

# Contemporary Slapping Techniques

## Introduction

By Cliff Engel

1

S P S P

5

S P S P S P S P

9

S S S S

13

S S S S S S S S

17

S S P S S P S S P S S P

21

S S P S S P S S P S S P

25

S P P2 S P P2 S P P2 S P P2

29

S P P2 S P P2 S P P2 S P P2

33

S S P P2 S S P P2 S S P P2 S P P2

□ V □ V □ V □ V

37

S S P P2 S S P P2 S S P P2 S P P2

□ V □ V □ V □ V

41

S S

□ V □ V

45

S P

49

S S P

□ V

53

S S P P2

□ V

57

S S P S S P S S P S S P S S

□ V □ V □ V □ V □ V □ V □ V □ V

61

S S  
 ▣ V

65

S P

69

S S P  
 ▣ V

73

S S PP2  
 ▣ V

## Bass Notation Legend

S = Slap

S = Slap Downstroke  
 ▣

S = Slap Upstroke  
 V

P = Pluck Index Finger

P2 = Pluck Middle Finger

This lesson is the first in a series of lessons in which I will address contemporary slapping techniques. The exercises that I am presenting to you have been pulled directly from some of the exact exercises that I use in my everyday practice. In fact, the majority of my practice time which I allocate strictly to slapping techniques is spent working through these same examples. This lesson will start out simple and become progressively more complex as you work your way through it. Focus your attention on being able to play these exercises as consistently as possible. Consistency is our chief objective here. Although playing consistently for prolonged periods of time may seem like a simple concept in itself, actually being capable of achieving this goal eludes many bassists. Be sure to use a metronome or any other type of device that can produce a steady, even pulse to which you can play along. Start slow and gradually increase the tempo. You should be able to eventually play all these exercises at any tempo.

The end goal for which I have composed this lesson is for all bassists to be able to play slapping and plucking techniques through a wide range of permutations across the fingerboard in a linear fashion. A few of the bassists who you'll hear utilizing these linear techniques in their playing include Alain Caron, Victor Wooten, and Marcus Miller to name just a few. Once you have trained your fingers to slap and pluck in this linear fashion, you'll have added another means of articulating tones to your toolbox of techniques. I've found that the best slappers have shown the greatest improvement in the least amount of time as a result of studying these most basic concepts. You'll find great challenges if you concentrate on these most simple and fundamental aspects of slapping techniques. I think that you will find these exercises to be very valuable and powerful at the same time.

In measures 1-40, we are just concentrating strictly on slapping and plucking techniques in various string crossing combinations. Here, just lightly dampen the strings with your fretting hand by laying it across the entire fretboard without actually pressing down hard enough to articulate any tones. At this point, you should hear just a solid click when you slap and pluck the strings (ghost notes). Within this section, you'll be utilizing what is commonly referred to as double slapping and double plucking techniques. The most common problem experienced with these techniques is allowing your thumb or index and middle fingers to get "hung up" underneath the strings, but with practice you'll learn exactly how much liberty you will be able to take with regard to each respective technique. When double slapping, your thumb will make the same up and down motion that a guitar player makes with a pick. Instead of allowing your thumb to rebound or bounce back as soon as it slaps a string as in the more traditional approach to slapping, your thumb will slap through the string. On the downstroke you will slap through the string with the side of your thumb, and then on the upstroke, the corner edge of your thumbnail will articulate the string. Although double slapping will produce two different articulations with the downstroke and upstroke of the string, you want them to sound as even as possible in volume, and your plucked tones should be consistent in volume with your slapped tones as well.

In measures 41-56, we take what we have previously taught our slapping and plucking hand to do and add activity with our fretting hand. In these examples, we are applying our slapping and plucking techniques to the G Major scale. After you get this exercise underneath your fingers, you should then apply it to all of the scales you can already play across the entire range of your instrument.

Pay particular attention to the exercise beginning at measure 57 because this is the essential foundation to a truly linear approach of playing lines with slapping and plucking techniques.

Lastly, in measures 61-76 we apply double slapping and double plucking techniques to a G Major 7 arpeggio. Again, like in the previous examples, take what I have notated for you and apply it to other dominant, minor, augmented, and diminished arpeggios and then transpose them to every position across the entire range of the fingerboard.