

Static Changes: Beginning to See the Light

Three-note chord sequences to supercharge your comping

By Ted Eschliman



Three Notes. You barely need more...

In the last three Jazz Mandology articles, we've looked at inversions of **7th chords**, using only three notes. <http://www.mandolinsessions.com/?p=809> We hope their logic and simplicity have become a useful reality in your own playing, not only in your experience with "All Blues" but in other situations that call for extended bars of the same **DominantV7** chord and in the last installment "vamping" patterns you can do with the **Major 7** chord and a passing **ii7**. Again:

- 1.) There are only four of them! From there, they just repeat up the hypothetically infinite fretboard
- 2.) They are instantly transposable up the neck
- 3.) They are instantly transposable across the strings

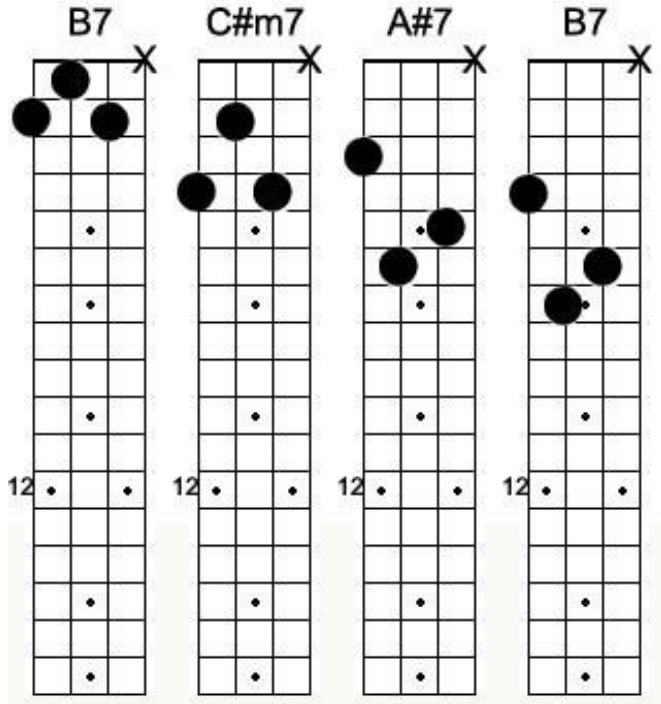
We threw a lot of theory at you and now we just want to take the bridge to a popular jazz tune, "**I'm Beginning to See the Light**" and show you a little, well... light.

The middle of the tune is very simple. It starts with five simple **V7** chords that stretch several measures and comfortably descend one half step, and is played in the **key of G**:

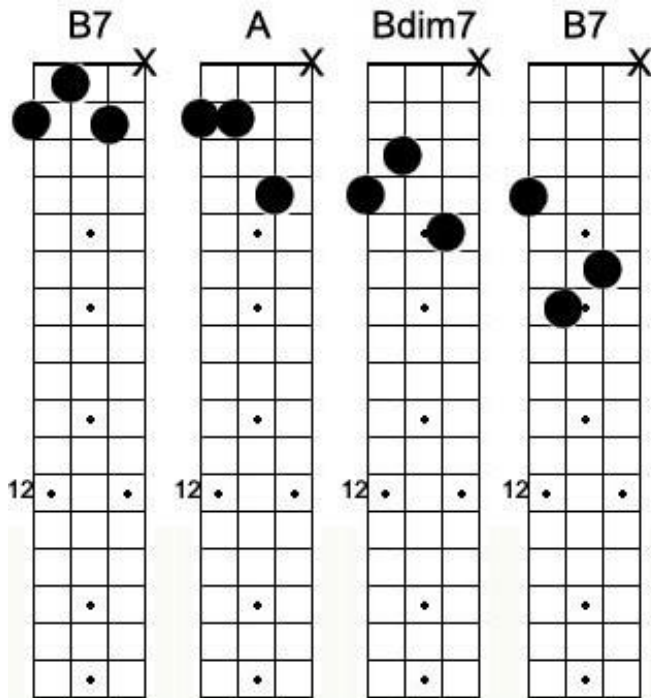
B7 / / / / / / / / | **Bb7** / / / / / / / / | **A7** / / / / / / / / | **Eb7** / / / / / | **D7** / / / / /

It's the first three measures we want to focus on. Are you just going to play as written, **chord**, repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat, **chord** repeat, repeat, etc? Maybe you will the first few times, but the whole point of these articles is to inject some extended, stress-free *variety* into your comping. We mentioned a couple sessions ago injecting a **m7** (**B7 C#m7 B7 C#m7**, etc.), and that would again be a logical option. This time we want to add to the arsenal and suggest an additional **passing chord**, and an added caveat you don't want to get too wrapped up in the theory.

For now, just play through the following pattern, substituting these chords for the two straight measures of **B7**. Play them two chords to a beat:

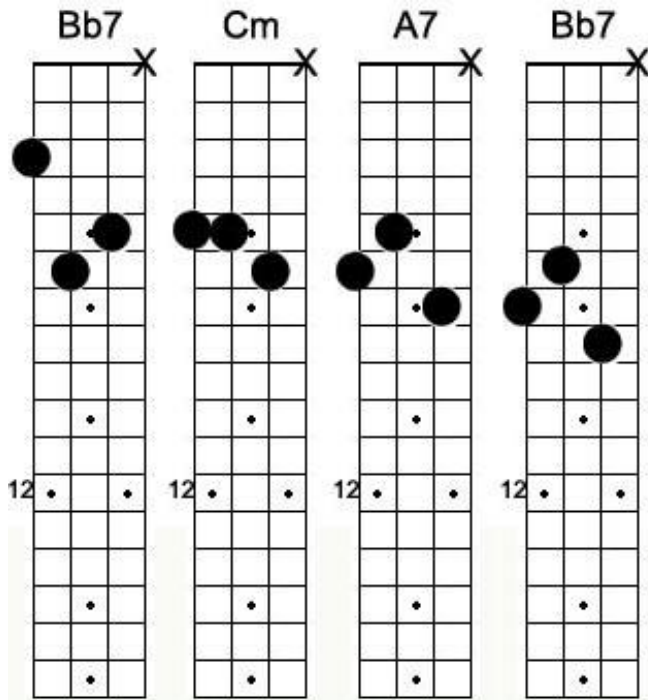


Smooth, right? We said we wouldn't dive deeply into the theory; let's point out the **A#7** chord above is simply a **V7** chord that's a half step below the **B7**. Hear how it slides up to it naturally. This **half step slide** is a great trick you can duplicate all over the fretboard. It sounds great here.

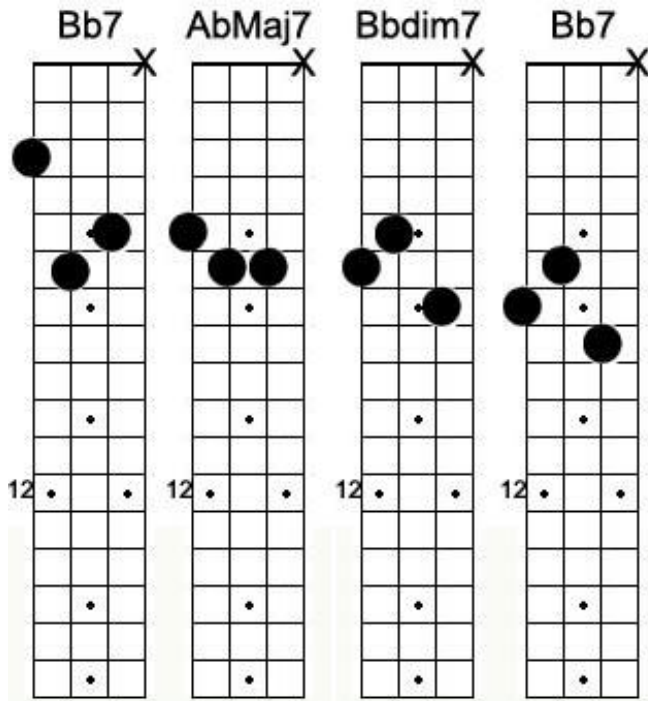


The above variation is similarly smooth, but one reason we don't want to get bogged down by the theory is that it could be argued that the **A** is actually a 3-note **A Major 7** chord with the 7th missing or an **F#m7** with an **F#** missing, the **B dim7** is actually a **D dim7**, **F dim7**, **A dim7**, and really, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter. What is important is they *sound* fabulous and any of the two above patterns can be transposed all over the fretboard. For now, get the grips in your hands and the sounds in your ears.

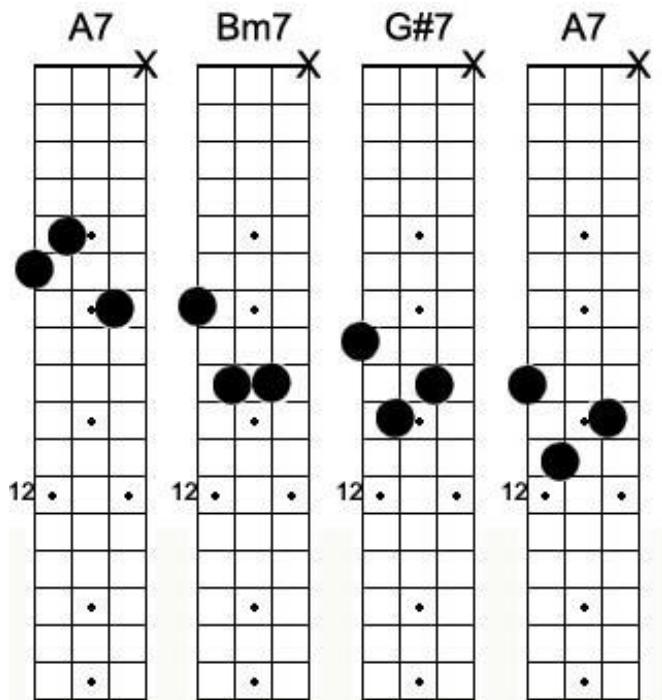
Let's move to the next chords, similarly enhancing the **Bb7**, only in a different inversion:



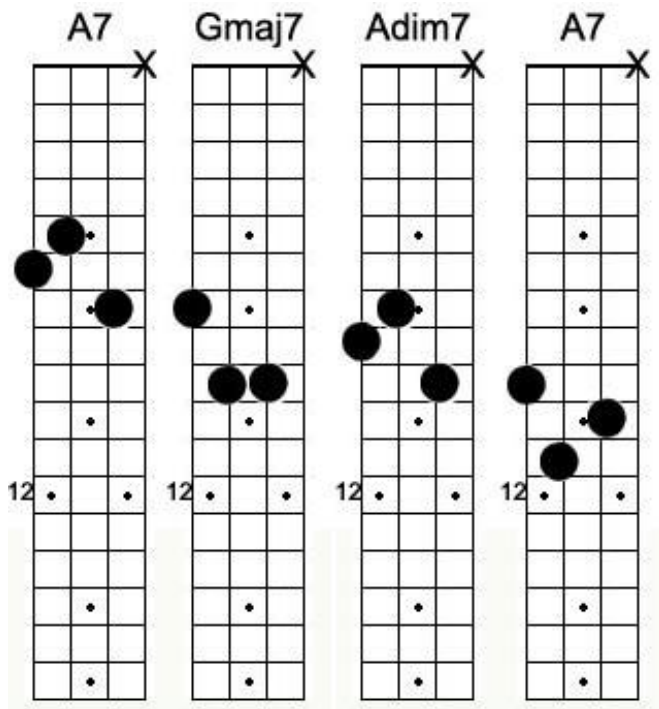
Silky movement here--very natural, and again, you can move this around for other keys as well. Half step slide from A7 to Bb7. We can modify this a second way as we did with the previous chord block:



Don't get bogged down in attempts to label the theory precisely here, either. It's just a good block of chords to get into your hands as you comp away on autopilot. Note the **G#** uses that **V7 half step glide** again. Really, that's the only thing we've added to what could have been a simpler alternating **A7 Bm7 A7 Bm7**:



The last block sets of chord substitutions start on yet another inversion, replacing the two measures of **A7**



We've mentioned four total inversions before, and if "I'm Beginning to See the Light" continued on to the **Ab7**, you could modify it like the previous one. That's your extra credit assignment--come up with your own.

The nice thing is when you get used to these chords, you really don't do much in the way of on-the-spot chord analysis. In essence we've just worked on blocks of **B7**, **Bb7**, and **A7**. That should be the mental association when you see a long block of **V7** chords, just the **V7** chord itself with passing chords in between. Try transposing this on other **V7** blocks like **Eb7**, **Bb7**, **D7**, etc. After comping the 29th chorus behind the other soloists, this can be a personal cerebral invigoration as well as a demonstration of your superior musicianship to your fellow musicians, and your audience.

Hope you're beginning to see the light!

By the way, if you ever want a title summary of all the **JazzMandology** topics (over three dozen, now!) here's a page that lists them: http://jazzmando.com/mandolin_sessions.shtml. There's a lot to uncover there, and **Mel Bay Publishing** has brought these all to you for free. Share them with your **Facebook** and **Twitter** friends. In case you are completely new to the **FFcP** concept referred to in previous **Jazz Mandology** articles, here's a good primer on the JazzMando site: http://jazzmando.com/ffcp_studies.shtml

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