A Step-by-Step Approach to Becoming a Jazz Musician

Part 3. In Part 2 we discussed basic chord symbols and how to define them. We also took our first steps to improvisation on C-Jam blues using the blues scale. Before proceeding to more advanced chords and scales, it is imperative to understand the function of chords and scales in relation to jazz harmony.

Refer to the blues progression on page 2, this is a variation of the basic blues in the key of C. I would advise you at this stage to play each bar on a keyboard so you can hear all the chord tones. Hearing the different chords will develop your aural skills and decision making in relation to jazz harmonies.

- Bar 1 CM7 is a C major triad with an added 7 (use the C major scale for improvisation).

- Bar 2 F7 is an F major triad with a flat 7 E flat (use the F major scale with a lowered 7th for improvisation). This can also be called a Mixolydian scale in B flat major which starts on the 5th degree of the scale.

- Bar 3 is a repeat of bar 1.

- Bar 4 C7 is a major triad with a flat 7 B flat (use the C major scale with a lowered 7th for improvisation). This can also be called a Mixolydian scale in F major which starts on the 5th degree of the scale.

- Bar 5 and 6 are a repeat of bar 2.

- Bar 7 and 8 are a repeat of bar 1 and 3.

- Bar 9 Dm7 is a D minor triad with an added 7 (use the C major scale for improvisation). This can also be called a Dorian scale in C major which starts on the 2nd degree of the scale.

- Bar 10 G7 is a G major triad with an added 7 (use the C major scale for improvisation). This can also be called a Mixolydian scale in C major which starts on the 5th degree of the scale.

- Bar 11 and 12 are a repeat of bar 1 and 3.