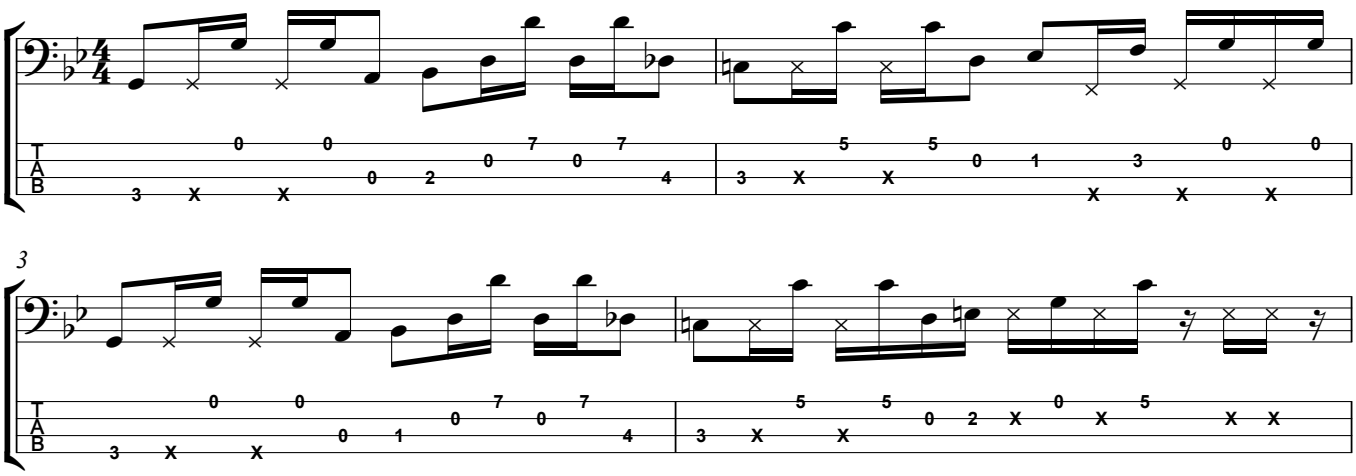
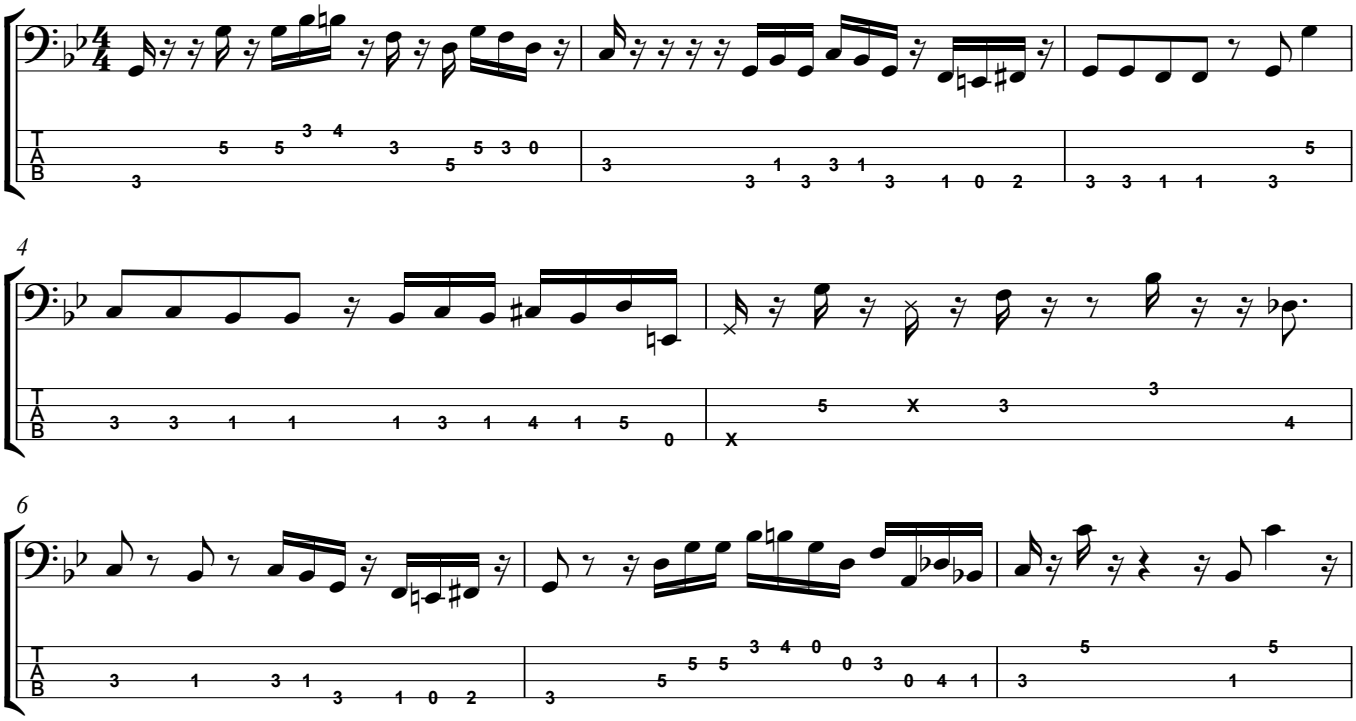
Finally, after many requests I will present an article that not only includes Flea- but some slapping!! Flea has been the poster boy for many an aspiring bassist, and is responsible to bringing the bass guitar to the ears of many a non-musician. Personally I have spent hours correcting poor slap technique that aspiring players have copied from flea videos, but that is not to discount the creative and catchy lines that Flea pumps out through his vehicle for stardom, The Red Hot Chilli Peppers. Many of you may know that Flea, aka Michael Balzary, was born in Australia, and started his musical journey on trumpet. This may be partly responsible for the melodic creativity in Flea's lines, and part of what brings his aggressive sound to the forefront of RHCP signature sound.

Flea's sound and style has evolved throughout the years, though there are elements outside of his sound that allow us to recognise his playing regardless. A lot of Flea's stylistic nuances can be heard in the main part, and especially the bass solo to Aeroplane, which we will look at below.

The main riff of the tune, as shown in Ex.1, is based on a G minor scale, with chromatic passing notes. The chord progression is basically a II-V, and Flea cleverly navigates his way through the progression with the use of passing notes in between funky syncopated octaves. In the first bar, the first half lays out a funky slapped G octave pattern, before using a Bb to walk up to a D octave line. To transition into the 2nd bar, Flea using a C# chromatic tone to lead the ear to the C chord, with the 2nd half of the bar alternating various fills throughout the tune. When slapping this line, try not to slap with the thumb pointing down as Flea does, as I believe you can achieve much more speed and accuracy with the thumb almost parallel to the string. This is especially handy if you would like to learn double-thumbing and other tricks later down the track.

Ex.2 shows the bass solo. For the most part the solo plays over a II-V progression, being a bar of Gm and a bar of C7. The Gm arpeggio consists of the notes G-Bb-D-F, whilst the C arpeggio consists of the notes C-E-G-Bb. With these notes in mind, it can be seen how Flea spells out the G minor arpeggio in the first bar, with the only non-chordal tone being a B natural. This is a lesson in how sticking to the chordal tines can be incredibly creative when utilising a great sense of phrasing. Many people are surprised to learn of the simple note choices in lines such as this. The second bar again sticks to notes of the C7 arpeggio before playing a funky little chromatic climb at the end of the bar. A great exercise, is to continue to go through the part in this fashion, picking out the chordal tones, and those that are chromatic tones. This solo emphasises not only the genius of Fleas phrasing, but also how he uses well placed chromatic tones to give an otherwise simple line a funky little twist. Have fun!

Ex. 1



Ex. 2