

# HOT CLUB JAMSESSION DO'S & DON'TS



The essence of mastering and enjoying hot club music is to play together. This music style was born by gifted musicians playing together and by crossing over various music styles. Playing in a jam session can also be a great way to meet fellow musicians, get more stage experience, make yourself heard, learn how to play different kinds of music and, most of all, have tons of fun! Often you will find your future friends and band members there.

However, there are some important rules to the game to keep in mind. Although most jams look quite informal, there are certain rules, a kind of jam etiquette which ensures that things go smoothly, every player gets to shine, the audience is entertained. But also that the music becomes something greater than the sum of its musicians and their egos, due respect is given and no-one is insulted or offended and everyone has fun and walks out at the end of the night feeling good.

In this document we try to give a brief overview of the unwritten rules of any hot club jam session. What is there to know if you want to visit these sessions and play in the jam?

## **Tune your instrument**

Really. Do it. There's nothing worse than playing out of tune in the first place.

## **Know the tune by heart: no chord sheets allowed**

If you want to join in, only join in when you know the tune. Practice at home, do not mess up songs played by fellow musicians. A jam session is not a practice session. Hot Club music is intended to play from the heart, not from paper. Skill yourself in remembering the chord structure, you can only do so by practising (a lot).

## **Choosing the tune together**

Usually, deciding the tune is something done democratically. Someone calls a song and the other may or may not know how to play it. Ideally, the jam players settle on a tune that everyone knows. But if you don't know the song, respect the others, wait and listen. Never be critical of other's choices; even the easiest or cheesiest songs of all can end up illuminating. It is always good idea to get out of your comfort zone and try something new. If you don't like the tune, don't complain, simply sit down and take a break.

## **Volume: always change dynamics**

Make sure that whatever you play is in balance with the rest of the band. Hot Club music should always change dynamics when a chorus is over or for instance when changing to the bridge of a song. Look at each other and see if you intensify the music or whether you want to lighten up. Always listen to the bass very well, follow the two beat feel or the four beat feel.



## **Communication and cues**

When jamming, constantly look at other players, their eyes and their body language. There is so much, musically, that you can make happen this way. Breaks, modulations (sometimes yelled and the end of a song section), solos, vamps, all these things are only possible when the players make eye contact regularly.

## **Comping**

If there are enough other comping guitar players around, it's cool to just lay out for a while and swap turns to do the comping. More than 3 guitar players playing the same tune the whole time just messes up the song and will bring forward an unstoppable boring diesel engine.

## **Singers**

If a singer joins in, this generally pulls in the attention of the audience. Take shorter solos and let the singer shine! Don't play too loud, singers need to hear their own voice in order to sing in tune. A good singer will also give the band subtle cues or signs through his/her body language. Singers will have to understand to sing hot club songs in designated keys. In jazz, many musicians use a real book to play a song and by using the iReal app, it is quite simple to modulate the song to another key. For most hot club players who play by heart, this is quite tricky, songs are played in just one key.

## **Solo length**

One of the most annoying mistakes made by musicians in jam sessions is to take too long solos. If your solo doesn't really fly, end it, there will be another tune. There will be another session. You'll be respected by the other musicians for staying modest in your role on stage (musicianship!), much more so than for your instrumental abilities. Sometimes however, you might be playing a solo that comes directly from the cosmic soul or the center of the earth... In that special case, KEEP PLAYING until the rhythm section starts playing softer!

## **Play your solo smart**

For ballads, you can split the choruses in half for solos. This will shorten the total length of the song. In faster songs, always try to trade solos in fours after all individual solos are done. Remember the solo order so when fours, eights or twelves come up, everybody gets a turn. And inspire each other in fours: copy, answer or improvise on your fellow musicians!

## **Listen and look**

Listen to what the other musicians are playing/singing at all times. This allows for REAL MUSIC to happen. And make yourself heard during the song, there's no shame in complementing fellow musicians on their efforts. Stop looking at your instrument all the time. It will hurt your neck and it bothers your ability to listen. Look at your fellow musicians and listen what they are doing. Practice at home to play without looking at your instrument. Take turns comping (playing chords) behind the soloists. Use eye contact to communicate who will comp for the first solo, who will comp next, etc.

## **Feel the state you're in**

Once you go onstage, you'll be visible and audible to most of the audience and the musicians. If you're feeling slightly too drunk, depressed, tired, stoned, or otherwise to make good music, then don't! Making a fool out of yourself can hurt your (social and/or professional) reputation. There are always older pros who can play the roof off the house while being completely wasted, but leave it to them. That also takes experience to be able to do.



### **The level of the jam**

When you encounter any session, first check it out for a while. It'll be clear very soon if this is your session to join in or not. Every jam at any given moment has its own level at which the majority of the jamming players can function. There are amateur jam sessions where any musician at level and any instrument can step in, but there are also jam sessions where even seasoned pros are hesitant to step on stage because of the perceived 'required' level of musicianship. In case the jam's level seems below your own abilities, jump in and encourage your fellow musicians, let them shine and explore their music.

### **Observe the audience**

All jam sessions serve not only the musicians playing, but also the audience (musician or non-musician) present. It's a good idea to also make eye-contact with the audience. And when you're having fun, show everyone that you are! Smile, do a little dance, whatever. It's nice if there is something entertaining/funny/intriguing going on onstage, visually. Live music is part music, part visual performance/entertainment, at least from an audience point of view.

### **Respect your fellow musician**

Most of the etiquette on jam sessions comes down to having a certain amount of respect for the abilities, but more importantly, for all emotions of the other people involved in the session. Keep in mind that they might feel just as happy/unhappy/scared/hyped/out-of-place or whatever as you do. Be Mature. A jam is supposed to be about mutual respect for all the players regardless of ability, and not just a cutting contest. There is no room for "higher, louder, faster," types of players who mainly want to show off. Also try to show musicians respect even if they act bossy or silent. Their attitude is not your problem, stay polite and let them solve their own issues. When finished, the other musicians around you. Don't be afraid to do a round of handshakes before and after playing: you will make many new friends and colleagues that way!

### **Always explore!**

You can focus on any mistakes of your own playing during and after you're done jamming. But don't worry!! A jam session is also a place to make mistakes, to mess up the chords or the form. It happens to everyone and it's no big deal, exploration leads to new experiences! After playing 10-20 jam sessions you will have learned more about music, about communication and about yourself, than you could have learned by playing 20 normal gigs with your own band, or practising for a whole year at home!

### **Guitars, keep in mind there are 4 functions!**

Guitars in hot club music can play a melody, can accompany chords, can play a solo or they can bring in fills. Most advanced guitarists are able to do the first three functions, but only a few guitarists have the right musical ears to bring in the real Django fills. Any brilliant solo is actually best served with excellent fills. That's where the real conversation starts in hot club music. Try to be very tasteful and supportive when jamming with soloists or singers. Try to play in between their phrases, to compliment what they doing.

### **When you're in, you're in!**

Always pay attention when you are playing in the session! Don't let your mind wander off into space, therefore missing the end of the bass solo, or worse, forget where you are in the form. Stay focused and everything will be fine. Sing along the melody in the back of your head while other musicians do their thing. Also, stay involved in between tunes: listen and talk on which song to play next. If you are tired, simply thank the other musicians and leave the music circle.



### **Try to arrange the song on the spot**

Of course the easiest way to start a song is to count of and start right away with the melody. But why not try to arrange the song on the spot and to start off with a peddle of 8 bars on the dominant chord or some turnarounds. Or start with the last 8 bars of a song or start on the bridge. Improvise, especially when you're advanced yourself and when your guidance can help inspire fellow musicians.

### **Never stick to the stage**

Playing more than three tunes in a row is more than enough at a jam session. Just handover your turn to others and join in later. Recharge your battery, enjoy others, listen to inspiration. Staying on stage all the time is just rude! Respect the jam session leader's position as he/she organizes the jam for all musicians.

### **Know the repertoire**

Hot Club jam sessions tend to have a rather basic repertoire. Try to master at least 10 songs at home before seriously entering a jam session. There are about 40 basis songs and a couple of hundred other hot club songs. Try to know all chord changes by heart and you must be able to look up from your instrument. If you are more advanced, try to really understand the chord structure of the songs you know well and play them in different keys.

### **Instruments**

Usually, hot club sessions are dominated by guitars, violins and a double bass. Keep in mind that Django himself loved the impact of other instruments, like percussion, clarinet, piano etc. Everybody can join in, but do try to follow all other jam recommendations as well. Limit the amount of instruments per song. Usually 3 guitars and 2 violins is the maximum per song. In case you allow more guitars or violins, then accept the birth of a dull monotone diesel engine, you will lower the musical quality significantly.

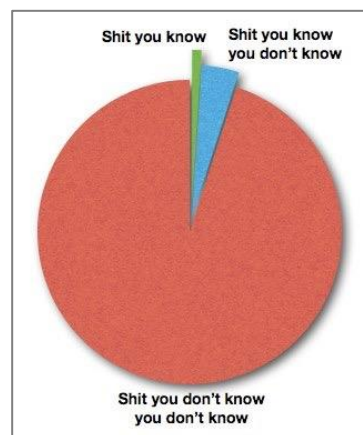
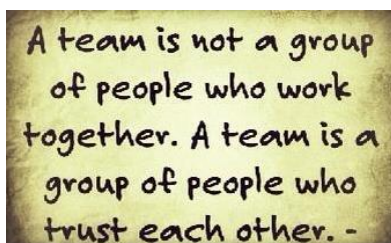
### **Acoustic over amplification**

Hot Club Jam sessions do work out best when the instruments are played acoustically. Amplification usually introduces a dysbalanced sound spectrum. Only allow very small handheld amplifiers that just boost soft instruments or vocals. Keep the music as it was intended and invented: acoustically.

### **Skill yourself, develop yourself**

Christiaan van Hemert made a nice video on hot club session No-No's. A brief introduction on the top 10 things NOT to do when in a gypsy jazz jam! See and listen:

[https://youtu.be/Vr6TlvE\\_Ac4](https://youtu.be/Vr6TlvE_Ac4)



## BASIC HOT CLUB REPERTOIRE

<b>Song</b>	<b>Key</b>	<b>Tempo</b>
After You've Gone	G	Medium
All Of Me	G	Medium
Autumn Leaves	Am	Medium
Bei Mir Bist Du Schön	Cm	Uptempo
Belleville	D	Uptempo
Bossa Dorado	Dm	Latin
Clair De Lune	Dm	Slow
Coquette	D	Medium
Danse Norvégienne	D	Slow
Dark Eyes	Dm	Uptempo
Djangology	G	Uptempo
Django's Tiger	A	Uptempo
Douce Ambiance	Gm	Medium
Honeysuckle Rose	F	Medium
I Can't Give You Anything But Love	G	Medium
I Love You	F	Medium
It Don't Mean A Thing	Gm	Uptempo
J'attendrai	C	Medium
Joseph, Joseph	Am	Uptempo
Lady Be Good	G	Medium
Lulu Swing	D	Swing
Minor Blues	Gm	Medium
Minor Swing	Am	Medium
Night And Day	C	Medium
Nuages	G	Medium
Out Of Nowhere	G	Medium
Seul Ce Soir	C	Medium
Summertime	Cm	Slow
Sweet Georgia Brown	G	Uptempo
Swing 48	Gm	Uptempo
Swing Gitan	Gm	Uptempo
Tears	Cm	Slow
Troublant Boléro	Em	Latin
What Is This Thing Called Love	C	Medium



## OTHER HOT CLUB REPERTOIRE (PLAYED OFTEN)

Ain't Misbehavin'	C	Medium
All The Things You Are	Ab	Slow
Anniversary Song	Am	Medium
Anouman	Dm	Slow
Avalon	F	Medium
Besa Me Mucho	Am	Latin
Bistro Fada	Em	3/4
Black Orpheus	Am	Latin
Blue Bossa	Cm	Latin
Blue Drag	Dm	Slow
Blue Skies	C	Medium
Body And Soul	E <sup>b</sup>	Slow
Caravan	Fm	Latin
C'est Si Bon	G	Medium
Cherokee	B <sup>b</sup>	Uptempo
Chez Jacquet	D	3/4
China Boy	F	Uptempo
Crépuscule	D	Medium
Daphné	D	Medium
Dinette	A <sup>b</sup>	Medium
Domino	Dm	3/4
Dream Of You	E <sup>b</sup>	Medium
Duke And Dukie	C	Medium
East Of The Sun	D	Medium
Embraceable You	G	Medium
Exactly Like You	C	Medium
For Sephora	Em	Latin
Golden Earrings	Gm	Latin
Heavy Artillery	C	Slow
Hit That Jive Jack	G	Medium
Hungaria	G	Uptempo
Illusion	D	Uptempo
In A Sentimental Mood	F	Ballad
It Had To Be You	G	Medium
It's A Good Day	A	Uptempo
It's All Right With Me	Cm	Uptempo
It's Only A Paper Moon	C	Medium
I Found A New Baby	F	Medium
I Wanna Be Like You	C	Uptempo
I Won't Dance	C	Medium
I'll See You In My Dreams	F	Medium
Indifference	Em	3/4
Jesus, Tu Hal Mange Hoffnunga	D	3/4 slow
Just A Gigolo	F	Slow
Just One Of Those Things	F	Uptempo
La Bikina	F	Latin 3/4
La Mer (Beyond The Sea)	F	Medium
La Vie En Rose	C	Slow
Lady Is A Tramp	C	Medium



Little White Lies	A	Medium
Loesje (combi met Muppetshow)	Gm	Uptempo
Love For Sale	B <sup>b</sup> m	Medium
Love Me Or Leave Me	Am	Medium
Lover Man	F	Slow
Lullaby of Birdland	Fm	Medium
Mano	A <sup>b</sup>	Swing
Manoir De Mes Rêves	D	Medium
Melodie Au Crépuscule	F	Slow
Ménilmontant	D	Swing
Me, Myself And I	F	Medium
Midnight In Moscow	Dm	Medium
More (theme Mondo Cane)	G	Medium
Mr. Sandman	C	Uptempo
My Melancholy Baby	E <sup>b</sup>	Medium
Nature Boy	Am	Boléro
Ne Nah Nah	Em	Medium
Noto Swing	Am	Medium
Paquito	Em	Medium
Patrus Swing 53	D	Swing
Pennies From Heaven	C	Medium
Puttin' On The Ritz	Gm	Uptempo
Russian Lullaby	Dm	Medium
September Song	G	Medium
Sheik of Araby	Bb	Uptempo
Shine	C	Uptempo
Sing, Sing, Sing	Dm	Medium
Si Tu Savais	Bm	Slow
Smile	C	Slow
Some Of These Days	G	Uptempo
Sous Le Ciel De Paris	Fm	3/4
Speak Softly Love	Am	Slow
Stompin' At Decca	G	Uptempo
Sweet Sue	G	Medium
Swing 39	B <sup>b</sup>	Swing
Swing 42	C	Swing
Swing De Paris	C	Medium
Take The A Train	C	Medium
Tchavolo Swing	Dm	Swing
Tenderly	E <sup>b</sup>	Ballad
There Will Never Be Another You	E <sup>b</sup>	Medium
The Man I Love	E <sup>b</sup>	Ballad
Them There Eyes	D	Uptempo
Tico Tico	Am	Medium
Topsy	Cm	Medium
Tu Djaial	Am	3/4
Undecided	C	Uptempo
Viper's Dream	F	Medium
Webster	E <sup>b</sup>	Swing
When You're Smiling	B <sup>b</sup>	Medium

