TRANSCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF RON CARTER’S BASSLINES FROM
FOUR SELECTED RECORDINGS OF AUTUMN LEAVES

A Report of a Senior Study

by

William Ashton Wise Yager

Major: Music

Maryville College

Fall, 2010

Date Approved___________________, by ____________________

Faculty Supervisor

Date Approved___________________, by ____________________

Editor
ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this project was to investigate the rate and manner in which a master jazz musician grows musically over the period of his or her career. As an aspiring bassist, Ron Carter is a musician that has commanded my respect and interest. While I possessed a cursory knowledge of Carter’s oeuvre prior to this study, I had no real intimate knowledge of his music or playing style. This project served to fulfill both interests. In order to familiarize myself with Carter’s playing, I transcribed by ear and analyzed four of his basslines from different recordings of the tune “Autumn Leaves” that span 38 years of his playing career. By selecting the same tune, I could track differences and similarities in his basslines in order to derive meaningful conclusions.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Ron Carter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Analyses</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

RON CARTER

As one of the preeminent jazz bassists in the history of the music, Ron Carter (b. 1937) has elevated the standard of excellence through his contributions in the second great Miles Davis quintet, a prodigious body of work as a leader, and his extensive work as a sideman on many of the greatest jazz recordings. He has lent his signature swinging sound to over 2,000 recordings becoming one of the most recorded musicians in the process. According to writer/pianist Ethan Iverson, the “sound of jazz is Ron Carter playing four beats in a row” (Iverson, Do The Math).

Carter’s musical journey actually began with the cello, not the bass. Upon his entrance to the prestigious Cass Technical High School in Detroit, the music teacher demonstrated several instruments and the sound of the cello particularly appealed to Carter. After completing his studies at Cass Tech, Carter enrolled at the Eastman School of Music. During his tenure there, Carter excelled in his classical studies and became one of the best undergraduate students in the school (Myers 1). However, the racist and discouraging atmosphere he experienced prevented him participating in or even being informed of many of the auditions for major orchestral positions.

At the time I was the best undergraduate student player in the school. I felt that given my unstated status, I should have been at least informed so I could decide
whether or not I wanted to audition for different orchestras. I felt that because I wasn’t kept in that loop, it wasn’t the fair thing to do to me. I think if I had not maintained that focus, I wouldn’t have gotten out of that school in one piece (Myers 1).

However, despite these setbacks, Ron was selected as the principal bassist for the Eastman Philharmonia. Ron’s personal drive and dedication enabled him to see past the unequal opportunities and be comfortable with his personal view of his talent. He also began to take jazz gigs in the New York state area during this time. After completing his studies at Eastman, Carter set his sights on the Manhattan School of Music in New York City in order to continue his education and play jazz bass professionally. The number of opportunities for jazz work also increased after arriving in the city. After early gigs with musicians such as Jaki Byard, Eric Dolphy, Chico Hamilton, and Art Farmer, he was enlisted to join Miles (Myers 2).

While Carter has been an integral part of many musical partnerships, the one most responsible for his rise to prominence was his time in the second great Miles Davis quintet. Together from 1963 to 1968, this particular group made an impact on jazz that many today are still coming to terms with. The rhythm section of Herbie Hancock on piano, Tony Williams on drums, and Ron Carter on bass with Wayne Shorter on tenor saxophone rewrote the book on rhythm section and small ensemble playing. Miles, with his ineffable talent for personnel selection, put together a unique group of individuals significantly younger than himself (Williams was just 17 years old when he joined the group, Hancock was 23, Carter was 26, and Shorter was 30). Miles’ status in the jazz community at the time allowed him to select a group made up of whomever he wished.
This freedom enabled him to bring together a younger group, ambitious and prone to experimentation (*Miles*). Experiment is precisely what this ensemble did both in the studio and on the stage. Playing a live repertoire consisting mostly of the same standard tunes his first quintet did in the 1950s, Miles and his young band deconstructed tunes with a level of harmonic sophistication and reckless abandon that set the stage for much of the jazz in the 1960s. The young age of the members directly influenced how they approached the music. According to Williams, “When you’re young, there are very few things that scare you. . .but when you’re young, you’re enthusiastic about everything. You can’t expect a 17-year-old to be intimidated. Kids are more cocky than intimidated” (*Miles* 263). Another key component in the group’s unique approach was the absolute trust each member had each member had in one another. For a rhythm section to be successful, input is required from everyone. The metaphor appropriately used by Ron in discussing the group is that of a mad science experiment. “I call that group a laboratory band. Miles had the lab and the tunes were the chemicals. He allowed us to go in, take our different test tubes and then make combinations of changes and rhythms. We boiled them up to see if together they had a vitality” (Ouellette, *Finding the Right Notes* 105).

One thing Ron learned from his experience in the group was that the bass player has the power to suggest and alter things that affect the entire group. By playing one note, Ron could alter Tony’s rhythms or the way Herbie voiced a particular chord. This level of musical empathy only exists among high-level musicians that work together consistently. That is perhaps why many claim the ‘60s Miles quintet to be the greatest jazz group of all time. According to Miles from *Miles: The Autobiography*: 
When we were up on the bandstand I always stood next to Ron because I wanted to hear what he was playing. Before, I used to always stand next to the drummer, but now I didn't worry about what Tony was playing because you could hear everything he was playing; same thing with Herbie. But back then they didn't have amplifiers and so it was hard sometimes to hear Ron. Also I stood next to him to give him my support. Every night Herbie, Tony and Ron would sit around back in their hotel rooms talking about what they had played until the morning came. Every night they would come back and play something different. And every night I would have to react. The music we did together changed every fucking night; if you heard it yesterday, it was different tonight. Man, it was something how the shit changed from night to night after a while. Even we didn't know where it was all going to. But we did know it was going somewhere else and that it was probably going to be hip, and that was enough to keep everyone excited while it lasted.

In addition to playing with Miles, Ron also played on many now legendary recordings for Blue Note records during the ‘60s including Hancock’s *Maiden Voyage* and *Empyrean Isles* and Shorter’s *Speak No Evil* as well as recordings by Freddie Hubbard, McCoy Tyner, Joe Henderson, Sam Rivers, and Horace Silver.

After leaving the band in 1968, Ron settled in New York and began an active solo career. He made several albums under his own name in addition to making contributions to others on prestigious labels like CTI. During the ‘70s, Carter also developed the piccolo bass (a half sized bass tuned differently) that he used as a solo instrument in various groups. Throughout the ‘70s and ‘80s, Carter continued to make records as a
leader and playing with a veritable “who’s who” in jazz music, often including former bandmate Herbie Hancock as well as other stars such as Freddie Hubbard and Joe Henderson (Engel).

In addition to his mammoth contributions to the music itself, Carter has also been an important part of jazz education. Besides authoring multiple bass instructional books, Carter is an active clinician and leader of workshops and was a Professor of Music at the City College of New York for 18 years prior to retiring as Distinguished Professor Emeritus (Ouellette, Finding the Right Notes 267). He also continues to teach privately to this day.

Carter’s distinctive tone and playing style are why he has been a part of so many great recordings both in the jazz world and out. His “big ears” make him a desirable accompanist in any musical situation. By listening to what is happening around him and selecting notes accordingly, Ron is a supportive player while remaining actively involved in the proceedings. Through analysis of his recorded basslines and solos, one can see that there are several devices that appear frequently. Devices such as pull-offs, hammer-ons, glissandos, double stops, and various rhythmic embellishments appear frequently in Ron’s playing (Engel). Ron also likes to outline chords in a clear manner by emphasizing roots and fifths on strong beats. This is one way that Ron creates a strong foundation that other musicians love to play over. However, depending on the musical setting, Ron sometimes uses more colorful chord tones like thirds and sevenths in his basslines (Engel). In addition to his impeccable note choice, he also creates lines with masterful melodicism and rhythmic embellishment. By utilizing idiomatic devices (see glossary) like skips, drops, and triplets, his playing propels the music forward with a subtly
insistent drive. While Carter’s prestige as a player is due primarily to his supremacy as a rhythm section player and timekeeper, his abilities as a soloist are also prodigious. His melodies have the clarity of a horn player and his mastery of rhythm make his lines compelling.

When discussing the style and sound of any bassist, the gear and setup of the instrument is of prime importance. While Ron Carter sounds like Ron Carter on whatever bass he is presented with, the sound he gets on his own instrument is very special indeed.

Ron Carter’s equipment:

- Juzek ¾ bass ca. 1910 (used since 1959)

"According to someone who researched it, the parts were made in Czechoslovakia," says Carter. "They were then shipped to Germany for assembly” (Senatore). Ron also states:

Nothing has the same feel and played-in quality. I’ve started to find where the notes are located better than I did almost 40 years ago and I’m still determined to play this bass better than I’ve ever played it. I’m really starting to know how this bass works finally and I’ve developed a sound on the instrument that’s so identifiable because I’ve been using it so long. I think bass players should be careful when they’re looking for a bass. Don’t be impressed by its age or pedigree. Ask yourself if it can make a sound on the instrument that you can be held responsible for forever (Prasad).

This bass also features the first prototype C extension. Ron notes, “Since 1971, I've been using an extension that goes down to low C. I was one of the first guys to do this” (Ouellette, Strings). They have now become standard in jazz and orchestral playing. In
addition to the fingerboard extension, Ron also uses a custom soundpost and snakewood end pin. His soundpost is tapered on both ends, allowing the top and bottom of the bass to move freely due to less contact with the post and have better resonance as a result.

- La Bella 7710 Black Nylon Wound Steel Core String (used since 1989)
- David Gage Realist bass pickup and Kurmann system in the soundpost (primarily for recording)
- Gallien-Krueger MBE Combo Amp or 400RB-III head with Flite 1x15 Cabinet

To fully appreciate the breadth of Ron Carter’s musicality and personal evolution as a player, one must go to the records. By listening to and analyzing Ron’s basslines, it is possible to gain some understanding of why his playing is so special. In order to truly document how his playing has grown and changed, I transcribed into musical notation by ear, analyzed, and compared a single tune recorded multiple times over his career. The complete transcriptions can be found in Appendix B.
CHAPTER II

ANALYSES OF THE TRANSCRIPTIONS

“Autumn Leaves” from Miles Davis’ *Live at the Plugged Nickel*

As stated earlier, Carter rose to prominence as a jazz bassist during his tenure with Miles Davis’ quintet in the 1960s. This live recording from 1965 is a perfect representation of the group’s live performance practice. The repertoire was relatively unchanged from this 1950s group, but the tempos and liberties taken with tunes were radically different. It is in this group that many of the things Carter became known for began to surface in his playing.

In m. 33 at the beginning of Miles’ solo, Carter remains in the two feel he employed during the melody. It is typical for the 4/4 walking feel to be used once a soloist begins so only playing half notes can be used as a tension-building device. Carter expands on this idea by blurring the lines between the “two-feel” and the regular 4/4 walking; by interspersing measures of 4/4, the listener is constantly surprised. Measure 34 is a prime example of this time teasing as well as Carter’s tendency to target more colorful chord tones like sevenths.
Phrases like mm. 37–38 also contribute to the blurriness between time feels; the quarter notes on beats three and four of each measure lead the ear to believe a walking line is impending. Measure 38 is also an early example of Carter’s fondness for triadic bass lines.

Measures 41–42 contain more of the same hinting at the walking line; this is compounded by the fact that both measures are very close to being examples of the ascending fourth cliché. The ascending fourth cliché is simply the most common way of approaching a ii-V7 when the root motion is ascending. The absence of a quarter note on beat two is all that differentiates what Carter plays here from the walking bass cliché. The B natural on beats three and four of m. 43 hints at the common Bmin7 substitution but Carter chooses not to resolve it and plays the normal Eb7 change in the next measure.

The rhythmic idea presented in m. 46 hints at some of what this rhythm section was known for; this sort of syncopation was previously uncommon in jazz basslines but Carter along with Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams experimented freely with various forms of metric modulation. Carter follow this measure with two measures consisting of only Gmin7 chord tones; this balancing of complex and simple ideas is one of the hallmarks of Carter’s playing.
Carter implies a tritone substitution in m. 49 by playing an Eb-Bb double stop and then the same chord a half step lower in the D7b9 change.

Measure 53 begins a section of the aforementioned metric modulation; Carter ignores bar lines by playing only dotted quarter notes. Carter’s note choice continues to reflect the harmony, but the lack of emphasis on strict demarcation between measures contributes a subtle feeling of harmonic ambiguity. Measure 53 contains notes all belonging to the Cmin triad, but m. 54 seems to fit the Bb7 more so than the F7. Measure 55 reflects a Bb7 more strongly than a Bbmaj7.

Carter’s insistent dotted quarter bassline creates a rhythmic dissonance against William’s 4/4 swing and builds an incredible amount of tension during the latter half Miles’ first solo chorus. Just like mm. 53–56, mm. 57–60 and their lack of clearly defined chord placement adds to the tension by blurring the lines between harmonies.

Carter ends the first solo chorus with four more bars of dotted quarters. Carter’s line also seems to be a bar behind; m. 61 appears to outline a Bbmaj7 instead of the AØ. The D7b9 measure contains notes Carter normally uses in the AØ and the first Gmin measure
contains notes from the D major triad. These twelve bars are a prime example of how strongly Carter can influence the musical proceedings by doing something relatively simple. In this case, he achieves that with the dotted quarter note.

Carter finally relieves the tension by beginning a walking line at the start of Miles’ second chorus in m. 66. Measures 66-67 are an example of the textbook approach to a ii-V7 chord sequence; both measures are another example of the ascending fourth bass cliché. It simply walks up the minor scale with a chromatic passing tone on beat four to connect the minor third and fourth (root of the V7 chord).

Measure 68 uses chromatic passing tones to circle back to the root on beat four and resolves downward by fifth to the Eb on beat one of m. 69. Measure 69 outlines an Eb triad with a chromatic passing tone on beat four to connect the G and A.

Measure 69 uses a chromatic lower neighbor tone to return to the A again on beat three before dropping an octave to the open string A on beat four. This octave enclosure is a common way to approach any sort of D chord from an A chord. Carter is a master of efficiency and shows his knowledge of what sort of phrases lie easily on the bass. Carter then uses what will become his most used phrases during the D7b9 portions of the tune. It is telling that the C on beat two is the only stopped note in the measure; Carter is always aware of when open strings are available and useful. Measures 71–72 are drawn primarily from the Gmin triad. The Eb on beat anticipates the Cmin7 in the following measure.
Carter plays a descending Cmin triad in m. 73 before using an E natural on beat four to target the F in the next measure. Measure 74 is another bass cliché example; when targeting the same note in the same octave, it is common to walk down a whole step with chromatic passing tones and then back up to the target note on beat one of the next measure. The F is the fifth of the Bb7 chord and thus an appropriate target; Carter uses this cliché to target the F in m. 74 and m. 75. Measure 75 is another example of a common Carter cliché. After targeting the fifth of a chord, if the next target is the root of a chord a fourth away, it is common for bassists to play the root of the first chord on beat two before playing the fifth again on beat three and using a descending chromatic passing tone to link the fifth and root of the next chord. Carter hints at an F pedal by repeating the note on beats two and four in m. 76 before landing on the Eb in m. 77.

Measure 77 is another Carter cliché; these Carter clichés differ from standard bass clichés in that they are unique to Ron’s playing. Carter tends to repeat himself in his lines by playing repetitions or slightly varied phrases in the same measures of each chorus or harmonic sequence. He targets the lowered fifth of the AØ chord and walks down to the minor third before using an G# to target the A natural on beat one of m. 78. Measure 78 is another example of Carter’s fondness for the Bb in the AØ-D7b9 sequence of the tune. He uses the lowered sixth of the chord to dress up the A natural on beats one and three before using the open string D to resolve upwards to the open string G on beat one of m.
79. Carter again uses notes derived from the Gmin triad in m. 79-80, but this time he targets the Bb on beat one of m. 80 and approaches it from above with a C and Cb.

Another of Carter’s favorite devices to employ on the AØ is to outline an Eb triad; all of the notes in the Eb triad fall within an AØ chord, but by ordering them into a triad shape, Carter’s line gives the impression of some sort of substitution or reharmonization.

Measure 82 is another open string line; the C is the only stopped note. Measures 83-84 are again drawn mostly from the Gmin triad; the C on beat three of m. 83 and beat four of m. 84 are the only exceptions.

Carter begins to repeat his line from the earlier Bb ii-V7-I sequence but drops a note on beat four of m. 85. This use of space can be a great device but only if employed with conviction; the recording quality of this album makes it difficult to ascertain whether or not this space is intentional. Measure 86 is another use of the ascending fourth cliché and m. 87 is the first iteration of what will become a Carter cliché in these transcriptions.

Carter drops to the open string D on beat two from the root Bb and then approaches the Eb on beat one of the following measure from above with diatonic whole steps. In this case, however, Carter leaves a rest on beat one of m. 88 leading one to believe the earlier rest may have indeed been intentional.
Carter targets the seventh of the AØ in m. 89 and provides more evidence of the greater harmonic freedom this band allowed him. He walks up to the A before playing the G again on beat four and using a 7–3 resolution. Carter again uses open strings in m. 90 to outline the D major triad. Carter uses open strings again in mm. 91–92 to target the roots of each chord before walking up to the Eb in m. 93.

Carter uses the common ascending fourth cliché in m. 93 but by using it to travel from an Eb on beat one of the AØ chord to the Bb on beat one of the D7b9 change, he proves its versatility. Measure 95 contains a common root-five pattern before he walks up to the Bb in m. 96 and uses the G on beat four to resolve to the C at the beginning of the next chorus.

Carter repeats his phrase from m. 65 in m. 97, but he plays the E natural on beat four an octave higher in order to transition into the upper register of the bass. Carter uses the ascending fourth cliché in m. 98 and the same target-chromatic passing tone cliché in m. 99 to target the Bb again in m. 100. He plays the root Eb on beat two before he walks down from an A natural on beat three to the G on beat one of m. 101.

Carter targets the seventh of the AØ again but this time plays the b9 on beat two and walks down to the G again on beat four using a 7-3 resolution to transition into the next
measure. Carter subtly anticipates the Gmin chord by framing the G on beat two with an F# on both beats one and three. Carter departs from his routine of using triadic note choice in the Gmin sequence by using more colorful tones like the Eb on beat two and B natural on beat three. The use of a major third in both measures hints at mode mixture by blurring the line between minor and major tonality.

Carter again uses the ascending fourth cliché in both m. 105 and m. 106. He then walks down chromatically from the Bb in m. 107 to F# on beat one of the Eb7 change in m. 108. This sort of “wrong” note choice is most likely anything but. The experimentation in this group often led to harmonies that can be described as heavily chromatic at best. Carter was generally the only one in the quintet that provided structural and harmonic support in any explicit way; the other members relied upon him to keep one foot in the tune while everyone else deconstructed the form and harmony.

Carter plays the lowered fifth on beat one of the AØ in m. 109 before forming an enclosure to target the A on beat one of m. 110. Carter uses open strings over the D7b9 change as is becoming the norm before using a left hand pull-off to anticipate the Gmin in the next measure. The use of the A in different octaves on beats one and two also implies a ii-V7 within the D7b9 chord. Carter repeats his phrase from m. 79–80 in mm. 111–112.
Carter delays the resolution of the AØ by inserting another chromatic passing tone on beat one and pushing the arrival of the root to beat two. He then uses beats three and four to form an enclosure to frame the A on beat one of m. 114. Carter uses another pull-off before playing the third of the chord on beat three. He anticipates the G again with another pull-off on beat four. Measure 116 is an example of linear chromaticism within a walking line but the presence of chord tones on beats one and three masks the dissonance.

By playing an F over the Cmin7 chord, Carter single-handedly creates an F7sus chord. This sort of on-the-fly reharmonization was standard practice for this band. He then targets a Db on beat one of the F7 to imply an augmented fifth and by extension an altered dominant chord. Carter brings the line back “inside” by using a varied ascending fourth cliché in m. 119; the term “inside” is common jazz parlance for referring to any note choice that abides by standard harmony. By placing the chromatic passing tone on beat two instead of beat four, Carter gets more mileage out of the cliché. He follows it with an unvaried ascending fourth cliché in m. 120 to target the Bb in m. 121.

Carter uses a variation of his m. 109 phrase in m. 121; He plays a Bb on beat one instead of an Eb before using the remainder of the measure for an enclosure. An enclosure is simply the framing of a target note by playing either diatonic or chromatic approach notes.
from above or below said target. Carter’s phrase in m. 122 is also the same as m. 110 minus the pull-off on beat four. Carter walks up to the seventh of the C7 chord in m. 123 from the root of the Gmin7 and then plays an E natural on the F7 chord. His E natural implies a prolongation of the C7 chord in the previous measure; the F on beat three relieves the tension while also belonging to the Bb7 chord.

Carter ends the chorus by using an exact repetition of mm. 109–110. He jumps to the octave G on beat two of m. 127 before outlining the Gmin triad as he descends. The B natural on beat four of m. 128 leads upward to the C at the beginning of the next chorus.

Carter’s first four bar phrase of this chorus is a goldmine for bass clichés; he again outlines the Cmin triad in m. 129, uses the same target-chromatic passing tone cliché to target an F in both m. 130 and m. 131, and repeats mm. 74-75 over mm. 131-132.

Measure 133 is a repetition of the AØ Carter cliché from m. 77. The D on beat three and A on beat four of m. 134 lead the listener to expect a G on beat one but Carter defies expectation and implies a suspended chord by playing a C on beat one before walking up to a D on beat three. He finishes the phrase by outlining a Gmin triad.
Carter uses a triad again in m. 137 before targeting the A on beat one of the F7 chord.

The rest of m. 138 contains notes from a Bb triad and thus anticipates the next harmony. Measure 139 is another example of a standard bass cliché; when targeting the same note an octave higher or lower, it is common to use a fifth passing tone on beat two before approaching the target from either a whole step above or below. The implied chord in m. 140 is slightly unclear; the D natural can imply an Ebmaj7, but the more likely scenario is that Carter is ignoring the Eb and playing a Bb6 chord.

In m. 141, Carter hints at earlier phrases like m. 113. Carter’s triadic line in m. 142 is a repetition of the one he played in m. 90. His line in mm. 143-144 is also recycled material; this self-repetition is a trend that continues throughout Carter’s playing in the other transcriptions.

Carter walks down from the b9 to the seventh before anticipating the D7b9 by playing a D on beat four. He frames the D on beat three of m. 146 by playing an A in two octaves on beats one and two. He uses a left hand pull-off on beat four to anticipate the Gmin change and uses the same pull-off to delay the second Gmin chord. He approaches the C in m. 149 from above by stepping down chromatically from a whole step above.

Carter uses another ascending fourth cliché in m. 149 but plays a Db instead of a D natural to color the line. Carter repeats his phrases from mm. 74–75 before playing a
semi-chromatic line in m. 152 and using a skip on beat four to target the Eb on beat one of the AØ in the following measure.

Carter uses a Db to target the C on beat three. In m. 154, Carter gives the line a slight lift by waiting until the and of one to play the D on the G string before the open string D on beat two. Carter hints at his earlier dotted quarter note line by playing quarter notes on the offbeats beginning in m. 155. This syncopation gives his line an anticipatory feeling as he arrives at most of the chord changes early.

Carter’s Ab on second half of beats four and one imply a DØ over the normal D7b9 change. It could also be seen as an extension of the AØ from m. 157 as the D7b9 gets pushed a bar ahead to where the Gmin normally occurs. The Bb on the second half of beat four in m. 159 anticipates the Gmin which finally occurs on m. 160. This sort of malleability the band imposes on the tune’s harmony allows Carter a much greater degree of freedom in his bassline construction.

“Autumn Leaves” from Ron Carter and Jim Hall’s Alone Together

This live recording from 1972 was the first of several albums in the Hall/Carter partnership. Playing as a duo is a very different musical situation compared to the trios and quintet discussed in the other transcriptions. Both musicians are known for their tasteful playing and musical sensibility and this duo recording documents that. One might
think that the fewer number of musicians would increase the amount of musical responsibility those musicians have, but Carter and Hall play relatively simply and place equal importance on the space left as a result.

Measures 97–98 are more evidence of Carter’s mastery of the walking bass idiom; his reliance on the ascending fourth cliché gives his lines a familiar sound. Measure 99 includes both a left hand pull-off and a muted-note triplet drop before approaching the Bb in m. 100. The skip and drop in m. 99 show how much can be done without actually playing a pitch. Carter uses the fifth of the Eb7 chord in m. 100 to great effect by surrounding the Eb root with Bbs in different octaves.

Carter continues his tendency to use Bb in the AØ change before anticipating the D on beat four. Beat four of m. 101 and beat one of m. 102 are an example of a commonly used syncopation in basslines. M. 102 is also another recurrence of the D7 cliché Carter uses so often. He completes the A section by using a D pedal on beats two and four of mm. 103-104 against an alternating root-fifth pattern on beats one and three.

Measure 105 is another example of how Carter relies heavily on notes from the triad; by using those notes in creative ways he hides the simplistic note choice. Beats three and four also form an enclosure, another frequently used device, that targets the A of the F7
chord. Carter again draws on the triad in m. 107 but uses a “skip” on beat one and a drop on beat four to dress up the line. The “drop” on beat four also anticipates the Eb in m. 108. Again, Carter outlines a root position Eb triad before enclosing the A on beat four.

Carter’s phrase in m. 109 is a fine example of how he often does a lot with little material; with only the A and the enclosure on beat two, Carter uses drops and syncopations to make the line sound much more complicated than it actually is. He anticipates the D on the and of beat four and then plays the D7 cliché in m. 110. Carter hints at his earlier pedal figure in m. 111 by playing the root-fifth on beats one and three and using a D on beats two and four instead of the high G. Measure 112 walks up to the minor third Bb from the root G before skipping and dropping on beats three and four to target the C in the next measure.

He walks down from the minor third of the AØ to the b9 before playing the Bb an octave higher to approach the A of the next measure. Carter uses his open strings as he often does in m. 114 before using a pull-off on the G string to anticipate the Gmin. Carter targets the minor third Bb in m. 116 by using the common whole step-half step neighbor tone approach. He then outlines a first inversion triad before using a B natural on beat four to target the C. This use of a major third in a minor chord also briefly implies mode mixture.
Carter uses the ascending fourth cliché again in m. 117, but this time it is an octave higher. Carter outlines an F7 chord in m. 118 by using all of the notes except the third in his bassline. He targets the F again in the Bbmaj7 chord and walks down before dropping on beat four to anticipate the Eb7. Measure 120 is just a root-fifth-octave pattern with a skip on the high Eb on beat three. The Bb on beat four resolves downward to the A in the next measure.

Carter uses another ascending fourth cliché in m. 121 but this is unique in that it is the first time he has done so on the AØ change. Carter uses a triad permutation again in m. 122. Carter tackles the turnaround in mm. 123–124 by playing the root on beat one, triplet dropping on beat two, and playing a root-fifth on beats three and four. He plays the next ii-V7 by sequencing his phrase from the previous bar.

Carter outlines an Eb triad in m. 125 while enclosing the target A in m. 126. Carter uses his open strings yet again in m. 126 before concluding his walking line by using more open strings and a D on the G string in mm. 127–128 to heavily emphasize the root and fifth of the Gmin chord.
“Autumn Leaves” from Billy Cobham’s *The Art of Three*

This live recording from 2002 is a fine example of mature Carter with a little more abandon and ensemble interaction. The recording begins with a simple arranged eight bar introduction before the trio plays the melody.

Ron’s use of quarter note triplets from the beginning along with the half note cymbal playing of Cobham enables the introduction to belie the actual tempo of the tune as well as hint at the flexibility and freedom this trio possesses.

The first of Carter’s two bar phrases (mm. 2–3) demonstrates another use of the enclosure. In this case, Carter targets the root of the Gmin7 chord by implying the harmonic minor scale through use of the minor third and raised leading tone.
In the next two bar phrase (mm.4–5), Carter approaches the diminished fifth of the AØ chord by using notes diatonic to the Eb major scale. In the final two bar phrase of the introduction, Carter again approaches a Gmin chord but this time by use of the notes contained within a D major triad.

After the introduction, the trio then plays the melody in accordance with common jazz performance practice. Carter stays mostly in a broken or half note time feel and Barron/Cobham follow suit by avoiding playing the time explicitly. Carter begins his demonstration of mastery of basic jazz bassline elements in the melody section of this performance. In mm. 9–10, Carter utilizes common bass cliché; he plays the root of the Cmin7 chord and arrives at the root of the following F7 chord by way of a chromatic passing tone from the upper neighbor note of G (the fifth of the Cmin7 chord).

Carter utilizes one of his trademark devices in mm. 11-2 by using a glissando travel from Bb to Eb.

He repeats himself in mm. 13–14 by glissing from A to D. He ends the first eight bar A section of the melody by playing two tied whole note Gs in mm. 15-16.
Carter develops the glissando idea throughout the repeat of the A section in mm. 17-24 by traveling from root to root by way of an upward slide. He avoids repeating himself verbatim by displacing the starting pitch of each slide by a quarter note; the glissando begins on beat three of the first measure of each two bar phrase as opposed to beat two as in the previous A section.

Carter begins the bridge section of the melody statement by going into a clear two feel for the first time. He demonstrates good voice leading by approaching each target note in mm. 25–26 by a chromatic half step approach note. In m. 25, Carter approaches the Dmin7b9 chord by way of the Eb of the AØ chord. He then travels from the D7b9 chord to the Gmin chord through an F#. He plays another time tested bass cliché in mm. 27-28 by approaching the Cmin7 chord by ascending from the Gmin with a G, A, Bb, and B.

In m. 29, Carter reaches the F7 chord in m. 30 by descending chromatically from a whole step above the target F. He then demonstrates another classic cliché by dropping by a sixth to the third of the chord, A. In m. 31, Carter uses a descending Bb bebop scale (see glossary) to reach the target Eb in m. 32.

Carter keeps it simple in mm. 33–34 by playing the roots of the chords. Carter’s use of syncopation in mm. 35–36 gives the music a sense of forward motion.
He uses only roots, but by playing half notes on beats two and four of each bar he disguises the simplicity of the line. Carter’s ability to play deceptively simple lines that serve the music is a key component of his mastery as an artist. Carter ends the melody section of the performance by expanding a descending chromatic pattern over four bars. In m. 37, he plays the Eb of the AØ chord to lead to the root of the D7b9 chord in the following measure. Instead of simply resolving to the i chord, Carter utilizes a tritone substitution and descends another half step to Db.

Instead of quickly going into a walking bass time feel as is usual at the start of one’s solo chorus, the trio chooses to remain in a more open, broken time feel. Both Carter and Cobham avoid playing the pulse outright and decide to merely hint at it instead. Carter chooses space instead of a note-laden line and the first four bars of his accompaniment during Barron’s piano solo show this. In mm. 41–44, Carter plays a total of six notes.

Fulfilling the rhythmic and harmonic responsibilities of a bass player with very few notes is a testament to Carter’s prowess.

Measures 45–46 continue the open feel while Carter’s ascending eighth note figure in mm. 47–48 give the music a brief hint of counterpoint. Carter returns to a half note time feel for mm. 49–52.
In m. 49, Carter’s Gb on beat one implies a tritone substitution but he plays an Eb and C respectively on beats three and four to more firmly state the original chord change of Cmin7. This subtle use of harmonic ambiguity is another of Carter’s masterful qualities. He utilizes roots and fifths in a standard manner to navigate the chord changes of the next three bars. Measures 53–56 finish the second A section of Barron’s first chorus.

Measures 54–55 contain another of the great bass clichés; by playing the F# on the G string and the open D string simultaneously, Carter strongly implies the D7 harmony. In this case, however, it is the rhythmic setting of the phrase that sets it apart more so than the notes themselves. Carter plays the same notes in consecutive measures but utilizes rhythmic displacement to differentiate the two bars. In m. 55, Carter shifts the phrase to weaker parts of the beat and the syncopation propels the line forward. Carter opens the bridge of Barron’s first chorus with a relatively normal two-feel line.

However, Carter again displays his command of deceptively simple lines starting in m. 60 and continuing mm. 61–64. He remains in two, but starts to use an eighth/dotted quarter note rhythmic motive to catalyze the line without becoming busy.
The repeated anticipations imbue it with a certain propulsive energy that Barron feeds off of in his solo.

Measures 65 and 66 revert back to a two feel before Carter recalls the quarter note triplet line from the introduction in mm. 67 and 68. Carter also utilizes tritone substitution by playing a Gb over the C7 chord in m. 67 and by playing a B natural over the Fmin7 in m. 68. The rhythmic motif established in both the intro and mm. 67–68 is repeated in mm. 69–70. Carter again uses a signature long upward glissando beginning in m. 71 through m. 73.

The two-feel, anticipations, and quarter note triplets have all served to build up an incredible amount of tension in the performance up to this point. Both Carter and Cobham finally break into a 4/4 swing feel in m. 73 in order to release some of this tension.

Resting on beat one, another widely used device of Carter’s, is seen in m. 73 as well. Carter’s note choice in mm. 73–75 also yields some interesting information. It is common in jazz performance practice to begin one’s solo and/or accompaniment relatively “inside” and then work out from the center. However, Carter begins his walking line by somewhat ignoring some of the chord changes. He uses chromatic approach tones and the strong resolution of a fifth to emphasize a Bb over both the Cmin7 and F7 chord changes.
This anticipation of the Bb7 change in m. 75 is a common device of Carter’s; Carter’s mastery of anticipated and delayed resolution allow him to imbue the proceedings with harmonic ambiguity in order to create tension. Carter again displays his command over basic jazz bassline elements in m. 76 by outlining the Eb7 change with an Eb major triad. Measures 77-80 are also textbook examples of walking bass fundamentals.

In m. 77, Carter outlines the AØ harmony by playing an A on beat one, an Eb on beat two, and a C on beat three. The C on beat three serves another purpose as well; it adheres to the rules of walking bassline construction by setting up the transition to the D7b9. The C# on beat four fills the gap and pulls the ear to the next harmony in m. 78. Carter plays a D on the G string followed by the lower open D string to firmly establish the D7b9. Beats three and four again serve two roles; the F natural and F# not only lead to the Gmin chord, they reinforce the D7b9 harmony. The F natural acts as a raised ninth and the F# is the major third. Carter walks up from the G to the minor third Bb and back down in m. 79. Carter adeptly provides forward motion in his line while playing a static harmony. He continues to provide harmonic support by playing important chord tones on strong beats; the G on beat one, the Bb on beat three, and the G again on beat one of the next measure all clearly spell a Gmin. He then uses the rest of m. 80 to push to the Cmin7. Like he has before, Carter uses approach notes from both a whole and half step away from the target, but this time Carter also uses an approach note from a half step below the C to further emphasize the pull to the Cmin7. While enclosure is a device most commonly used in solo analysis, Carter shows that its use in walking bassline construction is perfectly
acceptable and sometimes the best choice. Mm. 81–84 continue to exemplify Carter’s mastery of bassline construction.

His note choice in m. 81 clearly says Cmin while also leading to the F7 in m. 82. He plays a C on beat one and an Eb on beat two to establish the foundation. The G on beat three again serves a dual role; it further delineates the Cmin sound while also preparing the transition to F. The Gb on beat four pulls the ear all the way there by serving as an upper leading tone to the F. This pattern is also another example of walking bass cliché. Carter repeats another staple of walking bass language in m. 82. The way Carter tackles the Bb7 change in m. 83 is also cliché material; Carter hints at the classic bass drop of a minor sixth (root of the chord down to major third of the chord) by playing a Bb on the G string followed by an open D. Again, uses beat three to fill in the fifth of the chord while also heading to Eb. Carter again uses a walking cliché in m. 84. However, his target note makes the line more interesting. Walking up from Eb to Bb in this manner is very common but the change following the Eb7 is not a Bb, but an AØ.

By targeting the b9 of the chord, Carter uses a well-known figure in a refreshing manner. This is also the first of many times in Carter’s bassline on this recording that the target of a Bb on an AØ change is seen. Carter clearly favors this target as seen by the other transcriptions. He further emphasizes the note by repeating it on beat three after playing
the root on beat two. Carter then anticipates the coming Gmin chord by playing an open D on beat four and an open G on beat one of the D7b9 change. Explain rest of m. 86 here. Carter uses the notes contained within a Gmin triad to outline the harmony in mm. 87–88. In mm. 89–92, Carter uses one of his favorite rhythmic devices; he uses a D pedal with a broken rhythm over the entire ii-V7-I Gmin harmonic sequence.

This sort of metric modulation is a frequently used device as seen in the other Carter transcriptions. It is also a common device for the bassist to play the V7 of whatever ii-V7-I as a pedal throughout the sequence. Carter plays a variation of this idea in the next four bars; here he plays an F pedal over the ii-V7-I in Bb with a similarly syncopated feel.

His use of octaves here is also noteworthy; by using octaves in his F pedal, Carter can get more mileage out of the repeated single note. The quick register changes also give the passage a different texture. Both four bar passages also serve to break up the time and texture in a larger way; coming from a walking swing feel into a broken pedal also delineates the A sections from the bridge of the tune. Carter briefly resumes walking in m. 97 before recalling the anticipation-laden line first heard in mm. 60-64.

Carter continues that rhythmic idea through mm. 101–102 as well before ending the chorus with a tritone substitution (mm. 103–104).
Carter starts the next chorus with another pedal point; this time he plays an F in alternating octaves over the Cmin7 and F7 chord.

The B natural on beat four of m. 106 leads out of the pedal and into the Bb7. Carter uses a chromatic approach tone on beat two to lead to the F (the fifth of the chord) on beat three. The D on beat four takes the line to the Eb7 while also serving as the third of the Bb7 and further outlining the harmony. When targeting the same note a measure ahead, the common bass cliché is to use notes a half and whole step away from the target to provide motion without implying any real change in the harmony. Carter does this to great effect in m. 108 to play an Eb on beat one of the Eb7 change and again on beat one of the AØ change.

Carter walks down in half steps from the Eb and plays the root of the chord on beat four.

By playing the Bb on beat one of the D7b9 chord, Carter has again blurred the lines between the chord changes. Carter frequently targets the Bb on an AØ change but here he implies that harmony over the D7b9 by targeting that note. The Ab and F# on beats three and four respectively also hint at an enclosure that targets the G on beat one of m. 111. The figure Carter plays in mm. 111–112 quotes the well-known bass introduction played by Sam Jones on Cannonball Adderley’s recording of this same tune from his record
*Somethin’ Else.* By emphasizing the upbeats Carter also provides a jolt to the flow of the bassline. These sort of unexpected shifts are a favorite device of Carter’s. His walking bassline continues in m. 113.

Carter uses another enclosure figure in m. 113 on beats three and four to target the root of the following F7 chord. He also repeats the ascending fourth walking bass cliché in m. 114 to target the Bb7 change. The Eb on beat two hints at the harmony to come and Carter uses the open D string to approach the Eb on beat one of the actual Eb7 change. Measure 116 contains another repetition of the ascending fourth figure to the target Bb as seen first in m. 84.

Carter does indeed play the Bb over an AØ again but the use of the octave A on beats three and four clearly leads to the D7b9. Carter’s use of a triplet on beat two is a also indicative of common bass performance practice; triplets, like drops, pull-offs, and anticipations, are all part of the bass player’s tool kit in creating a dialogue with the other musicians. Measure 118 contains one of Carter’s most repeated bass figures; this manner of outlining of a D7 utilizes open strings and lies very comfortably on the bass. It is no wonder that Carter relies heavily on such ideas when improvising an accompaniment at a brisk tempo. Carter echoes his earlier quote of Sam Jones’ intro by playing a variation of that line in mm. 119–120. It differs here by the transition into quarter note triplets on beat two of m. 119 and the continuation of the triplets into m. 120.
Carter again rests on beat one of m. 121 to further differentiate his impending walking line from the quarter note triplet passage of the preceding measure. The Bb on beat two leads to the root on beat three. The Eb on beat four fleshes out the diminished sound of the harmony while leading to the D on beat one of the following measure. Measure 122 contains another repetition of the D7b9 cliché. Carter again hints at the Jones’ line by ascending to an E natural in m. 123. Measure 124 contains another enclosure figure to lead back to the C of the next bar.

Measure 125 contains another enclosure that points to the F7. This is also the third repetition of this figure thus far in Carter’s bassline. This is not a sign of laziness or symptom of a lack of inspiration; Carter realizes that the repetition of certain one bar phrases can lend a sense of continuity to the proceedings while also serving to mark the form. This particular one bar phrase is also very well constructed by any standard and Carter clearly recognizes its value. The same can be said for the rest of the larger four bar phrase; in fact, it is an exact repetition of mm. 81–84.

Carter again targets the Bb on beat one of the AØ change, but this time the Bb also serves as one half of the enclosure that targets the A on beat three. Carter uses the low open A string on beat four to firmly cadence to the D on beat one of the next measure. Carter
plays the same phrase on m. 130 to outline the D7b9; this is obviously one that Carter likes to employ. Carter’s note choice in mm. 131–132 is further evidence of his artistry. The descending contour of his phrase in m. 131 is a prime example of good bassline voice leading. He plays the root on beat one and then uses the seventh on beat two to resolve to the third of the next chord that falls on beat three. This 7-3 resolution, like the enclosure, is another key jazz solo ingredient that Carter uses as fodder for solid basslines. The 7–3 resolution is typically a device found in solos, but it can be used in other ways as Carter demonstrates here. The 7–3 is simply the best voice leading when resolving to a I chord from a V7 chord; the seventh of the dominant chord is only a half step above the third of the I chord. Both the seventh and the third are key target notes in any chord so the use of both in a V-I resolution is pleasing to the ear. He finishes the turnaround by again using the ascending fourth cliché.

Carter uses his refined sense of reharmonization in m. 133; despite the frequent use of Bb over AØ in previous measures, Carter uses it here to imply an Eb7 harmony over the AØ change. While the G and Eb could both be said to fall within a AØ, the use of the passing F on beat three gives the line more of a scalar feel. The Eb substitution analysis fits due to the frequent alteration of nearly any chord type to a dominant seventh chord by jazz musicians. Thus, the AØ could easily be replaced by an A7 to resolve to the D7b9; this chain of secondary dominants is a common type of reharmonization. The Eb would then function as a tritone substitute for the superimposed A7. Carter finally breaks from his pattern of the repeated D7b9 phrase in m. 134; he instead uses an enclosure to target the
A on beat three and then an open string D on beat four to resolve to the Gmin chord in m. 135. The outlining of a Gmin triad with a major sixth in m. 135 again hints at the Sam Jones intro. Carter uses the chromatic passing tones to fill space to target the D again in m. 137 after targeting it in m. 136.

Carter introduces some harmonic ambiguity in m. 137 by playing everything but the root. The ninth and fifth of a chord are not strong identifiers of that chord so Carter uses those notes on beats one and two respectively. The Eb skip on beat three is the first strong identifier of the Cmin7 harmony. He also uses that in conjunction with an E natural on beat four to lead to the F on beat one of m. 138. Carter uses the chromatic neighbor tones to fill space so he can target the F again on beat one of the Bb7 change. The F, E, Eb, and E sequence can also be said to subtly imply a bebop scale due to the inclusion of a raised seventh. Carter uses a drop on the second half of beat four in m. 139 to anticipate the Eb of m. 140. That as well as the muted note triplet on beat two is both common bass devices that Carter shows clear mastery of. He uses another drop on the second half of beat four to anticipate the A in m. 141.

Carter uses the ascending fourth cliché followed by a return of the D7b9 lick to move to the Gmin. He chord tones with the diatonic passing note of A to outline the Gmin harmony in mm. 143–144.
Carter repeats the Cmin7 enclosure phrase in m. 145 and introduces a new variant of that phrase in m. 146. The A on beat two and the C-B natural on beats three and four frame the Bb in m. 147. This is the same as the enclosure in the previous measure except it has now been inverted and adapted to fit an F7 chord. Carter uses the Bb major triad with the inclusion of a sixth to lead to the Eb7 in m. 148. M. 148 contains another repetition of the ascending fourth figure to target the Bb on the AØ change in m. 149.

Measure 149 is a repetition of the enclosure figure also seen in m. 129. The D7b9 phrase is also repeated with the addition of a skip on the D of beat one. Carter introduces a new method of dealing with the two measure Gmin chord in mm. 151–152; the repeated G pedal briefly suspends the forward motion of the walking line and gives the soloist a breath of air.

The Bb on both beats one and three of m. 153 frame the root A on beat two. The Bb is repeated on beat one of m. 154 to also create a sort of Bb pedal point. This is also a repetition of his phrase in m. 134. Carter also uses an Ab on beat two to enclose the A on beat three. The open string D on beat four leads the ear to believe a strong resolution to a G is next, but Carter instead delays that resolution by a beat to create tension in his line.
Carter completes mm. 155–156 with Gmin chord tones and a descending chromatic approach to the minor third Bb on beat three.

Carter uses a less chromatic approach in m. 157; all four notes in that measure are derived from the C minor scale. Carter quickly shifts from diatonicism in m. 158 by playing an E natural on beat one of the F7 change. This may seem like a wrong note by any sort of analysis but it is simply another classic example of Carter delayed resolution. The G on beat four of the previous measure and the E natural frame the F that finally occurs on beat two. This sort of delay is one of the many factors that set sophisticated lines apart from rudimentary ones. Carter completes m. 158 by walking diatonically up from the F to the Bb on beat one of m. 159. Carter again uses notes diatonic to the Bb major scale in this measure, but his drop down to the open string D on beat two gives it a level of sophistication that belies the diatonicism. Carter again plays the ascending fourth figure from the Eb on beat one of m. 160 to the Bb on beat one of m. 161.

Carter employs another enclosure in m. 161 as well as a 7-3 resolution to m. 162. Carter uses notes derived only from a D major triad in m. 162 but the manner of their use belies the simplicity of a triad. Carter uses a root-minor third figure on both chord changes in m. 163. Measure 164 contains an F on beats one and three to hint at a pedal while outlining the harmony of the F7 and Bb7 changes.
Carter anticipates the D7b9 harmony in m. 165 by playing the F# on the G string over the open D. Beats three and four emphasize the anticipation with the fifth and root. Measure 166 repeats the idea and the open D on beat four resolves upward to the octave G. Measures 167–168 contain the chromatic neighbor tones seen before in mm. 108 and 136. Measure 168 descends chromatically to an F on beat one of m. 169.

The F on beat one implies an F7sus harmony instead of the typical C-7. This is a prime example of the influence a bassist can have in a sympathetic ensemble; any minor seventh chord is a potential suspended chord based on what note the bassist chooses. The line descends chromatically to a C# on beat one in m. 170. The raised fifth implies an augmented fifth sound; this is not surprising considering the alteration Carter made in the previous measure. Carter targets an Eb on beat one of m. 171 and ascends chromatically to an F on beat three before dropping to the open string A on beat four. Carter clearly implies an F7 change despite the standard Bb7 change. This is again in keeping with the previous two measures; Carter’s sophisticated sense of harmony allows him to imply an F dominant seven sound over all three measures while altering certain pitches to further color that base F7 sound. The Eb7 change in m. 172 shows once again Carter’s fondness for root-fifth phrases.
Carter repeats his usage of chromatic neighbor tones in the AØ change to frame the target A on beat one of the D7b9 in m. 174. Carter uses open strings to great effect in this phrase; he continues to demonstrate his mastery through efficient use of the bass in idiomatic ways. Beat one of m. 175 is a great example of a left hand pull-off skip. These are most common on the G string as they are easiest to perform there. He plays the open string D on beat two while the open G continues to ring and the implied double stop creates a thicker texture for a brief moment. The downward chromatic descent on beats three and four target the Bb on beat one of m. 176. Carter finishes the Gmin sound by playing a Gmin triad in first inversion.

Carter again superimposes an F7sus sound over the Cmin7 chord by emphasizing the F on beat one. Measure 178 contains an octave drop and walks up diatonically to the Bb on beat one of m. 179. In m. 179, Carter plays a variation of the ascending fourth figure; he avoids strict repetition by inserting the chromatic passing tone between the root and the second as opposed to between the second and the third. He then plays the standard ascending fourth phrase in m. 180.

Carter echoes the idea played in mm. 161–162 but instead plays an Ab on beat four of m. 182 and an Eb on beat one of the Gmin7 chord in m. 183. Carter targets the F on beat three by approaching it from below. Measure 184 is another example of Carter’s use of triads.
Measures 185-186 are another example of Carter’s penchant for repetition with subtle variation; in this instance, he repeats mm. 153–154. By avoiding the root of the chord in m. 187 until beat four, Carter prevents his line from stating the harmony too explicitly. This, however, differs from his delayed resolution in that the notes he uses prior to the root fall within the harmonic parameters of a Gmin chord. Measure 188 is another example of an enclosure targeting the C in m. 189.

Measure 189 is yet another example of enclosure; he follows it with another use of the device in m. 190. Measure 191 is yet another repetition but Carter surprises the ear by landing on a Bb on beat one of m. 192 instead of the Eb as he did before in mm. 159–160.

Measure 193 is another repetition of a Carter cliché; m. 194 is also a recurrence of the D7b9 lick. Carter generalizes over the ii-V7 sequence in m. 195 by using notes that fall within a Gmin triad; he also plays the open string D on beats one and two to imply an F6 chord. An alternate analysis might suggest that Carter is implying a Bb7 over the whole measure by playing the third on beats one and two.
Carter plays an Eb on beat one and uses an A natural on beat two to connect to a Bb on beat three. By itself, this line would imply an Eb7, but in context it fulfills an AØ as well. Carter repeats the A natural enclosure phrase over the D7b9 and again uses triadic note choice in the Gmin chord. He completes his walking line in m. 200 by playing a quarter note triplet phrase also containing triadic notes with an added B natural.

“Autumn Leaves” from Ron Carter’s *The Golden Striker*

This 2003 recording of Ron Carter’s Golden Striker trio represents a different side of Carter’s playing. Unlike the previous three recordings, this recording was made in the studio with Ron’s Golden Striker trio comprised of Carter on bass along with Mulgrew Miller on piano and Russel Malone on guitar. Carter, in the studio, tends to focus on tight, clean playing over the freer, more conversational approach seen in the live recordings. This is not to say that his playing here is not conversational; on the contrary, his basslines influence the musical goings-on as much ever. The precision and focus exhibited in this recording is indicative of Carter’s maturity and stature both as a leader on a record date as well as a bassist.

Carter takes full advantage of the synchronicity his trio possesses in the arranging of the tunes; a tune as ubiquitous as Autumn Leaves demands that something be done beyond a simple head chart. By using the tune itself as the basis for the arranged introduction, Carter gives the tune a unique treatment without sounding overly forced or
contrived.

Carter and Malone play the first four bars as a duo with Miller entering for the second four. Carter’s descending chromatic line fits nicely with Malone’s statement of the tune’s melody.

Despite the absence of the first two A sections, m. 9 feels as if the bridge has arrived. Carter also begins to play time to further give the listener a sense that the tune has actually begun. Measure 10 contains one of Carter’s favorite devices; he sustains the G string A through beat four while sounding the open string D on the same beat to play a brief chord. He uses a triplet drop on beat four of m. 12 to arrive at the C on beat one of m. 13.

Carter, like many times before, uses another enclosure on beats three and four to frame the F on beat one of m. 14. The quarter note triplet on beat three of the same measure anticipates the Bbmaj7 in m. 15 by tying the third note of the triplet over into beats one and two of m. 15. Carter again sustains the note with his left hand and sounds the root Bb
on beat one of the measure as he did in m. 10. Carter repeats this on the end of beat four of the measure and into m. 16.

Carter anticipates the D7b9 on beat four of m. 17 and utilizes a skip on beat one of m. 18 to jump to the seventh of the chord before walking back down to the root G in m. 19.

Carter’s two quarter note triplets in m. 20 outline an Eb7 chord while also fitting within the typical Fmin7-Bb7 sequence.

Carter outlines the AØ harmony with the use of chromatic passing tones and again anticipates the D7b9 change. The introduction ends with a repeated root-fifth-octave pattern over the Gmin chords. They repeat the Gmin ending before moving on to the actual melody portion of the tune.

In this trio’s arrangement of the melody, they reharmonize the A sections of the tune by changing the root motion to ascend by half step until the Gmin chord at the end of the section. In m. 26, a C#º replaces the F7 and the AØ in m. 29 becomes an Eº. The F to F# motion in m. 30 implies a Dmin to D7 mode change before. The B natural in m. 32 leads back to the Cmin7 in the next A section. This sort of reharmonization works because the
trio begins with the Cmin7 and ends on a Gmin; what happens in between is simply to add color.

The next A section simply repeats except for the G in the second Gmin instead of the B natural.

The bridge contains more reharmonization of the melody; the Abmaj7 replaces the normal iiØ-V7b9 sequence in Gmin.

A repetition of these four bars replaces the entire ii-V7-I in Bb that typically follows the Gmin section in the bridge.

The trio makes one last use of the Abmaj7 chord by again replacing the iiØ-V7b9 in Gmin with it before returning to the original harmony for the turnaround.

The melody section of the tune ends with the standard iiØ-V7b9-i sequence in Gmin.
Carter’s walking line begins in m. 57 after a triplet drop pickup in m. 56.

Measures 57–60 are another textbook example of walking bassline construction; they contain the perfect amount of cliché and variation. Measure 57 is another iteration of the ascending fourth cliché. Measure 58 is the slightly altered version that has been seen in the other transcriptions; Carter gives the phrase life by placing the chromatic passing tone between the first and third notes as opposed to the second and fourth. Measure 59 breaks up the line with a minor six drop from Bb to the open string D and then to a high F on the G string. These abrupt register changes change the texture of the line completely. He drops back down from the upper register in m. 60 to target the open string A in m. 61.

Measure 61 is one of the times Carter actually targets the root on the AØ change instead of the Bb. He does use a Bb on beat three however to enclose the A on beat one of m. 62. Carter again shows his fondness for triads in bassline construction in m. 62. Measures 63–64 contain mostly diatonic note choices, but the rhythmic variation in m. 64 gives the line interest. He plays a skip on beat one followed by a triplet drop that targets the B natural on beat three. This major third in a minor chord immediately stands out, but it creates a strong pull to the C in the next measure. He combines a skip and an enclosure on beat four to target that C.
Carter begins to repeat the bass cliché he so often employs on the Cmin7 chord, but drops back down to the C on beat four instead of the open string G that has become the norm. He also targets the third on the F7 chord, an approach he pioneered in his work with Miles Davis. Prior to that period, most bassists traveled from root to root. Carter, however, freed bassists by targeting other more colorful notes in the chords like thirds and sevenths. This allowed bassists to introduce more color into their basslines while still outlining the harmony in a supportive way. The rest of m. 67 is also different from what Carter has typically done on the F7. He outlines a simple F major triad, but the inversion he uses creates space in his line as opposed to the linear approach more commonly used. The inverted triad approach is used again in m. 68 as well as a 7–3 resolution to the next chord. Carter uses a standard whole step-half step approach to target the Eb of the AØ in the next four bar sequence.

Carter continues his chord tone approach in m. 69 by using all four notes contained within a AØ in his bassline; he also employs another 7–3 resolution. Measure 70 again only contains notes from a D major triad. Measure 71 echoes the diatonic walking that Carter frequently uses over the Gmin chord. Beat four of that measure is another example of the staple triplet drop. Carter shows how efficient his playing is by his continued use of very few notes and the mileage he gets from them.
Carter uses yet another enclosure on beats three and four of m. 73 to frame the A of the D7b9. Carter also shows his fondness for open string lines in m. 74. Measures 75–76, like most of the Gmin chords, contain notes primarily diatonic to Gmin. The B natural on beat three of m. 76 is the exception and serves to target the C in the next bar.

Carter walks up diatonically from the C and jumps to the Bb on beat four in order to utilize a 7–3 resolution to m. 78. Carter continues to show the versatility of the major triad in walking lines in m. 78. There are a wide variety of note choice and placement possibilities within the triad and Carter puts the seemingly simple harmonic unit to great use. Measures 79–80 are an example of a common harmonic substitution in the tune; by thinking of the upcoming AØ in m. 81 as a target, one can superimpose a ii-V7 harmonic sequence in the key of A to lead there. Carter does so by outlining a Bmin7 chord over the Bb7 change and an E7 chord over the Eb7 change. This difference of a half step creates a momentary dissonance that resolves to the A in m. 81.

Carter repeats his pattern from m. 61 again in m. 81 and his pattern from m. 74 again in m. 82. This reinforces the tendency seen in earlier transcriptions that Carter has for repetition. The repetition gives the line a sense of continuity and structure; the lines sound very deliberate and intentional. Carter tackles the turnaround in mm. 83–84 by connecting the Gmin7 and C7 with a Bb. Carter outlines the F7 harmony with the third
and seventh of the chord; the E natural on beat three of the same measure implies a tritone substitution.

Carter’s phrase on m. 85 is interesting in that he fulfills the harmony but not in obvious way. The E natural on beat four clearly clashes with the AØ, but the V-I resolution to the A on beat one of m. 86 is strong enough that it the dissonance almost goes unnoticed. Carter repeats m. 82 again in m. 86; this is undoubtedly another Carter cliché. Carter again relies on notes from the Gmin triad in mm. 87–88 but his use of skips belies the simplicity.

Carter avoids the root while outlining the harmony in m. 89 by playing other notes of the chord instead. He does however use the ascending fourth cliché in m. 90. Carter plays a variation of one of his phrases in m. 91; the skips on beats one and three mask the fact that he has played the same phrase many times on that Bb7 change. Measure 92 is unique in that it is one of the few times in this bassline that Carter steps out from a strictly supportive role to interject a fill; he outlines an Eb6 chord by emphasizing the C on beat three.

Carter dresses the A in m. 93 by framing it with his frequent target of choice: Bb. The octave As on beats three and four point to a D on beat one of m. 94 but he delays the
resolution with a skip; this skip is the only variation from what would be another usage of Carter’s favorite D7 lick. Carter demonstrates left hand articulation and its uses in mm. 95–96; the muting capabilities of the left hand give the bassist another tool at his or her disposal.

Carter outlines the Cmin triad in m. 97 and uses a root-fifth-octave passage to leap to a higher register of the bass. Carter’s phrase in m. 99 is another bass cliché; when on the fifth of a chord that is resolving by fifth, it is common for bassists to follow the fifth with the root on beat one, play the fifth again on beat three and use a chromatic passing tone to target the root of the next chord a whole step lower. Carter uses a drop in m. 100 followed by a skip to fall back into the lower register.

Carter’s phrase in mm. 101–104 is nothing new at this point; he utilizes many of his trademark phrases like the D7 lick in m. 102. Carter ascends with notes from the Gmin triad in mm. 103–104 as is becoming the norm.

Carter, as he often does, breaks up the time on the bridge by introducing a new texture; he uses a D pedal and emphasizes beats two and four from m. 105 to m. 109.
Carter adapts his pedal figure to the new key center in mm. 109–110 before resuming the walking line in m. 111. He then superimposes the ii-V7 in A over the Bb7-Eb7 changes as he did in mm. 79–80.

Carter ends the chorus with many of the phrases seen before; m. 113 is a repetition of m. 81 and m. 114 is a permutation of the triadic approach used so often by Carter.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to transcribe and analyze the basslines of Ron Carter in order to gain some understanding of how his playing has evolved and/or changed over the course of his long career or if it has even changed in an appreciable way.

Miles Davis – *Live at the Plugged Nickel*

In this recording, Carter’s bassline during Miles’ solo contains 11 examples of walking bass clichés and 19 of what I call Carter clichés. These Carter clichés are phrases that are original to Carter but frequently appear in his playing. The remainder of the bassline is comprised of improvised material and repetition of that material. Some of the remaining material also contains variations on either Carter or general walking clichés. The combination of both cliché types only accounts for 30 of 128 measures; as is expected of a live recording of this particular band, there is a significant amount of original material. Only 23.43% (based on measures) of this bassline can be attributed to cliché.
Ron Carter/Jim Hall – *Alone Together*

This recording was made 7 years after the *Plugged Nickel* recording and is the first example of Carter’s growth. This one chorus bassline contains 4 examples of general walking bass clichés and 6 of Carter clichés. That is 10 total measures in a 32 bar chorus. In this bassline, that is 31.25%, a slightly higher figure than the previous bassline. However, the contextual playing situation is vastly different; Carter is playing in a duo with guitarist Jim Hall and that sensitive musical environment is not as conducive to the freedom and experimentation that the Miles Davis quintet was. In general, Carter plays more conservatively on this recording. The material that is not cliché can be described as inside due to the emphasis on chord tone note choice and supportive accompaniment.

Billy Cobham – *The Art of Three*

This 2002 recording serves as a great example of modern Ron Carter; made 30 years after the previous recording, it is an excellent document of Carter’s maturation as a player. This five-chorus bassline contains 15 bass clichés and 22 Carter clichés for a total of 37 clichés. However, the walking line does not begin until the second chorus so that must be taken into account. The actual walking line is made up of 28.9% cliché. That is the highest percentage thus far for clichés in general, but it is telling that more than half of them are the Carter clichés. This reliance on personal material shows that Carter hears these phrases in particular as he improvises; by studying those clichés, the listener can get a glimpse into the musical mind of Ron Carter. While the first recording was made with a group renowned for their experimentation, this line is every bit as adventurous both harmonically and rhythmically. Playing in trio with two sympathetic and intuitive
musicians like Kenny Barron and Billy Cobham affords Carter every bit as much creative control. The non-cliché material in this bassline is worth just as much if not more study; the Carter clichés may represent the things Carter himself prefers to use, but the improvised remainder is where Carter’s voice truly lives.

Ron Carter – *The Golden Striker*

This two-chorus bassline contains only 3 general clichés but a surprising 16 Carter clichés for 19 clichés total. The 29.68% of the bassline that is cliché is 84.21% Carter cliché. That is easily the highest percentage of Carter cliché in any of the four transcriptions. This studio recording from 2003, however, represents another unique playing situation. Studio recordings tend to have less freedom and more structure and Carter’s bassline shows that. The material that is non-cliché closely resembles cliché material and there is little that defies analysis or classification. Many phrases are very similar to general clichés and could potentially be called variations of those. However, this is simply a sign of Carter’s maturity as a player and evidence of his ever-present ability to play the right thing at the right time.

Based on the numbers alone, Carter’s use of clichés in his bassline seems to change little over the 38-year period represented by these transcriptions. However, what does change is the taste with which Carter plays in the different musical situations. For example, while the cliché (complete list of general bass clichés in Appendix A) percentage rises dramatically from the *Plugged Nickel* recording to the Jim Hall duo, the
settings are vastly different. It is more appropriate to rely on supportive clichés when playing in a more intimate setting like a duo.

What does change in an appreciable way over the course of Carter’s career as evidenced by these transcriptions are the Carter clichés (complete list of Carter clichés in Appendix A) and their increased use over time. This shows that Carter’s voice as a bassist becomes more refined and confident as his career progressed.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX B
WORKS CITED

Bergin, Brigid. "Ron Carter & The Importance of Playing Music with a Big 'M'". Bass


Prasad, Anil. "Ron Carter: Recreating the Past". Innerviews. 4/6/10

Senatore, Tony. "...Using Nothing But His Bass." Global Bass Online. 4/3/10