

Drop-type voicings. Then see if you can improvise a melody while simultaneously harmonizing it in block chords.

Sometimes, when you're really playing, rather than just studying or practicing, a passage of all Drop voicings will be the perfect thing. Sometimes, you'll want to harmonize the melody some other way, maybe using the techniques discussed in Chapter XIV or XIX. Sometimes you simply won't want to harmonize the melody at all. Maybe playing it straight, or in octaves, will be all you'll need. Maybe just dyads, or triads, will be the ticket.

There is a lifetime's amount of work suggested here, at least. Don't be too hard on yourself if you don't get this together in a week or two! Believe it or not, this stuff does get easier with practice. You should start noticing some common grips pretty early on in this, like how all Drop 2 chords with the 3rd in the lead have the root in the bass, etc. Don't allow yourself to be overwhelmed by the amount of work needed. That will just waste time. Just start doing it now.

Happy Birthday, harmonized with all Drop 2 voicings. No extra extensions added.

Guitar

D7 G6 Em7 Eb7 D7 Bb7 Am7 D7 G6 Ab7

Dm7 G7 CMaj7 Am7^b5 GMaj7 Eb7 D7 G6

Happy Birthday, harmonized with all Drop 2 voicings. Some extra tensions added, in the lower voices, also.

Guitar

D7 G6 Em7 Eb13(b9) D7 Bb7 Am7 D+7 D7 G6 Ab7

Dm7 G+7 CMaj7 Am7^b5 GMaj7 Eb7 D7 G6

The full effect of many of these voicings, especially the ones with 9-for-1, will only be felt with a bass player playing the roots.

You may find, sometimes, that the types of chord-tone substitutions for non-chord-tones that I've listed in this chapter don't quite cut it for the specifics of the melody you are trying to harmonize. Sometimes, as with the types of harmonizations discussed in Chapter XIV, exotic omissions may be in order.

When harmonizing a melody with Drop-type voicings:

- On a 6th chord - sometimes 7 can sub for 1.
- Sometimes 9 can sub for 3, instead of for 1. [This creates a so-called "sus2" chord.]
- On chords with $b5$ - sometimes it's better if you treat the $b5$ and the 3rd of the chord as being the "essential" tones. I.e. 13 might sub for 7 instead of for $b5$. Sometimes $b5$ and 7 (or $b7$, or $bb7$) might seem more "essential", i.e. omitting the 3rd (or $b3$) might work.

(There's others like this, but this is all I can think of right now. Experiment.)

You may find the following helpful...

Here is the chord-tone layout (bottom>to>top) for the 4 inversions of a 7th chord, starting with the 7th in the lead, for close voicings:

1 3 5 7 3 5 7 1 5 7 1 3 7 1 3 5

Note: With Close voicings, when the 7th is in the lead, the root is on the bottom.

Here is the chord-tone layout for the 4 inversions of a 7th chord, starting with the 7th in the lead, for Drop 2 voicings:

5 1 3 7 7 3 5 1 1 5 7 3 3 7 1 5

Note: With Drop 2 voicings, when the 3rd is in the lead, the root is on the bottom.

Here is the chord-tone layout for the 4 inversions of a 7th chord, starting with the 7th in the lead, for Drop 3 voicings:

3 1 5 7 5 3 7 1 7 5 1 3 1 7 3 5

Note: With Drop 3 voicings, when the 5th is in the lead, the root is on the bottom.

Here is the chord-tone layout for the 4 inversions of a 7th chord, starting with the 7th in the lead, for Drop 4 voicings:

1 3 5 7 3 5 7 1 5 7 1 3 7 1 3 5

Notes: These are the same numbers we had for the close voicings, but the lowest note is now an octave lower. With Drop 4 voicings, when the 7th is in the lead, the root is on the bottom.

Here is the chord-tone layout for the 4 inversions of a 7th chord, starting with the 7th in the lead, for Drop 2&4 voicings:

1 5 3 7 3 7 5 1 5 1 7 3 7 3 1 5

Note: With Drop 2&4 voicings, when the 7th is in the lead, the root is on the bottom.

Here is the chord-tone layout for the 4 inversions of a 7th chord, starting with the 7th in the lead, for Drop 2&3 voicings:

3 5 1 7 5 7 3 1 7 1 5 3 1 3 7 5

Note: With Drop 2&3 voicings, when the 5th is in the lead, the root is on the bottom, and the voicing is identical to a shell-voicing (1 3 7) with the 5th added back in, on top.

Consult this page frequently, as an aid, when you try to work out the various voicings, and grips, you'll need to harmonize the melodies of the tunes you're working on.

Also, consider this:

Any close-voiced chord of *any* type, not just tertian 7th chords, can be spread-out using the Drop-voicing techniques.

C C# D becomes C# C D in Drop 2.

C D E G [C(add9)] becomes E C D G in Drop 2, D C E G in Drop 3, etc.

C D E G A [C6(9)] becomes G C D E A in drop 2, etc.

Any spread voicing you happen to like can be converted to a close-voicing by arranging the component tones within a single octave. Then you can hunt for new permutations using Drop-voicing techniques.

Eg. C E B \flat D is a common voicing for C9(no5th).

By arranging these notes within a single octave, we can see a close-voiced version of this pitch collection, eg. C D E B \flat .

Its inversions are: C D E B \flat , D E B \flat C, E B \flat C D, and B \flat C D E.

E B \flat C D becomes C E B \flat D (our original voicing) in Drop 2.

C D E B \flat becomes E C D B \flat in Drop 2.

Etc., etc., etc. Happy hunting.