Dominant 7 Voicings

These are simple 4 note dominant 7 voicings to use on the piano. They will sound good in any sized ensemble and will create smooth voice leading when used properly. Neither of these voicings contain the root of the chord because that role is played by the bass.

Left Hand

The most important interval in a dominant 7 chord is the tritone. It one of the most dissonant intervals in western music and creates large amounts of tension. The left hand in these dominant 7 voicings plays the tritone interval between the 3rd and the 7th. The position of the 3rd and 7th switches between voicings types. In type I, the 7th is on the bottom and the 3rd is on top. In type II, the 3rd is on the bottom and the 7th is on top.

Right Hand

The other notes in a dominant 7 chord that are not the 3rd or the 7th give the chord its color. The 9, 5, and 13 chord tones are the least likely to get in the way of other instruments and will create smooth voice leading when moving in 4ths. Remember that the 9th chord tone can be thought of as a 2 and the 13th can be thought of as a 6. In type I, the 13th is on the bottom and the 9th is on top. In type II, the 9th is on the bottom and the 5th is on top.

Voicing Types

There are a few basic rules to choose voicing types when playing a blues.

1. The goal is to create the least amount of movement between the voices. This is known as smooth voice leading.
2. When moving in the interval of a 4th, the voicing types are switched.
3. When moving in the interval of a 2nd, the voicing type is kept the same.

The above examples are of measures 9-11 in a traditional blues in the key of Eb and C. When dominant chords are close together, the same shell voicing type is used. When dominant chords are farther away, the other shell voicing type is used.