

## **iim7b5 - V7b9 Notes by Peter Bouffard**

**When playing over a II-V in minor (i.e., iim7b5 - V7b9b13 - im)  
I suggest the following exercises in this order:**

1. Play notes from the tonic harmonic minor scale over the entire II-V progression. For example, in C minor, play notes from a C harmonic minor scale over Dm7b5 - G7b9. This is especially good if the harmonic rhythm is fairly fast.
  2. Again, if the harmonic rhythm is fairly fast, one can play a G half-whole diminished scale (G, Ab, Bb, B, C#, D, E, F) over the entire II-V. Of course the E natural is a “wrong” note because it comes from C major, but doesn’t really sound bad because of the symmetric nature of the scale and its common usage in jazz vocabulary. Furthermore, if resolved correctly, it can add a nice tension and release. Students often find the scale awkward at first. One should practice this scale a lot, even if at first you don’t know what you are playing or how to use it, as it “feels” different than regular seven-notes scales and modes. The scale is pervasive in jazz and essential to jazz vocabulary. One should be as fluent with it as any major scale.
  3. Arpeggiate the iim7b5 and V7b9 chords with proper voice leading and resolution. For example, play an ascending Dm7b5 arpeggio (D, F, Ab, C) then beginning on B natural (half step from C) play an ascending G7b9 arpeggio up to the flatted ninth (B, D, F, Ab) [this is also a B diminished seventh arpeggio]. The Ab at the end of the arpeggio will lead by half step to down to G, the fifth of a Cm triad. Then play a descending C minor triad arpeggio or scale, or both (I like these notes descending: G, Eb, D, C). Of course this exercise should be played in eighth notes over a progression where Dm7b5 - G7b9 are in a single measure (two beats each).
  4. For instances where the harmonic rhythm is slower (a bar or more for each chord) the classic approach is to play notes from D Locrian (D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D) [Eb major scale starting on D] against the Dm7b5. And play notes from a G altered scale [also called super-locrian] against the G7 chord (G, Ab, Bb, B, Db, D#, F) [Ab melodic minor scale starting on G].
- NOTE: I write “play notes from” a particular scale because, in my opinion, one should not often play an ascending or descending scale verbatim (especially any scale based on a seven-note major scale, i.e., the diatonic modes) because playing in that way is not a significant part of the jazz language. Furthermore, when playing seven-note scales in eighth notes, “wrong” notes often get undue emphasis, resulting in a very poor harmonic relationship. The notes from scales should be used as a collection of available pitches to use melodically, played in a jazz style, with jazz vocabulary, inflection, figuration, etc.
5. There are other, more convoluted, ways I use to approach a minor II-V, like playing Fm7 - Bb7 stuff when the chords are really Dm7b5 - G7, or playing Abm7-Db7 stuff against Dm7b5 - G7, or playing Ab major seventh arpeggio stuff over the Dm7b5 chord and Ab minor-major seventh arpeggio stuff over the G7 chord.

I think it is important for a student to practice playing over the tonic minor chord too. When playing against a tonic minor chord, jazz vocabulary often includes the major 6th and/or major seventh as a melodic tone (i.e., in C minor, A natural and B natural--from melodic minor). Furthermore, one should not underestimate the importance of a tonic triad! For years I, like many jazz students, thought that triads were for “other kinds” of music, and I would often try to include the flatted seventh on tonic minor chords, i.e., Bb against a C minor chord. But, after studying more, I found that jazz language often includes the major seventh on tonic chord figuration, or no seventh at all.