

BASS TIPS

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Chromatism

The chromatic scale contains all the twelve notes. The scale is a series of twelve half steps or semitones and represents all of the tones available to us in Western music.

For Example:

The C Chromatic Scale: (C - Db - D - Eb - E - F - G - Ab - A - Bb - B)

Formula: 1 - 2b - 2 - 3b - 3 - 4 - 5b - 5 - 6b - 6 - 7b - 7

A bass player would rarely play the full chromatic scale during an improvisation. The scale is used so that the performer can take a small passage of the scale to use in a melodic phrase. This concept of the chromatic scale applies to solos and grooves.

The chromatic scale effect is really interesting and it has been explored by many musicians of various styles. The result is a feeling of passing notes.

Fig. 1 – An example of a funk groove using chromatism.

The image shows a musical score for a funk groove. It consists of two staves: a bass staff and a guitar staff. The bass staff is in 4/4 time and features a chromatic line of eighth notes. The notes are: C4, C#4, D4, D#4, E4, E#4, F4, F#4, G4, G#4, A4, A#4, B4, B#4, C5. The guitar staff shows a fretboard diagram with fingerings: 3 3 on the first two strings, 5 3 4 5 on the next two strings, and 2 3 4 5 3 5 3 5 on the last two strings. Above the bass staff, the tempo is marked as ♩ = 90 and the chord is C7.

Fig. 2 – An example of a melodic phrase for a solo using chromatism.

♩ = 180 (♩♩ - ♩♩♩)
Am9

The musical notation consists of a bass staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Am9). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 180, with a note value of a quarter note. The melodic phrase is as follows:

- Measure 1: G2 (open), A2 (open), B2 (open), C3 (open), D3 (open), E3 (open), F3 (open), G3 (open).
- Measure 2: A2 (open), B2 (open), C3 (open), D3 (open), E3 (open), F3 (open), G3 (open), A3 (open).
- Measure 3: B2 (open), C3 (open), D3 (open), E3 (open), F3 (open), G3 (open), A3 (open), B3 (open).
- Measure 4: C3 (open), D3 (open), E3 (open), F3 (open), G3 (open), A3 (open), B3 (open), C4 (open).

The fretboard diagram below the staff shows fingerings for the T, A, and B strings:

- T string: • 14 15 16 17 14 17 16 14 15 16 14
- A string: •
- B string: •