

IGOR SARDI

THE FRETLESS BASS

**A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY OF A
MAGNIFICENT INSTRUMENT**



**HISTORY OF THE INSTRUMENT
ANALYSIS OF THE GREAT BASS PLAYERS
INTONATION
THE SOUND
THE VIBRATO
..AND MUCH MORE**

WITH ATTACHED VIDEOS, AUDIO EXAMPLES AND BACKING TRACKS

INDEX:

Preface - Page 5

Short biography of me - Page 6

Introduction - Page 8

Chapter 1 - Intonation - Pag.14

Chapter 2 - The Sound - Page 33

Chapter 3 - The Vibrato - Page 40

Chapter 4 - The Glissato - Page 49

Chapter 5 - The sustain - Page 56

Chapter 6 - Studying the fretless bass on the fretted! - Pag.59

Chapter 7 - Playing songs with the fretless - Pag.66

Conclusions - Page 95

CHAPTER 1 - INTONATION

When it comes to fretless basses, the first "concern" that usually comes to mind is about intonation. Why complicate your life with such an instrument when you can simplify it with the famous frets! Because, as already mentioned, they are two completely different instruments, so if you decide to start playing a fretless bass, you have to take into account the fact that you will practically have to start from scratch (or almost) with the study of an instrument. Obviously it's not like going from a piano to the trumpet, or from the violin to the drums, many things remain more or less the same (tuning in fourths, number and arrangement of strings, etc. etc.), but it's not even possible (unless you're Jaco or Gary Willis!!) to play a fretless well in two days. So, as with all fretless instruments (see strings), one of the first and most important things to do is to work on intonation. On how to approach this very difficult thing, there are many different views on the fretless bass. There are those who believe that the visual signs on the fretboard are fundamental for playing the fretless in tune, there are those who believe that they are an excellent help and that they serve to orient us and give us references, then there are those who believe that the fretboard should be looked at as little as possible, and finally there are those who believe that the fretless should be studied just like the strings (double bass, cello, violin etc.). I don't think there is a correct approach and a less correct one, I'll just tell you what it is and what has been mine, and I'll give you some interviews about it, of famous bassists, that I found doing a bit of research! Let me say that there are basically 4 types of fretless basses:

- The fretless bass that is already "born" with a blind fretboard (without any visual signs)
- The fretted bass from which the frets are removed (defretted)
- The bass that is "born" fretless, on which the "fret" signs are "drawn".
- The fretless bass (native or fretted) that has fret marks applied to the side of the neck.)

For the most part, my fretless training, and therefore the main part of my studies, was done with a Cort 4-string with a blind fretboard. The bass in question had (has) only some markers on the side of the neck (I honestly don't remember how many and made how, I think drawn dots). At that time (around 2003), I was taking private lessons from a guy who, when I told him about my purchase of the Cort, strongly advised me to study it as if it were an "upright" instrument (double bass for example), that it would be a long and difficult study, but that would allow me to play this kind of bass without having to constantly look at where to press the strings to be in tune. Obviously, at the beginning, out of 10 notes, I played nine and a half out of

Intonation

EX 1 - Min. 7:34

Bass

Error to avoid - Trying to find intonation with glissato EX 2 - Practice on all strings

EX 3 - Min 8:36 - Open string and same note with string pressed together

EX 4 - Min 9:45 - Fifth

EX 5

EX 6 - Perfect fifths per semitone

Etc.

EX 7

Etc.

EX 8 - Other fingerings for fifths

Etc.

EX 9 - Study of fifths on a major scale

(E)

EX 10 - Alternatives

EX 11

CHAPTER 2 - SOUND

Over the past few years, I've received a few hundred (I kid you not) questions about how I got my sound on fretless. The most common ones are "What effects do you use?", "How do you adjust the action?", "What strings?", "How open do you keep the tone and how much do you keep the two pickups?", "How much truss-rod release do you have?"..etc. etc. But the absolute most received is "How did you achieve Jaco's sound?". Obviously I say that I am honored to receive so many requests and especially that my sound is compared to that of my absolute idol (Jaco), but at the same time I feel a little difficult to answer, first because I assure you that my sound is light years away from that of Pastorius (it could not be otherwise), and second, unlike what you might think, I do not use practically nothing effects, and I'm not even too careful with the settings (truss-rod, action, etc..). (I talked a lot about this in my book "[The Electric Bass Workshop](#)"). Let's start from an assumption, the same bass, with the same strings, the same setup, the same electronics, the same amp, the same everything, played by me and immediately after played by any other bassist in the world, will have two different "sounds". This is as true for fretless as it is for fretted. The fact is that it is a physical thing, everyone has their own way of plucking, has their own touch, their own taste, their own feeling with the instrument, and many other factors. For me the bass is an extension of myself, when I play it, what comes out of a system, or an amp, or whatever, it's like it's me speaking, but not with my voice, with the bass. This is very difficult to explain, but I think that even if I had the chance (maybe!) to go on stage with Jaco (as well as any other bass player in the world) and he would have said, "hey man, you play a little bit, I'm going to have a beer!", the sound that would have come out of his magnificent Acoustic 360 amp, would not have even come close to his. Yet I would have used the same bass (and what a bass!), the same amplification, etc. So? So we all have to put our minds at ease, no one will have the sound of Jaco, no one will have the sound of Gary Willis, or Marcus Miller, or Rocco Prestia etc. etc. And no one will have the sound of Igor Sardi or all of you! We can, however, while maintaining our own style, try to take cues (attention, taking cues does not mean imitating, copying or seeking perfection at all costs) from those we like (for example, in addition to Jaco, I love the sound of Pino Palladino and Massimo Moriconi) and then find our musical identity and our sound. I am convinced that everyone must have their own well-defined personality. No one will hire you or look for a band because you are a copy of Marcus Miller, but more likely they will look for you because you have a nice sound that (at the limit) is very reminiscent of Marcus Miller. Those are two different things, but, in my opinion, fundamental. I hope I've explained myself, it's not easy, but I tried!!! So, back to the sound, I always try, with the utmost sincerity, to limit myself to tell you everything I know about my instrumentation and my setup, always premising

Vibrato

Free time
EX 55 - Perform the exercise very slowly, and use all 4 fingers of the left hand to vibrate on the same note.

Free time
**change notes and strings*
EX 56 - Perform slow and wide vibrato

Free time
EX 57 **EX 58** - Now perform a slow, tight vibrato

EX 59 - Now a fast and wide vibrato **EX 60** - Now a fast and tight vibrato

EX 61 - Difference between "normal" notes and notes with light vibrato

EX 62 - Difference between 'light' and 'intense' vibrato

Free time
EX 63 - Vibrato on different notes and rhythmic figures

Every Time You Go Away

Bass Line By Pino Palladino

Paul Young

From Album *The Secret of Association* (1985)

Words & Music by Daryl Hall

About ♩ = 82

Intro

F Fmaj7

B^b(add9)

Csus4

C

Fretless

1 1 1 3 5 3 3 1 3 | 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 | 3 5 3 3 3 3 3 3

F Fmaj7

B^b(add9)

Csus4

C

Csus4

C

1 1 1 1 3 5 3 3 1 3 | 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 | 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 | 3 3 3 5 7

A Verse 1

0:26

F

Am

B^b

C⁶/₉

1 1 1 1 | 0 0 0 0 | 1 1 1 1 | 3 3 3 3 5 7 5 3 3 3

F

Am

B^b

C⁶/₉

8va

1 1 1 1 | 0 0 0 0 | 1 1 1 1 | 3 3 3 17/19 17 17/19 17 17/15 17 17/15 17

B Bridge 1

0:49

Dm

A7

8va

B^b

B⁷

10 12 12 10 12 10 9 12 12 | 12 0 15 17 12 14 | 6 6 6 10 9 12 11 8 9 6 0