

BASIC IDEAS IN REHARMONIZATION FOR JAZZ GUITAR

When arranging music that has already been written by another artist or composer, in a way that conforms to your own ideas of how to express that son or idea, you are “re-harmonizing” the original composition. In jazz there are many ways to go about re-harmonizing a composition. For me, re-harmonization is basically “re-invention.” I try not to be overly concerned with theory, but I strive to be right and true to the tune at hand, and to be in sync with general harmony rules.

... there are so many ways and techniques available to you ... On my web site there is a file that contains a primer for the beginner jazz guitarist who would like to learn how to write chord melodies at: <http://chordmelody.org/doc/chordmelmethod.doc>.

This document is Part II of that primer file.

WAYS TO RE-HARMONIZE

- 1) Use tri-tone subs: min for maj (F6/Dm7), half dim. for dom. (Bm7b7/G7), dom7sus4 for min7 (D7sus4/Dm7), dom7 for half dim. (A13/Em7b5), min 6 for half dim (Dm6/Bmin7b5) etc., mix them up – and try using their tri-tone subs ... work toward more chromaticism in you chordal arrangements (especially in the bass line .. see Part I on my web site) (stay true to tune).
- 2) ii for V subs, e.g. C7 for Fm7 and vice versa. (Example: original harmony is D melody on top of Bmin7b5 to E7 to Db melody to C note resolve in Am .. re-harm. as Dm6 to Db7b9 to Db7 (Db on top) to Am. Anywhere a Dom 7 is used you can sub its ii (e.g., say E7 is given in the original arrangement” you can re-harm as Bm7 to E7 ... or Bm7 to Bb7 to A... most likely the E7 is going to A min or A Maj.
- 3) Diatonic substitution: 1 for 6, 1 for 4, 2 for 4, 2 for 5, 2 for 7, 3 for 1, 3 for 6, 3 for 5, 4 for 2, 4 for 7, 4 for 1, 5 for 2, 5 for 3, 5 for 7, etc .. and experiment with tri-tone treatments for these: For example, say original harmony is C to Am7 to Dm7 to G7 ... try this: C to E7 to A7 to D7 to G7 (you can always sub a secondary dom. for a minor, like A7 for Amin7, etc, etc) ... now, let’s do a tri-tone treatment on that re-harm of C-Am7-Dm7-G7 --- C to Bb7(E7) to A7 to Ab7(Dm7) to G7 to C.
- 4) Use of chromaticism, e.g. with common tones: G on top of G6/9-->AbMaj7/6--> A7-->Bb6-->E7#9-->A7-->Dm7sus4-->G.
- 5) CYCLE the same as above, CMaj7-->F9-->Bb6-->Ebmaj7...etc... (...aslo use tritone treatments on these). “Back-cycling” is the reverse of the cycle of 5ths. The Cycle of Fifths shows how music keys naturally progress according to gravity, it works like this: C to G to D to A to E to B to F# to C# to G# to D# to Bb to F to C. “Back-cycling” is to arrange these chords that progress by 5ths in 4ths as such: C – F – Bb – Eb – Ab – Db – Gb – B – E – A – D – G – C. Using the example in #3 above, we had to re-harmonize C to G7. We started with C and looked at the next chord, Am7. By using the cycle of 5ths. We ask what is the chord that goes naturally right before the A, and its E. Next, what is

the chord that goes right after the A, and it's the D, etc., etc. By treating them as secondary dominants we change their tonality from minor to dominant. Why did we use the E7 right after the C and before the A? because 3 (Em) is a great sub for 1 (C) – also, by “backcycling” before the A there is a very natural chord that wants to go to the A – and its E. Always refer to the “backcycle” of 5ths. Chart.

6) Use chordal neighbors as chromatic passing chords ...e.g., CMaj7-->C#dim7--->Dm7-->EbDim7--->E7#9--->FMaj7-->F#Dim7--->G7 (...also use tri-itone treatments on these)

7) Tritone subs in ii - Vs, e.g., Am7--->Ab7--->GMaj7.

8) Long minor sections use Min to min/maj7 to min6 to min7 ... back and forth ..

9) Use dom. interchangeably with minors and majors: For Example, take bar 5 of the verse in "I Thought About You" ...the melody is all eight notes starting after an eight rest: D F A C B Bb A tied to A half note in next bar followed by 2 quarter notes: G A ... Bar 5 harmony is simply Gm7 and bar 6 is Em7b5 and A7.

I would Reharm as Gm7(d) to Dm7sus4(f) to Eb9#11(a) to G7sus4(c) to G7(b) to Gm7(Bb) to A13(a) tied to A7#5(a) to Eb7 to Eb9#11 ... Bar 7, the first ending's melody is G – Gb – F - F (eight notes) tied to F (half note) tied to F dotted half in Bar 8 .. the harmony in Bar 7 is Dm7 to Db7 to Bar 8, Cm7 to F7 ...

Reharm Bar 7 and 8: D7sus4(g) to D7(f#) to Dm7 to Db7 to Bar 8, Cm11(f) to B7b5 (f) ... etc., etc.

10) On endings I like to take changes and liberties, usually by adding a tag of melody and harmony ... For Example, the ending note of "I Thought About You" is F6 (F melody) (whole notes tied for 2 measures) ... you can have a field day with this ... I would first reharm. in cycle of 4ths (back-cycling), also changing the melody in line with the new chordal ending, as such:

Fm9 (G on top) to Bb7 (F on top) Ebm9 (F on top) to Ab7 (Eb on top) to next last bar, Dbm9 (Eb on top) to Gb7 (Db) to FMaj7 (C on top)

11) Interchangeable use of minor 3rd subs for min7 and min7b5: Am7b5 for Cm7b5 and Am6 for F#min7b5, etc, etc for Ebm7, Ebm7b5 and F#m7 and min6, etc, etc. ... see also the tri-tone sub relationships here ...

12) Use of a V min sub for a minor chord, e.g., Dm7 for Gm7 ... it is treated as an early ii-V resolve For example, the harmony is Gm7 to C .. reharm. as Dm7 to Gm7 to C

13) Example 12 above can also be treated as advancing the Dm7 by using its Vth: Am7 to Dm7 to Gm7 to C ...

14) By subbing BbMaj7 for the Dm7 in Ex. 12 to Am7 and tri- tone to Db7/Ab (or Abm7) to Gm7 we create a fluid bass line (see Part 1) (... to be continued ...)