



GROOVE CONSTRUCTION & BASS LINE DEVELOPMENT

Michael League

COURSE BOOK

SCOTTSBASSLESSONS.COM

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Introduction



Whether it's Paul McCartney's *Come Together* riff or Bootsy Collins' vamp from James Brown's *Sex Machine*, a great bass line sounds as though it could go on forever, and it only feels more complete the more you hear it. Take *September* by Earth, Wind & Fire. It's hard to think of Verdine White as being understated in any category, but his bass line on this song is almost rudimentary. And yet, his use of space and staccato phrasing is the bedrock of the song. People get up and move as soon as that bass line kicks in.

In this course, bassist and bandleader Michael League takes you behind the scenes to break down some of his favorite ever bass lines. He'll also guide you through some of his own go-to methods for constructing and developing bass lines with the Grammy-winning Snarky Puppy.

Lesson 1

A Guide To Form: What It Is, How It Works

When learning about groove construction and bass line development, one of the big concepts many bass players tackle first is learning bass lines by famous players, which is what we're going to do in this lesson.

As you become more familiar with the structure of each bass line, you'll gain a better understanding of how they work. And by assigning a letter name to each variation, you'll start to recognize how bass lines can be organized to tell a story or to communicate an idea.

Don't think about the bass as an individual instrument. Think about it as part of an ensemble. Alongside the drums, it's the foundation of the entire song.

continued →

LESSON 1 (continued)

Example 1 - My Girl

Video - 02:00

[illegible]

Example 2 - Sign o' the Times

Video - 03:45

Play 4 times

1/4

1/4

continued →

LESSON 1 (continued)

Example 3 - You Got The Love (Pt 1)

Video - 05:53

Example 3 - You Got The Love (Pt 1) musical notation. The top staff shows the bass line in 4/4 time, starting with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G2, a half note F2, a quarter rest, a quarter note E2, a half note D2, a quarter rest, a quarter note C2, a half note B1, a quarter rest, a quarter note A1, a half note G1, a quarter rest, a quarter note F1, a half note E1, a quarter rest, a quarter note D1, a half note C1, and a quarter rest. The bottom staff shows fingerings: 1, 3, 1, 3, 1, 3, 1 1, 3.

Example 4 - You Got The Love (Pt 2)

Video - 07:59

Example 4 - You Got The Love (Pt 2) musical notation. The top staff is a bass line in 4/4 time, starting with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G2, a half note F2, a quarter rest, a quarter note E2, a half note D2, a quarter rest, a quarter note C2, a half note B1, a quarter rest, a quarter note A1, a half note G1, a quarter rest, a quarter note F1, a half note E1, a quarter rest, a quarter note D1, a half note C1, and a quarter rest. The bottom staff shows fingerings: 1, 3, 1, 3, 1, 3, 1 1.

Example 4 - You Got The Love (Pt 2) musical notation. The top staff is a bass line in 4/4 time, starting with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G2, a half note F2, a quarter rest, a quarter note E2, a half note D2, a quarter rest, a quarter note C2, a half note B1, a quarter rest, a quarter note A1, a half note G1, a quarter rest, a quarter note F1, a half note E1, a quarter rest, a quarter note D1, a half note C1, and a quarter rest. The bottom staff shows fingerings: (1) 3, 1, 3, 1, 3, 1.

Example 4 - You Got The Love (Pt 2) musical notation. The top staff is a bass line in 4/4 time, starting with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G2, a half note F2, a quarter rest, a quarter note E2, a half note D2, a quarter rest, a quarter note C2, a half note B1, a quarter rest, a quarter note A1, a half note G1, a quarter rest, a quarter note F1, a half note E1, a quarter rest, a quarter note D1, a half note C1, and a quarter rest. The bottom staff shows fingerings: (1) 3, 1 1, 3, 10 8, 1, 3, 10 8.

continued →

LESSON 1 (continued)

Example 5 - Do That Stuff

Video - 09:23

First system of musical notation for Example 5. The staff is in bass clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 4/4 time. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The bass line is shown below the staff with fret numbers: 0 0 0 | 0 0 2 3 4 | 2 0 4 2.

Second system of musical notation for Example 5, starting with a measure rest '2'. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes. The bass line fret numbers are: 0 0 2 3 4 | 0 0 0 | 0 0 2 3 4 | 2 0 4 2.

Third system of musical notation for Example 5, starting with a measure rest '4'. It includes first and second endings. The first ending is marked '1.' and the second ending is marked '2.'. The bass line fret numbers are: 0 0 2 3 4 | 0 0 0 | 0 0 2 3 4 | 2 0.

Lesson 2

How To Use Repetition And Variation

Now that we've established some of the foundational elements of how bass lines can be structured, it's time to put some of those ideas into a practical context and create some grooves of our own. As we've already discovered, injecting some repetition into your bass lines will make things far more digestible for your listeners, but your bass lines should also have enough variation to still make things interesting.

In this next lesson, we're going to look at how we can use these devices to come up with groove-based, repetitive bass lines while still flexing your creative muscles.

Example 1

Video - 00:56

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a bass line in 4/4 time, written in the key of D major (one sharp). Each system consists of a staff with notes and a corresponding fretboard diagram below it.

System 1:

- Staff:** The first measure contains a whole note D2 (marked with an 'x'). The second measure contains a half note D2 and a half note E2, both marked with a '3' and a slur, indicating a triplet. The third measure contains a half note E2 and a half note F#2, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The fourth measure contains a half note F#2 and a half note G2, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The fifth measure contains a half note G2 and a half note A2, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The sixth measure contains a half note A2 and a half note B2, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The seventh measure contains a half note B2 and a half note C3, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The eighth measure contains a half note C3 and a half note D3, both marked with a '3' and a slur.
- Fretboard Diagram:** The diagram shows the frets for the first two strings (A and B). The A string has frets 5, 7, and 0. The B string has frets 3, 5, 7, and 0. The diagram includes fingerings (1-4) and slurs for the notes.

System 2:

- Staff:** The first measure contains a whole note D2 (marked with a '3'). The second measure contains a half note D2 and a half note E2, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The third measure contains a half note E2 and a half note F#2, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The fourth measure contains a half note F#2 and a half note G2, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The fifth measure contains a half note G2 and a half note A2, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The sixth measure contains a half note A2 and a half note B2, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The seventh measure contains a half note B2 and a half note C3, both marked with a '3' and a slur. The eighth measure contains a half note C3 and a half note D3, both marked with a '3' and a slur.
- Fretboard Diagram:** The diagram shows the frets for the first two strings (A and B). The A string has frets 5, 7, and 0. The B string has frets 3, 5, 7, and 0. The diagram includes fingerings (1-4) and slurs for the notes.

continued →

LESSON 2 (Ex. 1 continued)

Measures 5-6 and 7-8 of Lesson 2 (Ex. 1 continued). The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measures 5-6 show a bass line with triplets and slurs. Measures 7-8 continue the pattern, ending with a triplet and a whole note rest.

Measure 5: Bass line starts with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, A, C), followed by a quarter note (D), an eighth note (E), and a quarter note (F#). The triplet is slurred. The bass line continues with a quarter note (G), an eighth note (A), and a quarter note (B).

Measure 6: Bass line starts with a quarter note (C), an eighth note (D), and a quarter note (E). The triplet is slurred. The bass line continues with a quarter note (F#), an eighth note (G), and a quarter note (A).

Measure 7: Bass line starts with a quarter note (B), an eighth note (C), and a quarter note (D). The triplet is slurred. The bass line continues with a quarter note (E), an eighth note (F#), and a quarter note (G).

Measure 8: Bass line starts with a quarter note (A), an eighth note (B), and a quarter note (C). The triplet is slurred. The bass line continues with a quarter note (D), an eighth note (E), and a quarter note (F#).

Example 2

Video - 01:58

Measures 1-2 and 3-4 of Example 2. The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. Measures 1-2 show a bass line with triplets and slurs. Measures 3-4 continue the pattern, ending with a triplet and a whole note rest.

Measure 1: Bass line starts with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, A, C), followed by a quarter note (D), an eighth note (E), and a quarter note (F#). The triplet is slurred. The bass line continues with a quarter note (G), an eighth note (A), and a quarter note (B).

Measure 2: Bass line starts with a quarter note (C), an eighth note (D), and a quarter note (E). The triplet is slurred. The bass line continues with a quarter note (F#), an eighth note (G), and a quarter note (A).

Measure 3: Bass line starts with a quarter note (B), an eighth note (C), and a quarter note (D). The triplet is slurred. The bass line continues with a quarter note (E), an eighth note (F#), and a quarter note (G).

Measure 4: Bass line starts with a quarter note (A), an eighth note (B), and a quarter note (C). The triplet is slurred. The bass line continues with a quarter note (D), an eighth note (E), and a quarter note (F#).

continued →

LESSON 2 (continued)

Example 3

Video - 02:34

Example 3 shows four systems of musical notation, each consisting of a bass staff and a treble staff. The notation is in 4/4 time and D major (two sharps). The bass staff contains a sequence of notes and rests, with fingerings (3, 5, 7, 0) and a '3' indicating a triplet. The treble staff contains a sequence of notes and rests, with fingerings (5, 6, 5, 7, 0) and a '3' indicating a triplet. The notation is in 4/4 time and D major (two sharps).

System 1:

Bass staff: 5 X 7 5 6 5 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 3 3 5 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 0

Treble staff: 3 3 5 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 3 3 5 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 0

System 2:

Bass staff: 3 5 0 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 3 5 0 7 0 5 6 5 7 5 (6) 0 0

Treble staff: 3 3 5 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 3 3 5 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 0

System 3:

Bass staff: 5 0 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 3 5 0 7 0 5 6 5 7 5 (6) 0 0

Treble staff: 3 3 5 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 3 3 5 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 0

System 4:

Bass staff: 5 0 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 3 5 0 7 0 5 6 5 7 5 (6) 0 0

Treble staff: 3 3 5 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 6 5 7 0 3 3 5 0 5 6 5 7 0 5 0

continued →

LESSON 2 (continued)

Example 4

Video - 04:15

Example 4 is a bass line exercise in 4/4 time, key of D major. The exercise consists of four measures, each with a bass staff and a fretboard diagram. The fretboard diagrams show fingerings for the left hand (T) and right hand (B). The exercise includes triplets, slurs, and a trill in the final measure.

Measure 1: Bass staff shows a sequence of eighth notes: D2, E2, F#2, G2, A2, B2, C#3, D3. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings: T (5, 0, 7, 5, 6, 5, 7, 0), B (3, 3/5, 0, 5, 6, 5, 7, 0).

Measure 2: Bass staff shows a sequence of eighth notes: D3, E3, F#3, G3, A3, B3, C#4, D4. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings: T (5, 0, 7, 5, 6, 5, 7, 0), B (3, 3/5, 0, 5, 6, 5, 7, 0).

Measure 3: Bass staff shows a sequence of eighth notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C#5, D5. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings: T (5, 0, 7, 5, 6, 5, 7, 0), B (3, 3/5, 0, 5, 6, 5, 7, 0).

Measure 4: Bass staff shows a sequence of eighth notes: D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C#6, D6. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings: T (5, 0, 7, 5, 6, 5, 7, 0), B (3, 3/5, 0, 5, 6, 5, 7, 0). The final measure includes a trill on D6.

Lesson 3

Rhythm First - The Solo Section

So you're on a gig and you want to breathe some energy into the bass line while the rest of the band trade solos. While it can be tempting to use this moment to show the world how brilliant you are at harmonic embellishments, you also run the risk of interrupting the story the soloist is trying to tell. In most cases, the soloist dictates the extent that we can interact.

Let's look at a few steps you can take to simplify your bass line and make more headway for the rest of the band. The examples recall the solo section from a track called *Grown Folks*, which is from Snarky Puppy's 2016 album *Culcha Vulcha*.

Example 1

Video - 03:48

5

Exercise 5 continues with measures 1-4. The notation is in bass clef, 4/4 time, and B-flat major. Measure 1: Quarter note G2, quarter rest. Measure 2: Quarter note F2, quarter rest. Measure 3: Quarter note E2, quarter rest. Measure 4: Quarter note D2, quarter note C2, quarter note B1, quarter note A1. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings: 2 for G, 4 for F, 4 for E, and 3 for D, 6 for C, 5 for B, 4 for A.

continued →

LESSON 3 (Ex. 1 continued)

9 *Play 3 times*

T
A
B

2 4 2 4 2 4 4 5 1 2 3 4 1 2 4

Example 2

Video - 05:28

T
A
B

2 4 4 2 4 4 2 4 4 3 6

4

T
A
B

5 4 2 X 9 11 2 4 9 11 2 4

7

T
A
B

9 11 2 4 4 5 1 4 1 X 9 11 2 3 2 4 X

continued →

LESSON 3 (Ex. 2 continued)

10

9 11 2 3 2 4 X | 9 11 2 3 2 4 | 4 5 1 2 4 1 X

13

9 11 2 4 X | 9 11 2 4 X | 9 11 2 4 X

16

4 5 2 2 4 1 X | 9 11 2 4 X | 9 11 2 3 2 4 X

19

9 11 2 3 2 4 X | 4 5 1 2 4 1 X | 9 11

continued →

LESSON 3 (continued)

Example 3

Video - 07:17

Example 3 is a musical exercise in 4/4 time, featuring a bass line and guitar accompaniment. The key signature has four flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, D-flat).

System 1: The bass line consists of eighth notes: B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1. The guitar accompaniment consists of eighth notes: B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1.

System 2: The bass line consists of eighth notes: B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1. The guitar accompaniment consists of eighth notes: B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1. The guitar part includes a "w/pick" instruction and a "tr" (trill) mark.

System 3: The bass line consists of eighth notes: B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1. The guitar accompaniment consists of eighth notes: B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1. The guitar part includes a "tr" (trill) mark.

System 4: The bass line consists of eighth notes: B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1. The guitar accompaniment consists of eighth notes: B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1. The guitar part includes a "tr" (trill) mark.

continued →

LESSON 3 (Ex. 3 continued)

10

trill

trill

trill

4 4 4 4 X 4 4 4 4 6 4 (5) 4 4 4 4 X 4 4 4 4 6 4 (5)

12

trill

trill

trill

4 5 7 8 2 4 6 2 3 2 4 6 4 4 4 4 X 4 4 4 4 6 4 (5)

14

trill

trill

trill

4 4 4 4 X 4 4 4 4 6 4 (5) 4 4 4 4 X 4 4 4 4 6 4 (5)

16

trill

trill

trill

5 4 0 5 5 4 5 7 2 (3) 4 4 4 4 X 4 4 4 4 6 4 (5)

continued →

LESSON 3 (Ex. 3 continued)

18

Trill

Trill

Trill

Trill

TAB: 4 4 4 4 X 4 4 4 4 6 4 (5) 4 4 4 4 X 4 4 4 4 6 4 (5)

20

Trill

Trill

TAB: 5 5 2 3 X 5 5 4 (5) 2 2 4 4

Example 4

Video - 09:05

Accents

TAB: 2 4 4 2 4 4 2 4 4 3 6 5 4 2

5

TAB: 2 2 2 2 4 6 6 4 4 2 2 2 2 5 5 4 4 2 2 4

continued →

LESSON 3 (Ex. 4 continued)

9

T
A
B

2 2 2 2 6 6 4 4 2 2 2 2

12

T
A
B

5 5 4 4 2 2 4 2 2 2 2 2 4 6 6 4 5 4 4

15

T
A
B

2 2 2 2 4 6 6 4 4 2 2 4 2 4

Lesson 4

Expand Your Bass Lines With Rhythmic Displacement

In this lesson, we're going to take one bass line and make it sound like eight different ideas by rhythmically displacing it around the measure. This is a great way to create a sense of anticipation in your playing.

To begin with, start on beat 1, then start to vary the groove in each example that follows, moving it around to other beats to see how it sounds. In order to quickly grasp each variation, make sure you get the original bass line under your fingers and in your ears before you move on. As in the previous lesson, the examples revisit the solo section from *Grown Folks*.

continued →

LESSON 4 (continued)

Example 1

Video - 01:47

Example 1 shows a bass line in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The notation includes a treble and bass staff. The bass staff shows fingerings (2, 4, 2, 4, 2) and a repeat sign. The treble staff shows a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet and a repeat sign.

Example 2

Video - 02:12

Example 2 shows a bass line in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The notation includes a treble and bass staff. The bass staff shows fingerings (2, 4, 2, 4, 2) and a repeat sign. The treble staff shows a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet and a repeat sign.

continued →

LESSON 4 (continued)

Example 3

Video - 02:36

Example 3 shows a bass line in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The notation includes a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The first three measures are identical, featuring a quarter rest followed by a dotted quarter note, an eighth note, and a quarter note. The fourth measure is a repeat of the first three. The fretboard diagram below shows the fingering: 2, 4, 2, 4, 2/ (first measure); 2, 4, 2, 4, 2/ (second measure); 2, 4, 2, 4, 2/ (third measure); and 2, 4, 2, 4, 2/ (fourth measure).

Example 4

Video - 03:02

Example 4 shows a bass line in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The notation includes a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The first two measures are identical, featuring a quarter rest followed by a dotted quarter note, an eighth note, and a quarter note. The third measure is a repeat of the first two. The fretboard diagram below shows the fingering: 2, 4, 2, 4, 2/ (first measure); 2, 4, 2, 4, 2/ (second measure); and 2, 4, 2, 4, 2/ (third measure).

continued →

LESSON 4 (continued)

Example 5

Video - 03:25

Example 5 consists of four systems of musical notation, each showing a bass line exercise. The exercises are numbered 1, 3, 5, and 7. Each system includes a musical staff in bass clef with a key signature of three flats and a 4/4 time signature, and a corresponding fingerings staff below it.

Exercise 1: The musical staff shows a sequence of notes: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. The fingerings staff shows the sequence: 4, 2, 4, 2, 1.

Exercise 3: The musical staff shows a sequence of notes: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. The fingerings staff shows the sequence: 4, 2, 4, 2, 5, 4, 5, 3.

Exercise 5: The musical staff shows a sequence of notes: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. The fingerings staff shows the sequence: 4, 2, 4, 2, 4, 2, 4, 2, 1, 1.

Exercise 7: The musical staff shows a sequence of notes: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. The fingerings staff shows the sequence: 4, 2, 4, 2, 5, 5, 5, 4, 2, 4.

continued →

LESSON 4 (continued)

Example 6

Video - 03:50

Example 6 shows a bass line in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The notation includes a treble clef and a bass clef. The first staff shows the melody, and the second staff shows the bass line with fingerings (4, 2, 4, 2) and a repeat sign. The third staff shows the melody with a first ending bracket and a second ending bracket. The fourth staff shows the bass line with fingerings (4, 2, 2, 4, 2) and a repeat sign.

Example 7

Video - 04:15

Example 7 shows a bass line in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The notation includes a treble clef and a bass clef. The first staff shows the melody, and the second staff shows the bass line with fingerings (2, 4, 2, 4, 2, 1, 2, 4). The third staff shows the melody with a first ending bracket and a second ending bracket. The fourth staff shows the bass line with fingerings (4, 5, 4, 4, 2, 4, 2, 4, 0, 2, 4).

continued →

LESSON 4 (Ex. 7 continued)

7

4

2 1 2 4 4 5 0 4 4 2 4

Example 8

Video - 04:41

4

2 4 2 4 2 2 4 2 4 2 2

4

4 2 4 2 5 4 4 2 2 4 4 2

Lesson 5

Note Duration

In this lesson, we're going to look at a few of Michael's go-to methods for achieving a feel that will have everyone else in the band singing your praises. We're going to start by featuring some classic bass lines by the likes of Paul McCartney and Bob Babbitt, and by paying close attention to note length, we're going to illustrate how much you can contrast the difference in feel.

A great way to immediately tighten things up is to cut off the notes on beats 2 and 4. This allows the snare drum to be heard in all its glory.

Example 01 recalls a groove from Snarky Puppy's 2019 studio album *Immigrance*. We're also going to mix up the duration of each note, holding certain notes longer as the music unfolds.

Example 1

Video - 04:31

Tuning:
(low to high) E $\flat$ -A-D-G

3

continued →

LESSON 5 (Ex. 1 continued)

5 *Play 3 times*

7

9

11

continued →

LESSON 5 (continued)

Example 2

Video - 05:40

Tuning:

(low to high) Eb-A-D-G

4/4

0 3 5 7 8 4 6 0 3

4

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

7

0 3 5 7 6 8 4 6 0 3

10

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

continued →

LESSON 5 (Ex. 2 continued)

13

Measures 13-15 of Lesson 5, Example 2. The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab). Measure 13 contains eighth notes G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. Measure 14 contains eighth notes F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F2. Measure 15 contains eighth notes E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F2, E2. The fretboard diagram below shows the fingerings: 0, 3, 5, 7, 8, 4, 6, 0.

16

Measures 16-18 of Lesson 5, Example 2. The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab). Measure 16 contains eighth notes G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. Measure 17 contains eighth notes F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F2. Measure 18 contains eighth notes E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F2, E2. The fretboard diagram below shows the fingerings: 0, 0, 0.

Example 3

Video - 07:50

Tuning:
(low to high) Eb-A-D-G

Measures 1-4 of Example 3. The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab) and a 4/4 time signature. Measure 1 contains eighth notes G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. Measure 2 contains eighth notes F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F2. Measure 3 contains eighth notes E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F2, E2. Measure 4 contains eighth notes D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F2, E2, D2. The fretboard diagram below shows the fingerings: 0, 0, 3, 5, 7, 5, 1, 2, 2, 3, 4, 7, 5, 1, 2.

5

Measures 5-8 of Example 3. The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab) and a 4/4 time signature. Measure 5 contains eighth notes G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. Measure 6 contains eighth notes F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F2. Measure 7 contains eighth notes E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F2, E2. Measure 8 contains eighth notes D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F2, E2, D2. The fretboard diagram below shows the fingerings: 2, 0, 3, 5, 1, 2, 2, 3, 4, 7, 5, 1, 2, 2, 0, 3.

continued →

Lesson 6

When In Doubt, Leave It Out

In our final lesson, we're going to revisit *Do That Stuff* by Parliament. The goal here is to manipulate and embellish the groove simply by removing notes. When you start to re-combine everything, you'll have a much better understanding of the original bass line, and it will stay more organized in your mind. It's a tactic that can be applied to any bass line. Think of it as a scene change that can bring a completely different energy for that particular moment.

Example 1 - Do That Stuff

Video - 02:14

The image displays musical notation for the bass line of "Do That Stuff" by Parliament. It is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The notation is presented in two systems, each with a standard staff and a corresponding fretboard diagram below it. The fretboard diagrams are labeled with 'T' for thumb, 'A' for index, and 'B' for bass finger. The first system shows two measures of the original bass line, which includes many grace notes and complex rhythms. The second system shows two measures of a simplified version of the same bass line, where many of the original notes have been removed, leaving only the most essential notes. The fretboard diagrams for both systems are identical, showing the fingerings for each note: 0 (open), 2, 3, 4, and 2 (for the second measure of each system).

continued →

LESSON 6 (Ex. 1 continued)

5

T
A
B

0 3 4 2 0 4 2 0 3 4 2 0

7

T
A
B

3 4 2 0 4 2 0 3 4 2 0

9

T
A
B

0 2 0 4 2 0 2 0 2 0 4 2

12

T
A
B

0 2 0 0 4 2 2 0

continued →

LESSON 6 (Ex. 1 continued)

15



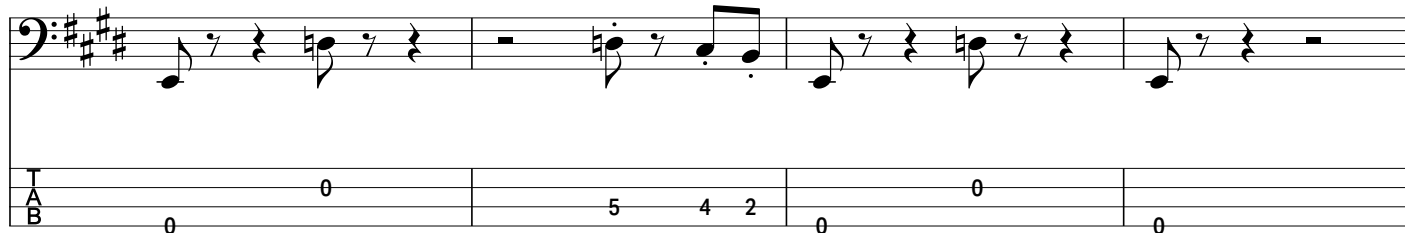
Measures 15-17 of the bass line. The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). Measure 15 contains a quarter rest, an eighth note G#4, an eighth note F#4, and a quarter note E4. Measure 16 contains a quarter note D4, an eighth note C#4, an eighth note B3, and a quarter rest. Measure 17 contains a quarter note A3, a quarter rest, an eighth note G#3, and a quarter note F#3. The fretboard diagram below shows the fingerings: Measure 15 (2, 0, 4, 2), Measure 16 (0, 2, 0), and Measure 17 (0, 4, 2).

18



Measures 18-21 of the bass line. Measure 18 contains a quarter note E3, a quarter rest, an eighth note D#3, and a quarter note C#3. Measure 19 contains a whole rest, an eighth note B3, and a quarter note A3. Measure 20 contains a quarter note G#3, a quarter rest, an eighth note F#3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 21 contains a quarter note D3, a quarter rest, an eighth note C#3, and a quarter note B2. The fretboard diagram below shows the fingerings: Measure 18 (0, 5), Measure 19 (5, 4, 2), Measure 20 (0, 5), and Measure 21 (0, 0).

22



Measures 22-25 of the bass line. Measure 22 contains a quarter note E3, a quarter rest, an eighth note D#3, and a quarter note C#3. Measure 23 contains a whole rest, an eighth note B3, and a quarter note A3. Measure 24 contains a quarter note G#3, a quarter rest, an eighth note F#3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 25 contains a quarter note D3, a quarter rest, and a whole rest. The fretboard diagram below shows the fingerings: Measure 22 (0, 0), Measure 23 (5, 4, 2), Measure 24 (0, 0), and Measure 25 (0, 0).

26



Measures 26-29 of the bass line. Measure 26 contains a whole rest, an eighth note B3, and a quarter note A3. Measure 27 contains a quarter note G#3, a quarter rest, and a quarter note F#3. Measure 28 contains a quarter note E3, a quarter rest, an eighth note D#3, and a quarter note C#3. Measure 29 contains a quarter note B2, a quarter rest, and a whole rest. The fretboard diagram below shows the fingerings: Measure 26 (5), Measure 27 (0, 4, 2), Measure 28 (0, 5), and Measure 29 (0, 0).

continued →

LESSON 6 (Ex. 1 continued)

30

TAB: 5 5 0 4 2

34

TAB: 0 5 5 4 2 0 5 0 4 2

38

TAB: 0 2 0 5 4 2 2 0

41

TAB: 0 3 4 2 0 4 2 0 2 0 2 0 4 2

continued →

LESSON 6 (Ex. 1 continued)

44

Fretboard diagram for measure 44:

Fret	0	3	4	2	0	0	3	4	2	0	4	2	0	2	0
String	B	A	G	F#	E	D	C#	B	A	G	F#	E	D	C#	B

47

Fretboard diagram for measure 47:

Fret	0	2	0	4	2	0	2	0	0	2	3	4	0	4	2
String	B	A	G	F#	E	D	C#	B	A	G	F#	E	D	C#	B

50

Fretboard diagram for measure 50:

Fret	0	2	3	4	2	0	2	0	4	2					
String	B	A	G	F#	E	D	C#	B	A	G	F#	E	D	C#	B

52

Fretboard diagram for measure 52:

Fret	0	2	3	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	4	2	0	4	2					
String	B	A	G	F#	E	D	C#	B	A	G	F#	E	D	C#	B	A	G	F#	E	D	C#	B

continued →

LESSON 6 (Ex. 1 continued)

54

0 2 3 4 0 0 0

56

0 0 2 3 4 0 0 2 3 4

58

0 0 2 3 4 0 0 0

60

0 0 2 3 4 0

Course Summary

We hope that the ideas and concepts that we've covered in this course will help you to write better bass lines, but there's also a lot to be said for relying on your own intuition. Of the bass lines that we've written, some of our favorites are the ones that we didn't think about too much. Listen closely to the music that you love.

Is the bass line the reason you love the song? If so, learn how to play it. You'll start noticing patterns, which will help you internalize the techniques being used. No matter what you do, make sure you're serving the song at all times. Coming up with a great bass line requires restraint and subtlety over flash licks. Guitarists and singers tend to claim the flashiest moments in any given song, but what you can bring is something more elemental — the part that loops endlessly in your head long after the music ends.

