

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF EVERY PRACTICE SESSION!



Practicing 3 & 4-Note Patterns

By Gunnar Mossblad

Warning, warning! I am about to state the obvious. Once a student has a basic theoretical understanding and proficiency of the basic scales, modes and chords in a linear fashion, three and four note patterns should be incorporated into the daily practice routine. In addition to improving general technique and flexibility on the instrument, these simple exercises are a major building block in developing the jazz language. They also serve as a stepping stone to larger, more complex patterns that are used in improvising.

ALTERING THE SOUND OF THREE OR FOUR NOTE PATTERNS

Three or four note patterns are simply groupings of notes that have a distinct intervallic relationship. Over the years teaching improvisation classes, I have developed generic names intervallic shapes based on the fundamental harmonic position that the pattern

normally appears. For instance, a common 4-note pattern, the "1-2-3-5" refers to the numbers of the scale tones in its fundamental position. It implies the intervallic relationships of two major or minor seconds, followed by a major or minor third. The quality of each of these intervals is determined by the harmonic application.

Simply put, the 1-2-3-5 can appear major, minor, diminished, or augmented depending on the quality of the 2nds and 3rds. In order to adjust the quality of a given pattern only a small adjustment must be made. A major tonality (major 2nd, major 2nd, minor 3rd) becomes minor simply by lowering the third (major 2nd, minor 2nd, major 3rd). A diminished pattern is created by lowering the third and fifth notes of a major pattern, resulting in a pattern made up of a major 2nd, minor 2nd and minor 3rd. An augmented pattern is created by raising the 5th of a major pattern. The result is an intervallic formula of a major 2nd, major

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2nd, augmented 3rd (see Example 1). Please note that my music examples are included in this article in the following pages, up to page fifteen.

These 3 and 4-note patterns should first be diatonically applied to scales and chords in all keys. Then the exercises can be applied to common harmonic progressions. The patterns should be performed by cycling through all major, minor, diminished, and augmented keys. These should be earned first chromatically and through the circle of fourths, then in major seconds, minor thirds, and finally in tritone.

For additional information please refer to my column in *Jazz Player*, August/September 2000 issue, *Introducing Approach Notes*.

as possible. A piano or some kind of chordal instrument can be utilized when an exercise can be executed consistently. If the student is not capable of playing the piano or guitar, you can always make an accompaniment tape. There are many sequencing programs, like *Band-In-A-Box* or *Cakewalk* that can be used to make a practice accompaniment.

PLAYING TRADITIONAL PATTERNS OR PRACTICING 3 OR 4-NOTE PATTERNS

Playing the patterns over common chord progressions, such as the iim7/V7/IM7 or the forms of entire tunes will not only help get the exercises under the fingers and part of the natural hearing, but will help you to learn the tune.

This is an excellent way to learn the tunes, however, practicing 3 or 4-note patterns randomly without a thorough understanding of how and where they can be properly applied in music does little more than help the digital dexterity of a student's fingers or lip. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the appropriate harmonic applications of the patterns are understood and thought about whenever the exercises are practiced.

I recommend that the exercises be learned without music as much

1) MAJOR MINOR DIMINISHED* AUGMENTED

*THE 2 MAY ALSO BE FLATTED

2A) 1-2-3 PATTERN IN TRIPLETS

2B) 1-7-1 PATTERN IN 8TH NOTES

2C) 1-2-1 PATTERN IN TRIPLETS

2D) 1-3-1 PATTERN IN 8TH NOTES

3A) 1-3-5 PATTERN IN TRIPLETS

3B) 5-3-1 PATTERN IN 8TH NOTES (A RETROGRADE OF EX. 3A)

3C) 1-5-3 PATTERN IN TRIPLETS

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The exercises I included in Example 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D are just a few of the possibilities for 3 and 4-note patterns. These can be used in 3-note patterns applied to the C major scale and used with C, C6, or CMaj7 (9, 11, 13) chords. Because of the limited space, I have limited the examples to just one octave, but the patterns should be practiced over the entire range of your instrument. Additionally, the examples are presented here in the most common jazz rhythmic denomination, eighth-notes and triplets, however a variety of rhythmic combinations should be utilized when practicing the patterns. Further, the exercises should be played with a general jazz articulation.

The patterns in all my examples included with this column should be learned in all twelve major keys,

followed by the parallel minors (harmonic and jazz melodic), diminished and whole tone tonalities. Examples 3A, 3B, 3C are 3-note chordal patterns applied to the C major scale. All these examples can be used with C, C6, or CMaj7 chords (9, 11, 13).

Examples 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D are 4-note patterns applied to the C major scale. All these examples can be used with C, C6, or CMaj7 (9, 11, 13).

Examples 5A, 5B, 5C, are 4-note chordal patterns applied to C major. All these examples can be used with C, C6, or CMaj7 (9, 11, 13) chords as well as the indicated chords.

As is evident, there are numerous 3 and 4-note combinations that can be learned and applied to scales and chords. As I mentioned earlier, it is also

important to apply the note groups to other tonalities and other harmonic progressions. Example 6 (chromatically), Example 7 (through the circle of fourths), Example 8 (major seconds or whole tones), Example 9 (minor thirds-diminished), Example 10 (tritones) use one of the most common 4-note patterns (1-2-3-5) to demonstrate many of the possible common tonalities as applied to common intervallic progressions.

After you can execute more than one of the patterns, two or more patterns may be combined in ascending and descending patterns (see Example 11 (diatonic in C major), Example 12 (chromatic), Example 13 (diatonic)).

Next, a combination of tonalities (major, minor, diminished and augmented) can be combined in one or more intervallic relationship to form common harmonic progressions. For instance, by combining a minor pattern with a major pattern played in 4ths you have one of the most common

4A) 1-2-3-4 PATTERN IN 8TH NOTES CONT...

4B) 1-2-3-1 PATTERN IN 8TH NOTES CONT...

4C) 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN 8TH NOTES CONT...

4D) 5-3-2-1, PATTERN IN TRIPLETS CONT...

5A) 1-3-5-7 CHORDAL PATTERN IN 8TH NOTES CONT...

5B) 7-5-3-1 CHORDAL PATTERN IN TRIPLETS (A RETROGRADE OF EX. 5A) CONT...

5C) 1-5-3-1 CHORDAL PATTERN IN 8TH NOTES CONT...

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chord progressions, a *ii*m7-V7 progression (see example 13).

As is evident, there are numerous other combinations of 3 and 4-note groups that can be utilized to train both the ear and the musician to respond to the appropriate musical cues. After these basic patterns are learned, more complex intervallic studies and longer free form patterns can be introduced. Even

chromatic passing tones and approach notes can be introduced in these basic patterns (again, please refer to my column in *Jazz Player*, August/September 2000, *Introducing Approach Notes*).

The basics of 3 and 4-note groups of notes presented here can be applied to numerous other 3 and 4-note patterns that will develop a strong foundation to build your own personal improvisational style. §

6A) MAJOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN CHROMATICALLY

C D^b D E^b E F

F[#] G A^b A B^b B CONT...

6B) MINOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN CHROMATICALLY

C_m D_m D_m E_m E_m F_m

F[#]_m G_m A^b_m A_m B^b_m B_m CONT...

6C) DIMINISHED 1-2-3-5 PATTERN CHROMATICALLY

C^o D^o D^o E^o E^o F^o

F[#] G^o A^o A^o B^o B^o CONT..

6D) AUGMENTED 1-2-3-5 PATTERN CHROMATICALLY

C⁺ D^{b+} D⁺ E^{b+} E⁺ F⁺ F[#] G⁺

A^{b+} A⁺ B^{b+} B⁺ C⁺ B⁺ CONT...

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7A) MAJOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN 4THS

C F B \flat E \flat A \flat D \flat

G \flat B E A D G C

7B) MINOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN 4THS

C \natural F \natural B \flat \natural E \flat \natural A \flat \natural D \flat \natural

F \sharp B \natural E \natural A \natural D \natural G \natural C \natural

7C) DIMINISHED 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN 4THS

C $^{\circ}$ F $^{\circ}$ B \flat $^{\circ}$ E \flat $^{\circ}$ A \flat $^{\circ}$ D \flat $^{\circ}$ G $^{\circ}$ C $^{\sharp}$

F \sharp B $^{\circ}$ E $^{\circ}$ A $^{\circ}$ D $^{\circ}$ G $^{\circ}$ C $^{\circ}$

7D) AUGMENTED 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN 4THS

C $^{+}$ F $^{+}$ B \flat $^{+}$ E \flat $^{+}$ A \flat $^{+}$ D \flat $^{+}$ G $^{+}$ C $^{+}$

G \flat $^{+}$ B $^{+}$ E $^{+}$ A $^{+}$ D $^{+}$ G $^{+}$ C $^{+}$

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8A) MAJOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN MAJOR 2NDS

C D E F# Ab Bb CONT...

Db Eb F G A B CONT...

8B) MINOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN MAJOR 2NDS

Cm Dm Em F#m Abm Bbm CONT...

Dbm Ebm Fm Gm Am Bm CONT...

8C) DIMINISHED 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN MAJOR 2NDS

C° D° E° F#° Ab° Bb° CONT...

C#° Eb° F° G° A° B° CONT...

8D) AUGMENTED 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN MAJOR 2NDS

C+ D+ E+ F#+ Ab+ Bb+ CONT...

Db+ Eb+ F+ G+ A+ B+ CONT...

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9A) MAJOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN MINOR 3RDS

C Eb F# A

CONT....

C# E G Bb

CONT...

D F Ab B

CONT...

9B) MINOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN MINOR 3RDS

Cm Ebm F#m Am

CONT...

C#m Em Gm Bbm

CONT...

Dm Fm Abm Bm

CONT...

9C) DIMINISHED 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN MINOR 3RDS

C° Eb° F#° A°

CONT...

C#° E° G° Bb°

CONT...

D° F° Ab° B°

CONT...

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10A) MAJOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN TRITONES

C
F#
CONT...
Db
G
CONT...

D
Ab
CONT...
Eb
A
CONT...

E
Bb
CONT...
F
B
CONT...

10B) MINOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN TRITONES

Cm
F#m
CONT...
Dbm
Gm
CONT...

Dm
Abm
CONT...
Ebm
Am
CONT...

Em
Bbm
CONT...
Fm
Bm
CONT...

10C) DIMINISHED 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN TRITONES

C°
F#°
CONT...
Db°
G°
CONT...

D°
Ab°
CONT...
Eb°
A°
CONT...

E°
Bb°
CONT...
F°
B°
CONT...

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10D) AUGMENTED 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN TRITONES

C⁺ F[#] D^b G⁺
D⁺ A^b E^b A⁺
E⁺ B^b F⁺ B⁺

11) 1-3-5 + 5-3-1 PATTERNS DIATONICALLY IN C MAJOR

1-3-5 5-3-1
1-3-5 5-3-1
1-3-5 5-3-1
1-3-5 5-3-1

12) MAJOR 1-3-5-7 + 7-5-3-1 PATTERNS CHROMATICALLY (ASCENDING THEN DESCENDING)

CΔ7 D^bΔ7 DΔ7 E^bΔ7 EΔ7 FΔ7
F[#]Δ7 GΔ7 A^bΔ7 AΔ7 B^bΔ7 BΔ7

13) MINOR 1-2-3-5 + MAJOR 1-2-3-5 PATTERN IN 4THS (IIM7-V7 PROGRESSION)

C_m F7 B_m E^b7 A_m D^b7
F[#]_m B7 E_m A7 D_m G7