

Bill Evans Chords

The next group of chords is the largest and toughest to play, but the most recognizable as the “So What chords.”

This is because Bill Evans played these chord shapes during the melody of So What.

With these shapes, you take each note in the scale, D and Eb Dorian, and then you stack a 4th, 4th, 4th, and 3rd on top of that bass note.

So, for the note D, you play D-G-C-F-A to create these Bill Evans shapes.

From there, below, each note in the scale has that same interval pattern on top of that note.

This allows you move between any of these chords over Dm7 and Ebm7 as they’re modal chords.

Just as you can play any note from D Dorian in your solos over Dm7, you can comp with any note from D Dorian over Dm7.

This modal approach to comping is an essential sound when playing tunes like So What.

Though they’re an essential sound to explore, they’re also tougher to play compared to the 3 and 4-note shapes you just learned.

Because of this, take your time and don’t feel pressure to use all of these shapes in your comping.

To begin, here are shapes for the Bill Evans 5-note So What chords to learn and add to your comping over Dm7.

Some of these shapes won’t be comfortable or even playable for some guitarists, that’s always the case with piano-based chords.

So, try these shapes out. Keep the ones that are playable, shelve the other ones for later on, and add those playable chords to the tune.

Have fun with these larger, cool-sounding piano chords as you develop your comping skillset over So What.

Audio Example 8

Dm⁷

The first staff shows a sequence of 8 chords with fingerings for T, A, and B strings. The second staff shows a sequence of 8 chords with fingerings for T, A, and B strings.

Staff	Chord 1	Chord 2	Chord 3	Chord 4	Chord 5	Chord 6	Chord 7	Chord 8
Staff 1	5 6 5 5	7 8 7 7	8 10 9 8	10 12 10 10	12 13 12 12	1 3 2 2	3 5 3 3	5 6 5 5
Staff 2	10 10 10 10	12 12 12 12	1 2 2 2	3 4 3 3	5 5 5 5	6 7 7 7	8 9 9 9	10 10 10 10

Here are fingerings for the Ebm7 Bill Evans chords to learn and add to your comping over So What.

As was the case with the Dm7 shapes, try each one, keep the ones that are playable, and ditch the ones that are too tough to finger.

Then, over time, come back to these shapes and see if they're easier to play as you develop your dexterity and fretting hand control.

Make sure to add these shapes to the backing tracks as soon as possible to get a feel for how they fit over the tune in your comping.

Audio Example 9

Ebm⁷

	6	8	9	11	13	2	4	6
T	7	9	11	13	14	4	6	7
A	6	8	10	11	13	3	5	6
B	6	8	10	11	13	3	4	6
	6	8	9	11	13	3	4	6

	11	13	2	4	6	7	9	11
T	11	13	3	5	6	8	10	11
A	11	13	3	4	6	8	10	11
B	11	13	3	4	6	8	9	11
	11	13	2	4	6	8	9	11