

# JAZZ

ALEX CARRERI

# ELECTRIC

*Foreword by Marco Panascia*

# BASS

**Playing the electric bass  
from traditional  
to contemporary jazz**

**VOLUME 1**

Techniques and basic concepts  
for comping

ISUKU VERLAG



First edition

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## FOREWORD

Amongst the several musicians that I have come in contact with during the course of my career, Alex Carreri is one of those rare colleagues that stands out for his genuine passion and dedication towards the electric bass, and the history of this still relatively young musical instrument. Such passion has clearly manifested itself during Alex's distinguished career, full of important professional collaborations, and with a widespread recognition as an electric bass and double bass pedagogue. This book sums up Alex's thirty-plus year experience both as a performer and as an educator, offering a solid theoretical foundation to all the electric bassists who are just beginning to learn the jazz idiom, and at the same time, offering some more challenging material for the more experienced electric bassists who need to expand their overall knowledge, in order to improve their playing skills within a jazz context.

After presenting a brief history of the electric bass, from the moment that it was conceived by Leo Fender in 1951 all the way to our current era, including a reference discography and a list of the most notable jazz standard songs, Alex offers a gradual introduction to the basic rhythmic skills that are at the foundation of the jazz idiom, and then he accurately explains what melodic and harmonic elements are important to know, in order to create a walking bass line in a jazz setting. This book features plenty of examples and exercises that illustrate each new concept as it gets introduced, which is essential when learning this art form. As an added bonus, most examples are available as audio tracks, allowing the students to learn the correct way to execute such examples.

The most advanced bass lines that are featured in the final part of the book, and that are based on all the concepts shown in the book's chapters, are a perfect example of Alex's excellent musicality, providing every serious electric bass student with the opportunity to grow musically, regardless of their current skill level. I am confident that this book will be offering some important insight to my private bass students and at the New School University in New York City, where I am currently an adjunct faculty member.

This book is one of the first examples of its kind, in the realm of electric bass pedagogy focused purely in a jazz context, and it stands as an essential contribution to this nascent educational segment that is still lacking some really noteworthy publications. This excellent opus is a source of great inspiration for me, and I wholeheartedly recommend it to all the bassists around the world, who are interested in refining their conceptual and performing skills within a jazz setting.

*Marco Panascia*  
*New York, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018*  
*[www.marcopanascia.com](http://www.marcopanascia.com)*

*“Art is not the application of a canon of beauty but what the instinct and the brain can conceive beyond any canon.”*

*Pablo Picasso*

*This book is dedicated to the memory of my teacher Rino Zurzolo, a musician and artist of the highest caliber, who was able to inspire me and encourage me in my journey of professional and human growth.*

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## INTRODUCTION

*“What’s the bass player’s role within a band?”*

*“What are the musical qualities that mostly inform a jazz musician?”*

*“What’s the best way for electric bassists to express their ideas within a jazz context, fusing traditional and contemporary ideas?”*

These were some of the questions that, as many other aspiring musicians, I asked myself several years ago when I decided to devote myself to a thorough study of the electric bass. Aided by a genuine passion and curiosity about all things related to music, I reached a clearer vision and better awareness, going through different gradual phases. The experiences that I gathered, as a student first, and later as a professional musician and educator, have allowed me to bring into focus all the necessary fundamental concepts in order to tackle the bass player’s role, by discovering ways to have a coherent approach towards music, and in particular, the jazz language. After some accurate elaboration, and the encouragement of my students and colleagues, I began writing this book in December 2016. By documenting this activity, my wish was to offer my personal contribution to whomever is intending to start studying music, with a special regard to the electric bass and jazz, with a professional approach.

### Objectives and recipients

This book was conceived and created, with the following objectives in mind:

- Providing a textbook for all electric bass students in conservatories or music schools and academies.
- Providing reference teaching material for all electric bass educators.
- Creating a tutorial informed by a methodology that would take into account the sonic, stylistic and historical features of the electric bass within a jazz context.
- Achieving a synthesis between the traditional literature geared towards jazz double bass, and the more modern literature linked to the expressive and technical features that are specific to the electric bass.

### Subjects and purpose of the material

Even though the material in this book is based on content that is already present in other books, I have intentionally created a more modern and articulate outline, striving to reformulate the order, presentation and analysis of the fundamental concepts. I have conceived this educational program as made up by different levels, and thus, it will consist of separate volumes. This first volume is dedicated to **comping in a jazz setting**, and it focuses on the following elements: a brief history of the instrument; rhythmic interpretation when playing with a *straight or swing feel*; what notes to choose when creating a bass line; employing different types of scales and arpeggios; the chord progressions and forms that are typical of the jazz language. And, in order to offer the students a real perception of the subjects above, this book comes with 233 audio tracks that were recorded live, and linked to the vast majority of all the examples and exercises offered here.

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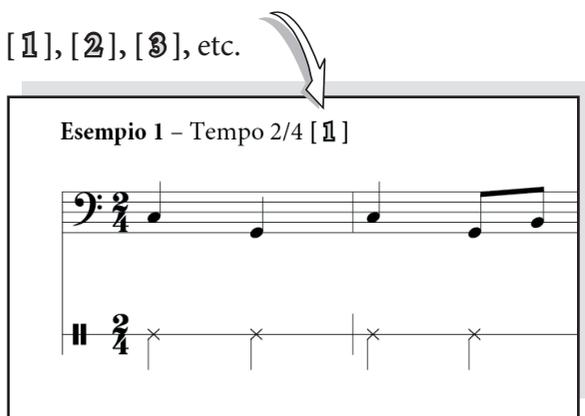
### Required prerequisites

In order to get the most out of this book, prior proficiency in some basic elements of music, such as reading, intervals, and the fundamental elements of harmony, is advisable. While some of these topics are briefly mentioned in this volume, it is recommended that students supplement their knowledge through other books that are fully focused on such topics.

### Audio files

All exercises and examples that are accompanied by audio tracks, are indicated with these symbols:

[1], [2], [3], etc.



The image shows a musical example titled "Esempio 1 - Tempo 2/4 [1]". It consists of two staves. The top staff is a bass clef with a 2/4 time signature, containing a sequence of notes: a quarter note G2, a quarter note F2, a quarter note E2, and a quarter note D2. The bottom staff is a percussion staff with a 2/4 time signature, showing four quarter notes marked with an 'x' on a vertical line. A grey arrow points from the [1] symbol in the title to the first note of the bass staff.

Download the audio tracks in mp3 format at the following link:  
[www.isukuverlag.com/IT/MBJ1.zip](http://www.isukuverlag.com/IT/MBJ1.zip)

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*Marco Panascia for his wonderful foreword.*

*Lauro Taormina for believing in this educational project right away, and supporting me during the writing process and preparation for this book.*

*All the teachers whom I have studied with, and the artists whom I have collaborated with. They all helped me meaningfully shape my identity as a musician and educator.*

*Milestone School of Music – Piacenza, Ibanez Italia and Mogar Music – Milano, GR Bass, and Gallistrings for their logistical support and their gear.*

*The students who have followed me with interest and dedication during the past twenty years, inspiring me and encouraging me to find new and engaging teaching solutions all the time, and letting me explore different methodological strategies.*

*Stefania and Maria Giulia for the love and support that they have shown in each and every moment.*

# CHAPTER 1 – METRIC DIVISIONS

Objective: *Acquiring the basic rhythmic skills of the jazz language*

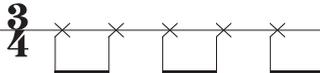
1 – 1

## TIME SIGNATURES AND THEIR FEATURES

Before focusing on the topics connected with reading and interpreting a swing feel, let's briefly review the most important time signatures and their features.

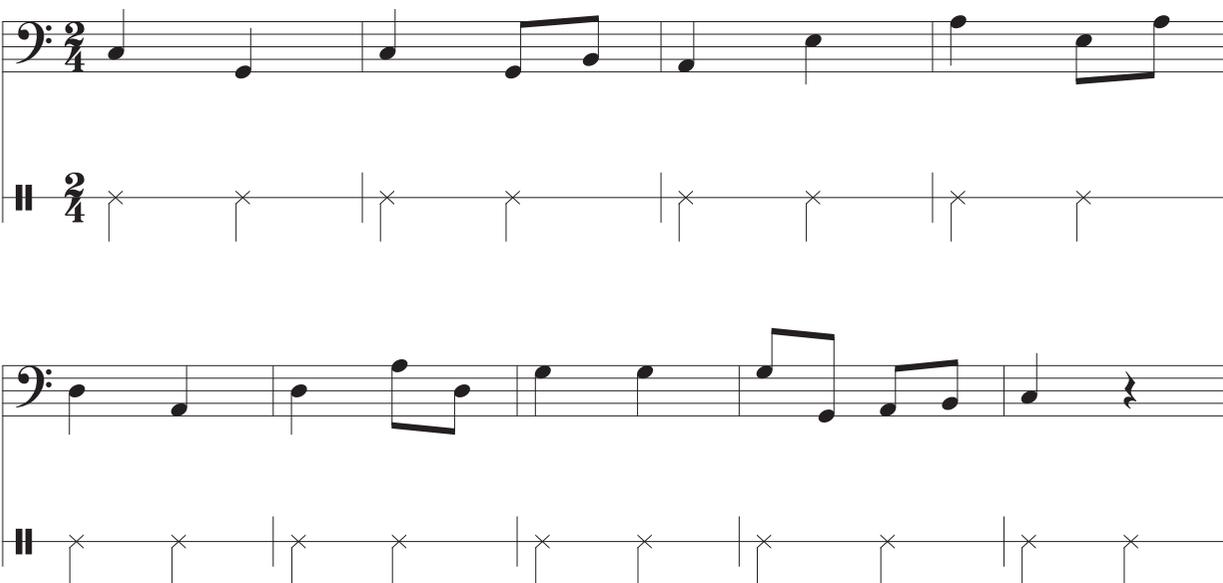
### SIMPLE TIME SIGNATURES

**Simple time signatures** consist of a sequence of regular movements that are accented every two, three or four beats, and that can be subdivided into two equal parts. The most common simple time signatures are: 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4.

	BINARY METER		TERNARY METER			QUATERNARY METER					
BEATS	1	2	1	2	3	1	2	3	4		
	>		>			>					
											
											

### EXAMPLES

#### Example 1 – 2/4 Time Signature [ 1 ]



The first example shows a melody in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. The drum pattern in treble clef shows a simple 2/4 rhythm with 'x' marks for beats.

The second example shows a melody in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. The drum pattern in treble clef shows a simple 2/4 rhythm with 'x' marks for beats.