

## Dominant Seventh Chords

## Dominant seventh chords

- Seventh chords are formed by stacking a note on top of a triad
  - Root—third—fifth—seventh
- The most common type of seventh chord is the dominant seventh
  - The  $V^7$ , built on scale degree 5
- To what does the dominant seventh typically resolve?
  - To the tonic I chord

## Spelling Dominant Sevenths

- The dominant seventh is also known as the *major-minor seventh*, since it consists of a major triad and a minor seventh
  - Another way to think of this is a major triad with a minor third on top
- In major keys, the dominant seventh happens naturally (with no accidentals)
- In minor keys, what do we need to alter to get a dominant seventh?
  - Raise the leading tone

## Inverting the $V^7$

- How many different inversions are there of the dominant seventh chord?
  - The  $V^7$  chord can be inverted three times
  - $V^5_3$  = leading tone in the bass (the 3<sup>rd</sup>)
  - $V^4_3$  = scale degree 2 in the bass (the 5<sup>th</sup>)
  - $V^3_3$  = scale degree 4 in the bass (the 7<sup>th</sup>)
- The inversions of the  $V^7$  chord are *weaker* than the root position  $V^7$  chord, and usually function as embellishing chords

## Functions of the Inverted $V^7$

- For example, the  $V^5_3$  chord typically functions as a lower neighbor chord to the tonic (I chord)
- The  $V^4_3$  chord is often used as a passing chord between I and  $I^6$  (or vice versa)
- The  $V^3_3$  chord often functions as a passing chord between V and  $I^6$

## Resolving Dominant Sevenths

- There are two basic principles to keep in mind when resolving dominant sevenths
  - 1. Seventh Down :**  
The 7<sup>th</sup> of the chord always resolves down by step (4-3 / fa-mi)
  - 2. Leading Tone Up:**  
The leading tone (the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord) almost always resolves up by step, especially if it is in the upper voice (7-I / ti-do)

## Voice-leading the V7

- In voice-leading the V7 chord, you do not need to use all four of the notes
  - You can omit the fifth of the V7 chord
  - You can double the root of the V7 chord
  - **Never double the leading tone**
- Again, the leading tone generally resolves up and the seventh resolves down—the other voices usually move by step or are common tones

## The V7 to I progression

- There are three good methods of resolving V7 to I:
  - Complete V7 to an incomplete I
    - (I with a "tripled root")
  - Incomplete V7 to a complete I
    - (omit the fifth of the V7 and double the root)
  - Complete V7 to a complete I
    - This can only be done by frustrating the leading tone in an inner voice)

## Voice-leading the Inverted V7

- The voice-leading is much smoother for inverted dominant sevenths, with voices resolving by step or common tone and no need to omit the fifth
  - $V_6^5$  chord: the leading tone is in the bass, so the bass must resolve *up*
  - $V_4^3$  chord: Since the seventh is in the bass, the bass should resolve down by step—thus the  $V_4^3$  always resolves to a  $I^6$  (not to a  $I$ !)

## V7 to vi

- The V7 can also resolve deceptively to vi
- The voice-leading is generally smooth, but it frequently results in a doubled third in the vi chord