

# Four-Note Groupings, Part Two

By Ed Saindon

Continuing our study of four-note groupings, we will address four-note grouping combinations on Dom 7 and Dom 7 sus chords. Since there are many scale choices for a Dom7 or Dom 7 sus chord, there are many four-note grouping possibilities that can be combined as a means of generating lines.

## CONSIDERATIONS WITH FOUR-NOTE GROUPING COMBINATIONS

Note that Dom 7 and Dom 7 sus chords may be interchangeable. When using combinations of four-note grouping pairs for a Dom 7 or Dom 7 sus chord, here are some considerations:

*Combinations from the same scale.* Four-note grouping pairs that come out of the same chord scale are effective choices. For example, on a C Dom 7 chord, using A-flat and G-flat triads (both come from the Altered scale) is an effective combination.

Ex 1A C7 (A<sup>b</sup>) (G<sup>b</sup>) F-

*Combinations from different scales.* Another option for a Dom 7 chord is to use a four-note grouping from one scale and a grouping from another scale. In this case, going from a scale with natural tensions like Mixolydian to an Altered scale sounds musical and logical. For example, on a C Dom 7 chord, going from A minor to E-flat minor makes for a strong and interesting line.

Ex 1B C7 (A) (E<sup>b</sup>-) F-

*Reharmonized approaches to the I chord.* The use of four-note grouping combinations also allows the improviser to suggest various reharmonization possibilities. For example, on a V7 – I cadence, certain combinations of four-note groupings can suggest alternate harmonic approaches resolving to the I chord. The following example uses an F minor and B-flat major four-note grouping on the G Dom 7 sus chord. This suggests a IV – flat V7 cadence to the I chord.

Ex 1C G7sus4 (F-) (E<sup>b</sup>) C

The next example illustrates a combination of four-note groupings for a Dom 7 sus chord, which suggest the sound of a flat VI – flat II resolving to the I chord.

Ex 1D G7sus4 (A<sup>b</sup>) (D<sup>b</sup>) C

*Major vs. minor triads.* Examples 1E and 1F show the comparison between four-note grouping combinations based on major triads over a Dom 7 chord versus four-note grouping combinations based on minor triads. Notice the strong color variation from one example to the next.

Ex 1E C7 (E<sup>b</sup>-) (D) (C) (B<sup>b</sup>)  
 Ex 1F C7 (E<sup>b</sup>-) (D) (C) (B)

## SAMPLE FOUR-NOTE GROUPING COMBINATION LINES

The improviser is encouraged to experiment with the many possible combinations of four-note groupings. With the many possible individual four-note grouping choices as well as the combination of all of the four-note grouping possibilities, the improviser can play line after line based upon this concept without falling into licks or repetitive phrases. Examples 2A through 2V illustrate some of the myriad of four-note grouping possibilities that can be used over a C Dom7 chord. Please note that in the following examples, a Dom 7 chord may be interchangeable with a Dom 7 sus chord.

Ex 2A C7 (C) (B) (A) (G)

Ex 2B C7 (C) (B) (A) (G<sup>b</sup>) F-

Ex 2C C7 (C) (B) (A) (F) F-

Ex 2D C7 (C) (B) (A) (E<sup>b</sup>-) F-

Ex 2E C7 (C) (B) (A) (D) F-

Ex 2F C7 (C) (B) (A) (D<sup>b</sup>) F-

Ex 2G C7 (C) (B) (A) (C) F-

Ex 2H C7 (C) (B) (A) (B<sup>b</sup>) F-

Ex 2I C7 (C) (B) (A) (B) F-

Ex 8x C7 (E7-)

Ex 8y C7 (E7-)

Ex 8z C7 (F7-)

Ex 8A C7 (F7)

Ex 8B C7 (G7-)

Ex 8C C7 (G7)

Ex 8D C7 (A7-)

Ex 8E C7 (A7)

Ex 8F C7 (B7-)

Ex 8G C7 (B7)

Ex 8H C7 (E7)

Ex 8I C7 (E7)

Ex 8J C7 (E7-)

Ex 8K C7 (A7)

Ex 8L C7 (E7-)

Ex 8M C7 (E7-)

#### FOUR-NOTE GROUPING SOLO ON A STANDARD

The following solo illustrates how four-note groupings can be used to construct lines. The solo consists of two choruses of a solo based on the progression of a well-known standard. The solo is preceded by a chart that lists the specific four-note groupings selected in creating the solo.

#### STELLA BY MOONLIGHT

Points of interest:

- Emphasis on tensions and “unusual” notes including sharp 11 and sharp 5 on Maj 7, natural 13 on Min 7 chord, natural 9 on Min 7 flat-5 chord.
- Tension balance between more “in” four-note groupings contrasted with more “out” four-note groupings.
- Skipping every other note in the grouping in order to create angularity.
- Use of chord alteration.
- Use of incomplete four-note groupings.
- Connection of grouping via half-step approach.
- Prominent use of motives throughout solo.



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# STELLA BY MOONLIGHT

## CHORUS 1

Ex 9A

Chord progression for Chorus 1:

C G- C- B- C- F7 G D-  
 E-7(s) A7 C-7 F7

E- D- E G- B-  
 F-7 B-7 E-MA7 A-7

G- F D B- C- C D- C-  
 B-MA7 E-7(s) A7 C-7 B-7 E-7

C F G- G A- E-  
 FMA7 G-7 G7 A-7(s) G7

D- E- F E-  
 G7 G7 C-7 C-7

B- A- D F C  
 A-7 A-7 B-MA7 B-MA7

D B- G- E- D-  
 E-7(s) A7 D-7(s) G7

B- E- B F D C  
 C-7(s) F7 B-MA7 B-MA7

## CHORUS 2

Chord progression for Chorus 2:

D C- B- D-  
 E-7(s) A7 C-7 F7

E- B- F B-  
 F-7 B-7 E-MA7 A-7

G- D B- A D- F  
 B-MA7 E-7(s) A7 C-7 B-7 E-7

A- D A- C- A- B-  
 FMA7 G-7 G7 A-7(s) G7

A- D- E- F B-  
 G7 G7 C-7 C-7

E- E- D- B- D G-  
 A-7 A-7 B-MA7 B-MA7

G- B C D-  
 E-7(s) A7 D-7(s) G7

B- B G- D-  
 C-7(s) F7 B-MA7 B-MA7

\* 1, 3, 4, 5 Four Note Grouping



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# STELLA BY MOONLIGHT

## CHORUS 1

EX 38

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of eight staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music is primarily composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings. Above the notes, various chords are indicated, including E-7(b5), A7, C-7, F7, F-7, Bb7, EbMA7, Ab7, BbMA7, E-7(b5), A7, D-7, Bb-7, Eb7, FMA7, G-7, C7, A-7(b5), D7, G+7, C-7, Ab7, BbMA7, E-7(b5), A7, D-7(b5), G7, C-7(b5), F7, and BbMA7. The score concludes with a double bar line.

## CHORUS 2

The musical score for Chorus 2 consists of ten staves of music. The notation includes various rhythmic values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, rests) and chord symbols. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major / D minor). The chord symbols are as follows:

- Staff 1: E-7(b5), A7, C-7, F7
- Staff 2: F-7, Bb7, EbMA7, Ab7
- Staff 3: Bb, E-7(b5), A7, D-7, Bb-7
- Staff 4: FMA7, G-7, C7, A-7(b5), D7
- Staff 5: G+7, C-7
- Staff 6: Ab7, BbMA7
- Staff 7: E-7(b5), A7, D-7(b5), G7
- Staff 8: C-7(b5), F7, BbMA7

Improvisers are encouraged to write out their own solos based upon the concept of four-note groupings. Constructing and writing out solos is a good way to practice and incorporate the concept into one's playing.

**Ed Saindon** is a Professor at Berklee College of Music. Vic Firth recently released his signature-model mallet for vibraphone and marimba. The complete study on Four Note Groupings as well as other studies on improvisational techniques are available from Ed on his Website at [www.edsaindon.com](http://www.edsaindon.com).

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