

New Running Shoes

While jazzy chord substitutions can be quite pleasant on the favourite tune, it is also possible to turn the song into a frightful mess with excessive harmonic implants.

Although these chords are quite possible to play on the guitar, they will undoubtedly be challenging when the tempo is raised. The bass line can be "roots only" for the sake of the experiment.

C C7 Fmaj7 C6 Dm7b5 Db7 Cmaj7 Am7 D7 G7 C

Dm7b5="ii" borrowed from key of C minor.
Db7=tritone substitute for G7

C G7 C G7 E7#9 A7+5 D9 G7

C Gm7 C7 F C D7#9 Db7 Cmaj7 A7b9 D7 G7 C

D7#9=Dominant of key of G
Db7=tritone sub. for G7
A7b9=Dominant 7th borrowed from the key of D minor
D7=Dominant of key of G.

Here is an ungodly mess that could be achieved with too much tonicization. On top of that, it is a bitch to play.

C Ab7 Gm7 G7b9 Fmaj7 B7 Cmaj7 B7b5 Bb7 A7 Ab7+5 G7 C

Ab7=tritone sub for D7
Gm7=ii chord in F
G7b9=tritone sub for C7

B7=half tone to C
and also tritone sub.
for F7?

Long cycle of Dominants leading to C
Bb7=sub for E7, Ab7+5=sub for D7.

Perhaps both of the above examples might fall into the category of things that you can do but maybe should not do.

If the song is originally crafted with a sequence of Dominant 7th chords, the result may very well be quite acceptable. A particularly beautiful song by Duke Ellington comes to mind, "Prelude to a Kiss." The song features a rather chromatic melody over a sequence of dominant 7th chords. (Worth checking out if you do not know the tune.)