

**Jazz Guitarists Wes Montgomery, Emily Remler and
John Scofield: an Analysis of Rhythmic and Chromatic
Strategies, and Tools for Improvising**

a DMA Project

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Rhythm is a central aspect of jazz improvisation, yet it is an aspect less-often studied when compared to its harmonic and melodic counterparts. There is yet much to learn about the compelling effect an improviser creates through the way they organize and express notes in time, in rhythm. On this subject, jazz saxophonist and pedagogue Jerry Bergonzi observes:

“All notes seem to sound good when they are played with ‘good time.’ Even melodies that use ‘wrong notes’ or notes that aren’t in the chord seem to sound good when played with ‘good time.’... What often packages or dresses up a good time feel are the rhythms a particular artist chooses.”¹

In this statement, Bergonzi suggests several points for jazz improvisation:

1) having ‘good time,’ or rhythmic sense, is fundamental to improvising at a high level, 2) the effect of a playing with good rhythm can support the playing of ‘wrong notes’ i.e., “chromatic” notes, from outside of the underlying harmony, and 3) the rhythmic choices an artist makes are central to defining their personal sound as an improviser.

Another foundation of the jazz tradition is the language of the blues, in which rhythm again plays an important role. The blues tradition is associated with the guitar, and also forms a connective tissue between jazz guitarists, who therefore make relevant models for learning to improvise on the blues form. So, what rhythmic and chromatic note choices do jazz guitarists make when they improvise in blues-based settings?

¹ Jerry Bergonzi, *Inside Improvisation Series, Volume 4: Melodic Rhythms* (Rottenburg: Advance Music, 1998), 8.

The purpose of this project is to create new resources for understanding and teaching jazz improvisation, based on models by three significant jazz guitarists who display a strong blues influence in their playing: Wes Montgomery (1923-1968), Emily Remler (1957-1990), and John Scofield (1951-), who each provide compelling and unique approaches. In this project, I analyze their solos in order to show how their individual rhythmic and chromatic strategies contribute to their improvisational styles in a significant way, and to create new tools for teaching their blues-based improvisatory language. I identify their strategies and additionally provide exercises to develop these skills for improvisors on guitar and indeed for all instruments. For historical and musical background, I provide biographies of each player that include insights on their own processes of learning to improvise, and original research from interviews with John Scofield, as well as with musicians who knew Emily Remler.

Through transcription analysis, I compare their soloing approaches in similar musical contexts over a 12-bar jazz blues form, and a blues-based, modal or vamp-based piece, at contrasting tempos. These settings provide a clear means to compare their styles. Each player offers a different picture of mastery and valuable context for comparison with the other guitarists.

The selected solos highlight the strengths of each player and also contain a large variety of approaches. I identify the rhythmic concepts of their personal styles, including characteristics of their phrasing, use of motives, subdivisions, groupings, accents and articulations, and use of temporal space between phrases. These aspects are

often related to their approaches to using chromaticism, which include substitute chords, scales, and “outside” playing.

Teaching resources for rhythmic language and playing outside the changes in a convincing way – based on these guitarists’ approaches – will give students tools to develop proficiency in these areas. The suggested exercises are designed to help musicians imagine and internalize new concepts and apply them on their instruments in real time as they improvise, thus enhancing their repertoire of rhythmic and chromatic possibilities. Furthermore, adopting and mixing preferred strategies from multiple players provides a means a student to develop their own personal rhythmic language.

Subjects of the Study: Montgomery, Remler and Scofield

The history of the guitar in jazz stretches back to musicians such as New Orleans’ guitarists Johnny St. Cyr and Lonnie Johnson who performed on Louis Armstrong’s *Hot Five* recordings in the 1920s.² After beginning with mostly percussive rhythm section roles, guitar soloists began to emerge as amplification developed in the 1930s, such as Charlie Christian, the first major electric guitarist in jazz, who performed in Benny Goodman’s racially-integrated band.

Wes Montgomery, an African American guitarist from Indiana, developed his style by learning to play Charlie Christian solos note-for-note from recordings.

² Charles Alexander, *Masters of Jazz Guitar, 1st British ed.* (London: Balafon, 1999), 5.

Musicologist Lewis Porter writes: "Critics generally consider Montgomery the most important and influential jazz guitarist after Charlie Christian."³ Montgomery's unique sound and technique were characterized by his ability to strike the strings with his right thumb, rather than with a typical plectrum. Analysis of Montgomery's solos offers an understanding of how he structures solos with rhythmic motives, "triple phrase structure," using cross-rhythms and several other rhythmic devices, as well as substitute chords and arpeggios.

Of the following generation, Emily Remler was a virtuoso who combined blues and bebop lines, whose life and career were tragically cut short at the age of 32. In a decade of performing and recording she left a substantial output of artistic music as a player and composer that is not well-known outside of the jazz guitar community, music which I aim to highlight in this project. Analysis of Remler's solos offers an understanding of how she uses picking accents to create rhythmic tension and release, in conjunction with the way she uses chromatic passing tones and arpeggios, as well as groupings of triplets. She often spoke of Montgomery's influence in interviews, and detailed analysis of her style-traits reveal their commonalities and also distinguish her style from Montgomery's.

John Scofield has been at the forefront of the jazz scene since performing in Miles Davis' group in the 1980s. Miles Davis wrote of him, "I like the subtleties of John Scofield's playing...The blues was John's thing, along with a good jazz touch, so I felt

³ Lewis Porter, "Montgomery, Wes." Grove Music Online. 2001; Accessed 27 Jan. 2021. <https://www.oxfordmusiconlinecom.ezproxynec.flo.org/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000041303>.

comfortable playing the blues with him.”⁴ Scofield combines his early blues and rock guitar influences with bebop and postbop jazz. Throughout his almost 50-year discography of stylistically-diverse projects that range from traditional jazz to funk and jazz fusion, one of the unifying characteristics of his style is his identifiable bluesy sound and use of chromatic playing to enhance the color palette of his solos. Analysis of his solos offers an understanding of chromatic approaches and outside playing, leaving temporal space between phrases, adapting bebop articulation to guitar, and several ways of coloring and extending dominant chords on a blues.

These three players provide a picture of jazz guitar that spans from the 1940s to the present. And while each has their unique style, there is also a relationship between each guitarist’s approach to rhythm. For example, Remler describes the way she developed Montgomery’s ideas to make them her own: “That’s why I say Wes Montgomery has more substance than others. I find myself listening to the older players. You see one bar of theirs and you can get one hundred more licks out of it.”⁵ Remler suggests a process of learning to improvise by focusing on short phrases and developing them systematically to generate a repertoire of new phrases or “licks,” thereby creating an original style of improvisation based in the language of ‘older’ players.

In my interview with John Scofield, he also spoke of learning new ways to improvise by developing short phrases from other musicians’ solos. This system of

⁴ Miles Davis and Quincy Troupe, *Miles, the Autobiography*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 394.

⁵ Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 248.

learning to improvise forms the motivation for my suggested exercises based on their own solos. Transcribing solos forms an important part of the process of learning to improvise in a jazz setting – and in addition to learning to play the transcription and absorbing the time-feel and note choices, this method provides a means to also transfer the rhythmic ideas to new musical situations.

For model jazz improvisation resources on rhythm, New England Conservatory faculty Jerry Bergonzi's *Inside Improvisation Series*, especially *Vol. 4 Melodic Rhythms*, contains examples of strategies for developing motivic and rhythmic ideas.⁶ It was in the context of taking his class based on this book that inspired me to take a closer look at the rhythmic practices of improvisors.

Blues

My desire to include topics related to the blues in this project grew during a performance experience and a year-long blues history ensemble class, both led by pianist and NEC faculty Jason Moran. Blues is a music deeply connected to the African American experience, from West African musical traditions preserved by slaves in United States, and evolving in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁷ In *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, writer Amiri Baraka argues that the progression from collective work songs to the focus on individual in the modern form of blues, is

⁶ Jerry Bergonzi, *Volume 4: Melodic Rhythms* (Rottenburg: Advance Music, 1998).

⁷ Though a full discussion of blues history is beyond the scope of this project, Amiri Baraka's *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* provides important context and informs my discussion of the blues and jazz history. LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, (New York: Perennial, 2002, 1963), 66.

reflected in the shift in African American societal roles after the end of slavery: “Even though its birth and growth seems connected finally to the general movement of the mass of black Americans into the central culture of the country, blues still went back for its impetus and emotional meaning to the individual, to his completely personal life and death.”⁸ This focus on the individual is present in the subject of blues lyrics that tell the personal stories of their authors, as well as the notion of the improvised blues “solo,” which evolved during this period.⁹

Performers began to accompany themselves on instruments, which eventually led to standardizing the 12-bar form of blues. The guitar became a dominant instrument, thanks to its portability and because a singer could easily accompany themselves. Baraka explains that not only did guitar have an effect on vocal blues, but the emulation of the vocal style on the guitar expanded the possible ways of playing it: “Blues, a vocal music, was made to conform to an instrument’s range. But, of course, the blues widened the range of the instrument, too. Blues guitar was not the same as classical or ‘legitimate’ guitar: the strings had to make vocal sounds, to imitate the human voice and its eerie cacophonies.”¹⁰ Even more than its cousin the banjo, the guitar’s ability to bend strings in a vocal manner gave it a means to capture the sound of the human voice.

In the studio and the field, as recording technology developed, blues performances were documented and disseminated around the nation and world. Blues

⁸ Baraka, 67.

⁹ Baraka, 66.

¹⁰ Baraka, 69-70.

historian Elijah Wald writes, “With its deep roots and broad influence, blues is widely regarded as the foundation for nearly all later American popular forms.”¹¹ As a key component of jazz and so many American musical styles, there is valuable research to be done in this area, and this project aims to contribute to the body of knowledge around the intersections of jazz and blues styles.

Saxophonist Lou Donaldson even “recommends that aspiring jazz musicians ‘concentrate on the blues,’ absorbing its special ‘feeling’ so they can project it into their improvisations. Without cultivating ‘that type of sound,’ he cautions, ‘you can never play jazz.’”¹² An emerging jazz musician must therefore confront and embrace the blues. The rhythmic language is an important aspect of developing ‘that type of sound,’ as well as an expressive, vocal quality. For example, there can be a conversational, out of pulse-oriented time quality to melodies and improvised lines. The blues vocal aspects can also include “blue notes,” bends and a behind-the-beat timing. The “blues scale” notes (scale degrees 1 b3 4 #4 5 b7) are present in many melodies and solos, though for blues improvisations, the entire chromatic scale is actually heard, as well as microtonal shadings, particularly around the third and seventh scale degrees. Bending strings or using a slide helps guitarists achieve these shadings, thus enhancing the connection to blues vocal tradition.

¹¹ Elijah Wald, "Blues," *Grove Music Online*, 10 Jul. 2012; Accessed April, 27 2023. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline.com.catalog.berklee.edu:2443/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002223858>.

¹² Interview with Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 68.

In terms of electric guitar sounds, they range from a dark jazz guitar sound on an archtop with heavy strings to brighter sounding, solid-body electric guitars, often with the warm sound of an overdriven tube amplifier. Montgomery and Remler favored the traditional dark sound, while Scofield typically favors a brighter, slightly-overdriven sound, and bending in the style of traditional blues. All three guitarists have a connection to perhaps the most well-known of blues guitarists, B.B. King. Remler and Scofield spoke in interviews of listening to him (and many other blues guitarists) in their formative high school years, and Montgomery's important early collaborator, pianist Mel Rhyne also played with B.B. King.¹³

In interviews, John Scofield readily credits the blues and Black musical influences for his sound and time-feel.¹⁴ When asked why his music resonates with young people specifically: "Blues. I think it's because I started with blues guitar and wanted to bend notes and play with vibrato."¹⁵ He also notes that this was an aspect of style in common with other guitarists of his generation, such as John McLaughlin, Larry Coryell, Mick Goodrick, John Abercrombie, Bill Frisell and Mike Stern. Like Scofield and Remler, I listened intently to and studied blues guitar masters in my formative musical years, especially to Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Jimi Hendrix and the British Invasion blues-rock guitarists, such as Eric Clapton, and later Stevie Ray Vaughan. Their collective blues language forms a kind of "lingua franca" of electric guitar players.

¹³ Oliver Dunskus, *Wes Montgomery, His Life and His Music* (Norderstedt, Germany: Books on Demand, 2020), 26.

¹⁴ Scofield, Interview with Author, March 2, 2021.

¹⁵ Scofield, Interview with Rick Beato, posted April 12, 2022, Accessed April, 27 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHhqTM4kKR0>

Jazz-Blues and Swing

Jazz-blues is a useful means to analyze and compare the musical personalities of each player, as it allows for almost limitless possibilities for developing an improvisational voice. With its concise 12-bar form, it is also an ideal platform for teaching jazz students, and for students already familiar with blues who are making their first forays into the world of jazz, the blues form can be a segue. Jazz-blues is a version of the 12-bar blues that contains many harmonic functions that are also common in jazz standards, such as II-7 to V7 and secondary dominant chords, and therefore these concepts can easily be extrapolated to other pieces as well.

I also identify examples of the subjects' solos over pieces that feature relatively static (modal) harmonies, which can allow players a greater flexibility of rhythmic and phrasing possibilities than over faster-moving harmonies.¹⁶ One of these possibilities is the use of extended cross-rhythms, which involve an understanding of the layers of rhythm that occur within a swing feel. Cross-rhythms in swing have been prevalent since the early days of jazz.

In Lee Brown's article "The Theory of Jazz Music 'It Don't Mean a Thing...'"¹⁷ he analyzes early jazz theorist Andre Hodeir's treatise on the essential elements of jazz.¹⁸

¹⁶ Pianist and musicologist Keith Waters' offers a thorough definition of modal harmony and modal jazz in chapter 2 his book: *The Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet, 1965-68* (New York: Oxford University, 2011), 46.

¹⁷ Lee Brown, "The Theory of Jazz Music 'It Don't Mean a Thing...'" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 49 No. 2 (Spring, 1991), pp. 115-127.

¹⁸ Andre Hodeir, *Hommes et problèmes du Jazz: suivi de la Religion du Jazz* (Paris: Parentheses, 1954), trans. David Noakes, as *Jazz - its Evolution and Essence*, (New York: Grove Press, 1956).

Brown explains Hodeir's ideas of rhythmic *infrastructure* and *superstructure* and how they interact and complement each other to create a feeling of swing. *Infrastructure* can be understood as an underlying pulse to the music, with strong and weak beats. In the context of swing music in 4/4 meter, this implies strong beats on beats 1 and 3, with a pulse subdivided with swing eighth notes, often with an eighth-note-triplet-based undercurrent.

Superstructure, Brown summarizes: "As Hodeir terms it, involves the rhythmic articulation of the line(s) superimposed over the *infrastructure*."¹⁹ This can be understood as accents that provide emphasis and create rhythmic tension and release. For example, in the case of "Four on Six," we see that Montgomery uses accents throughout his solo in his lines, often to imply dotted-quarter or 3/8 cross rhythms.

In "Harmonic and Rhythmic Oppositions in Jazz: The Special Case of John Coltrane and His Classic Quartet," Brian Levy shows how Louis Armstrong and Lester Young use 3/8 rhythms in their classic solos on "West End Blues" and "Shoe Shine Boy" respectively.²⁰ The effect of implying the 3/8 rhythms over 4/4 is to create alternating emphasis on the beats and off-beats, as a kind of push and pull, as well as to create phrases that go over the bar line. These 3/8 cross rhythms are certainly not unique to Montgomery, Armstrong or Young, and are also prevalent in the 1940's swing era (think "In the Mood") or earlier Ragtime (Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag").

¹⁹ Brown, 120.

²⁰ Brian Levy, "Harmonic and Rhythmic Oppositions in Jazz: The Special Case of John Coltrane and His Classic Quartet." *Jazz Perspectives* 12:1 (April, 2020), 58-62.

In his study of the process of learning jazz improvisation, *Thinking in Jazz*, ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner encapsulates the rhythmic goals of swing-based improvisations:

“Praised for their swing, effective improvisations are ‘natural, flowing, uncontrived and spontaneous’; they display strong rhythmic momentum, ‘rhythmic elasticity, bounce and vitality.’ These essential aesthetic qualities are the product of a combination of the rhythmic elements that make up improvised figures, the manner in which the figures are articulated, their placement within the piece’s metric scheme, and their relationships to the surrounding figures of other band members.”²¹

Berliner is essentially addressing (along with Brown, Hodier and Levy): what are the aesthetic qualities that make for a compelling solo and what makes it swing? He concludes that when a soloist swings, there is a “vitality” to the rhythm, and also a relationship to articulation, placement in the meter, and even to the rhythmic figures of accompanists. In this project, I reveal how the guitarists use these rhythmic elements to play effective improvisations, creating “strong rhythmic momentum” in their own unique ways.

²¹ Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 147.

Chapter 2 – Wes Montgomery

John Leslie “Wes” Montgomery – Short Biography

John Leslie “Wes” Montgomery (1923-1968) is considered one of the most important jazz guitarists. His significant predecessors include his hero, Charlie Christian, and Django Reinhardt, and contemporaries Barney Kessel, Kenny Burrell, Jim Hall, Tal Farlow, Jimmy Rainey, Les Paul and later, the players whom Montgomery influenced, such as Emily Remler and John Scofield, Pat Martino and George Benson, among many others.

Montgomery was born in Indianapolis, in 1923 to a family of five, who were active in church music.²² The long-held understanding of Montgomery’s musical upbringing was that he did not begin playing guitar seriously until late in his teens, which is suggested in Adrian Ingram’s 1985 biography of Montgomery. However, Oliver Dunskus shows in his 2020 Montgomery biography through the interviews of Wes’ older brother (and electric bassist) Monk Montgomery, that in fact Wes had significant early contact with music before purchasing his first electric guitar. This included a small five-string guitar (a tiple, akin to a ukulele) and time with neighbors who played music, as well as performances with groups in talent shows.²³

Inspired by the recordings of Charlie Christian, guitarist with the Benny Goodman Orchestra, who recorded some of the earliest electric guitar solos – Wes

²² His family roots on his father’s side were traced to slaves in Floyd County, Georgia before the Civil War. Oliver Dunskus, *Wes Montgomery, His Life and His Music* (Norderstedt, Germany: Books on Demand, 2020), 9.

²³ Dunskus, 10-12.

Montgomery bought his first six string guitar in 1943, at the age of 19. He bought it together with an amplifier for the price of \$350 in 1943 (which, adjusted for inflation would be valued at roughly \$5,500 in 2023 dollars), certainly a large sum for the young welder at the time.²⁴ He then proceeded to learn Christian's solos by ear, note for note, which led to some of his first professional performances. In an interview in *Down Beat Magazine* in 1961, Montgomery relates how, through sheer determination, he was able to find the notes and memorize Christian's solos, but realized quickly that he must practice the language of jazz and go beyond imitation to create his own way of improvising.

'I'd come on and just play Charlie Christian solos from the records because at that time that was all I could play. Of course, the other musicians knew this, but one day I got a hand so big that they wouldn't let me off the stage, but I couldn't play nothing else. It was so embarrassing, so I said I've got to go back and start practicing...'²⁵

And practice he did. Though he initially started playing with a pick in his right hand, he claimed to switch to playing with a softer thumb sound to placate his neighbors' noise complaints.

I propose an additional means of understanding why Montgomery chose to play with his thumb, which, to my knowledge, has not yet been suggested: as Dunskus' research makes clear, Montgomery's first instrument was not a guitar but a five-string tiple, like a large ukulele.²⁶ When playing ukulele, it is common to strum the chords

²⁴ Dunskus, 15.

²⁵ *Jazz Monthly*, "Wes Montgomery talks to Valerie Wilmer," May 23, 1965, in Dunskus, 15.

²⁶ Dunskus, 10.

and pluck the melodies with a thumb—in much the same way that Montgomery played the guitar. Therefore, this could have been a logical choice for him to apply to guitar, continuing to use a thumb-based technique he began as a teenager. Montgomery also realized that fewer players were using their thumbs, a choice that led toward developing his unique style of playing.²⁷ He was self-taught, and though he did not read music, he reportedly had a quick ear and developed his own broad understanding of harmony.²⁸

Jam sessions would also play an important role in his musical development, as well as for Montgomery's local community, including his brothers, bassist Monk and pianist and vibraphonist Buddy. In drummer Art Taylor's series of interviews with jazz musicians, *Notes and Tones*, fellow Indianapolis musician, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard says of Wes Montgomery:

He was my main inspiration before I really got into music. I was able to play with Wes one day a week, and it was my life while I was in Indianapolis. To me, he was so great, and I loved him so much. I would practice all week just to play that Saturday jam session.²⁹

Hubbard relates how Montgomery inspired him and a community of musicians in Indianapolis. In the same year he bought his guitar, 1943, Montgomery also met and married Serene, with whom he would remain married until his passing in 1968. They

²⁷ Dunskus, 15.

²⁸ Dunskus, 23.

²⁹ Freddie Hubbard in Arthur Taylor, *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews*, First Da Capo Press edition, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 197.

would have a family of seven children – five daughters and two sons. Supporting his family would become a constant challenge.

Montgomery's first touring opportunity was with vibraphonist Lionel Hampton's big band, with which he played for roughly two years (1948-1950).³⁰ Though he gained valuable performing and recording experience, life on the road was hard, and he returned to Indianapolis to support his growing family. He held a job by day, working at a battery factory and then a local dairy. And after taking a nap, he would often go out to play two gigs each night, one at a local jazz club and another after-hours club. He no doubt refined his personal style during these many hours on the bandstand.

This grueling work schedule was interrupted in 1959 when saxophonist Julian "Cannonball" Adderley and blind British pianist George Shearing came to perform in Indianapolis.³¹ Montgomery attended their show and invited the musicians to come hear his trio perform later that evening – and Adderley and Shearing were impressed. Back in New York the following day, Adderley went to Orrin Keepnews, A&R person for Riverside Records, to sign Montgomery to the label. Unbeknownst to Adderley, Keepnews had just read a positive review about Montgomery written by (former NEC president) composer and critic, Gunther Schuller:

Superlatives come much too easily in writing about Wes Montgomery (...). He is an extraordinarily spectacular guitarist. Listening to his solos is like teetering continually at the edge of a brink. His playing at its peak becomes unbearably exciting to the point of where one feels

³⁰ Duskus, 18.

³¹ Duskus, 30.

unable to muster sufficient physical endurance to outlast it. In its totality it is playing that combines the perfect choice of notes with a prowess that the jazz of yesteryear, the jazz of the jam sessions and cutting contests had, but that, I'm afraid, the jazz of today has completely lost. Wes keeps the listener constantly at the edge of his seat as he steadily pursues his target over 6 to 10 choruses, eliminating one musical obstacle after another until the ultimate goal has been reached. Towards the climax of his solos, guitar and man become entirely one, and both seem no longer earth-bound.³²

Pursuant to such praise from two sources, Keepnews went to Indianapolis himself, where he was equally impressed and soon signed Montgomery to his label. Two weeks later, Montgomery and his trio came to New York to record his first record under his own name: *The Wes Montgomery Trio – A Dynamic New Sound: Guitar/Organ/Drums* (1959).³³

Montgomery's second recording for Riverside, a year later was *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery* (1960), which received high marks from listeners and critics alike.³⁴ This album contains several of his best-known original pieces, including "D-Natural Blues," (the recording of my first solo transcription for this project), as well as the original recording of "Four on Six" – the same piece as my second transcription, though I transcribed a live version from five years later in Paris, France on March 27, 1965. His other important recordings include *Full House* (1962), *Smokin' at the Half Note* (1965), collaborations with vibraphonist Milt Jackson, *Bags Meets Wes* (1962) and organist Jimmy Smith, *Dynamic Duo* (1962) albums.

³² Gunther Schuller, *The Jazz Review*, Sept. 1959, 48-50, in Dunskus, 32-33.

³³ Dunskus, 34

³⁴ Wes Montgomery, *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery*, Riverside RLP 12-329, 1960

On Verve Records, Montgomery began working with producer Creed Taylor who paired Wes' distinct octave melody sound with large ensemble arrangements, first with big band and then with strings. The choices of repertoire became more 1960's pop-centric, which allowed the recordings to fit into a sound that was promoted actively on radio stations. These pop-oriented recordings were met with criticism from the jazz establishment, but the new format also allowed his music to reach a wider audience. He won a Grammy Award for *Goin' Out of My Head* (1966), and *A Day in the Life* (1967) rose to #13 on the Billboard 200 Album charts, a rare event for a jazz album.³⁵ This commercial and financial success allowed him to support his family in a way that he was not able to do previously during the jazz-focused Riverside period.

In roughly a decade of recording (1959-1968), Montgomery released an enormous number of recordings, sometimes recording five albums in a year, such as in 1960. According to interviews, Montgomery did not drink, nor do drugs, and was well-liked among his peers.³⁶ His rapid pace of work, including driving across the continental U.S. many times over, stress, and a smoking habit possibly contributed to a heart condition of which Montgomery would die, in 1968, at the age of 45.³⁷ Many albums, compilations, bootlegs and live Montgomery recordings have been released posthumously and he remains one of the principal influences for many jazz guitarists around the world.

³⁵ Brian Felix, "Wes Montgomery's *A Day In The Life*: The Anatomy of a Jazz-Pop Crossover Album." *Jazz Perspectives*, no. 3: 237, 2014.

³⁶ Dunskus, 61.

³⁷ Dunskus, 59.

Wes Montgomery's "D Natural Blues" Solo Excerpt

Background and Analysis

Recorded on Montgomery's second album, *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery* (in January 1960), "D-Natural Blues" is a slow 12-bar blues in D major.³⁸ Montgomery is surrounded by veteran accompanists, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Percy Heath and his brother, drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath.

I selected "D-Natural Blues," for the way that Montgomery's solo displays compelling motivic and rhythmic approaches in three ways: 1) his use of double time and triplet-based time-feels; 2) his "triple phrase structure;" and 3) his use of substitutions and arpeggios, related to the previous two elements. In the first three choruses alone, there is considerable material to unpack and develop.

His rhythmic approach to blues at this tempo is characterized by moving fluidly between double-time feel and back to a triplet-based swing feel, which he does several times during the solo, and which gives it sense of push and pull, of rhythmic tension and release. *Example 2-1* shows how Montgomery begins his solo with a double-time swing feel, as indicated by the sixteenth-note rhythms – where he swings the sixteenth notes as if he were playing eighth notes at a tempo twice as fast.

³⁸ There is also a live version of "D-Natural Blues," Montgomery recorded live with his brothers from 1961.

Example 2-1 Montgomery alternating double-time and triplet-based swing time-feels

These rhythmic approaches also have a relationship to the stylistic language material for the lines he plays: the double-time lines contain bebop-style chromatic passing tones, neighbor tones and arpeggios, whereas the triplet lines often include blues note choices. We can see this in *Example 2-2*, at the end of his first chorus of solo, in mm. 8-11, with the triplet-based swing time feel returning at the end of m. 9, and leading into mm. 10-11 when Montgomery plays bluesy, almost out-of-time phrases, reminiscent of traditional blues guitar playing.

Example 2-2 Montgomery's double-time arpeggios followed by triplet-based blues language

“Triple Phrase Structure”

In this solo, Montgomery often uses a formula for his melodic ideas with an *a-a'-b* structure: he plays an *a* phrase based on a rhythmic idea or harmonic shape, repeats it with a similar shape or rhythm in *a'*, and follows with a longer *b* phrase that begins in a similar fashion and extends the *a* idea. The initial idea could be based on a shape, rhythm, line direction or general contour. This formula is in a way modeled on the AAB form of some 12-bar blues lyrics, which Montgomery uses several times during the solo.³⁹ I call this technique “triple phrase structure.”

For example, in *Example 2-3*, mm. 3 – 7 of his second chorus, he begins with a 1-bar *a* idea over D7, repeats the same general shape and rhythm, transposing it to harmonize with the substitute chord changes Eb-7 to Ab7 (*a'*) in m. 4, and in mm. 5-7, extending with both a larger range and length into a 2.5-bar *b* idea, followed by a rest.

Example 2-3 Montgomery’s “Triple Phrase Structure;” *a*, *a'*, longer *b*

The image displays two staves of musical notation in G major, illustrating Montgomery's "Triple Phrase Structure".

The first staff begins at measure 3. It features three phrases:

- Phrase *a*: A 1-bar phrase starting on D4, moving up stepwise to A4, then down to G4, with a dotted quarter note on D4. Chord: D7.
- Phrase *a'*: A 1-bar phrase starting on Eb4, moving up stepwise to Ab4, then down to Gb4, with a dotted quarter note on Eb4. Chords: A-7 (Eb-7) and D7 (Ab7).

The second staff begins at measure 5. It features a longer phrase *b* that spans 2.5 bars:

- Phrase *b*: A 2.5-bar phrase starting on G4, moving up stepwise to B4, then down to A4, with a dotted quarter note on G4. Chords: G7, G7, G#dim7, and D/A.

Dashed lines below the staves indicate the duration of each phrase: "a - 1 bar", "a' - 1 bar", and "b - 2.5 bars".

³⁹ For example, B.B. King’s 1955 recording of “Every Day I have the Blues” lyrics: “Every day, every day I have the blues; Oh, every day, every day I have the blues; When you see me worryin’ baby, yeah it’s you I hate to lose.”

Note that in m. 4, the implied chord changes of Eb-7 to Ab7 are a tritone substitution for A-7 to D7 (II-7 V7 of IV). The sonic surprise of this unexpected harmonic implication is tempered by the clear connection from one phrase to the next, as well as the clear resolution of the *b* phrase to its intended target, the IV chord.

Montgomery follows this phrase with another example, this time with a phrase over the bar line into m. 9, that connects the harmonies, in *Example 2-4*.

Example 2-4 Montgomery's Triple Phrase Structure, goes over the bar lines, in mm. 8-12 of his second chorus.

In another, more compact example, in *Example 2-5*, he uses another triple phrase structure, this time with shorter 2 + 2 + 4 beat phrase lengths.

Example 2-5 Montgomery's Triple Phrase Structure, with compact phrases, in mm. 4-5 of his third chorus.

Harmonic Substitutions

Montgomery's approach to playing outside the expected chord changes by the rhythm section is characterized mainly by his use of harmonic substitutions. For example, in the above *Examples 2-3* and *2-5*, in his second and third choruses – while the bass and piano play D7 in bar 4 of each 12-bar blues progression, Montgomery's line implies Ab7 the tritone substitution, and also Eb-7 to Ab7. Guitarists Emily Remler and John Scofield also use these substitutions in their solos over jazz blues as well, though less regularly.

Another harmonic approach comes on the second half of bar 8, where Montgomery implies F-11 rather than the expected B7, thus creating a chromatic harmonic sequence of F#-9, F-11, and E-11 in mm. 8-9. The sequence of chromatically descending shapes works in tandem with the rhythms he plays. In *Example 2-6*, he uses this substitution again in the eighth bar of his third chorus.

Example 2-6 Montgomery substituting bIII-7 for V7/II in m. 8, creating a chromatic harmonic sequence: III-7, bIII-7, II-7

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains a single bar of music, marked with a '3' above the first measure, indicating a triplet feel. The notation consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. Above the staff, four chord symbols are indicated: F#-7 (9), B7, (F-11), and E-7 (11). The notes in the staff correspond to these chords: F#-7 (9) is F#-A-C-E-G; B7 is B-D-F-A; (F-11) is F-A-C-E-G-Bb; and E-7 (11) is E-G-B-D-F. The final note of the bar is a triplet of eighth notes: G, A, B. The text 'triplet feel, blues' is written below the staff.

In bar 6 of the blues progression, Montgomery uses an ascending G# whole-half diminished (or D, B or F octatonic) scale, where the rhythm section plays the IV7, G7. This is a common variation in jazz blues: to play the #IV dim7 in bar 6, which he implies in *Example 2-7* below, and works with the double-time swing feel, giving it a bebop quality.

Example 2-7 Montgomery implying a #IV dim7 in bar 6 by using a G# whole-half diminished scale

He uses the ascending diminished scale again in m. 6 of the third chorus of this solo.

One can see visually, that overall, the majority of his phrases begin by ascending, and often end descending, which generates a kind of lyrical quality throughout his solo.

Use of Arpeggios

Montgomery's common practice is to use arpeggios built in thirds, in the shape of a minor ninth or eleven chord, such as *Example 2-8* below. He uses these arpeggio shapes as substitutions for other chords. For example, in mm. 12-13, he uses Amin11 in place of D7, by arpeggiating the notes A C E G B and D, thus creating a subdominant sound by borrowing notes from the "related II-7," and which works with his double-time swing feel. In practical terms, he is turning one bar of D7 at the slow tempo into what sounds like a bar of A-7 and D7 each, at double-time.

Example 2-8 Montgomery using A-11 arpeggios, creating a subdominant sound from the "related II-7"

Montgomery sometimes uses just the “rootless” shape – so an A-11 becomes CMaj9 arpeggio (C E G B D notes), as he uses in *Example 2-9*, m. 3 of his second chorus, again essentially turning the measure of D7 into A-7 and D7, for two beats each.

Example 2-9 Montgomery using a “rootless” A-11 arpeggio, again creating a subdominant sound from the “related II-7”



And finally, Montgomery also uses this shape in the context of a double-substitution: in *Example 2-10*, m. 10 of his third chorus, over the A7 chord, he outlines an Eb7 (tritone substitution for A7), by playing a DbMaj9 arpeggio, all with a double-time swing feel.

Example 2-10 Montgomery using arpeggio to imply tritone substitution: a DbMaj9 for Eb7



Summary

In his “D-Natural Blues” Solo, Montgomery reveals his ability to fluidly alternate between double-time and triplet-based swing feels, as well as a bluesy out-of-time feel, establish “triple phrase structure,” and to use scalar lines and arpeggios to imply a range of harmonic substitutions.

Suggested Exercises, Based on Wes Montgomery's "D-Natural Blues" Solo

Exercise #1: Triple Phrase Structure (a, a', longer b)

Based on Montgomery's triple phrase structure (*a, a', b*), over a 4/4 medium swing jazz blues, create a 1-bar rhythmic idea, starting with 3 notes. Repeat a similar, but not identical rhythm in the second bar. In bars 3-4, create a third variation by beginning in a similar rhythm, and extend the idea into the fourth bar, freely. Continue with the pattern in 4-bar phrases, and work up to 5 or more notes per idea.

Also try augmenting this same formula to 2-2-4 bars, as well as diminution to 2-2-4 beats, and finally, freely varying lengths. Apply the triple phrase structure to a 32-bar form jazz standard, and with both swing and even eighth note feels. For double-time lines, use Montgomery's phrases as a model.

Example 2-11 Montgomery's Triple Phrase Structure on "D-Natural Blues"

The image displays two staves of musical notation in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps). The first staff, starting at measure 3, illustrates the triple phrase structure. It is divided into two sections: 'a - 1 bar' and 'a' - 1 bar'. The 'a' section consists of two measures: the first measure has a D7 (A-7) chord and the second has a (D7) chord. The 'a'' section also consists of two measures: the first has an A-7 (Eb-7) chord and the second has a D7 (Ab7) chord. The second staff, starting at measure 5, illustrates a longer phrase 'b - 2.5 bars'. It is divided into three sections: the first measure has a G7 chord, the second measure has a G7 chord with an accent (>), and the third measure has a G#dim7 chord with an accent (>). The phrase concludes in measure 7 with a D/A chord.

Exercise #2a: Double-Time/Triplet-Based Swing Time-Feels

Over a slow swing drum track or metronome set to around 60 beats per minute to start, try alternating phrases with double-time and triplet-based “normal-time” feels. The double-time feel has a swing sixteenth-note subdivision and the normal-time feel back to standard swing eighth notes and eight-note-triplet subdivisions.

Begin by creating phrases using Montgomery’s opening rhythms from *Example 2-12* in mm. 1-2, to get the feel of double-time swing (as if you are playing eighths at 120 bpm), since the short, syncopated notes bring out this character. The rhythm in m. 3 also helps to practice starting phrases after beat 1. Then, create your own phrases in this style. Work your way up to faster tempos of 90 bpm or more.

Example 2-12 Montgomery’s Double-Time Swing Feel on “D-Natural Blues,”

The image displays five staves of musical notation for Example 2-12, set in D major. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and chord changes:

- Staff 1 (Measures 1-3):** Labeled "Double-Time Swing Feel". It starts with a circled "1" above the first measure. Chords are D7, G7, and D7. The rhythm features syncopated eighth notes and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 3.
- Staff 2 (Measures 4-5):** Labeled "Normal-Time, Triplet Feel". It includes the phrase "Line Cliche" above measure 4. Chords are A-7 and D7. The rhythm features eighth notes and a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 3 (Measures 6-7):** Labeled "Double-Time Feel". Chords are G7, G# dim Scale, D/A, and /G. The rhythm features eighth notes.
- Staff 4 (Measures 8-9):** Labeled "Triplet Feel, Blues". Chords are F#-7 (9), B7 (F-11), and E-7 (11). The rhythm features eighth notes and triplets.
- Staff 5 (Measures 10-11):** Chords are A7, D7, and G7. The rhythm features eighth notes and triplets.

Exercise #2b: In and Out of Rhythm/Blues Language

Over a slow blues, practice going in and out of pulse-oriented rhythm, as well as in and out of blues language, as Montgomery does in *Example 2-12* above, mm. 9-10 of his first chorus.⁴⁰

Exercise #3: Tritone Substitution

Begin by alternating arpeggios of D7(9) and then Ab7(9), then scalar, melodic ideas based on each sonority. Since the Ab7 is SubV7 of IV, a lydian-dominant sound can work well, i.e. thinking Ab13(#11). For double-time, think two beats each of Eb-7 to Ab7 arpeggios.

Then, over a blues, substitute Ab7 over bar 4 of a D blues, and finally, anytime there is a I chord. Using simple, motivic ideas helps balance the dissonance of the substitutions. See mm. 4-5 in the third chorus of Montgomery's solo in *Example 2-13*:
Example 2-13 Montgomery's Tritone Substitution, SubV7/IV in m. 4 on "D-Natural Blues"

A-7 (Ab9) D7 G7

4

a a' b

>

⁴⁰ Suggested by Ken Schaphorst.

Exercise #4: Minor 7 Chromatic Planing (III-7 to bIII-7 to II-7)

Begin by reviewing arpeggios and scales of the III-7, bIII-7, and II-7 chords, which in D, are F#-7, F-7 and E-7. Create short, related ideas on each chord by varying the rhythm, direction and scale degrees in your lines. Then apply the ideas while soloing over a slow blues, specifically the eighth and ninth bars of the form, keeping Montgomery's example in mind in *Example 2-14*:

Example 2-14 Montgomery's bIII-7 substitution in m.8, on "D-Natural Blues"



Play freely, slowly incorporating these concepts into your solo, one at a time. Transpose them first to blues in C, and then to more keys as well.

Wes Montgomery's Solo on "Four on Six," Live in Paris, March 27, 1965

Background and Analysis

Wes Montgomery had a notable fear of flying.⁴¹ He was able to tour the US and Canada to great extent by car, but this fear limited his ability to tour internationally. However, he traveled overseas on one occasion: for a tour of Europe in the spring of 1965. During a month-and-a-half-long tour, his performances were well-documented, resulting in many recordings and footage of Montgomery with mainly European musicians.

This solo transcription is from Montgomery's performance of his piece "Four on Six" in Paris, France at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on March 27, 1965, with his own American quartet: Harold Mabern on piano, Arthur Harper on bass and Jimmy Lovelace on drums, with guest Johnny Griffin on tenor saxophone (who was living in Paris at the time).⁴² This is one of Montgomery's only complete live recordings.

I selected this Paris performance of "Four on Six," for the way Montgomery clearly structures his solo based on rhythmic motives, and the many ways he uses dotted-eighth (3/8) and 3/4 cross rhythms, which are central to his improvisational

⁴¹ Dunskus, 50.

⁴² Previously only available as a bootleg recording, it was remastered from the original tapes and officially released in 2019 by Resonance Records as *Wes Montgomery In Paris: The Definitive ORTF Recording*.

swing language at fast tempos.⁴³ His eighth-note lines and syncopated accents establish a clear sense of groove and developed technique.

The solos on “Four on Six” are over a 16-bar form whose progression is based on Gershwin’s “Summertime.” The first and third 4-bar phrases are mostly G minor, and have a modal, static harmony quality to them. The second 4-bar section is a series of descending II-V’s, and in the fourth bar the pattern is broken up by the Eb-7 Ab7 (the tritone substitution for A-7 D7). Montgomery tends to play rhythmic and melodic sequences during this section, transposing variations in the first three bars and a new variation in the fourth. Note how the harmonic rhythm increases rapidly from one chord during four bars in the first line, to two chords per bar in the second line, and again leading into the fourth line.

Example 2-15 Montgomery’s “Four on Six” Harmonic Structure

The image displays the harmonic structure of Montgomery's "Four on Six" in G minor, organized into four lines of four bars each. Each bar contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The chords are as follows:

- Line 1: G-7 (all four bars)
- Line 2: C-7 (bar 1), F7 (bar 2), Bb-7 (bar 3), Eb7 (bar 4), A-7 (bar 5), D7 (bar 6), Eb-7 (bar 7), Ab7 (bar 8)
- Line 3: G-7 (bars 1-3), C-7 (bar 4), F7 (bar 5)
- Line 4: BbMaj7 (bar 1), Am7(b5) (bar 2), D7#9 (bar 3), G-7 (bar 4), D7#9 (bar 5)

⁴³ The first recording of “Four on Six” was Montgomery’s 1960 version, from the album *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery*, recorded five years earlier.

Montgomery's solo on "Four on Six" has a distinct structure and follows his characteristic three-tiered progression of guitar orchestrations during a total of nine choruses: three choruses each of single note lines, octaves, and chord solo. His use of equal proportions in each section is notable and offers the solo a feeling of finality after the ninth chorus. He often begins each chorus with a new idea, rather than continuing ideas from the previous chorus, which further creates an underlying feeling of organization to his solo. This has the added effect of highlighting the sixteen-bar harmonic structure.

Rhythmic Motives

Montgomery's use of rhythmic motives, provide a cohesive quality to his solo. His ideas are often syncopated and two bars long, though there are also motives that last four or eight bars. They can be echoed during an entire chorus, and even throughout the solo. His rhythmic motives provide a feeling of consistency and predictability for the rhythm section to accent with him on occasion.

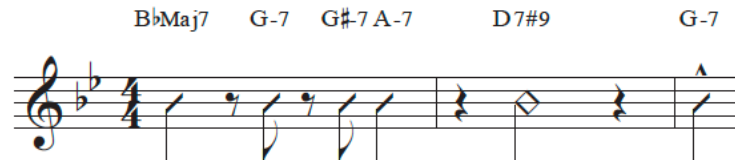
He begins his solo with a pickup during the solo break, ascending over the large range. In m. 15, in his last phrase of the chorus, he plays a rhythmic figure, which I call a "signature rhythm" – that is echoed many times over the course of the solo, seen in *Example 2-16*.

Example 2-16 Montgomery's "Signature Rhythm" on "Four on Six"



The signature rhythm is based on accents within a dotted-quarter note cycle, or 3/8 cross rhythm, which is a variation on the first bar of ensemble rhythms that precede the solo, shown in *Example 2-17*.

Example 2-17 Ensemble Rhythms Leading to the Montgomery's solo on "Four on Six"



This signature rhythm is a rhythmic seed that Montgomery returns to for much of the solo and its regular use creates a feeling of cohesion with the composition and throughout the solo.

Two-Bar Rhythmic Motives

Montgomery also uses several two-measure rhythmic motives. *Example 2-18* shows how the signature rhythm also forms the basis for a two-measure rhythmic motive, repeated twice below, to open his final chorus:

Example 2-18 Montgomery's two-bar rhythmic motives, based on his "Signature Rhythm"



Example 2-19 shows another example of two-bar motives in Montgomery's second chorus, as he intersperses chords with his lines, landing on the "and of four" several times beginning in m. 16—with the anticipations creating rhythmic drive.

Example 2-19 Montgomery's two-bar rhythmic motives, anticipated harmonies on "and of four"

The image displays two staves of musical notation in G minor. The top staff begins at measure 13 and features a sequence of chords: B♭Maj7, Am7(♭5), D7#9, G-7, and D7#9. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with accents. The bottom staff, marked with a circled '2', shows a 'G-7 2-bar motives' section enclosed in a dashed box. This section highlights a specific rhythmic pattern: a quarter note followed by an eighth note, then a quarter note, and finally a quarter note with an accent. This pattern is labeled as '*Signature Rhythm*'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as accents, slurs, and dynamic markings.

There can also be a harmonic relationship to his motives. In *Example 1-20*, during his third chorus of single notes, Montgomery motivically links the first and third four-bar sections of the progression, since they are both harmonically static (mostly on G minor). The second four-bar phrase (mm. 5-8), with the series of II-V's, has a contrasting, faster rhythmic motive.

Example 2-20 Montgomery motivically links the first and third four-bar sections of the progression on "Four on Six"

The musical score consists of four staves of music in 6/8 time, with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The first staff (measures 1-4) is labeled '2-bar motive, with variations' and features a circled '3' in a circle. The notes are G4, A4, Bb4, G4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, G4, F4, G4, A4. Chords above are G-7. A dashed line spans the first two bars. Below the staff is the annotation '*Signature Rhythm*'. The second staff (measures 5-8) is labeled 'Contrasting rhythmic motive' and features eighth-note patterns. Chords above are C-7, F7, Bb-7, Eb7, A-7, D7, Eb-7, Ab7. A dashed line spans the first two bars. The third staff (measures 9-12) is labeled 'Returns to previous motive' and 'Skipping'. It features the same notes as the first staff. Chords above are G-7, C-7, F7. A dashed line spans the last two bars. The fourth staff (measures 13-16) is labeled '3/4 cross rhythms:'. It features notes G4, A4, Bb4, G4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, G4, F4, G4, A4. Chords above are BbMaj7, Am7(b5), D7#9, G-7, D7#9. A dashed line spans the first two bars.

"Skipping" Rhythm and 3/4 Rhythms

We can see in the first line of *Example 1-20* above and in other lines, an emphasis on beat 3, which tends to stabilize the lines by highlighting the half-note pulse. In *Example 2-21* below (m. 12 of this third chorus), Montgomery further shows this pulse by introducing the "skipping" rhythm, that locks in with the traditional swing ride cymbal pattern, on the 'and of two" and "and of four."⁴⁴

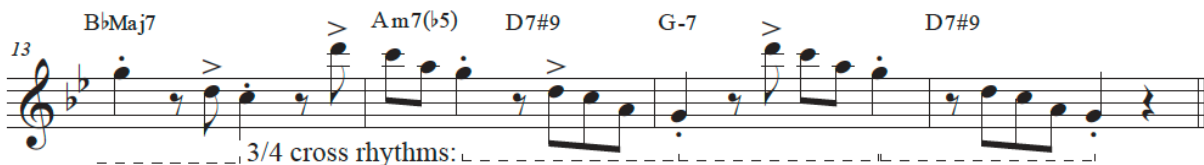
⁴⁴ As named by Jerry Bergonzi.

Example 2-21 Montgomery introduces the “skipping” rhythm on “Four on Six”



In Example 2-22, as he varies the idea by adding two eighth notes, he creates a cycle of 3/4 rhythms, superimposed over 4/4 meter, ending again on beat 3.

Example 2-22 Montgomery uses 3-beat cross rhythms on “Four on Six”



Cross Rhythms

In this solo, Montgomery often employs dotted-eighth cross rhythms to create and resolve tension through a feeling of rhythmic opposition, on and off the beat. A cross rhythm is after all, an extension of a polyrhythm—a cycle of rhythms that can carry over the bar line, even into multiple measures. In the case of 3/8 and 3/4 cross rhythms, it takes three measures of 4/4 to resolve the cycle back to the first beat of the measure. In Montgomery’s chord solo section especially, he relies on 3/8 cross rhythms to create rhythmic tension, such to end his seventh chorus, in *Example 2-23*. The rhythm section picks up on these rhythms, and for a moment appears to metrically modulate with him, until returning to the original 4/4 swing tempo at the downbeat of the following chorus.

Example 2-23 Montgomery uses 3/8 cross rhythms, starting on beat 1, on "Four on Six"

9
G-7
C-7 F7
13
BbMaj7 Am7(b5) D7#9 G-7 D7#9

Cycles of 3/8 cross rhythms - rhythm section catches on

These held dotted quarters produce the climax of his solo, 75% of the way through the duration. To end of his solo, in *Example 2-24*, he references these same rhythms, this time playing them as short accented chords, and beginning this time on the "and of one," which leads him to resolve his last phrase on the "and of four" into the start of the next solo.

Example 2-24 Montgomery uses 3/8 cross rhythms, starting on "and of one," on "Four on Six"

13
BbMaj7 Am7(b5) D7#9 G-7 D7#9 G-7

Piano Solo - Harold Mabern

Returns to 3/8 rhythms to end solo, starts on "and of one" and resolves to "and of four"

Accents

These 3/8 cross rhythms also appear in his eighth note lines in the form of accents, and this *superstructure* level creates a "bounce" to his lines, such as *Example 2-25*, mm. 9-11 of his second chorus. This is a phrase that he uses on other recorded solos of "Four on Six," such as on *Smokin' at the Half Note* (1965).

Example 2-25 Montgomery uses 3/8 cross rhythms, implied through accents on “Four on Six”

Accents based in 3/8 rhythm -----

9 G-7 C-7 F7

Whole-Tone -----

There are also several moments where he reconnects to the quarter note pulse by playing on each beat, such as *Example 2-26* below, often accenting beats 2 and 4, which adds another quality of rhythmic *superstructure*.

Example 2-26 Montgomery plays on each beat, accenting on beats 2 and 4 on “Four on Six”

13 BbMaj7 Am7(b5) D7#9 G-7 D7#9

Quarters with accents

3

Summary

The clear, cohesive quality of Wes Montgomery’s solo comes from the manner in which he uses rhythmic motives to tie his solo together, often grouping them in a way that reflects the harmonic structure. Many of his rhythms derive from a rhythmic *superstructure*, based on a cycle of dotted quarter notes, also known as 3/8 cross rhythms.

This recording stands out from other recordings of “Four on Six,” each recorded with mostly different rhythm sections in Europe and the U.S. It seems that playing with

his own group (rather than pickup rhythm sections) allowed Montgomery to take more rhythmic chances, especially with cross-rhythms.

Generally speaking, though a few phrases reappear in other recordings, the majority of the ideas in the solos are unique to each performance. For further study, one could compare this solo in detail to other published transcriptions of Montgomery's solos, such as his original 1960 version of "Four on Six" from the album *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery*, which may reveal how his playing evolved from 1960-1965; as well as compare it with his famous version on his live album *Smokin' at the Half Note*, from 1965, recorded just after returning from his European Tour.

**Suggested Exercises Based on Wes Montgomery's "Four on Six" solo,
from *Wes Montgomery In Paris: the Definitive ORTF Recording***

Exercise #1: Signature Rhythm

With a metronome (representing beats 2 and 4) or drum track set to medium swing or straight tempo (100-120 bpm), imagine a one-measure rhythmic idea, using 3-5 notes. Write the rhythm down. Improvise freely while using this rhythm, first at the beginning of each phrase, then ending each phrase, and also inserting it into the middle of the phrase. An effective tool is to derive the rhythmic idea from the melody of the piece. Or try developing one of the rhythmic phrases from Montgomery's "Four on Six" solo, such as these examples:

Example 2-27 Montgomery's 1-bar rhythmic motives for development from "Four on Six"



Practice the same rhythmic idea over a piece with a form, such as a blues or a 32-bar standard. Then try the same process with two-bar rhythmic ideas, including Montgomery's solo rhythms, such as these examples:

Example 2-28 Montgomery's 2-bar rhythmic motive 1 for development from "Four on Six"



Example 2-29 Montgomery's 2-bar rhythmic motive 2 for development on "Four on Six"

Exercise #2: New Rhythmic Idea Each Chorus

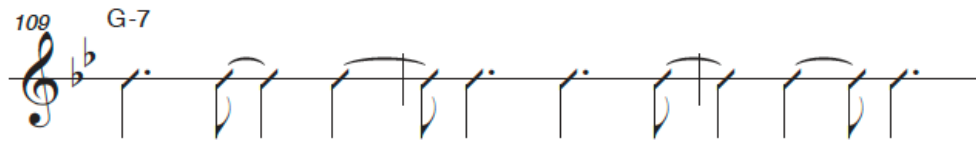
While playing "Four on Six," begin each chorus with a new, distinct rhythmic motive idea. This outlines the form and provides momentum for each chorus, while keeping continuity throughout the solo. Also, try motivically linking the first and third four-bar sections of the progression as Montgomery does in Example 2-30:

Example 2-30 Montgomery's use of similar rhythmic motives in the 1st and 3rd 4-bar phrases on "Four on Six"

Exercise #3: 3/8 Cross-Rhythms

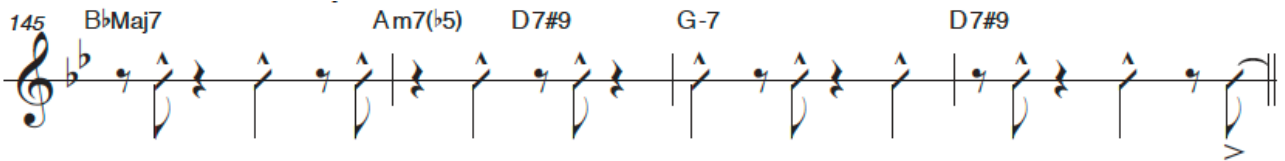
To first hear dotted quarter-note, 3/8 cross rhythms, practice clapping dotted quarter rhythms, with just drums or metronome accompaniment. *Example 2-31* shows the entire cycle of “hits,” which land on the beats 1, 2+, 4 in the first bar; beats 1+, 3, 4+ in the second; and beats 2, and 3+ in the third. Start with just the first bar, then adding the second and finally the third:

Example 2-31 Cycle of dotted-quarters in 4/4



Then improvise notes freely or in key, in this cycle during the first 3 bars, and then leave one of space to complete a 4-bar phrase. Also, start the cycle on the “and of one,” as Montgomery does to end his solo in *Example 2-32*, and on beat 2.

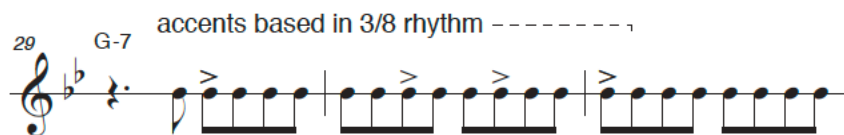
Example 2-32 Montgomery’s 3/8 cross-rhythm accents, starting on “and of one” on “Four on Six”



Exercise #4: Cross-Rhythm Accents

Playing eighth-note lines, practice accenting once every 3 eighth notes, as Montgomery displays in *Example 2-33*. Try over forms with 8-bar phrases such as “So What,” and even “Four on Six,” for a faster tempo.

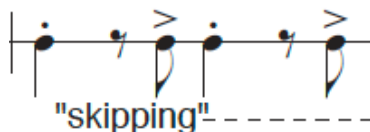
Example 2-33 Montgomery's 3/8 cross-rhythm accents, in eighth note lines on "Four on Six"



Exercise #5: The "Skipping" Rhythm

Improvise with the "skipping" rhythm, which locks into the jazz ride cymbal pattern. Begin by playing only this rhythm, with rests every few bars. Then try mixing it into your phrases, and as a kind of signature rhythm.

Example 2-34 "Skipping" Rhythm



Advanced Exercise: Write your own solo using the solo rhythms

Below is an example of a solo I composed using Montgomery's rhythms from his first two choruses on "Four on Six," whose 16-bar form is easily doubled to 32 to fit the form of many jazz standards. This example is over the chord progression of Miles Davis' composition "Nardis." In this case, I also attempted to maintain the contours of the lines and the articulations Montgomery used. This approach was suggested by Jerry Bergonzi, in a class based on material from his *Inside Improvisation Series Vol. 4, Melodic Rhythms* book.

Example 2-35 Montgomery's "Four on Six" solo rhythms over "Nardis" chord changes

Wes Montgomery's "Four on Six" solo rhythms over "Nardis" changes

Wes Montgomery's Rhythms
New notes by Nick Grondin

Starting at the end of previous chorus. Pickup to the top of the form:

Swing $\text{♩} = 236$ A-7 FMaj7 EMaj7 E-7

A E-7 FMaj7 B7 CMaj7

9 A-7 FMaj7 EMaj7 E-7

B E-7 FMaj7 B7 CMaj7

17 A-7 FMaj7 EMaj7 E-7 A-9(13)

C A-7 FMaj7 A-7 FMaj7 D-11

25 D-11 G13(9) CMaj7 FMaj7

D E-7 FMaj7 B7 CMaj7

33 A-7 FMaj7 EMaj7 E-7

Chapter 3 - Emily Remler

Emily Remler (1957-1990), Short Biography

“The first thing that comes to mind when I think of her playing is joy. She grabbed a guitar and she was so happy playing; and she loved to play. She was just genuinely drawn to a guitar and it was a happy experience for her.”⁴⁵

Emily Remler’s reputation among the jazz guitar community is of a bright light who burned herself out at the age of 32, and becoming a kind of legendary figure. In the conversations and interviews I have had with several people who knew her, I have found that she was well-liked by her friends, her collaborating musicians, her teachers at Berklee and by her many guitar students.

A generation after Montgomery, Emily Remler was born September 18, 1957, into a Jewish family, living in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, a suburb of New York City.⁴⁶ Her father was a businessman and mother a social worker, and she was the youngest of three children. She displayed a talent for both art and music as a child and began playing guitar at age 9. At first interested in folk, and later the rock music of the 1960s. She apparently had a remarkable ear and as an example, said that she would sing along to Ravi Shankar’s “Music for Bangladesh,” a raga piece, from “beginning to end.”⁴⁷

After a difficult period in high school in New Jersey, she attended a boarding school in Massachusetts. She recounted in a 1987 interview: “During boarding school, I

⁴⁵ Jane Miller, close friend of Remler and Professor of Guitar at Berklee College of Music, Boston. Interview with author, Boston, MA. June 3, 2022.

⁴⁶ Gene Lees, *Waiting for Dizzy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 131.

⁴⁷ Lees, 137.

played folk music. I listened to rock music, Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles. I was about fifteen years old when I came to dream that I wanted to be a blues player, so I listened to B.B. King and Johnny Winter and all those people. I played my brother's Gibson ES-330, which I still play today."⁴⁸ The blues was an important theme for her as she learned the guitar, and a theme on which she would build her career.

She finished high school early and was accepted into Berklee College of Music at age 16, where she spent two years. Harmony was her favorite class.⁴⁹ She was apparently very competitive when she started at Berklee.⁵⁰ She worked diligently on technique, especially Wes Montgomery's thumb technique and octave style. And when a teacher told her to work with a metronome, she spent many hours on it⁵¹ – a recommendation that she would later pass onto many students.⁵²

Her boyfriend there, guitarist Steve Masakowski convinced her to move to New Orleans with him after she finished at Berklee.⁵³ Before joining him there, Remler rented a room on the New Jersey Shore for the summer and practiced for eight hours a day, furthering her study of Montgomery and others, learning melodies and solos from

⁴⁸ Lees, 137.

⁴⁹ Ben Sidran, Interview with Emily Remler and Larry Coryell, et al. *Talking Jazz, Podcast: An Oral History*. Unlimited Media, 2006.

⁵⁰ Lees, 134.

⁵¹ Michael J. West, "The Rise and Decline of Guitarist Emily Remler," *Jazz Times Magazine (Online)*. Published October 7, 2021. Accessed March 15, 2022.

<https://jazztimes.com/features/profiles/emily-remler-rise-decline/>

⁵² Miller Interview.

⁵³ There are some sources that say she graduated (Lees, Gourse), but it is not clear. Jane Miller did not think she did actually finish, which would have been hard to do in just two years for a four-year program. It was common at the time for students to spend a year or two at Berklee without graduating. This was also the case for John Scofield.

recordings.⁵⁴ She developed her ear, an asset that was at the core of her musicianship and musical personality. “If I can’t hear a phrase, I won’t be able to execute for anything.”⁵⁵ Her melodic memory would help her implement her soloing ideas in real time.

She spent three years in New Orleans, playing with rhythm and blues groups, “bebop and Dixieland” jazz gigs and touring shows, such as with vocalist Nancy Wilson.⁵⁶ She also began teaching guitar while there, up to 25 students a week – the beginning of an important role as a teacher she would continue throughout her career.

When jazz guitarist Herb Ellis came to New Orleans, Remler called him for a lesson, which turned into a jam session. By Ellis’ account, he was impressed and invited her to join him on the Concord Jazz Festival with himself and guitarists Tal Farlow, Barney Kessel, and Charlie Bird.⁵⁷ She was soon offered a contract on Concord Jazz to record her first album, *Firefly* (1981). This would begin her recording career that would last just ten years. The straight-ahead debut album achieved success on the radio and she was offered a contract for more albums on Concord, including *Take Two*, released the following year (1982). The Concord Jazz label directed her to play in a traditional style, for which Montgomery was a primary influence:

‘They wanted me to be straight ahead. Since I want to do everything well, I decided that I would write tunes that were more like standards, learn a lot of standards, learn how to play within the limitations of jazz

⁵⁴ Leslie Gourse, *Madame Jazz: Contemporary Women Instrumentalists*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 95.

⁵⁵ Lees 138.

⁵⁶ Lees, 135.

⁵⁷ Gourse, 95.

tonal progressions, get my chops up in bebop. I needed a guide. And the people that I like in those limits, straight-ahead mainstream bebop, were Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass and people like that. I pretty much copied them. I learned a new Wes Montgomery tune every day. I copied his phrasing. Above all, I copied his timing. He was unbelievable.⁵⁸

Remler states specifically here that she sought to absorb Montgomery's sense of phrasing and rhythm. We see evidence of this influence in the solo transcriptions, especially in "Blues for Herb."

When she returned to live in New York City, Remler was hired to accompany the Brazilian vocalist Astrud Gilberto and she devoted herself to studying Brazilian music.⁵⁹ She met other guitarists in the city, including John Scofield who was "a fan of her playing."⁶⁰ According to Scofield, his wife and manager Susan offered to manage Remler as her career was starting in New York, though the relationship did not materialize.

She began playing with a group which included bassist Eddie Gomez, drummer Bob Moses and trumpeter John D'Earth, focused on performing her compositions, and captured on her subsequent albums, *Transitions* (1983) and *Catwalk* (1984).⁶¹ Both albums move away from the straight-ahead sound of previous ones and reveal her Brazilian influences from her time with Gilberto. Though these albums are not her most well-known, they present Remler as an original voice in jazz composition. Drummer

⁵⁸ Lees, 138-139.

⁵⁹ West.

⁶⁰ John Scofield, interview with author, March 2, 2021.

⁶¹ These albums are not currently available on music streaming services, though they can be found on YouTube.

Bob Moses, considers this to have been an excellent group.⁶² In 1984, she was also recorded on bassist Ray Brown's album *Soular Energy*.⁶³

Remler's personal and professional lives were intertwined. She was married to pianist Monty Alexander for two and a half years, with whom she performed as well, though they would divorce in 1984.⁶⁴ Remler also recorded and toured based on a jazz guitar duo album, *Together* (1985) with guitarist Larry Coryell, best known for his jazz fusion playing. They shared a mutual love for Wes Montgomery.⁶⁵

Remler was often asked by journalists about what was it like to be a female jazz artist and instrumentalist, in particular. In a promotional interview with Larry Coryell for their *Together* album, Remler says:

"It's more like I play and then I'm reminded that I'm a woman afterwards... You're just thinking of the music and trying to be creative and the best musician you can be. It comforts me to know that people buy my records and play them on the radio because then they can't see me and they can't see that it's a woman playing. It's just traditional that for some reason people would think a woman would play softer and with not so much conviction. And I don't understand that because I think women have a lot of conviction."⁶⁶

Remler clearly had a great deal of conviction, which she shows her through her rhythmic precision and technique, defying sexist stereotypes. The way she spoke about working on her time-feel could be framed by sexism, as well: "You have to have your

⁶² Interviews with author, spring 2019.

⁶³ Miller.

⁶⁴ Gourse, 93.

⁶⁵ Sidran.

⁶⁶ Sidran.

innate sense of time, and you have to believe in yourself that your sense is correct. Especially when there's some big burly guy at the other side of the stage who doesn't like the fact that you're there anyway.'"⁶⁷ These challenges seemed to have motivated her to practice even harder.

Remler moved to Pittsburg at the end of 1986, to be an artist-in-residence at Duquesne University, taking classes and learning composition at the University of Pittsburg with (former NEC faculty) Bob Brookmeyer.⁶⁸ She had a desire to become a film composer.⁶⁹ She would later study composition with pianist Aydin Esen (an NEC alum), who would also play on her last album.

She moved back to New York City in the late 1980s, it was during this period that she recorded *East to Wes* (1988), a return to straight-ahead jazz.⁷⁰ Both the transcriptions for this project are from this album: "Blues for Herb" and "Softly, As In a Morning Sunrise."

On March 24, 1988, she returned to Berklee to perform in a jazz guitar concert at with John Scofield, John Abercrombie, and Mick Goodrick.⁷¹ She played with the rhythm section as well as a duo performance with Scofield on "Stella by Starlight." In my interviews with Berklee Guitar Department Assistant Chair Sheryl Bailey and Professor Jane Miller, who were both in attendance that night, they saw Remler's

⁶⁷ Lees, 134.

⁶⁸ West.

⁶⁹ Gourse, 93.

⁷⁰ Gourse, 93.

⁷¹ The concert can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RR7d7sblT8A>

performance as an important moment for them musically and personally, to see a female guitarist on stage, a musical equal to her male peers. Both describe her performance as riveting and possessing a great clarity in her improvisations.

Remler would also tour the country with local rhythm sections across the country and in Europe. In 1989, she would embark on her first tour of Australia. She described in interviews how traveling was exhausting for her, which may have exacerbated her substance use.⁷² She would die while on her second tour of Australia, in Sydney in 1990, nominally from a heart attack.

Her final album, *This Is Me*, was released posthumously in 1990 on Justice Records. The album was a departure from the traditional jazz on the Concord label, and featured pop-influenced production, including synthesizers (even a synth guitar), a distortion guitar solo, and ambient soundscapes. According to her friend Jane Miller, Remler saw this recording as a pivot to an entirely new phase of her musical career. It leaves the question, if Remler's career had not been tragically been cut off so early, where would this new trajectory have led her; what would more decades of Remler's music and artistry have brought?

⁷² Sidran.

Emily Remler's "Blues for Herb" Solo

Background and Analysis

Emily Remler's "Blues for Herb," from her album *East to Wes* (1988), features her alongside pianist Hank Jones, Buster Williams on bass, and Marvin "Smitty" Smith on drums. The album is a tribute to Wes Montgomery, and though "Blues for Herb" is dedicated to guitarist Herb Ellis, it also features elements of Montgomery's style. That said, it is more than an imitation, and it displays Remler's unique rhythmic language, bebop fluency and technique.

Bailey and Miller related that, as a teacher, Remler prioritized playing with good time and practicing with a metronome: for swing, setting it to represent beats 2 and 4; and beats 1 and 3 for straight-eighths and Brazilian music. Understanding the altered and lydian dominant scales and their relationship to improvising on dominant chords seems to have been a common theme as well, and we see evidence of this emphasis in Remler's solo.⁷³

On "Blues for Herb," Remler exhibits an ability to change her motivic and rhythmic ideas quickly. I chose this solo for the compelling aspects of her style she displays: 1) her use of accents, as a means to create tension and release, as well as a means to incorporate chromaticism; 2) her use of rhythmic motives, including an accelerating motive; 3) aspects in common with Montgomery's style.

⁷³ Miller and Bailey, interviews with Author.

The tempo of “Blues for Herb” is more than twice as fast as Montgomery’s “D-Natural Blues,” and Remler uses mostly eighth notes and eighth-note triplets for her phrases. She relies on blues language and pentatonic ideas throughout. Like Montgomery’s “Four on Six” solo, she takes nine choruses, but with different proportions: seven of single notes and two with octaves.

Accents

Remler’s use of accents is an important characteristic of her rhythmic conception, even more than for Montgomery. Unlike Montgomery, who uses his right-hand thumb and often uses legato techniques, Remler slurs very few of her notes—rather, she picks the majority with a plectrum.⁷⁴

Example 3-1, at the start of her second chorus, shows how she accents beats 1, 2 and 4 in measures 2-3—contrasting with mm. 5-8, where she accents “and of two” and “and of four.” Alternating the accents on the beats or upbeats allows her lines to sound inventive and less repetitive, and occurs several times during the solo. We also can see a relationship to chromaticism here too, as the accents in mm. 1-3 highlight the descending chromatic motion in the line.

⁷⁴ Incorporating picking accents was an important aspect of her teaching as well. According to guitarist Sheryl Bailey, in a lesson, Remler showed her a warm up chromatic scale exercise that specifically focuses on bringing out different accented notes. This exercise was reportedly shown to Remler by guitarist Pat Martino. Sheryl Bailey, interview with author, March 24, 2022.

Example 3-1 Remler's Accents, on the beats in mm. 1-4 and upbeats in mm. 5-8.

2

F7

Accents On The Beats

5

Bb7

F7

D7

Accents On Beats 2+ and 4+

When she plays outside the changes or implies substitute chords, she uses sequences and accents on the strong beats, such as in start of her fourth chorus, outlining a Gb (bII) triad in *Example 3-2*, m. 2. The strong accents suggest to the listener an intentional choice to leave the key. In m. 4, like Montgomery, she implies a SubV7 of IV, in this key of F, as Cb7 moving to Bb7 in bar 5.

Example 3-2 Remler's accents, emphasizing the implied Gb triad from outside the key in m.2

4

F7

(Gb)

(Cb7)

Downward Sequence - Accents Beats 1 & 3

In *Example 3-3*, m. 8, she plays outside the expected changes, accenting on the strong beats, 1 and 3, while using descending minor seventh chord arpeggios to create tension. As the solo progresses, she incorporates more triplets, and engages her fast-picking technique in mm. 10-12, playing not exactly in time, much like a fast rubato.

Example 3-3 Remler's accented minor seventh chord arpeggios outside the key in m. 8, and progressively faster rhythmic subdivisions and "fast rubato" in mm. 11-12

Accelerating Motive

Following her fast rubato lines, in *Example 3-4* she shifts gears and begins a rhythmically-defined, accelerating motive that features similar oscillating notes, with progressively faster rhythms in mm. 1-6. Again, note the descending chromatic line highlighted by the accents in bars 5-6.

Example 3-4 Remler's Accelerating Motive

Rhythmic Motives

In *Example 3-5*, at the start of her sixth chorus, Remler employs a 2-bar rhythmic motive, connecting with only the eighth note upbeats. Each version of the phrase

begins with the same descending perfect fifth and ascending through each chord, beginning on the “and of one,” and the predictability allows the rhythm section players to they build with her on each phrase – creating a rhythmic unison moment for the ensemble.

Example 3-5 Remler’s “all upbeat” 2-bar rhythmic motive

Example 3-5 shows a 2-bar rhythmic motive. The first staff starts with a circled '6' and an 'F7' chord. The melody begins with a pickup note on the 'and of one'. The second staff starts with a circled '5' and contains three measures with chords Bb7, F7, and D7. A dashed line labeled 'All Upbeats:' spans across both staves, indicating the rhythmic pattern. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accents.

Aspects in Common with Montgomery’s Style

There are a few devices she uses in her tribute to Montgomery, such as a tendency to begin her phrases with a pickup and a similar arpeggio shape, as we saw in Montgomery’s “D-Natural Blues” solo: EbMaj7 over an F7, in the pickup to her fourth chorus, in Example 3-6.

Example 3-6 Remler’s upbeat pickup to her fourth chorus of solo, using a EbMaj7 shape over F7

Example 3-6 shows a pickup to a fourth chorus. The first staff starts with a circled '9' and contains five measures with chords G-7, C7, F7, C7, and (EbMaj7). The notation includes a pickup note and various note values. The second staff starts with a circled '4' and contains four measures with chords F7, (Gb), and (Cb7). The notation includes a downward sequence of notes and accents on beats 1 and 3. The text 'Wes' Style' is written below the first staff.

In *Example 3-7*, mm. 9-12 of her fifth chorus, she also employs a voice-led rhythmic motive with the *a, a', b* “triple phrase structure,” again with her accented notes implying a descending chromatic line: D-Db-C-Cb-Bb-A.

Example 3-7 Remler’s use of “triple phrase structure”

Musical notation for Example 3-7, showing a voice-led rhythmic motive in G major. The notation is on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (F major). It starts at measure 9. The first measure (m. 9) is labeled 'a - 1 bar' and contains a quarter note G4 with an accent (^) and a quarter rest. The second measure (m. 10) is labeled 'a' - 1 bar' and contains a quarter note F#4 with an accent (^) and a quarter note E4. The third measure (m. 11) is labeled 'b - 2 bars' and contains a quarter note D4 with an accent (^) and a quarter note C4. The fourth measure (m. 12) contains a quarter note Bb4 with an accent (^) and a quarter note Ab4. Above the staff, the chords G-7, C7, F7, and C7 are indicated. A dashed line underlines the first three measures.

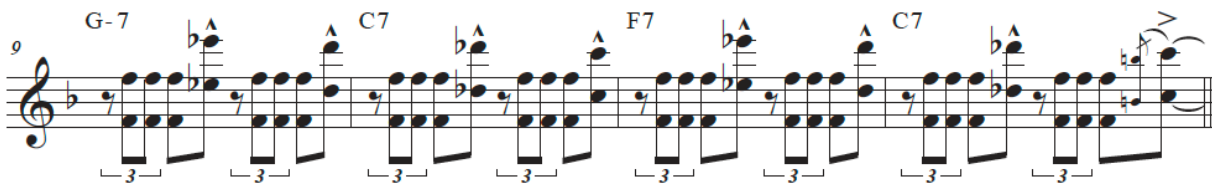
Creating tension leading up into her octave solo in her eighth chorus, she also employs a series of 3/8 cross rhythmic accents, in *Example 3-8*.

Example 3-8 Remler’s use of 3/8 cross-rhythmic accents

Musical notation for Example 3-8, showing 3/8 cross-rhythmic accents in G major. The notation is on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (F major). It starts at measure 9. The first measure (m. 9) is labeled 'G-7' and contains a quarter note G4 with an accent (>) and a quarter note F#4. The second measure (m. 10) is labeled 'C7' and contains a quarter note E4 with an accent (>) and a quarter note D4. The third measure (m. 11) is labeled 'F7' and contains a quarter note C4 with an accent (>) and a quarter note Bb4. The fourth measure (m. 12) is labeled 'C7' and contains a quarter note Ab4 with an accent (>) and a quarter note G4. A dashed line underlines the first four measures with the label '3/8 Cross Rhythms'. Below the staff, a circled number '8' indicates the start of the eighth chorus, which begins with a quarter note F#4 with an accent (>) and a quarter note E4.

Playing in octaves, in *Example 3-9*, at the end of the eighth chorus Remler uses an identical rhythmic device as on his “Four on Six” octave solo, bringing out the same accents on the “and of two” and “and of four.”

Example 3-9 Remler's octave solo, with accents on "and of two" and "and of four"



Summary

In her solo on "Blues for Herb," there are some aspects in common with Montgomery's style, but mostly we also see elements of her own style, in particular Remler's use of accents, as a means to create rhythmic vitality, and to highlight the chromaticism in her lines. She uses rhythmic motives, including an accelerating rhythmic idea, as well as "fast rubato." Picking every note makes her sound quite distinct from Montgomery as well.

Suggested Exercises, Based on Emily Remler's "Blues for Herb" Solo

Exercise #1: Accelerating Rhythms

Begin by improvising with only half note rhythms and rests. This will help connect to the half-time pulse, which is useful for playing over faster tempos. To start, solo over a vamp, blues or standard tune, at a medium tempo. With each subsequent chorus of blues or 8-bar section, accelerate by switching to lines based on dotted-quarter rhythms, followed by: quarters, quarter-note-triplets, eighth notes, eighth-note-triplets, and finally sixteenths. Then, experiment with lines that fill in the half notes and dotted-quarters with other notes, as Remler does in *Example 3-10*.

Example 3-10 Remler's Accelerating Motive on "Blues for Herb"

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff is labeled with a circled '5' and 'F7'. It contains a sequence of notes: a quarter rest, a dotted quarter note with an accent, an eighth note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter-note triplet with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, and a quarter note with an accent. A dashed line underlines the staff. The second staff is labeled with a circled '5', 'Bb7', 'F7', and 'D7'. It contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter-note triplet with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, a quarter note with an accent, and a quarter note with an accent. A dashed line underlines the staff.

Exercise #2: Accents

Practice accents in sets of two: begin by accenting beats 1 and 3, over 8 bars, followed by beats 2 and 4, 1+ and 3+, and then 2+ and 4+. On a tune, in each alternate phrase, accent on the beats, and then the upbeats. Play freely, remaining aware of your accents, mixing up their placement. A model is *Example 3-11*, from her second chorus:

Example 3-11 Remler's alternating accents, on and off the beat on "Blues for Herb"

Exercise #3: Chromatic Constant Structures

At first, with just a metronome or drum track, play a kind of melodic shape that implies a harmony, such as C-E-A-G, which implies C Major or C6. Experiment with transposing this shape to other key centers, as well as altering the notes, such as Eb to make it minor, or Ab to make it imply harmonic major. Stay conscious of your accents – accenting on the strong beats will create a confident, intentional sound, while accenting on the upbeat will create more rhythmic tension.

Also, experiment with arpeggios of seventh chords of different qualities. See Example 3-12 below, in mm. 7-9 where Remler transforms an Eb Maj7 arpeggio and shifts it to Eb-7, Bb-7, to G-7 or Bb6.

Example 3-12 Remler's chromatic constant structures on "Blues for Herb"

Emily Remler's "Softly, As In a Morning Sunrise" Solo

Background

Emily Remler's arrangement of Romberg and Hammerstein's "Softly, As In a Morning Sunrise" has several interesting characteristics. While the song is often performed in C minor, Remler transposes it to E minor, taking advantage of the guitar's open E and B strings and their natural harmonics, which she uses to play the melody. She also reharmonizes the melody using chords from E minor as well as chords borrowed from E major and E phrygian, such as FMaj7. The shifts in harmonic colors are also reflected in the dynamics, which swell during the introduction and A sections of the melody.

She improvises over the same harmonic structure for the opening chorus of her solo, and then switches to the traditional chord changes, which mostly revolve around E minor for the A sections, retaining the AABA song form structure. In the second chorus, the band stays with 4/4 swing for the remainder of her four choruses. The accompaniment is reminiscent of "Moanin'" by Bobby Timmons (as played by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers), but faster, at 142 bpm.

"Softly" Solo Analysis

Of the six solos I transcribed, Remler's solo on "Softly" is perhaps the most virtuosic, in terms of speed and quantity of notes. We hear style traits in common from "Blues for Herb," such as her use of accelerating motives, and accents in her lines that

often bring out beats 2 and 4. Compared to “Blues for Herb,” the slower tempo allows her to use a wider variety of rhythmic subdivisions. What makes her solo especially virtuosic is the fluid manner in which she moves between these subdivisions, particularly double-time sixteenths and eighth-note-triplet-based rhythms. It is her use of these triplet rhythms that stands out among the solo transcriptions for this project.

Eighth-Note Triplet Groups

Remler uses rhythms based on eighth-note triplets in groups of 2, 3, 4, and even 5 at a time, including her use of accents. For example, she opens her solo with a quarter-note triplet rhythm, which is a grouping of two eighth-note triplets at a time. She includes more eighth-note triplets as the phrase progresses in mm. 2-3, in *Example 3-13*.

Example 3-13 Remler’s groupings of 2 eighth-note triplets on “Softly”

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major. The first staff starts at measure 22 and includes chords: CMaj7, B-7, A-9, G6, F#-11, FMaj7, and E-11. It features a quarter-note triplet (two eighth-note triplets) and a quarter-note triplet. The second staff starts at measure 23 and includes chords: E-7, FMaj7(#11), F#-11, G6, A-9, B-7, CMaj7, and C#-11. It features a quarter-note triplet, a quarter-note triplet, and a quarter-note triplet. A circled '1' is placed at the beginning of the second staff. The word 'Solo:' is written above the second staff.

Another way of grouping two triplets at a time is heard when she begins on the second triplet, as in m. 3 of her second chorus, in *Example 3-14*. Note that swing eighth notes are commonly interpreted at this tempo as a quarter-note triplet plus an eighth-note triplet.

Example 3-14 Remler's uses displaced quarter-note triplets in m. 3, on "Softly"

Using an accelerating motive in *Example 3-15* in her first chorus, mm. 25-28, she turns the rhythm in m. 25 into an alternating triplet figure, accenting on every two triplets, complemented with crescendos and decrescendos.

Example 3-15 Remler accenting every 2 eighth-note triplets, on "Softly"

To highlight triplet groupings in sets of 3, Remler accents on the beats to create stability, or on subsequent upbeats to create tension, as she does here in *Example 3-16*, in the last chorus of her solo, mm. 25-27.

Example 3-16 Remler accenting every 3 eighth-note triplets, emphasizing upbeats, on "Softly"

Groups of 4

Groups of four eighth-note triplets are equal in total to a half-note triplet, and create a polyrhythmic cycle of 3 against 4. In *Example 3-17*, in her third chorus, she

creates this cycle through her use of accents. She begins the cycle on beat 2, which emphasizes that beat along with the second triplet of beat 3 and “and of four,” starting in m. 14.

Example 3-17 Remler accents every 4 eighth-note triplets, creating a poly-rhythmic cycle

Groups of 4 and 5

One of her most unique rhythmic ideas is in *Example 3-18*, at the end of her third chorus, in mm. 28-30. It is essentially a 3/4 rhythm, split up into two dotted quarters. Because in swing the eighth notes are unequal, each dotted quarter is split into 4 and 5 triplets respectively, for a total of 9. In the pickup to m. 28, Remler begins on the “and of 4” and a group of 4 triplets. The accents are further brought out by the contour of the lines.

Example 3-18 Remler using groups of 4 and 5 eighth-note triplets

Five Sixteenths (2+3)

She saves a sixteenth-note rhythmic device for the climax of her solo in *Example 3-19*, in her fourth chorus, mm. 10-12. We see a grouping of 2 and 3 sixteenths, equivalent to an eighth note and dotted eighth note.

Example 3-19 Remler accents every 2 and 3 sixteenth notes for the climax on “Softly”

9 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7
11 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7
Groups of 5 (2 + 3) 16ths

Upper Structure Triads

For the most part, Remler’s phrases in this solo stay within the changes. However, there are moments where she superimposes triads on dominant chords to create colorful effects, particularly on the B sections, on the second chord, E7, in mm. 19-20. In *Example 3-20*, in her first chorus, she implies an E altered scale: E F G G# Bb C D (a mode of F melodic minor).

Example 3-20 Remler uses the altered scale over E7 in mm. 19-20, on “Softly”

17 GMaj7 E7
Swing

In *Example 3-21*, in her third chorus, she further explores the E altered sound by using an upper structure Bb triad (contained in the scale) in mm. 19-20, motivically linked and voice-led to an Ab triad, and resolving to an E minor triad in m. 21.

Example 3-21 Remler uses triads from the E altered scale over E7 in mm. 19-20, on “Softly”

In *Example 3-22*, from her fourth chorus, she uses a Db (or C#) triad, bringing out the color of the E half-whole diminished (octatonic) scale: E F G G# A# B C# D.

Example 3-22 Remler uses triads from the octatonic scale over E7 in mm. 19-20, on “Softly”

Summary

The stylistic rhythmic ideas on display in Remler’s solo are based on her distinct groupings of eighth-note triplets, and virtuosic, double-time sixteenth-notes lines. The overall effect is of control, especially in the pacing of the solo, which builds up in energy through shifting rhythmic gears, and creates a clarity of narrative.

Suggested Exercises - Emily Remler's "Softly, As In a Morning Sunrise" Solo

Exercise #1: Crescendos and Decrescendos

While improvising over a groove, focus on maintaining a constant subdivision in your lines while also incorporating shifting dynamics. This could be over the course of a few measures or a few beats. Keep Remler's *Example 3-23* in mind, where she maintains triplets, and uses dynamics during her first chorus of solo.

Example 3-23 Remler's constant triplets with crescendos and decrescendos, on "Softly"

Musical notation for Example 3-23. The staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature is 2/4. The piece is in 2/4 time. The notation shows a sequence of triplets starting at measure 25. Above the staff, the following chords are indicated: E-7, FMaj7(#11), F#11, G6, A-9, B-7, CMaj7, and C#11. The triplets are marked with accents (>) and dynamic markings: a crescendo (>>>) under the first triplet, a decrescendo (<<<) under the second triplet, a crescendo (>>>) under the third triplet, a decrescendo (<<<) under the fourth triplet, and a crescendo (>>>) under the fifth triplet. The notation includes a measure rest for the first measure of the example.

Exercise #2: Accenting Beats 2 and 4

Accenting beats 2 and 4 helps to lock in with the drums and emphasize the back-beat quality of your lines. It often works best when alternating with lines that feature upbeat accents as well. For context, see *Example 3-24*, in mm. 5-8 from her first chorus:

Example 3-24 Remler accents on beats 2 and 4, on "Softly"

Musical notation for Example 3-24. The staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation shows a sequence of notes with accents (>) on beats 2 and 4 of each measure. Above the staff, the following chords are indicated: CMaj7, B-7, A-9, G6, F#11, FMaj7, and E-11. The notation includes a measure rest for the first measure of the example and a triplet of eighth notes in the fifth measure.

Exercise #3: Remler's Rhythms as Inspired Rhythmic Motives

Select an idea from her solo that lasts a measure or so and use it over a different piece or groove. There are many rhythmic moments to choose from in this solo. Here is an example from her second chorus, with two triplet-based ideas: in *Example 3-25*, mm. 5-6, and mm. 7-8, where Remler uses accents on beats 2 and 4.

Example 3-25 Remler's example triplet rhythms, on "Softly"

Musical notation for Example 3-25, showing a melodic line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes two measures of triplet rhythms. The first measure (mm. 5-6) features a triplet of eighth notes on beats 1, 2, and 3, with an accent on the second eighth note. The second measure (mm. 7-8) features a triplet of eighth notes on beats 1, 2, and 3, with an accent on the second eighth note. Chord symbols above the staff are E-7, F#m7(b5), B7, E-7, F#m7(b5), and B7. The tempo is marked as mm. (measures).

And another example: the sixteenth-note rhythmic device for the climax of her solo in *Example 3-26*, from her fourth chorus, in mm. 10-12.

Example 3-26 Remler's example sixteenth-note rhythms in groups of 5, on "Softly"

Musical notation for Example 3-26, showing a melodic line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes two measures of sixteenth-note rhythms. The first measure (mm. 10-11) features a group of five sixteenth notes (two eighth notes followed by three sixteenth notes) on beats 1, 2, and 3, with an accent on the second eighth note. The second measure (mm. 11-12) features a group of five sixteenth notes (two eighth notes followed by three sixteenth notes) on beats 1, 2, and 3, with an accent on the second eighth note. Chord symbols above the staff are E-7, F#m7(b5), and B7. The tempo is marked as mm. (measures). A dashed line below the staff indicates the grouping of five (2 + 3) sixteenth notes.

The notes and rhythmic device together are recognizable as a "lick." But to make it less recognizable as such, it is better to practice just the rhythms. We can see it simplified as groups of 2 and 3 sixteenths, or an eighth and dotted-eighth.

Exercise #4: Triplet Rhythms, in Groups of 2, 3, 4 and 5

First, develop your inner hearing by counting eighth-note triplets, while using a metronome or drum track in 4/4, around 70-80 bpm to start. Counting systems could be “1-trip-let, 2-trip-let, 3-trip-let, 4-trip-let,” or “1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3,” for example, though there are other possibilities.

Clap on each beat to start. Then, while maintaining the same subdivision, try counting different groups of triplets, starting with “1-2,” then “1-2-3,” “1-2-3-4” and “1-2-3-4-5.” Clap each time you say “1.” You can return to the 4 groups of “1-2-3” periodically to lock into the triplet subdivision again. For advanced students, begin starting the counting cycles on the second and third triplets of beat one.

Improvise with your instrument using the same steps. As you internalize the groupings, speed up the tempo and implement these cycles over a tune. And finally, improvise freely while locking into the triplet groove and trying different groupings of 2, 3, 4 and even 5.

Advanced Exercise: A New Solo, with Remler’s Rhythms

Write a new solo using the rhythms from Remler’s first chorus. This can serve as etude that assists you to hear the rhythms but in a new context. It works well to choose a piece in a similar tempo. *Example 3-27* is an example I wrote over Benny Golson’s “Whisper Not.”

Example 3-27 Remler's "Softly" solo rhythms over "Whisper Not" chord changes

Emily Remler's "Softly" Solo Rhythms

Over "Whisper Not"

Benny Golson

Trans. Nick Grondin

Medium Swing ♩ = 120

A C-7 /B \flat Am7(b5) D7 G- /F Em7(b5) A7

B C-7 /B \flat Am7(b5) D7 G- /F Em7(b5) A7

C Am7(b5) D7 G-7 C7

D C-7 /B \flat Am7(b5) D7 G- /F Em7(b5) A7

Chord changes for Section C: Em7(b5), A13(b9), Dm7(b5), G13(b9)

Chord changes for Section D: D-, Bm7(b5), E-7, A7, D-7, A \flat 7, G7

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Chapter 4 - John Scofield

John Scofield Short Biography

Guitarist John Scofield (b. 1951), has been active in the jazz scene since the 1970s, first recording and performing with the Billy Cobham/George Duke Band, and later with Miles Davis's group in the 1980s. He is one of the most-recognized guitarists of the last half-century. Scofield mixes the 1960s postbop jazz language with bebop (Charlie Parker, for example), and the language of blues and rock guitarists such as B.B. King, Albert King and Jimi Hendrix, as well as incorporating elements of funk music.

A generation after Montgomery and the same as Emily Remler, John Scofield was born in Ohio, and he grew up in Connecticut. He played in rock bands as a teenager and would take the train into New York City to hear concerts, including blues musicians such as Buddy Guy with Junior Wells, Albert King, B.B. King, Otis Rush and Eric Clapton. After seeing an impactful performance by Jimi Hendrix at Fordham University, Scofield concluded that if Hendrix was the foremost guitarist in rock, Scofield would focus instead on playing jazz.⁷⁵

He enrolled at Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA in 1970 where teachers Gary Burton, Steve Swallow and Alan Dawson mentored and later hired Scofield.⁷⁶ He would play often with vibraphonist Gary Burton, who in particular, helped him with connecting scales and arpeggios. During this time, he practiced phrases lifted from recordings of solos, and seeing how they could work over different harmonies.

⁷⁵ Scofield, interview with author, March 2, 2021.

⁷⁶ Called "Berklee School of Music" at the time.

He recalls he did transcribe an entire John Coltrane solo on *Coltrane Plays the Blues*, but never really tried to play it.⁷⁷ He attended Berklee for two years and then performed around Boston for another year.

His teacher Alan Dawson connected Scofield with saxophonist Gerry Mulligan, with whom Scofield would make his recording debut, in a live recording at Carnegie Hall that also featured trumpeter Chet Baker. Scofield moved to New York in this period and was hired to play with drummer Billy Cobham's jazz-fusion group in January 1975, replacing guitarist John Abercrombie. In addition to Cobham's band and forming his own projects, he played a great deal with saxophonist Dave Liebman, with whom he was playing the night he met Miles Davis.

In the 80s, when Davis sought to incorporate blues and rock guitar playing into his group's sound, he hired Scofield. Davis was comfortable playing with Scofield not only for John's expertise in playing blues but also because of his jazz background as well.⁷⁸ Scofield and fellow Berklee alum guitarist Mike Stern both played on Davis' 1983 recording *Star People*, and Scofield also provided compositional material for Davis' albums, while he was in the band from 1982-1986.

Joining Davis' band brought a new spotlight on Scofield. While performing with the group, he established his own career, recording his album *Still Warm* (1986), which reflected a combination of his post-bop and free jazz, blues and rock influences. In a 2013 interview, he reflects back on these influences and the guitarists of his generation:

⁷⁷ Scofield, interview with author, March 2, 2021.

⁷⁸ Miles Davis, and Quincy Troupe. *Miles, the Autobiography*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 354.

I think right from the beginning I was lucky because people my age that were into jazz, like me and Pat Metheny, Bill Frisell, and John Abercrombie just before us – we were influenced by rock guitar playing but wanted to play jazz...I found a voice and so did those other guys, using elements of rock music but in a jazz-like thing...It came from that and also from listening to saxophonists and trumpet players, and playing lines from '60s jazz: Coltrane and Miles Davis' group in the 60s, more free music – listening to Ornette Coleman and Paul Bley. Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Joe Henderson – I love that music and listened to that music a lot and transcribed things from them.⁷⁹

Scofield describes the way his generation of guitarists naturally mixed the sounds of 1960s rock music with jazz, including the specific influences of the 1960s post-bop and free jazz icons, such as John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, and Wayne Shorter, Coleman, Bley, and Joe Henderson, with whom he would later record.

The full scope of Scofield's almost fifty-year musical career cannot be captured in the context of this project, though I will suggest some of his notable recordings below.

Following *Still Warm*, John Scofield released many significant albums and projects, including:

- *Blue Matter* (1986) and *Loud Jazz* (1987) with drummer Dennis Chambers and bassist Gary Grainger
- Projects with Saxophonist Joe Lovano, *Time on My Hands* (1990), *What We Do* (1993); and *Grace Under Pressure* (1992), with guitarist Bill Frisell
- *Hand Jive* (1993) with organist Larry Goldings, saxophonist Eddie Harris and Bill Stewart on drums.
- *I Can See Your House from Here* (1994), with Pat Metheny
- *A Go Go* (1997), with John Medeski, Billy Martin, and Chris Wood
- *Uberjam* (2002), jazz-funk, and follow up *Uberjam Deux* (2013)

⁷⁹ Jan Bertil Pool, interview with Scofield on March 17, 2013. "John Scofield interview with Poolguitarblog," accessed Nov. 29, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-KpxtleM5w&feature=youtu.be>

- *EnRoute: John Scofield Trio Live* (2004) with his longtime trio with bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bill Stewart
- *A Moment's Peace* (2011) with Goldings, bassist Scott Colley and drummer Brian Blade
- *Past Present* (2015), reuniting with Joe Lovano, and winning a Grammy Award for Best Jazz Instrumental Album
- *Country for Old Men* (2016)
- *Combo 66* (2018)
- *Swallow Tales* (2020), with Steve Swallow, and Bill Stewart
- *John Scofield* (2022), solo guitar recording, with looper. It was recorded during the pandemic while at home in Upstate NY.

Recently, after the resuming of concerts after the pandemic lockdown in 2021, he has been touring as solo guitar and as a duo with bassist Dave Holland. Since 2022, he has been performing with a project called “Yankee Go Home,” with pianist John Cowherd, bassist Vincente Archer and drummer Josh Dion.

In 2022, director Joerg Steineck released *Inside Scofield*, a documentary film about the guitarist that captures elements of his career, relationships with musicians such as Pat Metheny and Joe Lovano, and life on tour after the release of his *Combo 66* album.⁸⁰

⁸⁰Joerg Steineck, dir. *Inside Scofield*, 2022; Berlin, Germany: Self-Released on Vimeo: <https://scofield.joerg-steineck.com>.

John Scofield's "Do Like Eddie" Solo

Background

In our interview, Scofield reflected on his approach to chromatic playing: "It comes from modern jazz from the 1960s, and from before with Charlie Parker and bebop, Dizzy Gillespie and Bud Powell." He transcribed Davis' solos, such on *Bitches Brew*, which was the first Davis album Scofield purchased, and later he especially listened in depth to the albums *ESP*, and *The Sorcerer*. "I loved Miles' Jazz Rock solos and I realized he would play very chromatically sometimes. I started to transcribe parts of Miles Davis' stuff from records and I realized how much he used it."⁸¹ Davis' approach to using chromaticism was an important influence for Scofield.

In a *JazzTimes Magazine* interview, Scofield mentions Eddie Harris' piece "Freedom Jazz Dance" as an inspiration for "Do Like Eddie," as he recounts an experience playing in New Orleans that led him towards his personal style that blends elements of jazz and funk music.

So they brought me down to play a little gig with this local rhythm section, drummer Johnny Vidacovich and bassist Jim Singleton, and man, those guys could just play any funk tune, any 'Freedom Jazz Dance,' any groove tune that you wanted to call, like 'Mercy, Mercy, Mercy' or 'Watermelon Man' and put that funky New Orleans beat to it, and that was it for me because it was what I had always been looking for: funk that swung... Bill Stewart is great at playing that way, too. I mean, there's a groove he made on a record I did called Hand Jive on a tune called "Do Like Eddie" and to me that is very New Orleans.

⁸¹ Scofield, interview with author, March 2, 2021.

Scofield explains how he found a way to combine jazz and funk influences by drawing on funky, swing-influenced music that also originated New Orleans. And in pieces largely based in a funk style, Scofield finds a way to include elements from jazz: “And while it feels good to funk-out all night long and have that be a thing, you come up with the challenge of how to make that creative.”⁸² To make it creative, Scofield includes elements such as chromatic and rhythmic approaches influenced by Miles Davis, which Scofield explained in a 2020 interview:

To develop a comprehensive style of playing over a vamp – Miles was completely into that. All those guys coming from free jazz and free-er jazz the way Miles played in the ‘60s – Miles kept that chromatic approach in his music in the ‘80s and ‘70s and had developed that. And I was influenced by that and all the tenor players and everything.⁸³

Scofield makes the connection between his phrasing and Miles Davis’ “chromatic” approach to improvisation over a vamp. For example, in Scofield’s piece “Do Like Eddie,” we see similarities to Davis’ chromatic approach to soloing over a static harmony from Davis’ version of “Freedom Jazz Dance” (*Miles Smiles*, 1967), originally composed by Eddie Harris – the same Eddie Harris who plays saxophone on “Do Like Eddie.”

⁸² Interview with Chip Stern, 2000, “Will the Real John Scofield Please Stand Up?” *JazzTimes*, vol. 31, Issue 2., updated May 31, 2019. Accessed 12.5.20.

<https://jazztimes.com/archives/john-scofield-will-the-real-john-scofield-please-stand-up/>

⁸³ John Scofield, and New West Guitar Group, “Interview with John Scofield,” Aug. 2020, High Action Podcast, accessed 11.28.20.

Analysis

John Scofield's "Do Like Eddie" from *Hand Jive* (1993) features a static harmony of Bb7 over an extended New Orleans-influenced second line groove. I selected this solo for the way it displays Scofield's use of blues-based language, space between phrases, "side-slipping" and substitute scales, such as octatonic scales, and references to the original theme.

Scofield exhibits control of blues language, including bending strings to achieve blue notes in between major and minor third, as well as the sixth and flat seventh scale degrees. He integrates these with chromatic strategies that include octatonic scale ideas, chains of perfect fourth intervals, chromatic approach notes and passing tones. Scofield sets up a pattern where he first establishes himself in the key using clear "inside" blues language, stretches outside the key and then returns squarely to the key via blues phrases. He also takes advantage of blues articulations such as legato techniques, slides and trills.

Though the solos are over a vamp without a prescribed form, Scofield and the rhythm section maintain the 8 and 16 bar phrase structure traditionally heard in jazz pieces. Scofield generally presents new ideas in each new 16-bar sections. In *Example 4-1*, in the first 16-bar section, he establishes a conversational tone by playing the last few notes of each phrase a bit softer, and using blues articulations like bending strings and hammering-on from minor to major thirds (C# to D). Like Davis' sparse solo phrasing (such as on his piece "So What," and version of "Freedom Jazz Dance"), Scofield leaves ample temporal space between phrases.

Example 4-1 John Scofield's use of blues articulations and space between phrases on "Do Like Eddie," mm. 1-8



Without specific harmonic changes to follow, Scofield focuses on being rhythmically motivic. For example, in *Example 4-2*, he uses a 3-beat, displaced rhythmic pattern, which also leads to an instance of *a, a', b* "triple phrase structure." He also uses the full range of the guitar and moves freely between registers, sometimes in the space of one measure (m. 65).

Example 4-2 John Scofield's use of 3-beat, displaced rhythmic patterns on "Do Like Eddie," mm. 57-65



Octatonic Scales and "Side-Slipping"

He begins stepping out of the principal sonority (Bb mixolydian) by including notes from the octatonic scale, also called "half-whole" diminished: Bb, Cb, Db, D, E, F,

G, Ab. In *Example 4-3*, from the middle of his solo, Scofield uses octatonic choices in mm. 71-72, and changes his approach in mm. 72-73 to include notes from the A major scale, down a semitone – an approach referred to as “side-slipping” – and resolves back to Bb in m. 75.

Example 4-3 John Scofield's use of Octatonic, and Side-Slipping on "Do Like Eddie," mm. 70-77

In *Example 4-4*, Scofield combines an octatonic-based intervallic shape, moving it up and down by semitones, all while giving the effect of a displaced rhythm by placing his accents on and off the beat in each subsequent phrase.

Example 4-4 John Scofield's use of octatonic-based intervallic shapes on "Do Like Eddie," mm. 78-85

As the solo progresses, Scofield steps out of the key a bit further each time, increasing in dissonance, which creates a narrative arc to the solo. Towards the end of the solo, in *Example 4-5*, he begins with the octatonic scale in m. 118, and resolves back to the key with Bb minor pentatonic in mm. 119. In mm. 121, he begins introducing melodic ideas that escape the key again, this time via stacked perfect fourth intervals (B-E-A, intervals also heard in the melody to “Freedom Jazz Dance”). He pushes the harmonic tension yet further by using notes from D major/lydian in mm. 122-23 before returning yet again to Bb in m. 125.

Example 4-5 John Scofield’s use of stacked Perfect 4ths and implied D Major to play “outside” on “Do Like Eddie,” mm. 118-125

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff begins at measure 118 and features a sequence of notes with various accidentals, including a trill-like figure. Above the staff, the text "P4ths, A Major" is written. The second staff begins at measure 122 and contains a triplet of notes followed by other melodic phrases. Below this staff, the text "D Major/Lydian" is written under the first part and "Back to Bb" is written under the second part.

Summary

His solo on “Do Like Eddie” exhibits Scofield’s control of tension and release, using blues-based language, including blue notes and bends, temporal space between phrases, “side-slipping” and octatonic scales. He reveals his early blues and rock influences, in combination with chromaticism techniques, related to his time transcribing and later performing with Miles Davis.

Suggested Exercises Based on John Scofield's "Do Like Eddie" Solo

Exercise #1: Three-Beat Motive Over 4/4

Over a groove in 4/4, improvise a 3-beat motive, beginning on beat one and repeating the rhythm every 3 beats, as Scofield does in *Example 4-6*. The notes can vary to fit the harmonic situation or chord changes. Try beginning on each beat (1, 2, 3, 4) as well as the upbeats or "ands" of each beat as well.

Example 4-6 Scofield's 3-beat motive on "Do Like Eddie"

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time, starting at measure 57. It features a series of 3-beat rhythmic motives. The first measure shows a quarter rest followed by a dotted quarter note, an eighth note, and a quarter note. This pattern is repeated every three beats. The notes are primarily eighth and quarter notes, with some accents and slurs. A dashed line above the staff is labeled "3-Beat Rhythms".

Exercise #2: Chromatic Shape with Rhythmic Displacement

Over a drum loop, take a 3-5 note motive with fixed shape, begin phrases on alternating beats and upbeats. Also, move it chromatically down and up, while displacing the rhythm, as Scofield does in *Example 4-7*.

Example 4-7 Scofield's rhythmically-displaced chromatic shape on "Do Like Eddie"

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff starts at measure 78 and shows a 3-5 note motive with a fixed shape, beginning on alternating beats and upbeats. The notes are primarily eighth and quarter notes, with some accents and slurs. A dashed line above the staff is labeled "Octatonic". The second staff starts at measure 82 and shows the same 3-5 note motive, but with the shape moved up and down chromatically. A dashed line below the staff is labeled "Moving the Shape Up/Down Chromatically".

Exercise #3: Motivic Register Jumping, “Low - Mid - High”

Electric guitars typically have 3 ½ - 4 octaves in range of available notes, which allows for generally three registers of any given scale: low, mid and high. Create a short motive, and repeat it in at least two other octaves of your instrument. As jumping becomes more comfortable, try varying the motive and eventually creating a cross-registrar call and response. Experiment with the order of placement: low-mid-high, low-high-mid, mid-low-high, mid-high-low, high-mid-low, high-low-mid. Consider Scofield’s registral shifts in *Example 4-8*, in mm. 50-52.

Example 4-8 Scofield’s Registral Shifts on “Do Like Eddie,” mm. 50-52

The image displays musical notation for Example 4-8, illustrating Scofield's registral shifts. The notation is in G minor (one flat) and 12/8 time. Measure 48 is labeled "Low Range" and shows a melodic line starting on a low register. Measures 50-52 show a shift to a higher register, with triplets and a 1/2 note rest. Measure 53 shows a return to a lower register with triplets.

Exercise #4: Leaving Space

Scofield begins his solo with two-bar phrases, and often leaves approximately one bar of space between. For three and four-bar phrases, he often leaves two bars of space between. Over a vamp, blues or standard form, improvise a two-bar phrase, and leave about one bar of space between each. As this becomes natural, play 3-4 bar phrases with 2 bars of rest in between, and using pickups as well. See the “Do Like Eddie” solo transcription in the appendix for reference.

John Scofield's "If" Blues Solo

Background

This John Scofield recording of Joe Henderson's blues "If" is from a live performance in Burghausen, Germany on March 14, 2013.⁸⁴ It is a rare Scofield "organ trio" performance, with longtime collaborator Larry Goldings on Hammond B3 organ and Greg Hutchinson on drums. The John Scofield Organic Trio captures the syncopated melody of "If," followed by solos over an F blues.⁸⁵

In addition to Henderson's sextet version of "If," Scofield's performance may also be influenced by John Coltrane's "Chasin' the Trane" performance from *Live at the Village Vanguard* (1962). In an interview, Scofield describes how he would turn off the left side of the stereo "Chasin' the Trane" recording and practice soloing along with the bass and drums, which were mixed onto the right side (Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones, respectively): "I would take licks off, and I would think about the overall shape of it and rhythm of it. I would hear things that he was doing and I could get an idea of the concept. And I still do that."⁸⁶ Scofield describes how he learned and internalized Coltrane's short phrases and motives from this recording.

Like Henderson and Coltrane, Scofield takes a generally motivic approach to soloing over this F blues, and all three versions of F blues are roughly a similar

⁸⁴ During the 44th Internationale Jazzwoche. The recording is not available commercially to my knowledge, but is on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/f-CNMqLc1g4>. Accessed Jan 17, 2022.

⁸⁵ From Henderson's 1967 album, *The Kicker*.

⁸⁶ Ross James and John Scofield, "Songs that Saved Me" Podcast. May 18, 2020.

medium-fast swing tempo. But in contrast to the other two, Scofield’s version relies more on relating to traditional jazz blues chord changes. He incorporates elements of bebop, such as from Charlie Parker and his piece “Blues for Alice” – even quoting its melody in *Example 4-9*, in his tenth chorus of solo.

Example 4-9 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 10, mm. 5-12. Scofield quotes Parker's "Blues for Alice" in mm. 8-10.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef, key of B-flat major. The first staff begins at measure 5 with a Bb7 chord. It features a melodic line with various articulations (accents, slurs) and chromaticism. A dashed line indicates a quote of Charlie Parker's "Blues for Alice" starting at measure 8, which includes a D7 (Ab-7) chord. The second staff begins at measure 9 with a G-7 chord and continues with a melodic line featuring slurs, accents, and chromaticism, with a 1/4 note indicated. Chords G-7, C7, F7, and C7 are marked above the staff.

“If” Solo Analysis

“If” is an excellent example of how Scofield synthesizes modern and traditional ways of playing jazz blues, and adapting them to the guitar in his own way. What characterizes his style on this solo are: 1) his uses of articulations to create emphasis and swing, including the use of accents and legato playing; 2) his use of rhythmic motives; and 3) his approaches to chromaticism, harmonic substitution and extending dominant chords.

Articulations and Accents

In our interview, Scofield explained how using legato techniques allows him to play faster and more fluidly – as compared with picking every note – and the occasional

points of emphasis from picked notes give a vocal quality to his lines.⁸⁷ This method includes the many ways Scofield articulates his notes, and legato techniques on guitar, such as hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides and bends.

In his thesis on Scofield, Daniel Pinilla Vera talks about how these techniques also give his guitar a “horn-like phrasing,” which reflects the Scofield’s influences by saxophonists such as Charlie Parker, as well as guitarists influenced by Parker, such as Jimmy Raney and others.⁸⁸ This bebop articulation style can be seen in the way that Scofield picks and accents the upbeats of his eighth note-based lines, while slurring to the downbeats, most often with pull-offs when descending, and hammer-ons when ascending. *Example 4-10* is one of many possible examples of this articulation style during the solo.

Example 4-10 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 10, mm. 1-4. Scofield picks on the upbeats and slurs to the beats.

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The tempo is marked as '10'. The staff contains a sequence of eighth notes with slurs and accents. Above the staff, chord symbols are written: F7, (D7), (G-7), (C7), and (B7). Below the staff, a dashed line indicates 'Slurs to Beats - Bringing Out the Upbeats'. The notation includes various articulations such as slurs, accents, and slurs to beats.

At this fast-swing tempo, around 240 bpm, this technique also allows him to “play good time, in a relaxed way,” which describes his time-feel here.⁸⁹ And at this

⁸⁷ Scofield, interview with author, March 3, 2021. This was something he heard in Jim Hall’s playing and observed Mick Goodrick do when Scofield came to Berklee in Boston.

⁸⁸ Pinilla Vera, p. 45 and p. 98.

⁸⁹ Scofield, interview with author, 3.2.21.

speed, rather than swinging with a triplet-based feel, his eighth notes are actually closer to straight, sometimes called “rounded eighths.”

To balance the rhythmic tension generated by the syncopated accents, Scofield places accents on beats 1 and 3 to create a sense of stability and clarity. This contributes to the relaxed quality of his time-feel by connecting to the half-note pulse. He tends to do this in the first half of the chorus. *Example 4-11* is an illustration, from his third chorus of solo.

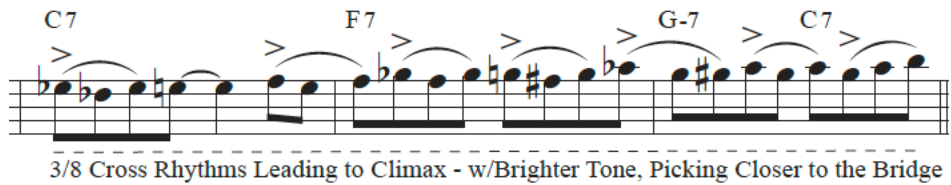
Example 4-11 John Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 3, mm. 1-8, lines with accents on beats 1 and 3 in mm. 3-5.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The first staff begins with a circled number '3' and a chord symbol 'F7'. It contains measures 3, 4, and 5. Measure 3 has accents on the first and third eighth notes. Measure 4 has accents on the first and third eighth notes. Measure 5 has accents on the first and third eighth notes. The second staff begins with a circled number '5' and contains measures 5, 6, 7, and 8. Measure 5 has a chord symbol 'Bb7' and accents on the first and third eighth notes. Measure 6 has a chord symbol 'F7' and accents on the first and third eighth notes. Measure 7 has a chord symbol 'D7' and accents on the first and third eighth notes. Measure 8 has accents on the first and third eighth notes.

Accents on beats 1 and 3 also have the effect of resolving not just rhythmic tension, but also the melodic tension generated by chromatic note choices.

In this solo, Scofield tends to build tension and momentum with typically longer lines during the second half of the chorus. Like Montgomery’s “Four on Six” solo, Scofield brings out dotted-quarter cross rhythms towards the end of his solo while building to a climax. In *Example 4-12*, at the end of chorus 14, he accents every three eighth notes.

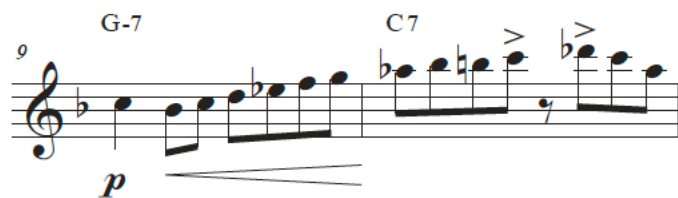
Example 4-12 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 14, mm. 10-12. Scofield uses cross rhythms to lead to the climax of his solo.



Scofield further exaggerates the effect of the accents by picking closer to the bridge of the guitar, thus changing to a brighter timbre. This technique also allows him to balance the way his guitar strings project. For example, he often picks near the bridge of the guitar to help bring out the notes on the low strings, thus making them “speak” – a bluesy effect which is one of the recognizable timbral qualities of his sound.

In addition to adjusting his timbre, Scofield also adjusts dynamics with his picking, which creates a lyrical quality. In *Example 4-13*, mm. 9-10 of the first chorus, he plays an ascending line, with a crescendo.

Example 4-13 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 1, mm. 9-10. Scofield uses a crescendo as his line ascends



Finally, in *Example 4-14*, in his last chorus, he builds his solo to a climax by using vibrato and pick accents to amplify the intensity of the held, high register notes, and contrasting them with staccato notes at the end of the phrase.

Example 4-14 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 16, mm. 1-4. Scofield uses vibrato, accents and staccato notes during the climax of his solo.

These ways of articulating such as bends and vibrato are different from Montgomery and Remler, and are more related to the traditional blues guitarists Scofield listened to in his youth.

Phrasing

Like in Montgomery's "Four on Six" solo, Scofield often starts a new melodic idea at the top of each chorus in his "If" solo. He mixes short and long phrases: each new and relatively concise idea typically spans the first half of the chorus, followed by longer lines in the second half. In Example 4-15 at the end of chorus 7, features another dotted-quarter cross-rhythm, and Scofield resolves the rhythmic tension at the start of chorus 8, accenting single notes on beat 1 in the first 2 bars.

Example 4-15 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 7, mm. 9-12 – Chorus 8, mm. 1-4. Dotted-quarter cross-rhythms

Example 4-15, at the start of chorus 8, is also an example of the same a-a'-b "triple phrase structure" used in Montgomery and Remler's solos, though Scofield uses it less frequently, by comparison.

Scofield's use of rhythmic motives also serves to balance melodic tension and long phrases. In Example 4-16, the long, syncopated phrase at the end of his fifth chorus is balanced by the motivic playing in his sixth chorus, as he develops the half-step bend idea (G to Ab) from m. 5 of chorus 5.

Example 4-16 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 5, mm. 5-12 – Chorus 6, mm. 1-8. Long, syncopated phrases followed by motivic playing, based on a motive in Chorus 5, bar 5.

The musical score consists of four staves of music. The first staff (measures 5-8) shows the beginning of Chorus 5 with a syncopated phrase. The second staff (measures 9-12) continues Chorus 5. The third staff (measures 1-4) shows the beginning of Chorus 6, featuring a half-step bend (1/2) and a triplet (3). The fourth staff (measures 5-8) continues Chorus 6, also featuring a half-step bend (1/2) and a triplet (3). Chords are indicated above the notes: Bb7, F7, D7, G-7, and C7. Rhythmic markings include accents (>), slurs, and specific rhythmic values like 1/2 and 3.

In Example 4-17, Scofield again develops a motive from a previous chorus, this time by using a three-note motive from the end of chorus 13 in mm. 11 to launch chorus

14. The strength of this connection, coupled with the rhythmic clarity of the motive balances the dissonance of the imposed triads from outside the harmonies.

Example 4-17 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 13, mm. 9-12 - Chorus 14, mm. 1-8. Scofield develops a 3-note triadic motive.

The image displays three staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The first staff (measures 9-12) features chords G-7 (G7), C7, F7, G-7, and C7. A dashed line below the staff is labeled "Octatonic Scale, C half-whole". The second staff (measures 1-8) is marked with a circled '14' and features chords F7, (B), (Bb), (Ab), (Gb), and (F). The third staff (measures 5-8) features chords Bb7, (Ab), (Gb), (E), F7, (C), D7, and (Ab-7). The notation includes various rhythmic values, accents, and slurs.

Chromaticism and Substitutions

In terms of his note choices, as with "Do Like Eddie," Scofield uses chromatic language in his "If" solo, which can be explained in terms of scales and substitutions, as well as anticipating/delaying and extending certain implied harmonies. Scofield begins this solo by operating within the expected chord changes, and during the course of the solo he progressively introduces more substitutions. This gradual introduction scheme makes each substitution distinct when it arrives.

In addition to traditional F blues language with some chromatic passing tones, in *Example 4-18* Scofield uses an F mixolydian sound that incorporates the #4 scale degree,

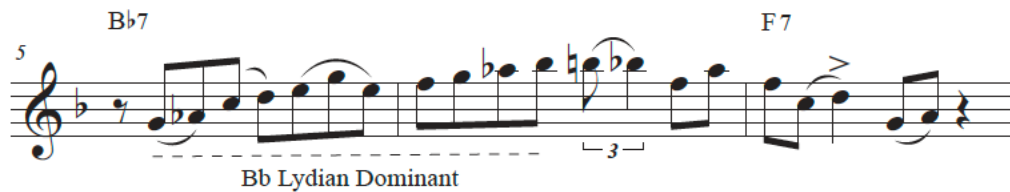
B natural, also known as a Lydian Dominant scale, which we hear in the beginning of Chorus 8.

Example 4-18 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 8, mm. 1-4. Scofield uses F Lydian Dominant, highlighting B naturals (#4).



What is less common, is how in *Example 4-19*, he applies the same scale to the IV7 (Bb7), using a Bb Lydian Dominant sound in mm. 5-8, featuring E natural notes, from chorus 9.

Example 4-19 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 9, mm. 5-8. Scofield uses Bb Lydian Dominant, highlighting E naturals (#4).



Like Montgomery and Remler, Scofield often uses a tritone substitution for the I7 (F7) by using notes that belong to the bV7 (Cb7, enharmonically B7), also analyzed as subV7/IV. However, he tends to enter this sonority earlier than the other guitarists, in bars 3-4 of the blues, and does so several times in this solo. In *Example 4-20*, he even implies bV7 in the first measure of the progression, at the start of his twelfth chorus, as well as in bars 3-4.

Example 4-20 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 12, mm. 1-4. Scofield implies B7 over an expected F7 in mm. 1, and 3-4.



In Example 4-21, Scofield introduces the bIII-7(Ab-7) sound in m. 8 of the chorus while referencing the melody of Parker's "Blues for Alice."⁹⁰ He uses the same substitution in choruses 14 and 15 below, using what are essentially variations on the "Blues for Alice" quotation.

Example 4-21 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 15, mm. 5-8. An example of bIII-7 substitution for D7 in m. 8.



Scofield approaches the V7 dominant (C7) chords which arrive in the final four-bar phrase of each chorus in a variety of manners. In Example 4-22, Scofield chooses an octatonic sound, similar to his "Do Like Eddie" solo, specifically the C half-whole diminished scale (C, Db, Eb, E, F#, G, A, Bb), in chorus 13.

⁹⁰ Montgomery does this too in "D-Natural Blues," but as chromatic planing: III-7, bIII-7, II-7.

Example 4-22 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 13, mm. 9-12. An example of octatonic C half-whole diminished scale over V7.

The musical notation shows a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The piece starts at measure 9. Above the staff, chord symbols are placed: G-7 (G7) above measure 9, C7 above measure 10, F7 above measure 11, G-7 above measure 12, and C7 above measure 13. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, often beamed together. A dashed line below the staff spans from measure 9 to measure 12, with the text "Octatonic Scale, C half-whole" centered underneath it.

In Example 4-23, he uses a tritone substitution for the V7 (C7), implying a SubV7 (Gb7) for C7, similar to the sound of the V7 Altered Scale, since C Altered and Gb Lydian Dominant share the same notes (both are modes of the Db melodic minor scale).

Example 4-23 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 2, mm. 9-12. An example of the bII7 for SubV7 (Gb7) for V7 (C7).

The musical notation shows a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The piece starts at measure 9. Above the staff, chord symbols are placed: G-7 above measure 9, C7 above measure 10, F7 above measure 11, G-7 above measure 12, and C7 above measure 13. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, often beamed together. A dashed line below the staff spans from measure 9 to measure 12, with the text "(Gb7)" centered underneath it.

Anticipating/Delaying/Extending Dominant Chords

Scofield anticipates chord changes, most commonly the V7, entering in m. 9 rather than the expected m. 10, which we observe in the previous Example 4-23. In Example 4-24, Scofield chooses the C Altered scale to extend the sound of the V7 through the end of chorus 12. He uses a Db-6 arpeggio in m. 11, and then switches to familiar minor pentatonic shapes, also based in Db minor, in m. 12.

Example 4-24 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 12, mm. 9-12. Examples of the Altered Scale, and extending the V7.

Example 4-24 shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notation includes a measure number '9' at the start. Above the staff, chords are indicated: G-7, C7, F7 (Db-6), G-7 (Db-7), and C7. The notes are primarily eighth notes with accents and slurs. A dashed line below the staff spans from the second measure to the fifth measure, labeled "Extending the Dominant w/ C Altered Scale".

Scofield also implies chords that are delayed from their expected position. In Example 4-25, at the end of chorus 6, he outlines chords that are delayed from their expected arrival by two beats, and resynchronizes with the expected chords by m. 2 of chorus 7.

Example 4-25 Scofield's "If" solo, Chorus 6, mm. 9-12 - Chorus 7, mm. 1-4. Scofield implies chords delayed by two beats.

Example 4-25 shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff starts with measure number '9' and contains chords G-7, C7, F7, G-7, and C7. A dashed line below the staff indicates "Chords Delayed 2 Beats: (D7b9) (G7)". The bottom staff starts with a circled '7' and contains chords F7, (F7), (Bb7), and (C7b9). A dashed line below the staff indicates "In Sync w/ Chords".

Whether this was an intentional choice or not, it is unclear, but in any case, the noticeable effect is the same. Scofield's use of swinging dotted-quarter accents and legato technique balance the dissonant effect of notes that are outside the key. The listener can infer an internal logic of the line, even if the notes do not "match" the chords the rhythm section is playing.

Summary

John Scofield uses several techniques to create a sense of swing, such as accenting every three eighth notes, or generally on the upbeats, while using legato techniques to slur to the beats. He creates a sense of melodic and harmonic tension by implying harmonic substitutions and various approaches to playing over a V7, including an altered scale, octatonic and tritone substitution sounds. He can also anticipate, delay or extend these implied harmonies. To create a sense of release, he uses melodic and rhythmic motives, uses accents on beats one and three, and leaves space between his phrases.

In our interview, Scofield spoke about being able to hear everything he plays, and even to be able to sing the lines. He pointed out a kind of irony of jazz improvisation: a soloist does not necessarily want to always play previously memorized lines (licks), but as listeners, we do want to hear a worked-out elegance in a soloist's lines, as if they are playing them from memory.

Scofield's approach to learning improvisation included learning short phrases, rather than entire solos. In this spirit, in the exercises section I suggest working on certain concepts by learning Scofield's specific phrases, borrowing excerpts from his "If" solo. In our interview, he explained that he practices specific melodic phrases, and while difficult, the secret to employing them during an improvisation in real time is to hear them in the mind's ear just before you play them.⁹¹

⁹¹ Scofield, interview with author, March 2, 2021. Emily Remler also echoes this exact idea in her 1987 interview with Gene Lees.

Suggested Exercises, Based on John Scofield's "If" Blues Solo

Exercise #1: Picking on Upbeats, Legato to Beat

A guitar warm-up to this concept is to play through a scale, ascending with hammer-ons and descending with pull-offs, and slides. When changing strings, it works best to begin with a picked note so that there are an even number of notes per string, two or four. A "bebop scale" is a convenient scale to use for this exercise since it contains eight notes, which allows each chord tone to land on the beat, in 4/4. For F7, the ascending dominant bebop scale is: F, G, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, E, and the reverse when descending. Start on the beat with a chord tone, and then picking/accents the non-chord tones on the upbeats, and slurring to the next note on the beat. For an example of how Scofield applies this concept to chord changes, play *Example 4-26*.

Example 4-26 Scofield picking on the upbeats, slurring to the beats, "If" Chorus 10

The musical notation for Example 4-26 is presented in four staves, all in the key of F major (one flat). The first staff begins with a square box containing the letter 'F'. The notation includes various chords: G-7, C7, F7, and Bb7. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with accents (>) and slurs. The second staff continues with Bb7 and F7. The third staff includes F7, D7, and G-7. The fourth staff features C7, F7, G-7, and C7. There are also some rhythmic markings like '1/4' and '4/4' indicating note values or rests.

Exercise #2: Superimposing Triads

Use this excerpt from Scofield's fourteenth chorus as an example of motivically using outside triads. After learning this example, maintain the rhythmic structure while experimenting with other triads. Note in how *Example 4-27*, the accents on beats 1 and 3 give clarity to the solo, even when the triads are outside the key (F). This concept seems to work well near the end of a solo in order to create harmonic tension.

Example 4-27 Scofield superimposing "outside" triads on "If" Chorus 14

Musical notation for Example 4-27. It shows a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with accents. Above the staff, the following triads are indicated: F7, (B), (Bb), (Ab), (Gb), and (F). The triad (B) is shown with a sharp sign, indicating it is B major. The triad (F) is shown with a natural sign, indicating it is F major.

Exercise #3: Extending the Dominant

As a warm up, review the scales below. Then work out melodic lines using some of the approaches that Scofield uses in his "If" solo over the V7, in this case C7:

- 1) C Altered: (C, Db, Eb, E, Gb, Ab, Bb).
- 2) Tritone Substitution:
 - a. Gb Lydian Dominant: (Gb, Ab, Bb, C, Db, Eb, Fb), which shares the same enharmonic notes as C Altered.
 - b. Gb mixolydian (Gb, Ab, Bb, Cb, Db, Eb, Fb)
- 3) Db min pentatonic (Db, Fb, Gb, Ab, Cb), which is contained within Gb Mixolydian.
- 4) Octatonic: C Half-Whole Diminished (C, Db, Eb, E, F#, G, A, Bb)

Begin by playing over a vamp of C7, and later by alternating 2 or 4 measures of C7 and F7. The goal, and challenge here, is to transition and resolve smoothly between the chords. *Example 4-28* is an example of smoothly resolving from C7 to F7 in mm. 11-12, from the end of chorus 8:

Example 4-28 Scofield using Gb and Db min triads over C7, "If" Chorus 8

Musical notation for Example 4-28. It shows a melodic line in the treble clef over a C7 vamp. The notation includes a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature. The melodic line starts with a G7 chord and moves through various notes, including a Gb triad and a Db triad, before resolving to a C7 chord. The notes are: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The chords are: G-7, (G7b9), (Gb), (Db-), F7, G-7, C7.

And finally, over an F blues, work on extending the dominant during the last 3-4 bars of the 12-bar form. Here are two examples of how Scofield uses this concept:

Example 4-29, from the end of chorus 4 and *Example 3-30*, from the end of the chorus 12:

Example 4-29 Scofield using the C altered scale and extending the V7, on "If" Chorus 4

Musical notation for Example 4-29. It shows a melodic line in the treble clef over a C7 vamp. The notation includes a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature. The melodic line starts with a G7 chord and moves through various notes, including a C7(alt) chord and an F7 chord, before resolving to a G7 chord and a C7 chord. The notes are: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The chords are: G-7, C7(alt), F7, G-7, C7. A dashed line underlines the last three bars, labeled "Extending the C7 dominant".

Example 4-30 Scofield using Db min pentatonic over C7, extending the V7, on "If" Chorus 12

Musical notation for Example 4-30. It shows a melodic line in the treble clef over a C7 vamp. The notation includes a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature. The melodic line starts with a G7 chord and moves through various notes, including a C7 chord, a Db-6 chord, and a Db-7 chord, before resolving to a G7 chord and a C7 chord. The notes are: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The chords are: G-7, C7, F7 (Db-6), G-7 (Db-7), C7. A dashed line underlines the last three bars, labeled "Extending the Dominant w/ C Altered Scale".

Exercise #4: Substitution Compilation

Though Scofield introduces each harmonic substitution individually over the course of the solo, as an exercise it is useful to compile his preferred substitutions into one chorus. Record an accompaniment or with a friend accompanying, practice playing an F blues with the substitute chord changes in *Example 4-31*. Learn to hear them in the moment when implying these chords as substitutions, over a rhythm section playing a standard 12-bar jazz blues progression, as Scofield does.

Example 4-31 Compilation of Scofield's Harmonic Substitutions on "If"

Compilation of Scofield's Harmonic Substitutions

The image shows three staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). Each staff contains four measures of music, represented by diagonal lines. The first staff is labeled with 'F7' above the first measure and 'B7' above the second measure. The second staff is labeled with 'Bb7(#11)' above the first measure, 'F7' above the second measure, and 'Ab-7' above the third measure. The third staff is labeled with 'G-7' above the first measure and 'C7alt' above the second measure.

Conclusion

In this project on jazz guitarists Wes Montgomery, Emily Remler and John Scofield, we saw through analysis of their transcribed solos how each musician's rhythmic and chromatic strategies contribute in a significant way to their compelling styles of blues-based improvisation. The suggested exercises based on their solos provide numerous ways to develop these skills for improvisors, especially for exploring new rhythmic tools. My biographical and interview-based research supports the idea that developing short ideas from these musicians' own heroes' solos was an important component of their musical and creative journeys toward mastery.

This project could become the foundation for a course on the music of these guitarists – one which combines music history, improvisation, and a focus on rhythm and chromaticism. There is certainly a great deal more to discover in their large catalogs of recorded music. Students could have transcription assignments where they also create their own original practice exercises, based on the concepts from the solos they choose. It could also serve as a model for students doing their own research on the process of learning jazz improvisation, with interviews on musicians about their own methods of practicing and internalizing musical styles and concepts.

This model of adapting transcriptions and creating inspired practice exercises could be additionally applied to other jazz guitarists, vocalists or any instrumentalists, as well as to other styles of improvisation. Examining improvisations in a blues context is fertile material to extend the ideas beyond the blues to other contexts, such as traditional and modern styles of jazz.

And since the blues is also a part of many American musical styles, including rock and roll, R&B, funk, pop and country music – there are additional implications to apply these concepts to those styles as well.

Toward an Original Voice

If one of the tenets of the jazz tradition is developing an original artistic voice, it asks the question: how does a jazz musician do this? Pianist and master jazz educator Barry Harris describes the process of finding new, original ideas in his solos during a masterclass and suggests that the key may be in the rhythmic aspects of improvising: “Sometimes I think the closest I can come to it is if I think of rhythmic things – and just think of the rhythm, don’t think of notes to go with the rhythm, just think of the rhythm – then I think I come closest to being original, if I think of the rhythm first.”⁹² Harris suggests that by disconnecting the notes from solos, we have a means to find new unique creative ideas, and without phrases that are recognizably borrowed from any particular artist.

Deep study of rhythmic approaches can help a jazz improviser develop an original voice, and actually help to generate more imaginative lines and note choices. In essence, any solo that inspires you has new rhythmic material waiting to be harnessed for your journey toward developing an individual musical language.

⁹² Barry Harris, “Barry Talking About the Importance of Rhythm,” BarryHarrisVideos, Posted on March 11, 2013, video, 2:58, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5VDXcmRiaU>, accessed June 11, 2022.

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Appendix

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For more information and to hear my music, please visit www.nickgrondin.com.

Transcribing Jazz Solos

Transcription offers a means to see and hear deeply into what is happening in the solo and what choices the soloist makes such as the notes, rhythms, space, phrasing, tension and release. For those interested, I am sharing my method for transcription – one that maintains a feeling of productive momentum to the process, and supports the internalization of the material through deep listening to each layer.

Transcribing full solos will help understand the development of an arc to a solo. However, the transcribed solos need not be complete – in fact there may be a higher return on investment of time to choose the most interesting phrases or sections of a solo rather than the whole.

Steps for Transcription:

1. Choose the solo/section of solo to transcribe. Decide where the quarter note is.
2. Phrase by phrase, measure by measure, listen (slowed-down, even at 50-75% speed) and sing back each phrase/measure.
3. Write down just the rhythm first.
4. Sing back again, find and write down the notes. An instrument helps.
5. Add accents, and dynamics.
6. Add legato markings, and in this case, for guitarists: hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, and bends.

By focusing on singing back the phrases and writing just the rhythm down first, we put our energy primarily into internalizing the rhythms and phrase structures in the solo. Accents and legato markings are valuable to include as well, as they play an important role in the rhythmic and the language-like aspects of instrumental solos, as we see in the transcription examples for this project.

Wes Montgomery - "D-Natural Blues" Guitar Solo

Swing
94 BPM

The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery, (1:34-3:09)

Wes Montgomery
Trans. Nick Grondin

1 D7 G7 D7

Double-Time Swing Feel

4 A-7 "Line Cliche" D7 G7

Normal-Time, Triplet Feel

6 G7 G# dim Scale D/A /G

Double-Time Feel

8 F#-7 (9) B7 (F-11) E-7 (11)

Triplet Feel, Blues

10 A7 D7 G7

12 D7 A7 (A-11) 2 D7 G7

3 D7 (A-7) (D7) A-7 (Eb-7) D7 (Ab7)

a - 1 bar a' - 1 bar

5 G7 G7 G#dim7 D/A

b - 2.5 bars

Wes Montgomery - "D-Natural Blues" Guitar Solo

8 F#-7 B7 E-7 A7
3 a ~ 1 bar w/pickup a' b ~ 1.5 bars

11 D7 G7 G#dim7 D7/A A7

3 D7 G7 D7

4 A-7 (Ab9) D7 G7
a a' b

6 G7 G# dim Scale D/A DMaj7 (F#-9) B7 (F-9)

9 E-7 A7 (E7) (Eb7 - DbMaj9)

11 D7 G7 G#dim7 D7 A7

Four on Six

Wes Montgomery in Paris: The Definitive ORTF Recording
March 27, 1965, solo 0:33-3:10

Swing ♩ = 236

Wes Montgomery
Trans. Nick Grondin

B♭Maj7 G-7 G#-7 A-7 D7#9 G-7

1

Signature Rhythm

2

Signature Rhythm

Accents based in 3/8 rhythm

Quarters with accents
on beats 2 and 4

3

2-bar motive, with variations

G-7

Signature Rhythm

5

8va

C-7 F7 Bb-7 Eb7 A-7 D7 Eb-7 Ab7

Contrasting rhythmic motive

9

G-7

C-7 F7

Returns to previous motive

"Skipping"

13

BbMaj7 Am7(b5) D7#9 G-7 D7#9

3/4 cross rhythms:

4

Octaves! G-7

5

C-7 F7 Bb-7 Eb7 A-7 D7 Eb-7 Ab7

Signature Rhythm

9

G-7

C-7 F7

13

BbMaj7 Am7(b5) D7#9 G-7 D7#9

5 One of Montgomery's signature octave phrases, over first half of the chorus

Signature Rhythm

6

Straight 8ths

Signature Rhythm

Chord Solo!

Signature Rhythm

7

G-7

5

C-7 F7 Bb-7 Eb7 A-7 D7 Eb-7 Ab7 ?

9

G-7 C-7 F7

Cycles of 3/8 cross rhythms - rhythm section catches on

13

BbMaj7 Am7(b5) D7#9 G-7 D7#9

8

G-7

2-bar motives

5

C-7 F7 Bb-7 Eb7 A-7 D7 Eb-7 Ab7

9

G-7 C-7 F7

13

BbMaj7 Am7(b5) D7#9 G-7 D7#9

2-bar motive, a variation on the signature rhythm: begins every 2-bar phrase with beat 1, "and of two"

9

Piano Solo - Harold Mabern

Returns to 3/8 rhythms to end solo, starts on "and of one" and resolves to "and of four"

Blues for Herb - Guitar Solo

Fast Swing, 218 BPM

East to Wes, (0:33-2:07)

Emily Remler
Trans. Nick Grondin

① F7

5 B \flat 7 F7 D7

9 G-7 C7 F7 C7

② F7

Accents On The Beats

5 B \flat 7 F7 D7

9 G-7 C7 F7 C7

Accents On Beats 2+ and 4+

③ F7

5 B \flat 7 F7 D7

Blues for Herb - Guitar Solo

G-7 C7 F7 C7 (EbMaj7)

Wes' Style

④ F7 (Gb) (Cb7)

Downward Sequence - Accents Beats 1 & 3

Bb7 F7 D7 (Eb-7) (Bb-7)

G-7 C7 F7 C7

"Fast-Rubato"

⑤ F7

- Accelerating Motive -

Bb7 F7 D7

G-7 C7 F7 C7

a - 1 bar a' - 1 bar b - 2 bars

⑥ F7 (Cb7, Whole Tone)

All Upbeats:

Bb7 F7 D7

9 G-7 C7 F7 (D7) C7 (G-7) (C7)

Pentatonic Leaps

7 F7 (C-) (C-Maj7) (C-7) (Cb7)

5 Bb7 F7 D7

9 G-7 C7 F7 C7

3/8 Cross Rhythms

8 F7

5 Bb7 F7 D7

9 G-7 C7 F7 C7

9 F7 (EbMaj7) (F#-7) B7

5 Bb7 F7 D7

"Signature Rhythm"

4

Blues for Herb - Guitar Solo

9

G-7 C7 F7 C7

3 3 3 3

Detailed description: This musical staff shows a guitar solo in the key of B-flat major. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody consists of eighth notes, with the first three measures featuring triplets. Chord changes are indicated above the staff: G-7, C7, F7, and C7. The piece concludes with a final chord of C7.

F7

Hank Jones' Piano Solo

Detailed description: This musical staff shows a piano solo in the key of B-flat major. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The solo is a sustained chord, specifically F7, which is held throughout the entire duration of the piece.

"Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise"

Emily Remler - Arrangement and Guitar Solo

East to Wes, (0:30-5:08)

Romberg and Hammerstein

Trans. Nick Grondin

Medium Swing ♩ = 142

A

E-7 FMaj7(#11) F#-11 G6 A-9 B-7 CMaj7 C#-11

In 2

5

CMaj7 B-7 A-9 G6 F#-11 FMaj7

1. E-11 2. E-11

B

GMaj7 E7

Swing

14

A-7 A#dim7 B9sus C/Bb A9sus E-/G

C

E-7 FMaj7(#11) F#-11 G6 A-9 B-7 CMaj7 C#-11

In 2

22

CMaj7 B-7 A-9 G6 F#-11 FMaj7 E-11

Solo:

1

E-7 FMaj7(#11) F#-11 G6 A-9 B-7 CMaj7 C#-11

5

CMaj7 B-7 A-9 G6 F#-11 FMaj7 E-11

"Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise"

E-7 FMaj7(#11) F#-11 G6 A-9 B-7 CMaj7 C#-11

CMaj7 B-7 A-9 G6 F#-11 FMaj7 E-11

GMaj7 E7

Swing

A-7 A#dim7 B7 F#m7(b5) B7

E-7 FMaj7(#11) F#-11 G6 A-9 B-7 CMaj7 C#-11

In 2 Accelerating Motive

CMaj7 B-7 A-9 G6 F#-11 FMaj7 E-11

2 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

Swing

E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

"Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise"

13 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 A-7 D7

17 GMaj7 E7

21 A-7 A#dim7 B7 F#m7(b5) B7

25 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

29 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

3 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7

4 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

9 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

"Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise"

E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 A-7 D7

13

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Groups of 4 Triplets

GMaj7 E7 (Bb) (Ab)

17

3 3 3

Straight

A-7 A#dim7 B7 F#m7(b5) B7

21

3 3 3

E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

25

3 3 3

Groups of 4 and 5 Triplets (9 total)

Like a 3/4 Cross Rhythm

E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

29

3 3 3

4 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

33

E-7 (B Blues Scale) F#m7(b5) B7

37

E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

41

E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

45

3

"Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise"

9 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

Groups of 5 (2 + 3) 16ths

11 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

13 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

15 E-7 A-7 D7

17 GMaj7 E7 (Db triad)

21 A-7 A#dim7 B7 Bends F#m7(b5) B7

Adjacent Strings for Alternating F#'s Hammer-ons

25 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7

28 F#m7(b5) B7 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7

31 E-7 F#m7(b5) B7 (5) E-7

Do Like Eddie - Guitar Solo

Half-Time,
Second Line Groove

Hand Jive, (1:34-4:22)

John Scofield
trans. Nick Grondin

B \flat 7

5

10

15

20

24

Implies F7alt

29

full

34

P4ths, F min Pentatonic Pattern #4

39 *mp* *f*

44

48 Low Range

53

3-Beat Rhythms

57

Triple Phrase Structure

61 Full Range:

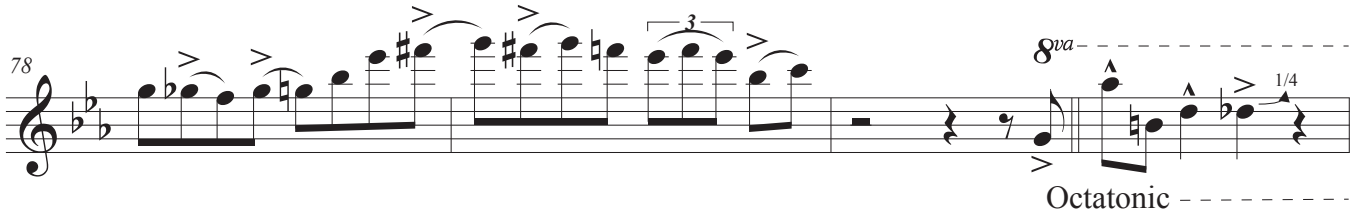
66 *mp*

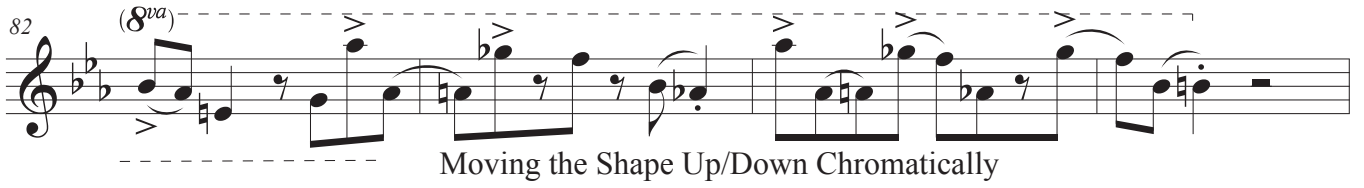
70

Octatonic A Major

74 Back to Bb, Blues

Do Like Eddie - Guitar Solo

78 
Octatonic

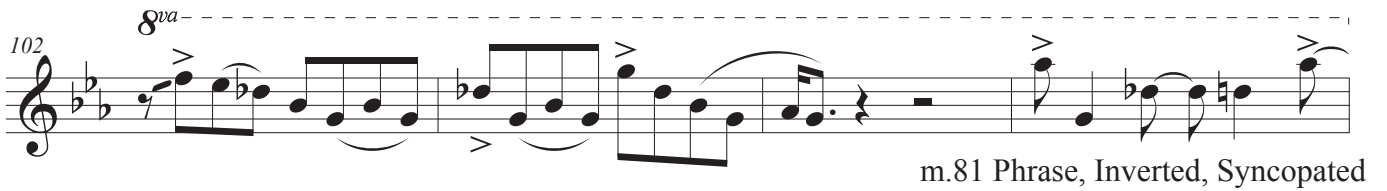
82 
Moving the Shape Up/Down Chromatically

86 

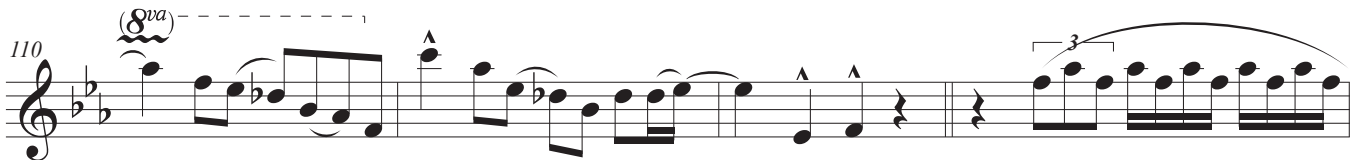
90 
Accelerating Rhythms

93 
Bluesy Bends

98 
Melody Reference

102 
m.81 Phrase, Inverted, Syncopated

106 

110 

114



118

P4ths

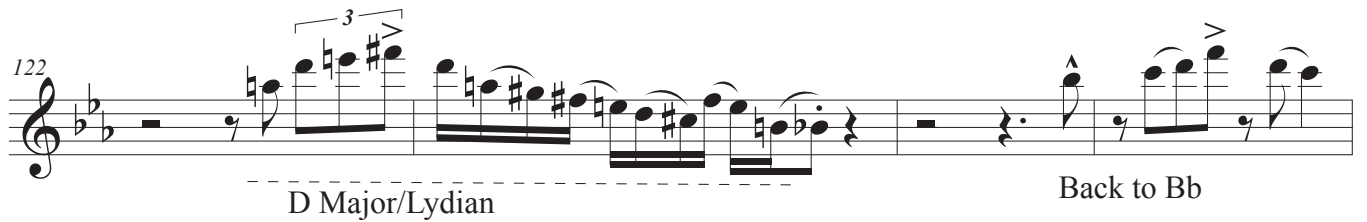
P4ths, 1/2 step up



122

D Major/Lydian

Back to Bb

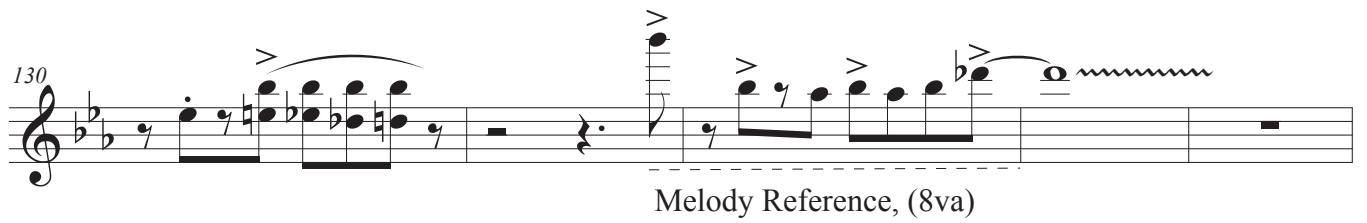


126



130

Melody Reference, (8va)



135



"If" - John Scofield Organic Trio - Guitar Solo

Swing ♩ = 240

Live at Jazzwoche Burghausen - March 14, 2013

Joe Henderson

Trans. Nick Grondin

①

5

9

G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7

p

②

Melody Reference

5

9

G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7

(B7)

(Gb7)

③

5

"If" - John Scofield Organic Trio

2

G-7 C7 (alt) F7 G-7 C7 >

Extending the C7 dominant

4

F7

Bb7 F7 D7

G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7

5

F7

Bb7 1/2 F7 D7

G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7

3/8 Accents

6

F7

Bb7 1/2 F7 D7

"If" - John Scofield Organic Trio

9 G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7

(C7alt) Chords Delayed 2 Beats: (D7b9) (G7)

7 F7 (F7) (Bb7)

(C7b9) In Sync w/ Chords

5 Bb7 F7 D7

Bb Lydian Dominant

9 G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7

Dotted Quarter Cross Rhythms Implied w/ Accents

8 F7

5 Bb7 F7 D7

Bb Lydian Dominant

9 G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7

(G7b9) (Gb) (Db-) Octaves at Halfway Point

9 F7

5 Bb7 F7 D7

Bb Lydian Dominant

"If" - John Scofield Organic Trio

4

G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7

(interruption)

3

10

F7 (D7) (G-7) (C7) (B7)

--- Slurs to Beats - Bringing Out the Upbeats ---

Bb7 F7 D7 (Ab-7)

Quote: "Blues for Alice"

G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7

1/4

11

F7

1/4

Bb7 F7 D7

1/4

G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7

1/4

12

F7 (B7) (B7)

3 3

Bb7 F7 D7 (Ab-7)

1/4

(Ab-7)

9 G-7 C7 F7 (Db-6) G-7 (Db-7) C7

Extending the Dominant w/ C Altered Scale

13 F7

5 Bb7 F7 D7

9 G-7 (G7) C7 F7 G-7 C7

Octatonic Scale, C half-whole

14 F7 (B) (Bb) (Ab) (Gb) (F)

5 Bb7 (Ab) (Gb) (E) F7 (C) D7 (Ab-7)

9 G-7 C7 F7 G-7 C7 (Db-7)

3/8 Cross Rhythms Leading to Climax - w/Brighter Tone, Picking Closer to the Bridge

15 F7 full

5 Bb7 F7 D7 (Ab-7)

"If" - John Scofield Organic Trio

6

Musical staff 1: Treble clef, key signature of one flat, measures 6-9. Chords: G-7, C7, F7, G-7, C7.

16

Musical staff 2: Treble clef, key signature of one flat, measures 10-15. Chord: F7. Includes "w/vibrato" instruction.

Musical staff 3: Treble clef, key signature of one flat, measures 16-21. Chords: Bb7, F7, D7. Includes "w/vibrato" instruction.

Musical staff 4: Treble clef, key signature of one flat, measures 22-26. Chords: G-7, C7, F7, G-7, C7.

17

Musical staff 5: Treble clef, key signature of one flat, measures 27-30. Chord: F7.