

## BASS LINE CONSTRUCTION

Good bass lines for Blues progressions can be achieved by applying the following rules:

1. Always play the root (tonic note) on the first beat of each measure.
2. Approach each new or repeated chord by half-step from above or below. This will be the fourth beat of the measure (see notes circled below).
3. Fill in beats two and three with chord tones (usually the 3rd and 5th, sometimes the 7th) or use tones of the scale as in measure 2, 6 and 9 in example A below. Remember to make the fourth note of each measure lead by half-step to the root tone of the new or repeated chord.
4. Make your bass line rise and fall gracefully. Try to use at least a one and one-half octave range.
5. After you learn to approach new or repeated chords by half step try to occasionally approach the new chord by whole step. Good bass players vary the interval of approach – sometimes by half step and others by whole step.

When one chord is sounded for more than one measure, you can add variety by sounding the root on the first beat of the first measure and sound the fifth note of the chord/scale on the first beat of the second measure. See example B below. All half-step leading tones in the examples below are circled.

### **A** BLUES IN F

### **B**

Bass players should practice scales and patterns just as horn players do. Strive for smoothness and speed. The exercises on page 2 will give every bassist a strong foundation in scales, chords and basic harmony. Listen to the bass and drum channel (left channel) on this play-a-long recording carefully. Spend time each day transcribing the bass notes off the record so you can see what the player is doing. Bass lines have been transcribed from Volumes 1,3,6,15,25,34,35,37 and 42 displaying the work of such exceptional jazz bassists as Ron Carter, Rufus Reid, Todd Coolman, Steve Gilmore and Bob Cranshaw. For further study I recommend *The Evolving Bassist* and *Evolving Upward* by Rufus Reid, *Ray Brown's Bass Method*, and *The Improvisor's Bass Method* by Chuck Sher. All of these books are available from Jazz Aids. Write or call for free catalog and prices.



## THE BLUES SCALE AND ITS USE

The blues scale consists of the following: Root, b3rd, 4th, #4th, 5th and b7th.

EXAMPLE: F blues Scale = F, Ab, Bb, B, C, Eb, F

When playing a twelve bar blues in the key of Bb, use the Bb blues scale: Bb, Db, Eb, E, F, Ab, Bb

The blues scale can also be used over minor chords when the minor chord is sounded for 2, 4, 8, or 16 measures or longer. EXAMPLE: If D minor is sounded for eight measures, you may use the D blues scale: D, F, G, Ab, A, C, D

When playing in minor tonalities you may choose to alternate between the dorian minor and the blues scale, both having the same root tone. EXAMPLE: If D minor is sounded for eight measures, play D minor (dorian) or play D blues scale or alternate between the two scale sounds.

The blues scale is used to convey a “Funky,” “Down-Home,” “Earthy” or “Bluesy” sound/feel. Rhythm and blues players use this scale extensively. Don’t run it into the ground by overuse! Experiment with the blues scales listed below and apply them to recorded tracks on your play-a-long recordings.

After you become familiar with the blues scale as I have it listed, you may want to add tones to the scale which give the scale sound more variety. *Added tones are underlined.* EXAMPLE: F blues scale = F, G, Ab, A, Bb, B, C, D, Eb, F

This scale sounds strange when played straight up or down. Jazz players usually play bits and pieces of the scale or make up licks utilizing certain notes of the scale. You will eventually want to transpose this scale to all twelve keys for practice. For now, learn it in Bb and F concert.

## THE TWELVE BLUES SCALES (Treble & Bass Clef)

The image displays the twelve blues scales in both treble and bass clefs. The scales are arranged in two main sections: the top section for treble clef and the bottom section for bass clef. Each section contains three staves, each representing a different key signature. The scales are written in a consistent format, showing the sequence of notes for each scale. The keys represented are C, Db, D, Eb, E, F, Gb, G, Ab, A, Bb, and B. The notation includes sharp and flat symbols for the appropriate notes in each scale.