



Jazz Voicings for **GUITAR** & **PIANO**

Tom Birkner and Ryan Birkner

Jamey Abersold Jazz[®]





Jazz Voicings for Guitar and Piano

Tom Birkner and Ryan Birkner



Dedication

We dedicate this book to musician and teacher Bob Borgstede (1979-2007). Bob was a graduate of Fort Zumwalt South High School and Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, where he earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in music with an emphasis in jazz and guitar performance. As a respected teacher at Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville and the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Bob served as an inspiration for the students, faculty, and staff of each school. Bob was active as a featured guitarist in performances throughout the St. Louis area and in major cities including Atlanta, Chicago, and Kansas City. Recognized with a prestigious ASCAP Young Jazz Composer's Award, Bob released his first album, *Narrative Threads*, in 2004. Talented and highly successful as a musician, Bob's real gift was demonstrated each day through his role as a teacher, husband, and father – at all times caring for others more than himself. For our family, Bob made a difference.

It is our hope that this instructional material will help inspire and encourage rewarding study and help provide a continuing positive performance experience for the student and teacher.

Contents

Introduction	1
Vocabulary	1
Application	2
Chord Voicings in Sequence	15
Equipment	19
Discography	20
Additional Thoughts for the Teacher	
The Rhythm Section	24
Placement and Communication	24
Rehearsal Procedure	25

Jazz Voicings for Guitar and Piano

Introduction

Success as a musician depends on thoughtful and expressive interaction with others. This approach can best be described as a process of sharing meaningful communication through music. As we gain experience in a variety of settings, we will learn to appreciate and value this opportunity. We will discover that the relative success of an ensemble is determined by a clear understanding of our role, responsibility, and contribution to the group.

As each player prepares for the rehearsal, it is important to practice with intent and work to bring individual experience and skill to an interactive group setting. Every musical decision in rehearsal or performance must be made in a collaborative way, working to listen to other members of the group as much or more than yourself. This routine will help foster a greater sense of confidence for each musician in the jazz rhythm section. More broadly, the approach will help to enrich experiences in other chamber music settings, regardless of musical style.

For the successful jazz musician, it is important that each decision be made in an environment that is spontaneous. These decisions are made in real time, as the music is being created. Musical choices, such as note duration, rhythm, dynamic level, range or register, voicing density (number of notes in the chord), and tone color, are dependent upon the decisions of other players in the group.

Within this interactive environment, it is important for each player to provide space in the musical texture, allowing for open and clear communication. From moment to moment, this interactive process brings life and spontaneity to the music, for the performing musicians and the members of the audience. For every student and teacher, Count Basie Orchestra's rhythm section is a wonderful example of this concept.

Vocabulary

For musicians playing piano, guitar, or bass, it is important to analyze and study popular chord symbol notation. This study will be essential to your continued growth and development as a rhythm section player in the jazz band or combo setting. It will be important to provide an accurate realization of each chord symbol. Regardless of musical style, this realization must include clear and consistent chord tones from measure to measure. In many situations, the rhythm section player will see only a written chord symbol. Turning chord symbols into functional chord voicings or bass lines is the first step of the process; this skill will have a large impact on the success of the soloist, rhythm section, and ensemble.

The bass player in a jazz rhythm section must 1) provide the root note of each chord, and 2) connect chords in succession, within a harmonic progression. With the drummer, the bass player will provide a rhythmic pulse (walking bass line or ostinato pattern) while playing accurate and varied rhythmic lines to outline the harmonies and maintain the rhythmic vitality and energy of the music.

The pianist and guitarist must then provide a pallet featuring the remaining chord tones that are indicated by each chord symbol. Prominent chord tones or 'guide tones' (3rd and 7th) are generally present in each voicing to balance the root in the bass; an exception would be the sus4 chord, where the third degree of the scale is replaced by the fourth. To these fundamental guide tones, it is common to play additional chord tones including b5 or #5, for example. If indicated, we may see additional notes past the octave. Frequently, these 'chord extensions' will include the b9, #9, #11, and 13. Within the section, chord realizations or 'voicings' must be structured by the harmonic instruments in a consistent way, providing clarity for the arrangement and a positive atmosphere for each improvising musician in the small group or big band ensemble.



Application

In the first section of musical examples, the chord voicings featured include ten symbols used most often in the jazz setting. Accurate and functional chord tones are indicated for both guitar and piano. Teachers and students should check the accuracy of voicings used by players in the ensemble on a regular basis. Again, our goal is to be consistent.

Finger positions and fret locations are indicated for the guitarist. The open circle (o) icon on each fret board indicates the root note of the chord. This note should be used when practicing alone so that you will hear the chord in context, with the root. However, when playing with a bassist, the guitarist should delete this note.

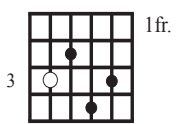
The exact guitar voicing is also shown on the grand staff of the piano. In this way, the pianist and guitarist will be playing consistent and accurate chord voicings at all times – voicings that are structured correctly and that include the correct chord extensions and alterations. The voicings indicated will be functional, consistent, and accurate in an effort to support the successful performance of the rhythm section, soloist, and ensemble.

On the grand staff, open note (o) in the left hand indicates the root of the chord. This note should be used when the piano is playing alone. In that way, the chord will be heard and learned in context. When playing with the bass player, delete this root note from the left hand. It is important not to double this root note in piano or guitar, but rather to allow the bass player to play this bass note alone. Doubling this note can create pitch problems and balance issues in the rhythm section – a problem for many developing bands.

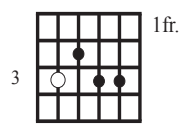
The open note (o) in the right hand is for piano only and should be included in the keyboard voicing. The remaining solid notes (●) indicate the complete guitar voicings. These notes are also shown as solid notes on the guitar fret board.

*In the following examples you will see an option for both min9 and min7 chord voicings. When playing a minor chord voicing that functions as a iii chord (for example Emin7 in the key of C), it is best to use the min7 voicing, as indicated. When playing an isolated minor voicing that functions as a ii or vi chord (for example Dmin7 or Amin7 in key of C), it is most common to play minor 9, which includes the 9th degree of the chord voicings. Both voicing options are included in the following section.

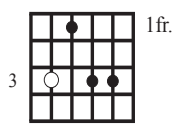
Cmaj9



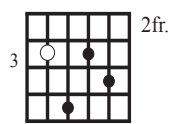
C9



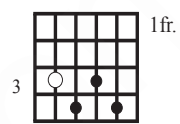
Cmin9



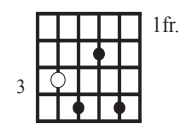
Cmin7



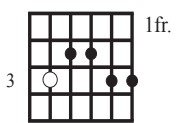
Cmin7(b5)



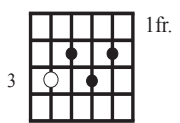
Cdim7



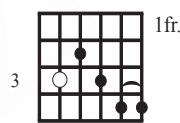
C⁶₉



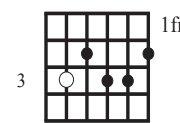
C7(b9)



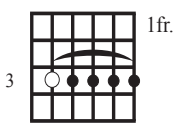
C7#9(#5)



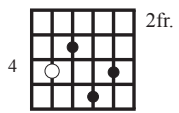
C9(#11)



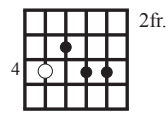
C9sus



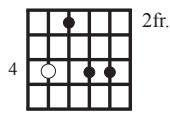
D \flat maj9



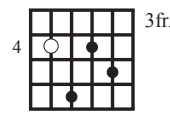
D \flat 9



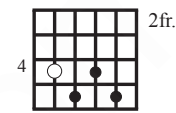
C \sharp min9



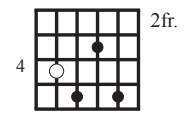
C \sharp min7



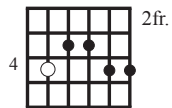
C \sharp min7(b5)



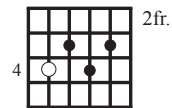
C \sharp dim7



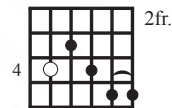
D \flat 9⁶



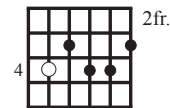
D \flat 7(b9)



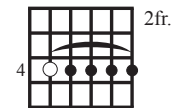
D \flat 7 \sharp 9(\sharp 5)



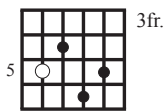
D \flat 9(\sharp 11)



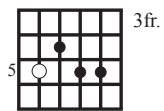
D \flat 9sus



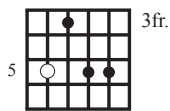
Dmaj9



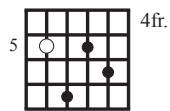
D9



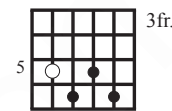
Dmin9



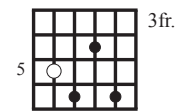
Dmin7



Dmin7(b5)

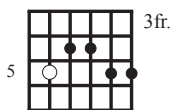


D dim7

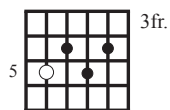


Musical notation for the first row of chords, showing piano accompaniment for Dmaj9, D9, Dmin9, Dmin7, Dmin7(b5), and D dim7.

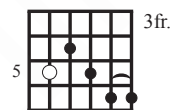
D⁶₉



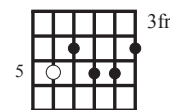
D7(b9)



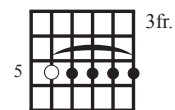
D7#9(#5)



D9(#11)



D9sus



Musical notation for the second row of chords, showing piano accompaniment for D⁶₉, D7(b9), D7#9(#5), D9(#11), and D9sus.