

Jazz Improvisation : «Antecedent-Consequent Phrases», Part 2

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The Jazz Vocabulary :

Two important elements that should be given due consideration when teaching jazz improvisation are: (1) *vocabulary* : a thorough understanding of the jazz language with its structural components including rhythms, tensions, resolutions, proper phrasing and articulation (2) *creativity* : the ability to spontaneously manipulate and organize the different components of this vocabulary into a coherent individualistic musical expression. The jazz artist attains this level of competency by regularly transcribing and analyzing the solos of the great master improvisers and by remolding this transcribed vocabulary into a personal style and sound.

In this article we continue our in-depth study of the jazz vocabulary by focusing on the fundamental II-V-I progression, exploring its varied melodic connections and tonal resolutions. In the last article we demonstrated how the «b7 to 3» melodic resolution, where the seventh (C) of the IIm7 chord (Dm7) resolves to the third (B) of the V7 chord (G7), is actually one of the strongest available resolutions in tonal music. We also illustrated how the flatted ninth (Ab) of the «3 to b9» motif, commonly played over the V7 (G7), resolves smoothly to the fifth degree (G) of the I chord (Cmaj7). The musical vocabulary presented in this article is once again based on these fundamental resolutions, however, we will progressively introduce new major and minor antecedent-consequent phrases with their various permutations.

The reader will probably notice that in these first two lessons we have been exploring short II-V-I phrases that are to be played within a single two-measure span. The short II-V-I progressions are generally harder to control because the improviser has less time to outline the chords effectively. Therefore it is important to learn to utilize proper chord tones and exact resolutions when playing on fast-changing II-V-I harmonies. We will demonstrate in future lessons how these shorter phrases can be integrated into longer II-V-I phrases.

Ex.1 Minor 7(b5) Antecedent Motifs :

In example 1 we have illustrated twenty-one different minor7b5 antecedent motifs that have been transcribed from various jazz recordings. We appropriately call these «antecedent» motifs because they always precede the G7b9 «consequent» motifs illustrated in example 2. These motifs outline the IIm7b5 chord (Dm7b5) and are commonly used to improvise over minor

IIm7b5-V7b9-Im or ||Dm7b5/G7b9/Cm///|| progressions, where the destination chord (the I chord) is minor. If one compares these minor7b5 antecedent motifs with the minor seventh motifs presented in the previous lesson (May issue, part I), you will observe that the only structural difference is the b5 (Ab) and the b9 (Eb) of the Dm7b5 chord. These two notes (b5, b9) give the minor quality to the complete antecedent-consequent phrase. The antecedent motifs outline the Dm7b5 chord in a linear or arpeggiated fashion and always connect to the G7 chord through the aforementioned «b7 to 3» resolution. Only basic chord tones (D, F, Ab, C) as well as the ninth (Eb) are employed so that the chord may be clearly outlined on the first two beats of the measure. We have kept the motifs in one key so that the student can easily compare and analyze the different scale degrees used.

Ex.2 Minor Antecedent-Consequent (3 to b9) Phrases

In example 2 the two motifs, antecedent and consequent, or the «b7 to 3» resolution and the «3 to b9» motifs, are combined randomly through various permutations to form coherent musical phrases on the minor IIm7b5-V7b9-Im progression. The various forms of the «3 to b9» consequent motif explained in the previous lesson are once again used in example 2 (starting on the third beat of the measure) and remain unchanged when improvising over a G7b9 moving to Cm. However, in this instance the b9 (Ab) of the G7 chord resolves in various ways to the fifth (G) of the Cmin chord instead of Cmaj. In this exercise we have briefly presented 20 examples out of the possible 168 permutations of the antecedent and consequent motifs.

Ex.3 Consequent Motif (3-#11-#9-b9)

Example 3 illustrates a popular bebop consequent motif (3-#11-#9-b9) that can be found in numerous recordings of the period. This motif is normally used over various altered dominant chords because it contains three (#11-#9-b9) of the possible four (b13, #11, #9, b9) dominant alterations. It is introduced at this point because it is structurally similar to the «3 to b9» motif, that is, it also begins on the third degree of the chord (B) and ends on the b9 (Ab). Consequently, this motif can also be approached via the «b7 to 3» resolution (from Dm7 to G7 alt.) and resolved via the «b9 to 5» resolution (from G7alt. to Cmaj, or Cmin). These are strong tonal resolutions that clearly outline the underlying harmony of the improvised line.

In the first four measures of example 3 we have illustrated four popular variations of the 3-#11-#9-b9 consequent motif. The motifs in measures 3 and 5

have small rhythmic variations, while the motif in measure 7 begins on the #11 instead of the third, that is, the third and the #11 have been interchanged. As in the previous lesson, we combine these consequent motifs with the various antecedent motifs introduced earlier to form numerous new possibilities of antecedent-consequent phrases.

Ex.4 **Minor Antecedent-Consequent (3-#11-#9-b9) Phrases**

In example 4, the four different variations of the 3-#11-#9-b9 consequent motifs are combined with the aforementioned minor7(b5) antecedent motifs to form new minor antecedent-consequent phrases. Because it contains more alterations, you will observe that the 3-#11-#9-b9 motif gives the line more tonal tension than the «3 to b9» motif. In this exercise we have presented 10 examples out of the possible 84 permutations of the antecedent and consequent motifs.

Ex.5 **Mixed Antecedent-Consequent Etude**

Example 5 is a jazz etude that summarizes and transposes through the cycle of fifths the different combinations of the major and the minor antecedent-consequent motifs presented in all of the previous examples. This type of study enables the guitar student to explore the II-V-I phrases in different keys and in diverse positions of the guitar fingerboard. It is strongly recommended that you internalize this music - sing, play and memorize each phrase individually, one at the time. Play the lines in different positions where you can properly visualize the chord form that is implied during the improvisation. We have purposely kept the rhythm simple so that you can concentrate on the motifs and the resolutions. In a real solo context one would certainly be expected to be more creative rhythmically with this type of material.

Once the student has mastered the exercises and the etude, he (she) should apply these lines on a standard tune that has numerous short II-V or II-V-I progressions. Tunes such as *Whisper Not*, *Afternoon in Paris*, *Joy Spring* or a Bird Blues (*Blues for Alice*) are excellent vehicles on which you can apply these antecedent-consequent phrases. Be patient and enjoy!

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