

CHAPTER SEVEN

Theory and Terms: Secondary Dominants

Remember the dominant chord we looked at in Chapter Two? It's a major triad with a b7 on it, its chord symbol is a capital letter followed by "7," and the only one to occur naturally in the Configuration is V7. This very important chord is the Primary Dominant, the one we'll see all the time in any key.

Any other dominant chord is a Secondary Dominant of that key. So in the key of C Major, G7 is the Primary Dominant, and C7, F7, E7, D7, A7 and B7 are all Secondary Dominants.

Secondary Dominants are just other kinds of chords that don't occur naturally in the Configuration, but add some spice to the music.

They also have another important function besides making music more interesting. Just as the Primary Dominant in any key leads back to I of that key, every Secondary Dominant leads to I (or i) of its own key. For instance, E7 is the Primary Dominant in the key of A Major, and in the key of A minor. So if we're in the key of C Major, and we see an E7 all of a sudden, we assume that it's a Secondary Dominant (in C Major) leading to a new I or i, and we expect to see either an A chord or an Ami chord immediately following it.

C F E7 Ami C F E7 A

7-1

This is the most popular way to change keys: go to the new key's Primary Dominant (as we saw in the section on Modulations, this new V7 is often preceded by the new key's ii7, to make the complete progression ii7 - V7 - I). Secondary Dominants are "Next stop is..." for side trips.

Key: Eb Major and Its Relative Minor, C Minor

7-2

Play the scales and the Configuration.

7-3@ What is the great progression in Eb? What's V7 in C Minor? Is it a Secondary Dominant in the key of Eb?