

BREAK OUT: 30 Backing Tracks for Advanced Improvisation - The digital handbook -

(April 2020 Edition)



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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for buying *Break Out: 30 backing tracks for advanced improvisation*. This album is designed to help anyone who wishes to explore their improvisation significantly further.

The album is divided into three types of backing track:

- 24x Song-Style Backing Tracks
- 4x Monster Tone Row Backing Tracks
- 2x Drone Backing Tracks (6 keys per track)

This handbook will summarise each backing track: the structure & chord sequence, particular practice goals, and any other tips that might apply. It will also explain the concept of 'Monster Tone Row Backing Tracks' and ideas you can try during the drone backing tracks.

At the end, there is some further reading that may be of interest to guitarists.

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Track 1: A Major with Diminished 7th Chords

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: A | C°7 | Bm | A#°7 | Bm7 | B°7 | E7 | F°7 - E7 :||

Practice Points:

- Ability to practise (not exclusively) every diminished 7 combination
- Adapting over frequently changing harmony

Track 2: A Hungarian Minor (Double Harmonic Minor) Slow Swing

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: Am(maj9) |// | Fmaj7 - Fmaj7#9#11 |// |
Am(maj9)	//	F7 - F7/maj7#9	// :	
B7b5	Emaj7#5	Am(maj9)	Am(add9)/C	
B7b5	//	Emaj7#5	NC	

Practice Points:

- Hungarian minor scale (1 2 b3 #4 5 b6 7, i.e. harmonic minor with an augmented 4th. In A this is: A B C D# E F G#)
- All chords are extended - limiting modal freedom but referencing more notes outside conventional triad

Track 3: Bb Major Swing

Chord sequence:

12/8 ||: Bb - Bbmaj7/D | Ebadd9 | Bb - Bbmaj7/D | Ebadd9 - Db7 :||
| Cm | Bb/D | Cm | Fsus4 - F |
| G - Gbaug | Bb/F - Eaug | Eb | F7sus4 - F |

Practice Points:

- Bb key
- Fairly frequent changes of harmony

Track 4: Bb Minor 7/8 Groove

Chord sequence:

7/8 ||: Bbm |// | Cm7 | F9#5 :|| x4
| Gb7 |// | Eb7 |// | Gb7 |// | C° | F7b6 |

Practice Points:

- Bb minor key
- Fairly frequent changes in harmony
- Improvising over a 7/8 time signature

Track 5: B and C# Phrygian Electro

Chord sequence:

6/8 ||: B7sus4 | Cmaj7 :|| x8
||: C#7sus4 | Dmaj7 :|| x8
||: B7sus4 | Cmaj7 :|| x4

Practice Points:

- Phrygian mode, both natural and dominant
- Change of key
- Effects encouraged

Track 6: B Egyptian Pentatonic Funk

Chord sequence:

4/4/ ||: B9sus4 | B9sus4 - C9sus4 :||
| A |// | F#m7 |// |
| Esus4 |// | C#11(b13) |// |

Practice Points:

- Egyptian Pentatonic scale, a tonality which has no 3rd (1 2 4 5 b7)
- Encouraging 'the wrong notes' practice with use of C9sus4
- Improvising over quartal harmony (C#11[b13] chord)

Track 7: C Mixolydian Electro

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: C7 |// |// |// | Gm9 |// | C7 |// :||
6/16 | C - B |
4/4 | Bbmaj7 |// | Am7 |// | Fmaj7 |// | Dm7 |// |
6/16 | C - D5 |
4/4 | Ebmaj7 |// | Em7b5 |// | Fmaj7 |// | Gm9 | Gm9/Bb |

Practice Points:

- Mixolydian mode in one key, with occasional changes of harmony (e.g. B chord, Ebmaj7 chord)
- Appearance of the unusual 6/16 time signature

Track 8: C Minor Groove

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: Cm9 | Am7b5 - Abmaj7 :|| x3
| Cm9 | G7#5 |

Practice Points:

- Frequent changes of harmony
- All chords are extended (limiting tonal freedom but encouraging notes outside of standard triad)

Track 9: C# Super-Locrian Trap

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: C#6alt* | C#7alt* | C#6alt* | C#m7(b9b5) :||
| A7** | Aaug7b9 | A9b13 | A11 (inc. 3rd) |
| Gm6 | Gm7b5 | Faug(#11) | Em7/6 - D5** |

* this version of [alt] is [#9#5]

Practice Points:

- Alternating between Super Locrian bb7 - red chords - and the Altered Scale (i.e. Super Locrian b7) - blue chords. **These don't contain notes determining which scale (B or Bb), but highlighted in suggested keys for ease
- Regular use of extended, cluster & altered chords, limiting harmonic freedom to encourage exploring this tonality

Track 10: Db and Eb Lydian Mystical

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: Db | Db6 | Db | Db6 - Db#11 :||
||: Eb | Eb6 | Eb | Eb6 - Eb#11 :||

Practice Points:

- Focus on Lydian mode in more than one key
- Db and Eb keys

Track 11: D Dominant Lydian Rnb

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: E/D - D |// |// |// |
D/C - C	//	E/D - D	E/D - D - D7 :				
G7#11	//	D7#11	//	G7#11	//	A7#11	//
NC (D in bass)	//	//	//				

Practice Points:

- Dominant Lydian mode (1 2 3 #4 5 6 b7) in different keys. In D this is D E F# G# A B C
- Total flexibility during NC bars - try chromaticism

Track 12: D Major 3/4 Slow

Chord sequence:

3/4 | D |// |// |// |// |// |// |// |
| Gmaj7 |// |// |// | D |// |// |// |
| Bm |// | F#7sus4 | F#7 | Gmaj7 | Em7 | Cmaj7 |// |

Practice Points:

- Focus on major scale, with occasional shifts in harmony (e.g. F#7 chord, Cmaj7 chord)
- Time signature of 3/4

Track 13: D# Phrygian Metal

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: D#7b9 :|| x32

E	C#m	D#		B	C#	D#		
E	C#m	B	B7	A#7b9				

Practice Points:

- Dominant Phrygian mode in D# (a semitone lower than E, which is more commonly practised)
- Combination of harmony remaining static and changing frequently

Track 14: Eb Major with Augmented Chords

Chord sequence:

4/4 : Eb	Ebaug	Ab	Abug	
Fm	Faug7 - B9#5#11	Bb	Bbaug	:

Practice Points:

- Augmented chords on alternate bars
- Can use Whole Tone Scale as well as augmented arpeggios, especially on B9#5#11 (whole tone cluster)
- Dynamic contrast between repeats (soft - loud)

Track 15: E Minor Fast Groove

Chord sequence:

4/4 : Em7	A7	Em7	A7/6	: x4				
B9		C9b5		B9		C9b5		

Practice Points:

- Dorian mode
- Parallel dominant 9th chords
- Can use whole tone scale over C9b5 chords

Track 16: E Harmonic Major Gentle

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: E - G#m7b5 - F#m7b5 | E - D9 - Am(maj13) :|| x4
6/8 | Cmaj7#5 |// | Am(maj7) |// | E/G# | Am6 | Cmaj7#5 | D |

Practice Points:

- Harmonic major / Mixolydian b6 tonality (1 2 3 4 5 b6 b7). In E this is: E F# G# A B C D
- Change in time signature (4/4 to 6/8)
- Unusual chord extensions

Track 17: F Mixolydian 11/16

Chord sequence:

11/16 ||: F7 :|| x 16
||: G7 :|| x 16
| Bb5 |// | Ab5 |// | Bb5 |// | B5 |// |
| C5 |// | Bb5 |// | C5 |// | Eb7 |// |

Practice Points:

- Mixolydian mode
- Key of F
- Irregular time signature of 11/16 throughout

Track 18: F Byzantine (Double Harmonic Major) Relaxed

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: Fmaj7 | F(b6) :|| x4
| Bbmadd9 | Gb - Gbmaj7 | Bbmadd9 | Gb - Gbmaj7 | C7b5 |// |

Practice Points:

- Byzantine / Double Harmonic Major Scale (1 b2 3 4 5 b6 7) In F it is: F Gb A Bb C Db E
- Unlike the A Hungarian Minor track, the chords here are less extended, meaning there is some flexibility outside the tonality over certain chords (though the underlying arpeggiator uses all notes of the Byzantine scale)

Track 19: F# Locrian Rock

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: F#m7b5 :|| x 16
||: Am7 | Em7 | F#m7b5 |// :||
| D | C | Bb9#5#11 |// |

Practice Points:

- Focus on Locrian mode (1 b2 b3 4 b5 b6 b7). In F# it is: F# G A B C D E
- Try whole tone scale in Bb9#5#11 bars

Track 20: Gb Augmented Lydian Clave

Chord sequence:

7/8 ||: Gbmaj7#5 |// | Ab6add9(#11) |// :|| x4
4/4 | Gbmaj7#5 |// | Ab6add9(#11) |// | Gbmaj7#5 |// | Fm11 - Fm7 | Ebm/Bb - Bb |
| Gbmaj7#5 |// | Ab6add9(#11) |// | Gbmaj7#5 |// | Fm11 - Fm7 | Ebm/Bb | Bb |

Practice Points:

- Augmented Lydian mode (1 2 3 #4 #5 6 7). In Gb it is: Gb Ab Bb C D Eb F
- Key of Gb (away from F# minor)
- Half of this is in 7/8

Track 21: G Major and Minor II-V-I Groove

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: Am7 - D7 | G :|| x4
||: Am7b5 - D7 | Gm :|| x4
| C - F - Bb - Eb | Ab - Db - Gb - B | E - A - D - G | Am - D7 - G |
| Cm - Fm - Bbm - Ebm | G#m - C#m - F#m - Bm | Em - Am - Dm - Gm | Am - D7 |

Practice Points:

- Playing over a ii-V-I progression, both major and minor
- Rapidly moving through cycle of 5ths, both major and minor

Track 22: G Microtonal Funk Electro

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: Gmaj7 |// | E \sharp m7 |// | Gmaj7 |// | E \flat m7 |// :||
Am7	Em7 - Am7	A \sharp m7	E \sharp m7 - A \sharp m7				
Bbm7	Fm7 - Bbm7	B \flat m7	F \sharp m7 - B \flat m7				
E \sharp m7	//	Bbm7	//	E \flat m7	A \flat m7	D7	D \sharp 7 - D7

Practice Points:

- Exploring microtonality and use of quarter tones (without changing tuning of A)
- Frequently-changing harmonies

Track 23: Ab 12 Bar Blues

Chord sequence:

12/8 | Ab7 |// |// |// |// |
 | Db7 |// | Ab7 |// |
 | Eb7 | Db7 | Ab7 - Ab7/C - Db7 - D $^{\circ}$ | Eb7 |

Practice Points:

- Standard 12-bar blues progression in a non-standard key (Ab)
- All dominant 7ths (apart from end of bar 11)

Track 24: Ab Major and Minor Chilled

Chord sequence:

4/4 ||: Abmaj7 |// | Abm13 |// | x4
 | Gbmaj7 |// | Gbm13 |// |
 | Gbmaj7 |// | Eb7sus4 | Eb7sus4 - Eb7 |

Practice Points:

- Frequent changes between major and minor of same key
- Ab and Gb keys

Tracks 25-28: Monster Tone Row Backing Tracks

...What on earth are these?

The *Monster Tone Row Backing Tracks* each follow the same structure: a tone row (i.e. all 12 notes of the chromatic scale following a certain order), but all of the intervals are different as well. For example, a tone row could start with C - D - E, but in this case C - D goes up a major 2nd, and D - E goes up a major 2nd... those intervals are the same, which this tone row avoids. The tone row that these follow is:

+3	+2	-3	-4	+1	-2	-5	+4	+5	+6/-6	-1	
C	E \flat	F	D	B \flat	B	A	E	G \sharp	C \sharp	G	F \sharp

As you can see, not only are all of the notes different, but all of the intervals are too.

Why is this relevant to improvisation?

Each track has one chord type: #25 is major 7th, #26 is dominant 7th, #27 is minor 7th, and #28 is half-diminished (m7b5). That chord type stays the same and moves in parallel motion throughout the entire track, and the notes in the tone row become the root for each chord in that order. In other words, #37 starts with Cmaj7, Ebmaj7, Fmaj7, Dmaj7, etc., while #38 starts with C7, Eb7, F7, D7, etc.

This particularly, though not exclusively, benefits practising **arpeggios**. You will be able to:

- Play the arpeggio in every key
- Play two different arpeggios that are different intervals apart every time...also in every key!
- Balance stamina and concentration: Same track for 18 minutes, being ready for every change.

It is a monstrous exercise (hence the title!)

The full note table

When practising, this is the order of notes:

C	D#/Eb	F	D	A#/Bb	B	A	E	G#/Ab	C#/Db	G	F#/Gb
B	D	E	C#/Db	A	A#/Bb	G#/Ab	D#/Eb	G	C	F#/Gb	F
A#/Bb	C#/Db	D#/Eb	C	G#/Ab	A	G	D	F#/Gb	B	F	E
A	C	D	B	G	G#/Ab	F#/Gb	C#/Db	F	A#/Bb	E	D#/Eb
G#/Ab	B	C#/Db	A#/Bb	F#/Gb	G	F	C	E	A	D#/Eb	D
G	A#/Bb	C	A	F	F#/Gb	E	B	D#/Eb	G#/Ab	D	C#/Db
F#/Gb	A	B	G#/Ab	E	F	D#/Eb	A#/Bb	D	G	C#/Db	C
F	G#/Ab	A#/Bb	G	D#/Eb	E	D	A	C#/Db	F#/Gb	C	B
E	G	A	F#/Gb	D	D#/Eb	C#/Db	G#/Ab	C	F	B	A#/Bb
D#/Eb	F#/Gb	G#/Ab	F	C#/Db	D	C	G	B	E	A#/Bb	A
D	F	G	E	C	C#/Db	B	F#/Gb	A#/Bb	D#/Eb	A	G#/Ab
C#/Db	E	F#/Gb	D#/Eb	B	C	A#/Bb	F	A	D	G#/Ab	G

Tracks 29 & 30: Drones in all keys

In these backing tracks, you have total harmonic freedom in your improvisation. The tonal centre is the only note in these drone tracks, meaning you have total flexibility as to which tonality you focus on.

Not only that, you are also able to change the tonality at any time you like. You could start with a major tonality, then after a few minutes, modulate to a minor tonality, or something even more unusual. It is all up to you.

This is the perfect opportunity to practice:

- Exploring less familiar tonalities, including microtonalities and different tuning systems
- Scales & arpeggios in that particular key
- Chords, including chord inversions, in that particular key
- Bitonality
 - e.g. try playing in F# major over a C drone. Experiment with different bitonalities and see which in particular you like
- Styles
 - The timbre of the synth drone is very hypnotic, but there's nothing to stop you playing something blues-y over the top
- Interval & harmonic relationships
 - E.g. over an F drone, how does it sound when you just play a perfect 5th (C) compared to a major 2nd (G)?
 - Practise singing each interval over this note to help familiarise yourself with where each interval is
- Breathing
 - These drone backing tracks are free of tempo, rhythm, and structure, making it easier to 'breathe' between ideas. Try not playing for 10 seconds during the track, and see what you come up with after you have taken that pause
- Not resorting to old habits
 - There's no change in key or harmony that might force you to jump first into what you know

There are 6 drones per backing track. Each drone lasts 10 minutes before moving onto the next drone, making both tracks an hour long.

Track 29 (A - D) chromatically ascends to the next drone:

A - A#/Bb - B - C - C#/Db - D

Track 30 (Ab - Eb) chromatically descends to the next drone:

G#/Ab - G - F#/Gb - F - E - D#/Eb

Further Reading

For guitarists, I would recommend the following books with this album:

Guthrie Govan - Creative Guitar 2: Advanced Techniques

It goes without saying that this is an exceptional book for building technique. But there are also a lot of very useful references for exploring new sounds. Try the sections 'Emulating Other Instruments', 'New Chordal Ideas' or 'Approaching New Scales'.

Troy Stetina - Speed Mechanics For Lead Guitar

This is also an extremely useful book for building technique. In addition, the 'Creativity' section at the end, as well as many of the pattern exercises, can really help with how and why to 'create', and methods on exploring new areas of the fretboard.

Tim Quinn - Fluid Soloing Book 1: Arpeggios for Lead Rock Guitar

This book will be especially useful for the Monster Tone Row Backing Tracks. Various arpeggios in 7 different starting positions on the fretboard, and many different exercises on joining them together. A lot of very helpful content!

David Bloom - Melodic Chords for Guitar - Vol.1

My 'G Major & Minor ii-V-I' backing track barely scratches any surface on the ii-V-I progression compared to this book! But not only that - it offers a huge range of chord shapes and voicings, and how to apply those chords melodically.

Askold Buk - The Advanced Guitar Case Chord Book

What I love about this book is, as well as offering a lot of extended chord shapes in multiple positions, it also gives many examples of famous and popular songs that use these extended chords, to help hear when they sound nice. A great way to learn new chords.

Credits

Music (writing, recording & production) - Owen Jones

Album Artwork - Matt Roberts

Handbook - Owen Jones

And a big thank you to YOU for buying the album! Enjoy exploring lots of new tonalities, harmonies and more unusual tools for your improvisation.

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