## Non-Harmonic Tones (NH Tones)

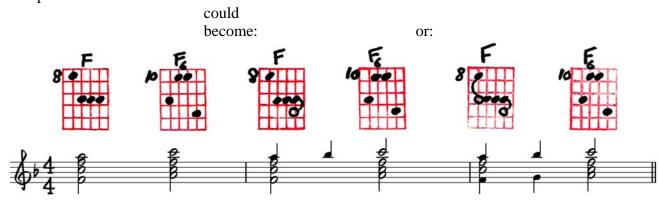
Ted Greene 9-16-1973

Non-harmonic tones can be defined generally as quickly moving tones that are unessential and/or foreign to the chords with which they are being played. They are arrived at and usually conceived by the melodic action of a given voice in a chord. Remember that chords do not only have to be thought of as frozen blocks of sound; rather, they are most often treated as a *temporary* freezing of the separate melodic lines which are constantly in motion.

However, because melodies tend to either be conceived from, or to imply a certain chordal background, it has been found convenient to classify tones as those belonging to the chords and those not (this is in reference to triads and triadal harmony mainly because almost any tone can be frozen to a triad, and this new combination then given a name. For example, an A triad with a B note is called an A added 9th, but this viewpoint will be covered thoroughly later – for now everything is in terms of triads – if a note does not belong to a triad with which it is being played, it will be called a non-harmonic tone).

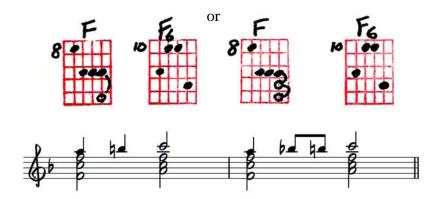
Stepwise motion has been found to be the smoothest type of melodic interval, so the whole and 1/2 steps dominate most melodies; however, when there is a melodic skip (a movement other than by step) the diatonic notes that are missing may be commonly filled in.

## Example:



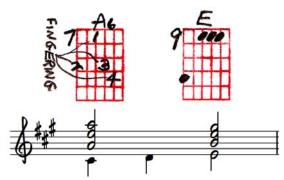
This type of NH tones are called <u>Passing Tones</u>.

Notice that chromatic (non-diatonic) passing tones could be used instead:



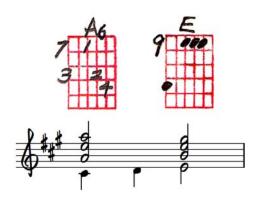
However, it is better to learn how to use diatonic passing tones first, so as not to miss the many beautiful sounds they produce.

So now go back to all of your exercises and try adding passing tones. Sometimes you will run across physical limitations. Example:

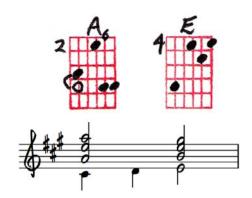


If you try to move the C# note in the A chord up to E in the E chord via the diatonic note D, you would have to remove one of the other notes from the neck in order to finger it.

You could try playing the A like this:

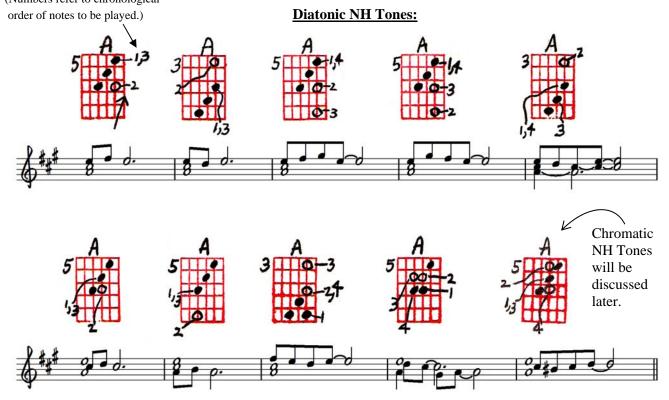


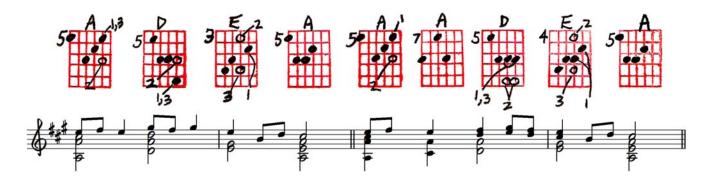
which is rough, or better yet, you could try *relocating* the chords and see if this will solve the problem. In this case the following re-location will probably be easier than the optional fingering given:



You must use all the resources at your disposal to cope effectively with non-harmonic tones. You may have noticed that NH tones help give motion to chordal sounds; also the temporary dissonance they create helps to give variety and added color.

Scale tones are used to embellish chordal tones in other ways such as some of the following: (Numbers refer to chronological

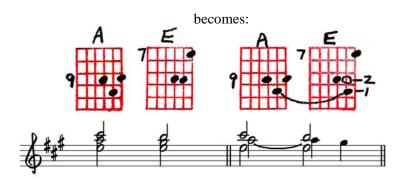




As you can see this system of [chord grid] notation leaves something to be desired (another argument in favor of learning how to read music).

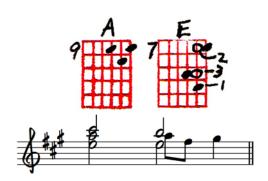
You should practice these techniques with all of your old exercises and also if you haven't learned to read music yet, you should start *today*; it will be much easier in the long run.

One more common device with NH tones is *suspension*. A suspension is a NH tone that is carried over from one chord into the following and is then resolved usually by step up or down. Example:

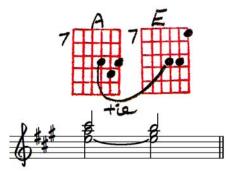


So suspensions act as a delaying of the resolution. Suspensions are often sustained between both chords (that is the note is not plucked again in the second chord) but this is by no means necessary and is often impossible on the guitar.

Other scale notes are often inserted between a suspension and its resolution:



Notice that because of the device in notation known as the tie, that chordal common tones can be sustained:



This device differs from a suspension in that the suspension is sustaining a note that is foreign to the second of the two chords dealt with.

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