Tuned In
November 9, 2007

Licks with Altered Scales

By Jason Kokoszka

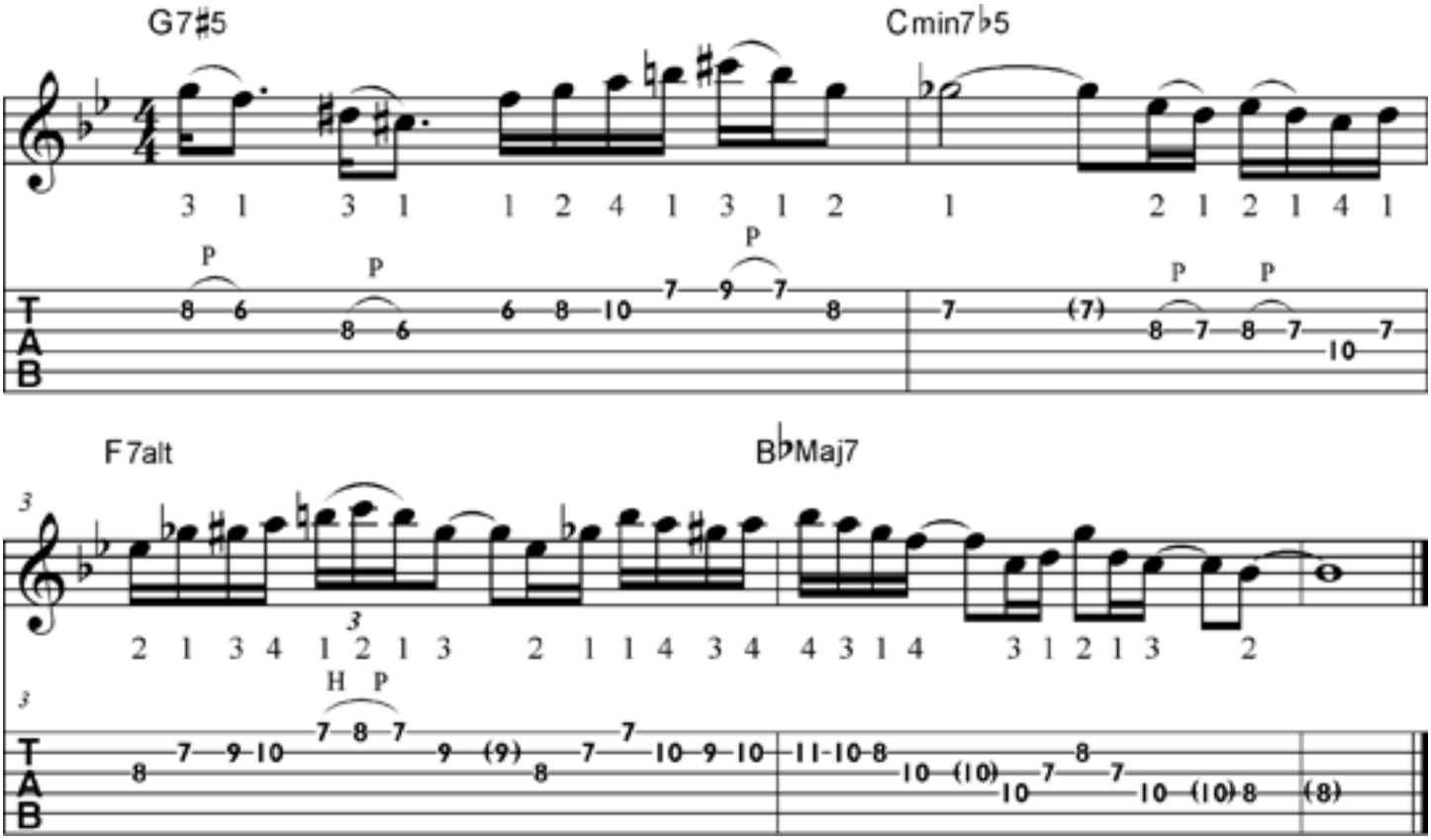
Do you enjoy the exotic sound of altered scales? If so, you'll love the funky example below. For more information on altered scales, check out the current Theory Corner for an excerpt from Jody Fisher's new book, *The Total Jazz Guitarist*, where he breaks down some common altered scales.

Please note that the chord symbols given for each bar reflect the overall basic harmonic structure (when the examples for guitar, keyboard and bass are taken into account). Try these ideas out with your friends; complimentary parts for guitar, keyboard, bass and drums are included below. Dig in, and enjoy!

Guitar

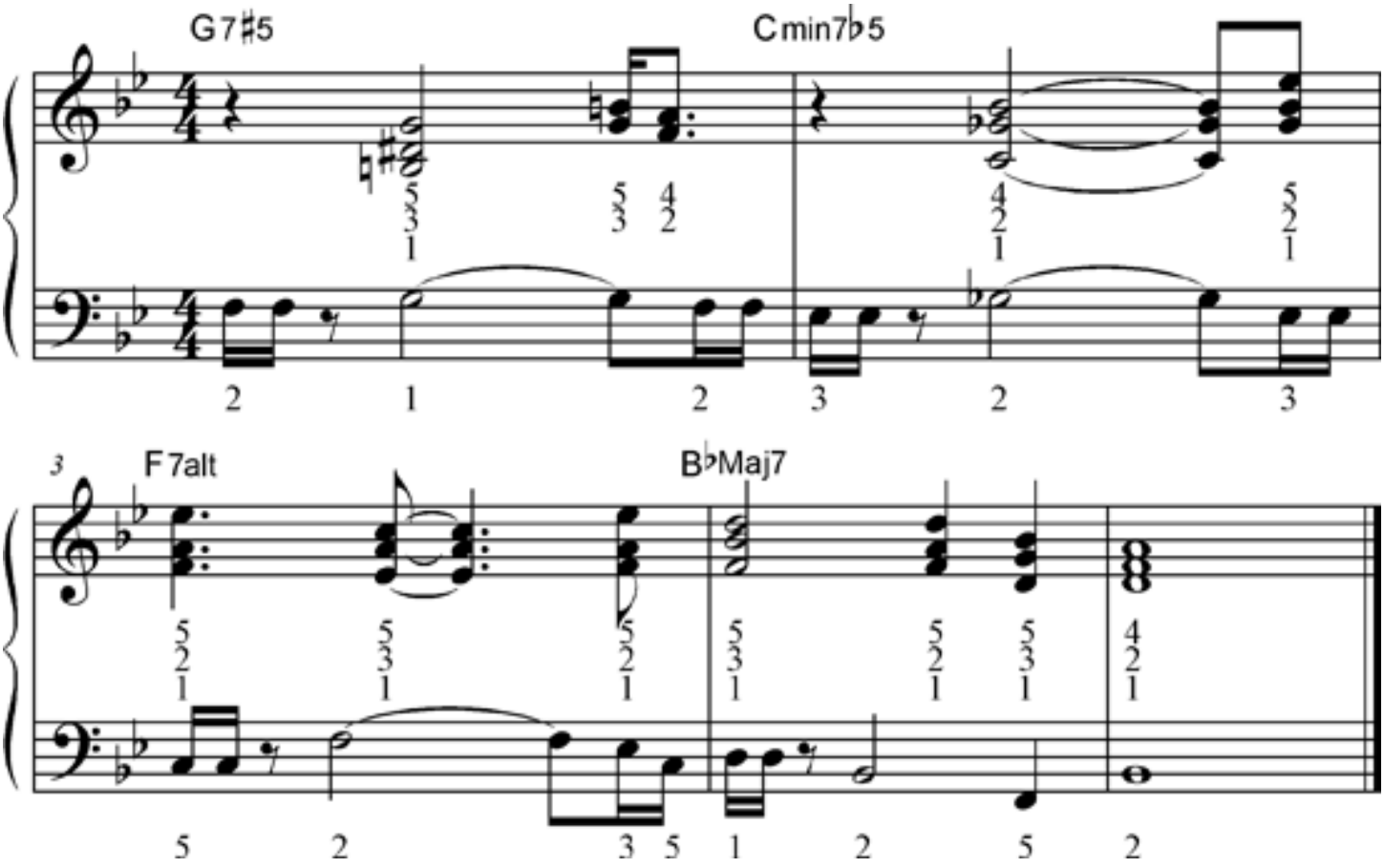
Let's try some altered sounds over a short chord progression in B♭. The non-diatonic harmonies and abundant sixteenth notes give this example a funky, jazzy flavor.

In bar 1, we have a lick based on the G Whole Tone scale. In bars 2 and 3, the licks are based on diminished scale patterns. In the last two measures, we return to an unaltered sound to end the example. Make it funky now!



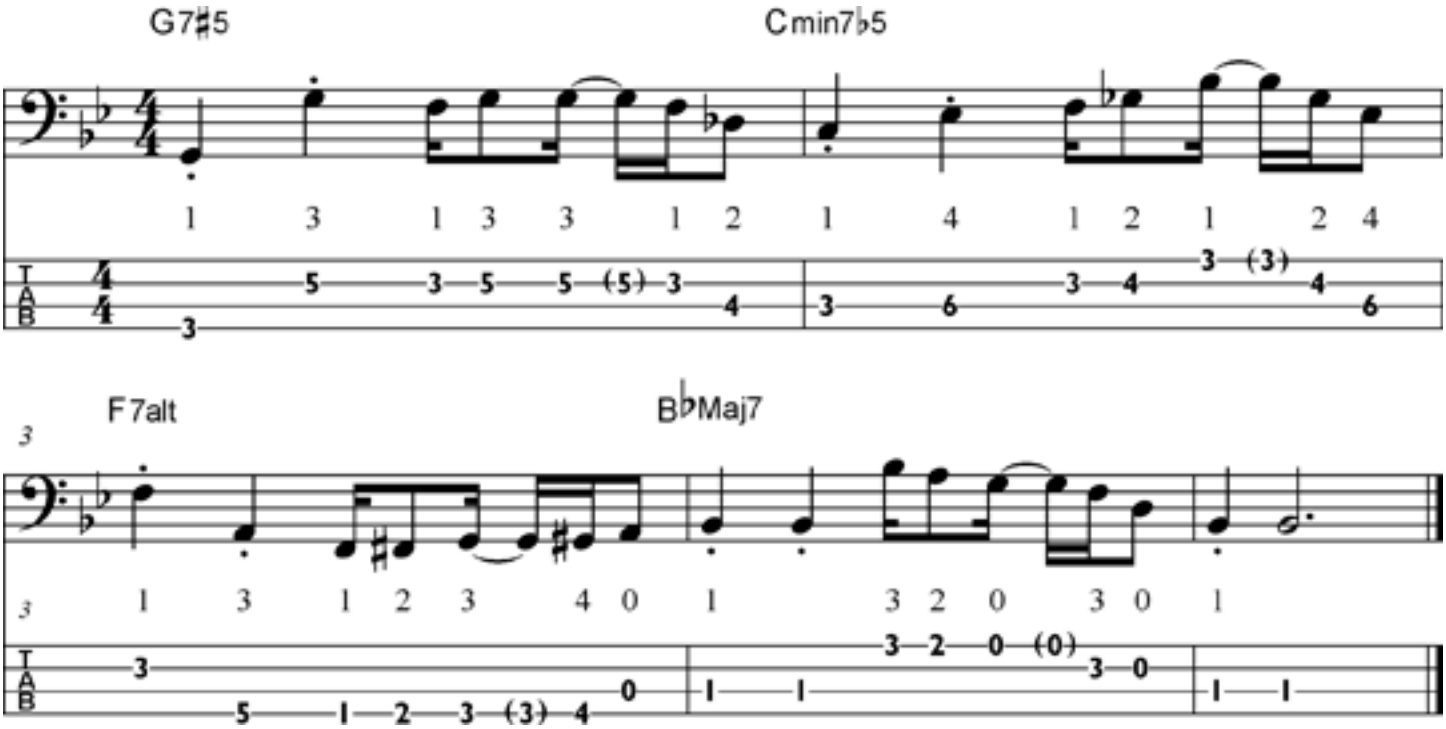
Keyboard

This keyboard part mainly provides harmonic support to the guitar licks above. The sixteenth notes in the left-hand part add rhythmic drive to this example. Try adapting this comping pattern to other chord changes when you want a funky feel.



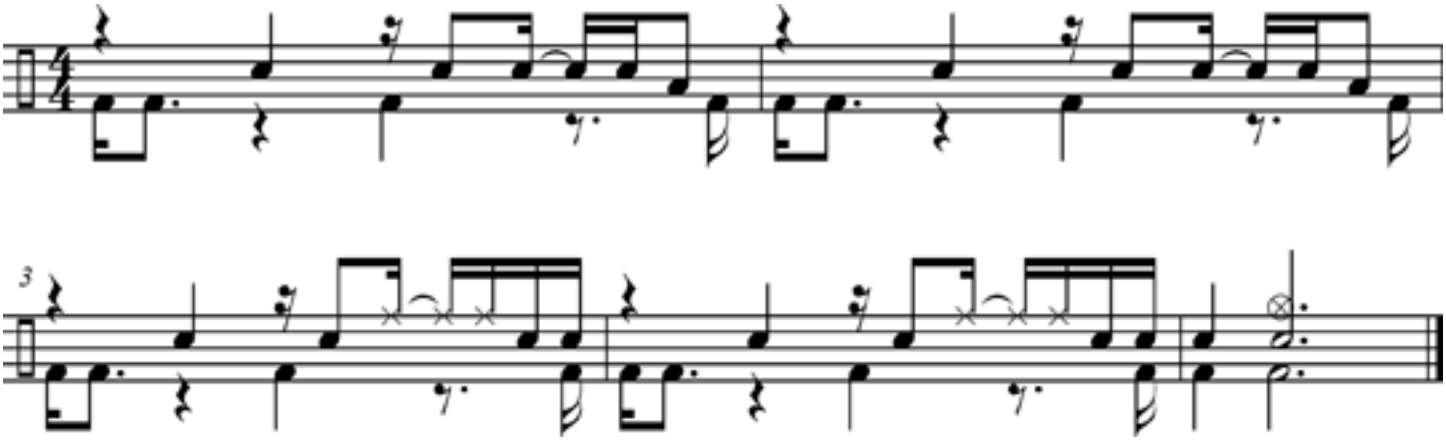
Bass

Who's gettin' funky? You are, when you play this little groove. The rhythms are the same from one bar to the next, but the pitches change. Make sure you play the notes on beats 1 and 2 staccato, or short, as this will enhance the funkiness of this bassline. Be sure to try this out the next time you find yourself in a funky jam!



Drums

Check out the funky patterns below. Be sure to count the sixteenth notes carefully. If these rhythms are a bit tricky, start slow and gradually increase the tempo to completely master these grooves. Once you get these patterns down, show them off to your friends at your next jam.



For more on altered scales, be sure to check out advanced jazz lessons taught by Jody Fisher in the “Symmetrical Scales I” and “Symmetrical Scales II” courses. And of course, don’t forget about his book, *The Total Jazz Guitarist*.

Not a guitarist? Wait! We’ve got something we’d like you to see. Check out the Adult Refresher lesson “In Other Modes: Modal, Chromatic, Pentatonic and Whole Tone Scales,” taught by Leo Marchildon and Andrea Amos. Enjoy!