

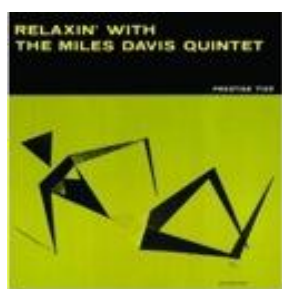
Pair of Miles Davis Minor ii-V-i Licks

Miles Davis was a very horizontal player, emphasizing chordscales over arpeggios in his solos. Take these two minor ii-V-i licks from his solo over the tune *It Could Happen to You* from [Relaxin' with the Miles Davis Quintet](#). Listen to the first at 1:14 and the second at 1:54.



Both are almost all scale and derived from the minor key diatonic chordscales, locrian and mixolydianb9b13.

To see the transcription that these licks were taken from and to learn more about chordscales of minor ii-V-i progressions, watch [Chordscales of Minor ii-V-i Progressions](#).



H/W Symmetric Dominant Scale Lick

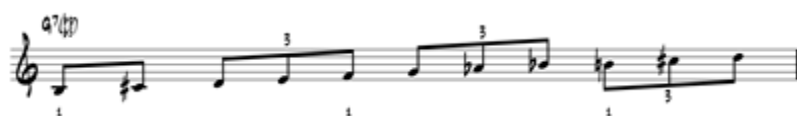
The h/w symmetric dominant* scale is a colorful scale. It contains b9, #9 and #11. While not as colorful as the altered scale, it offers a lot of chromaticism for the money.



In fact, it's so colorful, why not just use it as a lick as is?

That's just what Kirk Lightsey does in his solo over the changes to the tune *In Your Own Sweet Way*, from his 2004 Sunnyside release, [The Night's of Bradley's](#).

He starts on the third, B, and plays straight up the scale using triplets.



Listen to the lick at 1:50. You can get the track by clicking on the image of the album cover below.



*This scale is usually referred to as the h/w symmetric *diminished* scale. Since this scale is used over dominant chords, though, the h/w symmetric dominant scale is more descriptive.

To see the transcription that this lick was taken from and to learn more about how to improvise over this tune, watch the [Improvising Over *In Your Own Sweet Way*](#) lesson.

Miles Davis Major ii-V-I Lick

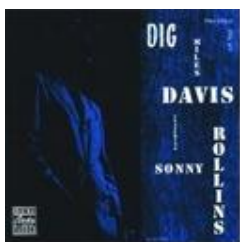
Trumpet licks are often clunky under the fingers of a pianist.

Not so with this Miles major ii-V-I lick from his solo over the tune *It's Only A Paper Moon* from 1951's *Dig*.



All you need is four fingers to play it. Start with 4 on the high E, 4 again on the B and then 4 on the F# and B.

Listen to the lick at 1:23.



To see the transcription that this lick was taken from and to learn more about dorian, mixolydian and ionian chordscales, watch [Chordscales of Major ii-V-I Progressions](#).

Danny Grissett Lick

No question about it, this lick does not look friendly in notation.



But listen to it a few times starting at 2:27 on the tune *Never Let Me Go* on Danny Grissett's *Encounters* then try to play it and you will see that it not only falls under your fingers well but it's flexible too. It works over a long stretch of C-7 or even a iiV in Bb.



Watch [Artist Voicings: Danny Grissett](#) to learn about his some of voicing techniques.

Wynton Kelly Gospel Lick

Nothing freshens a solo over the blues more than a touch of gospel flavor. Wynton Kelly does just that in his solo over his blues head *Old Clothes* from his 1959 Riverside album [Kelly Blue](#).



After several choruses of knucklebusting bebop lines, he changes pace with this simple gospel lick. Listen for it at 1:39.

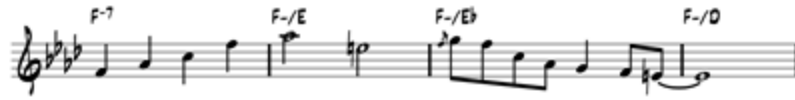


To learn more watch the [Gospel Blues lesson](#).

Bill Charlap Minor Line Cliche Lick

After learning this lick you won't ever feel that playing a root position arpeggio is lame ever again. After all, Bill Charlap played this lick on his first big recording in 2000, [Written in the Stars](#), for Blue Note no less. Listen for it at 2:35 on the track [Blue Skies](#).

He plays an ascending minor triad arpeggio in quarter notes of the tonic minor chord, hits the major 7 to bring across line cliché and then outlines the same chord again on the way down.

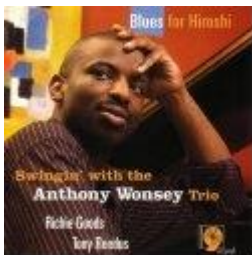
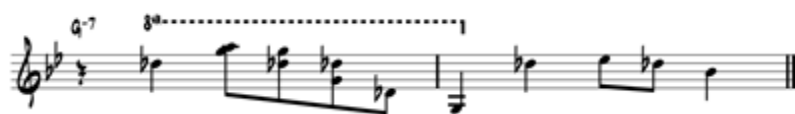


For more on this lick watch these lessons:

- [Line Cliché](#)
- [Improvisation: The Concept](#)
- [Four Components of Melodic Construction](#)
- [Improv Drill: Arpeggios](#)

Anthony Wonsey Bluesy Tritone Lick

Use this dissonant lick to add contrast a more melodic passage. While it will work pretty much anywhere because of it's out of place character, Anthony Wonsey uses it over a G-7 chord. Listen for it at (2:21) in his 2004 Sharp Nine trio album [Blues for Hiroshi](#).



For more licks like these watch these lessons:

- [Improvising Over Just in Time](#)
- any of the [Licks Lessons](#)

- any of the [Improvising Over . . . Lessons](#)
- [Improvisation: The Concept](#)
- [Four Components of Melodic Construction](#)
- any of the [Improv Drills Lessons](#)

Barry Harris Contiguous ii-V Lick

ii-V progressions often present themselves as pairs, a step apart, known as contiguous ii-Vs. Barry Harris plays this lick over a contiguous ii-V twice in the same chorus (see also Tommy Flanagan's repeated lick) in his solo over the changes to Tadd Dameron's *Good Bait* on Warne Marsh's 1986 quartet recording [Back Home](#).



For more licks like these watch these lessons:

- any of the [Licks Lessons](#)
- any of the [Improvising Over . . . Lessons](#)
- [Improvisation: The Concept](#)
- [Four Components of Melodic Construction](#)
- any of the [Improv Drills Lessons](#)

Pair of Minor ii-V Licks

The standard tune *Stella By Starlight* has a total of seven minor iiVs in it's 32 bars. Here is a pair of licks that will help you to get started improvising over this tune.

The first lick is composed of only a scale and an arpeggio. Starting on the 9 of the ii-7b5 chord, it proceeds up the locrian mode to the 3 of the dominant chord and arpeggiates the dominant 7b9 chord from the root to the b9.



The second lick is all about approach patterns. The first four notes zero in on the b3 on beat 3 via a root-chromatic from below-double chromatic from above pattern. Another approach pattern follows (double chromatic from above-chromatic from below) aiming for the 5 of the G7b9b13 on beat 1 of the second measure.



For more licks like these watch these lessons:

- [Two Page Piece: Stella](#)
- [Improvising Over Just in Time](#)
- any of the [Licks Lessons](#)
- any of the [Improvising Over . . . Lessons](#)
- [Improvisation: The Concept](#)
- [Four Components of Melodic Construction](#)
- any of the [Improv Drills Lessons](#)

Sergio Mendes Lick

While not primarily a jazz pianist, Sergio Mendes has been a major force for the last forty years in latin music. His deep musicality shines through in this excerpt from his solo over the tune *Once I Loved* on the 1962 Cannonball Adderley led recording [Cannonball Adderley And The Bossa Rio Sextet](#).



Don't think you can make a great solo with just chord tones? Think again. Composed of mostly chord tones with occasional chordscale fragments and chromatic notes used to connect his ideas, this elegant melody is as breezy as the bossa groove it floats upon.

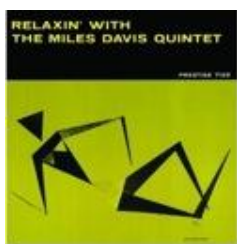
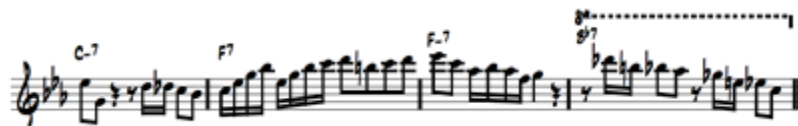
The rhythm of the buoyant comping on guitar is notated in slash notation on the second staff.



Learn some voicings and a bassline for this tune by watching the lesson [Voicings and a Bassline Once I Loved](#).

Red Garland Lick

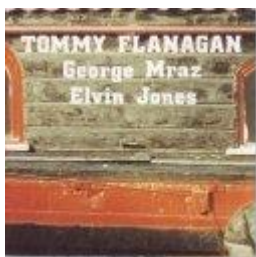
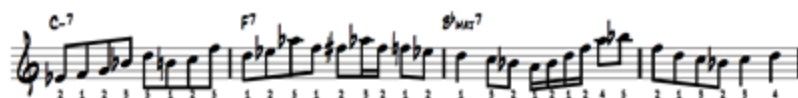
Red Garland was a fleet handed pianist who had a predilection for sixteenth notes. Try this lick of his over a pair major of ii-Vs. Listen to him breeze through it at 4:16 on the A section of the first chorus of his solo over the tune *It Could Happen to You* from Miles Davis' 1956 release [Relaxin' with the Miles Davis Quintet](#).



Action-Packed Major ii-V I Lick

This major ii-V-I lick from Tommy Flanagan's 1977 Enja recording [Confirmation](#) is loaded with notes, mostly eighths and sixteenths and tensions too. The first three notes proceed up the dorian scale and then break into a combination arpeggiated/approach three-against-two pattern with b9 and #9 over the F7. It ends by ascending and descending the ionian chordscale and Bbmaj7 arpeggios.

Watch the fingering on this one if you want to play it fast though!



Joe Zawinul Major Chord Lick

OK so you need to fill two measures over a major 7th chord. How are you going to do that? Plug in this lyrical lick from Joe Zawinul's solo over the tune *Teaneck* from the 1961 classic [Nancy Wilson/Cannonball Adderley](#).



It is loaded with approach patterns. Can you find them? Listen for it at 3:46, right at the tail end of his solo just before the band comes in for the head out.



For more Joe Zawinul licks, a complete transcription of his solo over this tune and for an analysis of his use of approach patterns, watch [Improv Drill: Approach Patterns Part 1](#).

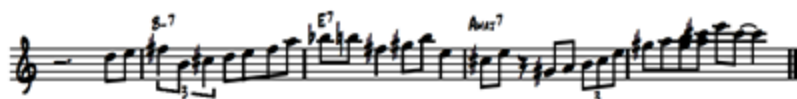
Major ii-V-I Lick from *Peace*

One of the most beautiful tunes in the jazz repertoire has to be *Peace* by Horace Silver. And perhaps the most beautiful recording of it is Tommy Flanagan's reading of it on his 1978 OJC release *Something Borrowed, Something Blue*. Jazz radio legend Eric Jackson, host of *Eric in the Evening* on Boston's WGBH 89.7 FM, has used it for the introduction to his show for decades.

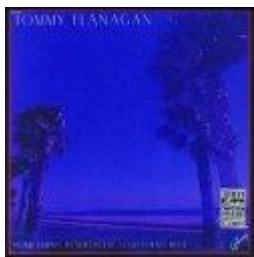
Played at a glacial 60 BPM, Tommy spins out this double-time lick over a major ii-V-I progression in A major at 2:44 in his first solo chorus:



To any of Eric's devotees, this lick is ingrained in their mind's ear as much as any childhood melody. Don't be put off by the sixteenth notes though; written in half time it becomes much more accessible:



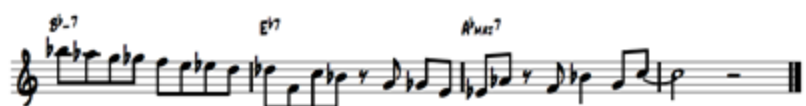
Click on the album cover below to listen to or buy the track or album.



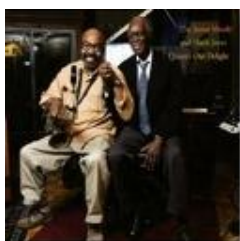
To learn more about the tune watch the lesson [Peace](#). For more Tommy Flanagan licks watch the [Tommy Flanagan Minor ii-V Lick](#) and [Whole Tone Turnaround Lick](#) and for a whole chorus of his solo over the changes to the Charlie Parker tune *Confirmation* watch the [Major ii-V-I Progression](#) lesson.

James Moody Major ii-V-I Lick

This lick comes from the hit album [Our Delight](#) by veteran tenor player James Moody. He begins with a descending Bb dorian scale with added passing tones between the 5th and 6th (Gb) and 4th and 5th (E) notes (a la BeBop Scale) which serves to place the chord tones on strong beats, 1 and 3. He finishes with a sequence of perfect 4th intervals which balances the line nicely. Listen for it at 2:32 on the tune *Lady Bird*.



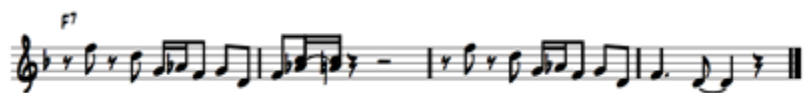
[James Moody Lick](#)



Watch [Improvising Over Lady Bird](#) for a transcription of Hank Jones' improvisation over this Tadd Dameron classic.

Wynton Kelly Blues Lick

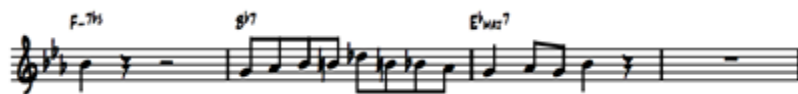
A frequent collaborator of Hank Mobley, Wynton Kelly is almost synonymous with hard bop. Here is a flexible blues lick that you can use over a dominant chord. Listen to it at 5:10 on the tune *Greasin' Easy* on Hank Mobley's 1961 Blue Note release [Workout](#).





Bill Evans Minor ii-V Lick

Here is a simple but strong minor ii-V lick to add to your arsenal. Listen for it at 1:23 on *Night and Day* on his 1956 *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* recording. It is the first idea in his solo and uses a straight up symmetric dominant scale (whole/half) over the Bb7 chord emphasizing the tensions #9 and 13.



Benny Green Major ii-V-I Lick

If the Three Benny Green Licks aren't enough to keep you busy try this tasty major iiV line also from the Bud Powell tune *Celia* from Benny's *That's Right* recording.

