

ON THE CD

TRACKS 35-36



35. Martin Taylor lesson
 36. Example

GT RATING
 EASY-MODERATE



Will improve your:
 ■ Understanding of chord substitution
 ■ Soloing skills

Martin Taylor unravels the myths surrounding one of music theory's biggest mysteries

THE TRUTH ABOUT TRITONE SUBSTITUTION

TRACK RECORD
 RECOMMENDED LISTENING



I would recommend checking out any of Django Reinhardt's recordings with the Hot Club and listening to how he approaches a slow ballad. This should give you an idea of how tritone substitution can be used to good effect. Take a listen to Bireli Lagrene's Gypsy Project while you're at it!

If you play the ordinary triad and follow it with a C major chord, the effect is not so conclusive:

G maj = G B D
 C maj = C E G

It still works, but it isn't such an effective aural signpost back to the root. In fact, it is only when we introduce the F into the G chord that this really begins to work and the reason for that is that the F forms a tritone with the B in the triad.

Naturally, with the parallel aspects of music, there is a tritone present in every dominant chord, providing the necessary dissonance which is then offset when the chord moves to the tonic.

The actual interval of a flat 5th is unique in music because it inverts to itself – in other words the musical distance along the scale between, say, F and B remains the same as that between the same two notes the other way around – B and F.

This doesn't happen with any other interval – if we look at C to E, for instance, then C to E is a major 3rd. But the other way around, E to C is a minor 6th. B to F is a tritone both ways around.

So, if we know that the tritone B to F will resolve very satisfactorily to C major, then any seventh chord containing that tritone will do pretty much the same job. It just so happens that the other dominant chord that contains this interval is Db7:

Db7 = Db F Ab B

...and the chord of Db7 is a flat 5th away from G. The actual sound it creates is different, naturally, but essentially it is doing the same job and that is why it works – and the different sound aspect is why it is used in jazz music.

Tritone substitution is a very difficult concept to understand from a technical point of view, which is why I think it is better to become accustomed to how it sounds, rather than get bogged down with the science of it. However, if you are still curious, there are scores of books on jazz harmony out there that will give you hours of migraine, should you wish to know more.

SOUND ADVICE
 HOW TO CAPTURE TAYLOR'S TONE

My guitar sound is produced via a combination of a pickup in the neck position and a transducer in the bridge mixed together. David was using the neck pickup on his guitar. Both of us were miked up for a bit of acoustic fizz and this was mixed with the sound of both guitars going straight into the mixer. To achieve a similar sound, you need an archtop guitar with medium gauge strings through a clean amplifier.

Before we move on to this month's new backing track, I will review a couple of things about the final solo over the previous one. You may have noticed how bluesy it was in places. Now, you have possibly already studied blues (possibly without any reference to jazz) and found that the scale used in that particular music form (the so-called blues scale) is pretty durable.

In other words, it is surprising how well it fits over almost everything. If you think about it, it is a series of notes that has all the characteristics of a minor scale, and yet it fits over chords that are predominantly major in content. What's more, it also seems to be a one-stop solution for the occasional oddball chords such as the diminished variety. When used in a jazz context, this remains true; it can be used as an all-terrain alternative to the more usual strategy of employing the relevant chord tones with connecting scale tones, for example.

Of course, discretion is the key word here. Although I am on record as having said that jazz is just blues with harder chords, you still have to be fairly sure that the time and place are both right before you launch into a stream of fluent blues while faced with some underlying jazz harmony.

It is worth experimenting with some bluesy lines over these backing tracks. After all, if you find something that works well, it will soon become part of your playing style.

The other point about the previous backing track was raised in an email to David Mead where the question of a more thorough explanation of flat 5th or tritone substitution was requested.

Normally, of course, I recommend that we don't stray too far into the technicalities of music, but seeing as a request has been made, here goes...

To understand tritone substitution, you have to think first why an ordinary V - I creates the satisfying effect of bringing a chord arrangement back to its root. The fact is that it is the flat 5 contained within the 7th chord that works the magic – take this G7 chord for example:

G7 = G B D F

YOUR GT TUTOR

■ MARTIN TAYLOR
 See p9 for more info on all the GT tutors



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“Tritone substitution is difficult to understand, so it is best to become accustomed to how it sounds.”

The late, great
Django Reinhardt



THE NEW BACKING TRACK

The new backing track is another series of descending chords, but not quite so chromatic a descent as last time. In fact, this time we have gone over to a minor key – E minor, to be precise. To me, the whole thing is reminiscent of Django Reinhardt in ballad mode. To

begin with, we have transcribed the two guitar parts that form the backing track. Have a look through both of them and look at the versions of the chords David and I were playing. Then have a go at putting a solo on top. We will be back next month for the first of my solos over this arrangement to study.

GT

