ii-V Chord Progressions

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February 2002
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 be 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.
Scale

Root Position:  ii  V  I  Voice Leading:  ii  V  I

7 → 3  7 → 3
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

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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 | Dm7 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

b7 resolves to 3.  b7 resolves to 3.

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

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):

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(key)
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, #4

- **V chord**: play 1, 3, 5, b7, 7, 9
  - avoid 4
    - chromatic alterations: #4, b9, #9 (= b3), #5
Examples

Dm7

G7

Dm7

G7

Dm7

G7
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:

  \[ \text{ii-V-I-VI}_7^{\text{alt}} \quad \text{e.g. Fm9-Bb9-Eb-C7}_{\text{alt}} \]
  or \[ \text{ii-V-iii-VI}_7 \quad \text{e.g. Fm9-Bb9-Gm9-C9} \]

- 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$_7^{\text{alt}}$ 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$_7$ - 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

diminished portion

whole-tone portion
Prototypical Altered Lick

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

\[ \text{C7#5#9} \]

- In A altered:

\[ \text{A7#5#9} \]
## Major ii-V-I-\textit{VI}^{7\text{alt}}. Progressions

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

Progression

(generated by Band-in-a-Box)
Practice Sequence ii-V-I Step-Down

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Choose one alternative

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