

Why Routine?
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Chapter 1

This is my take. You may get a slightly different take from my expert pals who spent a lot of time with Mr. Adam at IU. (And here's another blunt truth - taking advice on Mr. Adam's teaching from someone who doesn't know, is folly... Consider your sources.)

If I quote Mr. Adam, I'll "quote" Mr. Adam. Otherwise, these are my words and my opinion only.

Here are some hard truths in my opinion, may be hard, may be blunt, but IMO true:

People who do not pay their dues on "routine" do not play that great. There tends to be a lot of "I can't": chops, endurance, range, everything to do with sound production is lacking...

I remember a brutal but hard truth moment with Mr. Adam when I said, "but I had good intentions..." and he said, "the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. Get your ass in the practice room and don't come out 'til you are happy with what's coming out of the bell."

Doing routine in a hurry doesn't work very well.

Allowing your best sound to come and go doesn't work very well. Our best players have a distinctive sound ALL THE TIME. You cannot imagine one of those players sounding otherwise. They ALWAYS have their signature sound, whether high/low, loud/soft, short/long, bravura/tender, ALL the time. THAT is why they play so well.

Poor/frustrated players have "chameleon tone." That is, their timbre changes up and down the scale. "Mind in the sound?" Really? Prove it by how you sound.

Tone is more important than range.

Range is a product of even-ness in your sound. If you go at high range directly, it is not likely to work very well. If you establish a truly great, ringing tone and keep it there all the time, and the lean is 100% intact throughout, range happens, and everything else that's good also happens (endurance, control, accuracy, consistency, more).

A great, ringing tone (Adam said, "opulent") has nothing to do with dB's. Tone is tone. Period. Jim O'Banion said to me, "you have to be dictatorial about your sound." Yes.

Do your routine in time. Jim Reed told me, “time coordinates the body.” If you play with sloppy time you are uncoordinated, and nobody wants to play with someone who has sloppy time.

Here’s a big one: when you play routine with proper discipline, repetition, and over time, you are cementing the mind/body connection. Mr. Adam told me, “the body will find a way.” Do your routine with proper focus, and the body WILL find a way - give it time and get out of your own way; it’ll happen.

All the expanding exercises we do establish even-ness. How much establishment of even-ness is enough? In my opinion, it’s never enough. Do not skimp on anything. Play that “best sound” as many hours per day as you can.

Play long tones like that note is part of a vibrant melody - not a dead drone. Keep motion in your sound, even if it’s a long tone. Everything always must be in a musical mindset.

If your awareness is in your chops, your focus cannot simultaneously be on your sound. Choose the mental focal point that works: SOUND.

Establish freedom in the breath on the pipe before you dive into your routine. How much time does that take? Bob Slack says, “you greet the trumpet where it meets you” every morning.

You must establish and maintain a state of elevated energy. Never “relaxed blah” as Mr. Adam said. Trying to be “relaxed” is chasing your tail. Get that energy UP. Can you imagine Greg Wing playing with “blah” energy? Me neither.

Is developing a great sound throughout a 3+ octave range a matter of strength or technique? Yes. Let your sound be the guide. Not playing well? It’s your sound.

Finally, want to try another mouthpiece to solve your ills? I have plenty to sell you 😊