

## 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

♩ = 120

Dmin7 G7 Emin7 A7

5th

Track 04

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

4th 3rd

9

Dmin7 G7 Emin7 A7

5th

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

4th 4th

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