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autumn leaves chords barbra streisand e chords

Published: September 19, 2026 | Index ID: #-

Discovering Autumn Leaves: From Classic Jazz Standard to Barbra Streisand's Touch

When the first golden leaves start to drift from the trees, many of us feel the pull of nostalgia and melancholy. Music has long captured that bittersweet feeling, and one of the most celebrated pieces that does so is the timeless jazz standard **"Autumn Leaves"**. Whether you're a seasoned guitarist, a piano enthusiast, or simply a fan of Barbra Streisand's velvety voice, this article will guide you through the chords, the iconic performance by Barbra Streisand, and how the key of E shapes the song's emotional landscape. By the end, you'll be ready to play, analyze, and appreciate *Autumn Leaves* like never before.

What Makes Autumn Leaves a Jazz Classic?

Originally composed in 1945 by Joseph Kosma with French lyrics by Jacques Prévert, "Autumn Leaves" was later adapted into English by Johnny Mercer. The song's haunting melody and sophisticated harmonic structure have made it a staple for jazz musicians worldwide. Its chord progressions weave through several key centers, creating a sense of longing that mirrors the fall season's quiet beauty.

Key Musical Elements

- Chord Progression: The song's progression follows a classic 32-bar form (AABA) that includes ii–V–I turns and a cycle of fifths.
- Modal Interchange: It frequently borrows chords from parallel minor keys, adding emotional depth.
- Melodic Contour: The melody's stepwise motion combined with occasional leaps reflects the gentle rustle of falling leaves.

Autumn Leaves Chords: A Complete Guide for Guitar

Below is a practical breakdown of the chord shapes you'll need to play *Autumn Leaves*on guitar. We'll cover the original key of G major, a popular key for guitarists, and also explain how to transpose it to E major or E minor if you prefer a different tonal center.

Key of G Major (Standard Tuning)

1. A7: 575553
2. D7: xx0212
3. Gmaj7: 320002
4. Cmaj7: x32000
5. E7: 020100
6. Am7: x02010
7. D7/F#: 2x0212
8. Dm7: xx0211
9. G7: 320001
10. C7: x32310
11. F#7: 2x2211

Here’s a quick rundown of the AABA form with chord labels:

- A Section (Bars 1 8): Gmaj7 – A7 – D7 – Gmaj7 – Cmaj7 – D7 – Gmaj7 – Gmaj7
- B Section (Bars 9 16): Em7 – A7 – D7 – Gmaj7 – Em7 – A7 – D7 – Gmaj7
- A Section (Bars 17 24): Same as the first A section.
- A Section (Bars 25 32): Gmaj7 – A7 – D7 – Gmaj7 – Cmaj7 – D7 – Gmaj7 – Gmaj7

Transposing to E Major

Many guitarists find E major comfortable because it allows open strings and familiar chord shapes. To transpose from G major to E major, shift every chord down two semitones:

- Gmaj7 !’ Em7
- A7 !’ B7
- D7 !’ E7
- Cmaj7 !’ Amaj7
- Am7 !’ Bm7
- Dm7 !’ Em7
- G7 !’ E7
- C7 !’ A7
- F#7 !’ D#7

These shapes are often easier to play on guitar, especially if you’re comfortable with open chords.

Playing the Song on Piano

While the guitar is popular for *Autumn Leaves*, the piano offers a rich harmonic canvas. Here’s a simplified left-hand pattern you can use:

- Root note (bass) on beats 1 and 3.
- Add the 7th or 9th on beat 2 for a jazzier feel.
- Use arpeggios on beat 4 to give the progression a flowing motion.

Combine this with a right-hand melody that follows the original vocal line, and you’ll have a complete arrangement.

Barbra Streisand’s Take on Autumn Leaves

Barbra Streisand, known for her powerful vocal range and emotive phrasing, brought a unique interpretation to *Autumn Leaves*. Though she is primarily celebrated for her Broadway and pop repertoire, her rendition of this jazz standard showcases her versatility.

Why Barbra’s Version Stands Out

- Vocal Nuance: Streisand’s voice carries a warm, almost spoken-word quality, which lends itself to the song’s reflective mood.
- Arrangement: The arrangement features a lush string section that mirrors the gentle rustle of leaves.
- Dynamic Control: She uses subtle crescendos and decrescendos to mirror the song’s lyrical narrative.

Analyzing the Chords in Streisand’s Recording

While Streisand’s arrangement is primarily vocal, the underlying chords remain faithful to the original jazz structure. The key in her recording is often transposed to suit her vocal range, typically around D major. However, the chord sequence stays consistent with the AABA form described earlier.

How to Emulate Streisand’s Style on Guitar

1. Use a Clean Tone: Set your amp to a bright, clean sound. This will emulate the clarity of Streisand's vocals.
2. Employ Slow Tempos: Play the song at a moderate tempo (~80 BPM) to capture the reflective feel.
3. Add Soft Percussion: Light shakers or a cajón can provide a subtle rhythmic backdrop.
4. Chord Voicings: Use extended chords (maj7, 9, 11) to add color.

Understanding E Chords in Autumn Leaves

The term **E chords** refers to chords built on the note E. They are fundamental in many keys, including E major and E minor. In the context of *Autumn Leaves*, E chords play a pivotal role in the song's harmonic structure, especially when transposing to keys that center around E.

Key of E Major

When the song is transposed to E major, the chord progression changes as follows:

- Em7 (i7)
- B7 (V7)
- Gmaj7 (III7)
- Amaj7 (IV7)
- F#7 (V7/V)

Notice how the E chords (Em7, B7, F#7) serve as dominant functions, driving the resolution back to the tonic Em7.

Key of E Minor

If you prefer a minor key, transposing *Autumn Leaves*to E minor gives the song a more introspective feel. The chord progression in E minor becomes:

- Em7 (i7)
- B7 (V7)
- Am7 (VI7)
- D7 (III7)
- Gmaj7 (VI7)

Here, the E chords act as pivot points that maintain the song's emotional depth.

Why E Chords Matter for Guitarists

- Open Strings: The E chord shapes often involve open strings, making them easier to transition between.
- Rich Resonance: E major and minor chords resonate well on the guitar, offering a warm tone.
- Transposition Ease: Many guitarists find it convenient to play in E major or minor because the chord shapes are familiar.

Practical Tips for Mastering Autumn Leaves

Below are actionable strategies to help you become proficient with *Autumn Leaves* and its chord progressions.

1. Start with the Melody

Learn the vocal line first. This will give you a clear sense of the song's phrasing and emotional arc. Once you're comfortable, layer in the chords.

2. Use a Metronome

Set a metronome to a moderate tempo (70–80 BPM). Practice the chord changes slowly, then gradually increase the speed as you gain confidence.

3. Record Yourself

Listening back helps you catch timing issues and chord inaccuracies. It also allows you to assess how your rendition aligns with Barbra Streisand's emotive style.

4. Explore Different Keys

Transposing the song into keys that suit your vocal range or guitar skill level can make a big difference. Try G, D, A, and E major, as well as their minor counterparts.

5. Add Jazz Licks

Incorporate improvisational licks over the ii–V–I progressions. This will give your performance a more authentic jazz feel.

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

- Skipping the ii–V–I Turns: These turns are the backbone of the song's harmonic movement. Make sure you play them cleanly.
- Ignoring the AABA Form: Many beginners forget that the B section is the "bridge." Treat it as a distinct musical idea.
- Overcomplicating the Rhythm: Keep the rhythm simple at first; focus on chord accuracy.
- Forgetting Dynamic Nuance: The song thrives on subtle dynamics, especially when emulating Streisand's style.

Why Autumn Leaves Remains Perennial

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