

Understanding Popular Piano

Lesson Focus: The Dominant 7th \flat 9 Chord

In this lesson, you will learn that the diminished 7th chord built on the 3rd of any dominant 7th chord turns that chord into a dominant 7th \flat 9 chord. Once you see and understand this, you will be able to use both the arpeggiated diminished 7th chord (this is called the *unfolding* of the chord) and the *octatonic* scale (the official name for the diminished scale) to improvise or simply create fills over dominant 7 \flat 9th chords.

1) Let's look at the parts of the C7 chord:

Musical notation for the C7 chord. The first measure shows the full chord with labels for 7th, 5th, 3rd, and Root in both treble and bass clefs. The second measure shows the 7th and 10th(3rd) in the treble clef, and the 5th and Root in the bass clef.

2) Let's add the \flat 9 to the C7 chord:

Musical notation for the C7(\flat 9) chord. The first measure shows the full chord with labels for 9th, 7th, 5th, 3rd, and Root in both treble and bass clefs. The second measure shows the 9th and 7th in the treble clef, and the 10th(3rd) and 5th in the bass clef.

3) Let's look at the Diminished 7th chord that starts on the 3rd of C7 \flat 9 (Edim7):

Musical notation for the Edim7 chord. The first measure shows the full chord with labels for 7th, 5th, 3rd, and Root in both treble and bass clefs. The second measure shows the 7th and 10th(3rd) in the treble clef, and the 5th and Root in the bass clef.

4) Let's revisit the C7 \flat 9 chord found in example number 2.

Notice that all of the notes *above* the Root (C) make up the Edim7 chord:

Musical notation for the C7(\flat 9) chord. The first measure shows the full chord with labels for 9th, 7th, 5th, 3rd, and Root in both treble and bass clefs. The second measure shows the 9th and 7th in the treble clef, and the 10th(3rd) and 5th in the bass clef. Brackets indicate that the notes above the root in both positions form an Edim7 chord.

Now here's the exciting part: Since you now know that the diminished 7th chord that is built on the 3rd of any dominant 7th chord makes that dominant 7th into a dominant 7 \flat 9th chord, you can use both the *unfolding* of the diminished 7th chord as well as the notes of the *octatonic* scale to improvise over the dominant 7 \flat 9th chord. You can see and here this in action in my **Jazz Etude No. 1** which can be found on the **Free Stuff** page of my website: www.edmascariplanostudio.com