BASS BUILDERS

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Building Walking Bass Lines

By Ed Friedland

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Table of Contents

Part One

Part Two

Appendix

Preface

A walking bass line is the most common approach to jazz bass playing. The term "walking" is used to describe the moving feeling that quarter notes create in the bass part. Just like walking with your feet, the walking bass line is one step after the other that takes you somewhere. This is an important concept to remember, the walking bass line is *movement.*

Walking bass is also used in rock music, blues, rock-a-billy, r&b, gospel, latin, country, and many other types of music. In other words, you don't have to be a jazzer to walk. The processes involved in developing a walking line are applicable to any style of music. Essentially, this process is looking at a set of chords, deciding which notes we want to use, and determining the order in which we will play them. Being able to make these decisions will make you a "conscious bassist" as opposed to a bassist that hits or misses. With this in mind, I hope you are ready to start walkin'!

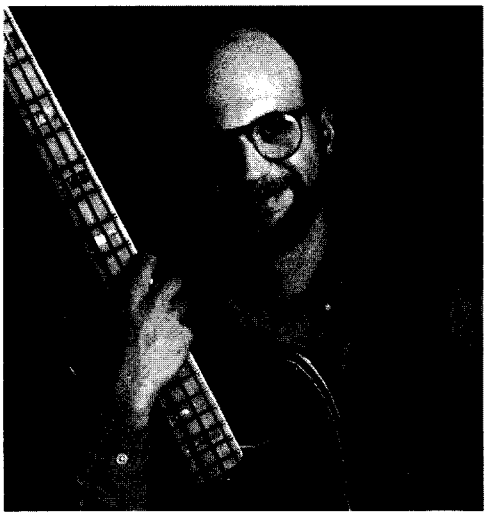
Goal Statement

The specific goal of this method is to familiarize you with the techniques used to build walking bass lines, and to help you develop an awareness of how the process of walking works. By understanding how it works, you will find that the information is transferable to other styles of bass playing. By the end of this book you will have the information you need to play good, functional, straight ahead bass lines. You will also have learned a system for analyzing a bass line that will help you to understand why some bass lines work and others don't. Rather than arm you with a few examples of walking bass lines, this book will show you the tools you need to build your own. Through the use of recorded rhythm tracks you will have the opportunity to put the new learning directly into action. It is crucial to your understanding that you are able to hear and feel how the bass line works in context.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Dr. Linda Ostrander, Tom Hamilton, members of the Bass Department at Berklee College of Music, Sonia Friedland, LeeEllen Friedland, David Taylor, Aimee Rae Friedland, Shelly Roth, Michael Merrill, Larry Fishman, and everyone over at Fishman Transducers. Thanks to all my students through the years who have helped me learn the art of teaching. Thanks to all the great inspirational bassists past and present.

About the Author



Ed Friedland is a Boston-area bass player and teacher. He is a graduate of the High School of Music and Art in New York City and a former faculty member of the Bass Department at Berklee College of Music. He has been a featured columnist in *Bass Player Magazine.* His performance credits include Larry Coryell, Michael Urbaniak, Robben Ford, Mike Metheny, Linda Hopkins, Johnny Adams, Robert Jr. Lockwood, Barrence Whitfield & the Savages, Martha and the Vandellas, The Drifters, Brook Benton, the Boston & Tokyo productions of *Little Shop of Horrors,* the Opera Company of Boston. Ed has a M.Ed. from Cambridge College, Cambridge, MA. Ed uses GHS strings and Fishman Transducers.

Using the Recording

A recording is included to give you the hands-on learning experience that is crucial to this style of bass playing. Many of the great walking bassists never learned from a book, they just went out and learned on the bandstand. Because these opportunities are now few and hard to find, the tape will provide you with a supportive and comfortable accompaniment to your learning process.

The recording uses a split stereo mix with piano and drums on the right channel, and bass and drums on the left channel. This configuration will allow you to turn the bass track off and play with the piano and drums, as well as giving you clear access to the bass track for learning the lines by ear, and by transcription.

The examples in the book with an icon () next to them have a number that corresponds to the number on the recording. Each example is first stated (the number is given), then counted off with a click. The click is a two-bar count off, two half notes, and three quarter notes leaving beat four blank. Ex. 1... 2... 1,2,3,...(play).

There are many opportunities in the book to create your own lines. There are examples with chord symbols and slashes. Turn off the bass track, and play your own line. This is what you will be asked to do in the real world, you might as well start now! You can do this with all of the examples in the book. These examples have recorded bass lines that are not written in the book. They are provided to give you another example of the concept in action. To enhance your learning experience, learn these examples by ear. It is highly recommended that you actually write them down, too, since transcription process is a very powerful tool for your overall musicianship.

The last section of the book is the Appendix. It includes ten commonly played jazz standard progressions. There are no written bass lines, but there are recorded ones. I played these lines as I would normally play them without thinking about chromatic approaches, scale motion, etc. However, I made a conscious effort to avoid too much rhythmic embellishment at this point, though there is some. These lines will give you an idea of what comes out when all the ideas presented in this book have been assimilated. They will also challenge your ear much more than anything else in the book. So when you feel ready, definitely learn these lines by ear, and transcribe them if you can.

I hope you will enjoy playing with the other musicians as much as I do. Brad Hatfield on piano and Jim Gwin on drums are two of Boston's greatest musicians. I have the pleasure of working with these two fine, upstanding citizens regularly, and now so can you!

Top Priority

Top priority for a bass player in any style of music is keeping time. Without this essential skill, anything you play is virtually useless. I don't mean to sound overly harsh. I'm trying to spare you the slings and arrows of irate horn players, guitarists, keyboard players, singers, and drummers. Oh yes, let's not forget drummers! The point is: if the time is not solid in a band, it doesn't matter how good everyone can play, how good you look, how nice your equipment is, etc., because the groove is not happening. Any style of music has to have a groove (unless the purpose is anti-groove), and this can only be achieved by the bass player and drummer hooking up into a solid rhythm section. Notice I mentioned the drummer here. Keeping the time is a shared responsibility between the bass and drums, and it requires individual strength and cooperation. For now, let's focus on individual strength. The first thing you need to develop your time is a metronome. If you don't have one already, ***buy one immediately!***

Get the picture? You can not achieve good time without one. You may substitute the metronome with a drum machine, however use it with a simple click for practicing time. A drum machine, though more fun to play with, can lull you into a false sense of security. Because it gives you so much rhythm to play with, it makes it too easy, it can tug you along for the ride, and it wouldn't swing if you hung it from a rope! To develop your time and your walking feel, practice with the metronome clicking on beats 2 & 4. In a jazz drum feel, beats 2 & 4 are played with the foot pedal of the hi hat cymbal. Using the metronome this way will give you the most important part of the jazz feel to work with.

Here is a simple way to find 2 & 4 with the metronome:

1) **Turn on metronome to a medium tempo.**
2) **Slap your knee with your hand in time with the click.**
3) **When your hand is in the air about to come down again, start counting. 1 is in the air, 2 is on your knee, 3 is in the air, 4 is on your knee. Keep this up for a while to get used to it.**

By using the metronome this way you are being held responsible for supplying the downbeat. This is an important part of your job as a bassist. Time is an internal clock that ticks in the center of the chest. This clock runs on a rechargeable battery. Like all rechargeable batteries, when you use them for the first time, you must leave them in the charger for a long time. Once your internal clock is up and running, it will require regular maintenance to keep it fully charged. No one's time is ever "good enough." When the battery is charged, and the rhythm section hooks up, there is no finer feeling in the world.

Reading Music

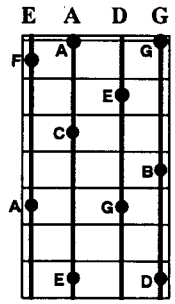
Reading music is an important skill for any musician to develop. How far into reading you go depends on what your musical goals are. If you are interested in becoming a professional musician, I highly recommend that you make reading a priority. Even if you don't see yourself needing to read music to carry out your musical goals, being able to read will enhance your understanding of music, and make you a better musician. Reading music gives you a *visual* representation of the notes you are playing. Playing the notes gives you an *aural* understanding, as well as physical or kinesthetic knowledge of where the notes are on the bass. When you combine all three, you have a very complete understanding of what you are playing.

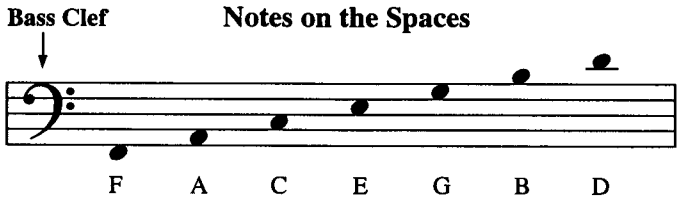
As a bass player, you will spend a large part of the time reading chord changes instead of actual notes. This book will help you interpret changes. By learning to walk over chord changes, you are discovering what notes you have available to you on a given chord. In order to get the most out of this book, you will have to read the examples. You will be able to hear the examples played on the play-along tape that accompanies this book, so using your ear to learn the written examples is fine. If you combine using your ears and your eyes, you will have a better understanding of the material, although it is possible to learn the examples either way.

On the next few pages is a basic reference guide to reading music. It is intended as a supplement to help you find the notes on the neck. It is not necessarily the definitive method for sight reading, just a tool to help you get the information you need from this book. Due to the nature of walking bass lines, the only rhythmic value you will see in this book is a quarter note. In 4/4 time there are four quarter notes in a bar, in 3/4, there are three. For further rhythmic training, I highly recommend the book, *Modern Reading Text in 4/4*, by Louie Bellson and Gil Breines (Belwin Mills Publishing).

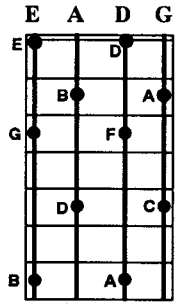
Basics of Reading Music

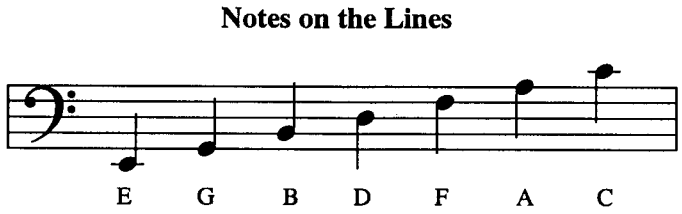
Music is written on five lines called the ***Staff.*** Bass players read in ***Bass Clef.*** The bass clef has two dots that surround the line on which the pitch "F" is written. The notes are divided into two groups, notes on the spaces...



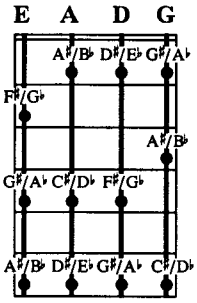


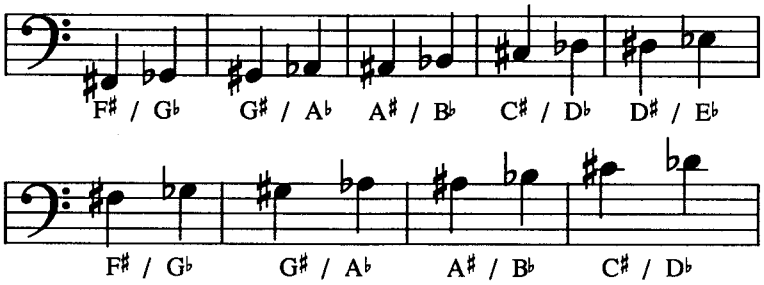
and notes on the lines...



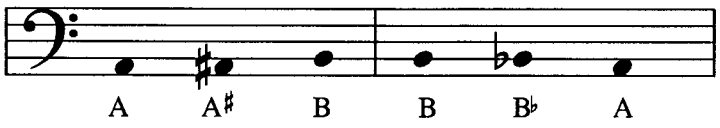


So far we have found the natural notes on the bass. These are notes without sharps (♯) or flats (♭). Between the pitches B and C is a half step (one fret). Between the pitches E and F is also a half step. Between all other pitches is a whole step (two frets). The notes that occur in the middle of these whole steps are called accidentals.





Notice that all of these chromatic pitches have two names. A♯ is also B♭. This is called an enharmonic spelling. Which name you use depends on what key you are in. In the key of B♭, you would call a note "E♭," where in the key of E, you would call that same pitch "D♯." Most often, when a line is ascending, a pitch becomes raised. For example a chromatic line from A would be A-A♯-B. Descending from B it would be B-B♭-A.



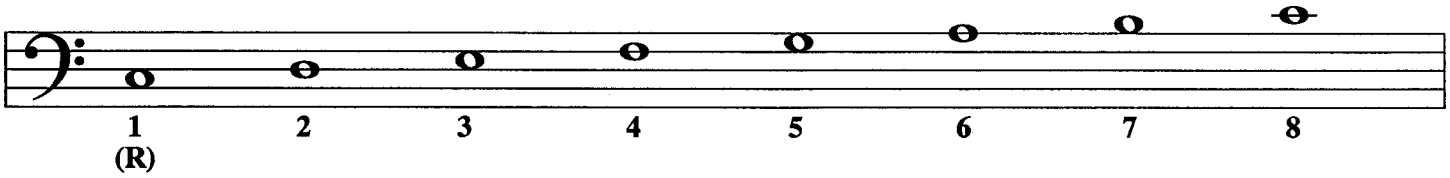
Note: When an accidental appears in a bar of music, it applies to the whole measure unless it is cancelled out with another accidental.

Basics of Chord Construction

The first step in the walking process is to be able to read the chord changes. The chord symbol tells you all the specific information about the chord structure. It is up to you to decode the information and create a bass line that will say something about the chord.

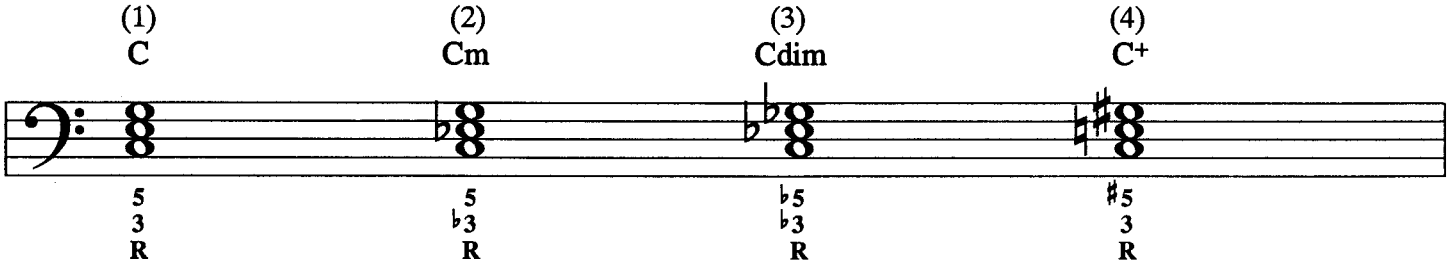
Chords are made from scale tones stacked on top of each other. Triads (three-note chords) contain the root, 3rd and 5th. Four-part chords contain the root, 3rd, 5th and 7th.

C major scale



Here is a listing of the most commonly used chord structures and what they contain. To make things easier, all the example chords will be built off the root C. Refer to the numbered scale above if you need to. Notes with a [♭] sign are lowered a half step from the original scale tone, notes with a [♯] sign are raised a half step.

Triads

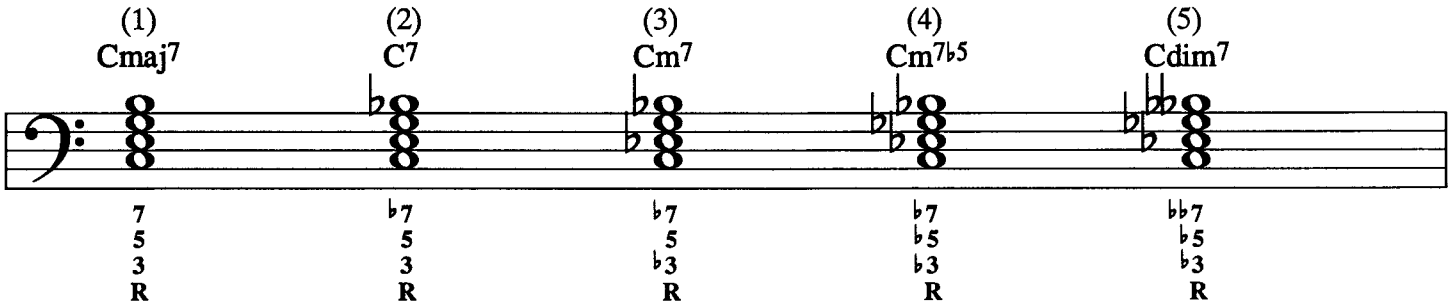


Chord List - Triads

(1) C major triad - (R, 3, 5)
(2) C minor triad - (R, ♭3, 5)
(3) C diminished triad - (R, ♭3, ♭5)
(4) C augmented triad - (R, 3, ♯5)

The next five chords are four-note structures called "seventh chords." They add a seventh from the root to an existing triad. The seventh will either be major (7), minor (♭7) or diminished (♭♭7).

Four-Part Chords – Seventh Chords



Chord List - Triads

(1) C major seventh - (R, 3, 5, 7)
(2) C dominant seventh - (R,3, 5, ♭7)
(3) C minor seventh - (R, ♭3, 5, ♭7)
(4) C minor seventh ♭5 - (R, ♭3, ♭5, ♭7)
(5) C diminished seventh - (R, ♭3, ♭5, ♭♭7)

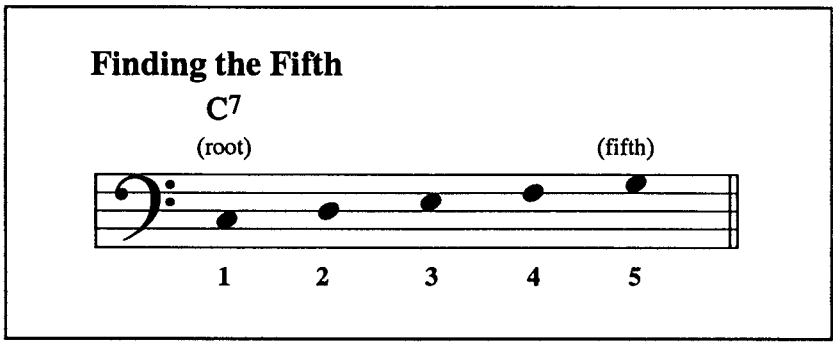
From the chord symbol we know which notes we can use to bring out the quality of that chord. Obviously, the root is the most important note; it is the bottom of the chord. The 5th of a chord combines with the root to form a framework for the chord quality. That is why they are important notes to know: they will work on any chord regardless of quality.

Triads with a natural 3 are major, and ones with a ♭3 are minor. A seventh chord will be determined by what combination of triad and seventh you use. For example, a major triad with a natural 7 will be a major seventh chord. A major triad with a ♭7 will be a dominant seventh chord. **On chords with a ♭5 or +5 symbol do not play the natural 5, play the 5 that the chord symbol says.**

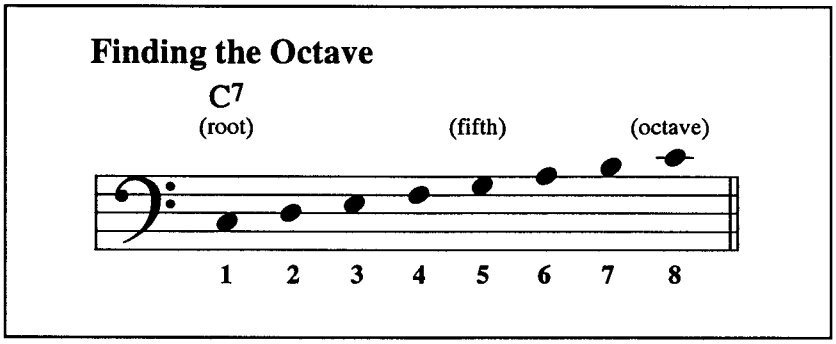
PART ONE

Overview

In Part One of this method, you'll be introduced to three notes that will be lifelong companions: the Root, Fifth, and Octave. These three notes are included in virtually every chord type. The root is the fundamental, the ground floor that all chords are built off of. The fifth is the fifth note up the major scale from the root. The fifth is the dominant note. In simple terms, this means that the fifth has an over powering need to go back to the root.



The octave is the root except – it is eight notes up the major scale from the root.



The R, 5, and 8 are the framework that a chord is built on. The R, 5, and 8 do not give you any specific information about the chord **quality.** That means they don't tell you if a chord is major or minor, major seventh or minor seventh, etc. Therefore that these three notes are your best choices when first starting to walk through chord changes because they will work on every chord type.

There are, of course, some special cases where a chord will have a flatted fifth, such as a 7♭5, or a diminished chord, and some cases where a chord will have a sharped fifth, such as an augmented chord. However, the chord symbol will let you know that these fifths will have to be altered up or down. In any case, you will not see these types of chords in Part One of this method, you will not have to think about them for now.

Part One will show you how to use the R, 5, and 8 to create simple walking lines. Once you have learned this, you will then learn about ways to approach the R, 5, and 8 in order to add more interest. These approaches are: chromatic approach, dominant approach, and scalewise approach. By the end of Part One, you will have experienced these techniques with blues progressions in the keys of F, B♭, E♭, C, and G. The blues progression is a good starting point because it is one of the most commonly played progressions in jazz, and because it is familiar to most everyone through its use in rock, blues, country, and countless other styles of music. In addition to the blues, there are 8 bar "II-V" progressions included for each concept. These progressions have more chord motion, usually two changes per bar. They are included to help you get used to playing active progressions.

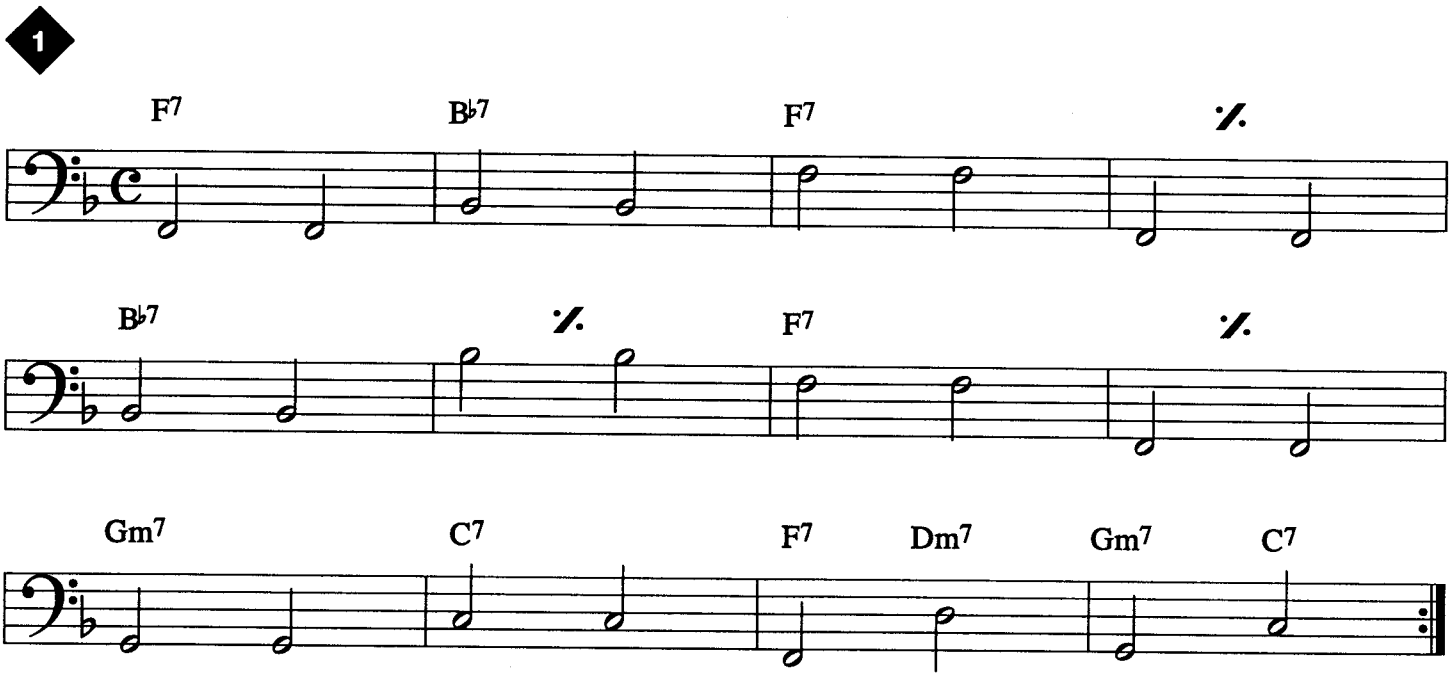
At the end of the section you will be introduced to "Rhythm Changes," the progression "I've Got Rhythm" is based on. Many jazz tunes use this progression, or segments of it, to build new progressions. Next to the blues, it is the most important progression to learn in jazz.

An Important Notice

Because this book attempts to instruct in an organized, chronological way, you will be introduced to concepts one at a time. The examples that will be given are geared towards helping you understand the concept they are illustrating. This will in, some cases, produce a bass line that may sound a little unnatural. Keep in mind that experienced bassists do not play with only one concept in mind. Because this book is designed to build an understanding of the many different concepts available to you, at first, the examples will emphasize one concept to the exclusion of others. As you advance through this method, you will discover that the examples will use more than one approach and start to sound more natural. Once you understand walking, you can play almost anything and make it work.

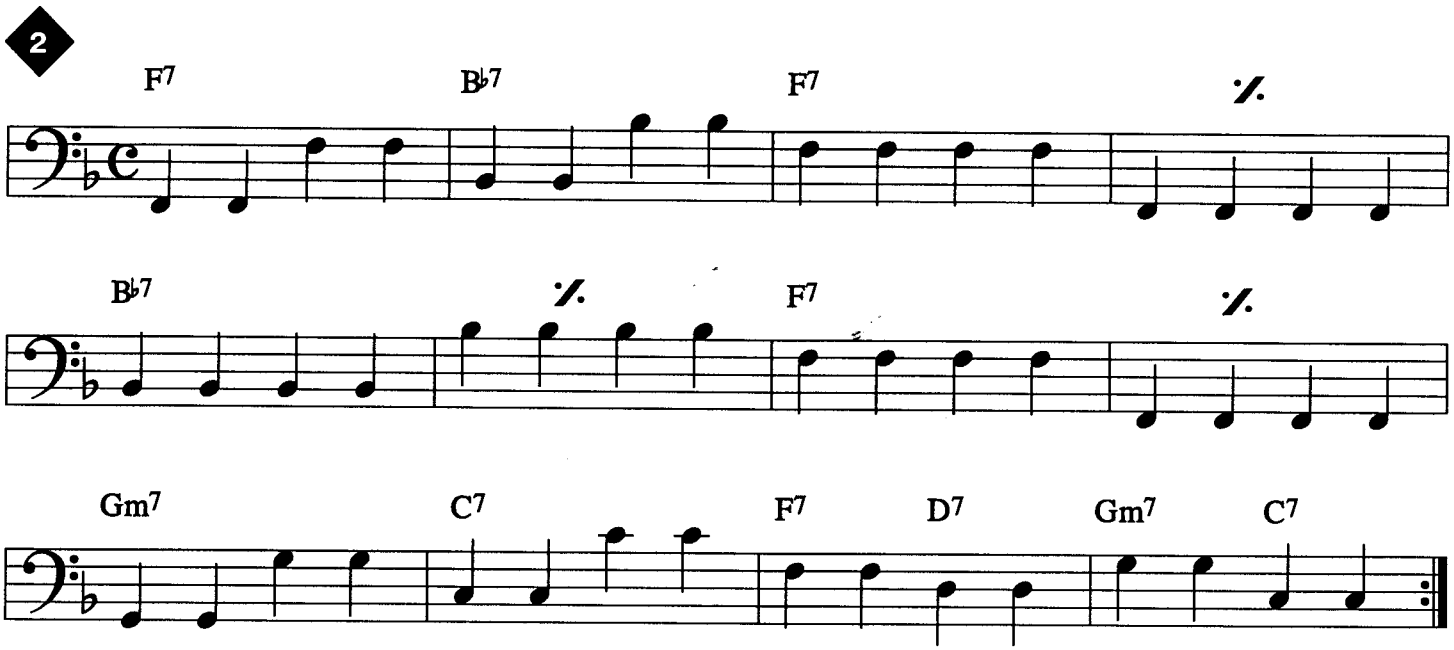
Walking the Blues: From the Bottom Up

Here is an F blues progression using only the roots of the chords in the half note rhythm. The root is the most important note of a chord. For a bass player, it is the first note you need to be able to find. Your first job is to outline the root motion of a progression.



Playing half notes for the bass line is called a "two" feel. It is commonly used for the head of a tune, or in dixieland, country or latin music. In jazz, the bassist will most likely switch to playing in "4," using quarter notes for the solos.

Here is the F blues again, this time in a "four" feel. We are still using only roots, but by using the octave we can give the line a little motion.



More Practice With Roots

Here is a progression that follows the cycle of fifths. This type of root motion is very common in jazz and popular music, so it's a good idea to become familiar with it now.

The frequent chord changes create a sense of movement, so, even though we are only using roots, the line still has motion to it. In some situations it may be best to stay with the roots on this type of progression.

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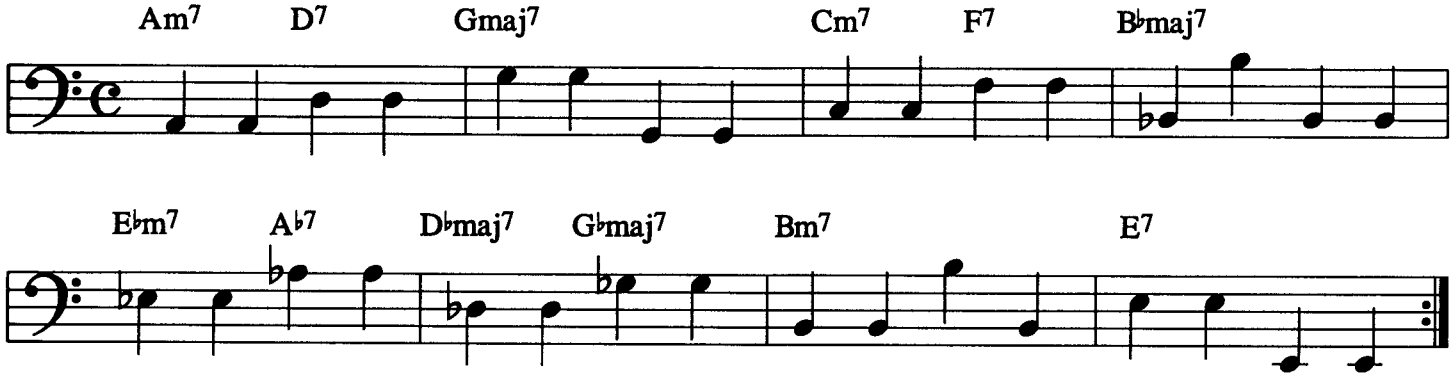

Here is another progression that uses cycle of fifths root motion. Play through this using only roots and octaves.

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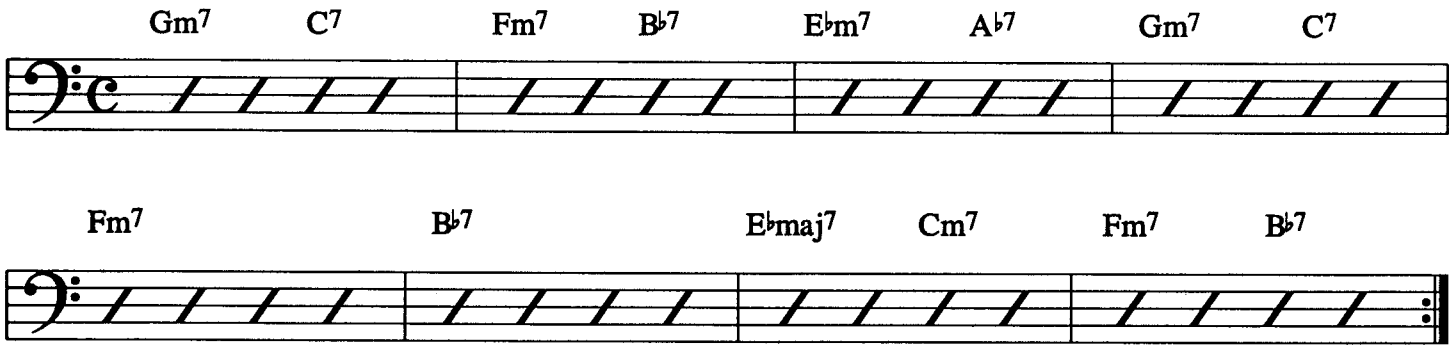
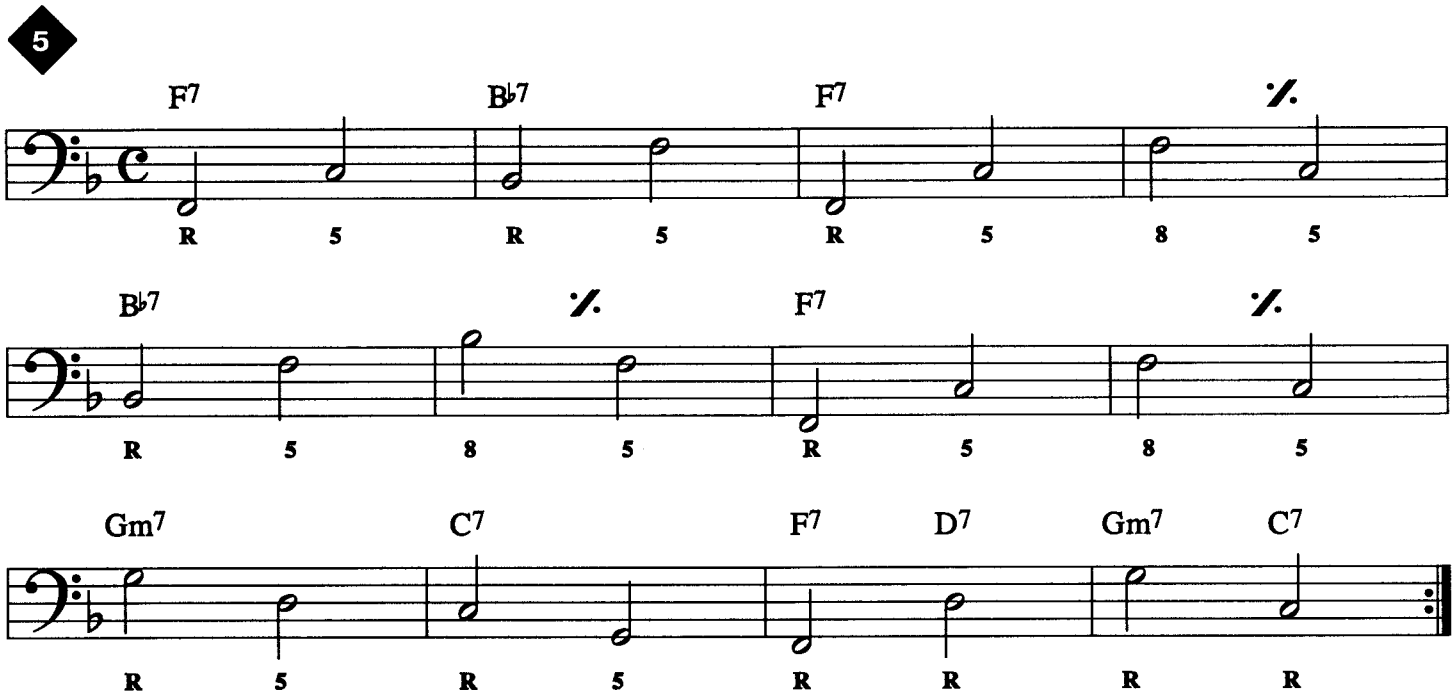


Moving On

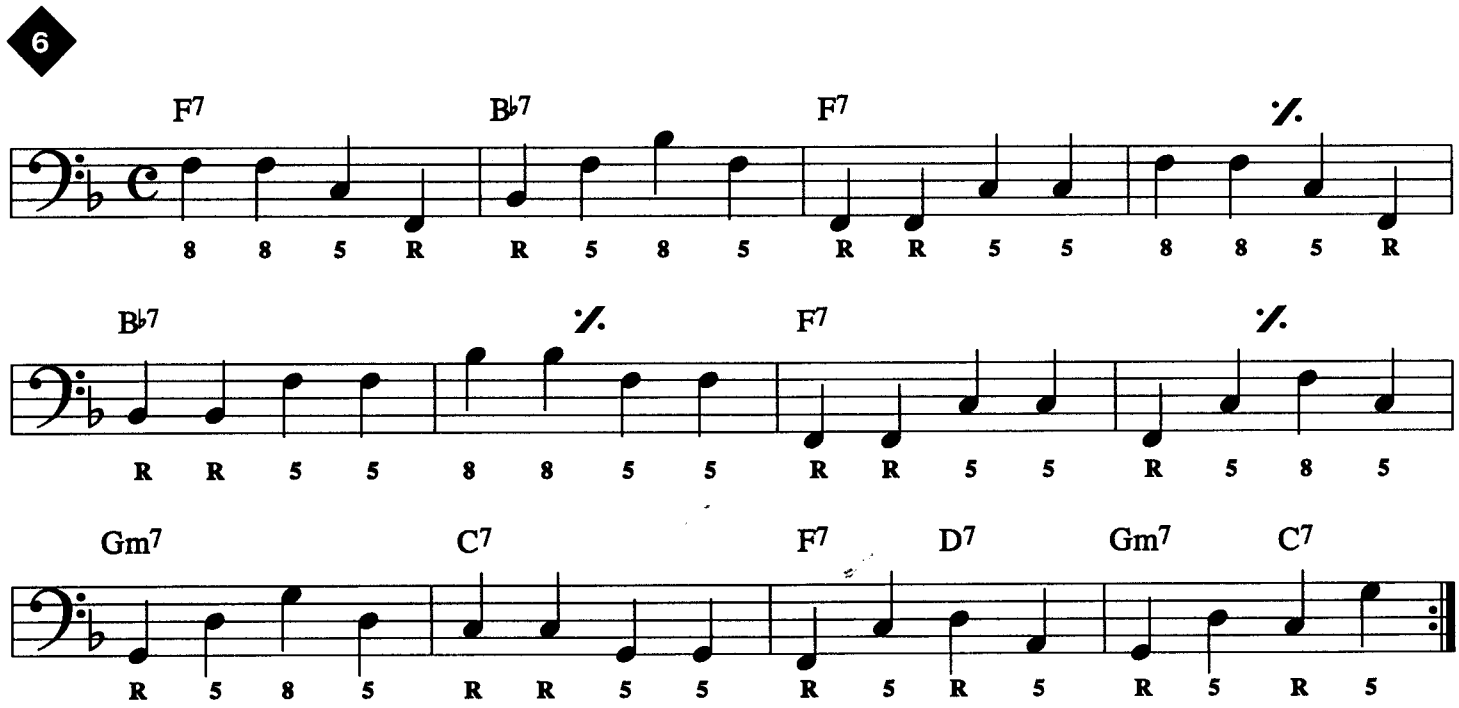
The first chord tone we will introduce is the fifth. As noted earlier, the fifth, along with the root (and octave) forms the framework of a chord. It is important to know that these notes can be used on any type of chord, since they do not interfere with the chord quality (major, minor, etc.). For now, since we will not look at chords with a ♭5 or ♯5, all chords shown will have a natural 5. On the next page are some lines that use the R, 5 and 8.

Adding the Fifth



The previous line is a classic example of a "two" feel. The use of R and 5 in half notes is common to many styles of bass playing.

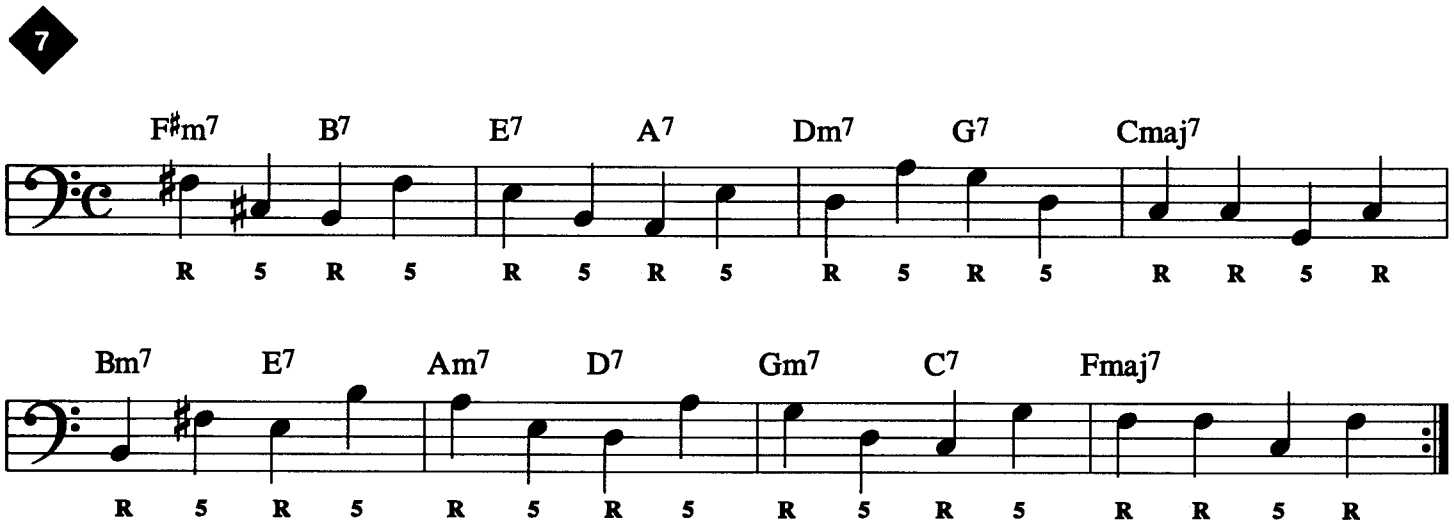
The next example uses roots, fifths and octaves in a "four" feel.



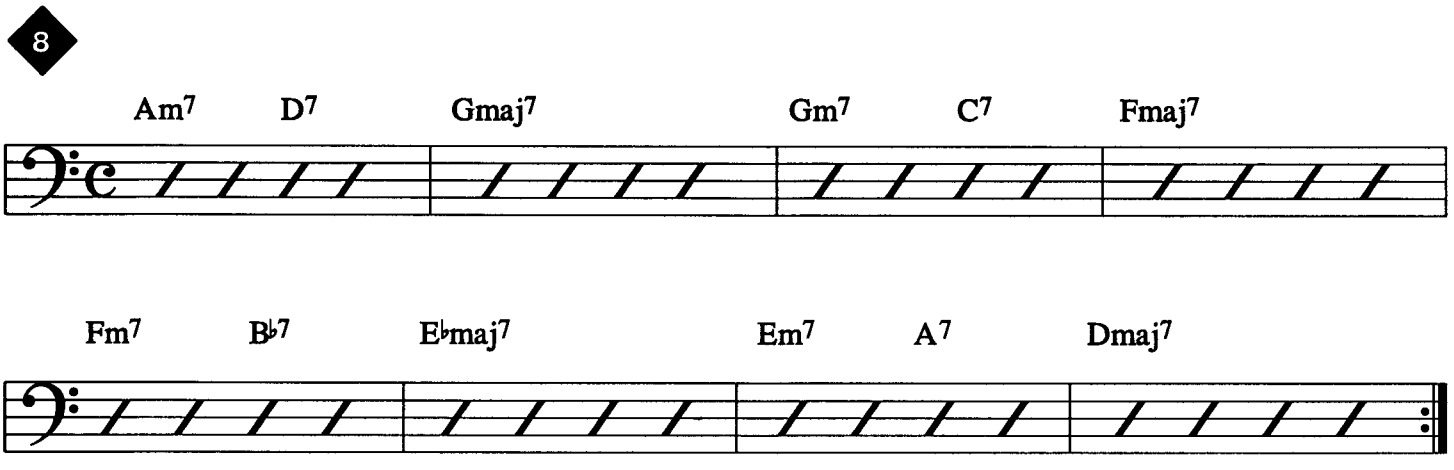
This line has a very foundational feel to it. Notice how the motion gets smoother in the last two bars of the blues.

More Practice with Fifths

Here is another progression that uses the cycle of fifths root motion. Notice how the fifth of one chord resolves to the root of the next chord by a whole step. This pattern will always occur with this type of progression.



Now use the roots and fifths to play through this cycle of fifths type progression. Take note of where the resolution pattern from the previous example shows up.



Two New Keys for the Blues

Here is the blues progression in the keys of B♭ and E♭. Find the roots and play through them in half notes. Then add the octaves and play through the changes in quarter notes. Add the fifth of each chord and play through the changes in half notes. Next play through with quarter notes using roots, fifths and octaves. You will find that some chords show up in all three keys. Even if the chord type is different, the R, 5, and 8 will be the same.

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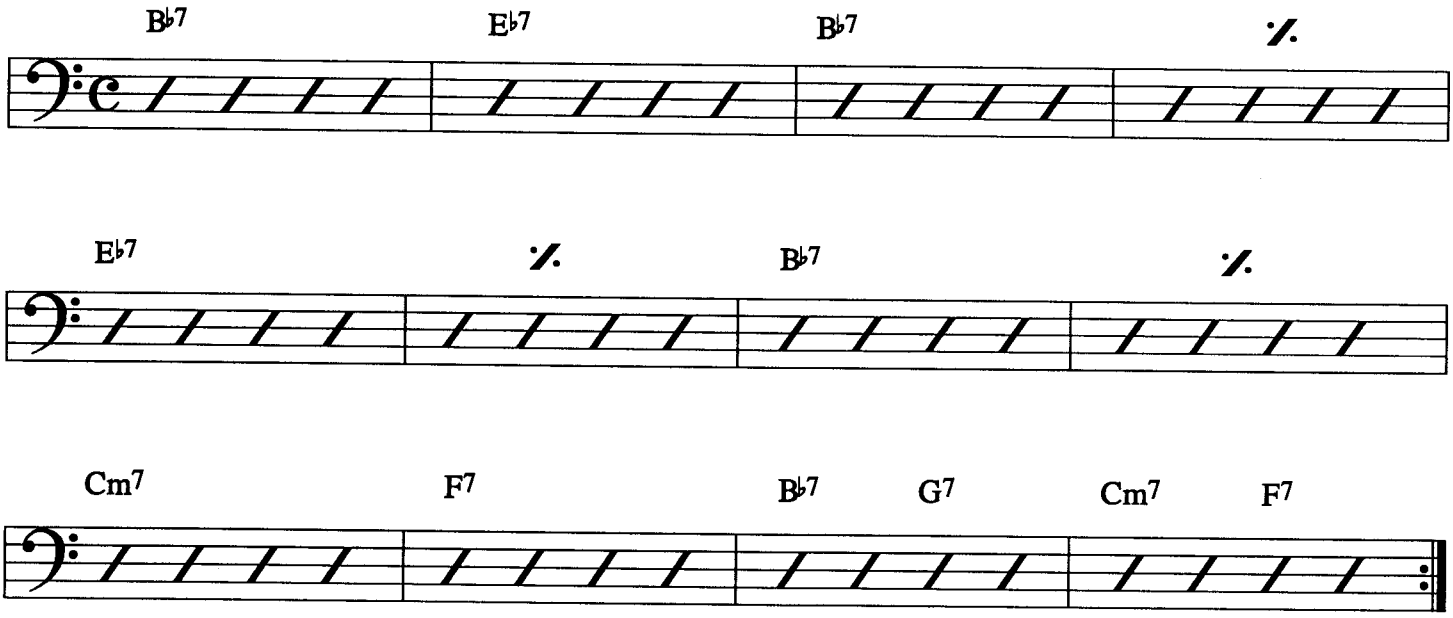

Look for the notes in more than one place on the fingerboard. This will keep you from getting stuck in the lower part of the neck. Explore the possibilities!

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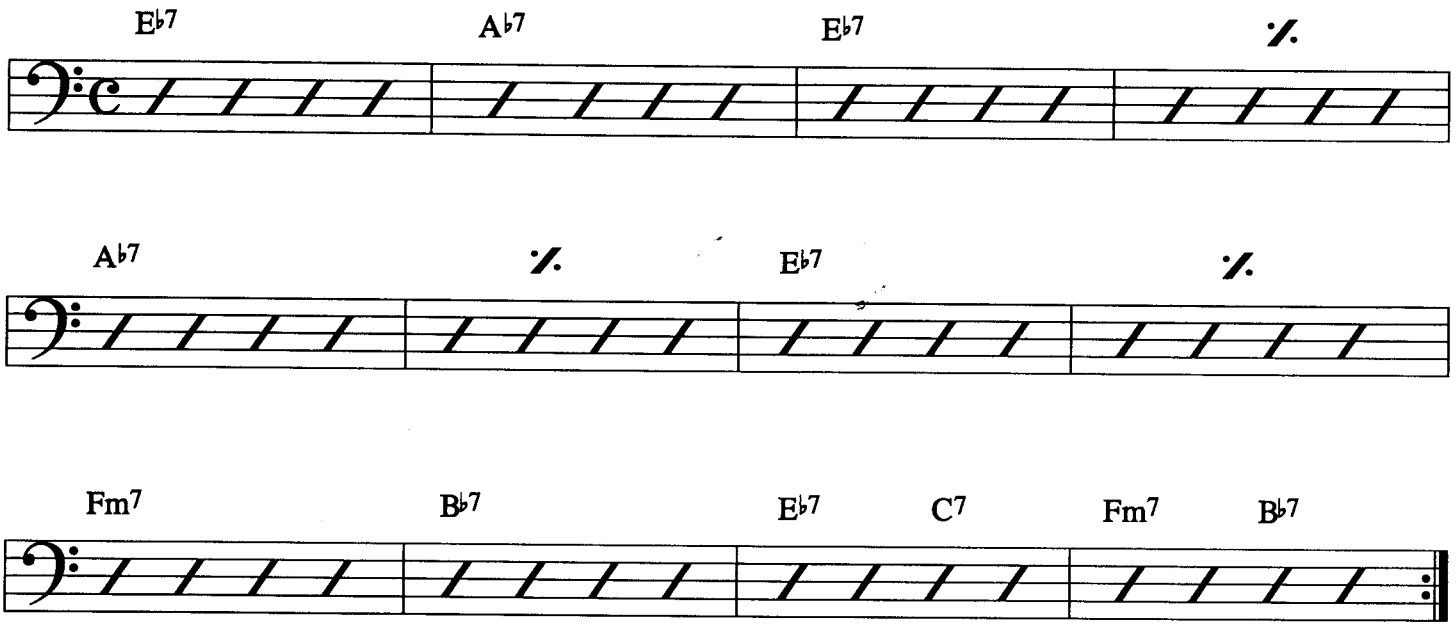


Approach Notes

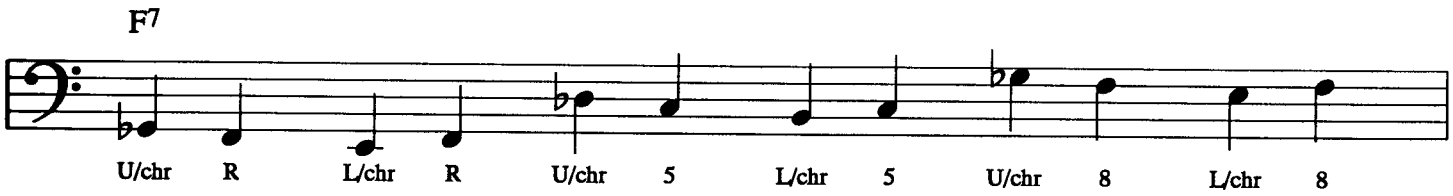
So far, we have used only roots, fifths, and octaves in our lines. This will help you to hear the structure of the progression. By adding approach notes, the bass line can become smoother, and more interesting.

Remember: walking bass line is a *moving object.* A good line has a feeling of forward motion. By using approach notes we can create a feeling of destination.

Approach notes set up target notes. For now, the target notes will be the roots, fifths, and octaves. There are many ways to approach a target note. For now, we will focus on the basic approaches. These are ***upper and lower chromatic approach, upper and lower dominant approach and scalewise approach.***

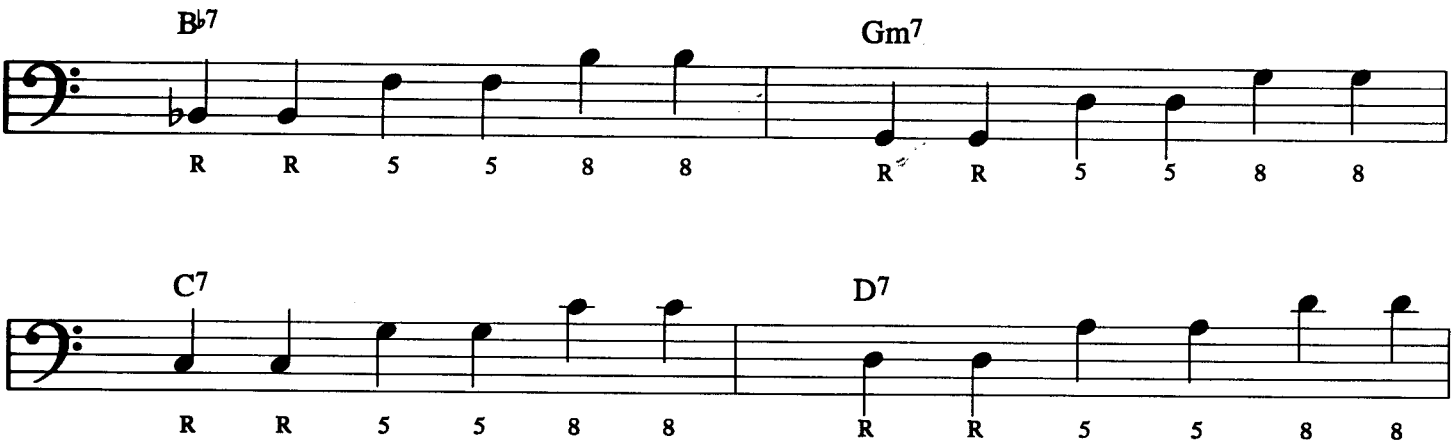
Chromatic Approach

Chromatic approach notes resolve to a target note from a half step (one fret) above or below. The analysis symbols for these approaches are **U/chr** for upper chromatic approach (from above) and **L/chr** for lower chromatic approach (from below). These are the upper and lower chromatic approaches to the R, 5, and 8 of an F^7 chord.



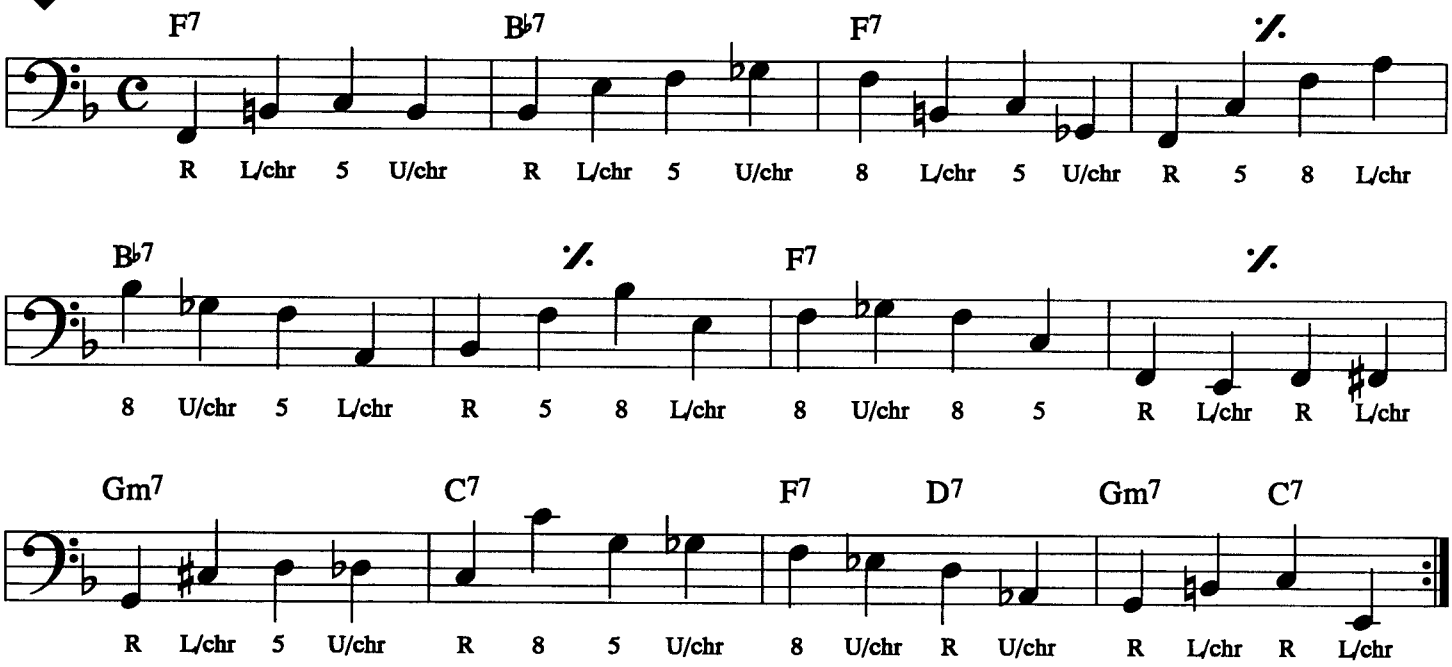
Here are the R, 5 and 8 for the chords in the F blues. On the bass, find the upper and lower chromatic approaches for each note. Look to see if these notes can be found in more than one place on the bass.

Once you have located the notes on the neck, write them in next to their target notes. Remember, that the approach note comes before the target note, so write it to the left of the target.



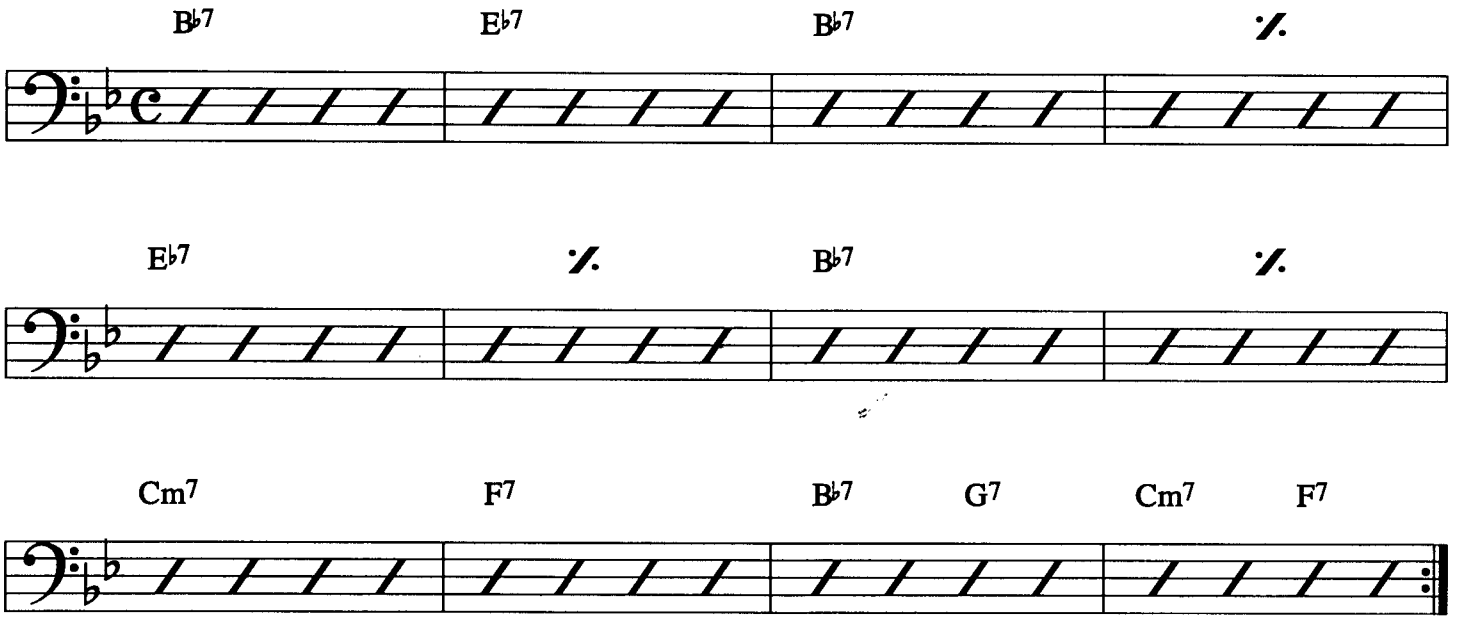
Lines with Chromatic Approach to R, 5 and 8

11



Below is the B♭ blues again. Find the upper and lower chromatic approaches to the R, 5 and 8 of each chord. You may want to write them out like with the F blues. Writing things out will help solidify them in your mind.

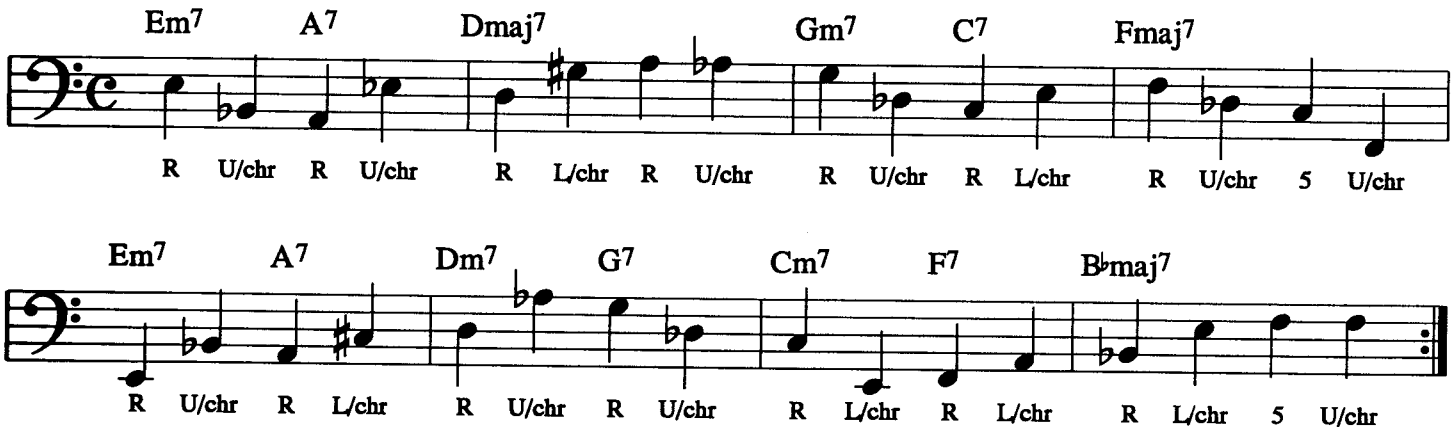
12



More Practice with Chromatic Approach

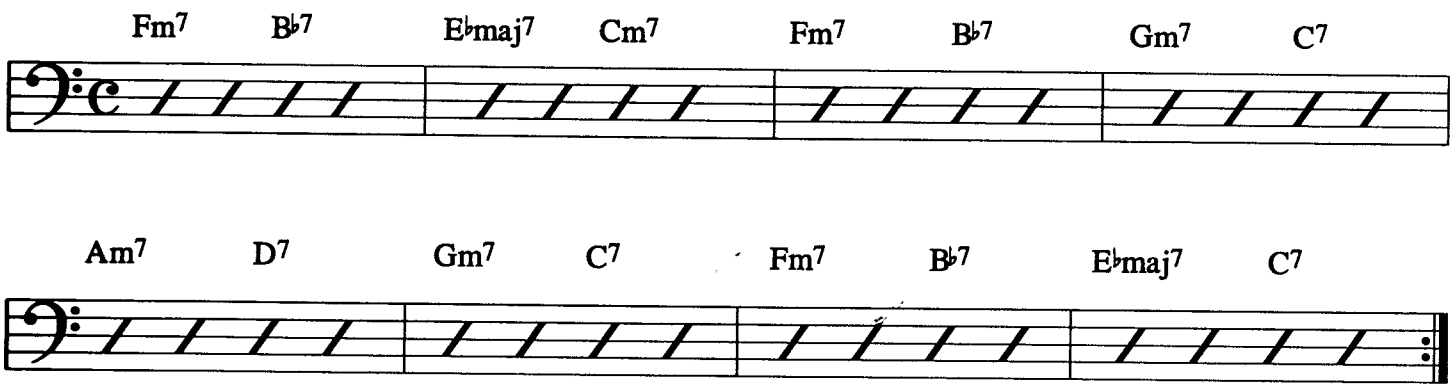
Here is an example of how chromatic approach works through the cycle of fifths. Notice how smooth the motion is between chords with this approach.

13



Now try playing this progression with chromatic approach. These busy chord progressions are easier to play through than they look. With the root on the first beat of each chord, all you really need to find is the approach note.

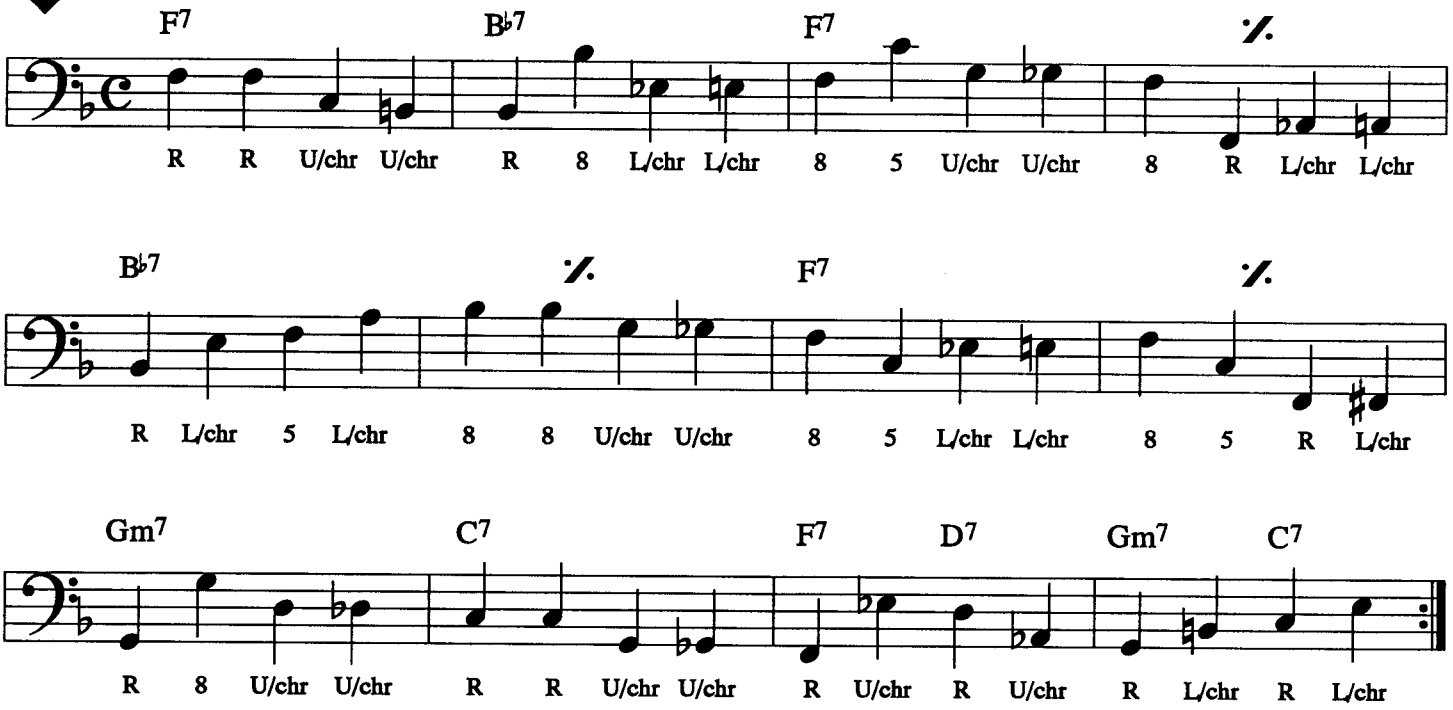
14



Double Chromatic Approach

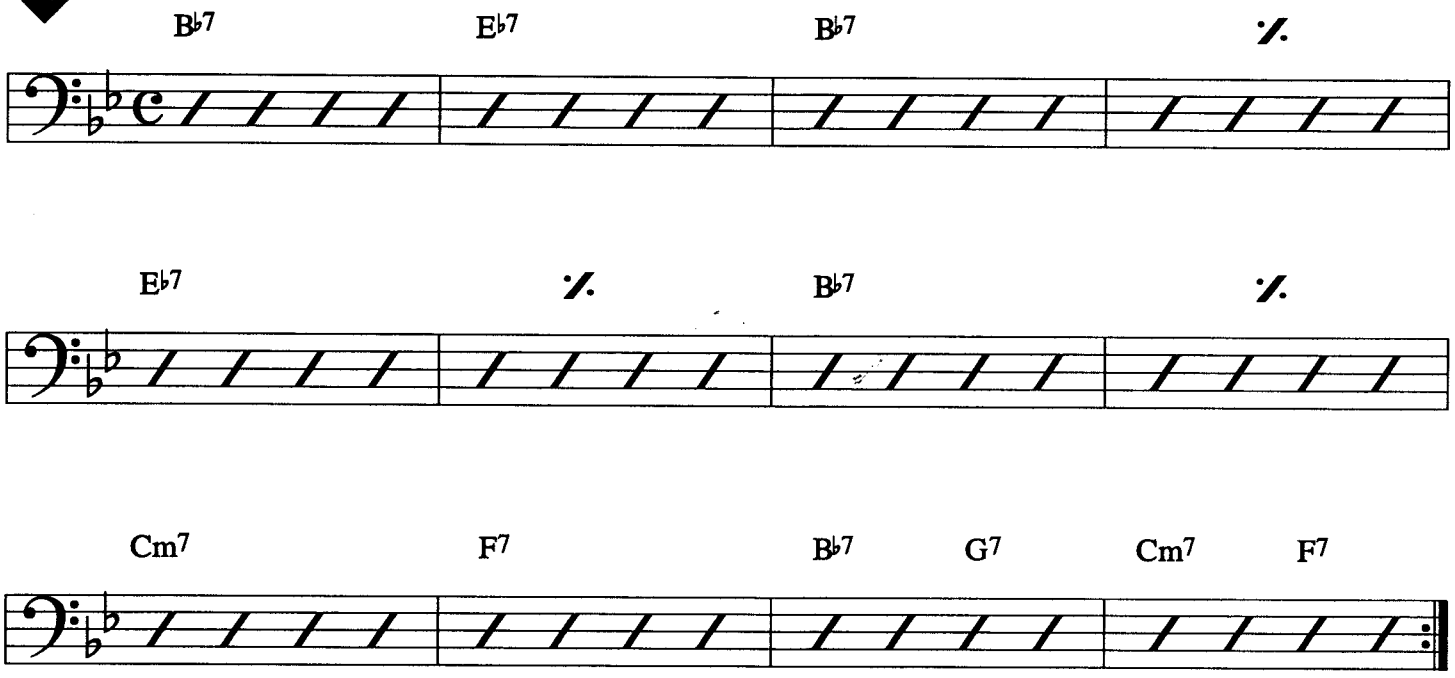
Here is a way to add more possibilities to chromatic approach. Double chromatic approach creates a very smooth line with a strong pull into the target.

15



Try this technique on the B♭ blues.

16



Dominant Approach

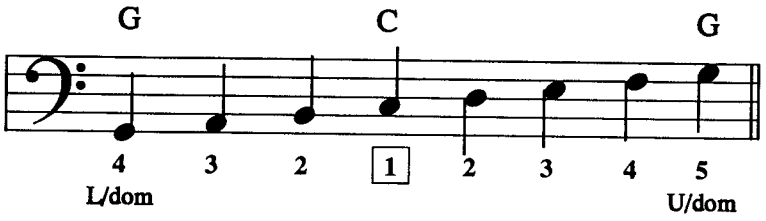
The next approach method we will look at is ***dominant approach***. The fifth of a chord is called the dominant. That means, **a dominant approach is a resolution to a target from the fifth of that target.**

Dominant approaches can be either upper or lower. To find the upper dominant approach to a target note, simply start on the target and count up the scale to the fifth, the same way you find the fifth of any chord.

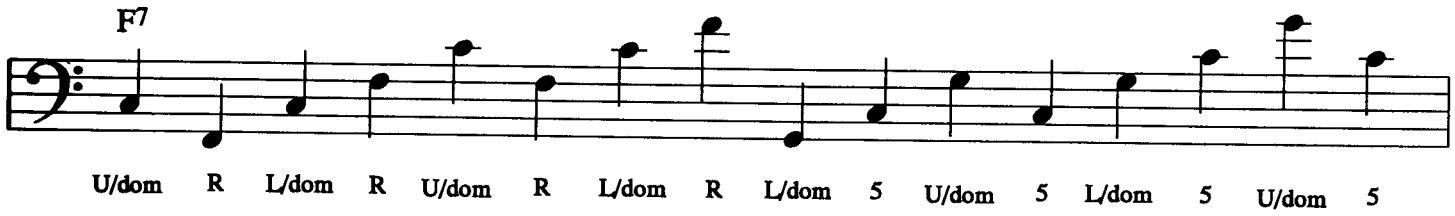
Below are the upper and lower dominant approaches for the root and fifth of F7. To make things simpler, octaves will now be analyzed as roots.

To find the lower dominant approach, we go a fourth below the target. You will find that this is the same note as the fifth above the target, only it is an octave lower.

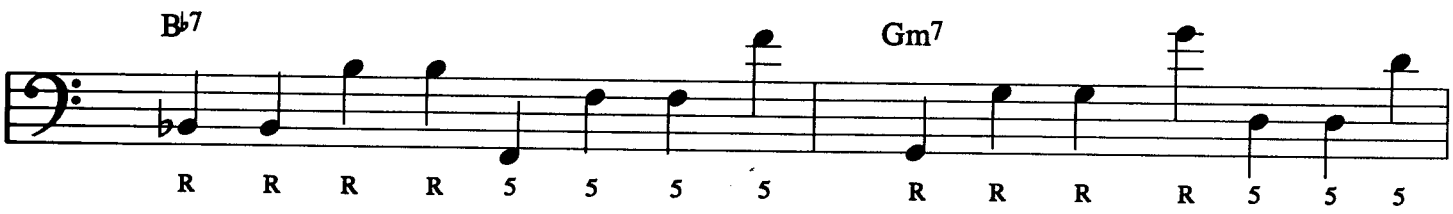
***Finding the lower dominant approach**

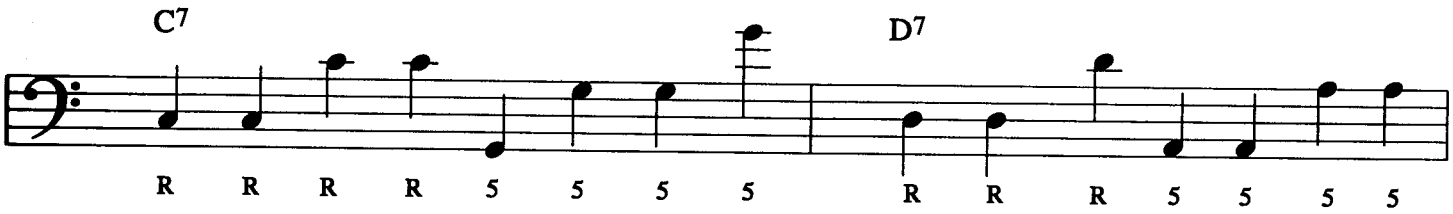


This shows how "G" is the upper and lower dominant approach to "C". The analysis symbols are **U/dom** for upper dominant and **L/dom** for lower dominant approach.



Now find and write in the dominant approaches for the R, 5 and 8 of B♭7, Gm7, C7 and D7.



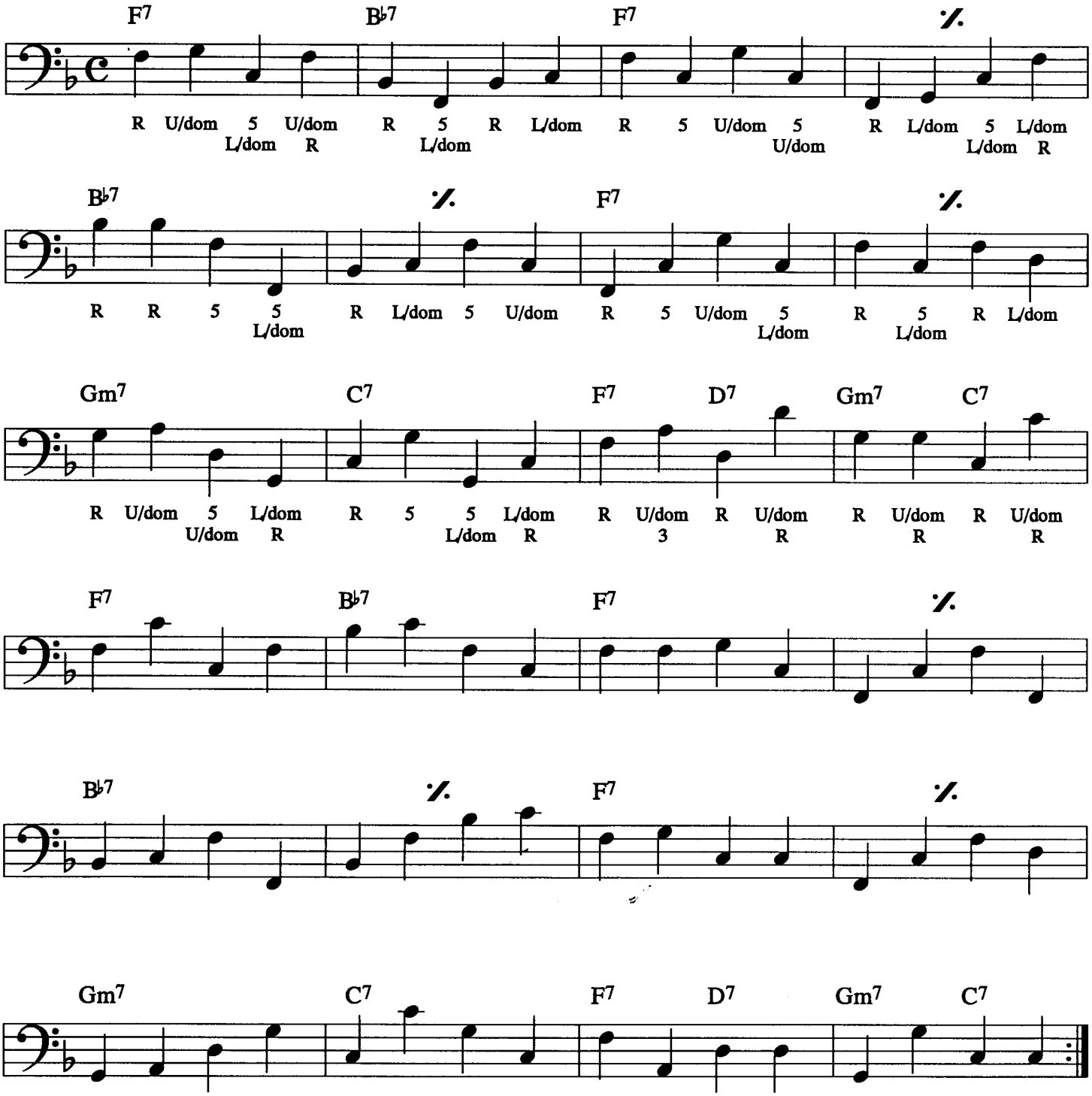


Lines with Dominant Approach

Here is an example of dominant approach. With this approach we are introducing a new note choice. The U/Ldom of the fifth is also scale degree 2. The dominant approach to the root is the fifth, a note you are already using.

The fifth now has a dual function and will be analyzed with two layers of symbols. The top layer will be the primary function, the bottom layer, the secondary function. Notes that have more than one function make the line stronger.

17



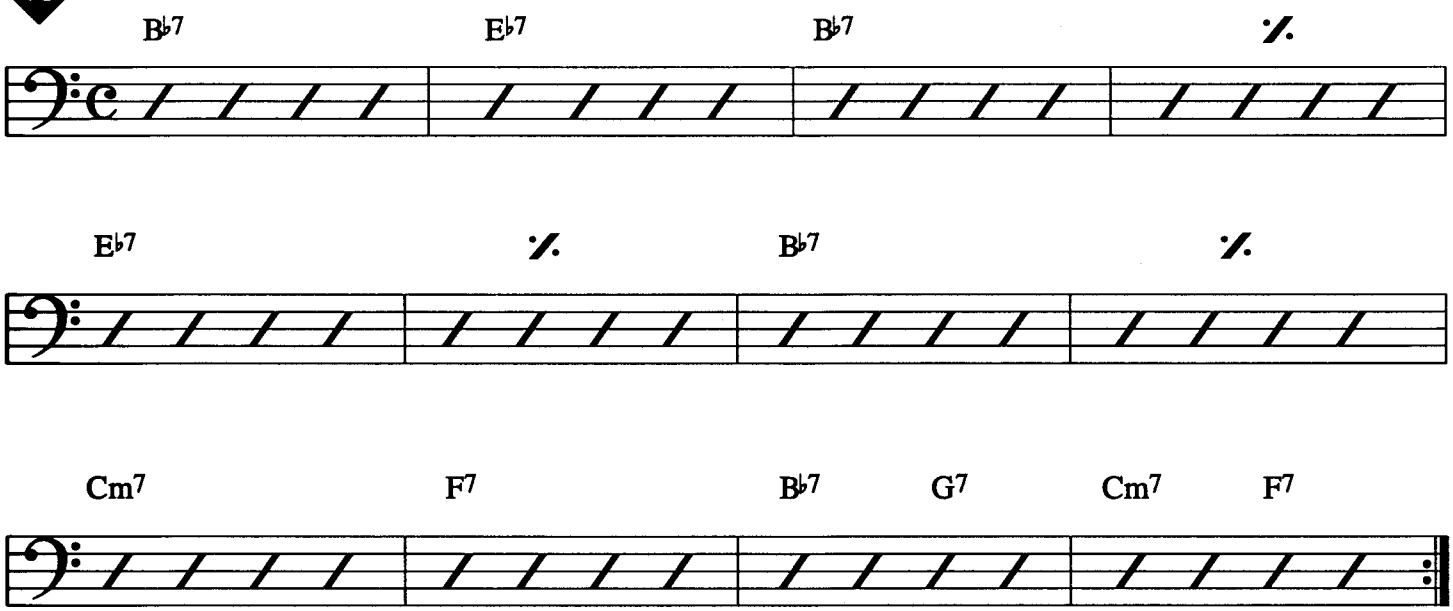
Write in analysis for the second chorus. Pay attention to dual functions.

New Keys for Dominant Approach

Because we are only working with R, 5 and 8, the dominant approaches for $B\flat^7$, F^7, Cm^7 and G^7 are the same as the chords from the F blues with the same roots.

Play through the progression in different places on the neck to get acquainted with your options.

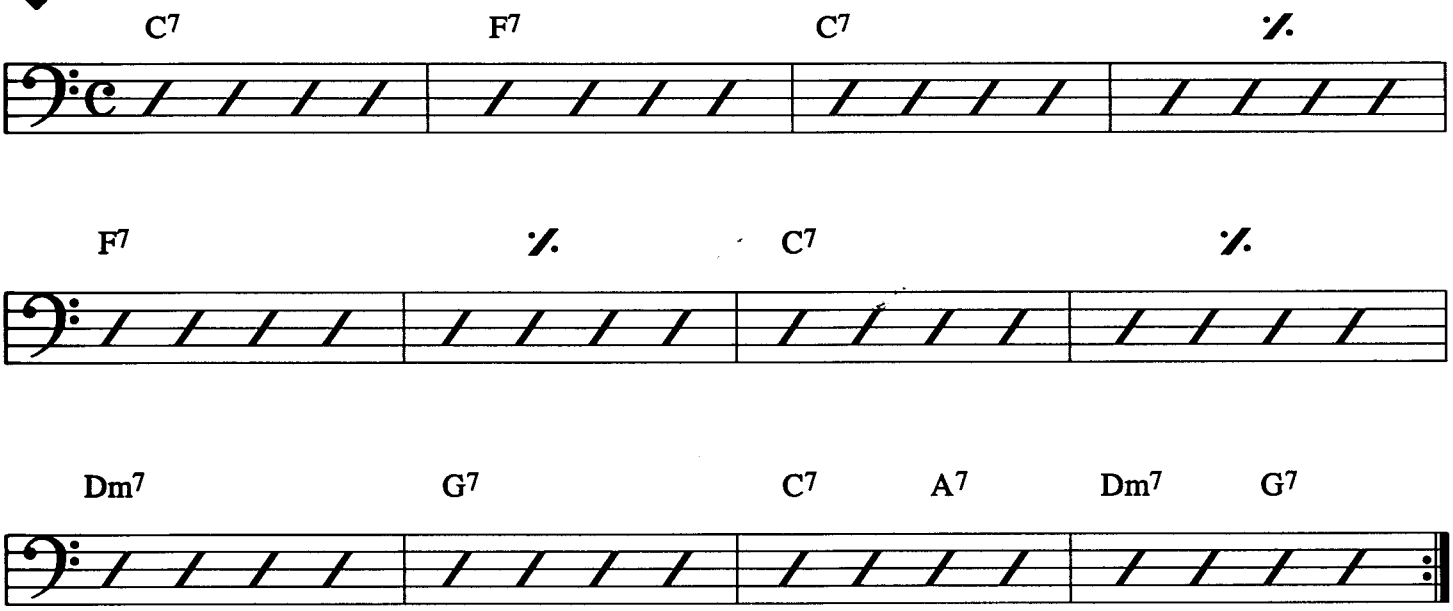
18



In the key of C, you will again find the R, 5 and 8 to be the same as on many chords from the other keys covered so far. This, of course, means that the dominant approach notes will be the same.

It may not be necessary to write out all the notes and approaches at this point. Although if you feel that it helps you, by all means, do it.

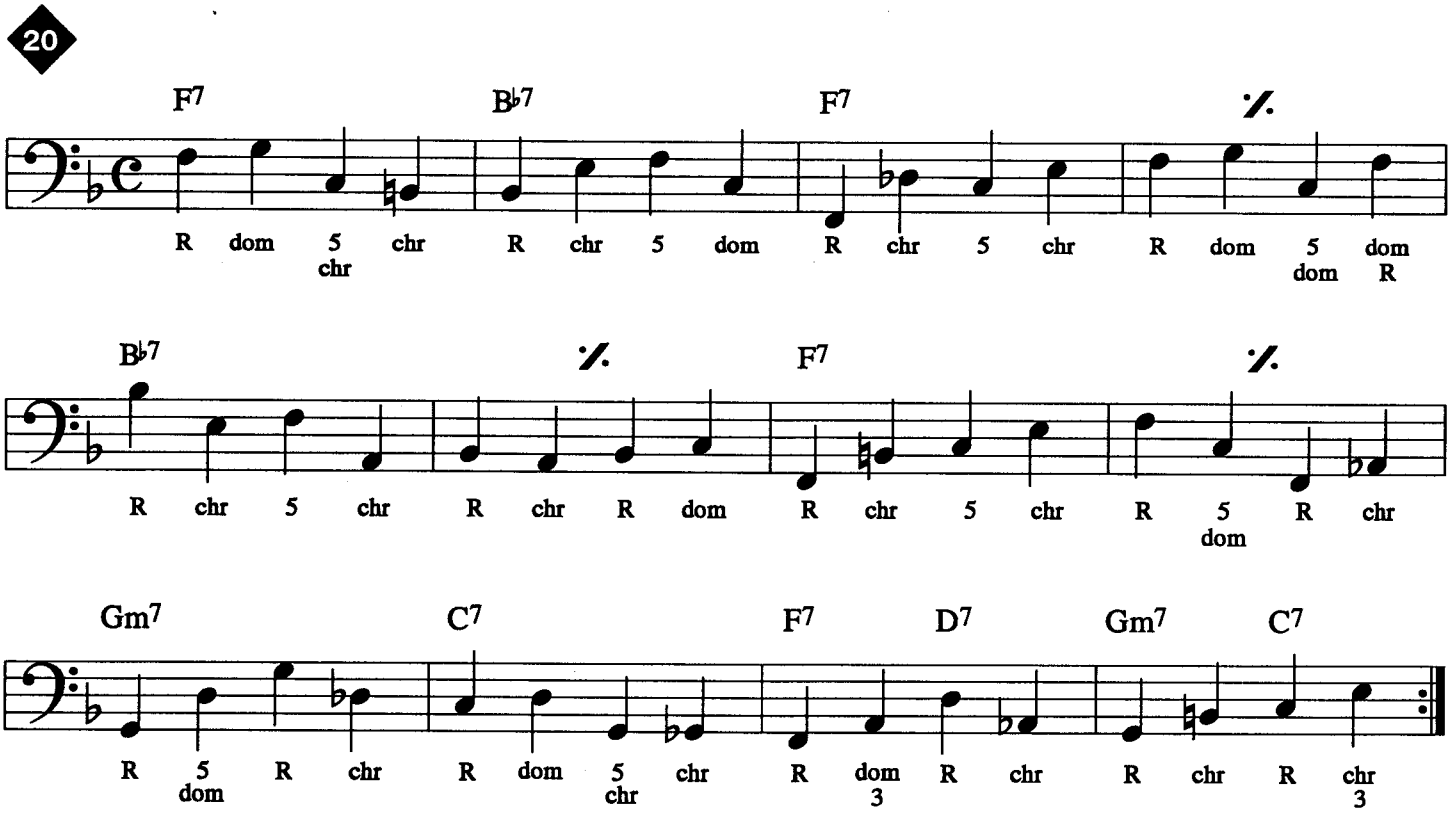
19



Lines with Chromatic and Dominant Approach

This example combines chromatic and dominant approaches to the R, 5 and 8. To make things less complicated, the analysis for these approaches will be shortened to **chr** for upper or lower chromatic, and **dom** for upper or lower dominant.

By combining two approach methods we will multiply our choices and come up with a more natural sounding line. A good bass line uses many approaches to achieve a well-balanced sound. As you learn additional approaches, your own lines will start to sound more natural.



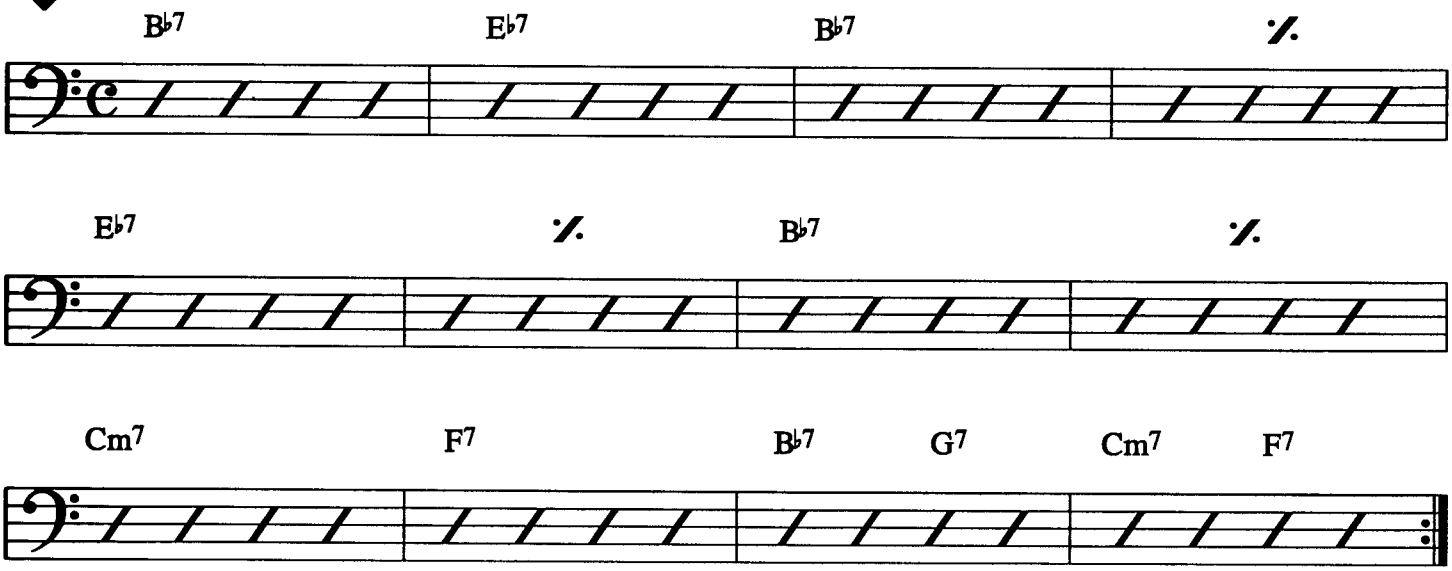
Were you able to hear the difference in this line? It is starting to sound more like the real thing. On the next page is the blues in B♭ and C. Try to combine the chromatic and dominant approaches to R, 5 and 8 in these keys.

New Keys for Chromatic and Dominant Approach

Combine chromatic and dominant approach notes in these two keys. First play through the keys, then do the following exercise.

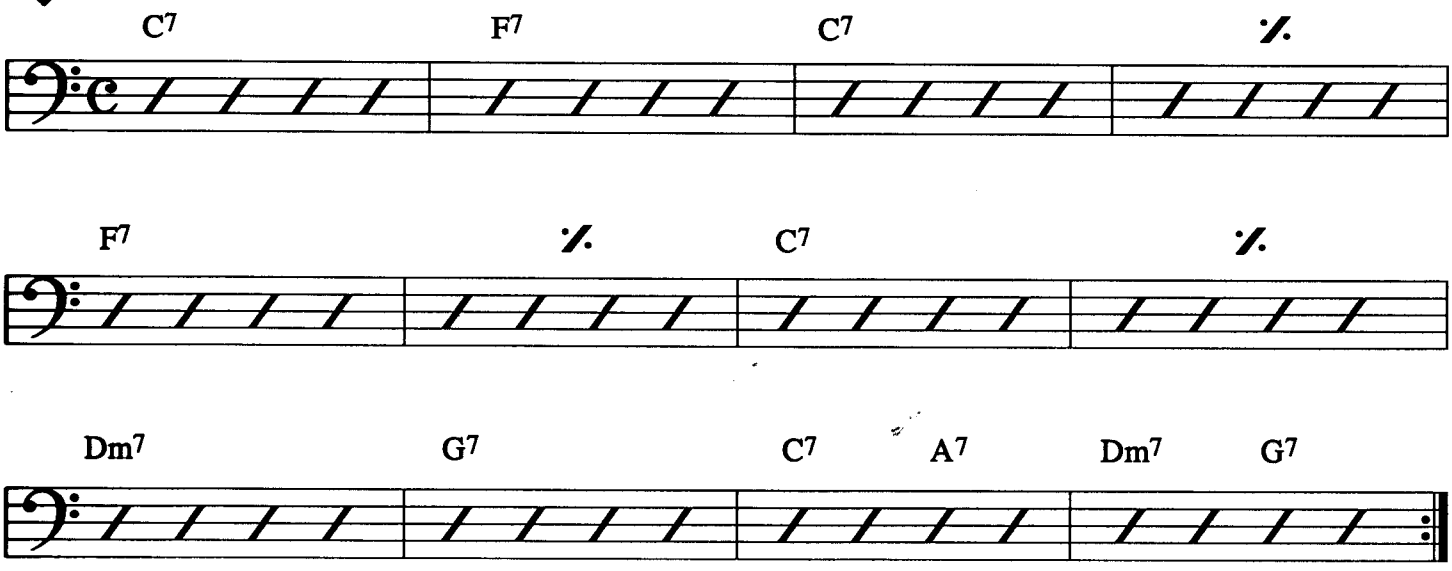
On a separate piece of music paper, transpose the line in F from the previous page to these two keys. Then play through the blues in B♭ and C again.

21



...the blues in C.

22



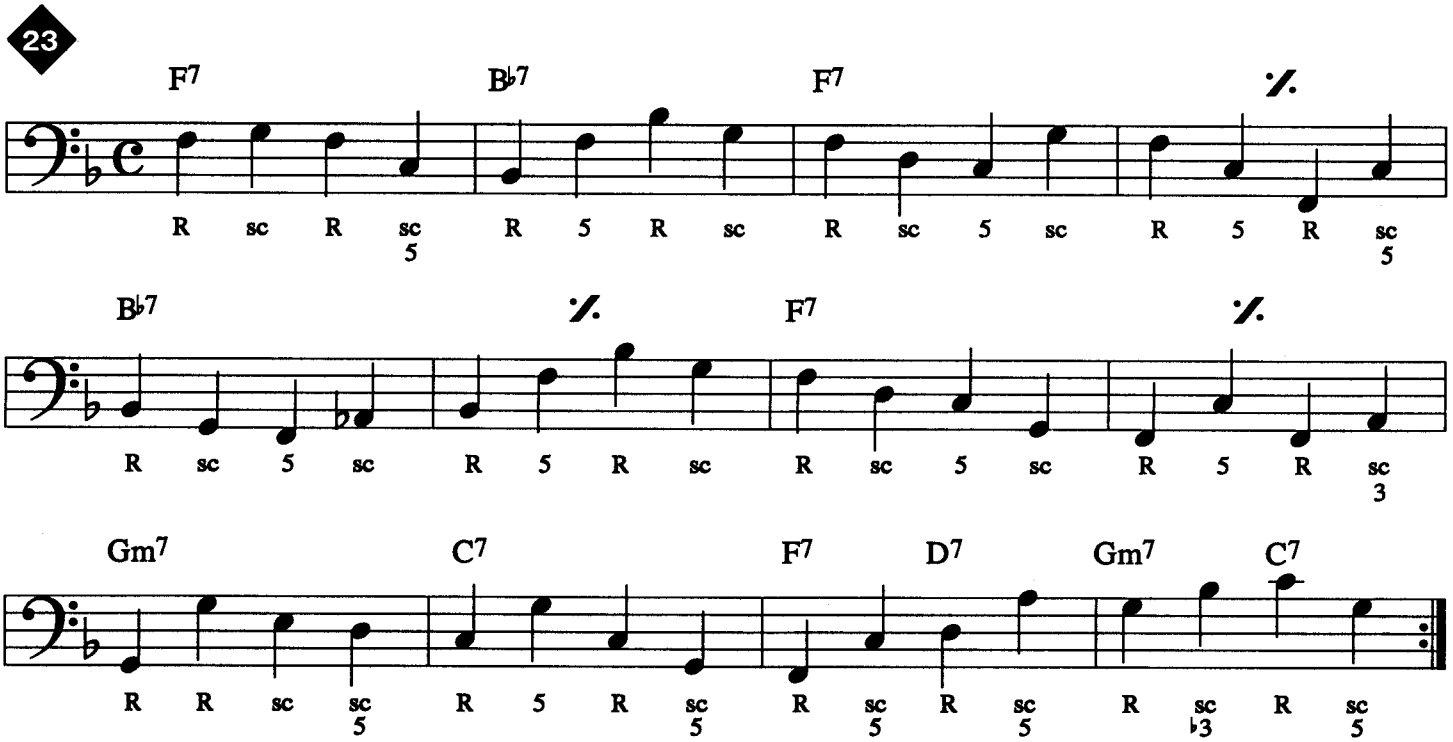
What was different about playing after the transposing exercise?

Scale Approach

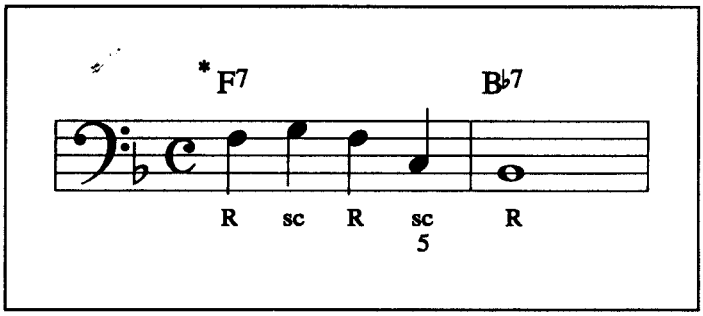
The next method of approach we will look at is scale approach. "Scale approach" means approaching a target note with the scale tone next to it from above or below. Sometimes the scale approach note is also a chromatic approach. For example, going from an F7 to a B♭maj7, the lower scale approach would be an "A". This is chromatic and scale approach. Scale approaches will be analyzed with the symbol **sc**. It should be obvious by now which notes are upper or lower approaches.

Sometimes a scale approach from below does not sound as smooth as other types of approach. When using this approach, keep your ear open; if it sounds strange, try another approach.

Also notice that there are dual functioning notes. Some notes are chord tones ***and*** scale approach notes. These will be analyzed in two layers, the top layer being the primary function, the second layer being the secondary function.



We can see a definite pattern showing up with this technique. When the root motion between two chords is dominant, the fifth of the first chord acts as an upper scale approach to the next chord*. This pattern is important to recognize because it will help you formulate your concept of how lines fit together.

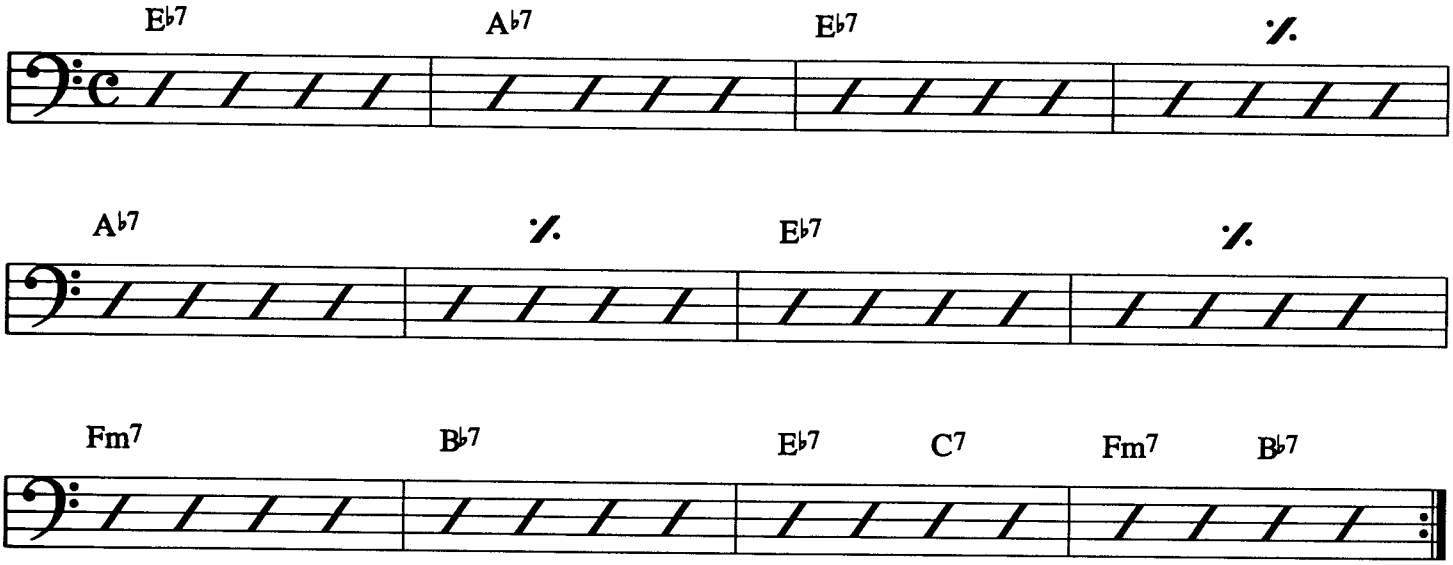


More Practice with Scale Approach

Find the scale approaches to R, 5, and 8 for the chords in the E♭ and G blues. G is a new key, so you might want to go back and find all the R, 5 and 8's and their chromatic and dominant approaches. This will keep you up to date with this key.

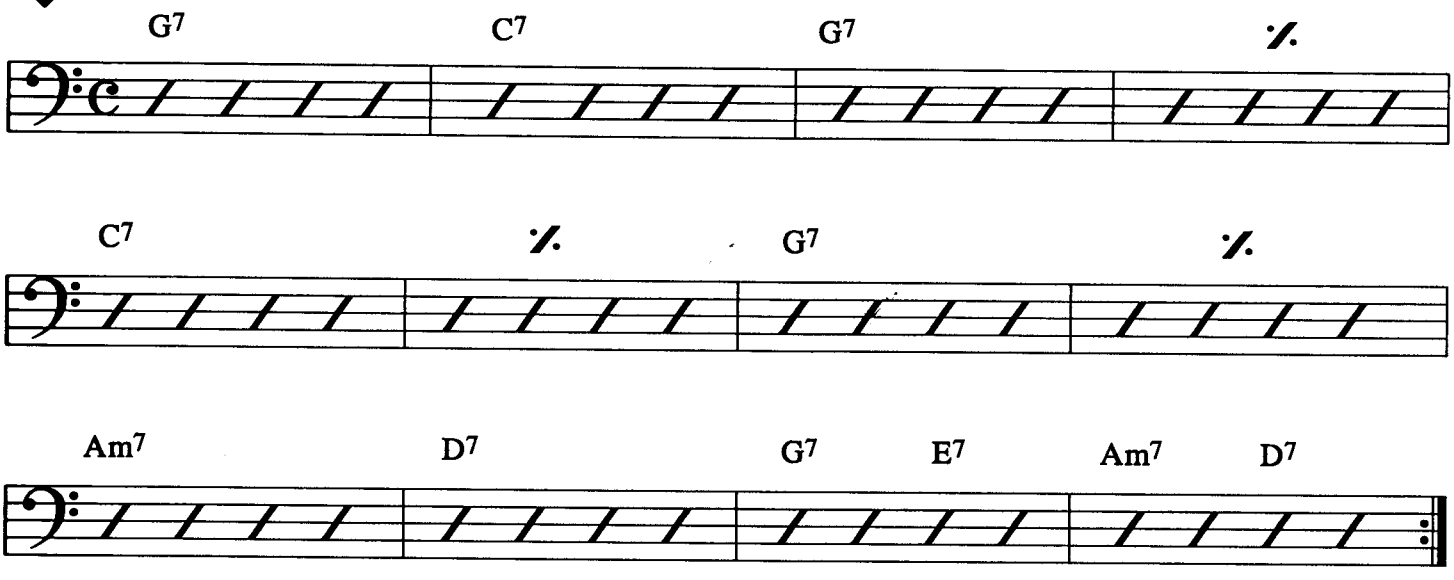
Pay attention to any patterns that seem familiar, repeated chords from one key to the next, and fingerings that might be the same but happen on different strings. Play in different areas of the fingerboard; look for new starting places.

24



Remember to do all the preliminary steps to get familiar with the key of G.

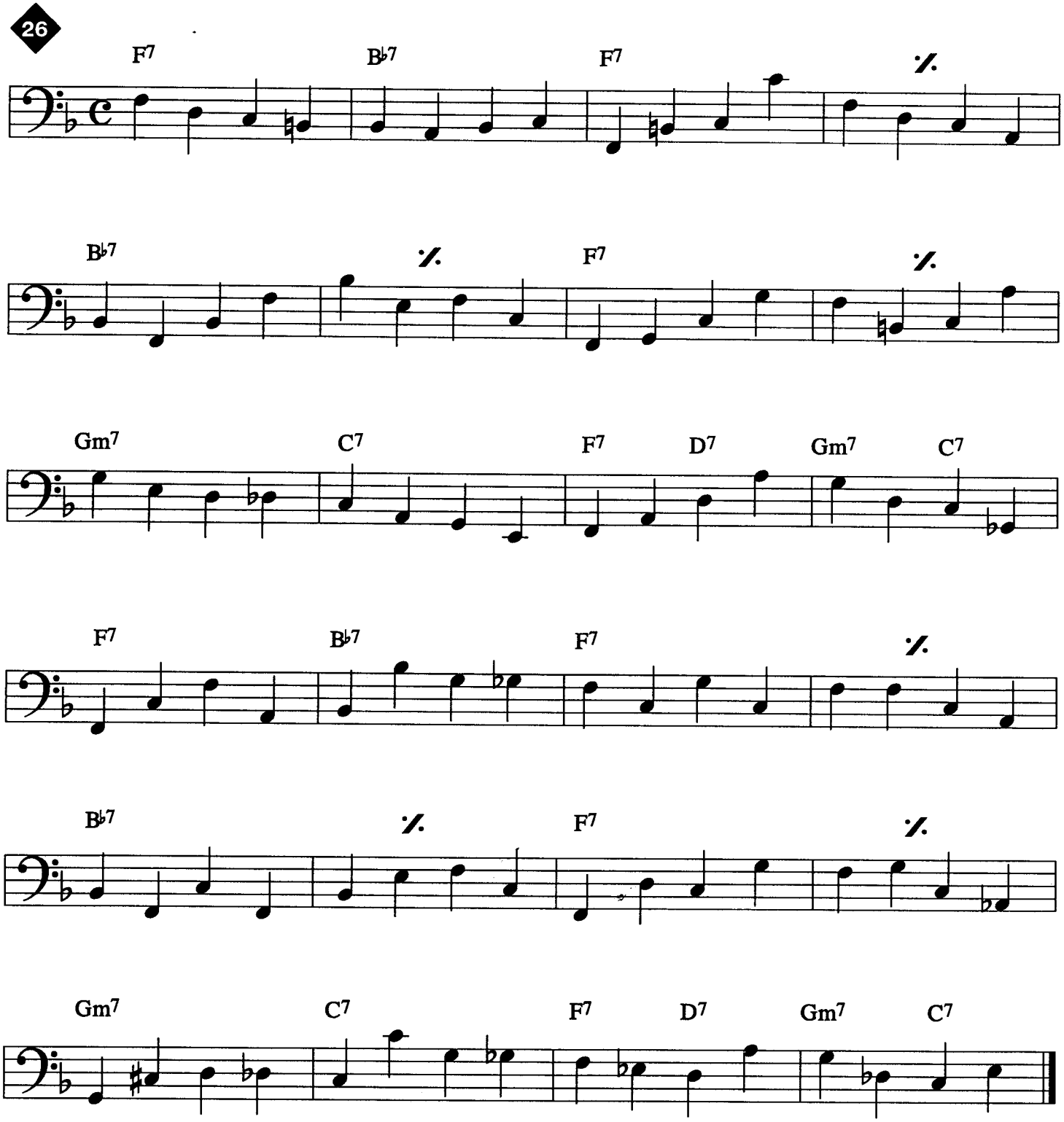
25



Combining the Approaches

Up to this point we have used chromatic, dominant and scale approaches to R, 5 and 8. By combining these techniques, we will multiply our choices and have lines with a more natural sound to them. A good bass line has a variety of ideas behind it.

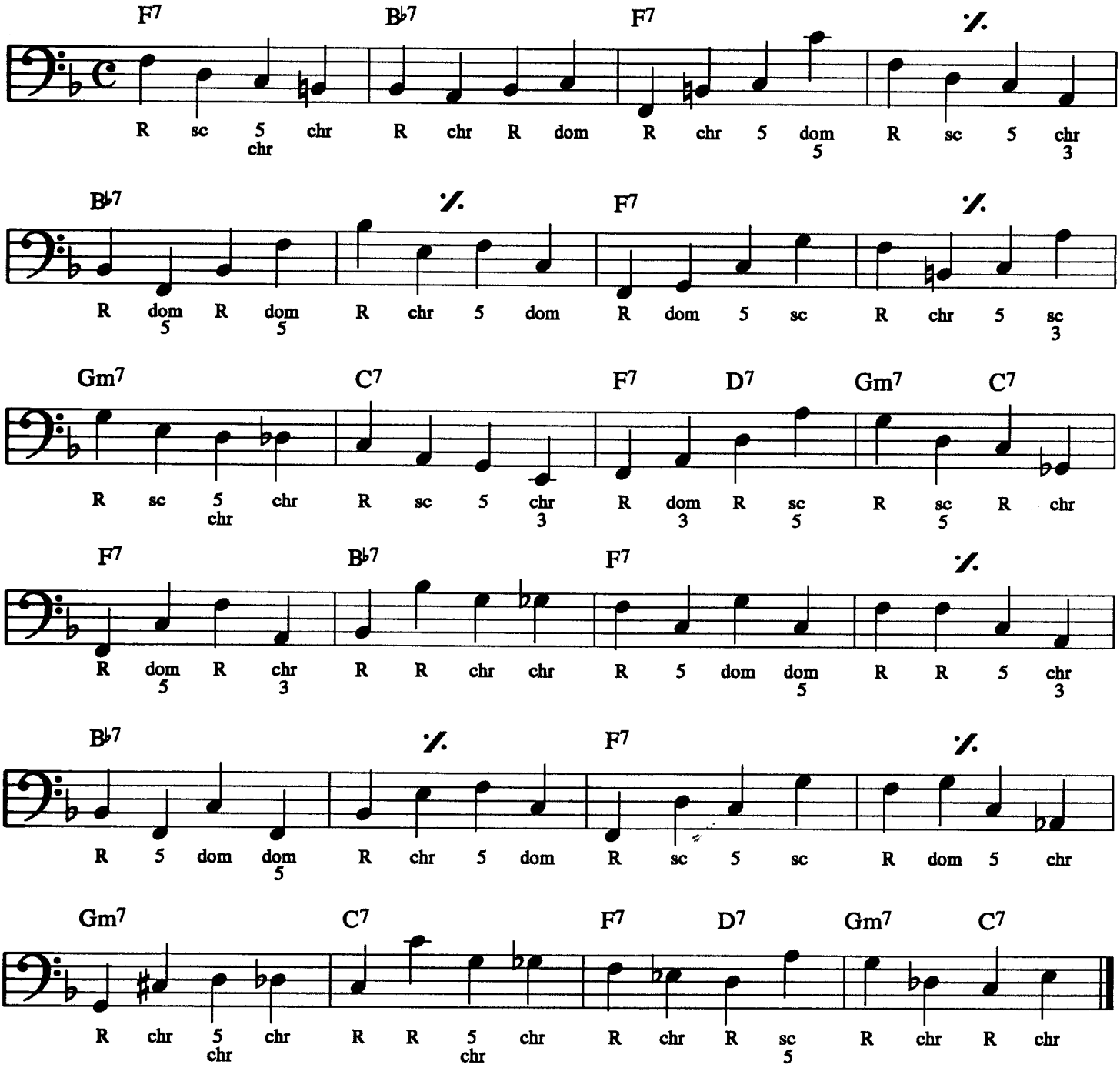
The line below uses all three approach techniques. In addition to playing the example, try to analyze it using the symbols we have worked with. See if you can find the dual function notes. The correct analysis is given on the next page.



Combining the Approaches – With Analysis

Here is the combination line with the analysis symbols. Compare you answers to see how close you were. The real value of this exercise is not so much how many you got right, but that you did it. To do this exercise, you had to ask yourself: "What is the function of this note? Is it an approach, a target, or both? Why does this line work? How can I use this in my own playing in other styles?"

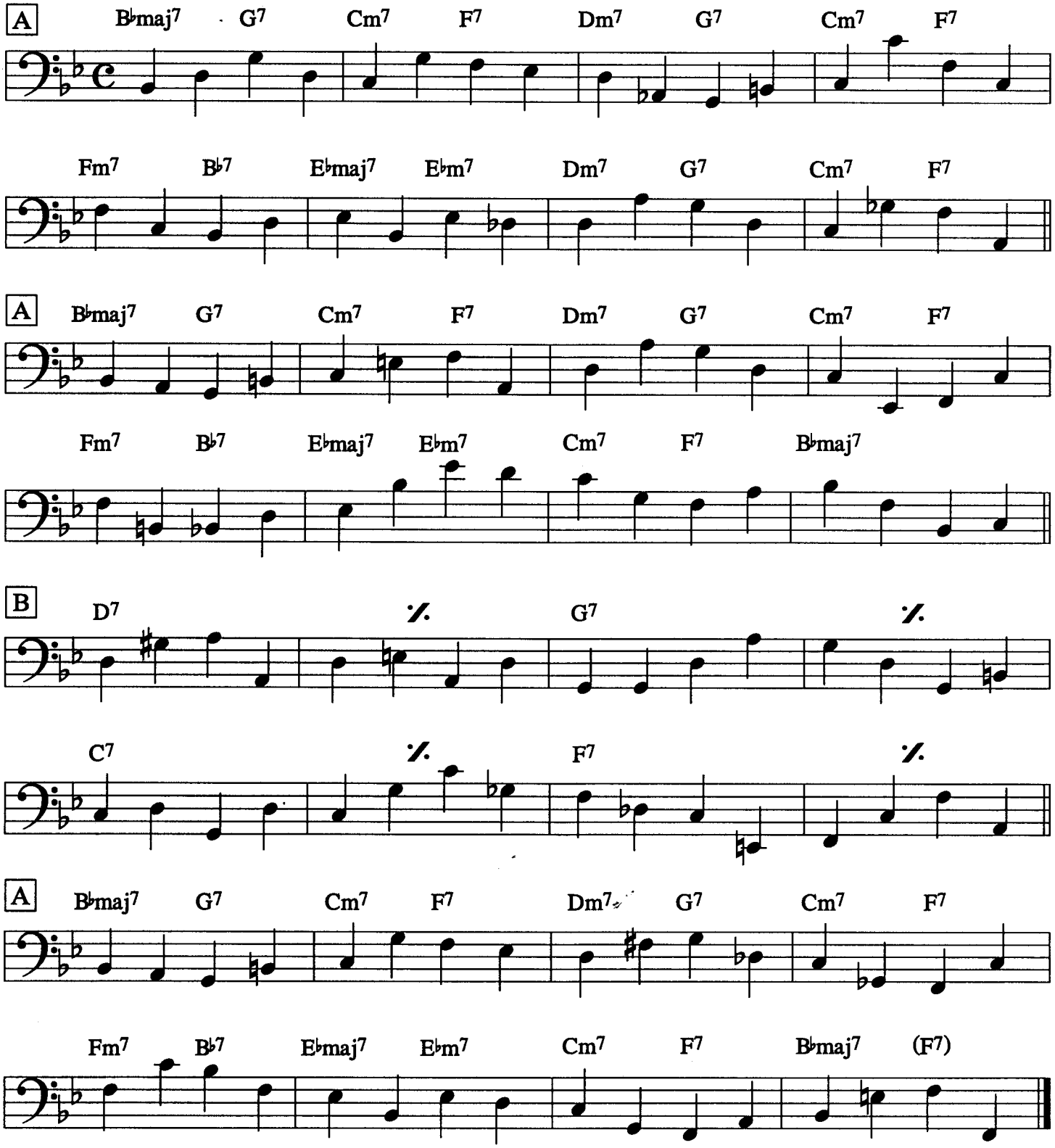
This is the thought process we are after. Being curious will make you search for the answers. When you find them, you will understand them better because they have been processed by you. When you understand things from this standpoint they become very usable. That is the point of this method: to make the concepts of walking bass lines usable to you.



Rhythm Changes – Sample Line

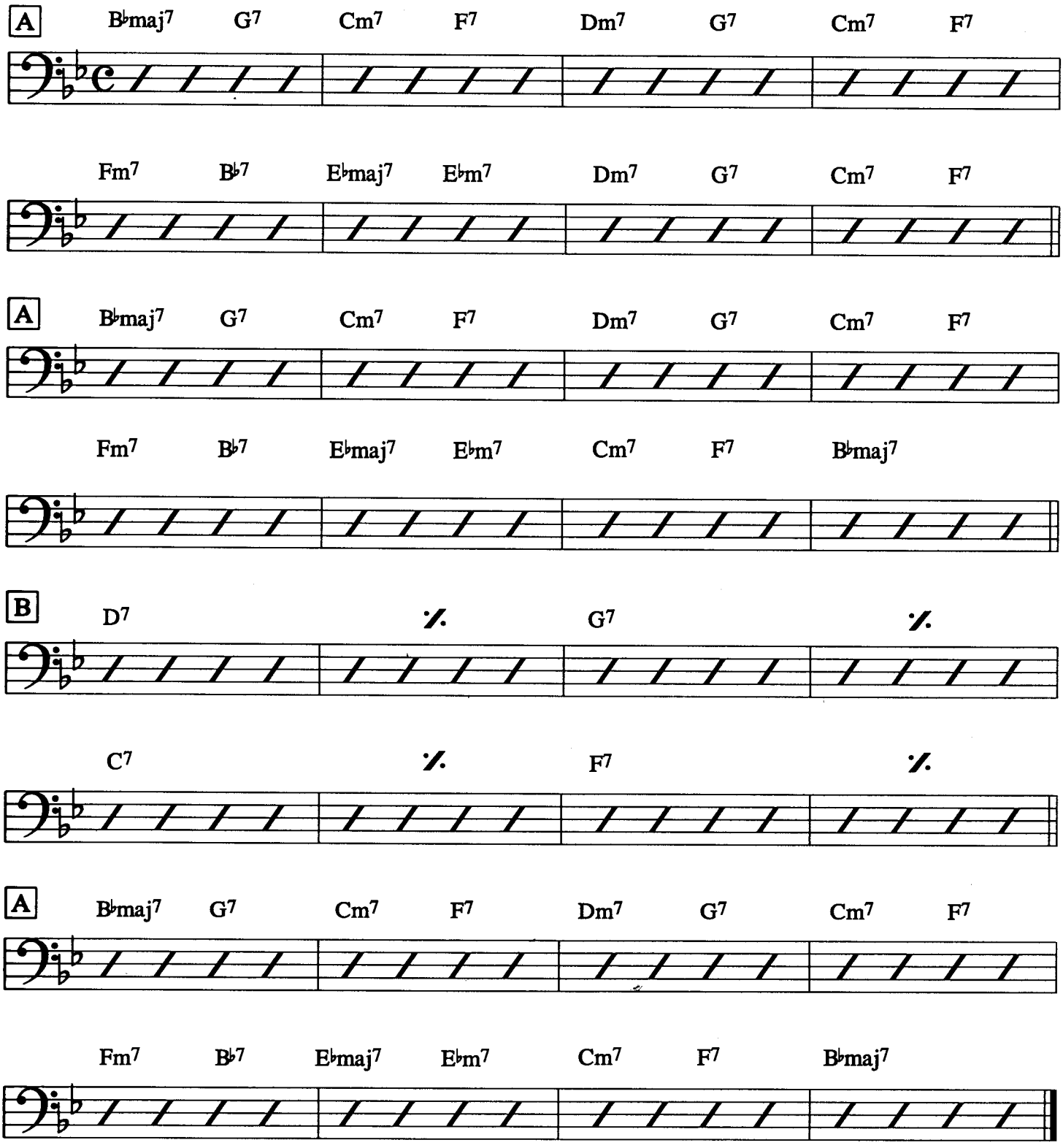
This standard progression is known as the song "I've Got Rhythm" progression. It is one of the most common progressions in jazz. The form is AABA. With two changes per bar, the root motion creates a sense of movement. When you add the approach techniques the line becomes more interesting. Take the time to analyze this line. Notice how the line works through the bridge where the changes occur less often.

27



Rhythm Changes

Now practice playing Rhythm Changes by just looking at the chords. Start out simply, then, as you get comfortable with it, add different approaches. The root motion in the A section gives you half of your choices already, so find ways to connect the roots. The B section lets you stretch out a little more.

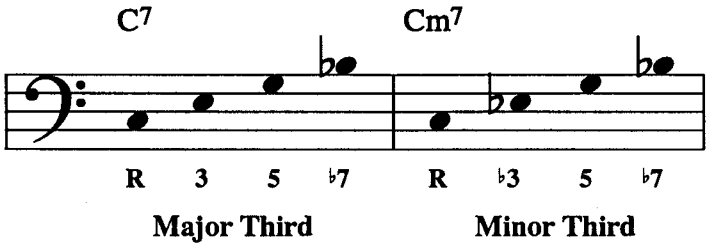


PART TWO

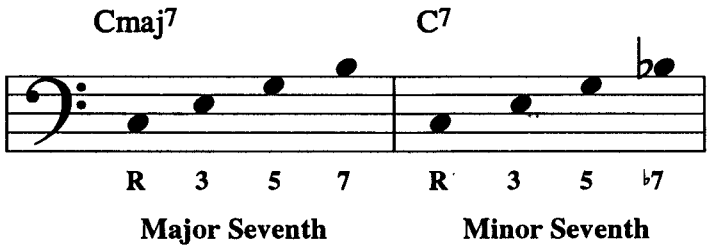
Overview

In Part One of this method, you saw how it is possible to play through chord changes using only the bare bones of R, 5, and 8. With the addition of approach notes, we were able to create some more interesting lines and add some variety to our note choices. In the second part of this method, we will start to use more specific information from the chords we are playing through.

The ***third*** tells us if a chord is major or minor. Up to this point, the lines we have played have not reflected the major or minor quality of the chords. Using the third makes the bass line sound more "in" with the chord changes. We are now getting more specific with the bass line.



The ***seventh*** is another note that tells you about the quality of a chord. Some chords have a major seventh, which is the seventh from the major scale (one half step below the octave). Other chords have a minor or flat seventh (one whole step below the octave).



Of course, along with these new note choices will be all the approach notes that came before, upper and lower chromatic, upper and lower dominant, and upper and lower scale. This means we now have every scale note, and every chromatic note available to us. Looking at building our lines this way would be a little confusing, at this point, so it is better to start seeing our bass lines in the larger terms of ***motion*** and ***shape.*** This is where the lines start to develop a flowing feel. We will still be using the approach-target concept, but it will be used as part of a developing bigger picture of the shape the bass line will take.

The types of motion we will look at are ***scalewise, arpeggiation,*** and ***chromatic motion.*** In addition to these, we will also get into targeting other notes besides the root for the first beat of a bar. This will help to free up our lines and make them more melodic and varied. We will also learn other ways to view the **II-V** structure to help break away from the root-approach method. As a part of the exploration of chromatic motion, advanced approach techniques such as ***indirect resolution*** will be shown to broaden your options at the point of chord change. By the end of Part Two, you will have been exposed to enough ideas to develop interesting, functional and musical bass lines over standard chord progressions.

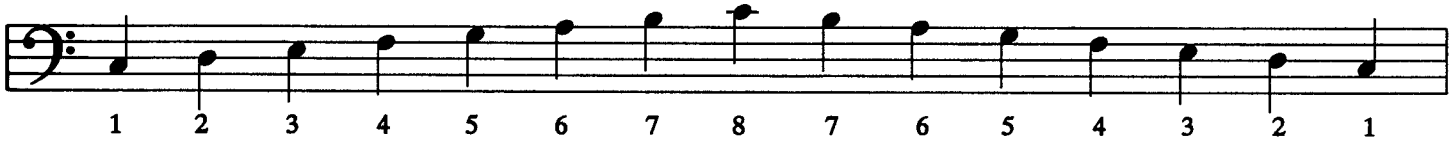
Scales You Should Know

These scales are very important tools that you will use to build your walking bass lines. Learning them will help you discover more about the fingerboard and play through chord changes in Part Two of this book.

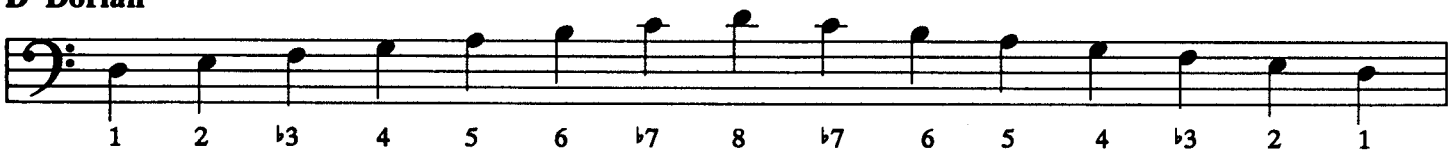
The Diatonic Major Modes

The first set of scales are the Diatonic Modes from the key of C Major. Each mode is built off a scale tone from the key of C using only the notes from that key. That is what **DIATONIC** means: using notes only from the designated scale.

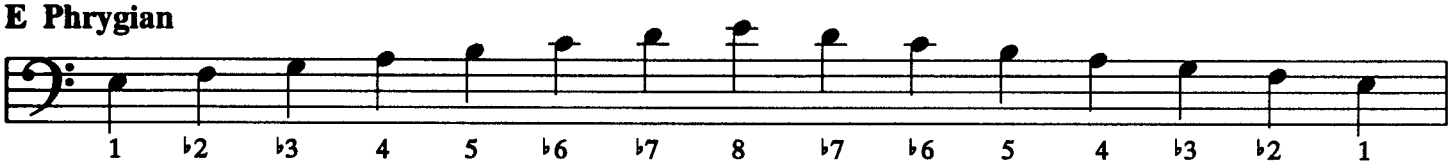
C Ionian



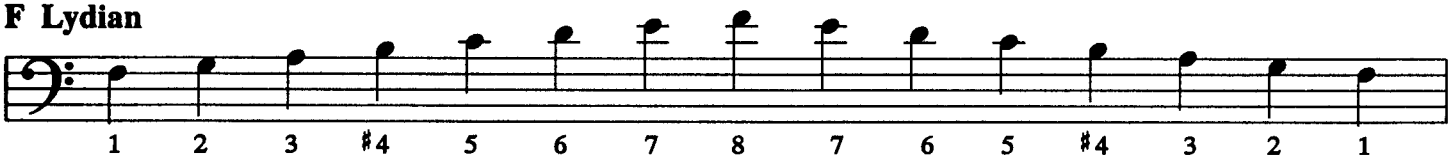
D Dorian



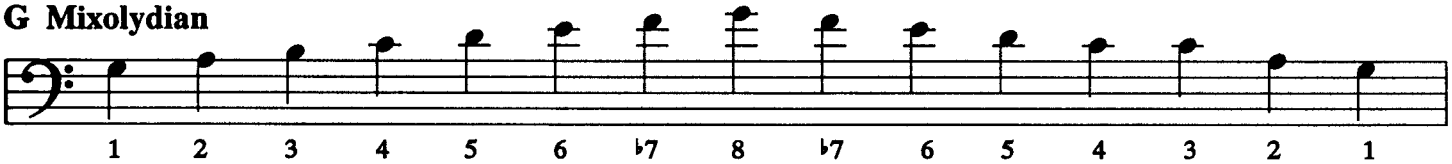
E Phrygian



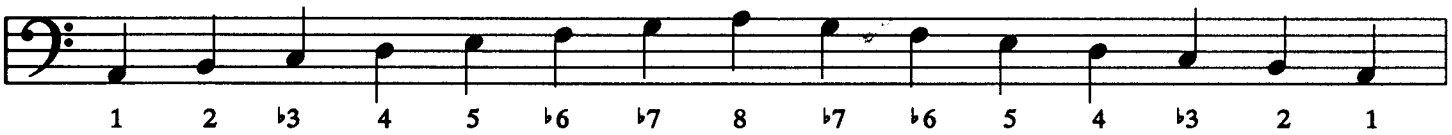
F Lydian



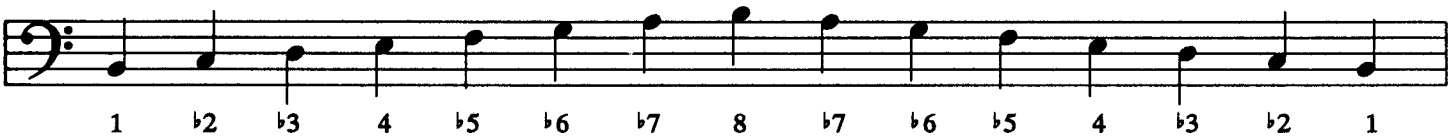
G Mixolydian



A Aeolian



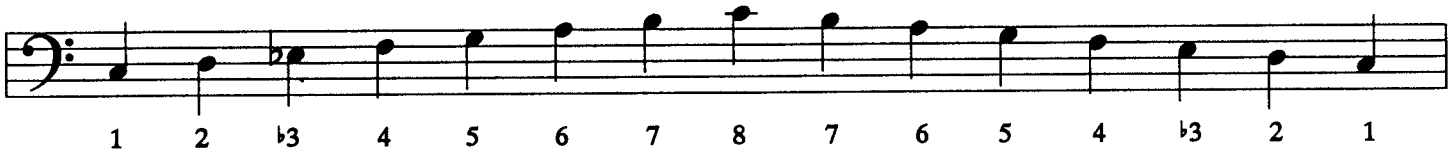
B Locrian



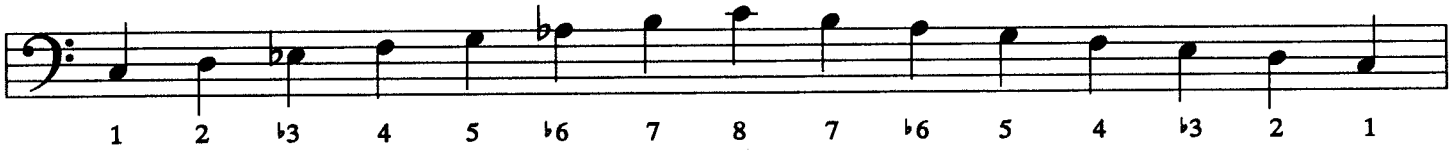
More Scales You Should Know

These next two scales are minor scales. Along with the Aeolian mode (also known as *Natural Minor)*, these scales are the most commonly used minor scales in Western music.There are Diatonic Modes built off these scales as well, however, we will not be concerned with them at this point.

C Melodic Minor

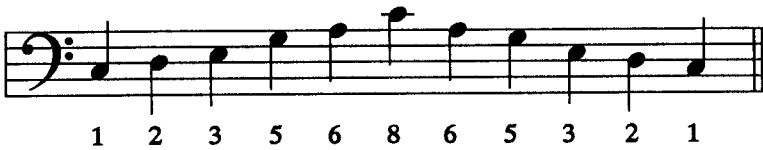


C Harmonic Minor

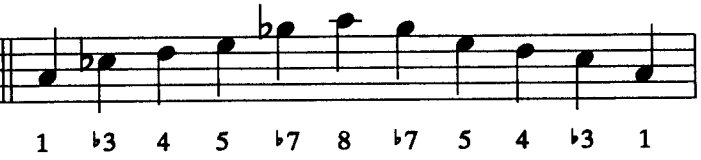


These five note scales are called ***Pentatonic.*** They are very common in jazz, rock, blues, and also non-western types of music.

C Major Pentatonic



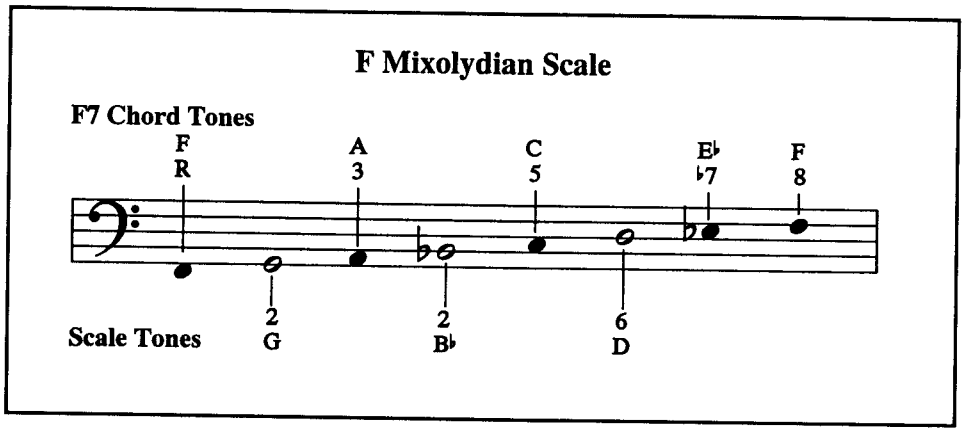
C Minor Pentatonic



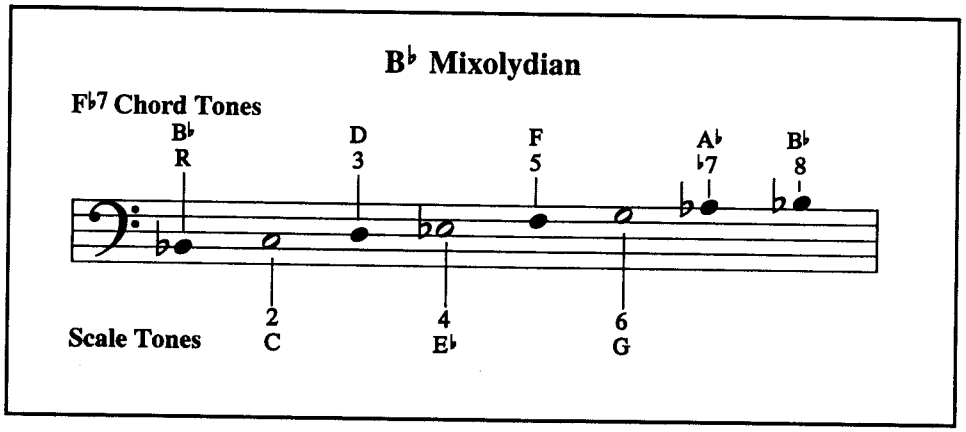
Spend some time practicing these scales with a metronome. These scales are written in one octave. When you are comfortable with them, try to play them as two-octave scales.

Scalewise Motion

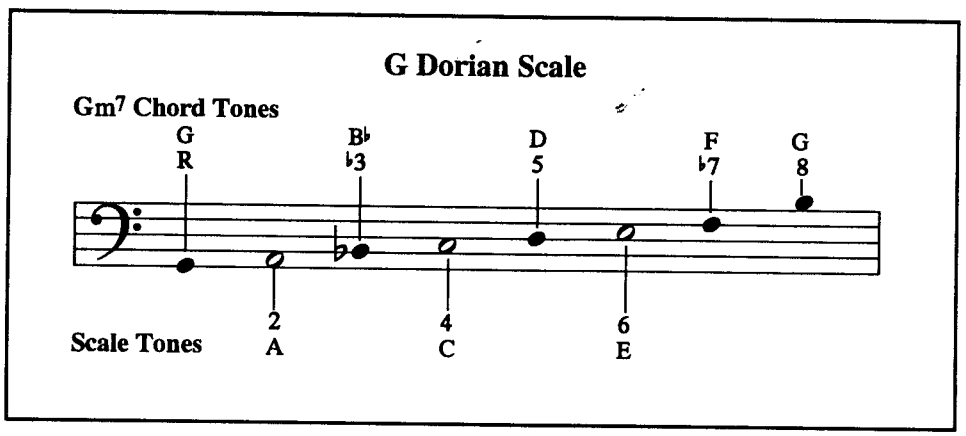
Scalewise motion feels very natural for walking bass lines. It is like going up and down a flight of stairs. By using scale tones that occur in between the chord tones, the line takes on a very smooth, flowing motion. The example below shows the chord tones of an F7 chord (black) and the scale tones in between (white). When you play these notes in succession, you have the scale that is most commonly used for a dominant 7th chord. It is called the ***mixolydian*** scale. In this case, we have an F mixolydian. The structure of any mixolydian scale is R–2–3–4–5–6–♭7–8.



Below we have the B♭ mixolydian scale. This is the common scale for a B♭7 chord.



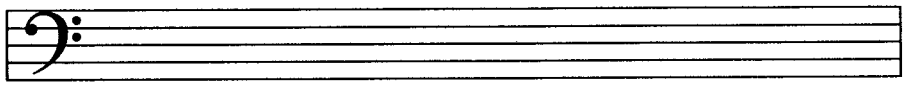
The next chord in the F blues is Gm7. This is a minor chord, so it will naturally use a minor scale. In this context, the Gm7 will work best with a G Dorian scale (shown below). The structure of this scale is R–2–♭3–4–5–6–♭7–8.



The next chord in the F blues is C7. It is a dominant chord just like F7 and B♭7, so it will also take a mixolydian scale, only starting on C. You know what the structure of the scale is, so write it out in the space provided below. Show which notes are chord tones and which are scale tones.

C Mixolydian

C7 Chord Tones

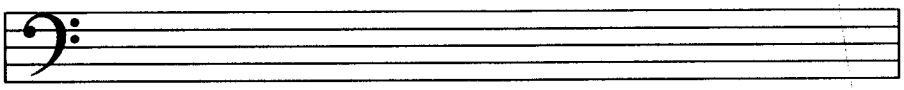


Scale Tones

Repeat this process for the D7 chord.

D Mixolydian

D7 Chord Tones

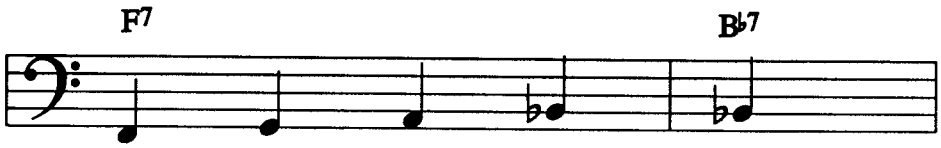


Scale Tones

Using Scalewise Motion

Now that we know the scales for all the chords in the F blues, let's look at ways we can use them to create walking bass lines.

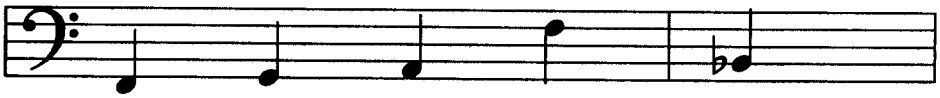
Bars 1 and 2



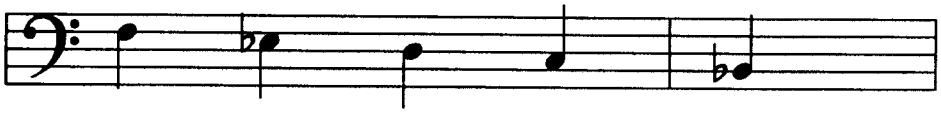
This line gets to the target too early, so . . .

This line uses an upper scale approach on beat 4.

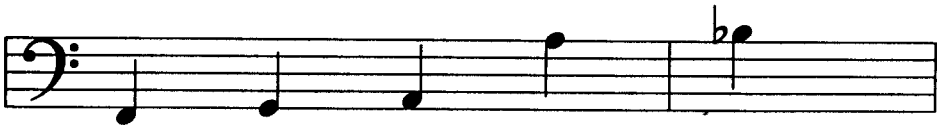
This example uses an upper chromatic approach into the next bar.



This line uses an upper dominant approach on beat 4.



Here, walking down the scale times out perfectly.



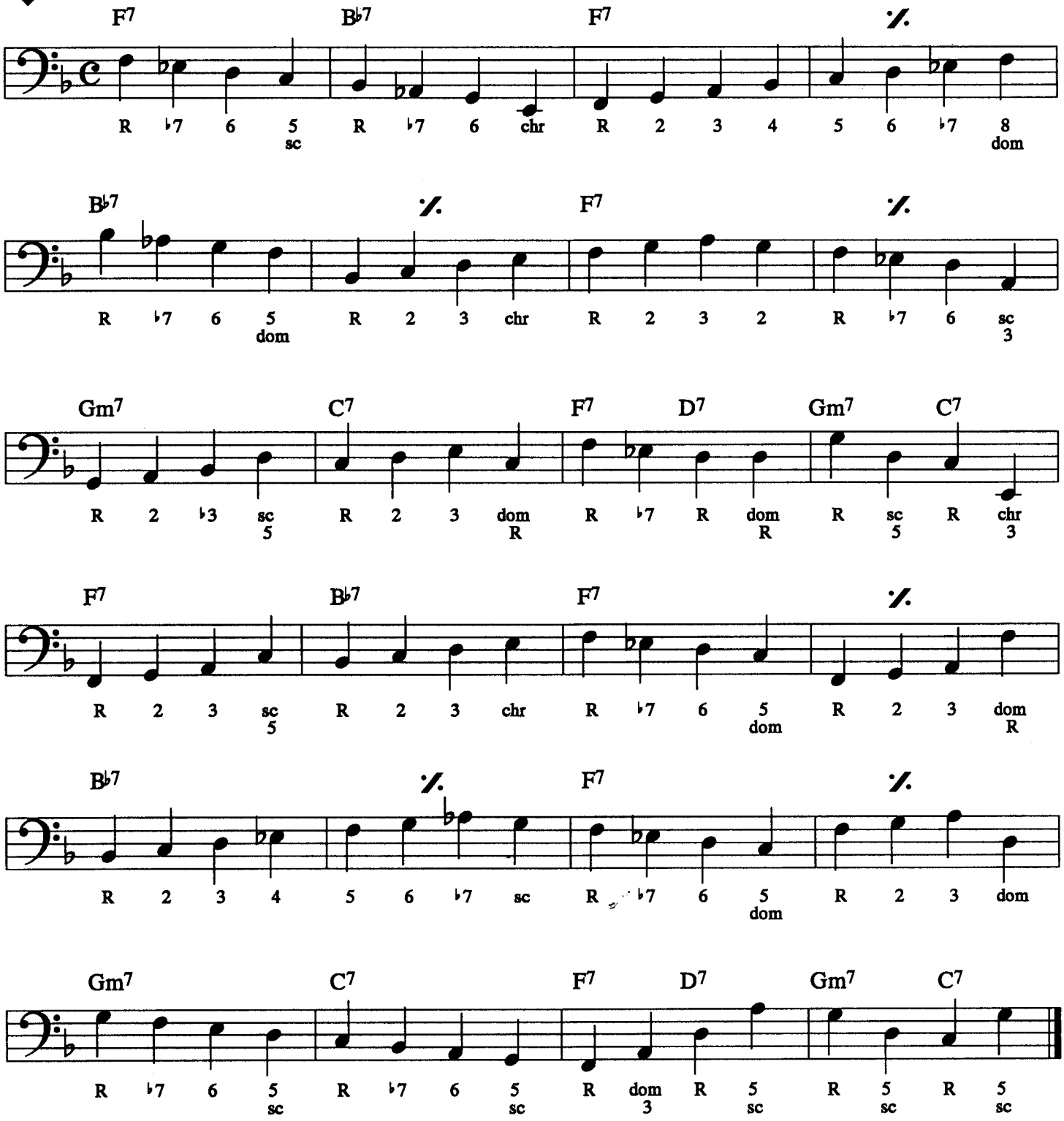
This example uses an octave to shift to a higher register.

As you can see, there are many ways to use scalewise motion. The different approach methods can be used to time your arrival at the next target. On the next few pages there will be examples of scalewise motion through the Blues and Rhythm Changes progressions.

Lines With Scalewise Motion

Here are two choruses of F blues using scalewise motion with approach notes to help the line reach the target at the right time. Notice that there is a scale motion that runs through two different chords in bars 1 and 2 of the first chorus. When the root motion between two chords is dominant, you can walk down from the root of the first chord and land on the root of the next chord on beat one. From there you adjust the scale to fit the new chord. Do you see this happening anywhere else in this example?

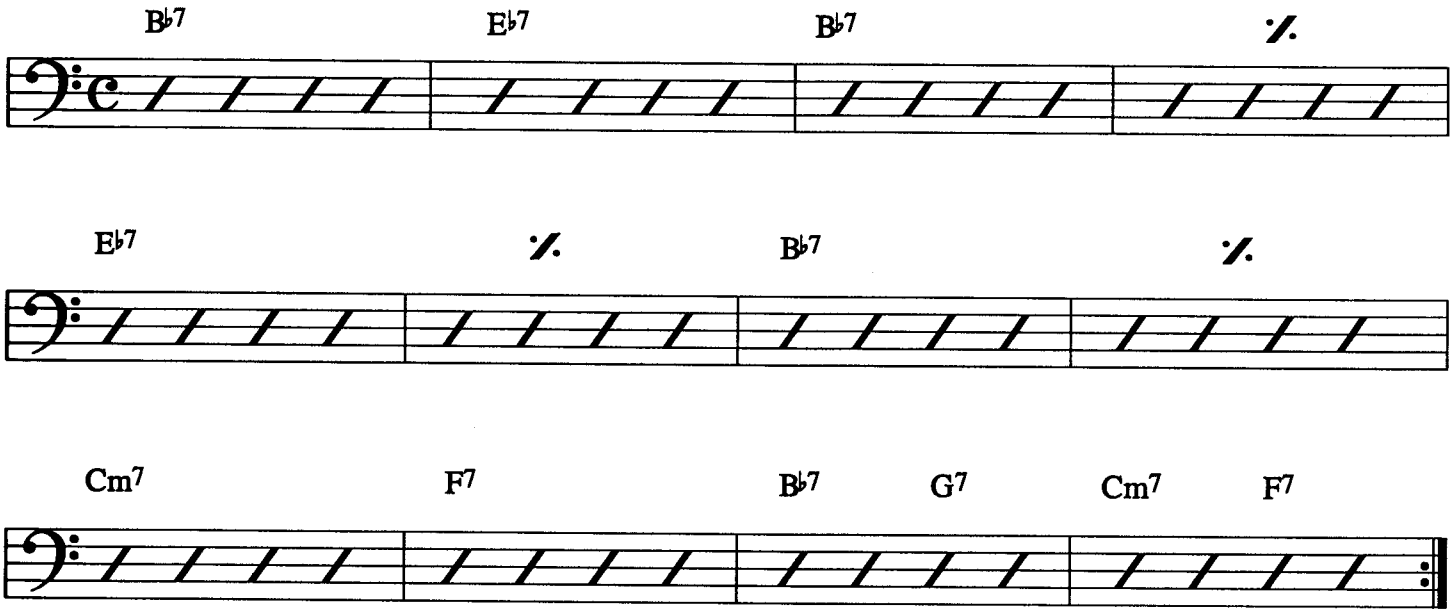
28



More Practice With Scalewise Motion

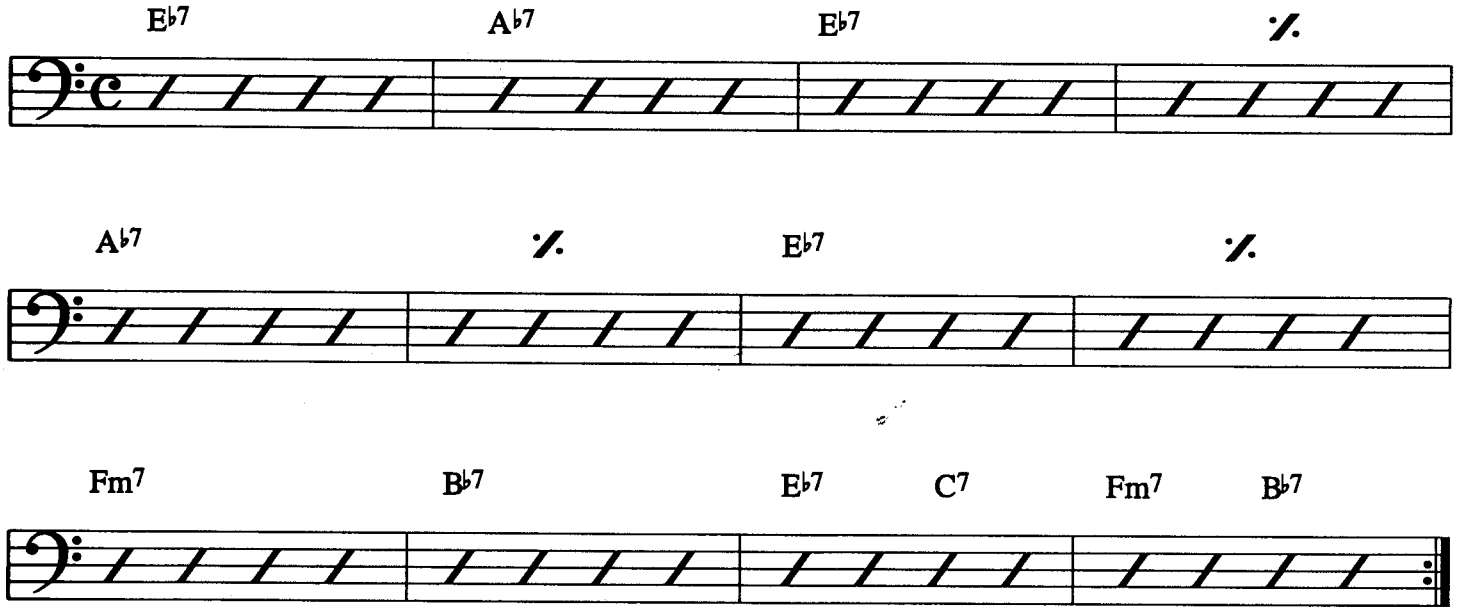
Here are blues in B♭ and E♭ again. Practice these using scalewise motion. Remember to pay attention to the timing of the line. Use different approach techniques to get to your target notes.

29



Look for ways to play scale lines that move through more than one chord.

30



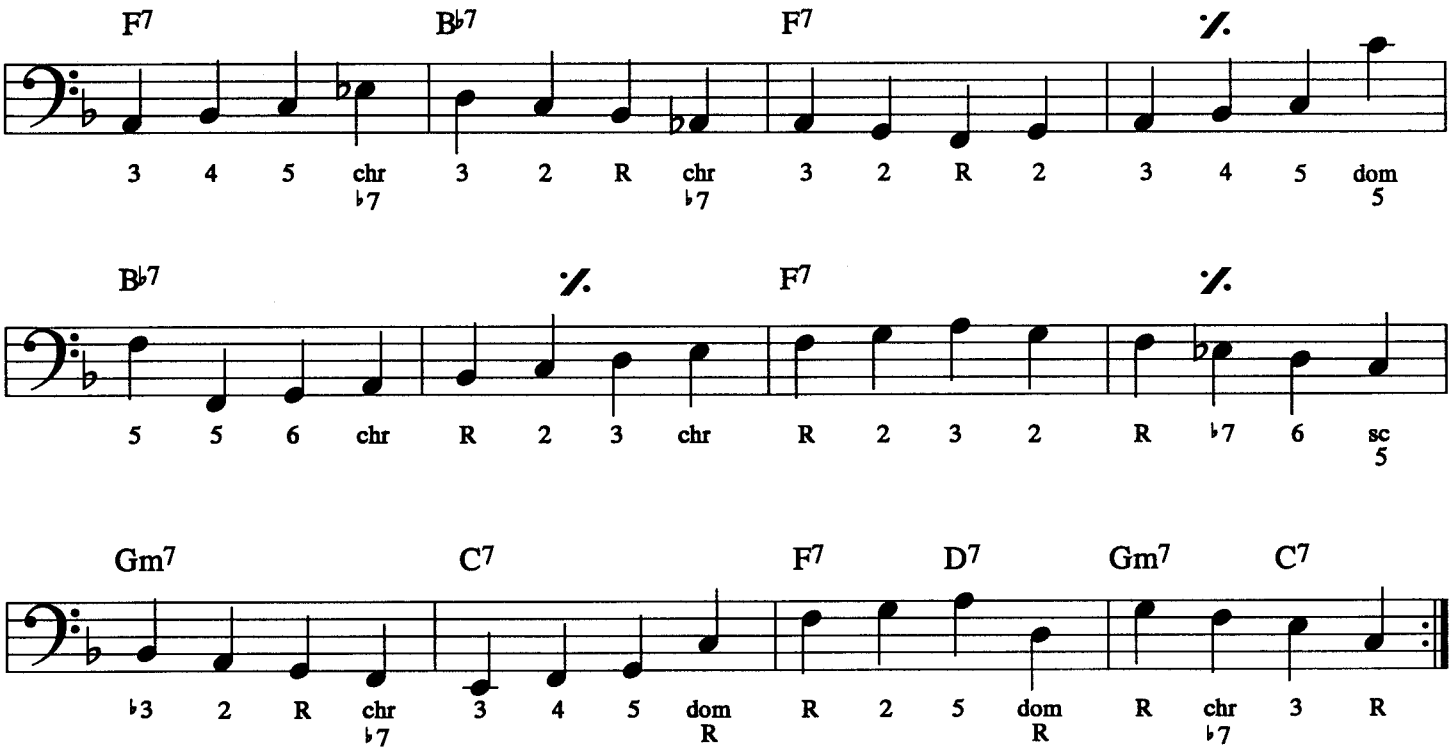
The Next Step

Before we get into using scalewise motion over rhythm changes, we will talk about the next step in the development of a musical walking bass line.

Up until now we have been targeting the root of each new chord change on beat one of its bar. You are no longer restricted to this concept! As your understanding of walking develops, you will see that almost any note can work if you know how to make it work.

For now, let's target the other chord tones, the 3 and 5 in particular. 7s can be used as targets, but because they are very close to the root, they are a little tricky to use. This example uses scalewise motion with the 3 and 5 as alternative targets on beat one. Notice that sometimes we are still using the R on beat one. It is not our intention to avoid the root, only to add to our options.

31



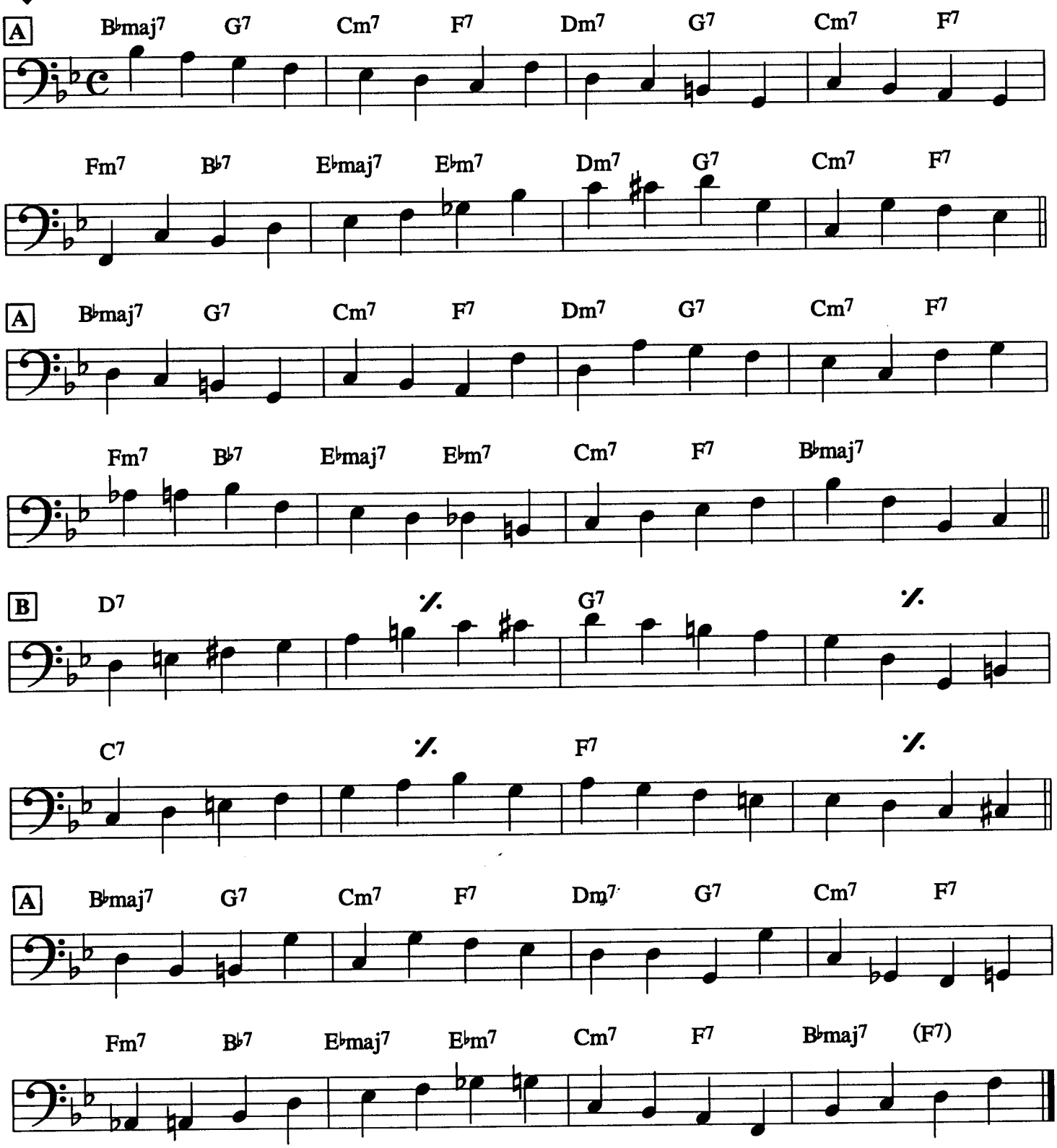
Now that we can use other notes on beat one, the line takes on a new melodic quality. Now, the overall shape and direction of the bass line becomes more important. The flow of the bass line is now a factor in how we structure our choices. As with any idea used to build a bass line, this technique works best when balanced with other concepts.

Scale Motion On Rhythm Changes

Here is an example of scalewise motion on rhythm changes. Now that we can use the chord tones 3 and 5 on beat one, we can take advantage of the melodic possibilities that occur with this approach.

Try analyzing the line below — you will find some new things happening. On a note-by-note basis it starts to get complicated, so keep in mind that the overall flow and shape of the line are now the main considerations.

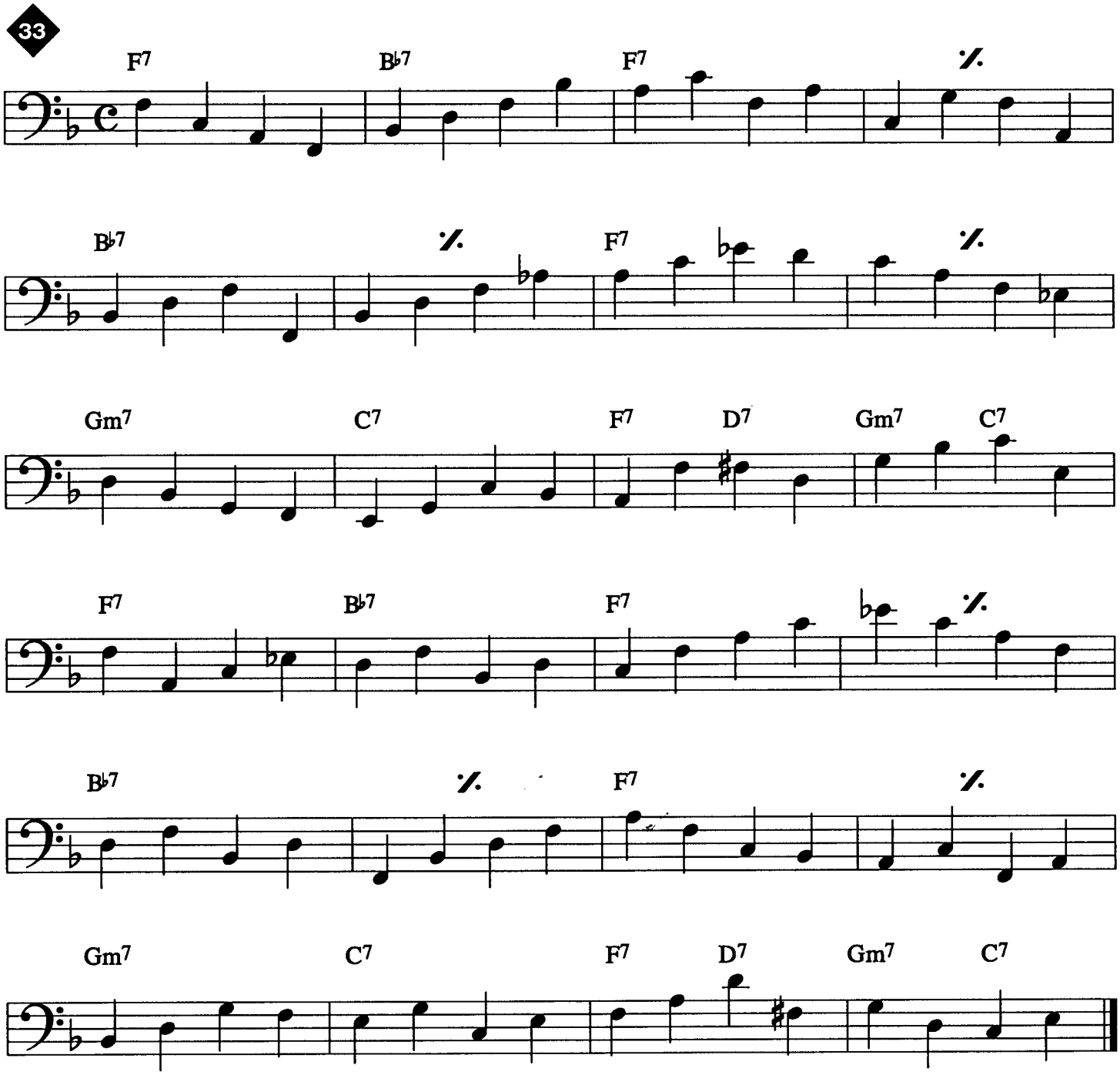
32



Arpeggiation

An arpeggio is a chord whose notes are played in succession, rather than simultaneously. Commonly, an arpeggio is learned from the Root going up and down in order (R-3-5-7-5-3-R). However, an arpeggio may start on any chord tone and move up or down from that note. These are called inverted arpeggios. Another approach is to play the chord tones in different sequences, not straight up and down. These are known as broken chords.

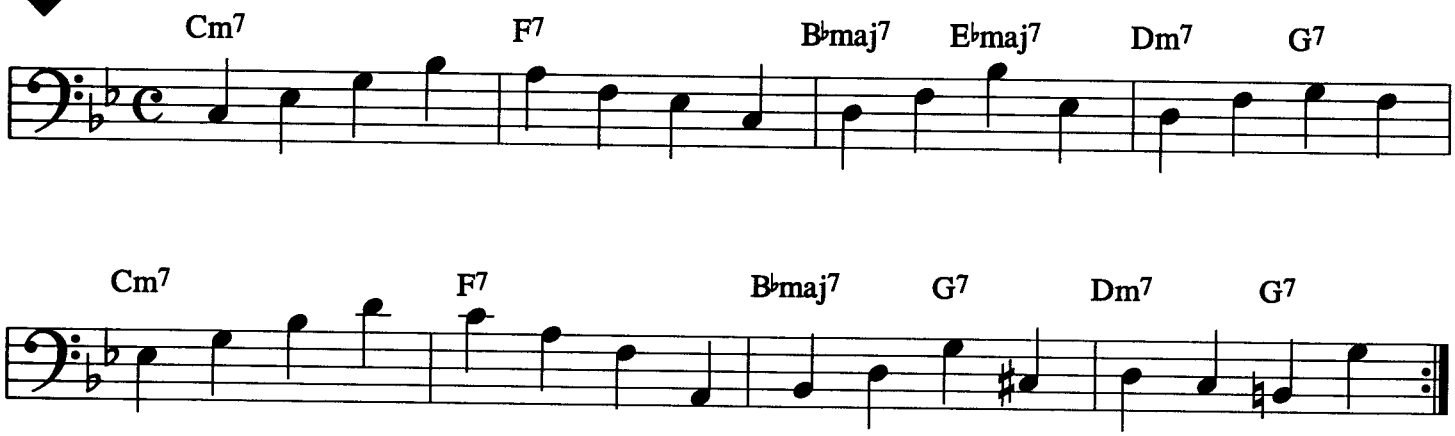
Arpeggiation creates more drastic vertical motions. Arpeggios spell the chord changes out very literally —your note choices are all chord tones. The main concern with arpeggiation is to make the resolutions between chords and between bars work. This means using chromatic, dominant, or scale approach to a chord tone on beat one of a new bar or the first beat of a new chord. Broken chords create interesting, abrupt up and down motions that work because they occur within the chord.



More Arpeggiation

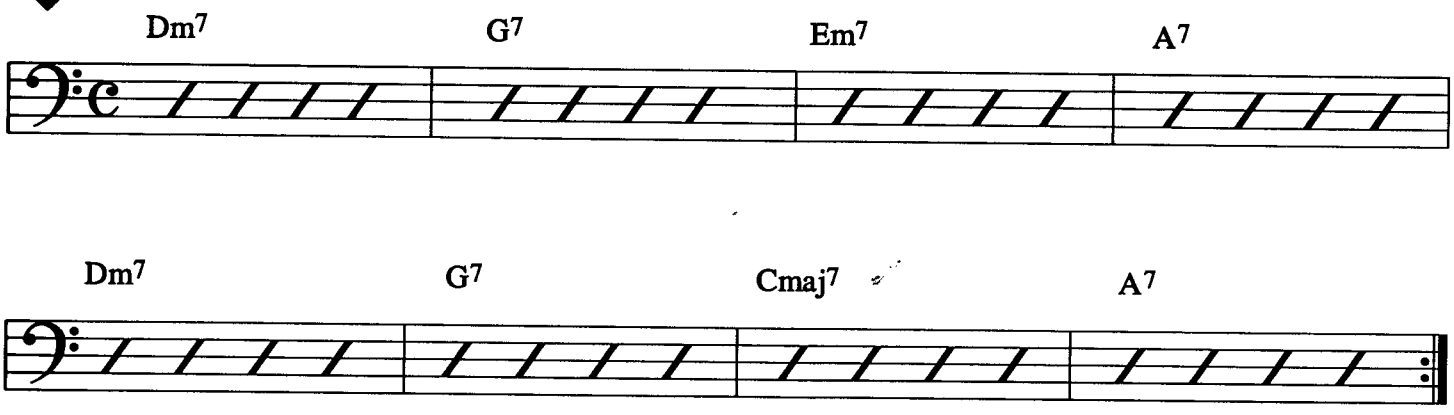
This is an example of arpeggiation on a standard progression. In bars 1 and 2 we have a very useful line that is worth examining. Cm^7 is going to F7, and when we arpeggiate the Cm^7, the $\flat 7$ is a chromatic approach to the 3 of F7. This will happen when any m^7 chord goes to a dominant chord whose root is up a fourth. In bars 5 and 6, Cm^7 goes to F7 again. This time we arpeggiate from the $\flat 3$ of the Cm^7, avoid the root completely and go up to scale note 2 (D) resolving scalewise down to the 5 of the F7 chord. The line works because we are using three chord tones and scale note 2, which is also called ***Tension 9***. These notes spell an $E\flat maj^7$ arpeggio. Take note of this pattern; it can be transposed to any key.

34



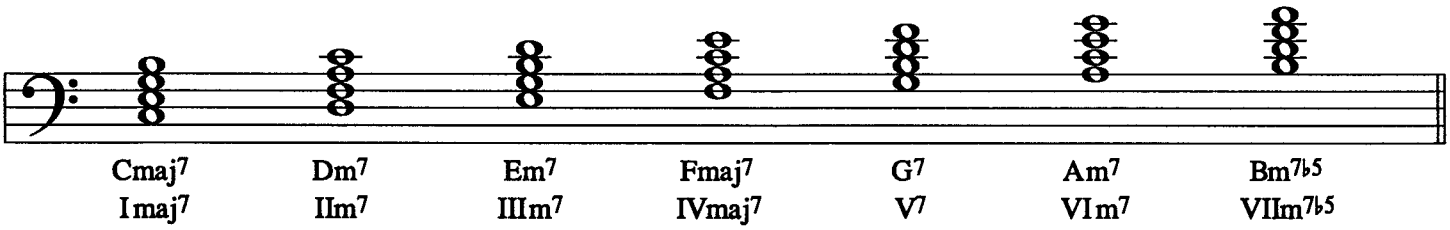
Transpose the patterns shown in the previous example to this progression. They will work on the Dm^7 to G^7 and the Em^7 to A^7.

35



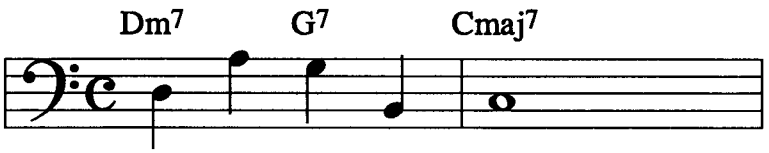
A Word About Chord Progressions: The II–V–I

These are the Diatonic chord structures belonging to the key of C major. Each chord is built up from a scale tone. Diatonic means "of the key," so every chord is built using only notes from the key of C. The chords are labeled according to which scale tone they are built on. For example, scale tone 1 is C, so Cmaj7 is Imaj7 chord, Dm7 is IIm7, and so on. The sequence of Diatonic Chords is the same in all keys, so learning the numbers and their corresponding chord type is very useful.



In order to get the most out of walking bass lines, we need to look at a very common chord pattern, the II–V–I. The II chord is IIm7, the V is V7 and the I is Imaj7. In the key of C they are Dm7 – G7 – Cmaj7. What are they in the key of F? How about B♭? Have you seen these chord patterns before? They are in rhythm changes, and in the blues (the II–V in the blues goes to a I7 chord). Let's look at how we can use this pattern effectively.

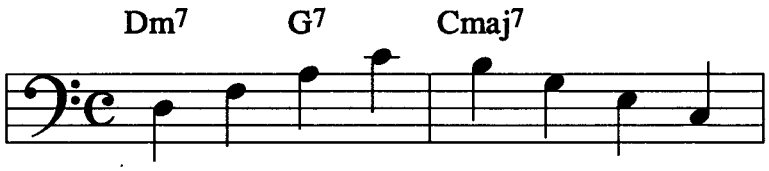
Ex. 1



This example treats the II-V as two separate chords. It is the standard R/approach/R/approach method that we have been using up to this point.

Because the II and the V work together to resolve to the IImaj7, you can also treat them as one chord. The next example shows how you can play through them as if they were a IIm7 chord.

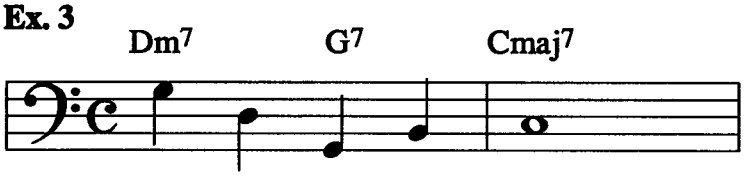
Ex. 2



Although the G7 is not outlined, this will still work. On the next page we will see how we can play through this as if it were a V chord only.

Now we will see how the II–V can be played as if it were a V^7 chord.

Ex. 3

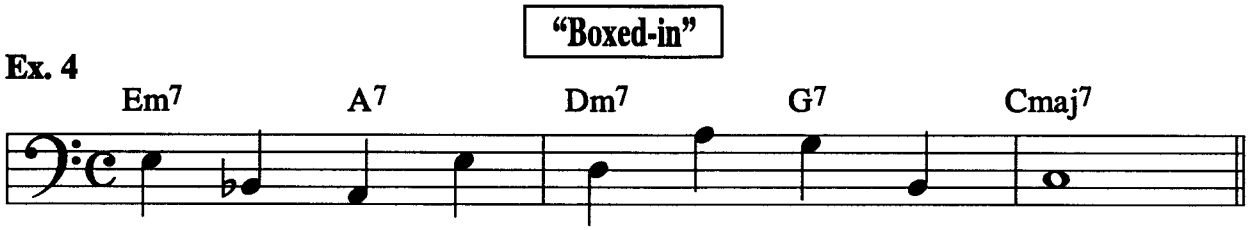


By playing the G on beat one of the Dm7 chord, we are creating a sus4* sound. This has a nice texture and can be used on any II-7 chord.

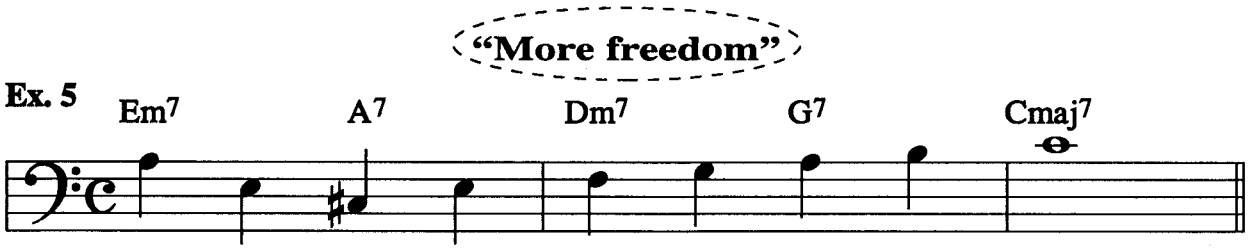
** A major triad or dominant 7 chord can substitute the 3rd with a 4th. The 4th gives the chord a hanging, unresolved, "suspended" quality, hence the name "sus4". The Dm7 with a G on the bottom is actually a G7sus4 chord that resolves to a G7.*

It is important to know about these possibilities now because we are expanding our freedom in what we use to create a bass line. You now have the option to look at a II–V as one chord. This will eliminate being boxed-in by the root motion when you have progressions with many II–V's occurring.

Ex. 4



Ex. 5

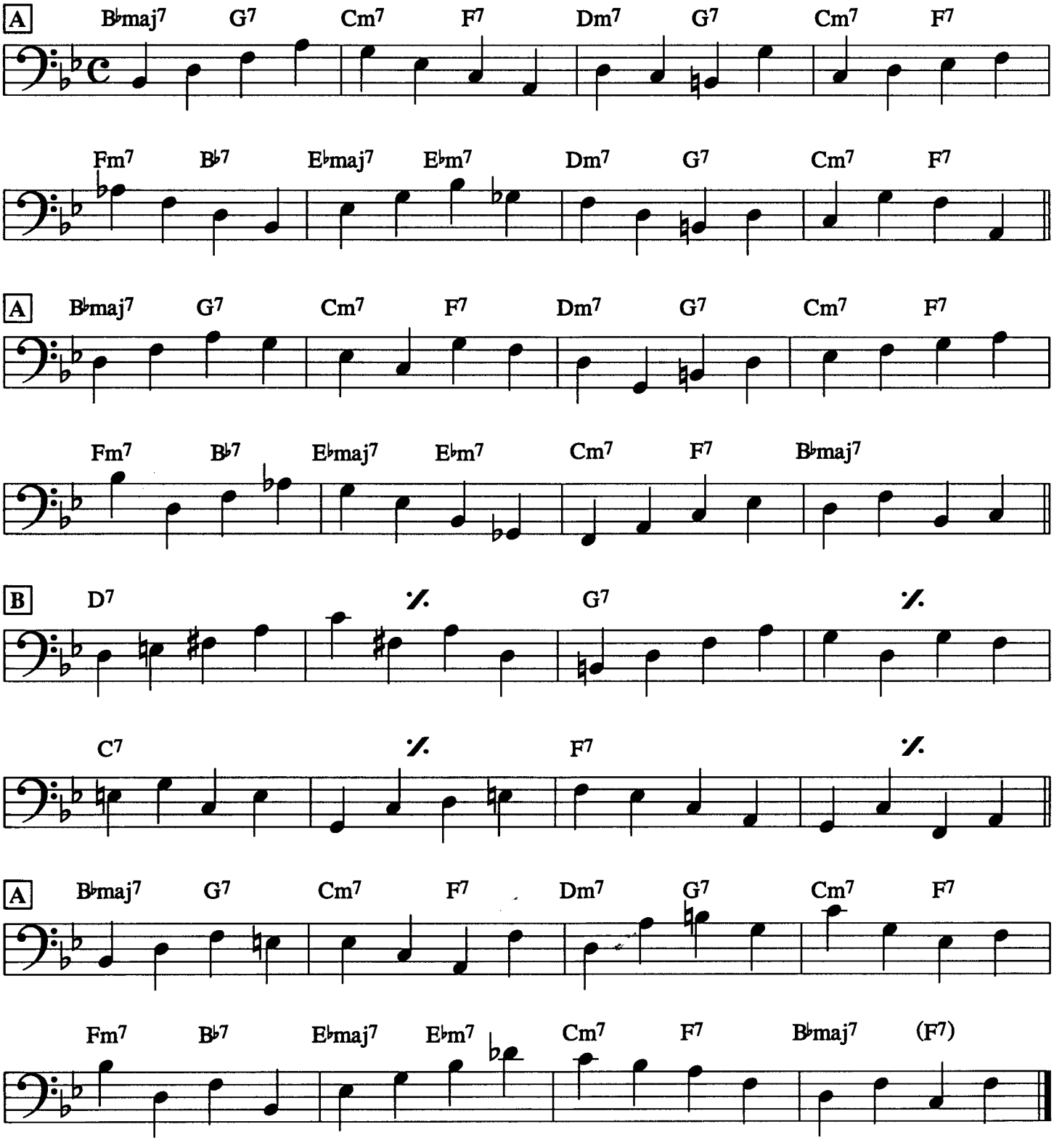


The "more freedom" approach is not better than the "boxed-in" approach, they are different. They both work well, but there are certain situations where one may be better suited than the other. For example, if you were playing swing music for dancing behind a singer, the boxed in approach might be a better choice due to the obvious nature of the line. However, if you were playing behind a tenor sax in a less commercial situation, it would be appropriate to be less straight ahead.

Arpeggiation On Rhythm Changes

Now that we have more freedom on II-V's, we can use arpeggiation over more active chord progressions, like rhythm changes. The root motion is not always necessary if the chord is outlined well.

36



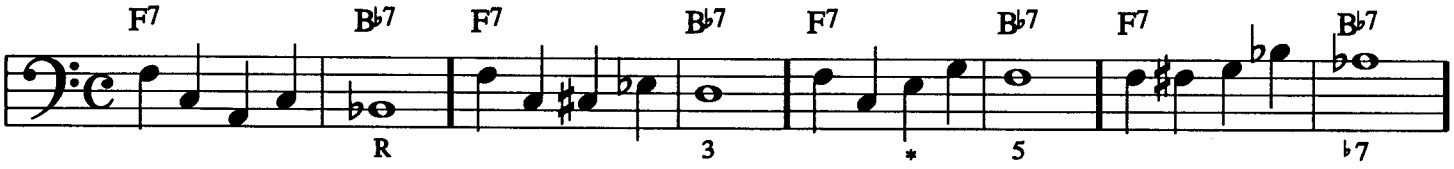
Advanced Approach Techniques: Indirect Resolutions

The next type of motion discussed will be chromatic motion. In order to take full advantage of this technique, we will explore the indirect resolution. An indirect resolution occurs when an approach pattern is interrupted with another approach pattern.

We will look at five different indirect resolutions using chromatic and scalar approach notes. With this technique, we will sometimes hit "funny" notes on a chord. In these cases, the indirect resolution pattern is so strong that the strange notes will work.

37

(1) Lower chromatic/upper scalar



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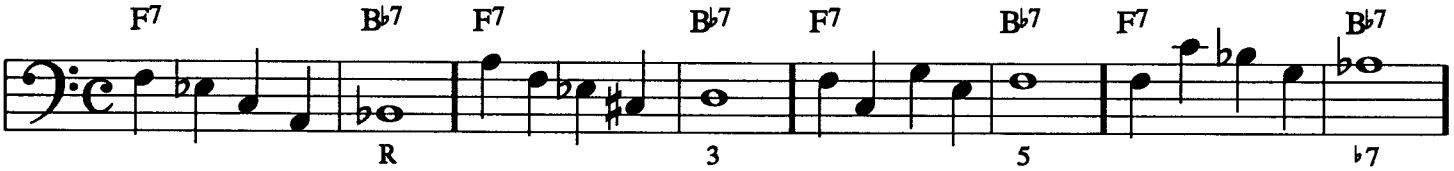
(2) Upper scalar/lower chromatic



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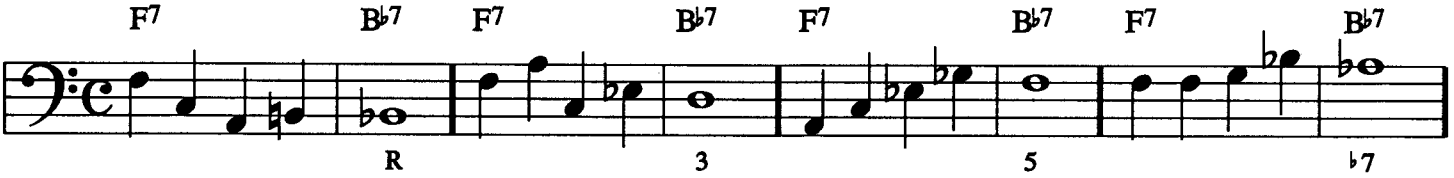
(3) Lower scalar/upper chromatic

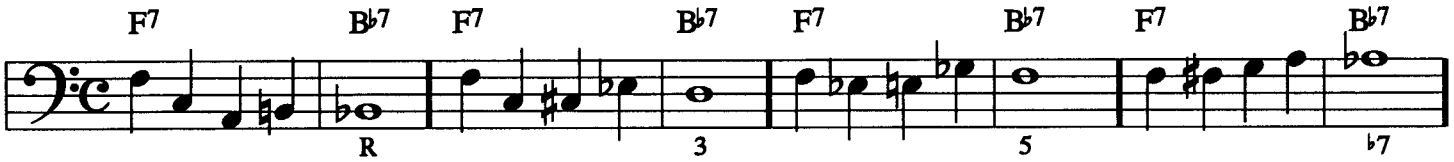


* E♮ is correct.

Here are two more indirect resolution patterns. All of these patterns can be adapted to fit any chord progression. They create very strong melodic motion over a chord, and introduce some interesting new note choices.

40

(4) Lower chromatic/upper chromatic



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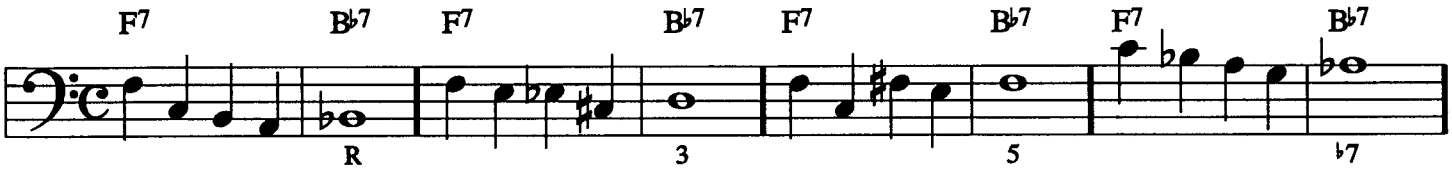
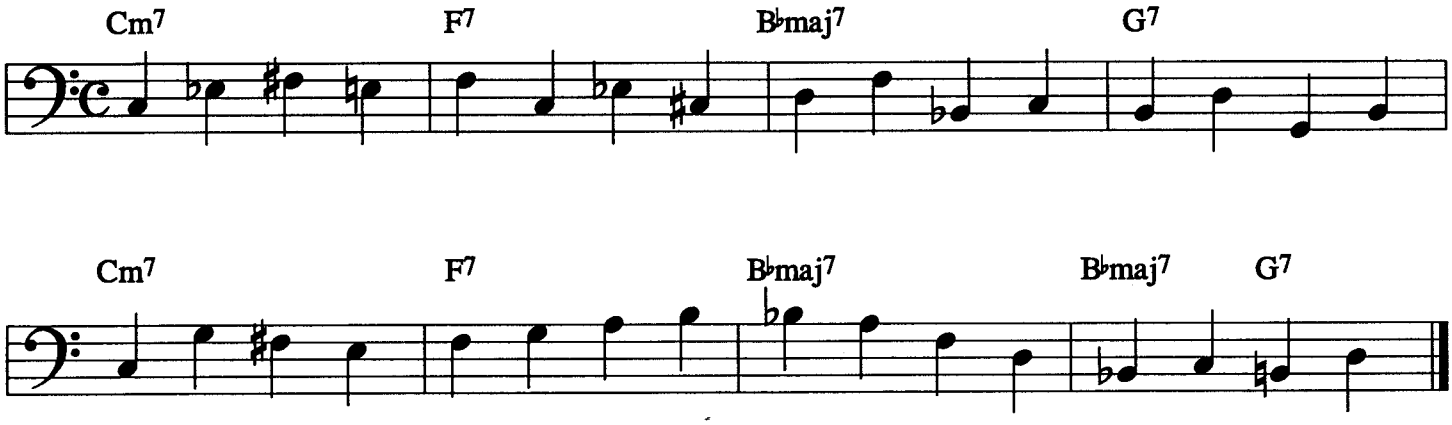
(5) Upper chromatic/lower chromatic



Below is a sample progression using some indirect resolution patterns. Try to identify each pattern used.

42

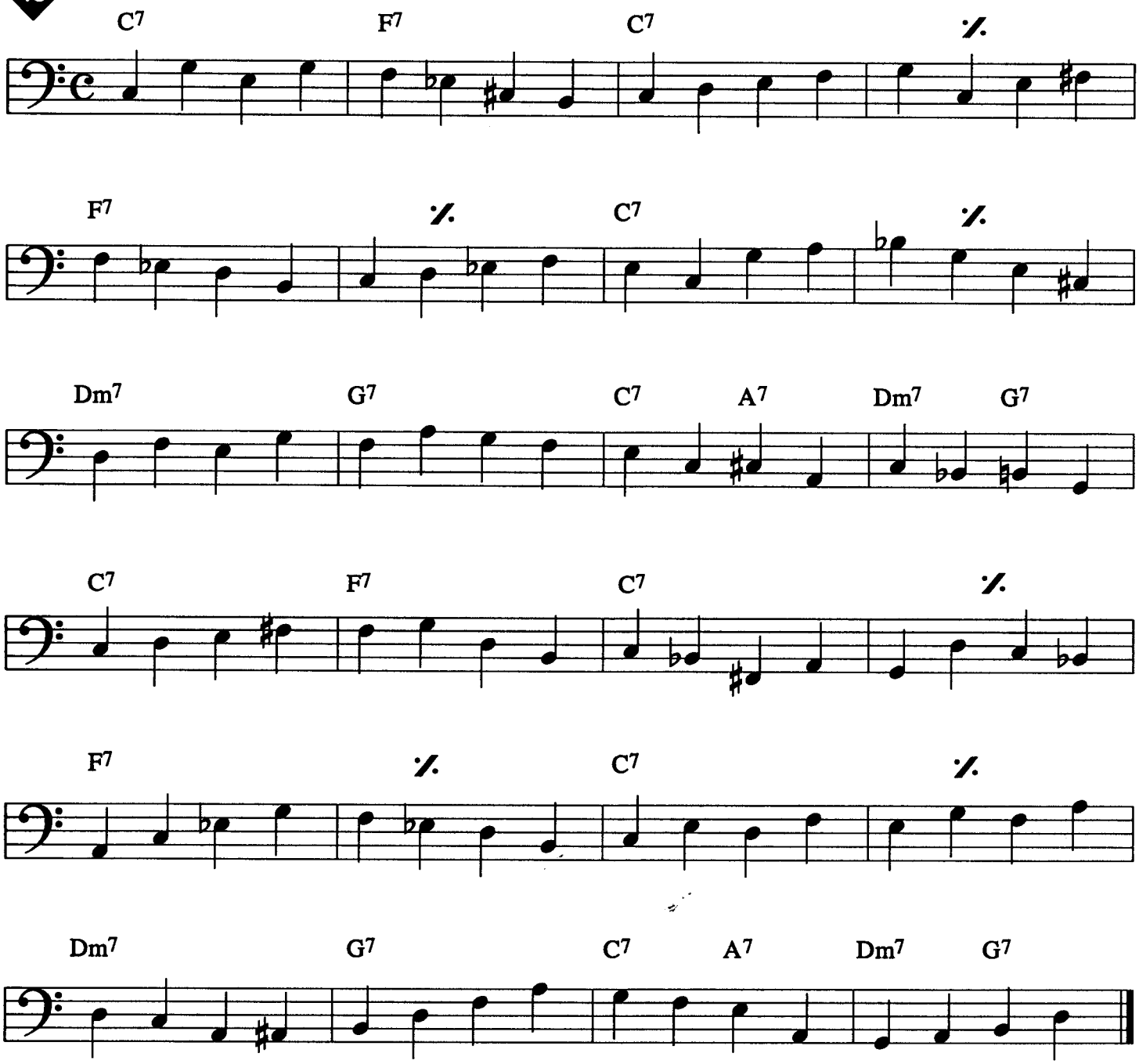


Using Indirect Resolutions

This blues line uses frequent indirect resolutions as well as other patterns. Bars 9 and 10 in the first chorus and bars 7 and 8 in the second chorus introduce a new pattern of **scale motion in thirds**. This uses scale tones in an "up two – down one" pattern.

Examine this line and try to identify the different techniques that are being used. On a separate piece of paper, transpose and learn to play this line in the key of B♭. This will help solidify your understanding of the concepts used to build this line.

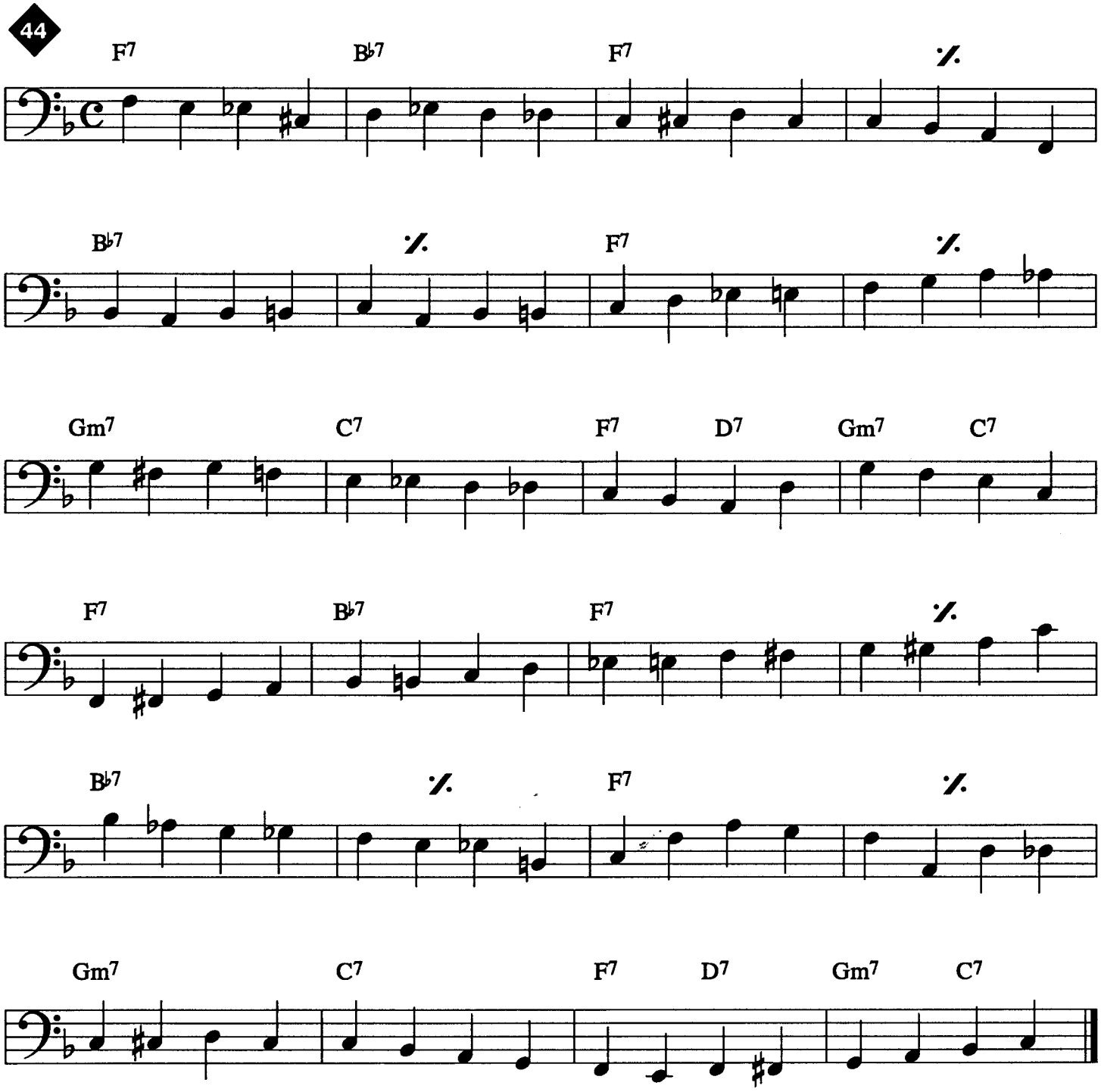
43



Using Chromatic Motion

Chromatic motion is very popular with jazz bassists. As the old saying goes, "When in doubt, play chromatic." Chromatic motion can be useful for those moments of "doubt." It is always better to keep playing until you regain your place in a tune; chromatic motion will help to mask your confusion. However, chromatic motion is much more than just a tool to cover yourself — it adds interest and propulsion to the bass line.

When used effectively, chromatic motion can create its own set of rules. The pull of the chromatic line is so strong that it can override root motion, chord quality, tonality, even form, and still remain functional. This example does not go quite that far, but it does avoid many of the direct approaches we have been using. This example has a good balance of "inside" and "outside" approaches.



Chromatic Motion On Rhythm Changes

This line uses chromatic motion, indirect resolution and other techniques to create an interesting line over rhythm changes.

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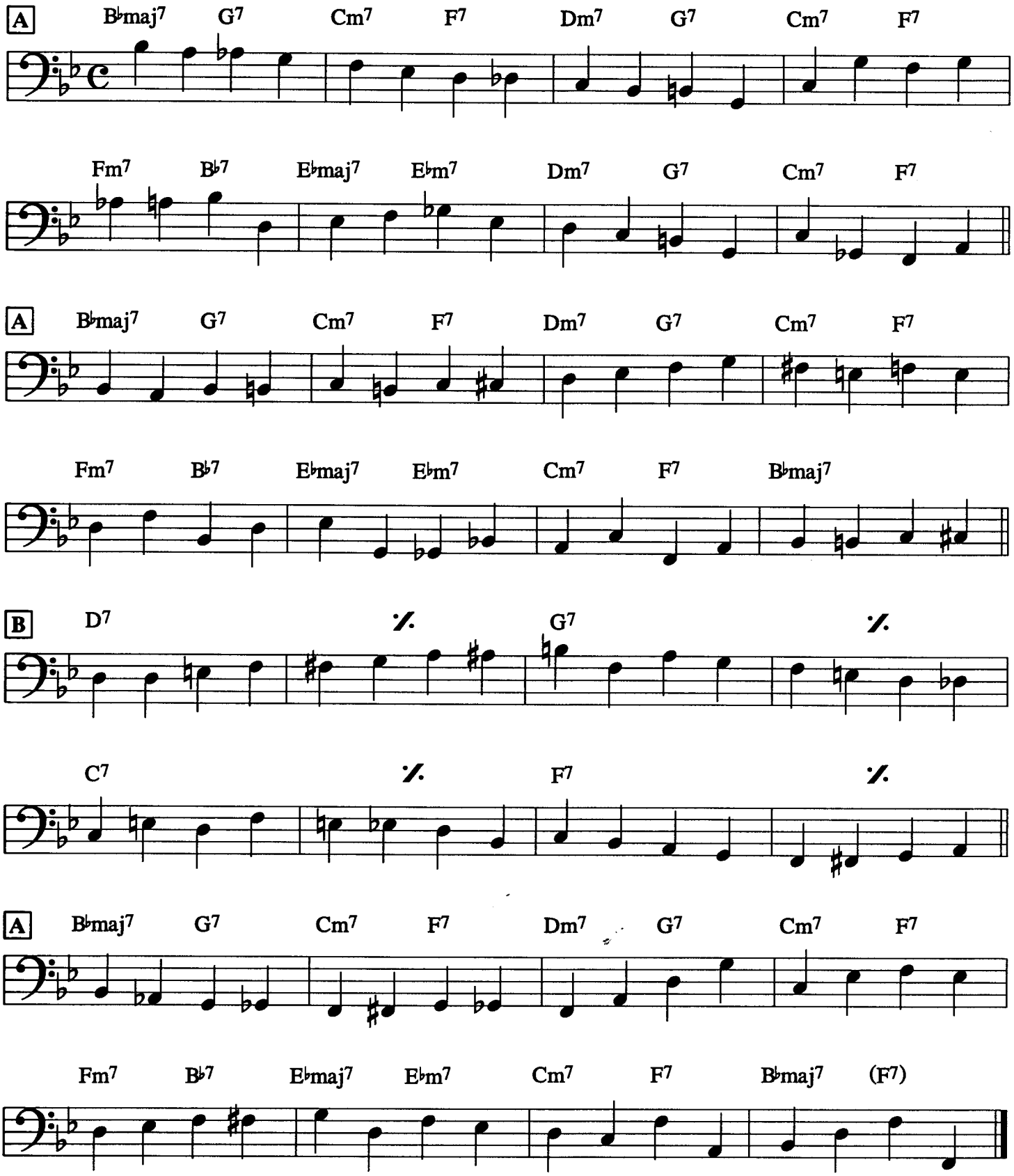


A Closing Word

Remember to always be inquisitive, don't just accept things because you see them in a book. Try to find out why things work for yourself. Keep your ears and your mind open. Hear what you play and how it reacts with the music. If something you play sounds good but isn't specifically discussed in this book, figure out why it sounds good and use it.

Always pay attention to the flow of time. Use the metronome to strengthen your internal clock and never settle for "good enough" time. Listen to the drums and feel the groove, make the bass line a deep, deep pocket.

Connect with the notes, "pre-hear" your ideas as you play. Listen to the chordal instruments to get melodic ideas. Lay down the time so the piano, guitar and drums can create rhythmic ideas to propel the tune. As soon as possible, memorize the chord progression you are playing. Get away from the page and use your "inner eyes" to guide you.

Learn everything you can about music. Learn harmony. Learn ear training. Learn about rhythm. Learn about the other instruments you play with, including their roles in an ensemble, and how your bass line interacts with their parts. Go to the piano and figure out the bass line to a tune you know.

Listen to the great bass players of all styles and visualize what they do. Listen, for example, to Ray Brown, Ron Carter, Paul Chambers, Scott LaFaro, Eddie Gomez, Dave Holland, Rufus Reid, Marcus Miller, Jaco, Stanely Clarke, James Jamerson, Jerry Jemmot, Charles Mingus, Jeff Berlin, Paul McCartney, Robbie Shakespeare, Jimmy Blanton, Sam Jones, Marc Johnson, Harvie Swartz, Jimmy Garrison, Chuck Rainey, Oscar Pettiford — the list never ends.

When you listen to music, see the bass, feel the bass, hear the bass. When you play, ***be the bass !***

APPENDIX

This section is included to give you the opportunity to put your learning into action. The examples in the book have been very common blues forms, rhythm changes, and short II-V progressions which are all necessary to master. Now you have ten standard progressions to play through, each containing many ideas that have been explored in the book, and each presenting some new challenges to deal with. These tunes are all commonly played standards that anyone wishing to play jazz should know.

Due to copyright restriction, I cannot provide the names of these songs. However, they are common enough that anyone familiar with the jazz repertoire will be able to identify them for you —you may be able to figure them out yourself.

Using the Standard Progressions

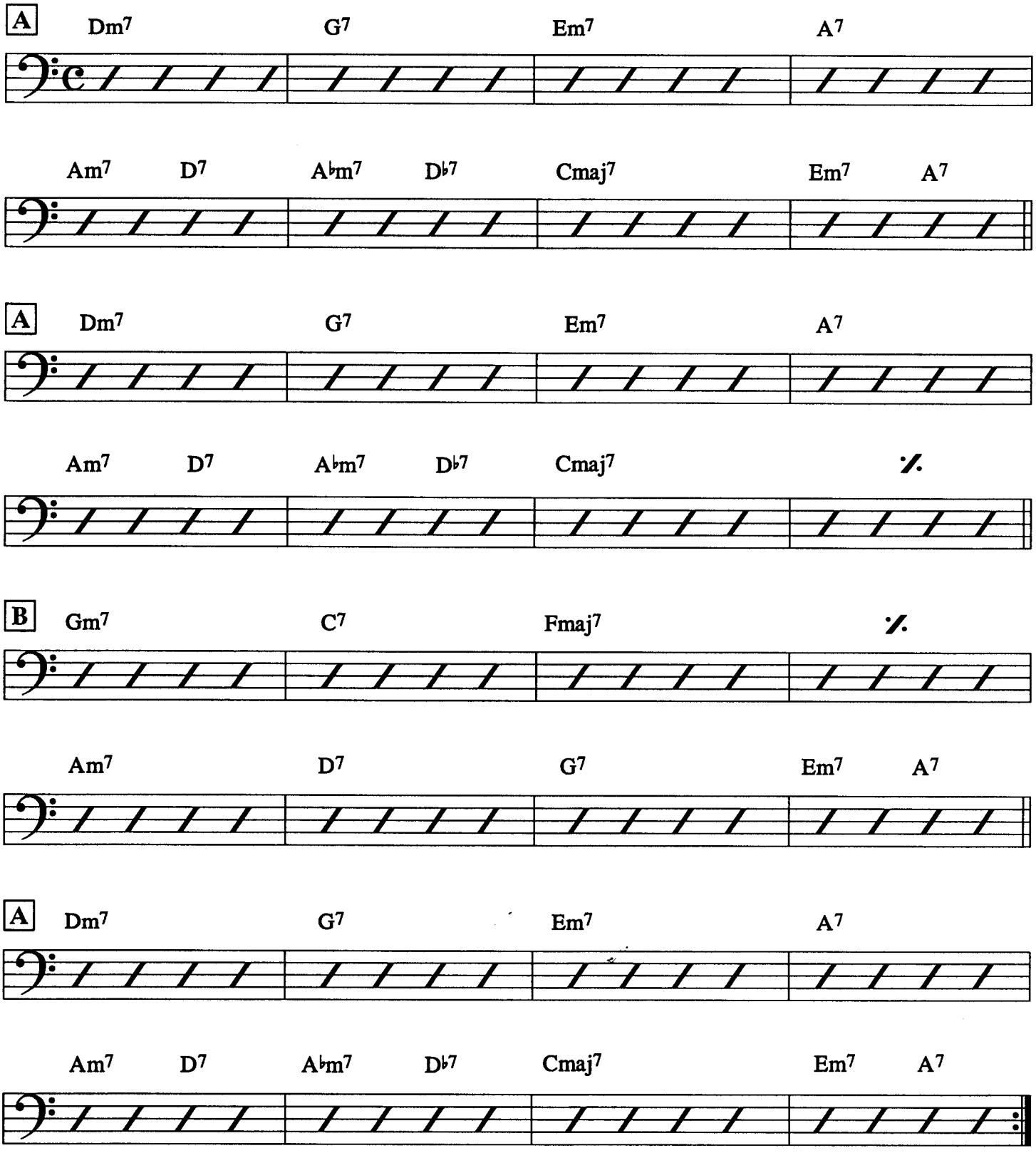
It is a good idea to use all the steps you have learned when playing through a new tune. Start with finding the roots, add the fifth, find the different approaches, look for scalewise lines that wind through the changes, arpeggiate the changes and use other chord tones for targets on beat one, use chromatic motion to get interesting melodic effects, advanced approach techniques to create unusual resolutions. Try all these ideas. Learn the tune as thoroughly as you can, listen to the progression, get the sound in your head, and, once you have learned the ins and outs of the tune, go for the sound you hear and play.

Like other examples in the book, there are bass lines recorded on the left channel of the tape. They are there to give you some "ear" ideas about how to approach these progressions. It would be of value to you to transcribe these lines and analyze them. A combination of listening and transcribing is a very strong way to develop an understanding of a musical concept. These lines were played freely without thinking about rules and concepts, so there are likely to be things in them that this book has not explored. Look for new ideas and develop your own understanding.

Standard Progression #1

This is the chord progression to a standard tune. The form is AABA. Utilize all the steps discussed in the book to learn the tune. Then, once you have a feel for it, just play!

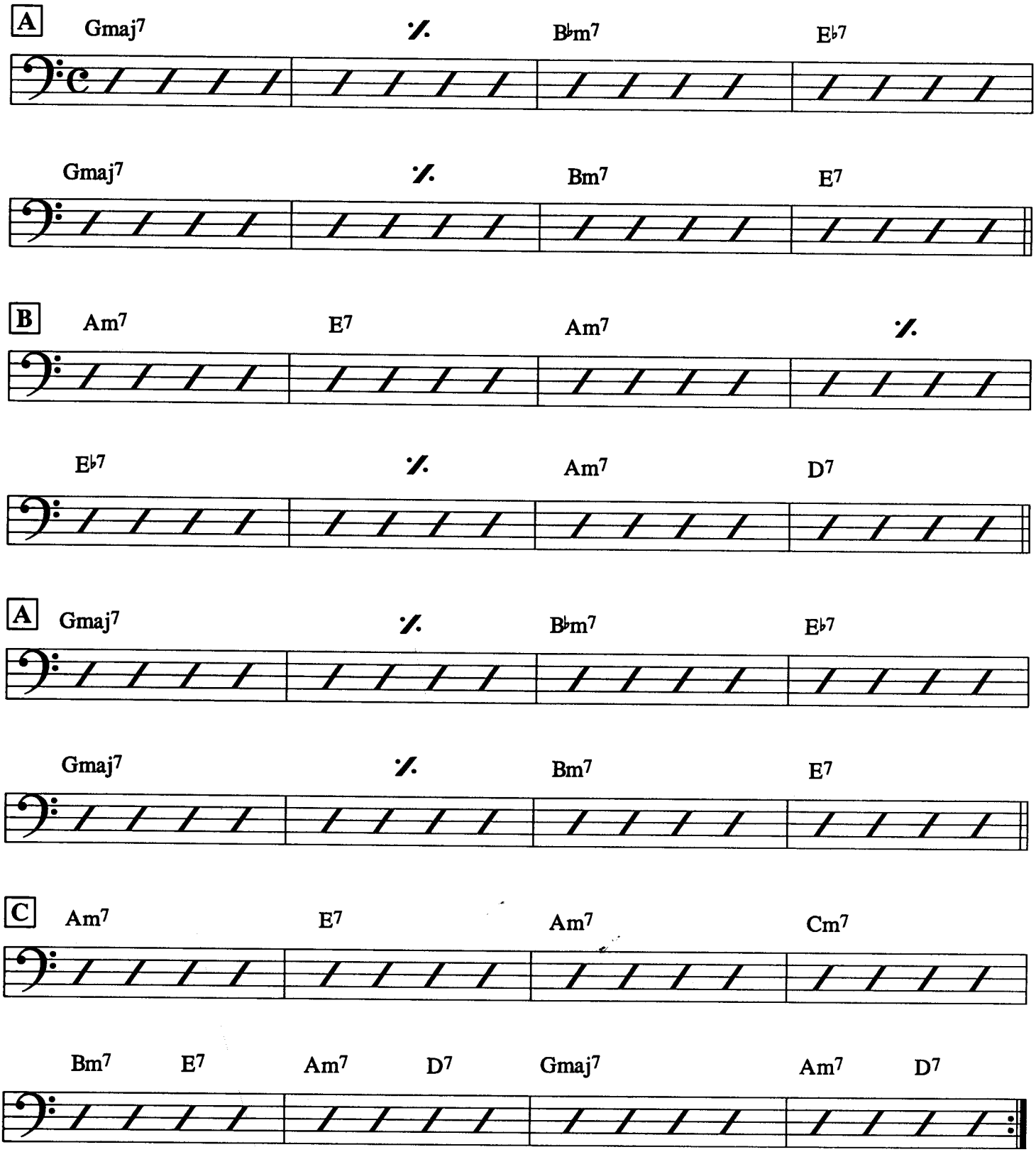
46



Standard Progression #2

This standard has some odd root motions. Find different ways to connect the chords in the unusual spots. The form is ABAC.

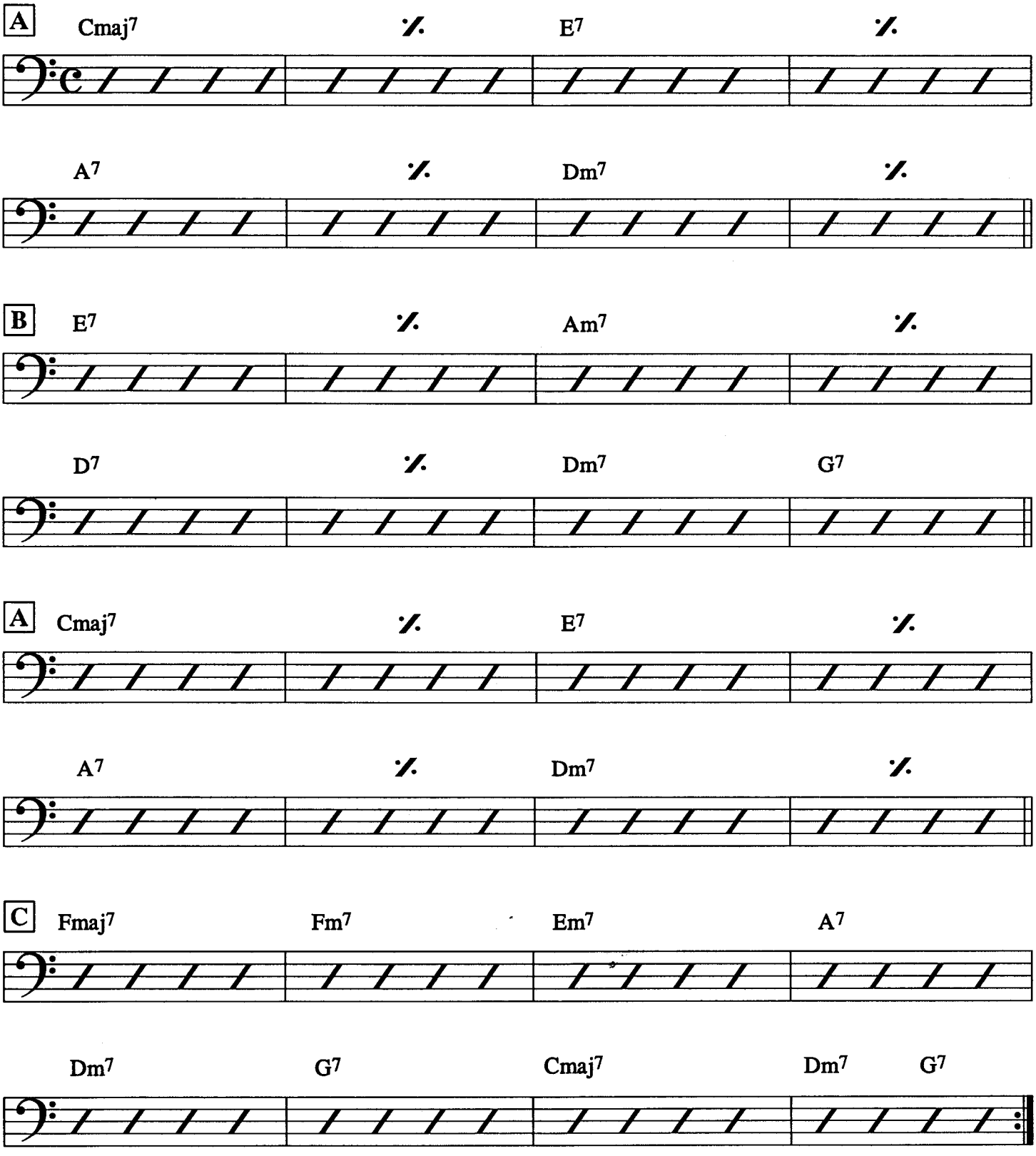
47



Standard Progression #3

Here is another ABAC form. This tune spends two bars on each chord until the C section, where it goes to one change per bar.

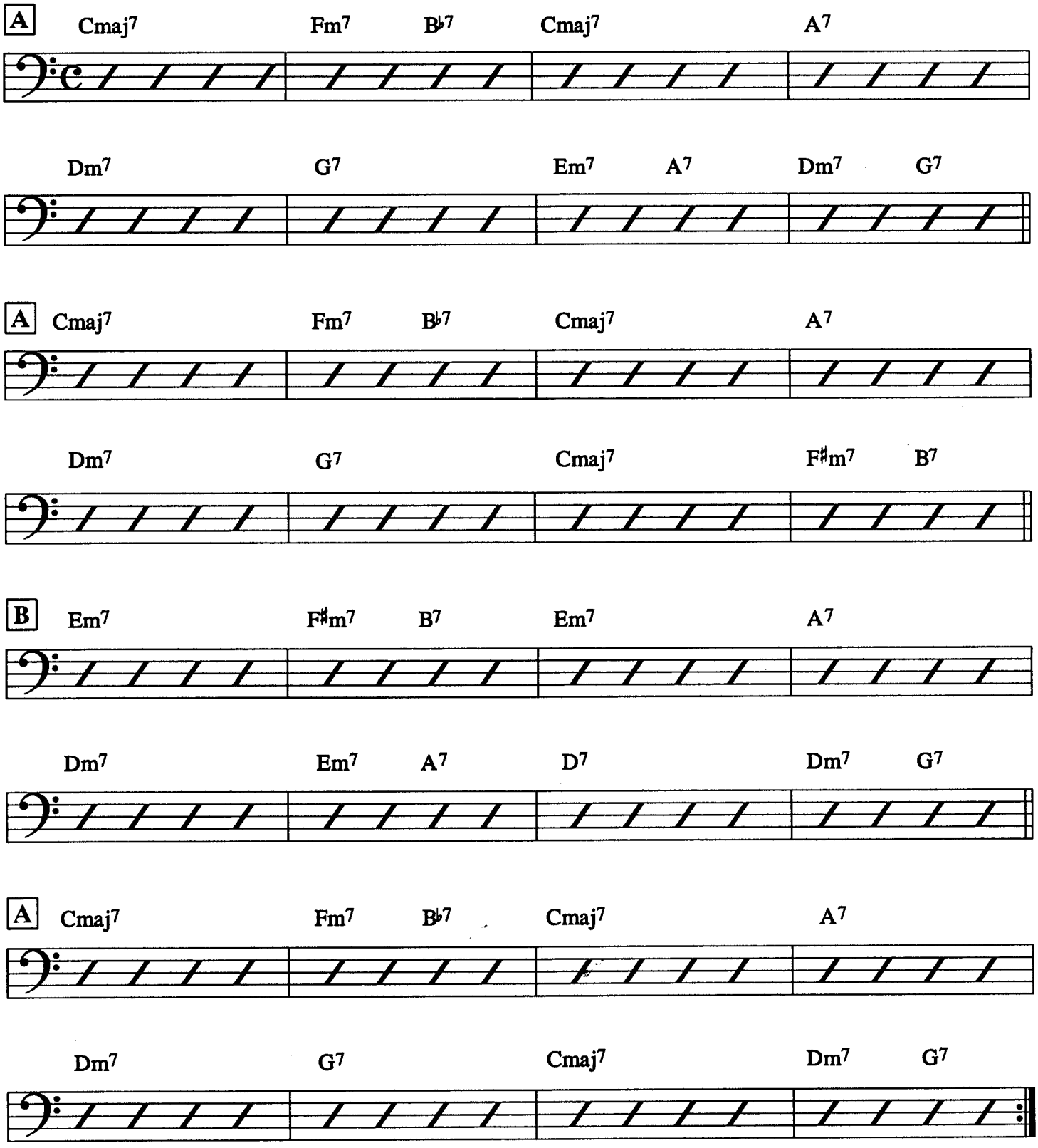
48



Standard Progression #4

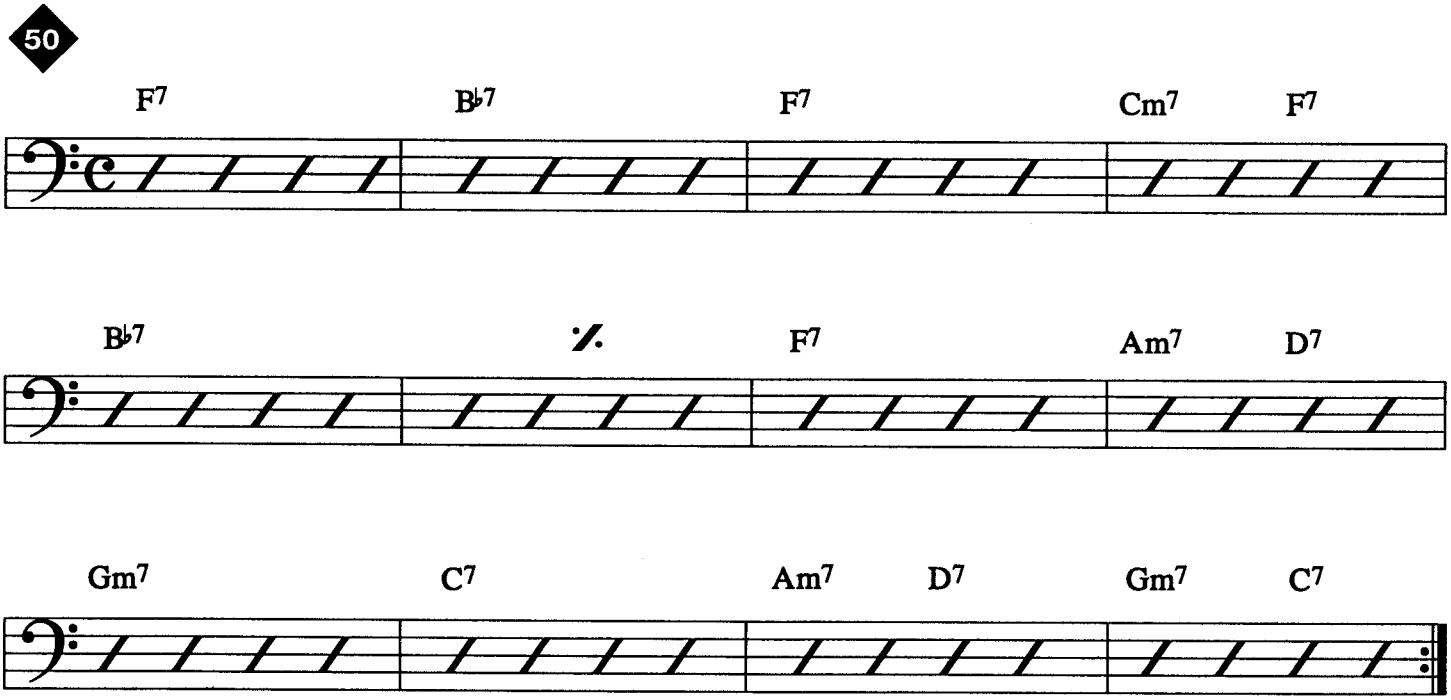
This AABA form belongs to a tune written by Charlie "Yardbird" Parker.

49



Standard Progression #5

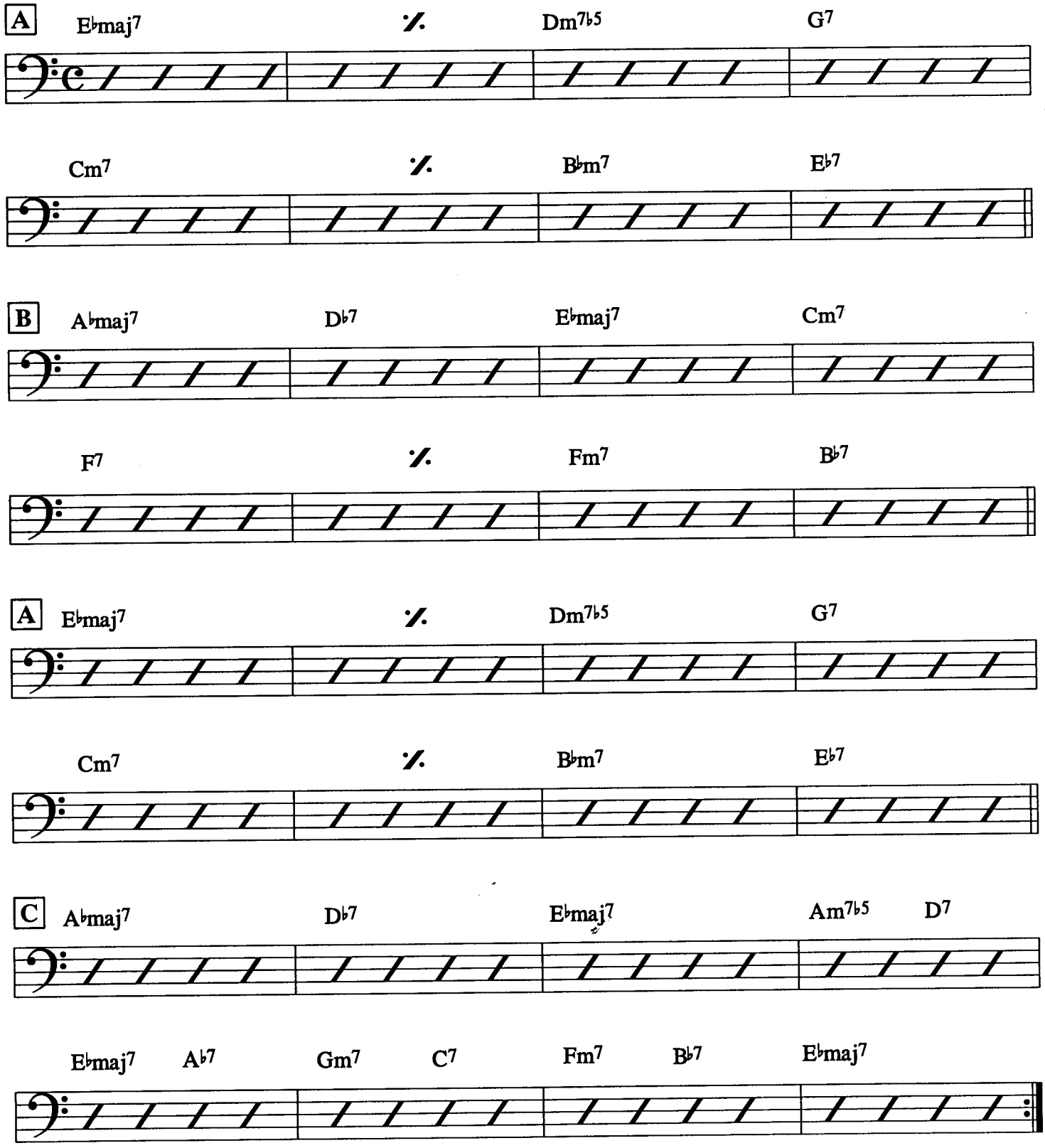
Here is the familiar F blues progression with some additional changes. These new chords add root motion without changing the character of the progression. This version is the one most "jazz guys" will use when playing the blues.



Standard Progression #6

This progression introduces the m7♭5 chord. When playing over this chord, make sure to use ♭5 as a chord tone, natural 5 can still be used as a chromatic approach.

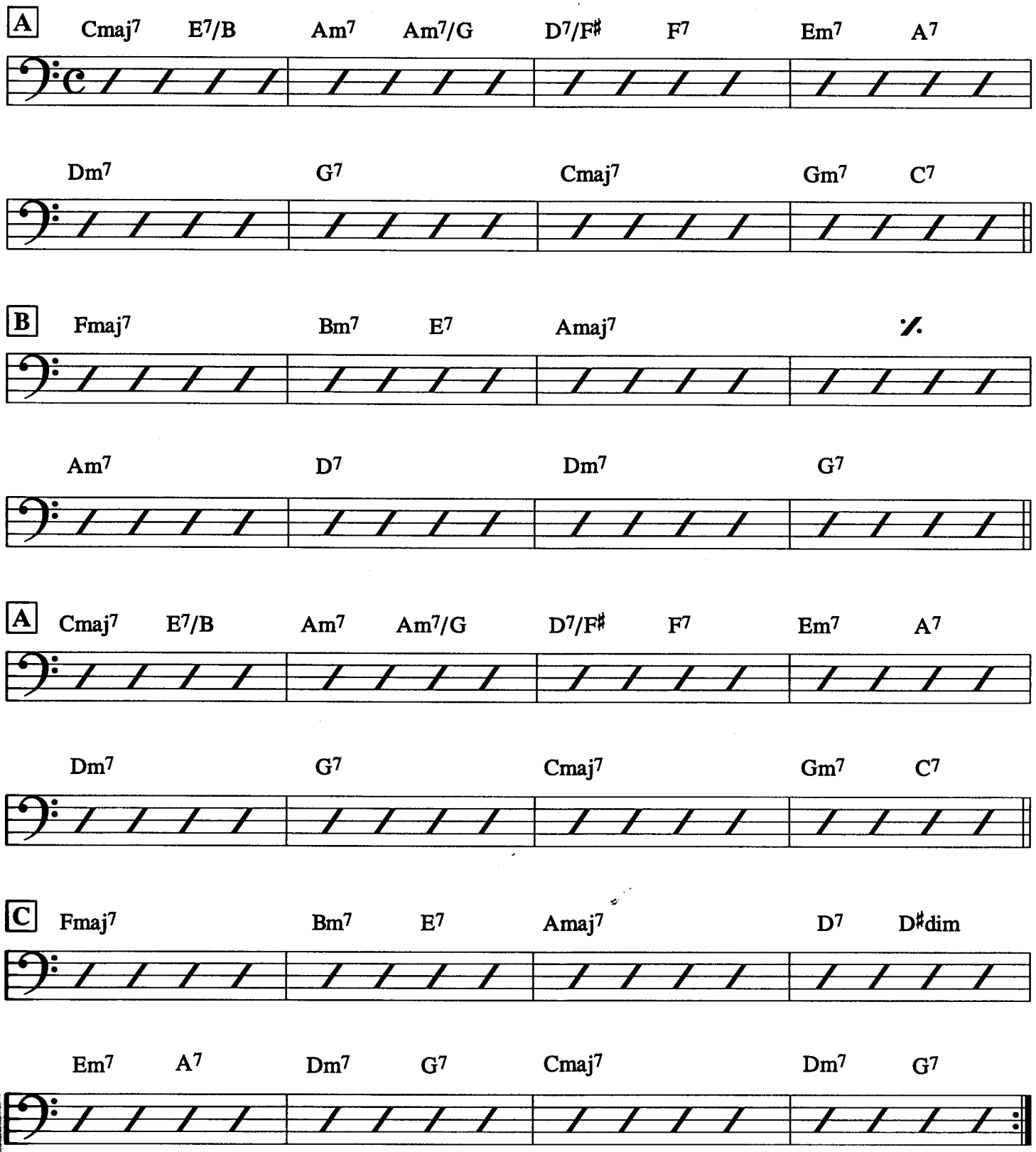
51



Standard Progression #7

This tune has chords over alternate bass notes. The root motion is an important characteristic of the song. It should definitely be played during the melody. If you want to get away from the specified root motion, use the upper chords to determine the progression. In this song, all the alternate bass notes are also chord tones.

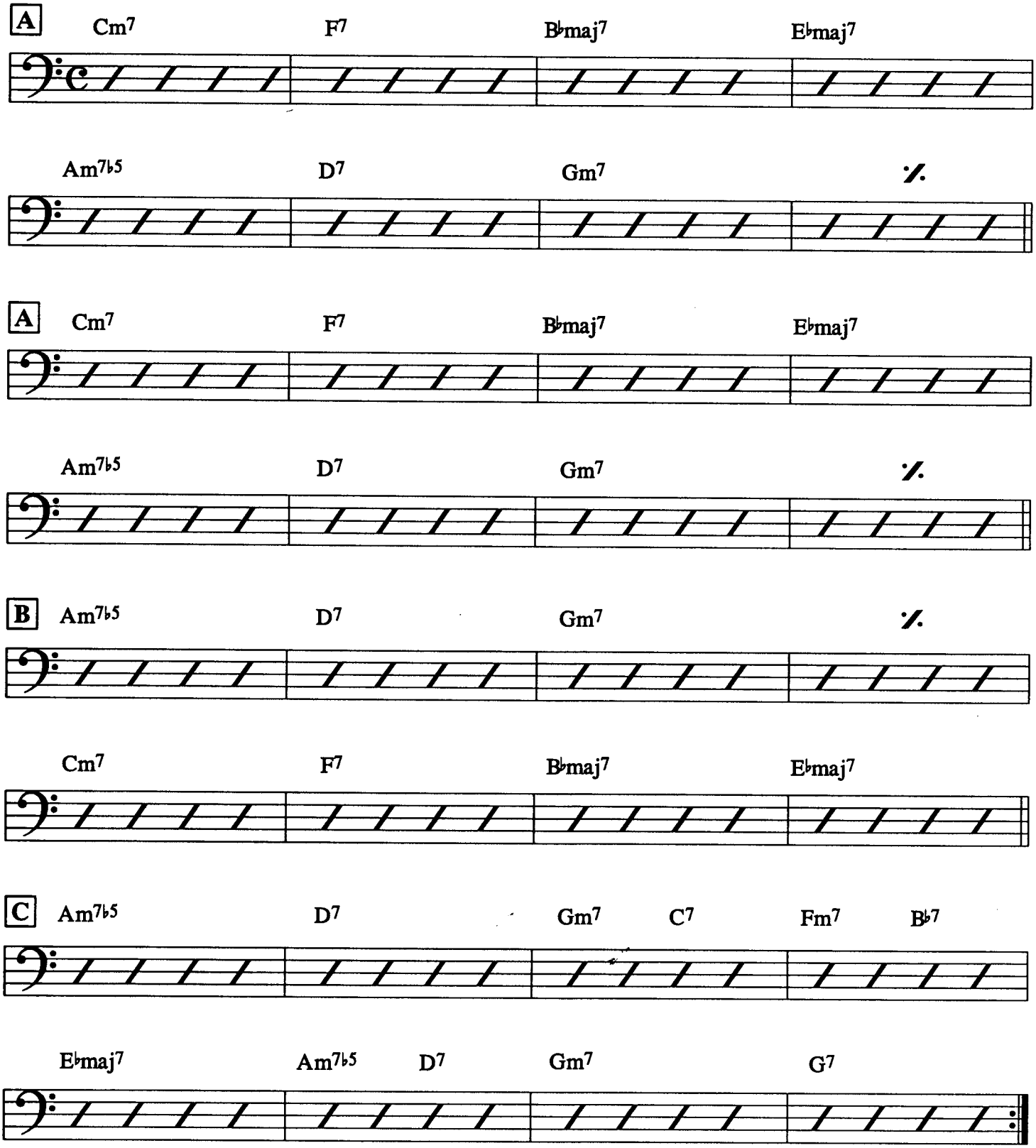
52



Standard Progression #8

This song is tricky because of the AABC form. The progression in bars 5-8 appears several times in the tune making it easy to lose your place. Concentrate!

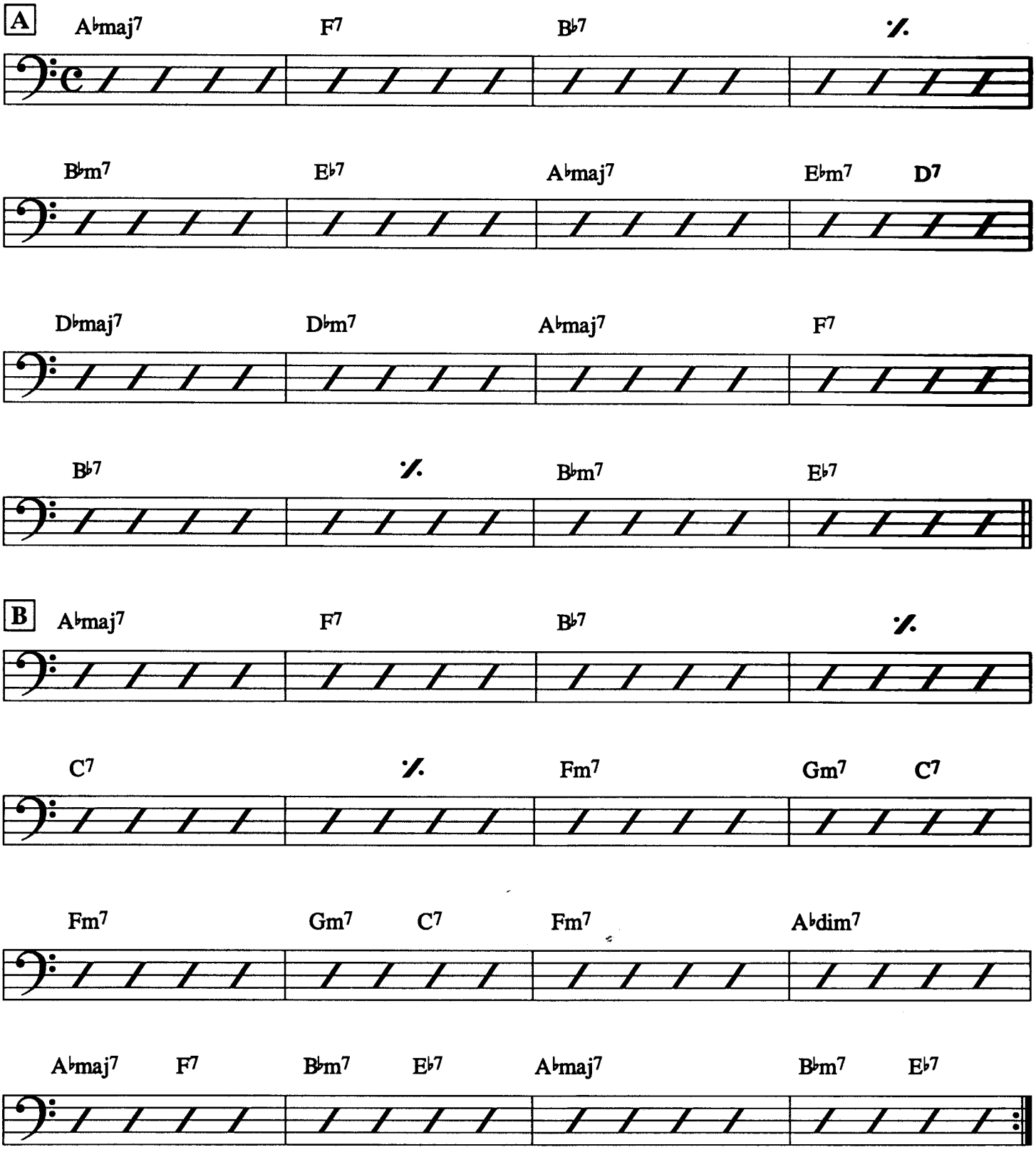
53



Standard Progression #9

This one is an old standard that later became into a bebop classic. It is usually called at a **very fast** tempo. **Bar 28** is an A♭ diminished chord. Don't forget the ♭♭7.

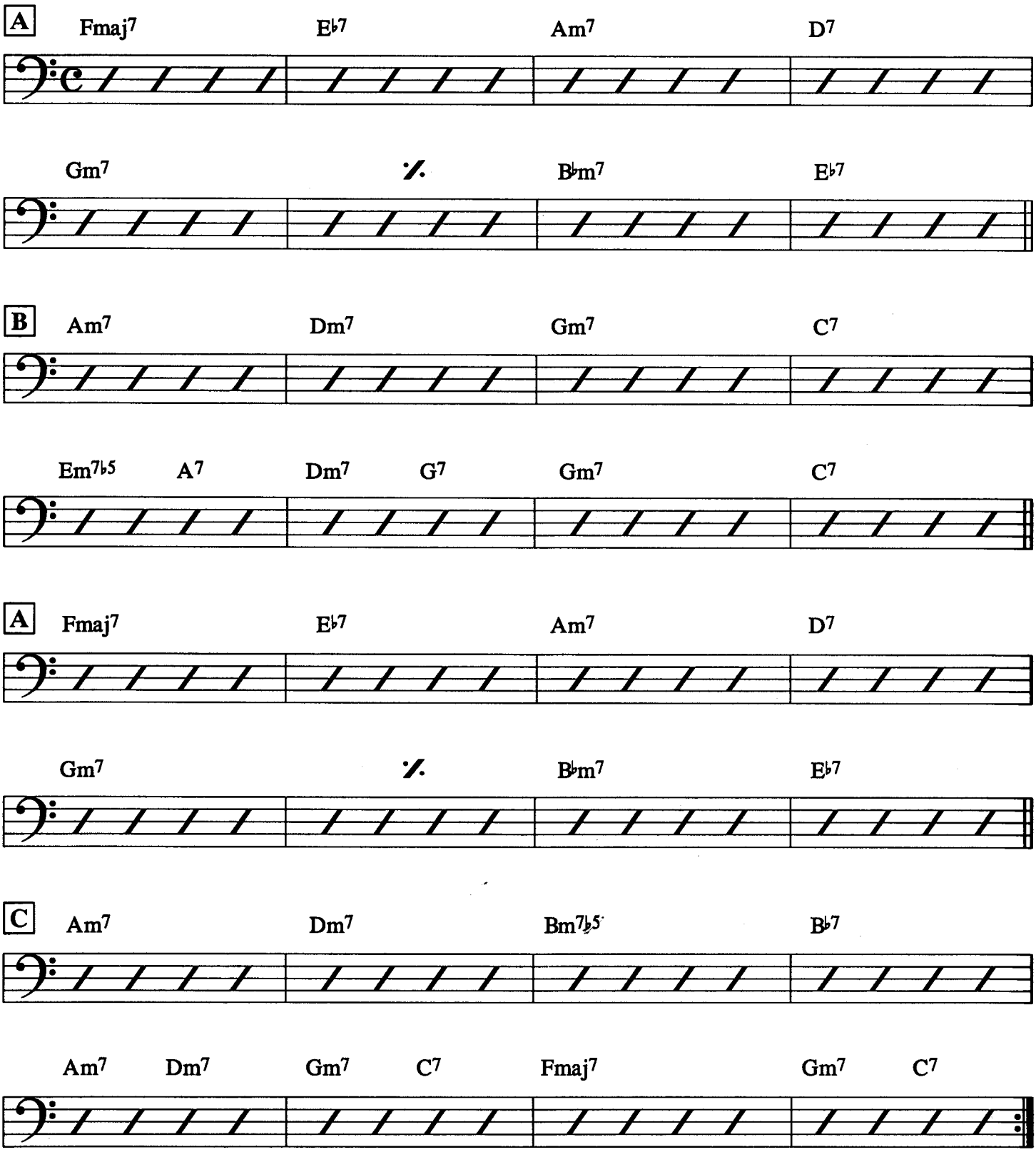
54



Standard Progression #10

This tune has some interesting, abrupt root motions. You can emphasize the abruptness or look for ways to smooth over it with other chord tones on beat one.

55



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