Chapter 11: Four Note Groupings

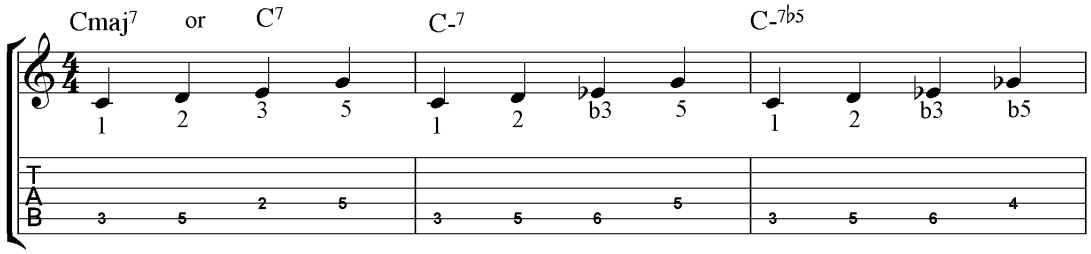
So far this book has examined scales, arpeggios, and extensions and another device that you can add to your harmonic bag and use in conjunction with the other techniques is four note groupings. Four note groupings are sometimes called tetrachords and 1235 or Coltrane patterns, but each term essentially means the same thing, a four note pattern based of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th degrees of the scale that belongs with each chord.

John Coltrane is a well known user of these patterns which is why the patterns are sometimes named after him. Coltrane used four note groupings exclusively on his solo on 'Giant Steps' which aided him in fluidly outlining the rapidly moving harmony. Because four note groupings only contain four notes, the soloing technique is effective to use over tunes where this isn't as much time to define the harmony such as Rhythm Changes and Giant Steps, but they work equally well on simpler tunes too.

In this section I will be showing you how to apply and practice four note groupings over the main chord types. Each of the patterns is shown in the table below. Note that the first 1235 grouping has no 7th which means it can be applied over both major and dominant 7th chords. Four note groupings can be amended for each chord type. For example if you wanted to use it over a minor 7th chord, just flattened the 3rd.

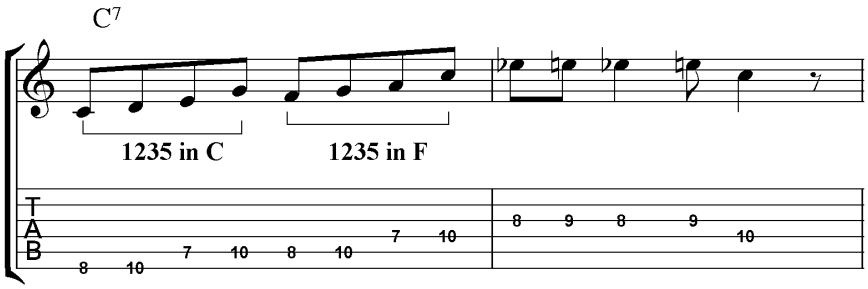
Chord Type	**Formula**	**Note Names in C**
Major 7	1235	C, D, E, G
Dominant 7	1235	C, D, E, G
Minor 7	12b35	C, D, Eb, G
Minor 7b5	12b3b5:	C, D, Eb, Gb

Here's how each pattern look together on the stave with tablature. Try running up and down each pattern a few times then record a one chord vamp and try creating some phrases using the patterns. Work on one pattern at a time and when you start to become fluent with the patterns, apply them over tunes that you are working on.



An effective way to use the major four note grouping to play two sets of the pattern going up in fourths. The following example shows how you can start a line using the pattern in fourths, starting with a 1235 in C, followed by a 1235 in F. I have chosen to write this lick over a C7 because of the bluesy elements in the second bar but it could easily be applied over C major 7 too.

Audio Example 15



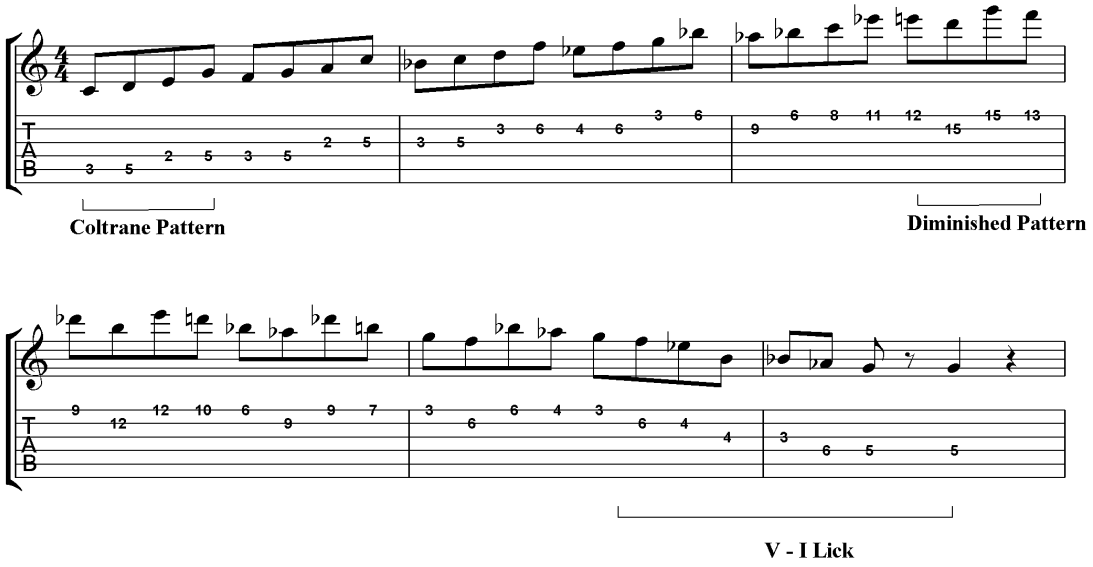
Joe Pass Lick

To finish off this section on the 1235 pattern I wanted to share a Joe Pass lick that uses the 1235 pattern again in fourths. Joe Pass is one of the most influential players of jazz guitar and this lick comes in right at the end of his composition 'C.E.D'.

For those that don't have it, the 'Sound of Synanon' album is essential listening for every jazz guitar fan. The album was recorded just after Joe come out rehabilitation and features some of his best single line playing on record.

Here's the lick Joe Plays at the end. As you can see on the chart Joe uses the 1235 pattern extensively in the first 2 bars. Note that fingering changes after the first bar. Besides being an impressive sounding lick to play, this lick is fantastic for getting the 1235 pattern up to tempo and changing the fingering across the neck.

Audio Example 16



Chapter 12: Jazz Rhythms

Aside from one lesson, this book has mostly concentrated on harmonic jazz techniques, but including rhythm in your daily practice routine is an important part of studying jazz guitar. Although it would take an entire book to properly explore rhythms in detail, I wanted this section to be an introduction into some common jazz rhythmic patterns that you can use to help develop your phrasing and feel.

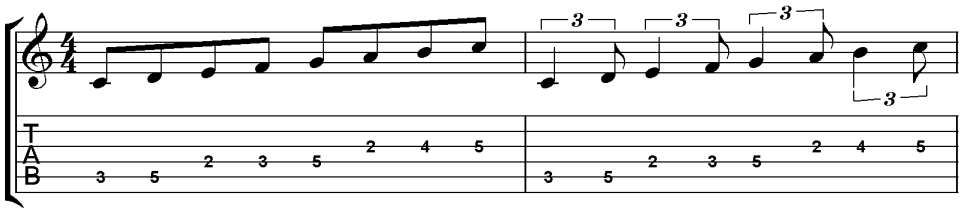
As with the rhythm chapter earlier, I highly recommend practicing all of these exercises with a metronome to ensure a steady pulse is kept throughout a practice section. I will break down some common jazz rhythms by explaining what they are and how they are used in common practice.

Eighth Notes

Eighth notes are probably the most commonly used rhythms in jazz. The majority of mainstream jazz solos will contain more eighth notes than any other rhythm. There are two types of eighth notes that are generally used, straight and swung. Most straight ahead jazz uses swung eighth notes instead of straight eighths.

The notated example below shows a C major scale played in eighth notes first, then in swung quavers. Straight eighth notes are played identically, whereas jazz musicians divide them into triplets and make the first note of the pair a little longer.

Audio Example 17



This example is really only an approximation of the swung quaver because almost every jazz musician plays and feels these differently. As you can see they're not exactly sight reader friendly either, so if a piece of music is swung it is usually specified that the quavers are swung. The best way to learn swung 8th notes is to play along with some of your favorite players and decide what style of swung eighth notes you like the most.

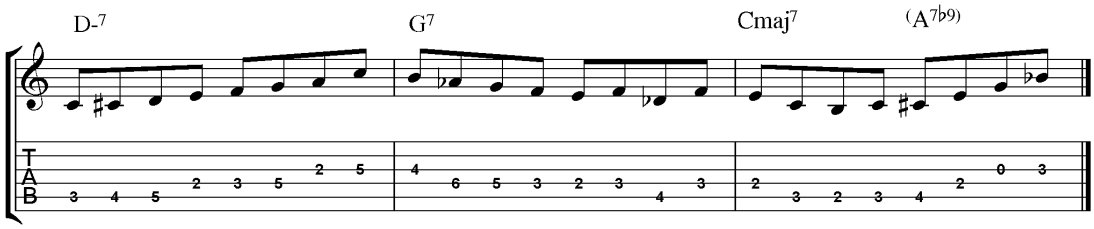
Many beginner jazz students that I have taught start play eighth notes that are straight and not swung, so it's essential that the difference is established. There is nothing wrong with playing straight eight notes, in fact some jazz compositions have a straight 8th feel, but most straight ahead swing jazz uses swung eight notes.

Practicing Eighth Notes

Because eighth notes form the basis for much of the jazz language, it is important that we include them in our practice routines. Practice playing constant eighth notes over a progression or tune that you are working on. By playing a constant flow of eighth notes you will have smooth voice leading between all of the chords and you will be able to stop and start whenever you need to.

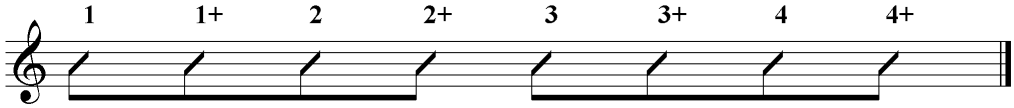
Playing constant eighth notes might sound mechanical in parts because you'll never stick to using one rhythm exclusively on a gig, but practicing eighth notes will mean that you will have the technique to use them when you want. The example below shows how this can be applied over a ii-V-I situation,

Audio Example 18



Besides practicing constant eighth notes, they should also be practiced on different beats of the bar. The diagram below shows all the different beats within the bar when subdivided into eighth notes. Practice starting eighth note lines on each of these beats.

Many jazz musicians use syncopation in their improvisation which makes lines less predictable. Although starting on the ands is trickier at first, it's a vital part in gaining a jazz feel. Especially starting lines on the and of 4.



Eighth Note Triplets

One rhythmic value that's used extensively by jazz musicians and especially bebop players is the triplet rhythm. Triplets form the entire rhythmic basis for music styles such as blues and they are a big part of the jazz rhythmic vocabulary. A triplet is a three note grouping of eighth notes in the space of one beat.