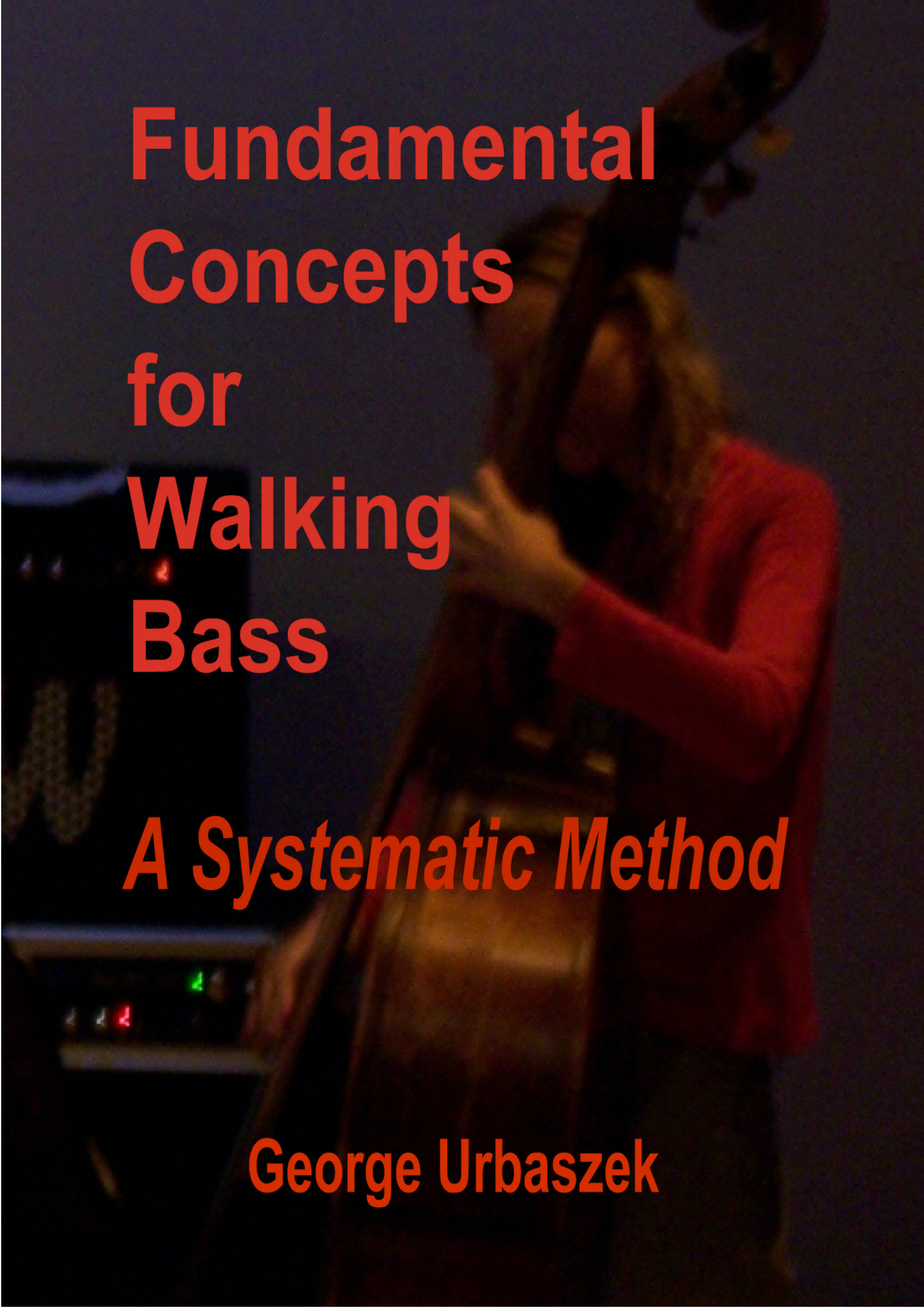


Fundamental Concepts for Walking Bass

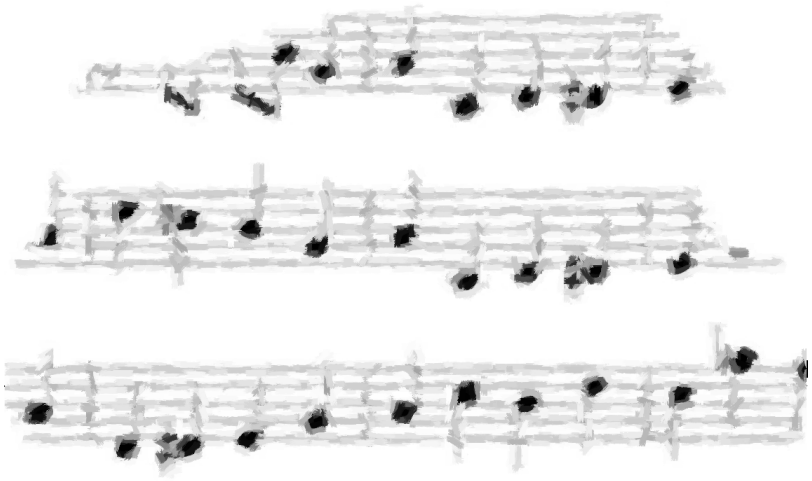
A Systematic Method

George Urbaszek

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

FOR

WALKING BASS



A SYSTEMATIC METHOD

Submitted as a sub-thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Music (Jazz) at the Australian National University, Institute of the Arts, Canberra School of Music.

BY GEORGE URBASZEK

1 FEBRUARY 2001

PREFACE

This sub-thesis is written in the form of a Method. Permission was granted by the Graduate Program in Music Board of Studies, ANU, to use this format. My research interest was in the area of jazz music pedagogy (bass). As I wished to investigate and examine possible ways of teaching walking bass in particular, it seemed appropriate and useful to actually develop a method. This accounts for:

a) the form of the sub-thesis as a Method and

b) the fact that the methodical approach in manual format appears to be most useful to the developing jazz bass player, toward whom this work is primarily directed.

The unfolding nature of the fundamentals of walking bass is revealed systematically chapter by chapter and, if explored progressively, culminates in the understanding of the final transcriptions as well as the ability to successfully write or improvise one's own walking bass lines with conviction.

Jazz is a continually evolving oral and aural tradition. The bulk of the literature on the subject of walking bass is in the form of books that are so-called methods. These mainly attempt to give examples, but do not explain the reasons why these examples work. These books often suggest creativity, but do not sufficiently address guidelines for further investigation.

I have not yet found a text dealing with the concept of walking bass in a concise explanatory manner. Famous bass player and educator, Ron Carter, says (*Jazz Times*, April, 1995):

> "There must be about 25 books on the market but they just show you bass players' lines, they don't explain to you how he got to that conclusion..." (p26)

Therefore, I am making this attempt myself - founded on my aural, oral, playing and learning background.

There is a notable absence of a bibliography in this treatise. This is because there are no resource texts that deal in depth with the concept of walking bass.

The following three books are arguably the best-known texts that address walking bass:

1. *Ray Brown's Bass Method* (1963,1999: Hal Leonard Corp. USA)
2. *Rufus Reid, The Evolving Bassist* (1974: Myriad Ltd, USA)
3. *Siggi Busch - Jazz Bass Compendium* (1984: Advance Music, Germany)

In my opinion the listed texts deal with walking bass only in a non-methodical and superficial way:

- *Ray Brown's Bass Method* - Brown's book contains excellent bass lines; however there is no explanation or justification for the bass line construction.
- *Rufus Reid, The Evolving Bassist* - This is possibly the most widely known, recommended and purchased jazz bass book. In "Etude VI, Simple Walking Bass Lines", Reid says:

  > "Here are examples of how you can start a strong walking bass line based from a chord symbol. Remember these following lines are only a few of thousands of combinations that can be applied once you give it some thought." (p62)

  Reid notes:

  > "When you honestly can say that you can play Etudes VI thru VIII at various tempos, go back and repeat them and then alternate each with your own lines based on the chords of that etude. I suggest if you own any kind of taperecorder, use it, and listen to yourself." (p77)

and:

> "You have now finished what should be a total thought process in constructing bass lines. These bass lines are just some of thousands of variations you can create if you put some thought to it. Take any tune and use this process until you are able to do it spontaneously. Write your own bass lines down, away from your bass if you can. Now play them. Do they sound good? If not, change them until they do. They can be academically correct and still not sound good. This is an extremely contrived process, but believe me, if you work at it, the definition of your lines will be stronger than you realise." (p82)

Although all of the examples are excellent, nowhere does Reid mention how these lines were constructed, what thought process and knowledge is behind these lines. He says "Write your bass lines down ... Do they sound good? If not, change them until they do." But change them how?! I realise experimentation is absolutely necessary, but with some thought and justification the process can be sped up!

- *Siggi Busch - Jazz Bass Compendium* - In the chapter titled "Walking Bass Lines" Busch lists a set of seven "certain basic rules for constructing walking bass lines", which are all appropriate; however, Busch does not address the reasoning behind these rules. The reader is therefore left with rules without explanations.

I have attempted to fill the gaps left by Brown, Reid, Busch and many other authors on the topic of walking bass.

My Method is written in a mode that addresses the reader/student in a casual, informal manner. The tone adopted is direct and is meant to enhance accessibility to the subject matter. Because music is an active and creative art form, I have attempted to incorporate some stimuli into what could otherwise be dry theory.

It was my aim to research a methodical approach to both the mental and practical skills required to further the developing player. I have focused on systematic development of concepts and fundamentals for walking bass.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to my ever-supportive wife, Düwike, to the Jazz Department of the Canberra School of Music, Australian National University, where I have been able to develop many of the ideas used in this Method, and to Charlie Banacos, who is continually enhancing my ability to focus and persevere.

Thanks to all of my supervisors in this project, especially to Robyn Holmes for her ability to enthuse and to Bengt-Olov Palmqvist for his keen musical observation. Further thanks to Bengt-Olov Palmqvist for supplying the accurate transcription of “Front Burner”. Also thanks to Zoe Frater for supplying the draft for the transcription of “hijacked”. Thanks also to Stephen Skurka for the layout and the many excellent suggestions.

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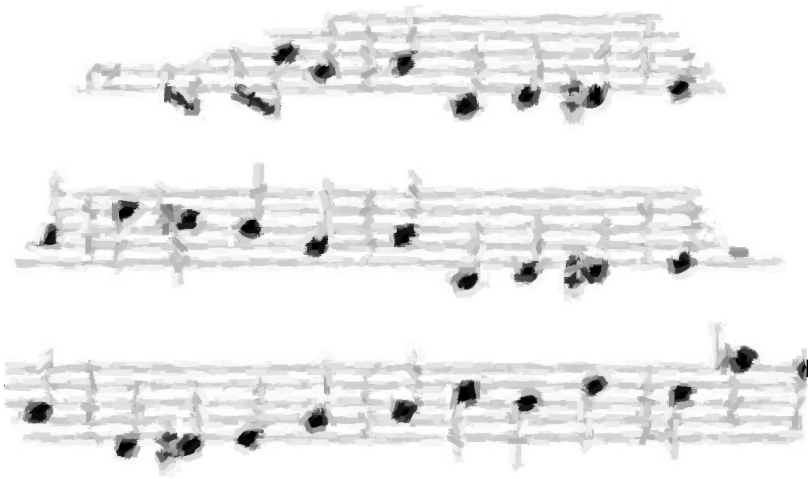


A SYSTEMATIC METHOD

INTRODUCTION TO METHOD

The aim of this Method is to reveal a systematic approach for learning walking bass. *Walking bass* is a term used in jazz to describe an even pulse of quarter notes used in a balanced combination of small and large intervals.

This book deals with the concept of walking bass and, therefore, can be used by anyone wishing to deal with and understand the theory behind walking bass lines. The introductory exercises, however, as well as some of the more advanced examples are specifically for string bass players and are directed primarily at the student of jazz bass. In the twenty-five years of my music teaching and playing experience, I have developed techniques for learning various concepts in a methodical, progressive manner.

A high standard of technical facility is not required for successful execution of many of the music examples, nor is a high degree of music theory necessary. However, basic reading of music notation in bass clef is essential. Obviously, the more advanced all of the above-mentioned skills are, the more progress will be made.

The material is presented in a progressive manner and will therefore enable systematic musical, technical and theoretical growth of the committed student.

The goal, upon completion of this method, is to be able to improvise walking bass - for any length of time - with intent, justification, and meaningful harmonic integration in a jazz ensemble.

The scope of this Method includes the understanding and playing of walking bass within the general context of jazz. It does not discuss specific elements of the various styles within the jazz idiom, such as note articulation, note duration, sound production, and note placement in relation to the absolute beat. However, the solid understanding achieved through working with this Method will enable the student to readily gain access to stylistic details and therefore further independent studies.

For the serious student it is important to play all of the examples in time, i.e. with an even pulse. This will enable the student to hear and evaluate the performance of the music realistically. It is also important to follow the suggestions and guidelines regarding expansion and development of the given examples.

Walking bass is played with the technique of jazz “pizzicato”. This technique is explained in Appendix A.

Standard jazz chord symbol notation has been used throughout this book. If in doubt, the reader should refer to the list of abbreviations in Appendix B.

Jazz terminologies, where they occur for the first time in the text, are explained in footnotes on the same page. The same explanation is also available in the Glossary.

It is not the aim of this Method to deal with the degrees of “swing”[1] involved; however, if the technique of walking bass is mastered, the student will be one step closer to the elements of swing.

The Method begins with fundamental principles of walking bass - the mental preparation required before playing a line - then moves on to concepts and their applications. The final examples contain embellishments and are therefore technically more demanding than earlier examples. The last two examples are transcriptions of bass lines to demonstrate “real life” applications of the material covered in this Method.

One advantage of learning a concept systematically and thoroughly is the amount of confidence this induces in the musician, which will reflect in that specific area of performance. As opposed to merely thinking of sound, the outcome of this Method is internal hearing of sound (sonic image), which enables the bassist to make the correct musical choice at any given moment.

[1] Swing - An even pulse with a triplet-based (internalised) subdivision.

Thorough instrument knowledge is an absolute prerequisite to playing a successful walking bass. Therefore the first chapter of this Method will deal with learning/reviewing all notes in all positions on the bass.

Many music examples are either twelve or sixteen-bar forms (which may repeat). This is sufficient length to demonstrate continuity of an idea. Some examples are longer to demonstrate further development of ideas. All examples not ending with a wholenote assume resolution to the root note of the chord on beat *one* of the first bar of the example. As a means to explain a concept, many examples in this Method are *patterns*. However, I urge serious students to ultimately look beyond patterns and use the concepts addressed in their own creative ways.

All examples must be used in conjunction with the corresponding text to enable thorough understanding of the addressed concepts. I have developed these exercises in what I believe to be a progressive order.

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

The purpose of walking bass is to play the quarter-note pulse on which the music is based, linking that rhythm with the harmony - outlining the chords. This therefore creates continual rhythmic motion, freeing drummers from their traditional strict time-keeping role, thus enabling their interaction with soloists and harmony players. The technique of walking bass became prominent in the 1940s. Before that period the bass usually played a “half-time feel” (two beats per bar in 4/4 time) that created a more settled, start-stop, less driving effect.

I will deal mainly with the concept of how *leading notes* set up or prepare approached chords.

My approach to walking bass is based almost entirely on the concept of *forward motion* in music. Forward motion could be a note, a group of notes, a rhythm, or combination thereof, which compellingly leads on to the next note, chord, phrase, or section.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Based on the principle that the major scale (Ionian mode) is generally accepted to be central to the Western tonal system, tonal forward motion is created by notes moving toward the establishment of a tonal centre, temporary or conclusive.

The authentic/perfect cadence is what comes to mind. More specifically, if a major scale is played and then each note of the scale individually resolved, you will find that notes 2, 5 and 7 want to resolve *directly* to the tonic.

Inverting notes 2, 5 and 7 in to 5, 7 and 2 gives the dominant triad. For example in C Major (C, D, E, F, G, A, B) notes 2,5 and 7 are D, G and B, which is an inversion of the G Major triad. (G B D).

It is essential that you play and/or hear this exercise.

Notes 3, 4 and 6 also want to resolve to the tonic. However their natural resolution is *indirect* and moves by step. For example in C Major the note E wants to descend over the D to the C; F over E and D to C; and finally A ascends over B to C.

The strongest and most direct element of tonal forward motion is the dominant triad leading to the tonic. This also works in minor keys, as the dominant triad has the same resolution properties. And, by superimposing the idea of a dominant chord just before *any* chord, the principle remains the same.

This principle is extremely significant and therefore central to playing walking bass. Grasping the central principle - the fundamental concept - in its various guises is essential to being able to think in terms of walking bass. Metaphorically speaking, having the right equipment, the foresight and the goal in mind, will get the job done well.

THE LEADING NOTE PRINCIPLE

In walking bass all notes of the dominant triad are considered leading notes to the following chord. These leading notes create strong harmonic forward motion. Even if a dominant chord is not present, a dominant triad may be superimposed to create harmonic forward motion.

When moving from one chord to another, or indeed re-establishing the same chord, the principle of the dominant triad can be used as follows:

		Approach Chord	Dominant Triad	Target Chord
1)	**Chords**	**G^7**	to	**C**
	Notes	G	G	C
		G	B	C
		G	D	C
2)	**Chords**	**$Cmaj^7$**	to	**C**
	Notes	C	G	C
		C	B	C
		C	D	C
3)	**Chords**	**Am**	to	**C**
	Notes	A	G	C
		A	B	C
		A	D	C
4)	**Chords**	**E^bmaj^7**	to	**C**
	Notes	E^b	G	C
		E^b	B	C
		E^b	D	C

The previous four examples show a skeletal approach to the leading note principle. The idea is to play the root note of each chord at the beginning of the bar. Then, at the end of the bar play the leading note, which is extracted from the dominant chord, whether it is actually present, as in the first example, or superimposed, as in the second to fourth examples. This superimposition can and should be done most of the time. As the fourth example shows, even if it is $E^{b}maj^{7}$ approaching C (major or minor), the leading notes are extracted from the superimposed dominant triad (G) of the approached chord.

Following is my system of leading notes, listed in ascending order (i.e. lowest to highest pitch) to the approached note (generally the root note of the approached chord):

Interval	Indicated by	Example	Symbol
Up a perfect 4^{th}	(↑ 4)	G up to C	l 1
Up a minor 2^{nd}	(↑½)	B up to C	l 2
Down a minor 2^{nd}	(↓½)	D^{b} down to C	l 3
Down a major 2^{nd}	(↓1)	D down to C	l 4
Down a perfect 5^{th}	(↓5)	G down to C	l 5

l 1 stands for leading note interval number 1

l 2 stands for leading note interval number 2

l 3 stands for leading note interval number 3

l 4 stands for leading note interval number 4

l 5 stands for leading note interval number 5

I will use this number system throughout this book.

I 3 approaches from a semitone above. This is a very ‘jazzy’ sound and is extracted from $^{b}5$ of the dominant chord or is the root of the *tritone substitute*[2] of the dominant.

This system of leading notes contains four notes but five intervals, which will all be put to use systematically.

To my way of thinking and hearing there are, therefore, not only one leading note (as is the common perception) but *four leading notes of equal resolving properties.*

[2] Tritone Substitute Chord - A dominant 7 chord whose root is a tritone away from the root of another dominant 7 chord

CHAPTER 1

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

IDENTIFYING NOTES

An important prerequisite to walking bass is being able to identify any note at any given point on your bass – immediately!

Pick a note, e.g. E and find all Es on your bass. This will be between seven and fourteen, depending on the number of strings and fingerboard length. Include open strings but exclude harmonics.

Start playing an even pulse of eight beats per bar (8/4), playing a different E on the first beat of every bar and random notes on beats 2-8:

Count E 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, E 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, E 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 etc.

Don't play E on beats 2-8. Make sure you play a *different* E on the first beat of every bar. If your bass has seven Es you play seven bars, stopping on the first beat of bar seven. The idea is to think ahead and select which E you are heading toward a long time before you actually play it. A few focal points to observe would be:

1) no finger repeats in the left hand
2) no finger repeats in the right hand
3) evenness of pulse and tone

Once you have mastered this very easy segment, you should do one or both of the following:

1) increase the tempo
2) decrease the number of beats to seven per bar (i.e. go to 7/4 time signature)

Therefore:

Count E 2 3 4 5 6 7, E 2 3 4 5 6 7, E 2 3 etc.

Master that and decrease to 6/4, 5/4, 4/4, 3/4, 2/4 and 1/4 (only Es).

An excellent side-effect of this exercise is that it will prepare you to play walking bass in various time signatures. Keep playing random notes between the first beat of every bar and move all over the instrument, up the strings, across the strings etc. Remember, the focus is mainly on nailing (term for accuracy) the E at the beginning of every bar while keeping an even pulse.

If any of the above exercises are too difficult, then leave out the random notes, play the target note only (E), while counting the other, unplayed beats of the bar; once this is mastered, go back to playing the random notes.

ADDING LEADING NOTES

The next segment introduces leading notes. Go back to 8/4. Choose a leading note, e.g. F (a semitone above E). Now continue playing E on the first beat of every bar and play F on the last beat of every bar. Thus E 2 3 4 5 6 7 F, E 2 3 4 5 6 7 F, E 2 3 etc. Move through the time signatures down to 2/4. Do the same with all other leading notes to E (i.e. B, $D^{\#}$ and $F^{\#}$). Master that.

If any of the above exercises are too difficult, then leave out the random notes, play only the target note (E) and the leading note (F) while counting the other unplayed beats of the bar. Once this is mastered go back to playing the random notes.

Now move on to *two consecutive* leading notes before the target note. E.g. E 2 3 4 5 6 $D^{\#}$ $F^{\#}$, E 2 3 4 5 6 $D^{\#}$ $F^{\#}$, E 2 3 etc. Play through the time signatures down to 3/4. Once you've mastered that, find and play permutations, such as E 2 3 4 5 6 F $D^{\#}$, E 2 3 4 5 6 F $D^{\#}$, E 2 3 etc.

If any of the above exercises are too difficult, leave out the random notes, play only the target note (E) and the leading notes while counting the other unplayed

beats of the bar. Once you've mastered this go back and include the random notes.

All of the above exercises were based on E. Now go back to the beginning of the exercise cycle and start on another note. Keep repeating the cycle until you have covered all twelve notes of the chromatic scale (including enharmonic equivalents). This might take weeks … or months, but I'll guarantee you'll know the instrument you paid for.

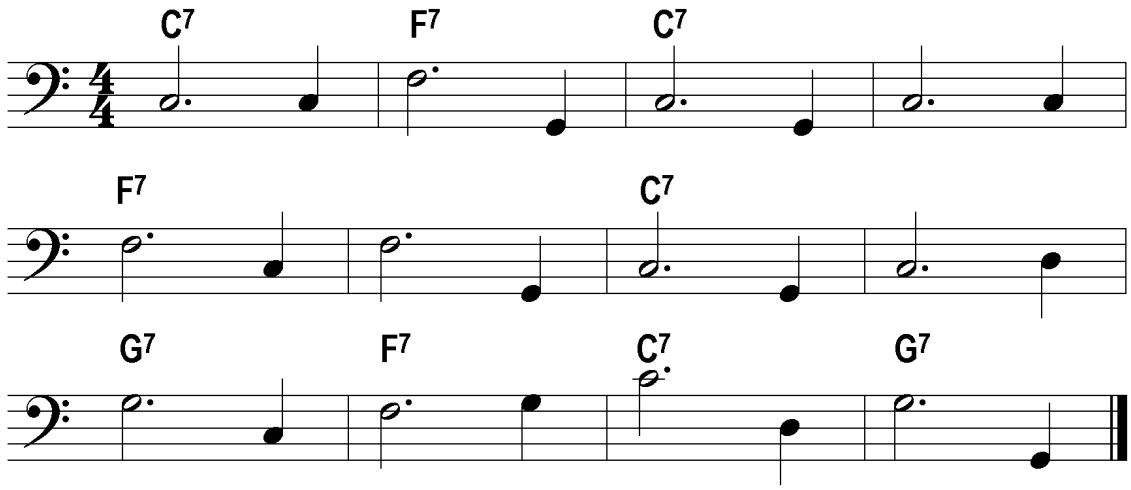
CHAPTER 2

LEAD THE WAY

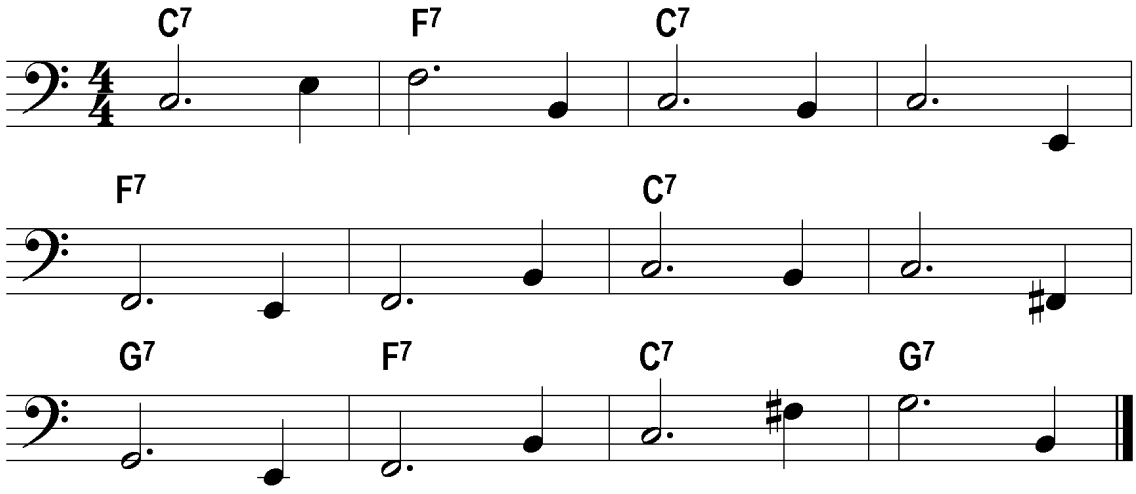
Using the leading note principle, we'll begin by constructing a skeletal line over a three-chord blues in C.

Note: All the blues examples assume resolution to the tonic after completion of the form.

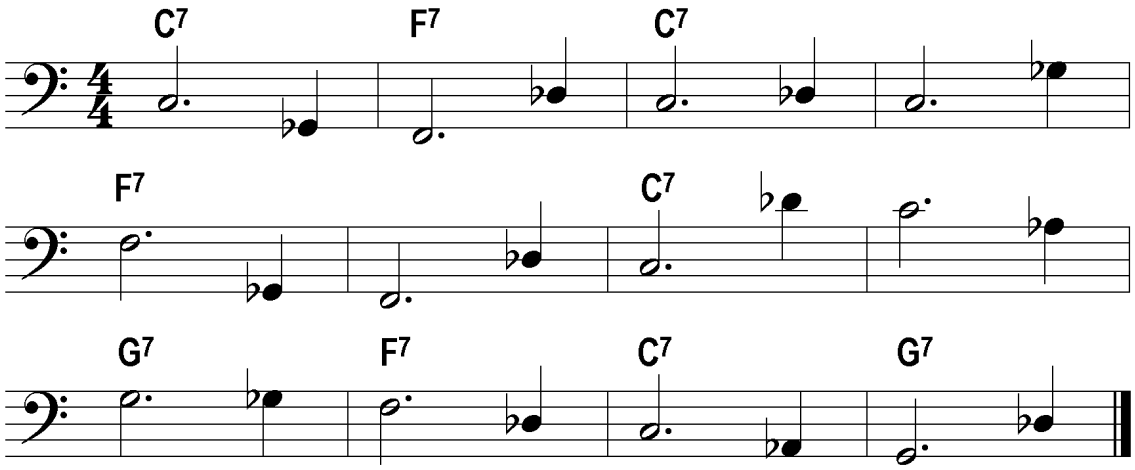
Ex 1 I1 (↑4)



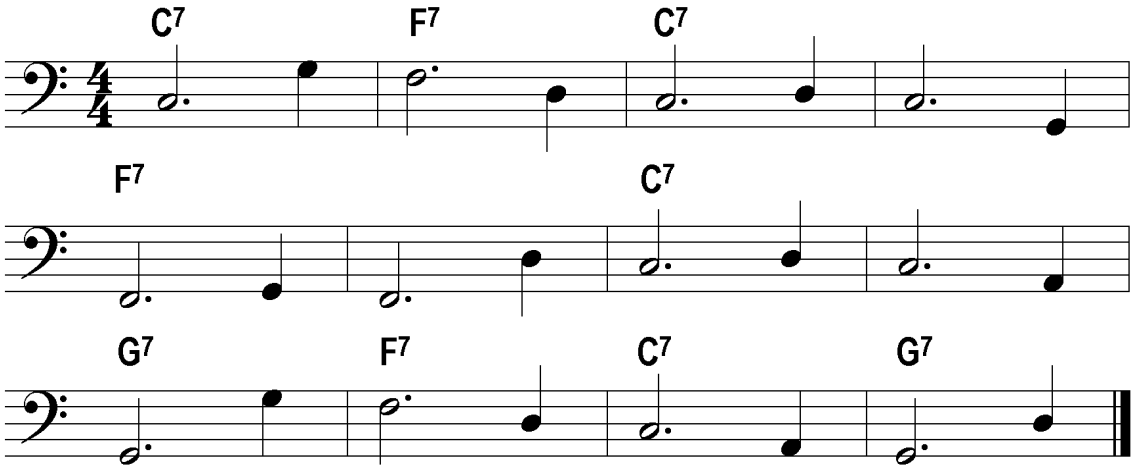
Ex 2 I2 (↑½)



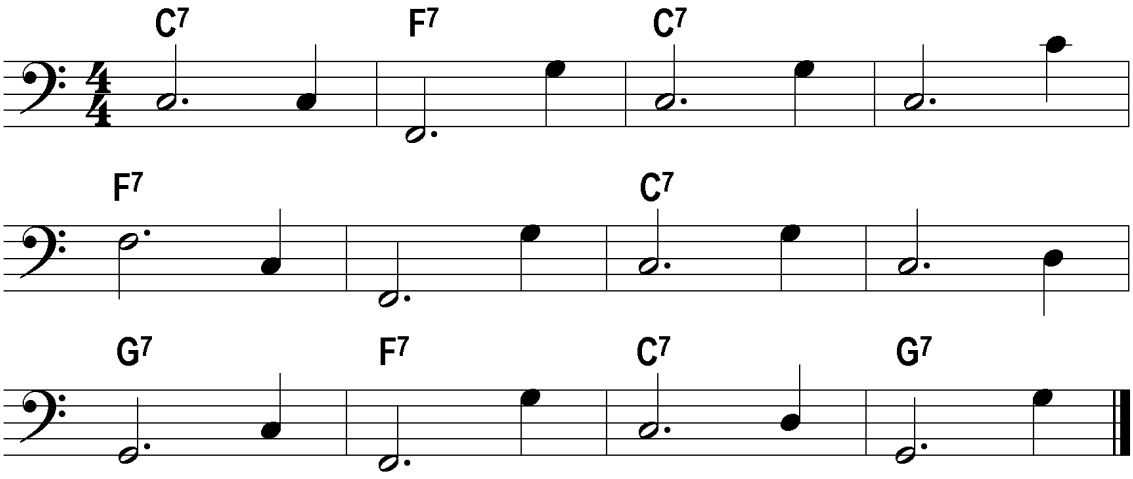
Ex 3 I3 (↓½)



Ex 4 I4 (↓1)



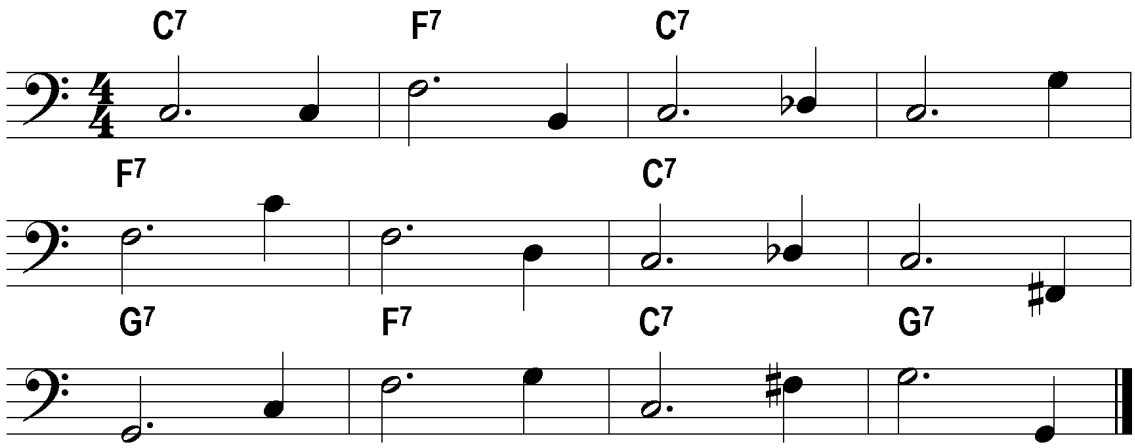
Ex 5 I5 (↓5)



Now play each exercise again placing the leading note and the root note in one hand position. This is to guarantee a technically smooth connection between the last and first beat of each bar – and it makes you think ahead and see at least two notes together. After playing through the five exercises, I'm sure you will hear the sonic quality of each leading note type. Remember these five sounds as they will form a strong sonic basis, i.e. you will hear the sound before you play it and therefore be able to make a musical decision based on sound knowledge.

Here's an example using all five leading notes in one chorus[3].

Ex 6



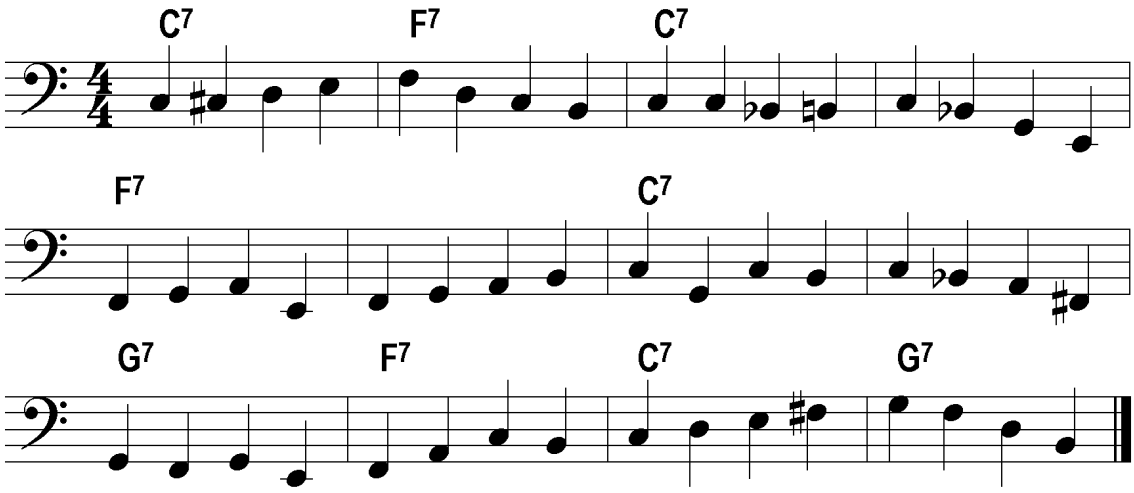
Work out for yourself what the sequence of leading notes is. Write the leading note number under the example. Remember to place beats 4 and 1 in one hand position.

[3] Chorus - the repeated form of a jazz or blues piece, (*usually used to improvise over)* based on the main melody (the actual tune), excluding any introductions, verses, interludes or endings.

Now let's walk...

Using notes from Ex 2 we'll fill in beats 2 and 3.

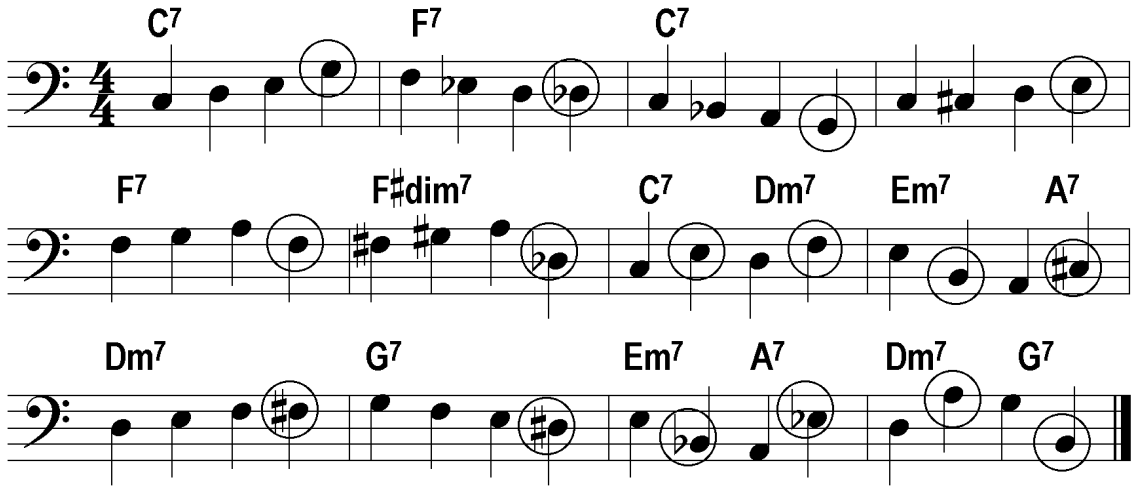
Ex 7



It's not the greatest bass line in the world... you'll find that one later!

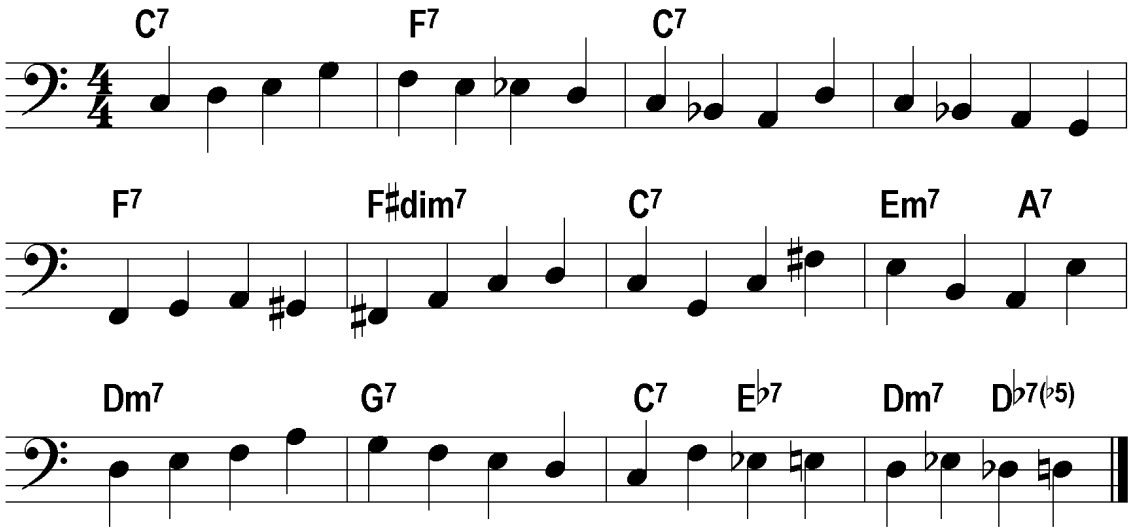
Here's a jazz blues to get things rolling. The leading notes are circled.

Ex 8



Now go and write several pages of bass lines over jazz blues progressions. This will enable you to think quickly. Try a systematic approach using the same leading note quality (i.e. interval) for an entire chorus. For example:

Ex 9



You won't *know* if you don't *try*!

CHAPTER 3

INSIDE OR OUTSIDE

Working through this chapter will enable you to choose the bast possible leading note according to your own musical discretion. You will therefore be able to control, in your own particular manner, the way your choice of leading notes influence to sonic quality of the music.

I classify the four leading notes into three categories, prioritised in order of consonance, category 1 being the most "inside"[4] and category 3 being the most "outside"[5].

Category	Definition
1	The leading note is a chord tone of the approach chord.
2	The leading note is another scale tone of the approach chord.
3	The leading note is neither chord tone nor scale tone of the approach chord but is one of the four leading notes.

The *necessity* to use 3rd category leading notes is indeed very rare. They are best used in passing, i.e. between 1st or 2nd category leading notes and resolution points (usually chord roots).

[4] Inside - To play “inside” or “in” is to improvise within the confines of the harmonic structure of a theme.

[5] Outside - To play “outside” or “out” is to depart, in improvisation, from the harmonic structure of the (sic.) theme.

Following are some examples demonstrating category selection:

- G^7 to C
    - 1st category leading notes are G, B and D
    - 2nd category is not available
    - 3rd category is D^b
- Gm^7 to C
    - 1st category leading notes are G and D
    - 2nd category is not available
    - 3rd category leading notes are B and Db
- $Bdim^7$ to C
    - 1st category leading notes are B and D
    - 2nd category leading notes are C# (Db) and G
    - 3rd category is not available
- E^bmaj^7 to C
    - 1st category leading notes are G and D
    - 2nd category is not available
    - 3rd category leading notes are B and Db
- F^7 to C
    - 1st category is not available
    - 2nd category leading notes are G and D
    - 3rd category leading notes are B and Db
- D^{b7} to C
    - 1st category leading note is Db
    - 2nd category is not available
    - 3rd category leading notes are G, B and D

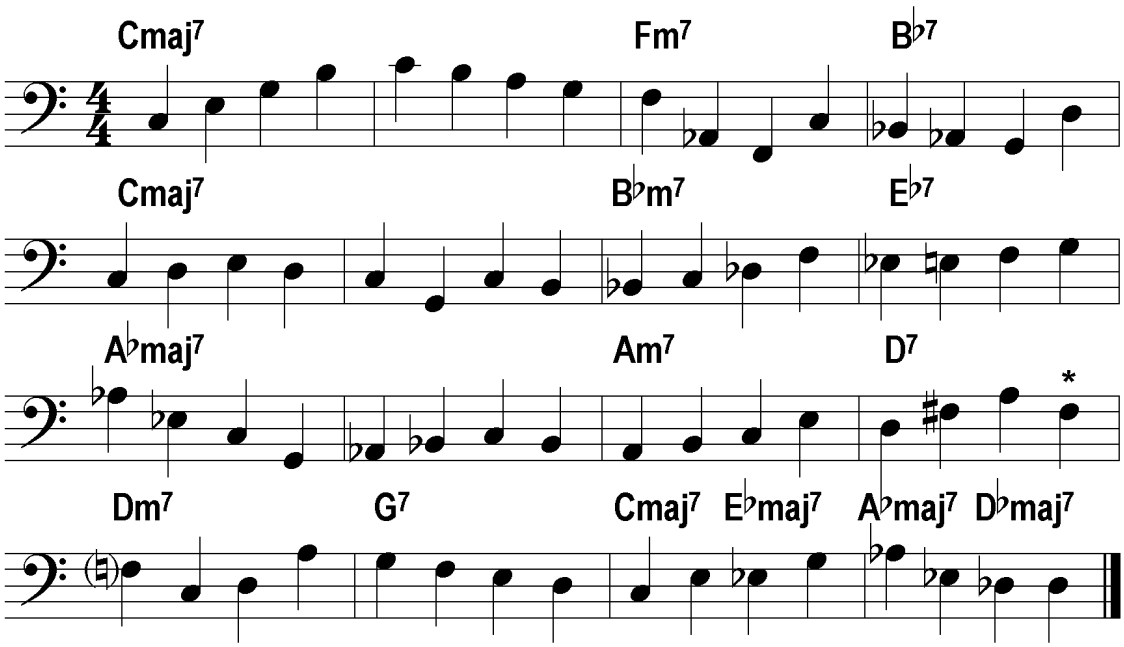
Remember, all leading notes are extracted from a superimposed dominant triad (V-chord).

There is in fact only one approach chord which does not have a 1st category leading note. That is the chord whose root is a perfect 4th above the approached chord as the fifth example, F^7 to C, shows.

Get thinking because this information is important for your preference of 'insideness' or 'outsideness'. Obviously if you are accompanying the tune/melody (either sung or played) it would be more appropriate to choose *inside*, *1st category leading notes*.

Following is an example of a set of "changes"[6] using inside leading notes:

Ex 10

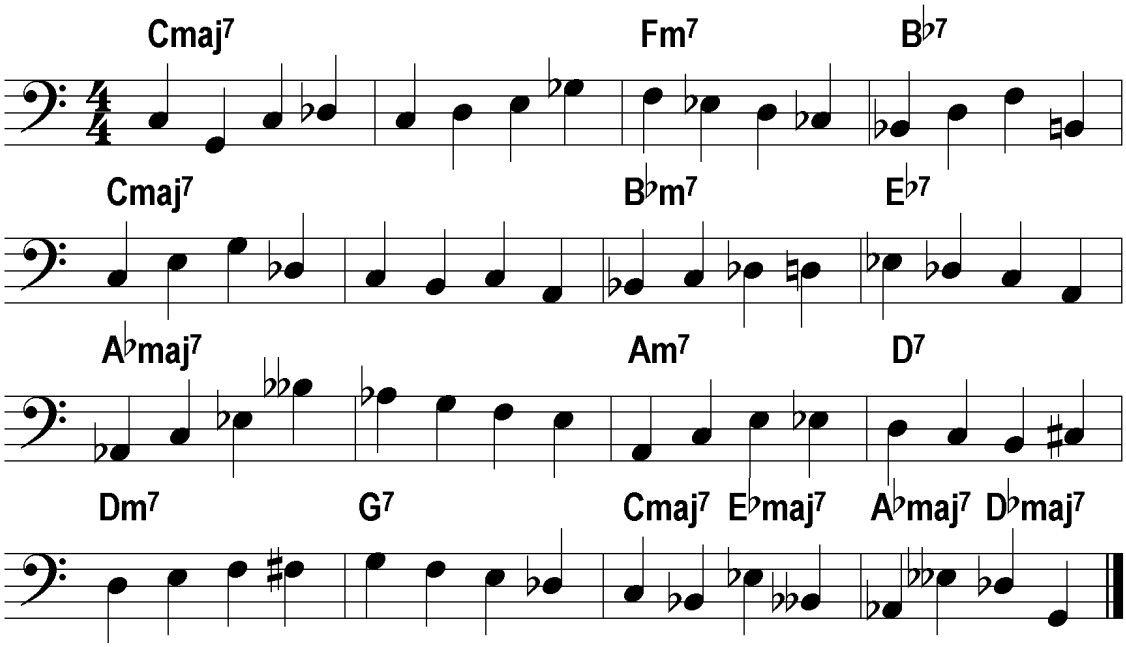


* This is a chord tone leading to a non-root chord tone, which will be treated later (Chapter 9).

[6] Changes - Jazz terminology for *chord sequence*.

And here are the same changes using outside leading notes.

Ex 11

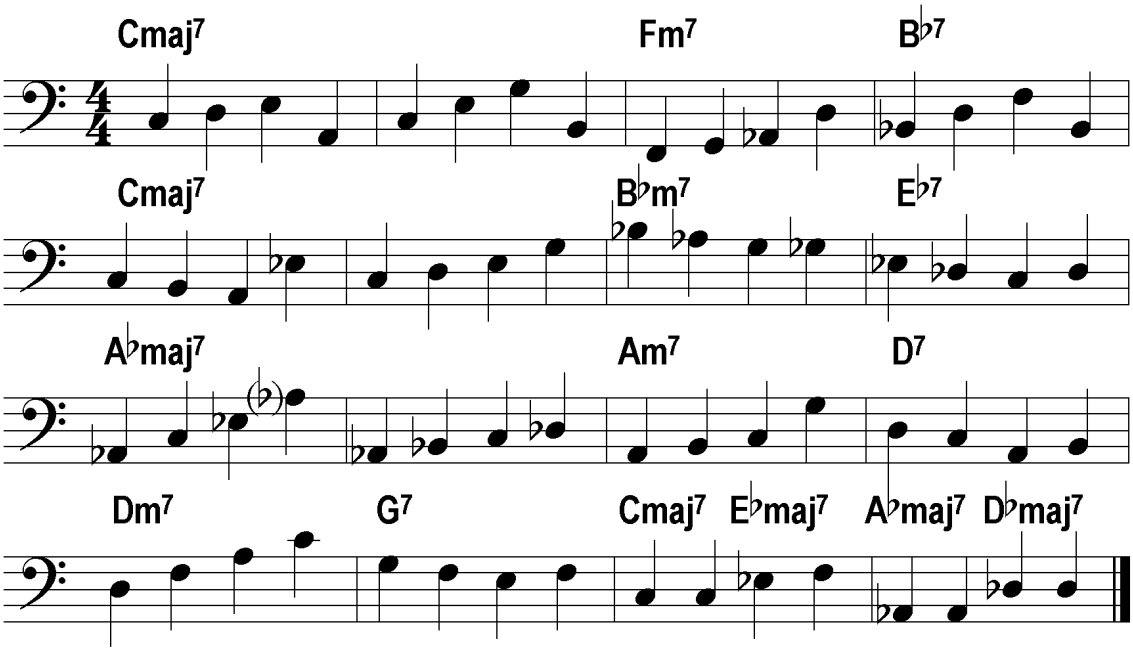


What works? What doesn't? You decide.

I would like to clear up a common misconception about *approach notes*. Leading notes, of course, are approach notes. But, approach notes are not necessarily leading notes. Ex 12 (p23) demonstrates this.

In Ex 12 chords are approached with non-leading notes:

Ex 12



Except for the approach notes (on beat 4) all other notes are fine; but hear how the non-leading approach notes really mess things up. (*This example justifies the theory that leading notes are essential).* In the last two bars, only root notes are used. This is a good technique to strengthen the turnaround[7].

An exception to the leading note principle is to use a whole tone from below when the approach note is a chord tone. For example, in Gm7 to C, the use of B^b as an approach note; or in B^{b7} to C the use of B^b as an approach note. This works because the approach notes are chord tones and therefore sound 'inside'. However, I regard them as *approach* notes only, as an ascending whole tone does not lead strongly. They are used more in certain, less traditional, styles of jazz-influenced music, such as Rhythm and Blues, Fusion, Pop, and Funk.

[7] Turnaround - A chord pattern at the end of the final phrase of a chorus, which leads back to the beginning of the theme.

In conclusion to this chapter, I recommend you learn to think, hear and know leading notes using the following system (you must do this approaching each and every chord):

Note that the following system uses some chord changes from Ex 10-12.

- $Cmaj^7$ to $Cmaj^7$ (1^{st} two bars)
  - Name the notes of the approaching arpeggio in ascending order - quickly!

    C E G B
  - Name the notes of the superimposed dominant triad (G) - quickly!

    G B D
  - Match notes from the first two steps

    G and B
  - Decide which to use (G or B) and commit yourself to using it - quickly!

    or

  - Decide on the 2^{nd} category leading note (D)

    or

  - Decide on the 3^{rd} category leading note (D^b)

Including the physical direction you choose to go on the instrument, the above steps should be carried out almost instantaneously.

- $A^{b}maj^{7}$ to $Amaj^{7}$ (bars 10-11)

    - Name the notes of the approaching arpeggio

        Ab C Eb G

    - Name the notes of the superimposed dominant triad

        E G# B

    - Match notes from steps the first two steps

        Only Ab/G#

    - Use that note (Ab/G#)

        or

    - Work out the other scales tones of $Abmaj^{7}$ and decide on the 2^{nd} category leading note (Bb)

        or

    - Pick the 3^{rd} category leading notes remaining from the superimposed dominant triad (E and B)

Continue this sequence of steps in the same fashion with each and every chord.

CHAPTER 4

ONE IN A HUNDRED

This chapter systematically deals with steps to learning, both practically and aurally, the leading notes in the context of the standard IIm7 V7 I jazz cadence. The ability to successfully apply the leading note principle to create forward motion in the IIm7 V7 I progression is crucial to this central harmonic concept in jazz.

I'd like to introduce a useful number system I've developed to learn the sound of the leading note qualities (and to learn a few more walking bass lines) over the practical $\mathrm{IIm}^7\ \mathrm{V}^7\ \mathrm{I}$ progression.

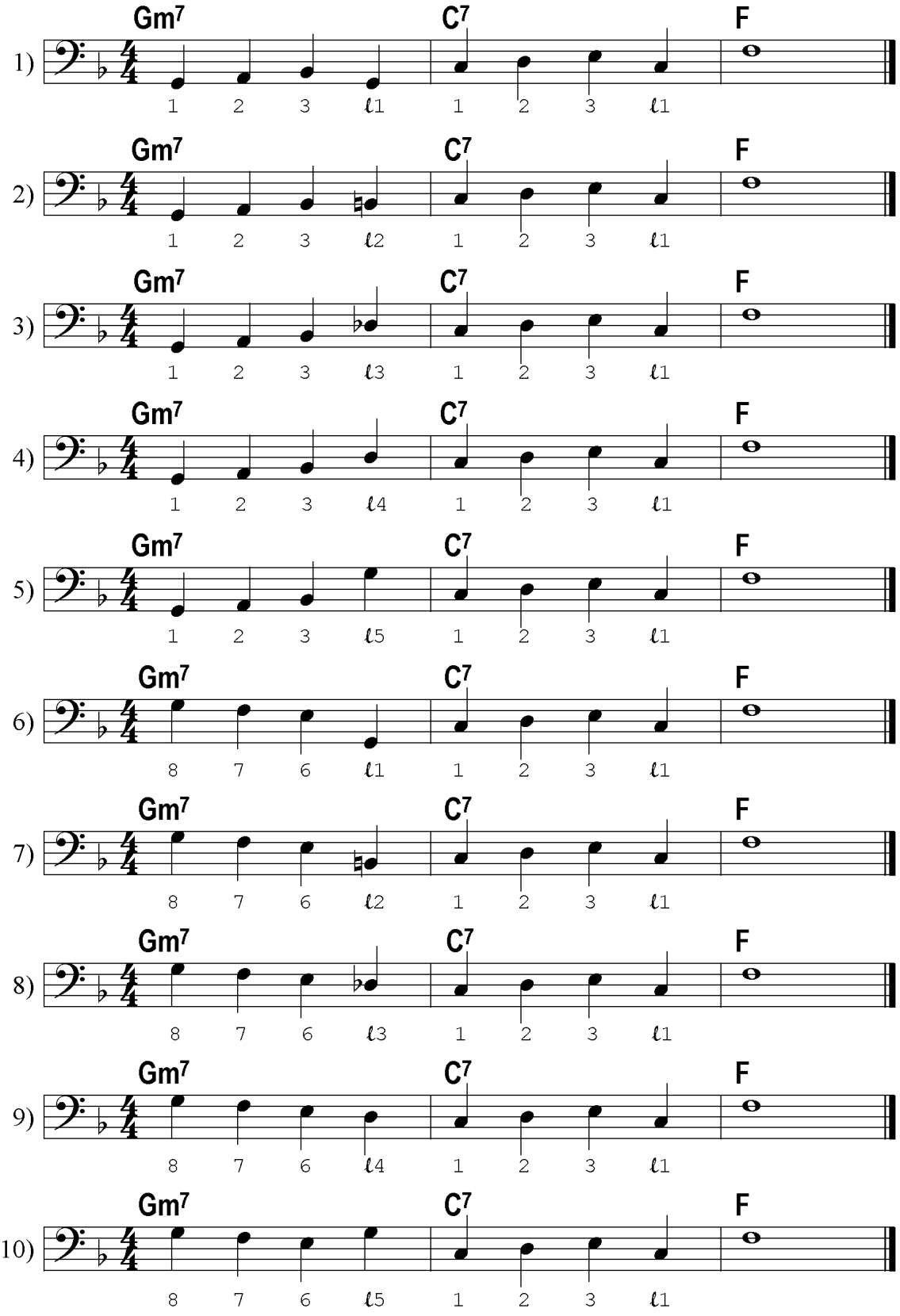
The principle (in 4/4 time) is to play notes 1 2 3 (ascending) or 8 7 6 (descending) of each *chord scale* on the first three beats of every bar, then one of the *leading notes*, l1 -l5, on beat four of every bar.

Using this system, one hundred different lines are created for a $\mathrm{IIm}^7\ \mathrm{V}^7\ \mathrm{I}$ progression. I have divided the hundred lines into ten series. When you play through each series you will hear how each leading note quality gives the line a distinct sound. Knowing this sound is what gives you the ability to choose a sound to suit the music of the moment.

The following pages contain the hundred lines in the key of F...

Ex 13

Series 1



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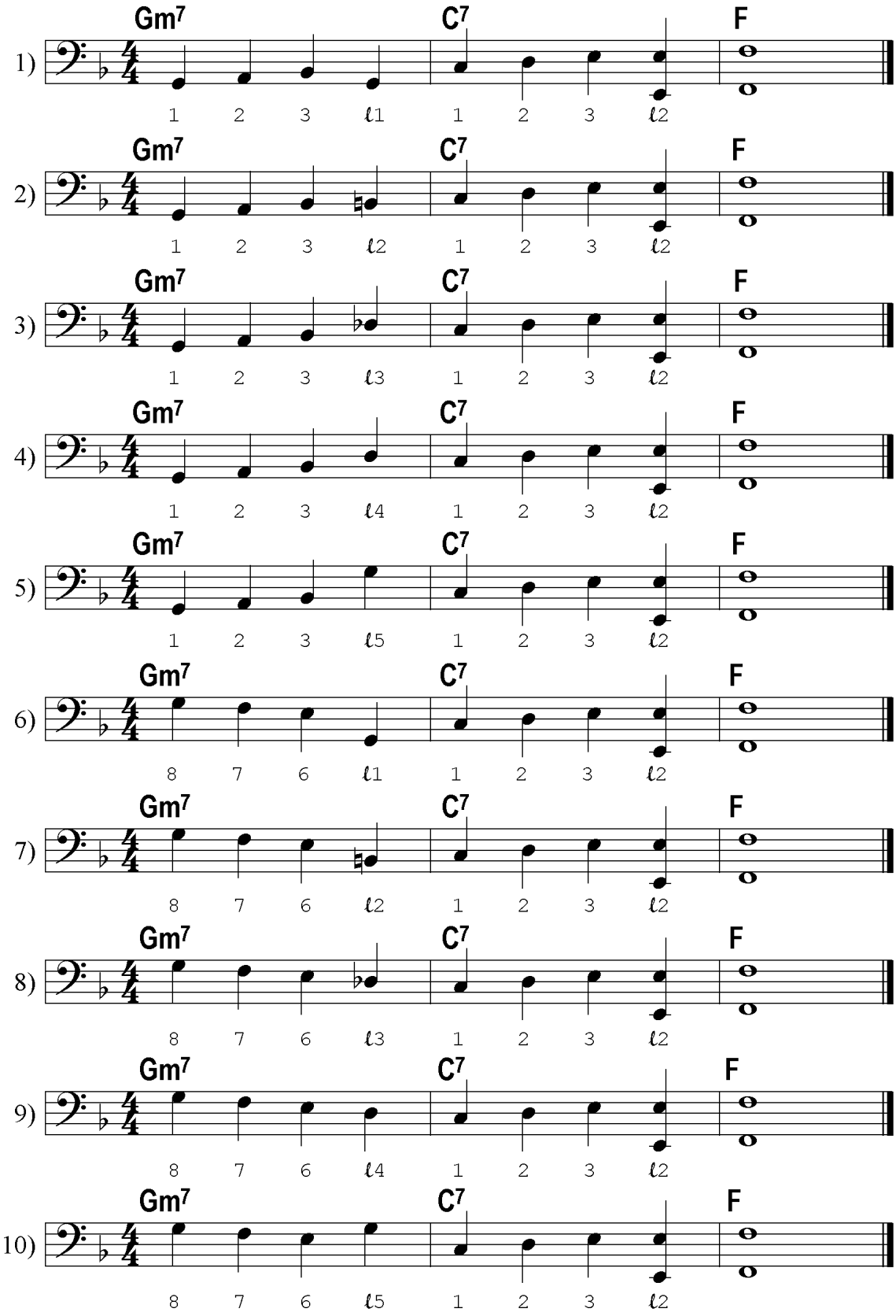
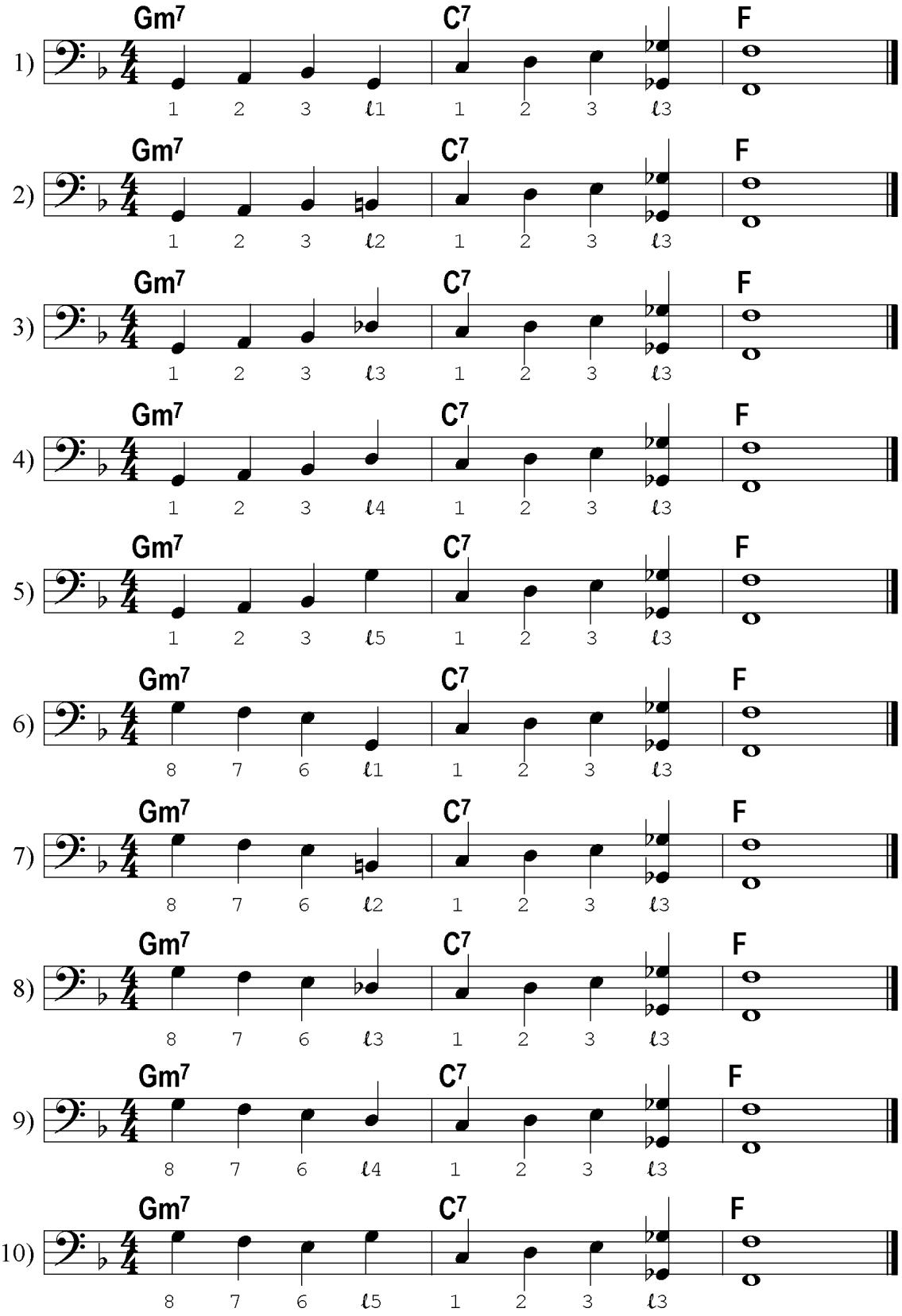

1)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ1 1 2 3 ℓ2
2)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ2 1 2 3 ℓ2
3)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ3 1 2 3 ℓ2
4)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ4 1 2 3 ℓ2
5)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ5 1 2 3 ℓ2
6)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ1 1 2 3 ℓ2
7)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ2 1 2 3 ℓ2
8)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ3 1 2 3 ℓ2
9)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ4 1 2 3 ℓ2
10)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ5 1 2 3 ℓ2

Series 3


1)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ1 1 2 3 ℓ3
2)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ2 1 2 3 ℓ3
3)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ3 1 2 3 ℓ3
4)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ4 1 2 3 ℓ3
5)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ5 1 2 3 ℓ3
6)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ1 1 2 3 ℓ3
7)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ2 1 2 3 ℓ3
8)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ3 1 2 3 ℓ3
9)
Gm7
C7
F
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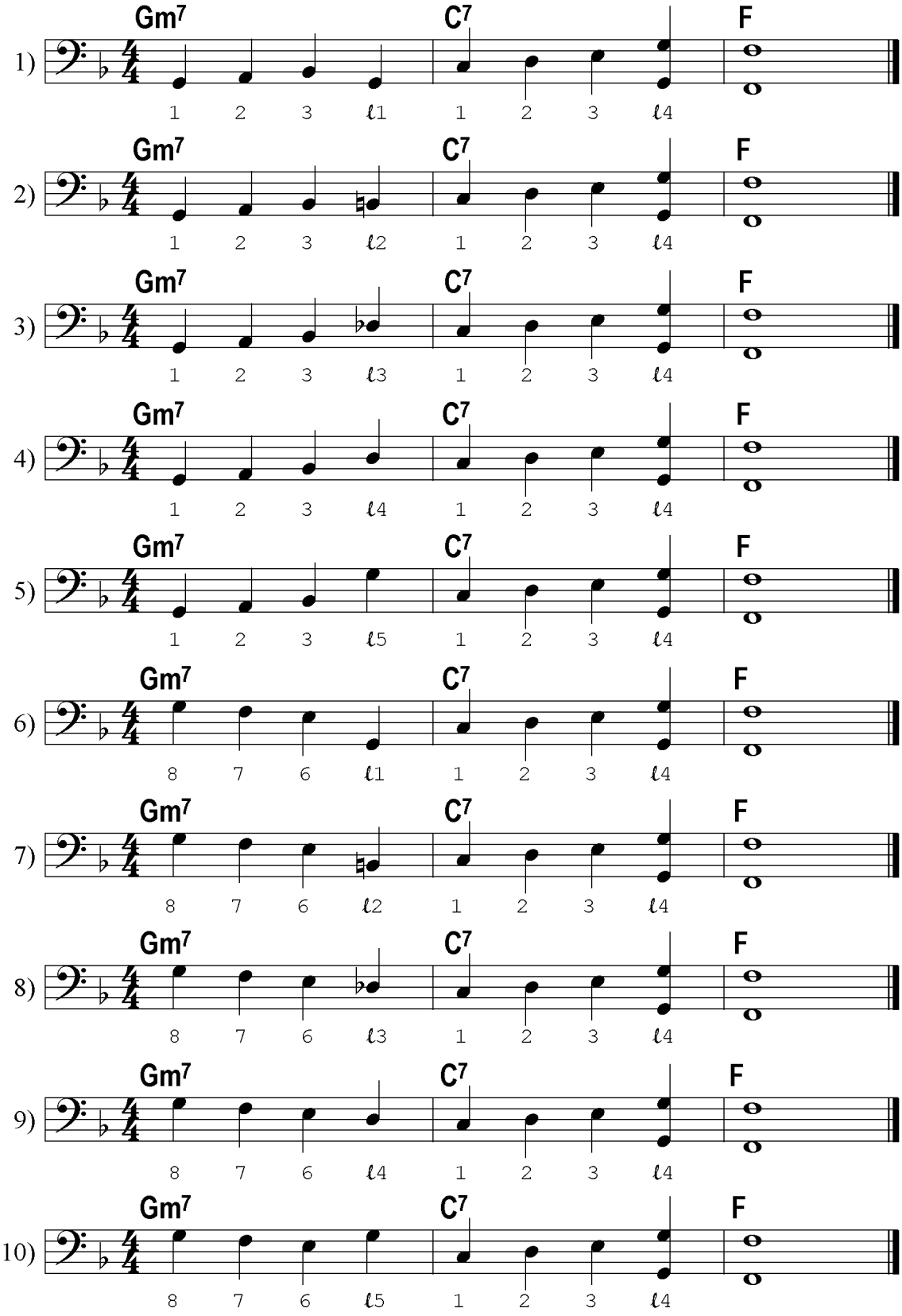
10)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ5 1 2 3 ℓ3

Series 4


1)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ1 1 2 3 ℓ4
2)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ2 1 2 3 ℓ4
3)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ3 1 2 3 ℓ4
4)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ4 1 2 3 ℓ4
5)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ5 1 2 3 ℓ4
6)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ1 1 2 3 ℓ4
7)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ2 1 2 3 ℓ4
8)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ3 1 2 3 ℓ4
9)
Gm7
C7
F
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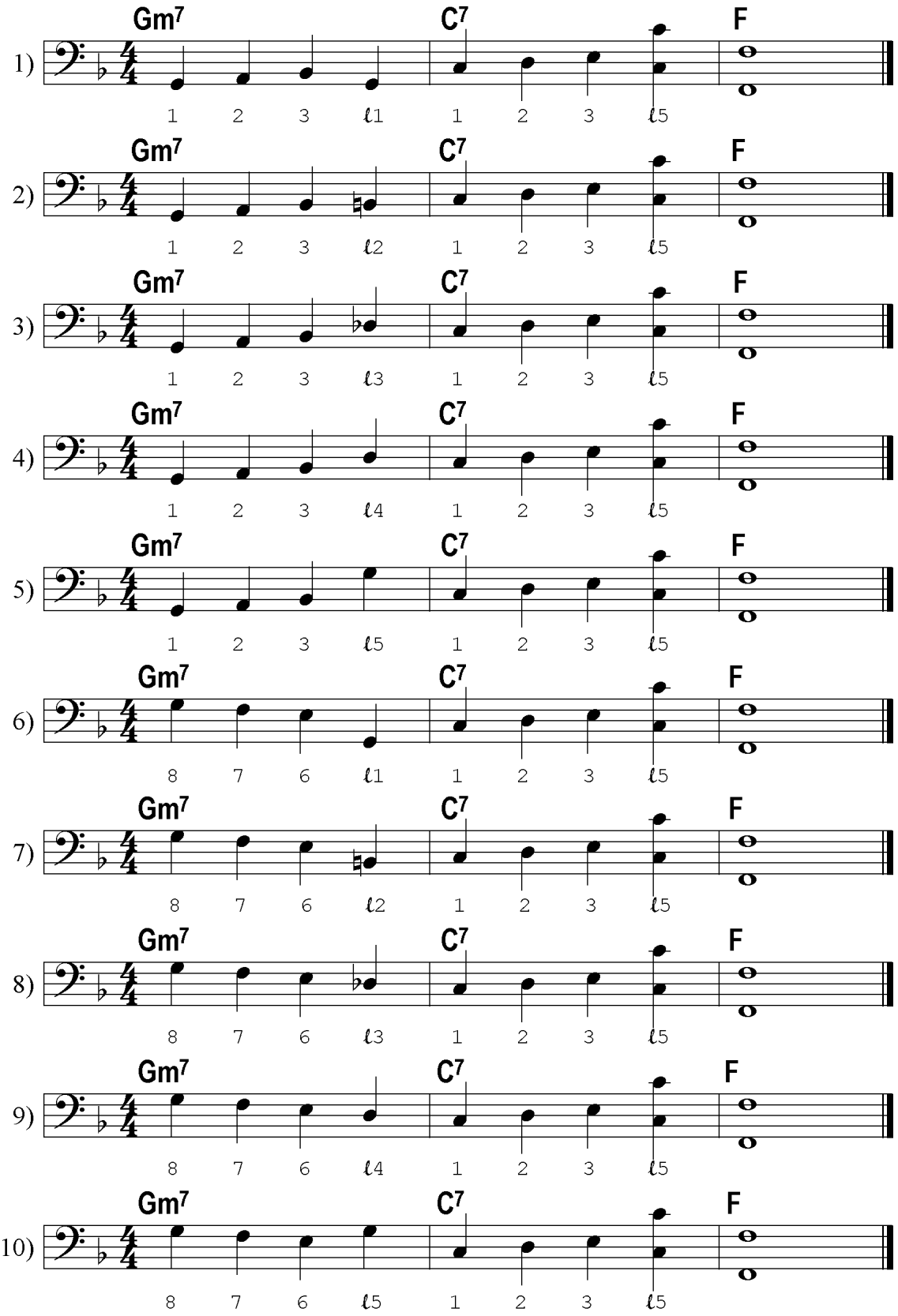
10)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ5 1 2 3 ℓ4

Series 5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2) Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ2 1 2 3 ℓ5
3) Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ3 1 2 3 ℓ5
4) Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ4 1 2 3 ℓ5
5) Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ5 1 2 3 ℓ5
6) Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ1 1 2 3 ℓ5
7) Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ2 1 2 3 ℓ5
8) Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ3 1 2 3 ℓ5
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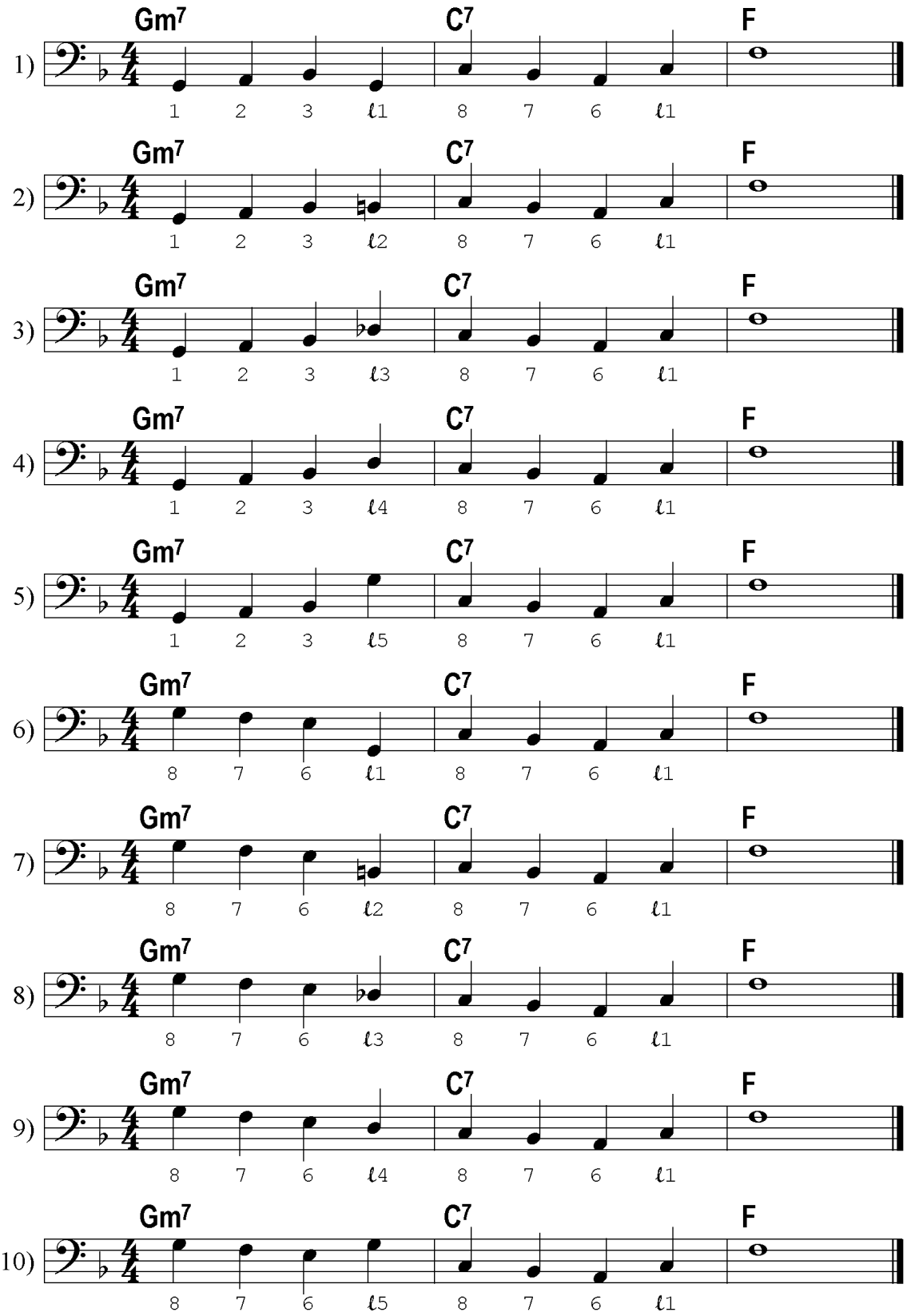
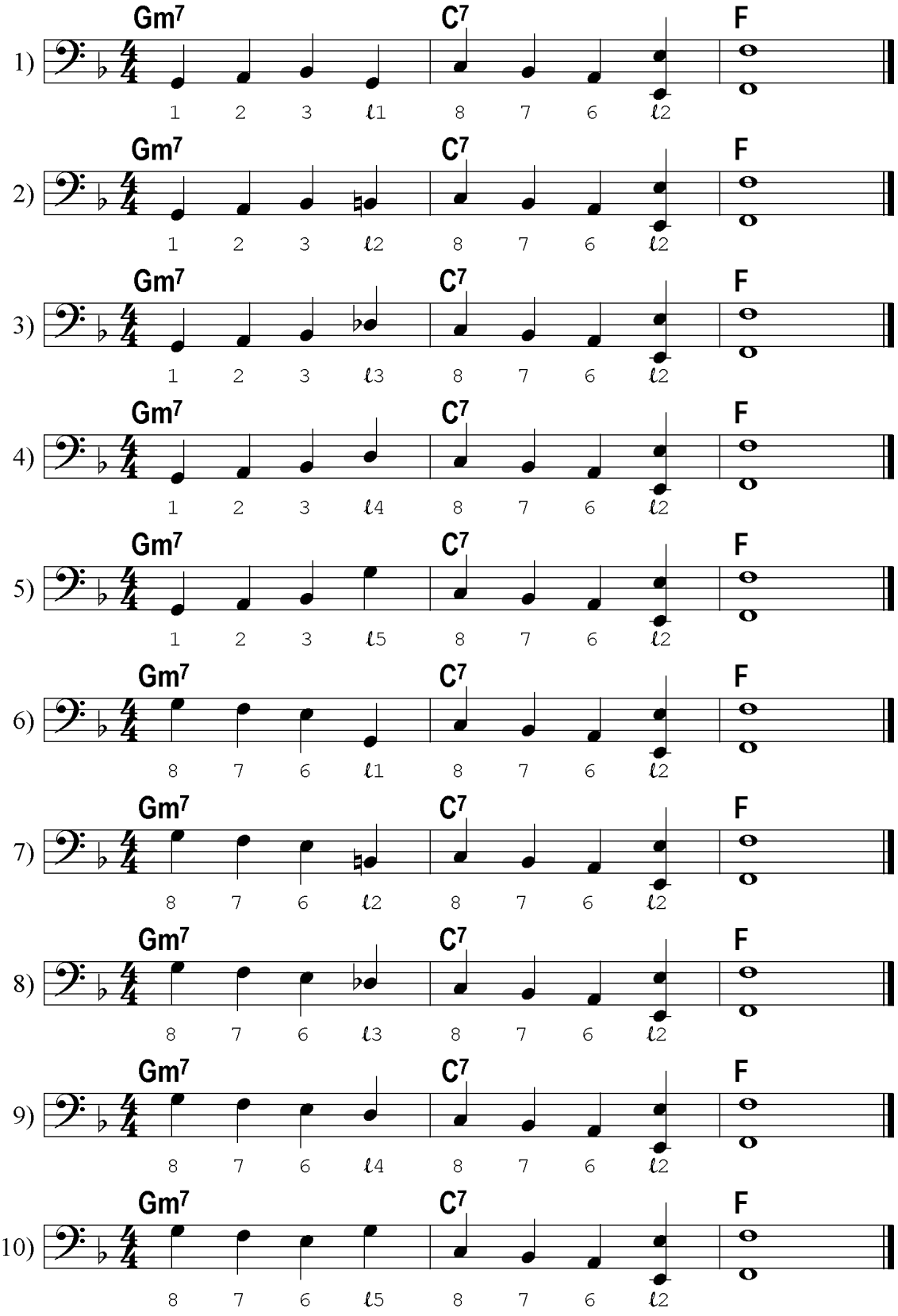
8 7 6 ℓ4 1 2 3 ℓ5
10) Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ5 1 2 3 ℓ5

Series 6


1)
Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ1 8 7 6 ℓ1
2)
Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ2 8 7 6 ℓ1
3)
Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ3 8 7 6 ℓ1
4)
Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ4 8 7 6 ℓ1
5)
Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ5 8 7 6 ℓ1
6)
Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ1 8 7 6 ℓ1
7)
Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ2 8 7 6 ℓ1
8)
Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ3 8 7 6 ℓ1
9)
Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ4 8 7 6 ℓ1
10)
Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ5 8 7 6 ℓ1

Series 7


Gm7
C7
F
1)
1 2 3 ℓ1 8 7 6 ℓ2
2)
1 2 3 ℓ2 8 7 6 ℓ2
3)
1 2 3 ℓ3 8 7 6 ℓ2
4)
1 2 3 ℓ4 8 7 6 ℓ2
5)
1 2 3 ℓ5 8 7 6 ℓ2
6)
8 7 6 ℓ1 8 7 6 ℓ2
7)
8 7 6 ℓ2 8 7 6 ℓ2
8)
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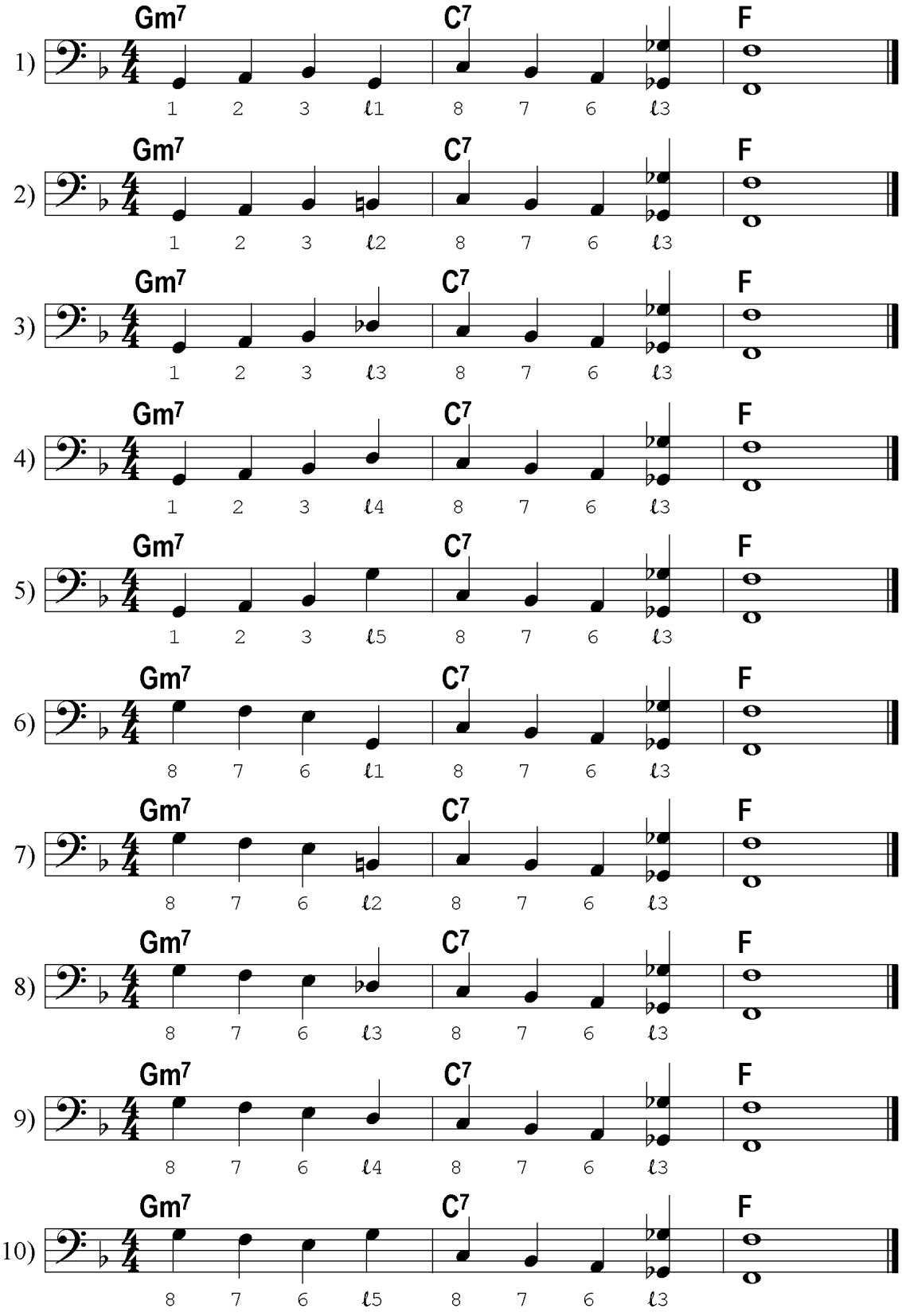
10)
8 7 6 ℓ5 8 7 6 ℓ2

Series 8


1)
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1 2 3 ℓ1 8 7 6 ℓ3
2)
Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ2 8 7 6 ℓ3
3)
Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ3 8 7 6 ℓ3
4)
Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ4 8 7 6 ℓ3
5)
Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ5 8 7 6 ℓ3
6)
Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ1 8 7 6 ℓ3
7)
Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ2 8 7 6 ℓ3
8)
Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ3 8 7 6 ℓ3
9)
Gm7 C7 F
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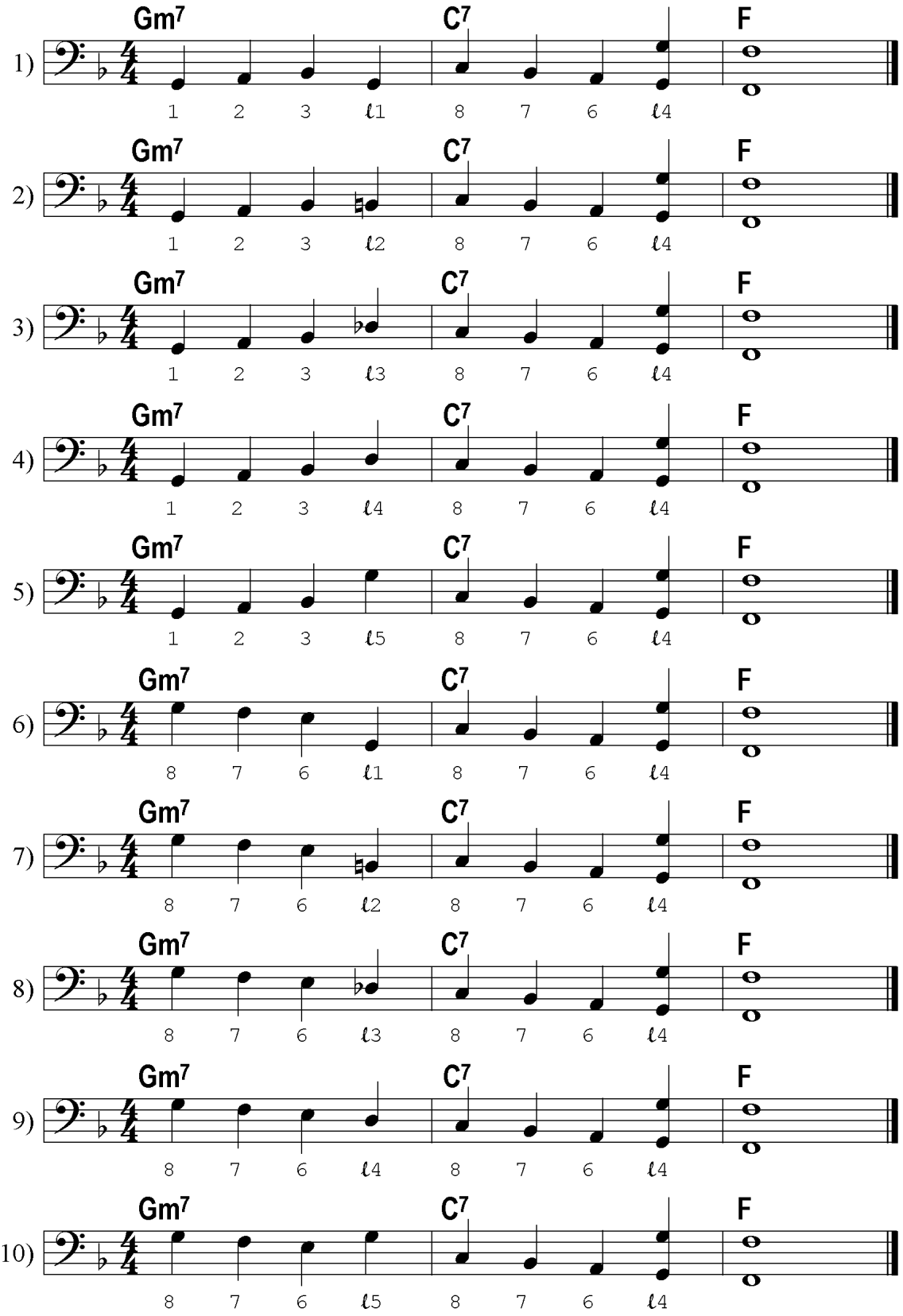
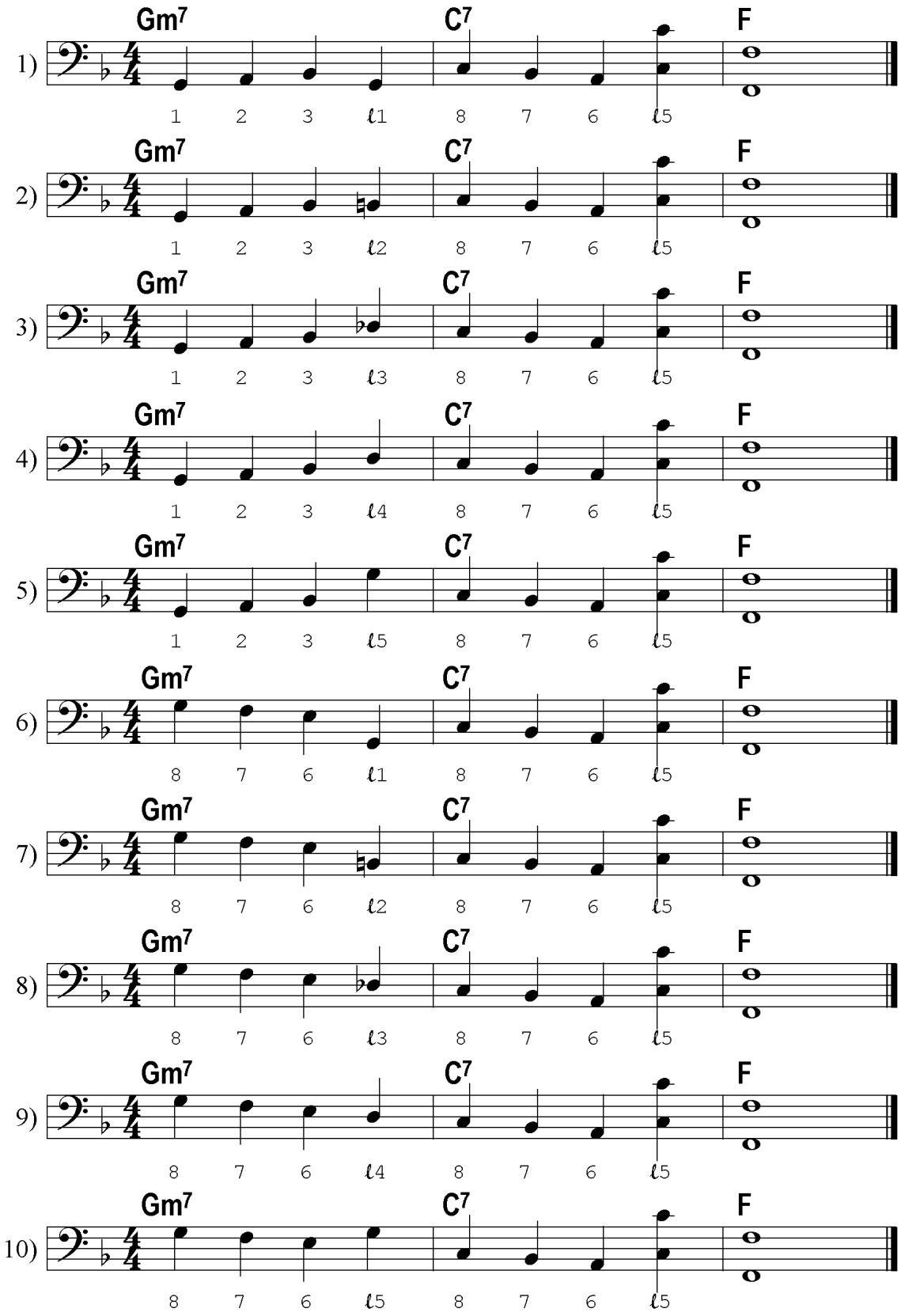
10)
Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ5 8 7 6 ℓ3

Series 9


1) Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ1 8 7 6 ℓ4
2) Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ2 8 7 6 ℓ4
3) Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ3 8 7 6 ℓ4
4) Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ4 8 7 6 ℓ4
5) Gm7 C7 F
1 2 3 ℓ5 8 7 6 ℓ4
6) Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ1 8 7 6 ℓ4
7) Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ2 8 7 6 ℓ4
8) Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ3 8 7 6 ℓ4
9) Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ4 8 7 6 ℓ4
10) Gm7 C7 F
8 7 6 ℓ5 8 7 6 ℓ4

Series 10


1)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ1 8 7 6 ℓ5
2)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ2 8 7 6 ℓ5
3)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ3 8 7 6 ℓ5
4)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ4 8 7 6 ℓ5
5)
Gm7
C7
F
1 2 3 ℓ5 8 7 6 ℓ5
6)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ1 8 7 6 ℓ5
7)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ2 8 7 6 ℓ5
8)
Gm7
C7
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8 7 6 ℓ3 8 7 6 ℓ5
9)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ4 8 7 6 ℓ5
10)
Gm7
C7
F
8 7 6 ℓ5 8 7 6 ℓ5

One hundred IIm7 V7 I lines in twelve keys gives twelve hundred lines to practise. And this does not include the enormous amount of variation through octave changes (those with note repeats are noted in the examples as options), different registers, positions, etc.

As a practice method for the hundred lines, I recommend using a metronome and increasing the tempo for each series of ten lines. This will also build your concentration and stamina.

This method of 1 2 3 *lead* or 8 7 6 *lead* can be applied to <u>any</u> chord sequence.

Below are examples using the chords $Gmaj^7$ to C^7 to F:

1-2-3-leading notes 1-5 (Ascending)	**1-2-3-leading note 1 (Ascending)**	**1**
G A B G	C D E C	F
G A B B	C D E C	F
G A B D^b	C D E C	F
G A B D	C D E C	F
G A B G	C D E C	F

8-7-6-leading notes 1-5 (Descending)	**1-2-3-leading note 1 (Ascending)**	**1**
G $F^\#$ E G	C D E C	F
G $F^\#$ E B	C D E C	F
G $F^\#$ E D^b	C D E C	F
G $F^\#$ E D	C D E C	F
G $F^\#$ E G	C D E C	F

Remember to use the *chord scale*!

As the system is numerical (i.e. 1 2 3 or 8 7 6) you must insert the correct 3^{rds} and 7^{ths} based on the chord scale:

- major 3^{rds} on major chords
- minor 3^{rds} ($^b3$) on minor and diminished chords
- major 7^{ths} on chords containing the major 7^{th}
- minor 7^{ths} ($^b7$) on chords containing the minor 7^{th}

This brings me to one very common, even popular, misconception.

Often musicians think it is necessary to have a thorough knowledge of modes to construct a good walking bass line. Whilst an essential ingredient for many soloing concepts in jazz, modes are not a primary consideration for walking bass. As you have seen, modes have not been an issue in this Method so far. However, a $^{b}9$ will be necessary on beat 2 of a bar if the chord is analysed to be a IIIm7, $VIIm^{7(b5)}$, $IIm^{7(b5)}$ or a $V^{7(b9)}$. The same principle applies to chords with a $^{b}13$, becoming a $^{b}6$ using this numerical approach.

Make sure you have understood the content of this chapter before moving on. The logic of the next chapter will then be evident.

CHAPTER 5

SIGNS OF THE TIME

Because jazz is not only played in 4/4 time, it is important to be able to play fluent walking bass in any time signature. In this chapter you will see how the leading note principle is used to create forward motion in different time signatures.

Let's take a *jazz blues* progression to make this harmonically more interesting.

We'll use this set of changes throughout this chapter:

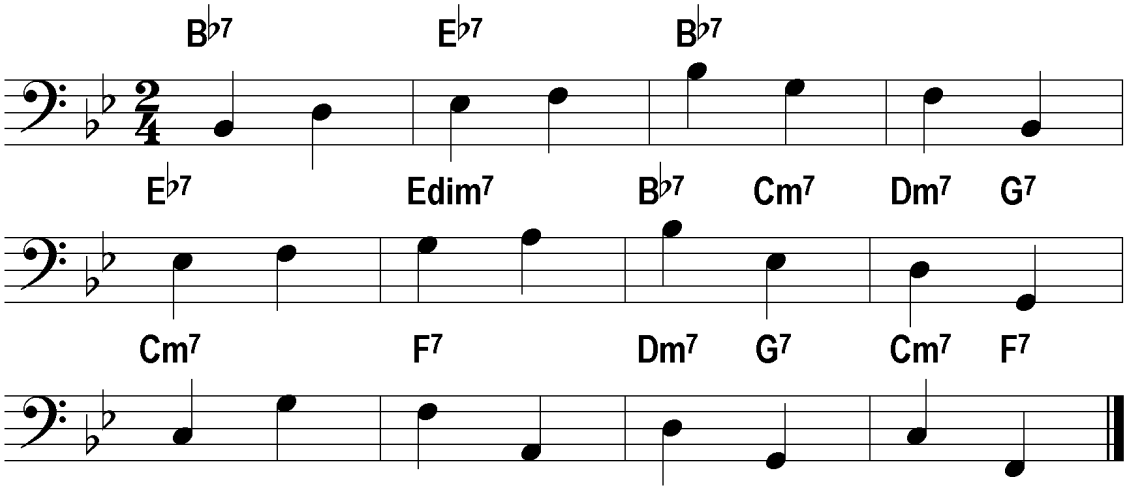
| B^{b7} | E^{b7} | B^{b7} | | |

| E^{b7} | $Edim^{7}$ | B^{b7} Cm^{7} | Dm^{7} G^{7} | |

| Cm^{7} | F^{7} | Dm^{7} G^{7} | Cm^{7} F^{7} | |

Beginning with a time signature of 2/4, here's an example using 1st and 2nd category leading notes.

Ex 14

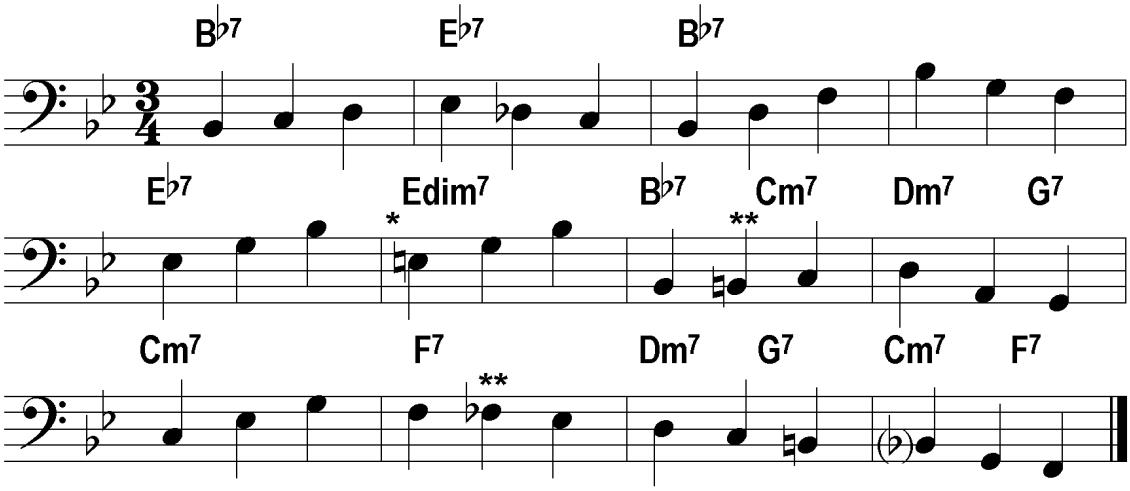


Encountering a blues in 2/4 is a very rare event. You could use this line as a half-time feel in 4/4, i.e. play each note as a half-note. However, the next example (Ex 15), in 3/4, is more common.

Generally, but not principally, if you have two chords per bar in an odd time signature, the second chord is placed in the last, smaller part of the bar. In 3/4 the second chord is placed on beat 3, unless you want to use a polyrhythmic approach and indicate 2 over 3; then the second chord is in the middle of the bar, i.e. on the '2 and' (2 +).

The next two examples show both approaches.

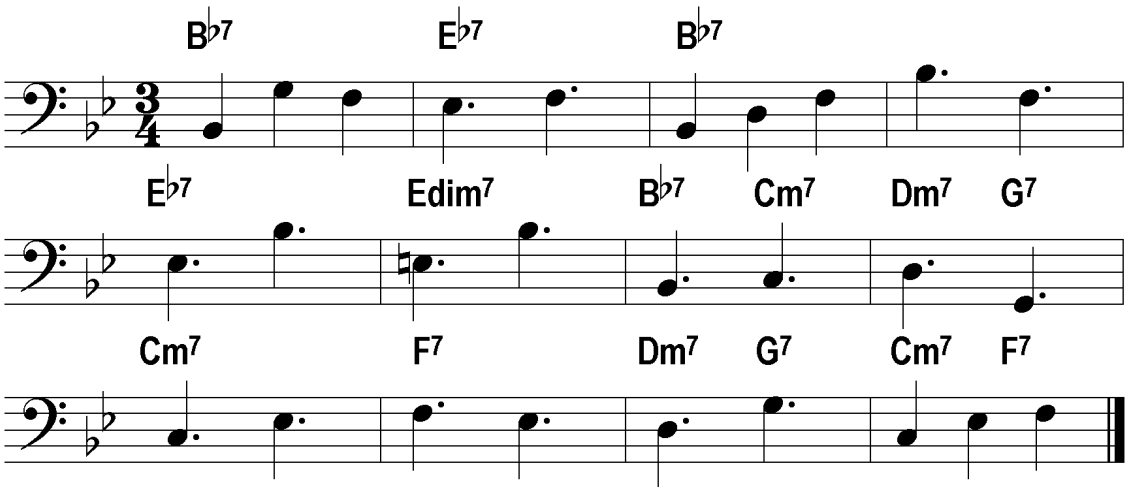
Ex 15



*This is a strong sequence where leading notes are not necessary.

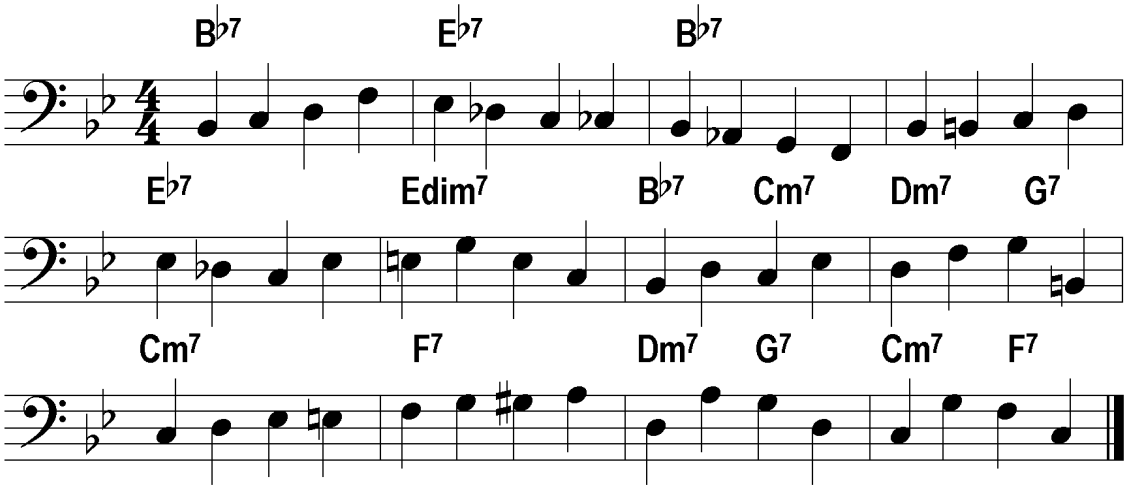
**Use of chromatic passing tones (on the harmonically weaker beat of the bar) leading to chord tones.

Ex 16



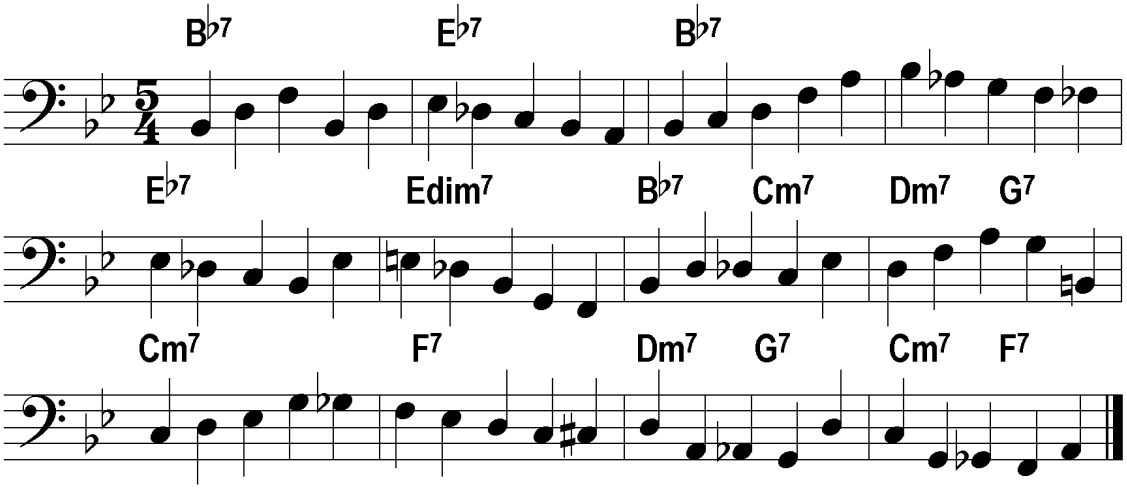
And in a time signature of 4/4...

Ex 17



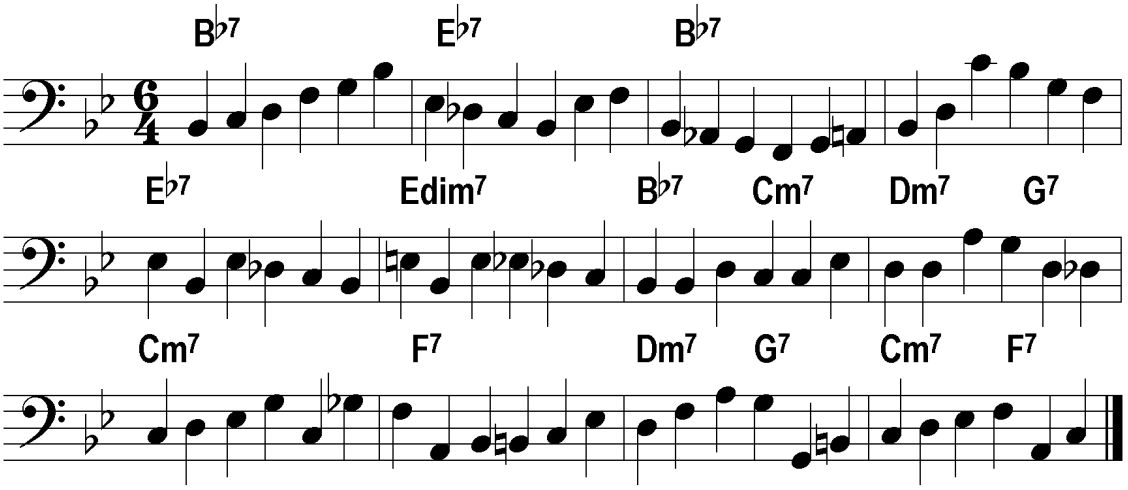
In 5/4, the trick is to play a strong chord tone (preferably the root or fifth) on beat 4. This *harmonic rhythm* (3+2) will strengthen the sense of form and therefore enable the listener (musician or not) to keep track.

Ex 18



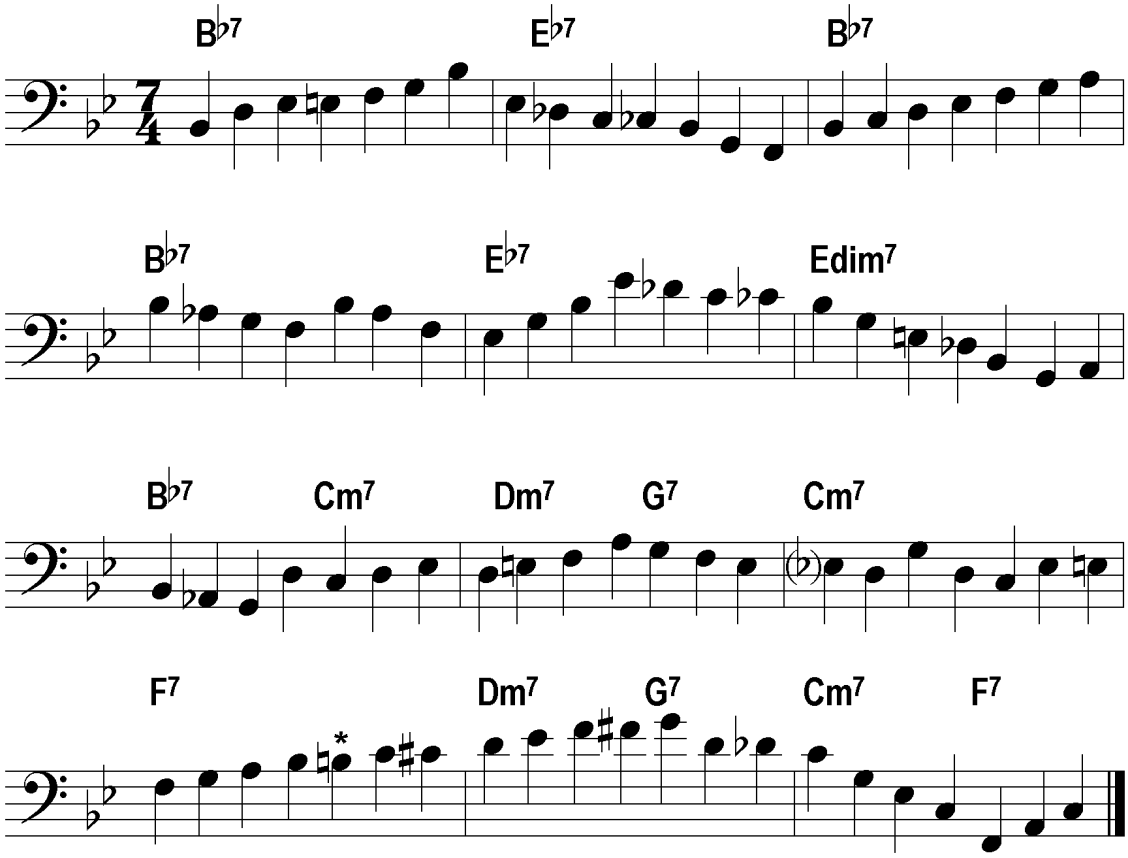
6/4 can be treated similar to two bars of 3/4, except it is best to place mainly chord tones other than the root on beat 4 (in bars which contain only one chord) otherwise it will sound like twenty four bars in 3/4.

Ex 19



The next example is in 7/4. Again, in the odd time signature, the second chord is usually placed in the last part of the bar.

Ex 20



With one exception (*), there is always a chord tone on beat 5.

7/8, 6/8, etc. in swing feel may be treated like 7/4, 6/4 etc. However when odd time signatures are not played in *swing feel* (as in jazz-rock, marches, tarantellas, etc) the rhythm is different. I will not treat this here as this Method deals only with walking bass.

CHAPTER 6

TURNING AROUND

An important and widely used harmonic concept in jazz is the turnaround. It is imperative for the player of walking bass to be able to deal with turnarounds instantaneously in the most suitable musical way. This chapter gives insight into ways of dealing with turnaround patterns.

A *turnaround* (sometimes called turn back) is a chord cycle usually leading (back) to the tonic. The cycle usually contains four different chords most often played within two or four bars, resolving to the tonic. As an example of a turnaround, refer to the last two bars of the chord sequences used in Ex 14-20 (Chapter 5).

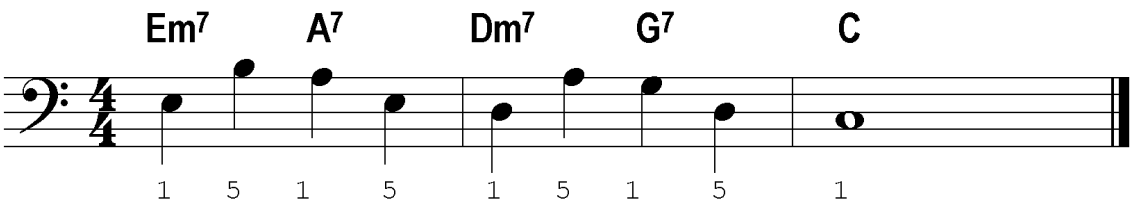
Here I will deal with the common 3 6 2 5 turnaround, generally noted as IIIm^7 VI^7 IIm^7 V^7, within a two bar pattern, leading to I, in the key of C. Thus, the chords are Em^7 A^7 Dm^7 G^7 to C.

First play the following root notes only, with an even pulse: E E A A D D G G C... This will give an indication of the harmonic field.

The following system, in 4/4-time, always uses the roots of the chords where they fall (i.e. on beats 1 and 3); beats 2 and 4 are leading notes and chord tones. The system employs an intervallic approach, beginning with roots and 5^{ths} (which are then inverted and altered) and continuing with roots and 3^{rds} (which are then also inverted and altered). Only 3^{rds} and 5^{ths} are used to approach to next chord root. The 7th of each chord would naturally resolve to the 3rd of the next chord, creating a false harmonic impression. This pertains especially to the bass register and is therefore not used.

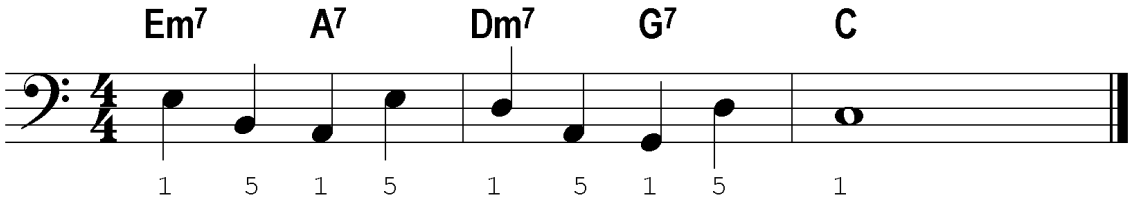
Play Ex 21 and note how the line ascends and descends naturally in each bar. The numbers under the notes are the chord tones, i.e. intervalically speaking 1= the root, 5 = the 5th.

Ex 21



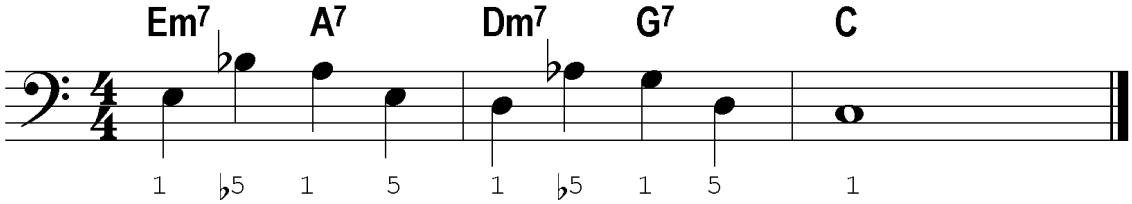
Ex 22 has the same chord tones, but is an *inversion* (descending, ascending) of Ex 21.

Ex 22



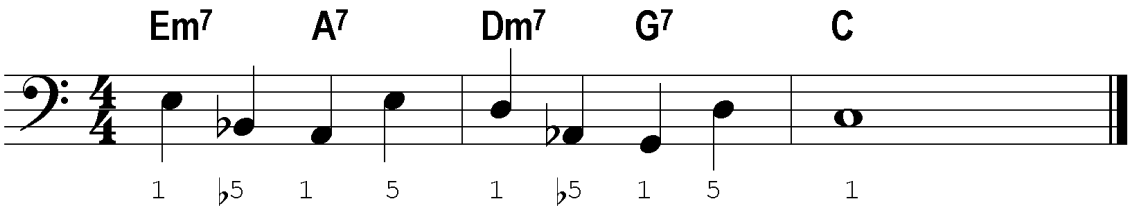
Ex 23 employs the $^{b}5$ on both minor chords. Note that if they were both $min^{7(b5)}$ chords, then this would be a 1st category leading note.

Ex 23



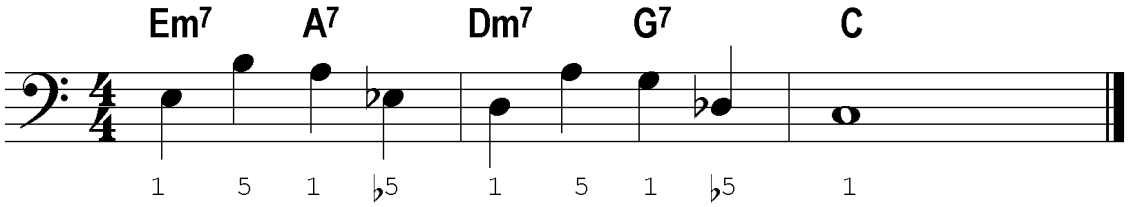
Ex 24 is the inversion of the preceding example.

Ex 24

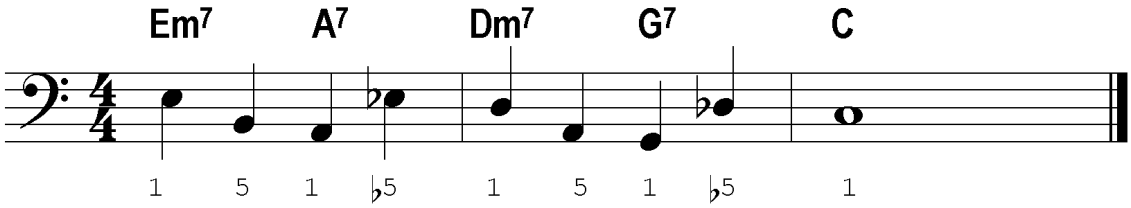


Ex 25-26 employ the $^{b}5$ on the dominant 7 chords.

Ex 25

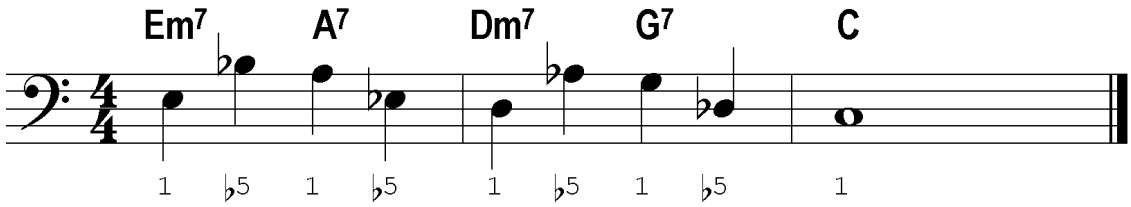


Ex 26

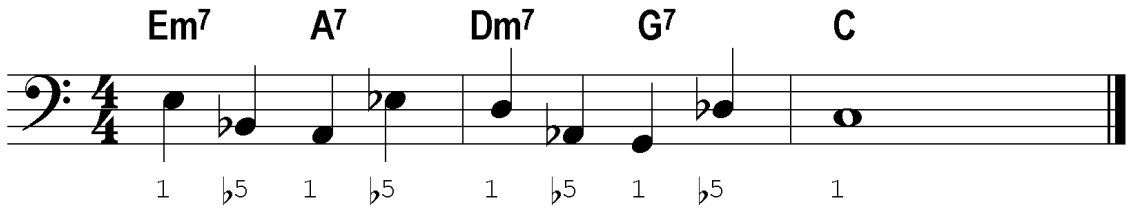


Ex 27-28 have a $^{b}5$ on all chords (arguably the most “jazzy” of the examples so far).

Ex 27



Ex 28



Ex 25 and 27 certainly indicate tritone substitutes on beats 2 and/or 4.

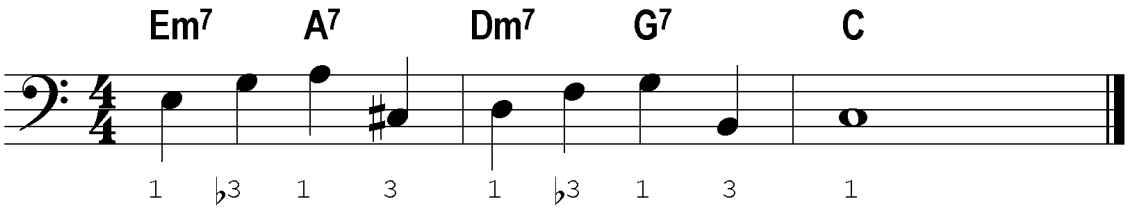
The previous eight examples, 21-28, show eight different ways of playing over the same turnaround. If, however, we combine bar one of Ex 21 with bar two of Ex 22, for example, and go through *all* the permutations, we’ll find 64 possibilities… 64 ways of playing over the same turnaround using only the root and 5th of each chord.

This system in all twelve keys gives 768 possibilities.

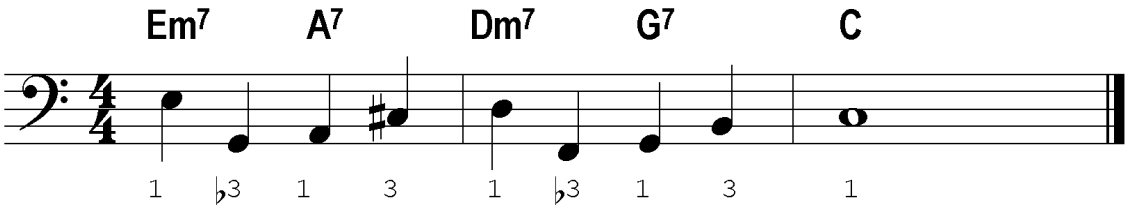
Now onto the 3rds as approach/leading notes. The following examples, I'm sure, will create some new bass lines… even for experienced players.

Ex 29 and 30 use the "correct" 3rds.

Ex 29



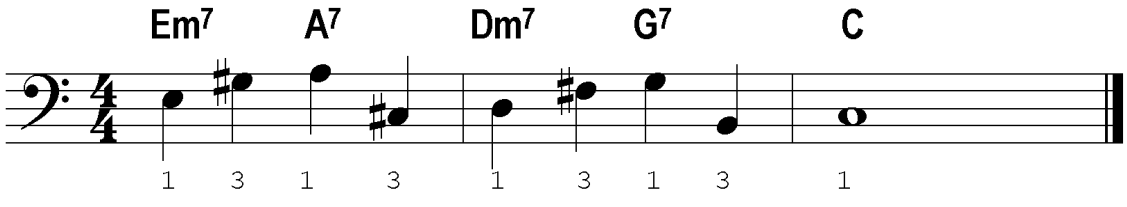
Ex 30



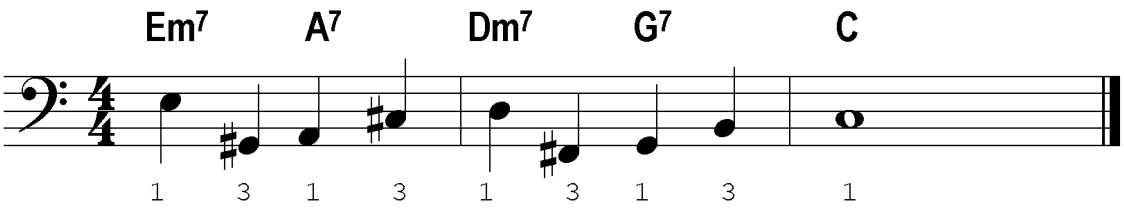
Note that the ascending/descending or descending/ascending quality of the line has been retained. This creates a better balance as opposed to going in one direction for the entire bar.

Ex 31 and 32, use the major 3rd on the minor chord. This works at medium to fast tempos. Try it in conjunction with a variety of minor chords and judge for yourself.

Ex 31

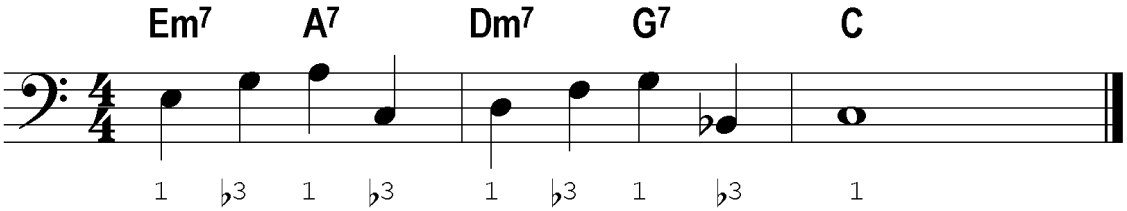


Ex 32

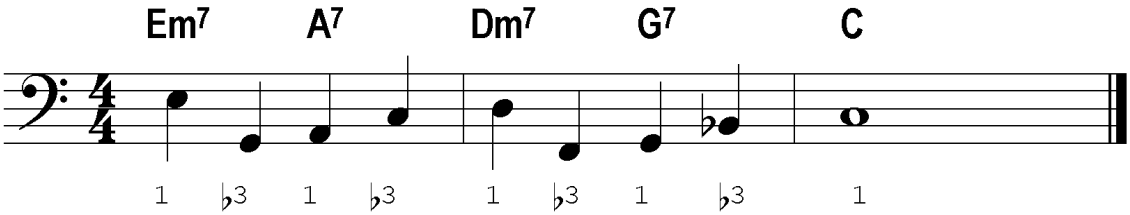


Ex 33 and 34 have the correct 3rd on the minor chord and the $^{b}3$ or $^{\#}9$ on the dominant 7 chord. This is a very common note choice for the highly alterable dominant 7 chord.

Ex 33

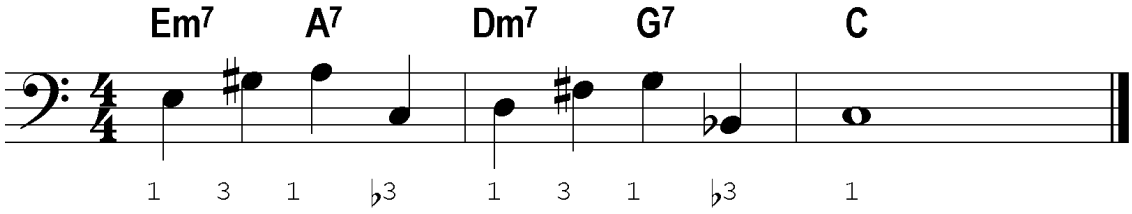


Ex 34

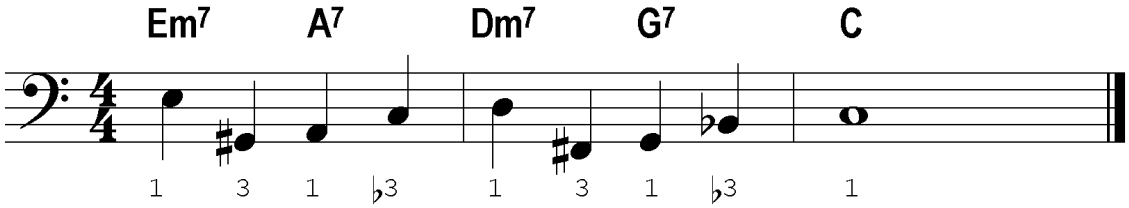


Finally, Ex 35 and 36 have the major 3rd on the minor chord and the minor 3rd on the major (dominant 7) chord.

Ex 35



Ex 36



Again, 64 permutations are available in each key, creating a total of 768 possibilities in all twelve keys. Combine the 5ths with the 3rds in one-bar or half-bar formats. You will see that there is *lots* to work with. An interesting fact: there are 65,536 possible combinations (in one key alone); therefore to restrict yourself to playing *patterned* turnaround lines would be a sign of insufficient investigation and creativity.

The main thing, however, is to understand the system and to employ what you hear to be the most appropriate combination of notes at any given musical moment.

The examples given above were based on one turnaround pattern only. I strongly urge you to explore further possibilities using the same or similar guidelines. Ultimately, the best way of learning is to find out for yourself.

CHAPTER 7

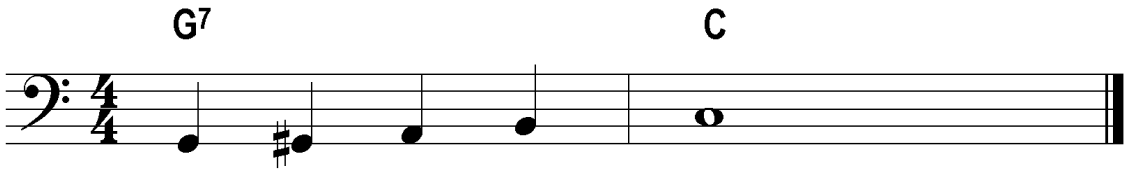
STAY CLOSE

This segment deals with the shortest distance between chord roots. The following concept is derived from not only the physical proximity of notes, but also from the desire to find the best possible chord outline while using limited range (beneficial for fast playing). This idea is also very useful for playing bass lines on instruments such as keyboard and guitar.

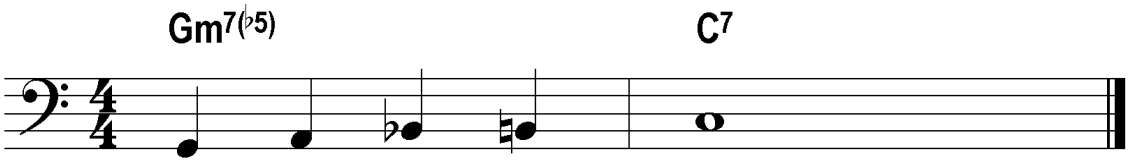
The first ten examples, 37-46, are based on ascending or descending lines from chord root G to chord root C using various chord qualities

Ascending

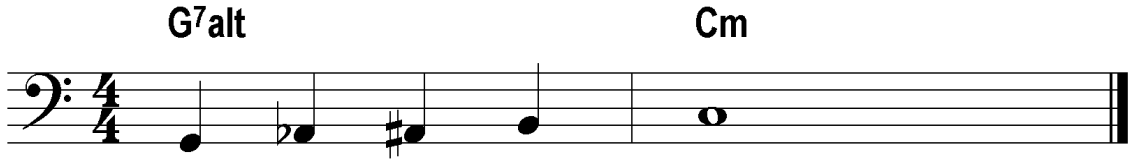
Ex 37



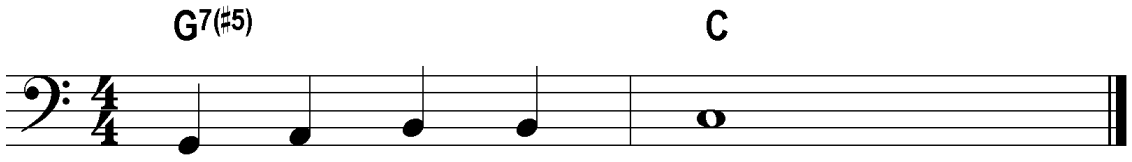
Ex 38



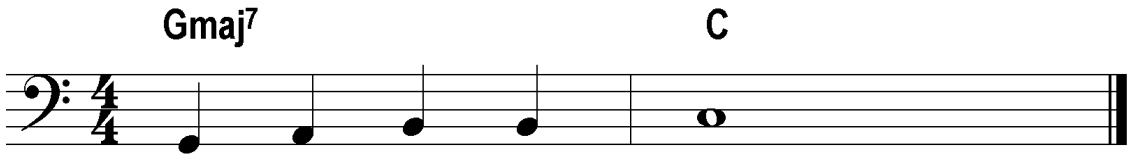
Ex 39



Ex 40

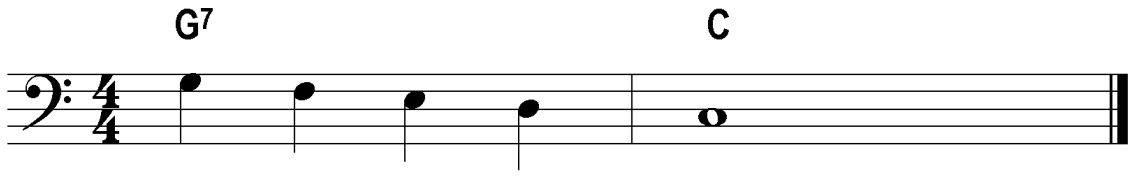


Ex 41

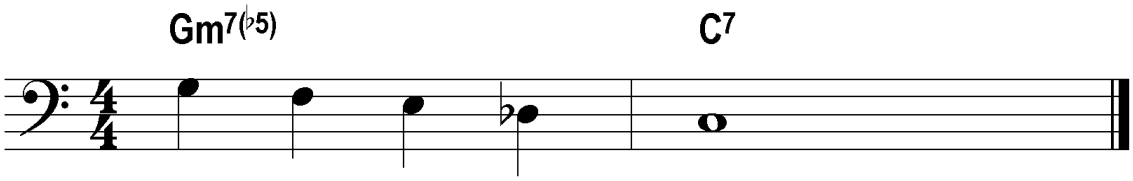


Descending

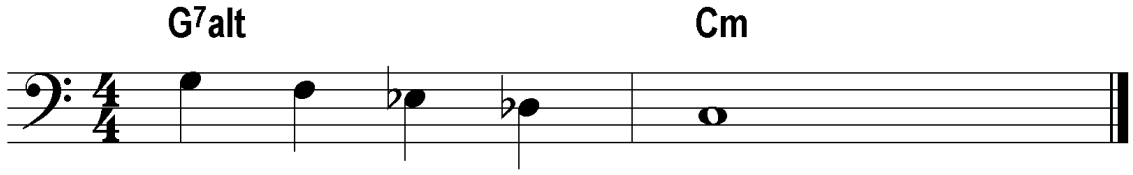
Ex 42



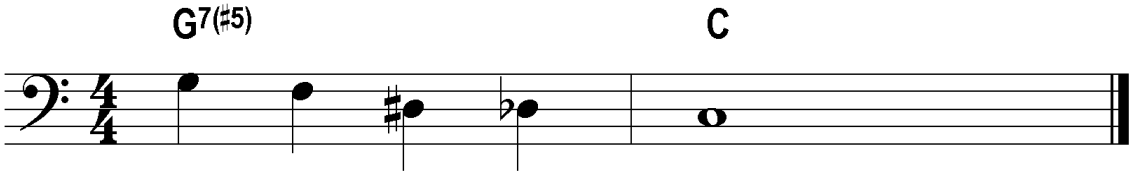
Ex 43



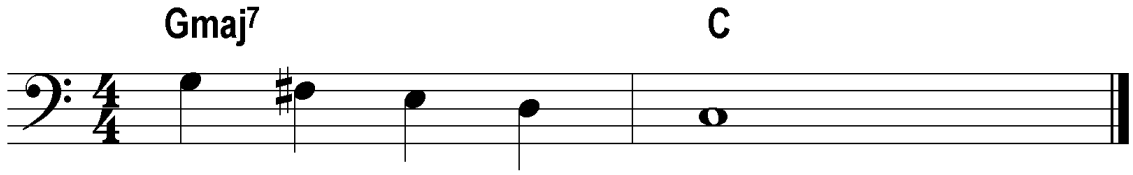
Ex 44



Ex 45



Ex 46



Notice that some lines are the same, e.g. $G^{7\#5}$ and $Gmaj^{7}$ to C have the same ascending line but not the same descending line. This is because the first notes (G A B) of the chord scales are the same but the descending notes of each chord scale are different. Sometimes enharmonic equivalents have been used

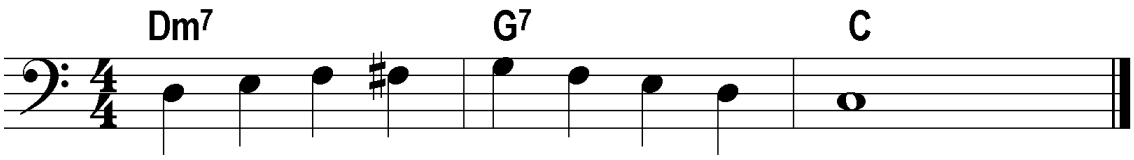
in the music notation for ease of reading. The rule is: if it is not a chord scale tone, use sharps for ascending notes and flats for descending notes.

The first example of this group (Ex 37), I believe, *best* reflects the sound of the dominant 7 chord leading to a tonic: hence the use of the $^{b}9$ ($A^{b}/G^{\#}$) as a passing non chord-scale tone. Many players would use the line immediately following (Ex 38) as a shortest distance possibility. However, that line definitely sounds more like a Gm^{7} than a G^{7}. One exception or excuse: To use the notes G A B^{b} B to C on G^{7} to C would be to create a "bluesy" sound, i.e. use of the $^{\#}9$ ($A^{\#}/B^{b}$) on the G^{7}… The choice, then, should be a matter of style and personal taste and not one made of ignorance.

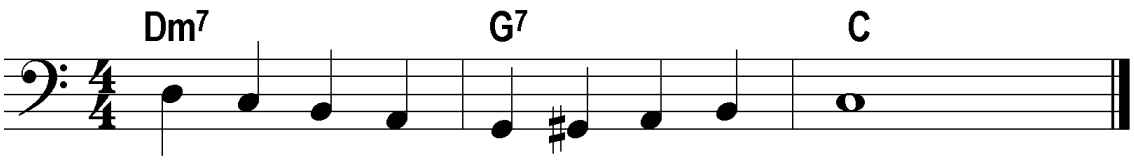
Just a reminder: Each first bar in the preceding two–bar examples (Ex 37 to 46) ends with a *leading note*!

The next examples are longer phases using the shortest distance between chord roots.

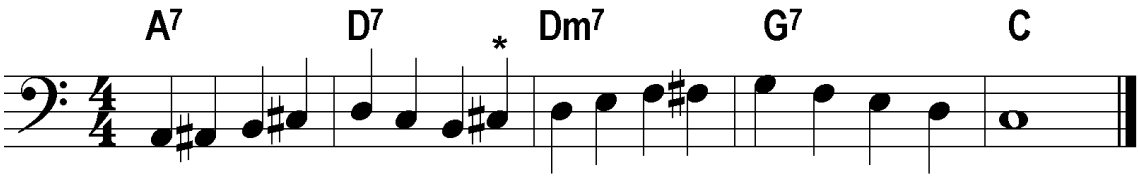
Ex 47



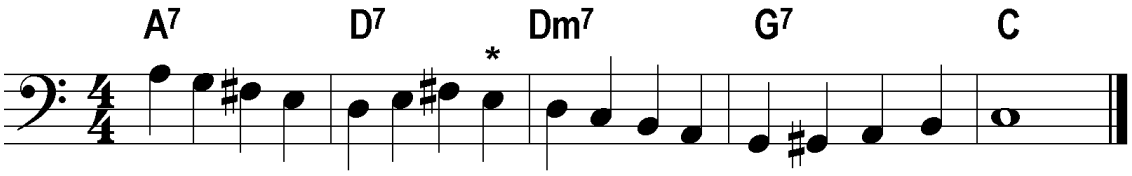
Ex 48



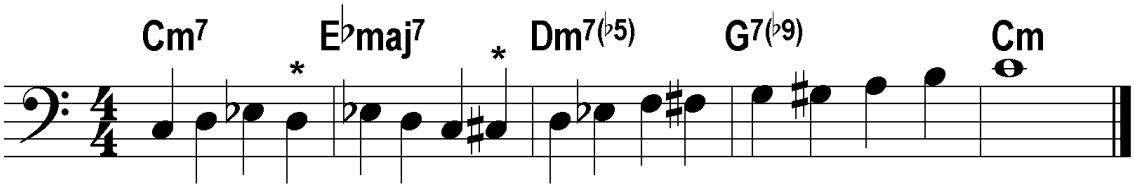
Ex 49



Ex 50



Ex 51



Notice that where the chord roots are less than a fourth apart, it is not possible to get a line without repeating notes. Therefore it is best to ascend or descend for three notes, then add a leading note on beat 4 within the region of ascent or descent. These notes are marked with an asterisk (*) in the examples.

As suggested in previous chapters, find your own lines; this time, however, using the concept of *shortest distance.*

CHAPTER 8

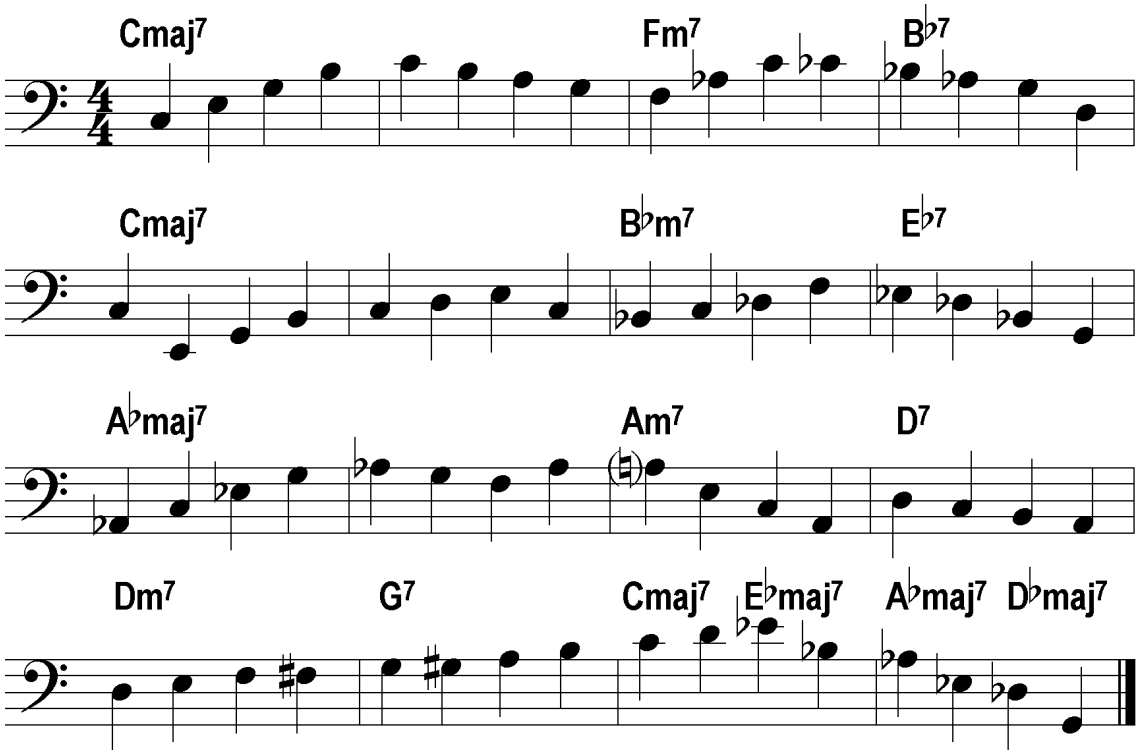
KEEPING YOUR BALANCE

This is where the bass lines will become more interesting, more personal and less predictable.

Based on the assumption that your knowledge of chord tones is immaculate, and that you have understood the material treated in this Method up to this point, let's now combine arpeggiated and linear approaches to achieve a greater overall balance in the bass lines. This technique will also allow fast changes in register.

Ex 52 shows arpeggio lines (generally wide intervals) alternating with linear lines (generally small intervals).

Ex 52



Note how the openness of the arpeggio segments is offset by the more tense and forward-driving effect of the more linear/chromatic segments.

This technique definitely has a tension-release quality in the comping line. It may therefore be utilised to complement a soloist's stylistic approach, i.e. to add tension to tension, to add tension to release (or vice versa), to add counterpoint, to fill gaps, etc. The possibilities are vast and ideally will depend on interaction of all ensemble members.

In Ex 52 none of the arpeggio segments contain more than three wider intervals (a 3rd or more) in one direction. This keeps the line more "together". By contrast, if you play more than three wide intervals consecutively, the line tends to break up and become unbalanced. It simply sounds like an arpeggio and not like a bass *line.* Check this out for yourself. And… if you play too linearly (or chromatically) for too long, the line becomes too dense-sounding. Therefore, it is important to maintain a balance of intervals.

Utilising the above information will enable the usually less tangible element of TASTE to be more tangible and therefore helpful in interactive bass line construction.

CHAPTER 9

STEPPING ON SOLID GROUND

MODAL WALKING BASS

Playing modally, i.e. to play over one chord scale for a longer period of time, is an integral element of modern jazz.

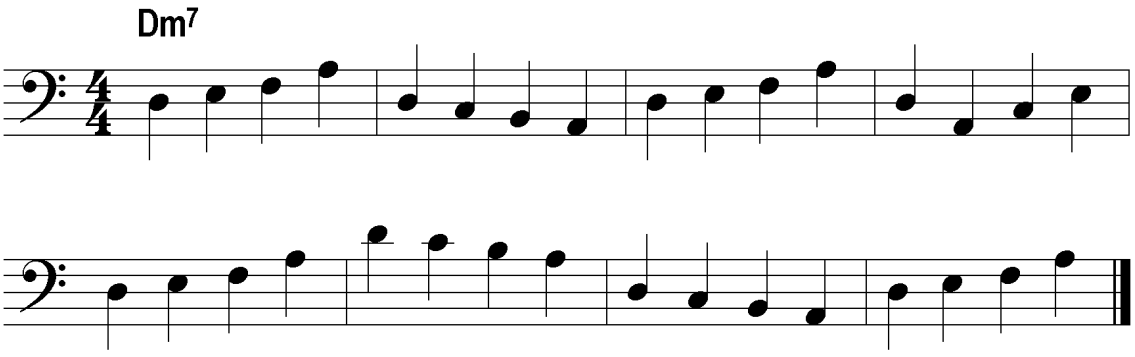
Here too, the bass has to set up the harmonic field, especially the tonal centre, with leading note techniques. However, because there are very few truly functional chord changes (i.e. chords indicating different key centres), the bass is at liberty to play longer phases.

Let's begin with one-bar phases in D – Dorian mode. In Ex 53 the bass plays the D root on the first beat of every bar and an A or E on the last beat of every bar. This has two effects:

1) to set up the D tonality

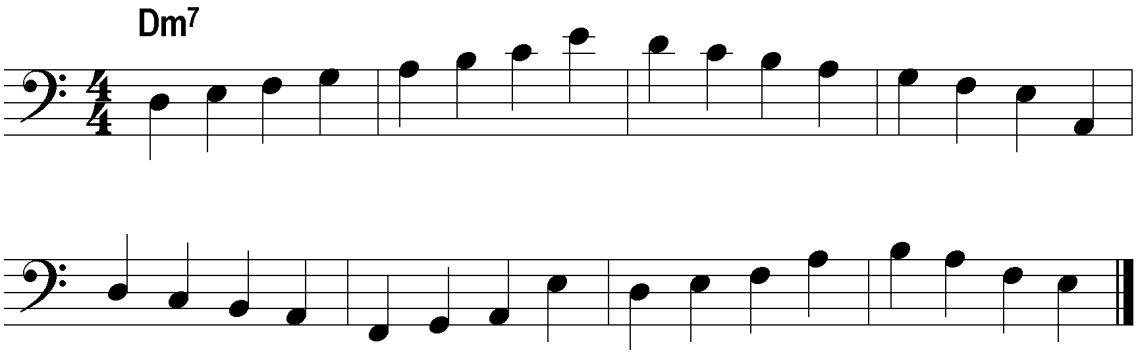
2) to reinforce the D tonality by superimposing a dominant (V) triad at the end of every bar.

Ex 53



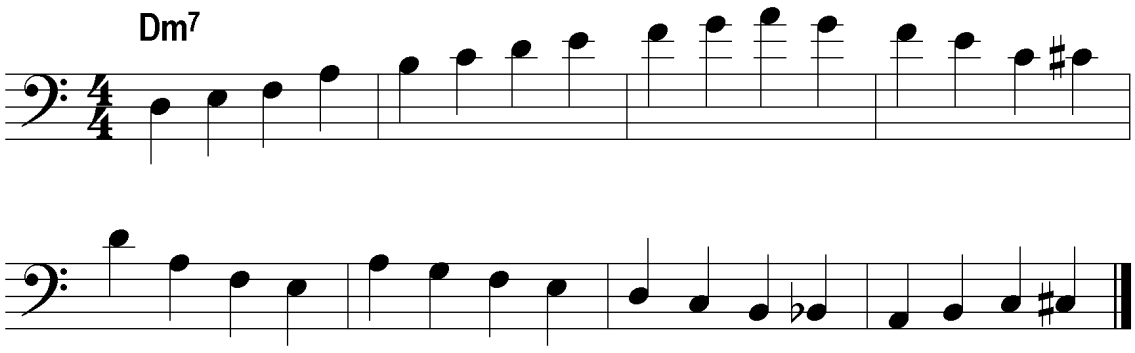
In Ex 54 you will see how the bass plays the root of the chord scale (D Dorian) on the first beat of every other bar (bars 1, 3, 5, and 7) with a leading note on the last beat of bars 2, 4, 6, and 8 to indicate a superimposed dominant (V) triad.

Ex 54



Ex 55 shows longer phrases, with the occasional use of non-scale-tone leading notes (i.e. outside the mode). This creates more tension, but, before it's too late the line resolves to the tonic. Also, note that the root D is used on beat 1 in three out of eight bars only.

Ex 55



Now play Ex 53-55 consecutively and observe the developmental process within these twenty four bars. This development is comprised of three simple ideas (one-bar phases, two-bar phrases, irregular phrases with additional chromatics) strung together.

To make modal lines sound interesting and not too repetitive, it is imperative that you have a strong idea for each segment within the form, i.e. play the form within the form using simple building blocks like target notes, phrase lengths etc.

If you use this information wisely, and experimentally, and practise these techniques in all modes in all keys, you will have no problems coming up with fresh ideas.

CHAPTER 10

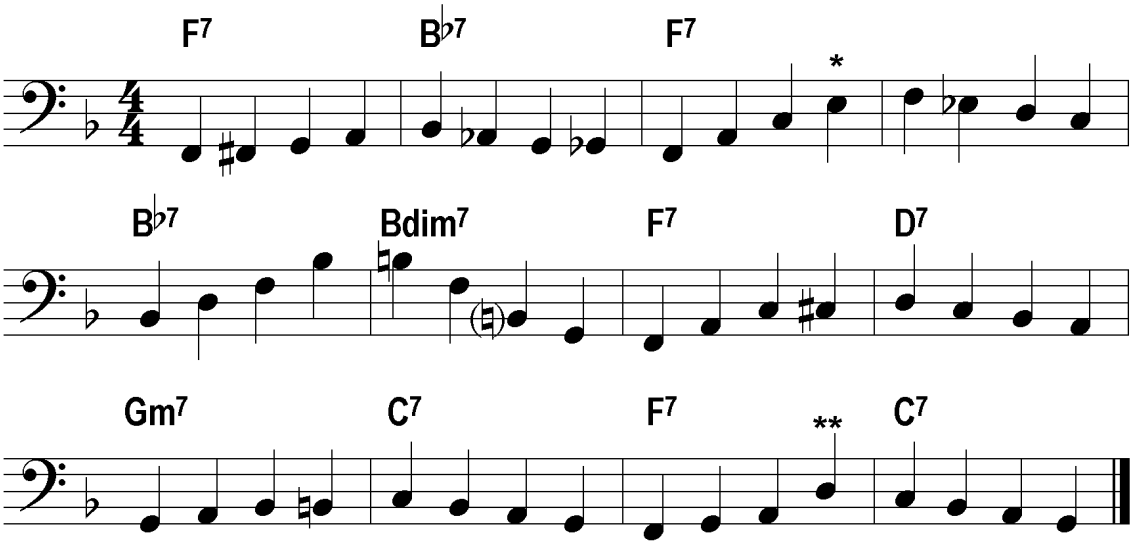
A CHANGE OF DIRECTION

SHAPING LINES

Ideally, a walking bass line (unless it is an ostinato-type line) should include yet another element of forward motion generated through the choice of direction. Targeting certain registers in a somewhat regular fashion (akin to sequencing) will create an overall contoured line, which, if chosen wisely and intuitively, will enhance the performance of all ensemble players.

The first step in this process is to play alternating ascending and descending one-bar lines, creating two-bar phrases. Ex 56 (over a blues in F) shows this technique.

Ex 56

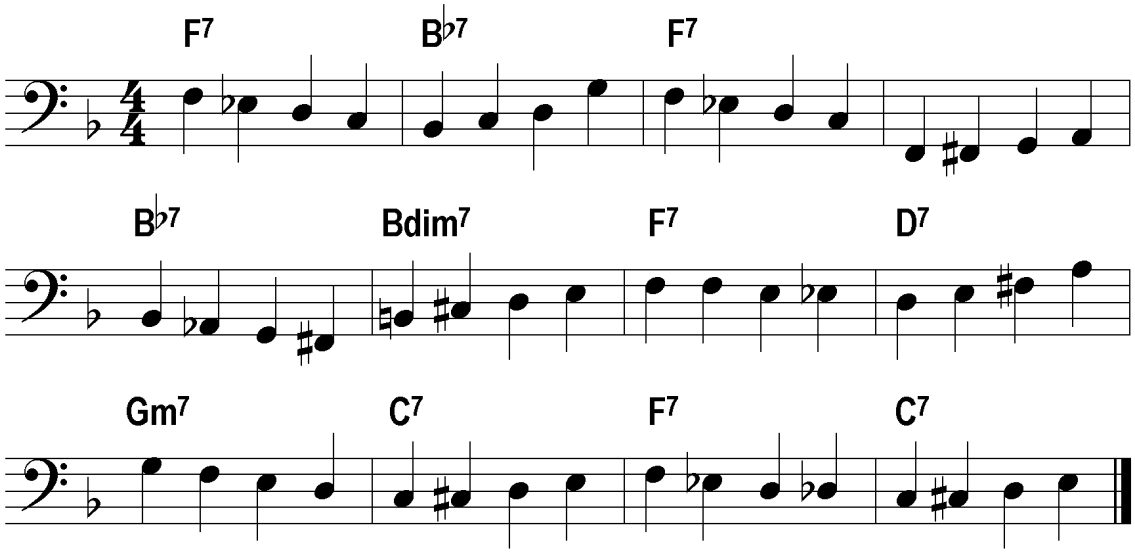


*This E leading to F in the ascending line, then E^{b} leading away from F in the descending line demonstrates the “classical” use of the leading note; i.e. to lead to the chord root by a semitone, then away from it by a wholetone toward the new key (F^{7} to B^{b}). This “melodic” principle works well on dominant 7 chords over two bars. To use E^{b} in both bars of F^{7} would also be perfectly acceptable, as E^{b} is a chord tone and we are not establishing a new chord. At medium to fast tempos both options (^{b7} and maj^{7}) are fine, but at slow tempos the chord tone is the better choice.

**This note (D) is outside the contour of the line and is used to demonstrate that we do not have to be totally rigid in our line creation.

Ex 57 shows alternating descending/ascending one-bar lines to also create two-bar phases.

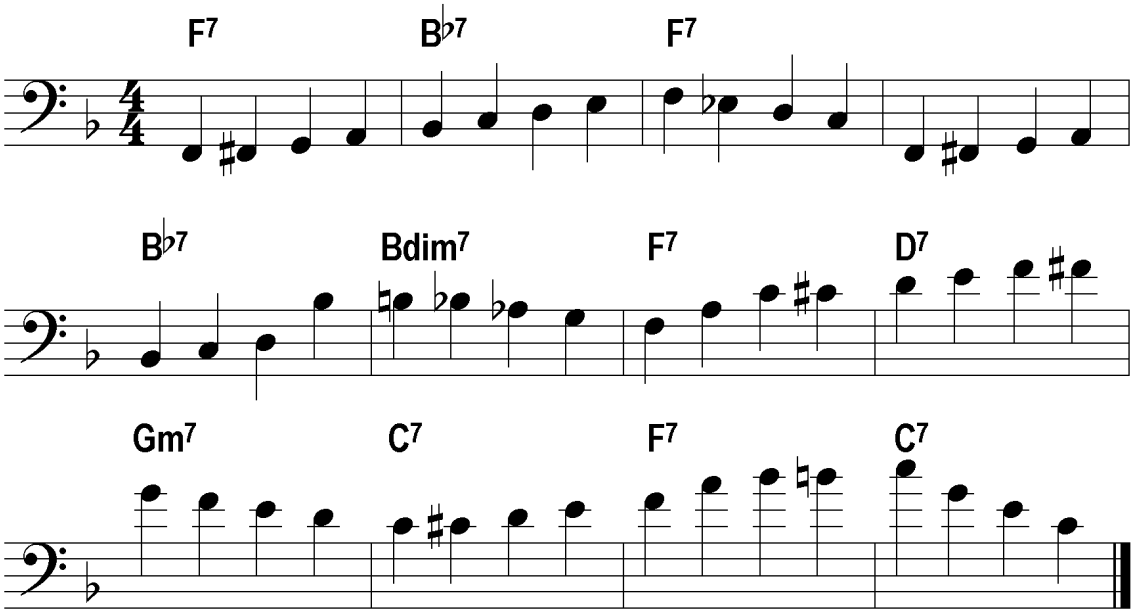
Ex 57



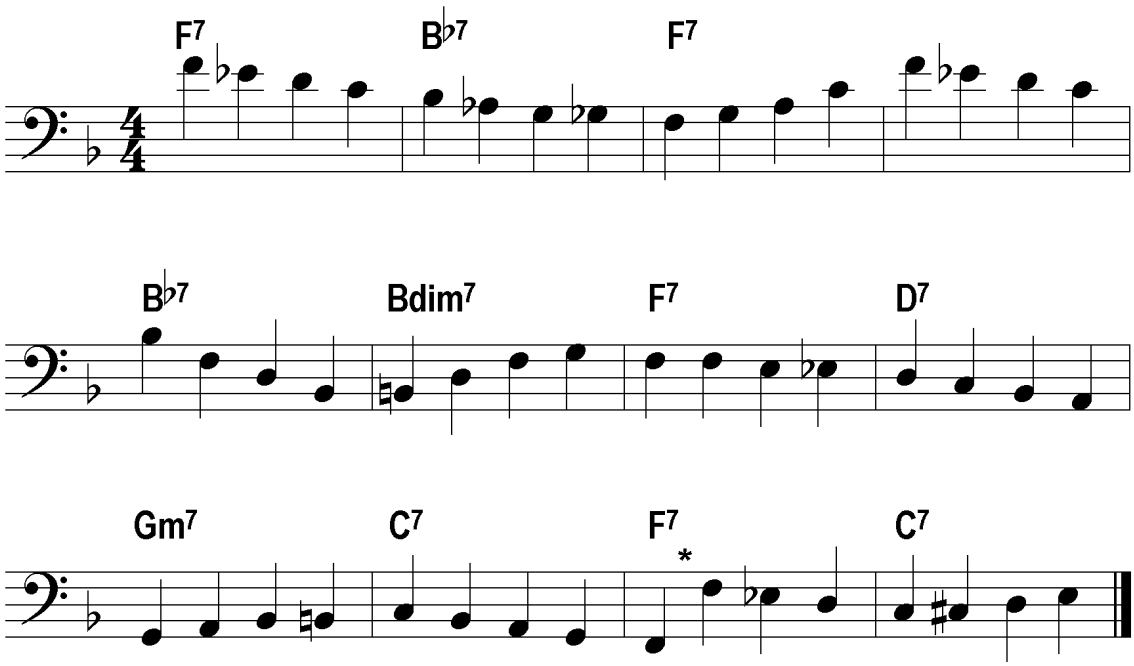
Ex 58 has an interesting, irregular effect as the lines are created by beginning with two bars ascending, then descending for one bar only, producing three-bar phases. The second chorus of Ex 58 goes two bars down, one bar up.

This technique, of course, involves more range as well as more directional thinking by the bass player. A good way to direct your concentration towards the targeted sequence is to say-as-you-play, bar-for-bar: “up-up-down, up-up-down” etc or “down-down-up, down-down-up” etc, whatever the case may be.

Ex 58 (1)



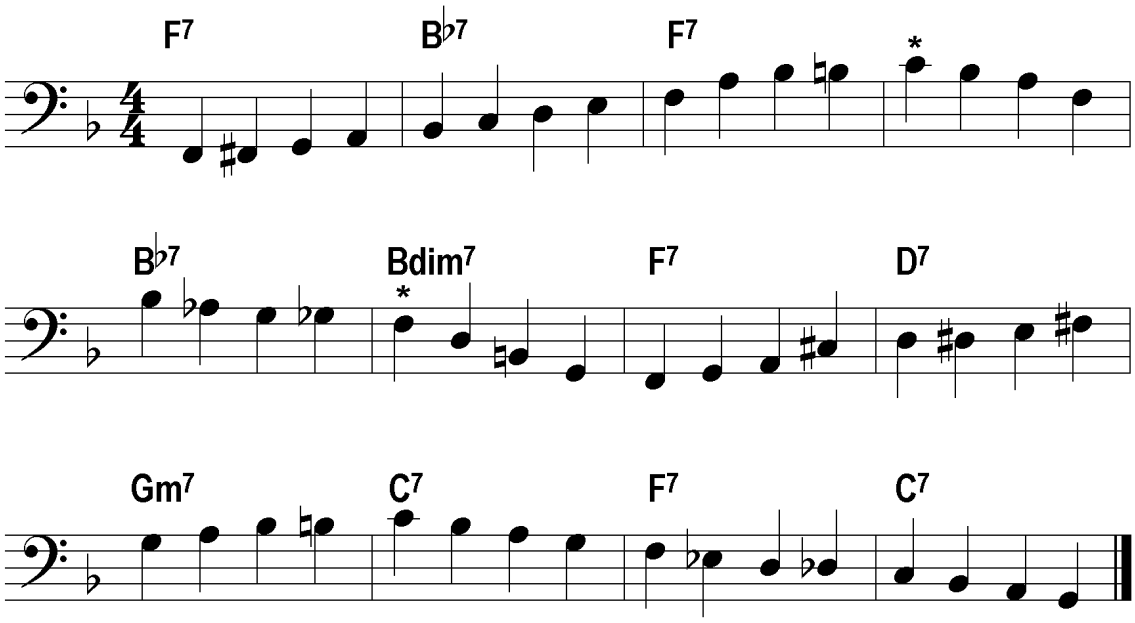
Ex 58 (2)



* Through insufficient foresight, an octave jump (or drop) is essential. This quick decision-making is crucial to keep the line flowing; the positive aspect of this ‘correction’ is that the line is less predictable.

The next step is to attempt a sequence of three bars ascending alternating with three bars descending and vice versa. Of course, the directions are becoming more contrived, but if you don't try this technique you will never be able to make even occasional use of it.

Ex 59

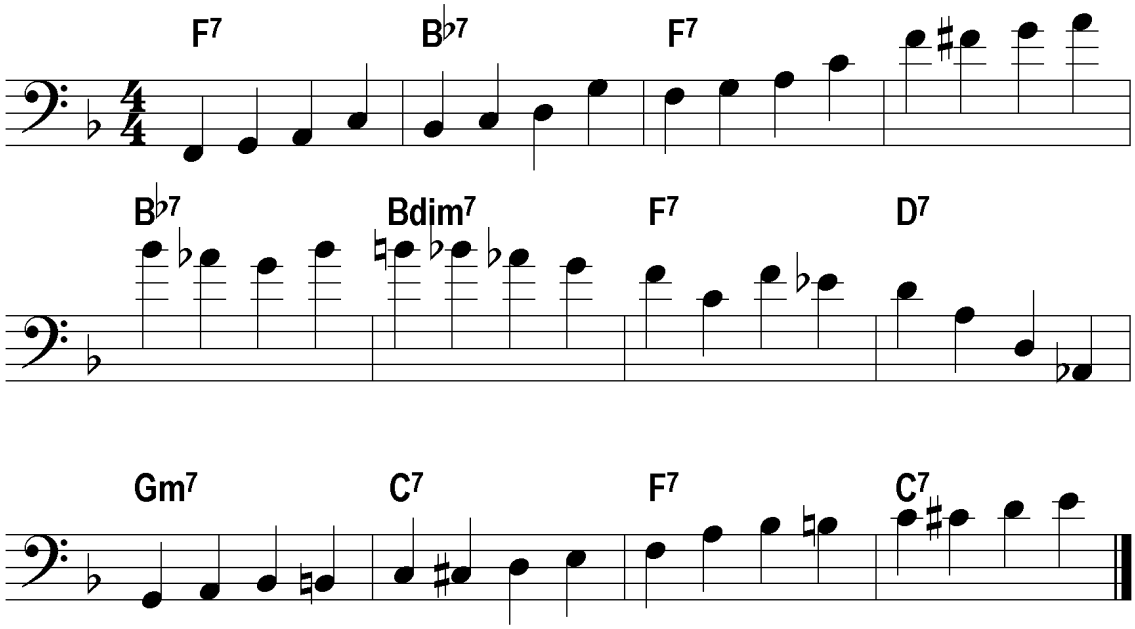


Notice how the directional flow is starting to take effect. The entire chorus is beginning to sound like one long line (as opposed to mere short phrases).

* Using this technique you often cannot play chord roots on the first beat of every bar; therefore play chord tones.

Ex 60 shows a possibility of four up, four down, four up.

Ex 60

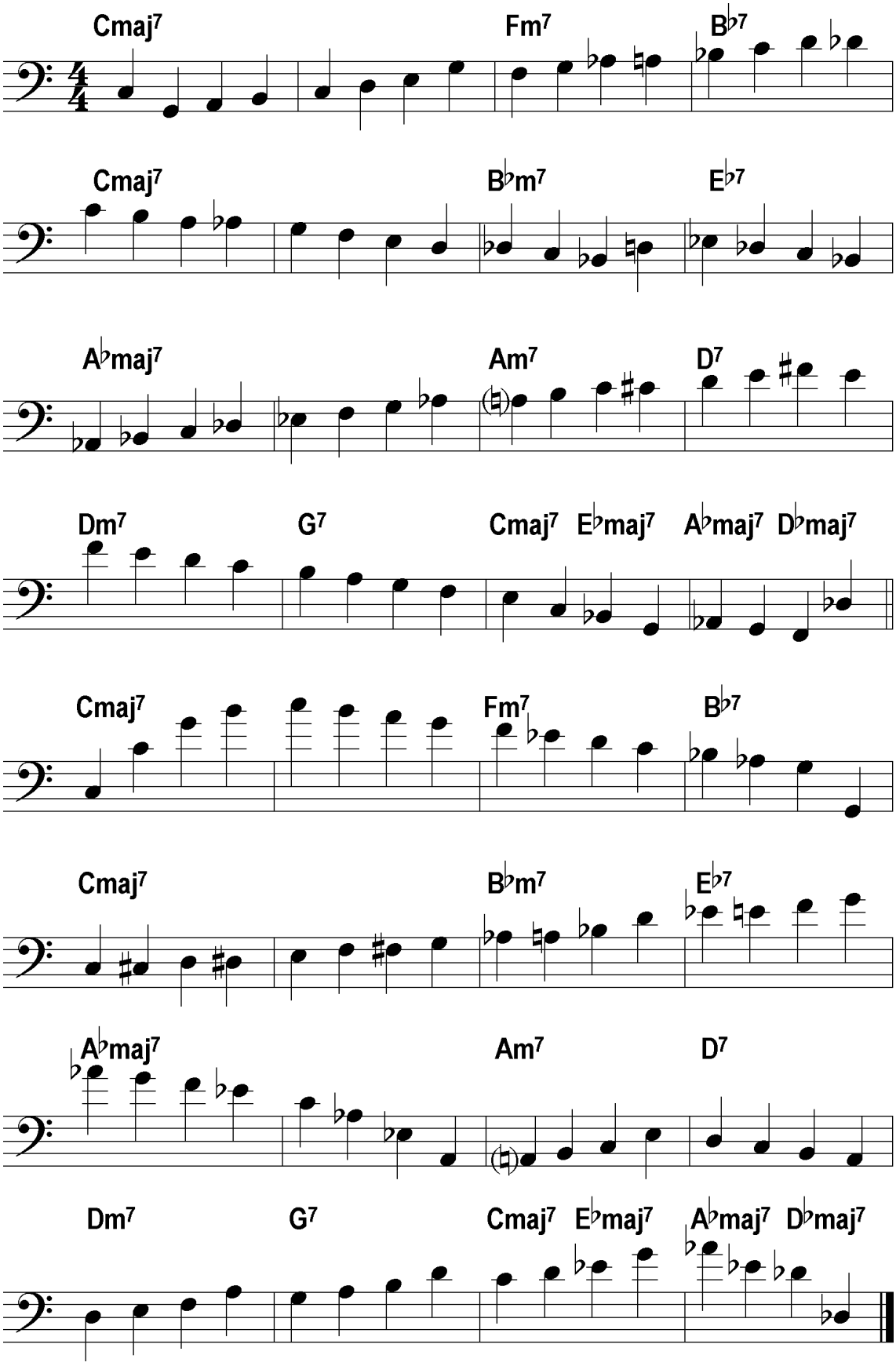


Of course you can start high in the register and play four down, four up, four down, over the twelve bars.

Now play Ex 56-60 non-stop to hear the directional ideas in succession. There are many possible permutations of this directional idea. Experiment!

Here are two sixteen-bar choruses utilising these ideas, however, a bit more freely and realistically.

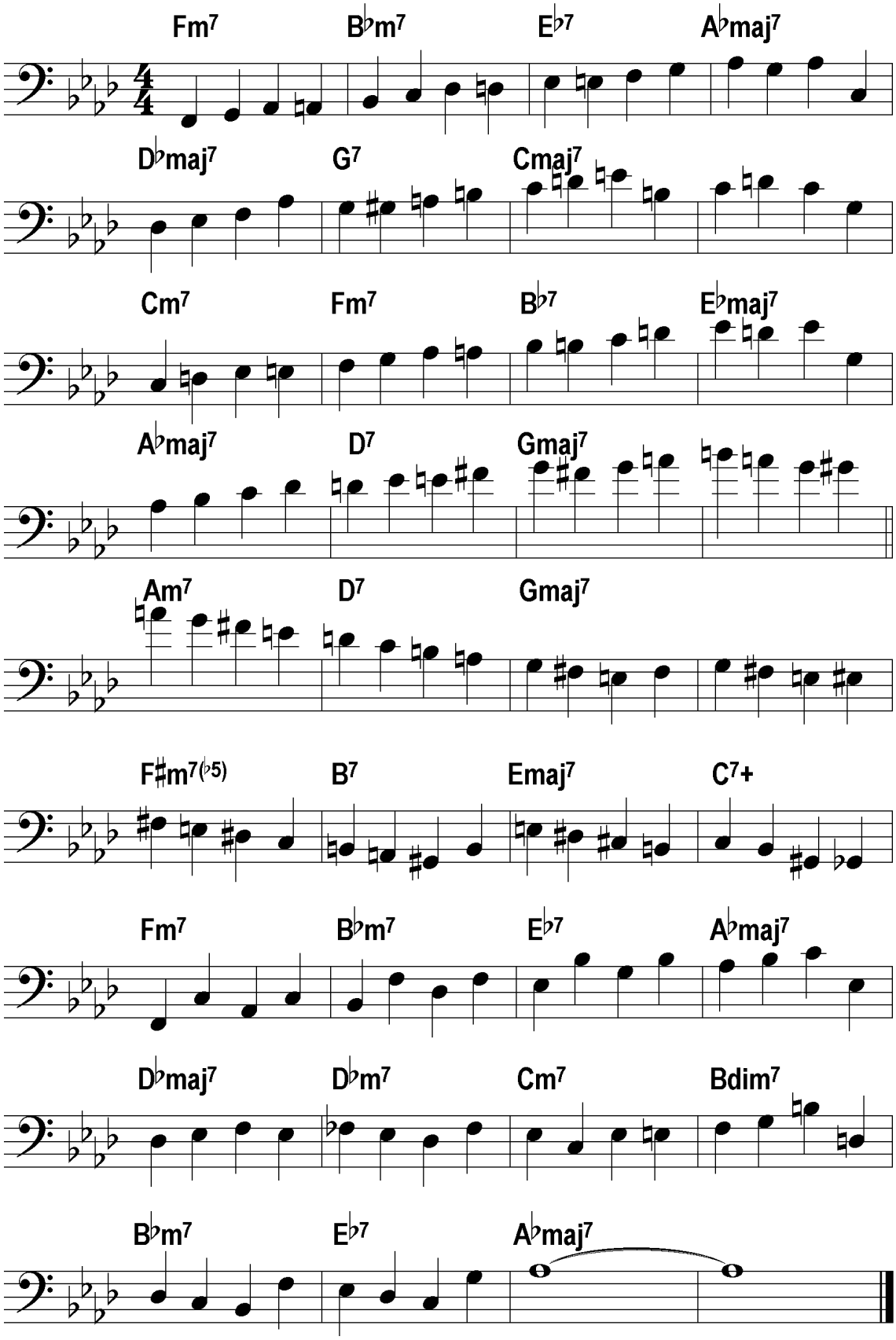
Ex 61


Cmaj7
Fm7
B♭7
Cmaj7
B♭m7
E♭7
A♭maj7
Am7
D7
Dm7
G7
Cmaj7 E♭maj7 A♭maj7 D♭maj7
Cmaj7
Fm7
B♭7
Cmaj7
B♭m7
E♭7
A♭maj7
Am7
D7
Dm7
G7
Cmaj7 E♭maj7 A♭maj7 D♭maj7

CLIMBING

To make a bass line climb its way up and down over longer stretches is a great way of creating momentum and direction. This technique mainly involves starting each bar on a higher or lower note (depending on the chosen direction) than the previous bar. Below is an example over a thirty-six bar form, where each set of four bars is either ascending or descending. The difference between this and the previous directional approach is that, instead of changing direction after a certain number of bars, here the same direction is chosen after dropping or climbing (after four bars) to a new starting note. Here, too, chord tones other than the roots are occasionally chosen on the first beat of the bar. Note how leading notes are used as pivots for the drops or jumps to set up the new ascending or descending four-bar line.

Ex 62


Fm7 B♭m7 E♭7 A♭maj7
D♭maj7 G7 Cmaj7
Cm7 Fm7 B♭7 E♭maj7
A♭maj7 D7 Gmaj7
Am7 D7 Gmaj7
F♯m7(♭5) B7 Emaj7 C7+
Fm7 B♭m7 E♭7 A♭maj7
D♭maj7 D♭m7 Cm7 Bdim7
B♭m7 E♭7 A♭maj7

SPIRALLING

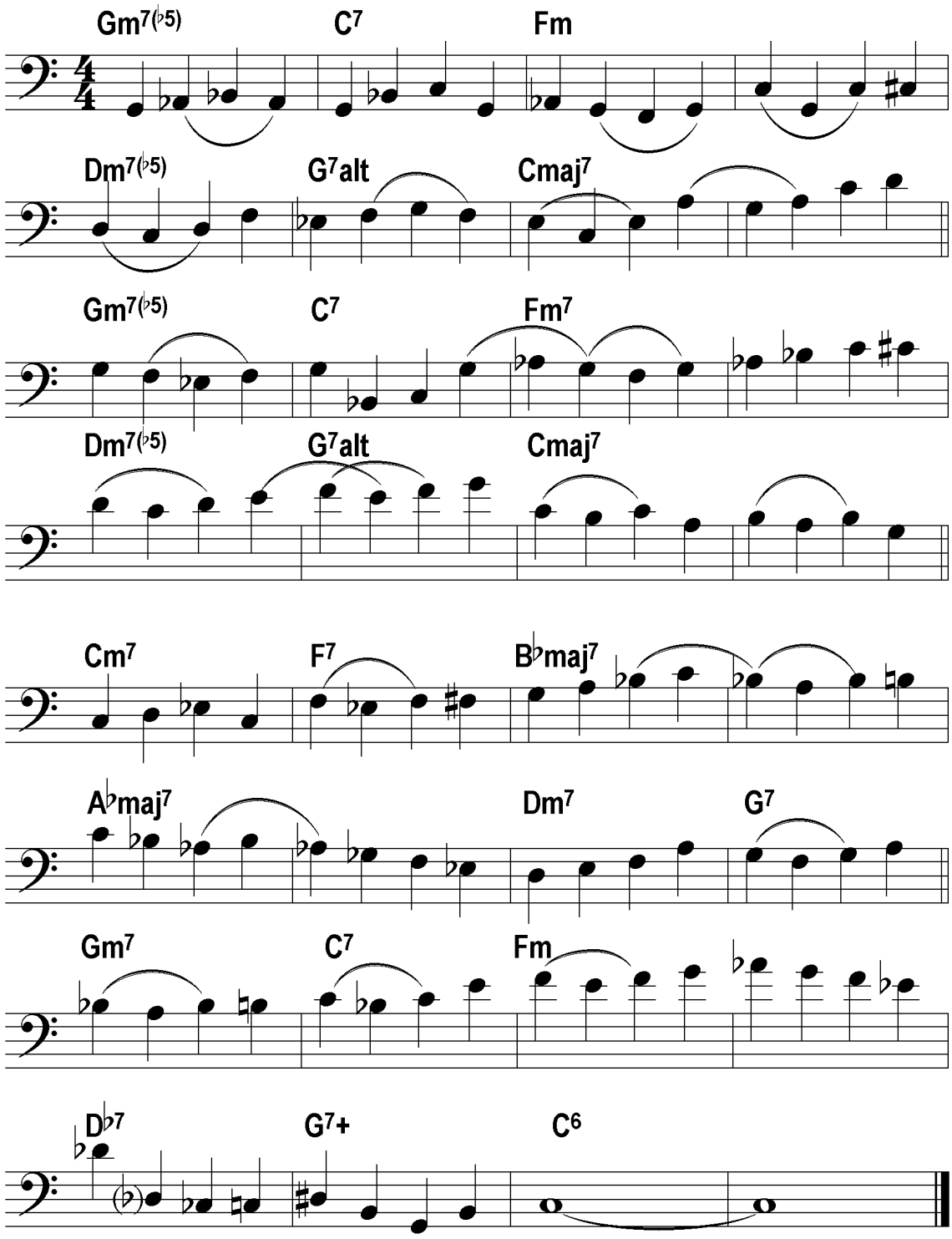
A variation of the climbing technique is the spiralling technique. Here, a form of "enclosure"[8] is often applied (marked on Ex 63 with curved lines), then the leading note directs the line in the new direction. The initial effect is that the individual bars do not seem to get off the mark, but, after several bars a new register has been reached, thus having created a more subtle form of *forward motion*.

Of course, notes other than chord roots are often used on the first beat of the bar; sometimes scale tones (other than chord tones) are used.

In this thirty two-bar example, sixteen bars do not begin with the chord root.

[8] *enclosure* is a technique used in jazz, where a target note, before being played, is preceded by one or more notes either side.

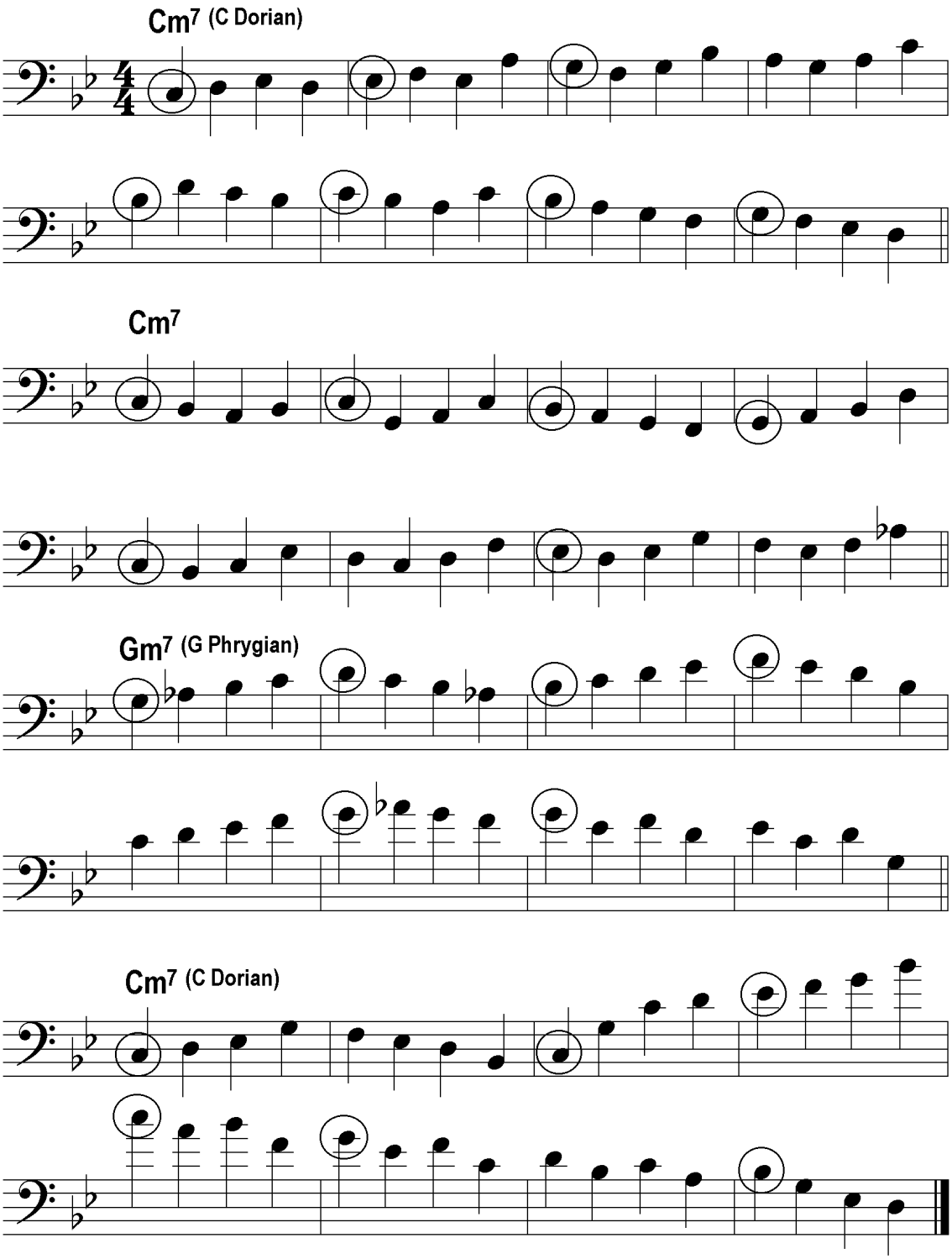
Ex 63


Gm7(♭5)
C7
Fm
Dm7(♭5)
G7alt
Cmaj7
Gm7(♭5)
C7
Fm7
Dm7(♭5)
G7alt
Cmaj7
Cm7
F7
B♭maj7
A♭maj7
Dm7
G7
Gm7
C7
Fm
D♭7
G7+
C6

Modal pieces are an ideal vehicle for using the *spiralling* technique. This is demonstrated in Ex 64.

Here it is easier to get chord tones at the beginnings of many bars (circled, twenty five of thirty two bars). All other beat 1 notes are other scale tones (2, 4, or 6) contributing to the melodic effect of the line.

Ex 64



Using some of the directional techniques explained in this chapter in a tasteful, musical way will positively contribute to almost any jazz performance.

CHAPTER 11

LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Embellishments such as drops and climbs can certainly contribute to forward motion, and, if used in a triplet fashion, may contribute toward a good swing feel.

DROPS

Drops are drops in register, usually executed quickly, using either a grace note, two swung eighth-notes, or a group of one or more eighth-note triplets. I believe that this technique, when first used on the double bass, was because of two main reasons:

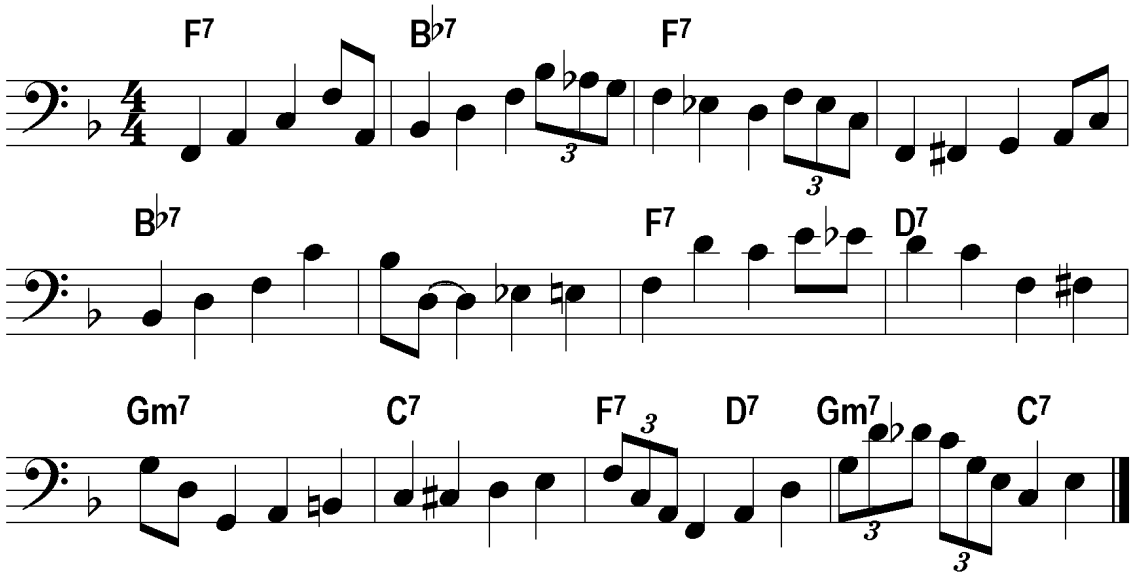
1) because of bassists' technical insecurity to continue a line into the higher register, and possibly more importantly

2) to get out of the piano or guitar area of lower chord voicings or bass lines.

The positive side-effect of drops soon became an *intended* effect because of the feel they created.

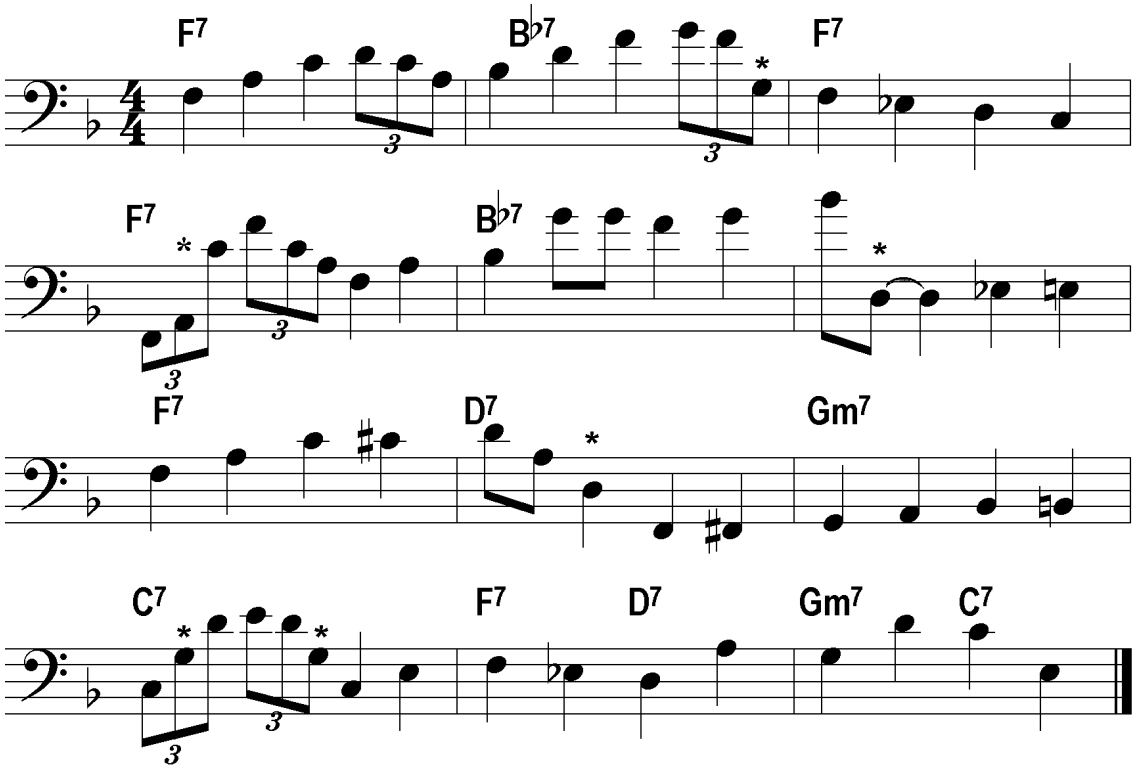
Here are some examples of various drop techniques.

Ex 65



Ex 65 demonstrates drops within a two octave range overall. Ex 66 demonstrates *climbs* and drops in a more extreme fashion, i.e. more in line with the two reasons stated on the previous page.

Ex 66



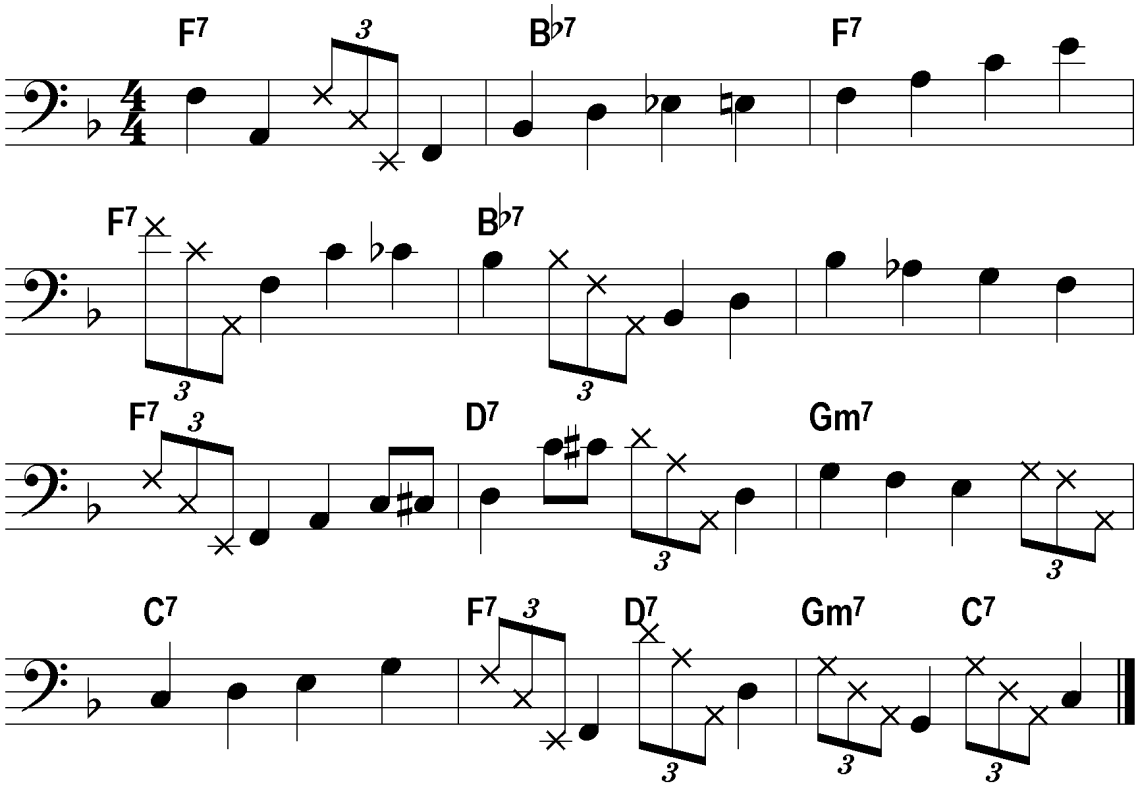
*Note how for extreme climbs and drops open strings are used.

Climbs and Drops are usually made up of chord tones and should be practised as arpeggios.

A further technique used in drops is the *Rake*. This technique is derived from the triplet drop and is used predominantly at faster tempos, when it is technically difficult to articulate all of the desired arpeggio notes. The strings are muted with the left hand fingers while one or more of the right hand fingers 'rakes' the strings from high to low, then landing strongly on the desired note. This creates a strong sense of rhythmic drive. The raked notes are noted with the symbol x, meaning an undefined, muted pitch.

Here is an example using string *rakes*:

Ex 67



The number of rakes in Ex 67 is far too many; but the example does demonstrate where the rakes can be used: on beats 1, 2, 3, or 4 – anywhere!

To find out where rakes, climbs and pitched drops are best applied, it is important to study various jazz styles.

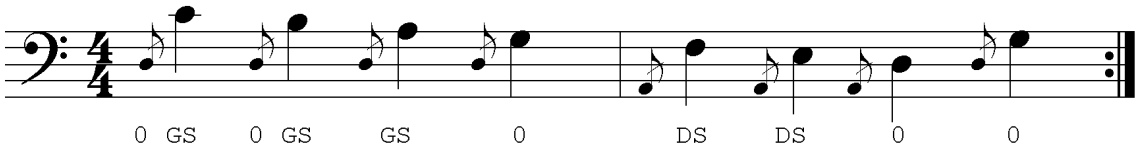
A further type of embellishment contributing to forward motion is the *grace note*, often called *skip* or *kick* note.

Grace notes, depending on the intended feel, are usually placed just before the beat and can be either ghost notes (muted) or pitched notes, including hammer-ons and pull-offs.

Here are some practice methods to learn the various grace note techniques.

First, play a descending C major scale while kicking off the adjacent open string below the one on which the next scale tone is played. Use the 1st [9] (shorter) finger of the right hand for the grace note and the 2nd (longer) finger for the pitched note as shown in Ex 68.

Ex 68

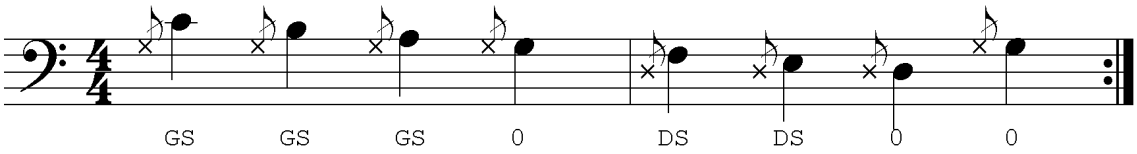


The indication GS[10] on Ex 68 is to start with the note C on the G-string. However, transfer this exercise to different positions on the other strings making sure the grace note is always kicked off the adjacent lower string. Of course, do this type of exercise with any group of notes, for example chromatic or arpeggio note groupings. If the time between the grace note and the pitched note is fast enough, then the pitch of the string on which the grace note is played will be barely audible, as the 2nd right-hand finger immediately rests on the lower string, therefore muting it.

[9] 1st = Index Finger, 2nd = Middle Finger, 3rd = Ring Finger, 4th = Little Finger
[10] GS = G-String, DS = D-String, AS = A-String, ES = E-String

Now attempt playing the grace note on the muted string on which the next pitched note is played. To do this, you will have to alternate muted open strings with stopped notes. Alternate right-hand fingers as well.

Ex 69



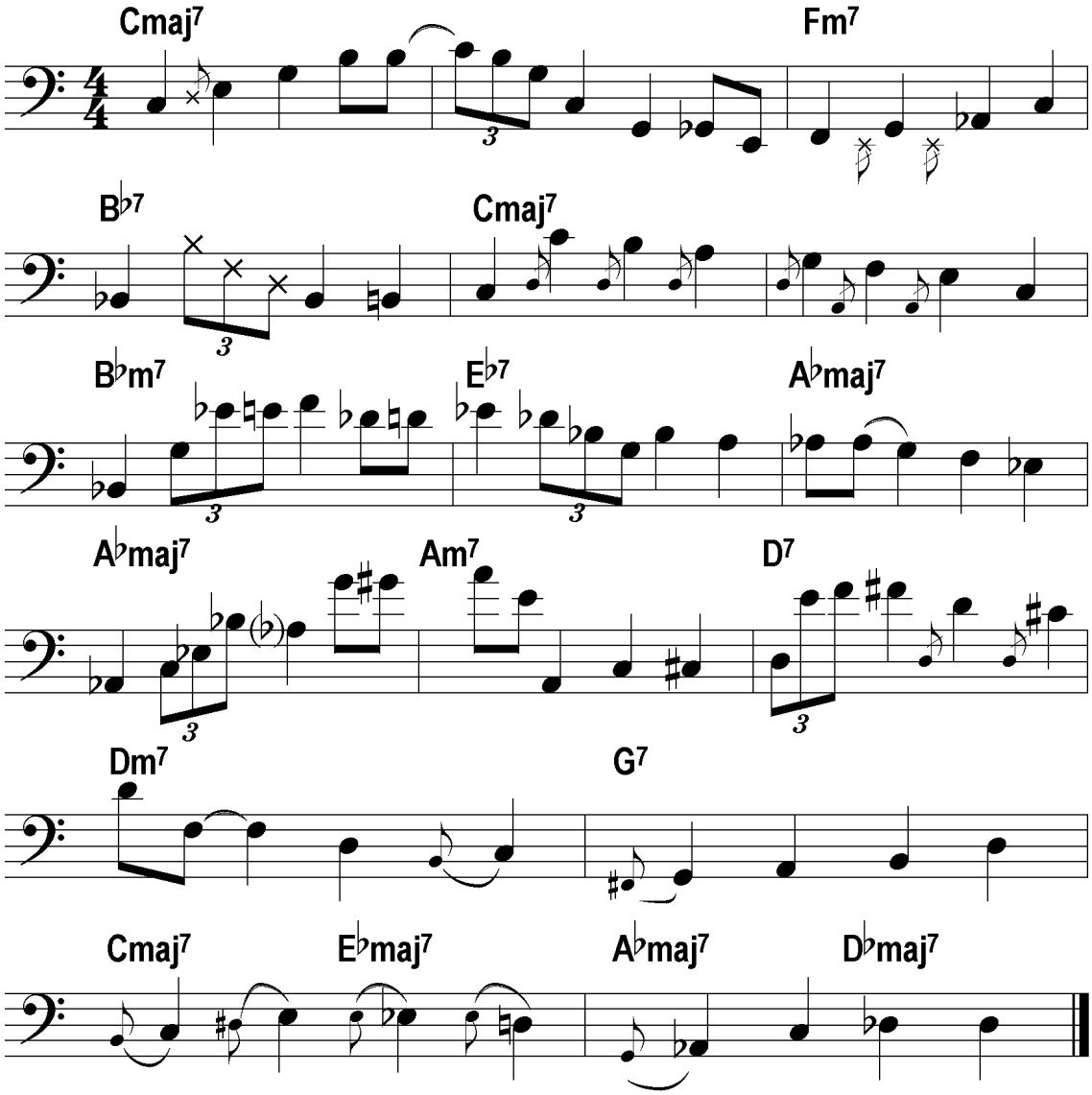
Of course, make up your own permutations of this exercise.

The two grace note techniques shown in Ex 68 and 69 can be combined to create the most comfortable playing method.

Grace notes can also be hammered on or pulled off as shown in Ex 70. The hammer-ons or pull-offs can also be part of a triplet group, usually the last swung eighth-note

This is an example using all techniques treated in this chapter (Drops, Climbs, Rakes, Grace Notes, Hammer-ons and Pull-offs).

Ex 70



Of course, the embellishments in this example are too numerous to all be practical. Use embellishments with taste so as not to destroy the groove[11]; then they will work in a positive way, creating natural forward motion.

[11]"groove": continuity through consistency

CHAPTER 12

THE REAL THING

This chapter contains two complete transcriptions of walking bass lines. From the many transcriptions I have undertaken and analysed, I have chosen two transcriptions of recorded jazz pieces that demonstrate the realistic use of the concept of harmonic forward motion through the use of leading notes. As you will see by the statistical evidence provided in this chapter, I could have chosen any transcriptions of walking bass to point out the use of leading notes.

The bass on the first blues piece, “Front Burner” (Nestico) from Count Basie “Big Band” 1975, was played by John Duke on double bass. This is a prime example of the consistent use of leading notes. The only times leading notes are not used are in the arranged sections of the piece, where the bass plays rhythmic hits.

The bass on the second blues piece, “hijacked” (McLaughlin) from John McLaughlin Trio “que alegria” 1992, was played by Dominique di Piazza on electric bass guitar. Although this piece is considerably more modern in many respects, the bass line nevertheless contains an overwhelming majority of leading notes to connect chords and bars. There are in fact 88 leading notes in 96 bars of music. This is quite remarkable, taking into account all of the advanced concepts the bass player otherwise uses, such as upper register double stops, ghost notes, and rhythmic variety.

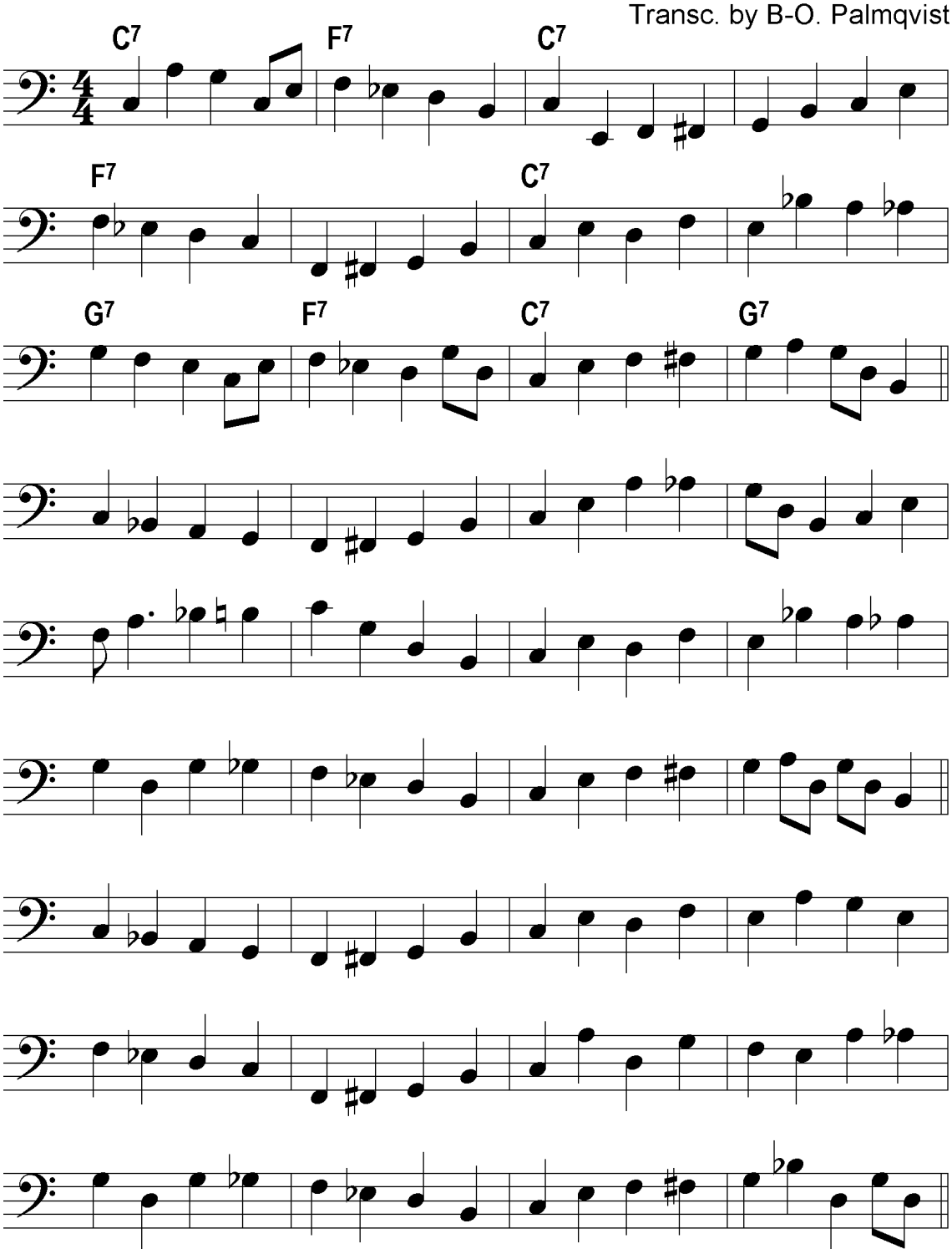
Take a good look at both transcriptions, play them, play the recordings and compare the information within them to the techniques discussed in this Method. You will see how the best players apply the concept of forward motion in walking bass. You, too, can achieve such results!

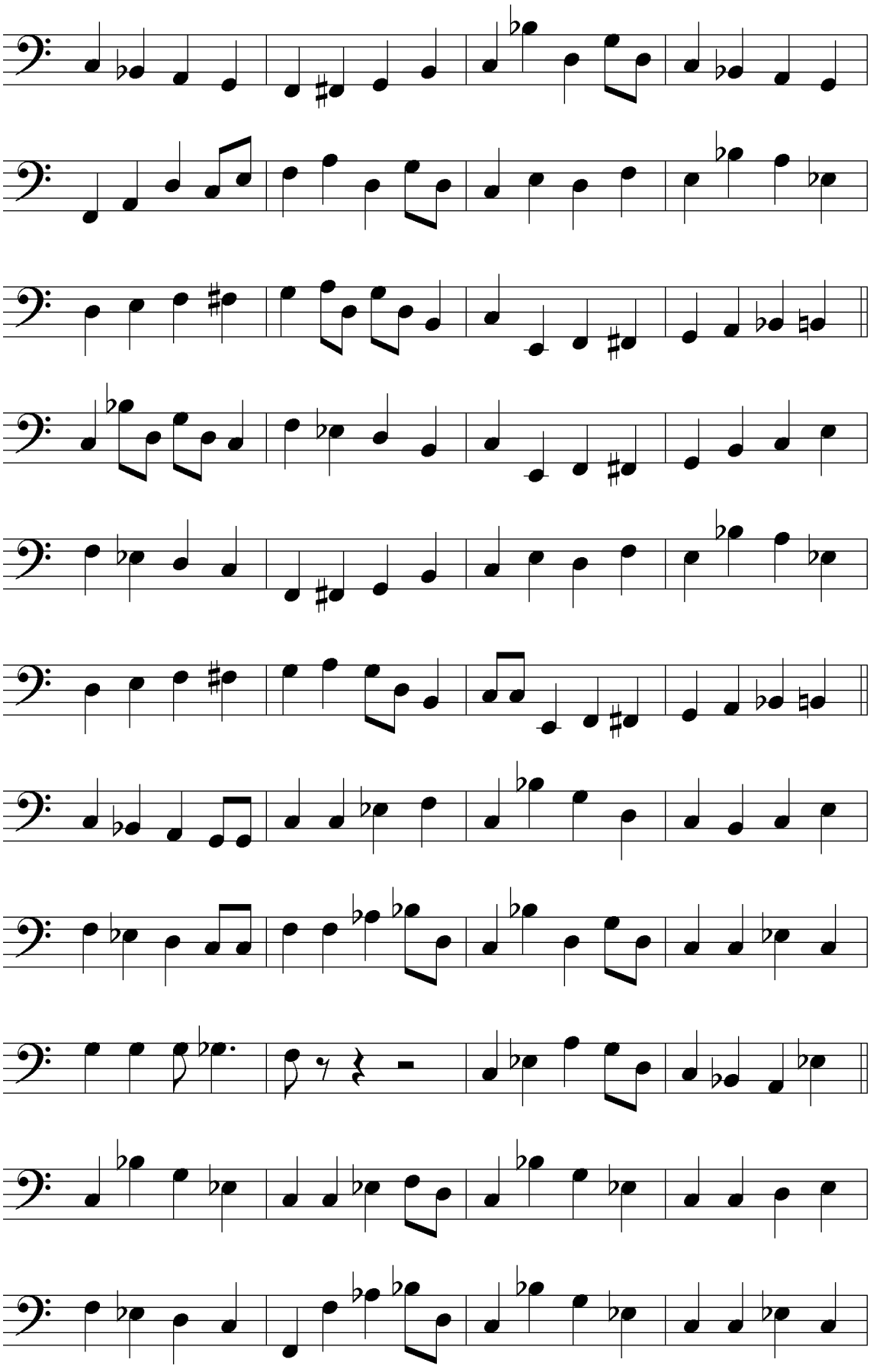
Front Burner

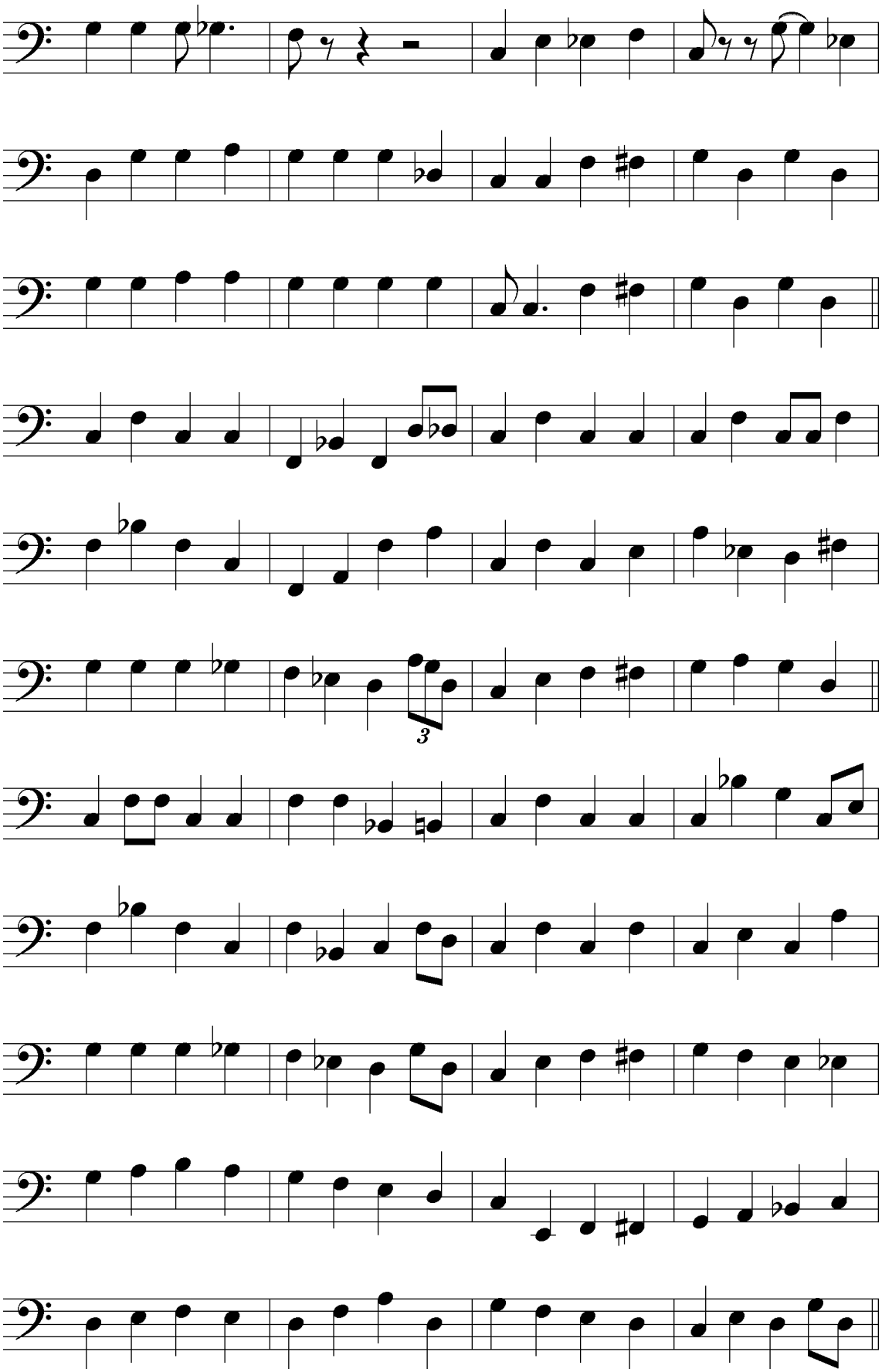
from Cound Basie 'Big Band'
August 26 & 27, 1975

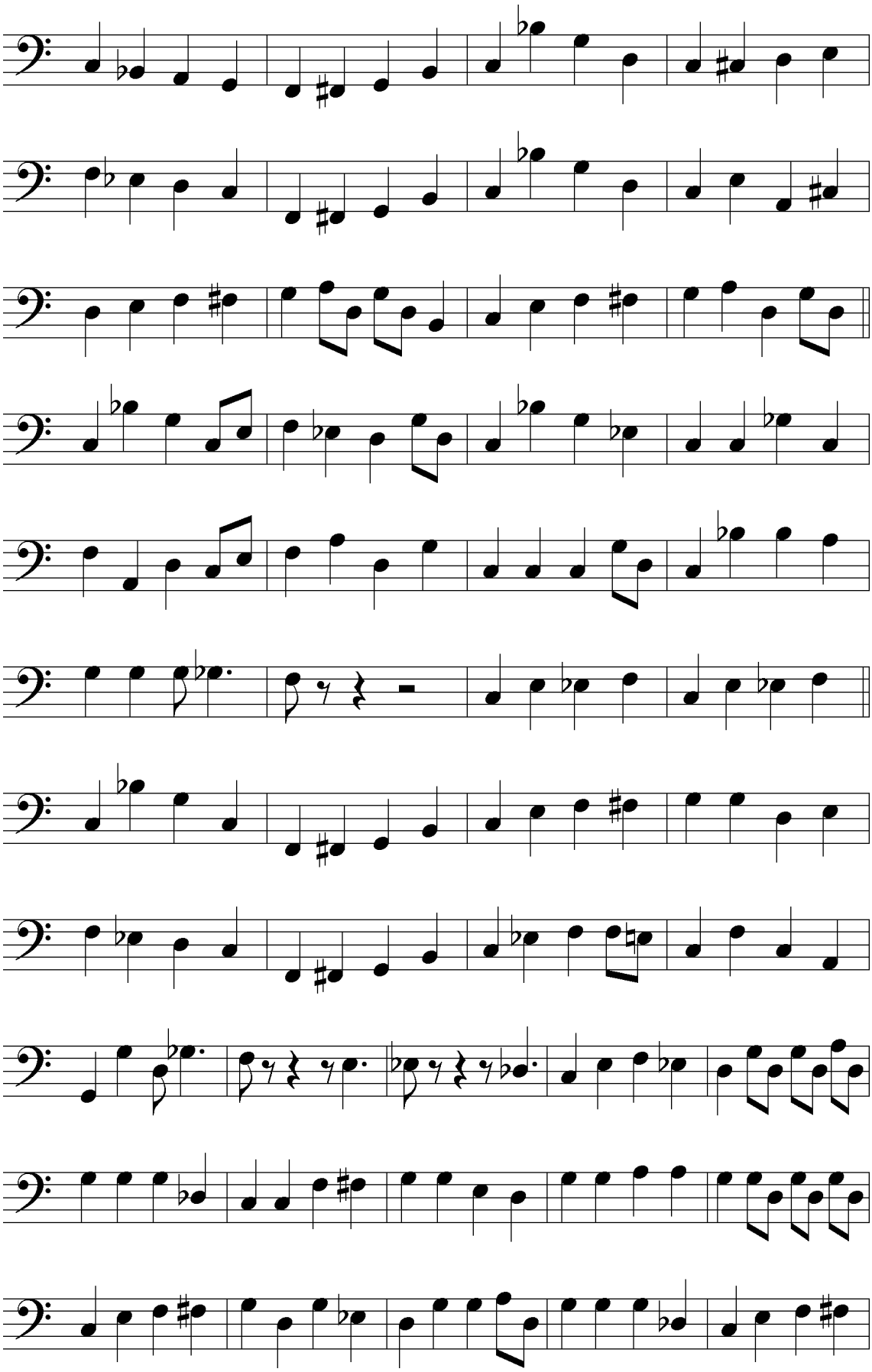
Bass

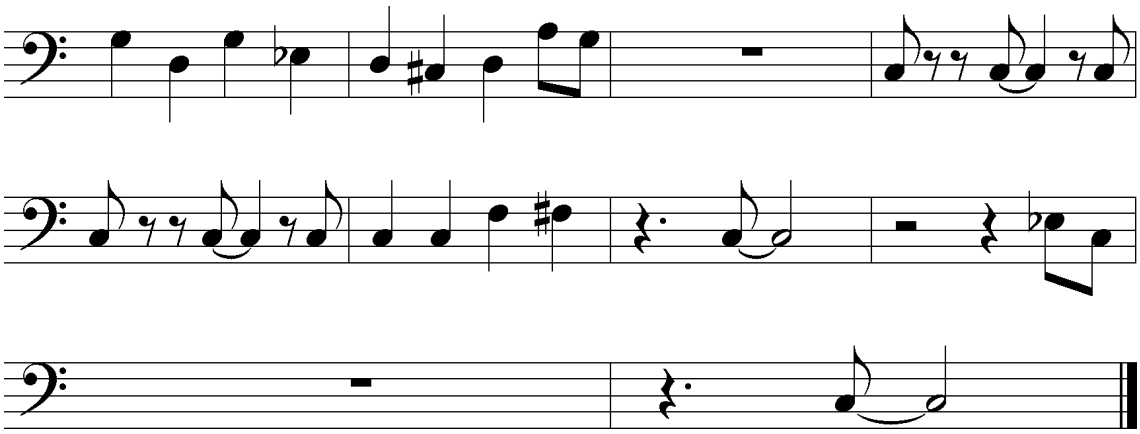
Nestico
Bass: John Duke
Transc. by B-O. Palmqvist









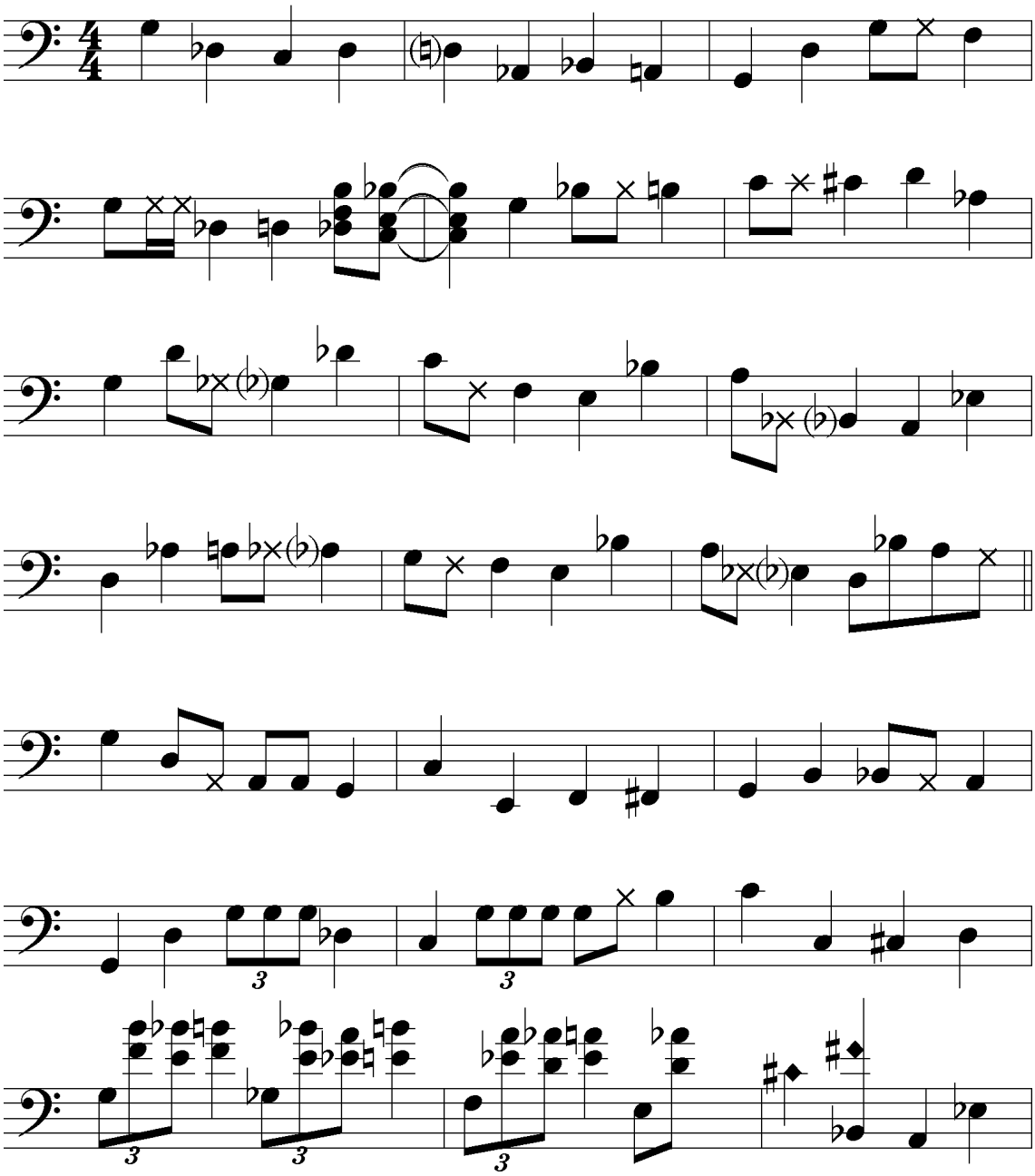


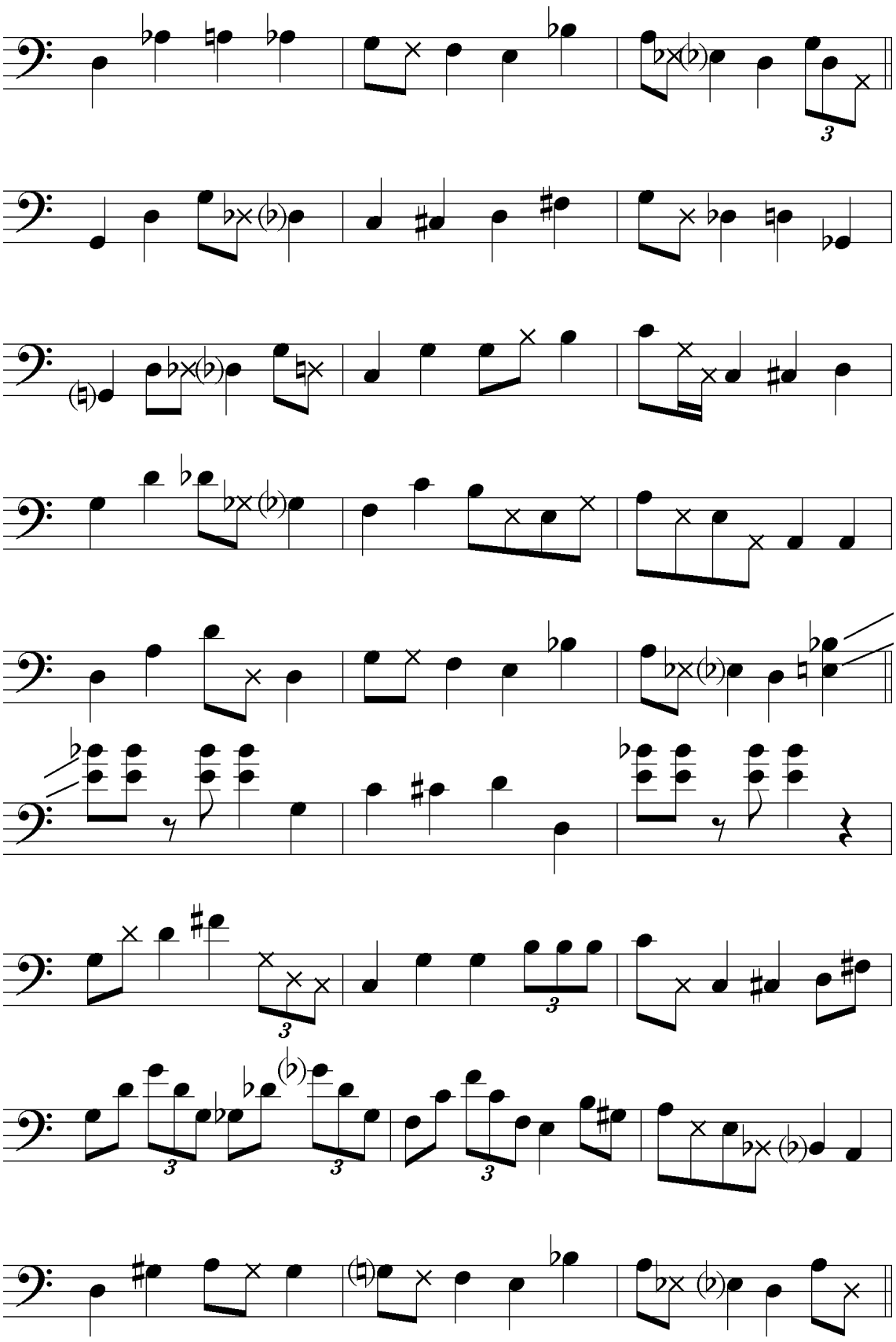
hijacked

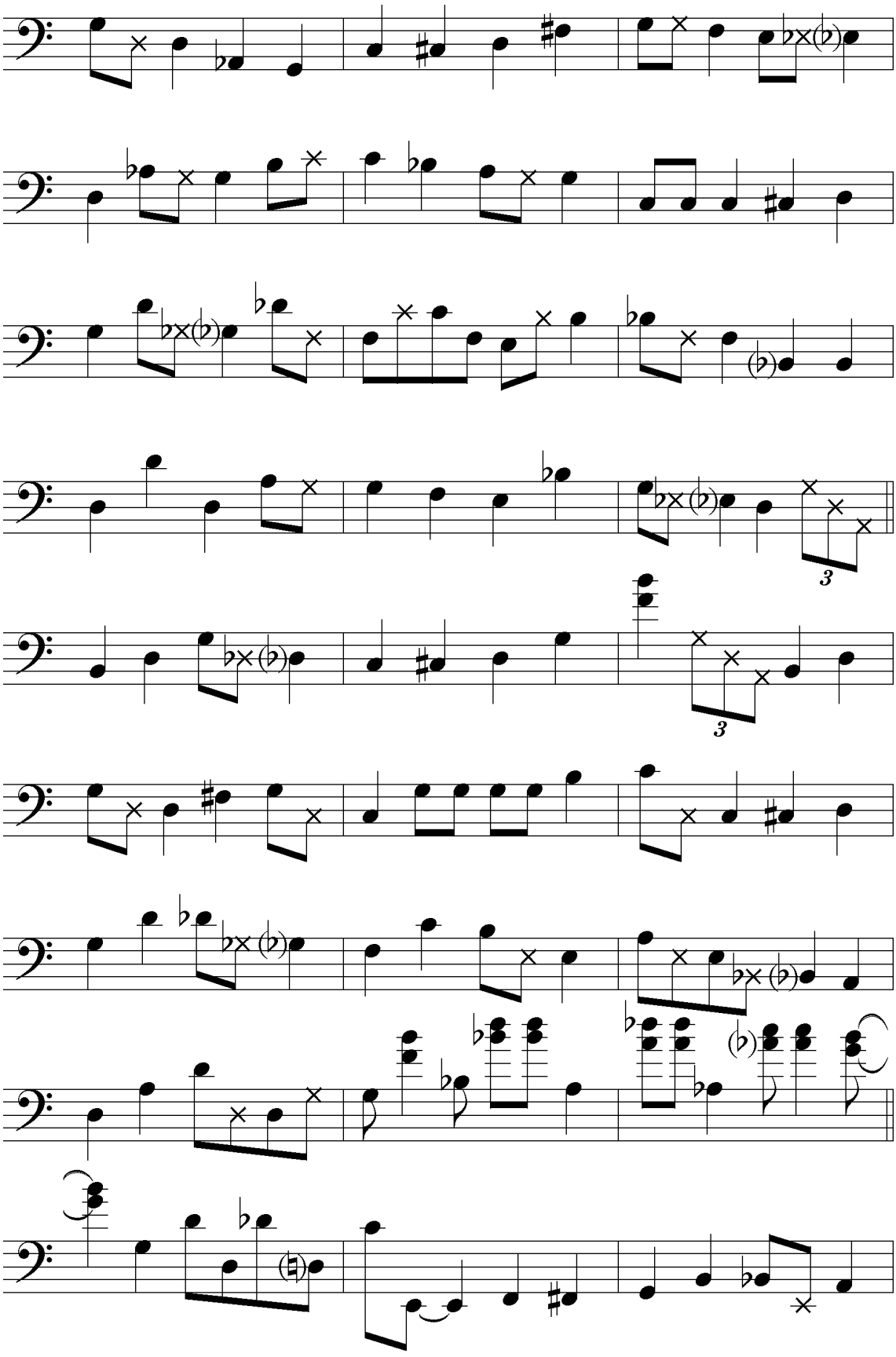
from John McLaughlin Trio
"que alegria" 1992

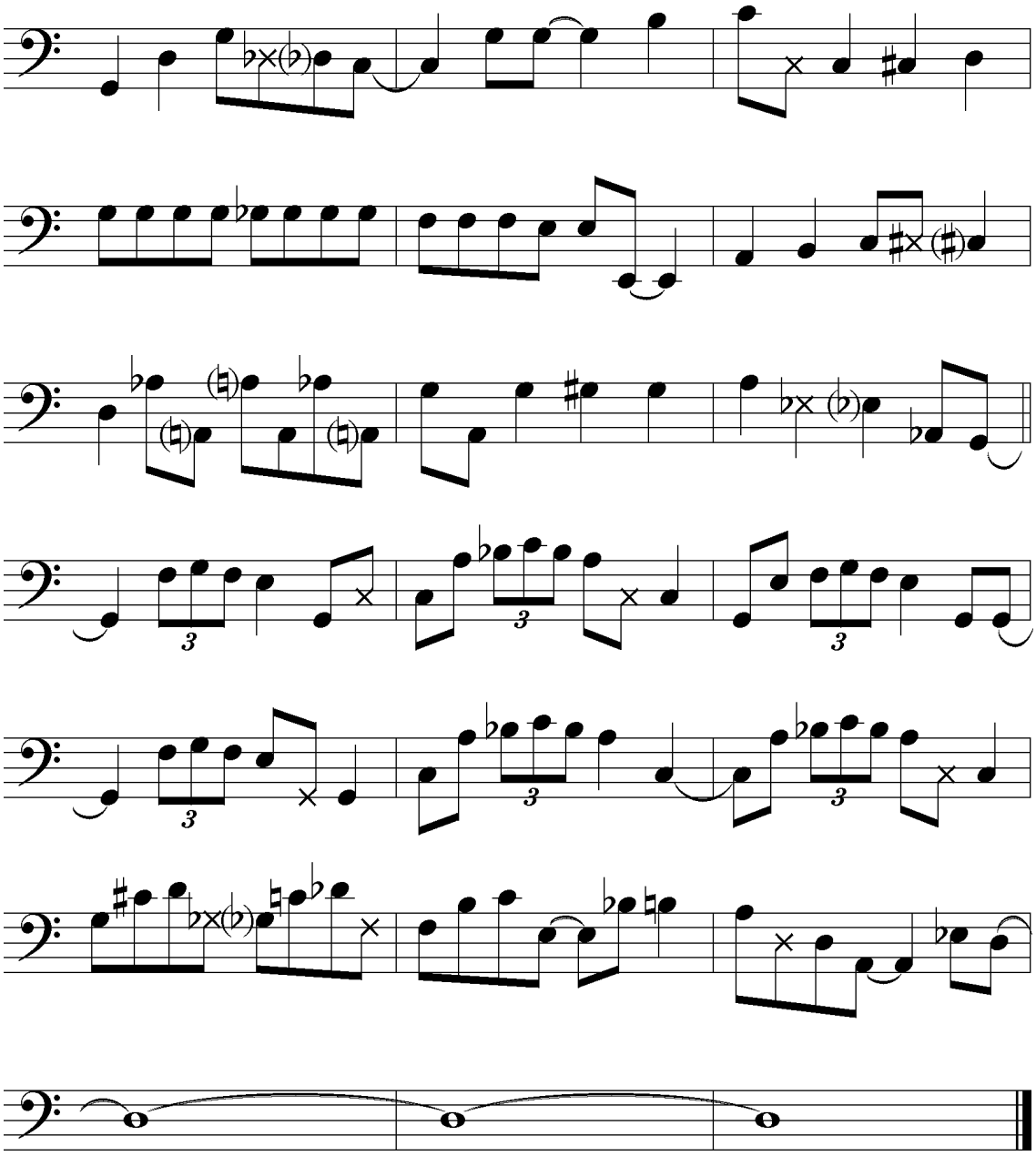
Bass

McLaughlin
Bass: Dominique di Piazza
Transcr. by Zoe Frater
and George Urbaszek









ANALYSIS

In my analysis of ten randomly selected transcriptions of ten representative bass players spanning fifty years of walking bass, the following statistics emerged:

- 1084 bars of music were analysed; the shortest piece being 36 bars and the longest 288 bars.
- On average, leading notes were used 90% of the time to connect chords.
- Non-leading notes were almost always chord tones, with only very occasional use of non-leading scale tones to connect chords.
- Chord roots were primarily used as the first note of each bar.

From the *broken swing* style of Scott La Faro (65% leading notes) through the *swing funk* of Jaco Pastorius (86% leading notes) to the rock solid walking bass of Paul Chambers (100% leading notes), one major factor emerges: *the prominent use of leading notes to connect chords* (90% average).

CONCLUSION

Having worked through this Method you will see that the following elements are important for the construction of good walking bass lines:

- Familiarity with the notes on your instrument.
- Knowledge of the leading note names, intervals and sounds.
- Ability to choose a leading note that sonically best suits the purpose.
- Knowledge of chord tones.
- Knowledge of chord scales.
- Willingness to investigate and transform ideas.
- Musical and technical foresight to shape lines.

Only when you have mastered all of these skills will you be able to play improvised walking bass lines with good time, intonation, sound and feel.

APPENDIX A

JAZZ "PIZZICATO"

The term "pizzicato" is actually incorrect in describing the application of the right hand fingers (assuming right-handed players, which is the norm) for sound production in jazz bass, as the strings are actually *pulled* sideways (parallel to the fingerboard) and not *plucked* upwards as the term "pizzicato" suggests.

The classical pizzicato technique is rarely use in modern jazz bass playing.

There are three main, distinct right-hand application techniques for jazz double bass playing:

1) First finger only (generally for slow to medium up-tempo playing)

Resting the pad of the thumb on the edge of the fingerboard close to the end (the thumb points downward, toward the bridge), simultaneously strike and pull the G-string sideways towards you, parallel to the fingerboard, using the first two joints of the side of the first finger. The first finger should then rest on the D-string. Carry out the same motion on the D, A and E-strings. As you strike the lower strings you will notice more finger length being used, up to all three joints for the E-string. This technique produces the "fattest" sound. After striking the E-string, the first finger temporarily strikes against and rests on the thumb; therefore the after-strike distance should be approximately the same as the distance between each string.

2) 1st and 2nd fingers alternating – generally for medium-up to fast tempos.

Raise the right arm so it is almost parallel to the floor and almost forms a right angle to the fingerboard. Hook the thumb under the fingerboard. The wrist and the back of the hand form a straight line, while the hand cups around the strings with the first finger touching (resting on) all four strings right down to its root on or near the E-string. Only the first joint of the first finger now rests on the G-string. Pull fingers 3 and 4 comfortably into the palm of the hand, out of the way. Strike/pull the G and D-strings with alternating 1st and 2nd fingers using their first

joints only. Continue with the same alternating technique on the other strings. As you progress to the lower strings, the thumb gradually moves out from under the fingerboard until it finally rests on the edge of the fingerboard when playing the E-string. Maintain sufficient angle to the fingerboard to enable use of the entire first joints (not the finger tips) of the first two fingers.

3) Bass Guitar technique – generally for up-tempo to very fast playing.

Place the tip of the thumb on the top of the fingerboard, vertically, with the thumb's pad resting on the E-string. Using alternating fingers one and two *vertically*, with fingers three and four tucked into the palm of the hand, strike/pull each string. When playing the E-string the thumb temporarily rests on the edge of the fingerboard.

DISCLAIMER

The three right hand techniques explained above should be used as general starting points to find your own way of playing, which may depend on your physique and physical playing position as well as your concept of sound.

Although these three techniques reflect the current standard, based on evolution of jazz bass playing, they certainly may not be the end of the evolutionary process. Experiment!

APPENDIX B

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCIDENTALS in parentheses, thus (#) or (b), are reminders that the indicated note is still # or b.

CHORD SYMBOLS - Standard (letter abbreviation) jazz notation has been used for chord symbols.

Here are some examples of 4-note chords:

1) Cmaj7 - C major 7 = C E G B

2) C7 - C dominant 7 = C E G Bb

3) Cm7 - C minor 7 = C Eb G Bb

4) Cdim7 - C diminished 7 = C Eb Gb Bbb (A)

5) Cm7(b5) - C half-diminished = C Eb Gb Bb

6) C7aug - C dominant 7 augmented = C E G# Bb

Here is an example of a 5-note chord used in this treatise:

C7(b9) - C dominant 7 with flatted 9th = C E G Bb Db

FINGER NUMBERS

1 = Index finger

2 = Middle finger

3 = Ring finger

4 = Little finger

ROMAN NUMERAL SYMBOLS indicate the scale degrees off which the chords are built. The *major scale* is always the reference scale, whether the piece is in major or minor tonality.

Here are some examples in C:

1) Imaj7 = Cmaj7

2) IIm7 = Dm7

3) bII7 = Db7

4) VIm7 = Am7

5) VI7 = A7

6) V7 = G7

7) II7 = D7

... in any key:

V-chord = dominant triad

V7-chord = dominant 7 (4-note) chord

STRINGS

GS = G-string

DS = D-string

AS = A-string

ES = E-string

GLOSSARY

Explanations marked with an asterisk (*) are taken from The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz. Unmarked explanations are my wordings.

Changes - Jazz terminology for a chord sequence

Chorus - The repeated form of a jazz or blues piece, (usually used to improvise over) based on the main melody (the actual tune), excluding any introductions, verses, interludes or endings.

Comping - Abbreviation for accompaniment. This term was traditionally used to indicate chordal accompaniment, but is now used to indicate almost any accompaniment.

Enclosure - A technique used in jazz, where a target note, before being played, is preceded by one or more notes from both sides.

Groove - Continuity through consistency.

***Inside** - To play “inside” or “in” is to improvise within the confines of the harmonic structure of a theme.

***Outside** - To play “outside” or “out” is to depart, in improvisation, from the harmonic structure of the (sic.) theme.

Swing - An even pulse with a triplet-based (internalised) subdivision.

Tritone substitute chord - A dominant 7 chord whose root is a tritone away from the root of another dominant 7 chord.

***Turnaround** - A chord pattern at the end of the final phrase of a chorus, which leads back to the beginning of the theme.