

Playing Fast Lines on Medium Tempo Tunes

Let's do a quick review of basic improv theory. The basic improv line to be created consists of a swing 1/8th note flow, grouped in groups of four with a slight accent on the first of the four. You can check out my two beginning videos "Breakthrough to Improv" and "Beginning Improvisation Using modal vamps" on YT for more information about this concept.

Here's an example of the basic swing 1/8th improvised flow that we'll use as a starting point for tonight's class. The swing 1/8 flow forms the backbone of linear improvisation.

Tonight we'll be using the standard "What is this thing Called Love " for all examples.

The first line to play that is faster than the basic 1/8 note line is a triplet line. Triplet lines break the mold of the 1/8 note lines, and add excitement and intensity to your playing. Triplet lines require faster thought processes and a quicker technique to execute. The way you can learn to develop your triplet line is to practice improvising in RHYTHMIC GROUPINGS.

Our first rhythmic grouping will be one group of triplets followed by a dotted half note. Improvise on your tune of choice, using only this rhythm at a tempo of between 66-92 (depending on your level) for 10-15 minutes at a time. Stay with the same tune for 1-3 months, and gradually move the metronome higher while doing the same exercise, at the rate of about 1 click per week.

I'll demonstrate the first rhythmic grouping using triplets now.

Next we'll move to 2 triplets followed by a half note. Each new rhythm will extend your ability to think and play faster triplet lines. As you get comfortable with 2 triplet groupings, you can speed the metronome tempo click by click while doing the same exercise to move towards Burnsville.

Next we have 3 groups of trips followed by a quarter note tied to a whole note, then 3 groups of triplets followed by a quarter note, finally ending the exercise with 4 groups of triplets followed by a whole note.

Spend 10-15 min or so on each rhythmic grouping, and wait to get a signal that you have mastered the first grouping before going on to the next.

The next line speed we want to tackle is the 16th note line. We'll approach the ability to play these in the same way as the triplet ones, using expanding rhythmic groupings, starting at a slow tempo and gradually doing the same exercise going click by click up the metronome at the general speed of one click per week. We'll start with one group of 1/16th notes , then expand to 2, 3, and 4 groups.

Practicing these exercises using constant rhythmic groups, expanding in number then gradually increasing the tempos doing the same exercise will give you the sure ability to think and transmit faster lines into your playing. You'll Diggit! Generally for practice purposes, we can think of doing these rhythmic grouping exercises from 72-80 until about 144 on the metronome and beyond. Take your time developing this process, remember to go on to the next grouping and up the metronome markings only when you feel you have mastered the previous group and/or tempo.

Improvising at Faster Tempos



Let's turn now to the method of practice that can lead you to play fluidly and confidently at high tempos. Here as before, the concept of practice that takes you higher is Stretching the Rubber Band. The speed of the complex mechanism that creates the jazz you hear can be stretched by gradually practicing improvisation at a continually higher tempo on the metronome. For pianists, when practicing this exercise, keep your LH very simple, primarily playing a chord on the first beat of the measure and holding for the entire measure. For other instrumentalists and singers, you can work with backing tracks that increase in tempo using some of the many software programs that allow you to manipulate the tempos.

The first thing to do is to determine your current challenge tempo. Your challenge tempo is the speed at which your improvising begins to feel like a bit of a struggle. When you find that speed, start the exercise about 30 numbers below that on the metronome. Play a chorus or two at a tempo 30 under your challenge, trying consciously to find and remain primarily in the 1/8 note flow as you improvise. The concentration should be on maintaining the steady line flow, and creating phrases that in themselves are complete and sound like they naturally follow each other.



I'll demonstrate a chorus of what is this Thing at 120 on the metronome for starters. Feel free to start your tempo at whatever tempo works for you.

Now I'll move the metronome up one click and play a chorus at 126, consciously trying to remain relaxed and use the same concepts – using primarily an 1/8 note flow and creating complete musical sentences with every line followed by a rest.

Continue going up a click at a time, playing one or two choruses at each faster click. When you approach your challenge tempo you will naturally feel yourself tense up a little, and playing will feel a bit wobbly. At this point it's really important to consciously relax and go a few clicks higher on the metronome. When you are above your challenge tempo, you might start improvising using shorter phrases with longer rests to start with, and allow the longer improv lines to gradually flow into your playing. Make a note of the tempo that you stop at for the day.

You may choose to do this exercise stopping and starting at the same tempos every day for a week, then the following week move the sustain and challenge tempos up a notch. You dig? This will work! Your progress may or not be steady; you may plateau for a while, or you may suddenly and unexpectedly be able to jump up a few notches comfortably without strain. Take the process slowly and steadily, don't either push too hard or lay back too much. It's the steady practice time devoted to this over a long period of time that will yield results. Pianists can try doing this exercise with the RH alone to achieve more concentration and speed if you are comfortable improvising without comping chords. You'll see how over time your improv machine will speed up its movement and you'll be Burnin'!

I'd like to thank you for joining me for this class, if you have any questions, comments,

Compliments, complaints or tomatoes, feel free to write to me at dave@davefrankjazz.com.

I'd like to thank my videographer and editor on this video, Fifer Garbesi for her help on this project and for her time and expertise.

Blessings and keep Burnin' from NYC!