

80-20 Bass

An Introduction To Modifying Devices



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80-20 BASS INTRODUCTION TO MODIFYING DEVICES

Back on the 6th December I played three relatively simple bass lines that were all created by a process I call deliberate composition and they featured only the first 10 of the 80-20 devices that I've discovered.

Today we're just going to look at the first 12 bars of the Tommy Shannon style blues example. That looks like this:

Now you may have done some homework and printed this out and done some analysis on this to identify some of the 'source material' being used.

Here's the same 12 bars again - this time there are brackets over the bars. Each complete bracket indicates a complete device:

Musical score for bass guitar in 4/4 time, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), tempo 120. The score is divided into three systems, each with two measures.

System 1: Measures 1-2. Chords: E7, E7. Fingering: 7 7 4 4 7 7 4 4 | 5 5 4 4 5 5 6 6 | 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7 | 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7.

System 2: Measures 3-4. Chords: A7, E7. Fingering: 5 5 4 4 7 7 4 4 | 7 7 7 7 7 7 | 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7 | 7 7 4 4 5 5 6 6.

System 3: Measures 5-6. Chords: B7, A7, E7, B7. Fingering: 7 7 6 6 9 9 6 6 | 7 7 5 5 4 4 7 7 | 9 9 9 9 7 7 6 6 | 9 9 9 9 7 7 6 9.

Again if you analyze this - especially the bars like Bar 6 and Bar 11 with overlapping brackets - you'll start to get an idea of how you can begin to layer devices to make your lines more sophisticated.

But there's another way that you can make your lines more sophisticated and more varied that in some senses is probably easier to use and comprehend than layering and stacking devices. This - as you've probably guessed from the title of this little unit - is done by using a concept that I call *modifying devices*.

So What Is A Modifying Device?

A modifying device is a secondary device that doesn't stand on its own but has to be applied to an existing device and 'modifies' the sound of it.

If you listened to the original Tommy Shannon style example you'll know that it is vaguely similar to the Stevie Ray tune *Pride And Joy*. That (deliberate) similarity is enhanced with the band style that I used in *Band In A Box* which I'm pretty sure modelled the sound of *Pride And Joy*.

Now if you looked at the *Pride And Joy* analysis earlier in the sequence you may have noticed that Tommy Shannon played a lot of open strings in his bass line. And those open strings serve as a 'modifying' device. They are often also the root note too, so they have a secondary harmonic function too. But 'the open string bounce' is definitely a modifying device.

Here's what the 12 bar example could look like with some of these incorporated into the line - and I'll play this on the appropriate page:

Now if you played though the previous example you may have found that at the end of bar 10 there was an awkward jump from the E at the 7th fret of the A string (A7) to the octave at the 9th fret of the G string

(G9). Using the open string makes this much smoother but note that I also put in a second modifying device at the start of Bar 11 - which is the grace note to the E at G9.

Now there are several different modifying devices and they start to get explored more thoroughly in Track 2 of my upcoming 80-20 Bass Course. More on that soon....hopefully you get the idea of one of the ways that you can make 80-20 devices more complex, interesting and sophisticated. Though note: that sometimes the song doesn't need more complex, interesting and sophisticated and you should ALWAYS play for the song.