

Spiced Up Blues

Many people ask the question, “How can I spice up some of my back up guitar parts?” Most of the time spicing up parts involves chord substitution. While it is beyond this article to explain chord substitution in full, I hope this introduction to the idea really whets your appetite for it because it really is a lot of fun.

There has always been a fascination among guitarists about substitute chord forms that permeate blues, rock, swing, jazz, and funk music, and those substitutions can get very complicated. In a simplistic form how this lesson works is that you can substitute any dominant 7th chord for a 9th or 13th with the same name because they come from the same chord family. For example G7 can be substituted for G9 or G13th at any time. However, there can be times when they don't fit and you will need to use your ear when applying this principle.

The music example here is a 12 bar blues progression with a blues/boogie/swing type feel that is found in a lot of music performed by artists such as B.B. King, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Brian Setzer, and Robben Ford. Also listen to NZ artists such as Midge Marsden, Bullfrog Rata, Darren Watson, Hammond Gamble, Kokomo, and there are many others.

G13	C9	G13	G7#5
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Count 1 2 + 3 4

Original chords			
G7	C7	G7	G7

C9	G13
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C7	G7
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