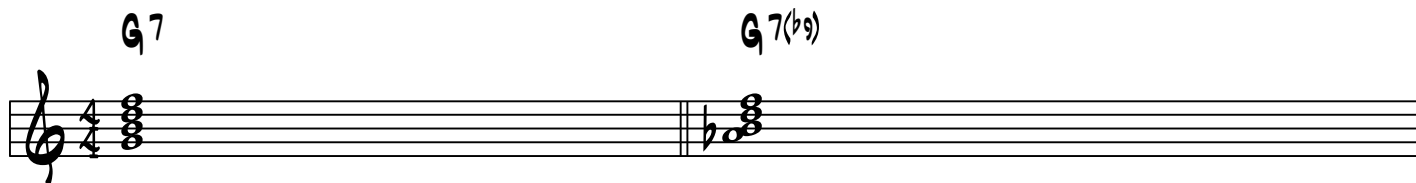


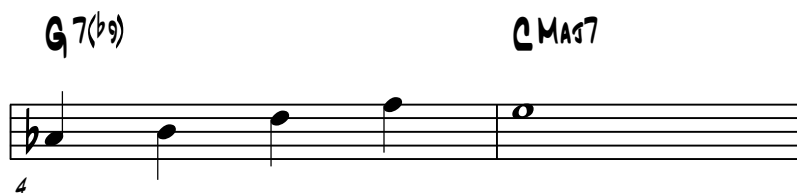
Using Diminished Scales for Dominant b9 Chords



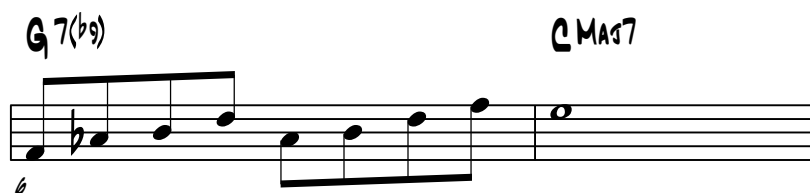
A 7b9 chord has a hidden diminished chord within it. It's kind of like double-secret probation. You can see this when you substitute the b9 for the root of the chord. Voila! Double secret diminished chord. Many just say "play a half-whole diminished scale over a 7b9. This is a lot of information, and if you just play a diminished scale, you will end up sounding, well, like you're playing a diminished scale, or the dreaded over-practiced diminished "licks" that we hear from every student musician (and many pros) on the planet. I have had better luck approaching it like this:



Again, here is your hidden diminished chord in a G7b9



Here is the first step. Arpeggiate the diminished chord in quarter notes, resolving the 7th of the V chord to the 3rd of the I chord (you can also resolve to a minor 1 this way too, but that's a topic for another time and place. Remember this: IT'S ALL ABOUT RESOLUTION. Ya dig? That's the trouble with starting with the whole scale, and the beauty of learning this very simple exercise in all keys. You know I was going to pull out that "all keys" stuff, didn't you? The most important part of this is the very STRONG movement from the 7th of the 7b9 chord to the 3 of the I chord. Once you hear this, your solos will improve immediately.



Now we get to eighth notes. The note value a large percentage of jazz is built on. Notice that we still have the guide tone movement into the I chord, by planning out how our diminished chord is sarpeggiated. Again, all keys, please. Well, all three, but that is again a story for another day.

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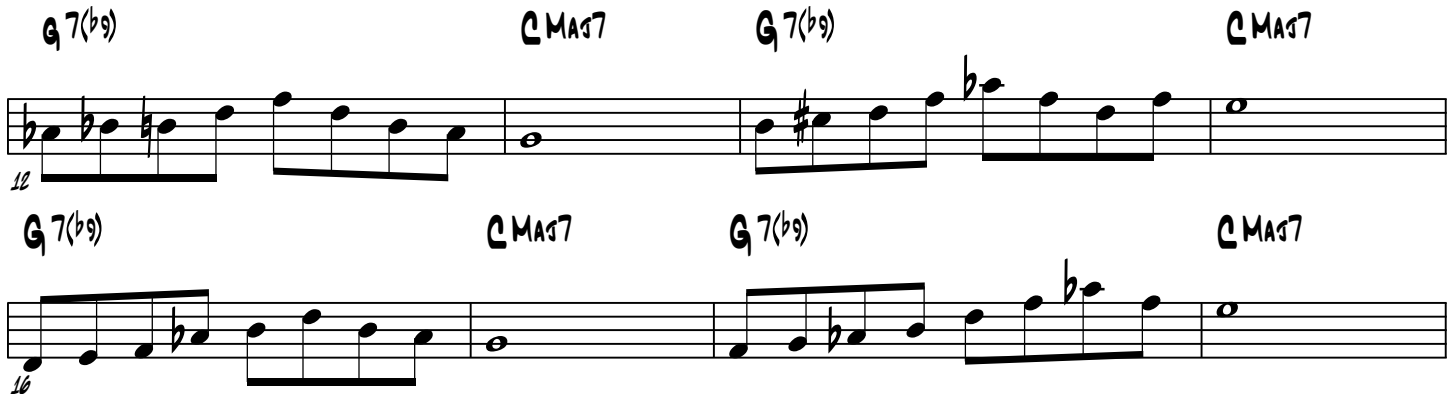
Again, planning good resolutions results in very satisfying soloing. After a while this will happen automatically, which is a beautiful thing. In the 7b9 chord, we have another strong resolution, one from the b9 of the V chord to the 5 of the I chord. We arpeggiate the chord to get this movement. All keys, no exceptions.



For many years, most improvisors had not discovered how to use the full diminished scale to play either over diminished chords or 7b9 chords, which were not very common in the early years of jazz. The traditional way of thinking about constructing a diminished scale is in steps, a symmetrical scale consisting of alternating whole and half steps - WHWHWH etc...For our purposes I tend to think of it as the above illustration shows. You can add a note a whole step away from any chord tone of a diminished chord to create a diminished scale. It is like two diminished chords crunched together.



Like most of you, I do not like double flats and double sharps. So even if it is theoretically incorrect, I'm going to spell our diminished chords as above, avoiding double rainbows and double confusion



Any learning is best done slowly. So instead of using the whole diminished scale, we are going to add only one extra note at a time. The above examples show how adding different notes changes the sound of the resolution. Also note that all examples use the 7-3 or b9-5 movement to get a strong resolution. At this point you can come up with your own exercises. Go slowly, intellectual indigestion is disturbing, and cramming produces only temporary results.



After you have practiced these exercises, you can start to use the whole diminished scale. It will sound good because you have learned to HEAR the resolutions, and the difference each added note makes to the sound. I've just touched the surface, of course, and there is much to explore. Have fun, and I'll see you next time!