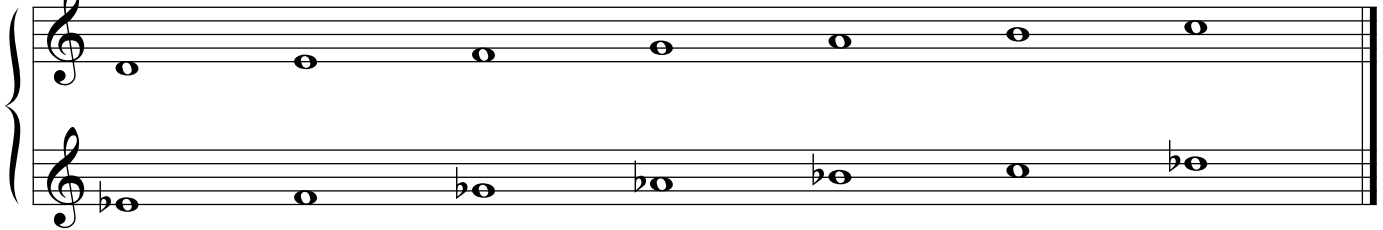


"SO WHAT" VOICINGS

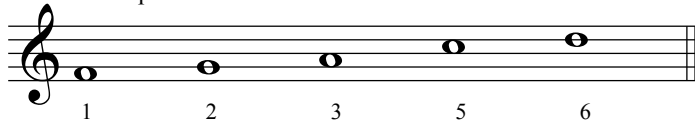
Miles Davis' 1959 recording "KIND OF BLUE" yielded important developments in the art of small group jazz improvisation. One of the most important developments was the concept of "MODAL" jazz, whereby the improvisor would construct melodies over a given MODE instead of a given CHORD. One of the best examples on the recording was the composition "SO WHAT", in which each improvisor was to construct melodies over the "D" DORIAN and "Eb" DORIAN modes (example 1). Pianist Bill Evans was free to provide harmonies behind each soloist using the entire MODE. This provided different possibilities than creating harmonies from a given CHORD.

Example 1: D DORIAN AND Eb DORIAN MODE

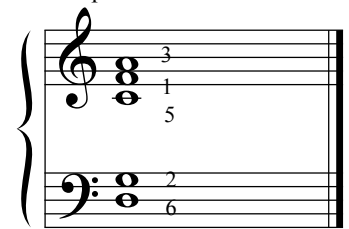


Bill Evans determined that important structural tones from the D DORIAN mode could be found in the F PENTATONIC scale (example 2). He arranged the tones of this scale into a combination of perfect 4ths and a major 3rd. This arrangement of tones is now known as the "SO WHAT" chord (example 3). The sound is pure, simple, and open, yet exotic.

Example 2: F PENTATONIC scale

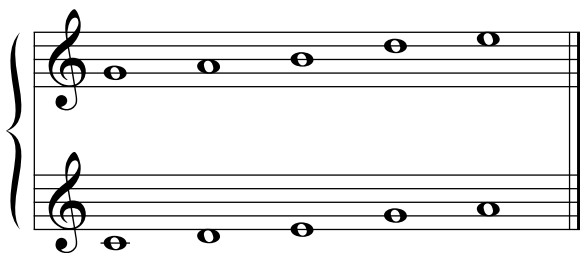


Example 3: SO WHAT chord



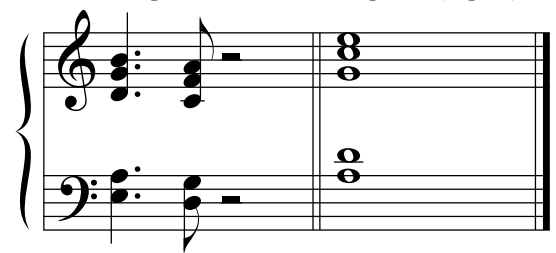
Bill also determined that the tones of the G PENTATONIC and C PENTATONIC scales (example 4) could also be derived from the D DORIAN mode. This led to more voicing possibilities for the D DORIAN mode, including the opening harmonic motif (example 5a)

Example 4: G PENTATONIC and C PENTATONIC scales

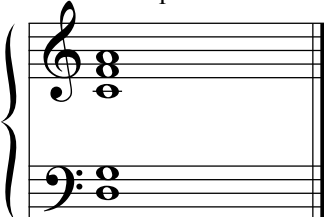


Example 5a

Example 5b (C pent)



Example 6



Further exploration of the pentatonic scale established that the SO WHAT chord is flexible enough to sound as an appropriate voicing for a variety of harmonies.

The SO WHAT chord in example 6 not only can be used for D DORIAN, but also Cmin11, Dmin11, Eb Maj9 (#11), F Maj 6/9, Gsus11, and BbMaj 9.

SO WHAT RELATED VOICINGS

Since the SO WHAT chord is a distribution of the pentatonic scale, inversions of the chord can yield some interesting possibilities for additional voicings. Example 7 shows the original SO WHAT chords from "D", "E" and "A". These are the original 3 chords best suited for the D DORIAN mode. Each additional measure shows inversions of each voicing. Some of the voicings did not appear on the original SO WHAT track, but were discovered by future pianists as additional possibilities.

Example 7

Original SO WHAT chord 1st inversion 2nd inversion (also a 5 note mixed)

3rd inversion (reminiscent of McCoy Tyner) 4th inversion (stacked perfect 4ths)

Additional possibilities arise when inverting the right hand of the original and 1st inversions. This makes the voicing more compact and gives more "bite" (example 8)

Example 8

Original SO WHAT chord, Right Hand inverted down 1st inversion, Right Hand inverted down

Practice in various keys, exploration of the various inversions, and application of the SO WHAT and SO WHAT related voicings to various chords will result in a comping technique that is applicable to a variety of styles (example 9)

Example 9

Dm9 B♭Maj9(#11) Gm9 Fm9 B♭7sus4 E♭Maj7

23

