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JAZZ TECHNIQUES: IMPROVISATION & ARRANGING

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These on-line notes are designed to be used as a reference for the 2nd year "Jazz Techniques" course at the University of Southampton, Hampshire, England. The notes accompany the lectures and workshops that take place over a twelve week semester. Although the notes themselves are designed to be studied and worked on independently, students will only gain the full benefit by attending all the lectures and practical workshops as well as practising in groups and using the backing track "playalong" CD provided.

This course has been designed to bring together some of the many different approaches to the teaching of jazz. It is assumed that the student already has a good knowledge of theory through the previous course ["Jazz Theory"](#).

The first part of the course looks at jazz improvisation. Rather than immediately looking at "changes" based improvisation, the course starts off with modal jazz and funk grooves. Once familiar with the way patterns can be combined with original melodic ideas to create simple but effective modal improvisation over one or two chords, the same patterns are then used in the context of IIm7-V7-I chord changes.

The second part of the course looks at basic jazz combo arranging. Students work towards the final project of creating an arrangement. Students are encouraged to bring work to the classes to be performed live. Use of Emagic



Logic software is recommended, and a score template has been set up on the music department workstations to facilitate the creative rather than the technical process.

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Week	Workshop (90 mins)	Lecture (20 - 30 mins)	Study
1		Intro to course	Handouts - exercises and dorian patterns
2	CD modes - swapping "fours" - comping for pianists	Tension/release. Start to think of two separate chords - chord tones - passing notes	Continue dorian patterns on backing CD
3	cont'd: impro and riffs - guide tones	Convert Dorian to Tonic (II V I) melodic cadences	Dominant and Tonic patterns (handout II V I) Alfred mastertracks CD
4	II-V-Is in standard tunes Autumn Leaves - Blue Moon etc	Blues	Blues and dominant licks. Transpose a vocal blues line to your instrument
5	Blues: playing transcriptions, blues impro	solo analysis	analysis/transcription
6	Short assessments (10%)	N/A	Rinzler/Russo/handouts
7	Voicings for big band or smallband		Handout.+ voicing of set tunes
8	groups playing each others study work in class. Submit title of tune for arranging assessment.	Open voicing/ rhythm section	Handout + initial work on arranging project
9	Tutorials. Submission of 8 bars of arrangement (assessed 10%)	Arranging - combo and big band - intros endings etc	Arranging project
10	Tutorials - submit repertoire and commentary for impro assessment		Arranging project
11	Tutorials		Arranging project
12	Duos, combos	general Q+A	

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ARRANGING PROJECT (40%) - Deadline Friday of week 12

MC20b to arrange two choruses, MC 30b to arrange three choruses of a 32 bar standard tune for jazz orchestra. Show understanding of elements of arranging discussed in class, handouts and further study (see below:reading list). If possible arrange on Logic with GM sounds - not essential but may prove useful in tutorials for getting more feedback Include the following elements:

- *Original* or derived intro/coda material
- Piano/gtr guide (chords *and cues*)
- Walking bass
- Basic drum notation
- Unison, two-part and four-part voicing for sections and/or mixed combo
- Close and open voicing
- Section soli passage (8 bars)
- Solosection with riff and sustained accompaniment
- Sections combined into ensemble (8 bars)

Italic = criteria for MC30B

The tune must be approved by course tutors by Thursday week 8. A short commentary must be submitted (200-500 words).

Reading list (reserve section)

- Composing for the Jazz Orchestra -William Russo (2 copies)
- Jazz Arranging and Performance Practice - Paul Rinzler
- Professional Arranger Composer - Russell Garcia
- The Essentials of Instrumentation - Brad Hansen
- Sounds and Scores - Henry Mancini

IMPROVISATION ASSESSMENT (40%)

The final assessment will take place in the exam period . You will need to prepare approximately 3-4 minutes of music, of which 2 minutes should be improvised. You can use a backing track (either one that is supplied by the course, a commercially available playalong CD or one you have prepared yourself) or live accompaniment. The general musical style should fit with those



styles that have been taught on the course (Modal jazz, jazz funk, mainstream jazz). By week10 you must inform the course tutors of your intended track for approval and submit a commentary (200 - 500 words) outlining practice methods, listening, study methods, aims etc. The examiners will also ask you to play a short unprepared improvisation and you will be given the opportunity to replay any solos as well as discuss any aspects of the playing. This is not a performance exam, you will not be marked for deportment or production. If you wish you can play in a group, as long as each performer improvises for 2 minutes. (N.B. If trading 4s your actual playing time needs to be at least 2 minutes).

Marks will be awarded for jazz feel, original motif and development, use of formulae (licks).

The following repertoire books are now in the reserve collection:

- New Real Book vols 1, 2, 3 (C, Eb and Bb except vol 3) - Chuck Sher
- Charlie Parker Omnibook (Bb and Eb)
- Vol 7 Miles Davis - Jamey Aebersold (playalong)
- Vol 25 All Time Standards - Jamey Aebersold (playalong)
- John Coltrane Solos - David Dempsey
- The Ultimate Jazz Fake Book (C, Bb, Eb) Herb Wong
- The Worlds Greatest Legal Fake Book - Chuck Sher

More will be added as we can find them

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All of the exercises and patterns should be practised using different articulations. The actual techniques can be adapted to suit your particular instrument (tonguing, fingering, slurring etc.) but should basically be as follows:



1. legato
2. legato tongued, (soft tongued)
3. staccato
4. "bebop"

All can be practised using straight eighths or varying amounts of "swing". An even tempo must be sustained throughout, this is much more important than speed. This means that instead of starting fast and slowing down for tricky passages, you should start at a slower tempo. Any awkward passages should be practised on their own until you can play them as fast as the easy bits.

Ideally you should already be able to play all major and minor scales and triad arpeggios in all keys. If you are already proficient in A, B and C then concentrate more on D. On wind and string instruments bebop phrasing can be played with or without the accents. On keyboard instruments, tuned percussion or any other instruments where slurring notes is not possible, accents are essential to imply the off beat character. When using this type of phrasing, any triplet figures should be played legato, slurring into the first of the next group of quavers.





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DIATONIC EXERCISES

If you are used to practising scales, the following exercises can replace a large part of your normal scale practice. They are more interesting than plain scales and will help with technique and harmonic understanding as well as being useful to use in improvisations at times.

To sustain interest it is recommended that instead of practising in all keys (which should be an ultimate goal), for the first few weeks you should limit your practice to four keys. These are the major keys of C, Bb, F and E and where appropriate the related minor keys of Am, Gm, Dm and C#m. Initially minor scales should be the harmonic minor and melodic minor. The melodic minor should be the same descending as ascending, with major sixth seventh intervals or in other words the same as a major scale but with a minor third. (See appendix A for suggested key practice schedule). These keys can be used as part of a daily routine, but other keys will be practised as necessary for specific tunes or chord sequences. Were indicated some of the exercises should be practised using modes.

The ranges of the exercises should be adapted to suit your instrument, if possible extend the range to cover two or three octaves.

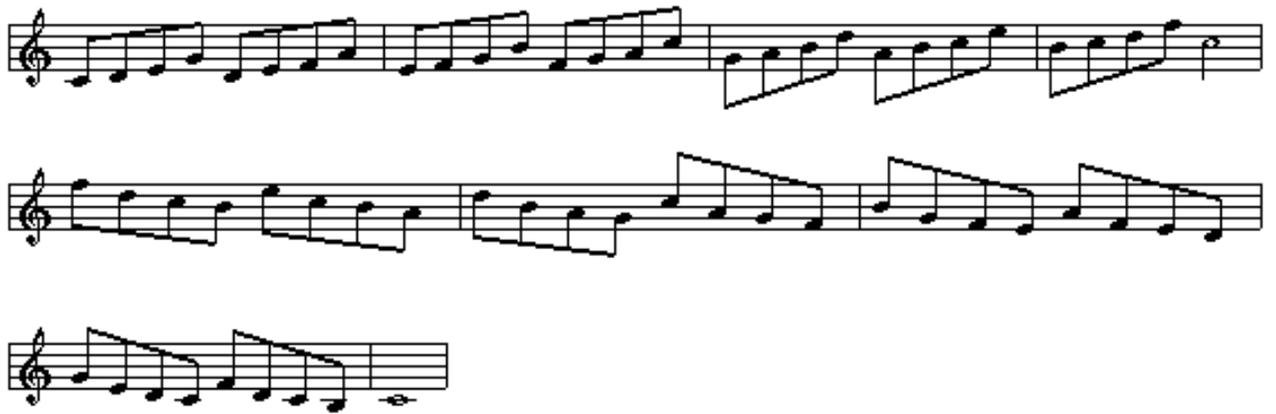
Ideally once you know an exercise in one key you should be able to transpose it in your head to the other keys. Even if this means you play it slower, this is better than writing the exercise out in different keys.

Ex 1



Practice in major and minor keys. Be aware of the scale degree of the first note of each group of four (C=1, D=2, E=3 etc.)

Variation:



Ex 2



Practice in major keys. Be aware of the chord name and scale degree for each rising arpeggio. This is an extremely useful exercise for becoming familiar with four note (7th) chords and their harmonic relationship.

Ex 3



Practise in major and minor keys. When using bebop phrasing tongue the first quaver and slur from second quaver to crotchet:



The following exercises use non chord notes either as suspensions (the diatonic note above the triad chord note) or non chord notes a semitone lower than the chord notes. The lower notes are very useful to learn as they can be used a neighbour note or “secondary leading note”.

Ex 4 (major)



Whether major or minor, these exercises always use the diatonic note above the chord note and the semitone below.

Ex 4 (minor)



Ex 5 (major)



Practise major and minor. The note below the chord tone is always a semitone lower.

Ex 5 (minor)



Ex 6





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DORIAN MODAL JAZZ & JAZZ FUNK GROOVES

These are usually tunes or sections of tunes based on a one or two chord repeated pattern. A one-chord pattern in a minor key can imply an Aeolian, Dorian or Phrygian mode. As soon as a second chord is added the mode is usually more clearly defined.

For example:

Dm7 - G7	implies Dorian as the G7 contains the major 6 of D
Dm7 - Gm7	implies Aeolian as the Gm7 contains the minor 6 of D
Dm7 - Eb ma7	implies Phrygian as the Eb contains the minor 2 and minor 6 of D

The Dorian mode is probably most common mode. It is also a very useful mode to practice as the two chords in the example above also form part of a typical IIm7- V7 - I chord sequence.

It is very important to be aware that the chords Dm7 - G7 in a Dorian mode are chords I and IV, but in the key of C they are chords II and V and usually imply a perfect cadence to chord I.

Scales and modes useful for dorian improvisation

NB scales in improvisation should always be used as a starting point for inventing melodic patterns, and not used exclusively as scales.

Dorian mode	7 note scale	
Dorian bebop	Dorian mode with added chromatic passing note to create 8 note scale	
Minor pentatonic	5 note scale	
Minor blues scale	minor pentatonic with added chromatic passing note	

Dorian mode

This is often thought of as the scale built on the second degree of a major scale. In the context of modal music it is much better to think of each mode as a scale in its own right, not relative to a major scale. It can however be useful to equate a mode to its *parallel* major or minor, ie the one with the same root note. Each mode has defining scale degrees; eg a Dorian in D differs from a major scale of D in that the third and seventh degree of the scale are minor. It differs from D harmonic minor in that the sixth degree is major and the seventh degree is minor. So the defining notes of a Dorian are the minor third, major sixth and minor seventh.

Dorian bebop

"Bebop" scales are not true scales in their own right, but scales that have had a chromatic passing note added to create an 8

note scale. This can be useful when improvising on 8th notes so that a scale passage resolves to a chord note, or so that chord tones fall on a strong beat.

NB. The main essence of modal jazz is melodic invention rather than the harmonic expertise used in changes based jazz. In a Dorian sequence that consists of the two chords Im7 and IV7, improvisers often interchange patterns and scales so that a Dm7 pattern can be used over the G7, or a G7 pattern can be used over the Dm7. This works well provided that the improviser is aware of the tension created by this kind of interchange and uses it appropriately. This is a stylistic issue, it is something that comes with experience and is often impossible to define. Note that the same passing note is used for the Dorian and relative Mixolydian mode, so that they usually blur into one scale over the chord changes, whether a Dorian Im7 - V7 or a standard IIm7 - V7.

The image shows two musical staves in 4/4 time. The top staff illustrates a Dorian mode pattern over a Dm7-G7-Dm7 chord sequence. The notes are D, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D. The bottom staff illustrates a G7 mode pattern over the same chord sequence. The notes are G, A, B, C, D, E, F, E, D, C, B, A, G.

Minor pentatonic

This is the same as the Dorian but without the second and sixth degrees of the scale. Used frequently by Sonny Rollins in his post bebop period. A common scale in many forms of blues.

Minor blues scale

(Often referred to as "The Blues Scale". This is incorrect as there is more than one so called blues scale - see [blues](#)). In the same way that the bebop scale was invented by adding a passing note to an existing scale, the minor blues scale is just a minor pentatonic with a chromatic passing note added between the fourth and fifth degrees. The passing note is a contrivance that is intended to emulate the intonation of a blues singer using "blue" notes, or intonation that defies the 12 note system. Rarely used as such by early blues musicians this scale has now fallen into the mainstream, thanks to 60s R&B and soundtrack music. It can be useful when used sparingly on a Dorian mode, major or minor blues sequence and is best when used to form licks rather than played as an entire scale. The same minor blues scale is used over an entire sequence, ie it does not change root with the changes of chord roots.

Modal key signatures

Although it is arguably correct to use the key signature that gives the correct number of sharps or flats, it is often less confusing to notate a Dorian as an Aeolian with the sixth degree raised as an accidental where it occurs, as you would with a melodic minor. Using this method a Dorian mode whose root note is G has 2 two flats not one, and the E naturals that occur are notated with a natural sign.

Patterns for Dorian improvisation

The following patterns are all tried and tested clichés. As such they are useful for practising technique but should be used sparingly when improvising. Strive to create your own patterns for practising and while actually improvising. As it is impossible for most players to be 100% original all the time, patterns, scales (and rests) are used fill in between original melodic motifs. The examples are all based on a D Dorian (Dm7-G7) but should be practised in all keys.

Ex 1: (Beware this is *very* clichéd)

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a Dorian mode pattern over a Dm7-G7-Dm7 chord sequence. The notes are D, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D. A triplet of eighth notes is marked over the G, A, and B notes.

Ex 2:

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a Dorian mode pattern over a Dm7-G7-Dm7 chord sequence. The notes are D, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D.

Ex 3: Extending Ex 2 up to the 9th



Ex 4: Useful triplet pattern. This one can also be extended beyond the 9th.



Ex 5: Dorian bebop. This is a cliché, but can be used in many combinations.



Ex 6: Extending Ex 5



Ex 7: Dorian with chromatic "leading note"



Ex 8: Combining Ex 7 with Ex 5



Ex 9: Dorian with chromatic "leading note"



Ex 10: Combining Ex 9 with Ex 1



Note that as soon as Ex 1 is combined with another pattern, it becomes less of a cliché.

Ex 11: Combining Ex 9 with Ex 5



Ex 12: Combining Ex 9 with Ex 3 and Ex 5



Ex 13: Pentatonic

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TONIC PATTERNS and CADENCES

Tonic chords are often more restricting for jazz improvisers than V7 or IIm7-V7 chords, as chromatic alterations do not sound good in many cases. The most useful chromatic alterations are "blue" notes, which should be used with care as the context dictates whether they are appropriate or not. Much of this is to do with individual taste or techniques of a particular instrument. This section will deal with mostly diatonic patterns on tonic chords.

The patterns are categorised by starting note. This is particularly important as these patterns usually follow on from a V7, and it can be very useful to combine them so that the last note of the V7 phrase runs smoothly and melodically into the first note of the tonic phrase at the perfect cadence. This is not a hard and fast rule, large intervals and surprising leaps are also useful.

Starting on the root

Ex 1: Two note motif.....Perfect cadence (scale run)

[tonic](#)

Ex 2: Triad arpeggio..... Cadence (bebop scale and extended dorian pattern)

[tonic](#)

Ex 3: Four note motif....Extended using chromatic neighbour note

[tonic](#)

Note that the extended phrase can fit over a tonic or dominant.

Starting on the 3rd

Ex 4:

[tonic](#)

Ex 5: As above but extended

[tonic](#)

Ex 6: Pentatonic pattern..... Cadence using bebop scale and neighbour note ("fake" leading note)

[tonic](#)



This phrase can also be used with a dominant chord:

tonic

Ex 7: Lester Young lick

tonic

Ex 8: Combination of 5 and 7

tonic

Starting on 5th

Ex 9: (Charlie Parker lick)

tonic

Ex 10: Extended to major 7

tonic

Starting on major 7

Ex 11: Arpeggio..... Extended using [dorian pattern 2](#) but applied to tonic

tonic

Ex 12: Another Charlie Parker phrase.

tonic

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BLUES

The commonest form in blues is the 12 bar sequence. In its most basic form this is based around three chords, tonic subdominant and dominant.

Ex 1: Basic 12 bar "blues" blues sequence

C	C	C	C7
F7	F7	C	C
G7	G7 or F7	C	C-G7

Although some or all of the tonic and subdominant chords may have a minor 7 added, this is a "blue" note and does not have its usual harmonic function as a dominant chord (except in bar 4 where it acts a secondary dominant leading to the IV7 chord). The above example only introduces the 7th to the tonic at bar 4 to emphasise this chord change. It is not a modulation to IV as it would be in classical harmony.

Blues musicians tend to use phrases and patterns rather than scale runs, though jazz variations of blues can be based on a 12 bar blues structure and can include jazz and blues style patterns alongside each other.

A simple jazz blues sequence usually changes to chord IV at bar 2 and back to chord I at bar 3 and uses a IIm7 V7 at bar 9 (often preceded by a secondary dominant).

Ex 2: Basic 12 bar "jazz" blues sequence

C	F7	C	C7
F7	F7	C	C or A7
Dm7	G7	C	Dm7-G7

This type of sequence is typical of 1930s-1950s swing, jump and R&B styles. More complex sequences were used in bebop

Ex 3: Typical bebop blues changes

C	F7-F#°7	C	Gm7-C7
F7	F#°7	C-Dm7	Em7-Eb7
Dm7	G7	C-Am7	Dm7-G7

Blues licks can often be used in non-blues tunes, but usually only in progressions with key centres that do not change, eg I Got Rhythm (A section), Take the A Train (A section - but not bars 3-4). When using blues licks in non-blues standards, the blues phrases will often clash harmonically with the chord changes, so they should be used with discretion and not overdone.

The so-called blues scale was not used widely before the 60s, when it became popular with guitarists and film composers. This is really just a minor pentatonic with a passing note added. It is misleading to call this scale "*the* blues scale", as there are several scales from which blues phrases are derived. I shall refer to it as the "minor blues scale".

Ex 4: Minor blues scale (minor pentatonic with passing note)

blues

Although this scale can be used over the entire 12 bars, it will sound boring very quickly, especially if used in scale runs; it is also better to use the scale in short motifs. It is not a problem that the minor third of this scale is sounding over a major third in a tonic chord; this dissonance is derived from original blues vocal styles where singers would use versatile intonation. Instruments capable of bending notes can also use flexible intonation to imply blues.

The use of minor thirds in a major key is much more effective if juxtaposed with major thirds. It is also useful to use the major pentatonic (major blues scale), once again to formulate licks rather than being used in its entirety as a scale.

Ex 5: Major blues scale (major pentatonic with passing note)

blues

This scale can also have a passing "blue" note. Note that although both scales can be used over one key, this scale contains the same notes as its relative minor (Am in this case). As this scale contains a major third it can obviously be used on a tonic major chord. However it should not be used on a IV7 chord as the major third of the scale becomes the major seventh of the F7, and is not a useful dissonance (unlike the minor third on a major chord which *is* a useful dissonance).

When making up blues licks it is also useful to draw from other scales or combinations of the two mentioned above.

Ex 6: Major pentatonic with flattened third

blues

Some basic blues licks:

Ex 7: Motif starting on 6th

blues

Ex 8: Extended to flat 3rd (with tritone interval)

blues

Ex 9: Motif starting on 6th, final note could be minor or major 3rd

blues

Ex 10: Contrasting major and minor 3rd

blues

Ex 11: Major pentatonic with flat 3rd

blues

Ex 12: Motif with 4th (3rd could be minor or major)

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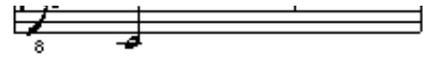
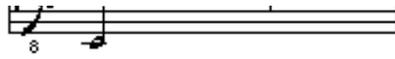
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INSTRUMENT RANGES

	POSSIBLE	PRACTICAL	TRANSPOSITION
Flute			Concert
Clarinet			Up M2
Soprano sax			Up M2
Altosax			Up M6
Tenor sax			Up M9
Baritone sax			Up M13
Trumpet			Up M2
Trombone			Concert
Bass Trombone			Concert
Piano			Concert
Guitar			Up P8
Bass			...

Upr Bass





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TRANSPOSITION CHART

Instrument	Untransposed score	Clef	Transposed parts	Clef
Alto sax	as sounds	treble	Up a major 6	treble
Tenor sax	8va	treble	Up a major 9	treble
Baritone sax	as sounds	bass	Up a major 13	treble
Trumpet	as sounds	treble	Up a major 2	treble
Trombone	as sounds	bass	no transposition	bass
Guitar	8va	treble	8va	treble
Bass	8va	bass	8va	treble



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EMAGIC LOGIC TEMPLATE

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The basic principles of setting out a jazz orchestra or big band score are the same as any orchestral score. In addition to the title, composer and arranger credits at the top of the score the tempo should be marked in BPM, and an indication of whether the quavers are swing or straight.

There are score markings available in the Logic partbox for this:



Very often scores written in the early part of the twentieth century used dotted rhythms to denote swing quavers; it is now more usual to write "straight" quavers and use the triplet symbol above. When writing a score in Logic it is best to write or quantise quavers to a swing groove if required, and set display quantise to 8/12. Where other display quantise settings (eg double time passages) you will need to use different sequences with the display quantise set appropriately.

For all assignments an untransposed score is required. Alto saxes are written at pitch in treble clef; tenor saxes are written an octave higher than sounding in treble clef; baritone sax is written at pitch in the bass clef. Trumpets and trombones are written at pitch in treble and bass clef respectively.

The template contains various instrument sets so that you can view any one section or combinations of sections. (Eg "full band", saxes, saxes and rhythm")

There is a text style set up for cues and titles.

There are three drum score styles (See "[drumparts](#)")

- "#Drums" is the standard mapped drum style
- "#Drums-combi" is the same but with slashes in the lower voice
- "#Drums-slash" hides all drum notes and just displays slashes. This is useful for extended passages of one basic repeated rhythm. As the notes

are hidden you need to use "#Drums" to write the part then apply this score style.

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In some cases reharmonisation is necessary before arranging for jazz orchestra or combos. Most sheet music for popular music standards of the 30s, 40s and 50s will include chord symbols, but in some cases these will be wrong, too simple or too complex.

Some publishers of sheet music invert a min7b5 so that it becomes a min6:



Ex 1

This is done to simplify the chord symbol for guitarists. The inversion makes no difference to the overall harmony if played alongside a bass instrument, but as a given chord symbol it implies the wrong bass note. A genuine m6 chord is usually either a tonic minor, or a IVm6 as part of a IV- IVm - I (plagal cadence). If it appears to be part of a IVm6 - V7 - I progression the chances are it is an inversion of II should be changed to IIm7b5 - V7 - I.

In mainstream jazz four note chords (7ths) are usual. Most sheet music will include four note chords (7ths and 6ths), but with other material (eg folk tunes) you will need to adapt triads according to the table below:

Major keys

Triad	4th note	Comments
I and IV major	Major 7	Unless root is in melody
	Major 6	Might sound cheesy. Use if root in melody
	Minor 7	Only for blues
V	Minor 7	
Minor	Minor 7	
Passing diminished	Diminished 7 (= maj 6)	
Diminished (chord VII)	Minor 7	Minor 7 b5 (half diminished)

Minor keys

Triad	4th note	Comments
Minor chord I	Major 6 or 7	Can be dissonant or cheesy
	Minor 7	Modal feel, may not always sound final
	None	Triad sometimes sounds best
Diminished chord II	Minor 7	Minor 7 b5 (half diminished)
Major chord IV	Major 6	

	Minor 7	Bluesy (can sound like dominant of bVII)
Minor chord IV	Major 6 or minor 7	
V	Minor 7	
Major chord bVI	Major 7	
	Minor 7	Bluesy
Minor chord VI	Minor 7	
Major chord bVII	Major 7	Dorian
	Minor 7	Aeolian (beware, sounds like V7 of III major)
Minor chord VII	Diminished 7	

- "bVI" is used to denote chord built on minor 6 degree of scale, eg Ab in key of Cm or F in key of Am.
- A major or minor 6 chord does not have a 7th, otherwise the chord would be a 13th.


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"Voicing" means harmonising a melody (or lead) with one or more instruments or *voices*, either with a similar instrument from the same section or with a combination. Block voicing is where the inside or harmony parts always move in the same direction as the lead. This type of harmony works well for the typical jazz orchestra (four trumpets, five saxophones, four trombones and rhythm section) but can also be used in many styles of pop and rock, e.g. for horn sections or backing vocals. Voicing can be used either on the actual melody or for a chordal accompaniment (backing).

GENERAL RULES

- When writing for sections (eg all saxes or all trumpets) the melody part is usually the highest part but this is not always the case. When harmony parts are above the lead, care must be taken with the dynamics to allow the lead to be heard as a distinct melodic line.
- In mixed ensembles the lead line is not necessarily the top line but should be on the loudest instrument.
- A syncopated note anticipating a beat by a quaver (8th note) or less is usually harmonised with the chord of the beat following the anticipation.
- Do not combine an anticipation in one instrument or section with an on beat note in another section.
- In most cases the melody note should not be lower than middle C (C3) or harmonised parts will sound muddy.
- Usually a bass line is played in the rhythm section so only the melody (lead) and *inside parts* need to be written for a section. Any bass parts in the harmonisation must be consistent with the bass in the rhythm section.
- As the voices are moving in parallel motion, strict voice-leading rules of classical harmony do not apply, though there are situations where attention to voice-leading is desirable.

Four- and five-part voicings are more straightforward than two- and three-part. This is because all four chord tones are used. With fewer than four voices decisions need to be made about which notes to omit.

FOUR PART CLOSE VOICING

Take a melody and add the three other notes of the chord beneath without omitting any.



As the melody of the Bb chord on beat one of bar 2 is the root, it has to be Bb6 not a Bbma7 to avoid a semitone interval at the top of the chord. Semitone intervals are no problem in inside parts. Unless a 6th chord lasts for more than one beat it is unnecessary to include it as a chord symbol for the rhythm section. (An exception would be if a rhythm section instrument was voicing chords with horns instead of comping)

Extensions

These are either defined by the melody or added to inside parts for colour. The rhythm section parts should include any extensions or alterations that last longer than one beat.

Extensions are usually treated as (unprepared) suspensions, 13th replaces 5th, 11th replaces 3rd, 9th replaces root.

Allowable extensions and altered extensions:

Chord type:	Maj 7	Maj 6	Min 7 or min7b5	Dominant 7
	9	9	9	9, 11, 13
	#11	#11	11	b9, b10 (#9)
	13 (rare)			#11 (b5)
				b13 (+5)

Use with 4 part block voicing

Extension	Omit	
13	5	Unusual in inside parts
b13	5	Often treated as augmented 5 th
11	3	Use sparingly in inside parts
#11	5	Often treated as b5 th
13 or b13 with #11	5 and root	With only four parts the 9 th would also be omitted as the 3 rd and 7 th are necessary
9 or b9	Root	Use freely in inside parts
b10 (#9)	Root	Often a "suspension" of b9. Faster passages can omit 3 rd instead of root for smoother voice leading, but does not sound as dissonant.

9ths

9ths and altered 9ths are treated as suspensions of the root and always replace it, so the next chord note down is a 7th. In addition to 9ths in the lead, they can be freely used in inside parts for added interest. As with 6ths, unaltered 9ths do not need to be included in the rhythm section chord symbols unless they are used for the entire duration of a chord.



Ex 3: 9ths and altered 9ths.

11ths

11ths on a dominant 7 usually omit the 3rd, so can be viewed as "slash" chords, eg a C11 (Gm7/C) would be voiced as a Gm7. (You can ignore the C as it is covered by the bass). 11ths on a minor 7 do *not need* to omit the 3rd, but for close voicing it is best to treat them the same as above.

13ths

13ths can be treated as suspensions of the 5th so the next note down is the 3rd.



Ex 4: 11ths and 13ths

#11ths

Usually a #11th can be treated as a b5, so the next note down is the 3rd.

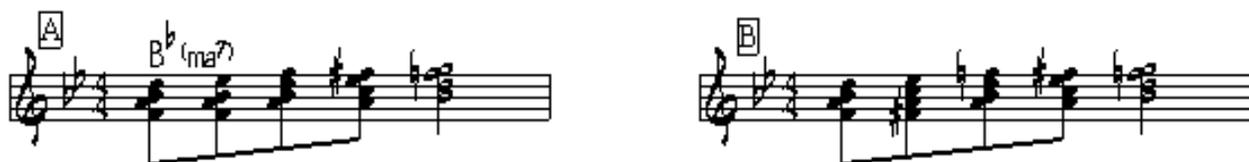


Ex 5: #11ths (b5ths)

NON CHORD NOTES

Passing notes

Passing notes are notes that occur in a step between two chord notes. In some cases they can be harmonised as if they are substituted for a note of the given chord (eg. a suspension or upper extension), or they can be harmonised with other passing notes to create a new passing chord (very often a passing diminished).



Ex 6: Passing notes

In ex 6A the Eb is harmonised as if it is an 11th or a suspended 4th. The F# is harmonised with a diminished chord. There is no movement between the first two notes of voices two, three and four. At slow tempos this is not a problem, but at medium and fast tempos there may be articulation problems, especially if the lead instrument is playing legato. The passing diminished chord in ex 6B is preferable as two of the three harmony voices are now moving. The harmonic impact of the passing chords become less important at faster tempos, but the need to minimise repeated notes in inside parts where the lead is moving becomes greater and it is usually possible to create movement in all voices.



Ex 7: Revoicing to give more movement in inside parts at fast tempos

- The first note is harmonised with a Bb6 instead of major 7 to allow voice three to move from G

to A.

- The F# in the second chord has been changed to G to give a smoother melodic line.
- The fourth voice of the final chord has been changed to a 9th to allow movement A-Bb-C instead of the repeated A on the second and third chords. Harmonically this is not as good as the passing diminished but will allow for a smoother performance at fast tempos.

TIP: It is a good idea to harmonise the chord notes before harmonising the passing notes.

A passing diminished should not usually be used with a dominant chord, instead use a minor7.



Ex 8: Passing note on a dominant harmonised as an extension

In ex 8 the passing note at beat three is harmonised as a 9th, replacing the root of the previous beat resulting in static inside parts. Where a passing chord is required for dominant chords you can usually use the minor 7th chord whose root is a fifth higher, in this case a Cm7:



Ex 9: Passing note harmonised with a minor 7.

Here the lower part is moving nicely but the second and third parts are still static. The Eb is necessary to the F7 chord, especially at slower tempos, so will need to stay but a Cm9 can be used to give more movement:



Ex 10: Passing note harmonised with minor 9. (NB no root as 9th acts as suspension)

The Cm9 at beat 3 allows two of the three inside parts to move.

Chromatic Neighbour notes and auxiliaries

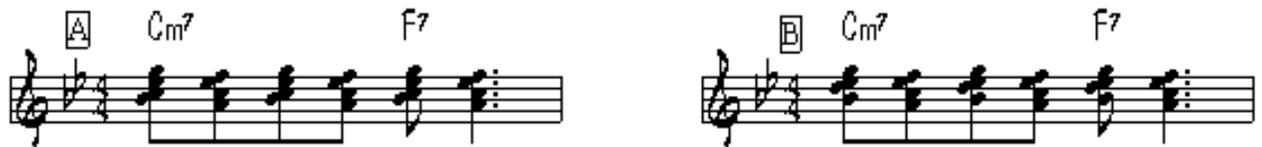
These can be harmonised with a chord of the same type moving in parallel or diminished chords:



Ex 11: The first non-chord note is a neighbour note harmonised in parallel, the second is a lower auxiliary harmonised with a diminished. Both of these harmonisations were chosen to allow movement in the inside parts.

Diatonic neighbour notes and auxiliaries

These are usually treated as suspensions or extensions. The following example shows how lower auxiliaries can be reharmonised on a IIIm7-V7-I



Ex 12 (A): The F in the Cm7 is harmonised with an F7, the G in the F7 is harmonised with a Cm7. In 12 (B) the Cm9 is used to give more movement to the third part.

A typical harmonisation of this passage could also have used sustained inside parts:



Ex 13: sustained inside parts beneath auxiliary notes.

Changing tones (enclosure)



Ex 14: The first note is harmonised as a suspension, the second note as a lower chromatic neighbour note with a chord of the same type moving in parallel.

OPEN VOICING

For open voicing the simplest method is to drop the second voice down an octave. Entire passages can be either open or close, or can use a combination.



Ex 15: Close and open voicing

Here the voicing is open on the Bb ma7 chord. This works well as the melody is moving by a larger interval and a b5 on the last beat of the V7 gives some strong voice leading at the cadence.

GENERAL

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1. Same as for four-part close voicing but with melody doubled an octave lower.
2. Same as for four-part open voicing but with the fifth part on roots
3. Clusters: add the 6 and 9 to triads; add the 9 to 7 chords. Close or open. The lead can be doubled in octaves to create a sixth voice. Clusters work well where a more dissonant sound is required or to add some tension to more traditionally voiced chords.

TWO PART

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The conventions of two-part writing specify:

- The interval between melody and harmony line is a third or a sixth.
- The note chosen for the harmony should be a chord note if the melody is a chord note.
- If the melody is a passing note the harmony part is often a passing note.
- All thirds or all sixths can sound bland.
- When choosing between third or sixth voice leading and good melodic movement in the harmony part should be taken into account.

In mainstream jazz arranging other intervals can be used occasionally either to create tension through dissonance or when a more melodic harmony line results:

Interval between lead and harmony	
major 2nds and minor 7ths	Dissonant - should be used only when stylistically appropriate. Avoid if in doubt.
minor 2nds, major 7ths	Very dissonant - useful for special effects
flattened/augmented 5ths (#4ths)	Can be used where the given chord requires
perfect 5ths, 4ths	Sound weak when combined with 3rds and 6ths, but can be used where stylistically appropriate (eg modal jazz)

Where the melody note is a chord tone, the harmony note should be a chord tone. Where the melody is a passing note or extension the harmony is often also a passing note or extension. The weaker intervals can be used on weak beats to avoid leaps in the lower part. Be careful of thinking of the 6th in a chord as a *proper* harmony note, its main function is to add thickness or colouration in four-part harmony and its use in two-part may imply a different chord. Long passages containing *all* 3rds or *all* 6ths should be avoided, but constant alternating between 3rds and 6ths should only be used when a better melodic harmony line results.

THREE PART

Harmonise the melody in the same way as for four part but only add two other chord notes from the lead downwards. One of the four chord notes will have to be omitted:

1. In all chords there must be a 3rd and 7th (except when the root of a major 7 is in the lead, in which case the 3rd and 6th).
2. Perfect 5ths can be omitted from chords, and so can roots provided there is a bass instrument somewhere playing them. Where there is a choice of note use the one that gives the best melodic movement in the harmony parts.
3. If the chord requires an altered 5th then that note should be used and the root should be omitted.

FULL ENSEMBLE (Tutti)[Home](#)

There are many methods of writing full ensemble for the jazz orchestra. Here are two very basic methods:

Combining sections.

Write close voicing for trumpets, close or open voicing for trombones immediately below them, add the saxes written with open voicing with the lead alto doubling the 2nd or 3rd trumpet.

"Big Chords"

Add chord tones downwards from the lead as with four-part. When writing "big chords" spread across the entire ensemble use smaller intervals high up, larger intervals low down. Roots and 5ths can be doubled, take care doubling 3rds. Avoid upper extensions low down. (See Russo - *Composing For The Jazz Orchestra*)

BACKINGS

1) A chordal accompaniment or "pad".

In this case a solo instrument or unison line is accompanied by instruments of the same or different section playing sustained chords. The lead line of the chordal accompaniment should move smoothly paying attention to voice leading where possible. This lead line can be harmonised with close or open block voicing, or traditional choral type voicing. The melody need not be higher than the backing but this is by no means essential, especially if the melody is on a stronger instrument. You can swap between block voicing and chordal accompaniment freely within the same passage.

Care must be taken with range and dynamics to avoid swamping the melody, especially if the accompanying instruments are of the same section as the solo instrument. With a different section you also need to take tonal dynamic considerations into account, especially when the accompanying instruments are stronger, e.g. great care would have to be taken if a flute were taking the melody and brass instruments were sustaining a chordal backing. This kind of "imbalance" can work in a studio with close miking but not in an acoustic situation. In this case it would be good to use mutes on the trumpets.

2. Stabs or short rhythmic phrases.

These nearly always "fill the gaps" in the melody, usually with a different section of instruments (a common big band cliché). It was often necessary on vocal arrangements in the days before powerful PA systems when a sustained backing would often drown out a singer in a club. Obviously great care should be taken if the stabs are not in the gaps of the tune, as they will confuse the melody. It can be very effective if the stab phrases have some kind of unity, e.g. a repeated riff. The riff may have to adapt to the harmonic changes (especially good if they move logically in scale steps). This often gives a feeling of shape that may not happen if the phrases are more arbitrary. Either way the phrases should complement the melody.

3. Counterpoint.

This is where a second (subordinate) melody is played at the same time as the main melody. This can be a completely independent melody or an imitation (fugue).

Some good rules to observe are:

1. The counterpoint should sustain while the melody is moving and vice versa
2. Contrary motion works very well
3. If the melody is in unison or octaves it can be a good idea to have the counterpoint in block harmony and vice versa.
4. The parts can cross, but preferably if the counterpoint is played on a different instrument or section.

GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS

- Transcription of existing arrangements is one of the best ways to learn, not just the rules but how different arrangers have created their individual styles, by bending or breaking the rules, or creating their own.
- Write legibly.
- Do not write transposed scores.
- However large the ensemble, unisons and octaves should not be ignored. They can be very powerful, or supply a contrast to thick harmony. When using backing figures or counterpoint it often works well to have the lead in harmony and the backing in unison, or vice versa. It can be very effective to use unison on an anacrusis (pickup) or faster melodic passages, followed by open or closed harmony on slower moving lines.

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BACKINGS

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In mainstream jazz arrangements, drummers are nearly always given a very basic "guide" part. The part should be constructed to give the maximum information without becoming at all cluttered or awkward to read. This is not because drummers are not good readers, but so that they can concentrate on listening and improvising a creative and sensitive performance. Fills are usually left up to the performer. Most parts can be written with just bass drum, cymbal (hi hat or ride), snare and in some cases tom toms, though the latter should be used for specific rhythms rather than written solos.

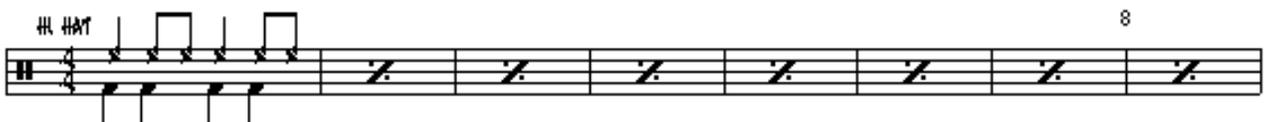
Ex 1: Basic drum notation. Note that many drum kits will only have two tom toms.



A musical staff in 4/4 time showing drum notation. Above the staff are labels: BASS DRUM, SNARE, CYMBAL, and TOM TOMS. The notation includes quarter notes for bass drum and snare, eighth notes for cymbal, and quarter notes for tom toms.

If a basic swing ride rhythm is required, it is common to write just bass drum and cymbal pattern for one bar followed by repeat bars. The bass drum part should follow the bass part, eg if the bass player has a walking bass, you should write four bass drum beats and if the bass player is playing two beats to a bar you should write two bass drum beats for the drummer. (The drummer does not necessarily play the bass drum – this is just so the drummer knows what the bass player is doing). The cymbal part should specify which cymbal (hi hat or ride) is to be played and whether any type of sticks other than normal should be used (eg brushes or mallets).

Ex 2: Simple drum part



A musical staff in 4/4 time showing a simple drum part. The first bar has a hi-hat pattern (quarter notes) and a bass drum pattern (quarter notes). The following seven bars are marked with slashes, indicating a repeat of the first bar's pattern. A small number '8' is written above the eighth bar.

The above is sometimes written like this:

Ex 3



A musical staff in 4/4 time showing a drum part. The first bar has a hi-hat pattern (quarter notes) and a bass drum pattern (quarter notes). The following seven bars are marked with slashes, indicating a repeat of the first bar's pattern. A small number '7' is written above the seventh bar, and the word '(SIMILAR)' is written above the slashes.

Ex 2 is better as it is easier to follow and you will be able to hear the drum part in Logic (The repeats signs hide the actual MIDI notes).

Once a basic rhythm has been established it is allowable to use slashes. This is especially useful after a departure from the basic rhythm.

Ex 4: Slashes used to denote return to basic rhythm

This example uses two score styles in Logic. Bars 1 – 4 are the basic "#Drums" style, bars 5 – 8 use the "Drums-slash" style. This allows you to hear the MIDI part but the notes are hidden.

PHRASING AND ACCENTS

When a drummer is required to accentuate rhythmic passages or accents in the brass or saxophones, they can either be given these as an exact part to play (see above ex. 4) or as cues. If a drummer is given cues, they have more freedom to interpret the part.

Ex5: Drum part with cues

In this example bars 1-2 and 5-7 use the score style "Drums-slash", bars 3-4 use the style "#Drums-combi". In this case a drummer would choose which drums to play and probably precede the phrase with a short fill.

STYLISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

Backbeat

The backbeat (ie beats 2 and 4 in 4/4) can be accented with:

- Snare drum - typically rock and roll, loud climaxes in jazz and "dance" jazz styles such as swing, jump and r&b.
- Hi hat foot pedal and/or sidestick on snare - subtler and quieter jazz styles

Bass drum

The bass drum is often written purely as a guide to indicate what the bass player is doing. If a bass player has a "walking line" it is usual to write for bass drum beats in a bar of 4/4. (a drummer will rarely actually play this except in certain styles such as "jump". If the bass player is playing 2 beats to the bar, it is usual to write two beats for the bass drum.

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PIANO/GUITAR

Piano and guitar parts are often very basic in big band writing and are just to supply a rhythmic backing (comping). Much of the interpretation is left up to the performer. In this case the parts may just consist of chord symbols which the player will interpret to fit the style.

Ex1: Basic chord symbol part for guitar or piano.



Symbols can be written above or below the staff, as long it is obvious which staff they belong to.

If specific melody lines are required on a piano or guitar part, they can be combined with the chord symbol part. Any parts that are unison with other instruments should have the same accent markings.

Ex 2: Combination of chord symbol and melody part.



With big band arranging it would be more common to give piano or guitar a melody part if they were featured in a small combo section of the arrangement, rather than playing a unison with a brass section.

It is not usually required to write out exact chord voicings for piano or guitar, but in some cases it may be worth writing the top note of a chord, especially if specific guide tones are useful to the part. In this case it is a good idea to use a different note head style:

Ex 3: Diamond note heads show the top note of the chord.



If a specific rhythm is required, slash type note heads can be used

Ex 4: Slash type note heads show rhythm of chords.



If an arrangement includes a written bass line, the piano part should include this, not so that the pianist can play the line in unison but so that they can see what the bass player will be playing so that they can voice their chords accordingly. Likewise any other instrument or section part can be given as a cue, so that the pianist can construct an accompanying part.

Ex 5: Bass part and sax cues.

The image shows a musical score for piano and saxophone. The piano part is in the bass clef with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of two flats. The saxophone part is in the treble clef with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of two flats. The piano part consists of a steady eighth-note bass line. The saxophone part has a melodic line with a 'cues' section indicated by a bracket and the word '(SAXES)' above it. Chord symbols Cm7, F7, Bbma7, and Bb6 are written below the piano staff.

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WALKING BASS

The walking bass line is usually made up of arpeggios and scale passages. The main object is to state every beat, so the line is predominantly crotchets, but can include quavers and triplets.

This table shows some basic rules of the 4/4 walking bass. (Chord tones = Root, 3rd, 5th, 6th or 7th)

Beat	One chord per bar	Two chords per bar
1	Root (chord tone if chord is repeated)	Root
2	Chord tone or passing note	Chord tone or passing note
3	Chord tone or passing note	Root
4	Chord tone, passing note, (often leading note to next chord)	Chord tone or passing note

Passing notes can be used between chord tones either on the same chord or between chord changes, often as leading notes or approach tones (chromatically from above)



Repeated notes are sometimes used, but are not recommended over a chord change



Chords are nearly always in root position, although inversions are required in certain sequences, eg "I Got Rhythm". Where chords are changing every beat use roots.



- Quaver and triplet notes can be used at times for variety.

- Large interval leaps are useful occasionally and are usually followed by a scale passage moving in the opposite direction.

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HINTS AND TIPS

- Transcription of existing arrangements is one of the best ways to learn, not just the rules but how different arrangers have created their individual styles, by bending or breaking the rules, or creating their own.
- Write legibly.
- Write untransposed scores.
- However large the ensemble, unisons and octaves should not be ignored. They can be very powerful, or supply a contrast to thick harmony. When using backing figures or counterpoint it often works well to have the lead in harmony and the backing in unison, or vice versa. It can be very effective to use unison on an anacrusis (pickup) or faster melodic passages, followed by open or closed harmony on slower moving lines.

