

(Book 5.) Lesson 9c.

Resolution of the Dominant 7th Chord

The previous pages outlined the "ideal" resolutions of the Dominant 7th chord. If no melody line is imposed on the player, these resolutions work perfectly well. However, if you are harmonizing a tune, the melody line can not be adjusted and the chord voices may not resolve in such an ideal manner. Just remember that we are not playing a piano where the player enjoys virtual total freedom because each note has its own separate trigger. (key)

Here is a sample of a possible musical situation where the guitarist would have to compromise in some manner.

Many compromises will disappear when two methods of dispersing the chord are introduced in later lessons.

For now, we are dealing strictly with the "open" voicing.

G7 C6

This will be the given melody.

G7 C6

Notice that all of the chord voices end up moving in parallel and taking a giant leap upward in pitch. This is not incorrect by any means. Unfortunately, it does not sound particularly sophisticated because of the large leaps.

G7 C6

This solution abandons the Major 6th chord, defaulting to just a four part C Major Triad. Although the chord is less "jazzy" sounding, the resolution is more sophisticated because the chord voices move "step-wise" rather than taking giant leaps.

In choral part writing, neither of the above solutions would be particularly well accepted.

In sectional harmony, both solutions would be acceptable. (sectional harmony=harmony composed for a group of instruments such as a horn section or a woodwind section in a jazz band or orchestra)

The guitar is a versatile instrument with terrific chordal possibilities but compromises must be made due to the limitations of the tuning and the size of the human hand. Careful study will usually reveal solutions which are satisfactory and maybe even hide the compromises in harmonic integrity. Often, the simple and playable solution is better than the sophisticated and difficult to play, chord progression.

A reoccurring statement in this series of books is:

The ear is the final judge! If it sounds good, it is most likely a good solution. If it sounds unusually bad, you might want to look for a better answer to your musical problem.

Don't mistake strong dissonances in harmony as being wrong or bad!