

# BASS MASTER CLASS

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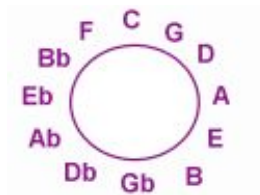
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### Linear Bass Line Construction

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

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

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



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

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

#### Cycle Patterns

1 (down the scale)                      2 (1 3 5 chromatic)                      3 (whole, half, half, half)

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









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

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

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

## 12-Bar Blues (Bebop)

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

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

## 12-Bar Blues (Bebop)

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

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