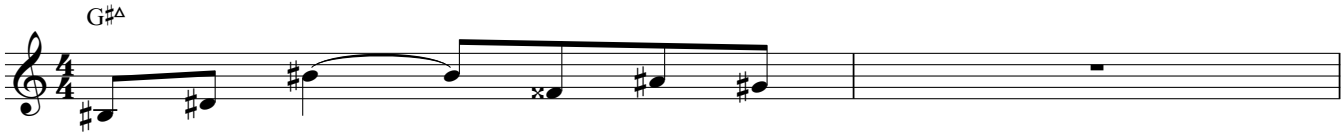
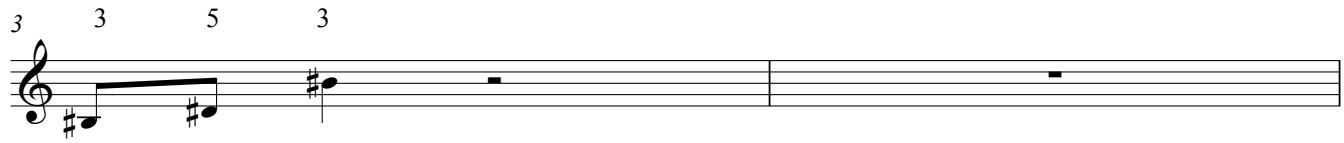
Smoke Gets In Your Eyes - Session 3 (Eb)

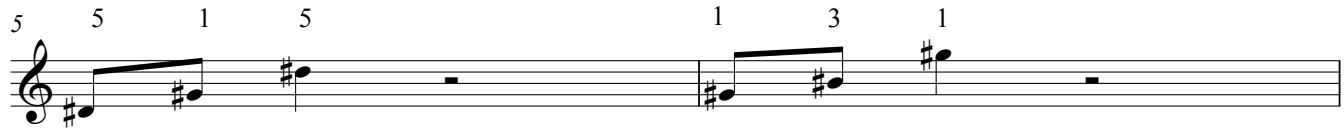
Session 3 is dealing only with the bridge of the piece. As in session 1, I have suggested some exercises based on the opening phrase (bar one), which is shown below.



It's useful to think of these notes as numbers which relate to the degree in the relevant scale or arpeggio. I think of this phrase as an ascending triad, but replacing the last note with a duplication of the 1st note, played an octave higher. This large interval leap (a major 6th) creates an emotional high point in the piece. It's interesting to consider that although the key change in the bridge is quite unusual (modulating up a minor 6th), the note which is most prominant in this phrase, the major 3rd of the new key, is the tonic note of the original key.

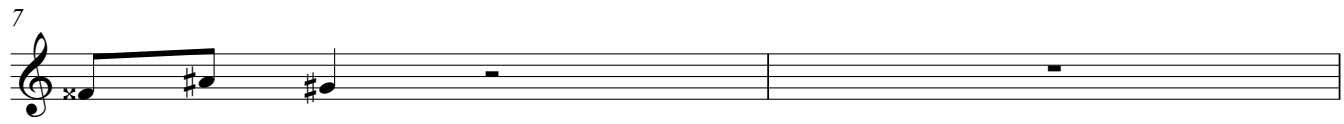


Below are examples of the same formula, applied to the other degrees of the triad.

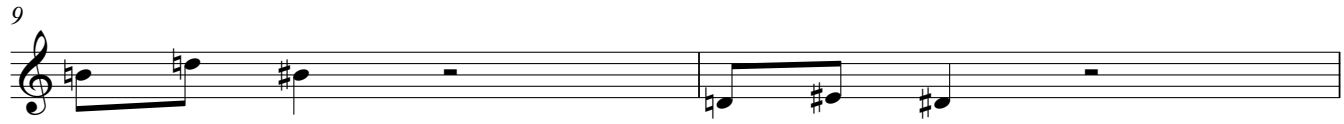


I suggest improvising over a static I maj7 chord to practice incorporating these figures. It can be helpful to bear in mind that the purpose of the exercise is to recreate the emotional quality of the large leaps in the melody.

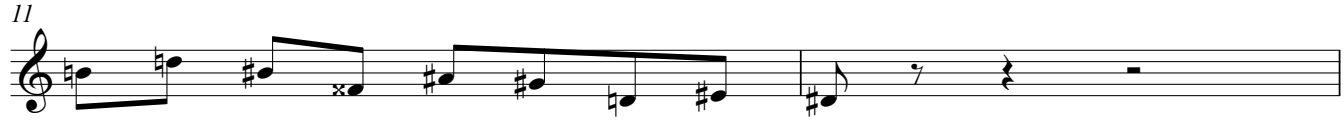
After exploring these possibilities based on the 1st 3 notes of the original phrase, I have focused on the last 3 notes, which can be described as surrounding the root note with a semitone below and whole tone above.



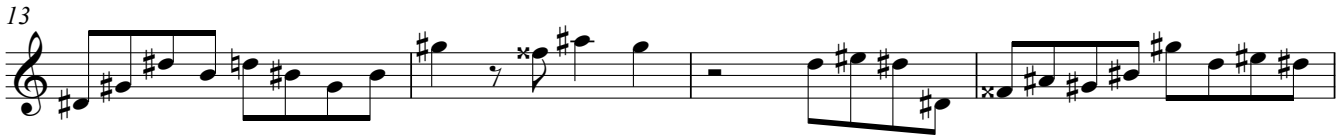
If we follow the same formula with the 3rd and 5th degrees of the scale we are left with the following.



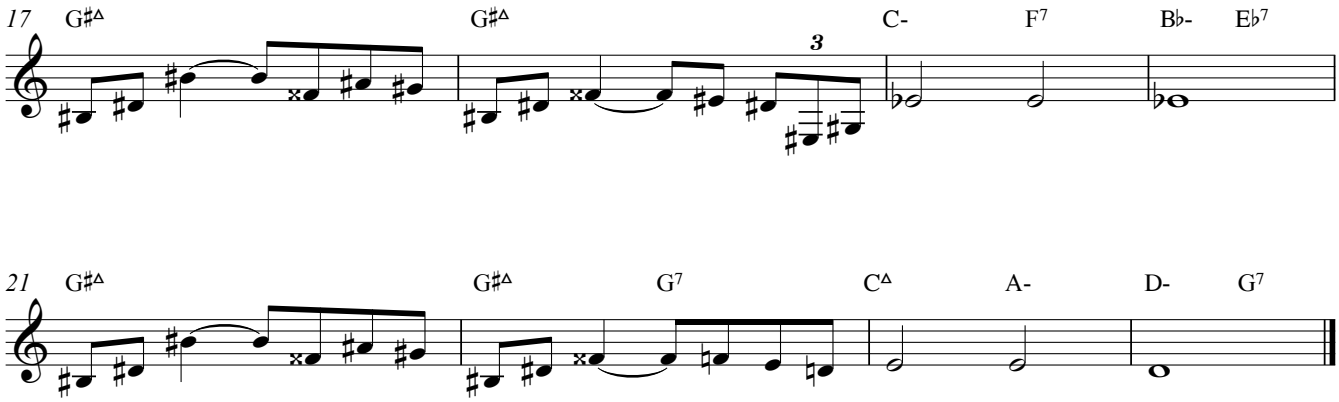
These surrounding figures can be played as a continuous line as shown below. By playing each note as a quaver, the rhythmic emphasis shifts from the target note to the surrounding notes, an effect that can be exploited further with other odd number cross rhythms.



A combination of the previously described techniques leaves us with the original phrase, plus two inversions of the phrase. We can also mix and match the opening 3 notes with the ending 3 notes and rearrange them.
A few ideas are shown below.

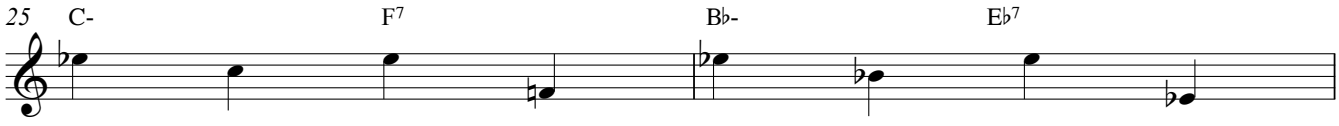


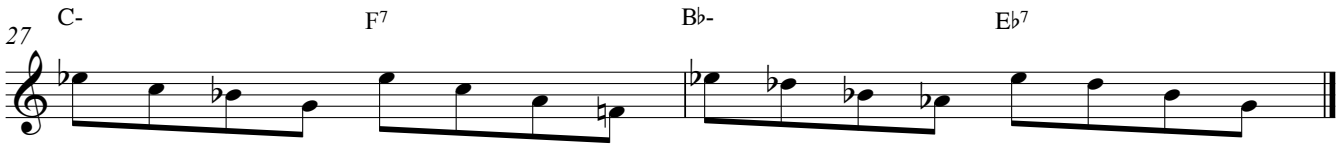
Although it's common to learn the entire melody and chord sequence before looking at the melodic material in such detail, it can be useful to analyse and expand on melodic fragments as you go. As well as immediately engaging the melody as a tool for improvisation, thinking of the fragments in this way can help with memorizing tunes and understanding their function. Below is the entire bridge in a leadsheet format. As always I have opted for what I view to be the most common and/or simplest harmonic choices.



Bars 3 and 4 of the bridge are interesting as the melody stays on the same note throughout. The oblique motion counterpoint between melody and root note (or any of the inner voices) creates a stabalising effect during this period of melodic rest and harmonic movement. The exercise below is an attempt to make use of this device while still allowing for movement and harmonic detail to be expressed in a single note line.

Step one is to combine the melodic pedal note with the root note:



We can then add the nearest available arpeggio notes to create a descending pattern, always maintaning the pedal note from the melody.

I hope that this exercise is a way into thinking about outining harmony changing subtly underneath a constant pedal note. The exercise can be extended through the entire chord progression by using the most prominant melody notes in each bar or half bar.