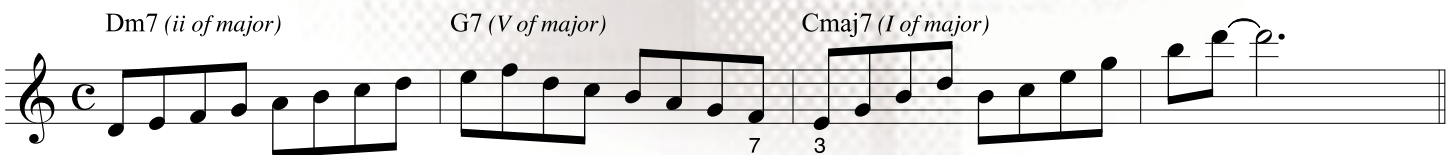


THE CADENTIAL USE OF THE DOMINANT SEVENTH CHORD

The following figures demonstrate improvised melodic "lines" over common progressions using major, minor, and dominant seventh chords. In this lesson, we will analyze the scales, chord tone placement, and harmonic resolutions used in each figure.

▶ [AUDIO-ii-V-I.mp3](#) - Use this piece for FIGURES A through M.

FIGURE A



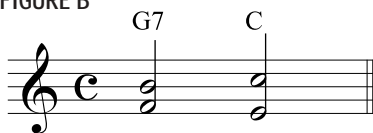
The above figure displays one of the most common progressions in music: the ii-V-I. The harmonic progression in Figure A is a ii-V-I progression in the key of C major. Each chord's treatment (scale choice) is diatonic in the key of C major; this means each scale choice consists of the same seven tones (D-E-F-G-A-B-C-D for Dm7, G-A-B-C-D-E-F-G for G7, and C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C for Cmaj7; next to each chord symbol is an indication of what mode is in use).

The most common mistake of the young soloist is to think only of the seven scale tones (C-D-E-F-G-A-B) and not their harmonic strength in relation to individual chords. The F works well in establishing the harmony of both the Dm7 and G7 chords, but resolving to the F on the first beat of the Cmaj7 chord and sustaining it will produce unfavorable results. The proper use of these seven scale tones can create a harmonic movement which parallels that of the chord progression. Meandering over these same seven scale degrees will create ambiguity at best.

The first measure of **FIGURE A** demonstrates the D Dorian mode (ii of major) in a scalar manner, with each chord tone falling on beats 1, 2, 3, and 4. The importance of the second measure lies not only in the chord tone prominence, but more importantly in the resolution to the I chord (Cmaj7). The upbeat of 4 in the second measure proceeds down an interval of a minor second to the first beat of the third measure. This half-step resolution is the seventh degree of the G7 (F) resolving to the third degree of the Cmaj7 (E).

A dominant chord's natural tendency is to resolve. The reason for this is the unstable nature of the tritone created by the third and seventh degrees of the dominant seventh chord. In the G7 chord, the F and B want to resolve to the E and C (respectively) of the C major seventh chord (right). Exploiting this natural movement within an improvised line will strengthen the harmonic movement.

FIGURE B



Notice how the last measure (**FIGURE A**) contains only chord tones with the exception of the ninth (D). Again this chord tone prominence establishes the harmony of the Cmaj7 chord. Linear harmonic movement is created when chord tones are exploited and logical resolutions are used.

FIGURE C (in the style of Sonny Rollins) demonstrates a ii-V-I with the same scale choices as FIGURE A. As in FIGURE A, a 7-3 resolution takes place from the V to the I chord. Note the anticipation of the fifth (D) of the G7 in the first measure on the upbeat of 4, and also how the last two beats in measure 2 are identical to the last two beats of measure 2 in FIGURE 8A.

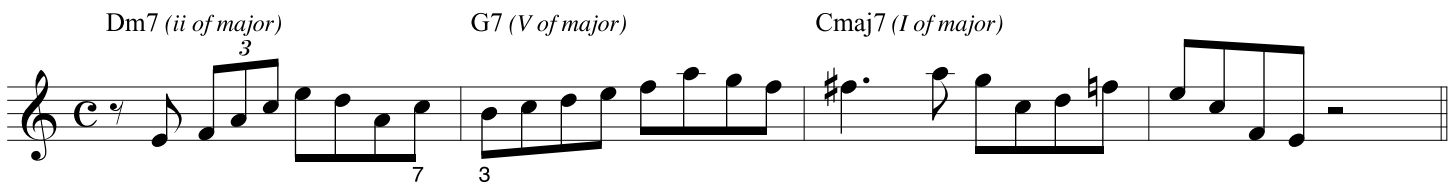
FIGURE C



FIGURE D displays the seventh of G7 (measure 2, upbeat of 4) resolving upward a minor second to the sharp eleventh of Cmaj7 (first beat of measure three). This changes the scale choice of the major seventh chord from I of major to IV of major. It should also be noted that in measure 3 (upbeat of 4) and measure 4 (beat 2) an F natural resolves down a minor second to the third of Cmaj7. This shows the line during the Cmaj7 chord is incorporating mode-mixture—I and IV of major. (This 4-3 resolution within the chord was discussed earlier in Chapter 5 as a way of establishing the dominant within the I of major mode.)

NOTE: the 7-3 resolution taking place from Dm7 (measure 1, upbeat of 4) to G7 (measure 2, beat 1).

FIGURE D



Altering the dominant seventh chord's extensions creates additional half-step resolution possibilities. FIGURE E has a G7 chord with b9 and #5 alterations. This line uses the altered scale over G7b9(#5) and displays another half-step resolution (b9-5) from the upbeat of 4 in measure 2 (Ab) to beat 1 of measure 3 (G).

Notice how the line (in the style of Dexter Gordon) clearly demonstrates the altered scale with the use of the #9 (Bb), b9 (Ab), and #5 (Eb). Remember: the altered scale is the only scale containing all of this line's alterations. The pitches are enharmonically spelled to make the reading of the line easier.

FIGURE E

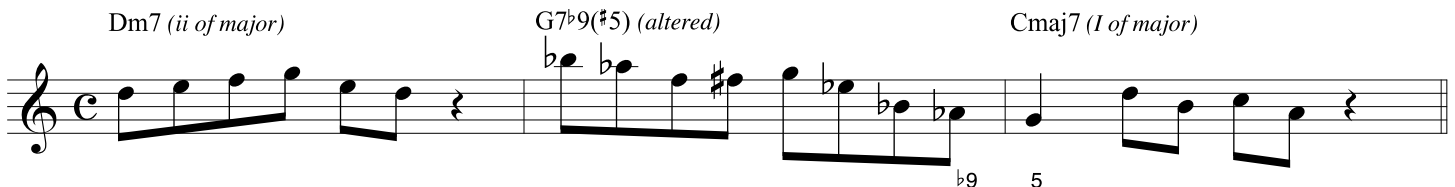
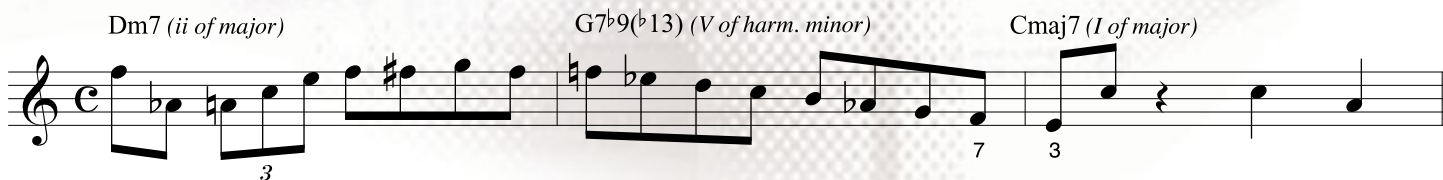


FIGURE F shows a different treatment of the minor seventh chord. One could view the first two beats of measure 1 as iv of harmonic minor. Another possibility is ii of major, with the Ab on the upbeat of 1 simply being a lower neighbor tone to the fifth (A). The F# in this same measure is a passing tone and demonstrates how chromaticism adds color to the line. The G7 is now treated as V of harmonic minor with a 7–3 resolution to the I chord (Cmaj7). Notice how the line over each chord has chord tones on almost every beat. Only beat 4 of measure 1 and beat 4 of measure 3 are without chord tones. Beats 1, 2, 3, and 4 in measure 2 spell the G7 chord from the seventh to the root (F–D–B–G). Another important point is the line resolves to a chord tone by a half step on each chord change.

FIGURE F



The dominant-diminished scale is demonstrated over G7 in Figure G (in the style of Hank Mobley). The Eb in measure 2 on the upbeat of 4 is the only note not a member of this dominant-diminished scale. The purpose of this pitch is to create a half-step resolution to the third of Cmaj7 on beat 1 of measure 3. This practice is commonly referred to as *chromatic surrounding* (the F and Eb chromatically surround the resolution to E). The half-step resolution is strong even though it is not coming from a chord tone; the strength is audible because it resolves to a chord tone. This establishes the color and harmony of the ensuing chord.

FIGURE G



The Dm7 chord (in FIGURE G) reveals the major seventh. The C# can be viewed as the seventh degree of the D melodic minor scale, or simply as a lower neighbor tone to the root D. The genius in this line is how measure 1 contains the same notes as the dominant-diminished scale used in measure 2. This creates a flowing line based on the dominant-diminished scale which builds tension until finally resolving on beat 1 of measure 3.

FIGURE H (In Sonny Rollins's style) demonstrates chromaticism within diatonic scale choices and shows how this chromaticism aids in creating tension and release.

FIGURE H



All twelve notes of the chromatic scale are used in **FIGURE H**. The harmony of the line is once again established by the use of chord tones on strong beats. In the measure 1, the fifth of Dm7 (A) is on beat 1, the third of Dm7 (F) is on beat 3, and the root (D) is on beat 4. The seventh of Dm7 (C) is on beat 1 of measure 2. The G7 is not established until beat 2 of measure 2. Anticipating a chord's resolution is common. This example displays the equally common method of delaying a resolution to take place one, two, or more beats after the chord's arrival.

The G# and F# on beat four of the second measure combine to circle one half-step above and below the fifth of the Cmaj7 chord (G). This surrounding effect (which eventually resolves) is presented again on beat 2 of measure 3, where the F and D# surround the third of Cmaj7 (E), creating two chromatic surrounds within the span of four beats. The C and Bb on beat 1 of measure 2 resolving to B functions similarly.

FIGURES J, K and L display a common approach to improvising within a ii-V-I progression. **FIGURE I** demonstrates the line in the key of C major. The basic concept is a simple chromatic line descending downward from the root of the ii chord, which eventually resolves to the root of the I chord.

FIGURE I



In the key of C major, the first pitch (D) functions as the root of the ii chord (Dm7). The second pitch (C#) can be theorized as the major seventh of an implied Dm(maj7) chord or as the third of an implied A7 chord. The C natural is the seventh of the Dm7 chord or an implied G7sus4 (for more on suspended chords see the end of this chapter). The B is the third of the five chord (G7), and the final pitch (C) is the root of the Cmaj7 chord.

FIGURE J (in the style of Sonny Stitt) is an example of this chromatic line disguised within a more complex linear movement. The root of the ii chord (D) is established twice: first on the pickup and again on beat 2 of the first full measure. The C# (the major seventh of Dm[maj7] or the third of A7) is on beat 3 of the first full measure. The C natural (the seventh of Dm7 or the suspended fourth of G7sus4) is on beat 1 of measure 2. The third of G7 (B natural) is on beat 3 of this same measure and the final resolution to C (the root of the I chord) is on beat 1 of measure 3.

FIGURE J



FIGURE K (in the style of Hank Mobley) is another example of this chromatic movement within a linear melody.

FIGURE K

