



Elements Of The
JAZZ
Language
For The
Developing
Improvisor

by
**Jerry
Coker**

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PERSONNEL FOR TAPING

MARK BOLING. Engineer for all MIDI and acoustic recording, guitarist for all solo excerpts for guitar and bass.

*DONALD BROWN. Performer for all piano solo excerpts, and pianist and midi bassist on exercise tracks (A-DD) and the three play-along tunes.

KEITH BROWN. Midi drum set on exercise tracks and play-along tunes.

JERRY COKER. Tenor saxophonist for all trombone, tenor saxophone, and alto saxophone solo excerpts. Also pianist and midi bassist on accompaniment for solo excerpts.

VANCE THOMPSON. Trumpet on trumpet solo excerpts.

* - Mr. Brown's appearance on this recording is through the courtesy of Muse Records.

CD TRACKING SHEET

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1.Solo Excerpts #4-11 | 25.Exercise G |
| 2.Solo Excerpts #38-65 | 26.Exercise H |
| 3.Solo Excerpts #93-103 | 27.Exercise I |
| 4.Solo Excerpts #120-134 | 28.Exercise J |
| 5.Solo Excerpts #139-153 | 29.Exercise K |
| 6.Solo Excerpts #164-177 | 30.Exercise L |
| 7.Solo Excerpts #185-193 | 31.Exercise M |
| 8.Solo Excerpts #196-212 | 32.Exercise N |
| 9.Solo Excerpts #219-238 | 33.Exercise O |
| 10.Solo Excerpts #249-267 | 34.Exercise P |
| 11.Solo Excerpts #273-291 | 35.Exercise Q |
| 12.Solo Excerpts #294-303 | 36.Exercise R |
| 13.Solo Excerpts #306-315 | 37.Exercise S |
| 14.Tuning Tones | 38.Exercise T |
| 15.Homesick Hoosier | 39.Exercise U |
| 16.Urbane Blues | 40.Exercise V |
| 17.Stellar | 41.Exercise W |
| 18.Tuning Notes | 42.Exercise X |
| 19.Exercise A | 43.Exercise Y |
| 20.Exercise B | 44.Exercise Z |
| 21.Exercise C | 45.Exercise AA |
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| 23.Exercise E | 47.Exercise CC |
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INTRODUCTION

Though the arts of music, dance, visual arts, and drama have existed for many centuries, even millenia, individual and collective styles within those art forms stay in a state of perpetual change and development. When a relatively new style comes into being and survives the scrutiny of practicing artists, critics, and the general populace, a reasonable amount of time must pass before we can deal with what might be termed “common practice” within that style. This is not to say that new elements will not be introduced by leading practitioners of the craft. Artists are individuals, and as such they will always be pressing at the established parameters of the established order of things as well as their own personal practices. But a certain grouping of ideas and approaches will remain relatively constant, giving an identity to the style. This is partially due to the fact that even artists who strive to be different and/or innovative will generally know that it is ill-advised, even impossible to create in a vacuum. Models and examples of their craft have been programmed into their memories since birth and so are relatively inescapable. Furthermore, they understand that one of the fastest means by which artists become trained, artistically literate, and inspired is to study the past work of the masters. Discoveries are made which might never have transpired without such study.

Jazz music has now been in existence for about a century, and its validity is no longer questioned by anyone who is relatively wise and informed. The common practices of the style are fast becoming evident. My first book, *IMPROVISING JAZZ* (1964), contained items such as common chord progression tendencies of standard songs used by jazz artists for their improvisations, a number of chord substitution principles in common usage for the blues and “I Got Rhythm,” a citing of common bridges (B sections) and their chord substitution practices, the prevalence of the II-V-I progression, the growing tendency of pianists to utilize new chord voicings which do not contain chord roots, and an analysis of what causes the ‘swing’ effect of eighth-notes in jazz. Others were making similar discoveries of common practices in the jazz style. My learned colleague and friend, **David Baker**, was making new observations, coupled with the terminology with which we would refer to those tendencies, such as digital patterns, the bebop scale, the bebop lick, and enclosures. He even **coined the term, “jazz language”**, spoke of its syntax, and pointed to the need for students to absorb that language. Another highly-esteemed colleague, Jamey Aebersold was including patterns in his play-along records/books that utilized many of the elements of the jazz language. Despite our efforts, a complete list of the vocabulary for the jazz language remained mysterious, elusive, and incomplete.

As is usually the case, the more complete identity and nature of the jazz language was discovered quite by accident. And even when the pieces of the puzzle fell into place, I virtually had to be bludgeoned into realizing the significance of the discovery. It came about as a result of teaching a course called “The Analysis of Jazz Styles”, in which solos by leading jazz artists were

listened to and analyzed in class. I kept searching for ways to describe and define elements that seemed to be common to all artists. I utilized what my colleagues and I had already found, especially Baker's contributions, and kept adding to the list until about 18 elements were on it. I typed them, with definitions into a hand-out for my students, called "Devices Commonly Found In Improvised Solos." Though the list was very helpful to us, I didn't have a system for marking the solos we studied, so I couldn't see what was taking shape. Each time I taught the course, the selected solos were analyzed all over again, as though for the first time. I felt remiss, because I knew I was probably missing some items we'd discovered the preceding year. It seemed haphazard to me. At least my copy of the solos should be marked, so we wouldn't miss anything. About this time I was scheduled to go to a Canadian hospital for double-hernia surgery. Not wanting to be bored or in pain with nowhere to put my concentration, I took my copy of Ken Slone's book, 28 MODERN JAZZ TRUMPET SOLOS and about 15-20 colors of felt-tipped pens, and worked out a coded, color bracket system for marking the solos. For example, a green bracket indicated the use of a digital pattern, a purple one signified the use of the bebop scale, and a pink bracket indicated a melodic quote from another tune. The result was a real eye-opener! Prior to marking them in this way, I was unconscious of the concluding totals, and I wasn't fully aware that the "Common Devices" list was so uniformly shared by all fifteen players whose solos were contained in the book, ranging from the likes of Fats Navarro and Dizzy Gillespie to Tom Harrell and Randy Brecker! The color coding made it effortless to see in a glance that all players were using the devices. Furthermore, there was virtually nothing left unmarked in the solos, though there were only 18 devices on the list. The only significance I attached to all this was that it was going to be an improved Analysis of Jazz Styles course from now on.

Then, because my students don't always assimilate everything I teach them, I began summing up what we'd learned when we approached the end of the term. I pointed out to them that all the players studied shared the 18 devices, and that there was very little left unmarked after citing those events (though sometimes what remained was really the best part of the solo, or at least the freshest). Then I would ask them how many of those devices they'd ingrained into their own playing. If they were devices that their 'heroes' found useful and/or needed, why weren't they using them? The students would hang their heads in shame. But I was the real dummy! I had collected the "Common Devices" list, I could find them in solos with enviable speed, I could recognize them quickly by ear, and they were a part of my own playing... yet it was several years of chiding my students for lack of assimilating the devices into their playing before it dawned on me that the elusive 'jazz language' was now in place! It wasn't merely a collection of things to notice about other peoples' solos. It was a concise list of what every jazz student should learn first, in order to speak the language of jazz and communicate with others in that language!

Now let us understand the true value of the jazz language at this point. It should not be used for cloning purposes (as in analyzing the solos of your favorite players, collecting their devices and personal cliches, then programming your own playing to be as close to identical as possible). Each of us has a worthwhile musical identity and enough originality and creativity to carry us through. Nor should the list be used so that we all sound the same. Finally, the list should not be used to the exclusion of many other worthwhile, new, or original thoughts in musical expression.

On the other hand, it should not surprise or discourage us to learn that much of jazz improvisation is clever re-editing of learned elements, many of which are shared by all the great players. All artists (classical composers, great choreographers, playwrights, painters, sculptors, architects, etc.) have personal cliches, as well as elements they share with others in the same field. Furthermore, there are innovative, fresh, inspired moments in the solos of all great players. If you can, pigeon-hole a phrase you hear, study it especially hard and long. It could be the creative heart of the solo.

The jazz language is a logical starting point (at least), providing us with the less-important, but needed aspects of the language, as words like “the”, “and”, “is”, “by”, “for”, “a”, “an”, etc., are to the spoken language. They may seem relatively unimportant words, but without them, language is unintelligible and uncommunicative! Let us focus, then, on the connective tissue in the giant body of a great art form.

J.C.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THIS BOOK

Each chapter will embody one element of the jazz language. Within each chapter, the designated element will be defined and illustrated; examples will be given of its use in outstanding recorded solos, each written in the key of the instrument that played it; suggestions will be made with regard to ingraining the element, and specific exercises provided for practicing the element. Since there are many notated examples throughout the book, each requiring an identification number for easy reference, all examples are integrated into one numbering sequence, regardless of their purpose. For example, #163 might be an illustration, or an example from a recorded solo or an exercise, but there will be only one #163. The same number will identify each example as it is demonstrated on Side 1 of the cassette. Note: All examples from recorded solos are notated in the key and clef of the instrument that played them.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE AUDIO CASSETTE

Side 1: As previously stated, Side 1 contains simulations of all examples excerpted from recorded solos, identified by the number assigned to them in the book, plus three play-along tunes. Side 1 does not include the accompaniment tracks for practicing the exercises. Because the accompaniment tracks are on Side 2, it is easier to locate the appropriate exercise track/s for practicing each of the elements. So Side 1 is essentially for listening (ear training, etc.), except for the three play-along tunes, and Side 2 provides the opportunity to roll up your sleeves and play (and sing!).

Side 2: The accompaniment tracks on Side 2 are identified by letters (A, B, C, etc.), rather than by numbers that agree with the exercise numbers in the book. The reason for using a different identification system for the accompaniment tracks is simply because a small number of tracks can service a much greater number of exercises. The book will direct you to the appropriate play-a long track/s for each exercise. For example, the book might state: "practice this exercise with tracks E, F, G, and H."

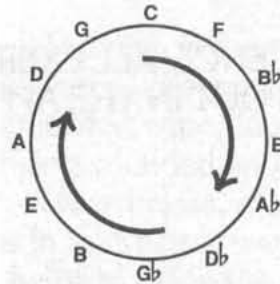
All exercises should be practiced in 12 keys and with the appropriate accompaniment track/s. By playing them in 12 keys, you will be prepared to use the element in whatever key you might need, during improvisation. Practicing with the accompaniment tracks ensures that you will be continually strengthening the relationship between the sound of the exercise and the sound of the appropriate harmony implied by the exercise, which is an indispensable form of ear-training. It is also important, whenever possible, to learn to slightly alter an exercise in such a way as to enable it to fit other chord-types. Hence the book will sometimes instruct you to practice some of the exercises, after minor alterations, with accompaniment tracks that use other chord-types.

The key sequences on the accompaniment tracks are deliberately sequenced to resemble the motions most frequently encountered in segments of tunes. Chord roots most often move around the circle of keys (commonly referred to as the cycle of fifths) and chromatically (especially chromatically downward). These are the motions included in the accompaniment tracks. In this way, you are not only learning each exercise in 12 keys, but you are also practicing them in sequences that you will most frequently encounter in real tunes.

than by numbers that agree with the exercise numbers in the book. The reason for using a different identification system for the accompaniment tracks is simply because a small number of tracks can service a much greater number of exercises. The book will direct you to the appropriate play-a long track/s for each exercise. For example, the book might state: "practice this exercise with tracks E, F, G, and H."

ILLUSTRATIONS OF USED CHORD MOTIONS

Cycle Of Fifths



Also See Jazzology

Chromatic

ascending: C, D \flat , D, E \flat , E, F, G \flat , G, A \flat , A, B \flat , B, C.
 descending: C, B, B \flat , A, A \flat , G, G \flat , F, E, E \flat , D, D \flat , C.

(Classical theory cycle motion illustrations notwithstanding, this is the logical and useful way to learn the cycle for our purposes.)

All accompaniment tracks for the exercises begin on CONCERT C. "Concert key" is the key of piano, bass, guitar, vibraphones, flute, trombone, etc. If you play a B \flat -pitched instrument (trumpet, tenor or soprano saxophone, for example), you must begin on D in order to be in the same place with the accompaniment. Your sequence on the cycle would be D, G, C, F, B \flat , etc., and your chromatic sequence will become D, E \flat , E, F, G \flat , etc. (ascending). If you play an E \flat -pitched instrument (alto or baritone saxophone, for example), your cycle begins on A (then D, G, C, etc.) and your chromatic sequence will be A, B \flat , B, C, D \flat , etc.)

All exercises are notated in treble clef and in concert key, therefore bass clef instruments and B \flat and E \flat instruments will need to transpose those notations into the proper clef or key.

For awhile, you may find it necessary to keep these pages handy, so you can re-read the instructions, review the organization of the book and tape, read the cycle and/or chromatic sequences (until they are memorized), and review your possible need to transpose the exercises.

If you've never practiced exercises, patterns, licks, scales, etc. in 12 keys without reading them in a notated form, you may be tempted to write them out, instead of figuring them in your head. This is acceptable at the outset, but wean yourself away from both the notated form and the cycle or chromatic illustrations shown here as soon as possible. Remember, you want to learn to improvise, and all great recorded improvisers have learned to execute their phrases by mental and aural skills, not by reading them. It will take time to develop those skills, however.

To help you get under way, the first exercise in Chapter 1 will be notated in the first few keys and the remainder of the sequences will be given in chord symbols. After that you will simply be given the notated form of the exercise in the starting chord/key and told to practice them in the sequences, along with the appropriate play-along's identifying letter (A, B, C, etc.) Always analyze each given exercise in terms of its digital relationship to the chord. That is, if the notated form of the exercise is:



then think of it as 1-3-5-1, not C-E-G-C. In this way the exercise becomes universal to all keys, so that if you are confronted with a G^b (major) chord, instead of C, you can quickly find the 1-3-5-1 of G^b (G^b - B^b - D^b - G^b) by simply thinking in another key (in this case, the key of G^b major).

NOTE: FOR THE READER'S CONVENIENCE, ALL EXERCISE PROGRESSIONS (A, B, C, etc.) ARE COMPLETELY WRITTEN OUT IN THE APPENDIX, FOR CONCERT, B^b , AND E^b INSTRUMENTS.

CHAPTER 1

CHANGE-RUNNING

Also See Steinel



Definition

Change is a synonym for chord. Running is a synonym for arpeggiating. Hence change-running is a jazz colloquialism for chord-arpeggiating. In terms of creative musical expression, change-running is somewhat superfluous when it occurs in an improvised solo, since the chord is already being sounded and/or implied by members of the rhythm section (piano, guitar, and bass). Nevertheless, change-running frequently occurs in improvised solos, and sometimes in interesting ways. It has at least several possible functions: (1) as a phrase which helps to place the ear of the improviser into the exact structure and sound of a chord, which sometimes insures the effectiveness and accuracy of a more melodic phrase to follow; (2) as a means to learn, during practice, the sound of each chord in a sequence or progression of chords; (3) as pick-up notes into a melodic phrase; (4) as a means to make the sound of a chord clear to an audience; and (5) as a means of communication or reinforcement for other members of the group, in the event that one or more members lose their place in the progression or the form of the tune.

Illustrations

Because of the nature of improvisation, being based upon chord progressions to a large extent, nearly all improvised phrases could be more or less regarded as change-running. However, the purpose of its introduction here is to focus upon phrases which do little more than to arpeggiate the notes of the chord, and even with that restriction the possibilities are endless. Note in the following examples that a change-running phrase does not necessarily begin on the root of the chord, it may omit one or more chord members, and its direction can be ascending or descending or both.

1.

Examples From Recorded Solos

J.J. Johnson, trombone ("Now's The Time")

4.

Freddie Hubbard, trumpet ("Clarence's Place")

5.

Blue Mitchell, trumpet ("Silver's Serenade")

6.

Lee Morgan, trumpet ("Ceora")

7.

George Coleman, tenor saxophone ("Maiden Voyage")

8. Musical notation for George Coleman's tenor saxophone part in "Maiden Voyage". The key signature is one sharp (F#). The notation includes a treble clef, a common time signature, and a series of eighth and quarter notes. Above the staff, there are handwritten chord symbols: E7 sus4, 13 4 9 7, 9 11 13 7, 9 4 #, 13 1, 13 4 9 7, 13 4 9 7. Fingering numbers (1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13) are written above the notes.

John Coltrane, tenor saxophone ("Trane's Slo Blues")

9. Musical notation for John Coltrane's tenor saxophone part in "Trane's Slo Blues". The key signature is one sharp (F#). The notation includes a treble clef, a common time signature, and a series of eighth and quarter notes. Above the staff, there is a handwritten chord symbol: D-7. Fingering numbers (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 3, 5, 7, 9) are written above the notes.

Hank Mobley, tenor saxophone ("Nica's Dream")

10. Musical notation for Hank Mobley's tenor saxophone part in "Nica's Dream". The key signature is one flat (Bb). The notation includes a treble clef, a common time signature, and a series of eighth and quarter notes. Above the staff, there is a handwritten chord symbol: Bb-7. Fingering numbers (4 7, 1, 3 5, 7, 9, b, b, b, 5) are written above the notes.

2:32 into recording

Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone ("Freight Trane")

11. Musical notation for Michael Brecker's tenor saxophone part in "Freight Trane". The key signature is one flat (Bb). The notation includes a treble clef, a common time signature, and a series of eighth and quarter notes. Above the staff, there are handwritten chord symbols: EbΔ, Eb-7, Ab7, D-7, G7. Below the staff, there are more handwritten chord symbols: C#-7, F#9(b5), C-7, F7(#9). Fingering numbers (13, 1, 3, 5, #7, 13, +4, 9, 13, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 4 7, 5, 3, +9, 3 +5, 1, +9, 3, +5, 3 +9, b9) are written above the notes.

Ways to Practice/Ingrain

We have begun our study with one of the most general aspects of improvisation (Change-Running). The foregoing examples from recorded solos will show some similar tendencies, with regard to the manner in which prominent players utilize change-running. However, it is also easy to see that there are a multitude of ways in which change-running can be realized, with very few common guidelines. Most of the remaining devices taken up in this book will have a considerably higher degree of uniformity, with respect to the manner in which players use them and, consequently, more specific ways for the reader to practice and ingrain those devices.


Any form of arpeggiation of chords in practice will lead to feeling more comfortable with using change-running as a part of one's solo. In fact, utilizing change-running phrases on each and every chord, in practice, is an excellent way to learn a new progression. Practice every known chord-type, in arpeggiation, in all 12 keys. Practice one chord-type at a time, modulating up and down in half-steps (chromatic sequence), around the cycle of fifths, up and down in minor thirds, and up and down in major seconds (whole-steps). Practice arpeggiation with triads, seventh chords, ninth chords, elevenths, and thirteenth, whenever the chord-type permits such chord extensions.


All of the items taken up in this book should first be practiced alone, then with an exercise track¹ on a play-along that accommodates the item being practiced, finally with a play-along tune whose progression offers numerous opportunities to apply the device being practiced. Although recorded examples of each device of the jazz language contained in this book will be provided, the author had to be very selective. Therefore, the reader should acquire some books of transcribed solos (there are many)², searching for examples of each device, and studying the particular manner in which they were used by various players. Find the recordings³, whenever possible, from which the transcribed solo was taken, so that you will eventually be able to recognize each of the devices by ear alone. You will find this sort of study to be the most valuable skill you can acquire in behalf of your development as an improviser!

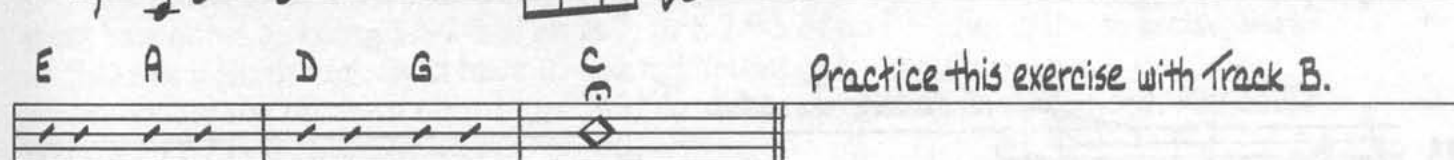

Exercises

12. 
 C Db D Eb E F Gb G


 Ab A Bb B C B Bb A Ab G Gb F

E Eb D Db C  Practice this exercise with Track A.

13. 
 C F Bb Eb Ab Db Gb B


 E A D G C  Practice this exercise with Track B.

14. 
 C Db D Eb


Continue chromatically up and down. Practice this exercise with Track A.

15. 
 C F Bb Eb

continue around cycle. Practice this exercise with Track B.


16. 
 C Db D Eb

continue chromatically with Track A.

17. 
 C F Bb Eb

continue around cycle with Track B.

Now practice 12-17 in minor (lower 3rd on each) with Tracks C (chromatic) and D (cycle)

18. 
 C Δ

Practice with Tracks E (chromatic) and F (cycle)

19. $C-\Delta$ Practice with Tracks G (chromatic) and H (cycle).

20. $C-7$ Tracks I (chromatic) and J (cycle).

21. $C\phi$ Tracks K (chromatic) and L (cycle).

22. $C-\Delta$ Tracks G and H.

23. $C-7$ Tracks I and J.


24. $C\Delta 9$ Tracks M and N.


25. $C-\Delta 9$ Tracks O and P.

26. $C-9$ Tracks Q and R.

27. $C\phi 9$ Tracks S and T.

The rhythms of any one of the last four (#24-27) could be used with the other three. The various rhythms used are merely to indicate some of the possibilities.

28.  Tracks U and V.

29.  Tracks W and X.

(#28 and 29 could also be played with the rhythms of 25, 26, & 27)

When practicing chord arpeggiation, it is important to understand that Exercises 12-29 are all tertian (constructed with successive third intervals), presented here from the chord roots (i.e., 1-3-5-1, 1-3-5-7-5-3-1, or 1-3-5-7-9-7-5-3-1, therefore other possibilities exist if we don't begin them from the root. For example, the first four notes of #12 (C-E-G-C) are taken to be 1-3-5-1 in C major, to be practiced with Track A, yet if we think of those four notes as being 3-5-7-3 of an A-7, or 5-7-9-5 of an F Δ chord, the exercise works for those as well, though we'd have to use a different accompaniment track to accommodate the different chord-type. #21 would work against an A \flat 7 chord, #25 could become an F7 (+4) chord or an A \emptyset chord, and so on.

Also, this list of exercises on change-running is only a starter list. Other chord-types, other note sequences, and other rhythms should also be investigated.