

UNISON LEAD CHART  
C instruments

# escaping gravity

written by: Rodney Lee

Jazz Electronica

♩ = 120

*mf* 1 2 3 4

4x's • twice on D.S.      tacet 1st x

**A**      *mf*      5 6 7 8

B<sup>b</sup>mi7      Ema7/F#      Bmi7/A      C#mi7/B

9 10 11 12

B<sup>b</sup>mi7      Ema7/F#      Bmi7/A      C#mi7/B to Coda

**B**      13 14 15 16

B<sup>b</sup>mi7      Ema7/F#      Bmi7/A      C#mi7/B

17 18 19 20

1st ending  
Bmi7/A      C#mi7/B

2nd ending      21 22

Bmi7/A      C#mi7/B

**C**      23 24 25 26

E<sup>mi</sup>11      E<sup>mi</sup>11

27 28 29 30

E<sup>mi</sup>11      E<sup>mi</sup>11

UNISON LEAD CHART  
Master Rhythm

# escaping gravity

written by: Rodney Lee  
arr: Raymond Brown

Jazz Electronica

♩ = 120

Drum p/up-----  
4x's • twice on D.S.      tacet 1st x

## Escaping Gravity - Rodney Lee - Teaching Guidelines

Genre: JAZZ

Style: TECHNO JAZZ

World Region: North America

Country: United States

**Overview:** "Escaping Gravity" is an ultra-funky tune with a hypnotic melody and deceptively challenging chord changes for soloing. With or without electronics, this one will be a blast to play as long as the intensity of the groove never lets up! Whether you have a synthesizer, guitar or piano (or all three!) filling in the space, everyone gets a chance to contribute to the moment. This tune is a perfect chance for your rhythm section to experience providing the momentum for a tune, while inspiring your soloists to take themselves and the listeners to new heights!

**Style:** The tune is reminiscent of grooves by the likes of Stevie Wonder, Fourplay, and even more pop-oriented groups like Jamiroquai. The solo section is definitely in the funky land of groove playing, but it's important to maintain the groove that was established in the melodic sections.

Note: The original track for this recording has no guitars or percussion players. These parts were created by professional players as if they were playing the song at a live event.

**Unique Teaching Elements:** This song is particularly good to emphasize the following:

- Latin-influenced bass line (focus on 1 and 5 of chord), combined with funk elements
- Simple syncopated parts for melody players
- Tritone relationship - primary solos in D minor, while rest of piece focused on Ab minor
- Non-traditional chord progression
- The drum/percussion groove, while very repetition and machine-like, is incredibly difficult to maintain. It's a great tune for endurance and focus.

**Structure:** Intro - a 16 bar groove set up of the melody, with the bass entering halfway through to give the extra impulse to the groove.

A - m5 - m12 - 1st melodic statement. This makes use of a tritone-emphasized chord progression that will return in a larger formal way at the solo section

B - m13 - m20 - 2nd melodic statement (possibly use a different instrument to emphasize different parts - experimenting is fun and ear-opening).

C - m23 - m30 - floaty 8-bar bridge, almost seems like time stops. Solo can begin here, but think space.

D - m31 - m34 - Open for solos (it's OK and encouraged to use letter C as an interlude into the next solo)

E - m35 - m38 - Similar to the section at C. Should be played as a transition after last solo, leading to DS al Coda

Coda - m39 - m42 - open for straight grooving or blowing... cue ending.

**Melody:** Listen to the recording for phrasing ideas, as you work to play the melody at letter A very laid back and connected. The sparse, almost fragmentary nature of the melody throughout offers the students playing the melody the chance to really lock into the rhythm section groove.

Additionally, the focus of the melody on the beginning of each 4-measure phrase provides opportunities to emphasize the rhythm section groove as well as the melodic content.

**Harmony:** The main 4-bar harmonic pattern is non-diatonic and features a bass line that outlines the motion very clearly |: Bb - F# - A - B :|. Chordal instrument players will need to carefully learn the sound of each chord/voicing. The whole group can be involved with learning the sound of these "slash" (chords, offering the possibility of introducing the concept of inversions to the students if they have a basic music theory background).

The focus on a fast-moving bass line, combined with a straight-forward drum pattern and held chords in the upper parts provides parallels to early funk jazz, as well as pop music.

**Rhythm:** Lightly syncopated in the rhythm section, "Escaping Gravity" works very well once the bass player and drummer know their parts. In particular, the drum part as played on the reference recording is a straightforward groove, helpful for giving even young drummers something that they can either perform immediately or that can be taught quickly. The syncopation in the third bar of the main groove (bass and bass drum), conversely, may cause a bit of confusion (it's easy to forget!). We suggest having it played slowly with a clear 16th note subdivision in mind until the students pick it up.

**Improvisation/Theory:** The solo section dwells on an Em7 chord, which offers many exploration opportunities, such as using the E minor pentatonic scale as a starting point. This also provides an easier entrance into jazz improvisation for more rock-oriented rhythm section players who may be exploring jazz for the first time. One suggestion, have students transpose melodic at letter A into the key of the solo section (from Bbmin to Emin). More advanced players can focus on the 9th and 11th extensions to add some interesting colors.

**Notes:** You can keep the groove simple and basic for a less experienced drummer or super tight with the drummer and bass laying it down with lots of subtle nuances and fills. It's a tune you can have a lot of fun with as the sections change.