

How I hear any chord

NOVICE

Sing the melody. Sing the bass note.

You can write out a melody or bass line from any song using only your ear.

BEGINNER

Name the chord, the inversion, and the bass note.

Not just "minor" — say "Eb minor with an F in the bass."

COMPETENT

Hear the 4 chord types — and whether each is at rest or a setup.

Major 7 — rest

Minor 7 — rest

Dominant — setup

Half-Dim — setup

INTERMEDIATE

Hear tensions and extensions. Use function and context.

What came before it? What comes after? Is it a target or passing chord?

ADVANCED

Use every tool at once — even on chords you've never heard before.

Vocabulary is the shortcut. Knowing the chord is how you move fast.

SEAN'S PERSONAL PROCESS

How I personally figure it out

1. Find the top note. Hold it in memory.
2. Find the bottom note. Compare both to a chord I already know.
3. Ask: does this note exist in that chord?
4. Use function and context to narrow it down.

More art than science. Not prescriptive — just how my ear works.

Hear it. Play it. Understand it.