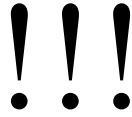


Woodshedding



In the words of the Free Dictionary, woodshedding is “to practice a musical instrument assiduously and with a specific goal in mind.”

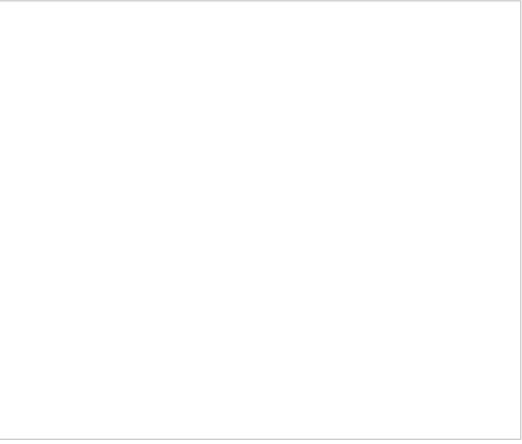
According to the Woodshedding Sourcebook, “woodshedding is an self-imposed exile which any creative musician must endure to reach their true potential.”

According to me, woodshedding is practicing something so many times, with such concentrated effort, that your family wishes you’d go out to the woodshed to practice.

When a jazz musician comes wailing out of the gate, spinning riffs and complex runs, fellow musicians will appreciatively murmur: "Cat's been shedding!" Alternately, when a player's ego outmatches his technique, his peers may suggest he spend more time in the woodshed.

Woodshedding is the nuts-and-bolts part of music, the place where you work out the techniques that form the foundation of your musical ability. The term woodshedding means more than just practicing. It is a recognition of the need to sequester oneself and dig into the hard mechanics of the music before you can come back and play with a group or play alone in public.

There's something philosophical, almost religious, about the term. You have to dig deep into yourself, discipline yourself, become focused on the music and your instrument, before you can unlock the treasure chest. At the same time, woodshedding is a process of demystifying the music. The amazing solo, the intricate melody, the complex rhythmic pattern, can be learned, if one is patient. It is a humbling but necessary chore, like chopping wood before you can start the fire. The term woodshedding, like the term "axe" (slang for your musical instrument), evokes images of rural, rootsy beginnings.



There is a lot of folklore and legend associated with woodshedding. The term is rumored to begin with bebop legend [Charlie Parker](#), who, after his embarrassing attempts to solo at several Kansas City jam sessions, spent the entire summer of 1937 honing his technique while playing a resort gig in the Ozarks. He took all of [Count Basie's](#) records, from which he learned all the [Lester Young](#) saxophone solos. At the end of this marathon woodshedding session, he reemerged as a mature player to be reckoned with.

How to woodshed:

- 1) Get somewhere private (doesn't actually have to be a woodshed)
- 2) Focus, *concentrate* with your fullest effort on learning and mastering a technique. Overpractice! Repeat hundreds of times.
- 3) Notice the results, and appreciate the results when others do it, too!