

Jay's Jams Volume 4

Going To 11: Scale and Chord Concepts for Rock Soloing

Written, recorded, and produced by Jay Scott

First, the technical and educational stuff needs to be said. Playing over and studying these tracks will help you in several ways. Memorizing the chord patterns and repeats will help develop your sense of song structure. Listening to them will develop your ear for chord movement, inside and outside of keys. Analyzing and thinking about them will lead to different strategies for creating melody lines and ideas for better, more interesting solos. Most important, I hope all this will help you to have much more fun playing music!

Second, I used a couple of new (for Jay's Jams) twists here. Most of these tracks were directly inspired by famous songs that my students have repeatedly asked to learn. I didn't do "sound-alike" tracks, but I did use chord patterns that I keep hearing in song after song. Learning to solo on a chord progression involves solving a few different problems, and this time we are going to dig much further into "playing to the chord", in addition to our usual study of scales.

Most songs are not limited to the chords available in a single key. Many are, but many more will have at least one chord from a related key, because it sounds cool. As you progress, you will need to figure out how to make your way through a chord pattern that changes keys often, sometimes measure by measure. "Playing to the chord" means that you will figure out the notes that spell each chord in the song you are learning, and then work out the fingering shapes on the neck that will map out those sounds for you. It's the flip side of thinking of scales as the main source of melodies.

Third, although I teach guitar and bass, these tracks work great for any instrument. Over the years I've heard from horn players, harmonica players, keyboard people, even singers who have used and had fun with earlier Jay's Jams products. Here's hoping that will happen again, with this one.

Before you start, you should know that all the tracks are in 4/4 time. Tempos are given for each one. The tracks are listed both by number and by the key or tonal center you'll hear. Brief text will alert you to some things to listen for and think about in each track. Each track lasts over four minutes, repeating the A and B parts as shown. Some of the endings change it up a bit, so pay attention. I have deliberately left a few things for you to figure out, since it's much more important to be a good listener than to be merely a competent chart reader.

Experiment to find the right balance of trial-and-error jamming versus to-the-bone analysis and study that works best for you. Whatever way gets the results you want is the right way.