

Chord Substitutions

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1. Tritone Substitution

Replace the V7 with another dominant 7 a tritone away.

Dmi⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷



Dmi⁷ D^{b7} Cma⁷



The chord functioning as V is replaced with another Major/Minor (Dominant 7) chord a tritone away. Not only does this create a chromatic bass line, but retains the same tendency tones between dominant chords - the 3rds and 7ths.

G7 - 3rd is B
7th is F

Db7 - 3rd is F
7th is Cb (B)

2. Add a ii before V

G⁷ Cma⁷



Dmi⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷



There are instances that a V chord is not preceded by ii. The ii chord can be added to the progression before the V. Works in both major and minor progressions. In minor it is usually ii7b5 instead of ii7.

Cherokee

B^bma⁷

B^{b7}

E^bma⁷



B^bma⁷

Fmi⁷

B^{b7}

E^bma⁷



3. Make the ii a V7sus

Dmi⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷ G⁷_{sus} G⁷ Cma⁷

The ii chord is replaced with a V7sus. This works in part because by simply placing the 5 in the bass while keeping the ii7 chord, it creates a suspension. Works with minor ii7b5 -V7 as well.

Dmi⁷ Dmi⁷/G

4. Replace viio7 with V (and vice versa)

Cma⁷ C[#]dim⁷ Dmi Cma⁷ G⁷ Dmi

viio7 and V7 are chords of movement to their respective I. They both contain the scale degrees 4 and 7 of the I (tritone). Certain eras of jazz and their styles may prefer the use of one over the other. Some consider V7 replacing the viio7 to be a more modern sound, especially when altered.

Have You Met Miss Jones

Fma⁷ F[#]dim⁷ Gmi⁷

Fma⁷ D^{7(b9)} Gmi⁷

5. ii7 - V7 up 1/2 step

Dmi⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷ E^bmi⁷ A^b7 Dmi⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷

The ii and V chords are played up 1/2 step before returning to their original. This doubles the harmonic rhythm (rate of harmonic changes) but does not add extra measures or time. Sometimes soloists/rhythm players will use this during soloing but not during the melody as it could conflict.

Have You Met Miss Jones

A^bmi⁷ Dmi⁷ A^bmi⁷ D^b7 Gmi⁷ C⁷
Gmi⁷ C⁷

in this instance, the ii-V up 1/2 step works with the melody

6. Contrary Motion

While technically it can be considered chord substitutions, this is more of a reharmonization or arranging technique and prepared ahead of time due to its complexity. This works particularly well when melodies are ascending or descending stepwise. The melody is not changed and the chords should use extensions that reflect it.

Bluesette

BMA⁷ Cmi^{7(b5)} F⁷ Dmi⁷

BMA⁷ Fmi¹¹ Ema^{7(#11)} B^b9/D[#] Dma^{7(#11)} D^b9 Cmi^{7(b5)} F⁷ Dmi⁷

(the melodic notes are spelled enharmonically to reflect the harmony and can be done as you prefer)

4 EXAMPLE

Chord Substitutions

There Will Never Be Another You

E^bMA^7 $Dm^{7(b5)}$ G^7
 Cmi^7 B^bmi^7 1. $A^{7(\sharp 9)}$ E^b7
 A^bma^7 D^b7 E^bma^7 Cmi^7
 F^7 5. $F^{\sharp}mi^7$ B^7 Fmi^7 B^b7
6. $E^bMA^7(Ddim D^bsus C^7sus B^{7(\sharp 9)} B^b7sus A^{7(\sharp 9)} A^b7sus) Dm^{7(b5)} G^7$ 2. (Bdim)
 Cmi^7 3. E^b7sus B^bmi^7 E^b7
 A^bma^7 D^b7 E^bma^7 Gmi^7 C^7
 E^bma^7 D^7 Gmi^7 C^7 Fmi^7 B^b7 E^b