

"Seventh Chords"

In earlier lessons, we discussed the development of the major, minor, diminished and augmented triads. It was also suggested that we use a "tertiary" system in modern day harmony. All triads are created by simply stacking notes which are separated by intervals of 3rds. We will now add another third on top of that original triad and this note will be the "7th" degree. Seven different "general spellings" of 7th chords will evolve from this process.

root 3rd 5th 7th

- A--C--E--G
- B--D--F--A
- C--E--G--B
- D--F--A--C
- E--G--B--D
- F--A--C--E
- G--B--D--F

There are two basic forms of the 7th and they are the Major and Minor 7th and in four part chords, there is also the opportunity to use a truly "diminished 7th" interval above the Root.

Because we have four different basic triad types and now we have three different versions of the 7th degree, a large library of 7th chord types enters the scene.

Comments on harmonic quality.

Cmaj7 =Major triad and major 7th above the Root.

Both major and minor 7ths are dissonant if sounded together with only the Root of the chord. ie: C--B or C--Bb.

The major 7th is a perfect 5th above the major 3rd and this is a perfect consonance but very bland.

C7 =Major triad and minor 7th above the Root.

The minor 7th is a diminished fifth above the 3rd and produces lots of tension.

The major 7th is an augmented 5th above the minor 3rd and this interval is very consonant because it is the enharmonic equivalent of a minor 6th.

Cm7 =Minor triad and minor 7th above the Root.

The minor 7th is a perfect 5th above the minor 3rd. Bland consonance.

Cm(maj7) =Minor triad and major 7th above the Root.

The major 7th is a major 3rd above the perfect 5th and produces good imperfect consonance.

The minor 7th is a minor 3rd above the perfect 5th and produces good imperfect consonance.

Cm7b5 =Diminished triad and a minor 7th above the Root.

The diminished 7th is a major 6th enharmonic note in relation to the root of the chord.

The diminished 7th would produce a new Root for the chord when added to the major triad.

Cmaj7+5 =Augmented triad and a major 7th above the Root.

ie: C--E--G--Bbb = A--C--E--G =Am7 chord.

Similarly, the diminished 7th would produce a new Root for the chord if added to a minor triad.

ie: C--Eb--G--Bbb = A--C--Eb--G = Am7b5

C7+5 =Augmented triad and a minor 7th above the Root.

The diminished 7th added to an augmented triad will produce some harmonic chaos.

Cdim7 =Diminished triad and a diminished 7th above the Root.

At this point in time, simply look at this as a start to what is going to be examined in great detail in the next four volumes of Guitar Fundamentals. Students who have arrived at this stage are most likely relatively keen about developing their mental skills as well as their physical skills. Many will have fallen by the wayside without ever getting to read this comment. There is a certain amount of tedium involved in developing the mental skills. (G.A.)