



THE WHOLE TONE SCALE AND THE 9 (b5 b13) CHORD



The **Whole Tone Scale** is a scale composed of nothing but whole-steps between scale degrees. Because there are only 12 half steps in an octave, there are only 6 notes per octave in the Whole-Tone scale. Scales that have six notes per octave are called **Hexatonic Scales**. The Blues Scale is another Hexatonic Scale you which you might already be familiar. Take the time and play through the scale very slowly and carefully on a keyboard and sing

along. Be sure to play all the right notes as there are lots of accidentals. Do this until you can internalize its sound and imagine the sound even when you are not playing.



Above is a special chord associated with the Whole-Tone Scale. It is a C9 (b5 b13) chord. Find the notes on a keyboard and play them. Listen carefully over and over.

This chord is quite quirky and you may not see it very often in the jazz charts you play. A more practical way to use the Whole Tone Scale is over a regular dominant 7 chord or 9 chord. Don't worry about the b5 clashing with the perfect 5th in the chord, because the rhythm section shouldn't be playing 5ths in dominant 7 chords anyway (Guitarists, Bassists, and Pianists take note of this!).

Because of the symmetry of the Whole Tone Scale, there are really only two of them.

1) C, D, E, F# (Gb), G# (Ab), A# (Bb)

This scale will work over C7, D7, E7, F#7, Ab7, and Bb7

2) C# (Db), D# (Eb), F, G, A, B. Take the time to learn this scale now as well.

This scale will work over Db7, Eb7, F7, G7, A7, and B7

Take the time to play these 2 whole-tone scale over a matching dominant 7 backing track, and begin to experiment with your own ideas.

Always take your time when learning a new scale and its associated chord. It may take weeks to feel comfortable with new sounds. Don't rush this process, but enjoy listening to the sound.

Musical Examples of the Whole Tone Scale

Don Redman - Chant of the Weed (Also listen to Gil Evans arrangement of the same tune).

Wayne Shorter - JuJu

John Coltrane - One Down, One Up

Thelonious Monk - Trinkle-Tinkle

Stevie Wonder - measures 3-4 of You Are the Sunshine of My Life

Dream Theater - Overture 1928