

## CONCEPTS I TEACH ON CHORD MELODY

1) First thing I do when considering any tune for a CM: I play the tune straight from the sheet music or fake book -- no subs, no re-harmonizations (yet) etc. If root inversion can't reach the melody either as an extension or scale degree, I'll cycle through the inversions; i.e., C -- C/E -- C/G -- C/A, etc., etc.

- When playing from piano sheet music, it's many times impossible to finger those voicings, so I cycle through the inversions and also start using some substitutions and inversions of subs..

2) After that I'll begin to find more suitable substitution chords that fit the direction I want to go for what's written -- while primarily concerned about a logical and "moving" bass line that is not static. In many ways the bass line will guide the direction of the arrangement and give it forward (or any directional) movement (or maybe not, or semi-movement, or pedal point for dynamic effect, etc.).

- There are no written rules other than theory and how it can be used to facilitate or leave aside in preference to what your "ears" hear and emotional impact -- that's where your "heart" meets your "ear" -- in between is where your brain puts in gear all your studies and practice time -- But it's all about what sounds good.

3) Next, having settled on a solid bass line, I'll find appropriate harmonic structures (not just chords but 1-note, 2-note, 3-note, 4-5-6-etc. combinations of "movements" based on the tune -- aware of the fact that CHORDS CAN BE CHANGED (and melody can be changed).

- I'll find subs, inversions, inversions of subs, etc., etc. that work in line with the a) the bass line, b) the melody, c) the rhythms of the tune. Nothing is written in stone.
- While in this process there inevitably will be places in the tune where I'll get an idea to "re-harmonize" the harmony (herein lies the "Art" of composition) -- being courageous enough to change harmonies according to a conceptual figure I "hear" -- maybe for movement, maybe for emotion, maybe for a whole host of reasons.
- I find many guitarists and pianists who play solo arrangements who dare not venture away from the chart (I'm not talking about playing so "outside" no one even recognizes the tune).
- I find it a license to respect the integrity of the original, but at the same time to take "license," pay respect to the landscape of the original tune, to "make music" of the song for it to sound fresh and new (new twist on an old tune, etc).

4) Next step is to come up with some inventive counterpoint -- not everything involves block chords -- this involves a whole world of possibilities (and is what usually takes the longest time because I think of it as a "song" inside a song.) (see my files on "Counterpoint" below.)

- Chord Melody is not just placing melody notes on top of chords (Block harmony) – this to me is very boring. It does not create interest, and really is not "Music" ... a computer can program this sort of "arranged" notes on top of generic chords.

5) Know the rudiments of basic theory (assuming one can read music not TAB)

6) Know virtually all the possible inversions on all the possible string groups (see my Pat Martino section):

<http://www.chordmelody.org/doc/martinochordfamily.doc>

7) Know all the basic "Jazz" substitute families of chords.

8) Know the general rules of Counterpoint consisting of 4 types of "contrapuntal" movement or "motion": Parallel, Similar, Contrary, and Oblique. (see my attached file below from my site).

9) Know general concepts behind "Re-Harmonization" of a song (see my example of "Summertime" lesson/package).

10) Know how a bass line creates movement, no movement, less or more movement, but dynamics (Pedal, etc.), direction forward, static, erratic, stable, etc., etc.

11) Know a mastery of chords on the fret board -- all families of chords (many guitarists have no clue at all at the "science" behind the design of the guitar's fret board .

12) There's always a tendency to die on a long tone (melody note of long duration) – to counter this, you can use a common tone on top of a moving chord structure in 4ths, or moving chords (up or down) with a chromatic bass line, etc., etc.

13) Use interesting inner harmonic movements like the leading tones as launching pads for counterpoint devices.

14) Use more inner voices of the chordal structure in "action" -- creating movements below the head's melody tone ... (sometimes also move tones

above the melody -- don't fear that it would change the tune -- it's your "New Tune").

15) Take your "Re-Harmonization" adventures. Don't be afraid to change the written harmony -- you can change the chords by creating a new conceptual harmonization -- called "Re-harmonization" -- it's your "New Tune."

- For Example: say the given chord is CMaj7 under the given melody of say "E" ... you can do a re-harmonization in 4ths, using FMaj7 instead of CMaj7 -- yes, everyone knows the familiar Am7 (vi) or Em7 (iii). Hey, there's an E and a B in the following chords: E, E7+5, Fmaj7#11, G6, G13, Abmin7b6, Am9, Bsus, C#7, D6/9/ Eb7+5b9, F#7sus, Db7#9 -- can they be used as a sub. for Cmaj7? -- if it sounds good and it moves logically in your arrangement ("to and from" within the harmonic structure) -- go for it -- theory will back you up.

- In other words, the tones of Cmaj7 are C - E - G - B -- that means we can find other chords that contain these notes --- Yes, That Right -- but in any key and every chord family. See my files on "re-Harm."

<http://www.chordmelody.org/doc/reharm.doc>

For Example see my lesson/package on "Summertime" re-harmonized on my site:

<http://www.chordmelody.org/doc/Summertime>

16) Invent 1- or 2- or 3-note inversion inventions on top or below the melody (Counterpoint) ... this creates interest in the listener. Why? because they are predicting the exact next note you "will be" playing - hear my rendition of "Try A Little Tenderness" and listen to the inner voices happening in the arrangement .... (I wish I had recorded it better....)

<http://www.chordmelody.org/mp3/tryalittle.mp3>

- See my file on "Counterpoint" at

<http://www.chordmelody.org/doc/counterpoint.doc>

17) Don't be afraid to temporarily linger in a harmonic -- could be chordal, or two-note double-stops(diads), or triad exchange (or take a small harmonic excursion in the key, pocket chords, etc.) into a lower or higher

inversion of the last chord you played under the melody.

- Like playing a little chordal exchange to the next melody note.

- For example, say the melody is a whole note "B" on top of G7 harmony. Play your chosen harmony say for a quarter or more note value on the B, but then move to a lower G7<sup>13</sup> to G7<sup>+5</sup> – and then to the next melodic exchange.

- Many players are afraid to do this because they think they are "killing" the melody, or changing the tune, or losing the listener. Listen about the listener: many folks don't even know the melody, they'll think what you're playing is part of the tune anyway. I consider it part of "educating" the uneducated audience.

18) Move parts of chords up or down to next resolution when & wherever possible while maintaining integrity of the melody – you can "echo" the melody if unreachable during counter movement.

Listen again, lots of players think CM is just putting notes (Blocking chords) on top of chords, but, as you can see, the mastery goes way beyond that it is not "LIKE" composing -- it IS composing MUSIC.

Listen to Johnny Smith ... I consider him a master at it ... and Barry Galbraith also.