



Beyond The Root: A guide on how to approach chord inversions for bass players

Ben Hands

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The mighty root note. Undoubtedly the bass player's best friend. If you have been playing bass for a while, you'll probably find that your fingers naturally gravitate towards playing bass lines built from the root note. As a bass player, it is vitally important for us to keep a solid foundation for the rest of the band and most of the time this involves primarily using root notes. However, there is nothing stopping you from creating a bass line that emphasises a different chord tone as well.

There is also the issue when the band leader suddenly asks you to take a bass solo! Melody instruments such as trumpet or saxophone are sometimes discouraged from using the root note as much as possible in their solos. Due to our conventional role in a band, this places us bass players in an awkward position because we instinctively target the root note every time!

However, this book explores how to approach these "other notes" available to you as well. This way, you will be able to keep your band leader happy, extend your harmonic vocabulary all over the fretboard, and give you more options when creating your own bass lines.

It is important to point out that some of the examples in this book will sound very jarring and dissonant but are still theoretically correct.

This book explores bass lines starting on the 3rd, 5th, and 7th of each chord type. There will be 12 examples per chapter in every key using the cycle of fourths, starting with the key of C. (C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, F#, B, E, A, D, and G)

The examples will also be in various musical styles to help you get used to playing in a wide variety of harmonic and stylistic situations you may find yourself in. All the examples are in standard tuning unless otherwise noted.

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