

DIMINISHED



HEIN VAN DE GEYN

Diminished Chords

Hein Van de Geyn

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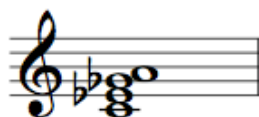
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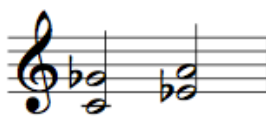
Diminished chords do not exist

A diminished 7th chord is made up of 4 notes a minor third apart.

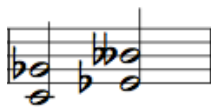


This makes for a symmetrical chord that is somehow weightless, yet full of tension, since you can unravel it and realise it's made up of 2 tritones.

The above sound can now be seen as 4 possible diminished chords:



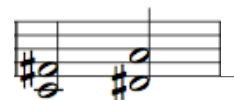
Adim



Cdim



F#dim



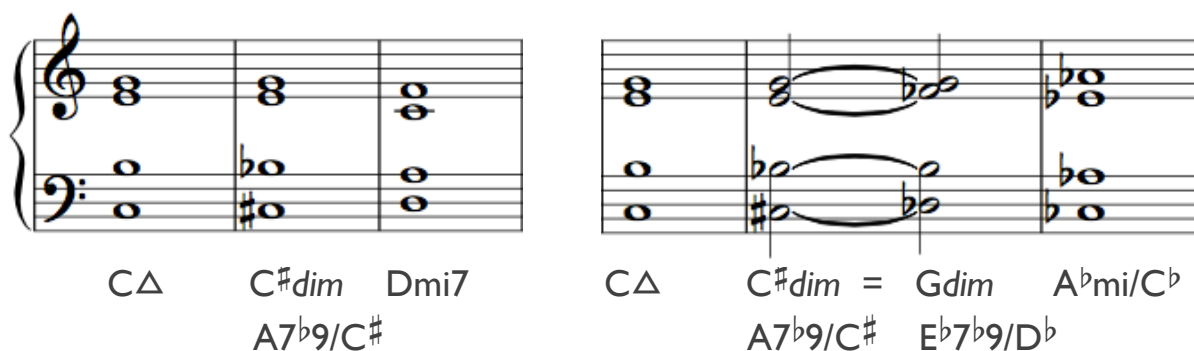
D#dim

These chords are found on the VIIth degree in a minor key, but also are totally accepted as a VII in major. The VII is without any doubt a dominant chord, and to now see the above diminished chords as part of an incomplete dominant 7^{b9} chord is only logical. Using the context to guide us, we can decide which of the tritones is the one containing the 3rd and 7th of the so called hidden dominant chord, thus providing an harmonic relevance to the diminished chord, giving it weight and grounding it.

If we follow the enharmonic possibilities of the above diminished chords it now must be clear which dominant chords lie at their foundation:



The above is an harmonic truth that cannot be ignored. Of course the composers of the 18th and 19th century used diminished in abundance as a means to modulate. This means that when presenting the diminished in its pure form it is open to enharmonic change - thus to a change of weight and direction.



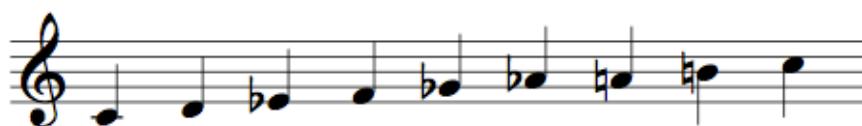
The composers of the standard tunes we as jazz players use so much, often gave weight to the diminished chord by having the melody above the chord be the root of the hidden dominant. With this they completely gave the secret away, and made the harmonic relevance clear to the listener.



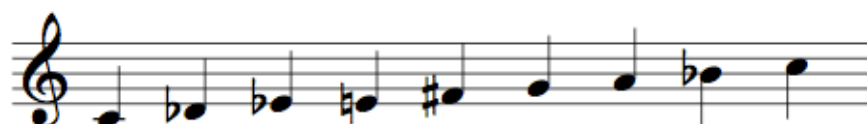
Of course the title of this chapter is an overstatement. Diminished chords do have a place in harmony, yet in almost all the cases within the standard repertoire the diminished chord can be seen as, or is even exposed as an incomplete, or even complete dominant 7^b9 chord.

The scales:

In principle we can use the symmetrical diminished scale on diminished chords. For clarity I name the 2 diminished scales differently. The diminished scale starts with a whole step; the octatonic scale starts with a half step. I use the diminished scale on the root of the diminished chord; I use the octatonic scale on the root of the hidden dominant chord.



diminished scale



octatonic scale

To separate the nomenclature is purely for practical reasons. The octatonic scale thus belongs to an octatonic dominant chord ($\begin{smallmatrix} b9 \\ 13 \end{smallmatrix}$); the diminished scale belongs to a diminished chord.

2

The hidden dominants

The whole idea behind a correct dealing with diminished chords is in fact to find their hidden dominants. Once we do this it means we can now notate the chord in a different and more clear way: as an inversion of a 7^{b9} chord.

The image displays two musical examples. The first example shows a Bdim chord (B, D, F, Ab) and a CΔ chord (C, E, G) on a grand staff. The second example shows a G7^{b9}/B chord (B, D, F, Ab, G) and a CΔ chord (C, E, G) on a grand staff. The notes for the diminished chords are shown in the bass clef, and the notes for the hidden dominants are shown in the treble clef.

This will make us understand the chord better, it will make us improvise differently. It steers us away from the conditioned response of playing a diminished scale or diminished lick on the chord - not wrong, yet quite meaningless.

I will present you here with all possible diminished chords one can encounter in a certain key (C in this case), and give you their hidden dominant. Once the hidden dominant is established, it is good to realise that the root and $b10$ of this hidden dominant are the golden notes to play in an improvisation. The composers of standard tunes understood this well, and would often have one of these notes be the melody in fact.

in C major:

Cdim

B7^{b9}/C

tension towards tonic

[



3

The thirteenth



*b*9
13

Diminished Chords



b9



Diminished Chords



4

In Practise

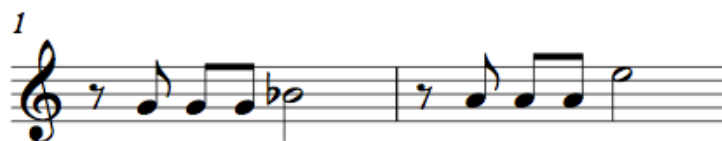


Diminished Chords



└→ VI

Diminished Chords



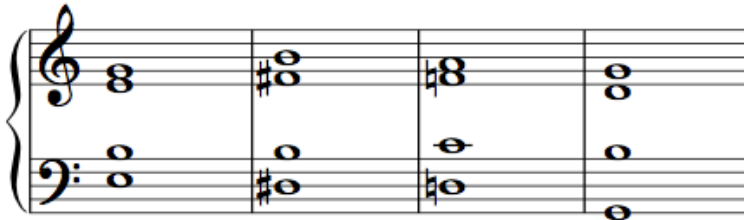
Diminished Chords





II^{dom} #II^{dim} I⁶ (V) II

7 of HD - B7/D#





Diminished Chords



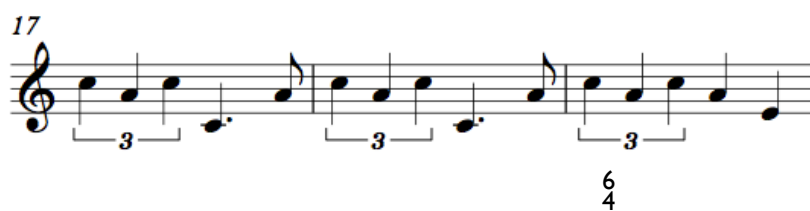
Diminished Chords





(note the I3)

Diminished Chords



Diminished Chords



Diminished Chords



Diminished Chords



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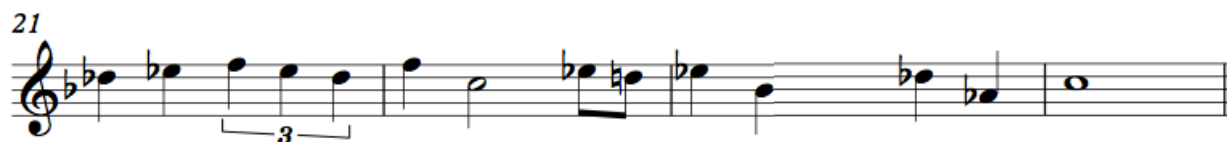


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4

Diminished Chords





$\flat 5$ and $\flat 9$ of HD - G7/B

6



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Diminished Chords



6

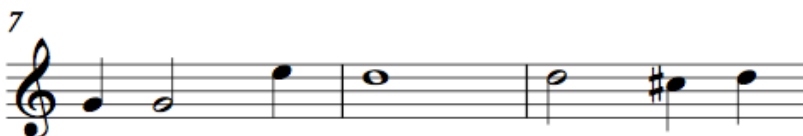


CΔ/G Ami7

6
4



Diminished Chords



Diminished Chords

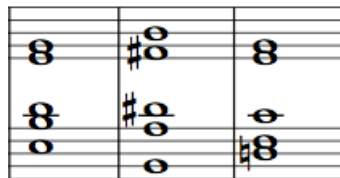
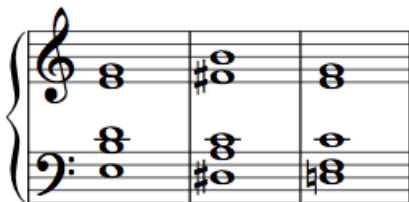
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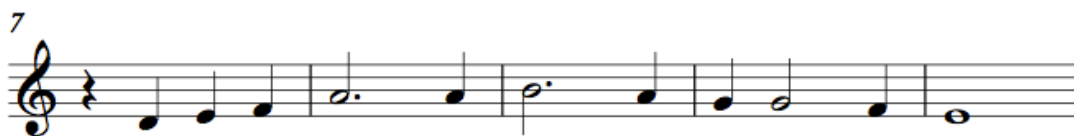
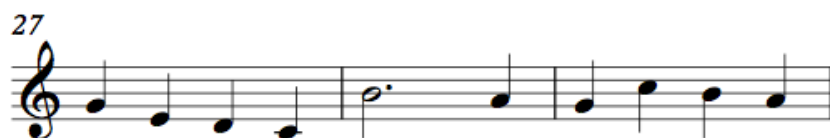
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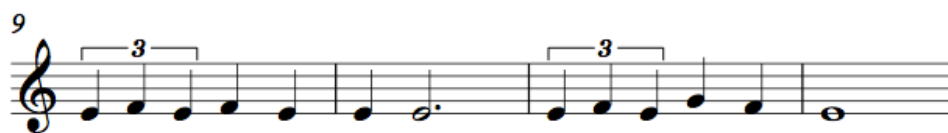
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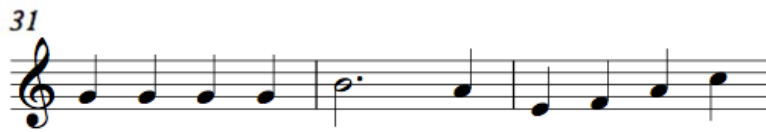


Diminished Chords



└─▶ VI

Diminished Chords



about the author:

HEIN VAN DE GEYN (The Netherlands - 1956) has played Jazz professionally ever since he finished his studies at the conservatories of Tilburg and Rotterdam. He lived in the US for several years, working with John Abercrombie, Larry Schneider, Tony Bennett, Larry Vuckovich and many others.

After his return to Europe he has been establishing himself as one of the most sought after bass players in Europe. Hein's playing can be heard on some 100 recordings. He has been the bass player with Philip Catherine since 1985 and recorded 9 CD's with him. In 1987 he toured and recorded in Japan with Chet Baker. Hein was also the bassist on the last concert of Chet Baker in Rotterdam in 1988. This was also the year Hein started to play with, and arrange for Dee Dee Bridgewater, with whom he has been performing at most of the important festivals and stages in Europe (Montreux, Antibes, Vienne, Berlin, Northsea, London) as well as in the USA (Carnegie Hall, Village Vanguard, Montreal, Newport Festival...) and Japan (Keystone Corner, Blue Note). After three albums and numerous tours and performances Hein and Dee Dee's paths separated in 1996 since Hein wanted to pursue his own career as a leader and producer.

In July 1990 Hein made the first album under his own name, a duo with Lee Konitz. Several tours followed. In 1994 he created his group BASELINE with John Abercrombie and Joe LaBarbara. This group recorded several albums and toured all over Europe.

1994 was also the year in which Hein co-founded the jazz label Challenge Records, for which he produced a number of successful recordings. Four of them received an Edison (Dutch Grammy) for best jazz recording of the year.

In 1996 Hein became the head of the bass section in the Jazz department of the royal conservatory in The Hague. In this year he also was awarded the prestigious Prins Bernhard Foundation Music Prize. He received this prize for his importance in the development of European Jazz as well as for his stimulating role as mentor and producer of many young musicians in Holland.

In 1998 Hein received the Bird Award of the Northsea Jazz Festival. In this year he was also elected as "Best European Acoustic Bass Player" by a referendum of the Belgian radios RTBF and VRT.

During a sabbatical period spent in South Africa in 2001/2002 Hein started writing his "Comprehensive Bass Method". This extensive method on bass playing (950 pages) became available in 2007 and is slowly becoming the standard work for the double bass worldwide.

From 2008 to 2010 Hein was the artistic manager of the Rotterdam Jazz Academy and was leading this internationally orientated school with great flair and enthusiasm.

In 2010 Hein decided to basically stop his travelling career as a performing bassist and moved with his family to South Africa to run a guest house, and dedicate his life to writing and education. He is a lecturer at the university of Cape Town (UCT).

Hein has performed with many artists over the years. To name a few: Chet Baker - Freddie Hubbard - Roy Hargrove - Woody Shaw - Kenny Wheeler - Tom Harrell - Nat Adderley - Abbey Lincoln - Meredith d'Ambrosio - Marlena Shaw - Tony Bennett - Mark Murphy - Jack DeJohnette - Ed Thigpen - Joe Labarbera - Elliot Zigmund - Peter Erskine - Idris Muhammad - Billy Hart - John Abercrombie - Tal Farlow - Larry Coryell - Dave Pike - Toots Thielemans - Hank Jones - Tommy Flanagan - Michel Petrucciani - Enrico Pieranunzi - Barry Harris - Horace Silver - Junior Mance - Walter Davis Jr. - Tete Montoliu - Horace Parlan - Jacki Byard - Slide Hampton - Bob Brookmeyer - Joe Lovano - Lee Konitz - Johnny Griffin - Benny Golson - Red Holloway - Charlie Rouse - Bobby Watson - Lew Tabackin - Gary Bartz - Archie Shepp - Rick Margitza - Charlie Mariano...

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