

'Gypsy Jazz' Session Etiquette

These sessions are quite different to folk sessions! Please read these brief guidelines to make sure you know what to expect.

1. BALANCE is critical – everyone has to listen very carefully to make sure the single person soloing can be heard. This is absolutely fundamental. Do not destroy someone else's moment of joyful creativity as they solo – we must support them appropriately at all times!

2. You must know the basic **STRUCTURE** that jazz uses: “head – solos – head”. Apart from playing the tune ('head') at the beginning and the end, melody instruments should expect to *not* play much of the time, except when it's their turn to solo.

3. The most usual way of taking turns for **SOLOING** is to go round the circle. Of course, if the group is large, it may be impractical for everybody to take a solo on every tune! In very slow ballad tunes, it is often a good idea to take 'half solos', to give more people a go. It is perfectly acceptable to **choose NOT to take a solo**; if you're new to improvising over a chord sequence, you may prefer not to take solos at all. You will *not* be forced into the limelight against your will – just shake your head! (Meg very rarely takes bass solos, for instance!)

4. We often use printed **LEAD SHEETS** (melody plus chords) to read from. In a folk session this would be frowned upon, but a jazz session is slightly different. The main melody only comes once at the beginning and once at the end – if you don't know it, there's not much chance to learn it by ear! Also, the basic chord structure is pretty much a 'given' – it's the bedrock upon which people play their solos, so you can't just guess, or do what you like.

5. It is agreed (before starting) **WHICH TUNE** is going to be played next. Unlike a folk session, one does *not* simply launch into a tune without checking that enough people know it, and in what key, if we have sheets, etc.