

Harmonic Improvement

Ted Greene — 1976, June 2

PART I

1) Any of the three basic chord types may be enriched by adding 6ths, 9ths, etc. to them. A glance at the “Chord Construction page” will reveal what types of chords result from this process. One of the fastest ways of learning to *apply* this concept is through the *patient* study (playing *and* analyzing) of the material on chord progressions, songs, etc., that you will be given as assignments. This concept will be referred to as **Chord Enrichment**. (This concept applies in a limited way to the °7 also.)

2) Any chord may be preceded by a similar type chord whose root is a *1/2 step above*. This process will be called **1/2 Step Embellishment**. Examples:

Given: (key of Ab)

	$A\flat\Delta 7$	$C_m 7$	$B\flat m 7$	$E\flat 7$
# of				
Beats:	//	//	//	//

With 1/2 step embellishment

	$A\flat\Delta 7$	$C_m 7$	$B_m 7$	$B\flat m 7$	$E\flat 7$
	//	/	/	//	//

with melody in contrary motion

	$A\flat\Delta 7$	$C_m 7$	$B_m 7/11$	$B\flat m 7$	$E\flat 7$
	//	/	/	//	//

Given: (key of Ab)

	$A\flat 7$	$F 7$	$B\flat 7$	$E\flat 7$
	//	//	//	//

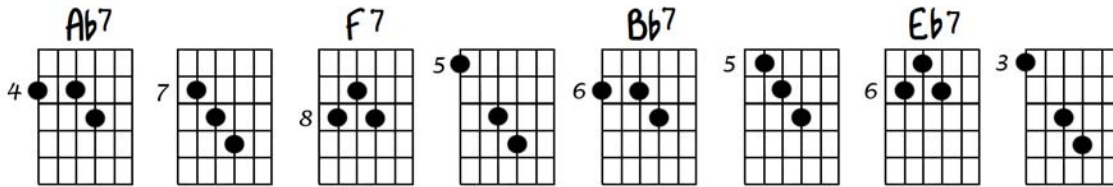
With 1/2 step embellishment:

	$A\flat 7$	$F 7$	$B 7$	$B\flat 7$	$E 7$	$E\flat 7$	$A 7$	$A\flat 7$
	//	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

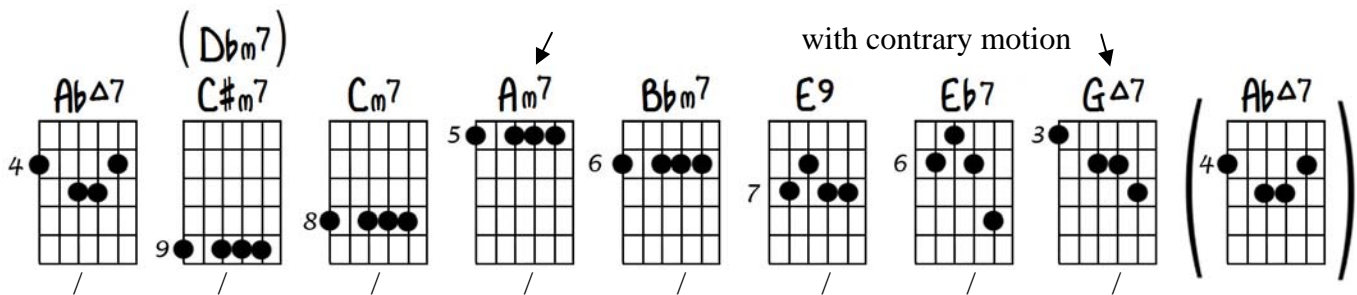
Is there somewhere else here that you could add 1/2 step embellishment?

An interesting twist on the above is to have the *bass* notes approach the given chords from a 1/2 step *below*, while the rest of the embellishing chord comes from above, normally. The resulting “polar” embellishing chords need not be given names. As a *group*, they might be referred to as **1/2 Step Moving Line Chords** (the result of musical lines in motion).

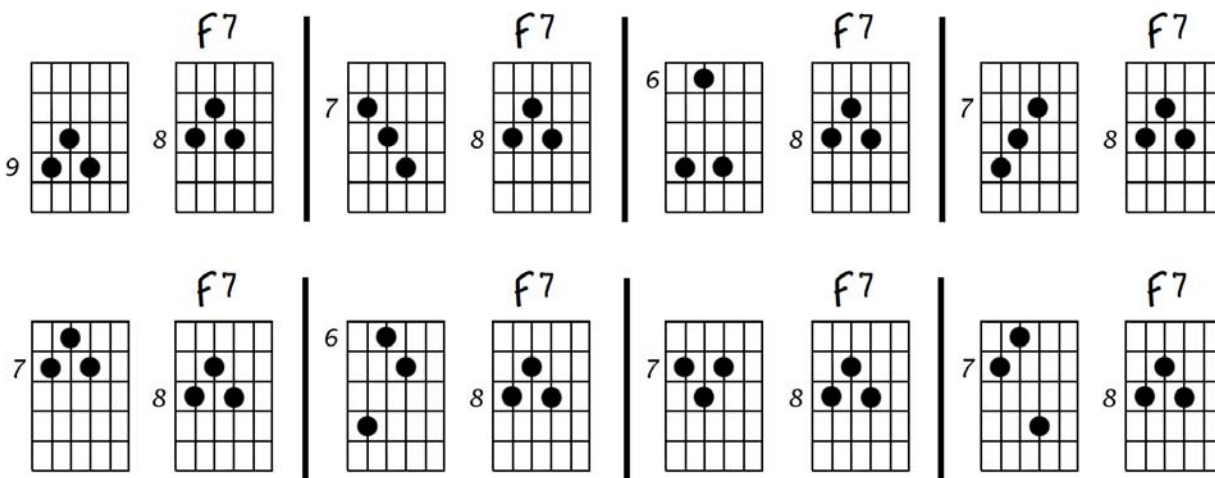
Example:



You might be wondering if 1/2 step embellishment with the *whole chord* approaching from below is a commonly used principle...yes and no—most players seem to use 1/2 step embellishment from above more than below (that is, when they use *any* kind of embellishment), but it does add variety, so you’ll probably enjoy fooling around with it also. Example: (using 1st progression above again).



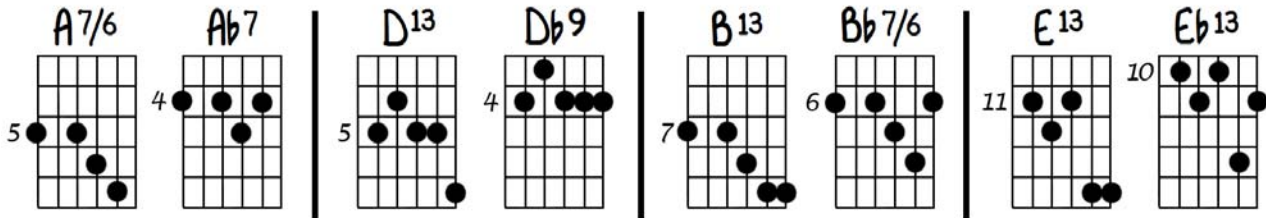
This concept of embellishment can get pretty “hairy” if we include some notes going in contrary motion, as illustrated in a few of the examples. For instance, here is a summary of some ways to embellish an F7 chord, with various combinations of 1/2 step notes:



If you were to make a similar list with a 4-note chord you would have a least twice as many options, and with 5- and 6-note chords...you could easily spend many years, if not the better portion of your life on just this concept alone. So a keyword here is *moderation*.

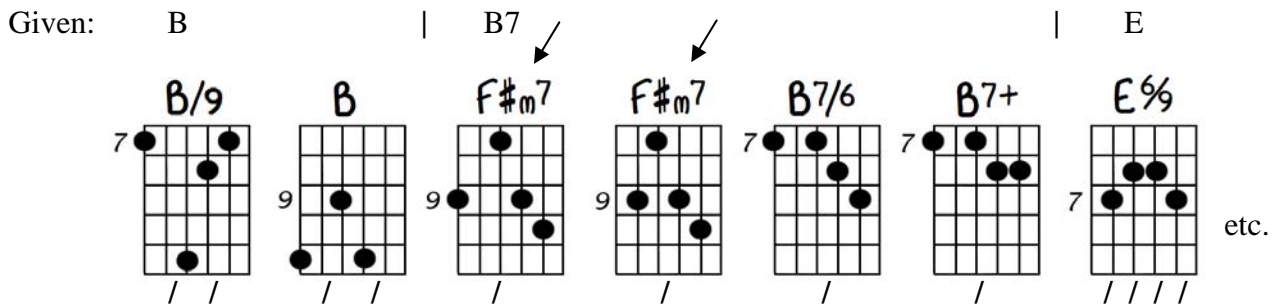
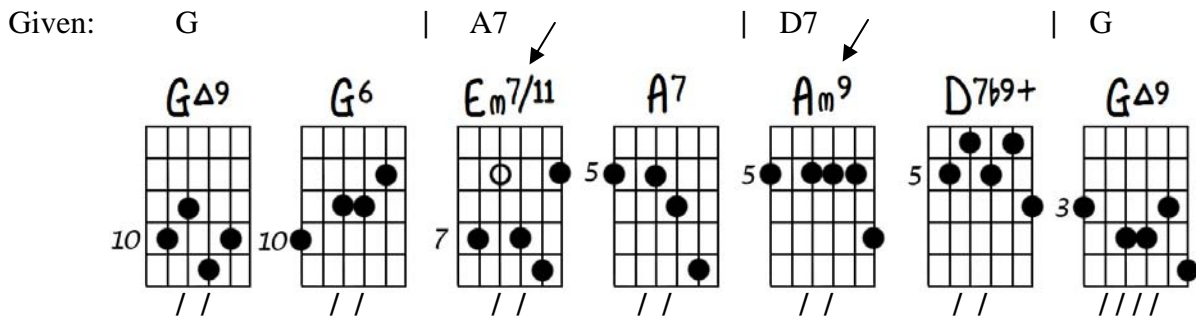
You will see these 1/2 step embellishment sounds used on the song pages to come, so you will get some experience in this area without really trying, just by playing and learning the material.

One last thing: melodic leaps in the soprano voice (highest pitch) are commonly used with 1/2 step embellishment. Examples:



PART II

3) Any dominant 7th type chord (and to a lesser extent, any m7 type chord) may be *preceded* by a m7 type chord whose root is a 5th higher. Examples:



4) Any major, minor or dominant 7th type chord may be preceded with a dominant 7th type chord whose root is a 5th higher. Examples:

Basic: G

Basic: Bb

Basic: A

It is often interesting to combine different principles. Examples:

Basic: A

Basic: Ab

This process, of adding chords a 5th higher, will be referred to as **Back-Cycling** (because you are “backing up” in the cycle of 5ths (4ths) in order to find the chord(s) to add in).

The process of back-cycling can be carried out even further (and this is especially useful in *chord melody style* playing) as you will see if you apply this concept to some songs.

Sometimes it is effective to break up a measure or two of a given chord by inserting the back-cycle chord in the middle in a “sandwich” fashion:

Given:

Or you might alternate the back-cycled chord with the original:

Given:

Minor 7th and dominant 7th type chords that stand in the relationship of Am7 – D7, will be called *Companions* (like Gm7 is the *companion m7* of C7, and C7 is the *companion dominant 7th* of Gm7).

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① Any of the three basic chord types may be enriched by adding 6ths, 9ths, etc., to them. A glance at the "chord construction page" will reveal what types of chords result from this process. One of the fastest ways of learning to apply this concept is through the patient study (playing and analyzing) of the material on chord progressions, songs, etc. that you will be given as assignments.

This concept will be referred to as **CHORD ENRICHMENT**. (a limited way to the 9th also.) *(this concept applies in)*

② Any chord may be preceded by a similar type chord whose root is a $\frac{1}{2}$ STEP ABOVE. This process will be called $\frac{1}{2}$ STEP EMBELLISHMENT. Examples:

NUMBER OF BEATS

Given: (Key of Ab) Ab7 Cm7 Bbm7 Eb7

WITH $\frac{1}{2}$ STEP EMBEL: Ab7 Cm7 Bbm7 Bbm7 Eb7 OR Ab7 Cm7 Bbm7(11) Bbm7 Eb7

WITH MELODY in contrary motion

Given: (Key of Ab) Ab7 F7 Bb7 Eb7

WITH $\frac{1}{2}$ STEP EMBEL: Ab7 F7 B7 Bb7 E7 Eb7 A7 (Ab7)

Are there somewhere else here that you can add $\frac{1}{2}$ step embel.?

An interesting twist on the above is to have the bass notes approach the given chords from a $\frac{1}{2}$ step below, while the rest of the embellishing chord comes in from above, normally. The resulting "polar" embellishing chords used

EXAMPLE:

Ab7 F7 Bb7 Eb7

not be given names. As a group, they might be referred to as $\frac{1}{2}$ step moving line chords (the result of musical lines in motion).

You might be wondering if $\frac{1}{2}$ step embellishment with the whole chord approaching from below is a commonly used principle... yes and no - most players seem to use $\frac{1}{2}$ step emb. from above, more than below (that is, when they use any kind of embellishment), but it does add variety, so you'll probably enjoy fooling around with it also. Example: (using 1st progression above again)

(Dm7) Ab7 Cm7 Cm7 Am7 Bbm7 E9 Eb7 G7 (Ab7)

WITH CONTRAST MELODY

This concept of embellishment can get pretty "hairy" if we include some notes going in contrary motion as illustrated in a few of the examples. For

instance, here is a summary of some ways to embellish an F7 chord, with various combinations of $\frac{1}{2}$ step notes:

F7 F7 F7 F7 F7 F7 F7

If you were to make a similar list with a 4 note chord you would have at least twice as many options, and with 5+6 note chords... you could easily spend many years, if not the better portion of your life on just this concept alone. So a keyword here is **MODERATION**.

You will see these $\frac{1}{2}$ step embel. sounds used on the song pages to come, so you will get some experience in this area without really trying, just by playing & learning the material.

One last thing: Melodic leaps in the soprano voice (highest pitch) are commonly used with $\frac{1}{2}$ step embell. Examples:

A7(6) Ab7 D9 Db9 B13 Bb7(6) E13 Eb13

5 4 4 3 7 6 11 10

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③ Any dominant 7th type chord may be preceded by a m7 type chord whose root is a 5th higher. Examples:

Given: G → G9, G6, Em7/11, A7, Am9, D7b9+, G9

Given: B → B9, B, F#m7, F#m7, B7b6, B7+, E

④ Any major, minor or dominant 7th type chord may be preceded with a dominant 7th type chord whose root is a 5th higher. Examples:

BASIC: G → G, G, E7#9b5, A7b9+, Am9, Am7/11, D7b6, D7b9, G9

BASIC: Bb → Bb7, Bb7b6, Bb7b9+, Eb6, Eb9

BASIC: A → A7, C#7+, F#m7, F#7b5, Bm7/11, F9, E7, E13

It is often interesting to combine different principles → Examples:

BASIC: A7, C#m7, F#7, Bm7/11, Bm7, E7#9, E9

BASIC: Ab → Ab7, Ab6, Fm9, Bb7, Ebm7, A13

This process, of adding chords a 5th higher, will be referred to as **BACK-CYCLING** (because you are "backing up" in the cycle of 5ths (4ths) in order to find the chords to add in).

The process of back-cycling can be carried out even further (and this is especially useful in chord melody style playing) as you will see if you apply this concept to some songs.

Sometimes it is effective to break up a measure or two of a given chord by inserting the back-cycled chord in the middle in a "sandwich" fashion:

Given: A7, Em7, A7b6, Eb9, D9, A7+, D7, Am7, D7, Ab7, G7

Given: A7, Em9, A7, Eb9, Am7, D7, Am7, D7, Am9, D7, Am9, D7+, G9

Or you might alternate the back-cycled chord with the original:

Minor 7th + dom. 7th type chords that stand in the relationship of Am7 - D7, will be called **COMPANIONS** (like Gm7 is the companion m7 of C7, and C7 is the companion dominant, 7th of Gm7).

⑤ 5th SUBST. PRINCIPLE - see harmonic improvement page 3