



The Locrian Mode

The locrian mode is the seventh mode of the major scale. In the key of C major, the scale would consist of the following notes -

B C D E F G A

If we take the root, 3rd, 5th and 7th notes of the scale (highlighted in bold), we get a minor 7^b5 chord. This means that we can use the locrian mode to improvise over a minor 7^b5 chord. The minor 7^b5 chord is commonly used as a II chord in a minor II V I chord sequence. For example, a minor II V I in the key of A minor would be -

Bm7^b5 E7^b9 Am7

The minor II V I is very common in jazz harmony. An example of this is Victor Young's composition 'Beautiful Love'. The piece begins with a II V I chord sequence in the key of D minor. Another jazz standard which makes extensive use of the minor II V sequence is 'Stella By Starlight', another Victor Young composition. The piece opens with a minor II V (also in D minor) and the last 8 bars of the piece are almost entirely comprised of the sequence.

Practise improvising with the scale over a static min7^b5 chord. This will help you to become familiar with the sound and characteristics of the scale. Once you have done this, try using it over the II chord in a minor II V I chord sequence. It is another vital part of standard jazz harmony.