Playing Outside With Concepts You Already Know Part 1: Triads

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I: Introduction

A lot of people are interested in creating modern "outside" sounds when they're soloing over changes. Many of these players believe that they have to learn about the symmetrical diminished scale, harmonic major, melodic minor, major 7#5 superimpositions and other concepts in order to achieve this sound. Yes, all the concepts mentioned above are necessary to study and apply but they take a while to become natural in one's playing. The reason it takes so long to assimilate these ideas naturally is because the harmonic material needed for the concept (i.e. the harmonic major scale) may be foreign to the player and thus, requires extensive work to become a useful improvisational source. You need to work with the new scales to the point where you no longer need to think of the shapes or what note you are playing; the scales should simply play themselves.

What if I told you that you could achieve an "outside" sound without having to learn an unfamiliar scale? What if I told you that you could bring the "outside" sounds in to your playing RIGHT NOW? You can achieve "outside" textures by using just **triads** (Part 1), and the major scale (Part 2). These things are the foundation of improvisation, which means they are already very familiar to you making them readily available scales for effective improvisation. Most players tend to think of these concepts as stagnant and as "boring", in this lesson I will show you ways to use these fundamentals to create a modern, interesting sound. Players such as John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock and Chris Potter have used this approach.

If you love instant gratification in the practice room or are looking for a new concept to pull out on tonight's gig then keep reading!

II: Tension Resolution

Many of these concepts will contain "wrong notes" and unconventional tensions (i.e. natural 7 on a dominant 7) so it is *very* important to understand the principles of proper tension resolution.

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Personally, I believe that you can play any of the 12 notes over any chord. Every single note is available to you. There are no "wrong" notes; you just have to know how to resolve them.

In an improvisational setting you are presented with chord changes and expected to solo over them. To achieve this we typically use chord scales. Most chord scales contain two things: the notes of the underlying harmony and other notes called "tensions". The notes of the underlying harmony are your "safe" notes. They are firm grounding that you can always revert back to. Tensions are notes that add color to the chord and sound the harmonic function of the chord. Some tensions sound great and some are generally avoided (like playing the $4^{\rm th}$ scale degree on a major 7 chord). It is important to know where each tension resolves in order to create strong sounding lines.

Here is a chart of common resolutions of tensions. It is important to note that some tensions have more then one resolution possibility and others, namely the altered tensions, only have one.

b9: resolves down half step to root

9: resolves up to 3 (or b3 in minor) or down a whole step to the root

#9: resolves up a half step to third.

11: resolves to 3 (or b3 in minor) or up to 5th (or b5 on -7b5 or °7 chords)

#11: resolves up a half step to the 5th

b13: resolves down a half step to the 5th

13: resolves to the 5th or 7th

*Note that the 13th or b13th is typically an avoid note on minor chords but still can sound great if these concepts are applied.

*These are just suggestions they are not concrete. Some times the music calls for unresolved tensions. Use your ear.

*It is possible to resolve an altered tension to another, diatonic, tension. For example, a #5 can resolve up to a 13 on a major chord because the 13 is a diatonic tension contained in the Ionian chord scale.

*It is not necessary to resolve the altered tensions right away. You can play the altered note, play a few more notes that are not its general resolution note and then play they resolution note (this is called indirect resolution).

III: Triads

Triads are a common and effective soloing technique. There are many applications of triads in improvisation; here we will be **focusing on ways to create "outside" sounds using major, minor, diminished and augmented triads.**

IV: Triads-Opposite Quality

This first concept is a technique I refer to as "opposite quality". It involves figuring out the basic triad that a chord is based on and switching the quality of that triad to the opposite quality.

The rule of thumb:

The opposite of major is minor and vice versa
The opposite of diminished is augmented and vice versa

Here are examples of this on chords with a "C" root:

- If the lead sheet says "Cmaj7" (1-3-5-7) the basic triad for this chord is a C major triad (1-3-5). Solo with a C *minor* triad (1-b3-5). This gives you tension #9 (b3).
- If the lead sheet says "Cmin7" (1-b3-5-b7) the basic triad is a C minor triad (1-b3-5). Solo with a C *major* triad (1-3-5). This gives you tension "°4" (natural 3).
- If the lead sheet says "C7" (1-3-5-b7). The basic triad is C major (1-3-5). Solo with a C *minor* triad (1-b3-5). This gives you tension #9 (b3).
- If the lead sheet says "C-7b5" (1-b3-b5-b7). The basic triad is C diminished (1-b3-b5). Solo with a C *augmented* triad (1-3-#5). This gives you tensions "°4" and b13 (#5).
- If the lead sheet says "C°7" (1-b3-b5-bb7). The basic triad is C diminished (1-b3-b5). Solo with a C *augmented* triad (1-3-#5). This gives you tensions "°4" and b13 (#5).
- If the lead sheet says "C+7" (1-3-#5-b7) or "Cmaj7#5" (1-3-#5-7). The basic triad is C augmented (1-3-#5). Solo with a C *diminished* triad (1-b3-b5). This gives you tensions #9 (b3) and #11 (b5).

See example line "A" for this concept in action.

This is just the beginning. When dealing with 7th chords it is possible to construct *two* basic triads from the four-note structure as seen in the example below.

C major 7 is C-E-G-B. C-E-G is a C major triad E-G-B is a E minor triad.

Here is a generalized chart according to quality:

Major 7: I major triad (1-3-5) and III minor triad (3-5-7) Minor 7: I minor triad (1-b3-5) and bIII major triad (b3-5-b7) Dominant 7: I major triad (1-3-5) and III° triad (3-5-b7) Minor7b5: I° triad (1-b3-b5) and bIII minor triad (b3-b5-b7)

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The "opposite quality" concept can be applied to *both* of these derived triads giving you the following options:

Major 7:

- I minor triad gives you tension #9 (b3).
- III major triad gives you tension #5 (b13).

Minor 7:

- I major triad gives you tension °4 (natural 3).
- bIII minor triad gives you tension b5 (#11).

Dominant 7:

- I minor triad gives you tension #9 (b3).
- III <u>augmented</u> triad gives you tensions #5 (b13) and natural 7.

Minor 7b5:

- I augmented triad gives you tensions °4 (natural 3) and natural 5.
- bIII major triad gives you tension natural 5.

These triads can be used separately or *used together* on any given seventh chord. See example line "B".

Remember to keep tension resolution in mind!

How to practice:

Start with just the single main triad and solo with it on a static vamp. Start at a very slow tempo (around 60 bpm or slower) and solo with just 8th notes. Focus on resolving the tension note. Gradually increase tempo and vary rhythmic subdivisions. If you are working on combining the two derived triads make sure you work on them both separately first. Experiment with placing the "outside" pitch on a strong metric stress and on a weak stress.

V: Triads-Quality Reharminization

The concept I refer to as "quality reharminization" is very much related to the previous concept of "opposite quality" but it is much more liberal. This concept means that once you deduce the basic triad of a chord you can **change the quality of the core triad to any of the other three qualities**. This can be applied to the primary and secondary triads of a seventh chord.

Generalized chart for reference:

Major 7:

- I minor triad = tension #9
- I° triad = tensions #9 and #11
- I+ triad = tension #5
- III major triad= tension #5
- III° triad = tension b7
- III+ triad = tension #5

Minor 7:

- I major triad = tension °4
- I° triad = tension #11
- I+ triad= tension °4 and #5
- bIII minor triad = tension #11
- bIII° triad = tensions b5 and 13
- bIII+ triad = tension natural 7

Dominant 7:

- I minor triad = tension #9
- I° triad = tensions #9 and #11
- I+ triad = tension #5
- III major triad= tensions #5 and natural 7
- III minor triad = tension natural 7
- III+ triad = tension #5

Minor 7b5:

- I+ triad = tensions °4 and b13
- I major triad = tensions °4 and natural 5
- I minor triad = tension natural 5
- bIII major triad= tension natural 5
- bIII° triad = tension 13
- bIII+ triad= tensions natural 5 and natural 7

See example lines "C", "D" and "E".

VI: Triads-Triadic Side-Stepping

Triadic side-stepping means that you can play a triad of the same (or different) quality a **half step above** *and/or* **below the main triad**.

For example on a C7 the main triad is C major triad so you can play Db or B major triads.

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Here are the 16 possibilities for C7:

- B major and Db major *
- B minor and Db minor
- B °and Db °
- B+ and Db+
- B major and Db minor
- B major and Db °
- B major and Db+
- B minor and Db major
- B minor and Db+
- B minor and Db°
- B° and Db major
- B° and Db minor
- B° and Db+
- B+ and Db major
- B+ and Db minor
- B+ and Db°

See example line "F".

*Notes: in this context (C7) it would be common practice to use one or both of these triads. The 15 others should be analyzed (what tensions they give you) and experimented with.

VII: Why do these concepts work?

You may have been asking yourself this question all through out this lesson. Why are we suddenly able to use all of these unconventional tensions and "wrong", "outside" notes? The answer has to do with our conditioning to music. We are very conditioned to respond positively to certain collections of pitches and patterns because we have been hearing them all our lives. Most of the music we hear in our formative years is very tonal and unadventurous in terms of altered tensions and chromatic harmony. Most of us respond well the intervallic structure of the major scale (do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do) and the tertial structure of triads; in other words these structures are consonant, "home-base", structures that have been drilled into our brain through years and years of hearing them. Thus when we hear notes that conflict with the intervals of the triadic structure we perceive it as "out" and in many cases, "wrong" (for example playing scale tone 4 on a major 7 chord). By using triads and the major scale to achieve these "outside" sounds we can take advantage of the nearly universal acceptance of the triadic sound. By using a familiar structure, triads or the major scale, to create outside lines you are doing so in a very familiar and

relatable way. Our ears can recognize the intervallic patterns as being derived from the major scale or from triadic structures. This makes the outside line more cohesive, logical and relatable to the ear. This is further evidence of as long as the tension resolution principles are applied any note can be played over any chord.

VII: How I use these concepts

As you can see in the example lines (provided in the following pages) I rarely use the straight up triadic structure. Typically I will grab the outside notes that are within the superimposed triads and just use that note (or notes). Other times I will use the entire triad in a close position or in a spread arpeggio. As I improvise with these triads I have the underlying "correct" chord scale in mind. I see this chord scale and when I go out, either using a fragment of the triad, the whole triad, or both of the triads (if using a pair), I use it to resolve the outside tensions to either chord tones or consonant tensions contained in the chord scale. Speaking of resolution, most of the time I use indirect resolution of the outside tension as opposed to direct resolution. Also, I tend to displace my resolution note by an octave sometimes. For example, if I am playing over C7 and I play a "D#" I know that it wants to resolve to "E" but lets say I want to make things more interesting. If I played the D# on the 6th fret of the "A" string the common resolution would be to the "E" on the 7th fret of the same string. Instead of resolving a semi-tone up, I will sometimes do an indirect resolution to "E" on the 9th fret of the "G" string thus, displacing the resolution by an octave. These are just something's to experiment with.

VIII: Where to find Part II

Part II of this lesson will also be COMPLETELY FREE! All you need to do to get it is join my email mailing list through my website (www.RyanCarraher.com). By joining my mailing list you will gain exclusive access to future free lessons covering a wide range of topics. Also, if you enjoyed this lesson or would like to learn more about this topic shoot me an email through my website and maybe we can schedule a one-on-one Skype lesson!

Thank you for reading this lesson. Happy practicing!

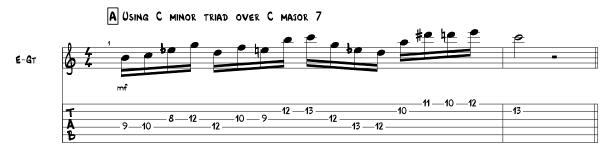
-Ryan Carraher

OUTSIDE CONCEPTS PART 1: TRIADS

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STANDARD TUNING

= 120



B Using C minor and E major triads on C major 7



C SAME LICK AS EXAMPLE "B" BUT USING & DIMINISHED AND C AUGMENTED TRIADS OVER C MAJOR 7



D Using C AUGMENTED AND EB MINOR TRIADS ON C MINOR 7



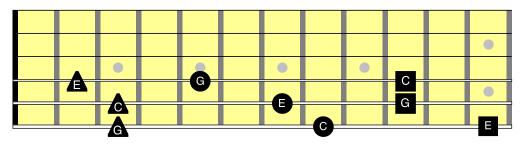
E Using C Diminished and E Augmented Triads on C7



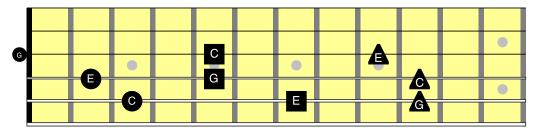
F Side Stepping with B masor triad and DB masor triad over C7



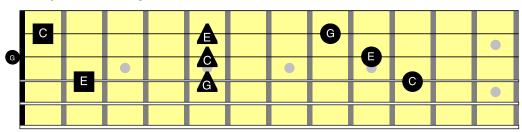
C major triads string set E-A-D



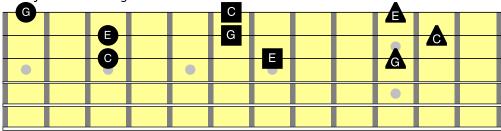
C major triads string set A-D-G



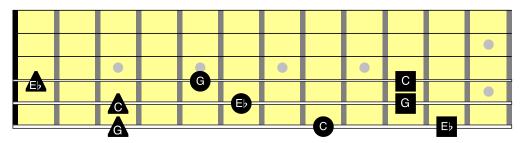
C major triads string set D-G-B



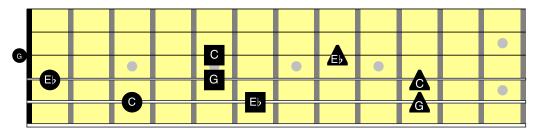
C major triads string set G-B-E



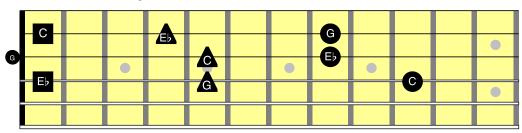
C minor triads string set E-A-D



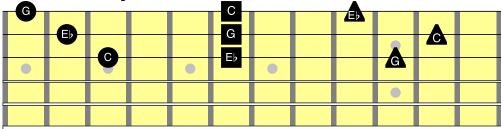
C minor triads string set A-D-G



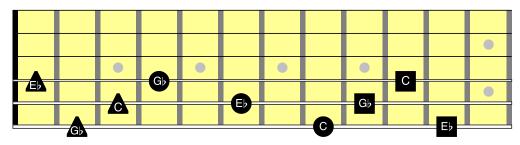
C minor triads string set D-G-B



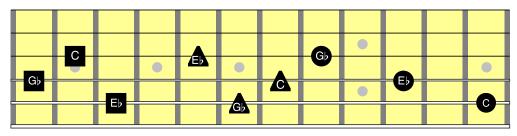
C minor triads string set G-B-E



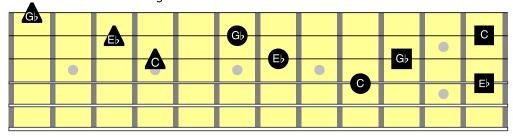
C diminished triads string set E-A-D



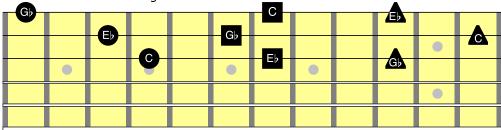
C diminished triads string set A-D-G



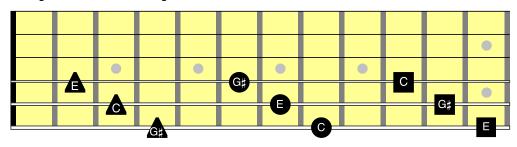
C diminished triads string set D-G-B



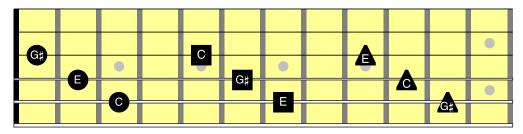
C diminished triads string set G-B-E



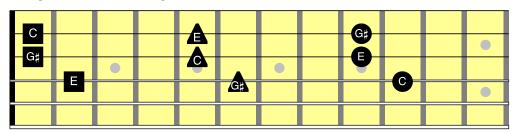
C augmented triads string set E-A-D



C augmented triads string set A-D-G



C augmented triads string set D-G-B



C augmented triads string set G-B-E

