Introduction

7 Grids is a system for practicing and memorizing material to be used in improvised solos. It is a twelve key system. It is self contained.

You will be asked to memorize grids and the material couched in them. You will be asked to import the practiced material into solo lines, at first in pre-selected measures, later randomly.

You will <u>not</u> be asked to read transcribed solos or master every available chord/scale relationship or compile involved rhythmic lexicons. You will <u>not</u> find any discography here-if you're interested in improvising we'll assume the foregoing items are on your shopping list.

For now, a few simple items have been selected for you to practice. There is no deadline involved; decide how many exercises you have time for and practice these. At some point they will be memorized. At some point your speed will exceed that of our practice CD. Practice without or program CD allowing you to increase speed.

Practice Guidelines.

- Practice the material in the order given.
- Practice 20-24 sessions in any month period.
- Practice by repetition rather than by clock time. Two to three repetitions per page will do.
- Practice aerobically. Keep moving from page to page. Momentum resembles the action of a solo.
- Practice through your mistakes; these will go away after a while. Should some gremlins
 persist, however, set aside a non-grid segment and work them over.

Average time of session; 32 minutes

Insert guidelines

As the material becomes easy, try fitting it into solo lines (see Key: "inserts")
The Jamie Aebersold play-along series is indispensable for insert drill. Try these albums:

- 1. Blues In All Keys, Vol. 42
- 2. Maiden Voyage, Vol 54
- 3. Killer Joe. Vol 70.

Before beginning, please take note:

- Before starting this system, singers would do well to read the addendum
- Chord calls do not dictate contents of the measure; rather the measure contents are (but one) workable option for the given chord call.
- Tablature is suggested only. It is presumed the individual will modify fingerings as necessary.

Now turn to our key.

Key

Look over the terms and descriptions listed below. It's a very small list and it's not overly formal. Knowledge of music theory is helpful but not utterly necessary. If you practice the material, taking note of the words in use, terminology will be comfortable soon enough.

Grid: A discreet ordering by interval of the twelve pitches in our notation system. This handbook uses seven orders or grids. Any material can be run through any grids. Grids may themselves by chords or scales but here we're keeping them distinct; material means one thing, grids another. The term "Grids" is informal; my students coined it in 1988.

Sets: Grids One, Two, and Three sound all twelve keys before repeating the first key. The remaining grids, however, repeat the first key before having played all twelve keys. These grids have been organized into Sets ensuring that all twelve keys be played.

Control Grid: A secondary grid used to order sets. See grids four, five six or seven. What is the interval featured in these grids? How many sets are there? What is the control grid?

MBP (Most Basic Pattern): A four note pattern consisting of two steps and a skip (ascending) or one skip and two steps (descending). Our MBP's will be major or minor in character. MBP is my own term.

Half Scale: The first five notes of a scale ascending or descending. We'll use major and minor half scales only. Later, starting on page 21 we'll take these half scales to the octave creating major, be-bop and Dorian scales.

Triad: A three note chord arranged in thirds. We'll use only two, the major and minor triad (see Grid three). The note upon which the triad is built is called the root. The remaining notes are called the third and the fifth, reflection their distance intervallically from the root. Later we'll add a seventh to the triad giving us three types of Seventh Chords.

Inserts: The placement of anything you've practiced into an improvisation. Inserts may be spontaneous or pre-chosen for a particular measure. In all instances inserts must be accurate, for instance, major material must be performed against major or dominant chords.

Enharmonic Note: In notation, all pitches have at least two possible spellings. For instance, Ab can be spelled G#, Eb can be spelled D# and so on.

Enharmonic Trades: Each grid features a discreet interval. At times, however, we will use an enharmonic trade for ease of handling. For instance, Grid 5 features sets of minor third related events. Ideally, a set beginning on C would show the following: C Eb Gb Bbb! Here we have (prudently, I might add) substituted this: C Eb F# A. The set handles easily and sounds the same as the first grouping. We can live with that.

Invert: Reverse the direction of the material as presented.



A simple inventory will be easy to practice, easy to understand, and easy to use.

Complex inventories might well prove impossible to practice in their entirety.

Understanding and usage might not occur in an acceptable period of time, if ever.

Let us begin.

Grid One Progression by Fourth Sample: Major MBP

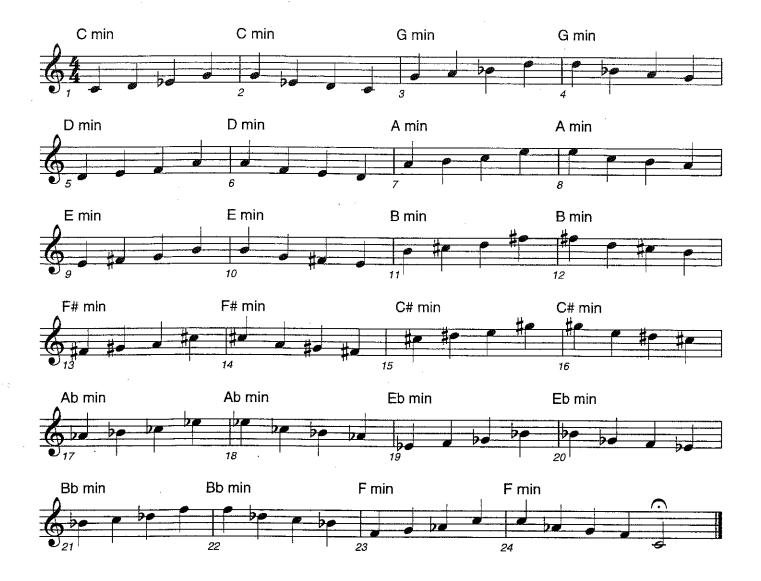


^{*} Practice as written
* Practice odd numbered measures

^{*} Practice even numbered measures

Grid Two

Progression by Fifth Sample: Minor MBP



Can you do the rest from memory?



Grid Three

Progression by Half Step Sample: Major Triad



Can you alternate (see-saw) from memory?



^{*} Practice as written

^{*} Practice odd numbered measures * Practice even numbered measures

Grid Three

Progression by Half Step Sample: Minor Triad



Can you play alternating major and minor triads like this?



Grid Four

Progression by Whole Step Sample: Major Half Scale

Set One



CD Track 5



CD Track 6

- * Practice as is * Practice odd measures only * Practice even measures only

Grid Four

Progression by Whole Step Sample: Minor Half Scale

3et One



CD Track 7



OB Hack o

Can you swing major and minor a whole step back and forth?



Practice as is Practice odd numbered measures Practice even numbered measures Grid Five Ascending

Progression by Minor Third Sample: Minor Half Scale & Minor Triad

Control: Grid Three

^{*} Set One



Grid Five Descending
Progression by Minor Third
Sample: Major Triad Control: Grid Three

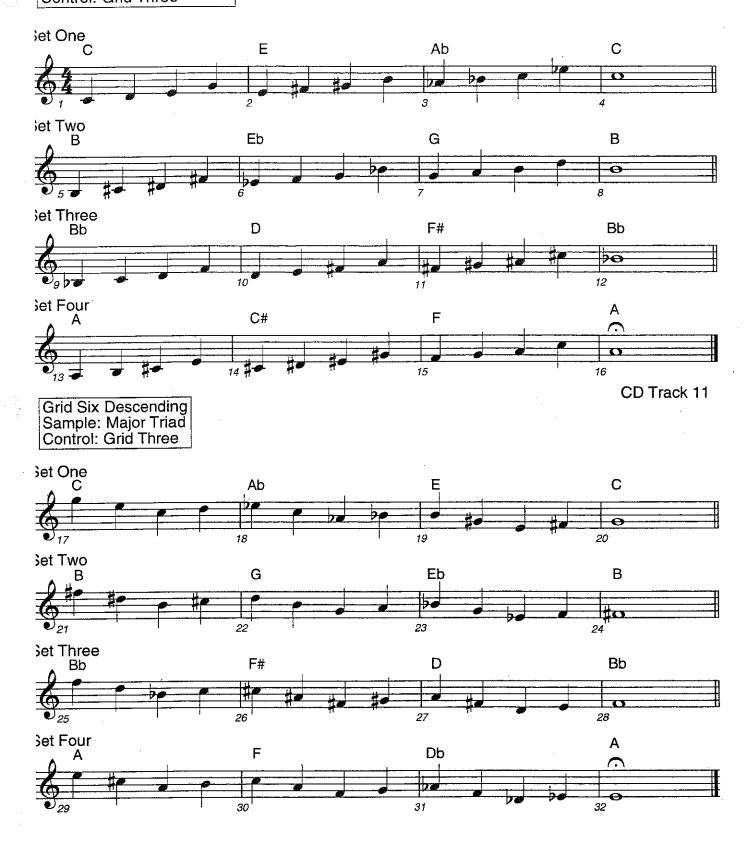
Set One



^{*} Practice as is

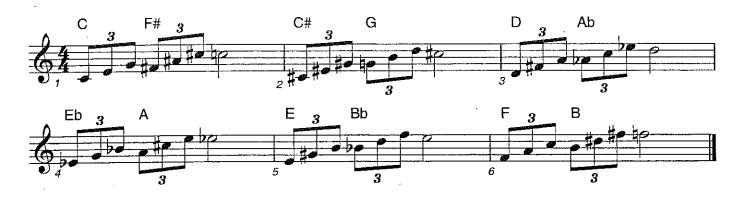
^{*} Mix starting sets

Grid Six Ascending Progression by Major Third Sample: Major MBP Control: Grid Three

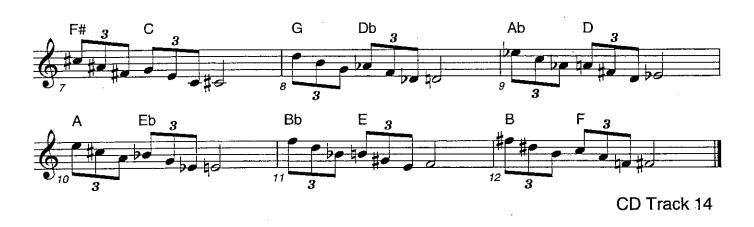


Grid Seven Ascending Progression by Tritone

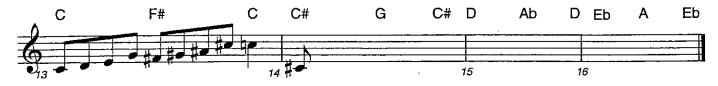
Sample: Major Triad Ascending Control: Grid Three



Grid Seven Ascending Sample: Major Triad Descending Control: Grid Three



Try Major MBP using the following grid chord calls



- * Practice as is
- * Vary start measure
 * Using the above layout, substitute major MBPs

CD Track 13

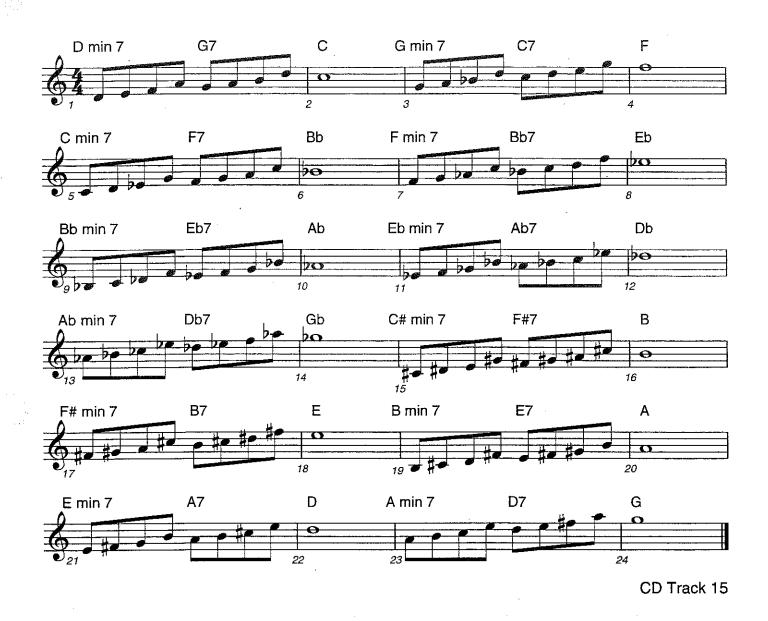
The Short Turnaround (ii mi7 – V7 – I)

Think of the Turnaround as a two-chord progression to a particular (target) chord

In the Short Turnaround the first two chords receive two beats apiece before resolving on the target. This resolving characteristic frees the target from any preset number of beats.

For a more thorough discussion of the Turnarounds and Turnbacks see the addendum.

Short Turn Around Minor MBP / Major MBP / Root Note Control: Grid One

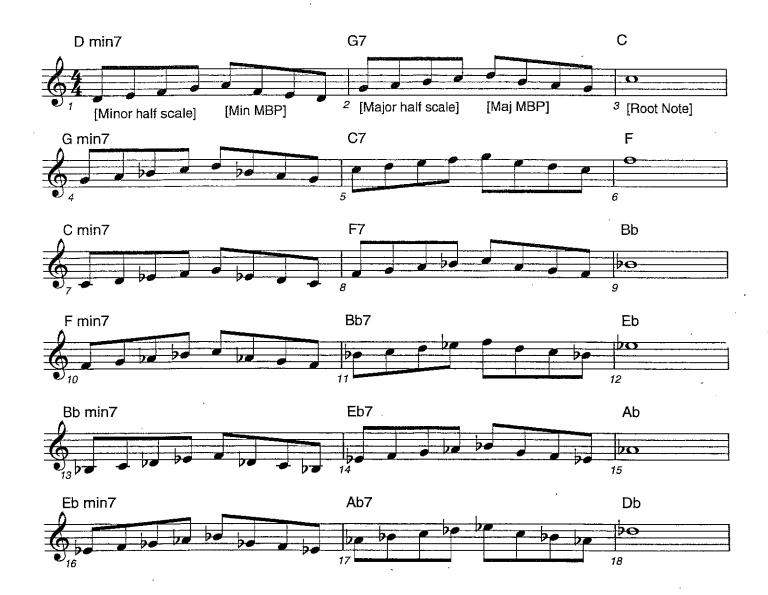


Try using Grid 4 as your practice grid



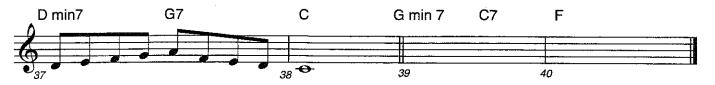
The Long Turnaround In the Long Turnaround, the first two chords receive four beats apiece, while the target remains unspecified in duration. Let's try it.

Long Turnaround Minor Half Scale + Minor MBP / Major Half Scale + Major MBP / Root Note Control: Grid One





Think: Minor side of each long turnaround can be used as a short turnaround!

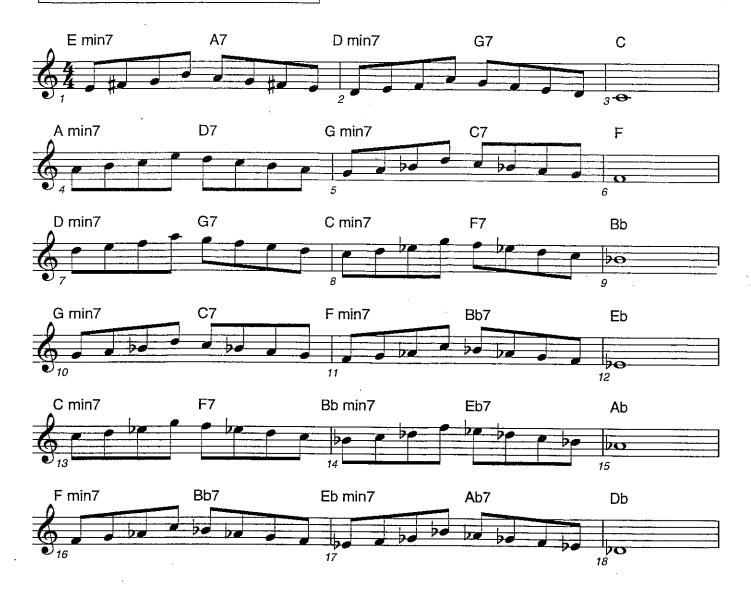


The Turnback (iii mi7 -- VI 7 -- ii mi7 -- V7 -- I)

Adding a Turnaround to a Turnaround creates the most common kind of Turnback. We'll start out Turnbacks on the third of the target chord. For learning we will use the Short version (two beats per chord with the target unspecified in duration).

At this point, there's no turning back!

Turn Back Minor MBP Same Minor Half Scale Control: Grid One



^{*} Practice as is

^{*} Think; any one can be used in a short turnaround

Turnbacks often occur at the very end of phrases and songs, in other words "highlight" areas. The use of simple material citing the existence of the Turnback is therefore not merely practical for learning but aesthetically pleasing.



CD Track 17

7th Chords and Partner Scales

We will now add three seventh chords and three full scales into the mix. Placing a selected third on to our by now familiar Major or Minor triads will give us Major 7th, Dominant 7th and Minor 7th chords. Note that these three seventh chords are those used most often in Turnarounds.

We will as well take our Half Scales on to the octave, creating one full scale for each seventh chord. The scales selected are: (for Major 7th chords) the Major Scale, (for Dominant 7th chords) the Bebop scale, and (for Minor 7th chords) the Dorian scale.

Our choice of grids is random. After having practiced the chords and scales as presented, run the material through different grids. In fact, why not re-route everything we've practiced to this point?

For instance...

Major MBP versus the 7 Grids

Can you run this material through all seven grids?

From memory?

Using the grid ribbon? (see addendum)



Major Seventh Chord Grid Three

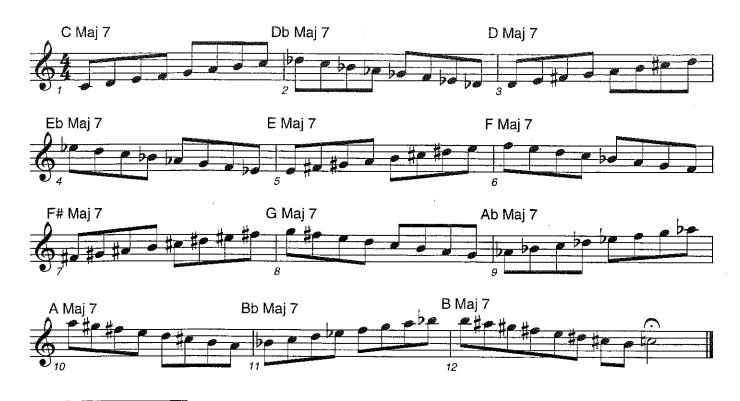


Can you swing the Major 7th chord back and forth?



- * Practice as is
- * Practice odd measures only
- * Practice even measures only

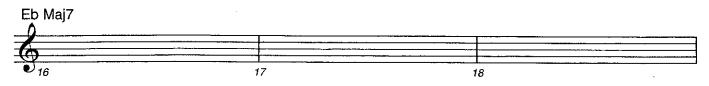
Major Scale Grid Three



Major Scale Grid Three Inversion



You're on your own! Fill in Chord Calls and Scales







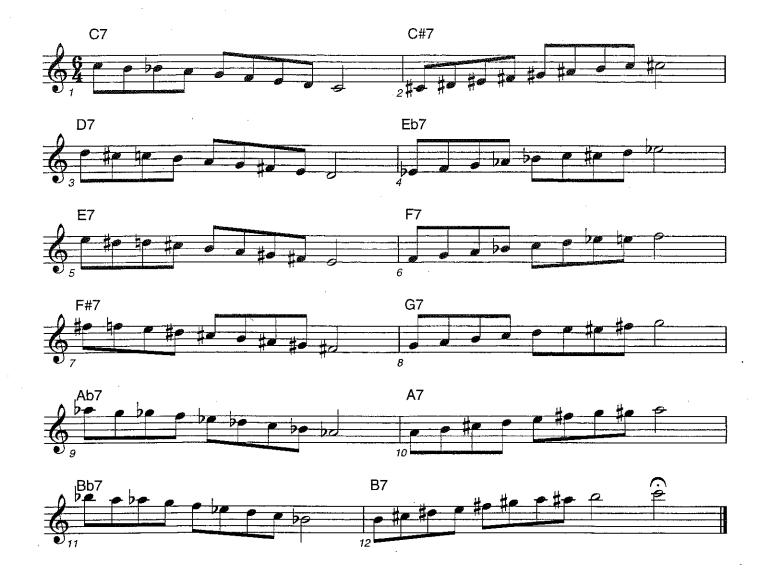
- * Practice as is
- * Invert the scale direction

Dominant 7 chord Grid One



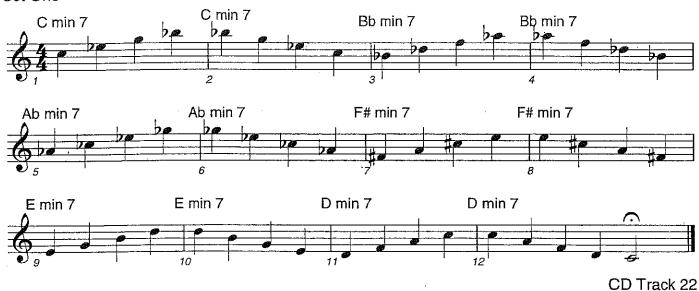
^{*} Practice as is * Practice odd measures * Practice even measures

Bebop Scale Grid Three

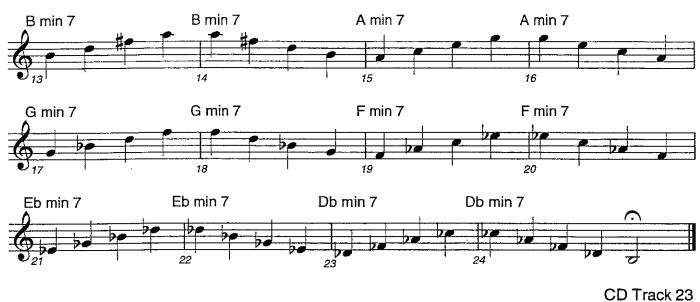


Minor 7th Chord Grid Four Descending

Set One



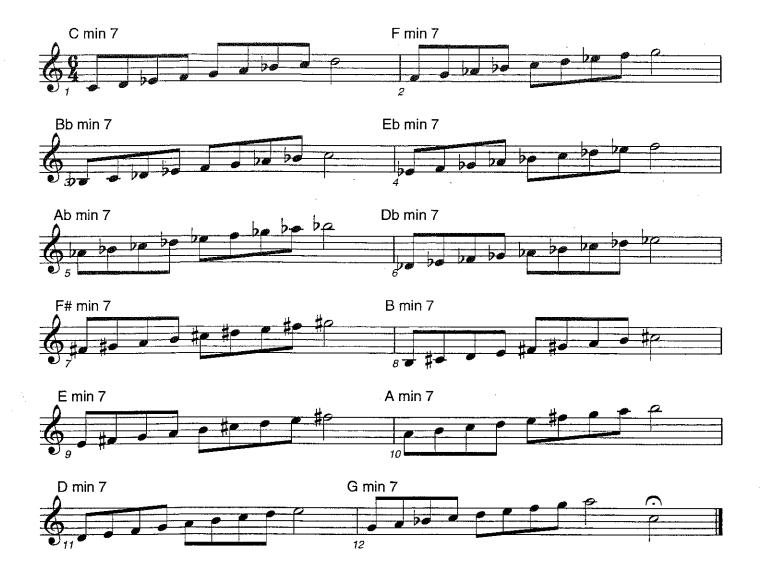
Set Two



We've added a 9th. Can you do the same?



- * Practice as is
- * Practice odd measures only
- * Practice even measures only



Can you play the scale from the 9th down?



Pentatonic and Blues Scales

Let's begin with two versions of the pentatonic scale: Major and minor.

To an ascending Major MBP, add one more whole step You now have a Major Pentatonic Scale.

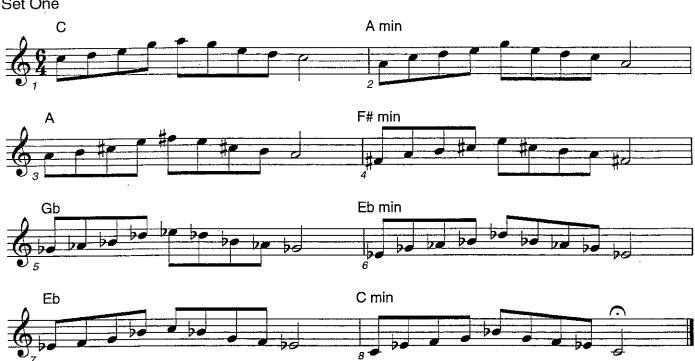
For a minor pentatonic scale, start a major pentatonic from its highest note (the note you just added.) Think of this note as the key note. You'll notice the overall sound is minor.

So, we have one scale with both major and minor character. The scale is placed in Grid Five below.

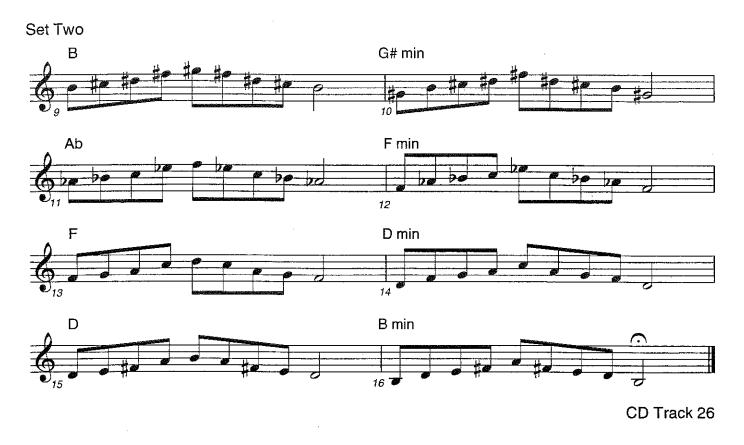
Let's practice it.

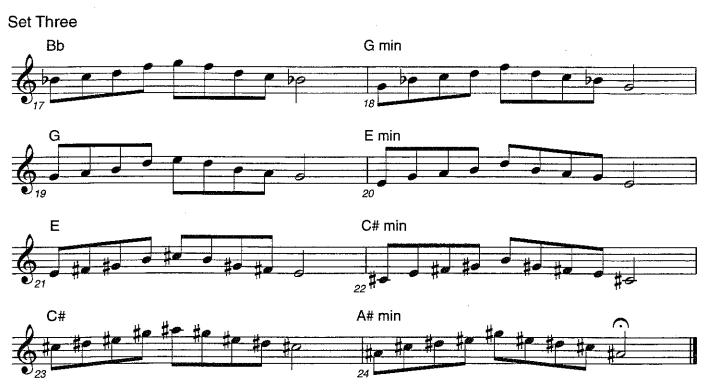
Major Pentatonics Major Pentatonics adjusted to Minor Grid 5

Set One



CD Track 25





The Blues Scale

Practice the material as presented on the following page, and then come on back (exercise page follows)

Against the emotionally heated backdrop Blues create, it's difficult to coolly lay down protocol! But that's our job here, so let's get on with it.

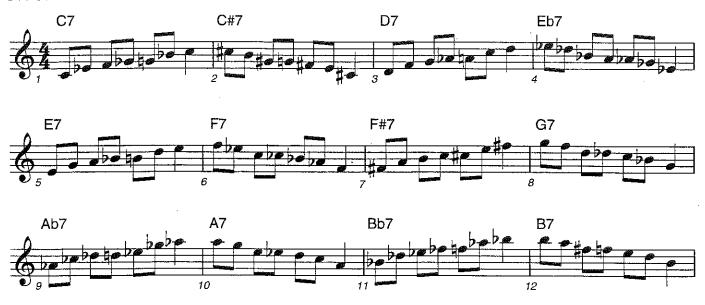
Protocol One: One scale per key; if the Blues is in C major or minor, play the C Blues Scale only. It will work throughout regardless of the chord changes.

Protocol Two: Run the entire scale up and/or down; it will sound fine.

Protocol Three: Break the scale up into two and three note groups and repeat these shorter ideas, (sometimes called "riffs"). Now and then these may clatter against the existing chord; experience will teach you when to bail!

Blues Scale Grid Three Ascending

Set One



Blues Scale Inverted Grid Three



Insert Solos

All competent improvisers insert memorized material into their solos. This material is re--cycled, varied, and augmented through the improviser's career.

The following written out solos recap some of the things we've learned.

You'll have to read them but that shouldn't be problematic if you've practiced well. Play them as is. Once played to your satisfaction try soloing with a mix of insertions you feel might work and ideas that just pop up. Once done ask the following questions:

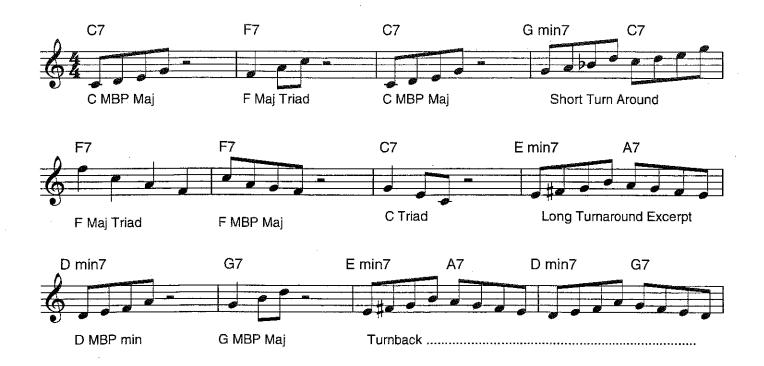
Did my inserts sound good?

Did my inserts blend with the idea being played?

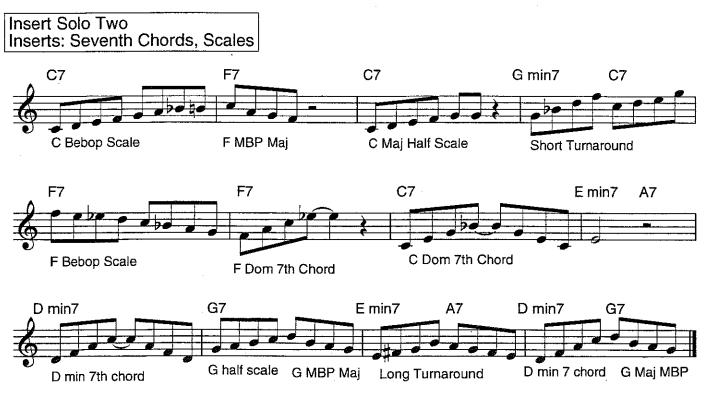
If you answered positively, welcome aboard! You're now ready for Vol. II of the Grid series.

Insert Solo One

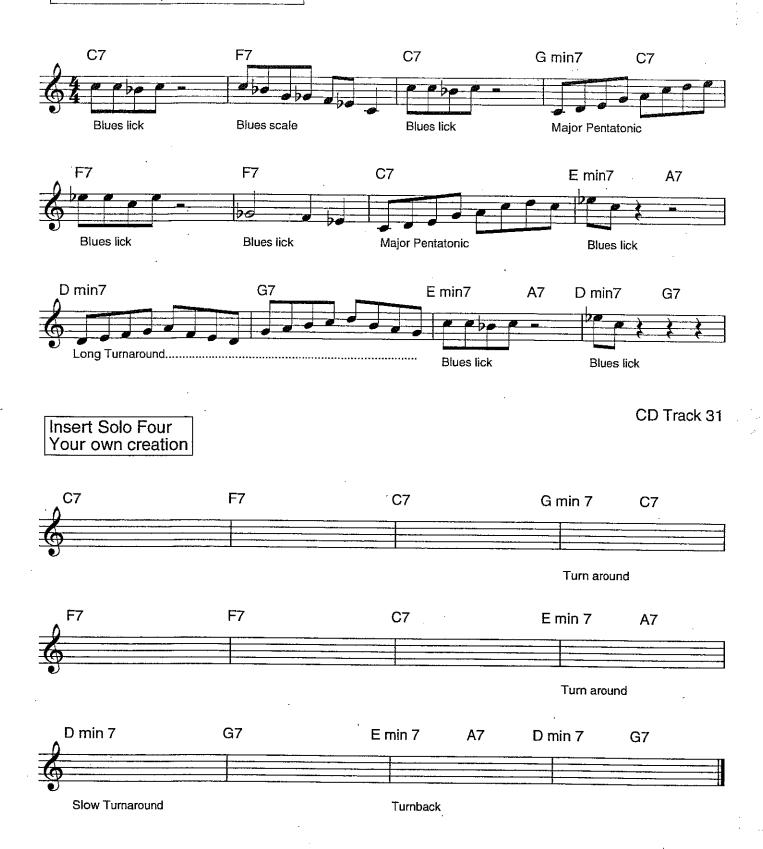
Inserts: Major and Minor MBP and Triads



CD Track 29



Insert Solo Three Inserts: Blues, Pentatonic Scale



Addendum

Turnarounds are complicated, yes, but absolutely necessary to our work here. Because of this, we will limit ourselves to Turnarounds (and Turnbacks) in major or dominant style keys.

Let's assemble a short turnaround.

We're in the key of C. Ascending, the notes of our C scale are: C D E F G A B and the octave C. Each note has a numerical equivalent as well: C = 1, D = 2, E = 3 and so on.

Let's extract D (2), G (5) and C (1).

Using the notes of our scale, lets build a seventh chord over D (2) and G (5) leaving C (1) as a simpler major triad. The progression should read: Dmi7, G7, C Major. Play through it. Remember: the first two chords receive two beats, the target as many as you wish.

On pages 23 and 24 the minor and major MBP have been combined into Short Turnarounds in all twelve major or dominant style keys. Let's practice these.

Turnbacks often occur at the very end of phrases and songs, in other words "highlight" areas. The use of simple material citing the existence of the Turnback is therefore not merely practical for learning but aesthetically pleasing as well. (The following is laid out on CD Track 17, play along or just listen.)

Return to the Scale of C. Extract, in order, E (3), A (6), D (2) and C (1). Over E and A, build the same order of seventh chords noting that A7 uses a pitch (C#) not found in the key of C. The progression should read: Emin, A7, Dmi7, G7, C Maj. Play through this. Maintain a two-beats-per chord feel.

On pages 26 - 28 the Minor MBP and half scale have been arranged to provide Turnbacks in all twelve Major or Dominant style keys.

Whether artistry can be taught is debatable; whether artistry can be attained without skill is not.

7 Grids teaches skills. Artistry is up to you

Grid One: Movement by Perfect Fourth

C F Bb Eb Ab Db/C# F# B E A D G [C]

Grid Two: Movement by Perfect Fifth

C G D A E B F# C#/Db Ab Eb Bb F [C]

Grid Three: Movement by Half Step

C C#/Db D D#/Eb E F F#/Gb G G#/Ab A A#/Bb B [C]

Grid Four: Movement by Whole Step

Set One: C D E F# G#/Ab Bb [C]

Set Two: C# D#/Eb F G A B [C#]

Grid Five: Movement by Minor Third

Set One: C Eb F# A [C]

Set Two: C# E G Bb [C#]

Set Three: D F Ab Cb/B [D]

Grid Six: Movement by Major Third

Set One: C E G# [C]

Set Two: Db F A [Db]

Set Three: D F# A#/Bb [D]

Set Four: Eb Gb B [Eb]

Grid Seven: Movement by Tritone (Control Grid One)

C-F# F-B Bb-F# Eb-A Ab-D C#-F

F#-C B-F E-A# A-D# D-G# G-C#