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 for a major scale this would a minor-seventh chord (e.g. for C major, the seventh of ii is C, which is a minor seventh).
- V is the chord built on the fifth degree.
  - The minor seventh is implied, so this would be a dominant-seventh chord.

Example: For C major

- Scale is C D E F G A B C.
- The ii chord is Dm7: D F A C.
- The V chord is G7: G B D F.

Extensions

- Extensions of ii: 9th, 11th, and 13th
  - Example: C: Extensions of Dm7: E G B
- Extensions of V: 9th, #11th, and 13th
  - Example: C: Extensions of G7: A C# E
- Extensions are discretionary, and need to be checked for the correct sound.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Dm7</td>
<td>G7</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bbb7</td>
<td>Bbm7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F</td>
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</tr>
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Example

- Now’s the Time (F blues):
  Turnaround starting in measure 9:
  \[
  \text{Gm7} \quad \text{C7} \quad \text{F7}
  \]
  \[
  \text{ii} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{I}^7
  \]

Example

- Honeysuckle Rose:
  Starts in F major: Gm7 C7 (ii V)
  I chord (F) is eventually reached in mm 5
  Turnaround at end of A section is in G major: Am7 D7 (ii V)

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 B
  (key of A): Bm7 E7 A
  (key of G): Am7 D7 G
  (key of F): Gm7 C7
  (key of Bb): Cm7 F7

More Examples

- “Giant Steps” by John Coltrane:
  B D7 | G Bb7 | Eb |
  Am7 D7 | G Bb7 | Eb F#7 | B |
  Fm7 Bb7 | Eb |
  Am7 D7 | G |
  C#m7 F#7 | B |
  Fm7 Bb7 | Eb |
  C#m7 F#7 |

Examples Using ii-V (with or without I)

- “Confirmation”, by Charlie Parker:
  F | E∅ A7 | Bm7 G7 | Cm7 F7 Bb7 ...

- “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**

- **Type A:**
  - 3-5-7-9
  - Fm9 → 9 → 5 → m3 → Bb13
  - Eb Maj7

- **Type B:**
  - 7-9-3-6
  - 9 → m7 → 6 → 3 → B♭7
  - b7 resolves to 3.

- **Which tones are emphasized most?**
  - b7 resolves to 3.
  - m7

**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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II</th>
<th>C major7</th>
<th>D major7</th>
<th>E major7</th>
<th>E♭ major7</th>
<th>F major7</th>
<th>F♯ major7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I (key)</td>
<td>B♭</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D♭</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E♭</td>
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**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
  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, #4
- 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-VI7 alternates: e.g. Fm9-Bb9-Eb-C7 alternates
  - II-V-III-VI: 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-VI7 alternates 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-VI7-ii-V

Recalled Altered Dominant

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

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

[Music examples and diagrams]
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:

Example ii-V-I-VI\textsuperscript{7}alt. Progression (generated by Band-in-a-Box)

Major ii-V-I-VI\textsuperscript{7}alt. Progressions

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Practice Sequence ii-V-I Step-Down