

## ii-V Chord Progressions

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## Meaning of ii-V

- ii is the chord built on the second degree of the scale.
  - The seventh is implied, so this would be a minor-seventh chord.
  - Other extensions (9th, 11th, and 13th) can also be used. In other words, all chords in the major scale can be used over this chord. The 13th needs to be treated carefully, as it is more dissonant.
- V is the chord built on the fifth degree.
  - The minor seventh is implied, so this would be a dominant-seventh chord. Extensions and alterations can also be used.

## Commonality

- ii-V progressions are ubiquitous in jazz
- They often precede a I chord and can provide a smooth aural transition to it.
- Wherever there is a V chord, a ii can usually be inserted in front of it.
- They can be used "out of the blue" to establish a different key.
- They may occur in several different keys in a given piece.
- They may also be used in isolation and in sequence.

## Major ii-V-I Progressions

Key	ii	V	I	
C	Dm7	G7	C	
Db	Ebm7	Ab7	Db	
D	Em7	A7	D	
Eb	Fm7	Bb7	Eb	
E	F#m7	B7	E	
F	Gm7	C7	F	
Gb	Abm7	Db7	Gb	
G	Am7	D7	G	
Ab	Bbm7	Eb7	Ab	
A	Bm7	E7	A	
Bb	Cm7	F7	Bb	
B	C#m7	F#7	B	

## Examples

- The bridge of "Cherokee" is a series of ii-V-I progressions in keys that ascend through four keys in whole steps:
  - (key of B): C#m7 F#7 BM7
  - (key of A): Bm7 E7 AM7
  - (key of G): Am7 D7 GM7
  - (key of F): Gm7 C7
  - (key of Bb): Cm7 F7

## More Examples

- "Giant Steps" by John Coltrane:
  - BM7 D7 | GM7 Bb7 | EbM7 |
  - Am7 D7 | GM7 Bb7 | EbM7 F#7 | BM7 |
  - Fm7 Bb7 | EbM7 |
  - Am7 D7 | GM7 |
  - C#m7 F#7 | BM7 |
  - Fm7 Bb7 | EbM7 |
  - C#m7 F#7 |

## Examples Using ii-V (with or without I)

- "Confirmation", by Charlie Parker:  
F $\Delta$ 7 | E $\emptyset$  A7 | Dm7 G7 | Cm7 F7 ...
- "Joy Spring", by Clifford Brown:  
G | Am7 D7 | G | Cm7 F7 | Bm7 E7alt |  
Am7 D7 | G | Bbm7 Eb7 |  
  
Ab | Bbm7 Eb7 | Ab | C#m7 F#7 |  
Cm7 F7alt | Bbm Eb7 | Ab | Bm7 E7b9

## Major ii-V-I Progression A-B

b7 resolves to 3.      b7 resolves to 3.

Fm9      Bb13      Eb Maj7

Type A: 3-5-7-9      Type B: 7-9-3-6      Type A: 3-5-7-9

## Which tones are emphasized most?

b7 resolves to 3.      b7 resolves to 3.

Fm9      Bb13      Eb Maj7

## Conversely

- In the ii chord, don't over-emphasize the 6th, since it is the tone to which the seventh will resolve (the 3rd of the dominant).
- In the V chord, don't over-emphasize the 4th, since it is the tone that was the seventh in the ii (emphasizing this is called a *suspension*).
- In the I chord, don't emphasize the 4th, since it is the tone that was the seventh in the V (and is an avoid tone in I).

## Outlining vs. Generalization

- The preceding assumes the soloist wants to "outline" the chord changes.
- Another way of playing is called "generalization", which means playing in the same key, but without outlining the changes so clearly.
- In generalization, one *could* play in the major scale of the I for all three chords. But it may not sound as crisp if the chords aren't outlined.

## Key Awareness

- Whether using outlining or generalization, it is important to be aware of the key in which one is playing a ii-V, if for no other reason than getting the notes right.
- The key is a whole step below the root of the ii (and a fifth below the root of the V):

ii	Cm7	C#m7	Dm7	Ebm7	Em7	Fm7	F#m7	Gm7	Abm7	Am7	Bbm7	Bm7
I (key)	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A

## Building ii-V Melodic Lines

- Play in the key
- Usually use a combination of:
  - Scalar movement
  - Arpeggiation
  - Sawtooth
  - Chromatic alterations
  - Smooth connections between chords

## Possible Mnemonic Devices

- Establish the key
- The b7 of the ii chord is the 1 of the key.
- The 3 of the ii chord is the 4 of the key.
- The b7 of the V chord is the 4 of the key.
- The 3 of the V chord is the major 7 of the key.
- So in the key, the guide tones for ii-V-I are:
 

1	7	7
4	4	3
- The top line is the melody of "I should care".

## Building ii-V Melodic Lines

- ii chord: play 1, b3, 4, 5, b7, 9  
use 6 less  
chromatic alterations: 7 (leading tone), b6, 3
- V chord: play 1, 3, 5, b7, 7, 9  
avoid 4  
chromatic alterations: #4, b9, #9 (= b3), #5

## Examples



## 1-bar vs. 2-bar ii-V

- 1-bar: each chord is one half bar long



- 2-bars: each chord is one bar long



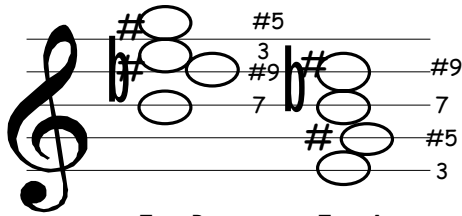
## Practicing ii-V

- I find it more enjoyable to practice these in the context of a longer cyclic progression:
 

ii-V-I-VI <sup>7</sup> alt	e.g. Fm9-Bb9-Eb-C7 <sup>alt</sup>
or ii-V-iii-VI <sup>7</sup>	e.g. Fm9-Bb9-Gm9-C9
- These sound more interesting and are less tiring. Plus they frequently occur in tune contexts, such as blues, rhythm changes, "A Train", "Satin Doll", etc.
- You can always cut before the I-VI<sup>7</sup> alt if you don't wish to play the whole cycle.
- You can also alter the V chord for variety.
- In many songs, I comes first, i.e. I-VI<sup>7</sup> - ii-V

## Recalled Altered Dominant

C7 alt. (= Gb9) C7 alt. (= Gb9)



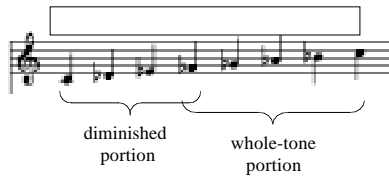
Type B:  
7-#9-3-#5

Type A:  
3-#5-7-#9

## Altered Scale

- The "altered scale" captures the notes that sound good over an altered dominant.
- It is a scale in which everything in a major scale but the root has been lowered a half step:  
1 b2 b3 b4(=3) b5(=#4) b6 b7
- This scale is also known as:  
diminished whole-tone scale  
super-locrian scale  
Pomeroy scale  
seventh mode of melodic minor
- Some people say this scale is not really used as such.

## C Altered Scale



## Prototypical Altered Lick

- "Cry Me a River" lick:  
descending: #9 b9 #5 3 #9 b9
- In C altered: Eb Db G# E Eb Db



- In A altered:



## Major ii-V-I-VI<sup>7alt.</sup> Progressions

Key	ii	V	I	VI <sup>7alt.</sup>
C	Dm7	G7	C	A7alt
Db	Ebm7	Ab7	Db	Bb7alt
D	Em7	A7	D	B7alt
Eb	Fm7	Bb7	Eb	C7alt
E	F#m7	B7	E	C#7alt
F	Gm7	C7	F	D7alt
Gb	Abm7	Db7	Gb	Eb7alt
G	Am7	D7	G	E7alt
Ab	Bbm7	Eb7	Ab	F7alt
A	Bm7	E7	A	F#7alt
Bb	Cm7	F7	Bb	G7alt
B	C#m7	F#7	B	G#7alt

## Example ii-V-I-VI<sup>7alt.</sup>

Progression  
(generated by Band-in-a-Box)



## Substitutes for ii-V

- $iv^7 - {}^bVII^7$  ("back-door" progression)  
Example: key of C:  $Fm^7 - Bb^7$
- $ii^7 - {}^bII^7$  (tritone substitution)  
Example: key of C:  $Dm^7 - Db^7(\#4)$
- ${}^bVII^7 - VII^7$   
Example: key of C:  $Bb^7 - B^7$
- ${}^bVI^7 - V^7$   
Example: key of C:  $Ab^7 - G^7$

## Practice Sequence ii-V-I Step-Down

Dm7	G7	C
Cm7	F7	Bb
Bbm7	Eb7	Ab
Abm7	Db7	Gb
F#m7	B7	E
Em7	A7	D

Choose one alternative

C#m7	F#7	B
Bm7	E7	A
Am7	D7	G
Gm7	C7	F
Fm7	Bb7	Eb
Ebm7	Ab7	Db

Choose one alternative