



# Shells

*A "pearl" of an idea you can use to add spice  
to your piano playing whenever you like...*

by David Longo

Shells? So what are they?

We know what they are as they apply to the limitless number of sea creatures out there, oysters included... But when it comes to piano chords, exactly what are "shells" anyway?

Well, there are variations of what a "shell" really is. Here we are discussing one very popular one. For this "shell," let's imagine an oyster. You see, when you think of an oyster, you imagine two shells enclosing the oyster itself (with any luck, a pearl is hanging around in there somewhere!)

Okay, well, when it comes to piano chords, the "shells" can be thought of as the "outside notes" that surround the remainder of the chord. For example, a Cmaj7 (C major seventh) chord consists of the following notes:

**C E G B**

This chord, as shown, is in its "Root Position" (the "Root" or name of the chord is at the bottom or furthest to the left on the piano keyboard). The two "outer voices" or "outer notes" are C and B, otherwise known as the 1 and 7 of the chord. Just as the two shells of an oyster kind of "sandwich" what's inside, the same is true of the 1 and 7, in this case the C and B.

When you play the C and B together, while not playing the "inner voices" or "inner notes," you are playing what is commonly known as a type of "shell voicing" or, more simply, a "shell."

As applied to the type of "shell" we are discussing in this lesson, the "shell" of Cmaj7 is:

**C B**

Go ahead and do this and see what this sounds like as opposed to playing the full chord shown above.

It's a great way to add different texture to your playing... as you can easily hear, playing this "shell" certainly results in what you might refer to as a "thinner" or "spacier" sound. While playing a melody in the right hand, this can be quite preferred at times.

So, quite simply... the "shell" that we are referring to is created by playing only the 1 and 7 of a seventh chord as we have done. The 1 and the 7 in this "shell" are exactly a "seventh" away from each other. In other words, counting both the C and B, the distance between the two is seven letter names (C D E F G A B).

A few more examples:

**G7 (a G dominant seventh chord) consists of:**

**G B D F**

Our "shell" would be:

**G F**

(play these, as we proceed, to hear what they sound like)

**Amin7 (an A minor seventh chord) consists of:**

**A C E G**

Our "shell" would be:

**A G**

**Gdim7 (a G diminished seventh chord) consists of:**

**G Bb Db E**

Our "shell" would be:

# G E

As you can see, the more seventh chords you know, the more "shells" you are able to easily play... and the more fun and rewarding your piano playing becomes! Actually, if you would like to have chord charts for major sevenths, minor sevenths, dominant sevenths, and diminished sevenths, you can obtain those very popular EZ-View Piano Chord Charts by [clicking here](#). This opens the door for your having 48 seventh chords and "shells" at your fingertips!

Would you like to hear some of these "shells" actually being used in the left hand while a right hand melody is being played? That's easy. [Simply click here](#) and once you arrive at the page, scroll down to hit the green "Play" button for the simplified arrangement of Satin Doll... *everything being played in the left hand in this easy arrangement consists of the very "shells" we are talking about!* Better yet, click on the "Microwave" image below that "Play" button to take the lesson. The benefit? You will actually see these "shells" being used, note for note! In addition, you can proceed all at your own pace with the video lesson.

I have a genuine passion for sharing information like this with people like you who aspire to add "style" and "pizazz" to their piano playing. Nothing gives me more satisfaction than having you apply the techniques I've learned throughout the years and that I love making available to you. It's the very reason I created [ProProach](#) (This very popular piano chord learning program clearly explains this "shell" concept and how to take it several steps further... but it goes wayyyyyy beyond talking about this topic - it's literally packed with great things you'll have fun with. It's a "treasure chest of pearls" in its own right!)

I encourage you to take this very simply, yet effective, "shell" piano chord technique and look for places in your own songs where you can apply it! As you have fun with it, please remember...

Always...

ALWAYS...

PLAY WITH PASSION!

