

DOUBLE-STOPPING

PART THREE



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BASSIST WITH THE WDR BIG BAND COLOGNE

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate level

AIMS OF TUTORIAL: Using triple- and quadruple-stops

IN THE LAST TUTOR (*DB*, Autumn 2007) we looked at some funky double-stops on the blues. This time we'll explore playing three and four notes simultaneously to outline more advanced harmonies. By adding more notes, we can play the root while at the same time introducing colourful chord tones like the 3rd, 7th, 9th and 13th.

These techniques add a virtuosic flair to your improvised bass lines. Triple- and quadruple-stops do not work in every situation, but when used judiciously they are some of the most beautiful – and surprising – sounds that a bass can produce.

EXAMPLE 1

Example 1 shows an open string A pedal point with different double-stops on top. The roots and fifths (A and E) in **BAR 1 AND 2** create a powerfully resonant sound. In **BAR 3** the A, E, and B create an open-sounding chord with no clear 3rd or 7th tone. The ambiguity of these three notes makes this a practical triple-stop to use over several different chord sounds: AMaj7, A7, Amin7, Asus. **BAR 4** of Example 1 uses the low A string with the 3rd and 7th of the AMaj7 chord on top, creating a thick, lush triple-stop. In **BAR 5** the Amin chord is outlined using the low A string, the 5th of the chord (the E on the D string in thumb position), and the third of the chord up high on the G string.

These examples are practical because they use an open string with various chord tones on top. You can experiment with the other open strings to create three- and four-note chords on the bass.

EXAMPLES 2 AND 3

You can also play triple-stops by fingering all of the notes and using no open strings as in Example 2. This excerpt shows the fingerings for a C7 chord and a CMaj7 chord. Note that the first triple-stop in this example is played using the first finger 'bridging' both the low C and the high Bb.

Since the notes in Example 2 are all in the low register of the bass and also within one octave, they do not speak as well as the chords in Example 1. However, these rich chords can be used effectively in the right context. Example 3 shows how Oscar Pettiford used the Maj7 triple-stop on his cadenza to *Stardust* (rec. 1955, available on the CD *Another One*, Rhino-WEA).

EXAMPLE 4

The great electric bassists of the last 30 years have inspired many double bassists to explore the use of harmonics. While harmonics are nothing new to classical bassists, our electric brothers and sisters have raised the bar for creating new sounds on the top end of the instrument. Example 4 shows two typical chords made popular by Jaco Pastorius. In **BAR 1** the low C is held down with the third finger, and the notes E, A and D are lightly touched with the first finger. By raking across all four strings with the right hand in a quick, sweeping motion, a gorgeous CMaj6/9 quadruple-stop is produced. In **BAR 2** the Emin6/9 is played by first hitting the low E string, then striking the three notes on top. The C# and F# harmonics are found on the A and D strings respectively, in a position slightly 'sharp' from the low C# and F# on those strings. The high G harmonic is found above the note C on the G string. I would suggest raking these three notes with the right-hand thumb in an outward motion (away from your body).

VIGNETTE

To end this three-part series on double-, triple-, and quadruple-stops, I have written a short vignette. This is a rubato piece for pizzicato bass which uses many of the chords and intervals from my recent tutors. Play each bar slowly and make sure you can hear the sonority of the chords and intervals. You can hear and download all of these examples on my website at www.goldsby.de.

