Tutorial 3B: Melodic Connections

Welcome! In this tutorial you'll learn:

1. The principles of melodic resolution
2. How to connect smoothly to chords in solos
3. How to anticipate or delay chord resolution

Enjoy the learning, and see you at the peak ...

Other Level 3 Tutorials

3A: More Melodic Color
3E: Melodic Patterns
3F: More About Patterns
3H: Rhythmic Development
3K: Dominant Alterations
3L: Learning Standard Tunes

- There's nothing quite as elegant as a solo that negotiates tough chords and keeps the melody nice and smooth. There are real, practical ways to learn how to do this, and it's definitely worth the effort to learn.

Part 1 – About Melodic Resolution

A) What is melodic resolution?

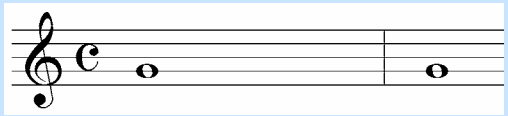
*Melodic resolution is the skill of smoothly connecting two "distant" chords (ones that aren't in the same key, such as consecutive chords of the same type). This lets you control your melodic contour, so it isn't forced up and down by the chords.

B) What intervals do I use for melodic resolution?

*A "smooth" melodic movement is moving by one of these intervals from the old chord to the new chord:

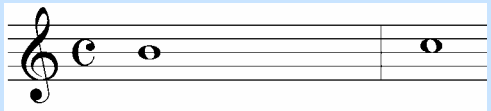
1) A "no-step" (same note on old and new chords) –

CMa7 (5th) EbMa7 (3rd)

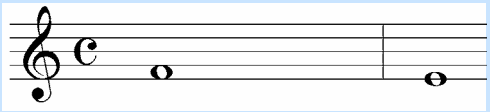


2) A half-step up or down to the new chord –

CMa7 (7th) EbMa7 (6th)

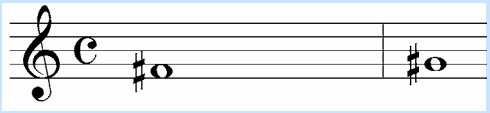


DbMa7 (7th) GMa7 (6th)

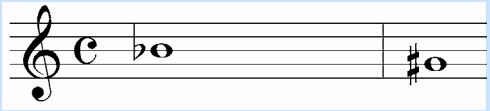


3) A whole-step up or down to the new chord –

DMa7 (3rd) BMa7 (6th)



EbMa7 (5th) AMa7 (7th)



*Melodic resolution has a maximum of a whole step. You can connect to a new chord by a wider interval, but it sounds like a skip, not a smooth connection.

C) What problems does melodic resolution solve?

*Some soloists improvise so smoothly you hardly notice the chords changing, while other soloists stumble or stop at each new chord. First, you must master the scales and arpeggios that go with the chords. After that,

(Part 1 – About Melodic Resolution)

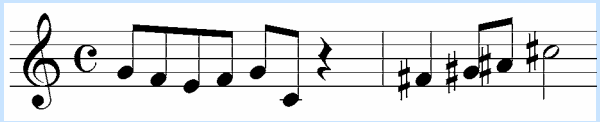
melodic resolution makes the difference. Good melodic resolution fixes these common problems:

• *Problem* #1: Stopping just before new chords, creating breaks in the solo.

• *Problem* #2: Jumping to the new chord root, even if the jump is awkward.

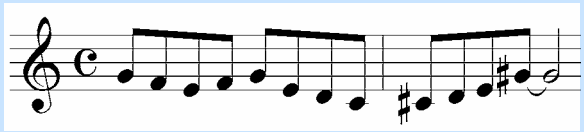
*The melody below illustrates both problems. It pauses before the new chord and has an awkward break when it jumps to the root:

C7 F#7



*Here is an improvement using melodic resolution:

C7 F#7



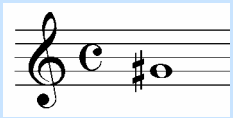
Part 2 – Using Melodic Resolution

A) What steps do I use for melodic resolution?

(Using sample whole-notes):

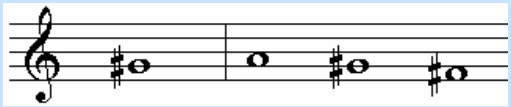
1 Select a whole note for the first chord; don't use the root or natural 4. For example, you could choose G# for an EMa7 chord:

EMa7



2 Choose a whole note for the second chord, moving by a no-step, half-step (up or down), or whole-step (up or down). The new note must *not* be the root or natural 4th of the new chord; it *can* be the #4 (in major).

EMa7 DMa7 (or or)



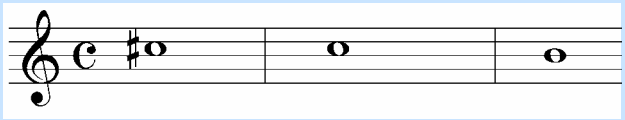
*The above example moves from EMa7 on the 3 (G#) to DMa7 on the 5 (A), or the #4 (G#), or the 3 (F#).

(Part 2 – Using Melodic Resolution)

*You can also use melodic resolution for minor or dominant chords by following steps 1 and 2 above. For minor chords, the first note of the new chord shouldn't be the b6th or natural 7th (the 4th is OK).

Here's an example of melodic resolution with major, dominant, and minor chords:

DMa7 Bb7 Am7



C) How do I practice melodic resolution on paper?

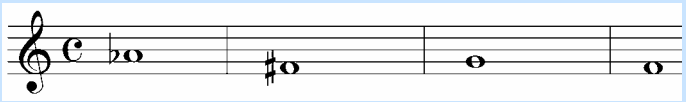
1 Write down any 4 chord symbols (major, minor, or dominant).

2 Under the first chord symbol, write one whole-note pitch. If you don't have music paper, you can spell the pitch by letter, without drawing it on a staff.

3 Write a whole-note pitch under the second chord symbol. Use a smooth movement described above.

4 Write a whole-note pitch under each remaining chord symbol, using smooth melodic resolution:

Fm7 AMa7 EbMa7 G7



5 Repeat steps 1 through 4, but say the pitches instead of writing them. Work for accuracy, and try to take a few seconds per note. You can work on melodic resolution away from your instrument, too.

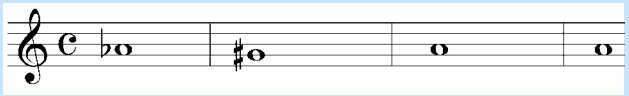
► **TRY IT –** Basic: Write any four *major* chord symbols. Choose a whole-note pitch for the first chord symbol, then quickly name whole-note pitches for the other chords. Medium: Use 4 *minor* chord symbols. Challenge: Use any 8 chord symbols, including dominant.

D) What other ways can I practice melodic resolution?

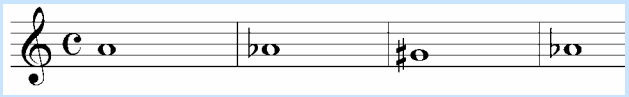
*Use the least possible movement (fewest half-steps) between chords. The notes below move only a half-step (G# to A) across 4 chords:

(Part 2 – Using Melodic Resolution)

Fm7 AMa7 EbMa7 G7



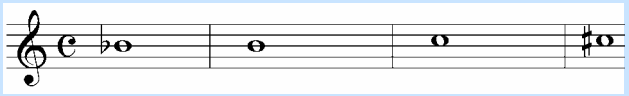
DMa7 Bb7 EMa7 Fm7



▶ **TRY IT –** Same as the previous Try-It; try for the least number of half-steps moved.

*You can also try to make each note move upwards:

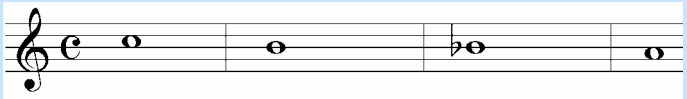
Fm7 AMa7 EbMa7 G7



▶ **TRY IT –** Same as the previous Try-It; try to go up with each note.

*You can also try to make each note move down:

Fm7 AMa7 EbMa7 G7



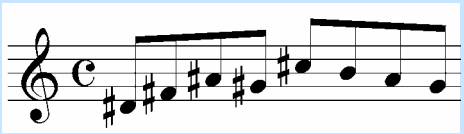
▶ **TRY IT –** Same as the previous Try-It; try to go down with each note.

E) How do I use other rhythms in melodic resolution?

*You can use other rhythms, such as eighth-notes, dotted quarters, etc. The smooth-movement rules are the same, but you choose notes much more quickly.

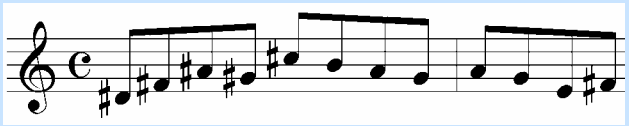
1 As you near the new chord, sense which pitch will be the last one you play in the current chord.

BMa7 to GMa7



2 Choose the first note for the new chord, moving by one of the smooth intervals (no-step, half-step up or down, or whole-step up or down).

BMa7 GMa7



Connecting eighth-notes quickly and accurately takes time and practice, so be patient – rewards are high.

- **TRY IT –** Same as the previous Try-It; use 8 eighth-notes per bar; connect chords in whatever way is easiest.

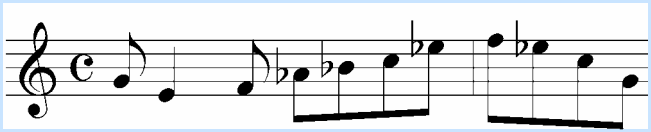
Part 3 – Chord Anticipation & Delay

A) What is chord anticipation?

**Chord anticipation* means soloing on the new chord a bit too soon (one, two, or three quarter-note beats before the new chord sounds), to increase tension.

*For example, say the first chord is FMa7 and the next chord is AbMa7. You could anticipate the AbMa7 by playing Ab, Bb, C, and Eb while F Ma7 sounds:

FMa7 ========== AbMa7



*The anticipated Ab, Bb and Eb sound tense in FMa7, but when the new chord arrives, it makes sense. (In movies, it's like starting the dialog in a new scene while the old scene's still on the screen).

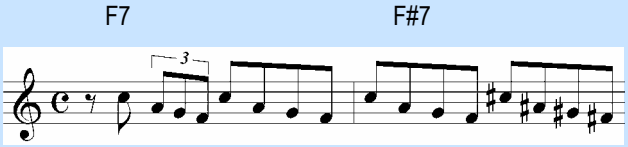
*Anticipated notes are usually resting tones of the new chord. They outline the new chord clearly while the old chord is still sounding. When the new chord arrives, use melodic resolution to connect to it smoothly. Then when the new chord is sounding, you can stress the new chord's color tones.

- **TRY IT –** Write two random major chords. Just before the new chord, write a few anticipation eighth-notes. Then use two minor chords.

(Part 3 – Chord Anticipation and Delay)

B) What is chord delay?

*Usually, it's not good to keep playing on the old chord when the new chord sounds. But repeating a motif can extend an old-chord motif into a new chord. In the example below, the last four 8th-notes of the F7 chord are repeated into the F#7 chord, causing dissonance until the melody goes up a half-step to match the new chord.



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*The repeated motif should be strong; otherwise, it just sounds like you missed the new chord. Then you can resolve the motif to the new key.

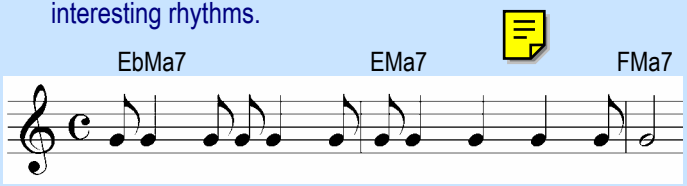
▶ **TRY IT –** Write 2 measures of 8th-notes, using C7 for the first bar and C#7 for the second bar. Use chord delay on the first 4 notes of bar 2. Then use BMa7, EbMa7; then use a progression with four hard chords.

B) What is pedal? How does it avoid chord changes?

*To add interest behind a solo, bass players sometimes repeat a root note while chords change. This repeated note is a *pedal* note.

*In your solo, you can use a pedal note (or a pedal pattern) by repeating one or more notes while the rhythm section changes chords.

*Pedal notes can be even more effective when you use interesting rhythms.



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▶ **TRY IT –** Write a chromatic chord progression and play an interesting pedal rhythm over it.

That's all for Tutorial 3B!

Next is the Quiz –to get started, go to the next page.

QUIZ – 3B: Melodic Connections

Click on the letter for the best answer for each question. You'll hear a C Maj6 arpeggio if you're right. If you miss 2 or less, you pass the Tutorial!

Or, click Back to review the Tutorial before taking the Quiz.

1) Distant chords

A) are more than a measure apart B) are different in type, such as major vs. minor C) have non-harmonic tones D) have unrelated keys

2) Pedal

A) avoids chords B) adds chords C) makes chords more complex D) moves smoothly between 2 chords

3) Chord anticipation uses more

A) resting tones B) color tones C) non-harmonic tones D) rhythmic variety

4) To connect smoothly from BbMaj7 to EMaj7, you could move from an F to:

A) E B) F C) F# D) G#

5) To connect smoothly from Am to Eb7, you could move from a G to:

A) Ab B) A C) F# D) Eb

6) Chord delay makes use of

A) repeated motifs B) varied motifs C) pedal D) ii-V-I's

7) Which is not a smooth chord movement?

A) half-step B) whole-step C) no-step D) third

8) Which is not a good way to practice melodic resolution?

A) try to move up from chord to chord B) try to move down from chord to chord C) try to move as little as possible D) try to connect to the seventh