

JAZZ PIANO VOICINGS 101

Presented By

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CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

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- Quite possibly the biggest FLAW of jazz...yet the one aspect that piano players MUST master FIRST
- Chord symbols can be broken into 'families'
 - Major 7th
 - Minor 7th
 - Dominant 7th
 - Half-diminished
 - Diminished 7th

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MAJOR 7th family

- Spelled 1, 3, 5, 7 (all from the major scale)
- Here are SOME of the many ways that you might be asked to build a C major chord in jazz...

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MAJOR 7th family

Cmaj7

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MAJOR 7th family

C^{ma7}

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MAJOR 7th family

C^{Δ7}

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MAJOR 7th family

CM⁷

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MAJOR 7th family

C^{6/9}

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MAJOR 7th family

C

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MAJOR 7th family
(spelled 1, 3, 5, 7...all from the major scale)

**C^{maj7}, C^{ma7}, C^{Δ7},
CM⁷, C^{6/9}, C**

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MINOR 7th family

- Spelled 1, -3, 5, -7 (all from the *major* scale)
- Here are SOME of the many ways that you might be asked to build a C minor 7th chord in jazz...

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MINOR 7th family

Cmin7

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MINOR 7th family

Cmi7

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MINOR 7th family

C-7

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MINOR 7th family

Cm⁷

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The MINOR 7th family
(spelled 1, -3, 5, -7...all from the *major* scale)

Cmin7, Cmi7,
C-7, Cm⁷

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The DOMINANT 7th family

- Spelled 1, 3, 5, -7 (all from the *major* scale)
- Here are SOME of the ways that you might be asked to build a C dominant 7th chord in jazz...

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The DOMINANT 7th family

C^7 , C^9 , C^{13}

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The HALF-DIMINISHED 7th family

- Spelled 1, -3, -5, -7 (all from the *major* scale)
- Here are SOME of the ways that you might be asked to build a C half-diminished 7th chord in jazz...

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The HALF-DIMINISHED family

$Cm^7(\flat 5)$

Or ANY of the minor 7th ways of notation with
($\flat 5$) or (-5) in parenthesis

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The HALF-DIMINISHED family

$C\emptyset$

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The DIMINISHED 7th family

- Spelled 1, -3, -5, --7* (6) (all from the *major* scale)
- Here are SOME of the ways that you might be asked to build a C diminished 7th chord in jazz...

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The DIMINISHED family

C^{dim} or C^{dim7}

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

The DIMINISHED family

C° or $C^{\circ 7}$

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

Let's review...

- Major 7th (1,3,5,7) C^{maj7} , C^{ma7} , $C^{\Delta 7}$, CM^7 , $C^{6/9}$, C
- Dominant 7th (1,3,5,-7) C^7 , C^9 , C^{13}
- Minor 7th (1,-3,5,-7) C^{min7} , C^{mi7} , C^{-7} , Cm^7
- Half-diminished (1,-3,-5,-7) $Cm^{7(b5)}$, $Cm^{7(-5)}$, C°
- Diminished 7th (1,-3,-5,-7) C^{dim} , C^{dim7} , C° , $C^{\circ 7}$

CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE

- Major 7th
 - Dominant 7th
 - Minor 7th
- ...Constitute approximately 80% of the chord 'calls' in jazz.

TWO SCENARIOS...

- Playing as a part of a rhythm section
 - Piano, bass, drums...

OR

- Playing as an accompanist
 - Piano ONLY (no other instruments)

CHORD SPELLINGS VS. CHORD VOICINGS

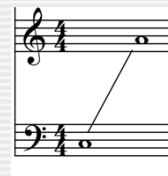
- Chord 'spellings' are simply functional association with the implied harmony (i.e. root, 3rd, 5th, 7th) and their various *inversions* (3rd, 5th, 7th, root...)
- Chord 'voicings' in jazz often include the following:
 - ESSENTIAL notes (3rd, 7th)
 - COLOR notes (9th, 13th, altered notes)
 - ROOTLESS (especially in a trio setting)

TRIO SETTING

- In most cases, the 'voicing' will be built in the LEFT HAND...
- The voicing can be 'extended' with the RIGHT HAND
- The ROOT of the chord will most often be covered by the bassist

VOICING 'TERRITORY'

- As with any sport, good jazz voicings have a playing field (boundary lines) that must be adhered to at all times...



VOICING 'TERRITORY'

- If the voicing extends TOO LOW...the result will be muddy, hard-to-decipher, ineffective chords
- If the voicing extends TOO HIGH...the result will be thin, brittle, ineffective chords



HIP JAZZ VOICINGS

- For each chord family, we'll provide TWO choices...the 'A' choice, and the 'B' choice...

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- Each choice will include 'scale degrees' (always built from the MAJOR scale point of view)

HIP JAZZ VOICINGS

- For each chord family, we'll provide TWO choices...the 'A' choice, and the 'B' choice...
- Each choice will include 'scale degrees' (always built from the MAJOR scale point of view)
- Always build chord voicings from BOTTOM to TOP (regardless of the scale degree)

HIP JAZZ VOICINGS


- MINOR 7th chord voicings...

‘A’	‘B’
9	5
-7	-3
5	9
-3	-7

MINOR 7th voicings use 4 note ‘stacks’


HIP JAZZ VOICINGS

- Let’s build a D-7 chord using the ‘A’ voicing:
- ‘D’ is the GRAND ROOT...(i.e. D = 1)



HIP JAZZ VOICINGS


- Let’s build the same D-7 chord using the ‘B’ voicing:
- ‘D’ is still the GRAND ROOT...(i.e. D = 1)



Although still ‘in bounds’, this is not as good of a choice

HIP JAZZ VOICINGS

- Here are ALL of the ‘A’ and ‘B’ voicings for MINOR 7th chords...



HIP JAZZ VOICINGS


- DOMINANT 7th chord voicings...

‘A’	‘B’
9	13
-7	3
3	-7

DOMINANT 7th voicings use 3 note stacks


HIP JAZZ VOICINGS

- Let’s build a G7 chord using the ‘A’ voicing:
- ‘G’ is the GRAND ROOT...(i.e. G = 1)



HIP JAZZ VOICINGS


- Let's build the same G7 chord using the 'B' voicing:
- 'G' is still the GRAND ROOT...(i.e. G = 1)



Although BOTH are 'in bounds', this is a better choice...

HIP JAZZ VOICINGS

- Here are ALL of the 'A' and 'B' voicings for DOMINANT 7th chords...



HIP JAZZ VOICINGS


- MAJOR 7th chord voicings

'A'	'B'
9	5
6	9
3	6

MAJOR 7th voicings use 3 note stacks


HIP JAZZ VOICINGS

- Let's build a CΔ7 chord using the 'A' voicing:
- 'C' is the GRAND ROOT...(i.e. C = 1)



HIP JAZZ VOICINGS


- Let's build the same CΔ7 chord using the 'B' voicing:
- 'C' is still the GRAND ROOT...(i.e. C = 1)



Although still 'in bounds', this is not as good of a choice

HIP JAZZ VOICINGS

- Let's build the same CΔ7 chord using the 'B' voicing:
- 'C' is still the GRAND ROOT...(i.e. C = 1)



Although still 'in bounds', this is not as good of a choice

HIP JAZZ VOICINGS

	'A'	'B'
• Minor 7 th	9	5
	-7	-3
	5	9
• Dom 7 th	-3	-7
	9	13
	-7	3
• Major 7 th	3	-7
	9	5
	6	9
	3	6


PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

Let's VOICE the following progression...

D⁻⁷ G⁷ C^{Δ7}


PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

- Since the first chord is D⁻⁷ choose *either* the 'A' or 'B' voicing...remembering that your choice MUST be in bounds...



PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

- Let's assume that you chose the 'A' voicing...

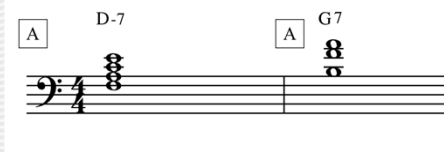


PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

- NOW...you are ready to PROGRESS to the G⁷ chord.
- Based on the choice you made for the D⁻⁷, one of the two choices for the G⁷ will now be a **closer & smoother** choice than the other...
- Either 'A' to 'A' or 'A' to 'B' is going to be a better choice...

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

- Here is what the 'A' to 'A' choice would look like...



PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

- Here is what the 'A' to 'B' choice would look like...

- As you can tell, 'A' to 'B' is a MUCH smoother choice!

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

- NOW...you are ready to PROGRESS from the G⁷ chord to the C^{Δ7} chord.
- Based on the choice you made for the G⁷, one of the two choices for the C^{Δ7} will now be a **closer & smoother** choice than the other...
- Either 'B' to 'B' or 'B' to 'A' is going to be a better choice...

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

- Here is what the 'B' to 'B' choice would look like...

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

- Here is what the 'B' to 'A' choice would look like...

- As you can tell, 'B' to 'A' is a smoother choice!

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

- Here is what the whole progression looks like...

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION!

- Here is what the same progression would look like if we simply used root position chord 'spellings'...

YOU be the judge...it is time to stop **spelling** and start **VOICING**

PICKING UP THE PACE

- It is good to have voicing choices, but choosing takes time...
- In all cases, you have to decide whether to **STAY** in the same voicing category from one chord to the next ('A' to 'A') or ('B' to 'B')...OR...whether to **SWAP** categories ('A' to 'B') or ('B' to 'A')
- You can reduce the amount of time it takes to 'choose' by simply looking at the **ROOT MOVEMENT** of the chords as they progress....

PICKING UP THE PACE

- Let's play the 'GREATER THAN...LESS THAN...OR EQUAL TO' game (sounds like 4th grade math!!!)

PICKING UP THE PACE

- If the **ROOT MOVEMENT** (one root to the next) is **GREATER** than the interval of a 3rd...**SWAP** ('A' to 'B') or ('B' to 'A')
- Example...F^{#-7} B⁷ E^{A7} ('A-B-A' or 'B-A-B')

PICKING UP THE PACE

- If the **ROOT MOVEMENT** (one root to the next) is **LESS** than the interval of a 3rd...**STAY** in the same category...('A' to 'A') or ('B' to 'B')
- Example...F⁻⁷ G⁻⁷ A⁻⁷ ('A-A-A' or 'B-B-B')

PICKING UP THE PACE

- If the **ROOT MOVEMENT** (one root to the next) is **EQUAL** to the interval of a 3rd...**STAY or SWAP** (depending upon the **DIRECTION** of the third. If the root moves **UP** a 3rd, **STAY**...If the root moves **DOWN** a 3rd, **SWAP**
- These general guidelines work in **MOST** cases, but you **MUST** stay within the boundary lines
- Examples... C^{A7} E⁷ STAY...('A-A') or ('B-B')
F⁷ D⁷ SWAP...('A-B') or ('B-A')

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- The bottom line for voicings...get from one chord symbol to the next, as smoothly as possible, while staying within the established boundary lines.
- Use 'hip' voicings that incorporate essential harmonic notes, color notes, and avoid duplicated effort.

HALF-DIMINISHED CHORDS

- HALF-DIMINISHED 7th chord voicings...

'A'	Alt. 'A'	'B'	Alt. 'B'
9	1	-5	-5
-7	-7	-3	-3
-5	-5	9	1
-3	-3	-7	-7

Use the alternate voicings when there is too much 'BITE' to the sound...

DIMINISHED 7th CHORDS

- DIMINISHED 7th chords are a bit of a PERFECT STORM...
- They are constructed by stacking a series of minor 3rd intervals (i.e. C-E^b-G^b-A)
- If you invert the notes of a diminished 7th, you end up with the same four notes (i.e. E^b-G^b-A-C)
- In essence, there are only THREE *different* diminished 7th chords

DIMINISHED 7th CHORDS

- C – (D[#]/E^b) – (G^b/F[#]) – A
- (C[#]/D^b) – E – G – (B^b/A[#])
- D – F – (A^b/G[#]) – B

DIMINISHED 7th CHORDS

D-7 D[#]dim7 E-7 A7

DIMINISHED 7th CHORDS

D-7 D[#]dim7 E-7 A7

Solve the chord voicing BEFORE/AFTER the diminished chord...THEN...simply choose what note would make a great ANCHOR NOTE for the diminished chord

DIMINISHED 7th CHORDS

D-7 D[#]dim7 E-7 A7

C – (D[#]/E^b) – (G^b/F[#]) – A...WHICH of these four notes would make the best anchor note (bottom note) for our diminished 7th chord? Answer...G^b/F[#]

DIMINISHED 7th CHORDS

The image shows four diminished 7th chords in root position on a bass clef staff in 4/4 time. The chords are: D-7 (root D), F#dim7/D# (root D#), E-7 (root E), and A7 (root A). Each chord is shown with its notes and a box containing its root letter (A, A, A, B).

- Play all diminished 7th chords in 'root position'...even though you MAY have to rename the root.
- Always put the ORIGINAL ROOT (D#) in your new chord symbol.