

STANLEY CLARKE SPELLCASTER

ENFIELD ANTOINETTE



bassplayer

THE **TRUTH**
BEHIND THE
MOTOWN
MYSTERY

James

JAMERSON

Carol

KAYE

Who played what? *The new evidence that reveals all*



BARENAKED LADIES
Jim Creeggan

STYX
Chuck Panozzo and
Ricky Phillips

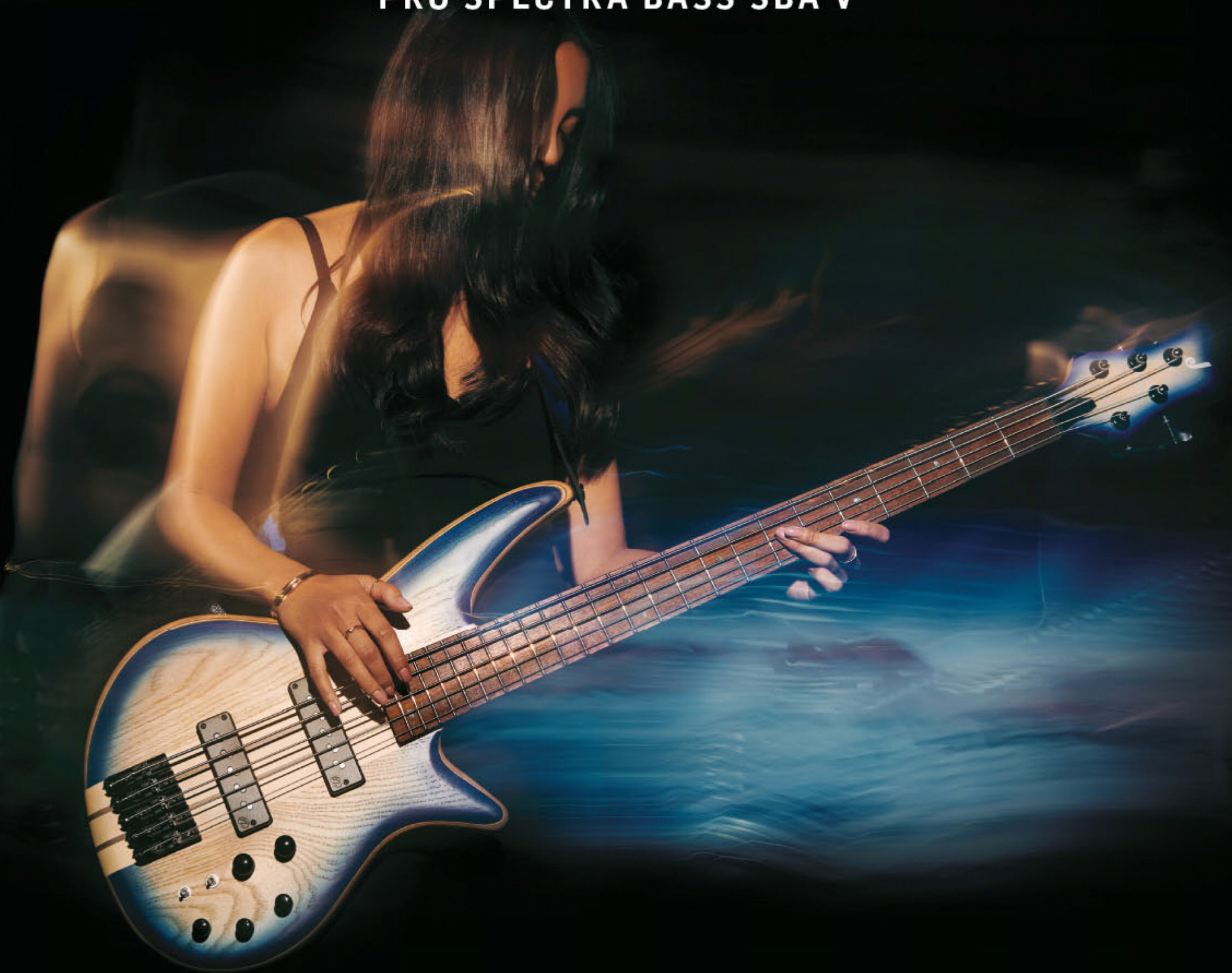
Isobella Burnham
Wolfgang Van Halen
Malcolm-Jamal
Warner



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WELCOME



We all owe a debt to the mighty James Jamerson and Carol Kaye.

We bass players pride ourselves on acknowledging the pioneers of our instrument, and giving credit where it's due. Just take a look at any 'Greatest Bassist'

poll of the last few years: a large portion of the results will be devoted to bassists from the Sixties and Seventies, and quite rightly so.

So why has there been so much confusion when it comes to the legacies of James Jamerson and Carol Kaye, surely the archetypes of our instrument? In this issue, we examine a long-standing debate over which of these great bassists played on which Sixties hit songs at the Motown stable. Our conclusions respect each bass player's unparalleled contribution to our world, and some welcome clarity is gained in doing so. That's our job, after all.

Elsewhere, we enjoy hugely entertaining quality time with a huge range of bassists, from the classic to the current and back again. Meet Jim Creeggan of Barenaked Ladies, rock royalty Wolfgang Van Halen, TV star-turned-bassist Malcolm-Jamal Warner, and gospel veteran Robin Bramlett, for starters. We also sit down with the great Mike Watt, we bring you Charles Mingus and Squarepusher news, we salute Lemmy, and we zero in on four brand-new bass players for whom the future is very bright.

Gear-wise, we get a first look at Stanley Clarke's new Spellcaster bass, we road-test Enfield and Warwick instruments, and we plug into two new Ampeg combos. Looking for bass lessons? Look no further, with our elite team joined this month by the acclaimed Rich Brown. Welcome on board, Rich.

Enjoy this issue, and stay in the groove!

Joel McIver, Editor



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THE Lowdown

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

BASS BROUGHT BACK

Classic album reissues are on the way from two legendary bassists.

The late jazz bassist, composer, and *bon viveur* Charles Mingus, whose influence on our world is incalculable, recorded the *Mingus At Carnegie Hall* album live in New York in 1974. Two extended tracks from the two-hour concert—‘Perdido’ and ‘C Jam Blues’—appeared on this single LP, but the rest of the audio has remained under wraps until now, when a deluxe double CD and triple LP version of the album has been announced for release shortly after you read this. A full 72 minutes of the show has never been officially released before. “The deluxe 3-LP set features never-before-seen photos taken by original photographer Gosta Peterson, new liner notes by jazz historian and producer, Michael Cuscuna, and additional notes by composer and arranger, Sy Johnson,” runs the publicity.

A classic bass album from pretty much the polar opposite direction from Mingus is also set for reissue from Squarepusher, aka Tom Jenkinson. His 14-song debut album *Feed Me Weird Things* was originally released by Aphex Twin’s Rephlex label in 1996, and has been out of print for some time. The new reissued version allows us to hear Jenkinson’s unusual but enthralling bass playing once again, in an environment that is one part uncategorizable experimentalism to two parts jungle and EDM. ■

Benny

Squarepusher and Charles Mingus: Both pioneers of bass







Groove Is In The Heart

New Accugroove remodel incoming.

Veteran cab-makers AccuGroove have announced the first major remodel in almost two decades of their bestselling Tri 112L range, introducing the AccuGroove Tri 112+. As they tell us, “These upgrades bring unparalleled performance with more power and clarity to the Full Range Flat Response workhorses. Changes include new 12” woofers, a new 6” midrange, and a new crossover.” The new cabs are available as Passive, Powered or Power-Plus variants, and as soon as we get a chance to plug into them, we’ll report back on their performance. ■



Love Lines

A great bass-line in 85 words

Weather Report, ‘Teen Town’ (1977)

On his first full Weather Report album, *Heavy Weather*, Jaco Pastorius still had plenty to prove, and contributed this iconic track, which showcases several of his best moves, including those plucked sixteenths in the intro, spiralling up into the midrange, counterpointing the famous horn motif, and playing in unison with Joe Zawinul’s ascending keyboard sequence. Few bassists can play this line accurately; even fewer can play it like Jaco did. ■



ASSUME NOTHING

Chloe Peacock challenges received bass wisdom...



What a crazy month this has been. To inspire this new column,

I asked the social media community for examples of negative assumptions, and in doing so opened a conversation within my own circles. One response that stood out came from my good friend Rachel Rhodes, an excellent solo bassist, songwriter and singer, who mentioned that one very common assumption which she encounters comes from being an extended-range bass player.

As she told us, a lot of people have very strong biases. “They assume I can’t groove, and that I don’t know how to be a bass player in a group setting. They think I must have a bad attitude toward other bassists, that I’m a frustrated guitarist, or that I can’t play a four-string!” laments Rachel.

How often have you seen the “Four strings were enough for Jaco” argument taken too far? What could have started out as a playful joke could be the 50th time that someone has had to face that very comment in a given week. Even the most well-intentioned jokes get tiring. For Rachel, coping methods vary—but as she says, “Mostly I just accept that I’m not for everyone. Be yourself and the right people will find you.” We couldn’t agree more. ■

Got an assumption to share? Insta: @assume_bassplayermag



FLY DATE

Tech21 release the Bass Fly Rig v2, a portable SansAmp

We make no secret here at BP about how much we’re impressed by Tech21 gear, not least because we’ve tried—and failed—many times over the years to trick their various SansAmps into thinking we’re not Steve Harris, Dug Pinnick or Geddy Lee. No, this is not a paid-for ad page—the things just work, which is why we’re keen to play through their new Bass Fly Rig, a transportable version of the venerable SansAmp.

According to its makers, the Fly Rig v2—updated from the original 2014 model—is “an easily transportable solution to getting rich, expressive combinations you can use for any gig—on-stage or in the studio,

whether it’s around the corner or across the pond, whether the backline is top-drawer or bottom shelf.” We have nothing but respect for the many other excellent companies in this product sector, but what will make this gizmo desirable is the tried-and-trusted SansAmp tech and heritage that goes into it. As they tell us, “The indispensable, all-analog SansAmp heart is what makes a Tech 21 Fly Rig a true Fly Rig and enables you to go direct to a PA or studio mixers and computer interfaces.”

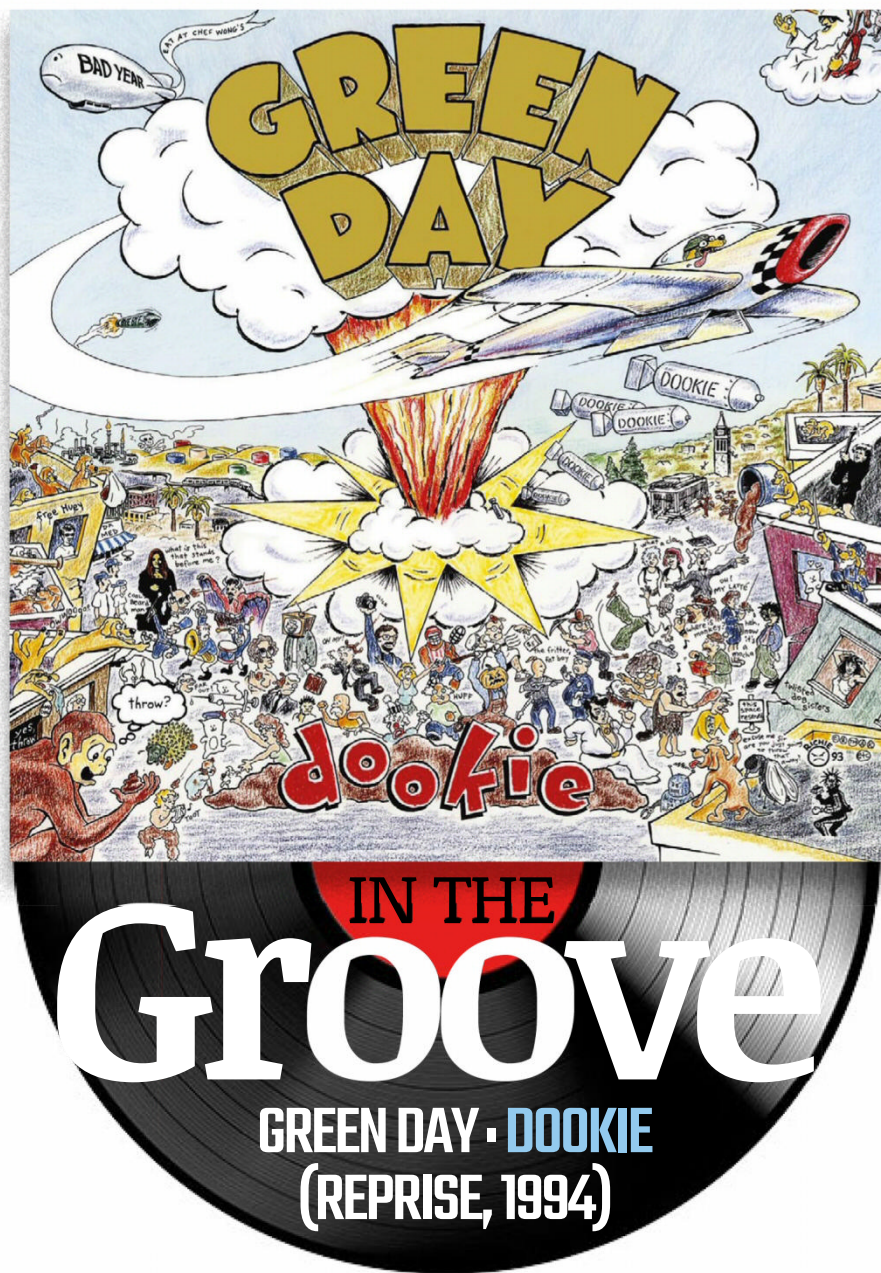
The Bass Fly Rig v2 comes with a choice of SansAmp Bass Driver DI for classic tube amp tones or VT Bass DI for Ampeg-style tones. There’s channel switching for drive and level settings, an effects loop, a three-band active

We’ve tried—and failed—many times over the years to trick Tech21’s SansAmps into thinking we’re not Steve Harris, Dug Pinnick or Geddy Lee



EQ, compressor, chorus, octaver, fuzz, chromatic tuner, XLR out, and 1/4” padded input. Illuminated mini-controls show you what’s happening, a power supply is included, the dimensions are 12.5” x 2.5” x 1.25” (318 x 64 x 38mm) and the weight is 20.7 oz (587g). Grab it for around 300 dollars or pounds, as you prefer. ■





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

The original punk scene threw up some unique players back in the day, as more or less any music fan over 50 will tell you—Paul Simonon, Glen Matlock, and Jean-Jacques Burnel among them. Even poor, doomed Sid Vicious brought a certain macabre charisma to the music, plugged in or otherwise. But in today's equivalents of the punk scene—the pop-punk, emo, and hardcore movements—the best that can be said of most of the relevant bass players is that they can hold down a line pretty tightly.

Not so of Mike Dirnt, bassist with arguably the first and biggest pop-punk act, Green Day. He was born Mike Pritchard, and is said to have got his stage name from his habit of playing air bass with a pick and muttering 'dirnt, dirnt, dirnt'. Once up and running in the renowned power trio, forming a muscular rhythm section with drummer Tre Cool, he found a superb, scooped tone that cut clearly through guitarist Billie Joe Armstrong's riffs.

A reasonable, if unlikely, comparison point for Dirnt's big-bottomed, razor-edged sound is that of Duff McKagan of Guns N'Roses, also a player of punk stock, whose band was imploding round about the time that Green Day took off.

Still, if tone was all that Dirnt had to recommend his playing, he wouldn't have

**Mike Dirnt
pulled off the feat
of serving the
music while also
running about
the fretboard like
a madman.**



Mike Dirnt: Not a huge fan of strap locks

made our Rare Grooves column, which—as everyone knows—is pretty much the closest that the bass world has to its own Academy Awards. No, Mike also threw in bass fills to die for across the instrument's whole range, while always retaining a super-tight control of his playing that meant that his lines never interfered with the songs themselves.

Octave runs, upper-register pull-offs, slides, cheeky scales: The man pulled off the disturbingly mature feat of sounding like a pro and serving the music while also running about the fretboard like a madman. It was hardly a punk approach as we knew it back in the Seventies, but it was part and parcel of the new punk style, and for anyone who plays in a hard-driving band, it's been a welcome evolution. Punk no longer has to mean primitive.

You can hear Dirnt at his best on Green Day's breakthrough album *Dookie*, although the fellow was on maddeningly excellent form on *American Idiot* a decade later, too. Nowadays, he delivers the goods via a huge-selling signature Fender Precision, which you really should play if you ever get the chance. Dirnt also part-owns a successful café called Rudy's Can't Fail Diner in California, named after the well-known Clash song, so all in all, this punk-rock thing seems to have worked out pretty well for him. ■



Mike Watt

Michael David Watt was born just before Christmas, 1957, and is widely regarded as one of the most important punk and post-punk bassists ever to have lived. His first band, Minutemen, blended punk with jazz and funk, but ended with the death of its frontman D. Boon in a car accident in 1985. Watt went on to play with Firehose, released several solo albums, and guested

with Iggy Pop and the Stooges. In the 2000s, he continued his musical explorations with a series of collaborations, culminating in his new album, *Stove Top*. Having started his bass career on a cheap Kay, he went on to use a 1956 Fender Precision, and then a Gibson Thunderbird which he hacked to install a Bartolini preamp. Watt underwent surgery in 2000 and, following his recovery, switched to lighter, short-scale basses

including a Gibson EB-3. These days, he plays his Reverend signature Wattplower bass, which he co-designed alongside Ken Haas and Joe Naylor over seven years and nine prototypes. His preferred amp is a DNA-1350, pushing sound through a Barefaced Generation 2 Super Compact 1x12 and a Super Twin 2x12. We caught up with the ever-entertaining musician to talk punk, jazz and cross-discipline creativity. ■



MUST-HAVE ALBUM

THREE-LAYER CAKE

Stove Top (2021)



Watt's new album is a tour through countless styles: Punk, jazz, dub, funk, doom metal and more. Its experimental nature is built into the process, in fact. Mike Pride, the percussionist, appeared—remotely—on Watt's radio show, and the two decided to work together. "I've never met him in person," Watt explains. "But he was talking to me about the saxophonist Jack Wright, the avant-garde composer Bob Marsh, as well as all this kind of improvising and shit." Price then sent some drum tracks across to Watt, who responded by adding bass-lines. The cloud-based collaboration needed something else, though—a third member to complete the developing project. Enter Brandon Seabrook, a guitarist and banjo player who had previously impressed Watt at a gig in San Pedro. It turned out that Pride already had Seabrook in mind, and so the line-up was complete. "I asked him, 'Do you want to try this?'," and the result is that he brings a third layer – another layer to the cake. He brings a secret. To me this was a total validation of what music can be. Not all this making excuses why things are bumming you out, instead of trying to look for the old word: Opportunity. We ask ourselves how we can get over some of these obstacles." The result is an album that has no limits—of genre or expectation.



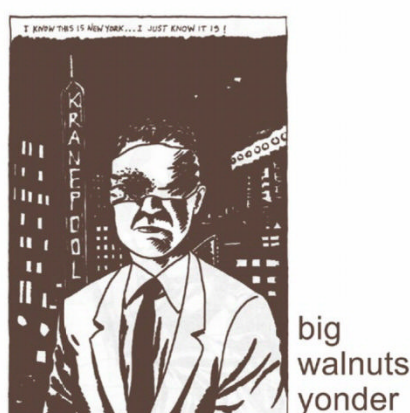
WORTHY CONTENDER

MIKE WATT

Hyphenated-Man
(2011)



The bassist's fourth solo album was a blast of 30 songs, each under two minutes long, inspired by the work of the 16th-century artist, Hieronymus Bosch. "I was a middle-aged punk rocker, and that was unusual because I never thought I'd make it to this age, so I wanted to write about that in a creative way," says Watt. The album was created on the back of a documentary about Watt's legendary band with the late D. Boon, the Minutemen. Losing his singer had been a very raw experience, he says. "I couldn't listen to the Minutemen records after D. Boon got killed. It was too emotional. But I had to, for this documentary, and I thought, 'I'd like to do this again, but it belongs to D. Boon, [drummer] George Hurley and myself. At the same time, I was playing in the Stooges and we were right next to Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid. I looked at the painting 'The Garden Of Earthly Delights' in real life, and I knew that was how I could do it: Use Bosch as a parallel, use the creatures in that painting. That's what the arts are for—transcendent realities. I can still do Minutemen kind of music through these filters of some Christian propaganda from Holland that's 400 years old. There's some heaven and hell issues, for sure, and I liked the dynamics in the idea of being less young."



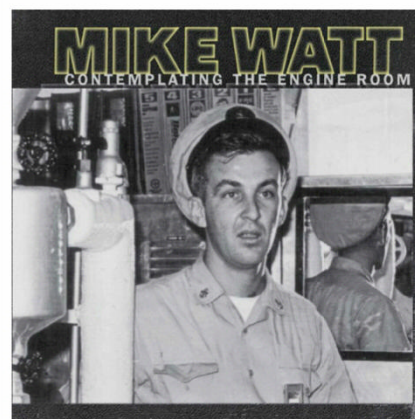
COOL GROOVES

BIG WALNUTS YONDER

Big Walnuts Yonder (2017)



This LP was recorded in New York City in 2014, with a line-up including Wilco guitarist Nels Cline, Deerhoof drummer Greg Saunier, and Nick Reinhart of Tera Melos on guitar and vocals. It is, says Watt, inspired by the way that jazz sessions would be constructed. "Raymond Pettibone introduced me to John Coltrane's music, and I went to see people from that scene like Elvin Jones, Ray Brown, Max Roach, all these guys. Incredible cats. They'd come together to play in recording sessions and document the situation. Tony Maimone produced the album. We came together and it was beautiful. It's what music is all about—being generous to each other. It is so special to be part of that, and I try to facilitate it by writing the songs. Composing on a bass leaves a lot more room compared to a piano or guitar, which have way more harmonic content and chord voicings. It was really genuine and organic, the way these cats could see two different time periods coming together. You gotta find out where the law is by pushing against it. You're really pushing these things in your head by artistically exploring. The punk movement got turned into just a lot of beats per minute and playing your guitar really fast, but that's only one way to do it—there are boatloads of ways."



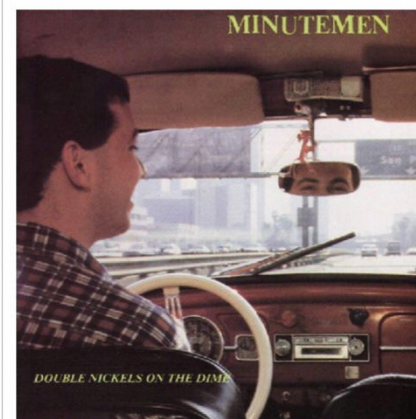
WILD CARD

MIKE WATT

Contemplating The Engine Room (1997)



Watt's punk opera is based around three workers in the engine room of a navy ship. His father was in the US Navy for 20 years, and the LP has many references to the stories that Watt Senior would tell when he got back to the shore. The protagonists in the songs for the most part are D. Boon, Hurley and Watt, enabling the bassist to consider the work of Minutemen while also paying tribute. Its storytelling spirit is inspired by James Joyce's Ulysses, and Watt has a colorful analogy for his approach: "It's a kind of humility. The way mortar is with bricks, or grout is with tiles. Most people look at the tiles. I look at the grout. The album is talking about me losing my best buddy. We did 15 days, each day a different part. I wouldn't reveal anything to the guys—Steve Hodges on drums and Nels Cline on guitar. It is basically a conversation between us three which instantly tells the story. It's not spending time with my friend or working the room, I specifically made the piece so it was only a recording situation. It wasn't about starting a band, doing a gig—that situation is so particular and cellular. Music is music. You can borrow from all kinds of traditions, because they're all related. The idea of genre is poison. Shortcuts. Fraud."



COULDA BEEN TIDIER

MINUTEMEN

Double Nickels On The Dime (1984)

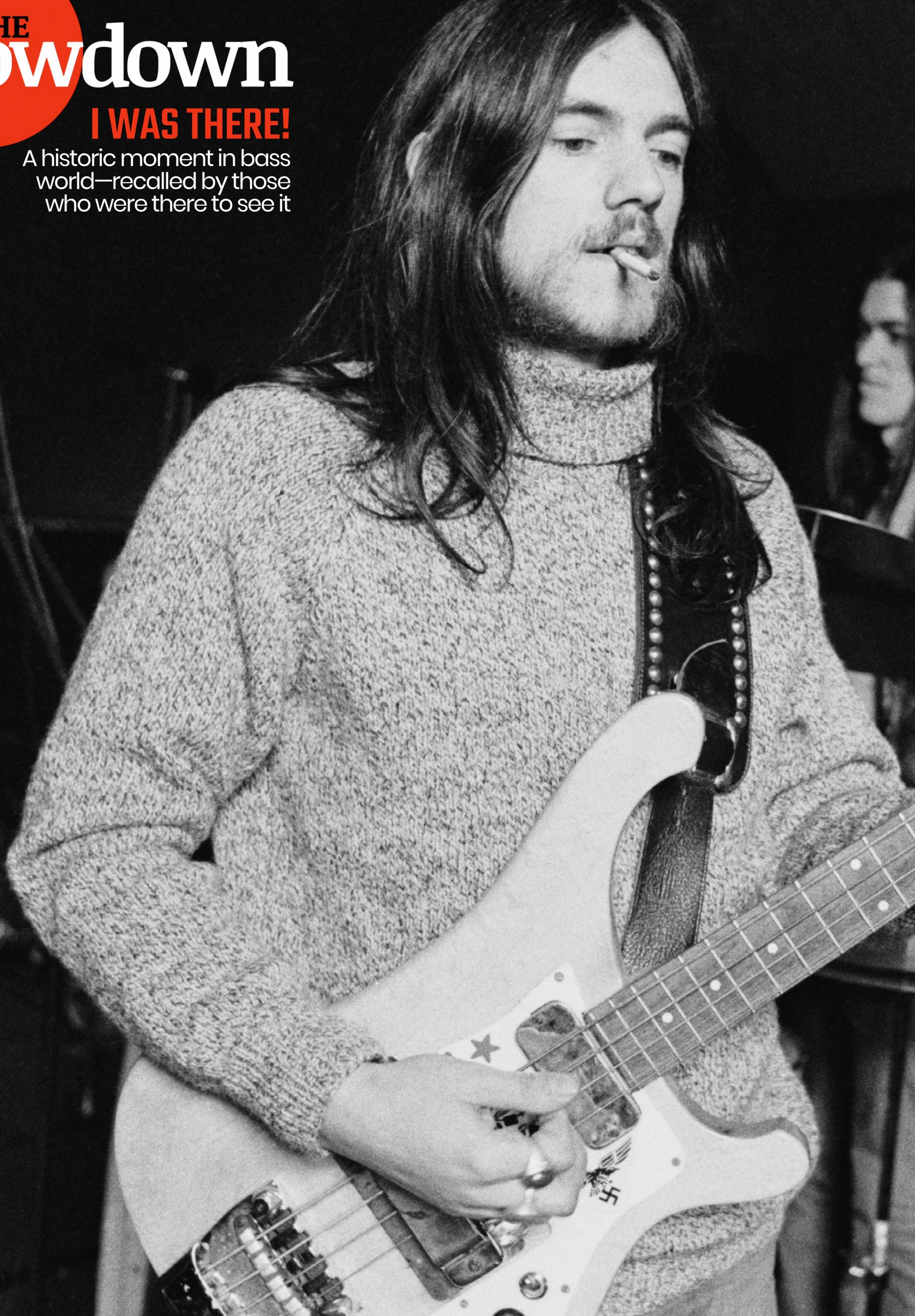


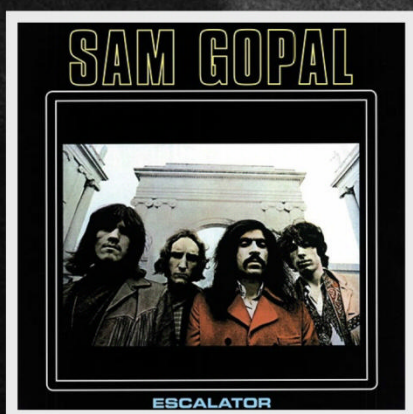
The great trio's third album is considered by many to be the band's apogee, a 45-song double album that regularly appears in all-time great lists, but Watt reckons it has a patchiness about it that wasn't necessary. "It was never intended to be a double album—until we heard Hüsker Dü were doing [their acclaimed 1984 album] *Zen Arcade*. We'd already recorded a bunch of songs the previous November, so like four months later, we recorded a second batch. It was epic, but was it ready for primetime? As always, shame the fuck out of me: 'Mr. Robot's Holy Orders' was part of that second batch in March, and I could have done it way better. I just wasn't ready—I was only 25 years old, so not a lot of experience under my belt. I was still a greenhorn in the studio and we rarely got involved with the recording process. It was almost like playing a gig in front of microphones for the producer, Ethan James. On that track I soiled myself in front of the world. It was six sessions, six days, one night to mix it all. It was basically bare-bones stuff, trying to capture the essence of Minutemen with the least amount of pollutants in the way. Ethan got the idea from R&B bands where guitar players would leave room for the bass and the drums. Not like that arena-rock shit where the guitar dominates."

THE Lowdown

I WAS THERE!

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





The *Escalator* album by Sam Gopal: “Half good”, as Lemmy later recalled

Future Motörhead bassist Lemmy makes a chemically-assisted appearance on a psychedelic freak-out in 1968

As readers over 55 who own a pair of loon pants will recall, psychedelia was an inventive genre of music, with the bands involved choosing to imbibe cortex-shredding amounts of drugs and sing about Winnie the Pooh and cups of tea. One unsung hero of the scene was Sam Gopal, a Malaysian tabla player who jammed with Jimi Hendrix, recruited Ian ‘Lemmy’ Kilmister to his band, and released a single, epic album: *Escalator*, released in 1968 as the movement peaked, the students rioted and the revolution seemed to be but a step away.

Fans of Lemmy need not be disappointed that he doesn’t play bass on *Escalator*, sticking to a surprisingly clean, dreamy tenor vocal and rhythm guitar instead. The bass parts come from Phil Duke, a session player who went on to supply the low end with dozens of acts. In any case, the unique selling point of this band was Gopal’s tabla set, which replaced a more conventional drum kit. The most obvious consequence of his choice to use tablas was that the songs were generally quieter and subtler, allowing the textures of the instrumentation to flow more easily, but a second, welcome effect from our point of view was that Duke’s liquid bass parts had great freedom to roam, as well as an enhanced supportive role. His compromise was to play parts that are droned and trance-like while establishing the song’s rhythm in the absence of any dominant percussion. The bass was also relatively high (like the band) in what was inevitably a fairly lo-fi mix.

“I thought that album was half good,” Lemmy told us back in 1999, meaning that it was not bad rather than literally only half good. “I wrote every song on that in one night on Methedrine. Those were the days, eh?” Elsewhere, he said: “Sam was really hard to play with. Now maybe it’s different, because you can amplify differently, but at the time, amplifying tablas was a nightmare... We did a show at [legendary London venue for ‘heads’] the Speakeasy, and when we got a standing ovation, we thought ‘That’s it, we’re stars’. We played about three other shows around London, which were awful, then we went to Munich and played for a week at the Blow Up club, which was even worse, and then we came home and broke up!”

Sadly, Gopal’s vision didn’t last long, with the players drifting on to other things and the general confusion of the psych scene—which saw bands spring up and collapse with alarming rapidity—contributing to the group’s impermanence. Duke went on to a successful career as a bass player, while Lemmy achieved bona fide stardom within a decade, and Gopal himself relocated to Munich, Germany, where he still lives and records today.

Perhaps all this is for the best, though: Like so many other groups who passed like ships in the night, only leaving a single souvenir behind them, there’s a bittersweet air about the Sam Gopal Dream’s music that still resonates. Anyway, the music lives on: You can see and hear the band play on YouTube. ■

Hello bassists! Over the last few issues, I've discussed how best to refine our edge when it comes to live performance, but this time around I thought it would be a great opportunity to hone in on one of the smaller—but still useful—details when playing live. Let's discuss our stage positioning and how this affects our ability to perform.

Now, many of us may never have consciously considered on which side of stage we want to stand, but it's often an underestimated factor. You may simply mirror the stage line-up of one of your favorite groups, or take the lead from other members of your band. Some bassists choose a side based on the overall look of the act, the number of band-members, or even whether they're left or right-handed.

Let's pick out some of the reasons why you might want to choose one side of the stage over the other.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

Stage left? Stage right?
Consider your position

SONIC SPLIT

If you're in a band with two guitarists, it would be a good idea for them to be on opposite sides of the stage, with the bassist and drummer on the inside. This helps the front-of-house engineer to more easily separate the guitars, which makes for a clearer and more defined overall sound.

TIMEKEEPING AND GROOVE

It's important for us, as half of the rhythm section, to be next to the drummer, but have you ever considered which side of the drums to be? The hi-hat is the

most consistent timekeeping measure on the kit, and being closest to it will aid your timing and ability to lock in tightly. If this isn't possible, you can compensate by asking for plenty of hi-hat in your monitor.

RIGHT OR LEFT HANDS

If you're positioned next to the lead vocalist on stage, I would recommend standing on the side that allows for your bass neck to angle away from them. There are many joyous videos of bassists or guitarists bumping into vocalists, so this will help to avoid that calamity.



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



BIMM
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VISUAL INTEREST

Other than what side of the stage to take, it's also important that you utilize the front and back of the stage. For low-key moments in your songs, you could hang nearer to your amp. For choruses, bass breaks, solos, or moments of focus, you could move to the front of the stage—and for pure rocking out and band interaction, you could get right by the kit, or face to face with your bandmates. ■

The Woodshed

BALANCING ACT

Is your bass too heavy?
Let's find out, Mr. Elrick

Virtually no bass player that I know who has spent any significant amount of time on their feet favors a heavy bass—but that doesn't stop us from making them! Unfortunately, some wood combinations and construction techniques make it unavoidable, resulting in heavier basses than our weary backs would consider ideal. However, weight is not the sole factor leading to player fatigue and injury: Balance also plays a considerable role in how the weight of an instrument affects us as players.

Poor balance can increase the physical stress imposed on a player, as the actual weight of a bass may be compounded by physical compensations that increase the burden upon the supporting shoulder. The obvious solution to alleviating the strain of a heavy instrument ought to be to simply find a lighter bass, but bantamweight instruments sometimes fail to deliver the same punch of their

middle- and heavyweight counterparts. What's more, a poorly balanced, lightweight bass can still be more physically stressful to play than one that is well balanced but pounds heavier. A poorly balanced bass can even be challenging to wrangle while seated. A good strap can provide some relief, but it's best to start with a winning posture.

It's easy to observe the balance of most basses. Hold the bass by the upper strap button: Using it as a fulcrum, it's possible to note an instrument's weight distribution. Some basses will exhibit a comfortable

upward angle of the neck; others will hang closer to horizontal; while some may exhibit neck dive.

The most comfortable basses to play for extended periods of time are most often those of moderate weight that is distributed to afford the player a comfortable neck angle. It is possible to adjust the angle at which a bass hangs when worn on a strap by repositioning the strap button at the end of the body. There are also three-point straps available which help to position an instrument comfortably, redistributing weight to both shoulders.



Ace luthier Rob Elrick brings decades of wisdom to the table. Listen up as he delivers the verdict!

With the supply of choice lightweight guitar timber, such as swamp ash, dwindling, it's fair to expect the average weight of many new bass guitars to go up. Finding a well-balanced instrument offers some compensation, and is important for extended-range basses, which can be particularly susceptible to balance issues. Before settling for a bass with a body that's been reduced to Swiss cheese in the name of weight relief, check your next bass for balance. That's where you're sure to find genuine relief. ■



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

EXPAND YOUR WALKING BASS-LINES

Welcome, theory fans! As a bass player, there are only two things that you will be required to play: Accompanying bass-lines and, occasionally, a solo. With that in mind, a good starting point is learning how to expand your walking bass-lines. Although walking lines are stylistically associated with jazz, studying them will help you to develop your lines melodically when playing other styles such as pop, rock, Latin, reggae, and even metal.

Walking bass-lines are often created by taking a particular melodic motif. This is usually nothing more than a short musical phrase containing notes that outline the chords over which you are playing. Using the same melodic statement over four different

Walking bass-lines are often created by taking a particular melodic motif. This is usually nothing more than a short phrase containing notes that outline the chords over which you're playing

chords will help to build a solid cohesion when playing through the chord changes. This concept helps to develop several things at once. Firstly, it will be helping you to gain familiarity with the chords you are playing over, and more importantly, it will also be enabling you to hear the chord progression from the lines you are playing.

Remember, practice slowly, and play these ideas in different keys. Once you can play them effectively, start to raise the tempo.

EXERCISE 1

In this exercise, the walking bass-line is being applied to a D-7 G7 Cmaj7 A7(b9). The melodic motif used in this example is Root-2-3-5 over each chord. Notice how in bar 1 the notes move up in sequence as D, E, F, and A. In

EXERCISE ONE



EXERCISE TWO



EXERCISE THREE



contrast, notice that in bar 2 after playing the root, I have used octave displacement where it goes down to the 2, and then steps up in sequence to 3 and 5. The same formula follows in bars 3 and 4.

EXERCISE 2

Now, to expand the previous motivic idea, I've used a melodic permutation which is 3-Root-2-5. Notice in bars 2 and 4 how octave displacement is being used similarly as in exercise 1. The main takeaway from this pattern is that starting on the 3rd and resolving to the root of the chord enhances the melodicism of the line exponentially.

EXERCISE 3

Finally, this exercise demonstrates how we can combine both previous exercises, but with a twist. Bars 1 and 3 are using the motif from Exercise 1, while bars 2 and 4 are using the motif from Exercise 2.

But here's the twist: Whereas in the previous exercise there was a root note, we are now substituting the 7th in its place. The cool thing about this is there are no roots across all four bars. This isn't something you want to use all of the time—but it is a great way to dynamically expand your walking bass-lines. Until next time—practice smart, work hard, and play creatively! ■

TIME FOR TRUTH

It's been 38 years since the bass pioneer, **James Jamerson**, died at the age of only 47. Virtually unknown at the time of his passing, but a star at the peak of his creativity, Jamerson created a legacy that is unparalleled in our world. However, debate has always raged about which recordings were his, and which were made by the equally great session bassist **Carol Kaye**. Recent developments have made that story clearer, as our exclusive report reveals.

Words: Joel McIver, Ben Cooper, Alison Richter
Photography: Getty

We like to think we're a fairly rock'n'roll bunch here at *Bass Player*: After all, the bass is the coolest instrument on the planet, and it deserves to be played loud. That doesn't mean we can't enjoy a spot of academic rigor when the moment calls for it, though, and indeed, we were fascinated back in 2019 by an article called *Reconstructing the History of Motown Session Musicians: The Carol Kaye/James Jamerson Controversy*, published in the learned *Journal of the Society for American Music*, and available for your perusal online at www.cambridge.org.

This extensive analysis of a particular long-standing debate over who played what at certain Motown sessions in the Sixties was authored by bassist Brian F. Wright, an acclaimed academic who holds the post of Assistant Professor of Popular Music at the University of North Texas in Dallas. He's also the recent recipient of the Charles 'Father of Stu' Hamm Fellowship from the Society for American Music.

An expert on Fifties and Sixties popular music, Professor Wright dug deep into primary sources to try to resolve claims made by the noted session bassist Carol Kaye, now 86, that some of her hit bass-lines had been wrongly attributed to the late James Jamerson.

For the full list of alleged misattributions, consult Kaye's website or her autobiography, *Studio Musician* (2016), and for background on Jamerson and his membership of Motown's famed Funk Brothers session crew, see historian Allan Slutsky's essential *Standing in The Shadows of Motown* book (1989) and documentary film (2002). All three documents are worth investigation if you're interested in this confused period in music history, when Motown—like many other labels—didn't bother to credit their session musicians. Half a century and more later, that lack of credit has led to a constant debate about whether Jamerson or Kaye recorded certain bass parts, a debate which may be resolved—at least in part—by Wright's excellent analysis.

Why did you write your article about the Jamerson versus Kaye debate, Professor Wright?

Well, this is a story that all bass players know, right? Regular people on the street don't know this story. Some of them may have heard of James Jamerson because they saw the Motown documentary that Allan Slutsky put together, and maybe they've heard about Carol Kaye, but this is really a sort of *Inside Baseball* kind of debate. There are great books by Jim Roberts and Tony Bacon and others that are for a broad audience of bass players, but in terms of really detailed historical work that goes back to the sources, there isn't much.

Yes, you've seen
this Jamerson pic
before... but it's
still iconic.



What were your objectives in writing it?

I asked myself, 'Is there anything new to add?' and 'Can we solve this thing, or is there only pure speculation?' Most of the time, these discussions happen in echo chambers, where people either love Jamerson or they love Kaye, and they speculate on what really happened, but nobody's really trying to go back and dig into the historical record.

How did you get started?

The question that started me on this journey was, 'What's the history of this debate?' I thought the controversy itself was so interesting that it was worth asking how we got to this point. By the time I got to it in the Nineties, it was a long-standing controversy, so the first thing I wanted to do was to trace the history of that controversy. After all, Jamerson had been dead since 1983, so I wanted to find out who was still fighting this battle.

What were the key moments in your research?

I got two very lucky breaks. While digging into the record, finding out as much as I could, I got ahold of two key documents. The first break was that I was able to get all of Motown's West Coast session musician contracts from the Sixties. I think other people had tried to do this before me, but their efforts had been

denied, or they weren't successful for whatever reason. So suddenly, I now had hundreds of session musician contracts—a huge amount of material. Then, around that same time, Kaye published her autobiography, and one of the things she included in that book was a day-by-day account of her sessions. So now I had two really interesting pieces of new information that people before me didn't have. I also knew people who could help me decipher those contracts, because the contracts can be a little misleading—you can't take them exactly at face value. You have to decipher them a little bit.

You've been sensitive to all the parties involved.

Yes. I don't want to diminish either of their reputations or legacies. My goals were not to bring Jamerson down a peg, or to say that Kaye was making it all up. It's not their fault. I want to emphasize here that the problem doesn't come from Kaye or Jamerson. It comes from the lack of information.

So what new findings did you come up with?

I can tell you that Kaye is definitely playing on 'I'm Ready For Love' by Martha & The Vandellas, 'Love Is Here And Now You're Gone' by the Supremes, 'In And Out Of Love' by the Supremes, and 'Brenda Holloway's' 'You've Made Me So Very Happy'. I can back those up 100 percent, and all of those were hits. I also attribute 'Someday We'll Be Together', the Diana Ross & The Supremes version, to Kaye. Although I don't have a contract for that one, there's enough historical evidence to make me pretty sure. I think all of those are very reasonable, and yet, if you look at the list of Motown hits that she claims, there's dozens more.

Why is there so much uncertainty about this?

Well, first, we don't know much about Motown's West Coast operations in the Sixties. Second, Motown was constantly re-recording material. If you look at Motown albums from this era, you have the Supremes and Stevie Wonder and Smokey Robinson doing each other's songs, and everybody doing everybody else's hits. The singers were often not in the room when the session musicians were recording these songs—so if you're the bass player, and you're playing on what you think is 'Get Ready', for example, how do you know if it's the hit version? Is it a re-recorded version? Is it an album version? Is it for a movie or for TV? And Motown also recorded lots of stuff that was never released. So you can't really blame any of the bass players for not knowing if it's them or not.

What's the bigger picture here?

I think, in general, what we really need is a clearer, more empathetic understanding of what it meant to be a session musician back then. We need to have a sense of what this job was like. This was a complicated job, where they were playing in a studio, three or four sessions a day, Monday through Friday. They were probably recording hundreds, if not thousands of songs per year, right? They were busy, and it was complicated. And the music industry treated them solely as hired guns, so they weren't involved in what



Jamerson in full flow, with flats, a P-Bass and a whole lot of skill

Betty

Dear James

The great James Jamerson's short but brilliant life in summary.

Born in South Carolina in 1936, James Jamerson inherited his musical awareness from his grandmother and aunt and, by the age of 10, was good enough on piano to be able to sit in with the choir in his local church. Relocating to Detroit with his mother, at high school he decided that he wanted to take up a second instrument, and soon found a natural affinity for the upright bass thanks to his large, powerful hands.

By the late Fifties, Jamerson's playing in Detroit clubs gained him sessions with local record labels who paid him the princely sum of \$10 or, if he was lucky, \$20 for cutting a track. This beat working in the car factories and warehouses of Detroit, and with each session Jamerson refined his style and pulled in more work. Heavily influenced by jazz virtuoso Ray Brown, he began using syncopation to create rhythmically complex grooves, and would traverse the length of the upright's fingerboard, adding in upper-register flourishes.

When the young Berry Gordy of Motown hired Jamerson as his house bassist in 1959, he joined the elite Funk Brothers, who backed Motown's stars. In the early days, Jamerson cut sessions on double bass, as heard on classic hits such as 'My Guy' by Mary Wells. He soon migrated to the bass guitar, developing a picking technique—'The Hook'—where he would play lines with only his index finger. If a Motown line has bubbling sixteenths, chromatic runs, open strings—even when they're outside the key of the song—and a rich musical inventiveness, it's likely (but not guaranteed) that you're



listening to Jamerson. His first Precision, a black '57 with a maple board, was stolen, and he chose to replace it with the bass that became known as the Funk Machine.

A '62 Precision in three-tone sunburst with a rosewood board, this is the bass that featured on countless Motown hits throughout the Sixties. Strung with LaBella heavy-gauge flatwound strings, the bass is said to have had a sky-high action, which may have been due to a warped neck. The Funk Machine was also stolen, and has never been recovered.

Although Jamerson was the first-call bassist for Motown, his increasing dependence on alcohol made him difficult to work with. One famous story has it that Marvin Gaye refused to record 'What's Going On' without Jamerson. The bassist was located playing with a band in a bar, and was so intoxicated that he could no longer sit up, and cut the track lying on his back.

In 1972, Gordy moved Motown's base of operations to Los Angeles, and Jamerson loyally followed his employer

across the country. However, his association with the company ended just a year later, and he found himself hunting for work in an unfamiliar town. He managed to maintain a level of work throughout the 70s, recording sessions for Robert Palmer and Hues Corporation among others.

As the decade progressed, and the musical landscape changed, he found himself less and less in demand. With disco becoming the dominant form of pop music in the mid to late Seventies, a new style of bass playing was emerging. The bass-lines became more repetitive and based around set parts, as opposed to the improvisational and lyrical approach that had become Jamerson's signature. His refusal to adopt new styles such as slap, or use brighter, more aggressive tones from roundwound strings and modern amplifiers, all meant that his work dwindled away. The steady erosion of his work was also partly due to his increasing reliance on alcohol, which made him unreliable and unpredictable

in the studio and on tour. The Eighties saw a rapid decline in his health. At this time he was reported to have become isolated and bitter about his treatment and lack of recognition; a tragic but understandable mindset, given his enormous musical contributions to Motown and pop in general. After a series of hospitalizations he passed away on August 2, 1983, due to pneumonia which had arisen from his various alcohol-related health issues.

His death attracted little attention at the time, and his achievements, and those of this fellow Motown musicians, might have disappeared into the mists of time, had it not been for a renewed interest in the man thanks to Allan Slutsky's *Standing In The Shadows Of Motown*. Thanks to Slutsky's efforts and those of Jamerson's family, he has gained the recognition that eluded him in life.

In 2000 he was inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame for his enduring contributions to music, and is now widely recognized as one of the greatest bassists of all time. **Ben Cooper**

happened to a recording after they left the studio.

We always assume that Kaye and Jamerson had completely different bass tones, but you explain that they're way more similar than we think.

You can't trust your ears as much as you think you can. You have to realize that the Motown arrangements sometimes featured a 30-piece band. Sure, the bass is still prominent in the mix, but hearing whether it's being played with a pick or not is tricky. And if you listen to any of those isolated Jamerson bass-lines, they don't sound like they sound in the context of the band, because he's overdriving the board and they're a little bit distorted, especially in the low register. They sound crunchy in a way that they don't at all in the full band context, and that's a really good indicator that we can't just trust our ears. And then people say, 'Oh, but Kaye played with a pick, and you can hear it clicking'. Sure, sometimes you do hear that, but other times you don't, because her job was to be a chameleon. She was supposed to make any bass sound you can imagine. I think that's a really hard thing for people to accept.

Presumably the sad ending of Jamerson's life makes people more emotional about him.

Yes, because he died relatively young and unloved. That amplifies people's emotions, and understandably so, because we all really admire what he did. Even towards the end of his life, they made the *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever* TV special (1983), which didn't even mention the Funk Brothers. I tell people that I couldn't possibly diminish Jamerson's legacy, even if that was what I wanted to do. It's such an amazing body of work—but one of the things that's different about what I do, as an academic and a historian, is that I try to avoid mythologizing people. There's a strong

urge when we talk about James Jamerson to say, 'He's the god of the bass!' But this makes for bad history and it

"I couldn't possibly diminish Jamerson's legacy, even if I wanted to do so"

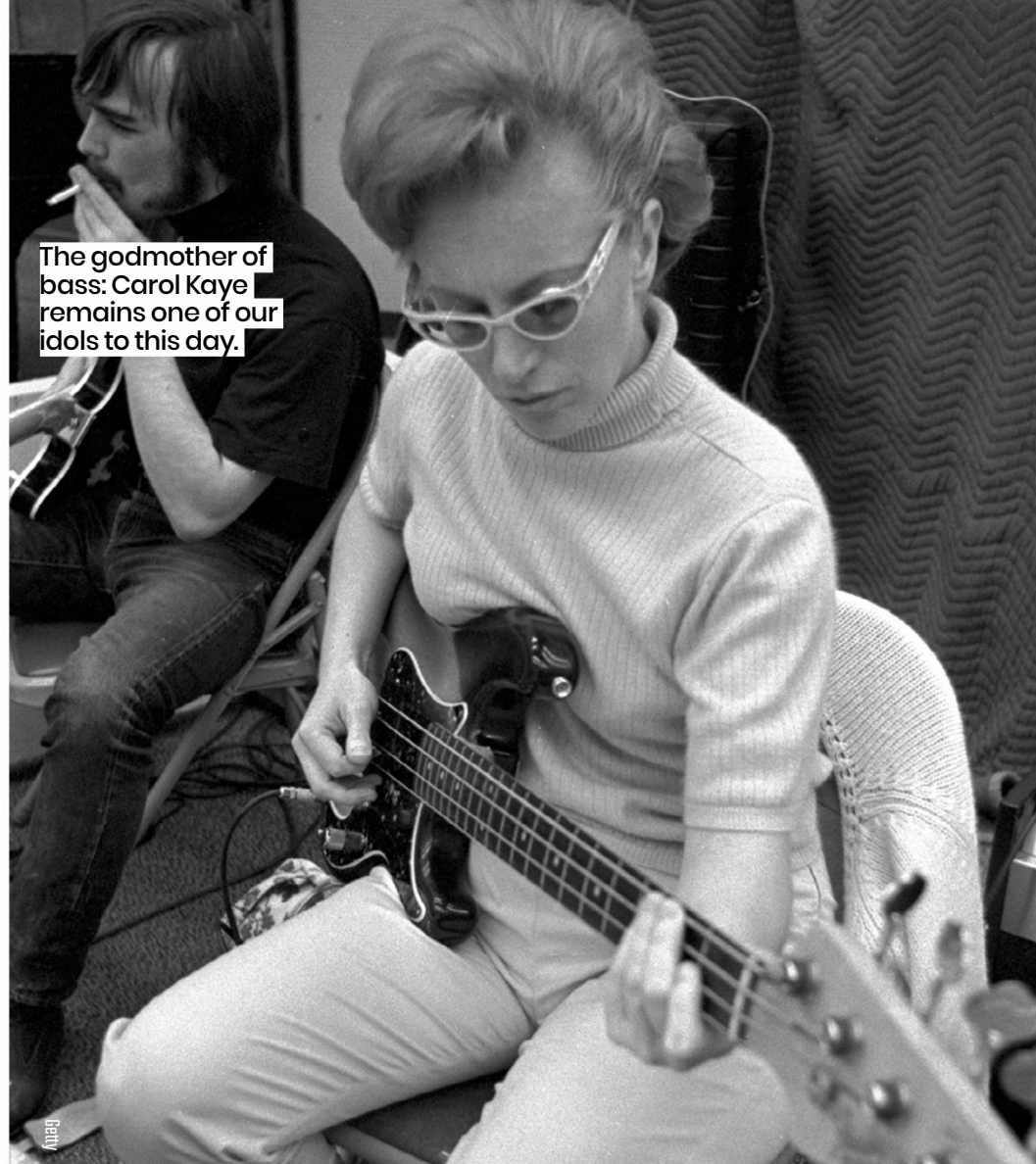
can diminish the work of other bassists. My article has been posted on various bass forums, where it was largely well-received, but some people there do not believe my conclusions. Even when they're confronted with direct evidence, they reject it because it doesn't match the story that they want to hear.

It's so important that you're doing this research.

I hope it resonates. We have to ask, 'What's the best way that we can look at these things? What are the facts here?' There are times when I am very clearly going against the way we normally tell bass history—but I think it's important to go back and look at these things with fresh eyes. ■

***Reconstructing the History of Motown Session Musicians: The Carol Kaye/James Jamerson Controversy* by Brian F. Wright can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/35Jdt7L>.**

The godmother of bass: Carol Kaye remains one of our idols to this day.



Oh, Carol!

The acclaimed Carol Kaye at a glance...

Born in 1935 in Everett, Washington, Carol Kaye began playing guitar at 13, gigging at 14, and was on the road with a big band at 18. "My husband was the bass player and I was the guitar player," she told *BP* a while back. "We travelled and played in the nicest places throughout the country. I was young, but back then, at 18, you grew up fast. When you were born in the Depression years, there were no entitlements. If you wanted to eat, you got out and worked."

Kaye began working at age nine to support her mother; at 15, prior to going on the road, she was a working musician, playing jazz and bebop guitar in Los Angeles clubs, and also worked as a technical typist. "I was cleared for top secret because I was typing manuals for the missiles they were building back then," she says. "I had a

family to support, and while I worked with the finest musicians and earned just about as much as they did, it wasn't enough to raise a family, so I had to get day jobs."

She raised three children—two from her first marriage and one from her second—and also supported a household of six, including her mother and a live-in housekeeper/nanny, while doing studio work.

Her illustrious career as a studio musician began in 1957 at the offer of producer Bumps Blackwell, and it was a life-changing move. Her first session was with Sam Cooke. Kaye's musical chops, as well as her ability to play well with others—both literally and figuratively—opened the door to steady recording dates, and her ascent to being a first-call session player, award-winning musician, educator, and respected author of instructional books, beginning with 1969's self-published *How To Play The Electric Bass*.

Alison Richter

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NAKED TRUTH

Canadian rock stalwarts Barenaked Ladies return with a new album, *Detour De Force*. We meet standup bassist—and occasional electric dabbler—**Jim Creegan**.

Interview: Joel McIver **Photography:** Getty

You'll know the Toronto quartet Barenaked Ladies, formed in 1988, for hits such as 'If I Had \$1,000,000', 'One Week', 'Pinch Me', and the theme to *The Big Bang Theory*, all of which have helped them shift 15 million albums, win eight Juno Awards and become members of the Canadian Music Hall of Fame in 2018.

Bassist Jim Creegan usually drives the music with instantly-identifiable double bass tones, although he also plays electric on occasion, and he's joined as always by Ed Robertson (vocals, guitar), Kevin Hearn (keyboards, guitar), and Tyler Stewart (drums) on their shimmering new album, *Detour De Force*.

The producer is Mark Howard—of Bob Dylan, Tom Waits and The Tragically Hip fame—and guests include Creegan's brother Andy, their former keyboard player, and bassist Fernando Saunders (interviewed in *BP* 409). Meanwhile, a certain renowned Canadian bassist lent Creegan some gear... Any guesses who?

Jim, your new album sounds really fresh—not like a band that's been doing it for several decades.

Yeah! I'm really excited about it. It has that catchy element. Some of our best writing is like slowly carving a big stone down to the shape that we really want to talk about. That's how I like to think of it.

Or like that giant chunk of meat in a kebab shop that gradually gets smaller as they cut bits off it?

That's it. Our music is just a kebab. It's been in the shop a long time. Maybe it's been there too long. Does it attract flies? Is this a good idea? Am I gonna be okay? That's a great metaphor.

As always, you sound like you're having fun on bass, with lots of space to move.

Yeah, yeah, that's right. Every song seemed to bring out a new thing for bass, you know. I actually surprised myself. For example, I never really learned how to play with a pick over the years, but there's a song here that

needed that kind of dynamic. We were struggling with this song, because we didn't know how to really do it. We did about three different versions of it, and I was just like, 'I need to go Peter Hook on this'. I liked Joy Division when I was in high school, and I knew that sound, so I just followed the melody.

Do you know Hooky?

About three years ago we were in England and we played a show with him—it was great. We're hoping to get back this fall, actually.

What's the split between upright bass and bass guitar on the record?

Most of it is double bass, and it was really interesting, because we did the majority of the songs all in one room. Mark Howard puts the console right in the middle of the studio. I used my pickup system on the double bass because there would be too much bleed with the drums if I had a mic on it, but we also experimented with a Hofner violin bass, plugged right into the board. Sometimes you need that real sustain up top, and Howard was asking me to play more melodic, too.

When did you start to add electric bass to your band's music?

Around 2000, though I played electric bass before that. We were recording the *Maroon* album, and they said, 'Hey, we're just wondering—what do you think about playing electric bass? It sits nicely on top of the bass drum'. I was like, 'Well, I'm a double bass player, you know?'

Surely it's easier to move from the double bass to the electric than the other way round?

It's a little easier, but then there's all the other nuances about electric bass that I'm still discovering now. Anyway, first I played Fenders, but my Jazz got stolen on the way to Japan from Australia, right out of the shipping container. They left the actual case! I also played a Gibson Recording bass: I love that big sound, and I can really lay into it. I eventually got a 1962 Fender Precision, which was so beautiful, and then I bought an F Bass for my son, because he wanted to learn to slap, so I thought I should get him a bass that is great for that style. I played that on the new record as well, and that's really become my main stage bass. It's so well done. They'll put an ash core in it, and then add alder wings, so you get that resonance, but you still get the bounce. With fingerstyle, that bass is just so clear and responsive. My sound man was like, 'Can you get any more of those basses?'

So all this is part of your transition from playing solely upright bass to playing both instruments?





Yeah. I was playing through a piezo pickup on the double bass for years, and I work that sound hard. If it's not there, I'll push it till it gets there, so I really played hard all those years. Now, I'm definitely backing up a little, because I'm 51 now and I can't do that forever. I use a lighter touch with an active bass, so I don't choke the notes as much. I've always struggled with that. But I've had great people to help me. Eden amps, Sadowsky, F Bass, David Gage, D'Addario—all those guys have been so cool to me over the years.

When you tour, do you take a double bass and an electric bass?

Yeah, but for a while—because of the flights and the shipping and stuff—I took a Ned Steinberger NS Design standup bass with me. That's been great. I practice on that bass all the time, because you can have the action very low, so you can spend more time in thumb position [ie holding down a string with your thumb] and you can get to where you need to be without getting exhausted in 20 minutes.

Don't purist double bass players regard those instruments as cheating a little bit?

I am fully cheating and I don't give a shit, ha ha! Because you know what happens? What happens is, you try to play credibly in thumb position, but if you're tired, you can't practice that. But yeah, I know what the world is like. Maybe it's time for everybody to just go, 'Hey, I just want to know what notes to play'.

They never will. Everybody seems to think that everything that everyone else does is wrong.

Exactly, and I think those things come out of insecurity. We, as bass players, are supportive players, and because of that supportive role, we rarely have a chance to explore more melodically. Sometimes we just go,

'Well, I'm a bass player. This is the way I do it. I've made sacrifices to be here'. But you know what? To be a musician, you've got to open up your mind. You've got to try some stuff. That will make your bass playing better.

Which bass players influenced you?

I admired the jazz players like Paul Chambers, mainly. Edgar Meyer was a great inspiration for me, because he had a real wide breadth of

feeling in his playing, which I think comes with classical. He also played bluegrass and stuff, which was great. But Geddy Lee was the first guy that I was air-bassing to, before I even played bass, you know. Actually, Geddy's gear is on this record. We asked him if we could use his Taurus pedals, and he was generous enough to give them to us. On the song 'Big Back Yard' I'm actually playing his pedals and playing bass at the same time.

He's a remarkably nice guy.

Yeah—he was very generous to us when we were coming up as young players. Rush gave us a bottle of champagne when we sold out this big concert venue in Toronto, Massey Hall. You know, here's Rush giving us a bottle of wine, saying 'Way to go!' And Geddy inducted us into the Canadian Hall Of Fame. He didn't have to do that, but he really cares. I remember watching him play, and I noticed that he threw in this little triplet. I couldn't figure out how he did it, so I emailed him and he got back right away, saying 'I hold my hand like this, and sometimes that triplet happens, and sometimes it doesn't!' That was so cool to hear. ■

Detour De Force is out now.

Info: www.barenakedladies.com

“Bass players are supportive players, but to be a musician you've got to open up your mind”



SON SHINES

Meet **Wolfgang Van Halen**, sometime Van Halen bassist and son of the late guitar legend Eddie

The story of Wolfgang Van Halen is not like that of most bass players. For starters, his father Eddie Van Halen was one of the most acclaimed guitar players in history, having pioneered a spectacular new approach to his instrument in a band whose rock'n'roll exploits were legendary. Born in 1991, Wolfgang first picked up the guitar and then the bass in his mid-teens, and joined Van Halen a few years later when the group—also featuring his uncle Alex Van Halen on drums, and singer Dave Lee Roth—had split from their long-time bassist Michael Anthony. In 2012 Wolfgang appeared on Van Halen's final album, *A Different Kind Of Truth*, and went on to play with Alter Bridge guitarist Mark Tremonti and Sevendust's Clint Lowery.

All this has led to his new solo album, released as Mammoth WVH: The band name comes from Eddie's early band Mammoth, and on the record Wolfgang plays every instrument and sings. Produced by Michael 'Elvis' Baskette, the record is a sensitive collection of anthemic songs with little of the extravagant shredding for which his dad, who sadly passed away last year, was justifiably famous. We asked VH Jr how it came about.

Did you get the album recorded before the pandemic, Wolfgang?

Yeah, quite a bit before—I did it between 2015 and 2018. I started writing around 2013, with the intention of recording something on my own. I didn't know exactly what I was doing at the beginning, I just knew I wanted to record some music that I wrote. Through the process,

I found out that what I enjoy most is writing songs. I think, most people, if they pick this album up with any preconceived notion of who I am or where I've come from, are probably going to expect a lot of guitar solos and shredding on it. What they'll eventually find out—if they don't immediately throw it away, after not hearing what they want to hear—is that I'm a songwriter first.

What are the upsides of playing all the instruments yourself?

I think the benefit of doing everything yourself is that when you're just one part of an album—like if you're just the guitar player, or just the bass player—you tend to want to show off, so you can be like 'That part is me!'

But when you're playing everything, if you showed off on every instrument, it would just be a jumbled mess. So it becomes about creating cohesive

songs and doing everything best for the song.

Did you work closely with your producer?

Yeah, Elvis Baskette is wonderful to work with. He really helped me when I was doubting myself, and he's phenomenal when it comes to mixing. When you're doing everything yourself, you kind of get lost in the sauce. It really helped to have him there to keep me from doubting myself and to keep me going on the right path.

Did he have ideas about song arrangements, too?

Nothing too much—just like, 'This would work better if we did this there' or 'What if we cut that part?' Just restructuring certain

“Playing every instrument isn't about showing off—it's about creating cohesive songs”

★ Players

WOLFGANG VAN HALEN

things. It was wonderful to figure out the process, because it was my first time doing anything like that. I'd recorded albums before, but this was a very new experience.

What bass gear did you use on the record?

I used a Stingray on every song, except, I believe, 'Resolve'—I think I used a P-Bass for that song. The one thing I didn't want to do was carry over my bass sound from Van Halen, so we landed on that Stingray and it sounded really great, so we just kept it. I still have tape on the knobs from when we recorded in 2015. I can't bring myself to pull it off.

Did you use amps or go straight in?

We used an Ampeg, but we did this special trick where we put a mic on the ass-end of it, so it picked up the bottom end. That was a thing that my dad found out when he was just fucking around in the studio, that if you miked an amp at the very bottom back of it as well as the front, you would pick up this bottom that you wouldn't otherwise get.

Seriously?

Yes. Literally where the bottom touches the ground, right in the back, there's a sub-bass frequency. Whenever we would rehearse, it was just a thing we were messing around with, and it sounded good, so we decided to keep doing it. Other than that, it was pretty simple. I don't think we even used any effects.

Where did the songwriting inspirations come from?

One of the biggest inspirations was Dave Grohl. When he started the Foo Fighters, he did everything himself on their first album. I wanted to have a go at that, I guess, and I've always admired bands like Nine Inch Nails, where the project emanates from one person and grows from there. That's kind of how I view it, even though it is still me. I view it more as a band than some sort of solo project.

How old were you when you got started on bass?

It was shortly after I picked up guitar, so it was probably around 13 or 14. I just started jamming for fun, with no intention at all of going anywhere, you know. I made a playlist of Van Halen songs and learned a bunch of them. My dad and I just started jamming on stuff, and we did that for months, just for fun, which is when I really started to get comfortable on the instrument. Van Halen's bass-lines really lend themselves to being able to interpret things your own way. They're very locked into



Two generations of Van Halens

the groove, so you can find little fun moments to fuck around, if you will. Mike Anthony is such a fantastic bassist—he really locks in with the drums.

Did you take lessons?

No, I never took any lessons. Dad gave me pointers here and there, but they were few and far between. He would tell you right now that he's not a good teacher. I liken it to how Einstein couldn't tie his shoes. People who are too smart for their own good!

Which bass players influenced you?

My two big ones would be Justin Chancellor and Les Claypool. I'm a huge fan of both of them. I watch them in awe and just go, 'I love that', but I can't replicate it in my own way.

Have you played many different basses over the years?

In 2012 we made some custom Wolfgang

basses, and those have ended up in every outfit I've played in. Chip Ellis made them in partnership with Fender, because that's where the VH brand is. They're killer.

Did you ever study the jazz guys?

Stanley Clarke, Jaco and so on.

You know, in the same way that I'm enamored with Les Claypool, it's the same thing with them. I can't even begin to play, or even fully comprehend, everything that they're capable of—but I'll watch them and be just like, 'Wow!'

Would you say you're playing bass differently these days?

I might be a little better. It's like the 10,000 hour rule—after a certain point, you just keep getting better the more time you put into it. In the context of the music I write, I found exactly what I like to do. Now that I've found my comfort zone, every now and then I'll try and pull some stuff that is out of it.

Which bass part that you've recorded or played live are you particularly proud of?

In terms of the Van Halen album I was on, *A Different Kind Of Truth*, I guess I'll do a couple. I think songs like 'Chinatown' and 'The Trouble With Never' are two that I'm really excited about on that album. On the Mammoth album, 'Feel' is a really fun one, and the groove on 'Resolve' is something I'm really proud of.

Your dad was a hero to many of us. I can't say it to him, so I'll say it to you.

Thank you. I'm so glad that he got to hear my music before he passed away. I know he enjoyed it a lot. ■

Mammoth WHH is out now.

Info: www.mammothwhh.com



"I'm so glad my dad got to hear my music before he passed away. I know he enjoyed it a lot"

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GENE GENIE

Ukrainian metalcore band Jinjer returns: Bassist **Eugene Abdukhonov** tells a tale about “the roots of all (bass) evil”...

My story is either very trivial or vice versa—it’s not that common. I come from a family with absolutely zero musical background, so honestly it is hard to say where the roots of all evil come from. Maybe I was just inspired by grunge music in my early youth so much that it made me think I could self-express by means of music too. Who knows... but by the age of 16, I made a few friends who were playing in local bands, and at some point I just thought, well, maybe I should try this myself. Everyone kept saying that bass was easy to play, and I was green enough to believe it. So in my first year of university, during winter holidays, I went to work at a construction area, made some money, and bought my first bass. The funny thing is, I tried to compose music on the first day.

That first bass guitar was a slightly customized and upgraded Soviet Ural instrument. I gradually made my way from Soviet trash into cheap Chinese basses, then my first really good axe was a five-string Spector Euro, which I used to record the debut Jinjer EP. Then I got my hands on a custom bass by Stas Pokotilo, a Ukrainian luthier whose guitar I have been using for five years.

Currently, I mostly play my signature bass, an Achilles by Overload Guitars and a custom JNJR bass by Pokotilo. Both are five-string multiscale semi-active guitars. As for effects, I have been using Helix by Line 6 for a few years, but recently I got a bunch of pedals

from Darkglass, and we managed to build a new chain and new concept of sound for the upcoming album. It features the B7K Ultra and a secret ingredient—a guitar overdrive pedal by Dunlop.

I have also had a couple of Coffee Custom Cabinets for years now, a 2x12 and an 8x10, which I use for big and small stages respectively. Markbass amps are my absolute love! I have a Mark III, a small but very powerful touring machine that perfectly fits my main requirements—small, loud, versatile, and it has the tone.

There are a few wonderful bass players in metal

“For me, bass is not about how many notes you pick, but how well you pick every single one”

who had an impact on me as a musician, but there is one who definitely stands out—Ryan Martinie. He’s the man. If you pick every young bass player in modern rock

music who is somehow well recognized in the musicians’ community, it’s 100 percent sure that there is a bit of Martinie in him or her.

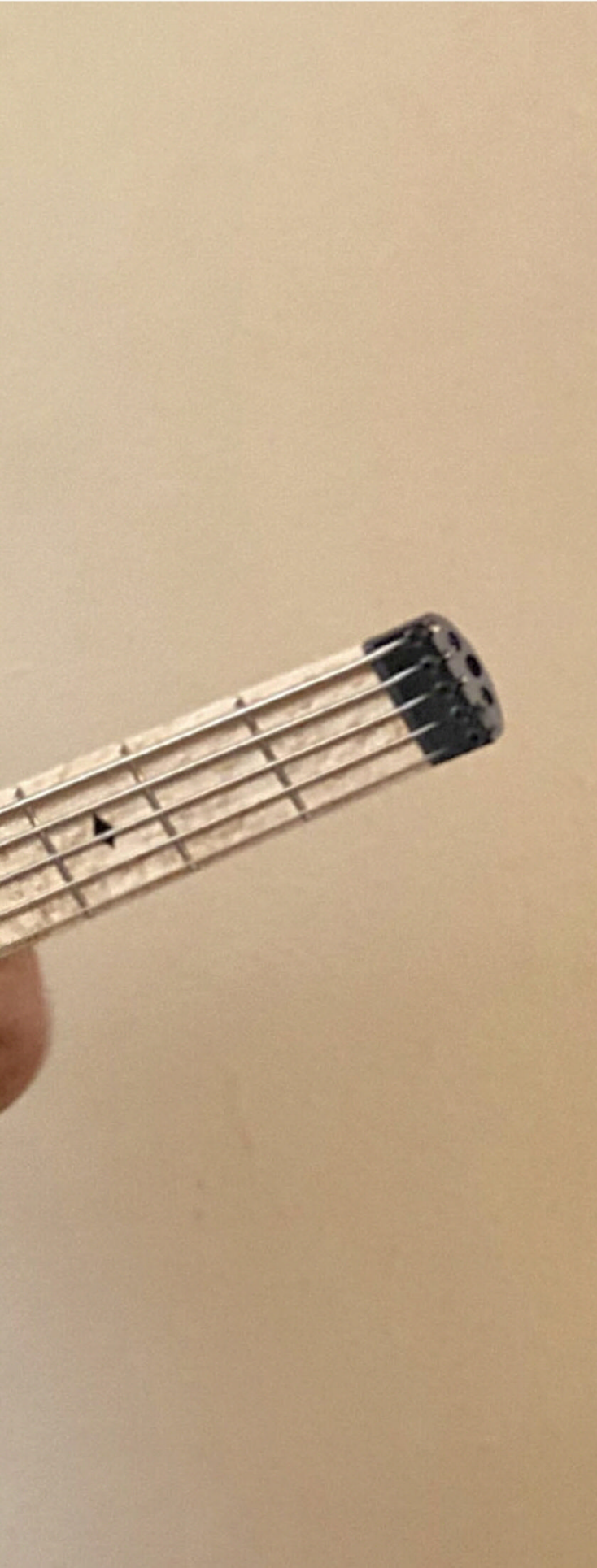
For me, bass is not about how many notes you play, but how well you pick every single one, even if there is only one in a bar—although it took years for me to realize that it truly works this way. In metal, you can show off as much as you want by playing 16th triplets under layers of guitars and blastbeat drums, hiding all your bad timing, poor dynamics, lack of groove and originality. A simple, catchy, and groovy bass-line, performed clean and with musicality, will really show who and what you are much better. ■

Instagram: @jinjerbass



GRACE NOTES

Gospel bassist **Robin Bramlett** reflects on her low-frequency journey



Recording artist, musical director, bassist, songwriter, and producer Robin Bramlett is best known for her roles with the Jazz Is Pink and Hit Like A Girl ensembles, as well as her 2013 solo album, *This Is My Life*. A follow-up is on the way, she told us when we caught up with her recently for a discussion about life at the low end.

Tell us about your bass gear, Robin.

I've been exclusively using Kiesel basses and Aguilar amps for years. I mostly play five-strings, because I need that extra low string—without it I feel lost. I grew up playing gospel, so instead of going from B to G, I tune down from B flat to G flat. I also use MXR effects.

Tell us about your background as a bass player.

Well, when I was growing up, we had an upright piano in the house, so that was technically my first instrument, but I soon got interested in watching MTV, where I saw bass guitars, regular guitars, and drums. I was like, 'Whoa, I want to do all of that!' so my mom and my dad gave me a toy drum set, a bass guitar and a lead guitar. The strings on the lead guitar started breaking because I didn't want to play with a pick, and then I broke the heads on the toy drum set, and the bass just stayed standing—so I was stuck with that. I think I was around seven years old.

What was that first bass guitar?

It was some knockoff. I remember it was a black P-Bass with an alder body and a maple fingerboard, but that's all I remember about it.

Who were the bass players you admired back then?

Mark Adams from the funk band Slave, Cedric Martin from Con Funk Shun, Bernard Edwards from Chic, and Marcus Miller. And then later on, when I dived into gospel, my main influences were Joel Smith, Sam Scott, Allen Golden, and Reggie Young.

Is there a connection within the gospel genre that leads people to identify more deeply with the music, because it's spiritual in nature?

That really depends on the person and their spiritual beliefs. They're going to believe what they believe. If you grew up with gospel, of course you're going to connect more with it. I think it's whatever you grew up with that is going to speak more to you. I most definitely connect with gospel, but I also connect with Afro-Cuban music and jazz.

What do you enjoy about playing gospel?

For me, gospel music has changed over the years, and to be honest, not for the better. It depends on who it is, though. There's still some great artists out there that are keeping their urban gospel, like Jonathan Nelson and Chrystal Rucker, but there's also this big part of gospel that we call Christian Contemporary Music, or CCM, that to me sounds a little bit watered down. You know, I'm used to playing different chord changes and interesting runs—I'm used to that. I mean, there's some CCM tunes I do like, but for the most part, I prefer for gospel to stay interesting, with plenty of unpredictable chord changes.

What were the inspirations for your album *This Is My Life*?

In general, the sounds I grew up listening to. For instance, I actually wrote the song 'Over The Years' in my head as I was driving through my old neighborhood where I started playing bass. The melody and even the chord progression came up in my head as I was driving through the neighborhood. I was like, 'Whoa, okay, let me write this down before I forget it!'

Has your bass playing evolved over the years?

Definitely. I was the musical director for Jazz In Pink for about five years, and I gained skills just from that, you know—writing out charts, preparing music, and making sure everybody was up and running. I also listen to saxophone players. I'll listen to John Coltrane and transcribe his playing on bass, just so I can think outside of the box and outside of my comfort zone.

What advice would you give our readers?

I would say, learn theory, because it will make you a better player—but also, learn to listen to music. Listen to how the bass player is grooving in the music, and emulate that. That's a big part of what you're doing. Learn from others and allow yourself to grow, and understand that there's always someone better than you. ■

www.robinbramlettmusic.com

BODY TALK

Hunter Burgan of rockers AFI on his road towards bass nirvana

When I was in high school, I played saxophone in the marching band, and there was a big competition in Hawaii planned. The jazz band was also slated to compete, but at the last minute their bassist wasn't able to go on the trip. My band instructor heard that I played instruments other than sax: He asked if I played bass and if so, would I be able to play in the jazz band. I said yes, even though I had never played bass before. I borrowed a headless Hohner bass from a friend's sister and quickly learned to read bass clef. We made it to Hawaii and won first place.

Despite playing bass in the jazz band, I considered myself a guitarist and a drummer—and not really a bassist. When one of my punk bands couldn't find a bassist

after months of searching, I decided to switch from drums to bass. We easily found another drummer, and I traded an old Marshall JCM 800 for a sunburst Fender American Jazz at a local guitar shop.

I played Fender Jazz basses exclusively until AFI recorded *Sing The Sorrow* in 2002. Our producer Jerry Finn had a 1962 Fender P-Bass that sounded amazing on some of the faster songs. Over the years I've used a Gibson EB-3, an Epiphone Jack Casady model, a few Rickenbackers, and even an old Peavey on occasion, but Fenders are always my main basses. On the road I have three or four Precisions in E, E_b, and D tunings, and most

of the time I play them directly through a few Ampeg SVT CL heads and 8x10 cabinets. If a song or part of a song calls for a specific effect, I have a tiny pedalboard with mostly Electro-Harmonix pedals. I use their Bass Microsynth for a subby synth tone, and the Bass Big Muff for a fuzzed-out sound.

In the studio I use a lot of different basses, amps, and effects, experimenting with combinations until the sound is just right for the song. The jumping-off point for each tone odyssey is always Fender and Ampeg, though. Six years ago, the Fender Custom Shop made me a beautiful roadworn '64 P-Bass, and it's been on every record I've made since the day I got it. Some records I've played on include

The Con by Tegan and Sara, *The Strawberry EP* by Dear Boy, *Babylon* by Matt Skiba & The Sekrets, *Complete Discography* by The Force, *The Colors Of Summer* by

Las Gatas Beach Club, and everything AFI has released since 1997, including our new album, *Bodies*.

I've always held Eric Avery's playing in the highest regard. His bass-lines are the perfect blend of rhythm, melody, and dynamics. They are the true hooks in many of Jane's Addiction's songs. There's also a meditative discipline to the repetition within his parts. It's as if he found pure enlightened truth in his bass-lines and eschewed any desire or need to deviate from that. The only bass advice I've ever received was when I was first starting out, and it was, "Hey, turn it down!" ■

www.afireinside.net

"The only bass advice I've ever received was when I was starting out, and it was 'Turn it down!'"



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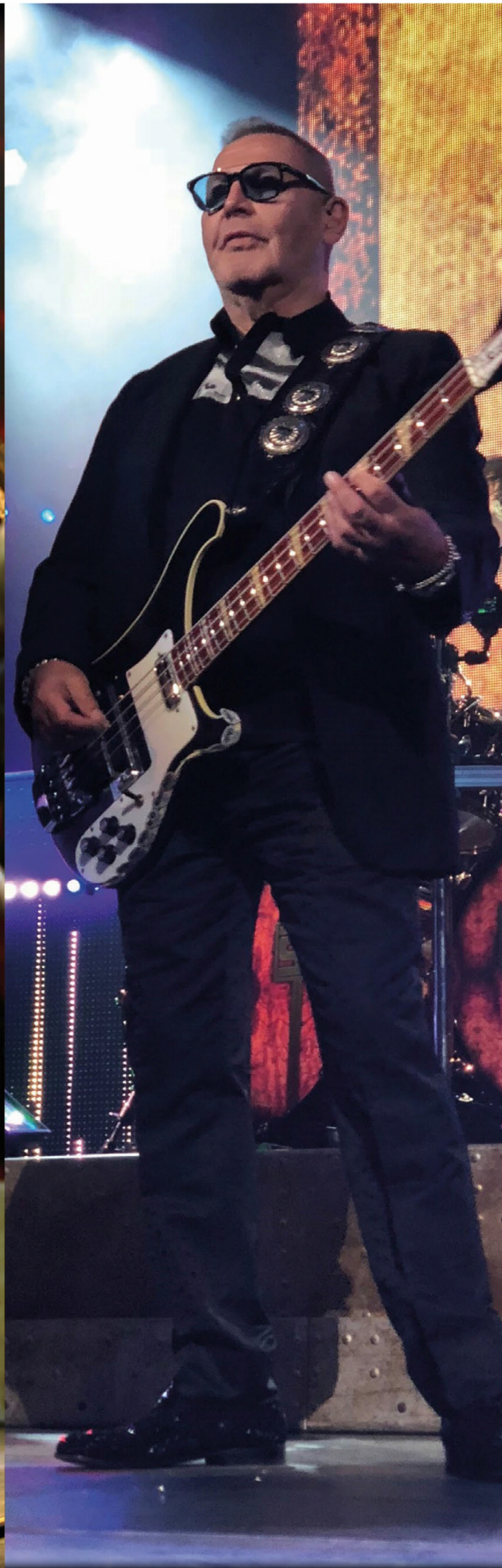
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“Our mission was to create
an incredible album after
being away all these years”
Chuck Panozzo (pictured right)





STYGIAN DEEPS

The veteran AOR band **Styx** now has not one but two bass players—founder member Chuck Panozzo and his colleague Ricky Phillips. We meet them both...

Interviews: Joel McIver **Photography:** Jason Powell, Getty

The Chicago-based rock band Styx, formed in 1972, isn't so much as a group as an institution. One of the last remaining Seventies giants to remain active as a recording and touring unit, the septet—still featuring two founder members, bassist Chuck Panozzo and guitarist James Young—has a catalog including several multi-platinum albums under its collective belt. Their new release, *Crash Of The Crown*, continues the grand Styx tradition of arena-sized melodies and arrangements, underpinned by bass parts from Panozzo and Ricky Phillips. As the former has been suffering from poor health for some years, he and Phillips have shared bass duties since 2002, both on record and live: We meet both bassists here.

Your new record is killer, Ricky.

That's great to hear. You just never know—you put your blood, sweat, and tears and a lot of love into an album, and you just pray and hope somebody likes it. It's kind of an ambitious record. My goal was to be supportive, and strong enough for everything that's on top to stand on. Even though there's a lot going on, you've got to have a strong rhythm section. Chuck got in on a couple of tracks, and he's playing as good as he's ever played. His tone is always just so nice and rich and so perfect. I had a little arsenal of basses this time, I don't know if you're interested in that stuff?

Very much.

Okay, cool. Well, I use all four-strings on the record.

The five-strings that I play live are awesome, because I can go down to certain places where the keyboards are going, but on the records we try to stay conscious of the Styx sound. One little thing could tip the boat—that's the way we look at it. So even though this is a very adventurous record, probably more adventurous than any Styx record before, I think, it has the big harmonies and the hooks and nice melodies. I used a Gibson Thunderbird that I brought on a whim—and I'm glad I did, because I was pretty heavy-handed with it on the record—and then I have a '68 Tele that really went well with that. It's really present in the mix, and yet it's got this rock and roll edge. I've also got a 1960 Precision that's a very James Jamerson-sounding bass. Norm from Norm's Rare Guitars was on the showroom floor at the Dallas Guitar Show, and he called me and said, 'I'm holding a '60 P right now'. They got me a good price on it.

I have to ask you what that price was?

I can tell you it was 4500 bucks. This thing is amazing. It has that James Jamerson tone, even though Jamerson played a '62. It just makes you smile when you hear it.

Do you put flatwounds on it, like he did?

No, I don't. I'm not a flats guy, although I like that sound. I've even used nylon flats—it's a cool sound if it works for the song. But I like to get a little bit of edge, as much as I can get away with, especially live, when you can get away with it because there's so much room for the air to move.

CHUCK PANOZZO

Styx's original bass player and founder member checks in

You've had a long career with many elaborate bass parts, Chuck.

Well, thank you. When we started the band, the more people we added, the more we added different songwriters. I think that's the success of Styx: You really have to adapt to every songwriter. My job in the rhythm section is to play the best I can and to understand that rock songs need to sound different than ballads. The vision our songwriters had between them really helped me to diversify my style.

What bass gear do you use nowadays?

I always bring my Rickenbacker. I've had that for a very long time. In fact, it was in disrepair, and Tommy said, 'Here's your guitar', and he'd had it completely refurbished. And I have a Fender out there. I used to have an Alembic, but it's so heavy, so I'll take a pass on that one for a while, although it was a beautiful instrument. You know, every tour you try to bring something new to the band, whether it's an instrument or whatever else, but you have to be better—you can't just be the same guy all the time. That's not very interesting.

What was your first bass?

Well, my first bass guitar was a Hofner. I was inspired, of course by Paul McCartney—who wouldn't be? I have my original Gibson guitar from 1961 on my wall. I don't have a huge collection of things, but what I have is important to me, for sentimental value.

Do you play five-string bass as well as four?

Well, Ricky does a great job on that. I'm comfortable with the way I play with a four-string. You know, the band has always been very supportive of my health issues, or whatever cause I had on a personal level, and that says a lot about the members of Styx. These are great guys. Our mission was to make an incredible album after being away for so many years, and I think we achieved that goal.

Which bass players influenced you?

John Entwistle and Paul McCartney. I learned so much from them, as far as how to write melodic, interesting bass-lines that no-one else is really doing. And then Chris Squire, of course. Those guys are all edgy, they go for it. They're not holding back. Those are the guys I was always kind of drawn towards, and now in Styx I can do that, but I try to do it with discretion and taste.

You and Chuck are both Rickenbacker players.

Yes, I've got one in each live rig. We have two rigs, so we can play in New York one night and then the next night in Vegas or LA or something. I was told about a run of white Rickenbackers—white on white, which had never been done before—and I bought five of them. So we have two rigs, with a Ricky in each one, and then I've got the third one in my studio here at home. I let Tommy [Shaw, guitar] buy the fourth one from me because I told him about it and he wanted it, and then the fifth one is from the very first run of seven that they made, and nobody's touched it—it's still in the case.

How about amps and effects?

Well, I don't really use a lot of effects other than compression, and I leave that up to my tech and our soundman up front. For amps, I just love Ampeg SVTs—I have the reissues that came out 12 or 13 years ago. I've had them gone through and re-soldered and reconnected, and they sound fantastic. I also have a rackmounted one for recording. I think

it puts some people off because it's a rackmount, but it's fantastic. There's so much horsepower, without distortion.

So, good times ahead for Styx?

Oh yeah. We get on like a house on fire. We have a blast. Everybody in the band has got a dynamic personality. It's just a fun place to be. We'll always have a good time. It's never down, it's always up, and everything is always moving forward. I'll start my 19th year in Styx in September, and for me to be in this band—having toured with them in the late Seventies in my former band, the Babys—has been a dream come true. ■

Crash Of The Crown is out now.

Info: <https://styxworld.com>

Ricky Phillips with guitarist James Young, 2020.

Styx rock London in 1978, with Chuck Panozzo at far left.





Players

MATT GOLDBAUGH

better on a fretless, so I have a 1984 or '85 Ibanez Roadstar with the frets ripped off and filled in, Jaco-style.

My pal Corey McGrath from Sean K. Preston's band gave me a really cool vintage Japanese Hofner-style violin bass guitar, with the brand name Coronet, and I dig Rickenbackers for fast rock'n'roll stuff, because the frets are so low. I sold mine 10 years ago to buy a computer and a banjo. I just started playing a Copley five-string fretless when I play in Pitchfork Militia, and I love it. I had a Strunal student model upright bass that I loved for many years. Bobcat, from my psychobilly band the Arkhams, is now in possession of that.

Most of the time, I'm playing my custom-built bass, 'Jerrene', built by my good friend, luthier Tom Zurawel, over at D'tavo Stringed Instruments in Vermont. I designed it and helped a bit, but Tom made the magic happen. It was a three-year experiment, resulting in a half-size fully acoustic body with a normal three-quarter upright bass scale, set up to play like my old Kay, somewhat resembling an inverted coffin. If anyone out there has ever seen an old Knilling Portabass, you will recognize the shape. I also play a blonde Upton Bass Superswing, built in 2007 in mystic CT. Her name is Christine and she has retired from the road, but makes frequent local, studio, and livestream appearances.

The pickups I use are piezo units built by hand in Detroit by Vic Victor of the Koffin Kats, but I've tried just about every pickup and string combo in the upright bass world. I've used a Gallien-Krueger 1001RB2 amp for 11 years now, and I got a Quilter Bass Block 800 back in 2018, which I run through Avatar cabs and a Fishman Pro Platinum preamp/DI. On my uprights, I usually use medium-tension hybrid strings—'hybrid' meaning a combo of nylon/perlon and metal—such as Presto/Eurosonics, Pirastro Evah Pirazzi solos, or low-tension steel strings like Thomastik Spirocore or Superflexibles.

My advice is to play in the pocket, yet behind the beat. Don't always just play the guitar riff. Willie Dixon was a big influence on me. He wrote so many iconic blues songs and influenced the way so many people play pizzicato or slap double bass today, whether they know it or not. My favorite quote from him is "The blues is the roots, the other music's the fruits."

Lara Hope & The Ark-Tones has a new album out, and the first single, 'Let's Go', can be found now anywhere music is streamed. Tune into our YouTube or Facebook page every Monday at 7pm US Eastern Time for our weekly free livestream show!  www.youtube.com/c/LaraHopeMusic

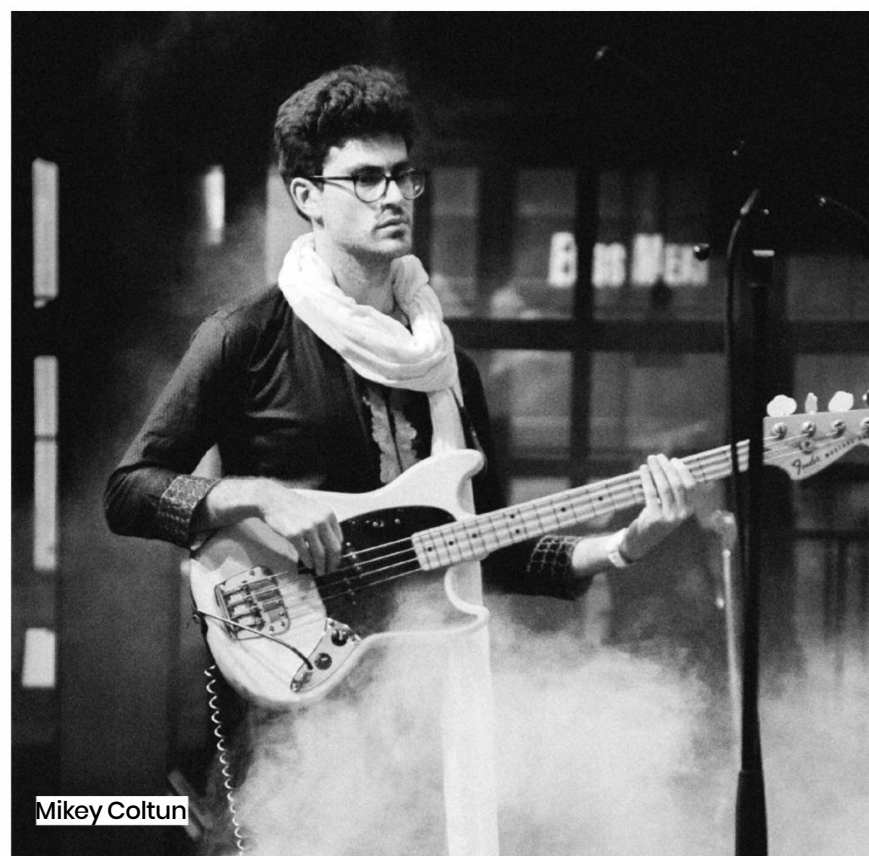
UPRIGHT CITIZEN

Matt Goldpaugh of Lara Hope & The Ark-Tones reports from the psychobilly trail

I was always drawn to bass-forward music, like Primus, Rancid, and a local Hudson Valley act called Pitchfork Militia, whom I now fill in on bass for, 25 years later. I loved the music world, and the punk, hardcore, and metal scenes in particular. I taught myself how to play bass guitar a little, just enough to play in punk bands. I started upright bass after getting into roots music a little more, which is when I got my own upright bass. I was fascinated by the upright bass slap technique. I found

psychobilly music, and I didn't pick up a bass guitar again very much for 15 years.

My first bass guitar was an old Schecter P-bass clone with no name on the headstock, painted flat black with a mirror pickguard. My first upright bass was a borrowed 1952 Kay, which an old friend and I passed back and forth for years—and I even refinished and repaired a neck break on once. I prefer fretless instruments—I hate frets. They're like prison bars to my ears sometimes. I find that subtle intonation issues can be adjusted



Incoming

We meet four up-and-coming bassists, **Bohte 'Boh' Daisuke**, formerly of Babymetal and now of Kari-Band; **Mikey Coltun** of Mdou Moctar; solo bass player **Isobella Burnham**; and **Ryan Lerner** of Tetrarch. Keep an eye out for them

What was your way into bass?
BOH It all started when I was in junior high school, and saw some seniors play in a band during a school festival. I thought, 'Wow, maybe if I join a band I can be popular!' So I thought I'd start with guitar, but I was having trouble handling so many strings, so I decided to focus on just four by playing bass. Now I'm a six-string bassist...

MIKEY I grew up in a musical family. My dad is a guitarist. When my siblings and I were young we started in kindermusik classes, followed by piano lessons, then I moved to cello. In middle school I started playing both upright and electric bass in jazz bands and orchestras. I started playing the bass out of spite—my childhood friend took up the bass guitar, and I wanted to be better than him, so I started playing, too. He played for a few months while I kept going.

ISOBELLA My way into bass was through records my mum and dad used to play. Earth, Wind And Fire, Parliament-Funkadelic, Jamiroquai, and St Germain were frequently

played in the house from an early age. I started my musical journey playing piano, and then in summer 2012 I asked my uncle Ozzy for a bass lesson, as he is a session bass player. My auntie Michelle bought me a bass guitar for my birthday, and that was the beginning of my beautiful bass journey.

RYAN My intro into bass was kind of unusual. I didn't grow up playing music, much less listening to it, but in high school that all changed when a few of my friends had an idea to start a band. For some reason, this idea just spoke to me, so I asked my mom for a guitar for my birthday, and she actually got one for me. I was stoked! Unfortunately, I had not the slightest clue what I was doing. I was told to tune the guitar to E standard, so I literally tuned all the strings to E. I tried to make this thing work for about a week, when I gave up and had my mom take it back. I was really

devastated about my failure, until one day I watched *Back To The Future*, and the scene came on where Marty McFly's band tried out for the school dance. I noticed the guy in the back holding down the bass while Marty was up front shredding, and thought, 'I could definitely do that!'

What was your first bass guitar?

BOH It was a GrassRoots Forest Bass. I picked it purely because of how it looks.

MIKEY A short-scale Gretsch Electromatic, the one-pickup version.

ISOBELLA It was a Staggs four-string P-Bass.

RYAN It was one of those starter packs with a Squier bass and a little 38W practice amp.

Which other basses have you played?

"I started playing bass out of spite. My childhood friend took up bass and I wanted to be better than him!"
 – Mikey Coltun



Isobella Burnham



Ryan Lerner

BOH Since then I've been using a Fender Japan Jazz bass, a Fender USA DX Precision, a Tune TWB six-string bass, and my own signature model, Atelier-Z Boh Custom 6. As well as those, I use quite a bit of Markbass and TC Electronic equipment.

MIKEY A Fender Jazz, a Sadowsky five-string, a Skjold fretless. I realized early on that short-scale basses felt the best to me and were my calling. Currently I'm playing a 1977 Fender Mustang, a 1975 Musicmaster and a 1960s Kay K5915. My amps are Traynor, Aguilar, Ampeg and Fender.

ISOBELLA Since picking up the bass in 2012, I've been lucky enough to play Sire and Fender basses. I'm currently endorsed by Sire, Rotosound strings, Boss pedals and Cosmic Ears IEMs.

RYAN I've had an LTD F Series four-string and a five-string Schecter Elite, but over the years I've switched entirely to exclusively using Ernie Ball Stingray five-strings. My other gear includes a Seymour Duncan Powerstage 700, a Darkglass X7 Ultra pedal, a Comp 66 Compression pedal, a Boss NS-2 Noise Suppressor and an Ampeg SVT 810 amp.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?

BOH Take in the good parts of other people's performances, and use them in your own playing style.

MIKEY Don't worry about the price of the instrument—you should be able to make it work on any bass. You don't need an expensive five-string with a bunch of knobs to be a good bass player. It's about the player rather than the bass, and there's no right way to play. Make it work for you and your sound—just don't hurt yourself.

"I watched Marty's band in *Back To The Future* and thought, 'I could do that'" – Ryan Lerner

ISOBELLA Stay rooted in the pocket. Both my bass teachers, Bill Evans and Gary Crosby, also implored me to work on a signature sound, so that people hire me not because I am a bassist, but for my sound.

RYAN The best advice I've ever been given is just to keep it simple. I still struggle with it because my natural tendency is to fit as many notes into a measure as possible—but just knowing when to lay back, locking in with the drums, and letting the guitars do their thing will make your time to shine even brighter.

Which bass player do you most admire, and why?

BOH Billy Sheehan. He's the bassist who made me want to become a professional. He introduced light hand playing and three-finger playing into rock bass, and had a great influence on bass kids all over the world.

MIKEY Eyadou Ag Leche, who is the bass player and musical director for the Malian Tuareg group Tinariwen. He invented the sound of Tuareg bass, which has been a big inspiration for me since I first heard Tinariwen. His lines are funky, super syncopated, and are played with a lot of force. Eyadou knows how to play the groove, stick to a part with discipline and hold down a band.

ISOBELLA It changes as I grow, but right now I most admire Oteil Burbridge for his chordal harmony solos and the killer syncopated lines he plays.

RYAN Cliff Burton for his creativity,

Steve Harris for his speed and technique, James Jamerson for his melodies that inspired a whole different playing style in the rock world, Chris Wolstenholme for his catchy hooks, and Paolo Gregoletto for his ability to combine old-school influences with modern metal... Just to name a few.

Where can we hear you play?

BOH You can hear us live on our new double live album *Kari-Band With Friends—Live At Streaming*. It's available on CD outside of Japan from JPU Records, and also available to download and stream. So please check it out. We invited some of our favorite musicians in Japan to join us for this live session, as well as our students. You could say it's like the masters with their apprentices, as well as their apprentices' apprentices! You can also hear us on our two EPs, *Nimaime* and *Kari Ongen*. Other than that, if you search for me on YouTube, you'll come across many things that I'm involved with.

MIKEY I'm currently touring with Mdou Moctar and Steve Gunn. The new Mdou Moctar album *Afrique Victime* is out now.

ISOBELLA You can hear my bass and background vocals on Steamdown's single 'Etcetera' on Blue Note Reimagined, and on my debut EP *Dancin' Garuda*.

RYAN Go check out our new record, *Unstable!*

Twitter: @bassistBOH
Instagram: @Les_Rhinoceros
Instagram: @isobella.burnham
Instagram: @ryanoftetrarch

STAGE TIME

Actor and poet **Malcolm-Jamal Warner** reveals that bass isn't just a hobby for him—it's a way of life.

Interview: Joel McIver **Photography:** Getty

Malcolm-Jamal Warner is best known for playing the part of Theo Huxtable in *The Cosby Show* from 1984 to 1992, and given that show's depressing fall from grace in recent years it must be a huge pain in the neck for him to talk about. Fortunately, here at *Bass Player* we're only interested in his career as a musician, and in any case he's got decades of acclaimed performances in *Malcolm And Eddie*, *The Resident*, *Sons Of Anarchy*, and many, many more TV and film productions to be proud of—so it's little wonder that he was in a great mood when we caught up with him recently.

Tell us about your approach to music, Malcolm.

I'm a poet, so in my band I recite my poetry over my music. I didn't start playing bass until I was 26, and because I've always played with advanced musicians, the best way I've found to communicate has always been through music theory. When I first picked up the bass, I went heavily into music theory because I knew it would be useful. In fact, I went to the Musicians' Institute a year after picking up the bass, because I was working on a TV show at the time, and we were on hiatus. I had a short period of time free, so I took their 10-week bass intensive. [Six-string bass pioneer] Todd Johnson was one of my teachers, and he told me, 'Dude, I'm telling you now, you're in way over your head—but still, hang in there!' So I stayed in the class and amassed all of the material, but it took me like the next three or four years to really grasp all of that stuff. Since

then, theory has always been my way of being able to communicate what I want.

How did you get into bass?

I was working on a TV show at the time. I had gone from eight years of working with Mr. Cosby, where he created an environment that made everyone involved acutely aware of the images of people of color that we were putting across the airwaves. On the new show, I found myself in a position where I was the only one caring about the show's images of people of colour. Literally every day, I was fighting with writers, producers, fellow actors, and the viewing public, and at some point I realized, 'I need a hobby—something that doesn't have to do anything with acting'. I thought about it, and I was like, 'All right, I've always wanted to play music. If I pick up an instrument, it'll give me something to do. I can practice scales to a

metronome in my dressing room to keep me centered. I'll never start a band, I'll never become one of those corny actors who get into music'. That was my whole approach—and then, of course, it became another career. I've recorded three albums, I've got a band, I've been doing jazz festivals, and cruises—all of that.

What motivated you to start recording albums of your music?

I'd just come out of MI, and I figured that the quickest way for me to develop as a bassist was to start a band and start doing club dates. I put a band together, and pretty soon we were doing covers, from John Coltrane to Living Colour, although acting was still my primary career. But what happened was, I was out of pocket after every gig, because after I paid the band, and after I paid the videographer, I was losing money—so I felt like if I had a CD to sell after the show, I wouldn't always be out of pocket. I had no original music, so—because I was already an established poet with other projects—I decided to start doing poetry with my band, and create my own music. That way, I'd have product.

You recite your poetry while playing bass at the same time. How do you match your words to the bass?

It's just knowing the rhythm. If I know where the one is, there's some phrases I can start on the one. It's really an ever-evolving thing. I can't do a whole set that way, though, because it requires so much at both ends.

You were in Robert Glasper's band when he won the Grammy For Best Traditional R&B Performance in 2015.

Yeah, totally. That had not been in my sights at all! It was really great how that came about. Robert was working at the studio where my MD had office space, and I just came and hung out. Robert knew I played bass, and he was telling me about a buddy of his whose



Picking up a Grammy in 2015



daughter was one of the kids who were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary in 2012, and he was going to write a poem for this piece. Two weeks later, he was mixing the record, and I came to hang out. He said, 'Listen, at the end of the day, my buddy couldn't do the poem because it was too close to home'. I was like, 'Give me the track and I'll go upstairs and write the poem'. And literally, after an hour and some change, I had the whole piece written. When I needed to create something on the spot, it was like a channel opened up and it came out.

Tell us about the bass gear that you play.

Well, Gallien-Krueger has always been a big supporter. Forest Gallien is a really cool dude, and I've been using their gear for probably 10 to 12 years now. When I first started gigging, I took a 60-pound power amp, a five-string and my upright bass. I didn't have a roadie, so I was packing all that stuff into my truck myself. As a musician, that's what you're supposed to do, right? So soon after that, I wised up to taking out a single G-K and one bass. For effects, I have a Pigtronix Infinity Looper and a reverb.

"I'm not just an actor who strums a few tunes so I can call myself a bass player. I bust my ass!"

What about basses?

I'm primarily a five-string player. An Xotic was my bass for a long time, and then I ended up playing Sadowsky for a couple of years, which were equally good. Then I was at the Fender custom shop in LA and I found a refurbished 60s Jazz, so that has been my bass for a while. I also got turned on to the Sire Marcus bass, and I have Marco Bass out of Oregon making me a custom Jazz.

Who influenced you on bass?

Marcus Miller was always the top of the list. What's really interesting is that when I was 10 or 11 years old, never even considering that one day I would end up being a musician, one of my favorite records was Luther Vandross's *Never Too Much* (1981). That record just speaks to my soul to this day. I know every lyric on that LP, and Marcus Miller is on that record, so I grew up with Marcus having an influence on my life without even realizing it. When I started playing bass, I was like, 'Wow, I've been listening to this guy all my life. This guy has really affected my life growing up'. So that's why he's at the top of

that list. Then there's Ron Carter, Paul Chambers, Stanley Clarke... It's funny—when George Duke passed [in 2013], I hosted George's memorial, and a bunch of musicians came through. Stanley played, and he was doing the whole flamenco thing on his upright. When it was over, I was like, 'That looks like it hurts'. He said, 'It does!'

What areas of your playing do you work on?

There's so much stuff to practice and so much stuff to work on, but I study with Anthony Wellington, and I've also spent some time with Phil Mann and Rich Brown from your magazine. I know all these great cats who I've had the pleasure of being able to study with. For me, bass and acting go hand in hand because of the discipline they share, but obviously, I'm much further ahead as an actor. I tell people all the time that I have such great respect for great musicians, because of the time, discipline, energy, focus, and commitment it takes just to be an okay musician. I work hard just to maintain an okay level. People know that I take it seriously, and that I'm not just some actor who strums a few tunes so I can call myself a bass player. I bust my ass! ■

Twitter: @MalcolmJamalWar





SHIP SHAPE

Armada Of Secrets bassist **Carl Dawkins** reveals the ethos behind the low notes

I guess I'm a closet punk bassist who learned to play! My bass playing is raw, energetic, and passionate. It's all about dynamics, and losing yourself in the music. When I first started playing in the pre-internet era, I was so unsure if what I was doing was right or wrong, especially as I started late in my life. Even when I went to college to do a degree in music, I was still doubting myself—until I started gaining recognition and getting booked because of my playing style. I can sit in the background and still bring the vibe, but I do love to bring the energy, especially live. If you're not sweating after a show, what were you doing?

I was very lucky to be trusted by Warwick basses and amps early in my career. After using them for years, my gear was stolen, but Warwick were extremely supportive, so I have to give a massive shout-out to them.

The instrument I use most regularly for Armada Of Secrets and sessions is a Fender with Dean Markley and DR Colored strings. After sessioning so much, I've learned that the extra notes of a five-string really help when you're playing with a piano or keys player. Having grown up playing in metal bands with drop tunings, the five-string gave me a lot of options. I even had a bass from ESP which was tuned F#, B, E, A, D when I was touring Asia sessioning for the metal bands Underside and Undying Inc. That was thanks to Dean Markley, who made me a custom 185 low F# string,

"Bass is one of the easiest instruments to pick up, but if you want to be good, it's one of the hardest to master"



which sounded like a Panzer tank.

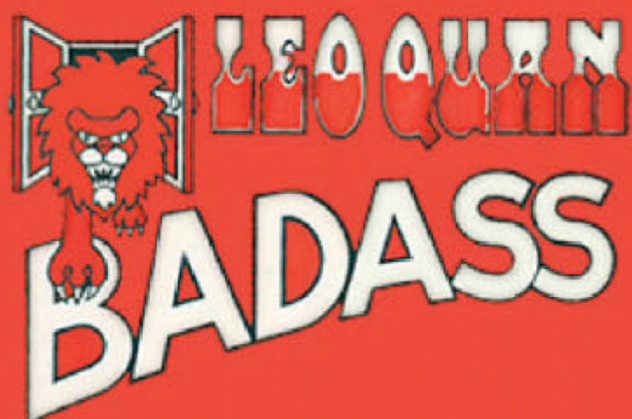
I slap when needed—I'll play with my nose if I have to, as long as the job is fulfilled and the bass sounds good. Too many players don't

play for the song. The funny thing about slap is that it can stand out for both the right and wrong reasons. To be honest, I could do with no slap being played at every music show—we already have Mark King and Henrik Linder.

It took me a long while to realize that playing for you and the song, rather than trying to impress everyone else, is the most rewarding thing you can do. It will take your playing to new levels that you never thought possible. Play so that everyone moves. Bass is one of the easiest instruments to pick up, but if you want to be good, it's one of the hardest to master. ■



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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

**LIEBER GUITARS
SPELLCASTER**

\$1635, www.lieberguitars.com

52

**ENFIELD
ANTOINETTE**

\$3195, www.sims.guitars/enfield-guitars

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**FRAMUS & WARWICK USA
ROCKBASS CORVETTE MULTISCALE**
\$1399 MAP, www.framuswarwickusa.com

56

**YAMAHA GUITAR GROUP
ROCKET BASS RB-108 AND
RB-110 COMBOS**

\$209.99, \$321.99, <https://yamahaguitargroup.com>



LIEBER GUITARS

Spellcaster

Supernatural—or just hocus-pocus? **Kevin Johnson** investigates Stanley Clarke's newest four-string

LIEBER GUITARS
www.lieberguitars.com

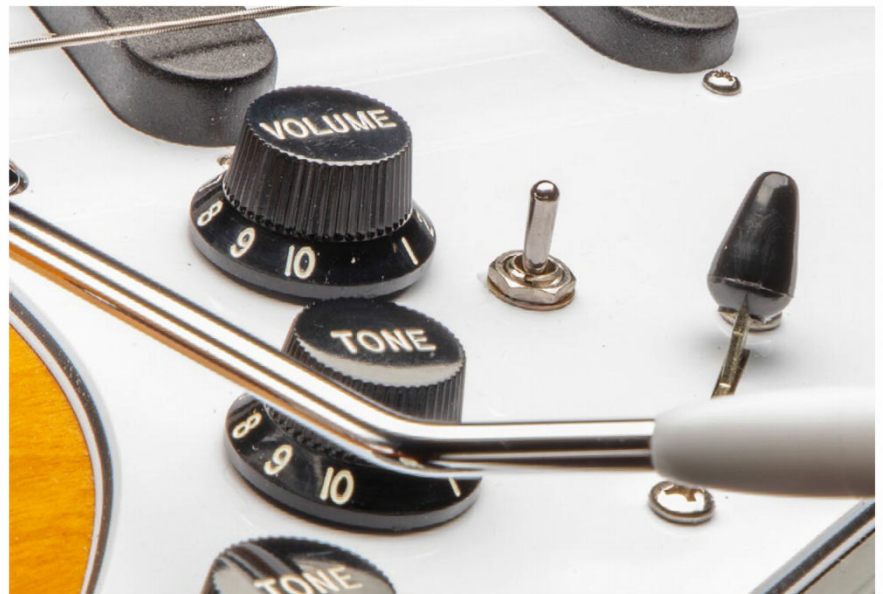
\$1635

For decades, Stanley Clarke has been a pioneer of the bass, in more ways than one. His virtuosity changed the way we approach the instrument, but he's also constantly working on improving the instrument itself. Although he's closely associated with Alembic, Clarke has spent the last 42 years collaborating with instrument designer Tom Lieber. The duo first teamed up in 1980 to make the Spellbinder Bass, and continued in the 2000s with the SB II, the Mando Piccolo Bass, and other unique designs. Several years ago, they worked together to create a four-string bass inspired by Leo Fender's Stratocaster guitar. They took it to Fender Corp to realize their creation, but after some back-and-forth on the design, the partnership did not pan out. Instead, they took it upon

themselves to see the bass through. That's the origin story of the Lieber Guitars Spellcaster Bass. We've been bewitched by it since Clarke teased it in 2018, so let's get on with the sorcery!

Build Quality

The Spellcaster ships in a thickly-padded Roadrunner gigbag. Snatching it from the case for the first time, it feels slightly heavier than it appears. Lieber bills the Spellcaster as 8.5 pounds, though the bass we received was just over nine. It's crafted with the classic wood combination of an alder body, maple neck, and rosewood fingerboard. Despite its classic shape and vintage sunburst finish, the axe has some bells and whistles rarely put into a bassist's hands. The tremolo bar is



Note that these photos depict an early Spellcaster model with a rosewood fretboard, while current models use ebony.



an eyebrow-raiser, for sure. There's also the reverse headstock, which helps to increase tension on the E string and reduce it on the G string. Once under the fingers, the strings all feel uniform. The hardware feels sturdy, if not elegant.

A few build issues presented themselves. The nut was not seated correctly in its slot, although the zero fret negated any effect that had on the sound. The side of the neck showed some chip out, and there were small gaps on either side of the neck in its pocket, where it should fit snug to the body. The Spellcaster is assembled in the USA, but pieces crafted overseas seem to have slipped through quality control measures. Ultimately, however, the playability was not sacrificed.

We mentioned our concerns to Tom Lieber, who explained that our review model was deliberately intended to represent an average Spellcaster, not a specially set-up model designed to elicit a better review. This struck us as commendable.

Sounds and Playability

As you can imagine for any instrument with Stanley Clarke's name on it, it's clear that the Spellcaster was built for speed. The short 30" scale combined with a 1.5" nut width make the neck feel like a breeze. I felt compelled to run lines up and down the neck, which put a big smile on my face.

Speaking of fun, let's get back to that whammy bar. Its construction is solid, so even when I cranked down on it with some chords, the strings all came back to pitch and stayed that way with no problems. If you want to try some divebombs, this will not disappoint.

The true magic of the Spellcaster is its sonic palette, which has a lot to offer. The three Kent Armstrong-designed single coils are some of the

cleanest, clearest pickups I've played. A Strat-style five-way selector lets you toggle the pickup configuration: Neck, Neck/Middle, Middle, Middle/Bridge, and Bridge. However, a mini-switch brings some extra tones to the mix. When it's flipped down, the first position on the five-way selector engages both the front and rear pickups. Most importantly, the second position then engages all three pickups at once.

The neck pickup on its own gives that old school short-scale tone that would sit well in indie or classic rock. Mixing in the middle pickup adds more low end to the sound. The middle pickup is aptly named, because it balances well, and the bridge pickup offers crystal-clear overtones, perfect for bell-like harmonics. Two tone controls let you roll off the highs of the neck and middle pickups for more subtle sounds.

I found myself switching to all three pickups at once over and over, because it turns the bass into a flamethrower of tone. Utilizing all three

provides a load of sonic information through the pickups, with the depth of the front pickup, the punch of the middle unit, and the definition of the rear pickup. No matter the setting of the bass, it always carries a certain throaty tone; more punchy and defined than fat. It makes sense once you read the name on the headstock again.

Conclusion

As Clarke himself states, the Spellcaster is not meant to replace your existing traditional bass: It's a new tool with different options. Yes, there are some problematic build flaws that are hard to ignore at this price point. However, the bass still acts a boon for creativity, with loads of cool tones that cut through a mix. If you're looking to conjure your own new sounds, this could be the bass for you. ■

**If you want to try
some divebombs, the
Spellcaster will not
disappoint**



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | \$1635 plus shipping**Made In** | Produced in Korea,
assembled in USA**Color** | Sunburst**Body** | Alder**Neck** | Maple, 30" scale**Neck Joint** | Bolt-on**Nut Width** | 38.1mm (1.5")**Fingerboard** | Rosewood**Frets** | 25**Pickups** | 3 x Kent Armstrong/Tom
Lieber-designed single-coils**Electronics** | Passive**Controls** | Master volume, dual tones,
two-position miniswitch, five-position
pickup selector**Hardware** | Chrome**Weight** | 9.3 lbs**Case/gig bag included** | Yes**Left-hand option available** | No**WHAT WE THINK****Plus** | Amazing tones and playability in a
familiar shape**Minus** | Build flaws incongruent with price**Overall** | An extremely fun and inspiring
instrument, but not without issues**BP RATING**

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

VALUE

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

ENFIELD

Antoinette

Meet Antoinette, a headless beauty from Enfield, says the ed

SIMS GUITAR WORKS
www.sims.guitars/enfield-guitars

\$3195

Sims Guitars, makers of Enfield basses, hit gold a few years back with their versatile Super Quad pickups, which enable the user to emulate Precision, Jazz, and humbucker tones at the flick of a three-position microswitch. With this new headless bass, the Antoinette, two of these futuristic units are installed alongside a whole range of features, many standard, but some as custom extras, so investigate the options with Sims if you're thinking of investing. Talking of investment, the pricetag is hefty, but not unreasonably so given the quality and spec of the bass: Whether you'll require all the tonal tools is another question entirely. Let's plug and play.

Build Quality

From the hand-painted gold rose on the back of the Antoinette's sort-of-headstock, down to the magnetic rear-body cavity cover, we had no issues with the quality of assembly or design. The London Red finish, with a custom matching finish to the neck, is flawless, as it should be at this price point. It's subjective, of course, but we like the gold and red combination, and the body shape is sleek and elegant; what's far from subjective is the impressive weight of the bridge and incorporated tuners, the satisfyingly immovable pickup fittings, and the very slick two-octave phenolic fretboard.

The active EQ controls dominate the body, with those silver globe control designs giving the bass a slightly sci-fi edge; three microswitches—two for the Super Quads and one for the LEDs at front and edge of the neck—are positioned so they don't get in the way. There's a side-mounted 'speed jack socket', which earns its name with its useful location and quick operation, and a double action truss rod, accessible at the neck heel. All in all, it's obvious where your taxed income is being spent: On quality and attention to detail.

Sounds and Playability

This bass seems designed to point at its tone options, the core of its appeal: As you may have figured out, two three-mode pickups plus a three-band boost is a combination that gives you a whole lot of tone-refining possibilities. As our reviewer Stuart Clayton pointed out when we first reviewed the Super Quads, the red (P-Bass), blue (J-Bass) and green (humbucker) LEDs that light up when you select a mode soon have you thinking of each tone as a color, which is weird but definitely interesting—almost like a form of applied synaesthesia.

For this test, I assumed the red mode to be the default, as Precision tones are so familiar. The thuddy chunk of that old reliable sound is there under your fingers, and can be modulated with the bass, mids and treble boost/cut of the Glockenklang preamp—fitted here as an extra—as you choose. The low-end boost is manageable rather than monstrous, which is a relief, and the mids and top restrained in this



mode. Switch to blue or green modes for rather more clank and twang, which is useful should you decide to slap or tap; the blue setting is the place to go for a touch of hollow throatiness, if you need to cut through your band live.

Combine the modes—with green at the bridge and blue at the neck, for example—and you then have even more options at your disposal. Refine your chosen tone with the EQ, and you'll probably find your ideal sound sooner rather than later. The question is, of course, whether you need all these tone options in your current gig.

Regardless of the tone wizardry under the hood, the Antoinette plays like a dream. The short-scale phenolic fretboard has a bounce and smooth solidity that rewards all levels of playing intensity, and the bass feels at home whether you pluck gently for some quiet subtlety, or apply enthusiastic pick downstrokes in the name of volume. Of course, its looks are pure funk, but don't let that put you off deploying it for other uses.

Conclusion

Other headed and headless basses exist at this end of the market with similar design and engineering levels, of course, but the Sims pickup system delivers options that are rarely seen elsewhere. If tone-tweaking is your passion, and you would rather make those refinements on board than via an external EQ of some kind—and, of course, the budget is there—you should definitely investigate. ■

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | \$3195 (review model includes some custom spec)

Made In | UK

Body | East Asian mahogany

Neck | Five-piece laminate with premium North American quarter-sawn hard rock maple and phenolic stringers, 32" scale

Neck Join | Bolt-on, five bolts

Fretboard | Phenolic, 16.5mm string spacing, 24 jumbo frets

Pickups | 2 x Sims Super Quads

Electronics | Three-band non-stacked Glockenklang preamp (as upgrade)

Controls | Three-band EQ, volume, tone, 2 x Super Quad microswitches, LEDs on/off

Hardware | Nickel and black, Hipshot headless system

Weight | 7.3 lbs

Gigbag/case included | Hiscox flight case

Leftie available | As custom option

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Very playable, huge tone palette

Minus | Do you actually need all those tones?

Overall | A superb, state-of-the-art bass for the professional

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★★★★★★

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★★★★★★★

VALUE

★★★★★★★★★★★





WARWICK

Rockbass Corvette Multiscale

Look no further if you're keen on fanned frets, says **Stuart Clayton**

FRAMUS & WARWICK USA
www.framuswarwickusa.com

\$1399
MAP

Anounced at the 2020 Winter NAMM show, the Corvette RockBass Multiscale marks Warwick's first foray into the world of fanned fret instruments. Elbowing its way into a marketplace that has exploded in popularity in recent years, Warwick's China-built offering seems priced to appeal to the more budget-conscious low-ender. With an enviable reputation for build quality, combined with one of the most impressive artist rosters in the business, Warwick could well be onto a winner if this bass is any good. Let's find out.

Build Quality

This new multiscale instrument from Warwick has the recognizable body shaping associated with the long-established Corvette range. Topping a red alder body with a maple burl veneer front, the matt black finish of our review model is flawless, and is offset nicely by the chrome monorail bridge units, controls, and toggle switches. The chunky MEC pickups look suitably businesslike, while the dot-free fingerboard and matching headstock complement the body nicely.

Flipping the bass over, we note that the neck-to-body joint of the instrument features an additional stepped cutaway, presumably to allow for improved upper register access.

Access to the control cavity and battery is simple, thanks to an easily removed plastic cover plate: With no screws here, the plate has simple click tabs which can easily be opened without tools—simple, but very effective. The cavity itself is impeccably clean, with all of the wiring neatly bundled and cable-tied or shrink-wrapped. The battery is secured with a metal clip, and the entire cavity is painted, with no excess sawdust present—a more common occurrence than you'd think.

The neck is constructed from maple, with ekanga veneer strips, topped with a surprisingly glossy wenge fretboard. Fretwork is excellent across the board, and the instrument has arrived well set-up, ready to be played. My only gripe in terms of the build is an aesthetic one: I found that the remaining triangle-shaped section of fingerboard behind the nut detracts somewhat from what is an otherwise sleek and attractive instrument. Other multiscale instruments—more expensive ones, granted—have an angled fretboard at the nut, with the headstock material angled to meet it accordingly. Presumably, addressing this minor visual quirk would increase the cost of the instrument disproportionately, taking it into a different sector of the market. As noted, this is a minor gripe, and one that I suspect is unlikely to bother most users.



The tones on offer should satisfy all but the fussiest low-enders



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | \$1399 MAP

Made In | China

Body | Red alder, maple burl veneer

Neck | Maple with ekanga veneer stripes, 34" to 35.5" scale

Neck Join | Bolt-on

Fretboard | Wenge, graphite nut, 24 extra high jumbo nickelsilver frets

Pickups | 2 x passive MEC Soapbar pickups

Electronics | Rockbass two-way

Controls | Volume, balance, treble, bass, two three-way miniswitches (series/parallel/single-coil)

Hardware | Warwick tuners and bridge

Weight | 9 lbs

Gigbag/case supplied | Gigbag

Left-hand available | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Great tones, great build quality, great price

Minus | Nothing significant

Overall | An impressive entry into the multiscale world from Warwick

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY



SOUND QUALITY



VALUE



Sounds and Playability

Contoured around the edges of the body, the instrument sits comfortably in the lap while seated, although there is some neck dive. This is less of an issue when standing, or using a strap, but nevertheless remains something to bear in mind. The neck profile is slimmer than I've come to expect from Warwick instruments, and is easy to get around. The stepped cutaway at the heel does indeed improve upper register access to a degree, although I find the last two frets difficult to get to effectively—but how often do you really need them?

It's a common belief that multiscale instruments are difficult to adapt to, but in my experience, this is not the case. I find the Corvette eminently playable, with no adaptation to fretting hand fingering technique required, even in the lower register. With a 34" scale length for the G-string, widening to 35.5" for the low B-string, the string tension is perfect across the instrument, with the lowest string benefitting noticeably from the added scale length.

Plugging in, the Corvette has a pleasing sonic palette, with notes in the lower register noticeably better defined than is sometimes the case. Although the on-board EQ is a simple

two-band affair, further tweaking is possible via the toggle switches, which allow for series/parallel/single coil configurations of the humbuckers. Grinding rock tones are easy to come by, as are more conventional options. Although a midrange control would have been nice, the options on offer here are more than enough for most modern players.

Conclusion

The Rockbass Corvette Multiscale is an impressive entry into the brave new-ish world of fanned fret instruments, and we're confident that it will be a welcome addition to the lower-to-midrange portion of the market. At this price, it's by no means a budget instrument, but with multiscale instruments often priced at considerably more, the Corvette is sure to be of interest to many young bass players. They'll be getting plenty of bang for their buck, too: The instrument is superbly built, with a high level of attention to detail, and the tones on offer should satisfy all but the fussiest low-enders. Shipping with a Rockbass gig bag, the Corvette Multiscale is a sensibly priced instrument from one of the biggest names in the business, making it a worthy contender for those looking for a fanned fret instrument. ■



AMPEG

Rocket Bass RB-108 and RB-110 combos

YAMAHA GUITAR GROUP
<https://yamahaguitargroup.com>

The new Ampeg combos have landed in a variety of configurations. Mike Brooks asks if you're ready for take-off...

\$209,
\$321

The new Rocket range of combos from Ampeg has five models of varying specifications, and all share a vintage, old-school vibe. With a simple but effective control layout, cool styling and all the connections you would expect to see, these combos can be used in a variety of settings and applications. We're looking at the 1x8" and 1x10" models which focus on home, rehearsal, and small acoustic gig situations. Let's see what they can do.

Build Quality

Rated at 30 and 50 watts respectively, both combos are lightweight and portable, aided by their speaker sizes, and both are finished in the 'black diamond' material seen on previous Ampeg combos. Metal corners protect the units from bumps and scrapes, while cloth speaker grilles, a recessed control panel, and a tough carry-handle situated on the upper facing feature on both units. Clearly, these combos have been designed with practicality and simplicity in mind.

Utilizing the Ampeg Legacy preamp, these combos have been additionally furnished with the company's trademarked SGT (Super



Grit Technology) overdrive circuitry, which provides both units with the signature Ampeg grit and drive that we have come to expect, without resorting to tube technology—and thus pushing the price up. Thankfully, the control panel is well laid out and easy to use, with a simple volume and three-band EQ setup, although the other combos in the range have additional Ultra-Hi and Lo selector switches. All of the controls are securely attached and turn smoothly with little fuss. The SGT option is accessed via a switch on the control panel, although it can be footswitchable on some of the larger combos; the 1x8 combo is purely ‘effect on/off’, whereas the 110 unit has additional Grit and Level controls to give the player a degree of control.

Both combos feature 3.5mm Aux in and headphone output sockets, a prerequisite for any home-use combo these days, while the 10” speaker-equipped 110 model also incorporates a balanced XLR DI output for sending a feed to a mixer or audio interface.

Sounds

It’s very apparent that these combos are only going to produce so much low end—and rated at 30 and 50 watts respectively, you won’t be blowing any drum kits away with one of these. However, placed in the corner of a room or against a wall, you will get the impression that they can produce a fuller and more rounded bass tone than if you were to place either of them in the middle of a room. With 8” and 10” speakers, the bass signals from each combo are going to have a mid bias. You can’t escape this, because you can’t rewrite physics—a small speaker in a small enclosure just can’t pump out tones that shift air.

Nevertheless, both of these combos put in a respectable performance, with the three-band EQ proving to be impressively flexible. Even without a horn or tweeter, the top end is clear and biting, without creating too much clank, especially from the passive basses I used to test the units with. Calling on several active basses, both combos managed to keep up with the additional power afforded by the active EQ, but as expected, the 110 combo just had the edge with its larger speaker and enclosure, allowing the signal and tones of each bass to bloom and be slightly more effective in terms of their delivery.

So, onto the SGT circuitry. For a company whose reputation has been firmly built on valve technology, some may see this solid-state ‘valve-flavor’ as a gimmick—but in use, it’s far from that. With the smaller combo, you may decide never to turn it off, as it gives the tone some added color and character, creating a lively edge that isn’t there otherwise. With the 110 combo, the additional SGT controls mean you can dial in some grit without it taking over the whole tone, instead simply adding some warmth to the overall sound. Returning both combos to their clean state, turning the volume up gradually, and

These combos naturally tick the usual boxes—portability, reasonably loud, simple to use, with useful features. and functions in a presentable format for home use and from a reputable manufacturer

pushing each unit to its limits, you may be surprised that the pushed delivery won’t take the plaster off the walls—which may or may not be a good thing, depending on your intended use of either combo.

Conclusion

These combos naturally tick the usual boxes—portable, reasonably loud, and simple to use, with useful features and functions in a presentable format for home use, and from a reputable manufacturer. If you require more heft and bang for your buck, then look at the more powerful combos going up the range—but for this particular level and spec, these amps will repay investigation. ■

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

AMPEG ROCKET BASS RB-108 COMBO

Price | \$209.99

Made In | China

Power | 30 watts @ 4 ohms

Features | SGT (Super Grit Technology) switch, volume, bass (+13/-21dB@40Hz), midrange (+16/-10dB@500Hz), treble (+12/-16dB@4kHz)

Speakers | 1 x 8” speaker

Dimensions | 433mm (H) x 411mm (W) x 306mm (D) / 17.04” (H) x 16.18” (W) x 12.04” (D)

Connections | 1/4” jack inputs x 2 (0/-15dB), 3.5mm Auxiliary input, 3.5mm headphones output

Weight | 23 lbs

AMPEG ROCKET BASS RB-110 COMBO

Price | \$321.99

Made In | China

Power | 50 watts @ 4 ohms

Features | SGT (Super Grit Technology) switch, grit, level, volume, bass (+14/-20dB@40Hz), midrange (+15/-10dB@500Hz), treble(+12/-16dB@4kHz), ground/lift switch

Speakers | 1 x 10” speaker

Dimensions | 481mm (H) x 411mm (W) x 330mm (D) / 18.93” (H) x 16.18” (W) x 12.99” (D)

Connections | 1/4” jack inputs x 2 (0/-15dB), 3.5mm Auxiliary input, 3.5mm headphones output, balanced XLR DI output

Weight | 22.5 lbs

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Usable sounds, easy to use, very portable

Minus | Bass projection is limited

Overall | A fine range of new combos with something for everyone

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★★★★★★

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★★★★★★

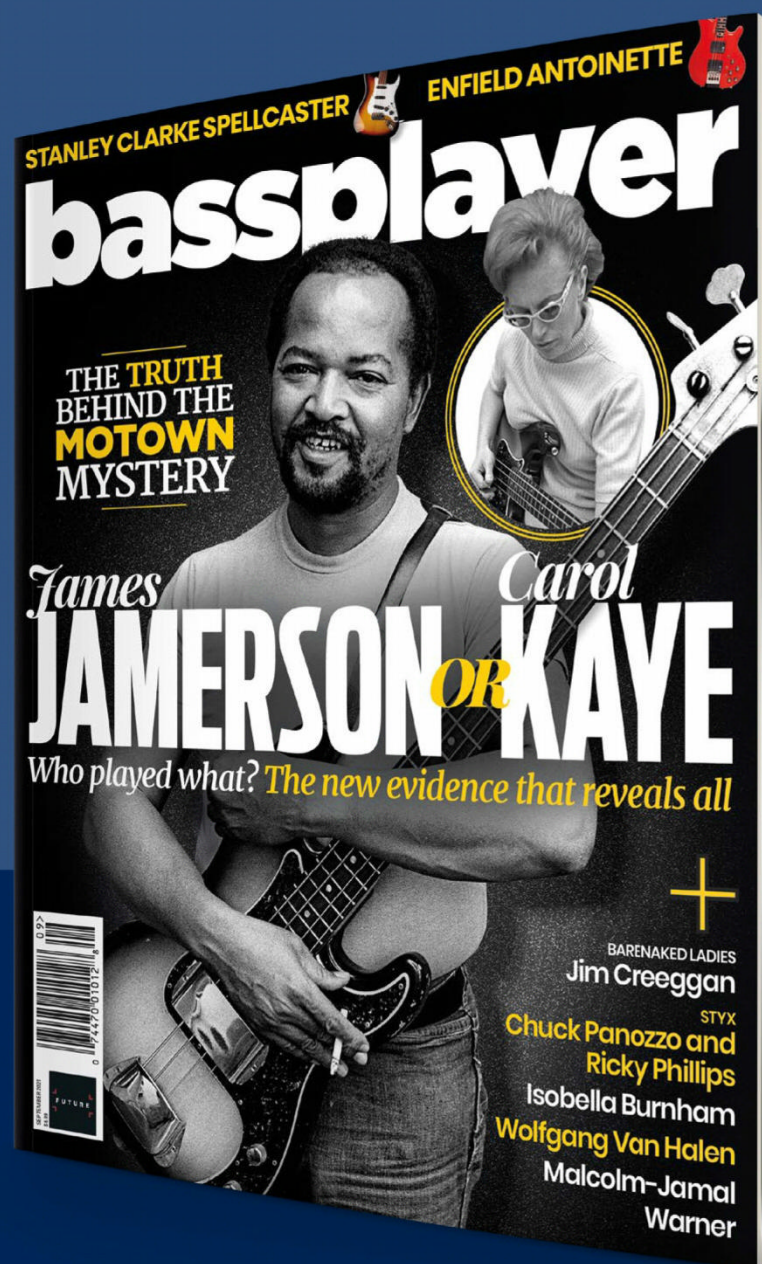
VALUE

★★★★★★★★★★

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I SPY...

62

RYAN MADORA

Dig into your favorite 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
Facebook ryanmadoramusic
Twitter RyanMadora
Instagram ryanmadora



BEGINNER

64

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 catalog 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'. www.stevelawson.net
Facebook solobasssteve
Twitter solobasssteve
Instagram solobasssteve



INTERMEDIATE

70

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
Facebook With-Bass-In-Mind
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ADVANCED

76

RICH BROWN

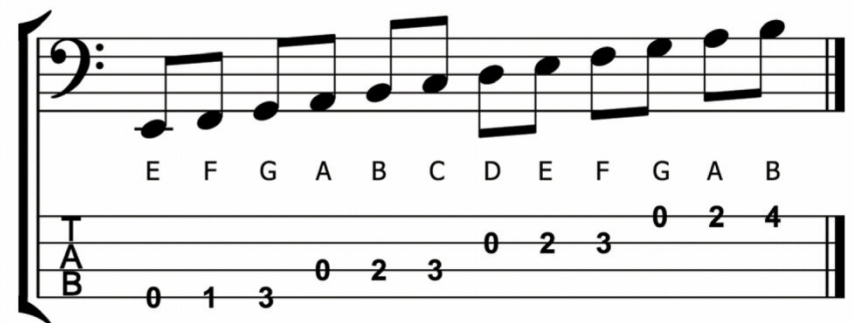
Maximize your bass skills with our advanced studies Toronto-born electric bassist Rich Brown has established himself as an incredibly versatile artist. Along with being one of the most called-upon electric bass players in Canada, Rich is a composer, producer, bandleader, educator and clinician, broadcaster, and voiceover artist. He has recorded three albums as a leader, including his critically acclaimed album of solo bass compositions *Between Heaviness & Here*. Rich appears on a plethora of recordings, ranging from jazz to traditional Arabic and Asian music. He has performed with a wide variety of artists, including Rudresh Mahanthappa, Vijay Iyer, Steve Coleman, and Angelique Kidjo. Rich leads two groups—rinsethealgorithm and The Abeng—and was nominated for a Juno Award in 2016 for his latest album, *Abeng*. fbass.com/artists/rich-brown
Instagram richbrownbass
Youtube Brown'stone With Rich Brown

BP Notation Legend

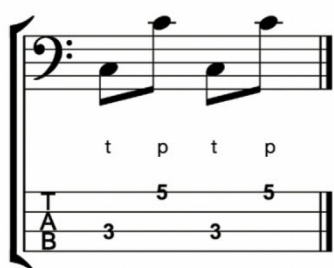
The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in Bass Player magazine

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.

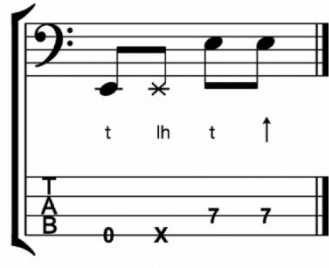


PLAYING TECHNIQUES



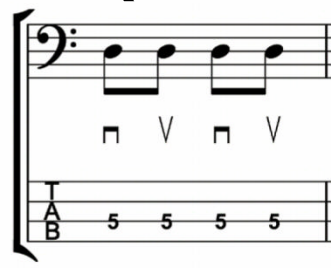
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

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

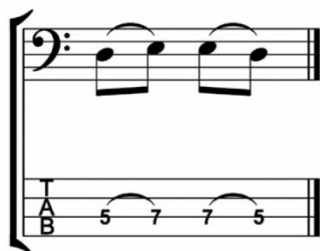
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up).



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

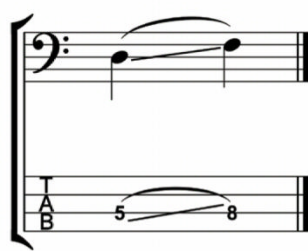
Fretting hand taps have a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are just '+'. Particular fingers may be shown with numbers.

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.



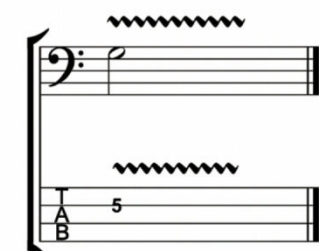
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

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



TRILLS

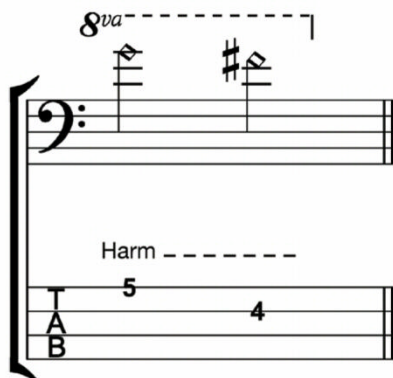
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown, using hammer-ons and pull-offs.



VIBRATO

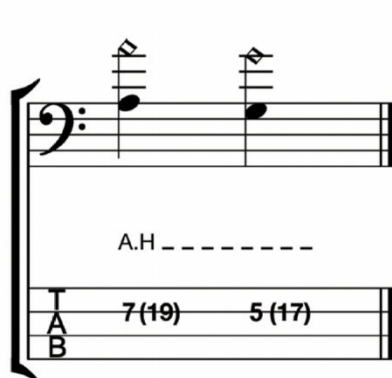
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger.

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

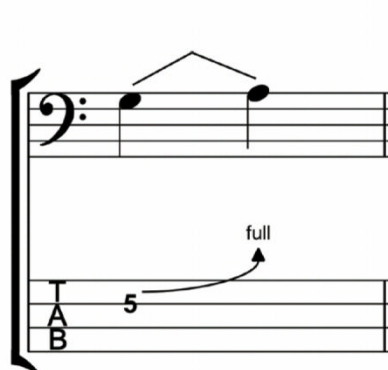
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated.



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

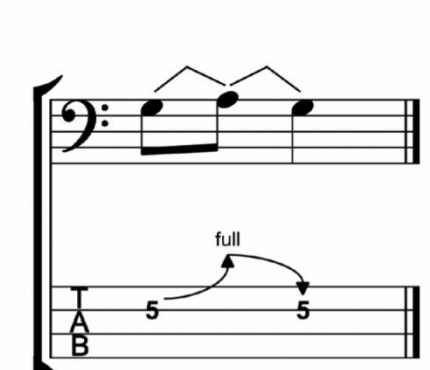
Pluck while fretting the lower note and touching the edge of the picking hand thumb to the note in brackets.

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: $\frac{1}{2}$ 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.



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!

I SPY...

DIMINISHED CHORDS

Hey there, bass players! The past few lessons have featured major and minor seventh chords in all their glory. However, we've been somewhat neglectful of our friend, the diminished chord—so this month, let's make that right. If you've ever cowered at the thought of something diminished, fear no more. We're going to make friends with this chord, find it on our fretboard, and discuss why it's important to our musical vocabulary.

First, let's spy it in the context of something familiar—the major scale. As we harmonize the scale and build a triad on each scale degree, most chords happen to be major (I, IV, and V) or minor (ii, iii, and vi). The only exception is the triad built from the seventh scale degree. As we build this triad—think B-D-F in the key of C—we realize that B to

D is a minor third but B to F is not a regular old fifth. Hmm; the fifth is a half-step lower than what we're used to. Since both the third and the fifth are lowered, it can't be a minor chord. Lo and behold, it is diminished! It sounds tense and demonic thanks to the intervallic relationship between the root and the flatted fifth. This interval is referred to as the “tritone” because the distance is three whole steps away from the root.

EXERCISE ONE

Now, let's find this on the fretboard. We'll harmonize the G major scale in **Exercise 1**, finally acknowledging the diminished chord on the seventh scale degree. Try sticking to your four-fret span and begin with your

middle finger on G (3rd fret of the E string). As you build the triad on F#, the seventh, you'll make a diminished triad with the notes F#-A-C. Because we're in the key of G, this whole exercise can be played in the same position, so no need to shift.

EXERCISE TWO

Once we've seen how it fits into the major scale, let's isolate this diminished triad and practice a few fingering patterns. In **Exercise 2**, we'll play the same triad over four bars, but we'll use two different patterns. Zip over to

the key of C so that we can practice these patterns with no sharps or flats. The diminished chord is built on the seventh scale degree, so we can play the aforementioned B diminished triad using the

There are two types of diminished seventh chords; fully and half-diminished

notes B-D-F. Play B on the 7th fret of your E string with your index finger. Then, use your pinky to play D on the 10th fret and your middle finger to play F on the 8th fret of the A string. Play D again to descend to the root and repeat this pattern in bar 2. For bars 3 and 4 of the exercise, start with your ring finger on B, use your index finger to grab D on the 5th fret of the A string, and then use your pinky to play F on the 8th fret. You'll see that both of these patterns adhere to the four-fret span!

EXERCISE THREE

Now that we've learned how to play the triad, we can add a seventh to the chord. Believe it or not, there are two types of diminished seventh chords—fully diminished and half-diminished. Let's begin with half-diminished, typically written as B $\flat$ 7. This uses the diminished triad and adds a minor seventh: B-D-F-A. We're still sticking to the diatonic rules, so this chord will appear on the 7th scale degree of a major key, or on the 2nd scale degree of a minor key. Fun fact: You can also think about this as a minor seventh chord with a flattened fifth; you may see this written as Bm7 $\flat$ 5 on a chord chart.

In terms of spying, the half-diminished chord is typically used in the context of a “two-five-one” progression in a minor

EXERCISE ONE

EXERCISE TWO

Bdim Bdim

1 4 2 4 1 4 2 4 3 1 4 1 3 1 4 1

T A B 7 10 8 10 7 10 8 10 7 5 8 5 7 5 8 5

EXERCISE THREE

Am⁷ B^ø7 E⁷ Am⁷

1 4 3 2 3 1 4 3 3 2 1 4 4

T A B 5 8 7 5 7 5 8 7 7 6 4 7 7

EXERCISE FOUR

B^b7 E^b7 Edim⁷ B^b7

2 1 4 2 2 1 4 2 3 1 4 2 2 1 4 2

T A B 6 5 8 6 6 5 8 6 7 5 8 6 6 5 8 6

key. If you ever play a formal event or corporate gig, you'll need this during cocktail hour as you jazz things up with 'Blue Bossa' and 'Fly Me To The Moon'. It'll even show up during the dance set during your favorite disco sing-along, 'I Will Survive'. Let's find this on the fretboard!

In **Exercise 3**, we'll play through this progression in A minor: Am⁷-B^ø7-E⁷. Arpeggiate each seventh chord, beginning with Am⁷. Start with your index finger on the 5th fret of the E string and adhere to your four-fret span. Then, play the B^ø7 chord with your ring finger on the first note. Use the second pattern from Exercise 2 but add the note A using your ring finger on the 7th fret of the D string. Finally, play an E⁷ chord starting on the 7th fret of the A string. You'll have to shift positions slightly, so be mindful of your fingering.

Now that you've got the half-diminished down, let's learn the fully diminished chord. This chord essentially stacks minor thirds, resulting in the root, minor third, flatted fifth, and diminished seventh. For example, we see that B to D is a minor third and D to F is a minor third. To create a fully diminished chord, we stack another minor third, or F to Ab. This chord is commonly used to add tension in blues, jazz and sophisticated pop.

EXERCISE FOUR

One of my favorite places to spy the diminished chord is in 'She Caught The Katy' from the *Blues Brothers* soundtrack. To spice up the melody and add extra tension, we

Being able to spot diminished chords may take some of the guesswork out of 'Sir Duke'

break away from the traditional 12-bar blues, adding a diminished chord after playing the IV. The root gets raised by a half-step but the other notes remain in their original place, resulting in a #IV^o chord.

Exercise 4 shows how this works. First, outline a B^b7 chord (I⁷), then an E^b7 (IV⁷) followed by an E^o7 (#IV^o7). This can either resolve to the tonic (as we do in the exercise) or walk up to the V chord. How cool!

Now that we've spied these chords in action, I hope you're able to befriend them and execute these patterns on the fretboard. Will you come across diminished chords in every song? Probably not, but they may take some of the guesswork out of 'Sir Duke'. ■

TAKE NOTE!

FIND SHARPS AND FLATS



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

Welcome! Continuing on from last month, we're going to take a deeper look at finding notes on the neck, and connect the fingerboard to what we know about music theory. Let's start with unpacking some of the logic in music theory—perhaps it will make a little more sense after this than is first apparent!

Within Western music, the naming conventions in music originate with the Major scale. Whether we're talking about note names, chords, or intervals, the Major scale is our default, and everything else is labeled as it differs from that. We also know that the scale of C Major is particularly useful because it contains no sharps or flats. This is because the sequence of 'natural' notes in C corresponds perfectly to the distribution of tones and semitones in the Major scale.

The template for a Major scale is 'tone, tone, semitone, tone, tone, semitone'—often written as T, T, S, T, T, T, S or in countries that use 'whole step' and 'half step' instead of tone and semitone, W, W, H, W, W, W, H. Either way, the tones or whole steps are two frets apart, and the semitones or half steps are one fret apart. That relationship is a constant for any Major scale, so for a C Major scale, we have C (tone) D (tone) E (semitone) F (tone) G (tone) A (tone) B (semitone) C. We can see that E to F is a semitone and B to C is a semitone, so there's no note between E and F or between B and C. When we move to another Major key, sharps and flats are used so that we always have one

of each letter name in each major key. It makes reading music so much easier when you can glance at a piece of sheet music and, so long as you know the key, you can see immediately what the intervals are. Running up a major scale—or any scale phrase—looks exactly the

Reading music is much easier when you can glance at the sheet and see immediately what the intervals are

same in any key: You just see notes moving up one line or space on the staff, and the key signature at the start of the line tells us which key that scale phrase belongs to.

All the while, we're maintaining that T, T, S, T, T, T, S pattern. So

if we start on F, it goes F (T) G (T) A (S) B flat. Because A to B would be a whole tone, the next note needs to be some kind of B to keep our letter-names sequential, so the next note, which is one fret below B, is called B_♭. In other situations, that note is also named A_♯—that's 'sharp', not 'hashtag', kids—but we can't have two As in the same key, or the sheet music would be littered with 'accidentals'—that is, sharps, flats or natural notes that are outside of the key—every time we went from A to A_♯ we'd have to write in the notation for the sharp and again for the natural note, ♮. So the logic behind where sharps and flats exist in a given key is entirely consistent, and to do with making sure we have one of each note name. So once we've got the key signature, we can read sequences of intervals, rather than worrying about note names!

It's worth noting at this point that this concept is initially more impactful on bass, or any other stringed instrument where the strings are the same interval apart, than it is on a piano or a wind or brass instrument. Once we know the shape for a Major scale, we can play and read that sequence in any key with exactly the same shape, just by finding the first note. On a piano, every key has a different sequence of notes to be learned as a distinct set of relationships.



Get (to know) Carter: Ron is the man when it comes to note awareness

Squarepusher, aka
Tom Jenkinson,
applies thumb to
string



★ Beginners Lesson

EXERCISE ONE

EXERCISE TWO

In that respect, we're incredibly lucky when it comes to reading and, crucially, to transposing—that is, moving the key of a piece of music up or down. This happens a lot in any vocal music, because singers each have a quite specific range. So you'll often find that learning a song in its original key by ear will only be step one in being able to play it with your band—you then have to find out the key that is most comfortable for your singer and move the whole song to that key. But for us, once we've got the relationships between the notes mapped out in the original key, our only real headache is what to do with any open strings that feature in the line!

So, going back to our F Major scale to finish it off, we have F (T) G (T) A (S) B_b (T) C (T) D (T) E (S) F. The one-fret step from E to F fits our template perfectly, so the key signature of F is one flat. It's also worth noting that F is the only Major key with one flat. The flat is a B_b, as we can see from our scale, but we don't need to work that out when looking at the key signature of a piece of written music—if it's got one flat, it's F Major, or D minor, the minor key that shares the same notes as F. See above for what it looks like on the staff. Note that the flat symbol in the key signature is on the note B, and that

means that all the Bs in the entire piece that don't have another symbol next to them as an 'accidental' are B flats. In this scale, the B_b is the first fret on the A string—one semitone above A, as dictated by the sequence of tones and semitones that make up a major scale:

EXERCISE 1

Let's look at one example that goes the other way, and take D Major. We can start with the notes from D to D just going through the letter sequence D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D and then work out where the

sharps or flats are by putting in our tones and semitones—D (T) E (T) F# (S) G (T) A (T) B (T) C# (S) D. E to F and B to C are both semitones, but we need a tone in both positions in order to keep the note sequence, so it's

an F# and C#. Try this anywhere on all the natural start notes. You'll soon see a pattern emerge; the sequence of sharps and flats that gets added is consistent, and there's only one Major key for each number of sharps or flats. Once we get our heads around this, we can make far greater use of being able to find any given note on the fingerboard. Not only can it give us the root of a chord, onto which we can overlay our known shapes for major

and minor triads or seventh chords, or pentatonic shapes—all without having to name the rest of the notes in the sequence. Now we can start to map out all of the notes in the key under our fingers, just by finding the root and knowing the shape for a major scale.

At this point, we can offload some of the heavy lifting to our ear and our muscle memory to help us navigate chord progressions or learn songs for which we've got some partial theory knowledge. Perhaps we've been told the key, or we know that it changes key between the chorus and the bridge. By learning how to find the notes on the neck, and map out the major scale from there, we can then at least find the right set of notes that each section of the song will be built from, and then combine our theory and fretboard knowledge with some ear-based decision making about what sounds correct within that subset of notes.

With this in mind, we can use our note-finding exercise from last week to start finding sharps and flats as well. Here's an exercise that gets us playing all the sharps and flats that are adjacent to the notes at the 12th fret. It also happens to be a really cool chromatic pattern, that gets used in some fairly advanced jazz contexts, so file it away for later use! Here, we're going to play two variations on the sequence of sharp, flat, and natural notes, and make special note of the fact that the semitone above E is an F, not an E#...

"There's not a flat fifth in there!" Gene Simmons once told us, on the subject of this lesson



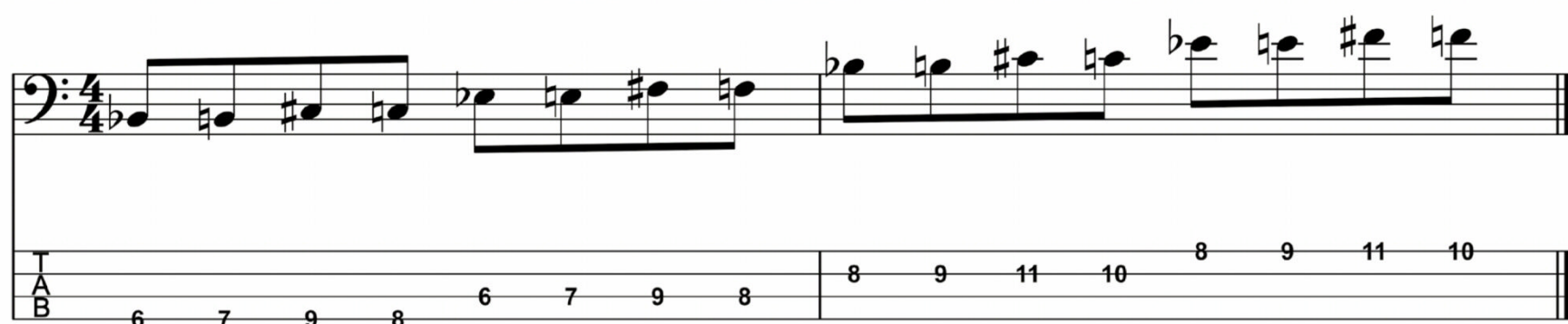
★ Beginners Lesson

EXERCISE THREE



Exercise Three is a bass line in 4/4 time. The notation consists of a staff with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, starting on B1 and ascending to F#4. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows the fingerings for each note: B1 (0), C1 (1), D1 (2), E1 (3), F1 (4), G1 (5), A1 (8), B1 (7), C2 (8), D2 (7), E2 (10), F2 (9), G2 (10), A2 (9), B2 (16), C3 (17), D3 (14), E3 (15), F3 (14), G3 (15), A3 (16), B3 (17), C4 (20), D4 (19), E4 (22), F4 (21), G4 (22), A4 (21), B4 (22), C5 (21).

EXERCISE FOUR



Exercise Four is a bass line in 4/4 time. The notation consists of a staff with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, starting on B1 and ascending to F#4. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows the fingerings for each note: B1 (6), C1 (7), D1 (9), E1 (8), F1 (6), G1 (7), A1 (9), B1 (8), C2 (8), D2 (9), E2 (11), F2 (10), G2 (8), A2 (9), B2 (11), C3 (10).

E# does actually exist as a note-name, but we don't have the space to unpack that here—Google it!

EXERCISE 2

As you play these, say the note names out loud. Use the tab if the ledger lines above the stave look intimidating, but try to get a feel for seeing the semitone below a note you already know as the flat and the semitone above as the sharp. Let's give a little more attention to that semitone gap between E and F and B and C. Once we learn to spot where they are on the fingerboard, this approach to finding notes becomes much easier. Every note a semitone above a natural note is sharp, and every note a semitone below is flat, except between those two pairs. Find those pairs, and the pattern makes perfect sense. So, building on the E to F pairs that we found last month, let's create a grid across the whole fingerboard that gives us all the E to F and B to C pairs in one pattern we can practice:

EXERCISE 3

To finish up this month, let's combine those last two exercises and play the semitones below and above each pair of notes as well, so we can start to see where B $\flat$ and C# are, as well as E $\flat$ and F#. One thing to note with these exercises is that

while they are primarily designed to teach us to see where the notes are on the neck, and be able to find them quickly, they're also a set of really unusual patterns that relate to our major key knowledge in very specific ways.

There's a whole world of theory and practice based on 'approach notes'—that is, using notes a semitone away from whatever your target note is as a way to build tension—and this exercise inadvertently stumbles into that territory. So please feel free, in fact actively encouraged, to explore writing lines using these slightly bizarre note groupings. You may find yourself striking a rich seam of inspiration for new and quirky riffs and lines. Here's our E to F and B to C, with each note preceded by its sharp or flat [see above].

EXERCISE 4

Notice the repeated sequence of 'flat natural sharp natural' that goes through each group of four notes. Getting used to seeing repeated patterns in music will help you significantly cut down the time you take to work things out. We do it with written language all the time, and as we

learn a language we go from letters, to words, to phrases, to entire sentences that we take in at a glance because we understand what they represent without breaking them down into their component parts.

Music very often works like this:

The amount of music out there that is

through-composed and contains minimal repeats is pretty marginal, and there's no reason to depress yourself by trying to tackle it at this stage. Use your ability to spot patterns in the music to aid shifting shapes

across the fingerboard, to understand how particular shapes correspond to the underlying chords, and to really help cut down on the time spent working out every note while reading a bass-line.

Ultimately we're here to play music, so coming up with ways of reducing the time wasted going over things that we've already learned, but in a slightly different position on the neck, helps us reach that goal of making great music much sooner and with less stress. Spot the patterns, and get familiar with finding sharps and flats from the natural notes you already know. The fretboard is your oyster! ■

Explore writing lines using these bizarre note groupings—you may strike a rich seam of inspiration!



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GET MELODIC!

THE MELODIC MINOR MINOR CONTINUED



Phil Mann is a stage and session star and educator extraordinaire. Get ready to step up your bass game!

Hello again! Melodic Minor is the holy grail when it comes to selecting a way to unpack minor tonality. The scale can be a treasure trove of melodic interpretation, because it not only allows you to decipher the complexity of minor harmony, it also helps you to produce an array of sonic textures over coinciding chord types.

To master this scale, you'll need to grasp the diatonic structure of melodic minor and all of its coinciding modes. Working through bite-sized portions of information is always the key to success, as the essence of good practice, so this month's studies continue to focus on familiarization with delivering melodic minor. Let's go! ■



Nik West: a one-woman funk machine

Betty

EXERCISE ONE

♩ = 130

Am(Δ7)

The exercise consists of two measures of the melodic minor scale in A minor, written in bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The first measure starts on A2 and ends on G#3, and the second measure starts on A3 and ends on A4. The notation includes fingerings (1-4) and a final double bar line.

Our first exercise refreshes our memories from last month by revisiting the melodic minor scale in its two-octave form. Work through the notation, ensuring that you can recall the formula in any given key. A smooth delivery is more achievable when your index finger transcends the semitone between the notes of G# and A at the end of the first measure.

EXERCISE TWO

♩ = 115

Am(Δ7)

The musical notation for Exercise Two is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 115 beats per minute. It consists of two measures. The first measure contains an eighth-note triplet (A2, B2, C3) followed by a dotted quarter note (D3), and another eighth-note triplet (E3, F3, G3). The second measure contains a dotted quarter note (A2), an eighth-note triplet (B2, C3, D3), and another dotted quarter note (E3). The guitar fretboard diagram below the staff shows the following fingerings: Measure 1: 5 (A2), 7 (B2), 7 (C3), 6 (D3), 7 (E3), 8 (F3), 8 (G3). Measure 2: 4 (A2), 5 (B2), 7 (C3), 8 (D3), 7 (E3), 8 (F3), 5 (G3), 8 (A3).

This exercise creates an ostinato groove from the diatonic formula presented in Exercise 1. Delivered over four bars of Am(maj7), the following measures view melodic minor in its tonic minor state. As you work through the study, you'll be confronted by a range of rhythms, from eighth-note triplets to dotted quarter-notes. Be mindful of the rhythmic displacement at the beginning of the second measure: This means prepositioning a pitch rhythmically to a point slightly before, or later than, that which is expected.

EXERCISE THREE

♩ = 130

Am(Δ7)

The musical notation for Exercise Three is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 130 beats per minute. It consists of two measures. The first measure contains an eighth-note triplet (A2, B2, C3) followed by a dotted quarter note (D3), and another eighth-note triplet (E3, F3, G3). The second measure contains a dotted quarter note (A2), an eighth-note triplet (B2, C3, D3), and another dotted quarter note (E3). The guitar fretboard diagram below the staff shows the following fingerings: Measure 1: 5 (A2), 8 (B2), 7 (C3), 5 (D3), 8 (E3), 7 (F3), 5 (G3), 9 (A3). Measure 2: 7 (A2), 6 (B2), 9 (C3), 7 (D3), 6 (E3), 9 (F3), 7 (G3), 10 (A3).

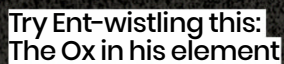
For many of us, melodic minor is an entirely new vocabulary. Although at first it may feel like a leap of faith, all we have to do right now is concentrate on developing our familiarity with the language: In later issues I'll show you how to apply your skill set. For now, just be mindful that playing scales is a physical act, so you need to be patient and take the time to train your hands to locate the notes and deliver them efficiently. Therefore, these next exercises will deliver melodic minor using various diatonic interval skips. We simply deliver each note of the scale in ascending order, followed by the associated pitch a prescribed distance away. Our first study is diatonic interval skips of thirds.

♩ = 85

$$A_m(\Delta^7)$$

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in two systems. The first system contains the first two measures of the melody, which end with a repeat sign. The second system contains the next two measures, also ending with a repeat sign. The melody is written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics 'The Rose Tree' are written below the first measure of the first system. The guitar accompaniment is shown as a single line with fret numbers (1-9) and a bar line. The first measure of the guitar part corresponds to the first measure of the melody, and the second measure corresponds to the second measure. The guitar part uses a mix of open strings (indicated by 'T' and 'B') and fretted notes (indicated by numbers).

This exercise contains a number of rudimental sixteenth-note rhythms. Referencing the preceding study, this intoxicating motif has been generated using diatonic interval skips of thirds. On the very first beat of bar one you will be required to deliver two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note—to get this, say the word ‘Lem-on-ade’. Likewise, the rhythm on beat two of the same measure can be produced by reciting the syllables in the word ‘Black-cur-rant’.



EXERCISE FIVE

♩ = 130

Am^(Δ7)

Delivering intervals of four on an instrument tuned in fourths will always be relatively straightforward. After all, 90 percent of the time the two pitches reside conveniently on the same fret, but on adjacent strings. It's this convenience that encourages some bassists to fall into the trap of employing a single digit to 'barre' the interval in your fretting hand. However, please attempt to deliver this using two individual fingers, to maximize your dexterity, and the control you possess over the articulation.

EXERCISE SIX

♩ = 85

Am^(Δ7)

Having to switch between rhythmical figures comprising both sixteenth note and triplet motifs can be tedious. It's not that the rhythms are individually complex, it's the discipline required to move between the subdivisions without compromising your timing that proves challenging. A good way to introduce and support this study is to clap alternating bars of sixteenth notes and eighth-note triplets to a metronome—you'll be surprised by just how helpful it can be!



Intermediate Lesson

EXERCISE SEVEN

♩ = 130

Am(Δ7)

Exercise Seven is a musical exercise in 4/4 time, marked with a tempo of 130 beats per minute. It is in the key of A minor, indicated by the Am(Δ7) chord symbol. The exercise consists of two systems of music, each with a bass staff and a guitar staff. The bass staff contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including accidentals (sharps and naturals). The guitar staff contains a fretboard diagram with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-4 and 7-9, and a 'T' for the thumb. The first system covers measures 1-4, and the second system covers measures 5-8.

Delivering a fifth interval in root position omits the diatonic third, which results in the structure becoming open to both major and minor tonality. However, the fifth intervals conveyed in Exercise 7 are diatonic, which means they only quote the pitches within the scale. This results in the portrayal of both perfect and flattened fifth intervals, which have contrasting harmonic properties.

EXERCISE EIGHT

♩ = 85

Am(Δ7)

Exercise Eight is a musical exercise in 4/4 time, marked with a tempo of 85 beats per minute. It is in the key of A minor, indicated by the Am(Δ7) chord symbol. The exercise consists of two systems of music, each with a bass staff and a guitar staff. The bass staff contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including accidentals (sharps and naturals). The guitar staff contains a fretboard diagram with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-4 and 7-9, and a 'T' for the thumb. The first system covers measures 1-4, and the second system covers measures 5-8. The exercise features a sequence of stacked fifths (root, fifth, ninth, thirteenth) in the bass line.

There are literally hundreds of theoretical hacks that can arm you with fresh insights and the means to refine melodic phrasing. One device, favored by many, is to stack intervals of fifths. Starting on the root, this method accesses the tonic pitch and note found on the fifth degree. But if you continue to synthesize this interval in an ascending manner, you then access the ninth—found a fifth above the fifth—and then finally the thirteenth—found a fifth above the ninth. This technique has been employed to construct the opening motif of this study.

EXERCISE NINE

♩ = 130

Am(Δ7)

The exercise consists of two systems of notation. The first system has a bass staff and a guitar staff. The bass staff shows a melodic line starting on A2, moving up stepwise to A4. The guitar staff shows fret numbers for strings A and B, with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-4. The second system continues the melodic line in the bass staff and the fret numbers in the guitar staff, ending on A4.

This month's penultimate study examines diatonic interval skips of sixths. Tablature readers, be warned: This form of notation can occasionally be misleading. For example, the pitches in bar two can be delivered as shown, or by continually playing the lower notes of each interval on string three—G# could be portrayed at fret 11 on string three and A at fret 12 accordingly. This sort of shift in perspective can simplify the delivery of harder phrases, so never accept tablature as definitive.

EXERCISE TEN

♩ = 85

The exercise consists of two systems of notation. The first system has a bass staff and a guitar staff. The bass staff shows a melodic line starting on A2, moving up stepwise to A4. The guitar staff shows fret numbers for strings A and B, with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-4. The second system continues the melodic line in the bass staff and the fret numbers in the guitar staff, ending on A4.

This month's final exercise revisits the sixth intervals found in the last study. As the pitches involved in the production of these intervals are so far apart, sixths often prove to be a beautifully harmonic resource for bassists. This final exercise isolates their rich harmonic properties and presents them in the form of double stops during the opening two measures.

If you only practice one thing this month...

This month's studies are all part of a series of instalments addressing melodic minor. By now, you should be able to recite the formula for melodic minor and then use it to reproduce the scale from any given position on your fretboard. This will ultimately empower you with total fluidity with the vocabulary, but if you can't do the aforementioned task yet, please place it top of your list of practice priorities.

STEP UP!

MASTER YOUR TIME AWARENESS



Rich Brown takes over our Advanced lesson this month. Read on as he takes us to the very top of bass technique!

Hello! Welcome to my new *Bass Player* column. It's an honor to be taking over from the great Stuart Clayton, and I'm really looking forward to taking the next steps on our journey into bass with you. Who knows what we'll find where we're going? Strap yourself in!

We're working at advanced level here, of course, so let's take a second to think what 'advanced' actually means. For example, an in-depth analysis of the individual notes of the 16th note subdivision, like the one we're going to do today, might not be an advanced lesson for some players. However, in all my years as an educator, it's been one of the most challenging exercises for the vast majority of my students, whether they're college students or professional musicians.

Many of them have shrugged this exercise off, saying, 'Yeah, I got it', only to struggle

Let's take a second to consider what 'advanced level bass' actually means

with playing certain syncopations when challenged to do so. Don't be that person! Open your mind, let go of your ego, and let yourself enjoy the process. These exercises are a lot of fun, and once you become truly comfortable with the idea that there are no 'strong beats' or 'weak beats' within the 16th-note subdivision, you'll find that your time and your phrasing will improve in astonishing ways.

So let's start at the very beginning. First of all, I'm pretty sure the debate as to whether or not we should or should not be practicing with a metronome will rage on long after our souls have floated off into the Mingusphere. I'm not passionate either way, but playing these exercises with a metronome is the best way to get the most out of them. The common complaint is that playing to a metronome can sound too mechanical, too inorganic, too cold. All of this may be true, but it doesn't have to be the case.

Ida Nielsen: a master of the groove



LEVEL ONE: ONE-NOTE PHRASES

1a



1b



1c



1d



For Level One, let's establish a solid groove with a metronome. Try to get to the point where it feels as if the metronome is responding to you, not the other way round. This is such a satisfying feeling!

LEVEL TWO: TWO-NOTE PHRASES

2a



2b



2c



2d



Level 2 of the exercise is the same as Level One, but we'll make the 16th-note shifts while playing beats 1 and 3. Now we're creating simple two-note grooves against the backbeat. But this is only the beginning!

Usually, when I practice with a metronome, I'll turn off beats 1 and 3 and play to beats 2 and 4—essentially the backbeat. Now I can connect to this 'backbeat' in the same way that I would connect with a live drummer. The larger spaces between the beats allow me to feel more relaxed inside the groove. The metronome is no longer dictating the time to me, and I no longer feel the pressure to play the 'right notes' against four relentless clicks. Instead, I'm grooving to the beat of the snare drum on 2 and 4. Suddenly this feels a lot less like practicing and a lot more like music.

So let's start with the basics and see how we do. I always ask my students to start this exercise with the metronome set to 80bpm, with beats one and three turned off. This tempo allows us to count the 16th-note subdivision comfortably. Counting the subdivision out loud is the first step of the exercise. Try it. The old '1-E-&-a 1-E-&-a...' works best. Now here's the part where you have to be brutally honest with yourself. You

Usually, when I practice with a metronome, I'll turn off beats 1 and 3 and play to beats 2 and 4

won't be doing yourself or your bandmates any favors by faking this.

So... how's your time when you're counting the subdivision? Are your twos and fours landing ahead of the beat? Behind the beat? Or right on the beat? It's essential to establish where you are in the bar before moving forward. If you're landing ahead or behind the beat when you're counting, you may be playing this way generally.

So let's get to work with **Level One** of the exercise. With your metronome set to 80bpm and beats one and three turned off, choose a note and play on beats one and three. On the surface, this is a simple and straightforward exercise—but it's not about playing the right note on the right beat, it's about establishing a solid groove with your metronome. You have to get to the point where you feel as if

the metronome is responding to you, not the other way around. It's such a satisfying feeling when you're playing right in the middle of that pocket!

The next step of the exercise is to shift the one and three by a 16th note, playing the 'E's of one and three. Some of my most advanced students find this part of the exercise very challenging. But remember, you're creating rhythmic phrases with the metronome. Those beats on 2 and 4 are an essential part of your rhythm when playing this exercise. Once you establish your groove on the 'E's, make your next 16th note shift to the '&'s of beats one and three, and finally the 'a's. If you're having trouble with this part of the exercise, you can count the subdivision out loud and accent the notes you find the most challenging.

LEVEL THREE: THREE-NOTE PHRASES ON 1E

3a



3b



3c



3d



Here we've created three different two-note phrases (1E, 1&, and 1a). It's essential to make sure you're comfortable playing these rhythms with the metronome before you move on. At this point, things can get exciting. Once you're comfortable with this, you can take each of these individual phrases through the bar, as we did with our single-note rhythms in Level One. We'll start with our '1E' phrase—essentially two 16th notes.

Les Claypool:
The fastest thumb
in the west.



It's important to count these rhythms out loud before you play them. Once you can count the rhythm in time with the metronome, it's just a matter of going back to the bass and playing what you hear.

Here are the rhythms we get when we shift this phrase. This time, instead of notating the examples, we'll count the subdivision and accent the correct beats. We start with:

■ **ONE** E and a—two e and a—**THREE** E and a—four e and a

And then we shift our two accented notes to the next beat.

■ one **E AND** a—two e and a—three **E AND** a—four e and a

■ one e **AND A**—two e and a—three e **AND A**—four e and a

■ one e and **A—TWO** e and a—three e and **A—FOUR** e and a

Isolating two-note phrases in **Level Two** when playing them with the metronome creates some great syncopations that immediately give you a better sense of what's possible when you genuinely familiarize yourself with the subdivision.

Now it's your turn. We can make the same shifts with our 1& phrase, as well as our 1a

phrase. Count the phrases out. Write them down if you wish. Play them with your metronome and listen closely to how each phrase sounds against that backbeat. You can have a lot of fun with each of these rhythms.

We can do so much more with these rhythms, but I'll leave you with **Level Three**. Just as we did with Level Two, we can now take our two-note phrases and make them three-note phrases by adding beats 1 and 3 to our Level Two examples. As you can see, we create these rhythms by taking the phrases 1e, 1&, and 1a through the bar while adding beats 1 and 3 to each example. I've notated these phrases for you here.

LEVEL THREE: THREE-NOTE PHRASES ON 1&



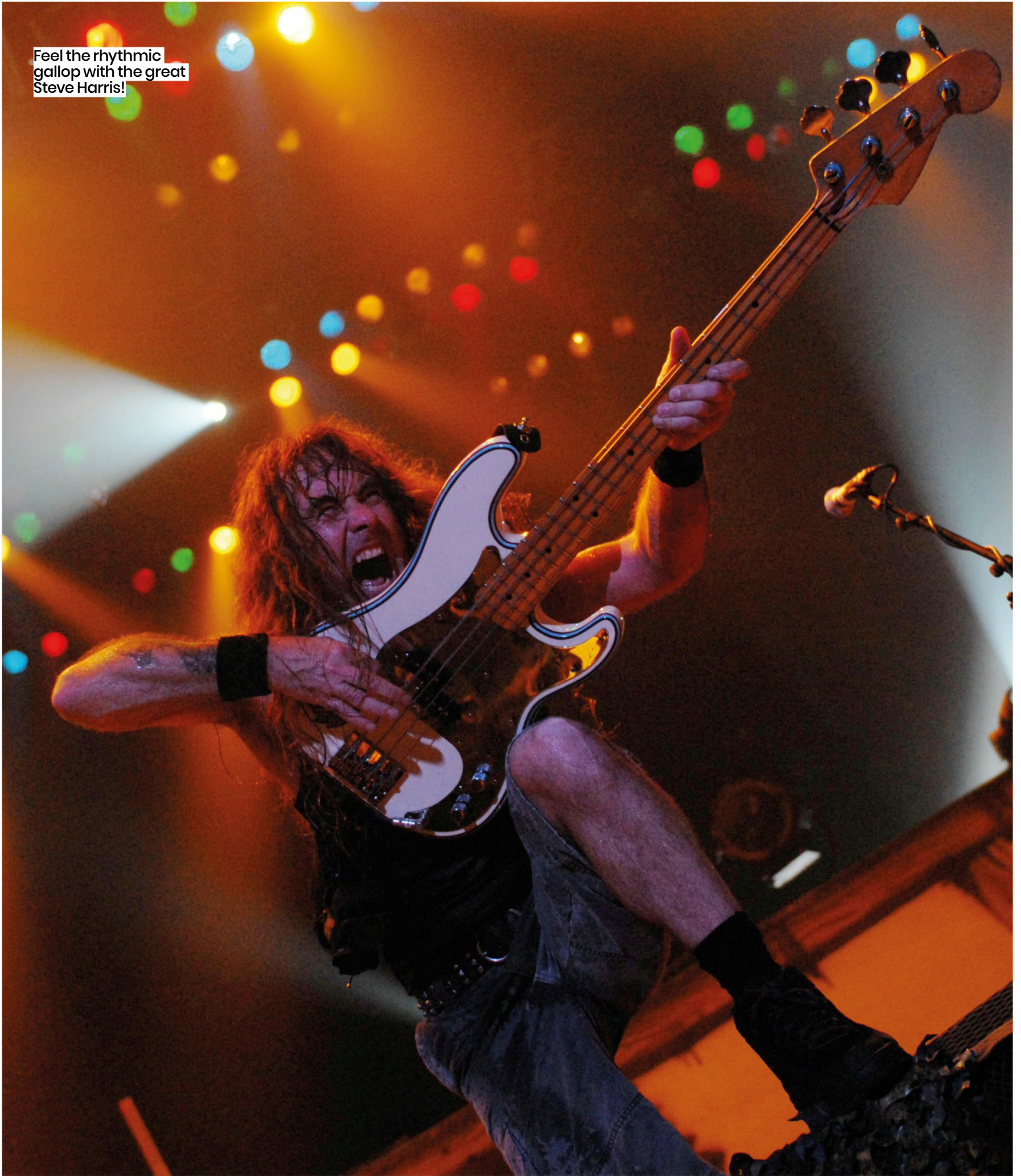
How many songs can you play through, using these rhythms?

LEVEL THREE: THREE-NOTE PHRASES ON 1A



Don't worry. You've got this.

Feel the rhythmic gallop with the great Steve Harris!



Betty

This examination of the subdivision is an exercise that continues to challenge you in ways that you can create for yourself. Change the tempo. Change the notes. Play the three-note patterns using triads and inversions, or use different intervals. Play

through entire songs using these rhythms. Combine different examples to create new rhythms.

There are so many ways to keep raising the bar with this, but above all, I urge you all to have fun with these rhythms. These exercises

are a great way to develop your overall time, groove, and phrasing. I hope you enjoy them, and I hope they bring you a little closer to the player you aspire to be. We'll dig deeper into these studies in the next instalment of this lesson. You got this! ■

Leaning against a colossal amp stack, there's a battered and bruised Fender Precision bass, road-worn after years of blood, sweat and tears spilled on tour, on planes, and on stages around the world. For me, this is an iconic image that comes to mind when I think of some of my favorite basses and bands. For a P-Bass, a favored upgrade that you'll see often is a new bridge. Lovingly known as the 'bent bit of tin', the standard and original Fender bridge was a seemingly utilitarian offering that was designed to spend its life hiding under the fitted cover. We can do better...

So, we're upgrading bridges?
 Yep! Last month we talked about bridge features—their hardware, their functionality and of course, their perceived improvement in tone. The market for customizing instruments, in general, is massive. Electronics, hardware, woodwork—everything can be replaced, either because it's worn out, or just for the sheer joy of personalizing your go-to axe. For those who want to upgrade their bass so that it's more in keeping with the sumptuous curves of their favorite instrument, the bridge is often an easy upgrade.

Have you swapped out bridges before, Veall?

Many times! I had a rather nice Dingwall Combustion bass for a while. It had a stunning white finish, and I decided I liked the two-tone look, and replaced the chrome hardware with some high-end equivalents in black.

Very good. How do we do it?
 In the case of Fender-style bridges, there's often a five-hole screw mount, and for the most part, you should be able to pop the old bridge off and drop the new one right on. A quick tip before doing so: Measure and line up the saddles for action and intonation before swapping over, so you'll only need to make small adjustments when the new bridge goes on.

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BRIDGES EXPLAINED

Part Two of our dive into bass bridges: Should you upgrade?

What else should I look for?

Bass bridges have lots of moving parts that can vibrate loose. On modern high-mass types, you will often find grub screws that help lock parts in place. The idea is that not only will they help to stop pieces falling out when you change strings, but they'll also help improve your tone, as string energy isn't being wasted in vibrating parts.

Who makes new bridges?

Hipshot, ABM, Gotoh, Babicz, and Schaller, to name just a few. All offer aftermarket upgrades, but even Fender have their own

parts outlet, too. The Leo Quan Badass bridge immediately springs to mind as the favorite of many a rock star gracing the pages of *BP*. Even Fender's signature models often have a bridge on them that is a nod to this heavy-duty monster. Most bridges from reputable outlets should come with new screws and tools such as an Allen key to enable the necessary adjustments for action and intonation.

Does the bridge's construction make a real difference?

Yes. Materials such as brass,



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aluminum and steel seem to be a much better choice than poor-quality die-cast bridges made of unidentified 'metal' covered in shiny paint. A better-made bridge is also less likely to fall to bits, negating the very point of upgrading in the first place. Stick to the well-known brands if your budget allows.

The big question: Does changing the bridge on your bass improve its sound?

It depends on what you define as 'improve'. I've certainly replaced bridges and enjoyed stronger fundamental tones, brighter top end and better-balanced mids—but don't expect a night-and-day difference. It's way more subtle than, say, changing pickup types. With certain setups, you probably won't discern any difference in sound.

So what's the point?

You know what? If a new bridge makes your instrument more personal, if it helps you connect more with playing, or even if you just like the sight of your bass hanging on the wall looking beautiful, do it. The great thing about bridges is that you can usually just unscrew the new one and stick the old one back on if you want. Furthermore, if a new bridge makes it easier to set up your instrument, and if your bass feels better for you when you play it, those are genuine improvements, too. ■



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