JAZZ TRUMPET MASTERCLASS
"PHRASING AND COMMON STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVISATION ON II V I"

WHAT IS A MUSICAL PHRASE?

When we improvise a musical phrase, we basically become composers creating new melodies on imprint over an established harmonic progression. Therefore, studying composition, or at least becoming familiar with elements of composition is essential to creating an effective musical phrase.

1. 'The smallest structural unit is the phrase, a kind of musical molecule consisting of a number of integrated musical events, which possesses a certain completeness and is well suited to combine with other similar units.'
2. 'The term phrase structurally means a unit that can be approximated to what a person can sing in one breath. Its ending suggests a form of punctuation, like a comma.'
3. 'The mutual structuring of melody and harmony is difficult at first, but the composer should never invent a melody without being aware of its harmony.'
4. 'Rhythm is particularly important in forming a phrase. It helps create interest and variety, establishes character, and is often the determining factor in establishing the unity of the phrase.'

Phrases will not appear out of nowhere if we are still thinking about scales and chord-tones. They won't come to us if we have to stop and remember what the next chord in the structure is or what key the bridge of the song goes into. If we have to think about every single note we play, it's really hard for us to think of a phrase that fits on a certain passage and ties in with the whole harmonic progression of the song.
If we want to construct phrases in our solos, we have to be able to hear the different types of chords, (major, minor, V7, etc) we have to know what notes the chords are made of, we have to internalise the tempo and character of a piece, we have to know the piece to such an extent that we can sing the melody and chord progression.
Musical phrases do not come from the intellect or reasoning, they come from the ear and our internal musicality.

Another important part of phrasing is to tend towards a vocal quality in our lines, as if the notes we play were something we would naturally sing.
Chet Baker is a great example of a musician who always played what he felt. No matter whether he played his ideas on the trumpet or by singing, there was always the same musical phrasing.

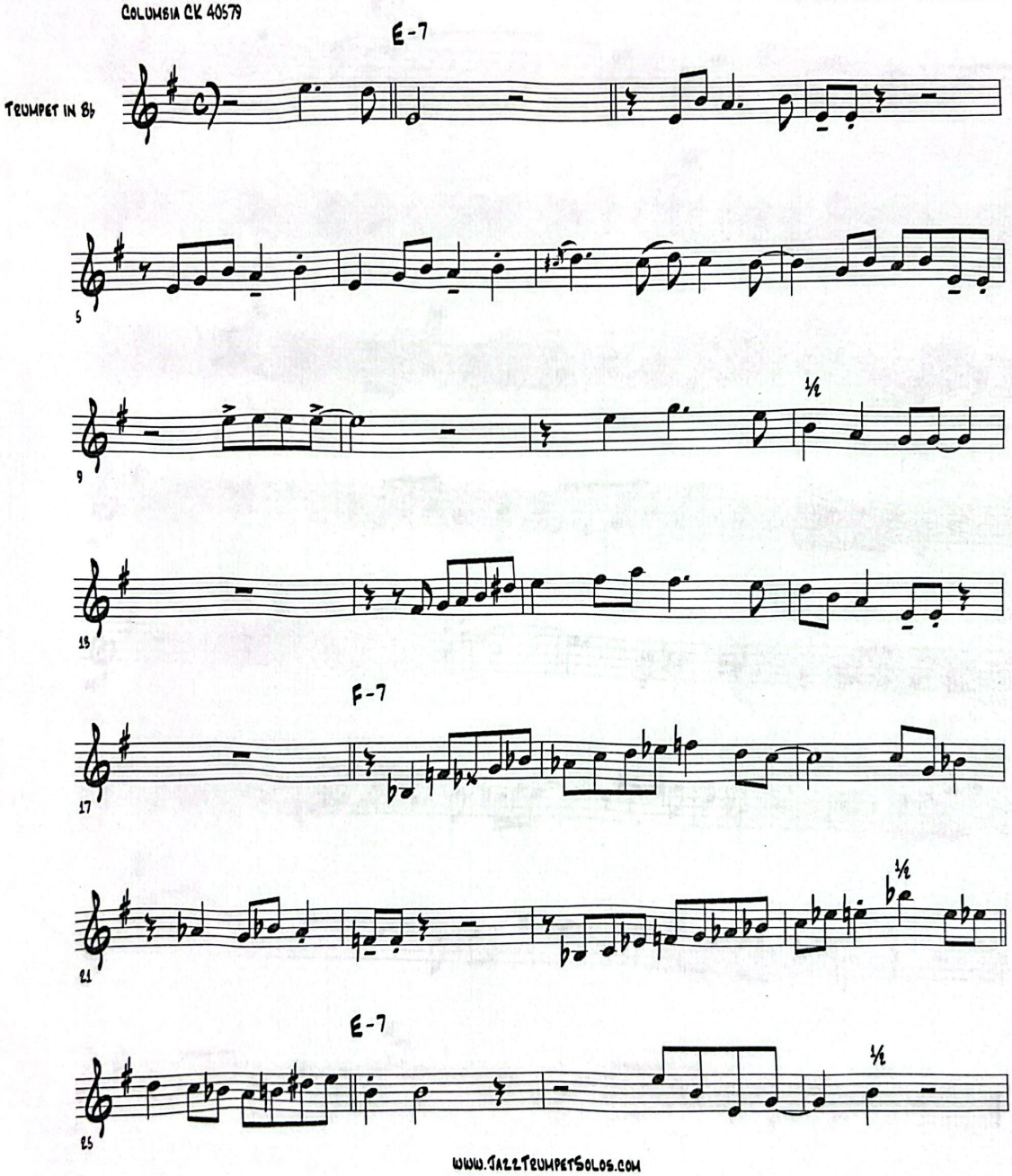
Musical phrasing is the natural result of listening to hundreds of recordings, transcribing solos and melodies, nevertheless it is the result of developing our ear, studying theory and chord progressions and melodies to such an extent that we do not have to think about them consciously.

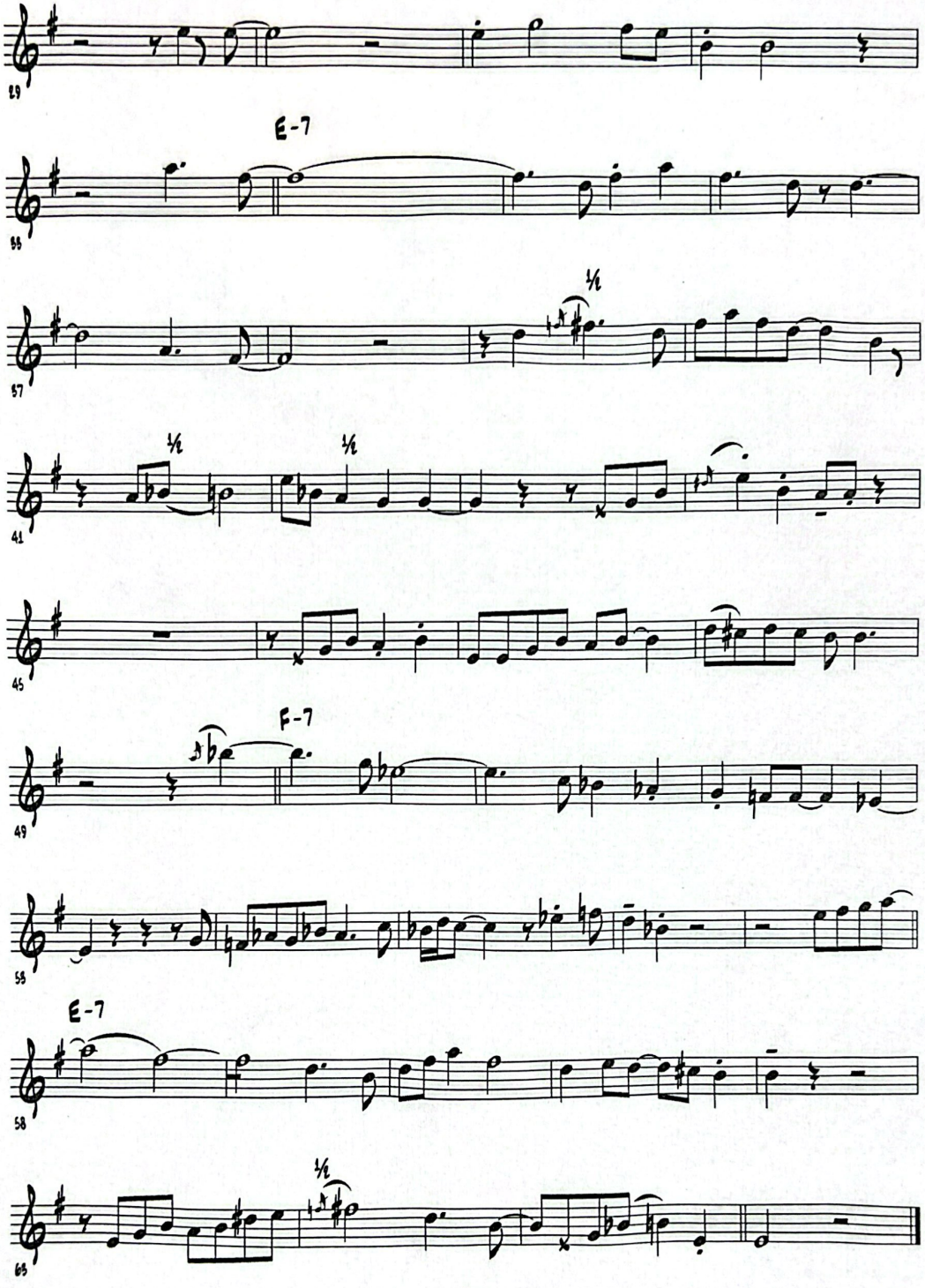
I recommend transcribing and studying Miles Davis' solo on **"So What"** (Kind of Blue record):

Miles Davis' trumpet Solo on "So What"

From Miles Davis - "Kinda of Blue"
Columbia CK 40579

Transcribed by John Keady




E-7
1/2
1/2
1/2
F-7
E-7
1/2

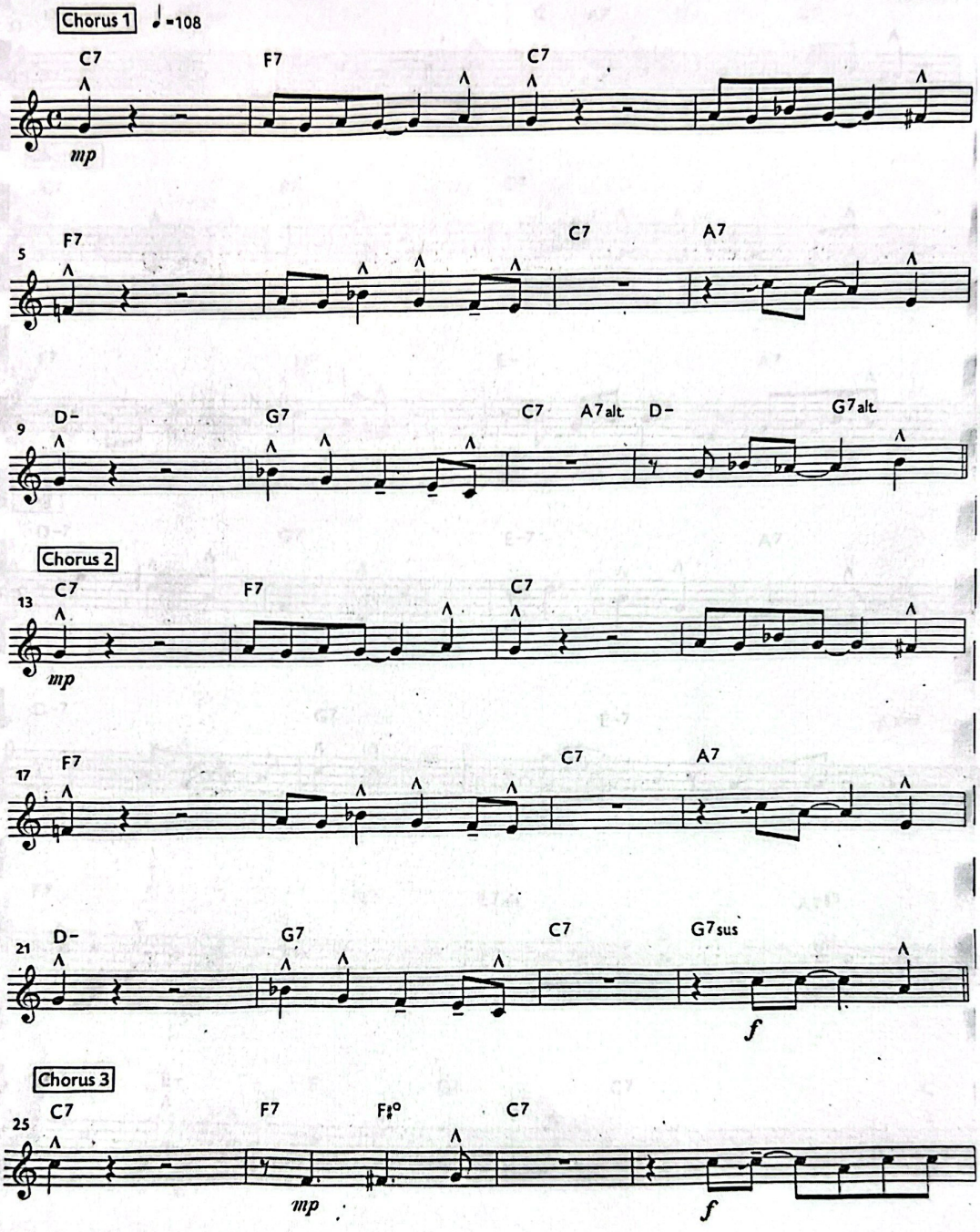
After some time, the idea of forming a musical phrase that we are hearing in our heads will seem natural. The same way we learnt to speak, we will begin to improvise musical phrases that make sense and develop them into our solos.
Keep in mind that thinking about phrases is only the beginning. Once we are used to playing phrases, we can use other techniques to further develop our ideas. Whichever way we develop our solos, let's keep a mental attitude towards musical phrasing whenever we improvise.

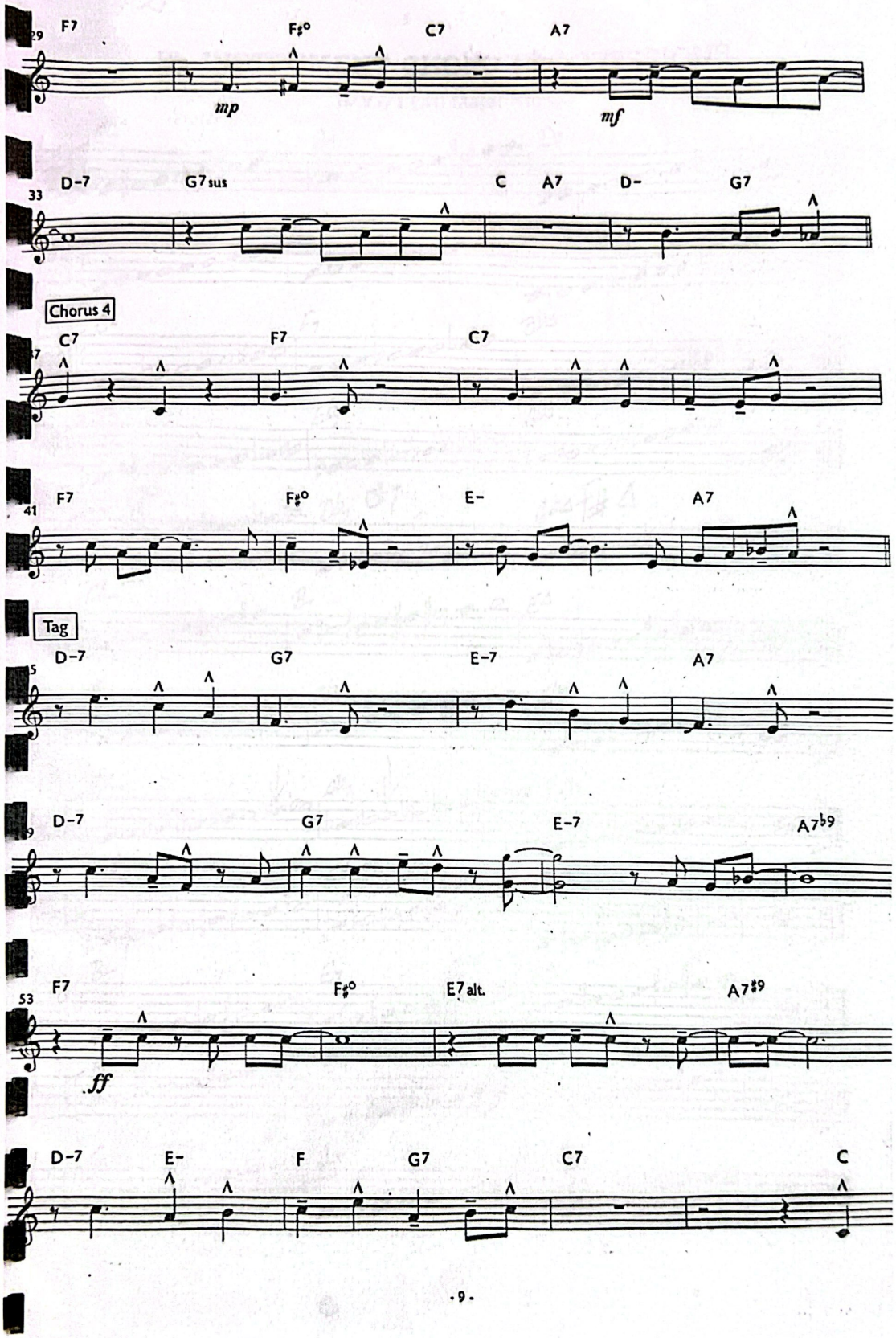
From a practical trumpet aspect, I recommend the 15 introductory studies to the study of jazz phrasing and interpretation, which are suitable for both individual and group study, as they are available in specific versions for different instruments and based on standard tuning sequences from **Ryan Kisor's** (first trumpet of the Lincon Center) book entitled **Jim Snidero Jazz Conception**:

Basie's Blues

(Track 1/18)

Jim Snidero

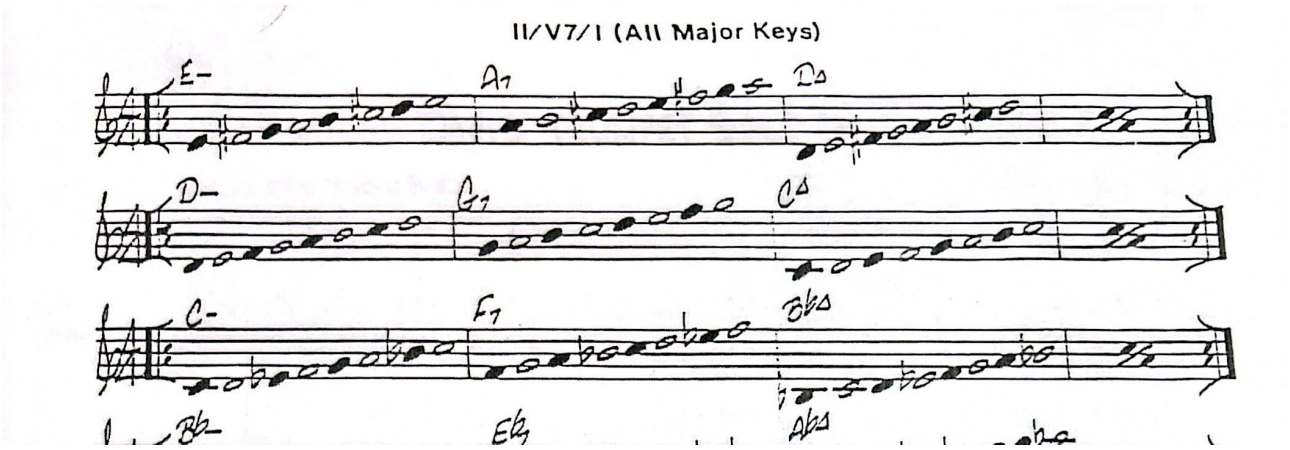


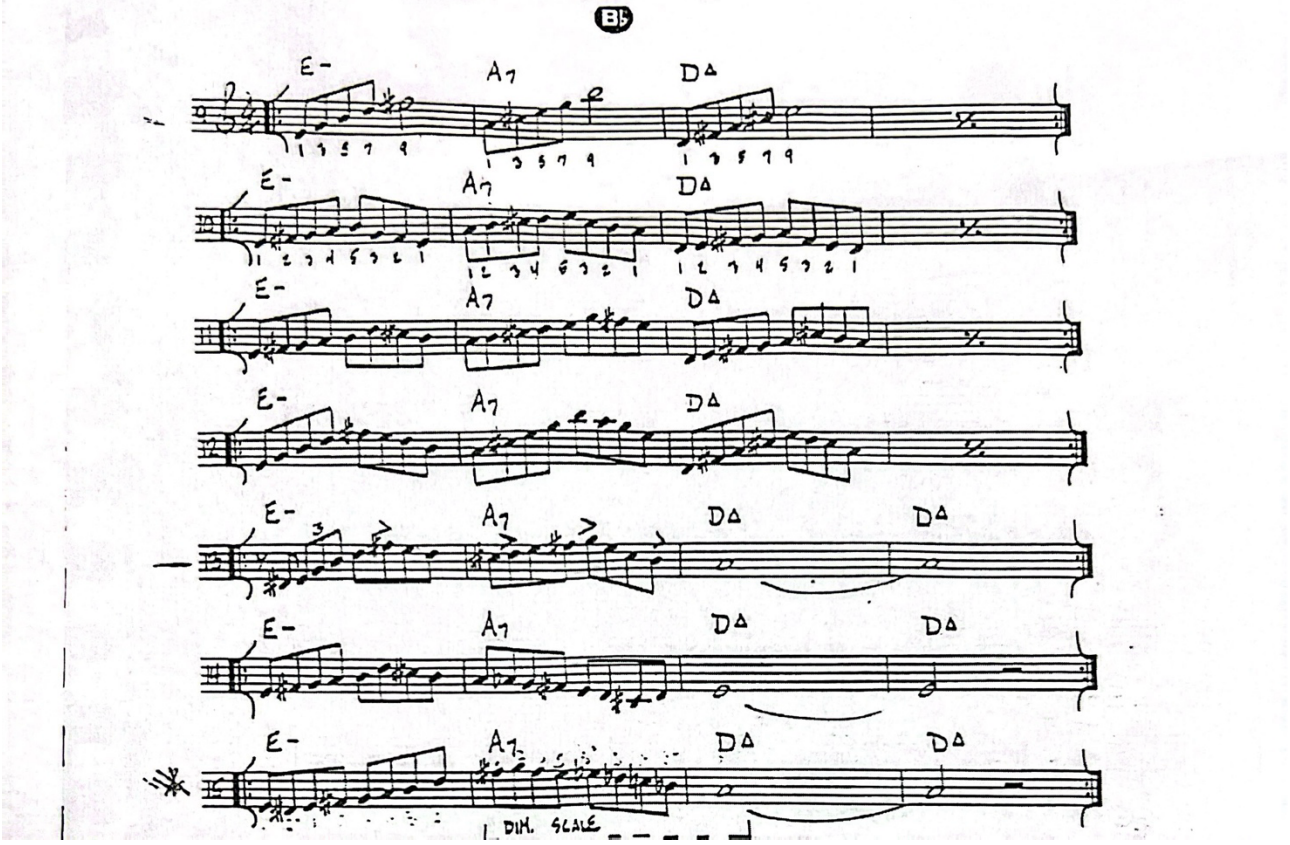


The term **‘cadence’** originates in the usage that existed even before the emergence of modern harmony, when polyphony still dominated musical customs in Europe. The term indicated, in instrumental music that evolved throughout the 16th century, a concluding melodic movement. Later, the meaning broadened to mean any point, even momentarily conclusive, within the musical discourse. ‘Cadence’ then came to mean “harmonic movement” and the set of “cadences” today corresponds to the set of various ways of combining chords in the movement towards the Tone (the first degree of the scale).

As is well known, Roman numerals are used to name the degrees of the scale. Cadence II V I therefore means cadence that proceeds through the ‘second’, ‘fifth’ and ‘first’ degrees of the most important reference scale, which is the major scale.
Each degree first identifies the sound that corresponds to it. In the case of the key of C major, the fundamental sounds of the cadence II V I are therefore the notes D G and C. Secondly, the cadence concerns the chords built on these degrees.

Here are some examples that we will then work on and the various ‘patterns’ that we will work on to understand how to resolve and play a II V I:




B♭
E-
A7
DΔ
DIM. SCALE