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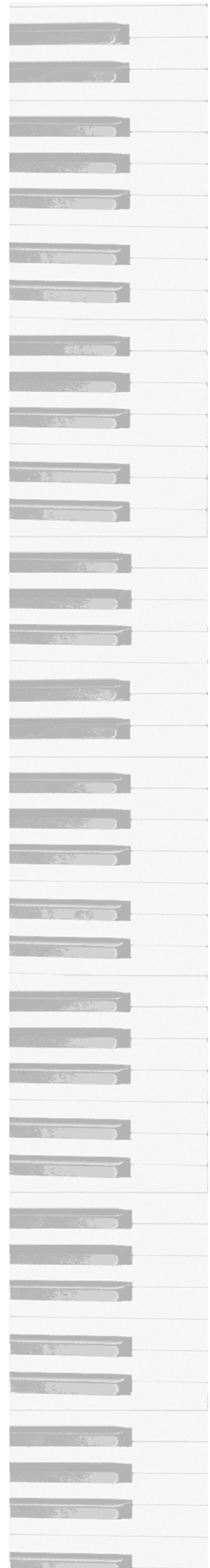
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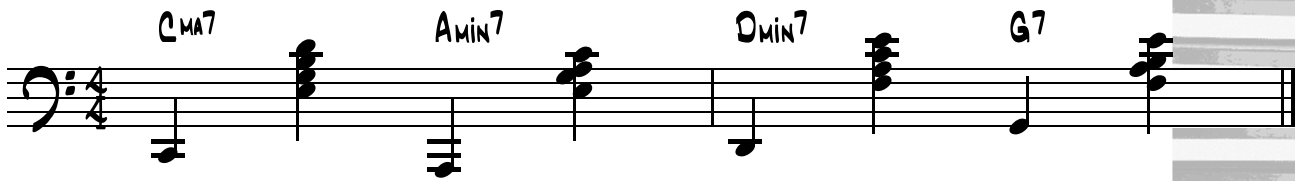
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Historical Perspective

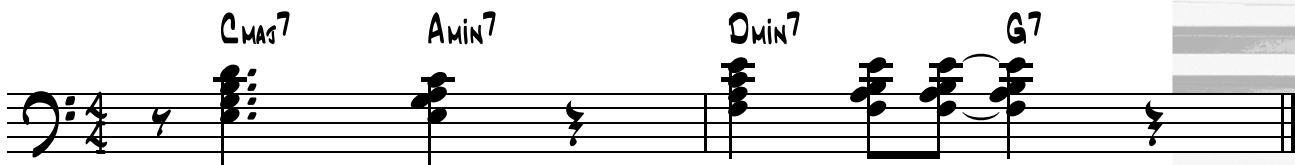
In the early days of jazz, the pianist was an orchestra unto him(her)self. The melody, harmony and rhythm of the tune were all contained in the two busy hands of the performer. In the 1920s and 1930s, players like James P. Johnson, Fats Waller and the boogie-

woogie pianists like Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis amazed crowds with their abilities to keep an awesome groove, invent swinging melodies and drive a band all by themselves. This type of playing was often called *stride* piano, as the left hand strode between bass notes and chords.



The great Art Tatum (1910–1956) made solo jazz piano playing a musical and technical feat equal to that of the great 19th-century improvisers of classical music, like Sergei Rachmaninoff and Franz Liszt. But by the time the 1940s rolled around, the quick tempos and changing roles of the bass player and drummer in a jazz group required the pianist to play in a different way. Through pianists such as Bud Powell (1924–1966) and later, Red Garland (1923–1984) and Bill Evans (1929–1980), a different approach evolved, which is the foundation of all contemporary jazz piano styles.

- Pianists left the bass notes out, to be played by the bassist in a style that became known as the *walking bass* (quarter notes that outlined the harmonies of the tune).
- The chords were simplified to voicings of three or four notes, which were rhythmically comped. Pianists selected only the notes in the chord that would show the harmonic movement as simply as possible, freeing themselves to focus on their more intricate bebop lines in the right hand.





TOOL 1 : Standard Blues

BASICALLY BLUES

[illegible][illegible]

7

8b7

F7

1 2 1 2

What is normally called the blues in jazz today is a 12-bar progression that is also frequently found in pop music. It is in $\frac{4}{4}$ time and is based on a poetic scheme derived from the founders of jazz and blues at the beginning of the 20th century:

Goin' to Yuba City, Yuba City here I come.

Goin' to Yuba City, Yuba City here I come.

They got great little tacos there, and I'm a gonna get me one.

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As you can see, the blues is a chord progression and melody, which is played in three four-bar phrases. This is the typical sequence of chords used to accompany the melody, simplified here for our needs.

The musical notation shows a 12-bar blues progression in Bb major. It is divided into three four-bar phrases. The chords are indicated above the staves: Bb7, Eb7, Bb7 in the first phrase; Eb7, Bb7 in the second phrase; and F7, Bb7 in the third phrase. The melody is represented by slanted lines on the staff.

Basically Blues is a 12-bar blues in a medium swing groove. The first voicing you are going to learn is the two-note 3rd and 7th voicing. Sometimes the 3rd is on top, sometimes the 7th is on top; they alternate to keep the voicings close to each other and sounding smooth as the chords change. If you read the left-hand voicings, you can play them throughout the track and you'll sound just fine—or you can even listen without reading; try to hear what notes the pianist is playing in the left hand, and match them at the piano. If you are adventurous, you can learn the right-hand melody by playing along with the pianist on the CD (it's best to start with just one hand at a time, so leave out the

left hand as you do this), and eventually put the left hand in there.

Each track in **Tools 1-6** will play the basic melody twice, then leave it out for three choruses, just comping, and then play the melody once more so you can practice. Remember, if you are having trouble, just go back to the basic left hand.

Notice that Jeff “interprets” the melody on the saxophone, adding bends and slurs before and after certain notes. It's always good for a pianist to imitate the sound of a horn—this makes your melodies “sing.” I often literally sing with my playing, and breathe during the rests.

IMPROVISING TIP:

The Bb blues scale can be used for creating right-hand lines. You can play these six notes through all the chord changes of the blues and you'll never be wrong! Practice this with

different rhythms using quarter notes, 8th notes, triplet 8ths, or any rhythms you hear.

Bb BLUES SCALE

The musical notation shows the Bb blues scale on a single staff in Bb major. The scale is written as Bb, C, D, Eb, F, and G.