

Rob's Piano Room - Module 6 - PDF
The Dominant Seventh Chord, and Harmonic Rhythm

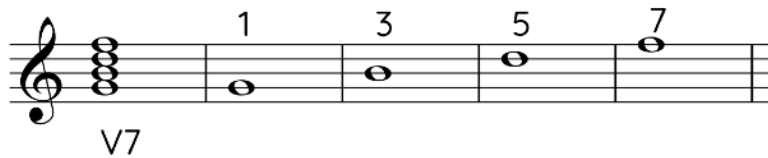
Main points

Review- The notes of the triad are referred to as the 1 (first or root), 3 (third) and 5 (fifth) of each triad regardless to which degree of the scale we are on



Most chords in basic classical harmony are triads (three note chords), but we do have a few four note chords in common use

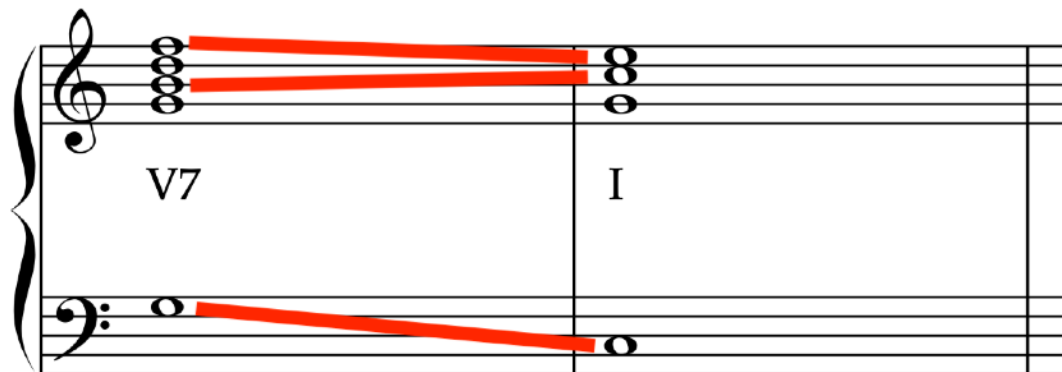
One of these is formed by adding a fourth note to our V chord. So we have 1,3,5, and 7 (G,B,D, and F in the key of C for example). The chord resulting from this adds an extra feeling of tension/release to our V-I progression. This chord is referred to as the dominant seventh (V7) chord



The word 'dominant' originally refers to the fifth scale degree and chords built on it.

We do sometimes casually refer to any chord that has the shape of a dominant 7th chord as a 'dominant' type of chord. It's important to understand the difference between these two meanings

Even in the triad form of the V, the 3rd of the V chord wants to move to the root of the one chord in the V-I progression. The added 7 in the V7 chord will want to move to the 3 of the 1 chord. These pulls, along with the movement with the roots, do much to create the feeling of tension and release in our V7-I progression.



This occurs within chords (harmonically) but also in melodies. For example if your last melodic note in your melody on the V chord is the third, it will most likely move to the root (1) of the I chord. If your last melodic note in your melody on the V chord is the seventh, it will most likely move to the third of the I chord.

The 7 note itself is considered a chord tone, but can also be seen as a kind of color note compared to the triad notes, because of the tension it provides

Harmonic rhythm is simply the speed at which chords change during a piece of music.

If a phrase stays on a chord for several bars before moving to the next chord, this is a slow harmonic rhythm. If chords change each bar, or even twice per bar, this would be an example of a fast harmonic rhythm. When freely improvising, it is important to be conscious of how fast your chords are moving, as another element of creating variety.

As a general rule, one is more likely to be more complex with melodic devices in a slower harmonic rhythm, as since the chords are not changing there is more room to create interest with the melody. A faster harmonic rhythm may not lend itself as well to more complex melodies, as there is already movement in the harmonic changes. Again, this is only a general rule.

Most of the progressions we have seen begin on the I chord, but it is perfectly acceptable to start on a different scale degree.

An example of a slower harmonic rhythm

Two musical staves illustrating a slower harmonic rhythm in 3/4 time. The first staff shows a progression from I to V over 8 bars, with the I chord lasting 4 bars and the V chord lasting 4 bars. The second staff shows a progression from V to I over 8 bars, with the V chord lasting 4 bars and the I chord lasting 4 bars.

An example of a faster rhythm

A musical staff illustrating a faster harmonic rhythm in 4/4 time. The progression is I - IV - I - V - I - IV - V - I, with each chord lasting only one bar.

An example of a progression not starting on the I chord.

A musical staff illustrating a progression not starting on the I chord in 4/4 time. The progression is IV - I - V - I - I - IV - V - I, with each chord lasting one bar.

Exercises

Ex1. Practice using the V7 chord in our previous chord progressions (using V7 in place of V.) Take care to notice when you are ending on the 7 or 3 of the V7 chord, and notice how you are resolving to the I chord, as described above. (See modules 2 or 3 pdfs for chord progression left hand examples if necessary, but do add the extra note on the V chord to create the V7 chord)

Ex.2 See the examples below - examine for melodic resolutions, and then create your own melodies with these left hand examples.

Ex.3 Create melodies with the above chord progressions showing different harmonic rhythms. Experiment with using more complex melodic ideas (surrounds etc.) more in the slower harmonic rhythm example than in the faster example. Feel free to create your own chord progressions using slow and faster harmonic rhythms, and use those to make melodies as well. Remember to try using both V and V7.

Example 1: 4/4 time signature. Treble clef melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter). Bass clef accompaniment: G2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), B3 (quarter). Chord labels: I (measures 1-2), V7 (measures 3-4), I (measures 5-6).

Example 2: 4/4 time signature. Treble clef melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter). Bass clef accompaniment: G2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), B3 (quarter). Chord labels: I (measures 1-2), V7 (measures 3-4), I (measures 5-6), V7 (measures 7-8), I (measures 9-10).

Example 3: 4/4 time signature. Treble clef melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter). Bass clef accompaniment: G2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), B3 (quarter). Chord labels: IV (measures 1-2), I (measures 3-4), V7 (measures 5-6), I (measures 7-8).

Example 4: 3/4 time signature. Treble clef melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter). Bass clef accompaniment: G2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), B3 (quarter). Chord labels: I (measures 1-2), IV (measures 3-4), V7 (measures 5-6), I (measures 7-8), I (measures 9-10), IV (measures 11-12), V7 (measures 13-14), I (measures 15-16).

Example 5: 3/4 time signature. Treble clef melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter). Bass clef accompaniment: G2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), B3 (quarter). Chord labels: I (measures 1-2), IV (measures 3-4), V7 (measures 5-6), I (measures 7-8).