

Red Garland Solo Technique

1. The first 8 bars plus the break (first 2 measures) are all eighth notes with no rests.

This is a textbook study on how to extend your jazz lines and still make them sound interesting.

Red does this by primarily using melodic voice leading and approach patterns.

2. When I say voice leading I am referring to how he mostly targets the 3rd and 7th of a chord on beat 1 or beat 3 of many measures. These are very strong beats.

The 3rd and 7th of a chord are essential chord tones and when you play them at the right time rhythmically it sounds really melodic and pleasing to the ear.

For example, Red hit's either the 3rd or 7th on beat 1 or beat 3 in measures 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 26, 27, 28. That's just the first chorus!

How To Practice: You could turn this into an exercise by improvising your own solo over a standard and making sure you hit the 3rd or 7th of every chord on the downbeat.

This is a fantastic way to practice improvisation by having target points.

3. On many downbeats (meaning beats 1, 2, 3, or 4) Red uses approach patterns to extend his line.

An approach pattern is series of chromatic notes that are either above,below, or circle a note of resolution.

When you hit a target note on a downbeat it often times makes the line stop moving.

So, that's why Red's very long first line (10 measures long) still sounds so interesting.

He keeps pushing his resolution forward using these approach patterns.

He does this all over the solo but here are a couple specific examples. Measure 4 beat 1 he plays F, F# and then finally resolves to G over the Gmin7(b5).

Measure 6 beat 3 he plays G, E and then finally resolves to F over the Fmin7 chord. Measure 10 beat 2 he plays D, D# and then finally resolves to E which is the 3rd of the C chord.

How To Practice: You could turn this into an exercise by grabbing your favorite approach pattern (say 2 chromatics below a note) and always playing the approach pattern before you hit that note.

4. Red mixes in arpeggios of the chord in a very cool way. He does this very strongly define the harmony of the tune.

It's also a great way to break up the monotony of most of the solo being stepwise motion. This is classic bebop material!

Most of the time he's using 4 notes in his arpeggio ascending and then immediately makes his line descend into a scale like passage. Check out how Red uses arpeggios in measures 4, 6, 9, 14, 19, 21, 28, 32, 33, 34

How To Practice: You could turn this into an exercise by throwing in arpeggios into your favorite standard and then immediately descending into a scale based jazz line.

5. One of the classic rhythmic ways of ending a line in bebop solos is using 2 eighth notes on *beats 1 and the "& of 1"* or *beats 3 and the "& of 3"*

So, it makes sense that almost all the lines end with 2 eighth notes end with this famous rhythmic figure.

Bud Powell and Charlie Parker used this rhythmic ending all the time as did [Barry Harris](#). Check out how Red ends his lines like this in measures 10, 18, 22, 34, 38, 56, 62, and 63.

How To Practice: You could turn this into an exercise by constructing 2 bar, 4 bar, and 8 bar lines that only end on *beats 1 and the "& of 1"* or *beats 3 and the "& of 3"*.

Jazz is a very rhythmic based style and when you can end your licks rhythmically very similar to Bud Powell, Charlie Parker, or Red Garland you're well on your way!

Your Next Steps

I've only included a few of the improvisational devices Red Garland uses on the solo. None the less, you could just take stuff we've talked about here and turn it into tons and tons of licks and ideas.

There is so much source material.

You should always remember that although it's important to study jazz transcriptions it's even more important to take the ideas you learn and use them as a springboard for building your own licks and soloing ideas.

Enjoy the solo and hopefully it improves your playing the way it improved mine!