

Beginner's Guide to Improvisation

Lesson 3

In the previous lesson, we discovered that we can already improvise using GUIDE TONES and our natural musical ears. Now, let's delve a little deeper and think about the other notes in a two-five-one progression.

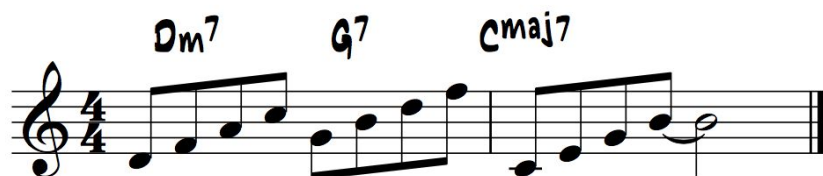
If you've been learning music for a while already, I'm sure you're beginning to realise that arpeggios are everywhere. But why are they important? You're about to find out!

Chord Tones

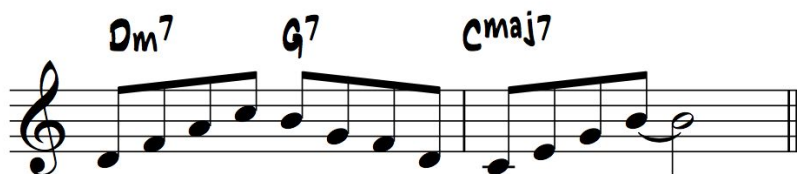
Chord tones are essentially the same thing as guide tones, but the name implies a different approach to playing them. Instead of picking out one note from each chord that leads to the next, our aim in this lesson is to sing or play all of the notes in each chord. These are called "CHORD TONES".

The best way to approach this is to welcome our old friend, the arpeggio, with a twist. As we learned in the last lesson, the 7th of each chord (or 6th, in some cases) is a juicy note to choose to spice up your improvisation, so instead of ending on the tonic, we are going to incorporate the 7th.

Try singing or playing the arpeggio of each chord, like so:



You may have already noticed something that makes the above arpeggios a little tricky - yes, it's that big leap between the high F and low C! What happens if we use the second inversion idea that we learned about in the last lesson, and use the G7 arpeggio to link the other two?



There we go - much better! See how we are playing the exact same notes as we did in the last lesson, but arpeggiating them instead of picking them out one by one? This way, you're describing the harmony like a pro. Ask your tutor to play you the chord progression again and have a go at singing along! You will eventually absorb all of the harmony, and improvising with chord tones will become second nature.