



On Green Dolphin Street

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I was playing 'On Green Dolphin Street' with Bill Pritchard at our last meeting. Jazz musicians often begin and end this piece by alternating the C major chord it ends on with a Db major chord, keeping the C as the root. This device also suggests 'Flamenco', especially when you play E to Fmaj7 down in 'Farmer's Corner' (position zero) i.e.

X22100 E major

X33200 Fmaj7#11

Anyway, back to the ending of On Green Dolphin Street, and I find myself playing this scale over Bill's C to Db progression.

C Db E F G Ab Bb C

Some bells ring about it being a 'Jewish or Spanish scale' and that it might be a mode of some other scale. We couldn't figure it out there and then, so I sat down later and worked out where it comes from.

The intervals in the scale I played, in terms of semitones, are:

$\frac{1}{2}$ $1\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 1

The harmonic minor scale has the following notes and intervals

C D Eb F G Ab B C

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ $1\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$

My scale has the same sequence of intervals, but starting at the fifth note of the harmonic minor – in technical terms, its the fifth *mode* of the harmonic minor scale.

The harmonic minor scale which has C as its fifth note is F harmonic minor i.e.

F G Ab Bb C Db E F

Start this at C and you have the scale I was playing. It is sometimes referred to as the Jewish or Spanish scale – play it and you'll hear why.

It is also referred to as the Phrygian Major scale, since it is the same as the Phrygian minor scale (the third mode of the major scale, C Phrygian being a scale of Ab starting on C), but here the interval from root to the third note is a major 3rd instead of a minor 3rd.

Why does it sound right over these two chords? Because it contains the notes of both of them – C E G and Db F Ab, or Db F G C if playing Dbmaj7#11. I also like the way it approaches every note in the Db major triad by a semitone :

C-Db, E-F, G-Ab

Wikipedia refers to it as the Phrygian Dominant scale, since it features a major 3rd and a flattened 7th. You can read lots more about this interesting scale and where it has been used, and who by, in both pop, rock and jazz genres here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrygian_dominant_scale

- **John Clarke**