

Bye Bye Blackbird - Session 3 (Eb)

Session 3 addresses the Bridge, or B section of the song. This section echoes the theme and development model from the opening A sections, this time using just a 4 bar phrase as opposed to 8, which is then transposed for the second 4 bars. Again building on the ideas introduced in the A sections, the melody comprises almost entirely stepwise motion.



The melody is shown again below, this time with the changes added. Note how they too are made up of an opening 4 bar phrase, which is then transposed down a tone for the final 4 bars, although the minor chords have slightly different qualities.



Some common substitutions played over this section are shown below. Note how closely chord IIIØ is related to I7. The chromatically descending root notes have a natural tension and release, however in the second bar of the bridge the melody does not fit the substituted chords particularly well.



It can be helpful to consider how the chord sequence of the bridge is a development of a simple III, VI, II, V cadence - a very common bridge sequence of this era, famously characterising the bridge in 'I Got Rhythm'.

Shown below is a suggested guide tone exercise which will help outline the chord sequence with just one note per bar. Although realistically, we are likely to play more than that in our improvisation, these exercises can be extremely beneficial in developing strong melodic lines and clear harmony. The pattern I have chosen uses the 5th, 3rd, 7th, and Root in each 4 bar section. By using different degrees of the arpeggios in each chord/bar we can create a line with more stepwise or chromatic movements, echoing the melody. This approach also allows for contrary motion between the Root notes and guide tones, and in this example between the guide tones and melody.



In order to explore more voice leading options and work towards more fluent and dense improvisation, I suggest building some crotchet and quaver line exercises on the sequence. A simple starting point is shown below:

To extend the above example to use further extensions for each chord it's necessary to look at the scale options available, some common choices are shown below:

Notice how when considering the parent scales, we see the implied cadence from chord IVmaj 7, to IV-(maj 7) which is typical of bridge modulations. Also note how the parent scale of the bVI chord in the penultimate bar could be described as an altered scale on chord II7.

Locrian: (Parent scale is major scale of degree IV of home key)

Lydian Dominant: (Parent scale is melodic minor scale of degree IV of home key)

Mixolydian b13 : (Parent scale is melodic minor scale of degree I1 of home key)

Dorian: (Parent scale is major scale of the home key)

Lydian Dominant: (Parent scale is melodic minor scale of degree bIII of home key)

Mixolydian: (Parent scale is major scale of the home key)