

# Introduction

The ii-V7-I chord progression is still the most important chord progression in jazz improvisation. It is a fundamental building block of the vast majority of standard songs, and is deeply ingrained into the ear and intellect of the serious jazz musician. It also often serves as a study template to express, explore, and/or demonstrate **musical ideas that move from dominant to tonic**. To many jazz musicians, if an idea can be utilized over the ii-V7-I progression, it is considered to be immediately “practical”.

There are many fine books and other learning materials available to introduce the novice through emerging improviser to the basic harmonic and melodic movement ideas and techniques for approaching this chord progression. This book is not one of them. Instead, this book is composed for the high intermediate to advanced improviser who has the ii-V7 and ii-V7-I progression well under the “fingers” and into the ear in all 12 keys. It is not a book full of licks for you to memorize, but rather, concepts for you to play through and study.

**The main aim of this book is to help spark your curiosity, and inspire exploration into the “materials of music” (specifically here: melody, harmony, form, rhythm and meter) in order to help you discover and develop your own language as an improvising musician.** It is the result of my own daily practice/study of improvisation for the last several years, informed by my ear, my intellectual curiosity, my explorations with time/rhythm (with and without my saxophone), as well as the beautiful moments of pure luck, when my ear and my fingers magically take me somewhere in an entirely unexpected way.

I’ve been faithfully meticulous in documenting any ideas that have made a positive impression upon me in my practice, and have chosen and edited 40 of what I think are the most creative and practical discoveries I’ve made. This book is not meant to be “comprehensive” by any measure, but is instead a documentation of some deep exploration with this chord progression, and even more important, how to think/hear/move through any tonalities **that move from dominant to tonic**.

Some of the tonal elements I present here are: harmonic major scales, melodic minor scale substitutions, four-note triad cells, triad pairs, pentatonic and hexatonic scales, large intervals, and melodic “shapes”. Most of the rhythmic elements I present here are polymetric (specifically, odd-metered subdivisions implied over 4/4). I also use more “conceptual” elements, as well, such as implied resolutions, “disguised” key centers, what I call “reverse resolutions”, stylistic concepts (e.g., the music of Thelonious Monk), to name a few.

**Each of the 40 etudes begins with one-page description/explanation of the concept being demonstrated in the etude.** This includes presenting the concept itself, pointing out any relevant theoretical elements (such as harmonic relationships, substitutions/alterations, rhythmic elements, etc.), as well as a paragraph or two at the end to suggest ways you can explore the concept further to expand upon it and ultimately, **make it your own.**

All of the etudes include the original melodic idea in the tonic key of C (major or minor), and is transposed into all 12 keys for your reference and practice. I tried to be as consistent as possible with my use of accidentals, but felt compelled to make exceptions in some cases. Sometimes my choice of accidentals is to emphasize something tonally/harmonically, and other times it's to make reading a bit more user friendly (e.g., I avoid the use of double flats and sharps). I've tried to find a balance between these two needs, and after reading and playing through all the etudes, I've arrived at what seems best for these purposes. All the etudes are composed in 4/4, but you should feel free to explore the ideas in other meters where applicable.

The etudes are organized into three groups:

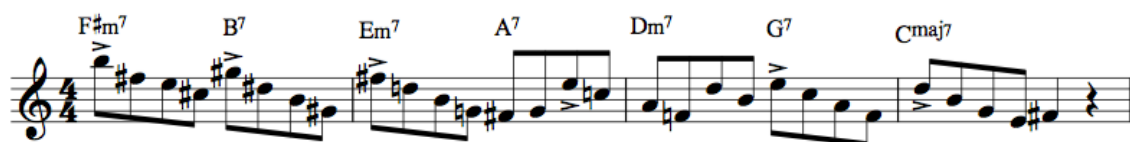
**Etudes 1 through 25** are composed over the highly common four-bar ii-V7-I (two bars of tonic) in major keys:



**Etudes 26 through 35** are composed over the same form, but in minor:



**Etudes 36 through 40** are composed over a multiple-key “turnback” cycle, #iv-VII7-iii-VI7-ii-V7-I:



Other than this organization, these etudes are presented in a completely random order (i.e., they are not organized to become more progressively difficult or complex).

I suggest you play through each one at first, in order to familiarize yourself with the material, and then go back to the ones that interest you most, and spend some significant time studying them. It's a good idea to play them in all 12 keys (as I've presented them), whether you need the notated material or would rather try to play them from ear/memory. Once the concept is fully absorbed, you'll easily be able to explore the variations I've recommended, as well as discover some on your own. And of course, it's also fine to just poke around the book and find the things that pique your interest! **And, because many of the etudes include metric and rhythmic concepts, it is very important that you use a metronome**, so that you can not only insure accuracy, but also, so you can feel and internalize the rhythmic dissonances and resolutions.

Finally, keep in mind that the note choices/organizations and ultimately, the melodic concepts I've used in composing each of these etudes, reflect my personal taste and aesthetic values. **Taking these ideas and making them your own is what I wish for the most!** Using your ear, your intellect, your curiosity, your musical tastes and your imagination, I'm hoping you'll find ways to work with these materials in ways I've never imagined!

So take your time and enjoy! Best wishes!