

## **Academia: Upright (or Doghouse) Bass and Bluegrass**

The string bass is the most commonly-used bass instrument in bluegrass music and is almost always plucked, though some modern bluegrass bassists have also used a bow. The Englehardt or Kay brands of basses have long been popular choices for bluegrass bassists. While most bluegrass bassists use the 3/4 size bass, the full and 5/8 size basses are less frequently used.

The bluegrass bass is responsible for keeping time in the polyrhythmic conditions of the bluegrass tune. Most important is the steady beat, whether fast, slow, in 4/4 time, 2/4 or 3/4 time.

Early pre-bluegrass music was often accompanied by the cello, which was bowed as often as plucked. Some contemporary bluegrass bands favor the electric bass, but it has a different musical quality than the plucked upright bass. The upright bass gives energy and drive to the music with its percussive, woody tone. Slapping is a widely-used bluegrass playing technique.

Common rhythms in bluegrass bass playing involve (with some exceptions) plucking on beats 1 and 3 in 4/4 time; beats 1 and 2 in 2/4 time, and beats 1 and 3 in 3/4 (waltz) time. Bluegrass bass lines are usually extremely simple, typically staying on the root and fifth of each chord throughout much of a song. There are two main exceptions to this "rule". Bluegrass bassists often do a diatonic "walkup" or "walk-down" in which they play every beat of a bar for one or two bars, typically when there is a prominent chord change. In addition, if a bass player is given a solo, they may play a walking bass line.

The first bluegrass bassist to rise to prominence was Howard Watts (also known as Cedric Rainwater), who played with Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys beginning in 1944. One of the most famous bluegrass bassists is Edgar Meyer, who has now branched out into newgrass, classical, and other genres.

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Daniel plays a Palatino Travel Bass, "The best-selling bass in America". The VB-004 features a crack-resistant spruce top with a gracefully designed, arched maple back. The neck is hand carved from solid maple for a great fit. The fingerboard and tailpiece are made from ebonized woods, and the bass comes with German-quality, Tyrolean tuners, with a 24:1 gear ratio. This outfit included a Mongolian horsehair bow and a DuraGuard nylon bag.