

Things the Advanced Jazz Improviser should know and be able to play: from Jamey Aebersold

1. Play ii V7's in all keys.
2. Play ii V7 I's in all keys.
3. Be able to instantly recognize ii V7 and ii V7 I and how they function.
4. Be familiar with altered dominants and when to use them.
5. Be familiar with Tritone Substitutions.
6. Be familiar with the standard Blues progression and also how several alternate blues progressions.
7. Be able to hear the altered tones with someone plays them behind you.
8. Feel comfortable starting phrases on most notes of any scale. The obvious qualities are major, minor and dominant. Then proceed to where you can begin ideas on any note of the Diminished Whole-Tone, Half Diminished or Diminished scales. This takes time and ear training, but it's where you want to be if you want to be secure playing this music. You don't want to be caught off-guard.
9. Be able to Double-time when the idea arises. Double-time is often nothing more than regular 8th note lines played twice as fast.
10. Time: Do you command the Time when you play? Do your 8th notes have a steady pulse to them? Practicing with a metronome will help.
11. Be able to use chromaticism and enclosures to lengthen your lines and add variety.
12. Be familiar with playing melodies through the cycle in 4, 2 and 1 bar phrases.
13. Know at least 30 to 50 songs. Be able to write the chord progressions and play the 7th chords in order of appearance in these songs.
14. The Bebop scale is an important element of jazz, and you must know it inside and out. You don't want to have to think about it when you play. It has become a natural part of your vocabulary.
15. Understand the Nomenclature and Scale Syllabus pages (found in each play-along and Red Summer Jazz Workshop handout books) even though you not use all of the sounds listed. Be familiar with those qualities because you'll run into them in the course of playing music and you will need to be familiar with that part of our music's history.
16. Be able to transcribe solos that you like without taking hours to do it. Listening to the solo before hand will speed the transcription process.
17. Be comfortable with Half-diminished chords and scales. Don't let ii V7 i in a minor key stifle your creativity.
18. Be comfortable with Rhythm Changes, especially in the concert keys of Bb, F and Eb. There are many ways to play rhythm changes. Be familiar with several variation, as they will appear in the professional world. The 47 play-along is an excellent guide.

19. Turnarounds: be familiar with at least 4 different turnarounds. Be able to identify them by ear. Know when to listen for them when playing tunes.
20. Be comfortable playing tunes from memory. Don't carry fake books around with you. Know the songs you intend to play. Personalize the melodies if you are the solo instrument.
21. Have several licks/patterns that you can play over any diminished chord/scale and any Diminished Whole-Tone chord/scale in all 12 keys.
22. Be familiar with Coltrane changes, how and where to use them.
23. Be able to play fast tempos when the occasion arises. This is not something you learn to do overnight. It takes a lot of slow, precise practice. Then by gradually increasing the speed, you will reach the point where you can play your 8th note lines and feel comfortable at tempos that are quartet note = 270 and above. You have to think fast, but keep in mind a lot of what we play has been played before. If it's played smoothly before, the faster tempo will not be that much of a change. Memory and repetition are key elements to playing fast. By repetition I mean, having played something so many times that you don't have to give much actual thought in order to perform it well.
24. Listen to records and analyze what new people are doing. Some you will instantly enjoy. Other music you may never enjoy. But as an advanced player, you need to be familiar with what's happening around you. Records allow you to Hear the music of the world.
25. When soloing, think in terms of building your solo. Remember, you are telling a story using music to whoever is listening. It may only be several people but you don't want to waste their time. They think you have it together.
26. Master your self-control so when you play, you are in charge of yourself.