

# Contrapuntal Concepts

For

## Electric and Classical Guitarists

By Jimmy Wyble - Edited by David Oakes

The infinite possibilities of our instrument, the guitar, are astounding! No other instrument offers such a wide variety of styles.

As growing guitarist there are basic challenges: the area of technique, the forever expanding concept of harmonic awareness, and reading music.

As we progress in our musical environment, we must investigate new sounds, research the works of other guitarists, and seek new ways and constantly try new ideas. The more challenging and varied our musical environment, the more we grow in technique, musical expression, harmonic awareness and style.

Generally, we improvise over chord changes with a single melodic line but the “Etudes” have the added component of the second voice. In the two line contrapuntal etudes, there is a fusion of the two voices.

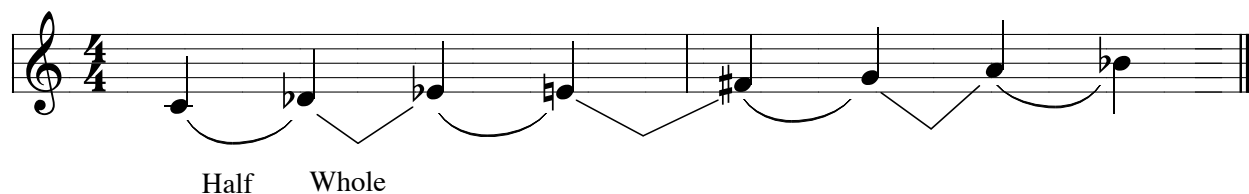
Examples 1 through 24 illustrate designs based on  $\frac{1}{2}$  step, whole step scales now known as diminished scales. There are also exercises based on familiar chord shapes combining voices within the chord and then moving them in opposite directions.

Our technique must be expanded to a finger-style approach, in order to deal with the two line contrapuntal etudes.

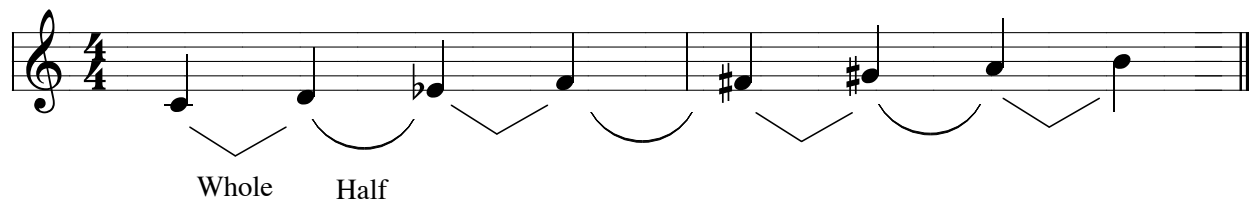
**Editors note:** The following scales did not appear in Jimmy’s original text. I have put them in just for reference. Jimmy has discussed with me the importance of scales that use whole and half steps as one of the most important sounds in the jazz vocabulary. He felt that as musicians, this is one sound that we should be very familiar with.

Examples 1-4 are based on the diminished scale.

C diminished scale  $\frac{1}{2}$  step - whole step:



C diminished scale whole step - half step



## Contrapuntal Concepts

Fingering explanation: Here we will use standard classical guitar notation:

- Numbers around the note heads represent left hand fingering
- Circled numbers are the string that the note is played one.
- Right hand fingering: p – thumb, I – index finger, m – middle finger, a – ring finger.

Example 1: Top line descending whole step, half step. Bottom line up a half step and then down a minor 3<sup>rd</sup>. Strict alternation of the right hand fingers (p – m , then i – a ), This is a very awkward feeling right hand technique at first, but with practice becomes a very natural move.

**Editors note:** If you come from a classical background, you might be tempted to use the bar or even a partial bar. Follow the fingerings marked. They might be awkward at first, but they do facilitate the technique. Stay with it and you will be rewarded with greater facility.

Descending half steps, whole-step.

Ascending whole step, half-step:

Whole step/half step design supported by ascending minor 3rds in the bass:

*m i m i m i m i m i m i*  
*p p p p p p p p*

Same fingering as #4 played backwards:

*i m i m i m i m i m i m*  
*p p p p p p p p*

The wide spread intervals are typical of the contrapuntal guitar etudes. Examples 5 and 6 illustrate the technique of keeping one finger down as the remaining fingers move across the fingerboard.

Pivot on the 3rd finger. The third finger does not release. Observe the differences in the right

*a p i m a p a a i m a p a*  
*p p p p p p p p*

### Contrapuntal Concepts

Fingers move across the fingerboard with no pivot and “yes”, the right hand fingering is correct. This will take some work!

① ③ ④ ① ② ④ ② ④

*m p i p a m i p a m*

Variations of the scale. The 1/2 step moves upwards to the high “E”, descending in whole step from D..to.A..

① ④ ② ③ ① ② ③ ⑥

*p m a m a m i m a m*

A variation of #7 with some octave displacement. Notice how similar the right and left hand fingering stayed the same in both examples 7 and 8.

① ④ ② ③ ① ② ③ ⑥

*p m a m a m i m a m*

A variation of the whole/half scale imposed on an altered V - I phase:

② ③ ① ④ ② ③ ① ③

*m p i p i p i p i m*

A variation of the whole/half scale imposed on an altered V - I phrase. Notice the contrary motion of the lines. Find and mark the altered 5ths and 9ths in this phrase.

10

*a p*      *i p*      *m p*      *a p*      *m p*      *a p*      *m p*

Analyze for both chord tones and the half/whole movements of the top line. Remember to observe the right and left hand fingerings. Also, find the contrary motion in the lines.

11

*m p*   *a p*   *m p*   *i p*   *m p*   *a p*   *m p*   *i p*      *a p*

Another V - I example this time in the key of "D". Notice the upper voice descending in whole and half steps:

12

*m p*      *i p*      *m p*      *i p*      *m p*      *i p*      *m p*      *i p*      *m p*

Contrapuntal Concepts

Top line half/whole diminished scale, bottom line is a dim7 arpeggio. The lower line of chord voicings are a reference showing the harmonic structure that the design it was built from:

**Editors note:** The following exercises break four note chords up into two - 2 note teams. In the file “A Lesson From Jimmy Wyble”, he also shows some other examples of how he breaks up chords into two note combinations. This is very fundamental to his technique as well as a technique that he practices every day. I have also witnessed Jimmy spending time practicing this technique with the students at Musicians Institute as well. The temptation to use a bar on these exercises is great. Don’t do it especially on the Bmi7 chord. Remember 4 notes - four fingers in both the right and left hands.

hand fingering from measure to measure:

In the classical/jazz approach, two lines are extracted from chord stacks using combinations of voices.

Examples 15a - 15b - 16 and 17 are extracted from the chord progression below. Observe the fingerings, 4 fingers for 4 notes - no bars:

Em<sup>7(b5)</sup>      Dmaj<sup>7</sup>      C#m<sup>7(b5)</sup>      Bm<sup>7</sup>

15a

m a m a m a m a  
p i p i p i p i

15b

m a m a m a m a  
p i p i p i p i

16

m a m a m a m a  
p i p i p i p i

17

a m a m a m a m  
p i p i p i p i

## Contrapuntal Concepts

The upper and lower voices are derived from chord tones to form this line. The lower chords are for reference and the the first E7 chord uses George Van Eps technique of barring across the fret. Learning to play that chord is not the goal of this lesson.

18

m i p i p i p i p m a m a m i a  
 E7(b5,b9) A13 A9(b5) Dmaj13

19

a m i i m m p i p i p i p i p a m  
 Bm7 Bm7(b5) E7(b5, #5, b9) Amaj7(b5)

**Editors note:** The following pages “Chords as a source of contrapuntal lines” will be shown in depth in the file called “Harmonic Awareness”. Some of the following material was also presented in the file “A Lesson From Jimmy Wyble” as well. Jimmy has used this material quite a bit in his lectures at Musicians Institute.



Chords as a source of contrapuntal lines. Exercises 21, 22, 23 and 24 use chord scales.

5th, Root, 3rd, 7th voicing. The 7th moving down the scale with chord tones supporting the downward motion.

20

*Contrapuntal Concepts*

Root, 5th, 7th, 3rd voicing. The root moving up the scale with chord tones supporting the movement.

Musical notation for Cmaj7 and Dm7. The first system shows Cmaj7 with root C (circled 5), 5th G (circled 3), and 7th Bb (circled 4). The second system shows Dm7 with root D (circled 1), 5th F (circled 3), and 7th Ab (circled 4). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4.

Musical notation for Em7 and Fmaj7. The first system shows Em7 with root E (circled 3), 5th G (circled 4), and 7th Bb (circled 3). The second system shows Fmaj7 with root F (circled 1), 5th A (circled 3), and 7th C (circled 4). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4.

Musical notation for G7 and Am7. The first system shows G7 with root G (circled 4), 5th B (circled 2), and 7th F (circled 3). The second system shows Am7 with root A (circled 1), 5th C (circled 2), and 7th Eb (circled 3). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4.

Musical notation for Bm7(b5). The first system shows Bm7(b5) with root B (circled 2), 5th D (circled 3), and 7th F (circled 2). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4.

Root, 7th, 3rd, 5th voicing. The 5th moving down the scale while the root moves up the scale.

22

Cmaj7 (2) (2) Dm7 (2) (2)

Detailed description: This block shows two measures of music. The first measure is for Cmaj7, with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The first chord is Cmaj7 (C4, E4, G4, Bb4) with fingerings 1, 3, 4 on the treble staff and 5 on the bass staff. The second measure shows the 5th (G4) moving down to F4 while the root (C4) moves up to D4. The second measure is for Dm7, with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first chord is Dm7 (D4, F4, Ab4, C5) with fingerings 1, 3, 4 on the treble staff and 5 on the bass staff. The second measure shows the 5th (C5) moving down to B4 while the root (D4) moves up to E4.

Em7 (2) (2) Fmaj7 (2) (2)

Detailed description: This block shows two measures of music. The first measure is for Em7, with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first chord is Em7 (E4, G4, Bb4, D5) with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 4 on the treble staff and 5 on the bass staff. The second measure shows the 5th (D5) moving down to C5 while the root (E4) moves up to F4. The second measure is for Fmaj7, with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The first chord is Fmaj7 (F4, Ab4, C5, E5) with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 4 on the treble staff and 5 on the bass staff. The second measure shows the 5th (E5) moving down to D5 while the root (F4) moves up to G4.

G7 (2) (2) Am7 (2) (2)

Detailed description: This block shows two measures of music. The first measure is for G7, with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The first chord is G7 (G4, Bb4, D5, F5) with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 4 on the treble staff and 5 on the bass staff. The second measure shows the 5th (F5) moving down to E5 while the root (G4) moves up to A4. The second measure is for Am7, with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first chord is Am7 (A4, C5, Eb5, G5) with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 4 on the treble staff and 5 on the bass staff. The second measure shows the 5th (G5) moving down to F5 while the root (A4) moves up to B4.

Bm7(b5) (2) (2)

Detailed description: This block shows two measures of music. The first measure is for Bm7(b5), with a treble clef and a 1/4 time signature. The first chord is Bm7(b5) (B4, D5, F5, Ab5) with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 4 on the treble staff and 5 on the bass staff. The second measure shows the 5th (Ab5) moving down to G5 while the root (B4) moves up to C5.

*Contrapuntal Concepts*

**Editors note:** The concept below is simply to discover sounds as voices move and to get used to moving different voices. This is fundamental to Jimmy Wybles technique of contrapuntal improvisation. It is also to develop the minds ability to see a chord as voices and to move lines in different directions. Jimmy has spent a lot of time in his lectures at Musicians Institute having students make these kinds of moves. Some of the chords need to be played with a bar and this is one of the few times I have ever witnessed Jimmy use a bar in his playing.

Root, 7th, 9th, 11th voicing. The 11th moves up a half step while the 7th moves down a half step in each voicing:

①

Cmaj<sup>9(11)</sup>      D<sup>11</sup>      E<sup>11(♭9)</sup>      Fmaj<sup>9(♯11)</sup>

⑤

G<sup>11</sup>      Am<sup>11</sup>      Bmi<sup>11(♭9)</sup>      Cmaj<sup>9(11)</sup>

⑤

Root, 3rd, 7th, 9th voicing. The 7th moves down a half step while the 3rd moves up a half step in each voicing:

②

Cmaj<sup>9</sup>      Dm<sup>9</sup>      Emi<sup>7(♭9)</sup>      Fmaj<sup>9</sup>

⑤

G<sup>9</sup>      Am<sup>9</sup>      Bmi<sup>7(♭5, ♭9)</sup>      Cmaj<sup>9</sup>

④