

EncycloMedia Man *by Mike Overly*

Playing Jazz Part 2 ~ Improvisation

February 1, 2021

Simply stated, **improvisation** is choosing a **scale** to play with a **chord** and then playing that scale in **every** possible pitch and rhythm combination and permutation.

If you had the time to do that, you would discover that you had played every improvised **solo** that had ever been played, or ever could be played!

Now, since that ain't gonna happen, let's move on...

Improvisation means you are **free to choose**. In other words, only you can decide what to play. It takes someone with a lot of **self confidence** to improvise, because there is **no one** who can tell you what you should play. If that were to happen, you wouldn't be improvising.

So, where does improvisation begin? The simple answer is, with **chord harmony**.

Let's start with **Major Scale Triad Harmony** as found on page 40 of **Bass EncycloMedia**.

Triads are chords of **three different letters and tones**.

Triads pose a problem for the beginning improviser for the following reason.

If you were asked, what **major scale** would you play if the chord was a **G major triad**. You wouldn't be able to answer with certainty. This is because the G major triad is found in **three major keys**: G, D, and C. And therefore, **three major scales** could be played.

In other words, with **triads**, there is no key or scale certainty... only **probability!**

Luckily, there is a way out of this dilemma: tetrads.

Tetrads are chords of **four different letters and tones**, see page 47 of **Bass EncycloMedia**.

Now, if you were asked what major scale would you play if the chord was a **G dominant seven tetrad**. You could answer with certainty, the **C major scale**. This is because the **G7 tetrad** is found in only one **major key**: **C**.

Said a different way, tetrads bring certainty to the improviser by presenting only one possibility.

Meet me here next month and we'll continue our journey into jazz by introducing: **Modes**.

Play Well and Stay Well,
Mike Overly
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