

Tenor Madness - Session 1 (Bass Clef)

'Tenor Madness' is a Sonny Rollins composition, based on a 12 bar blues chord sequence. There are many variations on this chord sequence, so I suggest beginning by familiarising ourselves with the version of the sequence shown below:

I IV I I

5 IV #IV I VI

9 II V I VI II V

As always, try practicing this sequence until it is memorised. I find it useful to practice playing the root note in different places within the bar, against a metronome. It's also fun to build an improvisation, using only the root notes. The predictability and limitation of this exercise can push you to be more inventive in creating tension using rhythm. It was reportedly a favourite exercise of the composer too (Sonny Rollins).

My next suggested exercise is to practice the 2 rhythmic figures below, before applying them to the sequence.

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Moving on to look at the harmony in more detail, I have outlined a triad over each chord. Each of these triads provide the extensions which best reflect the melody. Play the triads ascending and descending, before using them as a basis for improvising.

18 I⁷ [Minor Triad from 6th] IV⁷ [Diminished Triad from 3rd] I⁷ [Minor Triad from 6th] I⁷ [Minor Triad from 6th]

22 IV⁷ [Diminished Triad from 3rd] #IV^o [Diminished Triad from 3rd] I⁷ [Minor Triad from 6th] VI⁷ [Major Triad from Root]

26 II- [Minor Triad from root (2nd inversion)] V⁷ [Diminished Triad from 3rd] I⁷ [Minor Triad from 6th]