IMPROVISING ON THE UKULELE

1 WHY IMPROVISATION MATTERS

- ★ BUILDS CONFIDENCE
- ★ HELPS YOU PLAY BY EAR
- ★ MAKES SONGS MORE PERSONAL
- ★ IMPROVES RHYTHM AND FRETBOARD AWARENESS
- ★ TURNS SCALES AND CHORDS INTO REAL MUSIC



2 KEY INSIGHTS

- GREAT IMPROV IS RHYTHM + LISTENING + SIMPLE NOTE CHOICES
- RESTRICTIONS CAN BOOST CREATIVITY
- REPETITION CREATES MOTIFS
- SPACE MAKES IDEAS SOUND STRONGER
- TARGETING CHORD TONES SOUNDS MUSICAL

3 CORE BUILDING BLOCKS

	CHORD TONES
o–o–o–o–o	MAJOR SCALE
o–o–o–o–o	MINOR PENTATONIC
	RHYTHM PATTERNS
	DYNAMICS
? !	CALL + RESPONSE
	MOTIFS
	LISTENING

4 WHAT TO PRACTICE FIRST

- ☑ 1-CHORD JAM
- ☑ 2-CHORD VAMP
- ☑ MAJOR SCALE IN ONE POSITION
- ☑ PENTATONIC BOX SHAPE
- ☑ STRUM + SINGLE NOTES ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↑
- ★ END PHRASES ON CHORD TONES

START SIMPLE. MAKE IT MUSICAL.

5 THE IMPROV FLOW

1. TUNE UP
2. PICK A KEY
3. FIND THE CHORDS
4. LOCATE SAFE NOTES
5. PLAY A SIMPLE RHYTHM IDEA
6. REPEAT + VARY IT
7. LEAVE SPACE
8. RESOLVE TO A CHORD TONE
9. LISTEN + ADJUST

6 PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS THAT WORK

LIMIT TO 3 NOTES	QUESTION / ANSWER	SLOW TO SMOOTH TO FAST	SING THEN PLAY
DRONE PRACTICE (C)	80/20: FEW SHAPES, MANY SONGS (80% / 20%)	CALL + RESPONSE	PLAY + PAUSE

7 SAMPLE IMPROV RECIPES

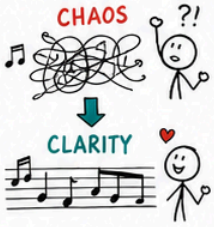
5-MINUTE RECIPE (5:00)		10-MINUTE RECIPE (10:00)		20-MINUTE RECIPE (20:00)	
1:00	SCALE (WARM UP)	2:00	SCALE	4:00	SCALE
1:00	RHYTHM IDEA	2:00	RHYTHM	4:00	RHYTHM
1:00	MOTIF CREATION	2:00	MOTIF	4:00	MOTIF
2:00	JAM (FREE PLAY)	3:00	JAM	6:00	JAM
0:00	REVIEW (WHAT WORKED?)	1:00	REVIEW	2:00	REVIEW

8 EXAMPLES

- OVER C–F–G: TARGET C, E, G ON STRONG BEATS (C F G C — C E G)
- BLUESY JAM: USE MINOR PENTATONIC + BENDS/SLIDES (bend)
- SING-AND-ANSWER: PLAY A SHORT PHRASE AFTER EACH VOCAL LINE (la la la...)
- CHORD MELODY IDEA: PICK NOTES FROM THE CURRENT CHORD (C F G)

9 COMMON MISTAKES

- ⚠ PLAYING TOO MANY NOTES
- ⚠ IGNORING RHYTHM
- ⚠ NEVER PAUSING
- ⚠ STARTING TOO FAST
- ⚠ NOT LISTENING TO THE CHORDS
- ⚠ RANDOM SCALE RUNS
- ⚠ FORGETTING TO REPEAT IDEAS
- ⚠ FEARING WRONG NOTES



10 HOW TO MEASURE PROGRESS

- STREAK CALENDAR (M T W T F S S)
- NUMBER OF MOTIFS CREATED (3, 5, 7, 6, 8 — W1 W2 W3 W4 W5)
- CLEAN STARTS + ENDINGS (STARTS ★★★★★☆ ENDINGS ★★★★★☆)
- CONFIDENCE SCORE 1–10 (7/10)
- RECORD YOURSELF WEEKLY (W1 ☐ W2 ☑ W3 ☐ W4 ☐)
- CAN I IMPROVISE OVER 2 CHORDS? (C — F ☑ YES ☐ NOT YET)

WHAT GETS TRACKED GETS IMPROVED.

11 ACTIONABLE TAKEAWAYS

1. HUM A PHRASE BEFORE PLAYING IT
2. PRACTICE WITH BACKING TRACKS
3. AIM FOR CHORD TONES ON BEAT 6
4. USE SPACE AS PART OF THE SOLO
5. REPEAT WHAT SOUNDS GOOD

IMPROVISATION IS NOT ABOUT PLAYING MORE. IT IS ABOUT HEARING MORE, FEELING MORE, AND SAYING SOMETHING MUSICAL.

