

“Outside” the Blues Pentatonic

Using the Half-Whole Scale

The Half-Whole scale or sometimes called, “Dominant Diminished” is an excellent scale for Dominant Seventh chords. It should not be confused with the Whole-Half or, “Diminished Scale.” The Diminished Scale is better applied upon a Diminished Chord, where the Half-Whole, (Dominant Diminished) is better applied with Dominant Seventh chords.

The initial movement of intervals in the Half-Whole gives us a “b9” interval and a “b3.” The altered 9th makes this scale perfect for Dom.7th chords with a “b9.”

The “going outside” sound of players like; “Larry Carlton,” “Mike Stern,” and “Robben Ford,” can be largely associated to their use of the Half-Whole scale. The major scale and their modes offers only seven notes, however the Half-Whole offers us eight notes. There are dozens of patterns for this scale, but like you may have noticed with other scales, you don’t have to learn them all to begin making some cool music.

Practice the example of this scale given below off of the Tonic note of “C”

Ex:

Because this scale has a repeating pattern of intervals it can sound quite dark played on it’s own. So, it is important to learn how to shape lines around the scale to reach melodies that exist within it’s structure. The more subtle you can be the better. Play the lick below to hear the interplay of the new melodic variations possible with this scale.

Example #2).

