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BASS PACKET

History of Modern Bass

The bass, whether vocally or instrumentally, has always been and continues to be the tonal foundation throughout Western music history. As music evolved, styles developed, and new instruments were invented to express and enhance tone and range, the role of the bass has remained the same - define the chord. The upright (double-, stand-up, stringed-) bass is the staple instrument in any stringed ensemble. The upright bass evolved into the modern electric bass with the advent of amplification and a need to cater to new musical styles.

Construction

Although a member of the violin family, it is unique in the fact that it is tuned in 4ths rather than 5ths. The fact that the guitar is tuned the same way (with the exception of a Major 3rd tuning between its G and B strings) almost destined the upright to be adopted into the guitar family later in the 20th century. Early electric bass necks contained 20 frets, and have since been extended to 24 frets (commonly).

Tonal to Percussive

The slap style of playing (percussively slapping, pulling the strings from the neck and releasing them to create the "slap" sound against the fingerboard) was developed in the 1920s and 30s because the unamplified upright bass was generally the quietest instrument in the jazz band. This style would allow the tone to cut through the sound of the band in a live setting, but also in early recordings where the lower bass frequencies weren't as audible.

This percussive element added a new responsibility to the bassist's role - to be in sync with the drummer when there was one present, and to provide a rhythmic pulse when there was none.

Styles

In jazz, the bass player is expected to provide "comping" (improvised accompaniment) over the harmonies played by guitar, horns, brass, keyboard, etc. A consistent walking bass line outlines the sounding harmony in a typical pattern of one note per beat. This pattern can be broken up by alternative rhythms such as triplets, ghost notes, swung eighths, and skips. A bass player must have a clear grasp of the key and modal scales to effectively outline chords and to travel from chord to chord.

In blues, the role is similar to jazz but the bassist does not always need to play the constant changes per beat but rather locks in with the drummer to provide the groove. The structural harmony is reduced to I7, IV7, and V7 (all have flat 7ths) with occasional substitutions and secondary dominants (V/V for example). There are several types of blues swings and shuffles utilized by the rhythm section of the blues band.

Country and folk music rely less on instrumental solos, but rather on vocals and storytelling, and in response, the bass provides the setting and groundwork for the song. In this style and bass player can use dynamics and unique articulations including glissandos to build the song.

A funk bassist uses quick 16th notes, syncopated rhythms, different slapping techniques, and plays slightly behind the beat. A funk tune can often revolve around 1-3 chords.

Pop music is often, but not always, simple. A good bass player approaches a pop tune with a "hooky," repetitive line.

Rock music can be simple but also complex. Sometimes the most effective bass line is one that matches the guitarist, while at other times, the bassist is holding down the groove with the drummer.

Notable Bassists to Listen to
Ray Brown, Larry Graham, Willie Weeks, Bootsy Collins, Todd Johnson, Marcus Miller, Victor Wooten, Paul Chambers, Stanley Clark, Jaco Pastorius, Oscar Pettiford, John Entwistle, Pino Palladino, Israel Crosby, Getty Lee, Flea, Paul McCartney, Jeff Berlin, Norm Stockton, Abe Laboriel

Intervals
- Intervals refer to a number system based on the space between notes.
- Chord specific starting at the root and moving out: (2nds/9ths, 3rds/10ths, 4ths/11ths, 5ths, 6ths/13ths, and 7ths).
- The necessary tones for a chord are the Root (1), the 3rd (Major or Minor) and the 5th. Any other tones are called extensions and may be added to the triad (R, 3rd, 5th) to add color to a chord.
- Gmaj7, for instance, represents a chord sounding:
        G (root), B (3rd), D (5th), and an F# (maj. 7th)

- Em7(add 9) represents a chord sounding:
        E (root), G (3rd), B (5th), D (min. 7th), and an F# (9th)

- As bass players, it is not necessary to play every chord tone (R, 3, 5, 7, etc.) to spell out the chord, but having an understanding of intervals makes it easier to craft creative bass lines.

Filling
- Think of the ensemble you are in. How many people are playing? Are there players on the team who are always filling?
- Think of range. Does the piano player have a heavy left hand or electric guitarist chunking low power chords? If so, think about higher fills to blend in those middle to higher frequencies.
- Fills work great after vocal phrases, but aren't always necessary.
- Get to know the lyrics and melody, not only to know when to fill, but to know when a fill isn't appropriate.
- Think melodically, as if you were humming the line.
- Fills aren't always about a flurry of notes, but about good note choices and space.
- Come from a place of economy, play less and add as needed.
- Types of simple fills: diadic and triadic:
        - Roots and 5ths (diadic): moving to a higher octave of the root using the 5th as a pivot note and glissandos (slides) to reach it. This is the simplest because the 5th lies in the same place whether the chord is major or minor unless otherwise notated - F#m7(b5)
        - Roots, 3rds, and 5ths (triadic): The inclusion of the 3rd adds an extra step to the previous fill. You must know the quality of the chord sounding and know where the 3rd lies above and below the root. Be careful not to give away the 3rd of the notated chord is a 'sus4' (suspended chord that substitutes a 4th in place of a 3rd to create tonal anticipation).
- There are 3 common positions where the 3rd and 5th are close to the root: 1st position (index finger on the root) 2nd position (middle finger on root), and 4th position (little finger on root)

Keys:

	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii	I
C:	C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	Bm7(b5)	C
G:	G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em	F#m7(b5)	G
D:	D	Em	F#m	G	A	Bm	C#m7(b5)	D
A:	A	Bm	C#m	D	E	F#m	G#m7(b5)	A
E:	E	F#m	G#m	A	B	C#m	D#m7(b5)	E
B:	B	C#m	D#m	E	F#	G#m	A#m7(b5)	B
F#:	F#	G#m	A#m	B	C#	D#m	E#m7(b5)	F#
F:	F	Gm	Am	Bb	C	Dm	Em7(b5)	F
Bb:	Bb	Cm	Dm	Eb	F	Gm	Am7(b5)	Bb
Eb:	Eb	Fm	Gm	Ab	Bb	Cm	Dm7(b5)	Eb
Ab:	Ab	Bbm	Cm	Db	Eb	Fm	Gm7(b5)	Ab
Db:	Db	Ebm	Fm	Gb	Ab	Bbm	Cm7(b5)	Db
Gb:	Gb	Abm	Bbm	Cb	Db	Ebm	Fm7(b5)	Gb

Practice each key by Horizontal and Vertical methods:
- Horizontal: Play open strings (if available, or lowest note on that string) moving up
  the neck to the 12th fret including all notes in the key. "Say & Play" to label and
  commit them to memory.
        Example: for the key of C, begin with the low E (open), then F (1st fret), G, A,
B, C, D, and finally E (12th fret octave). Then say and play backwards beginning on
12th fret descending to open E. Repeat pattern on the higher strings.
- Vertical: Play triads in 1st, 2nd, and 4th positions for each chord in the key.

Pentatonic Scales
- The pentatonic scales add 2 notes to the triad (including the octave) to create a
complete scale containing 5 different notes.
- There are both Major and Minor Pentatonic Scales.
- All notes in the Major Pent. scale work over a Major chord. All notes in the Minor
Pent. scale work over a Minor chord.
- Notice the blues notes that can be added to each chord if you want to add
  chromatic notes.
- Remember that the same scales will work for any key, all you must do is shift
  positions.
- Use these 5 notes not only for extended fills, but to travel from one chord root to
  the next.

Modal Scales
- Where the Major and Minor Pent. scales work over their Maj. and Min. chords
  respectively, 2 additional "modal" notes may be added to the pent. scales on chords
  (I - vi)
- These scales allow each chord in the key to have a unique set of ingredients based
  on the 2 "modal" notes added. (see diagram below)
- Modal scales add half steps to the Pentatonic scales.

Example: Key of G	"Modal" notes	Quality	Name
I: G	4th, and maj.7th	Major	Ionian
ii: Am	2nd, and maj.6th	Minor	Dorian
iii: Bm	b2nd, and min.6th	Minor	Phrygian
IV: C	#4th, and maj.7th	Major	Lydian
V: D	4th, and b7th	Major	Mixolydian
vi: Em	2nd, and min.6th	Minor	Aeolian
vii: F#m	b2nd, b5th, and min.6th	Diminished	Locrian

Open and Closed Chords
- Open chords include the root on the E string and the 3rd/10th on the G string.
- Use the thumb and index/middle finger on the right to pluck the 2 notes together to create this beautiful pad-like chord.
- Closed chords that include the root (trichords or triads):
    - R, 3rd, 5th
    - R, 3rd, 8va
    - R, 3rd, 7th
    - R, 5th, 3rd/10th
    - R, 5th, 9th
    - R, 5th, 7th
    - R, 5th, 8va (Power chord)

- Closed chords can also be rootless (double stops or diads)
    - 3rd, 5th
    - 3rd, 7th
    - 5th, 9th
    - 3rd, 8va
    - 5th, 8va
    - 5th, 3rd/10th
- Rootless chords allow for more movement.
- These can work especially well if several band members are holding down the root.

Inversions
- There are 3 types of inversions most commonly heard: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd inversions. Inversions build tension and provide good voice-leading for the melody.
    - 1st inversion is when the 3rd of the chord is assigned to the bass.
        - Example: G/B is a G major chord, and the bass player plays B (the 3rd). We often hear a G/B resolve up to a C or down to an Am.
    - 2nd inversion is when the 5th of the chord is assigned to the bass.
        - Example: G/D is a G major chord, bass plays D (the 5th). We often hear a G/D resolve to a D major chord or a C/E chord.
    - 3rd inversion is when the 7th of the chord is assigned to the bass.
        - Example: G/F# is a G major chord, bass plays the F# (the 7th). We often hear G/F# resolved to an Em chord. Careful with this one, it's very dissonant.

Pocket
"The phrase 'in the pocket' is used to describe something or someone playing in such a way that the groove is very solid and with a great feel. When a drummer keeps a good metronomic pulse, often referred to as *keeping time*, and makes the groove feel really good, and maintains this *feel* for an extended period of time, never

wavering, this is often referred to as a **deep pocket**. Historically speaking, the term 'pocket' originated in the middle of the last century with the occurrence of the **backbeat**, and implied that the backbeat, the Snare Drum striking the beats 2 and 4, is slightly delayed creating a 'laid back' or 'relaxed feel'. If the downbeat is exactly when the Kick Drum is struck, then the Snare Drum was very often played slightly later than the midpoint between two consecutive pulses from the Kick Drum. Musicians (and music listeners) were often times unaware of science behind this, but they had a term for it: 'the drummer is playing *in the pocket*.' Today, the term 'in the pocket' has broadened a bit, suggesting that if two musicians (usually the bass player and the drummer) are feeling the downbeats together, feeling and placing beat 'one' at the exact same time, they are said to be 'in the pocket.' Whether you are playing ahead (front) of the beat, or behind (back) of the beat, or right on top (middle) of the beat, as long as two musicians (ie. bassist and drummer) feel the downbeat at the same time, they'll be *in the pocket*." -Bart Elliot, article "In the Pocket" www.drummercafe.com

- "The best way to learn to groove is to play with people who can already groove. Like learning to talk, learning to groove requires the constant interaction, imitation, interplay, and trust that can only be developed in a group situation." - John Goldsby, article "It's Not About Notes" www.bassplayer.com

- This interaction comes from both a teacher, whether formal or informal, and from interaction with drummers. Seek out those players who are beyond your skill. Ask for advice, read up on articles, watch them live or on YouTube. Many teachers, these days, are offering Skype or FaceTime lessons if you cannot commit to travel time. Learn where the kick, snare, and hi-hat subdivide and fall on the beats of a measure.

Metronome Practice
- Set up a medium tempo in 4/4 where the strong click is on 1. Play through the first 4 notes of a pentatonic scale, for each chord in a key.
- Slow down the tempo in 4/4, and keep the clicks on beats 2 and 4. Repeat scale pattern for key. This is the most effective way to calibrate your internal clock.

Intervals : Distance away from Root

2nd = 9th
4th = 11th
6th = 13th

(G)/(Gm)

Neck Memorization

12th fret

"5 fret Down" Rule

"Octave Rule"
2 and 2

Sharps & Flats
Db/C# (#)   (b) Gb/F#

10

Major TRIADS

R: Root or (1)
3: 3rd
5: 5th

(G) G major

① - index
② - middle
③ - ring
④ - little

2nd position

1st position (slide)

Major Pentatonic Scale

(b) - indicates "blues" notes

(G)

◎ - indicates Root

Start

R end

Major Triad
Positions: A Major

A – Root
C# – 3rd
E – 5th

1st position

2nd position

4th position

① finger

② finger

④ finger

13

Major Modal Scales [examples in G]

I. (G)

4th

maj. 7th

1st position: begin with index

IV. (C)

#4th

maj. 7th

V. (D)

4th

b7th

14

Minor Modal Scales [examples in G]

Closed Chords: Key of G

Major

G

G² or G(add 9)

Gmaj⁷

G

17