PIANO

PLAY JAZZ

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO CREATING GREAT SOLOS

RYAN FRALEY & JOSH WEIRICH

MP3 files here: www.ryanfraley.com see page 43

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IF YOU JUST PICKED UP THIS AWESOME-LOOKING ***COMIC BOOK***, YOU ARE EITHER ATTRACTED TO GRAPHIC STORY-TELLING, OR YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING HOW THIS WHOLE "JAZZ IMPROVISATION" THING WORKS. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO KNOW BEFORE YOU READ ANY FURTHER IS THAT JAZZ IMPROVISATION DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ROCKET SCIENCE. YES, THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE DEDICATED HOURS, YEARS, AND EVEN THEIR CAREERS TO STUDYING AND MASTERING JAZZ IMPROVISATION. WHATEVER YOUR GOAL IS TODAY, THIS BOOK IS A GREAT WAY TO GET STARTED ON THE JOURNEY. THESE PAGES ARE FOR THE MUSICIAN WHO HAS HEARD SOMEONE PLAY AN IMPROVISED SOLO AND THOUGHT, "HOW DO THEY DO THAT?" AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, "HOW CAN I DO THAT?"

GREAT JAZZ SOLOS ARE A COMBINATION OF ARTISTRY, TECHNIQUE, AND FAST THINKING. MANY PEOPLE HAVE ONE OR TWO OF THESE COMPONENTS. WITH PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE YOU CAN MASTER ALL THREE!

THIS BOOK IS GOING TO GIVE YOU SOME SIMPLE TIPS AND TECHNIQUES USED BY THOUSANDS OF MUSICIANS TO START PLAYING GREAT SOLOS. IMPROVISATION IS USED IN JAZZ, ROCK, CLASSICAL, COUNTRY, BLUEGRASS, AND JUST ABOUT EVERY OTHER TYPE OF MUSIC THAT EXISTS. IT IS ARTISTIC, EXPRESSIVE, USES MANY DIFFERENT PARTS OF YOUR BRAIN SIMULTANEOUSLY, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY CAN BE A TON OF FUN. IF THIS SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN EXPLORING, ***KEEP READING!***

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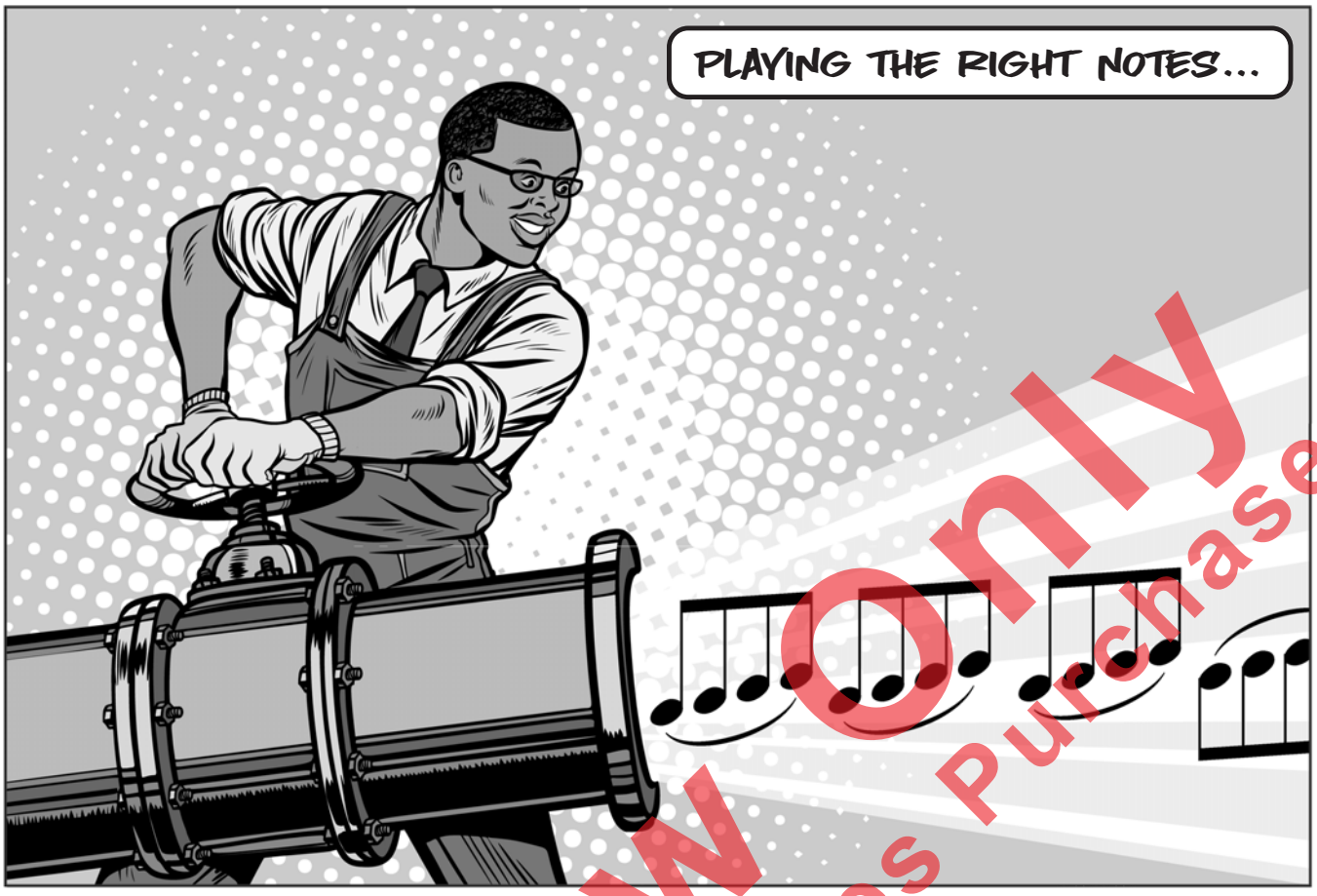

EVER LISTEN TO SOMEONE PLAY A SOLO AND YOU CAN'T QUITE PUT INTO WORDS WHAT DOESN'T SOUND RIGHT, BUT SOMETHING DEFINITELY DOES ***NOT*** SOUND RIGHT? CHANCES ARE THEY ARE NOT PLAYING THE RIGHT NOTES! SOME MAY SAY THERE ARE NO ***WRONG*** NOTES, BUT THERE ARE DEFINITELY NOTES THAT SOUND ***BETTER*** THAN OTHERS. SO HOW DO YOU KNOW THE RIGHT NOTES TO PLAY? IT BEGINS WITH KNOWING YOUR...

SCALES

MUSICIANS PRACTICE SCALES TO GET COMFORTABLE ON THEIR INSTRUMENTS. SCALES ALSO HELP YOU FIND THE RIGHT NOTES. LET'S START BY REVIEWING A SCALE YOU MIGHT ALREADY KNOW:

CONCERT B♭ MAJOR SCALE

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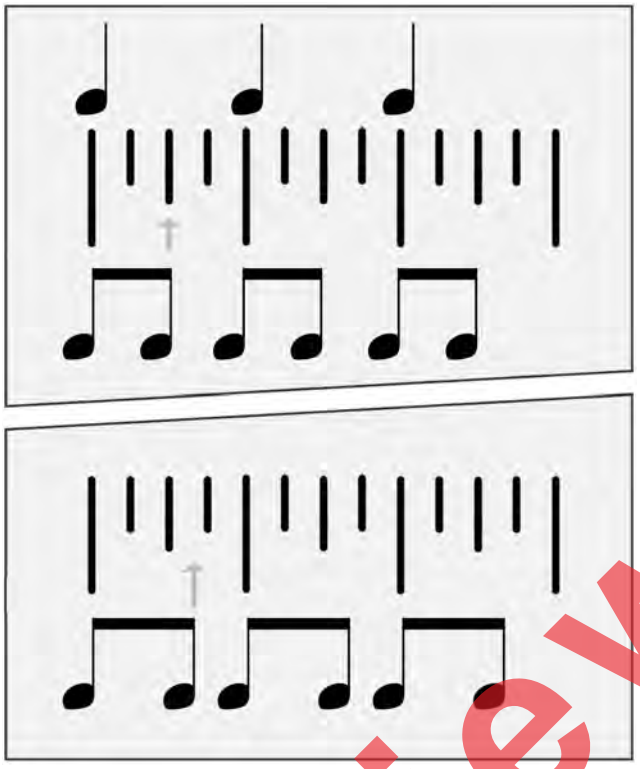
SWINGING 8TH NOTES

JAZZ MUSIC IS OFTEN -- BUT NOT ALWAYS! -- PLAYED WITH A "SWING" FEEL. IN FACT, TWO OF THE BAND CHARTS IN THIS BOOK WILL BE PLAYED WITH SWING EIGHTH NOTES, AND TWO OF THEM WITH STRAIGHT EIGHTH NOTES. SO WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, EXACTLY?



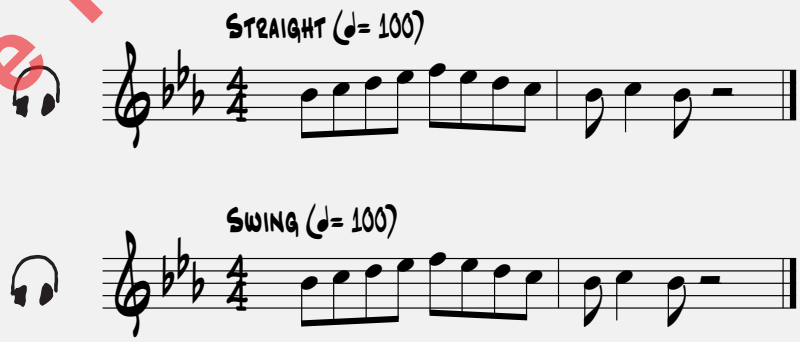
STRAIGHT EIGHTHS:
IMAGINE A RULER THAT CAN MEASURE THE TIME BETWEEN THE NOTES YOU PLAY. THE EIGHTH NOTES ON UPBEATS WOULD BE HALFWAY BETWEEN THE DOWNBEATS, SINCE ALL THE NOTES SHOULD BE EVEN.

SWING EIGHTHS:
WHEN WE SWING THE EIGHTH NOTES, IT MEANS WE PUSH THE UPBEATS BACK A BIT. THE DOWNBEATS STAY THE SAME, BUT THE UPBEATS ARE A LITTLE LATE. THIS CREATES A CASUAL, COOL, RELAXED FEELING.

JUST HOW LATE ARE THESE UPBEAT NOTES? THEY ARE NOT ALWAYS THE SAME! IT CAN DEPEND ON THE TEMPO, THE RHYTHM, AND THE PARTICULAR STYLE OF THE PLAYERS.

GENERALLY, WHEN THE TEMPO IS *FASTER*, THE EIGHTH NOTES ARE CLOSER TO *STRAIGHT*, AND WHEN THE TEMPO IS *SLOWER*, THE EIGHTH NOTES *SWING THAT MUCH HARDER*. BUT THE REAL ANSWER IS THAT YOU WILL NEVER LEARN THIS BY READING A DESCRIPTION OF IT. YOU HAVE TO HEAR IT AND FEEL IT BEFORE YOU CAN PLAY IT.

HEAR THE DIFFERENCE...



IN THE DOWNLOADABLE MP3 FILES, TAKE A LISTEN TO THIS SHORT MUSICAL PHRASE PLAYED TWICE. THE FIRST TIME WITH ***STRAIGHT*** EIGHTH NOTES, AND THE SECOND TIME WITH ***SWING*** EIGHTH NOTES.

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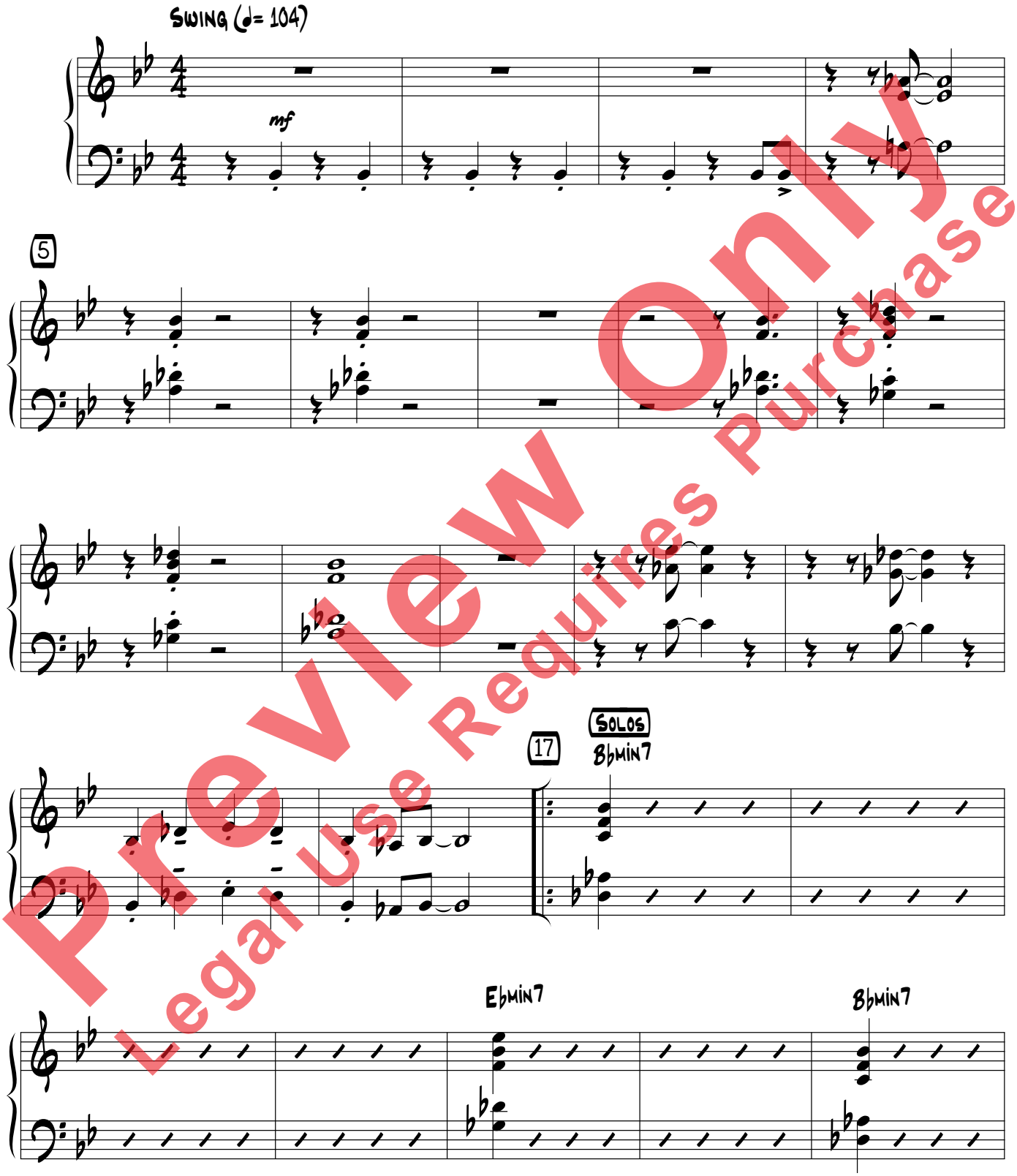
Piano

FULL BAND CHART

BRANDT'S BLUES

Josh Weirich
arr. Ryan Fraley
(ASCAP)



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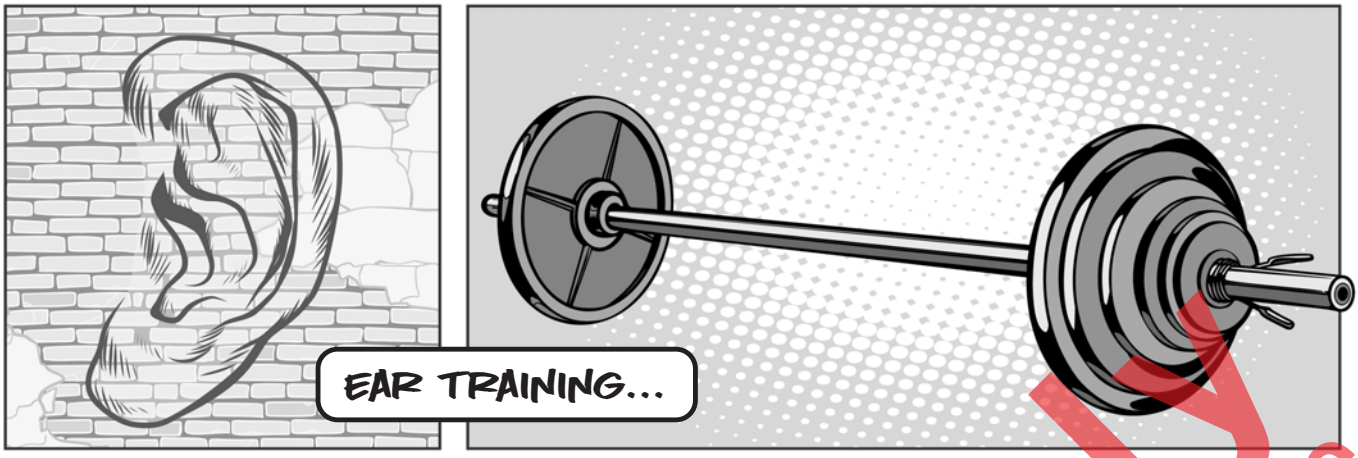
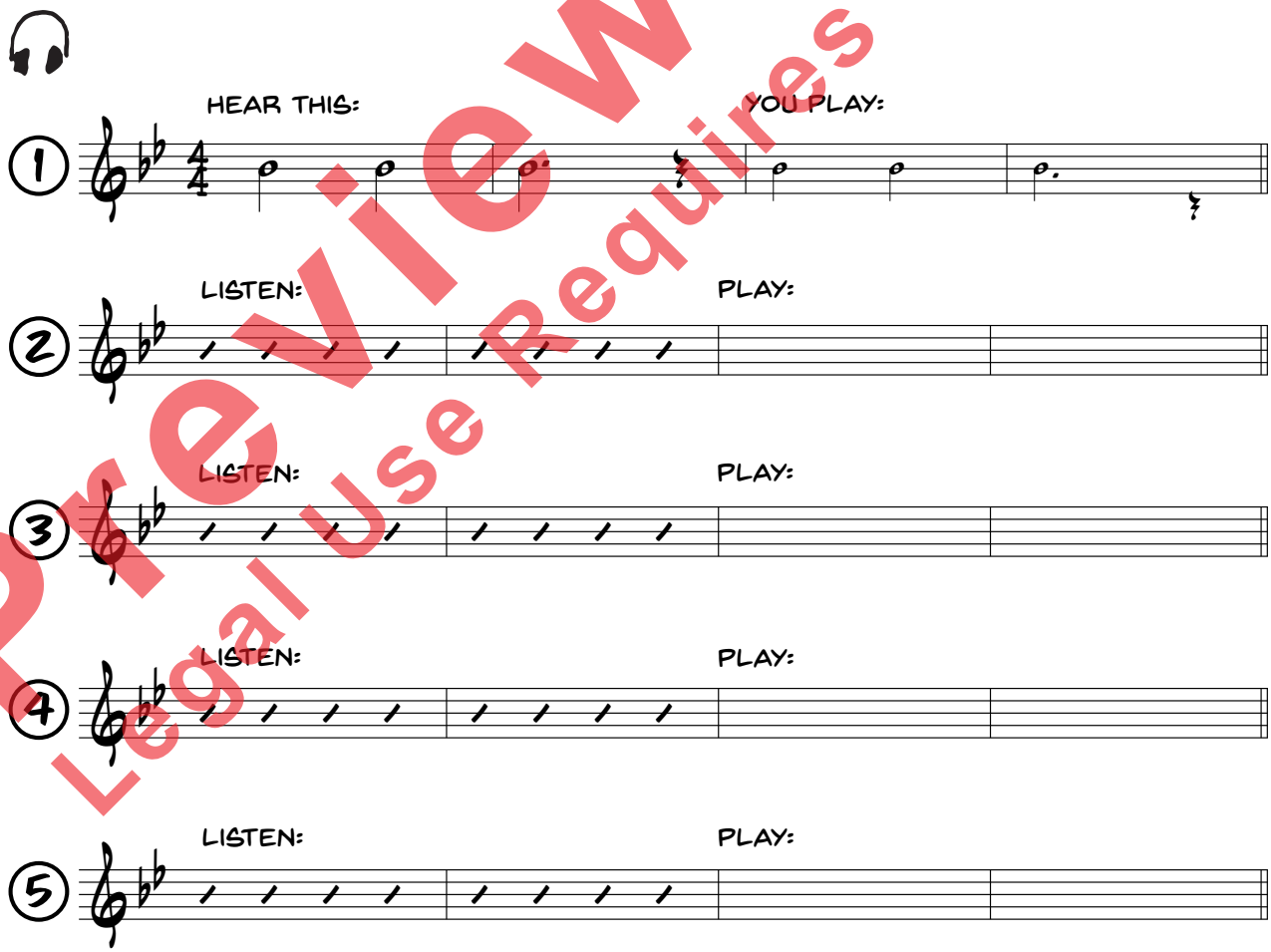


THE LANGUAGE OF JAZZ WAS DEVELOPED BY SOUND MORE SO THAN WRITTEN NOTATION. IT IS IMPORTANT TO LEARN HOW TO LISTEN AND INTERNALIZE THE NOTES THAT OTHERS PLAY, AND ALSO (EVENTUALLY) THE NOTES YOU HEAR IN YOUR OWN MIND. THIS LITTLE EAR-TRAINING EXERCISE USES ONLY NOTES FROM THE ***CONCERT B♭ MAJOR SCALE.*** LOOK FOR THE TRACK IN THE DOWNLOADABLE MP3 FILES. AFTER A COUNT-OFF, PIANO AND BASS WILL PLAY A SIMPLE, TWO-MEASURE PHRASE, THEN LEAVE TWO MEASURES OF SPACE FOR YOU TO REPEAT WHAT THEY PLAYED. HAVE FUN!



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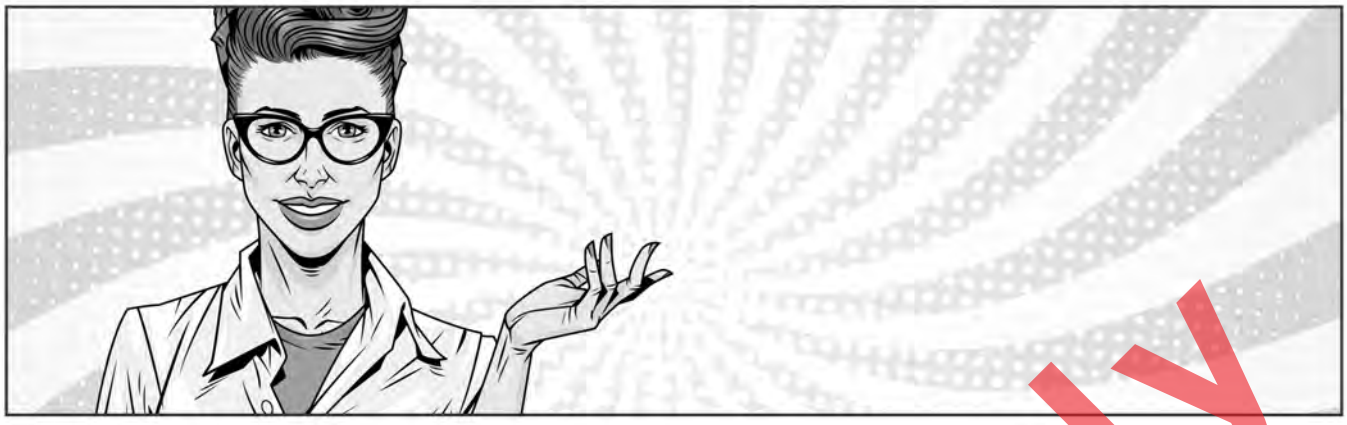
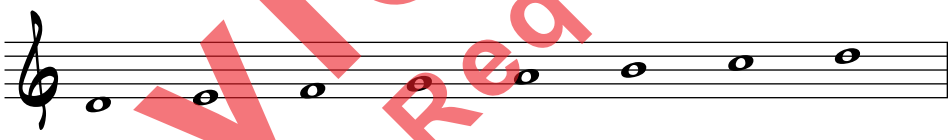


THERE ARE SO MANY SCALES TO LEARN! BUT RELAX, WE'RE ONLY GOING TO COVER A FEW OF THEM IN THIS BOOK, AND ONLY THE ONES YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR EACH OF THE FOUR BAND CHARTS. LET'S LOOK AT *DORIAN* SCALES RIGHT NOW. *DORIAN* IS ONE OF THE DIATONIC MODES THAT HAVE BEEN PART OF WESTERN MUSIC SINCE THE MIDDLE AGES. THERE ARE SEVEN DIATONIC MODES (YOUR MAJOR SCALE IS ONE OF THEM), AND THESE MODES ARE USED IN ALL STYLES OF MUSIC FROM CLASSICAL TO PUNK ROCK. THE DORIAN SCALE HAS ONLY A ONE-NOTE DIFFERENCE FROM THE NATURAL MINOR SCALE. DO YOU KNOW WHICH NOTE IS DIFFERENT?

CONCERT D DORIAN SCALE



CONCERT E♭ DORIAN SCALE

ONCE YOU HAVE THESE TWO SCALES MEMORIZED, YOU SHOULD PLAY THEM IN PATTERNS JUST LIKE WE DID WITH THE MAJOR SCALE ON PAGE 8. BY PRACTICING SCALES IN LEAPS AND STEPS, UP AND DOWN, YOU WILL GAIN CONFIDENCE AND MASTERY THAT CAN'T BE FAKED.

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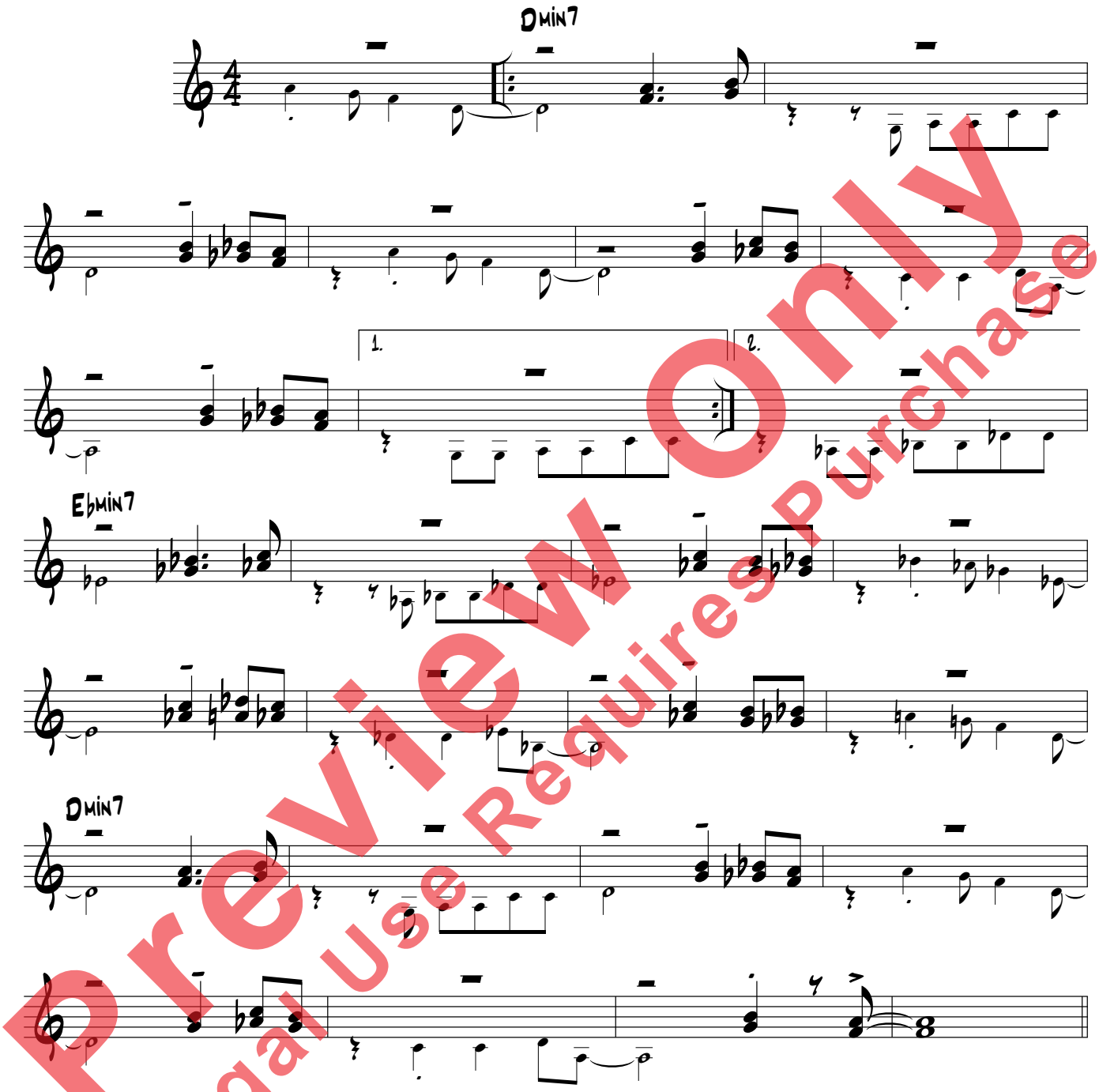
SO THERE

LEAD SHEET -- MELODY ONLY

Ryan Fraley
(ASCAP)



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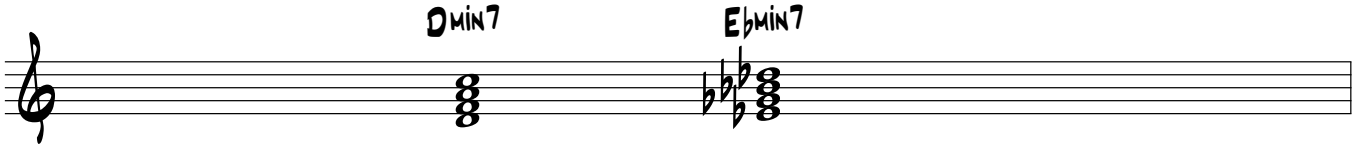
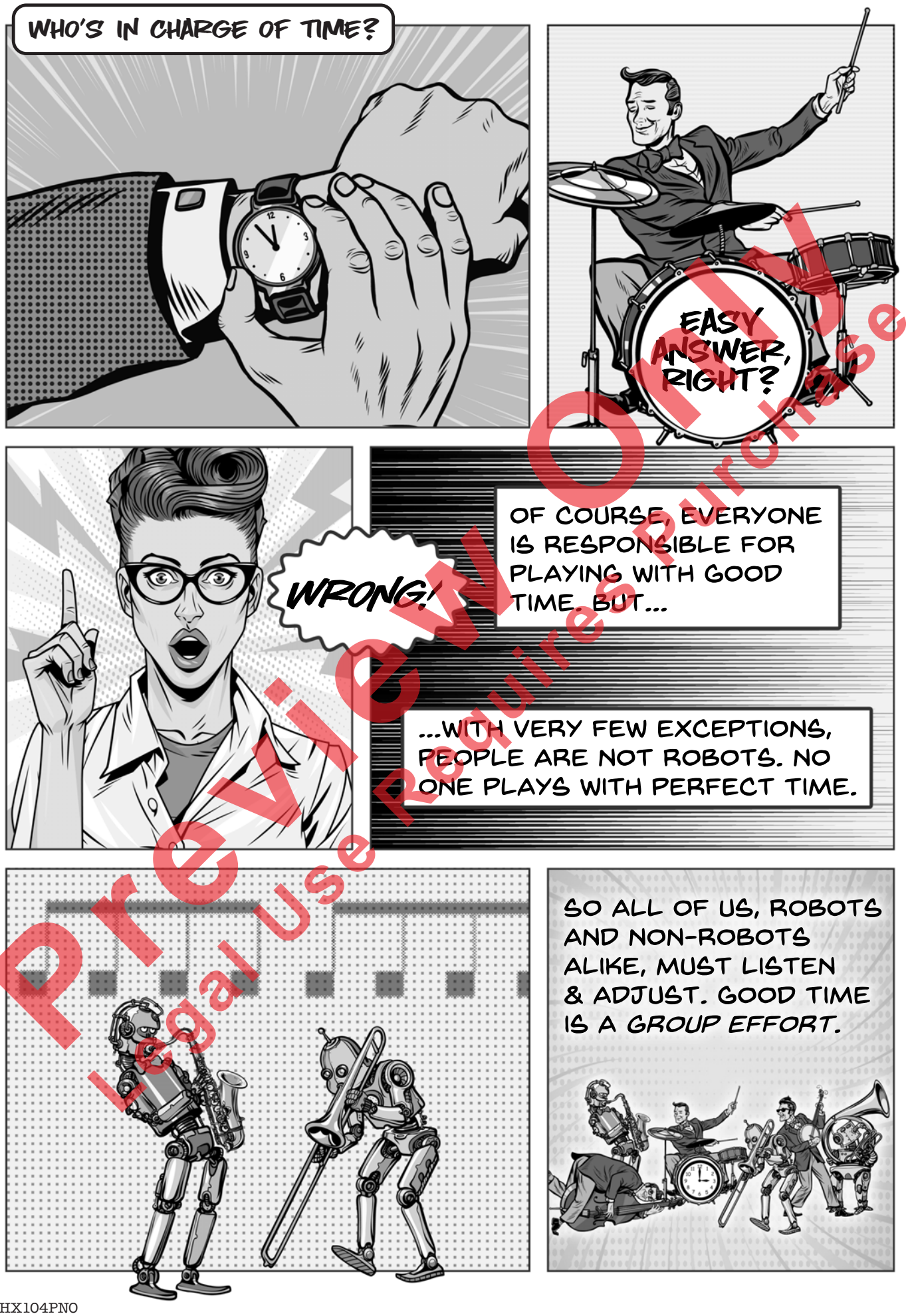
CHORD DEFINITIONS



D MINOR 7
D - F - A - C

Eb MINOR 7
Eb - Gb - Bb - Db



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Piano

FULL BAND CHART

SEGUNDO MODO

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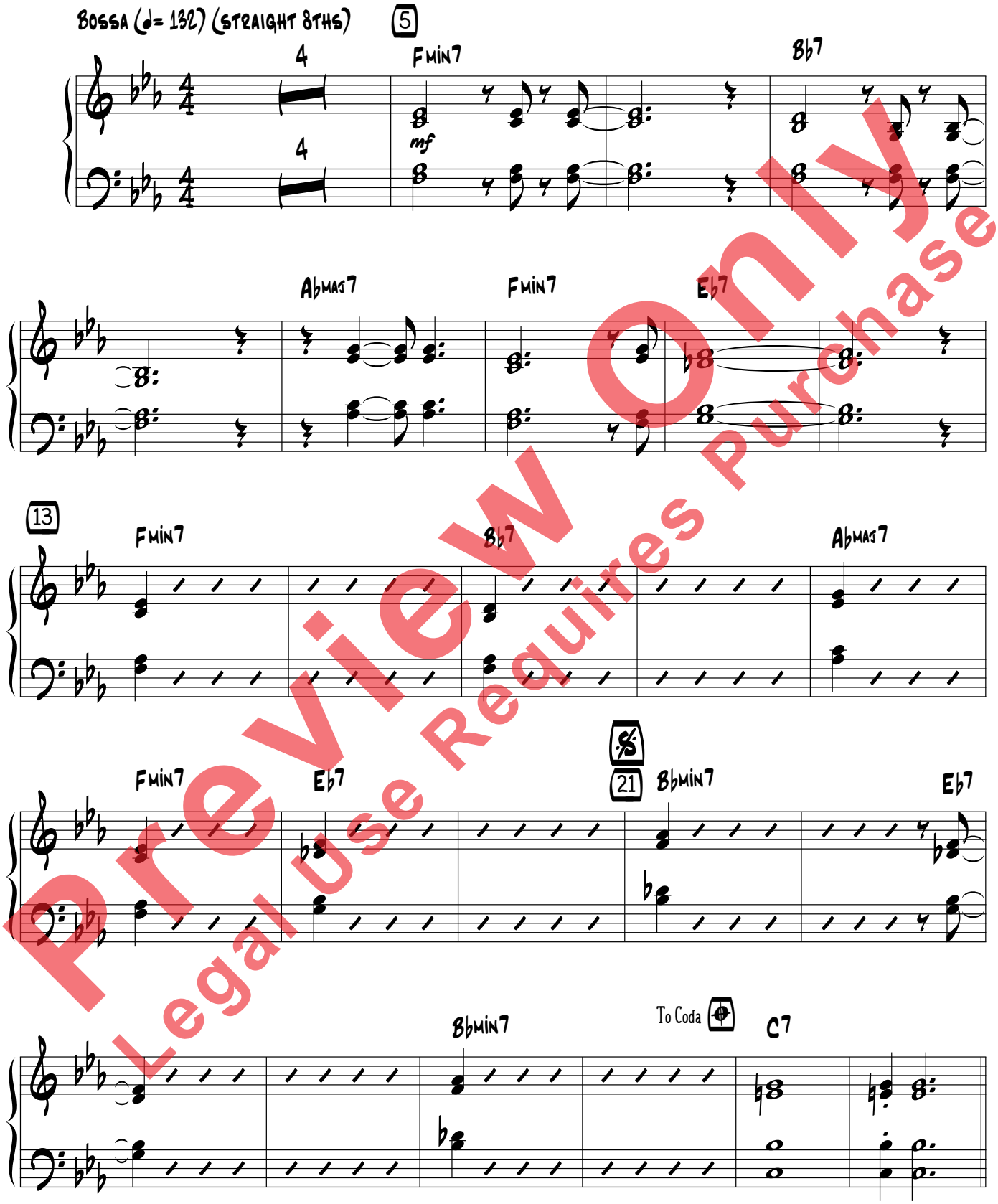

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"GNEISS" HAS JUST AN 8-BAR FORM. THOSE 8 MEASURES REPEAT OVER AND OVER. WITH A SHORT FORM LIKE THIS, IT IS COMMON FOR A SOLOIST TO PLAY SEVERAL TIMES THROUGH TO MAKE A LONGER SOLO. BELOW IS THE TRANSCRIPTION OF THE TRUMPET SOLO FROM THE RECORDING. IT IS 16 MEASURES LONG, SO TWICE THROUGH THE FORM. THE TRUMPET SOLO IS HEARD ON THE 1ST AND 2ND TIMES THROUGH THE SOLO SECTION.

GNEISS

TRUMPET SOLO TRANSCRIPTION
(TRANSPOSED FOR PIANO)

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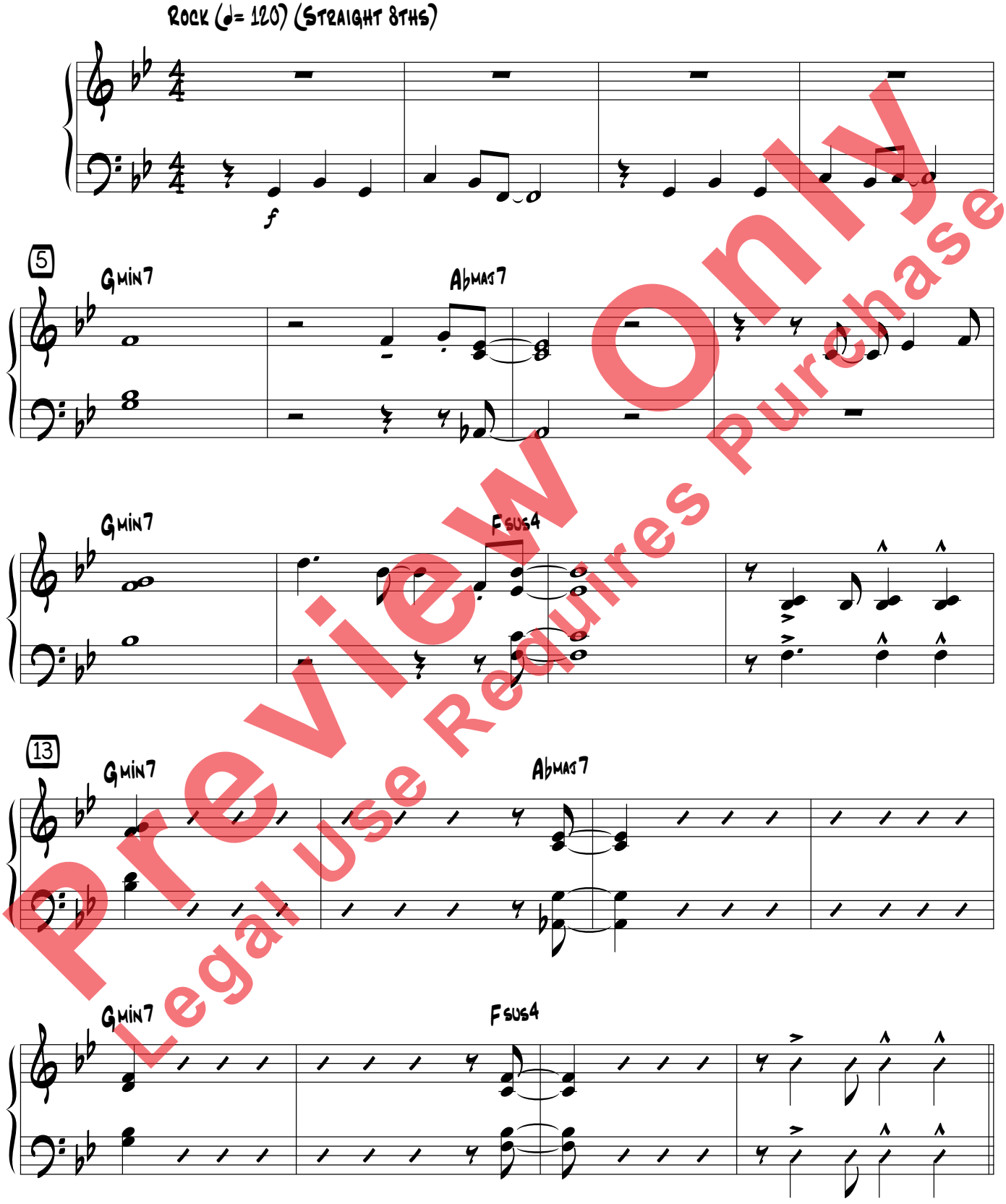
EVEN THOUGH THE PENTATONIC SCALE HAS ONLY 5 NOTES, YOU CAN PLAY A VERY COOL SOLO BY USING RHYTHMIC VARIETY, PATTERNS, AND REPETITION. THE TRUMPET SOLOIST USES DIRECT REPETITION IN MEASURES 5 AND 6.

Piano

FULL BAND CHART

GNEISS

Ryan Fraley
(ASCAP)



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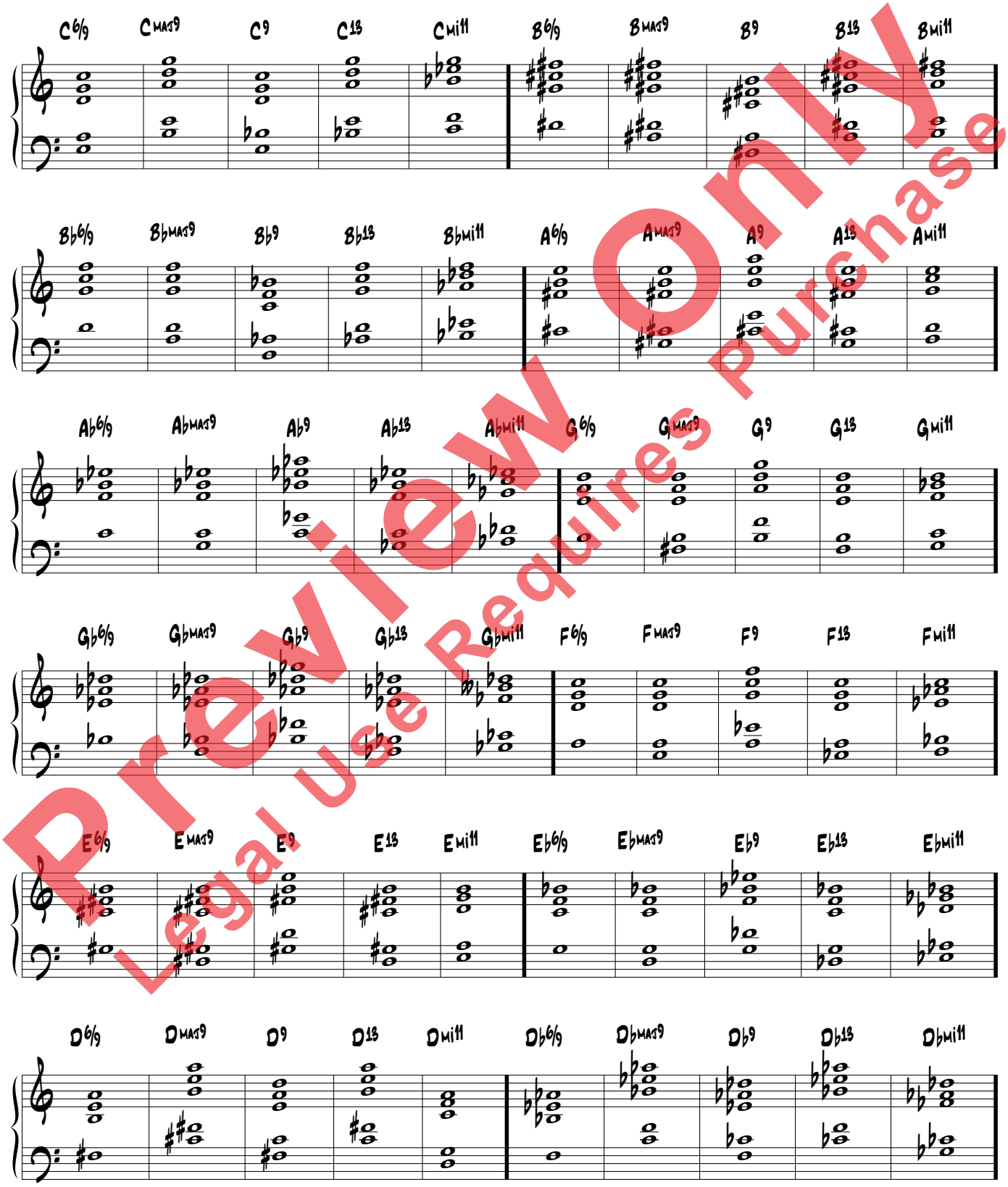
CHORD VOICINGS

INSTEAD OF PLAYING CHORDS AS BASIC STACKED THIRDS IN ROOT POSITION, A LOT OF GREAT PIANO PLAYERS HAVE DEVELOPED THEIR OWN UNIQUE SOUND BY FINDING DIFFERENT WAYS TO VOICE FAMILIAR CHORDS. YOU CAN ADD 9THS, 11THS, AND 13THS ABOVE THE TYPICAL TRIADS (OFTEN LEAVING OUT THE ROOT OR 5TH TO DO SO). PIANO CHORDS SOUND ESPECIALLY STABLE AND ATTRACTIVE WHEN THEY ARE BUILT FROM WIDER INTERVALS -- LIKE 4THS OR 5THS. THE TABLE BELOW GIVES YOU AN IDEA OF HOW TO VOICE CHORDS WITH STACKED 4THS AND WIDER INTERVALS.



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