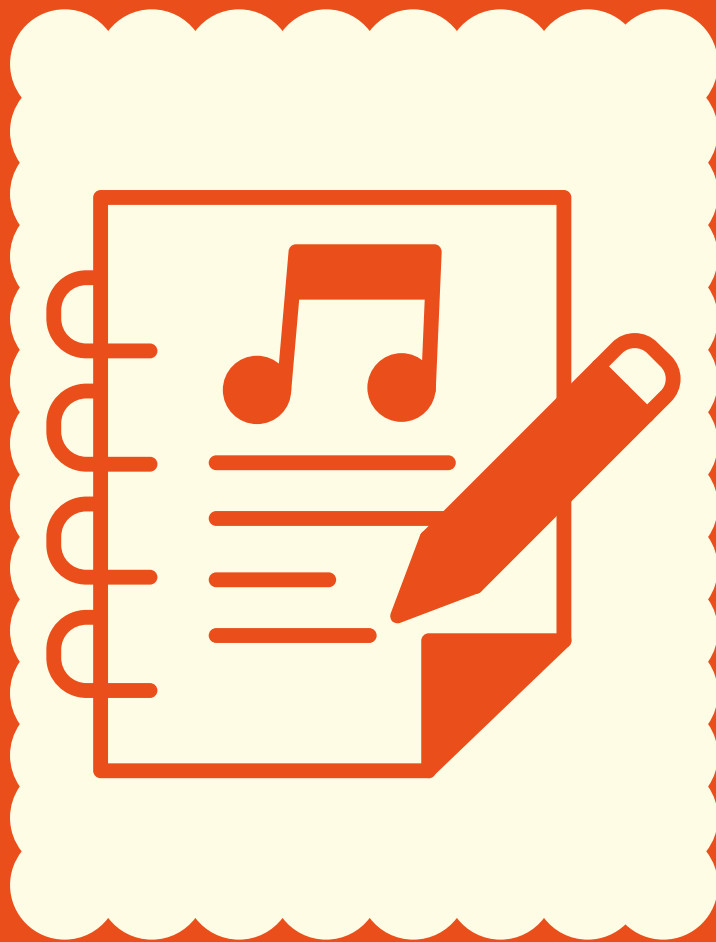


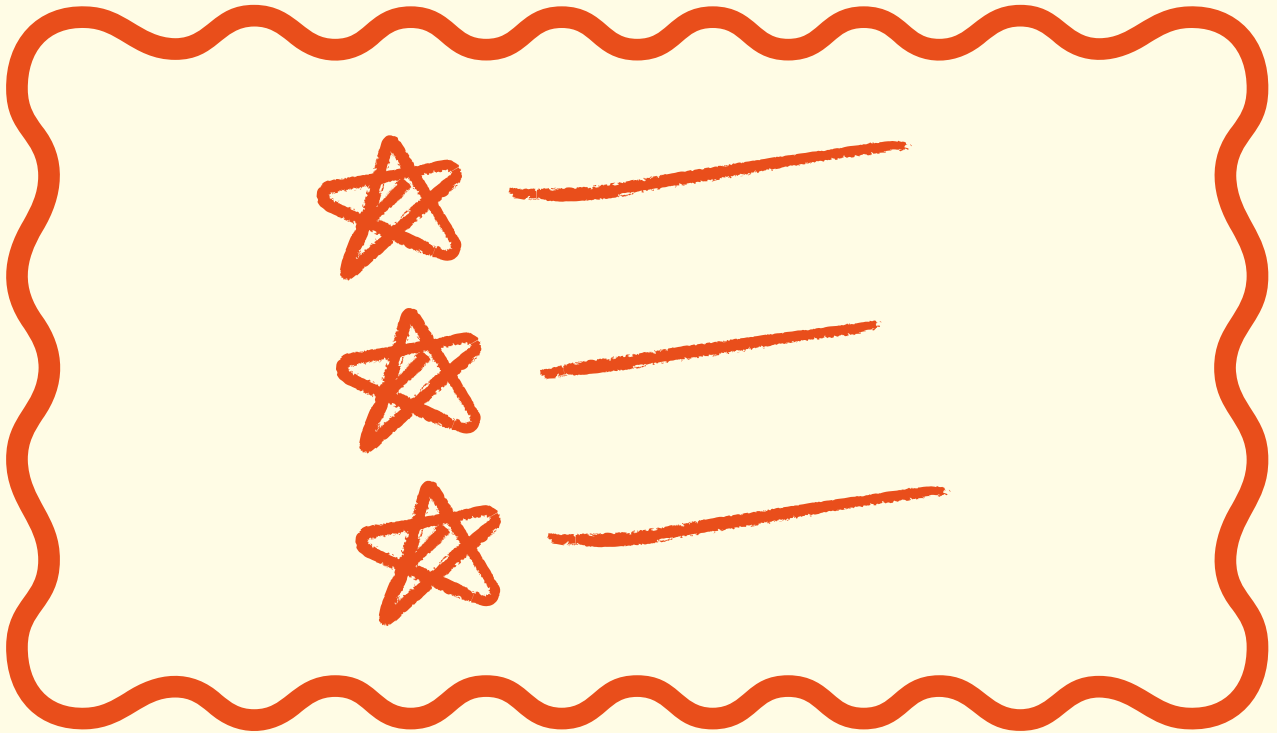
**NYJO**

# ***Introduction to Composition***



**CREATED BY ALEX WARDILL**

# ***Learning Objectives***



**This Resource Pack will allow you to work with your students to practice melody writing and apply different techniques such as: rhythmic manipulation, call & response phrasing, conjunct motion, chord inversions, and guide tone lines, all through a series of written exercises and discussions.**

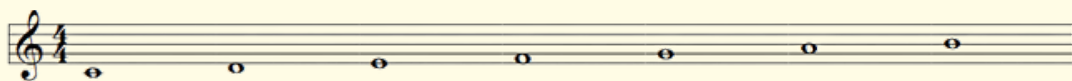
Throughout these exercises, encourage your students to create freely without the aid of the examples, as some of them may want depart from the examples earlier than others.

# *Melodic Writing Techniques*

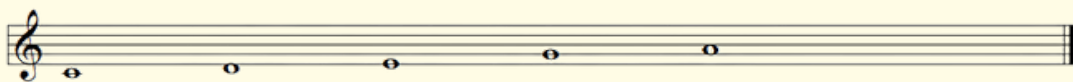
Here we will be exploring several approaches to writing melodies. We will learn some useful scales and chords, write melodies, and your very own song!

If you have access to a piano, play through the scales and chords. You can also play through them on your instrument.

## **C Major Scale**

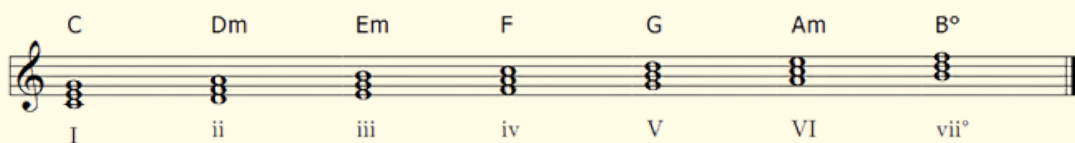


## **C Major Pentatonic Scale**



## **Chords in C Major**

We can build triads from each note of the scale and label them with roman numerals.

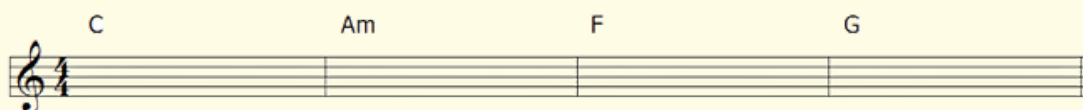


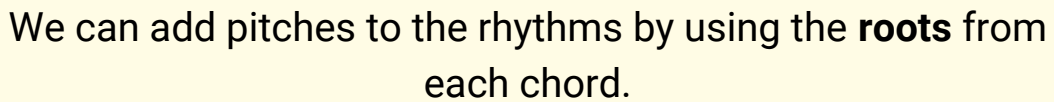
## **Example Chord Sequence 1**

Here is an example chord sequence, in C Major.

Write the chord sequence using the chords given above.

Play through the chord sequence on the piano.





Now we can add other notes from the chords, called **chord tones** to make our melody more varied.

Notice that these melodies are generally structured in two parts, a **question** and **answer** (call & response). Using question and answer phrases is a good way of writing a strong melody.

phrase 1 (question) phrase 2 (answer)

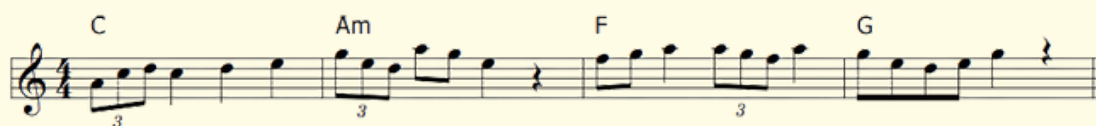
## Pentatonic Scale

We can level up our melodies on this chord progression by using the **C Major Pentatonic Scale**. This five note scale lets us use the second and sixth degrees of the major scale.

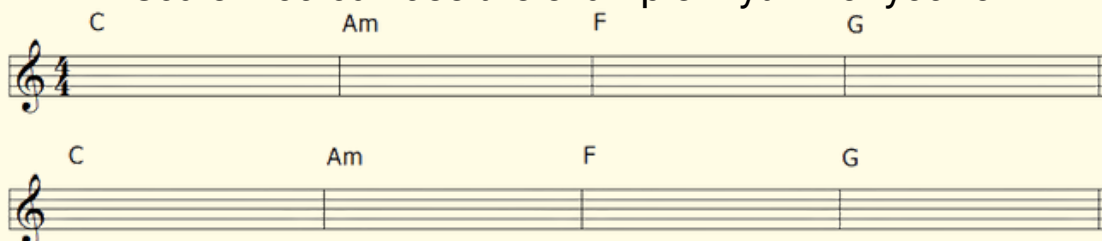
Sing this example rhythm.



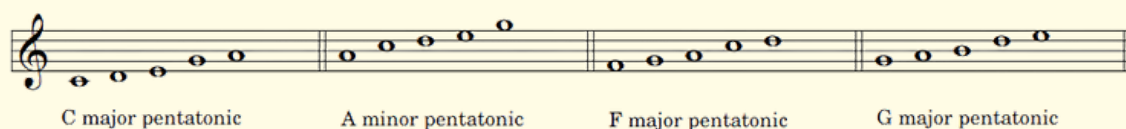
Play/sing through this example melody.



Write two different melodies using the C Major Pentatonic Scale. You can use the example rhythm or your own.



**Hint:** on the F and G chords, you can use the **F Major Pentatonic** and **G Major Pentatonic Scales**. (C Major Pentatonic and A Minor Pentatonic are actually just the same notes!).



Write two more melodies using the **pentatonic scales** listed above. You can use any of the example rhythms in the worksheet or come up with your own.



## Passing Notes

Passing notes are **non-chord tones** notes we add between our **chord tones**.

We can use the notes from the C Major Scale to make our melody move in a scale-like manner. This movement is also called **conjunct motion** (sometimes called stepwise motion or scalar motion). Conjunct motion can be used as a nice contrast to arpeggios and leaps as in the example below.

Play through this example.

The example shows a melody in 4/4 time across four measures. The first measure (C) has a half note C4, a quarter note D4, and a half note E4, labeled 'conjunct motion'. The second measure (Am) has a half note A3, a quarter note G3, and a half note F3, labeled 'arpeggio (using chord tones)'. The third measure (F) has a half note F3, a quarter note E3, and a half note D3, labeled 'conjunct motion'. The fourth measure (G) has a half note G2 and a whole rest. Red arrows with stars above the first and third measures indicate the conjunct motion.

Write two different scalar melodies (i.e. using conjunct motion) on the chord sequence by filling in the gaps.

Two musical staves in 4/4 time, each with four measures corresponding to the chords C, Am, F, and G. The first staff shows the first notes of each chord: C4, A3, F3, and G3. The second staff shows the second notes: C4, G3, E3, and A3. The remaining notes in each measure are blank, intended for the student to write scalar melodies.

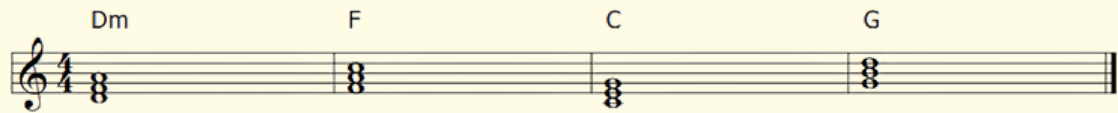
## Articulation

We can add different types of articulation, such as **slurs**, **staccato**, **tenuto**, and an **accent**. These are all important parts of a melody because they tell you how to play it, not just what the notes are. Play through this melody again, now with the articulation and notice how the articulation changes things.

The example shows the same melody as before, but with articulation. A slur is placed over the first measure (C). A staccato mark is placed over the second measure (Am). A slur is placed over the third measure (F). An accent mark (>) is placed over the fourth measure (G).

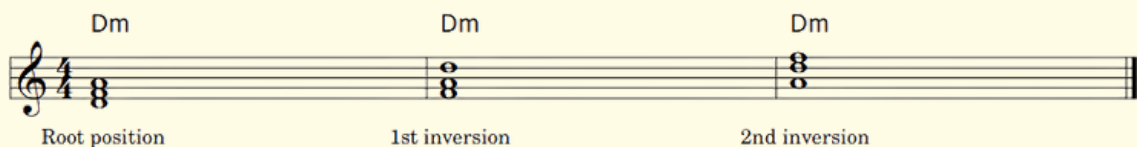
## Primary Triads and Chord Inversions

Here is a second chord sequence. Notice that it is still in C Major, and it has 3 chords in common with our previous chord sequence. Play through this new chord sequence.



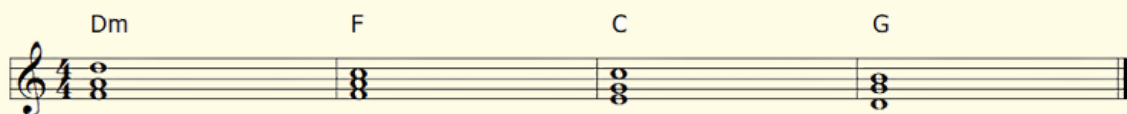
The common chords are C, F and G chords. In our roman numeral notation, these are chords **I**, **IV** and **V**. These are called the primary triads in a major key, because they are the most important chords for outlining the key.

We can change the inversion of some of the chords so we don't have to move our hands up and down so much. The inversion, or arrangement of the notes in a chord, is also called a **voicing**. These are the three different inversions of a D Minor Chord. The notes are the same but they are just in a different order.

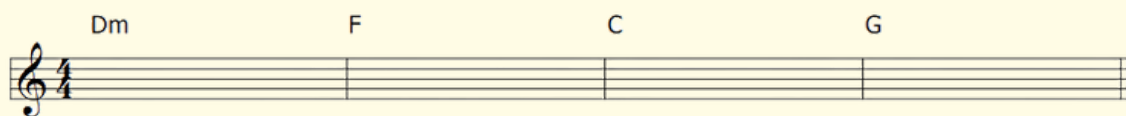


In this example we start from the 1<sup>st</sup> inversion. Play through the chord sequence again but with the new voicings. Good voice leading is where we use effective chord voicings to keep the chord sequence as smooth as possible, not jumping up and down the piano every time we change chords.

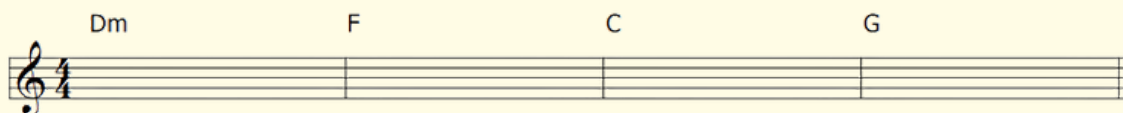
Another result of this good voice leading is minimising the distance between guide tones.



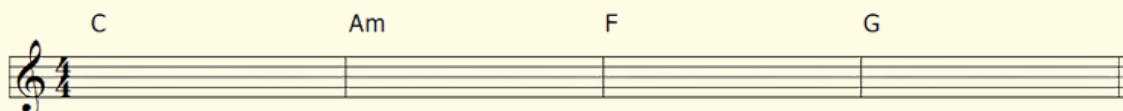
Write out alternative voicings for the chord progression,  
beginning from root position...



And again beginning from second inversion...



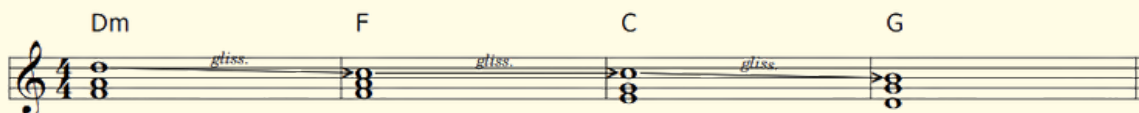
Write out the first chord sequence but with better voice  
leading.



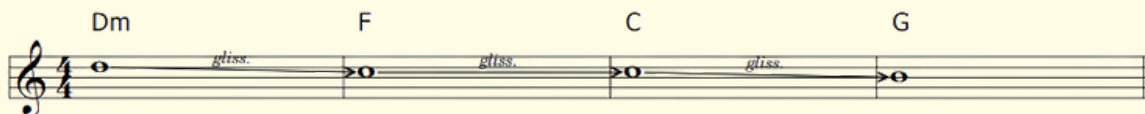
### Guide Tones

We can use our new voicings to help us write new melodies.

For example, see how the top note descends through the  
chord sequence.



On it's own it looks like this:



Notice how it only moves by very small intervals, and  
sometimes stays the same from one chord to another. We  
call these notes which move throughout the chord sequence  
**guide tones**. Typically we see guide tones resolve down.





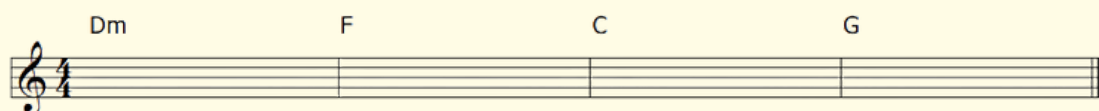
We can structure our melody around these guide tones. Play through these two examples. Notice the use of passing tones in Example 2 which gives the melody more movement.



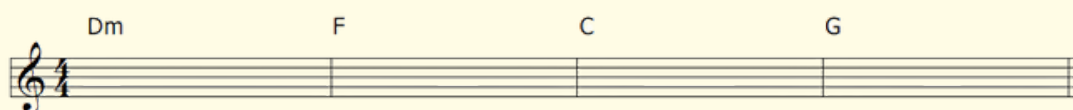
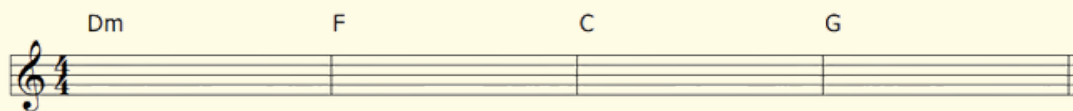
Example 2



Write your own melody using this guide tone line.



Write a melody for each of the other two guide tone lines.  
Hint: If you're having trouble figuring out what the other guide tone lines are, start from a different note of the first chord and follow it through the chord sequence.



## Putting it all Together

We can put together both chord sequences to make a 16 bar song. Fill in the gaps to complete the song, including articulation.

Chord sequence for the 16-bar exercise:

Bar	Chord
1	C
2	Am
3	F
4	G
5	C
6	Am
7	F
8	G
9	Dm
10	F
11	C
12	G
13	Dm
14	F
15	C
16	G

Now using everything we have learned (chord tones, question and answer phrasing, repetition, pentatonic scales, passing notes/conjunct motion, guide tone lines, and articulation) write an original melody from scratch on this 16 bar chord sequence!

Chord sequence for the 16-bar exercise:

Bar	Chord
1	C
2	Am
3	F
4	G
5	C
6	Am
7	F
8	G
9	Dm
10	F
11	C
12	G
13	Dm
14	F
15	C
16	G





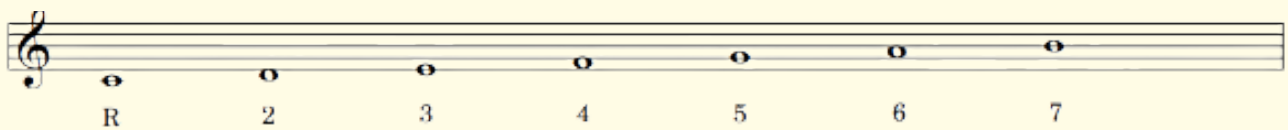
# 12 Bar Blues



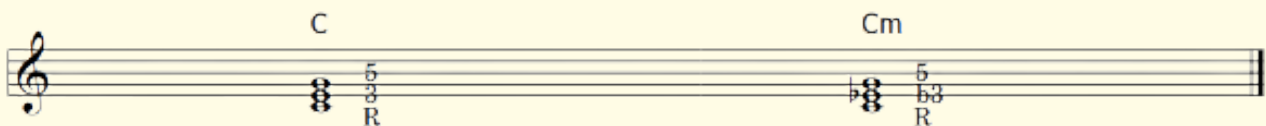
In this activity, we will study three different **blues heads** and write our own.  
First, we will examine some different scales and chords.

## Chord Symbols

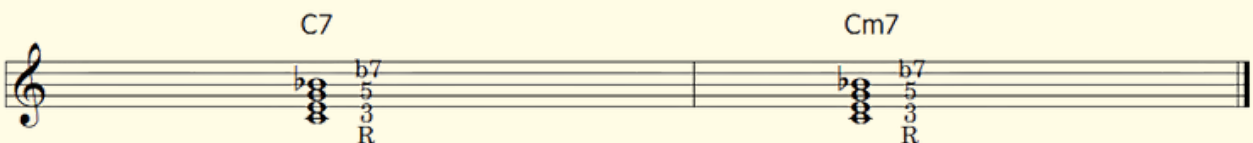
We can label each scale degree (each note of the scale) with a number.  
Often, instead of using 1 for the starting note, we use R (root) to signify the  
root note of the scale or chord in question. Take C Major for example:



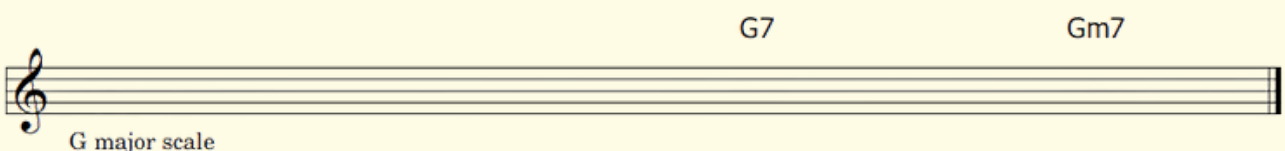
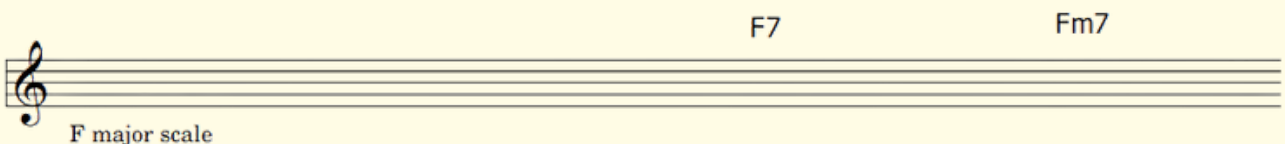
Commonly we construct chords made out of three notes, called **triads**. In  
terms of our scale degrees, we could say a triad has a root, third (3) and fifth  
(5). Here are the major and minor triads on C.



In jazz we usually use 7<sup>th</sup> chords. These are made up of the root, third, fifth,  
and flattened seventh. And we label the chord with the name of the root with  
a number 7 afterwards. For C7 we would say C Seven and a Cm7 chord a C  
Minor Seven.



Write out F Major and G Major scales and the 7<sup>th</sup> and minor 7<sup>th</sup> chords.



Here is the chord sequence for a 12 bar blues. We call the note of the chords a **chord tone**. We can use these chord tones to ensure our melodies work well with the chord sequence.

Fill in the missing chords and play through the chord sequence.

This **division symbol** means repeat the bar before. So here we play C7 again.

C7 F7 C7

F7 And here we play F7 again C7 C7

G7 F7 C7 G7

### Useful Scales

The blues is characterised by this 12 bar chord progression, but also has certain melodic characteristics, which we will discuss later.

In jazz, we call the melody the head. Lots of blues heads are based on a scale called the minor pentatonic scale. Fill in the notes of C Minor Pentatonic.

R b3 4 5 b7

Another commonly used scale is the aptly named Blues scale, which has one more note than the minor pentatonic - the b5. Fill in the notes of C Blues Scale.

R b3 4 b5 5 b7



Listen to a recording of Bag's Groove (e.g. Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk, Oscar Peterson Trio). Think about the different aspects of the head:

**Pitch Contour** (does the melody go up or down?)

**Syncopation** (is it on the beat or off the beat?)

**Notes/Scales** (what scale degrees does it use? Can you recognise a particular scale?)

**Phrase Structure** (is there question and answer? Do the phrases repeat? How many phrases per line?)

**Mood** (what kind of atmosphere does the tune create?)

Sing/play through Bag's Groove:



We can use the rhythm of the melody to write our own. Add pitches to the rhythm using notes from the C Minor Pentatonic Scale. You could also try using only chord tones instead!).

Three staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff has a melody starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4-B4, C5-B4, A4-G4, and a quarter note F4. Chords C7, F7, and C7 are indicated above the first three measures. The second staff continues the melody with eighth notes E4-D4, C4-B3, A3-G3, and a quarter note F4. Chords F7 and C7 are indicated above the first two measures. The third staff continues with eighth notes E4-D4, C4-B3, A3-G3, and a quarter note F4. Chords G7, F7, C7, and G7 are indicated above the measures. The piece ends with a double bar line.

We can change the order of the original rhythm to create a new melody. Assign pitches to this new rhythm. We can manipulate an existing melody in several ways. Some examples are:

- Retrograde** (playing it backwards)
- Inversion** (playing it upside down)
- Augmentation** (doubling the note lengths)
- Diminution** (halving the note lengths)

Three staves of music in 4/4 time, illustrating different manipulations of the original melody. The first staff shows the original melody in retrograde (played backwards), starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes F4-E4, D4-C4, B3-A3, and a quarter note G4. Chords C7, F7, and C7 are indicated above the first three measures. The second staff shows the original melody in inversion (played upside down), starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes F4-E4, D4-C4, B3-A3, and a quarter note G4. Chords F7 and C7 are indicated above the first two measures. The third staff shows the original melody in augmentation (doubling the note lengths), starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes F4-E4, D4-C4, B3-A3, and a quarter note G4. Chords G7, F7, C7, and G7 are indicated above the measures. The piece ends with a double bar line.



This is an example of **retrograde**, where we have used our previous example but backwards! Add pitches to this rhythm.

Three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff has a C7 chord above the first measure, an F7 chord above the second measure, and a C7 chord above the third measure. The second staff has an F7 chord above the first measure, a C7 chord above the second measure, and a C7 chord above the third measure. The third staff has a G7 chord above the first measure, an F7 chord above the second measure, a C7 chord above the third measure, and a G7 chord above the fourth measure. The notation shows a sequence of eighth and quarter notes that are a retrograde of a previous example.

Here is an example - play through it and see how it sounds. Notice the use of the b5 scale degree from the blues scale.

Three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff has a C7 chord above the first measure, an F7 chord above the second measure, and a C7 chord above the third measure. The second staff has an F7 chord above the first measure, a C7 chord above the second measure, and a C7 chord above the third measure. The third staff has a G7 chord above the first measure, an F7 chord above the second measure, a C7 chord above the third measure, and a G7 chord above the fourth measure. The notation shows a sequence of eighth and quarter notes, including a flat fifth (b5) scale degree, which is a characteristic of the blues scale.

Write another blues; try experimenting with **augmentation**, **diminution**, and **inversion**.

Three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff has a C7 chord above the first measure, an F7 chord above the second measure, a C7 chord above the third measure, and a C7 chord above the fourth measure. The second staff has an F7 chord above the first measure, an F7 chord above the second measure, a C7 chord above the third measure, and a C7 chord above the fourth measure. The third staff has a G7 chord above the first measure, an F7 chord above the second measure, a C7 chord above the third measure, and a G7 chord above the fourth measure. The notation shows a sequence of eighth and quarter notes, including a flat fifth (b5) scale degree, which is a characteristic of the blues scale.



Listen to a recording of Sonnymoon for Two (e.g. Sonny Rollins, John Hicks, Milt Jackson). Think about the different aspects of the head:

**Pitch Contour** (does the melody go up or down?)

**Syncopation** (is it on the beat or off the beat?)

**Notes/Scales** (what scale degrees does it use? Can you recognise a particular scale?)

**Phrase Structure** (is there question and answer? Do the phrases repeat? How many phrases per line?)

**Mood** (what kind of atmosphere does the tune create?)



Write your own blues head using two contrasting melodies.





Listen to a recording of Tenor Madness (e.g. Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon).

Think about the different aspects of the head:

**Pitch Contour** (does the melody go up or down?)

**Syncopation** (is it on the beat or off the beat?)

**Notes/Scales** (what scale degrees does it use? Can you recognise a particular scale?)

**Phrase Structure** (is there question and answer? Do the phrases repeat? How many phrases per line?)

**Mood** (what kind of atmosphere does the tune create?)

We now move to Bb blues, one of the most common keys to play a blues. Notice that there are more chords than before; this is an example of one of the most common harmonisations of a 12 bar blues in jazz. Sing/play through Tenor Madness.

Bb7 Eb7 Bb7 Fm7 Bb7

Eb7 E°7 Bb7 Gm7

Cm7 F7 Bb7 G7 Cm7 G7

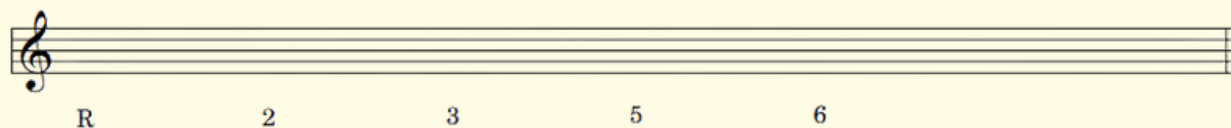
The chord in bar 6 is a **diminished seventh** chord. It contains the **flattened third (b3)**, **flattened fifth (b5)** and **double flattened seventh (bb7)**. This passing diminished chord creates extra tension and interest. You can use these chord tones in bar 6, or you can continue as before, just using a single scale and repeated phrase, treating it like any other chord.

E°7

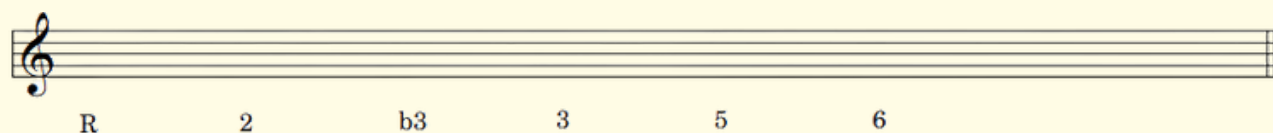
b3 bb7 b5 R

One of the defining features of this melody is the constant switching between the minor third and major third. Comparing with the chord tones, we can see that this successfully outlines the change from the C7 to the F7.

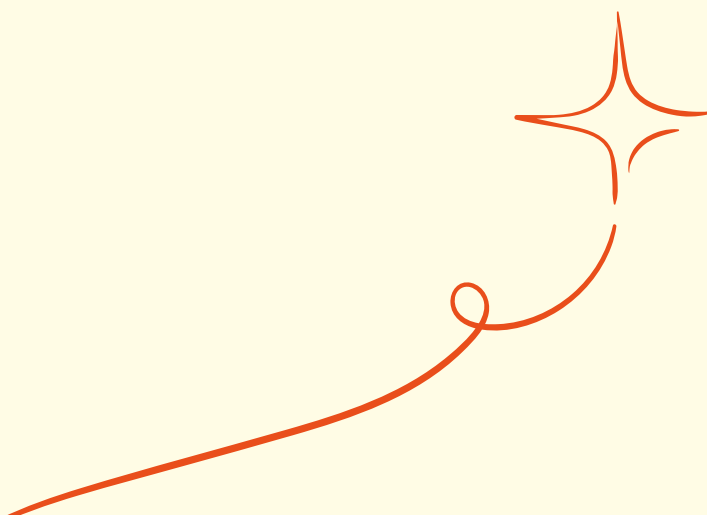
This melody uses a lot of notes from the Bb Major Pentatonic Scale. Write out the notes of Bb Major Pentatonic.



If we add the minor third as well, we get a new scale, sometimes called the **major blues scale**. Notice that this is just G Blues Scale starting from Bb! Write out the notes of Bb Major Blues Scale.



Add pitches to the rhythm using chord tones/blues scale/minor pentatonics/major pentatonics.



Add pitches to these two rhythms and/or make your own!

Chords: Bb7, Eb7, Bb7, Fm7, Bb7, Eb7, E°7, Bb7, Gm7, Cm7, F7, Bb7, G7, Cm7, G7

Chords: Bb7, Eb7, Bb7, Fm7, Bb7, Eb7, E°7, Bb7, Gm7, Cm7, F7, Bb7, G7, Cm7, G7



Now using everything we have learnt, have a go at writing your own 12 bar blues!

Chords: Bb7, Eb7, Bb7, Fm7, Bb7, Eb7, E°7, Bb7, Gm7, Cm7, F7, Bb7, G7, Cm7, G7



If you have any questions about the content within this worksheet, please contact us on [projects@nyjo.org.uk](mailto:projects@nyjo.org.uk).

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