

(CD TRACK 107)

(Bb-7 ON BLOWING) (Ab-7 ON BLOWING)
 NO CHORD ON MELODY Bb-7 Ab-7 G-7 E7#9b13 A13b9 D-11
 6 BbΔ7 F#-7 G-7b6 E7#9 FΔ7/A

In this tune, like many modern jazz compositions, a mix of functional and non-functional harmony is employed. Actually, this tune is a lot more functional than many of the tunes I write but I was trying to get at something that I've really liked in certain of Tom Harrell's compositions, a certain kind of movement chord to chord, moving in and out of functional and non-functional harmony. I didn't write this tune thinking about harmonic rules. However, I can analyze it to understand what effect certain harmonic choices have. Sometimes I'll challenge myself to write consciously using a particular harmonic idea that came from something that I wrote intuitively.

The first three chords are all the same chord quality, minor7ths. Then the tune modulates into D minor. The Bbmaj7 is a bVI maj7, a common place to go to in D minor. The next chord change, the F#-7 is interesting to me, because there's no functional reason to go there. The connection is the A natural, and I like the sudden juxtaposition of this harmony after the Bbmaj7, both chords harmonizing that same note. The first section ends in the related key of Fmaj/A.

Try to analyze some of your favorite modern tunes, such as songs by Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Bill Evans, Tom Harrell and others. Analyze the connections between chords that aren't based on ii-V, V7 to I or other functional harmonic relationships. Look for similarities in chord quality and common tone relationships.

Also, try and analyze your own music. Much of what we write is done intuitively and that's fine. However, after you've written something intuitively, you can analyze it and write other tunes exploring similar harmonic ground. Think of Coltrane writing "Giant Steps," "Fifth House," "Satellite" and the many other tunes exploring the "Giant Steps" progression. The marriage of intuition with rational development and exploration of ideas and harmonic structures that interest you can be extremely productive.

Here's one more tune of mine. This is from the same recording I mentioned above, "Handmade," and is called "Fairy Tale."

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The musical score consists of six staves of music in treble clef. Above each staff are chord annotations for each measure. The chords are: D7sus4, C#-7bb, Bb-7, A7, GΔ7, Gb7ALT, F11, E-7, CΔ7, B7ALT, Bb7sus4, GbΔ7, AΔ7, Ab-7, AΔ7/C#, G-7, E-11, AbΔ7#5, D-7, AbΔ7, BΔ7, EbΔ7#5, GΔ7/B, EbΔ7.

This tune explores a rhythmic cell through a chord progression. It's a good example of color chord relationships because most of the connections between chords are based on common tone relationships (bar 9 and 10, 10 and 11, 11 and 12, 13~18, 19 and 20, 21 and 22, 26 and 27, 30 and 31) and similar chord qualities (24 and 25, 28~32).

Try using the above concepts for your own color chord progressions. Try writing a chord progression that interests you using the idea of chords connected by similar notes and then chords connected by similar chord qualities. See if this generates a progression that is different from other compositions that you've written in the past. Then try writing a melody over this unusual progression. These are ideas that you can return to in future compositions. (For more on this and other compositional strategies, see "Appendix A: Tips for Composers.")