

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Todd Interview	6
Jim Interview	8
About Grips	10
1. Foundation - <i>You Are My Sunshine</i>	12
Triads - Under The Basket	
Seventh Chords - Six-footer	
Todd Grips - From the Three-Point Line	
2. Grips - Voicings	
Major Scale Grips	16
Practice Techniques	19
Minor Scale Grips	20
Dominant Scale Grips	24
3. Songs Demonstrating Grips	
<i>Autumn Leaves</i>	26
<i>Mr PC</i>	28
<i>F Jam Blues</i>	29
<i>Misty</i>	30
<i>Cherokee</i>	32
4. Review - <i>Surfer Girl</i>	
Triads - Under The Basket	34
Seventh Chords - Six-footer	
Todd Grips - From the Three-Point Line	
Conclusion	36
Discography	38

Todd Johnson Interview

Q. When did you get your first six-string bass?

A. In 1989. I was twenty-eight years old, living in Las Vegas, working Top-40 gigs in lounges and playing shows at Caesar's Palace. My first six-string was a Hartfield. Hartfield was a subsidiary of Fender.

Q. How was the six-string bass received by your fellow musicians?

A. Most of them were excited. Of course I played on the lower five strings most of the time. I would occasionally sneak in a few high notes on my C string when I could.

Q. Did you start out playing guitar like most of us bassists?

A. Yes, I learned a few chords when I was six years old. In high school I became an All American tuba player. I picked up the bass my junior year and later went to college on a tuba scholarship.

Q. What made you buy a six-string?

A. I wanted to play melodies. I heard John Pattitucci play with Chick Corea and Steve Bailey with the Rippingtons. I was fascinated by the range and harmonic possibilities. Shortly after hearing these great players, I went out to the LA Bass Exchange and bought my Hartfield.

Q. You didn't end up playing like Steve Bailey or John Pattitucci. What happened?

A. Ron Eschete came into my life at Bass Institute of Technology (BIT) in 1990. He was teaching at Music Institute (MI) and greatly impacted my music.

At this point in my career I was stuck, musically speaking. I had hit the wall and needed to find out what I didn't know. I enrolled at BIT hoping to learn what I needed to do to move forward with my music. I didn't want a degree. I wanted knowledge. All the players I was listening to on records were teaching at BIT; Garry Willis, Steve Bailey, Jeff Berlin, Bob Magnuson, Putter Smith, Ron Eschete, Joe Diorio, to name a few. I was mesmerized by the list of teachers in the catalog. These guys were working with all of the musicians I wanted to play with. So, I enrolled not knowing I would meet my musical mentor and life long friend. When Ron Eschete walked into MI on Mondays, I was waiting at the door with a cup of coffee for him, a pad of manuscript paper, pencils, and a tape recorder. I shadowed the man. Open Counseling, a class at MI, would consist of Ron sitting up front with a half-dozen big box jazz guitarists watching.

The school said Open Counseling was open to any student, so I would go in and sit as close to Ron as possible hoping to learn and hoping maybe he would ask me to play. He did. I would tape everything, go home, and learn the tunes. Eventually Ron asked me to sub on one of his gigs for his regular bass player who was one of my teachers. After three months, I took over the bass chair and have been playing with Ron Eschete for sixteen years now. That's how I really learned to play my stuff.

Jim Stinnett Interview

Q. How long have you been writing bass books?

A. In 1980 I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work with the legendary pianist, Red Garland. I was so inspired by this experience that I began to transcribe Paul Chambers. This led to my first publication, *The Music Of Paul Chambers*.

Q. What makes *Fishin' For Grips* unique for you?

A. This is the first time that I have ever written a book about a topic that is not my expertise. I play this material on piano regularly, but not on bass.

Q. What made you decide to collaborate with a fellow musician on a book project?

A. When I heard Todd Johnson play, I knew this was ground breaking technique on the electric bass. Besides making beautiful music, Todd is blowing the doors off the traditional concept of playing chords on the bass. I wanted to learn what Todd was doing, so I hired him to teach at one of my *Bass Workouts*. His concept and methodology are sound, so I offered to help Todd put his pedagogy into book form. I am honored that he accepted my offer.

Q. When did you first get into the extended range bass?

A. In 1996 I began playing bass again after a nine year hiatus and bought my first 6-string. The low B string was easy but the high C string was challenging. I loved the higher range for soloing and chords.

Q. What inspired you to buy your first 6-string?

A. Teaching at Berklee College Of Music allowed me to see and play many students' basses. I had two private students who both played a Modulus 6-string. I played their basses often in lessons and liked it. I opted to spend less money and got a Pedulla. I had always accompanied my students using the piano, but with the high string, I now began to use the six-string to comp chords during lessons.

Q. What is your concept behind the production of *Fishin' For Grips*?

A. Hearing jazz music from the standpoint of wanting to learn to play jazz can be quite mystical and deceiving. To watch and listen to a master like Todd Johnson can be very frustrating because you can be left with the feeling that there must be some secrets you don't know about. He makes it look so easy. Or perhaps you might think that your ear is just not good enough to decipher the complexities of these lush harmonies coming from Todd's bass guitar.

About Grips

Grip Rules

All good pedagogy has some rules. Here are Todd's Grip Rules.

1. When you have a root on the top, play the 3rd and 7th below.
2. When you have a non 3rd or 7th on top, add the 3rd and 7th below.
3. 3rd on top, add the 7th and 5th below.
4. 7th on top, add the 3rd and 9th below

The goal is to learn the rules so well that you don't have to think about them. This is accomplished by playing with the play-alongs so much that your ears internalize and recognize the sounds, and your hands begin to move to the shapes without conscious thought.

The majority of Todd's grips are three-note chords. While there are endless possible variations in the method of creating chord voicings, the basic Grip Rules always work. Let's also assume that the melody will always be played on top, the highest note of the grip, and located on your highest string. All video demos are using a bass with a high C string.

Work slowly. Be patient with yourself. These grips are challenging shapes. Some contortion of your hand is necessary to produce a good sound. As with any new task, it will take time to become comfortable with the execution.

If you just look at the rules without actually playing the music, you may be disappointed. This is not rocket science, just beautiful sounds when played on the bass guitar.

For each topic there are multiple videos highlighting various aspects of the technique. The progression for all lessons is generally from simplest to more advanced, beginning with triads then moving to seventh chords, then finally Todd Grips. Be sure to use each of the examples as your play-along tracks. Get your bass out and practice with Todd.

With the video examples structured as they are, you can choose the level of difficulty you wish to practice; triads, 7th chords, Todd grips. There is no substitute for repetition of practice. The video play-along tracks will allow you to learn the physical shapes that are used in each song. These shapes will be the same shapes/grips you will use in other songs you learn.

You should also take the time to listen to all the examples of each song before you jump in. This will give you an idea of the scope and depth of Todd's teaching. You can then better focus on your needs.

Video Chapter 3 - *You Are My Sunshine* - triads only

Video Chapter 4 - *You Are My Sunshine* - 7th chords only

Video Chapter 5 - *You Are My Sunshine* - from the three-point line

Let's identify a few characteristics that were present in all three of these examples of *You Are My Sunshine*.

1. good time
2. good intonation
3. good sound production
4. good interaction between players

While learning and practicing, it is vital to always maintain a high level of musical integrity by not forgetting the traits listed above. It can be easy to sort of blow-off these finer points when learning and practicing something new. DON'T! You will perform the way you practice.

The chord changes for each version of *You Are My Sunshine* are a bit different.

Sunshine - under the basket, triads only - **Video Chapter 3**

C



1

F

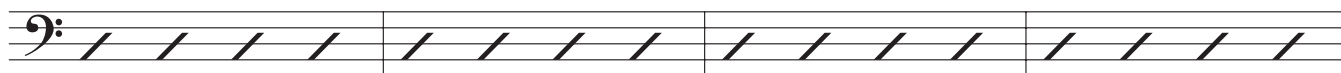
C



5

F

C



9

G

C



13

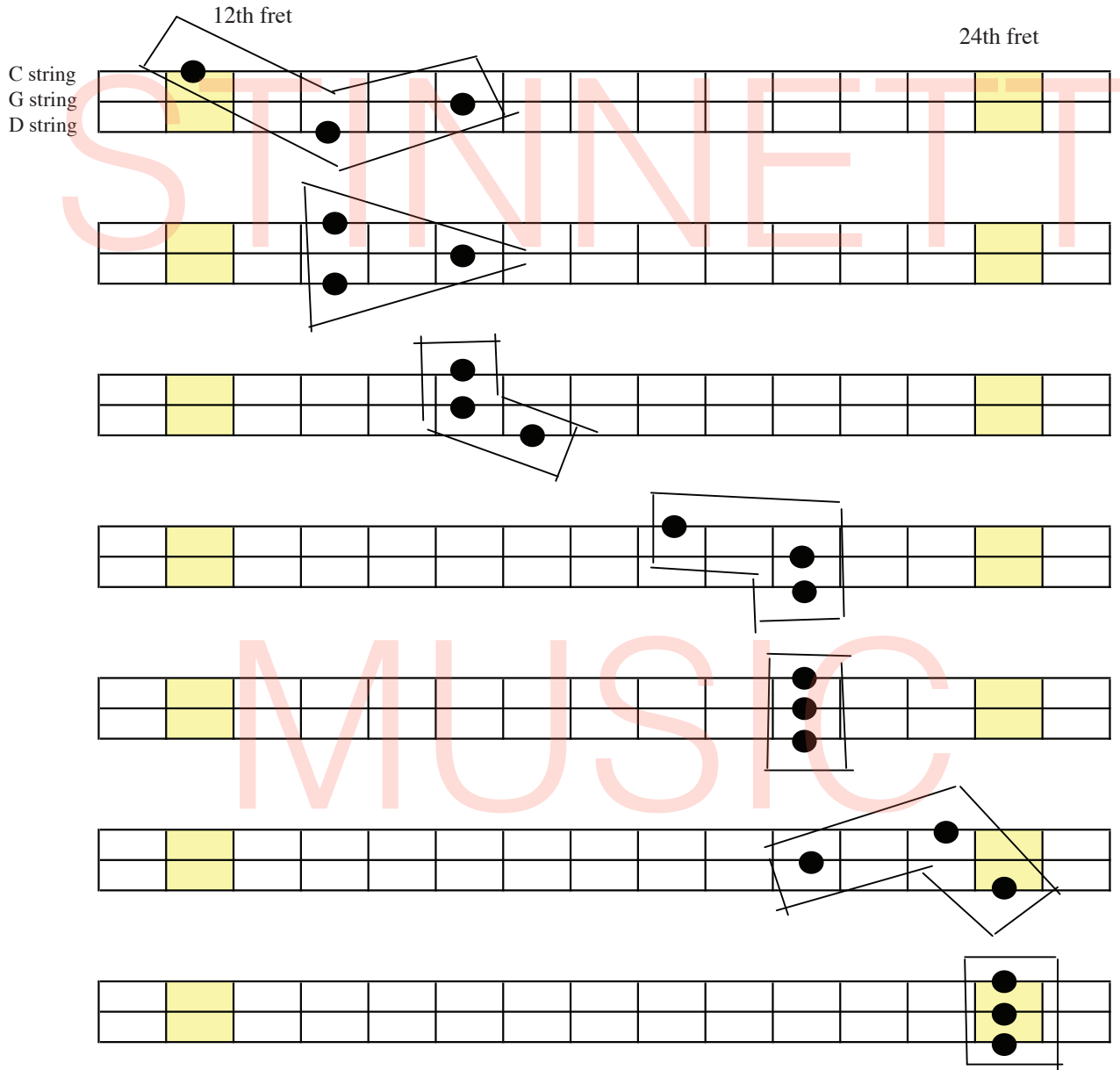
The variations in the chord changes used in these three versions of *You Are My Sunshine* are common. All good jazz players use varying degrees of tensions in their chords, and a variety of chord substitutions depending on how they want the song to sound. You will also notice some rhythmic variation in the melody. This is done to facilitate the physical movement necessary to grab some of the grips as well as just jazzing up the feel.

Todd's Tips 1: Raising the headstock of the bass toward the ceiling makes it easier to play hard to finger "grips". I often push the body of the bass with my right forearm, or push up the body of the bass with my right knee....or a combination of both to find angles that make "hard to play grips" a little easier.

Chapter 2

Major Scale Grips

These diagrams show the Grips beginning on each degree of the C major scale.



Grip Rules:

1. When you have a root on the top, play the 3rd and 7th below.
2. When you have a non 3rd or 7th on top, play the 3rd and 7th below.
3. When you have the 3rd on top, play the 7th and 5th below.
4. When you have the 7th on top, play the 3rd and 9th below.

Todd's Tips 4: How much theory do I need to know?

A working knowledge of intervals, chord construction and some basic rules of diatonic harmony "should" be sufficient. It's also important that you know your fingerboard as well. Once you start on this path you'll find out how well you know it, and quickly!

At this point, it is important that you do not get hung up on theory. You will notice very little discussion of theory on the video or in the book. Music is an aural art, and your ear is the best tool with which to learn. The videos clearly show the hand positions and fingerings. Listen, look, and copy.

I have some students who play Todd's grips very well without understanding the theory aspect. I want to warn you against making the statement, "Yeah, but I want to know what I am doing before I really practice it." This is often a poor excuse for not practicing something. Like it or not, no one can hear what is in your head, only what comes out of your bass.

We all have different learning styles, so you must do whatever you need to do to position yourself to practice. I can assure you that the grips will not physically come easily. While trying to find the correct notes can make your head spin, your ears will quickly begin to hear if the notes are correct or not. Repetition equals muscle memory, and muscle memory is needed to allow you to relax and play good music. Turn on the play-along and just play over and over. Your ears will tell you how well you are doing. Also, email Todd. "He loves to talk grips."

I should warn you, the more you practice, the more people will call you naturally talented. Isn't it great how you can increase your "natural" talent. ;)

Chapter 3

Songs Demonstrating Grips

Autumn Leaves is one of those jazz standards that everybody plays. Let's see how the grips work with this melody.

Video Chapter 19 - *Autumn Leaves* (A section only)

Video Chapter 20 - *Autumn Leaves* play-along

When working with the play-along track, if you find that you just cannot keep up, go back and work with the grips built on the major, minor, and dominant scales. Very quickly students become frustrated because they don't have time to think and find the grips. Obviously, slow things down, but also remember, you must have some degree of mastery over the basic shapes before you can play a song in time. Simply put, more technique practice will make all songs easier.

Todd's Tips 6: 2 and 3 note chords....it's hard to see them.

As bass players, we're used to seeing everything as a "one note at a time" type of thing. The minute we start playing more than one note at a time, our degree of difficulty leaps dramatically. Playing a 3 or 4 note chord is 3 or 4 times harder for us to "see" and remember. If we can't see it, we can't remember it. This means we have a hard time playing it correctly. Funny how that works. You'll find that you have to practice these grips OVER and OVER and OVER and OVER again until you can finally see them. Then once you can see them, you have to work them into muscle memory. Don't be discouraged when it takes more time to learn this than you think. Hang in there. Our methodology is extremely sound and proven. You just have to put in the time on a consistent basis to achieve the desired results. Eventually you'll start to see 3 and 4 note chords as if they were just one note.

Chord changes to *Autumn Leaves*

STINNETT MUSIC

1
C-7 F7 Bbmaj7
A-7 (b5) D7 G-7

5
A-7 (b5) D7 G-7

9
C-7 F7 Bbmaj7
A-7 (b5) D7 G-7

13
A-7 (b5) D7 G-7

17
A-7 (b5) D7 G-7

21
A-7 (b5) D7 G-7

Here Todd takes the old standard, *Misty*, and makes his grips sing with sweetness. This sound is classic jazz piano or jazz guitar styling.

Todd's Tips 8: Why don't you play guitar?

The reason I don't play guitar is because I play the bass, and don't have to. I can make a tremendous amount of music with the 6 string bass that you can't make on any other instrument. It's just a different chordal instrument than people are used to, and other than the improvement, you notice very little difference. Ha! In all seriousness, I love playing the 6 string bass. The future is bright for the instrument. We're breaking down barriers and making people rethink our instrument and it's role.

Todd's Tips 9: These are hard voicings. Should they be this hard to play? Yes! Anything new like this is going to be difficult and awkward at first. But give it time, patience and some consistent effort and you'll get it. Hey, if I can do it, then anyone can!! It's also a matter of getting our fingers used to doing things we've never asked them to do, so the learning curve will be steep at first. But this stuff sounds so good that it's definitely worth the hard work.

Todd's Tips 10: How do I use these chords?

You can use these chords in multiple ways, but the music and common sense should always dictate what you do. It's really useful when everyone drops out during the bass solo. You can play your own changes!