

BLUES USING GUIDE TONES

The following blues lines were conceived to illustrate the use of guide tones to create harmonically clear melodies. They are meant to be simple enough for teaching purposes, yet still retaining some element of musicality and development. The guide tones were adhered to, but the lines are also created using the basic F triad with neighbor tones and elaboration, and created using some simple forms of motivic development. These different approaches to an improvised or composed melody are not mutually exclusive.

The guide tones are shown above the line for reference. In a class, I have students sing this line while others are improvising to reinforce the aural sense of where the harmony is going.

The guide tones, like the outlines, can be a useful vehicle for teaching any element of melodic improvisational theory. Students can work on time feel, tone, motivic development, triad elaboration, creative noodling, or whatever and still try to connect the guide tones. The guide tones, after all, are what is actually making the chord changes sound, and therefore, when followed can propel a solo.

The musical score is written in F major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 1-4) shows a 'BASIC GUIDE TONE LINE' with guide tones (3rd and 7th) for chords Bb, Eb7, Bb, and Bb7. Below it, a 'SOLO FOLLOWING GUIDE TONES' line shows a melodic line with circled notes corresponding to the guide tones. The second system (measures 5-8) shows guide tones for Eb7, Eo7, Bb, and G7. The third system (measures 9-12) shows guide tones for Cm7, F7, and Bb. The solo line in the third system includes a triplet of eighth notes in the final measure.

The guide tones are not always at the start of the line or even on the beat. Sometimes they occur in other registers.

In m.7, the line suggests outline no.3 (ascending arpeggio, the 7th resolving down to the next third). From the F# in m.8 to the last F in m.12, the line moves down in steps as shown in the staff below the line. Practicing singing and playing the simple shapes helps in creating the more elaborate lines which follow the simple structures.

System 1 (Measures 1-4):

- Chords: Bb , $Eb7$, Bb , $Bb7$
- Section: BASIC GUIDE TONE LINE: (top staff), SOLO FOLLOWING GUIDE TONES: (middle staff)

System 2 (Measures 5-8):

- Chords: $Eb7$, $Eo7$, Bb , $G7$
- Section: OUTLINE NO.3: (middle staff), OUTLINE NO.1: (middle staff)

System 3 (Measures 9-12):

- Chords: $Cm7$, $F7$, Bb
- Section: OUTLINE NO.1: STEP PROGRESSION TO END (middle staff)