

CONTENTS

Transcribed From Jamey Aebersold's Volume 12 *Duke Ellington*

Bass lines as played by Ron Carter on chord changes applicable to:

Introduction.....	i
Discography.....	iii
Satin Doll.....	1
Solitude	3
I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart	5
Scale Syllabus	8
Mood Indigo	9
Perdido	11
In A Sentimental Mood	14
Sophisticated Lady.....	15
Take The "A" Train.....	16
Prelude To A Kiss	19

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Transcriber's Notes -- Erik Unsworth

The art of the walking bass line is an improvisor's art. The jazz bassist, along with his partners in the rhythm section, is constantly improvising while providing support for the soloists he performs with. The creation of a good walking line is one of the most important skills for a young bassist to develop and, like all jazz improvisation, must be internalized through listening and studying the innovations of past and present masters.

In a good rhythm section the bass line provides the bridge that connects the harmonic framework of a song to its rhythmic framework. Thus, the foundation for the technique of the walking bass line is twofold: consistent time feel combined with proper attack/sustain of notes so that a sense of "swing" is attained, and note choices that provide a harmonic base for the music. If a bassist is providing this foundation, his bass line will cement the music even in the absence of a pianist or a drummer. In a very real sense, if you have this foundation in the bass, you have "jazz." Beyond these two core musical elements lie the more subtle ingredients that give each bassist his musical "personality." Very few jazz bassists have ever approached a walking bass line with more personality than Ron Carter.

Mr. Carter is one of the most widely-admired and frequently-recorded bassists in the history of contemporary music. Of the many projects he has been involved with, he is probably best-known for being the anchor of Miles Davis' quintet from 1963 to 1968, a group that created a myriad of classic recordings, among them *Seven Steps to Heaven*, *E.S.P.* and *Cookin' at the Plugged Nickel*. He has also produced 23 solo discs, and his list of credits spans the full range of jazz and popular music in his lifetime: from Coleman Hawkins to Eric Dolphy, from Antonio Carlos Jobim to Aretha Franklin. He can be heard playing J.S. Bach with the Classical Jazz Quartet and laying down hip-hop grooves for A Tribe Called Quest. Yet he is a bassist the educated ear can easily identify when first hearing one of these many recordings. In addition to his distinctive tone quality on his instrument, he has developed his own unique "vocabulary" on the bass over the course of his long career.

Volume 12 of Jamey Aebersold's Play-a-Long series offers a unique opportunity for bassists to study Mr. Carter's bass lines and "vocabulary" as he plays over the changes to some of the most familiar standards in the jazz repertoire: the popular songs of Duke Ellington. As all experienced jazz musicians know, these songs are commonplace in the working musician's world. So, for young bassists, working with this set of transcriptions will help you to learn this essential music while you "take a lesson" from one of the acknowledged masters. For the more experienced player, spending some time listening to Mr. Carter's extremely creative approach to these time-tested tunes will help breathe new life into your lines as you play through these familiar changes.

Ron Carter is famous for his amazing sense of time, as well as his big warm tone and immaculate intonation on the string bass. These aspects of his playing are difficult to miss, and they're the reason why he's been so in-demand as a bass player since the early 1960's. Here are some other key features of Mr. Carter's bass style to keep in mind as you work with these transcriptions:

Ex. 1: His use of a wide range of bass-exclusive "effects" –



As a master of his instrument, Mr. Carter is able to create musical interest by including devices such as long glissandi and other left-hand slurs into pitches, natural harmonics (shown in the music by a small circle placed above the note), and double-stops. One notable piece of Carter's bass "vocabulary" takes place in the first 2 measures of the 3rd Chorus of "Satin Doll" (seen again in "Take the "A" Train"). An open D is alternated with a stopped D (on A-string) which is slurred into from below. In doing so, a "moving" line is created while using the same musical note.

Ex. 2: His rhythmic activity and rhythmic embellishments –



The performances of Mr. Carter and his rhythm section partners on this Play-a-long recording attempt to simulate the sound of a supportive section playing behind a soloist, though no soloist is heard on the recording. One way that they create an "authentic" jazz sound is by increasing the intensity of the music as each piece goes along by playing in a more rhythmically-active way during the middle choruses (or solo choruses). A great example of this on Vol. 12 is "Solitude," the only latin-oriented piece in this volume, which features a particularly creative bass line.

Mr. Carter has mastered the art of embellishing the quarter-note walking bass line with rhythmic ideas. You will notice many of these embellishments as you work through this book. Two ideas used frequently are the triplet "pull-off" and the triplet "rake," which are seen in this excerpt from "Satin Doll."

When working on the upbeat swing pieces in this volume ("Satin Doll," "Perdidio," etc.), you will notice that a large number of "ghost notes" (or "dead" notes) can be heard during the walking choruses. The majority of these notes have been left out of the transcription in order to give a clear picture of the walking bass line.

Ex. 3: His position-oriented technique –



Like most educated bassists, Ron Carter learned the bass fingerboard by studying each of the many hand positions and learning the combinations of notes found under each. He likely spent many hours with the method book published in the 19th Century by bassist-composer Franz Simandl, a study of hand positions which became the most

widely-used method of bass pedagogy in the 20th Century. Position-oriented studies served him well when developing the precision of his intonation. We can also hear Carter's position studies put to good use when his bass line moves into a higher register and is built upon the notes found in whichever position he has chosen.

This example comes from his line on "Perdidio." On beats 2 and 3 of the 1st measure open strings are played, giving Carter plenty of time to move into what Simandl called the seventh position of the fingerboard. The rest of the example consists of pitches found in this upper position, along with another appropriately-placed open string (note fingerings).

Ex. 4: His use of musical motifs –



Unlike many other bassists, Mr. Carter doesn't shy away from repeating effective ideas. On this volume and on many of his recordings, you will hear portions of bass lines returning as he walks his way through a piece of music. In this way, he often creates a type of counter-melody to the song (see "Perdidio" and others). You will also hear Mr. Carter creating rhythmic motifs that help establish a cohesiveness in the song, on this volume most obviously during "In a Sentimental Mood." In this tune, a triplet motif is played at the end of the first A section, establishing this idea in the mind of the listener.

Note how this idea returns in the 2nd chorus of the tune – reintroduced at the end of the 1st A section, and developed through the 2nd A section.

Another example of motif usage happens later in the same piece of music. In the 11th measure of the 2nd chorus a series of 4 glissandi are played on the G and A strings, covering exactly 2 octaves (F-sharp to F-sharp). Ron will later bring back this same idea in order to create an effective rubato ending to "Sentimental Mood" (this time F-natural to F-natural).

Satin Doll

As heard on Volume 12, track 2 of the Abersold play-along series

♩ = 128

Intro

D-7/G

A7

Bass line for the Intro, starting with a D-7/G chord and ending with an A7 chord.

1st Chorus

D-7 G7 D-7 G7 E-7 A7 E-7 A7

Bass line for the first chorus, corresponding to the chord changes D-7 G7 D-7 G7 E-7 A7 E-7 A7.

A-7 D7 A♭-7 D♭7 CΔ A7

Bass line for the second chorus, corresponding to the chord changes A-7 D7 A♭-7 D♭7 CΔ A7.

D-7 G7 D-7 G7 E-7 A7 E-7 A7

Bass line for the third chorus, corresponding to the chord changes D-7 G7 D-7 G7 E-7 A7 E-7 A7.

A-7 D7 A♭-7 D♭7 CΔ

Bass line for the fourth chorus, corresponding to the chord changes A-7 D7 A♭-7 D♭7 CΔ.

G-7 C7 FΔ

Bass line for the fifth chorus, corresponding to the chord changes G-7 C7 FΔ.

A-7 D7 G7 A7

Bass line for the sixth chorus, corresponding to the chord changes A-7 D7 G7 A7.

D-7 G7 D-7 G7 E-7 A7 E-7 A7

Bass line for the seventh chorus, corresponding to the chord changes D-7 G7 D-7 G7 E-7 A7 E-7 A7.

A-7 D7 A♭-7 D♭7 CΔ A7

Bass line for the eighth chorus, corresponding to the chord changes A-7 D7 A♭-7 D♭7 CΔ A7.

2nd Chorus

D-7 G7 E-7 A7

Bass line for the second chorus, corresponding to the chord changes D-7 G7 E-7 A7.

D7 D♭7 C7 B7 B♭7 A7

Bass line for the third chorus, corresponding to the chord changes D7 D♭7 C7 B7 B♭7 A7.

D-7 G7 E-7 A7

Bass line for the fourth chorus, corresponding to the chord changes D-7 G7 E-7 A7.

A-7 D7 A♭-7 D♭7 CΔ

Bass line for the fifth chorus, corresponding to the chord changes A-7 D7 A♭-7 D♭7 CΔ.

G-7 C7 FΔ

Bass line for the sixth chorus, corresponding to the chord changes G-7 C7 FΔ.

D7 G7 A7

Bass line for the seventh chorus, corresponding to the chord changes D7 G7 A7.

D-7 G7 E-7 A7

Bass line for the eighth chorus, corresponding to the chord changes D-7 G7 E-7 A7.

D7 D♭7 C7 B7 B♭7 A7

Bass line for the ninth chorus, corresponding to the chord changes D7 D♭7 C7 B7 B♭7 A7.

I Let A Song Go Out of My Heart

As heard on Volume 12, track 4 of the Aebersold play-a-long series

♩ = 172

1st Chorus

E^Δ A^Δ E^Δ G-7 C7

F-7 F-/B^Δ E^Δ C-7 F-7 B⁷

E^Δ A^Δ E^Δ G-7 C7

F-7 F-/B^Δ E^Δ A^b-7 E^Δ

F-7 B⁷ E^Δ G7

C-7 C^Δ-7 F^Δ7 F^Δ-7 B⁷ F-7 B⁷

E^Δ A^Δ E^Δ G-7 C7

F-7 F-/B^Δ E^Δ B⁷ E^Δ

2nd Chorus

E^Δ A^Δ E^Δ G-7 C7

F-7 F-/B^Δ E^Δ C-7 F-7 B⁷

E^Δ A^Δ E^Δ G-7 C7

F-7 F-/B^Δ E^Δ A^b-7 E^Δ

F-7 B⁷ E^Δ G7