



RUFUS

PHILPOT

**THE JAZZ
BLUES:
COMPING,
CHORDS &
CONCEPTS**

SBL Course Workbook



THE JAZZ BLUES COMPING, CHORDS & CONCEPTS

With Rufus Philpot

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, Rufus Philpot guides you through a 12-bar jazz blues, one of the *most essential* jazz song forms that serves as the foundation for countless, classic tunes.

By exploring a number of various concepts, techniques, and insights, you'll gain a deeper understanding of how to navigate a jazz blues in terms of walking bass lines and soloing.

In addition, we've included a bunch of play-along tracks for you to practice with, giving you the chance to experiment and jam along with a top-notch rhythm section! (Look under the "Course Resources" tab for these.)

LESSON 1

LEARNING THE FORM

Note: The time stamps listed with each example below correspond to their placement in the lesson videos. Also, don't miss the last page of this workbook for an index of useful scales.

Example #1: The Jazz Blues Form (00:15)

This chart shows the basic chord sequence (form) used in a typical 12-bar jazz blues. This one's in the key of F, which is a common key for many bop standard tunes, including "Billy's Bounce" and "Now's the Time" (both by the amazing Charlie Parker). The chord progression is used as the basis for so many tunes in addition to the ones just mentioned, so definitely memorize it if you haven't already!

12-bar jazz blues chord progression in F major:

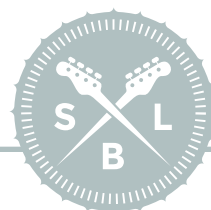
- Bar 1: F7
- Bar 2: Bb7
- Bar 3: F7
- Bar 4: F7
- Bar 5: Bb7
- Bar 6: Bb7
- Bar 7: F7
- Bar 8: D7
- Bar 9: Gm7
- Bar 10: C7
- Bar 11: F7
- Bar 12: D7
- Bar 13: Gm7
- Bar 14: C7

Chord Play-Through Demonstration (01:34)

Keep in mind that the chord sequence above is the "standard" set of changes, and jazz players sometimes embellish these even more by adding additional II-Vs and other slight variations (yet always sticking to the 12-bar form).

For example, notice that when Rufus performs his chord play-through of the changes at 01:34—check out the chords shown onscreen—he adds an extra II-V in bar 4 (Cm7 to F7), a II-V in bar 8 (Am7-D7), and plays Am7 in bar 11 in place of the F7.

We just want to point that out, BUT don't worry about it for now! The main objective here is to just get used to hearing the progression, and your *main goal* should be to memorize the standard set of changes above.



LESSON I

Example #2: Sample Walking Bass Line Over the Jazz Blues Form (02:24)

Chord progression for Example #2:

- Measure 1: F⁷
- Measure 2: B^b7
- Measure 3: F⁷
- Measure 4: B^b7
- Measure 5: B^b7
- Measure 6: F⁷
- Measure 7: E^b7
- Measure 8: A^m7, D⁷
- Measure 9: G^m7
- Measure 10: C⁷
- Measure 11: F⁷, D⁷
- Measure 12: G^m7, C⁷, F⁷

Example #3: The Jazz Blues Form - Roman Numerals (03:43)

Memorizing the chord progression in Roman Numerals will enable you to transpose it to any key.

Chord progression for Example #3 (Roman Numerals):

- Measure 1: I⁷
- Measure 2: IV⁷
- Measure 3: I⁷
- Measure 4: I⁷
- Measure 5: IV⁷
- Measure 6: #IV⁷
- Measure 7: I⁷
- Measure 8: VI⁷
- Measure 9: II^m7
- Measure 10: V⁷
- Measure 11: I⁷, VI⁷
- Measure 12: II^m7, V⁷

LESSON 2

WALKING BASS

Sample Bass Line Over the Jazz Blues Form – Breakdown (02:26)

First system of the bass line notation. It consists of a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notation shows a walking bass line with eighth notes. Above the staff, the chords F7, Bb7, and F7 are indicated. Below the staff, the fret numbers are written: 1 1 0 0 | 1 1 2 2 | 3 0 1 2 | 3 0 1 2. An orange arrow points to the right, labeled "Ascending walking bass line".

Second system of the bass line notation. It continues the walking bass line. Above the staff, the chords Bb7, F7, (E7), Am7, and D7 are indicated. Below the staff, the fret numbers are written: 3 3 0 0 | 1 1 2 2 | 3 3 2 1 | 2 1 0 4. An orange bracket under the first two measures is labeled "Drop 3rd". An orange bracket under the last two measures is labeled "Optional passing chords".

Third system of the bass line notation. It continues the walking bass line. Above the staff, the chords Gm7, C7, F7, D7, Gm7, C7, and F7 are indicated. Below the staff, the fret numbers are written: 5 2 3 4 | 5 7 8 9 | 10 8 7 9 | 10 9 8 0 | 1. An orange bracket under the last three measures is labeled "Turnaround".

Ascending Walking Bass Line (02:05)

Notation for the Ascending Walking Bass Line. It consists of a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notation shows a walking bass line with eighth notes. Above the staff, the word "HARMONIC..." is written. Below the staff, the fret numbers are written: 1 1 0 0 | 1 1 2 2 | 3 5 6 7 | 8 5 6 7 | 8 5 5 6. The final measure has a double bar line.



LESSON 2

Descending Walking Bass Line (08:00)

The musical notation shows a descending walking bass line in 4/4 time. The first staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The second staff shows the fret numbers for the bass line. The first measure (F7) has frets 3, 1, 0, 3. The second measure (Bb7) has frets 1, 4, 3, 2. The third measure (F7) has fret 1. An orange arrow points from the text "G^b is the chromatic passing note going to F" to the 2nd fret in the second measure.

F7 **B^b7** **F7**

G^b is the chromatic passing note going to F

Chromatic Passing Notes:

When creating a walking bass line that moves from one chord to another, we have more options than only chord tones and notes from the scale to use. Chromatic passing tones are an alternative, and make a great choice when headed to a root note, or chord tone.

Try adding a chromatic passing tone on beat 4, either a half step above, or a half step below the root on beat one of the following bar.

Sample Bass Line Targeting the 3rd (10:09)

The musical notation shows a sample bass line in 4/4 time. The first staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The second staff shows the fret numbers for the bass line. The first measure (F7) has frets 3, 0, 3, 1. The second measure (Bb7) has frets 0, 3, 3, 1. The third measure (F7) has frets 2, 3, 1, 2. The fourth measure (Bb7) has frets 3, 1, 0, 3. The fifth measure (F7) has fret 1. Orange arrows point from the text "3rd of F7 (A)", "3rd of Bb7 (D)", and "3rd of F7 (A)" to the 0th, 3rd, and 2nd frets respectively.

F7 **B^b7** **F7** **B^b7**

3rd of F7 (A) 3rd of B^b7 (D) 3rd of F7 (A)

Performance and Practice Tips (10:58)

- For a great jazz tone, Rufus recommends favoring the neck pickup while also plucking closer to the neck, giving you a round, fat sound. For soloing, however, you can pluck closer to the bridge to add more note definition and "bite."
- To work on solidifying your swing feel, try practicing with a metronome set to click on beats 2 and 4, or tap your foot on 2 and 4. Don't practice to a steady four-beat pulse.

ASSIGNMENT Using the "F Blues" audio play-along track we've provided, write your own jazz-blues walking bass line. Try and connect the chords using the notes of their arpeggios and scales, along with the additional tips provided in this course. If you're newer to walking bass, just take it a couple bars at a time. Experiment, jam, and have fun!

LESSON 3

THE VI CHORD

West London Blues Performance (00:00)

Chord progression: F7, Bb7, F7

Fretboard diagram (first system):
Measure 1: 12, 11, 12, 15, 13, 13
Measure 2: 11, 12, 13, 11, 13, 11
Measure 3: 12, 11, 12, 15, 13, 13

Chord progression: Bb7, Bb7, F7, D7

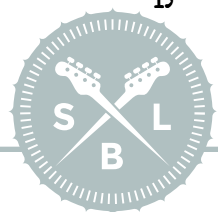
Fretboard diagram (second system):
Measure 4: 13, 15, 16, 12, 13, 15
Measure 5: 16, 12, 15, 16, 14
Measure 6: 12, 11, 12, 15, 14, 15, 13
Measure 7: 14, 12, 13, 11, 12, 11, 10, 13

Chord progression: Gm7, C7, F7, D7, Gm7, C7

Fretboard diagram (third system):
Measure 8: 10, 12, 13, 12, 15
Measure 9: 15, 18, 17, 15, 14, 17, 15, 14
Measure 10: 15, 14, 15, 15, 13, 15, 13
Measure 11: 13, 13, 15, 13

Chord progression: F7, Bb7, F7

Fretboard diagram (fourth system):
Measure 12: 12, 11, 12, 15, 13
Measure 13: 11, 12, 13, 11, 12, 11
Measure 14: 12, 11, 12, 15, 13
Measure 15: 13



LESSON 3

8^b7 8^o7 F7 D7

13 15 16 12 13 15 16 12 15 16 14 12 11 12 15 15 16 14 15 13 14 12 13 11 12 11

Gm7 C7 F7 D7 Gm7 C7

10 13 10 10 12 13 12 15 15 18 17 15 14 17 15 14 15 14 15 15 13 13 15 13 (13) 20 19

SOLO F7 8^b7 F7

15 13 15 13 12 13 12 15 13 12 15 13 15 12 12 13 14 14 15 15 12 13 12 15 13 16 15 13

8^b7 8^o7 F7 D7

12 15 11 10 14 15 13 14 12 13 12 13 11 12 10 11 9 10 9

Gm7 C7 F7 D7 Gm7 C7

8 10 9 7 10 9 9 10 8 7 8 7 8 7 7 10 9 10 8 9 8 10 10 8 10 8 11 10 8 11

LESSON 3

Chord progression: F7, Bb7, F7

Fretboard diagram: 7 10 6 (6) 5 | 8 6 8 8 | 6 8 6 8 6 4 1 | x

Chord progression: Bb7, Bb7, F7, D7

Fretboard diagram: 12 15 13 12 12 15 16 (16) 15 | x | 15 14 15 15 15 17 | 18 16 19 17 20 19 18

Chord progression: Gm7, C7, F7, D7

Fretboard diagram: 19 20 17 (17) 15 17 18 x 14 17 14 17 15 15 | 15 14 17 18 17 18 16 18

Chord progression: Gm7, C7, F7

Fretboard diagram: 15 15 | 13 15 14 13 16 13 | 11 12 13 (13) | x

LESSON 3

THE VI CHORD

If we had to pick out just *one* key ingredient that makes jazz blues different from a classic blues progression (I-IV-V), it would be the addition of the VI chord. In the key of F, the VI chord is D7 and is found in bar 8, and again in bar 11.

West London Blues "Head" (00:00)

West London Blues "Head" (00:00) musical notation. The notation shows a 12-bar blues progression in F major. Chords are labeled above the staff: F7 (bars 1-2), Bb7 (bars 3-4), F7 (bars 5-6), Bb7 (bars 7-8), F7 (bars 9-10), D7 (bar 11), Gm7 (bar 12), and C7 (bar 13). An orange arrow points to the D7 chord in bar 11, labeled "VI chord".

There are other differences as well (like the chords in the last four bars of the form), but the VI is maybe the most important in terms of "making the changes"—jazz-speak for outlining the chord changes.

For instance, you *could* solo over the entire blues form using only an F blues scale, but if you don't change it up when the VI chord comes around, your solo will lose that jazz flavor that is signature to the style.

Chord Tones for F7 and D7 (03:22)

Chord tones for F7 in F major. The notation shows the notes F, A, C, and Eb on a staff. Below the staff, the fret numbers 1, 0, 3, and 1 are indicated.

Chord tones for D7 in F major. The notation shows the notes D, F, A, and C# on a staff. Below the staff, the fret numbers 5, 4, 7, and 5 are indicated.



LESSON 3

Typically, the VI in a jazz blues is played as a dominant flat-9 chord (see arpeggio below). The addition of the flatted 9th—which is the same note as the flatted 2nd, an octave up, by the way (E^b)—gives a sound that's associated with bebop, and resolves beautifully to the G minor chord that comes next.

Notice that the $D7^b9$ arpeggio contains three notes in common with the F7 arpeggio: A, C, and E^b . Since there are so many notes in common between the I and VI chords, the easiest and best way to highlight the D7 is by aiming for the D and F#, with F# being the strongest choice.

Chord Tones for D7 with a Flat-9 (03:38)

$D7^b9$

Notes in common with F7

Connecting Bars 7-9 with Arpeggios, Using Common Notes (05:11)

F7 $D7^b9$ Gm7

D Half-whole Diminished Scale (07:36)

This scale is a great choice for walking and soloing over a $D7^b9$ chord.

Root $b9$ #9 3rd #11 5th 13th $b7$

D Half-whole Diminished Lick (09:24)

8va

LESSON 4

THE TURNAROUND

Sample Bass Lines for Different Jazz Blues Turnarounds (02:04)

The image displays five variations of jazz blues turnarounds, each consisting of a musical staff with a bass line and a corresponding chord progression. The key signature is one flat (Bb).

Variation 1: Chord progression: F7, D7, Gm7, C7, Am7, D7, Gm7, C7. The bass line starts on the 8th fret and moves down to the 4th fret.

Variation 2: Chord progression: Am7, A♭7, Gm7, G♭7, Am7, A♭7, D♭7, G♭7. The bass line starts on the 5th fret and moves down to the 4th fret.

Variation 3: Chord progression: F7, A♭7, D♭7, G♭7, F7. The bass line starts on the 3rd fret and moves down to the 1st fret.

Variation 4: Chord progression: F7, A♭7, D♭7, G♭7, F7. The bass line starts on the 3rd fret and moves down to the 1st fret.

Variation 5: Chord progression: F7, A♭7, D♭7, G♭7, F7. The bass line starts on the 3rd fret and moves down to the 1st fret.

In jazz, a **turnaround** is a chord progression at the end of a song form (usually either two or four bars long) that keeps the song moving to bring us back to the top again. In a jazz blues tune, the turnaround is found in the last two bars and typically goes I–VI–II–V, with each chord lasting only two beats.

In the music example above, we have five different variations of turnarounds, but the most important ones to focus your time on are the first two. They are I–VI–II–V (or F7–D7–Gm7–C7) and III–VI–II–V (or Am7–D7–Gm7–C7).

The rest of the variations Rufus demonstrates are more advanced. Check them out after you have a solid grasp of the more traditional types.



LESSON 4

Turnaround Lick Using Arpeggios (03:19)

In this lick, Rufus is moving up one arpeggio, then finding the closest note of the following chord, and going down its arpeggio from that point. This is an excellent exercise to help you memorize where the chord tones are on the fretboard, without starting on the root.

Diagram illustrating a turnaround lick using arpeggios in 4/4 time. The lick consists of five measures, each with a chord above it: F7, D7, Gm7, C7, and F7. The notation shows the bass line with notes and fret numbers (8, 7, 10, 8, 7, 10, 7, 9, 10, 8, 7, 10, 9, 10, 8, 10, 7) indicating the sequence of notes and frets.

Performance Tip (04:04): When you're improvising/soloing, try to avoid targeting the root notes of the chords. Instead, try targeting other chord tones such as the 3rd or 7th. By nature, we bass players tend to gravitate towards the roots—which isn't wrong at all, but it's really helpful to train yourself to get away from that typical launch spot.

Turnaround Lick Using Arpeggios and Chromatic Approach Notes (06:08)

Diagram illustrating a turnaround lick using arpeggios and chromatic approach notes in 4/4 time. The lick consists of five measures, each with a chord above it: Am7, D7, Gm7, C7, and F7. The notation shows the bass line with notes and fret numbers (8, 9, 10, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 12, 11, 12, 14, 15, 12, 14, 15, 12, 15) indicating the sequence of notes and frets.

ASSIGNMENT The play-along track titled "Jazz Blues Turnaround" is a repeating loop of... you guessed it, a turnaround. There's a slow version and a faster version for you to practice with. First, pick whichever tempo feels more manageable, then compose three (or more) different walking bass lines across the 4-bar sequence. Next, compose a solo over 8 bars of the turnaround (2 times through the sequence). Of course, you can compose as much as you'd like! ;)

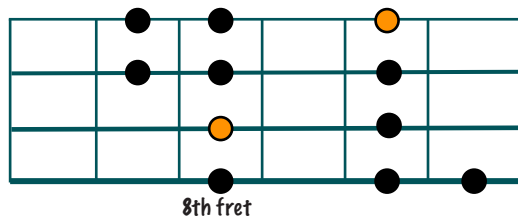
Here's the chord sequence in the turnaround audio track:

Diagram illustrating the chord sequence in the turnaround audio track. The sequence consists of eight measures, each with a chord above it: F7, D7, Gm7, C7, Am7, D7, Gm7, and C7. The notation shows the bass line with notes and fret numbers (I, VI, II, V, III, VI, II, V) indicating the sequence of notes and frets.

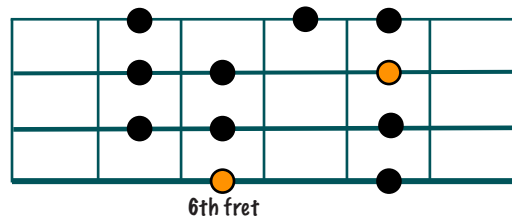
SCALE INDEX

Here's an index of all the chord-scales for a blues in F. The dots marked in orange are the root notes.

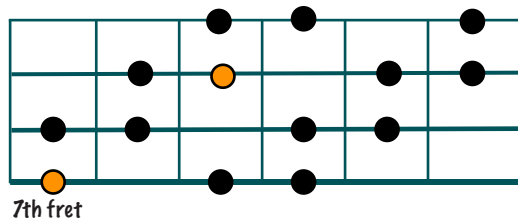
F Dominant - F7:



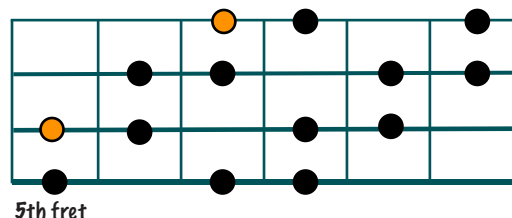
Bb Dominant - Bb7:



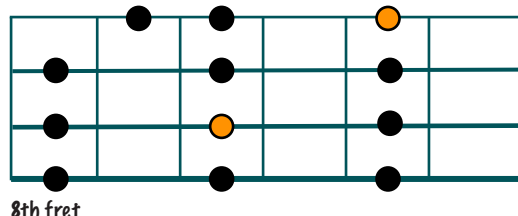
B Diminished:



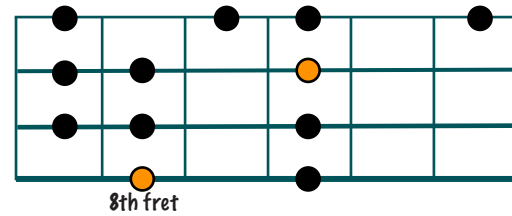
D Half-Whole Diminished - D7(b9):



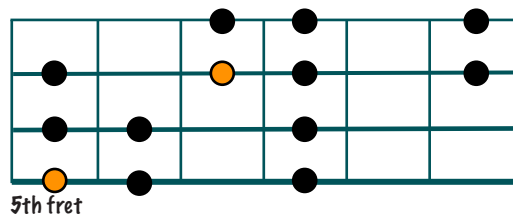
G Dorian - Gm7:



C Dominant - C7:



A Locrian (Half-Diminished) - Am7, or Am7b5:



EXTRA CREDIT

If you're serious about wanting to get better at playing a jazz blues, and bass in general (of course you are), one of the best things you can do is transcribe the masters. They'll give you plenty of ideas that will expand your vocabulary, and you'll train your ears in the process. It's a total win-win. Try this: Transcribe (you don't need to know how to read music for this — tab is fine) the walking bass line from the song "Bag's Groove" by Miles Davis with the great Percy Heath on bass. Pick your favorite 12 bars and find the notes one-by-one, writing them down as you go. Percy plays upright, but these lines sound really great on electric too.

