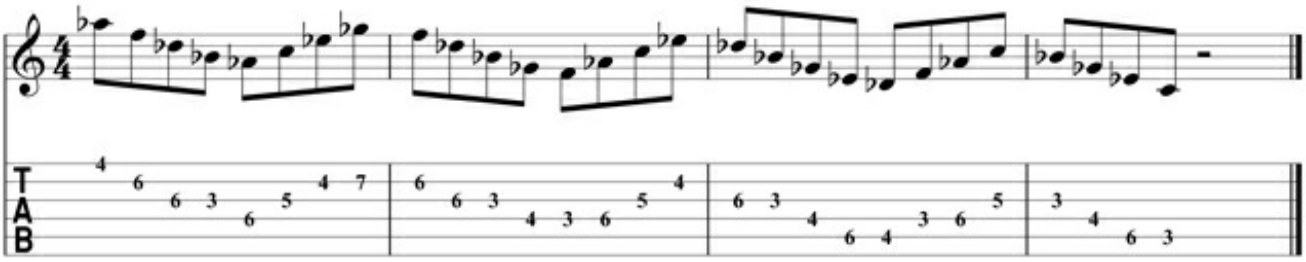Jazz Chops: Arpeggio Blowout

www.premierguitar.com/articles/Jazz_Chops_Arpeggio_Blowout

Amanda Monaco March 27, 2012

Fig. 3
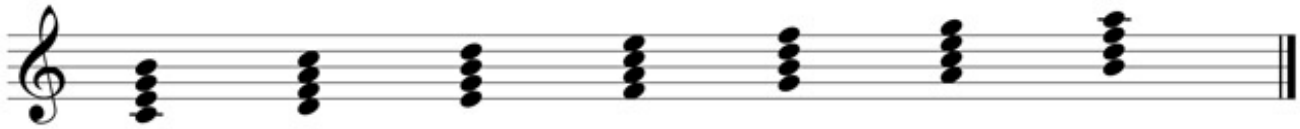


Chops: Intermediate
Theory: Intermediate
Lesson Overview:
• Learn how to connect arpeggios in all 12 keys.
• Play ascending and descending shapes all over the neck.
• Develop linear phrases over “Bird” blues.

Click here to download the MP3 audio and a printable PDF of this lesson's notation.

One of the best things you can do for your playing is to learn your arpeggios. A great way to do this is by playing them through the major scale. You’ll build technique, train your ears, and come up with cool soloing ideas. The possibilities are endless.
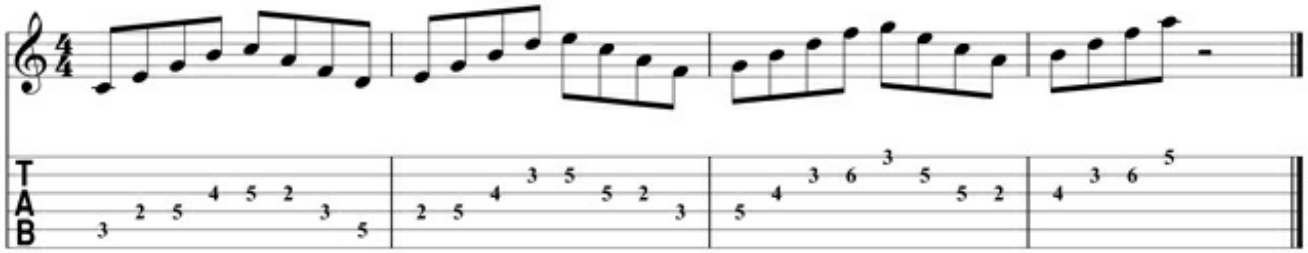
First, let’s look at the 7th chords that we have when we harmonize a major scale. In **Fig. 1** you can see that the I chord is major, IIm, IIIm, and VIm are minor, V is dominant and VII is half-diminished (or minor 7 with a b5). This pattern holds true for any major scale in any key.

Fig. 1



Now, let’s work through these arpeggios while sticking to one section of the neck. In **Fig. 2** we will play through each chord in the key of C while alternating direction. First, we have a Cmaj7 (C–E–G–B) chord played ascending; then we move to the IIm chord, Dm7 (D–F–A–C), starting from the 7th and descending to the root. We alternate direction until we finish with the 7th (A) of the Bm7b5 chord.

Fig. 2



If we move that last note down a half-step to Ab, we then start the descending version of the exercise shown in **Fig. 3**. Here, we move the key up a half-step (to Db major) and start with the descending version of the VIm chord, which is Bbm7. Once we get to the VII half-diminished chord (Cm7b5), we then repeat the exercise from Fig. 2 in the new key (**Fig. 4**).

Fig. 3
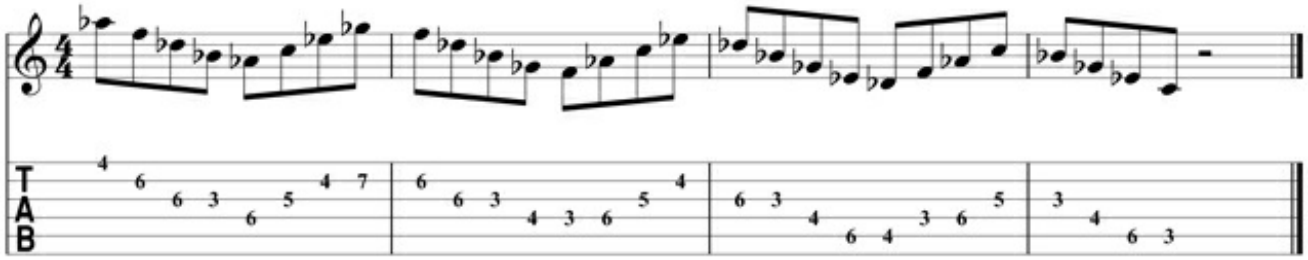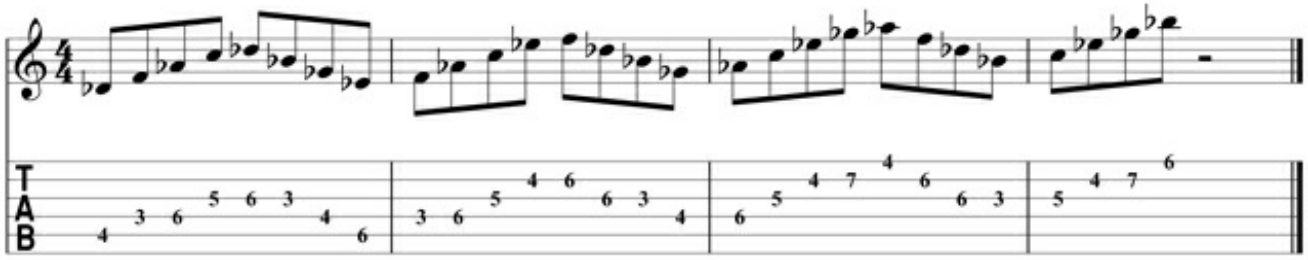


Fig. 4

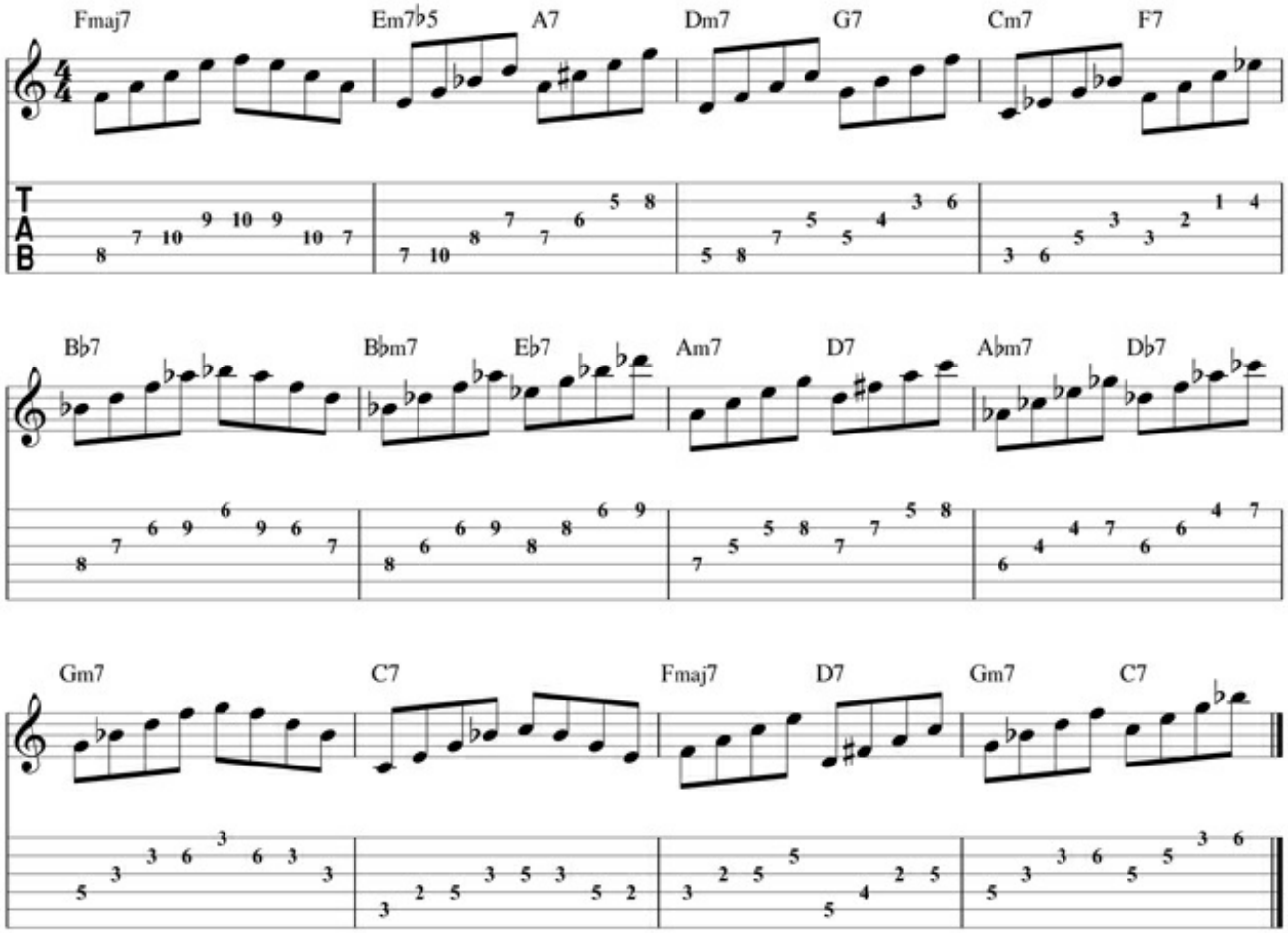


This is a fantastic exercise to warm up with each day. Play this pattern all the way up the neck until you get to the key of G Major (root on the 10th fret of the 5th string) and back. Make sure to use alternate picking and start slowly.

Now we want to take these arpeggios and use them over some actual music. A good place to start will be with what is known as “Bird” blues—a version of a 12-bar blues form that uses more than just your normal I–IV–V. (This is often called “Confirmation changes,” after the Charlie Parker tune “Confirmation.”). We’ll arpeggiate our way through the entire progression.
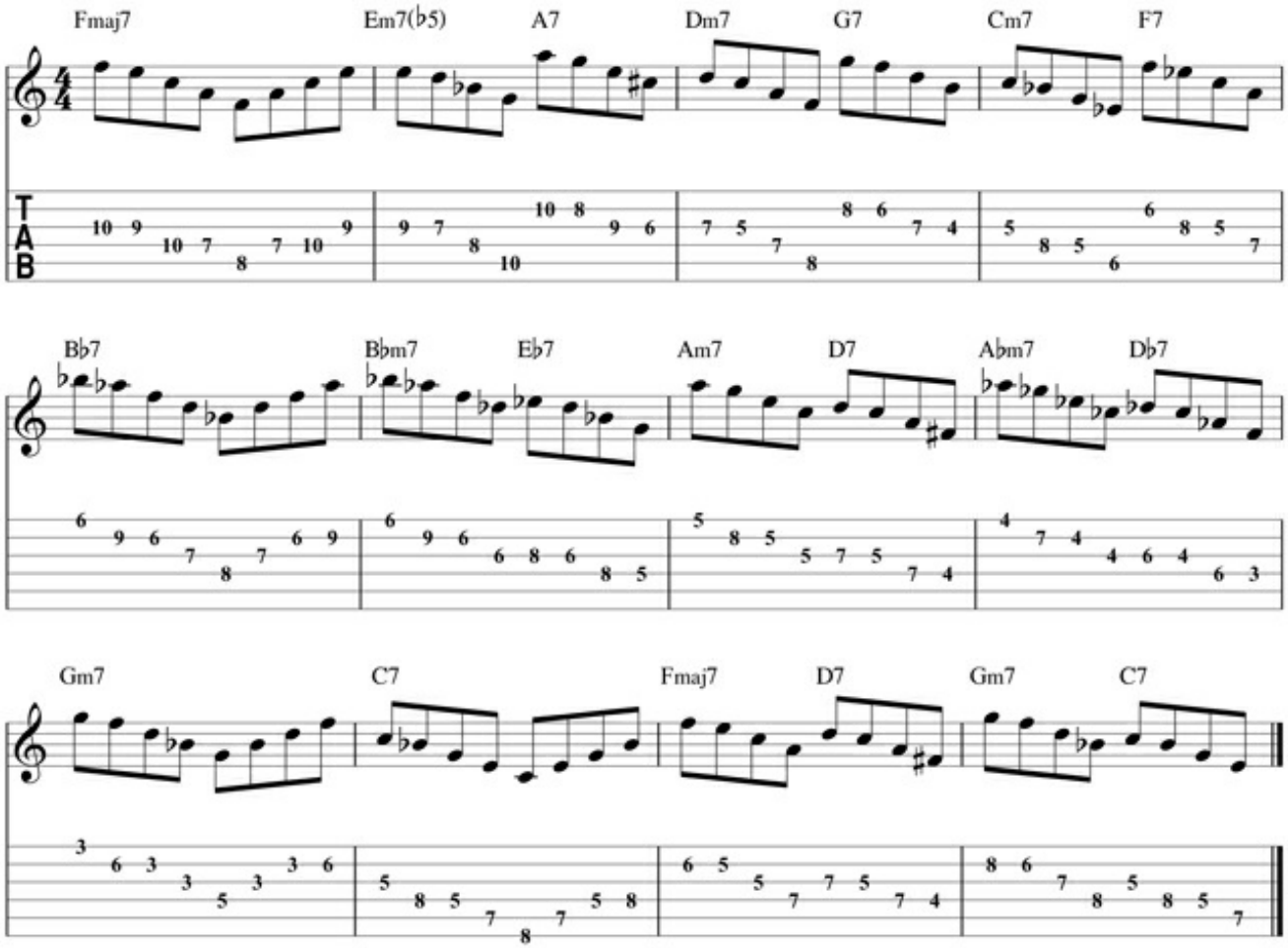
If there is only one chord in the measure, you’ll play the entire one-octave arpeggio ascending and descending, starting on the root and ending on the 3rd. If there are two chords in the measure, you’ll play both the first and second chord ascending, beginning on the root. **Fig. 5** demonstrates one possible way to play this.

Fig. 5



Once you feel comfortable with this pattern, you can reverse the entire thing (**Fig. 6**) and start to develop more melodic ideas. Notice that sometimes when you change chords, the line retains its flow by resolving by either a half- or whole-step.

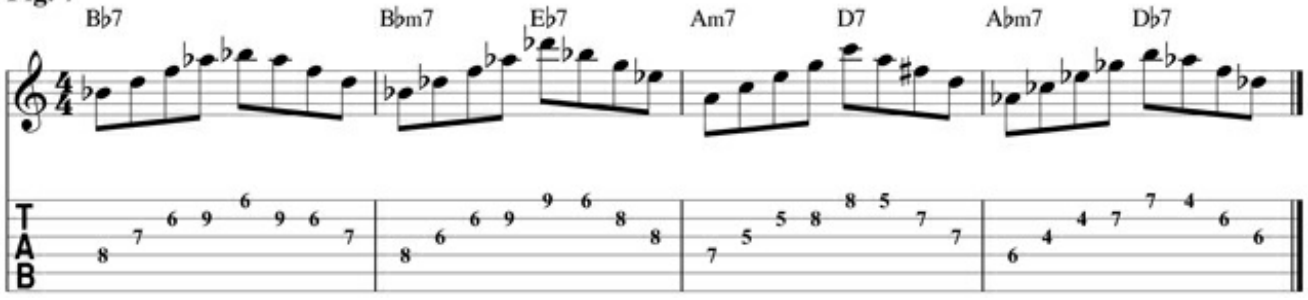
Fig. 6



Here's one (**Fig. 7**) that uses both the root and the 7th as starting tones. In a measure with two chords, you'll start on the root of the first chord and play the arpeggio ascending, then start on the 7th of the second chord and play the arpeggio descending. This example uses measures 5-8 of the chord progression.

As you can see, there are a lot of different ways to

Fig. 7



approach a tune using arpeggios. Work with one starting point at a time, then mix and match and listen for what kinds of sounds you'll come up with. It's a great way to get your ear to discover new ideas, both for songs and guitar solos alike. Happy arpeggiating!

Amanda Monaco has performed at the Blue Note, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and the JVC Jazz

Festival, as well as other venues in the United States and Europe. Her quartet, Deathblow, combines free-bop sensibilities with through-composed pieces that are equal parts textural, adventurous, and whimsical. Amanda has served on the faculty of Berklee College of Music, New School University, and the National Guitar Workshop and is the author of Jazz Guitar for the Absolute Beginner (Alfred Publishing). For more information, visit amandamonaco.com.

