

Introduction

This book is for guitarists who are new to jazz, but not beginners on guitar. Some familiarity with playing the instrument and the basics of music notation will be most helpful. It is designed to introduce guitarists who play rock, blues, country, folk, and classical into the realm of playing jazz guitar, especially in combo situations such as school jazz ensembles and big bands, adult rehearsal bands, jam sessions with friends or in actual professional situations. I frequently encounter students who can play blazing heavy metal solos and know a few chords, or perhaps can read and memorize classical pieces, but want to play in a jazz ensemble and are totally puzzled as to what to do in that situation. This book is for them, and for anyone who wants a “refresher” course or even just some alternate ways of looking at things.

The book has four main parts. Part One deals with the first puzzling thing encountered by guitarists new to jazz at their initial combo or big band rehearsal: jazz band rhythm guitar. Part Two deals with a style of accompaniment called “comping” by jazz musicians. Part Three is a somewhat novel way of beginning to improvise single note jazz solos, which involves using melodies to develop a “vocabulary” for jazz improvisation (actually it is the “old fashioned” way that jazz musicians originally used to do), rather than just learning a bunch of scales and modes and hoping for the best. Finally, Part Four gets to the scales, arpeggios, modes, and left and right hand technical studies that really are necessary to becoming a well-rounded jazz musician. This way of ordering is based on the way we learn to speak as infants (imitating sounds first, reading and writing later). Of course you can study the book in any order that is useful for you, such as skipping directly to something that may help you prepare for an upcoming rehearsal or performance.

After the four main parts is some preparatory material including a non-alphabetical glossary called “Some Definitions” (Appendix A), a primer on chord names and chord symbols (Appendix B), and a primer on chord types (Appendix C) which is important for understanding how to use the chord variations in real life. If any terms or chord names are unclear to you as you begin working through the book, please take a few minutes to check out these Appendices for clarification.

The notation is standard (the only kind you’ll ever see in your jazz band charts, never tab) supplemented with fingering numbers (below the staff) and string numbers (circled above the staff), and frequently fingerboard diagrams (standard vertical for chords and horizontal for scales and arpeggios). Once a circled string number appears, stay on that string until a new string number appears. Picking symbols are only shown on technical studies in Chapter 12, where they are explained. Slurs are notes that are not picked, but use hammer-ons, pull-offs, and left hand finger slides. You can always feel free to look ahead to Chapter 12 for technical help whenever you feel you might need it while working on examples earlier in the book.

The chord symbols currently being used here are a commonly used set of “shortcut” symbols similar to those recommended by Mark Levine in *The Jazz Piano Book* and in *The Jazz Theory Book* (both published by Sher Music Co.) using “Δ” to symbolize “major” and “-” to symbolize “minor”, “ø” to symbolize “half diminished” and “o” to symbolize “diminished.” In real life charts, a variety of different systems of chord notation are in common use. Please refer to Appendix B, *Chord Names and Chord Symbols Primer*, for a complete explanation. You’ll need to be familiar with them when you use charts and fake books.