MELODIC STUDIES

FOR THE JAZZ PIANIST

BY LARRY AGOVINO

"...helpful to seasoned pianists as well as beginners...the most clearly presented breakdown of jazz lines in many a moon...this is definitely a guide for the thinking keyboardist."

Bob Doerschuk
CONTEMPORARY KEYBOARD
September 1980

KEY MUSIC
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is two-fold: First, to increase your technical skills on the instrument; and second, to increase your mind's ability to perceive musical patterns in the various keys. If you diligently apply yourself to these studies, following all instructions and completing each set, you will find that your melodic skills will have been considerably sharpened.

Included in these exercises are a few "cliches" or "licks" that have been abused in jazz performances. These cliches are included so that the student can judge their value in relation to his or her musical aspirations.

Many of the exercises in this book ask for the student to play a pattern descending as well as ascending. The descending patterns are not written out purposely. In this way, the student must use his or her resources of logic and imagination to complete the puzzle. In cases where more than one descending pattern seems feasible, practice both of them.

The first three chapters of this book contain technical drills based on the arpeggiation of chords. Do not underestimate the importance of this work. Some of the arpeggios are extremely difficult, and the creative improvisor will find many unique ways to utilize them. There are some left hand techniques presented in the ninth chapter (Left Hand Patterns). Not only are they effective for the solo pianist seeking new ideas, but they can also serve as interesting textures upon which one can experiment with the melodic studies found in this book.

In some cases, the notation of these exercises may seem strange. There is, in fact, a reason for this. The manner in which they are written makes it easy for the student to identify a note as a chordal function, such as a 9th, 11th, or 13th.

Jazz eighth notes have a natural triplet inflection (=). It is important that you play these studies with both "straight" eighth notes and with "jazz eighths." Some of the exercises are written with sixteenth notes. These can be swung in a manner similar to eighth notes. In a jazz ballad, one may actually hear "swinging" sixteenth notes. This effect is often the result of the player using jazz eighth notes in double time.

There is ample opportunity to experiment with phrasing. Try playing passages either legato or staccato (or combinations of), and give some thought to phrase length. Be sure to finger these exercises carefully and logically. The attention that you give to fingering now will pay off later.

Search constantly for applications of these studies to your own improvisations. This is the most beneficial thing that you can do.

Take the time to play through these exercises in 12 keys. This type of effort will enrich you as an improvisor, providing you with a subconcious reservoir of musical ideas. Strive for perfection. Remember, perfection is making something that is inherently difficult look easy.

BASIC SEVENTH CHORDS

Name of Seventh Chord	Abbreviation	Type of Triad	Type of Seventh Interval Above Root
Major 7	$Maj^7/M^7/\Delta$	Major	Major 7
Dominant 7	7	Major	minor 7
Minor 7	$m^7/-7$	minor	minor 7
Minor Major 7	$mM^7/-Maj^7$	minor	Major 7
Augmented 7 (Dominant 7 raised 5th)	7^+ 7^{+5}	Augmented	minor 7
Augmented Major 7 (Major 7 raised 5th)	M^{7+} M^{7+5}	Augmented	Major 7
Diminished Major 7	$^oM^7$	diminished	Major 7
Half-diminished 7 (Minor 7 flat 5)	$\phi 7$ m^{7b5}	diminished	minor 7
Diminished 7	$^o7$	diminished	diminished 7

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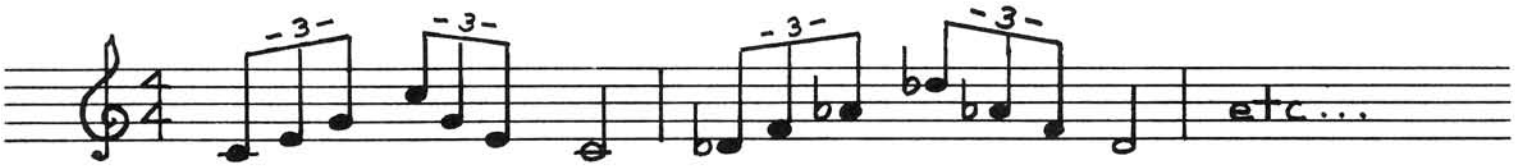
Triad Exercises

1. Try Exercise #1 with the minor, augmented and diminished triads.



2. Play Exercise #2 ascending and descending. Try also with the minor, augmented and diminished triads.

3. Play Exercise #3 ascending and descending. Try also with the minor, augmented and diminished triads.

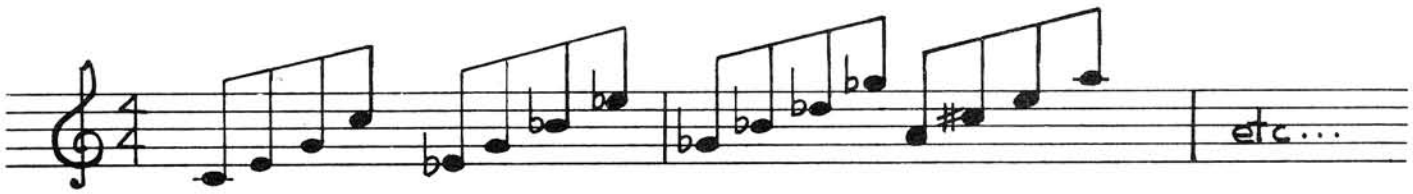
4. Play Exercise #4 ascending and descending. Try also with the minor, augmented and diminished triads.

5. Play Exercise # 5 ascending and descending. Try also with the minor, augmented and diminished triads.

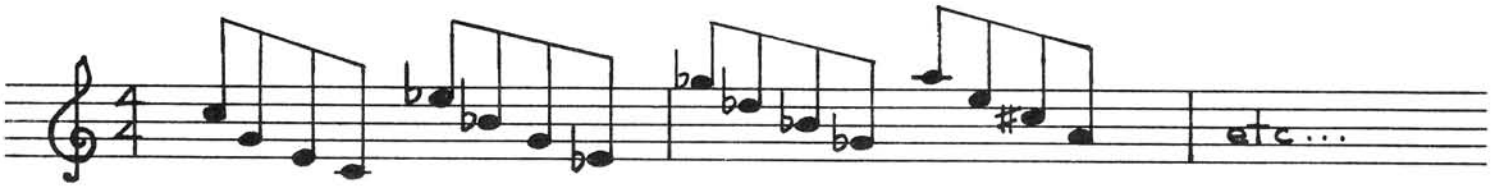
6. Play Exercise #6 ascending and descending. Try also with the minor, augmented and diminished triads. Then play Exercise #6 starting on Db with the major, minor, augmented and diminished triads.

7. Play Exercise #7 ascending and descending. Try also with the minor, augmented and diminished triads. Then play Exercise #7 starting on Db with the major, minor, augmented and diminished triads.

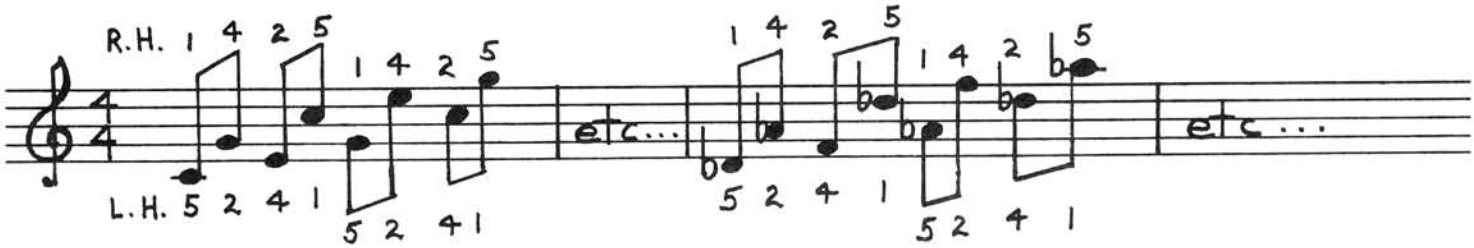
8. Play Exercise #8 in two octaves, ascending and descending. Then try Exercise #8 starting on Db and D (all 12 keys would be preferable) and with minor triads as well. This is known as the CYCLE OF MINOR 3RDS. This pattern can be useful when played against the following Dominant Seventh chords: C7, Eb7, Gb7 and A7.



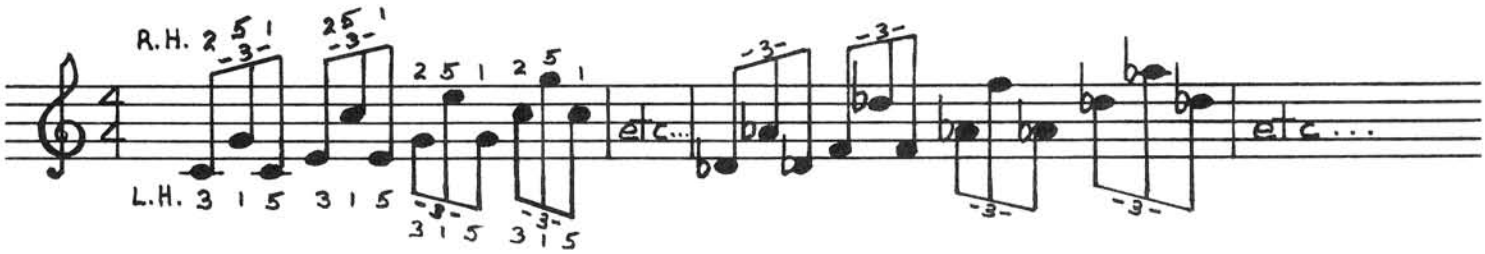
9. As in Exercise #8, this exercise should be played in two octaves, ascending and descending, and then played starting on Db and D (again, all 12 keys would be preferable) and with minor triads as well.



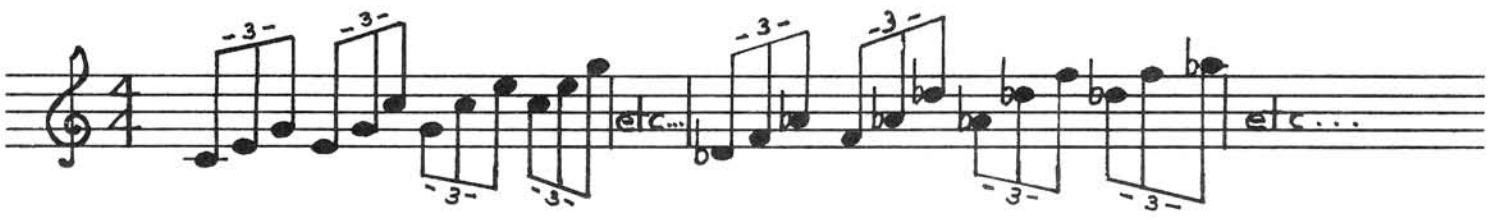
10. Play Exercise #10 in three octaves, ascending and descending. Make sure that you cover all 12 keys. Do it also with the minor, augmented and diminished triads. The repetitious finger pattern indicated is called a "group fingering" - use it! Try this exercise on a I-VI-II-V progression, using the pedal on each chord.



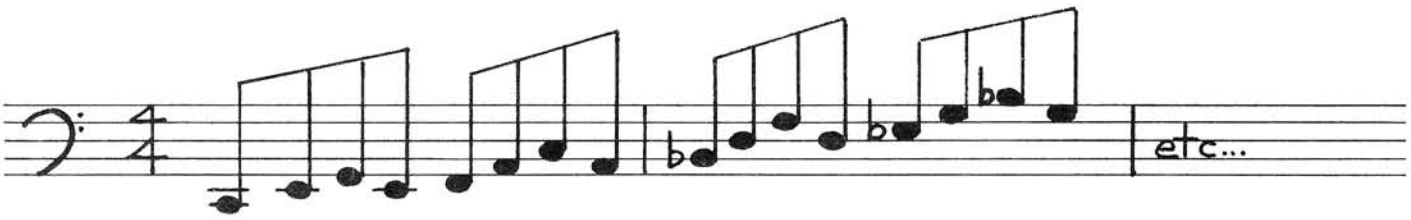
11. As in Exercise #10 above, this exercise should be played in three octaves, ascending and descending, in 12 keys, and with the minor, augmented and diminished triads as well. Remember to use the group fingering.



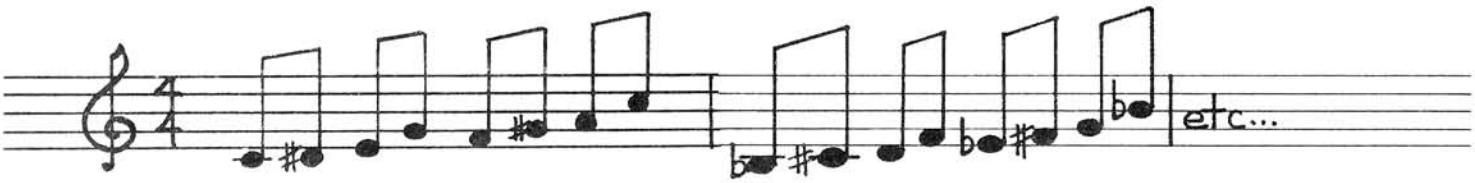
12. The instructions for this exercise are the same as numbers 10 and 11 above, except that regular triad fingerings will apply.



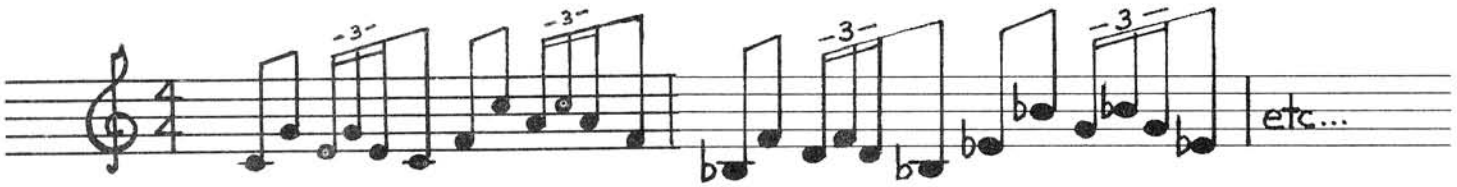
13. Continue Exercise #13 in the established cyclical pattern. Do it in the minor as well.



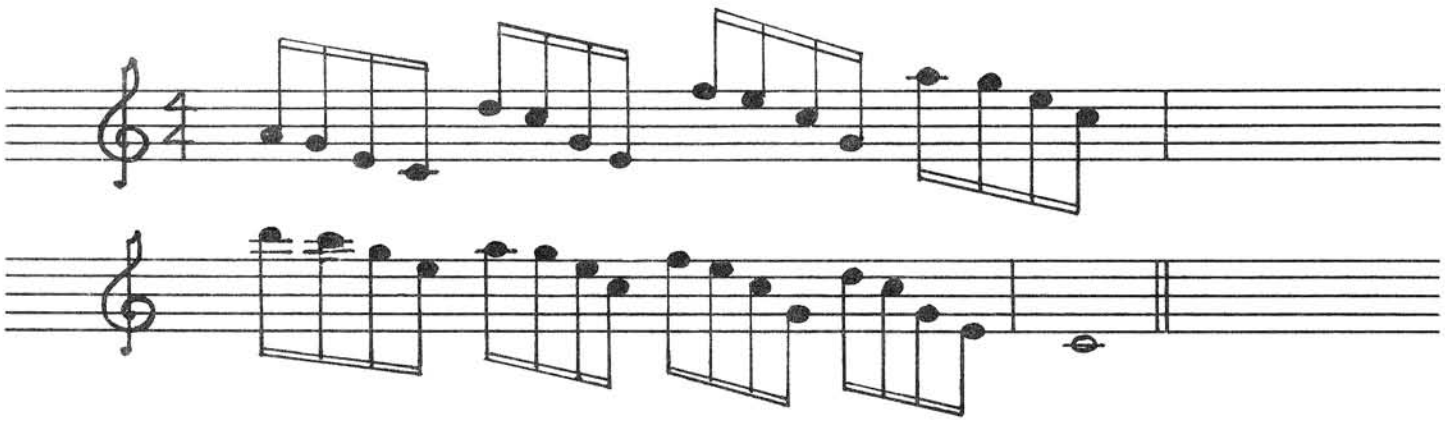
14. Continue Exercise #14 in the established cyclical pattern. Do it in the minor as well.



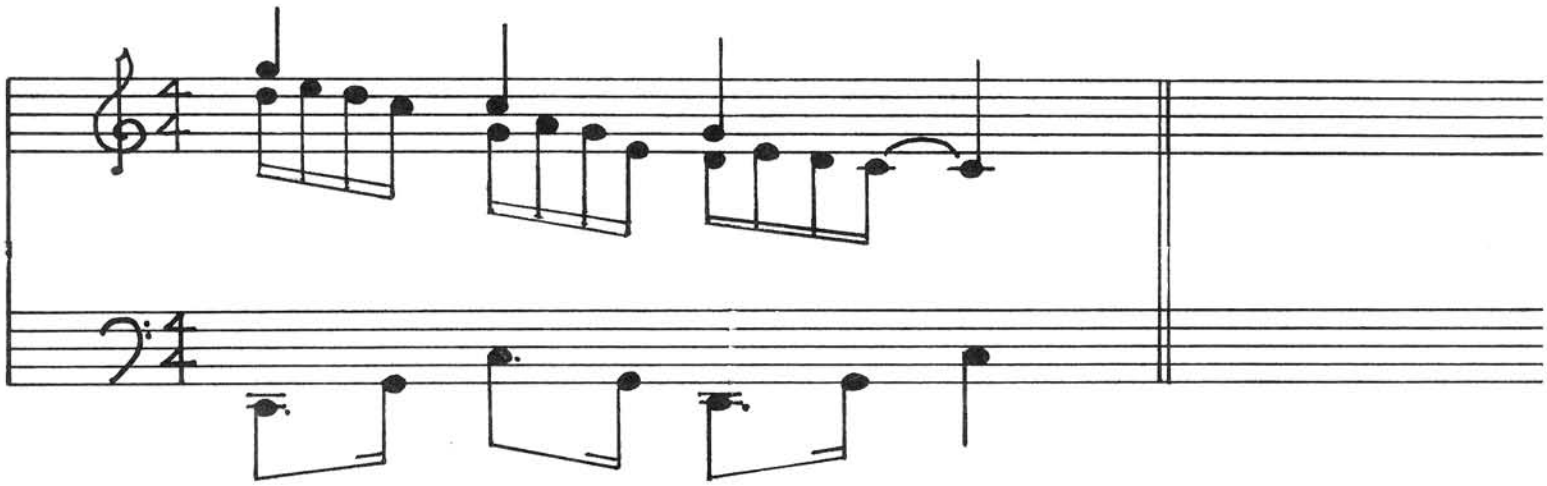
15. Continue Exercise #15 in the established cyclical pattern. Do it in the minor as well.



16. Play Exercise #16 in 12 keys, and with the minor triads as well. In the minor, the sixth degree of the scale (the A note in this case) can be either natural or flat, depending on which form of the minor scale you employ. Can't decide? Try both!



17. Play Exercise #17 in 12 keys, and with the minor triads as well.

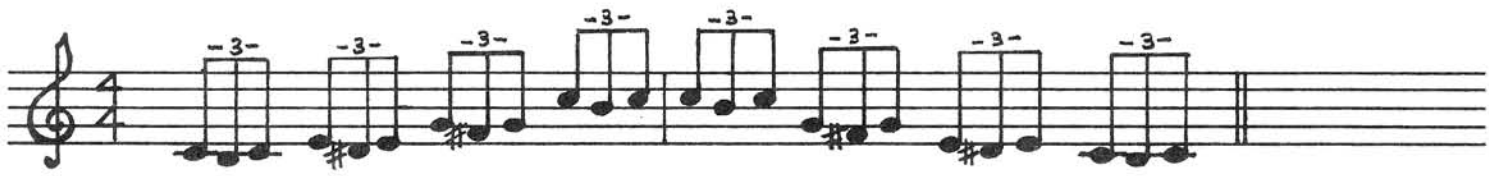


Exercises 18 - 25 are examples of chordal deflection. The upper neighbor tone is always diatonic. The lower neighbor tone is always chromatic. Expand these exercises to two and one-half octaves, in 12 keys, with both the major and minor triads.

18.

19.

20.



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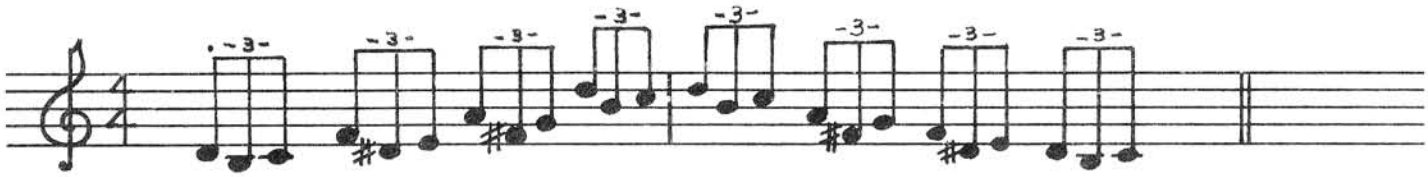

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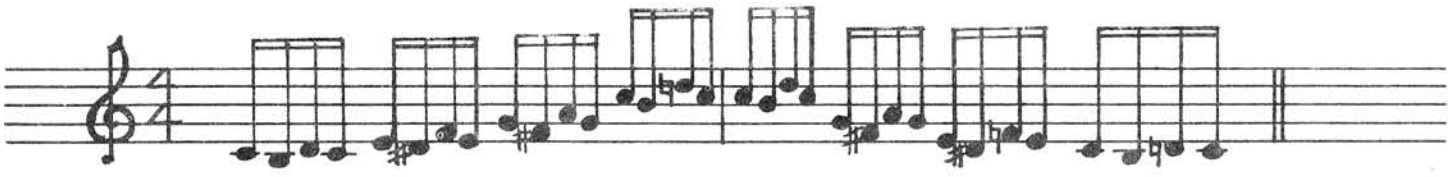

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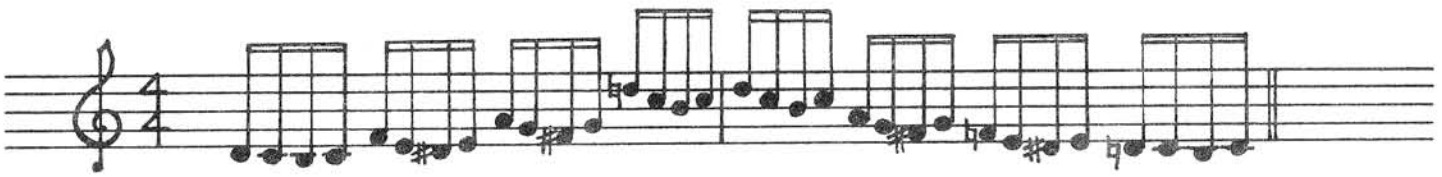
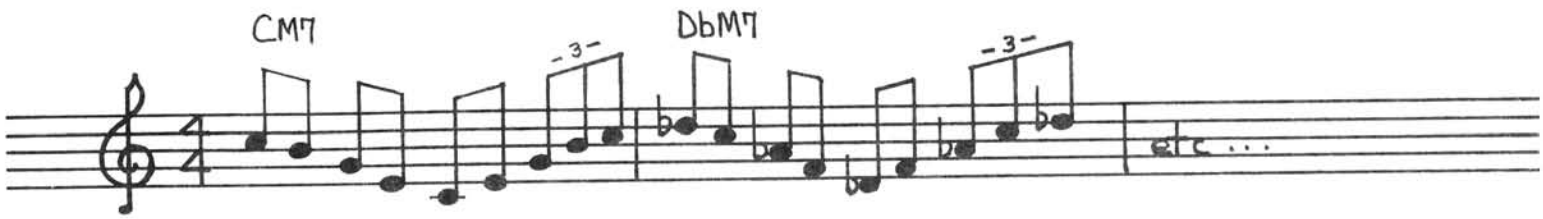


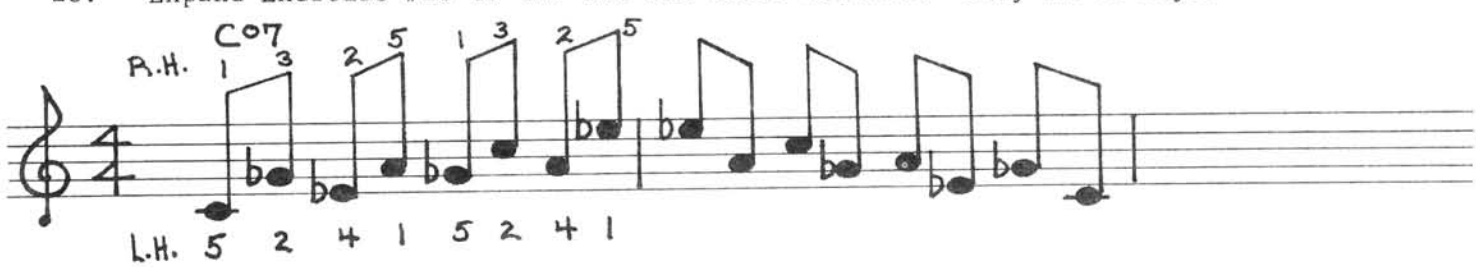
Seventh Chord Exercises

26. Continue Exercise #26 chromatically up to the octave. Play this exercise with virtually every 7th chord.

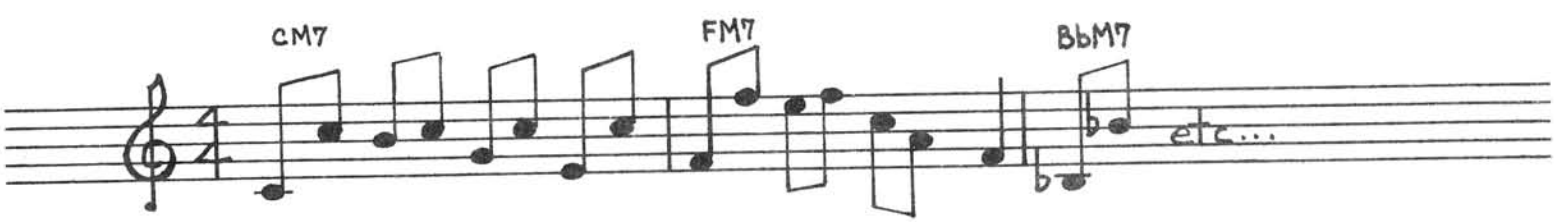
27. Continue Exercise #27 chromatically up to the octave. Play this exercise with every 7th chord.



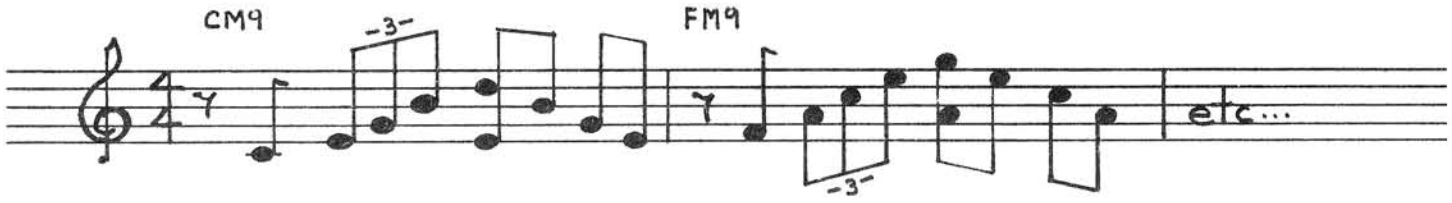
28. Expand Exercise #28 to two and one-third octaves. Play in 12 keys.



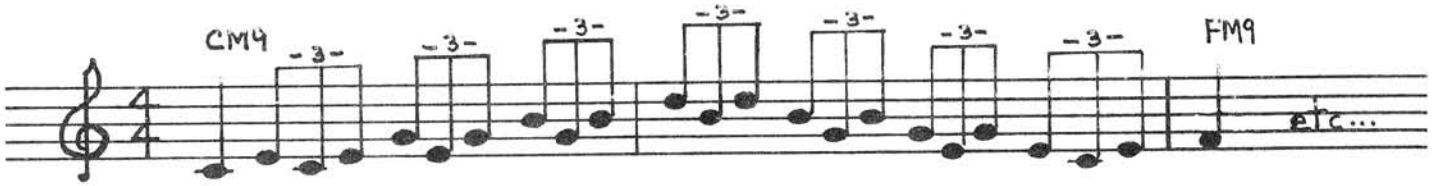
29. Continue Exercise #29 in cycle. Play also with the X7, m7 and mM7.



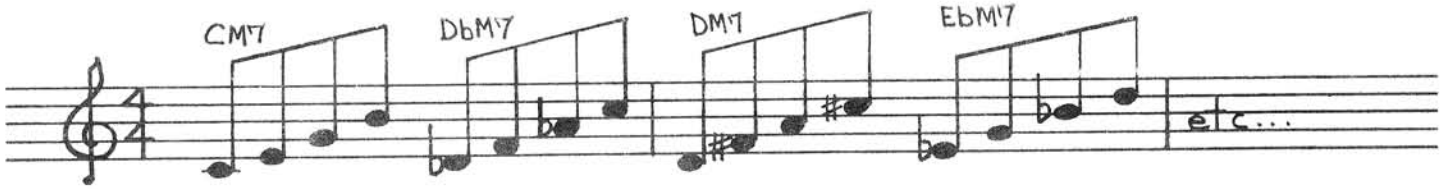
30. Continue Exercise #30 in cycle. Play also with the X9, X7b9, m9 and mM9.



31. Continue Exercise #31 in cycle. Play also with the X9, X7b9, m9 and mM9.

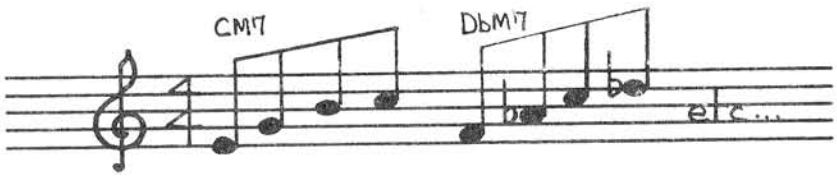


32. Continue Exercise #32 chromatically. Play this with ALL the 7th chords. Then try it from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd inversions.

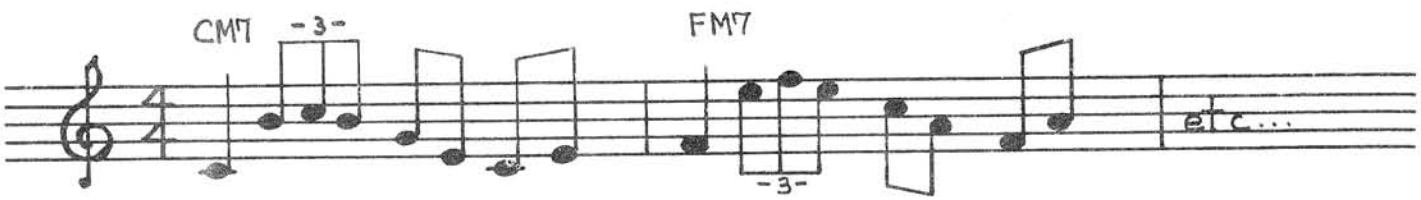


Example:

1st Inversion

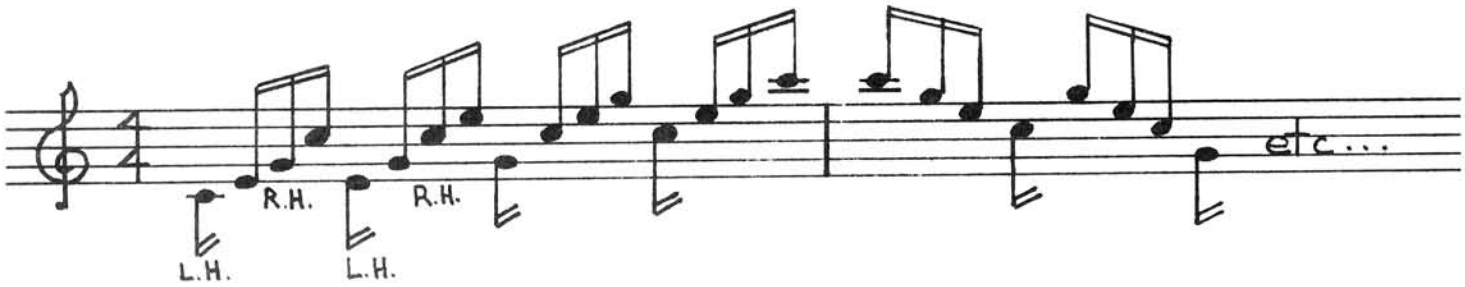


33. Continue Exercise #33 in cycle. Play also with the X7, m7 and mM7.

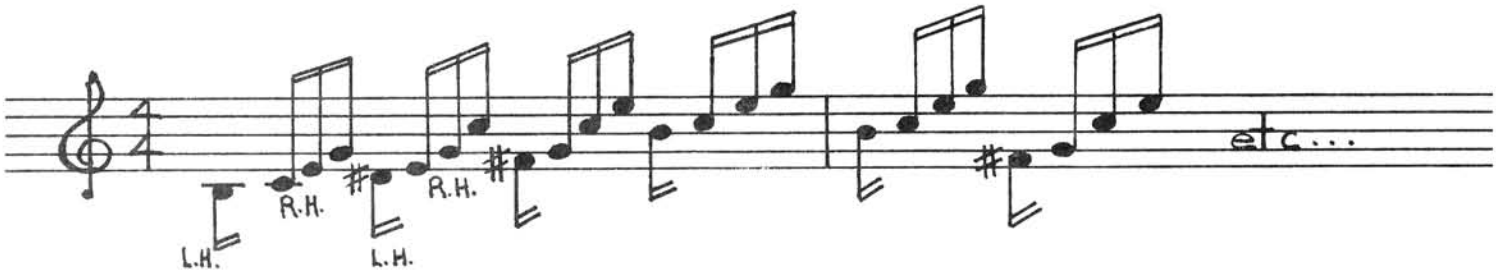


Arpeggios

34. Play Exercise #34 with a larger span than written (2 and 1/3 octaves works well). Play it in 12 keys, and with the minor and augmented triads as well. Try this exercise using a I-VI-II-V progression.

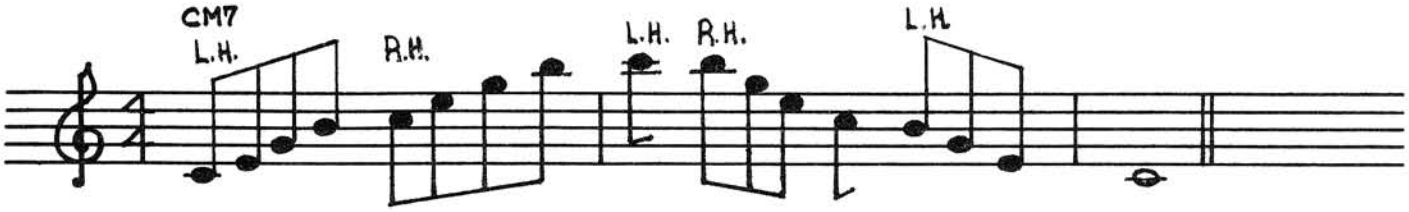


35. Play Exercise #35 with a larger span than written (2 and 1/3 octaves works well). Play it in 12 keys and with the minor triad as well. This is what I call the Gershwin Arpeggio.

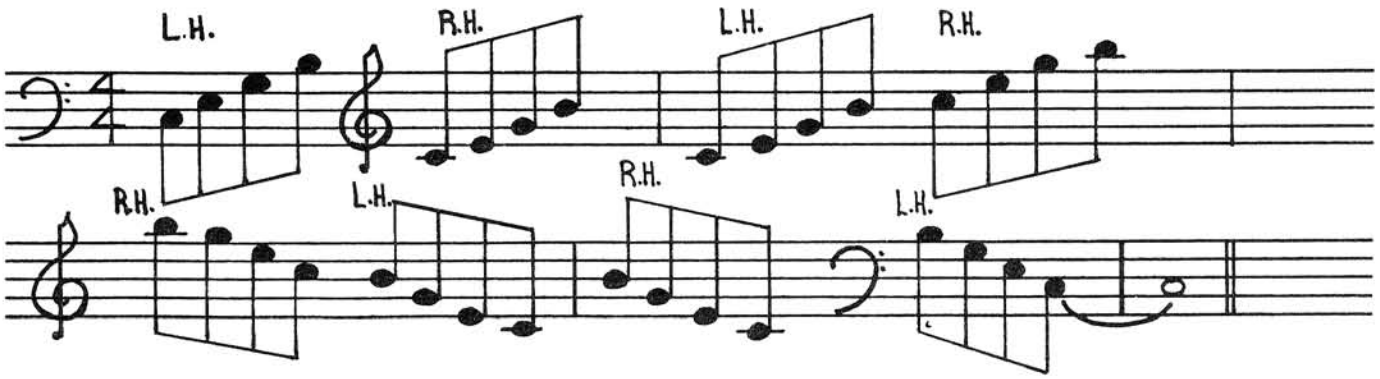


36. Play Exercise #36 in 4 octaves. Play it in 12 keys and with every 7th chord.

37. Play Exercise #37 in 4 octaves. Play it in 12 keys and with every 7th chord.



38. Play Exercise #38 in 5 octaves. Play it in 12 keys and with every 7th chord.



The II-V-I Progression

Exercises 39 - 46 should be played in 12 keys.

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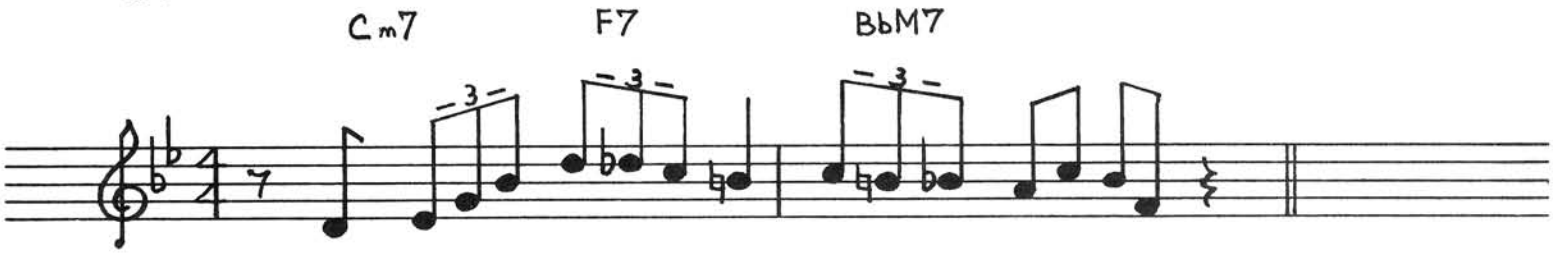

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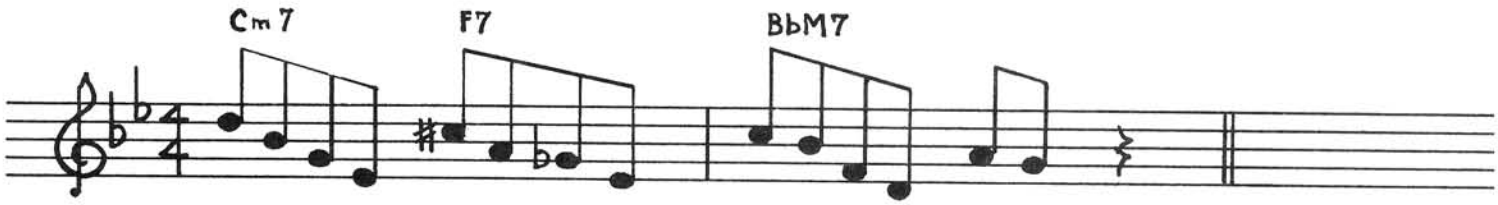

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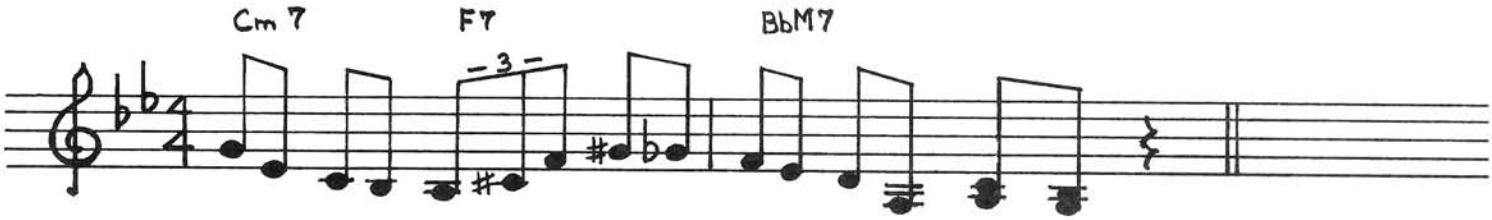

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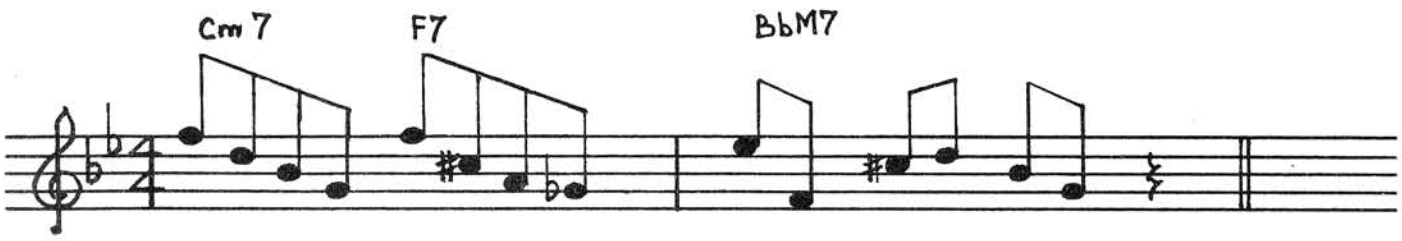

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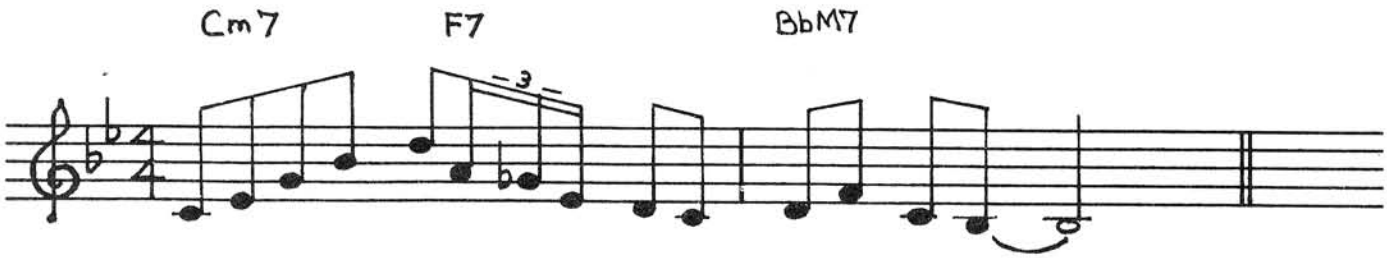

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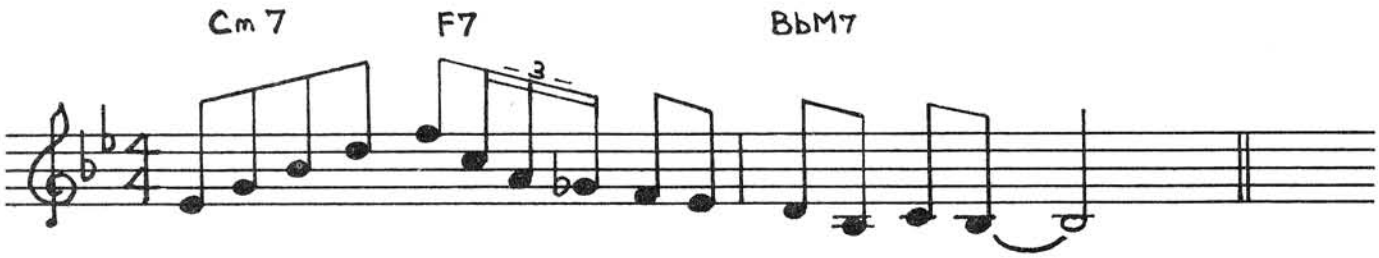

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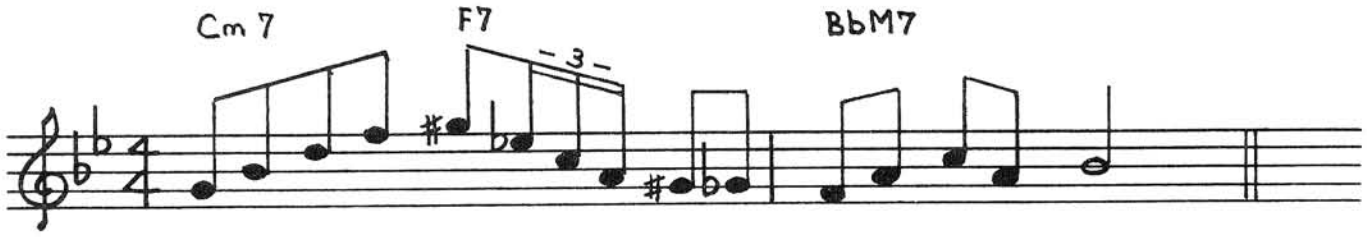
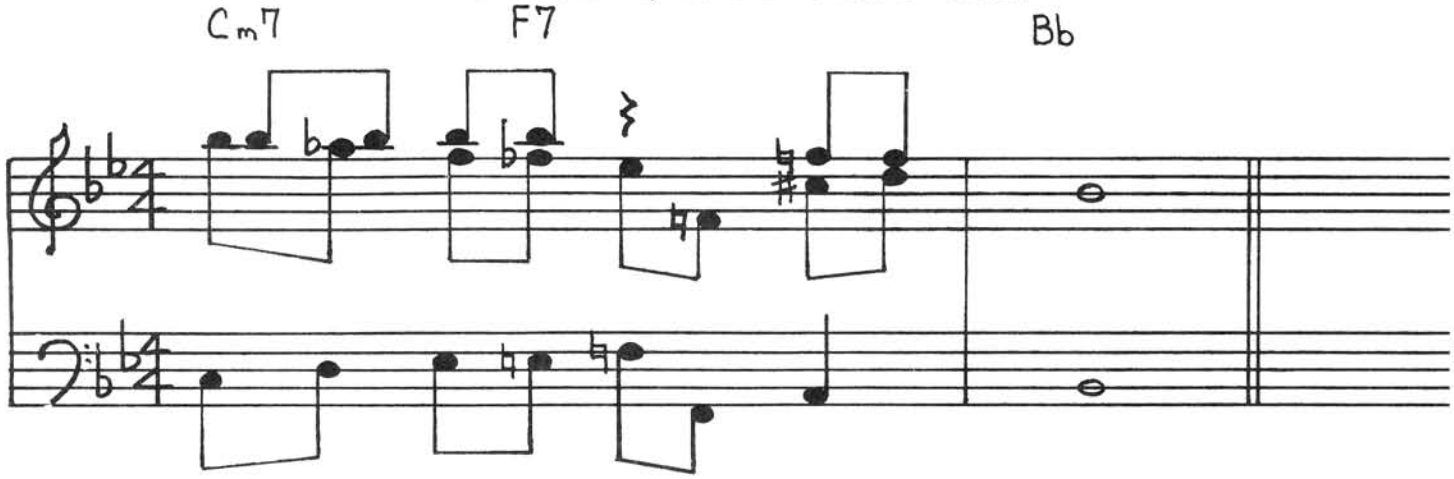
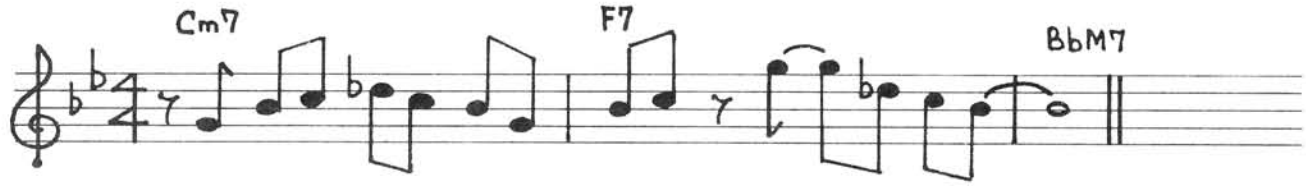


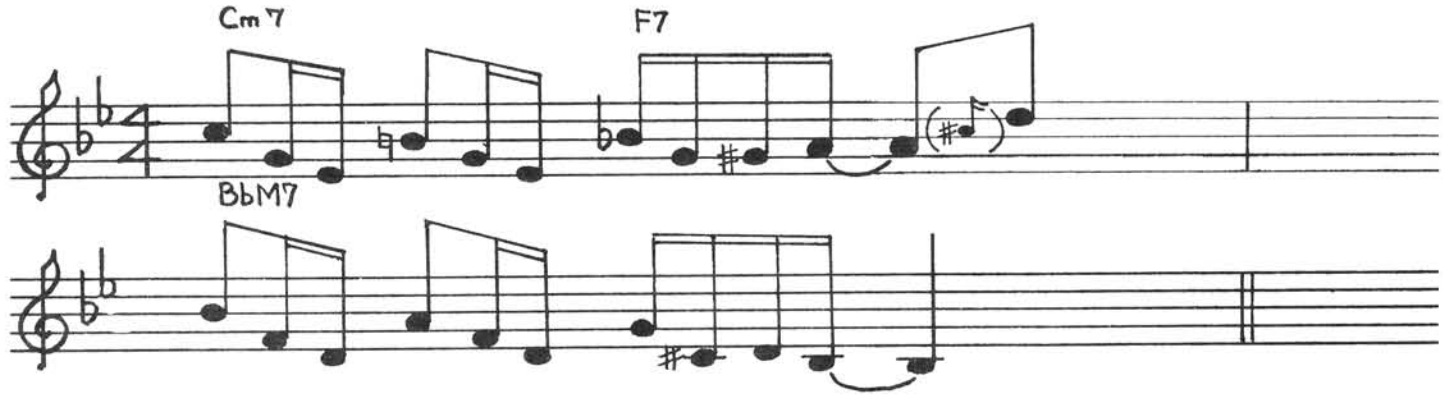
47. Play Exercise #47 in 12 keys. Try improvising blues scale melody over II-V-I chord progressions. The blues scale should be based on the root of the I chord. Another interesting blues effect is to base the blues scale in the key of the relative minor.



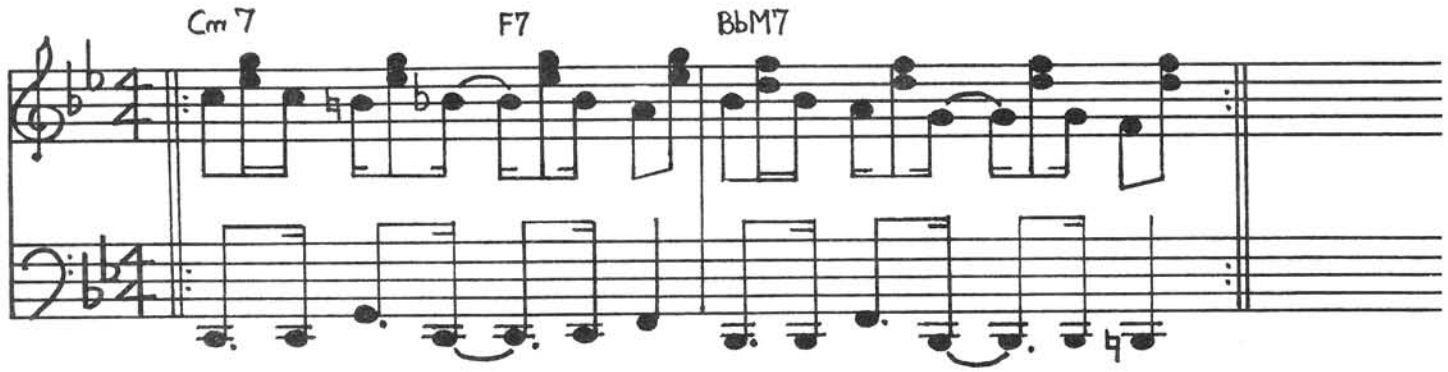
Example:
(Relative Minor)



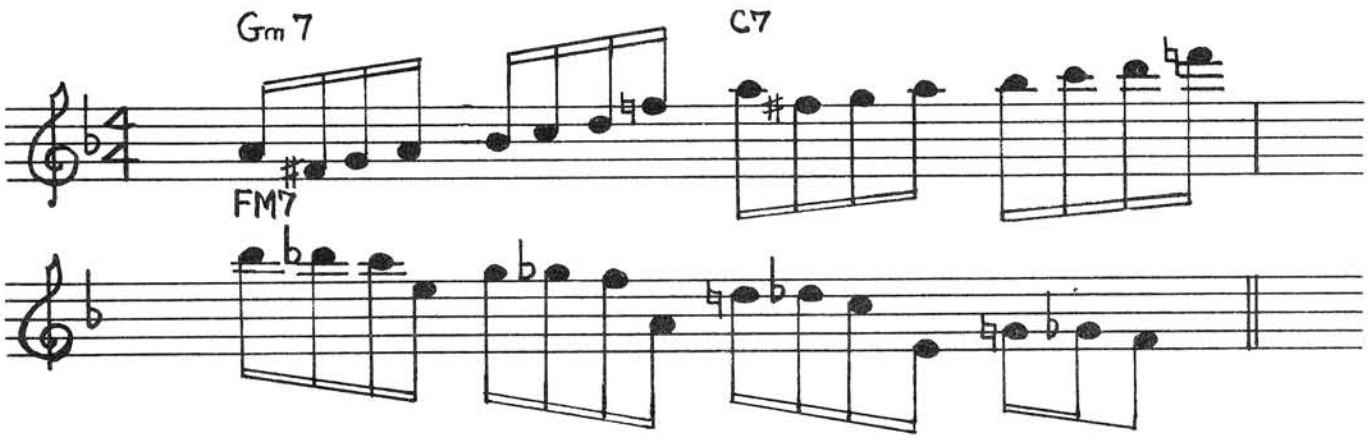
48. Play Exercise #48 in 12 keys.



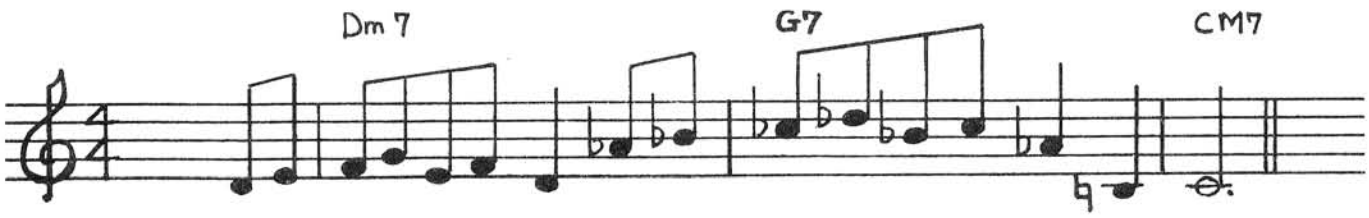
49. Play Exercise #49 in 12 keys. This is a common, but very exciting Latin accompanyment pattern.



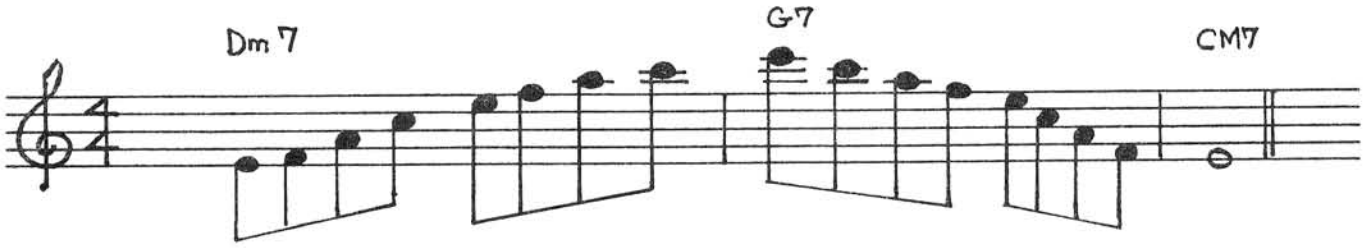
50. Play Exercise #50 in 12 keys.



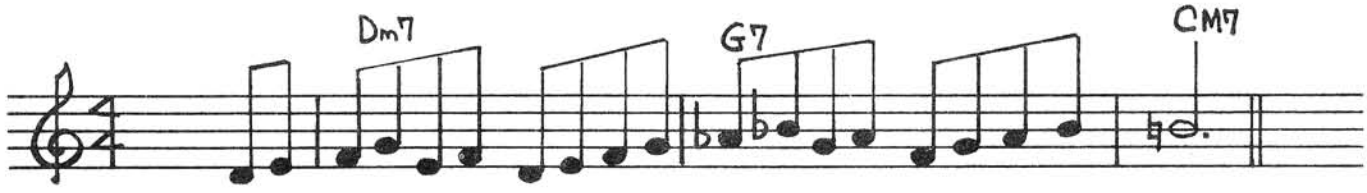
51. Play Exercise #51 in 12 keys.



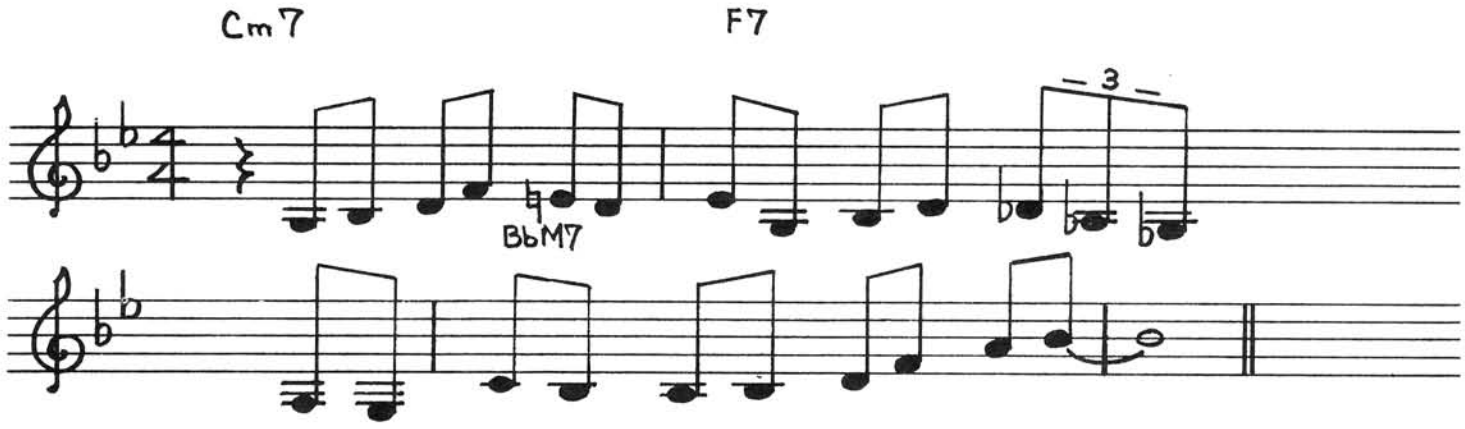
52. Play Exercise #52 in 12 keys.



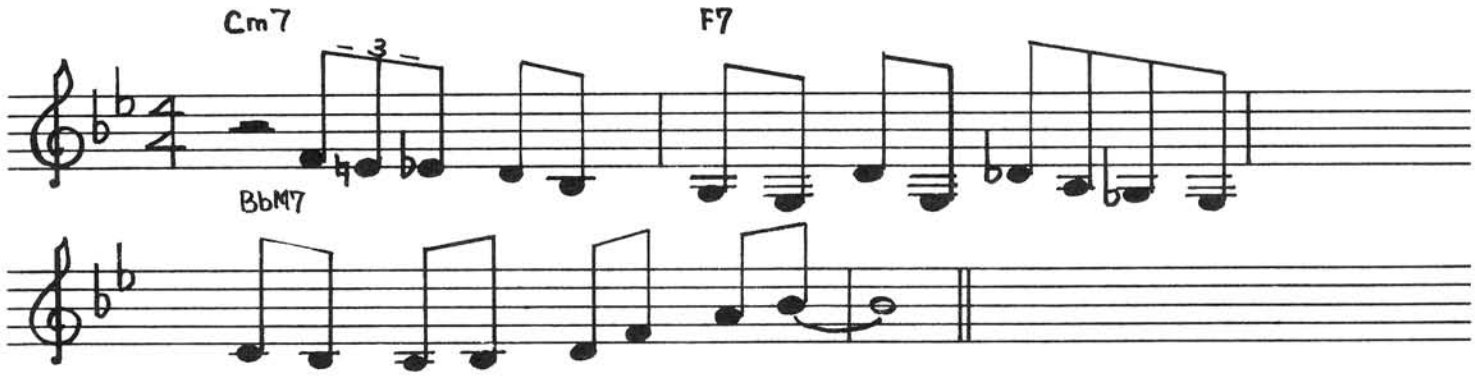
53. Play Exercise #53 in 12 keys.



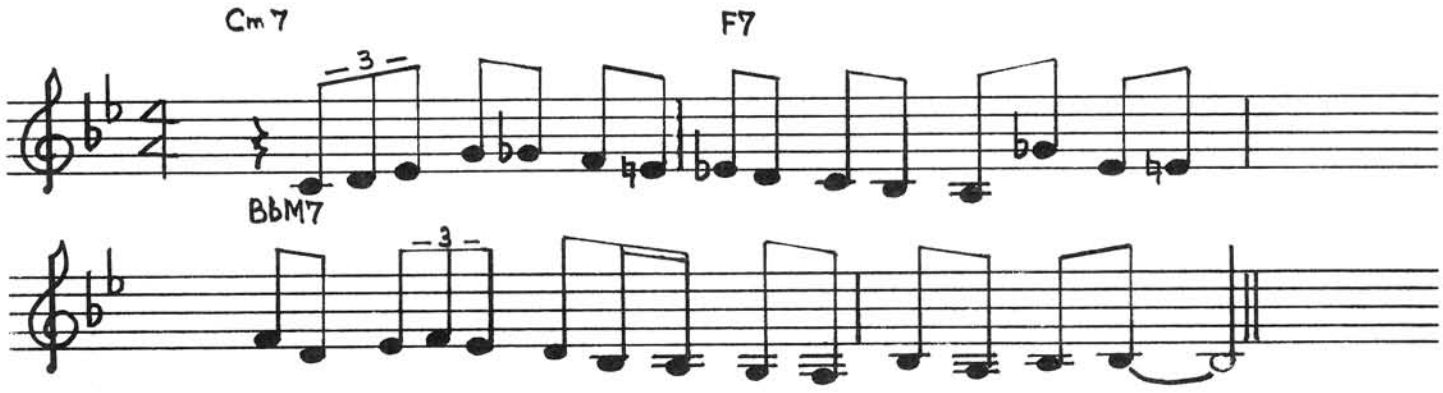
54. Play Exercise #54 in 12 keys.



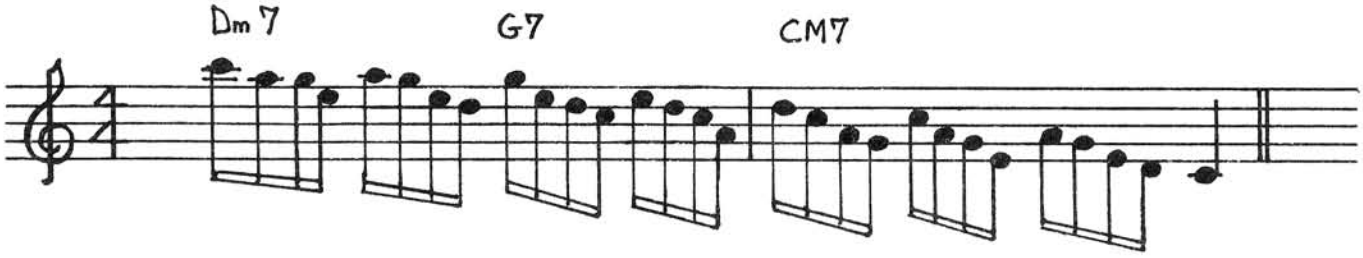
55. Play Exercise #55 in 12 keys.



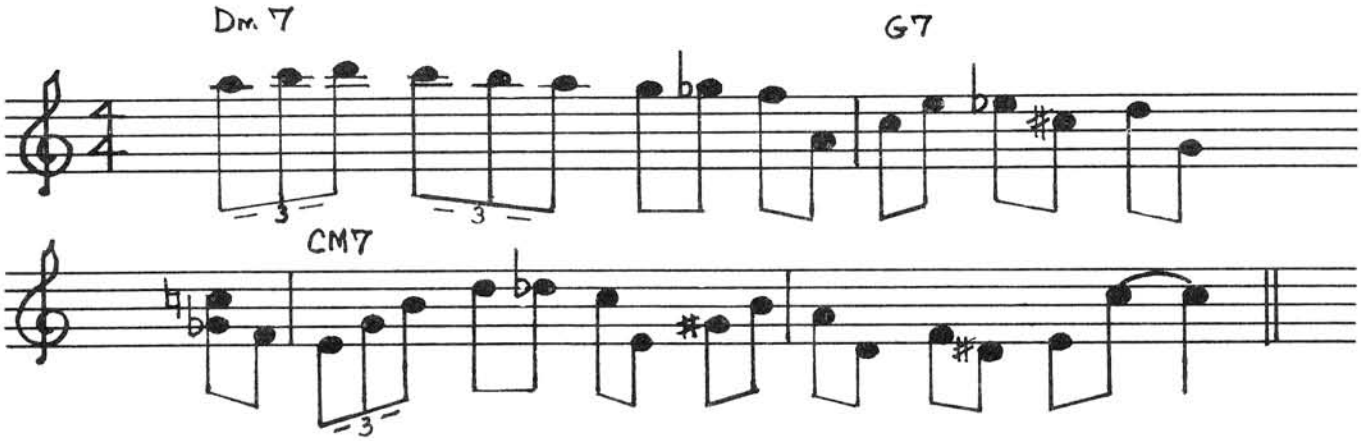
56. Play Exercise #56 in 12 keys.



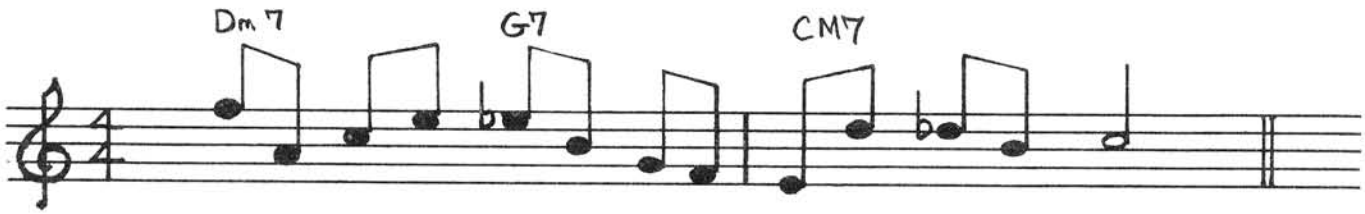
57. Play Exercise #57 in 12 keys. This pattern shows one possible application of a Pentatonic Scale on a II-V-I progression.



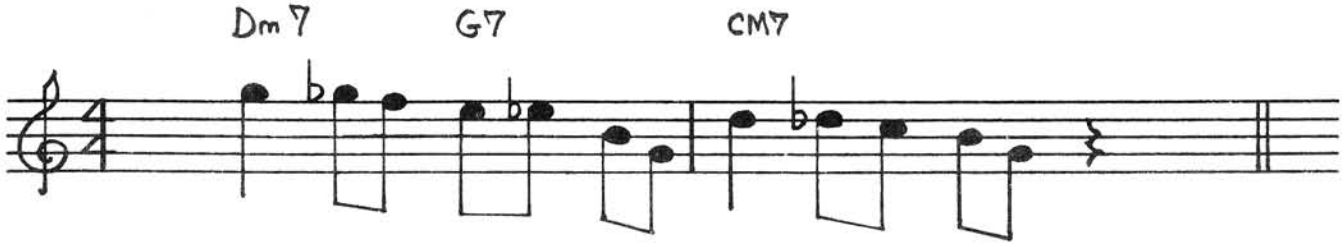
58. Play Exercise #58 in 12 keys.



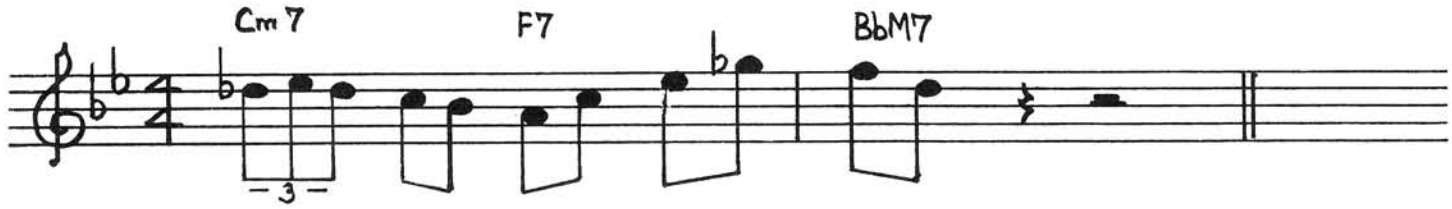
59. Play Exercise #59 in 12 keys.



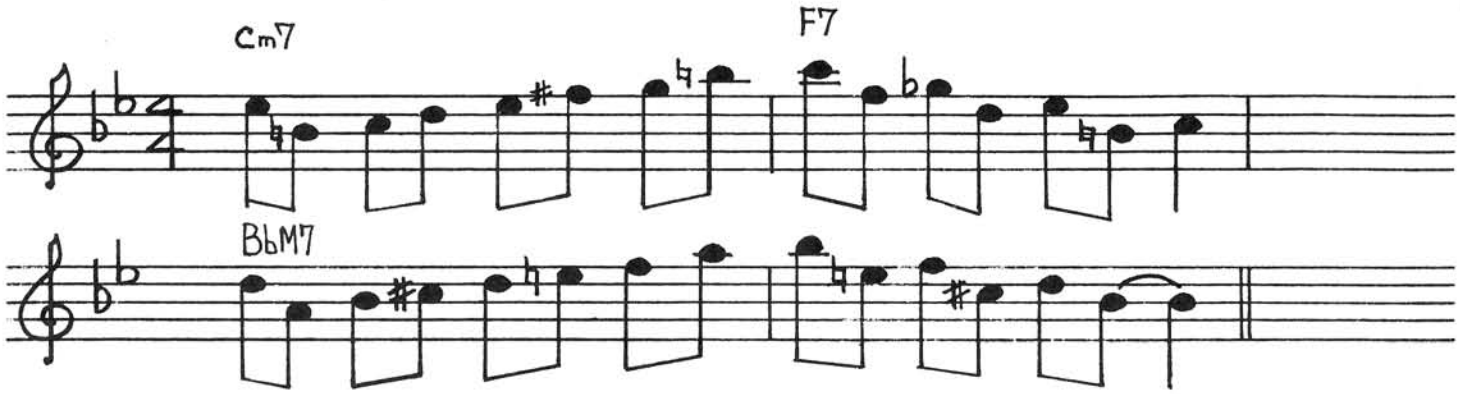
60. Play Exercise #60 in 12 keys.



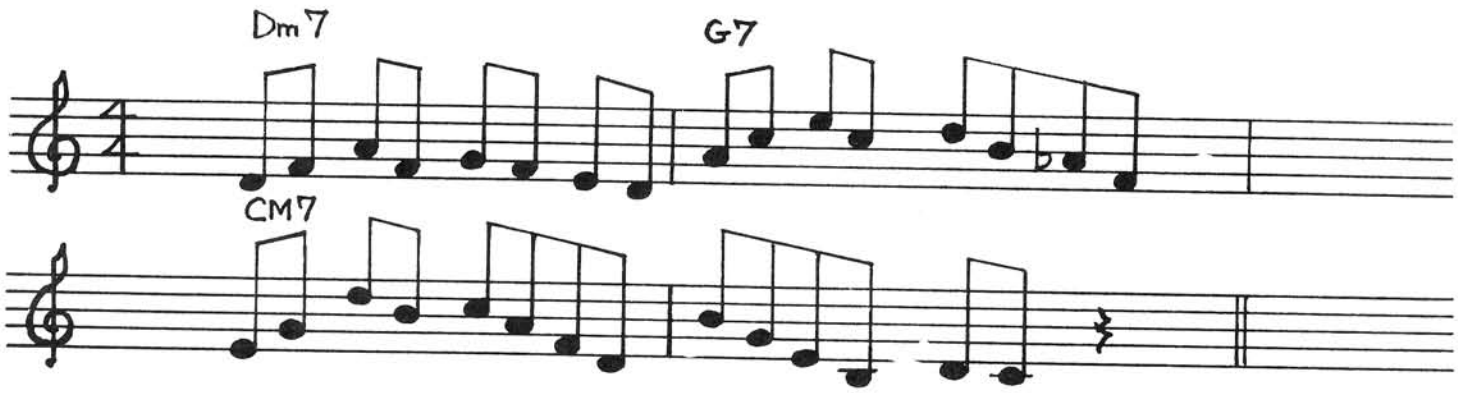
61. Play Exercise #61 in 12 keys.



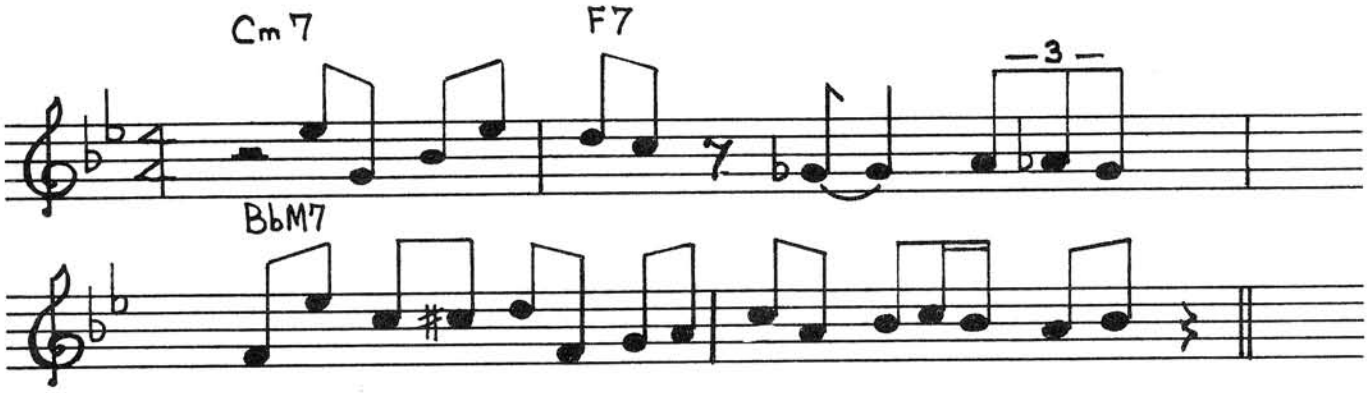
62. Play Exercise #62 in 12 keys.



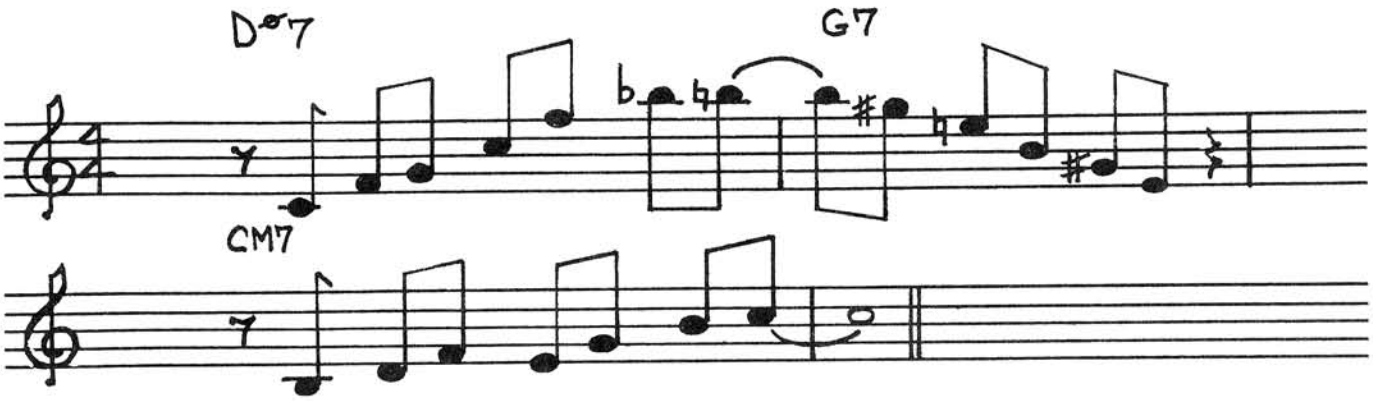
63. Play Exercise #63 in 12 keys.



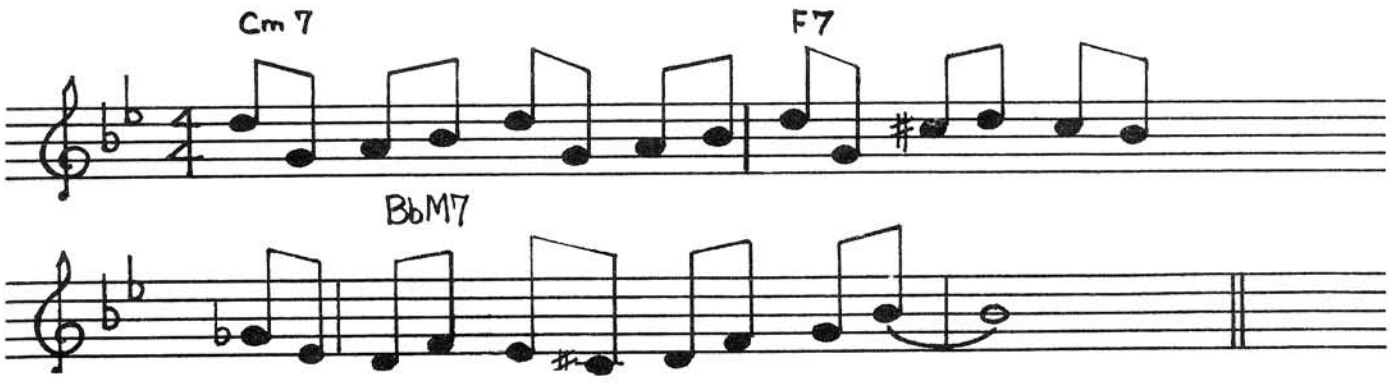
64. Play Exercise #64 in 12 keys.



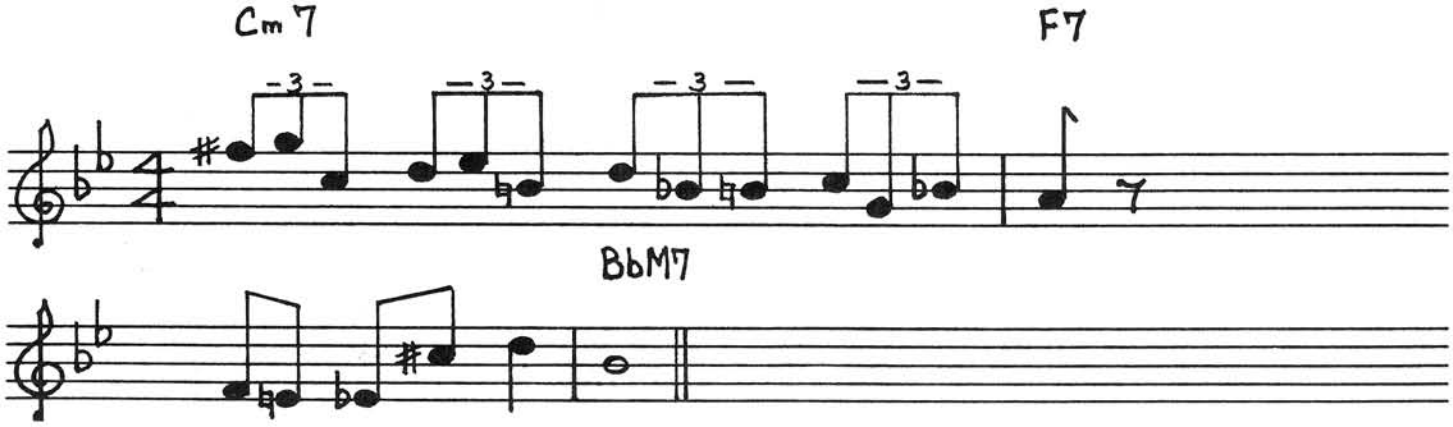
65. Play Exercise #65 in 12 keys.



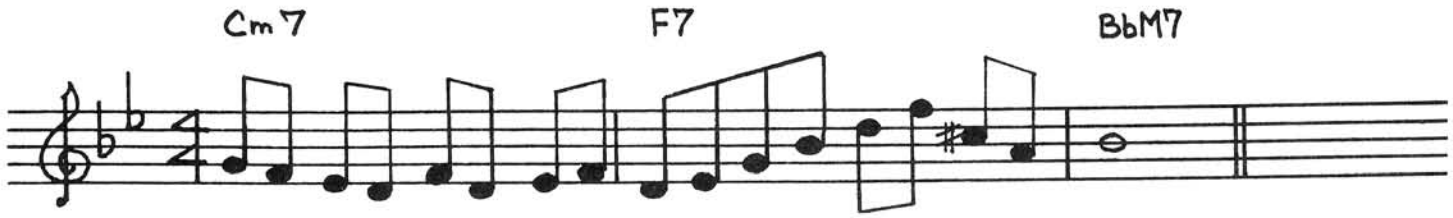
66. Play Exercise #66 in 12 keys.



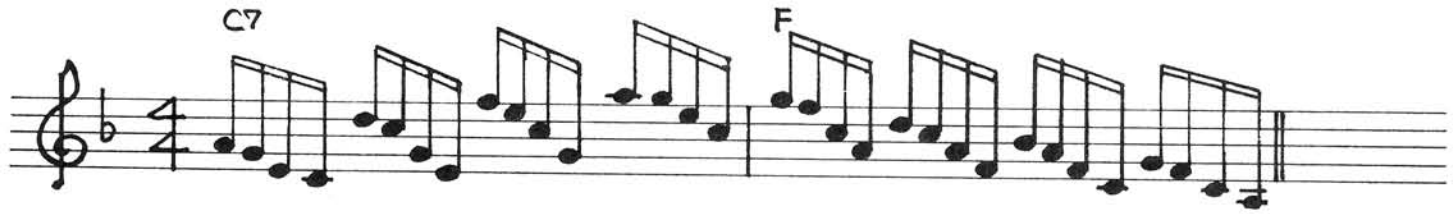
67. Play Exercise #67 in 12 keys.



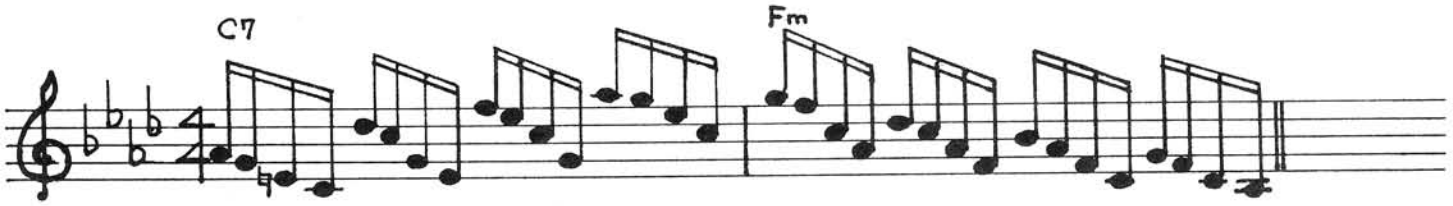
68. Play Exercise #68 in 12 keys.



69. Play Exercise #69 in 12 keys.

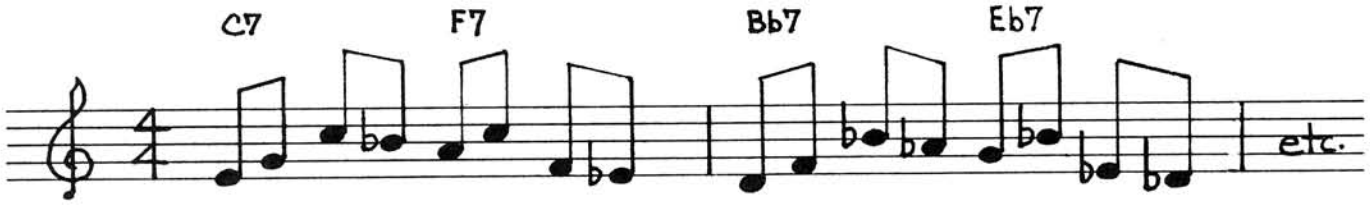


70. Play Exercise #70 in 12 keys.

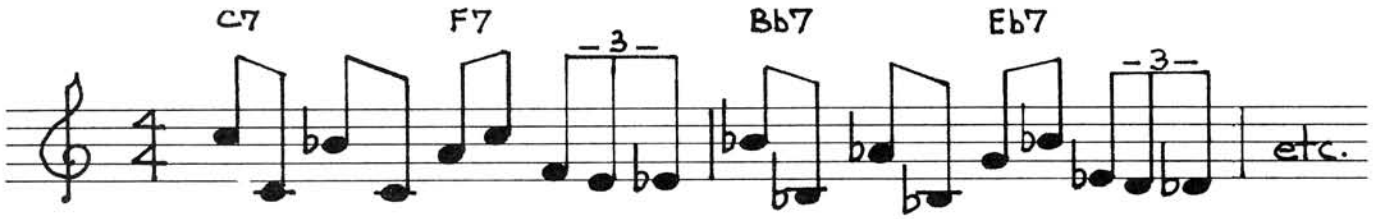


Cycles

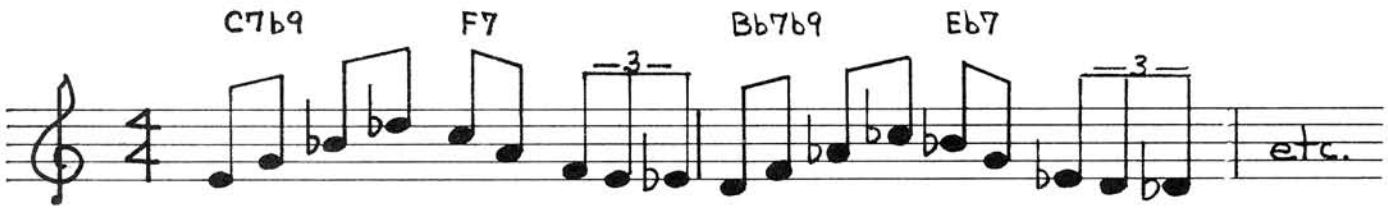
71. Continue Exercise #71 in cycle. Play root bass note in left hand.



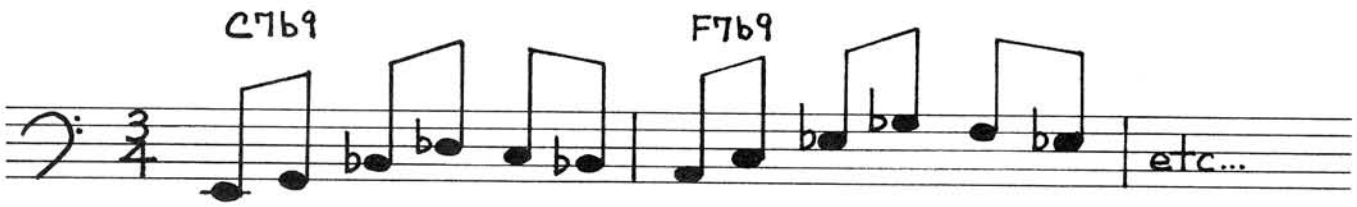
72. Continue Exercise #72 in cycle, playing root bass notes in left hand. Also start pattern on F7.



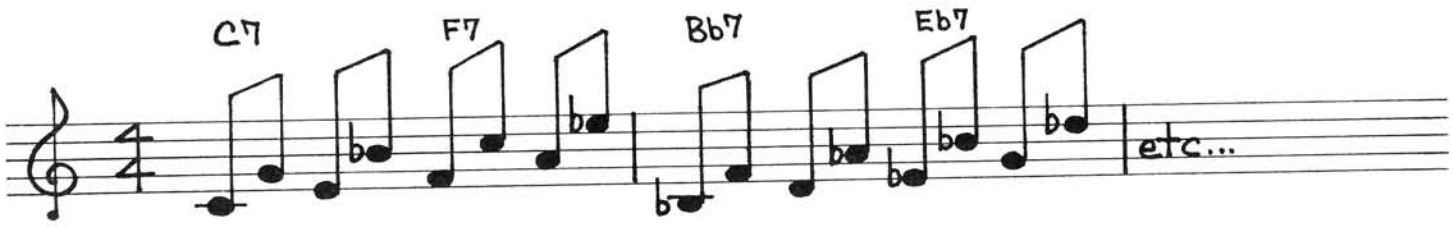
73. Continue Exercise #73 in cycle, playing root bass notes in left hand. Also start pattern on F7b9.



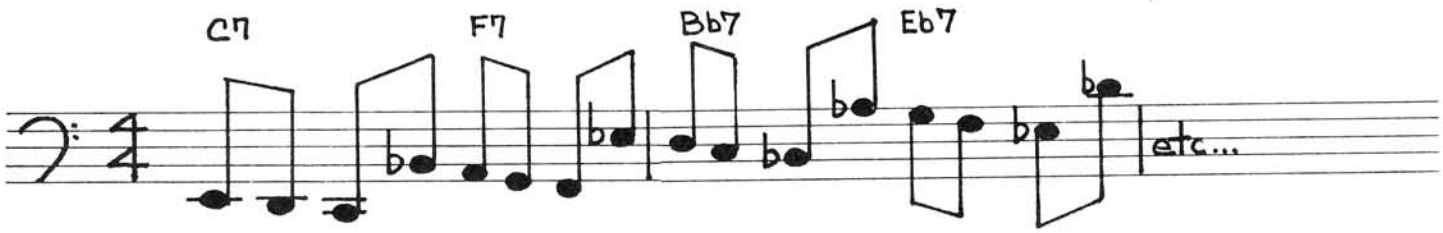
74. Continue Exercise #74 in cycle. Play root bass note in left hand.



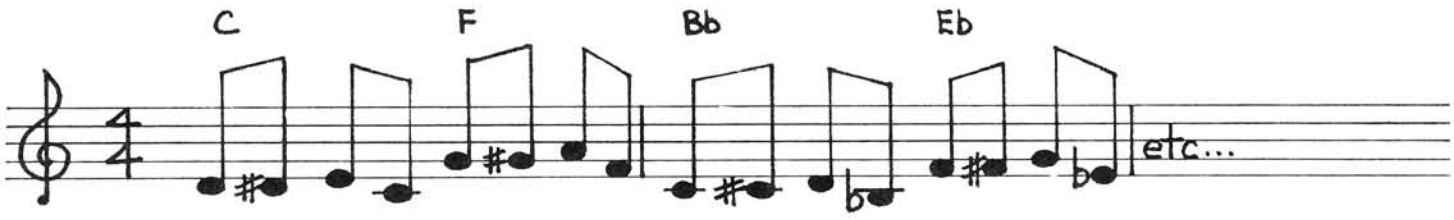
75. Continue Exercise #75 in cycle.



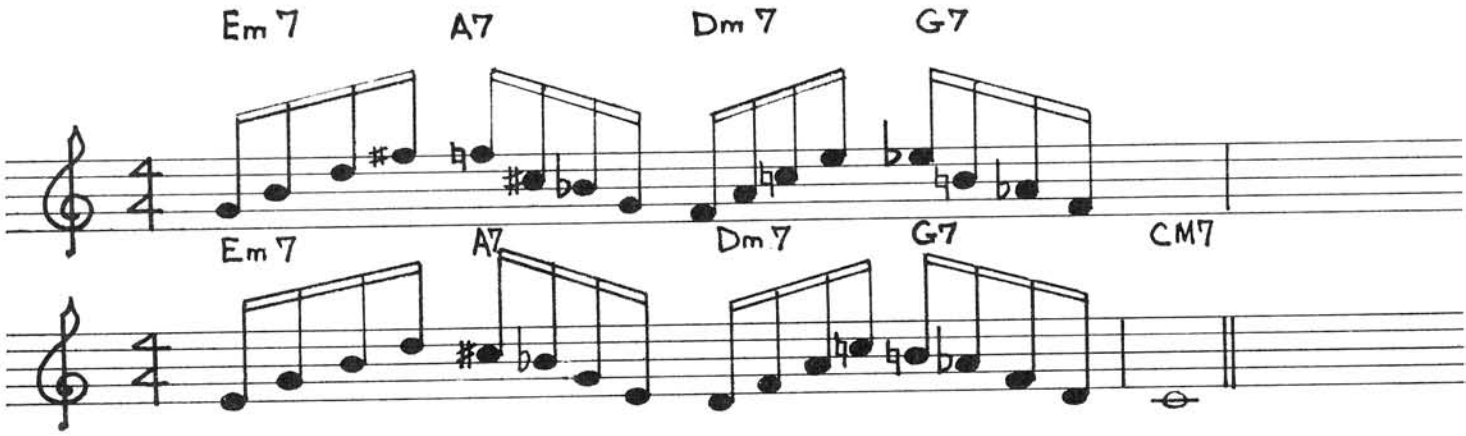
76. Continue Exercise #76 in cycle.



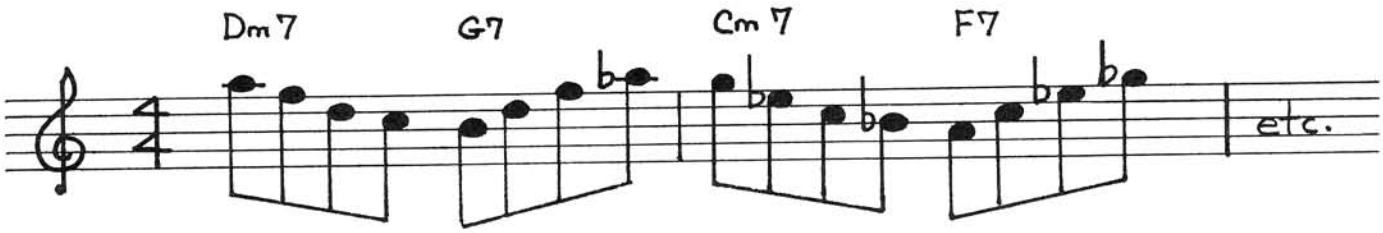
77. Continue Exercise #77 in cycle. This exercise can be played with a M7 or X7.



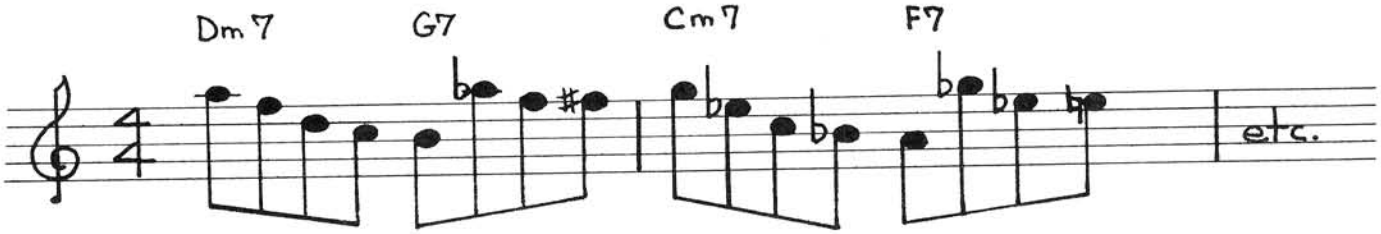
78. Play Exercise #78 in 12 keys.



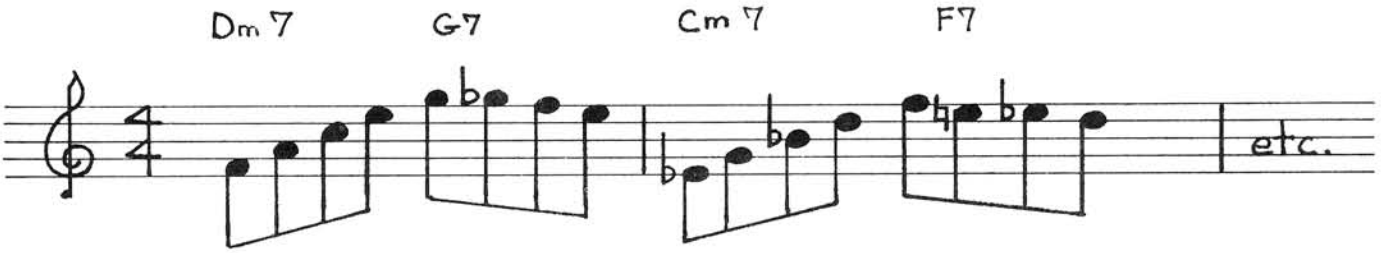
79. Continue Exercise #79 in cycle. Also start pattern on Ebm7.



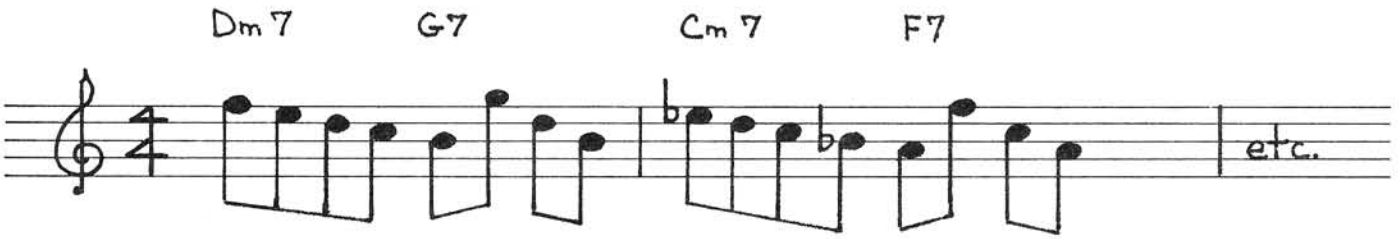
80. Continue Exercise #80 in cycle. Also start pattern on Ebm7.



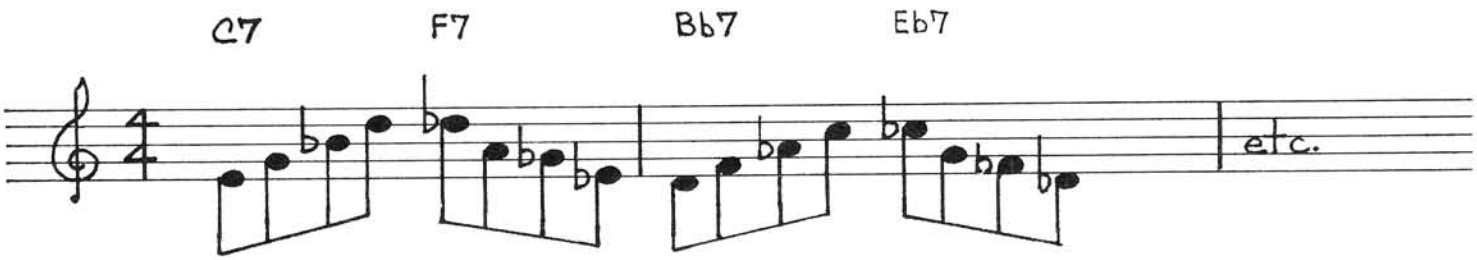
81. Continue Exercise #81 in cycle. Also start pattern on Ebm7.



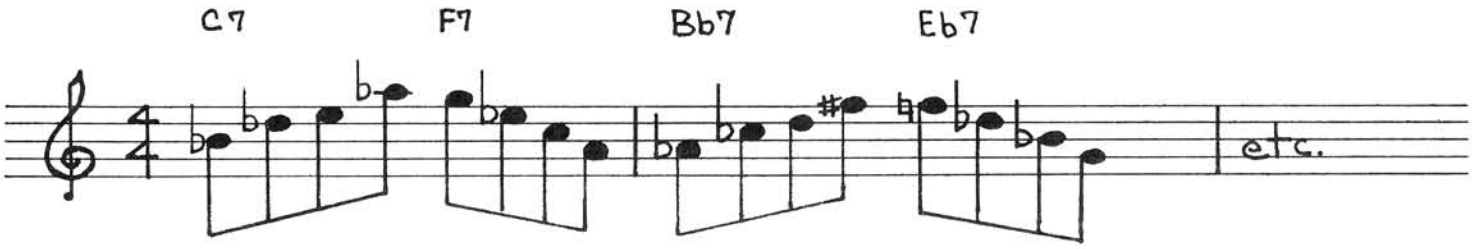
82. Continue Exercise #82 in cycle. Also start pattern on Ebm7.



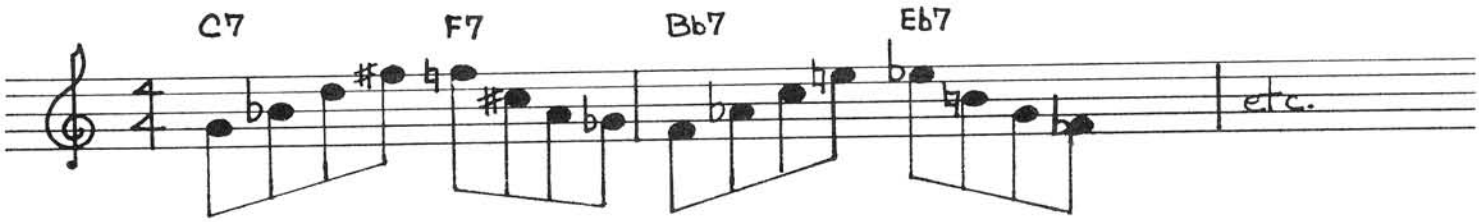
83. Continue Exercise #83 in cycle.



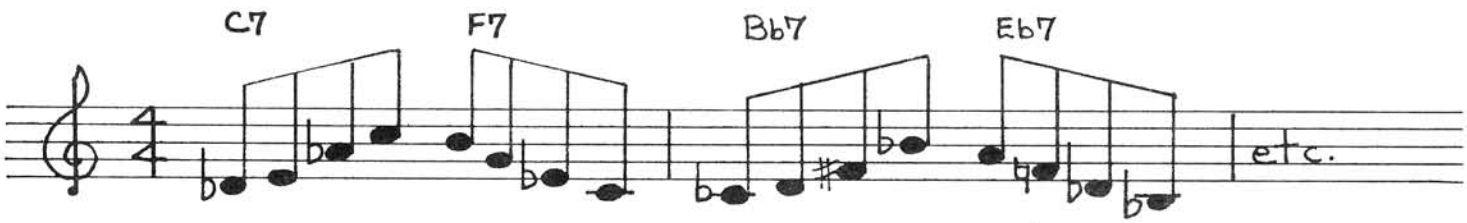
84. Continue Exercise #84 in cycle.



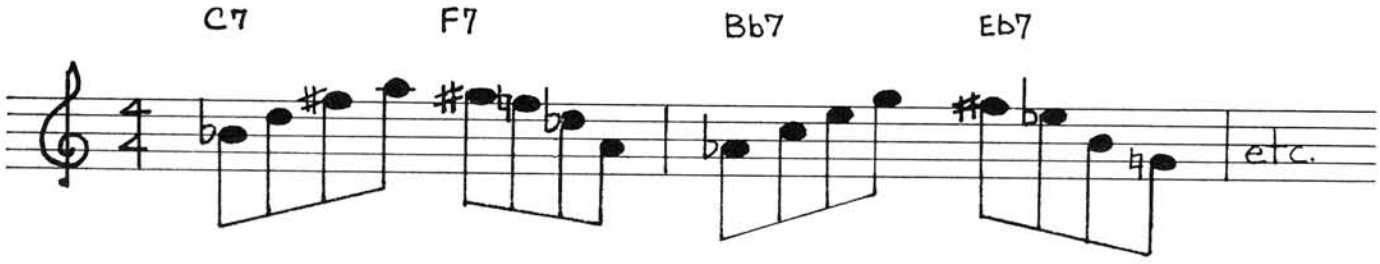
85. Continue Exercise #85 in cycle.



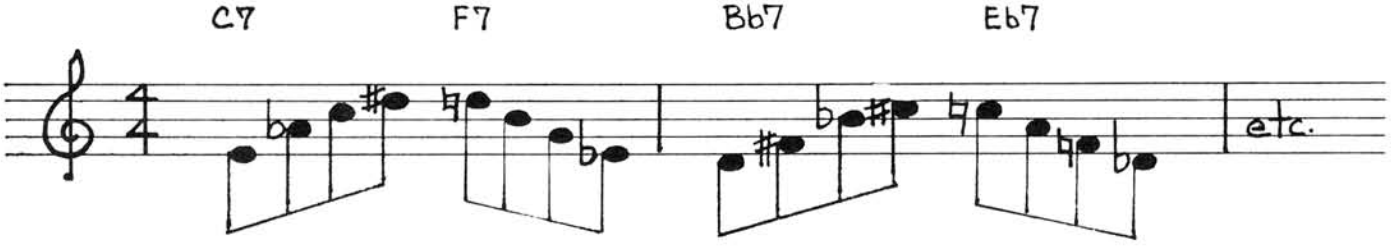
86. Continue Exercise #86 in cycle.



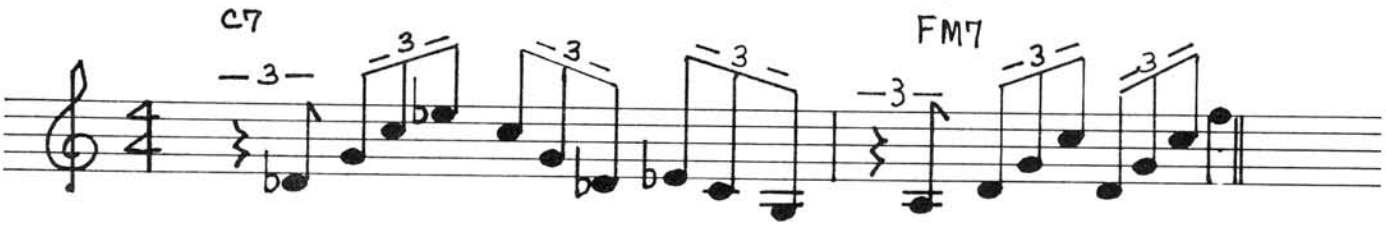
87. Continue Exercise #87 in cycle.



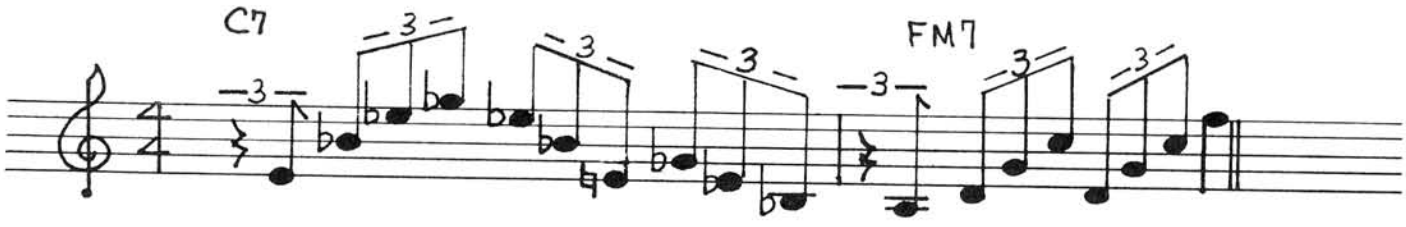
88. Continue Exercise #88 in cycle.



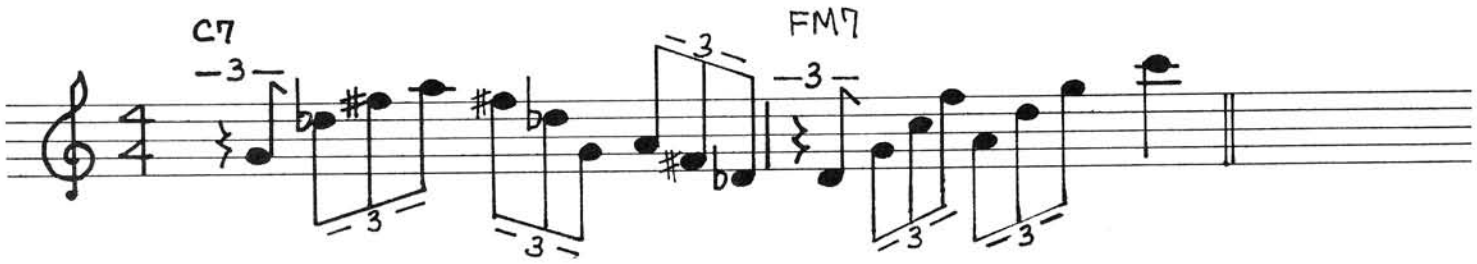
89. Play Exercise #89 in 12 keys.



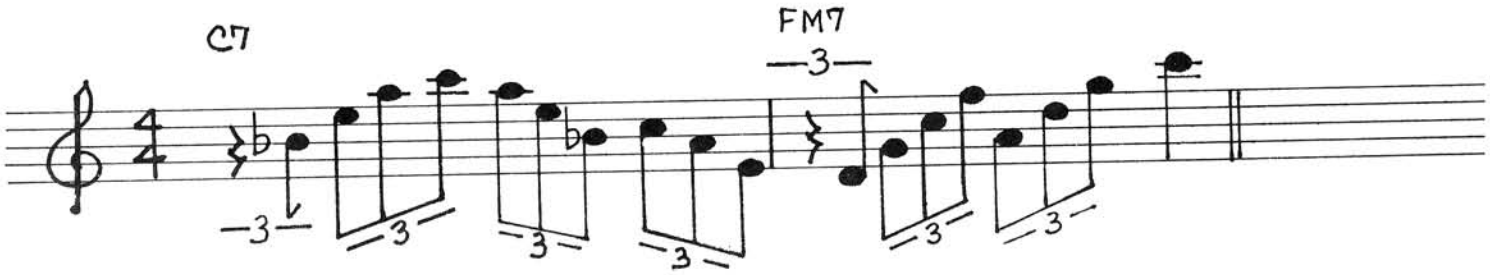
90. Play Exercise #90 in 12 keys.



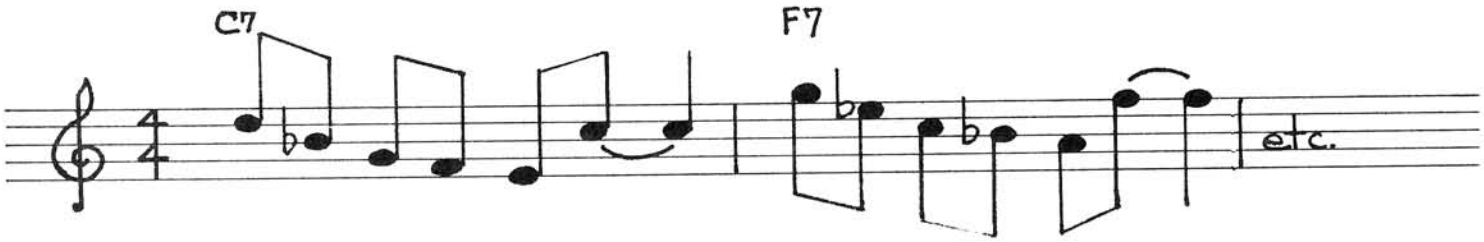
91. Play Exercise #91 in 12 keys.



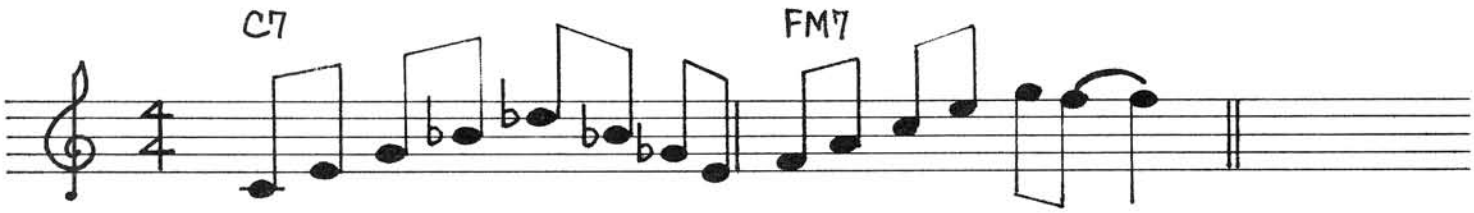
92. Play Exercise #92 in 12 keys.



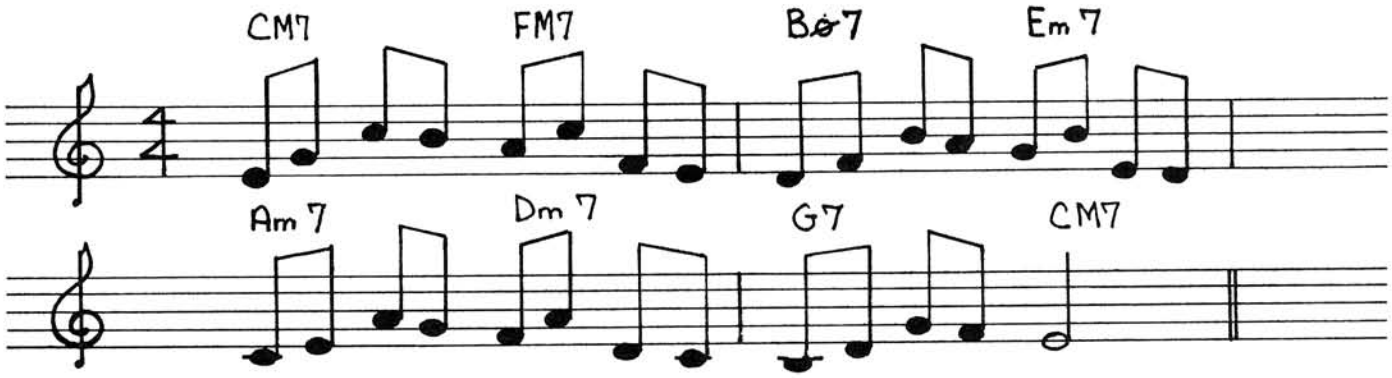
93. Continue Exercise #93 in cycle.



94. Play Exercise #93 in 12 keys.

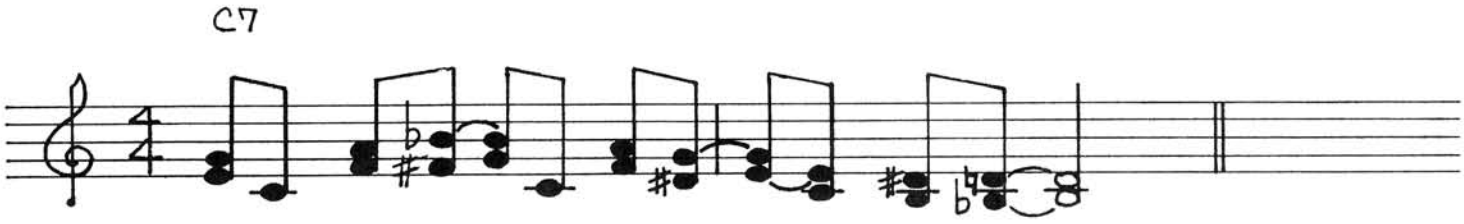


95. The following chord progression is known as the Diatonic Cycle. Play Exercise #95 in 12 keys; then try to improvise on it.



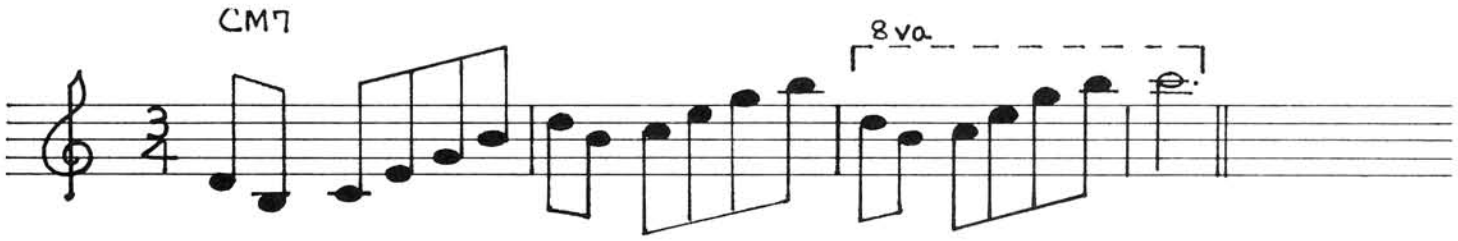
Miscellaneous

96. Play Exercise #96 in 12 keys.

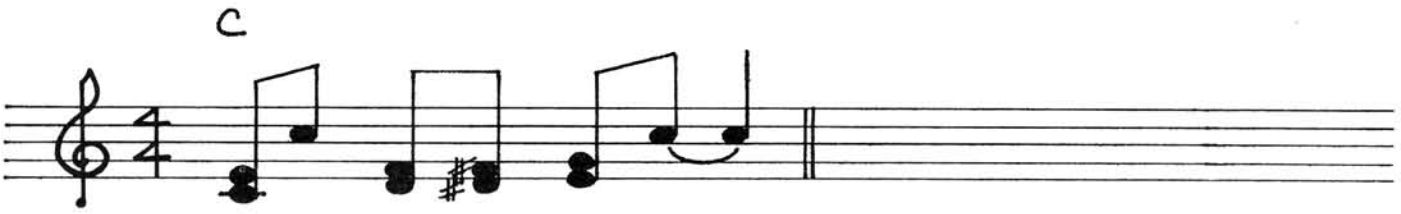


97. Play Exercise #97 in 12 keys.

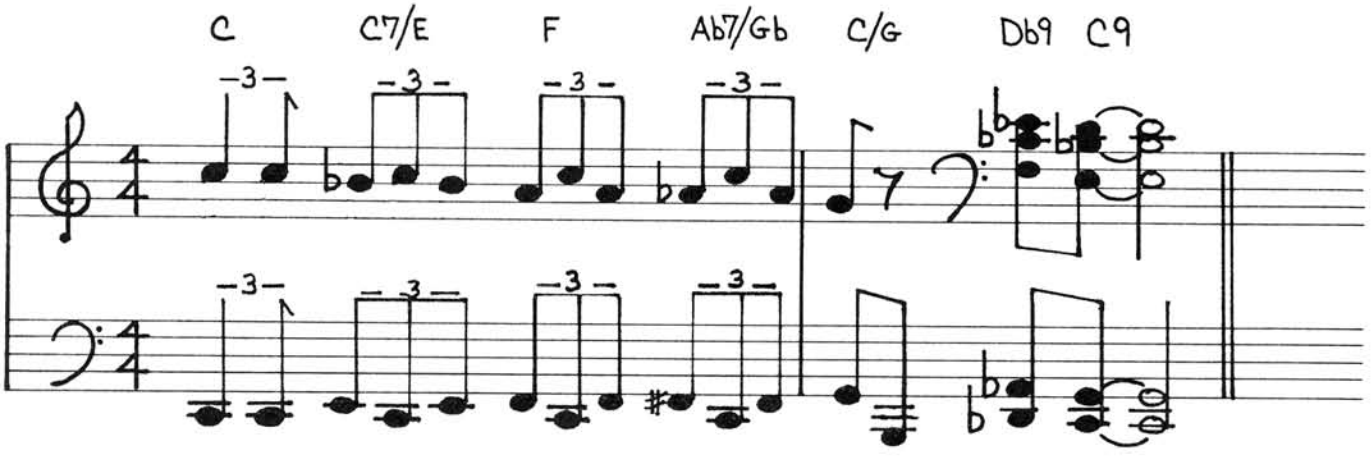
98. Play Exercise #98 in 12 keys. Play it also with the X7, m7 and mM7, keeping the D and B natural on beat 1 and modifying only beats 2 and 3.



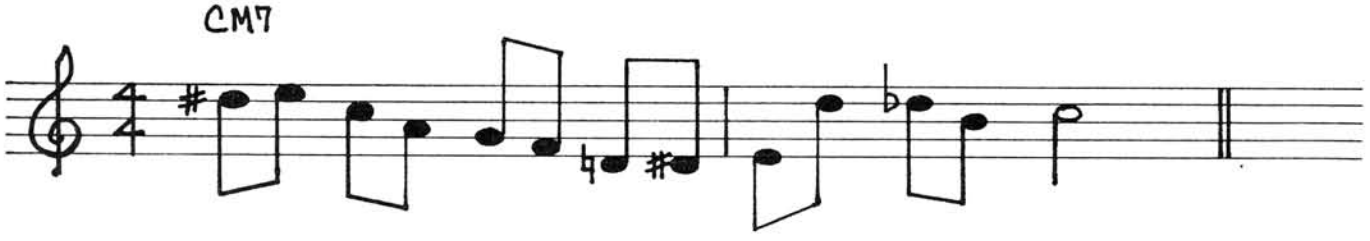
99. Play Exercise #99 in 12 keys.



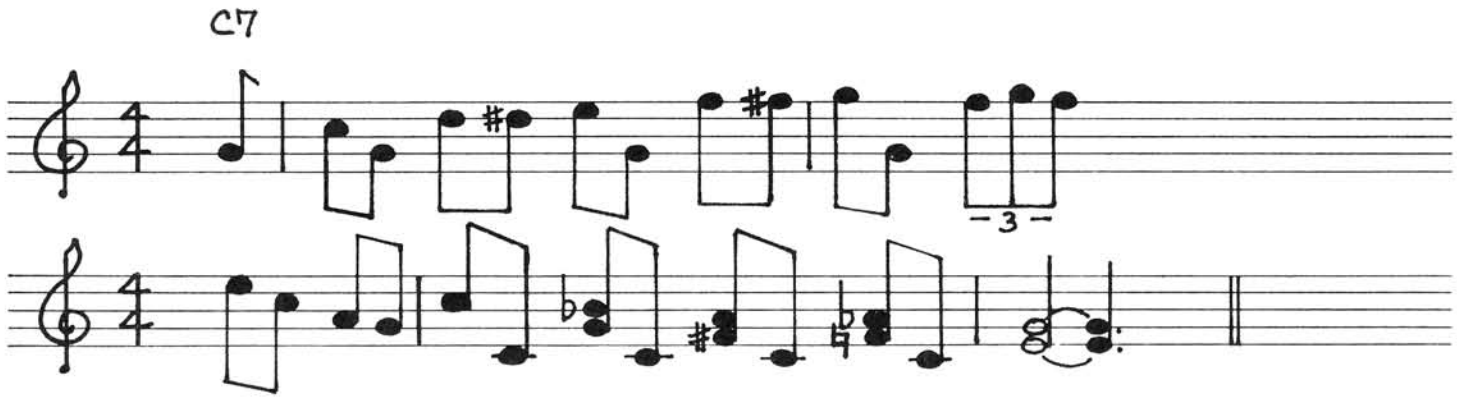
100. Play Exercise #100 in 12 keys. This is a <u>very</u> typical blues cadence. You may add a flat 5th or 13th to the two final right hand chords.



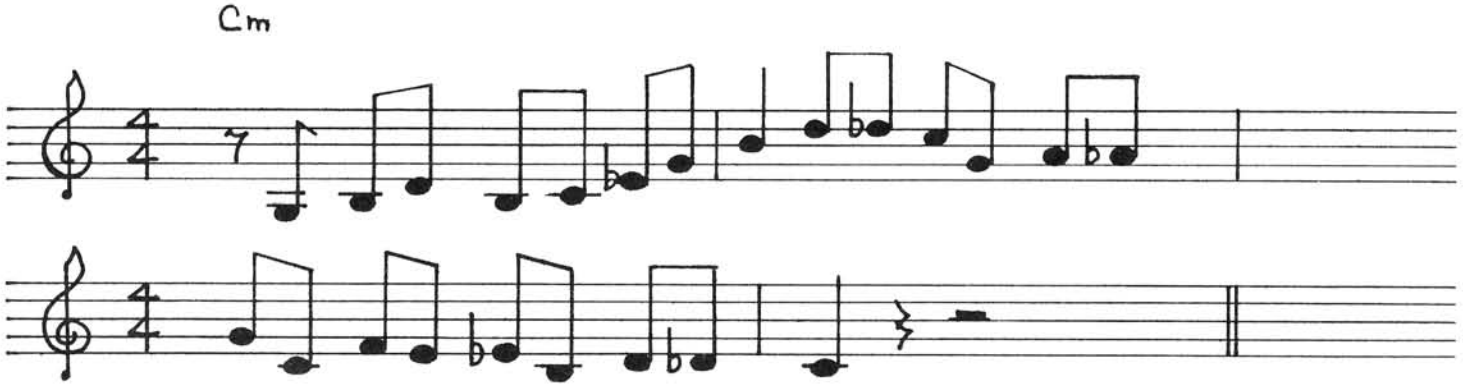
101. Play Exercise #101 in 12 keys.



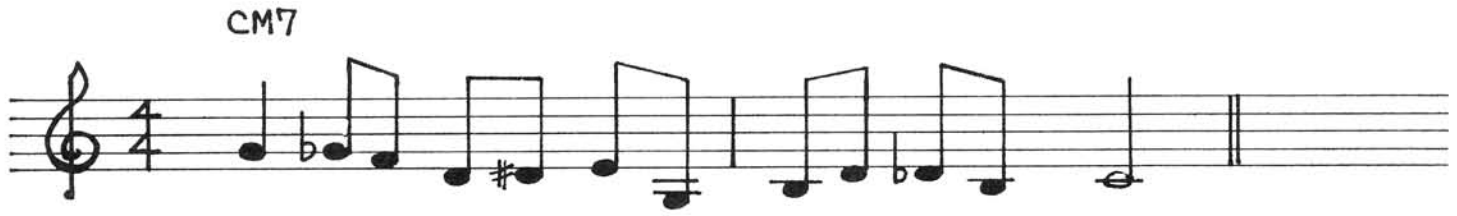
102. Play Exercise #102 in 12 keys.



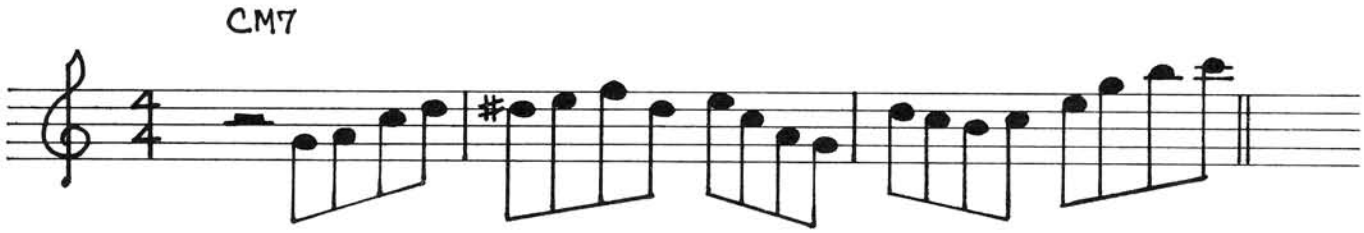
103. Play Exercise #103 in 12 keys.



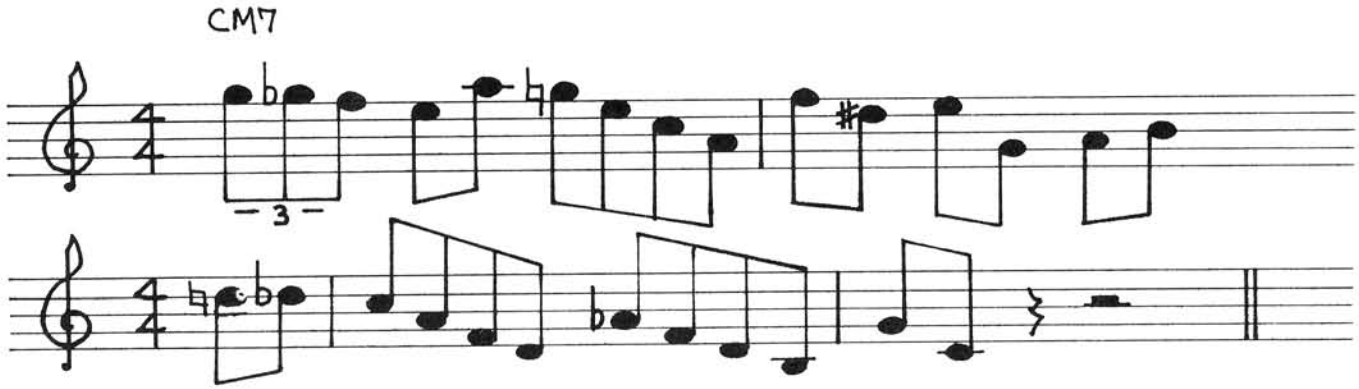
104. Play Exercise #104 in 12 keys.



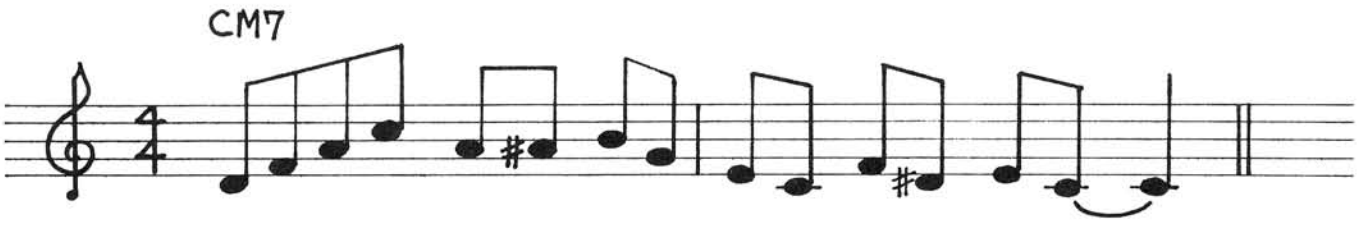
105. Play Exercise #105 in 12 keys.



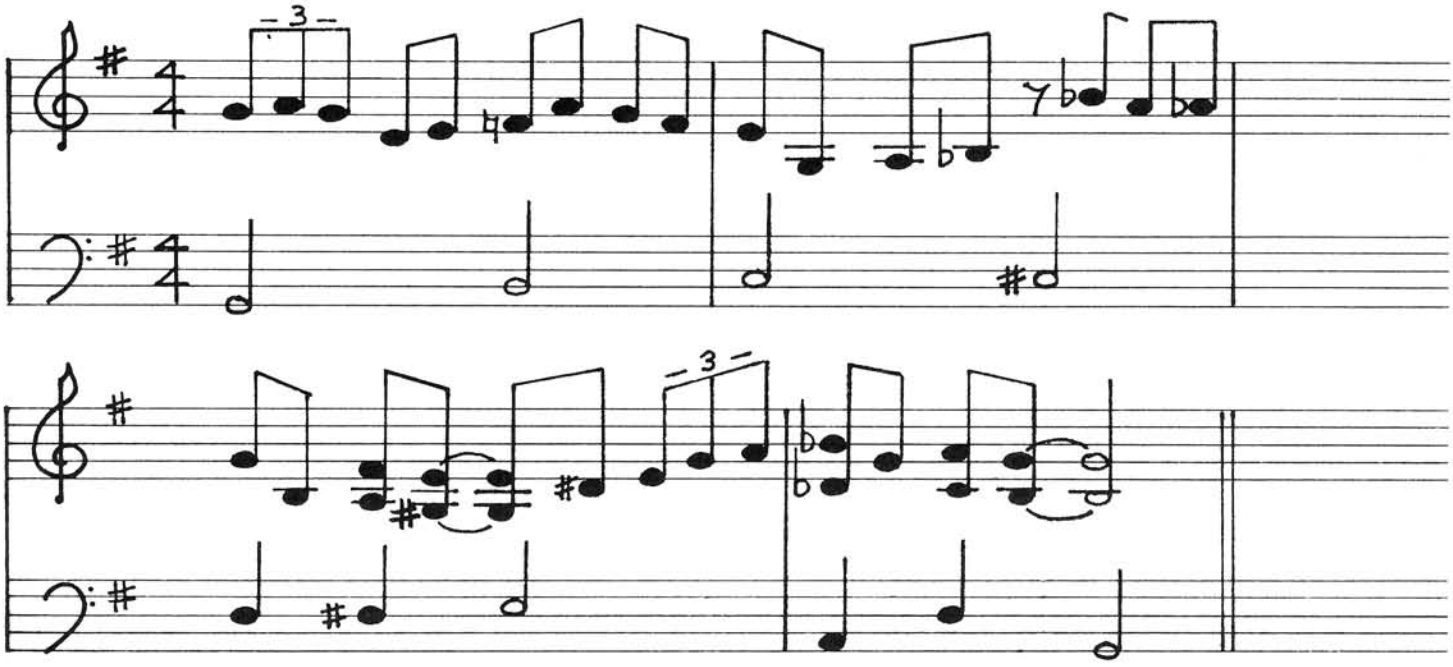
106. Play Exercise #106 in 12 keys.



107. Play Exercise #107 in 12 keys.



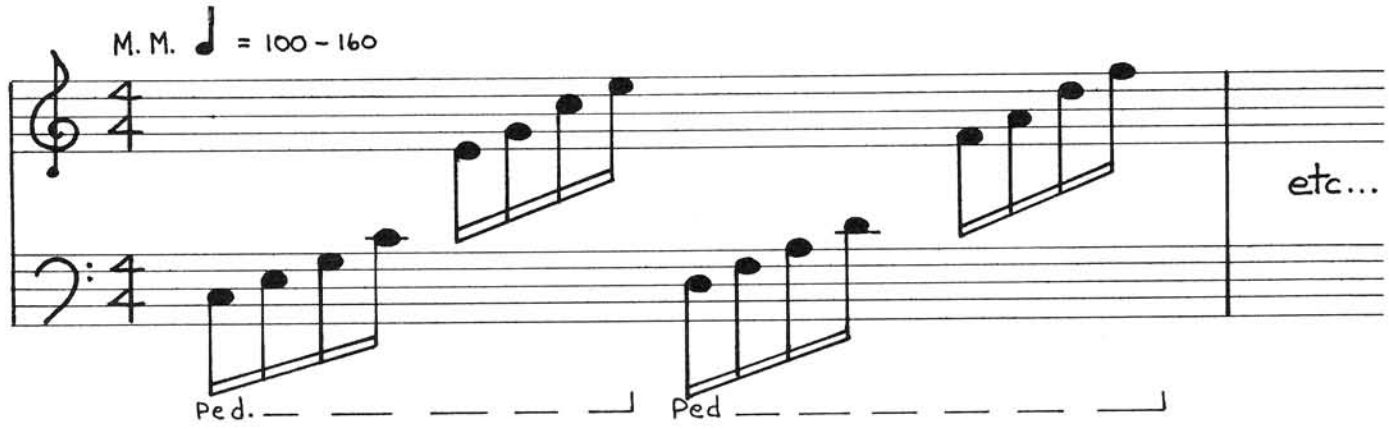
108. Play Exercise #108 in 12 keys.



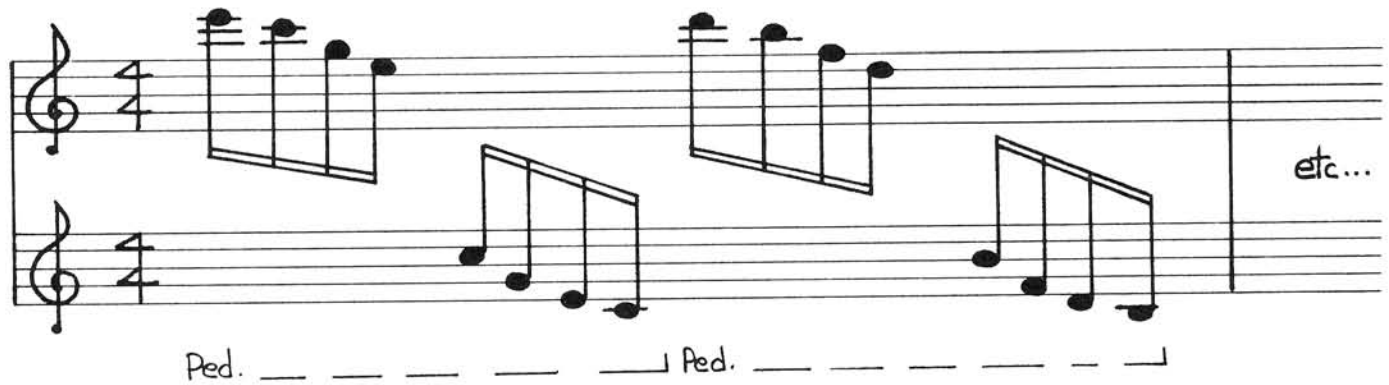
Linear & Diatonic Chord Patterns

109. Play Exercise #109 (A-B) in 12 keys. Also try starting on the first and second inversion.

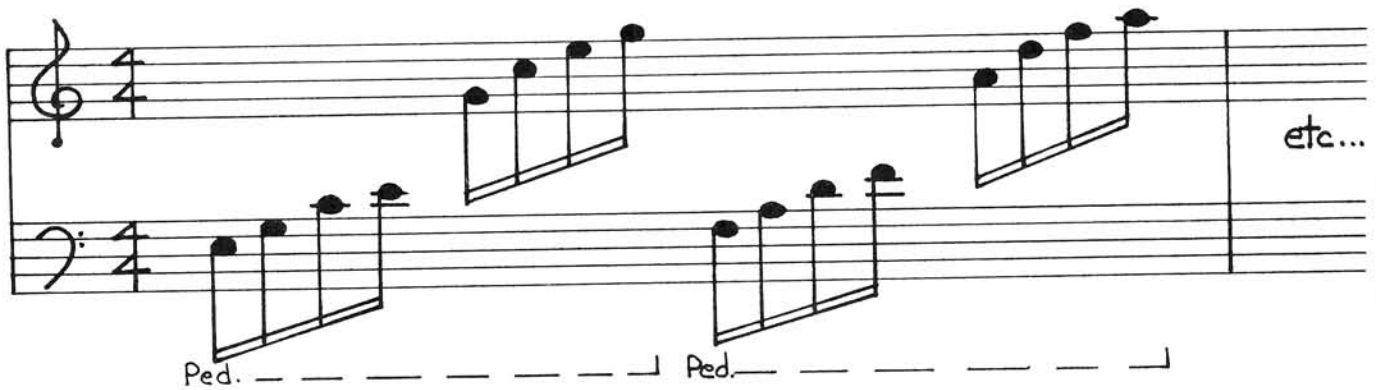
(A)



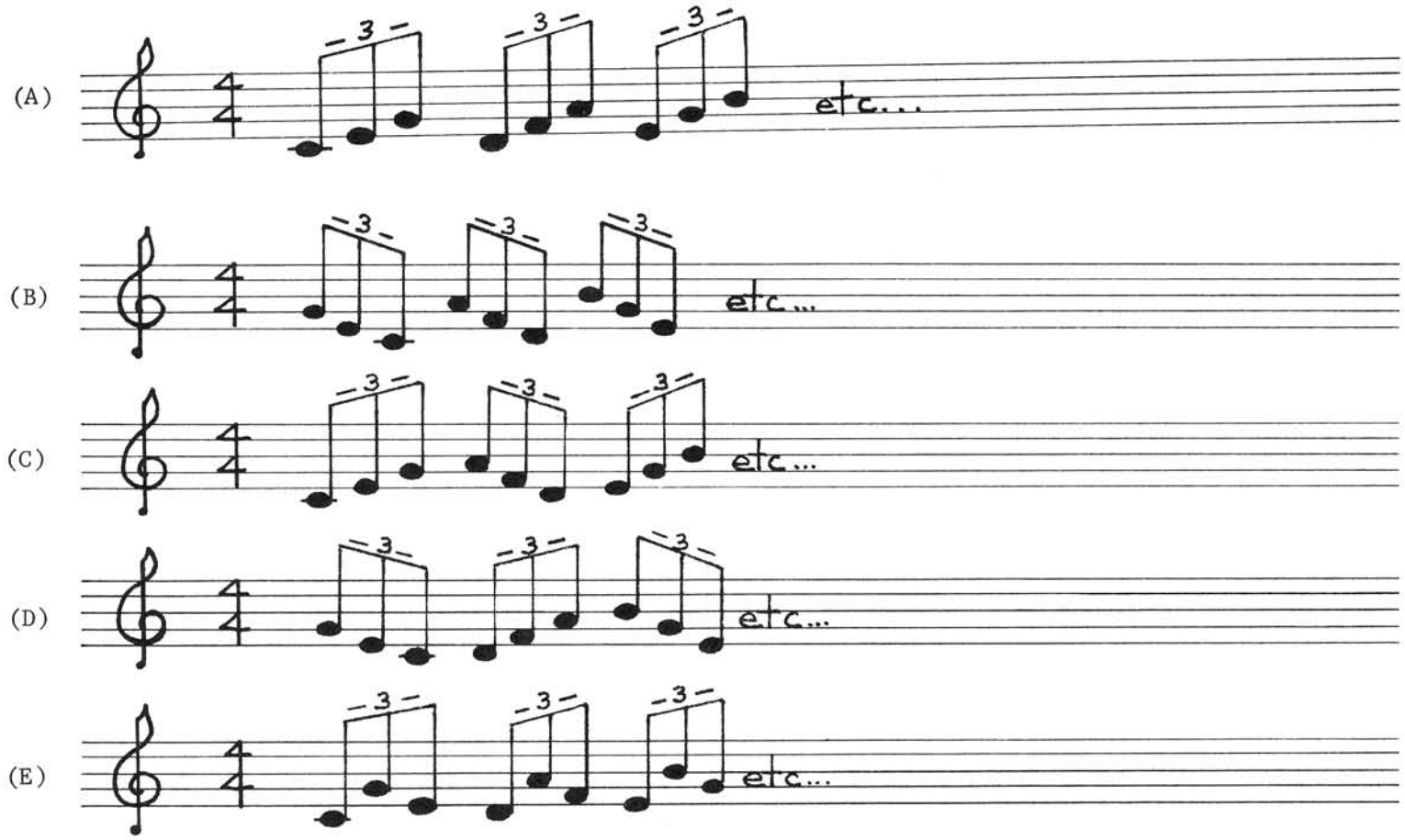
(B)



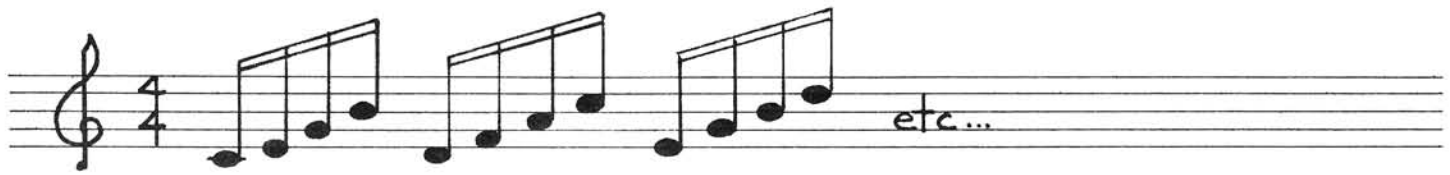
Example: 1st Inversion



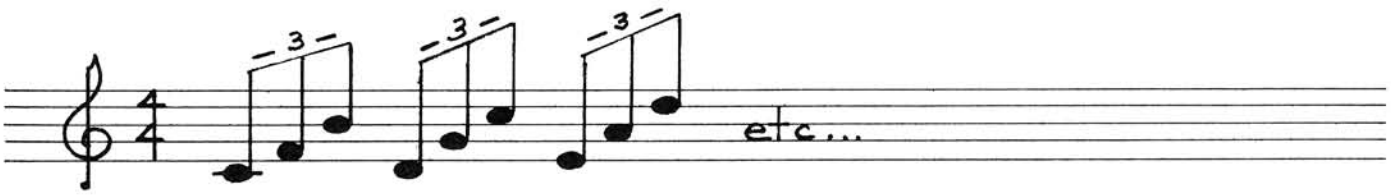
110. Play the following Exercise #110 (A-E) in 12 keys, up to the octave and back.



111. Vary Exercise #111 as I varied Exercise 110 (A-E) and practice in 12 keys.

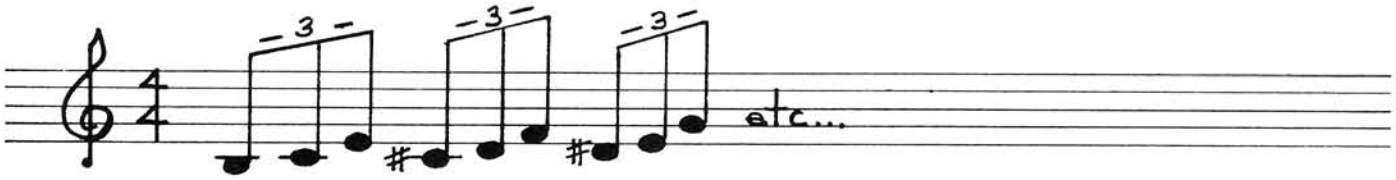


112. The following exercise is a pattern built in diatonic fourths. Using fourths as a basis for Melodic or Harmonic construction is known as the "quartal system." Practice Exercise #112 in 12 keys, with variations as in the previous exercise.

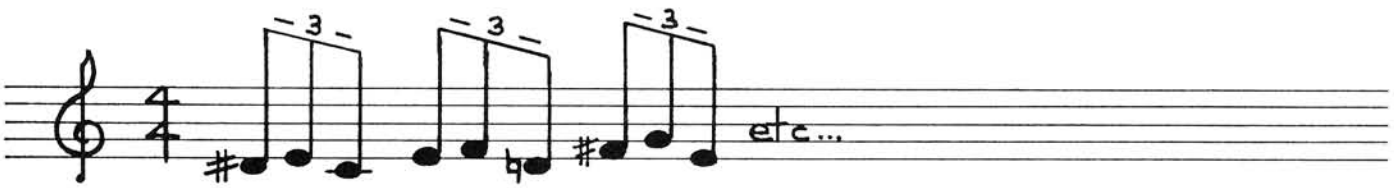


The following Exercises 113 - 128 are to be played in 12 keys, up to the octave and back.

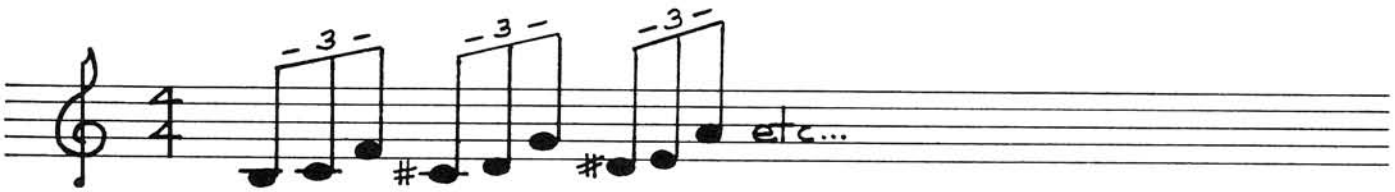
113.



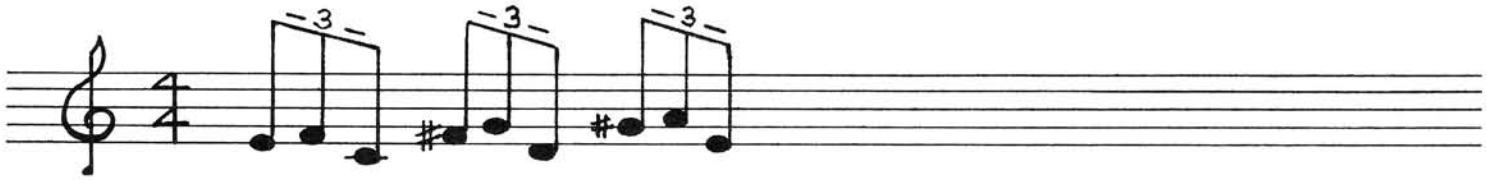
114.



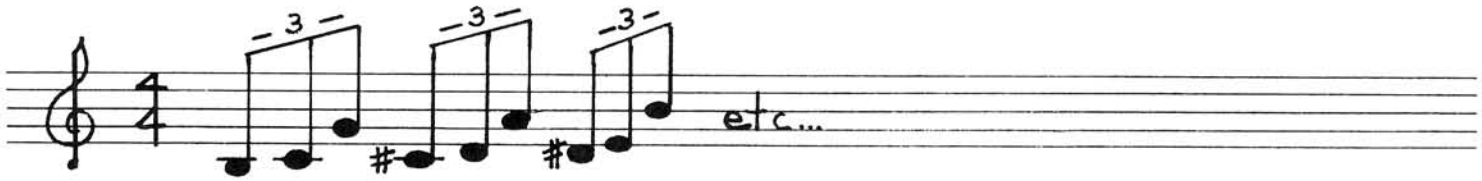
115.



116.

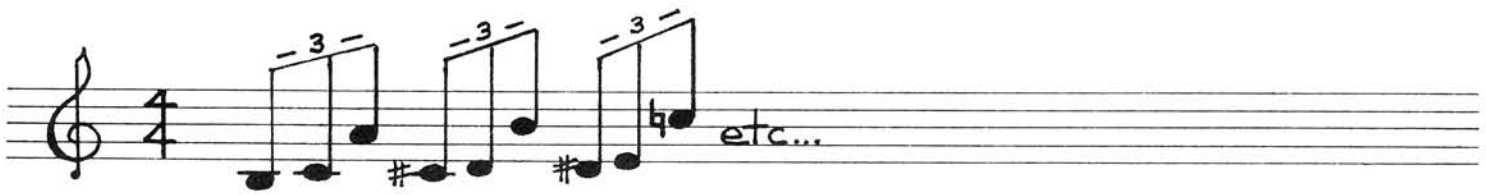


117.



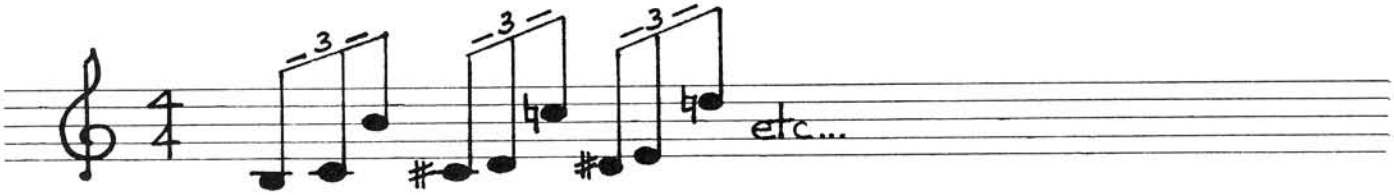
118.

119.



120.

121.



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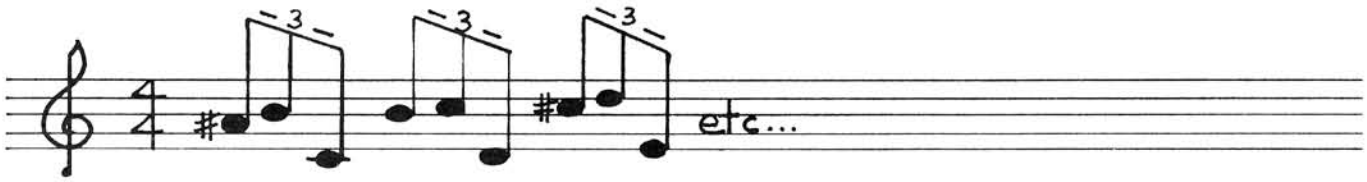
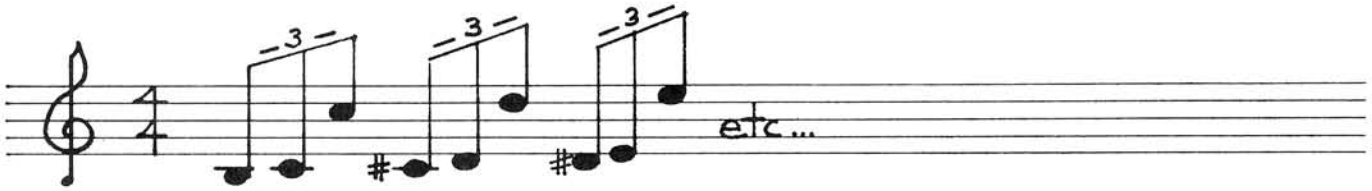


123.



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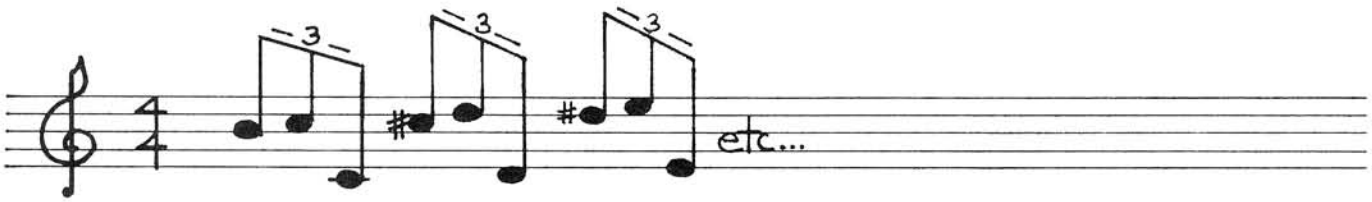

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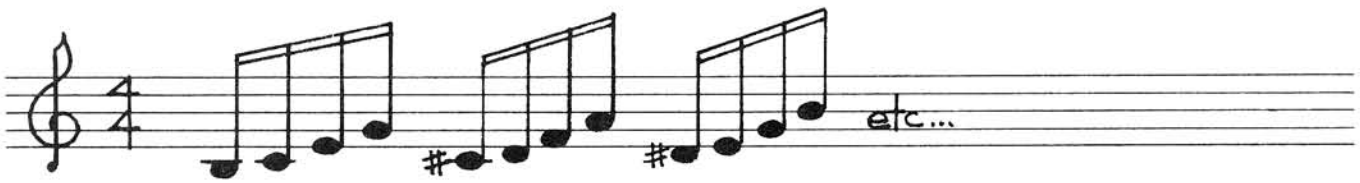

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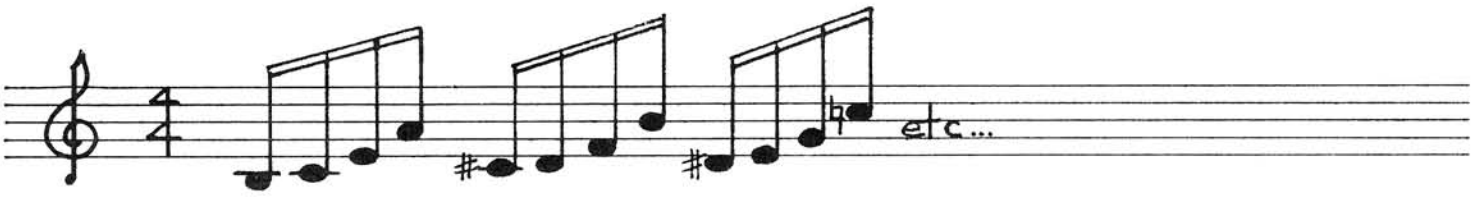

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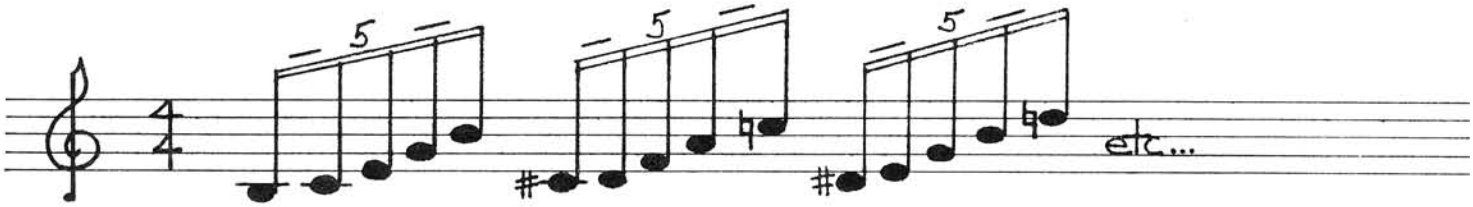
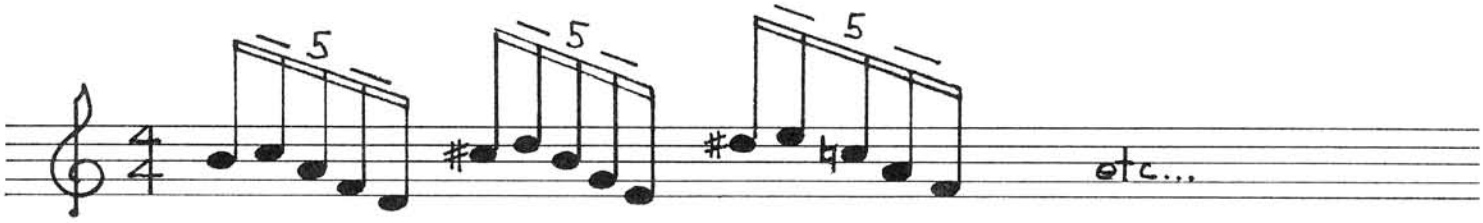


128.

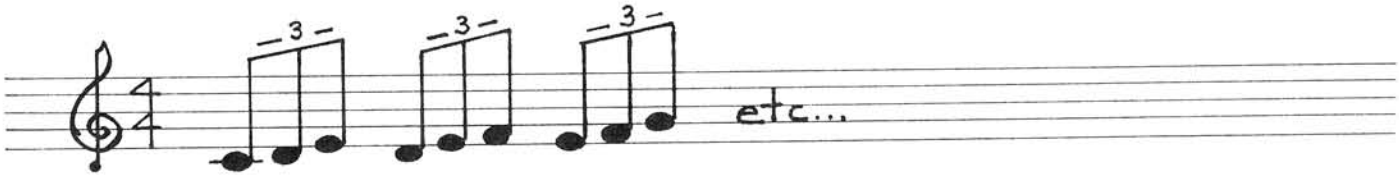


Scalic - Based Patterns

Exercises 129 - 152 are to be played in 12 keys, ascending and descending.

129.

130.



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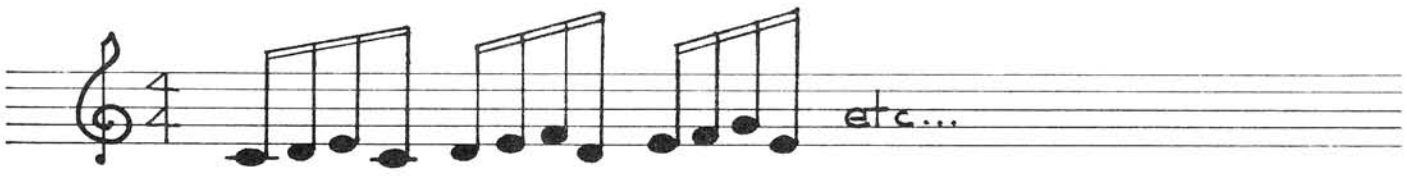

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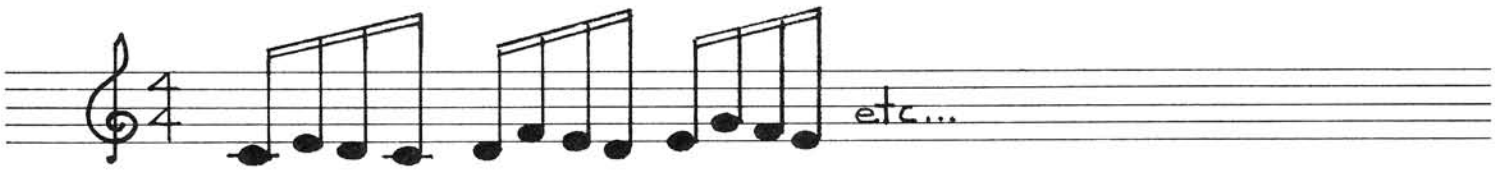
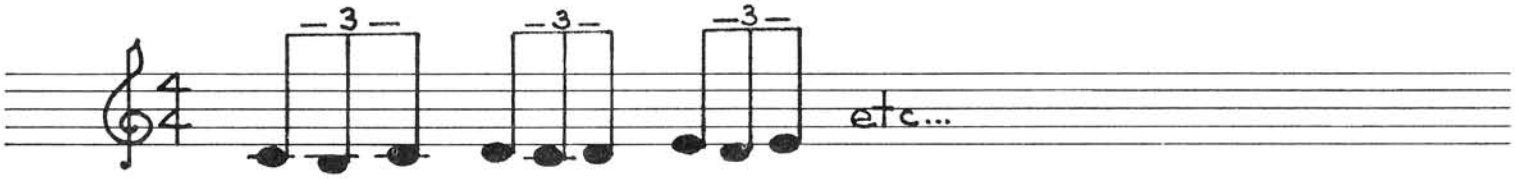


133.

134.



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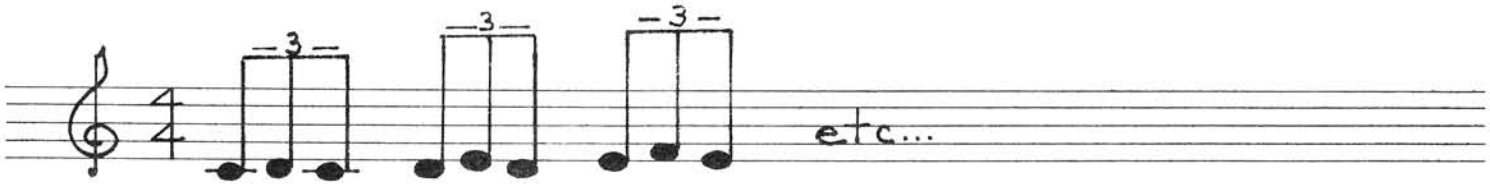

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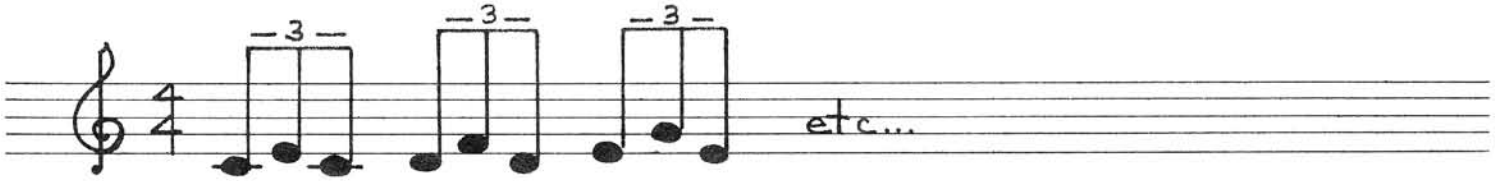

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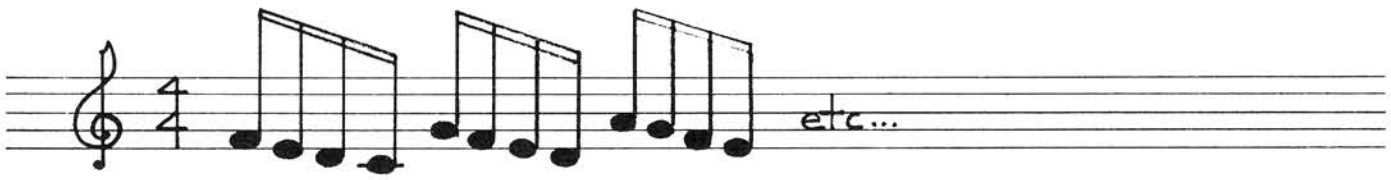
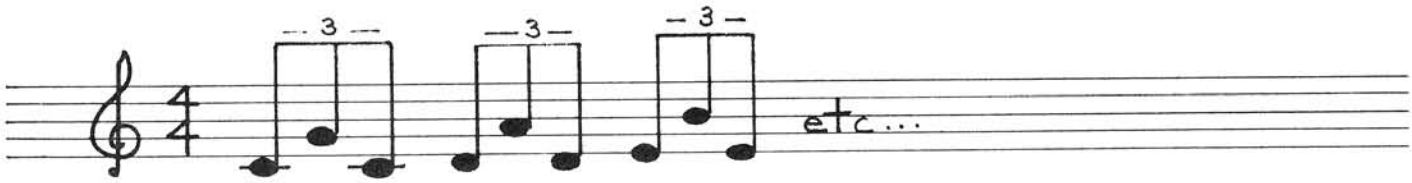


138.

139.



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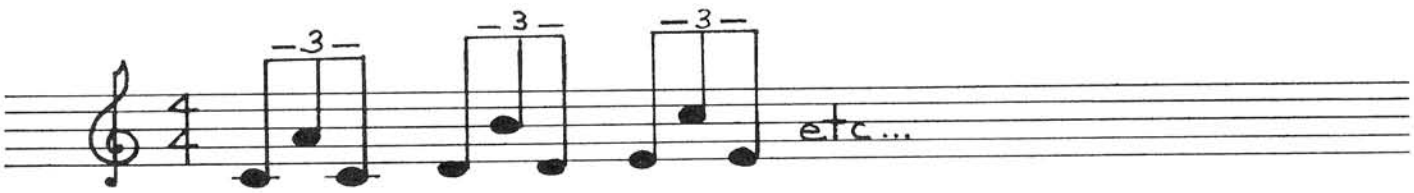

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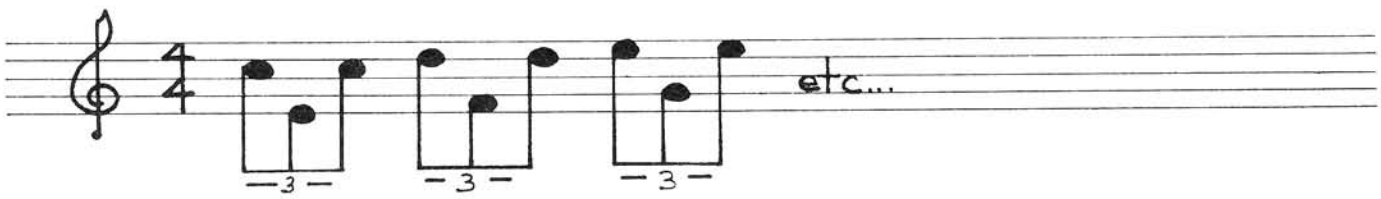

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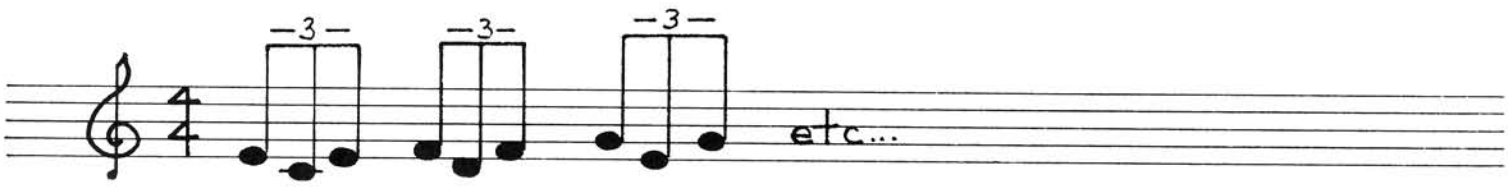

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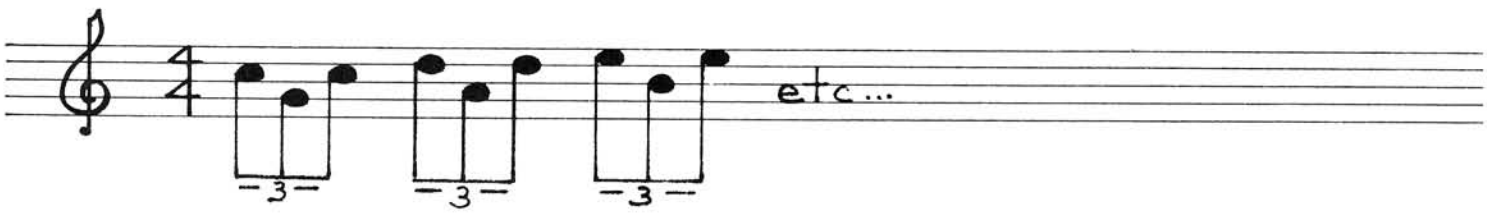
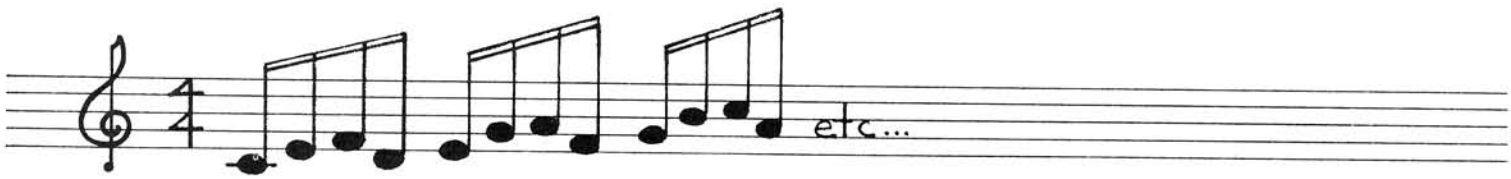
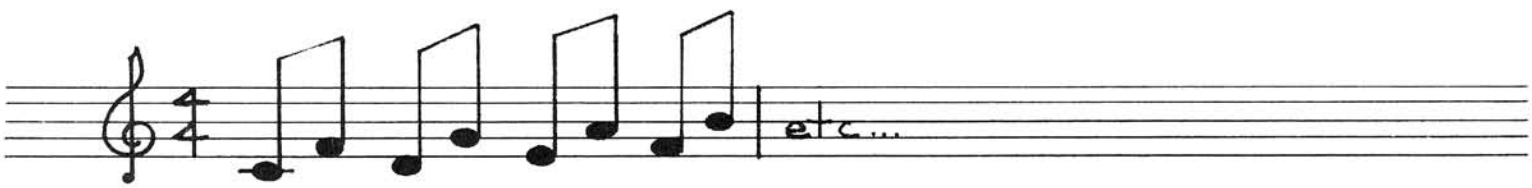


144.

145.

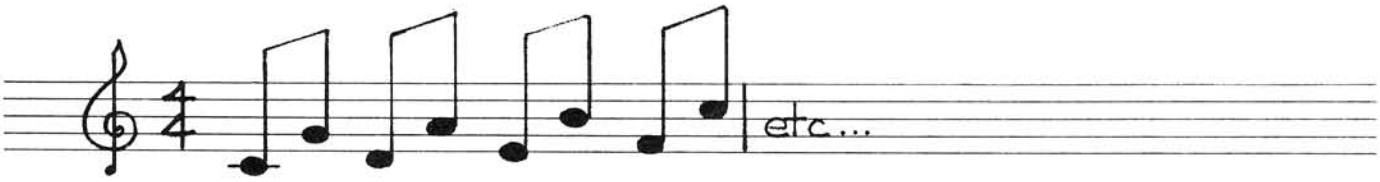


146.



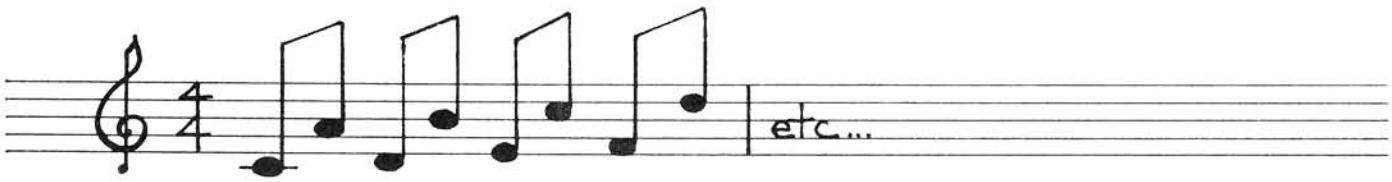
147.

148.



149.

150.



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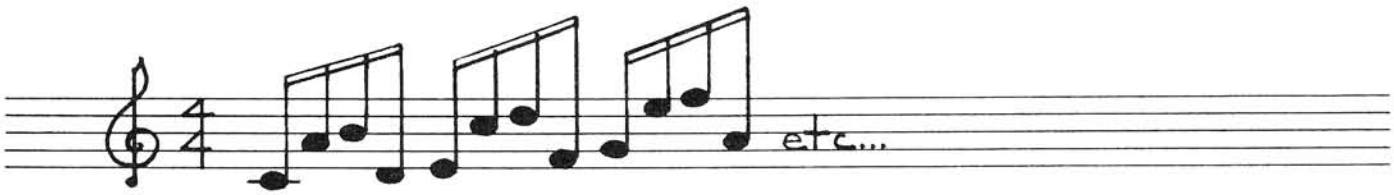
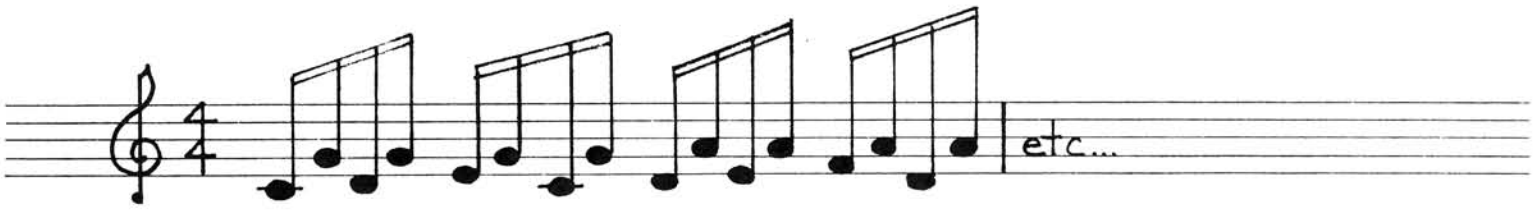


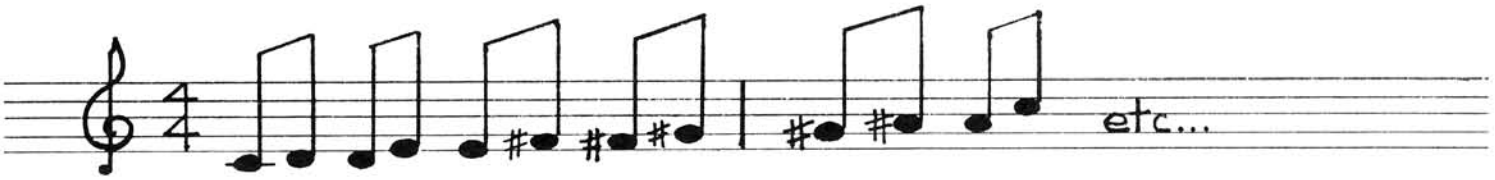
152.



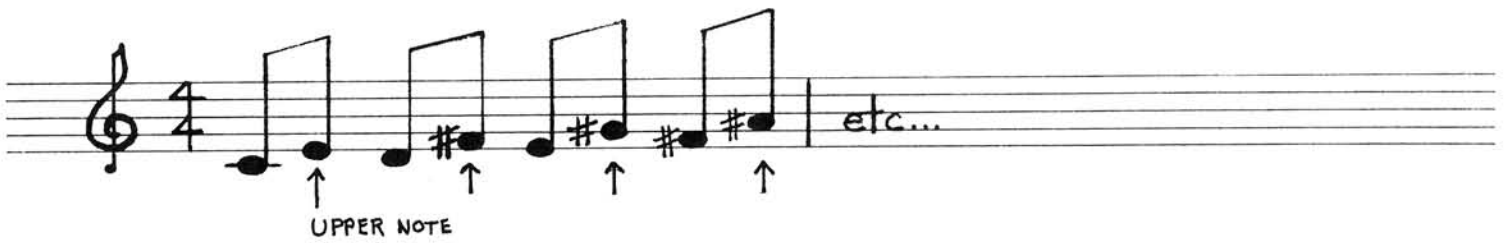
Note: These scalic-based patterns are endless. Experiment with your own patterns.

Exercises 153 - 160 are based on the Whole Tone scale. Play these exercises ascending and descending. Also start on Db.

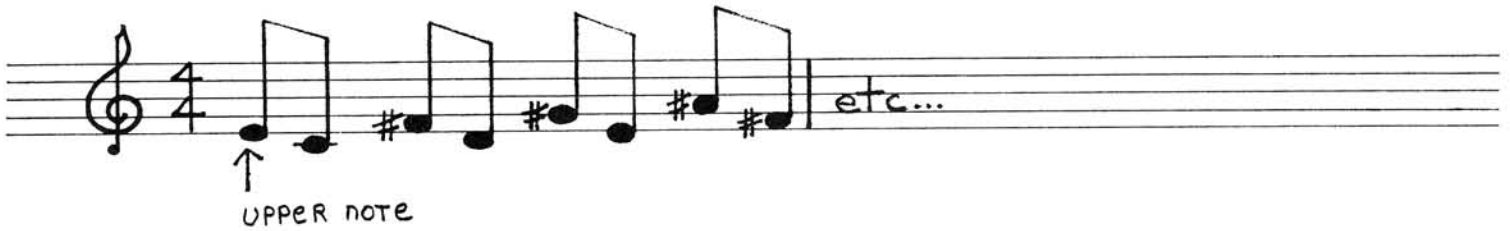
153.



154. Repeat Exercise #154 using the various notes of the whole tone scale as the upper note. Vary exercises 155 and 156 in a similar manner.

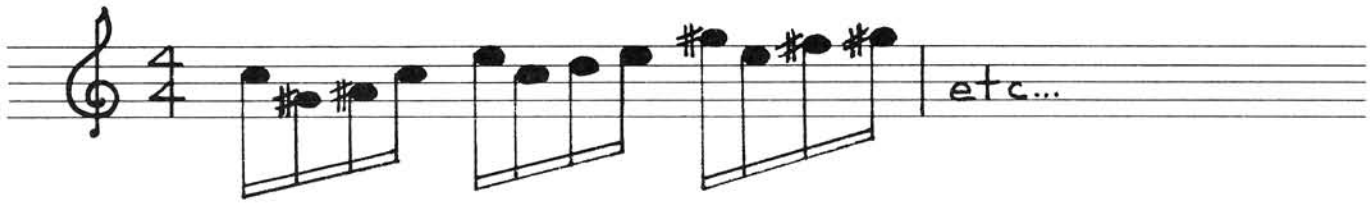


155.

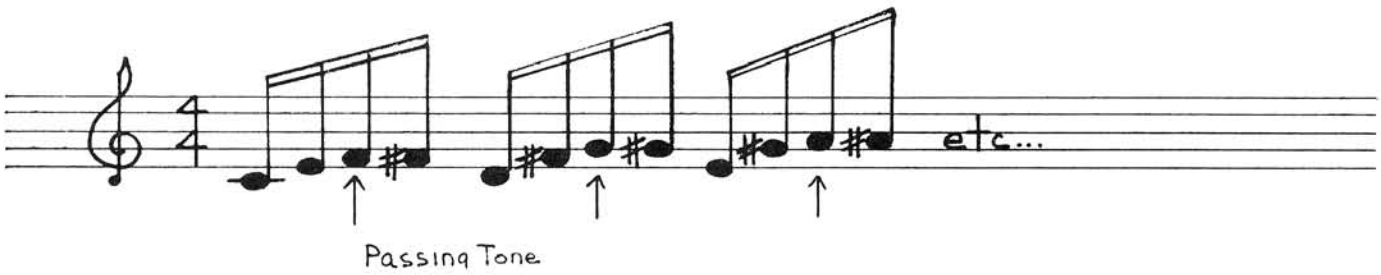


156.

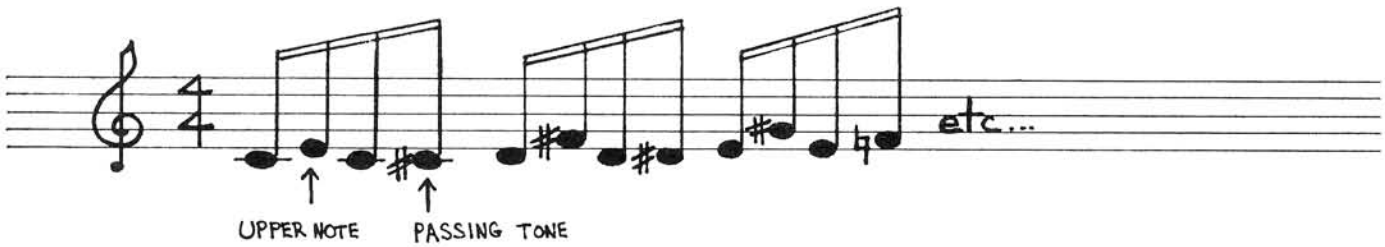
157.



158.

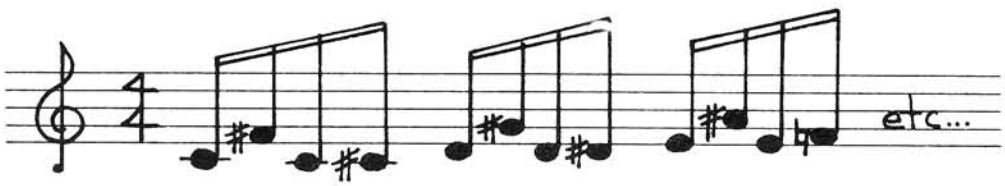


159.

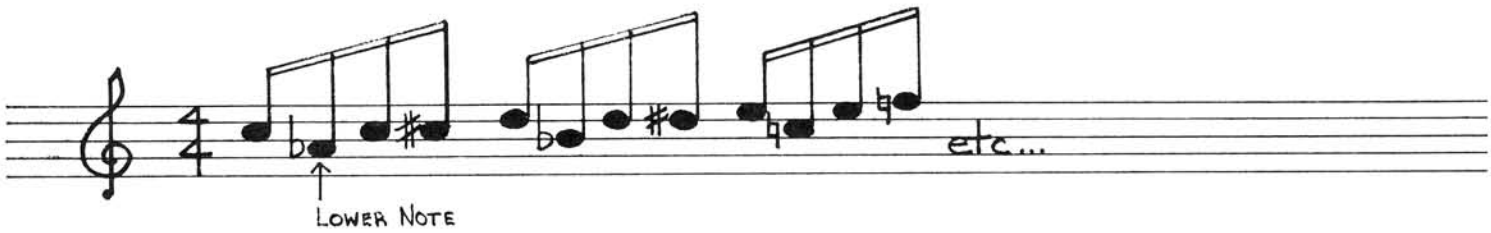


Repeat Exercise #159 using the various notes in the whole tone scale as the upper note.

Example:



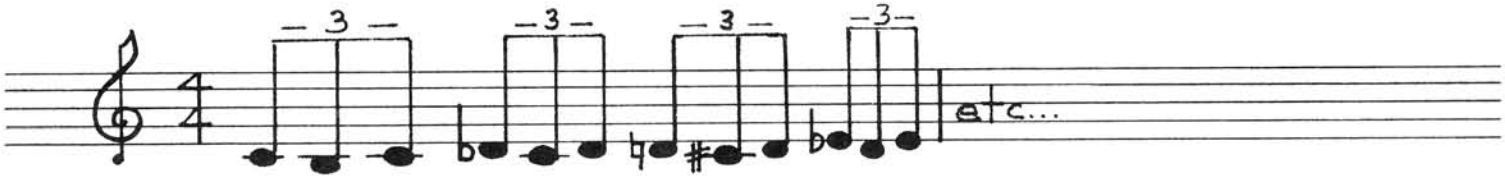
160.



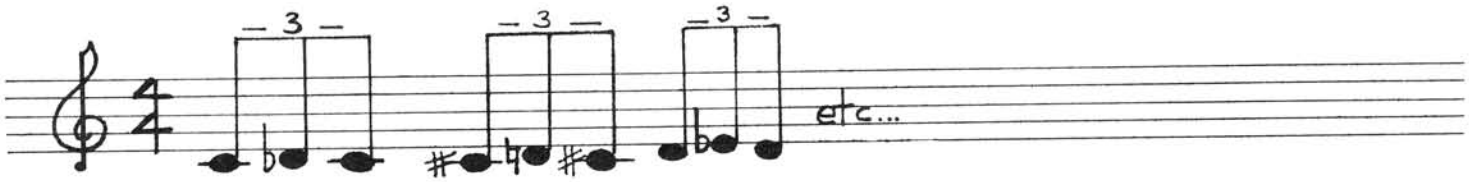
Repeat Exercise #160 using the notes of the whole tone scale as the lower note.

Note: The patterns that can be made with the whole tone scale seem endless, especially when you include passing tones. Experiment with your own patterns.

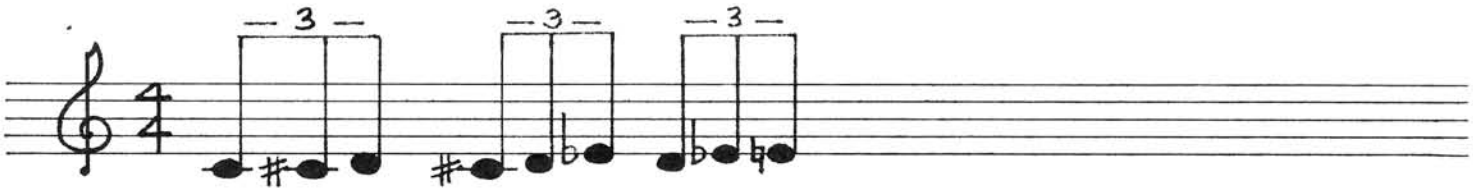
161. Play Exercise #161 up to the octave and back.



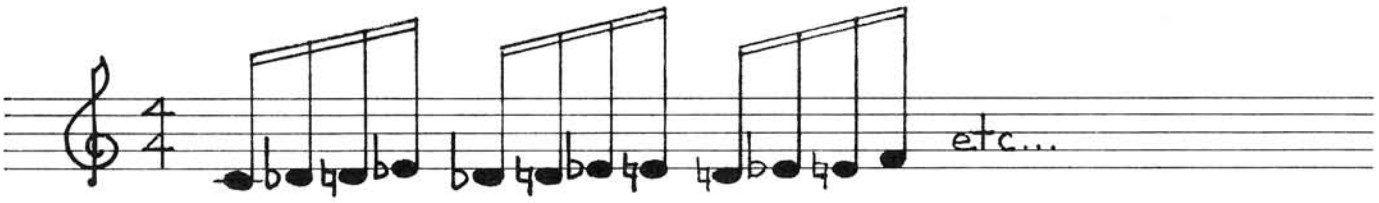
162. Play Exercise #162 up to the octave and back.



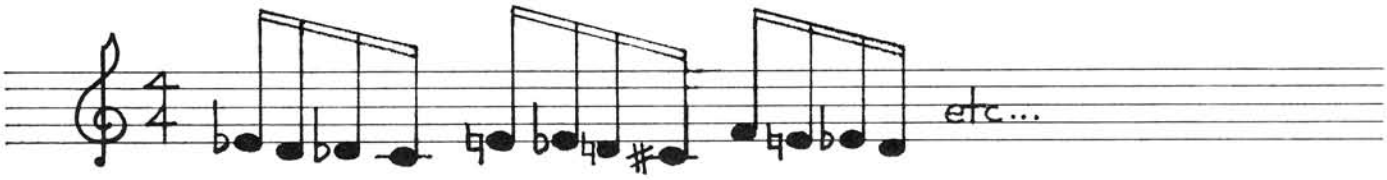
163. Play Exercise #163 up to the octave and back.



164. Play Exercise #164 up to the octave and back.

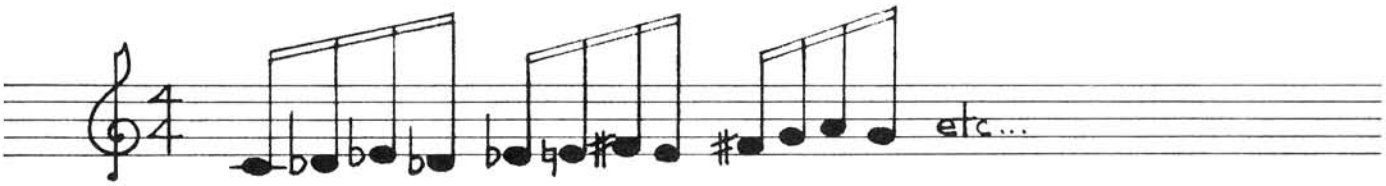


165. Play Exercise #165 up to the octave and back.



Exercises 166 - 186 are written on what we shall call the Altered Dominant Scale (half step, whole step). One should also be able to play these patterns on the Diminished scale (whole step, half step), or at least realize how they apply to both the X7 and the $^{o}7$ chord. Although there are only three different altered dominant scales (and three different diminished scales), it is best to play these exercises starting on all 12 keys, ascending and descending.

166.



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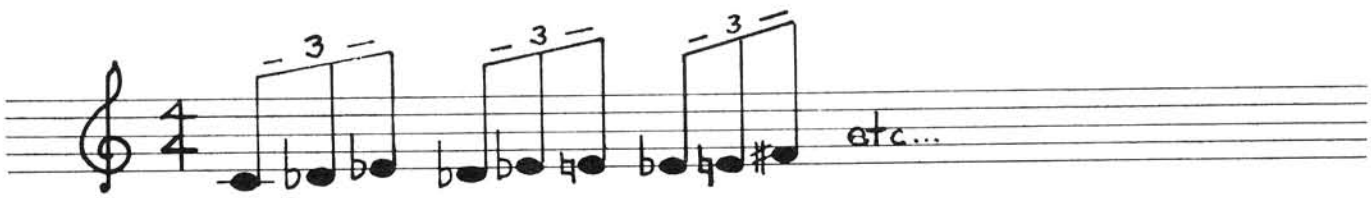

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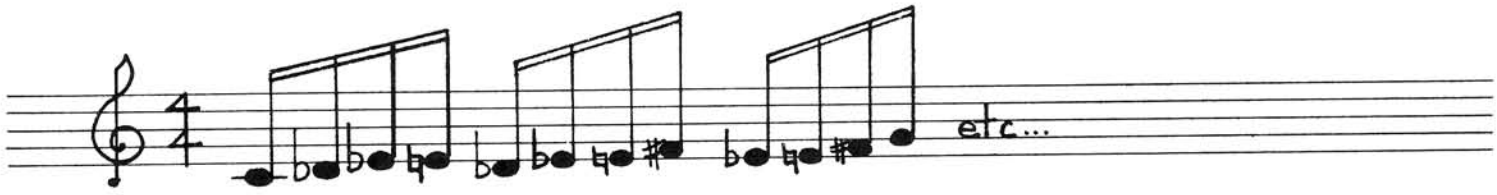

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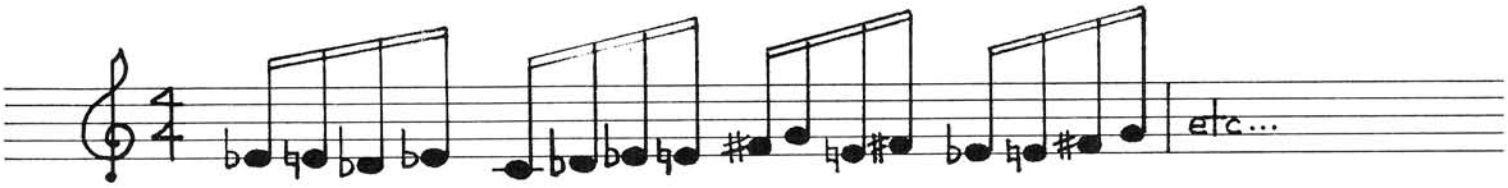

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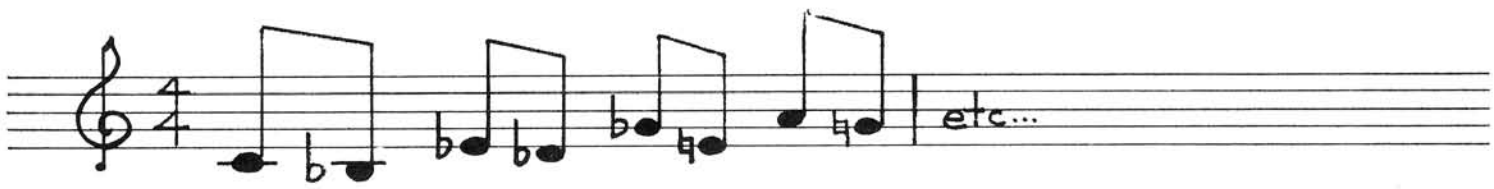

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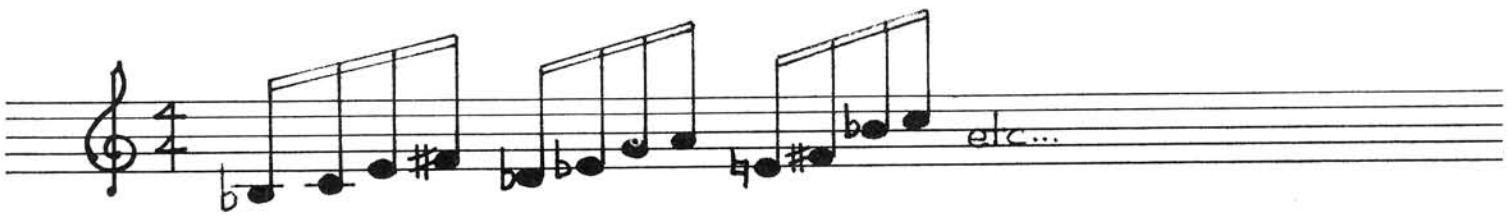

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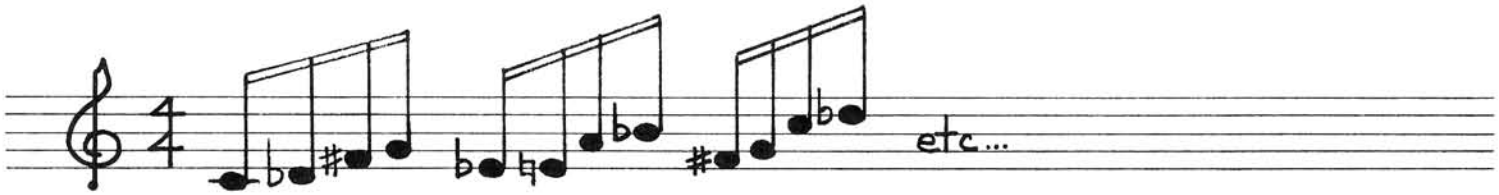

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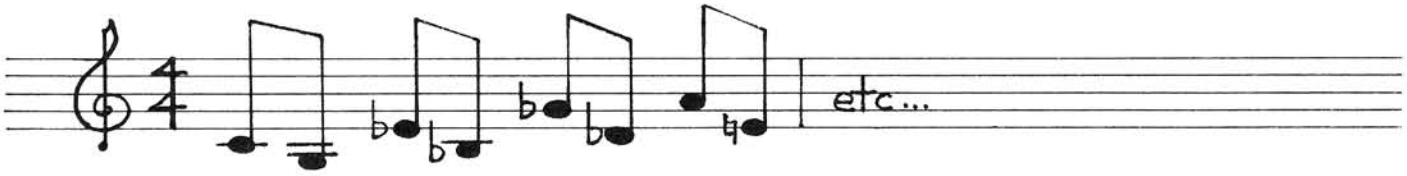

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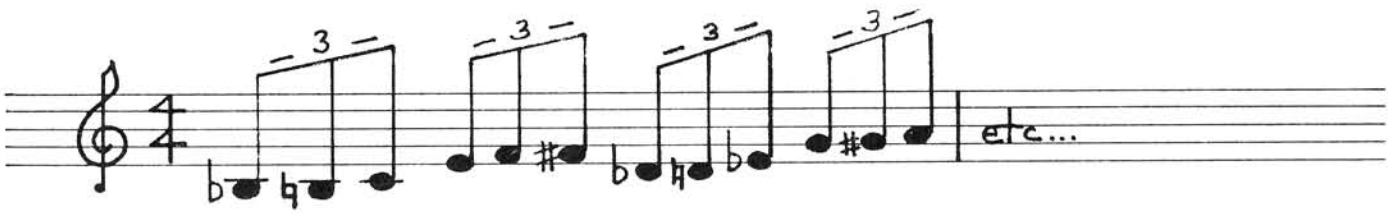

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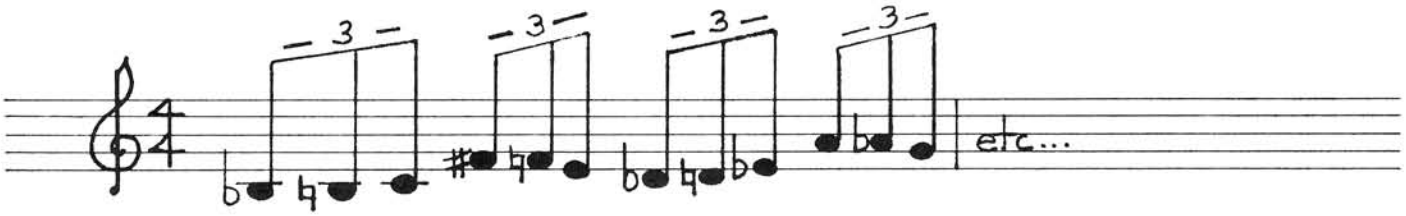

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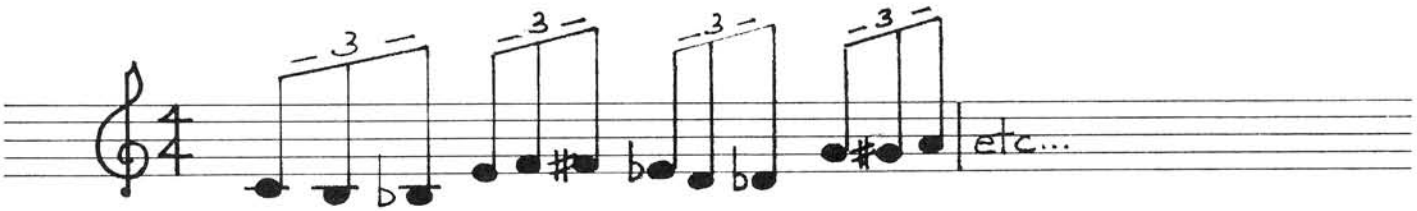

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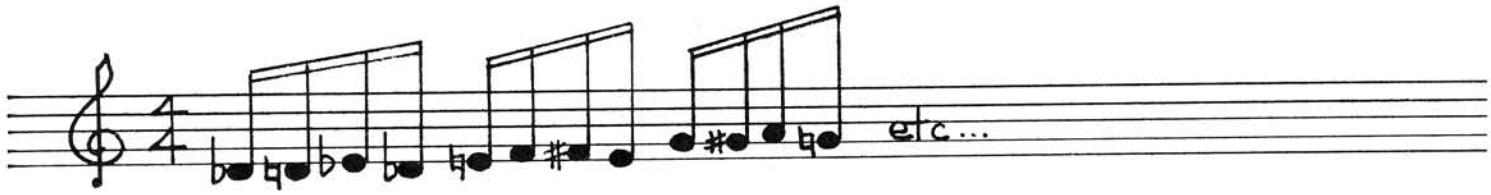

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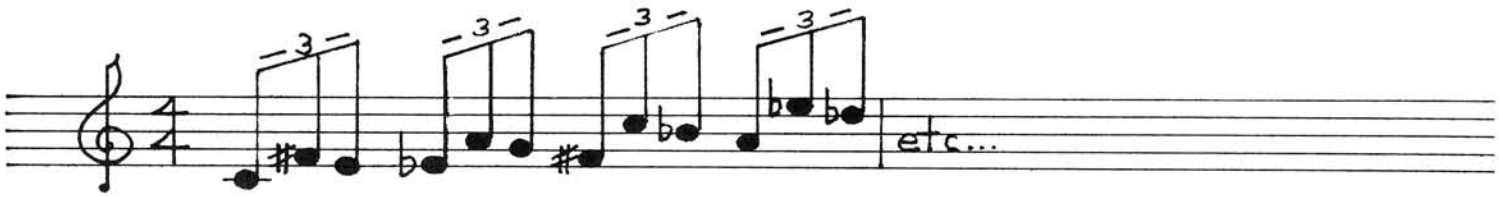

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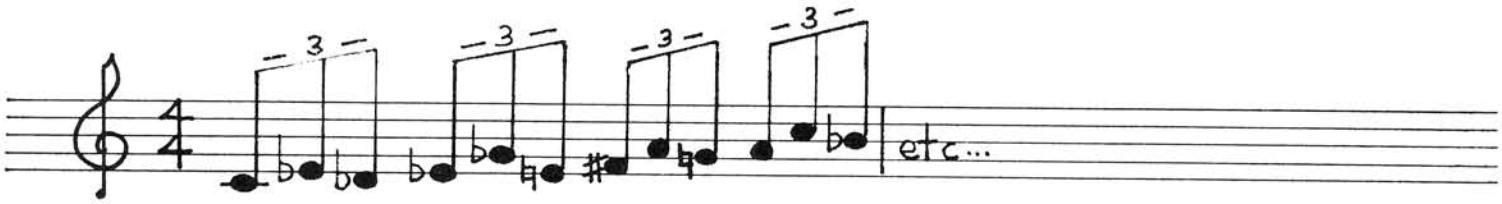

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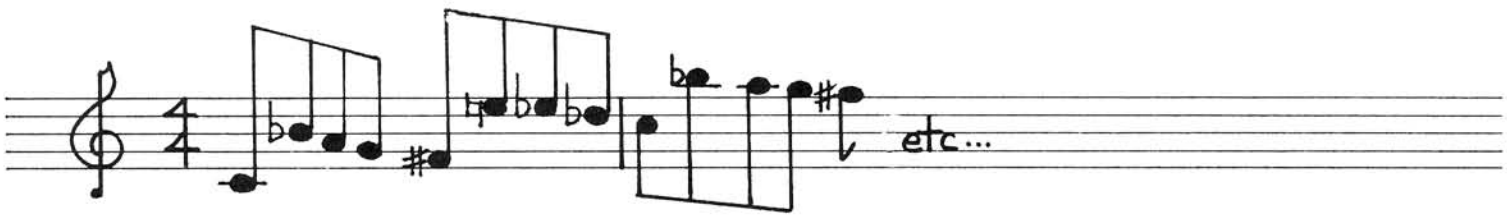

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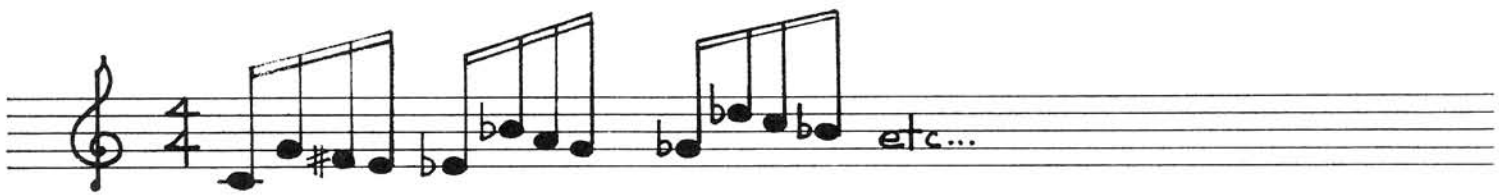

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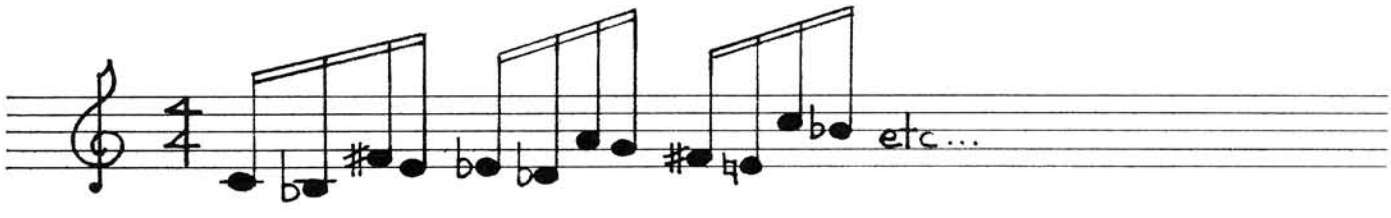

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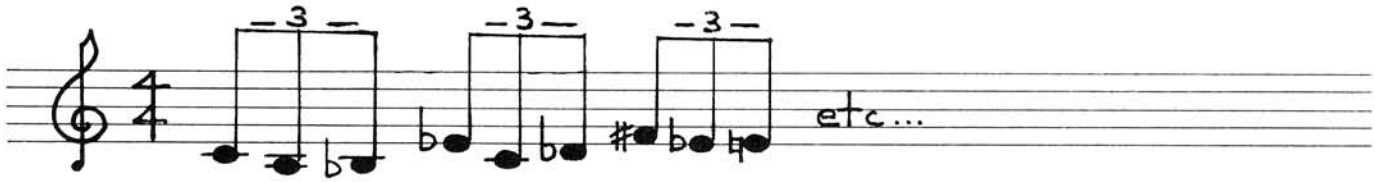

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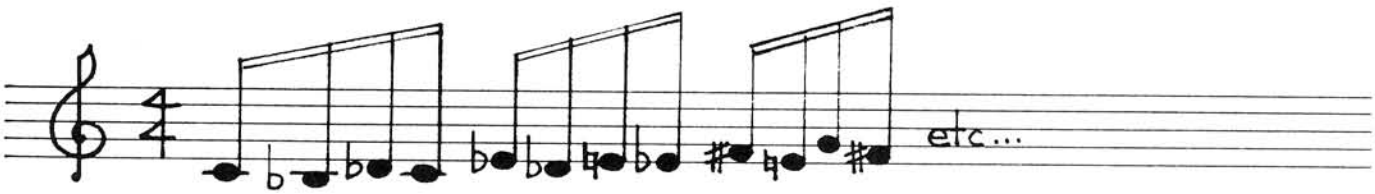

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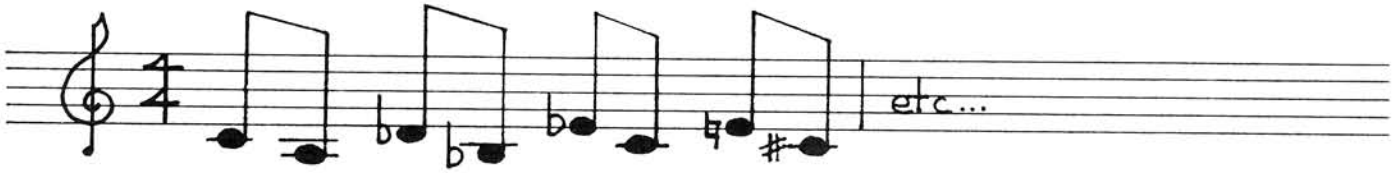


Left Hand Patterns

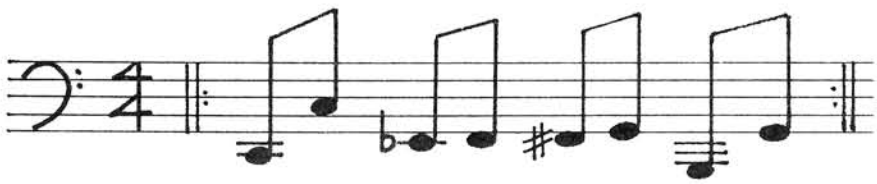
PRACTICE IMPROVISING OVER THE PATTERNS IN THIS SECTION IN 12 KEYS.

187. Try playing the pattern below with a blues progression.

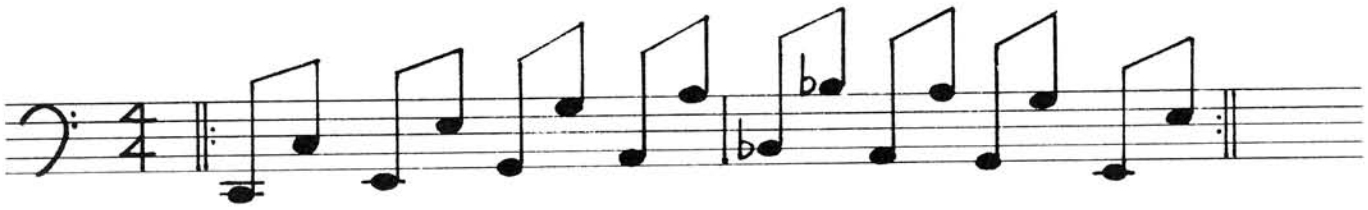
188. Try playing the pattern below with a blues progression. Some standards which have one chord per measure work well with this pattern, for example, "All of Me."

Also try playing this pattern with the minor variation.

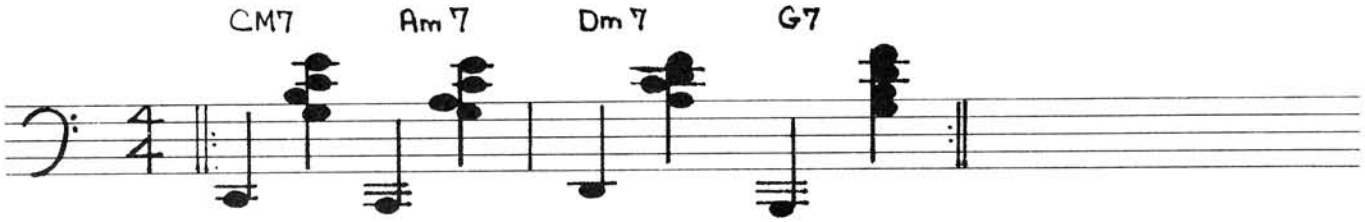
Example:



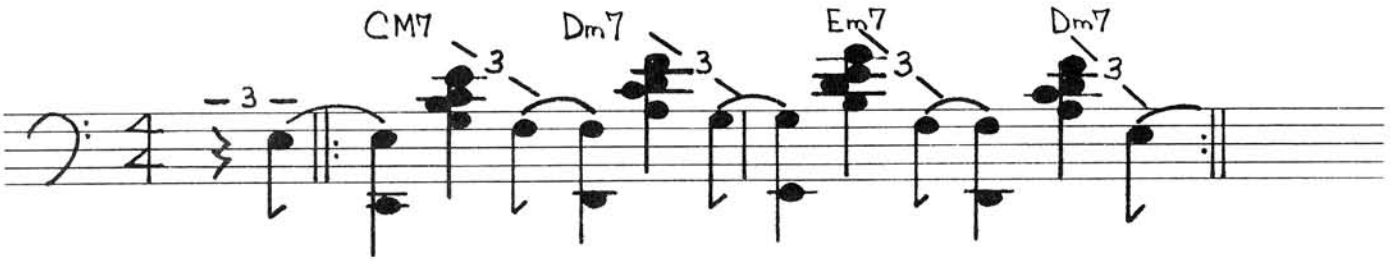
189. Try playing the pattern below with a blues progression.



190. Exercise #190 is a typical I-VI-II-V progression. Those of you who are lucky enough to be able to reach a 10th should try playing that instead of a single bass note.

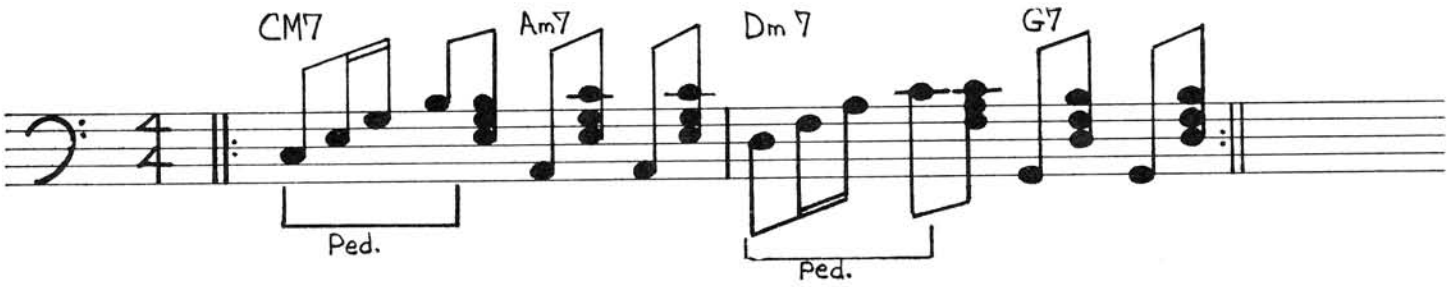


191. Exercise #191 is a technique for playing 10ths for those of you who cannot reach them. The pedal may be used to sustain the upper note to the lower note of the 10th. Try this with "Body and Soul."

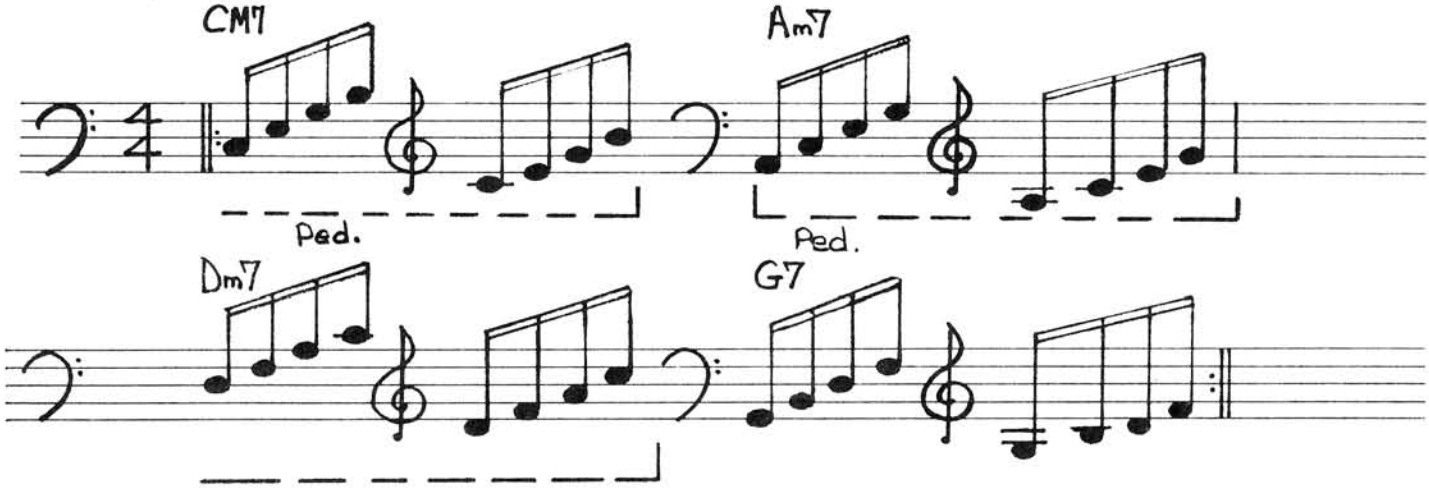


192. Try this also with any standard in 3/4. "Someday My Prince Will Come" works well.

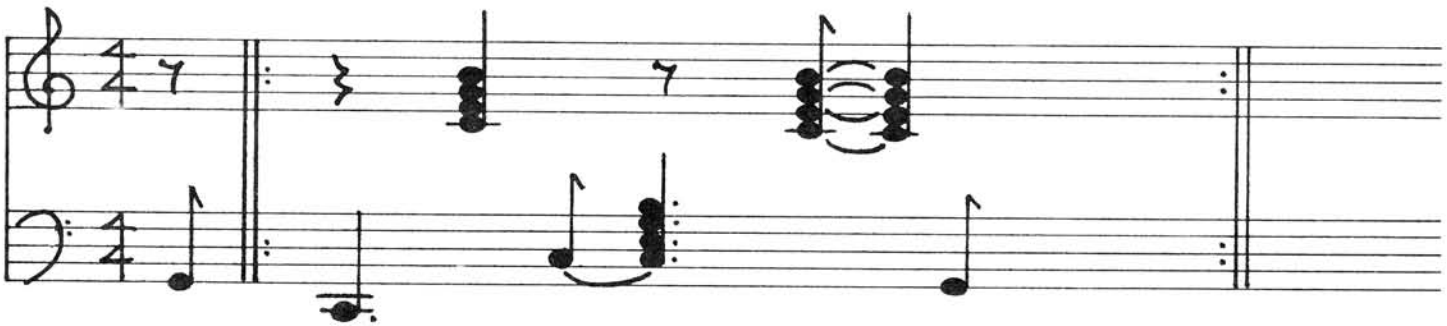
193. If you play the pattern in Exercise #193 well, it will give the effect of a guitarist strumming in a Spanish style. This pattern works well with "old style" Latin tunes, such as "Perfidia." It also can be very interesting to try this pattern with some modal progressions.



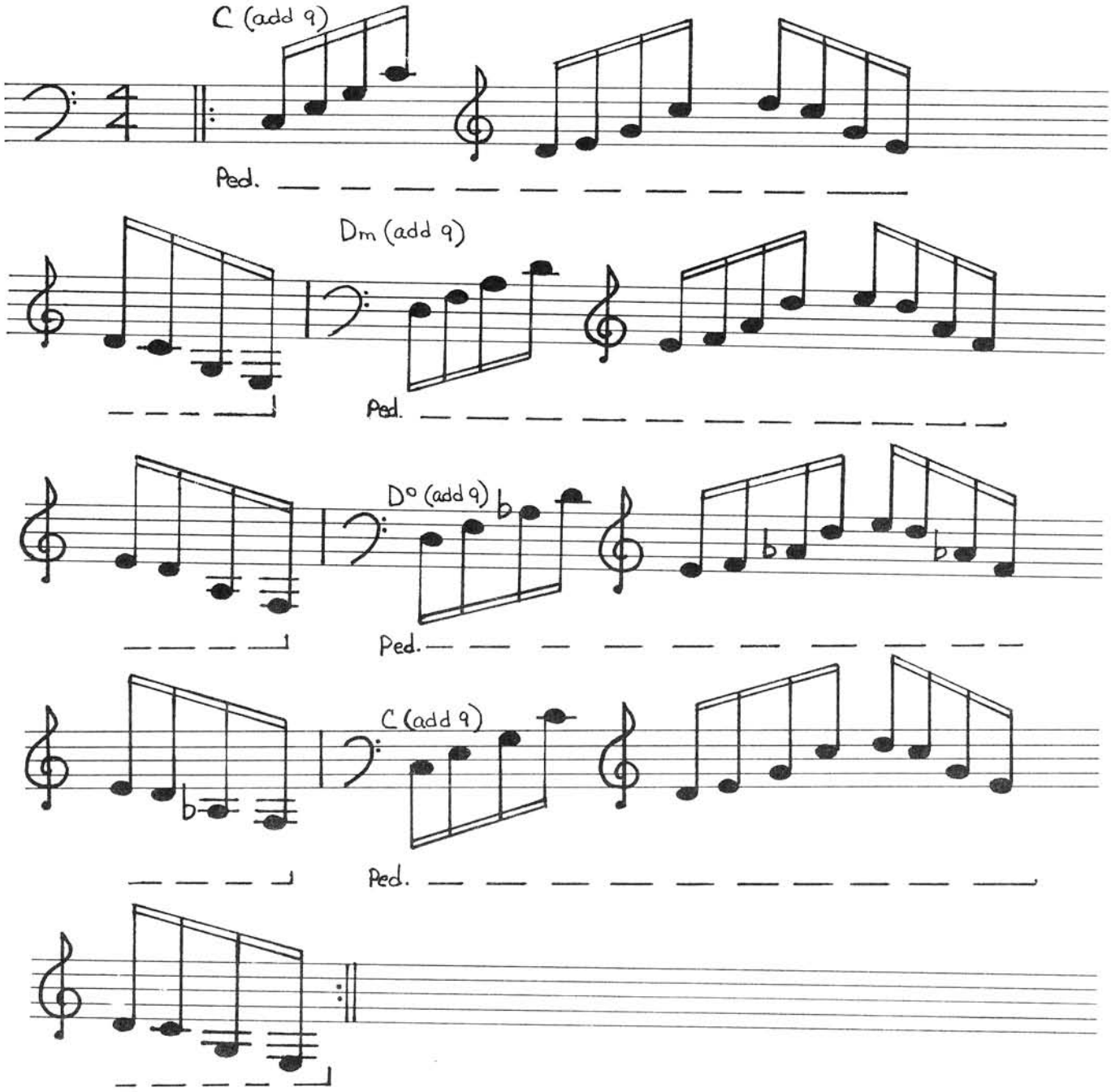
194. Exercise #194 is an example of a very popular "cocktail piano" style.



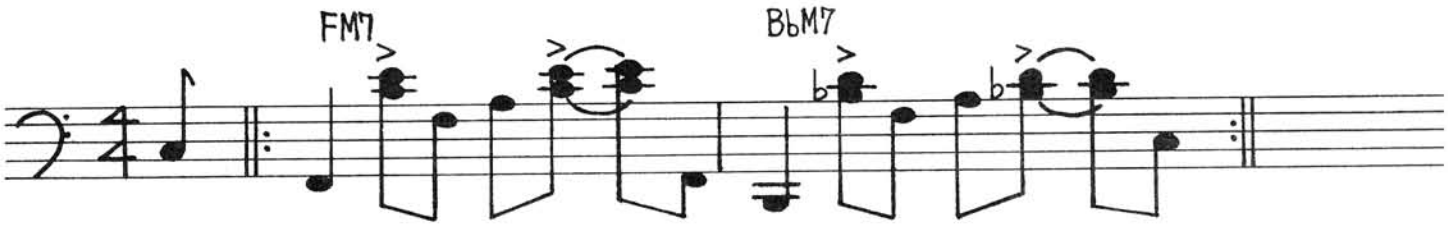
195. This is what I call the Latin-Pop Swing Bass. The left hand can be used alone or in conjunction with the right hand. Try this with a Latin tune, such as "Girl From Ipanima" or a popular tune, such as "This Masquerade." Remember, you can only use the right hand response when there is a rest in the melody.



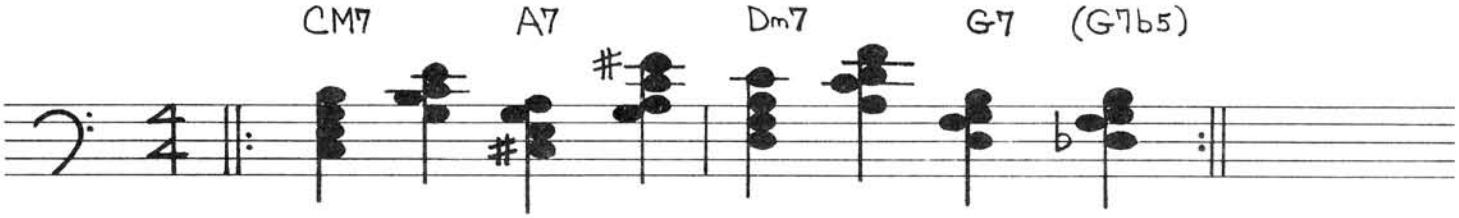
196. When arpeggiating triads in the left hand, you might add the ninth for a fuller effect.



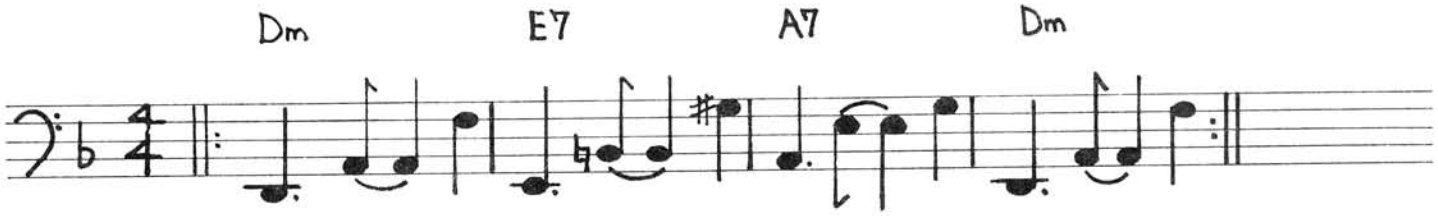
197. This is a derivitive of the Latin-Pop Swing Bass. All the rhythmic elements have been concentrated into the left hand, thus freeing the right hand for melody. Try this with Latin tunes, such as "The Shadow of Your Smile" or pop tunes, such as "Here Comes The Sun."



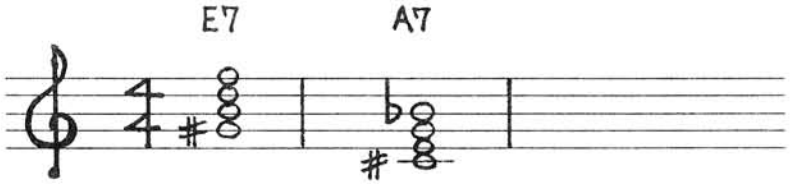
198. The pattern in Exercise #198 is known as oscillation. This pattern is very effective in playing ballads.



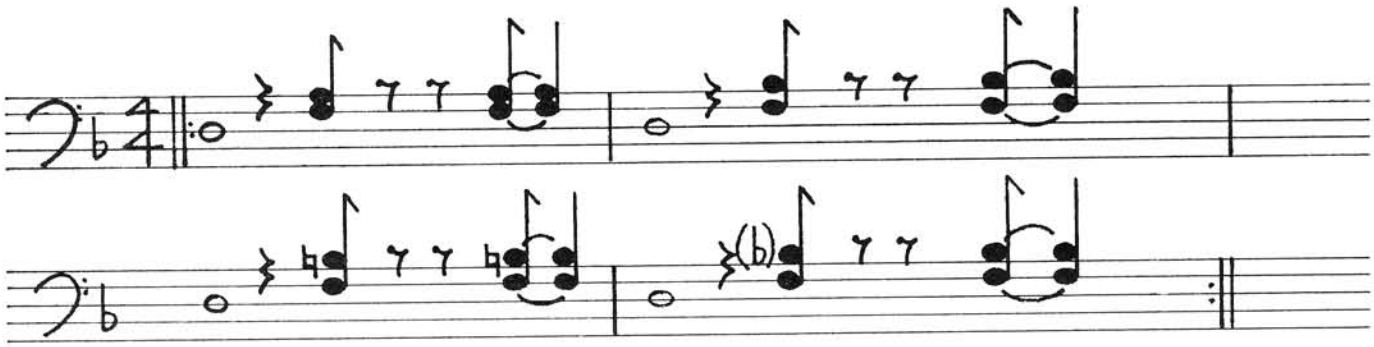
199. The pattern in Exercise #199 has a very Spanish sound to it - it's great fun to improvise on! At first, try simple right hand arpeggios over it, using °7 substitutions for the dominants, as in the example below.



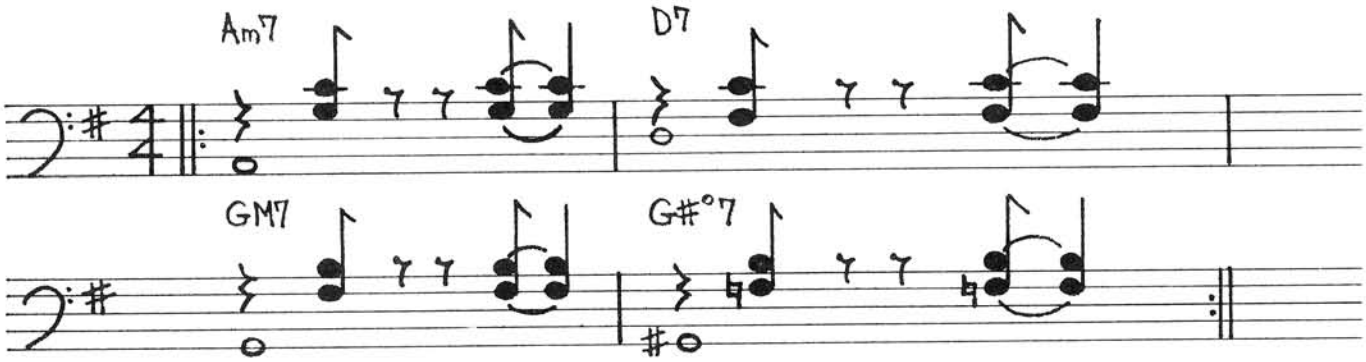
Example:



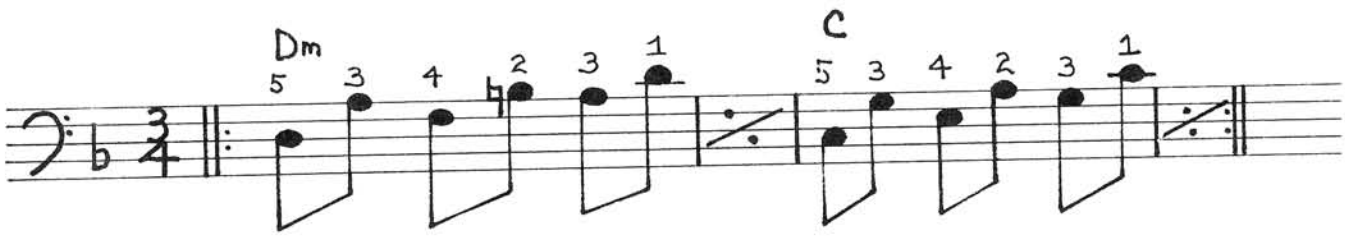
200. Improvising over the kind of rhythmic pattern in this exercise can by tricky. Try this pattern with chord progression that change roots and expand the chord to a full tenth if you can reach it (see example below).



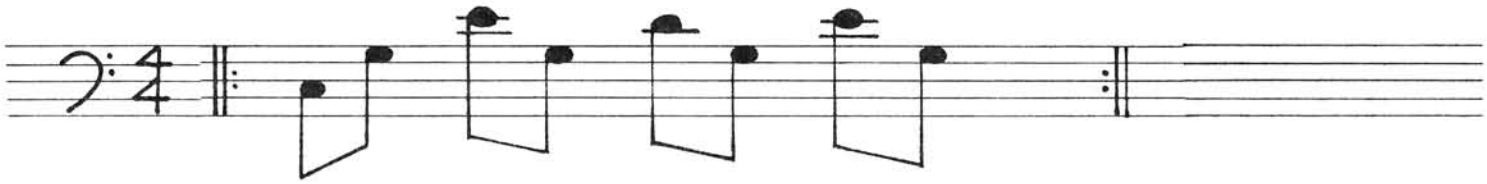
Example:



201. This approach to breaking up the chords has a "folksy" quality to it. You will also notice that it is a good stretcher for the left hand.



202. Exercise #202 is an example of an "Ostinato" pattern. If you like this kind of sound, listen to Keith Jarrett - he is the Ostinato King! Also try playing this pattern in the minor and improvise on it.

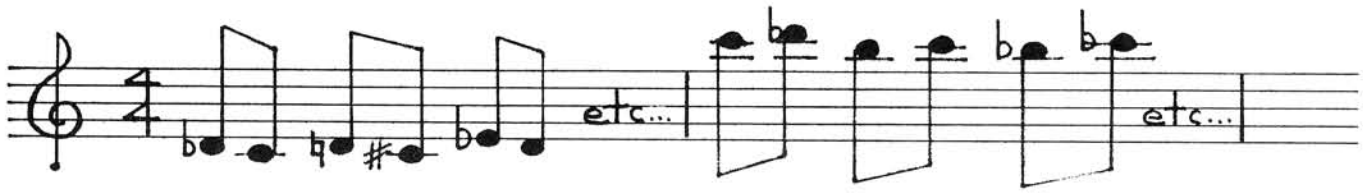


A WORD ON WALKING BASS

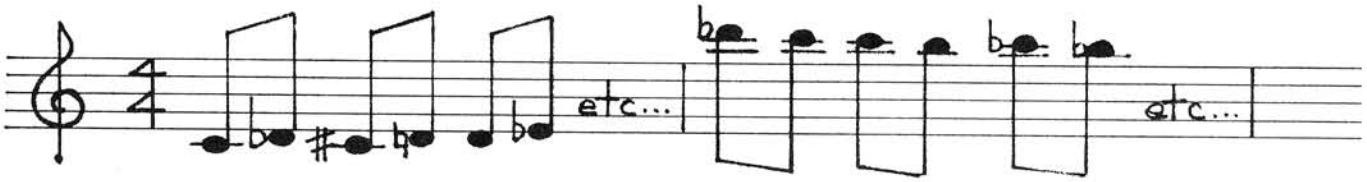
Walking Bass is a very important left hand piano style. The choice of notes is so crucial though, that it is beyond the scope of this book to try to present this material. Refer to a good bass teacher, or bass line contruction book.

Interval Exercises

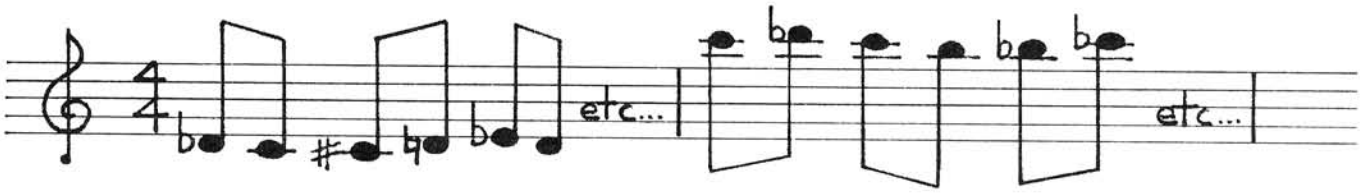
203. Exercise #203 and the variations below are based on intervals of minor seconds.



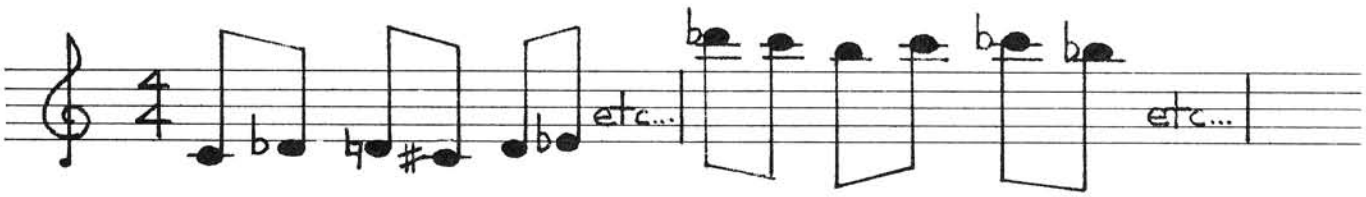
Variation A:



Variation B:



Variation C:



Try the following with Variations A, B and C:

1. minor 2nds progressing by minor 2nds
2. minor 2nds progressing by major 2nds
3. minor 2nds progressing by minor 3rds
4. minor 2nds progressing by major 3rds

Practice numbers 1-4 above also with major 2nds, minor 3rds, major 3rds, perfect 4ths, diminished 5ths, perfect 5ths, minor 6ths, major 6ths, minor 7ths and major 7ths. Be sure to complete this! For example, you will find that when you play minor 2nds progressing by minor 3rds, you will need to start the exercise on C♯ and on D to cover all possibilities. This sort of thing happens quite often. Take heed!