

## CHAPTER 6

## Comping in Rhythm

As we discussed earlier, comping is a form of accompanying or complementing a song's melody or solos. The most standard of the comping methods we have gone through is 4-part close voicings with tension substitutions. These chords are usually played using syncopation.

First consider the underlying subdivision of the basic pulse. This is also known as the "feel." We will consider an eighth-note feel, as we did in chapter 5.

Then play the chords indicated by chord symbols *off* the beat instead of *on* the beat, either before (anticipating) or after (delaying) the original attack.

The figure illustrates comping using syncopation in 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of musical notation. Each system has a treble clef staff with chord symbols and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic pattern. The first system has four measures with chord symbols C-7, F7, Bb6, and Eb6. The second system has three measures with chord symbols A-7b5, D7, and G-6. The rhythmic pattern in the bass staff is a steady eighth-note pulse, with arrows pointing to the downbeats of each measure. The chord symbols are placed above the treble staff, and the rhythmic pattern is placed below the bass staff.

Fig. 6.1. Comping Using Syncopation

## “RANDOM” COMPING

Another way to use these voicings are on random attacks on beats while playing a walking bass line.

Random comping is based on syncopation. To get comfortable with random comping, first choose a tempo. Then choose a subdivision, as you did in chapter 5, and place attacks where you feel it best complements the melody. Meanwhile, the left hand can play a walking bass line or additional notes below the right-hand voicing on random attacks independent of when the right hand plays.

Here is an example of random comping using any note of the chord in the left hand part.

The musical notation for Figure 6.2 consists of two systems of piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. The first system contains three measures with chords E-7<sup>b5</sup>, A7, and C-7. The second system contains four measures with chords F7, F-7, B<sup>b</sup>7, and E<sup>b</sup>6. The right hand part features chords on offbeats (beats 2 and 4), while the left hand part plays a walking bass line.

Fig. 6.2. Simple Random Comping

Here is another example of random comping. The bass part consists of attacks on downbeats. Notice that chords are not always voice led.

The musical notation for Figure 6.3 consists of one system of piano accompaniment in 4/4 time with five measures. The chords are B6/9, B<sup>b</sup>7, E<sup>b</sup>6/9, A<sup>b</sup>7, and E<sup>b</sup>6. The right hand part features chords on offbeats, while the left hand part plays a walking bass line with attacks on downbeats.

Fig. 6.3. Random Comping with Bass Activity

Here is an example of random comping that has a more active bass line than figure 6.3.



TRACK 22

Fig. 6.4. Random Comping with Active Bass Line

## PARTICALIZED RANDOM COMPING

*Particalization* is the use of displaced chord fragments. In random comping, you can particalize a voicing rather than use the entire chord. This can reduce conflicts in register between you and the soloist.

Here is a comping part.

Fig. 6.5. Comping without Rhythm

Here is a particalized random comping part for that same progression.

Fig. 6.6. Particalized Random Comping

Here is the original progression.

A-7                      D7                      G-7                      G7                      CMaj7

Fig. 6.7. Progression before Particalization

Here is that progression with particalized random comping.

A-7                      D7                      G-7                      G7                      CMaj7

Fig. 6.8. Particalized Random Comping

Here is an example of particalized random comping in “Sapphire,” bars 31 and 32.

Gb7                      F-7                      E-7                      Eb7                      D-7

Fig. 6.9. Particalized Random Comping: Bars 31 and 32 of “Sapphire”

## PIANISTICIZING YOUR ACCOMPANIMENT

*Pianisticizing* a progression adds variety by using multiple registers of the keyboard, displacing the components of the voicings. The melody stays intact.

Here is a pianisticized passage in “Sapphire.”

Fig. 6.10. Bars 31 to 34 from “Sapphire” (Pianisticized)

Fig. 6.11. “Sapphire”

In figure 6.12, the melody of “Theme for John” has been harmonized and pianisticized with additional activity in the left hand.

Fig. 6.12. Pianisticizing “Theme for John”

Other pianisticization examples on the CD include tracks 2, 5, 8, 11, and 14.

## Windows for Pianisticization

When you have a sustained melody note, you can use that space as a *window* to pianisticize it by:

1. Filling it with a simple melody based on the chord scale.
2. Approaching the target chord with V7, subV7, or V7sus4 or a passing diminished chord derived from an incomplete dominant 7th with tension  $\flat 9$ .
3. Using constant structures.

In this example, the window is closed with a simple connecting line, the last note of which approaches the target melody note in the following measure.

Fig. 6.13. Closed Window with Harmonization

Here is that same window pianisticized.

Fig. 6.14. Closed Window Pianisticized

Here is an example of filling in a window played by a soloist. The soloist's note is common to each chord. Note the derivative bass line (see chapter 7).

Fig. 6.15. Windows with Constant Structures

# PRACTICE

## Exercise 6.1. Syncopated Comping

Comp this progression, attacking on the eighth-note subdivisions indicated by arrows.

B $\flat$ 6                      B $\circ$ 7                      C-7                      F7

B $\flat$ 6                      G7                      C-7                      F7

A-7 $\flat$ 5                      D7                      G-7                      C7                      C-7                      F7                      B $\flat$ 6                      E $\flat$ 6

A $\flat$ -7                      D $\flat$ 7                      G $\flat$ 6                      C $\flat$ 6                      C-7 $\flat$ 5                      F7                      B $\flat$ 6

## Exercise 6.2. Random Comping

Choose any lead sheet from appendix A to practice random comping, playing right hand voicings on random attacks while the left hand plays a walking bass line. Then try the same tune with random attacks in both hands, with the left hand providing additional notes to the right-hand voicing.