

## Jazz Walking Bass Blues in F

All of the following exercises are based on typical 12 bar jazz blues in the key of F :

F7 | Bb7 | F7 | % | Bb7 | % | F7 | D7 | Gm7 | C7 | F7 D7 | Gm7 C7 |

This first exercise shows a walking line consisting of each chord's arpeggio with occasional scale passages. Although it works and doesn't sound "wrong", it doesn't sound particularly jazzy.

The first exercise consists of three staves of music in 4/4 time, key of F major. The first staff, labeled 'Bass Guitar', contains measures 1-4. Measure 1 is 'F7 arpeggio', measure 2 is 'Bb7 arpeggio', measure 3 is 'F5 arpeggio', and measure 4 is 'F Mixolydian scale'. The second staff, labeled 'Bass', contains measures 5-8. Measure 5 is 'Bb7 arpeggio', measure 6 is 'Bb Mixolydian scale', measure 7 is 'F7 arpeggio', and measure 8 is 'D Mixolydian'. The third staff, labeled 'Bass', contains measures 9-12, all of which are part of the 'F major scale'.

Although Bars 11 & 12 are based on the F major scale, if you compare them to the chord changes you will see that they also outline the chords by using the roots thirds and fifths.

The next example is almost identical but this time we use "chromatic approach notes" at the end of each bar. This basically means that we use notes outside the normal harmony which move by a semitone either up or down to the next note. This creates a tension ( the unexpected "out" note ) and release ( the resolution to the expected note ) which is the key to making a line sound jazzier. Note that the downbeat of each bar is still a strong chord tone, in this case always the root. This means that, even though we've added some unusual notes, you are still clearly outlining the chord changes. There may be times where you want to intentionally "blur" the harmony but it is best to start by learning the rule of clearly outlining the harmony at all times.

The second exercise is identical in structure to the first, but includes chromatic approach notes. The first staff, labeled 'Bass Guitar', contains measures 1-4 with annotations: 'F7 arpeggio', 'Bb7 arpeggio', 'F5 arpeggio', and 'F Mixolydian scale'. The second staff, labeled 'Bass', contains measures 5-8 with annotations: 'Bb7 arpeggio', 'Bb Mixolydian scale', 'F7 arpeggio', and 'D Mixolydian'. The third staff, labeled 'Bass', contains measures 9-12, all of which are part of the 'F major scale'.

A common way to change the chords in a jazz progression is to change functioning Dominant chords into II-V progressions.

A “functioning Dominant chord” is a 7 chord that resolves up a fourth ( or down a fifth) to another chord eg the F7 in bar 4 that resolves to Bb7 and the D7 that resolves to Gm7 in bar 8.

A II-V progression is one that moves, not surprisingly, from the second chord of a scale to the fifth chord. This usually then resolves to the root chord of the scale. An example of this can be found in bars 9-11 where the Gm7 ( second chord in F major ) moves to C7 ( fifth chord in F major ) before resolving to F. The II-V progression is one of the building blocks of jazz harmony so you should try to become as familiar with it as possible. All jazz players have a mental directory of II-V patterns.

So, by using this principle, we can create the following progression ( the new chords are in **bold**):

F7 | Bb7 | F7 | **Cm7 F7** | Bb7 | % | F7 | **Am7 D7** | Gm7 | C7 | F7 D7 | Gm7 C7 |

The following example uses this progression. Note that the pianist or guitarist may not play these substitutions but the bass line will still work.

Bass Guitar 

5 

9 

You can also turn the 11<sup>th</sup> bar into a II-V by substituting Am7 for the F resulting in Am7-D7 resolving to the Gm7 at the start of Bar 12.

Bass Guitar 

5 

9 

Another simple change is to make the second bar of Bb7 ( the 6<sup>th</sup> bar of the progression) into B diminished 7. How does this work? If we look at the spelling of these two chords we can see that the only difference is the root:

Bb7 – Bb D F Ab  
Bdim7 – B D F Ab

Again this is a common substitution but should be used with caution as the semitone difference can be a little unpleasant if the chordal instrument happens to play a low Bb as you play B! The next example shows a chorus with the sixth bar played as Bdim7:

The image shows three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, all in the key of Bb. The first staff is labeled 'Bass Guitar' and contains a line of music with notes: Bb, D, F, Ab, Bb, D, F, Ab, Bb, D, F, Ab, Bb, D, F, Ab. The second staff is labeled 'Bass' and contains a line of music with notes: Bb, D, F, Ab, Bb, D, F, Ab, Bb, D, F, Ab, Bb, D, F, Ab. The third staff is labeled 'Bass' and contains a line of music with notes: Bb, D, F, Ab, Bb, D, F, Ab, Bb, D, F, Ab, Bb, D, F, Ab. The sixth bar of the progression is marked with a '5' above the staff, indicating a Bdim7 chord substitution.

As I'm sure you can imagine, this only scratches the surface of what can be done with the blues form. Later lessons will look at other variations.