

SCAT SINGING...HELP!!!

by Dr. Kirby Shaw

Scat singing (vocal jazz improvisation) is easily the scariest part of singing jazz.

Here are some suggestions for putting the Bop into your Oop Pop Pa Dow!:

- ? Most beginning scat singers aren't sure what to sing, their fear manifesting itself in solos with too many notes and too few identifiable jazz rhythms. Solution: start your scat solo with a short melodic/rhythmic idea from the tune being performed. It is not a sin to have a preconceived idea to start a scat solo. By gradually changing /evolving the idea as you go, you will have an organized solo with recognizable jazz rhythms and melodic ideas...in short, you'll be organized and instantly hipper!
- ? Listen to and imitate note-for-note some of the great jazz singers. My favs?...Ella Fitzgerald, Jon Hendricks and Louis Armstrong.
- ? Sing along to Jamey Aebersold CDs (rhythm section only). Order from Jazzbooks.com or 1-800-456-1388...over 120 great CDs available...a great resource.
- ? Every chord has its own scale. Learn these scales and be able to sing arpeggios on any chord you hear.
- ? Many scat singers sing in a limited vocal range, but nearly every singer can sing higher than they think they can. Work to include your highest and lowest notes into scat solos without straining, excessive amplitude or facial contortions (avoid the Idol syndrome).
- ? Know how to sing the Blues...B.B. King, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Buddy Guy, Shemekia Copeland...even Elvis...there are thousands of blues recordings from which to choose.
- ? Be able to imitate any sound you hear...there's probably a place for that sound in one of your solos...a soft breeze, a car horn, a musical instrument.
- ? Learn as many kinds of songs as you can. The best scat singers quote such diverse sources as nursery rhymes, Broadway hits, African chant, middle-eastern modes and even operatic arias.
- ? Attend a summer vocal jazz camp...Phil Mattson, Soundsation Jazz Camp, Steve Zegree, Janice Bjorla..there are many available.

Good luck...and KEEP SWINGIN !