

C Instruments

JAZZ IMPROVISATION 3

HANDBOOK



Performing Arts Institute 2008

Jazz Improvisation 3: Modern Jazz

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Scale Choices for Common Chords

Major Chords

All of these scales work over major chord types, in approximate order from least to most dissonant. The chord listed is the specific sound that each scale produces, although all of these can be used over generic major seventh chords. Notice that each of these scales include the major root, third, and seventh.

CMaj7	CMaj7(#11)	CMaj7(#5)
<i>Ionian or Major</i>	<i>Lydian (4th mode of major)</i>	<i>Lydian Augmented (mel. minor mode 3)</i>

CMaj7(#9#11)	CMaj7(#9#5)	CMaj7(alt)
<i>6th mode of Harmonic Minor</i>	<i>Augmented or "Gap" Scale</i>	<i>9-tone "Messian" scale</i>

Dominant Chords

Dominant chords generally have the most possibilities for alteration. Make sure, however, that if the rhythm section is playing a specific type of dominant sound, you use the corresponding scale in your improvisations.

G7	G7(#11)	G7(alt)
<i>Mixolydian (5th mode of major)</i>	<i>Lydian Dominant (4th mode of mel. minor)</i>	<i>Diminished-Whole Tone (7th mode of mel. minor)</i>

G7(b9)	G7(b9#5)	G7(#5)
<i>HW Diminished</i>	<i>5th mode of Harmonic Minor</i>	<i>Whole Tone</i>

Scale Choices for Common Chords

Minor Chords

Minor chords rarely have written alterations. However, there are several different sounds that you can use depending on the effect you are looking for. Generally, on minor chords in an ii-V7-I, the best sound is the Dorian scale, but on minor chords functioning as tonics (such as in "So What"), you often have more freedom to experiment.

Three musical staves in treble clef showing scale runs for Dm7, Dm7, and Dm7(b9). The first staff is for Dm7, the second for Dm7, and the third for Dm7(b9).

Dorian
 (2nd mode of major)

Aeolian
 (6th mode of major)

Phrygian
 (3rd mode of major)

Two musical staves in treble clef showing scale runs for Dm(Maj7) and Dm(Maj7). The first staff is for Dm(Maj7) and the second is for Dm(Maj7).

Melodic Minor

Harmonic Minor

Other Chord Types

The following three more specialized chord types have less available options for sounds. However, they are all very commonly used chords and should be learned as well as the others.

Three musical staves in treble clef showing scale runs for Dø7, Dø7, and Dø7. The first staff is for Dø7, the second for Dø7, and the third for Dø7.

Locrian
 (7th mode of major)

Locrian #2
 (6th mode of mel. minor)

2nd mode of Harmonic Minor

Three musical staves in treble clef showing scale runs for Gø7, Gø7, and G+7. The first staff is for Gø7, the second for Gø7, and the third for G+7.

WH Diminished

5th mode of Harmonic Minor

Whole Tone

Practicing Scales and Chordal Patterns

The following sets of exercises comprise months or years of practice material. Approach them as a long-term project and resist the urge to completely master one particular exercise before beginning to work on others. Think of this kind of practicing like extracting a fossil from rock--you need to chip away all around the outside before getting to the center.

Step 1:

ALL modes of major scales in thirds, ascending and descending. Use the full range of your instrument.

CMaj⁷

Dm⁷

Step 2:

ALL modes of major scales in fourths, ascending and descending. Use the full range of your instrument.

CMaj⁷

FMaj⁷(#11)

Step 3:

ALL modes of major scales in triads, ascending and descending. Use the full range of your instrument.

CMaj⁷

G⁷

Step 4:

Repeat steps 1-3 for ALL modes of the melodic minor scale. Practice these slowly and again, use the full range of your instrument.

Cm(Maj⁷)

F⁷(#11)

B⁷alt

Practicing Scales and Chordal Patterns

Step 5:

Whole tone scales in thirds.
There are two of these.

C+7



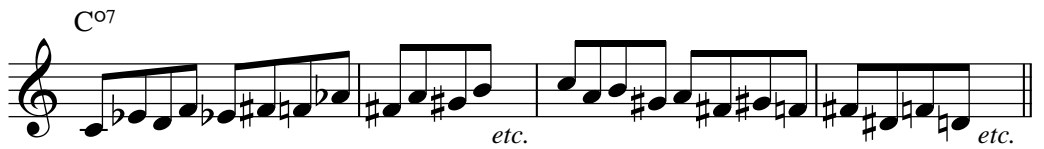
Step 6:

Both forms of the diminished scale (HW and WH). There are three of each.

C7(b9)



C°7



The following interval-based patterns should be practiced in the full range of your instrument. These patterns can be started on any note and are not necessarily specific to any one chord.

Major 2nds moving chromatically



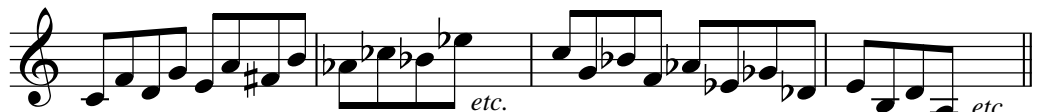
Minor 3rds moving chromatically



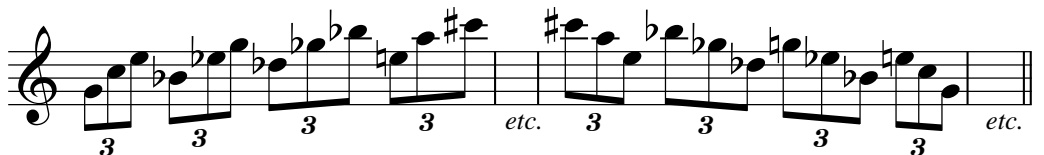
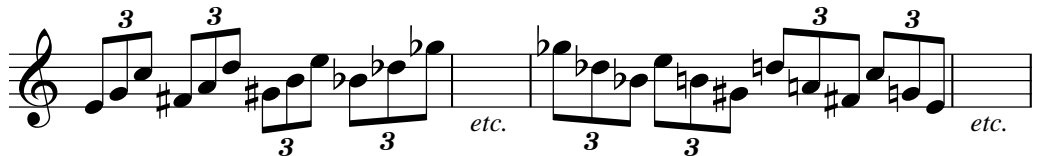
Major 4ths moving chromatically



Major 4ths moving by step



All inversions of major triads, moving chromatically, by step, minor third, and major third. Practice these in all keys.



Modifying Scales and Chordal Patterns

To create more rhythmically and melodically interesting improvisations, use the following techniques for modifying the patterns on the last two pages. All of the ideas on this page are based upon a simple pattern of thirds and triads over the chord CMaj7. After learning these over all of the scales and chords, create your own patterns by using different combinations of rhythms, rhythmic displacement, direction, inversion, and mixture of chords.

Basic thirds pattern, ascending and descending



Inverted version of the above pattern.



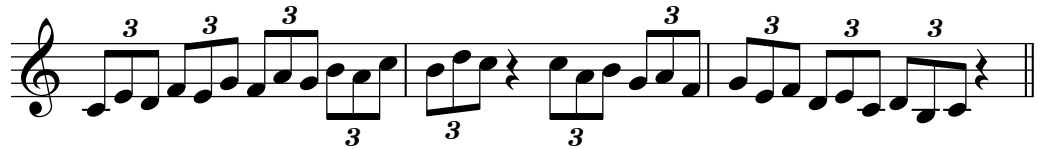
Alternating directions. Also practice 1 up-2-down, 2 up-three down, and other combinations.



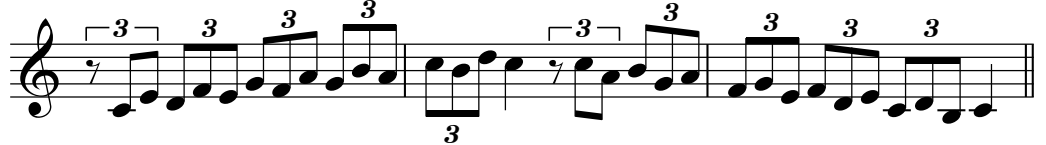
Displacement by an eighth note. Also displace the pattern before the first measure, using an eighth note pickup.



Two-note pattern written using triplets



Displacing the triplet pattern by an eighth note



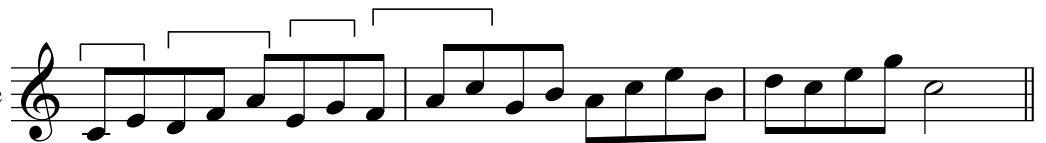
Displacing by two eighth notes. Again, also use pickup notes to displace as well.



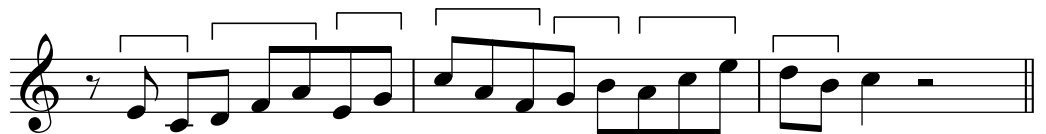
Triad pattern written in eighth notes



Alternating thirds and triads, effectively forming a five-note pattern.



Combining all techniques: displacement, alternating direction (two up-one down), & triads/thirds



Pentatonic Scales

Pentatonic scales, as the name implies, are made up of 5 notes. When practicing and improvising using pentatonics, do not think of them as a scale to be simply played ascending and descending; instead, use them as a collection of notes to be manipulated in various combinations and orders.



C Pentatonic

Two kinds of
Pentatonic Scales

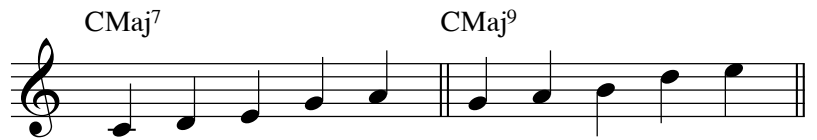


C Minor Pentatonic

Major Chord Pentatonic Use

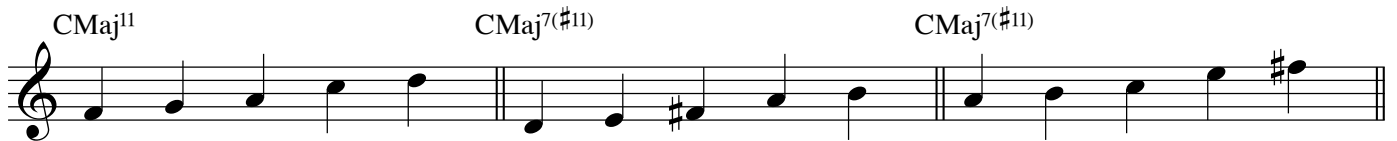


C Major Scale



Pentatonic built on I (C)
very inside sound

Pentatonic built on V (G)
mixolydian sound



Pentatonic built on IV (F)
*questionable because of
scale degree 4*

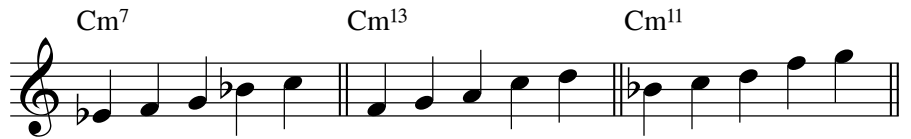
Pentatonic built on II (D)
lydian sound

Minor Pentatonic on VI (A)
lydian sound

Minor Chord Pentatonic Use



C Dorian Scale



Pentatonic on III (Eb)
very inside sound

Pentatonic on IV (F)
dorian sound

Pent. on bVII (Bb)
upper extensions



Pentatonic built on bVI (Ab)
aeolian/phrygian sound

Pentatonic built on bII (Db)
phrygian sound

Minor Pentatonic on I (C)
very inside sound

Pentatonic Scales

Dominant Chord Pentatonic Use



C Mixolydian Scale



Pentatonic on I (C) Pentatonic on \flat VII (B \flat) Pentatonic on IV (F)
way too inside sound *suspended 7th sound* *suspended 4th sound*



Pentatonic built on \flat V (G \flat)
altered sound

Pentatonic built on \flat II (D \flat)
altered suspended sound

Pentatonic built on \flat VI (A \flat)
altered sound



Pentatonic built on \flat III (E \flat)
bluesy sound

Minor Pentatonic on V (G)
mixolydian (inside) sound

Minor Pentatonic on \flat II (D \flat)
altered sound

Half-Diminished Chord Pentatonic Use



C Locrian Scale



Pentatonic built on \flat VI (A \flat)
questionable, missing the \flat 5

Pentatonic built on \flat V (G \flat)
better, but \flat 2 is somewhat problematic



Pentatonic built on \flat II (D \flat)
even worse, with both a \flat 2 and no \flat 5

Minor Pentatonic built on \flat III (E \flat)
best sound (locrian)

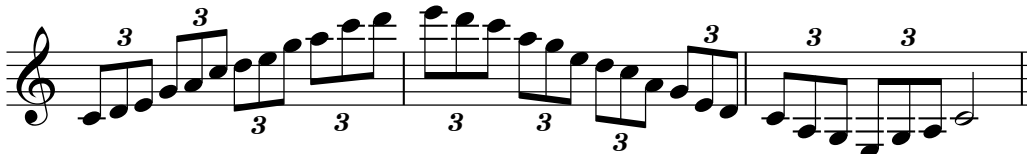
Practicing Pentatonic Scales and Patterns

Here are some possibilities for practicing pentatonic scales. Make sure to practice these patterns in all twelve keys, with both the major and minor versions of each scale. All options below use the C Major Pentatonic scale.

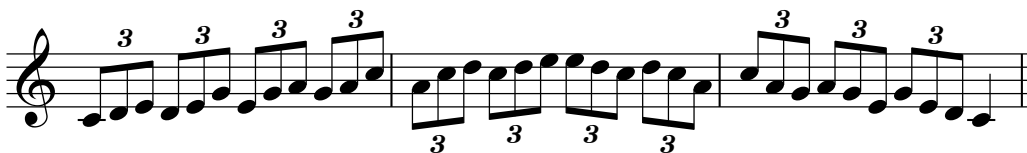
Run the scale up and down across your full range



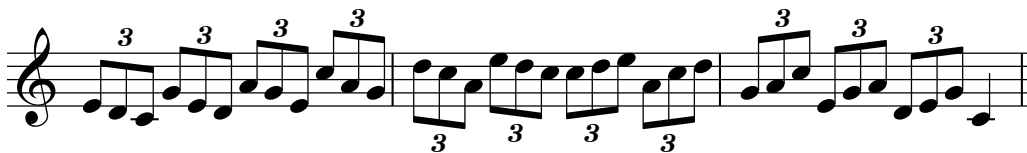
Run the scale up and down in triplets (also use sixteenths and quintuplets)



Three note groupings in triplets



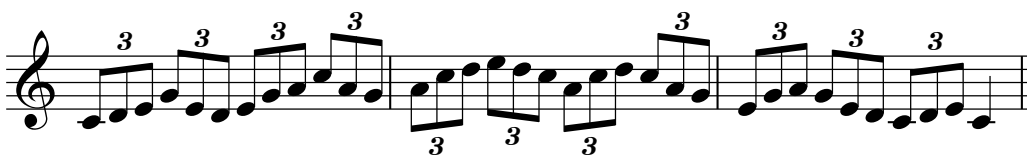
Invert the direction of the three note groupings



Three note grouping in four note rhythmic patterns



Alternate the direction of the three note groups



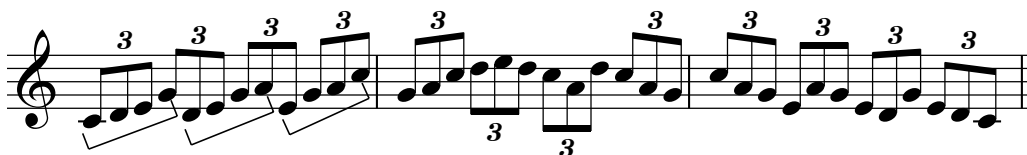
Four note groupings in eighth notes



Invert the direction of the four note groupings



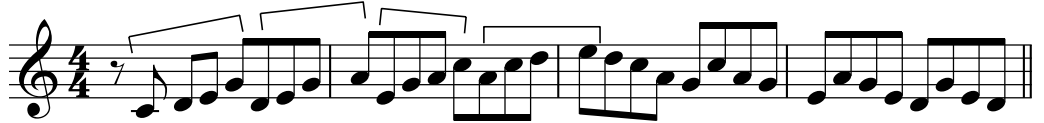
Four note groupings in triplets. Also invert and alternate the direction of the groups.



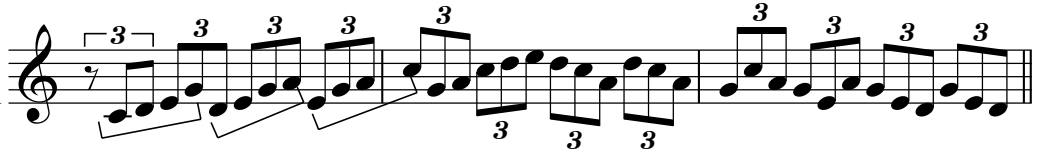
Practicing Pentatonic Scales and Patterns

Make sure to combine all of the different techniques on this and the previous page to create hundreds more possible patterns for practicing. Use all techniques of grouping, rhythm, displacement, direction, and intervals.

Displace the pattern by one, two, and three eighth notes in both directions



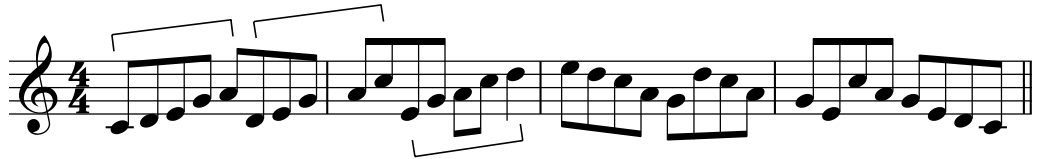
Use the same displacement techniques on a triplet pattern



Five note patterns. Begin by practicing in 5/8 time



Play the same five note pattern in eighth notes



Alternate every other note in the pattern. Also use direction inverting.



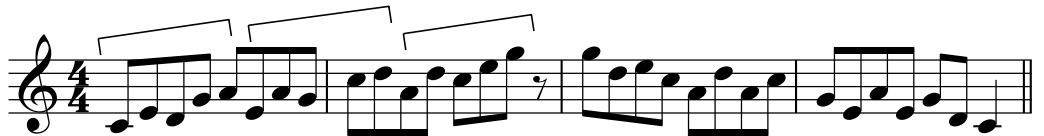
Alternate the direction in various patterns--in this case, up-up-down.



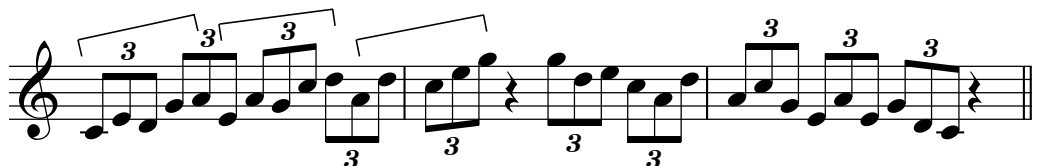
5 note intervallic pattern. Use all other techniques in combination.



5 note intervallic pattern in eighth notes.



5 note intervallic pattern in triplets.



Pentatonic Scales Applied to the Blues

Basic Blues ("inside" sound)

Musical notation for Basic Blues ("inside" sound) in F major. The piece consists of three staves of music. Above each staff are four chords: F7, Bb7, F7, and F7. Below each staff are four pentatonic scales: Eb Pent., Ab Pent., Eb Pent., and Eb Pent. on the first staff; Ab Pent., Ab Pent., Eb Pent., and C Pent. on the second staff; and Bb Pent., Bb Pent., Eb Pent., and Bb Pent. on the third staff.

Altered Blues

Musical notation for Altered Blues in F major. The piece consists of three staves of music. Above each staff are four chords: F7, Bb7, F7, and F7. Below each staff are four pentatonic scales: G Pent. (F7#11), C Pent. (Bb7#11), G Pent. (F7#11), and Bb Pent. (F7sus) on the first staff; E Pent. (Bb7alt), E Pent. (Bb7alt), Eb Pent. (F7sus), and Eb Pent. (D7alt) on the second staff; and F Pent. (G11), Gb Pent. (C7alt), Ab Pent. (F7#9), and Gb Pent. (C7alt) on the third staff.

Altered Blues using Minor Pentatonics

Musical notation for Altered Blues using Minor Pentatonics in F major. The piece consists of three staves of music. Above each staff are four chords: F7, Bb7, F7, and Fm7. Below each staff are four pentatonic scales: C Minor Pent. (F13), B Minor Pent. (Bb7alt), C Minor Pent. (F13), and F Minor Pent. (Fm7) on the first staff; B Minor Pent. (Bb7alt), D Pent. (Bm7), C Minor Pent. (F13), and Ab Pent. (D7alt) on the second staff; and G Minor Pent. (Gm7), D Pent. (C7#11), D Minor Pent. (FMaj7#11), and Ab Pent. (C7alt) on the third staff.

Triad Pairs

In the C Major scale, we can make seven triads, one beginning on each note of the scale

M m m M M m d

The triads that work in your improvisations use the following three rules:

- They must come out of the scale you are using
- They must not have any notes in common
- Major and Augmented triads sound the best, minor and diminished don't work as well

So in the major scale about, the only triads that work are scale degree 4 and 5 -- F and G. These two, of course, can be used over any scale that is a mode of C Major (D Dorian, E Phrygian, F Lydian, G Mixolydian, A Aeolian, B Locrian)

Harmonic Minor

m d A m M M d

In the Harmonic Minor scale, the only pairs that work are on scale degrees 5 and 6 -- G and Ab. Notice that the augmented triad on scale degree 3 can't be used because it shares notes in common with both of the other major triads.

Melodic Minor

m m A M M A d d

From the melodic minor scale, we can make two triads on scale degree 5, one major and one augmented. So there are two possibilities of triad pairs from this scale and its modes.

Dominant Diminished (HW)

Diminished

M d M d M d M d d M d M d M d M

Whole Tone

Augmented or "Gap"

A A A A A A M A M A M A

Triad Pair Selection

Use the chart below to find the appropriate triad pairs to use for the chord you are trying to improvise over. If there is a specific alteration listed, use that. Otherwise, it is up to you what (if any) alterations you choose to play over.

Using over major chords

C Major Scale

C^{Maj7} Major Sound
Scale degrees 4 & 5

C^{Maj7}(#11) Lydian Sound
Scale degrees 1 & 2

C^{Maj7}(#5) Lydian Augmented Sound
Scale degrees 2 & 3

C^{Maj7}(#11) 6th mode of Harmonic Minor
Scale degrees 7 & 8

C^{Maj7}(#5) Gap Scale
Scale degrees 3 & b6

Using over dominant chords

C Mixolydian Scale

C⁷ Mixolydian
Scale degrees 7 & 8

C⁷(#11) Lydian Dominant
Scale degrees 1 & 2

C⁷(#5) Whole Tone
Scale degrees 1 & 2

C⁷alt Diminished Whole Tone
Scale degrees b5 & b6

C⁷(b9b13) 5th mode of Harmonic Minor
Scale degrees 1 & b2

C⁷(b9) Dominant Diminished (HW)
Scale degrees 1 + #4 & b3 + 6

Using over minor chords

C^{m7} C Minor Scale

C^{m7} Dorian
Scale degrees 3 & 4

C^{m7}(Maj7) Melodic Minor
Scale degrees 4 & 5

C^{m7} Aeolian
Scale degrees 6 & 7

C^{m7}(Maj7) Harmonic Minor
Scale degrees 5 & 6

C^{m7}(b9) Phrygian
Scale degrees 2 & 3

Practicing with Triad Pairs

Here are some possibilities for practicing with triad pairs. Make sure to practice these patterns in all twelve keys, using both major and augmented triads. It is generally recommended to do pick one triad pair each day and practice a variety of exercises using it, rather than trying to learn one exercise in all keys. All of the exercises below use the pairs F and G.

Triads and inversions,
ascending in 4-note groups



Triads and inversions,
descending in 4-note groups.
Use your full range.



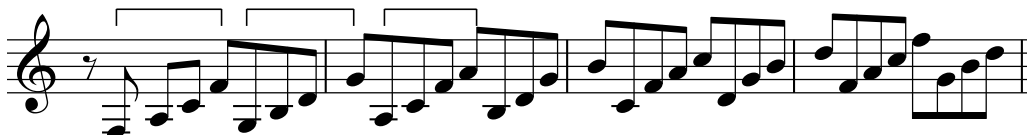
Reverse and alternate the
direction of each group



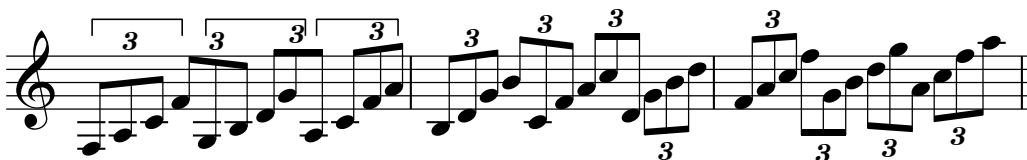
Two up-one down and other
such patterns (1-2, 2-3, 3-2)



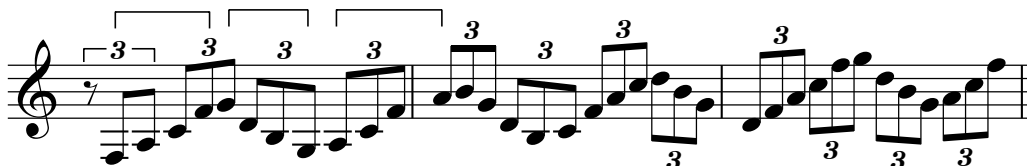
Patterns using various
forms of displacement



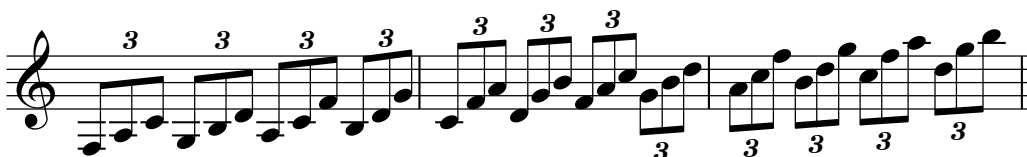
Play four note groups
as triplets



Triplets, displacement,
and alternating direction



Three note groups as
triplets. Play ascending
and descending, and with
all displacements.



Three note groups played
as eighth notes



Practicing with Triad Pairs

Make sure to combine all of the different techniques on this and the previous page to create hundreds more possible patterns for practicing. Use all techniques of grouping, rhythm, displacement, direction, and added notes.

Three note patterns using one up-two down



Alternating three and two note groups



Alternating three and four note groups



Adding a chromatic lower neighbor note for each group



Adding a chromatic upper neighbor note and alternating three and four note groups



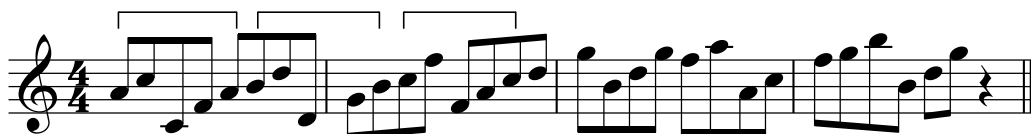
Another type of basic pattern



5 note intervallic pattern. Use all other techniques in combination.



5 note intervallic pattern in eighth notes.



One more pattern. Use all above techniques to modify.



Applying Triad Pairs to a Standard

Stella By Starlight

Basic "inside" solution

Basic "inside" solution chord progression in 4/4 time, F major key:

- Line 1: Em^{7(b5)}, A^{7(b9)}, Cm⁷, F⁷
- Line 2: Fm⁷, B^{b7}, E^bMaj⁷, A^{b7}
- Line 3: B^bMaj⁷, Em^{7(b5)}, A^{7(b9)}, Dm⁷, B^bm⁷, E^{b7}
- Line 4: FMaj⁷, Em^{7(b5)}, A⁷, Am^{7(b5)}, D^{7(b9)}

More complex "Altered" Solution

The implied sound is listed under each bar

More complex "Altered" solution chord progression in 4/4 time, F major key:

- Line 1: Em^{7(b5)} (locrian #2 (Em7b5)), A^{7(b9)} (5th mode of H.M. (A7b9b13)), Cm⁷ (melodic minor (CmMaj7)), F⁷ (lydian dominant (F7#11))
- Line 2: Fm⁷ (dorian (Fm7)), B^{b7} (diminished whole tone (Bb7alt)), E^bMaj⁷ (lydian (EbMaj7#11)), A^{b7} (whole tone (Ab7#5))
- Line 3: B^bMaj⁷ (lydian augmented (BbMaj7#5)), Em^{7(b5)} (diminished (entire bar implied as A7b9)), A^{7(b9)} (phrygian (Dm7b9)), B^bm⁷, E^{b7} (lydian dominant (entire bar implied as Eb7#11))
- Line 4: FMaj⁷ (lydian (FMaj7#11)), Em^{7(b5)}, A⁷ (5th mode of H.M. (entire bar implied as A7b9b13)), Am^{7(b5)}, D^{7(b9)} (diminished whole tone (entire two bars implied as D7alt))

Coltrane Changes

Coltrane Changes are progression of chord substitutions based on major thirds, as in the following musical example. Notice that after three chords, the pattern repeats. There are three of these progressions: the one starting on C, the one starting on C#, and the one starting on D.

CMaj⁷ A^b7Maj⁷ EMaj⁷ CMaj⁷ A^b7Maj⁷ EMaj⁷

Trane then modified the progression above by adding the dominant V chord before each major chord:

CMaj⁷ E^b7 → A^b7Maj⁷ B⁷ → EMaj⁷ G⁷ → CMaj⁷

This is the basic framework of "Giant Steps". Notice that it uses only three major chords that are related to each other by the interval of the major third.

BMaj⁷ GMaj⁷ E^b7Maj⁷

GMaj⁷ E^b7Maj⁷ BMaj⁷

E^b7Maj⁷ GMaj⁷

BMaj⁷ E^b7Maj⁷

Finally, this is Coltrane's modifications to the above progression to get the final harmonic scheme for "Giant Steps". Notice that in several cases, not only did he added the dominant V chord before each major, he also added the minor ii, forming several ii-V7-I progressions.

BMaj⁷ D⁷ GMaj⁷ B^b7 E^b7Maj⁷ Am⁷ D⁷

GMaj⁷ B^b7 E^b7Maj⁷ F[#]7 BMaj⁷ Fm⁷ B^b7

E^b7Maj⁷ Am⁷ D⁷ GMaj⁷ C[#]m⁷ F[#]7

BMaj⁷ Fm⁷ B^b7 E^b7Maj⁷ C[#]m⁷ F[#]7

Practicing Coltrane Changes

Here are some possibilities for practicing over Coltrane Changes. Make sure to practice these patterns in each of the three possible key areas. Remember, it is generally best to stick with simple, "inside" patterns when playing over these changes.

Play triads in all possible directions.

Dm⁷ E^{b7} A^bMaj⁷ B⁷ EMaj⁷ G⁷ CMaj⁷

Patterns using the scale degrees 1-2-3-5

Dm⁷ E^{b7} A^bMaj⁷ B⁷ EMaj⁷ G⁷ CMaj⁷

Vary the direction of the pattern in multiple ways

Dm⁷ E^{b7} A^bMaj⁷ B⁷ EMaj⁷ G⁷ CMaj⁷

Use any of the different combinations of 1-2-3-5

Dm⁷ E^{b7} A^bMaj⁷ B⁷ EMaj⁷ G⁷ CMaj⁷

Run arpeggios in all different directions

Dm⁷ E^{b7} A^bMaj⁷ B⁷ EMaj⁷ G⁷ CMaj⁷

Perpetual motion exercise using the scales

Dm⁷ E^{b7} A^bMaj⁷ B⁷ EMaj⁷ G⁷ CMaj⁷

Use bebop patterns

Dm⁷ E^{b7} A^bMaj⁷ B⁷ EMaj⁷ G⁷ CMaj⁷

Patterns in 4ths

Dm⁷ E^{b7} A^bMaj⁷ B⁷ EMaj⁷ G⁷ CMaj⁷

Any of the above patterns using rhythmic displacement

Dm⁷ E^{b7} A^bMaj⁷ B⁷ EMaj⁷ G⁷ CMaj⁷

Applying Coltrane Changes to Tunes

It is very easy to apply Coltrane Changes to standards and other tunes. You can use the methods below to write your own reharmonizations of standard or new compositions. Otherwise, you can also use them as chord substitutions, resulting in a modern "outside" sound. **Remember, if the rhythm section is playing standard changes, you must very inside ideas over the Coltrane Changes because you are already playing dissonant lines.**

Use over the ii-V7-I Progression

"Giant Steps" Method

"Countdown" Method

1.) Dm^7 G^7 $CMaj^7$

2.) Dm^7 G^7 $CMaj^7$

3.) Dm^7 B^7 $EMaj^7$ G^7 $CMaj^7$

Dm^7 G^7 $CMaj^7$

Dm^7 G^7 $CMaj^7$

Dm^7 E^b7 A^bMaj^7 B^7 $EMaj^7$ G^7 $CMaj^7$

In ii-V7-I progressions that end in a minor chord, substitute it for the relative major and create the Coltrane Changes progression based on that. It will sound much better.

Dm^7 E^b7 A^bMaj^7 B^7 $EMaj^7$ G^7 Cm^7

sounds a bit strange

Fm^7 $F^{\#7}$ $BMaj^7$ D^7 $GMaj^7$ B^b7 E^bMaj^7

much better

Use over the "A" Section to "What is This Thing Called Love"

Original Changes

$G^{\circ7}$ C^7 Fm^7

$D^{\circ7}$ G^7 $CMaj^7$

Substitute Changes

B^b-7 B^7 $EMaj^7$ G^7 $CMaj^7$ E^b7 A^bMaj^7

Dm^7 E^b7 A^bMaj^7 B^7 $EMaj^7$ G^7 $CMaj^7$

Select List of Modern Jazz Players

Saxophone

Eric Alexander
 Bob Berg
 Michael Brecker
 James Carter
 John Coltrane
 Eric Dolphy
 Kenny Garrett
 Joe Henderson
 David Liebman
 Joe Lovano
 Eric Marienthal
 Branford Marsalis
 Bob Mintzer
 Roscoe Mitchell
 James Moody
 Greg Osby
 Chris Potter
 Joshua Redman
 Gary Smulyan
 Phil Woods

Trumpet

Terrence Blanchard
 Randy Brecker
 Miles Davis
 Dave Douglas
 Tim Hagans
 Tom Harrell
 Freddie Hubbard
 Ingrid Jensen
 Nicholas Payton
 Woody Shaw
 Kenny Wheeler

Trombone

David Baker
 Robin Eubanks
 John Fedchock
 Wycliff Gordon
 Steve Turre
 Bill Watrous

Piano

Kenny Barron
 Chick Corea
 Bill Evans
 Herbie Hancock
 Keith Jarrett
 Kenny Kirkland
 Brad Mehldau
 Mulgrew Miller
 Jason Moran
 McCoy Tyner
 Kenny Werner

Guitar

Larry Coryell
 John McLaughlin
 Pat Metheny
 John Scofield
 Mike Stern

Bass

Ron Carter
 John Clayton
 Eddie Gomez
 Larry Grenadier
 Dave Holland
 Scott LaFaro
 Christian McBride
 Jaco Pastorius
 John Patitucci
 Gary Peacock
 Rufus Reid
 Victor Wooten

Drums

Terry Lynn Carrington
 Jack DeJohnette
 Peter Erskine
 Steve Gadd
 Elvin Jones
 Jeff "Tain" Watts
 Dave Weckl
 Tony Williams

Post-Bebop Method Books

All can be found at Jamey Aebersold Jazz: <http://www.aebersold.com>

Baker, David. **Modal and Contemporary Patterns**

Baker, David. **Modern Concepts in Jazz Improvisation**

Bergonzi, Jerry. **Inside Improvisation** (a seven volume series)

Crook, Hal. **Beyond Time and Changes: A Musician's Guide to Free Jazz
Improvisation**

Liebman, David. **How to Approach Standards Chromatically**

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Ricker, Ramon. **Pentatonic Scales for Jazz Improvisation**

Weiskopf, Walt. **Intervalic Improvisation**

Weiskopf, Walt and Ramon Ricker. **Giant Steps: A Player's Guide to Coltrane's
Harmony**

Weiskopf, Walt and Ramon Ricker. **The Augmented Scale in Jazz**

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Volume 102: Jerry Bergonzi – Sound Advice

Volume 104: Kenny Werner – Free Play