



# CHAPTER TWO

## *The Major Scale and the II-V-I Progression*

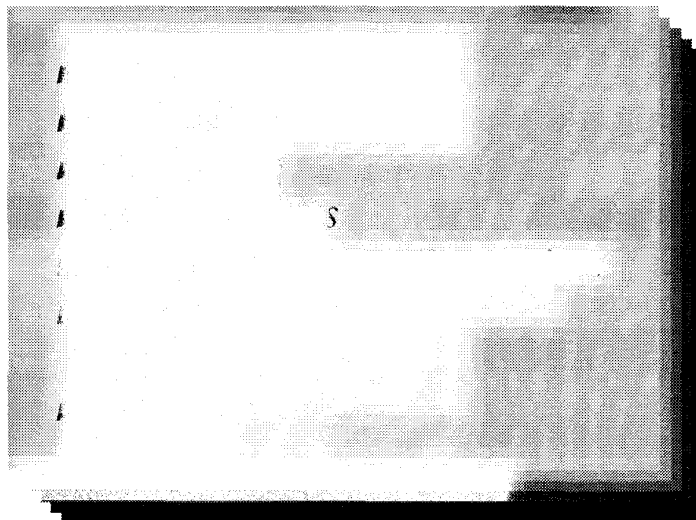


Figure 2-1

F-7      B $\flat$ 7      E $\flat$  $\Delta$

Figure 2-2

E-7      A7      D $\Delta$

Figure 2-3

A-7    D7    G $\Delta$       C $\sharp$ -7    F $\sharp$ 7    B $\Delta$

Play the music shown in the first three figures and listen to the sound of the II-V-I progression.<sup>1</sup> Figure 2-1 is a II-V-I in the key of E $\flat$  from Victor Young's "Stella By Starlight."<sup>2</sup>

Figure 2-2 is a II-V-I in the key of D from Miles Davis' "Tune Up."<sup>3</sup>

Figure 2-3 shows two II-V-I progressions from John Coltrane's "Giant Steps,"<sup>4</sup> the first in the key of G, the second in the key of B.

There are lots of chord progressions, but II-V-I is the most common chord progression jazz musicians play. The original source of the II, V, and I chords are the modes of the major scale.

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes notated as ii-V7-I.

<sup>2</sup> Miles Davis, *The Complete 1964 Concert*, Columbia.

<sup>3</sup> Miles Davis, *Cookin'*, Prestige, 1956.

<sup>4</sup> John Coltrane, *Giant Steps*, Atlantic, 1959.

## Modes of the Major Scale

**F**igure 2-4 shows the C major scale and all of its *modes*. Think of modes this way: The C major scale has seven different notes, and you can play the scale starting on any one of its seven notes. This means that there are really seven different C major scales—one that starts on C, one on D, one on E, one on F, and so on through B. Each mode has a Greek name, shown to the right of the mode. The Roman

Figure 2-4

### The C Major Scale and Its Modes

The figure displays seven musical staves, each representing a mode of the C major scale. Each staff is labeled with a Roman numeral on the left, a chord symbol above the staff, and a Greek mode name on the right. The notes are written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

- I C Ionian:** Chord symbol CΔ. Notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C.
- II D Dorian:** Chord symbol D-7. Notes: D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D.
- III E Phrygian:** Chord symbol E-7. Notes: E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E.
- IV F Lydian:** Chord symbol FΔ#4. Notes: F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F.
- V G Mixolydian:** Chord symbol G7. Notes: G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- VI A Aeolian:** Chord symbol A-7. Notes: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A.
- VII B Locrian:** Chord symbol B∅. Notes: B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B.

numerals I through VII shown to the left of each mode correspond to the modal name on the right—I is Ionian, II is Dorian, III is Phrygian, and so forth. *This is the same in every major key.*

Greek modal names are not esoteric; they are everyday terms that jazz musicians use. For example, you might hear a conversation like this:

First musician: "What's the chord in the second bar?"

Second musician: "F Lydian."

**The Ionian Mode and the Major 7th Chord**

From the modes come *seventh chords*. You construct seventh chords by playing every other note of each mode, as shown in **figure 2-5**. "Every other

**Figure 2-5**

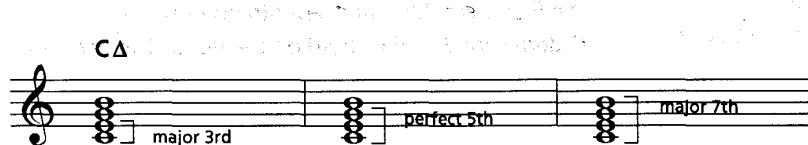


note" will be the root, 3rd, 5th, and 7th of the resulting chord. These notes are called *chord tones*, because they define the quality—major, minor, dominant—of each seventh chord.

In the Ionian mode of the C major scale shown here, every other note has been boxed, the boxed notes forming the seventh chord shown on the right. The boxed notes are the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes of the mode, and are also the root, 3rd, 5th, and 7th of the chord.

**Figure 2-6** shows a C major 7th chord. A common symbol for this chord is the triangle, as in CΔ.<sup>5</sup> This chord is called "major 7th" because of the intervalic relationships between the root of the chord and its 3rd and 7th. *Major 7th chords have a major 3rd, a perfect 5th, and a major 7th.* Because this chord is built off of the first mode, it is called a I chord.

**Figure 2-6**



<sup>5</sup> Common alternate chord symbols are C, CΔ7, Cmaj7, and CM7. C6 and C<sub>6</sub>, although slightly different, are used interchangeably with CΔ.

**The Dorian Mode and the Minor 7th Chord**

The second, or Dorian mode, of the C major scale runs from D to D, as shown in **figure 2-7**. The boxed

**Figure 2-7**



notes—the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes of this mode—again form a chord, in this case the D minor 7th chord shown on the right.

**Figure 2-8**



**Figure 2-8** shows a D minor 7th chord. The most common symbol for a minor chord is the dash, so this chord is notated D-7.<sup>6</sup> This chord is called “minor 7th” because of the intervalic relationships between the root

of the chord and its 3rd and 7th: *Minor 7th chords have a minor 3rd, a perfect 5th, and a minor 7th.* Because this chord is built off of the second mode, it is called a II chord.

**The Mixolydian Mode and the Dominant 7th Chord**

Skip now to the fifth, or Mixolydian mode, which runs from G to G. **Figure 2-9** shows this mode with

**Figure 2-9**



the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes boxed to form G dominant 7th, the chord on the right. The name of this chord is usually shortened to “G seven,” and is notated G7. This chord is called “dominant 7th” because of the intervalic relationships between the root of the chord and its 3rd and 7th. *Dominant 7th chords*

<sup>6</sup> Alternate chord symbols are Dmin7, Dmi7, and Dm7.

Figure 2-10



have a major 3rd, a perfect 5th, and a minor 7th, as shown in **figure 2-10**. Because this chord is built off of the fifth mode, it is called a V chord.

Figure 2-11



**Figure 2-11** shows an example of the Mixolydian mode. The first eight notes of Freddie Hubbard's tune "Philly Mignon"<sup>7</sup> (named for drummer Philly Joe Jones) ascend the G Mixolydian scale.

Figure 2-12



The first eight notes of Sonny Rollins "Pent-Up House"<sup>8</sup> ascend the D Mixolydian scale, as shown in **figure 2-12**.

The I, II, and V chords—major 7th, minor 7th, and dominant 7th—are the three most commonly played chords in jazz. Since each chord has a perfect 5th (there are chords with a b5 or #5, which we'll soon get to), the 3rd and 7th are the variables. They determine whether the chord is major, minor, or dominant—that is, they determine what's called the *quality* of the chord. The following rules sum up the differences between the three chords:

- Major 7th chords have a major 3rd and a major 7th.<sup>9</sup>
- Minor 7th chords have a minor 3rd and a minor 7th.<sup>10</sup>
- Dominant 7th chords have a major 3rd and a minor 7th.

### The II-V-I Progression

The I, II, and V chords often occur as a II-V-I *chord progression*, the most common chord progression played in jazz. The chords in the previous examples—D-7, G7, and CΔ—are the II-V-I progression in the key of C. Can you find II-V-I in the key of F? Here's how to do it: The second, fifth, and first notes of the F major scale are G, C, and F. The II chord is always a minor 7th chord, the V chord is always a dominant 7th chord, and the I chord is a major 7th chord. The II-V-I in the key of F is G-7, C7, FΔ. Think through the II-V-I in every key; you don't need your instrument to do this.

<sup>7</sup> Freddie Hubbard, *Here To Stay*, Blue Note, 1962.

<sup>8</sup> Sonny Rollins *Plus Four*, Prestige, 1956.

<sup>9</sup> Think "major-major-major."

<sup>10</sup> Think "minor-minor-minor."

Figure 2-13

F#-7   B7   E-7   A7   F#-7   B7   E-7   A7  
 II   V   II   V   II   V   II   V  
 in key of E   in key of D   in key of E   in key of D

Figure 2-14

G7   CΔ  
 V   I  
 in key of C

II-V doesn't have to end with I, as in the II-V changes in the first four bars of Richard Rodgers' "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" (**figure 2-13**).

And V-I doesn't have to be preceded by II, as in the V-I at the beginning of Bob Haggart's "What's New?" (**figure 2-14**). Also, II chords, V chords, and I chords often occur randomly, seemingly unconnected to the chords around them, as in the progression shown in **figure 2-15**.

Open your *fake book*,<sup>11</sup> and select an easy tune like "Just Friends," "Satin Doll," or "Tune Up." Analyze each chord—is it a II chord? A V chord? A I chord?

Figure 2-15

D-7   Eb7   BbΔ   A7   Bb-7   AΔ   D7   EbΔ  
 II in C   V in Ab   I in Bb   V in D   II in Ab   I in A   V in G   I in Eb

Look for II-V, V-I, and II-V-I progressions. Remember these rules:

- Minor 7th chords are II chords.
- Dominant 7th chords are V chords.
- Major 7th chords are I chords.

<sup>11</sup> A "fake book" is a collection of tunes, usually just the melody and chord symbols. The best and most accurate ones are "The New Real Book," Vols. I, II, and III, all of them available in concert, Bb, and Eb versions. Another good fake book is "The World's Greatest Fake Book," available in concert only. All are published by Sher Music.

You may see some chords with unfamiliar chord symbols—sus, b9, #11, #5, alt, ø, and so on. Not to worry, we'll get to them soon.

**Figure 2-16** shows the changes to “Just Friends.” Each chord has been analyzed to determine whether it is a II, V, or I chord. The figure also shows which key each chord is from. Notice how often “Just Friends” modulates from one key to another. The first two chords are a V-I in the key of C, followed immediately by a II-V in B $\flat$ . You play the two chords in parentheses in the last bar only when you're going back to the top and playing another chorus; they are called a *turnaround*. Along with the first chord back at the beginning of the tune they form another II-V-I.

**Figure 2-16**

The figure displays four systems of musical notation, each consisting of a treble clef staff with a 4/4 time signature and a series of chord symbols above and functional analysis below. The first system shows a V-I progression in C (G7, CΔ) followed by a II-V progression in B $\flat$  (C-7, F7) and a final I chord in G (GΔ). The second system shows a II-V progression in A $\flat$  (B $\flat$ -7, E $\flat$ 7) followed by a II-V progression in G (A-7, D7). The third system, labeled '1.', shows a II chord in A (B-7), a II-V progression in D (E-7, A7), a II-V progression in G (A-7, D7), and a II-V progression in C (D-7, G7). The fourth system, labeled '2.', shows a II-V progression in E (F $\sharp$ -7, B7), a II-V progression in D (E-7, A7), a II-V-I progression in G (A-7, D7, GΔ), and a II-V progression in C ((D-7, G7)).

**System 1:**  
 G7 CΔ C-7 F7 GΔ  
 V - I II - - - V I  
 in C in B $\flat$  in G

**System 2:**  
 B $\flat$ -7 E $\flat$ 7 A-7 D7  
 II - - - V II - - - V  
 in A $\flat$  in G

**System 3 (1.):**  
 B-7 E-7 A7 A-7 D7 D-7 G7  
 II II - - - V II - V II - V  
 in A in D in G in C

**System 4 (2.):**  
 F $\sharp$ -7 B7 E-7 A7 A-7 D7 GΔ (D-7 G7)  
 II - V II - - - V II - V - I II - V  
 in E in D in G in C

Other good tunes to analyze include "All The Things You Are," "Tune Up," "Soul Eyes," "I Thought About You," "Satin Doll," and "Perdido." Again, ignore any and all alterations to the chords that you see—b9, #9, #11, b5, ø, b13, alt, and so forth. We'll get to these soon.

### Voice Leading

In **figure 2-17**, notice that as you go from the II chord to the V chord to the I chord, the 7th of each chord resolves down a half step and becomes the 3rd of the next chord.

This is basic voice leading. Voice leading is the direction a particular note wants to go. It's almost as if there is a gravitational or magnetic pull on the 7th, urging it to resolve down a half-step. If you are a horn player improvising behind another horn player who's playing the melody, playing the 7th and resolving it down a half step provides an instant background line for the soloist.

Play the music shown in **figure 2-18**, the third and fourth bars of Thelonious Monk's

**Figure 2-17**

Figure 2-17 shows a II-V-I progression in 4/4 time. The chords are D-7 (II), G7 (V), and CΔ (I). The 7th of the D-7 chord (F) resolves down a half step to become the 3rd of the G7 chord (F). The 7th of the G7 chord (F) resolves down a half step to become the 3rd of the CΔ chord (E). The bass line shows the root movement: D, G, C.

**Figure 2-18**

Figure 2-18 shows a sequence of chords in 4/4 time: Eb-7, Ab7, B-7, E7, Bb-7, and Eb7. The 7th of each II chord (Eb-7, Bb-7) resolves down a half step to become the 3rd of the next V chord (Ab7, E7). The bass line shows the root movement: Eb, Ab, Bb, E, Bb, Eb.

**Figure 2-19**

Figure 2-19 shows a II-V progression in 4/4 time. The chords are G-7 (II), C7 (V), Ab-7 (II), and Db7 (V). The 7th of the G-7 chord (F) resolves down a half step to become the 3rd of the C7 chord (Eb). The 7th of the Ab-7 chord (Gb) resolves down a half step to become the 3rd of the Db7 chord (Bb). The bass line shows the root movement: G, C, Ab, Db.

"Round Midnight." Hear the 7th of each II chord resolve down a half step, becoming the 3rd of the V chord.

Play the music from **figure 2-19**. The top line is what Donald Byrd plays on two bars of II-V progressions on his tune "Low Life."<sup>12</sup> Jackie McLean plays the lower line, resolving the 7th of each II chord down a half-step to the 3rd of each V chord.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Byrd, *Fuego*, Blue Note, 1959.