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NOTES TO JAZZ IMPROVISATION CLINIC

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1. Just like English, Spanish, German, French, Latin, etc., Jazz is a language. Did your parents sit you down one day when you were a toddler and say, “OK, Son/Daughter, now we are going to teach you English”? NO! We all learned by listening to it since we were born, well before we understood what we were hearing. We could speak it before we knew what we were saying and before we could write it.
2. Jazz is the same way—you just start listening to it, and then gradually figure out what it is you are actually listening too. With the Internet at your disposal, along with your local library, you have more educational resources available than any Jazz Great ever had. Visit iTunes, YouTube, and other sites and search for Jazz. Many sites have free downloads as well. Many jazz radio stations have streaming audio on their websites so that you could listen to music from anywhere! Search for your favorite jazz musician. If you don’t have one, search for your instrument and add ‘Jazz’ in front of it. This will bring you to a number of sites—Jazz fan websites, jazz artist websites, and places to purchase Jazz CDs.
3. One of the best Jazz Education websites is Jamey Aebersold’s company—[www.jazzbooks.com](http://www.jazzbooks.com). In my clinics, I made mention of a free handbook he offers entitled The Jazz Handbook. You can get to this web page by clicking on the ‘Free Jazz’ section on the homepage or type the direct page--  
[www.jazzbooks.com/miva/jazz\\_handbook.htm](http://www.jazzbooks.com/miva/jazz_handbook.htm). You can download the entire book in Acrobat Reader/.pdf form. It has everything you need to get started or improve—Jazz Listening Lists, Jazz Scales, Blues Progressions, etc. Also, David Baker’s How to Play Bebop, (Vols. 1,2, &3) is essential in learning to apply the Bebop Scale. Of course, this should be used in conjunction with private lessons with a qualified jazz teacher.
4. Start imitating the jazz language (as you imitated your parents to learn to speak) by playing along with jazz recordings. Don’t worry about playing the ‘right’ notes—your ear will eventually tell you what feels right. The important thing is to learn what it FEELS like to play the music and learn the mechanics by trial

and error. If you want to start learning solos, start with players like Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, and Chet Baker. These legends are known for playing beautifully simple and melodic solos. Listen to it so many times that you can sing along with it. THEN start to figure out the notes and play along with it. Don't worry about being able to write it down—that is secondary. Ask your teacher for help.

5. Improvisation is just Composition sped up and Composition is just Improvisation slowed down. They are the same, just at different speeds. It's like talking to someone instead of writing them a letter. One you do in real time, the other you sit down and think about and edit your thoughts. Every melody or harmony part you play in a Big Band or Small Group chart was first someone's 'improvised' idea. They were just writing it down—composing. You are learning how to improvise by playing parts because your ear remembers how the lines fit over the music. It's all the same thing—starting with a melody and then developing it over the course of the music—Theme and Variation.
6. One last concept regarding Jazz as a Language. Do you enjoy listening to someone who speaks in a monotone, or at one volume, carries on with run-on sentences, or jumps from topic to topic without finishing any of them? Probably not! Then don't do it with the Jazz language. Why do we enjoy reading books or going to movies? If they are good, it's because they tell a good story, right? 'Telling a Story' in Jazz doesn't mean you have to play a ton of notes and have brilliant technique on your instrument. A good solo is one that communicates to the audience that you love playing and it's shown through passion, good time feel, good rhythm, and melodic development.

Feel free to email me any questions—[russ@russnolan.com](mailto:russ@russnolan.com)

# Russ Nolan Improvisation Clinic

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C Instruments--Bass Clef

## F Blues--3rds and 7ths

(Note the Half Step movements between chords)

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Chord progression in bass clef:

- Measure 1: F7
- Measure 2: Bb7 (Half Step movement from F7)
- Measure 3: F7
- Measure 4: F7
- Measure 5: Bb7
- Measure 6: Bb7
- Measure 7: F7
- Measure 8: Optional: D7(b9)
- Measure 9: G-7
- Measure 10: C7 (Half Step movement from G-7)
- Measure 11: F7 (Half Step movement from C7)
- Measure 12: C7 (Half Step movement from F7)

## F Blues Scale

Scale notation in bass clef (measures 13-14):

F, Bb, C, Eb, F, G, Ab

## Building a Melodic Blues Line From the F Blues Scale Note by Note

First 2 Notes (measures 14-17):

F, Bb

First 3 Notes (measures 18-21):

F, Bb, C

First 4 Notes (measures 22-25):

F, Bb, C, Eb

26 First 5 Notes



30 All 6 Notes



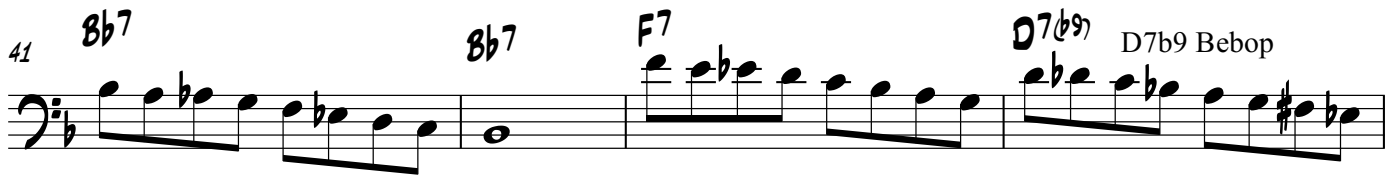
Now play 2 to 6 Note Lines going Down the Scale--Make up your own!  
That's Improvising!

F7 Bebop Scale--Has both major 7th and dominant (flat) 7th

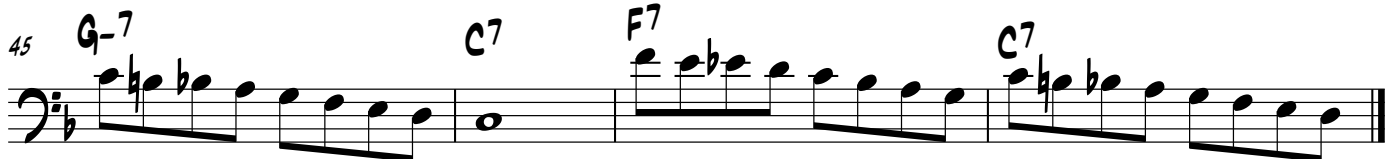
34 Half Step Half Step



Using the Bebop Scale over G Blues



Use C7 Bebop over these two bars--ii (two) Chord to V (five) Chord



## 2 Pentatonic Scales (Five Notes) to use over the entire Blues Form

3

F Blues Scale without the B natural

--OR--

F minor/Ab Major Pentatonic

F Blues Scale without the Bb

49

Musical notation for two pentatonic scales in F major. The first scale is F minor/Ab Major Pentatonic (F, Ab, Bb, C, D). The second scale is F Blues Scale without the Bb (F, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb). Both are written in bass clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one flat.

## 8 Pentatonic Shapes to Practice

from Jerry Bergonzi's book *Inside Improvisation Vol. 2 - Pentatonics*

Ab Major/F minor Pentatonic

51

Musical notation for the first shape of the Ab Major/F minor Pentatonic scale, starting on Ab. It consists of two measures of eighth notes.

55

Musical notation for the second shape of the Ab Major/F minor Pentatonic scale, starting on Ab. It consists of two measures of eighth notes.

59

Musical notation for the third shape of the Ab Major/F minor Pentatonic scale, starting on Ab. It consists of two measures of eighth notes.

63

Musical notation for the fourth shape of the Ab Major/F minor Pentatonic scale, starting on Ab. It consists of two measures of eighth notes.

## Dominant and Tritone Substitution Pentatonics

67 **F7** C-6/F7 Pentatonic **F7** B Major Pentatonic--Tritone(minor 5th from F)

Musical notation for two pentatonic scales. The first is C-6/F7 Pentatonic (C, D, Eb, F, G) starting on C. The second is B Major Pentatonic--Tritone (B, C#, D#, E#, F#) starting on B. Both are written in bass clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one flat.

69 **C7** G-6/C7 Pentatonic **C7** F# Major Pentatonic--Tritone(minor 5th from C)

Musical notation for two pentatonic scales. The first is G-6/C7 Pentatonic (G, A, Bb, C, D) starting on G. The second is F# Major Pentatonic--Tritone (F#, G#, A#, B#, C#) starting on F#. Both are written in bass clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one flat.

# Russ Nolan Improvisation Clinic

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Bb Instruments--Treble Clef

## G Blues--3rds and 7ths

(Note the Half Step movements between chords)

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Chord progression for G Blues in G major, showing half-step movements between chords:

- 1. G7 (G-B-F#-D) to C7 (C-E-Bb-F) via Half Step (B to Bb)
- 2. C7 (C-E-Bb-F) to G7 (G-B-F#-D) via Half Step (Bb to B)
- 3. G7 (G-B-F#-D) to C7 (C-E-Bb-F) via Half Step (B to Bb)
- 4. C7 (C-E-Bb-F) to G7 (G-B-F#-D) via Half Step (Bb to B)
- 5. G7 (G-B-F#-D) to C7 (C-E-Bb-F) via Half Step (B to Bb)
- 6. C7 (C-E-Bb-F) to G7 (G-B-F#-D) via Half Step (Bb to B)
- 7. G7 (G-B-F#-D) to C7 (C-E-Bb-F) via Half Step (B to Bb)
- 8. C7 (C-E-Bb-F) to G7 (G-B-F#-D) via Half Step (Bb to B)
- 9. G7 (G-B-F#-D) to A-7 (A-C-B-D) via Half Step (B to Bb)
- 10. A-7 (A-C-B-D) to D7 (D-F#-A-C) via Half Step (Bb to B)
- 11. D7 (D-F#-A-C) to G7 (G-B-F#-D) via Half Step (A to Ab)
- 12. G7 (G-B-F#-D) to D7 (D-F#-A-C) via Half Step (B to Bb)

Optional: E7(b9) (E-G-B-D-F#) is shown as an alternative to G7.

## G Blues Scale

13 G Blues Scale notation in G major (one sharp): G, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, E, F#.

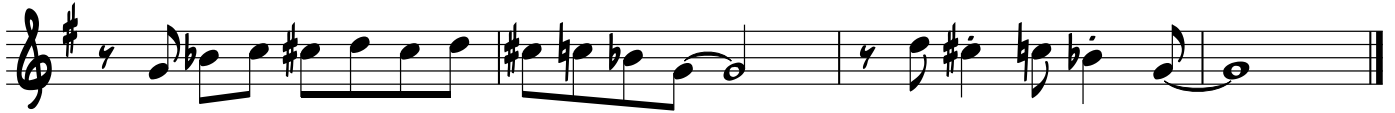
## Building a Melodic Blues Line From the G Blues Scale Note by Note

14 First 2 Notes: G, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, E, F#.

18 First 3 Notes: G, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, E, F#.

22 First 4 Notes: G, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, E, F#.

26 First 5 Notes



30 All 6 Notes



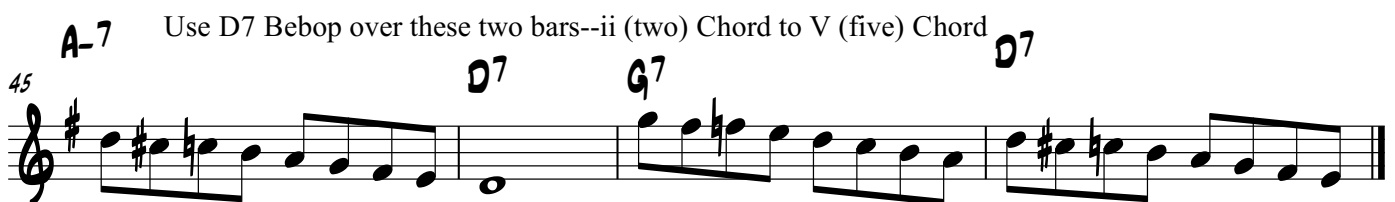
**Now play 2 to 6 Note Lines going Down the Scale--Make up your own!  
That's Improvising!**

**G7 Bebop Scale--Has both major 7th and dominant (flat) 7th**

34 Half Step Half Step



**Using the Bebop Scale over G Blues**



## 2 Pentatonic Scales (Five Notes) to use over the entire Blues Form

G Blues Scale without the C#

--OR--

G Blues Scale without the C natural

49 G minor/Bb Major Pentatonic



Musical notation for the G minor/Bb Major Pentatonic scale, starting at measure 49. The scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are G, Bb, C, D, Eb, F.

### 8 Pentatonic Shapes to Practice

from Jerry Bergonzi's book *Inside Improvisation Vol. 2 - Pentatonics*

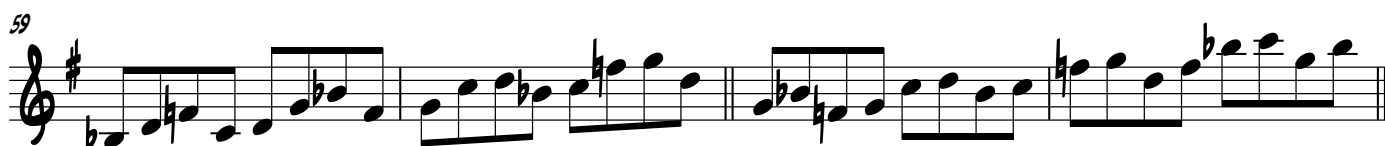
Bb Major/G minor Pentatonic



Musical notation for the first shape of the Bb Major/G minor Pentatonic scale, starting at measure 51. The scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are Bb, C, D, Eb, F.



Musical notation for the second shape of the Bb Major/G minor Pentatonic scale, starting at measure 55. The scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are C, D, Eb, F, G.



Musical notation for the third shape of the Bb Major/G minor Pentatonic scale, starting at measure 59. The scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are D, Eb, F, G, Ab.



Musical notation for the fourth shape of the Bb Major/G minor Pentatonic scale, starting at measure 63. The scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb.

### Dominant and Tritone Substitution Pentatonics



Musical notation for the D-6/G7 Pentatonic scale (measures 67-72) and the C# Major Pentatonic scale (measures 73-78). The D-6/G7 Pentatonic scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are D, E, F, G, Ab. The C# Major Pentatonic scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are C#, D#, E#, F#, G#.



Musical notation for the A-6/D7 Pentatonic scale (measures 69-74) and the Ab Major Pentatonic scale (measures 75-80). The A-6/D7 Pentatonic scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are A, B, C, D, Eb. The Ab Major Pentatonic scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb.



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C Instruments--Treble Clef

## F Blues--3rds and 7ths

(Note the Half Step movements between chords)

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Chord progression for F Blues in B-flat major, showing half-step movements between chords:

- 1. F7 (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat)
- 2. Bb7 (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat) - Half Step movement from F7
- 3. F7 (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat)
- 4. F7 (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat)
- 5. Bb7 (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat)
- 6. Bb7 (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat)
- 7. F7 (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat)
- 8. Optional: D7(b9) (D, F, A, C, E-flat)
- 9. G-7 (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat)
- 10. G-7 (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat) - Half Step movement from F7
- 11. C7 (C, E-flat, G, B-flat)
- 12. C7 (C, E-flat, G, B-flat) - Half Step movement from G-7
- 13. F7 (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat) - Half Step movement from C7
- 14. C7 (C, E-flat, G, B-flat) - Half Step movement from F7

## F Blues Scale

13 F Blues Scale notation in B-flat major, starting on F:

F - B-flat - C - D-flat - E-flat - F

## Building a Melodic Blues Line From the F Blues Scale Note by Note

14 First 2 Notes: F - B-flat

18 First 3 Notes: F - B-flat - C

22 First 4 Notes: F - B-flat - C - D-flat

26 First 5 Notes



30 All 6 Notes



Now play 2 to 6 Note Lines going Down the Scale--Make up your own!  
That's Improvising!

F7 Bebop Scale--Has both major 7th and dominant (flat) 7th

34 Half Step Half Step



Using the Bebop Scale over G Blues



Use C7 Bebop over these two bars--ii (two) Chord to V (five) Chord



## 2 Pentatonic Scales (Five Notes) to use over the entire Blues Form

F Blues Scale without the B natural

--OR--

F Blues Scale without the Bb

49 F minor/Ab Major Pentatonic



Musical notation for the F minor/Ab Major Pentatonic scale, starting at measure 49. The scale is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are F, Ab, Bb, C, and D, shown in two different phrasings.

### 8 Pentatonic Shapes to Practice

from Jerry Bergonzi's book *Inside Improvisation Vol. 2 - Pentatonics*

F minor Pentatonic/Ab Major



Musical notation for the first pentatonic shape, starting at measure 51. It shows a sequence of eighth notes in the F minor/Ab Major pentatonic scale.



Musical notation for the second pentatonic shape, starting at measure 55. It shows a sequence of eighth notes in the F minor/Ab Major pentatonic scale.

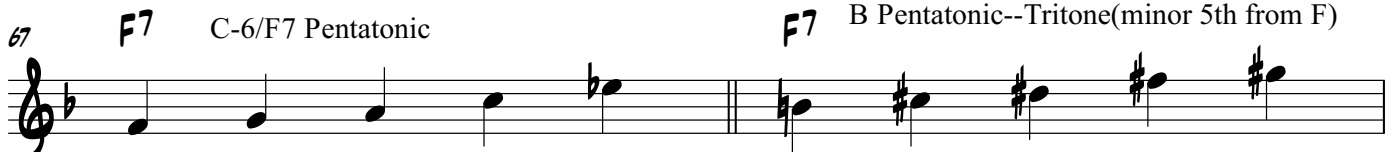


Musical notation for the third pentatonic shape, starting at measure 59. It shows a sequence of eighth notes in the F minor/Ab Major pentatonic scale.



Musical notation for the fourth pentatonic shape, starting at measure 63. It shows a sequence of eighth notes in the F minor/Ab Major pentatonic scale.

### Dominant and Tritone Substitution Pentatonics



Musical notation for the first pair of pentatonics, starting at measure 67. The first is the F7 C-6/F7 Pentatonic scale (F, Ab, Bb, C, D). The second is the F7 B Pentatonic--Tritone scale (Bb, B, C, D, Eb), described as the minor 5th from F.



Musical notation for the second pair of pentatonics, starting at measure 69. The first is the C7 G-6/C7 Pentatonic scale (C, D, Eb, F, G). The second is the C7 F# Pentatonic--Tritone scale (F#, G, Ab, Bb, C), described as the minor 5th from C.

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E♭ Instruments--Treble Clef

## D Blues--3rds and 7ths

(Note the Half Step movements between chords)

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Chord progression for D Blues in G major, showing half-step movements between chords:

- 1. D<sup>7</sup> (G4, B4, D5, F#4) → G<sup>7</sup> (B3, D4, F#4, G4) [Half Step]
- 2. G<sup>7</sup> (B3, D4, F#4, G4) → D<sup>7</sup> (G4, B4, D5, F#4) [Half Step]
- 3. D<sup>7</sup> (G4, B4, D5, F#4) → G<sup>7</sup> (B3, D4, F#4, G4) [Half Step]
- 4. G<sup>7</sup> (B3, D4, F#4, G4) → D<sup>7</sup> (G4, B4, D5, F#4) [Half Step]
- 5. D<sup>7</sup> (G4, B4, D5, F#4) → G<sup>7</sup> (B3, D4, F#4, G4) [Half Step]
- 6. G<sup>7</sup> (B3, D4, F#4, G4) → D<sup>7</sup> (G4, B4, D5, F#4) [Half Step]
- 7. D<sup>7</sup> (G4, B4, D5, F#4) → A<sup>7</sup> (C#4, E4, G4, A4) [Half Step]
- 8. A<sup>7</sup> (C#4, E4, G4, A4) → D<sup>7</sup> (G4, B4, D5, F#4) [Half Step]
- 9. D<sup>7</sup> (G4, B4, D5, F#4) → A<sup>7</sup> (C#4, E4, G4, A4) [Half Step]

Optional: B<sup>7</sup>(b9) (D4, F#4, A4, B4, C#5)

## D Blues Scale

D Blues Scale notation (treble clef, G major):

13

Notes: G4, A4, B4, C#5, D5, E5, F#5, G5

## Building a Melodic Blues Line From the D Blues Scale Note by Note

14 First 2 Notes

Notes: G4, A4

18 First 3 Notes

Notes: G4, A4, B4

22 First 4 Notes

Notes: G4, A4, B4, C#5

26 First 5 Notes

30 All 6 Notes

**Now play 2 to 6 Note Lines going Down the Scale--Make up your own!  
That's Improvising!**

**D7 Bebop Scale--Has both major 7th and dominant (flat) 7th**

34 Half Step Half Step

**Using the Bebop Scale over D Blues**

37 D7 G7 D7 D7

41 G7 G7 D7 B7(b9) B7b9 Bebop

E-7 Use A7 Bebop over these two bars--ii (two) Chord to V (five) Chord A7

45 A7 D7 A7

## 2 Pentatonic Scales (Five Notes) to use over the entire Blues Form

D Blues Scale without the G#  
--OR--

D Blues Scale without the G natural

49 D minor/F Major Pentatonic

Musical notation for two pentatonic scales in D minor/F major. The first scale is D minor/F major pentatonic (D, F, G, A, Bb). The second scale is D blues scale without the G natural (D, F, Gb, A, Bb). Both are shown in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature.

### 8 Pentatonic Shapes to Practice

from Jerry Bergonzi's book *Inside Improvisation Vol. 2 - Pentatonics*

F Major/D minor Pentatonic

Musical notation for the first pentatonic shape, F major/D minor pentatonic, in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F#, C#) and a 4/4 time signature.

Musical notation for the second pentatonic shape, F major/D minor pentatonic, in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F#, C#) and a 4/4 time signature.

Musical notation for the third pentatonic shape, F major/D minor pentatonic, in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F#, C#) and a 4/4 time signature.

Musical notation for the fourth pentatonic shape, F major/D minor pentatonic, in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F#, C#) and a 4/4 time signature.

### Dominant and Tritone Substitution Pentatonics

67 **D7** A-6/D7 Pentatonic

**D7** Ab Major Pentatonic--Tritone(minor 5th from D)

Musical notation for two pentatonic scales. The first is A-6/D7 pentatonic (A, C, D, E, F). The second is Ab major pentatonic (Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb). Both are shown in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F#, C#) and a 4/4 time signature.

69 **A7** E-6/A7 Pentatonic

**A7** Eb Major Pentatonic--Tritone(minor 5th from A)

Musical notation for two pentatonic scales. The first is E-6/A7 pentatonic (E, G, A, B, C). The second is Eb major pentatonic (Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb). Both are shown in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F#, C#) and a 4/4 time signature.