

# Seventh Heaven

## DIG IN TO THE SEVENTH CHORD

■ When it comes to harmony, one extra note can make all the difference. Just one note can take a “vanilla” three-note chord (a triad) and add the chocolate sauce or sprinkles that make it richer and more satisfying. Seventh chords are responsible for some of the most interesting harmonies found in music.

The seventh chord takes its name from the fact that the added note is the interval of a seventh (i.e., seven scale-tones) above the root note of the chord. With numerous possible combinations of triads and sevenths, there are also numerous types of seventh chords; the five most common are described here. Try playing through the intervals, from bottom to top, in each example given to get a sense of the “flavor” of each of these seventh chords. Then try your hand at forming the chords starting on different pitches.

*For more on root notes and triads, see the March/April 2010 issue of Making Music magazine.*



### DOMINANT

The most commonly seen seventh chord is the dominant seventh, made up of a major triad plus a minor seventh above the root. Altogether, the notes should stack up in this order of intervals: major third, minor third, minor third. The dominant seventh is the “default” of seventh chords; that is, if a seventh chord is indicated with no further specification, it is assumed to be dominant. The lead sheet abbreviation for a dominant seventh is simply “7.” C7—a dominant seventh built on the root note C—is shown here.



### MAJOR

The major seventh chord is common in jazz music. It is made up of a major triad plus a major seventh above the root. Therefore, the complete interval set is: major third, minor third, major third. The major seventh's lead sheet abbreviation is “M7.” GM7, for example, is shown here.



### MINOR

A minor triad plus a minor seventh above the root form a minor seventh chord. From bottom to top, the chord follows the interval pattern: minor third, major third, minor third. On lead sheets, the chord is abbreviated “m7.” Dm7 is shown here.



### HALF-DIMINISHED

The half-diminished seventh chord is made up of a diminished triad plus a minor seventh above the root. The stack of intervals, then, is: minor third, minor third, major third. The lead-sheet abbreviation for a half-diminished seventh is “ø7.” Aø7 is shown here.



### DIMINISHED

A diminished triad plus a diminished seventh above the root makes up the fully-diminished seventh chord. The intervals follow this pattern: minor third, minor third, minor third. On lead sheets, the diminished seventh is written as “ø7.” Eø7 is shown here.

