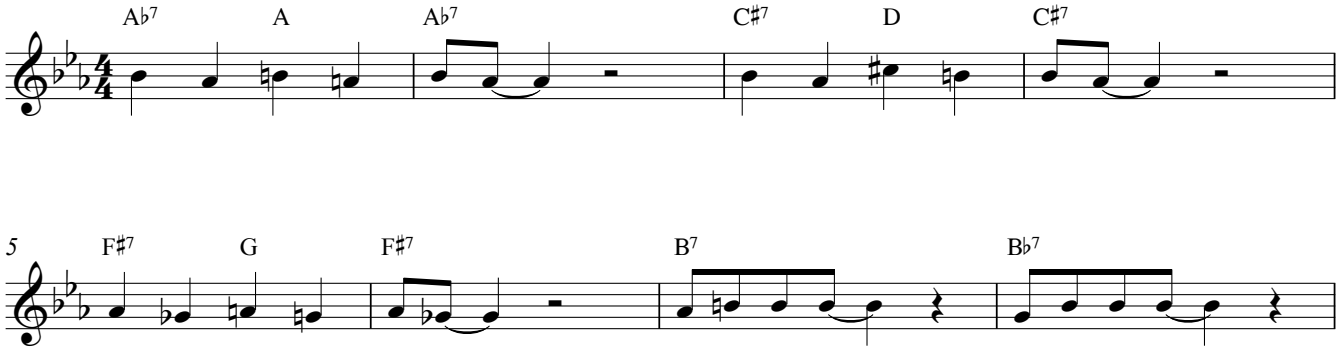
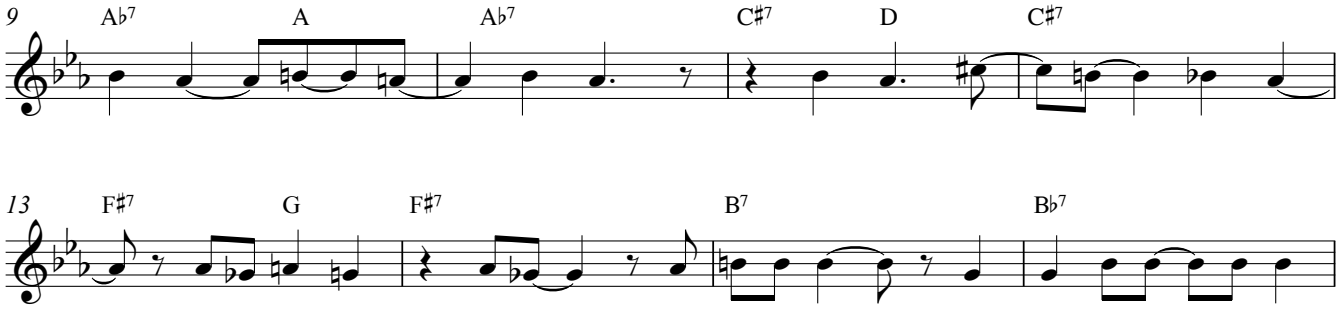
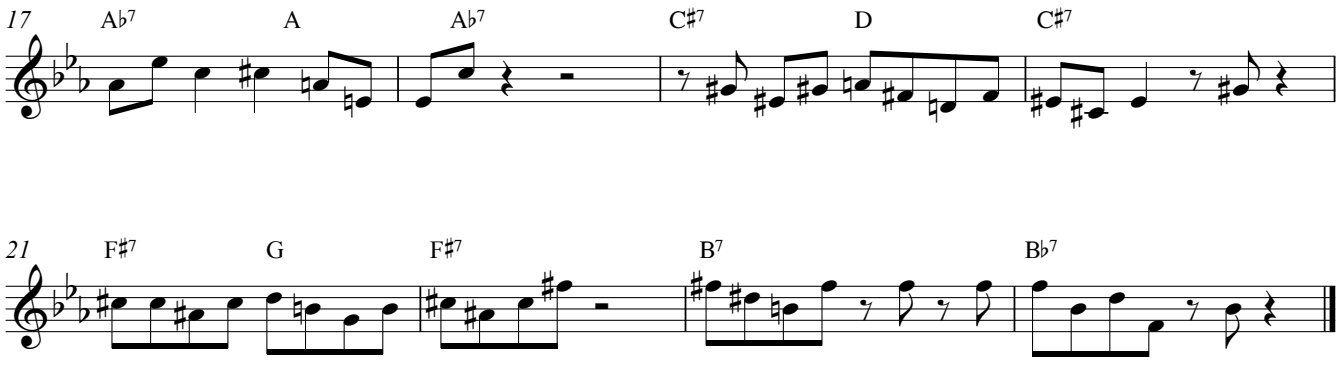
Stompin' At The Savoy - Session 3 (Bb)

This session will focus on the bridge of the song. The melody, shown below, is made up of an unusually dense group of notes (4 consecutive semitones). The easiest way to explain why this works, and also to memorise this section of melody is to divide the phrases into 2 pairs of notes - notes within the pairs being 1 tone a part, and the pairs themselves being a semitone apart.



At first glance, the root movement appears to be a long way from our home key - Db (concert pitch) . However on closer inspection the harmonic movemnt is not unusual at all. Chord IV is probably the most common modulation in Jazz composition, and certainly very likely starting point for the bridge of a standard tune. The chords on beat 3 of bars 1, 3 and 5 of the bridge can be seen as passing chromatic decoration. They lift the original chord up a semitone for hightened tension before returning. With this in mind, we can see the core root movement is always moving clockwise around the cycle of 4th/5ths, until bar 8 where we fall 1 semitone to chord V of our original key.

One way to develop improvising on this section of the tune is to interpret the rhythm more freely, by displacing, removing and repeating notes from the melody. In the bars I have grouped the melody notes to imply a 5/8 cross rhythm.



Focusing now on outlining the harmony, I suggest experimenting with ways in which to join up the triads of the chords which are 1 semitone apart. Below is a combination of several different permutations of the triad. Practice 1, 3, 5 to begin with. Then pick your favourite ones. I particularly like 5, 3, 1 and 1, 5, 3. In this example I have aimed to join the triads with small scalic steps.