



The Mixolydian Mode

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

G A B C D E F

If we take the root, 3rd, 5th and 7th notes of the scale (highlighted in bold), we get a dominant 7 chord. This means that we can use the mixolydian mode to improvise over a dominant 7 chord. There are several scale options when improvising over a dominant 7 chord in jazz music. The mixolydian mode is used to improvise over chord V in a major key when the improviser does not wish to create extra tension (this may be achieved using the half/whole diminished scale or the whole tone scale, amongst others).

The mixolydian mode is often used by improvisers when a dominant 7th chord is static for a period of time. This can be seen in a standard 12 bar blues chord sequence where the harmony is made predominantly (and sometimes entirely) of dominant 7th chords.

There are also several examples of funk compositions which use dominant 7th chords exclusively. These include Herbie Hancock's 'Watermelon Man' and 'The Chicken' by Pee-Wee Ellis.