

MINOR BLUES, EQUINOX BY JOHN COLTRANE

JOHN COLTRANE,
LESSON BY BEN PORTNER

Much like the two major blues heads we've played (C Jam Blues and Bag's Groove) a minor blues also follows a 12 bar form. The main difference is that the tune is in minor key sometimes called the "sad blues." To learn and practice the minor blues, we will be looking at John Coltrane's iconic piece "Equinox." The original key is C# minor however for the purpose of making the tune more accessible to beginners we will be playing the tune in C Minor. After getting more comfortable with the tune in C Minor you can try transposing to C # Minor.

First let's take a look at the melody and chords in root position. After getting comfortable playing the melody with root position voicings we will add on some more complex sounding rootless voicings.

Chord progression for the first system (bars 1-4):

- Bar 1: G, Eb, C
- Bar 2: Cm7
- Bar 3: G, Eb, C
- Bar 4: Cm7

Chord progression for the second system (bars 5-9):

- Bar 5: Cm7
- Bar 6: C Eb G Bb, Fm7
- Bar 7: Fm7
- Bar 8: G, Cm7, Eb, C
- Bar 9: Cm7

Chord progression for the third system (bars 10-12):

- Bar 10: D F A b C, D, D, D
- Bar 11: G7alt., D, C, Eb, C, Eb, C
- Bar 12: Cm7, G7alt., G

Once you're comfortable playing the melody with root position chords, let's try playing the melody using more complex chords. These chords will add more variety and texture to the melody.

We will go through each chord individually and go over multiple voicings to use for each chord. Try substituting these voicings with the root position voicings we used on the first page

14

C MINOR

23

F MINOR

GAbEb

32

D HALF DIMINISHED

G7 ALTERED

Although on the previous page we practiced the G7 chord as a regular root position G7 with no tensions, this chord is meant to be played with alterations (#9, b9, b13). Therefore we will practice this chord using the alterations

37

Now that we've worked on the voicings let's take a look at the scales we can use to improvise over each chord

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Let's start with C Minor. We will work on the natural harmonic and melodic minor scales. Much like in Miles's solo that we learned, the improviser has the options of interchanging these scales over a minor chord.

C NATURAL MINOR

39 C D Eb F G Ab Bb C

EbGBbD

C MELODIC MINOR

47 C D Eb F G A B C

EbGBD

C HARMONIC MINOR

55 C D Eb F G Ab B C

EbGBD

C DORIAN MINOR

63 C D Eb F G A Bb C

EbGBbD

C MINOR PENTATONIC

71 C Eb F G Bb C

CFBb

C BLUES SCALE

77 C Eb F Gb G Bb C

EbGBbD

Eb MAJOR HEXATONIC—despite it being in a different key, the Eb major hexatonic imposed over a C minor chord is extremely effective.

84 Eb F G Bb C D Eb

EbGBbD

Ab MAJOR HEXATONIC
despite being in a different key the Ab hexatonic imposed over a C minor chord is extremely effective

91 Ab Bb C Eb F G Ab

EbGBbD

Phew, that was a lot of scales. Now let's do the same thing for the F minor 7th chord

F NATURAL MINOR

98 F G Ab Bb C Db Eb F

AbCEbG

F HARMONIC MINOR

106 F G Ab Bb C Db E F

AbCEG

F MELODIC MINOR

114 F G Ab Bb C D E F

AbCEG

F DORIAN MINOR

122 F G Ab Bb C D Eb F

AbCEbG

F MINOR PENTATONIC

130 F Ab Bb C Eb F

FBbEb

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Ab MAJOR HEXATONIC

136

Ab Bb C Eb F G Ab

AbCEbG

Detailed description: This musical exercise shows the Ab Major Hexatonic scale in two staves. The treble clef staff contains seven measures of music, each with a single half-note chord: Ab, Bb, C, Eb, F, G, and Ab. The bass clef staff contains seven measures, each with a whole-note chord: AbCEbG, followed by six measures of whole rests. The key signature is two flats (Bb and Eb).

Db MAJOR HEXATONIC

143

Db Eb F Ab Bb C Db

AbCEbG

Detailed description: This musical exercise shows the Db Major Hexatonic scale in two staves. The treble clef staff contains seven measures of music, each with a single half-note chord: Db, Eb, F, Ab, Bb, C, and Db. The bass clef staff contains seven measures, each with a whole-note chord: AbCEbG, followed by six measures of whole rests. The key signature is three flats (Bb, Eb, and Ab).

Now we've come to the 9th and 10th bar which is the minor 2-5-1 leading back to the tonic of C Minor. Refer back to minor 2-5-1 voicings if you are having trouble with this progression. The scales used here are going to be a little different from the minor chords especially on the G7. Let's explore the scales.

D HALF DIMINISHED 7TH

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D LOCRIAN

150 D Eb F G Ab Bb C D

DFAbC

D LOCRIAN NATURAL NATURAL 2 (6TH MODE F MELODIC MINOR SCALE)

158 D E F G Ab Bb C D

DFAbC

D LOCRIAN NATURAL 6TH

166 D Eb F G B C D

DFAbC

Now let's take a look at the G altered chord and its scales.

G ALTERED SCALE (7TH MODE Ab MELODIC MINOR)

173

G Ab Bb B Db Eb F G

BEbFBb

G HALF WHOLE DIMINISHED SCALE

181

G Ab Bb B Db D E F G

BEbFBb

Ab MINOR HEXATONIC (ALTERED SCALE WITH NO 5TH)

190

Ab Bb B Eb F G Ab

BEbFBb

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Now let's try playing the melody again only this time we will use some of the more complex voicings we learned earlier. I will start by writing out some of these voicings and once you get comfortable with those try substituting some of the other voicings for the ones I wrote. After you get comfortable playing the chords with the melody try improvising over the song using the scales we practiced. It is recommended that the student listen to the masters (such as coltrane) play this tune multiple times and try to emulate their solos.

197

Cm⁷ Cm⁷ Cm⁷ Cm⁷

G Eb C G Eb C C Eb

EbGBbD FbBbEb CFBb EbGBbD

202

Fm⁷ Fm⁷ Cm⁷ Cm⁷ D^{ø7}

F C G Eb C D D D

EbGAbC FbBbEb EbGBbD DEbG CDFAb

207

G^{7alt.} Cm⁷ G^{7alt.}

D C Eb C Eb C G

BEbFBb EbGBbD FbBbEb

10

210

Musical notation for measures 210-217. The system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Each staff contains a whole rest in every measure, indicating that both hands are silent throughout this section.

218

Musical notation for measures 218-225. The system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Each staff contains a whole rest in every measure, indicating that both hands are silent throughout this section. The system concludes with a double bar line.