

WALKING BASS LINES FOR GUITARISTS

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BASS LINES ARE AN EXCELLENT MEANS TO IMPROVE YOUR MUSICIANSHIP ON THE GUITAR, OR ANY OTHER INSTRUMENT. LEARNING TO IMPROVISE/WRITE BASS LINES OFFERS SEVERAL BENEFITS INCLUDING:

1. PROVIDES A SOLID, SWINGING ACCOMPANIMENT FOR DUO AND CREATION OF PRACTICE PLAY-ALONG SEQUENCES, RECORDINGS, ETC...
2. HELPS TO DEVELOP AN INTUITIVE SENSE OF HARMONIC RHYTHM (CHORD CHANGES) BY ORIENTING TO THE BASS LINE.
3. BASS LINES INCORPORATE MANY "BASIC" IMPROVISATIONAL CONCEPTS AND FUNDAMENTAL MUSICAL BUILDING BLOCKS SUCH AS CHORD TONE OUTLINING WITH CHROMATICISM, BOP SCALES, AND USE OF SEQUENCE THAT ARE ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR IMPROVISING IN THE JAZZ/FUSION IDIOMS.

STEP ONE ROOT AND FIFTH ORIENTATION

BEGIN WITH A QUARTER NOTE "WALKING" BASS LINE UTILIZING PRIMARILY THE 1ST AND 3RD FINGERS. CONNECT THE CHORD CHANGES, EXPERIMENTING WITH DIFFERENT STRING GROUPS BUT STAY ON THE LOW SIDE. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO THIS WITH ANY PROGRESSION AT SIGHT IN 4/4 METER. ALTER ANY FIFTHS AS DIRECTED, SUCH AS $b5$ (MANY TIMES A $\sharp 5$ IN THE CHORD SYMBOL IS REALLY A $b13$ AND THE FIFTH IN THE BASS LINE SHOULD BE A NATURAL 5). IT IS ESSENTIAL TO HAVE MASTERED YOUR BASIC CHORD CONSTRUCTION IN 12 KEYS.

ALL THE THINGS... CHANGES

EX 1

F-7 B \flat -7 E \flat 7 A \flat Δ7

D \flat Δ7 D-7 G7 CΔ7

STEP TWO ROOT AND FIFTH WITH CHROMATIC APPROACH

*A TEMPORARY RULE FOR STARTING OUT—WHEN THE CHORD CHANGES PLAY THE ROOT, THEN THE ROOT OR FIFTH CAN BE APPROACHED CHROMATICALLY FROM ABOVE OR BELOW. WORK BACKWARDS FROM THE ROOT AS IN THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES.

EX 2A

F-7 B \flat -7 E \flat 7 A \flat Δ7

EX 2B

F-7 B \flat -7 E \flat 7 A \flat Δ7

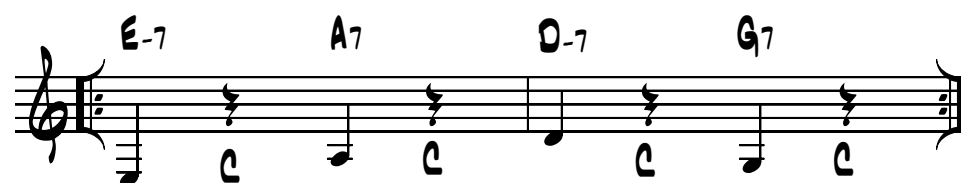
EX 2C ADD THE FIFTH



EX 2D APPROACH THE FIFTH



EX 3 VAMP WITH 2 CHANGES PER BAR (NOTICE THE ROOT WHERE CHORD CHANGES)



C = CHROMATIC APPROACH ABOVE/BELOW

PRACTICE THE VAMP WITH ALL APPROACHES FROM ABOVE, THEN ALL FROM BELOW, THEN MIXING BOTH DIRECTIONS.

EX 4 4 CHANGES PER BAR (ROOTS ONLY)



NOTE:

IN SITUATIONS WHERE THE CHORD DURATION IS MULTIPLE BARS THE ROOT ONLY NEEDS TO BE HIT ON THE INITIAL OCCURENCE OF THE CHORD.

WE'RE STILL USING THE "WHEN CHORD CHANGES PLAY THE ROOT" RULE FOR THE TIME BEING. IT WILL SIMPLIFY THE ADDING OF CHORDS TO THE BASS LINE.

THE FIRST 8 BARS OF "ALL THE THINGS..." MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS:

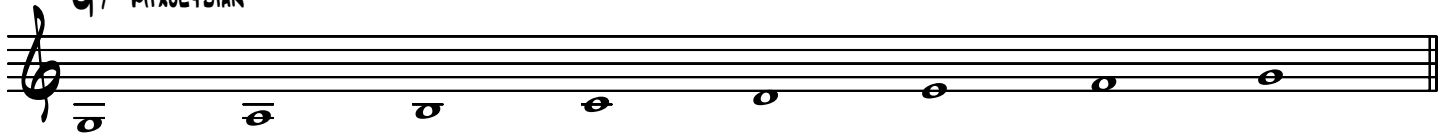


THIS METHOD WORKS WELL, BUT YOU'LL NOTICE THE LINE IS A LITTLE "JERKY". TO SMOOTH UP THE LINE LETS GO ON TO THE NEXT BIG BUILDING BLOCK FOR BASS LINES WHICH IS SCALES AND SCALES WITH CHROMATICS.

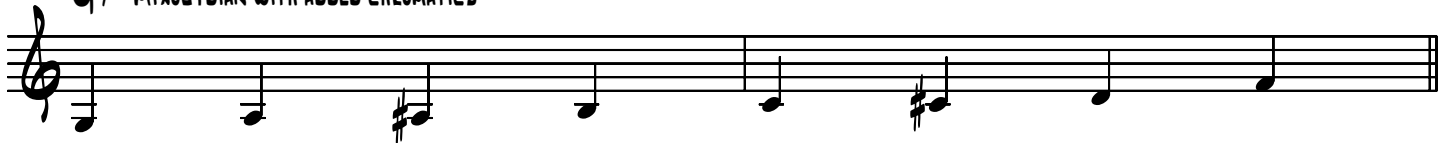
STEP THREE SCALES AND SCALES WITH CHROMATICS

ANY BASIC CHORD SCALE INTENDED FOR BASS LINE APPLICATION CAN BE USED BY ITSELF OR ENHANCED BY THE USE OF CHROMATICS.

EX 6 G7 MIXOLYDIAN



EX 6A G7 MIXOLYDIAN WITH ADDED CHROMATICS



START WITH THE BASIC MAJOR, DORIAN, AND MIXOLYDIAN SCALES AND TRY ADDING CHROMATIC CONNECTORS BETWEEN SCALE STEPS

2-3 4-5 b7-1.



TOO MUCH SCALE WITH CHROMICISM CAN GET A BIT TOO SMOOTH AND WISHY-WASHY.

STEP FOUR CHORD TONE OUTLINE BY TRIADS/7TH CHORD



TOO MUCH CHORD TONE OUTLINE ESPECIALLY THE TRIADIC, CAN MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE CAUGHT IN A BAD ELVIS PRESLEY MOVIE!

BUT, THERE'S STILL GREAT POTENTIAL FOR MUSICALITY THROUGH MANIPULATION OF THE CHORD TONES. THE CHORD OUTLINE DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE TO GO 1357, TRY 1537, 1753, ETC.

WITH THE INVERSIONS OF THE CHORD TONES AVAILABLE YOU CAN SEE THE POTENTIAL FOR NON-ROOT ON THE CHANGE THAT WILL BECOME POSSIBLE.

STEPS TWO, THREE, AND FOUR ARE THE BASICS OF BASS LINE CONSTRUCTION. YOU'LL FIND, THOUGH, TO KEEP THINGS INTERESTING FREQUENT JUXTAPOSITION OF THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS IS NECESSARY TO KEEP THINGS FRESH AND MUSICAL. THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE THREE INGREDIENTS AT WORK IN "ALL THE THINGS..."

NOTICE THAT SCALE FRAGMENTS SUCH AS 1235 OR EVEN A PLAIN SCALE WITHOUT CHROMATICS CAN BE USED TO CONNECT CHORDS VERY EFFECTIVELY.

Ex 8

Chord progression labels (from top to bottom, left to right):

- F-7, B \flat -7, E \flat 7, A \flat Δ 7
- D \flat Δ 7, D-7, G7, C Δ 7, //
- C-7, F-7, B \flat 7, E \flat Δ 7
- A \flat Δ 7, A-7, D7, G Δ 7, B-7, E7
- A-7, D7, G Δ 7
- F \sharp -7, B7, E Δ 7, G-7 \flat 5, C7(\sharp 9)
- F-7, B \flat -7, E \flat 7, A \flat Δ 7
- D \flat Δ 7, D \flat -7, G \flat 7, C-7, F7, B-7, E7
- B \flat -7, E \flat 7, A \flat Δ 7, G-7 \flat 5, C \flat 9

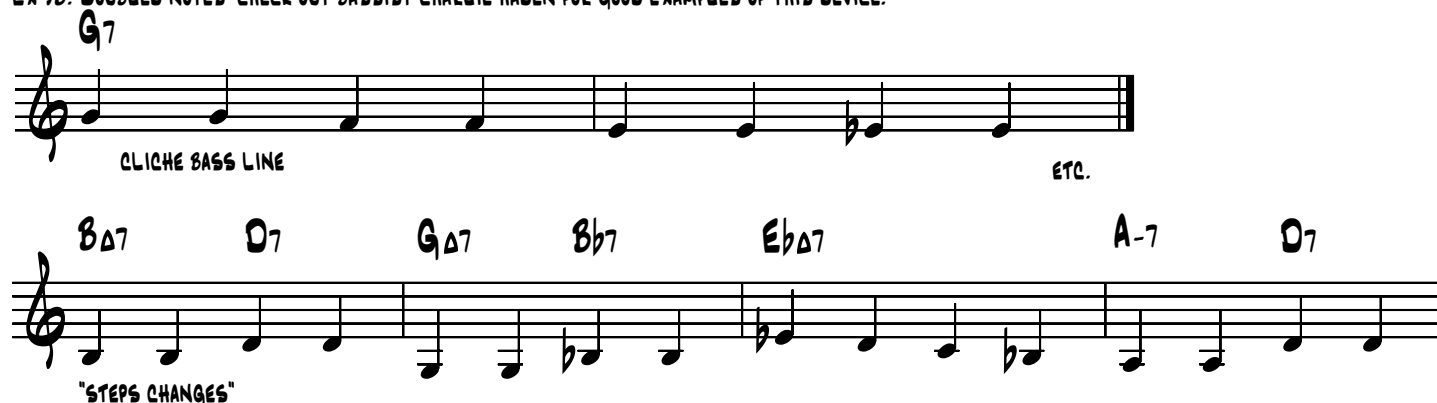
STEP FIVE VARIATION OF BASIC ELEMENTS

YOU CAN GET A LOT MORE MUSICAL MILEAGE OUT OF THE BASIC BUILDING DEVICES BY APPLYING THESE VARIATIONS TO YOUR BASS LINES.

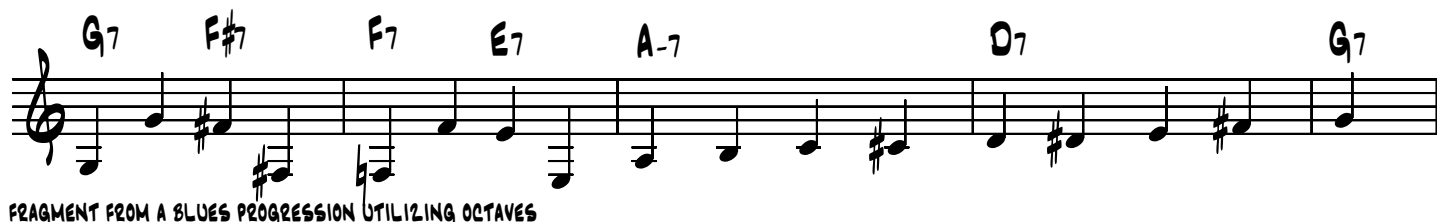
EX 9A. SEQUENCE—HERE'S A SIMPLE SCALE FRAGMENT PLUGGED INTO A MINOR BLUES.



EX 9B. DOUBLED NOTES—CHECK OUT BASSIST CHARLIE HADEN FOR GOOD EXAMPLES OF THIS DEVICE.



EX 9C. LARGE INTERVAL SKIPS BY 10TH, 9TH, OCTAVE, AND 7TH



EX 9D. "THE SECRET WEAPON" PERCUSSIVE/RHYTHMIC EFFECTS. UP 'TILL THIS POINT ALL OF OUR BASS LINE GENERATORS HAVE BEEN PITCH-ORIENTED. ANOTHER WAY TO CREATE INTEREST, VARIATION, AND RHYTHMIC "DRIVE" UTILIZES WHAT I CALL THE "FLAM". THINK LIKE A JAZZ DRUMMER IMPROVISING REACTIVE "HITS" USING THE SNARE DRUM. THE "ABSTRACTIONS" AS SOME DRUMMERS CALL THEM ARE REACTIONS TO THE MUSIC AND ALSO A WAY TO HEAT UP THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE PERFORMERS. WE DON'T REALLY RELATE THE PITCH OF A SNARE DRUM TO A SONG'S TONALITY, AND IN THE SAME WAY, WE CAN USE RHYTHMIC EFFECTS PERCUSSIVELY ON THE GUITAR USING OPEN STRINGS AND CHORD SHAPES WITHOUT AFFECTING THE MUSIC'S TONALITY IN A NEGATIVE WAY.



BASSIST RON CARTER IS A MASTER OF THESE EFFECTS ON DOUBLE BASS—CHECK OUT THE WAY HE USES THEM! WE GUITARISTS BENEFIT FROM THESE EFFECTS BY "DISGUISED" THE ELEMENTS WE'RE USING RHYTHMICALLY. AND YOU GET DRIVE AS WELL AS THE SURPRISE FACTOR. TRY TO USE THESE EFFECTS RANDOMLY SO THEY'RE UNPREDICTABLE.

WE NOW HAVE THE BASIC ELEMENTS TO MAKE GOOD BASS LINES. OF COURSE, THESE IDEAS ARE PRETTY THEORY ORIENTED. TO MAKE THESE ELEMENTS COME-ALIVE MUSICALLY YOU NEED TO LISTEN TO GOOD EXAMPLES OF THE ART OF BASS-PLAYING. IN ADDITION TO GREAT DOUBLE BASS PLAYERS LIKE: RON CARTER, PAUL CHAMBERS, PERCY HEATH, NIELS- HENNING ØRSTED PEDERSEN, RAY BROWN, ETC. CHECK OUT MODERN PLAYERS LIKE: JEFF ANDREWS, LINCOLN GOINES, AND SO ON. TRANSCRIBE!!! FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOUR EARS! WRITE!!! PRACTICE WRITING BASS LINES ON TUNES. START WITH THE BLUES OR A SIMPLE JAZZ STANDARD LIKE "SUMMERTIME", AND SCRUTINIZE YOUR WRITTEN LINES FOR GOOD CONTENT. USE THE ERASER AS MUCH AS THE LEAD IN YOUR PENCIL!!!

PLAY WHAT YOU WRITE, AND WORK ON THE GROOVE AND FEEL. TRY PLAYING A LINE ONLY ON ONE STRING, THEN TWO, THEN THREE, WHATEVER, AND SING WHAT YOU PLAY!!

YOU'LL BE SURPRISED WHAT A GREAT "ORIENTATION EXERCISE" THIS IS. TRY TO RELATE THESE IDEAS TO YOUR IMPROVISATIONS. RE-ORGANIZING THE FINGERBOARD IN THIS MANNER WITH THESE ELEMENTS IS A GREAT RUT-BUSTER!!

ONE LAST IDEA FOR THIS LESSON—LISTEN TO JAZZ ORGAN PLAYERS LIKE LARRY YOUNG. ORGANISTS TEND TO PLAY WHAT I CALL FUNCTIONAL BASS LINES. BASIC ELEMENTS—WHILE SWINGING THEIR TAILS OFF! WE GUITARISTS CAN LEARN A LOT FROM THEM.

NEXT LESSON: BASS LINES PART 2 ADDING CHORDS TO YOUR BASS LINES

MW in Perugia-7

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