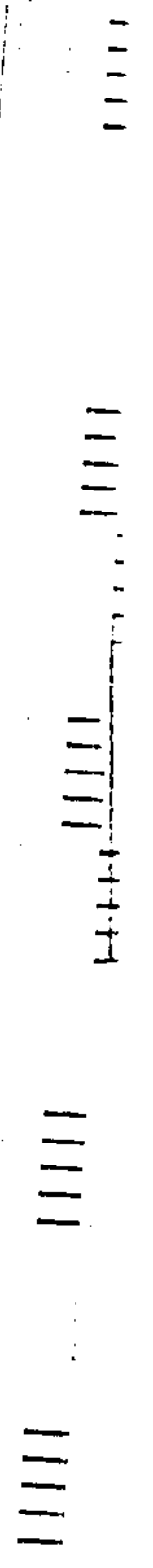
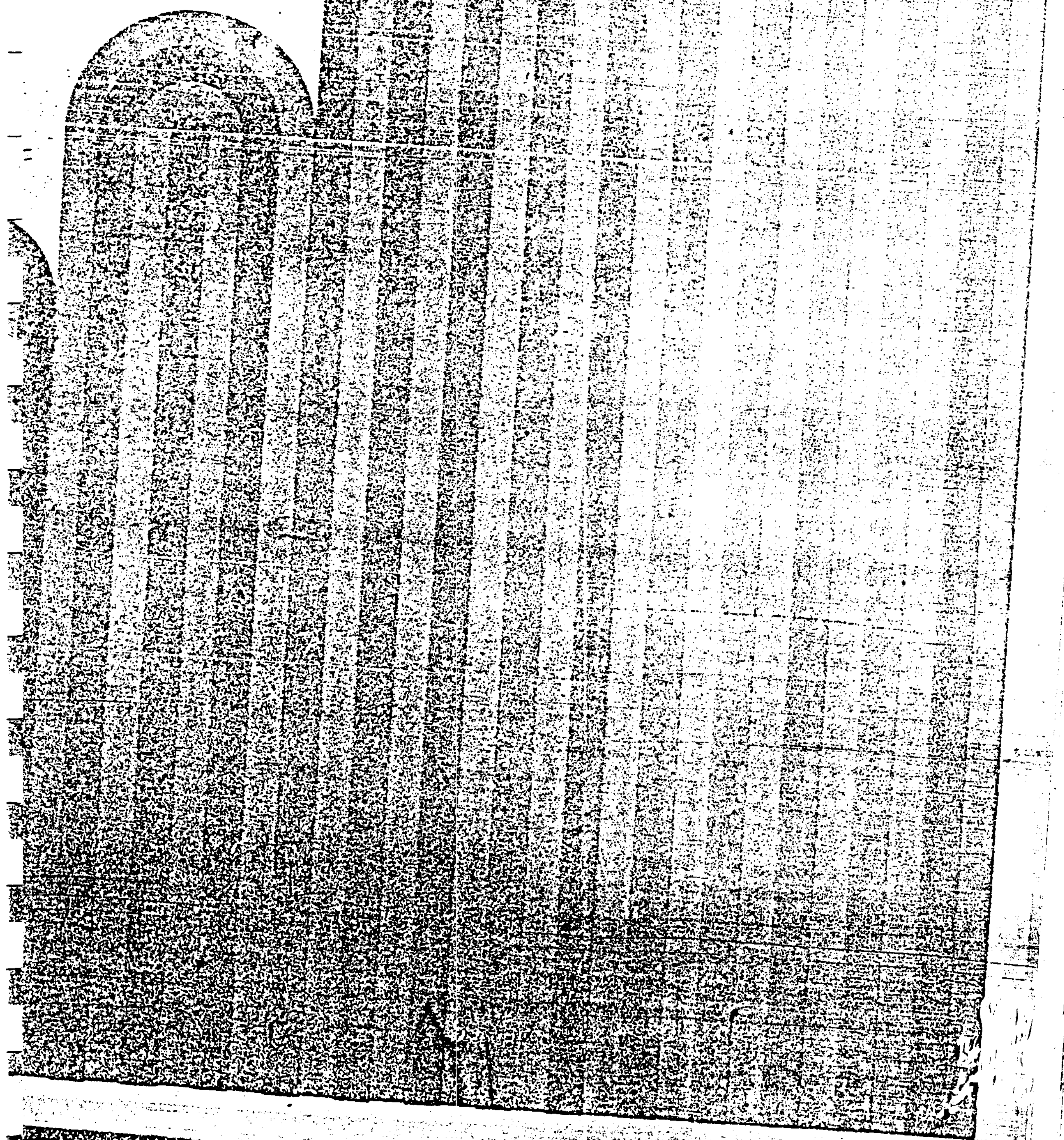


Jazz Improvisation Keyboard Players Complete Edition

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E - BASIC CONCEPTS
O - INTERMEDIATE CONCEPTS
EE - ADVANCED CONCEPTS
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Jazz Improvisation for Keyboard Players

by Dan Haerle

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INTRODUCTION

Improvisation, almost a lost art in some styles of music, is the freest form of expression of the human spirit. An improviser, who is actually a composer, can create his own melodies, harmonies and rhythms, and can instantly change the mood of the music he plays to anything he desires. Moreover, he can choose to improvise in any style, such as classical, folk, rock or jazz.

Listening is really the best way to gain an understanding of various styles of music. Therefore, the books in this series concentrate primarily on the materials and devices available to the keyboard player who wants to improve his skill as an improviser. The volumes begin with basic concepts and proceed through intermediate and advanced levels.

All the examples and exercises in these books are intended to be played. Understanding each example is important, but the hearing of it is of equal importance. Therefore, everything in the books should be played carefully and as musically as possible.

The serious student may wish to examine two other books by the author as supplementary to these volumes. They are JAZZ/ROCK VOICINGS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY KEYBOARD PLAYER and SCALES FOR JAZZ IMPROVISATION, both published by Studio P/R, Inc.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Kay, for her hard work in helping to prepare these manuscripts and her loving encouragement throughout.

I. CREATING MELODIES

Before beginning to improvise your own melodies, you should look at melodies of all types to see what goes into them. Generally speaking, all melodies are based on skipping motion through chords or step-wise motion through scales. Usually a melody is composed using a combination of the two methods. Since an improviser is really a composer, he must be thoroughly acquainted with chords and scales so that these materials are immediately available to him.

Play the following melodies and notice that they are based entirely on skipping motion through the chords which accompany them.

Example 1

Ballad

Example 2

Jazz Waltz

When you play the next two melodies, you will see that they use only step-wise motion through scales.

Example 3

Swing

Example 4

Bossa Nova

Though a melody may be mainly skips or mainly steps, it will probably be a combination of the two most of the time. Play the next two melodies and see how skipping and step-wise motion are combined.

Example 5

Swing

C Maj 7

F Maj 7

C Maj 7

D mi 7

G 7

C Maj 7

Musical notation for Example 5, Swing. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The melody consists of a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The bass line consists of chords: C Maj 7, F Maj 7, C Maj 7, D mi 7, G 7, and C Maj 7.

Example 6

Rock

D mi 7

G 7

D mi 7

G 7

Musical notation for Example 6, Rock. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The melody consists of a sequence of notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The bass line consists of chords: D mi 7, G 7, D mi 7, and G 7.

The previous examples have used very simple chord and scale materials and are intended to show the principles of melodic motion. The same principles may be used with more complex altered chords and with many different types of scales. These will be discussed in the intermediate and advanced books of this series.

Lesson 1

Improvising With Chord Tones

The following examples show several different kinds of skipping motion using only the tones of a seventh chord. Play these examples.

Example 7

D mi 7

Example 8

G 7

Example 9

C Maj 7

The three chords shown in the preceding three examples represent the three main chord types: minor, dominant and major. They are commonly used together in the progression on which you will improvise shortly.

First, begin by improvising on each chord separately. In the following exercises, play the written chord with your left hand and improvise melodies with your right hand using only the chord tones shown. This discipline will help you learn chords better and quicker. The slashes in each measure indicate the number of beats of duration of each chord.

Exercise 1

D mi 7

Exercise 2

G 7

Exercise 3

C Maj 7

As you play exercises 1, 2 and 3, try to sing along, either out loud or in your head. Later, you will find that this helps you to play what you hear more easily. It is very good practice to try to imitate melodies that you hear on the radio or on records. Developing the ear is an important part of becoming a good improviser. To be able to express yourself easily, you must be able to instantly transfer into specific notes and rhythms the ideas you hear inside your head. Practice singing chords and scales of all types and learn to recognize any interval up or down from a given pitch.

Now try the first three exercises again and use a metronome to help you develop a good steady beat. Play the exercises several times using the following variations:

- 1) faster and slower tempos
- 2) different note values (1/3's, triplets, 1/16's)
- 3) various styles (classical, folk, jazz, etc.)
- 4) different meters (3/4, 5/4, 6/8, etc.)
- 5) dynamics and shading
- 6) different articulation (legato, staccato, etc.)

After experimenting with these variations for a while, you should be ready to proceed to the next exercise. The same variations should also be applied to exercise 4.

Lesson 2
Improvising With Scale Tones

When you build a seventh chord, you take the 1st, 3rd, 5th and 7th notes of some scale form to construct it. For example, to build a major seventh chord, you take the 1st, 3rd, 5th and 7th notes of a major scale. Since each chord comes from some scale, naturally that chord and scale will sound good together. Actually, most chords have more than one scale that sounds good with them. Following is a brief listing of some basic chord forms and scales that sound good with them:

<u>Chord Type</u>	<u>Appropriate Scale Form</u>
Major Seventh	Major Scale Lydian (Major with raised 4th)
Minor Seventh	Pure Minor Scale Dorian (Pure Minor with raised 6th)
Dominant Seventh	Mixolydian (Major with lowered 7th) Lydian, $\flat 7$ (Major, $\sharp 4$ and $\flat 7$)

The next examples show several types of step-wise motion through scales which are appropriate for each chord. Play these examples.

Example 11

D mi 7

Example 12

G 7

Example 13

C Maj 7

As in Lesson 1, the minor, dominant and major chords are again used here. Learning to use scales with these three types of chords will make it easier for you to play many different chord progressions. Very often, entire progressions use only these chords transposed into several keys.

Now play exercises 5, 6 and 7 using only step-wise motion through the scales shown. Try to avoid any skipping motion but do emphasize the chord tones which are found in the scale. Usually it is a good idea to have chord tones occur on the beat or in a strongly accented position. Also notice, in exercises 6 and 7, that the 4th scale step of those two scales is very dissonant and should not be emphasized.

Exercise 5

D mi7 (D dorian scale)

Exercise 6

G7 (G mixolydian scale)

Exercise 7

C Maj7 (C Major scale)

As before, play with the metronome and try several variations such as you used in Lesson 1. Be sure to discipline yourself to use only step-wise motion and be sure to use the correct fingering for the scales. Try moving up or down the scale farther than just the one octave that is notated.

Now, proceed to exercise 8, still using the metronome and still using only step-wise motion. As in Lesson 1, your scale melodies now have to connect as the chords change. Remember that the 7th tone of the scale (which is also the 7th of the chord) wants to move downward step-wise when the chord changes.

Again, with exercise 8, use the six variations of the first lesson. As before, at a faster tempo, make each chord last twice as long; at a slower tempo, make each chord last half as long.

Exercise 8

The musical notation for Exercise 8 is presented in two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The exercise is divided into three sections, each with a chord label above it: D mi 7, G7, and C Maj 7. Each section contains a scale melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The scale melodies are: D minor 7 (D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C), G7 (G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F), and C Major 7 (C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb). The 7th note of each scale (C, F, and Bb respectively) is marked with a vertical line and a downward-pointing arrow, indicating the required step-wise movement to the 7th of the next chord.

You have probably noticed that all three scales used in this lesson are really a C major scale which starts on different notes. This is because the progression is in the key of C and these scales help make that key feeling even stronger. Also, the dorian is one of the best choices to use with a minor chord and the mixolydian scale is the first basic choice for a dominant 7th chord.

HHHHHHHH

HHHHHHHH

HHHHHHHH

Improvising With Chord Tones And Scale Tones

As shown in examples 5 and 6, most melodies use both skipping and step-wise motion. In this lesson, you will combine the two to create your own melodic improvisations.

At this point, two general types of improvisation should be mentioned. They are what I call the Flowing Melodic and the Motive Development approaches to improvising. The second approach will be discussed in Volume Two of this series. In the present lesson, you will be concerned with a Flowing Melodic approach.

Example 14, which is based on the same chords used in exercises 4 and 8, shows a Flowing Melodic type of solo. As you play this example, sing along with your right hand.

Example 14

Example 14 is a musical score for a piano. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The piece is divided into three measures, each with a different chord indicated above the staff: D mi 7, G 7, and C Maj 7. The melody in the treble staff is a continuous line of notes with various rhythmic values and fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) indicated above the notes. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

As you can see, there is no repetition or development of ideas but rather one continuous flowing melodic line. A continuous stream of running notes is not essential to this approach but short, rhythmic ideas lend themselves more easily to the Motive Development approach.

Notice also that the melodic line in example 14 is very singable and could almost be the melody to a song. It is not necessary to create a tune-like melody in all of your improvisations; many pianistic styles are not at all vocal in the sense of being singable. But a lyrical, melodic kind of thinking will make your playing very musical. To check yourself, see if you can "pre-hear" or vocally sing your ideas before you play them!

Now you are ready to play exercise 9, using both chord tone skips and step-wise motion through scales. Having removed the disciplines of Lessons 1 and 2, you should be able to play flowing, singable melodies.

Exercise 9

Exercise 9 is a musical score for a piano. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The piece is divided into three measures, each with a different chord indicated above the staff: D mi 7 (D dorian), G 7 (G Mixolydian), and C Maj 7 (C Major). The melody in the treble staff is a scale-like line of notes with various rhythmic values. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

The variations of the earlier lessons are again listed below to help stimulate your imagination. As before, apply these to exercise 9 and try to make music out of whatever you do. Repeat the progression a number of times to give yourself a chance to firmly establish the style or "feel" of what you are playing. Also, by playing over the chords several times, you have a chance to experiment with different kinds of motion, different rhythmic feelings, etc. Don't try to play too many fast notes at first but instead try to create melodies that you can sing. The speed will come naturally as you play more and build confidence. Don't forget to use these variations:

- 1) faster and slower tempos
- 2) different note values
- 3) various styles
- 4) different meters
- 5) dynamics and shading
- 6) different articulation

After you feel some confidence about what you are able to do with exercise 9, move on to the next exercise. Exercise 10 is exactly the same chord progression that you just finished playing but is transposed to the key of F. After you have played this exercise, transpose it to the keys G Major, B^b Major and D Major. The left hand will always play the root position (1, 3, 5, 7) or the nearest inversion of the chord.

Exercise 10

Exercise 10 is a four-measure progression in the key of F major. The first measure is labeled "G mi 7 (G dorian)", the second "C 7 (C mixolydian)", and the third "F Maj 7 (F Major)". The notation includes a treble clef, a bass clef, and a common time signature. The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth notes, and the left hand plays a bass line with eighth notes. The exercise is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines.

II. USING THE LEFT HAND

The left hand supplies an important part of the total sound in improvisation on keyboards and it contributes heavily to the interest of the total expression. Some of the ways in which it contributes are harmonic information, rhythmic energy, stylistic accompaniment, and sometimes actually part of the melodic improvisation.

In the days of ragtime, boogie woogie, and old stride styles of piano, the left hand was very active because it supplied the aspects of a missing rhythm section; that is, it made up for the void left when there was no bass player or drummer present. In the bebop era, the piano usually never appeared in a solo capacity and so the pianist would simply supply a very simple shell to give the barest outline of the harmony which was then completed by his right hand. The bass player and drummer were providing time and harmonic foundation. In more recent years, the left hand has become used in a more sophisticated manner and we again find it providing more of the functions of both bass and drums in the sense of creating harmony and time.

In this section the basic and conventional uses of the left hand will be explored to see how the pianist needs to be prepared to create his total improvisation.

Lesson 4

Voicing Chords

Example 1 shows a short improvisation in which the left hand is using voicings of each chord rather than root position black chords.

Example 1

D mi 7 (ii) G7 (V) C Maj 7 (I)

In the preceding example, notice that the voicing used on the II chord is built on the 3rd of the chord. The voicing on the V chord is built on the 7th and the voicing built on the I chord is again built on the 3rd. This is typical of a majority of the left hand voicings used by pianists. Voicings built on the 3rd and 7th, which include one or both of those chord tones, tend to achieve the strongest feeling of the harmony with the fewest number of notes. Also, they tend to work well together, as in the progression above, to provide a smooth easy connection from one voicing to another. Other voicings may be used, of course, but the voicings we will begin using exclusively are the following four voicings, shown in example 2.

Example 2

D mi 7 G7 C Maj 7

Notice that, of these four voicings, two are built on the 3rd and two are built on the 7th. There are some guidelines for the use of these voicings but, generally speaking, any of these four voicings may be used with any of the three main families of chords: major, minor, and dominant. The student will be surprised to discover that entire progressions may be played very satisfactorily using only these four voicings. Other voicings may be supplemented according to musical taste but these voicings will meet the needs of the progression in sounding the harmony with clarity and with a minimum of different choices required.

In exercise 1, you are now going to play the same progression found in example 1, using the same voicings but making your own choices as to how to rhythmically place them. Try to concentrate on the left hand so that it feels good and contributes to the total sound. Play exercise 1 several times and vary the treatment of the left hand each time. Use both staccato and sustained chords and vary the rhythm so that chords occur both on the beat and in a syncopated position.

Exercise 1

D mi 7 (8va optional) G 7 C Maj 7 (8va optional)

Notice that, in exercise 1, the II-V-I progression involves progressions of 5ths. In a situation such as this, you will find that voicings will tend to alternate between a voicing built on the 3rd and a voicing built on the 7th, or vice versa. This provides a good smooth harmonic flow with the greatest physical ease in playing. One general rule in using the left hand is to always use the least possible amount of motion in connecting from one voicing to another. If your left hand jumps around in a very disjunct, angular manner, the musical flow will be affected in a bad way and it will simply be harder to play and concentrate on your right hand improvisation. Notice the effect of this kind of poor voice connection in example 3.

Example 3

D mi 7 G 7 C Maj 7

In playing this example, I'm sure that you discovered that it is uncomfortable and unsatisfying to move the left hand in the way notated. Now go back to example 1 and play it again to see the difference in a smooth connection of voicings.

There are a few considerations in the choice of these four voicings that should be observed. First of all, if a minor 7th chord is a tonic function, or the I chord in a key, any of the four voicings may be used. However, if the minor 7th is a II function and is to be followed by a V chord, the dominant 7th located a 5th below, then it would be best to avoid either of the voicings that has the 6th in it. The reason is that it prematurely suggests the resolution to the V chord or confuses the feeling of the resolution since the 6th of that chord is the 3rd of the V chord. Example 4 shows how this creates a poor effect.

Example 4

D mi 7 G7

9 6 (no 6th) 6 3 7

However, in this type of harmonic situation, when a voicing without a 6th is used, a much stronger feeling of progression from II to V is achieved. This can be clearly seen when playing example 5.

Example 5

9 7 6 3 7

Because of the strong nature of dominant 7th chords, there is one important consideration. A dominant 7th usually implies a strong feeling of a V chord which needs to move onward and resolve. Therefore, it is not a good idea, generally speaking, to use the voicing without a 7th in it as that particular voicing is noncommittal. A 3-6-9 voicing could imply either major or dominant and for that reason is somewhat ambiguous. So whenever a dominant 7th is encountered, it would be best to use any of the other three voicings but not the one without a 7th in it.

With major 7th chords, any of the four voicings may be used with good effect. The major 7th is a rest chord and normally does not need to progress. Therefore, there doesn't have to be any particular concern over whether the 7th is present or not as is the case with minor and dominant chords.

One additional chord family occurs commonly and that is the half-diminished chord. Many voicings used with minor 7th chord may be simply adapted to half-diminished chords since a half-diminished chord is really a minor 7th chord with a lowered 5th. For example, the 7-3-5 voicing may be used as well as 3-7-9. However, the lowered 5th which is characteristic of the sound may be added to make a clearer picture of the harmony. A surprising thing about half-diminished chords is the fact that a root position voicing (1-3-5-7) sounds very good because it really is already an inversion. The half-diminished chord traditionally has a function of being a VII chord. The VII chord is a substitute for V so really the VII chord sounds like an incomplete V chord or a V chord in inversion. See example 6.

Example 6

-5
B mi 7 (vii) C Maj 7 (I) G7 (V) C Maj (I)

So, in addition to using the four voicings listed in example 2 with half-diminished chords, it is a good idea to use the root position block voicing as well.

One other troublesome family of chords is the diminished 7th chord. It always seems to be a problem as to how to voice it and make it sound other than a traditional classical music chord. The simplest solution in voicing a diminished 7th chord is to simply add into the voicing at some point the note located a major 7th above the root of the chord. Thus, it is an added chord tone that colors the chord in a very contemporary way removing its traditional sound. In actual fact, a note may be added a whole step above any of the chord tones of the diminished 7th in voicing it to get a very contemporary altered sound. See example 7.

Example 7

B^o Typical Voicings: Added Tones (C[♯]^o)

1-

For further ideas on voicings, the student is referred to the author's book, JAZZ/ROCK VOICINGS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY KEYBOARD PLAYER, also published by Studio P/R, Inc. Now you are ready to improvise a short progression using left hand voicings. In exercise 2, the voicings have been provided but the improviser must still supply the articulation, rhythmic spacing, and style of use of the voicings. Notice again that the voicings connect smoothly throughout the progression. Also remember to keep your right hand improvisation very simple while concentrating on the use of these left hand voicings.

Exercise 2

The musical score for Exercise 2 is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The time signature is common time (C). The first system contains four measures with the following chord voicings and fingerings in the left hand:
1. B mi 7 (fingering: 5, 3, 2, 0)
2. E 7 (fingering: -9, 7, 5, 0)
3. A mi 7 (fingering: 5, 3, 2, 0)
4. D 7 (fingering: 9, 7, 5, 0)
The second system contains three measures with the following chord voicings and fingerings in the left hand:
1. D mi 7 (fingering: 9, 7, 5, 0)
2. G 7 (fingering: 8, 3, 2, 0)
3. C Maj 7 (fingering: 9, 8, 0, 0)
The right hand in both systems plays a simple melodic line consisting of quarter notes, with some notes beamed together. The notes in the right hand correspond to the chord tones of the left hand voicings.

Play this exercise several more times referring again to some of the variations that were suggested in Section 1 of the book. Try to make your total improvisation musical and melodic and make sure that the left hand is an integral part of your total expression.

In exercise 2, you should try to simulate a regular rhythmic pattern similar to that found in example 2. Remember to emphasize the off-beats though some chords could fall on the beat.

Exercise 2

Musical notation for Exercise 2. The piece is in 4/4 time. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with eighth notes, starting on a bass line of (b2) in the first measure. Chords are labeled as C7, F7, and C7 above the staff.

Example 3 shows a typical rhythmic pattern used for a bossa nova. Notice again that a regular pattern is used to create the style. This is not necessary, but will help for at least a period of time to help establish the style before treating the left hand accompaniment more freely.

Example 3

Musical notation for Example 3. The piece is in 4/4 time. The right hand has a simple melodic line with quarter notes. The left hand plays a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Chords are labeled as C Maj 7, F Maj 7, and C Maj 7 above the staff.

In exercise 3, use the same rhythmic pattern as is found in example 3, but of course apply it to the different voicings shown in the exercise.

Exercise 3

Musical notation for Exercise 3. The piece is in 4/4 time. The right hand has a simple melodic line with quarter notes. The left hand plays a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Chords are labeled as C Maj 7, B^b Maj 7, C Maj 7, and B^b Maj 7 above the staff.

Example 4 shows an almost traditional treatment of the waltz beat. In a slow jazz waltz, almost of the ballad type, a very simple straightforward treatment such as this is very appropriate and allows the right hand more freedom in the melodic line.

Example 4

Musical notation for Example 4. The piece is in 3/4 time. The right hand has a simple melodic line with quarter notes. The left hand plays a consistent rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. Chords are labeled as G mi 7, C7, F Maj 7, and B^b Maj 7 above the staff.

In exercise 4, use the same rhythmic style of waltz accompaniment as is seen in the previous example in playing this exercise.

Exercise 4

A mi 7 D7 G Maj 7 C Maj 7

The next example shows a simple form of left hand accompaniment which could be used to create a rock style. Again, notice there is regular pattern and that the emphasis in this case is partially on the beat and partially syncopated.

Example 5

D mi 7 G7 D mi 7 G7

In the following exercise, improvise your own rock style accompaniment either using the same pattern or a new one.

Exercise 5

C7 F7 C7 F7

The next example shows a faster or swing feeling waltz. Notice again that, just as in the 4/4 swing feel, the emphasis is on a syncopated beat to achieve the swing feeling.

Example 6

C Maj 7 B Maj 7 C Maj 7 B Maj 7

In the following exercise, use the same rhythmic pattern found in the previous example with the new voicings shown to achieve your total improvisation. 1-

Exercise 6

The ballad style of accompaniment offers probably the most possibilities and the greatest challenge in terms of achieving a complete or full sound on the keyboard. The following example shows several methods used in the style of accompaniment. They are:

- 1) an arpeggiated chord
- 2) a root sounded in the low register, followed by a three or four note voicing
- 3) a light texture created by the use of a voicing without a bass note
- 4) a voicing followed by a bass note or an arpeggiation down to the bass note.

Example 7

Actually, all of these devices may be incorporated in subtle combinations to create a variety of accompaniment styles in the ballad idiom. Also, a good understanding of the classical piano literature will help to enhance the use of the left hand in the ballad style. All of the pianistic devices that have proven to be valid in the classical literature in slow styles of accompaniment would generally lend themselves to a ballad style in a jazz idiom. The only difference is that the materials used are of a different nature.

In the next exercise, try several different approaches to the left hand accompaniment using some indicated in the previous example and inventing your own combinations. Remember that a ballad is basically a slow, relaxed, and sometimes lazy style. A lot of rhythmic activity is not necessary and not really even desirable.

Exercise 7

It is suggested that listening to pianists such as Bill Evans will give a good understanding of the ballad styles possible as he has proven to be a pianist who gives a great deal of attention to a sensitive treatment of the ballad on the piano.

Rhythmic Treatment of the Left Hand

Already some mention has been made of the rhythmic possibilities in creating different styles of left hand accompaniment. However, in a more general sense, we might point out that, regardless of the style, the left hand can be used for rhythmic interest in a number of ways. The following examples will show different treatments of the left hand in one of several ways. They are as follows:

- 1) rhythmic punctuation or interjection of chords between phrases of the right hand
- 2) rhythmic punctuation or emphasis of certain notes found within the phrases of the right hand
- 3) extensive reinforcement of the right hand improvisation (in some cases complete rhythmic unison with the right hand)

Example 1 shows an extremely sparse use of the left hand. The left hand chords are practically nonexistent, allowing for a very open, free feeling to the right hand styles of improvisation.

Example 1

Musical notation for Example 1. The piece is in common time (C). The right hand (treble clef) contains three melodic phrases. The left hand (bass clef) provides sparse accompaniment with chords in the first and third measures, and a few notes in the second and fourth measures. The chords are labeled C7, F7, and C7 above the staff.

A good example of this approach to soloing is the playing of Herbie Hancock during the period when he was the pianist with the Miles Davis quintet. In exercise 1, try to emulate the style of the previous example. Use the left hand as sparsely as possible and allow it only to punctuate in between phrases, never occurring in unison with any of the melodic notes.

Exercise 1

Musical notation for Exercise 1. The piece is in common time (C). The right hand (treble clef) contains three melodic phrases. The left hand (bass clef) provides sparse accompaniment with chords in the first and third measures, and a few notes in the second and fourth measures. The chords are labeled C7, F7, and C7 above the staff. The left hand chords are shown as (b8) and (b8) in the bass clef.

Example 2 still shows punctuation between phrases, but also rhythmic emphasis by the left hand of certain accented tones in the right hand melodic line.

Example 2

Musical notation for Example 2. The piece is in common time (C). The right hand (treble clef) contains four melodic phrases. The left hand (bass clef) provides accompaniment with chords in the first and third measures, and a few notes in the second and fourth measures. The chords are labeled D mi 7, G7, D mi 7, and G7 above the staff.

In exercise 2, try to use the left hand both to punctuate between phrases and to accent or reinforce certain notes only of the melodic line.

Exercise 2

Musical score for Exercise 2. The piece is in common time (C) and consists of four measures. The bass staff provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The treble staff contains a melodic line. Chords are indicated as D mi 7 and G7 above the staff.

Example 3 shows extensive use of the left hand actually reinforcing every note of the melodic line. The only change occurs in tones in the left hand voicing as the chord itself changes.

Example 3

Musical score for Example 3. The piece is in common time (C) and consists of four measures. The bass staff provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The treble staff contains a melodic line. Chords are indicated as D mi 7 and G7 above the staff.

In Exercise 3, try to imply extensive use of the left hand rhythmically coinciding with each right hand melodic note to give extremely strong emphasis to it.

Exercise 3

Musical score for Exercise 3. The piece is in common time (C) and consists of four measures. The bass staff provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The treble staff contains a melodic line. Chords are indicated as D mi 7 and G7 above the staff.

III. PIANISTIC APPROACHES TO SOLOING

Lesson 7

The Single Note Linear Solo

So far, we have seen a number of examples of the single note linear solo throughout the first part of the book. This is probably the most common approach to improvisation on keyboards. Traditionally, in any medium, we are used to hearing a melody which is accompanied by harmony found underneath it or in a lower register. So, it is logical to hear the melody or melodic improvisation played by the right hand and accompanied by a chord (usually an inversion or a voicing of the chord) found underneath it. However, this same principle could be inverted as some pianists have done where the melody occurs as a bass melody and the right hand assumes the responsibility for accompaniment. The following examples show both methods where the same exact material has simply been inverted and the melody occurs first in the right hand and then in the left hand.

Example 1a

Example 1a shows a single-note linear solo in the right hand. The melody consists of a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The left hand provides harmonic accompaniment with chords: G mi7, C7, and F Maj7. The right hand starts with a quarter rest in the first measure, then begins the melody in the second measure.

Example 1b

Example 1b shows the same single-note linear solo material as Example 1a, but inverted. The melody is now in the left hand, and the right hand provides harmonic accompaniment with chords: G mi7, C7, and F Maj7. The right hand starts with a quarter rest in the first measure, then begins the accompaniment in the second measure.

The problem with left hand improvisation is simply this: because of the fact that the left hand is inverted in its physical structure from that of the right hand, a melodic conception that lends itself to the right hand is often awkward to execute on the left hand. Therefore, if the pianist wants to pursue extensive use of the left hand in a melodic capacity, he needs to devote a great deal of time to practicing techniques that will allow the left hand to speak fluently as a solo voice, or develop almost an entirely separate conception for use in the left hand, or both.

In the following exercise, try simply to create a pleasing melodic improvisation and a satisfying rhythmic accompaniment by the left hand. Use several different styles and play this exercise several times. It would be best to start out in the traditional jazz swing style trying to get a smooth swing feel or triplet feeling. Then try the same example in bossa nova or the latin style, rock style, ballad style, and even convert it to 3/4 to play in a jazz waltz style.

Exercise 1

Exercise 1 shows a single-note linear solo in the right hand. The melody consists of a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The left hand provides harmonic accompaniment with chords: G mi7, C7, F Maj7, and D7 (with a flat 9). The right hand starts with a quarter rest in the first measure, then begins the melody in the second measure.

In exercise 1, a melodic line is supplied. The student should play the line in octaves and attempt to fill in chord tones between the two octaves. Sometimes these chord tones will occur as simply inversions of the same harmony, if the melody seems to arpeggiate through the chord. Other times these chord tones will be simply passing scale tones that move through the scale of the harmony. In some instances, they may be entirely chromatic motion that moves in exact parallel with the melody. All of these possibilities work equally well.

Exercise 1

In example 2, the second form of chord style solo is shown. In this second form, the octave unison with the harmony filled in occurs in the right hand alone. The left hand supports the total sound with a typical voicing which is played in rhythmic unison as the right hand creates the melodic chord style improvisation.

Example 2

As before, the inner tones between the octave unison melody are simply chord tones, passing tones or, in some cases, chromatic parallel motion consistent with the melody. In exercise 2, use the left hand voicings and the melodic line supplied, filling in chord tones and harmonizing the motion of the right hand while keeping the left hand a repetitious rhythmic reinforcement of it.

Exercise 2

In this section of the book, several typical types of chord progressions will be studied and practiced. These are basic types of progressions that occur over and over in most music that has a jazz or jazz-rock orientation. A good understanding of these types of progressions will lead to overall fluency and ease as an improviser in dealing with practically any music encountered.

Lesson 10

The II-V-I Progression

There are many excellent improvisation books on the market that help an improviser deal with the II-V-I progression. Some important authors of such materials are Jamey Aebersold, David Baker, and Jerry Coker. The serious improviser is encouraged to look into all the materials available on the II-V-I progression. In this lesson, a basic understanding of the II-V-I progression in both a major key and a minor key will be explained and the pianist will be encouraged to practice this progression in all keys.

Example 1 shows the chord voicings and scale forms for a II-V-I progression in a major key. Notice that the three scales involved are actually all one scale: the major scale of the key. This is the first and most basic way of dealing with the II-V-I progression as an improviser. Play example 1 several times, applying principles studied in the first three sections of this book.

Example 1

D mi 7 (II) G7 (V) C Maj 7 (I)

In all the chord progressions for study in this section, a serious attempt should be made to give conscious thought to the application of the principles studied earlier in the book. Exercise 1 is a II-V-I progression in the key of F. Notice that the left hand voicing is in a different inversion but that the scales that accompany the progression are still basically all one scale, an F Major scale.

Exercise 1

G mi 7 (II) C7 (V) F Maj 7 (I)

Now play the II-V-I progression in the key of G and then the key of B^b and D, gradually adding more sharps and flats to the key signature until you have moved through all keys. Try variations on the II-V-I progression, either in a major or a minor key, playing it in different styles and also stretching the progression out in length from four bars to eight bars, simply doubling the length of the chords. At a slower tempo, it will probably be condensed to two bars. At a faster tempo, each chord may last a measure or two measures, or even longer. Regardless, they will be in equivalent lengths to create a regular two, four or eight bar phrase, generally speaking.

Example 2 shows the II-V-I progression in a minor key. Notice that the scale used in this case is simply the harmonic minor scale of the key center. This scale adequately sounds the chord tones of each of the chords of the II-V-I progression so that it is not necessary to use any other scales.

Example 2

D mi^{b5}7 (II) G^{b9}7 (V) C mi^{#7} (I)

In Volume Two, the improviser will discover additional possibilities for scales that could be used with either the II or the V chord in II-V-I progressions. For the time being, the main thing to concentrate on is the feeling of the melodic line moving through each of the three chords and leading to the following chord in each case. To achieve this flow, it is not necessary to use three separate or distinct scale forms.

In exercise 2, improvise on the II-V-I progression in F minor, using the voicings and the scale form indicated. Then, as before, transpose the progression to other minor keys, eventually playing it in all keys.

Exercise 2

G mi^{b5}7 (II) C^{b9}7 (V) F mi^{#7} (I)

For ease and fluency of expression, the pianist must be equally comfortable in terms of harmonic understanding in all major or minor keys since jazz progressions inevitably modulate through practically every key at some point. Therefore, it is a good idea not to delay in striving for complete key fluency with no mental blocks about some keys supposedly being hard. Such keys are simply unfamiliar to the player until they are practiced and played, and then they are, in actual fact, no harder than any other key.

(For teacher or student use)

A musical staff system consisting of two staves. The top staff begins with a treble clef, and the bottom staff begins with a bass clef. The staves are empty.

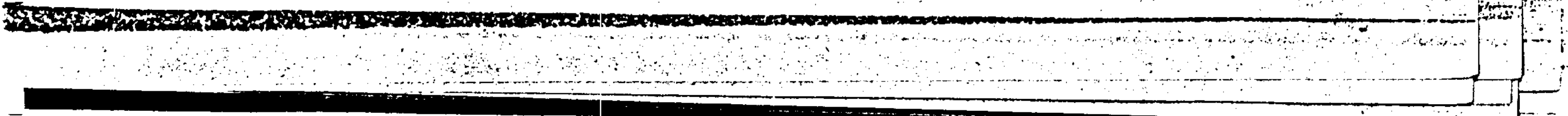
A musical staff system consisting of two staves. The top staff begins with a treble clef, and the bottom staff begins with a bass clef. The staves are empty.

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A musical staff system consisting of two staves. The top staff begins with a treble clef, and the bottom staff begins with a bass clef. The staves are empty.

A vertical scale on the right side of the page, featuring a series of horizontal lines of varying lengths, resembling a ruler or a scale for measurement.



Blues Progressions

In this lesson, three basic forms of blues progressions will be shown. They are as follows:

- 1) the simple three chord I-IV-V blues progression
- 2) the typical swing era II-V-I blues progression
- 3) minor blues

Example 1 shows the typical I-IV-V blues progression. This is extremely common in simple jazz forms and a great deal of rock and pop music.

Example 1

Musical notation for Example 1, showing a simple three-chord I-IV-V blues progression. The first system shows two measures of C7 (I) and two measures of F7 (IV). The second system shows two measures of C7 (I) and two measures of F7 (IV).

Musical notation for Example 1, showing a four-chord I-IV-V-I blues progression. The first system shows two measures of C7 (I) and two measures of F7 (IV). The second system shows two measures of G7 (V) and two measures of C7 (I).

Example 2 shows a swing style blues progression typical of that played by musicians in the 30's and 40's. However, this basic form of blues progression with variations and elaborations is still played widely today by musicians when playing in a jazz style.

Example 2

Musical notation for Example 2, showing a swing style blues progression. The first system shows two measures of C7 (I), two measures of F7 (IV), two measures of C7 (I), and two measures of F7 (IV). The second system shows two measures of C7 (I), two measures of F7 (IV), two measures of C7 (I), and two measures of F7 (IV).

Musical notation for Example 2, showing a more complex swing style blues progression. The first system shows two measures of C7 (I), two measures of A7 +9 (VI), two measures of D mi 7 (II), two measures of G7 (V), two measures of C7 (I), and two measures of G7 (V). The second system shows two measures of C7 (I), two measures of A7 +9 (VI), two measures of D mi 7 (II), two measures of G7 (V), two measures of C7 (I), and two measures of G7 (V).

Example 3

Example 3 shows two musical staves illustrating chord progressions for minor blues. The first staff shows a progression of C mi7, F mi7, C mi7, and F mi7. The second staff shows a progression of C mi7, A mi7 (with a b5), D mi7 (with a b5), G7 (with a b9), C mi7 (with a b9), and G7 (with a b9). The chords are represented by notes on a five-line staff, with accidentals and stems indicating the specific notes and their positions.

Example 4 shows the blues scale which could be used to improvise over any of the three forms of blues shown previously.

4

C Blues Scale

The C Blues Scale is shown on a musical staff. The notes are: C, Eb, E, F, G, Ab, A, Bb, B, C. The scale is written in two lines, with the first line containing the notes C, Eb, E, F, G, Ab, A, Bb, B, C and the second line containing the notes C, Eb, E, F, G, Ab, A, Bb, B, C.

When using the blues scale, only the one blues scale of the key (built on the root of the tonic chord) is used exclusively throughout the entire progression. It will be found that this scale closely fits all the chords in the blues progression with only one or two dissonant notes. This accounts for its popularity in use over the blues progression. Also the basic sound of the scale is actually bluesy and contributes to the feeling of a blues progression. This scale may be used over either major or minor blues and in practicing blues progressions, try using it accordingly.

In the exercises that follow, the scales shown are either mixolydian or dorian scales that accompany the chords of the progression. The exception is the harmonic minor scale used over the last portion of the minor blues. This is the same principle that we saw in playing over a II-V-I progression in a minor key since that is really what the last part of a minor blues is. Now play exercise 1, which is the simple three chord, I-IV-V progression. Use either the blues scale of the key or the separate mixolydian scales indicated.

e 1

C7(I) F7(IV)

C7(I) G7(V) F7(IV) C7(I)

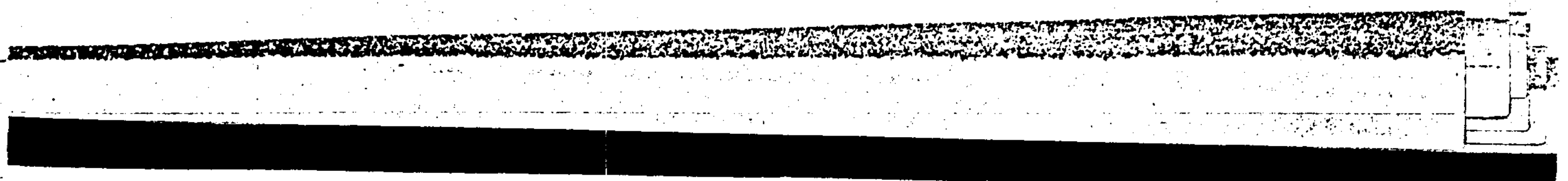
Exercise 2 is the II-V-I form of swing style blues. Again, use either the blues scale of the key or the scales indicated, which are mixolydian scales for each dominant 7th chord and the major scale of the key for the II-V progression. Notice that the VI chord uses the harmonic minor built on the II chord.

e 2

C7(I) F7(IV) C7(I)

F7(IV) C7(I) A7(VI) (D harmonic mi)

D mi7(II) G7(V) C7(I) G7(V)



In exercise 3, you will play on the minor blues progression. As before, you may either use the blues scale of the key or the dorian scales indicated for the minor chords and the harmonic minor indicated for the II-V progression.

1-3:

Exercise 3

The musical score for Exercise 3 is divided into three systems, each with a melody line and a chord line. The first system features a C minor blues progression with chords C mi 7, F mi 7, and C mi 7. The second system features an F minor blues progression with chords F mi 7, C mi 7, and b5 Ami 7. The third system features a D minor blues progression with chords b5 D mi 7, b9 G7, C mi 7, and b9 G7. The melody lines are written in a 12-measure format, with the first measure of each system containing a C-clef and a common time signature. The chord lines are written in a 12-measure format, with the first measure of each system containing a C-clef and a common time signature. The melody lines use various scales including the blues scale and dorian scales. The chord lines use various chords including minor triads, minor 7th chords, and minor 7th flat 5th chords.

After playing all three forms of these blues progressions, transpose them to other keys and again try playing them at different tempos and in different styles such as rock, bossa nova and jazz waltz. A blues that is played as a waltz usually is a 24 bar progression in which all the chords are simply doubled in length.

Exercise 2 is a continuous cycling progression of fifths with alternating minor and dominant chords. Notice that this exercise is in two parts so that the alternating minor and dominant chords occur in all keys. As before, the left hand voicings are simple shells built on the 3rd or the 7th and the scale for improvisation is the same for each minor 7th and the dominant 7th that follows it. This is typical of the II-V-I progression studied previously. In this case, only the II and V chords are occurring.

2a

Handwritten musical notation for Exercise 2a, consisting of three systems of two staves each. Each system contains four measures of music. The top staff of each system shows a scale-like line with notes and accidentals, and the bottom staff shows a chord voicing. The chords are: G mi7, C7, F mi7, Bb7 (first system); Eb mi7, Ab7, C# mi7, F#7 (second system); B mi7, E7, A mi7, D7 (third system).

se 2b

Handwritten musical notation for Exercise 2b, consisting of three systems of two staves each. Each system contains four measures of music. The top staff of each system shows a scale-like line with notes and accidentals, and the bottom staff shows a chord voicing. The chords are: C mi7, F7, Bb mi7, Eb7 (first system); Ab mi7, Db7, F# mi7, B7 (second system); E mi7, A7, D mi7, G7 (third system).

Exercise 3 is still another slight variation of a cycling progression using a portion of a II-V-I. In this case, the alternate qualities of chords are dominant to major creating a succession of V-I progressions. As before, this progression is divided into two sections so that the dominant and major chords will occur in all keys. Notice that the scale used for improvisation is the same for both the dominant 7th and the major chord that follows.

3

G7	C Maj7	F7	B ^b Maj7
----	--------	----	---------------------

This row contains four measures. Each measure shows a scale on a treble clef staff and a chord diagram on a bass clef staff. The scales are: G7 (G-B-A-B-A-G), C Maj7 (C-D-E-F-G-A), F7 (F-G-A-B-A-G), and B^b Maj7 (B^b-C-D-E-F-G). The chord diagrams show the chord voicings for each.

E ^b 7	A ^b Maj7	D ^b 7	G ^b Maj7
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This row contains four measures. Each measure shows a scale on a treble clef staff and a chord diagram on a bass clef staff. The scales are: E^b7 (E^b-F-G-A-B-A-G), A^b Maj7 (A^b-B-C-D-E-F), D^b7 (D^b-E-F-G-A-G), and G^b Maj7 (G^b-A-B-C-D-E). The chord diagrams show the chord voicings for each.

B7	E Maj7	A7	D Maj7
----	--------	----	--------

This row contains four measures. Each measure shows a scale on a treble clef staff and a chord diagram on a bass clef staff. The scales are: B7 (B-C-D-E-F-A-G), E Maj7 (E-F-G-A-B-C), A7 (A-B-C-D-E-F-G), and D Maj7 (D-E-F-G-A-B). The chord diagrams show the chord voicings for each.

C7	F Maj7	B ^b 7	E ^b Maj7
----	--------	------------------	---------------------

This row contains four measures. Each measure shows a scale on a treble clef staff and a chord diagram on a bass clef staff. The scales are: C7 (C-D-E-F-G-A-B), F Maj7 (F-G-A-B-C-D), B^b7 (B^b-C-D-E-F-A-G), and E^b Maj7 (E^b-F-G-A-B-C). The chord diagrams show the chord voicings for each.

A ^b 7	D ^b Maj7	F ⁺ 7	B Maj7
------------------	---------------------	------------------	--------

This row contains four measures. Each measure shows a scale on a treble clef staff and a chord diagram on a bass clef staff. The scales are: A^b7 (A^b-B-C-D-E-F-G), D^b Maj7 (D^b-E-F-G-A-B), F⁺7 (F-G-A-B-C-D-E), and B Maj7 (B-C-D-E-F-G-A). The chord diagrams show the chord voicings for each.

E7	A Maj7	D7	G Maj7
----	--------	----	--------

This row contains four measures. Each measure shows a scale on a treble clef staff and a chord diagram on a bass clef staff. The scales are: E7 (E-F-G-A-B-A-G), A Maj7 (A-B-C-D-E-F-G), D7 (D-E-F-G-A-G), and G Maj7 (G-A-B-C-D-E). The chord diagrams show the chord voicings for each.

Exercise 4 is a continuous cycle of minor 7th chords. This kind of progression is less likely to occur than the previous progressions, but is excellent for practice in that it allows the pianist to practice voicings and chord forms for minor 7ths in all keys.

Exercise 4

Exercise 4 musical score showing a cycle of minor 7th chords in all keys. The score is organized into three systems, each with four measures. The first system contains G mi7, C mi7, F mi7, and B^b mi7. The second system contains E^b mi7, A^b mi7, C[♯] mi7, and F[♯] mi7. The third system contains B mi7, E mi7, A mi7, and D mi7. Each measure includes a melodic line with eighth notes and a piano accompaniment with two chords.

Exercise 5 is similar to Exercise 4 in that the cycling progression moves through all major keys with an unbroken cycle of major 7th chords. Again, this is not typical of most chord progressions, but will prove to be excellent for practice.

Exercise 5

Exercise 5 musical score showing a cycle of major 7th chords in all keys. The score is organized into three systems, each with four measures. The first system contains G Maj7, C Maj7, F Maj7, and B^b Maj7. The second system contains E^b Maj7, A^b Maj7, D^b Maj7, and G^b Maj7. The third system contains B Maj7, E Maj7, A Maj7, and D Maj7. Each measure includes a melodic line with eighth notes and a piano accompaniment with two chords.

Lesson 13

Chromatic Progressions

The exercises in this lesson are simply a series of progressions which move through all keys, but by chromatic step-wise motion rather than moving around the circle of fifths. The first three exercises involve a single chord type moving chromatically downward, as this would be the most common type of chromatic progression. The succeeding exercises combine dominant and major or minor and dominant in typical types of chromatic progressions.

Exercise 1 involves a chromatic progression of dominant 7ths. Each scale presented is a mixolydian scale and the voicings are built on the 3rd of the chord.

ex 1

G7 G^b7 F7 E7

E^b7 D7 D^b7 C7

B7 B^b7 A7 A^b7

Exercise 2 involves a chromatic progression of minor 7ths. The scales used for improvisation are dorian scales.

Exercise 2

Musical score for Exercise 2, showing a chromatic progression of minor 7th chords and their corresponding Dorian scales. The score is organized into three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system contains G mi7, F# mi7, F mi7, and E mi7. The second system contains E b mi7, D mi7, C# mi7, and C mi7. The third system contains B mi7, B b mi7, A mi7, and A b mi7. Each chord is accompanied by its respective Dorian scale written in the treble clef, and the chord voicing is shown in the bass clef.

Exercise 3 is a chromatic progression of major 7ths. The scales used are major scales.

Exercise 3

Musical score for Exercise 3, showing a chromatic progression of major 7th chords and their corresponding major scales. The score is organized into three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system contains G Maj7, G b Maj7, F Maj7, and E Maj7. The second system contains E b Maj7, D Maj7, D b Maj7, and C Maj7. The third system contains B Maj7, B b Maj7, A Maj7, and A b Maj7. Each chord is accompanied by its respective major scale written in the treble clef, and the chord voicing is shown in the bass clef.

Exercise 4 is an alternating progression of minor and dominant 7th. This progression is a substitute for the II-V progression. The dominant 7th is a half step below the minor 7th, rather than a 5th below.

Exercise 4a

Exercise 4a musical notation showing four systems of chords and scales. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a scale and a bass clef staff with a chord diagram.

- System 1: G mi7, G^b7, F mi7, E7
- System 2: E^b mi7, D7, C[#] mi7, C7
- System 3: B mi7, B^b7, A mi7, A^b7

Exercise 4b

Exercise 4b musical notation showing four systems of chords and scales. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a scale and a bass clef staff with a chord diagram.

- System 1: A^b mi7, G7, F[#] mi7, F7
- System 2: E mi7, E^b7, D mi7, D^b7
- System 3: C mi7, B7, B^b mi7, A7

Exercise 5 is an alternating progression of dominant and major 7ths. This progression is a substitute for the V-I progression. The major 7th is preceded by a dominant 7th a half-step above rather than a 5th above.

Exercise 5a

G7	G ^b Maj7	F7	E Maj7
E ^b 7	D Maj7	D ^b 7	C Maj7
B7	B ^b Maj7	A7	A ^b Maj7

Exercise 5b

A ^b 7	G Maj7	G ^b 7	F Maj7
E7	E ^b Maj7	D7	D ^b Maj7
C7	B Maj7	B ^b 7	A Maj7

As before, the student is encouraged to practice these exercises with a variety of treatments, using both different tempos and different styles. Also, as before, any of these progressions may be stretched in length, doubling or quadrupling the length of each chord. In actual practice, the progressions may be extended or squeezed to any size. As they are presented here, they are regular and of an average chord duration.

It will be found that different portions of Section IV would be a valuable part of the daily practice routine. Possibly, a different exercise might be included in the practice session each day with a regular repetition of this cycle when all the exercises have been completed. Serious practice in this section will lead to ease and fluency in all keys and, most important, the ability to improvise on many chord progressions at sight.

After gaining a good understanding of the concepts presented in this book, the student is encouraged to examine Volume Two in the series. Subjects covered in that book include the development of melodies, further use of the left hand, basic scale choices for improvisation, rhythmic conception, and different treatments of the II-V-I progression.