

Rules For Jamming

When playing in a jam session, most of the time you will be playing rhythm to complement, not compete with, the singer or person taking an instrument break. Therefore:

1. Play in time - That's what rhythm playing is all about. It's almost impossible to keep a jam going if someone is playing out of time, especially if he is playing loud.

2. Don't play loud - If you can't hear the lead you are playing too loud and that is rude. People may not say it at that time, but they will resent it and you won't get invited back. So when someone is taking a solo, back way off.

3. Keep it simple - You are there to complement the singer by playing in the background. Complex patterns tend to focus the attention on you, not the lead singer. When someone else has the lead don't play the melody, play the chord changes.

4. Play the right chords - Know the changes, or just listen and play very quietly until you figure them out.

5. Don't "noodle" between songs. If you want to practice a lick you just heard, leave the jam or wait until you get home to practice it.

6. Pass the song selection around. Don't monopolize the jam by playing one song after another. This is why a "song circle" is one of the best jams.

7. A jam session is like a conversation. What makes for a polite, interesting conversation?