

Tools of the Trade

The Boys of Summer, Part I

By Chris Buono

In addition to teaching at Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA I spend two weeks of my summer break teaching major, minor, and seminar classes at the National Guitar Workshop New Milford, CT campus. At NGW I've been exposed to many great and inspiring guitarists—some of which have become great friends along the way. These incredible players come from all over the country and sometimes Canada bringing their own unique approaches, styles, and techniques that have an incredible impact not just on the NGW students, but on one another as well. After a long day in the trenches with the kids, we always get together and gladly exchange our knowledge during after hour jam sessions and off-campus gigs. In the last six years I've come to know and play with many outstanding musicians like Adam Levy, Dave Martone, Terry Syrek, James Hogan, Pete Weise, John Pelosi, Amanda Monaco, Mark Dziuba, David Hamburger, Matt Smith, Barry Greene, Jody Fisher, Rick Tate, and many others. It is in these situations I've come across some very valuable material and I thought I'd bring some of it here to JJG. In this two part series I'm going to let three of NGW's finest jazz educators show you some of their own clever tools. Part I will feature two great lessons from Christopher Morrison and George Muscatello while Part II will be dedicated to a masterfully conceived improvising concept for more advanced players created by Chris Parrello. I'm excited to introduce these three guitarists to you the JJG readers and I'm confident you'll find these lessons to be as much beneficial as fun to play. Enjoy!

Christopher Morrison – The Art of Rhythmic Phrasing

Starting things off is Connecticut based chops monster Christopher Morrison. When I first heard Chris's incredible facility I was thoroughly impressed by his musicality and phrasing. He effortlessly plays Pat Martino-esque runs with jaw dropping ease on his eclectic looking, yet gorgeous sounding custom Froc Filipetti solid body while never sounding unmusical. A former student of the legendary Sal Salvador and the elusive Charlie Banacos, Chris has played with some of jazz's finest including Adam Nussbaum, Harvie Schwartz, and John Stowell. You can find Chris educating future jazz icons at Western Connecticut University, University of Bridgeport, and Fairfield University in addition to his post at the National Guitar Workshop. For more information including how to obtain Chris's stellar debut release as a leader released in the spring of 2003, please visit www.morrisonguitar.com.

“I’ve found that Jazz educators often present students with improvisational techniques that emphasize which notes to play on various chord changes. The result is students tend to play solos primarily using a continuous stream of eighth notes showing little evidence of phrasing. I teach a technique that involves taking a rhythm *first* and applying notes *second*. I’ve found that this approach has had a drastic impact on many of my student’s overall playing while at the same time keeping them from relying on predetermined licks and patterns. This results in the student playing a more original and organic solo.”

The first step is to compose a rhythmic phrase to be used as a template. While you want to create rhythms that sound interesting it’s important not to overcomplicate them. Below you’ll find three simple four bar rhythmic phrases (Examples 1A, 2A, and 3A) each followed by two examples (Examples 1B-C, 2B-C, and 3B-C) of those phrases put into lines over harmonic progressions. Notice how each template utilizes varying combinations of common rhythmic tools like quarter notes, upbeat and grouped 8th notes, triplet 8th notes, and most importantly—rests. Before playing the lines, try clapping out the phrases so you can get familiar with the rhythms. Only after internalizing the rhythms should you play the lines.”

Ex. 1A

Ex. 1B

GΔ7 E7alt. A-7 D7alt. GΔ9

7 4 5	6 7 4 5 7 4 7 6	4 5 7 5 8 8 6	7 5 8 13 10 11 10

Ex. 1C

B \flat 7 E \flat 7 B \flat 7 B \flat 7alt. E \flat 7

T
A
B

		5 8	6	7 6	7	7 6 4 3
7	8 6	6	9 8 7 6	8 5 6	8 6	
	5 8					

Ex. 2A

Ex. 2B

G Δ 7 E7alt. A-7 D7alt. G Δ 7

T
A
B

	13 9 12	13 15 12 13	13 11	12
9 10	9 12 11 10	12 14	14 11	14 12
				14

Ex. 2C

E-7 A7 D-7 G7 CΔ7

T
A
B

10 7 8 9 7 9 8 6 6 7 7 6 8 6 5 8 6 4 7 8 6 7 8 5

Ex. 3A

Ex. 3B

GΔ7 E7alt. A-7 D7alt. GΔ7

T
A
B

9 9 7 7 6 7 8 6 7 8 10 9 11 8 11 9 10 11

Ex. 3C

Chord changes: F-7, B^b-7, E^b7, A^bΔ7, D^bΔ7

“I hope that these exercises help you attain your goals as an improviser. The next step may be to transcribe just the rhythms of one of your favorite jazz solos and let them serve as templates for composing your own etudes. Have fun! “

George Muscatello – The Power of Superimposing

Freelance Albany, NY guitarist George Muscatello is not your average looking jazzer. Upon first glance, George resembles more of the independent record storeowner type who owns the cool little shop in the hip part of your local downtown. Make no mistake though, when George plugs in his exquisite custom AO Venus Hollow Rim (www.aoguitars.com) a smile will surely come after hearing his uniquely tasteful improvisations albeit the puffy white and black trucker cap that sports a faux iron-on of Herman Munster. His fingers seem to float over the strings with a delicate touch delivering one brilliant idea after another as he sways back and forth with his head down and feet firmly rooted to the floor. George has studied with Eugenia of Melos, Pete Armstrong, Joel Brown, Eric A. Rogers, and the amazing Leo Brouwer and currently finds himself in the professor chair at Blue Sky Music in Delmar, NY. Look for George’s first CD as a leader in the coming months and be prepared to be dazzled.

“In this lesson I’m going to show you one of my approaches to playing over changes. By superimposing (substitute secondary melody over primary harmony) tetrad arpeggios over a given set of changes, I’m able to include extensions of the chords that I’m playing over for richer sounding lines. Let’s take a ii-7→V7→IΔ7→VI7 in B^b, which would come out to be C-7, F7, B^bΔ7, and G7 respectively. For the Cm7 chord I would play a Δ7 arpeggio a minor 3rd above

(EbΔ7) the root giving me a m9 sound. For the two dom7 chords—F7 and G7—I would play Δ7#5 arpeggios a major 3rd above the root (AΔ7#5 and BΔ7#5) giving me 7#9#5 sounds. As for the BbΔ7 chord, I would simply play a Δ7b5 arpeggio off root of the chord (BbΔ7b5) I'm playing over for a #11 or Lydian sound. Below **Figs. 1-4** display the fingerings for the arpeggios that are to be superimposed over the aforementioned changes. Ascending up the neck, the arpeggios are organized in four separate regions consisting of four arpeggios per region utilizing all twelve available patterns. One inversion type from each chord is included in each of the four sets and is carefully voice led for the smoothest transitions.”

Fig. 1

Fig. 1 shows a musical staff with four measures, each containing an arpeggio for a specific chord. The chords are C-7, F7, B^bΔ7, and G7. Below the staff, the arpeggios are labeled as (E_bΔ7 arp.), (AΔ7#5 arp.), (B_bΔ7_b5 arp.), and (BΔ7#5 arp.). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 on the strings. Below the staff, the fingerings for each measure are listed as follows:

Fin: 1 4 3 4 3 1 1 2 1 4 | 2 1 3 3 4 3 4 1 2 1 | 1 2 1 3 3 4 3 1 1 2 | 2 1 3 3 4 3 4 1 2 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 2 shows a musical staff with four measures, each containing an arpeggio for a specific chord. The chords are C-7, F7, B^bΔ7, and G7. Below the staff, the arpeggios are labeled as (E_bΔ7 arp.), (AΔ7#5 arp.), (B_bΔ7_b5 arp.), and (BΔ7#5 arp.). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4. Below the staff, the fingerings for each measure are listed as follows:

Fin: 1 4 1 4 2 1 2 2 1 4 | 4 1 4 1 1 2 1 3 4 1 | 1 4 1 1 2 1 3 4 1 4 | 4 1 4 1 1 2 1 3 4 1

Fig. 3

C-7 F7 B^bΔ7 G7
 (E^bΔ7 arp.) (AΔ7#5 arp.) (B^bΔ7,5 arp.) (BΔ7#5 arp.)
 Fin: 1 2 1 4 3 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 3 4 1 1 3 3 4 3 1 2 3 2 4 1 2 1 2 3 4 3 4

Fig. 4

C-7 F7 B^bΔ7 G7
 (E^bΔ7 arp.) (AΔ7#5 arp.) (B^bΔ7,5 arp.) (BΔ7#5 arp.)
 Fin: 1 4 3 2 3 2 1 4 1 4 4 1 2 2 1 3 4 1 4 1 1 4 1 4 1 1 2 2 1 4 4 1 2 2 1 3 4 1 4 1

“Take your time with these arpeggios—play them slow and steady so you can really get them under your fingers. Then, try playing the arpeggios over the primary changes to get the sounds in your head so you can start trying to improvise some lines with this concept in mind. I’ve included two lines to start you off with. **Fig. 5** is a simple example of these arpeggios put into motion; while **Fig. 6** is an example of the where this concept can take you. In Fig. 6 you’ll notice I’ve sequenced my melodic ideas into varying intervals mostly employing major and minor 7ths. The ultimate goal is to combine modal intervals within the arpeggios to create a more intervallic texture. The arpeggios should eventually serve as a skeleton helping get you more inside the sound. Thanks!”

Fig. 5

C-9 F7^{#9}₅ B^bΔ7^{b5} G7^{#9}₅

The musical notation for Fig. 5 consists of a treble clef staff in 4/4 time and a guitar TAB staff. The treble staff begins with a 3-measure rest, followed by a melodic line. The TAB staff shows the following fret numbers: Measure 1: 10-11 (B), 10-13 (D), 12-13 (E), 12 (F); Measure 2: 11 (F), 10-9-10 (G), 13-9 (A), 10-9-10 (B); Measure 3: 10 (B), 10-11 (C), 12-10 (D), 10-11 (E); Measure 4: 15 (F), 11 (G), 12-11 (A), 12 (B), 13 (C), 14-13 (D), 15 (E).

Fig. 6

C-9 F7^{b9} B^bΔ7 G7^{#9}₅ B^bΔ7

The musical notation for Fig. 6 consists of a treble clef staff in 4/4 time and a guitar TAB staff. The treble staff begins with a 2-measure rest, followed by a melodic line. The TAB staff shows the following fret numbers: Measure 1: 13 (F), 12-10 (G), 11 (A), 10 (B); Measure 2: 13-11 (C), 14 (D), 13-11 (E), 10-12 (F); Measure 3: 11-13 (G), 10-12 (A), 12 (B); Measure 4: 13 (C), 11-12 (D), 14 (E), 11-13 (F); Measure 5: 10 (G).