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19278 - Cort Action Junior Bass, Black OPB
21466 - Cort Action Junior Bass, Black Cherry
16156 - Cort Action PJ OPB, Open Pore Black
16157 - Cort Action PJ, Open Pore Black Cherry
16323 - Cort Action 4 String Lefty, Black
16769 - Cort B4 FL Plus AS OPN Fretless Bass
21598 - Cort GB54J 4-String Bass, Olympic White
21493 - Cort GB64J Natural
15242 - Cort Jeff Berlin Filthmic 5 String Bass
12807 - Cort Jeff Berlin Filthmic 4 String Bass
18184 - Epiphone EB3 Bass, Black, Secondhand

Fender

21578 - Fender 60th Road Worn Jazz Bass, Sunburst
21756 - Fender 60th Anniversary RWJ Bass, F Silver
22007 - Fender 60th Road Worn Jazz Bass, O White
19643 - Fender Am Orig. 70s Jazz, Vintage White
18246 - Fender Am. Pro Jazz Bass Sunburst Ex Demo
21858 - Fender Boxer Series PJ Bass, Torino Red
19238 - Fender Flea Active Jazz Bass Silver
21580 - Fender Ltd Trad 61 Jazz Bass, Sunburst
19570 - Fender Player Jazz Bass, Sunburst
21661 - Fender Player Jazz Bass Lefty, Sunburst
21772 - Fender Player Jazz Bass Polar White
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22014 - Fender Player Mustang Bass PJ Aged Natural
21755 - Fender Player Precision Bass, Sunburst
21847 - Fender Player Precision Bass, Polar White
19239 - Vintera 50s Precision Bass, Dakota Red
19503 - Fender Vintera 60s Jazz Bass, Firemist
22066 - G & L CLF Research Bass, Secondhand
19420 - Hofner HCT Violin Bass, Sunburst
12188 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst
14498 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst
22148 - Levin Deluxe LB50-TRD Bass Guitar
22112 - Levin Deluxe LB60 Bass in High-Glo Nat
22113 - Levin Deluxe LB76-SB Bass in High-Glo SB
22111 - Levin LB60 Bass Guitar in High-glo Black
22146 - Levin PB50-BK Bass in High-Glo Black
22147 - Levin PB50-SB Bass in High-Glo Sunburst
19565 - Marco Bass N1 TFL 4-String, Orange, Used
19702 - Markbass MB JP Black Chrome 4 GD PF
19460 - MusicMan Stingray 4 Bass with 3 EQ Blue
18114 - NS Design WAV4 Double Bass Trans Black
13012 - Rickenbacker 4003, Walnut
18083 - Rockbass Streamer LX4 Fretless, Blk Used
22033 - Sandberg Electra VS4 Bass Guitar
22032 - Sandberg Electra VS4 Bass Guitar

Squier

18287 - Squier Affinity Series Precision Bass PJ Pack
21274 - Squier Classic Vibe 70s Jazz Bass, Nat
21825 - Squier Classic Vibe 60s Jazz Bass, Black
21679 - Squier Paranormal Jazz Bass 54 W/Blonde
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MRJP Fretless, Sunburst
14490 - Vintage LV4 Left-handed 4 String
14407 - Vintage LVJ74 Left-handed Bass Guitar, Natural
19680 - Vintage VS4 Reissued Bass, Cherry Red
22065 - Vintage VS4 Reissued Bass, C.F.R.D., USED

Fretless Bases



6769 - Cort B4 FL Plus AS OPN Fretless Bass
22064 - F Bass AC-Signature Fretless Bass, Used
14867 - Magic Fluke Timber Electric Bass
18083 - Rockbass Streamer LX4, Blk Used
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MRJP, Sunburst

Bass Cabinets



13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet
6147 - Ashdown Klystron NEO 210 Secondhand
16800 - BLUGuitar Nanocab



13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16054 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16055 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16042 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohms
16041 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohms
16075 - Eich 115L Bass Cabinet
16052 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16053 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16040 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16071 - Eich 210M Bass Cabinet
16069 - Eich 212L Bass Cabinet
16070 - Eich 212M Bass Cabinet
16048 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16050 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16068 - Eich 410L Bass Cabinet
16067 - Eich 610L Bass Cabinet
16061 - Eich 612XL Bass Cab
16065 - Eich 810L Bass Cabinet
16321 - Gallien Krueger CX115 Bass Cabinet
16444 - Gallien Krueger CX210 Bass Cab
16320 - Gallien Krueger MB210 Bass Amp Combo



5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
16013 - Markbass 123 Alain Caron Bass Cab
16014 - Markbass CMD Super K1 Alain Caron
17732 - Markbass Marcus Miller Cab 102
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab



6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
10266 - Orange OBC210 Bass Guitar Speaker Cab
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)
21040 - D'Addario Planet Waves 5ft Speaker Lead
20753 - Staggy 10M Speaker-Jack Lead
20754 - Staggy 10M Spk-Spk Lead
21597 - TC Electronic RS212 (2x12), Used
16856 - Trace Elliot 1x10 Elf Cab
19686 - Trace Elliot TE28E 2x8 bass cabinet

Acoustic Bases



10498 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Black
19342 - Ovation B778TX Electro Acoustic Bass
12180 - Protection Racket Ac. Bass Case Dlx
15117 - Takamine GB30CE E.Acoustic. Blk

Bass Combos



13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)
21842 - Ashdown Studio 12



13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16046 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo
19163 - Eich BC112 PRO Bass Combo
16028 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo
19034 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo, Secondhand

Fender

13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13063 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo



16765 - Gallien Krueger MB110 Bass Combo
16445 - Gallien Krueger MB112 Bass Combo
16446 - Gallien Krueger MB150S/112 Combo



6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (1x15)
5429 - Mark Bass Covers For Mark Bass Amps
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W, 1x12)
19641 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P, 300W Used
18372 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 250
18370 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 500
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
9939 - Markbass MiniMark 802 Bass Combo
16764 - Markbass 102 250 Richard Bona Combo
19729 - Markbass Ninja 102-500 Bass Combo
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo



15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Combo
15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Combo
15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Combo
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Electric & Silent



14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
16847 - NS Design NXTA Upright Bass, Active
14014 - Yamaha SLB100 Silent Upright Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass
19938 - Yamaha SLB300 Silent Double Bass

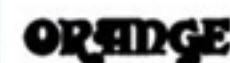
Bass Heads



14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
15115 - Ashdown ABM 600 EVO IV 600W Head SH
18854 - Bergantino Custom Padded Carry Bag
18850 - Bergantino Forte Bass Amplifier
21556 - Bergantino NXT210 Bass Cab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16044 - Eich T1000 Bass Amp
16043 - Eich T300 Bass Amp
16027 - Eich T500 Bass Amp
16026 - Eich T900 Bass Amp
19468 - GALLIEN KRUEGER LEGACY 500 Head
16318 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Bass Amp Head
16319 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Fusion Bass Amp H
17147 - Gallien Krueger MB800 Bass Head



14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - Markbass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
19081 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head USED
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - Markbass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
19484 - Markbass Evo 1 Bass Amp Head
17254 - Markbass Little Marcus 1000 Bass Amp
17252 - Markbass Little Marcus 250 Bass Amp Head
17009 - Markbass Little Marcus 500 Bass Amp Head
17010 - Markbass Little Marcus 800 Bass Amp Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
19282 - Markbass Little Mark Vintage Bass Amp Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head



15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
19674 - Orange Little Bass Thing Bass Amp Head
5351 - Orange Terror Bass 500 TB500
16531 - Trace Elliot Elf 200 Watt Bass Amp Head

5 & 6 String Bases



19147 - Cort A5 Plus SCMS Open Pore Natural
16526 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Black
18731 - Cort GB75J 5 String Bass Aqua Blue
16397 - Cort GB75J Amber Glossy 5 String Bass
21970 - ESP LTD FB1005 Rocco Prestia 5-String Used
22064 - F Bass AC-Signature Fretless Bass, Used
16766 - Ibanez SR60TH5PIL Premium, 5-String Bass
22085 - MTD Kingston Z 5-String, Sunburst, Used
19381 - Marleaux MBass 5 String Bass, Burl Top
9009 - Overwater Contemporary 5-String, Used

Rickenbacker

21654 - Rickenbacker 4003S 5 Bass Guitar Jetglo
21655 - Rickenbacker 4003S5 String Bass Mapleglo
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black, Used
21743 - Sandberg California TM5
21747 - Sandberg California 5 String Bass, Creme

Spector

19735 - Spector Bass Rebob 5DLX Blk Cherry
16773 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Trans Black
11196 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Classic Blk Cherry
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
16776 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5, Black Cherry
19158 - Sterling by MusicMan SubRay 5 Bass, HBS
8899 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
16000 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass

WELCOME



How do you outdo a classic album like *Led Zeppelin IV*, 50 years later?

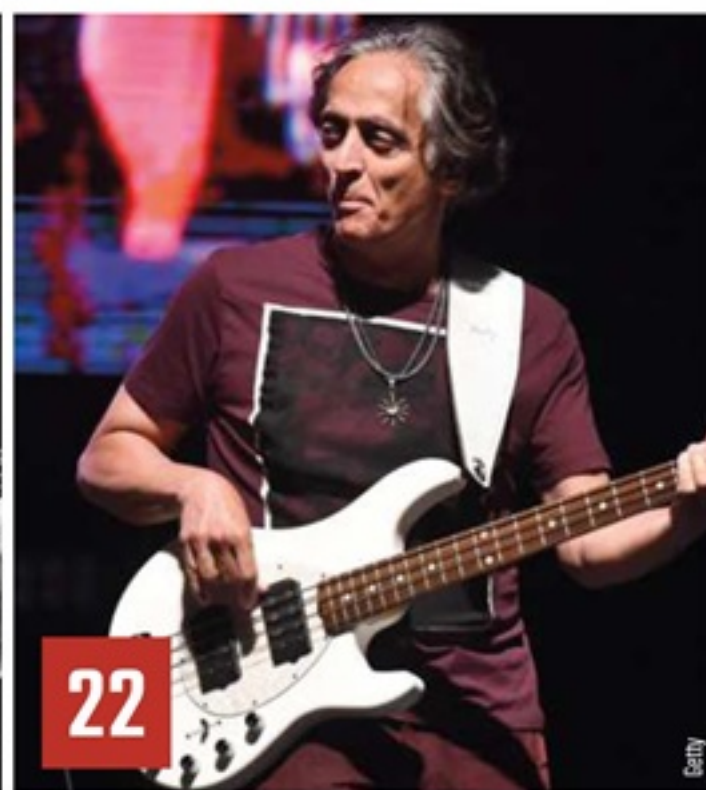
When John Paul Jones completed the recording sessions for his band Led Zeppelin's fourth album in early 1971, he would scarcely have realised at the time that the album was destined to be the subject of a magazine cover half a century later.

Here we are in 2021, though, still awe-struck by the songwriting, the musicianship, the majesty, the sheer over-the-top ambition and the huge presence (pun intended) of the record that was never formally titled *Led Zeppelin IV*. In this issue we celebrate the unique genius of JPJ, and take an appreciative look at those classic bass performances back in '71. There really is no other bass player like him.

We've gone above and beyond (up the stairway?) to bring you interviews with a wide cast of bass players this month, so you'll also encounter Benny Rietveld of Santana, Marcus Miller and Mark King here; established greats all. However, we like to dig a little deeper than the usual big-name heroes, so you'll also meet Putter Smith, a jazz stalwart who also acted in *Diamonds Are Forever* (yep!); Right Said Fred singer Richard Fairbrass, who used to hold down the bass position with none other than David Bowie; and Avishai Cohen, who combines a full orchestra with his upright bass. Like John Paul Jones himself, these are bassists with a vision.

As always our reviews are designed to cover as much territory as possible, with old, new and futuristic basses on test; and our tutors, the very best on the planet, will take your playing to the next level, no matter where you may be.

Enjoy this issue, and I'll see you next month!
Joel McIver, Editor



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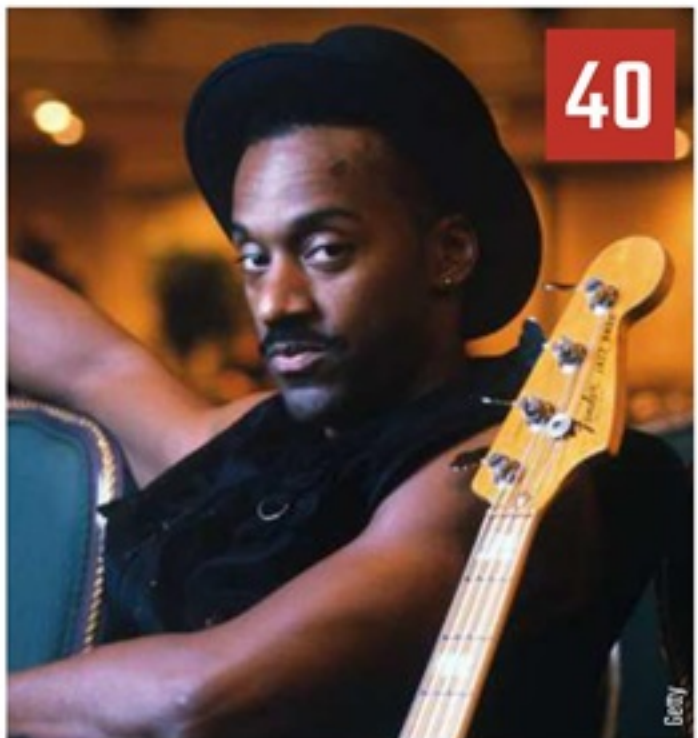
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bassplayer

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THE Lowdown

News and views from the bass world, collated by BP's team of newshounds

SPACE ROCK

Rick Armstrong, bassist and son of the late astronaut Neil Armstrong, releases *Infinite Corridors* with his band Edison's Children, and tells BP about his journey into the final frontier of the low end...

"I had a good friend in high school who played bass – he would play along to bands like Black Sabbath and Deep Purple in his bedroom. He ended up getting a new bass and gave me his old one. I don't remember what kind it was, but I started off learning Black Sabbath songs on that bass. I know my parents had to have been very concerned about me at that point – but to their credit they never said anything!

"The first bass I bought was a Dixon Rickenbacker 4001 copy around 1975, and I still have it. I used the Dixon for a long time, but I finally bought a real Rickenbacker 4003 five years ago. I've fiddled with any number of other basses, but haven't spent any real time with anything else. Besides the Rick, I have a Boss GT-1B pedal and a TC Electronic head and cabinet, but when I record any bass I just go direct into the computer.

"Which bass player do I most admire? Well, I couldn't keep it to just one, but I would have to start with Chris Squire. His bass sound was outstanding and his creativity with his bass parts was unmatched, in my view. As someone who listened to mostly progressive rock, other bassists who I really admired were guys like Greg Lake,

Mike Rutherford, John Wetton, and Tony Levin. Gary Strater from Starcastle deserves a special mention – his playing was very Squire-like, but I thought it was still very inventive in its own right.

"I would have to single out Jon Camp from Renaissance as the bassist that I probably most wanted to emulate, as I loved his sound and compositional style. My Edison's Children bandmate Pete Trewavas, also of Marillion, is an outstanding player. Having had to learn some of his parts over the years, he consistently comes up with bass-lines that work but which would never occur to me, and are very melodic.

"I played bass with Marillion guitarist Steve Rothery in Chile back in 2019, where we played both Marillion's and his own tracks. We also played at the La Silla Observatory just before a total eclipse, which was incredible. Doing a gig next to a large radio telescope is priceless. Another small gig of note was the chance to play with Roger McGuinn at an Astronaut Hall Of Fame event a few years ago. Playing Byrds classics with Roger such as 'Turn! Turn! Turn!' and 'So You Want To Be A Rock And Roll Star' is something I will always remember." ■

<http://rickarmstrong.bandcamp.com>



Rick's dad,
Michael Collins,
Buzz Aldrin

Gerry



Rocket Science

Ampeg introduces the Rocket Bass Series.

The veteran amp-builders Ampeg have announced a “powerful yet lightweight” Rocket Bass series of amps, comprising five RB models in 1x8, 1x10, 1x12, 1x15 and 2x10 speaker configurations. They cost from \$209 to \$909. Each amp boasts a three-band EQ, Ampeg’s Super Grit Technology (SGT) overdrive, XLR line outs (except the RB-108), aux inputs and headphone outs. “We wanted to design the ultimate bass combos, sacrificing nothing in terms of tone or aesthetics. Rocket Bass is designed for the practical player who doesn’t want to give up stage-ready looks, roadworthy construction, and killer tone just because they prefer the practicality of a combo amp,” says Dino Monoxelos, Ampeg’s Brand Marketing Manager. ■



Love Lines

A great bass-line in 85 words

Queen & David Bowie, ‘Under Pressure’ (1981)
It’s D. And it’s A. And it’s D again! One of John Deacon’s most instantly recognisable bass-lines ever, the ‘Under Pressure’ riff was perfectly counterpointed by a piano stab, a weird, live-sounding vocal and guitar and a cheesy rapper from Dallas. That’s right – the song and its iconic bass-line were given a whole new life in ‘Ice Ice Baby’, the dreary 1990 hit by Vanilla Ice, who sampled it and repackaged it for a younger generation of consumers. ■



Booked In



What is it with bass books at the moment? There’s loads of them coming out. Two more essential reads are on the way, the first from Ron Carter and titled *Chartography – Reinvented Transcriptions*. It includes five of his performances of the jazz standard ‘Autumn Leaves’ with the Miles Davis Quartet from 1963 to ‘67. The maestro explains the concept with the words: “This is the first book that explains all the factors that go into what has made the greatest bass-lines in history so great. And that is context... By looking at how a bass-line evolved over multiple choruses and performances, you will understand that a one-chorus transcription cannot help a bass player find out how that bass-line was actually built, much less how to write one like it himself.” ■



Next up is *Walking Bass* from the great John Patitucci, written for electric and upright players who want to walk the walk. “This book is all about strengthening your ability to play walking bass in a two-feel and walking 4/4 feel through a variety of changes,” runs the book’s blurb. “Whether you play electric or acoustic bass, this book is going to help you create stronger bass-lines with clarity and freedom.” ■



WILL POWER

Ever had a bass die during a gig? Will Palmer has...

I play in the heavy metal band Angel Witch, and after trying out a few different basses, I use a Fender Jazz these days. When I first joined, there was quite a bit of overdrive on the bass parts and I tried a Rickenbacker copy, but it just didn’t match up to the Jazz, although I did change the Fender bridge for a hi-mass unit, because I need my setup to be as functional as possible. I want to be very self-sufficient, and a Jazz bass is really good for that, because the tone is great – the sound man has to work really hard to screw it up.

“When we play live, obviously not under current conditions, nine times out of 10 it’s a fly date. You never know what amp you’ll be given on the date. Ideally I’d just ask for an Ampeg SVT and an 8x10 cab, although if I’m honest, the cab is for monitoring. I stick the Jazz through a SansAmp into

the PA and it always sounds fine. I never used to take a backup bass out with me, and I often don’t bother now that I have the Jazz, because it’s a high-quality instrument – but I do lie awake at night sometimes, worrying about what might happen.

“This is because of something that happened the first time we played in Japan. We didn’t have a tech with us and we didn’t know the front of house crew.

“To this day I don’t know how it happened, or how I got through that gig...”

We started to soundcheck, and to my horror, when I looked down at my bass I saw that the bridge saddles had basically fallen down to the body of the bass. The action wasn’t even zero – it was less than zero! It was almost like the air pressure in the plane had pulled off the screws. To this day I don’t know how it happened, or how I got through that gig.” ■

Angel Witch’s album *Angel Of Light* is out now. Facebook: angelwitchofficial



The late, great Marshall Grant

Each month, we celebrate a classic, bass-loaded album. Has it stood the test of time?

This ridiculously-titled LP, released by Sam Phillips' famous Sun label, the home of rock'n'roll, was the debut album of the greatest country singer of them all, the late Johnny Cash. Possibly the most troubled country musician ever to strum a guitar in anger, Cash went on to a fruitful career, surviving speed addiction, several turns of the wheel of fashion and a reinvention as a harbinger of doom by Rick Rubin in the years before his death in 2003.

One of the key features of this influential LP was Marshall Grant's double bass. While production technology was still in its infancy in those primitive times, a careful listen through the bathtub-level clarity will enable you to pick out Grant's solid, fluid bass parts. The 'boom-chicka-boom' sound that permeated Cash's work comes at least partly from the upright bass, with Grant adding extra value by stepping up as his boss's road manager. Now that's the kind of musician that you want in your band.

The best-known song from this album, and indeed one of the most enduring songs from Cash's astounding, six-decade catalogue, is 'I Walk The Line'. A little less intimidating than Cash's later prison-themed work (cue the always-worrisome "Shot a man in Reno... just

to watch him die" line, with the last word intoned in a sub-bass growl), 'I Walk The Line' is a stern declaration of the singer's love for his first wife, Vivian Liberto. "I find it very, very easy to be true," he warbles inaccurately, while the tinny guitar line and much more solid bass pattern swings along briskly. Sun-watchers will recognise this indistinct sound from later, better-known recordings by Elvis Presley and other greats of the Sun era.

Marshall Grant's reputation never really spread beyond country and rockabilly circles, although in later life he was justly hailed as a key musician of the era. Cash's epic, often-discussed drug and financial issues caused a rift between the two musicians, although they were reconciled in later years and last played together in 1999.

Grant recorded his experiences with Cash in a 2006 autobiography titled *I Was There When It Happened: My Life With Johnny Cash*, and died in 2011 at the age of 83, which is a pretty decent run given the demands of his career. Being a performing musician at his particular time and place was hardly the healthiest option for anyone, especially if you had to lug a double bass around all day. Hats off to Mr. Grant: he lived a first-class life.

A careful listen through the bathtub-level clarity will enable you to pick out Marshall Grant's solid, fluid bass



Billy Sherwood

Billy Sherwood, bass player for prog-rock legends Yes, is also a noted producer, guitarist and keyboard player. His songwriting chops, technical nous and sonic explorations have led him on a long journey through prog and its boundary-pushing, complex compositions. Sherwood's other bands include World Trade, Lodgic, Asia and Arc Of Life, who he formed along with Jon Davison of Yes.

The bassist was born in 1965 in Las Vegas, Nevada, and is from a solid background of musical performers. His father was an actor and musician and his mother a singer, as was his late brother Michael, who also played in Lodgic. Sherwood's setup includes basses from Spector, Fender, Turner and more, and he uses a relatively hefty Dunlop 1mm pick, which he prefers for its texture and versatility, using different angles and tilts on the

string to produce different attack strengths. A noted perfectionist when in the studio, Sherwood's technical skills are close to the forefront of his approach – but the bass-line and the songs always come first.

We caught up with him to chat about his career, his techniques and his triple amp set-ups, and got the lowdown on how it feels to play with his heroes – as well as a Yes album that has never got the credit it deserved. ■



MUST-HAVE ALBUM

LODGIC

Nomadic Sands (1985)



"This was my first ever album recording, and one that I'm very proud of to this day. It was produced by the guys in Toto, and was a very important record for me because it turned out to be a real learning experience on multiple fronts, and was also the record that was the pathfinder for my career to start going in that direction.

"Back then I used Boss choruses, flangers and analogue delays, because I wanted to do my best to have a palette of colours to work with. These days I'm completely digital, though, using the Line 6 Helix, but we got some really cool bass sounds on that record with those old stomp-boxes.

"It was always a tricky dance, you know – if you wanted a combination of three things for a chorus, and then one thing for a verse, just figuring out the timing of that was its own little move, its own trick. I prefer just hitting one pedal nowadays, though.

"The way that I program my current rig with Yes is that I bring those components in and dirty them up just a little bit, so that things aren't quite as pristine as digital always wants to be. By adding some crunch I can still have that old-school sort of vibe, while being able to press a single button to change the sound of my bass."



WORTHY CONTENDER

WORLD TRADE

World Trade (1989)



"The bass guitar sounds are just killer on this record. I had evolved my tones by that point, and I decided to take it into the stereo spectrum rather than a mono bass: I've been doing it stereo ever since.

"It was a very large bass rig that I had at that point: back in the World Trade days I was using three Acoustic 118 amps and running them through three 4x10" cabs. They were stacked up next to each other with the middle amp cabinet being a direct drive.

"The left and the right were the left and the right output of the effect that I was using, and it sounded great. It was quite something to record with: when I brought it in, the producer Keith Olson looked at me, like 'What are we doing?'

"There's a song on there called 'Wasting Time' which has quite a cool little riff. It's tricky to play, but I like it a lot and it still holds up. The other song I would pick out is 'Lifetime'. The bass-line had a really interesting melody to it, and what's interesting is that when Covid kicked in, I started teaching online lessons.

"Some of the students that I teach like to come at me with my own bass-lines, and a lot of them know the actual bass-line for 'Lifetime', which is quite an impressive achievement, in my opinion anyway."



COOL GROOVES

YES

Live In Las Vegas (2020)

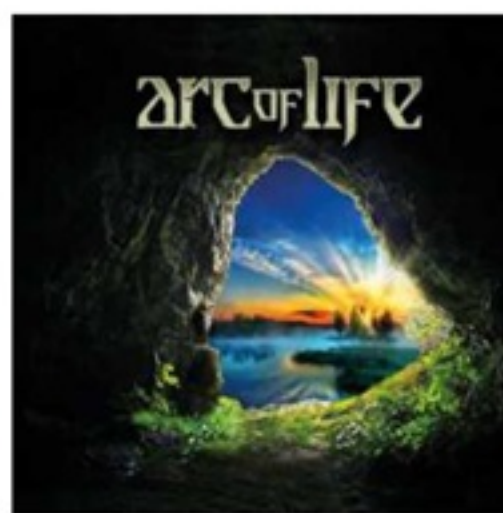


"I never in a million years thought I'd replace Chris Squire, my favourite bass player of all time, but we became friends over many decades and that's just how life worked out.

"It's a very special thing to play that material with them, but more importantly, when I was growing up, discovering Yes, and getting into it as a complete diehard as a kid, I was actually living in Las Vegas. That was where I saw my first Yes show. The fact that we recorded a live album there, as the first record without Chris, and for me to be playing bass, makes the record very special to me for all those reasons.

"We were playing through the song 'The Gates Of Delirium' onstage at the show, and during that song I actually remember thinking to myself, 'Oh, my God, how many times did I play along to this record in this town when I was a kid, just imagining being a musician on that level – and somehow my life has evolved to where that is what I'm actually doing'.

"So it's a very special thing, this particular record, but it's also a very, very bizarre thing as well, at least as I see it. That song, 'The Gates Of Delirium', didn't actually make it onto the live album. I think we might be saving that particular composition for a future live LP."



WILD CARD

ARC OF LIFE

Arc Of Life (2021)



"This is a band that spawned from my relationship with Jon Davison, having worked with him so closely on the Yes tours. The songwriting came out of really enjoying working with each other. There's some really cool bass-lines on that record: if you're a bass player, there's some really cool things to sink your teeth into.

"It's an unusual project that I never really planned on – it just evolved naturally. Jon and I looked at each other and said 'Maybe we should build a band around this'. Songwriting is key, as far as I'm concerned. The skill level involved with playing progressive rock music that we all know and love is one thing, but the songs are what do it for me.

"I think at this point people expect that I'm going to play a lot. In my early days, I'd always be jamming with people and the band would be looking at me like, 'Can't you just play the G?' and I would say, 'Well, Chris wouldn't do that. Or McCartney, or Jaco'. I'd come at the lines from my perspective. What was intriguing for me was the composition of the bass part, and when you listen to 'Awaken', or 'Gates To Delirium', you start appreciating Chris's skill in composition. I tried to do that in my own world, so the compositions of the bass parts on this album are unique."



ROUGH DIAMOND

YES

Open Your Eyes (1997)



"This album gets a real bad time out there among Yes fans, but when I listen to it myself, I hear things that are still very much Yes. I replaced Chris and I'm in the band, but I'm still a fan of the band, so I still listen to the classic stuff.

"I really love the song 'Fortune Seller' – that bass-line and the sound of the eight-string bass is killer – but there are a couple of tunes on there that make me wonder why we put them on the record. Still, I find, now that years have passed since the release of the album, that it's actually not so bad.

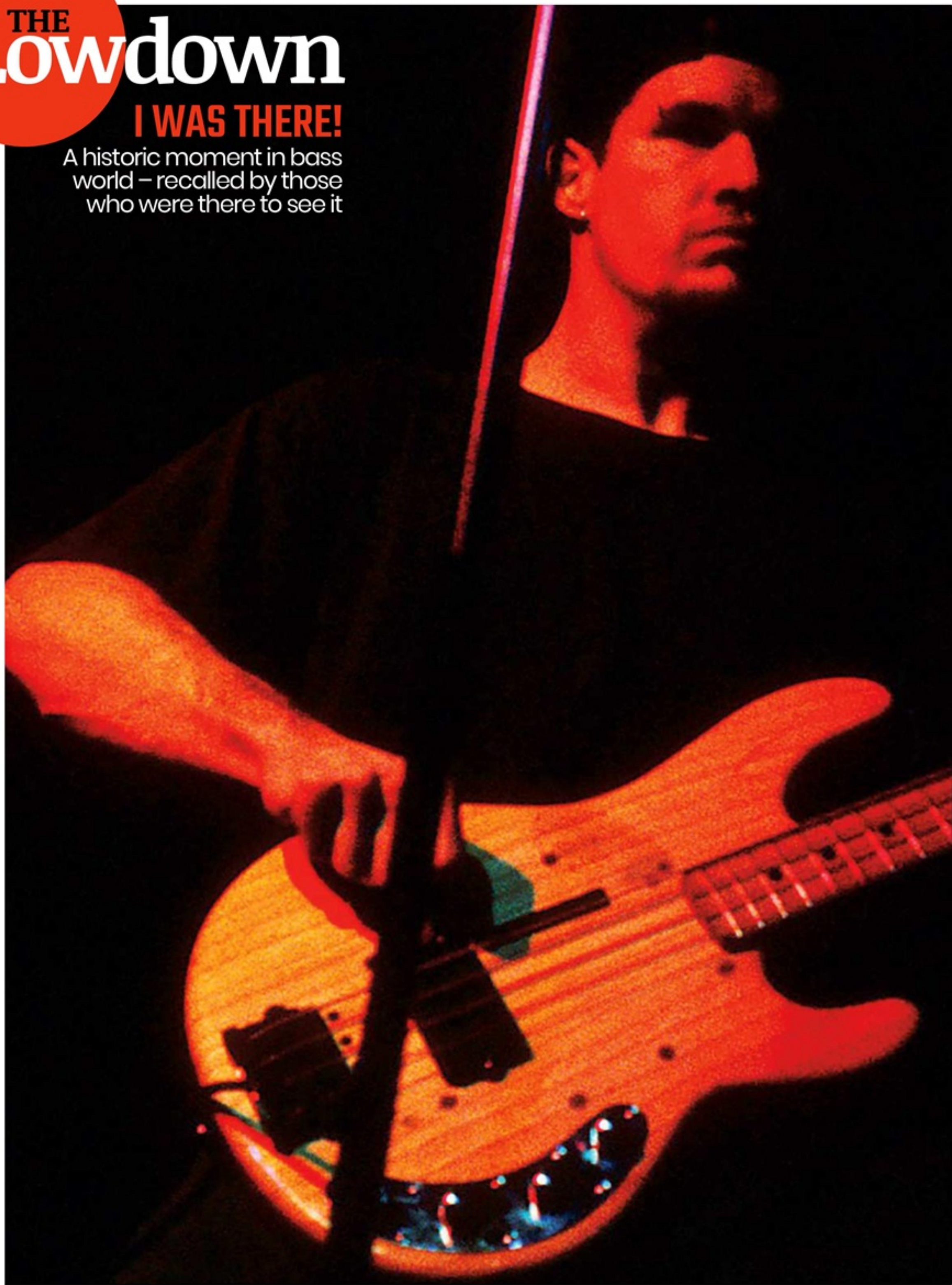
"Songs like 'New State Of Mind' and 'The Solution', for example – there's some material on there that's quite cool. I just think that they got wrapped up in the politics of the moment, because that record came along right after [legendary keyboard player] Rick Wakeman left the band. As a piece of music and a piece of art, I have nothing but respect for it.

"I appreciate that everybody's entitled to their opinion when it comes to music and art, but in my heart of hearts, I know why we made this record, and I also know that our intentions were totally pure at the time. The band was really prospering at that point in their career, so it was mission accomplished, as far as I was concerned."

THE Lowdown

I WAS THERE!

A historic moment in bass world – recalled by those who were there to see it





Above: Tim Commerford refuses to play ball at the 2000 MTV Video Music Awards.

Twenty-eight years ago, Rage Against The Machine release their self-titled debut album, and a generation of angry kids gets into metal...

The Los Angeles quartet Rage Against The Machine is that rare thing – a protest band that isn't faintly embarrassing. Mainstream acceptance and chart success have not taken the intimidating edge off their political rants, which target a combination of corporations and governments, and there's no denying their jaw-dropping musicianship.

As for the bass playing by Tim Commerford – it's absolutely world-class. Although Commerford has had his moments – he once climbed a gantry during a TV awards show, disrupting the event, and is on a mission to cover as much of his epidermis as possible with blue ink – the way he approaches and delivers his bass parts is second to none.

A fingerstyle player who somehow sounds as if he's using a pick, he has a percussive, economical approach which everyone could learn from. On RATM's 1993 self-titled debut album, the bass-lines were as prominent as Tom Morello's equally innovative guitar parts, holding down the grooves with robotic accuracy and adding a flamboyant melodic twist from time to time.

The high points of Commerford's bass tracks are many. The beginning of Rage's best-known song, 'Killing In The Name', is a sinister drop-tuned D plus octave of E₂; the immense overdriven line at the end of 'Know Your Enemy' is unforgettable; and frankly, the whole of the song 'Bullet In The Head' is iconic to bass players. At the end of the song there is a fantastic, spidery riff which Commerford plays with such consistency and accuracy that you'd think it was sampled and looped. Not a beat is off.

Watch out for Commerford's forthcoming *BP* cover – it's going to be quite an event. ■

Low Life

Welcome back, bassists! Let's continue with our theme of post-pandemic live performance and how to re-establish the necessary performance skills after a year out. This month, we're talking about re-learning and retaining material – whether it's your own band's songs, a covers band set, or for a tour this year that you've booked in with another artist

First off, get started now. Do this prep while the pace is less pressurised. I doubt we'll ever have a time like this again to regroup, establish and develop wider skill sets, or embark on thorough preparation. If you don't already do it, start labelling your repertoire with their key signatures. This has a whole host of benefits, from helping to relearn the bass parts more quickly, through getting the relevant theoretical structures under the fingers, to giving you the knowledge and ability to improvise when mistakes happen, or embellish your parts

RE-LEARN YOUR REPERTOIRE

Return to live performance at full strength!

when the performance calls for it. This will also help to put you in the right harmonic headspace for the song, which supports the retention of the bass part.

Another tip is to take the 'little and often' approach to learning or re-learning your material. By swapping lengthy sessions that tackle lots of material with shorter sessions focusing only on one or two songs at a time, you can work on the fine details and bring in a more concentrated element of repetition. This should result in more robust memorisation. I would then suggest replaying the parts at the beginning of every subsequent practice session to check how well

the material has been retained. Regular revisiting will help the bass parts to 'stick'!

Lastly, consider immersion. Sitting down and working out your bass parts – in other words, 'active' listening – is one way to learn them. At the same time, the more opportunities that you can engineer for yourself to engage with the material, the more your goal of knowing it inside out will be achieved. When you walk or drive anywhere, make sure that the repertoire you're learning is in a playlist on your phone, so that you can be listening to it outside of practice. This 'subliminal' listening helps to cement the structures and composition



Maximise your live bass performance with Tax The Heat bassist and BIMM tutor Antonio Angotti.



BIMM
INSTITUTE

of the parts, as well as drawing your attention to other aspects of the arrangement that you could exploit. It's also a good tool for double-checking bass parts that may be a little buried in the mix, as different headphones or speakers can draw out missed details or inaccurate interpretations.

Do you have any questions surrounding live performance? If so, please write into the mag and I'll broach them in an upcoming issue. ■

The Woodshed

There's no way around it... Despite being right under their fingertips, a lot of us have a difficult time understanding fretboard radius. Today, let's pull out our high-school geometry textbooks and slide-rules to take a closer look at radius...

Wait! Don't turn the page yet – there is an easier way to conceptualise the difference between one fretboard radius and another, without breaking out a scientific calculator.

As you will recall, a radius is the distance from a circle's centre to its edge. A bass fretboard's radius refers to its convex playing surface. The curvature of the fretboard is relative to that of a cross-section of the circumference of a circle with a specific radius. The smaller the radius number, the more sharply curved the surface of the fretboard.

The accompanying graphic illustrates how the size of a radius relates to the

FRETBOARD RADIUS EXPLAINED

It's back to school with Professor R. Elrick.

circumference of a circle and, ultimately, the curvature of a fretboard. The smallest radius results in the roundest playing surface, while larger radii offer flatter surfaces.

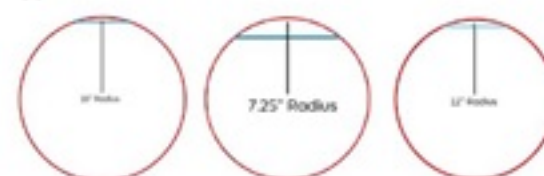
The width of a fretboard often plays a factor in determining the best fretboard radius for a particular instrument. For example, a small radius that may be suitable for a four-string bass will feel very round on a wide, six-string fretboard. For this reason, extended range basses generally specify a progressively larger radius as

they increase from five to six strings and beyond.

How do the numbers add up? Vintage Fender basses feature a very small radius of 7.25". Today, 9.5" is more common for a four-string bass, although many modern fours and fives use a radius of 12" or more. The wide fretboards of basses with six or more strings may have a radius of 16" to 20" or larger. The use of larger radii keeps extended-range bass guitar fretboards from feeling uncomfortably round, compared to four-string basses.



Ace luthier Rob Elrick brings decades of wisdom to the table. Listen up!



While determining an ideal fretboard radius is wholly subjective, radii do affect playability. Application and personal preference are essential to making a choice that's right for your style of play. There is no right or wrong here: for some, a large radius may offer enhanced playability, while a smaller radius may offer a more comfortable feel for others. ■



Understanding how to
construct bass-lines with
the mighty Joe Hubbard

EXPLORE II-V-I PATTERNS

Welcome! Contrary to popular belief, no matter what level of musicianship we attain, whether beginner, intermediate or advanced, there is always a hierarchy of levels within a level, so to speak. With that in mind, let's take a look at II-V-I patterns and build their harmonic

density in three levels of difficulty. When playing a II-V-I progression, the first way to approach it is by outlining the chords using chord tones and tensions, scalar passing tones, diatonic approach notes and chromatic approach notes. The second way would be to superimpose a $\flat$ II7 (tritone substitute) for the V7. The third way would be to superimpose the IV-7 to $\flat$ VII7 over the original II-7 to V7.

We could do this while another instrument comps the original II V I chords – so the chords you would outline for **Exercise 1** in the key of B_b major are $C-7$, $F7$ to B_b maj7; **Exercise 2** would be $C-7$, $B7$ to B_b maj7; and **Exercise 3** would be E_b-7 , A_b7 to B_b maj7. ■

EXERCISE ONE

$Cm7$ $F7$ $B_b\Delta7$

In this first exercise, bar 1 starts on the root note of the chord, followed by a chromatic approach note from below, and then continues with a scale passing tone sequence consisting of R-2- $\flat$ 3-4-5, finishing on the $\flat$ 7. Bar 2 starts on the 3rd and plays a descending chromatic sequence down to the root. From there, we have a chromatic above the $\flat$ 7 and then we resolve back to the root. In bar 3, the line starts on the 3rd followed by the 7, with a diatonic approach from above into the root, then steps up with chord tones 3, 5 and 7.

EXERCISE TWO

$Cm7$ $B7$ $B_b\Delta7$

Now, notice that in bar 2 we have a $B7$. This is a tritone substitute for the $F7$, meaning that they both contain the same 3rd and 7th, but they're inverted. Notice that bar 1 is the same as the first level. In bar 2, the line starts on the $\flat$ 7, root, $\flat$ 9, $\sharp$ 9, 3, $\flat$ 9, root, $\flat$ 7. In bar 3, we have a double chromatic approach from above into the 5th followed by 7, root, double chromatic from below into the 3rd.

EXERCISE THREE

$Ebm7$ A_b7 $B_b\Delta7$

This is where we take it up a notch! Over the original II-V pattern we superimpose the IV-7 to $\flat$ VII7. The A_b7 ($\flat$ VII7) consists of A_b , C, E_b , and G, which, compared to the original V7 chord $F7$, would be $\sharp$ 9, 5, $\flat$ 7 & $\flat$ 9. The E_b-7 (IV-7) is the related II-7 chord to A_b7 . Bar 1 starts on the $\flat$ 3, 2 to root, followed by a chromatic approach from below, and diatonic approach above the root to 5th. Bar 2 starts with a $\flat$ 9, 3 5, chromatic below, diatonic above the 3rd, finishing with a chromatic above/chromatic below approach into the 3rd of bar 3. Bar 3 continues to the root, with a diatonic approach from above into the 5th, then root, 7, root, 2. Bar 4 is root, 2, 3, 5, root and resolves to tension 13.

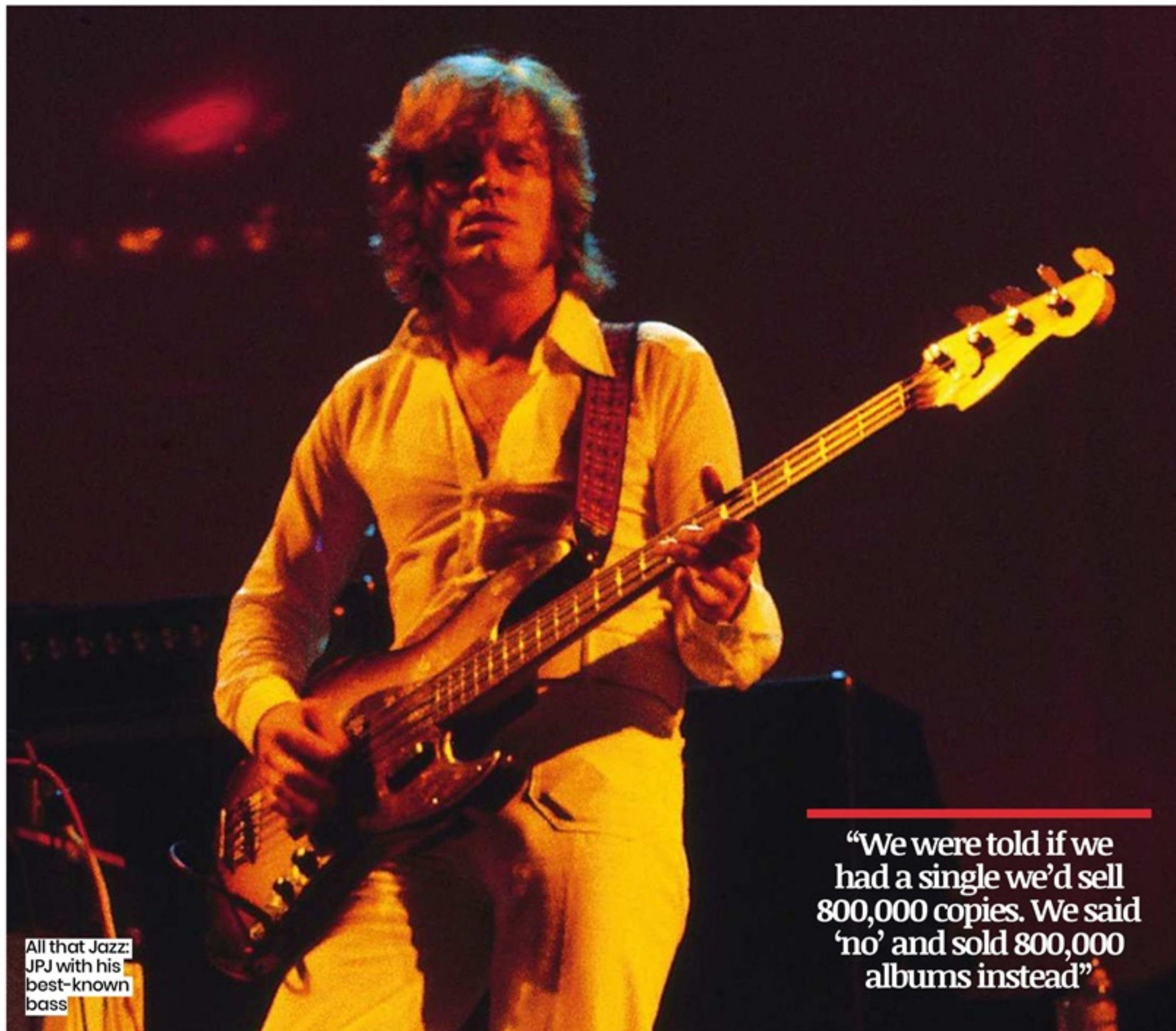




FOUR — of the — BEST

It's 50 years this year since Led Zeppelin released their immense fourth album, cementing their position in music history and inspiring the playing of a million guitar-shop visitors. The band's *Quiet One*, bassist **John Paul Jones**, was on astounding form throughout: half a century since that high point, we revisit his bass parts and ask how it was that JPJ became the leading rock bassist of his generation...

Words: Joel McIver, Stuart Clayton, Dan Veall
Photography: Getty



All that Jazz: JPJ with his best-known bass

“We were told if we had a single we’d sell 800,000 copies. We said ‘no’ and sold 800,000 albums instead”

Anyone who enjoys the cranium-crushing sound of heavy metal and its slightly more refined accomplice, hard rock, owes a debt to Led Zeppelin. Alongside their contemporaries Deep Purple and Black Sabbath, Led Zep were one of the unholy trio of British rock bands responsible for the evolution of popular music into a heavier, more high-volume direction. Without these three acts, the music of a whole generation would have been more lightweight in style and significance.

Where Sabbath pioneered heavy metal with their downtuned riffage, and Purple focused on streamlined power rock and classical virtuosity, Led Zeppelin’s approach was based on folk, acoustic and world elements and epic soundscapes just as much as the usual bludgeoning blues of the day. It was the makeup of the band which gave it its

spectacular edge: Robert Plant’s voice and lyrics were ambitious and wide-ranging; guitarist Jimmy Page and bassist John Paul Jones added their remarkable musical dexterity to a range of instrumentation; and John ‘Bonzo’ Bonham was a feral drummer. Few bands have benefited from such a perfect mix of talents, alongside that of their terrifying manager Peter Grant, although the creative tension thrown up by the intimacy of four great musicians almost destroyed the band on more than one occasion.

This month, we’re focusing on a single moment in Zeppelin’s long and chaotic career – the release of *Led Zeppelin IV*, as it was never formally titled. It’s 50 years since its appearance in late 1971, in the wake of the subtler *III* album, released the previous year. From its ambiguous sleeve art to the epic range of musical styles the LP encompassed, *IV* was a work of incredible depth – a quality

that has ensured vast sales and a cultural impact that lasts to this day.

High points included the twisty complexity of ‘Black Dog’, the folk whimsy of ‘The Battle Of Evermore’ and the career best of ‘Stairway To Heaven’ an acoustic-rock epic with a huge structure, plus a guitar solo and introductory chord sequence that established Page’s musical reputation forever. It eventually became the most played song in FM radio history, even though – in line with the band’s sometimes puzzling, but ultimately rewarding policy on the subject – it was never released as a single. The album went on to sell over 16 million copies.

As John Paul Jones told *Happening* in 1999, “There’s a great Peter Grant story, where [Atlantic Records head] Ahmet Ertegun said, ‘Peter, you guys have to put out a single. If you have a single, you’ll sell 800,000 singles, easily.’ And Peter just stood his ground and

Behind The Symbols

Stuart Clayton analyses the bass playing on *Led Zeppelin IV*, song by song

Led Zeppelin's widely acclaimed fourth album was released in November 1971. In the wake of the lukewarm response to the band's third LP – which had included a significant acoustic and folk music influence – the group elected to release their fourth album without a title. In fact, the outer sleeve contained no text at all, although each member of the band chose a personal symbol for inclusion on the inner sleeve. Because of this, the album is sometimes referred to as *Four Symbols*, but is now most commonly known as *Led Zeppelin IV*. Despite these eccentricities, the album was a huge hit for the band, and went on to become their best-selling release.

Although any conversation about the album is typically dominated by the eight-minute epic 'Stairway To Heaven', for most bass players the stand-out track is the album opener, 'Black Dog'. Built around a serpentine riff penned by Jones, the song remains a Led Zeppelin favourite to this day.

As Jones told *Bass Player* in 2008, 'I wrote 'Black Dog' on a train. My dad taught me how to write musical notation without using manuscript paper – just with numbers and note values – and I wrote that one on the way back from a rehearsal at Jimmy Page's house. There was a Howling Wolf song I was attracted to at the time, a kind of rolling blues with a riff that never ended. I fancied writing something that did the same thing. Just when you think the riff is going to finish, it goes off somewhere else.'

It certainly does: the riff can be incredibly confusing to play initially, and is just as hard to count, requiring the use of several irregular time signatures when written out.

The band's enthusiasm for unusual timings continued on the song 'Four Sticks', a piece named for drummer John Bonham's performance, in which he held a pair of drumsticks in each hand. With sections alternating between bars of 5/8 and 6/8, the song is anchored by Jones' supple bass work. In addition to his usual low-end role, John also played a VCS3 synth on the track.

Elsewhere on the album, Jones lays down a simple eighth note-based groove for the blues rocker 'Rock And



Roll'. This track – reportedly written in less than 20 minutes – quickly became a fan favourite, with the band playing it as their opening number from 1972 to 1975. It was also played as the encore during the band's 2007 reunion show at the O2 Arena.

As was often the case with Led Zeppelin's studio recordings, Jones' involvement on the album was by no means limited to his bass duties. Aside from co-writing four of the album's eight songs, he played mandolin on 'Going To California', electric piano on 'Misty Mountain Hop' and bass recorders during the Intro section of 'Stairway To Heaven'. Not bad for a bass player.

Looking for a quick way into *Led Zep IV*? Commit these easy soundbites to memory and you'll be a hit at any Zep-themed dinner party.

Black Dog

An instant classic thanks to its remarkable, virtually uncopiable stop-start guitar riff and Plant's helium wails, 'Black Dog' showed Led Zep's competitors how to execute a perfect rock tune with a balance of riffage and melody.

Rock And Roll

Equalling 'Black Dog' in excellence, despite all the odds, 'Rock And Roll' is a knowing homage to the greats of the 1950s – the plinky cabaret piano, the 12-bar structure – loaded with enduring motifs such as Plant's wail of "Lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely time" and Bonzo's unforgettably off-time intro.

The Battle Of Evermore

Any song which begins "Queen of Light took her bow, And then she turned to go/

The Prince of Peace embraced the gloom, And walked the night alone," had better be capable of embracing big themes and big sounds – but the epic 'Battle Of Evermore' pulls it off admirably.

Stairway To Heaven

From the acoustic intro to the woodwind to the riffage to the Tolkien-inspired lyrics to the frankly sizzling guitar solo, this is as close to perfection as rock music got in the Seventies and beyond. Only 'Bo Rhap' equals it for impact.

Misty Mountain Hop

"I didn't notice but it had got very dark and I was really, really out of my mind" sings Plant informatively in this tale of drug busts and escape to a mythical land. There's much more social observation in this song than the fantasy title would indicate.

Four Sticks

Keeping things ambiguous, Zep embark on a song which refers, according to urban legend, to the 'Zoso' runes on the LP cover – or could alternatively be just a song about escape and denial. Choose your path.

Going To California

"Someone told me there's a girl out there with love in her eyes and flowers in her hair" intones Plant in this homily to a far-off location where love runs free. The band add their usual expansive backing.

When The Levee Breaks

One of the last Zeppelin songs derived from traditional blues themes, 'When The Levee Breaks' sees the band embark on themes of sadness, heartbreak and universal destruction. An appropriate way to end this epic album.



Four symbols,
three necks

said, 'No, no single.' And guess what, we sold 800,000 albums instead."

John Paul Jones, one of the few bass players to grace our cover more than three times over the years, was arguably the most potent ingredient in the Zep recipe. When he joined the band in 1968 at the age of 22, he had been a choirmaster, a member of his father's dance band and the bassist on chart-topping hits with Jet Harris and Tony Meehan. As an arranger or musical director, he had already worked with the Rolling Stones, Burt Bacharach, Nico and The Walker Brothers. What were you doing at the age of 22?

The gear that JPJ used on *IV* was functional, but his approach innovative. His background lay in experimentation, as he told writer Mike Barnes: "I was a pop consumer when I was really young, but I soon got onto jazz, R&B and soul music. I had my first analogue synthesizer, a VCS3, in 1970, which I used to use on Zeppelin tracks. I was always interested in that stuff. When I was a kid, I was intrigued by sound possibilities, and I was always making instruments. My father was a trumpet player as well as a pianist and arranger, so I could pinch his mouthpieces and put big

lengths of rubber tubing and lengths of curtain rail and make strange noises. I was just experimenting all the time."

Much has been written about the ambition of the Led Zeppelin foursome – the epic songwriting, the dabbling with the occult, the mud-shark incident – and the myth has grown in the telling. The simple facts speak for themselves: Jones completed no fewer

than nine albums and 26 tours with Zep before it all came crashing down in 1980 with the premature death of Bonham, who asphyxiated on his own vomit after an all-day drinking session on 25

September. Plant, Page and Jones issued a statement confirming that they felt unable to continue without their late drummer, and the band essentially called it a day, although in one way or another the brand has been active ever since.

JPJ has been fairly prolific over the years, working with Brian Eno and Peter Gabriel, producing the Butthole Surfers, and writing and arranging movie soundtracks. He has written plenty of solo and collaborative music with the early music vocal group Red Byrd, Diamanda Galas and others, and has been seen in outfits such as Supersilent and Them

Crooked Vultures, the latter the closest he has come to the blustering power of Zeppelin.

So that's the back story, so to speak. Enjoy this dive into the bass goodness within *Led Zeppelin IV*, as well as a look at the gear John Paul Jones used to make it happen. Bassists, and albums, of this calibre don't come along every day – so let's raise a glass to Jones and his finest hour... ■

By 22, Jones had already been a choirmaster, appeared on chart-topping hits and worked with the Rolling Stones



Reaping the rewards

Gearography

Ever wondered which basses, amps and effects JPJ has used over the years? Dan Veall digs out a prime selection

Basses

1959–60 JPJ's very first bass was a Dallas Tuxedo, a single-cut instrument made in England by Dallas Arbiter around 1959. The UK's first mass-produced instrument was used by greats such as Mo Foster and Bill Wyman. Jones still owns his, and has said that the whole bass is made from a single piece of wood. His second bass was a Burns Artist in cherry red, made between 1959 and 1962.

1962 JPJ bought a sunburst Fender Jazz bass new in 1962 for \$250: it's often cited as the instrument for which he is best known. He still owns and uses it today, though it was retired from touring in 1976.

1973 Jones used a 1967 Fender Bass V tuned E to C on tour. Despite its 15-fret range, JPJ wrote and performed songs such as 'Over The Hills And Far Away', 'Heartbreaker' and 'The Song Remains The Same' on it.

1975 A Becvar Series I Triple Omega: Jones bought this instrument built by ex-Alembic employee Bruce Becvar. The instrument is in part a nod to the Alembic outline. In 1999 JPJ mentioned that the Becvar's eight-string tone lent itself perfectly to 'Achilles' Last Stand'.



Circa 1976 Jones set down his trusty Jazz as it needed some serious TLC after years on the road. An Alembic Series II model became a firm Jones favourite, as an Alembic endorser, in the latter years of Led Zep. It was built by Rick Turner sometime after the recording of the 1976 album, *Presence*.

Mid-Seventies A 1968 Hagström H8, which is a Swedish twin-pickup bass, was used by JPJ between 1970 and 1976. It featured a double-cutaway birch or mahogany body and a short 30" scale. You can hear this eight-string bass on 'Celebration Day'.

2010 The Manson John Paul Jones Signature E-Bass was made in the early Nineties, which Manson then released as a signature instrument. The spec runs: "With its maple through-neck construction, figured maple top, Aged Cherry Sunburst high gloss lacquer, ebony fingerboard, EMG pickups and active circuit, Hipshot D-Tuner, Schaller machine heads and Badass bridge, the specs reflect exactly the current upgraded hardware of the bass John is currently using on tour with Them Crooked Vultures." In 2021 Manson updated the signature model to feature a neck-through graphite-reinforced maple neck, a mahogany body, Aguilar DCB pickups and an OBP-2 preamp. Jones has used a wide range of other Manson basses, as well as playing their eight-string mandolins.

Amplification

1969 Jones' bass rig in the early days, and possibly the tone that Zep fans want to emulate the most, is the fat, heavy sound of the Acoustic 360 head and matching 361 cabinet. Jones had three – two used on stage, and a spare. The large folded horn cabinet with an 18" speaker also delivered the goods for John McVie of Fleetwood Mac and Jaco Pastorius. Interestingly, the power amplifier for this stack is in the cabinet – not in the actual head, where you'd usually find it.

Mid-Nineties onwards JPJ used SWR SM900 heads and SWR Goliath cabinets, with a mixture of 4x10" and 1x18" speaker configurations.

JPJ bought a Fender Jazz bass new in 1962 for \$250: it's often cited as the instrument for which he is best known

In recent years, JPJ has been a TC Electronic endorser, using their RH750 with RS210 and RS212 cabs. The man undoubtedly

knows his amplification, given that throughout his career he's used Gallien-Kruger, Fender, Trace Elliot, Univox, and Vox. Some of these amplifiers were used with keyboards.

Also...

An Electro-Harmonix Big Muff, a Boss SD-1 and a Maestro PS-1A phaser have all found their way in to JPJ's sonic arsenal in his career. He has a very long history with Rotosound strings, using their Swing Bass and Piano Bass products. More recently he has been using Elixir strings, specifically the Nickel Plates Steel and Nanoweb lines.

SMOOTH OPERATOR

Carlos Santana's long-time bassist **Benny Rietveld** reflects on a career at the front line of expression

Interview: Joel McIver Photography: Getty

The Holland-born, Hawaii-raised bassist Benny Rietveld is no stranger to demanding gigs, having played with the late Miles Davis towards the end of the late jazz icon's career, and holding down the low end with the mighty Carlos Santana since 1990. His most-heard bass part is undoubtedly the line anchoring the inescapable 'Smooth' in 1999, but he has also delivered miraculous contributions to recordings by Herbie Hancock, Eagle Eye Cherry, John Lee Hooker, Sheila E and as a solo artist. Let's find out what he's up to...

What's happening, Benny?

We just came back from a week of doing some recording with the Santana band – just personal projects that Carlos wanted to do. That's what all the rock stars are doing now: they can't play live, so they want to record. I've been writing a lot, and doing bass lessons, but bass is a hard one to do remotely. It's a rhythm section instrument, and I can't even clap along with the students to give them a sense of where to go in time. I don't do a lot of those lessons, because they don't really work.

Do you still need to practise to keep your chops up?

Oh, I think everyone can benefit from practising. I know I can. If I wanted to try to

do some of the things that Victor Wooten does, it would probably take me the rest of my life. It's the whole body stamina thing – like, this is more tiring than I remembered. There's a little bit of work on chops, but it's mostly about the stamina and the physicality of it.

After decades of playing bass, have you managed to escape injury?

My basses aren't that heavy, and I stretch a lot. Relaxed playing helps, too: I tell my students only to put their energy where it's supposed to go. Everything else should be relaxed. So far, knock on wood, I haven't really had very many problems.

What was your journey into bass?

It was the typical one: I was shunted off onto bass from another instrument! I was a drummer at first in the little band that I had, and our bass player quit, and we didn't know any other musicians except another drummer. So I said, 'Okay, we'll hire that guy, and I'll be on bass'.

What was your first bass guitar?

It was a Hagstrom with a plastic front that looked like a speaker grille. I liked it. The first bass-line that I played, although it was on a guitar that I had, was the bass-line from 'The Ballad Of John And Yoko' by the Beatles. The first actual line that I played on bass, or tried to play on bass, was 'Lovely Rita', which

is also by the Beatles. When I played it, I only used two strings, and my cousin saw my left hand jumping up and down and said, 'You can use more than two strings, Benny'.

Which bassists influenced you?

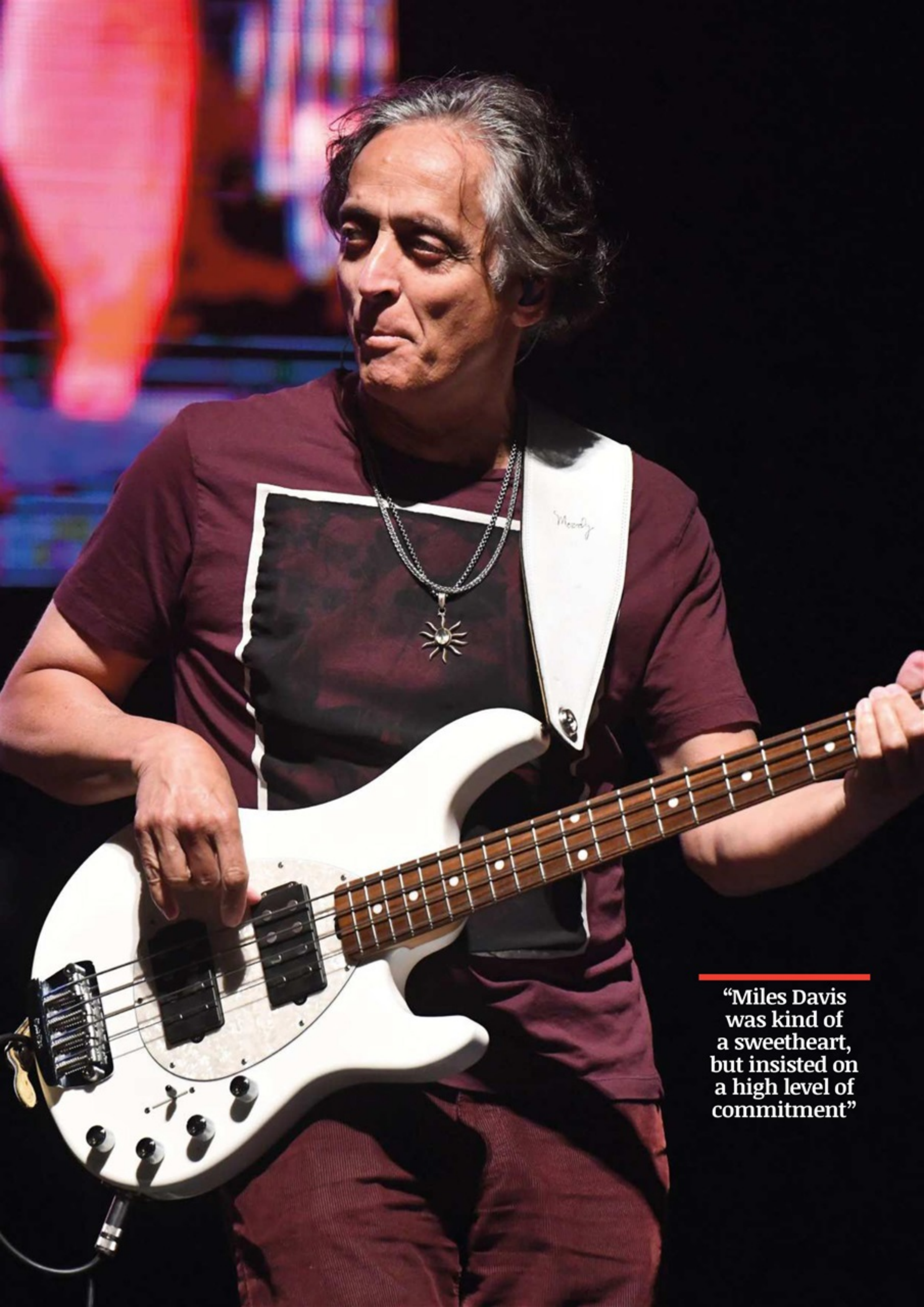
The first bass guy I gravitated towards was Chris Squire. I heard Yes and I was like, 'What?' I'll still use little parts of [his solo] 'The Fish' live in my bass solo. I even wanted a Maestro Bass Brassmaster [Squire's fuzz/octave pedal] when I was a kid, but it was so expensive. I had a Big Muff instead.

When would you say you were up and running as a bass player?

Maybe by the age of 14, playing simple music – dance music and all that. I was able to play a bunch of gigs, and I thought I was pretty good, but I wasn't in New York or any place where I could really learn seriously about the bass. I don't think I was really aware of how to create a foundation until my twenties – and when I did know that, it was a rude awakening, because I found out how little I knew.

Are you thinking of a specific gig that you played when you say that?

Yes. It was via the Crusaders, actually, of all bands. They hired me to play three shows that, inexplicably, they couldn't find a bass player for. They had two bassists at the time



**“Miles Davis
was kind of
a sweetheart,
but insisted on
a high level of
commitment”**



– Alphonso Johnson and Abraham Laboriel – but neither was available for these three shows. They flew me to LA to audition, but as far as playing an actual groove, apparently I didn’t have a clue. They let me know that pretty early on, in no uncertain terms, ha ha! But it was great. They still had me play. I guess they decided they’d suffer through it. It was a rough experience, but really good.

Tell us about playing bass with Miles Davis.

Well, we would develop the arrangements, and sometimes he gave me a few specific instructions – like, ‘Put a little lift in this section’, with maybe just a pedal or something like that – but mostly they were set. I would develop a bass-line over that, based on what had come before. There was a lot of freedom, and there was some great jamming, but with bass, especially in that kind of music, it’s a heavy responsibility. I always use the Spider-Man line with my students – ‘With great power comes great responsibility’. If we start changing things because we feel like it, then things don’t feel right. You don’t want to cause the destruction of the universe.

Indeed. What kind of man was Miles?

He was fine. He was completely devoted to the music and the experience. He insisted on being very present the whole time you were on stage,

and being 100 percent committed to the music. I’m pretty sure that was the way he was, his whole career. It was intimidating, because if you drifted just a little bit mentally, then he would feel it, and those laser eyes would suddenly go on you! But he was fun. He made plenty of jokes. He’d tell me, on the side, when somebody was doing a solo or whatever, ‘Guys always play louder when girls are on their side of the stage’, and I would laugh. So he was actually kind of a sweetheart, but very guarded, and insisting on a high level of commitment.

How did you come to meet Carlos Santana?

That was when I was still playing with Miles. Carlos had seen me play because he was a big Miles Davis fan, and he said, ‘Hey man, great to meet you. I might be looking for a bass player. Are you interested?’ I was planning to leave Miles anyway, perhaps not consciously, but I knew I was reaching a point where I should jump off. So later on I called Carlos and I auditioned with his band. I grew up playing all his songs, and they seemed to think I was good, so I was hired.

How did Miles take the news that you were leaving?

It was at the end of a tour, and we were all going our separate ways. I told him, ‘Hey,

I’m leaving’ and he thought I meant I was leaving for the airport. He said, ‘Oh, okay. See you’ and I had to say, ‘Oh no, actually I’m leaving the band’. It was really awkward, and I think he was a little bit puzzled, but in terms of guys like me coming through the band, I think he wanted to see people develop and go, so it was all right. That’s the impression that I got.

Tell me about your bass gear.

I use a QSC 1000-watt power amp. Brian Montgomery, who is our monitor guy, makes cabinets under the name Bad Monkey, and I use those on the road. They’re beautiful, and they really take a lot of SPL. I could probably get away with less power now, because I remember the days when the band was super-loud. When I joined, Carlos had tons of cabinets. The percussionist and the drummer were playing on 11, so I really needed an insane amount of power not to clip all the time. For basses, my mainstays are my Music Man Sterling Deluxes and my NS Design CR series electric upright. At home I’ve been playing an MTD Andrew Gouché model, which is also a beautiful bass. The NS has a really huge, full sound. The house guys are like, ‘Can you please play it all night?’ ■

Info: <https://linktr.ee/bennyrietveld>

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NEW ROSE

With his new album, *Two Roses*, Israeli upright bassist **Avishai Cohen** achieves a career high. We meet the master

Born in Israel in 1970 and living in St. Louis, Missouri as a teenager, Avishai Cohen was introduced to the world of bass by the music of Jaco Pastorius. After studying at the Music and Arts Academy in Jerusalem, he moved to New York City in 1992, where he continued to study and performed with the Panamanian pianist Danilo Perez. By '97 he was a member of Chick Corea's New Trio and a co-founder of Corea's ensemble, Origin, where he remained for six years.

A series of acclaimed solo albums followed, with this magazine numbering him in a poll of 100 Most Influential Bass Players of the 20th Century, and he has worked in collaboration with over 25 orchestras. In 2020, Cohen planned to play 50 concerts in 50 cities to celebrate his 50th year, although the pandemic put paid to most of those dates. Instead, he recorded new music with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, for an album, *Two Roses*, out now.

What are you up to, Avishai?

I'm continually writing new music, including scores for several film and TV projects, while I await the return of some sort of normality in the world.

Tell us about *Two Roses*.

I have always felt a sense of classical music and jazz when I write and arrange. My mother and father listened to many old Israeli folk songs and Ladino songs, but also classical pieces, so these sounds have always been around me. It comes out in my music quite naturally. This was the approach on my 2014 album *Almah*, my first steps, and over the years I developed my live program, *An Evening With Avishai Cohen*. As this new repertoire grew I felt there was a need to record this music with a great orchestra.

How did you go about creating the music?

The compositions and arrangements came over many years. For example, I rearranged a song 'Hayo Hayta', which worked very well for strings and oboe on my *Almah* album. Some of the older tunes and folk songs were introduced to me when I was younger and made an impression on me. One of the driving forces and ultimate tipping points of the initial assignment was to get deeper and deeper into it, and within a few years this incredible body of work was ready to be performed and recorded. Along the way I engaged several wonderful arrangers and orchestrators connected to the classical world, working closely with them day by day, such as Robert Sadin, Jonathan Keren and Per Ekdahl, themselves great musicians in their own right.

What inspired the new compositions?

Two Roses is a reflection of where I am now, as well as where I have

been. I've been touring and performing this project live with many orchestra partners for several years. It was time to document the music and introduce new compositions and

new arrangements to the mix. *Two Roses* is a metaphor for two natural and similar elements to come together as one. As the lyrics of the title song say, there is one red rose and one white, equal to each other but different. The album is a collaboration which creates and produces a whole world of sound, and tells a story from the first to the last.

Run us through the gear you used to record.

My performance bass for many years, and on this recording, has been a three-quarter-sized German Greshner upright, built around 1910, mounted with Thomastik Spirocore strings.

The mic setup is a mix of what we use for my live performances, plus an additional microphone for the recording. It's a combination of a David Gage Realist pickup, an Ischell contact mic, a Schoeps mic mounted on the bridge and a Microtech Gefell mic.

Who are your influences on bass?

At the age of nine I started playing the piano. I was inspired by Jaco Pastorius when I first heard his music, and I picked up the electric bass at age 14. I was always going to move to the acoustic upright, but I came to it late, at around the age of 20. I guess that was when I found the confidence to take on the challenge and embrace this unique instrument. The bass has been my closest musical partner ever since. I've explored and developed my own way of playing and performing upfront with it over the years. I've also been an admirer of classical composers since day one.

"As this new repertoire grew, I felt there was a need to record this music with a great orchestra"

Are you pleased with the new album?

I am very happy with the tracks and the recording for many reasons. It's been the most amazing project

and recording to date for me – a project of a lifetime. It truly reflects where I am and where I've been with my work and my writings over many years. I'm also specifically very happy with the arrangements: integrating my trio with orchestra has been a dynamic and soulful process for me, alongside trusting so many people with the final recording. It's a project that has been developing in my mind for a long time – and I'm proud and happy with the outcome. It's a project I will have with me for the rest of my life. ■

Info: <https://avishaicohen.com>.

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INSPIRED NOTES

Bassist and songwriter **Lena Morris** on the catalyst that sent her into the low frequencies

I remember exactly where, when and how my journey into bass started. I was 14, on a holiday in France, travelling by car with my family and listening to music. 'Oh Darling' by the Beatles came up and I started to feel bizarre, with butterflies in my belly and tears rushing up to my eyes. It was hyper-intense.

Although I loved John Lennon and George Harrison too, I was so touched by Paul McCartney's work that when I got back home after the summer I immediately decided to buy a bass. It clicked immediately. I also picked the bass because my brother and father are both guitarists, so I thought it would be cool to go for something different. Even though I also play the piano and the guitar, I've never dropped the bass since then, and I've always defined myself as a bassist.

My first bass was a black Hofner, again because of McCartney. As a kid I wanted to do everything like him. He might not be the greatest bass virtuoso, but he's the most incredible combination of bassist, songwriter, singer and showman ever. But I do have other bass heroes. Esperanza Spalding is insanely good. I love her groove, and what a voice she has, too.

The Hofner violin bass is a great first instrument, with its thin neck and small fretboard. They make it perfect for a beginner, especially for the tiny-handed teen that I was. Since then I've played many basses, from LTDs to Fenders and Epiphones – all basses borrowed at studios or gigs. I've only ever owned two basses of my own: that Hofner and a Fender Precision, which I bought because I needed an instrument with more kick and more versatility in its sound than the Hofner. She does all I need, from groovy bass-lines to slapping, at rehearsals, recordings or gigs. I'm not a gear freak: my Fender is just right for me, so why would I even think of getting another one?

The amp I use in my home studio is a little Hartke, so I don't drive my neighbours crazy. I'm sponsored by Rookie Music Pedals, who have great stuff for young musicians. I love using their Abyss Bass EQ to get the fine balance I look for. It really does a great job, and I also use their guitar pedals, just for fun and experiments. Their Gush phaser sounds awesome with my bass.

I never took proper bass lessons, so I did a lot of figuring out by myself. I started playing in several bands just a couple of weeks after I picked up the bass. During my school years, I played loads of gigs in bars and festivals, with many different songs and styles, with different drummers of all ages and backgrounds. That really left me no choice but to adapt and learn. It also helped me to figure out how to improvise, create interesting lines, sense when to play soft, or when to fill up the place with grooves.

My advice would be to just take a bass and play anywhere, any time, on any music, with anyone. It's also useful to practise another instrument, especially a polyphonic one like the piano or the guitar. That will enhance your understanding of harmonies, and your bass skills will naturally improve. Take care of your

"Take care of your hands – forget about basketball or shark feeding!"

hands, too – forget about basketball, shark feeding and so on.

As long as Covid is around, you can listen to my music on every major streaming platform. I've just released my sixth single, 'Little Bird', and my first EP is out now. The minute things are back to normal, I'll resume playing live. I want to play everywhere – London, Paris, Hong Kong, you name it... I often think about the first song of my first return gig, and it gives me goose bumps. I feel like I've been on a salad diet forever, and the perspective of any gig looks like a big juicy burger. ■

Info: www.facebook.com/LenaMorrisMusic





PUTT IT THERE

We meet the veteran jazz bassist – and occasional James Bond adversary – **Putter Smith.**

Interview: Joel McIver **Photography:** Getty

Patrick ‘Putter’ Smith, now 80, has a resume as a jazz bassist going back as far as the Fifties, and has amassed a huge list of recording and performance credits alongside Thelonious Monk, Art Blakey, Duke Ellington, Billy Eckstine, Lee Konitz, Art Farmer, Erroll Garner, Gerry Mulligan, Art Pepper, Bob Brookmeyer, Diane Schuur, Ray Charles, Burt Bacharach, Sonny and Cher, the Beach Boys, the Righteous Brothers, and many more. In his later career, he also became a respected teacher of upright bass at the Musicians’ Institute in Los Angeles. Smith is also known outside the music world for his acting role in the 1971 James Bond film *Diamonds Are Forever*, in which he played an affable hitman, Mr. Kidd – but acting was not for him, as we discover in this rare interview.

Are you still teaching bass, Mr Smith?

Yes, although teaching has changed very much over the last 45 years. When you originally begin studying the instrument, they usually start you on the low notes and the scales. With my current student, I’m starting him in the middle and at the top right away. It’s working very well, and he’s burning it up at 14 years old. But it’s no harder to learn to play up high. In fact, it’s easier to play up high because you have more room with your hands. Anyway, teaching is teaching the student rather than the method, and I’m enjoying it.

Do you also play bass guitar?

When it first came out in the early Sixties, Don Randi, a contractor for [the late producer] Phil Spector told me, ‘Buy an electric bass and I’ll get you some gigs’. I had a young family – a two-year-old and a one-year-old – and at that point all you’re concerned about is making your family safe, so I bought one and he started getting me gigs right away.

Were you impressed by the instrument?

Not at first. All of us musicians were like, ‘God, this is really crap, isn’t it?’ But now people come up to me and say, ‘That’s classic. You’re on that record!’ Now, to me Charlie Parker is classic, and Bill Evans is classic.

But you played with plenty of great names – Thelonius Monk, for example.

That’s true. I did studio work on electric bass for about five years, and then one day I was on a date with an arranger, a rock kind of guy. I started off by playing a James Jamerson kind of bass-line – you know, an interesting line – and the guy on the booth says, ‘Can you simplify the bass?’ I said ‘Okay’ and played something simpler. But then he said, ‘Can you simplify it more?’ so I played a very simple, one-note line. He goes, ‘Yeah, that’s it!’ and at that moment, I realised that this was not why I became a musician. I backed away from studio work after that.

Sounds wise.

Yes. There’s a lot of hustle involved in being a studio musician, so I stopped doing it. All that dried up in a matter of months, and then I had 10 years of playing with great people, but hardly working, so I got the gig teaching at the Musicians’ Institute when it was still a jazz school. I was making like \$30,000 a year, which was a lower middle-class salary at that time. God, I was thrilled to be making money after 10 years of \$30 gigs!

You still toured, though.

Yes, I got called to do a tour with Bob Brookmeyer, who’s one of my heroes from when I was 14 or 15. That was thrilling. The last gig on the tour was at a place in LA, and all of the musicians were there. They saw me and were like, ‘Oh, Putter can play’, and from then on, my career was fine.

Do you consider yourself retired now?

No, I’m not retired. I’m playing a couple times a week and still practising, although I’m thinking about retiring, because it’s a lot of work to maintain a relatively high-end technique. You know, my wife VR Smith died last year. We were married for 55 years, and it really hit me when she passed away that, a lot of what I was doing on the bass, I was doing to impress her.

I interviewed Ron Carter a while back.

You’re a spring chicken compared to him, and he does situps at 5am every day, so if he’s not quitting any time soon, there’s no reason for any of us to quit.

Okay, I’ll take it under advisement. Ron is one of my favourite bass players – maybe my absolute favourite. I was at a bass convention six or seven years ago and he was there. I got to see him play with his group and we had a conversation. That was really nice, you know, really beautiful. I said to him, ‘You’re my hero’, which was true. And he pointed to a bright red car and said, ‘You see that? That’s what colour I am now’.

How did you get to play with Monk?

The very first record I ever played at a record store was ‘Blue Monk’. My brother Carson Smith was a famous bass player, so I would read *Downbeat* magazine when I was 11, cover to cover. Just the name Thelonius was fascinating, so I wanted to hear ‘Blue Monk’ – and I was touched by the sadness in it. It was a kind of mournfulness. So I really worked hard on Monk’s music. When the gig came up, people called around, trying to find somebody that knew his music, and two different sources named me. That’s how I got the gig.

What kind of bandleader was he?

There was no rehearsal, so I met him the night of the first gig. I went down into the dressing room, and he was smoking and spinning around, so I just stood against the wall, because I didn’t want to get in the way. He stopped spinning, looked at me and said ‘Are you the new bass player?’ I said yes, and he said, ‘White is right’. I knew about his sense of humour, so it was cool. There was an article I had read, where they were asking him about black power. He said, ‘I get to hating [white people] pretty good, and then some nice white guy comes along and ruins it for me’. That was Thelonious, you know. He was very funny.

When you were starting out, which bass players did you admire?

My brother Carson was my hero. I listened to all his records over and over – Chet Baker and Gerry Mulligan. He was 10 years older than me, and he had left a little half-size bass

behind in our home, so I used to just fool around with it and try to play it. I didn't know anything about notes or anything like that. I just tried to make it sound right. I'd play along with the records, and that's how I knew how it was supposed to sound.

Do you remember your first gig?

Yes. I was at school, and I was 13. Somebody came up and said, 'Are you Carson's brother? Do you play bass?' I said 'Yeah', although I'd never played with anybody, and I started playing at community centres, earning three dollars for a three-hour set. I didn't even have a cover for the bass, and it was missing a string. I have an idea it was the A string, but I'm not sure. I did the best I could, and next thing you know, I'm working all the time, even though I still didn't know anything. At 15 I got real serious about it, and at 16 I realised that my life's work was to be a jazz bass player.

Which bass players influenced you?

I listened to Paul Chambers a lot, and also to a guy who's hardly ever mentioned but who is one of my biggest influences – Doug Watkins. He's on *Saxophone Colossus* [1956] by Sonny Rollins, which I played so often, I actually turned two albums grey. The black vinyl literally turned grey, because I played them so much.

What recording are you most proud of?

Well, let's see. The most recent recording, *Once I Loved*, which I made with my wife, is really good. I have three or four solos on it that I enjoy. There's one particular solo which makes me smile every time I hear it.

Tell me about your preferred double bass.

I had a bass that I bought in London when I was over there doing the Bond film. I played that for years, and it's a wonderful bass, but it was very large, and it began hurting me as I got older and began to shrink, except in the belly. I did everything I could to stop it, but in the end I picked up a three-quarter-sized bass. It's really easy to get around and it's light.

Does it have the tones that you need?

Well, so much of the tone these days is based on the amplifier and the pickups. I have an Acoustic Image amp and two pickups, an Underwood and a Highlander, which is really made for acoustic guitar. I'm probably the only person that has one for bass, but I just love the sound of it. The Underwood has



Mr Smith plays Bond villain Mr Kidd (right)

a nice little punch to it, and the Highlander has a real nice, warm tone.

How are you holding up after such a long bass-playing career?

I had a period where I couldn't play the bass for about five weeks, because I had what's called a frozen shoulder. It was the left one, so I couldn't lift my arm. That was nine months ago, and I've been practising for that amount of time, but I'm very limited in how long I can do it. My friend Ed Czach, a piano player, has been coming over a couple times a week and we play for an hour.

How do you keep your hands in shape?

Practice. I have a whole warm-up routine that I do. It takes about 20 minutes and gets my hands moving correctly, and then I begin working on whatever is my current project, which right now is the first piece in the Bach 4th cello suite. I'm playing it up an octave, so the very first note is E flat on the E string and the next note is two octaves above that.

Ouch.

Yeah. I went to a cello player and asked her, 'How do you do that?' Because when they

play that part, they nail it – they hit the two octaves above perfectly, you know. She showed me how they do it, and I worked on it for a month or so. I had a method worked out, but hers is more effective. I've just gotten back into playing that now in the last month, after my frozen shoulder.

I have to ask you about *Diamonds Are Forever*. Are you proud of your performance?

Oh, I don't think about it, really. A couple of times a year I get a royalty check for 150 or 200 bucks, and then recently it showed up on [streaming channel] Hulu.

Did you get recognised in public after it came out?

Yeah. A lot. At first it was weird, because I've always liked to be at the side observing, you know. It's great to be a bass player, because you're at the centre of everything, but you're still an observer. Suddenly I was a star for a minute, and it was horrible, because I couldn't go anywhere. The only question people ever asked me was 'What's Sean Connery like?'

What was he like?

Sean Connery was everything you'd want him to be. One of the coolest people I ever met. And he played drums, too.

I didn't know that.

Yeah, I didn't either. He brought a drum set up on the stage. I didn't have my bass with me at the time, unfortunately. He was a really great guy.

Were you always going to be a musician rather than an actor?

Right. I considered music a calling. I never doubted it, all my life. But for a hot minute, I had an agent, and I went out and did a couple of interviews for movies. It was a waste of time, because I didn't feel about it the way that I do about music, where I'll take all the hits in the world. I kind of struggle as an actor. It's not my scene. I mean, you see great actors like Meryl Streep, or that guy Bandersnatch. Is that his name?

Benedict Cumberbatch?

Yeah, him. Great actors. So, during that period of time I went on these interviews, but I really and truly did not care. I'd be on interviews with real good actors, and I'd think 'What am I doing here?' You can't fake not caring. Music was, and is, my calling. ■

VR Smith's album *Once I Loved...* is available now on Skipper Records, <https://sprecs.com>

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LEVEL HEADED

Behold an exclusive extract from *Level 42 – On Track* by author and bassist **Matt Phillips**. Here, Matt recalls the making of ‘Lessons In Love’, the song that took **Mark King** and his band into the stratosphere, all the way back in 1986...

One of the most successful British bands of the Eighties, Level 42 are also arguably the ultimate fusion unit, streamlining their energetic early jazz-funk sound into slick, effortlessly soulful pop music. Encompassing 11 studio albums, including 20 UK top 40 hits and two US top 20 singles, their catalogue in many ways defines the decade, but also reflects their musical virtuosity and vibrant eclecticism, peppering tracks with influences from Herbie Hancock, Return To Forever, Jimi Hendrix and the Mahavishnu Orchestra.

1985’s *World Machine* ‘plan’ had worked superbly. The album had been a solid success and the follow-up was set to push Level 42 into the major leagues – but writing hits was a lot easier said than done. Mark King opened up to David Hepworth in *Q* magazine about some of the pressures involved: “There was a time when I’ve had to sink a lot of drink to be able to drop off to sleep on a Monday night. And then on Tuesday morning you get a call at 10 o’clock to say that the single’s stayed where it was. And that’s it. The world hates us...”

Mark also remembers that, to a certain extent, the *Running In The Family* album from 1987 was the result of the record company’s feeling that the band had to strike while the iron was hot. ‘Lessons In Love’, ‘Children Say’ and ‘Freedom Someday’ were the first three tracks recorded in response to Polydor’s plea for new material: “We were out in the States, and I remember the manager phoning me and



“There was a time when I’ve had to sink a lot of drink to sleep on a Monday night. Then on Tuesday morning you get a call to say that the single’s stayed where it was. The world hates us...”





saying Polydor needed something to run with. They'd released 'Something About You' and 'Leaving Me Now' at home, and didn't see anything thing else on the album that would be a success as a follow-up single. They were asking if we could get in the studio – pronto – and come up with something, so we had this really small window of time."

Recorded during March 1986 at Maison Rouge Studios in London, 'Lessons In Love' is the Level 42 song probably most associated with the band. Mark came up with the verse chords, melody and chugging bass: the verse melody came from the coda to the live version of 'A Physical Presence', played regularly in 1985 and 1986. He put together a rough demo around the end of 1985, available to hear on YouTube and featuring a completely different chorus to the final one.

Everyone loved the verse, but the chorus and middle eight were problem areas. Keyboard player Wally Badarou was invaluable here: he simplified things by focusing on the verse chords, shuffling them around and

adding a few more, suggesting a new vocal line to Mark. They ended up with what they referred to as the 'Sgt Pepper chorus', thanks to its everything-but-the-kitchen-sink pandemonium.

Mark filled in the blanks to *Making Music* magazine: "I played it to Wally, Mike [Lindup, keyboards] and Boon [Gould, drums] and they said 'This is really great', and then Mike came up with that great middle eight: 'Lessons in love/When will you ever learn', and Boon had this killer lyric and it was all really, really fast. And you think: we're on a bit of a roll here..." Wally also added some lovely washes of sampled vocal 'stacks' underneath Mike's vocals in the middle eight, first heard at 2:37.

The final missing piece in the puzzle was the famous intro – another Wally masterstroke. It was taken from the four-bar tag at the end of the second chorus, leading into the middle eight ('Lost without love'). He copied eight tracks from that section with a Synclavier and inserted them at the beginning of the song – the intro

consists of sampled voices and bells, plus Boon's live guitar.

Mark explained his bass approach and equipment on 'Lessons In Love' to *Making Music*: "I'm using two basses. There's a thumb line that goes all the way through, where I use my red Status. For the fingerstyle line, I use my good old Jaydee – not the original, but number two, which has a great round bottom end. 'Organic', as Wally calls it. You can hear the wood in the thing, whereas the graphite in the Status suits the thumb line. It has a sort of cool, calm aggression." But it wasn't easy playing the bass-line through the whole live: "My right arm is ready to fall off at the end of that one!"

Polydor MD Richard Ogden first heard the 'Lessons In Love' demo in February 1986 and was convinced it was a smash hit. He was right, as it reached number three in the UK in June. However, manager Paul Crockford initially held off releasing it in Europe, demanding that Polydor's marketing arm first develop a sure-fire strategy. The wait paid off: it went to number one in Germany, Switzerland and Denmark, number two in Holland and number three in Sweden, and ended up as Europe's second-biggest-selling single of 1986. It also peaked at number 12 on the US Billboard charts during August 1987, a full 18 months after it was recorded." ■

Level 42 – On Track is out now.

Info: www.sonicbondpublishing.co.uk

***Lessons In Love* ended up as Europe's second-biggest-selling single of 1986. It also peaked at number 12 on the US Billboard charts, 18 months after it was recorded**

ALL'S FAIR

You know **Richard Fairbrass** as the frontman of Right Said Fred, who first came to fame with 1991's 'I'm Too Sexy' single – but we dig deeper into his history as a bass player with, among others, David Bowie

Interview: Joel McIver **Photography:** Getty, Right Said Fred

Together with his younger brother Fred, Richard Fairbrass was a fixture of music TV throughout the Nineties and beyond, thanks to the massive success of his band Right Said Fred's singles 'I'm Too Sexy' and 'Deeply Dippy'. As he recalls, the duo were often dismissed as 'gym queens' by critics – but the truth is that the brothers had earned their stripes as musicians in the Eighties, touring in support of Joy Division and Suicide and working with Mick Jagger and Bob Dylan. He also appeared as a bass player in three David Bowie videos: 'Blue Jean' (1984) – also released as a Grammy-winning 20-minute film called *Jazzin' For Blue Jean* – 'Loving The Alien' (1985) and 'Underground' (1986). Right Said Fred continue to record and tour to this day, although no-one has ever asked Fairbrass about his bass playing... until now.

How did you become a bass player?

You know how some people buy wine just because they like the label? Initially I wanted to be an actor, not a musician, so I only bought the bass because I just liked the look of it. I also thought, 'It's only got four strings – it's got to be easier than guitar'.

What was your first bass?

I bought a really cheap second-hand bass off some guy when I was in my mid to late teens, I suppose. I didn't have an amp – I didn't think you needed one. I played everything on the D and G strings above the 10th fret, because you can't hear anything below that. Eventually Fred and I bought a head for the bass, but it still didn't make any noise. We went back and complained, and the guy explained that we needed a cabinet too!

Which bass players impressed you back then?

When I was a kid I discovered a track on



the first McCartney album called 'Mamma Miss America'. He plays an octave line, and that was a real awakening for me as to how the bass can colour a track if you want it to. You can either sit in the back and play the groove, or you can change the very nature of where the emphasis is.

Most of us haven't heard you play bass.

Describe your style for us.

I'm left-handed but I play right-handed, which means that my fretting hand is strong, but my picking hand is not very effective. It's partly because I don't have a very strong picking hand that I play melodically. If I had

a really effective picking style, I think I would play on the root much more often. I tend to think in a more melodic way because I don't have that rhythmic sense in my right hand.

How did you come to play bass in those David Bowie videos from 1984 to '86?

I was hired mainly because I was incredibly pretty... but seriously, it had nothing to do with my ability as a bass player at all. I got the interview through my brother's girlfriend, who was a choreographer – back in those days, every video that was made had to have dancers in it. I had a ponytail at the time and they said, 'You can have the job if you cut that ponytail off'. I said, 'I'll cut anything off if I can get the job'. Bowie was quite particular about the bass parts: I had to mime them as they were on the recordings.

Who played bass on 'I'm Too Sexy'?

I came up with the bass-line on a synth, but we wanted somebody who could do the slap thing at the end, and I can't slap to save my life, so we got a great bass player, Phil Spalding, to play the line. The key to that song was that the bass had to follow the top line. If the bass just did a root and fifth or something, it wouldn't have quite the same character. We had a very robust discussion about that at the time.

Right Said Fred experienced a huge amount of success in the Nineties. Did you play much bass in that decade?

No – playing bass took second fiddle for a while, because the band took off with me as a frontman. It's only recently, since we've got back into songwriting through not being able to do gigs, that I've picked up the bass again. We think much more carefully about how we want to sound and what sort of stuff we want to play, and it's been great to refresh my memory about all the stuff I used to play.

What bass gear do you use these days?

My go-to bass in the studio is a Fender Precision, but if I'm practising at home I play a Jazz or an acoustic Martin, if I can't be bothered to go down to the studio and turn on the amp. If I've got an idea in my head about a bass-line, I can pick the acoustic up and see if what I've got in my head makes any sense. I have a 1960s Hofner violin bass, too: it's beautiful. We record straight into the desk through a Darkglass Microtubes preamp. Five-strings? No – within the confines of what we do, which is pop songwriting, and keeping it simple, four strings is plenty. We occasionally detune the E string.



How do you come up with bass parts?

I'll be absolutely honest – I'm quite lazy as a bass player. The only thing that drives me is, 'Can I do what I want to do within the songs we write?' That's my motivation. The great thing about punk rock was that it completely refused to buy into the idea that technical ability had anything to do with creativity. That

was a really valuable thing. It doesn't stop you wanting to be good, though. One of the best ever bass parts, I think, is 'Walking On The Moon' by The Police.

It's just so simple. You don't need more than two notes.

Which other bass players do you admire?

Ronnie Lane's playing on the Faces' 'Stay With Me' was an object lesson for me. The bass is mixed high in that track, because the band obviously knew that it was a major part of the appeal of that particular track. His part is really, really melodic. There's also a track on the *Bandstand* album by Family called 'Glove'. John Wetton does such a simple intro that is just really cool. I want to mention Duff McKagan from Guns N'Roses, too. He does a really fantastic piece of melodic playing at the beginning of 'Sweet Child O'Mine'.

The other guy that stands out for me is Bakithi Kumalo, who played on *Graceland* by Paul Simon. I'm not sure he's received the recognition that he deserves. On the title track of the album, he does this kind of octave slide at the beginning that sets the whole tone. I don't have much time for musicians who don't understand when another band-member contributes a part which is quintessentially of the track. It makes the song, even though it has nothing to do with the top line or the lyric.

I also love 'You're The One That I Want' from *Grease*. That was played by Max Bennett, who also played for Peggy Lee on 'Fever'.



He was in the Wrecking Crew. The bass-line in 'Fever' is so simple and so evocative. A bass player with less imagination would have killed that song stone dead.

Then there's Lou Reed's 'Walk On The Wild Side', which was played by Herbie Flowers. We met Herbie once, and what was interesting about him was that he was quite happy to dismiss a lot of the pop music that he had done. Maybe if I was a session player and hiring myself out for 250 quid a shot, or whatever it is, I would get a bit like that. I think the reason I'm still quite passionate about bass is because it's within the context of writing. Look at Benny Rietveld's bass part on Santana's 'Smooth' – it's really good because it's sympathetic to the song. He only does fancy stuff when he knows he can, because he's out of the way of the vocal.

So too much bass can get in the way?

Yes. You know these super bands where they put all the top players together? You know, the greatest drummer, the greatest bass player, the greatest guitarist, and they put them all together – and the band is always a let-down. There was a quote by John Lennon many years ago: he was talking about why he wrote 'Imagine' on piano as opposed to guitar. He said it was because he could hardly play the piano, which forced him to keep it simple and to think in a pure way about what he was trying to communicate.

We could all learn from that.

Definitely. I think that's a really important lesson for bass players within a songwriting context. Some songs don't need more than root and fifth, and some songs just need the root. Look at what Motörhead did, for example. We met Lemmy a couple of times, and he was a really nice guy. There's nothing clever about doing something that the song doesn't need you to do. ■

Right Said Fred's *Your Inner Light Is Love* EP is out now. Info: www.rightsaidfred.com

“There's nothing clever about doing something that the song doesn't need you to do”

UPRIGHT CITIZEN

Fumi Tomita on the road to jazz mastery

As a teenager I was a big rock fan, so I started on drums, but moved to guitar then bass. I discovered fusion, and that is how I ended up listening to jazz. I wanted to move on to acoustic bass in high school but I didn't have the guts – so I played fretless instead! I eventually attended McGill University where, a few months short of my 20th birthday, I started on acoustic bass as they did not allow electric. I was fine with it and has become my main instrument.

My first bass guitar was a copy of a Fender Precision. I don't remember the brand, but it came with a small practice amp. On electric, I've played mostly Fender Jazz basses, Japanese or the then-current American models. I was a fretless player and had a Sterling Music Man and a Washburn acoustic-electric. Nowadays I have a 2008 P-Bass, which is the first Precision I ever played that I loved; a fretless Moollon, which is basically a very good Sixties Jazz copy; and a five-string Yamaha TRB-5P. On acoustic I've been playing my 1930s-era Juzek since 2000. I also have a 1950s Kay, the one with the rounded corners. Before that I played a stock German bass with a baseball bat of a neck.

As a New York city jazz bassist, my small Gallien-Krueger amp served me for 11 years. I've since bought a new one, and over the years have picked up two Walter Woods – both 'green light' versions – the Acoustic Image Ten2, a Markbass 1x12, a wonderful 1x10 EA, the older and heavier version, and a 2x10 Bergantino. Yeah, I like gear!

My teacher Michel Donato told me that a good jazz bass player needs to have a few things down: good intonation, good time, and a good sound. Of course you have to know the tune, but those three basic items go a long ways on the bass, and for years I centred my practice around that. As influences go, I guess I've always admired Charlie Haden. He has such a natural sound and is such a soulful improviser. As a young musician without much technique or confidence, I saw that as an approach which I could actually accomplish. ■

www.fumitomitamusic.com





CLASSIC LOWS

Helen Storer of Hexandagger and Workshed hails the punk rockers

I've been playing classical guitar since I was about nine years old, but going into my teenage years I started being exposed to a lot of rock music through the underground club scene. The first time I heard *Fun House* by the Stooges was when I was around 16 – I really clearly remember hearing 'Dirt' and 'Down On The Street' and instantly wanting to switch from guitar to bass, so I guess Dave Alexander and

Ron Asheton were my original inspiration. Geezer Butler and Jean-Jacques Burnel are two of my perennial influences when it comes to tone and style, and just all-round effortless coolness.

I really wanted a Sid Vicious/Dee Dee Ramone style P-Bass – a white one with a black pickguard – and bought the closest rip-off I could find when I was about 16. Luckily, later on I got a Fender endorsement

and was happy to play the real thing! Since then I've generally stuck with Fender Jazz basses or Precisions, to be honest. I've borrowed Thunderbirds and Rickenbackers for studio recording sessions in the past, and loved them, but I always come back to Fender.

I'm currently borrowing a Precision from a friend as my gear is stuck in Los Angeles due to the pandemic: I moved back to London two years ago. The bass I have there is an active Fender Precision Lyte, which is a super weird choice for me, but it really sounds great and the neck is so easy to play that I feel that it massively improves my performance. In terms of pedals I usually use a EHX Bass Big Muff or a Fulltone '70 pedal for distortion, and an EHX Cathedral on certain occasions.

A classical musician once suggested to me that you can improve your technique by learning a really difficult song that you can barely play at all, but by learning it painfully slowly, nailing the notes perfectly one by one, before you try to play it at the normal speed. That was how I learned to play songs at the beginning, and still do, sometimes... ■

Info: <https://hexandagger.bandcamp.com>,
www.facebook.com/workshed.official



MARCUS MILLER

In every issue, we bring you a noteworthy interview from the bass vaults, from far-off times when gigs were plentiful and a virus meant no more than a day in bed.
This month: **Marcus Miller**, interviewed in 2012

When Marcus Miller, Victor Wooten and Stanley Clarke joined forces as SMV back in 2008, it was the obvious next step in each bassist's long career. These three guys are among the most accomplished electric musicians in the nebulous funk, soul and jazz arenas, having played with the world's most acclaimed bandleaders between them. You'd expect a clash of egos, right? Envelope filters at dawn?

Far from it, according to Miller. "You know what?" he chuckles, talking to us between rehearsal sessions. "We just picked up our basses and started playing! I heard what Stanley was doing and what Victor was doing, and they sounded like they were playing in the high range and in the mid range, so I just jumped right into the bottom and tried to fill that part up. I'm sure they did the same thing – just reacting to the other two players in the band."

This generally ego-free approach is typical of Miller, who is that rare thing, a man wholly

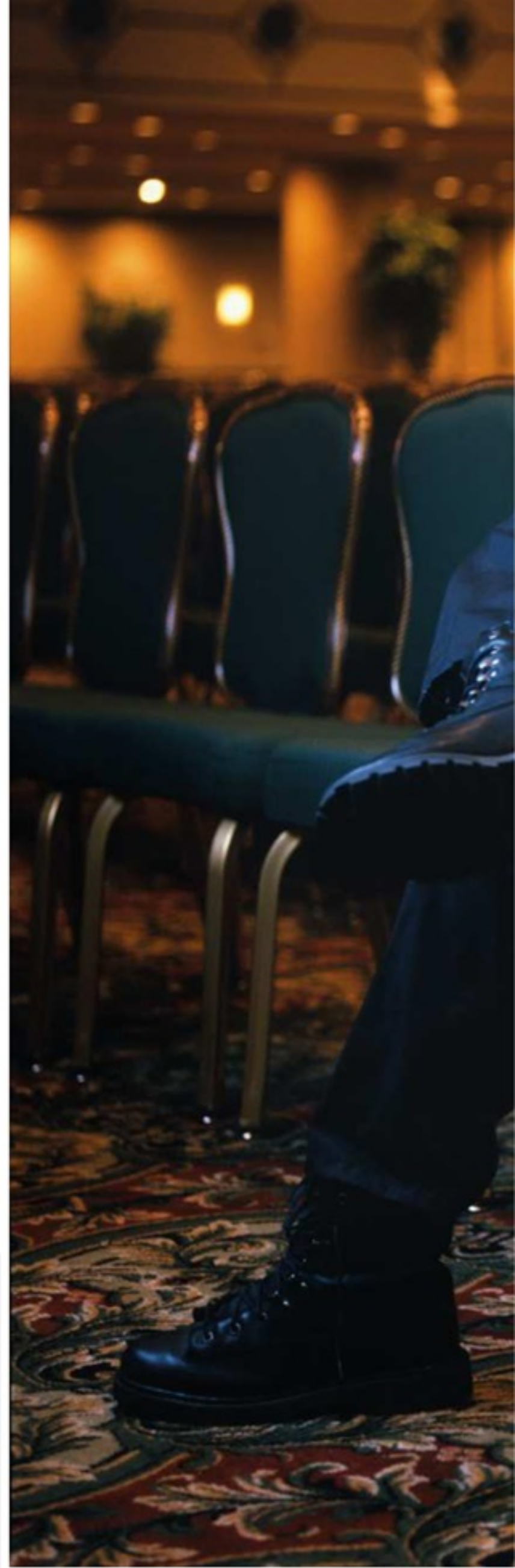
devoted to his own vision ("the voice", he calls it) but entirely tolerant of the visions of others. He's evolved a mature opinion of the way he used to play bass, as opposed to the way he plays it today. "I was a kid when I started playing," he enthuses, "so I played like a kid plays – with energy. Young, male energy! I played the bass, man, that was who I was, but as you get older you start playing for different reasons. You want to keep that energy, but you want to use it more judiciously."

You'll love it – we did – when he extends the metaphor, saying: "You want to be like that gunfighter who only shoots when he has to. Like Bruce Lee, man: you walk around saying 'I don't want to fight' and 'I don't want to fight', and then finally you say, 'Okay, now you've pissed me off' and you have to kick everybody's ass!"

Not that there's any ass-kicking on Miller's new album, *Renaissance* (unless you're talking about his bass skills when compared to yours and mine). A quizzical, often mellow suite of songs, *Renaissance* delivers the expected range of bass mastery, whether it's fingerstyle or

slapped, and across the instrument's full range. Continuing the Bruce "Don't think... feel" Lee analogy above, Miller used a full fistful of basses this time. "There are five on the new album," he tells us. "I used my 1977 Fender Jazz, which is my regular bass; a Sixties fretless; my Marcus Miller signature five; and I've got an old French acoustic that I play on a couple of songs. And there's an acoustic-electric bass, too."

Ah, he mentioned his signature Jazz, a lovely and hugely popular instrument which





**“As you get older,
you start playing for
different reasons...”**

many readers of this magazine will have plucked at some point. How many of those does he have stashed at home, we wonder? “I probably have four of the actual ones that you can get at the stores,” he says, “but I also have a few prototypes – the ones which they will send to me during development, and I’ll say ‘I like it, but can you change this or that?’, so I have a couple of basses which are a little different from the regular ones that ultimately go into production. They’ll probably call me one day and ask for them back, ha ha!”

After all these years and all these albums, how does Miller keep his music fresh? “I have a lot of inspiration, but there’s also a lot of not wanting to repeat myself,” he explains. “I’ve been writing a lot of songs over the last 30 or 35 years, so I’m looking for something a little different, and I’m inspired to try and find different colours and different approaches.”

In the case of *Renaissance*, Miller found a fresh approach by backing away from the precision-engineered production of his earlier work and going for a live feel. “On a lot of my

albums, I’m showcasing my production as much as I’m showcasing my musicianship,” he muses, “but because producing records with layers and layers of sound is much easier now because of GarageBand and Pro Tools and all that, I decided that at this point in time I would much rather focus on the musicianship. So there’s a lot less production on this album. We went in and cut the tracks live, and focused on the performances and showcasing the really great musicianship that I get from the guys in the band.”

★ The Classic Interview

MARCUS MILLER

He continues: “The songs come naturally, but I still spend a lot of time going through different songs and trying to find the ones that I think are unique. When I write a song, I’ll put it away and come back to it. Then if it sounds right when I come back to it, I’ll know it has something. I try to place myself between the writer and the person who is reacting to the song. That takes some time.”

As always, the core of Miller’s music is the groove, which he dominates with economy and simplicity, the hallmarks of any funk player’s technique. “There’s a whole lot of ways to be simple,” he says, “We have a lot of words in English, but we probably only use about 300 of them to talk about everything that needs to be said. Music is the same way. You may only use seven or eight notes, but there are infinite possibilities. Sometimes you just need to look at something in a slightly different way and it becomes something new. Or you can change your approach in a different way.”

As well as his bass playing, Miller is known for his soundtrack compositions, which begs the question of whether the bass guitar is as prominent in his film music as it is in his solo work. “The bass supports, unless I need some emotion down low,” he says. “The only problem is that people know my sound real well by now. The guy who wrote the music for *Seinfeld* really fucked things up for me! When I’m recording a soundtrack, sometimes directors say to me, ‘Is that a *Seinfeld* reference?’”

Miller has no resentment, however, about any association which people may have with his high mids-heavy slap style and that famous TV theme. “There are so many bass players out there, and they’re all searching for an identifiable sound, but not many of them find it,” he observes. “The fact that I have one is great: it’s like my voice, so I surround it with unusual, different things and put it in different circumstances. I think people will

say, ‘I know that’s Marcus, but he’s doing some different stuff there’ rather than start playing with a different sound.”

Accordingly, you won’t hear Miller changing his sound any time soon. “I have a six-string that I’ve been playing since the Nineties, but I haven’t fooled around with a seven-string,” he tells us. “I enjoy playing them, but my voice is my bass: it’s not the strings, or the range of the instrument: it’s the sound. I don’t really like the sound of a lot of new basses: they sound like a guitar, but an octave lower. Some guys are going for that – like Anthony Jackson: his ideal bass sound is a guitar an octave lower – but for me, it’s more somewhere between a low guitar and an acoustic bass. I like that kind of relationship.”

In fact, the differences in Miller’s approach when writing soundtracks and his more usual music aren’t as pronounced as you might expect. “The only difference is that my songs are inspired by something that I’ve thought or experienced myself, and in a soundtrack I’m trying to help the director convey his ideas to the audience,” he explains. “You then go back to your own projects with extra tools, because you’ve tried methods of communication that

you wouldn’t normally try, because you’re conveying emotions which aren’t yours. I use instruments which aren’t a typical part of African-American culture – and so it’s

a really broadening thing.”

One particular song on *Renaissance*, titled ‘Gorée’, comes from a pretty dark place, Miller tells us. “About a year and a half ago, we played a concert in Senegal and during our day off before the show they took us to the island of Gorée, which has slave houses. They domiciled the slaves there for three months before they shipped them off to the Americas. You can imagine that it’s a very emotional place: the guy was talking about a particular door which people walked through and, once you were through that door, you were never

“The guy who wrote the music for *Seinfeld* really f*ed things up for me!”**



going to see your family or your continent ever again. It was the point of no return, and that was profound. I figured that I could put these emotions into a song.” But how, we ask, is it possible to construct a bass part around something so traumatic? He answers, “You keep yourself in the mood you were in when you heard about these things, and you start playing: it’s not difficult to do when the emotions are that strong.”

Looking back across his career, Miller explains how his musical style has changed. “I had no idea who I was writing for, 15 years

Beginner's Tip

Advice from the man himself on how to get started on slap bass



“I would really like to encourage young players to listen to some Larry Graham records and to some of my old records, just to see how it went down. Try to understand what the slapping was doing in the music. There’s playing that you do in a band, and then there’s playing that you do in your bedroom and put on YouTube. There’s nothing wrong with either one of them,

but you should be aware of what it means to drive a band. It’ll change you. Technically, you’ve just got to keep doing it, and pay attention to your timing. A lot of guys play real fast, but they don’t realise that they’re not playing in time. Follow the line and you’ll find your place in it. You might decide that being funky is not really what you care about.”



Pro Tip

The mighty Miller's advice for advanced bassists

"I'm more serious about my rhythmic statements now, and my phrasing – stuff that a lot of casual listeners probably wouldn't even notice, know what I mean? There's a world of difference. Placement is an example: where on the beat I'm playing, whether I'm a bit behind or a bit before. The spaces, and how long the notes are... all these things will really evolve in your playing."

ago: I was just making music," he ponders. "But at the age of maybe 35, I started really getting into doing solo gigs, and because I was gigging, I got to meet the people who I'd been writing music for all these years. It was a beautiful experience, man: people would tell me how the music changed and affected them – and it changed me. You write music differently when you've got a feeling for the people. There were young kids, musicians who were looking to be inspired by you, and then there were people who were 70 years old and had been listening to you for 30 years. There was a bunch of different races – black, white, everything – and that really freed me up too, because there were people out there ready to listen to it."

It would be remiss of us if we didn't ask Miller what it was like to play bass in Miles Davis's band, which he did from 1981 to 1989.

"It was a beautiful thing," he recalls. "The Miles that I got to know was very different to the Miles that most people read about. He was a very sensitive cat and very nurturing with his musicians. He was very encouraging to me when I was playing bass with him and

when I began to write music in his band. He was very enthusiastic."

How about Miller's actual bass playing – how has it changed over the decades? "It's definitely evolved," he says, "but I don't know if it's improved: other people can decide that. If I'd written an album like this 15 years ago, it would sound way different. My choice of notes has grown. I'm not playing all the notes now: instead, I'm trying to find the right ones. I also try to use the correct techniques, energy-wise, especially when I'm soloing: I throw a technique in there when it works emotionally, rather than playing for the four teenagers in the front row!"

Speed isn't everything, Miller says – and he should know, having mastered the art of flying fingers as well as considered, subtle lines. "When I was young,

I came up in New York," he recalls, "and if you played fast that was a negative – unless you could make it funky. If you weren't funky but you played fast, you were just like the guy who dribbles a ball around the basketball court without doing anything. He does tricks,

"The Miles Davis that I got to know was very different to the Miles people read about"

but people say 'Dude, we're trying to play a game here! Give the ball up'. He's not helping the team."

The athletic comparison is apt, as Miller is beginning to feel the physical strain a little after decades of slapping and popping. "My wrists are a little bit like Kobe Bryant's knees right now," he chuckles, referring to the legendary American basketballer, "so I have to take care of them. I do some rotating stretches in my wrists before I even pick up the bass, to make sure they're really warmed up."

So will we be seeing Miller laying down his brand of bass brilliance far into the future? It seems so. "I know musicians of 50 and 60 whose sole occupation is talking about what they did when they were 25," he says. "But I recently played with Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter, who are in their seventies, and they played with enormous energy. They're arguably the best musicians in the world, and they're very inspiring to me – so no, I have no intention of retiring." Good news for all of us, you'll agree. ■

Info: www.marcusmiller.com

TURNER PORTRAIT

The Atlanta-based rock quintet Blackberry Smoke return with a new album, *You Hear Georgia*. Bassist **Richard Turner** explains the thinking behind the big tones

Did you get the new album recorded before lockdown, Richard?
Just before. We cut the record at RCA in Nashville and then shot up to Canada, and then a couple of shows into Canada, we had to escape or get locked in up there. So it was crazy. It's been odd to be sitting on a record for a year.

How many tour dates do you think you lost in 2020 and '21?

Oh my God. Maybe 200, although a lot of those shows are going to be rescheduled.

The upside is that *You Hear Georgia* is a great album.

I love it. It's clean as fuck, recording wise, and the bass is well thought out. After all this time as a band, everybody plays the part they think should be there. You know exactly where you want to go, and if you want to put a little signature doodle in there, then you can, or you can leave it super clean. It's done without even speaking, a lot of the time. We think with each other's brains now.

Some of your bass playing reminds me of AC/DC.

Well, Charlie [Starr, bandleader] is a huge fan, so that's probably where it comes from. I totally hear how they do it, in the structures of their songs. It's extremely complicated to sound so simple. It's a tangled web of intricate playing over there in AC/DC, despite the fact that everybody thinks it's so simple.

How did you get into bass in the first place?

My father was a Air Force colonel, but before

that he was playing saxophone, clarinet and all kinds of woodwinds in high school and college. I was born in 1965, and he had retired from the Air Force by that time, but he gave me one of his clarinets. And then my cousin, his nephew, wrote a song that was on CBS News one morning, and I thought, 'Wait a minute, there's all these musicians in my family. I think there might be something to this – and I would like to do this too'. It seemed natural, so I begged my parents for a bass, but they were like, 'We can't sit around the campfire while you play the bass, because we can't hear it', so I woke up Christmas morning, and there was a regular Les Paul-shaped electric guitar there.

Did you take to it?

Well, I went to guitar lessons, and I tried to do it, but I thought, 'This is just not what I hear in my head. It's not what I hear in my soul. I don't hear the pitch of this instrument', because I definitely have something going for the bass guitar. Eventually, I traded that guitar for a titanium racing BMX bicycle and won a bunch of races, and then I traded that bike for a bass and got on track with what I wanted to do. Later I worked security for clubs all around Atlanta, so I got to watch a lot of bass players. Who's the crazy bald-headed player that plays with the little sticks on the end of his fingers?

Tony Levin.

I stood right next to Tony Levin and watched him play in this little club that holds 1300 people in Atlanta. I was like, 'This is definitely

what I want to do. This guy's playing the craziest shit!' I watched hundreds and hundreds of some of the greatest acts, standing on the side of the stage, working security. I was totally cheating because I wasn't paying attention to what was going on in the crowd. I was totally dialled into the band. I saw Chris Squire, Trevor Bolder, Tony Butler, Tom Hamilton from Aerosmith... so many killer players. I started to really dig into what those people were doing, even though there was no *Bass Player* magazine when I was growing up, or any kind of media that was focused specifically on bass players.

BP started in 1990.

Okay, so that would have been later. I found a bunch of bass players by reading guitar magazine articles. I'd pick out little pieces in *Guitar Player* magazine where the guy would be like, 'My bass player does this and it helps me do that', you know. Carol Kaye's playing with the Beach Boys really influenced me, along with Trevor Bolder from the Spiders From Mars and Johnny Colt of the Black Crowes and Lynyrd Skynyrd. There's a long list of great bass players that I admired in my youth – Berry Oakley, Chris Squire, Dusty Hill. I also think that Scott Devine and Mark Smith out of the UK are excellent teachers, and I want to give a shout-out to Bob Harris at BBC2 for spinning us.

What's your preferred bass gear?

Man, I'll tell you what, Orange has been really good to me for live gear: I use their US-made amps for shows. My absolute favourite mind-blowing gear is these two Acoustic 360-361 rigs that I have. Whoever bought the

"After all this time as a band, you know where to go. We think with each other's brains now"

rights to that name is hand-making them to order. They're expensive as hell, but oh my God, that is the most incredible sounding rig I've ever heard. For bass

guitars, man, Joe Hamilton down here in Georgia built my first custom bass. The dude worked on it for about six weeks and it's the best bass I've ever played. You can feel its vibration all the way through the whole structure of the thing. And there's another cat out of New York City named Robert Mondell who deserves a shout-out: he makes some pretty neat custom basses that I keep here at the house. My strings are Thomastik-Infeld flatwounds, and I also use an Avalon U5 DI and an Ampeg V9 amp.

Any effects in the chain?

I've got a ton of effects at home. A lot of them



are prototypes that came from makers and hobbyists and kit guys and boutique guys, and they don't even have any writing on, just knobs and switches. I get into experimenting with them and it's killer. I have a great time with them. I love loopers, I love delays, I love playing with envelope filters, but I've never taken them on tour. I don't want to dilute anything when I play live. Something about me wants to go direct out of the bass into the console. I watch everybody with an effect in my band do that constant tap-dancing on those damn things.

Are you strictly a four-string guy?

I play a four-string, but I've got a drop tuner on it. I don't care for the weight and the width

of the fretboard on a five-string. I don't care for all that extra bulk.

Would you say your playing has matured over time?

Oh, absolutely. A while back I started digging real deep into Carol Kaye's lesson kit. I dove into it and I was like, 'She completely knows what's going on, all around the fretboard. She knows what everybody else is playing, and can probably play what everybody else is playing'. Whether it's the guitar line or the bass-line, hands down, any song she's ever played, she can play both of those.

What's the format of her lesson kit?

You can get a DVD, or a CD accompanying

a book, or you can book her through Zoom or Skype and get a one-on-one lesson, but you have to complete her lesson first because she wants you to know some of the theory. It's one of the best lessons I've ever taken.

Did you have a one-on-one lesson with Carol?

No, I was too intimidated. She's just too damn cool. You know, Billy Sheehan took a lesson from her, and all these other great bass players did too. I'll just keep looking at her lessons... ■

You Hear Georgia is out now.

Info: www.blackberrysmoke.com

Betty

**LOOKS.
TONE.
PLAYABILITY.**



Manson
GUITARS

John Paul Jones Signature E-Bass
mansonguitarworks.com

GEAR Reviews

Welcome to our expert road-tests of state-of-the-art bass gear

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass cabs and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's useful for bassists, but generally speaking, this zone is reserved for bass-specific gear.

We take our reviews seriously. *BP* is the last English-language print magazine devoted solely to bass in the world, and we have readers all over the planet, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your time, we'll say so; if it's flawed, we'll make that clear. We're not answerable to advertisers in any way, and our tests are independent of the views of musicians, manufacturers and distributors.

When you read about a product here, you're getting a fair, balanced review from a highly experienced gear tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality. Let us know what you think of our conclusions. Did we get it right?

Joel McIver, Editor

Reviewed this month...

48

GRETSCH
G5442BDC ELECTROMATIC
£1059, www.gretschguitars.com

50

ESP
PHOENIX 1004
£950 approx, www.sound-service.eu

52

KRAMER
D-1
£469, www.gibson.com

54

BASS CENTRE
ASHBORY
£345, www.basscentre.com

56

MXR
EFFECTS
£159.99, £169.99, £219.99,
www.westsidedistribution.com





GRETSCH

G5442BDC Electromatic

GRETSCH
www.gretschguitars.com

£1059

Comfortably vintage and sonically authentic, this red retro bass delivers the goods, says Joel McIver

Gretsch guitars are famous worldwide – who hasn't lusted over a White Falcon in their time? – but the veteran American brand's basses are less well known. Still, that's no reason not to investigate this muscle car of a four-string, the Electromatic, which will supply you with the feel, look and sound of a Seventies bass in return for a nice chunk of your taxed income. So what do you get for your bucks?

Build Quality

With this big a body, the Electromatic isn't exactly easy to swing around, but find a comfortable position and you'll be fine. This may take a moment, as this authentically old design also comes with authentically old neck-dive, presumably thanks to its hollow body and weighty headstock. They didn't complain about that back in '68, though, so deal with it.

Look down and the landscape is a little different to the regular P or J terrain. The bridge, a massive two-piece unit, takes up most of your view, and you'll see a master volume on the lower bout and a three-position pickup switch on the upper one. F-holes are

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £1059
Made In | Korea
Body | Maple
Neck | Maple, 30.25" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt-on
Fretboard | Rosewood
Frets | 22
Pickups | 2 x Black Top FilterTron humbuckers
Controls | 2 x pickup volumes, tone, pickup switch, master volume
Hardware | Die-cast tuners, Adjusto-Matic bridge, G-cutout tailpiece
Weight | 2.7 kg / 6 lbs
Left-hand option available | No
Case/gig bag included | Yes, at extra cost

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Attention to detail, authentic sounds

Minus | Big body, headstock dive

Overall | There's no better bass if you're after this look and sound

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆

VALUE

★★★★★☆☆

If you're after this particular aesthetic, you won't find it delivered this vividly anywhere else



there too, although they don't get in the way as such, and there's some fancy chrome detailing on the G-Arrow pots and the bridge. It's all very vintage, but with modern attention to detail, you'll be relieved to hear, with no sharp fret ends, screws falling out, cheap pickup housings or whatever to worry about.

Still, having played with quite a few 'overly refreshed' musicians over the years, I sometimes worry that hollow-bodied basses such as this one might not withstand the rigours of the dressing-room and tour bus quite as well as their solid-bodied equivalents would. Just a thought.

Sounds And Playability

Breathy, throaty, muffled – all the usual adjectives apply when you play this bass unplugged. Those F-holes don't let much volume out, but there's enough so that you can hear yourself if you just want to tune up or figure out a bass part.

The fun really starts when you plug in, because the tone range is rather wider than most of us would assume. We're given three pickup settings – one, the other or both – as well as a master tone

and separate volumes per pickup. You'll no doubt find what you need in there somewhere, from a punchy, modern sound with a bit of edge to a treble-free thud, although true tone extremes aren't to be found here for obvious reasons. Hot tip: grab a pick for a clicky Motown tone, although be warned: if you drop said pick inside an F-hole, it's never coming out again.

The playability is adequate rather than astounding, but then a high-speed platform for your playing was never what this bass was intended to be. Instead, it plays solidly, reliably and comfortably. The frets aren't even marked above 17, giving you a clear indication of what its designers intended.

Conclusion

This is a large bass with lots of details, so if you're looking for an effortless instrument that will be simple to operate while you do something else, like singing for example, you might want to look further afield. If you're after this particular aesthetic, though, you won't find it delivered this vividly anywhere else. This bass is a lot of fun, rocker. ■



ESP

Phoenix 1004

Has this Phoenix truly risen again?
Joe Daly finds out

SOUND SERVICE
www.sound-service.eu

£950
approx

Founded in Tokyo by Hisatake Shibuya in 1975, Electric Sound Products (ESP) began as a small repair shop that made replacement parts for guitars. Rather than chase margins by making cheap replicas, ESP focused on improving quality and design, delivering high-end parts and instruments at competitive prices. By the mid-Eighties, ESP had attracted a luminous roster of guitarists, including Ronnie Wood, George Lynch, Bruce Kulick (Kiss) and Vernon Reid (Living Colour), earning a reputation as a go-to brand for heavy music. It's hardly a surprise then, that their basses have followed suit, with ESP counting Tom Araya (Slayer), John Campbell (Lamb Of God) and Marco Mendoza (ex-Whitesnake) among its endorsements.

The company launched their LTD bass range in the mid-Nineties to considerable fanfare; lower manufacturing costs in Korea, China and Indonesia allowed ESP to offer exceptional builds at wallet-friendly prices. Exceedingly popular among rock and metal crowds, the original Phoenix offered musicians the notional equivalent of a high-end Thunderbird with active pickups. Now, after several years of discontinuation, ESP have resurrected the Phoenix with the goal of once again offering musicians a no-nonsense,

high-end bass at an affordable price. Let's see if the new 1004 model matches up.

Build Quality

The Phoenix boasts a full-force mahogany body with a dark satin finish that's blacker than the heart of Aleister Crowley. Its five-piece mahogany and walnut neck features a thin U-shaped contour and a 34" scale. There are mahogany body wings and a Macassar ebony fingerboard with 21 extra-jumbo stainless steel frets with ESP flag inlays. Its sturdy neck-through construction is designed to ensure a smooth transfer of signal into your amp.

Despite its imperious size, the Phoenix is designed for maximum player comfort. Across the lap, it rests snugly over the thigh, and hung from a strap, it balances easily in both high-up and low-slung positions. The neck sits cosily in the fretting hand and, with the 15.75"-radius fingerboard and the glossy satin finish on the back of the neck, moving between registers is quick and effortless. Many a metalhead will admire the reverse headstock, with its black, vice-grip LTD Vintage tuners. At the other end, a Gotoh 201B-4 bridge ensures an impressive level of sustain. The control selection

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £950 approx
Made In | Korea and Indonesia
Body | Mahogany
Neck | Five-piece mahogany/walnut, 34" scale
Neck Joint | Neck-through
Fretboard | Macassar ebony
Frets | 21
Pickups | EMG 35P4 humbucker (neck), EMG 35J humbucker (bridge)
Electronics | Active
Controls | 2 x volume, tone
Hardware | LTD Vintage tuners, Gotoh bridge
Weight | 11 lbs / 5 kg
Left-hand option available | Yes
Case/gig bag included | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Build quality, price

Minus | None

Overall | A well-constructed, no-nonsense instrument that sounds as badass as it looks

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★★★★

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★★★★

VALUE

★★★★★★★★

The active EMG humbuckers uncork an absolute siege of power... we hope the neighbours are enjoying the test as much as we are

is as simple as you like, with volumes for the neck and bridge pickups and a tone control next to the bridge. This all aligns with ESP's vision for the LTD Deluxe line: a durable build packed with high-quality parts that neatly avoids any hint of overcomplication.

Sounds And Playability

The Phoenix is appreciably versatile but make no mistake, it is aimed squarely at the heavy hitters: its active EMG humbuckers uncork an absolute siege of power. Sitting by the bridge, an EMG 35J unleashes a concussive low-end wallop, and with its coil set in the back of the housing, close to the bridge, we're pleased with the meaty midrange attack and expansive harmonic overtones in the high end. As we hammer away from one metal banger to the next, the Phoenix remains responsive and in tune: we hope the neighbours are enjoying the testing as much as we are.

As the neck pickup, the EMG 35P4 offers a suite of classic and modern tones, with a warm, creamy articulation that actually sounds quite nice with the tone knob in neutral position. It acquits itself admirably playing both blues and some drum and bass pieces, and it's easy to see the appeal for a gigging musician who

might need to switch between styles on the fly. It would be nice if the tone knob had some sort of mid-point indicator so the player could easily land on a desired setting, but this is a small quibble. Overall, playing the Phoenix borders on guilty-pleasure levels of fun and enjoyment. From the ultra-smooth action of the neck, to the generous jumbo frets, to its superior balance and arsenal of power, the playability is superior.

Conclusion

We could discuss the simple elegance of the Phoenix and how, with its straightforward three-knob control system, you can conjure a vast tonal palette suitable for a wide array of styles. This would be 100 percent true, and if you're a blues, country or R&B player looking for a versatile bass that's built to last, then the Phoenix might be for you. However, with its imposing, blacker-than-black finish, its high-quality construction and a ferocious low end that's powerful enough to swallow a black hole, the Phoenix is made for heavy music. If you're looking for a bass that's reliable, affordable and a hell of a lot of fun to play, then you won't do much better than this one. ■



KRAMER

D-1

When he heard there was a Kramer D-1 up for review, our man **Ian Glasper** couldn't put his hand up fast enough... but was his faith well placed?

GIBSON
www.gibson.com

£469

Kramer have been giving us high-quality guitars since the Seventies, and have seemingly gone from strength to strength since being acquired by Gibson in the late Nineties. The D-1 is part of their new Kramer Modern Collection, the 'D' standing for Disciple, and the design riffing on their most popular basses of the Eighties – always a hit with heavy metal players. But is this latest Disciple something we can all believe in?

Build Quality

First impressions are always important, and the Kramer D-1 ticks all

the right boxes on first glance, with its clean, fresh lines and sleek, elongated upper horn oozing minimalist modernity. A satin pearl-white finish shimmers enticingly in the light, and there's nothing that indicates the low-ish price tag which this bass carries.

Everything is finished off more than adequately, and the silky, slim C-profile neck, its maple feeling sumptuously poised under a matte finish, is clamped tight to the body courtesy of a sturdy five-point bolt-on connection. An adjustable truss rod is hidden behind the triangular D-1 badge on the headstock. And that solid, compact body – weighing in at a modest 4 kg (8.8 lbs), so definitely no back-breaker

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

RRP | £469

Made In | Indonesia

Body | Mahogany

Neck | Neck Maple, 34"

Neck Join | Bolt-on, five bolts

Fretboard | Ebony, 24 frets

Pickups | EMG MMCS humbucker

Electronics | Active BTS preamp

Controls | Volume, treble, bass

Hardware | Nickel

Weight | 4 kg / 8.8 lbs

Left-hand available? | No

Case/gigbag | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Plays like a dream

Minus | Not overly versatile tone-wise; tuning heads are a bit clunky

Overall | The D-1's understated aerodynamics and powerful bark punch well above its pricetag

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆

VALUE

★★★★★☆☆



– literally thrums with vibration when strummed straight out of the box. It really feels like an instrument with which you could defend yourself efficiently, which is always a bonus on the kind of live circuits I tend to frequent, and its economical design would certainly allow for plenty of swing in confined spaces. You might want to rethink the white finish if that's on your agenda, but that aside, this isn't a bass you're going to have to treat with kid gloves. For the modest outlay required, it genuinely appears likely to last.

The only slight eyebrow-raiser are the die-cast tuners, in the tried and tested two-up/two-down formation. These appear perfectly workmanlike, and are more than stable once in tune, but lack some subtlety when drop-tuning. Precise tuning is achievable, but it took a few seconds. However, the flush-mount bridge feels as if you could drop it from a plane and it would hold its intonation.

The EQ battery sits behind a plate secured by four fiddly little screws. In this day and age every active bass should have an easy-access battery compartment, but hey, you can't have everything, especially at this price.

Sounds And Playability

The responsiveness of the body timber makes this bass a pleasure to tinker with acoustically. It balances perfectly, admittedly with some slight neck-dive when on the knee, but that naturally corrects itself when on a strap, so gets the all-important ergonomic thumbs-up. It's gently chamfered for comfort, with none of its edges grating anywhere, not even on this old bag of bones.

The neck is quite the dream for a budget bass, smooth and slick under the fingertips, not a sharp fret edge in sight, and surprisingly

easy to navigate; I kept lying the bass down next to another instrument to check it actually was a long-scale, such was the comfort and speed with which I could traverse the glassy ebony fretboard. This is deceptive, feeling shorter due to the compact body and the roomy cutaway of the lower horn, which allows total access to all areas. Its low action and 19mm string spacing is perfectly geared towards shredders with a need for speed.

Plugged in, the D-1 reveals itself to be just as pleasing. Wisely avoiding over-complicating sound options, you just get a volume and two tone controls, so you can quickly and intuitively dial in something workable and get on with playing the damn thing. A slab of Seymour Duncan goodness, in the shape of a middle-positioned SMB-4D, energises every note played. There is a pleasingly fat lower end, and plenty of oily grit for the rock and metal players who are most likely to vibe with the D-1 aesthetic.

The lightning action and percussive response definitely lends itself to the slap style, striking a fine blend of attack and clarity with the mid and higher ranges. Overall, this feels like a reliable instrument that will be able to make a decent fist of most styles.

Conclusion

There may not be a huge amount of variation in the tones you can generate from the D-1's relatively simple EQ options, but the basic tone is great, and its outstanding playability and finish are exceptional for such a modest pricetag. If you're picking up a first bass, you won't go far wrong with this, and more seasoned players who buy it as a backup will be promoting it to their go-to bass as soon as they've spent some time with it. ■

BASS CENTRE

Ashbory

Time for something a little different,
suggests our Editor...

BASS CENTRE
www.basscentre.com

£345

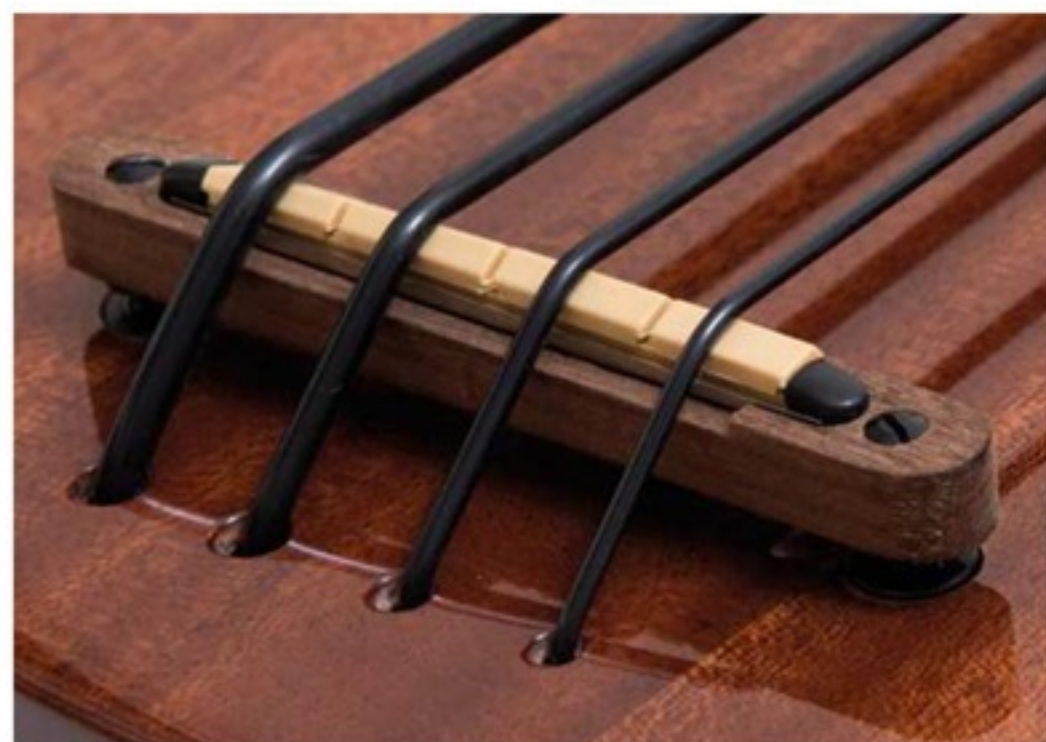
The Ashbory story goes back as far as the late Eighties, and while these rubber-stringed, small-bodied instruments have a reputation for quirkiness in a classically English way, most of their owners are actually in the USA, thanks to a production deal with Guild in the Nineties. You can read the full story at the Bass Centre's website – and it's a revealing tale, digging deep into the vagaries of instrument distribution and manufacture – but suffice it to say that this new bass, also available as a ukulele, has changed radically over the years. The silicon rubber strings are still in place, but the tuners are way more robust, and the active electronics – and therefore the tones – have been completely revamped. Let's see how it matches up.

Build Quality

Small, affordable basses often suffer from cost-cutting in the fine details, but there's no evidence of that here. The body is a smooth, slickly-finished slab, the 24" scale neck is fitted securely and the tuners do their job with little effort – no mean feat given the chunky rubber strings. There's very little superfluous detail, with the under-saddle piezo pickup invisible for obvious reasons, a simple three-control layout and a wooden bridge with through-body stringing. Everything fits together as it should, and there are no sharp fret ends, wobbly pots or any other evidence of quality-control skipping. How refreshing.

Sounds And Playability

At only 5.5 pounds in weight and with its short scale, the Ashbory



probably wouldn't produce particularly epic tones as a passive instrument, hence the turbocharged active electronics under the hood. While the treble boost is excellent, giving the player all sorts of zippy clank to use, it's at the bottom end where the instrument excels. Max out the bass boost and you'll find a fully-ledged reggae and/or soul tone, presumably designed in so that whining reviewers like me won't bewail the lack of a full low end. It's genuinely huge, and indeed I suggest you have this secret weapon ready to deploy the moment your guitarist makes a sarcastic comment about how small the Ashbory is.

The real reason to buy, or not as the case may be, is the silicon rubber strings. Personally, I really like the feel and playability of this material, unfamiliar as it undoubtedly is, because silicon enables fast legato playing, with a grippiness that lends precision. You may disagree, though, and for any number of reasons. If your style requires heavy, picked downstrokes, for example, you may miss the mass of metal strings. If you tap and slap, those techniques are perfectly doable with rubber strings, but the feel is very different. Furthermore, the strings bend with great ease, and while I enjoy the bluesy expression that this enables, this may not be for you.

Conclusion

I had so much fun with the Ashbory that I hate to give it back, but of course there's no real way from reading words on the printed page that you can get a true picture of the way it feels. Try one if you can: the instrument has huge charm. Live gigs are coming back, we're told, and the next time you're faced with aggressive airline check-in staff, you'll be glad of a bass that you can simply stick in an overhead locker. ■

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

RRP | £345

Made In | China

Body | Mahogany

Neck | Maple, 24" scale

Neck Join | Bolt-on, four bolts

Fretboard | Richlite, 22 frets

Pickups | Under-saddle piezo

Controls | Volume, active treble and
bass boost

Weight | 2.5kg / 5.5 lbs

Left-hand available? | No

Case/gigbag supplied? | Gigbag

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Very playable; powerful tones

Minus | The rubber strings are an
acquired taste

Overall | Affordable, useful and portable
– a wonderful little bass

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆

VALUE

★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆



MXR Effects

Spice up your bass tones, says Mike Brooks

WESTSIDE DISTRIBUTION
www.westsidedistribution.com

£159.99,
£169.99,
£219.99

The MXR brand is no stranger to these pages, and the three units under review here offer some seriously funky tones with which to create sonic nirvana during your performance. Both the Dyna Comp compressor and the Vintage Octave possess a very small footprint, so will take up very little real estate on your pedalboard. The Sub Octave Fuzz is a wider unit, but its control set offers a lot more options and flexibility.

All three pedals follow the standard metal chassis design used across the MXR range, and should be capable of taking a pounding during live use. All three operate effectively with a nine-volt DC supply, while the fuzz unit can also be operated with a battery. The controls on all three pedals are securely attached, and operate smoothly and efficiently across the whole turn.

Down to business... With four controls and an Attack switch, the **Dyna Comp** has plenty of flexibility with which to sculpt the dynamics of your bass tone. Some experimentation with the controls highlights just how effective it is, especially when reducing the peaks in your





TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

MXR M282 DYNA COMP BASS COMPRESSOR**Price** | £159.99**Features** | Attack switch, clean, output, sensitivity, tone**MXR VINTAGE BASS OCTAVE M280****Price** | £169.99**Features** | Mid switch (+6dB @ 800Hz), octave 1, dry, octave 2**MXR SUB OCTAVE BASS FUZZ M287****Price** | £219.99**Features** | Bypass switch, octave switch, bass, treble, gain, fuzz switch, fuzz, sub octave, dry, mid level**Made In** | USA**Weight** | 200g / 0.4 lbs

(M287: 400g / 0.8 lbs)

Power | 9v DC (M287: also 9v battery)**Dimensions** | 40mm (1.6") x 90mm (3.5") x 56mm (2.2"); M287: 127mm (5") x 90mm (3.5") x 56mm (2.2")

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Solid build, usable sounds**Minus** | Similar options available at these prices**Overall** | MXR pedals continue to impress

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆

VALUE

★★★★★☆☆

signal, essentially smoothing out your tone. Small changes to the controls can make a very noticeable difference, so taking the time to understand how they interact and respond to each other is essential. As with any compressor, your playing style is fundamental to how the pedal will respond, and the way you attack and approach the strings is a vital component that needs to be addressed, along with the instrument's signal output. Thankfully, the Dyna Comp doesn't complicate these issues, and the choice of parameters for user control means that you will hear the sonic differences quite clearly, whether you're looking for a pronounced or subtle style of compression.

The **Vintage Bass Octave** faces stiff competition in the marketplace, but thankfully, its tracking of your original bass signal is impressive used with both active and passive basses, producing fewer of the ghost effects and resonances that can plague some octave pedals. The choice of one- and two-octave effects opens up the palette of options, offering some serious sub choices when playing across the upper regions of the fingerboard. The Mid-boost switch is a huge bonus, allowing the player's octave-effected tone to cut through a mix much more clearly than certain competing units. Those mid-frequencies are so important, making the 6db boost at 800Hz a godsend: again, the tracking quality is much improved when this option is called into play. Although this pedal is intuitive to use, its black controls on a dark blue casing might be a little difficult to see in low lighting.

If you want to take what the Vintage Octave has to offer and mix it up with a bass fuzz that can fit into a whole raft of musical situations, cast your eye towards the **Sub Octave Bass Fuzz**. The team at MXR have filled this pedal with some excellent control options, giving the player a lot of tonal flexibility, in addition to some great octave and fuzz effects. You may choose to use the pedal for one or other of the effects, but the real ace up its sleeve is the ability to mix both of them with tone-shaping to create some radical tones.

With solid note tracking down to a low G, and two distinct types of bass fuzz on offer, the pedal's performance is very impressive indeed, although you may find you choose to bring the pedal into play sporadically rather than leaving it activated permanently, such is the general call for bass fuzz tones. First impressions may suggest that the control layout is a little busy, but once you've used the pedal extensively, making adjustments to the controls to find usable sounds will be intuitive.

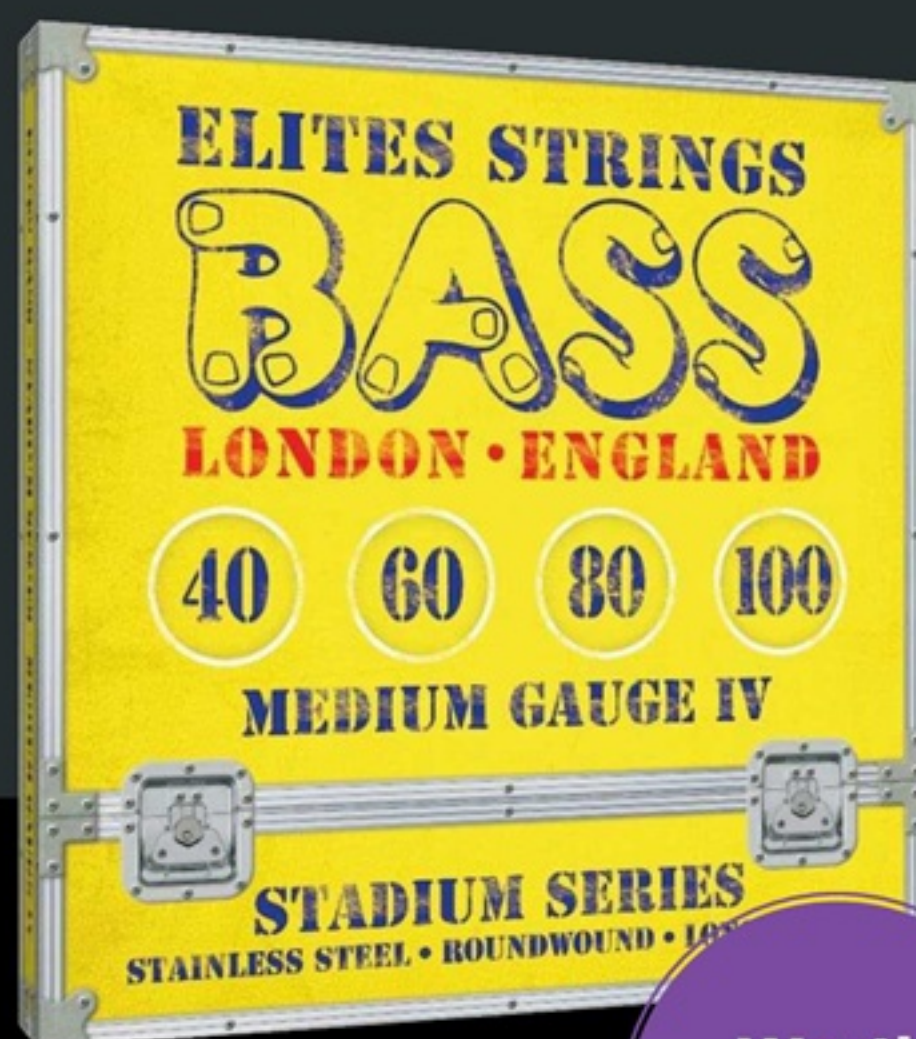
All three pedals are certainly worthy of consideration. Their relatively simple design and functionality means you don't need to have a degree to work out what each control does and how it applies to your sound and tone. The real skill comes in knowing how to apply each effect to your bass sound. Either way, each unit deserves an audition if you're in the market for any of these effects. With pricetags that won't empty your bank account, I suggest putting each through their paces. ■

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Bass Lessons

Making you a better bass player in every issue, our state-of-the-art team of educators will guide you every step of the way. Say hello to them here!



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BEGINNER 64



INTERMEDIATE 70



ADVANCED 76

RYAN MADORA

Dig into your favourite bass parts... and discover treasure! Ryan Madora is one of Nashville's most sought-after touring and session bassists. Recent touring and session credits include Robben Ford, Kyshona Armstrong, and her instrumental trio, The Interludes. For the past five years, she has served as musical director for Bobby Bones and has played with Garth Brooks, Darius Rucker, and Carrie Underwood. In addition to instructing at Nashville's campus of Musician's Institute, Ryan has taught at Gerald Veasley's Bass Boot Camp, Rock'n'Roll Fantasy Camp, and at universities across the USA. She has contributed columns to No Treble for over a decade and in 2019, published her first book, *Bass Players To Know: Learning From The Greats*. Ryan offers online education at TrueFire and her website. www.ryanmadora.com
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STEVE LAWSON

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across more than two decades of touring, and a huge catalogue of solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for almost three decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue? www.stevelawson.net
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PHILIP MANN

Now you're rolling, it's time to hit the next level Philip Mann studied at the London College of Music, securing bachelor's and master's degrees in performance before receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. Endorsed by Overwater and Eich, he's a busy, internationally freelancing electric and double bassist. His performance and session credits include work with Grammy Award-winning artists Van Morrison and Albert Lee, five-time Grammy Award nominee Hunter Hayes, Deep Purple's Steve Morse, Leo Sayer, Billy Bragg and country artist Peter Dinklage. Author of the *Chord Tone Concepts* texts, Philip is currently a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School while simultaneously lecturing for Scott's Bass Lessons. www.withbassinmind.com
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STUART CLAYTON

Take the bass world by storm with advanced study Stuart Clayton has been a professional musician, writer and transcriber since 2002 and has worked in function bands, on cruise ships, theatre shows and more. He spent four years recording and touring the world with Emerson, Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer and was one of the original writers at *Bass Guitar* magazine. From 2007 to 2019 Stuart worked as the Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Bristol, where he taught all levels of the degree course. In addition, he has also worked as the Bass Guitar Technical Specialist for the Rockschooll exam board. Stuart now runs Bassline Publishing, which publishes transcription books for bassists such as Mark King, Stuart Zender, Marcus Miller, Stuart Hamm and Bernard Edwards, as well as an acclaimed range of tuition books. www.basslinepublishing.com
Facebook stuartclaytonbass
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BP Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in Bass Player magazine

The Staff: Most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the staff.

Tablature: This is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature staff will have five or six lines as necessary.



PLAYING TECHNIQUES



SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'.



ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow.



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up).



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

Fretting hand taps have a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are just '+'. Particular fingers may be shown with numbers.

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

These are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand.



SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note and then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note.



TRILLS

Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown, using hammer-ons and pull-offs.



VIBRATO

The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger.

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated.



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

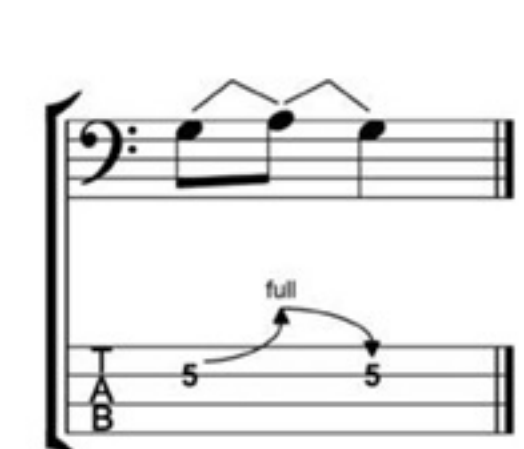
Pluck while fretting the lower note and touching the edge of the picking hand thumb to the note in brackets.

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: 1/2 indicates a semitone, 'full' indicates a tone.



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated and then released back to its original pitch.

I SPY...

SEVENTH CHORDS, PART TWO: MINOR



Nashville-based session and stage bassist Ryan Madora is here to dig into bass parts that we know and love for useful information. Pay attention!

Hey there, bass players! This lesson is the oh-so-anticipated follow-up to exploring seventh chords. In the previous column, we took a major triad and stacked an additional note on top, resulting in major seventh and dominant chords. Now, it's time to direct our attention toward minor tonality.

You may be wondering, 'Why should I be so concerned about chord qualities – bass players just have to play the root notes, right?' In some musical scenarios, yes, we can rely on rocking the root, especially if we're pedalling eighth notes in a pop or rock song. However, the moment we decide to add variation, compose a groove, or walk through changes, we have to be mindful of chord quality. Not only that, it's easier to learn songs by ear when you have a bit of theory knowledge to help you out. You may figure out three or four notes and realise 'Oh, this bass-line just arpeggiates the chord'. Knowing how to label sounds and patterns is the ultimate musical life-hack. Get these concepts under your belt now, and I promise they'll make your life easier every time you learn a tune.

Now, back to the task at hand. Let's build a four-note chord starting with a minor triad, such as A-C-E or Am. Stack another tone – the seventh – on top. If we play by the diatonic rules and adhere to the notes in the A natural minor scale, the seventh scale degree would be G, the minor (or flat) seventh. We now have a 'minor seventh' chord: A-C-E-G or 1-m3-5-m7. You will typically see this written as Am7 or A-7 on a chord chart or lead sheet.

This is undoubtedly the most common type of minor-sounding seventh chord. In fact, if we were to harmonise the major scale, we would get this every time we stacked a seventh on a minor triad. For example, in the key of C, the ii, iii, and vi chords would become Dm7, Em7, and Am7 respectively. The same rules apply to triads in the natural minor scale. In the key of A minor, the i, iv, and v chords would be Am7, Dm7, and Em7.

Now, let's find these chords on the fretboard. In **Exercise 1**, we'll play through

the chord progression Am7-Dm7-Em7-Am7 (or i-iv-v-i). Adhere to your four-fret span and begin with your index finger on A, the 5th fret of your E string. Use your pinky to play the minor third, C, on the 8th fret. Then use your ring finger to play the fifth, E, on the 7th fret of the A string and your index finger to play the minor seventh, G, on the 5th fret of the D string. Hit the octave with your ring finger and descend. Move this pattern across all chords in the progression.

When adding variation or composing groove, we have to be mindful of chord quality

In **Exercise 2**, practise the exact same chord progression using a different fingering pattern. It will involve more of a stretch, but trust me, it comes in

handy. This time, start with your middle finger on A and reach up to get C on the 3rd fret of the A string. Use your pinky to play E on the 7th fret, your middle finger for G on the 5th fret of the D string, and then land on the octave with your pinky. Turn back and descend the same way. Use this pattern for all of the chords and try arpeggiating Em7 with the open E as your root note.

EXERCISE ONE

The exercise is written for bass guitar in 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of notation. The first system shows a four-measure progression of Am7, Dm7, Em7, and Am7 chords. The second system shows a four-measure progression of Am7, Dm7, Em7, and Am7 chords. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above the notes and 5-8 below the notes.

EXERCISE TWO

Exercise Two consists of two systems of musical notation. Each system includes a bass staff in 4/4 time and a guitar fretboard diagram. The first system's bass staff has a melody with fingerings 2, 1, 4, 2, 4, 2, 4, 1. The guitar fretboard diagram shows a sequence of fret numbers: 5, 3, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 3, 5, 3, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 3. The second system's bass staff continues the melody, and the guitar fretboard diagram shows fret numbers: 0, 3, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 3, 5, 3, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 3.

EXERCISE THREE

Exercise Three consists of two systems of musical notation. Each system includes a bass staff in 4/4 time and a guitar fretboard diagram. The first system's bass staff has a melody with sharps on the second and fourth notes. The guitar fretboard diagram shows fret numbers: 5, 8, 7, 6, 5, 6, 7, 8, 5, 8, 7, 6, 5, 6, 7, 8. The second system's bass staff continues the melody, and the guitar fretboard diagram shows fret numbers: 5, 8, 7, 6, 5, 6, 7, 8, 5, 8, 7, 6, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Before we move on, let's do some spying. Take a listen to 'Money' by Pink Floyd and you'll hear how Roger Waters' bass-line adheres to the notes of a Bm7 chord. Instead of arpeggiating the chord in one direction, he grabs chord tones either above or below the root note. This creative approach resulted in one of the most recognisable bass intros ever.

Next, take a listen to 'Cissy Strut' by the Meters. George Porter Jr. and company play a descending Cm7 chord, starting on the octave and landing on the root. This just goes to show you how adding a bit of syncopation can transform a theory concept into an iconic theme.

Now we're going to identify another type of seventh chord, the 'minor-major seventh'. You probably won't stumble upon it too often, but it's important to know what it is and where you might find it. This chord uses a minor triad but stacks a major seventh on top, giving you 1-m3-5-Maj7. It will sound quite dissonant and is typically found in classical, jazz, sophisticated rock, film scoring and even flamenco music.

So far, everything we've harmonised has related to either the major scale or the natural minor scale. To explain this chord, we're going to the land of harmonic minor. Long story short, think of the natural minor scale and raise the seventh so it's just a half-step from the octave. The 'A harmonic minor' scale would contain the notes A-B-C-D-E-F-G#. When we use these notes to build a chord starting on A, we end up with this 'minor-major seventh' or A-C-E-G#. This will typically be written as AmM7.

Exercise 3 arpeggiates this chord by playing the root note, A, on the 5th fret of your E string. Similar to how you approached Exercise 1, play C on the 8th fret of the E string, and E on the 7th fret of the A string. Then, use your middle finger to play G#, the major seventh, on the 6th fret of the D string. Instead of hitting the octave, let's throw another minor third on top by playing

C on the 5th fret of the G string with your index finger. Play this pattern ascending and descending and you'll get a good feel for how this chord sounds.

To be honest, this is a chord that you should be familiar with but don't need to stress over. Think of it as a particular spice that you keep in the back of your cupboard; it's got an aggressive flavour that doesn't make its way into most dishes. That said, it's good to know

what it tastes like and how to use it if you so choose. I encourage you to work it out on your bass, embrace the dissonance, and spy it on Radiohead's 'Life In A Glasshouse'

from their 2001 album *Amnesiac*.

Getting a taste for seventh chords is a great way to improve your theory knowledge, expand your aural palette, and organise the notes that you're hearing. Enjoy playing through these exercises, and see you next time! ■

Getting a taste for seventh chords is a great way to improve your theory knowledge

PICK IT UP!

PICKING LARGE INTERVALS



The great Steve Lawson brings us a new approach to studying bass at beginner level. The journey begins...

Welcome! To finish off our exploration of pick playing, we're going to look at a couple of things related to playing bigger intervals. As we've noted before, every technique takes on a whole new level of difficulty when we start to move it across the strings, but it can get even harder when we want to be able to control how long each note lasts.

To start with, we're going to look at how to play open strings as a drone note underneath fretted notes higher up the neck. This is a technique that's been used to great effect by a number of rock greats, including Doug Pinnick, Justin Chancellor, Julie Slick and Jason Newsted. It can be a great way to keep the low end present while also adding to the melody or harmony of the song in a more involved way.

Let's start with some octave patterns using the open A string. **Exercise 1** starts with just two eighth notes on the low A and the A at the 7th fret on the D string:

EXERCISE 1

I've notated the picking as all down strokes, but there are a number of ways we can try this. For example, if you try the economy picking idea from last month, you may find

that you struggle to get much 'drive' out of the line. That's certainly my experience, but it's also worth experimenting with, because the greater the number of ways you have to play any line, the richer the range of grooves you'll have available to you when it comes to playing, writing or improvising music. If you start on an up stroke with the pick, you can then play two consecutive down strokes, followed by two consecutive up strokes. Please experiment, but definitely make sure you can play this consistently and with solid dynamics, using all down strokes.

Another factor you might want to vary is the amount that each pair of notes gets to ring over the other two. Try it with both the low and high notes ringing, then try to mute either one to clean up the sound.

One technique we can employ here is palm muting, where we rest the heel of our hand on the strings right next to the bridge. The easiest way to get your hand into position for this is to place your hand vertically over the bridge (see page 68) and then roll your hand down onto the strings. This gives you a really

solid amount of mass resting on the strings, which can then be adjusted by moving your hand a tiny bit forwards or backwards. Notes played with a pick while palm muting sound clipped and percussive, and can often present a very different feel for songs where you're struggling to find the right groove for the bass-line. The gaps between the notes leave the song feeling a lot more spacious, while the hard attack of the pick helps to keep the whole song moving forward.

Let's vary the line, and add in a G to the higher part, as in the next exercise.

EXERCISE 2

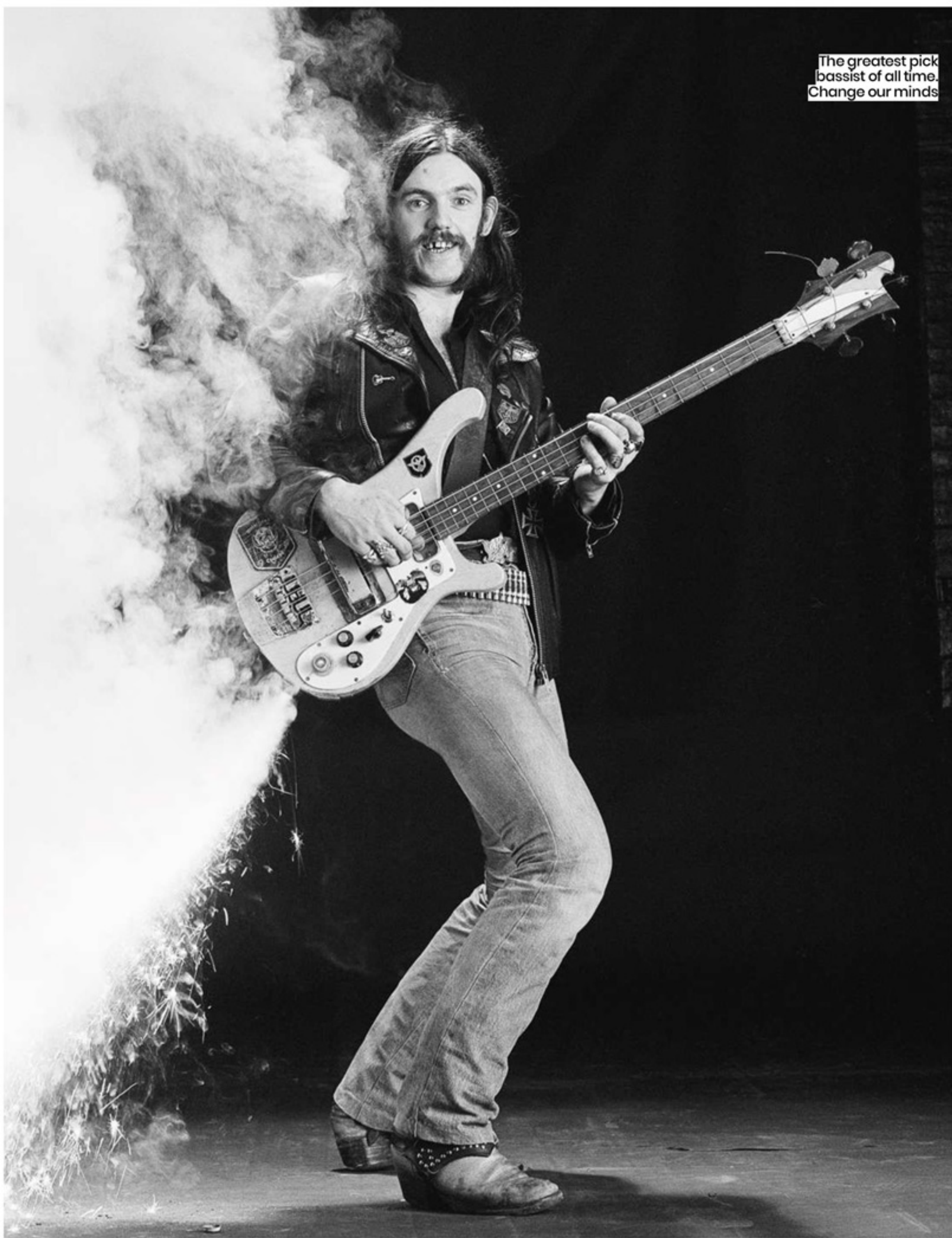
This time, I've notated it with alternating up and down strokes, which can help to emphasise the quarter-note feel. Try it with this alternate picking pattern and again with all down strokes, and see which feel you prefer.

I've changed the octave of the two As at the start of the repeated four-note phrase to highlight how shifting octaves can help to give a longer arc to an otherwise very short

Playing an open string underneath fretted notes can be a great way to keep the low end present while adding to the melody or harmony

EXERCISE ONE

The greatest pick
bassist of all time.
Change our minds



The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in three staves. The top staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The middle staff contains a series of 'V' and '□' symbols, likely representing a simplified notation for the melody. The bottom staff is a guitar fretboard diagram with two lines, 'T' (top) and 'B' (bottom), showing fingerings for the melody. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

The musical notation for the bass line of "The Sound of Silence" is shown in two staves. The top staff is a standard musical staff with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature. It contains two measures of music. The first measure starts with a quarter note on G2, followed by a quarter note on F2, then a half note on E2, and finally a half note on D2. The second measure starts with a quarter note on G2, followed by a quarter note on F2, then a half note on E2, and finally a half note on D2. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature staff with a 'TAB' label on the left. It contains two measures of numbers. The first measure has the numbers 0, 0, 7, and 9. The second measure has the numbers 0, 0, 10, and 12. The numbers are placed on the lines of the staff to indicate fret positions.

The great Bonnie
Buitrago of Nashville
Pussy applies pick to
string



EXERCISE FOUR



positions on the neck, and it's up to you to find the ones you like!

Consider this a musical treasure hunt. Start with the two we've used here and see how many other places up and down the D and G strings you can play that same interval over an open A and have it sound cool. Resist the urge to overcomplicate things here: just move that one shape up and down using the same picking pattern, and you may also find that taking your mind off what your picking hand is doing allows you to relax a little into your pick playing.

By this time, we've already spent a good amount of time playing with a pick. Adding in a practice idea that focuses on exploring a range of possible note choices will allow us to see how much of the picking motion is comfortable while we're looking at the neck, and conversely to what degree we still need to be looking intently at our picking hand to get things in the right order.

Finally for this month, to bring our short exploration of the pick to a close for now,

we're going to look at strumming. Playing double stops on bass has a long and illustrious history, and it only takes a minor modification of the technique we've used until this point in this month's column to be able to play two strings simultaneously rather than consecutively.

Again, we're going to use a drone string, and strum through that and one higher string – a technique employed very effectively by a lot of bassists, particular those who play eight- or 12-string basses, where the strings are in double or triple courses, repeated one octave higher for a chiming effect. Check out the work of players like Scott Reeder of Fireball Ministry and formerly of Kyuss, Monty Colvin from the Galactic Cowboys and the truly brilliant Amy Humphries of bass/drums duo Clatter.

EXERCISE 4

We're going to play Exercise 4 with all down strokes, without muting any of the strings, so we get that sustained droning sound. All

the notes are taken from the D Major scale, so if you've been working on finding the notes on the neck, you can explore the rest of the scale up and down the G string. Just remember about the F# and C# in there!

The slides between the notes as you move up and down the G string can be a very cool part of the sound, so work on making those shifts intentional. Very often when we're thinking about technique, particularly as beginners, we focus on playing things cleanly, but there are a lot of aspects of bass sound that can be anything but 'clean' but still be controlled and intentional. Lemmy's strummed chords, or Matt Freeman's solo on 'Maxwell Murders' by Rancid, aren't examples of clean, classical-like precision, but they are both incredibly well controlled. They use the sound of the strings clanging off the frets, and the slides between notes and chords, as a significant part of the character of the music. It is sometimes desirable to remove all the artefacts from a particular line, to have it sound totally clean and almost synth-like, but it's equally important to not get so lost in being precise that we lose the vibe.

Playing double stops like this with a pick offers a wonderful way to create a full and evocative sound with just the bass, and can be particularly effective for intros and breakdowns. Mixing up strummed notes with notes played separately, but allowed to ring out, can give a deceptively rich and full sound from one or two relatively simple technical approaches.

Hopefully these last few months have given you some ideas for developing your pick playing, and introduced you to a few new ways to approach writing bass-lines and adding new sounds into your arsenal of ideas. Keep experimenting, exploring and listening to the many great players we've mentioned throughout the lessons.

Finding the right inspiration can sometimes be as valuable as finding the right technical explanation, so make time to listen as well as play! ■

Playing double stops with a pick offers a wonderful way to create a full and evocative sound with just the bass – perfect for intros or breakdowns



'Deth, where is thy
sting? David Ellefson
wields the pick

NEXT STEPS

USE THE MELODIC MINOR SCALE



Phil Mann has built an enviable stage and studio career, and is here to help us take a leap to the next level. Let's go!

It's very common for you and I to see harmony and theory in black and white. Two plus two equals four – and that's the end of the debate! However, as bass is a melodic instrument, it's essential that the pitches we choose to play continue to uphold the harmony – otherwise entire compositions can be misinterpreted, or worse still, have the potential to collapse.

This school of thought isn't always employed by some of our neighbouring instruments. In fact, their perspective can be quite the contrary, as if a bassist's job is simply to hold down the harmonic fort while they create additional melodic tensions. The question is, therefore – are there any scales that we can utilise to create fresh, interesting sonic textures, while still upholding our commitments to the harmony?

The answer is yes. Let's take a look at the melodic minor scale, which can be described as a major scale with a flattened third. Its practical applications venture deeper than this simple description implies, though.

Our chum Robert Trujillo in the Black Label Society days



Getty

EXERCISE ONE

♩ = 100

Exercise 1 identifies the C melodic minor scale over two octaves. Once you've learned them, please transpose this structure chromatically, as this month's studies are very much focused on familiarisation. Melodic minor is a tonic minor chord, meaning that once you've identified a II-V-I progression in minor tonality, you can employ this scale to produce some innovative dialect.

EXERCISE TWO

♩ = 85

Exercise Two musical notation (Bass clef, 4/4 time, key signature of two flats). The exercise consists of two systems of music. Each system has a melodic line on a five-line staff and a corresponding fingering line below it. The melodic line contains groups of triplets of eighth notes. The fingering line shows the sequence of finger numbers (1-7) for each note. The first system covers measures 1-4, and the second system covers measures 5-8.

Example 2 requires you to deliver the scale in ascending and descending groups of triplets. Be aware that not only do the notes reside in unaccustomed positions, they are also delivered using a less-than-straightforward subdivision. Pay particular attention to the alternating nature of your index and middle fingers on your plucking hand, as the rhythmic requirements of triplets can be tricky!

EXERCISE THREE

♩ = 100

Exercise Three musical notation (Bass clef, 4/4 time, key signature of two flats). The exercise consists of two systems of music. Each system has a melodic line on a five-line staff and a corresponding fingering line below it. The melodic line contains groups of triplets of eighth notes. The fingering line shows the sequence of finger numbers (1-7) for each note. The first system covers measures 1-4, and the second system covers measures 5-8.

Melodic minor's accompanying arpeggio is the minor (Maj 7th), as in this example. The inclusion of the major 7th interval might seem a bit odd, but that's the point, as it acts as a leading note. The arpeggio itself is constructed by stacking a minor 3rd, a major 3rd and another major 3rd in succession. Work through the example, and once you're comfortable, transpose the first arpeggio and its subsequent inversions through all keys.

★ Intermediate Lesson



Geddy Lee: neck and neck with his peers

Getty

EXERCISE FOUR

♩ = 65 Gm^(Δ7)

Exercise Four is an eight-measure motif in G minor (Gm^(Δ7)) at a tempo of 65 beats per minute. The notation is presented in three systems, each with a bass staff and a corresponding fretboard diagram.

System 1: The first staff shows the melodic line in bass clef, 4/4 time. The fretboard diagram below it shows the fingerings for the first four measures.

System 2: The second staff continues the melodic line. The fretboard diagram below it shows the fingerings for the next four measures.

System 3: The third staff shows the final two measures of the eight-measure motif. The fretboard diagram below it shows the fingerings for these measures.

Here's a relatively straightforward eight-bar motif. As you work through the measures you'll notice that each of the phrases resolves back to the notes of the triad. From a bass-playing perspective, this is a powerful melodic strategy, as it allows you to step in and out of the melodic framework while still encouraging you to acknowledge the chord tones.

EXERCISE FIVE

♩ = 100

Chord progressions for Exercise Five:

- Chord 1:** $Cm^{(\Delta 7)}$
- Chord 2:** Dm^7
- Chord 3:** $E\flat\Delta 7(\#5)$
- Chord 4:** $F7(\#11)$
- Chord 5:** $G7(b13)$
- Chord 6:** $Am^7(b5)$
- Chord 7:** $Bm^7(b5)$
- Chord 8:** $Cm^{(\Delta 7)}$

The exercise is written in bass clef, 4/4 time. The first system contains the first four measures, and the second system contains the last four measures. Each measure includes a bass line and a guitar fretboard diagram with string numbers (1-6) and fret numbers (0-10) indicated.

As per major harmony, melodic minor can also be harmonised to produce an array of different structures. Whereas in its major counterpart you're accustomed to hearing names such as 'Dorian', 'Phrygian' and 'Aeolian', in melodic minor you'll frequently encounter titles such as 'Lydian Dominant' and 'the Altered scale'. Example 5 refreshes the order in which the 7th arpeggios appear within melodic minor harmony. Pay particular attention to the structures in bars three and six, as these will be the focus of the next exercises.

EXERCISE SIX

♩ = 100

Exercise Six is written in bass clef, 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of four measures each. The first system is in the key of C major, and the second system is in the key of D major. Each measure includes a bass line and a guitar fretboard diagram with string numbers (1-6) and fret numbers (0-10) indicated.

Let's look at one of the preceding structures: Major 7th ($\#5$) chords. Built upon an augmented triad, the structure is reminiscent of a conventional Major 7th arpeggio, but the presence of a raised fifth alters the sound, making it far more dissonant. You'll find that portraying this arpeggio in a linear manner improves access to the upper register. More specifically, delivering the tonic and major 3rd pitches on the same string may come as a bit of a stretch, but you'll immediately feel the benefits.

★ Intermediate Lesson

EXERCISE SEVEN

♩ = 70

G Δ 7(#5)

C Δ 7(#5)

F Δ 7(#5)

Example 7 continues to explore the melodic and harmonic properties of the Major 7th (#5) chord. If you have access to any form of sequencer, this could be an ideal opportunity to establish a harmonic loop, as a backing track will really help you to paint a sonic picture. We're in 12/8 here: this is a time signature portrayed by four groups of three eighth notes per measure.

EXERCISE EIGHT

♩ = 100

The objective of this month's studies is to gain fluency with the less familiar chord structures associated with the melodic minor scale. The subject of this exercise may feel more recognisable than the earlier examples, as it also appears on the seventh diatonic step of major harmony. However, minor 7th, 5 structures reside upon both the sixth and seventh diatonic degrees of melodic minor.

EXERCISE NINE

♩ = 100

G⁷

First system of Exercise Nine, G⁷ section. The staff shows a melodic line in 4/4 time with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a trill (tr) on the final note. The fretboard diagram below shows the corresponding fingerings: 3-3, X-5-5-3-2-5, 3-3, X-8-9-7-8-10, 3-3, X-5-5-3-2-5.

C⁷

Second system of Exercise Nine, C⁷ section. The staff shows a melodic line in 4/4 time with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a trill (tr) on the final note. The fretboard diagram below shows the corresponding fingerings: 3-3, X-10-8-7-9-10-7-9-7, 8-8, 10-10-7-X-10-10-8-7-10, 8-8, X-8-9-7-8-9.

G⁷

Third system of Exercise Nine, G⁷ section. The staff shows a melodic line in 4/4 time with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a trill (tr) on the final note. The fretboard diagram below shows the corresponding fingerings: 3-3, X-5-5-3-2-5, 5-5, X-X-5-5-X-X-5-3-2-5-9-7-8-10.

Minor 7th (♭5) chords are more common than you'd think, especially when excavating minor tonality. A rudimentary approach to dominant 7th vocabulary is to employ the associated arpeggio, or indeed the Mixolydian mode; also consider that a minor 7th (♭5) arpeggio played off the major third of a dominant chord has the ability to produce some wonderful sonic textures. The application isolates the primary chord tones of the dominant structure while incorporating the 9th and omitting the root. You'll encounter this melodic superimposition in every other bar of the exercise. Good luck, and I'll see you next month!

If you only practise one thing this month...

If you study the harmonisation of the melodic minor, you'll encounter three differing chord structures: minor (Maj 7th), Major 7th (#5) and minor 7th (♭5). Concentrate your efforts on the arpeggios associated with those structures. Don't shy away from these arpeggios just because they're new vocabulary – even the smallest steps in their interpretation will help you see the bigger picture.

Ron Carter:
yes, he plays
electric bass too



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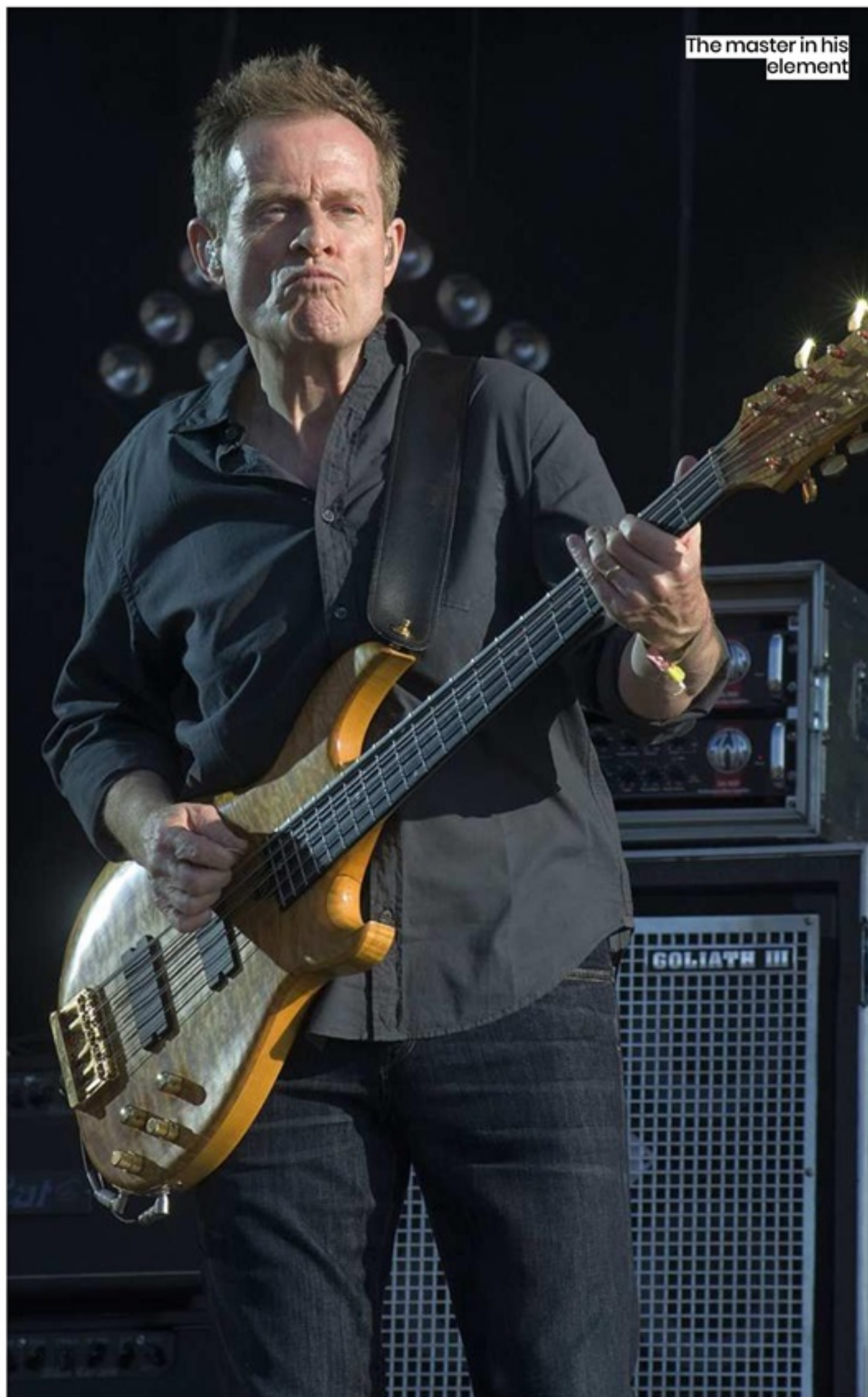
Ace bass educator Stuart Clayton guides us to the peak of the bass skills pyramid. Achieve your goals here!

Over the course of the last few issues, we've been taking an in-depth look at bassists who have played a pivotal role in the development of the slap bass technique. But in a break from our scheduled programming, we're going to set the slap bass aside for this issue, and instead focus our attention on this month's cover star, John Paul Jones. As most bassists will already know, Jones has played an important part in the development of the bass guitar's role in rock music, and his work is rightly celebrated.

John Baldwin (his real name) was born in Sidcup, Kent on 3 January 1946. Raised by musical parents, he showed an early aptitude for music and began learning the piano and organ at just six years old. With his mother and father often engaged in their own musical careers away from home, John attended a boarding school as a child, where he received a formal music education. By 14, he had become both the organist and choirmaster at his school and was also working during the evenings in his father's dance band.

While in his early teens John developed an interest in the bass guitar, which at the time was a relatively new instrument. Although keen for his son to pursue a career in music, his father felt that his efforts would be better focused on an instrument more conducive to finding regular work. John's enthusiasm soon won him over, however, and he agreed to help him buy his first bass, a Dallas Tuxedo. He began by playing along with the radio, taking influence from Motown and Stax legends James Jamerson and Duck Dunn. In the process of studying the work of these hugely influential bassists, he gained familiarity with bass-line construction and harmony, which he was able to understand thanks to his earlier music training.

After leaving school he found work with Jet Harris's band, the Jet Blacks. This in turn led him into a session career that soon found him playing bass for artists such as Tom Jones, Burt Bacharach and Sammy Davis Jr. Additionally, his musical education meant that he was also able to find work as an



The master in his element

EXERCISE ONE

♩ = 180

The exercise is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 180 bpm. It consists of two systems, each with a staff and a fretboard diagram. The first system shows a descending pentatonic line: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2. The second system shows an ascending pentatonic line: C2, D2, E2, F2, G2. The fretboard diagrams show the corresponding fret numbers for each note.

Like most rock bass players, Jones often turned to pentatonic lines when playing a supportive role. This exercise is an up-tempo E minor pentatonic-based line that recalls Jones' playing during sections of 'Dazed and Confused', which can be heard on the band's debut album.

arranger, and before long he was writing string arrangements for artists such as the Rolling Stones, Cliff Richard and Dusty Springfield. It was during this period that adopted his stage name, John Paul Jones.

By 1968, Jones was tiring of session work and had begun to look for other musical opportunities. At the same time, guitarist and fellow session player Jimmy Page was experiencing problems as a member of the Yardbirds: the band had split, leaving only Page and bassist Chris Dreja to attempt to fulfil some existing touring commitments around Scandinavia. When Dreja decided to quit the group as well, Page asked John to step in as the band's new bassist. They were joined by vocalist Robert Plant, who in turn recommended drummer John Bonham.

The quartet travelled to Scandinavia to play the required shows using the temporary name of the New Yardbirds. Upon returning to the UK, the band decided to continue working together and subsequently renamed themselves Led Zeppelin. And the rest, as they say, is history...

Jones' bass work with Led Zeppelin was innovative right from the beginning of the band's career. Let's take a look at some exercises which showcase some elements of Jones' playing. ■



★ Advanced Lesson

EXERCISE TWO

♩ = 110

E7(♯9)

7 7 6 7 0 8 9 | 7 7 9 9 7 9 0 7 8 9 0 | 7 7 6 6 6 7 7 8 0 8 9

A7

0 7 8 9 0 7 8 9 0 5 6 | 7 0 0 4 4 4 5 5 5 6 6 7 7 | 0 0 0 4 4 4 5 5 5 6 6 6

E7(♯9)

B7

7 7 6 7 0 8 9 | 7 7 9 9 7 4 0 7 7 8 8 | 9 9 9 11 9 11 13 11 13 11 9 11 9

A7

E7

B7(♯9)

7 7 7 9 11 11 9 7 7 8 9 | 7 7 7 6 6 6 7 7 7 8 8 8 | 9 9 9 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

Unlike other rock players, Jones wasn't restricted to pentatonic riffing, and his studies of bassists such as James Jamerson and Duck Dunn enabled him to play intricate, improvised, R&B-style lines. This complex exercise is an illustration of the kind of lines that Jones played on 'The Lemon Song', from the band's second album. Against a conventional 12-bar blues in E, Jones played a busy, sixteenth note-based part which was at times very heavily syncopated. Note the use of open strings in this example (indicated with an 'o' in the notation), as well as the major pentatonic riffing during the turnaround (bars 9-10).

EXERCISE THREE

$\text{♩} = 110$

E⁵ D A E⁵

4 D A E⁵ D A

7 E⁵ D A

0 0 0 7 0 7 6 5 7 6 5 3 5 5 0 4 5 2 3 0 0 0 7 0 7 8 9 7 9 8 7

5 5 0 4 5 2 3 0 0 0 7 0 12 13 14 12 13 14 12 5 5 0 4 5 2 3

0 0 0 7 0 16 14 16 15 14 12 14 12 12 4 5 2 3

The configuration of bass, drums and guitar in Led Zeppelin left Jones with a lot of room in which to experiment. As a result, he often played very active bass parts. This example is a simple three-chord riff, played over two bars: imagine the guitar sustaining power chords throughout this one. After playing the opening E-based motif, Jones might play improvised lines using the blues scale to add interest to the remainder of the bar. You'll notice that each of the E-based licks here is different, reflecting the improvisational nature of John's playing. Power chords are also used here, in the second bar of the riff.



Gerry

EXERCISE FOUR

♩ = 90

Sheet music for Exercise Four, featuring a bass line in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 90. The music is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

The first system consists of two measures. The first measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, a quarter note G, and a quarter note F. The second measure contains a quarter note E, a quarter note D, a quarter note C, and a quarter note Bb. The fretboard diagram below the first system shows the following fingerings: 5, 3, 5, 3, 5, 4, 3, 1, 3, 1, 1, 3, 4, 5, 3, 3.

The second system consists of two measures. The first measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, a quarter note G, and a quarter note F. The second measure contains a quarter note E, a quarter note D, a quarter note C, and a quarter note Bb. The fretboard diagram below the second system shows the following fingerings: 5, 3, 5, 4, 3, 1, 3, 1, 3, 3, 1.

As was the case for many of the rock groups that grew out of the blues era, the blues scale was an important resource for riffs as well as bass-lines. An excellent example of this is 'Heartbreaker', from Led Zeppelin's second album. This exercise is a blues scale-based riff that illustrates how effective this can be. I recommend playing this one on a P-Bass and cranking up the gain on your amp for a fat, driven tone.

EXERCISE FIVE

♩ = 90

The exercise is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 90 beats per minute. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a bass staff and a guitar staff. The bass staff shows a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The guitar staff shows the corresponding fretboard positions, with 'X' marks indicating muted notes or specific techniques. The first system is 8 measures long, and the second system is also 8 measures long, ending with a double bar line.

Jones was comfortable playing either fingerstyle or with a plectrum, and used both techniques during his time with Led Zeppelin. This riff is similar in style to 'Whole Lotta Love' and should be played with a pick. Jones' part on this track is notable for the way he doubles many of the notes: rather than simply play the D note at the fifth fret of the A-string, he also adds the open D, resulting in a thicker sound. Similarly, when riffing along on the E, he plays both the fretted E on the A-string, as well as the open E-string. The result is a much more powerful-sounding riff.



The Last Note

Hello! Your ears are way more delicate than you think, and it's all too easy to take good hearing for granted. We may have excelled in our ability to make a lump of wood rumble at levels that can not only move us emotionally but physically – but human evolution hasn't quite caught up with technology enough for us to withstand these electronically elevated conditions. Take heed!

Go on then, Veall – please illuminate us about our ears.

The outer, fleshy part of an ear, the pinna, directs energy down the ear canal to an eardrum, the tympanic membrane. This is vibrated by this energy and in turn vibrates a delicate set of bones – the smallest in the human skeleton, in fact: the hammer (malleus), anvil (incus) and stirrup (stapes). The last of these is tiny, at just two to three millimetres in size, and is correspondingly fragile. The inner ear is home to the cochlea, a spiral-shaped structure that is filled with fluid and cilia – tiny hairs that move when vibrated, causing a nerve impulse. Now these are extremely delicate: the length of a single cilium is between one and 10 micrometres, and its width is less than a single micrometre.

Yeah, yeah... so what?

Excessive sound pressure levels received at the eardrum are further amplified by these delicate structures – yes, amplified!

That doesn't sound good.

In terms of hearing damage, the main factors are volume, duration of exposure and proximity to sound. The World Health Organisation has defined guidelines on how long an adult should be exposed to noise levels. For children, the time is much shorter.

So how loud is loud?

Sound Pressure Level (SPL) meters measure how loud sound is in decibels, or dBA. For example, rainfall clocks in at 50dBA, while 70dBA matches

up to a group conversation, a vacuum cleaner or an alarm clock. You'll get around 91dBA from a passing motorcycle, 94dBA from a hairdryer or food processor, and 100dBA when you're listening to music through headphones. Up at the dangerous end, 112dBA is the audience of a rock concert – and

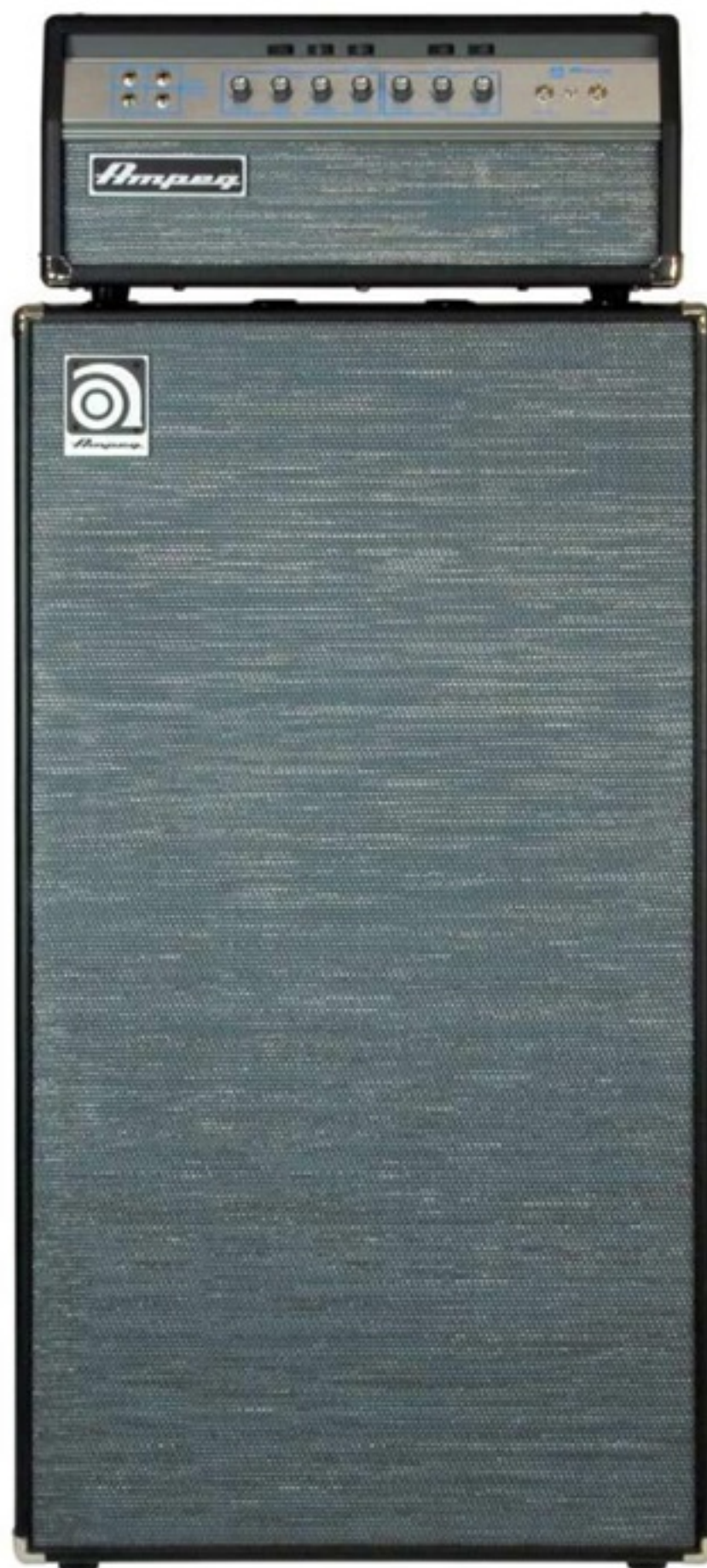
a jet plane taking off is 120dBA, the threshold of pain.

So what's a safe level?

The WHO suggests that 70dBA is safe for up to 40 hours per week. Above 80dBA, prolonged exposure should be halved for every additional 3dBA rise in SPL, because the damage will



Dan Veall is a session and stage bass player, educator and gear expert and is here to answer your questions. Contact @DanVeallBassist



PROTECT YOUR HEARING

Keep your ears in good shape with these essential tips

happen faster. That means 83dBA for 20 hours, 89dBA for five hours and at 101 dBA, you're down to just under 19 minutes before damage occurs. For a child, that's six minutes.

As a bassist, what can I do to look after my hearing?

Learn that playing at ear-splitting volume isn't as helpful as you think it is, for your ears and your performance. Wear good quality earplugs in both ears. Filtered types are not expensive and do a good job of attenuating volume uniformly, but even foam earplugs are better than nothing at all. Don't run a single in-ear monitor or earphone on its own. There will be a tendency to turn it up louder than ambient noise due to the way our hearing works, and you'll put your ear at risk of damage. Let's not forget the ear that is open to loud ambient sound too: it's a lose-lose situation. Do not run IEMs too loud – they seal the ear canal and are very close to your delicate eardrum.

My ears ring after a gig or rehearsal. Is that bad?

It could be. Whistling, ringing, or white noise after prolonged exposure to any noisy environment may indicate damage that you've caused by not protecting your ears. The ringing may abate, but the damage is still done. One day you'll wake up and the noise won't have gone away... Look after yourselves and your ears, please! ■



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