

Professional Piano Techniques – *and faking it!*

43 minutes

Shorthand used in the descriptions below are as follow:

LH = left hand

RH = right hand

Part One

00:07

Introduction

All professional pianists use these techniques

00:56

Finding better ways to play the basic jazz chords for left hand accompaniment.

-Example of *Misty* played with root position chords. They are too blocky, thick and plain sounding. We use these root position voicings a lot in improvisations but not for LH accompaniment so much.

3:00

Play with open 7th for simple left-hand accompaniment

Play just the outside notes of 4-note root position chords

-Good for faking it but also good for light LH accompaniment

-Talk about faking it. Never break tempo. Keep smiling!

-Play through *Misty* with only open 7ths without any tempo.

8:41

Add 5th to open 7ths to fatten the chord in the left hand accompaniment.

-You can also look at this as playing the chords in root position and omitting the 3rd of the chord.

-Play thru the chord changes to *Misty* with the 3-note chords. No tempo.

9:55

Break up the 3-note chord accompaniment in the left hand.

Play the 7th interval first followed by the 5th of the chord. This creates a simple and effective LH hand accompaniment without worrying about what the 3rd of the chord is. The RH hand melody and/or chord notes define the chord.

10:58

Roll the 3-note chords in the left hand

-First practice without tempo (rubato). The 3-note chord alone without any melody, rolling left hand chords only. It will roll by going up 1-5-7 or you can roll up 1-5-7 and come back to the 5. This creates a simple, moving left hand accompaniment that fills out the space a little when you want.

-Add melody in the right hand after you get comfortable with rolling the LH chords alone. Still play without tempo and don't worry if you roll up **1-5-7** or **1-5-7 back 5** or **1-5-7 back 5-1**. Just let your LH move up and down with the notes, however it feels natural while playing the melody in the right hand.

13:30

An example using all three left-hand techniques learned so far. Mix the elements as you want.

1. Open 7th (1-7)
2. Open 7th with the 5th added
3. Roll the 1-5-7 combination

14:35

Play a rolled 10th for left-hand accompaniment.

-Roll up 1-5-10 or up and down 1-5-10-5

-First practice without tempo (rubato). The 3-note. open 10th alone without any melody, rolling left hand chords only. Similar to the 1-5-7 roll, this creates a simple, moving left-hand accompaniment that fills out the space a little when you want. You can mix 1-5-7 or 1-5-10 as you wish or feel.

-Add the melody after you get comfortable with the rolling chords.

17:26

Mix and match all the various left-hand accompaniment techniques

1. Open 7th's
2. Play 1-5-7 as a chord or arpeggio
3. Rolling open 10th

-Practice playing the various techniques without rhythm

18:28

Other left-hand techniques.

1. Open 5th (1-5)
2. Octave with 5th (1-8-5)
3. Play a 3rd only (1-3)

19:44

Adding rhythm to the same left-hand techniques.

-Play just on open 7th to begin with.

-Use a straight ¼ note pulse in the left hand with the open 7th. This means to play on every beat. (4-beats to the bar.) This can be done when playing every other beat as well. (2 beats to the bar).

-This technique is very much the same as what a guitar, banjo or ukulele does when playing a straight-ahead swing accompaniment. This accompaniment becomes more about rhythm than the actual harmony of the left hand. Many well-known pianists use this device. You can hear it a lot in George Shearing and Errol Garner's recorded piano playing.

-First play thru the chords with your LH only.

-Add melody when you are comfortable.

-To make the pulsing chord fatter, add the 5th to it so it's a 3-note chord instead.

-Playing with what we've learned so far, the chords are moving in parallel movement all the time. This isn't optimum but it will work until you learn your inversions well. It's much better to use inversions so the chords aren't moving in this blocky, parallel motion all the time, but it's OK, still very musical and easy to do.

24:52

Playing in Eb.

-Eb is a good, comfortable key to play jazz and jazz standards in on the piano. It fits very well under the hand. All the chords are easy to spot and play in Eb. It's good for playing LH octaves and for playing blues licks where you want to slide off the 3rd of the chords. (Gb slides to G for blues licks)

26:32 Part Two

26:43

The bridge chords to *Misty*

Misty is a typical jazz standard song form A-A-B-A

-The first two A sections are identical except for the last two bars.

-Go through the bridge chords slowly. playing with open 7ths first. Add the melody when you are comfortable with the LH chords. Play without tempo.

-Play thru the chords, using the rolling, **1-5-7 back 5** technique. Add the melody when you feel comfortable to do so.

-Eb7b9--We won't worry about playing the b9 yet but will learn how to make it later in this lesson.

-Play thru the chords with a straight $\frac{1}{4}$ rhythmic pulse in the LH. (4-beats to the bar) Add RH melody when you are ready.

32:20

Play the bridge using the rolling 10th.

Play just the LH hand first then add the RH after. Don't worry about rhythm with this technique.

33:11

Example with $\frac{1}{4}$ note pulse in LH and octaves in the RH.

33:48

The final "A" section of *Misty*.

Misty is a typical A-A-B-A form that is common song form for standards.

-Example, using various elements presented so far.

Pro Tip:

All these techniques take time to learn. It's OK to fake it somewhat until you get it all together. Remember, if you're playing for someone or performing, just don't break tempo or stop playing even if you hit the wrong notes. If you're alone and make mistakes, stop and correct yourself. If you keep making the same mistake over and over again in the same place, stop! If you do that you are practicing and solidifying your mistake and it's very hard to unlearn something. It's best to stop, study and slow down as much as it takes to play whatever you are working on correctly, then proceed with practicing the whole section or piece of music.

35:58

Some examples of other standards that use part of the same chord progression that is used in *Misty*.

Songs with: Ebmaj7-Cm7-Fm7-Bb7 (Known by jazz players as the I-vi-ii-V progression)

Examples: *Blue Moon*, *At Last*, *For Sentimental Reasons*

Other songs similarly:

Since I Fell For You

Heart and Soul

I've Got Rhythm.....and many more

39:47

Other standards with the same A-section changes as *Misty*.

The chord progression for the A section of *Misty* can be used to play these other standards

Example:

Old Cape Cod (Eb)

The Nearness of You (Eb)

I Want to Talk About You (Eb)