

HARMONIC TENDENCIES + COMMON PROGRESSIONS

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What we are going to do in this series of pages is focus on the way that chords have commonly been used in Jazz Standards and also in Popular Music, Classical Music and maybe some other areas too. The attention will be on the common chord progressions FROM one chord type at a time. Some or much of this information may be somewhat familiar to you already but it is hoped that a new perspective may present itself every now & then.

For a variety of reasons, a good place to start is with the "two minor 7" chord in a major key. The common Roman Numeral symbol used is ii7. The ii7 loves to go to the "five dominant 7th" (V7) so lets take a look at this progression first:

Key of D

Em7/11, A7/6, D6/9 and Em7, A13, D6/9

Right away you may have noticed that we are adding the 11th to the ii7 chord. This process of **CHORD ENRICHMENT**, that is, the adding of chord extensions as they are commonly called, is all part of the normal modern harmonic language.

Key of G

Am9, D9 and Am7, D9, D7b9, Bm7

When "melodized" as in these examples, the ii7-V7 progression is soft, warm, tender, even romantic, no?

But rhythm being a big part of life as it is, can change the flavor of things. Try the following examples in JAZZ WALTZ and BOSSA NOVA (maybe SWING too) rhythms. Because of the lack of "melody" now combined with the potency of the rhythms, the mood is considerably changed:

Key of G

Abm9, Db13, GbA7, Eb7b9+

Key of Eb

Fm7/11, Db7/6, Eb6/9, C7+

Successive inversions are an attractive way to bring the ii, V7 progression to life. Influenced by the master French composer Claude Debussy, the late great Wes Montgomery brought this color to the jazz guitar. An example:

Fm9, Fm7, Fm7, Fm7, Eb13

This type of example needs no rhythm or "groove". The ear's satisfaction comes from the flow of chords and the "melody" created by the top voice.

One last device for now, one again favored by Debussy and also many film composers, is that of change of key (MODULATION) by "parallel" means. Try this ex. & see if you catch my drift:

Fm7, Eb7(6), Abm7, D7(6), Cm7, F7(6), Em7, A7(6), Am7, D9, Am7, Am9, D7, Am7, D9, Ab6/9, Gb9, Gb9, Gb9, Gb9

Relaxation 2