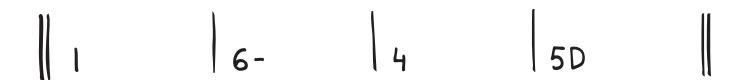


Chords 1, 6-, 4, 5D (early rock and roll)

Finally we arrive at one of the most famous chord progressions from early rock and roll music. I am sure it will sound familiar to you, as there are countless songs from the 40s and 50s that make use of these four chords in exactly this order:



Taken together with the previous track, this jam track has a very important lesson to teach you about the power of tonal centers. Notice that the last three chords in this progression are 6-, 4 and 5D, the exact same chords from the dark waltz that you studied in the preceding jam track. But notice that in this jam track, the effect of these three chords is so different that it's almost unrecognizable that they are the same chords.

In fact, here's a challenge for you. Play the current jam track and listen to a couple of complete lines so you can learn to judge how long each chord lasts. Then pause the jam track just at just the moment when the 1 chord is about to change to the 6- chord. Then just rest a moment in silence, because what we're going to do next is resume the jam track from this moment and see if we can recognize the chords 6-, 4 and 5D as the same chords you improvised over in the preceding track. I'll bet that even when you resume the recording, you'll still find it hard to be convinced that these are truly the same three chords that produced such a dark and ominous mood in the previous track.

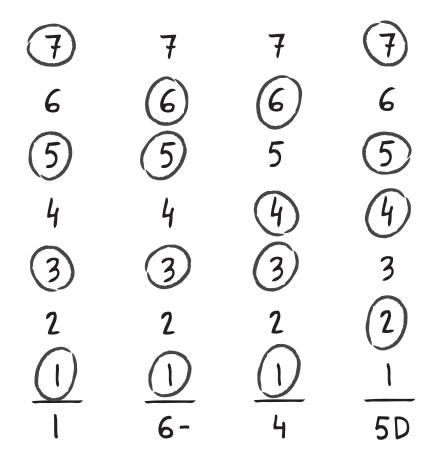
To explain this, we could point to many differences between the two tracks. This track has a faster tempo, with a bouncy 4/4 rhythm that is inherently more cheerful. Also the sound of the strumming guitars evokes memories that are quite different from our cultural associations surrounding the piano with its history in classical music. But by far the most important difference between the two tracks is the *tonal center*.

The structure of the dark waltz track made your ear feel note 6 as the tonal center. This is mainly because the song starts in the 6- chord but it's also because of the way the 5D chord is used to create tension leading up to each new line. In the present jam track, your ear will latch on to note 1 as the tonal center, both for its position in the progression and also because of the harmonic functions of the other chords.

And so what you have in the last two tracks is a nice example of the principle that "harmony is as harmony does". There is nothing inherently dark or sad about the 6- chord. It's true that the 6- chord sounded like it was heralding the end of the world in the previous jam track. But in the present

jam track, the 6- chord is just a pleasant passing chord in a much lighter song. Just by putting the chords in a different order, we can change their functions and cause them to affect you in an entirely different way.

Below are drawings of the chord notes:



Practice tips

Earlier in this collection we talked about the difference between triads and four-note chords. Triads create the pure and brilliant sound of baroque and classical music, as well as most modern rock and pop music. Four-note chords (when we include the seventh of the chord) produce a much more ambiguous sound which you can hear in impressionist and romantic music, and in contemporary jazz and bossa nova.

From the first moment you hear the chords of the strumming guitars in this jam track, I hope you notice immediately that this is the triad sound. There is no ambiguity or dissonance in any of these chords. Instead there is only the shining clarity of the triad.

Take a moment to get a pencil and paper, and sketch out the four chord columns as I have drawn them above. But for each chord, this time I want you to only put circles around the chord notes that belong to the triad. Remember that the triad means just the root, third and fifth of each chord. In the first few jam tracks I gave you drawings of these triads so that you could practice Melody Paths and Seven Worlds Expanded with just the triads. But this time I want you to make the drawing yourself, so you can practice thinking through the role of each note in each chord.

As soon as you have the triads mapped out, then I encourage you to practice both of the exercises just mentioned (Melody Paths and Seven Worlds Expanded) over this jam track. Not only will this help you get connected with the inner workings of the chord progression, but it's also a fantastic harmony exercise just to arpeggiate such an important and foundational chord progression on your instrument. With each harmony exercise like this one that you invest your time in, you'll come away having a deeper and more personal relationship with the sounds. And that's going to translate to having greater creative freedom and more precise melodic ideas when you're improvising.

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.)