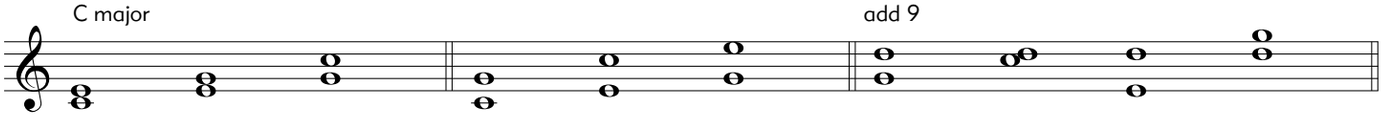
Chapter 7

INTERVALISTIC COMPING

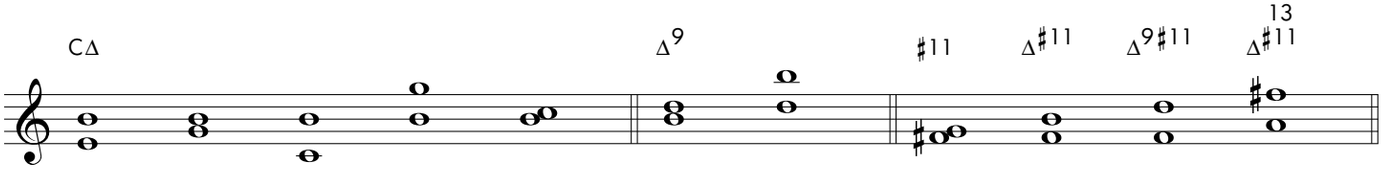
If we look at contemporary jazz guitarists and their comping styles, we see a strong tendency towards note reduction – let's call it "intervalistic comping." It's not only easier to comp with fewer notes, it also helps create "space" in the music. The old saying "too many cooks spoil the broth" could be interpreted musically as "too many notes kill the soloist." It's often better to comp with chords using three notes (or less!) than to fill everything up with thick voicings. You may not need to comp at all!

The space that a soloist has to develop melodic ideas is very much dependent on the comping. A lot of soloists even prefer playing *without* chords behind them all the time.

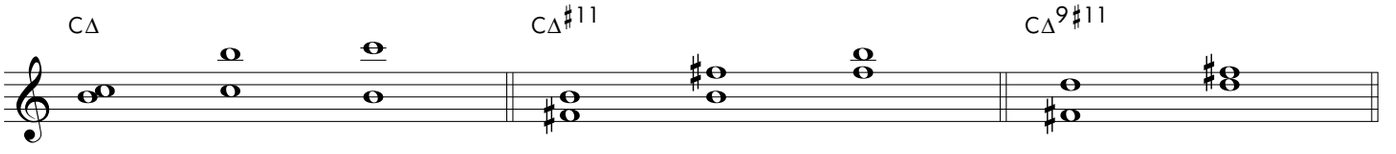
Guitarists like Bill Frisell or John Scofield often use intervals to express a chordal sound. This sort of comping is also popular in rock and country music. For example, to get a "major" sound we can use various intervals:



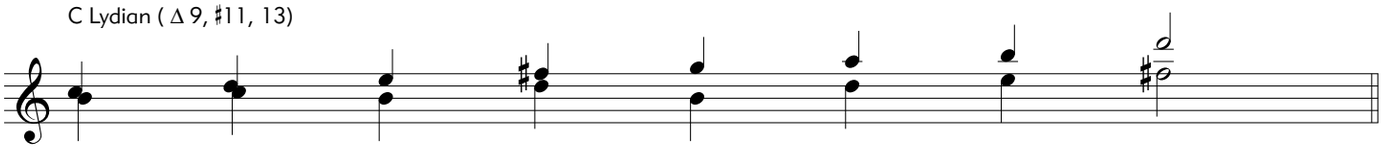
To get a major 7th sound with extensions we can also try these:



Experiment by changing the order of the intervals used:

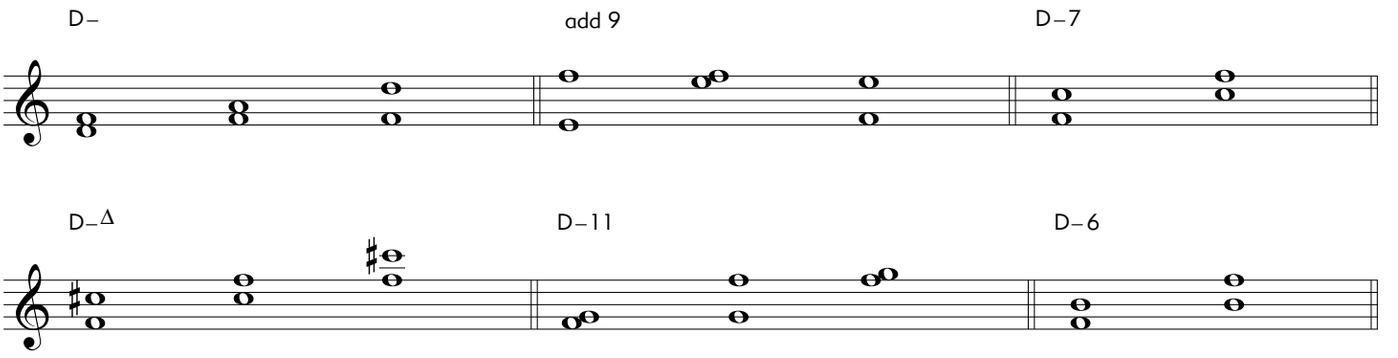


Here is an example combining some of these ideas:

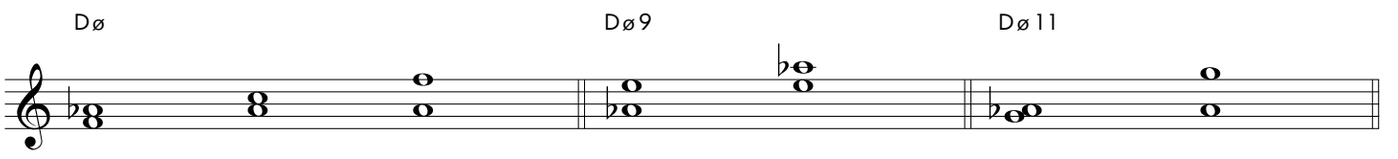


Here are some other chordal sounds:

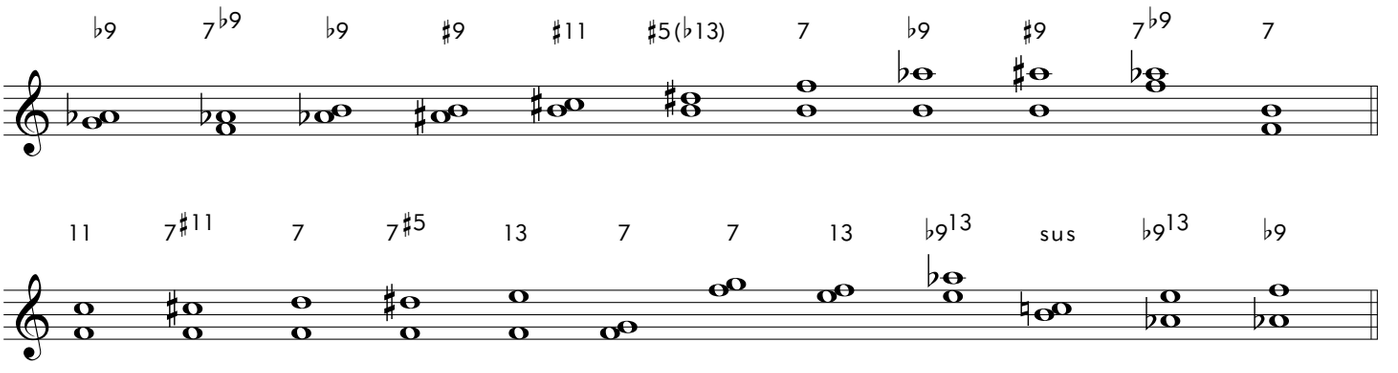
D MINOR SOUNDS



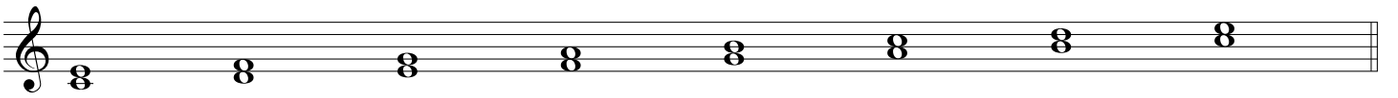
D MINOR 7TH ♭5 SOUNDS



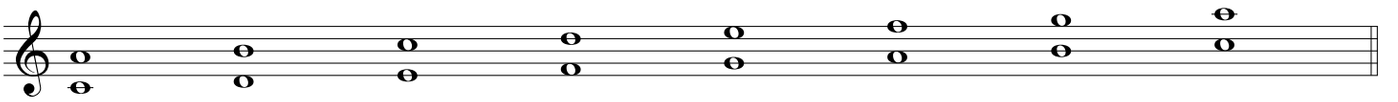
G7 WITH EXTENSIONS



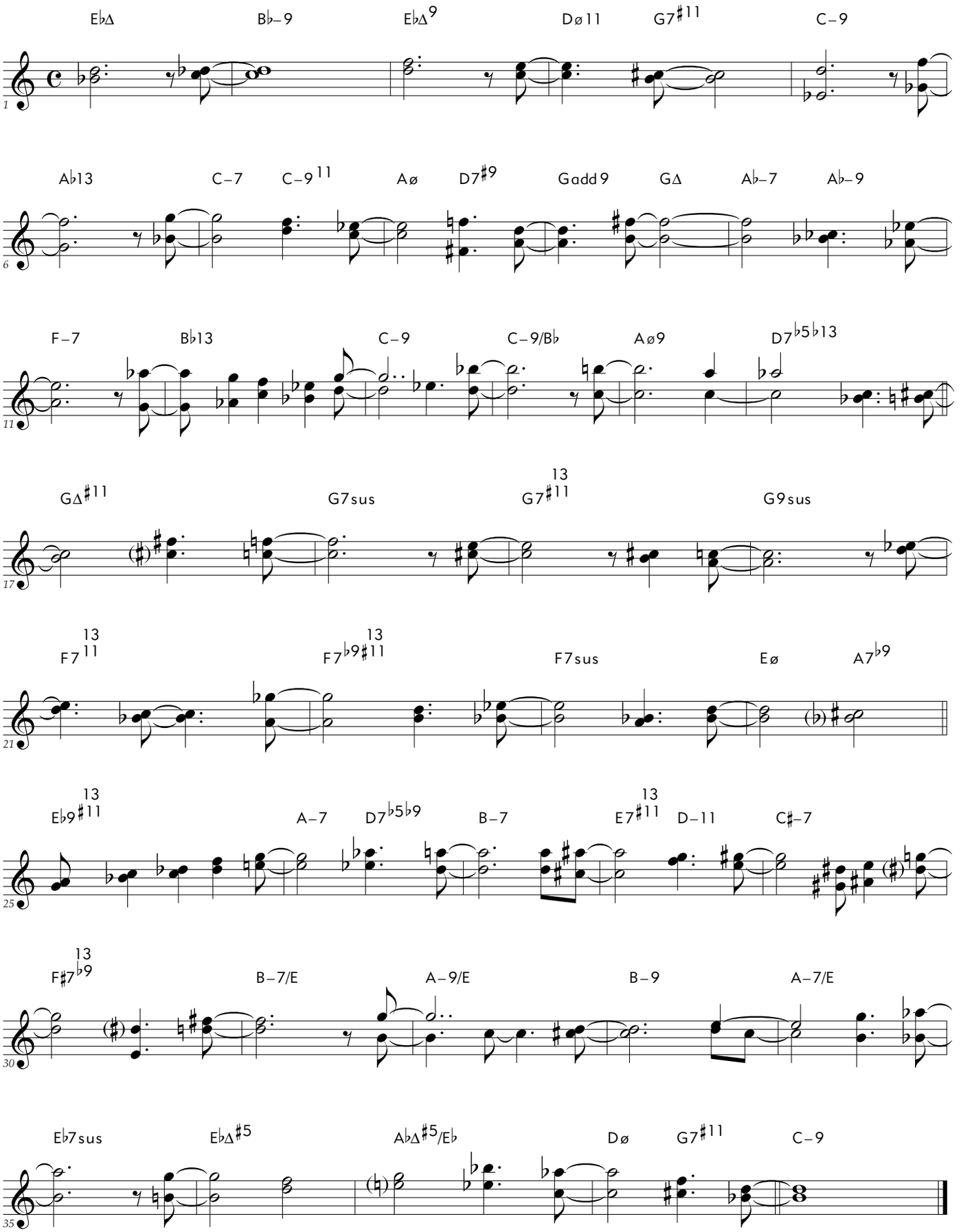
We can see that there are unlimited possibilities for this kind of comping as long as we know what the "important" notes in a given chord are. To gain this sort of knowledge, it's important to practice arpeggios, as well as intervalistic sequences based on scales. For example, playing the C major scale in thirds gives us that sweet "country" sound:



A similar effect can be achieved by 6th intervals:



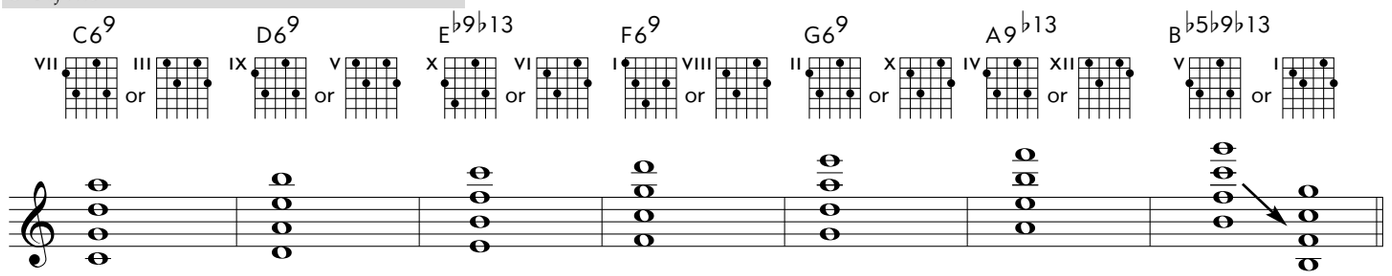
Here's an example of a standard chord progression using intervalistic comping:



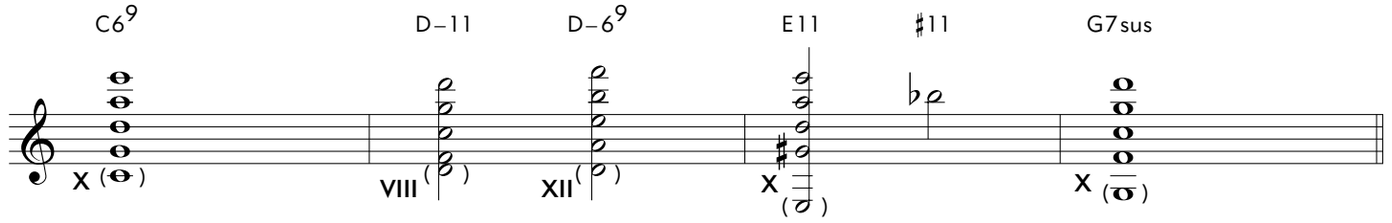
OTHER POSSIBILITIES FOR CHORD CONSTRUCTION

Note that there is no third in the first row of voicings!

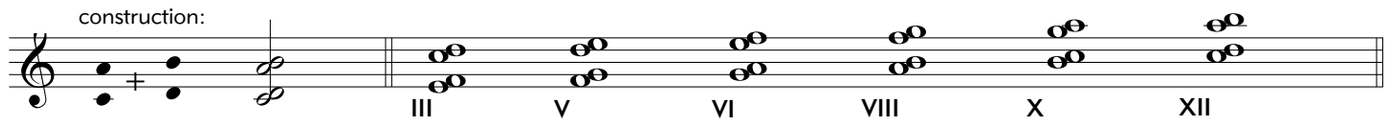
● *Fifths*



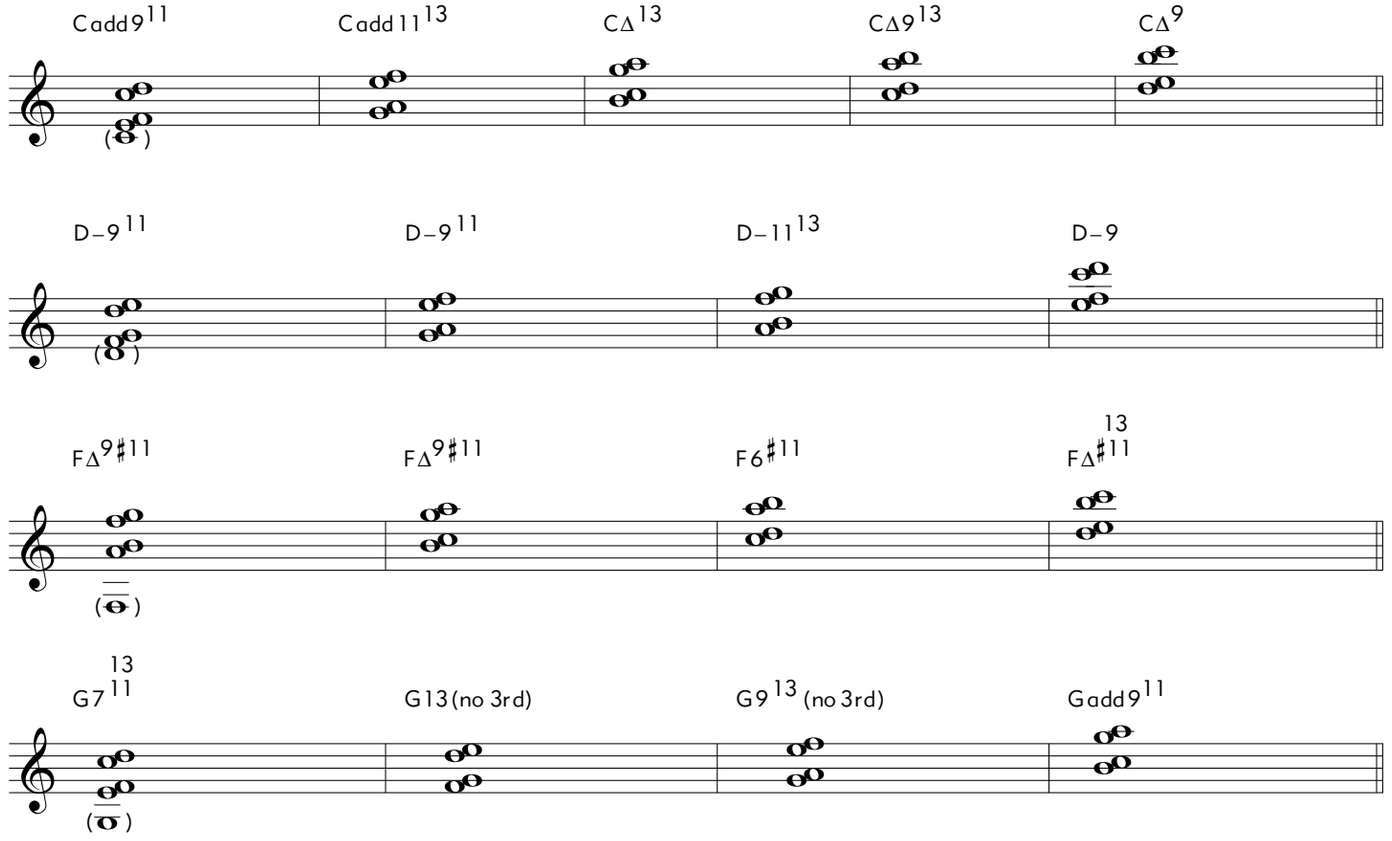
● *Possible Uses*



● *Sixths*



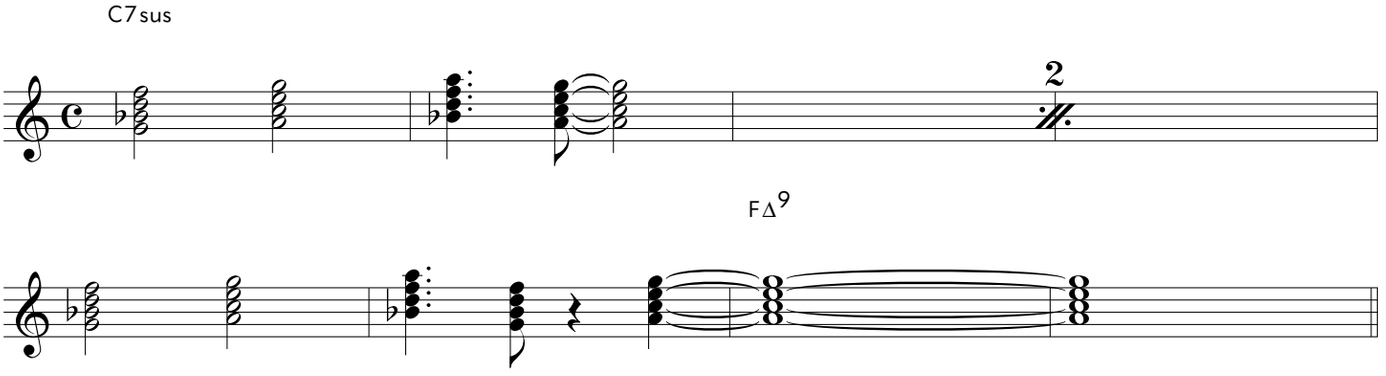
● *Possible Uses*



"SCALE SKIPPING"

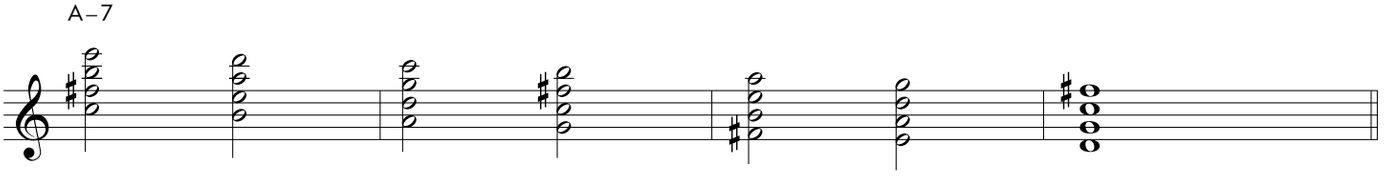
A lot of us are familiar with the voicings within the major scale and the sounds that they can produce in a "modal" setting (Ex. 1). The idea is to follow a particular voicing through the scale (in this case a "root position" voicing) while keeping a steady or "pedal point" bass line.

● *Example 1: "Milestones" Vamp*

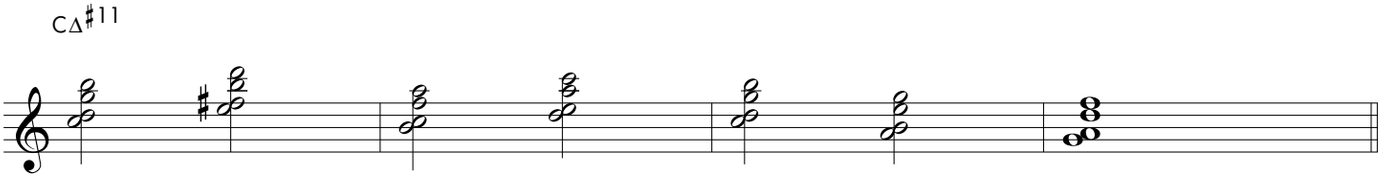


It is important to emphasize that any voicing can be taken through all the degrees of the scale to produce a unity of sound-texture which a random change of chord voicing cannot simulate. The advantage of this sort of comping is that the voicings lead to each other, rather than jumping around melodically:

● *Example 2: Quartal Voicing (Dorian)*

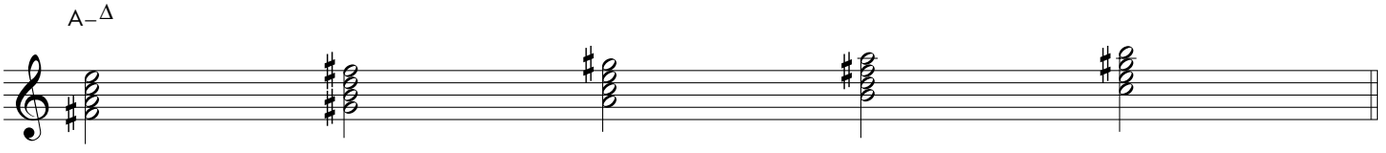


● *Example 3: Cluster Voicing (Lydian)*



We have looked at many possible voicing combinations in the previous chapters, from "four-note 4th chords" to "four-note clusters." Let's see what happens, when we change the source scale from the typical major scale to something like the melodic minor scale:

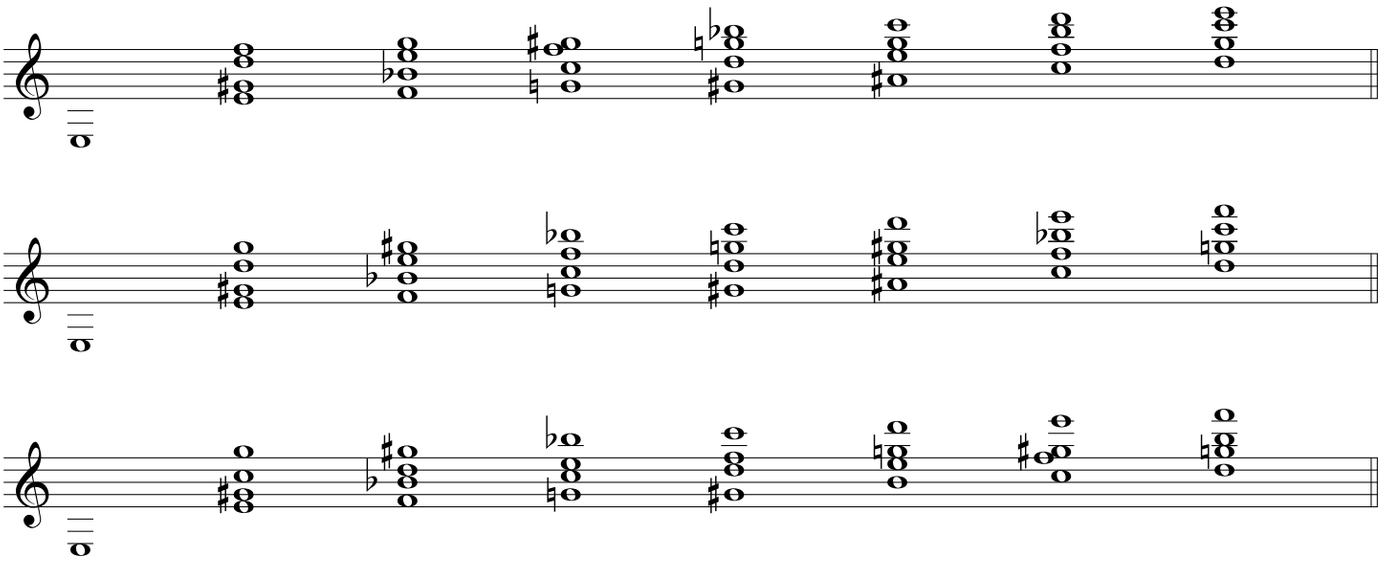
● *Example 4: Root Position (Melodic Minor)*



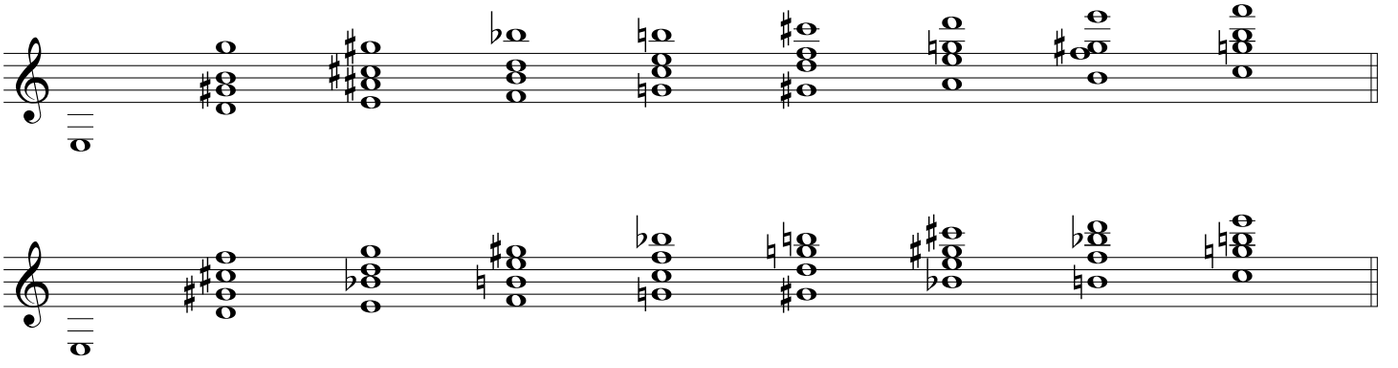
ALTERED SCALE VOICINGS

Here are some examples for altered scale voicings (E7 altered from F melodic minor VII):

● *E7 Altered Scale Voicings*



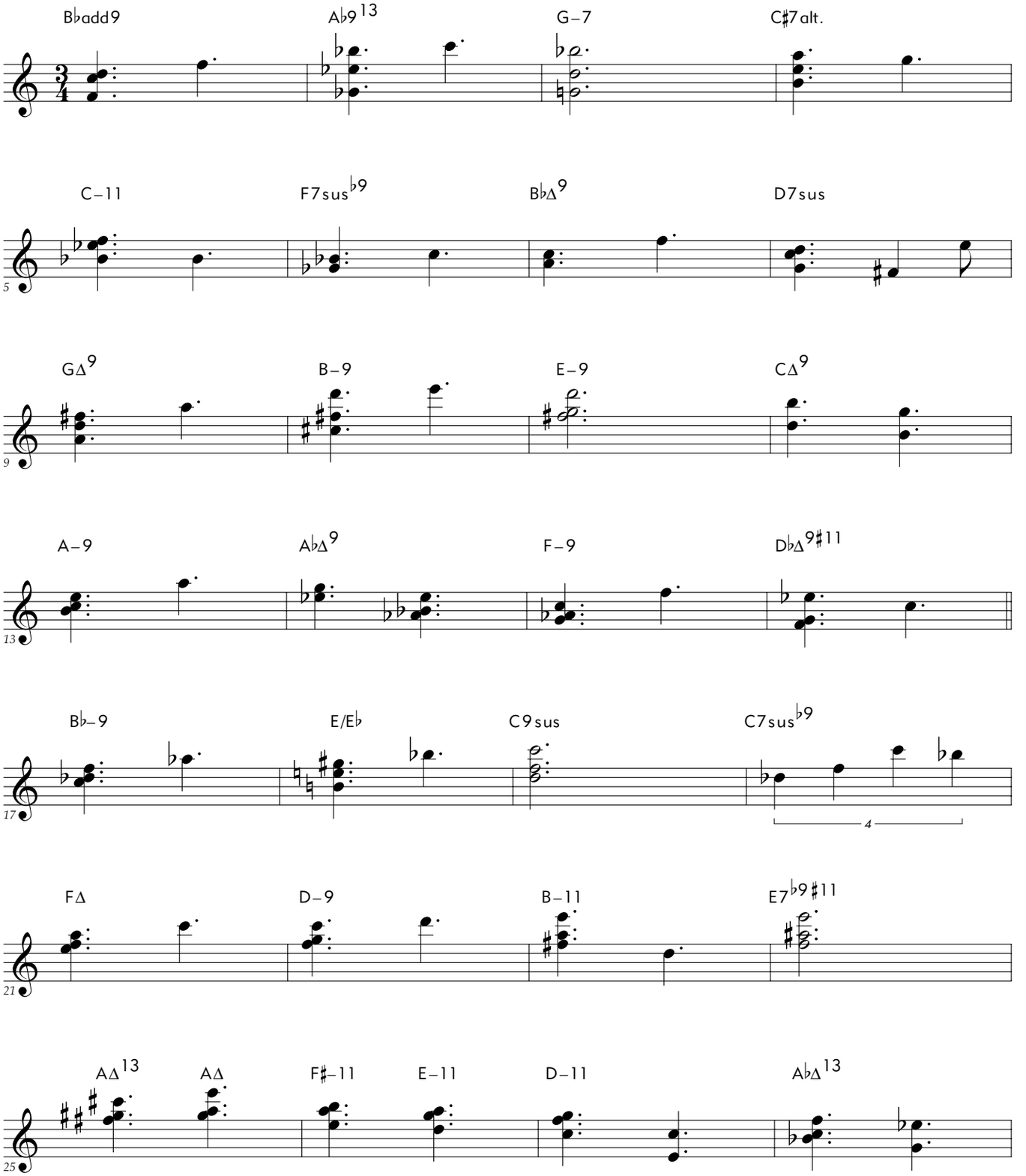
● *E7 Dominant Diminished Scale Voicings*

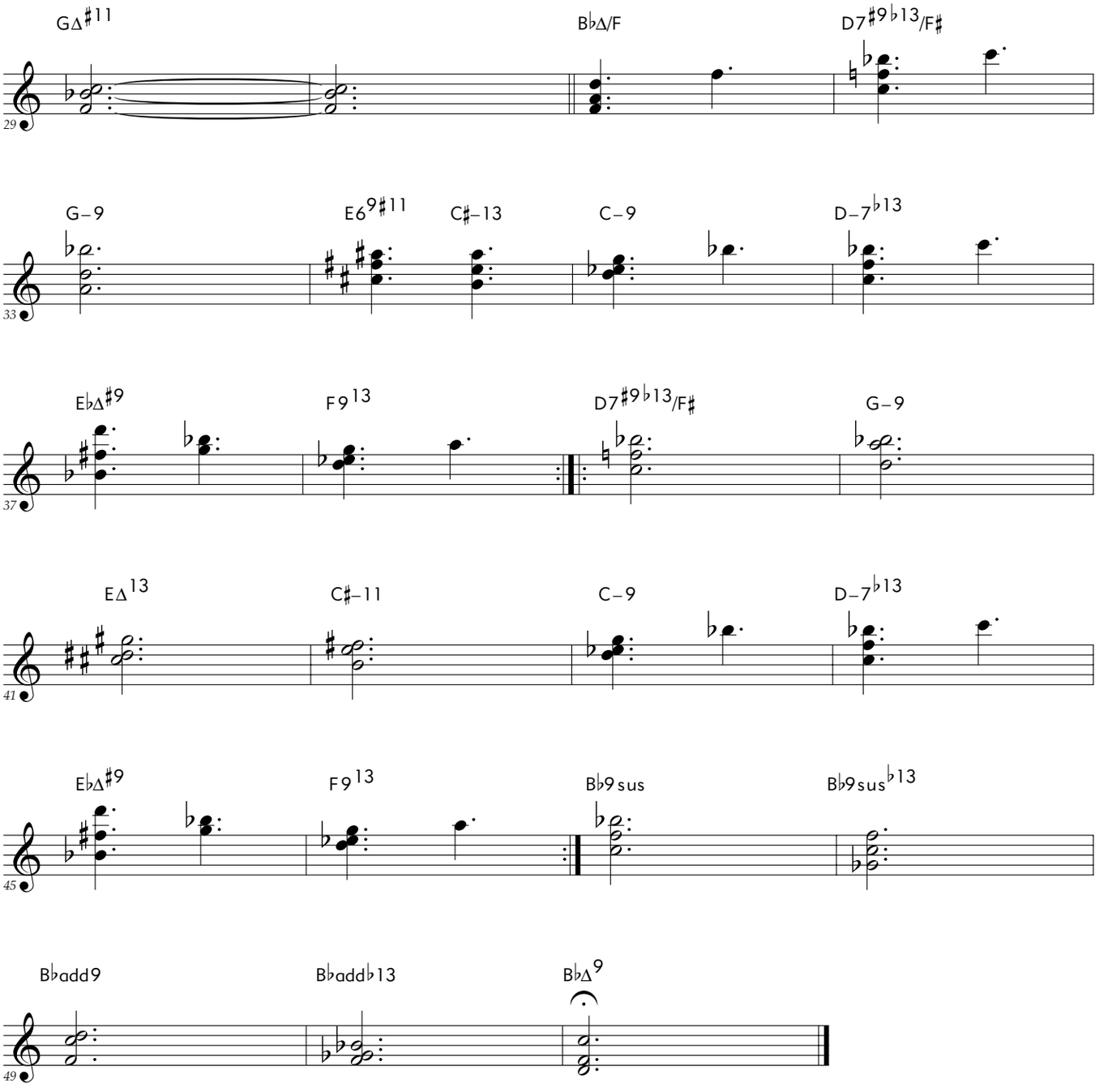


SONG FOR B

Peter O'Mara

This is a waltz using 3-note clusters and 4th chords.

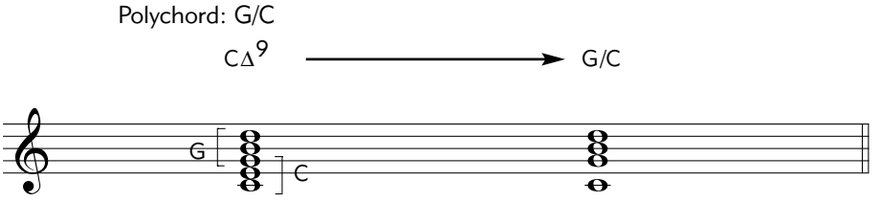



G∆♯11
B♭∆/F
D7♯9♭13/F♯
29
G–9
E6♯9♯11
C♯–13
C–9
D–7♭13
33
E♭∆♯9
F913
D7♯9♭13/F♯
G–9
37
E∆13
C♯–11
C–9
D–7♭13
41
E♭∆♯9
F913
B♭9sus
B♭9sus♭13
45
B♭add9
B♭add♭13
B♭∆9
49

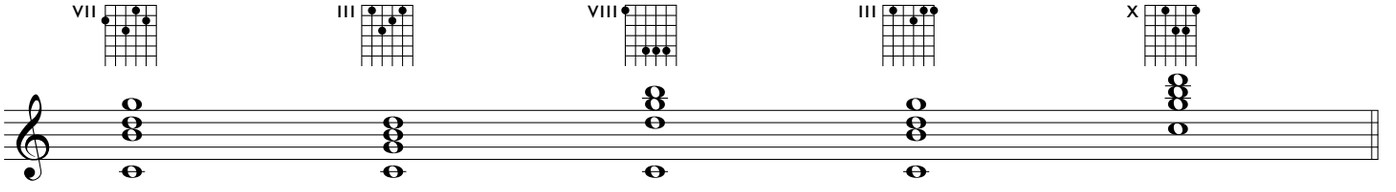
Chapter 8

SLASH CHORDS

"Slash chords" are named after their notation: a triad and a single root divided by a slash ("/"). They are a convenient way to express polychord-like sounds on the guitar.
Polychords are, literally speaking, two chords superimposed on each other. However, the limited number of notes available for guitar voicings make it necessary for us to be economical. This sort of voice economy is useful in producing new "sounds," for example:



Although we've left out the third (E), the result is still a "C major 7, 9 (CΔ9)" sound, because our ear fills in the gap between the root and the fifth. That means we can use any G major triad to create a CΔ9:



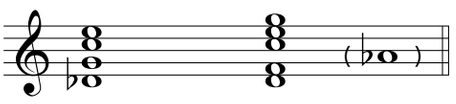
Here, our knowledge of triad shapes (see chapter 1) comes to fruition! Also, slash chords provide the guitarist with very resonant and "modern" sounds and voicings for the majority of modes as will be shown on the following pages.

MAJOR TRIADS AS "UPPER STRUCTURE" SLASH CHORDS

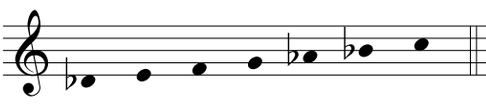
One way to learn to understand polychords is to take a triad, let's say "C major" and try every possible bass note under it. We can then analyze the chordal colours produced and establish the suitable scales for them.

MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE ♭2ND (♭9TH) IN THE BASS

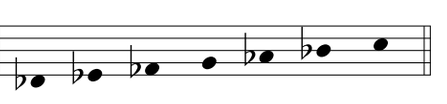
C/D♭ = D♭Δ♯9♯11 (no 5th)



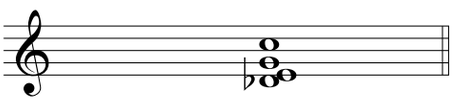
F Harmonic Minor VI



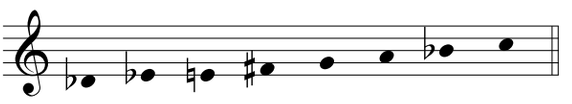
A♭ Harmonic Major IV



= D♭°Δ

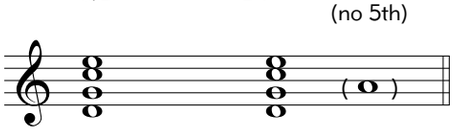


D♭ Diminished

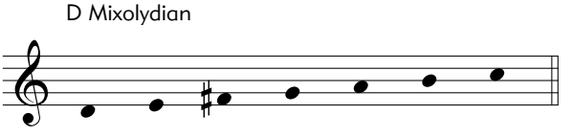


MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE 2ND (9TH) IN THE BASS

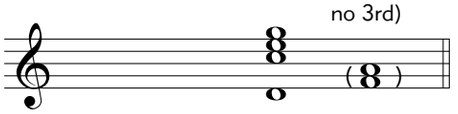
C/D = D9 11 (no 5th)



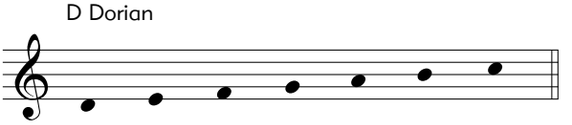
D Mixolydian



= D–9 11 (no 5th, no 3rd)

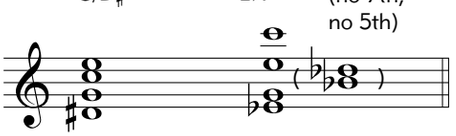


D Dorian

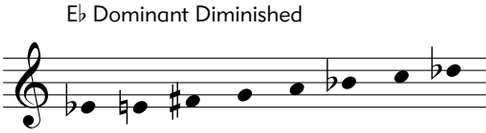


MAJOR TRIAD WITH ♭3RD (♯9TH) IN THE BASS

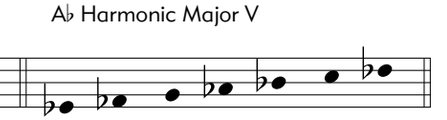
C/D♯ = E♭7 13 ♭9 (no 7th, no 5th)



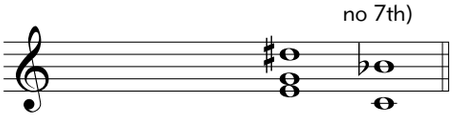
E♭ Dominant Diminished



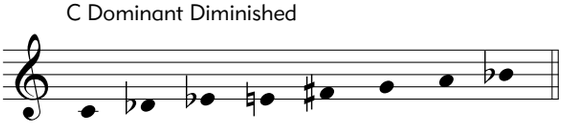
A♭ Harmonic Major V



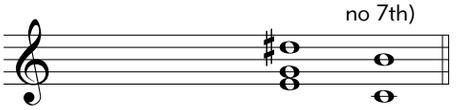
= C7♯9 (no root, no 7th)



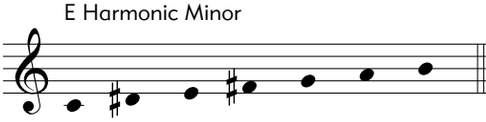
C Dominant Diminished



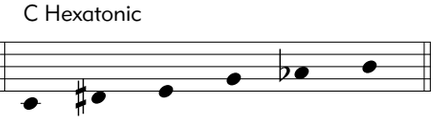
= CΔ♯9 (no root, no 7th)



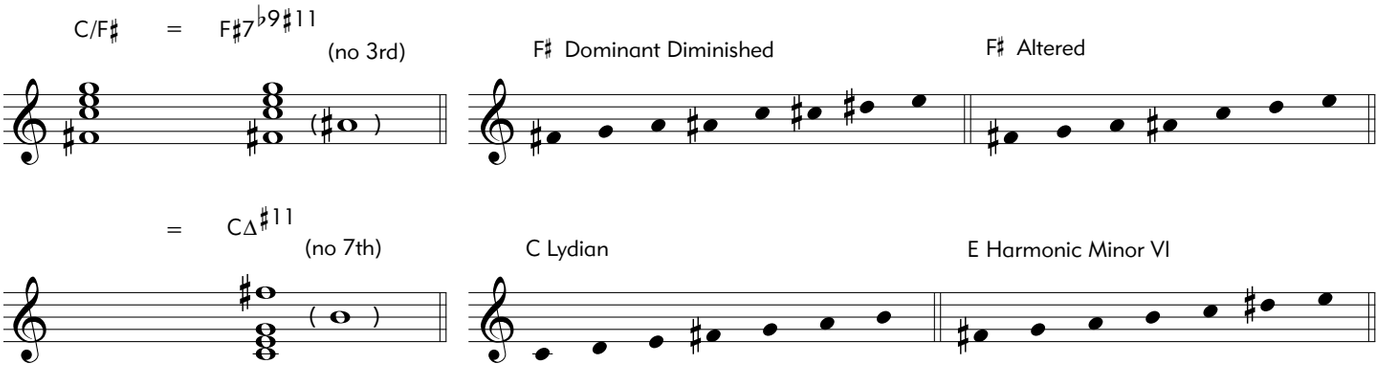
E Harmonic Minor



C Hexatonic

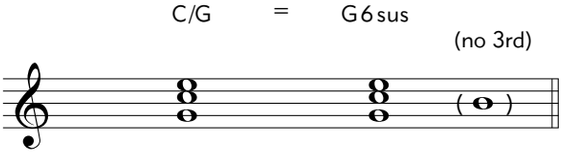


MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE ♭5TH (♯11TH) IN THE BASS

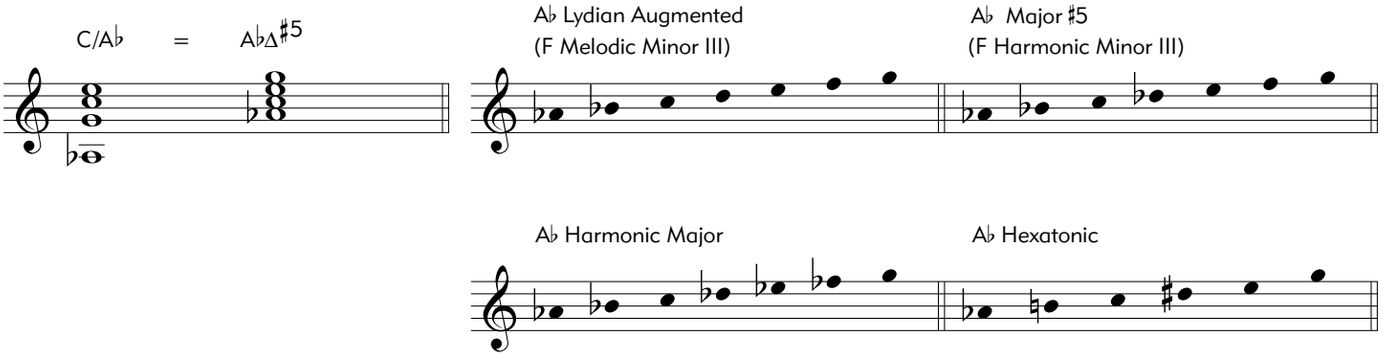


MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE 5TH IN THE BASS

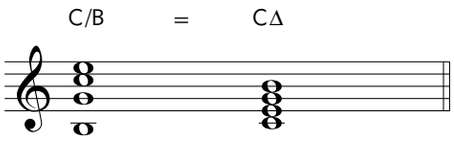
Here, just as with “C/E” we have an inversion of the triad, this time the second inversion with the fifth underneath. The possible chord-scales are the same as with “C/E”.

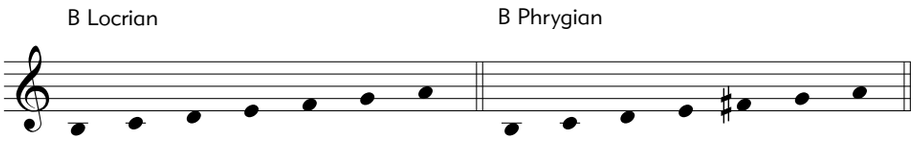


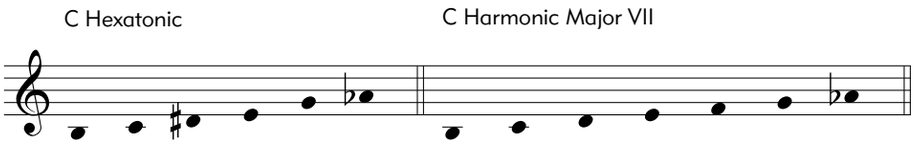
MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE ♭6TH (♯5TH) IN THE BASS



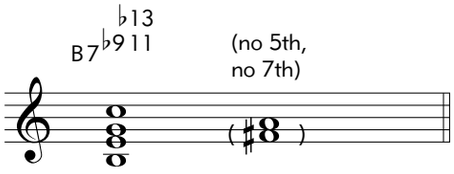
MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE 7TH IN THE BASS

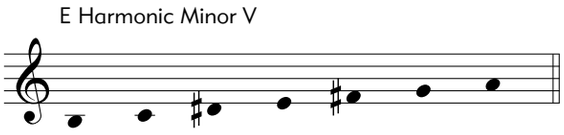






This polychord type can also be seen as a "dominant 7th sus (11), ♭9, ♭13":

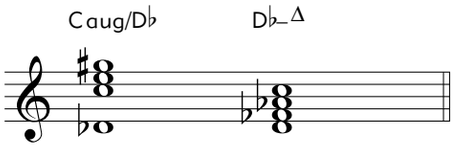


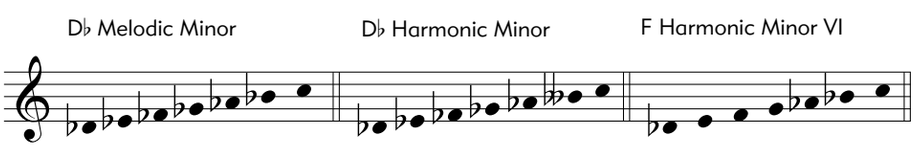


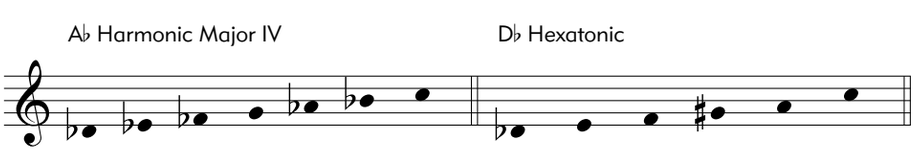
Some of these scales we have just seen may seem strange to the ear. Just remember: "Rome wasn't built in a day." What we "hear" is a result of what we have "heard," so let's keep our ears open!

MAJOR AUGMENTED TRIADS AS "UPPER STRUCTURE" SLASH CHORDS

MAJOR AUGMENTED TRIAD WITH THE ♭2ND (♭9TH) IN THE BASS



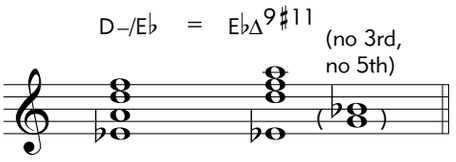


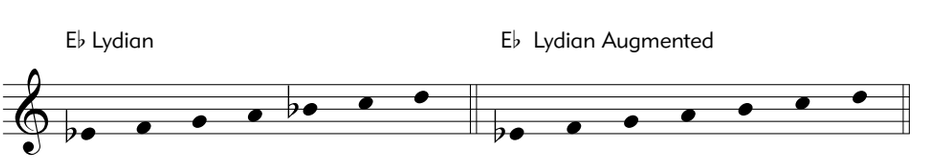


MINOR TRIADS AS "UPPER-STRUCTURE" SLASH CHORDS

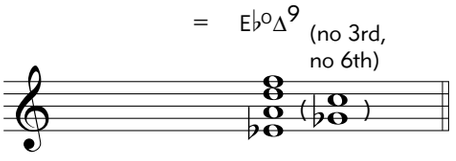
We have tried all the possible bass notes under major triads – now let's do the same for minor triads.

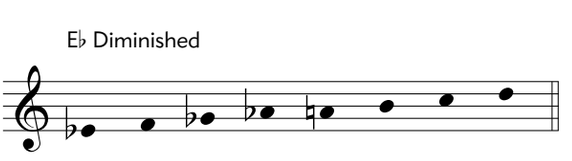
MINOR TRIAD WITH THE ♭2ND (♭9TH) IN THE BASS



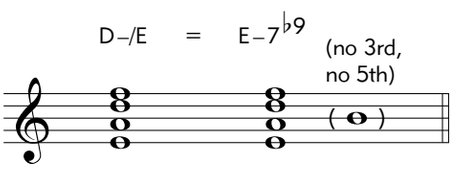


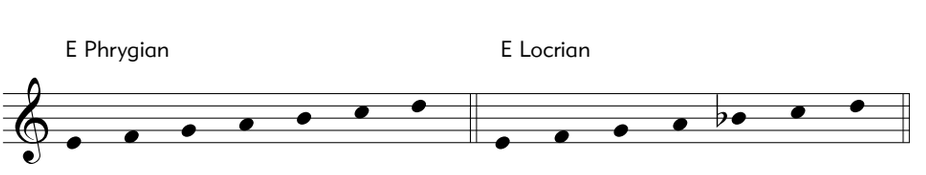
Although the most common use of this polychord is as a Lydian (or Lydian augmented) sound, it does also have a use as an extended diminished chord:

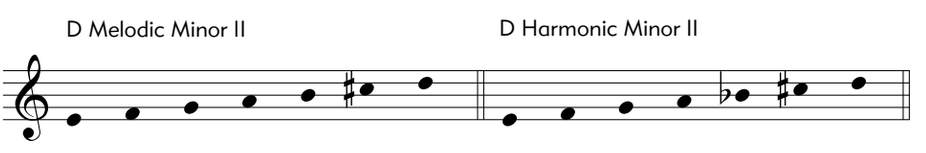




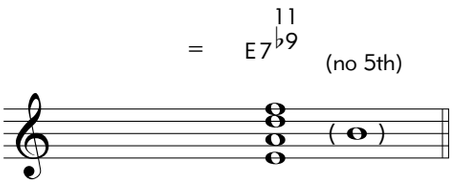
MINOR TRIAD WITH THE 2ND (9TH) IN THE BASS

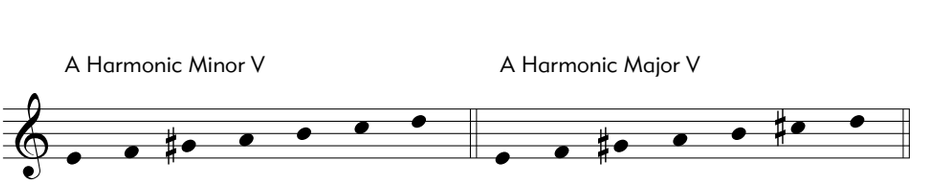




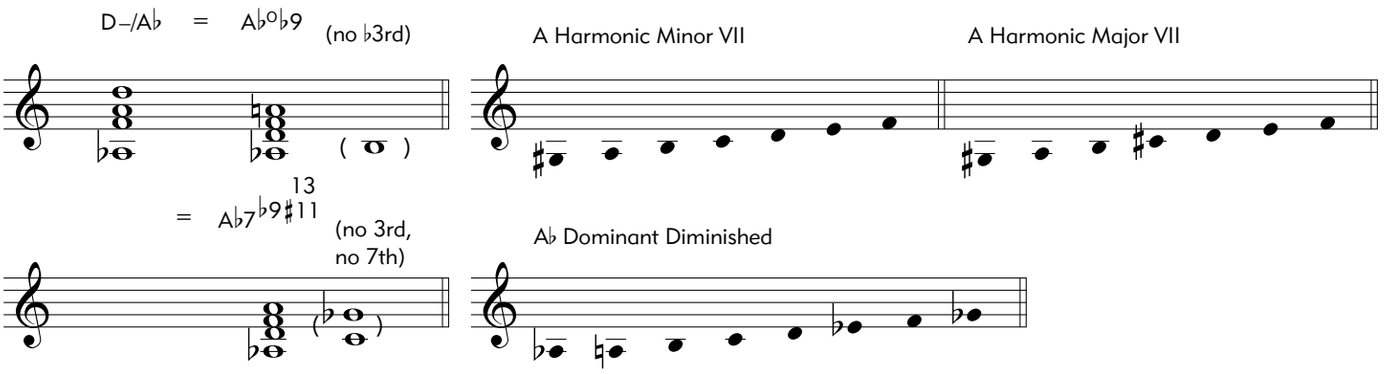


As a "dominant 7th sus (11) ♭9" chord there are more possibilities:



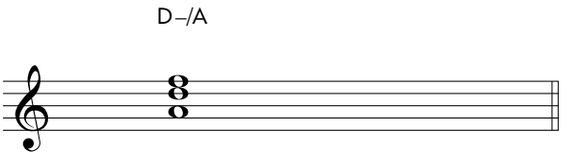


MINOR TRIAD WITH THE ♭5TH (♯11TH) IN THE BASS



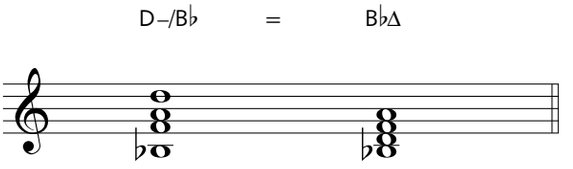
MINOR TRIAD WITH THE 5TH IN THE BASS

This is another inverted triad, so we can use any scale that contains a D minor triad.

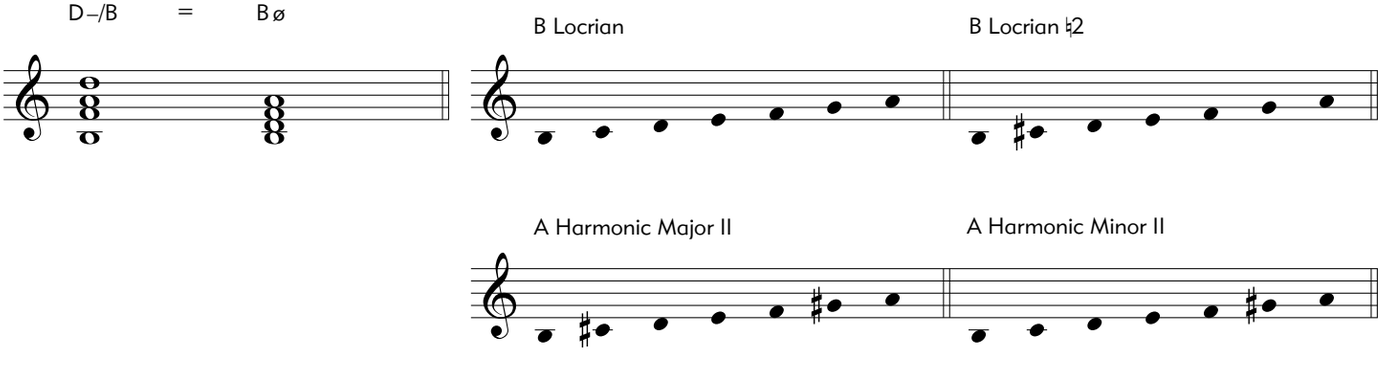


MINOR TRIAD WITH THE ♭6TH IN THE BASS

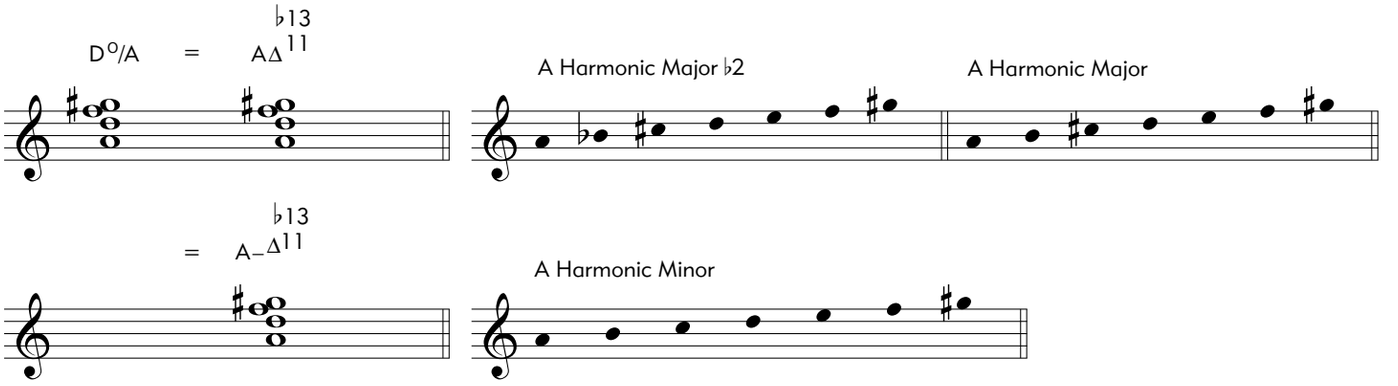
Here we can use any scale that fits a "B♭Δ" chord (see "Major Triad With The 3rd In The Bass").



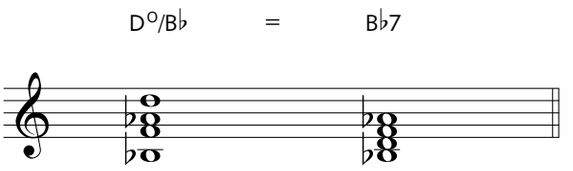
MINOR TRIAD WITH THE 6TH IN THE BASS



DIMINISHED TRIAD WITH THE 5TH IN THE BASS

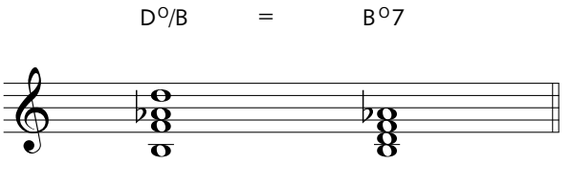


DIMINISHED TRIAD WITH THE ♭6TH (♯5TH) IN THE BASS



This is really no big deal, but let's just file this knowledge away for the sake of it!

DIMINISHED TRIAD WITH THE 6TH IN THE BASS

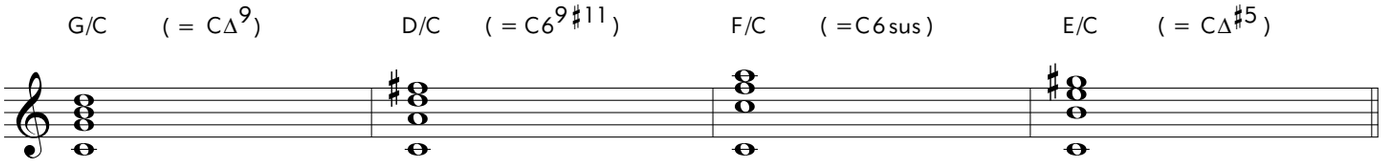


See chapters 2, 3 and 4 for a discussion of diminished 7th chords.

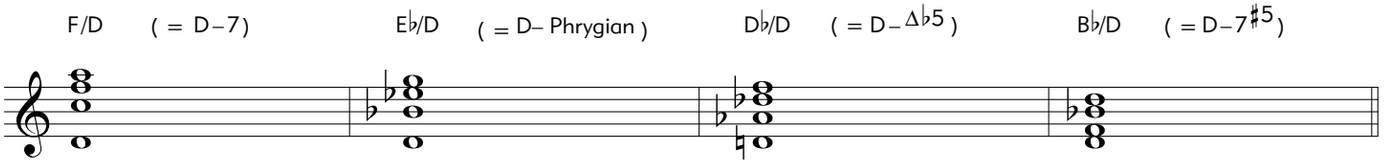
COMBINATION EXERCISES

Combining several slash chords can produce interesting results:

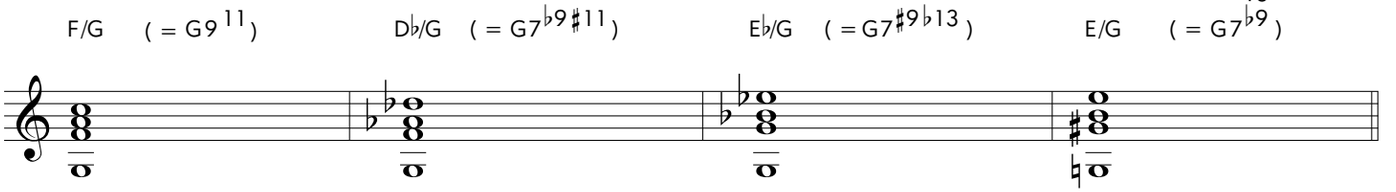
▲ *Major Polychord Sounds*



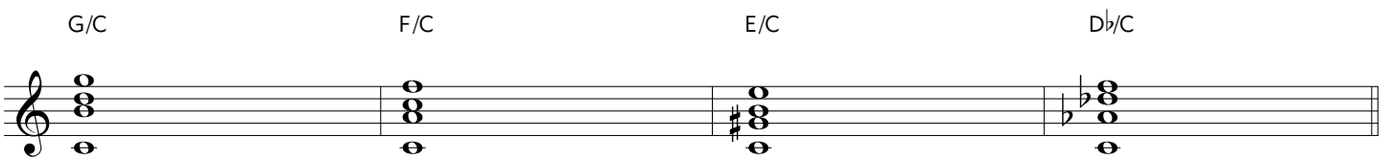
▲ *Minor Polychord Sounds*



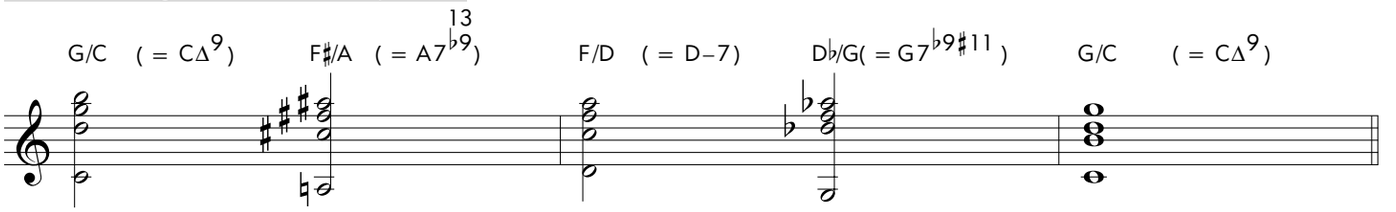
▲ *Dominant 7th Polychord Sounds*



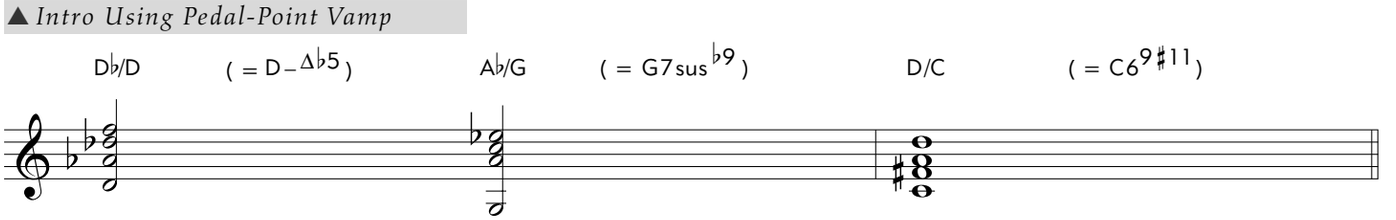
▲ *Intro Using Pedal-Point Vamp*



▲ *Intro Using Pedal-Point Vamp*



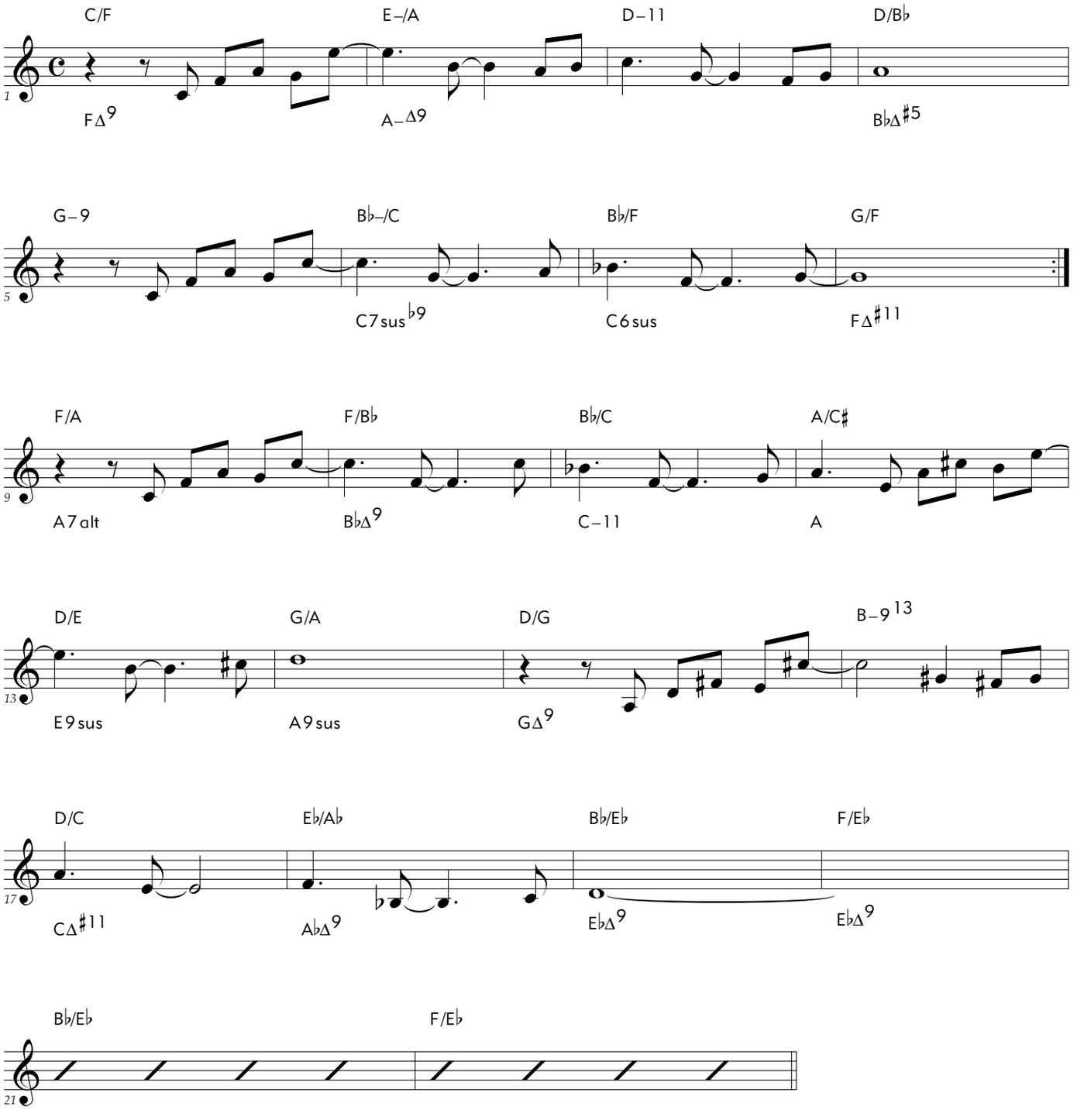
▲ *Intro Using Pedal-Point Vamp*



COSTA DEL SOL

Peter O'Mara
(as played on Peter O'Mara's "Avenue U", ENJA 6046, ENJA–TUTU)

Here is one of my own tunes for you to have more fun with slash chords. Again, the "scale-chords" behind the slash chords are written underneath.



D. C.