

I'VE GOT RHYTHM...YOU CAN TOO!

PART 1 :THE METRONOME

By Doug Munro

When a reporter asked the great Dizzy Gillespie how he improvised he said, “ I think of a rhythm and put notes to it...” Without command of rhythm, both within yourself and within the context of a group, our music sounds awful. Most of the weak playing I have checked out had more to do with a rhythmic disconnect than a melodic problem.

OK...so let's address the problem.

First, get a metronome...second, use it. You need to develop a “metronomic sense” which means the ability to give up the dictation of time to another instrument as well as to feel the pulse and be aware of where you are in relation to it. When you practice with your metronome don't tap your foot, let the metronome dictate the tempo.

How to use your metronome:

1. Practice with the metronome on beats two and four. Most people snap their fingers on two and four. Most drummers use their hi-hat on beats two and four.
2. Practice with the metronome on beats one and three. I am not personally crazy about practicing on one and three but many great players swear by it. So, I practice it and you should too.
3. Practice the same exercise at different tempos. Get out of your “comfort zone” and learn how to groove at different tempos, both fast and slow.

A quick analysis of Example 1 (from video).

1. The first “A” section is pretty much an exercise in chromatic approach chords and chromatic approach notes in the bass. You can see the chord symbols I put in. You will notice that they are almost all approached from either a half step above or below.
2. The first 4 bars of the second “A” section is the Coltrane Matrix starting on Bb. The Coltrane Matrix is a series of Key centers each a major 3rd below each other (in this case Bb, Gb and D). Each key center is approached by it's V7 chord (Bb, Db-Gb, A-D, F-Bb).
3. In the “B” section I do a sequence of triplets using the open E string (bars 19 and 20).
4. The last “A” section is similar to the first with some chromatic chord planning in the last two bars.