



Session musician, Songwriter and one-quarter of the UK soul outfit The Milk, **Daniel Le Gresley** brings us the first in a brand series of lessons for Guitar Interactive.

Sponsored by **Cloud Microphones Cloudlifter Zi.**



A Songwriters Guide to Bass

Like many songwriters and creatives, I spend much of my time looking for that mystical moment of inspiration. At some point during every day, I raise my antenna, currently a TRS Starla, and wait patiently for a genius to arrive and maybe deliver me a song, or at least an idea. If I'm quick enough I'll catch that idea as it flies overhead, if I'm prepared, I'll catch it and a song may emerge.

It's a common scene for us guitarists, once the study is done, the playing and wiring begins and such ethereal moments might occur. But the truth is that those moments are short-lived when that time is over you are left with the hard work. Crafting, writing, harmonizing, re-harmonizing and editing and that's just the songwriting part. From there we move onto the demo stage and Pandora's box is well and truly open. You can very quickly be pulled out of the

'guitar comfort zone' but fear not, Gi is here to help.

Over the next three issues of the magazine, I'm going to try and tackle one of the big challenges in the box.

How should a guitarist approach the bass parts when tracking?

I'll guide you through 10 practical ideas that you can apply to your bass playing to help make your songs feel more structured with an improved feel and groove. I've included two backing tracks for you to experiment with and filmed some example videos to give you practical examples of these ideas.

Idea No.1 - Serve the Song

This is one of the guiding principles of all musicianship, but let us be honest guitarists are not the best at this. Through

a combination of ego, technique and childish joy we tend to overplay. Trust me when I tell you that 90% of session work is concerned with good time keeping, a positive attitude and serving the song. This is never more apparent than when you give a guitarist a bass. You know your pentatonics, your scale shapes, you're comfortable with diatonic harmony and chromatism. But now you need to take all that guitar knowledge and apply it differently. We are talking in the same language, but we're writing a different type of story.

A great place to start with this, in the beginning, is to change your mindset on the nature of the instrument. In the context of a song the bass helps drive a track, it's the backbone; sitting with the drums and percussion and giving the song, grounding and groove. Keep it simple to start, whilst you lock down the feel. »

get comfortable with the roots, then you can explore the spaces in-between. And that brings me nicely on to Idea No2

Idea No. 2 - Snap it to the Grid.

All of the great rhythm sections in history have one thing in common, a killer musical relationship between the drummer and bass player. Whether that be James Jamerson and Richard "Pistol" Allen of the 'funk brothers', or Donald "Duck" Dunn and Al Jackson Jr of Stax records fame. Focus on the kick and snare and build the core of your lines around this central rhythmic theme. Think about formulating the sequence in

longer sequences, developing the lines with embellishment, articulation and fills over 8 and 16 bars and make sure you lock in with the rhythm track so that everything sounds solid. Be careful, don't forget rule no1. All being well, this will give you the backbone your song needs and leave the decorative work for your guitar and midi parts.

Idea No. 3 - Take it for a Walk.

Ok...so I've told you to serve the song and snap to the grid, but no one wants to hear root notes on the quarter 2 & 4, so you need to get some movement. So, let us take the bass for a walk.

The walking bassline originated in blues and jazz and simply means moving from one root note to another in perpetual motion, rather than playing the root over and over. This can be done by moving in quarter notes, these transition notes can be based on scale tones, chord tones, or chromatics, your job here is to give the bassline some flow and movement whilst retaining the backbone of the rhythm.

So remember to keep it simple to start, lock into the rhythm track, and try to give your basslines some movement. In the next instalment we'll be looking at how you can practise keeping time more effectively, the benefits and disadvantages of using a pick or your fingers and we'll delve further into the world of octaves, chord tones, scale tones and chromatics. Till then, go forth and groove.

DLG

END

BACKING TRACK



Sponsored by
Cloud Microphones Cloudlifter Zi.



For more info, please visit:
www.cloudmicrophones.com

