

Walking Bass and “Walking Chords” Guitar Styles

(Simultaneous Bass & Comping)

For Solo and Accompanying Situations

Ted Greene 1982-07-11

Main Facts or Observations:

- 1) The Main resources of nice bass lines are: 1. Chord tones and 2. Approach tones.
- 2) Chord tones are played on (at least) beats 1 & 3 normally (in 4/4 time), especially on beat 1. In 3/4 time, a chord tone on beat 1 is also essential.
- 3) The chord tones to use in the bass at the above mentioned stable spots are:

For Major type chords	→	1, 3, 5, and 6	
For Minor 7th type chords	→	1, b3, 5, and b7	
For Minor 6th type chords	→	1, b3, 5 and 6	
For Dominant 7th type chords	→	1, 3, 5, and b7	Some dominant types require modification of the basic 1, 3, 5, b7 in the bass. Let knowledge and common sense be your guides here.
For Diminished 7th type chords	→	1, b3, b5, and 6 (bb7)	
For Augmented type chords	→	complete whole-tone scale (1, 2, 3, b5, #5, and b7)	
- 4) Theoretically (and as a good starting point for us), a bass line can be comprised of *just* chord tones. Examples:



Assignment #1: Take some standards or show tunes and apply this principle of using only chord tones. Use the bottom 2 strings only. Just play bass notes first, then later add some chord forms with or without various syncopations. Strive mainly for a good feel—this is far more important than any particular order(s) of chord tones. Do Not Write Anything Down! Your ideas should be different every time, every chorus—Remember you are only dealing with 2 STRINGS!! (for your bass notes).

If you get lost periodically, the trouble is in your memory or your “visualizing.” You don’t need or want pieces of paper for this subject—you must carry it in your head as soon as possible.

Practice away from the guitar, totally in your head (at least some of the time). Visualize—it is the main key to this subject. Almost any order of chord tones sounds just fine on the bass, so don’t worry about “hearing” it as much as “seeing” it (unlike other subjects).

Also, don’t worry about playing fancy chord forms—they’re not necessary in this style because the ear will be drawn to the bottom line...unless you start adding chord forms on every beat...which you *shouldn’t* do (that is what “walking chords” are about) for now if you want to *really* hear the effect of an independent bass. Just add a chord here and there over *some* of the bass tones you choose and, to repeat myself, with or without a little syncopation now and then.

When you play a chord form in this style, it is more common to release it rather quickly, but, where physics permits, you may wish to sustain one for a beat or two (or more?).

So this all is step one—there’s a lot of work here; it takes more time than you’d wish...but at least it’s logical, learnable, repeatable. You don’t have to be “having a good day” to play some bass lines.

Take simple tunes at first, otherwise you’re up against too much.

WALKING BASS + "WALKING" CHORDS" GUITAR STYLES

(SIMULTANEOUS BASS & CHORDS)

for SOLO + ACCOMPANYING SITUATIONS

7-11-82
 2nd
 Lane

MAIN FACTS OR OBSERVATIONS:

1. The main resources of nice bass lines are ① CHORD TONES and ② APPROACH TONES.
2. Chord tones are played ^(AT LEAST) on beats 1 + 3 normally (in 4/4 TIME), especially on beat 1. In 3/4 time, a chord tone on beat 1 is also ^{essential}.
3. The chord tones to use in the bass at the above mentioned stable spots are:

For MAJOR TYPE CHORDS	→	1, 3, 5 and 6
MINOR 7th "	→	1, b3, 5 and b7
MINOR 6th "	→	1, b3, 5 and 6
DOMINANT 7th "	→	1, 3, 5 and b7
DIMINISHED 7th "	→	1, b3, b5 and 6 (b7)
AUGMENTED "	→	COMPLETE WHOLE TONE SCALE (1, 2, 3, b5, #5 and b7)

Some dominant types require modification of the basic 1, 3, 5, b7 in the bass. Let knowledge & common sense be your guides here.

4. Theoretically (and as a good starting point for us), a bass line can be comprised of JUST chord tones. EXAMPLES:

ASSIGNMENT #1: Take some standards or show tunes and apply this principle of using only chord tones. Use the BOTTOM 2 STRINGS ONLY. Just play bass notes 16+, then later add some chord forms with or without various syncopations. Strive mainly for A GOOD FEEL - this is far more important than any particular order(s) of chord tones. **DO NOT WRITE ANYTHING DOWN!** YOUR IDEAS SHOULD BE DIFFERENT EVERY TIME, EVERY CHORUS - REMEMBER YOU ARE ONLY DEALING WITH **2 STRINGS !!** ^{FOR YOUR BASS NOTES.}

NOTES TO MYSELF: SHORTS, REBARS, FREE-SOME STUFF, NEGL. PATTERNS (SOMEHOW MANY) + MORE TRILLS

IF YOU GET LOST PERIODICALLY, THE TROUBLE IS IN YOUR MEMORY OR YOUR 'VISUALIZING'. YOU DON'T NEED OR WANT PIECES OF PAPER FOR THIS SUBJECT - YOU MUST CARRY IT IN YOUR HEAD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. **PRACTICE AWAY FROM THE GUITAR, TOTALLY IN YOUR HEAD.** ^(AT LEAST SOME OF THE TIME) **VISUALIZE - IT IS THE MAIN KEY TO THIS SUBJECT.**

ALMOST ANY ORDER OF CHORD TONES SOUNDS JUST FINE IN THE BASS. SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT 'HEARING' IT AS MUCH AS 'SEEING' IT ^(UNLIKE OTHER SUBJECTS).

Also don't worry about playing fancy chord forms - they're not necessary in this style because the ear will be drawn to the bottom line unless you start adding chord forms on every beat, which you shouldn't do (that is what 'WALKING CHORDS' are about) for now if you want to really hear the effect of an independent bass. Just add a chord here & there over some of the bass tones you choose and, to repeat myself, with or without a little syncopation, now & then.

When you play a chord form in this style, it is more common to release it rather quickly but, where physics permits, you may wish to sustain one for a beat or two (or more?).

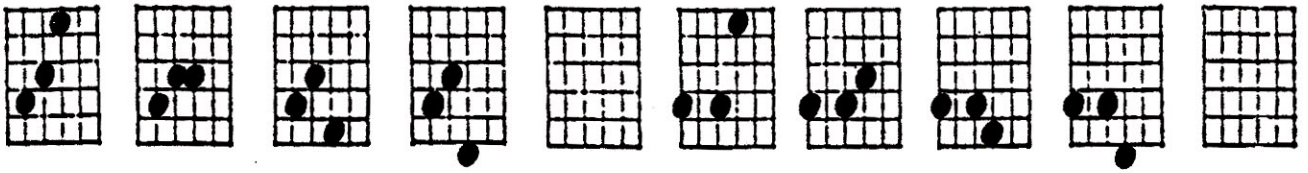
So this all is step one - there's a lot of work here, it takes more time than you'd wish but at least it's logical, learnable, repeatable. You don't have to be "having a good day" to play some bass lines. **IT'S EASY OTHERWISE YOU'RE UP AGAINST TOO MUCH.**

V7 I for ① low-end Acc. and ② Walking Bass Styles

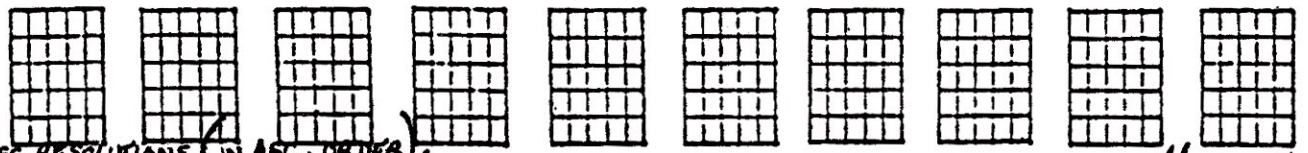
© 2006
Jed Johnson

I CHORDS

V7 CHORDS



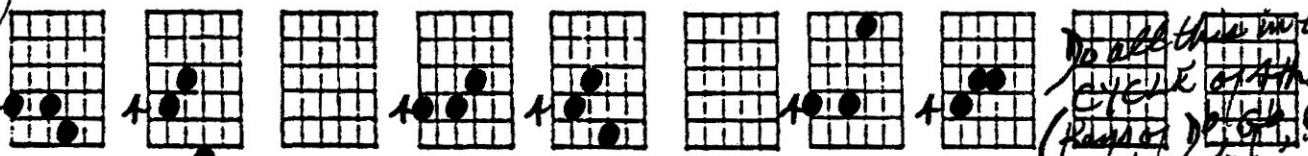
① DESC. RESOLUTIONS (IN ASC. ORDER):



All V's are to be felt as starting on the weak beat (as pickup chords)

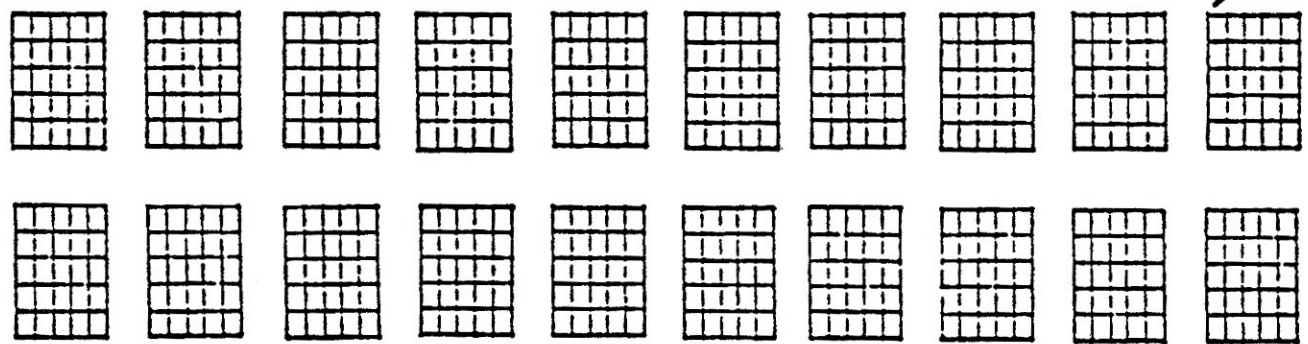


② ASC. RESOLUTIONS (IN DESC. ORDER):

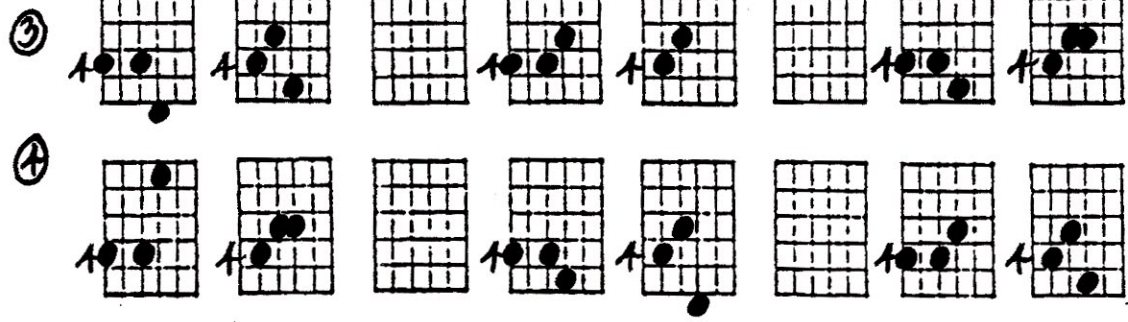


Do this in the cycle of 6ths (E, G, B, etc.)

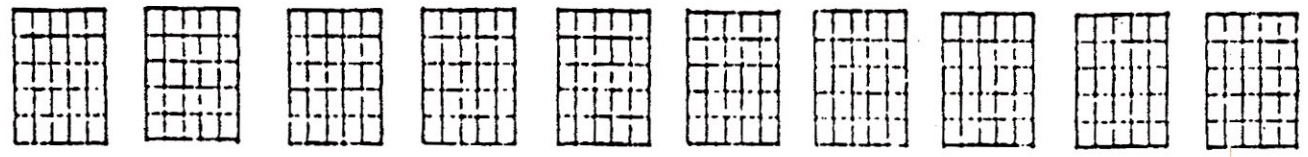
Do all this in the cycle of 4ths (E, G, B, etc.)



OPTIONAL EXTRA PRACTICE:



Do in either the cycle of 4ths or 5ths



V7I WITH ADDED 1/2 STEP BASS APPROACH TONES

© 2018
Jed Johnson

① Desc. Resolutions (in ASC. ORDER)

Do the above in the CYCLE of 5ths (Keys of D, A, E, B, G^b, etc.)

CHORD TONE
BASS. WHY
IS IT USED
HERE?

② Asc. Resolutions (in Desc. ORDER)

Do all these in the CYCLE of 4ths (Keys of F, B^b, E^b, A^b, D^b, G^b, B etc.)

NOW WITH SOME 1/2 STEP TONES FROM ABOVE MIXED IN:

③

Do these in the CYCLE of 5ths (Keys of F^b, B^b, F, C etc.)

④

Do these in the CYCLE of 4ths (Keys of G^b, B, E, A etc.)