

## Soloing with Block Chords: Part 2 (Unaltered Dominant)

“Gimme some block chords, Red” – Miles Davis



*Relaxin with The Miles Davis Quintet*

If you listen carefully to the beginning of “You’re My Everything” on the album *Relaxin’ with the Miles Davis Quintet*, you can hear Miles stop Red Garland’s intro and tell him to play block chords. Miles knew what he wanted and I think he was right! Let us continue our block chord discussion, Red.

The second type of chord I would like to examine is the dominant 7. To be more specific the unaltered dominant 7. Unaltered means that the melody notes of the chord contain no alterations such as #9s, #5s and such. The harmonized melodies come from the mixolydian scale. Shortly I will be following up with an article on symmetrical and altered dominant block chords. That is where the fun really begins. But

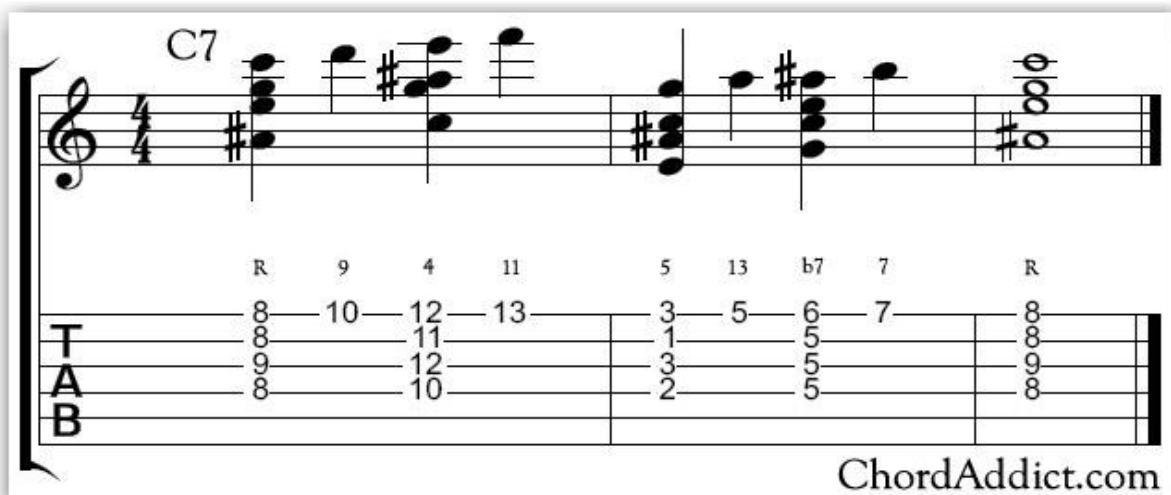
until then let’s have a look at the unaltered dominant type of chords.

Some short movie clips of the examples

Here is a quick video I made of the examples found below.

The Raw material

Here is a C Mixolydian Bebop scale (added natural 7) with the inversions of a C7 chord thrown in.



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Video Example 1:C7 Inversions

We can take this one step further and harmonize the non-chord tones with some type of C7 chord. I use these types of voicings if my chord solo melodic line lands on a non chord tone and holds it. This will add more of a resolution than an altered chord. (although the tension will add some coloring.)

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#### Video Example 2:C7 Mixolydian Harmonized

And yet another way to approach the non chord tones. Passing diminished chords will create a (desirable) 5 of 5 sound. If you don't know what 5 of 5 or secondary dominant means, don't worry, I will get to it in the future. (One exception is the dim chord with the 13 in the melody. We temporarily leave the 5 of 5 world, but the melody note is king in this situation.)

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#### Video Example 3:C Mixolydian with passing dim on high strings

And on the middle String group:

C7

*mf*

T	1	3	5	6	8	10	11	12	13
A	0	1	3	4	5	8	9	10	12
B	2	3	5	6	8	10	10	12	14
B	1	2	3	5	7	9	10	11	13

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### C Mixolydian passing dim on middle strings

Remember that you can achieve chromaticism by sliding a displaced voicing to the correct voicing. You'll see this in a few examples below. Make sure you make up your own material. This will help you remember it better. Also, the material you create will be yours and reflect your taste, and help you build your own personal sound. Improvise into and out of these licks and the ones you create. This way they won't sound so much like "licks" but more of a musical idea that is connected.

Integrate it into your playing

Now that you have the raw material, the real work begins. I could suggest to play harmonized scales up and down, in 3rds and 4ths, etc. but have never found this exercise helpful for improvisation. I suggest playing the block chords up and down to get familiar with them in a few keys. After this brief exercise, try to make music with it. Improvise, convert single-note licks into harmonized licks. Here is a few examples of what I am talking about:

C7

*mf*

T	12	8	13	12	8	5	2	3	12	8	13	12	8	10	7	8
A	11	8	12	11	8	4	0	1	11	8	12	11	8	10	7	8
B	12	9	13	12	9	5	2	3	12	9	13	12	9	10	7	8
B	10	8	12	10	8	4	1	2	10	8	12	10	8	9	6	7

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Video Example 4: C7 Lick



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Video Example 8: D7 G7 C7 F7 Lick 1

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D7 G7 C7 F7 Lick 2

### Backing Tracks

Finally, here are some backing tracks for your convenience.

[C7 Vamp](#)

[F7 Vamp](#)

[| Cm F7 | Bbm Eb7 | Vamp](#)

[| Dm G7 | Cm F7 | Vamp](#)

[| D7 G7 | C7 F7 | Vamp](#)