



Soloing over Major II V I's #4: The II chord

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So far this series of articles has covered:-

- 1.1 Internalising the sound of a major II V I progression by using arpeggios and modes;
- 1.2 Using these as a basis for creating solo lines;
- 1.3 The importance of the V chord, how it can be 'altered', and scales which can be used over this chord as a basis for melodic lines;
- 1.4 Soloing ideas for the I chord;
- 1.5 Swinging lines and maintaining rhythmic interest.

In this penultimate article in the series we will look at more ideas for soloing over the II chord.

So far we have used straightforward Dorian and arpeggio based ideas for the II chord. These are by far the most common 'inside' choices, but other options, some of which give a more 'outside' flavour, are shown in the Appendix.

The rhythm guitar vamp has been shown this time, the chord voicings having been kept to the basic outline harmony shells in order to prevent the solo lines from becoming too 'cluttered'.

All of these examples are available in audio form as a *PowerTab* file. If anyone has the software, downloadable free from the Internet, I am happy to email the file to you, or put it on a disc.

Here is a description of some examples, the examples themselves being shown in music notation format in an Appendix to this Newsletter.

Example 1 Dorian scale with neighbouring tone

The 5th of D Dorian scale has been approached from a semitone below. For the V chord I have used a similar approach, the 3rd of G7 being preceded by the minor 3rd. The b9 also makes an appearance prior to a resolution to the 3rd of C Maj7. There are many possibilities. Experimentation is the key word.

Example 2 Blues scale, from the root

A D blues line (D pentatonic minor plus b5) is followed by a D diminished arpeggio line, which yields the b9 of the V chord.

Example 3 Half- whole (diminished) scale from the root

The scale contains the chord tones of Dm7 (in italics), plus the more dissonant tones shown in bold.

D half-whole:

D	D#	F	F#	G#	A	B	C
R	b9	<i>b3</i>	3	b5	<i>5</i>	6	<i>b7</i>

The half/whole sound over the II chord is therefore the trickiest dissonance to handle. The scale yields arpeggios of Fm6 and Dm6 and these have been used in a descending pattern in Example 2.

Example 4 Minor pentatonic from 5th

Pentatonics can be used over all three chords in a major II V I sequence.

The 'rules' are: -

II chord - minor pentatonic from 5th

V chord - minor pentatonic from b3

I chord - minor pentatonic from 7th i.e. semitone below the root – see [previous article](#).

This gives a Lydian sound.

Note that in each case the root notes of the scales move upwards in semitones – A (II chord) to Bb (V chord) to B (I chord).

This knowledge helps us to remember how to use these pentatonics in a II V I situation. A useful exercise would be to analyse each of the scale tones against the underlying chords, to see which ones match the chord tones and which are non-chord tones. This will help you to target particularly colourful notes and discriminate against the ones that sound too dissonant for your liking.

3. Practice

Play these lines with a swing feel (with a friend playing the chords, or against a backing track if possible), experiment with different phrasing, speeds, positions and keys and try to come up with some melodic lines of your own.

I hope you enjoy playing these lines. In the final article we will consolidate what we have covered so far by seeing how a solo can be constructed over a progression, which includes II V I's in different keys.

- **Simon Newton**

APPENDIX

Example 1 Neighbouring Tones

♩ = 110 (♩-♩-♩-♩)
Dm7 G7 Cmaj7

Gtr I

T												
A	6	7	4	6	7	5	6	6	3			
B										4	3	5

H sl sl

Gtr II

T												
A	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
B	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Example 2 Blues Scale

Dm7 G7 Cmaj7

Gtr I

T	10	9	8	6	8	7	6					
A								10	12	13	12	10
B												10

Gtr II

T												
A	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
B	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Example 3 Half-whole tone scale

Dm7 G7 Cmaj7

Gtr I

T	10	8	9	10	7	5	6	7				
A									6	3	5	6
B										3	4	3

Gtr II

T												
A	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
B	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Example 4 Minor Pentatonic from 5th

Dm7			G7			Cmaj7		
T	5		7		5		8	
A	7		5		7		5	
B								
<i>sl</i>								
T	5		4		4		4	
A	5		3		3		3	
B	5		3		3		3	