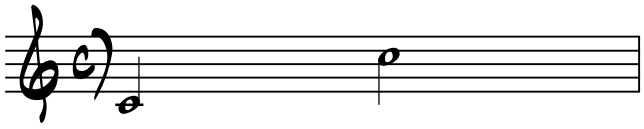
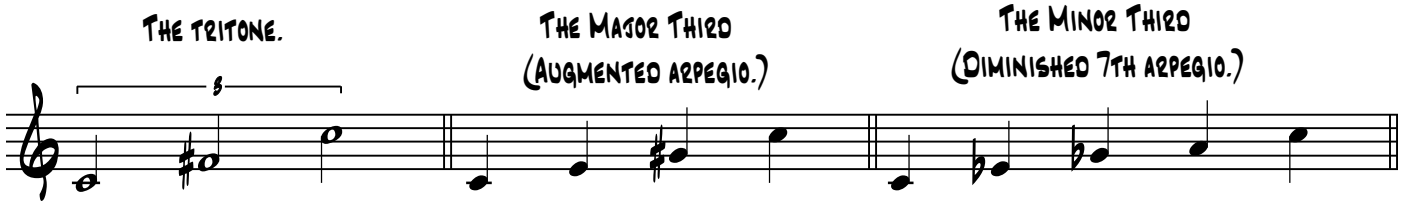
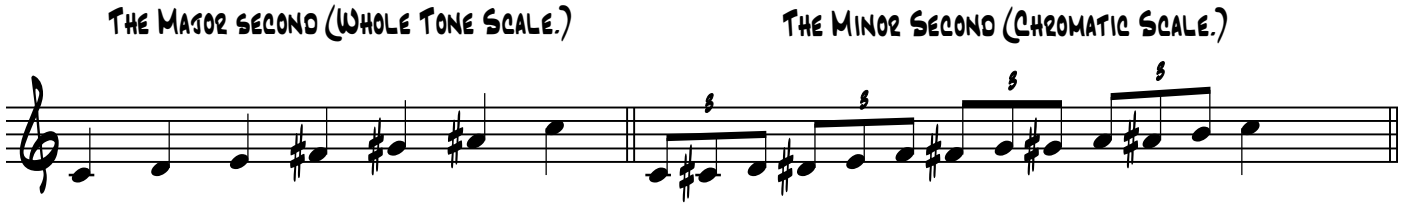
Dividing The Octave In Equal Parts



Probably the first step one can make, if he or she wishes to depart from the use of traditional tonal and modal progressions and melodic structures, is to delve into material derived from the division of the octave into intervals of equal value.

The intervals that divide the octave into equal parts are the following...





Using the above material as a creative basis of harmonic progressions, melodies and scales, or even as tools for voicing and/or reharmonizing tonal or modal melodies, will sound different from the techniques used in Tonal and Modal textures. The reason for this fact, is that tonal and modal concepts, are based on the way the Overtone Series is shaped, which is a utterly natural structure-therefore Asymmetric, while this concept is based on Symmetry Alone.

Cadences, "Musical Gravity", Tonal Centers (Not always), Functions and all other aspects that define music as a language, are needless to say still present, but with a very different character.

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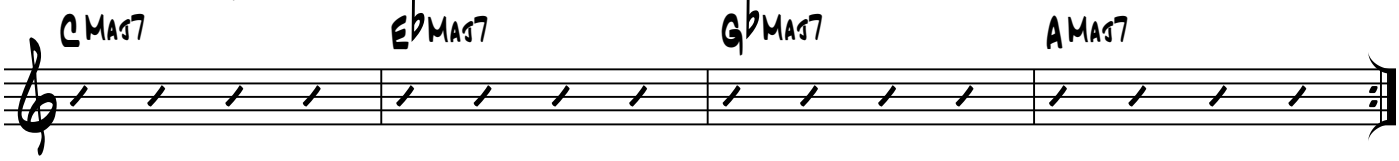
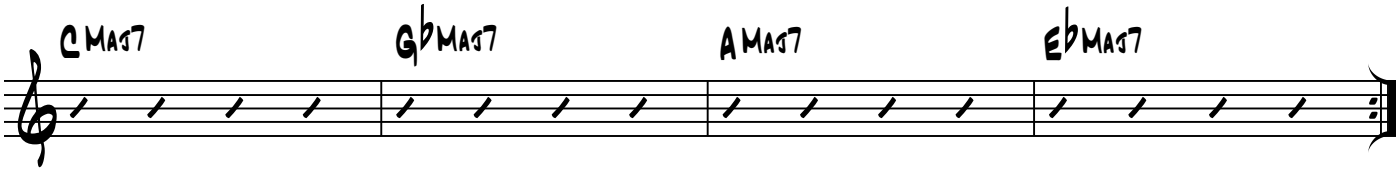
Using the Equal division of the octave, as a concept for creating harmonic progressions.

Example Utilizing Minor Thirds.

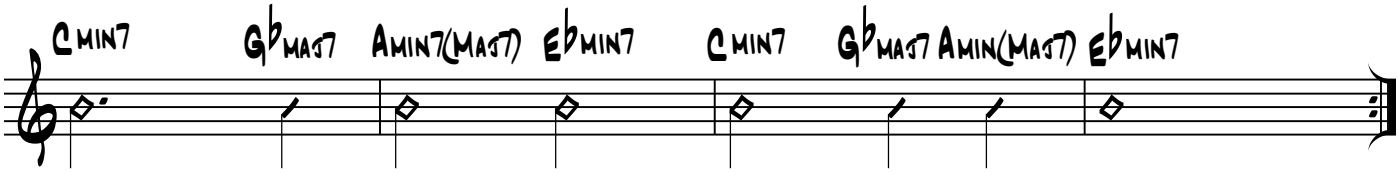


The Progression does not have to ascent or descent, it can be mixed...



The chord scales can be changed, according to the desired color..

Furthermore, the harmonic rhythm may be altered.



Conclusion:

Functions do not exist in the traditional manner (Tonic, Subdominant, Dominant.) However, there is a sense of gravity, similar to the one we conceive in tonal harmonies. In most cases, we perceive the first chord we hear in a progression as being the center of the tonality. Observe the rhythmic placement of the Cmin7 in the last 4bar phrase. It is placed on the strong parts of the phrase-as if it were a tonic chord, whilst the rest of the chords act and sound as if they had Subdominant to Dominant relationships.

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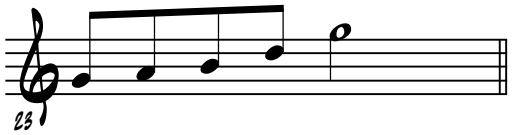
Using the Equal division of the octave, as a concept for creating Melodies.

The new material that came out from the division of the octave into equal parts, can be used to create melodic material. The same way we came up with harmonies, we can come up with melodies, by using the tritone, minor thirds and major thirds (Whole and half steps would be too disperse) as "roots" of arpegios, pentatonics, tetrachords or motives.

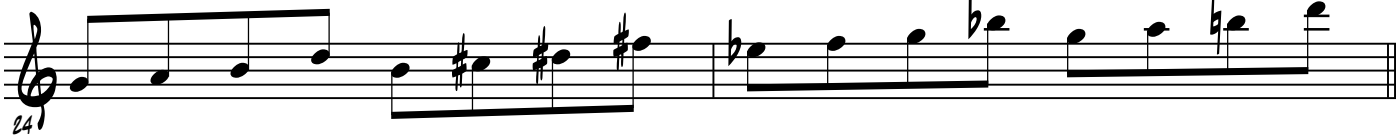
A G major tetrachord (G A B D), is diatonic to C melodic Minor chord scale.

Cmin(Maj7)



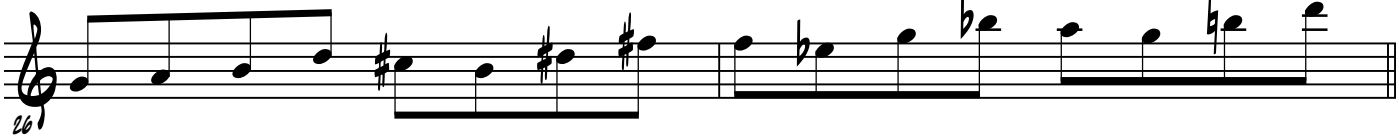
Using Major thirds as new places to start this tetrachord we can create new lines.

Cmin(Maj7)



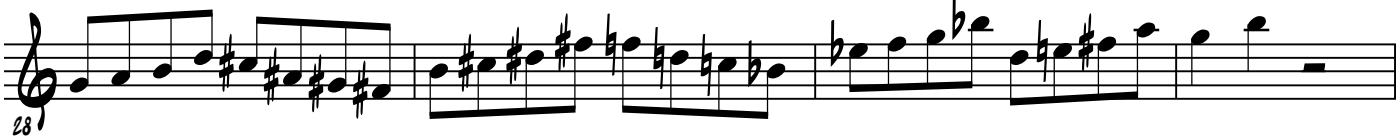
Permutations within each tetrachord, can smoothen the voice leading.

Cmin(Maj7)



To take it a step further, we can superimpose a V-I cadence, by adding the V of each tetrachord. In other words, instead of G B Eb G, we can play G F# B Bb Eb D G. The following example is very closely related to "Giant Steps" by John Coltrane.

Cmin(Maj7)



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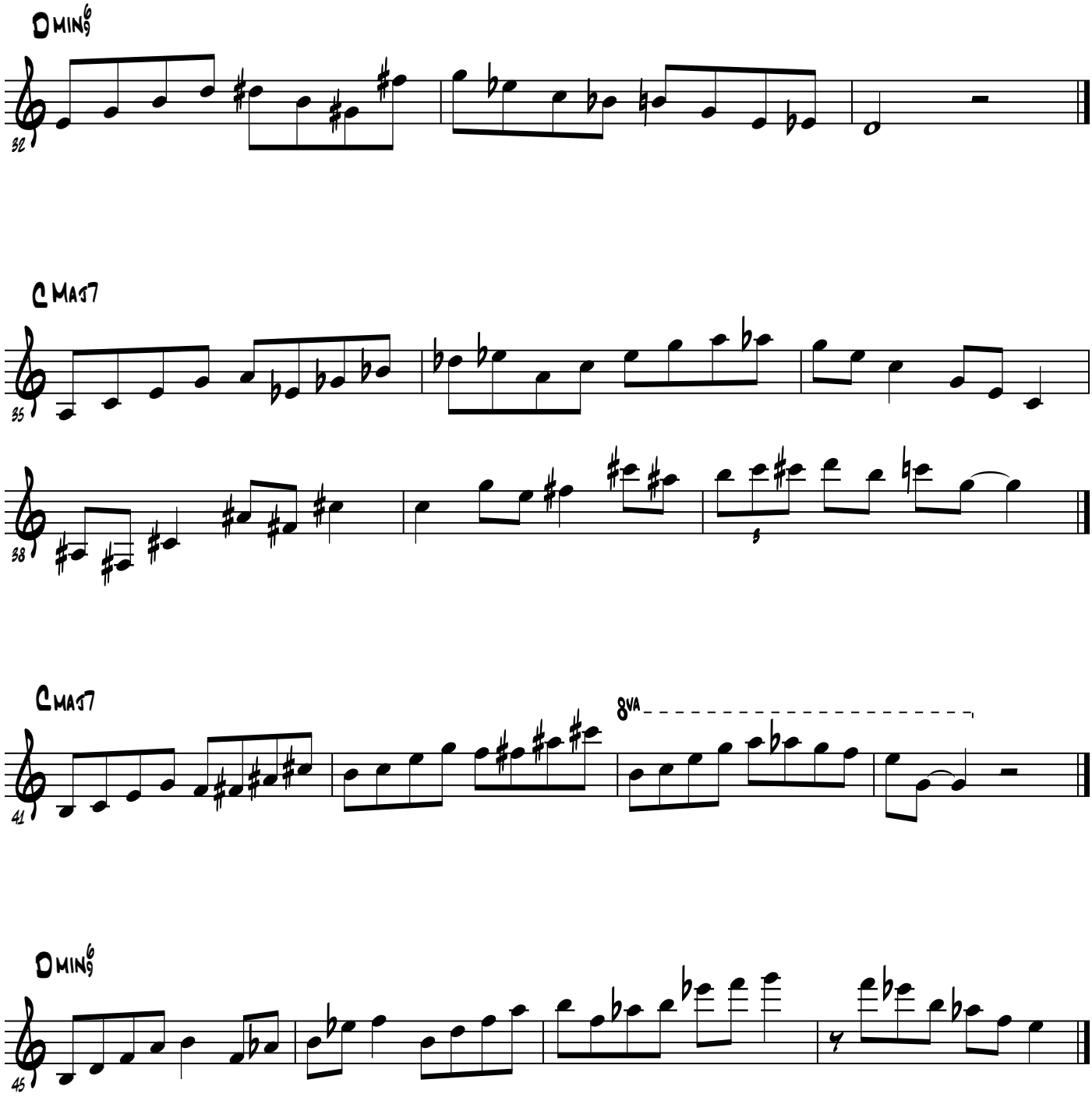
Some More Linear Examples...



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