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KEYBOARD OUTLINE

One of the most confusing mistakes made during the construction of jazz voicings is **placement**. Often the voicing is either too low or too high. Too low and the voicing is **"muddy."** Too high and the voicing is **"thin."** While there is no hard and fast rule, keeping the heart of the voicing, the **third and seventh**, around middle C is highly desirable.

Middle C
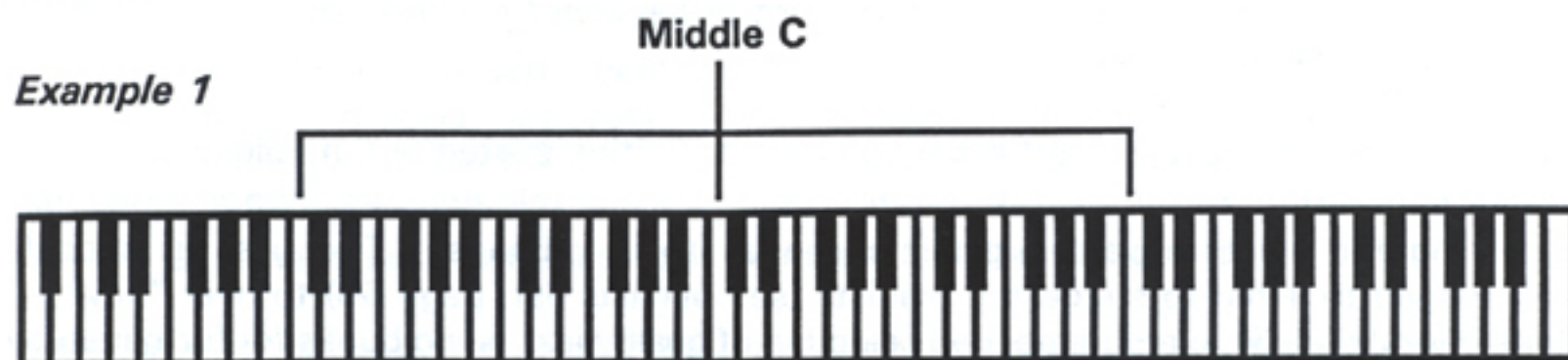
Example 1

Example 1 is the entire keyboard of an acoustic piano (88 keys). Portable electronic keyboards come in a variety of sizes but smallest used for professional purposes would have at least five octaves. Placement of voicings on electronic keyboards will often be more limited due to the quality of sound produced by the instrument. This is especially true in the lower registers. The range used in this book is notated. **Examples 2 thru 5** are **sample one-hand voicings** for major, dominant, minor, and half diminished chord. They are placed within this range. Try playing these voicings. Listen to the sound. Remember how it feels. Become familiar with middle C and be able to find it without hesitation.

Middle C

Example 2   C Major

Middle C

Example 3   C Dominant

Middle C

Example 4   C Minor

Middle C

Example 4   C Half-diminished
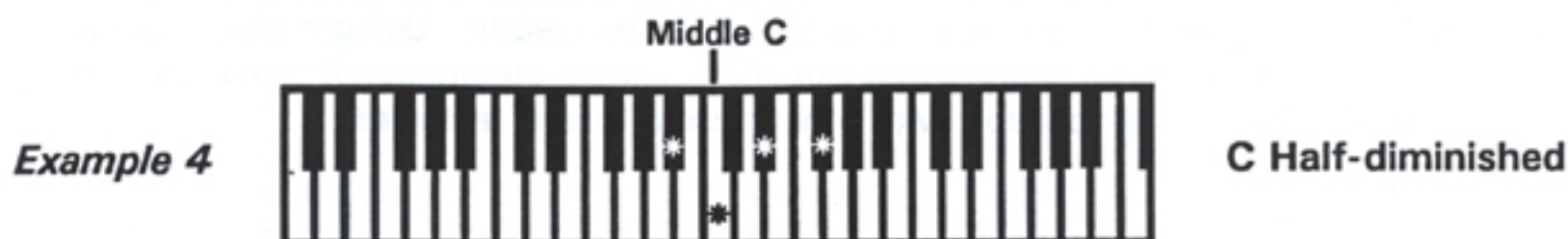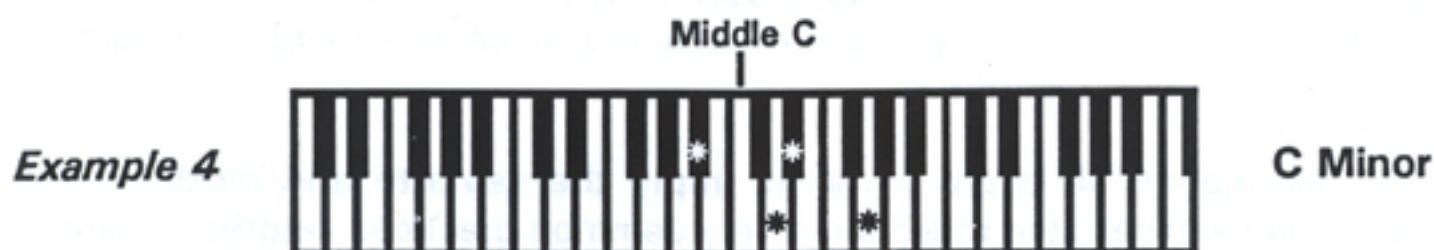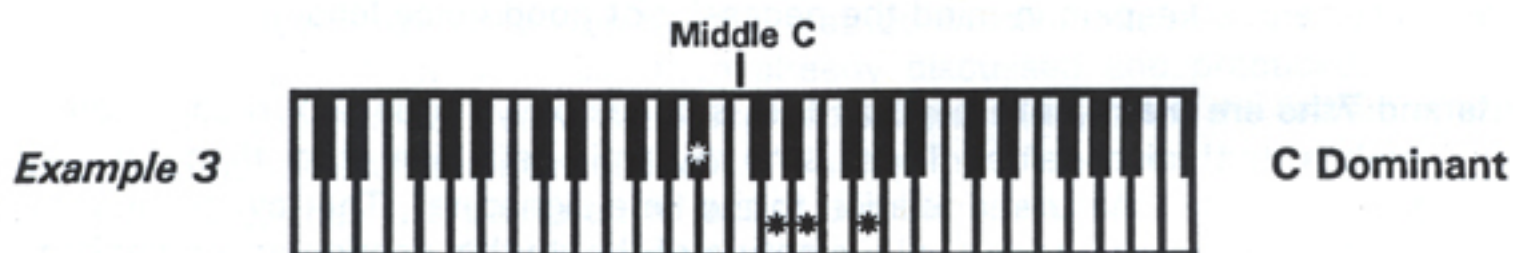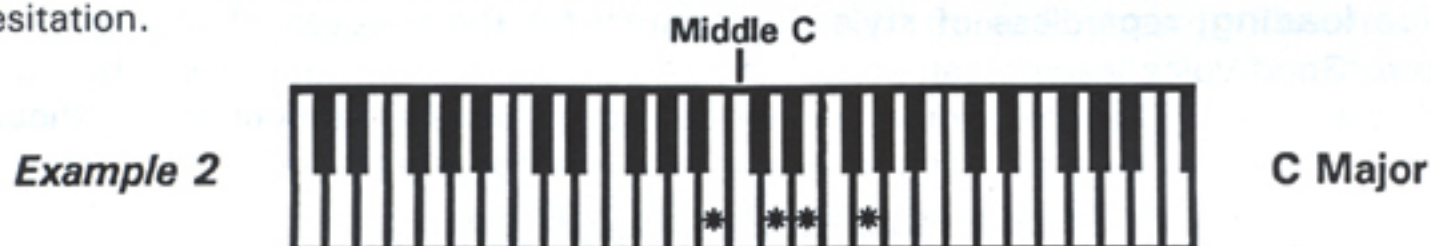
ABOUT THE BOOK

As the title implies ***Jazz Piano Voicings for the Non-Pianist*** is designed for the non-pianist with limited keyboard skills who is just beginning to work on jazz voicings. With this in mind, the voicings contained within this book are designed to be **repetitive**, with the hope that the user will remember (memorize) the sounds (voicing combinations), be able to play jazz tunes with a minimal amount of keyboard experience, and gain a basic harmonic knowledge within the jazz idiom.

The collection of voicings is **not meant to be a definitive statement** of voicings. It is the author's intention and wish that the individual will use this book as a **beginning**, thus searching for what respected pianists use as their voicings. The user is strongly encouraged to listen to suggested pianists (see pianists list, page 58) to hear "how it's done." Additionally, a recommended selection of quality jazz piano books for further study and inquiry is included (inside back cover).

In addition to chapters on getting started with basic concepts and various II-V7-I voicings, ***Jazz Piano Voicings for the Non-Pianist*** includes **one and two-hand voicings** for **sixty-eight standard jazz progressions**. They were chosen because of their repeated use within the jazz idiom, ease of understanding, availability of recorded examples, availability on the **Jamey Aebersold Play-A-Long** series, and ones which horn players might wish to know.

Good voice leading, regardless of style, is essential for the success of any musical progression. Good voice leading can be defined as the least amount of movement from one chord to another. The ideal would be a smooth transition between chords without having jumps, striving to keep common tones and whole or half-step resolutions. This can be accomplished through the use of inversions and formula voicings. The voicings contained in this book are printed so the user will frequently have a number of choices from which to select, keeping in mind the necessity of good voice leading.

All **3rds** and **7ths** are **black note heads**. This is done solely for ease of recognition and does not imply a rhythmical value. There is no rhythmic definition other than the length of the chord within the measure in relation to the time signature. The few progressions (tunes) with rhythms are due to the unique nature of the rhythm section accompaniment. Rhythmic conception will be discussed (page 59); however, the intent of this book is for the user to be able to quickly play useable keyboard voicings and to gain harmonic knowledge.

Unless specifically noted, **all chord symbols imply the seventh and ninth**. This is shorthand and has been selected reflecting a very common practice. Another reason for using this shorthand is that frequently there will be a number of choices contained within a measure and it would be difficult to notate each one clearly. Using a shorthand allows for greater flexibility. Refer to the inside cover for a complete outline of the chord symbols used in this book. A comparison with other possibilities is included.

Throughout the book, the **13th is often used instead of the 5th** and this is especially true in the section containing the standard chord progressions (tunes). The author finds that the **tension** created by the 13th is **desirable** when compared to the voicing with the 5th. This tension within the voicing is very useful since an altered or alternative scale need not be used by an improvisor when the voicing is sounded, yet tension is still present. The use of the 13th is not desirable if it clashes with the melody, i.e., a 5th in the written melodic line. The user should experiment to discover what is most appropriate for the setting.

The vast majority of **one-hand voicings are written in bass clef**. This could cause difficulty for an individual unaccustomed to reading in this clef, but is done to avoid numerous ledger lines and to place the voicing in the appropriate range. Before beginning each exercise check the clef. It is the author's belief that using this book as designed, the user will become familiar with bass clef in a reasonable amount of time.

The user must remember that it is often necessary to write pitches **enharmonically** to notate the material as clearly as possible. While possibly confusing at first, enharmonic spellings can assist with quick recognition and memorization. Remember **accidentals apply only to the notes within the specific measure** and do not continue to the following measure(s).

Take the time to familiarize yourself with the bass clef and enharmonic spellings. Being able to use bass clef and recognize enharmonic spellings will help your understanding of theory, arranging, and sharpen your reading skills as well as assisting you with this book. All of the voicings will sound best on a quality acoustic piano. However, you may need to **adjust some voicings** if you are using an electronic keyboard. The voicings which contain lower pitches and close voicings may sound "muddy." You should consider adjusting for range, using a different inversion, or avoiding entirely.

Finally, and most importantly, _**Jazz Piano Voicings for the Non-Pianist**_ is designed to be a collective process. The exercises, examples, and progressions will be best learned if the individual uses the book in the step-by-step method which is outlined. You will notice how all voicings are built upon information already discussed and practiced. When new information is incorporated, it will be presented progressively using the fewest notes/ideas possible to accomplish the new concept. While some of the exercises may seem simple and repetitive, they are designed to assist the beginning student in building a strong foundation for future musical growth.

You are now ready to produce another useful form of minor voicing, **minor-major seventh**. *Examples 78* and *79* create this sound by raising the 7th of a minor voicing one half-step. *Example 78* contains three-note voicings while *Example 79* has four-note voicings for minor-major seventh. Complete each set.

Playing only a one-hand voicing means you can play the **voicing in the right hand** while sounding the **root in the left**. This is very useful when first learning a tune, enabling you to hear the progression. It also enables you to accompany another instrument or voice without a bassist. Conversely you can play the **voicing in the left hand** while playing the **melody, practicing scales, or improvising** in the right.

Two-Hand Voicings

Until now you have only practiced on one-hand voicings. While one-hand voicings are very useful they can be limiting as you gain understanding and skill. If you truly understand and are able to play the one-hand voicings it is an easy step to expand them to **two-hand voicings**.

The bottom two staffs are two-hand voicings. The **third, seventh, and one additional tone** are usually contained in bottom staff (bass clef) and are to be played with the left hand (the thirds and sevenths will continue to be the black notes). The other staff (treble clef) is played by the right hand and will contain the other tones which complete the voicing. It is possible to use the voicings contained in the bottom staff as an **additional one-hand, three-note voicing choice**. The two hand voicings are written to line up directly. For example:

Often you will have **two choices in the right hand** which can be played **interchangably** with the left, depending upon the sound you choose. For example:

While having these choices may be confusing at first, they will offer you variety as you continue to gain knowledge, experience, and skill.

NOTE: Compare the two examples. Select either or combine to create another choice.