

Basic chords for Jazz

Alberto Betancourt (albetan)

Classical harmony works with triads, and any foreign sound is a dissonance that must be solved.

Jazz harmony works with chords of 4 or more sounds. Here there are not dissonances but colour or tension chords.

In **Bases for Scales, Chords and Modes** we have learnt classical triads.

Skipping by thirds we have discovered triads.

Skipping again to a fourth sound we have **basic jazz chords**.

These are the basic Jazz chords:

CM7 Dm7 Em7 FM7 G7 Am7 Bø

First, Third and fifth grades of chord are *harmonic sounds*.

Seventh grade is a *colour sound*.

By adding a seventh to a triad we have a colour chord, a *basic jazz chord*.

EXERCISE: Chords with left hand and arpeggios with right.

CM7 Dm7 Em7 FM7 G7

IM7 IIIm7 IIIIm7 IVM7 V7

These are **modal arpeggios**, because they are made over modal chords.

Am7 Bø CM7

VIIm7 VIIIm7b5 IM7

b^b b^b b^b

b^b b^b b^b

Treble clef: $D^{\flat}M7$, $E^{\flat}m7$, $Fm7$, $G^{\flat}M7$
 Bass clef: $IM7$, $IIIm7$, $IIIIm7$, $IVM7$

Treble clef: $A^{\flat}7$, $B^{\flat}m7$, C^{\flat} , $D^{\flat}M7$
 Bass clef: $V7$, $VIIm7$, $VIIIm7b5$, $IM7$

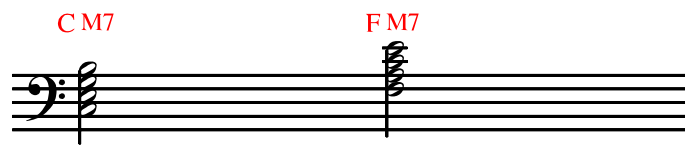
Treble clef: $DM7$, $Em7$, $F^{\sharp}m7$, $GM7$
 Bass clef: $IM7$, $IIIm7$, $IIIIm7$, $IVM7$

Treble clef: $A7$, $Bm7$, C^{\sharp} , $DM7$
 Bass clef: $V7$, $VIIm7$, $VIIIm7b5$, $IM7$

Follow this exercise in all keys. So you will master all jazz chords in each key. You are playing all basic arpeggios with right, a great tool for improvising.

Notice chords over grades I and IV:

They are *Major seventh chords* :

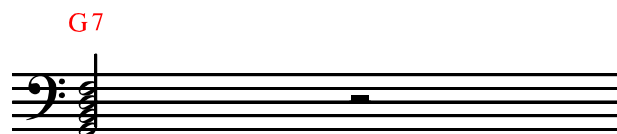


From first to second note there are 2 tones, being a major chord.

A half note under octave is a Major seventh. So we have a Major seventh chord.

CM7, FM7, Cmaj7, Fmaj7.

Notice chord over V grade: It is a *seventh chord*:

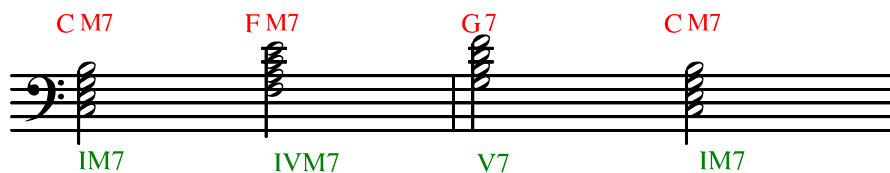


Triad G is a major chord with interval of 2 tones from first to second note.

One tone under octave is a seventh. So we have a seventh chord G7,

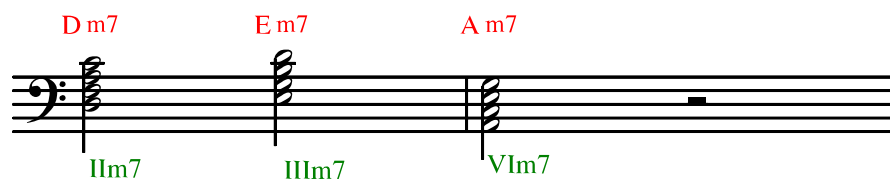
This is also called a *dominant seventh chord*.

These three chords IM7, IVM7, V7 are **primary chords** and they are enough to harmonize lots of tunes.



EXERCISE: Practise primary chords in all keys.

Notice chords over grades II, III and VI:



Between first and second note there is an interval of 3 half-tones, so they are minor chords.

Seventh is one tone under octave, so they are *minor seventh chords*,

Dm7, Em7, Am7

Notice chord over VII grade.

There is an interval of diminished fifth from first to third note.

B \emptyset

VIIIm7b5

This is a minor chord with a diminished fifth and with a seventh.

So we have a minor seventh chord with flat fifth: **Bm7b5** or **Bm7-5** or **B \emptyset** .

This one is also called **Half-diminished chord**.

Diminished chord:

When we skip by intervals of one and a half tones we have a diminished chord.

These ones are very useful as passing chords.

C dim C#dim D dim

Perform and learn all diminished chords.

Chord qualities:

Jazz harmony works with these chord qualities in each key:

Major, Seventh, Minor, Half-diminished and Diminished.

Practise this exercise in all keys:

C M7 C7 C m7 C \emptyset C dim

IM7 I7 Im7 Im7b5 Idim

Major Seventh Minor Half-diminished Diminished

Sixty basic Jazz chords:

We have five qualities in each key, and 12 keys; so there are 60 basic Jazz chords.

$D^{\flat}M7$ $D^{\flat}7$ $C^{\sharp}m7$ $C^{\sharp}\emptyset$ $C^{\sharp}dim$
 $IM7$ $I7$ $Im7$ $Im7b5$ $Idim$

$DM7$ $D7$ $Dm7$ $D\emptyset$ $Ddim$
 $IM7$ $I7$ $Im7$ $Im7b5$ $Idim$

Do it in all keys.

Arpeggios and chords in march rhythm:

Play ascending and descending arpeggios with right hand, and chords with left in a march pattern.

$CM7$ $C7$

Fingering:

Beginning in white key: 1 2 3 4_1 2 3 4 5

Beginning in black key: Same fingering, but putting 4 in wide part of the white key and passing thumb over to next black key

In classical fingering begin with finger 2 in black key and put finger 1 in next white key. If you have mastered classical fingering, go ahead and don't forget it.

Practical fingering is most easy... same for all tonalities.

Musical notation for Cm7 and Cø chords. The top staff shows a melodic line with fingerings 1, 4, and 5. The bottom staff shows the corresponding bass line with chords Cm7 and Cø.

Musical notation for Cdim and DbM7 chords. The top staff shows a melodic line with fingerings 1, 4, and 5. The bottom staff shows the corresponding bass line with chords Cdim and DbM7.

Practical fingering: Begin 1 in black key

Classical fingering: Put 2 in black key and 1 in next white key.

Musical notation for Db7 and C#m7 chords. The top staff shows a melodic line with fingerings 1, 4, and 5. The bottom staff shows the corresponding bass line with chords Db7 and C#m7.

Musical notation for C#m7b5 and C#dim chords. The top staff shows a melodic line with fingerings 1, 4, and 5. The bottom staff shows the corresponding bass line with chords C#m7b5 and C#dim.

Follow this exercise in all keys.

Practise it a lot in order to save it in subconscious. So you will master all sixty basic Jazz chords, you will get a great ear training, your fingers will learn their job in harmony, and you will develop a great rhythmic sense.

Chord Families:

Each one of chord qualities is a family.

We may substitute a chord by other into a family.

MAJOR: *CM7*,

C6, CM9, C6,9, CM9#11, CM13#11, CM7+5, Csus.

SEVENTH: *C7*,

C7-5, C7sus

C9, C7+9, C7-9, C9+5, C9-5,

C11, C9#11,

C13, C9-13,

C7alt,

C7+5, Caug

MINOR: *Cm7*,

Cm6, Cm(maj7), Cm6,9, Cm11, Cm13,

HALF-DIMINISHED: *Cm7b5, Cϕ,*

Cϕ9

DIMINISHED: *Cdim, Co,*

Co9

So if You find *C9#11* you may substitute it by *C7* into same family in order to simplify harmony.

Also you may change *C7* by *C9#11* in order to enrich harmony.

You must master all sixty basic jazz chords as a first condition to perform Jazz lead sheets at sight and to begin improvising.

Good luck and enjoy sixty basic Jazz chords.

