

SCAT SINGING... HELP!!!

by Dr. Kirby Shaw

Scat singing or vocal jazz improvisation can seem scary!
Let me help you with a few suggestions.

~You know the melody of the song, right? Using the syllables “Doo” or “Dah,” sing one of the melodic phrases from the song. Sing it over and over, changing the rhythm a little every time. Now change a note or two or three... and remember, you don't have to sing lots of notes to be effective.

~Do you know the chords of the song? Learn to sing the arpeggio (1-3-5, 5-3-1, 3-5-1, 3-1-5) of every chord you hear. Now sing the scale of every chord (1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8...8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1) and change the order (1-3-2-4-3-5-4-6-5 or 5-3-4-2-3-1-2-7-1). The possibilities are endless.

~Got Jazz? Who are your favorite jazz singers/players? Mine are Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Carmen McRae, Charlie Parker, Bobby McFerrin, Oscar Peterson, Jon Hendricks, Gene Harris, Joe Pass, Mark Murphy..... Listen to and imitate what they do note-for-note!

~Got Blues? Who are your favorite blues singers/players? Mine are: Shemekia Copeland, Delbert McClinton, Buddy Guy, Stevie Ray Vaughan, B.B. King..... Listen... listen... listen! As Carmen McRae says, “You can't lose when you sing the blues.”

~Variety! 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.

~Sing along to Jamey Aebersold CDs (rhythm section only). Order from Sheetmusicplus.com or 1-877-568-6947... over 250 CDs available... a great resource.

~Attend a summer vocal jazz camp or class... Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Workshops, New York Voices, Creston Community College, Frank DeMiero, The Real Group, Janice Bjorla... there are many available.

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