

Jazz Mandology with Ted Eschliman



Extending your vocabulary: The Augmented 11th

Review:

We've been looking at two perspectives of jazz the last few issues, [vertical \(chord pattern\)](#) and [horizontal](#) (melodic improvising). As mandolinists, we are afforded the luxury of expressing BOTH on our little eight-stringed wonders. Consider the poor saxophonist, pathetically devoid of polyphony (more than one note at a time), never able to breathe a Gm7b5 as a simultaneous notes of a chord. We have the virtue of slipping in and out of chord and linear melody with the swoop of a pick.

Yet, we have a responsibility to understand chord function and the magical intersection of melody and harmonic structure when we improvise. In a darkened room, if someone drew a fleeting figure “8” on a wall with a flashlight, our eyes would absorb the pattern; our brain would mentally connect this and tell us we just saw an “8,” even though that character isn't a permanent mark.

This is the way melodic improvising is perceived. The listener hears the individual notes, and their brain processes these in larger harmonic chunks, based on where the chord tones appear and what part of the beat they occur, even without accompaniment. Be it conscious or subconscious, it's a superb combination of art and intellect that conveys the best jazz. Knowing a “dangerous” amount of music theory gets us there quicker, and deeper!

Maybe A little Gypsy...

The **Major Scale** offers so much fodder for improvisation. Whether its folk, Bluegrass, Celtic, as long as you stay in the key center, you can play no wrong note, even though the chord tones (1st, 3rd, 5th) are “stronger” notes. Even in jazz, though multiple key centers take you in and out of the original home key, you could stick within the safe confines of the diatonic (major) scale, and still be “appropriate.”



The first step deviating from this could be lowering the 7th scale degree. This gives you the distinctive blues musician (as well as bluegrass) vocabulary. (Key of C, lower the B natural to a Bb)

Raise the 4th

You can “flat” the third (E) for color as well, but if you really want to start going “outdoors” a bit, consider the “Gypsy” approach of raising the 4th scale degree a half step, as well. Listen to Django Reinhardt and his followers, and you’ll hear this embellishment quite often. It’s also a strong “color” tone of contemporary Brazilian artists. In the key of C, we are going to keep the 7th (Bb) lowered) and add the raised 4th (F#) for a delicious new mode, ripe for a harmonic harvest.



Actually, the Augmented 11th

More advanced jazzers will recognize the raised 4th with different notation. To keep the extended chord tones straight, they describe the added 2nd as a 9th chord, the 4th as an 11th, and the 6th as a 13th for reasons we won’t go into here, other than to say the chord **extensions** are better described this way. So let’s switch gears and call this the raised, or more commonly the **Augmented 11th**. (also +11, #11)

You may have already seen this chord before, C7(#11). The notes of the chord would include the lower triad of C, E, G, and the 7th Bb. It would also include an implied 9th or D, and the altered (raised) 11th, or F#. Chording this is a bit tricky, as we only have four pairs of strings to communicate all six pitches, but we really don’t have to. The subject of chord economics is another we can tackle in a future issue, but for now let’s just stick to the melodic side of this, and play a melody that is based on this tasty scale, the

Augmented 11th scale (C D E F# G A Bb C):



Notice the “listlessness,” the craving to resolve. This is the beauty of straying a bit outside of the stability of the diatonic scale (in this case, C Major), adding a little bit of color in an appropriate context. Your ear will get used to this if you start practicing your scales this way. Every scale study you do can be altered with these two notes, lower the 7th, raise the 4th. The results will be “haunting” at first, but eventually you’ll get comfortable with it.

Drilling your scales with chord and thirds arpeggios are great, but I like to extend the texture a bit by practicing in **fourths**. This can feel peculiar on the mandolin fretboard, but it will take both ear and fingers out of routine, and inject a very contemporary effect in your improvising if you can get them accustomed to it.

Try the following exercise:

Aug 11th Drill

www.jazzmando.com

C7(#11)

5 4 7 5 2 7 4 7 5 2 7 4 1 2 7 4 1 5 3

4 1 5 3 7 5 5 3 7 5 1 7 7 5 1 7 3 2

7 1 7 3 2 5 3 3 2 5 3 7 5 5 3 7 5 2 6

10 6 2 5 7 3 5 5 7 3 5 2 3 3 5 2 3 7 1

13 2 3 7 1 5 7 7 1 5 7 3 5 5 7 3 5 1 4

16 3 5 4 7 2 1 4 7 2 5 7 7 2 5 7 4 5 5 7 4 5 2 3

Hints on practicing this:

- 1.) Start SLOWLY. Don't speed up until you achieve good, lasting tone. The phrase marks are quite intentional and demand your fingers be "at the ready" for each consecutive note.
- 2.) Repeat each measure indefinitely; don't proceed to the next measure until you've mastered the first.
- 4.) Use the 4th finger! You are spanning seven frets and building your pinky, as well as your third finger.
- 5.) Conceptualize it as a "Major Scale with two alterations," the 4th and the 7th. You will be able to tackle other major scales you are familiar with the same alterations.
- 6.) Now tackle other major scales in the same way.

Applying this in "real life"

You can think of this exercise in the key of C, but more often you'll approach the **Augmented 11th Scale** when playing a dominant functioning (V7) chord. If the above exercise is played as is, but within the framework of **F major**, this works great on its **V7** chord, or **C7**. (You already have the **Bb** in the **C7** chord, raising the **F#** gives you additional flavor.)

Extra Credit

Now, I want to let you in on a huge secret, hopefully not at the risk of confusing you.... Last issue, we explored something called the Altered scale. Notice if you start the **C Aug 11th scale** (from above) on **F#**, the 4th scale degree, you are actually playing the **F# Altered Scale**.

F# Alt Scale = F# G A Bb C D E F#

And for the extra, extra advanced jazz student, the **F#/Gb Altered Scale** is a tri-tone substitution for the C. But, that's getting way ahead of ourselves; we'll tackle the issue of Tri-tone Subs in the future...

If you want to be even more confused, there's yet another scale buried in here; start the **same** sequence of notes (**C D E F# G A Bb C**) on **G** (**G A Bb C D E F# G**) and you have a **G** (ascending) Melodic Minor Scale.

The point here is not to confuse you! Too many avoid jazz because of the fear and falsehood of the perceived "limitlessness" of jazz theory, when in essence, we've just taken three different scales, and *reduced* options within the context of the same identical notes. Plus, all we did was change two notes (4th & 7th) from an *already* familiar scale (C Major).

See, jazz isn't that hard after all!

Again thanks for the letters of encouragement, and if you're new to **Jazz Mandology**, or mandolinsessions.com, be sure to review the older articles by clicking the appropriate links. Let me know how you're doing at mandohack@aol.com and drop in on the www.jazzmando.com website!

Ed Notes—Hypertext Links embedded in the article:

<http://www.tannah.net/ted/jazzmandomp3/Aug11.mp3>

<http://www.tannah.net/ted/proof/Aug11th.pdf>

<http://www.mandolinsessions.com/feb04/jazz.html>

<http://www.mandolinsessions.com/dec03/ted.html>

<http://www.mandolinsessions.com/apr04/understanding.html>