

(Book 3) Lesson 37a

Three Part "Dominant 7th" Chords

This subject will be investigated more thoroughly in a subsequent volume. At this point in time, 3part Dominant 7th chords will be introduced for the purpose of incorporating them into triad harmonization. The Dominant 7th chord plays a very important and common role in harmony.

Any chord within the scale harmony of any key can be, and often is, expanded to include the 7th degree above the root note. If the 7th degree is a Major 7th above the root, we use the suffix "maj7". If the 7th degree is a Minor 7th above the root we use the plain number "7" as the chord suffix.

Notice that the I and IV chords which are major triads end up being Major 7th chords and the ii, iii, and iv chords which are minor triads end up being m7 chords. The DOMINANT (V) chord is the interesting exception being that it is a major triad but the 7th degree is a minor 7th above the root, resulting in a G7 chord. Notice that the chords can be referred to by their chord symbol, their numerical degree or by their technical names. It is quite customary to call the principal chords (I, IV and V) by their technical names. (Tonic, Sub Dominant and Dominant.) The secondary chords: ii, iii and iv are most often referred to by their numerical degree. (I did not invent the system!!!!!!)

Cmaj7	Dm7	Em7	Fmaj7	G7	Am7	Bm7b5
Tonic (I)	Super-Tonic (ii)	Mediant (iii)	Sub-Dominant (IV)	Dominant (V)	Sub-Meiant (vi)	Leading Tone (vii)
maj triad & maj7	min triad & 7	min triad & 7	maj triad & maj7	maj triad & 7	min triad & 7	dim triad & 7

Suffice it to say that the Dominant (V) 7th chord is interesting simply for the fact that it is different than the other 7th chords. (Yes, the vii7 chord is also an odd chord because it is a dim triad and a minor 7th.)

Because the Dominant 7th chord (G7 in this case) has four notes, it therefore will have a Root Position and three other inversions in close voicing.

Root Position	First Inversion	Second Inversion	Third Inversion

When you have made a supreme effort at trying to finger the above chords, you may realize that only the Root Position chord is really feasible. The fact is that "close voiced" four part chords are generally not practical on the guitar because of the limits of the tuning. However, Dominant 7th chords in close voicing can be reduced to 3 parts in the following manner.

1. The lowest and highest notes of the four part chord must always be present to depict the inversion.
2. The third of the chord must always be present to show the major quality of the triad.
3. The 7th must always be present to show that the chord is a 7th chord.

So!

Root Position	First Inversion	Second Inversion	Third Inversion
omit 5th	omit 5th	omit Root	omit Root

Notice that the 2nd and 3rd inversions are actually inversions of the Bdim (vii) triad.