

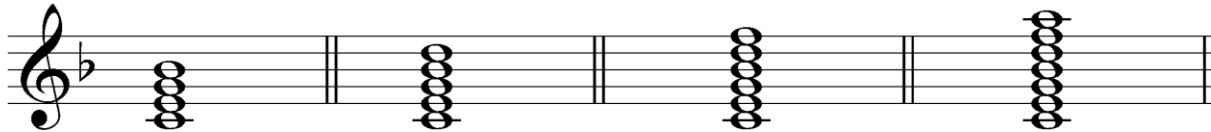
## The Barbershop 13<sup>th</sup> chord

In barbershop the 13th chord exists in two forms:

- Dominant 13th chord (in barbershop circles sometimes called a 'Waesche 13<sup>th</sup>')
- And what I call a 'Barbershop 13th' chord

We can build a 13<sup>th</sup> chord by stacking more thirds to the top of a seventh chord:

Dominant 7th chord  
(aka Barbershop 7th)      Dominant 9th chord      Dominant 11th chord      Dominant 13th chord

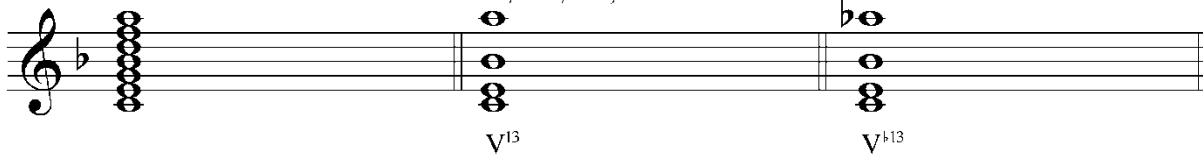


Obviously, with six notes we can't sing a 13<sup>th</sup> chord in its true form, so in barbershop this chord is reduced to 4-note 'bare bones' version containing the root—3rd—7th—13th (ex. B below). Note that there is a harsh dissonance of a M7 is created between the chordal 7<sup>th</sup> and the chordal 13<sup>th</sup> (the B $\flat$ —A). This dissonance is softened somewhat in the V<sup>b13</sup> (ex. C) chord because the use of an A $\flat$  changes the M7 into a m7.

A. The true dominant 13th chord.

B. The dominant 13th chord as expressed in four voices: root, 3rd, 7th, and 13th.

C. Here's a dominant 13th chord with a flattened 13th.



Here's an example. The M7 between the baritone and tenor on the word "of" probably sounds a bit "modern" to most barbershoppers' ears, but is still tolerable.



**THE "BARBERSHOP 13<sup>TH</sup>":** Now, if the chordal 13<sup>th</sup> is dropped an octave lower (thus expressed as a 6<sup>th</sup>) and placed in the lead, it will create a very harsh dissonance of a m2 with the chordal 7<sup>th</sup>. In order to avoid this dissonance between the chordal 7<sup>th</sup> and chordal 13<sup>th</sup> (now written as a 6<sup>th</sup>), the voice part with the chordal 7<sup>th</sup> will move up a step to form an octave above the bass. This version is what I call a 'barbershop 13<sup>th</sup>' chord and occurs all the time in our music.

Classic  $V^{13}$  chord.

Chordal 13th placed in lead.  
Ouch! Creates m2 w/bari.

Ah, better! Bari moves up a step (forms 8ve with bass).

You'll note that the 'barbershop 13<sup>th</sup>' looks just like the substitute 6<sup>th</sup> chord discussed earlier this week. They are similar in appearance and function, but the difference is this:

- Barbershop 6<sup>th</sup> chords substitute for *triads*.
- Barbershop 13<sup>th</sup> chords substitute for *barbershop 7<sup>th</sup> chords*.

The context of the passage (the controlling/prevailing harmony) will make clear which chord is intended. Here's an example from *Sweet and Lovely*. The first two measures prolong a  $G^7$  ( $II^7$ ) chord. (Note also the  $II^9$  with no root on the word "do.") But when the lead moves up to the E on the syllable "-bout" the tenor must move off of its F and goes up to a G to avoid clashing with the lead: the  $G^{13th}$  chord substitutes for the  $G^7$  chord on this syllable.

What do you think a - bout me?"

me, a - bout me?"

$G^7$  (II)      C (V)

Depending on the scale step on which it is built, the barbershop 13<sup>th</sup> chord may appear as  $V^{13}$  and sound enharmonically the same as an augmented triad. In this excerpt from *Let Me Call You Sweetheart*, the lead's  $E^b$  on the word "I'm" forces the tenor to move up the G. The  $G-B-E^b$  chord formed at this point resembles the augmented triad  $E^b-G-B$ , although the context makes it clear the root of the chord on the word "I'm" is G, not  $E^b$ .

Let me call you "Sweet-heart," I'm in love

$G^7$  (VI)