

A Diamond Dozen Bass Players

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Introduction

The modern electric bass guitar was invented by Paul Tutmarc in Seattle, Washington State in the 1930s. However it was not until 1951 that Fender, with their Precision Bass, introduced mass production of the instrument to the World. It was from that point that the bass guitar began to replace the acoustic upright bass in most popular musical genres.

Some argue, with just cause, that the adoption of the bass guitar was a seminal event in the development of Urban Blues, Rock and Roll, Soul and then Classic Rock. It certainly allowed the lower frequencies of the soundscape to be mixed more prominently, which is often a key feature of these genres.

However it was often still the upright bass which featured in the earliest Urban Blues and Rock and Roll recordings. Willie Dixon in Chicago (with Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and Chuck Berry) and Bill Black in Memphis (with Elvis Presley) being prime examples of this. Bill Black adopted the bass guitar later in the 1950s, but Willie Dixon stuck with the upright bass throughout his highly influential career, as we will see.

The bass provides a great foundation to the music so many of us have come to love. Working in close unison with the drummer bass players have laid down the compelling rhythms behind the lead instruments and vocals. It may have been the vocalists and lead guitarists who have stolen the limelight, but the 'stars' would only neglect their rhythm section at their peril!

Some of the most outstanding musicians to grace the Rock genre have adopted the bass guitar as their primary instrument. Some might find this surprising given how bass players are sometimes misconceived as being background and somewhat passive band members. I suspect that in choosing bass, as talented musicians, they have recognised the fundamental role of the bass in 'underpinning' a great sound?

This short book is about 12 great exponents of this art of bass playing in the opinion of your author. It is not based on pure virtuosity, it is as much to do with the influence their music has had on me personally. A completely arbitrary selection therefore, but no obscure artists, and so many fellow Rock and Blues fans would likely have some common ground in their own choices. Perhaps this work will encourage you to pick your 12?

This is my selection more or less in the order in which their music came to my attention:

- 1) Sir Paul McCartney
- 2) Bill Wyman
- 3) James Jameson
- 4) Jack Bruce
- 5) John Entwistle
- 6) John Paul Jones
- 7) Willie Dixon
- 8) John McVie
- 9) Donald 'Duck' Dunn
- 10) Andy Fraser
- 11) Pino Palladino
- 12) Nathan East

The music of the first ten selections all came to my attention before the end of the 1960s! So, in most cases, I have enjoyed their musical foundation for over 50 years. Both Pino and Nathan were much later discoveries from the 1980s. Eight on the list are British, with only four Americans and no women, with apologies to the increasing legion of female talent on the instrument.

In each case we will discuss their early musical influences and development. We will examine where this foundation led to usually in the most successful points in their careers. We will not be getting into any advanced musical theory, which would be way beyond your author's competence! Sadly only half of my list are still alive at the time of writing, with four of the group in or approaching their 9th decade, but still playing!

Sir James Paul McCartney (Born in 1942)

Having been the bass player in the most successful band of all time, in addition to being joint lead singer, and joint principal composer in The Beatles, the music of Sir Paul McCartney has surely impacted on most members of your author's generation and several since! We are going to focus on Paul's bass playing in this chapter, but he would certainly be one of the members of my dozen in the category of 'outstanding musician' I referred to in the Introduction. In fact it would be perfectly reasonable to suggest that McCartney is one of the most outstanding musicians of all time. All in all a good place to start with our bass players!

Paul was born during the second World War in a Liverpool which was under attack by German Bombers. His dad could not attend the birth because he was volunteering as a firefighter. His mum was a nurse. Perhaps a little ironic then that some 18 years later Paul

would begin his serious assault on the music industry with a residency in Germany, although on that first trip not as a bass player.

Paul's early musical education was actually on an upright piano which former band leader Jim (Paul's dad) kept in their front room. Despite Jim's encouragement to have formal lessons Paul preferred to learn to play by ear. Paul credits Jim for his earliest musical education. A trumpet followed for his 14th birthday, but that was traded in for an acoustic guitar, as newly emerging Rock and Roll began to grab young McCartney's attention. A church choir had provided him with some vocal experience, but it was Little Richard who was the first big inspiration for the developing Paul McCartney.

Paul was self taught on guitar, but there was 'peer' support in this learning from a younger pupil at Paul's Grammar School, The Liverpool Institute. McCartney and George Harrison met on the school bus, bonding through their mutual love of Rock and Roll and guitars in particular. They convened at the Harrison household regularly to work out the increasingly complex guitar parts of Rock and Roll, encouraged by George's mum Louise. Both Paul and John Lennon were to eventually concede that it was the youngest member of The Beatles, George Harrison, who became the most accomplished guitarist, but the other two were not that far behind. Paul even played lead guitar on a George Harrison composition to illustrate the point ('Taxman').

Many readers will know that, in their early days together (from 1957), Lennon, McCartney and Harrison all played guitar and sang in the skiffle group The Quarrymen. From time to time they had someone playing tea chest bass in this band, but it was not Paul. They played coffee bars, dances and had the occasional gig at the Cavern, which at the time was a Jazz club. The club did not allow Rock and Roll to be played in the late 1950s and

so they were restricted to Skiffle music at that venue. British king of Skiffle Lonnie Donegan was an inspiration to them all including Paul.

The real musical driving force for the developing Paul McCartney was the upbeat take on African American Blues which became known as Rock and Roll. The exponents were all initially from the USA with Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Buddy Holly, Carl Perkins and The Everly Brothers all having significant impact on him. On the British side of the Atlantic Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard, with their take on the genre, probably demonstrated to these Quarrymen that you did not have to be American to succeed with Rock and Roll in the UK?

So, when The Quarrymen eventually adopted the new name of The Beatles in 1960, enlisted a drummer (Pete Best) and a bass player (Stuart Sutcliffe) they compiled a Rock and Roll set list with covers almost entirely written in the USA. However Lennon and McCartney were beginning to write their own songs. They took this set list to Hamburg in Germany where they really began to gel as a band. They played for hours on end to an enthusiastic group of German Rockers and Students until George Harrison was deported for being under 18.

Once they were back in Liverpool in early 1961 patrons of The Cavern not only saw a much improved band, but they heard them playing Rock and Roll, which the venue now permitted. Paul did, somewhat reluctantly, play bass in the band for the first time in Liverpool on the 5th of January 1961, because Stuart Sutcliffe was still in Germany. Stuart came home to resume his duties early in 1961.

The band returned to Hamburg for the spring and summer of 1961 at which time Stuart decided to quit in order to pursue his talent for art in Hamburg. The Beatles became a four-piece band and Paul McCartney now took over on bass permanently. Stuart sadly died from a brain haemorrhage shortly after, without realising his great artistic potential. Paul had been playing 6 string guitar in a band for around 4 years before he began to major on the bass.

His initial reluctance, because of the common bass player mis-conceptions we referred to in the introduction, soon evaporated as Paul saw the positives. Firstly he quickly realised the 'power' a bass player has in controlling the vital rhythm of the band. Secondly he was not pushed into the background, but continued with his role as joint lead singer and composer.

Several factors led to Paul's purchase of the bass guitar which he made iconic. The fact that he was in Germany meant that a German manufacturer made sense. The Hofner 'Violin' Bass was about one-third the price of a Fender import at the time. Further, because he was left handed, the symmetrical configuration of this guitar made life easier and it looked good.

This hollow body bass with a shorter scale is also relatively light in weight, which becomes a factor when you are playing all nighters in Hamburg. To this day Paul still uses the model and I would imagine, as he approaches his 80s, the weight factor becomes even more important! The Steinway shop in central Hamburg took the equivalent of about £30 of Paul's hard earned cash in 1961 (Jim apparently instilled in him not to get involved in hire purchase). Think what that guitar would be worth today!

Paul's earliest bass amp was a Selmer Truvoice. By the time The Beatles were recording however Vox supplied their amplification. So, as The Beatles broke through to fame under the management of Brian Epstein in 1963 images of the band show the iconic vision of Vox amplification and Paul's Hofner Violin Bass. Vox were a British company at the time.

By the time of their breakthrough hit, written by Lennon and McCartney 'Love Me Do' Paul had been playing bass for a couple of years. He cut his bass 'teeth' mostly on the Rock and Roll covers the band played in the Hamburg and Liverpool clubs in 1961 and 1962. Here are some examples the songs they played at the time:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1) Roll Over Beethoven | Chuck Berry |
| 2) Sweet Little Sixteen | Chuck Berry |
| 3) Little Queenie | Chuck Berry |
| 4) Long Tall Sally | Little Richard |
| 5) Be Bop a Lula | Gene Vincent |
| 6) Everybody's Tryin' to be My Baby | Carl Perkins |
| 7) Cool Cats | Leiber and Stoller |
| 8) Twist and Shout | Russel and Medley |
| 9) Money (That's What I Want) | Gordy and Bradford |
| 10) Hallelujah I Just Love Her So | Ray Charles |

Readers will be aware that a number of these covers made it onto early Beatles albums, although all of their singles were self penned. Paul also liked to deliver a ballad vocally and so songs like 'A Taste of Honey' were also covered. The great Lennon and McCartney Rock and Roll offering 'I Saw Her Standing There' also featured in these early days.

In common with our next Diamond Paul played a lot of Chuck Berry covers as his development on bass began. Through Chuck's work the famous Chicago label founded by the Chess brothers, and ably supported by one of my later Diamonds Willie Dixon, exerted a significant influence on McCartney therefore. This was through their Rock and Roll output rather than the Urban Blues of stars such as Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf which was to be pivotal in the development of many of my Diamonds. Nevertheless Paul was taking up bass scales which had been developed as Blues artists moved from Country Blues solo performers into urban bands leading to the development of Rock and Roll eventually.

The prominence of bass in the mix is often held to be one of the defining characteristics of Rock and Roll. Some experts cite the early producer of Elvis Presley, Sam Phillips as the instigator of this trend when he recorded Howlin' Wolf for Chess in his Memphis studio in 1951. That track was 'How Many More Years'. Although it was, by now, Rock and Roll, Paul was playing plenty of standard 12 Bar Blues arrangements in these early days, in common with all of my Diamonds.

You will notice that the pioneer of Soul music, Ray Charles, provided material in these early years. Ray did so much to bring the music of African Americans across the racial divides on both sides of the Atlantic. You will also see that the man who arguably did the most effective work in this respect, Berry Gordy, at Tamla Motown in Detroit, is also represented with 'Money'. Usually classified as a Detroit Soul track even this arrangement is a standard 12 bar Blues.

Paul and the band were to increasingly come under the influence of Berry's Team at Tamla Motown. That was very obvious in some of the Lennon and McCartney songs on their

second album and the fact that they covered 'Money' 'Please Mr Postman' and 'You really Got a Hold on Me'. James Jameson, one of my Diamonds, and Berry's house bass player, started to exert a considerable influence on Paul's playing. Paul has confirmed in interviews many times that Jameson was his favourite bass player and greatest inspiration on the instrument, although Brian Wilson's bass playing in the Beach Boys is usually cited by Paul too.

From 1963 Paul had the solid backing of one of his three all time favourite drummers in Ringo Starr to cement the Beatles' rhythm. Incidentally, the other two members of his favourite drum trio also partnered two of my Diamond bass players (John Bonham and Keith Moon). That said Beatles producer George Martin suggested that Paul himself would have been capable of a professional career as a drummer. Another piece of evidence for his 'outstanding musician' status.

Rickenbacker presented Paul with their 4001 model during the 1965 Beatles summer tour of the USA and so it has not only been the Hofner violin bass featuring in Paul's career. By the time of The Beatles masterpiece *Sgt Pepper* he was using the Rickenbacker quite a lot, and he continued to do so when The Beatles split and he formed Wings.

McCartney has confirmed, unsurprisingly, that his writing was carried out on six string acoustic guitar or piano. During The Beatles highly creative years from around 65-70 they would often record tracks initially without bass. Paul would then dub it in later. This probably facilitated the creation of the melodic bass lines he became famous for. 'Michelle' would be a good early example of these techniques.

Paul seems to believe that it was this mid to late Beatle's period which saw him at his most pioneering and inventive on bass. He does not confess to studying musical theory or techniques to any great extent in becoming one of the best bass players of all time, in the opinion of many, including your author. Much of this pioneering was apparently achieved by starting his career playing the root notes for each chord and then enthusiastically exploring what might also fit to make it more interesting. Once The Beatles were afforded more time for studio work from around 1965 this became possible. Reports from the time suggest that Paul spent hours perfecting his bass lines on these mid to late Beatles recordings.

You can follow Paul's development on bass in an almost linear fashion through The Beatle's albums. On the first *Please Please Me* you will find a lot of 'root note' bass simply following the chord pattern. You can hear the Rock and Roll major key 'runs' in songs like 'I Saw Her Standing There' and the typical two note Country bass pattern on 'Love Me Do' for example. All quite standard fare, but played in beautiful time with Ringo.

Move on 2 years to *Rubber Soul* and you can hear the melodic complexities coming into songs such as 'Michelle' and 'Nowhere Man'. 'Drive My Car' sees Paul working with bass rock riffs and nice fills between root notes. The melodic complexity reaches its zenith on *Sgt Pepper*.

For your author however the band and Paul reach their pinnacle of performance on the last tracks recorded which were for *Abbey Road*. McCartney at his best on bass in my opinion. You only have to listen to the bass on the first two tracks to get my point 'Come Together' and 'Something'.

The Beatles quit playing live in 1966 and so at this time Paul was not compelled to develop the ability to play these more complex bass lines and sing simultaneously. With much practice this was achieved in his Wings and solo career. This ability might be taken for granted by a non musical observer, but anyone who plays any form of guitar and tries to sing will be aware of this challenge.

If you author gets around to a Diamond Dozen Vocalists or a Diamond Dozen songwriters McCartney is sure to feature in both in partnership with John Lennon. For your author's taste Paul's material has perhaps been a little 'soft' in his Wings and solo career, but, that said, he remains one of the most outstanding 'natural' musicians of all time and a truly great bass player.

Bill Wyman (born 1936)

The Rolling Stones have been a phenomenal success by any measure, until one directly compares them with The Beatles. There is absolutely no shame in this because only one band could be the most successful of all time, and the Stones have nevertheless lived up to the plaudit 'Greatest Rock and Roll Band on Earth'. They are still performing as I write in 2021, although only Mick Jagger and Keith Richards remain in the band which first adopted the unabbreviated name as a 6 piece early in early 1963, just as The Beatles were breaking through to fame.

There was a friendly rivalry between The Stones and The Beatles from that point. The Beatles were promoted as loveable witty 'mop tops' in matching suits. The Stones were promoted as anti-establishment / counter culture 'scruffs' with unruly long hair by their young manager Andrew Loog-Oldham. It is interesting to note that Sir Michael Jagger,

member of the MCC, turned out to be somewhat more 'establishment' than real rebel John Lennon!

There were musical similarities and differences. Both bands loved Chuck Berry material in their early days, but The Stones also had a 'harder' and more traditional Blues slant to their material right from the start. William George Perks joined The Rolling Stones on bass after an audition in a Chelsea pub in December 1962 and in 1964 legally changed his surname to Wyman. He was replacing original bass player Dick Taylor who left to continue his studies, but then soon emerged as a guitarist with The Pretty Things.

In common with many, but not all of my generation, during the 60s I favoured the music of The Beatles to an extent, while still liking the more Bluesy music of the Stones. As my personal focus has narrowed down to the Blues more since I retired from my profession I have come to view the two bands now with almost equal admiration. Whereas The Beatles had a great musical range, looking back The Stones were pivotal in getting The Blues the recognition it deserved as the fundamental building block for Rock and Roll and then Classic Rock music. As an integral part of the band for 30 years it was only natural therefore to include Bill in my Diamond Dozen.

Like Paul McCartney, Bill Wyman was educated at an English Grammar school (Beckenham and Penge County). He has described his early life in a deprived area of Penge (South London) as 'scarred by poverty'. His dad William was a bricklayer trying to provide for a wife and five children. Unlike Paul young Bill nevertheless had formal piano lessons, but his dad saw to it that he left school at the earliest opportunity to bring in income working for a local bookmaker.

In 1955 Bill was called up to do his National Service in the Royal Airforce. While serving in Germany Rock and Roll from the USA transmitted on American Forces Network radio grabbed his attention. He acquired a six string acoustic guitar and, in common with McCartney, formed a Skiffle group. Upbeat African American Blues in the form of Rock and Roll was therefore, once more, his initial inspiration.

Once back in civilian life he acquired a Burns electric six string on hire purchase. He was first grabbed by the deep sounds of an electric bass guitar at a concert by The Barron Knights in Aylesbury Buckinghamshire. The Barron Knights (from Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire) eventually found fame by releasing humorous parodies of their contemporaries, including The Rolling Stones, but they were a straight Pop band when they inspired Bill as the 50s became the Swinging 60s.

Wyman had not been pleased with his progress on The Burns and so he made the switch to playing bass. He acquired a Dallas Tuxedo bass, and developed a bass amp from instructions in a magazine, including an 18 inch Goodman's speaker in a 'coffin' like cabinet, weighed down with concrete! He also had a Vox AC 30 amp as back up. Bill soon removed the frets on the bass to produce a smoother sound and used this gear in the band he was in called The Cliftons. They were playing mainly London venues at the time.

Brian Jones, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were impressed with his kit and his playing when he auditioned, as we have heard, in late 1962. Although he had been familiar with some Country Blues performers, it was not until he joined up with The Stones that he was turned on to the Urban Blues coming out on Chess Records, which had so inspired Jones, Jagger and Richards. From this point the acoustic walking bass of my Diamond Willie

Dixon became a central inspiration to Bill Wyman. It was not long before another of my Diamonds, Donald Dunn at Stax Records became his second inspiration.

Bill did not have to wait long to form the first class partnership he had with Charlie Watts on drums, because the latter was finally persuaded to join the Stones one month later in January 1963. He replaced Tony Chapman who had encouraged Bill to do the audition.

Just as McCartney fused so well with Starr so too did Wyman and Watts. In comparison with Jones, Jagger and Richards they were a quiet pair who nevertheless became the rhythmic driving force behind these more flamboyant front men. Loog-Oldham soon sacked the band's golf loving pianist Ian Stewart for being too old and straight, although he was younger than Bill Wyman! The Stones therefore became a 5-piece band, although Stewart was retained for session work and to help out on the road. He remained as a valuable musical confidant to the band until his premature death in 1985 from a heart attack.

So, it was mostly Rock and Roll initially for the developing bass playing of Bill Wyman until early 1963 when he began to add Urban Blues into his repertoire. Many readers will know that The Rolling Stones had their 'Hamburg' like development closer to home in the first few months of 1963 at The Crawdaddy Club in Richmond Surrey. Owner Georgio Gomelsky had to more or less bribe people to attend the first show in February 1963, but within a few weeks the place was so crowded they needed to move to bigger premises. Below are some examples of the covers Bill was performing at this early stage:

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|---------------------------|------------|
| 1) Bright Lights Big City | Jimmy Reed |
| 2) Shame, Shame, Shame | Jimmy Reed |

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 3) Memphis Tennessee | Chuck Berry |
| 4) I Just Want To Make Love To You | Willie Dixon |
| 5) I Want You to Know | Fats Domino |
| 6) I'm Bad Like Jesse James | John Lee Hooker |
| 7) I'm All Right | Bo Diddley |
| 8) Hey Crawdaddy | Bo Diddley |

Still a leaning towards the upbeat side of The Blues or Rock and Roll with Chuck Berry, Fats Domino and Bo Diddley well represented, but The Urban Blues of Willie Dixon, Jimmy Reed and John Lee Hooker firmly in place. Chess/Checker records were well represented.

By the time the band released their first album *The Rolling Stones* in 1964 only the Willie Dixon track, which was first performed by Muddy Waters with Willie on acoustic bass 10 years previously, made the cut from this sample. Chuck Berry and Jimmy Reed were still represented with other tracks on the album. Jagger and Richards were yet to begin their prolific writing career in earnest.

Bill can be heard playing his deep toned walking bass lines throughout this record.

Interviews suggest that Bill is proud to have kept his parts relatively simple, but beautifully in time with the solid bass drum parts of Charlie Watts. He has made it clear that he is not a fan of bass lines becoming too complex for fear of losing the grounding for bands which it provides.

Vox were not only providing amplification for The Rolling Stones but also supplying their 'Tear Drop' guitars. Many of your author's generation will recall iconic pictures of this gear from the band's early period with Brian Jones using the 12 string and Bill the bass.

However Bill has reported in interviews that he did not really take to the instrument, using his customised Dallas for most studio work in the early days.

Bill has not gravitated to the industry 'standard' Fender basses (Precision or Jazz) because of their long scales and his short reach, although he did use the shorter scale Fender Mustang. His short reach is also why he can be seen holding bass guitars almost vertically in the early days so that he could use the full scale available. I must confess to have previously thought that this stance was to radiate a 'cool' image! Wyman has used a wide range of makes over the years including Gibsons and even the Hofner Violin occasionally. The same wide range applies to amps with Vox (including an 18 inch speaker again) in the early days of The Stones but the Fender Bassman from The USA was also employed.

When the Stones covered Lennon and McCartney's 'I Want To Be Your Man' for their second success in the UK singles charts in 1963 you can hear a very prominent bass mix featuring Bill's major key runs. The Following year saw the band release the Womack family's 'It's All Over Now' to give them their first UK number one and Bill's hero, Willie Dixon's 'Little Red Rooster' for their second UK number 1.

'Little Red Rooster' remains the only time a 'pure' Blues single has topped the UK charts and it includes Bill sticking fairly closely to Willie's bass parts, played on the Howlin' Wolf original from 1961. A predominance of root notes with some runs between them in a more or less typical 12 bar Blues in G characterised this one. It was at least part recorded by The Stones in Willie's 'home' studio at Chess in Chicago in common with "It's All Over Now'. Bill played in the backing band for *The Howlin Wolf Sessions* when Chess sent the

old master over to the UK to records in 1971. These sessions include a version of 'The Red Rooster'.

By 1965 Loog-Olham had managed to persuade Jagger and Richards to write original material and that summer they released the song which brought them international fame and some notoriety, '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction'. Keith Richards came up with the killer riff. In the studio I am convinced that Bill enhanced the track significantly by playing a harmonic to the riff (E up to A on bass) rather than what many players might have done and followed Keith's riff note for note from B up to D? Just a personal opinion but it touches like this that count for so much in Classic Rock.

Bill Wyman continued to be a great 'backbone' for the Rolling Stones in partnership with Charlie Watts on drums for 30 years until he decided to quit in the early nineties. One has to be a little careful when talking about bass parts on Rolling Stones songs because both Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood (who had played bass in the Jeff Beck Group before joining The Faces and then The Stones on guitar) played the bass on a number of tracks even during Bill's tenure.

Two Bill highlights from his Stone's days might be 'Gimme Shelter' from the album *Let It Bleed* in 1969 and then 'Miss You' from *Some Girls* in 1978. This latter track sees Wyman uncharacteristically 'busy' but to great effect! After The Stones Wyman continued to play with his band The Rhythm Kings featuring some excellent musicians. He is still playing at 85 years young as I write, in 2021, but sadly we have just lost his great rhythm partner of 30 years Charlie Watts.

James Jameson (1936-1983)

We have discussed that my first two Bass Diamonds arrived at an electric bass via the 6 string guitar, but my next two graduated from acoustic upright bass in Jazz and Blues bands to the electric bass. James Jameson may not be a name familiar to all readers, but his music will be. It has been argued that he played on more hits than Paul McCartney and Bill Wyman combined! James was the most prominent bass player with the backing musicians at Tamla Motown, often referred to as The Funk Brothers.

As we have heard he was a great inspiration to McCartney, but 5 more of my Bass Diamonds have also cited him as an influence, making in total 50% of my group! He has been placed at the top of the pile in several peer assessments of the best ever bass players. It is not hard, even with my technical limitations in music theory, to see why this is. His musicality is undisputed as he composed bass 'melodies' to run at the 'bottom' of the mix in harmony with the vocalists and other lead instruments. So important was James to the Tamla sound that sessions would often be delayed until he was available.

Jameson would have to be another of my group who would be classed as an exceptional musician. In common with my first two Diamonds his musical development started on piano as a child growing up in South Carolina. He was good enough to play the instrument in public despite his shy nature. In private he was listening to Gospel, Jazz and Blues music. He moved with his mother to Detroit in 1954 and began to learn upright bass at school. He was soon playing in local Jazz and Blues bands. He was offered a scholarship to study music at University but declined.

One of his earliest gigs was playing upright bass in Washboard Willie's Blues band. Willie was a singer/percussionist in the Detroit area who found some fame in the Blues revivals of the early 1970s. James also toured with Soul pioneer Jackie Wilson. Berry Gordy co-wrote Jackie's 1957 hit 'Reet Petite' which eventually became a huge international hit.

In 1959 Berry was encouraged to start up his own record company by Smokey Robinson. He named the label Tamla Records initially. James Jameson was an early recruit at the Detroit studio on upright bass. By the early 60s the label became Tamla Motown and James had converted to playing a Fender Precision electric bass on so many of the hits produced by Berry's company.

James became part of Berry Gordy's successful mission to market great African American music across the racial spectrum. Gordy carefully managed the choreography, dress, manners and of course that great Motown sound of his acts to achieve what African American Urban Blues was yet to achieve in the early 60s, success with the more affluent white population in the USA and Europe. That success was to come for The Blues later in the decade, but ironically spearheaded, in the main, by white British exponents such as Bill Wyman (my previous Diamond) and Jack Bruce (our next bass star).

As readers will know Motown's sound was a little more gentle and melodic than the Blues and its initially more successful 'offspring' Rock and Roll. Motown's Detroit Soul was still driven though by a great Rhythm section of which Jameson was pivotal. Tamla Motown achieved mass appeal and great wealth for its very talented leader Berry Gordy. In turn Berry looked after one of the label's greatest assets by putting James on a \$1000 per week retainer (at least £250,000 pa in 2021 values). Not quite the earnings to compare with some of the Motown 'Stars' but a very comfortable nevertheless.

James Jameson also played the Blues, notably with bluesman John Lee Hooker, who had also settled in Detroit, perhaps to avoid the intense competition in Chicago? James plays bass, for example, on John's big hit 'Boom Boom' in 1961. He was partnered on this Blues record with 'Soul mate' Funk Brother's drummer William 'Benny' Benjamin. Jameson's partnership with Benny at Motown was as tight as McCartney with Starr and Wyman with Watts.

I have previously discussed how my tastes and musical activity have progressively gravitated towards The Blues as I have got older. Nevertheless your author is still very fond of that 1960s Tamla sound. As this is a book about personal opinions I feel it is now appropriate to simply list a few of my favourite songs from the great Tamla catalogue in this era on which James Jameson left his remarkable 'stamp':

I Heard It Through The Grapevine	Marvin Gaye
You Can't Hurry Love	The Supremes
Love Child	Diana Ross and The Supremes
Reach Out I'll Be There	The Four Tops
Bernadette	The Four Tops
Standing in The Shadows of Love	The Four Tops
My Girl	The Temptations
I'm Gonna Make You Love Me	The Supremes and The Temptations
For Once in My Life	Stevie Wonder
Dancing in The Street	Martha and The Vandellas

It is reported that Jameson's Fender bass was usually direct lined into the mixer rather than played through a bass amp in the studio. Live he favoured Ampex amplifiers. Up to the mid 60s he still played the clubs and toured, but from that point he concentrated on the studio.

Motown writers would apparently give him the chord sequences for songs. He would then listen to the vocal melodies and construct melodic bass lines to harmonise with those within the chord structure. He could play it simple though and 'You Can't Hurry Love' gives a classic example of how effective this could be with a rhythm on the key's root note (B flat) driving the song off on bass. Perhaps 'Bernadette' provides one of the best examples of Jameson's ability to play prominent melodic bass lines so perfectly complimenting the vocal? Maybe 'My Girl' gives him his most remembered bass lines?

James Jameson was a true great. He moved to Los Angeles when Motown relocated. Sadly though he had succumbed to chronic alcoholism within about 10 years of that move. The damage addictions can do to health probably accounted for our next Diamond eventually, but at least he made it into his 70s, James did not even make 50.

John Symon Asher (Jack) Bruce (1943-2014)

Jack was yet another excellent musician who chose to major on bass guitar after a good musical education and playing upright acoustic bass in Jazz bands. In common with Paul McCartney Jack was also a composer of many songs (although not as many as Paul) and a great vocalist.

In this chapter we will focus on his bass playing in British 'supergroup' Cream since it was through this band that Jack came closely to my attention in the late 60s. In fact I plan to

explore Jack's prowess principally through just three 'live' Cream covers which originally got me interested in the Blues as a teenager. Earlier bands such as The Rolling Stones and The Yardbirds clearly sowed a few Blues 'seeds' into my musical appreciation, but it was through Cream that I, and many others in my generation, really got switched on to Blues music.

Cream had a distinctly Jazzy slant to their music because their rhythm section of Jack and Ginger Baker on drums commenced their careers in Jazz bands. However Delta and Chicago Blues influences were even more in evidence, thanks to lead guitarist Eric Clapton. The band put a heavy riff based accent onto all of these roots to become Hard Rock pioneers on both sides of the Atlantic. Sadly, because of longstanding personality clashes, particularly in respect of Jack and Ginger's relationship, the band only lasted a couple of years from 1966-68.

Jack Bruce was born in Scotland to musical parents. He won a scholarship to study cello and musical composition at The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama but did not stick to this formal musical education for more than a few months. By night Jack played upright bass in a Jazz band to make ends meet. He moved to London in 1962 and joined Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated.

Alexis was passionate about the Blues, but his grounding was also in Jazz with Chris Barber. Jack was one of many stars of the Classic Rock genre to be encouraged by Alexis. Blues Incorporated are held to be the first British electric Blues band although Bruce, at this stage, was still on acoustic bass. Brian Jones, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Charlie Watts, Ginger Baker, Paul Jones and Jimmy Page, for example, all passed through motivating jamming sessions with Alexis during this period.

Jack had a brief period with John Mayall's Bluebreakers, in common with Clapton, a spell with Ginger Baker in the Graham Bond Organisation and also a short time with Manfred Mann who were also Blues enthusiasts, but tended to release commercial singles.

Manfred Mann, who led this band on keyboards, has talked about Bruce playing his first gig without rehearsal, because the chord changes came so naturally to him! He also did some session work in the mid 60s, and this seemed to prompt the move to electric bass.

In 1966 Eric Clapton persuaded Ginger Baker to accept Jack Bruce on bass for Cream despite their personal differences, which had manifested themselves in previous groups. Bruce had enjoyed a contribution to a number one single while with Manfred Mann in this year. Paul Jones had featured on vocal and Jack on electric bass for 'Pretty Flamingo' one of the band's commercial hits. He was about to enjoy success in the growing album market on both sides of the Atlantic with Cream.

The idea of a 'supergroup' was a new concept in 1966 which gathered momentum over the next couple of years. Cream, as the name might suggest, were founded on the predication that this trio were at the top of the tree in terms of musical competence. There seems little doubt that Bruce and Baker were brimming with self confidence in this respect, and Clapton certainly should have been, since graffiti claiming 'Clapton Is God' was appearing around London following his success with John Mayall. In your authors opinion they proved their virtuosity over the next couple of years.

The band sold albums on both sides of the Atlantic and took the British Blues revival to another level on the emerging Rock concert circuit in the USA. Clapton, in particular, was astonished by how little white American Rock audiences knew about their own great Blues

heritage. Cream did much to rectify this ignorance and in effect promote the likes of Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and Buddy Guy. The Rolling Stones also obliged in this respect.

Cream carved out a concert circuit and sophisticated Rock/Blues album audience ready to make Led Zeppelin the biggest band in the World by the early 70s following The Beatles' split.

Jack Bruce kicked off, what was to become the most commercially successful part of his career, essentially with a set of only 3 Blues covers:

- 'Spoonful' by Willie Dixon released on Chess by Howlin' Wolf in 1960 with Willie on bass
- 'Cross Road Blues' by Robert Johnson released by Columbia in 1961 on *The King of The Delta Blues Singers* although initially recorded in Texas 1937
- 'I'm So Glad' by Skip James released by Paramount in 1931

Their warm up gig was the night before England played Germany in the World Cup final in a Manchester club on 29th July 1966. The band then went straight to the Windsor Jazz and Blues festival to play to a larger audience on 31st July.

So, Jack was playing electric versions of 3 songs with acoustic solo roots from way back in the Mississippi Delta of the 1930s, because Willie Dixon's song had clear inspiration from that period, although he filed the copyright for the Wolf's version in 1960. Live recordings by Cream of these specific three tracks were to eventually awaken your author's love of The Blues. It was actually recordings of their farewell concert at The Royal Albert Hall that did the trick in 1968, with these 3 numbers surviving from their first gig.

Cream created improvised, Hard Rock/Blues numbers from this material which would sometimes last longer than 20 minutes when played live. The Jazz roots of Jack and Ginger were often apparent in these pieces. The power trio was really being born. It was no simple feat to get a full sound especially at this time in 1966, a full year before Charlie Watkins pioneered his more powerful PA systems, ironically at the same Windsor festival. The 'full' sound was achieved, in part, by the busy, but clear, bass lines Jack crafted with more 'treble' and 'gain' on his amp settings than my first three bass Diamonds. It was notable that his reputation as a musician grew in the Cream period, not being overshadowed in the slightest by fellow virtuosos Clapton and Baker.

Of these three songs only Cross Road Blues took the traditional 12 bar Blues arrangement although Jack was to play plenty of other songs in this pattern, including some of his own compositions. All three of these songs have a basically simple structure around which the band stamped their improvisational skills to great effect. Within 10 years this approach had fallen out of fashion, but live recordings will demonstrate to readers how good this could be in its time.

Taking the live 'I'm So Glad' first Jack keeps principally to the root notes of the two chords in the vocal sections. The band don't even use all of Skip's verses before they leap into their improvisations. Jack is almost playing the bass as an equal lead instrument with Clapton's guitar. A whole variety of scales get reeled out by Jack to great effect and very together with Ginger. The two are really being led by the complicated Baker rhythms which drive the song. The performance owes quite a bit to the improvisations of Jazz but is also pioneering what became known as hard rock.

'Spoonful' has a similar arrangement whereby Jack again keeps to the essentially simple riff in the vocal passages, but then unleashes his improvised bass lines in virtuous 'harmony' with Clapton and Baker. It is very easy to do this badly (I could easily demonstrate!) but very difficult to keep it all in time and interesting. Cream did just that.

'Crossroads' as it became known is clear Hard Rock pioneering with a dominant riff which Jack certainly sticks to in the verses, although he improvises around it in the lead guitar sections, once more almost constructing a second lead an octave or two below Clapton. The balance on the mixes I listen to these days seem to have lead and bass equally prominent.

Jack had taken to using the Gibson EB3 Bass at this time and there are many iconic pictures of him with this instrument from Cream days. He has confirmed in interviews that he used lighter gauge strings on this model than was typical. This allowed note bending in almost the same manner as being practiced on lead guitar. Both Clapton and Bruce were using powerful Marshall amplification by 1968.

Jack was a bass purist, not a frustrated guitarist, and even wrote stuff on the bass like 'Sunshine of Your Love' for example. On record check out 'Badge' from Cream's last album for an outstanding bass part.

It was good to see Cream re-unite in 2005 for concerts on both sides of the Atlantic, but sad to see that Jack's health was not that great. He had enjoyed a long career after Cream in which he associated with many other great musicians, but sadly addictions laid him pretty low about 10 years after Cream first disbanded. He did recover, but eventually died of Liver disease for which hard drug addiction is a clear risk factor. Ginger Baker put their

differences behind him and attended Jack's funeral in 2014, but sadly we also lost Ginger four years later.

Like Jack our next Diamond favoured a bass sound with more 'treble' and adopted an almost 'lead' style on his bass. Sadly substance abuse was also a factor in his death in a Nevada USA hotel room.

John Alec Entwistle (1944-2002)

Two things happened in 1969 to make me a big fan of The Who. They released *Tommy* in May and in August I saw them live for the first time in Bournemouth. My ears took a while to recover after the Bournemouth experience but it was great! That was the first time I had witnessed bass as prominent and powerful as that of John Entwistle. Sadly I never got to see Jack Bruce and Cream live, although I have seen Clapton many times since. That was not the last time I was to see The Who with 'The Ox' (Entwistle) on bass.

Perhaps even more than Bruce, John Entwistle favoured a 'treble' enhanced bass sound with some distortion, especially live. He too sometimes sounded like he was the lead instrument to Pete Townsend's beautifully crafted chords and riffs on lead guitar. The story goes that it was a competition for loudness between these two local boys (Townsend and Entwistle) which got Jim Marshall to invent separate amplifier and speaker 'stacks' at his Hanwell, Middlesex shop. Jack Bruce came to use these stacks, as we have discussed, but Entwistle was the pioneer.

John Entwistle had formal piano lessons to kick off his musical education when only 7 years old. His mother played piano but his estranged father was a trumpet player. John was not keen on formal piano and switched to trumpet once he got to Acton Grammar

School aged 11. It was however on French Horn that he featured in the Middlesex Schools Symphony Orchestra, thus enjoying some clearly Classical roots.

He was also fond of Traditional Jazz and initially formed a Jazz band with schoolmate Pete Townsend, before the two were quickly seduced by the rhythms and power of Rock and Roll. John was particularly smitten by the bass tones of Duane Eddy's guitar. He made his own bass guitar. So, he was another of our bass Diamonds not to seriously flirt with the six string instrument before he settled on bass, and obviously another serious musician.

When researching the music played by the three ex Acton Grammar School boys who made up 75% of The Who (Daltrey, Townsend and Entwistle) in their very early days together I get the feeling that the covers they played in order to secure an audience on their North London pub circuit now causes some embarrassment?

Pete Townsend seemed to be a little in awe of the covers The Rolling Stones were playing at the time and very taken with Mick and the band. It sounds like The Detours (forerunner to The Who) did play some Jimmy Reed and Bo Diddley (in common with the Stones) but they were also trotting out a lot of chart hit covers by artists like Cliff Richards and The Shadows, The Beatles and Gerry and The Pacemakers. Nothing to be ashamed of!

We will continue to explore the excellent musical partnerships most of my Bass Diamonds carved out with a drummer. John Entwistle was to meet his rhythm soul mate at the same venue your author met his wife Ann 7 years later. John met Keith Moon at The Oldfield Tavern in April 1964. This pub was on The Who's regular circuit. After a successful audition at the venue the manic boy from Wembley, who became one of the best drummers of all time, agreed to complete what would become a very successful Who lineup with a 'killer'

rhythm section. Entwistle and The Who continued to get their development on this largely North London pub circuit.

When the time came to record their first album *My Generation* in 1965 a good number of Soul and Blues covers from the USA were committed to tape. Three made it onto the album with two from James Brown and 'I'm A Man' from Bo Diddley. The band's principal songwriter Pete Townsend contributed the majority of songs and that included the band's first big hit with the title track.

'My Generation' might have been written by Pete but in many ways it is a showcase for the emerging talents of John Entwistle. In common with 'I'm A Man' it is partly in stop time with Daltrey's vocals filling the 'stops' until we get a bass solo in the 'stops' from John. A classic and pioneering Hard Rock track which became an important feature of the band's live act during which the phenomenal power of John's bass rig was in evidence by 1969. There have not been many bass solos on top ten hits!

As for John's bass rig it would need another book to catalogue it in full! He kicked off with the home made copy of a Fender Precision until he could afford the real thing and an amp with an 18 inch speaker cabinet that was very heavy. John owned one of the biggest guitar and bass collections in the world in time. According to interviews he would have been using his Fender Precision 'Frankenstein' when I saw him for the first time in 1969 with a complicated double Hi Watt stack. The 'Frankenstein' was put together by John in San Francisco from the parts of 5 basses which had been trashed in the group's stage act. John apparently used this during the band's heyday in making *Tommy*, *Who Live at Leeds* and *Who's Next*. It eventually got spray painted salmon pink. As it is this 'heyday' we are going to discuss we will leave John's equipment discussion at that.

The Who had further success in the singles charts with John's bass featuring prominently. 'Happy Jack' and 'Magic Bus' come to mind as good examples. *Tommy* (1969) and *Who's Next* (1971) are excellent studio albums featuring quality contributions from Entwistle on bass, but it is through *Live at Leeds* (1970) that I would like to illustrate John's bass playing prowess in this chapter. The great strength of The Who, in my opinion, was their live act which saw them to international fame through events like The Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, The Isle of White Festival in 1969 and of course Woodstock in 1969. *Live at Leeds* remains, in my opinion, one of the best live albums of all time. It features versions of several of their hit singles and a number of covers of Stateside R&B songs. The more recent 'Deluxe' versions contain significant sections of *Tommy*. The album *Tommy* has quite a 'mellow' mix, which works well in that format, but it is when the band played it live as a Hard Rock Band that it really came to life.

As we have discussed The Rolling Stones had two 'quiet' men in their rhythm section. With The Who Townsend, Daltrey and Moon all had highly active stage presence. It was only John who, until he had a vocal contribution, stood impassively in front of his 'stack'. The only moving part was his 'thunderous' fingers plucking out his pentatonic scales and holding all the mania going on around him together.

Taking the covers first, a Hard Rock version of Mose Allison's 'Young Man Blues' opens the original vinyl album with 'stop time' solo vocals. When the improvised section gets going you get a classic example of John holding it all together with a highly active bass part, beautifully in time with the manic drumming of Moon, and in perfect harmony with Pete Townsend chords and riffs on lead. Eddie Cochrane's 'Summertime Blues' sees the band play their own Hard Rock version of this Rock and Roll classic. Pete partly cuts off the

signature chords linking the vocal lines allowing John to fill in with his own tasteful 'runs'.

Both of these tracks are fully 'customised' covers very different to the original versions.

In respect of the original vinyl album just two tracks, Who singles, 'My Generation' and 'Magic Bus' make up side 2. 'My Generation' lasts for more than 15 minutes but is in reality a medley with a couple of *Tommy* tracks and another couple of Classic Rock chord progressions thrown in to make up the long improvised number which, as we have discussed, was so fashionable with 'serious' Rock bands in the later 60s. You get a great live rendition of John's famous bass solo in the early part of this track and some excellent bass improvisation throughout the medley.

The early part of 'Magic Bus' sees John keeping it really simple with Keith Moon on maracas. His rhythm is largely confined to the root note (A). It does 'take off like thunder' in the middle and at the end allowing John to roam around his pentatonic scales in harmony with Pete's chords and riffs.

John died of a heart attack in 2002 when still far too young. He apparently had underlying heart disease, but this was not helped by a significant dose of cocaine on the fateful day. The frequency with which cocaine kills relatively young people by effectively stopping the heart is massively underestimated in all probability? He was 'replaced' if that was even possible, by another of my Diamonds Pino Palladino.

The opinion that John was one of the best bass players of all time is widely held. As a session guitarist Jimmy Page made a contribution to the Who's first album. John and Keith obviously made an impression on Jimmy because when he was considering forming his own group John is reported to have featured in his thoughts along with his rhythm partner

Keith Moon. The story goes that Moon even came up, inadvertently, with the name Led Zeppelin. Very tough call indeed in your author's opinion but some would say Jimmy did even better in the end by recruiting John Bonham on drums and our next Diamond on bass.

John Richard Baldwin aka John Paul Jones (born 1946)

With John we have some serious competition for Sir Paul McCartney as an 'outstanding musician'. John's musical education was certainly more formal than Paul's. Paul was a member of the most successful band the World has seen, John was a member of either the second or third most successful band of all time depending on which set of statistics you use. They were both multi-instrumentalists and co-wrote plenty of great songs, although Paul would be ahead on this 'score'. They both chose to major on bass guitar and John did that without much of an affair with the six string guitar first.

Once more he was born into a musical family. His dad Joe was a professional pianist and arranger for dance bands. From the age of 6 John was taught piano by his father. Because his parents toured he went to boarding School in Blackheath London and formally studied music. The classical pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff was an early inspiration, but also the Jazz of Charles Mingus (acoustic bass) and The Blues, Jazz and Soul of guitarist Phil Upchurch. Phil came to be a session guitarist at Chess in the sixties and played with the likes of Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. He had also played with Jimmy Reed. This was a very broad 'church' of music also 'topped' out by him becoming a church organist and choir master at the age of 14!

Also when he was 14 John acquired his first bass, a Dallas Tuxedo (in common with Bill Wyman another South London resident at the time). John particularly liked the bass

sounds coming out of Detroit (Motown) and Memphis (Stax). His great musical 'ear' allowed him to learn the sounds created by my Diamonds James Jameson and Duck Dunn. He eventually came to the attention of DECCA records by virtue of this ability to re-create the Soul and Blues bass sounds coming from the Western side of the Atlantic. This was also through the patronage of ex Shadows Jet Harris and Tony Meehan, who had a contract with DECCA.

The record company discovered his broader musical talents for playing keyboards and arranging songs. However the bass was still his major instrument. He was involved in hundreds of recording sessions during the 1960s for artists such as Dusty Springfield, Tom Jones, Donovan, Cat Stephens, Jeff Beck, Lulu and Shirley Bassey. He even arranged the strings for The Rolling Stones on 'She's a Rainbow'. Live experience came backing Dusty for her *Talk of The Town* season.

The Dallas Tuxedo had long since given way to a 1962 Fender Jazz bass which remained as John's primary instrument until 1976. His main bass amp by the time Led Zeppelin formed was The Acoustic 360 with its very heavy 361 !8 inch speaker cabinet. This first appeared on the market in 1967. During his DECCA period Rolling Stone's manager Andrew Loog Oldham suggested the stage name of John Paul Jones when our bass Diamond released a single.

In 1968 John heard that his former sessions colleague Jimmy Page was looking to put a new band together as The Yardbirds were disbanding. He was a little burned out by studio work at the behest of other artists. His wife Maureen suggested that he approach Jimmy. Page was delighted to take him up on the offer, knowing the musical breadth John would bring. The New Yardbirds, with Jimmy on guitars, Robert Plant on vocals and harmonica,

John Bonham on drums and John Paul Jones on bass and keyboards were constituted in a Soho rehearsal basement on Monday 19th August 1968.

John was another relatively 'quiet' man, if you can say that about musicians who played so loud! Nevertheless he was brimming with ideas. Although not an out and out Blues fan he was very keen to apply the funky rhythms of Stax and Motown to the Blues/Rock/Folk music The New Yardbirds were about to create, once they adopted Led Zeppelin as their name that autumn. He was also to bring a 'classical' aspect to the band and by 1973 was playing some Rachmaninoff live in the wonderful 'No Quarter'.

Back to the Soho basement and John Paul Jones was blown away with the quality and power the group displayed at their first get together. That sentiment was shared by all and so they decided to fulfil the remaining Yardbirds dates in Scandinavia in the second week of September 1968. I will take these sets as the primary development for John Paul Jones as a bass player in a band. He had some band experience previously, as we have discussed, but most of his time had been in the studio playing material that he had little choice over. Although Page was the undisputed leader of the band John now had a real creative input. From the start they were playing their own compositions, but four covers in particular featured on this tour:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1) You Shook Me | Willie Dixon |
| 2) I Can't Quit You Babe | Willie Dixon |
| 3) How Many More Years | Howlin Wolf |
| 4) Train Kept a Rollin' | Tiny Bradshaw |

A very Blues orientated start, with three Chess songs, two copyrighted by my next Diamond Willie Dixon and one by The Wolf, with the original production being by Sam Phillips in Memphis. The two Dixon songs appear on *Led Zeppelin* (their first studio album in 1969) and you can catch early live versions on *The BBC Sessions* (1997). These recordings demonstrate what a great Soul fan on bass and the best drummer of all time could bring to the Blues.

Once established live some of John's bass lines came from a bass pedal set up rigged with his various keyboard instruments. As we have said however the Fender Jazz was in regular service until 1976. You can hear that instrument beautifully played on the studio and 'live' recordings of 'I Can't Quit You' in the 12 Bar Blues format with plenty of harmonic variety around the root notes in the key of A.

I have chosen *Led Zeppelin 2* to demonstrate the true quality of JPJ. The band were so busy touring, particularly the USA during 1969 that this number 1 album on both sides of the 'Pond' had to be recorded at multiple studio locations in the USA and UK. It was mainly a Hard Rock album with a strong Blues influence. The more acoustic/folk influences were to emerge more on the next album. Two tracks in particular show the 1962 Fender Jazz being used to its full potential.

Led Zeppelin had taken to playing Howlin' Wolf's 'Killing Floor' early in their touring career. The band retained some of The Wolf's lyrics as this piece developed into a number with 2 tempos and called it 'The Lemon Song'. The slower first and third sections were driven by a Jimmy Page Hard Rock 12 bar Blues riff. The faster second and fourth sections were still in 12 bar Blues format but at a faster pace, closer to how Jimi Hendrix played 'Killing

Floor'. John developed his bass parts into the greatest 12 bar Blues playing that I believe I have ever heard.

John starts off by largely following the Page riff, but with some very tasteful fills. In the second and last section he plays some ultra fluid runs to Page's lead. However it is the slower third section where he really excels. As the riff is dropped for a quiet section of Plant improvised vocals and lead guitar fills John more or less takes the lead with great harmonic playing within the 12 bar format. It illustrates perfectly what I mean't when I said how great a James Jameson fan on bass could sound within the 12 bar Blues format. For this contribution to the song John got a writing credit along with the three other band members. In time Chester Burnet's (The Wolf's real name) representatives threatened a lawsuit for breach of copyright. The band settled out of court and the track now has five credits including Chester Burnett aka Howlin' Wolf.

John Paul Jones does not get a writing credit for his second masterpiece I want to discuss. That is 'Ramble On' which is at a constant tempo, but, in keeping with the bands' signature musical dynamics, has quiet and loud sections alternating. Behind Jimmy's fairly simple chord structure in the quiet verse sections, JPJ came up with a wonderful counter melody on bass to Robert's excellent vocal. Very Jameson again perhaps? Then for the louder chorus we have a very funky bass part. A great song which is so enhanced by this excellent bass playing. I'm not sure fellow South Londoner Bill Wyman approves of such complexity, but in my view it makes the song.

When the untimely death of John Bonham, through acute alcohol abuse, in 1980 stoped the band in its tracks John Paul Jones moved on to a much quieter life with his family in Devon. He has collaborated over the years with many excellent musicians in the time

since, including mega stars Paul McCartney and Dave Grohl. There have been some famous Zeppelin re-unions, the most memorable being the O2 concert in 2007. Apparently 20 million applications for tickets were recorded (including my failed application) showing the enduring popularity of the band. The performance was hailed as excellent by critics and the public and it can be seen on the DVD *Celebration Day*. John Bonham's son Jason was a highly able substitute for his dad.

John Paul Jones will be 75 years young soon after I finish the first draft of this short book. He seems to have avoided the excesses of the Rock and Roll life style, which have sadly shortened the lives of many in the business, and looks pretty good for his age. All staying well he will soon surpass the age achieved by my next Diamond who threatened to take John's band to court on copyright matters for two songs on *Led Zeppelin 2*. He was finally co-credited for these in addition to the two songs on *Led Zeppelin* for which he received credit from first release.

Willie Dixon (1915-1992)

More than a decade before DECCA realised the broader abilities of John Paul Jones, beyond simply playing bass in the studio, Chess Records had done the same with Willie Dixon. Willie is in my Dozen because of the huge influence he was to exert on the development of Electric Urban Blues, Rock and Roll and then Classic Rock through his time with Chess.

I was getting clues about this influence in the 1960s through The Rolling Stones, Cream, Jeff Beck and Led Zeppelin all crediting Willie for Blues covers they recorded. It was not until I had access to iTunes, and time on my hands to study the music I loved in greater

depth in retirement, that I realised the full impact of this big man (6ft 6inches and about 18stones)

Dixon's earliest music experiences came through singing in Gospel choirs as a child in Vicksburg Mississippi. He inherited his mother's ability to write rhyming verse and soon put that to use in song writing. Once his voice broke he was singing bass harmonies in Gospel choirs.

In 1936 he joined the Great Migration to Chicago and became a heavyweight boxer. He won local competitions in Illinois and even became the sparing partner of the great Joe Louis. He met Blues musician Leonard Caston in a Chicago boxing gym. Caston was a singer, pianist and guitarist. He persuaded Willie to join him and they constructed a sort of 'Tea Chest' bass on which Willie started to learn his scales. Willie also learned guitar. The vocal bass harmony he had been performing helped him with taking to the lower end of the musical spectrum on an instrument.

Willie and Leonard were in two groups together on either side of World War 2. The Five Breezes came first and then The Big Three Trio. During the war Willie was imprisoned for refusing to fight for a country with racist laws. The Big Three did record for Columbia. Soon after their formation in 1950 Willie was signed as an artist to Chess. The brothers realised Willie's broader potential for arranging and songwriting and by 1951 he was a full time employee.

It was through these broader activities that Willie exerted huge influence having his name, for example, on the copyright of more than 500 songs. However this chapter is principally about his bass playing. The 'tea chest' was replaced fairly soon with a classical upright

double bass. Willie is held by many authorities to have pioneered the standard bass 'runs' you are likely to hear when listening to the Blues. To some extent he was probably following what he had heard 'Boogie Woogie' pianists playing with their left hand. Nevertheless he was to play the patterns that nearly all of our Diamonds would follow when they started playing the Blues or Rock and Roll in their early development.

Willie did not 'graduate' to bass guitar. As the electric instrument came to more prominence he was increasingly devoting his time to organisational matters, letting others play electric bass at Chess. However he played acoustic bass on so many records which came to be a fundamental influence all of our other Diamonds. This chapter therefore concludes with short notes on the most important of these recordings, in the opinion of your author.

'Hoochie Coochie Man' in 1954 featured Muddy Waters on guitar and vocals while Willie made his debut with Muddy on this first Dixon composition to become a hit. The band playing on this recording became the Chicago electric Blues 'Supergroup' of the 1950s. Jimmy Rogers was on second guitar, Ottis Span was on piano, Little Walter was on harmonica and Elgin Evans was on drums (although Fred Below soon replaced him in Muddy's band). This track is held to have introduced 'stop time' to the Blues where the band, including the bass player, leaves a gap 'in time' for Muddy's vocals in this case. It also introduced 16 bar Blues verses. It has become a Blues standard which so many of our Diamonds would have come to play at some point. Willie is playing a counter riff to the harmonica in the first 8 bars of 'stop time'. The remainder of each verse sees him playing notes on the snare drum beat and once between with harmonic notes around the root note. It is simple bass playing, beautifully in the groove, and almost defining the genre. It set a standard which Bill Wyman would follow, particularly in his early days with The Rolling Stones.

'Just Make Love to Me' from a little later in 1954 was a re-run in terms of personnel apart from Fred Below taking over on drums. There was an element of 'stop time' in this too but with Willie's bass filling in the stops at times with the vocal. The bass is actually very prominent in the mix, again with the lovely groove playing on and between each snare drum beat. It is not a standard 12 bar Blues arrangement and it even has a bridge. Etta James had a big hit with her version of Willie's song re-titled 'I Just Want To Make Love To You'. It was famously re-invigorated by a soft drinks commercial in the 1990s for the UK market. The Rolling Stones did a cover for their first album, but actually played it at a much faster tempo and without a hint of 'stop time' so Bill was not mimicking his mentor in this case! It could be argued that The Stones played it in the manner Bo Diddley might have?

'Maybellene' in 1955 was Chuck Berry's first hit and is considered to be pioneering Rock and Roll. The Chess brothers were moving with the times into this fusion of Country and Blues music just as Elvis Presley was breaking through a little further south in Memphis. Chuck arrived at this number by adapting an old country song, increasing the tempo and playing Blues electric guitar riffs on his Gibson, all to a driving back beat with Ebby Hardy on drums and Willie Dixon on acoustic bass. Willie plays a combination of the two note country style bass to each chord in the verses and his Blues runs at the fast tempo in the guitar solo. Willie does not get any writing or production credit, but he is a fundamental part of the rhythm section backing the artist that was to be such a huge inspiration to The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. Willie repeated this role on other important Chuck Berry hits such as 'Johnny B Goode' for example.

'Spoonful' in 1960 was one of several songs that Willie worked on with the great voice of Howlin Wolf which did not adopt the traditional 12 bar blues arrangement, using instead a single chord modal approach, in the key of E in this case. Willie on the bass and Hubert

Sumlin on guitar keep returning to the mesmeric 2 note riff (E and G). As we have heard Cream with Jack Bruce used this riff as the basis for a highly improvised Hard Rock/Blues cover which was very important in bringing the Blues across racial divides on both sides of the Atlantic. Willie gets a writing and production credit for the original.

‘The Red Rooster’ in 1961 essentially employs the 12 bar Blues arrangement. Willie keeps it pretty simple on the root notes for much of this track as The Wolf howls his signature vocal to his own iconic slide guitar part, which Brian Jones was to follow so well 3 years later. Bill Wyman kept it simple too for the cover of Willie’s song which is still the only pure Blues cover to make number 1 in the UK.

Willie died aged 76 in Los Angeles in 1992 with heart failure after suffering from diabetes for many years. He certainly witnessed where his huge contribution to The Blues and Rock and Roll led. He left behind The Blues Heaven Foundation with a mission to protect the legacy of the Blues and to encourage new talent . This Foundation has come to be housed in the old Chess studios at 2120 South Michigan Avenue Chicago. Brits Bill Wyman and our next Diamond both visited this ‘Mecca’ in the 1960s to record.

John McVie (Born 1945)

John McVie was born in the London suburb of Ealing where British Electric Blues was pioneered by Alexis Korner. However, his first steps as a bass player were taken performing covers of The Shadow’s music. His professional grounding as a bass player was then firmly rooted in The Blues, before he played on his first number one hit, an instrumental in 1968. Fleetwood Mac’s ‘Albatross’ could be held to owe more to the sounds of The Shadows than the Blues? A great record in my opinion.

John in partnership with drummer Mick Fleetwood has enjoyed a long and successful career in Fleetwood Mac. What foresight the founder, the late Peter Green, must have had when he named his new Blues band in 1967. McVie and Fleetwood have been the only constants in the, so far, 54 year lifespan of the group. The music played by Fleetwood Mac has covered a broad range in that time. However they started off as an almost 'pure' Blues band. John's early professional career on bass was significantly influenced by the playing of our last Diamond Willie Dixon.

The trumpet was John's first musical instrument. When a grammar school boy (Walpole) at the age of 14 he took up guitar, but soon removed the two thinner strings (E and B) to form a rudimentary 'high octaves' bass. His dad got him a pink Fender bass just like his hero Jet Harris and the long career started in earnest. He joined a couple of bands playing The Shadow's music he loved at the time.

McVie left school at 17 and started training as a tax inspector. He was recommended to John Mayall by the bass player in The Cyril Davis All Stars. Harmonica virtuoso Cyril had played with Alexis Korner for some time prior to forming his own band. McVie joined the Bluesbreakers and set about learning his Blues craft, essentially by listening to Willie Dixon on records supplied by John Mayall. He had no formal training. He continued his tax office job for a few months, playing with Mayall by night. He eventually turned professional and stayed with Mayall for over 4 years, although there were occasional interruptions in the relationship. Jack Bruce deputised during one such break.

Mayall and his band wrote some of their own material, but it is worth taking a look at a small sample of the covers they were performing in this mid sixties period to get a flavour for John's development on bass.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Hideaway | Freddie King instrumental |
| 2) Have You Ever Loved a Woman | Freddie King |
| 3) I Can't Quit You Babe | Willie Dixon recorded by Ottis Rush |
| 4) Double Trouble | Ottis Rush |
| 5) All Your Love | Ottis Rush |
| 6) Stormy Monday | T Bone Walker |

John would have played these with either Eric Clapton, Peter Green or Mick Taylor (later of The Rolling Stones) on lead guitar. Hughie Flint, Aynsley Dunbar or Mick Fleetwood would have been on drums and John Mayall himself on vocals, guitars, keyboards and harmonica.

It really illustrates how he was focusing on the 12 bar Blues arrangement at this stage. A significant proportion of the band composed material was also in this format. There was an obvious fascination with the work of the legendary Chicago bluesman Ottis Rush from the late 50s period, who usually had Willie Dixon on bass at this time. He was recording for Cobra Records under Willie's production. Willie had a period at Cobra in an attempt to improve on the financial deal he had with Chess. Cobra Records did not survive financially and so both Willie and Ottis ended up back at Chess after a couple of years.

During his period with John Mayall, McVie played on the highly influential album *John Mayall's Bluesbreakers featuring Eric Clapton* on which a couple of these covers were committed to vinyl. Between them John Mayall and Alexis Korner had a 'Who's Who' of British Classic Rock pass through their bands, as we are seeing, during the 1960s.

Peter Green finally persuaded John McVie to follow him and Mick Fleetwood out of The Bluesbreakers in September 1967. He was initially reluctant to leave a well paid and secure job, but relented when he perceived Mayall was moving more towards Jazz.

Fleetwood Mac continued as a, more or less, pure Blues band until the end of the 1960s, but increasingly with a more Rock/pop edge to their singles. They were successful in the UK both live, with singles and with album sales. They made the 'pilgrimage' to Chess Records in 1969. They met Willie Dixon on his 'home turf'. You can hear throughout the first seven years of his career how John McVie's electric bass was so inspired by the pioneering Blues playing of Willie during the previous 20 years.

It would take another huge book to catalogue the full career of Fleetwood Mac and their personnel changes. Many readers will be aware that their initial leader Peter Green left when his mental health deteriorated quite suddenly in 1970. Suffice it to say that John McVie married Blues singer and keyboard player Christine Perfect in 1968. She officially joined the band in 1970. The band moved over to Los Angeles in 1974 and briefly lived with another migrant John Mayall. They soon met up with the American Folk/Rock duo Linsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks. The rest, as they say, is a very successful history kicked off by the release of *Rumours* in 1977. It is through this album that we will discuss where this long Blues foundation led for John McVie's bass playing.

The first thing to say is that it led to him writing and performing one of the most famous bass parts in the history of Rock music! 'The Chain' starts off in a pretty routine manner on bass. Very prominent root notes on the instrument to emphasise the chorus. Then comes the dramatic bass led 'outro' with the iconic riff composed by John. This was made even more famous in the UK because of its use as a theme tune for Formula One Motor Racing

coverage. It is a Folk Rock song very different to the Blues and a great example of their musical diversity. As we have seen previously the partnerships of my Diamonds with a good drummer is fundamental to their success. No exception in John's case and his partnership with Mick Fleetwood has been the longest I can think of in Classic Rock.

As we have already heard John commenced his professional career with a Fender bass. It is however an Alembic series bass guitar on his most famous track 'The Chain'. He is another of our Diamonds to favour Ampeg amplification although he has also endorsed Orange. As with most of our Diamonds his gear has varied quite a bit over the years.

Rumours was heavily influenced by the catchy melody writing and vocals of Buckingham and Nicks. Great lead playing by Buckingham and some very tasteful writing contributions, vocals and keys from Mrs McVie. The Rhythm section of John and Mick really drives these songs to success with their Blues and Rock upbringing. Great teamwork all round despite the personal relationship problems apparently being experienced at the time, including for Mr and Mrs McVie.

'Go Your Own Way' is a memorable example of this teamwork written and sung by Buckingham with prominent harmonic bass lines from Diamond John without straying too far away from the roots to Mick's great beat. 'You Make Loving Fun' was in a similar vane with Christine writing and on lead vocal this time.

Rumours is considered to be one of the best Rock albums of all time by many authorities. In you author's opinion it is the Blues trained rhythm section (including Christine on keys) keeping a great groove behind the more folky talents of Nicks and Buckingham that was

the formula for this success. Lindsay can really rock on lead guitar when the mood takes him though.

John and Mick are still playing together as I write this. Peter Green died in 2020 aged 73. After many years he overcame his mental health problems to make a comeback with the Blues. Neil Finn (Ex Crowded House) and Mike Campbell (Ex Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers) replaced Lindsay Buckingham in Fleetwood Mac in 2018. This should bring yet more breath and interest to the band named after the rhythm section Peter Green wanted in 1967, but had to wait a couple of months for because John McVie is cautious fellow. His bass playing has not been too risky, but it has been totally in the groove with Mick for approaching 60 years!

Donald Dunn aka Donald Duck Dunn (1941-2012)

Just as I first became aware of Willie Dixon through an Eric Clapton with Cream cover, I first became aware of Donald Dunn when he joined Eric Clapton's backing band in the 1980s. In fact it was when we saw the band at The NEC Birmingham in 1985. However I was soon alerted to the fact that I had known Dunn's music since the mid 1960s! Donald, of course, played bass in the STAX Records house band in Memphis, Booker T and The MGs. From the 1970s I had also been listening to Dunn's great bass lines on the band's 1968 instrumental 'Soul Limbo' when it was adopted as the theme music for BBC's coverage of Test Cricket.

It is worth making a selective list (author's selections) of some of the greats who Duck Dunn has played bass for in the studio:

Booker T and The MGs, Duane Allman, Joan Baez, William Bell, The Blues Brothers band in the film, Ray Charles, Eric Clapton, Rita Coolidge, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Delaney and Bonnie, Bob Dylan, Eddie Floyd, Peter Frampton, John Fogerty, Albert King, Freddie King, Richie Havens, Levon Helm, Jerry Lee Lewis, Steve Nicks, Tom Petty, Wilson Pickett, Elvis Presley, Ottis Reading, Leon Russell, Sam and Dave, The Staples Singers, Rod Stewart, Muddy Waters, Tony Joe White, Bill Withers and Neil Young.

Now that is some list! It would have either been Sam and Dave, Ottis Reading or Wilson Pickett records in the 1960s on which I would have first heard Dunn play. All I knew at the time was that I liked these great Soul numbers. The pioneering racial mix of the STAX approach to music in Memphis passed me by at the time.

Dunn was a school friend of legendary guitarist to be Steve Cropper in Memphis. He took up the bass to join Steve in a band. Duck was self taught by playing along to records. His first bass guitar was a Kay when he was about 16, but he soon graduated to the Fender Precision. He became another convert to Ampeg bass amps in time.

In 1961 STAX records were constituted formally in a disused cinema in Memphis. Dunn was involved in sessions from the early days. His great friend Steve Cropper not only became session guitarist for the new label, but also took on production, writing and administrative responsibilities for owners Jim Stewart and Estelle Axton. He took up a role not dissimilar to that secured by Willie Dixon at Chess 10 years earlier.

In 1962 Steve Cropper joined up with Booker T Jones on Keyboards to form Booker T and The MGs. Al Jackson was on drums and their first bass player was Lewie Steinberg. Steve

recruited his friend Duck to replace Lewie in 1964. This means that Dunn was not the bass player on their famous 12 bar Blues hit instrumental 'Green Onions' from 1962.

Booker T and the MGs not only had several hits of their own, but they became the STAX house band. They played on virtually every release on the label from 1962-1970. From 1965 Booker T Jones studied music at Indiana University and so Issac Haynes often deputised on the keys. This house band, of which Dunn was an integral part from 1964, the sloping floor of the cinema and their 'relaxed' working methods made The STAX sound unique.

The 'relaxed' working methods included a real team approach to arranging and the final sound. It also meant no music sheets. So, Duck Dunn played on most of the STAX and their sister label Volt's hits from 1964-70. As has become the tradition I will talk about Dunn's work principally through a few of my favourite tracks which he laid down the bass for in his STAX/Volt days.

Dunn did not play overly complicated bass lines, but just what seemed right for each track in question. That observation fits with his positive influence on Bill Wyman? Donald was not being told what to play, like James Jameson for Tamla Motown he was the 'author'. Dunn, Jameson and Dixon came to influence the vast majority of the serious young bass players across the Atlantic in Britain starting out in the emerging Blues and Soul based bands as we have seen. So, here are my favourites Donald Duck Dunn tracks from the 60s from a time when your author was hearing a lot of these covered, as teenager, by the local bands playing Saturday night 'School' dances.

'Knock on Wood' was written by Steve Cropper and the singer Eddie Floyd. It was released on STAX in 1966. This has the Memphis Horns in addition to The Booker T guys and is an absolute Soul classic. Music fans will be well aware of the great 'horn' progression which opens the song and ends each verse after drummer Al Jackson has beat out the 'knock'. There is also the great ascending run Bridge in this song. Duck plays these straight, but he enhances the verses superbly with his simple but lovely harmonics around the root chords E and A. The whole sound has a great groove held together by the band. Nearly 20 years later Duck was to play this all again in Eric Clapton's band when he covered the song for his 1985 album *Behind The Sun*. It was apparently one of 2 encore numbers the night we saw the band, but I did have to look that up!

'Hold On I'm Coming' was written by David Porter and Issac Hayes, recorded by Sam and Dave and released on STAX in 1966. Another real classic kicked off with the Horns playing the chorus which is the real 'hook' for the tune. Duck keeps totally rooted (literally) through this one. A simple and prominent bass part which underpins the great horns and vocals right in the groove with Al again. These two numbers were just about my favourites at these 60s school dances, but I wasn't doing too much dancing despite the great grooves! I am pretty sure I worked them out, after a fashion, on my acoustic guitar, but not quite to the same effect as Eddie, Sam, Dave, and the Booker T band.

'Sitting On The Dock Of The Bay' was written by the original artist Otis Reading and Steve Cropper and released early in 1968, just after Reading's death in an air crash. This one starts with just Duck and the sea. Another one Dunn keeps perfectly simple with just a few tasteful 'fills' around the root notes of the chords.

'Born Under a Bad Sign' was written by Booker T Jones and William Bell for Albert King on STAX in 1967. This sees Donald playing the Blues with one of the three Kings. It is not a traditional 12 bar blues chord sequence (no lift after 4 bars) although it does have the traditional turnaround. This is almost 'Hard Rock/Blues' and it is little wonder that it was picked up by Jack Bruce, Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker the following year to cover on Cream's *Wheels of Fire*. Duck is playing, a soon to be very fashionable, riff more or less with the rhythm guitar of Steve Cropper while Albert plays his 'licks'. The Memphis Horns are there again but more supplementary than prominent this time. This type of song enabled Albert to break through to the Rock venues such as the Filmores and to enjoy a more multiracial audience. 'Born Under a Bad Sign' has become a Blues Standard.

When I tell you that the local bands I heard at School dances included, Wainwrights Gentlemen, Sweet, Episode 6, Gino Washington and Bluesology (sometimes backing USA Soul acts) you will realise, if you Google those bands, some of the future talent I was lucky enough to hear in Harrow and surroundings! Neither Google or my memory can confirm exactly what covers were played by each band in the 1960s though.

Donald Dunn died in his sleep while on tour in Japan with his old friend Steve Cropper and Eddie Floyd in 2012. As we noted at the beginning of the chapter he has left behind a huge contribution on record to Soul and Blues music in particular. Duck could play a lively or laid back tune. Our next Diamond's band came to global recognition when they decided they needed a more lively tune to supplement their mid and slow paced Rock/Blues set, and he co-wrote it with the singer.

Andy Fraser (1952-2015)

‘All Right Now’ was written by Andy Fraser and Paul Rogers immediately after a gig in Durham which seemed to leave their audience wanting something more lively. The song has enjoyed global fame, being played well over 3 million times on radio in the USA for example. It appeared on Free’s excellent *Fire and Water* album and was a successful single in many countries including the UK and USA. Not bad for a song which is reported to have taken about 15 minutes to write! Not surprisingly, as it was co-written by a bass player, it has an excellent bass line or two, although the verses are bass free! We will come back to ‘All Right Now’.

Andy was raised by his mother because his parents separated when he was young. He took up classical piano at the age of 5. He switched to the guitar when 12 years of age and by 13 he was playing in bands. He was expelled from School and age 15 and enrolled at Hammersmith College, where he met Sappho Korner, who introduced him to her father. Alexis was not only the father of Sappho he was the ‘father’ as we have heard, of the British Blues movement. He became a father figure to Andy.

Korner was aware that John Mayall was looking for a bass player. He recommended Andy, who got the gig. He was playing in the band with Mick Taylor on lead at this time when John McVie had recently departed. So, it was very much a 12 bar Blues introduction to professional work for 15 year old Andy. His bass playing was inspired, he has reported, by Paul McCartney, Jack Bruce, Bill Wyman, James Jameson and Duck Dunn, nearly half of my Diamonds.

Korner facilitated the formation of Free in 1968 while Andy was still only 15. Guitarist Paul Kossoff was 17, Drummer Simon Kirke was 18 and so was Paul Rogers the singer. They

started to write their own material immediately but two Blues covers surfaced on their first album to give a flavour of their early development.

‘Going Down Slow’ had been popularised with the young British Blues bands by the Howlin Wolf version of James Burke Ogden’s 1941 song. You can catch some pretty prominent Blues bass lines from Andy on this their 1969 cover in addition to his piano part.

‘The Hunter’ was co-written by our last Diamond Duck Dunn along with the rest of the Booker T band for Albert King in 1967. This number was a focal point for Free’s live act in the early days before ‘All Right Now’. Both of these Blues covers are in the 12 bar format. So, Andy was getting his early grounding in The Blues.

The big commercial break for Free came with the 1970 release of *Fire and Water* which made number 2 in the UK album chart and number 17 in the USA. Andy Fraser excels on this album both with his writing (co-wrote all but one track) and his bass playing. So it will be through my three favourite tracks on this commercial high in Andy’s career that I will discuss his bass playing.

‘All Right Now’ as we have discussed was (still is really on Rock radio) a big hit. Andy decided to absent himself from the verses rather tastefully, because the impact when he joins the other three for the chorus and is great. A great tone on the bass coming to almost have an equal lead with Paul in the chorus and memorable guitar solo. It reminds me a bit of Jack Bruce who had inspired Andy. The same bass guitar as Jack used in Cream days too, the Gibson EB3. The Chorus has lovely bass harmonics around the simple chord structure balanced well up in the mix. The solo section starts with a few bars of Paul’s lead

guitar only, then Andy comes in without lead for a few bars to introduce the 'killer' bass progression which so expertly underpins Paul's lead. One of my all time favourite tracks.

In the title track 'Fire and Water' Andy keeps it quite close to the root chords but in a great groove with Simon Kirke on drums for the verses and chorus. In the essentially 2 chord structure behind the solo he plays very tasteful fills and runs. Another great track but they made it a hat-trick of greats with 'Mr Big' for me and Andy really takes the lead on his Gibson bass.

'Mr Big' is built around another 'killer' Fraser Riff which he plays embellished with fills for the verses. The Chorus he plays pretty straight. Then we have another solo built around two chords (E and D). The solo is taken by Kossoff first but then Fraser takes a bass solo to the two chords for longer than Paul had. A virtuoso piece of electric bass playing if there ever was and a big reason why Andy is one of my Diamonds.

Free did not last long after their commercial success started. They were very well received at The Isle of White Festival in 1970, but by the next year the first split occurred. There were differences affecting the relationship between Andy and Paul Rogers, but the biggest problem for the band became Paul Kossoff's substance abuse, which sadly killed him in 1976.

Andy Fraser enjoyed a long career after Free, but without the same commercial success. He rightly saw himself as a musician and songwriter rather than a specialist bass player, but there have been few better than Andy in that specialism. He died following a long battle with HIV Aids in 2015. One of Andy's big influences was Scottish, it's now time for a Welshman.

Giuseppi Henry Palladino aka Pino Palladino (Born 1957)

Pino first came to my attention, and that of many others, in 1983 as the bass player for a singer who had ironically started his career in Luton Beds as a bass player. Paul Young had a long 'apprenticeship' in the music business before he finally broke through with a great cover of Marvin Gaye's 'Wherever I Lay My Hat'. Pino's fretless bass parts match the excellence of Young's voice and almost out do his hero James Jameson in the bass counter melody stakes. The prominent bass parts were surely fundamental to the success of this record?

When John Entwistle died suddenly in 2002 Pino was recruited, as we have discussed, to deputise for the irreplaceable Who bassist. He has played with the band on and off since, usually with Ringo Starr's son Zak on the drums. As a Who fan this obviously caught my attention.

However it is his work with my Diamond Dozen guitarist John Mayer in the John Mayer Trio which sealed Pino's place in my bassist dozen. In this unit he is playing with Steve Jordan on drums, who has recently been recruited to The Rolling Stones to replace the late Charlie Watts. This gives a flavour for the company Pino keeps in his music career. As we did with Duck Dunn here is a selective list (author's choice) of some of the talent Pino has also played with, not including the three examples above:

Gary Numan, Joan Armatrading, Dave Gilmore, Don Henley, Elton John, David Knopfler, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, Phil Collins, Ed Sheeran, Jools Holland, David Crosby, Brian Ferry, Carly Simon, BB King, Tina Turner, Richard Ashcroft, Gerry Rafferty, Rod Stewart, Paul Simon, Adele and Robbie Robertson, a list which speaks for itself!

Pino was born in Cardiff to a Welsh mother and Italian father. He started with Classical guitar lessons when he was 14, moving to bass when he was 17. Motown, Jazz, Led Zeppelin and Yes were key influences on his early playing. By the time he was 18 he was using a fretless bass. He has continued to use the fretless bass from time to time, but a Fender Precision is his main instrument now. He is another fan of Ampeg bass amps. Fender have made a Pino Palladino Signature Precision bass, as well they might for such a popular player within the music business, but you will need to part with at least £4000 if you want one!

Given his parts on some of the best selling albums of this century with Adele and Ed Sheeran, for example, it might seem a bit quirky to cite Pino's work on *Try* (2005) and *Where The Light Is* (2007) in this chapter. *Try* is a live album recorded in the Chicago House of Blues, a venue we have visited most enjoyably a couple of times. This music features Pino playing Blues/Rock.

John Mayer surprised a few people with his Power Trio project after a very radio friendly Pop orientated start to his recording career. *Try* in particular showcases his great Blues guitar credentials and, more importantly for the purpose of this chapter, Pino Palladino's virtuoso bass playing in the genre.

As can be gauged from the artists on his CV Palladino has crossed over into many different genres. *Try* is simply an example of his ability to play live in your author's favourite genre. The album was nominated for a Grammy and sold well in the USA, but it is not the most commercially successful work Pino has done. It is a stern test for a bass player to provide the solid backing required for a singer/guitarist playing in a Rock/Blues trio live, but Pino does it on *Try* to perfection. By the time the trio's second live recording

was made a couple of years later the band was even better in your author's opinion. That was for the *Where The Light Is* album which was recorded in LA.

Where the Light Is takes its name from the coda of John Mayer's signature composition 'Gravity' one of my all time favourite songs. Slow Blues, but not in the regular 12 bar format. On *Try* 'Gravity' was being played live before it was released on the studio album *Continuum* (2006). So, at this stage John's fans were unfamiliar with the track. Palladino and Jordan also feature on the studio version, which gained such acclaim in time.

As with many great songs the verses have a simple 2 chord structure (G and C in this case) which also underpins the guitar solo. A more complex chorus turns the song round to the next verse. Pino keeps it spot on with Jordan's slow pattern and pretty simple for the most part, but with lovely harmonic fills between the root chords. He puts a lovely fill in, reminiscent of his work on 'Where Ever I lay My Hat' to introduce the guitar solo to the two root chords. There is nowhere to hide in a slow Blues. These three need no place to hide, it is magnificent!

Two tracks further on *Try* bring us to a traditional Slow 12 Bar Blues 'Out Of My Mind' written by Mayer. Right in Willie Dixon's old 'backyard' Pino pulls out all the standard Blues runs pioneered by the great man and a few of his own too in the Key of D.

Before these great slow Blues tracks *Try* opens up with 3 'rockers'. 'Who Do You Think I Was' written to a Mayer rhythmic riff in A lets Pino rove skilfully around his pentatonic scales to lovely effect. The wonderful 'Good Love is on the Way' follows with a writing credit to the whole trio, once more in A. Pino is again working his harmonics around a typical 2 chord pattern (A and G) in the verses and a simple but highly effective chorus.

With a somewhat more complex chord pattern the band then cover the Jimi Hendrix song 'Wait Until Tomorrow'.

We have seen John Mayer twice with his full backing band in the UK, but did not get a chance to see Pino in this great trio. A somewhat different emphasis, but possibly the nearest thing we have got to Cream and The Jimi Hendrix Experience this century? Not forgetting the Cream reunion in 2005, mentioned in the Jack Bruce Chapter.

Perhaps it should be no surprise to me, as we come to number 12 that, including Pino Palladino, the majority of my Diamond Dozen bass players have worked, at some stage, with Eric Clapton. My last selection again came to my attention via that association.

Nathan Harrel East (Born 1955)

Nathan East is the only one of my Diamonds to have completed music studies at university. He has a BA from The University of California San Diego. East would certainly be in the sub-group of 'outstanding' musicians I talked about focussing on the bass in the Introduction. It was from around the mid 80s when I became aware of Nathan when he started playing with Eric Clapton, an arrangement that continues to this day. He started his career aged only 16 with the legendary Barry White. His career has included work on *Bad* with the even more legendary Michael Jackson.

So here comes another selective (your author's) list of the great and good who have also gone to East for the 'bottom line' and once more it speaks for itself:

Dolly Parton, Bobby Womack, Billy Preston, The Four Tops, Gladys Knight, Lionel Richie, Dusty Springfield, Don Felder, Herb Alpert, George Benson, Donna Summer, Kenny Rogers, Johnny Mathis, Julio Iglesias, Joe Cocker, Barbara Streisand, The Pointer

Sisters, Natalie Cole, Dianna Ross, Dionne Warwick, Phil Collins, Olivia Newton-John, Whitney Houston, Aretha Franklin, Ry Cooder, Neil Diamond, Bonnie Raitt, Michael McDonald, The Isley Brothers, Bob Dylan, Randy New, Bee Gees, Peter Gabriel, Peter Frampton, Seal, Elton John, Bryan Ferry, Chaka Kahn, Toni Braxton, Mariah Carey, Bette Midler, Kenny G, Boz Scaggs, Quincy Jones, Mary J Blige, Carole King, Michael Bolton, James Last, Keb Mo, BB King, Joe Satriani, Stevie Wonder, Les Paul, Eurythmics, Herbie Hancock, Andrea Bocelli, Michael Buble, Beyonce, Celine Dion, Rod Stewart, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Burt Bacharach, Ronan Keating, Robbie Williams, Diana Krall, Ringo Starr and Barry Manilow. After that list I should probably quit and go to the Summary. What a range this man has covered, and I left so many others out!

Nathan was born in Philadelphia but moved with his large family to San Diego when he was four. His musical education commenced on cello which he played in the school orchestra. He took up the bass when 14 and played in Church with his brothers and in local bands. My Diamonds Paul McCartney and James Jameson were amongst his early influences. In addition to his incredible CV as a session player for other artists he has also been a founder member of the successful Jazz Quartet Fourplay since 1991.

It is clear that Nathan's development has spanned Classical Music, Jazz, Soul, Pop, Country, Big Band, Rock and Blues. No prizes for guessing the genre I have chosen to illustrate East's prowess with, because, as you might expect, it is the Blues. I am going to use Eric Clapton's tribute album *Me and Mr Johnson* from 2004 to do the business as Nathan plays on 13 out of the 14 tracks with Pino Paladino standing in for 'Traveling Riverside Blues'.

As most readers will be aware this album is a tribute to Eric's great musical hero Robert Johnson. However, as another Robert (Plant) has said, all Rock bands owe something to Mr Johnson. The 29 tracks Johnson recorded in temporary studios during 2 visits to Texas in the late 1930s are held to be the foundation for so much Urban Blues, Rock and Roll and eventually Classic Rock. The 1930s recordings are simple single track takes of Robert's voice and acoustic guitar. There is no bass on the original material, so Nathan had a free hand to develop the 'bottom line'. Robert Johnson had no drummer to work with either, but Nathan had the legendary Steve Gadd, who has also so successfully crossed into many musical genres as a session man.

It is interesting to note that even with the musical prowess in Nathan's possession he chooses to keep a lot of his bass lines close to the root chords on these old Country Blues songs. A good example being track 1, the medium fast 12 bar Blues in E 'When You Got a Good Friend'. A lovely simple effect in a perfect groove with Steve Gadd. 'Simple effect' but far from simple to get this sort of result. It illustrates the Bill Wyman philosophy perfectly, although Nathan is very capable of elaborating and also making that sound great.

The second track 'Little Queen of Spades' is a slower 12 bar Blues in A where Nathan brings in the major key tradition Blues runs pioneered by Willie Dixon on bass. 'They're Red Hot' is the third track and not a traditional 12 bar chord sequence. It sees Nathan adopting a real 'Country' bass style with some harmonics. There is no 'flashy' bass guitar on this album but it is the perfect illustration of an excellent bass player and drummer supporting a Blues front man (Clapton).

East has taken to Yamaha 5 string bass guitars and the Company have made a beautiful Nathan East signature model which you can buy if you have a spare £4000. This seems to be the going rate if you want a bass used by either of the most popular session bass players in the World (Pino and Nathan). Nathan also uses forms of upright bass at times. With both Pino and Nathan there can be no greater evidence for why they are in my Diamond Dozen than the list of people who wanted them to provide the bass lines on their recordings.

Summary

Three of my American bass Diamonds, Willie Dixon, James Jameson and Duck Dunn were a huge inspiration for the development of my British Diamonds. Willie pioneered the bass patterns which became standard in The Blues and its 'baby' Rock and Roll. James Jameson was pivotal in the development of the bass counter-melody approach, while Duck Dunn championed driving Soul and Blues riffs. These three Americans were playing in house bands for highly successful record companies Chess, Tamla Motown and Stax respectively.

The house band model proved very effective in the 1960s, but more recent years have seen the emergence of bass 'super session' players who have no allegiance to particular studios but operate on a freelance basis. Pino Palladino and Nathan East between them have played for a vast array of music talent and are in incredible demand.

Both John Entwistle and Jack Bruce adopted a bass style which, particularly in live performance, meant they were almost playing dual lead with Pete Townsend and Eric Clapton respectively but an octave or two lower. Andy Fraser was similar in this respect in his partnership with Paul Kossoff.

Both Bill Wyman and John McVie have played for many years in their highly successful bands keeping it right in the groove with Charlie Watts and Mick Fleetwood respectively. Their deliberate approach has been to keep it relatively simple and support the more flamboyant band members.

It is interesting to note that the bass players in my Dozen from the two most commercially successful bands played the full range of styles, but were more likely to adopt the James Jameson 'counter melody' approach than any of the others. Paul McCartney and John Paul Jones are outstanding musicians, but even though they played in the two best selling bands Britain (and possibly The World) has seen they did not play on as many top 10 hits as their bass hero James Jameson.

Online resources have been the main reference for this document. Where possible facts have been ascertained from multiple sources . TV documentaries on Sky Arts and AXS TV have provided useful verification.