

5. Chord-Tone Exercise #4.

By putting the chord-tones of one chord in groups of 2 consecutive chord-tones, and moving to the closest 2 consecutive chord-tones on a new chord, we can examine all of the step-wise and common tone connecting links between the 2 chords. It is best to first start doing this type of thing on a single string. Later on, you might want to try doing it on pairs of consecutive strings as well, or even as a position exercise.

Let's look at the Imaj7-VI7-IIIm7-V7 progression in C. Cmaj7-A7-Dm7-G7.

On Cmaj7, our pairs of consecutive chord-tones will be: C-E, E-G, G-B, and B-C.
On your 1st string, work out *all the places* where these pairs of notes fall under your fingers.
Important: For now, try to always use your 1st finger for the lower of the two notes.

On A7, our chord-tone pairs will be: A-C#, C#-E, E-G, and G-A.
Find these CT pairs all across your 1st string. (Use your 1st finger for the lower note.)

On Dm7, our pairs will be: D-F, F-A, A-C and C-D.
Play them on your 1st string.

On G7, the pairs are: G-B, B-D, D-F, and F-G.
Play them on the 1st string.

- Record yourself comping a vamp on Cmaj7 (just Cmaj7) for a few minutes, with a swing or bossa feel. Improvise some CT melodies on Cmaj7, just on your first string. Try to think in terms of the pairs of consecutive chord-tones that we just worked out, always with your 1st finger playing the lower note of the pair. Your note choice is extremely limited here, so try to make the rhythms interesting.

- Do the same thing for a while over an A7 vamp, then a Dm7 vamp, and then a G7 vamp.

Now, let's examine the various places along the 1st string where the CTs of Cmaj7 happen to join-up with the CTs of A7.

If you're playing your open E and 3rd fret G on Cmaj7; when the chord changes to A7, those same 2 notes happen to be common tones.

If you're playing G (3rd fret) and B (7th fret) on Cmaj7; when the chord changes to A7, the closest 2 CTs of A7 will be G (3rd fret) and A (5th fret). [But, you also might move to A (5th fret) C# (9th fret).]

If you're playing B (7th fret) and C (8th fret) on Cmaj7; when the chord changes to A7 the closest 2 CTs of A7 will be A (5th fret) and C# (9th fret).

If you're on C-E on Cmaj7; you'll move to C#-E for A7.

If you're on the high E-G; they are still common tones on A7.

Etc.

- Record yourself (several minutes) comping a vamp of 1 bar of Cmaj7 to 1 bar of A7.

Improvise CT melodies over these 2 chords, just on your 1st string. Think in terms of the pairs of notes and the ways that they connect.

Now, let's examine the various places along the 1st string where the CTs of A7 happen to join-up with the CTs of Dm7.

If you're playing your open E and 3rd fret G on A7; when the chord changes to Dm7 you'll move to F-A.

If you're playing G (3rd fret) and A (7th fret) on A7; when the chord changes to Dm7 you will also move to F-A. [But you might move to A-C also.]

If you're playing A (5th fret) and C# (9th fret) on A7; then you'll move to A-C# on Dm7.

If you're on C#-E on A7; you'll move to C#-D for Dm7, or D-F.

If you're on the high E-G on A7; you'll move to D-F or F-A.

Etc.

- Record yourself (several minutes) comping a vamp of 1 bar of Dm7 to 1 bar of A7.

Improvise CT melodies over these chords, just on your 1st string. Think in terms of the pairs of notes and ways that they connect.

Now, let's examine the various places along the 1st string where the CTs of Dm7 happen to join-up with the CTs of G7.

If you're playing F-A on Dm7; when the chord changes to G7 you'll move to F-G or G-B.

If you're playing A-C on Dm7; when the chord changes to G7 you'll move to G-B or B-D.

If you're playing C-D on Dm7; you'll move to B-D on G7.

If you're on D-F on Dm7; they are common tones on G7.

If you're on the high F-A on Dm7; you'll move to F-G or G-b on G7.

Etc.

- Record yourself (several minutes) comping a vamp of 1 bar of Dm7 to 1 bar of G7.

Improvise CT melodies over these chords, just on your 1st string. Think in terms of the pairs of notes and ways that they connect.

- Examine the way that G7's CT pairs move to Cmaj7's CT pairs.

Record a vamp of Cmaj7 for 1 bar going to G7 for 1 bar and practice improvising CT melodies across the 1st string.

Now, let's preplan some places on the 1st string where we can play over all 4 chords:

If we start with the low E-G for Cmaj7, then we'll stay there for A7, we'll move to F-A on Dm7, and to F-G on G7.

- Record a vamp of the entire Cmaj7-A7-Dm7-G7 progression and improvise CT melodies using only the CT pairs we just worked out. Your note choice is obviously **very** limited here, so try to make the rhythms interesting.

Try the following pre-planned CT pairs as well:

Cmaj7	A7	Dm7	G7
E-G	E-G	F-A	G-B
G-B	G-A	F-A	F-G
G-B	G-A	F-A	G-B
G-B	G-A	A-C	G-B
G-B	G-A	A-C	B-D
B-C	A-C#	A-C	G-B
B-C	A-C#	A-C	B-D
C-E	C#-E	C#-D	B-D
C-E	C#-E	C#-D	D-F
C-E	C#-E	D-F	D-F
E-G	E-G	D-F	D-F

Etc.

- Now we'll free it up a bit, and you can use the entire length of the 1st string for your CT soloing. But resist the urge to leap away from where you happen to be when the chord changes. See if you can make the new change without having to move too far away. This way of joining the chords in your lines by step or by common tone is generally more musical sounding than leaping. But start looking for ways to make leaping at the point of a chord change sound good too.

- Repeat all the above on the 2nd string, 3rd string, etc.

When we use two adjacent or non-adjacent strings for CT pairs, our CTs might not be consecutive. But the basic principles will remain the same.

- Try soloing over the vamp using various pairs of strings, still playing just CTs and trying to keep them in groups of 2, joining one chord into the next as smoothly as possible.

- Get in the habit of doing this type of thing over the entire form of **every** tune you are working on.

- You should be able to do all of this too, in time - without losing your place, when there is no vamp supporting you. I.e. You should be able to do this with no accompaniment at all.

- Once you can really hear all the ways that the pairs of CTs link up with each other, you should experiment using passing tones between the notes in the CT pairs. Usually, your ear will hear these as coming from the scale of the key the music is in at that point in the progression. See Passing Tone Exercise Number 1, in this chapter.

Hint: Eventually you'll start treating available tensions almost like they too are chord-tones.