

## Terry Seabrook's Jazz tip of the month No. 26

### Creating a jazz a piano accompaniment: Guide tone Voicings and Autumn Leaves

In my last article I illustrated the simplest way to make a LH hand voicings to accompany a RH melody, using Autumn Leaves as an example with shell voicings (2 notes) This time I look at making slightly more elaborate chord voicings which use the root in the LH and the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in the right hand. So these are primarily 2 handed voicings (although see below\*).

The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> are the most important notes in a jazz harmony because they determine the chord's basic character and function. The three main categories of chords (maj7, dom7 and m7) all have a different pair of 3rds and 7ths but the same root and 5<sup>th</sup>:

	Cmaj7	C7	Cm7
7th	B	Bb	Bb
5th	G	G	G
3rd	E	E	Eb
Root	C	C	C

These voicings are more complete than the shell voicings but still represent a sort of bare minimum. They work very well in a cycle of 5ths type progression (which is what Autumn Leaves is) because the RH parts all link up with step movement from chord to chord where one part moves a half step (semitone) (and sometimes a whole tone) or remains stationary. This makes for good *voice leading* which is the aim with chord progressions that sound good and are easier to play. Each of the 2 parts (in the RH) make a *guide tone line* through the progression and that is why this type of voicing is often called a *guide tone voicing*.

This also forms the basis of horn or vocal arranging so this example should be studied and played by other players: 2 horn players/singers playing each of the upper guide tone parts. A third player could play the roots (in the bass clef here). The bass part moves less smoothly as it has to jump 4ths and 5ths between roots. Alternatively sing each of the 2 lines. (One at a time, naturally)

There are 2 versions here. In V.1 the treble notes start with 3<sup>rd</sup> above 7<sup>th</sup>.  
In V.2 the treble notes start with 7th above 3<sup>rd</sup> (inverting V.1 all the way).

Notice how the voice in each line switches between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in every chord. Eg. In both versions the Eb in bar 1 is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Cm7 and then becomes the 7<sup>th</sup> of F7 (and so on) while the Bb in bar 1 is the 7<sup>th</sup> of Cm7 and then moves by half step to the A of F7. The notes in each continue to do this through the song. However, because the lines descend they have to jump back up sometimes to avoid going too low.

One chord that isn't defined is the Am7b5 in bar 5 and 9 etc. Since we are not using 5ths the chord is just like an ordinary Am7. (So the 5<sup>th</sup> sometimes plays a bit part).

This voicing system is a good keyboard accompaniment to a horn or singer playing the melody (not given here) or improvising. The keyboard player could even play a proper bass line in the LH instead of holding the roots. Simply try playing a bossa nova type bass rhythm on each root and later a proper walking bass (swing).

\*Another way keyboard players can use these *guide tone voicings* is to play the upper 2 treble notes in the LH and play them as rootless chordal accompaniment to the RH which can play the tune or improvise.

Now try this voicing system with some other tunes – Eg: Afternoon in Paris, All the things You are, Ladybird.

Guide Tone Voicings V.1

# Autumn Leaves

1  $C^{m7}$  3rds & 7ths  $F^7$   $B^{\flat}\Delta$   $E^{\flat}\Delta$   $A\emptyset$

6 1.  $D^7$   $G^{m7}$   $G^{m6}$  2.  $D^7$   $G^{m7}$   $G^{m6}$

12  $A\emptyset$   $D^7$   $G^{m7}$   $G^{m6}$

16  $C^{m7}$   $F^7$   $B^{\flat}\Delta$   $E^{\flat}\Delta$

20  $A\emptyset$   $D^7$   $G^{m7}$   $C^7$   $F^{m7}$   $B^{\flat}7$

24  $A\emptyset$   $D^7$   $G^{m7}$   $G^{m6}$

Guide Tone Voicings V.2

# Autumn Leaves

1  $C^{m7}$   $F^7$   $B^{\flat}\Delta$   $E^{\flat}\Delta$   $A\emptyset$

3rds & 7ths

Roots

6 1.  $D^7$   $G^{m7}$   $G^{m6}$  2.  $D^7$   $G^{m7}$   $G^{m6}$

12  $A\emptyset$   $D^7$   $G^{m7}$   $G^{m6}$

16  $C^{m7}$   $F^7$   $B^{\flat}\Delta$   $E^{\flat}\Delta$

20  $A\emptyset$   $D^7$   $G^{m7}$   $C^7$   $F^{m7}$   $B^{\flat}7$

24  $A\emptyset$   $D^7$   $G^{m7}$   $G^{m6}$