

*Linear Jazz Improvisation*

# **Block Chord Keyboard Cadences**

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## INTRODUCTION

It is important that jazz practitioners have a firm basic knowledge of the keyboard, in particular the essential harmonic cadences found in most tunes. They should be learned in all keys. We focus here on ii7 V7 I MA7 and its minor key counterpart, ii7-5 V7-9 i7, before adding *Modified Block Chords*, in which we introduce such tension substitutions as 9 for 1, 6 for 5, and +9 for 3 in the right hand.

While it would be nice to be a great pianist with great facility and sophisticated harmonic voicing capabilities on the keyboard, it is only *essential* that one knows enough to be able to use the keyboard as an aid in learning to hear and to analyze tunes in preparation for improvisation—and perhaps to compose.

Therefore, we shall begin with block chords in all keys. Block chords are 4-note close position 7th chords, doubled in both hands at the octave. They are handy and can be used in a variety of ways, such as:

1. Accompanying (*comping*)—in both hands,
2. Playing the chords in the left hand while playing the melody in the right,
3. Playing the chords in the left hand while improvising lines in the right,
4. Playing the basic (un-modified) chords in the right hand while playing a simple bass line or ostinato in the left.

With these *under your fingers*, you will be able to play most tunes you need to address.

In practicing these formulas, you will notice that they involve similar finger movement patterns, which lends to their learning through motor memory. To aid in this motor memory process, it is helpful to first practice repetitively arpeggiating each chord before combining them into the entire cadence:

1. Up
2. Down
3. Up and Down

Listen to the sound placement of your fingers mechanically hammering in succession.

It is also useful to put on a metronome and practice playing number 4 above: Play the chords in the right hand while playing a bass line in the left. Imagine a specific rhythmic style and get and keep a groove.

I hope that you enjoy working on these exercises, and that you will gain a higher musical level from putting to practical use your new keyboard and harmonic facility.

Sincerely,  
Ed Byrne

# 117 V7 | MA7 BLOCK CHORDS

ALL KEYS:

PIANO

Dm7 G7 CMA7

This system shows three piano chord voicings in C major. The first measure contains Dm7, the second G7, and the third CMA7. Each chord is shown in both treble and bass clefs with fingerings. The CMA7 chord is shown with a wide interval between the 3rd and 7th degrees.

Cm7 F7 BbMA7

This system shows three piano chord voicings in F major. The first measure contains Cm7, the second F7, and the third BbMA7. Each chord is shown in both treble and bass clefs with fingerings. The BbMA7 chord is shown with a wide interval between the 3rd and 7th degrees.

Bbm7 Eb7 AbMA7

This system shows three piano chord voicings in Eb major. The first measure contains Bbm7, the second Eb7, and the third AbMA7. Each chord is shown in both treble and bass clefs with fingerings. The AbMA7 chord is shown with a wide interval between the 3rd and 7th degrees.

Abm7 Db7 GbMA7

This system shows three piano chord voicings in Gb major. The first measure contains Abm7, the second Db7, and the third GbMA7. Each chord is shown in both treble and bass clefs with fingerings. The GbMA7 chord is shown with a wide interval between the 3rd and 7th degrees.