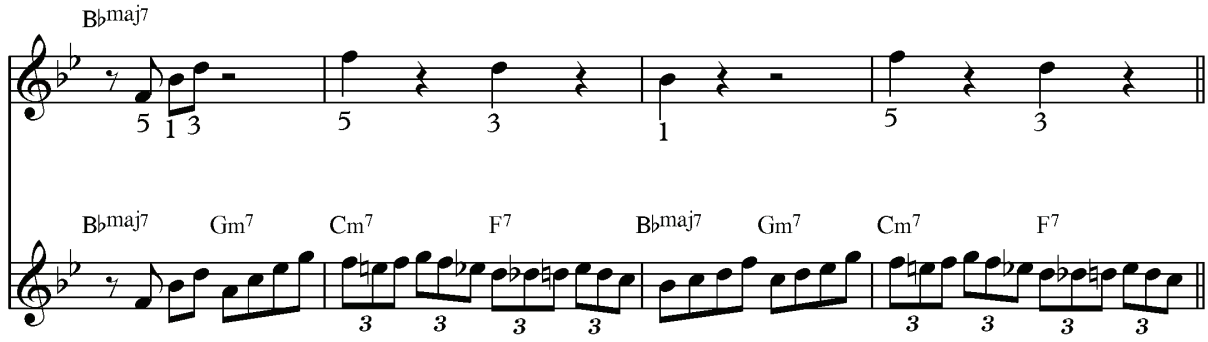
OTHER DIATONIC TECHNIQUES

TRIADS

The tonic triad is the core of tonal music and diatonic playing. It is necessary to practice ways of embellishing this fundamental musical building block. It is crucial to be aware of the underlying background and middle ground harmonies when improvising diatonically.

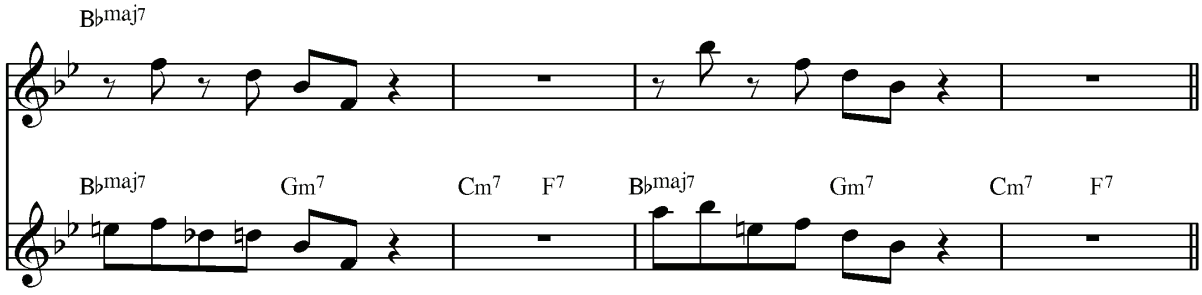
EMBELLISHING TRIADS: EXAMPLES FROM THE MASTERS

- Sonny Stitt “Eternal Triangle”



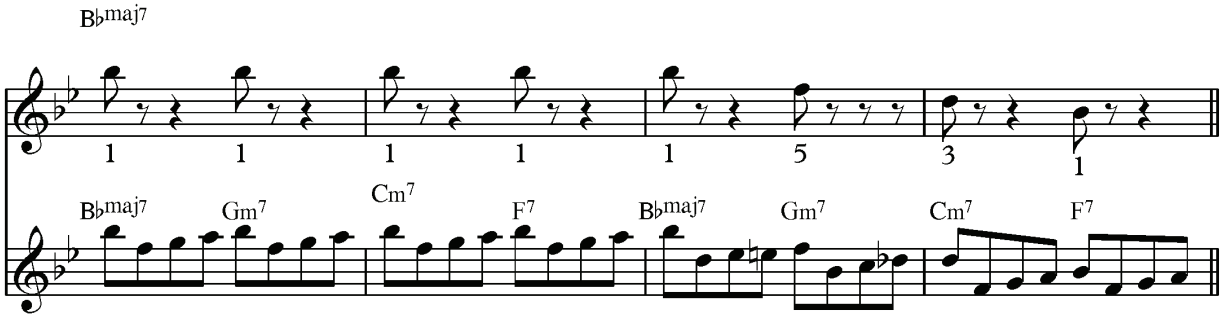
In this example Stitt uses the key’s tonic triad throughout the first four measures of the A section. Here he is using an approach that relies on the background perspective, since all four measures are based on the I chord.

- Dexter Gordon “Red Cross”



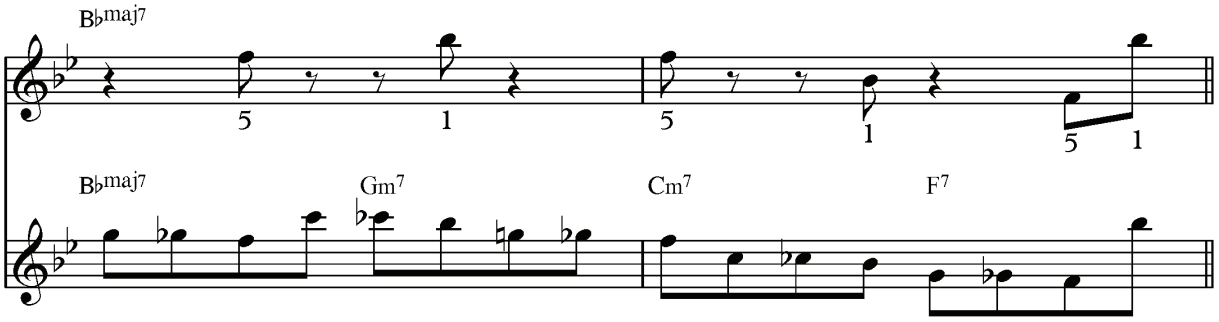
Gordon also embellishes the tonic triad in this example. He approaches each note of the triad with a half step from below. The background perspective is also used here.

- Dexter Gordon “Red Cross”



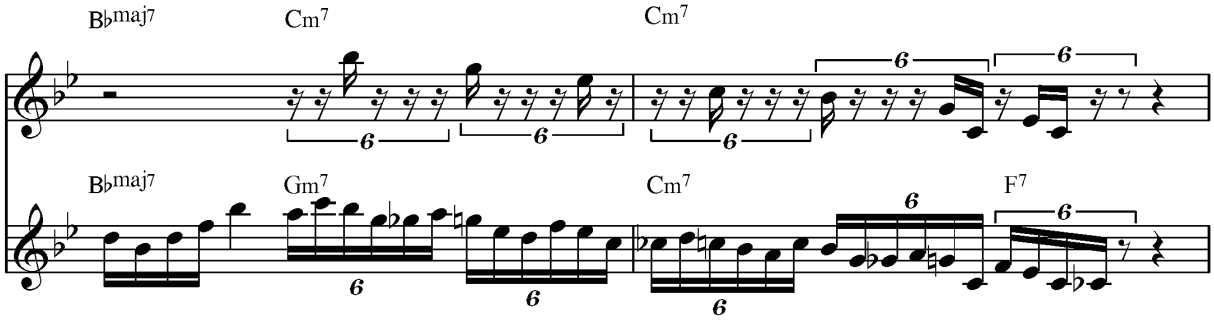
Gordon also ornaments the tonic triad in this example. Each chord tone is approached with a three-note group.

- Cannonball Adderley “Oleo”



This embellishment only ornaments the root and fifth of the tonic triad, but a 3/4 cross rhythm is also implied.

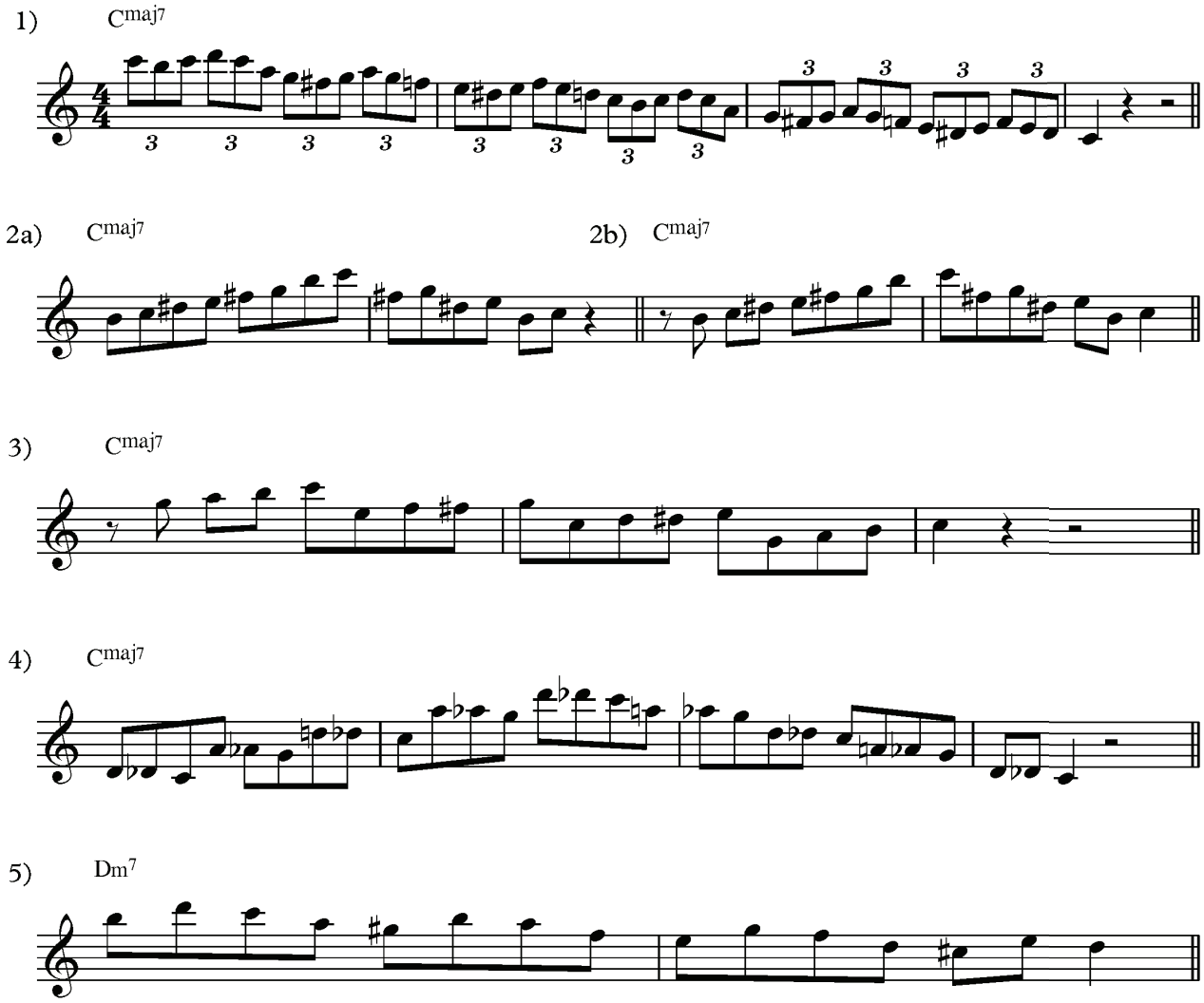
- John Coltrane “Good Bait”



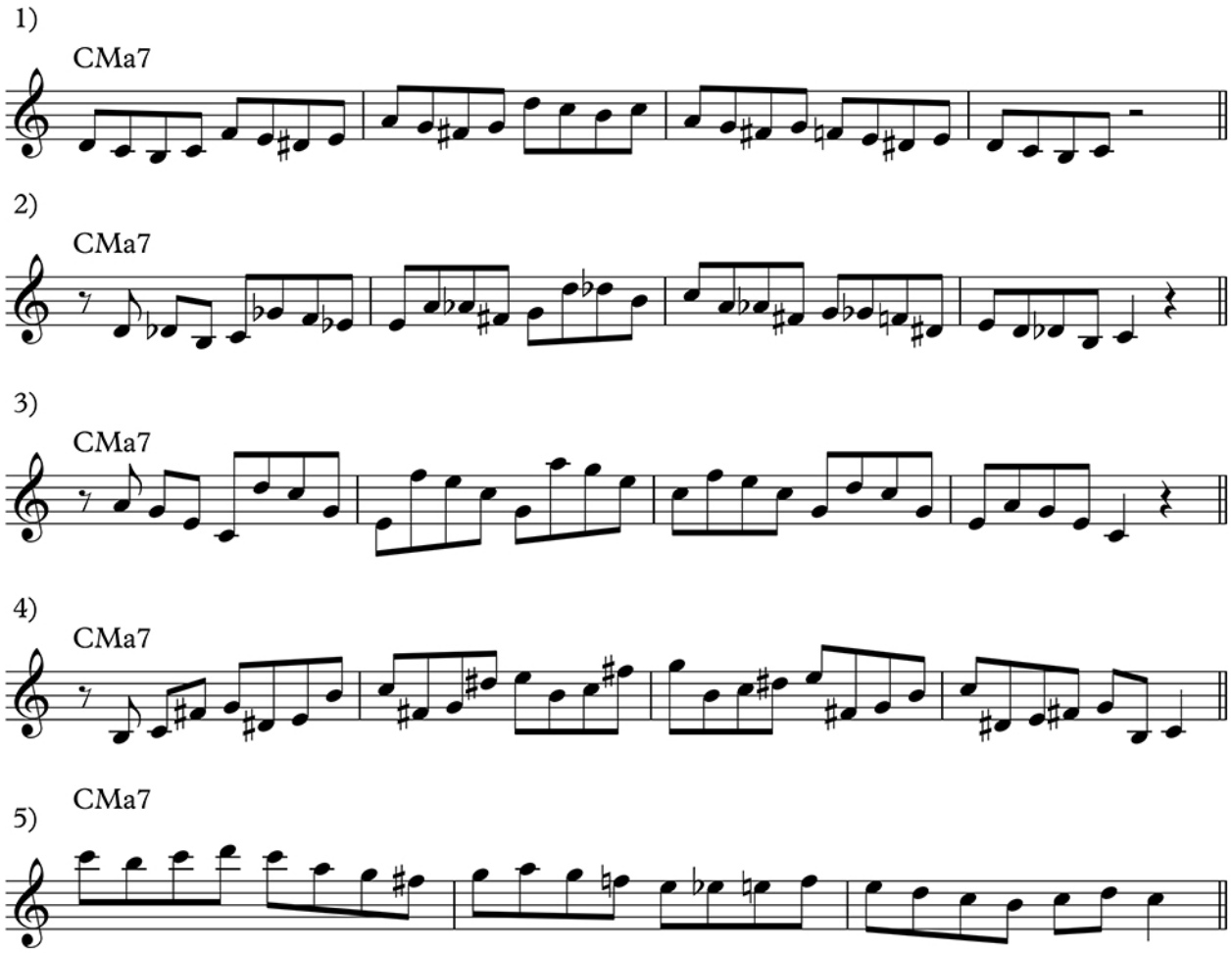
Here Coltrane performs an embellishment of the ii^7 chord. In contrast to the earlier examples, it is not the I chord which is prolonged but the predominant chord Cm^7.

TRIADIC EMBELLISHMENTS: EXERCISES DERIVED FROM THE MASTERS

All the derived exercises are transposed to the key of C but should be practiced in all keys.



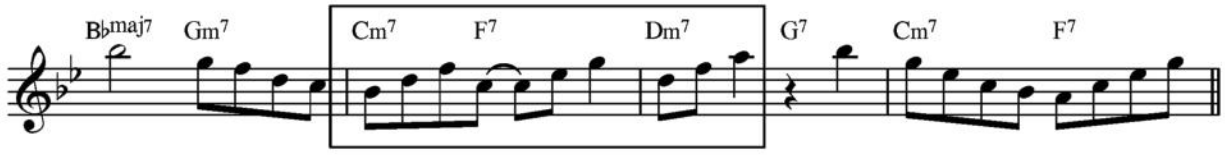
There are countless other ways to ornament triads and seventh chords besides what is displayed in these examples. The following exercises are also derived from the jazz tradition.



SEQUENCES: EXAMPLES FROM THE MASTERS

Sequences are very effective for expressing middle ground and foreground harmonies. Often diatonic sequences are hidden by ornamental pitches, but sometimes they are more obvious.

- Sonny Stitt "Eternal Triangle"



Stitt uses the three diatonic triads B♭maj – Cmin – Dmin in sequence.