

Mr PC - Session 1 (Concert)

This is a composition based on a traditional 12 bar Blues sequence, in a minor key. It's a great way to explore minor key harmony and the cadences which occur most frequently in pieces with a minor tonality. Being a Blues, it also has some elements of Jazz and Blues harmony which we find less often in other standard forms and Jazz compositions.

The melody is shown below:

5

9

Depending on your instrument, and the tempo you play the piece at, it may be more effective to leave out the repeated notes in bars 1 and 5. Rhythmically, the anticipations into bar 4 and 8 are important in contrasting the heavy on beat feel in the opening phrase. Similarly, the off beat crotchets across the bar lines of bars 9 and 10, where the melody surrounds beat one with notes a quaver either side emphasizes the rhythmic and harmonic tension of the turn around.

The melody is shown again below, this time with the harmony added. Notice that although the harmony appears to be slow moving - chord I- for 4 bars - played at the original tempo, this doesn't feel very long at all. However practicing the piece at a slower tempo provides a great opportunity to explore improvising on one sound for more extended periods than we generally find in standard repertoire.

13 C-

17 F- C-

21 Ab7#11 G7alt C-

Session 1 now focuses on how to approach improvising over the final 4 bars of the piece. This important turnaround, or cadence, is typical of minor Blues progressions, and minor key harmony in general. Firstly, it's useful to understand the way each chord is functioning within the cadence. The staff below shows the 'evolution' of the chord in bar 9, starting out life as II-7b5, morphing into II7(#11) and then II7(alt), before being substituted/renamed as bVI7#11

The first step - between -7b5 and 7#11 is a typical substitution, transforming the II chord from it's most diatonic representation into a dominant chord leading to chord V, so becoming the dominant of the dominant - commonly called a 'secondary dominant'. Although the additional alterations added in the 3rd bar of the above example appear messy and complex, they actually return the chord (and subsequent scale) to a collection of seven notes only one note different from the original -7b5 sound. The final change between II7alt and bVI7#11 is actually an enharmonic description of the same chord/scale. This change can rightly be described as a 'tritone substitution' based on the root note movement, however it is useful to see how this is the seven notes.

While exploring this sound, whether describing it as II7alt or bVI7#11 it is especially useful to consider the parent scale which applies to both chords/scales. This is shown below:

The sound in bar 10 is a V7alt chord/scale. This has been covered extensively in previous sessions so a brief reminder is shown below. Session 2 explores a number of ways to practice moving from bar 9 to 10, how to resolve this into bar 11 and 12, and ways to reinterpret the melodic material while expressing the harmonic tension and release of the cadence found through bars 9-12.