

Developing Jazz Vocabulary

*For the Jr. High and
High School Jazz Player*

“Your ear is the final judge as to what sounds right
and what sounds wrong”

Big Nick Nicholas... August 1994

*Tim Price Jazz
Lesson*

The Play and Learn Process for developing jazz vocabulary is;

Listening to jazz vocabulary patterns

Imitating jazz patterns immediately after they are played

Evaluating the way jazz patterns are heard and played

Repeating and memorizing each jazz vocabulary pattern

Applying jazz vocabulary patterns to a variety of jazz forms

Jazz Vocabulary

Jazz vocabulary results from combining a variety of melodies with any number of rhythms in the jazz swing style or more contemporary rock style. Jazz music has borrowed musical concepts from every single style of music. Its rhythmic vitality and unusual nuances of sound and dynamics gives jazz music its flavor.

Next we will break down the vocabulary into small simple areas.

Study these areas of Jazz:

Rhythms

One must learn and develop facility with rhythm much in the same way one learns other aspects of instrumental technique. It is important to introduce and integrate rhythms sequentially, starting with simple jazz swing and rock rhythm patterns that gradually develop into more complicated rhythmic forms.



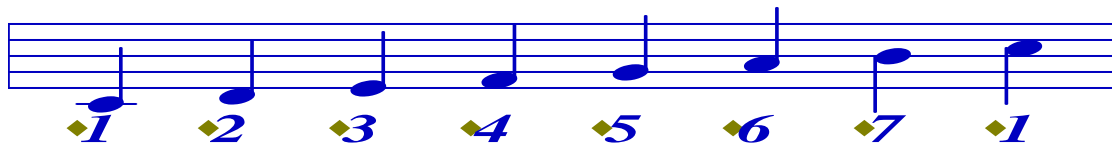
Melodies

Pentatonic (5 note) Scales form an integral part of the diatonic melodic and harmonic system. These natural pentatonic melodies may be quickly and successfully combined with simple rhythms by most beginning jazz students. The minor pentatonic scale with the addition of an additional note; the flat fifth (b5) has become widely recognized as the traditional blues scale.

The minor pentatonic scale is extracted from a major scale in the following manner;

The Major Scale is built on 7 scale tones.
You should learn all major scales in all 12 keys.

C Major Scale



The number below each note indicates the number tone of the scale from 1 to 7

The Minor Pentatonic scale is built on 5 Chord Tones

1 $b3$ 4 5 $b7$ of the major scale
(flat 3) (flat 7)

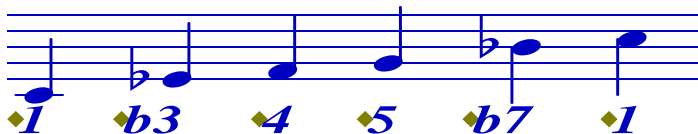
$b3$ = the #3 scale tone of the major scale lowered $\frac{1}{2}$ step (b)

$b7$ = the #7 scale tone of the major scale lowered $\frac{1}{2}$ step (b)

i.e. C Major Scale - #3 Chord Tone = E The Flat 3 ($b3$) = Eb

i.e. C Major Scale - #7 Chord Tone = B The Flat 7 ($b7$) = Bb

C Minor Pentatonic Scale



The Blues Scale is created by adding 1 note to the Minor Pentatonic Scale.... a flatted 5 ($b5$) of the major scale

i.e. C Major Scale - #5 Chord Tone = G The Flat 5 ($b5$) = Gb

C Blues Scale



By combining these two components of rhythm and melody we see how we can quickly create a simple jazz phrase.

Simple Blues Vocabulary — pay especially close attention to the stylistic qualities of each note, the accents or staccato markings will help give you the “swing “ feel of the rhythm being played.



This Simple Blues Vocabulary can be expanded into a longer pattern.

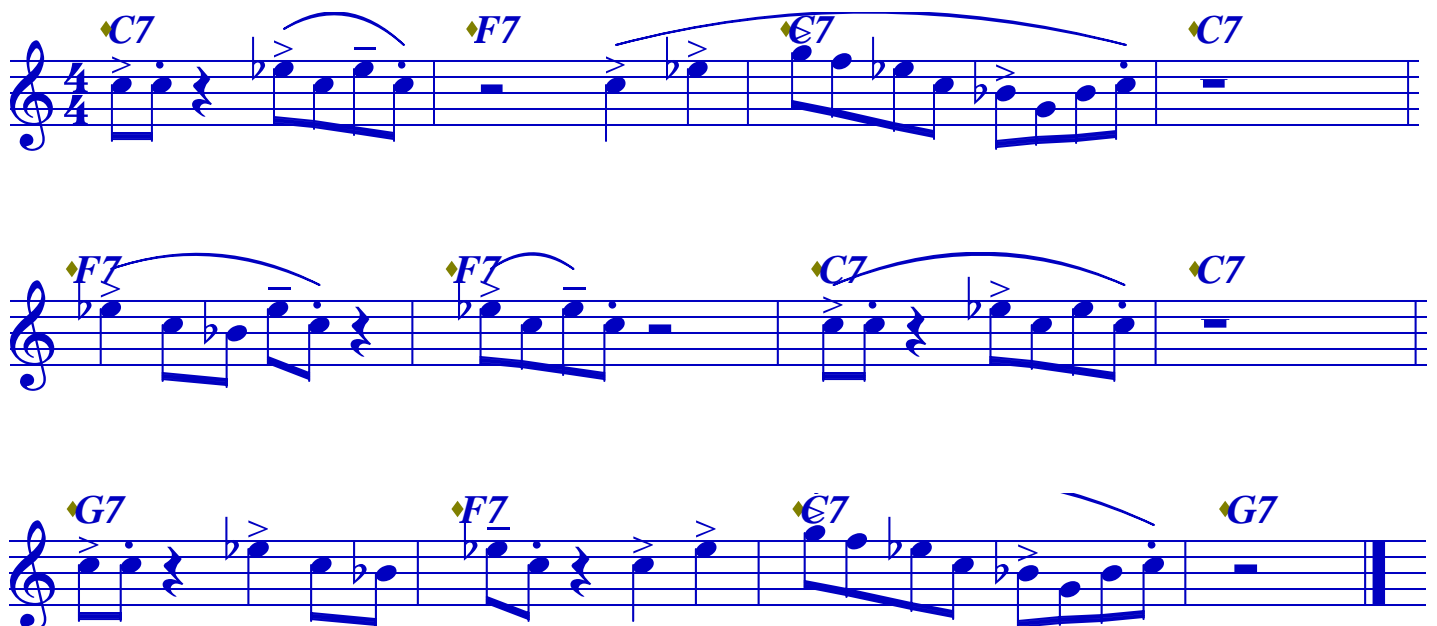
Longer Patterns



The Creative Process

IMPROVISATION is the creative process in jazz music and it is accomplished by learning to skillfully combine, rearrange, manipulate and apply a wide variety of memorized jazz patterns to selected jazz forms. Each of the following examples combine key jazz vocabulary patterns into blues choruses that exemplify this process.

Try this chorus, which is built on a 12 bar Blues chord progression.



Processing Rhythms

Quick rhythm response when improvising can be developed by processing a variety of melodies through a series of fixed rhythms.

Three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, labeled (1), (2), and (3). Each staff shows a different melodic line with various rhythmic patterns and articulations.

Chaining the Blues

Melody chains help students quickly hear and create major vocabulary patterns through the I7-IV7-V7 chords used in the traditional blues form. These major patterns can be easily changed to minor (blues) patterns by merely raising the 6th and 2nd pentatonic scale steps to the b7th and b3rd of the blues scale. There is an exception on the IV7 pentatonic pair when the 2nd scale step is lowered ½ step to the flat five (b5) scale step.

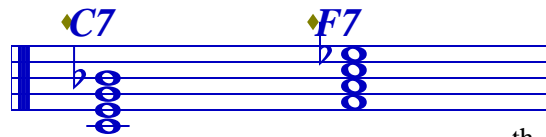
Two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, illustrating major and minor blues patterns with chord symbols and scale steps.

Staff 1 (Major): C7, F7, C7. Scale steps: 5 6 1, 2 1, 5 6 1, 2 1.

Staff 2 (Minor): C7, F7, C7. Scale steps: 5 b7 1, b3 1, 5 b7, b5.

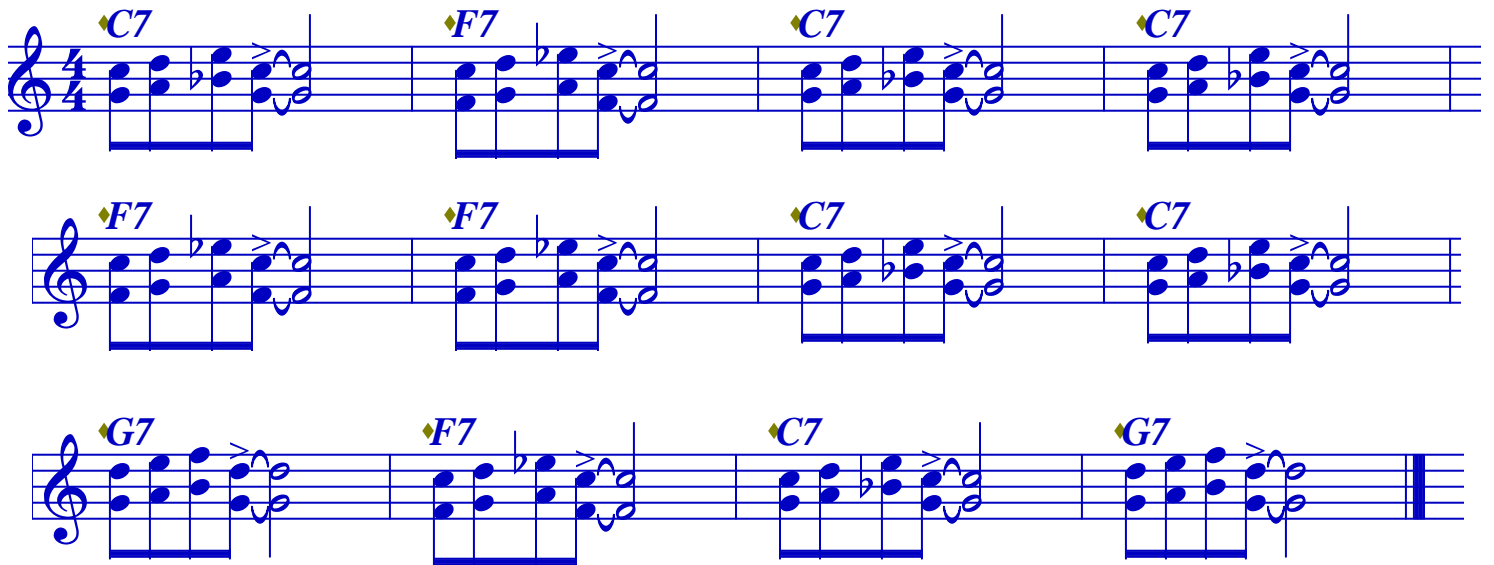
Guide Tones

When dominant seventh chords move up a fourth or down a fifth, the thirds and sevenths (tri-tones) invert and may be effectively used in guiding blues melodies through the blues harmonies.



C7 to F7 (both Dominant 7th Chords)
C7 to F7 is a move up a 4th

The following patterns are easily memorized and quickly developed. THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!!



Playing Changes

Melody chains provide an excellent jazz vocabulary source for structuring and building melodies through the chord changes. These simple sets of whole-step pairs act as harmonic coordinates that assist students in keeping their place as they learn to play the chord changes. The following 5 steps outline the Play and Learn process for developing these simple melodic seeds into the traditional jazz language.

Step 1 Identifying, hearing and playing the whole-step pairs through a set of chord changes.

Musical notation for Step 1, showing a melody chain in 4/4 time. The notation is written on a single staff in treble clef. The melody consists of two lines of music. The first line starts with a Dm7 chord and ends with a G7 chord. The second line starts with a Cmaj7 chord and ends with an A7 chord. The melody is composed of whole-step pairs, with rests indicated by a '7' symbol. The final measure of the second line ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Step 2 Embellishing the whole-step pairs with a chromatic leading tone

Musical notation for Step 2, showing six measures of music in 4/4 time, written on a single staff in treble clef. Each measure is numbered 1 through 6. The notation shows the whole-step pairs from Step 1, with a chromatic leading tone added to the beginning of each pair. Measure 1 starts with a D note, followed by a chromatic leading tone (C#), then D, E, F, G. Measure 2 starts with an E note, followed by a chromatic leading tone (D#), then E, F, G, A. Measure 3 starts with an F note, followed by a chromatic leading tone (E#), then F, G, A, B. Measure 4 starts with a G note, followed by a chromatic leading tone (F#), then G, A, B, C. Measure 5 starts with an A note, followed by a chromatic leading tone (G#), then A, B, C, D. Measure 6 starts with a B note, followed by a chromatic leading tone (A#), then B, C, D, E.

Step 3 Connecting whole-step pairs with chromatic half-steps

Musical notation for Step 3 showing four pairs of notes connected by chromatic half-steps. The pairs are labeled *ii m 7*, *V7*, *V7*, and *Imaj7*. Each pair is enclosed in parentheses below the staff.

EMBELLISHED PAIRS CONNECTED BY CHROMATICS

Musical notation for Embellished Pairs Connected by Chromatics, showing a sequence of notes with chromatic half-steps connecting pairs.

Step 4 Setting up and playing off the seventh scale steps on the ii7-V7 (b7) and the V7-I7 (#7) chord changes

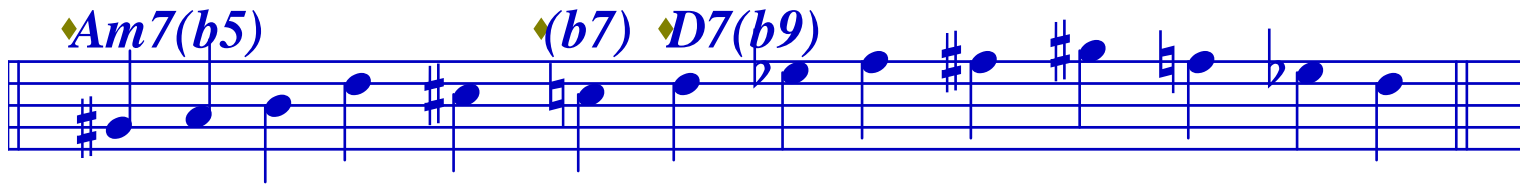
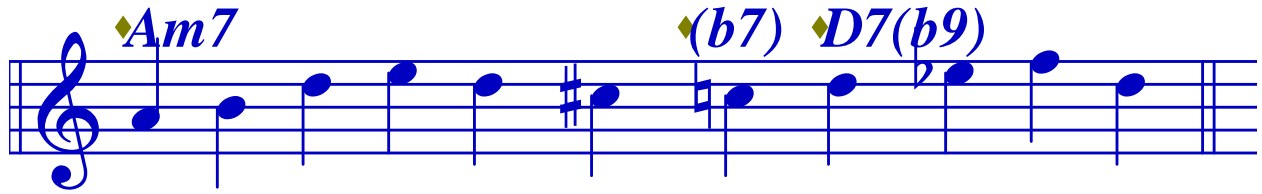
Musical notation for Step 4 showing the C Major Pentatonic scale with fingerings for *Am7* and *D7 (b7)* chord changes.

C Major Pentatonic

Musical notation for Step 4 showing the G Major Pentatonic scale with fingerings for *D7*, *Gmaj7*, and *(#7)* chord changes.

G Major Pentatonic

Step 5 Setting up and playing the diminished scale off the b7 of the V7



NOTE; More complicated patterns can be readily developed for the ii7b5 – V#9 combinations with this system built on the diminished seventh.



HAVE FUN.... WORK HARD

Tim Price