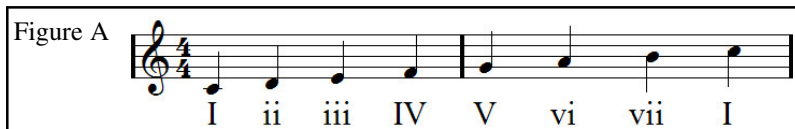


Theory I

Learning To Play By Ear

Progressions are built with chords. Chords are built from scales. That is why it is so important to know your scales! The numbers in Figure A represent a “scale degree.” The lower case numbers are minor chords while the upper case is major. The 7th scale degree is diminished.



What does all that mean? It means the “I” in every key is major...the “ii” in every key is minor...and so on. Note—there are exceptions to this rule, but we will get into that at a later time.

This theory is the basis for transposing and playing by ear.

Time to Practice!!

In figure B you will see the roman numeral representation of the chord with the corresponding chord name below it. Using this principle, practice transposing into the key of D. (Remember I said you would have to learn your scales.) Note: often times when reading a chart you will see the diminished chord written something like Bm7b5. The reason for this is if you play a Bm7 and lower the 5th note in the scale you get a dim. chord.

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|----|-----|----|---|----|------------------|
| Figure B | I | ii | iii | IV | V | vi | vii ^o |
| | C | Dm | Em | F | G | Am | Bdim or Bm7b5 |

Progressions!!

Now to the fun stuff...progressions. This is where we put into practice the chords we learn. Have you ever seen a person accompany someone perfectly, never having seen or heard the music before? Often times this is because there are common progressions based on the function or tendency of the chord. (Just so you know, I, ii, iii, IV...these are all functions, that is they service a purpose.)

Figure C shows some common tendencies of these chords. Remember these are rules and as

| | | |
|----------|------------------|--|
| Figure C | I | Can go to just about any chord, but often times to the ii or the IV (the vi is popular too, especially in 50's tunes. A modern day example is Shout To the Lord) |
| | ii | Mostly the V, sometimes the iii |
| | iii | vi or sometimes the IV |
| | IV | Almost always the V, sometimes the I (i.e. the “amen” at the end of a hymn) |
| | V | Almost always the I (especailly when it's a V7), other times the vi (this call a deceptive cadence because the vi sounds similar to the I...try it) |
| | vi | The ii or IV |
| | vii ^o | Always the I |

Going Deeper!!

Don't just take my word for it...look at some music and see if I'm right.