

RHYTHM

Another keystone of this style is very active use of rhythm. While bebop is predominantly played in a stream of eighth notes, it is common to mix things up using rests and rhythmic displacement. Someone once said of Charlie Parker (I forget who) that the rhythms he played were so strong that any notes would have sounded good over them. Some specific examples of rhythmic devices, and the players associated with them, are as follows:

Use of triplets and classical-style ornaments based on semiquavers (Parker)

Use of crotchet triplets (Bill Evans – whose style was more influenced by bebop than many people recognise)

Use of odd note groupings – 5s and 7s – to fit extended ideas into the space of two or four beats (Dizzy Gillespie, later Coltrane)

The next time you're listening to a good bebop solo, focus on the rhythms – it's actually quite easy to transcribe just the rhythms if you don't worry about the note pitches, and well worth doing to expand the rhythmic possibilities in your own playing.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

- a) Practise the figures round and round as written. Concentrate on what is going on harmonically as you play through them.
- b) Experiment with leaving different tones out to isolate the internal fragments and alter the feel of the whole figure. Leaving notes out and/or compressing parts of the figures into triplets is a good way to bring more rhythmic sophistication into your playing.
- c) Interchange fragments between the different figures, creatively altering the rhythms to fit them together.
- d) Finally, improvise freely over the chord sequences, looking to insert pieces of the figures to launch, extend or end your line.

By the way, it's best to begin by assimilating these kind of lines thoroughly in one key, before you take them round the cycle of Vs. You will eventually need them in all keys, but you'll be able to learn them much quicker in all the keys if you are completely clear about what's going on in one key first.

In no time at all, the bebop language will start to appear naturally in your solos. If you've really internalised the "why" as well as the "what", you'll soon find yourself constructing more musical lines within the bebop idiom.

Best of luck, and feel free to get in touch with me at:

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BEBOP PERPETUAL MOTION FIGURE 5

Dm7 G7 CM A7b9



Descending melodic cell pattern (5321) over the Dm7, then the first four notes of the popular fragment of the bebop scale over the G7. This leads smoothly, upwards this time, to the 7th of the C chord. Then down a CM arpeggio to a seesaw figure on the A7b9 chord between the 3rd and b9th. The three final notes (Bb, G and G#) form an extended chromatic approach to the 3rd of the Dm7 chord (A) that we started with.

BEBOP PERPETUAL MOTION FIGURE 6

Dm7 G7 CM A7b9



That popular bebop scale fragment again, with the first two tones acting as a pickup, then an extended chromatic encircling (G, F, D, D#) of the 3rd of the C chord. The line then drops to the root of C, then anticipates the A7b9 chord by a beat with its 3rd and 5th. Finally up to the 7th and root of the A7b9 chord, arriving back at the pickup.

BEBOP PERPETUAL MOTION FIGURE 7

Dm7 G7 CM A7b9



The first three notes descend the Dm7 scale. The next four notes just ignore the G7 chord altogether and form an extended chromatic approach to the 5th of the C chord. The line then descends a melodic cell (5321) in C and ascends the diminished scale that goes with the A7b9 chord in 3rds.

BEBOP PERPETUAL MOTION FIGURE 8

DØ G7b9/G7alt Cm



A little something in minor. The first four notes go up a 7th chord in DØ, then the next three notes descend the diminished scale that goes with G7b9 or G7alt. The Ab and F# also form an encirclement of G, which is the 5th of the Cm chord that follows. Then down a melodic cell (5321) in C minor, which connects naturally with another melodic cell (431) – very bluesy sounding. The Eb, C and C# then form an encirclement back to the D. Note also that the final four notes in the second bar fit both Cm and A7alt (the VI chord).

STRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

This is the sort of thing you can come up with by creatively combining the fragments from the 8 figures with some connective material (the chord sequence is Dm7 G7 | CM A7b9 repeating over and over):

The image displays three staves of musical notation in C major, 4/4 time. The top staff is a melodic line consisting of 16 measures. The second and third staves are bass lines, also consisting of 16 measures each. The music is a single melodic line with a bass line accompaniment. The chord sequence is Dm7 G7 | CM A7b9 repeating over and over. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, along with accidentals (sharps and flats) and a double bar line at the end of the piece.