

Passing Chords

by Dave Black

During accompaniment, or while playing a chord melody, or even during an improvised passage, passing chords help to provide contour and movement to an otherwise ordinary chord progression.

LEADING TONE DIMINISH APPROACH - ASCENDING

Leading Tones provide resolution like that of a V-I cadence, where the 3rd of the V chord resolves up a 1/2 step to the root of the I chord. Therefore, if you precede any chord with it's V7, you then achieve a brief resolution. This will strengthen the presence of the following chord, even if it is not the I chord. This temporary V7 chord is known as a SECONDARY DOMINANT.

EXAMPLE #1.)

EXAMPLE #2.)

SECONDARY DOMINANT
B7 reinforcing the presence of Emi7

It is common to substitute a V7 chord with the viio7 chord of the same tonality, being that 3 out of 4 of their chord tones are common. For instance, the secondary dominant of Emi7 - B7 [B-D#-F#-A] can be substituted by it's respective viio7 - D#o7 [D#-F#-A-C]. The only difference is the 'B' in B7 is replaced with the 'C' of D#o7. Simply put, D#o7 in root position, is the same as B7(b9) 1st inversion without it's root.

EXAMPLE #3.)

Dim 7 SUBSTITUTE - D#o7 replaces B7, providing smoother chromatic passage to Emi7

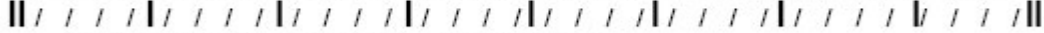
Sound all the diatonic chords of the G Major scale in ascending order. Be sure to use uniform voicings for a more consistent texture.

EXAMPLE #4.) Diatonic progression


CMa7 Dmi7 Emi7 FMa7 G7 Ami7 Bmi7(b5) CMa7

Precede each diatonic chord with it's leading tone dim7 passing chord - each serving as a 'Secondary Dominant' substitute. (same as V7(b9) 1st inversion without root)

EXAMPLE #5.) Stepwise progression

^{Vii/Em7} ^{Vii/FM7...}
CMa7 (C#o7) Dmi7 (D#o7) Emi7 (Eo7) FMa7 (F#o7) G7 (G#o7) Ami7 (A#o7) Bmi7(b5) (Bo7) CMa7

 This will provide you with a chromatic chord movement

EXAMPLE #6.) Back-Cycle of Fifths progression

CMa7 (Eo7) FMa7 Bm7(b5)(D#o7) Emi7 (G#o7) Ami7 (C#o7) Dmi7 (F#o7) G7 (Bo7) CMa7

 Even in progressions that are not step wise, you may precede each chord with it's leading tone dim.7
 This will again add movement to the already existing progression.

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DOMINANT TRITONE SUBSTITUTE APPROACH - DESCENDING

The TRITONE is a #4 interval (or b5) and is the exact middle point of an octave. The tritone of 'C' is 'F#' or vice versa... the tritone of 'F#' is 'C'.

The same applies with chords moved in parallel: The tritone of C7 is F#7, or vice versa... the tritone of F#7 is C7.

EXAMPLE #7.)

C7	F#7
0 3	0 7
b 0 7	# 0 3
0 7	# 0 3
0	# 0

[C7=C-(E)-G-(Bb)] --- [F#7=F#-(A#)-C#-(E)].

In C7, the 3rd is 'E' and the b7th is 'Bb', whereas with F#7, the 3rd is 'A#(Bb)' and the b7 is 'E'.

The fact that C7 and F#7(or any two other dom.7 chords separated by a tritone, for that matter) share the same guide tones (3rd & 7th), makes them extremely good candidates for chordal substitutions. These substitutions are called TRITONE SUBSTITUTES.

First let's sound all diatonic chords in the G Major scale in descending order

EXAMPLE #8.) Diatonic progression

CMa7 Bmi7b5 Ami7 G7 FMa7 Emi7 Dmi7 CMa7


Precede each diatonic chord with it's Secondary Dominant Tritone Substitute (shares same but reversed guide tones as V7)

