

Finding the Bass Line:

My Journey into Music by Greg Mudd

Greg Mudd is Course Leader for ESTA Education's Certificate for Music Educators (CME) programme of professional development for anyone teaching music. He is also the Professor of Bass Guitar and Jazz at the Royal Marines School of Music and Royal Military School of Music (Alford Schools of Military Music) and a Senior Lecturer of Popular Music at Solent University, Southampton.

My career has been defined by a profound passion for music. This was nurtured during my early years by several enthusiastic teachers in schools that prioritised the subject, along with the ever-present support of my parents.

The journey began with hearing the deep and lush resonance emitted by a Double Bass during a music presentation at my primary school. It was there, under the guidance of the esteemed Double Bassist Barry Glynn, that my musical education

took flight. Starting at the age of nine, I played a mini-Double Bass before progressing to a standard size instrument.

My childhood gradually became more and more filled with practising while balancing other activities such as playing second row for the school rugby team. Indeed, many key characteristics needed to be a good sportsperson having many commonalities with musicians; motivated, passionate, team player, good timing, etc. The fact that I was chosen for the second row because of my tall stature, may have been an additional factor in why I was attracted to play the double bass.

My music weekly practice routine was typically framed by working towards various Royal Academy examinations, nicely balanced by rehearsing with groups such as the Dorset and Wessex Youth Orchestras. Such experiences not only honed my skills but also introduced me to the world of ensemble playing and collaboration, shaping the musician I would become. As I entered my teenage years, my rugby aspirations declined as I increasingly wanted to protect my fingers from injury.



My musical horizons expanded with the introduction of the electric bass guitar. This instrument became an extension of myself as it led me to a wider range of amateur gigs such as with jazz and fusion bands and later into the realm of rock and other heavier genres.

The addition of going to college to study music at A-Level, meant that by age seventeen, in a typical week I would play pieces by a wide range of composers – from Saint-Saëns to Stones, Hancock to Hendrix. However, dropping out of college due to a poor experience meant that my twenties were spent juggling a variety of jobs to support my performing ambitions and ongoing love for music.

Looking back, this route was challenging because it closed doors to the traditional route of higher education. Despite such setbacks, I joined a variety of bands, one of which took me on a thrilling journey to WinterLand studios in Minneapolis, USA.

Later in my twenties, I began to seek a more settled and balanced life. I also wanted to start teaching music, but my lack of formal higher-level qualifications was an ever-present barrier. I embarked on what became a long journey of part-time study, and eventually gained multiple degrees and qualifications. Yet, my education didn't stop there. I sought out masterclasses with renowned musicians, refining my craft and expanding my musical repertoire.

Armed with knowledge and experience, along with an expanding collection of recognised qualifications, I was able to embark on a more diverse career in music. I performed in various ensembles, engaged in recording and session work, and began to teach music; I had built a portfolio career.

For me, the beauty of a portfolio career lies in its flexibility. I see it as a richly rewarding route for musicians. The approach allows artists to create their own balance of performance, recording, teaching, and a huge variety of other creative avenues.

Whether I am on stage, in the studio, or imparting knowledge to eager students, the diverse nature of my typical weeks keeps me continuously motivated. In a world that constantly evolves, the concept of a lifelong learner continues to resonate deeply with me.

The pursuit of further qualifications and exploring new avenues as a part of my portfolio career keeps me focused and open to the endless possibilities within the music industry and education sector. Currently, I am mid-way through a part-time PhD, with the aim of adding music education research into my skill set.

As I navigate the ever-changing but joyous landscape of a portfolio musician, I am reminded of the harmonious balance between teaching, performing, and learning—a balance that enriches both my life and the lives of those I inspire. Because without inspiration and support, my career journey would have taken a different path – perhaps on the 22 metre line, rather than playing the bass line.

