

LISTENING TO CLASSIC ROCK MUSIC
THE INFLUENCE OF JAZZ AND JAMMING

The term “jamming” can have a range of meanings, all under the umbrella of “improvising”: music that is (to some extent) created in the moment of performance. In some circles, jamming refers to instrumental music where solos are played for extensively long intervals, with minimal expectations with regard to form or dynamics—sometimes with a sense of self-indulgence. More “refined” ideas about jamming conjure up the image of a small jazz band where a structured jazz standard is improvised-over in an orderly manner with each soloist taking one or two choruses while the rhythm section provides supportive accompaniment.

In either scenario, there is still an emphasis on instrumental improvisation over an *extended* period of time. This should be thought of as different from the solo section of a *rock/pop* song, where the section is proportionally short and measured. In some instances, the short, studio-recorded solo section of a song is extended in a live performance version where it takes on more of the characteristics of an improvised jam. Some bands sought this out more than others on the stage with no surprise to the fact that those who had more instrumental skill were quite comfortable taking improvisational risks: Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, The Grateful Dead.

Zooming-in on these situations, there are instances where the influence of modal jazz played an important role in the rock improvising/jamming process. While many people in both camps are comfortable distinguishing jazz from rock, there are instances where one style clearly informed the other--sometimes in both directions.

Technically speaking, there are two most-typical modes (scales) used. The mixolydian mode is used for major key sonorities and the dorian mode is used for minor key shadings.

Jazz Influences	Rock with jazz-improvisational (jamming) qualities or sections
John Coltrane: <i>My Favorite Things</i> Miles Davis: <i>Shhh/Peaceful</i> Freddy Hubbard: <i>First Light</i>	The Doors: <i>Light My Fire</i> Led Zeppelin: <i>No Quarter</i> Pink Floyd: <i>Shine On You Crazy Diamond</i> Traffic: <i>Low Spark of High Heeled Boys</i> The Beatles: <i>Come Together</i> Grateful Dead: <i>Dark Star, Playing in the Band</i> The Rolling Stones: <i>Can't You Hear Me knocking</i>