Jazz Piano – Introduction – Intervals

•**Intervals** represent the **distance between two notes**.

TIP! The quickest way to learn interval recognition is to know your major scales!

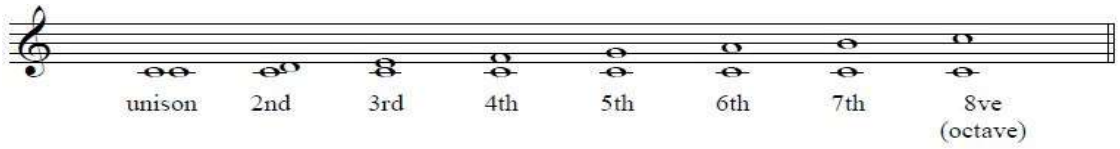
•The **smallest interval** at the keyboard is the "**half-step" or "semi-tone" -** for example from **C to C#** (Db) or **E to F**

• A "**tone**" (whole-tone) or "**whole-step**" comprises of 2 semi-tones, for example **C to D** or **E to F#.**

• Although intervals can be counted in semi-tones it's more simple to think of them as having a **position from 1- 8 (or higher) within a scale**.

Within a **Major Scale** the intervals are numbered 1-8 as in the diagram below:

fig1.



Naming Intervals:
Informal Names

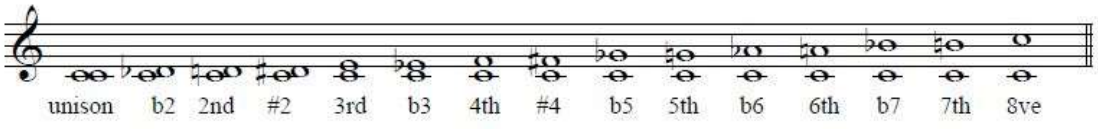
There is a traditional, or "formal" method of naming intervals favoured by classical musicians and an "informal" method, which Jazz musicians tend to use, you should know both methods.

The **informal approach** refers to the "natural" intervals in the major scale as **1 to 8 (**as in fig1 above). For the remaining intervals we use either a "b" (flat) or "#" (sharp) to describe the accidentals.

*"**accidentals**" are the notes outside of the major scale – the black notes if we are in C major*

So, **C to D** would be a **2nd** whereas **C to Db** would be " **flat 2**"or "**flattened 2nd".**

Fig2.



Formal Names

“Major 2nd”
A **Major 2nd** is the 2nd note in a major scale and is 2 semi-tones (half-steps) away from the “root” (the starting note).

“Major 3rd”
A **Major 3rd** is the 3rd note of the major scale and is 4 semi-tones away from the “root”.

“Perfect 4th”
A **Perfect 4th** is the 4th note of the major scale (you get the idea!) and is 5 semi-tones away from the “root”.

“Perfect 5th”
A **Perfect 5th** is the 5th note of the major scale and is 7 semi-tones away from the “root”.

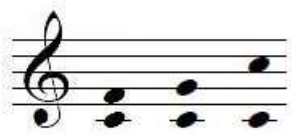
“Major 6th”
A **Major 6th** is the 6th note of the major scale and is 9 semi-tones away from the “root”.

“Major 7th”
A **Major 7th** is the 7th note of the major scale and is 11 semi-tones away from the “root”.

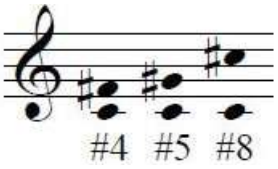
PRIMARY and SECONDARY Intervals

PRIMARY intervals (4, 5, 8)

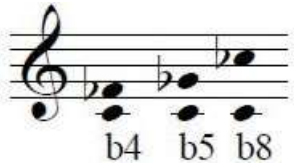
Primary Intervals are the **4th**, **5th** and **8ve (octave)**



“Perfect”
Perfect 4th, 5th and Octave.
If they occur in the major scale these intervals are called “**PERFECT”** (eg perfect 4th)



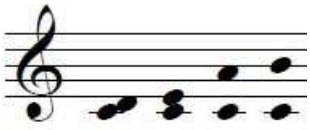
“Augmented”
They can also be **raised** 1 half-step and are called **AUGMENTED (or sharpened)**
(augmented 4th or sharp 4)



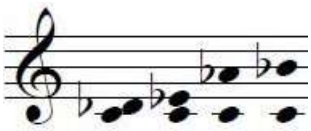
“Diminished”
They can be **lowered** 1 half-step/semi-tone and called **DIMINISHED (or flattened).**
(diminished 4th or flat 4)

SECONDARY intervals 2, 3, 6, 7

SECONDARY intervals are either MAJOR or MINOR



“Major”
Intervals 2, 3, 6 and 7 that occur in the Major scale are called **MAJOR.**



“Minor”
If these intervals are flattened, they are called **MINOR.**