

INTRODUCTION

Properly interpreting the chord symbols from a rhythm chart is one of the first challenges faced by a contemporary rhythm section player.

Unlike most members of a band or orchestra, rhythm section players (i.e., those who play keyboards, guitars, electric bass, drums, and percussion) are generally called upon to improvise their own parts, using a basic chart consisting mainly of chord symbols and a few rhythmic notations.

Difficulties arise at times when there is confusion in understanding and interpreting the meaning of the chord symbols. Since no standardized notation system exists for chord symbols, often a single chord may be represented by different composers in several different ways. In other cases, a given chord symbol may mean different things to different people, or a chord symbol may be written in a confusing or even incorrect manner. Understanding and interpreting these chord symbols is what this book is all about.

I first discovered these concepts as a teenage piano player and budding composer. They were later codified in my studies in the jazz department at North Texas State University, and further refined through my experience as a pianist, teacher, conductor, composer/arranger, publisher, and editor.

This book is not intended to be an exhaustive study of harmony and theory. I hope, however, that these concepts will be helpful to you in your own music making, whether you be a songwriter, band leader, or rhythm section player.

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