Endorsements

"Randy Vincent has put together a comprehensive, thoughtfully presented and practical jazz manual. It's packed with great examples and analysis for the Left-brained Jazzer. You will surely find some useful lines and tools here to help expand your vocabulary."

Bob Sheppard

"This book is good for ALL instruments. The patterns and exercises are excellent! There is much food for thought in here."

Jamey Aebersold

"Randy Vincent is a master player and teacher. The information in this book is very thorough and complete and the insights he offers are invaluable to anyone who is interested in improvising. This is a most welcome addition to the world of jazz pedagogy. Thanks, Randy!"

Bruce Forman

Building Solo Lines From Cells

(for all instruments)

by

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Preface

This book is for all instruments but is actually an edited version of my last book "Jazz Guitar Soloing: The Cellular Approach," which is very guitar-specific. Jamey Abersold suggested that it could be valuable for all musicians and thus the new edited version that eliminates guitar strings and fingerings that are not necessary for other instruments. The examples are in concert pitch but sound one octave lower as in written guitar music—but any octave is good depending on the range and register of your chosen instrument. For horn players, I suggest working out the examples on piano first, then transpose to your horn, preferably without having to write them out. This will prove valuable when doing some examples based on stock tunes and things based on rhythm changes, Coltrane changes, etc.

The concept for the book is based on the idea that any long line transcribed from any great jazz solo can be broken down into many smaller "cells" that have melodic content that are so idiomatic to the jazz language that they can be recombined into new individual lines that sound as authentic as the original without being a mere regurgitation of part of someone else's solo. Since the book was originally for guitarists many of the transcribed lines are from guitarists such as Wes Montgomery, Joe Pass, Pat Martino, etc. but also many from other great instrumentalists as well, including Miles Davis, McCoy Tyner, and Michael Brecker, among others.

Let me leave you with a thought on HOW to practice in order to get the maximum benefit from the exercises in this book:

It's a good idea to break things down and practice small amounts with focus on the fine details, and don't worry that it seems there's too much you're not getting to. Patience is key. If you chip away on bite-size pieces they will eventually accumulate into a vast amount of useful material. Take your time and make sure you hear all the notes intended and only the notes intended—and evenly in time. Don't worry about the other patterns you're not getting to yet. There will be plenty of other days for those.

Randy Vincent

Chapter 1 – Cycles and II-V Sequences

Let's explore "cellular" improvisation as a concept in itself. Actually, almost any long line of notes could be sliced up into short melodic cells which can be used separately and re-combined into other long lines. When jazz musicians refer to melodic cells, they are most commonly four-note cells. Hal Galper in his great book *Forward Motion* defines a cell as a four-note group with at least three of the notes being chord tones. Jerry Bergonzi uses a similar concept. Most of the cells we'll use in this book will fit that description, although later there will be some other types as well.

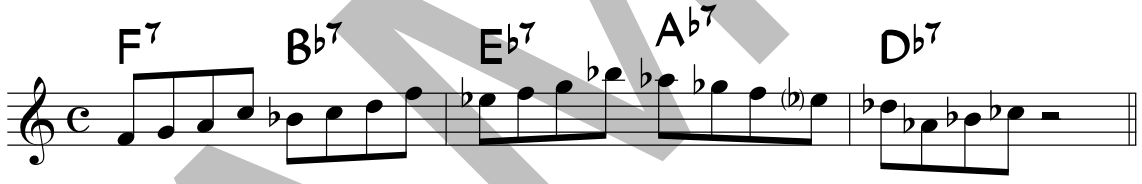
Four-note cells are not only useful for re-combining into long lines over a given chord, but are especially useful for improvising lines over very fast-moving changes. Four-note cells played as eighth-notes only last for only two beats, so changes that last for only two beats each are perfect for some cellular work-outs. These could include fast-moving cycles, quick II-V sequences, various turnarounds, "Coltrane changes" (as in "Giant Steps") and more. Let's get started with some fast-moving dominant cycles.

Fast-moving dominant cycles

A dominant cycle is a progression of all dominant 7th type chords moving counter-clockwise around the the circle of fifths (each new root being down-a-fifth or up-a-fourth from the previous root). The bridge of "Rhythm Changes" is a dominant cycle, but the chords last for two whole measures each, or eight beats apiece. Right now we want to check out changes lasting only two beats each, so we'll specify them as "fast-moving" dominant cycles.

Some actual examples of fast-moving dominant cycles

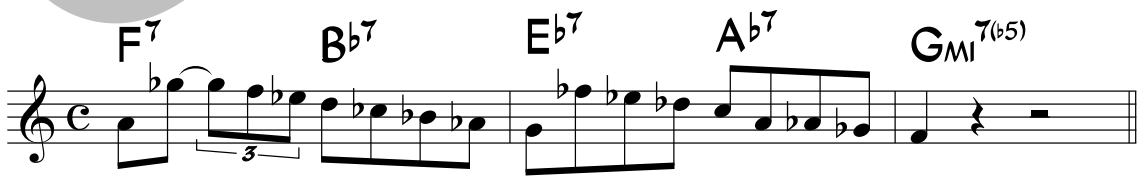
Play Ex.1-1, from a recording of an improvised solo by Joe Pass.



Notice that each cell begins on the root of each chord. The first three chords use an ascending sequence, the root, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th of each chord. This pattern is very common and will be identified as the 1-2-3-5 cell from now on. The Ab7 chord uses a descending pattern going right down the scale (1-b7-6-5). The Db7 chord has the same descending scale notes, but the order has been changed to make a nice phrase ending (1-5-6-b7). In the first three chords the three chord tones are root, 3rd, and 5th, with one passing tone, the 2nd. In the descending patterns the three chord tones are root, b7th, and 5th, with one passing note, the 6th.

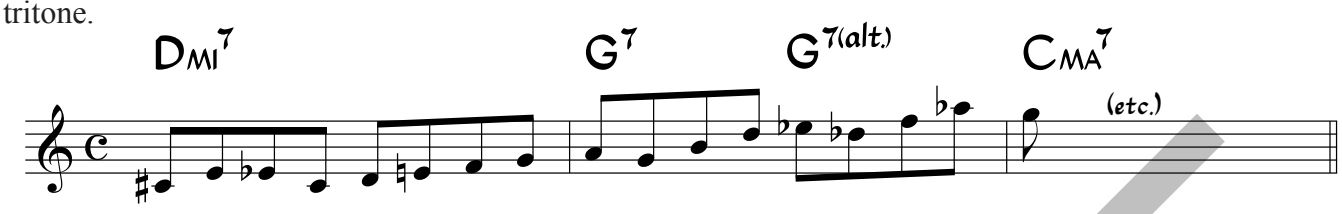
Cells that start on the root and end on the 5th lead to the root of each following chord, so they can form sequences that go "root to root".

Now check out ex.1-2, from a little later in the same solo.

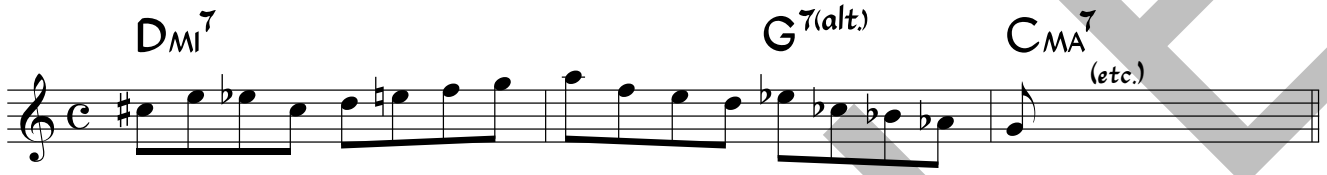


One cell replication at the end using cells starting on the 5th

Ex.3-109 uses cells at the end that start on the 5ths of Dmi7 and Abmi7 and use literal replication up a tritone.

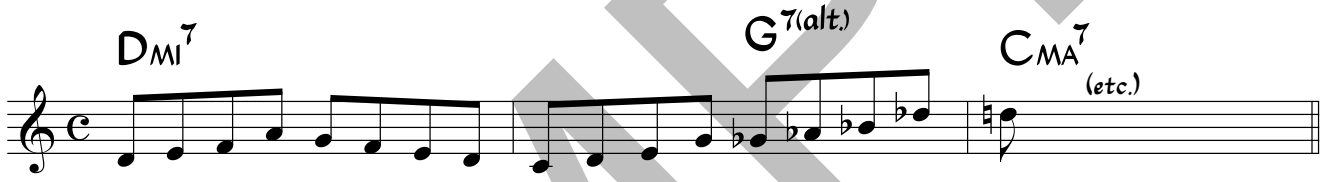


Ex.3-110 uses cells at the end that start on the 5ths of Dmi7 and Abmi7 and use literal replication down a tritone.

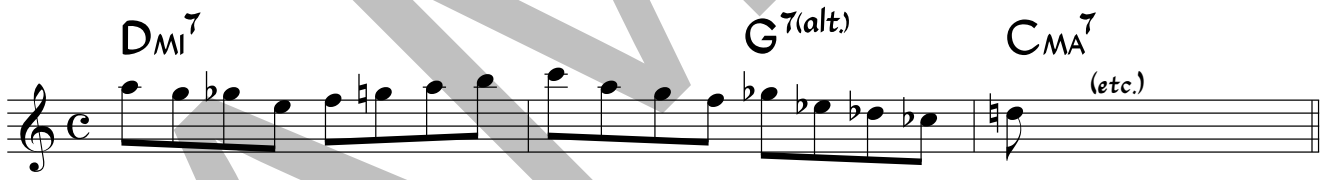


One cell replication at the end using cells starting on the b7th

Ex.3-111 uses cells at the end that start on the b7ths of Dmi7 and Abmi7 and use literal replication up a tritone.

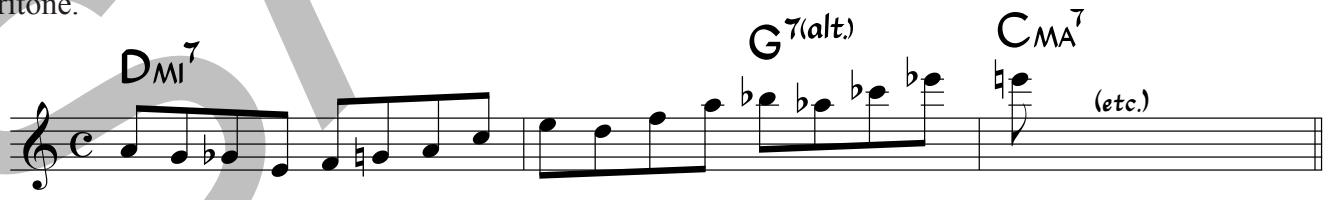


Ex.3-112 uses cells at the end that start on the b7ths of Dmi7 and Abmi7 and use literal replication down a tritone.

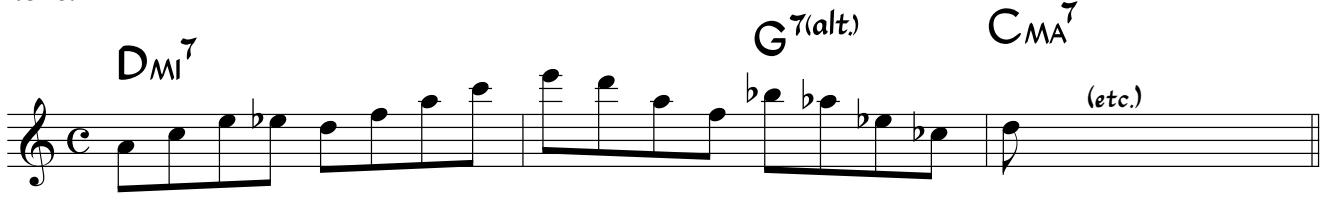


One cell replication at the end using cells starting on the 9th

Ex.3-113 uses cells at the end that start on the 9ths of Dmi7 and Abmi7 and use literal replication up a tritone.



Ex.3-114 uses cells at the end that start on the 9ths of Dmi7 and Abmi7 and use literal replication down a tritone.



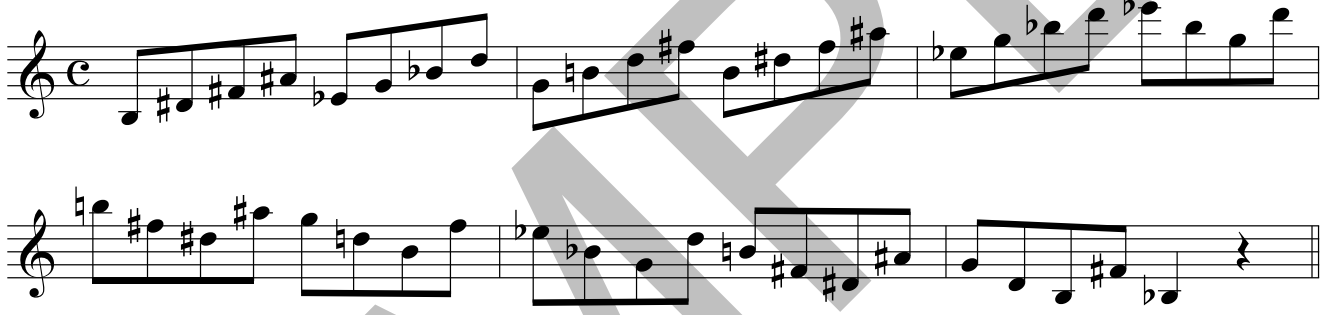
I chose Eb because Cmi-maj7 and F9#11 both contain an Eb augmented triad (Eb+). The scale is actually a hexatonic triad-pair consisting of Eb+ and D+, as shown in the example.

The augmented triad is symmetrical, dividing the octave into three equal parts, so naturally the augmented scale is also symmetrical. Therefore each augmented scale is actually three augmented scales, so there are really only four different augmented scales (Eb+=G+=B+, E+=G#+=C+, F+=A+=Db+, and F#+=Bb+=D+).

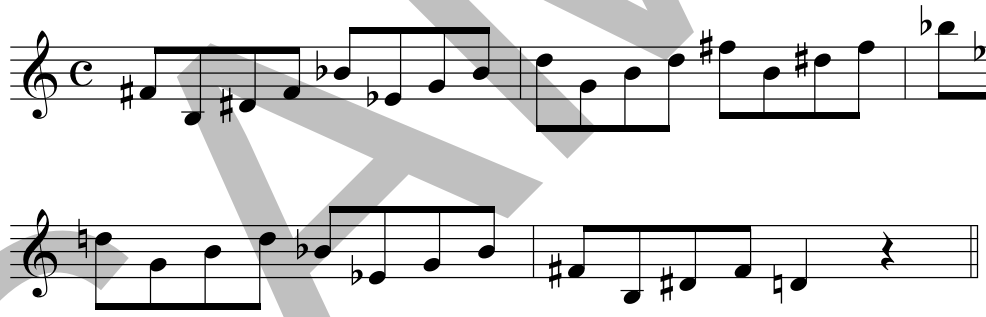
The Eb augmented scale is also G augmented and B augmented. Notice that these notes are the roots of the major 7th chords used in example 7-66. Even though the scale is made out of symmetrical augmented triads, when two a half-step apart are combined it produces many varied and interesting chords. From each of the root notes Eb, G, and B you can find major triads, minor triads, maj7 chords, mi-maj7 chords, maj7#5 chords, and mi-maj7#5 chords to name a few.

Some augmented scale melodic sequences

Ex.4-67 ascends like 4-65 but starting on Bmaj7. It descends with a pattern inspired by Joe Diorio. The first descending cell is a permutation of an Ebmaj7 arpeggio, 1-5-3-7. This cell is then sequenced down in major 3rds.



Ex.4-68 uses major triadic cells ascending and descending in major 3rds (continued on following page).



Ex.4-69 uses minor triadic cells ascending and descending in major 3rds.