

Utilizing 5 Note Groupings

Many of us are familiar with 3 or 4 note diatonic patterns like these:



Or slightly more advanced ones like this one which uses a chromatic approach note. This was made popular by John Coltrane and used by countless other jazz greats.



-These diatonic patterns are fantastic and very useful when you becoming familiar with a given key centers. They should be practiced the full range of your instrument and in every key with as many different variations you, the improviser, choose to become familiar with. I highly suggest writing out 2 or 3 that appeal to you and internalizing them to the point where they can easily be played backward and forward.

Have a look at this 5 note pattern which was derived from the original, (ascending diatonic triads) paying specific attention to the accented notes:



Take a look at this same pattern written in 5/4 time:



-This 5 note pattern can just as easily be practiced in all 12 keys and are equally as helpful in navigating a given key center. It can be played over Cmaj7, D-7, Ephryg, Fmaj7#11, G7, Am7b6, and B-7b5. It also has the added advantage that you are practicing playing groups of 5 notes which will help you play and feel in 5/4 time more efficiently.

Another added bonus of making this a 5 note pattern is that it starts and ends on the same note, making it easy to shift between an ascending and descending version of the same pattern. Here is the pattern written in 4/4 descending diatonically:



Here is this same pattern written in 5/4 time. Notice how this pattern splits the bar line evenly and gives an even split to each measure of 5/4 that isn't available in 3 or 4 note groupings.



Here are some loops to practice for exploring the different rhythmic variations that can be used within a 5 note group. Practice these loops until you can play them comfortably and tap your foot on the quarter note:



-As you get comfortable with each loop, begin to move the notes up the diatonic pattern utilizing the range of your instrument. Practicing these will give you a systematic way of arriving at a variety of different rhythmic options when improvising.

2 The Coltrane chromatic approach pattern can also be a 5 note pattern if you take the triad it is based on and add an extra note a diatonic 3rd below it making it a 7th chord instead of a triad:

33

(Descending) (Ascending)

-When played with a metronome or externally tapping the pulse for the quarter note, one finds that the accent of the 5 note pattern (in 4/4 time) is constantly shifting giving it a rhythmic 'tumble' that isn't prevalent in a 3 or 4 note pattern.

39 Conversely, here is the same pattern written in 5/4 time:

(Descending) (Ascending)

-Again, notice how 5 note patterns in 5/4 time provide a clarity to each measure that isn't available when playing 3 or 4 note groupings.

-Because 5 note groupings are rhythmic in nature, using them is a great way to further develop your sense of time while simultaneously augmenting your ability to provide clarity in 5/4 time. It will take practice to cultivate this skill at first so it is important to go slow and always know where the beat is in relationship to the note you are accenting. After a while, playing these groupings will be natural and allow you to create a new spin on your existing vocabulary.

Dig this chorus on Rhythm Changes using diatonic 5 note groupings from the previous 2 patterns mentioned:

43 C Δ 7 A $^7(b9)$ D-7 G $^7(\#5)$ E-7 A $^7(b9)$ D-7 G 7

47 C 7 alt. F Δ 7 F $\#^{\circ}7$ |1. E-7 A $^7(b9)$ D-7 G $^7(b9)$ |2. C 6 G 7 C 6

53 E $^7(\#11)$ A $^7(\#11)$

57 D $^7(\#11)$ G $^7(\#11)$

61 C 6 D-7 G 7 E-7 (eb7) A 7 (d7) D-7 G 7 alt.

65 C 7 F 6 F $\#^{\circ}7$ D-7 G 7 C 6