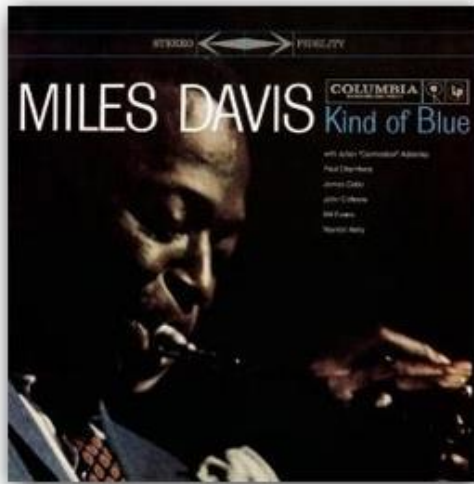


Chord Soloing with Block Chords: Part 1 (Minor Chords)

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Miles Davis: Kind of Blue

In our quest for chord soloing freedom, I thought I would jump right into the deep end and begin a series of articles about harmonizing melodies. This harmonization is sometimes called block chords. The term “Block chords” is borrowed from piano players. It is used to describe a locked hand style that harmonizes a melody and usually sounds best in the middle register of the piano. There are an infinite number of ways to harmonize a note so we will have to make some choices along the way. The first chord type we will look at is the minor chord. So our goal here is to harmonize any note that may be played over a minor chord (in theory any note from the chromatic scale.). As you have probably realized by now, the study of comping and chords is more about melody than anything else. The melody you

interact with and the melody of the comping. So let's begin:

Chord Tone Harmonization

Step one to is to harmonize the chord tones. So here are the 4 tones of a Gminor7 chord on top.(in melody position.) Note that I have added a leading tone(the natural 7) to the scale we are working with. This is sometimes called the minor be-bop scale.

The image shows musical notation for a G minor 7 chord and the minor be-bop scale. The top staff is in 4/4 time, showing the G minor 7 chord (G-Bb-D-F) and the scale G-A-Bb-B-C-D-Eb-F. The bottom staff shows the guitar fretboard with fingerings for the chord tones and scale notes. The fretboard is labeled with fret numbers 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 15. The notes are: G (3), Bb (3), D (3), F (3) for the chord; and G (3), A (5), Bb (6), B (8), C (10), D (11), Eb (13), F (14), G (15) for the scale. The dynamic marking is *mf*.

Gminor7 inversions

Chord tension harmonization

Let's look at the non-chord tones. We have some choices here. We can treat these non chord tones as chord tensions, meaning we can build Gmin9, Gmin11, Gmin13 in order to include these notes.

Gmin7

mf

T	3	5	6	8	10	11	13	14	15
A	3	3	6	6	8	8	11	11	15
B	3	3	7	7	10	10	10	10	15
B	3	3	5	5	8	8	10	10	15

Gmin Chord Extensions

Another way to deal with these chord tensions is to use passing diminished chords. The diminished chords imply a dominant7 and we achieve a 5 to 1 resolution between each non-chord tone and chord tone. Check out Wes Montgomery!

Gmin7

mf

T	3	5	6	8	10	11	13	14	15
A	3	4	6	7	8	10	10	11	13
B	3	5	7	8	10	11	10	14	15
B	3	4	5	7	8	10	10	13	15

Gmin with Diminished Passing

As a rule of thumb, if I am going to land on a chord tension and stay there for a bit, I usually choose a Gmin with the tension. If my line is moving I use the diminished passing for harmonization. This is not a hard fast rule. You should do what sounds good to you.

Chord Alteration Harmonizations

So how do we harmonize a note that is not a chord tone or an alteration(i.e. not from the minor scale)? Well, chromatic material is most often used in passing. This means you shouldn't stand on a chromatic note. They are used in passing. The easiest way to deal with these other notes is to choose the voicing above or below the chromatic note, and to use that voicing displaced. Here is an extreme example:

Gmin7

mf

T 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4

A 3 3 4 6 6 7 7 8 10 10 11 13 15 13 11 11 10 8 8 7 7 6 4 4

B 3 4 5 7 7 8 9 10 11 11 12 14 15 14 12 12 11 10 9 8 8 7 6 5 4 4

Gmin7 Chromatic Alterations

Aeolian and Dorian

We need to also be aware of the type of minor scale we are harmonizing. The natural minor (aeolian) or the dorian mode (which contains a natural 6). The Aeolian sounds a bit better when using passing diminished so you can choose to harmonize the dorian's natural 6 as a minor6 chord instead of a passing diminished like I did. It is a matter of taste. Here are the differences.

Dorian Minor

Aeolian Minor

mf

T 3 5 6 8 10 12 13 15 3 5 6 8 10 11 13 15

A 3 4 6 7 8 11 11 15 3 4 6 7 8 10 11 15

B 3 5 7 8 10 12 12 15 3 5 7 8 10 11 12 15

B 3 4 5 7 8 11 12 15 3 4 5 7 8 10 12 15

Gmin7 Dorian and Aeolian

Miles Davis So What solo harmonized with Block chords

As an example, I have transcribed Miles Davis classic solo over "So What" from the album [Kind of Blue](#) (Which I am sure you own.) I am using all the techniques above. Doing work like this is great because you get familiar with changing voicings fast, and you can build up lick and material that you can use. The solo I am playing along with is 80% of the original tempo.



Miles_Davis_So_Wh
at_Block_Chords.mp

[Miles Davis So What Block Chords.mp3](#)

Miles Davis Solo on So What
 Harmonized what block-chords

Dmin

TAB

TAB

TAB

Ebmin

TAB

TAB

23

Dmin

28

40

45

ChordAddict.com

2/3

48

16 (16) 13 9 (9) 6 7 9 7 6 6 4 4 4 6

18 (18) 12 7 (7) 0 7 0 0 4 4 0 0 4 6

16 (16) 12 0 (0) 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 4 6

52

6 4 7 6 4 7 6 4 8 6 9 8 11

4 6 5 4 3 6 6 7 6 6 7 11

5 6 5 5 3 6 0 3 0 0 0 7 11

55

8 4 10 12 13 15 (15) 12 (12) 8 5 8 12 15 12

7 6 10 10 13 14 (14) 10 (10) 6 6 7 11 14 10

7 4 10 10 12 13 (13) 10 (10) 7 5 7 11 15 10

7 4 10 10 12 12 (12) 10 (10) 7 5 7 11 14 10

60

8 10 8 7 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 9 10

6 10 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 8 10

7 10 7 7 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 8 10

7 10 7 6 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 7 10

63

12 8 5 (5) 3 6 4 5 3 3 3

10 6 6 (6) 5 5 4 5 3 5 5

10 7 5 (5) 5 5 4 5 3 5 5

10 7 5 (5) 5 5 4 5 3 5 5

ChordAddict.com

3/3

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What Now

You should start working with harmonizing melodies that you like over minor chords. Transcribe or look at transcription books if you need inspiration. Practice in all keys and focus on getting this material into you playing.