SECTION I:

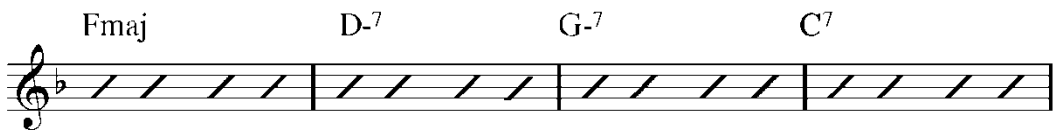
JIMMY RANEY'S IMPROVISED LINE

(ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1986, EDITED & UPDATED: 2012)

CHAPTER 1: CONSTRUCTING AND EDITING JAZZ LINES

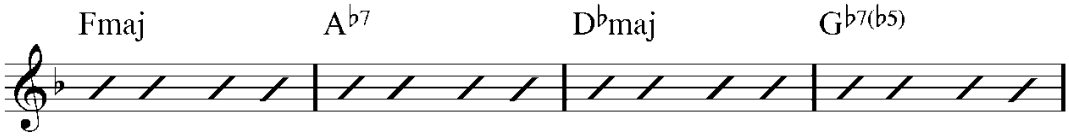
I will begin by constructing lines and then analyzing and rebuilding them. For this purpose, I will use three variations, (A, B and C) of the common four-measure I VI II V chord progression found in many standards.

Original:

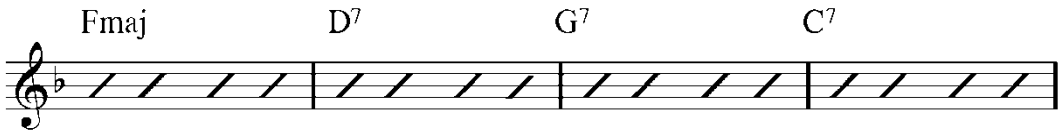


Chord variations A, B & C:

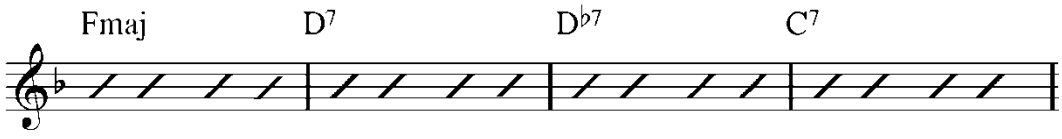
A.



B.

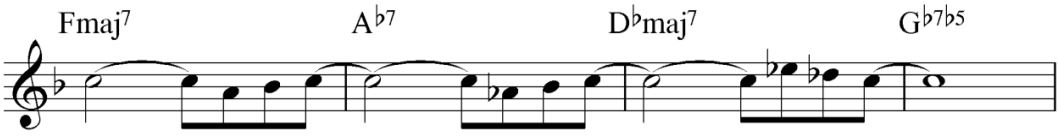


C.



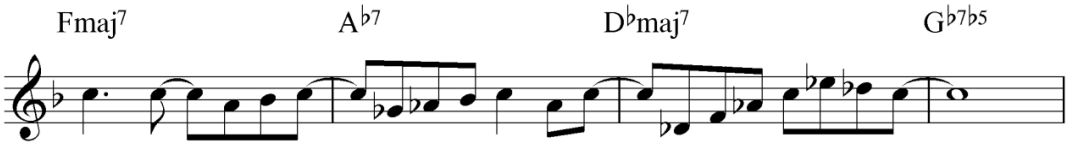
Let us construct a melodic line on the first chord variation, **A**:

Figure A1



As we look this melodic line in Fig. A1, what are the strong and weak points of its construction? In its favor, it is a very song-like melody. It also fits the chords without "running" them and is sequential, which gives it coherence. But it is very monotonous because it repeats the same rhythm exactly. Let us see if we can fix some of the difficulty (see fig A2):

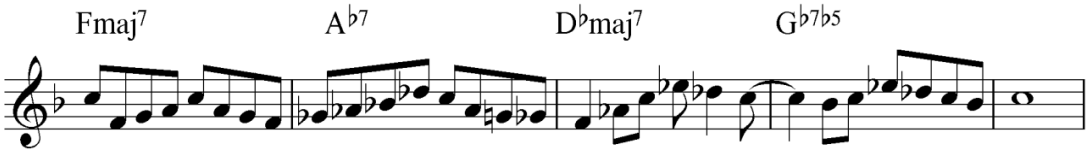
Fig. A2



Now the phrase has been filled in with added syncopation (dotted quarter and eighth in the first bar), added sequence in the second bar, and finally harmonic interest with a Db major seventh arpeggio on the first two beats of the third bar. Much of the original sequence remains, thereby retaining its original strength and coherence, but the monotony has been lessened by the alterations.

Let's try another variation:

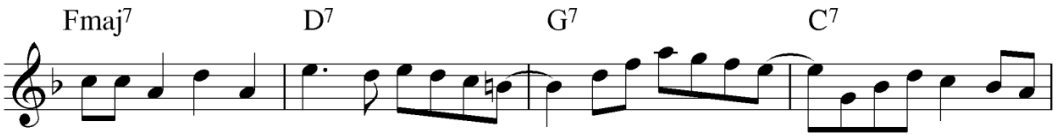
Fig. A3



This is still related to the original fig. *A1* but has undergone further transformation. There is now an ascending and descending scale sequences in bars 1 and 2. The phrase still pivots around the note common to all 4 chords, the C natural.

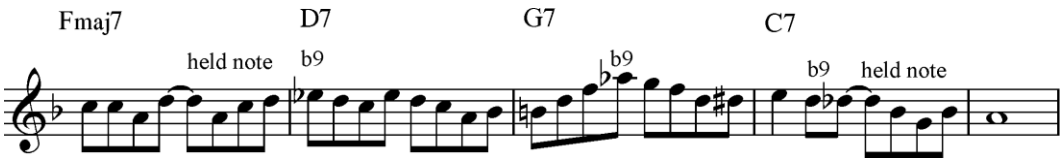
Let's try a new phrase on the harmonic progression of **B**, which substitutes dominant chords for the minors on VI and II:

Fig. B1



This is a pleasing phrase although rather simple. Let us add a couple of flatted 9ths and other alterations to give it more interest (see fig. B2)

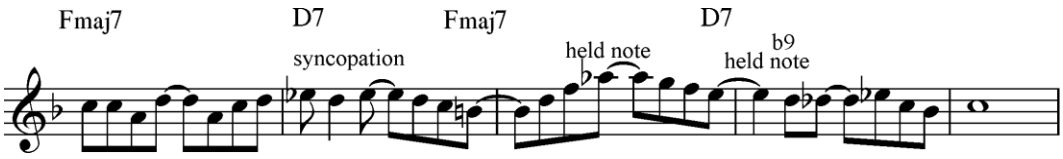
Fig. B2



In the first bar we have created syncopation by anticipating and holding the D. We have added flatted ninths on the D7, G7 and C7 chords. Note also the chromatic ascension from the 5th of the chord to the third of the next chord in bars 3 and 4. This gives a strong harmonic movement to the phrase as the third clearly defines the chord.

However, there is still not enough rhythmic interest here. Let us add more syncopation in measures 2, 3 and 4 by attacking the upbeats of the *"and"* of two and four and holding them over (see fig. B3):

Fig. B3



Note also how both the b9 and #9 (Db, Eb) were used as suspensions to the C in the fourth measure.

The next two examples further illustrate this altered suspension approach. In fig.B4 measure 2, a natural 9th is paired with the root on chords D7, G7 and C7. Compare and contrast this with fig.B5 where b9 and #9 suspensions are used on the same chords. Although the phrases are nearly identical, the altered 9th suspensions in fig.B5 create a stronger pull towards resolution than in fig.B4.

Fig. B4

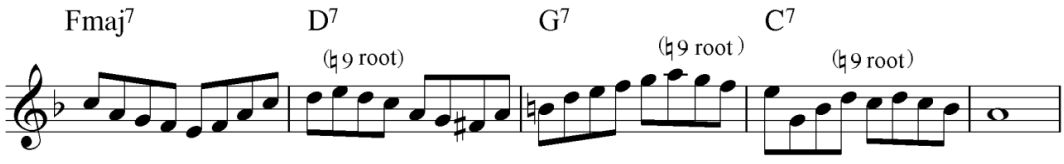
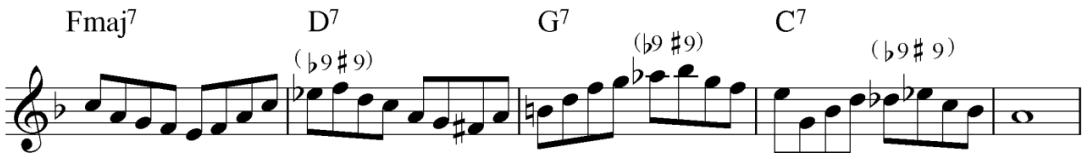
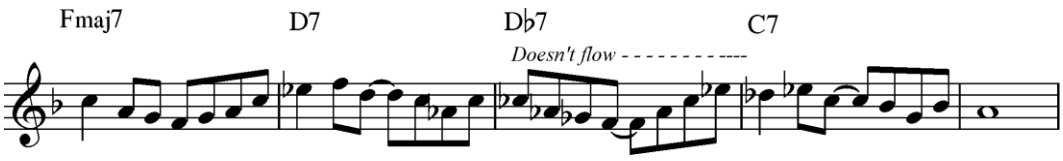


Fig. B5



The next examples are over the **C** progression, which swap Db7 for G7 (see fig. C1)

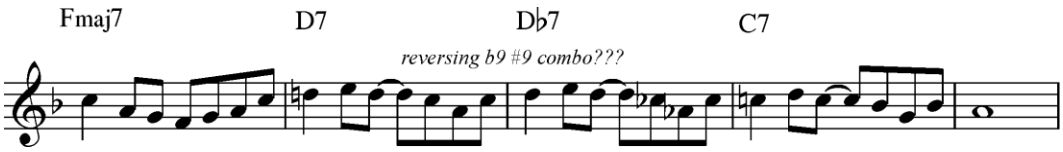
Fig. C1



This phrase doesn't quite sound right. The flatted notes on the Db7 phrase, although agreeing with Db7, seem more out of key because they are unprepared and don't resolve to diatonic notes. Contrast this with the b9 and #9 notes used on the D7 and C7 chords. Although they include chromatic tones (Eb, Db) they still resolve smoothly to the diatonic notes within the key of F (D and C respectively).

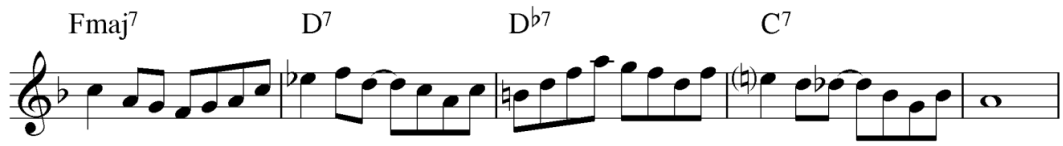
Interestingly, reversing the procedure doesn't help. In fig. C2, diatonic ninths are used on the D7 and C7 chords and the b9 #9 combo is used on the Db7. It sounds odd:

Fig. C2



Since neither Db7 type tones or diatonic b9/#9 suspensions that resolve to Db seem to have worked well so far, let's try another solution: bitonality. In this case we will approach the chord melodically as if it were a G7 (as in prior examples) but against the Db7 chord. This is simply a tritone substitution (see Fig. C3)

Fig. C3



Clearly this solution is much more melodic than the previous because the G7 is closer in key to F

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

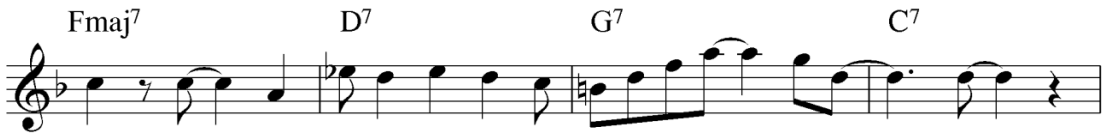
- Use sequence with varied rhythm, and include pitches that create harmonic interest (A1-A2)
- Vary the shape of the line (A2, bar3)
- Use flatted 9ths to create more melodic interest on dominant chords (B2)
- Connect to the 3rds of the chords to better define the harmony (B2)
- Use syncopation to sustain rhythmic vitality in the line (B3)
- Use the flat9 sharp 9 suspension combination to create tension and resolution to the dominant root (B5)
- Take special care preparing and resolving chromatic tones, resolving to diatonic key related pitches (A3, C1-C3)

CHAPTER 2: REFINING/ENHANCING LINES WITH RHYTHMIC DEVICES

Long lines are part and parcel of modern jazz playing. Although anyone can play long lines, it is easy to fall prey to monotony without interesting rhythms. The lines to be discussed are more or less continuous but are nevertheless successful because they contain rhythmic complexities, which create tension and sustain interest.

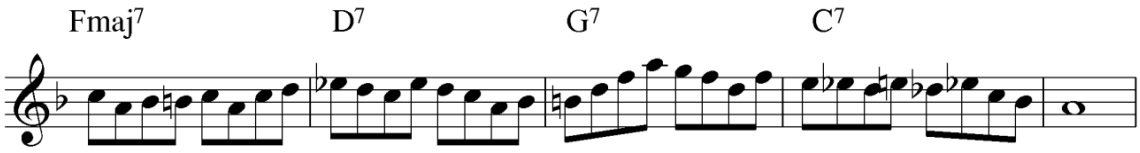
Earlier styles consisted of shorter phrases such as those of the Dixieland or the Swing era as exemplified by the phrase below:

Fig 2-1



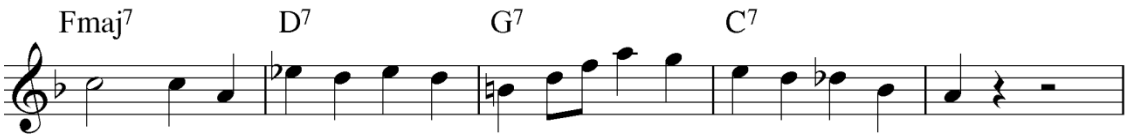
Let's now construct a longer phrase based on this:

Fig 2-2



What's wrong with this revision? The syncopations that gave the previous line its life and vitality have been removed. It is harmonically and melodically similar to the first example but it is rhythmically equivalent to the following rather dull phrase:

Fig 2-3

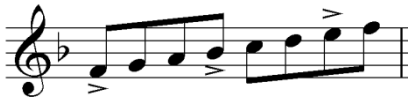


Polyrhythm

One way to counteract rhythmic flatness in long lines is through the use of *polyrhythmic* phrases against the given meter.

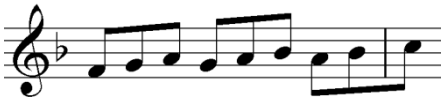
Polyrhythms can be created by accents:

Fig 2-4a

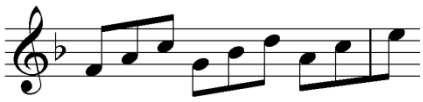


Or by groupings in scale sequences (b) or broken chord sequences (c)

b.



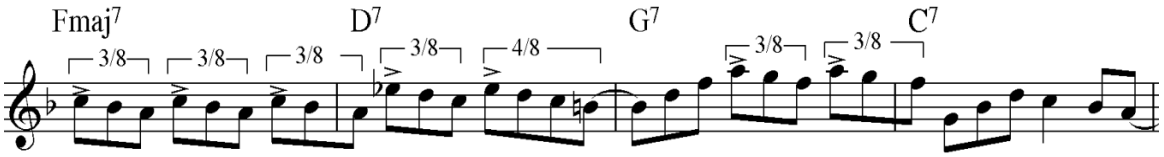
c.



In b and c the accents are built into the phrases.

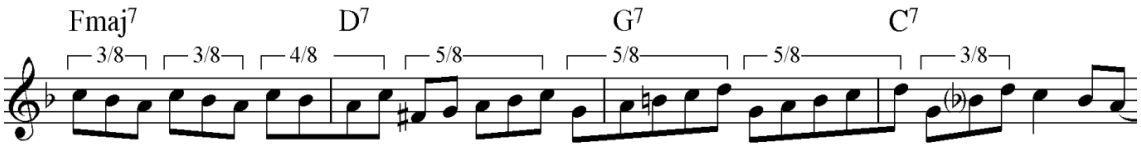
This sample phrase is similar to fig. 2-2 but it utilizes 3/8 meter scale groupings, creating more rhythmic interest:

Fig 2-5



Here is another example that mixes both 5/8 and 3/8 phrases against 4/4:

Fig 2-6

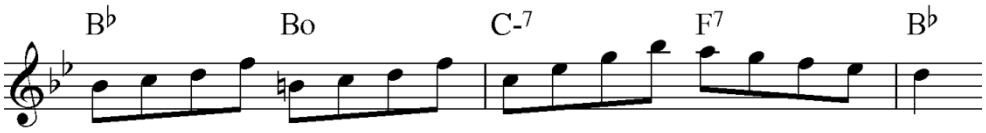


When you hear jazz players playing long lines that nevertheless sustain interest, it is likely they are using the polyrhythms shown in previous examples or others similar to them.

Harmonic Dislocation

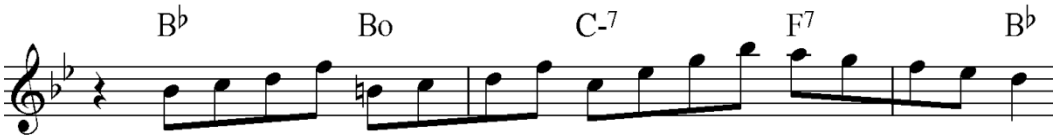
Another device also used to create rhythmic tension and interest is a technique I call *harmonic dislocation*. Take this common *Rhythm changes* phrase as an example:

Fig 2-7



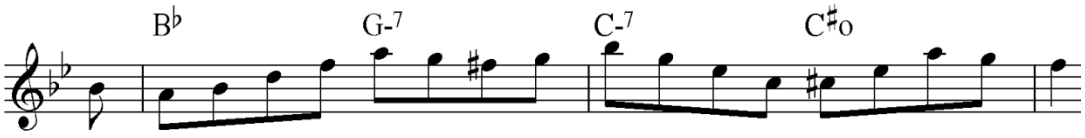
By playing the phrase one beat later we get:

Fig 2-8



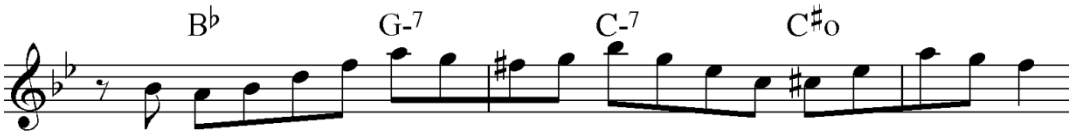
Here is another typical phrase over the same section that uses an eighth pick-up to the downbeat:

Fig 2-8



Shifting over one beat, we get:

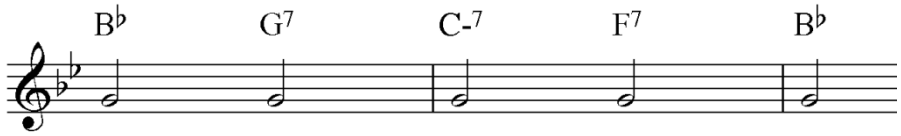
Fig 2-9



This tension is caused by harmonic dislocation. Another good way to demonstrate this is by playing chords displaced in the same manner:

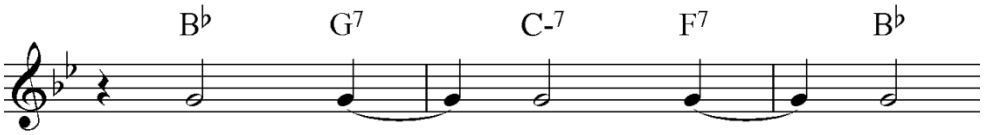
These are the chord changes of the original:

Fig 2-10



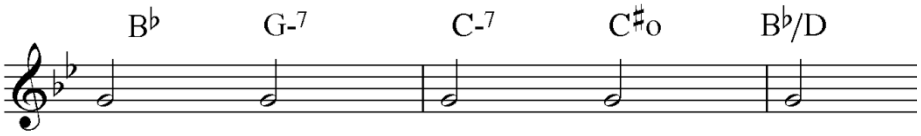
Same changes shifted over one beat:

Fig 2-11



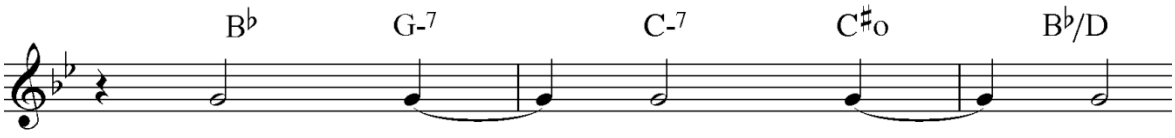
In Fig 2-9 this is the harmonic progression:

Fig 2-12



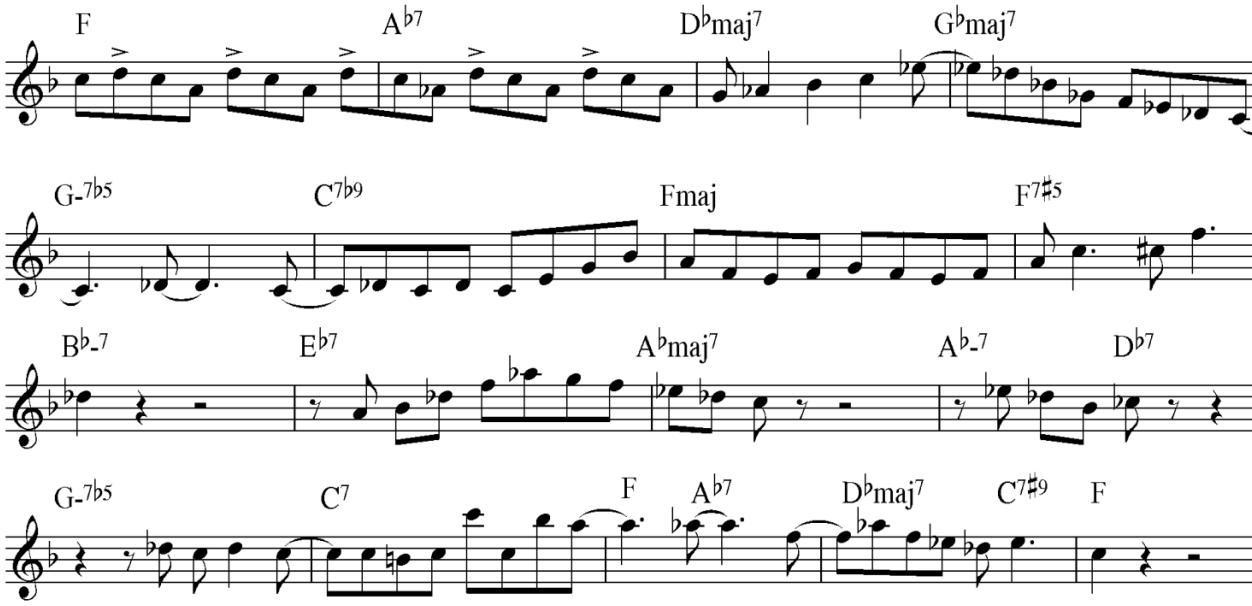
Moved over one beat:

Fig 2-13



I will now write a solo using some of the devices discussed thus far. I will use the chords to Van Heusen's "Here's That Rainy Day". This tune starts out like the first chord changes used (chord variation **A)**. Below is an analysis of some of the key phrases of the solo.

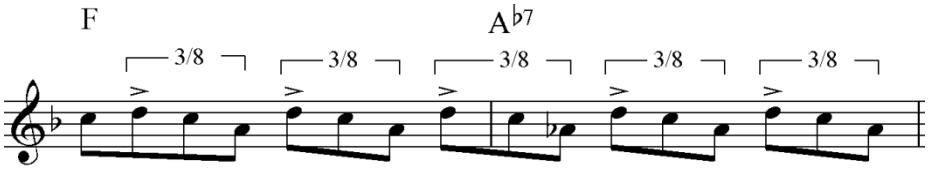
Fig 2-15 Here's That Rainy Day solo (first 16 bars)



Here's That Rainy Day Solo Analysis

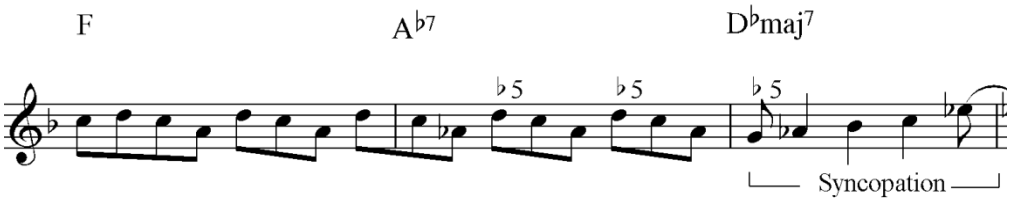
In the first two bars I use the 3/8 groupings against 4/8 which creates built in syncopations:

Fig 2-15



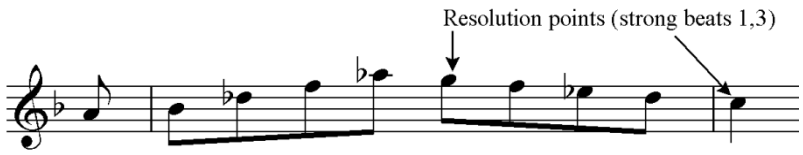
In bar 3 we have upbeat quarters (more syncopation). Note also the flatted 5th in bars 2 and 3, which nevertheless sound melodic because they are notes in the key (F) scale:

Fig 2-16



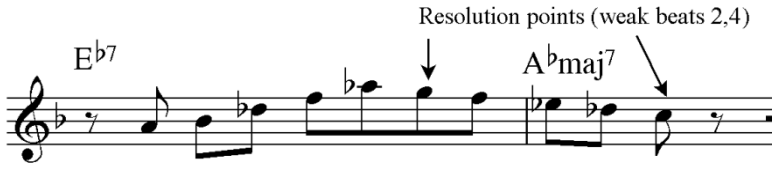
In bar 10 there is dislocated harmony. The straight (or perhaps expected) way to play this phrase would be:

Fig 2-17



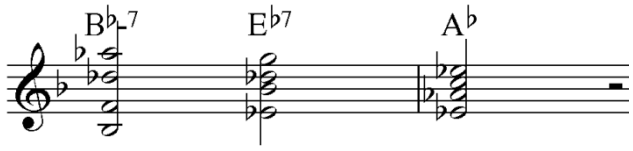
Played this way, the 7th (Ab) of Bb-7 resolves to the third (G) of the Eb7 on beat 3 and the 3rd of Ab (C) comes right on beat one. These are the strong beats of the bar. However, in the solo, with one beat later displacement, the 7-3 resolutions occur on the 4th and 2nd beats of the bar respectively. Two and four are weak beats so you have delayed resolutions, giving tension (see fig 2-18)

Fig 2-18



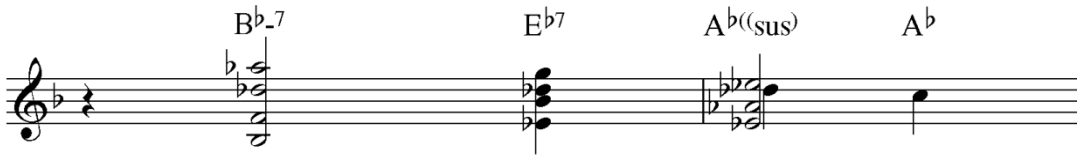
The effect of the displacement can be heard clearly by playing chords. Instead of this:

Fig 2-19



You get this:

Fig 2-20



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- Mixing 3/8 and 5/8 accented scale patterns with 2/4 and 4/4 are very useful for creating more interest on a continuous line
- Use scale and arpeggio sequences as a “quick and dirty” way to create polyrhythms
- Learn whatever phrases you know on different beats. Experiment by starting on every eighth note subdivision within a measure
- Make sure you know how to get back to beat 1 when you do odd meter tricks
- Don’t overdo rhythmic devices. Use them to enhance your existing “straight” lines

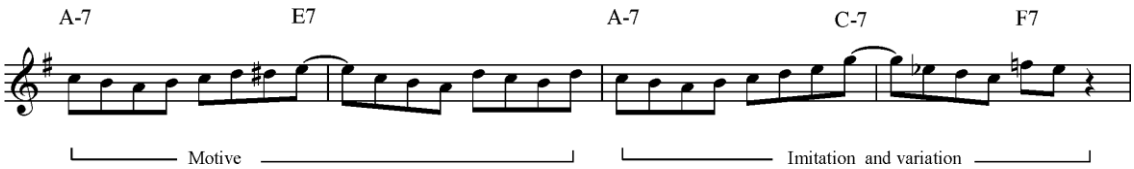
CHAPTER 3: SEQUENCE & DEVELOPMENT OF LINE

Sequence adds direction and interest to melodic line, especially when they are used with subtle variations, both harmonic and rhythmic. Quotes Jimmy:

"There is a lot of sequential stuff in my playing that's hidden sometimes...in other words there will be sequences... but they're decorated or hidden…The structure of your playing comes from cohesion from sequences and patterns, but you can't make them too obvious."

Fig 3-1 features a great sequence from Vol 20 Aebersold Play-Along track, on "Out of Nowhere" which repeats the first 6 notes of the first half, then rises a third above the original, makes a harmonic alteration a m3 above (to fit the minor IV chord) and continues the imitation. Note how the second half makes the entire phrase more climactic and with feeling for partial cadence.

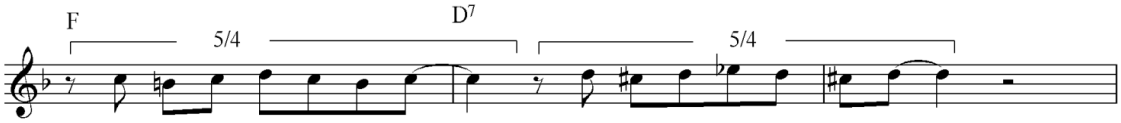
Fig 3-1 ("Nowhere", bars 26-29, *Play Along with Jimmy Raney,* JA *Vol 19*)



Frequently sequential and polyrhythmic devices are used together to build phrases.

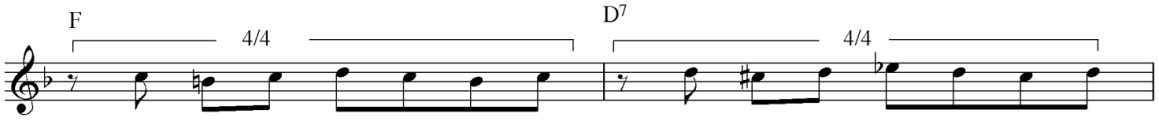
This is a sequence implying 5/4 polyrhythm against 4/4 rhythm. Do you feel the tension created?

Fig 3-2



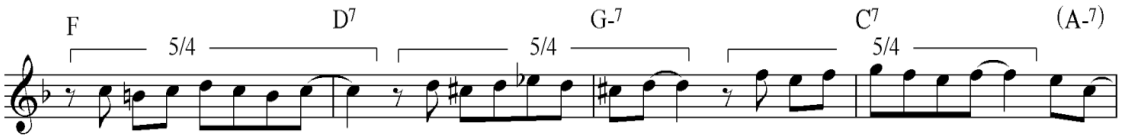
If it were 4/4 against 4/4 there would be no tension:

Fig 3-3



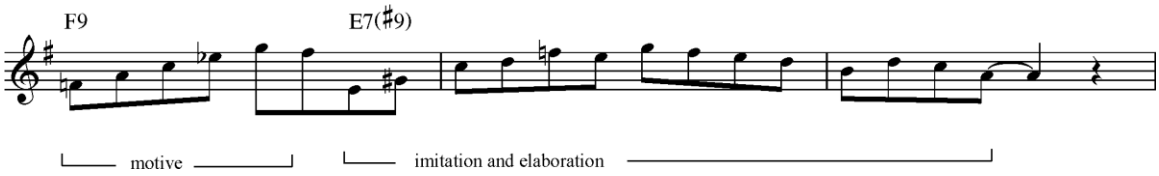
The 5/4 phrase could be done three times, finally resolving back to straight 4/4 on the A minor chord:

Fig 3-4



The below solo sample in Fig 3-5 over the changes to *Out of Nowhere* uses the"hiding the sequence" technique quoted at the top of the chapter. It is an asymmetrical sequence. The first F7 phrase implies 3/4 but the second E7 phrase - although imitative - is longer in length and uses different 9ths (F9 vs. E7#9) although they are on the same notes (E, F):

Fig 3-5 ("Nowhere", bars 7-8, *JA Vol 19*)



Although initiating a 3/4 over 4/4 feel, this phrase seems more indicative of 3 + 5 asymmetric 8/8 division. For example, the phrase seems to be most in sync conceptually while counting, "1, 2, 3 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 1, 2, 3…" (See fig 3-6)

Fig 3-6

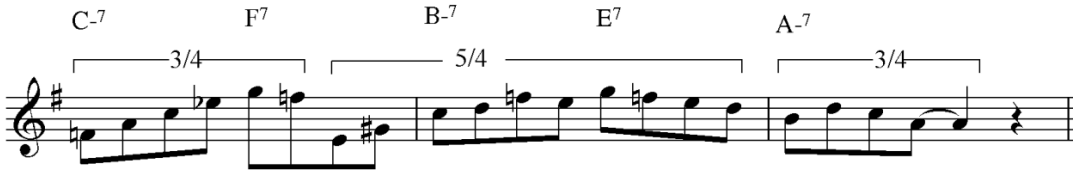
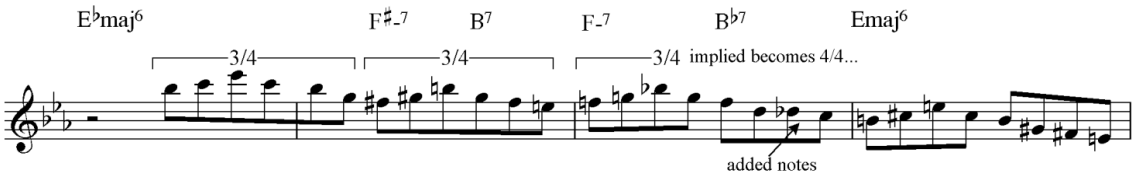


Fig 3-7 shows another asymmetrical polyrhythmic sequence on "How About You" from *Live in Tokyo*. It also begins with 3/4 pentatonic phrases then elongates to 4/4 to meet the next downbeat. The implied harmony is shown but essentially the line is moving from Eb major to E major tonalities.

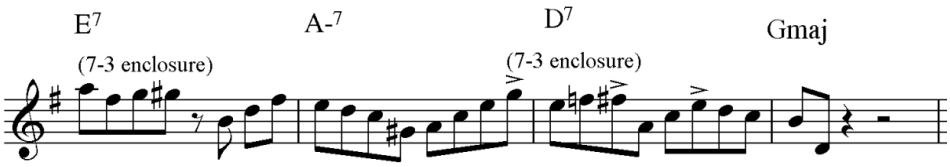
Fig 3-7 ("How About You", 3rd chorus, bars 65-68, *Live in Tokyo,* 1976)



"A good line starts with an idea and builds from there, often using sequences-repeating the idea starting on a different note and during a different chord. Maybe also starting on a different beat. Perhaps even an upbeat."

Jimmy's above quot is reflected in the line played during a recorded lesson in Fig 3-8. The phrase uses a subtle sequence by displacing the second imitation. Note how 7-3 enclosure (A-F#-G-G#) starts on beat 1 of the E7 chord but the related enclosure starts on the upbeat to beat 1 of D7 chord enclosure (G-E-F-F#)

Fig 3-8



Analyzing further, there is implied polymeter with two 6/4 phrases, with additional sub accents in 3/8 which resolve to the 3rd of G on beat 1, bar 4. (See analysis below) This attests to Jimmy's mastery in reconciling metrical space instinctively, after having introduced displacement and asymmetry prior.

Fig 3-9

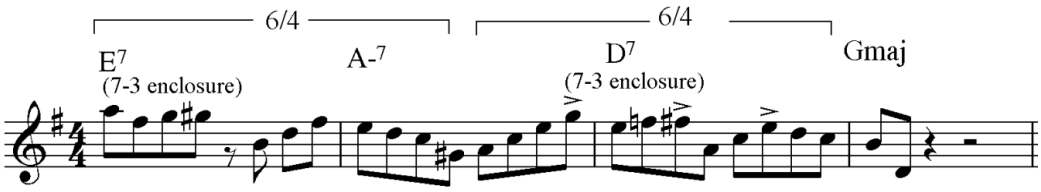
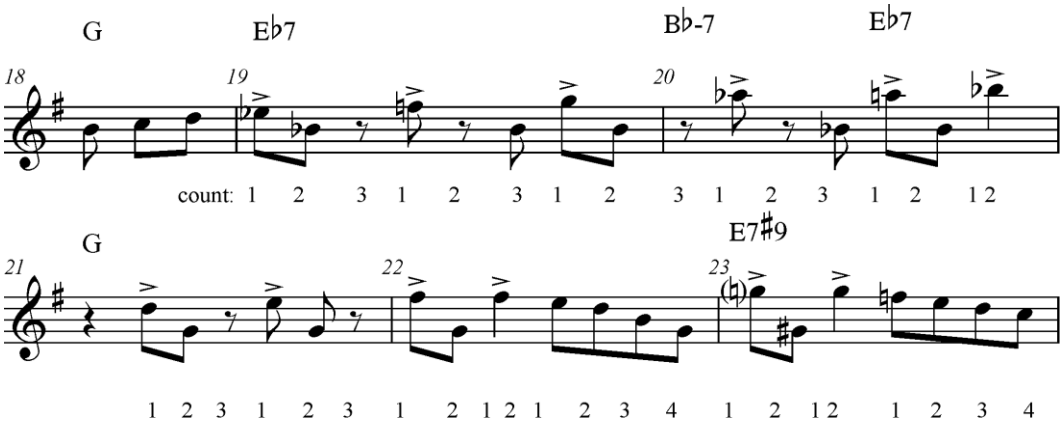


Fig 3-10 is an example of asymmetrical development that begins with a 3/8 pattern, germinates a second 2 count sequential nugget ("12, 12") on the latter half of its ending, and is developed further. To better illustrate the sequence, verbalized eighth note counts are shown with the passage.

Fig 3-10 ("Nowhere", bars 18-23, *JA Vol 19*)



Note how the second 3/8 (count: "123") pattern repeats only twice the second time and starts on beat 2, meeting the downbeat of bar 22. Also note how a new theme and answer of 12 12 1234 is developed in measures 22 and 23 based on the "1 2" rhythm and 7th interval of measure 20.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

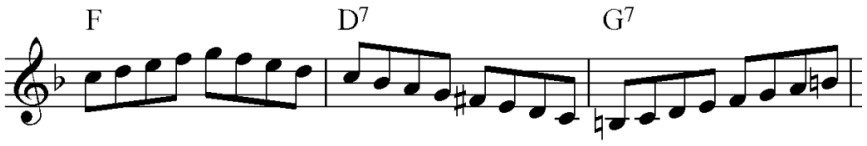
- Generally, avoid using exact or obvious repetition for sequence
- For variety, continue sequences on different beats
- Try using sequence over sections that change in harmony for more interesting results
- Different parts of the original motive may be also used as sequence material
- Combine sequence with rhythmic devices, such as polymeter

CHAPTER 4: INTERVALLIC AND DIRECTIONAL VARIETY IN LINE

A common fault of inexperienced players is using too many consecutive scale notes without varying the intervals or linear direction. It's important to make sure your improvised line is a balanced mixture of intervals, scales, thirds (broken chords), chromatics and skips (intervals of a fourth or larger).

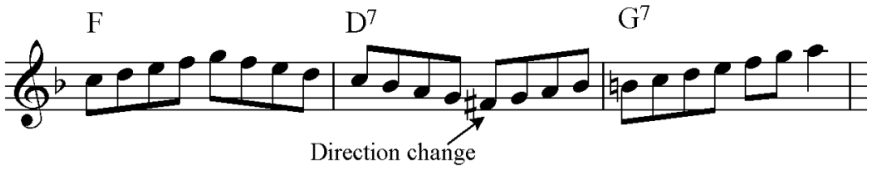
You want to avoid too many scale passages such as:

Fig 4-1



Changing direction sooner helps:

Fig 4-2



Adding altered notes and changes of directions:

Fig 4-3

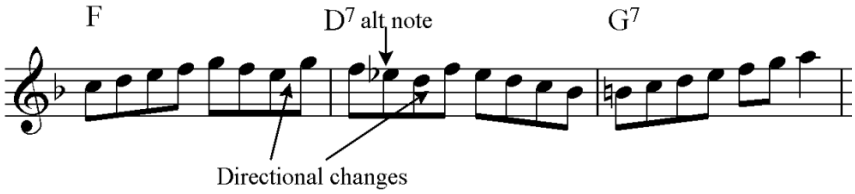
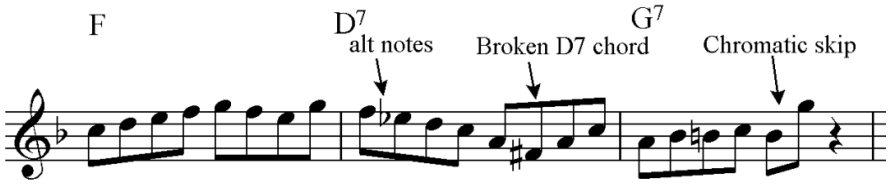


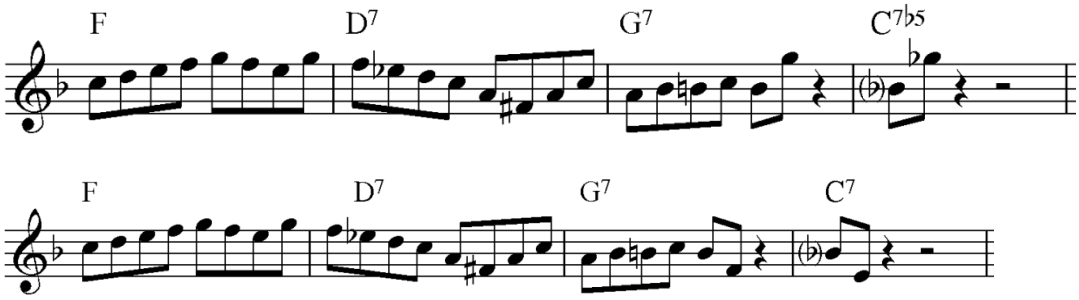
Fig 4-4



Now we are getting an interesting line. It has scales with changes in direction, altered tones (suspensions) raised 9th and b9 on the D7 chord, a broken D7 chord, chromatics and a leap (skip) of a minor 6th. Note that we are still playing straight 8th notes with no pause in between.

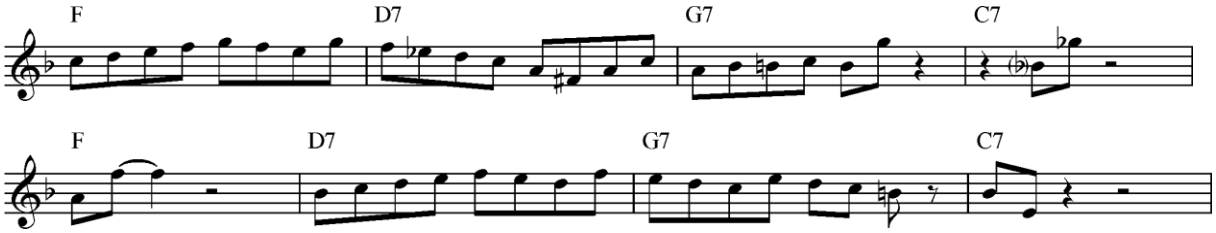
By comparing fig 4-4 with fig 4-1, you can easily see how much more interesting 4-4 is than 4-1. Let us try building a solo from this phrase:

Fig 4-5



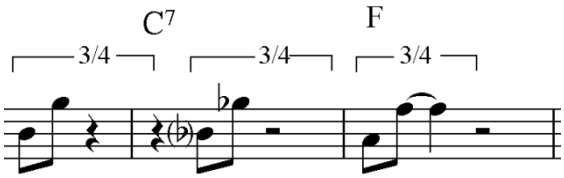
Now we have repeated the phrase exactly except for the downward motion of the skip. We can vastly improve it thus:

Fig 4-6



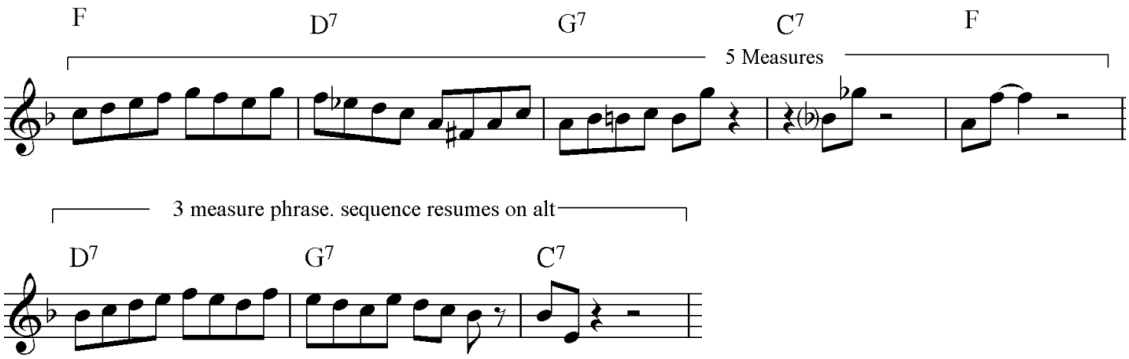
Now we still have the sequence but we have played the skip three times. Notice that it repeats every 3 beats giving a 3/4 against 4/4 grouping.

Fig 4-7



Note also we have a 5 bar phrase before the sequence begins again starting this time on the D7 chord:

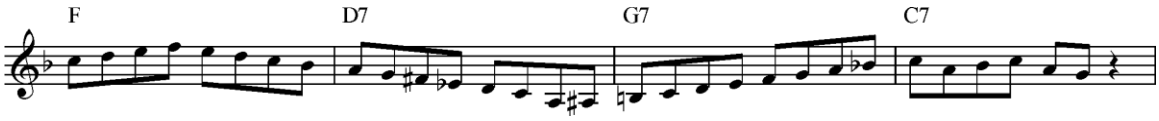
Fig 4-8



The sequence is now one step lower giving augmented fifth, raised and flatted ninths (part of an Eb scale against a D7 chord). So, we now have a 5 bar phrase followed by a 3 bar phrase (asymmetry), implied 3/4 meter against 4/4 more altered notes.

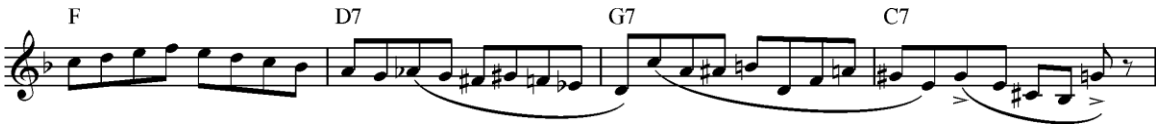
Although it is generally more acceptable to play more consecutive scale notes as tempos increase (to cover more ground), it is still more effective to vary the line direction at up tempos, because it is more creative and thoughtful approach. For example at 250 bpm, the line in fig 4-9 would be a plausible jazz line over the progression:

Fig 4-9



But it falls flat in comparison to line in fig 4-10 which breaks up the line direction and features more rhythmic, melodic and harmonic interest:

Fig 4-10



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- Weave lines with more changes of direction
- Avoid continuous uniform motion of scales up or down*
- Intersperse skips and broken chords with scales for variety
- Create rhythmic interest in long scalar lines by grouping measures asymmetrically

**Note:*

On faster tempos, long passages of consecutive scale notes may be more acceptable and common given there are generally more notes per change. However, it also true that master beboppers (like Jimmy and Barry Harris for example) will change directions in line even at up-tempos, projecting the feeling of "thinking faster" than the rest of us.

- # SECTION II:

- ## BACKGROUND/HISTORY

- ## CONCEPTS IN RECORDINGS

CHAPTER 5: JIMMY RANEY'S POLYRHYTHMIC DEVICES IN RECORDINGS

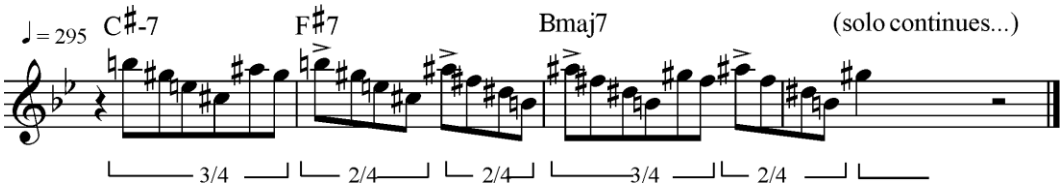
Background/History

Although much is justifiably made of Jimmy's melodic genus, it is perhaps overlooked and underemphasized Jimmy's innovations in regards to rhythmic conception. Polymetric concepts are at the heart of Jimmy's broader thinking in terms of playing over changes. Many of these concepts can be traced back to his earliest influences. Charlie Parker's *Savoy* recordings were hugely influential on Jimmy, who mastered many instrumental solos from the Parker recordings note for note. Friend and colleague, Stan Getz also had an impact on Jimmy's playing, and they picked up many things from each other by osmosis on the bandstand. Both Stan and Jimmy went on to develop their own personal conceptions built originally from the Parker and Lester Young models.

Charlie Parker's influence

This famous arpeggio phrase by Parker from the 2nd bridge of the legendary "Koko" solo is deceptively complex. It's actually an implied 7/4 phrase (3+2+2). This solo was easily the most famous bebop solo of its time. More on Parker's influence will be discussed later.

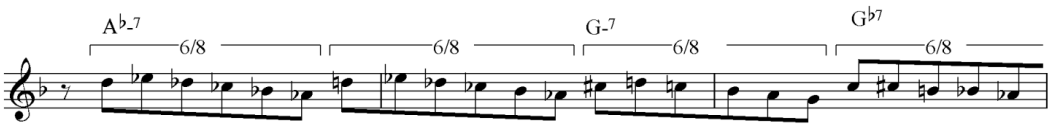
Fig 5-1 (Charlie Parker, "Koko", 2nd chorus bridge, *Savoy Recordings*, 1945)



Stan Getz's influence

On the classic *Live at Storyville* sessions, Getz frequently used Parker influenced polyrhythmic scales and arpeggios over fast tunes. These type of devices were already somewhat present in Jimmy's playing (see figs 5-8, 5-9), but not quite as forcefully yet as was the case with Getz at that point (1949-1951) especially on up-tempo numbers. Below are 6/8 patterns from his solo to "Mosquito Knees"*:*

Fig 5-2 ("Mosquito Knees", Stan Getz Quintet Live at Storyville, 1951, bars 26-30)



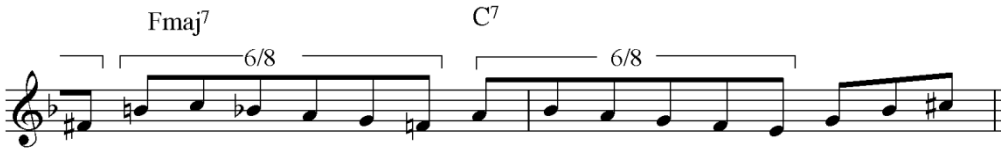
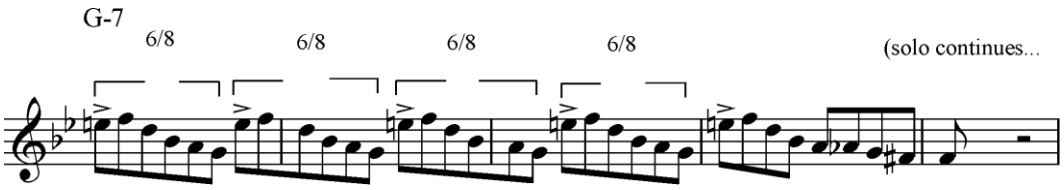


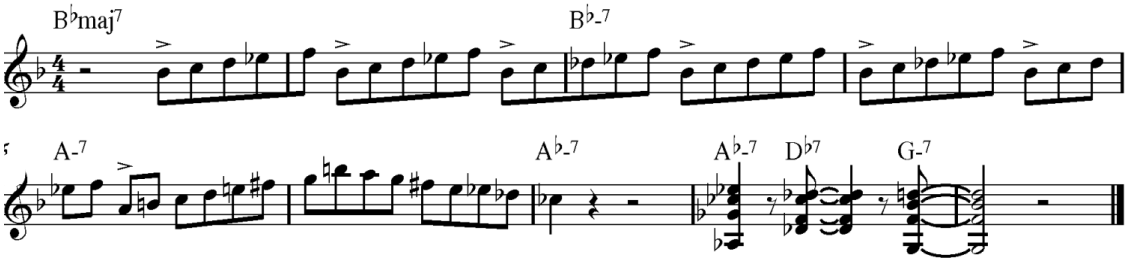
Fig 5-3 (same solo, bars 97-100)



Polyrhythmic scale patterns

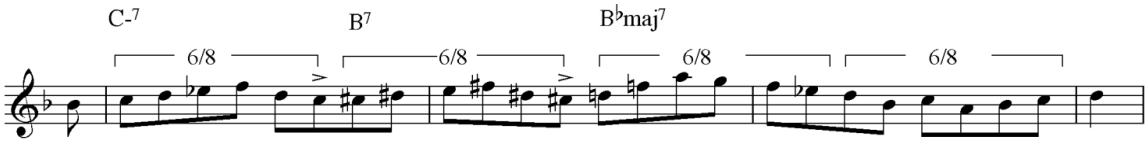
This is a Raney style 5/8 scale pattern (similar to an early lesson I heard demonstrated to Doug) used to navigate one of Jimmy's favorite solo vehicles, "Just Friends":

Fig 5-4



Here's another of Jimmy's favorite scale patterns in 6/8 used typically on bars 15-16 of "Just Friends".

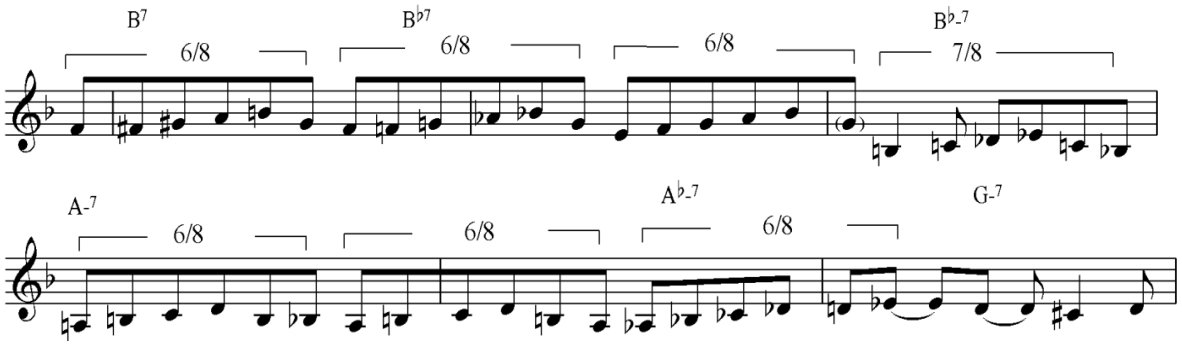
Fig 5-5



Another interesting aspect of the phrase is the upward nature of the scales (C- C#- D-) vs. the downward nature of the implied harmony (C-7 B7 Bb)

Fig 5.6 shows a 6/8 scalar polyrhythm Jimmy played live in Nashville (captured on video circ. 1984) over the transition to the IV chord in Parker's "Billie's Bounce" in F*:*

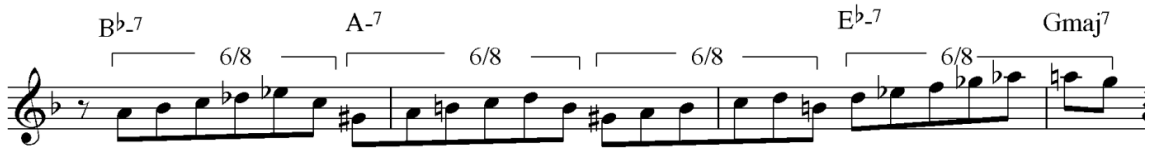
Fig 5-6 ("Billie's Bounce", *Live in Nashville-1984*, private video collection)



Note in above example how the 6/8 pattern is broken briefly in the 3rd measure to get back on track to the A-7 in the 4th measure. Similarly, the Ab- pattern is deftly transitioned mid-bar to the G-7 chord. Jimmy was always keenly aware of his place in the music no matter what rhythmic devices he employed.

Fig 5-7 is a similar pattern played over the changes to "Out of Nowhere". Note how the scale pattern modulates down a half step and then up a flatted 5th:

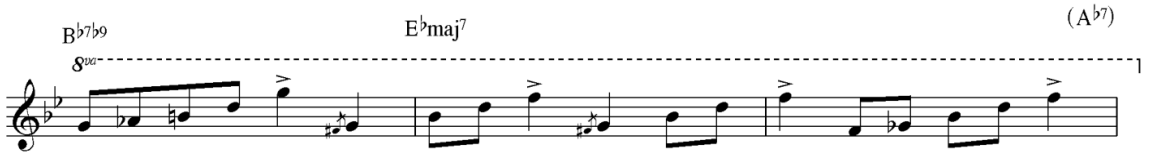
Fig 5-7 ("Nowhere", bars 46-48, *JA Vol 19*)



Polyrhythmic arpeggio patterns

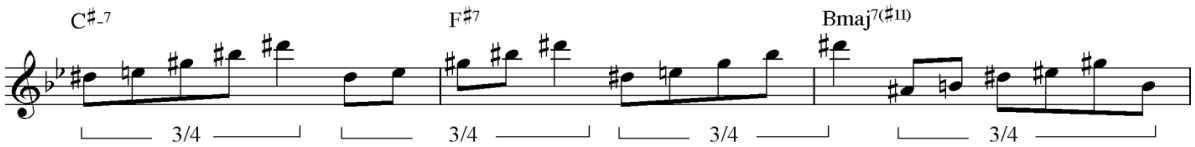
When playing polyrhythmic arpeggios, Jimmy typically plays 3/4 meter sweeps on 7th arpeggios against 4/4 and has from an early point in his recorded output. He also usually makes melodic adjustments to fit changes in the harmony. Below is a polyrhythmic phrase Jimmy played on "Parker 51" second solo chorus on the *Storyville* sessions:

Fig 5-8 ("Parker 51", bars 68-70)



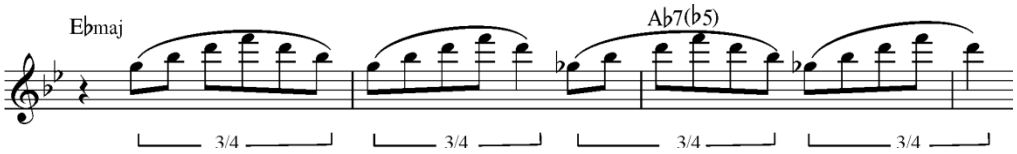
A similar arpeggio phrase follows on the 1st bar of the bridge of the same solo chorus:

Fig 5-9



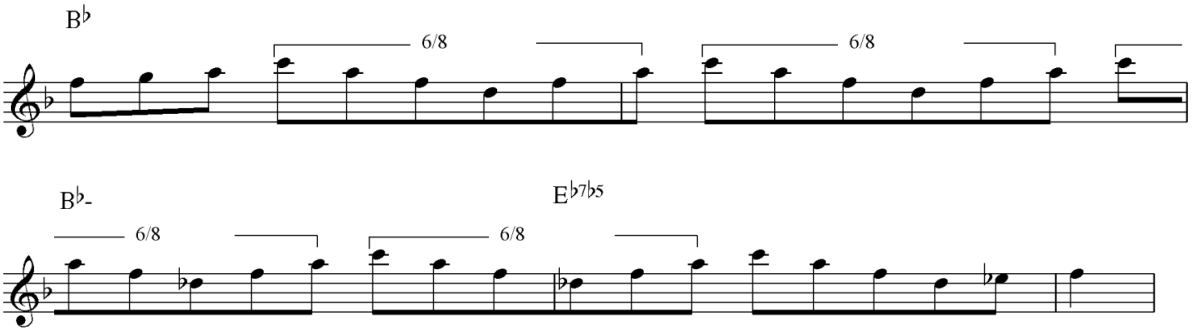
As shown in previous two examples, his early polyrhythmic efforts were more conservative in terms of rhythmic placement, starting on beat 1. Later on he would open things up a bit more, for example in this 1954 recording of "Cherokee" he starts the 3/4 pattern on beat 2:

Fig 5-10



In this arpeggio line Jimmy played on Vol 20 play-along instruction book over *Just Friends*, the phrase outlines the 3rd to 9th arpeggios in a progression from Bbmaj to Bb- but starts in the middle of the bar.

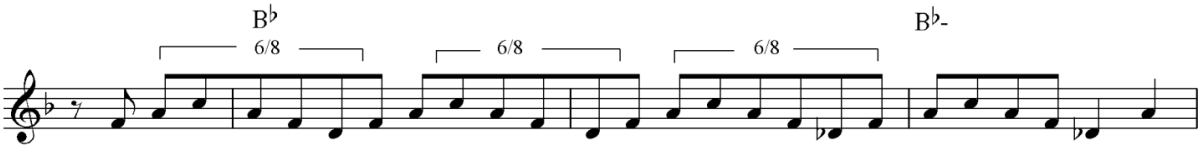
Fig 5-11



It is important to note in three of these examples that the harmony can be displaced from one: anticipating (fig 5-10) or delaying (fig 5-9 & 5-11) to suit the line. This demonstrates the interconnected nature of displacement and polyrhythm in Raney's style. Polyrhythmic approaches are ideally suited for Jimmy's concept of freeing improvised line from the barline because they are periodic, un-grounding and then re-grounding by design.

On the Actor's Theatre gig in 1987 with Cal Collins, Jimmy played a similar arpeggio sequence as Fig 5-11, but he initiated the line with a pick up on the "and" of 3 in Fig 5-12. The line continues to anticipate 1 as the chord anticipates the Bb- chord:

Fig 5-12



Polyrhythmic general phrase patterns

In addition to polyrhythmic scale and arpeggio patterns, Jimmy also uses short lick and rhythmic phrase patterns to break up the time. Fig 5-13 and 5-14 shows some good examples of this.

Fig 5-12 ("Momentum", bars 2-3, *Momentum*, 1974)

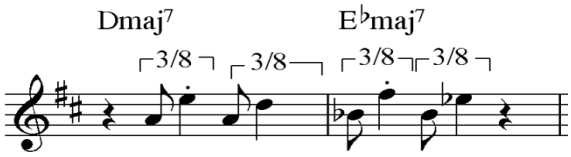
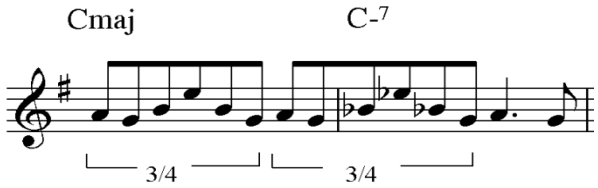


Fig 5-13 ("Stella By Starlight", bars 7-8, *Strings and Swings*, 1967)



Here's a similar but more elaborate 3/8 rhythmic pattern to fig 5-12 over the same tune and changes from the Aebersold play-along Vol. 29, *Jimmy Raney Solos*. Note the mixed eighth-quarter combinations, and the 5th ostinato (on "A") with the rise and fall of the upper notes against it. This combination of factors makes the entire passage feel like two 6/4 phrases. Seemingly simple, these techniques reflect Jimmy's rhythmic improvisational skill and his knack for creating subtle sequences.

Fig 5-14 ("Suspended Motion", bars 33-36, *Play Duets with Jimmy Raney*, JA Vol 29)

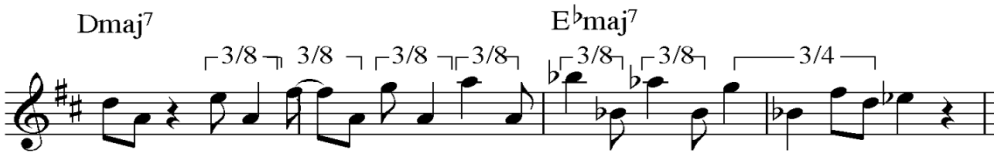
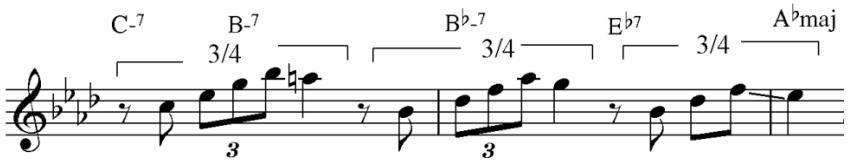


Fig 5-15 shows a short 3/4 pattern used to navigate a 2 bar turnaround, each note group executed with a rest and a pickup:

Fig 5-15 ("Signal", bars 13-15, *Jimmy Raney Plays*, 1953)



Polyrhythmic blues lick patterns

Jimmy often does bluesy finger slur licks in 3/8 patterns. In standards often this involves transposing with the change:

Fig 5-16 ("Momentum", bars 27-29)

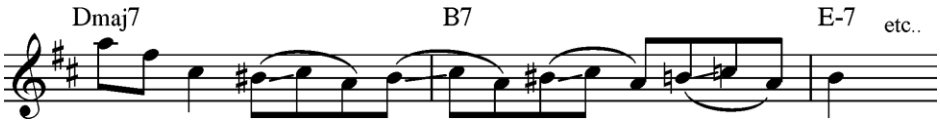
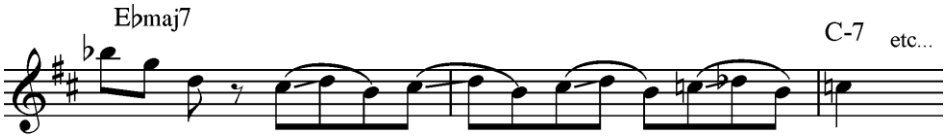


Fig 5-17 ("Momentum", bars 35-37)



Sometimes he adds thirds or chord fragments to the 3/8 figures to make them more interesting as in figs 5-18 and 5-19:

Fig 5-18 ("Anthropology", *Live In Tokyo*, beginning of drum trades)

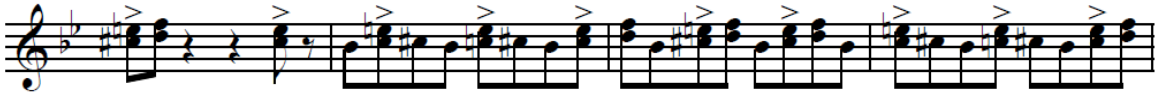
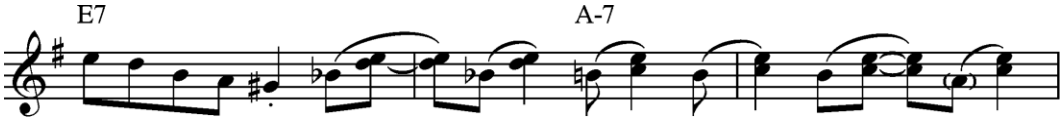
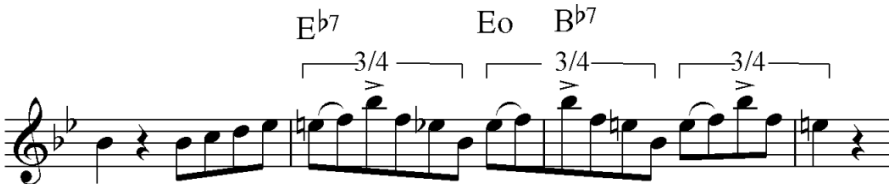


Fig 5-19 ("Stella by Starlight", *Strings and Swings*, bars 82-84)



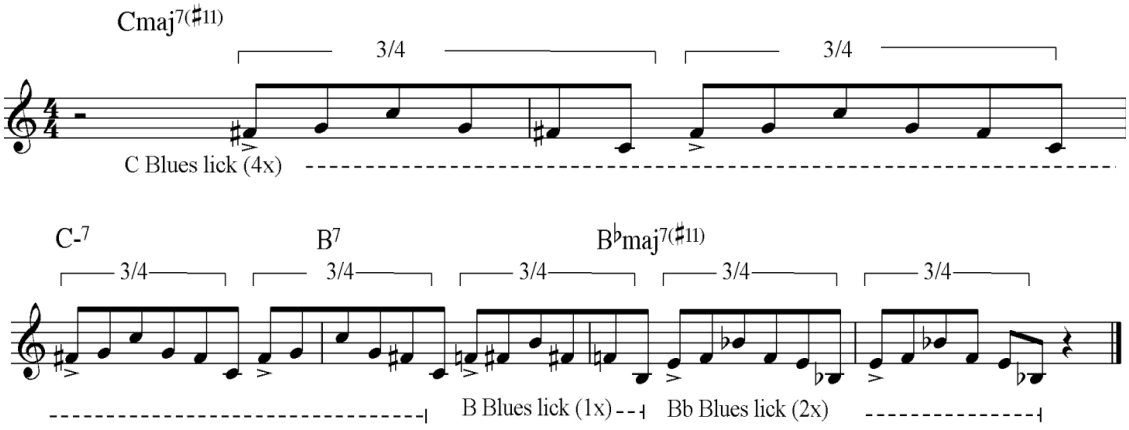
One of Jimmy's most famous original licks is the one he frequently uses on the b5. He uses it many contexts, generally in 3/4 polyrhythm, though occasionally others. Here is an example of it in a blues context:

Fig 5-20 ("Blues for Wes", bars 6-8, *JA Vol 19*)



Jimmy is also fond of using this blues phrase in a standards context, which involves transposing the phrase sequentially to fit the chords:

Fig 5-21 ("What Is This Thing Called Love", bars 79-84, *Raney '81*, 1981*)*



Note how the blues licks phrase starts two bars before the bridge, descends from C to B to Bb with the harmony and finishes comfortably on the downbeat of the Bb chord for the last iteration of the lick.

Jimmy sometimes pauses between iterations of this b5 lick, which leads to interesting metrical implications. In fig 5-22 the phrase implies a 6/4 because the first iteration starts on the 2nd beat of the bar and the second on 4th beat of the next measure. It's important to perceive each phrase from attack point to attack point so that silence is also part of the count. Note also how the second iteration answers the first with its downward E – Eb ending notes vs. the first's upwards E - F ending notes.