

THE
DIMINISHED
SCALE
FOR GUITAR

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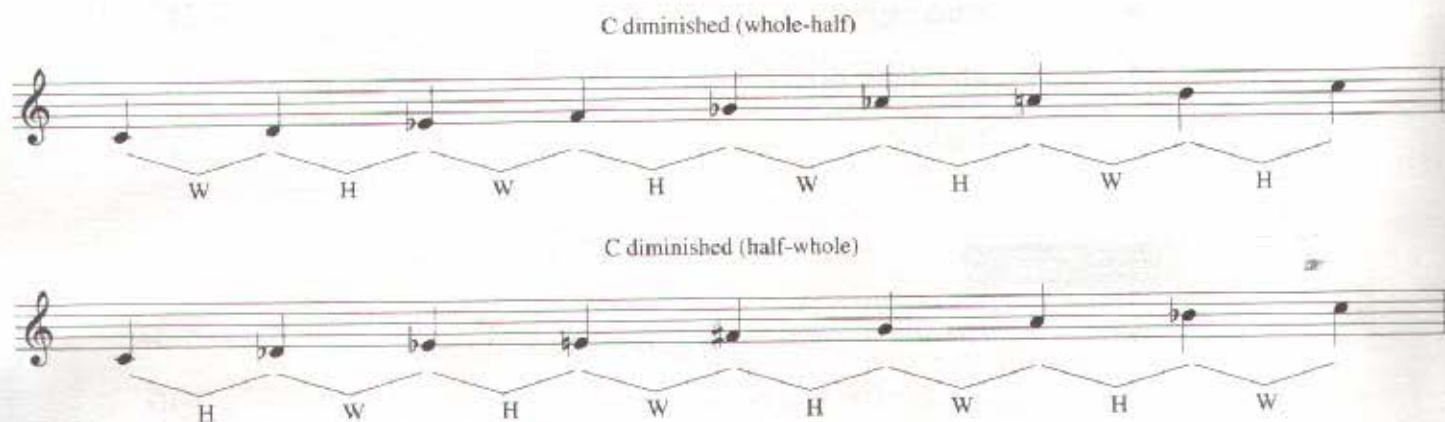
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Introduction

The diminished scale is frequently heard in jazz and fusion music. Although it is less common in rock, the diminished scale remains an important tool for improvisation and composition. In this book, we will explore different ways to use this scale in a variety of musical situations you may encounter—in jazz, fusion, and rock.

The intervallic structure of the diminished scale alternates between a whole and half step (whole-half) or a half and whole step (half-whole). Each version is an eight-note-per-octave symmetrical scale.



Because it is a symmetrical scale, the diminished scale has four possible roots. The C diminished scales above could also be called E $\flat$ diminished, G $\flat$ diminished, and A diminished. Because of this, there are only three different diminished scales in total, just like the diminished seventh chord.

To begin, we will use the diminished scale (employing major and minor triads, arpeggios, and added chromatic notes) in lines over dominant 7th chords. Then we will move on to use the diminished scale over other harmonies such as minor seventh, major seventh, major seventh sharp-eleventh, and others.

About the Audio

The audio symbols, **1**, found throughout this book indicate the CD track number where each example will be found.

Each example is played several times at full tempo, then at half speed. In addition, short introductory phrases (which are not transcribed in the examples) are sometimes included to provide a better sense of context and to maintain an improvisational feel.

CHAPTER 1

The Diminished Scale in a Tonal Context

3

Example 1: ii-V-I (in B $\flat$ major)

The chord progression is Cm7-F7 $\flat$ 9-B $\flat$ maj7. Over the V chord (F7 $\flat$ 9), the diminished scale (half-whole) is used. This example uses three triads per scale pattern before resolving to B $\flat$ maj7.

Example 1: ii-V-I (in B $\flat$ major). The notation shows a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a TAB section. The chord progression is Cm7-F7 $\flat$ 9-B $\flat$ maj7. The V chord (F7 $\flat$ 9) is used to demonstrate the diminished scale (half-whole). The scale is played in three triads before resolving to B $\flat$ maj7. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a TAB section with fret numbers.

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Example 2: ii-V-I (in C major)

The progression is Dm7-G7 $\flat$ 9-Cmaj7. This example uses an ascending diminished scale over the V chord (G7 $\flat$ 9) before resolving to Cmaj7.

Example 2: ii-V-I (in C major). The notation shows a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a TAB section. The chord progression is Dm7-G7 $\flat$ 9-Cmaj7. The V chord (G7 $\flat$ 9) is used to demonstrate the ascending diminished scale. The scale is played in three triads before resolving to Cmaj7. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a TAB section with fret numbers.

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Example 3: ii-V-i (in G minor)

The progression is $A\flat 7\flat 5 - D7\flat 9 - Gm7$. Note the diminished scale pattern with wider intervals used over the V chord ($D7\flat 9$).

Am7 $\flat 5$

TAB

10 8 9 8 8 12 10 8 9 7 10 6 8 5 8 8 5

D7 $\flat 9$

Gm7

6 8 9 7 10 6 7 6 9 9 12 10 12 9 11

6

Example 4: ii-V-i (in D minor)

The progression is $E\flat 7\flat 5 - A7\flat 9 - Dm7$. Here is another example using the diminished scale over the V chord, in this case $A7\flat 9$.

Em7 $\flat 5$

TAB

10 7 9 10 7 8 10 7 9 7 8 10 7 8 9 8 9

A7 $\flat 9$

Dm7

7 10 9 7 6 9 8 5 7 5 5 7 8 6 5 8 7 (7)

Example 5: ii–V–I (in D major)

Example 6: ii–V–I (in E major)

9

Example 7: ii-V-i (in D minor)

The progression is $E m7^b5 - A7^b9 - D m7$. Example 7 adds a chromatic passing note to the diminished scale and resolves to a minor tonic chord.

Example 7: ii-V-i (in D minor) musical notation and guitar tablature.

The progression is $E m7^b5 - A7^b9 - D m7$.

First Staff (Musical Notation): Shows the $E m7^b5$ chord and the $A7^b9$ chord. The $A7^b9$ chord is marked with a b over the 7th fret, indicating a chromatic passing note.

Second Staff (Guitar Tablature): Shows the fret numbers for the first staff. The sequence of frets is: 9, 7, 8, 10, 8, 7, 9, 10, 8, 7, 10, 9, 7, 10, 8, 7, 7, 10.

Third Staff (Musical Notation): Shows the $D m7$ chord. The $D m7$ chord is marked with a b over the 7th fret, indicating a chromatic passing note.

Fourth Staff (Guitar Tablature): Shows the fret numbers for the third staff. The sequence of frets is: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 7, 5, 8, 7, 5, 8, 7, 6, 7, 5, 8, 7, (7).

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Example 8: ii-V-i (in F minor)

The progression is $G m7^b5 - C7^b9 - F m7$. This straight ahead bebop line utilizes the diminished scale with added chromatic notes on the V chord ($C7^b9$), resolving to $F m7$.

Example 8: ii-V-i (in F minor) musical notation and guitar tablature.

The progression is $G m7^b5 - C7^b9 - F m7$.

First Staff (Musical Notation): Shows the $G m7^b5$ chord and the $C7^b9$ chord. The $C7^b9$ chord is marked with a b over the 7th fret, indicating a chromatic passing note.

Second Staff (Guitar Tablature): Shows the fret numbers for the first staff. The sequence of frets is: 8, 9, 8, 11, 10, 8, 10, 11, 10, 8, 8, 10, 11, 10, 10, 9.

Third Staff (Musical Notation): Shows the $F m7$ chord. The $F m7$ chord is marked with a b over the 7th fret, indicating a chromatic passing note.

Fourth Staff (Guitar Tablature): Shows the fret numbers for the third staff. The sequence of frets is: 8, 11, 10, 11, 9, 11, 8, 10, 11, 8, 9, 10, 11, 11, 9, 10.

CHAPTER 2

Diminished Triads

11

Example 1: Diminished Triads over Cm7

The progression is Cm7–Fm7. This example uses D $\flat$ diminished arpeggios over Cm7.

Triplet Feel (♩♩♩)

Cm7

Fm7

TAB

10 7 9 10 7 8 10 8 11 10 11 13 (13) 12 11

10 11 12 11 12 9 11 8 9 11 8 12 11 10 8 10 8

12

Example 2: Diminished Triads over Asus4 and A

The progression is Asus4–A. This example incorporates a B $\flat$ diminished arpeggio with additional passing tones over an A tonal center.

Asus4

A

TAB

8 9 11 10 11 9 12 10 12 11 11 10 12 10 14 13 12 11 12 10 12 11 12 (12)

Major Triads

13 Example 3: Major Triads over G7

Example 3 moves major thirds symmetrically by an interval of a minor third (following a diminished scale pattern) over G7.

G7

12 13 14 12 12 16 19 15 15 16 16 15 15 19 22 18 18 19 19 18 18 18 17 18 15 18 17 15

18 17 15 17 15 18 17 15 17 15 17 16 15 13 15 15 13 14 15

14 Example 4: Major Triads over Cm7

This time, we'll play major triads with an added flat-ninth, moved symmetrically in tritone intervals (following a diminished scale pattern) over Cm7.

[illegible]

Minor Triads

15

Example 5: Minor Triads over F7 and F#7

The progression is F7-F#7. Example 5 uses minor triads, moved in intervals of a minor third.

F7 F#7

TAB

16

Example 6: Minor Triads over C7

This example uses minor triads with an added flat-fifth and some chromaticism.

Triplet Feel (♩♩♩)

C7

TAB

Here we see A $\flat$ m and Fm triads with an added major third, moved in minor third intervals.

Cm7

T
A
B

10 9 9 9 12 11 9 8 6 5 6 8 8 6 10 8

CHAPTER 3

Diminished Arpeggios and Polytonalities

18

Example 1: Over C5

Example 1 places B $\flat$ diminished arpeggios moving by minor third intervals over a C5 power chord. This example also incorporates a sweep picking technique.

C5

8va loco 8va loco

TAB

13 14 12 15 12 15 18 17 15 18 15 17 18 15 12 15 18 17 15 21 18 20 21 18 21

19

Example 2: Over F5

Here, diminished arpeggios are moved up chromatically, creating a sort of polytonal sound. This example incorporates two-handed tapping technique.

F5

8va loco 8va loco

TAB

10 16 10 13 16 13 10 16 10 13 16 13 11 17 11 14 17 14 11 17 11 14 17 15 12

20

Example 3: Over E5

Example 3 utilizes B7 and D7 arpeggios over E5 to create a bi-tonal sound.

E5

7 8 7 6 9 6 8 7 6 10 8 7 9 8 7 10 9 7 10 9 7 6 7 9 6 7

21

Example 4: Over B $\flat$ 13 $\flat$ 9

Example 4 features another bi-tonal idea, this time with C7 and E $^{\circ}$ 7 arpeggios played over B $\flat$ 13 $\flat$ 9.

B $\flat$ 13 $\flat$ 9

8 7 10 8 9 5 8 6 5 8 6 9 11 8 9 8 11 9 11 8 10 11 10 8

22

Example 5: Over F

Example 5 uses diminished-plus-major-seventh arpeggio shapes drawn from the B $\flat$ diminished scale over F. Double the same lick up or down a minor third to add a cool harmony line.

F

TAB

10 13 11 11 14 12 12 12 15 13 14 12

23

Example 6: Over G $\sharp$ 11

This one uses the diminished scale with octave displacement. You can also shift this lick up or down a minor third.

G $\sharp$ 11

TAB

7 10 7 10 10 7 11 8 6 10 7 8 9 7

24

Example 7: Over B13 $\flat$ 9

Example 7 incorporates major triads and chromaticism over B13 $\flat$ 9.

B13 $\flat$ 9

T
A
B

25

Example 8: Over A $\flat$ and D $\flat$ m/A $\flat$

Here we apply the A $\flat$ diminished scale, using sixth intervals connected to the notes of E $\flat$ minor pentatonic.

A $\flat$ D $\flat$ m/A $\flat$

T
A
B

CHAPTER 4

Diminished Variations in a Modal Context

26

Example 1: Over C#°

Example 1 is a scale pattern descending by minor thirds over C#°.

C#°

TAB

14 12 13 12 14 13 11 11 13 11 14 17 15 14 17 16 14 13

27

Example 2: Over C#°

Example 2 uses the diminished scale in four-note-per-string patterns with a two-handed tapping technique.

C#°

TAB

3 5 7 8 7 5 4 7 8 10 11 10 8 7 8 10 11 12 11 9 8 9 11 6 7 9 10 9 7 6 7 9 6 8 9 11 9 8 6 8

28

Example 3: E7#9

This one moves the scale pattern in tritone intervals.

E7#9

Tablature (T, A, B, B):

Measure 1: X 5 8 5 7 6 8 7 8

Measure 2: 6 9 6 8 7 9 8 9

Measure 3: 7 10 7 9 9 10 9 10

Measure 4: 9 10 12 14 13 15 14 12

Measure 5: 10 12 9

29

Example 4: Over Cm-C#m-G7

A frightening double-stop diminished idea you can double (harmonize) either up or down a minor third...

Cm C#m G7

Tablature (T, A, B, B):

Measure 1: 3 4 4

Measure 2: 7 (7)

Measure 3: 6 7 7

Measure 4: 10

30

Example 5: Over D11

Example 5 employs diminished triads with chromatic passing tones.

D11

TAB

31

Example 6: Over Cmaj7#11

Try playing this pattern down a minor third as well.

Cmaj7#11

TAB

This last lick mixes minor and major triads with dominant seventh arpeggios.

F#

F#b9#11

T
A
B

X 7 10 8 7 10 8 7 10 8 11 8 5 4 7 6 8 9 10 (10/9)