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Reharmonization Techniques

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Chapter 11

Line Clichés

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11

LINE CLICHÉS

A line cliché is a stepwise descending or ascending line that moves against a single stationary chord. Line clichés may be used to reharmonize melodic phrases that are largely diatonic to a single key. Famous line cliché tunes include "My Funny Valentine," "Michelle," and the "Bond" theme from the early James Bond films.

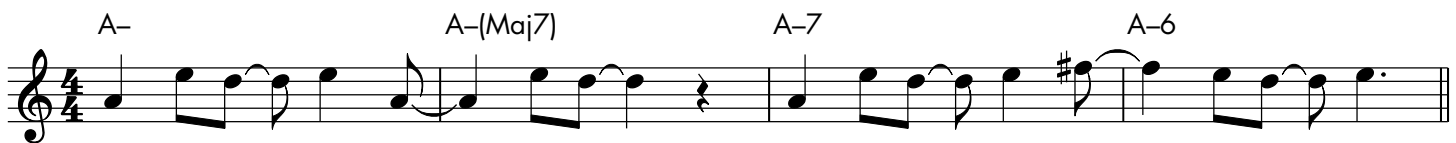


Fig. 11.1. Typical descending line cliché



Fig. 11.2. Typical ascending line cliché

In order to use a line cliché as a reharmonization technique, find a melodic phrase in which most of the notes are diatonic to the key. Then, eliminate the original progression and insert a single major or minor chord that is compatible with the melody notes. You can then embellish this chord with a line cliché. The example below illustrates this process.

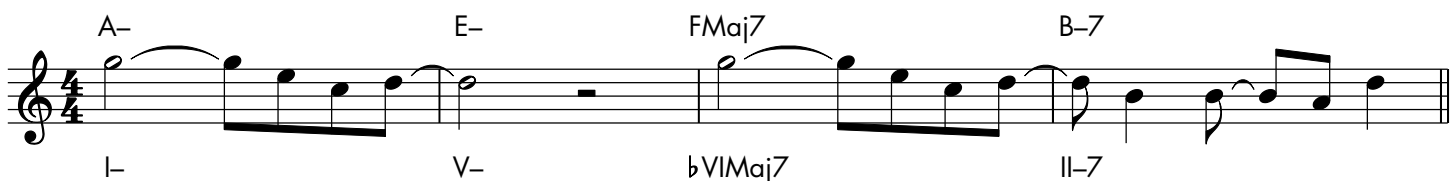


Fig. 11.3. Original form

LINE CLICHÉS

A- A- A- A-

I-

Fig. 11.4. Phrase reharmonized with a single chord that is harmonically compatible with the melodic material

A- A-/G# A-/G A-/F#

I- I-/Maj7 I-/b7 I-/6

Fig. 11.5. Line cliché added: chromatic line descends in half steps against a static minor chord

The next example shows a chromatic line that rises and falls against the static minor chord. The line cliché movement is most often in half steps between the fifth and root of the chord being embellished.

A- A-(#5) A-7 A-(#5)

I- I-(#5) I-7 I-(#5)

Fig. 11.6. Line cliché

Although most line clichés move in half-step increments, whole step motion between the fifth and the root is also possible. Fig. 11.7 illustrates a line cliché derived from the Aeolian scale.

A- A-/G A-/F A-/E

I- I-/b7 I-/b6 I-/5

Fig. 11.7. Aeolian line cliché

The harmonic rhythm of the line cliché also may be varied. The example below doubles the number of chords per measure.

A- A-/G A-/F A-/E A- A-/G A-/F A-/E

I- I-/b7 I-/b6 I-/5 I- I-/b7 I-/b6 I-/5

Fig. 11.8. Line cliché with faster harmonic rhythm

The example in fig. 11.9 is a good candidate for a line cliché. All the melody notes are diatonic to a single key.

Fig. 11.9. Original form

Fig. 11.10. Line cliché added

The next example is also reharmonized with line clichés. The moving line illustrates that the descending (or ascending) line does not have to move exclusively by half steps. Whole-step motion also works, and is sometimes needed to prevent melody/harmony clashes.

Fig. 11.11. Original form

LINE CLICHÉS

Bb- Bb-/A Bb-/Ab Bb-/Gb
 3 3 3 3 3
 I- I-7 I-/b7 I-/b6
 Bb- Bb-6 Bb-(#5) Bb-
 3 3 3 3 3
 I- I-6 I-(#5) I-

Fig. 11.12. Line cliché added

The harmonic rhythm should fit with the performance tempo. If the song is played at a fast tempo, a harmonic rhythm of one chord per measure will sound smooth.

Bb- Bb-(#5) Bb-6 Bb-(#5)
 3 3 3 3 3
 I- I-/7 I-/b7 I-
 Bb- Bb-(#5) Bb-7 Bb-(#5) Bb-
 3 3 3 3 3
 I- I-(#5) I-7 I-(#5) I-

Fig. 11.13. A faster tempo calls for a slower harmonic rhythm.

If performance tempo is very fast, an even more sparse and extended harmonic rhythm would be a good choice.

Bb- Bb-(#5)
 3 3 3 3 3
 I- I-(#5)
 Bb-6 Bb-(#5) Bb-(#5)
 3 3 3 3 3
 I-6 I-(#5) I-

Fig. 11.14. A very fast tempo calls for an even slower harmonic rhythm.

Line clichés may also be used to reharmonize melodies in major keys.

Original form: Bb $G-7$ $C-7$ $F7$ Bb $G-7$ $C-7$ $F7$
 Roman numerals: I $VI-7$ $II-7$ $V7$ I $VI-7$ $II-7$ $V7$

Reharmonized form: Bb $Bb7$ $EbMaj7$ $Eb-7$ $C-7$ $F7$ Bb
 Roman numerals: I $V7/IV$ $IVMaj7$ $IV-7$ $II-7$ $V7$ I

Fig. 11.15. Original form

Reharmonized form 1: Bb $Bb(\#5)$ $Bb6$ $Bb(\#5)$ Bb $Bb(\#5)$ $Bb6$ $Bb(\#5)$
 Roman numerals: I $I(\#5)$ $I6$ $I(\#5)$ I

Reharmonized form 2: Bb $Bb(\#5)$ $Bb6$ $Bb(\#5)$ $C-7$ $C-7/Bb$ $F7/A$ $F7(\#5)/A$ Bb
 Roman numerals: $II-7$ $II-7/b7$ $V7/3$ $V7(\#5)/3$ I

Fig. 11.16. Reharmonized using line clichés

Although line clichés are found on the I chord more often than on other diatonic chords, a short line cliché (one measure or less) may be applied to any diatonic chord.

The line cliché allows the writer to sustain a particular chord while adding momentum to the progression. However, repeated use of a line cliché on a chord other than the “ I ” may cause the listener to hear the chord being embellished by the line cliché as a new I chord. Overuse of this technique may weaken the sense of key within the progression.

The example below uses short line clichés based on $II-7$ and $IVMaj7$. Notice the increased sense of motion and the varied rhythmic placement of the lines. Each line cliché leads to its target chord by stepwise motion.

LINE CLICHÉS

II-7 sustained for two beats in root position then embellished with a line cliché on beats 3 and 4.

IVMaj7 embellished with a line cliché. The bass line moves on beats 1 and 2, then slows to a single bass note lasting through beats 3 and 4.

Fig. 11.17. Line cliché based on II-7 and IVMaj7

Here is a different example.

Fig. 11.18. Original form

Short passing notes against a single chord may be used in the same spirit as a full line cliché. The reharmonized example below uses stepwise, passing sevenths in the bass to increase the sense of movement within the chord progression.

The example below is reharmonized with passing sevenths in the bass. Notice that a chord in root position always precedes a chord voiced over its seventh.

Fig. 11.19. Line cliché with passing sevenths in the bass

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