

for all instruments

THE SERIOUS JAZZ BOOK II

by Barry Finnerty



THE HARMONIC APPROACH

SHER MUSIC CO.

The Serious Jazz Book II: The *HARMONIC* Approach

(Harmonic Possibilities of the Improvised Line)

by Barry Finnerty

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About The Author

Barry Finnerty is a guitar legend, having played and recorded with many of the best musicians in jazz and fusion—including Airtó & Flora Purim, Chico Hamilton, Hubert Laws, Joe Farrell, Ray Barretto, Blood Sweat & Tears, Taj Mahal, Billy Cobham and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis band.

Barry was the guitarist on several seminal recordings in the 1970s and 1980s, including Miles Davis' "The Man With The Horn", the Brecker Brothers' "Heavy Metal Bebop", and the Crusaders' "Street Life".

Born in the San Francisco Bay Area, Barry moved to New York in 1973, played with the above-mentioned artists (and many more), toured with the Crusaders for four years, and then moved back to the Bay Area in 1998, where he currently plays, teaches, composes and records. His latest records are available at www.barryfinnerty.com. He can be reached at barry@barryfinnerty.com.

Barry is also the author of the widely-acclaimed *The Serious Jazz Practice Book*, available from Sher Music Co., www.shermusic.com, or at better music stores worldwide.

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Dedication:

For Jim Checkley, wherever you are... thanks for the idea!

Introduction

The original title of this book was: “Harmonic Possibilities of the Improvised Line”. An intriguing concept. Does an improvised line, i.e. a jazz solo, actually *have* harmonic possibilities? And if so, what are they? Isn’t it enough to know the correct scales to go with the chords in whatever song you are playing, and then just let your creativity take over? Or can a melody being spontaneously improvised over chord changes actually go one step further than that? Can the modern jazz soloist create melodies that really reflect and embody the harmonies of the chords in the tune he is improvising over? Can he develop his melodies based on extended *harmonic* creativity, chord substitutions, etc? Is it possible for the player to really *get inside* the harmony of a tune and achieve real harmonic *and* melodic control of *every note he is playing*?

Well, yes. It can be done. And this book is being written to light the way.

In my last book, *The Serious Jazz Practice Book*, I tried to put forth a guide to getting just about every possible combination of *melodic* materials under the fingers of the modern jazz soloist. To give the player a vast and varied musical vocabulary to be used for the creation of *melody*.

But *harmony* is different from melody. The harmony of a tune is part of its structure and foundation. Harmony happens, chords change, over time, at specific points in time, and the modern jazz soloist must be aware of those points and be sure to adjust his spontaneity, his creativity, his improvisation accordingly. There are so many ways to do this, and variations upon variations, but with dedication and study I believe that it can be mastered. (To get started with this book, you should have at least a basic knowledge of scales, modes, and chord formation.)

A very important thing to remember, in my opinion, is that playing and improvising over chord changes is first of all an exercise in *correctness*. The *craft* of it comes first; the *art* comes later. If the soloist is not fully conscious of the prevailing harmony and (at least) the correct notes that can (and should!) be played against it, the music will definitely suffer. I think musicians should have to take kind of a jazz version of the Hippocratic Oath like doctors are required to do before they are allowed to practice: “First, do no harm.” Well, as long as you are not playing any seriously *wrong* notes, you will be doing no musical harm! Once you have the *correct* thing down, *then* you can be more adventurous, creative and inspired! As John Coltrane once said, “The more you know, the more you can create.” And I would venture to say that he knew what he was talking about!

Some might say that there is no such thing as a *wrong* note, there are only wrong ways to *play* them - wrong places to *put* them - wrong ways to insert them melodically into the harmonic structure one happens to be improvising on at the moment. And there is a lot of truth in that.

But in any case, a rock-solid knowledge of the *exact notes* that make up *every chord you are likely to see* as a jazz player is a great foundation on which to build solos of real and lasting musical value.

Another, and probably the most important thing to remember is that, harmonically speaking, *everything is interrelated*. Every (major) scale has 7 notes, and 7 modes, which means that every note of every scale is part of 6 other scales, and (if you multiply 6 times 7) 42 other modes! And that is not even counting the non-diatonic scales, of which there are plenty!

And of course, every note can be part of a great number of chords. And the degree of the chord that that note is functioning as (along with the type of chord itself) will determine what I like to call its *harmonic color*. I tend to think of the basic tones of a chord...root, third, fifth, seventh... as the primary colors, and the ninth, eleventh, thirteenth, and various alterations (b5, #5, b9, #9) as the more exotic harmonic shades! But the interesting thing is that *every note has the same number of possible uses, harmonically speaking, as every other!* The relationships, relative to each possible chord and bass note, will stay the same!

We are going to go over a LOT of harmonic possibilities in this book, and I hope that it will greatly increase your knowledge and understanding not only of your particular instrument but of music and jazz playing in general. Have fun!

NOTE: For those of you who have *The Serious Jazz Practice Book* (or those who haven't got it... yet!) I would recommend a thorough review of the Diatonic 7th Chords and Arpeggio sections—in all keys—as a prelude to, or accompaniment for, this book.

Let's get started by taking a look at the various harmonic possibilities of one note. Let's see how many different things a "C" can be!

Section I - WHAT A “C” CAN BE

Part 1 - The Root Of All “C” Chords

I wanted to start this book off with a bit of practical music theory... *quite* a bit, actually... and discuss the incredible number of functions a single note can have. It can operate as a member of a tremendous variety of chords, and each chord that it functions as a part of will spin off its own arpeggio (which will *melodically define* that particular chord) and also, naturally, that chord’s associated scale (or scales). This gives us an amazing number of choices, of harmonic and melodic avenues, musical roads that we can explore in different directions from our starting point, our central connection, our common tone, which in this case will be... you guessed it... C!

You can see quite easily in the first example how our C in the middle of the treble clef can be the tonic in a C major triad. I am sure you will be able to imagine playing a C major arpeggio against that C major chord, as well as the scale choices C major or C Lydian. (The scales are written descending here so you can hear how they sound coming off the C in the middle of the staff, naturally they can be played up, down, intervallically, any way you choose!)

The first musical example shows the C major triad (C-E-G) in the middle of a treble clef staff. To its right is the C major arpeggio, which is the same three notes played sequentially. Below these are two scales: the C major scale (C-D-E-F-G-A-B-A-G-F-E-D-C) and the C Lydian scale (C-D-E-F#-G-A-B-A-G-F-E-D-C), both written in a descending direction.

But obviously there are quite a few more “C” chords than just the plain old major triad! Since we are starting at the beginning, there is the minor triad, which comes with an assortment of possible scale choices:

The second musical example shows the C minor triad (C-Eb-G) in the middle of a treble clef staff. To its right is the C minor arpeggio, which is the same three notes played sequentially. Below these are four scales: the C minor scale (C-D-Eb-F-G-A-Bb-A-G-F-Eb-D-C), the C Dorian scale (C-D-Eb-F-G-A-Bb-A-G-F-Eb-D-C), the C Phrygian scale (C-D-Eb-F-G-A-Bb-Bb-A-G-F-Eb-D-C), and the C melodic minor scale (C-D-Eb-F-G-A-Bb-A-G-F-Eb-D-C).

Staying with triads for a moment, there is C augmented and its companion whole tone scale; the altered 7th scale is also a choice here. (See following page.)

C AUGMENTED C AUGMENTED ARPEGGIO

C WHOLE TONE C ALTERED (C# MELODIC MINOR)

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff is labeled 'C AUGMENTED' and 'C AUGMENTED ARPEGGIO'. It starts with a C major triad (C-E-G) and then an arpeggiated sequence of notes: C, E, G, Bb, C, E, G, Bb. The second staff is labeled 'C WHOLE TONE' and 'C ALTERED (C# MELODIC MINOR)'. It starts with a C major triad (C-E-G) and then an arpeggiated sequence of notes: C, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb.

Then there are the various 7th chords built from C: C major 7th, whose scale choices are the same as for the major triad (C major and lydian, since the major 7th chord could be the tonic in C or the IV in G), C minor 7th, (scales: natural minor, dorian, or phrygian, depending if the C minor 7th chord occurs in the modes of Eb, Bb, or Ab...are you following this?), C dominant 7th, where you would use the C mixolydian mode in the key of F (C7 is the V chord in that key), or, if you want the color of the #4, the C lydian dominant mode of the G melodic minor scale. There is Cm7b5, a chord which occurs as the VII chord in the key of Db (locrian mode), and also as the VI chord in the scale of Eb melodic minor, which is the scale you can use if you desire the harmonic color of the natural 9th (D natural in this case) against the Cm7b5 chord. (See following page.)



(This was from an outdoor gig in Switzerland with the Crusaders in the early 80's. I used to like that t-shirt. And I wish I hadn't sold that guitar - my '59 sunburst Les Paul - I could pay off my mortgage with it today!)

a) C MAJOR 7TH C MAJOR 7TH ARPEGGIO

C MAJOR C LYDIAN

b) C MINOR 7TH C MINOR 7TH ARPEGGIO

C MINOR C DORIAN C PHRYGIAN

c) C7 C7 ARPEGGIO

C MIXOLYDIAN C LYDIAN DOMINANT (#11)

d) Cm7b5 Cm7b5 ARPEGGIO

C LOCRIAN C LOCRIAN #2 (Eb MELODIC MINOR)

There is C diminished 7th, with its symmetrical arpeggio and scale.

The first staff shows the C DIM. 7TH chord in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notes are C, E, G, and Bb. The second staff shows the C DIM. 7TH ARPEGGIO, which is a symmetrical pattern of four notes: C, Bb, G, and F#. The third staff shows the C DIMINISHED scale, which is a symmetrical pattern of eight notes: C, Bb, Ab, G, F#, E, D, and C.

There are C major 7th(b5) and C major 7th(#5). It is worth noting that the latter chord can be regarded as an E major triad over a C. This concept of a triad over a (seemingly unrelated) bass note is very important and a preview of things that we will soon have to examine in depth!

The first staff shows the C MAJ 7b5 chord in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notes are C, E, G, and Bb. The second staff shows the C MAJ 7b5 ARPEGGIO, which is a pattern of four notes: C, E, G, and Bb. The third staff shows the SCALE: LYDIAN, which is a scale of eight notes: C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, and C. The fourth staff shows the C MAJ 7#5 chord in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notes are C, E, G, and B#. The fifth staff shows the C MAJ 7#5 ARPEGGIO, which is a pattern of four notes: C, E, G, and B#. The sixth staff shows the SCALE: A MELODIC MINOR, which is a scale of eight notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, and C.

And then there are the various alterations of the C dominant 7th chord: C7b5, C7#5, C7b9, C7#9, C7b5b9, #5#9, b5#9, #5b9....we will deal with most of these later in the book, because the best way to convey their special harmonic colors is to play them using mostly their *upper extensions*...and that is a whole other kettle of fish! (Play C in the bass as you play this next series of chords.)

(See following page.)