

Tritone Substitution

Music

Swapping a dominant chord for the one a tritone away, and why it works.

Any dominant 7th can be replaced by the dominant 7th a tritone away.

G7  **D**  **7** • both contain B and F

ii-V-I in C

The standard.

Dm7 → G7 → C

With the substitution

The bass now walks down by semitone.

Dm7 → D  **7 → C**

Why it works

The same tritone, respelled.

G7 has B and F; D  **7 has F and C**  **(= B)**

THE COMMON MISTAKE

✗ **Substituting any chord a tritone away**

✓ **Only dominant 7ths**

The trick depends on the tritone inside the chord, which only dominant and diminished chords have.

The chromatic bass line it creates is the reason this is everywhere in jazz.