CHORD IDENTITIES AND SIMILARITIES

Chords with Similar Names

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Introduction

A few years ago, Robert Denman and I wrote this article for WholeNote.com. We have received some nice comments on this and I decided to put this into a small booklet.

Learning jazz chords can often be frustrating, as some chords have more than one name. Robert Denman and myself have put together a list of chords that have the same name. This list will provide the reader with the names of the chords sharing the same tones and a brief description of how they are related in the case of similarities. We hope that this list will be of benefit to you.

While this material is aimed at the jazz guitarist, these voicings can be use in all types of music. These chords add interest and can change to mood of a song.

I have not provided any chord charts, in an effort to keep the size to a minimum.There are many books on the market and many chord charts on the Internet that can be of help (here's one on Jazzguitar.be). I would suggest that you look into books like "Chord Chemistry"or a Joe Pass book on chords. I would also suggest that you learn the CAGED System of chords. Again the Internet has many sites with this information.

Index

Minor 6th - Dominant 9ths - Minor 7 flat 5

Remember that in these chord relationships that the m6 and m7b5 chords listed are identical. However, in the relationship to the 9th chords they are not absolutely identical because the root of the 9th chords is a note not present in the m6 or m7b5 chords being compared. So, in the list it would be better to say that the m6 and m7b5 shown are identical and the 9th is not identical, but close.

It is handy to remember these relationships especially in creating runs. ie: a run based on Gm6 or Em7b5 will also fit against a C9. Conversely a C7 or C9 run with the root C not included will become a run that fits over Gm6 or Em7b5. (rd)

Am6 = D9 = F#m7b5
Bm6 = E9 = G#m7b5
Cm6 = F9 = Am7b5
Dm6 = G9 = Bm7b5
Em6 = A9 = C#m7b5
Fm6 = Bb9 = Dm7b5
Gm6 = C9 = Em7b5

Minor 7th -Major 6th

Here the relationships are absolutely identical. Notice that for instance, Am is the relative minor to C and C is the relative major to Am. It works out that for any Major 6th, the chord tones are exactly the same as the relative m7th. So, Am7 equals C6, and etc. down the list.

Want to make a minor or a m7th run? Just think the Cmajor scale. Its'notes are the same as the notes in the Am (pure) scale. So, use a C scale to create runs against C, Cmaj7, C6, or Am, Am7,or Am9. When you learn any major scale fingering you also have the relative minor right under your fingers. (rd)

Am7 = C6
Bm7 = D6
Cm7 = Eb6
Dm7 = F6
Em7 = G6
Fm7 = Ab6
Gm7 = Bb6

Minor 9th -Major 7th

Again, in this relationship the m9 & maj7 are almost identical. If you add the note A to the Cmaj7 chord, then the chord becomes Am9. And likewise down the list. A run over Am9 is easily done using the Cmajor scale tones, as explained above.(rd)

Am9 = CM7
Bm9 = DM7
Cm9 = EbM7
Dm9 = FM7
Em9 = GM7
Fm9 = AbM7
Gm9 = BbM7

Minor 11th - Dominant 7 suspended

These are not exactly identical.

Let's review an Am11. It contains the notes of A C E G B D.
Compare to a D7sus4 and D11. The D7sus4 contains D G A C. The D11 contains D F# A C E G.
Also, compare to an Am7 with the notes of A C E G. See the similarity?

To make a run over any of these chords, just think the Am (pure) scale tones which are the same as the C major scale tones. Neat, huh? It can be seen that Am11, D7sus4, D11 and Am7 could be interchanged for all practical purposes, as far as the sound is pleasing to the ear. (rd)

Am11 = D7sus
Bm11 = E7sus
Cm11 = F7sus
Dm11 = G7sus
Em11 = A7sus
Fm11 = Bb7sus
Gm11 = C7sus

Dominant 7th flat 5 -Dominant 7th flat 5

Here the compared chords respectively are identical. Each one is built on a root which is the b5 of the other. (rd) This is called tritone substitution (more here). (dl)

A7b5 = Eb7b5
B7b5 = F7b5
C7b5 = Gb7b5
D7b5 = Ab7b5
E7b5 = Bb7b5
F7b5 = Cb7b5 (B7b5)
G7b5 = Db7b5

Because of the above relationship of the 7b5 chords, it is possible to substitute A7 for Eb7, B7 for F7, etc in certain situations. I call these pairs alternate 7ths of each other as they might be substituted for each other. (ie:) in Dm7 to G7 to Cmaj7 use Dm7 to Db7 to Cmaj7 providing it satisfies the ear. (rd)

Dominant 7th sharp 5 -Dominant 9th flat 5

Here we have a root problem again. An Eb9b5 is not the same as A7#5 until the root of A is added to the Eb9 b5 and the Eb is dropped. Remember that the b5 note is the same as the #11 note. In a chord named as say, Eb9#11, it would contain both the regular 5th(Bb) as well as the b5 which is the #11 note(A orG##). It is best to separate the b5 note and the #11 note by an octave or more in the voicing. (rd)

A7#5 = Eb9b5
B7#5 = Fb9b5
C7#5 = Gb9b5
D7#5 = Ab9b5
E7#5 = Bb9b5
F7#5 = Cb9b5 (Bb9b5)
G7#5 = Db9b5

Dominant 7th flat 9 – Diminish

The diminished chord is closely related to the 7b9 chord. Consider the C#dim chord containing: C# E G Bb. Any of these 4 notes can be the root for that diminished chord. Also, these same 4 notes are contained in 4 different 7b9 chords.

Examine these four 7b9 chords:

C7b9 (C E G Bb Db) = Edim7 = Gdim7 = Bbdim7 = Dbdim7
Eb7b9 (Eb G Bb Db E)
Gb7b9 (Gb Bb Db E G)
A7b9 (A C# E G Bb)

If the roots are removed from each of the above four 7b9 chords what 4 notes are left? The 4 notes left are those notes of the diminished chords named by any of those 4 notes: C#dim, Edim, Gdim, and Bbdim.

By extending this comparison it will be seen that since there are only 3 diminished chords (each chord with 4roots times 3 chords equals 12 roots in all.) Three diminished chords therefore,are common to 12 different 7b9 chords.(rd)

Related Lessons @ Jazzguitar.be (dl)

Jazz Guitar Chord Theory: learn how guitar chords work and how you can construct your own.

Chord & Neck Chart: 2 charts that will help you construct your own voicings.

Tritone Chord Substitution: theory and examples of a very common substitution in jazz.

Guitar Chord Charts: ebook with basic and more advanced jazz guitar chords.

Major Chord Substitutions: 14 ways to play over major chords.

Minor Chord Substitutions: 13 ways to play over minor chords.

Half Diminished Chord Substitutions: 13 ways to play over m7b5 chords

Discussion, Feedback and Questions about this booklet: @ The Jazz Guitar Forum

A Final Word

As previously mentioned I have not provided you with chord charts. I believe that if you build a chord yourself, you will remember that chord longer. Learn the five basic forms of dominant 7th chords. Learn the 1, 3, 5 and 7 intervals of each chord. Finally, learn what note needs to be moved up or down, to form the chord you are building. For example, move the 3rd degree down a fret to make a minorchord, or up a fret to make a suspended 4th chord (more about jazz guitar chord theory here).

I hope this booklet has help in your understanding of chords that have many names. Good Luck.

Frank