

# Learning Jazz Improv from Kenny Dorham, part II

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When Kenny Dorham plays a solo on Joe Henderson's "Recorda Me", rather than playing scales and basic arpeggios over each chord, he simplifies the chord progression while using melodic motifs. By borrowing from Kenny, you can use the same process over "Recorda Me" to create more connected and inspired lines of your own.

**1** Start with Kenny Dorham's original line on "Recorda Me".

Chord progression: Bm7, Dm7, Dm7 G7, Cmaj7, Cm7, F7, Bbmaj7, Bbm7, Eb7, Abmaj7, Dm7, G7, Dm7.

The notation shows a melodic line in G major with various ornaments and phrasing over the chords.

**2** Simplify the descending II-V chord sequence by removing the V chord.

A diagram showing a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff contains a descending sequence of four slanted lines representing a II-V sequence. An arrow points to a second staff where the final line (the V chord) has been removed, leaving a descending sequence of three slanted lines.

**3** The motif below is derived from measure 8 of Kenny's line, sequenced through the major and minor keys. The Dmaj7 starts and moves to Dm7 with a similar sound as the Bm7 of Recorda Me as it shifts to Dm7.

Chord progression: Dmaj7, Dm7, Cmaj7, Cm7, Bbmaj7, Bbm7, Abmaj7.

The notation shows a melodic motif starting on D and moving through the keys of D major, D minor, C major, C minor, Bb major, Bb minor, and Ab major.

**4** This line is also developed from measure 8, but it is simplified even further. Note the emphasis on the leading tone into the root of each chord. The common tones from major to minor enable the line to keep a focus without using rapidly changing guidetones (3rds and 7ths).

Chord progression: Dmaj7, Dm7, Cmaj7, Cm7, Bbmaj7, Bbm7, Abmaj7.

The notation shows a simplified melodic line focusing on the leading tone of each chord moving to its root, maintaining common tones between major and minor versions.

**5** This line manipulation illustrates how the pattern can be broken, emulating how the original motif might be used in an actual improvisation.

Chord progression: Dmaj7, Dm7, Cmaj7, Cm7, Bbmaj7, Bbm7, Abmaj7.

The notation shows the simplified motif from step 4 with various rhythmic and melodic variations, including rests and phrasing changes.

## What Next?

When learning how to solo on a tune, go to the source and learn from the masters, as the answers lie in their solos. But don't simply memorize their licks in all keys. Move beyond chord/scale charts by manipulating lines, all in an effort to delve deeper into each tune while maximizing your creative potential.