

Pat Metheny Plays the Blues

by

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Thesis

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the improvisational language of the jazz guitarist Pat Metheny, by transcribing and analyzing his solos over the 12-bar blues form. The topics covered are conventional jazz vocabulary, use of superimposition of harmonic progressions, non-tonal chromaticism, “Metheny-isms”, group interaction, phrase rhythm, technique and articulation. The results of this research will provide insight into Pat Metheny’s vocabulary and process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Pat Metheny is one of the most influential guitar players of his generation. For years, jazz guitarists have looked to him for inspiration. Metheny has a very unique sound and approach to jazz, which many musicians have been trying to understand. To better understand his improvising, I have transcribed five Metheny solos over the 12-bar blues form. Improvising over a blues form allows rhythmic and harmonic freedom for the soloist because of its simple chord changes and phrasing. I believe that studying Metheny's solos over the blues will provide musicians a deeper insight into his improvisational approach. I will give examples and analysis of his use of conventional jazz vocabulary, use of superimposition of harmonic progressions, non-tonal chromaticism, "Metheny-isms", group interaction, phrase rhythm, technique and articulation. Given the enormous influence of his music, there is surprisingly little scholarly analysis of Metheny's approach to improvisation. The only previous academic study is by Steve Langemo¹. In his thesis, Langemo transcribes thirteen Metheny solos from various songs. He follows each transcription with a melodic and harmonic analysis. My research is slightly different because it only focuses on the blues.

Pat Metheny was born on August 12, 1954 in Lee's Summit, Missouri. Although he was exposed to music at an early age, he did not play the guitar until he was a teenager.² After dedicated practice, he moved to Kansas City, where he became one of the most popular guitarists in town. Early in his career, Metheny was provided

¹ Steve Langemo, "The Jazz Guitar Style of Pat Metheny," (thesis, Bowling Green University, 2003).

² *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, s.v. "Metheny, Pat."

opportunities to teach guitar at the University of Miami and the Berklee College of Music in Boston. Richard Niles, a student of Metheny during this time, recalls Metheny's concerts in Boston. Niles explains, "The gigs Metheny did in Boston clubs and bars were literally shocking. None of us had ever heard anyone play any instrument the way he played his (even then) slightly battered Gibson ES175."³ In 1974, Metheny began playing with Gary Burton, one of the great jazz vibraphonists. Metheny had appeared on three of Burton's albums before ECM gave him his first opportunity to make his own record. His early records with ECM helped him become one of the biggest names in jazz. Throughout the rest of his career, Metheny has played with many leading artists including Jaco Pastorius, Lyle Mays, Joni Mitchell, Michael Brecker, Ornette Coleman, Dave Holland, John Scofield, and Jim Hall.⁴ Currently, he has been nominated for 35 Grammy awards, winning 20. He has three gold records and is in the DownBeat Hall of Fame.⁵

³ Niles, Richard, *The Pat Metheny Interviews*, IX

⁴ *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*

⁵ "Awards," *Pat Metheny*, accessed Nov. 14, 2016. <http://www.patmetheny.com/awards/>

Articulation and Technique

After analyzing many excerpts of Metheny's playing, it is clear there is a distinct way in which he articulates his notes. On guitar, there are several ways to play a note, or a group of notes. One way would be to pick the notes with a guitar pick or fingers. This is notated without any articulation mark. Example 1-1 shows a C major scale articulated by all picking. Usually guitar players will alternate their picking strokes from up to down. Guitar picking is similar to a wind instrument tonguing each note.

Example 1-1: Picking



Another articulation possible on the guitar is a hammer-on. A hammer-on is when a guitarist will pick the first note but then not pick an ascending note. In order to get sound out of the hammer-on, a guitarist must move his finger quickly and forcibly to the string and fret of the ascending note. A hammer-on is similar to a wind instrument slurring notes and is notated by slur marks.

Example 1-2: Hammer-on



A pull-off is the opposite of a hammer-on. To achieve the pull-off, a guitarist picks a note and then pulls off of the string, without picking, with his finger to articulate a note below the first one.

Example 1-3: Pull-off



Metheny uses a combination of picking, hammer-ons, and pull-offs in his playing. By doing this, he creates horn-like lines. Most woodwinds would not tongue every note, which is why most jazz guitarist might apply these techniques to their own playing. Guitarists such as Pat Metheny use combinations of techniques to articulate notes when playing at a fast tempo. It is generally easier to pull-off and hammer-on notes at a fast tempo rather than picking every note.

Other ways of articulating include slides and bends. A slide is similar to a hammer-on and pull-off. A slide is notated with a straight line leading to the next note. The way a guitarist achieves a slide is by picking a note and moving his/her finger up or down the fretboard without lifting up in order to articulate different notes. Below is an example of a slide.

Example 1-4: Slide



A bend is when a guitarist picks a note (or slurs to a note) and then bends the string cause a change in pitch. An example of this is found in Metheny’s solo on “Turnaround.” In Example 1-5, Metheny articulates each E by bending up from a half-step below, Eb. That is why the music is notated with “1/2 step” bend.

Example 1-5: Bend

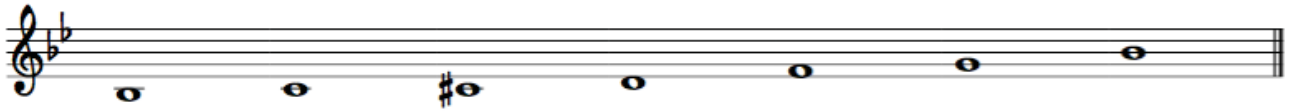


Paying close attention to all of Metheny’s guitar techniques guide guitarists to playing fast, horn-like lines. It is a combination of all these techniques that enable Metheny to play the way he does.

Chapter 2: The Blues Form

The blues is one of the most popular forms of American music. Blues lyrics often end in rhymes over the chord progressions that reference I-IV-V.⁶ Blue notes are three distinct tones that are often used melodically over a blues progression. These notes are the flatted 3rd, 5th, and 7th scale degrees.⁷ There are two modes of the blues scale: major and minor. A major blues scale contains both the major third and the minor third (or sharp 9). The minor blues scale omits the major 3rd.

Example 2-1: Bb Major Blues Scale



Example 2-2: Bb Minor Blues Scale



When analyzing the improvisations of Pat Metheny, it is important to understand the different harmonic variations of the 12-bar blues. The most basic blues form has very

⁶ Kubik, Gerhard. *Africa and the Blues*, 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

simple chord changes. Example 2-3 shows the harmonic progression of a basic blues form.

Example 2-3: “Simple” Bb Blues Form

The musical notation shows a 12-bar blues progression in Bb major. The first staff (measures 1-4) has Eb7 above it. The second staff (measures 5-8) has Eb7 above it. The third staff (measures 9-12) has Eb7 above it. The fourth staff (measures 13-16) has F7 above it. The notation is in 4/4 time and features slanted lines on the staff to represent the melodic line.

In this example, all of the chord changes are dominant seventh chords, suggesting the Mixolydian mode. Other scale options are the major blues scale of each chord, or the Bb minor blues scale superimposed over the entire chord progression. The phrasing for this form is also very simple. Any 12-bar blues can be broken into three 4-bar phrases.

There are other harmonic variations of the blues. Example 2-4 shows harmonic variation by introducing the ii-V-I chord progression. The first example of this is in mm. 4-5. The F-7 and Bb7 are both diatonic as the ii7 and V7 in Eb major. Instead of resolving to the diatonic Eb maj.7, the progression resolves to Eb7 in order to keep the blues harmony. Similar tonicizations happen in mm. 8-10. Measure 8 is tonicizing C major, but instead resolves to C minor in m. 9. It resolves to C minor to set the return to Bb in m. 11. The harmony in m. 6 is changed to a E dim. 7 to act as a passing chord connecting Eb7 and Bb7. Finally, the last two measures are reharmonized to I7-VI7-ii7-

V7 in Bb major to create a *turnaround*. A soloist has the freedom to superimpose these harmonies melodically over the blues form, even if they are not being played by the rhythm section.

Example 2-4: Bb Blues Scale with ii-V7-I

Bb7 Eb7 Bb7 F-7 Bb7
 Eb7 Edim.7 Bb7 D-7 G7
 C-7 F7 Bb7 G7 C-7 F7

Example 2-5 introduces the use of tritone substitution. This substitution occurs when a chord is substituted by a dominant chord a tritone away. In m. 4, Bb7 is substituted by E7 because E is a tritone away from Bb. Another example of the tritone substitution is found in mm. 8-9. In m. 8, Ab7 is substituting for D-7, while Gb7 is substituting for C-7. Tritone substitutions are very common in jazz and can be superimposed melodically over standard changes.

Example 2-5: Bb Blues form with Tritone Substitutions

The minor blues form, shown in Example 2-6, is very similar to a regular 12-bar blues form. The main difference is that the tonic and subdominant chords are minor. The turnaround in a minor blues often goes from bVI-V7-i (mm. 9-11). In many cases, a half-diminished 7th chord built on the second scale degree proceeds the V7 chord in measure 9. In a C minor blues, that chord would be a D-7b5.

Example 2-6: Minor Blues Form

Turnaround is an altered 12-bar blues written by Ornette Coleman.⁸ The turnaround of the tune is much different than that of a regular 12-bar blues. In mm. 9-10 Coleman substitutes a standard turnaround with C-7, Db-7, B-7, and A-7. Coleman also substitutes F7 or F#dim in m. 6 with an F-7.

Example 2-7: “Turnaround” Blues Form

The musical notation for Example 2-7 consists of three staves, each with four measures of rhythmic notation (diagonal lines). The chord symbols are as follows:

- Staff 1 (measures 1-4): C7, F7, C7
- Staff 2 (measures 5-8): F7, F-7, C7
- Staff 3 (measures 9-12): C-7, Db-7, B-7, A-7, C7, G7

Metheny will often imply harmonic ideas from one blues progression into the context another blues. For example, he may play *Turnaround* changes over a standard blues. Understanding these different blues forms will be very important when analyzing Metheny’s solos.

⁸ Ornette Coleman, *Turnaround*, Contemporary Label, 1959.

Chapter 3: Conventional Jazz Vocabulary

In his formative years, Pat Metheny was strongly influenced by artists such as Wes Montgomery and Miles Davis.⁹ The influence of these artists and other artists of the bebop era can be heard in Metheny’s improvisation. Two of the most important notes in jazz harmony are the 3rds and 7ths. These notes define the quality of the chord, and improvisers during the bebop era accented these notes in their solos. Bop players also outline chord changes with extensions such as the 9ths and 13ths, and embellish their lines with neighbor notes, chromatic passing tones, and blue notes.¹⁰ Example 3-1 and 3-2 illustrate Metheny targeting 3rds, 7ths, and extensions on “Blues for Pat” from the album *Rejoicing*.¹¹

Example 3-1: “Blues for Pat,” *Rejoicing*, mm. 5-8

The musical notation shows a single staff in G major. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: Bb7, Bdim, F7, A-7, and D7. The melody starts with a whole rest, then a quarter note Bb, followed by a dotted quarter note B, and a quarter note A. The next measure contains a quarter note G, a quarter note F, and a quarter note E. The third measure has a quarter note D, a quarter note C, and a quarter note B. The fourth measure has a quarter note A, a quarter note G, and a quarter note F. The fifth measure has a quarter note E, a quarter note D, and a quarter note C. The sixth measure has a quarter note B, a quarter note A, and a quarter note G. The seventh measure has a quarter note F, a quarter note E, and a quarter note D. The eighth measure has a quarter note C, a quarter note B, and a quarter note A. The piece ends with a quarter note G. A measure number '5' is written above the first measure, and an '8' is written below the first measure.

⁹ Niles, 17.

¹⁰ Grove Music Online, “Bop.”

¹¹ Metheny, Pat. *Rejoicing*, ECM, 1983, MP3.

Example 3-2, "Blues for Pat," *Rejoicing*, mm. 17-24

Musical notation for Example 3-2, showing two staves of music. The first staff (measures 17-20) features chords Bb7, Bdim, F7, A-7, and D7. The second staff (measures 21-24) features chords Db7, C7, and F7. The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and triplet markings.

The bebop scale is another conventional scale that improvisers use. The bebop scale can be thought of as a Mixolydian scale with a chromatic passing tone between the root and the b7 scale degree. The bebop scale is typically used over a dominant seventh chord. Example 3-3 shows an example of a Bb bebop scale.

Example 3-3: Bb Bebop Scale

Musical notation for Example 3-3, showing the Bb bebop scale over a Bb7 chord. The scale is written in a single line of music, starting on Bb and ending on Bb, with a chromatic passing tone between the root and the b7 degree.

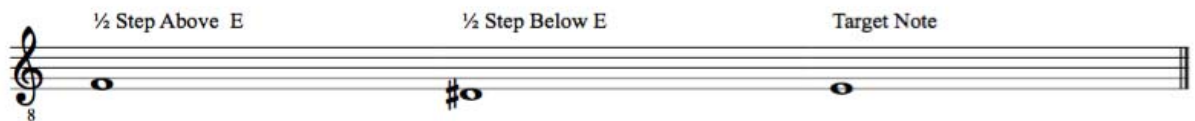
The last two beats of Example 3-4 show Metheny using the characteristic chromatic passing tone of the bebop scale over an A7 chord.

Example 3-4: "Blues M45," *Te Vou!*, m. 13

Musical notation for Example 3-4, showing a melodic line with various chords (Bb7, A7, D-7, E-7b5, A7) and a chromatic passing tone over an A7 chord. The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and triplet markings.

Another example of conventional jazz vocabulary is Metheny's use of surround tones. A surround tone is when an improviser surrounds a target note with diatonic and chromatic neighbor tones. Example 3-5 shows surround tones surrounding the note E. Half steps typically surround the target note. Other notes can be added to prolong the arrival of the target note.

Example 3-5: Surround Tones



Example 3-6 shows Metheny using surround tones with F as the target note. The notes in between the lines are prolonging the F. The G descends to Gb, then goes to E, then finally F. The Gb and the E surround the F by two half steps.

Example 3-6: You Speak My Language, m. 20



Chapter 4: Superimposition

David Liebman describes superimposition as “the placement of one musical element over another to be sounded simultaneously with the original.”¹² Superimposition can create harmonic tension. Tension and release is an extremely important principle in all of jazz music, and in Metheny’s style in particular. David Liebman describes tension and release as, “a balance of excitement and quiescence, action and relaxation.”¹³ Traditional Western art music uses tension and release harmonically by moving from the dominant to the tonic.¹⁴ In jazz, many improvisers use techniques such as chromaticism and tonal or rhythmic displacement to create musical tension.

An example of this can be found in Metheny’s solo of “Turnaround” off of *Wish*.¹⁵ In mm. 8 and 9, Metheny superimposes a melody implying an Ab7 chord over a C7 harmony. This superimposition creates altered pitches, such as #5, #9, and #11. It is also possible to hear this is an E7 chord in m. 8 going to an Ebm7 chord in m. 9, then descending to a Dm7 in m. 10.

Example 4-1: “Turnaround”, *Wish*, mm. 8-9

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The staff contains a melodic line for measures 8, 9, and 10. Above the staff, the chords F7, F-7, and C7 are indicated for measures 8, 9, and 10 respectively. The melody in measure 8 starts on G4, moves to Ab4, then Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, and ends on F5. In measure 9, it starts on E5, moves to D5, C5, Bb4, Ab4, G4, F4, E4, and ends on D4. In measure 10, it starts on C4, moves to B3, Ab3, G3, F3, E3, D3, and ends on C3. There are some rhythmic markings like 'z' (accidental) and 'z' (rest) in the notation.

¹² Liebman, 14.

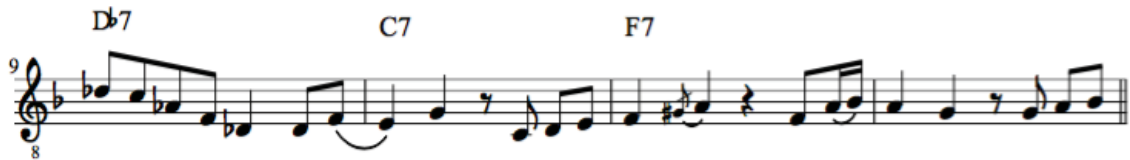
¹³ Liebman, David. *A Chromatic Approach to Jazz Harmony and Melody*, 13.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Redman, Joshua. *Wish*, Warner Bros., 1993, MP3.

Another example of superimposition can be found in m. 5 of “Blues for Pat”, from *Rejoicing*.¹⁶ In m. 9 of Example 4-2, Metheny superimposes a Db major 7 chord over a C dominant 7 harmony. This superimposition sounds the b9, #5, and 11 over C.

Example 4-2: “Blues For Pat,” *Rejoicing*, m. 9-12



Another way of improvising over the blues is by superimposing the blues scale over the entire form. Metheny uses this concept many times in the song “You Speak My Language,” off of *I Can See Your House from Here*.¹⁷ Example 4-3 shows Metheny superimposing the Bb minor blues scale over an E diminished chord.

Example 4-3: “You Speak My Language,” *I Can See Your House From Here*, m. 7



A similar example of this is found in Example 4-4. In this example, Metheny is playing the Bb minor blues scale over the iii-VI7 chord progressing in m. 9.

The line in Example 4-4 shows Metheny combining the Bb minor blues scale with the Mixolydian mode. Metheny starts off with the Bb minor blues scale in m. 16, then

¹⁶ Metheny, Pat. *Rejoicing*, ECM, 1983, MP3.

¹⁷ John Scofield and Pat Metheny, *I Can See Your House From Here*, Blue Note, 1993.

switches to the Bb mixolydian scale in m. 17. Metheny plays the Eb Mixolydian mode over the Eb7 chord in m. 18 until beat 1 of m. 19.

Example 4-4: “You Speak My Language,” mm. 16-18

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff begins at measure 16 with a Bb7 chord. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, including a triplet of eighth notes in measure 17. The bottom staff begins at measure 18 with an Eb7 chord and continues with a melodic line. In measure 19, the chord changes to Edim. The notation includes various accidentals (flats, sharps) and articulation marks like slurs and accents.

Metheny also superimposes over chords using tritone substitutions. Example 4-5 shows Metheny playing a line in E major over a Bb7 chord. E is the tritone substitution of Bb7. In this example, Metheny resolves the E major superimposition to Bb on beat 4 of m. 22.

Example 4-5: “You Speak My Language,” m. 22

The image shows a single staff of musical notation starting at measure 22. The chord is initially EMaj7 and then changes to Bb7. The melody is a single line of music with various accidentals and articulation marks, including slurs and accents. The notation includes a triplet of eighth notes and a quintuplet of eighth notes.

Example 4-6 shows Metheny using tritone substitution and blues scale substitution in one line. The tritone substitution happens on beat 2 of m. 34 where he

plays an F#7 arpeggio over a C-7. On beat 3, Metheny plays the Bb minor blues scale over C-7 and F7 until beat 3 of m. 35.

Example 4-6: “You Speak My Language,” mm. 34-35



The pentatonic scale is a five-note scale that can be imposed over the blues form the same way that a blues scale can. There are two main pentatonic scales: minor and major. The minor pentatonic scale consists of 1-b3-4-5-7. The major pentatonic is 1-2-3-5-6.

Example 4-7: C Minor Pentatonic



Example 4-8: C Major Pentatonic



Example 4-9 shows Metheny superimposing the A minor pentatonic over an A7 chord from m. 134 to beat 2 of m. 135. This example is from “Go Get It” off of the album

*Pat Metheny Trio 99-00.*¹⁸ Imposing the minor pentatonic over the blues is a very common improvisation technique that is often heard from blues musicians such as B.B. King.

Example 4-9: “Go Get It,” m. 133-136



¹⁸ Pat Metheny Trio, *Pat Metheny Trio 99-00*, Wea/Warner Bros., 2000.

Chapter 5: Non-tonal Chromaticism

Liebman describes non-tonal chromaticism as “melodic lines and harmonies that have no discernible key or root orientation.”¹⁹ Liebman suggests that improvisers who are undermining the harmonic center are relying on their ear, rather than relying on familiarity or “intellectual forethought.”

An example of this can be found in mm. 36-37 of Metheny’s “Turnaround” solo. The chromatic passage begins on beat 3 of m. 36 of Example 5-1. Although, one can justify the notes as “altered”, there appears to be no specific scale from which the passage is devised.

Example 5-1: “Turnaround”, mm. 36-37



Metheny often uses the same chromatic line in “Blues M45” off of the album *Te Vou!*.²⁰ Example 5-2 shows the first time Metheny plays this particular line. The chromatic line appears in m. 25. The line works because of how Metheny leads into it and how he resolves it. The chromatic line is approached by a D melodic minor line in m. 24. Although the line in m. 24 is not purely melodic minor, it captures the tonal quality of the

¹⁹ Liebman, 30.

²⁰ Roy Haynes, *Te Vou!*, Dreyfus Records, 1995.

melodic minor scale. A chromatic motive on beats 3 and 4 of m. 25 leads to the root of the tonic chord on beat 1 of m. 26.

Example 5-2: “Blues M45,” mm. 24-29

The musical notation for Example 5-2 consists of two staves of music in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first staff covers measures 24 and 25. Measure 24 is marked with a D-7 chord and contains a chromatic line of eighth notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Measure 25 is marked with an E-7b5 chord and continues the chromatic line: D4, Eb4, E4, F4, G4, Ab4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The second staff covers measures 26, 27, 28, and 29. Measure 26 is marked with a D- chord and continues the chromatic line: D4, Eb4, E4, F4, G4, Ab4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Measure 27 has a Bend instruction over the final note, A4. Measure 28 is marked with a D7 chord and continues the chromatic line: D4, Eb4, E4, F4, G4, Ab4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Measure 29 is marked with a D7 chord and continues the chromatic line: D4, Eb4, E4, F4, G4, Ab4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. A vertical red line is placed at the end of measure 29.

Example 5-3 shows Metheny using a similar line. The chromatic line begins on beat 1 of m. 34 and resolves on beat 1 of m. 36. In m. 34, the line begins in whole tones until beat 2. The rest of the measure is an ascension of whole steps and half step and then a descension of half steps until beat 1 of m. 35. Measure 35 begins with the same line found in Example 5-2, with the exception of the last beat. He is also playing the line over the same tonality, A7. Even though the line becomes more tonal in the last beat of m. 35, it does not fully resolve until beat 1 of m. 36. Metheny again resolves to the root of the tonic chord.

Example 5-3: "Blues M45," mm. 34-38

Musical notation for Example 5-3, measures 34-38. The notation is in 12/8 time and features a blues scale. The upper staff (measures 34-35) is marked with $B\flat 7$ and $A 7$. The lower staff (measures 36-38) is marked with $D-7$, $E-7\flat 5$, and $A 7$. The melody in the upper staff consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the lower staff provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Example 5-4 and 5-5 show chromatic lines incorporating the same $A 7$ chromatic line found in the last two examples.

Example 5-4: "Blues M45," mm. 46-49

Musical notation for Example 5-4, measures 46-49. The notation is in 12/8 time. The upper staff (measures 46-47) is marked with $B\flat 7$ and $A 7$. The lower staff (measures 48-49) is marked with $D-7$, $E-7\flat 5$, and $A 7$. A vertical red line is placed between measures 47 and 48. The melody in the upper staff features a chromatic line, and the lower staff provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Example 5-5: "Blues M45," mm. 58-61

Musical notation for Example 5-5, measures 58-61. The notation is in 12/8 time. The upper staff (measures 58-59) is marked with $B\flat 7$ and $A 7$. The lower staff (measures 60-61) is marked with $D-7$, $E-7\flat 5$, and $A 7$. The melody in the upper staff features a chromatic line, and the lower staff provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Chapter 6: Motivic And Thematic Development

Jazz improvisation can be divided into two categories: paraphrase and chorus improvisation.²¹ Paraphrase is embellishment or ornamentation of a melody or theme, while chorus is free improvisation over a chord structure. Metheny improvises using both of these categories. Many of Metheny's improvised lines start with a simple rhythmic or melodic motive. A motive is a short melodic, harmonic, and/or rhythmic musical idea.²² One example of this can be found in Metheny's solo in "Blues For Pat." Example 6-1 shows rhythmic and melodic motivic development. The original idea is one measure long and begins in m. 13. Measure 14 is a continuation of that motivic idea by keeping similar rhythm and melodic content.

Example 6-1: "Blues For Pat" mm. 13-16



Example 6-2 shows use of rhythmic motivic development. The basic rhythmic motive Metheny uses is four sixteenth notes and a quarter note. The first motive starts on beat four of m. 22. The second motive starts on beat two of the next measure. There is a

²¹Gunther Schuller, *Musings: The Musical Worlds of Gunther Schuller* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 86.

²²William Drabkin, "Motif."

slight deviation from the motive on beat four of m. 23 through beat three of m. 24. The motive comes back on beat four in m. 24 and continues until beat one of m. 26.

Example 6-2: “Blues For Pat”, mm. 21-28

Example 6-3 is another example of a melodic and rhythmic motive. In this example, Metheny is moving perfect fifths up and down the fretboard while maintaining the same rhythmic figure.

Example 6-3: “You Speak My Language,” mm. 24-25

Example 6-4 shows thematic improvisation. The theme Metheny is improvising over is similar to Count Basie’s “Lester Leaps In.” Thematic improvisation differs from motivic improvisation because it is based on a specific melody or specific pitches.

Example 6-4: “(Go) Get It,” m. 157-168

Musical score for Example 6-4, measures 157-168. The score is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It consists of three staves. The first staff (measures 157-160) has a treble clef and a common time signature. The second staff (measures 161-164) has a treble clef and a common time signature. The third staff (measures 165-168) has a treble clef and a common time signature. Chord symbols are placed above the staves: A7 (157), D7 (161), A7 (162), F#7 (163), B-7 (165), E7 (166), A7 (167), B-7 (168), and E7 (168).

Chapter 7: “Metheny-isms”

I define a “Metheny-ism” as an improvised passage that is based on a finger pattern. These passages can be chromatic or diatonic. A chromatic Metheny-ism is using the same exact finger pattern and moving it up or down the fretboard. A diatonic Metheny-ism is based around a shape that slightly changes finger patterns in order to keep the passage diatonic. An example of a chromatic Metheny-ism is found in mm. 21-22 of “Turnaround.” In Example 7-1, the finger pattern starts on beat two in m. 21 and ends on beat two of m. 22. In this passage, Metheny is taking one four-note shape and moving it up one fret at a time.

Example 7-1: “Turnaround,” mm. 21-22



Another example of a Metheny-ism can be found in mm. 38-42 of the same piece. Example 7-2 is a mix between a chromatic and a diatonic Metheny-ism and is approached by a chromatic line. From mm. 38-39, the Metheny-ism is diatonic in Bb major, with the exception of the last note in m. 39. One cannot play this passage by using the same exact fingering, but can use a similar fingering with adjustments to compensate for the key. The line starts becoming chromatic in m. 40. The same exact fingering is used from mm. 40-41.

Example 7-2: "Turnaround," Wish, mm. 38-42

Example 7-3 is an example of a tonal Metheny-ism. Each note, with a few exceptions, fits each chord. The Metheny-ism starts on beat 2 of m. 60 and ends on beat 4 of m. 69.

Example 7-3: "Blues M45," mm. 60-69

Metheny-isms are often resolved on strong beats. Example 7-4 and Example 7-5 are two examples of Metheny resolving on beat one.

Example 7-4: “Go Get It,” m. 21-33

Musical score for Example 7-4, measures 21-33 of "Go Get It". The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music is in 4/4 time. The first staff (measures 21-24) has a vertical red line at the end of measure 24. The second staff (measures 25-28) has a vertical red line at the end of measure 28. The third staff (measures 29-33) has a vertical red line at the beginning of measure 29. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: B-7, E7, A7, B-7, E7, A7, D7, A7, F#7, B-7.

Example 7-5: “Go Get It,” m. 145-156

Musical score for Example 7-5, measures 145-156 of "Go Get It". The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music is in 4/4 time. The first staff (measures 145-148) has a vertical red line at the end of measure 148. The second staff (measures 149-152) has a vertical red line at the end of measure 152. The third staff (measures 153-156) has a vertical red line at the end of measure 156. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: A7, D7, A7, F#7, B-7, E7, A7, B-7, E7.

Chapter 8: Phrase Rhythm

Stefan Love describes phrase rhythm as, “the interaction of grouping and metrical structure.”²³ There are many variations of phrase rhythm. Some improvisers use the form of a piece to construct their phrase rhythm. For example, Charlie Parker often created seven- or eight-measure phrases over a 32-bar form.²⁴ Phrase rhythm plays an important part in Metheny’s improvisation.

Metheny does not displace phrases in any of the blues solos. In fact, his phrases often start or resolve on beat one. Metheny tends to start his solos with short phrases. An example of this can be found in the first eight measures of “Turnaround,” shown in Example 8-1. The first eight measures of this excerpt can be broken into five small phrases. The first phrase is mm. 1-2. The second phrase is m. 3 through beat two of m. 4. The third phrase starts on beat four of m. 4 and ends on beat two of m. 5. The fourth phrase starts on beat three of m. 5 and ends on beat three of m. 6. The last short phrase begins in m. 7, including the pick-up, and ends on beat two of m. 8.

²³ Stefan Love, “An Approach to Phrase Rhythm in Jazz,” *Journal of Jazz Studies* 8, no. 1 (2012): 4-32.

²⁴ Ibid.

Example 8-1: Short Phrases from “Turnaround”

Metheny tends to play a long phrase over the turnaround. Example 8-2 shows the rest of the first chorus of “Turnaround.” The first three measures are short phrases that were already covered in Example 8-1. In the last two beats of m. 8, Metheny starts his longest phrase that eventually ends in m. 11. He follows that phrase with another long phrase that starts in m. 11 and ends in m. 13. Starting a chorus with a series of short phrases and ending a chorus with long phrases is a scheme that Metheny uses in many of his blues solos.

Example 8-2: Long phrase from *Turnaround*

Example 8-3 is the second chorus of Metheny's solo in "Turnaround." This chorus is another example of Metheny's tendencies in phrasing. He starts the seventh measure of the chorus with a series of short phrases. In m. 20, Metheny starts a long phrase that lasts over most of the turnaround. He then starts a phrase in m. 24 that leads into the next chorus.

Example 8-3: Second Chorus of "Turnaround"

The musical score for Example 8-3 is presented in four staves of music. The first staff (measures 14-17) features chords C7, F7, and C7. The second staff (measures 18-20) features chords F7, F-7, and C7. The third staff (measures 21-23) features chords C-7 and Db-7. The fourth staff (measures 24-26) features chords B-7, A-7, C7, and G7. The piece concludes with a double bar line in measure 26.

Chapter 9: Group Improvisation

Much of Metheny's improvisation is dictated by the group he is playing with. Because he generally likes to play the blues with smaller groups like trios or quartets, Metheny has a lot of freedom to interact with his band. Ingrid Monson describes group interaction as a journey. In her book, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, Monson states, "The shape, timbral color, and intensity of the journey is at every point shaped by the interacting musical personalities of band members, who take into consideration the roles expected of their musical instruments within the group."²⁵

There is one moment when Metheny and the drummer, Billy Higgins, are rhythmically communicating with each other. Higgins is playing syncopated rhythms on his snare drum while Metheny continues his fast lines. Both players begin to rhythmically play off each other until they resolve on beat one of m. 61.

²⁵ Monson, Ingrid. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 26.

Example 9-1: "Blues For Pat," mm. 53-61

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Blues For Pat" in measures 53 through 61. The score is written in a single system with five staves, each containing a line of music. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/8. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and phrasing slurs. Above the staves, chord symbols are provided: Bb7, Bdim, F7, Eb7, D7, Db7, and C7. Measure 53 starts with a bass clef and a common time signature (C), with a '6' written below the staff. Measure 55 has an '8' below the staff. Measure 57 has an '8' below the staff. Measure 59 has an '8' below the staff. Measure 61 has an '8' below the staff and a '3' below the staff. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets and rests.

When Metheny improvises over the blues, the rest of the group generally lays back. Much of Metheny's other music relies on group improvisation, but not many examples were found in his blues improvisations.

Conclusion

After analyzing these five transcriptions, I have concluded that Metheny's improvisation is based around conventional jazz vocabulary, mixed with superimposition, non-tonal chromaticism, and Metheny-isms. He uses these combinations of techniques to create tonal tension in this playing. I was surprised to learn how basic his phrase rhythm is and how little he displaces it. I was also surprised to discover the lack of group interaction between him and the band. Although this research has answered many questions on how Metheny improvises, it also raises questions. The questions I now have come from the many harmonic passages that cannot be explained by traditional analytical techniques. I believe this research can be expanded upon by comparing these transcriptions to the solos of Metheny's main influences, such as Wes Montgomery and Ornette Coleman. I also believe further research will show that many of the topics covered in this paper can be found in other Metheny solos.

Appendix

SOLO TRANSCRIPTIONS

- 35 Blues For Pat
- 38 Blues M45
- 41 (Go) Get It
- 46 Turnaround
- 48 You Speak My Language

Pat Metheny's Solo on "Blues For Pat"

Pat Metheny, *Rejoicing*

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of ten staves of music, each with a measure number (1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29, 33) and a circled '8' below the staff. The notes are written in a treble clef. Above the staves, chord symbols are placed: F7 (above staff 1), Bb7, Bdim, F7, A-7, D7 (above staff 5), Db7, C7, F7 (above staff 9), F7 (above staff 13), Bb7, Bdim, F7, A-7, D7 (above staff 17), Db7, C7, F7 (above staff 21), F7 (above staff 25), Bb7, Bdim, F7, A-7, D7 (above staff 29), and Db7, C7, F7 (above staff 33). The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

37 **F7** Fall

41 **Bb7** *Let ring* *simile* **Bdim** **F7** **A-7** **D7**

45 **Db7** **C7** **F7**

49 **F7**

53 **Bb7** **Bdim**

55 **F7** **Eb7** **D7**

57 **Db7** **C7**

59 **F7** **Bb7** **F7** 3

61 **F7** **Bb7** **F7** 3

65 **Bb7** **Bdim** **F7**

69 ⁸ D^b7 C7 F7

73 ⁸ 3

Pat Metheny's Solo on "Blues M45"

Roy Haynes, *Te-Vou*

The image displays a musical score for a guitar solo in 4/4 time, featuring a key signature of one flat (Bb). The score is organized into eight systems, each beginning with a measure number (8, 6, 11, 14, 16, 18, 22, 24, 26) and a common time signature of 8. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and triplets, along with slurs and accents. Chord symbols are placed above the staff to indicate harmonic changes: D-, D7, G-, D-7, C-, F7, Bb7, A7, D-7, E-7b5, A7, D-7, D7, G-7, D-7, C-7, F7, Bb7, A7, D-7, E-7b5, A7, D-, Bend, and D7. The solo concludes with a final D7 chord.

30 G-7 D- C-7 F7

34 Bb7 A7

36 D-7 E-7b5 A7

38 D-7 D7

42 G-7 D-7 C-7 F7

46 Bb7 A7

48 D-7 E-7b5 A7

50 D-7 D7

54 G-7

56 D- C-7 F7

58 $\text{B}\flat 7$ A7

60 D-7 E-7b5 A7

62 D-7

64 D7

66 G-7

68 D-7 C-7 F7

70 $\text{B}\flat 7$ A7 D-7 E-7b5 A7

Detailed description: This is a musical score for guitar, consisting of seven staves of music. The music is written in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a common time signature. The score includes various chord diagrams and chord names. The chords are: $\text{B}\flat 7$, A7, D-7, E-7b5, A7, D-7, D7, G-7, D-7, C-7, F7, $\text{B}\flat 7$, A7, D-7, E-7b5, and A7. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and includes some rests and accidentals.

Pat Metheny's Solo on "(Go) Get It"

Pat Metheny Trio, *Trio 99-00*

The image displays a musical score for a solo in 4/4 time, key of A major. The score is written on a single treble clef staff and is divided into measures by bar lines. Above the staff, chord symbols are placed to indicate the harmonic structure. The solo begins at measure 8 and ends at measure 33. The chord progression is as follows: A7 (measures 8-9), D7 (measures 10-11), A7 (measures 12-13), F#7 (measures 14-15), B-7 (measures 16-17), E7 (measures 18-19), A7 (measures 20-21), B-7 (measures 22-23), E7 (measures 24-25), A7 (measures 26-27), D7 (measures 28-29), A7 (measures 30-31), F#7 (measures 32-33), B-7 (measures 34-35), and E7 (measures 36-37). The solo features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. A triplet of eighth notes is present in measure 13. The notation includes stems, beams, and various accidentals (sharps, naturals, and flats).

37 ^{A7}

41 ^{D7} ^{A7} ^{F#7}

45 ^{B-7} ^{E7} ^{A7} ^{B-7} ^{E7}

49 ^{A7}

53 ^{D7} ^{A7} ^{F#7}

57 ^{B-7} ^{E7} ^{A7} ^{B-} ^{E7}

61 ^{A7}

65 ^{D7} ^{A7} ^{F#7}

69 ^{B-7} ^{E7} ^{A7} ^{B-7} ^{E7}

73 ^{A7}

Detailed description: This image shows a musical score for guitar, consisting of ten staves of music. Each staff begins with a measure number (37, 41, 45, 49, 53, 57, 61, 65, 69, 73) and a small '8' in a circle below the first measure, indicating an 8-measure phrase. Above the notes, chord names are written: A7, D7, A7, F#7, B-7, E7, A7, B-7, E7, A7, D7, A7, F#7, B-7, E7, A7, D7, A7, F#7, B-7, E7, and A7. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and slurs.

77 D7 A7 F#7 B-7

82 E7 A7 B-7 E7

85 A7

89 D7 A7 F#7

93 B-7 E7 A7 B-7 E7

97 A7

101 D7 A7 F#7

105 B-7 E7 A7 B-7 E7

109 A7

113 D7 A7 F#7

117 B-7 E7 A7 B-7 E7

121 A7

125 D7 A7 F#7

129 B-7 E7 A7 B-7 E7

133 A7

137 D7 A7 F#7

141 B-7 E7 A7 B-7 E7

145 A7

149 D7 A7 F#7

153 B-7 E7 A7 B-7 E7

157 A7

8 D7 A7 F#7

161 B-7 E7 A7 B-7 E7

165 Vamp

8

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is written for guitar in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It consists of four staves. The first three staves feature a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, often beamed together. The fourth staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment using chords and eighth notes. Chord changes are indicated by letters above the staff: A7, D7, A7, F#7, B-7, E7, A7, B-7, and E7. A 'Vamp' section is marked above the fourth staff. Measure numbers 157, 161, and 165 are placed at the beginning of their respective staves. A small '8' is written below the first measure of each staff.

Pat Metheny's Solo on "Turnaround"

Joshua Redman, *Wish*

The image displays a musical score for a solo on the piece "Turnaround" by Pat Metheny, performed by Joshua Redman on the album "Wish". The score is written in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. It consists of ten staves of music, each beginning with a measure number (8, 6, 10, 14, 18, 20, 22, 26, 30) and a common time signature of 8. The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and various chord voicings. Above the staff lines, chord symbols are provided: C7, F7, C7, F7, F-7, C7, C-7, Db-7, B-7, A-7, C7, G7, C7, F7, C7, F7, F-7, C7, C-7, Db-7, B-7, A-7, C7, G7, C7, F7, C7, F7, F-7, C7. The score includes several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' and a bracket) and a final triplet marking at the end of the piece. The overall style is a classic jazz solo with intricate phrasing and harmonic complexity.

34 C-7 Db-7 B-7 A-7

36 C7 G7

38 C7 F7

40 C7

42 F7 F-7 bend to C7

46 C-7 Db-7 B-7 A-7 C7 G7
 1/2 step bend simile

50 C7 F7 C7 F7

55 F-7 C7 C-7 Db-7

59 B-7 A-7 C7 G7 C7

Pat Metheny's Solo on "You Speak My Language"

John Scofield/ Pat Metheny, *I Can See Your House From Here*

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). It consists of nine staves of music, each starting with a measure rest marked with an '8'. The notes are primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped in triplets. Chord symbols are placed above the staff lines: Bb7, Eb7, Edim, D-, G7, C-, F7, and Edim. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

B♭7 D- G7

EMaj7 B♭7 F7

B♭7 C-7 F7

B♭7 B♭7

B♭7 Edim.

B♭7 D- G7

C- F7

B♭7 G7 C-7 F7

B♭7 B♭7

Unison notes on two separate strings

40 $B\flat 7$

42 $E\flat 7$ Edim.

44 $B\flat 7$ D- $G 7$

46 C-7 F7

48 $B\flat 7$ G7 C- F7 $B\flat 7$

8 8 8 8 8

3 3 3 3 3

^

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1975	Bright Size Life	ECM
1977	Watercolors	ECM
1978	Pat Metheny Group	ECM
1979	New Chautauqua	ECM
1979	An Hour with Pat Metheny	ECM PRO
1980	American Garage	ECM
1980	80/81	ECM
1980	As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls	ECM
1981	Offramp	ECM
1982	Travels [live]	ECM
1982	Live	ECM
1983	Rejoicing	ECM
1984	First Circle	ECM
1984	The Falcon and the Snowman	EMI
1985	Song X	Geffen
1987	Still Life (Talking)	Geffen
1989	Letter from Home	Geffen
1989	Question and Answer	Geffen
1989	Different Trains / Electric Counterpoint	Elektra Nonesuch
1992 (Collector's	Secret Story	Geffen

Edition Released 2007)

1992	Under Fire	Alex
1992	Zero Tolerance for Silence	Geffen
1993	I Can See Your House from Here	Blue Note
1993	The Road to You (Recorded Live in Europe)	Geffen
1994	Dream Teams	Bugsy
1994	We Live Here	Geffen
1996	This World [live]	Bootleg?
1996	The Sign of 4	Knitting Factory
1996	Quartet	Geffen
1997	Imaginary Day	Warner Brothers
1998	Passaggio Per Il Paradiso	Geffen International
1999	All the Things You Are [live]	Fruit Tree
1999	A Map of the World	Warner Brothers
2000	Trio 99>00	Warner Brothers
2000	Trio Live	Warner Brothers
2001	Move to the Groove	WestWind

2001	Parallel Universe	Starburst
2001	Sassy Samba [TIM] [live]	TIM
		Warner
2002	Speaking of Now	Brothers
		Past Perfect
2002	Sassy Samba [Past Perfect]	Warner
		Brothers
2003	One Quiet Night	Brothers
		Nonesuch
2005	The Way Up	Nonesuch
2006	Metheny Mehldau	Nonesuch
2007	Quartet	Nonesuch
2008	Day Trip	Nonesuch
2008	Tokyo Day Trip: Live EP	Nonesuch
2008	Upojenie	Nonesuch
2008	Question and Answer	Nonesuch
2009	One Quiet Night	Nonesuch
2009	Day Trip / Tokyo Day Trip (LP+CD)	Nonesuch
2010	Orchestrion	Nonesuch
2011	What's It All About	Nonesuch
2011 (Original Release 1999)	Jim Hall & Pat Metheny	Nonesuch
2012	Unity Band	Nonesuch
2013	The Orchestrion Project	Nonesuch
2013	Tap: John Zorn's Book of Angels, Vol. 20	Nonesuch

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