

The Nielsen-Goodman Project

TAP DANCE ON A CLOUD

From *Tap Dance on a Cloud*

Composer/bassist Garry Goodman began playing the bass guitar at the age of nine and has extensive experience performing with and opening for such acts as The Pointer Sisters, Smokey Robinson, Marvin Hamlisch, Dionne Warwick, The Osmonds, Burt Bacarach, Thelma Houston and many others. Garry is recognized as the world's first 7-, 11- and inline 12-string bass guitarist. In the 1970's, he developed a unique playing technique called Percussive Harmonics that expands the tonal possibilities of the electric bass guitar. Garry has been playing the Chapman Stick since 1975 and utilizes a similar two-hand touchstyle technique on several tracks of the *Tap Dance on a Cloud* CD.

You're a proponent of multi-string basses. What got you into that and what keeps you into it?

Learning to play bass guitar in the 1960's, two major influences led me to think of expanded range guitars. The first was owning a used Fender Bass VI and the second — not being able to find a guitarist for our band — got me thinking about trying to play both bass and guitar at the same time. I began to think of them both as components of the same instrument. Much like the keyboard has 61-, 76-, and 88-note versions, why can't a guitar have the same? I developed my playing skills on bass guitars that are constructed using 30-, 32-, and 34-inch scales. The tuning I used was always in fourths. As a composer and a musician, I wanted access to the same range that a pianist enjoys. Yes, I play the bass parts that needed to be played and fulfilled my role as bass player, but wanted to also play rhythm and melody all on one instrument that I was comfortable playing.

In the late '60s and early '70s, I would often play a 6-string bass with my left hand and a 6-string guitar with my right hand. In 1975, I purchased a Chapman Stick, which used a low B0 string. I liked the idea of having a bass and guitar on one fretboard, but the odd string placement and tuning was more of a hindrance than not. This led to me to develop the 7-string bass. Having the 7-string bass opened the door that eventually led to the creation of my 97-note 12-string bass guitar. Having a guitar that has a range spanning 8 octaves allows for unlimited expression for me as a bass guitarist, a two-handed touch player, and also as a composer. This is what keeps me into multi-string basses. Some people say that this instrument is no longer a bass guitar, but the majority of its notes are below middle C and it is a 34-inch scale fanning to a 32-inch scale, tuned in fourths. I consider it to be an evolution of the bass guitar.

How did you and David approach the material on Tap Dance on a Cloud? Did you write it specifically for multi-string bass, or just interpret that way?

David and I each contributed five compositions to the CD. My tunes were composed to utilize the 7-string bass to its fullest potential, in conjunction with a technique I developed called Percussive Harmonics. David's compositions were solo classical guitar pieces for which I created bass parts (using the same idea as for my own compositions) to give an overall continuity to the CD. I played the 11-string on one composition entitled "Bubblework." Its bass part was created by combining five and six octave arpeggios and two-handed piano-style playing to complement David's guitar parts. On this tune I also used the C#0 (17 Hz) open string.

Tell us a little about the title track specifically.

"Tap Dance on a Cloud" is a combination of a visual metaphor

and a reference to the technique of "tapping" in Percussive Harmonics. On the Hawaiian island of Maui sits the volcano Haleakala. When visitors come to the national park, they are literally standing at cloud level. Where the parking lot ends, a field of clouds begins. To me, it looks like one could walk right out and begin tap dancing on those clouds. The compositional make-up of the tune is inspired by the bossa nova, but approached in a very different way. Both the standard bossa nova bass groove and a 2:3 clavé variation are played simultaneously on the 7-string bass and also all notes are played in harmonics. In the bass part, the foundation notes and the accompanying chords function together as a single entity. The guitar plays the single-line melody, occasionally adding chords; but the tune is actually driven by this percussive harmonic bass groove. The melody begins as an arpeggiated GMaj13(+11) chord. This melodic phrase is used again in the bass solo, which is played completely in harmonics (save for the lowest and highest notes on the bass), thus exploiting the 4-1/2 octave range of the 7-string bass guitar. My desire to create a fresh approach to bass grooves using percussive harmonics was the ultimate motivation for both this composition and for the creation of the 7-string bass guitar. There are no bass or guitar overdubs on this tune (nor on any of the tunes on the CD). However, we did overdub percussion tracks by Alex Acuña and Ivan Krillzarín.

What do you listen to for inspiration?

During my childhood, I was exposed to all kinds of music: concert band, orchestra, automated musical instruments (e.g., player pianos), ragtime, show tunes, Latin, Afro-Cuban, Polynesian drums, jazz, blues, rock'n'roll, country, you name it! I also have spent a great deal of time listening to microtonal music by composers such as Harry Partch. I played tuba in the high school band, double bass, and even bagpipes. I even listen to sounds that aren't considered music, such as noisy washing machines or passing freight trains and sometimes find inspiration in such ordinary things. Ironically, I am least influenced by other bass players, although I admire and appreciate many of them.

Tell us a little about playing the 11-string.

The Adler 11-string is the first of its kind and the first guitar to have a low C#0 string and an Eb4 string, with the highest note being Eb6 at the 24th fret. There's a lot that can be done with six octaves! The Adler 12-string, which was in the planning stages even before the 11-string was completed, has 8 octaves — the same 97 notes as the Bosendorfer 97-note grand piano. The highest five notes are played by fretting the string beyond the fretboard. I had been playing a 9-string bass for a number of years by the time I first played the 11-string bass. Being that it was the first 11-string bass available, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. Not only was I now dealing with eleven strings, but this was my first experience with the low C#0 string. I found that it would take some time to adjust to playing the extreme range of this instru-

