Now's The Time
Ron Carter

F7    B♭7    F7    F7

B♭7    B♭7    F7    Am7    D7

Gm7    C7    F7    D7    Gm7    C7

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This lesson features a complete transcription of the walking bass lines recorded by Ron Carter on "Now's The Time." "Now's The Time" is a classic 12-bar blues in F that was composed by alto saxophonist Charlie Parker who was one of the most prominent figures of the bebop era and is today regarded as one of the most innovative musicians in the history of jazz music. This rendition of "Now's The Time" was featured on the 1988 motion picture soundtrack for Bird. Utilizing complex techniques of selective equalization, noise filters, and other devices, a team of engineers removed all of the unwanted frequencies and retained every note of Parker's solo from the original Savoy recording. A group of renowned jazz musicians including Ron Carter was then assembled to recreate the track with Parker's solo.

First, listen to the recording of "Now's The Time." Next, play the bass lines as notated, and commit your favorite lines to memory. Use the audio track from Bird as a play-along to help replicate a live performance application. To gain insight to Carter's approach of walking bass line construction, print this transcription, and then beneath each note in every measure, write the relationship of the notes to each applicable chord type. As you analyze and study these bass lines, you will discover all of the fundamental components of walking bass line construction including chord tones, scale tones, and non-diatonic notes along with some of the most common rhythmic embellishments such as skips and ghost skips. During the first and last choruses of this arrangement, you will also find excellent examples which demonstrate how to improvise walking bass lines in the two-feel style. Since the 12-bar blues is the most common song form found in the jazz repertoire, you can take selected bass lines from this transcription, transpose them to the remaining keys, and easily incorporate them into other jazz compositions written in the standard 12-bar blues form. You can also use this transcription as a template and then improvise your own walking bass lines based on variations of the lines in this transcription.

You can expand these concepts by transcribing and analyzing signature bass lines, and incorporate modified excerpts of those lines into your own playing. By developing this approach to bass line construction, you can borrow ideas that have been recorded by your favorite bassists and then create lines that are in their styles. Studying transcriptions similar to this is an excellent way to start building your vocabulary and compiling a database of bass lines to help you improvise more fluently and communicate more effectively with other musicians.

This lesson has been excerpted from Jazz Bass Lines - Contemporary Concepts For Bass Guitar & Acoustic Bass. For more information on the IIB's online bass courses, visit: http://www.InstituteOfBass.com.