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TAKE YOUR TURNAROUND

Soloing over ii-V (two-five) chord changes

THE MOST prevalent, and need I say important, chord change in jazz—one that's also used abundantly in rock, pop, funk, blues, country and other styles of music—is what's known as the "ii-V" (two-five). These Roman numerals signify the second and fifth chords that are generated from a major scale relative to a given tonal center or *tonic*, which is called the "I" (one) chord. The lower-case "ii" indicates that the "two" chord is minor.

The ii-V chord change typically serves as a *resolution* within a longer chord progression. As it is often used at the end of a phrase to set up a return to the beginning, or "top," of a chord progression, it's commonly referred to as a *turnaround*.

Hundreds of jazz compositions include numerous ii-V chord changes throughout the course of the progression that the tune is based on, with each ii-V setting up a resolution and modulation (key change) to a new, "temporary" tonic within the overall progression. Well-known examples of "standard" tunes that include numerous ii-V chord changes in their progressions are "All the Things You Are," "Autumn Leaves," "Round Midnight," and "Green Dolphin Street," to name a few.

FIGURE 1a illustrates the A major scale (A B C# D E F# G#) with a Roman numeral assigned to each scale degree. **FIGURE 1b** shows a set of *diatonic seventh chords* that can be generated by harmonizing this scale in four parts. As you can see, each chord is assigned a Roman numeral that designates its relationship to the tonic. In the key of A, Bm7 is the ii chord (iim7), and E7 is the V chord (V7).

One particularly effective approach to improvising over these chords is to "target" one of the four *chord tones* that comprise each chord by playing it on the beat so that it coincides with the chord change. The chord tones of Bm7 are B, D, F# and A; the chord tones of E7 are E, G#, B and D. For a more harmonically sophisticated sound, you can go a step further and target the *upper extensions* of each chord: for Bm7, these are C#, E and G#; for E7, the upper extensions are F#, A and C#. As you can see, there are many shared, or *common*, tones between these two chords, and part of the challenge when soloing is to try and use common tones as melodic/harmonic pivot points from which you smoothly move from one chord to the next. There are also *passing tones* that fall between the chord tones. These can be used to connect chord tones that are a whole step (or further) apart.

A great way to learn how to improvise over

FIGURE 1a A major scale (A B C# D E F# G#)

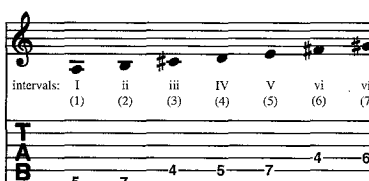


FIGURE 1b diatonic seventh chords in A

Amaj7 Bm7 C#m7 Dmaj7 E7 F#m7 G#m7b5 (Amaj7)

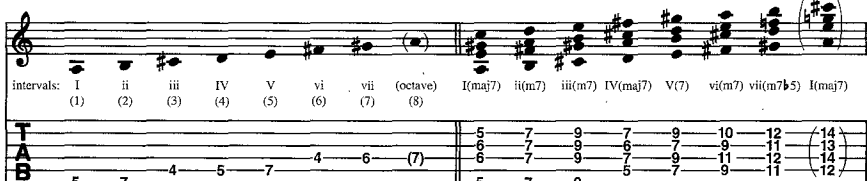


FIGURE 2a

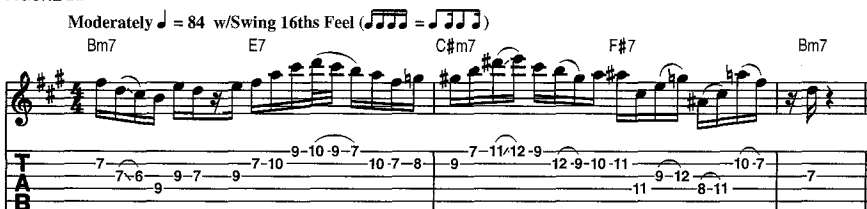
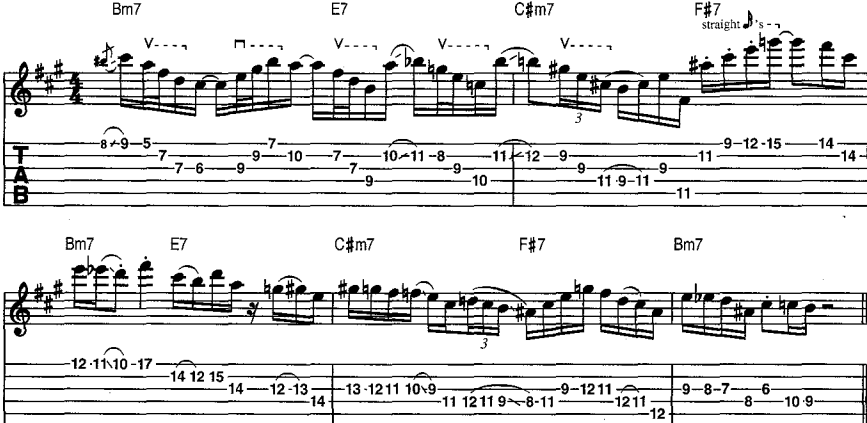


FIGURE 2b



FIGURE 2c



chord changes is to practice soloing over a *vamp*—a relatively short chord progression that loops around and repeats. **FIGURES 2a** and **2b** illustrate examples of improvised melodies played over a four-chord vamp in A. **FIGURE 2c** is a longer example of a line played over this same vamp.

The chord sequence in each of these examples may be analyzed as being a ii-V-iii-VI (two-five-three-six) progression in A (Bm7-E7-

C#m7-F#7). It may also be thought of as a ii-V turnaround in A (Bm7-E7) alternating with a ii-V turnaround in B or B minor (C#m7-F#7). The beauty of this cyclical progression is that it can be repeated indefinitely, offering a soloist a challenging and inspiring framework over which to create streams of melodic resolutions from chord to chord. As you play these lines, notice the use of chord tones, as described above, as well as passing tones. ■