

## • MAJOR 7 CHORDS

The 'major 7' chord is a major triad with a major seventh added. This is a very commonly misunderstood chord. The notes of chord  $C^{ma7}$  are:

Root	C
Major 3 <sup>rd</sup>	E
Perfect 5 <sup>th</sup>	G
Major 7 <sup>th</sup>	B

Learners often play a  $C^7$  instead which has a flattened 7<sup>th</sup>. The two sound radically different. Speaking subjectively, I think that the major 7 chord sounds dreamy, soft and distant<sup>3</sup> whereas a 7 chord is bluesy and tense.

If you remember Golden Rule Number Four:

***The symbol 'ma' always refers to a major 7<sup>th</sup>***

the problem won't occur. The misunderstanding arises because players interpret the 'ma' as telling you that it's a major triad. We know that a triad is assumed to be major unless told that it's minor through the symbol 'm'. The chord 'D' clearly has a major 3<sup>rd</sup> so there is no need to add the symbol 'ma' unless the major 7<sup>th</sup> is required as well.

The terms  $C^{A7}$ ,  $C^{maj7}$ ,  $C(\natural 7)$  (the flat 7<sup>th</sup> naturalized) and less commonly  $C^{(\sharp 7)}$  are used as well, all meaning the major seventh chord. In the case of  $C^{(\sharp 7)}$ , the principle is that the 7<sup>th</sup> is sharpened a semitone higher than an ordinary 7<sup>th</sup> which would have been flattened. It is therefore a major 7.

Some old scores use the symbol 'CM' which is very confusing. The logic is that the 'M' is upper case and therefore means 'major 7', whereas the minor triad 'Cm' uses a lower case 'm'. Thankfully, this is seen infrequently nowadays, but I have come across it when playing in pit bands for musicals with old hired parts.

Finally  $C^{ma}$  is used too, which fits with the logic that the only reason that you would say 'ma' would be to indicate a major 7<sup>th</sup>, so why mention the number 7 at all?

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<sup>3</sup> Satie's Gymnopédie no. 1 is full of major 7<sup>th</sup> chords - it's *that* sound!