



Welcome

Well, it has been quite a while since I sent out a Newsletter! Hopefully you will find that it was been worth the wait. The main focus of this issue is the analysis of one chorus of a Phil Woods solo on "Solar." Even though it is only one chorus of a longer solo, I hope to show how much material can be extracted from it.

Phil Woods/Gordon Beck - The Complete Concert: Live at The Wigmore Hall

Phil Woods and Gordon Beck played together in the late-'60s, early-'70s in Phil's European Rhythm Machine band. They reunited for a duo concert in May, 1996 at London's Wigmore Hall. I love Phil Woods in all contexts, but I'm particularly fond of his duo collaborations and this 2-CD set is one of the best. A review and a list of the tracks can be found here:

<http://www.allmusic.com/album/complete-concert-live-at-the-wigmore-hall-london-mw0000236941>

Solar

One of my favorite tracks from this concert is "Solar." It opens with solo piano from Gordon, followed by 12 choruses from Phil, the first four of which are a capella. This solo is a goldmine of bebop vocabulary. I have transcribed the complete solo and it is available to patrons of Phil Woods's website (www.philwoods.com).

For this newsletter, I will be focusing on the first chorus. Even in only 12 bars, there is a wealth of material to study. To start, here is the first chorus:

SOLAR

PHIL WOODS SOLO
FROM "THE COMPLETE CONCERT"

0 B^b8 E7 A A- A- E-7 A7

5 D^{ma}7 D^{ma}7 D-7 G7

9 C^{ma}7 C-7 F7 8^bma7 B^b8 E7

It is nice that the solo starts and ends with the same lick - it makes it easy to loop the solo chorus over and over until you really know it.

Once you have learned and memorized the chorus, it's time to start taking it apart to see what makes it work and look for ways to extend the ideas. I have extracted 8 different licks from just this one chorus and give some ideas on how to practice them and extend them. All of the material should be practiced in 12 keys.

"Solar" Exercises

Exercise 1

The first exercise is based on the opening lick. It is based on the b9,#9 alteration of the E7 chord and suggests the diminished scale. Often when you hear something based on the diminished scale, you can sequence the original idea by minor thirds. This idea is illustrated by the exercise. 1A is the original lick, 1B is transposed up a minor third, 1C is transposed up another minor third, and 1D

is up another minor third. In each case, try to resolve the lick to a chord tone of the following minor chord using good voice leading.

EXERCISE 1

Musical notation for Exercise 1, showing two variations (1A and 1C) of a lick. Variation 1A starts on measure 1 with an E7(b9) chord and ends on measure 4 with an A- chord. Variation 1C starts on measure 5 with an E7(b9) chord and ends on measure 10 with an E7(b9) chord.

Exercise 2

The second exercise is based on the ii-V lick in measures 3 and 4. It is a nice illustration of a bebop scale with an arpeggio based off the 3rd of the V chord resolving to the 3rd of the major chord. 2A shows the original phrase, 2B is a small variation strictly using the arpeggio off the 3rd, and 2C is a variation of the resolution to the third of the major chord.

EXERCISE 2

Musical notation for Exercise 2, showing three variations (2A, 2B, and 2C) of a lick. Variation 2A starts on measure 2 with an E-7 chord and ends on measure 4 with a DΔ7 chord. Variation 2B starts on measure 4 with an E-7 chord and ends on measure 7 with a DΔ7 chord. Variation 2C starts on measure 7 with an E-7 chord and ends on measure 10 with a DΔ7 chord.

Exercise 3

The third exercise is based on the phrase Phil plays on the D major chord. 3A is the original lick in D major. The exact same notes can be played on a B minor7 chord as shown in 3B. Finally, the original lick can be modified to work over a D minor-major7 chord as shown in 3C.

EXERCISE 3

The image shows three staves of musical notation for Exercise 3, all in the key of D major (one sharp). Each staff contains a single measure of music with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The notes in all three variations are: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), followed by a quarter rest. Variation 3A is labeled 'DΔ7' and has a blue box around the number '3A'. Variation 3B is labeled 'B-7' and has a blue box around the number '3B'. Variation 3C is labeled 'D-Δ7' and has a blue box around the number '3C'. A vertical green line is drawn between the end of the eighth note and the start of the quarter rest in the 3B staff.

Exercise 4

The fourth exercise is based on the ii-V line Phil plays in measures 7 and 8. The variations illustrate being able to start the lick on a different note.

EXERCISE 4

Exercise 4 consists of three staves of music, each starting with a boxed label: 4A, 4B, and 4C. Each staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The first measure of each staff contains a D-7 chord, and the second measure contains a G7 chord. The melody in each staff is a sequence of eighth notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5. The first staff (4A) starts on the first line (D4). The second staff (4B) starts on the second line (E4). The third staff (4C) starts on the second space (F#4). Each staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Exercise 5

The fifth exercise has many parts and is based on the second measure of Exercise 4. To my ear, the line on the dominant chord has a diminished quality to it. As we saw in Exercise 1, when you find a nice diminished line, you can usually find 3 more lines by successively transposing in minor thirds. That idea is shown in 5A.

EXERCISE 5

Exercise 5 consists of a single staff of music labeled 5A. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The first measure contains a G7 chord. The melody is a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5. The staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The rest of exercise 5 is based on just the first 4 notes of this line. There are different ways of conceiving this line, but for the purpose of this exercise, I want to treat it as 1-2-b3-b5 of a diminished scale. For those familiar with John Coltrane's solo on "Giant Steps," the 1-2-3-5 pattern is used extensively in it. There is a lot of information available on how to permute the 1-2-3-5 group to generate new lines; I will illustrate a few possibilities with the 1-2-b3-b5 group.

5B and 5C show the 1-2-b3-b5 group repeating at the minor third in both ascending and descending directions.

5D and 5E show a common permutation (b5-b3-2-1) that is the reverse of the original line. Again the pattern is repeated in minor thirds in both ascending and descending directions.

5F and 5G take another permutation (3-b5-2-1) through a similar set of transpositions and directions.

Once you have worked on 5A-5F extensively and have the patterns under your fingers, it is time to isolate pieces of the line and work on resolving the diminished line on the dominant chord to a major or minor chord. This idea is shown in 5H where the original line is transposed up in minor thirds and then resolved using good voice leading. Note that the same line can resolve to either C major or A minor.

To add variety, try combining different pieces of exercises 5B-5G together and then resolve. 5I is just one of many possibilities.

Exercise 6

Exercise 6 is based on the phrase Phil plays in measure 9. 6A extends the line so that it would work over 2 bars of a major chord. 6B is the original line, but it is displaced rhythmically by one beat so that the first 2 notes are an approach to the tonic on the downbeat.

EXERCISE 6

Exercise 7

Exercise 7 is based on the phrase Phil plays in measure 10. 7A is the original phrase. 7B and 7C are just two possible ways to extend the line and resolve to a major chord.

EXERCISE 7

7A C-7 F7

7B C-7 F7 BbΔ

7C C-7 F7 BbΔ

Exercise 8

Exercise 8 is based on the phrase Phil plays in measure 11. 8A is the original phrase starting on the 3rd. 8B is the same phrase, but starting on the major 7th (note that the #11 is introduced in this line). 8C is the same phrase, but starting on the 6th.

EXERCISE 8

8A BbΔ

8B BbΔ

8C BbΔ

Summary

As I said, even though it is only one 12-bar chorus, there are many valuable

ideas contained within it. These 8 exercises are just some of the possibilities of what can be done with the original material. Perhaps in future newsletters I can examine the other 11 choruses in Phil's solo in a similar way.

Until Next Time ...

I hope you enjoyed this issue of the Scooby-Sax Newsletter and that you have plenty of material to practice now! Your comments and questions are always welcome. Send me an email at scooby@scooby-sax.com to let me know what you thought of this issue, suggestions for future issues, etc.

Sincerely,

Jeff Rzepiela

www.scooby-sax.com