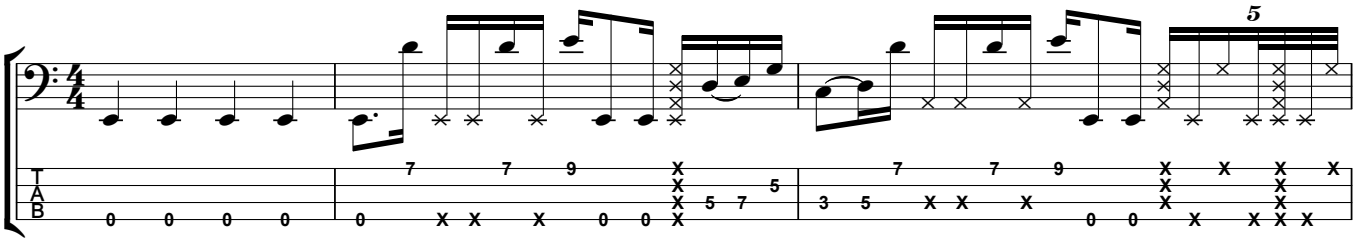
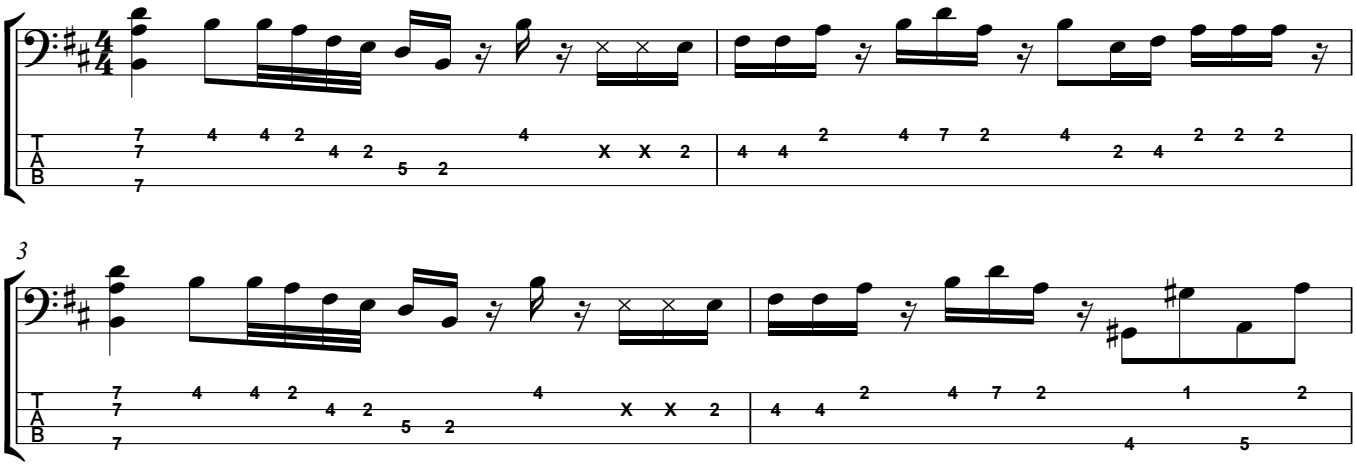
Ex. 1



Ex. 2



Issue 101

Marcus Miller

This issue we feebly attempt to give justice to the massive influence of one of the finest-Marcus Miller. Regardless of whether or not you dig Marcus's solo recordings, in some form or another, you have quiet likely heard Marcus, or heard the result of his influential style.

Marcus has played with and composed for an incredibly diverse portfolio of artists including the likes of Miles Davis, Eric Clapton, Paul Simon, Snoop Dog and composed for stars such as Spike Lee and Eddie Murphy, and TV programs such as *Everybody Hates Chris.* A true master of the bass, narrowing down Marcus's style is hard. Marcus is most known for pioneering the slap style, with his enviable fat bass sound that he gets from his 1977 customised jazz bass. Marcus is famous for his creative percussive lines, as well as creating meaningful slap melodies.

Ex.1 demonstrates Marcus's rhythmic prowess on the lead track to the 2005 album, *Silver Rain*. In this short piece, titled, *Introduction*, Marcus combines slapping and popping with left hand slaps and cleverly placed muted notes. The tune is a lesson in the rhythmic phrasing of Marcus. Whilst the piece is very simple harmonically, it is the muted notes that give this piece impact. In particular, the left hand slaps Marcus incorporates allows the production of a machine gun flurry of notes. The left hand slaps can be seen on beat 4 of bar 2, and twice in beat 4 of the 3rd bar. This piece is worth looking at for this phrase alone. To play the last flurry of muted notes, the pattern is Left hand slap, thumb slap, pluck, thumb slap, Left hand slap, thumb slap, pluck. All of the notes other than the plucks occur on the E string, and plucking the G string with the fingers seems to work best. Practice this pattern slowly, building up coordination needed. This phrase can come in handy in dressing up a slow funk slap pattern-though use it wisely. The phrasing at appears on the page is quite complex in terms of timing. Get hold of the track and see if you can match the timing, as counting this is a little bit of a nightmare!

Ex.2 is from the grammy award winning M^2. *Power,* combines Marcus lightning slap technique with chordal playing and ear catching melodies, with an impeccable sense of phrasing. The tune is for the most part based around a B minor scale, with the quick repeated line on beat 2 of the piece being a descending B minor pentatonic scale. This line is popular for many students working on their double thumbing technique, which comes in handy on the second beat of the phrase. However, if you are struggling with this, you could happily slur the notes, or if your single thumb technique is quick enough, play it this way. Again, counting this phrase is a little difficult, so grab the tune and have a listen.

These 2 tunes barely scratch the surface of Marcus's style. To get an appreciation of his beautiful fretless playing, check out Dave Gruisin's *Friends and Strangers*, one of my personal favourite examples of Marcus's playing. To hear some of his melodic slap playing, check out his interpretation of the Miles Davis tune, *Lonnies Lament.*