

## A Striking Way to Play Bass

With an 11-string bass guitar spanning six octaves and a unique way of playing harmonics, has Garry Goodman added a new color to the bass guitar palette? Goodman became a member of Local 47 (Los Angeles) in 1970. He has worked as a traditional bass guitarist doing everything from casuals to conventions, from musical theater to cruises. Goodman has been a sideman with a number of name acts and has also worked as a session musician for jingles, film, and television. Over the past 34 years, he has been developing a unique technique for playing bass guitar that he terms "Percussive Harmonics."

"I developed the technique as a vehicle for making my bass playing more effective in a solo or duo situation," says Goodman. Percussive Harmonics is an organized system of playing melodies, chords and grooves, all in harmonics, while still allowing the fundamental of each note to be heard. "It may not be obvious, from the description, that this is a unique and original technique. You have to hear and see it in use to understand how unique it really is."

For decades, Goodman has been using this technique regularly in playing his original compositions, and somewhat sparingly in other musical situations. "Percussive Harmonics allows me to play a solid bass line and chord accompaniment simultaneously, all in harmonics," he says.

The technique can be compared to mallets striking a xylophone. In the process of developing it, Goodman expanded the concept of the bass guitar and began to experiment with more strings. After playing a Fender Bass VI and a Gibson EB6, he began playing a Chapman Stick, which gave him the idea of adding a low B string to the configuration E-F, tuned in fourths. "I had been playing the Chapman Stick since 1975, but the way the instrument was tuned wasn't working for me. Playing Percussive Harmonics and touch-style, in combination with traditional bass playing, convinced me that a 7-string bass would be ideal."

After several attempts to modify his six-string bass guitars, he started searching in the late 1970s for a luthier to build a 7-string bass. This eventually led him to Michael Tobias, who in 1987 crafted what is now recognized as the first 7-string bass. Although Goodman says it was funny hearing guitarists remark that he had more strings than them, he asserts that he never invaded the guitarist's domain, and just played the notes as written on the chart. "I don't think anyone could tell I was playing a 7-string just by listening," he says. By the 1990s, Percussive Harmonics had become an integral part of his playing, woven into his compositions from start to finish.

In January of this year, Goodman started playing the first 11-string bass guitar, conceived and crafted by luthier Michael Adler. Its low C#00 string (17 hz), conceptualized by Chicago bassist Jaquo III-X, lends new meaning to the word "bass." According to Goodman, other musicians often wonder if the low C# string is actually audible. "It is," he confirms. Bassoon Sound recently made a custom cabinet especially for the 11-string bass.

With the extended low end comes new possibilities, such as playing an octave below standard bass guitar tuning, and allowing access to the entire range of a guitar. Goodman explains, "I can now play chords guitar-style with my left hand while playing bass notes between the 7th and 12th fret on the lower strings with the right hand. Having 11 strings gives me almost the same range as a piano. Now I can play the 'Bach Two-Part Inventions' non-transposed, as a pianist would."

Goodman is currently composing for and recording with the 11-string bass. To hear audio samples of his 7-string Percussive Harmonics in live duo recordings with guitarist David Nielsen, go to [www.nielsengoodman.dmusic.com](http://www.nielsengoodman.dmusic.com). The first sixty seconds of "Can I Keep This Dream" are a perfect example of solo 7-string bass utilizing Percussive Harmonics.



Garry Goodman of Local 47 demonstrates his technique of playing his unusual 11-String bass, at a recent jam session.