

[SQUEAKING]

[RUSTLING]

[CLICKING]

MICHAEL SCOTT ASATO CUTHBERT: Hello, everybody. I'm excited to be presenting a video by renowned professor and artist George Lewis on computers and improvisation. I just want to give a quick introduction to how much his work had an impact on me.

I remember hearing about various projects on teaching computers to do things like automatically accompany a jazz improviser so that it would do exactly what he or she wanted and put the right chords at the right place and then hearing a comment from George Lewis on how that's exactly wrong in the spirit of jazz in the African-American tradition, that when we have improvisers, and they work in a group, the other people aren't pure accompanists. They're collaborators.

And one of the things that a collaborator should do is respond to you. And one of the responses is, well, if you get into a rut and you keep doing the same things, it shouldn't be letting you stay in that rut. If you keep playing the same chord progressions, well, a good jazz group will start playing different chords for you or mix up the rhythm to try to make you have to think and stay in the spirit.

And there were comments about with the early history of jazz coming out of a tradition of people who had been through the injustice of enslavement, that why would we want a computer system that replicates jazz to be the slave or servant of a master performer, so that there's an ethical dilemma in-- ethical component of how we teach computers to improvise. And that's why I think this video is very important for you to see.