Get Your Whole Band Improvising—and Your Rhythm Section Grooving—in 10 Minutes a Day.

presented by Rick Hirsch

YOUR MISSION (should you choose to accept it)
To help all of your jazz ensemble students become confident, well-informed, and comfortable improvisors—without sacrificing rehearsal time on your repertoire.

YOUR STRATEGY
Devote time in every rehearsal to group improvisation activities that are derived from your band's present repertoire.

YOUR METHOD(S)
Aural and visual methods to be demonstrated and explained in this session.

BENEFITS OF THIS APPROACH TO DEVELOPING IMPROVISATION SKILLS

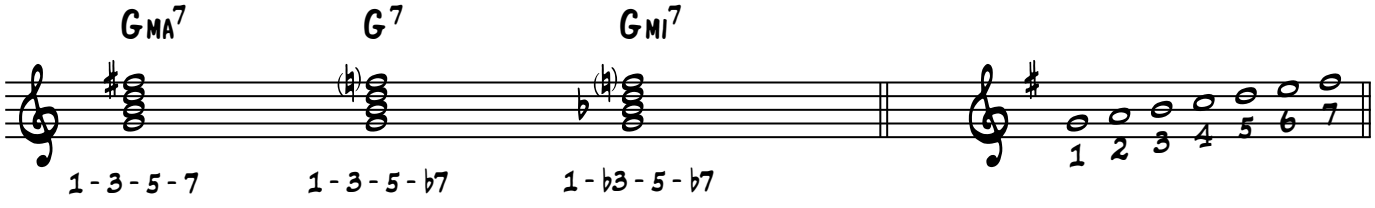
- It equips your students with the tools needed to play a convincing solo on a tune(s) that they will be performing.
- It engages your students in a different way than just *playing the notes on the page*.
- It broadens your students' overall musicianship with understanding of theoretical and structural concepts.
- It boosts students' confidence in their ability to improvise or play "off the page."
- It reinforces your own musicianship as a well-trained music educator.
- It makes your actual *chart* sound better.
- It's fun.

FOLLOW UP
Contact Rick Hirsch with any questions or to receive the PowerPoint slides (see footer).

Deciphering Jazz Chord Symbols

The 3 main types of chords are Major 7th, Dominant 7th, and Minor 7th

Here is how they are constructed, relative to the major scale of the chord's root.

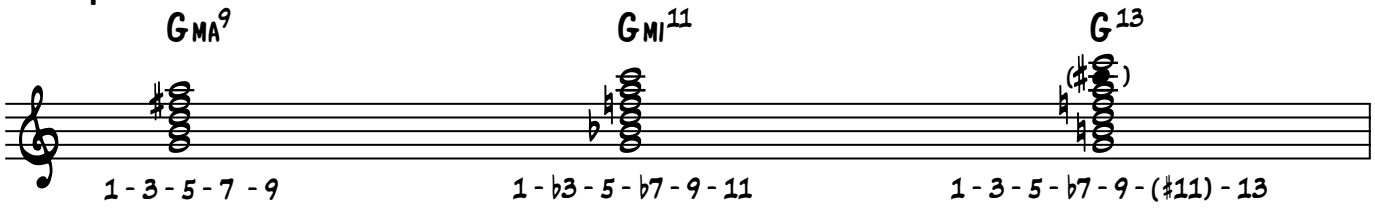


Note that ♭ indicates 'lowered by 1/2 step'

Please Note:

. Most chords you will encounter are variants of one of these three types.
. We're dealing with *tertian* harmony, which means that chords are stacks of 3rds.
. **9** implies the presence of a 7th, too. **11** implies 7 and 9. **13** implies 7, 9 (and often #11)

Examples



About chord voicing (i.e. arrangement of chord tones)

. Chords are not often voiced in close position (all notes within one octave) as notated above.
. On piano, guitar, and in orchestrations, the notes of the chord are often more spread out.
. But, close position notation is a convenient way to see exactly which pitches are in a given chord.

There are several common ways people notate chord symbols.

All indicate G Major 7

GMA7 GMAJ7 G△7

All indicate G minor 7

GMI7 GMIN7 G-7

How to spell chords.

. In Western music, most chords are constructed upon a Major or Minior triad.

. In Jazz music, most chords are constructed upon a 4-note 7th chord (Maj7, Min7, Dom.7)

It could be a Dominant chord.

. Chords with only an odd number (**7, 9, 11, 13**)—and no **MIN** or **MAJ**—are Dominant: **G11**…**G9**…**G7(♭9)**, etc.

. To determine the pitches in an **F9**, first construct an **F7** (**F-A-C-E♭**) chord, then add the 9th (**G**)

. To spell an **F7(♯9)**, construct an **F9** as above, then raise the 9th by 1/2 step (**G♯**).

Other Common Chords.

. **G2, G6,** and **G6/9** are all major. G major triad plus the other indicated tones. eg. **G6** = **G - B - D - E** (6th)

. **G+7** is dominant. The **+** indicates augmented (raised 5th), but the 7th is still lowered as in a **G7** chord. It is spelled **G - B - D♯ - F**

. **G°7** is "G diminished 7," constructed **1 - ♭3 - ♭5 - ♭♭7** and spelled **G - B♭ - D♭ - F♭ (E)**

. **Gø7** is shorthand for **GMI7(♭5)**

There are many different chord symbols, but only a few chord types.
Most chords have one of three functions: Tonic, Subdominant, or Dominant.

. All chords with an **MA** suffix are major and are functionally interchangeable: **GMA7**…**GMA9(♯11)**, etc.

. The same interchangeability is true for chords with an **MI** suffix: **GMI7**…**GMI9**…**GMI11**…**GMI13**, etc.

. There are many variants on **F7**. Each has it's own character, but is still an **F7** chord in essence:
F9…**F7SUS**…**F+7**…**F7(♯9)**…**F9(♭5)**…**F7(♭13, ♭9)**…**F13**, etc...

Chord functions in MAJOR keys

	TONIC	SUBDOMINANT	DOMINANT
PRIMARY	**I**	**IV**	**V7**
SECONDARY	**vi**	**ii**	

Chord functions in MINOR keys

	TONIC	SUBDOMINANT	DOMINANT
PRIMARY	**i**	**iv**	**V7**
SECONDARY	**VI**	**ii°** (or **min7 b5**)	

>> Starter Lesson Plans (assuming 10-15 minutes per rehearsal)

Rehearsal 1
Teach melody, if applicable. *(sing, then play)*
Teach accompaniment: root movement & song structure. *(identify key, scale degrees)*
Play melody & accompaniment together.
Get rhythm section grooving. *(whatever feels good and natural for them to play)*
Play melody, accompaniment and rhythm section together.
Get feet wet with some group improvisation over this structure. *(entire section at a time - no soloists)*

Rehearsal 2
Review and refresh melody & accompaniment, as needed.
More group improvisations.
Discuss improvisation strategy(-ies): *Ask "What can you play when improvising on this song?"*
More group improvisations. *(now, direct students to try something you just discussed)*

Rehearsal 3
Have drummer count it off and play your "tune."
Everyone plays melody and accompaniment.
Some group improvisation.
Discuss improvisation strategy(-ies): *Ask "What can you play when improvising on this song?"*
More group improvisations. *(now, direct students to try something you just discussed)*

Rehearsal 4
Have drummer count it off and play your "tune."
Everyone plays melody and accompaniment.
Call-and-response (led by teacher OR student).
** Caller should make phrases clear. If it sounds like most people get it "right" in their response, move on to new phrase. If not, then repeat the phrase.*

Rehearsal 5
Have bassist count it off and play your "tune."
Everyone plays melody and accompaniment.
Improvise in smaller groups (twos or threes).
Introduce Rhythm Sheets.

Rehearsal 6
Have bassist count it off and play your "tune."
Everyone plays melody and accompaniment.
Go through rhythm sheet….Then, improvisation throughout band as you see fit.

Rehearsal 7 and beyond
You're on your own! Try to stay attuned to the students and gradually introduce more ideas, including: triad structure, leading tone, trading solos, changing rhythm section feel & dynamics, section "riffs."

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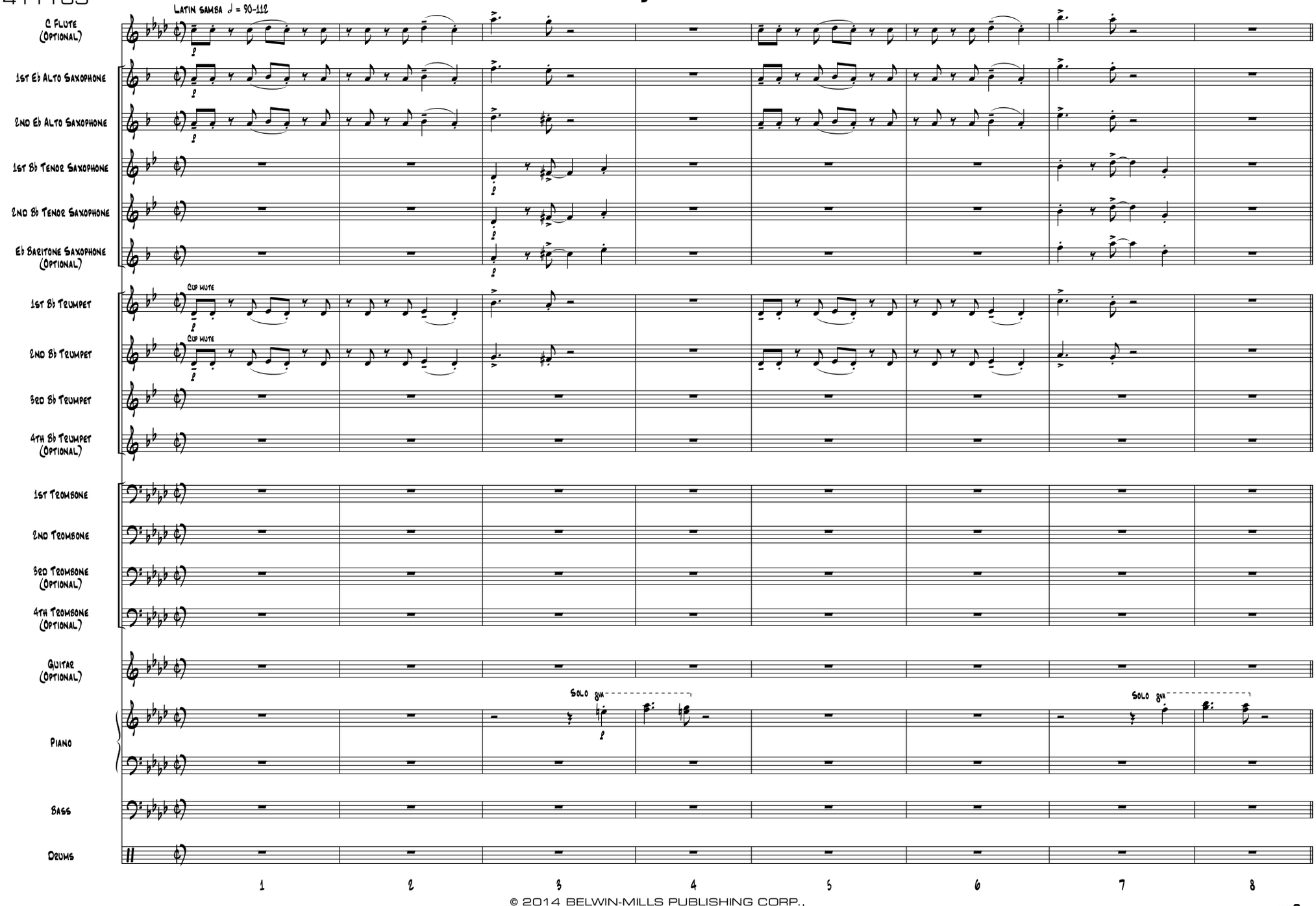
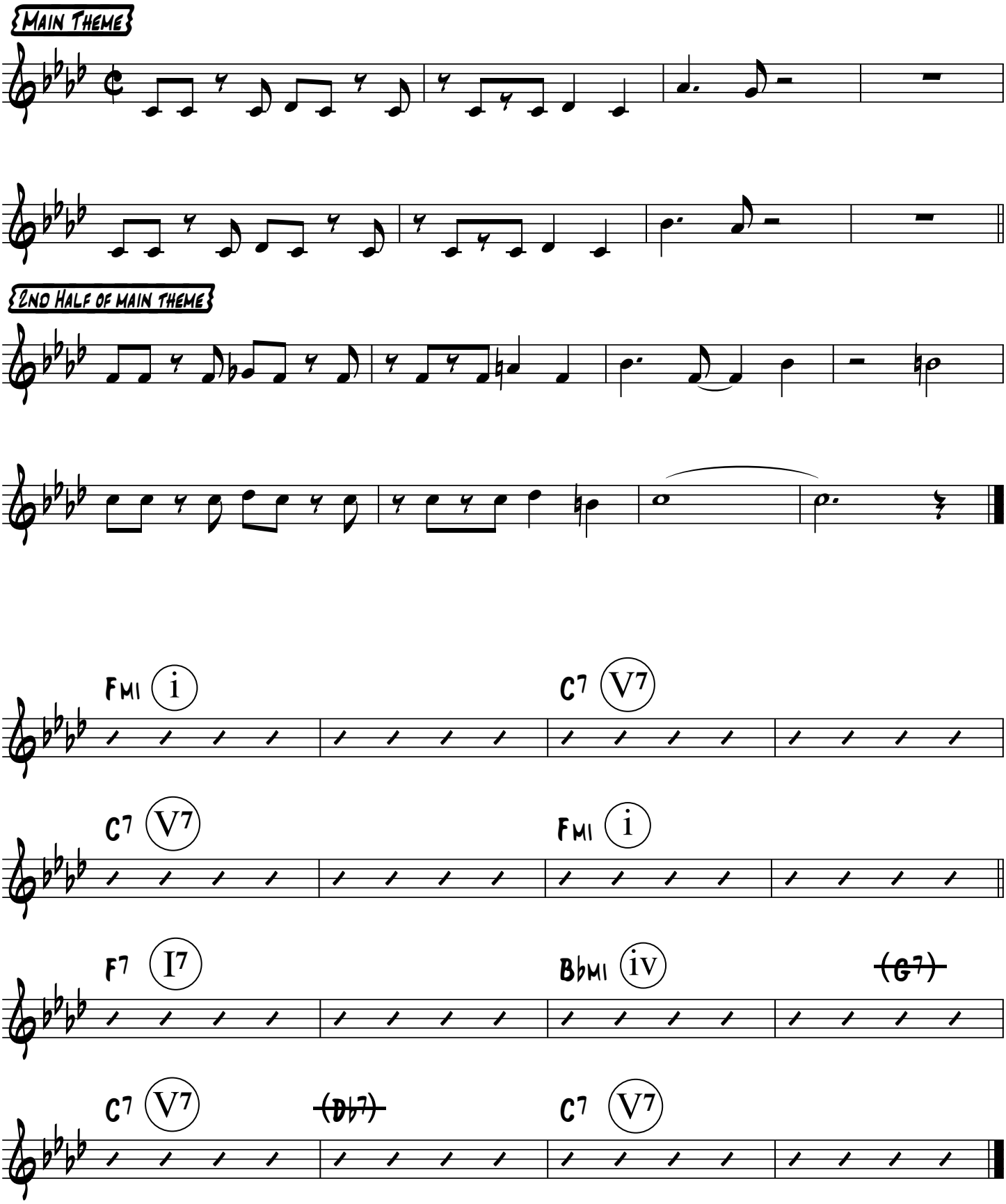
CHILI TODAY, HOT TAMALE

By Rick Hirsch



"Chili Today, Hot Tamale" distilled



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