

Fingerstyle Walking Bass

BY BRAD BELDNER

IT'S A CHALLENGE TO SIMULTANEOUSLY play chords and bass. To give you a feel for this approach, here's a basic walking bass pattern with some jazzed-up blues changes (Ex. 1). First practice the bass line by itself. Play with a swing feel. Next work out the chords *sans* bass line. Ex. 2 shows the fingering and forms. When you're comfortable with


Ex. 1

Ex. 1 is a musical score for a walking bass line in 4/4 time, featuring a swing feel. The score is divided into two systems, each with a treble clef staff and a bass staff. The first system (measures 1-4) includes chords G13, C9, G13, D9, and G13. The second system (measures 5-8) includes chords C9, G13, Am7, Bm7, and E7#9. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 on the bass staff. A triplet of eighth notes is shown at the beginning of measure 1.

Measure	Chord	Bass Line (Fingering)
1	G13	3 0 1 2
2	C9	3 0 1 2
3	G13	3 2 3 4
4	D9	5 4 3 4
5	C9	3 1 0 3
6	G13	3 0 1 2
7	Am7	3 4 5 6
8	Bm7	7 6 7 6
9	E7#9	7 6 7 6

each part, try the music as written. The goal is to make the bass line sound independent

of the chords—this isn't a mechanical counterpoint exercise. Master this technique, and

the audience will swear you're hiding a bass player behind your amp. 

9

Am7 D9 G13 E7#9 Am7 D9 G13

T
A
B

Ex. 2

G13 C9 Am7 Bm7 E7#9 D9

⊙ = Root