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Blues Scale Riffs

As with the minor pentatonic scale, the blues scale can be used by bass players over minor chords, 5 chords, or in riff-oriented tunes. The blues scale is also used extensively for soloing over the blues. It is essential for any rock or blues bassist to get the blues scale under their fingers in the early stages of their development, as it will be used extensively in the rock and blues genres. Below are one- and two-bar blues scale bass patterns. The one-bar riffs are played four times, and the two-bar riffs are played two times. Also, notice that examples 10A and 10C make use of the *hammer-on* technique. This means you “hammer” your 3rd finger onto the 7th fret to play the E^b, without plucking with your right hand.

H = Hammer-on

One-Bar Blues Scale Riffs

10  Track 11

A Amin *Swing 8ths* **B** Amin **C** Amin *Swing 8ths* **D** Amin

5 **E** Amin **F** Amin **G** Amin *Swing 8ths* **H** Amin

1 | 3 3 | 2 3 | | | 3 3 | | 4 3 | | 1 | 3 3 | | 2 3 | | 1 | 3 3 | 2 | | |

3 | | 3 | | 2 3 | 3 3 | 3 | 4 3 | | 1 | 3 | 3 3 | 2 3 | | 1 | 3 | 2 3

Two-Bar Blues Scale Riffs

11  Track 12

Swing 8ths **A** Cmin **B** Cmin

5 **C** Cmin **D** Cmin

3 | | | 2 | 3 | 2 | | | 3 3 | | 4 3 | | 3 3 3 3 | 3

1 | 3 | 2 | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | | 1 | 3 3 | | 3 3 | | 3 3 | | 3 3

Various Old-School Grooves

Following are slap & pop lines in the styles of various artists and groups. The first one is in the style of "Brick House" by The Commodores.



A

P P P P P

T
A
B

5 3 5 3 4 (4) 5 | 3 5 0 3 5 3

3 1 3 1 2 3 | 1 3 0 1 3 1

H

3 P P P P P

T
A
B

5 3 5 3 4 (4) 5 | (5) 3 5 0 5 7 | 0

3 1 3 1 2 3 | 1 3 0 1 3 0

H H

The next example is in the style of "Shakey Ground" by The Temptations.

B

P

T
A
B

7 4 5 3 0 0 4 5 5 7 4 5 3 | 0 0 0 0 0

3 1 2 1 0 0 | 1 2 4 1 3 1 2 1 0 0 0 0 0

5 P

T
A
B

7 4 5 3 0 0 4 5 5 7 4 5 3 | 0 0 0 0 0

3 1 2 1 0 0 | 1 2 4 1 3 1 2 1 0 0 0 0 0

Flea of The Red Hot Chili Peppers

Flea, the bassist for The Red Hot Chili Peppers, took funk and the slap & pop style and crossed over into the rock genre. His bass lines are a distinctive part of the group's sound.

Following is a funk bass line in the style of Flea. Note the use of triplets in this line, reminiscent of the Stevie Wonder tune "Higher Ground."



A

3 P P P P P P P P

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

T
A
B

2 5 7 2 5 7

0 0 2 0 1 1 4 1 1 4 0 0 2 0 1 1 4 1 1 4

3 P P P P P

3 3 3 3 3 3

T
A
B

7 9 5 7 2

5 5 7 7 3 3 4 5 5 4 0 0 0 2 0

1 1 4 1 1 4 1 1 4 1 1 4 0 0 0 2 0

Here is another bass line in the style of Flea. This groove is in the style of the Chili Peppers tune "Aeroplane."

B

P P P P P P P

T
A
B

3 5 6 5 4 3 5 7 0

1 1 1 3 2 1 1 1 0 1 1 1 0 1 2 1 0 1 2

3 P P P

1. P P P P

2. P P P P

T
A
B

3 5 6 5 4 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2


1 1 1 3 2 1 0 1 1 1 1 0 1 2

Intermediate Walking Bass Lines—Scale Tones


To take the next step in creating a walking bass line, we will incorporate scale tones. Using scale tones provides for smoother motion and allows us to connect the chord tones.

The bass lines below are based over diatonic chord progressions, meaning all of the chords are within the key. The blues progressions we looked at previously are not diatonic progressions, because they used three different dominant 7th chords. In diatonic harmony, there is only one dominant chord per key.

Here is an example using scale tones to connect chord tones. In this example, the connecting scale tones are highlighted.

75  Track 83

Dmin7 G7 CMaj7 Amin7



T
A
B

0 2 3 2 | 0 3 2 0 | 3 2 0 4 | 2 0 2

0 2 3 2 | 0 3 2 0 | 2 1 0 3 | 1 0 1 2

There are often several scale choices for a chord, especially dominant 7th chords. Review the scale chart (page 21). The following are scale choices commonly used when creating walking bass lines.

1. Major chords—Major scale
2. Minor chords—Dorian mode
3. Dominant chords—Mixolydian mode
4. Minor 7^b5 chords—Locrian mode

The list above includes some of the more common choices, but when you study the chord chart, you will discover more options. The more familiar you are with these scales, the more effective you will be in creating great sounding walking bass lines.

Following is a walking bass line using scale tones. Notice how the bass line sounds smoother than when we used chord tones exclusively.

76  Track 84

Amin7 D7 GMaj7 CMaj7



T
A
B

0 2 3 2 | 0 3 2 0 | 3 0 2 0 | 3 2 0 3

0 1 2 1 | 0 2 1 0 | 2 0 1 0 | 2 1 0 2

5 F#min7^b5 B7^b9 Emin



T
A
B

2 3 0 3 | 2 1 4 1 | 2 2 2 3 | 0 2 3 2

1 2 0 2 | 2 1 4 1 | 2 2 2 3 | 0 2 3 2

Latin Funk in the Style of Jaco Pastorius

Latin, Afro-Cuban, and Caribbean styles such as the bossa nova, samba, cha-cha-chá, calypso, and others have found their way into American mainstream funk. Jaco Pastorius, known for his extraordinary bass playing with Weather Report, Pat Metheny, and his own big band, was one of the most influential electric bassists. Jaco played incredibly funky bass lines, and often his sixteenth-note funk grooves were influenced by Latin and island music. The following examples are all in the style of Jaco Pastorius.



A D7

T 7 4 x 5 7 4 x 5

A 5 x x x 5 x 6 x 7 7 x 5 x 7 x 4 4 . 5

B 2 4 | 1 2 | 1 2 3 3 | 2 4 | 1 2 | 2 4 | 1 1 | 2

B D7

T 7 4 4 H 5 5 0 0 2 x 3 3 0 x 2 x 3 x 4 4 . 5

A 5 x 4 4 x 6 6 7 x x 0 0 x 4 5 5 0 0 2 x 3 3 0 x 2 x 3 x 4 4 . 5

B 2 4 | 1 1 | 3 3 4 | 0 0 | 1 2 2 0 0 | 1 2 2 0 | 1 2 2 2 | 2

C

T 7 7 5 5 2 2 7 7 5 5 10 10 9 9 .

A 5 5 3 3 0 0 5 5 3 3 8 8 7 7 . 5

B | 1 4 4 | 1 4 4 0 0 2 2 | 1 4 4 | 1 4 4 | 1 4 4 | 1 4 4 | 1

D

T x SL SL SL SL

A 5 x 4 x x 6 7 7 0 0 3 x x 4 5 4 x 7 x x 6 7 x x 4 5 x x 4 . 5

B 2 | 1 3-3 3 0 0 | 1 2 - 2 | 1 4 3-3 2-2 | 1 2