

30 Real Books Tunes That Will Teach You to Play ANY Tune

By Doug Perkins, JazzGuitarsociety.com

The above statement is probably true on maybe 97% of the songs you'll even encounter, as it's always possible that there is something new that will come around the pike that will go outside of the harmonic situations that these songs present. (*) *denotes not in the original Real Book.*)

Below is a list of the 30 songs that I have played from the Real Book that taught me what I needed to know to play pretty much everything else I have encountered since then. I have also included the reason why I included each song, with a short explanation of terms below that. I have also tried not to include any really obscure rarely played tunes, so that you are learning songs that will get called on gigs as well.

Please note that there are no major or minor straight blues form tunes here - make sure you learn those forms before you start any of these tunes.

Song Title	Composer	Harmonic Situations
A Night In Tunisia	Dizzy Gillespe	The exotic Bb melodic minor over the Eb7 resolving down 1/2 step to the D melodic or harmonic minor situation, and the subtle mode shifts in the B section. ALSO SEE: "Black Nile" by Wayne Shorter.
500 Miles High	Chick Corea	The quintessential "modal" tune, with constant subtle shifts in the chord scales. SEE ALSO "Captain Marvel" etc from Chick, "Olhos De Gato" by Carla Bley.
All The Things You Are	Jerome Kern	Parallel key major scale chord progressions with subtle key changes, the IV major to IV minor shift (Db to Db min) and then the flat II diminished (E7#9 or B diminished) in Ab in the last 8 measures.
Blue In Green	Bill Evans (not Miles Davis)	Lots of subtle mode shifts off only one I chord, Also See: "Crystal Silence" by Chick Corea
Body & Soul	Green	Diminished chords and chromatic dominant chords
Bright Size Life	Pat Metheny	Non-functional modal 70s style tune with chords that just shift the mode slightly and come back.

Broadway Blues	Ornette Coleman	Tune with implied harmony from melody, shifting time signatures, and “open” soloing over implied harmony - this is something that requires ear from all players to do well.
Canyon Song	Ralph Towner	Time Signature shifts and non-functional harmony. maj7#5 chords. SEE ALSO: “ Towner’s “Icarus” Subtle mode shifts and the F#/G that requires the diminished scale.
Chega De Saudade (No More Blues”	A, C, Jobim	Minor to major section shifts, standard minor bass lines, secondary dominants, passing diminished and Idim chords. SEE ALSO : See also “Falling Grace” Steve Swallow, Clare Fisher’s “Pensitiva”, Jobim’s “Desafinado” and “Dindi” for more unexpected key changes.
Cherokee	Ray Noble	The original blend of “I Got Rhythm” changes with an ever modulating down a whole step bridge.
Confirmation	Charlie Parker	The definitive “Charlie Parker Blues” progression in the A section with modulating bridge.
Dolphin Dance	Herbie Hancock	The definitive non-functional harmony modal tune. SEE ALSO “Litha” by Chick Corea.
Donna Lee	Charlie Parker	Secondary dominants, diminished chords, VI minor, shifts between related I and VI tonic sections. SEE ALSO: “There will Never Be Another You”, “There Is No Greater Love.”
Epistrophy	Thelonius Monk	Fast chromatic dominant shifts. SEE ALSO “E.S.P.” Miles Davis
Giant Steps	John Coltrane	The quintessential “tonic system” chord progression, ALSO SEE: “Lakes By Pat Metheny, “Countdown” and “Moment’s Notice by Coltrane, “Humpty Dumpty” by Chick Corea, “Have You Met5 Miss Jones” by Rogers & Hart.
Good Bye Pork Pie Hat	Charles Mingus	The definitive “blues tune without blues changes” that requires a lot of work to play over. Try looking for common tones in the blues scale that will fit the unusual changes.
Inner Urge	Joe Henderson	Modal with parallel chords.
Invitation	Kaper	The ultimate melodic minor tune, where pretty much every chord requires that scale.

Like Someone In Love	Van Huesen	Downward baselines with secondary dominants and key changes.
Nardis	Miles Davis	Harmonic Minor chord scales and shifts from major to minor I chords.
Nica's Dream	Horace Silver	Parallel whole step Melodic minor soloing.
Oleo	Sunny Rollins	The classic "I Rhythm Changes" head (jazz slang for melody) - many people have written melodies over this chord progression, and it is commonly done FAST.
Orbits	Wayne Shorter	Lots of parallel chords that don't resolve that are difficult to create something melodic over.
Someone to Watch Over Me (*)	George Gershwin	Lots of 1/2 step diminished and min7b5 chords.
Spain	Chick Corea	Spanish / Latin Salsa type chord progression. SEE ALSO his "La Fiesta"
Stella By Starlight	Victor Young	Possibly the most sophisticated "functional harmony" standard with all kinds of secondary dominants, whole tone and melodic minor dominants, etc.
The Dolphin	Eca	Constant Surprise left turns of harmony,
The Girl From Ipanema	A. C, Jobim	This tune is much harder than people think and many people don't have the melodic minor dominant 7th chords on the bridge at all - you know who you are ;-)
Windows	Chick Corea	A non-functional harmony tune in 3/4 with challenging up and down half step dominants.
You're Everything (*)	Chick Corea	One of the toughest progressions to improvise over I've ever seen. Almost all the resolutions of the chords go someplace you wouldn't expect.

Terminology:

Melodic minor: Major scale with flat 3.

Harmonic minor: Major scale with flat 3 and flat 6.

Modal: Songs that do not have a I major as their resolution chord.

Secondary Dominant: Dominant 7th chords up a 5th from chords other than I.

Functional harmony: Chord Progressions with one predominant key.

Non-functional harmony : Chord Progressions that do not have one predominant key.