

# Bye Bye Blackbird

Henderson/Dixon

Arranged By Todd Johnson

As Recorded On *The Solo Session*

Transcribed By Cliff Engel

Rubato

8va CMaj7 Dm7 G7 CMaj7 F#m7b5 Fm6

1

T  
A  
B

C/E Ebdim7 Dm7 G7 Em7 A7

5

T  
A  
B

Dm7 A+7 Dm9 G13

9

T  
A  
B

Am11 D7 Dm9 G13 B7#9 CMaj6 Dm9 G13

13

T  
A  
B

17 C7 B+7 Bb7 A7 Bm7 Cdim7 C#m7

TAB: 19-19-19-19 | 19-17-16-14 | 14-13 | 12-12-12-14-14-14-15-15-15-16-16-16

21 Dm7 A+7 Ab9 G7 Am7 Bbdim7 Bm7

TAB: 17-17-17-17 | 17-16-14-12 | 12-11 | 10-10-10-12-12-12-13-13-13-14-14-14

25 CMaj7 Dm7 G7 CMaj7 B7#9 Bb7 A7

TAB: 16-16-16-16 | 17-16-16 | 16-14-14 | 14-13-13 | 17-16-16 | 17-16-16 | 16-14-14 | 14-13-13 | 13-12

29 Dm7 Ebm9 Ab13 G7 CMaj7 A7 Dm7 G7

TAB: 14-10-10 | 17-18-16 | 17-17-16 | 11-10-10 | 11-10-10 | 11-10-10 | 16-17-15

33 Dm9 Dm9 Fm9 Fm9

TAB: 16-16-16-16 | 17-17-17-18-19 | 19-19 | 19-18-17-16 | 17-14-14-17 | 17-17-17-18-19-20 | 20-20-20-17-17-20 | 20-20-20-19-18-17-16

Dm9

Dm9

G13

G13b9

37

Musical notation for measures 37-40. Bass clef, 7/8 time signature. Chords: Dm9, Dm9, G13, G13b9. Includes a treble clef staff with a 3-measure slur and a guitar TAB staff with fret numbers and a 3-measure slur.

CMaj7

Dm7

G7

CMaj7

F#m7b5

Fm6

41

Musical notation for measures 41-44. Bass clef, 7/8 time signature. Chords: CMaj7, Dm7, G7, CMaj7, F#m7b5, Fm6. Includes a treble clef staff and a guitar TAB staff with fret numbers.

C/E

Ebdim7

Dm7

G7

Em7

A7

45

Musical notation for measures 45-48. Bass clef, 7/8 time signature. Chords: C/E, Ebdim7, Dm7, G7, Em7, A7. Includes a treble clef staff and a guitar TAB staff with fret numbers.

Dm7

A+7

Dm9

G13

49

Musical notation for measures 49-52. Bass clef, 7/8 time signature. Chords: Dm7, A+7, Dm9, G13. Includes a treble clef staff with a 3-measure slur and a guitar TAB staff with fret numbers and a 3-measure slur.

Am11

D7

Dm9

G13

B7#9

CMaj6

Dm9

G13

53

Musical notation for measures 53-56. Bass clef, 7/8 time signature. Chords: Am11, D7, Dm9, G13, B7#9, CMaj6, Dm9, G13. Includes a treble clef staff and a guitar TAB staff with fret numbers.

C7                      B+7                      B $\flat$ 7                      A7 $\flat$ 9

57

TAB

Dm7                      A+7                      A $\flat$ 9                      G7

61

TAB

CMaj7                      Dm7                      G7                      CMaj7                      B7 $\sharp$ 9                      B $\flat$ 7                      A7

65

TAB

Dm7                      E $\flat$ m9                      A $\flat$ 13                      G7                      CMaj7                      A7                      Dm7                      G7

69

TAB

### Bass Notation Legend

{ = Rolled Chords - chords are arpeggiated in quick succession starting with the lowest note

In 1989, I enrolled at Musicians Institute to study with Gary Willis, Steve Bailey, Bob Magnusson, Jeff Berlin, and all of the other great players that were teaching there at the time. It was there that I saw Ron Eschete play bass lines and harmony on a 7-string electric guitar. Before I had met Ron, I knew it was possible to do this on a 6-string bass, but I just didn't know what to play. One day, Ron and I got together, and he asked me if I could play an F7 voicing with the third and seventh on the high strings while playing an F on one of the lower strings. Then, he wanted me to move the third and seventh of F7 down a half step and find a low Bb to play a Bb7 chord. When I went home, I figured out how to play an entire F blues using just thirds and sevenths. During our next session, he wanted to see what I could do on "Autumn Leaves." He told me that as long as I kept thirds and sevenths in my chords, he didn't really need anything else to play over. After a couple sessions, those ideas started coming together, and Ron started playing polychords on top of what I was doing.

My chordal studies on bass began with a blues in F and countless hours of hard work. Now, I can do all those things simultaneously without having to think about it. In much of jazz music, when it comes time for the bass solo, everyone stops playing and takes a break. The bass player supports everyone during their solos, and then they just quit on the bass player when it's time for the bass solo. Since I can play bass lines, harmony, and melody at the same time utilizing chordal techniques, I can accompany myself during a bass solo so I don't have to rely on anyone else to provide the chordal accompaniment.

I've been a member of the Ron Eschete trio since 1991. Ron is one of the greatest guitarists in the history of jazz music and one of the premier harmony players that you will hear anywhere. He's a harmonic genius who just happens to play guitar. I've been very fortunate to have played with him all these years and have great voice leading presented to my ears for so long. After awhile, you learn how things are supposed to sound so when I started experimenting with chordal techniques, I already knew what the end result was supposed to sound like. I just needed to figure out how to emulate that sound on my bass.

Ron has definitely been the biggest influence on my chordal playing. I've also spent a considerable amount of time studying most of the classic jazz guitar players including Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass, among others. While living and playing in the Los Angeles area, I've been inspired by a number of guitarists that may not be well known on the international level, but these guys have amazing talent. I've always said that if you are smart, you steal ideas from many different people. If you steal from one person, you are a thief, but if you steal from 100 people, it's called research!

To begin assimilating chordal concepts into your playing, you need to have at least a basic understanding of harmony. You need to know how chords are constructed. This seems to be a real problem for many bass players because they can build chords on paper, but they can't figure out how to put them together on their instrument. I learned how to play chordally by studying theory and harmony. Through Gary Willis' fingerboard harmony method and some exhaustive studies consisting of arpeggios and scales, I learned how to use the entire fingerboard. I know where all the information is located. Once you have those things figured out, it's just a matter of investing the time to put it all together on the fingerboard and committing it to muscle memory. If you only learn this chordal approach as a trick, that is all it will ever be, and you are going to get stuck. You won't be able to transpose it or apply it. If you learn theory, harmony, and your fingerboard, then you can put this chordal approach together and do it in a musical fashion rather than using it only as a trick. The most important thing is to play what you hear and play things that are musical.

I started playing duo and trio gigs with acoustic upright bassist Kristin Korb in 2004. 90% of what I played on *Get Happy*, our trio recording that we released during the same year, is played on the D, G, and C strings so I'm literally a 3-string guitar player. Because of the low range of the instrument, I'm a little limited to the number of notes I can stack on top of one another, but I've found that if you play the right two or three notes, you can imply a lot. Unless it's a melody note or a part of a moving phrase, I generally don't play many root notes in the voicings. Since Kristin provides the bass lines when we play, she is covering the root notes and fifths. If we are playing over a chord with an altered fifth, then I'll include it in my voicings. Most of the time, I'm playing lots of thirds, sevenths, ninths, elevenths, and thirteenth. I think triads sound lousy if they start on the root. I also play lots of voicings using fourths. For example, if I play the notes D, A, and E barred across the 14th fret of my 6-string bass, I can imply several different chord changes. If you put an F below that voicing, you have FMaj13. If you were to play a C underneath, you would have CMaj6/9. If I move that same shape up to the 21st fret and play the notes A, E, and B simultaneously, I can imply a CMaj13 chord with the thirteenth on top. If I move that shape down by a whole step and play the notes G, D, and A, then I'll have a C6/9 voicing. I can imply many different voicings just by moving that concept around the fingerboard. There are some voicings that are real easy to play with just one finger like I've mentioned, and then there are other voicings that are real finger twisters.

Over the past several years, I've spent the majority of my time working on chord melodies during my own practice sessions. I've gone back to rework songs that I've known for years as chord melodies. I've also spent quite a bit of time transposing jazz tunes to keys that they normally aren't played in. By accident, I discovered through working with Kristin in duos and trios that many of the keys which work well for her vocal range also tend to be the optimal keys for playing them on my bass using chord melodies. Don't be afraid to experiment with transposing songs to different keys because often times you will find a key that is more suitable for that piece on bass and makes chord melodies easier to play.

Although chord melody playing is really fun, I can't stress enough how important it is to become a great bass player first because nobody is going to hire you to play chord melodies within the structure of a traditional band. I would never have had the opportunity to do any of this now if I had never learned how to play bass and function as a supportive member of a rhythm section. I can't stress this enough to beginners. With that said, I'd like to offer you some tips for learning my chordal arrangement of "Bye Bye Blackbird" which will assist in expanding your musical horizons and exploring new sounds through the application of chord melodies on bass guitar.

"Bye Bye Blackbird" is one of my favorite standards from the jazz repertoire. I recorded this particular chord melody arrangement on my DVD, *The Solo Session*, with my Zon 6-string bass. You'll need a 6-string in order to play this transcription note-for-note, but you can play most of this rendition, with the exception of a few notes, on a 5-string bass that is tuned E-A-D-G-C. If you enjoy this distinct style of solo bass performance that goes beyond the traditional role of the bass guitar, I recommend checking out the entire DVD since it contains my chord melody arrangements of many other popular jazz standards and can serve as a master class for learning chordal vocabulary.

This transcription features the first two choruses of my arrangement. On the DVD, I follow these two melody choruses with two solo choruses before ending with another melody chorus. This arrangement has been notated using both standard notation and tablature. Please note that the standard notation has been written one octave lower than where it is played on the fingerboard to eliminate the extensive use of ledger lines and to provide an easy means of comparing the chordal structures between both choruses. The positions indicated in the tablature represent the actual positions that I played on this track. In addition to the standard notation and tablature, I have provided a streaming video clip from my DVD so you can see the exact fingerings I'm utilizing to play this arrangement. As you will notice throughout the transcription, I play chords in two different ways. Some of the chords are played in a block style format where all the notes are sounded simultaneously with my thumb, index, middle, and ring fingers while other chords are articulated in a rolled fashion where I arpeggiate the notes from low to high in quick succession, one after the other.

This chord melody arrangement contains a collection of double, triple, and quadruple-stop chordal voicings which is a culmination of all the things I've borrowed or stolen from Ron Eschete and Ray Brown. I often say that if you're going to steal something, then steal something good!

The first chorus of "Bye Bye Blackbird" is found in measures 1-32, and it is played rubato or with a relaxed time feel. A general guideline to remember is to try to include the 3rd and 7th whenever possible because they are the notes that give a chord its quality which is one of the most important aspects of this chordal approach.

Measure 1 contains a simple 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass. You'll see that simple voicing used over and over again because it's easy to play, and it sounds good.

Measure 2 has the 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass on the Dm7 chord. The G7 is the same voicing but with a 13th added on top.

Measure 3 contains the 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass, but it becomes a CMaj9 because of the melody. I also changed the root to the 5th (G) so it resolves smoothly to the next chord.

Measure 4 (F#m7b5 - Fm6) is a Ray Brown voicing I borrowed from Ron Eschete. It resolves nicely to measure 5, and it creates some nice movement in a traditionally static part of the piece.

Measure 5 keeps the root motion going in the same direction and resolves nicely to the Ebdim7 chord in measure 6 which almost looks like an EbmMaj7 chord, but it's definitely a diminished chord because that is all I could fret at the time.

Measures 7 and 8 turn around nicely and connect us back to the melody in bar 9. Again, we have the 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass. That voicing should start looking familiar.

Measure 10 has a 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass. On beat 3, the chord becomes augmented with the #5 on top along with the 3rd and 7th underneath it and the root in the bass.

Measure 11 contains the 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass which then changes to a Dm9 chord with the 9th on top and the 3rd and 7th below along with the root in the bass. You should start to notice a pattern.

Measure 12 goes back to a G13 voicing and then to a G7 voicing with the 5th on the top and the 3rd and 7th below. The difficult part about that progression is switching your fingers from G13 to G7. The only note that actually moves is the top note, but you have to use a different fingering for the entire chord. That voicing is very easy to execute on the piano, but it's really challenging to play on bass. Believe me, I feel your pain!

Measures 13 and 14 are Ron Eschete voicings. They really keep the harmony moving nicely.

Measure 15 is very hip in my humble opinion, and I love this sound. The B7#9 is easy to finger, but be careful trying to play that CMaj6. Don't hurt yourself!

Measure 16 has the 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass for the Dm7 - G7 changes.

Measure 17 contains a "convenience" voicing I discovered awhile back. It works well for any major quality chord with the 5th as the top note of the voicing.

Measure 18 has the 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass but with the #5 on top. That voicing should look familiar.

Measure 19 contains a 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass.

Measure 20 has a harmonized version of an old ascending bass line that you have heard a million times. Don't let the transcription scare you. It looks much more difficult in the notation than it really is to play. As you sound each note of those arpeggiated chords, allow them to ring for the rest of the beat before you shift to the next chord change.

Measure 21 contains a 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass.

Measure 22 has the 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass but with the #5 on top and the descending melody line.

Measure 23 contains a 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass.

Measure 24 is just like measure 20 except the chords walk from G7 up to CMaj7.

Measures 25 and 26 are repeats of measures 1 and 2.

Measure 27 has CMaj7 resolving down to a B7#9 voicing. Notice that it's just the #9 on top with another 3rd and 7th below and the root in the bass.

Measure 28 contains another 3rd and 7th with the root in the bass.

Measures 29 and 30 are pure Ron Eschete. Normally those measures would consist of Dm7 and G7, respectively, but Ron does the old "ii-V up a half step trick" there. If you look around, you'll start to see that jazz musicians use it everywhere so file that technique in your mental harmony folder.

Measures 31 and 32 would normally be a turnaround, but instead, I just hold the G7 chord while I step on my DigiTech JamMan pedal and start my bass and drum backing track.

Measures 33 through 40 include the well known introduction that pianist Wynton Kelly made famous as a member Miles Davis' legendary quintet. At this point, I've switched to rootless voicings since I've started the backing track on the JamMan.

This introduction which is now functioning like a bridge to connect the first chorus with the second contains a minor 9th voicing with the 9th on top while the 3rd and 7th are below. Then, I just move that structure up a minor 3rd to Fm9 and back down a minor 3rd to Dm9. After that, all I have to do is resolve the C in the Dm9 voicing to a B, and I have G13. Since I've already established the G13 sound, I can lower the B in the G13 chord to an A and then lower it again to an Ab in measure 40 to produce that great G13b9 sound. I love the sound of the tension contained in that voicing.

Following the eight measures of Wynton Kelly voicings, the second chorus begins at measure 41 and continues through the conclusion of this transcription. For the rest of the tune, my backing track is playing with the bass line so I'm in complete "rootless voicing mode." Since I don't have to play the root of the chord, I generally fret whatever chord tone is available on the D-string.

During the turnaround found in measures 71-72, I transition into the two solo choruses that follow.

Your assignment is to figure out what I played during the second chorus. Compare those chords to what I played in the first chorus, get the chords under your fingers, and assimilate those chordal techniques into your own playing. Once you have all of the correct notes and proper fingerings figured out, the next step is to work on transitioning fluidly from one finger-twisting chord structure to the next while playing the melody simultaneously.

Here is a very general guideline to get you started working with the chord melody thought process.

- If the root is on top, add the 3rd and 7th below it.
- If the 9th is on top, add the 3rd and 7th below it.
- If the 3rd is on top, add the 7th and 5th below it.
- If the 4th or 11th is on top, add the 3rd and 7th below it. This only applies to minor chords for the most part.
- If the 5th is on top, add the 3rd and 7th below it.
- If the 6th or 13th is on top, add the 3rd and 7th below it.
- If the 7th is on top, add the 5th and 3rd below it or possibly the 3rd and 9th below it.

I'm constantly figuring out new things that I didn't think were possible even a year ago so get to work and have fun with your own chord melody arrangements on bass!