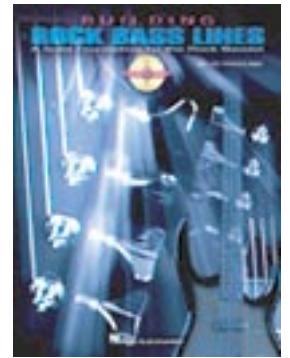


From the book:

BUILDING ROCK BASS LINES
A Solid Foundation for the
Rock Bassist
 by Ed Friedland
 #HL 695692 Book/CD \$17.95 (US).

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Play the Root

The most important aspect of bass playing is to play the root of the chord. It's simple: when you see a chord symbol, or someone tells you a chord name, the root is the same as the letter name. For example: the chords E7, E minor 7th, E major 7th, E diminished 7th, E augmented major 7th, and E minor (major 7th)—all have the same root—E! It's up to you to decide which E you need to play. From your exploration of the fingerboard, you've discovered that you have at least seven E notes (more if you have over twenty frets, or a five- or six-string bass). Each E has its own particular function and flavor. For simplicity's sake, let's stick with the LOW ones; after all, you're a bass player and that's what we do—play low notes. Let's look at how to put this idea into action.

Before you play, you should always tune up. If you have a tuner, great—use it now. If not, here are the open strings to tune up with.

TUNE UP

Here's a very simple chord progression. Coincidentally, it uses three chords whose root notes are open strings. Be sure to mute the open D and A strings as you move back down to the E string. Notice that under each note is the letter R, which stands for Root. The root is the same as "1" in the numerical system you learned earlier; they are interchangeable. From now on, you'll see the numbers (and other markers, as they're introduced) under the notes. This will help you learn how the line is functioning, which makes it easier to find the notes in other places on the fingerboard. We'll learn to play this example with three different rhythms. First, solid quarter notes:

AUDIO CLIP

E A D A *Play 4 times*

R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R

It's amazing how something so simple can sound so cool, isn't it? Get into the habit of finding new locations to play the same note. Check out the following fingerboard grid, and play the last example using some of the new note locations shown.

fret:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
D							●		●
A		●		●		●	●		
E					●		●		
					A		E		

Now that you've experimented with different note placements, let's learn this example with other rhythms. First, we'll use the dotted quarter/eighth note rhythm. Notice that it has a distinctly different feel from the first example. Also notice that the kick drum part matches the bass line. This is a very common approach in the rhythm section (bass and drums) for all kinds of music. The kick drum is one of the most important things to listen to when deciding what rhythm to choose for your own lines. While you're listening to the differences, also pay attention to how the guitar part has changed; the whole progression has a totally different feel.

AUDIO CLIP

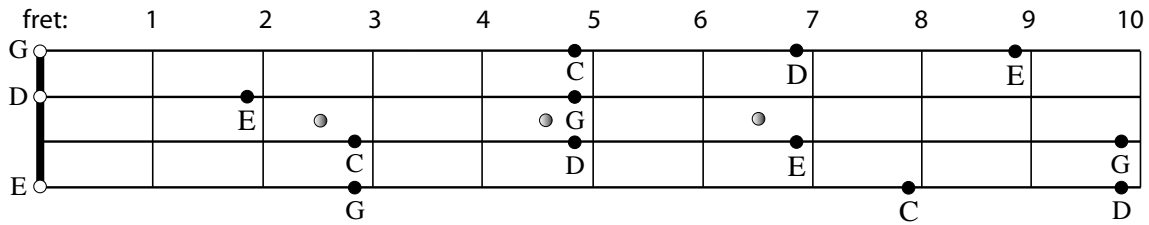
The next rhythm is the classic “pumping eighth-note” feel. This is a great way to make a tune move. Pay close attention to the consistency of your eighth notes—make sure they are rhythmically accurate, consistent in volume and tone. Again, notice how the drum and guitar parts have changed to match the bass line. These decisions are made during band rehearsals, so you need to be prepared to change your part to accommodate the melody and feel of a tune—after all, we are there mainly to *support* the music.

AUDIO CLIP

Let's practice this a little more. Here's another progression; it's 1–6–4–5 using the numerical system. Once again, we're only playing root notes. I've started with the low G on the third fret of the E string—it's the only location for that particular G. The next note is the open E string. The most logical place to play C is the third fret of the A string. D can be played either as open D, or on the fifth fret of the A string.

AUDIO CLIP

Did you notice that the second chord is an Em (minor) chord? No problémo—play E, and you're all set. Before we use the next rhythm, let's check out the fingerboard grid and see where else these notes can be found.



The grid goes up to the tenth fret, where you can find D on the E string and G on the A string. There are several places to find the roots of this chord progression; get familiar with many different ways to put them together. Look for ways to play them close to each other, although it is also common in rock bass to slide all over the neck—you can play this entirely on the E string if you want to. It’s kind of cool to slide into your notes sometimes, and the C and D notes on the E string carry a lot of weight. There is no “wrong” way to do it—as long as you’re playing the correct root—but keep in mind that the line has more integrity if you don’t make huge jumps in register. For example: open G to open E, to fifth-fret C on the G string, to open D. That combination jumps register three times and sounds too choppy. Get the picture?

To try out the next rhythm, let’s go back to the first set of note choices with a variation on the dotted quarter/eighth-note pattern. This time, make it a quarter note with an eighth rest on beats 2 and 4, and play an eighth-note “pickup” to beat 3 and beat 1 of the next measure. This is a great way to tighten up the feel by leaving those beats open for the snare drum to hit alone. It’s a subtle way we can affect the groove.

AUDIO CLIP 

G Em C D

Play 4 times

Did you notice how the drums and guitar sound different from the previous track? There are many styles that can be called “rock,” and many ways to play within any given style. You will need to be able to play your bass lines with several approaches. By listening to the music, you will learn to instinctively play the right groove.