

## Vamps

A vamp is a musical idea that is rhythmic, often built upon a bass ostinato, has syncopated chordal organization, and usually found at the beginning or at turnaround areas of a composition. A vamp figure found at the beginning of a composition sets up the premise or mood of the composition. Vamps occasionally are in the form of a *figure* (see below), and are less vigorous, but do clearly set up the tenor of the composition.

## Figures

Figures unto themselves are usually found *within* a composition, are based more on chordal materials, and show more musical substance and development than vamps or hooks. In addition, figures found within often are the main premise of a composition from which the remaining materials are derived. Vamps and in some cases, hooks are a form of musical figure, the differences are mainly in construction, length and where they are found.

## Hooks

Hooks tend to be short and riff-like in description. They also tend to be clear and identifiable with some quality be it melodic, harmonic, timbral, or rhythmic, that renders them unique and memorable. Another important point is that hooks occur throughout the presentation of the composition – in the “head” portions, improvisations, and subsequent reiterations of the “head” materials. In addition, occurring in the same place and way, hooks serve as a form of “marker”; a point of interest that both the listeners and the performers can easily identify.

## COMPOSING FIGURES, VAMPS and HOOKS

### Figures

Most figures are chord-oriented and are created by segmenting the intervallic arrangement of the Upper Structure or the *grip* of a chord. This refers to a form of arpeggiation in which the sounding of the chord is by two or three pitch intervallic groups. In addition to segmenting individual chords, the process can be applied to groups of chords in a harmonic movement – usually two to three chords in length. Note also that many figures are crafted from non-segmented chords as well but the organization usually is complex requiring that the figure be written out in full for chord-oriented parts. (see pp. 50-52 in vol.1 of the Jazz Comp books)

When deciding to segment a grip, consider the quality of the resulting intervals. In general, thirds and sixths intervals are consonant, fourths and fifths are stark sounding, and seconds are tense. (see p. 21 in vol. 1 and p. 20 Vol. 2 of the Jazz Comp books)

Example 1: segmenting Upper Structures (grips)

a. diatonic roots, single grip

The musical notation for Example 1a is presented in a grand staff with a 4/4 time signature. It is divided into four segments by vertical bar lines. The first segment is labeled 'original' and shows a single chord with a bass line. The second segment, labeled '6ths & 3ds', shows the upper structure of the chord with the 6th and 3rd degrees. The third segment, labeled '4ths & 5ths', shows the upper structure with the 4th and 5th degrees. The fourth segment, labeled '3ds', shows the upper structure with the 3rd degree. The bass line remains consistent throughout all segments.

b. chromatic roots, chord sequence

1. Deep Pools, by Ron Miller, 4ths & 5ths

The musical notation for Example 1b.1 is in a grand staff with a 4/4 time signature. It features two measures of music. The first measure is labeled 'A<sup>b</sup>MIN<sup>11</sup>' and the second measure is labeled 'G<sup>b</sup>ALT'. The upper structure consists of 4ths and 5ths, while the bass line moves chromatically between the two chords.

Comments: This is a technique borrowed from the impressionists: Ravel, Debussy and Respighi. The open, hollow-like sound of the 4th & 5ths is clearly identifiable.

2. Phase Dance, by Pat Metheny, 3ds

The musical notation for Example 1b.2 is in a grand staff with a 4/4 time signature. It features two measures of music. The first measure is labeled 'B<sup>b</sup>MIN<sup>11</sup>' and the second measure is labeled 'E<sup>b</sup>Δ<sup>4</sup>'. The upper structure consists of 3rds, while the bass line moves chromatically between the two chords.

Comments: Although the harmonic movement is chromatic, the use of thirds in the segmented grips gives the vamp a consonant, endearing diatonic quality that is typical of Pat's compositional style.