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INTRODUCTION

The pentatonic scale has, of late, drawn considerable attention by jazz artists as a tool in their improvisation. Perhaps as a reaction to the melodic patterns of the Bop Era that were based primarily on chords with third intervals, many jazz artists, such as Freddie Hubbard, Chick Corea, and Joe Farrell, turned to pentatonic scales and patterns in fourths and fifths as a means of expressing their music. In the continuing evolution of music, it must be remembered that events that appear as a departure almost always have roots in the past. The use of pentatonics is no exception. Numerous tunes of the '40's and '50's used pentatonic scales as an integral part of their melodies (Symphony Sid, Moanin', Cousin Mary).

The purpose of this book is to acquaint the advanced high school or college improviser with the vast resource of melodic material available through the use of pentatonic scales. It is not intended to be used as a complete method of improvisation, but rather as a supplement to other, more comprehensive, books which deal with chord/scale relationships, substitute chords, melodic development, swing, etc. If pentatonics are used exclusively in improvisation the result can be a rather predictable, stereotyped sound. The author can not stress enough the continued study of chord/scale relationships and their application to jazz improvisation.

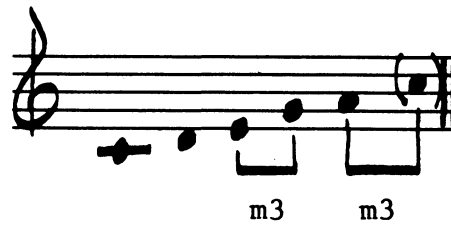
This method, if studied diligently, can provide the student with materials to build a harmonically "outside" improvisation while still retaining a logical basis. The use of these scales has proved particularly effective in turnarounds, and in modal or vamp playing. They also can be used with satisfying results in nearly every other circumstance in jazz. Because the scales often only hint at a basic sonority while outlining the upper extensions of a chord, a skating quality above the changes is achieved. This is discussed in detail in Chapter II.

CHAPTER I

CONSTRUCTION OF PENTATONIC SCALES

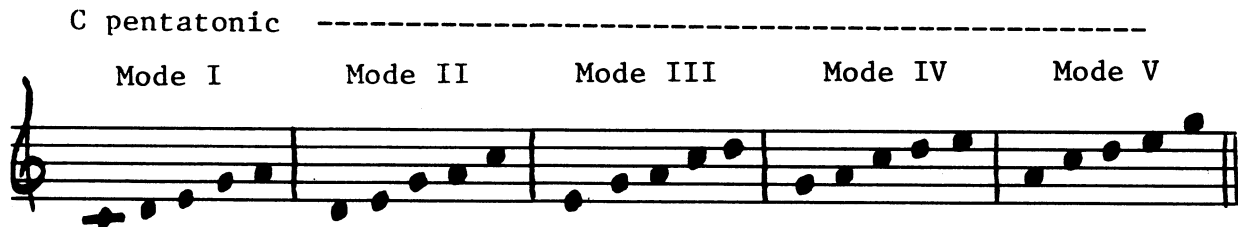
Pentatonic scales, as used in jazz, are five note scales made up of major seconds and minor thirds. Within a scale there are two minor thirds leaps in an octave, thus producing a gap. (Ex. 1) In addition there is no leading tone (seventh scale degree of a major scale) nor, for that matter, any half step within the scale. For these reasons, the scales act as chords, and are invertible.

Example 1



It can be seen that each pentatonic has five possible inversions, or what the author refers to as Modes. (Ex. 2)

Example 2



The above is not without historical precedent. The pentatonic scales were tabulated in a similar manner by Annie G. Gilchrist in "Note on the Modal System of Gaelic Tunes," *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, Dec. 1911, pp. 150-153. However, it must be noted that Ms. Gilchrist assigned Mode I to the author's Mode IV.

With five possible modes and twelve half steps in an octave there exist sixty different pentatonics. To have every pentatonic at full command the student should be able to play five different pentatonics from each note in the chromatic scale. A tall order for anyone!