

Hi Cees

I copied and pasted your great email into a document so that I could answer points specifically and also so I could italicize and format your text easily so you can visually determine which is me speaking and which was you.

What I'm hoping to do is lay out to you my goals with my course and how I'm aiming to achieve them.

*Q1 - I am right at the beginning of playing bass, I have played acoustic guitar as a teenager (aged 12 - 16) , I am 61 now :-)  
so you figure it out how long ago that was :-)*

*Picking up playing was one of the things on my list for > 60 and so I started again and love it.*

Loving it = inspiration and motivation. Check one.

*Q2 - Goals: playing the songs of my favourites (60's and 70's) and/or play with friends. If joining a band comes along, I may give it some thoughts, but the main objectives are playing the music I've grown up with, with or without friends playing together.*

This is really interesting to me. My course – How To Play Bass In 50 Songs (HTPB#50) is designed to equip beginner level students with the following:

- Detailed fretboard knowledge – learning all the notes of the fretboard is actually relatively simple and once done...it's there forever.
- The foundation of a good fretting hand technique (there are TWO different fingering systems required that you need to be able to use and switch seamlessly between)
- The foundation of a good plucking hand technique – the course will focus on fingerstyle playing with two fingers using the rest stroke. Plectrum playing will be addressed at a future point.
- Strong and practical understanding of whole note rhythms, half note rhythms, quarter note and eighth note rhythms. The bass is the glue between the drums and the harmony – so we have to understand rhythm (and be able to execute it) as well as a drummer. This will involve reading rhythms on a staff...it's like learning just the vowels of the alphabet. If you can count to four and understanding subdivisions you can learn to read rhythms. (I.e. it's so “difficult” that they teach it to 5 and 6 and 7 year old kids when they are learning their first instrument.)
- Some basic music theory in the later parts of the course – but practical musical theory. I.e. not this is a major scale...but this is how a chord is made up and this is the root note and here's how it's used in a bass line
- A spine of 50 Songs to organize and hang everything on. The songs are really important because not only are they more enjoyable to learn and play and work on than pointless dry exercises, but EVERY SINGLE SONG has been chosen to be practical applications of the more theoretical and foundational material – and the song sequence is just as important because it's a barometer of your progress.
- Correcting Mistakes. I'll have more to say about this at a later stage but for self learners there has to be a system of correcting mistakes built in. My rule of thumb is correcting something that you've learned poorly or wrongly in the first place takes between two and eight

times the amount of time when you come to fix it. On the beta run of the course EVERY STUDENT will receive an assignment at the end of each module that they have to film for critiquing. Also there will be a tacit understanding that if I think those critique videos will help other students their enrolment on the course will signal their permission for me to use these critique vidoes.

- Practicing Correctly. No-one teaches ‘practicing.’ There will be guides on this too.
- Deliberate Practice. Everything in HTPB#50 will be underpinned by the last 8 years of research into deliberate practice that I’ve done – in fact underpinned isn’t strong enough of a word. Hardwired into the DNA of HTPB#50 would better describe it. That means sequential learning, mental representations, incremental improvement, motivation and accountability, comfort zone/learning zone/panic zone and more.
- Mental representations – which are crucial for progress – can also be built AWAY from the instrument. That will be covered too.

I’ll add more on some of these later on in the body of the email.

At the end of the course the last two songs are SHAKE A TAILFEATHER (Blues Brothers/Duck Dunn) and I SAW HER STANDING THERE by The Beatles. By the time you have reached this point you will have the tools you need to do further work on your preferred subgenres.

*Q3 - Finding a local (and affordable) teacher is nearly impossible where I live so i started searching the Internet and come across many courses being offered on the net. I scutinized a few ([studybass.com](http://studybass.com), [talkingbass.net](http://talkingbass.net), scotts bass lessons, HTPB etc) but ended up with your site as the one site concentrating on playing songs without going to deep into music reading and all the theoretical stuff.*

The theoretical stuff is important – but IMO it’s overdone. For example scales (and again I’ll talk about this at length) – practicing scales by rote is the biggest waste of your precious practice time that I’ve ever come across. Here’s why: over the last 8 years of my weekly magazine First Bass And Beyond I’ve either transcribed or commissioned (and then gone through) over 450 songs in their entirety. Plus I’ve created around 850/900 song tutorials (or commissioned them) in the last 8 years too. Guess how many instances of a complete scale played in a bass line I’ve found in those 1300 or so songs.

I think the tally is currently standing at 7.

When you bear in mind that for example in Come Up And See Me Make Me Smile which has around 120 bars that the scale (A G Mixolydian for the pedantic) occurs just 2 or 3 times it shows you how little complete scales are used in basslines.

Most people who want to learn to play want to play with their friends, in a real life band, or along with their favourite bands. If that describes you....why would you waste time learning scales by rote which happens very rarely.

It would be like a beginner golfer practicing really difficult lays in sand bunkers.

Plus when songs are arranged in a learning sequence they can be used to both test out your skills and as a measure of your progress. And to see what mistakes you are making. Check out how classical instruments learn....and the learning material has

been built up over 200 years. A new concept is introduced...that concept is then applied with a piece. Back in the day those pieces were often written for the express purpose of teaching people. We don't have to create material to do that...there's a rich history of bass lines that we can tap into and pull out the songs that illustrate specific elements and arrange them in a learning sequence. In a nutshell that will be HTPB#50.

*I find [talkingbass.net](http://talkingbass.net) a very informative site but for me it's focus is on people wanting to be more of a professional bass player as opposed to people playing just for fun.*

A common theme on other bass sites.

*I also searched for publications which could be used for helping a beginning bass player and ordered some of the material offered by Hal Leonard, the Bass Method books 1-3, a couple of play along books etc. and so far, I am impressed with the material it offers.*

I reviewed The Hal Leonard Bass Method...I really like Ed Friedland (the author) but I'm ambivalent about The HL Bass Method.

*I set myself to a disciplined practice routine but find that my age is slowing me down, especially when it comes down to technique and left/right hand coordination and speed, but I am sure it will come - it just takes a little longer. I got my private pilot license at the age of 50 and found that studying and comprehending the mass of theoretical parts needed for the graduation took me longer than it would have done at the age of 25, so it is true,*

*with age, everything takes a little longer and a little more effort - but the reward and satisfaction of having achieved something makes up for that*

There are probably two components to these struggles: one is that the material you are accessing is not structured in a sequential way. SO when you try to learn material out of order so to speak you not only have the challenge of the new material, you also have the challenge of dealing with new concepts and new techniques.

The second component is that “theory” is easy to teach but not so easy to understand. And is often put into lesson plans because it’s an easy way to generate course content. Whether that course content meets the student’s needs at that particular point of the course doesn’t seem to have been considered.

*What i noticed when searching the net is that no one makes courses for specific groups and/or ages. I can imagine a course with starts the same for everyone, getting the basics on technique and reading notation/tabs but from there the participant should have the possibility of choosing where to go from there. Today's teenies don't have anything with music from Cream, the Doors or even the Beatles, they would more likely proceed with a course whereby the choice of songs/music/riffs is adapted to their time and their liking.*

*I know this is a lot more work to put together but I can imagine younger people backing off because of songs and music presented with which they don't have anything in common.*

The younger generation – by this I’m thinking of people in their mid 20s and under AND I’m generalizing – have been brought up in an age of abundance with the internet. And expect to be able to get everything for free. (“Free” can actually be really

expensive – I’ll be writing about this at length soon too). Plus they’ve not learned to value their time – as a further generalization they are time rich and money poor. I’ve no intention of trying to appeal to anyone in that market – the other issue is that the majority of contemporary music has been affected by “The Cubase Revolution” of the late 80s/early 90s and most of it is much less sophisticated than the music of the 60s/70s.

*I've grown up with the 50's / 60's and 70's and find it difficult to like most of today's music - therefore a lot of your music choice is very appealing to me. But having said this, I think it also works the other way round. Younger people are being attracted to your course system but are getting turned off by the choice of music.*

As noted above I’m not interested in appealing to that under 25/me/everything for free generation.

*Furthermore, I feel your idea of sending out lesson material every week versus supplying the whole package at the moment of joining/paying should be looked at. Today everyone wants to get what he/she paid for - if having to pay in full up front I would want the whole package - if paying on the basis of payment per issue is a possibility, that would be acceptable to me to. But not paying in full and getting it bit by bit.*

Here’s how HTPB#50 will work:

- There are 10 modules
- Each module appears at monthly intervals
- Each module – in the beta run – has an assignment to be filmed by the student. Until I’ve seen that assignment I’ll

hold them back from the next module. I want people to learn and move forward – **THERE'S NO POINT GETTING A NEW MODULE OF INFORMATION WHEN THEY HAVEN'T ASSIMILATED THE PRIOR MODULE.** If you are building a house you don't build the walls until the foundations are laid and set. Same with learning.

- The payment will be a one sum deal – though I may consider a three-pay instalment option. The bottom line is that on the beta run every student will get every one of their 10 video assignments critiqued by me. In future runs assignment critiques will be an optional extra and cost at least \$50. Probably \$75. So the assignments alone will be worth three times the likely cost of the course.
- One more thing...if you got the 10 Modules on Day 1 the overwhelm factor would be enough to cause some students to not even get started. Most modules have 20 Core Units...and several 'optional' articles to read and digest.

*I can imagine a course like this:*

*5-10 Lessons on technique / music reading (notation, tabs, lead sheets, rhythm, timing) presented as Block 1 - Payment for Block 1 gets you all the lessons including lesson materials needed for this Block 1 of the course*

*Thereafter, every month a block of songs (4-5 songs) comes available and here the student has the possibility to choose his/her 5 songs out of a group of say 50 songs for this particular month. These listing of 50 songs contains songs of various type of music, blues, rock, metal, funk, reggae, so each course participant can pick his/her 5 songs that are the most appealing to him/her. - paying for this is per month*

*The following months this gets repeated with increasing level of difficulty.*

*And this could carry on for as many months as you can find songs :-)*

As noted right at the top the course will give the students the tools they needs to be able to pursue their chosen genre. Though there will be some additional songs available as options at some stage in the near future.

*The monthly course material should contain the musicnotation/tabs/leadsheets (PDF), downloadable backing tracks (preferably drum tracks AND full band backing tracks with and without bass) and online video's showing how to play the song, preferably with 2 camera's - one for the plucking hand and one for the fretting hand. The video should also show and explain how the song is put together, thinks to watch out for when practising the song etc.*

The course materials contain the following:

- All lesson content available in PDF
- All lessons also available in web form with all relevant music examples filmed
- ALL Music examples are also presented with interactive Soundslice technology (great for your mental representations)
- All song sections are filmed twice – once with picture in picture focusing on fretting hand and pluciking hand. This is available at two tempo levels. And then they are filmed

going through note by note. This is not filmed with picture in picture.

- Downloadable MP3s. Complete playalong tracks for songs. Drum tracks for rhythm practice. Different tempo chordal sketches of every song chunk in every tutorial

*Course participants should get themselves a software for slowing down music without changing pitch like Transcribe or Song Surgeon for Windows or Anytune for Mac.*

Anytune for Mac has revolutionized my transcribing and practicing. Every bass player serious about improving and irrespective of their current ability level should have this piece of software as well as Band In A Box.

*If you come up with a course set-up like this, I think you have a winner as there are a lot of people out there just like me - they want to play for fun, play their favourite songs and by doing so, pick up the technique to get more fluent over time. And they don't need to put up a lot of cash up front, but they can buy as and when they like it for something that they like a lot - they get to choose their music/songs - they more or less get their own songs.*

My goals for setting up this course aren't to set up a "winner" as you describe it – but are based around these ideas:

- The bass is a new instrument – only 65 years or so old. As such there is no established pedagogy for learning the instrument.
- I studied the literature of classical piano and classical violin to see how their courses are structured and put together. These instruments successfully turn out high level students year in year out...the systems have been

road tested for 200 years. I'm modelling these systems in this course

- Online learning is great for convenience, cost and so on. But falls down without the fixing of errors. You either have to go to a teacher to get one on one feedback – defeating the benefits of online learning in some ways – OR you can't get to a teacher and you make mistakes that are never corrected. Fundamental mistakes will cause you to reach a point from which you can never improve.
- Mistake Fixing is another of those elements being hardwired into the course.
- Accountability. There will be a private and secret facebook group which will be a safe place to ask questions and share 'war stories' with other students.
- I interviewed several classical piano teachers over the last year and essentially they all said this: *if you teach the students by following the system, tell them where they are making mistakes and help them fix them and provide the motivation so the students do the required work....the system is virtually foolproof. This is the kind of system I'm building with HTPB#50.*

## Summing Up

I hope that explains more for you. If you have questions, don't hesitate to hit reply and email me.