



# A SCALAR APPROACH TO BLUES

## IMPROVISATION

(For use over the changes to "Airport Blues")

### - THE BLUES SCALE

The simplest approach to playing over the Bb Blues is to simply use the Bb Blues scale over the entire form. We know by using Chord Tones and Chromatic Leading Tones in the from the Part 1 of Airport Blues

Improvisation video that we can use other notes that aren't part of the blues scale. It's still a good exercise to internalize the sound of the static blues scale. Play the following example.



7

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

10

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

## - USING 3 BLUES SCALES

Let's use the Bb, Eb, and F Blues Scales to help highlight the Bb7, Eb7, and F7 chords in the form. Basically the idea is to play the Blues Scale matching the root of each 7 chord. You could technically play a blues with three chords: I, IV, and V. That would be Bb7, Eb7, and F7.

13

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

16

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

19

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

22

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

## - USING 3 (OTHER) BLUES SCALES

At first glance, the next exercise seems like it wouldn't fit over the changes. Over Bb7, we use the G Blues Scale. Eb7 uses the C Blues Scale. F7 uses the D Blues Scale. The scales ends up working pretty well over the chords. Take a look how it all lines up.

G Blues Scale = G, Bb, C, Db, D, F, G

If we compare each note next to the Bb7 chord, we get these intervals that actually sound quite useful:

G = 13 of a Bb7 chord

Bb = Root of a Bb7 chord

C = 9 of a Bb7 Chord

Db = #9 of a Bb7 Chord

D = 3rd of a Bb7 Chord

F = 5th of a Bb7 Chord

You don't need to work out all that math, just understand the power of this scale is having the major 3rd (D) and a Chromatic Leading Tone below (Db). The other notes fit right in nicely, as well.

You can get this sound by playing a Blues Scale a minor third (3 half steps) below a 7 chord.

25

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

29

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.



32

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

35

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

## - MIXING IT UP

The next exercise uses the previous example going up and the first example going down. It's a good example of how you can mix up multiple scales over one chord to help shape the sound of your improvisation.

38

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

42

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

45

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

48

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

## - BE BOPPING

The next example uses a scale called the bebop scale. This scale is simply a major scale with an extra b7 scale degree. Here it is in Bb:

Bb BeBop = Bb(1), C(2), D(3), Eb(4), F(5), G(6), Ab(b7), A(7), Bb(1)

Note this example uses this scale in a descending fashion. Also look careful at measure 9. I've included an extra chromatic note, Ab (b2), coming down the F BeBop scale so we can land on a chord tone (G) of the Eb7 chord in the 10th bar. Just an example of using a chromatic leading tone to make the line work out better over the chord changes.

51

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

54

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

57

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

60

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

## - MIXING IT UP WITH THE MIXOLYDIAN

A common approach to playing over a 7 chord is to use the Mixolydian mode. The Mixolydian mode is simply a major scale with a flat 7 as opposed to its leading tone. Here is an example:

Bb Mixolydian - Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb

Note that unlike the BeBop Scale, the Mixolydian only has ONE SEVEN. The flat one.

Another quick way to get a mixolydian mode out of a major scale is to simply add a flat to the key signature (or take away a sharp in a sharp key signature).

Note each scale comes down a 9 chord (9 b7 5 3 1). These are good patterns to learn up as well.

Also check out the hip turnaround lick the last two measures. Learn it by memory and store it in the memory banks. You'll be using it forever.



63

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

66

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

69

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

72

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

## - 7 ARPEGGIO UP/BLUES SCALE DOWN

The next example is killer. Another example of mixing up scales and arpeggios we have already learned to get something new. The possibilities are endless.

Look at the last 2 beats of this example. It features a **Tri-Tone Substitution**. A tritone substitution is when you play a 7 chord a tritone away from the original chord's root.

The easiest way to find a tritone is go up to the 5th of the chord then go down a half step. Here are some examples of Tri-tone Subs.

Bb7 = Bb(1), D(3), F(5), Ab(b7)

E7 = E(1), G#(3), B(5), D(b7)

Notice we went up to the fifth of the original chord (F) then down a half step (E). This relationship works so well because you end up keeping the 3rd and 7th of the first chord as the 7th and 3rd in the next.

Notice the last chord usually features a F7, but we have substituted the B7.

75

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

78

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

81

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

84

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

## - ONE MORE TIME

The last example uses all the concepts we have learned so far. Let's walk through the example one measure at a time.

Measure 1: A Bb major arpeggio with a chromatic leading tone (Db) leading up to the 3rd (D).

Measure 2: Look at beats 3 and 4. Here is a tri-tone substitution over the F7 chord. Note the B7 arpeggio used instead.

Measure 4: This is a popular way to get to the IV chord in a strong way. These notes come from the Bb diminished scale (Bb, B, C#, D, E, F, G, Ab, Bb). This gives you the same sound as a tri-tone sub and is synonymous with it.

Measure 6: A common approach to the 6th bar of the blues is to play a diminished 7th chord a half step above the chord. Eb7 = E dim7.

Measure 7-8: A Bb Blues Scale in m. 7 followed by an arpeggio in m. 8

Measure 9: Notice the descending F blues scale at the end of this bar. The last note in the measure is a Chromatic Leading Tone to the 3rd of the next measure.

Measures 11-12: A turnaround lick featuring chord tones. The last 2 beats feature notes that are Chromatic Leading Tones going back to the I chord again.

137

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

140

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.



143

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.

146

A. Sax.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Pno.