

Practicing

No matter how accomplished you become as a player, you will always need to practice. A consistent practice schedule is very important, especially if you don't work much with your band. Think of your musical ability as a muscle; it can't be maintained, much less developed, without playing and exercise.

The late Jaco Pastorius practiced scales and used them as the basis for his approach. Considering that all music is based on scales, knowledge of them is important to any serious bassist. Memorize the following major scale exercises, so that you can play them in any key or position. For instance, for the first exercise, start

on the low E note, and play the exercise in the key of E major. Then play the exercise in F major. Continue to play the exercise, moving up a half step at a time on the low E string, until you reach the twelfth fret. Use this scale exercise for your daily warm-up. Play the second exercise in all twelve major keys as well. Through repetition, you will develop a better ear and the ability to locate notes on the fingerboard when playing unfamiliar phrases. You will also become comfortable playing in all positions on the neck. Always practice with a metronome!

◆ E Major Scale



Two systems of musical notation for the E Major Scale in 4/4 time. The first system shows the ascending scale with notes E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, D, E. The second system shows the descending scale with notes D, C#, B, A, G#, F#, E. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 below the notes.

G Major Scale in Thirds



Two systems of musical notation for the G Major Scale in Thirds in 4/4 time. The first system shows the ascending scale with notes G, B, D, F#, G, B, D, G. The second system shows the descending scale with notes F#, D, B, G, F#, D, B, G. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 below the notes.



Artist's Spotlight

Edgar Willis

When it comes to blues/soul upright bass playing, the absolute master was the late Edgar Willis. His amazing gut-string tone and melodic phrasing graced the early recordings of Ray Charles. Oftentimes unconventional in his approach, he always made his melodic phrases fit the music with outstanding results.

Upper-register runs with a sweet, woody tone were Willis's hallmark, yet he never gave the impression of playing too busy. For example, check out the amazing "soulfulness" he brings to Ray Charles's "Georgia on My Mind"—this is the quintessential "uptown" blues ballad. His use of triplet patterns, swing, and dancing runs provided the musical backdrop for Ray's vocal interpretations. One might think that a bass player with a lot of facility might be "edgy" in his time feel, but Edgar played with one of the most relaxed and widest grooves imaginable.

Edgar was also a pioneer in the blues/funk field, and Charles's "Unchain My Heart," and "One Mint Julep" are perfect examples of his "funkiness." Other examples of his artistry include "Crying Time," "That Lucky Old Sun," "You Don't Know Me," and the great "Born to Lose"—all by Ray Charles (recordings circa 1960-70).

The tone of Edgar's bass is attributed to an upright bass played with gut strings—the perfect combination for expressing the music of Ray Charles.

When talking with players of that period, I was told that it was hard to hear Edgar because he didn't use an amp! Even in big concerts, the only device he used was a mike placed in front of his bass. Imagine playing in a concert hall with a full horn section and having to play as hard as you can—only being able to feel your bass sound!

Along with being a great blues bassist, Edgar could also make every song he played really swing. Purchase Ray Charles's Greatest Hits, Vol. 1, to hear what I'm talking about. I am very pleased to present these bass lines in the style of legendary bassist Edgar Willis.

Jump Swing



Slow Blues

18 Slow $\text{♩} = 72$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

F

B^b **F**

C **B^b** **F** **C**

F

B^b **F**

C **B^b** **F** **C** **G^b** **F**