

Soloing Over Chords

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I've scoured the internet and went to college to learn how to solo over chord progressions. Most sites I've seen either have riffs/licks or theory such as scales, modes, etc. However, the question I always wanted to know the answer to was: How do I make music out of all these scales and theory?!? While this is a pretty big topic I've tried to come up with a basic framework for a solo that you can expand upon as you improve, and which will allow you to add as much complexity as you want.

We start with a 4 chord progression in the key of G major. It's a I-iii-IV-V progression, check out some theory books if you're not sure what that means. In the key of G, the chord progression is G major, B minor, C major, and D major. These chords contain the following notes (root, third and fifth of the chord):

G – G, B, D

Bm – B, D, F#

C – C, E, G

D – D, F#, A

Start simple by just play the root notes over the chord progression for 4 beats per measure. Then do the 3rds only. Then the 5ths.

Next we increase the pace a little with half notes, starting with the root for beats 1 and 2, then the 3rd for beats 3 and 4. You can take this further by trying 3rds and 5ths, roots and 5ths, then reverse the order – 3rds and roots, 5ths and 3rds, 5ths and roots.

Finally I show you how to add some scalar activity, but instead of mindless scale playing it expands on the previous example (roots on beat 1 and 3rds on beat 3). There are many possibilities for expansion, such as intervals, arpeggios, adding rhythmic variety by anticipating the beat (instead of playing exactly on beat 1 for example). Ok, this should be enough for you to absorb for a while! Drop me a line if you have any questions.