

BLUES USING GUIDE TONES

The following blues lines were conceived to illustrate the use of guide tones to create harmonically clear melodies. They are meant to be simple enough for teaching purposes, yet still retaining some element of musicality and development. The guide tones were adhered to, but the lines are also created using the basic F triad with neighbor tones and elaboration, and created using some simple forms of motivic development. These different approaches to an improvised or composed melody are not mutually exclusive.

The guide tones are shown above the line for reference. In a class, I have students sing this line while others are improvising to reinforce the aural sense of where the harmony is going.

The guide tones, like the outlines, can be a useful vehicle for teaching any element of melodic improvisational theory. Students can work on time feel, tone, motivic development, triad elaboration, creative noodling, or whatever and still try to connect the guide tones. The guide tones, after all, are what is actually making the chord changes sound, and therefore, when followed can propel a solo.

BASIC GUIDE TONE LINE:

SOLO FOLLOWING GUIDE TONES:

1

5

9

The guide tones are not always at the start of the line or even on the beat. Sometimes they occur in other registers.

In m.7, the line suggests outline no.3 (ascending arpeggio, the 7th resolving down to the next third). From the F# in m.8 to the last F in m.12, the line moves down in steps as shown in the staff below the line. Practicing singing and playing the simple shapes helps in creating the more elaborate lines which follow the simple structures.

System 1 (Measures 1-4):

- Chords: D, G7, D, D7
- Staff 1: BASIC GUIDE TONE LINE
- Staff 2: SOLO FOLLOWING GUIDE TONES

System 2 (Measures 5-8):

- Chords: G7, G#07, D, B7
- Staff 1: OUTLINE NO.3, OUTLINE NO.1
- Staff 2: Bass line

System 3 (Measures 9-12):

- Chords: Emi7, A7, D
- Staff 1: OUTLINE NO.1: STEP PROGRESSION TO END
- Staff 2: Bass line