

The How-To-Play-Bass Ezine

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how-to-play-bass.com

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INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME!

If you've been getting the How To Play Bass Ezine for any length of time you'll know that having the Ezine in PDF format is a new move. This is for several reasons:-

1) It allows me much greater control over how the content of the Ezine appears. Some people have been reporting missing characters with their HTML ezines, and I've never liked the look of the text only based ezines.

2) I wanted to add more content to the Ezine that was PDF based - and it just made more sense to make ALL the content PDF based.

3) It's time to move from giving the Ezine away to making a subscription charge for it. There's more details here:

<http://www.how-to-play-bass.com/ezine-charter.html>

For those of you who want to stick with the free Ezine that option exists - but the free Ezine will now be monthly. Seriously, however long you've been getting the How To Play Bass Ezine (and apologies to hit you with this if you're a new subscriber this week!) I strongly recommend that you go to the link above and check out what will be included in the subscription version of the Ezine, and the value that you'll be getting.

This Issue should give you an idea of the standard of what's to come in the weeks and months ahead. For the transcriptions I'm going to start expanding the range of what's covered. Up to now it's very much been a steady diet of 'classic rock' with the occasional something else thrown into the mix. Well coming up we're going to look at some more pop and classic soul tunes - and I'm going to try and transcribe a new Jamerson line (and one that's not been published anywhere before) every six weeks or so. First up will be Jimmy Ruffin's tune "What Becomes Of The Broken Hearted." Expect that before the end of September.

You'll also find a new tutorial column in each issue. The first topic I'm going to cover is Sightreading. In my opinion sight reading is a seriously neglected part of bass playing - and I'm going to try and do my part to combat that! There will also be Audio to download to go with these columns. And eventually - in 6 months or so - the columns will be bundled together to form a sight reading package that will be sold on the website (and probably for more than the cost of this ezine - so there's even more value for you).

TRANSCRIPTION - MORE THAN A FEELING by BOSTON

OK, the song we're looking at in this week's Ezine is MORE THAN A FEELING by Boston. Before I get started I just want to take a moment and say this transcription is for one of my bass students who got married last weekend - many congrats to Kyle and his lovely wife, hope you had a great wedding!



This song originally appeared on Boston's self-titled debut album, which was released way back in 1976. The song recently featured on some of the Guitar Hero games, and has received fresh critical acclaim.

The bassline was played by a guy called Tom Scholz - who also plays guitar and keys - and in fact played most of the instruments on Boston's first album, the band being very much his baby.

I really enjoyed transcribing it and playing it - and as a sidenote I'm looking forward to kicking my 6 year old son's butt on this tune on Guitar Hero! As with all songs from now on the transcription is presented in two formats: (1) music notation. (2) music notation with bass tab.

Here's how the sections of the song work out, with approximate timings:

Letter A: Intro - 0.00

Letter B: Verse 1 - 0.18

Letter C: Chorus 1 - 0.42

Letter D: Verse 2 - 1.26

Letter E: Chorus 2 - 1.59

Letter F: Guitar Solo - 2.30

Letter G: Verse 3 - 2.57

Letter H: Final Chorus/Outro - 3.57

There's a couple of things to note in the transcription. There's a couple of points in the song where the bassline goes to a low D (so the bass was probably detuned for the original recording). I've transcribed and notated the bassline for STANDARD tuning - so the few times this happens you'll actually play an octave above the line on the recording. You'll hear where it is and if you decide you want to play it like that then you can use Drop D tuning and alter the E string fingerings accordingly!

Secondly watch out for the line in the Chorus. Getting the slide from the G to the C smooth will take a bit of practice to get the timing of it right - as always if in doubt slow the metronome right down and just work on that. If you listen to the original as well it will give you a good idea of how it should sound.

OK, here's the transcription - enjoy!

This sheet music is for a bass guitar piece titled "Ezine No 1". It is written in the key of D major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The piece is divided into five distinct sections, each marked with a letter in a box: A, B, C, D, and E. Section A begins with a 2-measure rest, followed by a melodic line. Section B continues the melodic development. Section C is characterized by a more rhythmic, eighth-note pattern. Section D features a mix of melodic and rhythmic elements. Section E concludes the piece with a final melodic phrase. The notation includes various bass clefs, accidentals, and note values such as quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and ties.

This page contains ten staves of bass sheet music for the piece 'Ezine No 1'. The music is written in G major, indicated by two sharps (F# and C#) on the bass clef. The notation includes a variety of rhythmic patterns such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and dotted rhythms. There are two specific chord markers: 'F' (F#) and 'G' (G#), which likely refer to the F# and G# notes in the key signature. The music is organized into measures across the staves, with some measures containing rests.

The image displays five staves of bass guitar notation in G major (one sharp). The notation is as follows:

- Staff 1:** A sequence of eighth notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3, G3, followed by a quarter rest, then eighth notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, and another quarter rest.
- Staff 2:** Similar to Staff 1, but with a sixteenth rest before the final eighth note G4.
- Staff 3:** Features a dotted quarter note G2, followed by eighth notes: A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3, G3, then a quarter rest, eighth notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, and a quarter rest.
- Staff 4:** Starts with eighth notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3, G3, then eighth notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, followed by two sixteenth notes marked with an 'x' (G4, F#4), and a quarter rest.
- Staff 5:** Starts with eighth notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3, G3, then eighth notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, followed by eighth notes: G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, and eighth notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4.

A **B**

5 5 0 | 3 2 2 3 | 5 5 0 | 3 2 2 3 | 5 5 0 5 0 5

3 2 2 3 | 5 5 5 7 5 0 | 3 2 2 3 | 5 5 5 5 7 5 | 3 2 2 3

5 5 0 5 0 5 | 3 | 2 | 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 | 5 5 5 5 5 7 5 0

C

3 3 8 8 8 | 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 2 | 3 3 8 8 8 | 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 0

3 3 8 8 8 | 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 2 | 3 3 8 8 8 | 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 0

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

0 7 7 9 9 7 9 7 5 5 5 5 5 5 4 4 2 5 5 5 5 4 4 5

D

5 3 2 2 3 5 5 5 0 5 0 5 3 2 2 3 5 5 5 7 5 0

3 2 2 3 5 5 5 5 5 7 5 3 2 2 3 5 5 7 7 5 7 5 0 3 2

7 7 7 5 5 7 5 7 5 7 7 5 5 7 5 0 3 3 8 8 8 2 2 2 2 2 2 0 0 2

E

E

3 3 8 8 8 2 2 2 2 2 0 0 3 3 8 8 8 7 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 2

3 3 8 8 8 7 7 7 7 7 2 5 5 0 3 3 8 8 8 7 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 2

System 1: Bass staff with notes and a guitar fretboard diagram below it. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the first four measures: 3 3 8 8 8 | 6 | 0 7 7 9 7 9 | 0 7 7 9 9 7 9 7 | 9 9 9 9 7 7 7 7

System 2: Bass staff with notes and a guitar fretboard diagram below it. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the next four measures: 5 5 5 5 4 4 4 5 4 | 7 7 7 0 7 7 5 7 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 7 5 7 | 5 5 5 5 3 3

System 3: Bass staff with notes and a guitar fretboard diagram below it. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the next four measures: 2 2 0 2 2 2 0 0 | 5 5 5 5 5 5 | 4 5 4 0 0 0 5 4 2 | 5 5 3 3 3

System 4: Bass staff with notes and a guitar fretboard diagram below it. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the next four measures: 2 2 2 2 2 0 4 4 0 | 5 7 9 7 7 5 | 0 7 5 0 0 4 5 | 3 5 5 5 5 5 5

System 5: Bass staff with notes and a guitar fretboard diagram below it. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the next four measures: 3 2 2 0 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | | | |

System 6: Bass staff with notes and a guitar fretboard diagram below it. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the final four measures: | | | | 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 | 3 3 3 2 2 2 3 3

5 5 5 0 5 0 5 | 3 2 2 2 3 | 5 5 5 0 5 0 2 | 3 2 2 2 3 0 3

5 0 5 5 5 4 | 5 7 5 | 3 2 2 2 3 0 3 | 5 5 5 0 5 0 2 | 3 | 2

0 0 | 3 3 2 3 | 5 5 5 5 5 0 5 5 5 | 7 5 5 7 5 5 7 5 5 7 5 0 | 3 3 8 8 8

7 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 | 2 3 3 8 8 8 | 7 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 0 | 3 3 8 8 8

7 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 | 2 3 3 8 8 8 | 7 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 0 | 3 3 8 8 8

7 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 | 2 3 3 8 8 8 | 7 7 7 7 7 5 0 5 0 | 3 3 8 8 8

The first system of music consists of a bass staff and a guitar tablature staff. The bass staff is in the key of D major (one sharp) and features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including some triplets. The guitar tablature staff is positioned below the bass staff and contains fret numbers (7, 5, 3, 8) and rhythmic markings (3, 8, 8, 8) corresponding to the notes in the bass staff.

The second system of music consists of a bass staff and a guitar tablature staff. The bass staff continues the melodic line from the first system, with some notes marked with 'x' to indicate natural harmonics. The guitar tablature staff includes fret numbers (0, 5, 3, 8) and rhythmic markings (3, 8, 8, 8), with 'x' marks above the 5th fret in the second measure.

The third system of music consists of a bass staff and a guitar tablature staff. The bass staff concludes the melodic line with notes marked with 'x'. The guitar tablature staff includes fret numbers (0, 5, 3, 8) and rhythmic markings (3, 8, 8, 8), with 'x' marks above the 5th fret in the first and third measures.

7 REASONS WHY BASS PLAYERS SHOULD LEARN TO READ MUSIC

Imagine this: you're a professional carpenter and your next job is putting a barn up. And as part of your toolkit on your barn building project you're given the choice of a normal screwdriver or an electric screwdriver. Which would you choose?

It's a no-brainer, right? You'd choose the electric screwdriver every time. And I know what you're thinking: what relevance has carpentry and screwdrivers got to the bass guitar, and reading music in particular.

Well, reading music is a topic that's often discussed on the forums at Talkbass.com. And often that discussion goes veers down the road of the pluses or minuses of learning to read music versus using bass tab. And a line of reasoning of bass players who can't read music is that bass tab is just a tool, and if it gets the job done then it's OK.

And in many ways these guys are right – bass tab IS just a tool. And it can do the job. It just can't do the job as well as reading music. And there are many other reasons why you should learn to read music – for this article I picked 7 and here they are:

1) Learning To Read Music Will By Definition Make You A Better Musician.

This is not conjecture. It's a fact. When you read music you have to process several elements – two of those elements are pitch and rhythm. In order to read music well you need to spend some time working on your rhythmic perception – and as bass players are a band's link between the drums and everything else, the better your perception of rhythm is the better you'll do perform your role as a bass player.

And that's just one area of musicianship it will improve. I can think of at least 3 others off the top of my head.

2) You Have Access To Much More Potential Practice Materials

If you can read music your potential practice horizons have increased exponentially because it's not just the electric bass guitar that uses the bass clef when we're reading. Any literature for double bass/string bass can be potential practice material.

So you've got classical double bass literature. And jazz double bass literature. Plus there are other instruments that use the bass clef. The cello and the trombone are the primary two, and both of these instruments have a teaching tradition and literature. Lots of players play Bach's Cello Suites on their electric basses as finger busters! And playing through some trombone solos will give you a different appre-

ciation of melody on the bass – and will get you playing music that’s been written without falling back on passages that fall easily under the fingers.

3) You Don’t Have To Reinvent The Wheel

There’s a lot more song transcriptions around than there was in the day when I was learning the bass. And while you will learn a song more thoroughly – and with greater appreciation – if you learn it by ear, well we don’t always have time. If a song has been published and you can read music, it can often save you a good few hours of transcribing.

Now I know there are bass tabs for many thousands more songs than there are for written notation, but one of the problems I have with bass tabs is that the vast majority of them are inaccurate. Whereas if a publisher publishes a transcription generally the accuracy rate is more like 95% and up.

4) If You Want To Play In Certain Genres Tab Just Doesn’t Exist.

If you want to play jazz or classical music you HAVE to learn to read music, because there’s no tab. And there’s a vast library of classical music out there, and the jazz field is starting to fill out too. And none of that music has tab – so you’ve got to read music to use it.

So say you wanted to play one of Bach’s Cello suites (and why wouldn’t you - they are beautiful pieces of music) if you don’t read music then you’d have to learn it by ear. (good luck with that by the way!) Or if you wanted to work out how Ron Carter approaches walking bass lines you could either transcribe a stack of his tunes (which you probably should do a few of anyway) or you could get some of the transcriptions of his basslines that are now readily available and analyse those.

So let me just repeat: interested in jazz or classical music - there’s no tab.

5) If You Do A Lot Of Transcribing

One of the best ways to practice read music is to write it. If you do any transcribing of a player you want to learn from, writing down what you’ve transcribed is the best way of recording that transcription for posterity. And yeah, you could write it out in Tab too – but standard notation is just simpler to write out, and simpler to read back too.

6) In The World Of Playing For Money You Will Never Be Handed A Part To Play That’s Written Out In Tab. Never.

So if you’re planning on becoming professional – or semi-pro – on the bass guitar being able to read music is something that you simply have to do. If you

don't, you'll lose work. I can't think of ANY situation where a bass player for hire would be handed a bass tab. Not one.

If you work in a theatre show you need to read music. If you work for a 'show' band (or wedding band, or function band) you'll need to read music for that band's arrangements of popular songs. If you're a session player then maybe you might just get a chord chart and told to do your thing – otherwise you'll be given a part written in music notation.

7) Standing In The Shadows Of Motown

If you don't know anything about this book then head over to Amazon now and search it out (the author is Allan Slutsky aka Dr Licks). It's an amazing book detailing the life and times and basslines of Motown bass player James Jamerson. And whatever kind of music you play you should really check Jamerson out and spend some time incorporating some of the things he did into YOUR playing.

And to help you do that there's nearly 50 full or partial transcriptions of his bass playing in the book. But there's no tab. So to get anything out of it you've got to read music. And if for no other reason you should learn to read music to dig into this book – if you truly aspire to be a great bass player a good many of the pieces are contained in the transcriptions you'll find in here.

The Next Step

Learning to read music isn't difficult, it just requires a system, some practice and some perseverance. I've written a course that will take you from no knowledge of the music staff or bass clef whatsoever to being able to sight read fast and complex parts (think Jamerson, or Geddy Lee). That course will be serialized week by week in this ezine and will include 'practice songs' to work on with MP3 accompaniment.

SIGHT READING FROM THE GROUND UP - PART 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO SIGHT READING

One of the first problems for bass students who want to learn to sight read is they find a piece of bass music and get overwhelmed by the apparent complexity. Here's an example from the track 'Hemispheres' that I transcribed for my upcoming Geddy Lee basslines book:



Now I've chosen a deliberately complex few bars to look at - most people looking at this music would probably find it overwhelming. But let's have a closer look at some of the elements that are present in these 18 bars of music (all of which I'll highlight with red circles)

Firstly the curly shape at the left of each bar - that looks kind of like a number '9' with a colon after it - is called **THE BASS CLEF**. This tells us how to interpret the pitches of the noteheads on the lines and in the spaces. There are several other clefs for different instruments - but the Bass Clef is the clef that concerns us most.

Here's those bars from Hemispheres with the bass clefs highlighted.

The next piece of information we can see are the key signatures. Just to the right of the Bass Clefs are four sharp signs. This tells us that the music we're looking at is in the Key of E Major or its relative minor, G Sharp Minor. Also note that there is a key change in the last bar of this segment - we can see that because the 'key signature' changes to two 'flats' - which tells us the key of the piece is now Bb or G minor.

Here's that section with the key signatures ringed:

The next piece of information we can learn from this piece of music is the time signature - this piece of music though has multiple time signatures! (It is Rush - so you'd kind of expect that!)

We'll look at time signatures in greater detail later on in this column, but for now here's the music with the time signatures ringed:



So just by looking through the music we've already found a great deal of information before we analyse the actual notes and work out what the symbols mean.

PITCH, RHYTHM AND NOTE DURATION

Now the remaining elements of music that are presented on a written piece of music are the actual pitch of each note to be played, where it occurs in the bar, and how long each note lasts.

All this information is conveyed in the above system. The pitch is determined by where the note head appears on the staff. The rhythm and duration are determined by a combination of whether the notehead is filled in or not, the type of 'line' that either ascends or descends from that notehead, and any 'qualifiers' (eg a full stop after the note - which adds 50% to its value - or a tie which ties the note to another note).

Now this is where most people get overwhelmed and give up. And whilst to sight read music effectively you have to master all of these combinations, when you're *learning* to sight read you can separate all these elements and work on them individually.

And surprisingly very few 'methods' seem to teach this way - which to me seems like the quickest and most effective way to sight read.

And this is how my **Sight Reading From The Ground Up** course works - we start with rhythm and work exclusively on rhythm to start with. And once a student has started to master rhythms then we can add in pitches.

Learning to sight read in this manner also has a side benefit - your rhythmic perception will improve an enormous amount. And as the bass player is the link between the drums and the rest of the band, this increased rhythmic understanding will help your bass playing in a band context AND you will be held in higher esteem by your band mates!

So we'll start next week by looking at eighth notes, learning how they're notated on the music staff, learn how to count them in time, and start practicing various combinations of eighth notes and eighth note rests.

Once we've been through some basic eighth note rhythms then we'll start looking at different pitches - and I'll give you some practical exercises with play along tracks that will be 'song based.'

The best way to learn something is to apply it as soon as you've learned it, and as often as you can until it becomes second nature. Sight Reading Music is no different!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul has played the bass since he was 15 (a LONG time ago!) and has made a living from music since 1992.

In 1994 Paul co-founded CARTE BLANCHE, one of the UK's most popular party/function bands, which he now manages.

In addition to Carte Blanche, Paul has played with numerous tribute bands covering Abba, Robbie Williams, Elvis Presley, Tom Jones, Blues Brothers, Freddie Mercury, Kylie Minogue, Seventies Disco, Eighties New Romantic, Britpop, Bee Gees and more.

Paul has played at the business end of nearly 2000 gigs since 1990 ranging from jazz duos in pizza bars to open air festivals for 10,000 people. Paul has played all over the UK and Europe - plus the odd couple of times in the middle east - and fits in the odd gig here and there with Carte Blanche. His last big gig was for a party at the Ritz where guests paid over £1000 a head!

In March 2008 Paul set up the website www.how-to-play-bass.com - a website aimed at teaching the bass guitar to beginners, with a particular emphasis on song based learning. The website - and this unique approach - came about as a result of Paul's dissatisfaction with how the bass guitar is taught.

