

AUTUMN LEAVES

- JOSEPH KOSMA /
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(MED. JAZZ)

Handwritten musical score for "Autumn Leaves" in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of ten staves of music with various chords and first/second endings.

Staff 1: Chords: A-7, D7, Gmaj9

Staff 2: Chords: Cmaj9, F#-7b5, 1. B7b9, E-7

Staff 3: Chords: 2. B7b9, E-7

Staff 4: Chords: F#-7b5, B7b9, E-7

Staff 5: Chords: A-7, D7, Gmaj9

Staff 6: Chords: F#-7b5, B7b9, E-7 (A7), D-7 (G7)

Staff 7: Chords: F#-7b5, B7b9, E-7

Staff 8: (Final staff with a key signature change to F major)

Autumn Leaves: an introduction to playing jazz chords on the accordion

By Alan Zisman ©2011 - ideas based on notes from Katheryn Petersen

Many accordion players limit themselves to the standard chords on the bass side: Major, Minor, Dominant 7th, and Diminished, along with the root note button and the counter-bass. That works fine for most sorts of folk music - English, Celtic, Cajun, Mexican, and much much more.

But it's harmonically impoverished when used playing jazz tunes and many 'standards' - pop tunes from the 1930s on. These tunes add extra notes to the basic chords. These are often written out something like: *B 7 (b9)* meaning to play a *B7* chord with the addition of the 9th tone of the B major scale, flatted (lowered a half-tone). Not only does this chord sound richer, it gives a hint of notes to play when improvising. On an instrument like a piano, it might be straightforward to add the *b9* note to a chord, but not on an accordion!

It's possible to play these sorts of chords on the accordion making use of these ideas:

- 1) If you know what notes make up the desired chord, you can often play them with the accordion chord buttons by combining a different chord (or chords) with the given bass. For instance, an *A min 7* chord is made up of the notes *A, C, E, and G*. *C, E, and G* are the notes of a *C* major chord, so playing an *A* bass note plus a *C* major chord will give you an *A min 7*
- 2) That could be a bit of a stretch. The next trick is make use of the notes in the counter-bass row (the one above the standard bass note row). These are the third note above the bass. For instance, on the *F* row, the counter-bass note is *A* - 3 notes above *F* (in an *F* major scale). Aha! Pressing the *A* (in the *F* row) along with the nearby *C* major chord gives you an easier way to play that *A min 7* chord.
- 3) Once you've learned how to play a chord in one key (such as *A min 7*), the same fingering will work for that chord in all other keys - just find the appropriate bass note for the root of the chord. So *E min 7* is just like the *A min 7*, but moved over one row - *E* is the counter-bass note above *C*; press that with the *G* major button for *E min 7*. (This is similar to how guitar players learn to move the same hand position up and down the neck).
- 4) There are often more than one way to play the same chord...
- 5) Tunes often use chords in the same order, called a progression... so once you've learned one tune, you'll find big pieces of it (perhaps in a different key) show up again and again, both in that tune and in other tunes. Bonus! In *Autumn Leaves*, you'll find the *A min 7* is often followed by a *D7* and then a *G maj 9*. *F# min 7 b5* is followed by *B7 b9* and then *E min 7*.

Before we get to the chords themselves, you need to know a bit about the shorthand you'll often see reading jazz 'charts':

- Most common, a minus sign (-) indicates a minor chord: *A-7* means *A minor 7*.
- Often: a triangle indicates a *MAJ7* chord
- A small circle beside the chord makes it diminished
- A small circle with a vertical line through it makes it 'half-diminished', which is another way of writing a minor 7th chord with a flatted 5.
- Chords within parentheses are optional
- A chord followed by a slash then a note name means to play that last note as the bass note with the chord: *A7/D* would mean to play a D bass note with an *A7* chord.

Ready for the chords in *Autumn Leaves*? (I'm not going to write out the standard chords - the *D7* (etc) is played just the way you've always played it!)

Chord Name	Bass Note	Chords to Play
<i>A minor 7 (A-7)</i>	F row counter-bass (A)	<i>C</i> major
<i>G maj 9</i> (note: works for <i>maj 7</i> as well)	<i>G</i> row bass	<i>G</i> major + <i>D</i> major together
<i>C maj 9</i> (note: works for <i>maj 7</i> as well)	<i>C</i> row bass	<i>C</i> major + <i>G</i> major together
<i>F# min 7 b5 (F#-7b5)</i>	<i>D</i> row counter-bass (F#)	<i>A</i> minor
<i>B7 (b9)</i>	<i>G</i> row counter-bass (B)	<i>C</i> diminished
<i>E minor 7 (E-7)</i>	<i>C</i> row counter-bass (E)	<i>G</i> major

Notice how the *A-7* and *E-7* chords are the same pattern in different rows, as are the *G maj 9* and *C maj 9*. You can (usually) use the *maj9* pattern for *maj7* chords. Edward D. notes another way to play the *B7b9* - by combining the *B7* and *Adim* chord buttons.

