

Blues Turnarounds Pt. 1

A turnaround is a four chord progression that resolves to a target chord. Standard turnarounds start on the iii chord and progress through the circle of fourths resolving to a I (iii^{ø7}, VI^{7b9}, ii⁻⁷, V⁷). Measure eight through twelve of a jazz blues can be thought of as two turnarounds.

The Last Five Measures

The chords in the first turnaround do not have the same length. There is a iii-VI in measure eight, a ii in measure nine, and a V in measure ten. The last two bars of a jazz blues are a more regularly spaced turnaround with a substitution of a I instead of a iii. I, VI, ii, V.

Am^{7(b5)} D^{7(b9)} Gm⁷ C⁷ F⁷ D^{7(b9)} Gm⁷ C⁷

Turnaround #1
Unequal Lengths

Turnaround #2
I instead of iii

Navigating The Changes

The last five bars of a jazz blues contains chords that, if outlined correctly, shows the level of the improvisor's harmonic awareness. To practice navigating these chords, first outline them in root position.

iii-7b5 VI7b9 ii-7 V7

Next, practice superimposing minor 7b5 chords based on the third of dominant 7 chords. The minor 7b5 chord can also be played over the root of the iii chord. Notice the 7-3 resolution from one chord to the next.

iii-7b5 VI7b9 ii-7 V7

Minor 7b5 off of root 3,2,1,7 scale fragment 3,2,1,7 scale fragment Minor 7b5 off of the 3rd

Application

There is a tendency to play faster rhythms when chords move quicker. The measures that have one chord in them share the same ideas as the others, but the rhythmic values are longer. Here is a sample line using chord outlining, scale fragments, and ornamentation over the last five measures of a blues in the key of F

Gm⁷ C⁷ F⁷ D^{7(b9)} Gm⁷ C⁷

Am^{7(b5)} D^{7(b9)}