



# Jazz Piano

## AND HARMONY

### AN ADVANCED GUIDE

F7 (#9) Ab pent. (blues note b5) Bb7 Bb pent.

F7 (#9) Ab pent. D7(#9) F pent. G7 (alt) Db pent.

C7 (sus) F pent. F7 Ab F7 (#9)

by **JOHN M. FERRARA**

*Jamey Abersold Jazz®*



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## **Chapter 1 - Improvisation Basics** (*track 01*)

In jazz, the eighth note line is an important part of improvisation. There are two fundamental concepts for the musician to master. One is the eighth note swing or feel; second is the ability to play eighth note patterns in symmetrical phrases, such as two and four bar phrases.

The eighth note in jazz is commonly referred to as the swing eighth note. It is notated as an eighth note, but played with a triplet feel. It is not as extreme as a dotted eighth and sixteenth. If anything, it is more “straight” than swing. It is *not* a dotted eighth, sixteenth note feel. That is the kind of feel that a strict classical player may impart to the music. It is slightly more than straight; not too much, not too little.

There are, of course, jazz tunes that stylistically do not adhere to the swing eighth technique described here. Herbie Hancock’s “Cantelopes Island” is a straight eighth note type tune, and the improvisation should match the feel. In any case, you have to be flexible enough to play any style of tune. The swing eighth note can be very natural for some folks to play, and rather difficult for others in creating a natural and unexaggerated improvisation line. Listening to other players will help to underscore the type of feeling you want to achieve; horn players and piano players alike.

Very necessary tools for improvisation are major and minor scales in all keys. This includes the natural, harmonic, and melodic minor. Not only is it important for fingering control, but the scales can be applied in improvisation: that is, superimposing them over various harmonic situations as well as modes, as you will see. In addition, major and minor arpeggios are good technique builders. Arpeggiating the four part chords such as major, minor, and dominant seventh over four octaves with both hands is a good exercise as well.

The next page illustrates the swing eighth note and how it relates to the eighth note triplet grouping.

# Swing Eighths

Track 02

Written Played

Written Played

## Chapter 2 - Improvisation Guidelines (track 03)

These are the elements of an improvised line:

- Stepwise motion diatonic to the scale of the moment
- Chromatic motion connecting two contiguous scale notes
- Chromatic approach note to a scale note
- Consecutive third or fourth intervals from the scale of the moment
- A leap followed by stepwise motion in the opposite direction

A **chromatic approach note** is one which is leaped into or played without preparation and that resolves  $\frac{1}{2}$  step above or below the chromatic approach note to the note in the chord scale. An example of this is in the A-7 of the 13<sup>th</sup> bar in the next example where the B natural leaps down to the G# and resolves upward by  $\frac{1}{2}$  step to the A natural.

### **A word about scale of the moment -**

This means analyzing what key you are in at any given time. The key signature of a tune indicates what major or minor key the music is based in. However, there are temporary key changes which can occur from bar to bar. You can't just play the major or minor scale associated with the key signature. As discussed in book one, *Jazz Piano and Harmony: A Fundamental Guide*, you can construct a basic chord scale by:

1. Connecting the four chord tones of a chord whose root is *diatonic* with diatonic passing tones (notes of the scale of the key).
2. Connecting the four chord tones of a chord whose root is *non-diatonic* with passing tones one whole step above each chord tone.
3. For the chords II7 and IV7, use the method in step 2 - this will yield what is called a "lydian b7" chord scale, which is commonly used for these two chords.

Practice playing over one chord for two bars, then four, then eight. Use a metronome with one click per beat, and then one click each on beats **two** and **four** emulating a drummer's high hat. A great way to play, and one that I have always used, is to improvise with the metronome on two and four as mentioned, but with NO left hand (sit on your left hand if need be). The results are amazing. You will begin to play lines like a horn player, which is very desirable. You will not rely on left hand accompaniment to indicate the chord sound or progression. The single note line in the right hand should eventually be masterful enough to spell out the chord progression, without simply arpeggiating the chord.

The following example is an improvisation over a common progression. It utilizes chord scales derived from the chord of the moment, chromatic passing tones, and leaps.

# Improvisation Example

Track 04

$\bullet = 120$

Dmin7 G7 Emin7 A7

Musical staff showing a melodic line in 4/4 time. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. Chord diagrams for Dmin7, G7, Emin7, and A7 are provided above the staff.

Amin7 D7 A<sup>b</sup> min7 D<sup>b</sup> 7 Cmaj7 B<sup>+</sup> 7 B<sup>b</sup> 7 A7

Musical staff showing a melodic line in 4/4 time. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in measure 5. Chord diagrams for Amin7, D7, A<sup>b</sup> min7, D<sup>b</sup> 7, Cmaj7, B<sup>+</sup> 7, B<sup>b</sup> 7, and A7 are provided above the staff.

9

Dmin7 G7 Emin7 A7

Musical staff showing a melodic line in 4/4 time. A box with the number '9' is at the start. Chord diagrams for Dmin7, G7, Emin7, and A7 are provided above the staff.

Amin7 D7 A<sup>b</sup> min7 D<sup>b</sup> 7 C7 D<sup>b</sup> maj7 C7

Musical staff showing a melodic line in 4/4 time. Chord diagrams for Amin7, D7, A<sup>b</sup> min7, D<sup>b</sup> 7, C7, D<sup>b</sup> maj7, and C7 are provided above the staff.

17

Gmin7 C7 Fmaj7 C7sus4 Fmaj7

Amin7 D7 Dmin7 G7

25

Dmin7 G7 Emin7 A7

Amin7 D7 A<sup>b</sup> min7 D<sup>b</sup> 7 Cmaj7 B<sup>b</sup> 7 A7



## **II-7 V7 patterns**

In the previous example, common II-7 V7 patterns or clichés were incorporated. Sometimes, incorporating just such a cliché in an improvisation can add a little variety. In the following example, two such clichés are shown. They illustrate the activation of the seventh degree of the minor seventh progressing to the third of the dominant seventh. Practice this in all keys.

## II-7 V7 Exercise

$\bullet = 120$

Dmin7 G7 E<sup>b</sup>min7 A<sup>b</sup>7 Emin7 A7 Fmin7 B<sup>b</sup>7

In tempo

F<sup>#</sup>min7 B7 Gmin7 C7 A<sup>b</sup>min7 D<sup>b</sup>7 Amin7 D7

B<sup>b</sup>min7 E<sup>b</sup>7 Bmin7 E7 Cmin7 F7 C<sup>#</sup>min7 F<sup>#</sup>7

Dmin7 G7 Dmin7 G7 C<sup>o</sup>7 Cmaj7

Dmin7                      G7                      E<sup>b</sup> min7                      A<sup>b</sup> 7

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. Above the staff are four guitar chord diagrams: Dmin7 (5th fret), G7 (open), Eb min7 (5th fret), and Ab 7 (5th fret).

Emin7                      A7                      Fmin7                      B<sup>b</sup> 7

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. Above the staff are four guitar chord diagrams: Emin7 (open), A7 (open), Fmin7 (5th fret), and Bb 7 (5th fret).

F<sup>#</sup> min7                      B7                      Gmin7                      C7

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3. Above the staff are four guitar chord diagrams: F# min7 (5th fret), B7 (open), Gmin7 (5th fret), and C7 (open).

A<sup>b</sup> min7                      D<sup>b</sup> 7                      Amin7                      D7

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: Ab4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, Ab4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. Above the staff are four guitar chord diagrams: Ab min7 (4th fret), Db 7 (5th fret), Amin7 (5th fret), and D7 (open).