

# Introduction

## The Concept

The augmented scale (sometimes called the “symmetrical augmented scale”) is a hexatonic (six-note) scale that is formed by combining two augmented triads a minor third apart. It ends up being a series of consecutive minor thirds and minor seconds:



Because of its symmetrical structure (and the chord/scale relationship from which the scale is formed) there are only *four* of these scales (beside the one above, three others moving up in half steps; i.e., D flat, D natural, and E flat as the root notes). There is no real “resting” point (tonic note), so each scale can be thought of as having a continuous, *circular* structure (i.e., there are no modes, such as are found in diatonic scales).

In jazz improvisation, this is a decidedly “modern” sounding scale, though European classical music composers have used it since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Franz Liszt) and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Schoenberg, Bartok, et. al.)

Even in jazz it has been around for a while. Oliver Nelson and John Coltrane were incorporating it into their improvisational vocabularies in the 1960s, and it became a staple of Michael Brecker’s tonal color not long after. Today, many “modern” jazz artists have brought these colors into their tonal palate of expression.

This scale has a strong, stark quality, and can be used very effectively to create melodic and harmonic tension. The work in this book involves using the scale as a harmonic substitution (or extension) over dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chords, as they resolve to major.

For each dominant chord, there are two augmented scales that work well in this way. The first is what I call the *stronger* scale, because it contains the 7<sup>th</sup> of the dominant chord:



In the example above I'm using the augmented scale formed from the Db augmented chord in combination with the E augmented chord. (I think of this as the augmented scale formed from the flatted 5<sup>th</sup> of the dominant chord). You can see (and hear!) lots of interesting tensions, specifically: 7<sup>ths</sup>, flatted 9<sup>ths</sup>, and raised 11<sup>ths</sup> (or flatted 5<sup>ths</sup>) that resolve to the tonic tonality.

Because of its symmetrical structure, this scale will work in a similar way (functioning as *stronger*) in two other keys:

The image shows two musical staves in 4/4 time. The first staff is for B major, with a B7 chord above the first measure and an Emaj7 chord above the second measure. The scale starts on B and consists of: B, C#, D, E, F, G, A, B. The second staff is for Eb major, with an Eb7 chord above the first measure and an Abmaj7 chord above the second measure. The scale starts on Eb and consists of: Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb.

As you can see, the three keys I've used with this scale as examples above are based upon the division of the octave into three equal parts, in this case, C, E, and Ab.

The second augmented scale related to the dominant 7<sup>th</sup> is what I'm calling *weaker*, as it *doesn't* contain the 7<sup>th</sup> of the dominant chord:

The image shows a single musical staff in 4/4 time for G major. A G7 chord is above the first measure and a Cmaj7 chord is above the second measure. The scale starts on G and consists of: G, Ab, B, C, D, E, F, G.

In this example, I'm using the augmented scale formed from the C augmented chord in combination with the Eb augmented chord. (I think of this as the augmented scale formed from the 4<sup>th</sup>, or 11<sup>th</sup>, of the dominant chord). There are still lots of nice tensions, specifically: flatted 13<sup>ths</sup> (raised 5<sup>ths</sup>), flatted 9<sup>ths</sup>, and 3<sup>rds</sup>.

To be clear, there is still plenty of tension, yet without the 7<sup>th</sup> the scale doesn't have quite the contrast and drive as the stronger one. (Keep in mind that this assertion is only based upon my subjective judgment about how the augmented scale functions relative to V7 chords.)

This (*weaker*) scale, too, works in a similar way in two other keys:

The image shows two musical staves in 4/4 time. The first staff is for the key of B7, with an augmented scale starting on B. The second staff is for the key of Eb7, with an augmented scale starting on Eb. Both scales are shown in 4/4 time and end with a whole rest on the tonic note.

I think of these both of these scales as being *superimposed colors* over the dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord that contrast with, and resolve to, the tonic.

Each dominant chord has only two augmented scales that work well over it in this way (as described in the formulae above). The other two augmented scales don't work very well because they contain the raised (major) 7<sup>th</sup>.

**What I've done in this book is arranged the augmented scales into diatonic triad pairs, and used these *pairs* as tensions over the dominant 7<sup>th</sup> resolving to tonic.** These triad pairs create a slightly different tension color with the scale notes, and function somewhat as *direct harmonic substitution*. Here are the three diatonic triad pairs that can be organized from the above-mentioned *stronger* scale:

The image shows a musical staff with three diatonic triad pairs: Db and Am, F and C#m, and A and Fm. The notes are arranged in a sequence that shows their relationship.

(As you can see, I'm changing some of the augmented scale tone names enharmonically so that the harmonic spelling is consistent with the how the triad is labeled.)

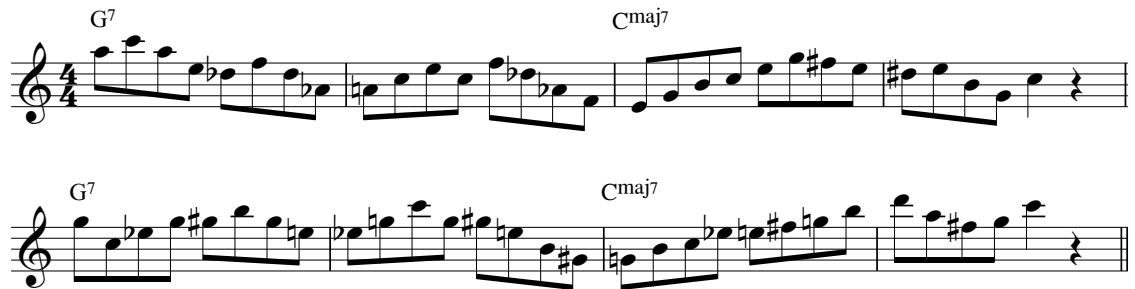
There is a symmetrical relationship between the triads in each pair: specifically, a minor 6<sup>th</sup>/augmented 5<sup>th</sup> (e.g., Db ascending to A minor) or a major 3<sup>rd</sup> /diminished 4<sup>th</sup> (e.g., Db descending to A minor), depending on your perception, and/or how you move the triads. And the color contrast between each triad pair is always major/minor (or minor/major).

Because of this tonal relationship, the diatonic triads still maintain a very tense, symmetrical quality (not unlike the scale itself).

Here are the three diatonic triad pair arranged from the weaker scale:



And here's an example of the diatonic triads pair being applied to the V7-I progression:



Above, in the top four bars, I've organized the *stronger* scale into two diatonic triads: A minor and Db major. In the bottom four bars, I've organized the *weaker* scale into two diatonic triads: C minor and E major.

After going through each diatonic triad pair formed from all four augmented scales, and showing how they fit over each respective V7-I progression, I then show a way to *combine* triad pairs from both the *stronger* and *weaker* scale to create interesting melodic and harmonic tension over this progression:



In the above example I organize both scales to create four different diatonic triads: E minor, Ab major (formed from the weaker scale); A major, and F minor (formed from the stronger scale), finally resolving to the C major (tonic) tonality.

In this book I show *ten different ways* to combine these diatonic triad pairs to create unique and powerful sounding tensions and resolutions.

## The aims of this book

I've developed and practiced the material in this book with specific aims in mind. I offer this work:

- To help you to deepen your understanding and practical application of using the augmented scale over dominant chords.
- To provide you with a written "reference" of the scale organized into diatonic triad pairs (and how they resolve from dominant to tonic).
- To help you broaden your understanding of relating triad pairs over V7 chords extracted from symmetrical scales (such as the diminished scale).
- To expand your sense of harmonic substitution, giving you more colors to choose from when improvising over harmonic forms.
- To challenge your ears.
- To challenge and improve your technique within the context of the modern jazz language.

## Format

As I've mentioned, there are four distinct augmented scales. I've included a reference page to demonstrate how I've chosen to label each scale (Scales 1 through 4), and their respective diatonic triads. It will be helpful for you to take a brief look at the reference for clarity and consistency.

I've tried to be as consistent as possible with enharmonic spellings. As you'll note, I'll change the spellings of certain notes to make them consistent within the diatonic triad they form (rather than how they relate to the dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord over which they are applied). I make a few exceptions to this when working just with the augmented scales themselves (first two chapters) in order to make the exercises a bit less cluttered with accidentals.

The exercises in the first two chapters are designed as an intensive introduction to the augmented scales themselves. If you already know the scales well, and are using them in your improvisations (can resolve them readily from V7 to I), you can probably skip these sections. If you're not quite fluent in the sound and movement of the scale, I *strongly* recommend you spend a good amount of time with these first two chapters before moving on. You should be able to think, understand and hear the scale clearly and have an immediate understanding of how the tensions function and sound moving from dominant to tonic.

There are four chapters in the book. After the first two mentioned above, there is a chapter that is devoted entirely to exploring each diatonic triad pair formed from each of the augmented scales. Besides having basic exercises to get you to move and hear the triad pair (in of itself), I also show how each one resolves from dominant to tonic in the six keys in which it works. In the final chapter I show ten different ways to combine diatonic triad pairs from both scales as they resolve from dominant to tonic. Each exercise (each triad pair combination) is put into all twelve keys. The harmonic movement in this and all other exercises is V7-I in major keys.

I've tried to keep the range of all exercises reasonably moderate. The lowest note is low Bb (below middle C) and the highest is F# above the staff. Each melodic pattern (over V7-I) is kept in a fairly narrow range (no more than an octave and a fifth), so if any pattern goes beyond your range, you can, of course, feel free to transpose the octave.

The rhythmic language of all the exercises is primarily the eighth note (and occasional eighth-note triplet). I did this mostly for the sake of simplicity. Again, feel free to alter rhythms to add variety and interest.

### **How to practice this material**

I've organized the material in the way that I've studied it: first learning the movement and sounds of the augmented scale; then learning how to hear and move the scale into resolution from dominant to tonic; then learning how to organize the scale into diatonic triad pairs (resolving them from dominant to tonic); finally, learning how to combine diatonic triad pairs from both scales, and how to resolve them from dominant to tonic.

I suggest that in the beginning you focus on *one scale at a time*. Get to know the sound and movement of that scale, become intimately familiar with how it resolves from dominant to tonic, and know it's diatonic triad pairs clearly and readily.

As I've stated earlier, if you already know the scale really well (can sing it, and resolve it easily from dominant to tonic) go ahead and start with Chapter Three, directing your effort to one triad pair at a time. Once you've gained fluency and confidence with this material, move on to Chapter Four, where you'll have a chance to combine diatonic triad pairs from both scales. If you follow the above mentioned practice procedure, you'll be able to understand and apply these concepts fairly easily over chord changes.

My aim in writing out the various melodic exercises (particularly those written over the V7-I progression) is to give you an example of how the augmented scale and (its diatonic triad pairs) can move and resolve. Though I've mindfully composed the

exercises to move well, sound cogent and resolve in a variety of ways, I don't think of them as "licks" to be memorized. Rather, I offer these exercises, presented and organized in a logically progressive way, as reference points to ignite your own imagination.

As always, work toward really hearing the material you practice (be able to sing it!), and invite it into your aural imagination. Start putting it into practice on harmonic progressions, tunes, etc. Turn it into music. Have fun with it. Best wishes!