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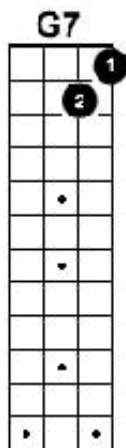
Jazz Mandology

Understanding the 'ii V7 I' Progression

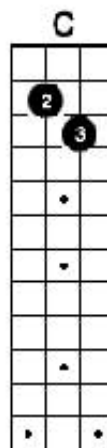
by Ted Eschliman

Drama; it's always about conflict and resolution. Every good art form, whether a playwright script, Hollywood screenplay, or good novel, uses tension to engage and resolution to calm. Music is certainly no different. In Western (European) Music, music will "cadence" by taking us away from home base or "tonic" and its nemesis, "dominant," only to return again...

These are words you've probably heard bantered about, and maybe never quite grasped. Let's just deal with these terms here in a non-threatening, elementary approach to Music Theory. We'll save the high level terminology for another article.



V7



I

Simple "Cadence"

Let's listen to two chords to hear this. Play a G7. Hang on to it, and follow it up with a C. Listen how the G7, the "dominant" or 'V' chord in the key of C likes to lead us to the "tonic" or 'I' Chord in the key of C.

What you have here is the most rudimentary, primal example of "cadencing." You can enlarge this by preceding with an F chord, or a Dm7, and you get the IV or ii7, but in essence, all your doing is "preparing" for the final 'V7 I' cadence.

Rather than get steeped in the technicality of advanced music theory, let's try to understand this concept in these three terms:

Tonic: (home base, 'I' Chord, the key of the section or entire song): resolution

Dominant: ('V' or 'V7' Chord) tension

Preparation: (IV, ii7, vi7, ii7-5) set-up chord(s) for the upcoming conflict/resolution.

A tiny bit of explanation, Roman numerals are used in notating scale degrees (which is why you've been seeing them!). Recall from grade school, Arabic numbers 1-7 translate into Roman I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, and for the purpose of music theory, VIII and I are the same, as we start the scale all over again. Getting into chords based on these scale degrees, capital letters indicate major chords, small case indicates minor (and we'll save diminished & augmented for later). So you see the chords based on the major scale notated like this: I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi, viio. Don't get caught up in the theory technicalities just yet, our focus is on the 'V' (or 'V7') which would be the G7 chord you played earlier, the 'I' or C chord you played.

Play any Bluegrass or Folk standard, and your ear will tell you what chords are restless, tense, and incapable of "finishing" the song. You can also hear the chord that brings you back to the original key of the song (or large section), this is your Tonic. What might be less clear to analyze, are the chords that merely prepare you for the tension chords. In the key of C, you can add an F (or Dm7) chord; it will prepare you for the dominant G7, which will demand resolution to C.

This is where the complexity of jazz can take you into a lush, verdant dimension of harmonic vocabulary. Not only extensions of the chords themselves, like sevenths, ninths, thirteenth, etc. (G7, G7+9, G13b9), but the tonal centers of the song stray in and out of the original key of the song in brief, incidental tonal cells. This is why understanding the basic concept of 'V7 I,' and bigger sister, 'ii V7 I' is crucial to deeper exploration of jazz.

We'll go into discovering the (multiple) tonal centers of some jazz standards in subsequent articles, but for now, try to learn some "stock" 'ii V7 I' patterns. I'm including some of my own personal favorite positions for you to experiment with. If you can nail these, you'll unlock the doors of opportunity to play virtually any jazz standard, simply by moving the patterns up and down the fretboard. For example, learning the Dm7 G7 C(6/9) moves up two frets to yield a convenient fingering for Em7 A7 D(6/9); down two frets gives you Cm7 F7 Bb(6/9).

When you consider there are only 12 pitches, learning three chief patterns and transposing them up and down the fretboard only two frets south or north covers ALL the song key possibilities. (See-that's not so hard is it?!) Jazz can be more "finite" than you thought.

For the time being, don't let my extensions like 6/9 or maj9 throw you off. They are harmonic "color" you will understand (and vary to your taste) later. For now, just get a tactile sense of where the notes and fingers go from chord to chord. Also, rather than digging out a chord dictionary and learning complex chords one at a time, you are learning patterns-in CONTEXT or phrases. Much like learning Spanish or a second language-it's SO much easier in a conversation.

Note: the goal is smooth voicing leading. These positions were crafted to allow you to move as few

frets as possible, keeping motion from chord to chord at a minimum, and allowing crucial chord tones to move to their friendliest resolution.

As this is geared for ensemble playing, not all the voices of the chord structure are present. The subject of paring down six voices into the four (or three) voices you'll use on the mandolin is whole topic we can discuss in the future, but now you'll notice the root or bass of the chord often is not included. Jazz groups generally give this assignment to the bass player, left hand of the piano, or lower strings of the guitar.

Observe the two groupings; one is for patterns in major mode, the other for minor mode. An "X" at the top of the fingerboard indicates a muted string.

Sample Stock 'ii V7 I' Chord Fingerings

MAJOR PATTERNS:

Major chord patterns for ii, V7, and I chords in various keys:

- Am7** (ii): 1-1-2-2
- D7** (V7): 2-1-3-3
- Gmaj9** (I): 1-2-2-2
- Dm7** (ii): 1-2-3
- G7** (V7): 1-2-3
- C6/9** (I): 1-1-3
- Fm9** (ii): 1-3-3-3
- Bb13** (V7): 1-1-2-3
- Ebmaj9** (I): 1-1-2-3

MINOR PATTERNS:

Minor chord patterns for ii7b5, V7, and i chords in various keys:

- F#m7b5** (ii7b5): 1-2-3-4
- B7** (V7): 1-1-2-3
- Em** (i): 1-2-4
- Bm7b5** (ii7b5): 1-2-3-3
- E7** (V7): 2-1-3-3
- Am9** (i): 1-3-3-3
- Dm7b5** (ii7b5): 1-1-2-4
- G7** (V7): 1-2-3
- Cm** (i): 1-1-2-4

Now for extra credit, dig up some jazz (or maybe jazzier tunes). They can be anything from Broadway tunes to hardcore Bebop. See how these fit in the song, and better see where you can

actually find these patterns. You'll be surprised at how easy it is to actually hear this before thinking it. If you have trouble transposing quickly, go ahead and tab the transposed chords up and down several frets for your own reference.

Until next time, join me for more jazz insights on my website: www.jazzmando.com. I'm always open to feedback and questions, so drop me an email at mandohack@aol.com. Let me know what part of the globe your feet are on, too!

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