



Organ Padding Accompaniment for the Diatonic and Chromatic Harmonica

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A couple of years ago I wrote an entire series on blues harmonica accompaniment playing. An area I would like to expand on is one of the ways the organ approaches accompaniment playing, called **Padding**.

Padding is holding a chord voicing (such as 3rds and flat-7ths) for an entire chord change. This is basically playing sustained chords for accompaniment instead of playing a series of licks or repetitive lines.

Example 1 demonstrates this padding concept... played best to a slow blues. This example can be played to a minor blues as well. Play softly and use a throat tremolo to achieve the Leslie Speaker Cabinet sound organ players get when performing. In place of the 2 draw/5 draw split embouchure you could choose to use a 5 draw flutter or 4 draw/5 draw shake. All of these will sound really nice.

Ex. 1 – G Harmonica in Second Position (Key of D)

5 2 4+ 4 5 5 6+
1+ 1 2 2 3+

6+ 4+ 4 5 4+
3+ 1+ 1 2 1+

4+ 4+ 4 5 6+ 5+ 6+ 6+ 5 5
1+ 1+ 1 2 3+ 2+ 3+ 3+ 4 4

The chromatic harmonica does a great job presenting this type of playing as well. A great example of this is "Miss Bessie Mae" by Sunnyland Slim with George "Harmonica" Smith on chromatic harmonica (*Slim's Got His Thing Goin' On* on Sequel Records NEX CD 212).

Example 2 is the most dissonant way of playing to a traditional slow blues.

Ex. 2 – C Chromatic in Third Position (Key of D)

4/4 time signature. Key signature: one sharp (F#).
 Staff 1: **I7** chord. Notes: D4 (whole), E4 (half), F#4 (half), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter).
 Staff 2: **IV7** chord. Notes: D4 (whole), E4 (half), F#4 (half), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter).
 Staff 3: **V7** chord. Notes: D4 (whole), E4 (half), F#4 (half), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter).
 Fingering: 4/1, 4/1, 6/3, 6+/3+, 4/1, 5/2, 5/2, 5/2, 4/1, 3/3, 3/4, 5, 6+/3+, 6/3, 6+/3+, 5/2, 5/2, 4/1, 4/1, 3.

Example 3 uses the same fake octave idea, but this time using note combinations that are tamer.

Ex. 3 – C Chromatic in Third Position (Key of D)

4/4 time signature. Key signature: one sharp (F#).
 Staff 1: **I7** chord. Notes: D4 (whole), E4 (half), F#4 (half), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter).
 Staff 2: **IV7** chord. Notes: D4 (whole), E4 (half), F#4 (half), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter).
 Staff 3: **V7** chord. Notes: D4 (whole), E4 (half), F#4 (half), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter).
 Fingering: 5/2, 5/2, 6/3, 6/3, 6/3, 6+/3+, 5/2, 4/1, 5/2, 3/3, 3/4, 5, 6+/3+, 6/3, 6+/3+, 5/2, 3/3, 3/4, 5, 5/2, 5/2, 4, 3.

Example 4 uses octaves (mainly root notes) for a very “matching” sound. In other words, not too dissonant.

Ex. 4 – C Chromatic in Third Position (Key of D)

5 1

IV7 I7

6 2 6 2 6+ 2+ 5 1 4 3 4 5 1 3 3 4 5

V7 IV7 I7 V7

6+ 2+ 6 2 6+ 2+ 5 1 3 3 4 5 5 1 5 1 4 3

Finally, Example 5 uses a mixture of techniques—focusing more on a lick-based accompaniment idea within this organ padding concept.

Ex. 5 – C Chromatic in Third Position (Key of D)

I7

3 3 4 5 6 3 6+ 5 4 5 3 3 4 5 6 3 6+ 5 4 5 6 3 3 4 5

IV7 I7

7+ 3+ 7 3 6 6+ 5 1 3 3 4 5 6 3 6+ 5 4 5 6 5 3 2 3 3 4 5

V7 IV7 I7 V7

6+ 3+ 6 3 6+ 3+ 5 2 3 3 4 5 5 2 5 2 4 3

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