GUIDE TONE LINES APPLIED TO STANDARD PROGRESSION

Basic Guide Tone Line illustrated by the roots of the chords. Bass line connecting roots follows a Guide Tone Line.

Melodies can be created following other guide tone lines as the bass follows roots. Guide Tone Line that follows the 3rd & 7th is harmonically clear.
Guide Tone Line that follows the 5th is harmonically ambiguous, but colorful.

Guide Tone Line that follows the 9th is harmonically ambiguous, but colorful.

Four Guide Tone Lines together = harmony.
An improviser should follow a voice other than the root when creating melody lines in order to create a counterline to the bass. An ideal place to start is the 3rd. Typically, a descending line can be found in common progressions that begin and cycle back to the 3rd as illustrated below. Melodies can be created which aim for and follow these guide tones. Notice that the 3rd will resolve to the 7th, which resolves back to the 3rd. The example on the bottom line is from a John Scofield tune that Alex played at the workshop. Another tune that follows this guide tone line over this progression is Weaver of Dreams.

\[
\begin{align*}
E_{b}m\text{aj7} & \quad D_{\flat}o7 & \quad G_{b}7b9 \\
\text{Cm7} & \quad F7 & \quad B_{b}m7 & \quad E_{b}7 \\
A_{b}m\text{aj7} & \quad D_{b}9 & \quad E_{b}m\text{aj7} \\
F9 & \quad F_{b}m7 & \quad B_{b}7
\end{align*}
\]
Here is an “improvised” line that follows the 3rd through the progression. The lines do not have to begin on that note. In that way we have a lot more freedom than the bass line. In the first measure I lead to the 3rd with a Monk quote. The Fb and the Eb are played in two octaves before leading to the Db.

The guide tone line (C-Cb-Bb) is on the bottom of this line under an Eb pedal tone.

I lead to the Ab with a common bop line and sequenced it in the last two measures.
Following two Guide Tone Lines can create compound melodies.
Compound Melody framework using 3rd & 7th pairs

Abmaj7  Db9  Ebmaj7  Cm9  F9  Fm7  Bb7  Ebmaj7

Compound Melody framework using 3rd & 5th pairs. Note the interval between the lines. The two lines can sound independent at the range of a 6th but would not at a 3rd.

Abmaj7  Db9  Ebmaj7  Cm9  F9  Fm7  Bb7  Ebmaj7

Compound Melody framework using 5th & 7th pairs. Note the interval between the lines. The two lines can sound independent at the range of a 6th but would not at a 3rd.

Abmaj7  Db9  Ebmaj7  Cm7  F7  Bbm7  Eb7

Two very ambiguous Guide Tone Lines on the 5th & 9th can lead to very colorful melodies. Tunes that use this include Invitation, Candy and others.

Abmaj7  Db9  Ebmaj7  Cm7  F7  Fm7  Bb7  Ebmaj7

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This “improvisation is a compound melody created by following two independent voices through the progression. The top line follows the 5th & 9th, the lower voice follow the 7th & 3rd.

This line shows some extended arpeggios. The F9#11 uses an arpeggio from C melodic Minor. The E7#11 or Bb7 uses an arpeggio from B melodic minor.
The following Guide Tone Lines go against the grain. As they rise, tension is created by the ascension, the unexpected resolutions, and the new dissonances created by those resolutions. The basic line is shown on top—the bottom shows a possible melody that follows the against the grain guide tone line.
Here is another against the grain guide tone line shown with a possible melody realization.
This “improvisation” uses a rising, against the grain, guide tone line.