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The "9 for 1" Substitution

BY MORRIS ACEVEDO

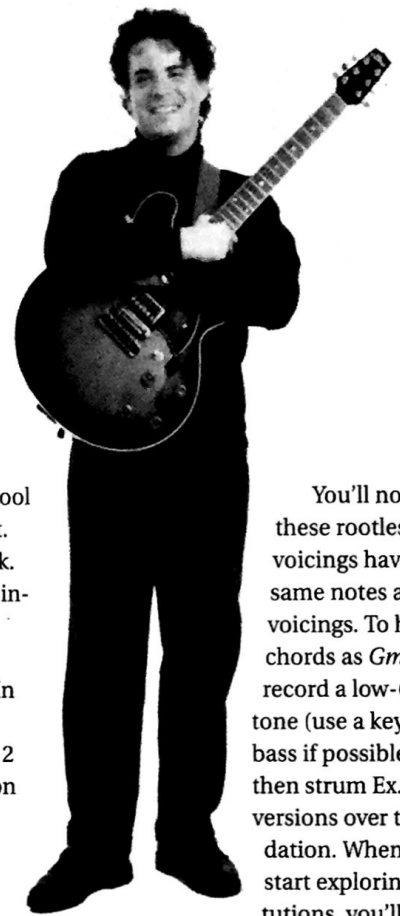
YOU CAN GET A LOT OF mileage out of basic major 7th, dominant 7th, and minor 7th chords and their inversions, but sometimes a song begs for richer harmony. Adding the 9 to a seventh chord is an effective way to increase its harmonic color. (Strictly speaking, you only get a 9 when you move the 2 an octave higher than the root. In practice, however, guitarists

accept that once you've added the 2 to a voicing that contains a 7, you get a ninth chord—even when that 2 is voiced within the chord's first octave.)

Going rootless. One quick way to create ninth voicings is to replace a seventh chord's root with a 9. This "9 for 1" substitution sounds particularly solid when the bassist or pianist plays the root, but rootless ninth voic-

ings can also sound cool without such support. Let's take a closer look.

Ex. 1a shows four inversions of *Gmaj7* voiced on strings six, four, three, and two. In **Ex. 1b**, we replace G (the root) with A (the 2 or 9). This substitution yields four, rootless *Gmaj9* voicings.



You'll notice that these rootless *Gmaj9* voicings have the same notes as *Bm7* voicings. To hear the chords as *Gmaj9*, record a low-G pedal tone (use a keyboard or bass if possible), and then strum **Ex. 1b's** inversions over this foundation. When you start exploring substitutions, you'll find that

the same group of notes can often fulfill several functions, and how you (and the listener) interpret a given voicing depends on its harmonic context—specifically the bass notes below it, and chords that precede and follow it.

Sailing the subs. To create **Ex. 2**, we'll begin with this seventh-chord progression: *Am7*, *D7*, *Gmaj7*, *Cmaj7*, *F#m7b5*, *B7b9*, *Em7*. Next, let's apply the "9 for 1" substitution, replacing each root with the note a whole-step or a half-step above it. (This generates either a 9 or b9, respectively.) Here's the recipe we'll use to transform our seventh chords into rootless ninth voicings:

- Replace a major 7's root with a note a whole-step higher to create a major 9.

- Replace a minor 7's root with a note a whole-step higher to create a minor 9.

- Replace a dominant 7's root with a note a whole-step higher to create a dominant 9, or replace a dominant 7's root with a note a half-step higher to create a dominant 7b9.

Ex. 1a

Gmaj7

T	3	7	8	12
A	4	7	11	12
B	4	5	9	12
	3	7	10	14

Ex. 1b

Gmaj9 (9 for 1)

T	3	7	10	12
A	4	7	11	14
B	4	7	9	12
	5	7	10	14

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Ex. 2

Am9 *D9* *Gmaj9* *Cmaj9* *F#m7b5b9* *B7b9* *Em9*

T	5	7	3	5	10	7	8
A	5	7	4	5	9	7	7
B	7	7	4	5	10	7	9
	7	7	5	5	10	8	

Ex. 3

Am9 *D9* *Gmaj9* *Cmaj9* *F#m7b5b9* *B7b9* *Em9*

T	8	10	7	8	13	10	12
A	9	9	7	8	12	11	11
B	9	10	7	9	14	10	12
	8	9	7	7	12	11	10

• Replace a minor 7 \flat 5's root with a note a half-step higher to create a minor 7 \flat 5 \flat 9.

As a result of our "9 for 1" substitution, we now have a new, more colorful progression: Am9, D9, Gmaj9, Cmaj9, F \sharp m7 \flat 5 \flat 9, B7 \flat 9, Em9.

Tracking inversions. Notice how the lowest note in

each of Ex. 2's voicings is the 9 (or in bar 3, the \flat 9). The next three examples contain the same progression, but each one is voiced with different inversions of the rootless ninth chords:

• Ex. 3 has the 3 of each chord in the lowest voice.

• Ex. 4 has the 5 in the lowest voice.

• Ex. 5 has the 7 in the lowest voice.

Each inversion has its own flavor. Placing the 9 or 7 in the lowest position yields dark and potentially ambiguous voicings. Using the 3 or 5 as the foundation produces more traditional sounding harmonies. All have their place, and working with inver-

sions not only expands your harmonic palette, but helps you master the fretboard.

Finally, ninth voicings are more colorful than seventh chords, but use them sparingly. You'll get good results when you mix a few rootless ninth chords into your progressions. For more ideas, check out the bible of chord voicings and tension substitutions, Bret Willmott's *Complete Book of Harmony, Theory and Voicing*, published by Mel Bay.

Berklee College of Music grad Morris Acevedo teaches jazz guitar at the Blue Bear School of American Music in San Francisco, and performs throughout the Bay Area. For info on his trio, CDs, and the Berkeley Jazz Guitar Ensemble—which Acevedo directs—visit www.planeteria.net/home/morris.

Ex. 4

Am9 D9 Gmaj9 Cmaj9 F \sharp m7 \flat 5 \flat 9 B7 \flat 9 Em9

Ex. 5

Am9 D9 Gmaj9 Cmaj9 F \sharp m7 \flat 5 \flat 9 B7 \flat 9 Em9

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