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CHAPTER ONE:
Bebop Scale

Players such as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie refined the bebop scale. It had been used prior to these players but had not been formally worked out. **The bebop scale is basically a way to get eight notes out of a seven-note scale**. Why did players want to do that? A lot of bebop is played at fast tempos. The soloist would sometimes string long groups of eighth notes together. It's hard to navigate long scale-like lines made of seven notes. By adding one chromatic note you could have eight notes to the measure, which worked out great in 4/4 time (eight eighth notes per measure). Through analyzing solos of the great bebop players, you will discover that they did certain chromatic moves on the same scales in a fairly consistent way. These are what we call the bebop scales.

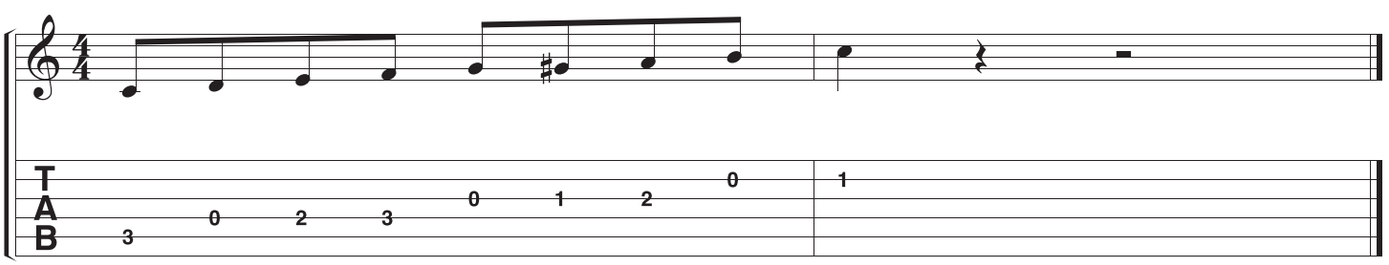
Transcription is the best way to get in a player's head. Remember, this book is just one person's take on various topics of jazz improvisation. I want to share my observations with you, but I also want to encourage you to explore every area for your self. You will probably discover some new way of looking at and understanding jazz, which you then can share with others.

I am going to discuss three different bebop scales: major, minor, and dominant 7. Remember that the bebop scales are an attempt to organize a very loose way of playing scales, so don't be surprised to find contradictions in your exploration of these scales. They are definitely not written in stone!

The Bebop Major Scale

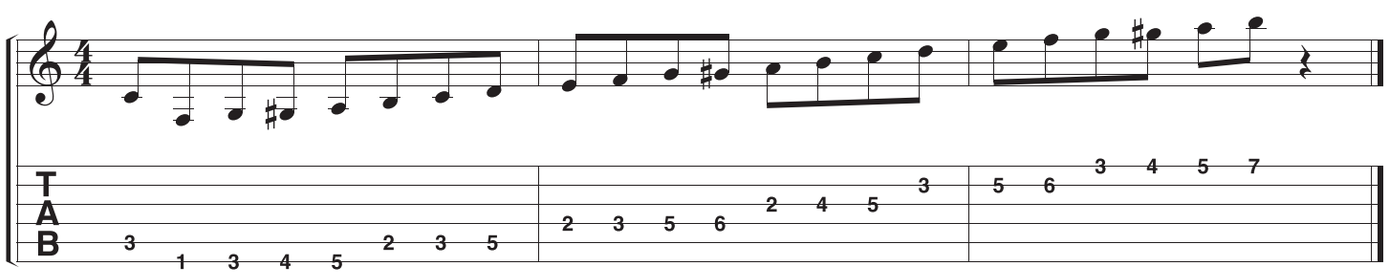
The bebop major scale is an Ionian mode (same notes as the major scale) with an added sharp 5th. The sharp 5th is used as a chromatic passing tone. These fingerings lets the player achieve eight notes per bar. The examples will use the C major bebop scale.

Example 1 is a bebop major scale in C:



Following are some fingerings using the bebop major scale. Notice that they're mostly three or four notes per string. This is a good way (but not the only way) to learn scale fingerings. These fingerings will get you moving more horizontally across the fingerboard as opposed to vertically. I have found it makes my scale-like lines a little more legato.

Example 2 shows the bebop major scale fingerings across the fingerboard (C major):



CHAPTER THREE:
The Altered Dominant Scale
(7th Degree Melodic Minor Scale)

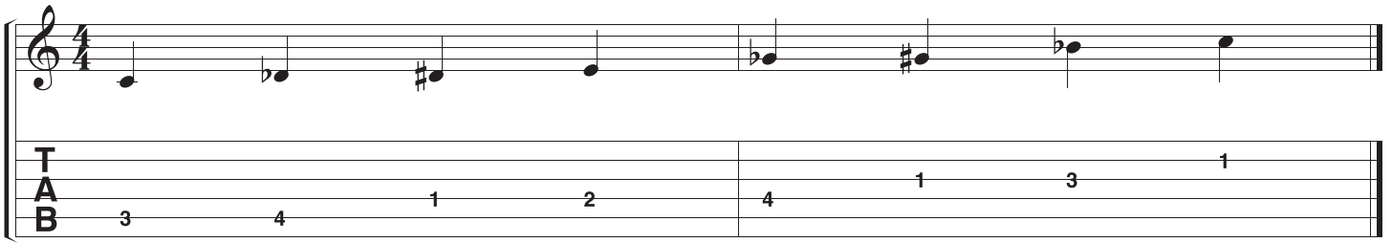
The mode built on the 7th degree of the ascending melodic minor scale is known as the altered dominant scale, the Super Locrian mode, or the diminished whole-tone scale. Previously, when I labeled the modes of the melodic minor scale, I called the 7th degree Super Locrian. I did this so the student might relate it to the modes of the major scale (the 7th mode of the major scale is the Locrian mode). The term **altered dominant scale** works especially well since this scale contains every alteration on a dominant 7 chord (♯5, ♭5, ♯9, ♭9). The term **diminished whole-tone** also works because the first tetrachord (first four notes of the scale) spell a diminished scale, and the second tetrachord spells a whole-tone scale.

Once again I'd like to stress the reason for not thinking that you play over an altered C7 chord by playing a D♭ melodic minor scale. In theory this works, but in practice it is wrong. A C7 tonality is built around the notes C, E, and B♭. A D♭ minor tonality is built around the notes D♭, F, and A♭. It's easier to focus on the C7 chord tones if you're thinking in terms of C, not D♭. Now how about if you start using tritone substitutes; every time you go to play a flat 5 sub you'd have to think of a minor scale a half step away. This just gets all too confusing and non-harmonic. If you are going to play C7 altered, learn the scale, arpeggios, and chords and go! There is no substitute for the real thing.

The arrangement of whole and half steps in the altered dominant scale (from here on let's just call this the "altered" scale) is:

H-W-H-W-W-W-W

Example 61 shows a C altered scale in first position.



I have picked the C altered scale for our examples. Again, note that it is my inclination to work in flat keys because this is where most of jazz lives, thanks to the horn players.