Understanding Polychords

* Complex Theory Made Simple

by Scott Wilson

Polychord: A combination of two (or more) simple chords which, when sounded together, create a more complex sound. In the jazz idiom, the polychord definition expands to include "a combination of a chord (or chords) placed over a bass note." Polychords are considered extended chords. Now that you understand extended 13th chords (explained in previous pages) you can clearly see that extended chords are sometimes more easily expressed as a polychord. For Example: CMaj7 13#11 is quickly realized by understanding it is D

CMaj7

JAZZ JEM *: Most extended and complex chords break down into one simple chord placed over the top of another simple chord. If you become familiar with the Polychord Cheat Sheets you will absolutely gain **aptitude** at a large variety of jazz skills, such as:

* Aurally understanding complex and extended sounds
* Visualizing complex and extended chords on the piano
* Creating specific moods and colors in your original compositions
* Creating interesting color tones and colorful melodies in your jazz solo
* Orchestrating for the big band(in terms of chord clarity)

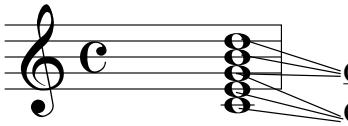
***** You must understand the following examples to make use of the** Polychord Cheat Sheets**.**

Polychord

$CMaj9 = \frac{G}{C} = \frac{5}{1}$

When listed by itself, a letter or number specifically indicates a Major triad.

This is the Polychord formula to create this chord (i.e. 5 major triad over 1 Major triad).
I use numbers instead of roman numerals to make them easier to retain.



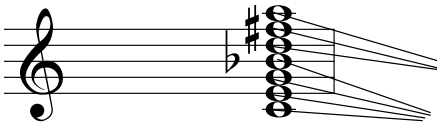
G Major triad

C Major triad

$C13(\sharp 11) = \frac{D}{C7} = \frac{2}{1\ 7}$

When listed by itself, a letter or number specifically indicates a Major triad.

* This chord symbol represents a Dominant I 7 Chord.

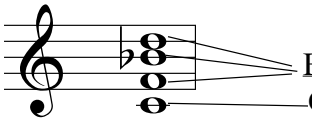


D Major triad

C Dominant 7th chord

$Csus4 = \frac{Bb}{C\ bass} = \frac{b7}{1\ bass}$

A letter or number, followed by the word "bass" indicates a single bass note.



Bb Major triad

C Bass Note

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