



Soloing Over Major II V 1's: Part 2 - Altering The V Chord

Author: Simon Newton Date: May 2005

1. In this second article we will look at a few ideas for soloing over the V chord. Here is the basic II V I again the key in the key of C.

| Dm7 /// | G7 /// | C Maj 7 /// | C Maj 7 ///
|

Dominant 7th chords can accommodate all types of altered tones, so this gives the improviser plenty of scope for creating solo lines over the altered V chord. Here are some basic alterations:-

One alteration: G7#5 (G7b13)
G7b5(G7#11) G7b9 G7#9 G13b9

Two alterations: G7#5b9 (G7b9b13)
G7b9#11(G7b5b9)

Note that #5 is sometimes written as b13 and b5 is written as #11; the alteration with the lowest number is usually placed first. Use of the abbreviation “alt” next to the chord (e.g. G7alt.) gives jazz musicians the freedom to alter the dominant 7th chord in any way they like.

Try all of these alternatives and see which ones you prefer. In general the voicing with a top note that joins the top note of the II chord to the top note of the I chord will sound the best (“voice leading”). You may prefer, say, a G7b9 to a G7b5.

If we extend the harmonies on the I and II chords to make them more interesting and alter the V chord we now have:

| Dm9 /// | G7b9b13 /// | C 6/9 /// | C 6/9 //
/ |

(G7 alt)

Note the chromatic movement between chords, A - Ab- G and E - Eb - D

2. For our soloing ideas, we can “target” the altered tones on the V chord (even if the accompanist is playing an unaltered dominant 7th). The theory books tell you to play the altered tones on the weak or “off” beats, but as always let your ears tell you what sounds best to you.

Below are some sample lines incorporating some V alt ideas. At this stage don't worry too much about which scales to use over the V chord; it is best to get accustomed to the sound of the alterations first, although the lines you come up with will inevitably contain scale extracts. All examples should be played slowly at first with a “swing” rhythm. They can then be used as a basis for creating original lines.

Example 1 - the b9 of G is played on the offbeat and uses a chromatic note to resolve to a chord tone of C Major.

Example 2 - incorporates 3 altered tones, #9, b9 and #5. Note how the b9 seems to naturally want a #9 with it. The line is based on Ab melodic minor. This is a common “trick” for playing over functioning dominant 7ths – use the melodic minor scale a semitone above the root of the dominant 7th chord you want to solo over.

Example 3 - this time we start on the b5 and incorporate the b9 too. The idea is based around Db Mixolydian with a b5 (on the basis that Db7 is a b5 substitute for G7).

Example 4 - this time we shift to the 10th position and weave in and out of the altered tones on the V chord with 16th notes, resolving again to a strong chord tone for the I chord. You will find John Scofield or Pat Metheny playing lines like this.

3. In the next article I will examine more scale-based soloing ideas for the V chord and

take a look at some ideas for playing lines
over the I chord.

See examples on the following page.

Example 1

Dm9	G7b9	Cmaj9
Gtr I	b9	Chromatic line
T	8 5	4 3 3
A	6 5 5 6 8	6 3 4
B	7	5

Example 2

Dm9	G7b9	Cmaj9
	#9 b9	#5 b9
T	5 6 8	6 4 3
A	7 6 5 7	6 4 4 3
B		6 5

Example 3

Dm9	G7b9b5	Cmaj9
	b5	b9 b9 b9
T	5	4
A	5 7	5 6 6 5 6
B	8 7 5 4 5	4 5 5

Example 4

Dm9	G7b9b5	Cmaj9
	#9 b9 #9 b9	#9 b9 b5 #9 b9
T	12 13 12	12 10 9
A	10 13 10 8	12 11 9 12 9 12
B	12	12
	p	sf