

# Chromatic Tones

Ted Greene, 1978-07-07

Up till now, virtually our entire focus has been on chord tones and scale tones. But there are other notes, known as *Chromatic Tones*, which are often used by jazz players in creating ultra-smooth lines. Chromatic tones are simply those tones which are *not* part of a given scale.

Example:

C dominant 7th scale:	C	D	E	F	G	A	B $\flat$	C
Chromatic tones for this scale:	C#	D#		F#	G#		B	
	or	or		or	or		or	
	D $\flat$	E $\flat$		G $\flat$	A $\flat$		C $\flat$	

What would be the chromatic tones for the C minor 7th scale?

Answer: C#, E, F#, G#, and B, right?

Chromatic tones usually lead to another note a 1/2 step higher or lower. For instance, in the above group of tones C# would normally proceed up a 1/2 step to D or down a 1/2 step to C. These two melodic tendencies will be discussed in more detail below and on the following pages.

## Lower Neighbor Tones

Every scale or chord tone has a note a 1/2 step below it, which is known as its *Lower Neighbor Tone*. Many of these are chromatic tones, but some are just other notes in the same scale.

Example:

C dominant 7th scale:	C	D	E	F	G	A	B $\flat$	C
Lower Neighbor tones:	B	C#	D#	E	F#	G#	A	B
	or	or	or	or	or	or	or	or
	C $\flat$	D $\flat$	E $\flat$	F $\flat$	G $\flat$	A $\flat$	B $\flat\flat$	C $\flat$

### Application:

One of the most common uses of lower neighbor tones is that of using them to precede the scale or chord tones to which they are related. Another common use involves first playing a scale or chord tone, then its lower neighbor tone, and then the scale or chord tone again. (In this usage, the neighbor tone is often referred to as a *Returning Tone*.) Both of these concepts will be illustrated in the musical examples that follow.

# CHROMATIC TONES

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Up till now, virtually our entire focus has been on

chord tones and scale tones. But there are other notes, known as **CHROMATIC TONES**, which are often used by jazz players in creating ultra-smooth lines. Chromatic tones are simply those tones which are not part of a given scale. EXAMPLE:

C DOMINANT 7th SCALE → C D E F G A B<sup>b</sup> C

CHROMATIC TONES for this scale → C<sup>#</sup> D<sup>#</sup> F<sup>#</sup> G<sup>#</sup> B }  
or Db or Eb or G<sup>b</sup> or Ab or C<sup>b</sup>

What would be the chromatic tones for the C Minor 7th scale? Answer: C<sup>#</sup>, E, F<sup>#</sup>, G<sup>#</sup>, and B, right?

Chromatic tones usually lead to another note a  $\frac{1}{2}$  step higher or lower. For instance, in the above group of tones C<sup>#</sup> would normally proceed up a  $\frac{1}{2}$  step to D or down a  $\frac{1}{2}$  step to C. These two melodic tendencies will be discussed in more detail below and on the following pages.

## LOWER NEIGHBOR TONES

Every scale or chord tone has a note a  $\frac{1}{2}$  step below it, which is known as its lower neighbor tone. Many of these are chromatic tones but some are just other notes in the same scale.

Example:

C DOMINANT 7th SCALE → C D E F G A B<sup>b</sup> C  
LOWER NEIGHBOR TONES → B C<sup>#</sup> D<sup>#</sup> E F<sup>#</sup> G<sup>#</sup> A B }  
or C<sup>b</sup> or Db or Eb or F<sup>b</sup> or G<sup>b</sup> or Ab or B<sup>bb</sup> or C<sup>b</sup>

### APPLICATION:

One of the most common uses of a <sup>lower</sup> neighbor tone is that of using them to precede the scale or chord tones to which they are related. Another common use involves first playing a scale or chord tone, then its lower neighbor tone, and then the scale or chord tone again (in this usage, the neighbor tone is often referred to as a returning tone).

Both of these concepts will be illustrated in the musical examples that follow.