



ELLEN O'REILLY

Bass ace Ellen continues her beginners' look at chord charts

Hey bass buddies! In the last few columns we've been looking at chord charts: this month I'm going to go a little deeper.

I've already spoken about how chords are created by building up from the root in increments of 3rds, and also how we call this system 'Harmonising the major'

scale'. For each degree of the major scale there is a chord that comes from it: we allocate a number (or roman numeral) to each of these chords. These chords are put in different orders to become chord progressions. Modern pop and rock songs are built around chord progressions, so knowing how to write chord charts and how to read them will become invaluable to you when learning songs.

The 1 chord	I	maj7
The 2 chord	II	min7
The 3 chord	III	min7
The 4 chord	IV	maj7
The 5 chord	V	7
The 6 chord	VI	min7
The 7 chord	VII	min7b5

A very common chord progression is what's known as the; I, V, VI, IV, or in other words; the one, five, six, four progression. This forms the base for popular songs such as 'With Or Without You' by U2, 'You're Beautiful' by James Blunt, 'I'm Yours' by Jason Mraz, 'Don't Stop Believing' by Journey. We can allocate these numerals or numbers to any major key, so if we choose the key of A major, then the chord progression will look like the following example:

||: Amaj7 | E7 | F#min7 | Dmaj7 ||

If we choose the key of F major, then the progression will look like this:

||: Fmaj7 | C7 | Dmin7 | Bbmaj7 ||

And so on...

You can do this for any major key signature. So how do we build a bass-line around a progression like this? Well this is where triads, arpeggios and pentatonics come into play. Under each of these chords you can play the root note, so if you were in the key of F major and the chord progression was a I, V, VI, IV, you would play F, C, D and Bb. This would make for a very functional but dull bass-line: we can make it a bit more interesting by incorporating a root and 5th motion as in **example 1** on the stave. Alternatively, you could create a more rhythmic, melodic bass-line by playing triads, as in the second example on the stave. Have a go at working out bass-lines in other major keys using the I, V, VI, IV progression, and create your own lines using root, 5th and triads as a guide. Have fun!

EXAMPLE 1

I Maj7 V7 VI min7 IV Maj7

I Maj7 V7 VI min7 IV Maj7

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