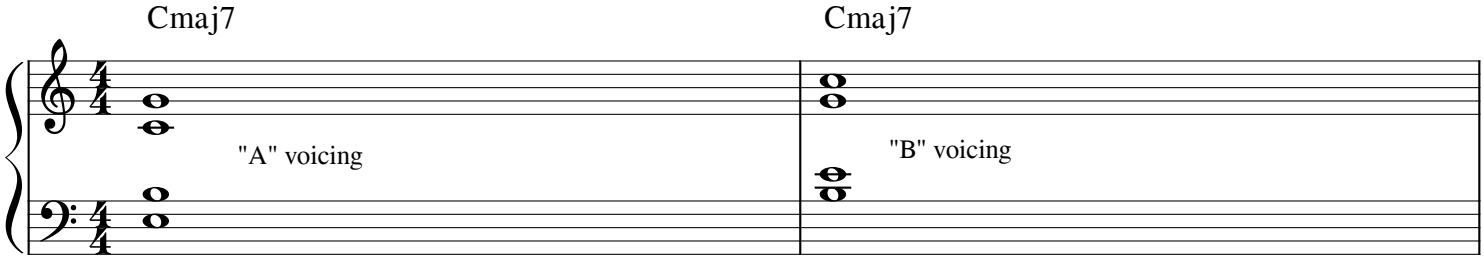
Using SATB voicings in a big band or a combo

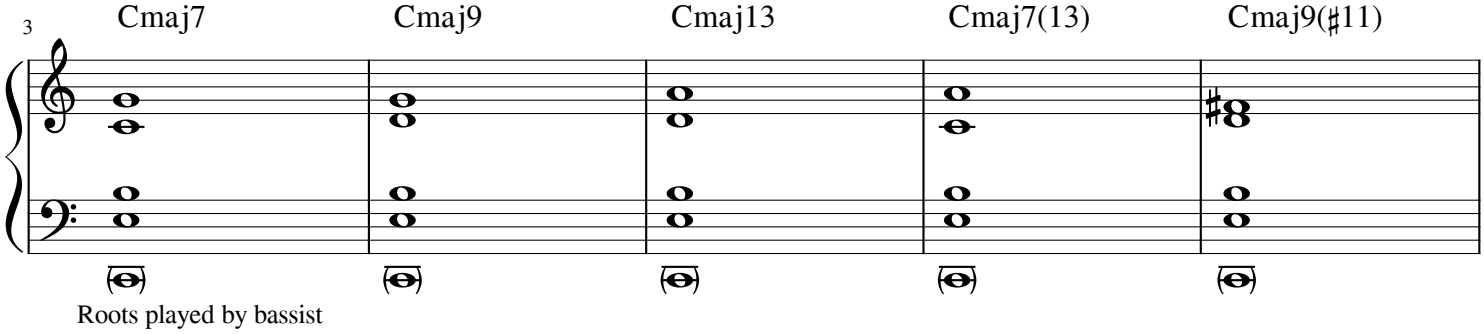
What is SATB?

SATB stands for "soprano, tenor, alto, bass", which refers to a writing style used for choirs. It basically means four note voicings, spaced out in a certain way. In a jazz piano context SATB voicings are *rootless*, meaning we don't play the root of the chord. We don't have to plays roots in a combo or big band setting, because the bass player is doing it.

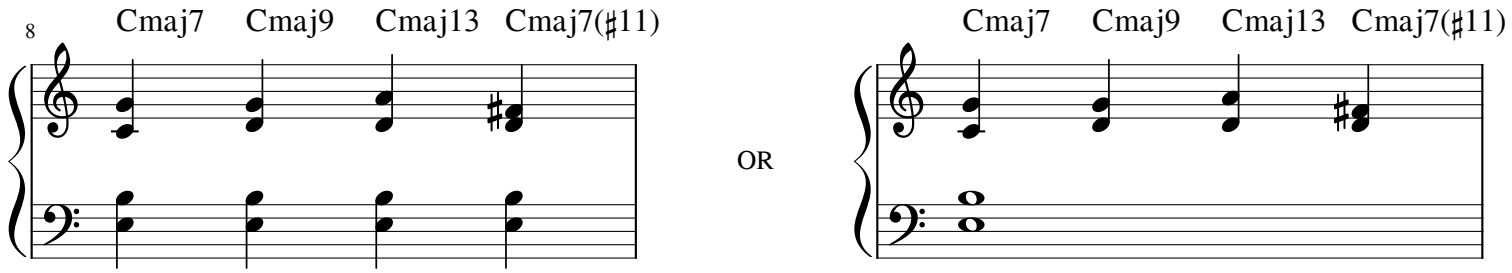
Usually in SATB, we play guide tones in the left hand, and root tones/colour tones in the right hand. There's also an A and B voicing, one with 3 in the bottom voice, and one with 7 in the bottom voice.



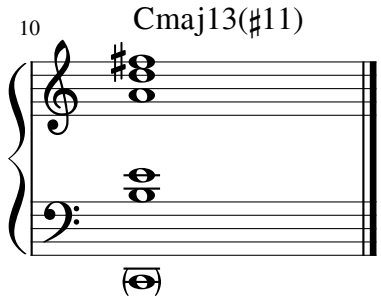
SATB is a really efficient structure, because the left hand doesn't change no matter what extensions are specified in the right hand.



Dominant chords are especially maleable, and you'll see tons of different extensions specified in a big band chart. Sometimes, changing even beat by beat. You can sustain left hand guide tones while shifting right hand colour tones around.



In this system, the left hand always has guide tones. The right hand can have extensions, sometimes even 3 or 4. Most commonly the right hand will be a two note structure, or a three note triad like below.



Apply these concepts right away on a simple form like a blues.