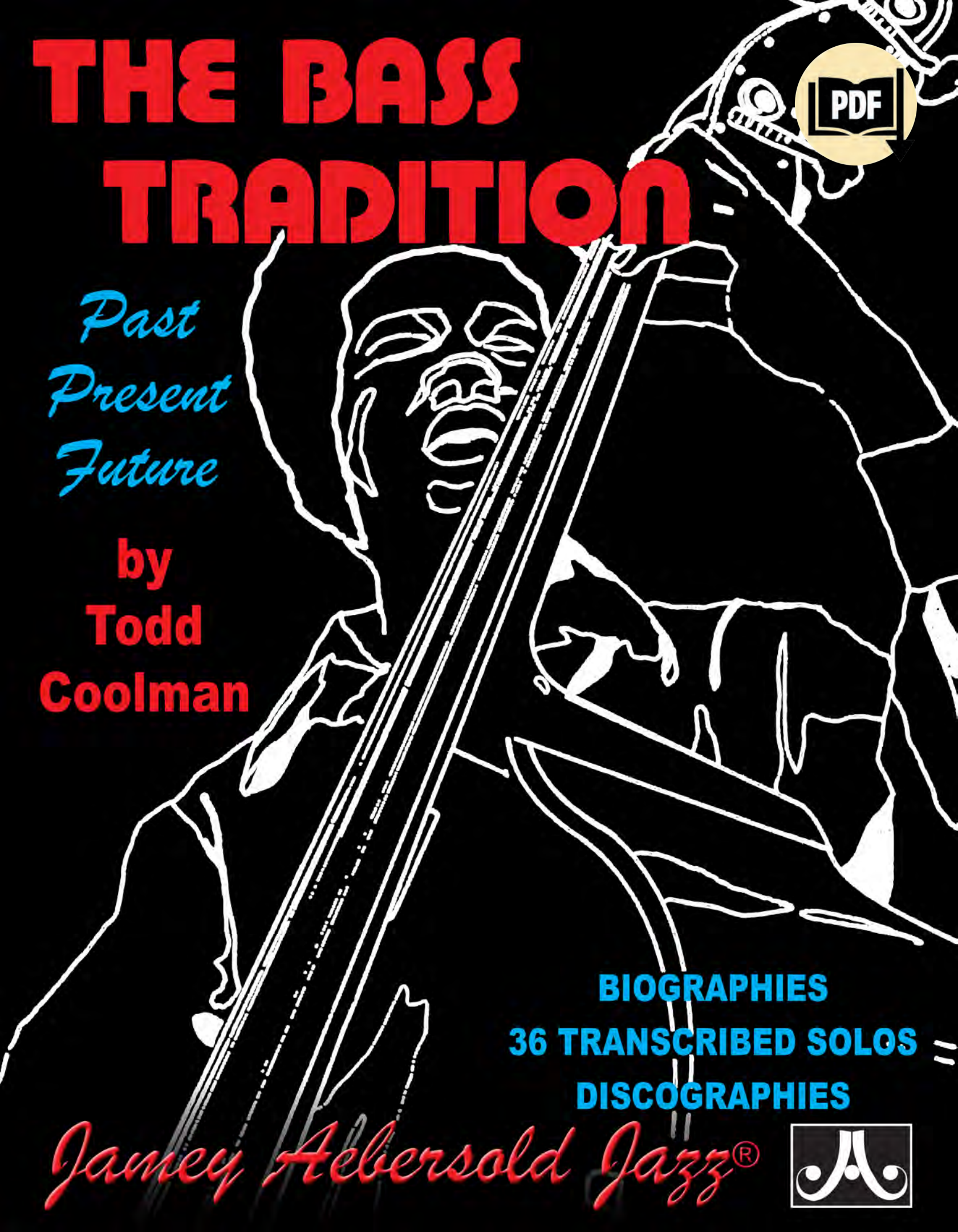


THE BASS TRADITION

*Past
Present
Future*

**by
Todd
Coolman**



**BIOGRAPHIES
36 TRANSCRIBED SOLOS
DISCOGRAPHIES**

Jamey Abersold Jazz®



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Todd Coolman

Grammy award-winning bassist Todd Coolman is among the more in-demand musicians on the New York scene today. Since moving to New York in 1978, he has performed and/or recorded with a virtual "who's who" of jazz artists including Horace Silver, Gerry Mulligan, Stan Getz, Benny Golson, Art Farmer, Tommy Flanagan, Lionel Hampton, Benny Goodman, and numerous others. Today, Todd is actively performing with an impressive array of artists including James Moody, Ahmad Jamal, Slide Hampton, Jimmy Heath, and The Carnegie Hall Jazz Band under the direction of Jon Faddis. Todd has recorded two CDs as a leader, "Tomorrows" and "Lexicon," the latter featuring guest artist and jazz legend Joe Henderson.

In addition to his performing schedule, Todd is an associate Professor and Director of Jazz Performance at Purchase College (SUNY) and has authored two books, "The Bass Tradition" and "The Bottom Line." Among several academic honors, Todd holds a Ph.D in music from New York University and is frequently sought after as an author and research consultant for jazz historiographies and CD liner notes. He is also an adept bass fisherman and collector of antique fishing lures.

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PREFACE

The selected bassists and musical examples contained in this book are the culmination of three years of research, including listening to numerous recordings and reading articles, interviews and books on the history of jazz. To my knowledge, it is the first book of its kind which concentrates on the major innovators of jazz bass playing from 1939 (Jimmy Blanton) to the present. Every effort has been made to include as many important players as possible and not to omit anyone who had a major impact on bass playing, past or present. If a certain player is not mentioned, it is not to suggest that his influence was not important to the music community. A subsequent volume will focus on other important players.

The purpose of this book is to instill a sense of heritage and tradition, especially to younger, aspiring bassists who have not been exposed to a variety of music and styles. It is also expected that this information can further the appreciation level of those already knowledgeable.

Todd Coolman

1985

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Many young bassists today exhibit serious deficiencies in their playing due to their lack of understanding of the musical legacy of those who preceded them. Without adequate knowledge of previous jazz bass styles and innovations, a young player will sound unseasoned, stylistically misplaced, and ill-equipped to perform in the variety of musical situations that will confront him/her. The great bassists throughout history have always been acutely aware of their heritage and thus developed a mature and idiomatic playing style.

There are several levels at which this book can be useful. Below, I have outlined an approach which I feel is the most logical, and will provide the reader with the deepest understanding and appreciation of the subject. The outline should be followed step by step, in order.

1. Study each player in order, one at a time. Do not skip ahead. The players have been arranged in a chronological/historical order which approximates their place in the history of jazz bass playing. By going in order, you will better understand the heritage of the instrument and can trace its evolution.
2. Read the biographical sketch of the selected player. This will help you understand his individual contribution.
3. Select a single transcription of the selected player and locate the recording that is listed.
4. Carefully listen to the recording **several** times, without the book.
5. After several listenings, test your familiarity with the music by seeing how much of the solo (or bass line) you can sing from memory.
6. Find the transcription and listen several more times to the recording while following along with the printed music.
7. Try to play the solo (or bass line) on your instrument. Begin at a tempo slower than the recording and gradually work up to tempo. You can extract particularly difficult passages and work on them separately.
8. Once you can play the solo (or bass line) proficiently, use the transcription and try playing along with the record simultaneously. Try to imitate and capture every nuance and musical quality the selected player demonstrates.
9. Finally, try playing the solo (or bass line) from memory.

Jimmy Blanton

(1918 - 1942)

Jimmy Blanton is regarded by most as the "father" of modern jazz bass playing, and is unquestionably the central figure in the evolution of the bass. He was the first bassist to solo in a "horn-like" fashion and liberate the bass from its basic four-notes-to-the-bar "walking" function. He possessed an enormous, warm sound that was easily heard and felt in a big band, without amplification.

Originally a violinist, Jimmy enrolled in Tennessee State College and switched to string bass. After playing only a short while, he was heard by Duke Ellington in the fall of 1939 and immediately hired.

In the span of just two years with the Ellington orchestra, Blanton revolutionized jazz bass playing and, for that matter, the sound of jazz itself. His influence can still be heard and felt today. Many of the discoveries he made, especially evident on the duo recordings with Duke, are being rediscovered and explored further by today's players.

Tragically, Jimmy died of tuberculosis at the age of 23 (July 30, 1942). In a career spanning two short years, Jimmy did more than any other bassist before or since to influence the evolution of jazz bass playing. Jimmy Blanton's place in jazz history is strikingly similar to that of players like Bix Biederbecke, Charlie Christian, Clifford Brown, Scott LaFaro and Booker Little, all major innovators who died at an early age.

Body and Soul

$\text{♩} = 60$

ARGO Eb- Ab6 Eb- D7 DbΔ Ab7

DbΔ E° Eb- Ab6 A° Bb- Eb- Ab7

DbΔ B7 Bb7 Eb- Ab6 Eb- D7

DbΔ Ab7 DbΔ E°7 Eb-

Ab6 A° Bb- Eb- Ab7 DbΔ A7

DA A7 DA G-6 DA E- A7 DA