

## Turnarounds: Or How to Turn One Chord into Four

In this article we will look at turnarounds and their various permutations as applied to major keys, minor keys, suspended resolutions and “other” progressions. To define the term a “turnaround” or “turnback” is a chord progression that helps bring a chord progression back to the tonic key. So in the case of these examples our turnarounds are being used to bring us back to the tonic keys of C major and C minor.

The practice of turning around a tune started when jazz players began becoming bored with chords that lasted for 2 bars or more, most of which were found in the last two bars of the tunes they were playing. So these players thought up new ways to take a long tonic chord and play other chords on top of it to take the harmony to a different place before bringing it back to the tonic chord.

Turnarounds are most commonly used during the last two bars of a piece, but they can be used in many situations. The first three bars of the blues and rhythm changes for example are turnarounds. In the blues the I7 chord goes to IV7 and back to I7, so any of the progressions below will work in that situation just change the tonic from a maj7 to a dom7 and plug it in. As well, the first two bars of Rhythm Changes start on Imaj7, go to VI7 then iim7, V7 and back to Imaj7 in bar three. So any or all of the progressions below will work in that situation as well.

### Chapter 1: Basic Subs

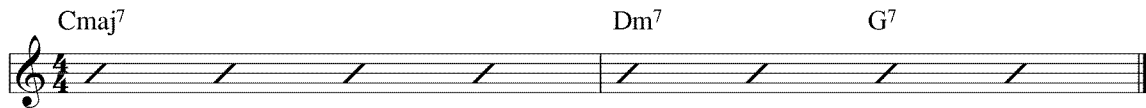
The first example lays out the most basic turnaround that is used in jazz. Here the V7 chord, G7, is being added to the second bar, replacing the Cmaj7 that was being used for both bars in the original progression. This additional chord produces tension that is now resolved at the top of the tune when we return to the Imaj7 chord.

#### Ex. 1

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time. The first bar contains a Cmaj7 chord, and the second bar contains a G7 chord. The staff is divided into two measures by a vertical bar line. The notation consists of a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and two measures of music, each containing a single chord symbol (Cmaj7 and G7) above the staff. The notes themselves are not written, only the chord symbols and the staff structure are shown.

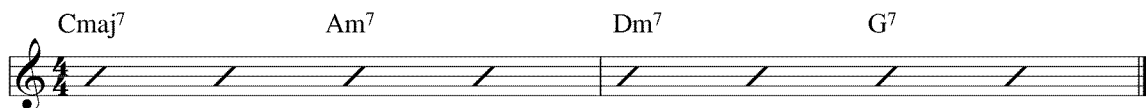
In the next example we will add the iim7 chord, Dm7, to the second bar along with the G7 chord. In jazz theory one can always add a iim7 chord to a bar that has a V7 in it or vice versa, and one can choose to solo over either or both of those chords in the measure that they occur. So in this instance one could play a Dm7 arpeggio for the whole second bar, or a G7 arpeggio for the whole second bar, or a D Dorian scale, or G Mixolydian scale, or all of the above and it would all sound great.

### Ex. 2



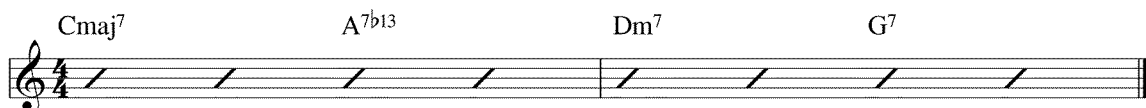
Now that we have filled up the second bar we can add a second chord to the first bar. The Am7 chord is the vi<sup>m</sup>7 chord in the key of C major and is the most common chord found between a I<sup>m</sup>aj7 and ii<sup>m</sup>7 chord in the jazz idiom. Again one could choose to focus on outlining the Cmaj7 or the Am7 in their soloing for the whole first bar as these two chords, I<sup>m</sup>aj7 and vi<sup>m</sup>7, are interchangeable in jazz theory. Also listen to how the bass movement is much more interesting now that we have four chords within a two bar phrase. Even though we are still only technically playing C major for two bars, the added bass notes really create energy and movement within those bars.

### Ex.3



The next example contains what is commonly referred to as the VI dominant chord. We are adding it in place of the Am7 chord, vi<sup>m</sup>7, which leads into the Dm7 chord. The reason this works is that A7<sup>b</sup>13 is the V chord of Dm7. So, like Bach would do, we are using “secondary dominant” chords. This is where you momentarily make a secondary chord, like ii<sup>m</sup>7, a I<sup>m</sup>7 chord by playing a V7/ii before it. Think of it as a mini cadence within the context of a larger progression. This substitution can be used at anytime and on any chord, which we will see in later examples. Also note that the b13 on the A7 chord, F, helps keep it related to the key of C major as the F is the 4<sup>th</sup> degree of the C major scale.

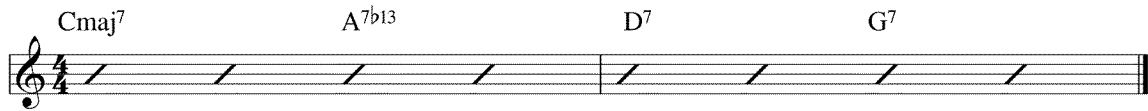
### Ex. 4



Now we will add another secondary dominant, this time the Dm7, ii<sup>m</sup>7, will become D7 which is the V of G7, V. This produces what is referred to as a chain of dominants as we now have the progression I<sup>m</sup>aj7 followed by a cycle of fifths movement for three chords

producing a V of V of V7 progression. This progression is quite common in jazz. The B section of rhythm changes uses this concept where the progression is D7/G7/C7/F7 or V of V of V of V7.

**Ex. 5**

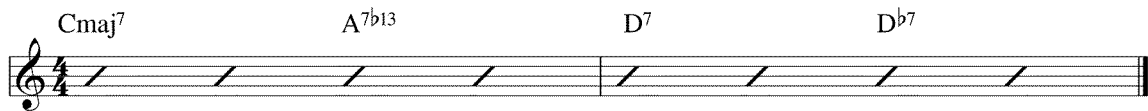


**Chapter 2: Tri-Tone Subs**

The following examples will cover turnarounds that use tri-tone substitutions. For those of us who are new to this concept the crux of it is that any 7<sup>th</sup> chord can be substituted by a 7<sup>th</sup> chord a tri-tone, aug4th/dim5th, away. The reason that this works is that both chords share the same 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> notes. For example G7, B (3<sup>rd</sup>) and F (7<sup>th</sup>) shares these tones with Db7 B (7<sup>th</sup>) and F (3<sup>rd</sup>). Aurally speaking, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> are the two most important notes of any chord in jazz because they tell us whether the chord is major or minor, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and whether or not it is a maj7, min7 or 7<sup>th</sup>, the 7<sup>th</sup>.

In the first example we will substitute the last chord in the I/vi/ii/V progression, G7, with its tri-tone chord, Db7. Notice how the Db7 moves by a half step back to the tonic chord, Cmaj7. It is because of this movement that this sub is often referred to as the “Flat 2” chord, because it is the bII7 chord in the key of C major.

**Ex. 6**



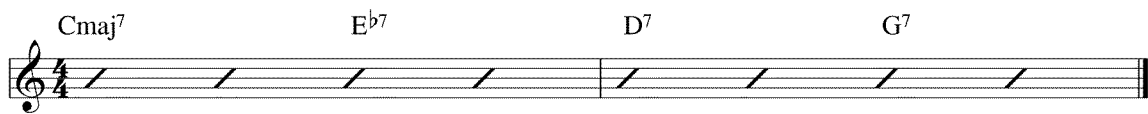
Now we will sub the ii chord, D7 (this is the V of V discussed earlier), with its tri-tone chord, Ab7. Here the Ab7 acts as a bII7 chord resolving to the G7 chord, the V7 in C major. Because of this the tri-tone of II is often referred to as the “Flat 6” sub.

**Ex. 7**



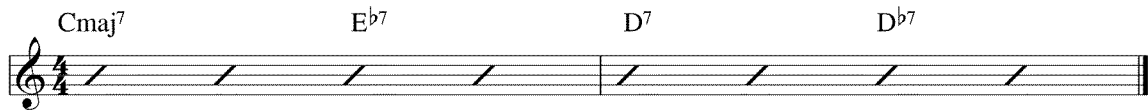
Here we are subbing the VI7 chord, A7b13, with its tri-tone chord, Eb7. Again notice that the Eb7 becomes a bII7 chord to the II, D7. Because of its relationship to the tonic, bIII7, this sub is often called a “Flat 3” chord.

**Ex. 8**



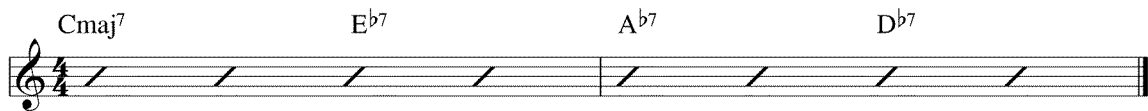
Now we can use multiple tri-tone subs in our turnarounds. In this example we use the Flat 3 and Flat 2 subs, Eb7 for A7 and Db7 for G7.

**Ex. 9**



Here we use all three tri-tone subs, Flat 2, Flat 6 and Flat 2, Eb7 for A7b13, Ab7 for D7 and Db7 for G7. Notice how even though we are “stepping out” of the key of C major, the progression flows smoothly and resolves nicely when it comes back to the tonic Cmaj7 chord at the top of the form.

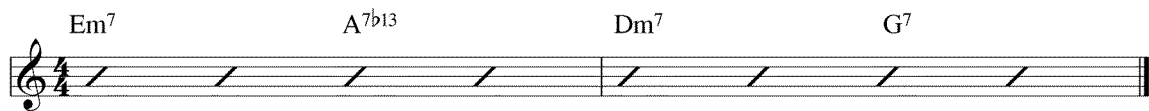
**Ex. 10**



**Chapter 3: Subbing the Imaj7 chord**

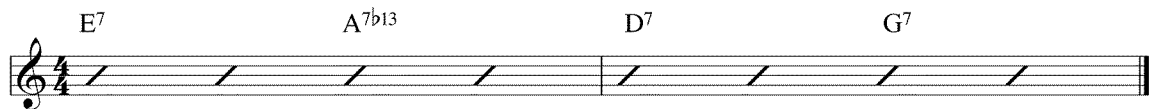
So far we have looked at adding subs for the vi, ii and V chords in our turnarounds. Now we will look at adding subs to the Imaj7 chord at the start of our progression. In this example we will play an Em7, iim7, in place of the Imaj7, Cmaj7 chord. Notice how this produces a iii/VI7/ii/V7 chord progression, or a chain of ii/V7's. The Em7 and A7b13 are the iim7/V7 chords of Dm7, which instead of being a im7 chord acts as a iim7 chord and continues the chain with a iim7/V7 back to the Imaj7 chord at the top of the form.

**Ex. 11**



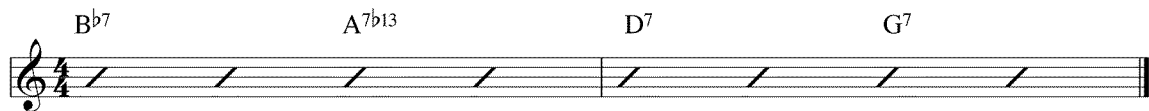
Now we will make the iim7 chord a 7 chord which will produce a chain of secondary dominants, V7 of V7 of V7 of V7 to Imaj7 at the top of the form. Sometimes the E7 chord will have a b13, C, in the voicing to help keep it connected to the original Cmaj7 chord that it is subbing for.

**Ex. 12**

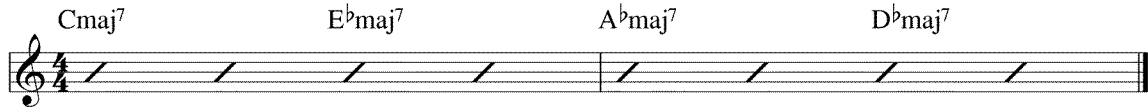


In this next example we will use a tri-tone sub for the E7 chord, Bb7, which acts as a bII7 chord leading to A7b13. Because of this movement and its relationship to the original key of C major this sub is often referred to as the "Flat 7" chord.

**Ex. 13**

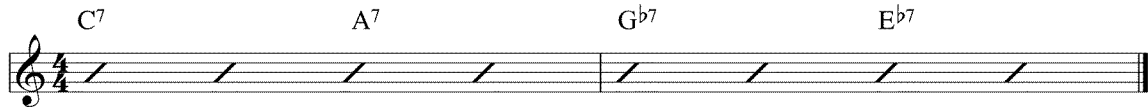






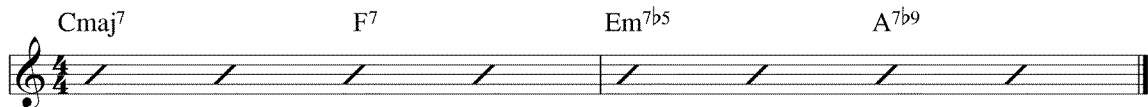
The next example comes from a Joe Henderson blues tune called “Isotope”. Here the first bar is a standard I7 VI7 progression, the I is a 7<sup>th</sup> chord because the tune is a C blues so the tonic chord is a 7<sup>th</sup> not a maj7<sup>th</sup> chord. The second bar steps out a little more, but all four chords are related by the C dim7 arpeggio. The notes of the Cdim7 chord are C Eb, Gb and A, the roots of the four chords in the progression. So what Joe has done is harmonize the descending Cdim7 arpeggio with dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord to produce a new and exciting way of turning a tune around.

**Ex. 17**



This last example is used when the chord at the top of the form is a iim7 chord, as in But Not For Me and other standards. Here the Em7b5 and A7b9 are the ii and V chords leading to the Dm7 at the top of the form and the F7 chord is a tri-tone sub that resolves to the Em7b5 chord.

**Ex. 18**



**Chapter 5: Minor Key Turnarounds**

In this section we will look at turnarounds that occur in minor keys, in this case the key of C minor.

The first example is of a standard turnaround in the key of C minor using a im6/vim7b5/iim7b5/V7alt chord progression. Notice that in minor keys the vi and ii chords are always m7b5 voicing’s, which is different from the vi and ii chords in major keys.

**Ex. 19**

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The staff is divided into four measures, each containing a slash (/) to indicate a placeholder for a chord. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: Cm<sup>6</sup> above the first measure, Am<sup>7b5</sup> above the second measure, Dm<sup>7b5</sup> above the third measure, and G<sup>7alt</sup> above the fourth measure.

Now we will apply a tri-tone sub to the vim7b5 chord making the second chord of the turnaround an Ebmaj7 chord. In this case we choose to use an Ebmaj7 and not an Eb7 chord because the maj7 voicing is the relative major chord in the key of C minor which makes it closely related to the tonic key.

**Ex.20**

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The staff is divided into four measures, each containing a slash (/) to indicate a placeholder for a chord. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: Cm<sup>6</sup> above the first measure, E<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> above the second measure, Dm<sup>7b5</sup> above the third measure, and G<sup>7alt</sup> above the fourth measure.

In the next example we apply the tri-tone substitution to the iim7b5 chord to produce an Ab7#11 chord. We specifically use a 7#11 voicing because the #11, D, is both in the key of C major, the 9<sup>th</sup>, and the chord G7alt, the 5<sup>th</sup>. This helps link the chord to the key we are playing and gives a smooth resolution to the next chord, G7alt.

**Ex. 21**

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The staff is divided into four measures, each containing a slash (/) to indicate a placeholder for a chord. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: Cm<sup>6</sup> above the first measure, E<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> above the second measure, A<sup>b</sup>7#11 above the third measure, and G<sup>7alt</sup> above the fourth measure.

In the last minor example we apply the tri-tone substitution to the V7alt chord resulting in a Db7#11 voicing. Again the 7#11 chord is specifically used because the #11, G, relates it to the key of C minor, the 5<sup>th</sup>, and to the chord it is subbing, G7alt, the root.

**Ex. 22**

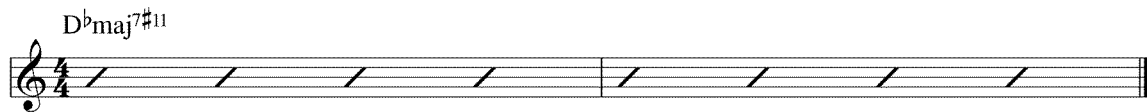
A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The staff is divided into four measures, each containing a slash (/) to indicate a placeholder for a chord. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: Cm<sup>6</sup> above the first measure, E<sup>b</sup>7#11 above the second measure, A<sup>b</sup>7#11 above the third measure, and D<sup>b</sup>7#11 above the fourth measure.

## Chapter 6: One Chord Turnarounds, Suspended Resolutions

Sometimes the coolest and best sounding turnarounds are the ones that are the least complicated. In these next examples we have what I call “one chord turnarounds” or what some books called Suspended Resolutions. In this concept we take chords from the flat keys, Db (bII), Ab (bVI), Gb (bV), Eb (bIII) and Bb (bVII), and sit on these chords for the whole two bars of the turnaround. This creates a suspended sound that lifts the listeners ears outside of the expected harmony, but brings them nicely back into the tonic key with the Imaj7 chord in bar one of the tune.

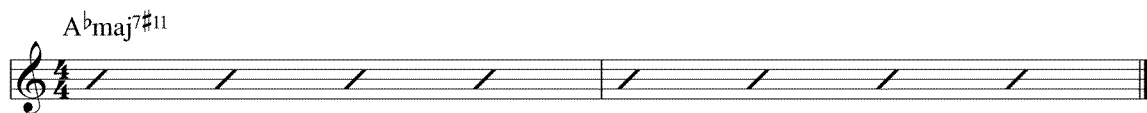
This example works well because the tonic, C, is the 7<sup>th</sup> of the chord and the #11, G, is the 5<sup>th</sup> note in the tonic key of C major.

### Ex. 23



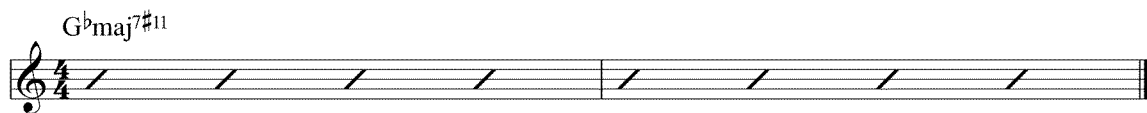
This example works well because the tonic, C, is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord and the #11, D, is the 2<sup>nd</sup> note in the tonic key of C major.

### Ex. 24



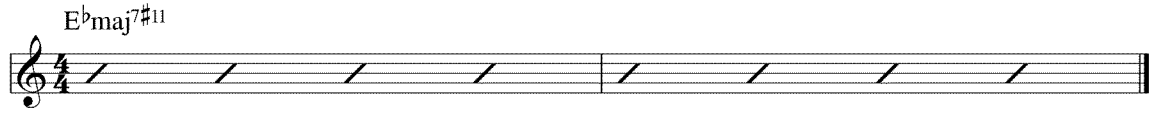
This example works well because the tonic, C, is the #11 of the chord.

### Ex. 25



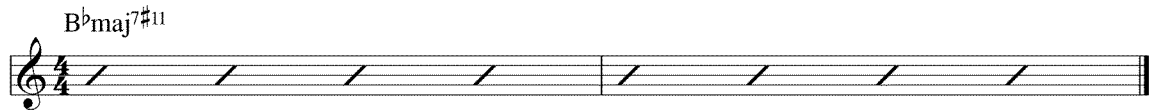
This example works well because the tonic, C, is the 6th of the chord and the #11, A, is the 6th note in the tonic key of C major.

**Ex. 26**



This example works well because the tonic, C, is the 9<sup>th</sup> of the chord and the #11, E, is the 3rd note in the tonic key of C major.

**Ex. 27**



So now that you have seen what is possible as far as turnarounds are concerned, try and take the ones you like and punch them into your comping and soloing. Even with a few of these progressions under your fingers you'll be sure to turn a few heads at the jam session or on your next gig!