

THE MATURE BASS PLAYER'S GUIDEBOOK

Groove, Growth,
and Joy For A Lifetime
of Playing

LESSONS AND STORIES FROM A DECADE
OF TEACHING BASS PLAYERS OVER 50

JAMES EAGER

Founder of eBassGuitar.com

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DEDICATION

To the eBass+ community.

Thank you for trusting me with your stories.

This book exists because of you.

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FOREWORD



Over the last few decades, I've been privileged to teach bass players from every imaginable background: teenagers dreaming of becoming professional musicians, weekend warriors getting back into music after years away, touring professionals looking to sharpen their skills, and complete beginners. One thing I've learned is that people think learning bass is about bass.

It isn't. At least not entirely.

Yes, you'll learn notes, grooves, scales, songs and technique, improve your timing, develop your ears and become a better musician. But if you've spent any length of time around bass players, you'll know that something much bigger is often happening beneath the surface.

Music gives people confidence, purpose, friendships, community and connection. Sometimes it even helps them rediscover a part of themselves that has been waiting patiently for years to be expressed. That's one of the reasons I was so pleased when James asked me to write the foreword for this book.

I've known James for well over a decade as both a friend and fellow bass educator, and throughout that time I've watched him build a community that has helped thousands of people begin and continue their musical journeys. He understands something many teachers miss: learning an instrument isn't simply a technical process. It's a human process.

That's especially true for adults who come to music later in life.

One of the biggest misconceptions I encounter is that there's an age limit on becoming a musician. The truth is, some of the most inspiring musicians I've known started much later than most people would consider ideal.

I remember two close friends who both began learning upright bass in their forties. At the time, I assumed they would simply enjoy the process and

become competent players. But both went on to become first-call bassists in their respective cities. Not hobbyists who could play a few tunes or were merely “good for their age.” They became genuinely respected players that other musicians wanted to hire.

Watching their journeys completely changed my perspective. Older students often bring something younger musicians lack. They know why they’re learning. They’re often more focused, more patient and more intentional. They aren’t chasing somebody else’s dream. They’re pursuing something that genuinely matters to them.

That combination can be incredibly powerful.

I’ve also become increasingly convinced that music itself has no age limit. Creativity, growth, the desire to learn, express yourself and connect with others... none of these has an age limit. In many ways, music becomes richer as we get older because we bring more life experience, perspective and emotion to the journey.

What James has created here is something different. He’s written about the realities of becoming a bass player as an adult: the doubts, challenges, victories, mindset shifts, friendships, community, and the profound impact music can have on a person’s life.

Most importantly, he’s written a book that reminds us of a simple truth:

It’s never too late to become the musician you’ve always wanted to be.

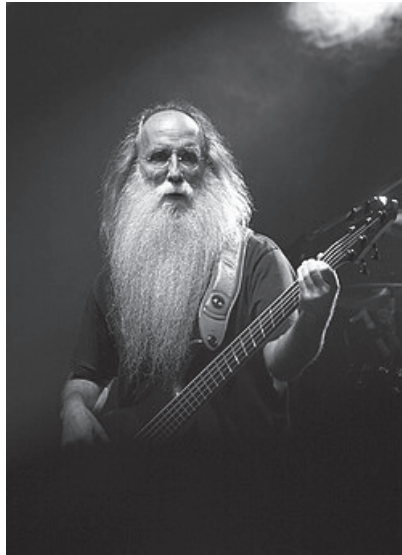
Whether you’re picking up a bass for the very first time at 50, 60, 70 or beyond, I hope this book gives you encouragement, perspective and belief. The journey ahead may be about much more than learning bass: it might just change your life.

Scott Devine

Founder, ScottsBassLessons.com



A NOTE FROM LELAND SKLAR



I have been asked for years, ‘Am I too old to start playing bass?’ and I always respond, ‘It is never too late to do something you are passionate about!’ James’s book is the perfect guide to following your heart and passion. Lays out what I have been telling aspiring musicians of any age for many years in a comprehensive and thoughtful way.

Leland Sklar

*Legendary session bassist (Phil Collins, James Taylor, Toto,
Jackson Browne, Carole King and hundreds more)*

A NOTE FROM PAUL WESTWOOD



It's great to see a book written by someone with music industry experience. In his career, James has enjoyed a wide variety of musical styles and engagements, so after ten years of online teaching experience, he is clearly well placed to pass on his anecdotes and advice.

His target of the 50+ market is a great idea, since older people are now looking to enrich their lives and develop personal skills far more than in previous generations.

As a result, this book creates a bridge for those who are either thinking of making a creative leap into bass playing or need inspiration for further personal development.

James has always shown great enthusiasm for music and life in general, so this book is also a tribute to his ever-growing skills, talent and ability to inspire those around him. He is always a joy to spend time with, and this book is evidence of his zest for living, learning and mission in life.

Paul Westwood

*British TV and session bassist,
bass educator and author of *The Bass Bible* and *The Bass Bible 2*
(Elton John, Cliff Richard, Peter Green, and David Bowie)*

A NOTE FROM JAMES EAGER

Although this book is written primarily for bass players starting at 50, 60, 70 and beyond, the ideas inside are universal. If you're 21 and dreaming of becoming a professional musician, you'll still get enormous value from these pages. Many of the lessons I've learned took years to understand fully, and I hope this book helps you discover them much sooner.

Where this book differs is in its focus. Every idea has been carefully curated from more than a decade of specialising in teaching mature bass players. I've deliberately focused on the concepts that matter most to adults learning later in life, omitting topics primarily relevant to players pursuing a full-time professional career or the highest levels of technical performance.

That doesn't make those subjects unimportant; they're simply beyond the scope of this book.

Whatever your age or ambition, I hope these concepts help you become a more confident, capable and fulfilled bass player.

Bonus Materials

Throughout the book, you'll find references to additional online resources, including video interviews, free lessons, bonus materials and an exclusive bonus chapter, all designed to complement the ideas in these pages; simply scan the QR code at the end of the book or visit ebassguitar.com/mature to access them.

The Evolution Of The Bass Lab PLUS

As you read this book, I'll refer to **eBass+**, our membership and learning community for adult bass players.

eBass+ is the natural evolution of what was previously known as the **Bass Lab PLUS**. As eBassGuitar has grown, the programme has evolved with it, bringing our learning, support and community together under one name.

For clarity and consistency, I'll use **eBass+** throughout this book, although you may recognise the Bass Lab PLUS name from earlier eBassGuitar content.

Welcome & Why This Book Exists

Welcome to *The Mature Bass Player's Guidebook*.

This book is for adults who want to learn bass later in life with more confidence, clarity and enjoyment.

Over the past decade, thousands of adults have started learning bass through eBassGuitar. Many began in their 50s, 60s, 70s and even 80s. Their stories prove something powerful: it's never too late to learn.

If you've ever wondered whether you're too old, too late or not musical enough, this book is for you.

This isn't a method book with endless pages of scales and exercises. Instead, it's about what it really means to learn bass as an adult, exploring the things many bass books never mention: how to practise in a way that fits real life, how to adapt physically as we get older, how to build the mindset of a bass player, how music can help keep the mind sharp, and how to connect with others through bass. We'll also look at the joy of simplicity, finding confidence, building resilience, the humility of supporting a band, the courage it takes to start playing with other musicians, and the simple pleasure of making music.

This book combines practical advice, real student stories, and the questions, doubts and challenges that often slow down mature learners, helping you avoid common mistakes and focus on what matters most.

Maybe you've just bought your first instrument, or you played years ago before life and family got in the way. Wherever you're starting, you're in the right place.

I've had countless lessons with students where not a single note was played. Instead, we talked about strategy, mindset, the softer skills and the joy of being a bass player. I've seen repeatedly that what seems obvious to one person can be a frustrating roadblock to another. Sometimes the smallest shift, a single nugget of gold, unlocks everything.

I'll share stories from my own journey as a professional bassist, lessons I've learned from teaching, and the experiences of students just like you. You'll discover practical ideas, mindsets and strategies to help make learning bass straightforward, sustainable and enjoyable.

Read the book in whatever way serves you best. Some chapters are reflective, others practical. Many include students' stories proving it's never too late to learn. You might read it cover to cover or dip into the chapters that speak to where you are right now. Think of it less as a manual and more as a companion for your bass journey.

Above all, this book exists to give you the confidence to learn and play. So, take a deep breath, pick up your bass, and know you've found your tribe.

Let's begin...

James Eager

PREFACE

It was an ordinary Monday afternoon in April 2022. I was deep into Zoom calls, which had become the norm by then, and was about to record another interview for our new Bass Lab Legend series with a student who had been steadily impressing me.

Ten minutes before my 4.00 pm call, my assistant, Xybil, messaged me: *“Martin wants to talk about his cancer. He hopes that’s okay.”*

Martin had been part of the eBassGuitar community for a few months. He regularly entered our song challenges, and I’d been watching him improve in leaps and bounds. He was new, but progressing quickly. Until Xybil’s message, I had no idea he was unwell.

I learned that Martin lived in the same town as my parents, we had mutual friends, and he was a professional photographer who had worked with many iconic names in British music. Bass, he told me, had always been a dream, and now was the time. He also shared that he’d been living with prostate cancer for nearly a decade and wanted to encourage other men his age to be aware of the signs.

What followed was one of the most moving conversations of my life; certainly not the Monday afternoon I’d expected.

It was then I realised eBassGuitar was about far more than teaching bass guitar.

Martin later sent me two of his photographs to thank me for the interview: one of Phil Collins (my first major musical influence), and one of Norman Watt-Roy (who played the legendary bass line on *Hit Me With Your*

Rhythm Stick). Those photographs still hang on the back wall of my studio and appear in many of our eBassGuitar videos.

In October 2023, Martin emailed again. His health was declining, but he'd seen I was building a new studio and wanted to offer some advice, giving himself something positive to focus on. He had designed and built his own home, so while I was in Berkhamsted with my son, Oliver, I arranged to visit him. We spent an afternoon drinking tea, talking bass and exploring his remarkable house.

Sadly, Martin passed away in December 2023. At his funeral, I watched a slideshow celebrating his life as a photographer, family man, cyclist, house builder and, most meaningful to me, bass player.

That day confirmed something I now believe deeply: whatever your age, ability or circumstance, it's never too late to learn. And with the right guidance and support, that journey can become one of the most rewarding parts of your life.

So, if you're doubting your ability to learn, I'm here to give you confidence and show you that it is possible.

In this book, I'll share stories from the past ten years of eBassGuitar, along with the lessons, ideas and strategies that have helped thousands of adults become bass players later in life.

To playing the bass...

Let's crack on.

James

PART I

FOUNDATIONS



CHAPTER 1

Why I Wrote This Book

didn't set out to be a bass player.

Like many teenagers, I picked up a guitar first and dreamed of being the one standing at the front of the stage, playing blistering solos like Gary Moore, Nuno Bettencourt or David Gilmour. Bass came almost by accident. Many of the school bands already had enough guitarists. What they really needed was someone to hold down the bottom end.

Everything changed when I was seventeen and started rehearsing with the British National Youth Jazz Orchestra (NYJO). For the first time, I locked in with a great drummer and experienced the 'engine room' of a band. In that moment, I understood something that has shaped my entire career. The bass isn't simply another instrument; it's the link between rhythm and harmony, the foundation allowing everyone else to sound better, and it feels incredible to be part of it. Instantly, I knew I'd found my instrument.

Over the next thirty years, I studied at Trinity College of Music, worked as a professional bassist in function bands, West End theatre productions and recording sessions, before eventually finding my way into teaching. Looking back, none of those experiences is the real reason I wrote this book.

The real reason is the people I've met since founding eBassGuitar in 2016.

When I started teaching online, I thought I was helping people learn bass. Now, I realise I was helping them do something much bigger. Many of my students had wanted to play for years, sometimes decades. Life had simply got in the way. Careers, mortgages, raising families and looking after other people naturally took priority, while music quietly slipped to the bottom of the list.

Then, one day, they decided: it was finally time to do something for themselves.

The students who inspired me most weren't the quickest learners or the most naturally gifted. They were the people who refused to believe they'd missed their chance. Every lesson reminded me that becoming a bass player isn't determined by age. It's determined by deciding to begin.

I also realised that we shared the same musical language. The Beatles, Queen, Genesis, Dire Straits, Pink Floyd, Elton John and Eric Clapton weren't simply famous artists. They were the soundtrack to our lives. When students wanted to learn those songs, they weren't just learning bass lines. They were reconnecting with memories, people and moments that had shaped them.

This made me realise that learning bass later in life isn't simply about learning an instrument. It's about reconnecting with a part of yourself that may have been waiting patiently for years.

Music was always part of my own life. My dad played drums professionally during the 1960s, and stories about touring, recording and performing were simply normal conversation at home. I think growing up around music taught me something I've spent my career trying to recreate. Music brings people together. It creates confidence, purpose and lasting friendships. Those things matter just as much at 70 as they do at seventeen.

That's why I wrote this book. There are already plenty of books that teach scales, technique and music theory... these matter, and we'll touch on them as we go. But this book has a different purpose. It's about helping adults become bass players later in life by giving them confidence, direction and a realistic path forward.

Over the last decade, I've watched thousands of adults prove that it's never too late to start. They didn't succeed because they were naturally gifted, but

because they decided to, kept turning up and trusted the process. Eventually, something remarkable happened: they stopped *trying* to become bass players. They simply *became* bass players.

I hope that this book helps you do the same. Not perfectly. Not quickly. Just consistently.

Because I believe something very simple: you don't become a bass player when somebody gives you permission. You become a bass player when *you* decide. The rest is simply proving it to yourself, one practice session at a time.



CHAPTER 2

Why We Play

I often ask new eBassGuitar students why they decided to learn bass. Very few talk about speed, technique or music theory. Instead, they talk about something much deeper. They talk about finally doing something for themselves.

For some, bass is a way to unwind after a busy day. For others, it's the social connection that comes from playing with other people. Some simply want a hobby that challenges them, while others describe bass as therapy... something that helps them through loneliness, stress or grief. I've lost count of the number of students who've told me that twenty minutes with a bass guitar each evening has done more for their wellbeing than they ever expected.

There's something difficult to explain about locking into a groove. Your attention narrows, the noise of everyday life fades into the background and, for a little while, nothing else really matters. Bass has a wonderful way of keeping you completely present.

For many adults, learning bass isn't about starting something new. It's about returning to something that life interrupted. Careers, mortgages, raising children and looking after other people have a habit of pushing music

further down the list of priorities. Then one day you realise the years have passed, and the instrument you always wanted to learn is still waiting.

Often I hear, “*I’ve always wanted to play bass, but I never got around to it.*” If that sounds familiar, you’re certainly not alone.

The encouraging thing is that mature learners often underestimate the advantages they already have. They assume they’ll struggle because they’re older, but they usually arrive with qualities that younger players are still developing: patience, discipline, perspective, and the ability to keep turning up even when progress feels slow. Bass rewards exactly those qualities.

There’s another reason people continue playing: community. Musicians naturally find one another, and bass players are a unique part of that world. Bassists don’t usually chase the spotlight, but we understand the importance of our role. We know what it feels like to support the music rather than dominate it; perhaps that’s why bass players are often such welcoming people.

Over the years, I’ve watched complete strangers become genuine friends through **eBass+**—our private online membership—as well as through online workshops, local jam sessions and community music groups. For many people, particularly after retirement or when family life changes, bass becomes much more than an instrument: it becomes somewhere they *belong*.

I’ve seen this repeatedly. Kev arrived at eBassGuitar with years of instinctive playing experience, but little confidence in his understanding of music. As his knowledge grew, so did his confidence, eventually inspiring him to teach other musicians himself. Bev reconnected with the Northern Soul and Motown records she’d loved all her life after her husband passed, while Martin, whose story you read in the Preface, discovered that bass gave him purpose, routine and something positive to focus on during his battle with cancer.

Different stories, different reasons: the same outcome. Playing bass became about far more than bass.

I noticed something else. Many of the older musicians I admired seemed unusually curious, energetic and engaged with life. Paul McCartney continues to perform into his 80s; Mick Jagger still performs with extraordinary energy. My dad started playing bass in his 40s, learned classical double bass

after retiring and has since taken up the trombone. He often jokes that he's so busy playing music now that he doesn't know how he ever found time to work.

For a long time I assumed this was simply coincidence. Then I came across the work of neuroscientist Dr Anita Collins, and the science supported what I'd been observing for years. Playing an instrument is one of the most demanding activities we can ask our brains to perform. Reading music, listening, keeping time, moving both hands independently and responding to what we hear all happen simultaneously. Unlike simply listening to music, playing actively engages movement, memory, concentration and emotional expression all at once.

Research suggests that musical training strengthens memory, attention, coordination and problem-solving. Every practice session exercises far more than your fingers. You're challenging your brain to keep adapting and learning.

That's encouraging news for mature learners.

Many people worry they're starting too late because their fingers don't move as quickly as they once did or their memory isn't what it used to be. Yet the very act of learning music helps keep the brain active and adaptable. Your life experience gives you advantages too. Patience, discipline, listening and teamwork are qualities you've spent decades developing, and they're exactly the qualities that good bass playing depends upon.

So Why Do We Play?

My answer is simple: because it makes us feel alive.

Music connects us to other people, gives us a second chance at dreams we thought had slipped away; something that's ours.

There's also something deeply satisfying about sitting in a groove. It's simple, repetitive and almost impossible to describe unless you've experienced it yourself. A drummer once told me that watching an audience move together with the groove was better than any drug he'd ever tried. I knew exactly what he meant.

Most people I work with aren't trying to become professional musicians. They're looking for something that fits into their life and gives something back. They want to keep learning, stay curious, enjoy music and become a little better than they were yesterday.

I've also noticed the students who keep going aren't always the most talented; they're the ones with the clearest reason for playing.

When progress feels slow, talent won't carry you very far. Your reason will.

There will be weeks when everything clicks, and you feel yourself improving with every practice session. And there'll be weeks when nothing seems to work. Every bass player experiences both, but those with a strong reason keep picking up the instrument anyway.

Before you move on, I'd encourage you to answer one simple question:

Why Do You Want To Play Bass?

Write your answer down, somewhere you'll see it often, and come back to it whenever your motivation fades.

You do not need a *technical* reason to play bass; you need a *personal* one.

Every time you pick up your bass, you're doing far more than learning notes. You're investing in yourself, keeping your mind active, building confidence, joining a community and proving to yourself that it's never too late to begin.



CHAPTER 3

The Bassist's Role In Life & Music

One of the things I love most about the bass is that it's not about *you*. Not in the obvious sense, anyway. It's about the music, the band and the people you're supporting. Bassists lead from the bottom. We are the foundation, the glue and the amplifier of others.

If a band loses the guitarist, people notice, but the song carries on. When the bass drops out, the whole piece changes. The groove disappears, the harmony feels thinner, the energy falls flat. Our role is understated but crucial. We are the link between rhythm and chords. When we do our job well, people don't consciously notice; they simply feel good.

I often compare being a bassist to being part of a family or running a business. The bassist is like the parent who quietly holds everything together without demanding the spotlight, or the manager who creates the conditions for everyone else to succeed, even if nobody outside the organisation knows their name. The work isn't glamorous, but it is essential. Without it, the whole structure begins to weaken.

Since my eight-year-old son Oliver became football mad, I've started using another comparison; the bassist is like the goalkeeper. When a goalkeeper is doing their job well, very few people notice because nothing dramatic happens. That's exactly the point. Goalkeeping, like bass playing, is about being dependable, consistent and giving everyone else confidence to play their game.

Bass requires humility. It's about serving the music rather than feeding your ego, knowing when to hold back and when to step forward. Some of the greatest bass lines ever written contain only a handful of notes. Their power doesn't come from complexity, but from feel, timing and the discipline to play what the music needs. A bassist who overplays can destabilise the whole band. A bassist who supports with confidence and clarity makes everyone around them sound better.

Don't mistake humility for weakness. Playing bass is leadership of a different kind. We establish the pulse, guide the harmony and give the music its weight. Like the foundations of a building, we're rarely the first thing people notice, but everything above depends on us: that's real influence.

I've realised that this lesson extends far beyond music. As a father, I want to give my son a solid foundation from which he can grow and flourish. In business, I've learned that leadership isn't about being the loudest voice in the room. It's about creating the conditions where other people can succeed. I consciously step back so my team can grow, develop and shine.

Bass taught me that.

I think that's a wonderfully freeing idea. You don't have to dazzle people with speed or complexity. Your role is to create music that feels good, supports everyone around you and makes the whole band stronger. There is enormous satisfaction in knowing that, although many people may never notice what you're doing, the music wouldn't feel the same without you.

That's the bassist's role: foundation; glue; amplifier of others.

It's humble, it's powerful, and I believe it's one of the most rewarding roles in all of music. And, perhaps, in life as well.

Art Pulis: Stories From eBass+

Started learning bass at 82



When Art joined **eBass+** at the age of 82, I remember immediately thinking how curious he was. Not just about bass playing itself, but about learning, psychology, technology, music... even his own behaviour and motivations.

Conversations with Art rarely stayed on one subject for long. One minute we'd be discussing bass lines, the next neuroscience, AI tools, motivation, or how adults deal with frustration when learning something new.

What stood out instantly was his level of self-awareness. He openly spoke about losing his wife, living alone, and how difficult loneliness could become. He admitted he struggled if he was not mentally engaged:

"I get bored if I'm not learning."

Bass became part of the solution to that.

He described sitting with music playing constantly in the background because silence could leave too much room for anxiety and overthinking, particularly after later facing serious health challenges, including cancer.

But what fascinated me was that even at 82, Art still leaned into life rather than away from it. He was taking online neuroscience courses, experimenting with AI audio separation software, using tools like Moises, studying how the brain learns, and carefully observing his own learning patterns. He understood that too much frustration makes adults quit, so he balanced challenge with enjoyment by switching between structured lessons and simply playing songs he loved.

Perhaps that's the real lesson in his story. Art starting bass at 82 proves it's never too late. But, deeper than that, curiosity, growth, creativity, and the desire to keep learning don't have to disappear with age.

Some people stop learning long before they get old; Art has never stopped.

You can watch the full interview and access the bonus resources using the QR code at the end of the book.



CHAPTER 4

What Are Groove, Pocket, & Feel?

Groove. Ask ten musicians to define it, and you'll get ten different answers, but here's mine:

Groove is the repetitive, hypnotic effect of the band playing together in time, in sync, and in service of the song. It's what makes people nod their heads, tap their feet, and want to get up and dance. Groove makes people feel good, even if they don't know why.

When bass and drums lock together, the effect is palpable. Your body feels before your brain processes it: pulse, repetition, the steady anchor that draws people in and makes them move. It's addictive. That's why I've driven five hours for a gig with the right band: to feel that collective power and energy is worth it every time!

Groove has nothing to do with how many notes you play or how fast you move your fingers. It's not about speed or complexity; some of the greatest bass lines are made up of just a few notes. What makes them iconic is their

feel, placement, and consistency. A two-note line with the right feel will always sound better than a blizzard of notes that don't sit right.

Pocket is a lot like Groove and has a hundred different definitions. Here's mine:

When a musical performance is said to be "In the pocket", it means the musicians are collectively playing together with a tight sense of timing and repetitive groove, locking in their rhythms and musical accents in a way that feels unified and solid.

Feel, as in "The rhythm section has a great feel":

Musical feel is the human, emotional, and rhythmic nuance in music that exists beyond the written notes, created by subtle timing variations (playing slightly ahead or behind the beat), dynamics, and articulation, which together produce a groove or a specific emotional, visceral response.

This explains why a human never sounds like a computer, and why two people can sound so different when playing the same notes.

Groove, pocket and feel are all components of the greatest bass lines ever played. Take Queen's *Another One Bites The Dust*: John Deacon plays nothing complicated, but his line drives the whole song; you have to move to it! Similarly, *Stand By Me*, where the almost childlike bass part carries the entire track.

Bill Withers' *Lovely Day* is built on a repetitive bass line that sits right in the pocket, and James Jamerson's line in *My Girl* by The Temptations is simple, clear, and full of feel. These are grooves beginners can learn and instantly grasp the magic of what bass is all about.

Explore more intricate grooves like Francis Rocco Prestia's work with Tower of Power or Bernard Edwards on Chic's *Good Times* (the bass line that inspired *Another One Bites The Dust*); the principle doesn't change. The lines may be busier, but they never lose the pocket.

Speed is impressive, but groove, pocket, and feel are what get you hired and rehired. They're what ignite an audience; the difference between polite applause and people dancing until their feet ache. Groove is the bassist's superpower. Learn to create it, protect it, and serve it, and you'll always have a place in the music.



CHAPTER 5

Simplicity & Complexity

When I was twelve, my dad's bassist friend, Dave, gave me a piece of advice that has stayed with me ever since:

"The great thing about the bass is it can be as simple or as complex as you like."

That sentence explains the bass perfectly, and it's one of the reasons the instrument speaks so strongly to mature players. Bass is approachable: it doesn't take years of study before you can make music with other people. With one note, one finger and one string, you can play your part in a band and create something that feels genuinely satisfying. At any age, that accessibility is incredibly powerful.

At the same time, bass is as deep as you want it to be. Once you've mastered the basics, you can spend a lifetime exploring groove, harmony, technique and improvisation. After more than thirty years of playing, I still discover new ideas every time I pick up the instrument. That's one of the things I love most about it; there's always another layer to uncover.

Here's the distinction:

Bass is *simple*, but it isn't *easy*.

Anyone can play a root note on the beat. Playing that same note with the right tone, feel and consistency: that's the art.

Listen to *Dock Of The Bay*, played by Donald "Duck" Dunn. The bass line is simple, supportive and instantly memorable. It never gets in the way, yet it holds the entire song together. Remove it, and the song loses its foundation.

The same is true of Queen's *Under Pressure*. The famous riff is built from just two notes, repeated with complete consistency. It's simple enough for a beginner to learn, yet memorable enough to become one of the most recognisable bass lines ever written.

The Beatles' *Come Together* is another perfect example. Every note is placed with intent. U2's *With or Without You* relies on almost no variation or fills, just controlled simplicity; precisely why it works.

As bass players, we could fill every bar with notes, but the real strength lies in restraint. Knowing when **not** to play is every bit as important as knowing what to play. A great bass groove depends as much on musical space as it does on the sound of the actual notes which are played. Repetition, silence and consistency are often what make a bass line feel great.

I tell students: *Simple does **not** mean lesser.*

A simple bass line played with confidence and authority can make an audience dance all night.

Of course, complexity has its place. Walking bass, funk and improvisation all demand greater technical skill. Norman Watt-Roy on Ian Dury & The Blockheads' *Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick*, Mark King on Level 42's *Love Games*, and Jaco Pastorius on *Come On, Come Over* all demonstrate just how exciting intricate bass can become. The lines are busier, faster and technically demanding, yet they all remain anchored to great timing and feel.

That's the important point: complexity without pocket is just clutter. Simplicity played with confidence will always beat complexity played at the wrong time or for the wrong reason.

Many begin their journey believing they need flashy technique before they can call themselves a "real" bass player. Then they discover that most bands simply want someone who can play the right part, with great timing, every time. That's when they realise where the real magic lies.

Learning the foundations is relatively straightforward; mastering them is a lifetime's work.

Virtuosic bass playing still has an important place. Players such as Marcus Miller, Victor Wooten and Anthony Jackson continue to inspire me with the instrument's possibilities and their technical brilliance. This is simply a reminder that bass can be enjoyed at every level. You can build a lifetime of musical enjoyment from simple foundations, adding complexity when the music calls for it.

Dave's advice still rings true today: bass can be as simple or as complex as you like. The real art is knowing when each is needed, and finding joy in both.

PART II

LEARNING THE INSTRUMENT



CHAPTER 6

The Four Pillars Of Bass

In 2023, I started the most challenging bass guitar course I'd ever put together. Students had been asking me how to play by ear for years. Truthfully, I'd never fully figured out how I did it.

I started music college with significant anxiety about my musical ear, regularly wondering how fellow students could seemingly hear something, then play it without consulting a piece of paper or spending hours dissecting it. It felt like voodoo.

My go-to was preparation. I'd reach for a *Real Book* or make excuses about not wanting to throw myself in at the deep end. I stuck to chord charts and notation for what felt like an eternity.

Eventually, I found myself in situations where I had no choice but to jump in. Gradually, I started hitting the right notes, predicting what was coming next and getting to the end of songs unscathed. Some moments were frightening. I felt exposed, convinced the world was about to engulf me. But things slowly shifted. Music became something I could anticipate.

After four years at college, I had all the elements of a professional working musical ear. Fifteen years later, I still wasn't completely sure how I'd got there.

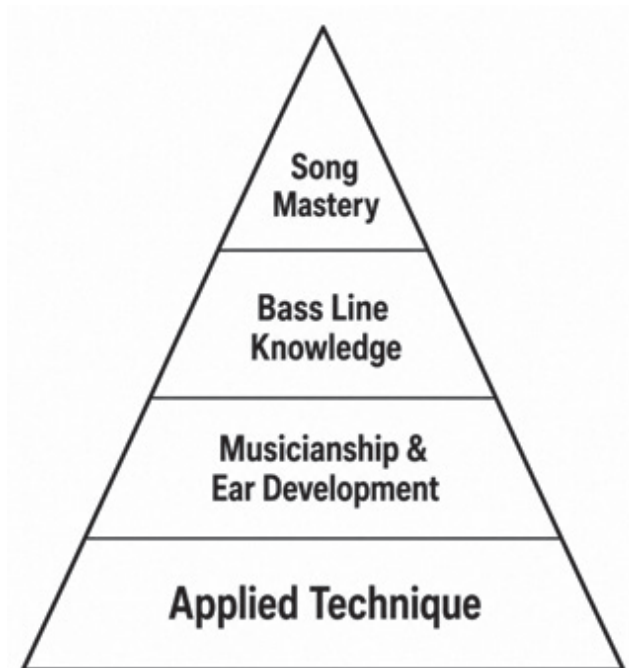
What I knew was that ear training alone wasn't enough. There was more to it. I just couldn't put my finger on it.

I spent months analysing what had happened during that period so I could share it with other students. The result was my *Hear It, Play It* course (HIPI).

My research made something very clear. What I'd really done during music college was become a more rounded bassist and musician by developing multiple skills at the same time. Building HIPI led me to create my **Four Pillars Of Bass** framework, giving my students a clearer way to structure their learning and decide what to work on during practice. Although it grew out of learning to play by ear, the framework reaches much further than that.

The Four Pillars are:

- Applied Technique
- Musicianship & Ear Development
- Bass Line Knowledge
- Song Mastery



Working through these four areas will help you make meaningful progress across every important aspect of bass playing. Together, they provide a balanced approach to becoming a well-rounded musician.

Applied Technique

Applied technique relates to the physical side of playing, training your hands to do what your ears and brain want.

Think of a car. Two specifications are always quoted: 0-60 mph acceleration and torque. Both relate to performance, but in different ways. Acceleration measures how quickly the car reaches speed. Torque is the force the engine produces, especially when moving through resistance.

Acceleration is great if you're driving in a straight line on a test track. Torque is what pushes you out of corners, and is arguably, in real-world driving, the more useful measure of car performance.

Traditional bass technique is like acceleration; developing finger strength, economy of motion, smooth shifting up and down the neck, muting unwanted string noise, dexterity and control.

I think of applied technique as developing your musical torque; it goes beyond drills and installs the patterns of music itself, including triads, arpeggios, intervals and scale fragments. Learning diatonic triads and arpeggios helps you cover the most important note combinations found within a key. These exercises soon start sounding musical rather than mechanical, hard-wiring the geography of the bass and the language of music into your hands, so common musical phrases become instinctive.

Mature players often worry about dexterity. I've found that efficient technique combined with real musical patterns allows them to access far more than they expect.

I started practising these concepts at music college and never looked back. I rarely practise traditional exercises such as spider drills because there's far more musical content, practical application and long-term value in applied technique.

I'll link to a video in the bonus resources so you can see this concept in action.

Musicianship & Ear Development

Musicianship is about understanding the building blocks of music and recognising them by ear in context. Ear training can feel dry in isolation, but when it connects with real bass lines and real chord sequences, it becomes practical.

This pillar combines theory and ear development because I've always seen them as two sides of the same coin. You begin to sense what's coming next, hear a change in the music and anticipate where the bass line is heading without consciously thinking about it. Notes begin to feel as though they either fit or don't fit, and your ear naturally guides you towards the right choices.

That's musicianship: a skill built gradually from listening, understanding and experience.

HIPI encourages students to lead with their ears, to work things out before reaching for written material.

Bass Line Knowledge

Every style of music has its own classic bass lines and recurring patterns. The more of those patterns you understand, the more comfortable you'll feel in different musical situations.

Take James Jamerson's line on *Reach Out I'll Be There* by The Four Tops. The chorus is built around root, 5th and octave patterns that are woven throughout the Motown language. Once you recognise those ideas, you hear them everywhere.

Bass line knowledge isn't about memorising hundreds of songs. It's about recognising the common musical ideas that appear across many songs and styles. That's often a breakthrough moment for mature players: the fretboard

suddenly feels less overwhelming because they realise one idea unlocks many others.

Song Mastery

Song mastery is where everything comes together. It's the process of learning, internalising and performing complete songs confidently from beginning to end, locking in with the drummer and supporting the harmony of the band.

One of the biggest breakthroughs for many students is discovering how many songs share similar chord progressions and musical ideas. Learn those common patterns, and again, you'll start hearing them everywhere.

Song mastery gives your practice a purpose; building a repertoire you can enjoy, share and return to for the rest of your life.

Playing music will always be the most important part of learning bass. Song mastery is where all the other pillars become real.

Bringing It Together

The Four Pillars work best when they're developed together because each one strengthens the others.

- Applied Technique gives you the ability to execute
- Musicianship helps you hear and anticipate
- Bass Line Knowledge gives you the language of the instrument
- Song Mastery puts everything into a real musical context

Working across all four reinforces everything else. Your hands become more capable, your ears sharper, your repertoire richer, and your confidence stronger.

Now you start to feel like a real bassist.



CHAPTER 7

The Six Musical Senses

While I was developing HIPI, I also thought deeply about how we process and learn music.

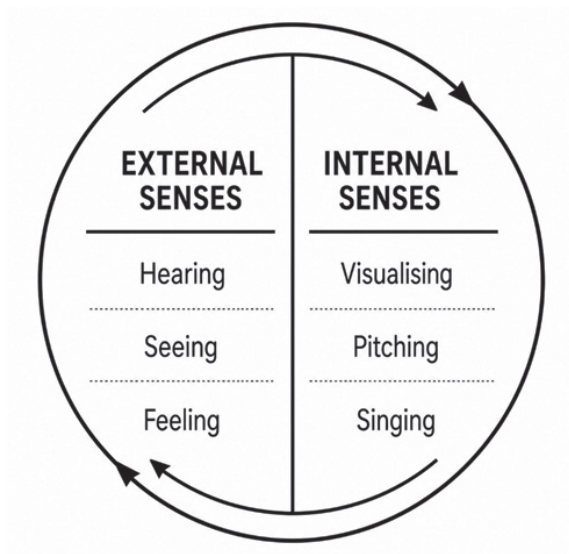
I realised that, for me, music was like a 1980s video platform game. Closing my eyes, playing or listening to music felt more like the levels in *Sonic The Hedgehog* or *Super Mario World* (which is odd, as I've never been a gamer).

Many musicians talk about learning music in terms of information: notes, scales, charts and songs. I realised that what matters just as much is how that information is processed, and that there are different ways we can improve our ability to play music.

I noticed that players making steady progress seemed to be using several learning systems at once, whether they realised it or not. I think of these learning systems as musical senses.

This is a concept called **Six Musical Senses (SMS)**, which I developed when I created the Hear It Play It program. It's simply a way of describing how we absorb music and turn it into something playable:

Six Musical Senses (SMS)



- **Hearing** - What something sounds like when you play it
- **Seeing** - What something looks like on the fretboard
- **Feeling** - What something feels like under your fingers
- **Visualising** - How you see musical shapes and movement in your head
- **Pitching** - How you hear notes internally before playing them
- **Singing** - The connection between internal sound and physical execution

Of these, the first three are external, relying on feedback from the instrument and three of your five senses.

The second three are internal, happening in your mind and often less tangible at first. As they develop, they create a deeper connection with the music.

Adult beginners often rely heavily on external information: TAB, written music, fingerings and visual cues. Progress comes from gradually strengthening the internal senses so they begin guiding the external ones.

Mature students can sometimes feel their progress is slower, not because they lack ability or effort, but because most of their processing is happening externally.

The shift begins when the internal senses start waking up. You notice moments where you anticipate what is coming rather than reacting to it. That's very similar to my own experience at music college. I wasn't just training my ear. Without realising it, I was developing several musical systems at once.

To explore this idea, begin with the external senses.

- What does this sound like when you play it?
- What does it look like on the fretboard?
- What does it feel like under your fingers?

Once those feel comfortable, begin exploring the internal senses.

- If you close your eyes, what do you visualise?
- Can you hear the music internally when you're not playing?
- Can you sing the bass line and connect it back to your hands?
(Singing out loud is often the critical piece that links the ears, the mind and the hands together)

Now you're no longer relying entirely on written material; you're engaging with music at a much deeper level. Many players find that, as their internal senses develop, they naturally begin guiding the external ones.

Everyone experiences this differently. Some players naturally visualise first, others hear music internally, while some recognise physical patterns before they fully understand them. There is no fixed order.

Many students find visualisation, pitching and singing uncomfortable at first. That's completely normal. They're often the least developed senses, particularly if you've relied heavily on written material. As these senses begin working together, you may notice small but important shifts. You start anticipating movements, recognising patterns earlier, feeling where the music is heading before it fully arrives.

This is why learning by ear often feels difficult in the beginning. You're asking internal systems to work in ways they may never have done before. As they develop, progress starts feeling more natural and less forced.

I encourage students to explore all six musical senses, especially the internal ones: Visualisation, Pitching and Singing. It's perfectly normal to feel awkward initially. Give the senses time, and they'll gradually become another way of understanding music.

This is a brief introduction to a much deeper idea. The aim isn't to master it immediately, but simply to begin noticing how you experience music. The HIPPI course explores these ideas in much greater depth and shows how your SMS can be developed step by step.

Terry Sinclair: Stories From eBass+

Featured as one of our first eBass+ Legends



When we launched a community feature inside **eBass+** called *Bass Lab Legend*, the idea was to highlight members whose dedication, progress, and contribution to the community really stood out.

One of the first people we featured was Terry Sinclair from Canada.

Terry played bass in high school before life gradually moved in other directions. University, work, family, and the passing of time meant he stopped playing music altogether.

40 years later, after retiring, he saw a bassist performing in a local bar and immediately felt pulled towards the instrument again.

“I need to learn something. I need to do something.”

I think many mature adults recognise that feeling. Terry looked after himself physically through mountain biking and weight-training, but realised he also needed something mentally engaging and creatively demanding.

He picked up the bass again: it felt like starting from zero.

The thing about Terry was the depth of his engagement. He wasn't casually dipping into occasional lessons; he *really* studied the material. He took part in challenges, recorded videos, squeezing every ounce of value from the courses and community.

The Classic Rock Bass Challenge ignited something in him, partly because of the accountability and camaraderie surrounding it:

“When you know somebody’s going to watch it, every note matters.”

Terry stopped being simply a student and became a contributor to the wider **eBass+** community. During lockdowns, he even created a private challenge group with other members to keep everybody motivated, learning, and posting regularly.

Terry represents something important about mature learning: adults progress further than they expect when they combine structure, curiosity, accountability, and deep engagement with the process.

You can watch the full interview and access the bonus resources using the QR code at the end of the book.



CHAPTER 8

Practice That Works

A question I'm asked repeatedly is, "How often should I practise?" Many students worry they're wasting time or not practising the "right" things. However, progress comes from consistency and clear structure rather than spending hours mindlessly playing the bass.

I've found two simple frameworks that work particularly well with mature students. The first is about how often to practise; the second explains how to structure a practice session so your time on the instrument remains productive and enjoyable.

The Reality of Time

The biggest hurdle many mature students face isn't dexterity or music theory.

It's time.

The good news is that you don't need huge amounts of it to improve. Short, focused sessions, repeated consistently, are far more effective than occasional marathon practice sessions followed by long gaps.

“I’d love to practise more, but life gets in the way,” is something I hear constantly. Work, family, health, responsibilities and everyday life all compete for your attention. It’s easy to wait for the perfect time to practise: a quiet house, your energy levels are right, everything is perfectly aligned...

That moment rarely arrives.

What works far better is lowering barriers and making practice part of everyday life, not treating it as a major event.

The 20-5-1 Rule

The first principle is the **20-5-1 Rule**, which I credit to my friend John Henny from voiceschool.com.



The idea is simple:

- Practise for **20 minutes a day**
- Practise **five days a week**
- Don’t allow yourself to take **more than one week off during any three months**

That's it.

This framework has helped countless students because it's realistic. Twenty minutes is long enough to make meaningful progress and short enough to fit into a busy day. Five days a week builds momentum while leaving room for real life. The "one week off" rule recognises that holidays, illness and unexpected events happen, but prevents short breaks from quietly becoming permanent ones.

Think about fitness. Walking for twenty minutes five days a week will do more for your health than running one marathon every year. Bass works in much the same way.

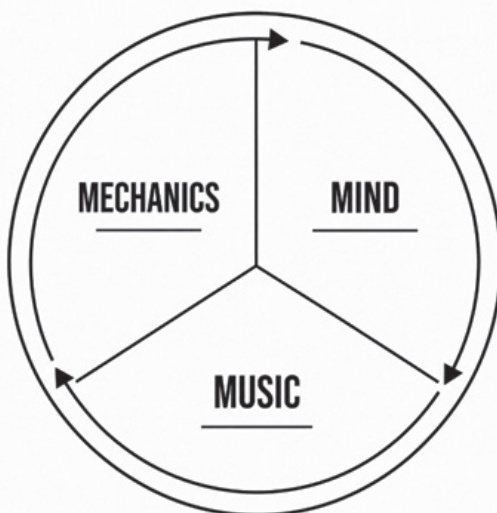
I've watched mature students begin believing they didn't have enough time. Once they committed to twenty minutes, they discovered not only that they could manage it, but that they looked forward to those sessions. When life inevitably interrupted, they had a simple framework that helped them start again rather than give up.

Once you've decided when to practise, your next question becomes "What should I practise?"

Structuring Your Practice: The 3M System

Mechanics. Mind. Music.

I developed this framework because many students spend too much time thinking about how to organise their practice instead of actually practising.



The three areas work together:

Mechanics focuses on the physical side of playing: technique, exercises and anything that helps your hands move efficiently. That might include finger exercises, scales or warm-ups. For mature players, this isn't just about improving technique. It's also about staying relaxed, keeping your joints mobile and avoiding unnecessary tension.

Mind is where you stretch yourself and learn something new: figure out a new rhythm, work on an unfamiliar song, tackle a section you've been avoiding... It's where your understanding grows. Earlier, we looked at Dr Anita Collins' work on music and the brain. Challenging yourself mentally is one reason playing music remains so valuable throughout life.

Music is the reward. This is where you stop analysing and enjoy playing. Put on a backing track. Play along with a favourite song. Improvise. Explore. This is the reason we picked up the bass in the first place. It's free, generally unstructured, and your chances to get lost in the moment.

What This Looks Like in Practice

My own practice usually follows this pattern: a few minutes noodling to settle in before moving on to something technical to keep my mechanics sharp. Next, something that stretches me mentally before finishing by simply playing music and enjoying the instrument.

I generally divide my practice into three roughly equal sections. A 20-minute session for a mature student might look like this:

- **5 minutes:** Mechanics (warm-ups or finger patterns)
- **5 minutes:** Mind (learning a new rhythm, groove or bass line)
- **10 minutes:** Music (playing songs or jamming with a backing track)

That balance keeps practice enjoyable while making sure progress continues.

The Role of Noodling

People sometimes feel guilty about picking up the bass and just playing whatever comes to mind, but I think noodling has real value. It helps you connect with the instrument, experiment with ideas and often leads to discoveries you wouldn't have made otherwise.

Balance is the key.

If all you ever do is noodle, progress will probably slow. If all you do is grind through exercises, you'll probably lose motivation. Somewhere between those two extremes is where most make their best progress.

One of my tutors at music college told me that some of his most valuable practice happened when he didn't realise he was practising.

I've never forgotten that. Sometimes it's worth spending time with your bass with no agenda, no targets and no pressure... just playing.

Micro-Wins Matter

Long-term progress is built on small victories. A micro-win might be:

- Playing a difficult bar cleanly for the first time
- Locking into a backing track without rushing
- Learning a section of a song
- Relaxing your fretting hand so everything feels easier

Mature players sometimes dismiss these moments because they feel they should be progressing faster.

Don't!

Small wins accumulate; they're how real progress happens.

Enjoyment Comes First

However obvious, it's worth saying: practice has to be enjoyable enough that you want to come back tomorrow.

If you dread picking up the bass, consistency becomes difficult. Playing songs you genuinely care about will invariably keep you more engaged than running exercises for the sake of it.

Enjoyment isn't a reward for practising; it's one of the reasons practice works.

Practical Tips for Busy Lives

A few small changes can make practice much easier to maintain:

- Pair practice with an existing routine, such as your morning coffee or evening wind-down
- Keep your bass visible and easy to reach
- Set small, specific goals rather than vague ones
- Track your progress
- Keep your equipment set up and plugged in whenever possible to reduce friction

If you miss a session, don't worry. Just start again tomorrow.

The Long Game

Many mature players worry they've missed their chance. I don't believe that's true.

One of the greatest advantages of learning later in life is that you already understand the value of steady habits. Practising bass isn't about perfection. It's about persistence.

20 minutes a day; five days a week. Progress over perfection at all times. Do that consistently, and you'll be amazed where it takes you.

PART III

DEVELOPING THE MUSICIAN



CHAPTER 9

Overcoming Mental Blocks & Building Confidence

One of the biggest challenges I've faced as a musician was the voice in my head asking, "*Am I good enough? Do I belong here? Do I have what it takes?*" Those questions haunted me throughout my early career, especially when I first arrived at music college. I'd look around at other players who seemed more talented and confident than me and wonder whether I deserved to be there. Add in the challenges I faced from dyslexia, and that sense of not belonging can be crippling if you let it take over.

I don't think I've met many people who haven't experienced similar thoughts at some point. It's a deeply human pattern. Psychologists now refer to it as **imposter syndrome**.

What This Chapter Is About

I eventually realised that the way through those thoughts wasn't mind-set alone. It was putting practical systems in place that allowed me to keep moving forward, even when the doubts remained.

This chapter is about practically dealing with those thoughts; not by eliminating them, but by learning how to work alongside them.

I see the same mental blocks in many mature players. They may not be caused by dyslexia, as some of mine were, but the questions are often similar:

Am I too old?

Am I too slow?

Do I have what it takes?

For many, those doubts appear before they even begin. Hesitation creeps in. They second-guess themselves. I've come to believe that many of the limits we place on ourselves are simply stories we've repeated often enough to believe. They aren't always true, or at least not as fixed as they feel. These are often described as **limiting beliefs**.

Why This Matters

Dyslexia made those doubts stronger for me. Reading musical notation was far harder than it seemed to be for many of my classmates, and it often felt as though I had to work twice as hard to achieve the same result.

But those struggles also gave me something valuable: they forced me to become resilient, to find workarounds, develop systems and keep going when things felt difficult.

Many of the skills I wrestled with eventually became strengths as a teacher. Because I had to break ideas into smaller, simpler pieces for myself, I learned how to explain them clearly to other people.

That's why I teach bass through frameworks such as the 3M System and The Four Pillars. They grew out of the systems I developed to help myself learn.

The important point is this: confidence rarely appears first. It grows from repeated experiences where things begin to work, even in small ways.

How To Move Forward

Over time, I've developed what I call **Progress Builders**.

They're practical steps that help build confidence, maintain momentum and keep you moving forward. They're not rigid rules. They're tools you can lean on whenever you need them.

Always Prepare

Whether it's a gig, a jam session or your own practice, arrive with something you know you can play well. That gives you a foundation to build on.

Preparation became one of my greatest advantages. While other musicians were sometimes happy to wing it, I learned songs thoroughly and turned up ready. People noticed that. Not because I was the most talented player in the room, but because I was dependable.

Break It Down

If a bass line feels overwhelming, strip it back to the root notes or just the rhythm. Then build it up, one piece at a time.

That's how I dealt with many of my own learning challenges, and it's an approach I've found effective ever since. In Neuro-Linguistic Programming, this is often called **chunking down**. Whatever you call it, it's a simple way of reducing overwhelm.

Lean On Frameworks

Frameworks such as The Four Pillars remove guesswork. Instead of wondering what you should practise next, you have a clear direction that helps keep you moving forward.

Seek Safe Environments

Learning is much easier when you know it's safe to make mistakes.

Find people who encourage you, support you and want you to improve. That's exactly why we built the eBassGuitar community. I wanted it to be a place where encouragement mattered more than judgement, where people felt comfortable learning at their own pace.

Reframe Mistakes

Wrong notes aren't failures.

They're information. Treat them as feedback rather than proof that you don't belong.

I used to beat myself up over one wrong note in a two-hour performance. At the time, I thought that showed I cared. Retrospectively, all it really did was make me more anxious. Nobody respected me more because I criticised myself. Learning from mistakes will always serve you better than punishing yourself for them.

How This Builds Confidence

Progress Builders work because they accumulate. Each one adds another layer of confidence while gradually reducing self-doubt. They don't simply protect you from setbacks; they help you move forward.

One definition of confidence is:

“The feeling or belief that one can have faith in or rely on someone or something.”

I’ve always liked that definition because it reminds us that confidence isn’t something you suddenly find. It’s something you build.

Confidence grows when you develop musical and mental skills that you know you can rely on when things become challenging. It’s trusting that your preparation, your practice and your experience will be there when you need them.

If you find yourself asking, *“Am I good enough?”* or *“Do I belong?”*, remember that these thoughts are common; most people experience them when they’re pushing into unfamiliar territory. If you’re willing to learn, persevere and put in the work, you’re already doing what many people never sustain.

Skills can be developed. Persistence can be learned.

I’m living proof that, when others fall by the wayside, persistence continues moving you forward.

Laurel: Stories From eBass+

The bass guitar felt like home



Laurel started playing bass during the pandemic, almost by accident.

She'd been attending ensemble classes on keys at a local music school in Chicago when suddenly the instructor told her, "You're on bass." She'd never played a stringed instrument before, but something about the experience connected immediately. A week later, the school shut down due to COVID. Leaving, she stopped at the music store and bought a used bass.

That moment changed everything.

Laurel realised she'd always been drawn towards the lower end of music. Even playing keys, she gravitated towards the bass notes and lower octaves. The bass guitar did not feel foreign to her. It felt familiar, like home.

What I've always appreciated about Laurel is the depth of her engagement with music and creativity generally. Outside of bass, she travels regularly to Iceland, studies Icelandic, welds as a creative

outlet, gardens, runs, and seems to throw herself fully into the things that fascinate her.

That same immersion carried over into her bass playing. She became deeply involved in the **eBass+** community, attending workshops, song challenges, Zoom calls, and masterclasses whenever possible. Underneath everything was a love for groove and feel, particularly the music of James Jamerson.

One of my favourite things she said was:

“Sometimes I lie down on the floor with my bass and try to channel Jamerson.”

Laurel threw herself completely into the instrument, the music, and the community around it; watching that level of enthusiasm and engagement develop later in life has been a real joy.

You can watch the full interview and access the bonus resources using the QR code at the end of the book.



CHAPTER 10

Building Resilience

Being a musician comes with highs and lows. There are days when music feels like the best thing in the world, and days when you wonder why you ever picked up an instrument in the first place.

I've had nights where I've been on stage in front of thousands, locked in with the band, feeling unstoppable... and nights where I've come home frustrated, tired and questioning whether I belonged in the industry at all.

That's part of the journey. The key isn't avoiding the lows; it's learning how to move through them.

That's resilience.

What This Chapter Is About

Resilience isn't about never feeling doubt. It's about not letting that doubt define what you do next. It's about showing up again the next day, bass in hand, ready to try again.

Every musician you admire has done the same thing. Behind the moments that look effortless are long periods of persistence, mistakes and uncertainty.

This chapter is about understanding how progress accumulates and how resilience helps you stay on track when it doesn't feel like it's working.

Why This Matters

One of the biggest challenges isn't ability; it's how progress feels. One practice session feels great, and the next feels like you've gone backwards. It's easy to conclude that nothing is improving.

But progress on an instrument isn't linear. It moves in cycles, with periods where things click, followed by periods where things feel stuck. What makes the difference is understanding that this pattern is normal.

One idea I find helpful is **The 1% Rule**.

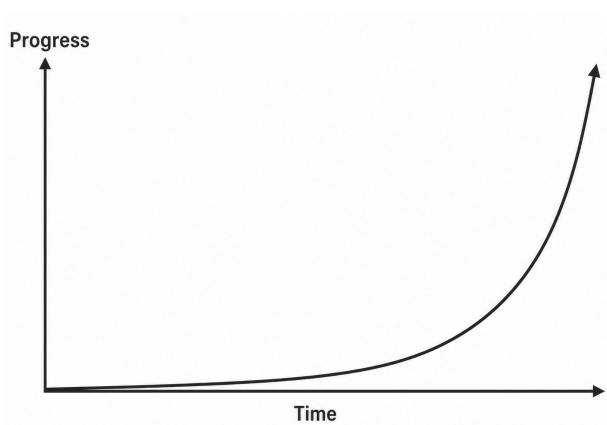
Improving by 1% in a day feels insignificant: a groove feels unstable, a bass line still needs work.

The maths tells a different story. Improving by 1% means multiplying your current level by 1.01. Do that every day for a year and the calculation becomes 1.01 to the power of 365. That's almost 37.

The exact number isn't the important part; the principle is.

Small, consistent improvements lead to progress that feels disproportionate to the effort you notice each day.

You don't see it on a Tuesday afternoon. You notice it months later when something that once felt difficult now feels straightforward.



Remembering that makes it much easier to stay resilient during the slower periods.

How To Apply This

The 1% Rule becomes useful when it changes how you approach playing. Instead of chasing dramatic breakthroughs, focus on small, repeatable improvements, such as:

- Playing something more cleanly
- Learning a couple of bars properly
- Keeping your timing slightly steadier
- Remembering one more position on the fretboard
- Moving between shapes more easily

None of these changes feels dramatic on its own. Together, they build momentum.

Earlier, I mentioned one of my instructors saying he did his best practice when he didn't realise he was practising. I'd take that one step further:

Half of your development happens in the practice room, where you slow things down, repeat ideas and build control. The other half happens outside in the field: playing in bands, jamming at open mic nights, or simply playing with another person at home.

Think of it as **50% practice** and **50% fieldwork**.

Practice builds the skill. Fieldwork teaches you how to use it.

Playing with other people also exposes the gaps you may not notice at home; importantly, it shows you what's beginning to work.

One mistake I see regularly is waiting until you feel fully ready before applying what you've learned. Readiness develops through doing.

How Resilience Shows Up

Mature players often underestimate the resilience they already have. If you've built a career, raised a family or handled difficult periods in life, you've already developed the ability to keep going through challenges. Learning bass isn't about building resilience from scratch. It's about applying something you already have in a different context.

There'll be times when you feel stuck, when things don't go to plan, when motivation drops. Those moments aren't a sign that you're failing.

They're part of learning.

Resilience shows up in what you do next: picking up the instrument the following day, working on something simpler for a while to regain momentum or continuing even when the progress isn't obvious.

A steady approach builds both skill and resilience.

What If It Feels Like You're Not Progressing?

If you find yourself thinking you're not improving fast enough, step back and look at the longer pattern. Progress feeling uneven doesn't mean it isn't happening.

Return to a few simple principles:

- Expect dips as part of the process
- Focus on small improvements rather than big jumps
- Balance time between practising and applying what you've learned
- Trust consistency, even when progress feels slow

These simple habits reduce frustration and make progress more sustainable.

Remember: progress isn't linear; it ebbs and flows.

That's exactly the way it's supposed to work.

Alan Wheeler: Stories From eBass+

Started bass at 50 and found his own way to learn



When Alan first picked up a bass guitar at the age of 50, something immediately felt different. A friend handed him the instrument during a visit to Oregon, and, unlike his earlier experiences trying to play guitar, the bass felt natural.

“I just found bass lines fascinating.”

There was one significant challenge: Alan is blind.

Like many mature beginners, his first reaction was uncertainty.

“How am I going to make this work if I can’t read music?”

What fascinated me about Alan’s story was how he adapted the learning process to fit the way he experienced the world. Instead of relying on TAB or notation, he worked through lessons using listening, repetition, physical shapes, and feel, replaying videos repeatedly, internalising patterns under his fingers through sound and movement.

Then something happened that genuinely staggered me. While learning fretboard shapes and scale patterns, Alan realised some of them resembled Braille letters.

“One shape looked exactly like a Braille Q,” he said.

I never imagined somebody would adapt eBassGuitar material in this way, building their own tactile understanding of the instrument. It completely changed how I thought about teaching bass online.

Progressively, Alan’s confidence grew alongside his playing.

“Hey... this is something I can really do.”

Today, bass gives him a deeper connection to music, creativity, and self-expression. He’s now writing music, experimenting with ideas, and making plans to record with the friend who first handed him that bass all those years ago.

You can watch the full interview and access the bonus resources using the QR code at the end of the book.



CHAPTER 11

How To Deal With Mistakes

The Reality Of Mistakes



One of the most important skills any musician can develop is recovering from mistakes. They happen to everyone, beginners and seasoned professionals alike.

My double bass coach at Hertfordshire County Youth Orchestra said that amateurs and professionals make the same number of mistakes; the difference is how quickly they recover from them. Experience teaches you to get back on the horse immediately.

If the difference between an amateur and a professional is simply how quickly they recover, it makes sense to discuss how to recover from mistakes more quickly. That's a more productive conversation than trying to avoid mistakes altogether because, frankly, the sooner we get comfortable with the fact that they're inevitable, the easier playing becomes.

What The Audience Actually Hears

I remember watching the bass player in a pub blues band getting flustered with the onboard tuner in my setup. We were sharing equipment, which is common when multiple bands are on the same bill.

In the stress and confusion of being on stage using unfamiliar equipment, he managed to tune one of his bass strings a half-step out. The band started the song, and he was clearly uncomfortable trying to figure out what on earth to do as the blues juggernaut motored forward.

I could empathise because it's happened to me too with an instrument that's been knocked out of tune. Do I stop playing, leaving the band without its bottom end? Do I keep going, hoping no one notices? Or do I try to re-fret the bass line under pressure? Making the best decision can be difficult, especially in a stressful and unfamiliar situation.

I could hear his problem immediately and felt just as uncomfortable, but my mum, a non-musician standing next to me, was none the wiser. She couldn't hear anything wrong.

I'd recently finished music college, and it was becoming apparent just how highly tuned my musical sensibilities had become. I learned something important that day: the public hears only a fraction of what musicians hear.

The more competent you become as a musician, the more you notice.

The Double-Edged Sword Of A Trained Ear

Refining your musical ear is a lifetime's work, and I'll always pursue developing this crucial musical skill. Being able to hear music in detail is joyful, but it can also be a curse.

Most musicians I know have high standards, and when you've made a mistake, the challenge becomes not taking the gig home with you or openly showing your frustration on stage. It's easy to feel exposed, as though everyone is watching and the world is about to swallow you up. Many of you have

seen Phil Collins play that obviously wrong note on the piano at Live Aid. His facial expression gave it away as much as anything.

With some instruments, mistakes are more exposed. With bass, they can be less obvious. Whether that's because of the nature of bass lines or the frequency range we work in, it's useful to remember that you hear your mistakes far more intensely than the audience does.

How Mistakes Show Up On Stage

The worst thing you can do is wear a mistake on your face or show it in your body language. Shaking your head, grimacing or throwing your hands up doesn't help the music; that just makes the mistake bigger, more obvious. An audience often won't notice a wrong note, but they will if you draw attention to it.

The audience is far more likely to notice a musician looking uncomfortable than one playing a few wrong notes. Early on, I was told to "Cheer up!" by a random audience member when, really, I was deep in concentration, and a deadpan face was the last thing I was thinking about.

Be aware of how you carry yourself on stage. You don't need dance moves like Travolta, but being aware of how you move to the music and how often you smile makes a big difference to how comfortable and confident you appear, especially to the audience.

How To Deal With Mistakes In The Moment

So what do you do when mistakes happen?

If the mistake is small, it's simple: keep going. Never stop; that only draws attention to it. If a bandmate notices a wrong note, make eye contact and smile. Those knowing looks across the stage can be fun. We all make innocent mistakes.

Keep your head up. Eye contact and visual cues from other musicians are often the quickest way to recover. The best players will always want to help.

Open your ears and really listen. The more aware you are of the musicians around you, the quicker you'll recover.

If the mistake is more significant, which also happens to all of us occasionally, address it directly with the musical director or the rest of the band after the show or during the interval. A quick, "Sorry about that. I'll take a look," is enough.

Take responsibility, but don't let it derail the performance or your evening. The worst thing you can do is turn inward and withdraw. That can destroy the energy of a band, both on and off stage. Once the mistake has happened, it's happened. The important thing is recovering from it positively.

The Trap Of Beating Yourself Up

I've been guilty of beating myself up after gigs, replaying mistakes in my head and retreating into self-punishment. It feels as though you're being responsible by hanging your head in shame, but it helps no one: self-flagellation is never attractive.

People want to work with musicians who bring positive energy to the gig. If you spiral inward, the atmosphere between the band members quickly changes.

A Real-World Example

Several shows into my first professional musical theatre production, *Saturday Night Fever* at London's Victoria Apollo Theatre, I developed a terrible headache during the show.

I knew the music well enough to play it, but battling through a pounding headache was difficult. I remember looking away from the music for a split second and then having no idea where I was when my eyes returned to the page. Worse still, another musical director was watching me with a view to hiring me for a tour of the same show.

The drummer spotted my blind panic as I looked around—a rabbit in headlights—and started shouting bar numbers at me. This probably lasted eight bars—perhaps ten or fifteen seconds—but it felt like an eternity. The drummer saved me. Fortunately, no one died.

I learned a huge lesson that day. Help people when they're struggling. Give them the information they need when they need it most. Not everyone does, but ever since then I've tried to bring that same supportive attitude to every band I've played with. I encourage you to do the same.

At the time, I was convinced I'd ruined the biggest opportunity of my career. Turns out that was all in my head: I ended up playing the show around 80 times over the following three months.

The Mindset Shift

Everything comes back to one thing: recovery.

Mistakes are natural, and yes, they'll throw you. Your job is to recover as quickly as possible. Pick up where you are. Look around. Listen. Use the support of the musicians around you. Good players will help you find your place, but if you're hanging your head in shame, you'll miss their cues.

It took me years to become comfortable with this, but it changed my approach completely. The quicker you can move past a mistake, the better the music will be, the better the band will feel, and the faster your own confidence will return.

Mistakes don't define you: how you deal with them is far more important.



CHAPTER 12

Performing With Confidence

Playing bass at home is one thing; playing in front of people is something else entirely. The nerves, the lights, the sound of your amp on stage... it can all feel a little intimidating at first.

Performance is where music really comes alive, where practice and preparation meet the energy of the moment. It's where the joy of making music is at its greatest. This chapter is about how to handle performing in real situations, both on and off stage, so you can experience and fully appreciate the magic of playing with others.

Let's start by talking about nerves.

The Internal Challenge (Why This Matters)

Performance Anxiety = Energy

It's normal to feel nervous before a gig; I often do. Anxiety and excitement are two sides of the same coin. If your heart is racing, it means you care. The trick is learning to channel that nervous energy. Instead of

letting it paralyse you, breathe, focus and turn it into concentration and a great groove.

People sometimes ask me when the nerves disappear. In my experience, they never disappear completely. Even now, before an important performance, I still feel them. The difference is that I've learned to recognise them, accept them and get on with the job. Confidence isn't the absence of nerves; it's trusting yourself despite them.

Early in my career, depping (or subbing) on West End shows was a considerable part of my work. You sit in, watch the show several times, observe the regular bassist, take the music and audio recordings home, and do your preparation. The first note you play live is the first note the audience and band hear. Playing your first show is a frightening experience, especially when you're surrounded by musicians who may have played it hundreds of times and know the score inside out. It was always a moment to prove what I was made of, to throw myself into the deep end and manage my nerves.

The skills from those tense professional moments are equally useful to a hobbyist feeling exposed by stage fright and asking, "*Do I really belong up here?*"

By the time you're standing on the side of the stage waiting to walk on, there's nothing more you can do to prepare. The hard work has already been done. That's the moment to stop analysing, trust your preparation and simply enjoy the experience. Take a slow, deep breath to centre yourself and calm your nervous system. Then walk on, play the first note and let the music take over.

Audiences aren't looking for perfection. They want entertainment from someone who looks like they belong on stage. If you can carry yourself with calm confidence, even when you're nervous, you'll help everyone around you feel more relaxed too.

Mistakes are part of live music. Everyone makes them. The important thing is not to dwell on them. A mistake is just a moment in time, while the performance continues. Acknowledge it, let it go and focus on the next note rather than the last one. More often than not, the audience won't even notice unless your reaction tells them something went wrong.

Nervousness should be there to fire you up, not stop you from walking on stage. If your nerves become so overwhelming that they're preventing you from performing, it's worth knowing that this isn't something you simply have to live with. There are highly effective therapies that can address the root cause of severe performance anxiety.

That's beyond the scope of this book, but if you're struggling to the point where performance no longer feels enjoyable, don't suffer in silence. Please reach out to me and my team, and we'll do our best to point you in the right direction.

How You Actually Operate Onstage & What Musical Directors Look For

I learned early on that 50% of the gig is what you play; the other 50% is *everything* else.

In April 2025, I joined a tour of Canada's East Coast with a tribute show called *The Celine Experience*. eBassGuitar had become my main focus, but the opportunity to get back to my roots and perform felt right. Over three weeks, we played twelve shows and travelled thousands of miles. The whole experience reminded me of valuable lessons I'd learned over the years.

Andy (the MD), Ray (guitarist) and Paul (drummer) had been around the block a hundred times and had been working together for a couple of years. I was the new guy stepping into an established environment. We stayed in the same hotels, travelled together, socialised and performed, but we didn't know each other particularly well.

Our time on stage was only a fraction of the whole trip. Charlie Watts' quote, "*It's five years of work and 20 years of hanging around*," is completely true. Even in a pub band playing once a month, the actual performance is only a small part of the day. It's important to know how to get on with people, both on and off stage.

I've worked with many musical directors and bandleaders over the years. They're not just listening to what you play; they're also noticing how you behave. Here are some of the things they're looking for.

Preparation – Do your homework. Turn up prepared, know the songs well and arrive on time. Arriving unprepared or late is disrespectful to everyone who's taken the time to learn the music and be on time. You never know what's going to happen at soundcheck. I've seen soundcheck take ten minutes one night and two hours the next because of an unforeseen technical issue. Give yourself plenty of time so you can deal with the unexpected without adding unnecessary stress. Rehearsals and soundchecks are for refining the performance, not learning the parts.

Attitude – Stay positive and flexible. People enjoy working with musicians who make the gig enjoyable both on and off stage.

Awareness – Keep your head up. Watch for cues and stay aware of the bigger picture. Musical directors value eye contact and musicians who communicate in the moment.

Consistency – Keep your playing steady and reliable. Solid outdoes flashy every time. Never show off unless you know you're going to pull it off.

Support – Your job is to make everyone else sound better and provide a solid musical foundation. If you want to be the centre of attention, bass may not be the instrument for you.

Flair – Bring something to the music. I advocate taking care of business and keeping bass lines simple, but musical directors also want to be inspired by creativity and ideas at the right moment.

There's always a risk of bassists overplaying. I've been there myself, trying to work out where the line is. If you're unsure, that's usually the moment to dial it back. Equally, if you genuinely feel the music calls for something more, take the opportunity and see what happens. We're human, and music is a chemistry of sound created in the moment. Interaction and spontaneity are what make live music exciting!

The Reality Of Gig Life

Alongside great moments comes the reality of gig life itself. Performing professionally, or even semi-professionally, isn't always glamorous. You never quite know what you're walking into. One night you might be on a big stage with all the trimmings; the next you're in the Dog and Duck. You might play a big-budget corporate event at a five-star hotel in London one night and be served the most unappetising stale sandwiches, then play a venue in the middle of nowhere the next night and be treated to a three-course meal with unlimited wine. It's all part of the unpredictable adventure.

Good bandleaders will always try their best to look after the musicians, but things don't always go to plan. At every level, things still go wrong. Being able to deal with that calmly is an important skill.

Staying Steady When Things Go Wrong

When things don't go to plan, it's easy to become frustrated, especially if you've travelled a long way or you're tired. Stay positive and make the best of the situation. Avoid being the person who pulls everyone else down.

I've seen it countless times. The solid player who's easy to work with gets booked ahead of the killer player who makes everyone uncomfortable or brings a bad vibe.

That doesn't mean standards don't matter; of course they do. But music is a people business. Travelling, waiting, setting up, eating, talking and solving problems take up far more time than performing. People remember how you made the whole experience feel, not just the hour or two you spent on stage. If a problem arises, more often than not it's best to deal with it after the gig in preparation for the next one. Once you're at the gig, there's often very little you can do about it.

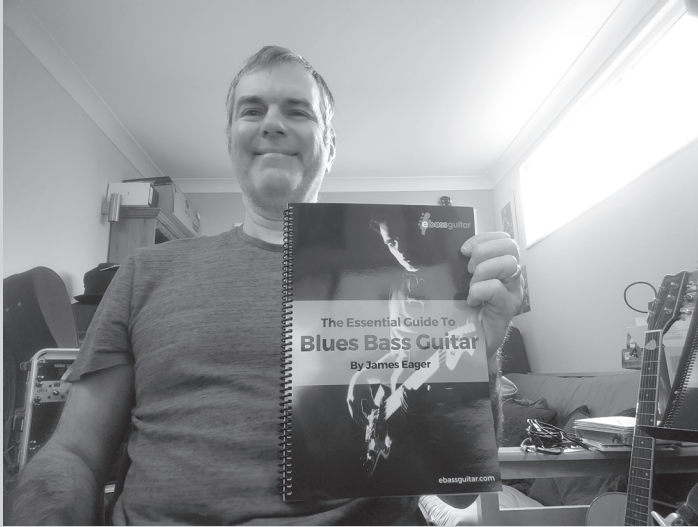
Final Thoughts

Good performance isn't just about playing well. It's about managing yourself, staying consistent under pressure and supporting the people around you. If you handle your nerves, recover well from mistakes and become someone people genuinely enjoy working with, you'll always put yourself in a strong position.

That said, performing live is one of the greatest joys of music. Sharing a moment with other musicians and feeling an audience respond—that's the magic for me.

Key Presnell: Stories From eBass+

From copying songs to understanding music



Kev was featured as an **eBass+** Legend after making huge progress over a short period.

Interestingly, he was already an experienced musician, having played guitar and bass for years, gigged in bands, and actively performed around the UK. But most of his playing had been learned through TAB, repetition, and copying songs from YouTube. He openly admitted he didn't know what an arpeggio was.

Despite years of playing, there were gaps in his understanding of how music worked. Gradually, though, that changed. Chord progressions, triads, walking bass lines, and fretboard knowledge all began connecting. And with that came freedom.

Instead of simply memorising bass parts, Kev understood why things worked. He began adding his own ideas into songs, changing bass lines naturally, and learning material much faster than before.

His bandmates noticed, too. He described getting positive sideways looks from the guitarist whenever he added a new run or fill.

I was genuinely surprised to hear Kev consider teaching. That had never really been part of his identity before. As his understanding grew, so did his confidence, to the point where he started helping younger players. Kev realised he had something valuable to pass on.

When somebody moves from simply copying music, to understanding it, to confidently explaining it to somebody else, something fundamental has shifted in how they see themselves as a musician.

You can watch the full interview and access the bonus resources using the QR code at the end of the book.



CHAPTER 13

Playing With Other Musicians

Since starting eBassGuitar in 2016, many unexpected realisations have caught me off guard. One was discovering just how many musicians I was helping whose main musical outlet was playing at church.

Every Sunday when I was growing up, I'd sing in the choir at my local church. Everything I experienced musically was choral music, hymns and psalms. Being a chorister gave me an amazing musical grounding, but it was beyond my awareness that a bass guitar could be used to worship God: anything with a groove simply wasn't the done thing. At 13, my voice broke, and I was done with church, having been there every Sunday for five years. I wonder whether my relationship with the Church would have been very different if, during those formative years, I'd been exposed to music that connected with me.

I've since learned that there are plenty of UK churches with a more contemporary approach to music, exploring rock, pop, soul and gospel. When you get to North America, where around 70% of eBassGuitar students are from, it's on a whole new scale. The opportunities to play bass with other musicians at church are significant and plentiful.

That's exciting because it creates another opportunity for eBassGuitar students to apply their knowledge, whether that's at church, in a covers band, a rehearsal group, a jam session or simply playing with friends at home.

What This Chapter Is About

Leaving the practice room can feel intimidating. If you're not ready for full gigs yet, don't worry. Playing with other people doesn't have to begin on stage. It might simply mean joining a community rehearsal band or making music with one other person at home.

Whatever playing situation you're joining, this chapter will give you practical ideas on how to prepare, how to conduct yourself and how to become someone other musicians enjoy playing with.

Why This Matters

I've noticed this is often the point where progress either accelerates or stalls. At 50+, this often shows up as hesitation. Many people feel they need to be completely ready before playing with others. I don't believe that's true.

Bass playing is a team activity. The practice room develops your skills, but playing with other musicians is where those skills begin to come alive. Timing, listening, awareness and confidence all develop in ways impossible to recreate on your own.

How To Prepare

Put the time in beforehand and build a repertoire of standard songs. Since I was 20, I've written out charts. I now have more than 750 in my folder, all scanned and stored on my iPad. I encourage you to do the same. You'll build a repertoire of songs that you can quickly draw upon without hours of preparation. The more music you already know, the more useful you'll become to other musicians.

Starting a new gig usually means learning a *lot* of music. Put the time in. Go deep. Don't hope. Don't blag. Preparation shows.

It might not pay off immediately, but people notice who has done their homework and who is winging it. Every style of music has its standards. I've played hundreds of weddings; the repertoire is remarkably similar wherever you are in the world. As the gigs build up, you may only need to learn one or two new songs each time. Your early effort pays dividends later.

If you're an eBassGuitar student, you can access my charts in The Bass Vault.

Rehearsals Are For Rehearsing

If you're rehearsing for a performance, this is the time to finesse the music. Sort out difficult passages, rehearse sections, discuss arrangements, develop ideas and play songs from beginning to end.

Never use rehearsal time to do the fundamental learning of a song. Unless you've all agreed otherwise beforehand, 90% of the preparation should already have been done at home. If three members of the band have prepared properly and one hasn't, frustration quickly follows. Most musicians see that as disrespectful.

If you're organising a gig yourself, only ask people to learn songs that you're genuinely planning to rehearse and perform.

Equipment Matters

Reliable equipment matters. Aim for a setup that's dependable, simple and quick to assemble. Take everything you need to be self-sufficient: extension leads, spare cables, strings, batteries and picks and, if required, a music stand. I keep another mains lead in the car as well.

I also recommend using a silent tuner. Listening to someone tune up between songs isn't generally regarded as very professional.

A well-prepared musician who never needs to borrow equipment is always easier to work with than someone who regularly forgets the essentials.

Understanding The Situation & Being Appropriate

I was at a New Year's Day jazz jam session in a pub about half an hour from where I lived. The house band supplied the backline. Although I wasn't the regular bass player, I took my own bass just in case. Most bassists are happy for you to use their amplifier, but good etiquette is to bring your own instrument and offer to use that instead. It also covers the possibility that the regular player turns up with something completely unsuitable... perhaps a bulky, left-handed, six-string fretless bass!

On this occasion, he had a five-string Yamaha, which worked perfectly.

The session worked exactly as you'd expect. Musicians sat in and out, called jazz standards, used *Real Books*, chord charts or *iReal Pro*, and simply made music together. It was collaborative, relaxed and enjoyable.

Halfway through the second set, a complete blues band arrived carrying another amplifier and a full pedalboard. They wanted to perform their own original material. I immediately noticed raised eyebrows around the room.

This jam wasn't about showcasing your own band. It was about creating music together with whoever happened to be there. They'd misunderstood the purpose of the session and, in doing so, irritated the other musicians.

Every jam has its own unwritten rules. The simplest solution is to observe for a while or ask the organiser, "How does this work?" You'll almost always get the guidance you need.

Being appropriate also means dressing appropriately. A black-tie function requires something very different from a country music bar. If you're unsure, don't guess. Ask, "What's the dress code?"

The same applies to equipment. Some gigs justify bringing an Ampeg SVT 8x10. Others don't. There are no fixed rules. For years I could do 90% of

my work with a four-string Sadowsky and a Markbass CMD121 combo because I wanted to minimise trips to and from the car, particularly in Central London. These days I'm more experimental and often take several basses and a pedalboard.

If you're unsure, ask questions such as, "How big is the venue?" or "What size amp do I need?"

Avoid Noodling

During rehearsals, and especially during gigs, avoid the temptation to noodle between songs—things are noisy enough already!

It's tempting to practise difficult passages while everyone else is talking, but I strongly advise against it. It distracts people and rarely creates a good impression.

Be Someone People Enjoy Working With

How you behave off stage is every bit as important as how you perform on it. The social side of being a musician matters.

Be friendly; someone people enjoy spending time with. The lift to the gig, dinner after soundcheck or a drink after the show are all part of the experience. Those moments build relationships, and strong relationships often lead to more opportunities.

Final Thoughts

Much of this chapter has been less about playing bass and more about becoming a musician. Preparation, awareness and understanding the situation you're stepping into all matter.

You don't need to be perfect before you start playing with other musicians. You need to be prepared, aware and willing to learn as you go. At 50+,

James Eager

you've already spent a lifetime reading situations, working with people and adapting to different environments. Playing with other musicians is simply another place to apply those skills.

Real progress often begins when you step beyond practising alone and start making music with other people. You don't need to feel ready before you start playing with others: playing with others is what helps you become ready.



CHAPTER 14

Reading Notation, Chord Charts & Tablature

After I finished music college in 2003, I landed a job teaching music at a summer camp in America. The only snag was that my band, *Metropolis*, was gaining momentum, and we already had gigs booked that needed covering. I asked my teacher, Paul Westwood, if he would dep for me. We had a great relationship, so thankfully he said, “Yes, just make sure I’ve got the pad for the gig.”

A “pad” is a reliable set of music or charts, allowing a player to perform a gig without spending hours learning every song in advance. It should be clear and easy to read, so an experienced musician can glance through it beforehand and confidently play the show from start to finish. I’d always written out my songs, so without thinking too much about it, I handed Paul my pad.

When I returned from America, I called to thank him and ask how the gigs had gone. I clearly remember him saying, “It was all fine, but what was that piece of TAB doing in the pad? I stood no chance!”

He was referring to the *solì* (the unison section) in Stevie Wonder's *Sir Duke*. I'd learned that section from the record using a TAB I'd found online. Then, I was still relatively inexperienced and had spent hours learning it. I simply glued the TAB onto my handwritten chart, reasoning that something was better than nothing. I also assumed every bass player would already know the part, so surely there was little point writing it out?

Looking back, giving a highly skilled professional musician a mixture of TAB and standard notation to sight-read on a gig was an embarrassing thing to do. That experience taught me an important lesson: different methods of writing music exist for different situations.

This chapter takes you through the strengths and limitations of the three most common methods: standard notation, chord charts and tablature (TAB). I'll also share the hybrid system I use most often.

You'll find examples of each by scanning the QR code at the end of this book.

Standard Notation

Standard notation is the traditional method of writing music. It contains the notes, rhythm, dynamics, articulation and phrasing needed to perform a piece accurately from beginning to end. Depending on the complexity of the music, experienced players can often sight-read it with little or no rehearsal.

You can think of standard notation as another language; it takes time to learn. Being dyslexic, it was years before I felt comfortable being handed a new chart and playing it from beginning to end without losing my place.

One challenge for bass players is that the same note can often be played in several different places on the neck. For example, the G in the top space of the bass clef can be played on the open G-string, the fifth fret of the D-string, the tenth fret of the A-string or the fifteenth fret of the E-string. The player has to choose the best position to play it on the fretboard. Choosing the best position depends on the sound you want, the most comfortable fingering and what comes before and after the note or phrase.

Music written in standard notation is designed to be read from beginning to end. Every bar is written out; repeated sections are clearly marked with instructions telling you where to go next. Being able to read notation has opened many doors for me, allowing me to step into interesting musical situations at short notice. It's also the format I choose whenever I'm writing a complete bass transcription, capturing every nuance of a player's performance.

Chord Charts

Chord charts are usually a single page containing the chord sequence written as letter names, such as C, **Am**, F, **G7**... They often include the structure of the song, along with basic rhythmic information, stops, cues and occasionally performance notes.

They're simple to use and easy to read on a gig, but they rely on the bass player having enough musical knowledge to create appropriate bass lines, grooves and fills. If you're new to bass, that can feel daunting because much of the detail is left for you to decide. Experienced players often love chord charts because they offer greater freedom.

For a basic rock or pop song with no iconic bass line, this is usually the format I choose.

Tablature (TAB)

TAB is a simple, linear way of showing music from left to right by indicating which fret to play on each string. When written well, it naturally guides you towards the most practical note location on the fretboard, making it an excellent tool for learning bass lines by rote.

The biggest limitation is that most TAB contains little or no rhythmic information: all you see are fret numbers. To understand the rhythm, you usually need another source, such as the original recording. That makes TAB difficult to sight-read or interpret instantly.

Despite this drawback, TAB certainly has its place, particularly when learning a bass line or illustrating a specific technique. I often compare it to painting by numbers. You may produce a good result, but you haven't necessarily developed the skills to create the picture yourself.

There are countless sources of TAB online, although the quality varies enormously. I'll compare several versions before deciding which is closest to the original recording.

I'm certainly not anti-TAB. I regularly use it to double-check something I've learned by ear, and I don't have a snobbish attachment to the "proper" way of doing things. That's why my books include both notation and TAB, making everything I produce as accessible as possible. Combining notation, TAB and chord symbols gives students the best chance of learning the music.

Hybrid Charts

The system I use most often is a hybrid of standard notation and chord charts. Typically, it fits onto two pages of A4 or a single sheet of A3 paper. I've even created my own manuscript paper with four bars per line, available through the QR code at the end of this book.

I write out any important bass lines in standard notation, often the intro, first verse, pre-chorus and first chorus. Repeated sections are then referenced by name rather than written out again. This gives me the detail I need without creating pages of unnecessary notation. It's the format I generally choose when learning songs with bass lines that need to be played accurately.

Choosing Your Format

Each of these methods has strengths and weaknesses. The important thing is knowing which one best suits the situation. As my *Sir Duke* story illustrates, the wrong format can make life much harder than it needs to be.

It's also worth thinking about where you want your musical journey to take you. I always wanted to play with as many musicians, in as many styles,

as possible, and ultimately become a 'session musician'. For that goal, learning to read standard notation made complete sense.

If you aim to play in a cover band, learn songs at home and enjoy making music with friends, you may decide that chord charts and TAB give you everything you need. Neither approach is right or wrong; choose the tools that best support the kind of bass player you want to become.



CHAPTER 15

The Different Levels Of Sight-Reading & Preparation

London, 2005. As a young bassist, hungry and determined to make music my life, I said yes to almost everything. One August day, I got a phone call:

“Andy here. I’m a musical contractor. Phil (Mulford) from *Saturday Night Fever* gave me your name. The show tours next month. Are you interested?”

I’d had calls like this before; they’d never gone anywhere. There are usually multiple names in the mix, often more experienced players, so it’s best not to expect too much. I said yes.

I’d had lessons with Phil, a top-flight bassist, who was the current bass player on the West End production of *Saturday Night Fever*. I was flattered that he’d mentioned me.

Later, chatting to Phil, I thanked him for recommending me. He said, “Andy wants you to come in and dep on *Saturday Night Fever* in town for me. My wife’s having a baby soon, so I’ll need time off. Are you okay with learning the show?”

Depping on the West End production was clearly my audition for the tour. Without hesitation, I picked up the sheet music and CDs and started preparing. A Bee Gees groove show was right up my street. I got learning straight away and was put on standby, waiting for Phil's baby to be born.

Days went by with no news. Eventually, Phil messaged to say his wife was in labour. He told me I'd need to wait because too many deps were already covering shows. "This never happens," he said. "I need to get Steve (Pearce, a first-call session player who's worked with everyone from Van Morrison to Tom Jones) to do tonight."

I realised I was entering a different world of *serious* musicians. *Saturday Night Fever* went on to open the door to many West End and touring productions.

Many students ask me the same question: "Don't you need to be a great sight-reader to work in the West End?" My answer is: no. Playing a West End show is far more about preparation than sight-reading. By the time you perform, the score has become an aide-mémoire rather than something you're reading for the first time.

In my experience, there are four different levels of reading music and preparation, each requiring a different approach:

Level 1 – Pure Sight-Reading

This is where you walk into a gig and read the music for the first time. You might get thirty seconds before the tune starts to scan the difficult sections, then you're off.

The notation is usually written within the normal limits of what a competent bass player can sight-read. Early in my career, I assumed I had to be able to read absolutely anything. That isn't how most professional situations work. I regularly play with a rehearsal big band, a 17-piece jazz orchestra, where random bass charts are put in front of me every week. It keeps those reading muscles sharp. The best way I know to maintain that skill is simply to keep playing with other musicians.

Level 2 – Sight-Reading With Basic Preparation

This is where you're sent the music beforehand or have a rehearsal to look at the difficult corners. Your preparation is spent getting the tricky passages under your fingers, while the more straightforward sections are read during the performance.

Level 3 – Fully-Prepared Reading

This includes West End shows. You receive the notation and recordings well in advance, so you know exactly how the music sounds. You prepare every bar, every key change and every page turn. Nothing should come as a surprise.

On a West End show, there's no rehearsal and no warm-up. The musical director gives a count-in, and you're away. The first few performances still involve reading, but because you've prepared so thoroughly, very little catches you off guard. If something unexpected does happen, you've already built enough muscle memory to keep going.

Level 4 – The Notation Becomes A Prompt

Eventually, there comes a point where the chart becomes little more than a prompt. You know the music: you're relaxed, no longer reading every note, simply playing.

There is one warning, though. When I interviewed Leland Sklar, he said: *"Charts are like heroin; hard to get off."*

There comes a point where charts can become a crutch, and playing without them starts to create anxiety. Steve, the regular bass player on *The Lion King* in the West End, had memorised the entire show after about a year, learning one tune each night over several weeks. That gave him another level of freedom within the music.

For many gigs, I haven't played enough performances for that to happen naturally. If your goal is to memorise a piece, it can sometimes be better to learn it by ear before writing anything down. Once you've become dependent on the page, it can be surprisingly difficult to let it go.

Why This Matters To You

Each of these four levels requires a different amount of preparation. Some gigs are forgiving; a few mistakes won't matter too much.

Others—at all levels—demand much higher standards. I've played pub gigs with incredibly high expectations. One bandleader once said to me, "It may be a pub gig in High Wycombe, but don't take the gig if you're going to show up unprepared. It's rubbish otherwise." She cared about the music being good. Equally, I've been in plenty of situations where musicians have been put together with little or no preparation, with everyone simply hoping for the best. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't.

You may never play in the West End, but you'll still find yourself in situations where preparation matters. The real question isn't, "Can I sight-read?", it's "Can I prepare well enough that, when the moment comes, I feel calm and confident?"

Reading and memory are both useful tools, but preparation sits between them. Knowing how to prepare, what to expect and how much detail the situation requires is what really matters. The better you prepare, the less you need to rely on the page.

Wendell Goff: Stories From eBass+

Featured as one of our eBass+ Legends

Inside eBass+, we've run various community initiatives to recognise members whose progress, attitude, or contribution really stood out.

Wendell had been involved with music for most of his life. He played guitar growing up, sang, wrote songs with his dad, and always had a deep connection to music. After suffering scarlet fever as a child, he gradually lost his hearing. By his early 20s, he was almost completely deaf.

Years later, bass became the instrument that pulled him back in. How he adapted everything fascinated me.

He described using a combination of memory, theory, timing, feel, vibration, and hearing implants to process music. Simpler guitar-driven music made more sense to him, while heavily produced music could sometimes sound like "traffic noise".

Learning songs, he focused intensely on rhythm and structure:

"I have to listen for the kick and snare, feel the song, and build the music theoretically in my head."



He never wanted sympathy or lowered expectations. He wanted to be treated like every other bass player and judged on the quality of his playing. Honestly, when I first watched one of his eBass+ performances, I had absolutely no idea he was deaf.

He summed it all up simply:

“It’s my identity.”

Without drama, bass had become part of who he was.

You can watch the full interview and access the bonus resources using the QR code at the end of the book.

PART IV

LEARNING LATER
IN LIFE



CHAPTER 16

Becoming A Bass Player

Writing this book, I realised eBassGuitar isn't a book company, a video course company or an e-commerce website. eBassGuitar is a people business. The people make our community, courses and products what they are.

I've met incredible people over the years who've said things that have made me stop and think. Like Chuck, a retired scriptwriter from the west coast of Canada, I'd worked with for several years and had got to know well. One afternoon—very early morning for Chuck—he said something profound:

"I feel like a bass player. Bass is what I do now."

He wasn't talking about what he could play. He was talking about *who* he had become.

I was delighted because something had shifted inside him. I wondered what had changed. Had someone given him permission to feel that way? Had he now clocked enough musical miles to say it out loud?

It made me think about identity. At what point do you go from playing bass to being a bass player? Chuck had moved from being a scriptwriter to being a bass player: *"This is what I do now."*

More recently, my six-year-old son told someone he played the drums because he'd been given a toy drum kit. Children don't worry about the validity of being something; they simply decide that's what they are. As adults, the gap between starting something and becoming something often becomes much longer. We're frequently waiting for permission, approval or proof before we're willing to call ourselves something new.

There wasn't a specific moment when I suddenly felt like a bass player. It crept up on me over time. In some respects, I didn't feel truly confident until my late 20s, after a lot of gigs and plenty of real musical miles. Even then, that confidence was relative to what I wanted from the instrument and who I wanted to become in the industry.

Looking back, I could have chosen that identity much earlier. That's what no one tells you. Being a bass player isn't something somebody else grants you; you choose it. You decide, "This is what I do. This is part of who I am."

I also realised that peer respect mattered to me. I thought a real bass player was someone who had every skill nailed, stayed confident under pressure, had years of experience, was respected by other musicians and whose phone never stopped ringing. Musicians in the UK aren't particularly generous with compliments; you can play well and hear nothing back. If your identity depends on external validation, you may spend years waiting for it. I was chasing approval more than I realised, wanting to feel legitimate, as if I belonged. That's perfectly normal, but it can slow your progress if it becomes your only source of confidence.

The real shift happens internally. You stop waiting for someone else to tell you that you belong. You decide that you belong.

Becoming a bass player doesn't require virtuosity. Some basic skills under your belt certainly help, but more than anything it requires commitment; a willingness to make the instrument part of your life. There will always be players who are better than you and players who are less experienced than you; neither changes your identity. You choose when you become a bass player, and it's often much sooner than you think.

I've also noticed that bass players tend to share certain character traits. Every instrument seems to attract different personalities. Within *Metropolis*

(the party band I ran for many years), the differences are obvious. Nick is a wonderful frontman who loves entertaining and being the centre of attention. That's exactly why he's so good at that role. Toby, our drummer, has a quiet confidence. He leads from the back, takes no nonsense and knows how to make the rest of the band feel good. I can't imagine either of them changing roles.

The same traits often carry across from everyday life into music. Here are some of those characteristics that I've noticed in bass players:

Dependability

If you're dependable in business or family life, you'll probably be dependable on bass. You'll turn up prepared, do what you said you'd do, and give other musicians confidence that they know what to expect from you.

Humility

Humility shows up in preparation: doing your homework, respecting the music, valuing the people around you and turning up knowing the songs. It means not blagging your way through or hiding behind arrogance.

Confidence

Confidence in a bass player isn't loud or showy. It's an understated certainty. You know you'll get from A to B. You know the groove. You know the feel. You might add a fill when the music calls for it, but your main job is making everyone else sound better.

Music college was competitive—sometimes uncomfortably so—and forced me to step up to a high level. I'm grateful for the skills those years brought. It taught me where my level was, but I've also observed that, at every level of playing, the bassists people trust are usually the ones who are

focused, steady and reliable. The shared character traits of bass players are uncanny sometimes.

If you don't yet feel like a bass player, I'd gently suggest that it's your decision when that becomes true. Get some fundamentals under your belt. Spend time with the instrument and play with other musicians as soon as you can. The identity shift often happens sooner than you think. Fundamentally, you choose.

Over the years, I've noticed that this shift in identity happens surprisingly often with adult learners. It made me curious why some teaching approaches seem to unlock that change so consistently. That question eventually led me to Malcolm Knowles and adult learning theory, which we'll explore in the next chapter.

Chuck Lazer: Stories From eBass+

Started bass at 65; still playing at 80



Chuck spent much of his working life as a television producer and writer in Canada. When work slowed later in life, he found himself with more time and a simple question: “What do I want to do next?”

The answer was bass guitar. He’d always loved the sound of the instrument. He had played some guitar years earlier, but the bass felt more connected to the foundations of music itself.

“It strips music down to chord structure and rhythm,” he told me. “And who needs anything more than that?”

Starting at 65, he approached learning seriously. He worked with teachers and practised consistently, building confidence steadily.

While learning the Miles Davis tune *So What*, Chuck’s teacher suggested increasing the tempo by just one or two bpm each day. Shortly after, he was playing the tune at full performance tempo. It reinforced something he already understood from life and work:

small, structured improvements compound over time. However, he still hesitated to think of himself as a musician.

Then came the gigs. Small local performances gradually shifted to something deeper. After one successful show, Chuck realised: “This is what I do now.”

Later, he sent me a message saying, “I identify as a musician now.”

Many mature beginners experience that same shift: the instrument stops being something you practise and becomes part of your identity.

At 80, Chuck is still playing, learning, and building his life around music and community.

You can watch the full interview and access the bonus resources using the QR code at the end of the book.



CHAPTER 17

Teaching Adults Over 50

When I started teaching online, something quickly became clear: the students who resonated with my approach weren't teenagers. Unintentionally, we'd built an environment that suited mature adults. After a conversation with Dr Elio Spinello, an eBassGuitar student and Professor of Adult Learning Theory, I understood why.

He introduced me to the work of Malcolm Knowles, who spent decades studying how adults learn and why many traditional education models begin to fall apart once people leave school. As Elio explained Knowles' ideas, it felt like someone was describing eBassGuitar back to me.

These ideas don't describe every adult exactly; people are different. But clear patterns appear when adults learn music, and one of the strongest examples is the music they naturally connect with.

Why The Music Of The 1960s To 1980s Still Matters

The music that shaped the modern electric bass came out of the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s: Motown, funk, disco, classic rock and jazz

fusion. This was the golden age of the instrument, when its musical and technological innovations were at their most significant.

They're also the decades that shaped the lives of many of today's over-50 bass players. They grew up with Paul McCartney, James Jamerson, John Deacon, Bernard Edwards and Donald "Duck" Dunn coming through the radio and their turntables. Those sounds are etched into memory. Hearing those songs again, the desire to play them runs deep.

Teaching mature students goes beyond teaching notes. They learn best when the material connects to something they already know and care about. When I build a lesson around *Soul Man*, I'm not just teaching a bass line. I'm teaching nostalgia, memories and history wrapped together. That emotional connection matters.

Structure matters just as much. Adults want clarity, direction and practical application.

Practical Application

The Framework: What, Why, How, What If?

As a student, I was often told, "Just do this," with little explanation of how it related to real music. I found many method books dull and uninspiring, full of endless exercises with little obvious connection to the music I loved. It wasn't until music college that I truly appreciated their value. They unquestionably have their place, but if a teacher doesn't explain why they matter, an important part of the learning process is often missing.

I discovered that adults don't learn well that way. They want context: to understand why something matters and how it applies. Children are often happy to follow instructions without understanding the reason; adults rarely are.

That's why I use a simple framework in every lesson:

What – The concept or exercise itself, "Today we're working on root and fifth patterns."

Why – The reason behind it, “Roots and 5ths are the backbone of thousands of songs.”

How – The step-by-step breakdown, “Here’s the fingering and how to use it in context.”

What If – What if I can’t play it? What if I want to take it further? “Here’s what to do if you’re struggling,” or, “Here’s the next step if you’re ready.”

That structure helps learning stick. Adults appreciate knowing the purpose behind what they’re doing. The same framework runs through this book: every chapter has a clear point, and everything connects.

Understanding The Adult Learner

Adults approach learning differently. They’re rarely chasing virtuosity. More often, they’re looking for fulfilment, community and confidence. Nostalgia and the opportunity to pick up where they left off years ago are often powerful motivators as well.

They also arrive with doubts: *Am I too old? Is it too late? Will my hands cope?*

My answer is always the same: it’s never too late!

Bass is one of the most forgiving instruments to learn. With the right guidance, people can experience meaningful progress quickly. That’s why I design courses so that Level 1 is achievable from day one. Everyone deserves to experience the joy of making music, regardless of where they’re starting.

Why Teaching Over-50s Is So Rewarding

Working with older students has reshaped the way I think about teaching. It’s never just about scales or theory. It’s about helping people develop the confidence to pursue a musical dream they’ve often carried for decades.

I've seen the social and therapeutic side of bass playing change lives across the world. The music begins with notes on a page, but the impact goes far beyond.

Looking back, I realise I wasn't simply teaching bass; I was discovering how adults learn. Much of what became eBassGuitar developed naturally through trial, error and listening to students. Later, I saw that many of the patterns I'd observed had already been identified by Malcolm Knowles in various papers on *Assumptions About Adult Learners*. Understanding those ideas changed the way I thought about teaching. More importantly, they'll help you understand why learning bass as an adult doesn't need to feel like going back to school. It can be practical, enjoyable and built around the way adults naturally learn.



CHAPTER 18

What Adult Learning Theory Taught Me

After my conversation with Elio, I read more of Malcolm Knowles' work on adult learning. The more I read, the more I realised these weren't abstract educational theories; they explained why thousands of adult bass players had responded so positively to the approach we'd developed at eBassGuitar.

Knowles identified six assumptions about adult learners. They don't describe every individual perfectly, but they've helped me understand why certain teaching approaches work so well with mature students. Here they are:

1. Adults Need To Know Why They're Learning Something

Children often learn because they're told to. Adults usually want a reason. They want to understand how what they're learning will help them today, not at some vague point in the future. This is where music lessons can lose adults very quickly: theory is taught in isolation, exercises feel

disconnected from real music, and scales appear with no explanation of why they matter.

At eBassGuitar, every idea has a purpose. If you learn a scale, you hear how it sounds. If you learn a pattern, you use it to build a groove. If you explore harmony, it appears inside a real song. When the reason is clear, the motivation follows.

2. Adults Become More Self-Directed

Growing older, we naturally want more ownership over how we learn. We appreciate guidance, but also value the freedom to explore and discover things for ourselves.

That shows up clearly in music. Some people learn through repetition, others through experimentation. Some want to apply ideas immediately to songs they already know and love.

That's why flexibility matters. Backing tracks, loops and creative exercises give people room to explore music in their own way. Some learners prefer structure, others more freedom: both approaches can work.

3. Adults Bring A Lifetime Of Experience

An adult learner never starts from zero. Even if you've never picked up a bass before, you arrive with decades of experience from work, family, teamwork, problem-solving, success and failure.

Many people also bring fragments of previous musical experience. Perhaps you learned a few guitar chords years ago, sang in a choir, played another instrument, or simply developed a good ear by listening to music throughout your life. Good teaching builds on what's already there instead of assuming everyone starts from the same place.

4. Adults Learn What Feels Relevant

As adults, we're usually more selective about how we spend our time. We naturally invest our energy in things that feel relevant to our lives.

That's one reason so many mature bass players enjoy learning songs from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Those songs aren't just great music; they're part of people's lives, carrying memories, emotions and personal history. That connection makes learning more meaningful.

When learning feels relevant, it lasts longer.

5. Adults Want Learning To Solve Real Problems

Adults tend to be practical. They like learning that helps them do something. Learning triads as abstract shapes can feel disconnected; using triads to build a bass line over a chord progression immediately makes sense.

The same is true throughout music. Theory becomes valuable when it helps you create music. That's why applying ideas to real songs is so important. The connection between knowledge and music keeps people engaged.

6. Adults Are Motivated From Within

Adults rarely learn because someone tells them they should; they learn because something matters to them.

That motivation grows through small wins: playing a recognisable bass line, locking into a groove, hearing steady improvement and enjoying the process. Enjoyment keeps motivation alive. Pressure and comparison usually have the opposite effect.

Beyond The Theory

Beyond these six assumptions, I've noticed other patterns over the years.

Many adults learn better when there's a social element. Seeing people at different stages, sharing progress, and giving and receiving feedback reduce isolation and remind us that struggling is a normal part of learning.

Clear points of completion matter too. Finishing a song, recording yourself, sharing your playing or completing a challenge often feels more rewarding than endlessly refining the same exercise.

Learning also accelerates when it connects to real musical situations. Playing with other musicians, attending a jam session or performing in front of people teaches lessons that simply can't be recreated alone. Those experiences turn practice into music.

Looking back at how eBassGuitar developed, these ideas explain a great deal: the clarity, structure, focus on application, supportive environment and emphasis on real music. Initially, much of this happened by accident. By observing how I learned, where I struggled and how thousands of students responded, the pattern gradually became clear.

If learning music as an adult has felt difficult in the past, the chances are you weren't the problem. You may simply have been taught in a way that didn't fit the way adults learn. When the learning environment fits the learner, progress feels steadier, confidence grows and making music becomes enjoyable again. That's exactly what I've tried to build at eBassGuitar.



CHAPTER 19

Common Myths About Learning Bass Later In Life



Over the years, I've watched thousands of musicians develop, and noticed three things time and again:

- Where someone starts is never where they finish
- Progress is never linear
- Where natural ability runs out, perseverance takes over

Steve was a student I taught from the age of 15, when I was in my mid-twenties. He was shy, introverted and seemed to lack confidence. I could tell he cared deeply about the bass and wanted to do something with it, but something was taking time to click. At the time, I had doubts about whether a music career would be sustainable for him.

I immediately connected with Steve. During one lesson, I noticed he was struggling to process the music on the page and get his hands to respond. I instantly recognised myself in his situation. I spoke to his mum, wondering if

Steve might be dyslexic. She was open to the idea, but the conversation didn't go much further.

When Steve left school, we stopped working together. Six years later, he got back in touch and asked for another lesson. I was surprised to hear from him. I wasn't surprised he was still playing.

He said, "You were right. I'm dyslexic. You spotted it when no one else did."

He'd gone to university and found many things harder than expected. He remembered what I'd said, decided to get tested, and things finally made sense. He received the support he needed and began reaching his potential.

After university, he went deeper into playing, attending a London bass school. Today, he works in music and plays in bands.

I'd doubted Steve because I hadn't had enough experience to recognise what time and perseverance could achieve. I believe natural ability exists; I've seen it. But I've also seen the point where natural ability stops, and perseverance takes over. I've watched obviously talented players fall by the wayside, while determined players put their heads down and do the work. I've seen people struggle in their 20s and become solid professionals in their 30s because they simply kept going.

At eBassGuitar, we help students find their way around obstacles. I recently released a video about my own experience with dyslexia (I'll put the video in the bonus resources). I still find it astonishing that a kid who barely passed English at school has now published seven books—and you're reading the eighth! What struck me most were the number of older musicians who commented, saying they'd discovered they were dyslexic later in life too.

If you've hit obstacles, it's natural for doubts to follow. Picking up the bass later at 50+ often brings those doubts back to the surface; many begin in childhood and feel completely true. Often, though, they're simply stories we've carried with us for decades: a teacher's comment, comparing ourselves with others, an embarrassing experience, or believing we "*weren't musical*" can stay with us far longer than we realise.

Here are some of the most common myths I've heard from students over the years. I've experienced a few of them myself. See if any resonate with you.

“It’s Too Late”

I hear this often. The idea that learning an instrument is only for young people runs deep. Many of us grew up believing that once adulthood arrived, creativity took a back seat to work, family and responsibility. Music became something we *used* to do.

We’ve already discussed the cognitive benefits of playing music later in life. Beyond that, what matters is what music adds to your life today. I’ve seen people start from scratch in their 70s, form bands after retirement, play with friends and enjoy playing songs they never imagined they’d be able to.

As I’m writing this, a 77-year-old has just signed up to work one-to-one with our VIP coaches. He’s not trying to prove anything. He simply wants to become a better bass player, bring joy to his life and enjoy the process of learning. It’s never too late.

“I’m Not Talented Enough”

Talent gets romanticised; I’ve never found it to be the deciding factor.

Most working bass players aren’t prodigies. They’ve simply put in consistent hours over a long period of time. Bass playing revolves around patterns and structures. With clear frameworks and steady practice, progress builds naturally: remember the 20-5-1 Rule from earlier? What looks like talent from the outside is often confidence built through repetition, experience and consistent effort. If you’re prepared to do the work, you’ll reap the rewards.

Talent fades fast; perseverance doesn’t.

“I Don’t Have Time”

Life gets busy. Work, family and everyday responsibilities compete for attention. Many people assume learning an instrument requires huge, uninterrupted blocks of time, so they abandon the idea before they’ve even started.

Perfect conditions rarely arrive. That's why the 20-5-1 Rule works so well. Make bass part of your daily routine.

“My Hands Are Too Small, Weak, Or Old”

This is another very common fear. The bass can look physically intimidating. Long necks, thick strings and wide stretches make it easy to assume your hands aren't built for it.

Fortunately, bass adapts remarkably well. Short-scale instruments, lighter strings, a good setup, relaxed technique and sensible positioning all make a huge difference. Comfort matters far more than forcing your way through pain or tension.

My team and I regularly work alongside students with arthritis, old injuries, mobility issues and other physical limitations, helping them find individual approaches that work. I've taught people with small hands and many other physical challenges to become capable, musical bass players.

Good technique matters far more than hand size or brute strength.

“I'll Embarrass Myself”

For many adults, this fear goes far beyond music.

They're not really afraid of the bass. They're afraid of looking foolish, making mistakes in front of other people or feeling exposed while learning something new later in life. Some worry they don't belong on stage in the first place.

The truth is that learning an instrument involves mistakes, awkward moments and periods where everything feels unfamiliar. Every musician you admire has been through that process. Audiences are far less critical than we imagine, and musicians are usually too focused on their own playing to spend time judging yours.

In the right environment, mistakes stop feeling like failure and become part of learning. That's one of the reasons eBassGuitar exists as a supportive

place where people can experiment, learn and belong without unnecessary pressure.

The willingness to become a beginner again later in life isn't a weakness; it's a sign of confidence.

“They’re Better Than Me”

Walking into a room full of stronger musicians can feel intimidating. You instantly compare yourself and notice everything they can do that you can't. But playing with musicians who are better than you is one of the fastest ways to improve. It sharpens your listening, timing, concentration and awareness in ways practising alone rarely can.

The biggest leaps in my own playing came from situations where I felt uncomfortable or underqualified. Playing with formidable musicians forced me to prepare better, listen harder and rise to the level around me.

Good musicians respect groundwork, attitude, listening and reliability. Turn up prepared, contribute to the music and you'll learn far more than you realise.

“My Memory Fades Faster”

Many people notice they don't remember things as easily as they once did. At eBassGuitar, it's one of the most common frustrations we hear. That doesn't mean you can't learn successfully later in life. Adults learn differently, not worse.

The answer isn't to rely on memory alone. It's to revisit ideas regularly and keep the bass in your hands. Repetition, consistency and understanding gradually replace the need to memorise everything instantly. Gradually, patterns stick, muscle memory develops, and what once felt unfamiliar feels natural.

Where This Leaves You

Many of the limitations adults carry into music have very little to do with the bass itself. They're old stories people have repeated to themselves for years: *"I'm not musical," "I've missed my chance," "I'm too old," "I don't learn like other people."*

I've watched countless students prove those stories wrong. Not overnight, not without effort, but through consistency, patience and refusing to give up.

Older beginners bring enormous advantages with them: perspective, discipline, emotional maturity and a clearer sense of why they're doing this in the first place. The rock-star fantasy has usually faded, leaving something much healthier underneath: a genuine love of music and a desire to enjoy the learning process. That's a far stronger foundation for long-term progress.

If you're doubting yourself, you're not alone: everyone starting later in life feels that way at some point. You don't need fabled talent to become a capable, musical bass player. You simply need time, consistency and the willingness to keep going.



CHAPTER 20

Looking After Your Body

Throughout this book, I've spoken candidly about the challenges I've faced in becoming a bass player. Everyone has their own set of challenges.

There's one area where I've been fortunate: my body has been relatively bulletproof. Twenty-five years in, I have very few war wounds compared to many musicians, and I'm grateful for that. After my first proper hearing test, I was surprised at how little hearing loss I'd suffered, considering the number of drummers I've stood beside for hours on end. The worst issue I've experienced was some sciatica in my 20s and 30s.

In my mid-40s, I'm more aware of aches and stiffness. I know I'm not the most flexible person in the room, so I try to do yoga each week and have a massage every few weeks. But life gets busy, and preventative work often slips down the list.

So maybe I'm not the obvious person to write a chapter about physical struggles. But I do have the benefit of spending my life around musicians who *have* been through the wars.

Working on *The Lion King* in London, Steve had his electric double bass mounted on a wheeled frame because of a shoulder injury, adapting his setup

so he could keep working. A percussionist friend, Matt, stopped lifting his arms above shoulder height for a month—even to make a coffee—to let his shoulders recover from years of work. Sian, an eBassGuitar VIP coach, underwent surgery to address long-term tendonitis in her elbow and now helps students adapt their bass playing based on her own experience... Injuries are common.

At 50+, many of us are carrying a lifetime of small injuries, tightness or general wear and tear. Theoretically, there's an optimal bass technique, but in practice there's always adaptation. The online world can become an echo chamber when discussing technique, with polarised opinions and strong views about the "right" way to play. While I'm fortunate that most traditional ideas of good technique still work well for me, I'm open to different ways of achieving the same result because we're all built differently.

Technique is not absolute. Django Reinhardt lost several fingers in a fire and became one of the most influential gypsy jazz guitarists in history. Rick Allen, Def Leppard's drummer, lost an arm in an accident and reconfigured his drum kit so he could continue playing. His bandmates even felt his groove improved.

One of the finest bass players I ever sat next to in London had an unorthodox technique. By traditional standards, it shouldn't have worked... but it sounded incredible, and it was obvious why he'd sustained a 40-year career at the top of his profession.

The point isn't to glorify adversity. It's to acknowledge that adaptation is sometimes necessary and that there's often more than one way to achieve the same musical result.

Listen To Your Body

The greatest lesson I've learned, both in my own playing and from working with mature students, is simple: listen to your body.

At 20, you can often get away with poor habits. At 50 or 60, those same habits have a way of catching up with you. Fortunately, a few sensible adjustments can help make bass something you continue to enjoy for decades.

Start with awareness. Notice how you feel while you're playing. Are your shoulders creeping upwards? Are your wrists bent at awkward angles? Are you gripping too hard when playing something quicker or more technical? Does tension build in your neck, hands or lower back?

The goal is relaxation and efficiency. If you're straining to execute a line, you're probably using more effort than necessary. Tension affects your timing, tone, endurance and overall comfort. One of the major improvements you can make is to use less pressure. Fret lightly. Pluck lightly. Let the amplifier do more of the work.

If you're struggling to hear the instrument properly, there's a good chance you'll start overplaying without even realising it. Whenever possible, practise through an amplifier or a good pair of headphones.

If you feel tension building, stop for a moment. Reset your posture. Relax your shoulders. Take a breath. Small resets during practice sessions can prevent bigger problems later.

If discomfort persists, seek proper professional advice. A doctor, osteopath, physiotherapist or chiropractor who understands musicians can make an enormous difference. Sometimes a small adjustment to your posture or a targeted exercise is all that's needed, but it's important to get the right guidance rather than trying to push through pain.

Posture

Posture underpins everything.

When standing, try to keep your shoulders relaxed and position the bass so your fretting hand isn't constantly overreaching or collapsing at the wrist. Generally, straighter wrists place less strain on the hands and forearms.

Strap position matters too. If the bass hangs too low, it can create unnecessary tension through the wrists, shoulders and upper back. The goal is to position the bass so your hands fall into a natural, relaxed playing position.

When sitting, sit slightly forward with your back upright and your feet flat on the floor, keeping your legs roughly at right angles. Rest the bass on either leg to see which feels most natural; some players prefer using a small footstool, like classical guitarists. Most importantly, find a position where the bass feels stable, and your body feels balanced.

Many players unconsciously hunch over the instrument while practising, creating a surprising amount of tension through their neck, shoulders and upper back. The best posture is one that allows you to forget your body, allowing focus on the music.

Professional Support

Think of your body as an extension of your instrument—one that also needs maintenance and care.

I've had medics and fellow musicians point out small changes that helped immediately. Sometimes it's as simple as not hunching your shoulders, standing straighter, releasing unnecessary facial tension or distributing your weight more evenly when standing.

In 2019, I wrote *The Essential Guide To Technique For Bass Guitar*, which includes a full chapter on arthritis, injuries and considerations for older bass players. That material is still relevant today. This section is intended as an overview rather than detailed medical guidance. If you'd like to explore the subject in more depth, including technique adjustments and practical strategies for mature bass players, I'd encourage you to read *The Essential Guide To Technique For Bass Guitar*.

Not being a medical professional myself, I once again turned to a good friend of mine: Anthony “Will” Williams, a British osteopath, educator and musician with over 25 years' experience treating musicians and working in this field. He says many musicians receive excellent technical instruction but very little education about the physical demands playing places on the body.

Some of the more common issues musicians experience include:

Muscle & Ligament Injuries

- Over-practising leading to strain
- Poor technique creating unnecessary tension
- Poor posture affecting overall biomechanics
- Lack of warming up or cooling down

Age-Related Conditions

- Osteoarthritis (wear-and-tear-related joint degeneration)
- Rheumatoid arthritis (an autoimmune inflammatory condition affecting the joints)
- Benign tremor (involuntary shaking that can affect control and coordination)

Systemic Conditions

- Diabetes (which can affect circulation and nerve sensitivity)
- Dupuytren's contracture (thickening of tissue in the hand, affecting finger movement)
- Hypermobility (excessively flexible joints, which can sometimes create instability or fatigue)

Other Injuries Affecting The Hands & Upper Body

- Carpal tunnel syndrome (compression of the median nerve in the wrist)
- Tennis elbow (pain affecting the outer elbow and forearm tendons)
- Golfer's elbow (pain affecting the inner elbow and forearm tendons)
- Shoulder strain
- Thoracic outlet syndrome (compression affecting nerves or blood vessels between the neck and shoulder)
- Cervical spine issues (neck-related problems affecting nerves, mobility or posture)

This list is by no means exhaustive.

Will's wider point is that prevention is always better than cure. Musicians benefit from thinking more like athletes and taking both their physical and mental wellbeing seriously. His practical advice includes:

- Consider approaches such as the Alexander Technique or yoga to improve posture and body awareness
- Allow injuries proper time to recover; tendons can take a surprisingly long time to heal
- Undertake strengthening and stretching exercises under professional guidance
- Be aware of warning signs of strain and adjust your practice routine accordingly
- Never try to play through pain
- Choose a practice routine that challenges without punishing the joints
- Maintain good posture and minimise unnecessary fatigue
- Maintain good cardiovascular health and circulation
- Avoid self-diagnosis via the internet and seek expert guidance instead

Will also stresses the importance of movement, particularly for players dealing with arthritis or age-related stiffness. Joints generally respond far better to sensible, regular movement than to long periods of inactivity.

Adaptation isn't a weakness. It's sustainability. If something needs adjusting, adjust it. The goal is to keep playing, enjoying music and finding approaches that work for you and your body over the long term.

To Wrap Up

Remember that natural physical modification is normal. Every experienced musician adjusts over time, whether that's changing technique, improving posture or becoming more aware of how their body responds when playing. None of this is about lowering standards or cheating. It's about finding sustainable ways to enjoy music and keep the instrument part of your life for years to come.

Bev Taylor: Stories From eBass+

Started bass in her 50s after a lifetime of loving music



Bev had loved bass long before ever playing one. Growing up around Motown and Northern Soul, music had always been part of her life. She spent years dancing to those records, completely immersed in the energy, rhythm, and movement of the music.

“The bass was always the prime instrument to me,” she said.

But life moved on. Decades passed before she finally picked up a bass guitar herself.

After losing her husband in 2015, music became something deeper. During this difficult period, Bev bought a Höfner bass and a small practice amp and started learning through YouTube videos before eventually joining eBassGuitar.

She told me, “It brought me back from being hurt and not knowing where to go.”

During our conversation, I was struck by how clearly bass helped her reconnect with herself. Not just as a hobby, but emotionally.

“It’s my medicine,” she said.

Gradually, Bev became increasingly engrossed in learning: music theory, ear training, learning songs, and understanding how bass lines worked. The instrument stopped feeling distant and started feeling natural.

Today, Bev remains deeply connected to the music she has loved her whole life: Northern Soul, Motown, groove, movement, feel. At open mics and jam sessions, she is still developing confidence and searching for musicians who share that same musical connection.

After waiting more than 40 years to play bass, she feels connected to the music in a completely new way.

You can watch the full interview and access the bonus resources using the QR code at the end of the book.



CHAPTER 21

Choosing The Right Bass & Equipment



One of the easiest ways to make bass playing more enjoyable is choosing equipment that works with your body instead of against it.

Getting older, comfort, ergonomics, and practicality become increasingly important. Small adjustments to your bass, strap and setup can make a dramatic difference to how long and how comfortably you can play.

Ergonomics & Comfort

I'm increasingly convinced that comfort and ergonomics matter far more than students initially realise. In a music store on Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, one of the staff said to me, "*The right instrument will speak to you.*" Sometimes you pick up a bass, and it's just *right*. It sounds good, feels natural, and you find yourself wanting to play it more. You naturally gravitate towards it.

There's also something harder to explain: a connection with the instrument that goes beyond logic. Most players know exactly what that feeling is when it happens. This was also the trip where I ended up buying my 5-string Sadowsky. I had no intention of buying another bass. I was simply trying instruments to see what was available. But the moment I played that bass, I knew there was something special about it. It's been with me ever since, and it's still the best-sounding bass I own.

As players get older, finding an instrument that works with rather than against them becomes increasingly important.

Scale Length Matters

Traditionally, most bass guitars use a 34-inch scale length. It's considered the industry standard and is what you'll find on most Fender-style instruments. However, for many players, especially those with smaller hands, arthritis, shoulder issues or reduced flexibility, a shorter-scale bass can make a huge difference.

Short-scale basses are typically 30 inches, while medium-scale instruments are around 32 inches. The shorter string length reduces the distance between frets—requiring less stretch from the fretting hand—and often makes the strings feel easier under the fingers.

During the 1990s, many manufacturers moved towards longer scale lengths and heavier instruments. The thinking was simple: more mass, longer strings and greater tension created a tighter low end with more piano-like clarity. Thirty-five and even thirty-six-inch scale basses became increasingly popular, particularly among 5- and 6-string players looking for a tighter low B-string.

For years, short-scale basses were often seen as compromise instruments or something aimed at guitarists dabbling in bass. That simply isn't true anymore. The quality of modern short-scale basses has improved enormously, and their growing popularity reflects that. My short-scale Duesenberg completely changed my perspective; its semi-hollow body sounds unlike any other

bass I've owned. It makes me play and think differently whenever I pick it up, and I always take that as a good sign.

Traditionally, one criticism of short-scale basses was that they could sound woolly or lack clarity compared with longer-scale instruments. Historically, there was some truth in that. Today, with good design, pickups, electronics and strings, modern short-scale basses can sound every bit as good while offering a very different playing experience.

A great short-scale bass isn't a compromise. It's simply a different tool that can make playing easier and more enjoyable.

Weight Matters

Bass guitars used to be heavy. If you have an older instrument gathering dust somewhere, there's a good chance it weighs considerably more than many modern basses. Today's manufacturers are much more conscious of ergonomics and player comfort. Lightweight woods, improved hardware and better balance have changed things noticeably. As a rough guide, I think somewhere around 8 to 9 pounds is a comfortable weight for most players.

An interesting development has been the use of chambered bodies to reduce weight while still retaining resonance and sustain. Roger Sadowsky was one of the pioneers of this approach. Although players sometimes talk as though there's only one correct way to build a bass, there are many valid approaches, and they're highly personal.

My own journey reflects that.

In the mid-2000s, Overwater built me a fabulous 5-string Jazz-style bass. It became a real workhorse for several years. With its 35-inch scale, substantial weight and focused tone, it suited the work I was doing perfectly. Later, I commissioned a matching fretless version with an unlined fingerboard and high-mass body wood designed to give a great tone. I had the romantic idea of becoming a specialist fretless player. The bass sounded fantastic!

In reality...

One evening, in a dark West End orchestra pit, I briefly looked up at the conductor and then back down... only to realise I had absolutely no idea where I was. Not on the completely black fingerboard, nor on the sheet music. In that high-pressure situation, it wasn't a great feeling.

It became obvious that, however beautiful the bass sounded, it wasn't the right instrument for the environment I was working in. Overwater kindly part-exchanged it for a lightweight 4-string fretless with a lined fingerboard, which I still own today.

The valuable lesson: sometimes common wisdom isn't the right wisdom for you.

The same lesson applies to amplification. Modern Class-D amplifiers and lightweight speaker cabinets have completely changed the game. Just because bass rigs used to be large and heavy doesn't mean they need to be today. You no longer need to carry enormous equipment to achieve a great bass sound. Many modern amps fit comfortably into a backpack and sound excellent.

Straps, Balance & Neck Dive

A good strap helps more than players realise. A wide, padded strap spreads the weight more evenly across your shoulders and upper back, significantly reducing fatigue during longer sessions.

Balance is equally important. Watch out for neck dive—where the neck wants to fall towards the floor because the bass is poorly balanced. Your fretting hand often ends up supporting the neck without even realising it, creating unnecessary tension and fatigue in your arm and shoulder.

I've always preferred basses where the upper horn reaches roughly to the 12th fret—the classic Fender balance point. During the 1980s, many manufacturers shortened the upper horn to around the 14th fret to create a sleeker, more modern appearance. The downside was that it pushed the neck further away from the player, increasing the reach required and placing extra strain on the fretting arm and shoulder.

In conversation with Roger Sadowsky, despite his decades of experience refining instruments, he said something wonderfully simple: “*Leo Fender got it right.*”

There’s a lot of wisdom behind that. The Precision and Jazz basses have survived for decades because they’re comfortable, balanced and work brilliantly in an enormous range of musical situations. If you’re unsure where to start, it’s difficult to go wrong with either design.

Setup Matters

A proper setup can completely transform how a bass feels to play. High string action, poorly adjusted neck relief and heavy strings can make everything harder than it needs to be, particularly if you’re dealing with stiffness, fatigue or joint pain.

One misconception is that expensive automatically means easy to play. It doesn’t. Genuinely, I’d rather play a £200 bass with a professional setup than a £2,000 bass that hasn’t been adjusted properly.

Learning a few basic setup skills yourself, or finding a good local technician, are the best investments you can make. Small adjustments to string height and neck relief can make a significant difference to both comfort and enjoyment.

I think it’s important to empower students to experiment with their own setup rather than assuming only a professional should adjust their instrument. Many people are frightened of truss rods and saddle adjustments because they seem highly technical. Make gradual adjustments, learn patiently and pay attention to how the bass responds; there’s very little to fear.

Remember that changing string gauge may also affect the setup, particularly neck relief and string action. Small changes in one area influence another. Basses naturally change with the seasons too: temperature and humidity may affect the neck, string height, and overall feel, sometimes shockingly quickly. Learning the basics teaches you a huge amount about how your bass reacts and feels. You’ll save yourself unnecessary trips to a technician, develop

far more confidence in your instrument, and keep it feeling comfortable all year round.

The vast majority of new basses leave the factory well set up these days. However, if you've bought a second-hand instrument, it's worth having it checked by an experienced technician. A poor setup can make learning good technique far harder than it needs to be.

Final Thoughts

Buy equipment that inspires you.

I've seen players convince themselves they're "not good enough" to own a particular instrument because they haven't been playing long enough. I don't agree with that mindset. After years of experimenting, I've realised equipment has two important functions. The first is practical; it helps create the sound, feel and response you want. The second is inspirational; good equipment makes you want to pick up the bass and play.

Both matter more than many people realise.

I'm not suggesting disappearing into gear acquisition syndrome at the expense of practising; we've all seen players endlessly buying basses and pedals instead of putting in the work. Equally, I don't think anyone should feel guilty about investing in a good instrument if it keeps them engaged and connected to music. If a particular bass inspires you to practise more, enjoy playing more and stay connected to the instrument, that's a worthwhile investment.

PART V

THE BIGGER PICTURE



CHAPTER 22

The Next Stage

like the idea that life comes in seasons.

My son is eight, and I'm already aware that the rhythm of life will change significantly over the next few years. An important lesson is recognising when seasons are changing, thinking about what the next one might bring and, importantly, how to get the most from it.

A conversation with a student, Darren, brought much of this into focus for me. He was approaching 50, had played guitar on and off since he was young, but never seriously or with other people. Then he bought a cheap bass from Facebook Marketplace, started enjoying it, and soon knew it was the instrument for him.

Then, his grandad passed away, leaving him some money. His mum told him not to put it in the bank, but to buy something meaningful with it. Darren bought himself a Fender Precision Bass.

Darren told me his daughters were grown up, work felt “dull as dishwater”, and he was asking himself what came next. He knew he'd had a purpose for years, but now he needed to find something for himself.

Many people arrive at music through that kind of doorway later in life, as a new season begins. Children grow up, careers plateau, retirement arrives or appears on the horizon. Things that once defined your days carry diminishing importance. You begin looking for something else.

Many players struggle to put themselves in unfamiliar situations. At 18, you throw yourself into things without overthinking. At 50+, you're much more aware of all the ways things could go wrong. But when people push through that layer of hesitation, opportunities begin to appear.

Darren talked about wanting to find people to play with but not knowing where to begin. He'd joined a local guitar group, but the bass chair was already occupied by a player who clearly saw it as his territory. Darren stayed on acoustic guitar, trying to find his way into the world of bass.

By the end of the call, he'd decided to message a musician he knew and ask if they'd like to play together sometime.

A small step.

But one new opportunity can become the beginning of a whole new community, especially through music. Online communication made this much easier for many people around 2020. Until then, most online teaching happened through pre-recorded videos and webinar software. It worked, but still felt one-dimensional. Students learned from me, and I got to know them through names in Facebook groups. The community existed, but at arm's length.

Almost overnight, group video calls became normal as everything moved across to Zoom. People who'd never considered joining online video sessions suddenly found themselves doing it every day for work, family and everything else. Online calls became part of everyday life.

Things changed inside the eBassGuitar community too. Students could finally see one another properly, talk, stay behind after sessions, continue conversations and even have virtual drinks together. Previously isolated learners discovered there were many other people in exactly the same position.

It became something much bigger than lessons.

I got to know people like Terry, Merle, Drazen and Alan, to name just a few. Smaller spin-off groups started forming naturally. Students organised

practice groups, Zoom meet-ups, informal catch-ups and friendships that are still going strong today.

It's common for adult learners to assume they're the only ones feeling uncertain, thinking everyone else is progressing faster, understanding more or feeling more confident than they are.

Then they meet other learners and discover they're having much the same experience. "I'm behind" becomes, "This is probably just part of learning."

I've seen people reconnect with music after 30 or 40 years away from it, and complete beginners encourage one another through the awkward early stages of learning. I've watched students, nervous about posting their first recording, become some of the most supportive people in the community.

At 50 and beyond, this matters more than people expect. Social circles, work and family life all change. The places where connection happened naturally aren't there in the same way. Music seems to fill some of that space: learning, struggling and improving together creates friendships surprisingly quickly.

I think bass players understand this instinctively. We spend most of our time listening, supporting and paying attention to what everyone else is doing. We learn that our role affects the whole band, even if nobody notices directly. That develops a certain mindset: less ego, more awareness and better listening.

Looking back, I don't think I fully understood what eBassGuitar would become. The teaching side was deliberate; the structure developed over time. The community grew naturally from people recognising themselves in each other.

I've realised that music becomes bigger than the instrument itself. People arrive thinking they're learning bass guitar, but what they're really doing is rebuilding confidence, exploring curiosity, re-finding purpose and creating connection.

They're beginning a new season of life. For mature players, that matters as much as the notes themselves.



CHAPTER 23

Life Lessons From The Low End

It was an ordinary Thursday lunchtime. I was in my practice room at Berkhamsted School, teaching my fifth student of the day.

Between lessons, I got a phone call from Andy, a fine trombone player and musical contractor.

“Jim, what are you doing tonight?”

“I’m off tonight,” I replied.

“Can you get to Wembley Arena by 4.30 pm to play double bass in the orchestra for *War Of The Worlds*? Someone’s gone sick, and I need cover.”

Assuming this was a traditional orchestral gig, I said, “Andy, are you sure you’ve got the right guy?”

“Yes, Jim. It’s right up your street.”

A few hours later, I found myself performing in front of 10,000 people at the same venue where, as a ten-year-old, I’d watched Paul McCartney. The music was exactly my thing, and I even bumped into Steve, one of the keyboard deps for my band *Metropolis*, who certainly wasn’t expecting to see me behind a double bass.

Countless times I've thought I was having a quiet evening at home, only for the phone to ring and everything to change. That's one of the things I fell in love with about the music industry. After decades of playing, teaching and living with a bass in my hands, I've realised that music teaches you far more than notes:

Connection & Friendship

Music has introduced me to some of the best people I've ever met... and a handful I'd happily never meet again. It would be disingenuous to pretend every musical relationship has been positive, but those experiences have been the exception rather than the rule. Almost every gig introduces me to someone with a similar outlook, background or sense of humour. Without doubt, musicians are my people.

It's also a surprisingly transient world. I've worked closely with people for a year or two, then not seen them for a decade. Then, completely out of the blue, we're back on a gig together, and it's like no time has passed.

Camaraderie is the word that comes to mind. That sense of community exists at every level, whether you're playing your first jam session or working professionally.

Adventure

Music has taken me all over the world. Between November 2012 and January 2013, *Metropolis* performed in India, Dubai, Paris and London. Many of those shows were booked anywhere between six months and six days in advance.

That's part of the adventure; never quite knowing what's coming next.

Adventure isn't always about travel. Sometimes it's walking into a gig where you know nobody and walking out feeling you've made friends for life.

Resilience

The music world has highs and lows. There are brilliant nights, and there are difficult ones. Sometimes the phone rings constantly; sometimes, it seems to stop altogether. I've accepted a one-night dep that turned into weeks of work.

I've also had periods where nothing seemed to happen at all. Those quieter periods teach you just as much. You learn to keep preparing, keep practising and trust that another opportunity will come.

Resilience isn't about never doubting yourself. It's about continuing anyway.

Advice To My 20-Year-Old Self

Many of the lessons I've shared in this book didn't come quickly. They came from years of experience, mistakes, and gradually understanding both the music business and myself.

If I could speak to my 20-year-old self, I'd say:

- Believe in yourself sooner: you don't need someone else's permission
- Take every opportunity: the most ordinary gig is often where you meet the person who changes your career
- Communicate more: ask musical directors and bandleaders what they're looking for instead of guessing
- Don't fear mistakes: they don't define you; how you respond to them does
- Enjoy the ride: music isn't a race! Every rehearsal, gig and setback becomes part of the journey

More than two decades later, that journey still hasn't finished.

The Bigger Picture

Bass has shaped how I show up, both as a musician and as a person. It taught me that life isn't about being the loudest or the most visible. It's about being reliable, listening properly and making the people around you better.

It also taught me to let go of perfection. Music falls apart when you chase flawless playing. It comes together when you focus on time, feel and consistency, when you stay steady and keep things moving.

Those lessons don't stop at the gig. They carry into work, relationships and everyday life. Learning to support, listen and hold things together has been just as valuable away from music as it has been within it.

That's what the low end gives you. It teaches you how to be solid when it matters.



CHAPTER 24

The Principles Behind eBassGuitar

September 1999 marked a new phase of my life. I got on a train to London Euston for my first day at Trinity College of Music. I remember the excitement clearly. It felt like I'd made it. School was done, and for the next four years I could focus entirely on the one thing I cared about most: playing bass.

That feeling didn't last long.

At school, I'd mostly done my own thing musically. I was used to being one of the stronger players in the room. Music college was different.

Within a few weeks, I realised what had happened. The strongest player from every school had arrived in the same building. Add four years of students and the postgraduates, and I found myself surrounded by players operating at an incredibly high level.

It was a shock. The environment could be competitive and intense. People were pushing hard to prove themselves; support wasn't guaranteed. At times, it felt old-school. You had to fight, step up and earn your place.

Looking back, I know it wasn't the healthiest environment for a nineteen-year-old to process. There were times I felt very alone trying to figure things out, and times when my sense of self became too tightly attached to how well I was playing. I still remember certain comments and reactions when things went wrong; they weren't supportive. I was just a young musician trying to do my best and work things out as I went.

It wasn't all bad. I learned a huge amount there, met some extraordinary musicians and played some incredible music. But that other side of the experience stayed with me.

When I founded eBassGuitar, I realised I was consciously trying to build the opposite kind of learning environment. The people coming to me were often older, at different life stages and with different goals and insecurities. Taking the same approach I'd experienced at college would only alienate them. I knew what it felt like being the person trying to work things out. That experience shaped many of the principles behind eBassGuitar.

Learning Should Feel Achievable

Everything we create is designed to feel achievable and relevant. That doesn't mean easy; it means structured.

Somebody putting the time in should feel able to move forward without constantly feeling lost or overwhelmed. There should always be an entry point: a Level 1 giving each student an early win, helping them understand the core idea before things become more advanced.

Much of our material is structured into Levels 1, 2, and 3:

- **Level 1** covers the foundational idea
- **Level 2** adds more depth and application
- **Level 3** explores the concept at an even deeper level

One principle I always aim for is this: if somebody studies only the Level 1 material, they should still walk away with something genuinely useful and musically complete.

There's always a temptation as a teacher to brain-dump every clever thing you've learned over the years. This usually helps the teacher more than the student. The information must be useful; progress matters far more than perfection.

Teaching Should Inspire

Students have explicitly told me over the years that watching long displays of chops, speed, or highly advanced technique can feel impressive... for a while. Ultimately, it becomes discouraging. Instead of inspiring people, it can make the gap feel bigger, leaving them thinking, *"I'm never going to be able to do that."*

There's a fine line between showing students what's possible and unintentionally inhibiting them. That's a stance we aim to balance carefully, and why I've never wanted eBassGuitar to become a platform built around showing off. The focus stays on helping the student play, understand and move forward.

Frankly, I struggle to stay inspired when viewing endless displays of ultra-technical fusion or slap playing online. I can appreciate the skill involved, but musicality, groove, feel, phrasing and communication are the things that hold my attention long-term.

Usually, towards the end of a lesson, I'll demonstrate where an idea can lead. I believe students need to see the bigger picture of where a concept can go, to know there are deeper levels if they choose to explore further. But the goal is always to open doors, not raise barriers. A student should leave a lesson thinking, *"I think I can do that,"* not, *"I'll never be good enough."*

There's nothing wrong with advanced playing; some of it's extraordinary. But I've always believed teaching should primarily help people participate in music, not simply watch somebody else be good at it.

People Learn Better Together

The internet can be a hostile place at times, especially in forums and Facebook groups. I've seen how quickly sarcasm, point-scoring, and gate-keeping can make people retreat inwardly.

That culture has never interested me. The eBassGuitar community is built around support, encouragement and constructive feedback. Effort matters. Progress matters. Putting your playing out there takes courage, especially early on.

Our student video review sessions are a favourite part of our teaching. Students record themselves playing and share where they're currently at. That's a huge step for many people. Our job is to encourage them, help them improve and make sure they leave feeling motivated to continue.

Whether it's your first bass line or your 100th, you should feel comfortable sharing your playing without feeling judged for where you currently are.

Everyone Should Feel Welcome

Bass has been a male-dominated world for a long time. Within eBassGuitar, around 90% of our students are men. Honestly, I wish the split were more even.

I've spent a lot of time listening to female students and musicians talk about their experiences, and it does seem that learning bass as a woman can feel noticeably different. I've noticed how women often appear to be spoken down to or patronised in online musical spaces. Sometimes subtly, sometimes obviously. But I can see how that kind of environment could make anyone feel unwelcome or reluctant to participate.

That's something I've always wanted to avoid within eBassGuitar. We see a high number of women joining our VIP programmes, and I suspect part of the reason is that a smaller one-to-one learning environment can feel more supportive, less intimidating than the harsher corners of the internet.

Clearly, bass playing ability has nothing to do with gender. Some of the best bass players in the world are women, even if historically they've been underrepresented within the industry itself. This isn't an add-on or a marketing angle. It's simply part of the culture I want the community to have.

Why Environment Matters

I've become more aware that the environment where people learn matters just as much as the information itself, especially later in life. Confidence can evaporate quickly if people feel overwhelmed, talked down to or constantly made to feel behind.

My goal is simple: I want people to feel welcomed, respected, encouraged, structured and supported from the moment they pick up a bass. Fundamentally, most people aren't just trying to learn notes on a fretboard: they're trying to reconnect with music, creativity, curiosity and a part of themselves they may have neglected for a long time. I understand that deeply because I've seen it happen thousands of times.

Ultimately, the right environment gives people the confidence to keep going. And that's where the most meaningful progress happens.

EPILOGUE

Keep Playing!

There's one story I've deliberately kept until the end of this book because I learned a huge amount from it.

eBassGuitar was one of the happiest accidents of my life. Back in 2016, what started as a few lessons and videos online led to all sorts of unexpected opportunities, interesting people and, eventually, moving away from London towards the coast for a different pace of life.

One of the people I met during that period was Scott Devine from Scott's Bass Lessons, who many of you will already know. This led to my joining the SBL team for eighteen months in 2017.

Sometimes people assume I joined SBL first, then branched off to create my own thing. The reality was different. Although still in its early stages, eBassGuitar already existed before I joined SBL. Joining their team was part of that wider journey rather than the beginning of it.

I have nothing but love and respect for what Scott has built and the positive impact SBL has had on the bass community. The scale of what he's created is extraordinary, and I'll always be grateful for the opportunity to be part of that chapter.

Around the same time, Oliver, my son, was born. Becoming a new dad while building a start-up business and continuing to work as a musician was a significant undertaking. Having steady work during those early stages gave me stability, allowing me to properly enjoy that precious time instead of constantly worrying about where the next gig was coming from. I know how fortunate I was.

I also gained a much deeper understanding of the bass community itself. Already in existence, eBassGuitar could have been viewed as a competing business. But Scott never treated it that way. From the outset, he was always encouraging and supportive.

The music world can become competitive and territorial; I'd experienced plenty of that over the years. But the online bass world seemed different. There was space to support each other, share ideas, help students and genuinely want other people to do well.

That experience shaped me more than I realised at the time. Now, if I see a new bass instructor starting online, I'll reach out, say hello and be encouraging. Part of that comes from the example Scott set during that period.

In many ways, that idea is the bedrock of this entire book. Music works best when people support each other, and I would love to support you and your bass playing going forward.

As you've read this far, I'm sure music matters to you. Maybe bass is something you've wanted to do for years, or maybe you're only just starting to believe this could genuinely become part of your life. Wherever you currently are, I hope this book has helped make the process feel clearer, achievable and less intimidating.

The bass has given me far more than I ever expected: friendships, work, travel, challenges and perspective. Importantly, it has introduced me to thousands of people around the world who simply wanted to learn music and enjoy playing.

Increasingly, I've realised the instrument itself is only part of it. The real value often comes from what surrounds the playing: the routine, the curiosity, the sense of progress, the people you meet, and the meaningful satisfaction of gradually getting better at something.

I want to leave you with a few simple ideas that I genuinely believe matter:

- Believe you can improve: age does not disqualify you from becoming a musician
- Consistency matters more than intensity: 20 focused minutes done regularly always beats an occasional three-hour marathon

- Try not to learn in isolation: music is far more rewarding when shared with other people
- Buy equipment that inspires you: you don't need to earn the right to own a good instrument
- Most importantly, enjoy the process: when you enjoy playing, you'll keep coming back to the bass, and consistency is where real progress happens!

This book is more of a starting point than an ending. Whenever you pick up the instrument, you begin another small chapter, another groove, another song... another layer of understanding.

If you'd like help continuing that journey, I'd love to welcome you into the eBassGuitar community and **eBass+** (our next evolution of Bass Lab PLUS). It's a place built around support, structure, encouragement and helping people develop at their own pace, especially later in life. So keep playing, keep learning, and keep finding enjoyment in the low end.

I'll see you inside **eBass+**

James Eager

Continuing Your Journey...

If this book has resonated with you, don't let it become another book that sits on the shelf.

Reading about bass is one thing. Becoming the bass player you want to be happens by picking up the instrument regularly and playing.

That's exactly why I created **eBass+**, the next evolution of Bass Lab PLUS.

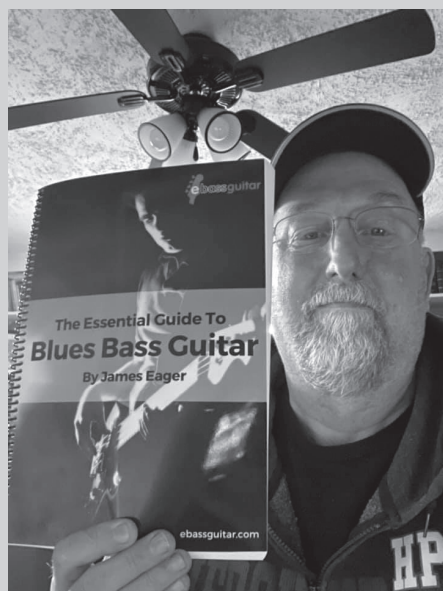
Inside you'll find the step-by-step learning system, structured courses, 20-day challenges, workshops, downloadable resources and a supportive community of adult bass players from around the world. Whether you're playing your very first notes or returning to the instrument after many years away, everything has been designed around the way adults learn best.

Most importantly, you won't be doing it alone.

If you'd like to continue your journey with me, simply scan the QR code below or visit ebassguitar.com/mature. I'd be delighted to help.



Bill Bedford: A Final Story From eBass+



Bill was an early member of eBass+. Back when the community was still small, he really threw himself into it. He joined live sessions, posted videos, connected with other members, and became a familiar face who helped shape the culture of the community early on.

He also persuaded me to bring my son onto one of our first live webinars when Oliver was still a baby.

Bill kept pushing himself musically. He joined bands, played gigs, and became part of a group called *Everything Hurts*—an appropriately honest name for a band full of men in their 60s!

Then life became very difficult.

Within a short period, Bill suffered a mini-stroke, affecting the vision on the left side of both eyes. Then, he lost his father-in-law, one of his dogs, and eventually his wife, Rita, after 47 years together.

What struck me, listening back to our conversation, was the way music remained interlaced through all of it. Even when Rita was seriously ill, she encouraged him to keep rehearsing; “Rita told me to keep playing.”

After she passed away, Bill arranged the funeral so he could still make a gig the following week.

“I have a gig next week. I’m not missing it,” not because the gig mattered more, but because music gave him something solid to hold onto; something that kept life moving forward, even if only a little.

That night, his family came to watch the band play. They performed *Wonderful Tonight*, a song he and Rita had danced to many times over the years.

Bill told me, “Music keeps your mind somewhere else for a while”, adding later, “Either you let it consume you, or you move on.”

And perhaps that is the real story behind this entire book. Over the last decade at eBassGuitar, I thought I was teaching people how to play bass. Somewhere along the way, it became obvious it was about far more than that.

You can watch Bill’s full interview and access the bonus resources using the QR code at the end of the book.

APPENDIX & PRACTICAL RESOURCES

The following recommendations are products and approaches I've used, tested, or regularly recommended to students over the years. This isn't about buying the most expensive gear possible. It's about finding equipment that feels comfortable, practical and inspiring enough to keep you picking up the bass.

Comfortable Basses

Many mature players find lighter or shorter-scale basses easier on the hands, shoulders and wrists, especially during longer practice sessions. These are instruments I've consistently found to be popular with students inside eBassGuitar:

- Fender Mustang PJ
- Sire U5
- Ibanez Mezzo
- Höfner Ignition
- Duesenberg Starplayer

Lightweight Amplifiers

Modern bass amplifiers have become dramatically lighter over the last decade. Some models I regularly recommend are:

- Fender Rumble Series
- Markbass
- Aguilar Tone Hammer
- Warwick MS & PS Series

A small modern combo amplifier is more than enough for most home practice, rehearsals, jam nights and local gigs.

Other Useful Equipment

Small upgrades can make playing noticeably more enjoyable.

- A wide padded strap (I use Neotech Straps)
- A reliable tuner (TC Electronic and Boss both make excellent tuners)
- A good quality gig bag (I use Mono)
- An iPad with an Apple Pencil
- Good quality headphones or in-ear monitors

Ten Songs Worth Learning

These songs regularly appear at jam sessions, function gigs and informal playing situations. They teach groove, timing, note length and musical feel:

- Stand By Me – Ben E. King
- Another One Bites The Dust – Queen
- My Girl – The Temptations
- Come Together – The Beatles

- Lovely Day – Bill Withers
- Superstition – Stevie Wonder
- Ain’t No Sunshine – Bill Withers
- (Sittin’ On) The Dock Of The Bay – Otis Redding
- Knock On Wood – Eddie Floyd
- Sweet Home Alabama – Lynyrd Skynyrd

You don’t need to learn hundreds of songs: a smaller selection played confidently, consistently and musically will take you surprisingly far.

Continue The Journey

Thank you for reading *The Mature Bass Player’s Guidebook*. To accompany the book, I’ve created a collection of bonus resources that you can access by scanning the QR code at the end of this book.

Inside you’ll find:

- Video interviews with people and stories featured throughout the book
- Bonus resources to help reinforce ideas we’ve covered
- Free video lessons to help you take the next step on your bass journey
- Exclusive bonus chapter: *My Dad, David Bowie & A Lifetime Of Learning*

I’ll continue adding to these resources, so keep checking back. I hope they help you continue enjoying the journey.

Scan the QR code to get started or visit ebassguitar.com/mature

REFERENCE & FURTHER READING

How Playing An Instrument Benefits Your Brain

a TED Talk by Dr Anita Collins

Indirect Procedures: A Musician's Guide To The Alexander Technique (The Integrated Musician)

by Pedro De Alcantara

Jaco: The Extraordinary And Tragic Life Of Jaco Pastorius

by Bill Milkowski

Standing In The Shadows Of Motown: The Life And Music Of James Jamerson

by Allan Slutsky

The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic In Adult Education And Human Resource Development

by Malcolm S. Knowles, E.F. Holton III, R.A. Swanson

The Use Of The Self: From The Originator Of The Alexander Technique

by F.M. Alexander

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No one writes a book alone. First, thank you to my parents for encouraging my love of music from an early age and supporting a path that has shaped my entire life.

Thank you to the teachers and mentors who helped me become the musician, teacher and person I am today: Corin Long, Leon Bosch, Paul Westwood, Phil Mulford, Simon Woolf and Steve Watts. Each of you has influenced my thinking, musicianship and approach to teaching in ways that continue to ripple through my work.

A special thank you to Paul Westwood. Studying with Paul fundamentally changed the way I think about music. Many of the ideas in this book can be traced back to lessons I learned from him, both directly and indirectly.

Thank you to the coaches who have helped build eBassGuitar over the years: Andy Hodge, Freddie Draper, Marco Ronquillo, Paul Geary, Sian Unwin and Toby Newcombe. It has been a privilege to teach alongside you and learn from you. The impact you've had on our students is far greater than most people will ever realise.

Thank you to the eBassGuitar team: Ceidelle, EJ, Martin, Matet, Paolo, Shin and Xybil. While my face may appear in the videos, eBassGuitar has always been a team effort. Your dedication, creativity, care and hard work have helped thousands of bass players around the world.

Thank you to my partner, Vicky, and my son, Oliver. You have both lived through the entire eBassGuitar journey with me... the early experiments, the late nights, the successes, the mistakes, the endless conversations about bass

guitar, and all the ideas that seemed sensible at the time. Thank you for your support, patience, humour and perspective over the years.

Thank you to my business mentors, particularly James Schramko and Martin Norbury, whose guidance has helped me navigate the challenges of building a business around something I care deeply about.

Most importantly, thank you to the **eBass+** community and the thousands of students I've had the privilege of teaching over the last decade. This book exists because of you.

James Eager

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Alexander Technique, The; a therapy for stress-related chronic conditions. It does not attempt to cure the underlying cause, but to teach people how to avoid bad habits which might exacerbate their condition *p150*

Allen, Rick; English drummer, joined Def Leppard at age 15, continued with the band after losing his left arm in a 1984 car accident, subsequently pioneered a custom electronic drum kit to adapt his playing *p144*

Assumptions About Adult Learners; *p129, p132*, see also *Malcolm Knowles*

Bettencourt, Nuno; virtuoso Portuguese-American guitarist & composer, best known as the lead guitarist of the Boston rock band Extreme *p18*

Bowie & The Buzz, David; 1966, David Bowie's first band after changing his name from David Jones; John 'Ego' Eager on drums *Bonus Chapter p1-2*

Celine Experience, The; UK-based Celine Dion tribute show, feat. January Butler *p89*

Collins, Dr Anita; celebrated educator and author, renowned for her contributions to brain development and music education *p25, p58*

Collins, Phil; English singer, drummer, songwriter, record producer, and actor, best known as drummer and later lead vocalist of Genesis; became one of the best-selling solo artists of all time *p7, p16, p81*

Corea, Chick; US pianist, composer (Spain, 500 Miles High...), bandleader, and occasional percussionist *Bonus Chapter p3*

Deacon, John; English bassist and songwriter with Queen *p34, p126*

Devine, Scott; UK bassist and educator, founder of ScottsBassLessons.com *p6, p180*

Eager, Archie; aka John 'Ego' Eager, drummer with David Bowie & The Buzz, 1966; James Eager's multi-instrumentalist father *Bonus Chapter p1-6*

Eager, James; English session bassist, educator, founder of eBassGuitar.com

Eager, John 'Ego'; see Archie Eager

Gadd, Steve; US drummer, one of the best-known and most highly regarded session and studio drummers in the industry *Bonus Chapter p3*

Genesis – The Mama Tour Live; concert film by the English progressive rock band Genesis, February 1984 *p19, Bonus Chapter p3*

Gilmour, David; British guitarist, singer, and songwriter best known as the lead guitarist and co-lead vocalist of Pink Floyd, joining in 1968 to replace Syd Barrett *p18*

Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick; song by Ian Dury and the Blockheads, a single on Stiff Records, UK #1 in January 1977 *p16, p38*

iReal Pro; versatile app, primarily for practice, read and write chord charts, simultaneously creating basic backing tracks *p100*

Jamerson, James; uncredited bassist on most of the Motown Records hits in the 1960s and early 1970s, now regarded as one of the greatest and most influential bass players in modern music history *p34, p45 p70, p126*

King, Mark; frontman of jazz-funk band Level 42 who popularised slap-bass in the 1980s *p38*

Knowles, Malcolm; American adult educator renowned for popularising andragogy—the art and science of adult learning—and shaping modern adult education *p122, p125, p129-130*

McCartney, Paul; English musician, singer, renowned for his melodic bass playing and songwriting; gained worldwide fame as the Beatles' bassist and co-lead vocalist alongside John Lennon *p24, p126, p168, Bonus Chapter p3*

McIntosh, Robbie; English guitarist and composer acclaimed for his versatile session work with The Pretenders, and Paul McCartney's band (1989–1994), Norah Jones, John Mayer *Bonus Chapter p4*

Moore, Gary; Northern Irish guitarist, singer, and songwriter; Skid Row, Thin Lizzy, & a prolific solo career *p18*

Motown Records; influential US record label that played a pivotal role in the racial integration of popular music; synonymous with the Motown Sound, a polished blend of soul, pop, and gospel *p24, p45, p125, p152-153*

Mulford, Phil; omnipresent London-based session bassist *p110-111, p189*

National Youth Jazz Orchestra (NYJO); UK youth jazz education organisation, est. 1965 to 'empower young jazz musicians and inspire UK audiences' *p18*

Pastorius, Jaco; American jazz bassist, composer, and producer, revolutionised the electric bass with his virtuosic fretless technique, rich harmonics, and melodic approach *p38*

Pearce, Steve; ubiquitous and renowned UK live and recording session bassist, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Elton John, Mariah Carey, absolutely everyone *p111, p143*

Pepper Foundation; a small charity raising funds to support children's hospice at-home care in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, England *Bonus Chapter p4*

Prestia, Francis 'Rocco'; US bassist with Tower Of Power, famed for 16th-note funk lines *p35*

Ready Steady Go!; British rock/pop music TV show that aired live every Friday from 1963 to 1966, showcasing top UK and US acts of the era *Bonus Chapter p2*

Real Book, The; a collection of lead sheets for jazz standards, comprising a single line of melody and chord symbols *p40, p100*

Reinhardt, Django; Belgian-born Romani jazz guitarist and composer who pioneered gypsy jazz and became Europe's first major jazz talent *p144*

rhythm section; the part of a pop or jazz group supplying the rhythm, generally regarded as consisting of bass and drums, and sometimes, additionally, piano/keyboards and/or guitar *p34*

Saturday Night Fever; 1970s music-based film, later a worldwide stage show, featuring the Bee Gees' disco-fuelled soundtrack *p83, p110-111*

Sklar, Leland; American bassist and session musician whose career spans over six decades, with credits on more than 2,000 albums; James Taylor, Toto, Carole King, Phil Collins... absolutely everyone ever! *p113*

Spinello, Dr Elio; professor in the Health Science dept, California State University *p125, p130*

Stewart, Hamish; Scottish guitarist, bassist, singer, composer, and record producer, founding member of the 1970s funk/soul group Average White Band *Bonus Chapter p4*

Trinity College of Music; prestigious London-based musical education and training institution, founded 1872 *p18, p173*

Unwin, Sian; UK session bassist and educator, EBG coach *p144*

Victoria Apollo Theatre, London; premier West End venue since 1930, art deco features, the current home for *Wicked* *p83*

voiceschool.com; an interactive online learning experience for singers over 50 *p55*

War Of The Worlds; Jeff Wayne's musical version of the HG Wells classic story *p168*

Watt-Roy, Norman; English musician & composer; esteemed bassist for Ian Dury & The Blockheads *p16, p38*

Watts, Charlie; UK drummer, Rolling Stones 1963-2021 *p89*

Westwood, Paul; much-recorded English session bassist, composer, educator, author *p104*

Whitten, Chris; a British session drummer, Paul McCartney, Dire Straits, The Waterboys, Edie Brickell *Bonus Chapter p4*

Wickens, Wix; English musician, singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, composer, and record producer best known as keyboardist and musical director for Paul McCartney's touring band since 1989 *Bonus Chapter p4*

BONUS MATERIALS

To access the bonus resources that accompany The Mature Bass Player's Guidebook, including video interviews, free lessons, bonus materials and an exclusive bonus chapter, simply scan the QR code below or visit:

eBassGuitar.com/mature



