

## The Seventh Harmonic Environment

The seventh harmonic environment is the most unusual of all the harmonic environments. It's almost never used in pop and folk music traditions, but it does play an important role in jazz and classical music.

7 | 1 • 2 • 3 4 • 5 • 6 • | 7

### Why does it sound so strange?

The most unusual thing about the seventh harmonic environment is the position of note 4, which falls in the position of a flatted fifth relative to the tonal center (note 7). This is the only harmonic environment of the major scale that contains a flatted fifth. Every other harmonic environment of the major scale contains what is called a “perfect fifth”. It's the presence of this flatted fifth that gives the seventh harmonic environment its unstable sound which never feels totally resolved. Pay special attention to note 4 as you improvise over the jam tracks and notice its surprising, exotic sound.

### Practice tips

While the seventh harmonic environment certainly has an unusual sound, that doesn't make it any less interesting or valuable to us as improvisers. Remember that *every* harmonic environment has at least one important lesson to teach you about harmony. The lesson contained in the seventh harmonic environment obviously has to do with that mysterious flatted fifth.

Remember also that every sound you discover through your Seven Worlds practice is actually available to you all the time. So even if you play mostly popular music in a style where the seventh harmonic environment would never appear, it will still enrich your personal vocabulary of sounds to spend time discovering this surprising collection of notes.

To learn the lessons of the seventh harmonic environment, I encourage you to listen carefully to each note you play and to make a special effort to play in a lyrical, expressive manner. Focus on producing a beautiful tone on your instrument and make each note express something. The seventh harmonic environment is the most exotic and mysterious of them all. If you give it the same attention you've given the others, it will teach you many beautiful lessons about composition, storytelling and harmony.

## Using the jam tracks

In the accompanying mp3 jam tracks, the filename tells you where to locate note 7 on your instrument. (Remember to transpose this note for your instrument if you play a transposing instrument.)

For example, the jam track in the key of A indicates that note 7 = G# for this track. So you just need to go to the note G# on your instrument and imagine this to be your note 7. Then use the tonal map drawing above to construct the rest of the scale.

The jam tracks in this collection let you experience the sounds of each harmonic environment in three very different ways:

**Meditative.** This is the best place to start. The meditative tracks give you lots of space for deep contemplation of the sounds. These tracks are ideal for learning the musical lessons contained in each harmonic environment. Play slowly and listen deeply to each note you play. Think of this activity as your opportunity to get to know the raw materials of your art. Later in the other tracks you can focus on creating music with these sounds. But first you should take the time to really get to know each sound, and the meditative tracks are perfect for that.

**Modern.** The modern tracks allow you to hear each harmonic environment in a style that will be more familiar to you. These tracks will help you discover the beautiful melodic possibilities that each harmonic environment offers you. Use these tracks to practice creating your own music, and embrace the creative challenge of finding your own musical voice within these diverse styles.

**Jazz.** The jazz tracks give you an opportunity to really stretch out and follow your imagination. These tracks provide the ideal supporting environment for more intellectual or abstract modal playing. Use these tracks to push the limits of your playing, both creatively and physically.

## Note about transposing for wind instruments

Remember that not all instruments use the same names for the notes. In the tracks, the key listed for each jam track always refers to the concert key. If you play an instrument that is not in concert key, remember to transpose this key name to the corresponding key on your instrument. (If you're not sure how to do this for your instrument, a quick Google search will lead you to many clear explanations.)