

# Contents

Introduction	6
Forward	10
Chapter 1 - Problem(s)	14
Faking It	14
Practice Blur	16
Time Management	18
The Web	23
Parachute	28
Obstacles (diagram)	30
Rampal	35
Chapter 2 - Solution	36
Attitude	36
Iceberg (diagram)	42
Steve	44
Expectation	46
Pradigms	49
Chapter 3 - Execution	56
Goal Setting	58
Practice Curve (diagram)	62
Personal Puzzle	67
Gigs	74
Year Of The Reading Bassist	78
Chapter 4 - Evaluation	82
Quadrant Lesson (diagram)	86
Student Excuses	92
Index	94
People and Places	95
Works Cited	98
About the Author	99
Tear-outs - planning pages	101

## Introduction

For a number of years I thought I was a bad practicer because I just couldn't seem to practice eight hours a day. I worried that I would never become an accomplished musician because I did not have the discipline.

I remember during my first year in a community college music program, the first time someone told me, "You only need to focus a couple of hours a day, for a few years, on fundamental technique to gain control over your instrument." The man who told me this was an outstanding violinist, an excellent teacher, and had my best interests at heart. I understood his words, but did not understand how they could be in such conflict with what I so often heard, "Man, you gotta practice eight hours a day all your life."

Three years later I heard this sentiment again. An excellent pianist/composer-arranger told me that I really needed to master my instrument. "Just be willing to focus your practice for a couple hours a day for two to three years, and then you will be free to express yourself," he said. I was playing the bass ten to twelve hours a day at this point in my life. I was improving by leaps and bounds, almost by accident. I had learned to groove when I was a teenager, and this skill afforded me countless playing opportunities. In most of these playing situations, I was surrounded with players far beyond my level. Hence, my level of musicianship rose to their level just by association. However, I still had not figured out how to practice consistently, and more importantly, I had not figured out what to practice on a daily basis.

I always seemed to be chasing things I needed to learn. I would need to play a certain song for a concert, so I would learn it. I would

Diagram #1, You looking at your dreams

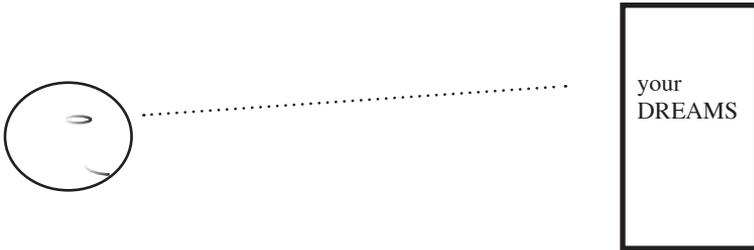


Diagram #2, You looking at your dreams, but an obstacle moves in the way and you lose your vision of success.

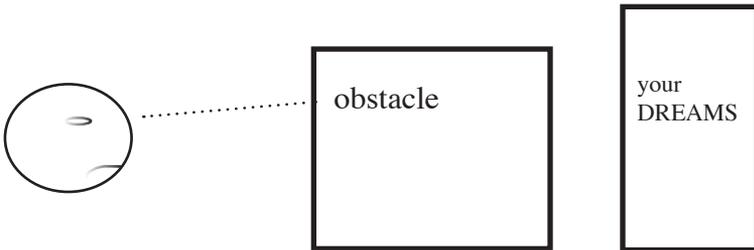
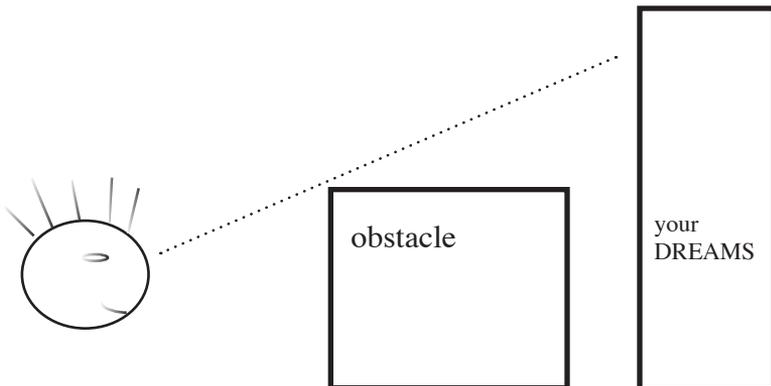


Diagram #3, How do you NOT focus on the obstacle? Get your dreams UP!



If you want to become a pro, and make a living from your music, you better be a fanatic about practicing. And you better surround yourself with people who understand this and are also working that hard chasing their dreams.

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*Practice Technique #14 Practice is Not Perfect.*

*Vince Lombardy said, "Practice does not make perfect, practice makes perfect practice." Be careful of those things you practice. Search out and study with the best teacher you possibly can find. Go regularly to clinics and workshops. Go out and listen to live players who are doing what you want to do. Invest time and money in your own education. Everyone will pay a price to achieve success. Although the price is different for each individual, for everyone, that price is non-negotiable.*

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*Practice Technique #15 - Eleventh Commandment*

*When I ask students whom I haven't seen in a while, "What are you working on right now?" and their answers are general and vague:*

*Example 1. "Well, uh, my band is getting a demo together."*

*Example 2. "A lot of soloing concepts."*

*Example 3. "My groove."*

*Example 4. "Man, I'm totally into Jaco right now."*

*I know that they are not practicing. If they are playing their instruments at all, it's in the form of jamming, not practicing. I've seen many students "practice" for hours and basically play the same garbage over and over that they have known for years. This IS NOT productive practice. If you cannot list the specific things you worked on today, and yesterday, and will work on tomorrow, you are not being productive. The Eleventh Commandment (for musicians) is: "Thou shalt not fake thyself out."*

There is no excuse for not being prepared. I can recall many times doing my homework prior to a gig, show, audition, concert, whatever, and the leader and other musicians thought I was great. I fooled them!! It did not take me long to learn that all professionals are as prepared as they can be before they walk on stage. Let me relate a story from my youth that really set my attitude about being prepared.

Back in 1976, I got a phone call from a booking agent. The man said that he was bringing Jean-Pierre Rampal into the Seattle Opera House. "Great!" I said. (who the hell is John-Peer Rumpall) I wondered. He told me that the music would be very demanding to read and play - the performance would include the entire "*Suite For Flute and Jazz Piano*" by Claude Bolling. "Cool," I said, like I knew the piece well. He told me he needed a bass player who could read this music down because there would only be a short rehearsal. Rampal did not like to rehearse and was a "very busy man." This agent was quite anxious and let me know how important this gig was. I replied by telling him, "No problem, I CAN READ ANYTHING WRITTEN." After a short pause, he gave a big sigh of relief on the phone and proceeded to thank me and then give me the details of the gig. I sent this guy away singing to himself.

I immediately called the local sheet music store and ordered the music. I also asked them how popular was this Jean-Pierre Rampal guy. I went to the classical record store and bought the album. As you might have already guessed, at the gig, I sight read the stuff right down. (ha ha, wink wink) All my friends around town were impressed that I aced the big gig with Rampal. You know how musicians talk. By the way, Rampal showed up at the rehearsal with a gorgeous young blonde on each arm, and we rehearsed for a total of 15 minutes. I recognized then, he was a very busy and talented man. He also was a hell of a flute player even if he did have to read bebop.

## Chapter Two

### Solution

#### Attitude - Your Choice

We all have desire, but what propels some to achieve where others stagnate? How does one stay motivated to do the work that produces results? What helps our belief become so strong that we cannot be stopped? The answer to all of these questions is Attitude.

Attitude begins with how you react to challenges. “I can overcome this,” or, “I’m not sure if I can,” are the two basic responses you will choose from when faced with adversity. On the road to success, you will have endless opportunities to answer challenges with, “I don’t think...” “I can’t...” “In my opinion...” “It’s not worth...” “I am not sure...” etc. These are easy answers because they require no further action.

I once heard a very successful businessman say, “You will either make excuses or money.” I have observed this to be true in all professions. You must be willing to pay the price for success, and a “can do” attitude is your first down payment. The choice is yours.

An attitude of humility promotes open-mindedness, and an open mind is a prerequisite for learning. A positive attitude means you must humble yourself enough to listen to the advice of people who have done what you want to do. It is your choice.

Bolster your attitude by associating with successful people. Get around positive, uplifting folks, and see how they answer challenges. Their examples will uplift you and increase your belief level. Likewise, protect your attitude by limiting your exposure to negative friends who are “just trying to help you.” As parents we are all concerned with whom our

Musical talent is rampant. Undeveloped natural ability is commonplace. What young bassists can do today is boggling. Today we also see an endless supply of highly educated, yet unemployed musicians. I believe this is mostly because of lack of determination. I have always known it to be true that there is and always will be a shortage of good bass players.

I know some folks learn music as a hobby. I am all for this. What better way to associate with other people, relax, and offer a gift to others than with your performance. Those are not the people I am talking about. I see far too many talented students who never “make it.” For most of us, stardom is not the benchmark of making it. Most guys I know would just love to become bona fide professionals. These same folks spend a great amount of time and money trying to make it. What most of them are lacking is determination - plain old-fashioned stick-to-it-ness.

When my wife, Jamie, and I moved to Texas in 1978, I met a young boy that had determination. He was highly talented, for sure. And, he had some real challenges - mainly that seven inches between his ears. He was so bright and quick when it came to music, and he also practiced more than most. He was musically immature, but would listen to and copy any of the great players I told him to. We practiced together constantly. He says he was snagging free lessons. I say we were practice buddies. I watched Steve Bailey work his tail off in pursuit of his dream of becoming a great bassist.

Anything that I could play, Steve wanted to know how to do it. I would show him, and the next day he would come back and perform it for me. We played together almost every day. I am positive Steve ate more meals at our house than at his own. How exciting to have a student who was so motivated that I could show him something one day, and the next day he had it down! When I gave him an assignment that was a little

A few days later a friend came over and saw the record standing by my stereo. He asked what I thought of the record. I told him I just didn't dig it. He had never heard the recording, but said he was told it was one of Miles' best. I gave him the record and said, "Hope you like it better than I did."

Now this is the truth. Six months later I went over to this same friend's house to play some bass and guitar duets. I walked in the door and was floored with this incredible sounding jazz band coming from his stereo. I asked, "What is that?" He told me that it was the Miles album I had given him. I was totally perplexed.

Years later I heard a very successful business man say, "We are always down on what we are not up on." SO True.

Diagram 1 transfer

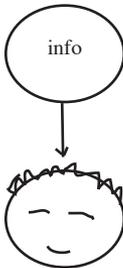
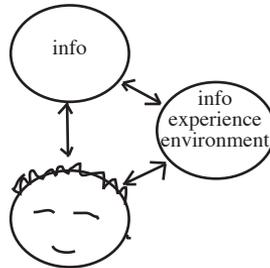


Diagram 2 influence



It is common knowledge that we learn by information coming into our brain. (diagram 1) But in truth, what we learn, what we understand, and what we like, is determined by perception. Our perception is based on our paradigms. Experience gives us a much different perspective on all information. Our environment affects our experiences and therefore has a profound impact on how we perceive the world. When I first read the book, "The Origin" by Irving Stone, I was in my early twenties. I

*Practice Technique #20 -*

*One of the most difficult things about learning is that we don't know what we don't know until after we have learned it.*

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*Practice Technique #21 - Get Your Music Out*

*If you really want to improvise and “get your own thing happening” then accept the fact that you need to become a virtuoso on your instrument. At Berklee I constantly hear, “Well man, I don't wanna stifle my creativity.” I am here to tell you that you have all the talent and creativity you're EVER GOING GET, NO MORE, NO LESS. How about if we feed that creativity with a little discipline? Only through discipline will you find freedom.*

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I have some students who get it and others who don't get it. The big difference between the two groups is maturity. I don't mean age. Let me make an illustration. When my daughter was two years old and she wanted some candy, I would give her a choice.

“Honey, you can have this piece of candy in my left hand, today, but if you will wait until tomorrow, I will give you this entire bowl full of candy.

“But Daddy, I want the candy. I want it now.”

“Honey, listen to me. Don't you want the whole bowl of candy tomorrow?”

“I want the candy now, Daddy.

Now, was my two-year old dumb? No, she wasn't mature enough to understand the concept of delayed gratification. Some of my students aren't mature enough to understand the reality of doing the work before

## Chapter Four

# Evaluation

### *Practice Technique #32 - Finish Line*

*Remember that success is not measured by what you start but rather by what you finish.*

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### *Practice Technique #33 - Good Teaching*

*Good teaching is a combination of what the student wants, what the student needs, and what the student can handle.*

*It is too easy to ask the new student: “So, what do you want to learn?” And then we teach to his idea of what he needs. The student usually doesn’t know what he needs. That’s why he is the student. Another common question asked of a new students is: “What kind of music do you like?” The mistake made here is we use only this style of music in our teaching of this student. Perhaps the most dangerous type of question is: “So, do you know your scales?” The problem here is that by asking a question which requires a verbal response instead of asking the student to perform a specific scale, they will usually answer: “Uh... yeah most of them.” And if we are not careful, we believe them.*

*My point is that you as a teacher must evaluate each new student by his performance ability. In other words, TEST THEM! It is my experience that many students talk a much better game of music than they can play. It is common for students to “know” much more than they can play. I*

## Checklist for Evaluation

A good starting point when evaluating yourself is to have a simple checklist to work with. Here are a couple of possibilities.

Yes	No	
___	___	in tune
___	___	in time
___	___	sounds solid
___	___	sounds weak
___	___	correct notes
___	___	nice tone
___	___	good volume

---

How would you rate these aspects of the performance?

good	medium	bad	
___	___	___	sounded professional
___	___	___	looks relaxed
___	___	___	dynamics
___	___	___	articulations - clean
___	___	___	groove
___	___	___	sound of instrument
___	___	___	control of technique
___	___	___	musicality

Honest evaluation will allow you to know what to improve and what is working well.

Tear out and use

### Five Year Goals

Where would like to be five years from now? Be Specific. The list below is generic, to prime your dream pump a bit. Substitute your own long term goals.

Where will you live?

What will be your business?

What kind of music will you be playing?

How much income do you want each year?

What kind car will you be driving?

Will you be touring?

With whom?

What basses will you be playing?

Will you be recording?

What will be your hobbies?

Tear out and use  
One Year Goals

One year from today - what one thing would you most like to improve?

How many hours per day can you consistently practice?

What can you do to make a good environment for your practicing?

What clinics and workshops will you attend in the next year?

How will you afford the expenses of your musical studies?

What player(s) will you transcribe and emulate this year?

What CD(s) will you learn the tunes from this year?

How will you maintain your momentum throughout the year?