



PIANO

HANDBOOK VOL 1

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THE FUNDAMENTALS OF KEYBOARD INSTRUCTION

FROM THE ONLINE COURSE *BERKLEE KEYBOARD METHOD*

BY PAUL SCHMELING

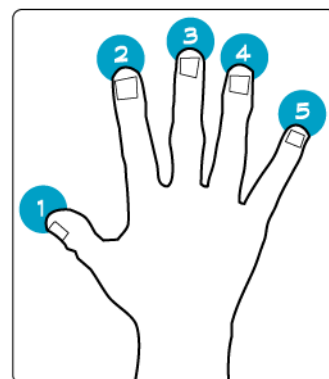
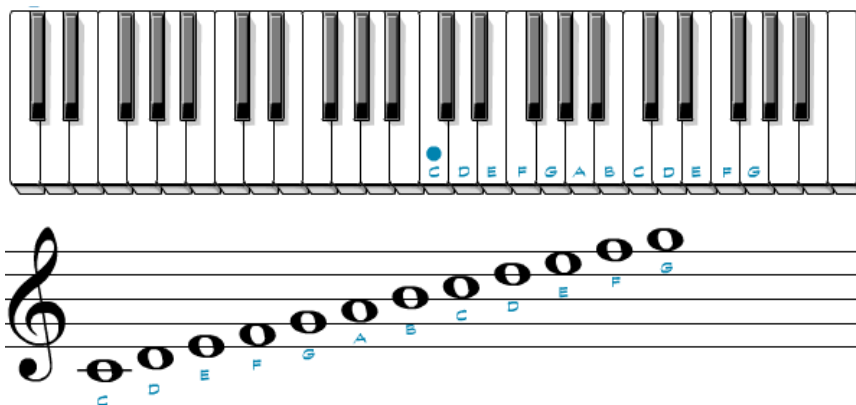


Paul Schmeling has unparalleled experience as a pianist and as an educator. The Chair Emeritus of the Piano Department at Berklee College of Music, Schmeling's career spans from the "Birth of the Cool" era to the present, from the club to the classroom. He has played with the likes of George Coleman, Carol Sloane, Herb Pomeroy, and Clark Terry, amongst many others. In 2006, the Schmeling-authored course *Berklee Keyboard Method* received the award for Best Online College Course by the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA).

TREBLE CLEF

The treble clef is used in keyboard music notation to indicate the higher range of the piano keyboard. The graphic below provides a view of what can be notated on the treble clef, from middle C moving to the top of the staff.

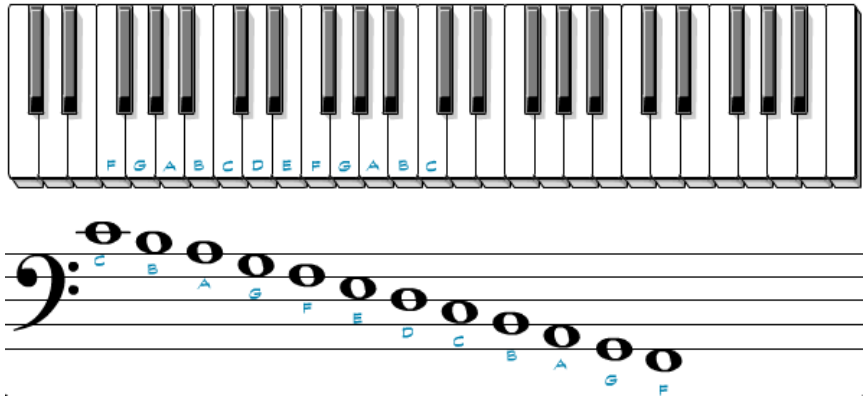
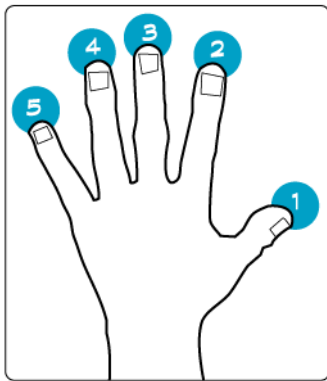
The right hand is typically called upon to play treble clef parts. The image to the right illustrates the numbering for the right hand, from the 1 at the thumb to the 5 on the pinky.





BASS CLEF


The bass clef is used to notate music on the lower range of the keyboard, or notes lower than middle C.


We utilize the numbering system in the fingers in the left hand in the same way we did with the treble clef for the right. The thumb starts at one, the pinky ends with five.






Here are two fingering exercises that I use in the course. Move through these 4-bar lines one at a time. Acquaint yourself with the numbering and how it feels to play the notes in order. Start out slow while playing these sections, then increase the tempo when you feel comfortable.









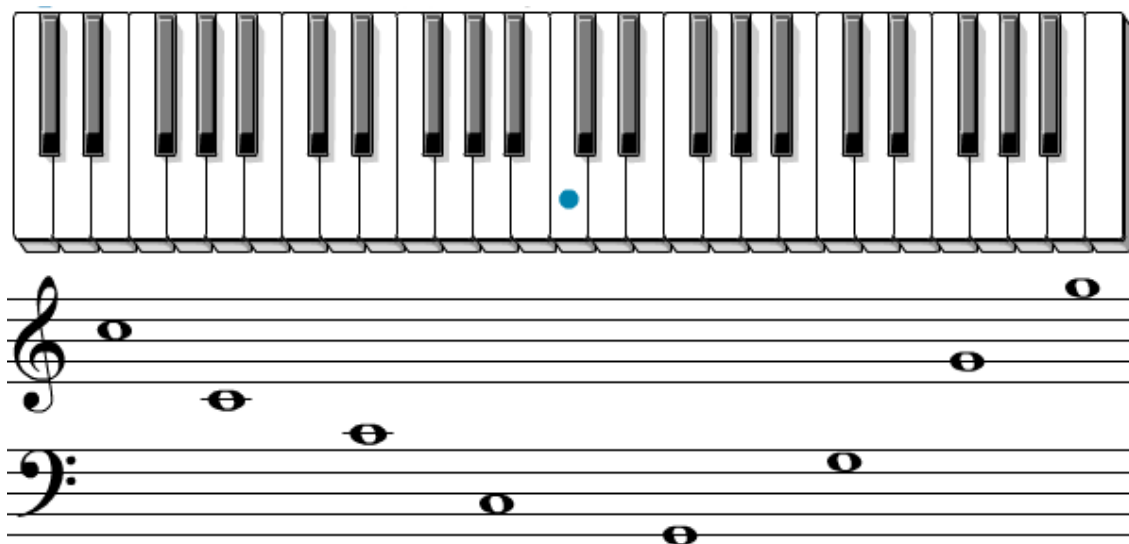




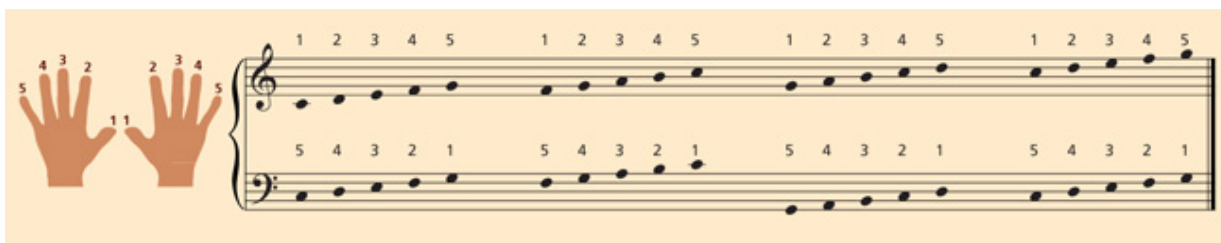
GRAND STAFF NOTATION

Now let's move on to the grand staff. The grand staff is made up of the combined treble and bass clefs and it encompasses the full range of the piano keyboard. Again, music notated in the treble clef is typically for the right hand to play while the left plays music notated in the bass clef.

The same note can be displayed differently depending on the hand playing it. Below, notice that the second note is middle C played on the right hand, and the third note is middle C on the left.



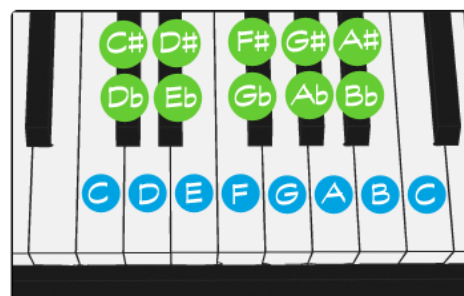
The placement of both hands across the grand staff



THE BLACK KEYS AND ACCIDENTALS

The black keys on a keyboard represent the chromatic alterations made to the white keys. We call these alterations in pitch, and the symbols that refer to them are accidentals. These keys are a half step higher or lower than their neighbors. For example, the key to the left of G represents both F# and Gb. The key to the right of G can be expressed as either G# and Ab. The graphic at right outlines

the relationship between the white and black keys.



The accidentals come into play as we begin to explore major and minor tonalities.

Below are studies in feeling out major and minor tonalities. While they may be rhythmically rudimental, they will be valuable to master before you begin to construct chords from them.

ACCIDENTALS STUDY — MAJOR KEY TONALITY

Be sure to start each five-note group with your thumb on the right hand and little finger on the left.

Two systems of musical notation for a Major Key Tonalities study in 3/4 time. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff. The first system contains four measures: the first three measures each have a five-note group (quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, half) in both hands, and the fourth measure has a whole note in both hands. The second system contains three measures: the first two measures each have a five-note group in both hands, and the third measure has a whole note in both hands. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1 and 5 above the notes.

ACCIDENTALS STUDY — MINOR KEY TONALITY

Start each five-note group in this passage with your little finger on the right hand and the thumb on the left.

Two systems of musical notation for a Minor Key Tonalities study in 3/4 time. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff. The first system contains four measures: the first three measures each have a five-note group (quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, half) in both hands, and the fourth measure has a whole note in both hands. The second system contains three measures: the first two measures each have a five-note group in both hands, and the third measure has a whole note in both hands. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1 and 5 above the notes.

We've moved quickly through the beginner exercises and studies for those who want to master the keyboard. That said, we're already at a point where can begin to

focus on intermediate fare such as playing with independence between the hands and major and minor triads in the root positions.

PAUL SCHMELING'S ONLINE COURSES

BERKLEE KEYBOARD METHOD

Through exercises that explore the interpretation of lead sheets and chord symbols, the *Berklee Keyboard Method* course will help you to improve your performance, harmonic vocabulary, and composition/arranging skills. Over the duration of this 12-week course, students will master the basics of keyboard technique and chord voicings, and gain an understanding of more advanced concepts including blues progressions and playing three part chords.

MUSIC THEORY 101

As one of Berkleemusic's most popular online courses, *Music Theory 101* digs into the building blocks of music – pitch, rhythm, scales, intervals, chords, and harmony—and illustrates how they flow together to make a song work. Whether you're a high school student preparing for Berklee, a professional getting by on your natural ear and intuitive sense of rhythm, or someone who always wanted to know how music functions, a firm grasp of music theory can provide you with just the boost you need.

MUSIC THEORY 201: HARMONY AND FUNCTION

Building off the concepts presented in *Music Theory 101*, *Music Theory 201* helps enrolled students further develop their understanding in music theory. By exploring more advanced concepts in this course such as rhythmic anticipations and related notation issues, articulation markings, diatonic triads and seventh chords in both major and harmonic minor, harmonic function, the II V I chord progression, and melodic and harmonic tension, students will open up their understanding of the elements that together contribute to put the groove in jazz, pop, blues, and rock.

MUSIC THEORY 301: ADVANCED MELODY, HARMONY, RHYTHM

There will be practically no barriers between you and the music you want to create once the concepts presented in *Music Theory 301* are mastered and internalized. Exploring harmony related topics such as diatonic, natural/melodic, minor, and slash chords as well as topics related to improvisation and melody including chord scales, avoid notes, approach notes, and modal and pentatonic scales, this advanced course provides students with a professional command of the mechanics of contemporary music.

HAND PREPARATION AND INDEPENDENCE

FROM THE ONLINE COURSE *BERKLEE KEYBOARD METHOD*

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Paul Schmeling has unparalleled experience as a pianist and as an educator. The Chair Emeritus of the Piano Department at Berklee College of Music, Schmeling's career spans from the "Birth of the Cool" era to the present, from the club to the classroom. He has played with the likes of George Coleman, Carol Sloane, Herb Pomeroy, and Clark Terry, amongst many others. In 2006, the Schmeling-authored course *Berklee Keyboard Method* received the award for America's best online college course by the University Professional and Continuing Education Association.

It doesn't matter if you aspire to be a concert pianist or if you're a musical jack-of-all-trades wishing to better your skills at one of the most popular instruments in the world. No matter your inclination, you can utilize the keyboard as a flexible musical tool or as an inspiring, productive instrument of performance.

So let's dive right in. A big part of learning piano is understanding and internalizing the proper technique. A lot of this is in the wrist. For example, think of the speedy runs that experienced pianists can make up and down the keyboard. When pianists are in

this position and need to reach beyond the five notes that their fingers naturally fall on, they have to use the "thumb-under" motion. A little lateral motion in the wrist creates a pivot, allowing the thumb to reach keys on the right side of your middle finger. A good way of practicing thumb-under technique would be to press down gently with your third finger and twist your wrist so you can play the note above and the note below with your thumb. This will keep your hands and wrist loose and limber. As illustrated below, this is an exercise that you can, and should, do with both hands.



Speaking of which, let's address playing with both hands — simultaneously and independently of one another.

Let's practice that independence. Take a look at the study below. Practicing this prototypical selection — with the perfect

fourths and fifths in the treble clef and the bass line for the left hand — will aid your ability in playing two or more notes in the right hand and single notes in the left. Remember, start slow and work your way up tempo.



Having trouble with this selection, even at a slow pace? Take a deep breath and try it again.

Now, observe and familiarize yourself with all the notes on the staff line. What are the hand positions that you're going to be using when playing these notes? If you can't do both hands starting out, practice separately with each hand. Then, while keeping a slow tempo, begin

to put the parts for each hand together.

Now let's look at mastering chord playing with the left hand while the right performs an independent melody. If you need

to bone up on your hand positions, refer to the diagram of the placement of both hands across the grand staff on page 5 in this handbook. Use this section to help increase your ability to read and play two or more notes simultaneously.

HAND INDEPENDENCE PROTOCOL

- Practice each hand separately until each hand is secure with its rhythms, notes, and fingerings.
- Once you're comfortable with each part, then begin to put the hands together.
- Start slow and gradually increase the tempo.



You can use the staff line below to practice playing different notes with both hands simultaneously. Familiarize yourself with the notes and hand positions used by both

hands. Start slowly, and practice with each hand separately. Then, while maintaining the slow tempo, try putting the parts for each hand together.



Hand independence, fingering positions, thumb exercises — mastering these routines, and making them a part of your practice repertoire, is essential to learning and mastering the piano. Remember, slow and steady is the key. You need to internalize

what we've gone over here. Now you may be inclined to jump ahead in your instruction or you may not be comfortable playing at such a slow pace.

Don't do that. Sloppy practice amounts to self-sabotage.

Bear this in mind when applying all of the techniques that I've mentioned here: focus and practice pays in dividends. These are the foundational skills that you are going to build on as a player for the rest of your piano-playing life.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A half hour of focused effort a day is worth more than four hours of noodling and plinking around on the keyboard in a day.

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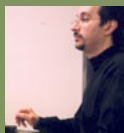
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STORYTELLING IN 12-BAR BLUES

FROM THE ONLINE COURSE *BLUES AND ROCK KEYBOARD TECHNIQUES*

BY DAVE LIMINA



As a pianist, Dave Limina has shared the stage with the likes of B.B. King, Chuck Berry, and Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters. An Assistant Professor in the Piano Department, Limina received the Most Valuable Contribution to the Performance Curriculum Award in recognition of the Hammond Organ course he developed for Berklee College of Music in 2001.

Blues is the bedrock, the root of nearly every contemporary style, as you should well know if you have any appreciation for music history.

It's easy to consider, then, on an intellectual level, that blues can be heard in rock, pop, R&B, and jazz to this day. That's what makes blues useful to know, but it's not what makes it special.

Many of the most famous blues musicians weren't trained in theory. "Anyone can play the blues," is a truism (and the name of a James Taylor song) for a reason. This nebulous aspect is the reason why blues is the basis for so many genres.

That said, just because everyone can play the blues doesn't mean that you should be ignorant of the music theory behind the style. So let's start with blue notes, that fundamental component that the blues takes its sound and name from. A modified G scale with blue notes is shown below. The 3rd, 5th, and 7th notes have all been lowered by a half step. This shading of the notes found in the blues scale clashes with traditional harmony. This dissonance can be haunting and very expressive. Try playing through the scale below. Note the wailing or "crying out" effect that the blue notes create.



Now onto the nitty gritty. Most modern blues chord progressions are made up of dominant 7th chords. These chords consist of a major triad and “flatted 7th” of the major scale. Below we see the G Mixolydian scale. With these notes we can construct a G7 chord as seen below and to the right.



Play the G7 chord with your right hand and play a G bass note with your left hand. Not only is this chord the basis for rock and roll, it is also one of four chords we utilize over the entirety of the 12-week *Blues and Rock Keyboard Techniques* course. You cannot play the blues without the Mixolydian scale and you cannot play the blues without the dominant 7th chord.

The blues scale is the melodic vocabulary for the storytelling component of the blues. When playing a melody or a solo in this context, bear in mind that the listener

is more interested in hearing the narrative. They won't appreciate how technically demanding that last riff was if it detracts from the quality of the story you're trying to tell. Besides, you'll see that playing the melody and the rhythm background at the same time is rather difficult (especially in a solo performance).

Below is an example of a collection of licks that we refer to as blues calls. These “calls” are motives, or phrases, that are used to express emotion, negative events, or conditions. These calls make up the “story” of



the blues. As these calls would historically be sung, you need to aim to make your playing of these licks as expressive as a singer's voice.

Get well acquainted with these four keys. Knowing the licks and the accompaniment

styles in these four keys will allow you to play 12-bar blues and rock tunes in the keys of C and G.

Now let's take a look at the rhythmic background, the accompaniment to the story in the melody.

The image displays four musical staves, each representing a 12-bar blues piano accompaniment in a different key: C7, F7, G7, and D7. Each staff is written for piano, with a treble clef and a bass clef. The bass line is a steady eighth-note pattern. The treble line has a 12-bar melody. Each staff is labeled with the key (C7, F7, G7, D7) and '2 times'.

Above is an example of a Chicago bass line, a broad style of blues whose construction is based primarily on Mixolydian triads. This style is often referred to as a “march” with the emphasis falling on the downbeats (1234 1234). The downbeats are also played for just slightly longer than the upbeats.

TIP

This solo piano style can also be used in a full band context. The left hand pattern generally won't interfere with the bass or guitar parts.

This creates a plodding, shuffling feel when you play the harmonic accompaniment. Give the licks on the previous page a shot and try playing through them. When doing your practice, perform each line separately before putting them together. If you're having trouble playing this feel, don't worry. It

looks simple on paper but this is something that most players will have to work up to. Slow and steady.

So now we have the story and the back-up elements for our blues song. But a story needs a beginning, middle, and end, or our introductions, turnarounds, and endings.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ENDINGS

Below you'll see examples of 1) introductory passages and 2) endings. Play through these sections with your hands separately at first, then put them together. Given their similarity, what separates the ending forms

from the introductions? What creates that feeling of finality? Consider these questions while you're playing through. These are framing devices, standard within the blues/rock vocabulary.

1 Introductory Passages

The image displays four musical examples of introductory passages, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The first example is in C major, starting with a C7 chord. The melody in the treble staff features a series of eighth notes with triplets, while the bass staff provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The second example is in F major, starting with an F7 chord. The melody in the treble staff features a series of eighth notes with triplets, while the bass staff provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The third example is in G major, starting with a G7 chord. The melody in the treble staff features a series of eighth notes with triplets, while the bass staff provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The fourth example is in D major, starting with a D7 chord. The melody in the treble staff features a series of eighth notes with triplets, while the bass staff provides a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

2 Endings

C7 D^b7 C7

F7 G^b7 F7

G7 A^b7 G7

D7 E^b7 D7

Now we come to the last piece of a 12-bar blues song, the turnaround. Again, we'll stick with the same four keys. Occurring

in the last two bars of a blues song, the turnaround serves to return the progression back to the top of the song.

Turnarounds in C, F, G, and D

The image displays four musical staves, each representing a different key for a blues turnaround. Each staff consists of a treble and bass clef. The first staff is for C7 and G7, the second for F7 and C7, the third for G7 and D7, and the fourth for D7 and A7. The notation includes chords, eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes in the final bar of each system. Fingering numbers (1, 2, 3) are provided for the first three systems.

There you have it. Over the last few pages I have shared with you all of the components for a 12-bar blues song. There are few musical forms that are as time-tested and proven as this one. The special thing about blues is the amount of variation possible within the style. We used a Chicago bass line in the accompaniment but there are many, many other regional

flavors and variations we could have used to turn our song into something different. And that's just the harmonic element! Playing keyboards in the blues and rock styles can stay fresh and new over the course of a lifelong pursuit. There are always new tales to tell and new ways of expressing yourself through your instrument. Now go tell your story.

BLUES AND ROCK KEYBOARD TECHNIQUES

Blues and Rock Keyboard Techniques will help you develop the fundamental skills necessary to perform stylistically accurate keyboard techniques in the blues/rock idiom. After building up your knowledge of theory, accompaniment ability, and phrasing foundations, the course explores the licks, techniques, patterns, and improvisation styles associated with shuffles, New Orleans piano, and solo blues piano.

POP/ROCK KEYBOARD

Pop/Rock Keyboard provides an in-depth, practical approach to playing pop/rock music in solo and full band arrangements. From instruction on triads, arpeggiated keyboard parts, voice-leading, and comping patterns, to deep dives into performance considerations and the development of improvisational chops, this course will teach students how to play and compose authentic keyboard parts in a wide range of styles.

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE OF JAZZ PIANO

FROM THE ONLINE COURSE *JAZZ PIANO*

BY ROBERT CHRISTOPHERSON AND ROSS RAMSAY



Robert Christopherson comes from a musical family; his father was a violinist in the Cleveland Orchestra and his mother earned a doctorate in music. When he's not teaching classes as an Associate Professor in the Piano Department at Berklee College of Music, Christopherson can be found performing throughout the New England region.



Ross Ramsay is a faculty member in the Piano Department at Berklee College of Music. In addition to his academic career, Ramsay has written and produced music for various television programs and advertisements. As a performer he's shared the stage with Benjamin Orr of The Cars fame, Jon Finn Group, and many others.

Jazz is a porous musical form. Over the years, jazz has influenced and been influenced by other genres in nearly equal measure.

Jazz's influence is so wide-reaching because the world of jazz is so large. From bebop to bossa nova, from swing to fusion, "jazz" is an umbrella for an uncommon number of sub-genres and styles. This is why having knowledge of jazz is so important. The genre's history and continued influence on contemporary music means that one can utilize aspects of jazz playing and composition in nearly every style.

Consider some of the unique rigors that a jazz pianist will face in their playing. Jazz players need to know how to read lead sheets and be able to improvise on the fly. You'll need to understand the function of a given chord progression, and be able to transpose the harmony of a song into another key. Knowledge like this would be of value to any player.

Fundamental to this is an understanding of how chords work with one another. All diatonic chords (and some non-diatonic chords) are given roman numerals to define their relationship within a given key. These relationships stay true across all major keys.

Play the progression and try to answer the following questions without glancing at the answers printed below:



1. What key is the progression in?
2. What inversions are being used here?
3. Can you mentally label the function of the chords with roman numerals?

You'll need to answer these questions quickly and with confidence if you wish to succeed as a jazz pianist.

1

Key: E♭Maj

	III-7 G-7	VI-7 C-7	II-7 F-7	V7 B♭7	IMaj7 E♭Maj7
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2

1st inv. 3rd inv. 1st inv. 3rd inv. 1st inv.

Let's backtrack a bit. How does the expression go — you have to learn to walk before you can run? Running, in jazz, is the implementation of rich tonal color in your music, to expand upon a basic idea or motif and to enrich it. So let's start walking, then, by exploring the functions of the chords we'll use. The most basic and fundamental of these relationships is with 7th chords and their inversions.

On the following page are the diatonic chords in root position in the key of C broken up into arpeggios. Try playing through the example. Before playing, note the "Swing!" notation written at the top. Swing feel is a common jazz groove, a syncopated rhythm in which the strong beats are 2 and 4 (as opposed to the classical, or straight, interpretation where the downbeats are typically stronger). Try to maintain this rhythm while you play these chords.

Root Position

Swing! ♩ = ♩³♩

The score is a 12-measure blues progression in 4/4 time, featuring a consistent eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a melody in the right hand. The progression is divided into four systems of three measures each. The chords for each measure are as follows:

- Measures 1-3: CMaj7, D-7, E-7
- Measures 4-6: FMaj7, G7, A-7
- Measures 7-9: B-7b5, CMaj7, B-7b5
- Measures 10-12: A-7, G7, FMaj7
- Measures 13-15: E-7, D-7, C
- Measures 16-18: CMaj7, D-7, E-7
- Measures 19-21: FMaj7, G7, A-7
- Measures 22-24: B-7b5, CMaj7, B-7b5
- Measures 25-27: A-7, G7, FMaj7
- Measures 28-30: E-7, D-7, CMaj7

The score includes fingerings (1, 5) and accents (^) for the right hand, and fingerings (1, 5) for the left hand. The tempo is marked 'Swing!' with a note value of ♩ = ♩³♩.

Do you feel confident with the root position? Then give the exercise below a shot. These are the first inversions of the chords we just played along to — in the same key

no less. Again, maintain the swing feel in your playing! If you can't keep the rhythm steady and swinging, then slow down and start from the top.

1st Inversion

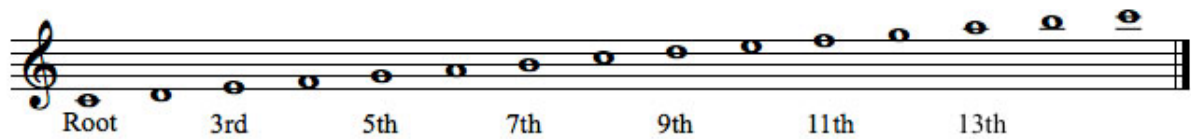
Swing! ♩ = ♩³♩

The exercise is a piano accompaniment for a swing feel, marked with a tempo of 3 beats per measure. It consists of four systems of two staves each. Each system contains four measures of music. The chords for each measure are: System 1 (CMaj7, D-7, E-7, FMaj7), System 2 (G7, A-7, B-7b5, CMaj7), System 3 (B-7b5, A-7, G7, FMaj7), and System 4 (E-7, D-7, CMaj7, B-7b5). The exercise is marked with a 'Swing!' tempo and a 3-beat rhythmic pattern. Fingerings (1, 5) and articulation (accents) are indicated throughout the piece.

This is all fairly rudimental, to be sure. But this is the foundation of our jazz study upon which we will build. We'll be building on it very quickly, as a matter of fact.

Note that all of the diatonic 7th chords used in the previous example are built upon

the major scale. In composed pieces, jazz players can introduce color into their parts by incorporating notes that are beyond the basic structure of the root, 3rd, 5th, and 7th called tensions. So what does a tension note look like? Why, there's some now!



These tensions exist beyond the traditional seven-note scale. By expanding the C major scale here to a second octave we can better illustrate these 9th, 11th, and 13th intervals, or tensions 9, 11, and 13. These additional notes provide sonic flavor. This is how you turn a traditional progression into something more sophisticated.

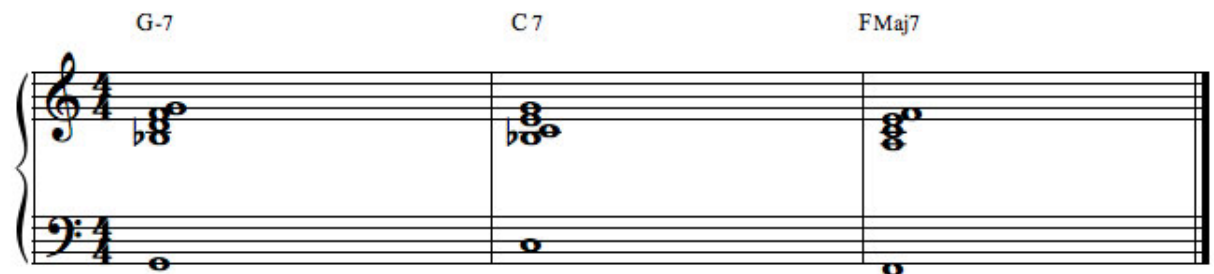
Let's look at some basic applications of tension 9. Below are two notations of a

II V I progression in the key of F starting in the first inversion. The first example features no tension. The second example has the root of each chord replaced by tension 9.

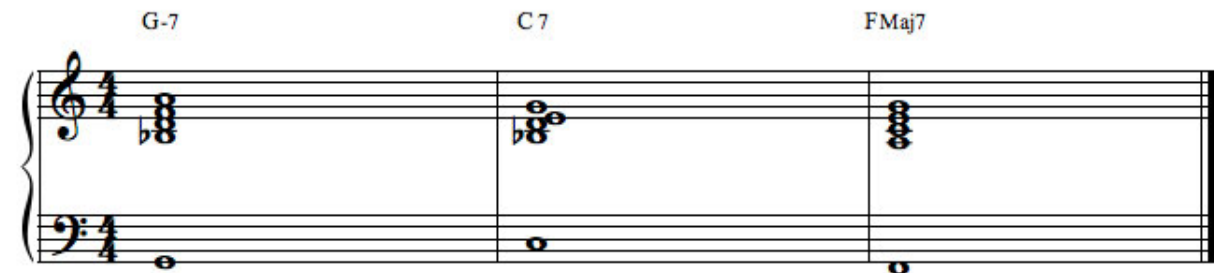
Play through the progressions in order, one at a time. Listen to the subtle differences in sound between them.

Does the second example sound brighter? Dare I say a bit more "jazz"?

1



2



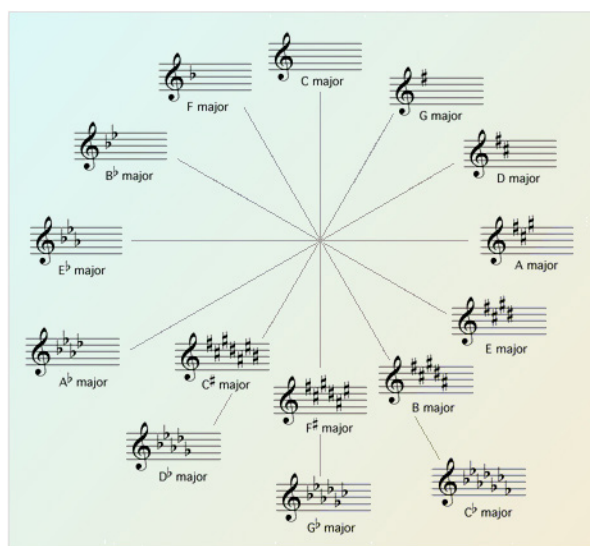
There are numerous combinations of chords and tensions that can be applied to any tune. So how does one practice jazz? Many jazz performers practice different techniques by utilizing the circle of fifths.

Chord progressions often move backwards through the circle of fifths. This reflects a common trajectory in progressions. For example, the movement from the dominant chord to the root, from the V to the I, is so common because this movement is always the strongest resolution.

This pattern of moving through the circle can be used in your study to practice individual chords, progressions, and scales—essentially anything you would want to practice in every key.

We have only just scratched the surface of jazz performance. Knowledge of jazz will provide a player with a universal

Circle of Fifths



language from which to draw inspiration. I can't guarantee that you won't have improvisational or compositional writer's block after taking this course, but I can say that the answer to any problem of performance might be a variation away.

ROBERT CHRISTOPHERSON'S ONLINE COURSES

JAZZ PIANO

Jazz Piano is an essential course for pianists looking to enhance their originality, versatility, and compositional skill within the jazz genre. Students will explore jazz chord voicings with tensions, learn how to interpret melodies and phrases with an authentic jazz feel, and tackle the basics of jazz improvisation. Coupled with a historical overview of the genre and utilization of audio and video demonstrations, the course will teach students timeless techniques that develop their ability to meet the demands of a working pianist in dynamic situations.

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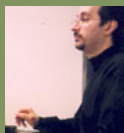
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IMPLEMENTING DOMINANT, MAJOR, MINOR, AND SUSPENDED CHORDS

FROM THE ONLINE COURSE *POP/ROCK KEYBOARD*

BY DAVE LIMINA



As a pianist, Dave Limina has shared the stage with the likes of B.B. King, Chuck Berry, and Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters. An Assistant Professor in the Piano Department, Limina received the Most Valuable Contribution to the Performance Curriculum Award in recognition of the Hammond Organ course he developed for Berklee College of Music in 2001.

First, a clarification—pop and rock music get an undeservedly bad rap. Some of my students enrolled in past terms have entered into the course with the mistaken impression that pop and rock piano is easier to learn and master than some other, more vaunted styles.

Pop/rock playing has its own rigors, and the genre employs different grooves and harmonic material. But just like jazz, blues, or any other genres/styles of performance, pop and rock keyboard players need to employ a strong sense of chords and a good sense of rhythm.

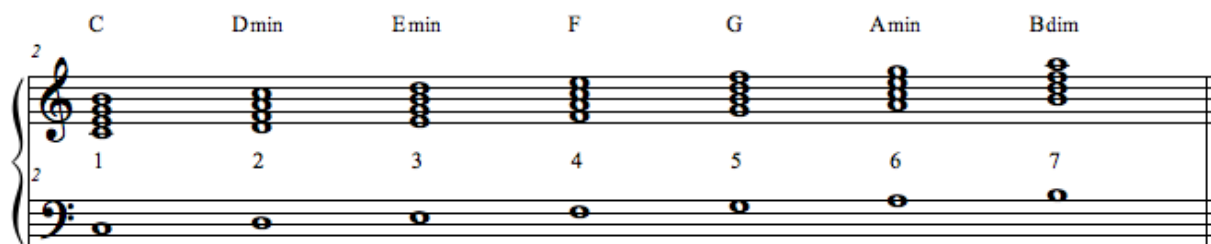
Pop/rock songs often employ the same chords and progressions time and again. The progressions we'll save for another time. Right now, let's get to know those chords and how they're employed in pop/rock songs. Pop/rock music makes constant

use of the dominant 7th chord, major 7th, minor 7th, and the suspended chords. These chords are the building blocks to harmonically rich pop/rock tunes, from classics such as "What's Going On?" by Marvin Gaye to "Moves Like Jagger" by Maroon 5.

DOMINANT 7TH CHORDS

The dominant 7th or dom7 chord is a holdover from the blues. It is called dominant because of its major key diatonic harmony. The chord is constructed of a major triad—the root, a major 3 and 5 degree—and a flattened 7 degree. There's a lot of tension inherent in the dominant 7th chord. It wants badly to resolve down to the tonic chord of the key. On the next page are the naturally occurring 7th chords in the C Major scale.

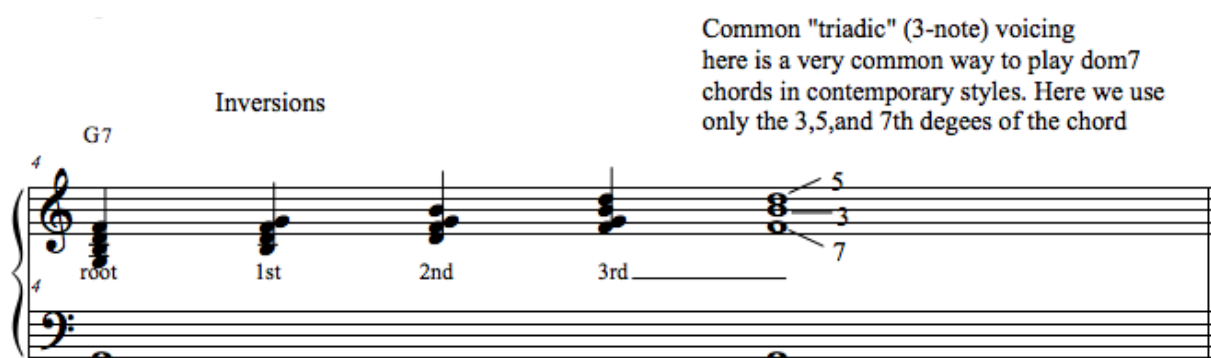
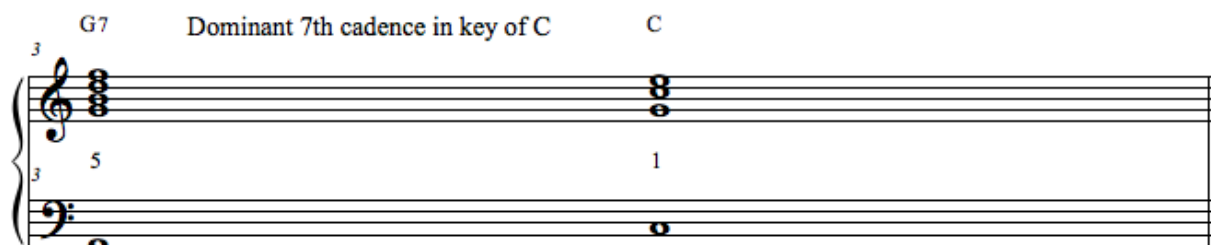
Note: Refer to my section in the handbook for the *Blues and Rock Keyboard Techniques* on page 12 for more discussion on the dominant 7th chord and its relationship with 12-bar blues.



I'll highlight the V I cadence here. The chord on scale degree 5, in this case, G7, has a very strong tendency to resolve to the

I chord, or C in this case.

Note the inversions of the dom7 chord (below) as well.

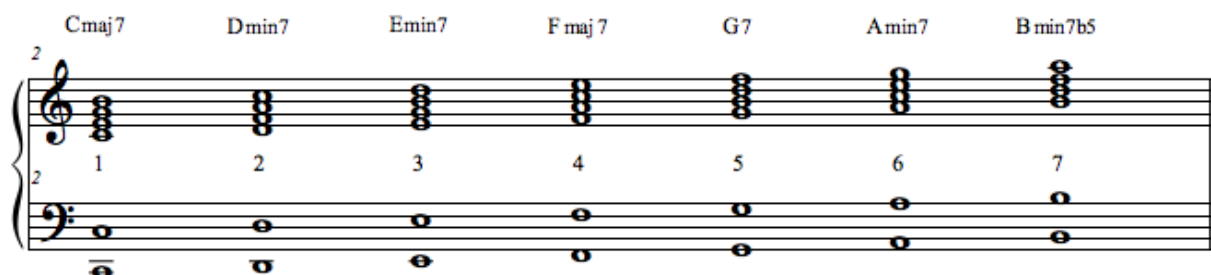


MAJOR 7TH AND MINOR 7TH CHORDS

On the staff line below we can see the major 7th, or maj7, and minor 7th, or min7, chords. Conventionally, dom7 is notated as G7 (not Gdom7).

Maj7 chords are constructed in the same

way as a dominant 7th chord except the 7 degree isn't flattened. They can be implemented in much the same way as dominant 7th chords — as whole notes, arpeggios, or rhythmically.

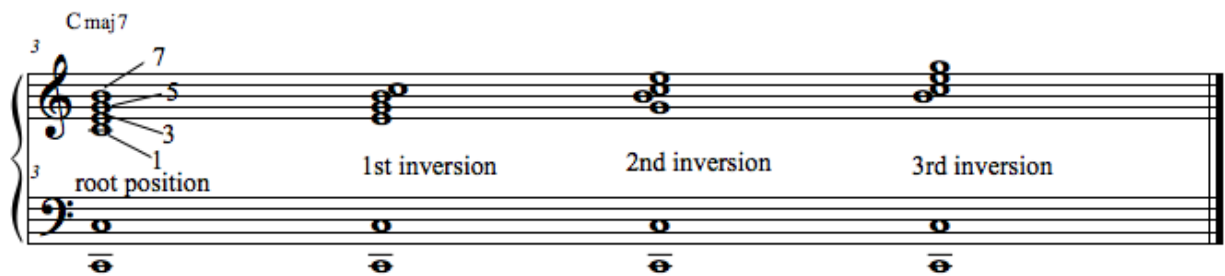


Learn these labels!
Knowing them will
help immeasurably
with your lead sheet
reading.

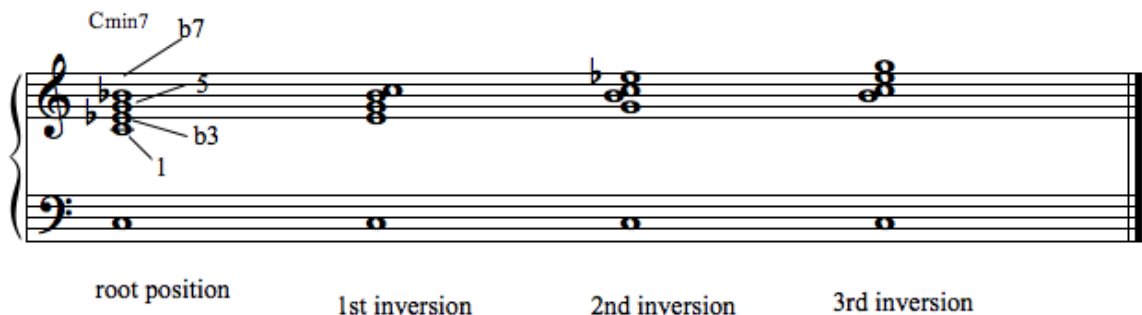
Take a look at chords built on the second, third, sixth, and seventh scale degrees. These are our min7 chords. These min7 chords consist of a minor triad and a flattened 7th scale degree

of the major scale. These are chords used rhythmically in R&B, funk, and dance and are often featured in pop ballads when a darker emotional quality is called for. In the key of C above, we have Dmin7, the II chord; Emin7, the III chord; and Amin7, the VI chord.

Inversions of the maj7 chord built on scale degree 1



Inversions of the min7 chord built on scale degree 1



SUS CHORDS

Suspend, or sus4 and sus2, chords are easy to visualize yet somewhat difficult to implement in sound ways. A bit contradictory in nature, these triads are restful yet tense. The fourth scale degree wants to resolve down to 3 while scale degree 3 wants to resolve down to 2.

Not as unstable as dom7, sus4 and sus2 chords are often followed by a major triad with the same root, like a Csus4 to C. The sus chords can make for great transitions or for adding a sense of ambiguity to your harmony.

Csus2

root position 1st inversion second inversion

Csus4

root position 1st inversion 2nd inversion

Csus4 C Resolutions Csus2 C

4 down to 3 2 up to 3

To get a better sense of the function of sus4 and sus2 chords, take the chords provided to the right and try arpeggiating them and playing them in different ranges across the keyboard. Experiment!

DOMINANT 7TH SUS4 CHORDS

We finish up our look into the chords with the dominant 7th sus4, or dom7sus4. These chords are lush, more so than their sus4 brethren.

The voicing of the dom7sus4 chord adds a new note to the chord — degree 9, tension 9. I won't take too deep a dive into the theory behind this but here's what you need to know. Understand that degree 9 is the same as degree 2. Think of the seven-note scale as degrees 1 through 7. For example, if we're working in the key of C, degree 9 will be

C7sus4 C7sus4(9) B^b/C

D. In this line of thinking, C is degree 1 and degree 8. We can continue up the octave in this fashion — E is degrees 3 and 10, F is degrees 4 and 11, etc. These are called compound intervals, and we use them to describe tensions built on 7th chords. We also have a new chord symbol presented here as

well B \flat /C. This is shorthand for a B \flat chord (B \flat , D, F) “over” a C bass note.

Now take a look at the lead sheet below. Using the chords that I’ve presented here you can play through any of these 8-bar progressions. Give it a shot.

Swagger groove

1 Dmin7 Gmin7

7 B \flat maj7 Asus4 A7 4X's

11 A maj7 Bmin7 C \sharp min7 D7

16 D/E F/G D/E F/G 4X's

ballad feel

20 Amin7 D7 Amin7 D7

25 Gmaj7 Cmaj7 Gmaj7 E7 4X's

Back UP!!

29 B \flat min7 E \flat min7

34 G \flat maj7 E \flat /F F sus F7 4X's

The chords we just ran through have been and will be the bricks with which you build your songs, as the example illustrated above. Just because you have a sense of how these chords function doesn't mean you are near ready to write and play

pop/rock music. But you're on the right path. Take the material you've learned here and build upon it, transform it, and play around with it. Pop/rock music is built upon the innovation of older styles. Where are you going to take it?

DAVE LIMINA'S ONLINE COURSES

BLUES AND ROCK KEYBOARD TECHNIQUES

Blues and Rock Keyboard Techniques will help you develop the fundamental skills necessary to perform stylistically accurate keyboard techniques in the blues/rock idiom. After building up your knowledge of theory, accompaniment ability, and phrasing foundations, the course explores the licks, techniques, patterns, and improvisation styles associated with shuffles, New Orleans piano, and solo blues piano.

POP/ROCK KEYBOARD

Pop/Rock Keyboard provides an in-depth, practical approach to playing pop/rock music in solo and full band arrangements. From instruction on triads, arpeggiated keyboard parts, voice-leading, and comping patterns, to deep dives into performance considerations and the development of improvisational chops, this course will teach students how to play and compose authentic keyboard parts in a wide range of styles.

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