

Intermediates' Workshop

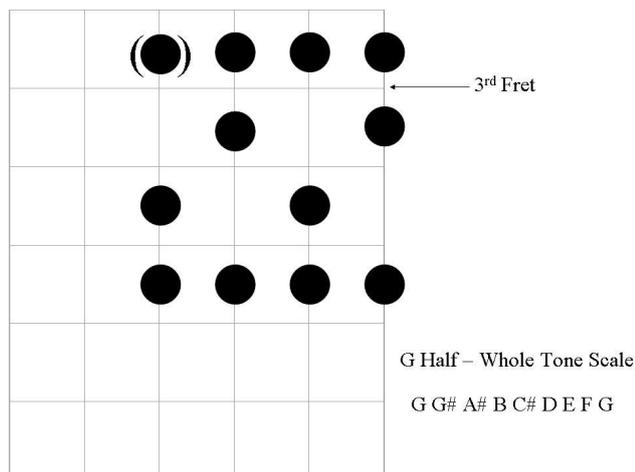
Author: John Clarke

Date: ?

Thanks to all of you who attended the Intermediates' Workshop on Improvisation which I ran at the February meeting. I hope you found it helpful. Please let me know if you would like a follow-on session at the April meeting. If I do run this, then I am thinking to discuss with you how to use knowledge of some other scale patterns as improvising tools.

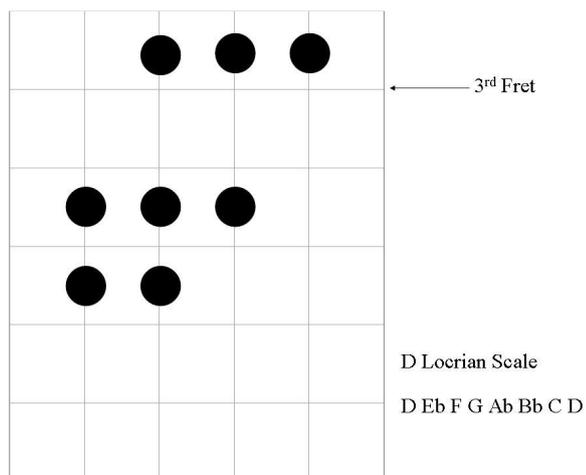
A common chord progression in jazz tunes is the minor II/V, which we worked on with 'Autumn Leaves'. Often this appears a m7b5 to dominant 7b9 or dominant 7#5b9 (sometimes written a 'alt'). Let's look at some scales for this progression.

The diminished scale is a sequence of whole and half steps, beginning with a whole step. This scale only has one alternative mode, and that is beginning it on a half step. I call this scale the half-whole tone scale, therefore, and it works really well over dominant 7th chords with b9 or #9 alterations, but un-altered 5th. Here it is, used over a G7b9 chord.

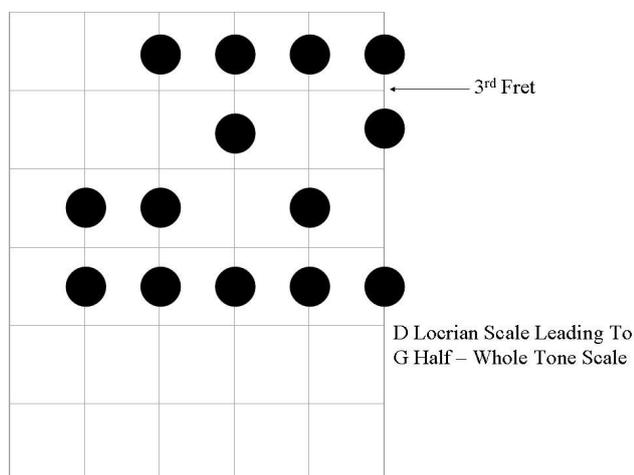


Ignore the bracketed note when playing the scale. I have included this only to illustrate that you can 'see' an Ab diminished chord within this scale. You can also see G13 and some other chord shapes as well.

The II chord which would precede this V chord is Dm7b5. The scale which works well with this is the D Locrian scale. This is a scale using the notes of the Eb major scale, starting on D.

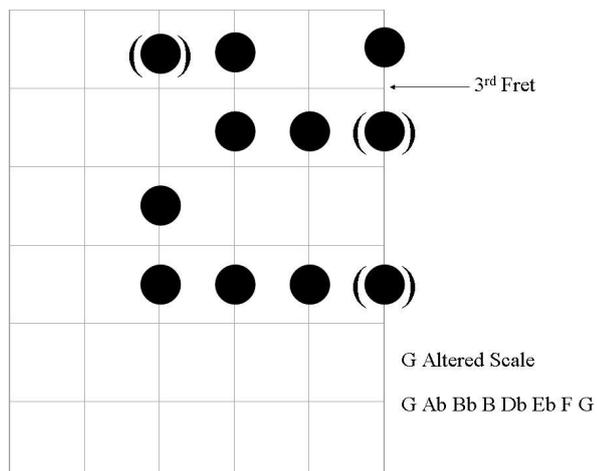


Where you have a progression such as Dm7b5 to G7b9, therefore you can combine these two scales as shown here.



However, where the dominant 7th chord has #5 or a b5 instead of a 13th, it is better to use the 'Altered Scale'.

This is formed using the notes of the melodic minor a semitone above the root of the dominant 7th chord i.e. Ab melodic minor in this example. Start this on the note of G, and you have the G Altered Scale shown here.



Again, I have only added the bracketed notes outside of the scale octave so you can see the shapes of some other chords which use notes in this scale e.g. Abm6, Db13, Db9#11, etc.

You may therefore like to try this G Altered Scale over the second chord of 'Cantaloup Island', which in the usual key of Fm is Db9#11. I think it works really well.

As always with scales, to make them sound interesting, break up the rhythm, play the notes as triplets, pick-out subsets of the notes, etc.

At the April Intermediates Workshop, we'll have a look at a tune which uses the types of chords and chord progressions shown here, and hear how they sound.