SCOTT'S BASS LESSONS



FREE LESSON BOOK

Slap Bass

SCOTTSBASSLESSONS.COM



Slap Bass



Join Ian Martin Allison as he shows you what everybody thinks is the only thing bass players do—slappa da bass! Rather than show you many different techniques as no doubt found on the internet, let Ian demonstrate what he's found to be the *best* technique for beginner, intermediate or *boss* players alike.

Slap 101

Slap & Pop

The first thing to know when learning to play slap bass is...how to **slap** the string:

— Point your slapping thumb absolutely *parallel* to the strings.

— Strike *through* the string using the bone on the side of your thumb. Don't "bounce" your finger off the string.

— End the stroke on the small piece of the fretboard just after the last fret.

— Your goal should be a clear, consistent sound across all the strings as you slap each string.



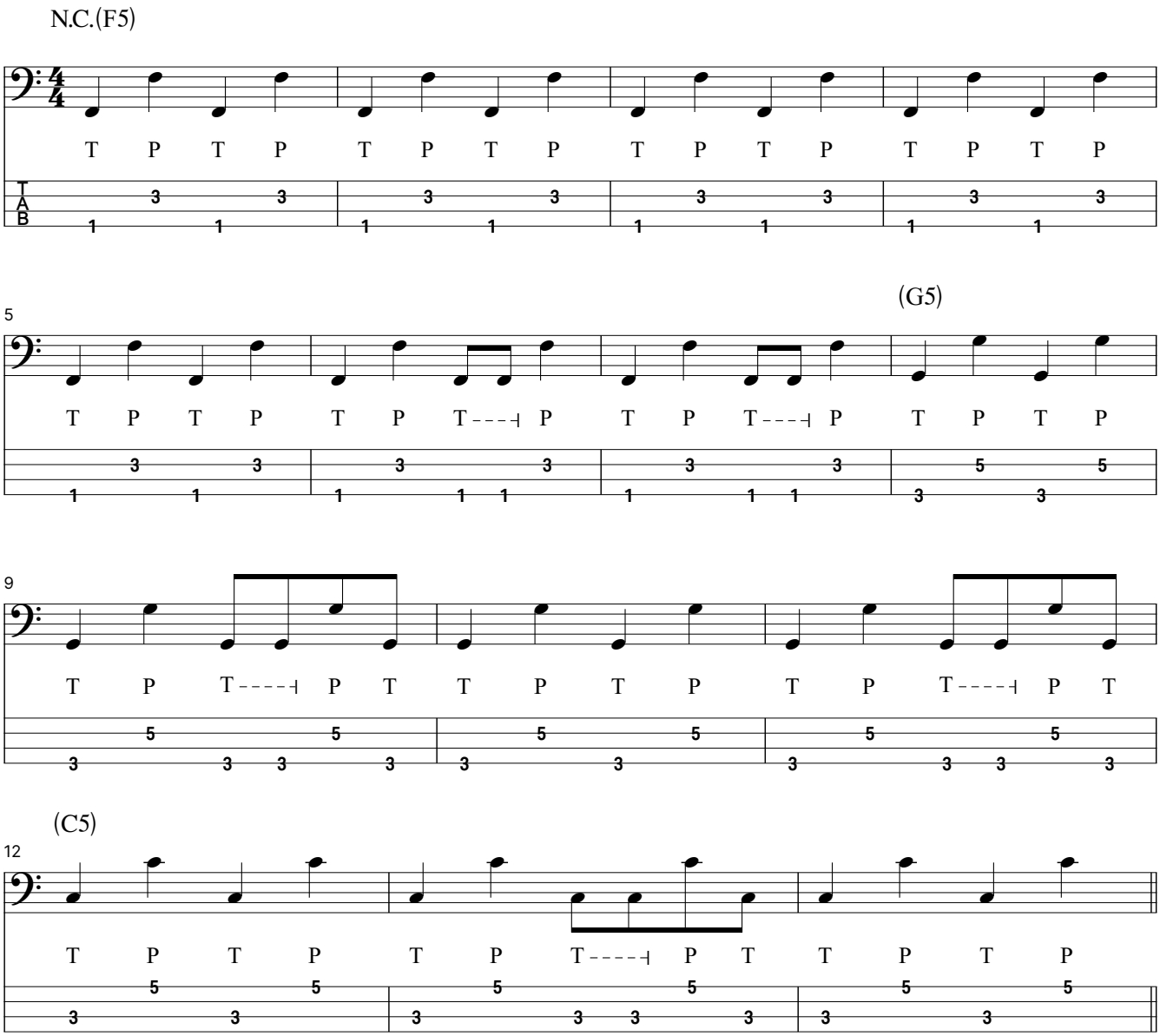


But slapping is only one part of playing slap bass. We also need to know how to **pop** a string. Although you can use any finger that's comfortable, try using either your index finger or middle finger—or both. Hook your finger under the string and pull up to produce a "popping" sound. (Ian prefers his index/first finger for the A and D strings, and his middle/second finger for the G string.)

continued →

Playing Octaves

A simple way to get your hands comfortable with the slap technique is to play octaves. You can think of the slap stroke as the “bass (kick) drum” and the pop as the “snare.” Start slowly and be sure the notes are even, then work up to a tempo that you’re comfortable with. Don’t be afraid to add in some articulations (slides into notes, muted notes, dead notes, etc.) to mix things up, too:



Next, let’s look at some actual songs...



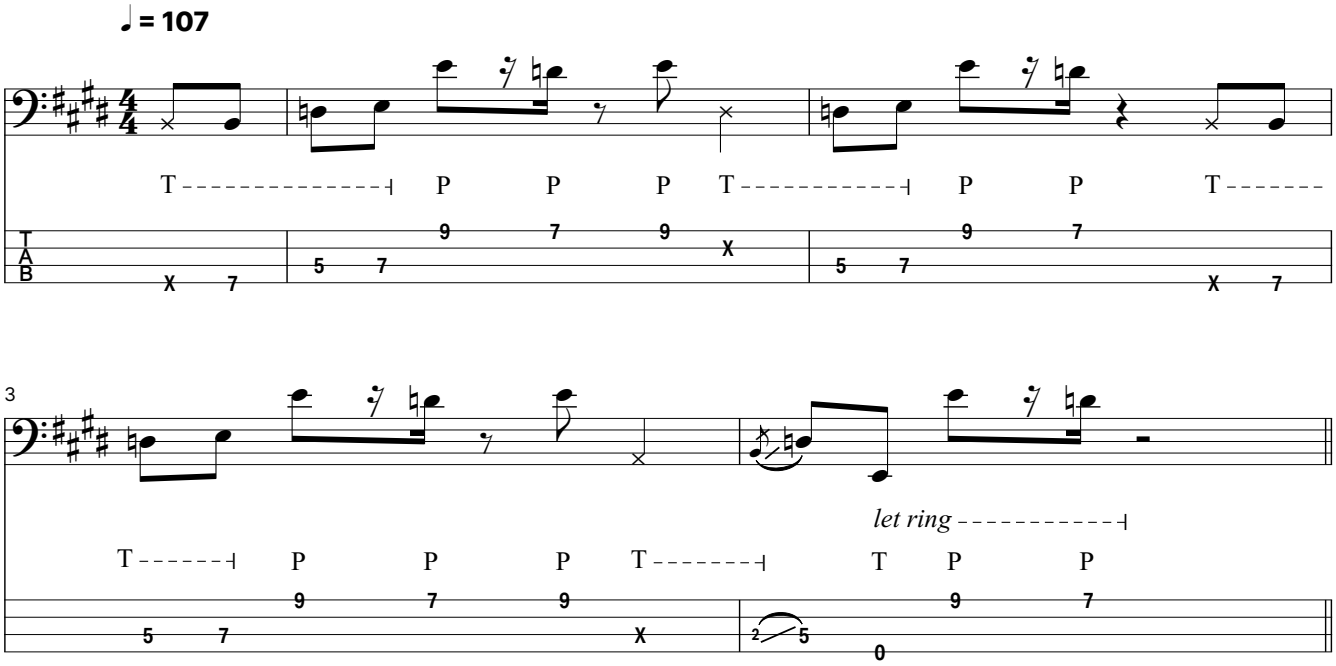
"Thank You (Falletinme Be Mice Elf Agin)"

released 1969
artist Sly and the Family Stone
bassist Larry Graham



"If you're gonna slap the bass, you gotta start with Larry Graham!"

While a "beginner-level" tune, the rhythm can be a little tricky. It very well may be the first recorded example of the slap technique, "thumpin' and pluckin'" together:



Notes:

— Play all the thumbed notes a little short, but not quite staccato.
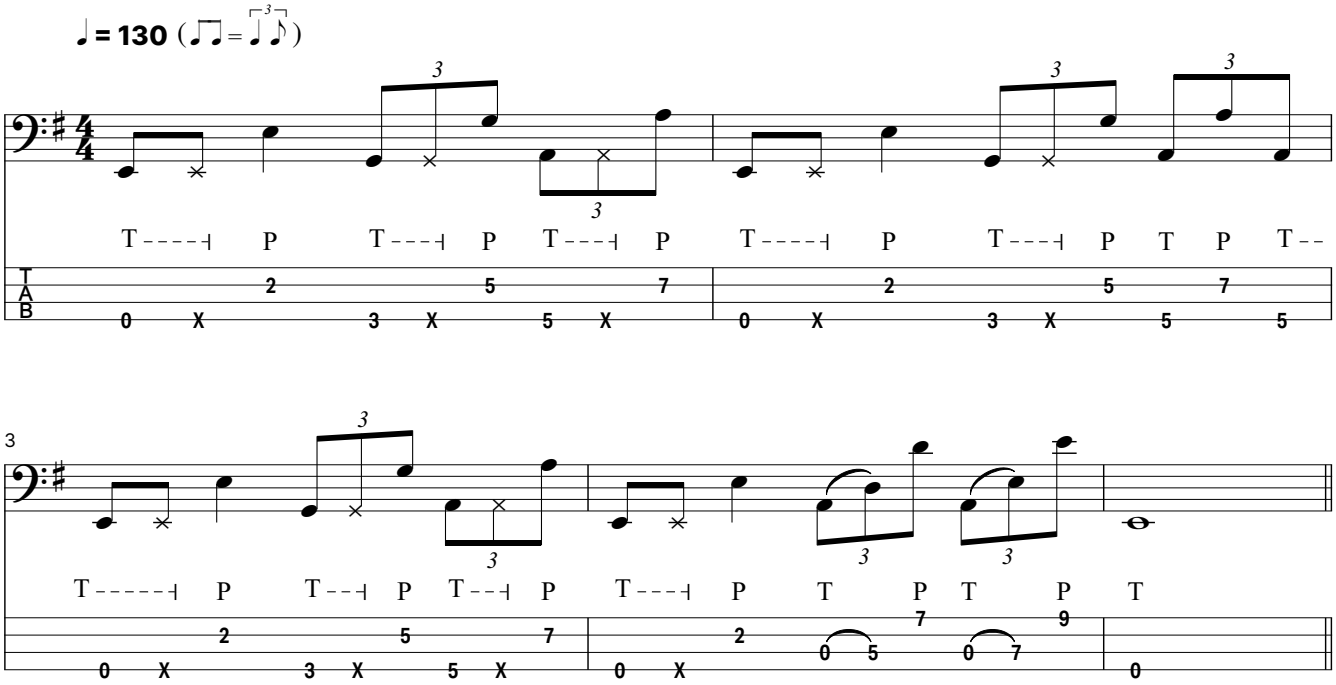
— Be sure to let that low E note ring out in the last measure!



“Higher Ground”

album ***Mother’s Milk*** (1979)
artist Red Hot Chili Peppers
bassist Flea

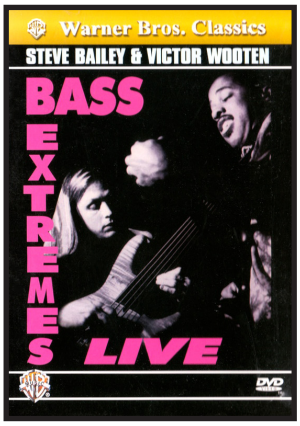
An “intermediate-level” tune, this Stevie Wonder classic incorporates a triplet feel, and ups the tempo a bit, too:



Notes:

— Pay attention to the swing feel indicator in the tempo, or the first beat of Bars 1–4 won’t sound correct..

— You can also play the dead notes on beat 1 1/2 in Bars 1, through 4 as open E notes, too.



"Pretty Little Lady Groove"

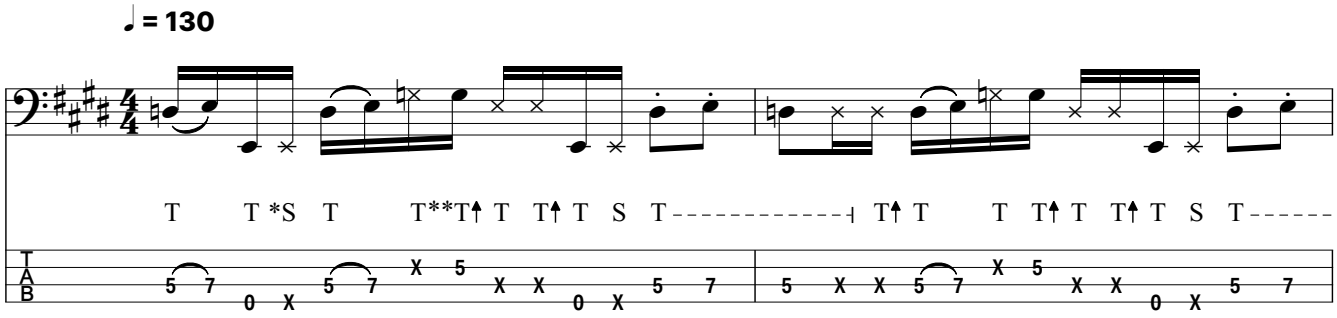
album ***Bass Extremes Live DVD*** (1992)
artist Steve Bailey and Victor Wooten
bassist Victor Wooten

The final bass line is by Victor Wooten, so you know it's beyond expert level, it's **boss** level! His playing is so smooth, you might miss what he's doing on the video: *double thumbing*—a technique where you rapidly play a string twice with the thumb, once on a downstroke then again on an upstroke. It may look simple, but that's hardly the case! But note that if you play *through* the string on the downstroke, you'll already be set up to play the upstroke to sound the string again.

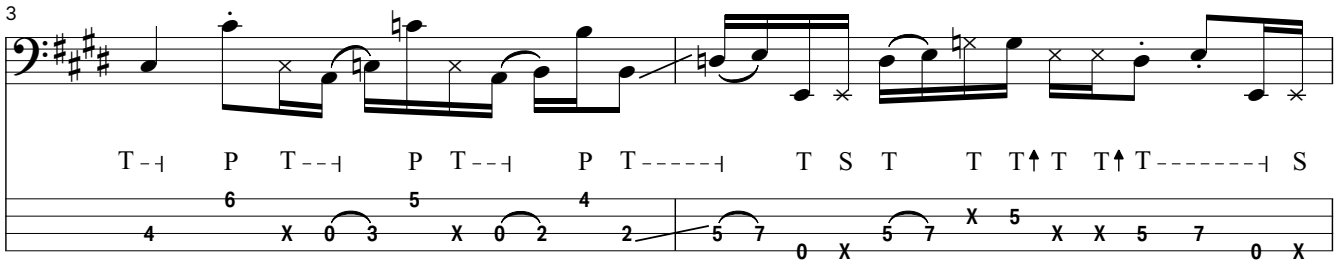
This tune also features a *fret-hand slap*: drop your finger(s) onto the string(s) to create a percussive "click" sound; do not fret any notes.

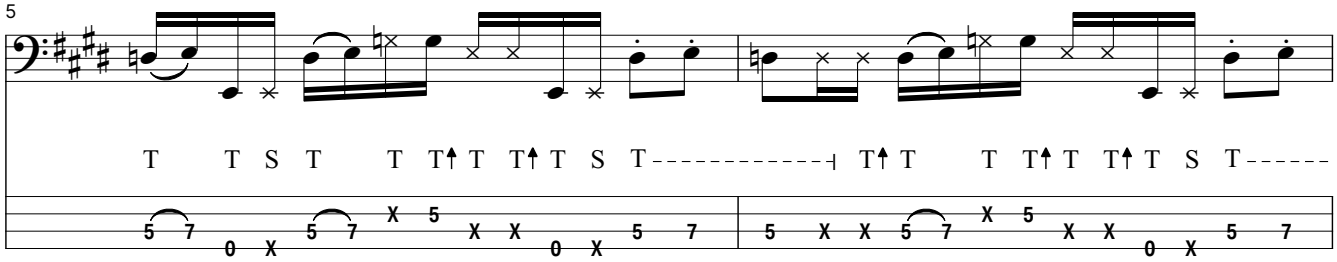
Let's look at this fantastic bass line on the next page.

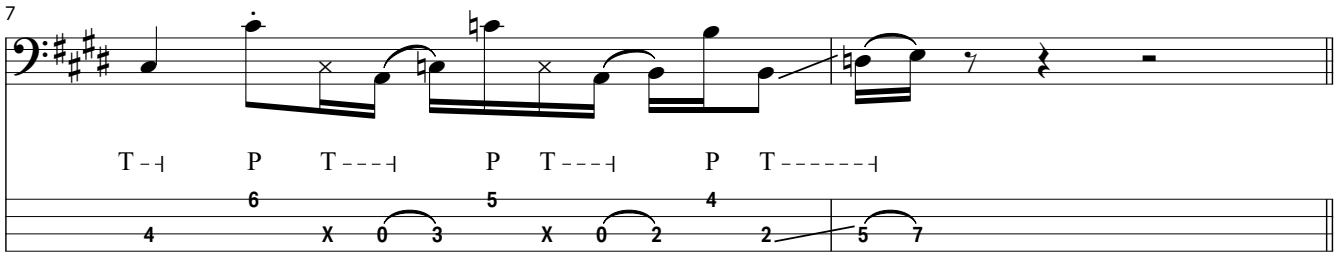
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*S=Slap down on string w/ fretting hand to mute, as indicated, throughout.
**Double thumb; strike string w/ an upward motion of the thumb, as indicated, throughout..







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