

# Tritone Substitution

Tritone Substitution is often heard as a variation of the standard iii-vi-ii-V-I turn around progression.

In the following example we see the traditional iii-vi-ii-V7-I progression in the key of C major:

Em7      Am7      Dm7      G7      CMaj7

In this example we see the same iii-vi-ii-V7-I progression reharmonized using the tritone substitution principle,

Em7      Eb7\*      Dm7      Db7\*      CMaj7

\* Please note that in the above example we are treating the vi as a VI7 by substituting it with the Eb7. Treating a minor vi as a dominant VI is a common substitution in the jazz idiom. It creates stronger progression (or movement towards a tonic).

## Scale choice for improvising over Tritone Substitutions:

Introducing the Lydian Dominant Scale

Often called the Lydian Dominant or the diminished/Whole-Tone Scale. This scale uses many of the altered pitches created in the tritone substitution and can result in some very hip sounds. (The conventional Lydian mode is like a major scale with a #4; the Lydian dominant has a #4 and a b7). While the Lydian dominant can be played over a dominant chord (as in playing C Lydian dominant over a C7), its best application arises when it is used over the b5 chord (tritone substitution). (Please remember the b5 respelled enharmonically is the #4)

Db Lydian dominant scale      Db Lydian dominant arpeggio

1 2 3 #4 5 6 b7      1 3 5 b7 9 #11 b13

The same pitches re-analyzed in the G7 role (dominant function) notice the chromatically altered pitches:

G7 (alt)      arpeggio

1 b9 #9 3 #4 #5 b7      1 #9 #4 b7 b9 3 #5

This is an excellent and often used scale in jazz. It very nicely showcases the typical alterations of a dominant chord, which are the #5, #4, b9, #9 and also includes the b7 and 3!

Wow, what a great scale!! Now go and practice!!