



# Gettin' Around On The Saxophone

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## A Quick Guide To Analyzing Jazz Standards

Jazz standards hold valuable lessons about classic jazz harmony construction that can be helpful in learning and playing a tune as well as making decisions on harmony of new compositions. Unlike many musical styles, jazz uses a rich harmonic palette, and as a result, jazz compositions change key quite often. It is not uncommon to play in four, five or more keys within a simple 32-bar song. Nor is it uncommon to play in two different keys even within the same measure. With so many key changes and subtle color changes going on in the harmony of a jazz standard, a simple but comprehensive identification system that summarizes the common trends in the harmony of jazz standards can be an effective tool for a student of jazz.

Using chord-scale relationships to analysis the keys of jazz standards, four common modulation techniques are repeatedly used by the jazz composers to modulate between keys. These four techniques are found in thousands of jazz standards and as a result is a reliable analytical vehicle. Assuming the tune being studied has a lead sheet that has acceptable chord changes, a student of jazz can quickly analyze the chord relationships by key centers and see the scale relationships of any jazz standard. Understanding not only the key centers of a piece, but the why and how the harmony works will improve an individual's voice leading in their soloing and allow the player to overlay viable chord substitutions in their improvisational melody. It will allow the improviser to bringing more color to their playing, and can be used as a composition tool to develop interesting and viable harmonic progressions for their original jazz compositions.

In order to effectively use this analysis method, one must have an understanding of the harmonic construction of major and minor keys centers (see Examples 1a, b, c, & d), with common harmonic progressions. Once a student of jazz understands the chord types contained with the major and minor keys, it will be quite easy to spot chords that are not in the same keys. The four kinds of modulations most commonly used in jazz compositions, and chord substitutions used by the great improvisers are:

1. Common Chord
2. Tri-tone
3. Color change
4. Root on/off

It should be noted that these

modulations while quite often used in a singular fashion can and are used in conjunction with one of the other modulation types.

### COMMON CHORD MODULATION

A common chord modulation uses a chord that exists in two different keys to modulate from one key to another. Chords that have commonality to more than one key are used as a pivot chord to move from one of the keys to another. The resulting modulation is a smooth and sonorous modulation. The following list are possible functions for the chord types.

#### • Major 7<sup>th</sup> Chords Function As

- a... I in G major
- b... IV in D major
- c... III in natural and harmonic minor
- d... VII in natural and harmonic minor

#### • Dominant 7<sup>th</sup> Chords Function As

- a... V in Major
- b... V in harmonic and melodic minor
- a... IV in melodic minor

#### • Minor 7<sup>th</sup> Chords Function As

#### Example 1a Chords Of The Major Scale

I<sup>Δ7</sup> II<sup>m7</sup> III<sup>m7</sup> IV<sup>Δ7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> VI<sup>m7</sup> VII<sup>°</sup>

#### Example 1b Chords Of The Natural Minor Scale

Im<sup>7</sup> II<sup>°</sup> III<sup>Δ7</sup> IV<sup>m7</sup> V<sup>m7</sup> VI<sup>Δ7</sup> VII<sup>7</sup>

#### Example 1c Chords Of The Harmonic Minor Scale

Im<sup>Δ7</sup> II<sup>°</sup> III<sup>Δ7(#5)</sup> IV<sup>m7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> VI<sup>Δ7</sup> VII<sup>°</sup>

#### Example 1d Chords Of The Harmonic Minor Scale

Im<sup>Δ7</sup> II<sup>m7</sup> III<sup>Δ7(#5)</sup> IV<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> VI<sup>°</sup> VII<sup>°</sup>

- a... II in major
- b... III in major
- c... VI in major
- d... I in natural minor
- e... IV in natural or harmonic minor
- f... V in natural minor
- g... II in melodic minor

• **Half Diminished Chords Function As**

- a... VII in major
- b... II in natural and harmonic minor
- c... VI in melodic minor
- d... VII in melodic minor

• **Minor/major 7th Chords Function As**

- a... I in Harmonic and melodic minor

• **Major 7th With A Sharp 5 Function As**

- a... III inharmonic or melodic minor

A common chord modulation is not as obvious as some of the other modulations, and it will always appear just before a chord that cannot be analyzed in the existing key.

**TRI-TONE MODULATION**

A tri-tone modulation is simply the substitution of one chord for another an interval of a tri-tone apart. A tri-tone interval, a diminished perfect 5<sup>th</sup> or an augmented perfect 4<sup>th</sup> splits an octave and is a common and easily spotted modulation both aurally and visually. Aurally, the tri-tone modulates the music to the most distantly related key and thus is the most colorful sounding modulation. There are two main types of tri-tone modulations. One is a hidden tri-tone, where the modulation occurs by replacing the original chord that is substituted. This is most often recognized by chromatic motion in the roots of the chords, and most often occurs by substituting the V7 chord of a IIm7-V7-IM7. (The F7 of a Cm7-F7-BbM7 will be substituted by a B7 creating a progression Cm7-B7-BbM7) There is also a visual Tri-tone, in the root motion of the chord progression. For example, a G7 chord in one measure moves to a Db7 in the next measure. Both the original and the Tri-tone substitution can be seen on the page.

**COLOR MODULATION**

A Color modulation is simply changing the quality or color of some aspect of the upper partials of a chord and retaining the same root for each chord. By changing the 7<sup>th</sup> of GM7 from an interval of a major 7 (F#) to a minor 7 (F), the chord quality changes from a IM7 (GM7) in the key of G to a V7 (G7) in the key of C major. If the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> are lowered, then the chord goes from being a GM7 (IM7) to

a Gm7 (a IIm7), and effectively change the key from G major to F major. Remembering that both the major M7 and the m7 chords have several possible functions, the number of keys that a color modulation can take a progression is significant.

**ROOT ON/OFF MODULATION**

The root on/off modulation is a substitution of one chord for a chord that starts on the third of the original chord (a Root off modulation) or a chord that adds a major or minor 3rd to the original chord (a Root on modulation). This is most often used in combination with a color modulation, because many root on/off produce a chord that is diatonic to the original key center. It should be noted that many common chord modulations are mis

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**Example 2 Analysis Of All The Things You Are Chords**

Ab major: VIIm7	IIm7	V7	IM7
F#M7	BbM7	Eb7	AbM7
IVM7	C major: V7	IM7	IM7
DbM7	G7	C#7	IM7
Eb major: VIIm7	IIm7	V7	IM7
CC mod.			
C#M7	F#M7	Bb7	EbM7
IVM7	G major: V7	IM7	IM7
AbM7	D7	G#7	IM7
IIm7	V7	IM7	IM7
A#M7	D7	G#7	IM7
E minor: IIm7(b5)	CC mod.	E major: IM7	ROn w/CC mod.
VIIIm7(b5)	V7	CC mod.	F minor: V7
F#M7(b5)	B7	E#7	C7(b9)
Ab major: VIIm7	IIm7	V7	IM7
CC mod.			
Im7			
F#M7	BbM7	Eb7	AbM7
IVM7	CC mod.	Bb major: IIm7	
	Cb major: IIm7	Hidden TT sub for Gb7	Hidden TT sub for F7
DbM7	DbM7	C#M7	B Dim: I Diminished
Ab major: IIm7	V7	IM7	VIIIm7(b5) CC mod.
TT sub for E7			F minor: IIm7(b5) V7
BbM7	Eb7	Ab6	G#M7(b5) C7

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taken for root on/off modulations, but only those that have either a color change above the new root or the new root itself is not common to the original chord qualifies the modulation as a root on/off. For instance, if the root of a GM7 is removed the resulting Chord is a Bm7. If this chord functions as a IIIm7 and the GM7 functions as a IM7, then there is no modulation. However, if the Bm7 functions as a IIIm7 it is no longer diatonic to the GM7, since it functions in the new key of A major, this would be considered a common chord modulation. The strongest of the root on/off modulations is where there is not color modulation needed to modulate to a distantly related key. An example might be adding a major 3<sup>rd</sup> to a GM7. If the GM7 is functioning as a IM7 and the interval of a major 3<sup>rd</sup> is added to the root of the chord the resulting chord is an EbM7#5, which can only function as a III chord in C harmonic or melodic minor.

Written explanations of this analysis in the confines of a magazine article might be somewhat confusing, but a visual representation applied to a jazz standard will clarify the analytical vehicle. All of these modulations are represented in one of the most common jazz standards, Hammerstein and Kern's *All the Things you are*. Example 2 is the common changes for the tune with the analysis indicated for each chord. What follows are keys for the abbreviations (X = where X is key name, representing a key center such as Ex. C major)

- CC = Common Chord Modulation
- TT = Tri-tone substitution
- CM = Color Modulation
- ROn = Root On modulation

- ROff = Root Off modulation
- M7 = Major 7 chord
- m7 = minor 7 chord
- 7 = dominant 7 chord
- Dim = Diminished
- Mod. = Modulation

After reviewing this tune, go to a reliable fake book and analyze other standards. With a little bit of practice, not only will the harmonic structures of the tunes become clearer, but other harmonic options for the tunes will be revealed both theoretically as well as aurally. In time, a personal approach to each tune will be realized in creative arrangements of the tunes and in a personalized approach to improvised solos. §