

## Soloing Over Major 11 V I's Part 1: Getting Started

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1. Knowing how to solo over major II V I's and II V's is a must for all jazzers. The purpose of this article is to give beginning jazz guitarists a basis for building solo lines over II V I and II V sequences, which appear in a large percentage of jazz standards, in various keys and in various combinations.

2. Below is a basic major II V I progression in the key of C, harmonised in 7ths. I have chosen this key for the time being so as to avoid sharps and flats. It can also be easily played on the piano as it uses white keys only.

II                  V                  I

4/4 | Dm7 /// | G7/// | C Major 7/// | C Major 7/// |

You should be able to play this on the guitar using basic barre chord shapes. Try Dm7 in the 5<sup>th</sup> position, and G7 and C Major 7 in the third position.

3. We will start with some ear training. You need to be able to outline the harmony of each chord using modes and arpeggios. These are given in figures A and B below. Note that we are using quaver rhythms and these should be "swung" in order to get the jazz "feel". In fact from now on, all the lines you practice should swing, so that you get in to the habit of playing with a jazz feel and not a "straight" feel. Stick on the metronome and try to aim for a maximum speed of about 120 b.p.m. Even better, set the metronome to click on beats 2 and 4; *so for 120 bpm you need to dial in 60 bmp and start your line before the click, on beat one.* Although not easy at first, this is really good practice as the metronome acts as a pseudo-jazz drummer.

### 3.1 Modes ( Figure A)

I will not go into a lengthy tutorial on modes, as John Clarke has covered this topic admirably in previous articles. (EDITOR – these were published quite some time ago in the newsletter, so if you missed them and would like copies, let me know, and I will send them to you). The three chords in the sequence are all built on the three relevant modes of C major:-

Dm7 – D Dorian    G7 –G Mixolydian    C Major7 – C Ionian

The intervals of these modal scales are taken from the notes of the C major scale, going from (D - D), (G - G) and (C - C).

By playing each mode over the relevant chord, we start to hear which notes fit, or sound "sweet". For example, playing a B note against a C chord gives you the Major 7<sup>th</sup>, very sweet-sounding. An E played against Dm7 will result in a Dm9 sound, very jazzy.

You should listen to each note carefully against the harmony if possible, using a backing track or by having a friend play the chords, in order to decide for yourself which notes fit the harmony and which notes you are not keen on. An F played against a C major chord for example is considered to be an "avoid" note, as it creates an unresolved, or suspended, sound. In time, you will start to hear and be able to play lines built on each of the modes.

### 3.2 Arpeggios (Figure B)

Each arpeggio Dm7, G7 and C Major 7, is built on the relevant mode. The great thing about arpeggio-based lines is that there are no avoid notes. But be warned, after learning the arpeggios as given, you should avoid using them "straight" in a solo line as they will sound bland. It's much better to use them as a *basis* for your lines, and as a means of internalising the harmonies.

## 4. Practice

4.1 Practice the lines as indicated above, then transpose to different keys and different positions on the guitar fretboard.

4.2 Experiment with rhythms by displacing the first notes (D) of each example to a different beat in the bar. E.g. start on the “and” of beat 1 instead of bang on beat 1.

4.3 Listen to as much jazz as possible and try to recognise Major II V I and major II V sequences. Use real or fake books in order to put a name to what you are hearing.

5. The next article will discuss the interesting alterations we can make to the basic V chord harmony, and give some interesting scale and note choices which can be used over this chord to create some jazzy sounds.

Here are the examples.

Major II V I's

A) *Modes*