

JAZZ LICK OF THE WEEK!

#4a

(harmony edition)

EXPLAINING THE II V I

The simple answer:

In short, a II V serves the same function as a V7. Both chords contain the 4th of the resolution chord (in ex 2 this is the f), but only the V7 chord contains the leading note (the b).

So from a harmonic view, it embellishes the cadence (and gives it more of a "jazz" sound). From an improvisation point, the lines that are created over each chord have different "flavors", and therefore help to create longer and more interesting lines than those based over a single chord.

Because each chord are so closely related, the soloist can, and often does, imply a II V while the rhythm section is playing a V7. Or, the soloist could imply a V7 chord while the rhythm section is playing II V etc. It's basically up to the soloists what kind of flavor they are looking for at the time.

Importantly, the soloist develops lines that encompass the two (or three including resolution) chords, rather than soloing on each chord independantly as many beginner players do. This helps to create longer, and well connected lines.

For the arranger, if melody allows, variations on this can be achieved by making the IIm chord a II7, or replacing that chord with its tri tone substitution (Which in Ex would be an Ab7 to G7). But that's getting deeper than where we need to go here.

EX 1

G⁷ C

EX 2

D^m7 G⁷ C

V7 I IIm7 V7 I

The image shows two musical examples, EX 1 and EX 2, on a single staff in treble clef. EX 1 consists of two chords: G7 (G, B, D, F) and C (C, E, G). EX 2 consists of three chords: Dm7 (D, F, A, C), G7 (G, B, D, F), and C (C, E, G). Below each chord is its label: V7, I, IIm7, V7, and I respectively.

In More Detail:

We'll assume that you're comfortable with the theory behind a V- I cadence. The defining features of this progression are:

- a) bass movement of a 5th.
- b) leading note to tonic (stays static to Imaj7)
- c) in the case of a V7 chord, the presence of the 4th resolving to the 3rd.

These three qualities make the V7 chord the most "unstable" cadence chord, and cries out for resolution. example 3 demonstrates these in isolation from other notes of the chord.

Chord IV is also somewhat unstable, and also functions as a cadence chord in a IV - I progression ("plagal".) This is due to:

- a) the presence of the 4th degree of the key resolving to the 3rd
- b) the 6th degree resolving to the 5th of the key (but not very unstable).

example 4 demonstrates these ("characteristic") notes of chord IV resolving to chord I.

EX 3: G⁷ (V) → C (I)

EX 4: F (IV) → C (I)

Cadential patterns are basically "tension and release". Therefore, a progression could be (and often is) IV (slight degree of tension) to V (high tension) to I (release). see example 5. We could include a IVm in there, but not for now!

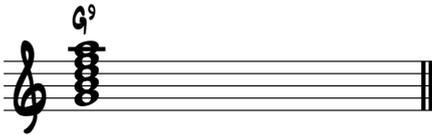
What the chord IV lacks to give it even more forward direction is that bass motion of a 5th. So what if we could find a diatonic chord (contains only notes from the key) to use in place of chord IV? It must contain those characteristic notes shown ex 4. (so that the chord serves the same function), but can have a bass motion of a 5th to chord V.

Enter the IIm chord!!!

EX 5: F (IV) → G⁷ (V) → C (I)

EX 6: D^{m7} (II) → G⁷ (V) → C^{maj7} (I)

Note also a feature of the V7 chord if we extend it by a further 3rd, making it now a G9. Look at the top three notes, and you will see that they form a Dm chord. So "thinking" Dm7 while you are soloing over a G7 chord will automatically give more of a 9th sound. If you're looking to add some hip!



In summary so far, the key points are that

- a) the II V I progression makes up a bass motion of intervals of a 5th.
- b) the II and the V chords both have cadential qualities, meaning that they both have an expectation to resolve to a I chord.
- c) These two chords contain almost the same notes, and are therefore easily interchangeable.

If this has cleared things up a little, the "simple answer" on the previous page may now make more sense.

There is a lot more that can be discussed in the topic of the II V progression, including minor II V's. This short publication was intended to at least add a little clarity for some readers on the subject, and if this has proved helpful I will be happy to continue in future.

In the accompanying "Jazz Lick Of The Week #4", I will look at some lines over the II V for players new the concept (and 1 or 2 lines for the more advanced). I certainly had spent a number of years as a young student improvising and being oblivious to them, and yet it really is essential knowledge.

I'll close here looking at some of "How High The Moon", and the abundance of II V's contained in it.

The image displays three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, illustrating various II V progressions. The first staff shows a progression starting with Amaj7, followed by Am7 and D7, and ending with Gmaj7. The second staff shows Gm7, C7, Fmaj7, Bm7(b5), E7, and Am7. The third staff shows Bm7(b5), E7, Amaj7, Bm7, E7, C#m7, C7, Bm7, E7, Amaj7, and ETC..

* nb, the Bm7(b5) to E7 is an example of a min II V. For now see "Jazz Lick Of The Week #1" for an explanation of the derivation for these type of chord. They do still serve the same function as a II V.