

Cheat Sheets - Your Help with Analyzing Jazz Tunes!

Dear musicians,

Jazz tunes need to be played! It does not matter if its on center stage or in a small club, during rehearsals or just in the shed with a backing track. What makes jazz fun to play and to listen to is to a considerable extent derived from the productive tension between the prescribed form (melody and chord changes) of the tune and the almost unlimited liberty for musicians to interpret the form both as soloist as well as accompanist.

Fake books such as the Real Book and its many descendants have traditionally been the preferred source to obtain melody and chord changes of a tune (yes, we all know they are full of mistakes and the only correct way to come up with a tune is to learn it by transcribing from the original record - but let's face it, only the most saintly jazz cats do that, all other sinners just pick up a lead sheet, see how they get along and don't even feel guilty about it).

Once melody and chord changes are established, an experienced musician will quickly (and sometimes intuitively) perform a harmonic analysis to determine the tonal material for soloing. But many entry-level or amateur players do not have the experience or the time for a comprehensive analysis as and when a song is called. And sometimes harmonic situations are not as straightforward as we all would wish them to be - which means having a second opinion on your analysis would be a nice thing to have.

This is why we have written the "Cheat Sheets" - to provide you with the quick and easy help you need when it comes to harmonic analysis.

We are presenting a selection of harmonic analyses for the most popular jazz-standards in an unique, performance ready format.

With our innovative format, you have all the information needed to play available at a single glance: chord, the most appropriate scale, the Roman Numeral of the chord and the parent scale that provides the tonal material for improvising - giving you instant orientation for your musical ideas.

All analytical work for the Cheat Sheets was done manually and not derived from a computer algorithm. We have checked, compared and extensively played all suggested changes and scales to come up with what we believe to be the best solution. (This is why there will never be a Cheat Sheet App...)

Cheat Sheets are written to help entry-level players and amateurs to improvise by providing a quick and easy to understand view of the tonal material that can be used.

That means that the analysis in each Cheat Sheet will always strive to give you the "easiest-to-play" harmonic approach. However, there is also a comment page to each analysis that provides further insights, alternate scales and changes and performance notes such as the most commonly used endings etc. (For details pls. see "Cheat Sheets - This is how it works" on this page)

Of course, just knowing and playing scales does not make you a jazz improviser and most of the spice in any improvisation stems from breaking the rules and inventing new ones. But the first step towards using the tonal material creatively and extending the language is to have a good awareness of the basic harmonic structure of a tune. We know from experience as performers and teachers that a lack of harmonic understanding prevents many beginners and even intermediate players from fully exploring their creative potential.

Cheat Sheets were written to help you with this and open up the fascinating and limitless world of jazz improvisation.

Enjoy!

Gerhard Brunner & Martin Eisenmeyer

Cheat Sheets - This is how it works

“Cheat Sheets” are performance-ready harmonic analyses of the most common harmonizations (“changes”) of popular jazz standards. They are presented with further annotations eg. regarding the most common performance convention, endings etc.

For easy orientation, the analysis of the changes is presented in a bar-by-bar format and structured as follows:

G Maj	G Maj	G Maj	G Maj
ii	V	iii	vi
A min7	D 7	B min7	E min7
dorian	mixolydian	phrygian	aeolian

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The **third line** from the top contains the actual changes (using standard chord symbols). All of the songs we analyze can be (and have been) harmonized in many different ways. For our purpose we have used the most commonly played changes. One of our goals is to use chords that have a high degree of functional harmonic consistency. Consequently, many of the substitutions and embellishments that can be found in various fake books were - wherever possible - omitted in favor of highlighting the basic harmonic structures. Commonly used alternative changes to our basic approach are discussed in the comment page for each song.

The **fourth line** matches the most appropriate scale to the chord above. Of course, many different scales can be played over a given chord. However - since “cheat sheets” are primarily targeted at entry/intermediate level players - preference is given to the most “simple” and easy to play solution. In particular we opted for the following choices:

- wherever possible, we use diatonic scales (ie. derived from the major scale)
- for minor ii-V-i we generally use the harmonic minor scale of the i chord and its modes throughout the progression. Most modern players clearly prefer the use of three different scales in this situation (locrian 2, altered, melodic minor). However, we felt that - for entry level players - the advantage of having to navigate just one scale outweighs the disadvantage of a slightly less “hip” sound.
- altered and symmetrical scales are only proposed where this is clearly the most appropriate approach
- Alternate scale options are - wherever appropriate - discussed in the comment page for each song.

We use the established terminology (e.g. ionian, dorian etc.) for the modes of the (diatonic) major scale. As there are myriads of different terms to describe the modes of harmonic and melodic minor (eg. lydian dominant, ultralocrian etc.) we rather chose a system which describes these modes as alteration of the closest diatonic scale. For example, the 4th mode of the melodic minor scale is given as mixo(lydian)#4 rather than lydian-dominant as it is a mixolydian scale with a raised 4. For detailed reference see the glossary below.

The **first line** states the “master scale” or “parent scale” from which the suggested scale for the chord is derived. For example: the G-mixolydian scale is the scale that emerges once the C-Major scale is played from its fifth (i.e. G). It therefore contains the same tonality as its parent scale C-Major. This approach allows the user to quickly detect the overarching harmonic context of a tune.

The **second line** shows the number of the mode of the underlying parent scale - commonly known as the “Roman Numeral”