

Whole Tone Scale - Searchin' Lesson

Date: Fall, 1987

Location: Emily's apartment. Must be Manhattan judging by the sound of the traffic in the background from time to time (which thankfully doesn't seem to affect the recording).

Description: An interesting lesson that dives into the whole tone scale, playing the whole tone scales in fourths, how to approach soloing over Dominant7(sus4) chords. We then tackle the tune "Searchin" from one of her albums.

00:00 - we jump right into it with the whole tone scale. I ask Emily to show me the fingering for playing the whole tone scale in fourths. It's a really "out" sound.

1:00 - we go through the whole tone scale in fourths slowly. Emily wrote it out (see accompanying lesson PDF).

4:00 - same scale going down.

5:00 - some examples of using the whole tone scale to go "out" and then resolving it to come back "in". Emily mixes up the whole tone scale playing it straight and in fourths. She makes an interesting comment that bears notice - going out and coming back in is really a matter of changing scales. We know from earlier lessons that altered scales like the whole tone and jazz minor scales work best over Dominant chords, so here Emily is emphasizing that you need to resolve the tension by changing scales - play a whole tone scale over the dominant chord to create tension, and then a major scale over the major chord to provide release.

8:30 - Emily throws in the Lydian mode and indicates that you can use the Lydian mode over any major chord (it brings out the #11). She starts laying down some really wild chords and indicates that Pat Metheny uses them a lot. I asked her whether she played with Pat also George Benson and she said yes.

10:00 - we start talking about playing over Sus4 chords (see pdf) to see how she superimposes a Dorian mode over an A7sus4.

14:00 - I play an A7(sus4) and Emily superimposes a G Major and then an E Minor scale. See accompanying pdf file for diagram of the A7(sus4) voicing that we're using!

20:00 - Emily vamps over A7(sus4) to C7(sus4) while I play Em to Gm.

23:00 - we talk a bit about positioning.

25:00 - Emily gives a few examples of the different positions of these scales up and down the neck.

27:00 - I comp again on A7(sus4) to C7(sus4) while Emily takes an extended solo into the stratosphere.

30:00 - I take a stab at a solo

34:00 - we change topics and start working on her arrangement of Duke Ellington's Searchin

35:00 - Emily has written out the chord changes for Searchin and shows me the fingering.

42:00 - Here's an interesting historical note - I asked Emily if the liner notes for the song "Arubian Nights" from the album together are wrong. The liner notes credit Larry with the first solo, but to me it always sounded like Emily. Turns out I was correct - it was Emily and the notes are wrong.

46:00 - Emily plays Searchin'one last time, but the tape ends along with the lesson.