

Tritone Substitutes and Other Common Chord Substitutions

Okay, almost done. All that remains is a few qualities of chord progressions. So far we've discussed half cadences and full cadences—and ii-7 V7 I. ii-7 V7's often occur in jazz. Sometimes they resolve to I and sometimes they move in different ways, such as up a half step or in minor thirds, but they are a sort of unit. When soloing over ii-7 to V7, jazz players often use Dorian for the minor ii chords and a darker scale for the V7. (Mixolydian on the V7 chord is the least spicy scale for dominants. It has the same notes as the Dorian over the ii chord). The most common substitute for a ii-7 to V to I Major 7th is the tritone substitute. "Tritone substitutes" mean replacing one or both chords in a ii-7 V7 with one or both chords of the ii-7 V7 located a tritone away. The reason that these chords are related is that they mirror each other. The Lydian b7 scale of a given dominant has the same notes as the altered scale of a dominant 7th that is a tritone away. So, if you are playing a Lydian b7 scale over a given dominant and then you play the altered scale over that same dominant, you are doing the same thing as playing a Lydian b7 over the first dominant and then playing the Lydian b7 scale over the dominant a tritone away. Anyway, all this is a way of saying that Db7 is like the altered version of a G7 chord. For this reason, D-7 to G7 can be changed to D-7 to Db7, or D-7 to Ab-7 to Db7 or any combination of progressions, as illustrated by the chart below.

