

PLAYING BASS IN A VOCAL SETTING

ELECTRIC VS. ACOUSTIC

Know when the arrangement calls for electric or acoustic bass. Electric tends to have a clearer articulation and is well suited to latin, funk, R&B and pop styles. The acoustic tends to blend a bit more and fits well in all traditional jazz styles, especially ballads. Of course, if your bass player only plays one of these instruments, you can make either work.

KNOW HOW TO EQ THE BASS TO FIT THE GROUP

The electric bass will often sound thin and slightly abrasive if care is not taken with the equalization. That can be found on the amplifier (some basses have onboard EQ). To fix it, turn up the lower frequencies slightly while turning down the higher ones. The acoustic bass tends to have the opposite problem, depending on the instrument and amplification method. Removing some of the low end and raising the overall volume can often make a muddy upright audible behind a group of singers.

KNOW YOUR STYLES

It's helpful for a bassist to be knowledgeable in as many styles as possible. One set of vocal music might shift styles multiple times. Rhythm section parts often don't include a written bass line and will assume that the player can "play the changes" in the given style. Common styles include: medium-swing, up-swing, bossa-nova, samba, jazz-latin, afro-cuban 6/8, blues shuffle, funk, disco—the list goes on. Even if a bass part is provided, it won't contain the articulations and nuances of a particular style. *Listen!*



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