

# Walking Bass

## Getting Started

**Step I.** Memorize all the notes on the bass (at least up to the 15th fret).

	<u>E string</u>	<u>A String</u>	<u>D String</u>	<u>G String</u>
1	F	A# (Bb)	D# (Eb)	G# (Ab)
2	F# (Gb)	B	E	A
3	G	C	F	A# (Bb)
4	G# (Ab)	C# (Db)	F# (Gb)	B
5	A	D	G	C
6	A# (Bb)	D# (Eb)	G# (Ab)	C# (Db)
7	B	E	A	D
8	C	F	A# (Bb)	D# (Eb)
9	C# (Db)	F# (Gb)	B	E
10	D	G	C	F
11	D# (Eb)	G# (Ab)	C# (Db)	F# (Gb)
12	E	A	D	G
13	F	A# (Bb)	D# (Eb)	G# (Ab)
14	F# (Gb)	B	E	A
15	G	C	F	A# (Bb)

**Step II.** The Major Scale (C D E F G A B C)  
Play in all 12 keys starting on both the E string and the A string.  
Common Fingering: 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4

**Step III.** The Five Main Arpeggios  
Play in all 12 keys starting on both the E string and the A string.

<u>Chord</u>	<u>Chord Symbol</u>	<u>Arpeggio</u>	<u>Fingering*</u>	<u>Notes in C</u>
Major 7	C	1 3 5 7	2 1 4 3 (4)	C E G B (C)
Dominant 7	C7	1 3 5 b7	2 1 4 2 (4)	C E G Bb (C)
Minor 7	C-	1 b3 5 b7	1 4 3 1 (3)	C Eb G Bb (C)
Half Diminished	Cø	1 b3 b5 b7	1 4 2 1 (3)	C Eb Gb Bb (C)
Diminished	Co	1 b3 b5 6	1 4 1 4 (2)	C Eb Gb A (C)

\* All fingerings given are for electric bass

## “Cycle Patterns”

when chords progress up a 4th (or down a 5th)

### Pattern I. Go Down the Scale

- 1st note: root  
 2nd note: 7th (correct 7th)  
 3rd note: 3rd of the next chord (always know where you are going)  
 4th note: 5th



root      7th      3rd of  
 next chord      5th      root  
 (4)      (2)      (1)      (4)      (2) \*



root      7th      3rd of  
 next chord      5th      root  
 (3)      (1)      (4)      (3)      (1)



root      7th      3rd of  
 next chord      5th      root  
 (4)      (3)      (1)      (4)      (2)



root      7th      3rd of  
 next chord      5th      root  
 (3)      (2)      (4)      (3)      (1)

\* numbers in parenthesis represent electric bass fingerings

**Pattern II. root 3 5 chromatic (b5)**

C- F7

root 3rd 5th chromatic root  
(1) (4) (3) (2) (1)

C F

root 3rd 5th chromatic root  
(2) (1) (4) (3) (2)

**Pattern III. whole half half half (ascending)**

C- F7

root whole half half half root  
(1) (1) (2) (3) (4)  
(4) (1) (2) (3) (4)

C F

root whole half half half root  
(1) (1) (2) (3) (4)  
(4) (1) (2) (3) (4)

## Cycle Exercises

1. Play all 9 combinations of the three cycle patterns for | **C-** | **F7** | **Bb** | as follows:

<u>C-</u>   <u>F7</u>   <u>Bb</u>	<u>C-</u>   <u>F7</u>   <u>Bb</u>	<u>C-</u>   <u>F7</u>   <u>Bb</u>
1 1	2 1	3 1
1 2	2 2	3 2
1 3	2 3	3 3

2. Now play 9 combinations of the three cycle patterns in **all keys**:

C-   F7   Bb	Ab-   Db7   Gb	E-   A7   D
F-   Bb7   Eb	C#-   F#7   B	A-   D7   G
Bb-   Eb7   Ab	F#-   B7   E	D-   G7   C
Eb-   Ab7   Db	B-   E7   A	G-   C7   F

3. Play all 27 combinations of the three cycle patterns for | **C-** | **F7** | **Bb** | **Eb** | as follows:

<u>C-</u>   <u>F7</u>   <u>Bb</u>   <u>Eb</u>	<u>C-</u>   <u>F7</u>   <u>Bb</u>   <u>Eb</u>	<u>C-</u>   <u>F7</u>   <u>Bb</u>   <u>Eb</u>
1 1 1	2 1 1	3 1 1
1 1 2	2 1 2	3 1 2
1 1 3	2 1 3	3 1 3
1 2 1	2 2 1	3 2 1
1 2 2	2 2 2	3 2 2
1 2 3	2 2 3	3 2 3
1 3 1	2 3 1	3 3 1
1 3 2	2 3 2	3 3 2
1 3 3	2 3 3	3 3 3

4. Now play all 27 combinations of the three cycle patterns in **all keys**:

C-   F7   Bb   Eb	Ab-   Db7   Gb   B	E-   A7   D   G
F-   Bb7   Eb   Ab	C#-   F#7   B   E	A-   D7   G   C
Bb-   Eb7   Ab   Db	F#-   B7   E   A	D-   G7   C   F
Eb-   Ab7   Db   Gb	B-   E7   A   D	G-   C7   F   Bb

## “Altered Cycle Patterns”

for half diminished ( $\emptyset$ ) and altered dominant (7alt) chords

### Pattern I. Go Down the Altered Scale

1st note: root  
 2nd note:  $b7$ th (correct 7th)  
 3rd note:  $\#5$   
 4th note:  $b5$ th

A $\emptyset$  D 7alt

root (3)     $b7$  (1)     $\#5$  (4)     $b5$  (2)    root (1)

D 7alt G -

root (3)     $b7$  (1)     $\#5$  (4)     $b5$  (2)    root (1)

### Pattern II. root $b2$ 3 (correct 3rd) $b5$ (chromatic to next root)

A $\emptyset$  D 7alt

root (3)     $b2$ nd (4)    ( $b$ )3rd (1)     $b5$ th (4)    root (3)

(1)    (2)    (4)    (2)    (1)

D 7alt G -

root (2)     $b2$ nd (3)    3rd (1)     $b5$ th (3)    root (2)

(3)    (4)    (2)    (4)    (3)

**Pattern III. half whole half half (ascending)**

A $\emptyset$  D7alt

root *half* *whole* *half* *half* root

(1) (2) (1) (2) (3)

(3) (4) (1) (2) (3)

D7alt G-

root *half* *whole* *half* *half* root

(1) (2) (1) (2) (3)

(3) (4) (1) (2) (3)

## Altered Cycle Exercises

1. Play all 9 combinations of the three “altered” cycle patterns for | **A $\emptyset$**  | **D7alt** | **G-** | as follows:

<b>A<math>\emptyset</math></b>   <b>D7alt</b>   <b>G-</b>	<b>A<math>\emptyset</math></b>   <b>D7alt</b>   <b>G-</b>	<b>A<math>\emptyset</math></b>   <b>D7alt</b>   <b>G-</b>
1 1	2 1	3 1
1 2	2 2	3 2
1 3	2 3	3 3

2. Now play 9 combinations of the three “altered” cycle patterns in **all keys**:

A $\emptyset$   D7alt   G-	F $\emptyset$   Bb7alt   Eb-	C# $\emptyset$   F#7alt   B-
D $\emptyset$   G7alt   C-	Bb $\emptyset$   Eb7alt   Ab-	F# $\emptyset$   B7alt   E-
G $\emptyset$   C7alt   F-	Eb $\emptyset$   Ab7alt   Db-	B $\emptyset$   E7alt   A-
C $\emptyset$   F7alt   Bb-	Ab $\emptyset$   Db7alt   Gb-	E $\emptyset$   A7alt   D-

## “Tritone Patterns”

when chords progress up or down a tritone (b5th)

### Pattern I. Go Down the Scale (root 7th 6th 5th)

Eb A  
 root 7th 6th 5th root  
 (4) (3) (1) (4) (3)  
 (2) (1) (1) (4) (3)  
 (2) (1) (4) (2) (1)

### Pattern II. Go Up the Scale (root 2nd 3rd 4th)

Eb A  
 root 2nd 3rd 4th root  
 (2) (4) (1) (2) (3)  
 (1) (3) (1) (2) (3)

## Tritone Exercises

1. Play both tritone patterns for major and dominant in **all keys**:

C	F# $\emptyset$	Ab	D $\emptyset$	E	Bb $\emptyset$
F	B $\emptyset$	Db	G $\emptyset$	A	Eb $\emptyset$
Bb	E $\emptyset$	F#	C $\emptyset$	D	Ab $\emptyset$
Eb	A $\emptyset$	B	F $\emptyset$	G	C# $\emptyset$

C7	F# $\emptyset$	Ab7	D $\emptyset$	E7	Bb $\emptyset$
F7	B $\emptyset$	Db7	G $\emptyset$	A7	Eb $\emptyset$
Bb7	E $\emptyset$	F#7	C $\emptyset$	D7	Ab $\emptyset$
Eb7	A $\emptyset$	B7	F $\emptyset$	G7	C# $\emptyset$

## Unison (or Octave) Patterns when the chord's root remains the same

### Pattern I. Go Down the Arpeggio (root 7th 5th 3rd)

G- G7alt  
 root (3) (b)7th (1) 5th (3) (b)3rd (4) root (1)

### Pattern II. Go Up the Arpeggio (root 3rd 5th 7th)

G- G7alt  
 root (1) (b)3rd (4) 5th (3) (b)7th (1) root (3)

## Octave Exercises

### 1. Play both octave patterns for major, minor, and dominant in **all keys**:

C   C	Ab   Ab	E   E
F   F	Db   Db	A   A
Bb   Bb	F#   Gb	D   D
Eb   Eb	B   B	G   G
C7   C7	Ab7   Ab7	E7   E7
F7   F7	Db7   Db7	A7   A7
Bb7   Bb7	F#7   Gb7	D7   D7
Eb7   Eb7	B7   B7	G7   G7
C-   C-	Ab-   Ab-	E-   E-
F-   F-	Db-   Db-	A-   A-
Bb-   Bb-	F#-   Gb-	D-   D-
Eb-   Eb-	B-   B-	G-   G-



## Combination Exercise

1. Play the first eight bars (with repeat) of *Autumn Leaves*, combining all the preceding patterns (hundreds of combinations).

I: C-            | F7            | Bb            | Eb            | Aø            | D7alt        | G-            | G7alt        :|  
           cycle        cycle        cycle        tritone      alt.cycle    alt.cycle    octave      alt.cycle

2. Play the first eight bars (with repeat) of *Autumn Leaves* in **all keys**, combining all the preceding patterns (hundreds of combinations).

I: D-	G7	C	F	Bø	E7alt	A-	A7alt	:
I: G-	C7	F	Bb	Eø	A7alt	D-	D7alt	:
I: C-	F7	Bb	Eb	Aø	D7alt	G-	G7alt	:
I: F-	Bb7	Eb	Ab	Dø	G7alt	C-	C7alt	:
I: Bb-	Eb7	Ab	Db	Gø	C7alt	F-	F7alt	:
I: Eb-	Ab7	Db	Gb	Cø	F7alt	Bb-	Bb7alt	:
I: Ab-	Db7	Gb	B	Fø	Bb7alt	Eb-	Eb7alt	:
I: C#-	F#7	B	E	Bbø	Eb7alt	Ab-	Ab7alt	:
I: F#-	B7	E	A	Ebø	Ab7alt	Db-	Db7alt	:
I: B-	E7	A	D	Abø	Db7alt	Gb-	Gb7alt	:
I: E-	A7	D	G	C#ø	F#7alt	B-	B7alt	:
I: A-	D7	G	C	F#ø	B7alt	E-	E7alt	:

## 12-Bar Blues (I - IV - V)

e.g., *Shuffle Time, Blue 7, etc.*

<b>Bb7</b>			
arpeggio up or down	arpeggio up or down	arpeggio up or down	cycle pattern
<i>or bebop scale up or down.....</i>		arpeggio up or down	
<b>Eb7</b>		<b>Bb7</b>	
arpeggio up or down	1 3 4 chro	arpeggio up or down	1 3 4 chro
<b>F7</b>	<b>Eb7</b>	<b>Bb7</b>	<b>F7</b>
1 3 5 6	1 3 4 chro	1 3 4 chro	cycle pattern
<i>or</i>			
1 5 1 chro			
("Killer Joe" lick)			

## 12-Bar Blues (Bebop)

e.g., *Tenor Madness, etc.*

<b>Bb7</b>	<b>Eb7</b>	<b>Bb7</b>	
cycle pattern	1 3 4 chro	arpeggio up or down	cycle pattern
<b>Eb7</b>		<b>Bb7</b>	<b>G7alt</b>
arpeggio up or down	1 3 4 chro	1 3 5 chro	alt. cycle pattern
		<i>(or b7)</i>	
<b>C-</b>	<b>F7</b>	<b>Bb7</b> <b>G7alt</b>	<b>C-</b> <b>F7</b>
cycle pattern	cycle pattern	1 b7 1 3	1 b3 1 3
		<i>(or b5)</i>	<i>(or b5) (or b5)</i>

## 12-Bar Blues (Bebop)

e.g., *Tootsie, Billie's Bounce, Straight No Chaser, etc.*

<b>F7</b>	<b>Bb7</b>	<b>F7</b>	<b>C-</b> <b>F7</b>
cycle pattern	1 3 4 chro	1 3 4 chro	1 b3 1 3
			<i>(or b5) (or b5)</i>
<b>Bb7</b>		<b>F7</b>	<b>A-</b> <b>D7</b>
arpeggio up or down	1 3 4 chro	chromatic up	1 b3 1 3
			<i>(or b5) (or b5)</i>
<b>G-</b>	<b>C7</b>	<b>F7</b> <b>D7alt</b>	<b>G-</b> <b>C7</b>
cycle pattern	cycle pattern	1 b7 1 3	1 b3 1 3
		<i>(or b5)</i>	<i>(or b5) (or b5)</i>

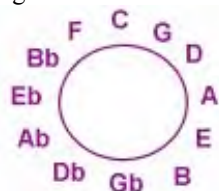
**BASS MASTER CLASS**  
As Published in *DownBeat Magazine*  
by **Dr. J.B. Dyas**

**Linear Bass Line Construction**

It has been said that the definition of a jazz combo is a bassist and at least one other player, hence, the importance placed on the former's vital role in jazz. Indeed, the bassist has the dual responsibility of providing both a rhythmic and harmonic foundation simultaneously. In most straight-ahead jazz, this is accomplished through the use of walking bass lines, that is, quarter note lines performed with a long, warm tone in which the root of each chord is attacked (played) as each chord changes. The remaining notes "connect" one chord to another in deference to the harmony (chord) of the moment.

In analyzing the lines constructed by the walking masters (e.g., Ray, Ron, Rufus, Christian...), we find that the majority of their straight-ahead walking lines are comprised primarily of three elements: scales, arpeggios, and chromatics, and the combination of the three. The rule of thumb when constructing lines using scales and arpeggios is to be cognizant of each chord's scale and chord tones, i.e., use correct 3rds, 7ths, and appropriate alterations (e.g., #5, b9, etc.) as indicated. The guideline for using chromatics is that as long as you start your chromatic line on a chord tone of the chord you're on, and land on a chord tone (preferably the root) of the next chord as it changes, chromatics are cool.

The following exercises are meant to be practiced not only by up-and-coming bassists, but also on piano (left hand) by all musicians, especially jazz improvisation teachers and instructors of all instruments. When accompanying an improv class or private student, nothing beats walking a bass line in the left hand while comping the chords in the right.



Following are three one-measure bass lines that connect two chords that progress up a 4th (aka down a 5th), the most common progression in jazz. Called "cycle patterns" because they progress around the cycle of 4ths (up a 4th/down a 5th), the three lines are:

- 1) *down the scale* (1 7 6 5) – regarding the 7th: be sure to use a b7th for minor 7 and dominant 7 chords, and a major 7th for major chords
- 2) *1 3 5 chromatic* – regarding the 3rd: be sure to use a minor 3rd for minor 7 chords, and a major 3rd for dominant 7 and major chords
- 3) *whole, half, half, half* (steps going up)

**Cycle Patterns**

With just these three patterns, nine combinations can be used to construct nine distinctive ways of walking a II- V7 IΔ progression. The combinations are 1&1, 1&2, 1&3, 2&1, 2&2, 2&3, 3&1, 3&2, and 3&3.

### Cycle Pattern Combinations

1 & 1 (down scale / down scale)      1 & 2 (down scale / 1 3 5 chro)      1 & 3 (down scale / w, h, h, h)

2 & 1 (1 3 5 chro / down scale)      2 & 2 (1 3 5 chro / 1 3 5 chro)      2 & 3 (1 3 5 chro / w, h, h, h)

3 & 1 (w, h, h, h / down scale)      3 & 2 (w, h, h, h / 1 3 5 chro)      3 & 3 (w, h, h, h / w, h, h, h)

After mastering these nine combinations in the key given, the next step is to practice the nine combinations in all 12 keys:

D-	G7	CA		Bb-	Eb7	AbΔ		F#-	B7	EA	
G-	C7	FA		Eb-	Ab7	DbΔ		B-	E7	AΔ	
C-	F7	BbΔ		Ab-	Db7	GbΔ		E-	A7	DΔ	
F-	Bb7	EbΔ		C#-	F#7	BΔ		A-	D7	GΔ	

Similar lines can be constructed for II V I progressions in minor (II $\emptyset$  V7alt I-). Note that the following three patterns are altered from their major key counterparts in order to fit the chord qualities, i.e., half diminished (aka minor 7 b5) for the II chord, dominant 7 altered (meaning flat & sharp 5th and flat & sharp 9th) for the V chord, and minor 7 for the I chord. The “altered cycle patterns” are:

- 1) *down the altered scale* (1 b7 #5 b5)
- 2) *1 b2 3 b5* – regarding the 3rd: be sure to use a minor 3rd for half diminished chords and a major 3rd for dominant 7 altered chords
- 3) *half, whole, half, half* (steps going up)

### Altered Cycle Patterns

1 (down the altered scale)      2 (1 b2 3 b5)      3 (half, whole, half, half)

Again, with just these three patterns, you have nine combinations that can be used to construct nine distinctive ways of walking a II $\emptyset$  V7alt I- progression. The combinations are the same (1&1, 1&2, 1&3, 2&1, 2&2, 2&3, 3&1, 3&2, and 3&3), we're simply substituting the altered cycle patterns for the regular cycle patterns so as to better fit the chord qualities.

### Altered Cycle Pattern Combinations

1 & 1 (down alt scale / down alt scale)      1 & 2 (down alt scale / 1 b2 3 b5)      1 & 3 (down alt scale / h, w, h, h)

2 & 1 (1 b2 3 b5 / down alt scale)      2 & 2 (1 b2 3 b5 / 1 b2 3 b5)      2 & 3 (1 b2 3 b5 / h, w, h, h)

3 & 1 (h, w, h, h / down alt scale)      3 & 2 (h, w, h, h / 1 b2 3 b5)      3 & 3 (h, w, h, h / h, w, h, h)

Again, after mastering these nine combinations in the key given, practice them in all 12 keys:

D $\emptyset$   G7alt   C-	Bb $\emptyset$   Eb7alt   Ab-	F# $\emptyset$   B7alt   E-
G $\emptyset$   C7alt   F-	Eb $\emptyset$   Ab7alt   Db-	B $\emptyset$   E7alt   A-
C $\emptyset$   F7alt   Bb-	Ab $\emptyset$   Db7alt   Gb-	E $\emptyset$   A7alt   D-
F $\emptyset$   Bb7alt   Eb-	C# $\emptyset$   F#7alt   B-	A $\emptyset$   D7alt   G-

The next step is to apply these patterns to a tune that utilizes II V I progressions in both major and minor, such as *Autumn Leaves*. Using just these six patterns (i.e., three cycle patterns and three altered cycle patterns), plus a scale for the tritone progression (Eb $\Delta$  to A $\emptyset$  in the 4th to 5th bar) and an arpeggio for the unison progression (G- to G7alt in the 7th to 8th bar), there are now literally hundreds of ways to walk the first 8 bars. Following are but a few:

### Examples of the First Eight Bars of *Autumn Leaves*

Three examples of the first eight bars of the bass line for *Autumn Leaves* in C major, showing different cycle patterns (cp) and altered cycle patterns (acp) applied to the chord progression: C- F7 B $\flat$  $\Delta$  E $\flat$  $\Delta$  A $\sharp$  D7alt G- G7alt.

Example 1: cp 2, cp 1, cp 1, scale, acp 2, acp 1, arpeggio, acp 1

Example 2: cp 3, cp 2, cp 3, scale, acp 1, acp 2, arpeggio, acp 3

Example 3: cp 1, cp 3, cp 3, scale, acp 3, acp 3, arpeggio, acp 2

Once you feel comfortable walking the first eight bars of *Autumn Leaves* and are able to vary the different cycle patterns and altered cycle patterns at will, the final step is to practice this eight-bar progression in all keys, say, one key per week for 12 weeks. I also suggest you say the name of each chord aloud as you land on it. At the end of the three-month stint, you will find that you have a much better handle on walking through changes, including being considerably more aware of correct 3rds, 7ths, and alterations. This exercise also will substantially increase your familiarity with the entire instrument -- low to high, common and uncommon keys alike. More importantly, it will give you far more confidence when approaching new tunes to walk, allowing your mind and spirit to focus less on the notes and more on TGIF (time, groove, interaction, feel) with that at-least-one-other-player in your combo.

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**First Eight Bars of *Autumn Leaves* in All Keys**

D-	G7	CΔ	FΔ	Bø	E7alt	A-	A7alt	
G-	C7	FΔ	BbΔ	Eø	A7alt	D-	D7alt	
C-	F7	BbΔ	EbΔ	Aø	D7alt	G-	G7alt	
F-	Bb7	EbΔ	AbΔ	Dø	G7alt	C-	C7alt	
Bb-	Eb7	AbΔ	DbΔ	Gø	C7alt	F-	F7alt	
Eb-	Ab7	DbΔ	GbΔ	Cø	F7alt	Bb-	Bb7alt	
Ab-	Db7	GbΔ	BΔ	Fø	Bb7alt	Eb-	Eb7alt	
C#-	F#7	BΔ	EΔ	Bbø	Eb7alt	Ab-	G#7alt	
F#-	B7	EΔ	AΔ	Ebø	Ab7alt	Db-	C#7alt	
B-	E7	AΔ	DΔ	Abø	Db7alt	Gb-	F#7alt	
E-	A7	DΔ	GΔ	C#ø	F#7alt	B-	B7alt	
A-	D7	GΔ	CΔ	F#ø	B7alt	E-	E7alt	

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**Linear Bass Line Construction Part 2**  
**Chromatics and More**

In most straight-ahead jazz, the bassist's primary function is to provide walking bass lines -- quarter note lines in which the root of each chord is attacked as each chord changes. The remaining notes connect one chord to another in deference to the harmony of the moment. However, to construct lines that are more linear, that is, more scalar and chromatic than chordal, contemporary bassists often land on notes other than the root as the chords change, giving their lines a smoother and more *forward momentum* feeling.

To achieve this and still be faithful to the harmony, chromatics may be used as long as the line begins on a chord tone (preferably the root) and lands on any chord tone (root, 3rd, 5th, or 7th) of the subsequent chords as they change. The root, however, should still be attacked at crucial points in the chorus, e.g., the first beat of the first bar of each section, anchoring the form.

Chromatic and scalar lines sound especially hip when it appears that a long linear line "just happens" to fit perfectly. To show the difference between arpeggio- and scalar/chromatic-type lines, look at the last four bars of the bridge of Horace Silver's AABA tune *Sister Sadie* in which the chords are C7, Bb7, A7, and Ab7 (culminating on G7 which is the first chord of the last A). The first two examples below represent typical up-and-down lines using arpeggios, landing on the root of each chord; while they work fine and get the job done, they're not the hippest.

Example 1

Example 1 shows a bass line with four measures. The chords are C7, Bb7, A7, Ab7, and G7. The line uses arpeggios, landing on the root of each chord. The notes are: C7 (C, E, G), Bb7 (Bb, D, F), A7 (A, C, E), Ab7 (Ab, Cb, Eb), and G7 (G, B, D). The fingerings are: R 3 5 6, R 5 3, R R 3 5 b7, R 5 3 R, R.

Example 2

Example 2 shows a bass line with four measures. The chords are C7, Bb7, A7, Ab7, and G7. The line uses arpeggios, landing on the root of each chord. The notes are: C7 (C, E, G), Bb7 (Bb, D, F), A7 (A, C, E), Ab7 (Ab, Cb, Eb), and G7 (G, B, D). The fingerings are: R 5 3 R, R 3 5 b7, R 5 3 R, R 3 5 b7, R.

The following two examples, on the other hand, are all stepwise, using a combination of scalar and chromatic lines. Note how 1) each line continues in the same direction, 2) a chord tone other than the root is landed upon on the first beat of most of the inner measures, and 3) the four-bar phrase starts and ends on the root of its respective chords (as they are at crucial points in the chorus). Also note that in Example 3, the line is ascending while the chord progression is descending (very cool).

Example 3

Example 3 shows a bass line with four measures. The chords are C7, Bb7, A7, Ab7, and G7. The line is ascending stepwise. The notes are: C7 (C, Eb, F, G), Bb7 (Bb, C, D, Eb), A7 (A, B, C, D), Ab7 (Ab, Bb, C, D), and G7 (G, A, B, C). The fingerings are: R 2 ch ch, 5 ch ch ch, R 2 3 4, 5 ch ch ch, R.

Example 4

Example 4 shows a bass line with four measures. The chords are C7, Bb7, A7, Ab7, and G7. The line is descending stepwise. The notes are: C7 (C, B, Ab, G), Bb7 (Bb, Ab, G, F), A7 (A, G, F, E), Ab7 (Ab, G, F, E), and G7 (G, F, E, D). The fingerings are: R ch ch ch, b7 ch ch ch, 5 ch ch ch, 3 ch 2 R, R.



If you've got the thumb position chops to do it, Example 4 sounds especially hip up an octave (no problem for electric players); then for a *really* long linear line, continue by going down the G bebop scale on the G7 chord for the first two bars of the last A of *Sister Sadie* as displayed in Example 5.

Example 5

Example 5 shows a bass line with the following chords and fingerings: C7 (R ch ch ch), B<sup>b</sup>7 (b7 ch ch ch), A7 (5 ch ch ch), A<sup>b</sup>7 (3 ch 2 R), and G7 (R ch b7 6 5 4 3 2 R).

Linear lines also sound great on tunes that have numerous measures with two chords per bar, such as John Coltrane's *Giant Steps*. Following is an example of the first four bars of this tune with a typical arpeggio/scalar type bass line. This is followed by a chromatic/scalar example.

Example 6

Example 6 shows a bass line with the following chords and fingerings: B (R 2), D7 (R 3), G (R 2), B<sup>b</sup>7 (R 3), E<sup>b</sup> (R 7 6 5), A- (R b3), D7 (R 3), and G (R).

Example 7

Example 7 shows a bass line with the following chords and fingerings: B (R ch 5), D7 (ch), G (R ch 5), B<sup>b</sup>7 (ch), E<sup>b</sup> (R ch enc enc), A- (b3 2), D7 (5 ch), and G (R).

The way to “find” these kinds of lines is to “see” the closest chord tone of the next chord (from the chord tone of the chord you're on), then, using chromatics and/or scale tones, proceed to that note. If you find that you get there too soon and need another note to make the line work, simply use an *enclosure*, “enclosing” (i.e., playing a half step above and below) the note you're approaching (as in the E<sup>b</sup> to A- in the 3rd to 4th bar above). An alternative would be to keep the chromatic line from the E<sup>b</sup> moving downward until it lands on the G in the 5th measure as in Example 8. Although you're not landing on a chord tone on the A-, the line still works as the chord is not in a crucial section of the chorus; hip chromatic line trumps landing-on-a-chord-tone in this case.

Example 8

Example 8 shows a bass line with the following chords and fingerings: B (R ch 5), D7 (ch), G (R ch 5), B<sup>b</sup>7 (ch), E<sup>b</sup> (R ch ch ch), A- (ch ch 5), D7 (ch), and G (R).

Using an enclosure (as in the 3rd bar of Example 7) or keeping the line moving chromatically in the same direction (as in Example 8) are both far better than repeating a note (i.e., playing the same note twice in a row) which would give the line a “stutter,” temporarily losing its forward momentum.

For a *really* long chromatic line that “just happens” to fit this twist-and-turn chord progression, play Example 8 up an octave then continue descending chromatically for the tune's next four bars as displayed in Example 9 (this is especially effective after a soloist has climaxed his last chorus and you're transitioning the vibe, preparing for the next soloist, especially at fast tempos).

Example 9

Example 9 shows a bass line with the following chords and fingerings: B (R ch 5), D7 (ch), G (R ch 5), B<sup>b</sup>7 (ch), E<sup>b</sup> (R ch ch ch), A- (ch ch 5), D7 (R ch 5), G (R ch 5), B<sup>b</sup>7 (R ch 5), E<sup>b</sup> (R ch 5), G<sup>b</sup>7 (R ch ch ch), B (ch ch 5), F- (R), B<sup>b</sup>7 (R), and E<sup>b</sup> (R).

An example of using the same technique for constructing an ascending line is below. Note the use of the upper chromatic approach note (2nd to 3rd beat in the first measure), “zigzagging” the line upwards.

Example 10

Example 10 shows a bass line in B-flat major. The chords above the staff are: B, D7, G, Bb7, Eb, A-, D7, G, Bb7, Eb, Gb7, B, F-, Bb7, Eb. The bass line consists of 16 measures. The fingering below the staff is: R uc b7 ch 5 6 5 ch 3 4 5 ch b3 ch R b7 3 2 b7 ch 5 6 5 ch 3 4 5 ch b3 ch R uc R. The notation includes a double bar line at the end of the 16th measure.

To add scalar/chromatic lines to your walking bass vocabulary, you must first work them out very slowly in the practice room, giving yourself enough time to think, “seeing” where you are and where you are going. After working on a number of tunes, finding the linear lines within, you will eventually be able to improvise these kinds of lines on the spot, playing them when the musical situation you’re in at the moment calls.

Key:

numbers refer to the scale/chord tone of the chord of the moment; R = root of the chord of the moment; ch = chromatic; enc = enclosure; uc = upper chromatic approach note

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## Combo Preparation for Bassists (in order of importance)

### Construct

1. Play with a good sound.
2. Play in tune.
3. Keep your place; don't get lost.

### Preparation

Carefully adjust sound on amp before rehearsal or performance begins; strive for a warm, fat (but not boomy) tone for straight-ahead jazz; dig in

Carefully tune up before every rehearsal or performance; listen closely to the intonation *while* playing (especially for upright and fretless players)

Before playing, *memorize the form*. Common forms include:

- **12-bar blues** (e.g., *Tenor Madness*, *Billie's Bounce*)
- **16-bar tune** (e.g., *Blue Bossa*, *Summertime*, *Doxy*)
- **32-bar standard**
  - **AABA** (e.g., *I Got Rhythm*, *Misty*, *Satin Doll*)
  - **ABAC** (e.g., *On Green Dolphin Street*, *All of Me*)

Be on the lookout for tunes with uncommon forms, for example:

- *Alone Together*: AABA' (14-bar first A, 14-bar second A, 8-bar B, and 8-bar last A)
- *Moment's Notice*: ABAB'V (8-bar first A, 8-bar first B, 8-bar second A, 6-bar second B, 8-bar Vamp with Bb pedal)
- *Song for My Father*: AAB (24-bar tune)
- *Peace*: 10-bar tune
- *Stablemates*: ABA (14-bar first A, 8-bar bridge, 14-bar last A)
- *Yes and No*: AABA (14-bar A sections with a 16-bar bridge)

4. Play the style with good time and a good feel.

If not sure of the style, ask combo director or a bandmate.

Common grooves include:

- **bop**: walking bass
- **standard** (swing): often the first chorus as a "2 feel" with successive choruses in "4" (walking bass); sometimes the last chorus returns to a "2 feel"
- **bossa**: dotted quarter/eighth note feel (straight, not swung)
- **various Latin grooves**: combination of playing on beats 1 & 3 and syncopating
- **rock**: straight eighths
- **funk**: syncopated sixteenths (with clear downbeats)
- **waltz**: 3/4 time; often the first chorus as a "1 feel" (dotted half notes with successive chorus in "3" (walking) or a "broken 3" (partly in "1" and partly in "3"))
- **ballad**: often the first chorus as a "2 feel" with successive choruses in "4" (walking bass); also, ballads often provide more room for interaction with soloist and other members of the rhythm section

5. Play the "right" notes.

Before the tune starts, check out root movement and chord qualities (major, dominant, minor, half diminished, etc.); land on the roots as the chords change; be sure to play correct 3rds and 7ths; memorize what you can in the time you have