SAMPLE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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(Research topic: origin of “walking bass” in jazz)


This book offers first-hand experiences and accounts related by an early bass master himself. The most helpful information found in this text is his own personal approach to walking bass lines, his experimentation with them when combined with his knowledge of harmony learned from a few college theory classes. Furthermore, it elaborates in greater detail than another article concerning Ben Webster’s influence on Mr. Hinton’s harmonic approach to bass lines. He also claims to have had an influence on the development of walking bass lines in jazz.


This text provides a comprehensive history of the Kansas City Jazz Scene from the late 19th-century until the mid 20th Century. As its focus is on the regional Midwest jazz scene, Walter Page is given a great deal of focus as is Count Basie’s band. There are a handful of quotes from colleagues of Page declaring him the initiator of walking bass lines, yet nearly every source regarding other bass players say the same thing.


This video allows Milt Hinton to demonstrate his slap bass technique so commonly heard on early jazz recordings with the bass and also sheds light on early bassists, their personalities and playing styles. Hinton is also interviewed by another great modern bassist, Mr. Ray Brown who produced the project. Mr. Brown’s interest, evident in his questions for more information regarding a few early bassists, is telling evidence of their influence upon his personal playing and approach to the instrument.


This article briefly speaks of Wellman Braud’s influence upon the young Milt Hinton. Wellman Braud was one of Duke Ellington’s first bassists who also doubled on tuba and bass, but converted strictly to using bass in 1927.

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This article, alluded to above, makes brief mention of Ben Webster’s influence upon Milt Hinton’s harmonic approach to bass lines. It also provides an additional account of the influence of the tuba on early bassists and their approach to the instrument.


This book is an exhaustive treatment of the early history of jazz. The author clearly relates the influence of the tuba on early bass players and how its continued use inhibited the progression of jazz. The walking bass emancipated soloists in their ability to pursue greater harmonic and melodic freedom as the rhythmic and harmonic foundations were provided by the bass. This book mentions specific recordings which the author has found useful and bassists where influential strides were made in the development of walking bass lines—particularly those by Wellman Braud with the Ellington orchestra. In this earlier published text he gives specific credit to Braud over Walter Page as the major innovator of walking bass lines.


This book is a follow up to the previous text and, as title demonstrates, covers the swing era and the evolutions in jazz. Of particular interest is that the author changes his tune regarding who was the most influential bassist in the development of walking bass lines. This perhaps explains the author’s entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* wherein he cites Walter Page as the ‘first master’ of walking bass lines. He attributes this recognition to three factors: the rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic nature of Page’s bass lines. There is not sufficient time to address these three components in this paper, but this would make an interesting study to compare the *quality* of early bass lines based upon these three factors.


This short article, which provides a basic definition, spurred the direction of this paper as it gives credit to one individual as the ‘first master’ of walking bass lines.


Shipton’s history sheds light on a white New Orleans bassist named Steve Brown who was one of the earliest recorded bassists. Brown developed a knack for slap-bass technique, and exerted a great influence on bassists such as Wellman Braud, Milt Hinton.
and Walter Page. This brings greater clout to the thesis of this paper, providing historical information which had been unattainable elsewhere.


This one resource is perhaps the most telling of all. It is a 3-CD set of early bass recordings with accompanying essays on each of the bassists, their contributions and a little about each of the groups with which they performed. It provides information on bassists that were unknown to the author with audio evidence of their playing styles. While not all of the bassists on the anthology have amazing things to offer, it gives credence to the claim that no single individual is the sole creator of walking bass lines as all of these individuals were part of shaping what became the standard practice in jazz today.


Pops Foster is one of the earliest bassists who stuck with jazz throughout his whole life. Many influential, early bassists such as Steve Brown, Bill Johnson and Wellman Braud eventually got out of the music scene and so their contributions were easily forgotten. Pops provides first hand accounts of what was going on before any of the music was or could be recorded. He spends quite a bit of time explaining how he started with bass, moved to tuba when it became the fashion in the early 1920s and then how he pushed to reinstate the bass as the instrument of choice at the end of the 1920s. Bertram Turetzky (a well known classical bass pedagogue and performer) contributes an informative introduction which comes to conclusions that contradict Mr. Schullers. There are also a few helpful and informative essays in-between chapters by jazz historian Ross Russell providing context for much of Pop’s commentary—particularly on the transition between tuba and bass.