

Section 1 – Chord Colors

Chord colors are one of the most important aspects to successful jazz guitar comping, but they're often misunderstood.

So, to begin your study of jazz comping, here's an outline of what chord colors are and how to use them in your playing.

There are four main families, and some sub families of chords.

- Major Family
- Minor Family
- Dominant Family
- Diminished Family

Think of these families as colors, so like this as an example:

- Major Family = Red
- Minor Family = Blue
- Dominant Family = Green
- Diminished Family = Yellow

Then, just as colors have shades, variations of that color, chord families have shades of chord colors you can use in your playing.

An example of this would be the major family shades of color.

- Maj7 = Cherry Red
- Maj9 = Fire Truck Red
- 6 = Scarlet
- Maj6/9 = Merlot
- Maj7#11 = Crimson

As you can see, each of those shades is a part of the red family of colors, just like each chord is from the major family of chords.

But, each shade has it's own unique personality and characteristics.

And, when it comes to applying them, it's up to you the performer to decide what shade is best.

If you want to paint a sunset scene, you can choose cherry red, or merlot, or whatever shade of red you prefer.

Just like, when you comp over a maj7 chord, you can choose to color it with a maj9, maj6/9, maj7#11, etc. chord.

The more shades you have, the more options you have as a painter.

The more chord colors you have, the more options you have as a jazz guitarist.

Check out the next few sections for more info on how to use chord colors in your comping.

Then, as you move forward, a good first goal would be to know 1 shape for each chord color listed in this eBook.

Then, aim for 2 shapes, then 3, etc. as you expand your chord color palette in the woodshed.