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Introduction

The inspiration for writing this book was to create a series of technique building exercises as well as some useful melodic and harmonic studies and incorporate them into one format. Setting up a daily practice routine is vital to becoming a more proficient player. This book uses various scales and melodic motifs to explore ways of approaching different chord types. The idea is to study these scales and exercises in a way that will be useful for improvisation while, at the same time, providing a practice routing that simply helps improve your technique.

This book is based on the six chord scales most commonly used in improvising, no matter what style of music. They are:

1. The Major Chord Scale
2. The Minor Chord Scale (specifically Dorian Minor)
3. The Dominant Chord Scale (The Mixolydian Mode)
4. The Melodic Minor Scale
5. The Diminished Scale
6. The Pentatonic and Blues Scales

Each chapter is dedicated to a different scale and is divided into five parts:

PART ONE: "CHORD SCALE EXERCISES"

Part one introduces the chord scale of each chapter. Each key has its scale and corresponding exercise and each exercise has a different melodic and rhythmic treatment. It's important to learn each scale and working on them in this way creates a more interesting and useful practice routine.

PART TWO: "MOTIF EXERCISES"

This is an exercise that starts with a single short melodic idea. The idea, or motif, is first played in half-steps both ascending and descending. With each successive exercise the interval between motifs grows wider by half-steps until the interval between motifs reaches an octave. Even though the motif stays the same, as the interval widens, each exercise presents a new technical challenge.

PART THREE: "FINGER BUSTERS"

The idea behind this set of exercises is help build strong technique and endurance, just as the name implies. Each "FINGER BUSTER" corresponds with the chord type of its chapter. The most benefit will come if each exercise is repeated at least four times. Try to build up to the point where you can make it to the end of number 50 with as few breaks as possible. You can almost think of this as the "workout" portion of each chapter and if you stay with it, you should really notice the benefit.

PART FOUR: "EXTENDED MOTIFS"

One valuable way to practice is to take a melodic phrase and practice in every key. Part Four uses this idea and is based on five different phrases written chromatically. Each phrase is derived from the chord type emphasized in that chapter. As the phrase changes key, keep the key of the chord in mind as well. Some of these exercises tend to be quite long in order to cover as much of an instrument's range as possible so feel free to break them up to make them easier to finish.

PART FIVE: "IDEAS FOR IMPROVISATION"

This final section of each chapter deals with a solo that was written to show different ways to use the chord scales over various sets of chord changes. As you play through each solo you'll see phrases pointed out to show how they relate to the chords and how various scales are used. I'm sure that, as you play through them, you'll find many more ways to use these chord scales and melodic ideas.

Tips on How To Use This Book

1. Try to always use a metronome to practice with. As I said before, this is as much of an exercise book as it is a harmonic studies book. The metronome is an important technique building tool because it guides you and makes sure that all your notes are being played evenly. Make sure that you can hear it as loudly as you can hear yourself and keep each note right in time. As you practice, set the metronome at different tempos and never play an exercise faster than you can control. The best way to become faster on your instrument is to first practice slowly and be very definite with each note.
2. Before you sit down to practice, decide which exercises you want to work on and set a goal for yourself. For example, I practice parts One, Two and Three of a chapter one day and Four and Five the next. Or take certain lines out of each chapter and create your own routine. However, it's put together, if you set a goal for yourself before you start, you'll probably be more likely to stick with it and really maximize your practicing time.
3. This book was written as a way of showing how you can use melodic ideas to become more familiar with certain chords and chord scales while building technique at the same time. But it's just the beginning! The optimum way to use this book is to work on the written exercises first and then challenge yourself by coming up with some of your own ideas and motifs and practice them in the same format. By practicing ideas off the top of your head, you'll be exercising your brain as well as your fingers!

Notes

This book was designed to fit the range of most instruments. Since certain instruments don't have a range lower than low B or higher than high F#, optional notes are provided so that all of the exercises can be played on just about any instrument. These optional notes are written in parentheses and hopefully don't create too much of a distraction.

Also, during all the time I spent working on this book I struggled with the question of "courtesy accidentals" and whether or not to use them. It's important to practice remembering accidentals written early in a measure so that you don't forget to use them on the same notes later in the measure. But, at the same time, concentrating on playing an exercise correctly can be hard enough without having to think about remembering accidentals in measures that are more complicated and not to use them in measures that aren't so complicated or where a repeated accidental should be more obvious. I suppose that the bottom line is to just keep your eyes open!

I'd like to thank Chick Corea, Michael Brecker, John Patitucci, Frank Gambale, and Eddie Daniels for their valuable advice during the writing of this book.

CHAPTER ONE

MAJOR CHORD SCALE EXERCISES

Part One: Scales and Exercises

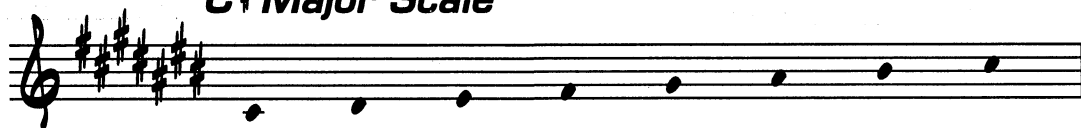
C Major Scale



Exercise



C# Major Scale



Exercise



Part Five: Ideas For Improvising

This section deals with a solo written over several different types of chords that can all use the Melodic Minor scale as their chord scale. As you practice the solo study how the scale is being used and how it relates to the chord above.

#1
C#m7(b5)

#2
F#7Alt

Cm7(b5)

F7Alt

Bmi7(b5)

E7Alt

#3
Am7

#4
D13(#11)

C#m7(b5)

F#7Alt

Cm7(b5)