

Chord/Scale Approach for Improvising over Dominant Chords

-Ron Kieper

ex. D7 (“Inside” sounding options)

1. **Pentatonic Scale** (Starting point: 1,2,3,5,6 from the root of the chord)
D-E-F#-A-B-D
2. **Dominant Bebop Scale** (add the major 7th as a passing tone)
D-E-F#-G-A-B-C-C#-D
3. **5th Degree Melodic Minor Scale** (start on 5th of dominant and build from there) Melodic Minor is basically a major scale with a minor third.
A-B-C-D-E-F#-G#-A

ex. D7 (“Outside” sounding options)

1. **Diminished Scale** (from root of chord, build the scale with half-whole-h-w-h-w, etc. intervals) D-Eb-F-F#-G#-A-B-C-D
2. **½ step up from root melodic minor scale** (D-Eb-F-F#-Ab-Bb-C-D)
3. **Whole Tone Scale** (from root of chord, build the scale in whole steps)
D-E-F#-G#-Bb-C-D
4. **Tritone Substitution** (start on tritone interval from root of chord and build another dominant scale) ex. Tritone of D is Ab, so you now play an Ab7 chord. Ab-Bb-C-Db-Eb-F-Gb-Ab

***Remember...the 3rd and 7th of a chord are the 2 most important notes.**

They are what make a Major 7 chord sound Major, and a Minor 7 chord sound Minor, etc.

Think of these as the “quality” notes of a scale and the rest are for “color”.

***Blues Scale** – 1,b3,4,#4,5,b7,8 (D-F-G-G#-A-C-D) Try to use this scale only as an “addition” to the other choices above for effect and color in your improvisations. From this point forward, it should not be the “primary” scale choice.

The best improvisers are able to incorporate many, if not all of these options into their solos. Good to get familiar with them!

***This is not an “all inclusive” list, but will give the improviser many tools to pull from their musical toolbox! Enjoy!**