

Day 1 - The 8-b7-6-5 Device



The Tommy Shannon 30 Day Challenge

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Introduction

It's time to get the 30 Day Challenge officially started! If you've not read the pre-training PDFs yet then it's probably worth going back and checking those out - especially the first three pre-training days.

Onwards.

Here's what we're going to do in Day 1:

- Look at the first device we're going to learn - which is the 8-b7-6-5 device
- Practice this device using the blues in A7
- incorporate a couple of simple modifications to the device so that you can play through the entire 12 bar blues with this device and it sounds logical everywhere

Day 1 - The 8-b7-6-5 Device

I chose to kick off the 30 Day Challenge with this device because it's a foundational device in Tommy Shannon's vocabulary. The bass line on Pride And Joy uses this device as its foundation - though Tommy does vary up this pattern with a modifying device that we'll cover in a training later on in the challenge.

So in the key of A7 the 8-b7-6-5 device would be the notes:

- A (the '8' or the octave)
- G (the 'b7')
- F (the '6')
- E (the '5')

I'm going to plug this device into a 12 bar in A7 so we can see (and hear) it in action in the three chord centres of A7, D7 and E7.

Here's what it looks like in notation and tab:

(iv) we finish Bar 8 on the 5th of A7 which is E...that's also the root note of E7 so that doesn't sound great. We'll fix that in a moment. (This also happens at the end of Bar 11)

(v) the transition at the end of the E7 bar to the D7 bar (Bars 9 to 10) isn't great...for now as we're concentrating on the 8-b7-6-5 pattern we'll leave that, but we'll note that this transition could be better and when we introduce more devices we'll make it better.

(vi) finally, the transition from the final E7 chord in Bar 12 to the start of the pattern again works if you play a low A...but if you play a high A you've got an upward interval leap that doesn't sound smooth. Here are the last four bars with both of these note choices so you can see and hear exactly what I mean.

Here's the low A option - which works fine:

And here's the option where you go back to the high A - which isn't great IMO:

Not only is it an awkward resolution for the ear...but it's also awkward under the fingers.

So let's go about working on ways to 'fix' both of these issues with variations of the device.

Variation 1 - The 8-b7-6-ch

This variation is a way to 'smooth' out the transition when going from A7 to E7 or when going from D7 to A7 where the last note - the 5th - of the device used on D7 chord is the A note that you want to use on the down-beat of the next A7 chord.

To smooth out this transition what we're going to do is instead of playing the 5th of the first chord - which is the root note of the next chord - we're going to play the chromatic note BETWEEN the 6th and the 5th...which becomes the chromatic note between the 6th and the root note of the next chord.

To give us more chord changes where we can use this pattern we're going to use the 'quick blues' (see Pre Training 3 - Unpicking The Blues) to give us an extra chord change. We're also going to use the device in different registers of the bass as well.

The next example does these things:



♩=120/100/80

A7 D7 A7

8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 8 8 b7b7 6 6 chch 8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5

T 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7 5 5 3 3 2 2 1 1 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7

B 5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0 5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0 5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0

D7 D7 A7

8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 8 8 b7b7 6 6 chch 8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 8 8 b7b7 6 6 chch

T 5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0 5 5 3 3 2 2 1 1 7 7 5 5 4 4 3 3

B 5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0 5 5 3 3 2 2 1 1 5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0

E7 D7 A7 E7

8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 8 8 b7b7 6 6 chch 8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5

T 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7 5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0 7 7 5 5 4 4 3 3 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7

B 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7 5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0 7 7 5 5 4 4 3 3 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7

Now there are still some areas that from a bass line point of view I probably wouldn't recommend playing in a proper bass line - notably the jumps from the open E string to the octave of A at the end of Bar 3/start of Bar 4 and also the end of Bar 7/start of Bar 8.

As we're working on practicing the device and its variations we'll leave that for now and we'll 'fix' that kind of issue when we introduce and work on future devices.

That being said there is a variation of this pattern that we can use to 'fix' this big jump. And it's also a great way of using this device in situations where you want to play it higher than where you in your bass line but the root note that you're starting out with is more logical than the octave.

Variation 2 - The 8-b7-6-5 With Octave Jump

In this variation what you do is play the pattern identically to how we've learned it - except that the pair of 8th notes on the first beat are played at different octaves. So if we expand the -8-b7-6-5 nomenclature out to 8 designations (in pairs of 8th notes), we'd get this:

R-8/ b7-b7/ 6-6/ 5-5

So you can hear it, let me layer it onto the last example that we played:



♩=120/100/80

A7 D7 A7

8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 8 8 b7b7 6 6 chch 8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 r 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5

7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7 5 5 3 3 2 2 1 1 5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0 7 5 5 4 4 7 7

D7 D7 A7

8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 8 8 b7b7 6 6 chch 8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 r 8 b7b7 6 6 chch

5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0 5 5 3 3 2 2 1 1 5 5 3 3 2 2 0 0 7 5 5 4 4 2 2

E7 D7 A7 E7

8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5 8 8 b7b7 6 6 chch r 8 b7b7 6 6 chch 8 8 b7b7 6 6 5 5

7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7 5 5 3 3 2 2 1 1 0 7 5 5 4 4 3 3 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7

Using this variation allowed me to use the 8-b7-6-ch pattern in Bar 10 on the D7 to A7 chord, then play the open A string on the downbeat of A7 and then use that moment whilst the open string is playing to move my fretting hand to fret 7 to grab the octave of A at the 7th fret.

So this is a handy variation. But it's not anything I've ever seen in my analysis of Tommy's work - remember that we're modelling Tommy's bass playing without intending to sound exactly like Tommy!

Action Plan

Here's the Action Plan to implement today's lesson.

1. Download the backing tracks for the two forms of the blues in A7 covered in this lesson and add them to your practice library. There are three tempo levels for each blues form: 80 BPM (with chordal metronome); 100 BPM (with band style); 120 BPM (with 'Texas' band style). There are also two 'lengths' of track - 12 bars and 36 bars.

Paul's Note: Remember that as well as starting out with the tempo that you feel comfortable with you can also start out by swapping each pair of 8th notes for a quarter note. The only time this doesn't work is where you're playing Variation 2.

2. Start off with Blues Form 1 and play the 8-b7-6-5 pattern slowly and out of tempo. Don't worry at this point about the points in the chord form where practicing this device doesn't 'fit' the chord form as I pointed out above. Remember that these are 'origin exercises' (see Pre Training Day 4) and the goal of this exercise is to start training your fingers on executing this device and when you add a backing track you will also be training your brain and ear on the sound of this device and connecting the sound of the device with the sound of the dominant chord (that's subliminal ear training by the way).

3. When you're happy playing this out of tempo, then pick whichever tempo track you feel comfortable with and play along with that. Choose the 12 bar track first so that if you make a mistake you can stop the track, work out why you made the mistake, fix it and try again. When you can play through the 12 bar track then move to the 36 bar track and play through three times. *The more you play the device the more your fingers and brain will get used to it.*

Paul's Note: *be honest with yourself about tempo. If you can only play this comfortably at 80 BPM it's better to play this well at 80 BPM than play this poorly at 100 BPM. The goal here is learning...don't be frustrated if a higher tempo level is out of reach. That will come over time.*

4. Repeat the above steps with the two variations - the second blues form is more appropriate for both of these. Again - and especially for the second variation with the octave jump - be prepared to sacrifice tempo for accuracy. If you can't execute the octave jump at 120 BPM, then move down to 100 BPM. ***Learn something as perfectly as you can BEFORE trying to move up in tempo.***

Suggested Practice Time: this will vary depending on your current ability level, but most of you should be able to get through this reasonably comfortably with 30 to 60 minutes of practice. (The more advanced you are, the quicker this will take.)

Day 2

In Day 2 we'll practice this device with the blues in different keys.