

Wes Montgomery Harmonization Techniques

Most modern guitarists may know that Wes Montgomery chose to use his thumb to attack the strings and forego the use of a pick. They may also be familiar with Wes' trademark use of octaves. But, these guitarists may still be unfamiliar with Wes' incorporation of 4 note block chords during his solos, as well as his concept of harmonizing scales with these block chords.

Wes Montgomery pioneered and perfected the "3 tier" solo concept, beginning many solos with the use of single note runs, then moving to the use of octaves, finally bringing the solo to it's peak intensity level with the use of 4 note block chords. Wes' ability to incorporate all three of these soloing devices and meld them into one cohesive solo statement has set him apart from any guitarist to come before or after him. A classic example of this "3 tier" solo technique can be heard on Wes' "Gone With the Wind" solo on his album *The Incredible Jazz Guitar*. (Riverside)

Today's lesson will delve into this block chord style outlining the harmonic techniques utilized by Montgomery. This lesson will begin by showing the "drop 2" chord voicings that Wes used as well as how he incorporated passing diminished 7 chords to harmonize some of the most common scales used to improvise over jazz chord progressions. Next, the guitarist will be shown how to take standard single note jazz improvisation ideas and harmonize them in the Montgomery style. Wes' occasional use of strictly diminished 7 chords to harmonize single note lines will also be discussed. The harmonization of a portion of the melody to famous jazz standard "Lullaby of Birdland" rounds out this lesson on Wes Montgomery's harmonization techniques.

Enjoy!

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