

## 2 Blues progressions with Substitutions

In the *Jazz* context, in particular in the *Bebop* era, in order to allow for greater freedom of improvisation, the progression gradually evolved to a more articulated form, by means of *chord substitutions*, such as the use of *secondary dominants*, *sequences II-V7-I*, *tritone substitutions*, *turnarounds of the Rhythm Changes I-VI-II-V*. This led to endless possible chord progressions on the twelve bars. What we will show in the following will be one of those possible progressions. We will start with the basic form, *I, IV, V* of *Blues* in *A*:

1 A7 2 D7 3 A7 4  
5 D7 6 A7 7 8  
9 E7 10 D7 11 A7 12 E7

Let's consider the first of the three melodic phrases. We leave the first three bars unchanged, while in the fourth we make a *II-V7* substitution resolving on the **D7** Chord of the fifth bar, which is considered the *I* of the sequence *II-V7-I*:

1 2 3 4 Em7 5 A7<sup>#5</sup> 6 D7  
7 8  
9 10 11 12

Note that the **V7** chord has been altered to a greater harmonic richness. Moving on to the second melodic line, the first bar remains unchanged, while we use a **D#** on the bass in the second bar in order to chromatically approach the **E** note, which is the fifth of the next chord **A7**. In this way, the **D** chord becomes a **D#dim** chord. The, **IV#dim** chord, is to be considered an *approaching chord* to the **A7** of the next bar.

1 2 D#dim 3  
4  
5 6 A7 7 8  
9 10 11 12

Let's now move on to the third melodic phrase. The eleventh bar contains the **A7** chord which can be approached by a **II-V7** of the two preceding bars, namely **Bm7 (II)** of bar nine and **E7 (V7)** of bar ten. This way bar nine no longer has a **V7** dominant chord as in *Country Blues*, but a *minor seventh chord* formed on the second grade: **IImin7**. As a result of this substitution, the structure, composed of three melodic phrases of "Tonic", "Subdominant" and "Dominant," is revolutionized to make room for a new progression, with a more Jazzy sound

1 2 3 4  
5 6 7 8  
9 10 11 12

II V7 → I  
Bm7 E7 A7

Now, the **I7 (A7)** chord of bar eight is substituted with a **II-V7** sequence which resolves on the **IImin** chord of bar nine. Moreover, bar seven is enriched with **G#7**, dominant of the **C#min7** chord of bar eight

1 2 3 4  
5 6 7 8  
9 10 11 12

II V7 → I  
A7 G#7 C#m7 F#7#9 Bm7

The last two bars are replaced with an **I-VI-II-V** sequence:

1 2 3 4  
5 6 7 8  
9 10 11 12

I VI II V  
A7 F#7#9 Bm7 E7

Finally, the complete Blues Progression is:

1 2 3 4  
5 6 7 8  
9 10 11 12

A7 D7 A7 Em7 A7#5  
D7 D#dim A7 G#7 C#m7 F#7#9  
Bm7 E7 A7 F#7#9 Bm7 E7