Nauczanie jazzu. Historia, teoria i praktyka

Zielona Góra 2023

https://doi.org/10.59444/2023MONredSzyr8

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COMMUNICATION USING JAZZ HARMONY



Introduction

This article is about the advanced use of jazz harmony, intended for the medium-advanced jazz musician on any instrument. I'm introducing concepts that are useful for any improvising musician who is dealing with harmony in a creative way.

Basic knowledge of jazz theory (to about college level) is required to follow these concepts. You should be familiar with basics such as standard harmonic progressions, circle of fifths, turnarounds, etc. This article will only help you if you are familiar with the basic jazz language and know basic chord voicings, tensions, bebop licks, etc.

I am a bassist, so I'm often explaining how to create walking bass lines. But this article is meant to be equally useful for concepts for soloing and comping on any instrument. (Jazz) music is not just harmony, but also consists of melody and rhythm, but the focus in this article is on harmony.

There are many books about jazz harmony, and some have been helpful to me. However, in my 30 years' experience of teaching jazz harmony, I have developed my own way of explaining this to my students. It's based on how we, professional jazz musicians, express ourselves and communicate with each other when we are performing. In all my teaching, the students usually say that it's a new approach for them, it was never explained to them this way. I have been teaching a lot in many different countries. I've had students of all levels, but with the advanced students I keep repeating this focus on harmony. Therefore, I feel it's time to organize my notes and thoughts on paper for whoever is interested.

To understand the essence of my "method" it is important to agree with me that jazz is an art form of spontaneous improvisation and therefore every single time that we play the same piece it will be somewhat different and often completely different. It's comparable to having a conversation. When you communicate with someone about a certain subject you can try to repeat this the next day, but you will not repeat this word for word; however, you can repeat the essential parts in general terms.

Thinking in harmonic ideas

When we, jazz musicians, are thinking of the harmony of a tune or reading the harmony that is notated on the sheet music, we take note of the information, but we use this information in a different way than, for example, classical musicians or pop musicians. We try to hear what the composer meant, and we scan the possibilities that our knowledge of harmonic relationships gives us. Then we make our personal choices on how to interpret the harmony that is notated.

So, it's obvious that the more knowledge of harmony we have, the more possibilities we have to choose from. And more possibilities give us more freedom to express ourselves in this art form and allow us to communicate with each other.

We use harmonic knowledge to create bass lines, to decide upon the voicings or lines for comping behind the soloist or melody. But we also use the harmony for creating improvisational melodies (solos).

There are basically two ways of thinking of how to use theoretical knowledge for jazz improvisation. One way is the linear scale approach (horizontal) and the other way is the harmonic approach (vertical). It's probably clear to you by now that I'm talking here about the vertical approach, but I use this to create horizontal lines. I'm just saying that in this explanation I use chord relationships, rather than scales to decide which notes to play. And the good news is that music theory is not as mystical as it seems. It's not endless. There is an end to it. At some point, you just know the basic rules of jazz theory, just like you just know all the basic traffic rules when driving a car.

You can get some of these rules in your system by reading further, but what I explain here is only meant to be an eye-opener to an approach of the use of jazz harmony. Be aware that the only way to understand it is to experiment a lot with the harmonic options explained here. Do experiment to find out when to make certain choices and, most important, when NOT to make them. In addition, the best way to further discover and expand your use of jazz harmony is by (1) learning more standards and (2) listening to the great masters in the (relatively short) history of jazz.

For this reason, I'm adding a basic list of about 200 standards at the end of this article, just to give you a place to start. Many students have found it helpful to see such a list.

Many other tunes should be on your list... it's just a start, so please treat it that way. Every serious jazz musician needs to understand that you learn from making your own list, not from copying mine.

Let's get to the practical harmonic choices.

Let's examine the harmony of a 12-bar blues in F. Basically it's just 4 bars of F7, going to Bb7 in bar 5 & 6. Then back to F7 in bar 7 & 8. Then C7 for bars 9 & 10 and F7 for the last two bars (see figure 1).

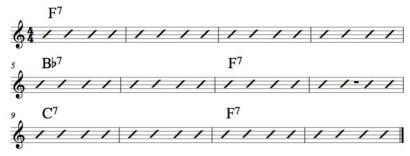


Figure 1. F-blues

What harmonic possibilities do we have here to choose from? Each possibility will lead to small or significant changes. It can create a different vibe or mood. The tune may change to feel happier, or darker, or spooky or whatever you are looking for. It might invite the bassist to choose different notes, other musicians might change voicings or rhythms, etc. None of this can, or should, be notated on the sheet music. It's a spontaneous improvised element that makes it "jazz". It also brings the performance of jazz to a higher level. It puts everyone in the group on high alert for interaction.

If you are an intermediate to advanced jazz musician and are still reading harmony from sheet music, you have not yet understood this way to approach jazz harmony (versus the way it's approached in other styles of music).

Let's examine some possibilities. Please keep in mind that these are harmonic thoughts that the soloist may have while developing his solo (or perhaps not the soloist but someone else in the group). The other musicians may respond, but often it works just fine when they are playing "normal" blues changes. These examples are not to be interpreted as reharmonizations of the blues, but as a superimposition in the mind of the players:

• We can treat the dominant chords as if they are V7s and add the IIm7. This will create more motion and extend the possibilities for both the soloist and the bassist (see figure 2).

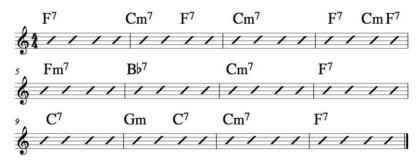


Figure 2. F-blues

• We can change the IIm7 chord into a dominant chord; now everything sounds more bluesy (see figure 3).

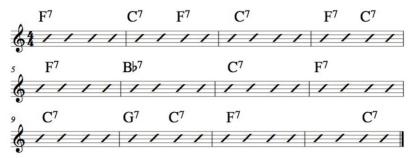


Figure 3. F-blues

• We can place chords in a different part in the bar, or in a different bar, and we maybe change only some of the IIm7 chords into dominant chords. Be sure to really communicate with the other musicians (see figure 4).

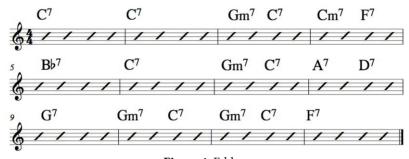


Figure 4. F-blues

• We can sometimes use the tritone sub for the dominant chords (see an example at figure 5 –remember that this is just one of many possibilities).

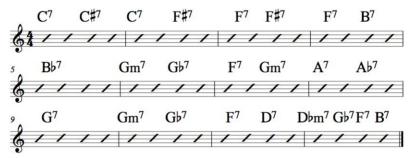


Figure 5. F-blues

• We can keep adding IIm7 chords and change them into dominant chords to create a dominant chain. Now we are getting so adventurous that even when the bass player just plays roots it sounds very hip (see figure 6).

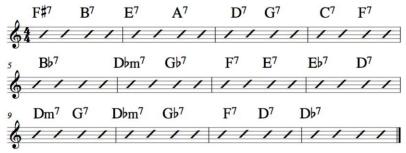


Figure 6. F-blues

• We can replace a IIm7-V7 progression by a IVm7-bVII7 progression. This is a very basic trick used in many standards, for example in *Stella By Starlight*. We can also just use the minor chord or just the dominant chord (see figure 7).

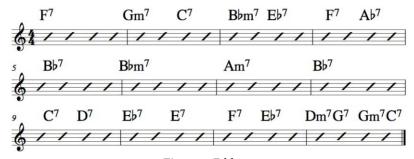


Figure 7. F-blues

• We can treat the V7 chord as a flat 9 and then replace it with a diminished chord (essentially leaving out the root of the V7b9) (see figure 8).

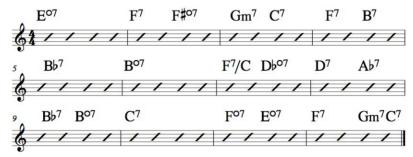


Figure 8. F-blues

• We can keep a pedal bass and add various combinations of chord substitutions on top of it. The ostinato bass will create a different vibe to the harmonic ideas of the soloist (see figure 9).

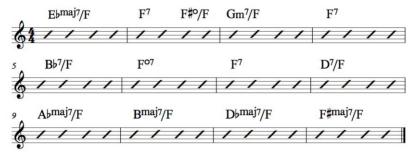


Figure 9. F-blues

• We can interchange the root of diminished chords and move chords up or down in minor 3rds (see figure 10).

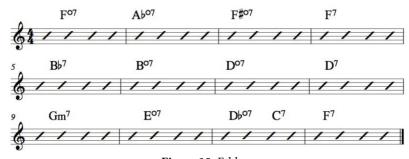


Figure 10. F-blues

• We can use Coltrane changes (see figure 11, with a chromatic chain on the last 4 bars).

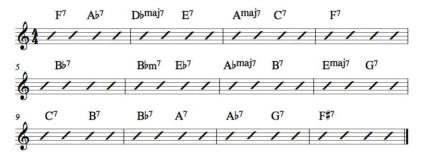


Figure 11. F-blues

• We can use *Blues for Alice* changes (see figure 12).

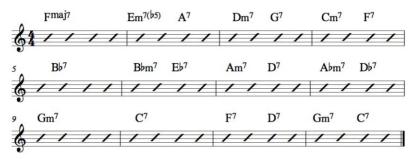


Figure 12. F-blues

• We can replace V7 chords by major 7 chords (see figure 13).

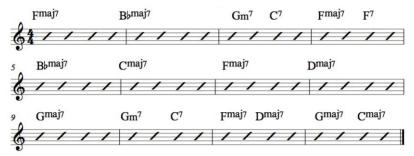


Figure 13. F-blues

• We can move the major 7 chords up or down in minor 3rds (*Ladybird*) (see figure 14).

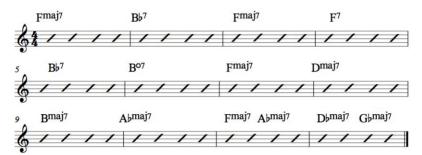


Figure 14. F-blues

• Go to the parallel minor (D minor) (see figure 15).

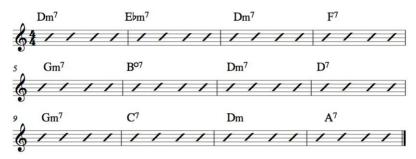


Figure 15. F-blues

• Use a diatonic progression (see figure 16).

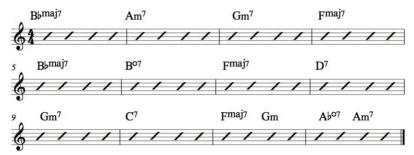


Figure 16. F-blues

• Use a non-diatonic progression (see figure 17).

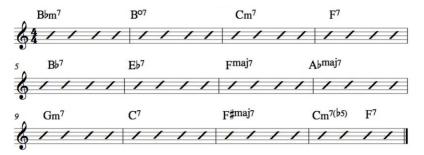


Figure 17. F-blues

• Use elements of the minor blues scale, such as the minor third or b5 in a major blues; I'm indicating this with superimposition of a #9 chord (see figure 18).

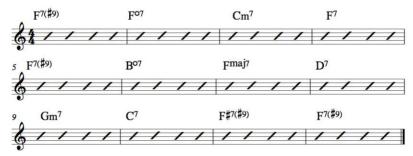


Figure 18. F-blues

Modal harmony

I've been using a 12 bar F-blues to show the examples, but everything can be applied to any situation where there is room to play around with jazz harmony, especially in modal tunes, such as the classic standard *Softly As In A Morning Sunrise* (composed by Sigmund Romberg) or semi-modal material such as a "Rhythm Changes" structure or the tune *Solar* (by Miles Davis). Below you can see how I do this in the modal tune *So What* (by Miles Davis). Again... please keep in mind that these examples are not to be interpreted as a reharmonisation, but as a superimposition.

• We can treat the minor chord as the tonic and add the V7 (see figure 19).

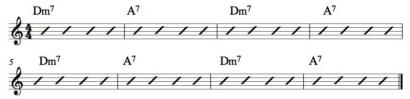


Figure 19. So What, 8 bars

• We can move chords to a different part of the bar (anticipation or delay) (see figure 20).

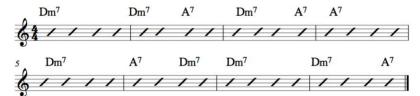


Figure 20. So What, 8 bars

• We can use the tritone substitute for the dominant chords (see figure 21).

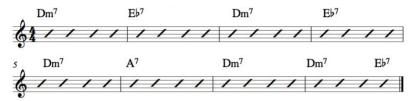


Figure 21. So What, 8 bars

• We can treat the minor chord as the IIm7 chord and add its dominant chord (see figure 22).

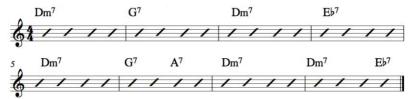


Figure 22. So What, 8 bars

• We can keep adding dominants to create a dominant chain (see figure 23).

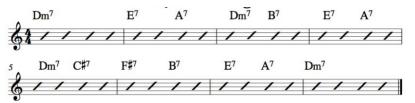


Figure 23. So What, 8 bars

• We can replace a IIm7-V7 progression by a IVm7-bVII7 progression. Or occasionally replace the minor with the relative major (by just changing the bass note, we can create interesting harmony (see figure 24).

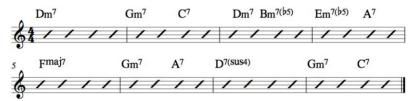


Figure 24. So What, 8 bars

• We can replace a V7b9 chord by a diminished chord (by leaving out the root) (see figure 25).

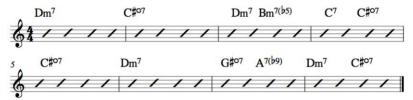


Figure 25. So What, 8 bars

• We can keep a pedal bass and add various combinations of chord substitutions on top of it (see figure 26).

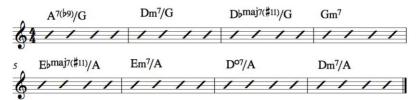


Figure 26. So What, 8 bars

• We can interchange the root of diminished chords and move chords up or down in minor 3rds (see figure 27).

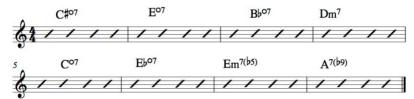


Figure 27. So What, 8 bars

• We can use Coltrane changes (see figure 28).



Figure 28. So What, 8 bars

• We can move the minor chords up or down in minor 3rds (see figure 29).

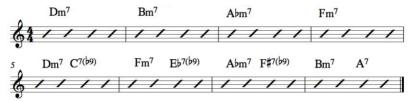


Figure 29. So What, 8 bars

• Go to the parallel major (F major) (see figure 30).

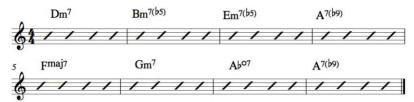


Figure 30. So What, 8 bars

• Use a diatonic progression (see figure 31).

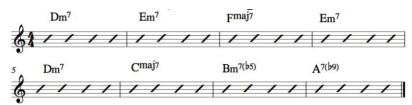


Figure 31. So What, 8 bars

• Use a non-diatonic progression (see figure 32). For example, use the bIIm.

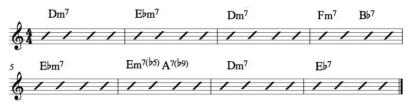


Figure 32. So What, 8 bars

• Use blues elements, such as the major third or b5 in a minor chord progression; I indicate this with superimposition of a #9 chord (see figure 33).

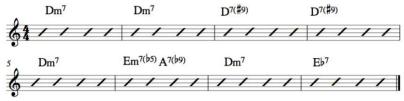


Figure 33. So What, 8 bars

Tunes with more complex chord progressions are harmonically more "boxed in", which makes them easier to play. There are fewer harmonic choices to make. For example, the bass line has to outline the given harmonic material, which has its own challenges (choosing between chord notes, scale notes, passing tones, substitute chords, pedal notes). But at least the main harmony is given, typical for the tune and not to be ignored.

Harmonic Interaction

I am a bass player and whenever I am in a situation where there is no chord instrument, I can take a lot of freedom in harmonic choices when comping for a soloist. By playing this bass line I could have been suggesting a progression to the soloist, in an instant improvisation that I transcribed later (see figure 34). However, in this example I was playing alone, so I was just having fun without communicating with anyone else.

I'm approaching the A sections as a modal C minor harmony, but the trick here is to outline the suggested harmony very clearly. The big chords are the ones I'm focusing on. If it's not clear enough it sounds meaningless, just creating confusion rather than interaction. However, I'm not holding back here, adding the complexity of anticipation/delay (it feels "awkward" to hold that Dbmaj7 in bar 5) and suggesting many little side roads (the smaller chords) to open it all up and give the soloist choices. Using repetition or clear melodic lines might help to make your point (bar 6/7 and 14-16).

The exception to this is when your goal is to create an unclear, confusing situation, for example in avant-garde (or free jazz).

Naturally, I try to be completely alerted to what harmony the soloist is suggesting and I try to create a bass line that works for his idea. For example: When in the tune *Nardis* the soloist is going for the use of arpeggios of different upper structure chords, then I may play E pedal all throughout the A sections, in this way creating a *Naima* vibe.

When it's just bass and one soloist it's easier for experienced musicians with well-trained ears to interact and improvise together. The challenge will then shift to another



Figure 34. Softly as in the Morning Sunrise, Teepe bassline

level. For example, do you feel inspired at that moment of the day? Are you technically able to execute on your instrument every idea that you hear in your head?

But when there is a third person involved, such as a pianist, guitarist or another soloist, it gets tricky. My general advice is to follow the leader. Again, it's a similar situation to when you are having a conversation with three or more people at the same time. You need one person to take the lead to organize everyone's creative ideas, but this is a different story; this gets into the techniques of how to work as an ensemble. Rather, I want in this article to help you to understand your responsibility for contributing to the harmony.

A little over 200 standards you should know (by Joris Teepe)

Afro Blue Angel Eyes Alone Together Airegin All Blues *Anthropology (rhythm)* Ask Me Now All of Me All of You Au Privave Autumn in New York All the Things You Are Almost Like Being in Love Autumn Leaves Along Came Betty Bags Groove

Beautiful Love ESP

BeatriceEasy to LoveBemsha SwingEmbraceable YouBessie's BluesEnd of a Love Affair

Billie's Bounce Epistrophy Black Nile Equinox

Black Orpheus Eternal Triangle

Blue Bossa Everything Happens to Me

Blue in Green Evidence

Blue Monk Falling In Love with Love

Blues for Alice Fee Fie Fo Fum
Body and Soul Footprints
Bolivia Four

But Beautiful Fly Me to the Moon
But Not For Me A Foggy Day

Bye Bye Blackbird Four
Caravan Gentle Rain

Ceora Georgia on my Mind

Chameleon Giant Steps

Cheek to Cheek Girl From Ipanema
Cheesecake Gone with the Wind

Cherokee Good Bait

Chelsea Bridge Goodbye Pork Pie Hat
Child is Born Green Dolphin Street
Come Rain or Come or Come Shine Grooving High

Con Alma Have You Met Miss Jones
Confirmation Here's that Rainy Day

Corcovado Hi-fly

Daahoud Honeysuckle Rose/Scrapple From the

Darn That Dream Apple
Days of Wine and Roses How Deep is the Ocean

Do Nothin Til You Hear from Me How High the Moon/ Ornithology

Dolphin Dance How Insensitive
Donna Lee I Can't Get Started

Don't Get Around Much Anymore I Didn't Know What Time it was

Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got that I Fall in Love too Easily

Swing I Got Rhythm
Doxy I Hear a Rhapsody

Emily I Love You

I Mean You Milestones (old)
I Remember You Milestones (new)

I Should Care Minority
I Thought About You Misterioso
I'll Remember April Misty

If I Should Lose You Moment's Notice
If I Were A Bell Monk's Dream

I'm Old FashionedMoonlight in VermontIn a Mellow ToneMoose the Mooch (rhythm)In a Sentimental MoodThe More I See You

n a Sentimental Mood — — — — Ine More I See You

In Walked Bud Mr. PC

In Your Own Sweet Way My Foolish Heart Inner Urge My Funny Valentine

Invitation My Ideal

It's All Right With Me My One and Only Love

It Could Happen to You -Fried Banana's My Romance

It Never Entered My Mind My Shining Hour
It's You or No One Naima

I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face Nardis

Jeanine Nearness of You Jitterbug Waltz Never Let Me Go

Joy SpringNica's DreamJust FriendsNight and DayJust in TimeNight in Tunisia

Just the Way you Look TonightNow is the TimeLady BirdOld Devil MoonLamentOld FolksLazybirdOleo (rhythm)LauraOn the Trail

Let's Fall in Love One Finger Snap
Like Someone in Love One Note Samba

Love for Sale Our Love is Here to Stay

Lover Out of Nowhere

Lover Man Peace Lullabye of Birdland Perdido

Lush Life Prelude to a Kiss

Maiden Voyage Polka Dots and Moonbeams

The Masquerade is Over Recordame
Meditiation Remember

Rhythm-ning (rhythm) The Song is You Round Midnight (Monk's changes, Miles' Star Eyes

changes) Sweet and Lovely
St. Thomas Sweet Georgia Brown
Sandu Take the A Trane
Satin Doll Take the Coltrane

Secret Love Take Five
Seven Steps to Heaven Tangerine
Shadow of Your Smile Tenderly
Simone Tea For Two
Skylark Teach Me Tonight
Smile Them Their Eyes

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes There is No Greater Love

Someone to Watch Over Me There Will Never Be Another You

Spain Triste

Speak Low Up Jumped Spring

Speak No Evil Wave

Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Well You Needn't

Most What is this Thing Called Love

Solar What's New

Somewhere Over the Rainbow When Lights Are Low Someday my Prince will Come When I Fall in Love

Soul Eyes Whisper Not

Sophisticated Lady
Star Dust
Will You Still Be Mine
Willow Weep for Me
Straight No Chaser
Without A Song
Sunny Side of the Street
Woody'n You
Stablemates
Yardbird Suite

Stars Fell on Alabama Yesterdays

Stella By Starlight You and the Night and the Music Stomping at the Savoy You Don't Know What Love

Strolling You Go to My Head

Summertime You Stepped out of a Dream

Someday my Prince will Come You'd be So Nice to Come Home To

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Komunikacja przy użyciu harmonii jazzowej

Streszczenie

Artykuł dotyczy sposobów zastosowania harmonii jako środka pierwszego wyboru do konstruowania zarówno melodii, struktury improwizacji, jak i komunikacji w jazzie. Autor, wybitny kontrabasista o bogatym dorobku, dzieli się w tekście refleksją, że jego podejście do operowania materią dźwiękową bliższe jest pianiście niż basiście, co czyni je na tyle uniwersalnym, że może z powodzeniem służyć każdemu muzykowi, niezależnie od instrumentu na którym gra. Podkreśla przy tym, że praktycznie nigdy nie myśli "horyzontalnie" (melodiami czy skalami), ale "wertykalnie" (harmonią, blokami akordów). Podkreśla jednocześnie rolę zapisu nutowego jako jedynie swego rodzaju zbioru wskazówek, ruchomych i otwartych na improwizację. Tekst zawiera też podpowiedzi, jak używać harmonii w konkretnych sytuacjach muzycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: harmonia jazzowa, jazz, komunikacja poprzez harmonię