

## 24 Major Loops: Accessible Improvisation In Three lessons

By Nick Syman

### Lesson 1: for anyone who knows a scale

Instructions:

Play a track that corresponds with a major scale you know from memory. Adjust the volume of the track to match the volume of your instrument. Play notes of the scale in any order. Listen to what it sounds like.

Follow-up:

Each note resonates with the key in a different way - what does that feel/sound like? What note combinations do you like? What rhythms do you like? What percentage of your brain was focused on listening?

Variations:

Play fewer notes. Play more notes. Play faster. Play slower. Adjust your tuning. Listen more. Use the whole range of your instrument. Play notes outside of the scale.

### Lesson 2: for anyone who has improvised and practiced scales a few times

Instructions:

Choose a track and play it on repeat. Review the scale while thinking of each note of the scale as a number (ex. in C major: C=1, D=2, E=3, F=4, G=5, A=6, B=7). Improvise on the following sets of notes for 1-5 minutes each. Play the notes of each set in any order you like (ex. 1,3,1,1,5,3,5,1,5,3,3,1,5,5 etc.).

- Triad - 1,3,5
- Non triad - **2,4,6,7**
- Tension and release - 1,2,3
- Tension and release - 3,4,5
- Tension and release - 5,6,7,8
- Pentatonic - 1,2,3,5,6
- Full scale - 1,2,3,4,5,6,7

Follow-up:

How do the notes of the triad (1,3,5) feel/sound different from the other notes (**2,4,6,7**)? If you wrote these instructions, would you choose to bold the triad notes (1,3,5) instead?

Why? How does the 2,1 resolution feel/sound different from the 2,3 resolution? How does the 4,3 resolution feel/sound different from the 4,5 resolution? Is it the same feel/sound difference? How does the tension of 7 feel/sound different from the tension of 6? How does pentatonic feel/sound different from the full scale? What do rests feel/sound like? What do rests feel/sound like after 1, 3 or 5? What do rests feel/sound like after a 2, 4, 6 or 7?

Variations:

Select a groove track and play everything in tempo. Select an ambient track and play everything freely. Play faster. Play slower. Rest more. Rest less. Play the full scale but mostly 1,3,5. Play the full scale but mostly 2,4,6,7. Play your favorite scale patterns. Play your favorite melodies. Listen more.

### **Lesson 3: for anyone who has practiced scales a lot and wants to improvise outside of the scale**

Instructions:

There are five pitches outside of a major scale: ♭2, ♭3, ♭5(♯4), ♭6(♯5), ♭7. Pick a track and explore these notes one at a time with the following sets.

- Chromatic passing tones
  - 1, ♭2, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
  - 1, 2, ♭3, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
  - 1, 2, 3, 4, ♯4, 5, 6, 7
  - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ♯5, 6, 7
  - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, ♭7, 7
- Replace a note in the scale
  - 1, ♭2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
  - 1, 2, ♭3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (ascending melodic minor)
  - 1, 2, 3, ♯4, 5, 6, 7 (lydian)
  - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ♭6, 7
  - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, ♭7 (mixolydian)
- With tonic triad
  - 1, ♭2, 3, 5
  - 1, ♭3, 3, 5
  - 1, 3, ♯4, 5
  - 1, 3, 5, ♭6
  - 1, 3, 5, ♭7

Follow-up:

How do each of the five non scale pitches feel/sound? How does that feel/sound change when they are surrounded by more or fewer notes from the scale?

Variations:

The number of possible combinations becomes overwhelming if more than one outside note is combined with notes from the major scale. A simple way to start exploring these possibilities is to borrow triads and pentatonic scales from other keys:

<b>Starting on</b>	<b>Major Triad</b>	<b>Major Pentatonic</b>
1	1,3,5	1,2,3,5,6
$\flat$ 2	$\flat$ 2,4, $\flat$ 6	$\flat$ 2, $\flat$ 3,4, $\flat$ 6, $\flat$ 7
2	2, #4,6	2,3, #4,6,7
$\flat$ 3	$\flat$ 3,5, $\flat$ 7	$\flat$ 3,4,5, $\flat$ 7,1
3	3, #5,7	3, #4, #5,7, $\flat$ 2
4	4,6,1	4,5,6,1,2
#4	#4, $\flat$ 7, $\flat$ 2	#4, #5, $\flat$ 7, $\flat$ 2, $\flat$ 3
5	5,7,2	5,6,7,2,3
$\flat$ 6	$\flat$ 6,1, $\flat$ 3	$\flat$ 6, $\flat$ 7,1, $\flat$ 3,4
6	6, $\flat$ 2,3	6,7, $\flat$ 2,3, #4
$\flat$ 7	$\flat$ 7,2,4	$\flat$ 7,1,2,4,5
7	7, $\flat$ 3, $\flat$ 5	7, $\flat$ 2, $\flat$ 3, $\flat$ 5, $\flat$ 6