

Soloing with Block Chords Part 4: Whole Tone Scale



Thelonious Monk

As I peered through the bushes the purple monkey driving a tractor spotted me. I knew I was in trouble when he climbed down asked me for a banana..."cue whole-tone dream sequence music" ..."fade to black"

Today we will be exploring the harmonized whole tone scale over dominant 7 sharp 5 chords. This is a very special (and mysterious) scale. My uncle insists that historically, jazz musicians who employed this scale have gone insane. So be forewarned. This scale has a very particular sound and its symmetrical structure makes it extremely flexible and very easy to incorporate into your playing. Both John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk have made extensive use of this scale, so be sure to give them a listen. Let's dig into it.

A video clip of the examples

The Raw Material

ChordAddict.com

Video Example 1: Harmonized Whole Tone Scale

ChordAddict.com

Example 2: Harmonized Whole Tone Scale

ChordAddict.com

Example 3: Harmonized Whole Tone Scale

ChordAddict.com

Example 4: Harmonized Whole Tone Scale

Some Jazz lines (V7+ to I) to try

Some points to remember while working with new material:

- Be sure to work in all keys.
- Use a metronome or backing track.
- Improvise into and out of the lick.
- Try singing the melody note of the chord, this will help you integrate it into your playing
- Make up your own material. Write your own lines. If you want, use my lines as a seed and create variations.

Video Example 1: Whole Tone Block Chords Lick

Because of the symmetrical nature of the whole tone scale, we can transpose any lick up or down by whole steps and it will still work over the harmony. The next 4 examples demonstrate this.

Video Example 2a: Whole Tone Block Chords Lick

Video Example 2b: Whole Tone Block Chords Lick

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Video Example 2c: Whole Tone Block Chords Lick

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Video Example 2d: Whole Tone Block Chords Lick

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Video Example 3: Whole Tone Block Chords Lick

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Video Example 4: Whole Tone Block Chords Lick

Backing Tracks

Here are a few backing tracks for your convenience.

[G7 120 Straight.mp3](#): G7+ Vamp 120bpm Straight

[A7DMaj 110 sw.mp3](#): | A7+ | DMaj7 | Vamp 110bpm Swing

[G7CMaj 105 Swing.mp3](#): | G7+ | CMaj7 | Vamp 105bpm Swing