

9th Chord Shapes

By: Jeff Ellwood

www.jeffellwood.net

Melody is an essential ingredient in my approach to improvisation. When coming up with melodic material, I like to use note clusters that I should be familiar with. For this exercise I use 9th chord shapes. I like to come up with as many variations of a 9th chords as possible (I sometimes use a series of note cards to randomize the order for me) I also want to apply these shapes to apply upper structure or altered sounds on any given chord. This means I want to build this shape from all the primary chord tones.

Example:

CMA7 = CMA9, E-9 from 3rd, GMA9 from 5th, B-7b9 from 7th

(Notice that I am using the F# on all these chords. For This sound, I like to use the C Lydian scale

Musical notation for Cma7 chord shapes. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of four measures. Each measure is labeled with Cma7 above it. The notes in each measure are: C4, E4, G4, B4, F#4, C5. The notes are played in a sequence of eighth notes: C4, E4, G4, B4, F#4, C5. The first measure has a quarter rest on the first beat, and the second measure has a quarter rest on the second beat. The third and fourth measures have quarter rests on the third and fourth beats respectively.

Example:

C-7 = C-9, EbMA9 from 3rd, G-9 from 5th, BbMA9 from 7th

Musical notation for Cmi7 chord shapes. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of four measures. Each measure is labeled with Cmi7 above it. The notes in each measure are: C4, E4, G4, Bb4, F#4, C5. The notes are played in a sequence of eighth notes: C4, E4, G4, Bb4, F#4, C5. The first measure has a quarter rest on the first beat, and the second measure has a quarter rest on the second beat. The third and fourth measures have quarter rests on the third and fourth beats respectively.

C7 = C9, E-9b5 from 3rd, GmiMA7 from 5th, BbMA9#5 from 7th

Notice that I am using the F# on all these chords. For This sound, I like to use the C Lydian b7 scale

Musical notation for C7 chord shapes. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of four measures. Each measure is labeled with C7 above it. The notes in each measure are: C4, E4, G4, Bb4, F#4, C5. The notes are played in a sequence of eighth notes: C4, E4, G4, Bb4, F#4, C5. The first measure has a quarter rest on the first beat, and the second measure has a quarter rest on the second beat. The third and fourth measures have quarter rests on the third and fourth beats respectively.

Example:

C-7b5 = C-9b5, EbmiMa7 from 3rd, GbMA9#5 from 5th, Bb9 from 7th.

For this sound I borrow chords from the related melodic minor scale. C-7b5 = Eb melodic minor

Musical notation for Cmi7(b5) chord shapes. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of four measures. Each measure is labeled with Cmi7(b5) above it. The notes in each measure are: C4, E4, G4, Bb4, F#4, C5. The notes are played in a sequence of eighth notes: C4, E4, G4, Bb4, F#4, C5. The first measure has a quarter rest on the first beat, and the second measure has a quarter rest on the second beat. The third and fourth measures have quarter rests on the third and fourth beats respectively.

This gets a bit more complicated

Example:

C7alt = C#-MA7 from root of C# mel mi, EMA9#5 from 3rd of C# mel mi, G#9 from 5th of C# mel mi, C-7b5b9 7th of C# mel mi
 For this sound I borrow chords from the related melodic minor scale. C7alt = C# melodic minor

Here on some examples of some 9th chord variations. Adjust the octave accordingly to make the best sounding melodies. This will take some experimentation.

Transfer these shapes to the other parts of the chord 3rd, 5th, 7th
 Here is an example on C-7. The shape is 3-2-7-1-5

Here is the shape from above applied to a 2-5-1 progression.

Notice the C7alt (A C#-MA9 is borrowed from the melodic minor sound)

7-9-3-1-5 shape

Musical notation showing the 7-9-3-1-5 shape in the 5th degree of D \flat melodic minor. The notes are G \flat , A \flat , B \flat , C, D, E \flat , F \flat . The chords shown are Gmi 7 , B \flat ma 9 , C 7ALT , A \flat 9 , Fma 7 , and Ami 9 .

5TH DEGREE OF D \flat MELODIC MINOR

Mixing up the shapes

Musical notation showing a sequence of chords: Gmi 7 , C 7 , E $^{\circ 7}$, Fma 7 , and Cma 9 .

Combined with scale motion or bebop type phrases

Five lines of musical notation showing various chord shapes combined with scale motion or bebop type phrases:

- Line 1: Gmi 7 , C 7ALT , A \flat 9 , Fma 7
- Line 2: Gmi 7 , C 7ALT , Ema $^9(\#5)$, Fma 7
- Line 3: Gmi 7 , Dmi 7 , C 7 , Fma 7
- Line 4: Cmi 7 , F 7ALT , B \flat ma 7
- Line 5: Cmi 7 , F 7ALT , B \flat ma 7