

Jazz Comping 1

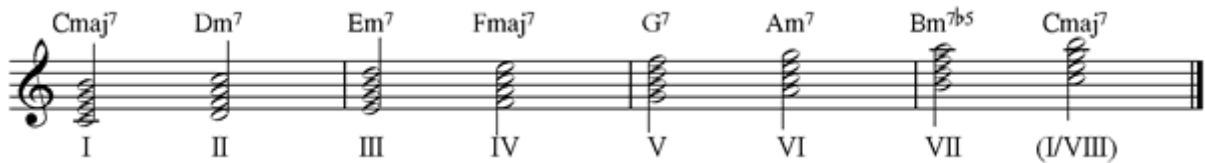
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This series on comping - the skill of accompanying with chord structures - will happen in four installments. We will start in this edition with harmonizing the major scale by building seventh chords on this seven step system. We will realize this within chord systems by basing the roots of the voicings on individual strings of the guitar. After defining this context and working the obtained shapes into your playing along the lines of typical jazz cadences (one to two bar chord progressions that are encountered in most jazz tunes), we will apply the learned material to a song.

In later installments, we will talk about concepts of adding extensions, the use of quartal chord voicings, and their applications to songs and progressions, including "Autumn Leaves," Rhythm Changes and more.

Harmonizing the Major Scale System

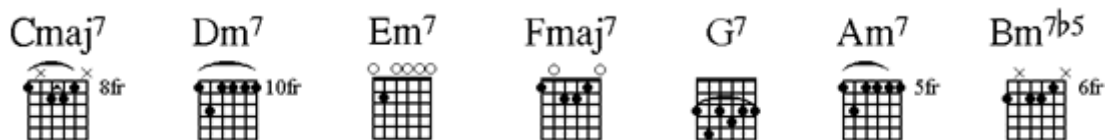
In the figure below, you can see the **C major scale** harmonized with seventh chords; instead of playing a scale with single notes, you can do the same with a series of chords that consist of notes from that scale:



The steps are numbered for a certain reason:

- Steps I and IV are harmonized with *major seventh chords*,
- II, III, and VI with *minor seventh chords*,
- step V with a *dominant seventh chord*,
- and step VII becomes a *half-diminished chord* (minor7 b5).

This structural knowledge becomes handy when applying the shapes to the guitar. First, place the root of each chord on only the sixth string, and you'll notice that there are only four initial voicings:



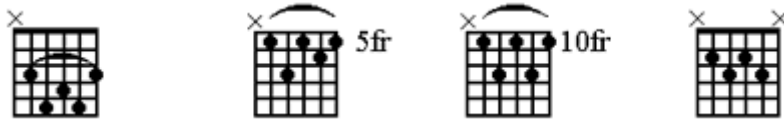
Since we repeat and recycle some of the shapes, we can break down the list of voicings to these four:



The same system can be played with the roots on the A-string:



The four different voicings we encounter here are the following:

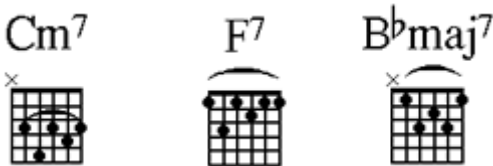


Note: Please keep in mind that these voicing types are basic versions, which we will modify in later installments by adding extensions to turn them into typical jazz voicings.

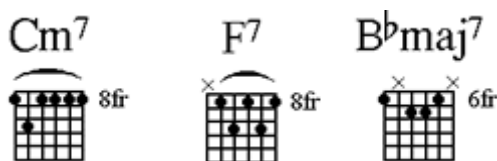
How to practice:

1. Practice both systems (system I with roots on only the E-string, and system II with roots on A-string) of the C major scale chord progression illustrated above, ascending and descending.
2. Transpose the C major systems to B \flat major (one whole step down) and repeat the same exercise in that key; here, the first chord of system I has its root on the sixth fret, sixth string. In system II, the root of chord I, B \flat maj7, falls on the first fret, fifth string.
3. In the key of B \flat -major play the following typical jazz cadences (chord progressions that you will find in almost all jazz tunes):

Major II-V-I's:

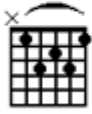


or



I-VI-II-V's (turnarounds):

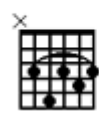
B^bmaj⁷



Gm⁷



Cm⁷

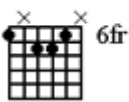


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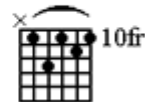


or

B^bmaj⁷



Gm⁷



Cm⁷

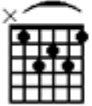


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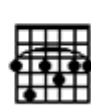


in more modern Jazz, the VI-chord is more often than not played like as a dominant seventh:

B^bmaj⁷



G⁷



Cm⁷

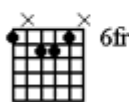


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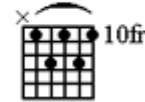


or

B^bmaj⁷



G⁷



Cm⁷



F⁷

