

FORECASTING FUSION AT LOW FREQUENCIES:

THE BASS PLAYERS OF *WEATHER REPORT*

by

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Chapter 1: The Bass Players of Weather Report and The History of the Electric Bass Guitar

Introduction

This dissertation examines the role of the electric bassists in the influential jazz-rock¹ band *Weather Report*. I will argue that each bass player changed *Weather Report*'s sound; in support of this argument, I will analyze the musical function (harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic) of various bass parts, the specific equipment choices, and the specific musical and technical approaches of these bass players.

Because the bass both outlines the harmonic progression and locks in rhythmically with the drum set, the bass performs a defining harmonic-rhythmic role in jazz and rock ensembles. I will argue that because the electric bass² has timbral, percussive, and other technical capacities not available on the acoustic bass, and because *Weather Report* was one of the most influential jazz-rock groups, each of the electric bassists in *Weather Report* played an integral part in creating the sound of jazz-rock.

Little is written on the history of the electric bass guitar. There is one notable exception: *How the Fender Bass Changed the World* chronicles the impact that Leo Fender had on the popular music world when he introduced his solid body electric bass guitar to a mass market in the early 1950's.³ John Goldsby's book *The Jazz Bass Book* chronicles the history and style of acoustic bass players, but omits electric bass players.⁴ *Jazz-Rock Fusion: The People, The Music* is a collection of interviews by Julie Coryell with some of the greatest jazz-rock and fusion musicians to include Jaco Pastorius,

¹ I use the term "jazz-rock" to refer to that music which was a combination of jazz improvisation and rock rhythms and explored by artists and groups such as Miles Davis (*In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*) and, especially in terms of this dissertation, *Weather Report*.

² I use the terms "electric bass" and "electric bass guitar" to define the bass instrument patterned after and played similar to the electric guitar.

³ Jim Roberts, *How The Fender Bass Changed the World* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001).

⁴ John Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2002).

Alphonso Johnson, and Miroslav Vitous, three of the four *Weather Report* bassists.⁵ The interviews very briefly touch on approaches to composition. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to Fusion and Beyond*, which contains information about *Weather Report*, presents a historical/biographical perspective of jazz in general as well as information about the instruments and elements of jazz.⁶ Bill Milkowski's book about Jaco Pastorius is the definitive biography on Pastorius, but again, it does not contain any analyses of what he played and how it influenced the sound of *Weather Report*.⁷

Thus far there has been little research published on the bass players who were in *Weather Report* or even on the role of the electric bass in jazz-rock, but some of the ground work necessary for this dissertation has been laid. Of particular interest is Andrew James Waters's dissertation: "Steve Swallow: Electric Bass Innovator with Analysis of Selected Works."⁸ Waters's work "chronicles briefly the history and aesthetics of electronic instruments in the 20th century, focusing specifically on the electric guitar and the electric bass" as well as discussing the "general differences between the double bass and electric bass." One of the articles, also by Waters, was published in *Bass World: The Magazine of the International Society of Bassists* and is titled "Electric Guitar, Electric Bass and the Predominance of the Acoustic Bass in Jazz."⁹

Another useful dissertation is Lawrence A. Wayte's "Bitches Brood: The Progeny of Miles Davis's 'Bitches Brew' and the Sound of Jazz-Rock."¹⁰ Wayte provides a

⁵ Julie Coryell and Laura Friedman, *Jazz Rock Fusion: The People, The Music* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2000).

⁶ Joachim E. Berendt, *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to Fusion and Beyond* (Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books, 1992).

⁷ Bill Milkowski, *Jaco: The Extraordinary and Tragic Life of Jaco Pastorius "The World's Greatest Bass Player"* (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 1995).

⁸ Andrew James Waters, "Steve Swallow: Electric Bass Innovator with Analysis of Selected Works," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2003): 190.

⁹ Drew Waters, "Electric Guitar, Electric Bass, and the Predominance of the Acoustic Bass in Jazz," *Bass World: The Magazine of the International Society of Bassists* 28/3 (Feb-May 2005): 7.

¹⁰ Lawrence A. Wayte, "Bitches Brood: The Progeny of Miles Davis's 'Bitches Brew' and the Sound of Jazz-Rock," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2007).

history and definition of jazz-rock along with theoretical aspects of jazz-rock which include timbre, meter, rhythm, and texture. He provides the compositional process for the album *Bitches Brew* and Miles's use and exploration of electronic instruments. Wayte talks extensively about *Weather Report* and devotes a chapter of his dissertation to Joe Zawinul, one of the founders and enduring members of the group, and another chapter to electric bass pioneer and virtuoso John Francis "Jaco" Pastorius III, the most talked and written about bass player from *Weather Report*. An important aspect of Wayte's discussion is how Pastorius took an instrument, the electric bass guitar, previously not known for its virtuosic potential, and completely transformed the way people think about and approach the electric bass.

Because there is little information available for study on this subject, most of the materials used will be primary source information obtained through interviews and transcriptions of audio recordings. The goal of my interviews will be to ask direct and pointed questions about bass players' opportunities to contribute creatively to other members' compositions, what direction each player was given regarding improvisation versus playing a written part, and direction about specific timbral qualities or electric bass-specific technique. I will develop profiles for each of the *Weather Report* bass players, drawing upon interview data, solo transcriptions, and compositional analyses to demonstrate the contrasting impact each bassist had on the overall *Weather Report* sound. The opportunities for personal interviews will be the first priority, and the use of the Internet for email interviews will be considered if no personal interview is possible.

Audio recordings of the group will be utilized for transcriptions as well as existing transcriptions already in print. Possible sources for audio recordings will be compact disc, cassette, and vinyl. I will use mostly notational transcriptions and draw my analysis from those transcriptions. I will apply a model in which the bass line will be evaluated/analyzed against the harmonic progression and the rhythmic figures the drum set is playing, thus allowing me to reinforce the defining harmonic-rhythmic role of the

electric bass in the music of *Weather Report*. In evaluating the bass line against the harmonic progression, I will look at how the bass notes are functioning within the chord. In evaluating the bass line against the rhythmic figures of the drum set, I will look at how the bass is influenced by what the drummer is playing, or vice versa, and whether the bass is rhythmically supporting or contrasting what the drummer is playing. I expect to find certain consistencies for each player (that is, an individual stylistic approach) as well as consistencies for the electric bass (that is, a relatively consistent role for the electric bass within the group sound); however, I expect to find differences in the approach based upon the source of the line: whether it was created note-for-note by the composer or was left to the individual bass player to improvise the line from a set of chord changes. I will test my thesis against the cases of the following bass players: Miroslav Vitous, Alphonso Johnson, John Francis “Jaco” Pastorius III, and Victor Bailey.

The study of the bass players of *Weather Report* could provide a wealth of information about electric bass performance and jazz-rock performance, composition, and history. This dissertation will be of benefit to electric bassists in terms of performance practice as well as other musicians in terms of jazz-rock composition and improvisation.

History of the Electric Bass Guitar

With the emergence of jazz-rock, jazz musicians began to use electronic instruments and effects to create sounds new to jazz. These electronic instruments and effects in a jazz ensemble provided opportunities for players not only to explore new sounds and timbres, but also to experiment with new techniques. Because jazz performers have always been noted for their sound and individuality, this creative process was simply an extension of their common practice. In *The Jazz Book* by Joachim Berendt, he states, “A jazz musician has his own sound. The criteria for this sound are based not so much on standardization as on emotionality.”¹¹ One of the instruments utilized and explored in the jazz-rock groups of the seventies and eighties was the electric bass guitar.

Concerning the use of electric instruments in jazz, Lawrence Wayte offers the following, “The electric bass guitar perhaps best exemplifies the spirit of virtuosity that animates nearly all of jazz-rock.”¹² Players such as Stanley Clarke and Jaco Pastorius took the instrument to new levels in their respective groups, setting the standard for other electric bassists to emulate. Although largely unaccepted in “traditional” jazz settings, as I will show below, the electric bass guitar had its start in jazz bands and was developed as a solution to amplifying and transporting the much bigger acoustic bass.

Volume has always been an issue for the acoustic jazz bassist. Without amplification, it always has been and always will be a struggle to be heard over the drums and increasing volume levels of piano, guitar, and horn players. The need to solve the volume issue is what motivated Leo Fender and others to create and develop a bass that could meet the demands of the jazz bassist. According to Drew Waters, Leo Fender wanted to develop “an electric version of the acoustic bass, or the bass version of the electric guitar” because some bassists were having difficulty hearing the pitch due to the

¹¹ Joachim E. Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 149.

¹² Lawrence A. Wayte, “Bitches Brood,” 231.

drums and other parts of the band playing so loudly.¹³ *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* gives similar reasons for the invention of the electric bass: “The instrument was introduced to meet the needs of the musicians playing the bass part in small dance bands in the USA: they wanted not only a more easily portable instrument than the double bass, but one that could match the volume of the increasingly popular solid-body electric guitar, and could be played with greater precision than their large, fretless, acoustic instrument.”¹⁴

It is possible to think of the bass guitar as an instrument that started in the popular music groups, but in fact it was first utilized in jazz groups in the early 1950’s. It is also a common myth that Leo Fender invented the electric bass guitar. Fender was the one credited not with inventing the electric bass, but with inventing a design that was most successfully marketed and mass produced. In Jim Roberts’s book *How the Fender Bass Changed the World* it is suggested that Leo Fender did change the world with the invention of his electric bass guitar by creating an instrument that allowed for much higher volume levels which in turn opened the door for rock and roll and other musical styles that could explore the possibilities available with these new volume levels.¹⁵

Roberts also provides an outline of other instruments that preceded the Fender bass but which did not gain as much popularity. He states that instrument designers from the 15th century until today continue to experiment in search of bass designs producing “strong, clear, low-frequency sounds that projected well.”¹⁶ These experiments included

¹³ Drew Waters, “Electric Guitar, Electric Bass and the Predominance of Acoustic Bass in Jazz,” *Bass World: The Magazine of the International Society of Bassists* 28/3 (Feb-May 2005): 24. Waters’s article gives insight as to why the acoustic bass takes a more prevalent role in jazz music with commentary by jazz musicians including non-bassists. He also gives brief commentary on the history of the bass guitar and how it is a descendent of the electric guitar and not the acoustic bass.

¹⁴ Tony Bacon and Jim Ferguson, “Electric Bass Guitar,” *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988): 328.

¹⁵ Jim Roberts, *How the Fender Bass Changed the World*, Roberts’s book gives detailed information on the history of the bass guitar from the earliest prototypes to contemporary designs. He also includes profiles on many electric bass guitar players who have shaped the history of the instrument whether by endorsing the instrument or setting new trends on ways to play the instrument. Three of the four bass players from *Weather Report* are mentioned in this book.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

trying different sizes and shapes as well as even attaching large horns, similar to ones found on early phonographs, which rested on the bridge to project the sound.

One of the earliest such instruments, modeled after the acoustic guitar and made larger to increase the sound, was the Regal Bassoguitar introduced in the early 1930's. This "gigantic acoustic guitar...stood over five feet tall (not including the 10" endpin) and was played vertically."¹⁷ This instrument had a flat fingerboard like the guitar, with a scale length of 42 inches like the acoustic bass. The Bassoguitar also looked to solve the problem of intonation by having frets that were filed flush, making it a lined fretless instrument.

Later in the 1930's, Gibson introduced its Electric Bass Guitar—a huge hollow-body guitar equipped with an end pin for vertical playing which had its sound magnified by a magnetic pickup. Unfortunately the only amplifiers available at the time were for guitar, so the amplified sound may have suffered due to equipment not able to handle the lower frequencies. Gibson's instrument was produced from 1938 to 1940.

It wasn't long before electric "stick" basses started to show up on the market. These stick basses were, in design, basically the fingerboard and headstock of the acoustic bass with a pickup which was "an electrostatic transducer mounted in a Bakelite box under the bridge."¹⁸ This particular type of bass was originally designed by Gibson engineer Lloyd Loar in 1924. When Gibson didn't show any interest in Loar's stick design, he started his own company to manufacture and market this and other electric instruments.

Many upright electric basses became available in the 1930's, and one of the most popular was the Rickenbacker Electro Bass-Viol designed by George Beauchamp. According to Jim Roberts, "it was a metal stick that plugged directly into the top of its amp. Equipped with the familiar Rickenbacker horseshoe-magnet pickup, the Electro

¹⁷ Ibid., 22.

¹⁸ Ibid., 24.

Bass-Viol had gut strings that were wrapped with metal foil where they passed through the pickup.”¹⁹ Although Beauchamp’s design was an indicator of things to come, it never became popular; however, the Electro Bass-Viol is noted as the first electric bass to be recorded—it was featured on a record from the 1930’s by *Mark Allen & His Orchestra*.

Most of the electric bass instruments in the 1930s were designs based on either the acoustic guitar or the double bass and were played vertically. Volume issues had been somewhat solved by the use of pickups, and some of the instruments had frets or fret lines which helped with the issue of intonation, but the issue of portability still remained to be solved. It was in the 1930’s that Paul H. Tutmarc would make important steps in the development of the electric bass guitar.

Tutmarc was a steel guitarist who had originally designed a solid-body electric upright with a magnetic pickup. Although Tutmarc’s company, Audiovox Manufacturing, never produced the instrument, he had started the path to another “more radical instrument.”²⁰ The new design was the result of sympathy for the bass player who, once he loaded his string bass into the automobile, usually had no room for anyone to ride with him. In 1935 Tutmarc had the idea to build a smaller electric bass that could be played horizontally like a guitar. The Audiovox Model 736 Electronic Bass was “a solid body, fretted 4-string equipped with a magnetic pickup” built from black walnut.²¹ Production was small – about 100 – and distribution was limited to the Seattle area. In 1947 Bud Tutmarc, Paul’s son, tried again to build and market his father’s idea with the introduction of the Serenader Electric String Bass. Unfortunately, his effort did not yield any greater success.

With Tutmarc’s instruments clearly predating Leo Fender’s, it is natural to wonder whether or not Fender had seen those introduced by Paul or Bud Tutmarc. John

¹⁹ Ibid., 26.

²⁰ Ibid., 28.

²¹ Ibid., 28-29.

Teagle wrote a 1999 article for *Vintage Guitar* magazine in which he speculates that Leo Fender may have seen some of the Audiovox advertisements; however, Richard R. Smith, the author of *Fender: The Sound Heard 'round the World*—the definitive work on Leo Fender—doesn't think so.²² The difference in body style and scale length suggests that Leo Fender's instrument was not a copy of another person's work. The body style was modeled after Fender's Telecaster guitar body and made bigger for the bass.

Leo Fender's mass production of the electric bass guitar allowed bassists to be louder, more portable, and more precise with their intonation. It seemed to solve all the problems apparent in the acoustic bass. Fender's electric bass guitar gained popularity in an odd place: jazz. One had been sent to Nashville, Tennessee in 1952 and played on the Grand Ole Opry, but it was Roy Johnson, in Lionel Hampton's band, who played it consistently. At a jam session in New York, Johnson was booed because he was an acoustic bassist playing an electric bass and it was viewed as unacceptable in jazz. In a later tour of the South the electric bass received more attention. In the July 30, 1952 issue of *DownBeat*, jazz critic and writer Leonard Feather reported:

Suddenly we observed that there was something wrong with the band. It didn't have a bass player. And yet—we heard a bass. On a second glance we noticed something even odder. There were two guitars—but we heard one. And then the picture became clearer. Sitting next to the guitarist was someone who held what looked like a guitar at first glance but on closer inspection revealed a long, fretted neck and a peculiarly shaped body, with electric controls and a wire running to a speaker.²³

This “peculiarly shaped” instrument was the Fender electric bass guitar. In the same article, Leonard Feather also praised the “deep, booming quality” of the instrument.²⁴ Hampton liked the instrument so much that he required his next bass player, Monk Montgomery, brother of guitarist Wes Montgomery, and an acoustic bassist, to play the

²² Ibid., 29-30.

²³ Ibid., 35-36.

²⁴ Ibid., 36.

instrument in his band as well. Drew Waters provides the following insight concerning Monk Montgomery: “Although he never met him, electric bassist Steve Swallow credits Montgomery as having a ‘strong place in the history of the instrument,’ and ‘for many years...the only guy who displayed the possibilities of the instrument being used in rock ‘n’ roll or rhythm and blues.’”²⁵ Another noted jazz bassist who played the instrument when it first came out was New York bassist Shifte Henry who played in jazz and jump bands.

While many jazz bassists were reluctant to take up the instrument despite its obvious advantages, “the Precision Bass would soon assume a prominent role in another style of music that would push it into the foreground—a brand-new kind of music called rock & roll.”²⁶ It was in rock and roll that the electric bass was most exploited for its volume; with the proper amplifier, it could keep up with the volume levels of the electric guitar.

Joachim Berendt suggests that the sound of the electric bass was at first “dull, somehow always empty.”²⁷ Berendt’s description appears to be in stark contrast to Leonard Feather’s description of a “deep, booming quality” that “cut through the whole bottom of the band like a surging undertow.”²⁸ This “surging undertow” is what drove the rock bands and motivated rock players to improve and create their own sound on the instrument; but it was not just in rock that the sound of the electric bass guitar could be heard and easily recognized. In his book *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, Nelson George gives the following insight, “The electric bass forever altered the relationship between rhythm section, the horns, and the other melodic instruments...The electric bass had a punchy, dynamic range that would become identified with rhythm & blues.”²⁹ It was guitarist Dave Myers of the Chicago blues scene who, after using the electric bass guitar

²⁵ Waters, “Electric Guitar, Electric Bass,” 24.

²⁶ Roberts, *How the Fender Bass Changed the World*, 38.

²⁷ Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 327.

²⁸ Roberts, *How the Fender Bass Changed the World*, 36.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

in his band, set the standard for other Chicago blues bassists in incorporating the instrument into their bands. This trend led to the emergence of more small, electric ensembles and the disappearance of the big bands due in large part to the club owners not wanting to pay a larger group when a smaller group could do the job for less money.

The electric bass guitar was making huge inroads on the studio scene as well. In the early 1960's the acoustic bass was being doubled by the electric bass creating the "tic-tac" sound producers were looking for. At times, producers hired three basses: "an upright, a Fender 4-string, and a Danelectro 6-string. (Recognizing the popularity of the Dano bass, Leo Fender came up with his own version, the Fender Bass VI, in 1961.)"³⁰ Two notable session players who played and recorded on electric bass guitar are Carol Kaye and Joe Osborn. Both were guitarists who picked up the electric bass as a second instrument and were very successful. Again we see that one of Leo Fender's desires, to have guitarists pick up and play the instrument, was fulfilled in these two musicians as well as many others to come.

Although the electric bass guitar seemed to be gradually enjoying more popularity and success, there were still those who had issues with the instrument. Joachim Berendt detailed the problem players had with the sound of the instrument, "Their dilemma was this: On the one hand, the electric bass had more flexibility, its sound (and volume!) fit better into electric groups; on the other hand it lacked expressivity and didn't sound 'human' but technical."³¹ Despite the issues with the sound of the instrument in "traditional" jazz groups consisting of acoustic instruments, many players such as Ron Carter used the instrument when it was required. When asked during an interview about the acceptance of the electric bass in traditional jazz groups, Mike Richmond stated: "Some of the real traditional guys accepted it. I took my electric bass twice on the road and Stan [Getz] didn't mind it...Dizzy didn't mind electric bass and he often hired

³⁰ Ibid., 60.

³¹ Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 327.

electric bass players...With Jack DeJohnette, half the gig was electric bass.”³² Another notable bassist who started as an acoustic bassist but then played electric exclusively is Steve Swallow. Berendt says of Swallow, “His wiry, brittle, and yet full sound and his melodious lines constitute one of the most unmistakable styles in the realm of the electric bass, unfolding with great sensitivity in his performances with Carla Bley.”³³ It is here that we see the electric bass guitar beginning to move into its own as an instrument with players utilizing and maximizing its sonic capabilities.

Up until the late 1960’s, the electric bass had been played like the acoustic bass, plucked with the fingers, or with a plectrum or pick. According to Berendt and Roberts it was Larry Graham who initiated a new way of playing the electric bass—he struck the strings with his thumb and then plucked with his index finger.³⁴ This new percussive way of playing came to be known as “thumping and plucking” and was Graham’s way of compensating for not having a drummer for a few gigs. He used the thumping to emulate the sound of the bass drum and the plucking to make up for the backbeat of the snare. It was Stanley Clarke who combined Graham’s percussive playing with acoustic bassist Scott LaFaro’s “superdimensional, low-register guitar” solo sound to become “the first great jazz-rock electric bassist” with *Return to Forever* in 1971, one year after Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter formed *Weather Report* with Miroslav Vitous on acoustic bass and electric bass guitar.³⁵

This brief history of the electric bass guitar up to the formation of *Weather Report* has traced the development of the instrument from its origins in a couple of experimental designs driven by the desire to have an instrument that was louder, more portable, and more precise in intonation to its increasing role in jazz and rock ensembles. The choice of the electric bass guitar over the acoustic double bass in the louder and electronically

³² Waters, “Electric Guitar, Electric Bass,” 24.

³³ Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 328.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 327; Roberts, *How the Fender Bass Changed the World*, 114-115.

³⁵ Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 322-323; Roberts, *How the Fender Bass Changed the World*, 118.

driven jazz-rock groups of the seventies and eighties is only logical. The electric bass guitar was not new to jazz musicians as evidenced by the use of the instrument in jazz groups from New York to the southern states by such notable band leaders as Lionel Hampton, Stan Getz, and Dizzy Gillespie. Next I will present a brief history of jazz-rock and its place in the history of jazz.

Chapter 2: A Brief History of Jazz-Rock and Weather Report

Background of Jazz-Rock

Most jazz in the 1950s can be identified as belonging to one of two schools of playing: cool and hard bop. “Cool Jazz” was the answer to the increasing “unrest and excitement in bop” and was first apparent in the playing of Miles Davis.³⁶ Davis had played bop with Charlie Parker in the 1940s, but soon began to play in a much more relaxed or cool manner. The hard bop style was a result of the confrontation of young bebop musicians from New York with the hot swing band style found in the music of Lester Young and Count Basie from the 1930s. This new form of bop was grounded in “a greater knowledge of harmonic fundamentals and a greater degree of instrumental-technical perfection.”³⁷ Joachim Berendt calls hard bop the “most dynamic jazz played in the second half of the fifties” and names artists such as Max Roach, Art Blakey, Horace Silver, Clifford Brown, Sonny Rollins, and John Coltrane as some of the perpetuators of this style.³⁸

These new styles of jazz were still able to draw audience members and fill clubs even though rock was taking form at the same time. Artists such as Elvis Presley were basing rock songs on blues forms—something jazz musicians had been doing in the decades before rock’s birth. Even though rock and jazz would have to wait to merge as one, jazz was already incorporating popular music styles in the late fifties.

Horace Silver was one of the first jazz musicians to incorporate a new relationship with the blues into his music. Silver’s new style of playing was known as “funky.”³⁹ It consisted of a “slow or medium blues, played hard on the beat, with all the feeling and

³⁶ Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 19.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 21. Berendt cites French jazz critic André Hodeir with coining the phrase “new fifties jazz classicism.”

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

expression characteristic of the old blues.”⁴⁰ Gospel songs of the black churches also played an increasing role in jazz. In a style connected with, again, Horace Silver, singer-pianist Ray Charles, and vibraharpist Milt Jackson, “soul” music quickly became not only a popular music, but also a term which signified the “special cultural strength of blacks.”⁴¹ Both funk and soul were explored and developed by members of the cool and hard bop school. Although jazz musicians have been known to incorporate disparate musical influences in their music, the fusion of styles in this decade of jazz music produced new and interesting sounds as well as opportunities for growth and exploration.

As with any musician or musical style there is a sense of wanting to belong and be accepted. Joachim Berendt writes the following concerning jazz at the end of the 1950s: “The tendency toward funk and soul expresses the wish to belong and the desire for something offering a semblance of security in a world of cool realism.”⁴² The cool realism of the world in the 1960s would offer jazz musicians anything but security, and this affected their lives and their music.

The socio-cultural issues of the 1960s heavily influenced the jazz artists who created and played the music. When English historian and jazz critic Eric Hobsbawm visited America for the first time in 1960, he “found the nights too short to listen to everything that could be heard in New York”, but when he came back two years later he wrote that he could see “‘Bird Lives’...painted on lonely walls, but the celebrated New York jazz venue named after him, Birdland, had ceased to exist” and “jazz had virtually been knocked out of the ring.”⁴³ The outlook for jazz in the early 1960s was grim, and Burton W. Peretti points out, “The story of jazz in the 1960s illustrates that the decade defies simple description.”⁴⁴ However, he does acknowledge that jazz continued to grow

⁴⁰ Ibid., 22.

⁴¹ Peretti, *Jazz in American Culture* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997): 136-137.

⁴² Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 23.

⁴³ Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *Jazz: A History of America's Music* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000): 428.

⁴⁴ Peretti, *Jazz in American Culture*, 134.

in the sixties and was still a popular and profitable music – jazz artists were at the forefront of the international artistic avant-garde.

Unfortunately there were social and cultural issues that overshadowed the growth and vitality of jazz in the sixties:

U.S. efforts to contain communism, its technological advancement, corporate and suburban expansion, and the relocation of mass leisure into private homes (mainly due to television) dwarfed and often diminished the urban nightclub scene... Americans confronted a flood of new experiences—on superhighways, in outer space, in the jungles of Vietnam, and in personal relationships—which had no real precedents in the jazz and swing ages. Adolescent “baby boomers” did build a powerful subculture around music, but that music was not jazz.⁴⁵

As Peretti points out, the urban nightclub scene, which in the past had been mainly jazz, was lost on the new generation of baby boomers who preferred the comforts of suburban neighborhoods and their new televisions. Coincidentally, jazz made a move from the downtown clubs to the concert halls: places that tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin called “joints where you have to be quiet.”⁴⁶ Griffin believes the reason that black audience members went back to Harlem was to hear rhythm and blues and have a good time. In addition, pianist Hampton Hawes states, “white kids were jamming the rock halls and the older people were staying home and watching TV.”⁴⁷

These issues of taste in music and relocation of audience members caused many jazz performers to find jobs in cocktail lounges, studios, or rock bands as background musicians. Bud Shank tells the following about finding work outside of jazz, “When I became a full-time studio musician, I had been unemployed for a long time since jazz music left us in 1962-63...I went into another business. That’s what I did...using the tools I had, which was playing the flute and saxophone.”⁴⁸ Many other jazz musicians

⁴⁵ Ibid., 135.

⁴⁶ Ward and Burns, *Jazz: A History of America’s Music*, 428.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 428.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 431.

quit performing completely and found jobs outside of music entirely. Others left the country for Europe in search of the opportunity to continue playing the music they loved in front of a live audience.

In the early 1960s the civil rights movement was being played out to a national audience via the television and radio; Americans saw and heard about the nonviolent movement against segregation and injustice in the South. The images portrayed on television of ordinary citizens making a difference motivated other groups to effect change and drove the revolutionary spirit of the decade. Jazz also became increasingly concerned with freedom during the sixties. It was Ornette Coleman's 1960 recording *Free Jazz* that experimented with and initiated the "outside" jazz movement. Coleman recorded with two quartets improvising simultaneously without any prearranged chords or scales. It was dominated by the wails, grunts, and dissonant pleading runs of major saxophonists such as John Coltrane, Jackie McLean, Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp, and Albert Ayler. Any pretense toward "cool," whether stimulated by heroin, West Coast living, or material comfort, was waning.⁴⁹ "Outside" jazz would soon become the new avant-garde; however, many African-Americans were more interested in music such as soul, funk, and rhythm and blues—similar to the white audiences being more interested in rock.

The hallmarks of free jazz in the sixties included a breakthrough into the space of "free tonality"; the disintegration of meter, beat, and symmetry; the introduction of "world music" into jazz from places like India, Africa, Japan, and Arabia; an emphasis on intensity; and an extension of musical sound into the realm of noise.⁵⁰ The steps to free tonality included playing around tonal centers, complete harmonic freedom, and all points in between. In terms of beat and meter, free jazz eliminated the beat and replaced

⁴⁹ Peretti, *Jazz in American Culture*, 140

⁵⁰ Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 23.

it with the pulse; meter was passed over for “wide arches of rhythmic tension.”⁵¹ World music offered new sounds and scales as well as new rhythmic series and cycles. Intensity came in the form of multiple choruses of solos that would start at an unrelenting pace and build from there, often causing the listener as much fatigue as the performer. The acceptance of all sounds as music by classical and jazz musicians was often a result of the introduction of world music as well as the emphasis on intensity.

Outside or avant-garde jazz could not compete with the new, popular styles of the sixties. “The harmonies, dissonances, and complex rhythms that typified avant-garde jazz could not compete commercially with the alluring glitter and the emotional immediacy of R and B [rhythm and blues] and soul.”⁵² Rock music, which became the soundtrack for many subcultures, also proved more inviting than the new jazz; but these popular styles borrowed from and were based on the same music it was overpowering. Some rock bands were even influenced by the passion of militant, avant-garde jazz; groups such as *The Doors*, *The Band*, and the *Allman Brothers Band* “studied jazz and performed extended group improvisations on blues themes.”⁵³ Guitar solos based on modal improvisation, which would later become the basis for “heavy metal” styles in the 1970s, were reminiscent of John Coltrane and Miles Davis. Some jazz musicians were switching to rock; *Blood, Sweat, and Tears*, *Chicago*, *Dreams*, and *Fourth Way* attempted to present jazz based music to rock audiences. Success was mixed, and a truly hybrid style would have to wait for Miles Davis and the progeny of his groups from the late sixties and early seventies.⁵⁴

Rock music became alluring to some jazz musicians because it provided a way to make money and survive as a musician. Groups such as the *Beatles* helped push annual record sales to \$1 billion and effectively marginalized all other styles. John Hammond of

⁵¹ Ibid., 27.

⁵² Peretti, *Jazz in American Culture*, 146.

⁵³ Ibid., 150.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 150.

Columbia records said, “The new-found intellectual complexity of jazz was having a strange effect on young jazz musicians... Jazz was defined, composed, studied, and dissected, not *played*.”⁵⁵ It was not that jazz music was not being played, but that it was being marginalized by the continually growing popularity of soul, funk, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll. In the 1960s, jazz was the music of the concert hall and classroom, while rock was the music of the clubs and dance halls. Lawrence Wayte points out that “rock and roll began to lose its identification as simply the latest fad in teen dance music and was on its way toward becoming a fully adult art form.”⁵⁶

On the desire of jazz musicians to stay connected with audience members, Wayte also offers the following insight:

Jazz musicians in the late 1960s looked to revitalize their music and compete in a marketplace now crowded with artistic rock, and one of the most obvious ways for them to reconnect with a younger audience was to adopt some of the sounds of rock. Younger jazz musicians had also by then grown up listening to the rhythms of rock and found them compelling in their own right. By incorporating the straight eighth rhythms of rock and funk, jazz musicians could transform their music into something that sounded less dated. And, perhaps what is even more significant, because rock was at this time ascending the cultural hierarchy, jazz musicians could make this move without risking as much of their own cultural capital as would have been the case only a few years earlier.⁵⁷

Jazz was not alone in the pursuit of rock music as a musical resource—Leonard Bernstein’s *Mass* from 1971 incorporated an electrified rock band in an effort to not only connect with young listeners, but to create a work of art that was an expression of the times in which he worked and lived.

Miles Davis’ 1970 album *Bitches Brew* was the first truly successful jazz-rock album. It sold 400,000 copies its first year and more than any other record that Davis had

⁵⁵ Ibid., 150-151.

⁵⁶ Wayte, “Bitches Brood,” 207.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 208.

sold before.⁵⁸ *Bitches Brew* “became the biggest selling jazz album of all time” and was the first jazz album to compete with rock record sales.⁵⁹ Miles Davis led the way in jazz-rock, and his groups from this time provided the foundation for many other jazz-rock groups. Christopher Smith points out that “a vast majority of the important jazz musicians and bandleaders who came after Miles either went through his band or otherwise came under his tutelage, and virtually all of these individuals have cited their time with Miles as crucial to their musical development.”⁶⁰ Players from the *Bitches Brew* album who formed their own groups include Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea (*Return to Forever*), Tony Williams (*Lifetime*), John McLaughlin (*Mahavishnu Orchestra*) and, most importantly in terms of this dissertation, Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter (*Weather Report*).⁶¹ *Weather Report* is one of the most important jazz-rock groups, as evidenced by their winning the Jazz Album of the Year in the *DownBeat* Reader’s Poll for *Weather Report* (1971), *Mysterious Traveler* (1974), *Tale Spinnin’* (1975), *Black Market* (1976), and *Heavy Weather* (1977). They were also voted Jazz Group of the Year from 1973 to 1979.

Miles Davis was known for change and being on the front edge of whatever was new in music. His decision to incorporate electric instruments into his groups was the result of him knowing what was happening in rock, funk, and soul bands and wanting to utilize those resources to the best of his ability. Miles was not trying to use electric instruments to make money by appealing to younger rock crowds; he was trying to find players who had a “voice” on those instruments. “Musicians have to play the instruments that best reflect the times we’re in, play the technology that will give you what you want

⁵⁸ Ward and Burns, *Jazz*, 446.

⁵⁹ Peretti, *Jazz in American Culture*, 156.

⁶⁰ Christopher Smith, “A Sense of the Possible: Miles Davis and the Semiotics of Improvised Performance,” in *The Drama Review* 39/3 (Autumn, 1995): 41-55.

⁶¹ Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 441-442. Joachim Berendt writes that, “after Miles’ *Bitches Brew* and along with John McLaughlin’s *Mahavishnu Orchestra*, *Weather Report* is the most important and most influential group in fusion.” Wayte, “Bitches Brood,” 154. Lawrence Wayte reinforces this statement with, “Over the next decade, *Weather Report* would become, along with the *Mahavishnu Orchestra*, a standard-bearer of jazz-rock, defining and setting the limits of the genre.

to hear. All these purists are walking around talking about how electrical instruments will ruin music. Bad music is what will ruin music, not the instruments musicians choose to play. I don't see nothing wrong with electrical instruments as long as you get great musicians who will play them right."⁶²

Miles was able to find the right players for his jazz-rock works, and his foresight and musical intuition would set the example for the musicians he worked with when they formed their own groups. Wayte notes that "Miles Davis was not the first jazz musician to incorporate rock, soul, and funk into jazz, but because of his ability to surround himself with the best jazz musicians of his time and his legendary status within the jazz community, his efforts in this direction became the core of the new 'jazz-rock' sound, obscuring nearly all other musicians who were then exploring similar territory."⁶³

Miles only used electric bass sparingly on *Bitches Brew*. Dave Holland played mostly acoustic bass and only Harvey Brooks is mentioned as playing the electric bass. Miles used three electric pianos and drum set players as well as percussionists. The basic rhythm section of the group (drums, percussion, bass, and electric piano) is the model on which *Weather Report* would build their group.

⁶² Miles Davis, *Miles: The Autobiography*, (New York: Touchstone, 1989): 295.

⁶³ Wayte, "Bitches Brood," 43. Wayte also lists many other jazz musicians who were active in incorporating those styles into jazz in order to find a new sound.

Background of Weather Report

Not long after the *Bitches Brew* sessions Wayne Shorter left Miles's group to do some freelance recording and possibly start a group of his own. He made the effort to enlist Miroslav Vitous but was unsuccessful as Vitous was leaving for a tour of Japan with bandleader Herbie Mann. Vitous left Mann's group after the tour and contacted Shorter, expressing interest in forming a group with him. About the same time in 1970, Joe Zawinul announced that he was leaving Cannonball Adderley's group in order to form his own group. Zawinul originally met Vitous at a music competition in Austria and had worked with Vitous previously on a recording project, and the two had discussed the possibility of working together. According to Dan Morgenstern, "In one afternoon, Miroslav called Wayne, Wayne called Joe, and, the pianist says, 'all three of us found that we were free—so there was the band.'"⁶⁴

The group originally consisted of Zawinul (keyboards), Wayne Shorter (saxophone), Miroslav Vitous (bass), Alphonse Mouzon (drums) and Airto Moirera (percussion). *Weather Report* had four bass players during the lifetime of the group: Miroslav Vitous, Alphonso Johnson, John Francis "Jaco" Pastorius, and Victor Bailey. Each bassist played with different drummers and percussionists, but notable pairings include Vitous and Mouzon, Pastorius and Peter Erskine, and Bailey and Omar Hakim. Johnson played with many different drummers during his tenure with *Weather Report*, including Skip Hadden, Chester Thompson, Narada Michael Walden, Ishmael Wilburn and Dom Um Romao. Of the drum chair in *Weather Report*, Zawinul said it "was always a weak spot. Drums are difficult. A lot of those guys were very good, but nobody was a total guy, like what Tony (Williams) was for Miles. We hardly ever had that."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Dan Morgenstern, "Weather Report: Outlook Bright and Sunny," *DownBeat* 38 (November 1971): 14.

⁶⁵ Josef Woodard, "Storm Surge: The Rise and Fall of Weather Report, the Best Jazz Band of the Past 30 Years," *DownBeat* (Jan 2001): 26.

The band decided to call themselves *Weather Report* thus allowing them to change like the weather; however, “Shorter maintained that no change of either musical policy or personnel was for the sake of change.”⁶⁶ Their first album, a self-titled release from 1971, included Vitous, Mouzon, and Moirera, but this rhythm section was replaced after the recording of *Weather Report*. Just before a 1971 tour of Europe, Dom Um Romao replaced Moirera on percussion, then after the tour Eric Gravatt replaced Mouzon for a tour of Japan and South America in 1972 as well as the recording of *I Sing the Body Electric* the same year. *I Sing the Body Electric* contains studio recordings from December 1971 as well as live material from a January 13, 1972 recording from Tokyo, Japan.⁶⁷

For the album *Sweetnighter*, recorded in 1973, Vitous played acoustic and electric bass and was augmented by Andrew White III for “Boogie Woogie Waltz” and “125th Street Congress” with Vitous playing acoustic bass and White playing electric bass. White also played English Horn on “Adios” and “Will” from the same album. Gravatt played drums on only three tracks for this recording, with drummer Herschel Dwellingham joining Gravatt for one track and recording three more as the only drummer. In 1974 *Mysterious Traveler* was released with Vitous playing on only one track – “American Tango” which he co-wrote with Zawinul and on which Alphonso Johnson played electric bass. Zawinul and Johnson had met when Johnson was a member of the *Chuck Mangione Group* in October of 1973. Johnson was hired for, among other things, his ability to play funky, groove oriented bass lines. For *Mysterious Traveler*, Johnson worked with drummers Ishmael Wilburn and Skip Hadden, with Dom Um Romao continuing to hold the percussion chair.

⁶⁶ Barry McRae, “Weather Report,” *Jazz Journal* 29 (June 1976): 10.

⁶⁷ The live material from “I Sing the Body Electric” consists of edited medleys which can be found in their entire form on the “Live In Tokyo” album released in 1977. This two-disc set, recorded in Shibuya Philharmonic Hall, contains the entire evening’s performance.

The 1975 album *Tale Spinnin'* established Alphonso Johnson as the only bass player, with Leon "Ndugu" Chancler on drums and Alyrio Lima on percussion. Chancler had been recording with Jean Luc Ponty in the studio next door to *Weather Report* and as he was walking out the door *Weather Report* asked if he would be interested in some session work, which turned into a week of recording and the album *Tale Spinnin'*. The April 1976 release of *Black Market* saw the arrival of Chester Thompson on drums, who was playing with Frank Zappa at the time, and Alejandro "Alex" Acuña on percussion as well as the contributions of Narada Michael Walden on drums and Don Alias on congas and percussion. Arguably the most notable change of personnel in the band's history was when Jaco Pastorius replaced Alphonso Johnson on electric bass in 1976 during the recording of the *Black Market* album. Pastorius entered the picture when Johnson expressed interest in leaving the group to be a co-leader in his own band with George Duke. Zawinul had already heard of Jaco and, based on a recommendation by Tony Williams that Jaco could play anything, he was brought in to record the tune *Cannon Ball*, which also served as his audition, and he was hired immediately. Jaco also wrote the tune *Barbary Coast* for the album.

Weather Report's 1977 release, *Heavy Weather*, gave the group its most critical and commercial success. It won Jazz Record and Group of the Year in the *DownBeat* Reader's Poll; Grammy Nominations for Best Instrumental Composition for *Birdland*, and Best Jazz Soloist for Pastorius; Record of the Year for *Jazz Forum*, *Playboy*, and *Cashbox*; and Jazz Band of the Year in *Playboy* and Instrumental Group of the Year in *Record World*. The album went to number 30 on the *Billboard* Pop Chart and sold over 500,000 albums, giving it gold status. The rhythm section for this album consisted of Pastorius on bass with Alex Acuña on drums. Chester Thompson left the band at this point to pursue playing opportunities with *Genesis* and Phil Collins. Playing percussion on *Heavy Weather* was Puerto Rico native Manolo Badrena.

Released in May 1978, *Mr. Gone* featured four drummers counting Pastorius who played drums on “The Pursuit of the Woman in the Feathered Hat” and “River People.” The other drummers enlisted to help with this album were Tony Williams, Steve Gadd, and Peter Erskine. Although it was originally to be a solo album for Zawinul, he called on his *Weather Report* band mates to help with the recording at Zawinul’s home studio. Erskine was recruited for the follow-on tour and the next three albums, solidifying what was to be the most stable rhythm section for *Weather Report*. The albums *8:30* (1979), *Night Passage* (1980), and their second self-titled *Weather Report* (1982) all featured the Pastorius/Erskine based rhythm section. The live album *8:30* was taken mostly from the November 24, 1978 concert at Terrace Theatre in Long Beach, California.

The upcoming tour for the second *Weather Report* titled album was in need of a rhythm section; Erskine had committed to the Brecker Brothers and Pastorius was promoting and touring with his own *Word of Mouth* band. Zawinul called New York jazz violinist Michael Urbaniak for a recommendation on a rhythm section, which yielded drummer Omar Hakim. Hakim brought bassist Victor Bailey and percussionist José Rossy to do the tour and record the next two albums: *Procession* (1983) and *Domino Theory* (1984). The album *Sportin’ Life* (1985) featured percussionist Mino Cinélu with the Hakim/Bailey rhythm section. *This Is This* (1986) was an album done to fulfill the contract *Weather Report* had with Columbia records and is not highly regarded even by Zawinul, who called it “a contract record that we had to do.”⁶⁸ This album saw the return of Peter Erskine to the drum chair for most of the album, with Omar Hakim playing only on the Bailey composition “Consequently.” This was the only song Victor Bailey contributed to the *Weather Report* repertoire as both composer and producer.

Throughout the 1970s the *Weather Report* rhythm section was constantly changing until towards the end of the decade when Jaco Pastorius joined the band and

⁶⁸ Woodard, “Storm Surge,” in *DownBeat*, 29.

became one of the most important artistic contributors to the band and its music. It was the constant change of sonic direction that motivated *Weather Report* to find new rhythm sections which could rise to the challenge of playing grooving ostinatos or funky backbeats to serve as the foundation for Zawinul and Shorter to explore new timbres, textures, and melodies. Roy Carr described the band's sound as follows: "Rhythmically complex ensemble themes and a virtuoso level of improvisation were realized using every resource studios offered."⁶⁹ Although *Weather Report* was making its musical contribution to jazz as a jazz-rock group, Zawinul cited bebop as a major influence for him and his music. Joachim Berendt says that Zawinul "emphasizes that his *Weather Report* music is embedded in the tradition of jazz, above all, in bebop...the bop element, albeit veiled and transposed into electronic music, is to be felt during all the stages of *Weather Report's* development."⁷⁰ Zawinul also cites Thelonious Monk's compositions and Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan's piano playing as the bebop influences of his style.⁷¹ The members of *Weather Report* had a solid foundation in the jazz tradition and were recognized as great musicians before they came together to form their own group.

The first *Weather Report* album, the self-titled release from 1971, incorporates all the elements that would define their sound as well as the sound of jazz-rock:

...a significant leading role for Zawinul's electric keyboards, particularly the Fender Rhodes electric piano; sparse and uncomplicated harmonic and formal structures within which players could freely improvise their own harmonic variations, countermelodies, and rhythmic syncopations; a nearly-constant, driving, rhythmic groove binding the often freeform improvisations, using both drums and 'ethnic' percussion; an unusual sense of melody (usually contributed by Shorter's saxophone), often angular and rhythmically untethered but always prominent and memorable; and ostinatos and repeated phrases used to create structure, rather than traditional descending-fifth harmonic progressions.⁷²

⁶⁹ Roy Carr, *A Century of Jazz*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997):181.

⁷⁰ Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 442.

⁷¹ Greg Armbruster, "Zawinul: Continued Hot, Chance of Record Highs," *Keyboard Magazine* (March 1984): 45.

⁷² Wayte, "Bitches Brood," 155.

Weather Report used the same basic concepts of sound, rhythm, and melody that were utilized by Miles Davis in the *Bitches Brew* and *In A Silent Way* sessions. Zawinul, however, had a much more structured approach to composition than Davis did during his jazz-rock albums. Zawinul had written compositions for Davis while recording *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*, and the two talked about them constantly. Davis then took Zawinul's compositions and used fragments of them to provide material for improvisation during the recordings. Davis did still credit Zawinul as the composer for "Pharaoh's Dance" even though the final recording was a result of Davis's edit or "sketches" on Zawinul's original, more complete composition.⁷³ Wayne Shorter was also credited with two compositions from *Bitches Brew*: "Sanctuary" and "Feio". ("Feio" is a bonus track on the CD not included on the original LP.)

The music of *Weather Report* moved away from the traditional jazz arrangement of playing the head, moving through the ensemble for solos, then playing the head again as closing material. Zawinul and Shorter both wanted to experiment with more open forms, a point which Zawinul made clear in a *DownBeat* interview:

Wayne was coming at it independently of me, but he had that same kind of openness, with no limits. I was tired of standard jazz form—you know, the ABB and the changes—sax, trumpet, bass solo, then drums, then back to the melody...I wanted to play music which had drive, which was melodically interesting. Harmony wasn't that important. Music which was melodically and rhythmically present, which had tone, color, and space, so that you could find silence with it, not being hectic.⁷⁴

Here Zawinul gives the driving force behind not only his music, but jazz-rock in general. Zawinul tried to break with the traditional harmonic progressions found in most jazz music such as rhythm changes, blues, and other functional, circle-of-fifths-type

⁷³ Wayte, "Bitches Brood," 67. In his dissertation, Wayte goes into further detail on the compositional process of *Bitches Brew* and how Miles gave direction to the musicians about what and how they were to play the individual pieces.

⁷⁴ Brian Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, (London: Sanctuary Publishing Limited, 2001): 132.

progressions. Wayte observes that “Zawinul and Shorter take great pains to avoid setting up expectations of harmonic resolution altogether. This was not a radical musical breakthrough at the time. Not only had classical composers been experimenting with nonfunctional harmonies for at least 75 years, but jazz musicians had also been circumventing those conventions for at least a decade, most notably in the free jazz experiments of Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor.”⁷⁵ Wayte suggests that the sounds of the late 60s and early 70s cultural movement of rock, found in the music of bands such as the *Beatles*, the *Grateful Dead*, and guitarist Jimi Hendrix also place an increased value on timbre, texture, and rhythm while sacrificing functional harmonic progressions.⁷⁶

One way in which *Weather Report* avoided functional harmony was creating compositions based entirely on one tonal center. The composition “125th Street Congress,” from the *Sweetnighter* album is one example “which stays firmly in a C minor tonal center throughout its entire 12:15 length.”⁷⁷ By staying in one tonal center for an entire song the listener’s attention shifts to other musical elements which are more important to *Weather Report*’s sound: timbre, rhythm, texture, and melodic interplay between instruments.⁷⁸ *Weather Report* achieved musical variety and interest through the use of electronic instruments and effects to create new timbres and layered textures. These new sounds inspired melodic interplay between the members of the group while the rhythm section provided firmly grounded rhythmic grooves as a foundation for the collective sound.

Weather Report’s theory of collective improvisation can be found, again, in the rock culture of the 60s. Bands like the *Grateful Dead* played concerts in which the open jam sections became the focal point of the show. These were not solos on fixed chord changes, but rather “moments of unscripted collective improvisation during which the

⁷⁵ Wayte, “Bitches Brood,” 162.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 162.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 163-164.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 164.

direction the music might take was unknown not only to the audience but to the band as well.”⁷⁹ The *Grateful Dead* would explore new musical territory during their improvisations that were guided only by the players and what they heard during these open jams. Through listening within the ensemble, the musicians are able to move from one tonal, melodic, or rhythmic place to another via collective improvisation without any prior composing or planning. This concept is explored in free jazz in the music of Ornette Coleman; his album *Free Jazz* features the collective improvisation of two quartets playing at the same time. Solo voices would emerge which would lead to the next section of collective playing; then another solo voice would take the lead and move to the next section of collective playing. Coleman and the *Grateful Dead* “created, reflected, and embodied the values of the 1960s counterculture – freedom, democracy, self-determination, community, etc. We can hear *Weather Report’s* forays into electrically amplified collective improvisation with its first two albums as an attempt to capture within the jazz-rock community some of that same spirit and energy.”⁸⁰ *Weather Report* was one of the first jazz-rock groups that, as Wayte points out, ventured successfully into the territory of collective improvisation with electronic instruments.

To say that rhythmic drive is important in jazz-rock is an understatement; rhythmic drive and the groove are what hold the jazz-rock ensemble together. Without a solid foundation, the ability of the other members of a jazz-rock group to explore what Wayte calls “other aspects of the musical fabric” would be difficult at best. He also adds, “Prominent, driving, rhythmic grooves define *Weather Report’s* sound, and to a great extent, that of jazz-rock in general.”⁸¹ The idea of a driving rhythmic groove can be traced back to the *Bitches Brew* recording and the solid rhythmic foundation that the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 166.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 166.

⁸¹ Ibid., 167.

Miles Davis rhythm sections provided. *Weather Report's* reliance on the solid, driving groove is an extension of Davis's musical vision.

In the search for the perfect groove, Zawinul and Shorter played with many different rhythm sections. "Nearly every record features a different pairing of bass players, drummers, and percussionists. The only constant was the presence of Zawinul and Shorter, who seem to have been always searching for new drummers, percussionists, and bass players to provide the most up-to-date sounding rhythmic grooves."⁸² Josef Woodard adds the following about the shifting rhythm sections, "This was partly because of Zawinul's demanding, and also ambiguous, vision of how the drums affected the ensemble whole."⁸³ The constant searching and adapting to new rhythm-section players provided many opportunities for change and growth in terms of the groove and rhythmic pulse.

The importance of the rhythm section and how it grounds the band has been established in terms of jazz-rock, but why is it so important in terms of the sound of *Weather Report*?

The answer lies in its [the rhythm section's] ability to ground the music in bodily energy and movement while still allowing freedom for Shorter and Zawinul to experiment with unconventional and daring harmonic and melodic ideas. The grounding effect of the rhythmic groove provides context and connection with listeners on different levels. Even the most complex rhythmic groove, if skillfully played, still contains an underlying pulse that untrained ears (and bodies) can use to anchor their listening experience. That anchoring gives a listener a sense of security that can allow the mind to accept greater harmonic and melodic freedom – transgressions of musical convention – without risking an alienating level of discomfort.⁸⁴

⁸² Ibid., 169.

⁸³ Woodard, "Storm Surge," in *DownBeat*, 26.

⁸⁴ Wayte, "Bitches Brood," 169-170.

Weather Report was able to connect with audiences because of the rhythm section's grounding effect: it provided a familiar foundation to Shorter and Zawinul's unfamiliar journeys into new timbral, textural, and melodic realms. The freedom of jazz combined with the familiarity of rock both appealed to audiences and perpetuated the jazz-rock momentum created by Miles Davis.

In the next chapters I will consider the four main bass players of *Weather Report*, Vitous, Johnson, Pastorius, and Bailey, and how they each affected the sound of the band in particular and jazz-rock in general.

Chapter 3: Miroslav Vitous

Weather Report's first bass player, Miroslav Vitous, was also a co-founder of the group. Born in Prague, Czechoslovakia on December 6, 1947, he studied violin when he was six and piano at nine before finally moving to bass at age fourteen.⁸⁵ His father, a saxophonist, encouraged Miroslav's musical career at every step. Miroslav said of his father, "He discovered that I had almost perfect pitch when I was quite small, and felt that I had great talent."⁸⁶ At the Prague Conservatory he studied with bass virtuoso František Pošta and played in a jazz group called *The Junior Trio* with his brother Alan on drums and Jan Hammer on piano. As a competitive freestyle swimmer, he was a member of the Czechoslovakia National Team preparing to compete at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, Mexico; but in 1966 at the age of nineteen he entered a music competition that changed his life.

Vitous entered the *Internationaler Wettbewerb Für Modernen Jazz*, an international competition for young jazz musicians which took place in Vienna, Austria. The event was founded by pianist Friedrich Gulda who enlisted a judging panel that included Cannonball Adderley, Ron Carter, Art Farmer, Mel Lewis, J. J. Johnson, and Joe Zawinul.⁸⁷ Vitous received a first prize in the competition, which included \$1,000.00 and a partial scholarship to Berklee School of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. It was at this competition that Vitous and Zawinul were introduced and Zawinul noticed that Vitous "played the bass fiddle like it was guitar because he was so big—his hands were huge, like Ron Carter's."⁸⁸ Before attending Berklee, Vitous was asked to play in

⁸⁵ Except where cited, most information for Vitous's biography is taken from his official website. I have found very little biographical information in print on Miroslav Vitous. The information provided in my dissertation has been verified by Vitous via my emails and interviews.

⁸⁶ Coryell and Friedman, *Jazz-Rock Fusion*, 43.

⁸⁷ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 100.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 130. One of Zawinul's comments about the competition was, "The bassists were the best!" This is evident in Vitous winning one of the sections of the competition and fellow Czech bassist Jiri (now known as George) Mraz winning another section which also won him a scholarship to Berklee.

Cannonball Adderley's band, but upon his arrival to the United States it was discovered that his communist-nation passport would not allow him to travel with Adderley's band.⁸⁹

Vitous's stint at Berklee was scheduled for the 1966-67 academic year, but he was in class for only two weeks – he spent most of his time at home practicing eight hours each day. Later in 1967 he moved to New York and soon began working with Art Farmer, Freddie Hubbard, Bob Brookmeyer, Clark Terry, and, for a short time, Miles Davis. “One of the most highly touted prodigies in jazz at the time, Vitous started playing [and recording] regularly with Chick Corea and Roy Haynes.”⁹⁰ Vitous recorded the album *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* with Corea and Haynes in 1968 for the Blue Note label. John Goldsby called this album “a milestone in modern trio playing. This handling of mostly standard material was a development of the Bill Evans/Scott LaFaro style, and a precursor to 1970's extremely free *The Song of Singing* with Corea and bassist Dave Holland.”⁹¹

From 1968 to 1970, Vitous played in one of Herbie Mann's popular groups with Stan Getz and also recorded his first album as a leader, which John Goldsby described as “a series of jazz-rock jams called *Infinite Search*.”⁹² However, Vitous had the following to say about this album:

You write that it was a series of Jazz/Rock stuff. It was not. This album is still today one of the pillars of the top of Jazz times and it was a combination of European melodic/Slavic which was addition [*sic*] to the top of modern jazz. It was one of the first valid blends of enriching the American jazz/just as later was Zawinul's – *In A Silent Way* etc...I don't know where you received this info but that album has absolutely nothing to do with Jazz/Rock. [It] is pure music.⁹³

⁸⁹ I first found out about Vitous being asked to play in Cannonball Adderley's band from Vitous's website. It was through an email from him that I found out he could not take the gig because he would not be allowed to travel outside the U.S. with the band due to restrictions on his Czechoslovakian passport.

⁹⁰ John Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book*, 143.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 143

⁹³ I received this quote via email directly from Vitous.

Infinite Search was released in 1969 and included Herbie Hancock on piano, Joe Henderson on tenor saxophone, John McLaughlin on guitar, and Jack DeJohnette on drums. Upon hearing the album the listener is introduced to the style that Vitous carried over to *Weather Report*. In 1969, Vitous played on Wayne Shorter's album *Super Nova* which also included Chick Corea, Jack DeJohnette, and Airto Moirera on percussion.

After playing and recording with many of the leading-edge jazz-rock experimenters, including trendsetter Miles Davis, Vitous joined with Wayne Shorter and Joe Zawinul to form *Weather Report* in late 1970. In addition to his duties as the band's acoustic and electric bassist, Vitous contributed as a writer or co-writer for several compositions in the *Weather Report* repertoire. He wrote three compositions for their self-titled album in 1971, which won *DownBeat* magazine's award for Album of the Year; two for *I Sing the Body Electric*, released in 1972; one for 1973's *Sweetnighter*; and one on 1974's *Mysterious Traveler*.

Following his departure from *Weather Report*, Vitous recorded several solo albums on the German ECM label. In late 1982 he rejoined Chick Corea and Roy Haynes to record *Trio Music* on ECM. The group toured Europe in 1984, which yielded a live album: *Trio Music, Live in Europe* released in 1986. Another successful reunion of this group occurred at New York's Blue Note club; this recorded performance was released as a DVD in 2006. Vitous has also been involved in academia – he joined the faculty at the New England Conservatory in 1979 and became head of the jazz department in 1983.⁹⁴ He served as Chairman of the Jazz Department for three years until personal commitments required him to step down and teach part-time for the next two years until finally giving up his position altogether to pursue other musical frontiers.

Vitous returned to live in Europe in 1988, and in 1991 he recorded with former *Weather Report* drummer Peter Erskine for another album on the ECM label, *Star*,

⁹⁴ Ibid., 143.

released the same year. This album also featured saxophonist Jan Garbarek with whom Vitous recorded another album for ECM called *Atmos*, released in 1992. After these recordings, Vitous became interested in compiling a library of high-quality, digital orchestral samples for use in his own compositions. The samples and subsequent compositions were featured on two solo albums, *Universal Syncopations* and *Universal Syncopations 2* released in 2003 and 2007 respectively. These recordings also feature Chick Corea, Jack DeJohnette, John McLaughlin, and Jan Garbarek. Vitous has continued to work as an educator and clinician in conjunction with his concert performances. Recent clinics have been conducted in Biarritz, France; Sardinia, Italy; and at the Thomastik Acoustic Bass Convention in Vienna, Austria.

MUSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO WEATHER REPORT

Vitous played and recorded with *Weather Report* for their first three albums as well as on the composition “American Tango” from the 1974 album *Mysterious Traveler*. On the 1971 album *Weather Report* he played acoustic and electric bass and contributed his compositional skills to three tracks. He is listed as a co-writer, with Zawinul and Shorter, for the composition “Umbrellas” and he wrote “Seventh Arrow” and “Morning Lake” alone. On “Umbrellas,” Zawinul gives credit to Vitous for writing the melody to which Zawinul and Shorter added backgrounds to create the finished composition.⁹⁵

Zawinul called Vitous’s “Seventh Arrow” a “masterpiece” during an interview with Dan Morgenstern for *DownBeat*.⁹⁶ In the same article, Vitous went on to say the following about his own work: “It’s a continuous composition; in other words, we don’t just play one motive and then something on that. It’s first one motive and then comes another, almost like another song, and all these motives are written, so it never really is an improvisation. Actually, the piece is two songs, two of my songs which we decided to put together—it reminded me of an arrow.”⁹⁷ “Morning Lake,” which features Vitous’s work on acoustic bass with and without effects, was also recorded on Norwegian guitarist Terje Rypdal’s 1981 album *To Be Continued* featuring Miroslav Vitous and Jack DeJohnette. The 1972 album *I Sing the Body Electric* was a combination of studio recordings and live recordings from concerts in Japan. Of the studio recordings on that album, Vitous wrote “Crystal,” playing acoustic bass with distortion.⁹⁸ Of the live tracks on that album, Vitous wrote “T.H.” on which he played acoustic bass using a slight wah-wah effect during his arco solo.

⁹⁵ Dan Morgenstern, “Weather Report,” 14.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 14. Although this article quotes Vitous directly, when I asked him about the accuracy of this quote, he explained that *Seventh Arrow* actually is an improvisation. The improvisation takes place on the motives that Vitous wrote.

⁹⁸ The first half of *I Sing the Body Electric* contains studio recordings and the second half is from a live concert in Japan. The entire live recording can be heard on *Weather Report: Live In Tokyo*.

The *Sweetnighter* album was very transitional for *Weather Report* and Miroslav Vitous. He only wrote one composition for the album, “Will,” on which he plays electric bass guitar, and he plays acoustic bass on tracks that use multi-instrumentalist Andrew White as the electric bass player: “Boogie Woogie Waltz” and “125th Street Congress.” Vitous’s playing is completely missing on the composition “Non-Stop Home,” which incorporates White’s electric bass playing, but Vitous can be heard on acoustic bass on “Manolete” and electric bass on “Adios.” The *Weather Report* rhythm section took a more commercial approach to their composing beginning with the *Sweetnighter* album, often basing their compositions on repetitive funk patterns which was not the music Vitous wanted to pursue. About the commercialization of *Weather Report*, Vitous says, “Improvisation was the mark of the band, but Joe Zawinul wanted to get more commercial, in a sense. It’s a question of money in the US, and what the music business is doing to music. The band had to change – it was in a bad financial situation. It moved into a steady rhythm section, black funk type thing. I wasn’t really in favor of that, but I wasn’t ready to know what I was going to do next. I simply didn’t know at the time.”⁹⁹

Mysterious Traveler marked the end of Vitous’s tenure with the band. Alphonso Johnson played on the entire album, even playing a second bass line on Vitous’s composition “American Tango.” According to Wayne Shorter in a *Jazz Forum* article, Vitous “had a little background but no melody to go with it. After some time, we began to feel a little frustrated. Now, I remembered a melody I had written long time ago. I added it to Miroslav’s background and, in the studio, we improvised on it. This is the origin of ‘American Tango.’”¹⁰⁰

Mark Gridley says the following of Vitous’s musical contributions to *Weather Report*:

⁹⁹ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 160.

¹⁰⁰ Adrian Macintosh, “Wayne Shorter: Putting It In the Weather Report Rack,” *Jazz Forum* No. 42 (April 1976): 44-45.

Miroslav Vitous, *Weather Report's* first bassist, improvised melodies on bass. He knew how to engage his bass in musical conversations with other group members. His contributions included fragmented melody statements, bowed sustained tones, and syncopated interjections. He could just as easily bow melody in unison with saxophone as feed rock-style bass figures into the group texture. He could play timekeeping rhythms coordinated with the drummer, or he could coordinate with a rhythm of the pianist. He could quickly go back and forth, too. There was often no distinction between soloist and accompanist.¹⁰¹

Vitous's contributions as a bassist and composer were important in developing the early sound of *Weather Report*. As a bassist, he provided a solid foundation as well as acted as a third melodic line, conversing with Zawinul's keyboard and Shorter's saxophone lines. Zawinul biographer Brian Glasser says the following of Vitous, "[his] exceptional skill lay in his ability to interchange between time-keeping and decorative work whenever appropriate."¹⁰² Concerning his involvement in *Weather Report* as a co-founder and bassist, Vitous says the following:

It is not only the fact that [I] was the cofounder and original bass player, it shows clearly today that the way the bass demanded a direct conversation from Shorter and Zawinul, [my] bass playing is in a major way mostly responsible for creating the new way of playing, mainly in direct conversations (which can consequently be already heard on *Infinite Search*). It is a fact that upon [my] departure this quality, which *Weather Report* claims, has almost entirely vanished from the music of *Weather Report* as the group turned heavily in [the] direction of commercial success.¹⁰³

Vitous's musical "conversations" with Zawinul's keyboards and Shorter's saxophone can be heard on any of the albums he recorded with *Weather Report*. Vitous says the way he played in those days is actually the direction music will take in the future, "As without direct communications, there is only flat music and old [musical] roles [and] formats

¹⁰¹ Mark C. Gridley, *Concise Guide to Jazz*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992): 163-164.

¹⁰² Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 145.

¹⁰³ I received this quote via email directly from Vitous.

available. This will also consequently soon start up [*sic*] multi-dimensional ways of playing, which is the development we must take.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

ANALYSIS OF STYLE

Vitous co-founded *Weather Report* after having already experimented with changing the role of the bass, moving it away from the traditional background role as part of the rhythm section to a more up-front, melodic role. When asked about which musical elements inspired his playing he answered:

...basically what happened in *Weather Report* is that we tried to play new music, it was time for new music to arrive and we did that. It was a kind of fusion going on with a very advanced, modern jazz. The main reason for this is that the bass was being played in a different way. I am not a bass player who will be playing an accompaniment and just stay in the back and just go [mimics playing four quarter notes to the measure] boom, boom, boom, boom. I am playing like a solo player which means I was playing with them as an equal – answering and talking, having a conversation with them. I was not only doing that...I was demanding a conversation. And that alone is the biggest part of why the music was so fresh and so new. The role of the bass had completely changed from the background to up front. This happened while I was in the group and after I left the group this stopped.¹⁰⁵

Vitous's solo album *Infinite Search* demonstrates where he was coming from in terms of this new role of the bass in a jazz ensemble. Vitous continuously plays melodic fragments and often takes the lead on which direction the ensemble moves based on what he is playing. Vitous shares the melodic responsibility equally with John McLaughlin, Joe Henderson, and Herbie Hancock while Jack DeJohnette provides a driving rhythmic groove, often “answering and talking” with the other musicians as well. There are, however, moments of traditional jazz bass playing where Vitous contributes a walking bass line as a foundation for the group: a technique he used in *Weather Report* as well.

When asked about how he came up with the bass lines he played he explained that “normally I would come up with the bass line myself from what I would hear.”¹⁰⁶ He

¹⁰⁵ Frandsen phone interview with Vitous on 8 January 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

further added, “What I hear I would play, so sometimes I would create my own bass line on the composition, sometimes I would play the bass line which was suggested, or do half and half. It is impossible to tell how much and when and how because it’s a creative process. You just have to mark it as a creative process.”¹⁰⁷ Because Zawinul, Shorter, and Vitous were creative improvisers and composers, they would listen and arrange on the spot, making adjustments to the compositions as they played, a technique that is not new or peculiar to any formation of *Weather Report*, and one that can be traced to the *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew* recording sessions that Zawinul and Shorter played with Miles Davis.

I asked Vitous about his tone and technique and whether or not he would experiment with or change his technique in the course of working up a tune and he offered the following:

This is not the way I thought about it and this is not the way you think about it when you create music. You play what you hear. So if the heavens sent you something, you hear it, you play it. It’s not a question that you would try this technique then another technique. You have to know your instrument well enough to have incredible technique to play whatever you want to play or whatever you hear or as close to that as possible. And then you just go and perform what you hear. You are the instrument of the music. I play the bass, but the music plays me. You can not play music technically like this because if you do this then you are not really with the spirit; you are just technically trying to do something like in school.¹⁰⁸

Vitous suggests here that the use of certain sounds, tones, timbres, or techniques is a result of what he heard in the music and not a product of the style or label of music he chose to play. He was in search of a new music based on the collective improvisations of the group. Charts that were brought in were often sketches of songs or fragments of ideas that received improvisational treatment during the rehearsing, playing, and recording

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

process. All three of the founding members of *Weather Report* played with Miles Davis, who used compositional sketches and melodic fragments on which to base improvisational composition—he gave the players brief guidelines and let the individuals explore the possibilities from there. The Zawinul-Shorter-Vitous trio worked in the same direction, and Vitous’s bass playing exemplified what Lawrence Wayte describes as the main aspects of jazz-rock: “virtuosity, experimentation with timbre and rhythm, and exploring the aesthetic sublime.”¹⁰⁹

His experimentation with timbre can be heard in the way he played electric and acoustic bass, often using effects on both even when playing arco passages on acoustic. Rhythmically he could imitate the pattern of the drum set, percussion, saxophone, or piano and keyboards to enhance the propulsion of the rhythmic pattern. The music of *Weather Report* and the new role of the bass in particular moved many listeners to admire and respect the direction this ensemble was taking in trying to create something organic, fresh, and exciting.

Perhaps more than the other bass players of *Weather Report*, Vitous had a style that employed more differences in “rhythm and groove, timbre, and texture.”¹¹⁰ I have chosen examples from four compositions that Vitous played with *Weather Report* to illustrate his musical style. The first is “Umbrellas” from the band’s 1971 self-titled album. This is the second track from the album and the first with the entire band playing. After a short two and a half measures of drums establishing the rhythm and tempo of the opening section, Vitous enters playing electric bass with distortion (see example 3.1) outlining a C-blues scale, without the minor 3rd, in measures three through six.

¹⁰⁹ Wayte, *Bitches Brood*, 13

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 158.

Bass Guitar

Example 3-1: Vitous's opening bass line for "Umbrellas"

Vitous adds the minor 3rd to the C-blues scale in measure nine, then continues on to play the Major 3rd in measure 11, giving contrast to the previously played minor 3rd, which is common in the blues. Vitous continues to play in the C-natural minor tonality when he introduces the A \flat in measures 15-16, then he outlines a B-major triad using octave displacement in measures 17-19. In measure 20 he uses a D to E \flat movement resolving to C to establish the C-minor tonality of the next section. I point out the scales and implied harmonies here to show that Vitous did not use complicated theoretical devices; the emphasis was not on harmonic structure, but melody and rhythm, tone, color, and space.¹¹¹ Vitous used existing harmonic tools as fragmented melodic motives and a distorted electric bass to give the introduction a definite tone and color that was markedly different from the typical jazz bass sound of the time.

¹¹¹ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 132. "[Zawinul] wanted to play music which had drive, which was melodically interesting. Harmony wasn't that important. Music which was melodically interesting..."

This introduction section of “Umbrellas” provides the listener with many clues as to the nature of not only *Weather Report*, but the new role of the bass in this new band. Vitous is mostly an acoustic player, yet his first track from this album that includes the entire band is recorded on electric bass using a distortion effect. This is significant because as a jazz-rock group *Weather Report* exploited the use of electronic instruments and effects in their playing and established this with the listener almost immediately. Although albums have included bass intros or solos many times, Vitous and *Weather Report* use the timbre and texture of the distorted electric bass to introduce their concept of electronic instruments and effects in jazz-rock.

The rhythm and groove of the next section, beginning in measure 21 and 50 beats per minute slower than the first 20 measures, is set up by the drums with Zawinul’s keyboards providing short melodic gestures until the bass comes in to reinforce the rhythmic drive at measure 24 as seen in example 3-2. Vitous pedals rhythmically on a C starting on beat one in measure 24, then delays his next entry until beat two in measure 25, enters again after a quarter rest and a eighth rest in measure 26, then again after a half rest in measure 27. When Vitous originally enters the new section he answers the pattern of the snare drum that was set up in the previous three measures providing a solid foundation which quickly, due to rhythmic variation and delays, seems to disintegrate until measure 29 where he reestablishes a strong, driving groove with the drums. The expectation of the listener to be provided with a continuous foundational role by the bass player is not met and is one of the stylistic trademarks of Vitous’s playing.¹¹²

¹¹² Leonard Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956): 157. “Delays and irregularities are most effective precisely when patterns and shapes are distinct and tangible; for it is then that expectations of continuation and closure are most clear and unambiguous.”

21

25

29

Example 3-2 Vitous establishing, moving away from, then reestablishing a strong rhythmic groove in “Umbrellas”

In measure 31, Zawinul introduces a diatonic descending melodic line of scale degrees 3-2-1-5-♭7 which he uses again with slight variation and prolongation in measure 33, this time omitting scale degree 5; Vitous continues the descending line in the bass in measure 34 and uses it as a transition into a new tonal center of G (see example 3-3).

31

Bass

Synth

Example 3-3 Vitous completing Zawinul’s descending melodic line in “Umbrellas”

In the first 15 measures of this new slower section beginning at measure 21, Vitous uses syncopated interjections and fragmented melodic statements to engage in musical

conversations with the band, showing that he can move between accompanist and soloist easily and quickly.

Example 3-4 demonstrates Vitous's rhythmic and melodic style of playing. In measures 35 to 44, Vitous once again makes use of the drum set rhythm to set up his own improvisations, often reinforcing what drummer Alphonse Mouzon is playing. Tonally, Vitous works around a Gmin⁷ through this section and borrows from the blues scale by utilizing the lowered 5th scale degree in measure 47 before outlining a C minor chord in measures 50 to 53. Any sense of a traditional bass foundation disappears when Vitous returns to his melodic fragments in measures 54-59.

33

37

41

45

49

53

57

Example 3-4 Vitous's rhythmic and melodic playing in "Umbrellas"

The rest of the song continues with this type of playing where the bass moves between serving as a rhythmic counterpart to the drum set and serving as a third melodic voice exchanging fragments and phrases with Zawinul and Shorter. At the end of the song, the tempo picks up to the original 170 bpm and Vitous takes charge with his distorted bass playing phrases and melodies similar to the intro.

Lawrence Wayte points out that "[Miles] Davis used tonal centers, modes, fragmentary melodic ideas, and static harmonies to provide the space necessary for

spontaneous musical creation. However, one element that serves as a structural skeleton in nearly all jazz-rock recordings, and the one that Davis insisted on, was a strong, propulsive, continuous, syncopated groove.”¹¹³ All three of the founding members of *Weather Report* had worked with Davis at one time, Zawinul and Shorter especially during the landmark *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew* sessions. The “structural skeleton” that Davis required was fully met in “Umbrellas” by Mouzon and Vitous and their interaction with each other on this composition. Vitous’s style allowed him to further contribute the tonal centers, modes, and fragmentary melodic ideas that are so crucial to Vitous’s style and jazz-rock. On the compositions where he played acoustic bass with *Weather Report* he used the same types of techniques to establish his own style within the group while contributing to the overall *Weather Report* sound.

For “Orange Lady” from the album *Weather Report*, Vitous plays acoustic bass with large sections of arco playing. The total song time is 8’41” and only 2’50” of that is played pizzicato with any semblance of time or pulse. Most of this composition is played in a rubato style, lacking the signature propulsive groove of the Miles Davis school of jazz-rock. Vitous’s arco playing doubles Shorter’s soprano sax line throughout most of the tune with Zawinul providing arpeggiated chords for accompaniment. When a steady sense of pulse does enter at 3:33, it is set up by Zawinul playing the five-note melodic figure that the section is based on. This melodic idea is first heard on the keyboards, then heard on a pizzicato bass doubling the keyboards, and finally heard on sax before Vitous again changes the timbre of his acoustic bass by adding a wah effect. The band plays this section over an E tonal center for a short time before moving to a G#/A \flat center creating a mediant relationship and a change in the melody. After playing in this new tonal area for a short time, Vitous moves again to change the timbre of his instrument by playing arco with the wah effect. The drum set is notably absent from this section where a steady

¹¹³ Wayte, *Bitches Brood*, 272.

pulse is finally established. It is replaced by percussion instruments, and they are more for accents and ambiance than they are for contributing to a time-keeping function. Finally, in the closing section of “Orange Lady,” Vitous returns to the bow and again doubles the melody with Shorter.

Another composition which gives an example of the techniques Vitous employed while in *Weather Report* is “Eurydice” from 1971’s self-titled album. This tune features Vitous playing a walking line in a more traditional jazz bass role. After a couple of starts and stops in the rhythm section, created by mixing walking bass lines with longer pedal tones, and moving through the tonal centers C-F#-G, Vitous and Mouzon create a driving rhythmic pulse utilizing traditional jazz rhythm section roles. Example 3-5 shows the line in E \flat -minor that starts at 0:23 of the song and finds Vitous quickly ascending to an E \flat above the staff in measure 22, then using the next three measures to slowly descend to the F below the staff in measure 26, and then finally moving back up to the E \flat on the third space in measure 27.

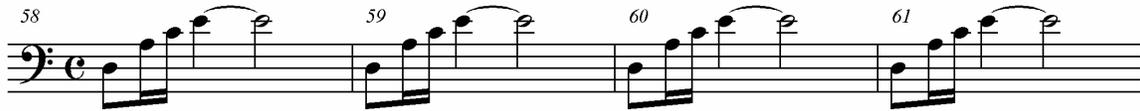
21 ♩ = 208

Bass

25

Example 3-5 Vitous’s walking line in “Eurydice”

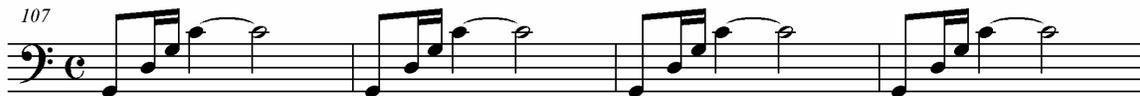
This creates a nice, long arcing bass line typical of traditional jazz bass players, and even though Vitous plays a fairly standard walking line, Zawinul doesn’t “comp” behind Shorter but instead adds another melodic line or fragments thereof to the composition. Although Vitous is known mainly for his conversational driven playing in *Weather*



Example 3-7 “Manolete” bass line transposed up a minor 3rd

It is interesting to note that on the eighth bar of the riff on B, measure 56, the electric bass moves to the D riff while Vitous continues to play the B riff. The electric player tries to correct the riff in the ninth measure but cuts it short because the acoustic is not playing. Both basses then move to the D riff on the tenth bar, measure 58, of this section.

After playing the D riff for four bars, the electric maintains a steady rhythmic pulse on one note while Vitous continues to play different melodic fragments and motives. He eventually gets back to the basic rhythm of the earlier riffs and then plays a similar riff in diminution. At the end of the song Shorter plays the bass riff starting on G and outlining a Gsus chord which the rest of the band picks up and plays back, using it as an outro groove. Example 3-8 shows the bass line Vitous plays starting at measure 107 and continuing until the end of the song.



Example 3-8 Bass line at the end of “Manolete”

The use of a groove-type line is significant on this composition because it is the album where Zawinul and Shorter began to approach more commercial funk and groove based rhythms on which to create their improvisations. Andrew White III came in to provide these types of rhythms on *Sweetnighter*, but it would be Alphonso Johnson who would dominate the *Mysterious Traveler* album with his repetitive and improvised funk lines.

Vitous's bass playing in *Weather Report* is a balance of fragmented melodic ideas and driving rhythmic figures, colored by electronically experimental tones and timbres, and his ability to funnel his muse directly into and through his acoustic and electric basses. Vitous helped establish *Weather Report* as the premiere jazz-rock group, contributing greatly to the overall collective improvisation because he demanded musical conversations with the other instrumentalists. When asked what he thought his greatest contribution to the band was, he explained, "Because of the way I play the bass, basically I have created the opening for very new music to arrive...because of this very particular reason. I think that was my biggest input in this band or in any band; but especially in this band at this time."¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Frandsen phone interview with Vitous, 8 January 2009.

Chapter 4: Alphonso Johnson

Alphonso Johnson, the second of *Weather Report*'s bass players, was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on February 2, 1951. He began playing the acoustic bass in his elementary-school music class and continued on to study at the Philadelphia Music Academy with former Duke Ellington bassist John Lamb. Johnson does, however, mention that the first instrument he gained notice for was the voice: "It started during my junior-high school days when I used to sing in the neighborhoods and on the street corners and finally I got in the All-City Choir. I sang with the Philadelphia Junior High School Boys Choir."¹¹⁵ Through his studies and listening in the mid to late 60s, Johnson was exposed to classical (Western Art) music, jazz, 60s rock, and rhythm and blues; he also bought his first electric bass, which opened up opportunities for numerous gigs.¹¹⁶

In the late 60s to early 70s, some of Johnson's important early gigs were recording with Quincy Jones on the album *I Heard That* (1969) and backing up vocalists Ronnie Dyson and Billy Paul, after which he became a member of the Philadelphia-based fusion group *Catalyst*. Johnson says, "Basically my jazz influences began when I was working with a group called *Catalyst* in Philadelphia and they were into very free music. What I mean by 'free' was that we would allow each player enough self-expression within the normal boundaries of music. In other words, we didn't play the same way every night. You know, it was that kind of group."¹¹⁷ This type of free playing that Johnson describes would be the same type of playing he would be able to develop and explore with *Weather Report*.

In 1973, Johnson joined Woody Herman's *Young Thundering Herd* for a world tour and the recording of *The Raven Speaks*. Later that same year, *Young Thundering*

¹¹⁵ Coryell and Friedman, *Jazz-Rock Fusion*, 25.

¹¹⁶ Chris Jisi, "Alphonso Johnson: Fusion Revolutionary," *Bass Player* (April 1992): 23.

¹¹⁷ Coryell and Friedman, *Jazz-Rock Fusion*, 25-26.

Herd drummer Joe LaBarbara joined Chuck Mangione's quartet and brought Johnson along as the bass player.¹¹⁸ It was during his tenure with Mangione's group that Johnson recorded the best-selling album *Land of Make Believe*, on which he contributed the signature B♭ ostinato line for the title track.¹¹⁹ During a live show where Mangione's group opened for *Weather Report*, Johnson's fretless electric bass work caught the ear of Wayne Shorter, and he was soon asked to join the band. Johnson played and recorded with *Weather Report* from 1974 to 1976. His playing and composing skills were put to work on the albums *Mysterious Traveler* (1974), *Tale Spinnin'* (1975), and *Black Market* (1976).

Johnson was replaced in *Weather Report* by electric bassist Jaco Pastorius in 1976 during the recording of *Black Market*. Both bassists played on the album, but Pastorius was the one to tour in support of it. Johnson says he "remember[s] first meeting him [Pastorius] in Zawinul's hotel room in Florida, while the two of them were listening to Jaco's audition tape."¹²⁰ About his departure from *Weather Report*, Johnson adds the following in the same article: "As much as I enjoyed my time with the band, I got so burned out from the drummer problems that by the time we solved them with Chester Thompson, I was ready for a change."¹²¹

While playing and touring with *Weather Report*, Johnson moved to Los Angeles, California and was soon doing session work with keyboardist George Duke and the George Duke/Billy Cobham band, the *Crusaders*, guitarists Allan Holdsworth and Lee Ritenour, and others.¹²² Notable recording credits during this time include sessions with Cannonball Adderley (1976), Chet Baker (1977), Bob James (1977), Eric Gale (1978), and John McLaughlin (1979). Also during this time, Johnson became fascinated with and studied the Chapman Stick, a ten-stringed electric touchboard. Drawing on his broad

¹¹⁸ Jisi, "Alphonso Johnson," 23.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 23.

range of musical experiences and styles he recorded three solo albums in as many years: *Moonshadows* (1976), *Yesterday's Dreams* (1977), and *Spellbound* (1978). In 1979, he toured the United States with the CBS All-Stars, including Tom Scott, Billy Cobham, and Steve Kahn, and recorded a live album with rock artist Rod Argent. The same year he received a Grammy Nomination for Best R&B Instrumental for the album *Street Life* with *The Crusaders*.¹²³

In 1983 Johnson composed music for a children's film titled *Sound of Sunshine...Sound of Rain* which earned an Academy Award Nomination for Best Animated Film. Also in the early 80s, Johnson remained active as a bassist and composer for such notable popular music performers as Phil Collins, Bob Weir, Jeffery Osborne, and Bob Dylan.¹²⁴ In 1984, Johnson began playing and touring with guitarist Carlos Santana, with whom he recorded the albums *Beyond Appearances* (1985), *Freedom* (1987), *Viva Santana* (1988), and *Spirits Dancing in the Flesh* (1990).

Some of Johnson's other recording credits include "Hideaway" (1986) with fellow electric bass fusion pioneer Stanley Clarke, "Phantom Navigator" (1986) with former *Weather Report* band mate Wayne Shorter, "Brazilian Romance" (1987) with Sarah Vaughan, and "Old Friends/New Friends" (1988) with another former *Weather Report* alumnus, Ndugu Chancler. His list of teaching credits includes the Mesar Hause Institute of Music in Tokyo, Japan; the Bass School of Music in Köln, Germany; the Musicians Institute in Los Angeles, California; the National Guitar Summer Workshop, and the California Institute of the Arts. He has conducted bass seminars and clinics in Germany, England, France, Scotland, Ireland, Japan, Switzerland, Australia, Brazil, and

¹²³ Information for this and other parts of Alphonso Johnson's biography are taken from his official website. This information has been verified by Johnson via my emails and interviews.

¹²⁴ Jisi, "Alphonso Johnson," 23.

Argentina. In 1997, he became the director of the bass department at the Los Angeles Music Academy in Pasadena, California.¹²⁵

Johnson's publications include a chapter in *Lessons with the Greats* published in 1994 by Manhattan Music and *The Bass Guitar* also published in 1994 by Oxford University Press. He also contributed an article to *The Guitar Teacher's Handbook* which was published by Oxford University Press. In 1995, Johnson joined the original members of the group *Santana* to form *Abraxas* with whom he recorded the album *Abraxas Pool* in 1997 on the Miramar label. Also in 1995 he recorded "Sending Love to Everyone," a Japanese import, with former *Weather Report* drummer Narada Michael Walden. In 1998 and 1999, he joined Billy Cobham, T. Lavitz and Jimmy Herring to form the touring group *Jazz Is Dead*, paying tribute to late *Grateful Dead* member Jerry Garcia. In 2000, he joined the Further Festival to play with former *Grateful Dead* members Mickey Hart, Bruce Hornsby, Bill Kruetzman, and Bob Weir under the name *The Other Ones*. Johnson returned to *Jazz Is Dead* in 2001 to tour with Lavitz and new members Rod Morgenstein and Jeff Pevar; in the second half of 2001, Johnson played and toured with the *Gregg Rollie Band* and the *Steve Kimock Band*.

In 2004, Johnson returned to academia and was appointed as an adjunct associate professor of the Jazz Studies Department at the University of Southern California, where he still teaches. His duties include teaching bass students and conducting the *ELF Ensemble*, an eleven-piece jazz ensemble. He remains active as a sideman and solo performer, playing in a wide variety of styles and musical settings.

¹²⁵ Information taken from Johnson's official website. A complete list of performing and recording credits can be found there. The list of credits includes many great jazz, rock, and fusion style instrumentalists and singers.

MUSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO WEATHER REPORT

Johnson came into *Weather Report* at a time when the group was looking to move in a new direction. His solid grounding of the rhythm section was a contrast to the more melodic and lyrical playing style of Vitous. This is evident on the composition “Cucumber Slumber” from the album *Mysterious Traveler* which he co-wrote with Zawinul. According to Johnson, it was originally:

...a jam. We were recording in a studio in Connecticut, and I just came up with [sings the famous bassline]. All of a sudden, the drummer started playing, and it just took off from there. It was a total improvised jam. I’d have to say it was one of the best tracks for me. Not just because of that bassline—that was a stroke of luck—but when I listen to Wayne and Joe’s solos, they’re like, the perfect solos. Every note, all the phrasing, is just perfect, and I marvel at that. Even now I listen to that track and I go, ‘God, how’d they do that?’¹²⁶

Johnson still remembers “Cucumber Slumber” as “the most impressive piece of music that Joe and I played together...He took a simple bass riff and turned it into a masterpiece.”¹²⁷ Although Johnson does venture into melodic playing on the track, it is the signature ostinato line played on electric bass that grounds the song and provides the foundation for the solos played by Zawinul and Shorter.

“Scarlet Woman,” also from *Mysterious Traveler*, is another track Johnson co-wrote with Zawinul and Shorter. According to Johnson, he brought in a completed composition, but it was rewritten in the studio when Zawinul and Shorter used the main four-note riff as the basis for the composition and eliminated the rest of Johnson’s written material. Johnson thought the new composition was great the way Zawinul and Shorter arranged it and he has not recorded the original version since.

¹²⁶ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 164.

¹²⁷ Chris Jisi, “A Remark They Made: The Bass World Remembers Joe Zawinul,” *Bass Player*, (January 2008): 44.

On *Tale Spinnin'* Johnson recalled the Miles Davis-esque way of recording that took place on this particular album:

There was a lot of freedom in how it was put together. That was part of what made the music so special. It was very reminiscent of how I imagine Miles used to record. They would just start rolling tape and the song would start immediately from the first note. Then later Joe and Wayne would go back and splice the tape. So what may have been the middle of what we did would all of a sudden become the introduction, so it would start at a high point.¹²⁸

His solid bass lines signify Johnson's innate musical ability to provide a firmly grounded groove. According to Glasser, "*Tale Spinnin'* contains some of the greatest *Weather Report* material ever produced," but it's an album Johnson would rather forget.¹²⁹ He explains, "For some reason I was in a really bad slump doing that record. I did not play well. I didn't have the spontaneity, I don't know what was going on, but it just didn't come together as a musician for me."¹³⁰ Nevertheless, some of Johnson's highlights on the album include his "light fretless bass playing" on "The Man In The Green Shirt" and the "understated funk" of "Lusitanos."¹³¹ Johnson recalls his time with Chester Thompson and Alex Acuña before recording the *Black Market* album as "the best band during my time...That band could play anywhere, any time, and just raise the roof."¹³²

For 1976's *Black Market*, Johnson contributed once again as a bass player and composer. It was also the album that introduced Jaco Pastorius as a bassist and composer. For Johnson's part, he played on "Black Market," "Gibraltar," "Elegant People," "Three Clowns" and his own composition "Herandnu." Although Johnson didn't contribute to *Tale Spinnin'* as a writer, he did for *Black Market* and offers the following on why: "At the time, I was working on my own stuff, for my own albums [*e.g.*

¹²⁸ Ibid., 170.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 172.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 174.

¹³¹ Ibid., 173.

¹³² Ibid., 178.

Moon Shadow], so I just brought in the stuff that I thought would fit in the band, of which this was the first for a while.”¹³³ He wrote “Herandnu” which got its name from a clothing store in Europe where they were on tour: “We were on a tour in Europe—Copenhagen, I think—and I walked into this clothing store and it was called Herandnu. I asked what it meant, and they said, ‘Here and now.’ And what impressed me about this store was that downstairs they had a little corner set aside for kids, so that while Mom shopped they could play, which is fashionable now but back then was really progressive thinking!”¹³⁴ Written in 11/4, the song was paired down from its original as Johnson recalls, “I brought that song in. It’s an odd meter—it’s in eleven—and again, with that one they only kept two parts of the song. They kept it in an odd meter, and the intro line was a melody I’d brought in, but Joe expanded it using synth voicings in his Zawinul kind of way, which made it really unique. Again, I’m totally happy with the way it turned out.”¹³⁵

Johnson’s desire to start his own band with George Duke and Billy Cobham and the constant changing of the drum chair led him to quit *Weather Report*; but his time with Zawinul and Shorter helped him to become, in the words of Joachim Berendt, “A particularly elegant, versatile, much-employed performer on the West Coast fusion scene.”¹³⁶ His compositional skills and solid, grooving bass playing contributed to the overall sound of *Weather Report* in particular and jazz-rock in general.

¹³³ Ibid., 181.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 181.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 181.

¹³⁶ Berendt, *The Jazz Book*, 328.

ANALYSIS OF STYLE

Johnson was brought in to *Weather Report* to provide the group with a more funk-and-groove-oriented foundation, especially in terms of the function of the bass within the rhythm section. He knew that Zawinul and Shorter wanted to utilize rhythm-section musicians with differing backgrounds in American funk, rhythm and blues, and jazz in their quest to create fresh, new music. The night Johnson played with Chuck Mangione as an opening act for *Weather Report*, he took notice of drummer Greg Errico, of *Sly and the Family Stone*, holding down the rhythm section with Vitous and thought:

...it made sense in a very experimental kind of way. I don't know if they thought 'We'll put an R&B rhythm section in and we'll transform the band.' I think they were looking to find musicians that could add a more American musical element. Miroslav is a very European bass musician, and I don't mean that in a negative way—he's brilliant at what he does; but I think they wanted someone that had jazz sensibilities and street sensibilities, in terms of what was happening in American music. A lot of that I think came from Joe.¹³⁷

It is evident from listening to Johnson's playing with *Weather Report* that he was hired to ground the rhythm section with his "jazz and street sensibilities," providing a different foundation upon which Zawinul and Shorter could continue their forays into melodic and electronic musical experimentation.

Where Vitous's palette of musical colors came from his ability to play acoustic and fretted electric bass (often employing pizzicato and arco playing on the acoustic in the same composition), Johnson was more strictly an electric player and was providing the sound of the fretted and fretless electric bass guitar. Johnson, like Vitous, also used a variety of effects processing on his basses to create even more colors, tones, and timbres within the group. This is consistent with what *Weather Report* had done in the past as well as with the sound of the bass in jazz-rock and fusion groups of the time.

¹³⁷ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 162.

Johnson provides some insight about how tunes were brought into the band and worked up over the course of time:

We would get back from a tour and after a week or so there would be time set aside for capturing the momentum that had built. I wouldn't call it a rehearsal because that would imply that we'd do the same thing over and over until we got it to be correct. Sometimes the compositions were fully notated and sometimes they were just sketches of a theme. There was always direction but not in the sense that Joe or Wayne would tell you exactly what to play. A lot of what transpired was more intuitive or even spiritual depending on if we were recording or not.¹³⁸

The opportunity for creative thinking and playing was there for Johnson just as it was for Vitous; however, Johnson contributed bass playing that was consistent with his background in jazz and funk. He played the continually driving and propulsive bass lines found in funk and rhythm and blues with the often subtle variations attributed to jazz improvisation to create bass lines that evolved and changed throughout the course of a tune.

Johnson mentions other aspects of working up compositions with *Weather Report* that are extremely intangible and subjective: the intuitive and spiritual components of playing and recording together. These aspects of creating music are, or should be, of vital importance when playing with other musicians. I suggest that these two aspects of playing music are separate but interdependent concepts that can move a musician or group of musicians to higher levels of spontaneity and creativity, especially during recording and performing. Both aspects involve listening to what is going on around you while you are playing and being able to instantly respond to the other musicians as well as taking the lead and getting the other musicians to respond to you.

Intuition is defined as "...the act or process of coming to direct knowledge or certainty without reasoning or inferring; immediate cognizance or conviction without

¹³⁸ Frandsen, email interview with Johnson on 30 December 2008.

rational thought: revelation by insight or innate knowledge: immediate apprehension or cognition.”¹³⁹ We can understand that Alphonso Johnson and *Weather Report* used their musical intuition to immediately, without thinking about it, recognize then respond and react to each other’s musical gestures and cues during recording and performing situations. Vitous talked about knowing your instrument well enough and having the technique to immediately play what you hear when you hear it. Musical intuition can provide a musician with the ability to immediately be aware of something new happening in the music, but knowing what to do with the new knowledge or certainty is accomplished by listening, studying, and working with other musicians and knowing how to react to them.

Christopher Smith’s article “A Sense of the Possible: Miles Davis and the Semiotics of Improvised Performance” provides great insight about the musicians in Miles’s groups and how they developed the ability to react and respond to him.¹⁴⁰ Although Smith mainly discusses how the musicians in Miles’s bands interpreted his methods of communication and what those methods were, he also suggests that Miles sought out and hired musicians who could develop the ability to respond to his subtle and ambiguous clues; Miles withheld information just so his musicians could develop the instincts to react to him. Smith suggests that “Miles wanted a quality of attentive musical flexibility that would lift the players to the level of co-composing interpreters; one that would encourage them to respond to the improvisational moment with the same alert freedom that he did.”¹⁴¹ This was the same type of musical direction Zawinul and Shorter were taking in *Weather Report*. Smith also points out, “a vast majority of the important jazz musicians and bandleaders who came after Miles either went through his band or otherwise came under his tutelage, and virtually all of these individuals have

¹³⁹ Gove, *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1986): 1186.

¹⁴⁰ Christopher Smith, “A Sense of the Possible,” 42.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

cited their time with Miles as crucial to their musical development.”¹⁴² Just as Miles was reluctant to give explicit direction to his musicians or dictate what they should play, Zawinul and Shorter also gave little verbal direction to their musicians in an effort to get them reacting to the music differently than if they had explicit instructions on what to play during a certain composition. Vitous, Johnson, and Bailey have all said that there were often just sketches of compositions brought in to rehearsals and they were able to improvise bass lines and play what they heard based on the rehearsal or performance of a composition. If there were no notated bass line or explicit instructions on what to play, Vitous, Johnson, Pastorius, and Bailey all became equal contributors to the “improvisational now” by creating based on the musical gestures and cues of Zawinul, Shorter, or the other members of the group. *Weather Report* is one of those bands whose musicians and bandleaders spent time with Miles and were consequently influenced by his rehearsal and performance techniques and relied heavily upon musical intuition to generate spontaneous improvisation.

Johnson’s comment, “There was always direction but not in the sense that Joe or Wayne would tell you exactly what to play” is also firmly grounded in the Miles ethos of ambiguity and begs for the experience of understanding musical gestures and cues to bring to pass the realization of a truly creative environment. While immediate apprehension or cognition (intuition) recognizes that something different is happening or the music is moving in a new direction, the experience of playing with other musicians and recognizing their method of musical communication brings to pass the spontaneous creativity of an improvisational moment. Johnson’s comment also supports Smith’s statement about the influence Miles had on those who came through his band or under his tutelage: Miles often gave little or no verbal direction to the players in his group, which meant they were “forced to engage with him by interpreting what they thought such

¹⁴² Ibid., 41.

communication demanded.”¹⁴³ Johnson would have to rely on musical intuition to know that there were changes in the improvisational moment, and then he would engage his experience to correctly interpret what he thought Zawinul and Shorter were asking of him musically. Vitous further reinforces the importance of musical intuition in *Weather Report* when he described the recording process:

Basically we had a very good idea of what we were going to do beforehand, and much of it comes after you play the lines, of course, or the tune itself and then improvisation is the thing which happens always on the spot because it’s improvisation. And the great thing about a band on this level is everyone was sticking with the essence of the tune or of the song. Nobody would be playing something entirely different; everyone had enough understanding to remain within the essence of the composition. This is what makes it very special and very original.¹⁴⁴

Vitous very specifically points to the musicians in *Weather Report* sticking to the “essence of the tune” and having “enough understanding to remain within the essence of the composition” which is a direct result of the highly developed technique by which each musician responded to another—it is no coincidence that the three co-founders of *Weather Report* had all played with Miles. If the “essence” of the composition is the intrinsic or indispensable properties of the composition, then, according to Vitous, each member of *Weather Report* would have been familiar with the very core of each composition they played via the time they spent working out and playing each composition.

Musical intuition drove musical decisions within *Weather Report*; Vitous explains, “...we are improvisers, so we go on and everyone tries to play the tune and things come to us and we stop and did cuts and talk and we say ‘Yeah it’s better to do it this way’ or ‘Why don’t we skip this part and make it longer or shorter’ or ‘Why don’t we skip this phrase and go to the next phrase.’ You know, we listen while we are playing

¹⁴³ Ibid., 42.

¹⁴⁴ Frandsen, phone interview with Vitous on 8 January 2009.

– listen and arrange it on the spot.”¹⁴⁵ Vitous’s use of the phrase “things come to us” is a hint at “revelation by insight or innate knowledge,” a process *Weather Report* exploited while working up compositions. Bailey verified the process of playing and figuring out what would happen in a composition when he said, “...we played it...and it was all about what worked,” a comment I explore further in Chapter 6: Victor Bailey.

The spiritual aspect of music that Johnson mentions is an internal, inspirational factor that is fully realized when a musician is able, via musical intuition and technical expertise, to execute an idea on their particular instrument, thus positively contributing to the greater overall performance. It also includes the feelings of joy or euphoria that can occur when the members of a group are totally in sync with one another as a result of what is or has happened during the course of a performance. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi refers to this as his “theory of optimal experience based on the concept of *flow*—the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter.”¹⁴⁶

If during the course of a *Weather Report* performance the members of the group experience “flow,” they would be so involved in what is happening at the moment that they will not be bothered by any outside distractions because of their state of deep concentration. The post-flow result is what Csikszentmihalyi calls “complexity” which he defines as “the result of two broad psychological processes: *differentiation* and *integration*. Differentiation implies a movement toward uniqueness, toward separating oneself from others. Integration refers to its opposite: a union with other people, with ideas and entities beyond the self.”¹⁴⁷ It is the concept of integration that helps define the group feeling of being totally in sync with each other and the resulting optimal experience for each member of the group. Csikszentmihalyi further explains integration:

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. This is an idea I will follow in more detail in Chapter 6: Victor Bailey

¹⁴⁶ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990): 4.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 41.

“A complex engine, for instance, not only has many separate components, each performing a different function, but also demonstrates a high sensitivity because each of the components is in touch with all the others... And when the flow episode is over, one feels more ‘together’ than before, not only internally but also with respect to other people and to the world in general.”¹⁴⁸ *Weather Report* had many separate components in the individual musicians that played in the group, and each musician paid attention, responded, and reacted to the other musicians during the course of the performance—a trait *Weather Report* possibly learned and passed on from experiences with Miles Davis. After a great performance, or flow experience, the members of *Weather Report* would have felt more cohesive as a group because “Thoughts, intentions, feelings, and all the senses [were] focused on the same goal.”¹⁴⁹

Another aspect of the spiritual is what Vitous referred to when he said, “You play what you hear. So if the heavens sent you something, you hear it, you play it.”¹⁵⁰ The spontaneous creativity suggested by Vitous’s quote and Johnson’s description of his recording and performing sessions with *Weather Report* is what Smith refers to as the “improvisational now.”¹⁵¹ Both Vitous and Johnson have acknowledged a type of spiritual awakening to a musical idea or concept that can be immediately executed during a performance if the performer is in position to receive that inspiration. Being open to inspiration is based on the concentration and awareness of the performer about what’s happening at that particular moment, during the improvisational now. In terms of the flow experience, Csikszentmihalyi states, “anyone who has experienced flow knows that the deep enjoyment it provides requires an equal degree of disciplined concentration.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 41.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 41.

¹⁵⁰ Frandsen, phone interview with Vitous on 8 January 2009.

¹⁵¹ Smith, “A Sense of the Possible,” 51.

¹⁵² Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 41.

Even though the spiritual aspect has connotations of always being something sent from the heavens or a higher power, another source of spiritual inspiration is what we encounter in our everyday lives. Johnson clarifies:

I think what Wayne once said to me says it best, ‘Music is but only a small part of life.’ Sitting at the bar before leaving the hotel, riding the trains together throughout Europe, laughing together backstage just before a concert, having a serious conversation with Ana Maria [Shorter] or Maxine [Zawinul] at their home shaped and inspired my playing just as much as being in the presence of two musical geniuses. Imagination, composition, and change all come from the same source and it's not anything physical other than the instruments that we use.¹⁵³

Although Johnson is here replying to a question about what musical elements shaped, dictated, or inspired unique approaches in his playing, he points to extra-musical forces or experiences that have a strong enough and lasting effect to provide inspiration in his playing. Johnson’s comment “it’s not anything physical other than the instruments that we use” matches Vitous’s comment “[I am] the instrument of the music. I play the bass, but the music plays me.” Both bassists suggest that their instrument is only a medium for expressing the music that they receive spiritually and that is translated into audible pitches when they are physically playing the bass. This phenomenon is not unique to the bass players of *Weather Report*; Daniel Levitin suggests that the “ineffable power of music” is present in the creators of music: “The great songwriters and improvisers talk about not so much *creating* music, but having it written *through* them, as though the music comes from outside their bodies and their heads, and they are merely the conduit for it.”¹⁵⁴

The importance of the extra-musical experiences that Johnson mentions above are further reinforced by Ingrid Monson when she says, “a crucial aspect of the reality of experience is interacting with other people...without considering this dimension a crucial

¹⁵³ Frandsen, email interview with Johnson on 30 December 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Daniel J Levitin, *The World in Six Songs: How the Musical Brain Created Human Nature* (New York: Penguin, 2008): 93.

aspect of the music is lost.”¹⁵⁵ Christopher Small suggests that the meaning of music “lies not just in musical works but in the totality of a musical performance” which would include, as mentioned above in Monson, interacting with other people.¹⁵⁶ Small continues:

The act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships. And it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies. They are to be found not only between those organized sounds which are conventionally thought of as being the stuff of musical meaning but also between the people who are taking part, in whatever capacity, in the performance; and they model, or stand as a metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be: relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world. These are important matters, perhaps the most important in human life...¹⁵⁷

Johnson’s, and the other members of *Weather Report*’s, extra-musical experiences and the relationships they had on micro and macro levels are, according to Small and Johnson, the most important in human life, and helped to shape what happened in the process of making music or, according to Small, musicking.

As musicians we are shaped by who and what we interact with on a daily basis, and these interactions and experiences help shape our perspective of the world which in turn helps us create our individual sound and style. As mentioned earlier, individual sound and style are crucial to the jazz musician and especially to the members of *Weather Report* who were looking for something new in terms of electronic jazz and jazz-rock. Johnson attributes his extra-musical experiences during his time with *Weather Report* as being of vital importance to his style and approach to playing with the group. The spiritual aspect of music that offers the performer inspiration and creativity in the “improvisational now” is a powerful element found in Alphonso Johnson as well as the

¹⁵⁵ Ingrid Tolia Monson, “Musical Interaction in Modern Jazz: An Ethnomusicological Perspective,” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1991): 28.

¹⁵⁶ Christopher Small, *Musicking* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1998): 13.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

other bassists of *Weather Report*; without it the group would not have enjoyed the long life and success it did.

The spiritual aspect of music that is the joy or euphoria accompanying a great recording, rehearsal, or performance is powerful in its own right. It is based on the group being focused on the music and thus completely aware of each other musically, and requires each individual musician to come to a collective performance having the necessary technical expertise and musical intuition; then “the muse” can speak to the individual musicians, creating the synergy of a spiritually gratifying musical experience. In the recording studio or rehearsal hall the members of the group share the spiritual moment with each other, but in the ideal live performance the audience participates by being there and partaking in the spiritual moment as well: the musicians feel the emotions of having performed incredibly well while the audience feels the emotions of having seen and heard an incredible live performance, creating a cycle of shared spiritual energy.

The intuitive and spiritual are great contributors to improvisation in allowing a single musician to respond to other musicians and in allowing a musical group to move to new places when “the muse” takes them there. Without these aspects of music, the performance will suffer and the music itself will sound lifeless and uninspiring.

Johnson always had the opportunity to be creative and improvise, but he does cite a couple of times when he played around what Zawinul had already created. “Nubian Sundance” and “American Tango” were compositions which already had a preexisting bass line that Johnson used to play with and around. For “Nubian Sundance” Zawinul had recorded a synth bass line which Johnson often doubled or embellished by adding fills or short bass runs. “American Tango” was written by Vitous and already had the bass line recorded before Johnson came in to overdub electric parts. The combination of playing fretted and fretless electric bass guitars along with the improvisatory nature of the music he created with *Weather Report* established Johnson’s bass playing as a new and

unique voice in the band’s rhythm section and a major contributor to the band’s new sound.

Perhaps the tune that best defines Johnson’s style in the band is his own composition “Cucumber Slumber.” He has been quoted several times as saying this was the best contribution and most musical experience he had with the band, recalling that it “was one of the few moments of total spontaneous improvisation that was captured while recording.”¹⁵⁸ Johnson had been playing the bass line in the studio when the rest of the band picked up on it and began improvising and eventually recording the tune on the spot. There are two sections, and each has its own riff and key center. The short introduction, which fades in, is based on a D^{b7} and makes use of the minor and major 3rds creating a sense of uncertainty about whether the section is in a major or minor mode (see example 4-1).

Bass Guitar



The image shows two staves of musical notation for bass guitar. The first staff is labeled "Bass Guitar" and contains a short introduction. The second staff is marked with a "4" and shows a more complex bass line with various rhythmic patterns and accidentals.

Example 4-1 Johnson’s bass line during intro to “Cucumber Slumber”

Johnson introduces a B^b tonality in measure five of example 4-1, reinforcing the tonality by playing the 5th and leading tone of the B^b, before moving a tritone away to the next section and new riff in E (example 4-2). The enharmonically spelled mediant

¹⁵⁸ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 164; Jisi, “A Remark They Made,” *Bass Player*, 44; Frandsen, email interview with Johnson, 30 December 08.

relationship from D \flat to E makes the tritone movement from B \flat (major sixth scale degree of D \flat) to E very smooth.



4). After Johnson sets up the $D\flat^7$ with double stops, he moves into a bass riff similar to the introduction material.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in bass clef. The first staff begins at measure 32 with a whole note chord (G2, B1, D2) and a half note (G1). The second staff begins at measure 36 with a series of eighth notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F60, G60, A60, B60, C61, D61, E61, F61, G61, A61, B61, C62, D62, E62, F62, G62, A62, B62, C63, D63, E63, F63, G63, A63, B63, C64, D64, E64, F64, G64, A64, B64, C65, D65, E65, F65, G65, A65, B65, C66, D66, E66, F66, G66, A66, B66, C67, D67, E67, F67, G67, A67, B67, C68, D68, E68, F68, G68, A68, B68, C69, D69, E69, F69, G69, A69, B69, C70, D70, E70, F70, G70, A70, B70, C71, D71, E71, F71, G71, A71, B71, C72, D72, E72, F72, G72, A72, B72, C73, D73, E73, F73, G73, A73, B73, C74, D74, E74, F74, G74, A74, B74, C75, D75, E75, F75, G75, A75, B75, C76, D76, E76, F76, G76, A76, B76, C77, D77, E77, F77, G77, A77, B77, C78, D78, E78, F78, G78, A78, B78, C79, D79, E79, F79, G79, A79, B79, C80, D80, E80, F80, G80, A80, B80, C81, D81, E81, F81, G81, A81, B81, C82, D82, E82, F82, G82, A82, B82, C83, D83, E83, F83, G83, A83, B83, C84, D84, E84, F84, G84, A84, B84, C85, D85, E85, F85, G85, A85, B85, C86, D86, E86, F86, G86, A86, B86, C87, D87, E87, F87, G87, A87, B87, C88, D88, E88, F88, G88, A88, B88, C89, D89, E89, F89, G89, A89, B89, C90, D90, E90, F90, G90, A90, B90, C91, D91, E91, F91, G91, A91, B91, C92, D92, E92, F92, G92, A92, B92, C93, D93, E93, F93, G93, A93, B93, C94, D94, E94, F94, G94, A94, B94, C95, D95, E95, F95, G95, A95, B95, C96, D96, E96, F96, G96, A96, B96, C97, D97, E97, F97, G97, A97, B97, C98, D98, E98, F98, G98, A98, B98, C99, D99, E99, F99, G99, A99, B99, C100, D100, E100, F100, G100, A100, B100, C101, D101, E101, F101, G101, A101, B101, C102, D102, E102, F102, G102, A102, B102, C103, D103, E103, F103, G103, A103, B103, C104, D104, E104, F104, G104, A104, B104, C105, D105, E105, F105, G105, A105, B105, C106, D106, E106, F106, G106, A106, B106, C107, D107, E107, F107, G107, A107, B107, C108, D108, E108, F108, G108, A108, B108, C109, D109, E109, F109, G109, A109, B109, C110, D110, E110, F110, G110, A110, B110, C111, D111, E111, F111, G111, A111, B111, C112, D112, E112, F112, G112, A112, B112, C113, D113, E113, F113, G113, A113, B113, C114, D114, E114, F114, G114, A114, B114, C115, D115, E115, F115, G115, A115, B115, C116, D116, E116, F116, G116, A116, B116, C117, D117, E117, F117, G117, A117, B117, C118, D118, E118, F118, G118, A118, B118, C119, D119, E119, F119, G119, A119, B119, C120, D120, E120, F120, G120, A120, B120, C121, D121, E121, F121, G121, A121, B121, C122, D122, E122, F122, G122, A122, B122, C123, D123, E123, F123, G123, A123, B123, C124, D124, E124, F124, G124, A124, B124, C125, D125, E125, F125, G125, A125, B125, C126, D126, E126, F126, G126, A126, B126, C127, D127, E127, F127, G127, A127, B127, C128, D128, E128, F128, G128, A128, B128, C129, D129, E129, F129, G129, A129, B129, C130, D130, E130, F130, G130, A130, B130, C131, D131, E131, F131, G131, A131, B131, C132, D132, E132, F132, G132, A132, B132, C133, D133, E133, F133, G133, A133, B133, C134, D134, E134, F134, G134, A134, B134, C135, D135, E135, F135, G135, A135, B135, C136, D136, E136, F136, G136, A136, B136, C137, D137, E137, F137, G137, A137, B137, C138, D138, E138, F138, G138, A138, B138, C139, D139, E139, F139, G139, A139, B139, C140, D140, E140, F140, G140, A140, B140, C141, D141, E141, F141, G141, A141, B141, C142, D142, E142, F142, G142, A142, B142, C143, D143, E143, F143, G143, A143, B143, C144, D144, E144, F144, G144, A144, B144, C145, D145, E145, F145, G145, A145, B145, C146, D146, E146, F146, G146, A146, B146, C147, D147, E147, F147, G147, A147, B147, C148, D148, E148, F148, G148, A148, B148, C149, D149, E149, F149, G149, A149, B149, C150, D150, E150, F150, G150, A150, B150, C151, D151, E151, F151, G151, A151, B151, C152, D152, E152, F152, G152, A152, B152, C153, D153, E153, F153, G153, A153, B153, C154, D154, E154, F154, G154, A154, B154, C155, D155, E155, F155, G155, A155, B155, C156, D156, E156, F156, G156, A156, B156, C157, D157, E157, F157, G157, A157, B157, C158, D158, E158, F158, G158, A158, B158, C159, D159, E159, F159, G159, A159, B159, C160, D160, E160, F160, G160, A160, B160, C161, D161, E161, F161, G161, A161, B161, C162, D162, E162, F162, G162, A162, B162, C163, D163, E163, F163, G163, A163, B163, C164, D164, E164, F164, G164, A164, B164, C165, D165, E165, F165, G165, A165, B165, C166, D166, E166, F166, G166, A166, B166, C167, D167, E167, F167, G167, A167, B167, C168, D168, E168, F168, G168, A168, B168, C169, D169, E169, F169, G169, A169, B169, C170, D170, E170, F170, G170, A170, B170, C171, D171, E171, F171, G171, A171, B171, C172, D172, E172, F172, G172, A172, B172, C173, D173, E173, F173, G173, A173, B173, C174, D174, E174, F174, G174, A174, B174, C175, D175, E175, F175, G175, A175, B175, C176, D176, E176, F176, G176, A176, B176, C177, D177, E177, F177, G177, A177, B177, C178, D178, E178, F178, G178, A178, B178, C179, D179, E179, F179, G179, A179, B179, C180, D180, E180, F180, G180, A180, B180, C181, D181, E181, F181, G181, A181, B181, C182, D182, E182, F182, G182, A182, B182, C183, D183, E183, F183, G183, A183, B183, C184, D184, E184, F184, G184, A184, B184, C185, D185, E185, F185, G185, A185, B185, C186, D186, E186, F186, G186, A186, B186, C187, D187, E187, F187, G187, A187, B187, C188, D188, E188, F188, G188, A188, B188, C189, D189, E189, F189, G189, A189, B189, C190, D190, E190, F190, G190, A190, B190, C191, D191, E191, F191, G191, A191, B191, C192, D192, E192, F192, G192, A192, B192, C193, D193, E193, F193, G193, A193, B193, C194, D194, E194, F194, G194, A194, B194, C195, D195, E195, F195, G195, A195, B195, C196, D196, E196, F196, G196, A196, B196, C197, D197, E197, F197, G197, A197, B197, C198, D198, E198, F198, G198, A198, B198, C199, D199, E199, F199, G199, A199, B199, C200, D200, E200, F200, G200, A200, B200, C201, D201, E201, F201, G201, A201, B201, C202, D202, E202, F202, G202, A202, B202, C203, D203, E203, F203, G203, A203, B203, C204, D204, E204, F204, G204, A204, B204, C205, D205, E205, F205, G205, A205, B205, C206, D206, E206, F206, G206, A206, B206, C207, D207, E207, F207, G207, A207, B207, C208, D208, E208, F208, G208, A208, B208, C209, D209, E209, F209, G209, A209, B209, C210, D210, E210, F210, G210, A210, B210, C211, D211, E211, F211, G211, A211, B211, C212, D212, E212, F212, G212, A212, B212, C213, D213, E213, F213, G213, A213, B213, C214, D214, E214, F214, G214, A214, B214, C215, D215, E215, F215, G215, A215, B215, C216, D216, E216, F216, G216, A216, B216, C217, D217, E217, F217, G217, A217, B217, C218, D218, E218, F218, G218, A218, B218, C219, D219, E219, F219, G219, A219, B219, C220, D220, E220, F220, G220, A220, B220, C221, D221, E221, F221, G221, A221, B221, C222, D222, E222, F222, G222, A222, B222, C223, D223, E223, F223, G223, A223, B223, C224, D224, E224, F224, G224, A224, B224, C225, D225, E225, F225, G225, A225, B225, C226, D226, E226, F226, G226, A226, B226, C227, D227, E227, F227, G227, A227, B227, C228, D228, E228, F228, G228, A228, B228, C229, D229, E229, F229, G229, A229, B229, C230, D230, E230, F230, G230, A230, B230, C231, D231, E231, F231, G231, A231, B231, C232, D232, E232, F232, G232, A232, B232, C233, D233, E233, F233, G233, A233, B233, C234, D234, E234, F234, G234, A234, B234, C235, D235, E235, F235, G235, A235, B235, C236, D236, E236, F236, G236, A236, B236, C237, D237, E237, F237, G237, A237, B237, C238, D238, E238, F238, G238, A238, B238, C239, D239, E239, F239, G239, A239, B239, C240, D240, E240, F240, G240, A240, B240, C241, D241, E241, F241, G241, A241, B241, C242, D242, E242, F242, G242, A242, B242, C243, D243, E243, F243, G243, A243, B243, C244, D244, E244, F244, G244, A244, B244, C245, D245, E245, F245, G245, A245, B245, C246, D246, E246, F246, G246, A246, B246, C247, D247, E247, F247, G247, A247, B247, C248, D248, E248, F248, G248, A248, B248, C249, D249, E249, F249, G249, A249, B249, C250, D250, E250, F250, G250, A250, B250, C251, D251, E251, F251, G251, A251, B251, C252, D252, E252, F252, G252, A252, B252, C253, D253, E253, F253, G253, A253, B253, C254, D254, E254, F254, G254, A254, B254, C255, D255, E255, F255, G255, A255, B255, C256, D256, E256, F256, G256, A256, B256, C257, D257, E257, F257, G257, A257, B257, C258, D258, E258, F258, G258, A258, B258, C259, D259, E259, F259, G259, A259, B259, C260, D260, E260, F260, G260, A260, B260, C261, D261, E261, F261, G261, A261, B261, C262, D262, E262, F262, G262, A262, B262, C263, D263, E263, F263, G263, A263, B263, C264, D264, E264, F264, G264, A264, B264, C265, D265, E265, F265, G265, A265, B265, C266, D266, E266, F266, G266, A266, B266, C267, D267, E267, F267, G267, A267, B267, C268, D268, E268, F268, G268, A268, B268, C269, D269, E269, F269, G269, A269, B269, C270, D270, E270, F270, G270, A270, B270, C271, D271, E271, F271, G271, A271, B271, C272, D272, E272, F272, G272, A272, B272, C273, D273, E273, F273, G273, A273, B273, C274, D274, E274, F274, G274, A274, B274, C275, D275, E275, F275, G275, A275, B275, C276, D276, E276, F276, G276, A276, B276, C277, D277, E277, F277, G277, A277, B277, C278, D278, E278, F278, G278, A278, B278, C279, D279, E279, F279, G279, A279, B279, C280, D280, E280, F280, G280, A280, B280, C281, D281, E281, F281, G281, A281, B281, C282, D282, E282, F282, G282, A282, B282, C283, D283, E283, F283, G283, A283, B283, C284, D284, E284, F284, G284, A284, B284, C285, D285, E285, F285, G285, A285, B285, C286, D286, E286, F286, G286, A286, B286, C287, D287, E287, F287, G287, A287, B287, C288, D288, E288, F288, G288, A288, B288, C289, D289, E289, F289, G289, A289, B289, C290, D290, E290, F290, G290, A290, B290, C291, D291, E291, F291, G291, A291, B291, C292, D292, E292, F292, G292, A292, B292, C293, D293, E293, F293, G293, A293, B293, C294, D294, E294, F294, G294, A294, B294, C295, D295, E295, F295, G295, A295, B295, C296, D296, E296, F296, G296, A296, B296, C297, D297, E297, F297, G297, A297, B297, C298, D298, E298, F298, G298, A298, B298, C299, D299, E299, F299, G299, A299, B299, C300, D300, E300, F300, G300, A300, B300, C301, D301, E301, F301, G301, A301, B301, C302, D302, E302, F302, G302, A302, B302, C303, D303, E303, F303, G303, A303, B303, C304, D304, E304, F304, G304, A304, B304, C305, D305, E305, F305, G305, A305, B305, C306, D306, E306, F306, G306, A306, B306, C307, D307, E307, F307, G307, A307, B307, C308, D308, E308, F308, G308, A308, B308, C309, D309, E309, F309, G309, A309, B309, C310, D310, E310, F310, G310, A310, B310, C311, D311, E311, F311, G311, A311, B311, C312, D312, E312, F312, G312, A312, B312, C313, D313, E313, F313, G313, A313, B313, C314, D314, E314, F314, G314, A314, B314, C315, D315, E315, F315, G315, A315, B315, C316, D316, E316, F316, G316, A316, B316, C317, D317, E317, F317, G317, A317, B317, C318, D318, E318, F318, G318, A318, B318, C319, D319, E319, F319, G319, A319, B319, C320, D320, E320, F320, G320, A320, B320, C321, D321, E321, F321, G321, A321, B321, C322, D322, E322, F322, G322, A322, B322, C323, D323, E323, F323, G323, A323, B323, C324, D324, E324, F324, G324, A324, B324, C325, D325, E325, F325, G325, A325, B325, C326, D326, E326, F326, G326, A326, B326, C327, D327, E327, F327, G327, A327, B327, C328, D328, E328, F328, G328, A328, B328, C329, D329, E329, F329, G329, A329, B329, C330, D330, E330, F330, G330, A330, B330, C331, D331, E331, F331, G331, A331, B331, C332, D332, E332, F332, G332, A332, B332, C333, D333, E333, F333, G333, A333, B333, C334, D334, E334, F334, G334, A334, B334, C335, D335, E335, F335, G335, A335, B335, C336, D336, E336, F336, G336, A336, B336, C337, D337, E337, F337, G337, A337, B337, C338, D338, E338, F338, G338, A338, B338, C339, D339, E339, F339, G339, A339, B339, C340, D340, E340, F340, G340, A340, B340, C341, D341, E341, F341, G341, A341, B341, C342, D342, E342, F342, G342, A342, B342, C343, D343, E343, F343, G343, A343, B343, C344, D344, E344, F344, G344, A344, B344, C345, D345, E345, F345, G345, A345, B345, C346, D346, E346, F346, G346, A346, B346, C347, D347, E347, F347, G347, A347, B347, C348, D348, E348, F348, G348, A348, B348, C349, D349, E349, F349, G349, A349, B349, C350, D350, E350, F350, G350, A350, B350, C351, D351, E351, F351, G351, A351, B351, C352, D352, E352, F352, G352, A352, B352, C353, D353, E353, F353, G353, A353, B353, C354, D354, E354, F354, G354, A354, B354, C355, D355, E355, F355, G355, A355, B355, C356, D356, E356, F356, G356, A356, B356, C357, D357, E357, F357, G357, A357, B357, C358, D358, E358, F358, G358, A358, B358, C359, D359, E359, F359, G359, A359, B359, C360, D360, E360, F360, G360, A360, B360, C361, D361, E361, F361, G361, A361, B361, C362, D362, E362, F362, G362, A362, B362, C363, D363, E363, F363, G363, A363, B363, C364, D364, E364, F364, G364, A364, B364, C365, D365, E365, F365, G365, A365, B365, C366, D366, E366, F366, G366, A366, B366, C367, D367, E367, F367, G367, A367, B367, C368, D368, E368, F368, G368, A368, B368, C369, D369, E369, F369, G369, A369, B369, C370, D370, E370, F370, G37

his own instrument as well as the color of the song as a whole at these particular times. “Scarlet Woman” is one of the moments Johnson plays as an equal with the other melodic instruments, contributing to the musical conversations of the group—a nod to the legacy of Vitous and the direction he tried to take *Weather Report*.

Although *Tale Spinnin’* contains more of Johnson’s ostinato groove playing, as mentioned above he was not happy with what he played on the album and the way the recording sessions went for him. Glasser gives credit to his playing on tunes such as “Man in the Green Shirt” and “Lusitanos,” both of which feature funky fretless lines—ostinato grooves that move the music along, providing the “structural skeleton” of a “strong, propulsive, continuous, syncopated groove.”¹⁶⁰

On the album *Black Market* Johnson continued to ground the band with his signature embellished groove playing. On the title track, Zawinul begins playing bass on his keyboards with Johnson coming in to double his line at 0:54. Example 4-6 shows the bass line that Zawinul plays during the introduction and serves as the basis for Johnson’s bass line improvisations.



Example 4-6 Zawinul’s bass line for “Black Market”

Johnson takes Zawinul’s bass line and plays along with him often adding variations to the line as seen in examples 4-7 and 4-8.

¹⁶⁰ Wayte, “Bitches Brood,” 272.



Example 4-7 Johnson’s improvisation on Zawinul’s original bass line



Example 4-8 Johnson’s improvisation on Zawinul’s original bass line

The improvisations happen mostly during the fourth measure of a phrase and the variations to the line are minimal, creating continuous variety during a mostly repetitive bass line. Johnson’s improvisations include diatonically based runs and fills but he does use some chromaticism utilizing the flat 5th scale degree, the major and minor 3rd scale degrees, and the major and dominant 7th scale degrees. These tools are typical of Johnson’s style and his ability to add to the collective improvisation of the group while providing a solid foundation with the drummer and percussionist.

During “Black Market” Johnson also makes use of octave, ninth, and tenth leaps to add variety to his bass lines. The first section is at 2:15 in the composition where the meter alternates between 4/4 and 7/8 with Johnson playing the line in example 4-9.



Example 4-9 Johnson utilizing octave leaps during mixed meter section

Johnson first utilizes the major 3rd on the last sixteenth note of beat three and then uses the minor 3rd two measures later. He also slightly varies the rhythm and order of pitches

from the first measure of 7/8 to the second by delaying the arrival of the B \flat by one eighth-note and playing it an octave higher. This also varies the third and fourth eighth notes of measure 55 from octave-fifth to fifth-root which is different from the first three measures. Again, these types of subtle variations and nuances within Johnson's bass lines are typical and expected of his style. It not only relieves Johnson of the monotony of playing the same bass ostinato throughout the entire tune, but gives the listener slight variations and differences to keep the music fresh and moving along. Monson reinforces this concept, stating, "A rhythm section musician is constantly balancing the need to fulfill ensemble responsibilities with the aesthetic demand to be inventive."¹⁶¹

Another section that features Johnson making use of octave, ninth, and tenth leaps to add variety is during the sax solo at 3:33. Example 4-10 is Johnson's bass line played during the second four bars of the sax solo.



Example 4-10 Use of octave, ninth, and tenth leaps during sax solo

Johnson continues through the sax solo building intensity with more fills based on this line until the end of the solo where he plays less, thus creating a more open texture (see example 4-11).

¹⁶¹ Monson, "Musical Interaction in Modern Jazz," 243.



Example 4-11 Transitional bass line leading out of the solo

In the above example, simpler fills and smaller note groupings in the bass contribute to the change of texture in “Black Market” at the end of the composition. Zawinul stops playing keyboards at measure 115, Shorter’s sax solo concludes at the beginning of measure 116, and Walden plays a quieter drum groove starting at measure 118. Johnson quickly takes notice of the musical gestures of the other members of the group and in measure 119 he begins the basic bass groove heard until the end of the composition. Johnson continues to play a similar line underneath Zawinul’s synth bass line which returns at 5:27 and also continues until the end of the composition. Through musical gestures such as playing less or more or quieter or louder, other musicians in the group can, through musical intuition, quickly interpret and react to what is being communicated. After building the intensity of the solo, the keyboards and the sax, the leaders of the group, eventually lay out signaling a desire to reduce the intensity that has just built in order to introduce the closing material. The use of these musical gestures also cues the listener that something new or different is happening.

Alphonso Johnson brought to *Weather Report* the “jazz and street sensibilities” of American music including a different approach to the bass and rhythm section than the group previously had with Miroslav Vitous. Johnson provided a more solid and conventional groove which was often based on embellished groove playing—bass lines that would evolve over time via improvised variations on a bass riff. This type of playing provided a solid rhythmic and harmonic framework for the tonal and electronic

explorations of Zawinul and Shorter. Johnson was not, however, influenced and driven solely by harmonic progressions or particular drum patterns. His style, as well as the styles of the other bassists of *Weather Report*, was based on what he musically intuited from the other players in the group, as well as the music itself, in combination with the realm of spiritual influences and extra-musical experiences he had. Johnson's technical ability on the electric bass guitar was enough to play with *Weather Report*, and his style and musical contribution to the group was founded on what was "more intuitive or even spiritual," the qualities that allowed Johnson and Vitous to reach new levels of creativity in the "improvisational now."

Chapter 5: John Francis “Jaco” Pastorius III

Pastorius’s status as an innovator and revolutionary on the electric bass has been documented in many different places.¹⁶² His use of the electric bass guitar as a foundation, lead, and solo instrument has influenced and inspired bass players ever since he appeared on the musical scene. He brought to *Weather Report* skills and techniques he had acquired while living and working as a bassist throughout Florida and the eastern United States with funk, soul, and rhythm and blues bands. Pastorius’s innovative use of the electric bass guitar in funk and jazz-rock has influenced the way many bass guitarists approach and play the instrument.

Currently, the definitive biography on Pastorius is Bill Milkowski’s *Jaco: The Extraordinary and Tragic Life of Jaco Pastorius “The World’s Greatest Bass Player.”* Milkowski’s book chronicles Pastorius’s life and musical development as well as his eventual physical and mental demise brought on by “a manic-depressive condition coupled with a chemical imbalance in his brain” which was fueled by the abuse of drugs

¹⁶² Joachim Berendt, “Jaco Pastorius: The ‘Human’ Sound on the Bass Guitar,” *Jazz Forum*, english edition, (1977): 35, 37-38; Larry Birnbaum, “Weather Report Answers Its Critics,” *DownBeat* 61 (February 8, 1979): 14-16, 44-45; Bob Blumenthal, “Weather Report,” *DownBeat* 48 (February 1981): 14-15; E. E. Bradman, “Jaco: Evolution of a Genius,” *Bass Player* (January 2002): 46-47, 49, 51, 53; John Goldsby, et al., “The Players Who Shaped 20th-Century Bass,” *Bass Player* (January 2000): 36; Chris Jisi, “A Remark They Made: The Bass World Remembers Joe Zawinul,” *Bass Player* (January 2008): 45; Matt Scharfglass and Chris Kringel, *Jaco Pastorius: The Greatest Jazz-Fusion Bass Player*, (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation) is a collection of transcriptions of Jaco’s bass lines from *Weather Report* tunes.; Bill Milkowski, *Jaco: The Extraordinary and Tragic Life of Jaco Pastorius “The World’s Greatest Bass Player”* (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 1995); Bill Milkowski, “Jaco Pastorius: Bass Revolutionary,” *Guitar Player* 18/8 (August 1984): 58-62, 65-67; Jim Roberts, *How the Fender Bass Changed the World* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001); Conrad Silvert, “Jaco Pastorius: The Word Is Out,” *DownBeat* 48/12 (December 1981): 17-19, 71; Neil Tesser, “Jaco Pastorius: The Florida Flash,” *DownBeat* 44/2 (January 27, 1977): 12-13, 44; Dan Towey, *Jaco Pastorius: A Step-by-Step Breakdown of the Styles and Techniques of the World’s Greatest Electric Bassist*, (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2002); Josef Woodard, “Storm Surge: The Rise and Fall of Weather Report, the Best Jazz Band of the Past 30 Years,” *DownBeat* 68 (January 2001): 22-24, 26-29. The reference material used for this dissertation contains relatively more information on Pastorius and his place in jazz and jazz-rock history than the other *Weather Report* bass players. In most of these articles and histories Pastorius is mentioned as revolutionizing the way the bass guitar is played based on his tone, technique, and chordal and soloistic playing.

and alcohol.¹⁶³ His life is considered extraordinary in that “he totally revolutionized his instrument and left behind an incredibly rich body of work that will stand the test of time.”¹⁶⁴ Pastorius’s life is also considered tragic because his brilliance as an artist and champion of the electric bass guitar might have been more fully realized had he lived a longer, healthier life. Whether or not Pastorius’s body of work will stand the test of time is yet to be seen; it has only been 33 years since he released his solo album and joined *Weather Report*.

Pastorius’s most notable period of development was with *Wayne Cochran and the C.C. (Chitlin’ Circuit) Riders* band; Cochran was “the great white soul singer from Georgia,” described as “a kind of missing link between James Brown and David Clayton-Thomas.”¹⁶⁵ In the summer of 1972, Pastorius was hired by Charlie Brent, Cochran’s musical director, after Brent saw him play with *Tommy Strand & the Upper Hand* in Miami. According to Milkowski, “Jaco’s ten-month stay with the *C.C. Riders* was the most intensive period of woodshedding in his career. Besides playing the demanding five-hour show every night, he practiced on the bus as the band traveled from town to town.”¹⁶⁶ Charlie Brent adds, “He had that bass in his hands constantly...And he had this little practice amp with headphones, so he could sit there and work out new ideas without disturbing anybody.”¹⁶⁷ Pastorius had already begun to experiment with harmonics and his aural consumption of rhythm and blues records provided the foundation for his incredible 16th note grooves. Milkowski points out the following concerning Pastorius’s rhythm and blues studies:

During this period [with the *C.C. Riders*], Jaco was checking out the work of Charles Sherell and Bernard Odum, two great bassists who worked with James Brown in the ‘60s. He paid especially close attention to Jerry

¹⁶³ Milkowski, *Jaco*, 5.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

Jemmott's 16th-note work on the great B.B. King album *Live & Well*. And he learned the Tommy Cogbill bass line on Wilson Pickett's "Funky Broadway," the [Donald] Duck Dunn bass line on Sam & Dave's "Soul Man," and the bass lines from many other R&B songs that had been cut for the Stax and Atlantic labels.¹⁶⁸

Pastorius cultivated his composing and arranging skills during this time as well. According to Charlie Brent, "He kept bugging me, always asking me about how I did this arrangement or why I wrote something a certain way. He was curious about how I dealt with harmonies and chords. He was always picking my brain for information."¹⁶⁹ After an all-night lesson on arranging, theory, and composition, Brent had provided Pastorius with a solid foundation on which to build his own compositional skills which led to Pastorius, three days later, bringing in a chart for the band called "Amelia." Brent described it as "full of these wonderful horn voicings. And to think that he came up with this chart in just three days is amazing to me. I couldn't believe that all this flowing, moving, meaningful music was coming out of this skinny kid who didn't know shit about nothing except playing the bass. But the truth was, he was just way ahead of everybody. He was this raw talent evolving before our eyes."¹⁷⁰ Pastorius's tenure with the *C.C. Riders* provided a fertile environment for developing all aspects of his sound and style as an electric bass guitarist and composer. Pastorius's friend and fellow bassist Bob Bobbing also points to the *C.C. Riders* as a valuable learning time for Pastorius:

That gig was like the oven for Jaco Pastorius. It was a big horn band with no keyboards, so Jaco was able to experiment with chords, harmonics, and that whole soloistic approach to the bass, which he became so famous for years later. I like to call it "creative overplaying." And when he wasn't playing gigs, he was practicing all the time. So by the time he came out of that band, Jaco's chops were at a peak, better than they were when he was in *Weather Report*. His playing with Wayne Cochran was the best bass playing I've ever heard in my life.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 42.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 47.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 50.

Indeed Pastorius had become a unique and innovative electric bassist and Lawrence Wayne points out that “Jaco Pastorius, playing the bass guitar, an instrument rarely before noted for its virtuosic potential, came to completely transform the nature of his instrument.”¹⁷² This is evident in Pastorius signing a record deal with Epic on September 15, 1975 as a solo artist on electric bass guitar. His playing and compositional skills were featured on his self-titled album which included such players as Don Alias, Herbie Hancock, Lenny White, Narada Michael Walden, and Bobby Economou. Pat Metheny enlisted Pastorius to play on *Bright Size Life*, the guitarist’s debut album on the German ECM label. Gary Burton wrote the liner notes in which he said, “Pat’s counterpart on bass, Jaco Pastorius, is an equally startling young player and a true innovator on electric bass. Because of the similarity of their respective talents, they are a great match.”¹⁷³

Jim Roberts summarizes Pastorius’s sound and style in the following:

The fretless Jazz Bass, strung with Rotosound strings and plugged into an Acoustic 360 amp, was the tool Jaco needed to realize his creative vision. Many of his early gigs were with R&B bands, where he perfected a percolating 16th-note style—influenced by a South Florida bassist named Carlos Garcia and studio ace Jerry Jemmott—that gave the music incredible forward motion. Jaco mastered the technique of playing harmonics, using both natural...and artificial harmonics. This gave Jaco a tremendously extended range to work with, transcending the supposed limitations of the bass. He got the most from the expressive capabilities of the fretless fingerboard, creating long, fluid melodic lines filled with slides and expressive vibrato. He found the most effective double-stops and used them to fill out his parts. Taking a cue from Jimi Hendrix, he created a flamboyant stage presence that included cross-stage slides and spectacular flips. And, perhaps because of his training as a drummer, Jaco played everything with uncanny rhythmic accuracy.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Wayne, “Bitches Brood,” 229.

¹⁷³ Milkowski, *Jaco*, 65.

¹⁷⁴ Roberts, *How the Fender Bass Changed the World*, 127-129. Milkowski’s book also mentions the Jazz Bass, Rotosound strings, Acoustic amplifier, and bassist Carlos Garcia as the foundation for Pastorius’s sound on the electric bass guitar. In fact, Pastorius ordered his first Acoustic 360 amplifier after hearing Carlos Garcia play through one.

Pastorius's self-titled debut solo album was recorded in late 1975 and released in 1976.¹⁷⁵ Roberts calls it "the single most important and influential solo recording ever made by an electric bassist. It shattered any notions that the Fender bass was an instrument of limited expression. It proved that a bass player could function effectively as the lead voice and the foundation—and do them both at the same time. It sent an entire generation of bassists scurrying to their practice rooms."¹⁷⁶ Pastorius revolutionized the way the electric bass was played and forced musicians, bassists and otherwise, to rethink the bassist's role within an ensemble. He still provided the harmonic and rhythmic foundation for a group while contributing melodic lines, chordal passages, and timbres and tones unique to the electric bass at that time. All of these experiences and playing skills would culminate in Pastorius's peak career period. Jim Roberts explains:

Jaco's career took off after his solo album was recorded. He played with Pat Metheny on the guitarist's stunning debut, *Bright Size Life*. He was invited to join *Weather Report* and immediately made a strong contribution to the album *Black Market*. He went on to spark some of the group's finest work on such recordings as *Heavy Weather*, *Mr. Gone*, *Night Passage*, and the potent live album *8:30*, which showcased his solo feature, "Slang." From 1976 to 1980, not only did Jaco light a fire under *Weather Report* with his playing, he contributed a number of evocative and well-crafted compositions to their repertoire, such as "Havona," "Teen Town," and "Three Views of a Secret." During this period, he was also a guest star on a number of records. He collaborated with Joni Mitchell on four albums, including *Hejira*, which has some of his freshest and most lyrical playing. Jaco went on the road with Mitchell's all-star band in 1979 and is a powerful presence on the *Shadows and Light* album and video recording during the tour.¹⁷⁷

Brian Glasser pointed out that Pastorius's entry into *Weather Report* "appears both logistically unproblematic...and artistically logical (he was a further development of

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 129.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 129.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 130.

the electric fretless bass concept that Johnson had introduced).”¹⁷⁸ Johnson was considered a pioneer on the fretless bass with “unparalleled timing and sensitivity,” and was the “perfect bassist for *Weather Report* at the time;” but with his departure, the door opened up for the arrival of “the finest exponent of the electric bass in jazz.”¹⁷⁹ Because *Weather Report* is known for its work as a band exploiting the use of electronic instruments and discovering new sounds, textures, and timbers, Pastorius’s sound and unique abilities, at the time, on the electric bass fit Zawinul and Shorter’s need for something new and exciting. According to Glasser, “not only was he the most complete bassist that the group ever had but he also showed himself to be a composer of note, and proved to be a dab hand at the production side of record-making.”¹⁸⁰

Although Pastorius’s departure from *Weather Report* in 1982 was amicable and expected, tensions still existed between him and Pastorius. Peter Erskine speculated that “Joe was getting tired of Jaco jumping around onstage and doing his Hendrix stuff, and Jaco was frustrated having to play all these written-out bass parts that Joe was composing for this new thing he was conceptualizing. And it drove Jaco nuts that Joe was doubling the bass with synth bass.”¹⁸¹ Pastorius left the band before a 1982 spring tour to devote more time and effort to his *Word of Mouth* band as a leader and composer. He toured Europe and Japan with the group while his personal behavior on and off stage grew more disturbing for the other members of the group. His antics were fueled by drugs and alcohol while justifying his actions as a way to relieve the pressure he was under as a leader and as “the world’s greatest bass player.” Saxophonist Randy Emerick said Pastorius “One day confided that he felt he *had* to do crazy and unusual things because it was expected of him. He said it was his way of getting people’s attention.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 189.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁸¹ Milkowski, *Jaco*, 110.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 119.

Pastorius also picked up and sometimes forced himself into other gigs with smaller groups at local clubs in New York. During the time following his departure from *Weather Report*, he played with artists such as Mike Stern, Randy Brecker, Peter Erskine, Don Alias, David Sanborn, and Hiram Bullock either in Pastorius's *Word of Mouth* band or in other settings. Despite his erratic behavior, he was still voted Best Jazz Bassist in *Guitar Player's* 1982 reader's poll and Jazz Artist of the Year in *Swing Journal*. His performances would alternate between good and bad based "on what was happening in his personal life at the time," and eventually he found it hard to get work in New York because of rumors that his "bass playing sucked" or that "he was doing the same old clichés he had been doing for the past five years."¹⁸³ Finally, in July 1986, Pastorius's brother Gregory and his ex-wife Ingrid persuaded him to check himself into the Bellevue Hospital psychiatric ward where he was diagnosed as a manic-depressive.

During his stay at Bellevue Hospital, he made several phone calls to friends, record company executives, and others who he thought might be able to help him get out of the hospital and back into the music industry; however, most of those to whom he spoke commented on his lack of touch with reality. Pastorius eventually checked out of Bellevue in September 1986 and relocated to San Francisco to live with drummer Brian Melvin. His post-hospital time started on a positive note, but then soon returned to the same type of manic-depressive behavior despite having family and friends who tried to support and provide a positive influence for him. By April 1987, Pastorius had again alienated all of his friends and family that were trying to help him.

In September 1987 Pastorius tried to get into a club outside of Ft. Lauderdale but was denied entrance because he was, according to the bouncer, "drunk and abusive. A scuffle ensued. When Wilton Manors police arrived on the scene at 4:00 A.M. on September 12, 1987, they found Jaco lying face down in a pool of blood. His skull had

¹⁸³ Ibid., 153.

been fractured.”¹⁸⁴ When he was finally admitted to the hospital he had lost a lot of blood and was in a coma; it was also discovered that he had pneumonia. Nine days later, on September 21, Pastorius’s family made the decision to remove him from life support. His troubled past was now behind him and his legacy as a bass player lives on in the music he created. Milkowski recalled a late night phone call in which Pastorius told him, “Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter are my biggest teachers to date...*write it down!*”¹⁸⁵ Pastorius was as much influenced by Zawinul and Shorter as they were by him.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 208.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 219-220.

MUSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO WEATHER REPORT

Pastorius officially joined *Weather Report* on April 1, 1976, not long after Johnson announced that he was quitting to form a band with Billy Cobham and George Duke.¹⁸⁶ At the time, *Black Market* was only partially recorded, which caused problems for the band, but Zawinul remembered that Pastorius “had just sent me a rough mix of his solo album, and I was really floored by it, particularly the song ‘Continuum.’”¹⁸⁷ Zawinul called Pastorius and asked him to come to the studio to record “Cannonball,” a song dedicated to Zawinul’s late bandleader and friend. Zawinul theorized that since both Cannonball Adderley and Pastorius were from Florida, it was a fitting tribute to have the Florida sound on the recording. After the song was recorded, Zawinul and Shorter talked and decided that Pastorius should be offered the job of bassist in the band. For the same album Pastorius also contributed his composition “Barbary Coast” a “funky, slow-moving vehicle propelled by Jaco’s crisp, muted bass figure.”¹⁸⁸

Pastorius’s musical contributions continued on *Weather Report*’s biggest-selling album, *Heavy Weather*, for which he wrote “Teen Town” and “Havona” and served as a multi-instrumentalist on “Teen Town” (drums), “Birdland” (mandocello and vocals), “Palladium” (steel drums), and “The Juggler” (mandocello). Arguably, *Heavy Weather* is the best of Pastorius during his time with *Weather Report*; he contributed more artistically on this album than on the others he recorded with the band. Glasser points out that the album is “lighter in tone than *Black Market*, and its songs are more geared to form, albeit those of striking originality (there are four bite-sized pieces on each side of the record and practically no unrestricted jazz blowing). As such it tends not to be a

¹⁸⁶ Milkowski, *Jaco*, 73.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 73. Both Milkowski’s *Jaco* and Glasser’s *In A Silent Way* document the exchange between Zawinul and Pastorius after a *Weather Report* gig in Florida during which Jaco introduced himself to Zawinul as the “World’s Greatest Bass Player” to which Zawinul told him to “Get the fuck out of here.” The next morning Pastorius took a demo tape to Zawinul’s hotel room and followed up over the next several months with letters and gig tapes. When it was time to replace Johnson, Zawinul didn’t have to look too far or too hard to find his replacement.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

favorite of the hardest-core *Weather Report cognoscenti*.”¹⁸⁹ He also adds the comments of guitarist Pat Metheny who said, “To me, *Heavy Weather* is the best. That’s one of the great records of all time. Pretty much from the beginning to the end, there is not a dead spot on that record. It’s conceptually brilliant and, execution-wise, it’s devastating. Also, the sound on that record is incredible.”¹⁹⁰

The 1978 album *Mr. Gone* contains Pastorius’s writing contributions in “River People” and “Punk Jazz” along with more multi-instrumentalist credits on “The Pursuit of the Woman With the Feathered Hat” (drums and vocals), “River People” (drums, timpani, and vocals), and “Punk Jazz” (vocals). *Mr. Gone* is also the album that garnered *Weather Report* a “one star drubbing in *Down Beat*” magazine to which Zawinul famously replied, “there is no way in the world that a record like this could get a one star review...If we tried to make a one star album we couldn’t do it, because it’s just not in us. We are goddamned sincere with what we are doing.”¹⁹¹

For the album *8:30*, the band began on-the-road recordings in January and February 1979 to produce a live double album; however, the fourth side of the album did contain studio recordings. *Night Passage* found the band recording music that had already been played live during the summer of 1979. After touring with the new material, the band’s management asked them to record an album, so they did in a live concert setting on a sound stage complete with audience members made up of record company people. According to Bill Milkowski, *Night Passage* also “contains the enigmatically titled ‘Three Views of a Secret,’ a moving, dramatic ballad that Zawinul regards as Pastorius’s finest composition...this piece is strikingly original and a crowning achievement in his career.”¹⁹² Glasser adds the following about *Night Passage*, “...it also featured what many think of as Pastorius’s finest composing hour, the expansive and

¹⁸⁹ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 198-199.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁹¹ Larry Birnbaum, “Weather Report Answers Its Critics,” 14-15.

¹⁹² Milkowski, *Jaco*, 93.

evocative waltz ‘Three Views of a Secret.’”¹⁹³ Ken Pullig of the Jazz Composition department at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts offers the following about Pastorius’s composition:

‘Three Views of a Secret’ shows that Jaco was extending the legacy of Mingus as a bassist with serious compositional skills...Appropriately, it has three main phrases—‘A,’ ‘B,’ and ‘C’—and is in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. ‘A’ is a bluesy 16 measure melody that presents the three pitches that provide the fundamental motivic resources for the whole piece: B, E, and G. This melody makes use of octave displacement and contains some very creative reharmonization choices for the key center of E. ‘B’ is a more complicated 24-measure section that modulates to D-flat and then B before returning to E. ‘C’ is a 16 measure section made up of an eight measure melody that is repeated. The fundamental melody pitches are B and E, two of the three pitches introduced in ‘A.’ The ‘C’ section provides good continuity but uses new colors to develop the E tonality; by doing this, Jaco shows his skill at taking a simple sound and then using it in a new way, rather than simply repeating it. Overall, there is enough repetition in the piece to make it accessible to the average listener and enough compositional development to satisfy the artistic segment of the listening audience. ‘Three Views of a Secret is a very well crafted piece.’¹⁹⁴

Weather Report’s second self-titled album, released in 1982, contains no writing credits from Pastorius and is the last album to use the Pastorius/Erskine rhythm section. By this time, Pastorius had committed to his own *Word of Mouth* band and Erskine was working with *Steps Ahead*, thus creating the situation that opened the door for both Victor Bailey and Omar Hakim to join *Weather Report*.

In addition to the tremendous musical contributions Pastorius made to the group, he moved the band into a new level of popularity. Zawinul made the following observation:

Weather Report was a really powerful group with Alphonso Johnson on bass. But Jaco was in a space all his own. He was so different from all the other

¹⁹³ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 221.

¹⁹⁴ Milkowski, *Jaco*, 93.

bass players of that time. He had that magical thing about him, the same kind of thing Jimi Hendrix had. He was an electrifying performer and a great musician. And he was really responsible for bringing the white kids to our concerts. Before Jaco came along, we were perceived as a kind of esoteric jazz group. We had been popular on college campuses, but after Jaco joined the band we started selling out big concert halls everywhere. Jaco became some kind of All-American folk hero to these kids.¹⁹⁵

Jazz historian Alyn Shipton confirms Zawinul's insight:

The catalyst was the arrival in the ranks of another bassist, Jaco Pastorius, who had replaced Johnson during the making of the *Black Market* album. Pastorius was a virtuoso electric-bass player, with a warm sound on both the fretless and conventionally fretted Fender instrument, and an ability to play both the kind of rapid solo lines and chordal passages one might expect of a regular guitarist, together with urgent, propulsive funk bass-lines, which he had honed into a fine art.¹⁹⁶

Pastorius brought and contributed a large amount of musicality and showmanship to *Weather Report* and jazz-rock. He had already developed his style and sound before joining the group, and the vision of Zawinul and Shorter allowed him to showcase his talent and ability in front of a world-wide audience, garnering praise and accolades from critics and fans alike.

A contribution to *Weather Report's* live shows was Pastorius's solo spot. Both Milkowski and Dan Towey explain how Pastorius would use MXR digital delay units to loop harmonic and rhythmic patterns over which Pastorius would solo while dancing across the stage. He would "meander from one idea to another, sometimes shouting out the words to a song as he played bass lines from it. His tributes to Jimi Hendrix, with distorted amp tones and quotes from 'Third Stone From the Sun' and 'Star Spangled Banner,' were certainly a highlight."¹⁹⁷ Pastorius performed the same type of solo when he was touring with Joni Mitchell's band and can be seen doing so on the live *Shadows*

¹⁹⁵ Milkowski, *Jaco*, 74.

¹⁹⁶ Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz: Revised and Updated Edition* (New York/London: Continuum, 2007): 619.

¹⁹⁷ ; Milkowski, *Jaco*, 92; Towey, *Jaco Pastorius*, 3.

and Light video from the tour. An example of his solo spot with *Weather Report* can be heard on the track “Slang” from the *8:30* album.

Pastorius brought a tremendous amount of fame and popularity to the band via his virtuosity on the electric bass and his eclectic stage performances and antics. He changed not only the way the electric bass was played, but also the way it functioned within *Weather Report*. Previously there was Vitous who demanded dialogue with the other instrumentalists, quickly shifting from the role as foundation to additional melodic line, and later Alphonso Johnson brought the funk feel and permanence of a foundational bass player. Pastorius was able to synthesize the roles of the previous bassists into one complete package. Chip Stern stated: “Jaco Pastorius, one of the most original and inspired musicians of the decade, is able to take on Miroslav Vitous’s rhythmic-harmonic-melodic role and put up the funk as well.”¹⁹⁸

The post-Pastorius *Weather Report* saw a return to the more foundational role of the bass player when Zawinul told Victor Bailey that *Weather Report* wanted the bass to be more a part of the rhythm section and not as much of a lead instrument; more of a return to the Johnson era of the band. Peter Erskine said the following about the post-Pastorius *Weather Report* sound:

All of a sudden you didn’t have Jaco’s presence, his personality, his sound, his harmonic understanding, because what used to really knock me out after concerts was standing there and listening to Joe, Wayne and Jaco talk about harmonically what happened in these tunes, because the stuff used to go all over the place, and when Jaco left that element left. So though *Weather Report* had always had the monoharmonic element in its jams, with Jaco there the stuff always went to other tonal areas, and that didn’t happen afterwards.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Milkowski, *Jaco*, 74.

¹⁹⁹ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 231.

It was not that Bailey couldn't deliver the same type of musical performance that Pastorius did, but Zawinul and Shorter were ready to move on and let the weather change again.

ANALYSIS OF STYLE

In a February 1981 *DownBeat* article by Bob Blumenthal he states, “Jaco Pastorius’ arrival in 1976 as Johnson’s replacement was just the boost *Weather Report* needed. Here was an electric bassist who felt rock riffs and straight 4/4 with equal conviction, who had the tonal presence to act as a lead voice, yet could also function in the more traditional role, and who was an audacious soloist and a writer of substance.”²⁰⁰ His style not only affected the sound of *Weather Report*, but the sound of the electric bass as well as the style of many electric bassists who meticulously studied his lines and solos then and now.

A major aspect of Pastorius’s style was his sound created by his use of the Acoustic 360 amplifier with 18-inch speakers. Pastorius took notice of this amplifier and speaker combination after hearing local bassist Carlos Garcia play through them. Pastorius used two of the 18-inch speakers which, according to Towey, “gave him more volume and punch.”²⁰¹ Pastorius’s sound was also influenced by his use of a 1962 Fender Jazz bass from which he removed the wire frets and filled in the fret lines with wood putty, then covered the fretboard with marine epoxy to protect it from the abrasiveness of the Rotosound roundwound strings he used.²⁰² According to Towey, “This combination, combined with his natural creativity, became the essence of the Jaco sound.”²⁰³

Towey goes on to offer the following on Pastorius’s style:

Jaco has had a significant impact on electric bass players because of his use of harmonics. He often played natural and artificial harmonics individually or in chords. He would also combine them with fretted bass notes. He learned the specific placement of the harmonics along the fretboard and learned the harmonies they produced in combination. This

²⁰⁰ Bob Blumenthal, “Weather Report,” 15.

²⁰¹ Towey, *Jaco Pastorius*, 4.

²⁰² Roberts, *How the Fender Bass Changed the World*, 127-129; Towey, *Jaco Pastorius*, 4.

²⁰³ Towey, *Jaco Pastorius*, 4.

gave him a rich and expansive palette of sounds that bass players had not been previously using.

The very quick, light, muted touch he played with also contributed greatly to his sound. In fact, this is one of the key ingredients of Jaco's funk style. He always picked the strings with his fingers; he never employed the pop and slap techniques that were becoming popular at the time.²⁰⁴

Dan Towey and Jim Roberts both give succinct accounts of the signature equipment, sounds, and techniques that created Pastorius's unique style. Neil Tesser commented on Pastorius's style by adding, "The sound that Jaco was developing [was] indeed 'different.' In some respects, it is even unique, all the more so since the bass guitar is not an instrument that easily lends itself to a great range of individual expression. At least it didn't before Jaco, with a few notable exceptions such as Stanley Clarke, Alphonso Johnson, and especially, Steve Swallow, whose style is the closest thing to an antecedent that one could find for Jaco's playing."²⁰⁵

More than anything else, a bass player's sound comes from the hands: how and where the string is plucked and the strength of the fretting hand. Whereas Roberts, Towey, and others have attributed much of Pastorius's sound to his gear and equipment, Pastorius talks about the importance of his hands in creating his sound: "It's all in the hands; in order to get that sound, you have to know exactly where to touch the strings, exactly how much pressure to apply. You have to learn to feel it. And then it just sings."²⁰⁶ In addition, Wayte mentions the cornerstones of Pastorius's style, which also have to do with the use of his hands, as being the "sixteenth note bass groove and sustained, singing melodic lines that carried the lead melodic role in many *Weather Report* songs."²⁰⁷ Although Pastorius's style was largely developed before he joined

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 4.

²⁰⁵ Tesser, "Jaco Pastorius: The Florida Flash," 13.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 13.

²⁰⁷ Wayte, "Bitches Brood," 274.

Weather Report, he certainly had the opportunity to realize his potential in developing his own style while he worked with the group.

The sixteenth-note bass groove that Wayne mentions often filled each beat of every measure; if Pastorius was not playing a pitch, he often used muted notes to create more rhythmic variety in his bass line, thus filling each beat of every measure with bass. This aspect of his style can be found on “Barbary Coast” from the *Black Market* album. Example 5-1 is the bass intro which comes in at about 0:18.

Bass Guitar

Example 5-1 Bass intro to “Barbary Coast”,²⁰⁸

Except for an eighth-note rest in the fourth measure Pastorius has filled each measure with mostly sixteenth and eighth notes, his signature sixteenth-note funk style, which sets the pace for the rest of the tune. Similar to earlier *Weather Report* compositions, the harmonic structure for “Barbary Coast” is stagnant, as the entire song is based on a $D\flat^7$ chord; however, Scharfglass calls the introduction a $D\flat^{7\sharp 9}$ with the $F\sharp$ functioning as the raised ninth.²⁰⁹

The next six measures are Pastorius’s basic groove for the rest of the song (see example 5-2).

²⁰⁸ Scharfglass, *Jaco Pastorius*, 4.

²⁰⁹ The transcription for “Barbary Coast” is taken from the book *Jaco Pastorius: The Greatest Jazz-Fusion Bass Player*. This particular composition was transcribed by Matt Scharfglass.

Example 5-2 Basic groove for “Barbary Coast”²¹⁰

Of particular mention is the C^b-B^b-A^b that happens on beat two and the first sixteenth note of beat three in measure eight. The descending three-note pattern is slightly transformed in measure ten to become C^b-A^b-B^b-B^b as four sixteenth notes on beat two and recurring throughout the rest of the song, almost always followed by material similar, if not identical to, measures nine and eleven. Pastorius also continues, throughout the composition, to anticipate beat one by a sixteenth note as seen in example 5-2 going from measures six to seven, seven to eight, nine to ten and ten to eleven. The use of constantly driving sixteenth notes, both pitched and muted, along with the constant anticipation of the downbeat, or strong beat for that matter, give “Barbary Coast” its funky feel and is one of the tunes that best exemplifies Pastorius’s signature sixteenth-note style.

Perhaps the most recognized of all *Weather Report* compositions is “Birdland” from the *Heavy Weather* album. It features Pastorius’s use of artificial harmonics to play the opening melody; his use of artificial harmonics is a trademark of his style and can provide a wide spectrum of timbres on the electric bass. Examples 5-3 and 5-4 are from the opening of the composition and illustrate what Pastorius was able to do with a technique that, at the time, was new to the electric bass. The artificial harmonics are

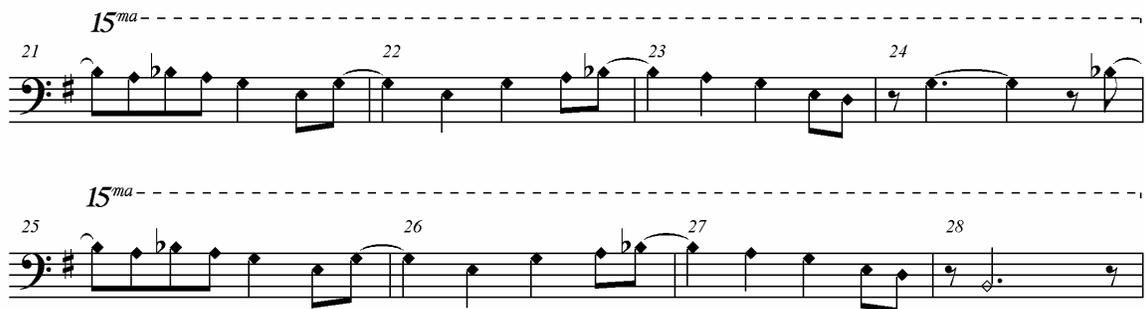
²¹⁰ Scharfglass, *Jaco Pastorius*, 4-5.

played by placing the finger of the fretting hand on the note to be played, and then, in Pastorius's case, placing the thumb lightly on the string at a spot equivalent to one octave above the fretted note and plucking the string with the middle finger just behind the thumb. Example 5-3 illustrates what Pastorius played on the first half of the intro to "Birdland."



Example 5-3 Use of artificial harmonics on intro to "Birdland"

The second half of the intro is played an octave higher which means placing the thumb lightly on the string at a spot equivalent to two octaves above the fretted note (the fretting hand plays in the same place) and again plucking with the middle finger just behind the thumb (see example 5-4).



Example 5-4 Second half of intro to "Birdland"

The result is a doubling effect, and Towey describes Pastorius's technique by saying, "It's important to follow the relative position of the fretted notes with your thumb so that you always get a harmonic that's one octave higher. If you don't, it's possible that you may produce other harmonics that are not part of the melody. The method is not

foolproof, and an occasional natural tone can be heard. Jaco uses this to his advantage though, letting the inconsistencies create an illusion of octave doubling in the line.”²¹¹ Pastorius also uses artificial harmonics to play the melody during the A section of “Three Views of a Secret.”

An example of Pastorius’s singing fretless bass line is found at the beginning of his solo during “Havona,” also from the *Heavy Weather* album. After a short synthesizer-and-drums introduction at the start of the song, Pastorius comes in at 0:42 playing his signature sixteenth-note bass line, which sounds more like bass solo with band accompaniment during this main melody which is doubled by piano and soprano saxophone. Pastorius starts his solo [at 2:35] after the piano and sax solos (see example 5-5).

The musical notation for Example 5-5 is presented in two staves of bass clef. The first staff contains measures 91 through 94. Measure 91 is marked with a chord of EMaj7(b5) and an artificial harmonic (8va) above the staff. Measure 92 is marked with a chord of CMaj9. Measures 93 and 94 contain triplet markings. The second staff contains measures 95 through 98. Measure 95 is marked with a chord of BMaj7(b5) and an artificial harmonic (8va) above the staff. Measures 96, 97, and 98 contain triplet markings. The music consists of sixteenth-note patterns with various articulations and chord changes.

Example 5-5 Opening of Pastorius’s solo on “Havona”²¹²

Except for short, unaccented, metrically weak moments, Pastorius avoids the root of the chords over which he is soloing. He prefers to stick to other chord and scale tones for his long notes, choosing the fifth of the chord for long notes on the EMaj7(b5) and the CMaj9, and scale degree six for the BMaj7(b5) and the GMaj7. After the opening to his solo, Pastorius continues with his typical sixteenth-note-style solo encompassing almost the entire range of the fretboard.

²¹¹ Ibid., 25.

²¹² Scharfglass, *Jaco Pastorius*, 44-45.

More than chord tones and scale degrees, this solo starts with the perfect example of Pastorius's human, singing sound on the fretless bass guitar and opens up what is "widely considered to be Pastorius's finest recorded solo."²¹³ Another particular point is that Pastorius's solo on "Havona" is two choruses versus the one chorus each that Zawinul and Shorter take for their solos: an indicator of the influence and bass dominance that Pastorius brought to the group.

In his *Bass Player* article, Chris Jisi reprinted a hand-written copy, by Pastorius, of the original "Havona" chart and makes a few observations about differing intros for the composition as well as some harmonic discrepancies from the chart to the recorded version.²¹⁴ This reinforces the notion that *Weather Report* worked from sketches of musical ideas and did make changes to charts and compositions during the process of playing and recording, often trying different ideas to find what worked best in the pursuit of the ideal version of each completed composition.

Pastorius's style and technique have been copied and documented perhaps more than any other electric bassist in the history of the instrument. Above I have provided a small portion of what he did that made him unique within *Weather Report* in particular and jazz-rock in general although, also as mentioned above, he came into *Weather Report* having already developed most of his style and sound previously—he had already recorded his solo album as well as *Bright Size Life* with Metheny by the time he joined the band. Possibly his greatest contribution to the instrument was "inspiring [bass guitarists] to explore new sounds and challenging them to extend their technique on the instrument."²¹⁵ He was unmatched in his theatrics and stage antics, and he often turned an otherwise tame jazz concert into a rock-concert-type environment because of his actions on stage and the audience's reaction. Pastorius knew what he was doing; in a

²¹³ Jisi, "Evolution of A Genius," 54.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Milkowski, *Jaco*, 77.

conversation with Bill Milkowski, Pastorius commented “This ain’t nothing but a show. It’s just show business, that’s all.”²¹⁶

Although most of the articles cited above and the books written about him focus on his technique and sound, Pastorius also acquired and used his sense of musical intuition and spirituality to create the music for which he is now so well known. His experience with the *C.C. Riders* helped him to develop an incredible sense of musical intuition which he further developed and utilized in working with Metheny, Zawinul and Shorter, and later Joni Mitchell. Joni Mitchell said that Pastorius was “different from any other bass player [I] had ever played with...he was the only bass player up to that time that [I] felt really understood what [I] was trying to do.”²¹⁷ Mitchell would hire musicians to play on her record dates and she would often get frustrated because of the way they interpreted her music on her record, stating, “The worst were the bass players because they always wanted to know what the root of the chord was.”²¹⁸ Daniel Levitin explains the complexity of Mitchell’s compositional style due to her altered guitar tunings and the resultant ambiguity of her harmonies. Her frustration with the bass players she worked with previous to Pastorius is clarified by Levitin:

As soon as a bass player plays a note, he fixes one particular musical interpretation, thus ruining the delicate ambiguity the composer [Mitchell] has so artfully constructed. All of the bass players Joni worked with before Jaco insisted on playing roots, or what they perceived to be roots. The brilliance of Jaco, Joni said, is that he instinctively knew to wander around the possibility space, reinforcing the different chord interpretations with equal emphasis, sublimely holding the ambiguity in a delicate, suspended balance. Jaco allowed Joni to have bass guitar on her songs without destroying one of their most expansive qualities.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Ibid., 92

²¹⁷ Daniel J. Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Plume, 2006): 213.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 214.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 215.

Joni Mitchell's insight into Pastorius's musical intuition makes clear and reinforces the importance of developing that particular quality and being able to access it immediately. If Pastorius did not have or utilize his musical intuition, he would not have been able to respond to the needs of the artists he worked with, including those in *Weather Report*.

Pastorius's spirituality is observed in comments by Herbie Hancock which not only point directly to Pastorius's spirituality, but reinforce, again, Johnson's and Vitous's comment about the instrument being only a physical object through which the musician speaks the language of music. Hancock first says, "Jaco is a phenomenon. He is able to make sounds on the bass that are a total surprise to the sensibilities. Not only single notes, but chords, harmonics, and all sorts of nuances with the color of the instrument that when combined and translated through Jaco make for some of the best music that I've heard in a long time."²²⁰ Hancock first points out Pastorius's technique and sound but then goes on to explain that without Pastorius and the events that contributed to who he was as a musician, the sounds would not be the same. Hancock goes on to say, "Of course, it's not the technique that makes the music; it's the sensitivity of the musician and his ability to be able to fuse his life with the rhythm of the times. This is the essence of music."²²¹ Pastorius had incredible technique that has been matched by a few bass players since his death, but his musical soul and the spirituality which inspired him to create and play the way he did has never been duplicated by another bass player.

Pastorius's contribution to *Weather Report* was more than just his virtuosic bass playing; he created a new sound on the fretless electric bass guitar that is easily recognizable in any group or musical setting he was in, contributed a large number of compositions to the *Weather Report* library, produced some of the band's recordings during his time with them, and propelled the band into a realm of superstardom that was previously unknown by the group. Pastorius came into the band as a strong personality

²²⁰ Milkowski, "Jaco Pastorius: Bass Revolutionary," 60.

²²¹ Ibid.

and perhaps had as much or more influence on *Weather Report* as the band had on him: “Pastorius was to become by far and away the second-biggest personality in the entire *Weather Report* story, if we take the Zawinul-Shorter axis as occupying a permanent primacy. Zawinul conceded as much in a 1996 interview with Klaus Schulz, when he was asked about the continual changes that took place in *Weather Report*. ‘Basically, it was always Wayne and me,’ he said. ‘Other things were small. Only Jaco was a big thing.’”²²²

²²² Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 190.

Chapter 6: Victor Bailey

The final bassist in the *Weather Report* legacy is another Philadelphia native: Victor Bailey was born on March 27, 1960 into a very musical family.²²³ According to Bailey, his father Morris Bailey Jr. was a composer, arranger, producer, saxophonist, artist, and teacher who had his songs recorded by rhythm and blues artists such as Patti LaBelle, *The Stylistics*, *Blue Magic*, *The Spinners*, Harold Melvin and the *Blue Notes*, and Nina Simone. His father's saxophone playing can be heard with artists such as McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Smith, Lee Morgan, and Reggie Workman. The influence of his father's musical experiences would shape Victor's life and musical style. He claims, "I spent literally everyday after school and on weekends somewhere in a studio or backstage at a gig. I was getting to watch great R&B people like *The Stylistics*, or Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff. Or I might walk in from school and there would be Philly jazz legends like Odean Pope, Eddie Green and Tyrone Brown."²²⁴

In 1970, at the age of ten, Bailey expressed interest in drums and was given a drum set for Christmas. He joined his first band a week after getting the drum set, and his first gig was three or four weeks later. He did his first recording session about three months later and has been working non-stop ever since. His introduction to the electric bass guitar happened in 1975 during a basement rehearsal with his brother's band.²²⁵ Bailey was telling everybody in the group what to play and when they were out of tune, and it was this serious approach to and attitude toward music that led to the older bass player walking out. According to Bailey, the only person in his local area was a drummer, so Bailey decided to pick up and play the bass; Bailey said, "That moment

²²³ The information for Victor Bailey's biography is taken from his official website (the bio is written by him personally) and verified by him via email and interviews.

²²⁴ Taken from Bailey's official website.

²²⁵ Chris Jisi, "Victor Bailey: 10 Years After," in *Bass Player* (September 1999): 34.

changed my life forever.”²²⁶ Bailey recalls that he instantly understood the instrument without having played it before. He played his first gig on electric bass only three weeks after that experience, and within three months he was as busy as any bassist in Philadelphia. He played a variety of styles in his early days as a bassist, and that ability continued to be a strength throughout his career.

In 1978, after a failed enlistment opportunity in the United States Navy, he enrolled in Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Because all he had to do was work on music, Bailey claims that this was the greatest period of growth he has ever had. Those of his peers who took advantage of the same opportunity were Branford Marsalis, Jeff “Tain” Watts, Kevin Eubanks, Greg Osby, Wallace Roney, Cindy Blackman, Terri Lynne Carrington, Stu Hamm, Steve Vai, and many other successful musicians of his era.

During his time at Berklee he was given the opportunity to play over the phone for New York drummer Pogie Bell. During Bailey’s second year Bell came to Berklee with South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela who was looking for a bass player. Based on Bell’s recommendation, Bailey got the gig and moved to New York. While in New York, Bailey played and recorded with Sonny Rollins, Lenny White, Hamiet Bluiet, Olu Dara, Larry Coryell, Sadao Watanabe, Michael Urbaniak, and Ursula Dudziak. Of the younger generation of jazz artists, he played with Tom Browne, Bobby Broom, Kenny Kirkland, Bernard Wright, Mike Stern, Dennis Chambers, Pogie Bell, and former Berklee classmate Kevin Eubanks.

During a gig with South African singer Miriam Makeba in 1982, drummer Omar Hakim mentioned that he would be playing with *Weather Report* and they were looking for a bass player – it was the gig Bailey had wanted since the age of 16. Bailey was given Zawinul’s address so he could send a demo tape which led to Zawinul calling

²²⁶ Taken from Bailey’s official website.

Bailey and telling him, “I know you’re the guy I’m going to hire, I can feel it.”²²⁷ Bailey says the following about his anchoring the rhythm section with Hakim: “The aftermath of course is that Omar and I made the ultimate *Weather Report* rhythm section and laid down the definitive bass and drum performances in the band’s history, and recorded the most inspiring music the band ever did. This was the beginning of a long and inspiring journey.”²²⁸

Bailey and Hakim had only been in *Weather Report* about two and a half weeks before the *Procession* tour in 1982. Zawinul relates the following about the Bailey/Hakim/ Rossey rhythm section:

Two and a half weeks before the tour started, Omar, Victor, and Jose walked in and started rehearsing. We would’ve really been in trouble if they couldn’t play. It was just one of those things, and I call this our real fortunate period because we could have really been on ice...After one month playing in the United States, we went into the studio and recorded the *Procession* album. In 1983 we did 86 concerts with this band and it really developed into something else. It was not such a flamboyant band as the one before but the compositions were really being played very correctly, interpreted very correctly.²²⁹

Bailey’s ability to play in any situation proved to be the quality that brought success to himself and *Weather Report* during his early years with the band.

Bailey also recorded *Domino Theory* (1984), *Sportin’ Life* (1985), and *Weather Report’s* final album *This Is This* (released in 1986), to which he contributed his own composition “Consequently,” before the group disbanded in 1985; however, Bailey’s musical association with Zawinul would continue in the formation of *Weather Update* and *The Zawinul Syndicate*.

Since his time with *Weather Report*, Bailey has “played on over one thousand recordings with everyone from *Weather Report*, to Michael Brecker, to LL Cool J, to

²²⁷ Taken from Bailey’s official website.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 230-231.

Mary J. Blige. I have written [for] and produced artists like the *Force MD's*, Alex Bugnon, George Howard, and *Missing Links*.”²³⁰ He also recalls his time with critically acclaimed jazz group *Steps Ahead*, which he joined in 1985, “I took the jazz fusion supergroup *Steps Ahead* to new heights, transitioning them from a clever acoustic jazz band to a funky electric monster with Mike Manieri, Michael Brecker, (former *Weather Report* drummer) Peter Erskine, and Chuck Loeb.”²³¹

In 1989 he released his first solo album, called *Bottom's Up*, which featured his skills as a bassist, writer, arranger, keyboardist, drum and sound programmer, and singer. Most of his time in the 1990s was spent as a bassist performing and recording with popular music artists, often in Europe and Japan. It was in 1993 that Bailey and Hakim united again as part of the road band for popular music mega-star Madonna. After arranging Madonna's material, they completed a worldwide concert tour including numerous television appearances.²³²

In 1997 Bailey moved to Los Angeles, California, rejoined Zawinul in *The Zawinul Syndicate*, and stayed with that group for over three years. In 1999 he released his second solo album *Low Blow* after signing with ESC Records. Shortly after the release of this album, Bailey was able to leave *The Zawinul Syndicate* and concentrate on his solo career. He has since toured steadily with his band throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas. In 2002 he released his third solo album, called *That's Right*, and then joined forces with Larry Coryell and Lenny White to form the group *CBW* which released two albums: *Electric* (2005) and *Traffic* (2006).

Bailey's diverse musical experiences have made him one of the most in-demand bassists in the music business. His leap into *Weather Report* on the heels of Jaco could

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Taken from Bailey's official website.

²³² Jisi, “Victor Bailey,” in *Bass Player*, 34

have been intimidating for another player, but Bailey's virtuosic ability on the electric bass helped him define the late sound of the group.

MUSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO WEATHER REPORT

Victor Bailey came into *Weather Report* to replace the bass player who, according to many, revolutionized the way the electric bass guitar is played. Bailey relates his feelings about playing after Jaco: “The *Weather Report* gig was big for me, but I never worried about what anyone else thought. I always knew what I had to get together. I never got up there on stage thinking, ‘Oh, I hope people like me.’ I never was easily intimidated. You had to be very sure of yourself to play in that band or in Joe’s current band.”²³³ Even Jaco complimented him during Bailey’s transition into the group. Bailey recalls, “For the first tour with *Weather Report*, I was always kind of looking at Joe out of the corner of my eye, like, ‘I wonder if he likes this?’ But then Jaco told me, ‘Man, you can play! Just go ahead and do what you do, and do it!’”²³⁴

Bailey already had a strong sense of himself as a person and a musician, which he developed in his younger years in Philadelphia, and it was this self-confidence that allowed him to create his own unique voice not only within *Weather Report*, but within jazz-rock. In an interview with Bailey in 1984, Josef Woodard says that “Bailey insists it was his intention to deflate some of the bass prominence that Jaco brought to the group;”²³⁵ however, when I asked Bailey about this, he said that it was Zawinul’s idea to deflate the bass prominence. On the first day of rehearsal, Zawinul told Bailey, “We just had five years of a lot of bass. We want it to be more a part of the rhythm.”²³⁶

Bailey’s musical ability to adapt to new situations and play what needs to be played is evident in his coming into *Weather Report* rehearsals (with drummer Omar Hakim and percussionist Jose Rossy) two and a half weeks before the tour supporting the band’s 1982 album *Procession*. Zawinul knew he needed a band that could play and interpret *Weather Report*’s compositions correctly and do so in a very short time frame.

²³³ Bill Milkowski, “Victor Bailey,” *Basics* (January/February 2000): 24-34. In mentioning “Joe’s current band” Bailey is talking about *Zawinul Syndicate*.

²³⁴ Bill Milkowski, *Jaco*, 243.

²³⁵ Josef Woodard, “Weather Report’s Victor Bailey,” *Guitar Player* (December 1984): 23.

²³⁶ Frandsen, phone interview with Bailey on 5 January 2009.

He found success in the players he recruited and adds, “In my opinion, this is the best all-around band we have had. We can play anything and everything.”²³⁷

For the *Domino Theory* album, Bailey had a chance to play a little of the slap/pop style of bass playing made popular by bassist Larry Graham. He offers the following concerning the introduction of the song “Predator:” “I do it on my solo in our shows. But I really don't see a need for it that much in *Weather Report*. I played a lot of that stuff, especially in sessions, and that's what I grew up doing... I did it on the beginning of 'Predator' on *Domino Theory*, but I don't want to do it just to show people, ‘Hey, everybody, I can do that.’”²³⁸

The only Victor Bailey composition recorded by *Weather Report* was the composition “Consequently” from 1986’s *This Is This*. According to a 2001 internet chat session, this song was on the demo that Bailey had originally sent to Zawinul and Shorter as an audition for the group (I was able to verify this through my interview with him). Bailey provided a solid foundation and bass playing that was more a part of the rhythm section after Jaco departed, but “Consequently” shows that Bailey had the skills to provide whatever it was that *Weather Report* needed from the bass chair.

²³⁷ Greg Armbruster, “Zawinul: Continued Hot, Chance of Record Highs,” *Keyboard* 10 (March, 1984): 51

²³⁸ Milkowski, “Victor Bailey,” *Bassics*,

ANALYSIS OF STYLE

After playing the bass for only six and a half years, and with the desire for less bass prominence established early by Zawinul and Shorter, Bailey came into *Weather Report* to ground the rhythm section once again and provide the group with the foundation it needed. While establishing his style within the group, Bailey knew that what was traditional would not work in a group that had “no rules and regulations.”²³⁹ Bailey did bring compositions into the group, and offers the following about them: “They were open to other people’s music – but, they didn’t necessarily do the music that I had.”²⁴⁰ The main reason for this is that Bailey’s own music was very bass-oriented and *Weather Report* had just emerged from an era of extremely bass-oriented music and compositions—a style and direction in which Zawinul and Shorter were not ready to continue. Bailey knew and understood this and “had the freedom to bring and play for them anything that [he] wanted, but [he didn’t] know if that is what they were looking for.”²⁴¹ As a result, only his composition “Consequently” was recorded by the band.

In creating bass lines for the compositions he recorded and performed with *Weather Report*, Bailey approached the process in the same manner as Vitous, Johnson, and Pastorius. He would vary between playing the written-out bass lines provided by Zawinul and Shorter and improvising new bass lines based on what he heard during the course of working out compositions. Bailey said that as a group, “*Weather Report* was a combination of everything. Joe and Wayne always had their music and their ideas written out, but it was not an exact, specific thing. In some bands everything’s written out and in some bands nothing...it’s a combination of everything. They brought in what they had and it was written and everybody would read it and learn it, but their approach was based on what sounded the best.”²⁴² Bailey’s bass lines were based on what sounded

²³⁹ Frandsen, phone interview with Bailey on 5 January 2009.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

best as a result of the creative process of learning the compositions and playing them together as a group. Sometimes the written bass line was played then recorded, and at other times the improvised bass line sounded and worked best, giving the composition a new color, texture, and direction. Bailey elaborates:

At the beginning of every song, pretty much, we would just look at what was on the paper and learn what was on the paper, and then whether we played what was written or whether we improvised just depended on what happened. We may have been playing a written part that was on the paper and I may have just started playing something else and that sounded better, and we'd go 'okay, we're going to use that bass part right there.' Other times I may have come up with an alternate bass part and then looked back and said 'No, I think the part that Wayne wrote is what I should play.' Everything they ever did was a combination of written music and improvising.²⁴³

When asked about verbal direction while playing Bailey answered, "There is no real verbal direction. It's exactly what I said—we played it...and it was all about what worked."²⁴⁴ He also said, "Joe and Wayne have something they want, but they can't exactly put it into words, because it's not a definite, specific thing...It's something that's just more spiritual. They know it when they feel it. So they're trying to get you to capture a certain feeling, a certain frame of mind."²⁴⁵ Bailey's statements support Alphonso Johnson's comment about the intuitive and spiritual aspect of playing, and Vitous, Johnson, and Bailey all acknowledge the importance of *Weather Report* using its collective musical intuition to determine what works best for each composition. In trying to define this moment in terms of harmonic or melodic analysis, Monson offers the following: "The analytical focus upon melody and harmony in certain individuals, however valuable, fails to consider the ensemble musical process by which these melodic and harmonic ideas are utilized during the course of a performance."²⁴⁶ We can look at

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Woodard, "Weather Report's Victor Bailey," 23-24.

²⁴⁶ Monson, "Musical Interaction in Modern Jazz," 23.

the harmonies and melodies used in *Weather Report* compositions, analyzing and labeling them in relation to the individual players as well as the group as a whole, but without considering the “ensemble musical process” and the events that lead up to or happened during a performance we fail to consider the intuitive and spiritual aspects that Vitous, Johnson, and Bailey spoke of. The “ensemble musical process” is the process that Bailey and *Weather Report* would use to determine what worked and what sounded best—whether it was the written out bass line contributed by Zawinul or Shorter, or the improvised bass line that Bailey would invent during the course of working up a new composition.

The “ensemble musical process” was as important to *Weather Report* as it was to Miles Davis. Smith says, “Miles Davis’s particular genius was centered in an ability to construct and manipulate improvisational possibilities, selecting and combining compositions, players, musical styles, and other performance parameters.”²⁴⁷ *Weather Report* used certain compositions or portions of compositions, different rhythm section players, and contrasting musical styles to create an ensemble musical process that resulted in the use of melodic and harmonic ideas in a particular way. Yes, the analysis of melody and harmony in individual players will yield style characteristics of each player, but the process by which they came to realize those melodic and harmonic ideas can yield still more information about the individual players as well as the synergy of the larger group. Zawinul and Shorter would have learned something about the dynamics of group performance and creating the space to explore the ensemble musical process from Miles; the lineage is clear when considering Zawinul and Shorter as Miles’s progeny.

Miles himself pointed to a process when he said, “What we did on *Bitches Brew* you couldn’t ever write down for an orchestra to play. That’s why I didn’t write it all out, not because I didn’t know what I wanted; [but because] I knew that what I wanted would

²⁴⁷ Smith, “A Sense of the Possible,” 41.

come out of a process and not some prearranged stuff.”²⁴⁸ Similar to Miles, *Weather Report* were looking to create music through a process of improvisation, playing and arranging on the spot to find what worked best. Bailey confirmed this when he said, “Their [Zawinul and Shorter] approach was based on what sounded the best.”²⁴⁹ In trying to find what sounded best, Bailey was pushed out of his comfort zone to find the bass lines that contributed the most to each individual composition; he talked about this when I asked him about what musical elements within the ensemble shaped, dictated, or inspired unique approaches in his playing. He also gave insight into the music as well as his approach to it:

...the music itself was unique. It was jazzy, but it wasn't jazz. It was funky, but it wasn't funk. You know, a lot of the recorded work and the gigs that I've done, even though I'm much more of a jazz person than most of my recorded work shows, most of the gigs I've done are the little simple pentatonic bass lines with a funk feel. But the funk feel thing, that didn't really work in that band. So I was always looking for something other than funk. The other thing that was a very heavy part of what I did was be-bop, but be-bop didn't work in the band either. So in trying to find my own way, it was almost natural that I would truly have to search for something. I couldn't pull out any of my classic lines. Where I had some little funk lines that I would always fall into or maybe little licks that I could do under certain kinds of grooves...that band was so organic that there were no specific rules about how to find what I was going to play, other than nothing that is typical worked.²⁵⁰

The opportunity or demand of the music for the musicians to do something different or new can result in levels of creativity previously unreached. It is often in these circumstances that a deeper level of creativity is unleashed, moving the music to new places that may not have been accessible using something that previously worked. Bailey's work with *Weather Report* was just such an experience for him; the types of jazz

²⁴⁸ Davis, *Miles: The Autobiography*, 300. Smith, “A Sense of the Possible,” 42. I reference Smith here to suggest that the ritual space he discusses is the place where the ensemble musical process takes place whether in the recording studio or on stage during a live performance.

²⁴⁹ Frandsen, phone interview with Bailey on 5 January 2009.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

or funk bass lines he played previously did not work in this group, forcing him to think of new ways to approach the music he was playing. This was a concept Miles required of his players as well: “See, if you put a musician in a place where he has to do something different from what he does all the time, then he can do that...He has to use his imagination, be more creative, more innovative; he’s got to take more risks [...]”²⁵¹ Bailey was put in a position where he had to rely on his intuition and spirituality to discover new ways of approaching the bass and how it would function in *Weather Report*. According to Vitous, a musician would need to hear something new, then immediately transfer it from cognition to the corporeal act of physically playing on the electric bass what was revealed to him by “the muse.”²⁵²

Bailey referred to the end result of the ensemble musical process as the “That’s It!” moment:

When something really feels good, it’s right, there’s never any question about it. I could come up with slick bass lines all day and never repeat myself, but if people say ‘how do you like that, what do you think? I think that works right,’ that was never the thing. Whenever it was right, and this is true with everything I’ve ever done including *Weather Report*, when it was right we’d all just look at each other and go ‘yeah, that...that’s it!’ The ‘That’s It!’ moment. When the ‘That’s It!’ moment happens, you know that’s the thing and it just works and you don’t need to play anything else. Sometimes it might just be a feel and it might not be a specific bass line when the ‘That’s It!’ moment happens.²⁵³

Melodic and harmonic analysis can provide the notes, chords, and rhythms of a particular bass line, but they cannot provide the feeling that occurs when the music feels right between the musicians or the creative process that brings about that feeling. Bailey even had a difficult time explaining when and what that moment is: “It’s hard for me to put into words when that is...it’s just that everybody knows it.”²⁵⁴ For Bailey, when it was

²⁵¹ Davis, *Miles: The Autobiography*, 220. Smith, “A Sense of the Possible,” 43.

²⁵² Frandsen, phone interview with Vitous on 8 January 2009.

²⁵³ Frandsen, phone interview with Bailey on 5 January 2009.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

right, he and the band knew it and worked and created based on that feeling. The notion of composition and improvisation based on musical intuition and spiritual revelation was shared by all the bass players in *Weather Report*, and can be seen as a direct result of the time Zawinul, Shorter, and Vitous spent in Miles's band and the lessons they learned there.

Bailey, like Pastorius, mentions that his sound was produced more by his hands than by any type of gear that he used. He says the following about his gear and what influence Zawinul and Shorter had concerning his gear:

Joe and Wayne pretty much had nothing to do with my gear. As far as changing for tunes, there are guys who might change for tunes, but I'm not one of them. You can give me one bass, a chord, and an amp. Any changes I made from song to song I made with my fingers. I'm not one of those guys who has to step on a pedal for everything. Those guys leave something to be desired, for me. I didn't have any specific gear for the band other than I played a '66 Fender Jazz bass during that time. That was my main instrument. That was an instrument that, in retrospect, was pretty dead. The neck on that bass was really dead. It didn't sing as much as I can sing on the bass, but it was the sound that worked for me at the time in giving me my own sound and my own identity.²⁵⁵

Bailey explained that for a while he was looking for his sound to come from the amplifier, attributing that mentality to his young age and short time playing the bass when he joined *Weather Report*. "I went through a bunch of different amp companies. But at that time I did not really realize that I was still learning how to play the *bass*. So I was looking for my sound from the amp and thinking the amp had something. Now I can play through any amp and it doesn't matter. I can get my sound through a television...just plug into it."²⁵⁶ Although equipment can play a large role in the type of sound you can get on an electric bass guitar, two bassists on the same gear will sound different based on how each individual plays the instrument. Lawrence Wayte explains,

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

“Two instruments of the same type may have different timbres. Two players of the same instrument may generate a significantly different timbre from that instrument by using different playing techniques or, in the case of electric instruments, different settings or features.”²⁵⁷

When asked about his function in the group, Bailey said:

They [Zawinul and Shorter] were always focused on the quality of the music first and foremost. And to say what the function...there was no one function. I was on the bottom, holding the thing together... but at the same time I had to improvise, so I’m improvising all the time. There were parts of the song where I had to play the written part, but you had to play the written part and make it sound organic and make it sound natural. I was everything...I was melodic, I was harmonic, I was functional, I was improvising... There was no one function. I can’t say there was any one function. I functioned as everything – melodic instrument, harmonic instrument, the foundation, sometimes I provided some color, sometimes I gave the band a boost of energy if the solo wasn’t going anywhere, sometimes I stayed out of the way if the solo was going somewhere. It was a little bit of everything.²⁵⁸

For the composition “Plaza Real” from the *Procession* album, Bailey had the opportunity to play Shorter’s written bass lines as well as improvise his own lines to make the composition what it is. Concerning the issue of playing written versus improvised parts, Bailey said, “Sometimes exactly what was written was perfect and it didn’t need anything. Other times what was written we didn’t play...those guys were some of the most open people I ever worked with in terms of just letting the music flow and become what it was. Some guys are stuck in what they wrote and that was never a question with Joe and Wayne.”²⁵⁹ Shorter had written a bass line for “Plaza Real” and Bailey did play what was written during the melody, but improvised during the bridge. Bailey explains, “The parts that I play in the melody section are the parts that Wayne

²⁵⁷ Wayte, “Bitches Brood,” 253-4.

²⁵⁸ Frandsen, phone interview with Bailey on 5 January 2009.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

wrote, and then the parts that I played in the bridge I just improvised. There are some moving chord changes and I improvised through those chords, and it's something completely different than what Wayne wrote."²⁶⁰

Musical notation for measures 8-11 of "Plaza Real". The top staff is labeled "Accordion" and the bottom staff is labeled "Bass Guitar". Both are in 4/4 time. Measure 8: Accordion has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Bass has a quarter rest, quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2. Measure 9: Accordion has a quarter note D5, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4. Bass has a quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 10: Accordion has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Bass has a quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 11: Accordion has a quarter note D5, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4. Bass has a quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3.

Musical notation for measures 12-16 of "Plaza Real". The top staff is labeled "Acc." and the bottom staff is labeled "Bass". Both are in 4/4 time. Measure 12: Acc. has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Bass has a quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 13: Acc. has a quarter note D5, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4. Bass has a quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 14: Acc. has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Bass has a quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 15: Acc. has a quarter note D5, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4. Bass has a quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 16: Acc. has a quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Bass has a quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3.

Example 6-1 Bass guitar and accordion lines from "Plaza Real"

Example 6-1 shows the bass line Shorter wrote which Bailey played during the opening melody featuring Zawinul on the accordion. The accordion and bass enter the song at 0:19 and play off of each other rhythmically with Bailey often accenting the second of the two eighth-note groupings, creating even more of a syncopated feel throughout the section. Bailey improvised over the bridge section and changed the texture and timbre of the bass line and the composition by playing octave jumps, more notes, arpeggiated lines, and syncopated rhythms, and by using a wider range.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

Bass Guitar

Example 6-2 Bailey's improvised bass line in bridge section of "Plaza Real"

The subtle nuances of playing some notes short and not giving some notes full value can be heard in the recording, and contribute to the overall appeal of his particular style throughout this section of the composition and in all his work with *Weather Report*.

More of Bailey's diversity as a bassist and sideman can be heard on "Two Lines," also from the *Procession* album, which features him playing two types of bass lines in the same composition. One is a typical walking bass line and the other is an "evolving groove" with the entire song based on an F-Major tonality. Although there are some times when he repeats small sections of what he has previously played, his ability to improvise for extended periods of time provides constant forward motion for this composition. His walking lines swing hard in conjunction with Omar Hakim's ride cymbal and drive the composition through each of the A sections. The basic line he improvises during the half-time funk section is illustrated in example 6-3.

Example 6-3 Bailey’s funk line in the B section of “Two Lines”

The evolving groove is present in the above example with Bailey using subtle changes in rhythm and pitch to give the line long-term variety and change. The bass line stays within the F pentatonic realm and doesn’t even introduce the third of the chord during the first eight measures of this section. Although Bailey’s bass line looks and sounds similar to something Pastorius may have played, Bailey’s bass line sits in the mix as more of a contributor to the rhythm section rather than as an up-front bass groove that the rest of the band plays around.

The form of “Two Lines” is A-B-A and is constructed as follows:

- 0:00-0:24 Intro material
- A: 0:25-1:48 Sax and synth double melody over walking bass line
- B: 1:49-5:34 Sax and synth solos over half-time funk feel
- A: 5:35-7:43 Sax and synth double melody over walking bass line

Not only does the title describe how many types of bass lines Bailey uses, but also how the form is set up and how many lines are playing the melody during the A sections. The constant state of improvisation and listening that Bailey engages in during a composition is another aspect of his style that helps define his sound within *Weather Report*. Bailey is

able, through listening to the other players, to find and explore new melodic and rhythmic ideas to carry the bass line forward throughout the composition.

Chris Jisi writes briefly about Victor Bailey’s style in a 2008 *Bass Player* article that paid tribute to the bass players who had played with Zawinul over the years. Jisi points to Bailey’s “evolving improvised groove prowess” on the Zawinul composition “D \flat Waltz” commenting on how Bailey “varies and builds his part, during the A section” (see example 6-4).²⁶¹

Example 6-4 Bailey’s bass line on “D-Flat Waltz”²⁶²

In this short 12-bar section of the song, Bailey starts out fairly simple in the first two measures, but then starts to embellish his original line in the next two measures, then continues to evolve the bass line throughout the entire excerpt as well as the composition as a whole. Bailey utilizes syncopation, parallel octaves, two-octave leaps, sixteenth-note triplets, muted notes, and anticipations, all within this short example, thus establishing his style of “evolving improvised groove prowess.”

One aspect of Bailey’s playing with drummer Omar Hakim that cannot be notated is the ability to make the time groove or feel good. Bailey and Hakim play well together

²⁶¹ Jisi, “A Remark They Made,” 48.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 48.

on “D \flat Waltz” to create what Bailey considered “one of the best rhythm section performances ever.”²⁶³ About his playing on this composition, Bailey says, “The key is to provide the bass function, but make it move; it’s a feel thing. Rhythmically I make sure I’m always riding the drums—locking into a part of the kit or a pattern. Melodically, I keep my phrases and fills short, so the part remains in groove mode. And overall, I’m listening to the rest of the band for inspiration and material to react to.”²⁶⁴

Bailey, like Johnson, felt that his unique contribution to the *Weather Report* sound was his own composition. Bailey had originally included “Consequently” on the demo tape he sent to Zawinul, and it was the one composition that Zawinul kept asking Bailey to bring in and record with the band. Bailey mentions the following about recording “Consequently” with *Weather Report*: “It’s the only tune in the entire history of the band that sounds like I sound. It’s my song so I mixed it. The tone of the bass is my sound. The way I soloed on it is my sound. It’s the only song that’s really the way I play.”²⁶⁵

The composition is a simple A-B form, repeated once, with the bass playing the intro and melody in the first A section followed by a B section where Zawinul’s synth and Shorter’s sax double playing another melody. The second A section is Bailey’s bass solo and is the same length as the original A section. The final B section brings the return of the melody played during the first B section as well as a simultaneous synth solo. The bass only provides a foundational role during the B sections balancing the much greater role of the bass in the A sections. Zawinul provides a pedal bass note during the A sections to help ground the harmonies and Bailey plays long bass notes in octaves to provide the harmonic foundation for the synth and sax melodies.

Bailey’s four-measure introduction to “Consequently” sets up the slow tempo and establishes a sparse texture with only light playing from the piano, synthesizers, cymbals,

²⁶³ Frandsen, phone interview with Bailey on 5 January 2009.

²⁶⁴ Jisi, “A Remark They Made,” 48.

²⁶⁵ Frandsen, phone interview with Bailey on 5 January 2009.

and hi-hat. When Bailey enters with the bass on the last beat of measure two, he sets up the style of the first A section melody: faster notes played in double time followed by longer notes that create space and allow the music to breathe. The use of space is something Bailey realized after he joined the band, “I realized it’s not this constant blowing. There’s a lot of space. The main thing is to realize how to get your thing in there and still leave all that space.”²⁶⁶ Later in the same article Bailey adds, “But when I pick up the bass, my mind is just naturally thinking of a million things.”²⁶⁷ “Consequently” creates the dichotomy of space and “thinking a millions things” through the use of a slower tempo and an open texture juxtaposed with Bailey’s double-time bass melody and solo. Bailey’s use of space can also be seen in example 6-1 where his sparse bass line accompanies the accordion for the melody of “Plaza Real” and continues in a similar manner during other sections of that composition.

Another aspect of Bailey’s style present in this example is his tendency to think like a melodic player rather than as a foundational player. His melody during the first A section and his solo during the second A section comprise half of the entire composition. This is similar to Pastorius’s up-front bass playing and twice as long solo on “Havona,” but where Pastorius continues with a busy bass line during the keyboard and sax solos during his composition, Bailey provides space for Zawinul and Shorter by playing much less, thus taking the focus off the bass and putting it on the melody and solos when appropriate. Bailey’s melodic A sections and longer-note-value B sections are also lacking a repeated bass riff or groove, which often grounded *Weather Report* compositions especially after the Vitous era. In comparing Bailey’s “Consequently” to Johnson’s “Cucumber Slumber,” both of which were considered the most important contribution to the group by each bass player, the styles are quite dissimilar. Where Johnson based his composition on a groove and fairly stagnant harmonies, Bailey was

²⁶⁶ Woodard, “Weather Report’s Victor Bailey,” 24.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

concerned with more melodic material and increased harmonic activity. Bailey's melodic role in "Consequently" was not as a co-melodic player, similar to Vitous, but as the sole melodic player or soloist.

Example 6-5 First A section of "Consequently"

The musical score is arranged in four systems. The first system is for the Alto Saxophone, the second for the Drum Set, the third for the Bass Guitar, and the fourth for the Keyboard. The Alto Saxophone part is mostly silent, with a few notes in the final measure. The Drum Set part features a steady pattern of eighth notes. The Bass Guitar part has a melodic line starting in the third measure. The Keyboard part consists of a continuous eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and rests in the left hand. A tempo marking of quarter note = 58 is shown at the top left.

Alto Sax.

Drum Set

Bass Guitar

Keyboard

$\text{♩} = 58$

5

A. Sx.

D. S.

Bass

Kbd.

9

A. Sx.

D. S.

Bass

Kbd.

13

A. Sx.

D. S.

Bass

Kbd.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 13 to 16. The Alto Saxophone (A. Sx.) part is silent, indicated by a whole rest in each measure. The Drums (D. S.) part features a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with 'x' marks above the notes indicating specific drum sounds. The Bass part has a melodic line starting with eighth notes, followed by a more complex eighth-note pattern with slurs, and ending with a few quarter notes. The Keyboard (Kbd.) part consists of a right-hand part with chords and a left-hand part with a simple bass line of quarter notes.

17

A. Sx.

D. S.

Bass

Kbd.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 17 to 20. The Alto Saxophone (A. Sx.) part is silent, indicated by a whole rest in each measure. The Drums (D. S.) part continues with the same rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and 'x' marks. The Bass part features a melodic line with eighth notes and slurs, similar to the previous system. The Keyboard (Kbd.) part maintains the chordal accompaniment in the right hand and the bass line in the left hand.

Victor Bailey's contribution to *Weather Report* was as a multifunctional bass player who helped to regroup the band by making the bass more a part of the rhythm section rather than a lead or up-front instrument as it was during the time Pastorius was in the band: a relationship that was established early during Bailey's tenure as a result of Zawinul and Shorter's request. During the course of working out compositions with *Weather Report*, Bailey would vary his approach by playing a combination of written-out and improvised bass lines based on what sounded best to the musicians in the group. Because Zawinul and Shorter were looking for something that was more spiritual, Bailey had to rely on his own spirituality and muse to work at capturing a certain feeling or frame of mind within each composition—the essence of the composition.

Bailey contributed ideas that were new to him as well because he was not able to play his “classic lines” that had worked for him in the past; he was forced to find something new and fresh because nothing that was typical for Bailey worked for Zawinul and Shorter. Bailey's function within the group was as everything: melodic, harmonic, foundation, improviser, and whatever else he needed to contribute in order for the band to collectively reach the “That's It!” moment when everyone knew that what had just happened was perfect for that composition.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

In coming up with a name for the band, Joe Zawinul said that “Wayne popped out *Weather Report*, and we all said, ‘That’s it!’ That’s the fun thing. When it’s happening, you immediately know it.”²⁶⁸ During our phone interview, Victor Bailey said, “When the ‘that’s it’ moment happens, you know, that’s the thing and it just works and you don’t need to play anything else.” The single greatest thread in interviews with the bass players of *Weather Report* seems to be their shared belief that their collective musical intuition was the primary determinant for all musical choices in the band. At the same time, each was unique in his approach to the music and the band, and each had a personal sound and approach that defined his time in the group, and helped define the sound of jazz-rock in general.

Each of the bass players in *Weather Report* brought a different sound and approach to the band based on his individual background as a bass player and musician. They were formed by the people they had played with previously as well as during their time in *Weather Report*. Playing jazz-rock with Zawinul and Shorter was an opportunity for all of them not only to explore the technique they brought to the band, but also to realize deeper levels of creativity while they were in the band. This sometimes included being pushed out of their individual comfort zones to find something fresh and new to contribute to *Weather Report* compositions and the sound of jazz-rock. The intrinsic value of each player as a virtuoso and the opportunity they had to develop that virtuosity with one of the premier jazz-rock groups of all time contributed greatly not only to the sound of *Weather Report*, but also to the sound of jazz-rock, while at the same time establishing the electric bass guitar as an instrument with unlimited virtuosic potential.

²⁶⁸ Glasser, *In A Silent Way*, 131.

In the previous four chapters, the individual style characteristics of each player have been examined through the analysis of representative recordings. This has yielded insights into how each player was able to provide a different sound in terms of timbre and texture, rhythmic approach, and phrasing, and in how they reacted to musical gestures played by the other members of *Weather Report*. The interviews with the living bass players of the band have brought insight into how they approached the music and what they thought, in hindsight, was their most important contribution to the band. Unfortunately, because of Pastorius's untimely death in 1987, the answers to the questions of how he approached the music of *Weather Report* and what he felt his significant contribution was to the band had to be deduced from the existing articles and books about him. In terms of how *he* affected *Weather Report*, Zawinul provides the following: "Basically, it was always Wayne and me...Other things were small. Only Jaco was a big thing."²⁶⁹

Each player brought their own sound and approach to the band, and it is easy to identify those differences over the course of the band's history; but what may be more interesting at this point are the similarities that exist between each player in how they viewed themselves in relation to the band and their approach to creating and improvising new music or compositions while they were with the band. Each player played a combination of written-out and improvised bass lines; created not on a set of verbal directions or cues, but based on what sounded best during the course of working up a composition for a recording or live performance; acknowledged an intuitive or spiritual realm of creativity that would take place while playing with the band; and contributed their own compositions, which they felt was the most important contribution to the band that they could make.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 190.

Small offers the following concerning musical performance: “We begin to see a musical performance as an encounter between human beings that takes place through the medium of sounds organized in specific ways.”²⁷⁰ The bass players of *Weather Report* played the way they did based on the relationship between the players and the encounters that took place between them as human beings. The two constant members of the group, Zawinul and Shorter, established different relationships within the group by virtue of the changing personnel throughout the history of the band. When new members of the rhythm section were brought into the band the relationships changed and the individuals reacted and responded differently to the new and established players.

The sound of the group would have changed not only from bass player to bass player, but also while each bass player was active within the band. Concerning these evolving relationships Small says, “In that all musical performances evolve over time, the relationships the performance brings into being are also evolving. The relationships at the end of the performance are not the same as those of the beginning.”²⁷¹ If, as Small argues, the relationships at the end of a particular performance have changed, then the relationships from album to album would have changed, as would have the relationships from the time an individual bass player started playing with the group to the time they left the band, and, ultimately, from the formation of *Weather Report* to its break up.

The improvisatory approach that *Weather Report* took to composition was based heavily on the nature of the relationships within the band: an approach most likely learned from the time that some of the members spent with Miles Davis. Where Zawinul and Shorter gave relatively little verbal direction, the bass players, as well as other rhythm-section players in the band, had to play what they thought or intuited that the leaders of the group wanted. The relationships that were built and developed during the

²⁷⁰ Small, *Musicking*, 10.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

time that each bass player spent in the group provided the foundation upon which they could explore new musical possibilities within each composition.

Another similarity among the bass players who were interviewed for this dissertation is the presence of a spiritual aspect of their playing. Vitous mentioned “the muse,” and both Johnson and Bailey specifically used the term “spiritual” when talking about their individual playing in the group. This spiritual sense of knowing what to play, or knowing that what is being played is absolutely the right thing, is of value to these musicians and is important in how they make musical decisions. All of the bass players mentioned that this was a collective feeling within the band: a sense that when the music was happening or being played in a manner that all agreed was the right way to play it, all the members of the group knew that this was how the music was to be recorded or played in a live performance.

When asked about what it was like playing in the bass chair with Zawinul and what was expected of him, Victor Bailey replied:

Actually, Joe rarely said anything specific or told you what to play...it was very open for you to create your own bass line. But he expected you to hold the groove and keep improvising. He always pushed and challenged you, never letting you get too comfortable in what you were playing. Just when the R&B/funk part of me would settle into a popping groove, he'd want me to change it—he would play something with his left hand and look over at me to pick up on it. And it wasn't just bass lines that would transform, Joe would get to soundcheck and change the entire feel of tunes on a nightly basis.²⁷²

Bailey's comment summarizes the challenge faced by each of the bass players of *Weather Report*: they were encouraged to be creative while at the same time expected to provide a solid foundation for the rest of the composition, and the relationship between the bass player and the composition could and would change on a regular basis—whether it was within a single composition or if it was the same composition on a different night.

²⁷² Jisi, “A Remark They Made,” 48.

While this dissertation has shown how each bass player contributed something new and different, it has also shown that these bass players shared many beliefs, and that their approaches to improvisation were remarkably similar.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Who were the main writers for the band? Were you encouraged by Zawinul or Shorter to bring your own compositions to the band?

How were new tunes brought into the band? How much was written out? Did that include a written bass line? If the piece was not fully notated, was there much verbal discussion or direction?

How much compositional input did you have on other people's tunes? Can you give me a specific example, and break down how your part was created?

In a through-composed work by another of the band's writers, were you encouraged to improvise or otherwise depart from the written parts?

What musical elements within the ensemble shaped, dictated, or inspired unique approaches in your playing? What sort of factors would make you write a part, change a part, or completely re-imagine a part? Can you give me an example?

How much room was there for you to experiment with tone and technique? Were there examples of tunes where you started with one kind of technique and then changed that technique in the course of working up the tune? Were there tunes where your altered techniques fundamentally changed the overall tune?

Did you try different processing? What type of equipment did you use (basses, effects, amps)? Did that change over your tenure in the band? Did the band's composers ask you to make changes in gear for specific compositions or albums?

All in all and with the benefit of hindsight, what do you believe was your most important function in the band? Do you feel that your understanding of your most important function agreed with or argued with that understanding on the part of Zawinul, Shorter, or the other composers? Can you give me a single tune which best illustrates, for you, your unique contribution as a bass player in defining the Weather Report sound?

(Disclaimer: The following interviews are transcribed in their entirety and are unedited.)

Phone Interview with Miroslav Vitous on 8 January 2009

MF: Who were the main writers for the band and were you encouraged by Joe Zawinul or Wayne Shorter to bring your own compositions to the band?

MV: Okay, I will answer this question; quite frankly it was a co-op band. The three of us owned the group. It has not been really publicized correctly because after I had left they sort of wanted to make me be a regular bass player [in the way Johnson, Pastorius, and Bailey were hired sidemen]. I was one of the owners of the group which means that everything was equal. We were sharing the money, we had the group together, each one of us had the same amount of compositions for the recordings and for the concerts, so there was no need for encouragement whatsoever. Each one of us brought in the music which we composed for the band.

MF: How were new tunes brought in to the band? How much was written out and did that include a written bass line? If the tune was not fully notated, was there much verbal discussion or direction?

MV: Well it was a very creative process, you know, because we are all improvisers and all composers. So basically all of us brought in the structure of the song – which was basically the harmonic progression and the melody – very rarely there was a bass line, well sometimes Joe would bring in a bass line or something, but normally I would come up with the bass line myself from what I would hear. That is the best way to do it anyway because you choose the musician who is playing it. Sometimes when a piano player writes a bass line they write a bass line which works on the piano but it doesn't really work on the bass. So that's the danger of that. So we are improvisers, so we go on and everyone tries to play the tune and things come to us and we stop and did cuts and

talk and we say “Yeah it’s better to do it this way” or “Why don’t we skip this part and make it longer or shorter” or “Why don’t we skip this phrase and go to the next phrase.” You know, we listen while we are playing – listen and arrange it on the spot. Basically we finish the composition among the three of us. That’s basically how it worked.

MF: As far as the recordings, did you have a pretty good idea going in to the studio what you were going to do or was there a lot of material on the recordings that was improvised on the spot?

MV: Sometimes yes and sometimes no. But, for example, the first album we rehearsed for three months or something to get all the new music together and then we went in to record it so we knew exactly what we were going to do. Basically we had a very good idea of what we were going to do beforehand, and much of it comes after you play the lines, of course, or the tune itself and then improvisation is the thing which happens always on the spot because it’s improvisation. And the great thing about a band on this level is everyone was sticking with the essence of the tune or of the song. Nobody would be playing something entirely different; everyone had enough understanding to remain within the essence of the composition. This is what makes it very special and very original. It’s like you don’t eat beef if you eat pork and you don’t eat pork if you eat beef, you know? It’s kind of a thing like that.

MF: How much compositional input did you have on other people’s tunes? Can you give me a specific example, and break down how your part was created?

MV: Well, I already told you that. What I hear I would play, so sometimes I would create my own bass line on the composition, sometimes I would play the bass line which was suggested, or do half and half. It is impossible to tell how much and when and how

because it's a creative process. You just have to mark it as a creative process. But it was quite a bit, I can tell you that, because each player, on his instrument, is capable of bringing up a better part than the musician who writes for it from another instrument. Because we each know our instrument better than anybody else, so it is always best when the person will come up with his own part or changes it to his own liking or his own personality.

MF: What musical elements within the ensemble shaped, dictated, or inspired unique approaches in your playing?

MV: Well this is a little bit too much of a technical question. I think I will make it a little bit broader, and that is: basically what happened in *Weather Report* is that we tried to play new music, it was time for new music to arrive and we did that. It was a kind of fusion going on with a very advanced, modern jazz. The main reason for this is that the bass was being played in a different way. I am not a bass player who will be playing an accompaniment and just stay in the back and just go (mimics playing four quarter notes to the measure) boom, boom, boom, boom. I am playing like a solo player which means I was playing with them as an equal – answering and talking, having a conversation with them. I was not only doing that...I was demanding a conversation. And that alone is the biggest part of why the music was so fresh and so new. The role of the bass had completely changed from the background to up front. This happened while I was in the group and after I left the group this stopped. They went on to the black funk kind of commercial approach. Joe and Wayne were truly improvising among themselves, but the rest of the band was playing a solid, almost like an R and B [rhythm and blues] kind of a thing. Basically they went in a commercial way after I had departed from the group.

MF: Do you believe that was just in an attempt to make money as a group or is that the direction you think they wanted to go?

MV: The money was the main reason for this. I know that because I was there and I can tell you that. It didn't work out because, this is really ironic, but one year later the top American jazz musicians were coming to European festivals for 30, 40, 50 thousand dollars a concert. So if they just would have held off for another year, we would have gotten the same money or even more money before even, you know, none of this was even necessary. But there were other reasons for that because Joe Zawinul was not capable of playing and continuing in this direction, to a more collective way because he was very much self-centered and he wanted control. You could see it in the later days of the band. Wayne had little to say and Joe basically became the dictator of the group and that's what he wanted. There was another reason for this, because Joe could not play the way me and Wayne and a lot of free musicians who improvise would play. I will explain this to you: Joe's system worked like, he would receive the music from the heavens, so to speak, right, then he would stop it, he would think about it, he would change it, and then he would play it. The way we play is that we don't change anything, we don't stop anything; it comes from the heavens, goes straight through us, and goes out. This was comparable to...sometimes Wayne and me and the drummer would play some incredible music and Joe would not know what to do so he would go (makes a sound like a descending glissando on the piano) he would break that thing out and stop playing his own tune because he didn't know what to do. It was a major thing where Joe could not go and he never revealed that, of course, because it would be a disadvantage if the musicians caught you, so basically he was trying to cover this up all his life. That is one of the reasons why this would not have worked anyway.

MF: How much room was there for you to experiment with tone and technique? Were there examples of tunes where you started with one kind of technique and then changed that technique in the course of working up the tune?

MV: No. I would have to completely correct you on this. This is not the way I thought about it and this is not the way you think about it when you create music. You play what you hear. So if the heavens sent you something, you hear it, you play it. It's not a question that you would try this technique then another technique. You have to know your instrument well enough to have incredible technique to play whatever you want to play or whatever you hear or as close to that as possible. And then you just go and perform what you hear. You are the instrument of the music. I play the bass, but the music plays me. You can not play music technically like this because if you do this then you are not really with the spirit; you are just technically trying to do something like in school.

MF: On a couple of tunes it sounded like you used some processing on your bass. Did you try different processing?

MV: I used a wah-wah pedal, and I used a fuzz tone. And some reverb sometimes. But those were the only effects I was using.

MF: What type of equipment did you use while you were playing with Weather Report?

MV: I don't really remember. There was electric bass, my acoustic bass with the pick-up, I don't remember the name of the pick-up back then, but it was very limited anyway. It was the beginning of the electronic age of the instrument and also the pick-up and all this stuff.

MF: Did Joe Zawinul or Wayne Shorter ask you to make changes in your gear for specific songs that they brought in?

MV: No. Why would they ask me to make some changes? Everybody does what they want to do. I didn't ask them, they didn't ask me, there was no reason for this. Everybody did the best he could possibly do and there was no reason for this.

MF: All in all and with the benefit of hindsight, what do you believe was your most important function in the band?

MV: I think I have already said that. Because of the way I play the bass, basically I have created the opening for very new music to arrive...because of this very particular reason. I think that was my biggest input in this band or in any band; but especially in this band at this time.

MF: Can you give me a single tune which best illustrates, for you, your unique contribution as a bass player in defining the early *Weather Report* sound?

MV: All the tunes which we played...on every one of them this is what I'm speaking of.

MF: I had a chance to pick up *Infinite Search*. It's definitely not the jazz-rock thing that John Goldsby talked about.

MV: Right, that's total bullshit. They don't know what they are talking about.

MF: The intensity of *Freedom Jazz Dance* right off the bat was great. I enjoyed getting to know that album a little bit.

MV: Well, you know what was accomplished was the top of the modern jazz with the best modern jazz musicians, ever, and it was combined together with the European melodies and European feelings. So American modern jazz was unreached and European culture was unreached by American modern jazz. So that was the accomplishment on that album.

MF: The feel of what was going on in European jazz at the time you recorded *Infinite Search*, and even before that...

MV: That's not what I am speaking of about what was going on in European jazz. I am speaking of my roots and my musical feeling and my musical being. Not what was happening in European jazz at the time...that's not what I am referring to.

MF: Is there anything else you would like to add about the time you spent in *Weather Report*?

MV: Not really. We did what we were supposed to do. Well I did write you that they were not fair to me?

MF: No, you did not write that.

MV: Well, just to complete the whole picture then...basically I got kicked out of *Weather Report* because they wanted more money; they wanted to go in a commercial way. I was not the black style bass player, so they kicked me out and they have lied; they have not

paid any money whatsoever for one third of my ownership. And on top of that, Wayne Shorter's wife has stolen my documents of ownership of *Weather Report*. She had access to my apartment because I was living with her niece at the time. So this will probably complete the picture?

MF: Yes that does provide a completed picture. That is unfortunate.

MV: Yes. It is very unfortunate and it is a bit typical. They both were trying to be very bright and very big and very great personalities and whatever have you; especially Wayne. And Wayne is a very beautiful person and he is like he is, but this is like a skeleton in his closet and he will not admit to it and he will not take care of it, he will not correct it.

MF: That's too bad.

MV: This is really something very strange for me. Of course I know he doesn't want to reveal that his wife did that. I think that he doesn't want to deal with it because he doesn't want to have her being accused. Anyway, I know that for a fact because she came to me and asked me for forgiveness. So I know that, and it is completely useless. It is useless even more because I am speaking of it in my interviews everywhere. So it's going to be exposed more than if he would have taken care of it.

MF: My dissertation will be available on academic search engines. Do you mind if...

MV: I don't mind at all because it's about time the world knew what the true story was and how these two people really behaved in legal matters being completely not fair. Basically, they were trying to bury me. All the credit I was supposed to receive for being

part of the new music, and in fact the bass playing was most responsible for this to happen, they took it themselves and tried to bury me. But things are changing now. People are starting to realize what I am doing and that's the reason *Weather Report* was doing what they were doing and things are coming up to the surface. So this will be taken care of in the next year or so. I think it will be public knowledge of what really happened back then and it will be very clear.

MF: What are you working on right now?

MV: Right now I am releasing a band album which is actually a project called *Remembering Weather Report*. I didn't record any of *Weather Report*'s music which we played at that time, but the way the remembering is done is in the way of concept. I am doing exactly the same thing I was doing there and that is to, with the bass, making this happen with the bass...like I did in *Weather Report*. We are playing *Nefertiti*, by Wayne Shorter, but it's not really *Nefertiti*. I just took the first three notes of the phrase, everybody will know it's that tune, but it's not really that tune and it's done in such an incredible way that it's a complete knock out. The album is on an incredibly high level, ECM knows, and the producer, Manfred Eicher, he thinks that no-one is even close to this, period. Because now everybody is doing older things or they are afraid to step forward or they are doing commercial things just to make money, whatever; but no-one is doing anything...no-one.

MF: Who do you have playing on the album?

MV: It's my group: Franco Ambrosetti [trumpet], Gary Campbell [tenor saxophone], and Gerald Cleaver [drums]. I have also a guest Michel Portal, I don't know if you have ever heard of him. He is a clarinetist, also classical musician, fantastic musician from France.

MF: When are you going to be touring through Europe?

MV: Let me just finish...so this is what's coming up and I am working on *Universal Syncopations III* again with the orchestra in a much more profound way going much more into the marriage of creative force and classical form. I don't know if you have heard *Universal Syncopations II*, but it was the first one with the orchestra and this basically set this marriage of the creative force and the classical form. And I believe this is where the music has to go because everything else is just repeating or doing one little branch of the tree, whatever, but it is not a complete picture. And this does provide the complete picture and as a consequence a lot of changes will have to happen in education of musicians and the whole reform of education must take place so that the composers can work with the musicians and learn and therefore they can improvise within the orchestra and we have created creative force on the classical stage, you see, because this is what we are missing. We don't have the creative force on the classical stage. I think it is only repeated from the notes and that is not... so the heavens have nothing to do there, you know? So now we have to come up with something so it can be creative on the spot. So this is what I am aiming for.

MF: Do you mind if I send you more of what I write so I can get your feedback on the chapter?

MV: That's good because sometimes I can be misunderstood because I am speaking very directly. So that's good if you can send it and I can read it through and just make sure it's what I mean...it's there.

MF: That's really what I'm trying to do. I want to get your intent. I think a lot of times in magazines and books there is misinterpretation, the artist is misunderstood. So I want to be sure your side is understood.

MV: Right. Exactly. After all, it is the truth. And please feel free to include that thing about how they behaved to their partner. I think that is something that should be included in this because this is what happened.

Email interview with Alphonso Johnson on 30 December 2008

MF: Who were the main writers for the band? Were you encouraged by Zawinul or Shorter to bring your own compositions to the band?

AJ: Joe and Wayne were the main writers for the group but they always encouraged all of the musicians to bring in compositions of their own.

MF: How were new tunes brought into the band? How much was written out? Did that include a written bass line? If the piece was not fully notated, was there much verbal discussion or direction?

AJ: We would get back from a tour and after a week or so there would be time set aside for capturing the momentum that had built. I wouldn't call it a rehearsal because that would imply that we'd do the same thing over and over until we got it to be correct. Sometimes the compositions were fully notated and sometimes they were just sketches of a theme. There was always direction but not in the sense that Joe or Wayne would tell you exactly what to play. A lot of what transpired was more intuitive or even spiritual depending on if we were recording or not.

MF: How much compositional input did you have on other people's tunes? Can you give me a specific example, and break down how your part was created?

AJ: There was so much music that we played over the course of a few years that I'd have to go back and listen to each song to remember if there was anything that I changed or created. For example I do remember that on *Mysterious Traveler* we recorded a song called "Nubian Sundance" and most of what I played was really around what Joe had already recorded with his synth bass. The same thing for "American Tango" which of

course already had Miroslav Vitous bass lines recorded but I overdubbed and played around what he had previously recorded.

MF: In a through-composed work by another of the band's writers, were you encouraged to improvise or otherwise depart from the written parts?

AJ: Always !!

MF: What musical elements within the ensemble shaped, dictated, or inspired unique approaches in your playing? What sort of factors would make you write a part, change a part, or completely re-imagine a part? Can you give me an example?

AJ: I think what Wayne once said to me says it best, "Music is but only a small part of life." Sitting at the bar before leaving the hotel, riding the trains together throughout Europe, laughing together backstage just before a concert, having a serious conversation with Ana Maria or Maxine at their home shaped and inspired my playing just as much as being in the presence of two musical geniuses. Imagination, composition, and change all come from the same source and it's not anything physical other than the instruments that we use.

MF: How much room was there for you to experiment with tone and technique? Were there examples of tunes where you started with one kind of technique and then changed that technique in the course of working up the tune? Were there tunes where your altered techniques fundamentally changed the overall tune?

AJ: The group was called *Weather Report* specifically because the music reflected the constant state of change. This concept reflected everything we did musically so all of the music was changing all of the time or at least that was the expectation. I think that if you

listen to my playing on the first recording that I did with the group and compare it to what I did on *Black Market* you'll hear a difference in my approach to that music.

MF: Did you try different processing? What type of equipment did you use (basses, effects, amps)? Did that change over your tenure in the band? Did the band's composers ask you to make changes in gear for specific compositions or albums?

AJ: When I first played on stage with the band I had a blue, nagahide, tuck and roll 100 watt Kustom bass amp with two 15" speakers. At that time it was killin' until I heard Joe's equipment. He blew me away so bad that I had Brian Risner (our sound tech) design me a custom bass system. Brian really was the first person that I could sit down with and talk specifics about sound from a musician's viewpoint and also from a mixers viewpoint. Both Wayne and Joe were always seeking new sounds all of the time so I got to try out a lot of new toys in front of the audience.

MF: All in all and with the benefit of hindsight, what do you believe was your most important function in the band? Do you feel that your understanding of your most important function agreed with or argued with that understanding on the part of Zawinul, Shorter, or the other composers? Can you give me a single tune which best illustrates, for you, your unique contribution as a bass player in defining the *Weather Report* sound?

AJ: It's true that hindsight is 20/20, so I'd have to say that my function was to stay out of the way, both in frequency and register, from an orchestration perspective. You would have to ask Wayne that question but I think he'll give you the same answer in a different form. Without a doubt "Cucumber Slumber" was one of the few moments of total spontaneous improvisation that was captured while recording. That really allowed me to be myself and at the same time help guide the sound in a direction that I thought was unique.

Phone interview with Victor Bailey on 5 January 2009

VB: What is this that you are writing exactly?

MF: This is a dissertation. I am working on my Ph.D. and this is that last thing I have to do – write this dissertation. I wanted to do it on the bass players of *Weather Report* based on an article that I read, it was actually an interview that Josef Woodard did with you in...

VB: That was '83 or something.

MF: Yes, it was actually '84. He talked about, in his first paragraph, “forwarding the cause of the electric bass.” I thought I'd like to write about that and pursue that a little more as far as “forwarding the cause” because *Weather Report* was one of the first bands to forward the cause of the electric bass and electric instruments in jazz in general. That's kind of the direction I was going with this.

VB: Okay.

MF: First I want to say thanks for offering to do the interview. I've got just a few questions. Basically what I'm interested in is your role as an electric bass player in *Weather Report*; things that you did on other people's compositions, your own compositions, and how that creative process came about. As I go through the questions, if you can't hear me or if you need me to repeat anything, please just let me know.

VB: Okay.

MF: So the first one is: Who were the main writers for the band? And, were you encouraged by Zawinul or Shorter to bring your own compositions to the band?

VB: Well, *Weather Report* was Joe and Wayne's band, period. They were the main writers, they were the main everything, it was their band. They were open to other people's music – but, they didn't necessarily do the music that I had. I had one song recorded on the last *Weather Report* record called *This Is This*. It was ballad of mine called "Consequently". Other than that I played them everything I had, they just didn't respond to what I had, which, at the time, I thought they just weren't getting it. But if you know anything about my solo work...one of the tunes is a song called "Kid Logic" which is from my first record *Bottom's Up*. It was a song I wrote for the band (*Weather Report*) which they didn't like. Joe told me the bass line wasn't happening. Needless to say it is one of the all time classic bass tracks recorded by anybody. It's up there with *School Days* [Stanley Clarke] or *Teen Town* [Jaco Pastorius] as something that was a pivotal moment for the instrument. So the music that I had that Joe didn't record ended up on my records. But I had the freedom to bring them whatever I had and play for them whatever I had. I sort of had the feeling that after Jaco, well, it's not even that I have a feeling, they weren't looking for the bass thing to be as prominent, and everything I had was very bass oriented. Joe told me the first day of rehearsal before we ever played that "we just had five years of a lot of bass and we want the bass to function more as part of the rhythm section." The short answer to your question is that I had the freedom to bring and play for them anything that I wanted, but I don't know if that is what they were looking for.

MF: You had mentioned in a previous email "less bass prominence" and that's definitely something that I want to use that Joe had told you, so I'm going to quote you on that for

sure. How were new tunes brought to the band? How much was written out? If any of it was written out did it include a written bass line?

VB: *Weather Report* was a combination of everything. Joe and Wayne always had their music and their ideas written out, but it was not an exact, specific thing. In some bands everything's written out and in some bands nothing...it's a combination of everything. They brought in what they had and it was written and everybody would read it and learn it, but their approach was based on what sounded the best. There were times when something was written and maybe the first page we found out that the written parts sounded best and maybe on the second page we may have improvised a little bit. The bass parts were never that specific. There was always a bass part written, but I'm a born improviser, I'm always improvising even though some of the things I read seem to have this impression that I played a traditional bass role in *Weather Report*. I think because I was not mixed prominently, a lot of people are not really listening, didn't really listen to what I did, but I'm always improvising. At the beginning of every song, pretty much we would just look at what was on the paper and learn what was on the paper, and then whether we played what was written or whether we improvised just depended on what happened. We may have been playing a written part that was on the paper and I may have just started playing something else and that sounded better, and we'd go "okay, we're going to use that bass part right there." Other times I may have come up with an alternate bass part and then looked back and said "No, I think the part that Wayne wrote is what I should play." Everything they ever did was a combination of written music and improvising.

MF: You've answered this a little bit, but maybe you could clarify: How much verbal discussion or direction was there when you guys started playing new tunes?

VB: There is no real verbal direction. It's exactly what I said – we played it...and it was all about what worked. Sometimes exactly what was written was perfect and it didn't need anything. Other times what was written we didn't play; it was always about...those guys were some of the most open people I ever worked with in terms of just letting the music flow and become what it was. Some guys are stuck in what they wrote and that was never a question with Joe and Wayne. They always had a sense of what sounded the best. I'll give you a classic example: there's a song from the *Procession* record called "Plaza Real" which Wayne wrote. The parts that I play in the melody section are the parts that Wayne wrote and then the parts that I played in the bridge I just improvised. There are some moving chord changes and I improvised through those chords and it's something completely different than what Wayne wrote. But what I improvised, in the studio, it was just one take when we got to the bridge. I didn't play what was on the paper, I just improvised and played some (begins singing bass line) and they really liked it. It worked, we left it. So, once again, the short answer to your question is, it's not about any verbal anything, we just played – played the music and went with what sounded best. There were no rules and regulations.

MF: What musical elements within the ensemble shaped, dictated, or inspired unique approaches in your playing?

VB: Just that the music itself was unique. It was jazzy, but it wasn't jazz. It was funky, but it wasn't funk. You know, a lot of the recorded work and the gigs that I've done, even though I'm much more of a jazz person than most of my recorded work shows, most of the gigs I've done are the little simple pentatonic bass lines with a funk feel. But the funk feel thing, that didn't really work in that band. So I was always looking for something other than funk. The other thing that was a very heavy part of what I did was be-bop, but be-bop didn't work in the band either. So trying to find my own way, it was

almost natural that I would truly have to search for something. I couldn't pull out any of my classic lines. Where I had some little funk lines that I would always fall into or maybe little licks that I could do under certain kinds of grooves...that band was so organic that there were no specific rules about how to find what I was going to play, other than nothing that is typical worked.

MF: This may be more of the same, and if it is you can let me know...What sort of factors would make you write a part, change a part, or completely re-imagine a part and can you give me an example?

VB: All I would do is play. I'm a natural improviser. You could give me a chord chart or you could write out 18 bars right now and put some chords in there and I could stand here for the next 72 hours and play those and never repeat myself and have a fat groove every time around. I just do that naturally, so other than there being any additional mental factors or any rules and regulations we would just play and I would just improvise. And the only thing, and this goes back to something I said earlier, the only thing that counted is whether it sounded good or not. We would have rehearsal and it might just be a solo in F, and it might be Joe's solo, and we might spend the whole day just playing that solo. It's a question of when I played something, or not only me but everybody in the band, when you play something that just sounded good and it just felt right. We might just play Joe's solo for an hour and then go have lunch for a while and come back and just then I would play something that was just...right. It felt right. It sounded right. It's hard for me to put into words when that is...it's just that everybody knows it. This is a real rule for me when I work with my band or when I work with other bands and when I'm recording in particular. When something really feels good, it's right, there's never any question about it. I could come up with a slick bass line all day and never repeat myself, but if people say "how do you like that, what do you think? I think

that works right,” that was never the thing. Whenever it was right, and this is everything else I’ve ever done including *Weather Report*, when it was right we’d all just look at each other and go “yeah, that...that’s it!” The “That’s It” moment. I have to coin that as a phrase because that’s something I could use for the future. When the “that’s it” moment happens, you know, that’s the thing and it just works and you don’t need to play anything else. Sometimes it might just be a feel and it might not be a specific bass line when the “that’s it” moment happens.

MF: How much room was there for you to experiment with tone and technique? Were there examples of tunes where you started with one kind of technique and then changed that technique in the course of working up the tune? In asking this question, I’m hearing the “that’s it” moment.

VB: It’s the same thing. I’m probably not the guy to talk to about technique. I have technique, but I don’t use technique. I’m old fashioned. I grew up in the 60’s and I started playing the bass in the 70’s. I basically play with two fingers, and I play pop and slap style which was invented by Larry Graham. And I have some chordal things that I do where I might use all my fingers, but basically I’m not a...I don’t know if I have different, well, I guess I have some techniques. I have tapping technique that I never used with *Weather Report*. It was more just finding things with the music. Technically speaking, most of what I did...I think I played slap and pop on one tune – it’s a song called “Predator” on the *Domino Theory* record...it was a Wayne Shorter tune and I slapped on the beginning of that tune. Other than that almost everything I did was traditional finger-style playing. Tone-wise I had issues with my work with *Weather Report* because I had a way better sound. I’m not complaining about the sound on any of those records, but it wasn’t my sound. I had no say. After I recorded I left and they mixed the record the way they heard it, so I had a way better sound than the sound on any

of those records. None of those records...it's not really my tone. I used way more variety of tones than is on the records; my take is real muddy and boomy compared to what my sound really is. Ultimately it goes back to that same thing... the "that's it" moment where I would have a little more pick-up, have some back pick-up, add some chorus, or take some treble off...we'd all just know when the sound was right. There was total freedom in everything. Those guys, maybe less than anybody else I've ever worked with, were never locked in to what they brought in or to what their ideas were. Everybody contributed to the bigger picture.

MF: This next question is getting a little more into gear. Did you try different processing? What type of equipment did you use as far as basses, effects, and amps? Did that change over the time that you were in the band? Did Joe or Wayne ask you to make changes in your gear for specific tunes?

VB: No. Joe and Wayne pretty much had nothing to do with my gear. As far as changing for tunes, there are guys who might change for tunes, but I'm not one of them. You can give me one bass, a chord, and an amp. Any changes I made from song to song I made with my fingers. I'm not one of those guys who has to step on a pedal for everything. Those guys leave something to be desired, for me. I didn't have any specific gear for the band other than I played a '66 Fender Jazz bass during that time. That was my main instrument. That was an instrument that, in retrospect, was pretty dead. The neck on that bass was really dead. It didn't sing as much as I can sing on the bass, but it was the sound that worked for me at the time in giving me my own sound and my own identity. Amp-wise I never used any specific thing. I went through everything; I mean I had so many different amps. I had set-ups where we had a huge rack with three amps and a power amp and a refrigerator-sized rack. I went through a bunch of different amp companies. But at that time I did not really realize that I was still learning how to play

the *bass*. So I was looking for my sound from the amp and thinking the amp had something. Now I can play through any amp and it doesn't matter. I can get my sound through a television...just plug in to it. There was no specific amp that I used. Tone-wise I used the brown Boss Octave Divider/Octaver, and the MXR Distortion Plus, and a volume pedal. And those were the only effects I used. I never was a big effects guy and this is since I was young. Some guys have to always step on a pedal when they play a solo. That for me is an issue. I just want to hear...do you just know how to play the fucking instrument yet? So I avoided that. Also, after Jaco every bass player, you know...needless to say I'm a guy who is very interested in what Jaco did, but after Jaco it seemed like every bass player who was influenced by that, maybe except myself and maybe John Patitucci before he played the six-string – I had heard he was coming from the same place I was coming from – we were some of the only guys who didn't step on a chorus pedal when we played a solo. So I specifically avoided a lot of effects for that reason. I wouldn't say that my gear had any big influence on what I did at the time. I had only been playing the bass for six years when I got the gig.

MF: Now that's impressive only be playing for six years and step in with those guys.

VB: I got my first bass in Christmas of 1975 and I got the gig in May of 1982. So it's a little under six and a half years. So I think I went a long way on natural talent, but I was still very much learning the *bass*. I had more chops than anybody from *Weather Report* knew, or any record I had played on, because I'm not a guy trying to show how fast I can play all the time. But I had the chops and I had played the piano since I was seven so I had the theoretical and harmonic knowledge to keep up with those guys. And I always had a strong groove and a strong feel and I always gave a band a lot of energy since I was ten years old playing the drums. But I was still very much learning the *bass*, so things

like pedals, gear, I wasn't at a point yet where that had that much influence on me and what I was doing.

MF: All in all and with the benefit of hindsight, what do you believe was your most important function in the band?

VB: My most important function? Man, that's a hard one. I don't know...I think everybody's function was...it was a combination of everything, of really to first and foremost focus on the quality of the music. They were not interested in how much you could play or how much chops you had. I think they got stale with Jaco after a while because there was always a bass showcase. And a lot of times after a while that's all it was. There was no improvising going on, it wasn't organic. They were always focused on the quality of the music first and foremost. And to say what the function...there was no one function. I was on the bottom, holding the thing together... but at the same time I had to improvise, so I'm improvising all the time. There were parts of the song where I had to play the written part, but you had to play the written part and make it sound organic and make it sound natural. I was everything...I was melodic, I was harmonic, I was functional, I was improvising... There was no one function. I can't say there was any one function. I functioned as everything – melodic instrument, harmonic instrument, the foundation, sometimes I provided some color, sometimes I gave the band a boost of energy if the solo wasn't going anywhere, sometimes I stayed out of the way if the solo was going somewhere. It was a little bit of everything.

MF: So do you feel that all of those functions and the things that you did agreed with or argued with the same understanding that Joe and Wayne had for you in the band?

VB: That's pretty much what the band was. It didn't necessarily have anything to do with me in particular. It was a band where everybody was everything, there were no rules. In some bands the drummer just has to play the groove or the bass player is just the foundation. There were no rules with Joe and Wayne. Nothing was locked. There were no expectations. They didn't exist. Some bands that I've worked with the guy has his bass line that he wrote and that's it, that's all he wants from me. Some bands they want you to keep the groove and not do anything else. Some bands don't like you to hold the groove down, they like it real busy; they like you to improvise. But Joe and Wayne...there were no specific rules or any specific expectations handed out. I think everything agreed based on the music we made...I would say everything agreed. If you read any interviews by Joe Zawinul he always seemed to be very happy with whatever I did. As a matter of fact, I am the only musician, not just the only bass player, who played in every group Joe Zawinul ever had: *Weather Report*, and after that he did *Weather Update*, then I worked with *The Zawinul Syndicate*. Then before he passed away he did a big band project with the WDR (Big Band from Köln, Germany). I'm the only musician that ever worked in every group. And every time he ever mentioned my name he always mentioned me as one of the greatest that he ever played with. So I would say that whatever I did must have agreed with him in some way. That question is hard to answer because, as I said, there are no rules and regulations with those guys.

MF: Can you give me a single tune which best illustrates, for you, your unique contribution as a bass player in defining the *Weather Report* sound?

VB: The best tune for me with *Weather Report* is my tune called "Consequently." It's on the last record. It's the only tune in the entire history of the band that sounds like I sound. It's my song so I mixed it. The tone of the bass is my sound. The way I soloed on it is my sound. It's the only song that's really the way I play. Everything else was a

sort of a compromise to make everything else in the group work. As far as what defines my sound I can't say because it's so different from – if you go to “Procession,” which is the first song on the first album I did, which brought me in like “bang,” and all the reviews were saying “if you thought nobody could replace Jaco in Weather Report, think again.” It's a strong track but then if you go around to the *Domino Theory* record and we did “D♭ Waltz,” which is by far one of the best Joe Zawinul compositions *ever*, before they were even getting into the issue of me and Omar Hakim's rhythm section performance being one of the best rhythm section performances ever, there's one of the best Zawinul compositions ever. It's a phenomenal tune. But that's a completely different sound than “Procession.” It is hard to say any one tune defines...every tune we did, every record we did – it was a four year period or a five year period – but every record we did, every period had a slightly little different something. It's the same thing I keep saying about everything, but there is no one thing that defines what Joe and Wayne did, not even talking about myself, because *Weather Report* was bigger than me or Jaco or Alphonso or Omar or anybody, *Weather Report* was Joe and Wayne. And a part of their magic is that, a lot of other groups I can pin down to one thing – this group, they're funky or, you know, they've got chops or something – but with those guys, you can't pin it down. They were so open and the range of it is so wide if that you go from Miroslav Vitous's era of *Weather Report* to my era, so much happened in that short amount of time it's pretty phenomenal.

MF: Now I have a question for you on your tune “Consequently.” I came across something that said that was the demo that you had sent to Joe and Wayne. Is that correct?

VB: The song was on the demo that I sent to them. It was a version that I recorded at home by myself. I guess I was four records into my time with the band [before it was

recorded by *Weather Report*], but Joe always mentioned that tune. They liked everything that was on my demo that I sent, but from the very beginning Joe always mentioned that tune, “Where is that tune Consequently, I like that tune” and when we got around to doing *This Is This* he specifically asked me to bring a tune. When I first came in I was like a little kid...I WAS a little kid (21) and I think it may have taken a couple of years before these guys realized I was a serious mother fucker. I wasn’t joking around. Whether I was anybody’s favorite or whether anybody thinks I’m the best or not the best, they found out I was not joking around. And by that time I was into a lot of other things and I was being taken a little more seriously, and Joe asked “Hey why don’t you bring some music?” And I said “Well you always like that tune Consequently” and he said “Yeah, yeah, yeah, let’s record it.” So we ended up doing it.

MF: I liked what Joe had said about the rhythm section of you and Omar Hakim playing and interpreting the songs the most correctly out of any rhythm section that *Weather Report* had and I think he said that the rhythm section with you and Omar was the best all around band.

VB: You know I’m such a fan of every era of *Weather Report*. There was a site that had all *Weather Report* reviews on it and one guy thinks we’re the best and we blew everybody else away. You’ve got the Jaco fans that say that was the best. Other people say the Miroslav Vitous era was the best and after that it was just a jive commercial band; but I’m a fan of all of them. I just think that we were sort of a combination of a lot of what those other bands did. The Alphonso Johnson era, which is really one of my favorite eras; it was really a great improvising era. Alphonso was just a great improviser, he never repeated himself. But then Jaco had a certain...he was just very, very, very dynamic. He could play one note and he would have magic just jump off of him, but there was no improvising; it was always the same groove on every song (sings groove

from Teen Town) and after a while that kind of lost me. We were somewhere in the middle of that. Maybe we didn't have the immediate dynamicism like Jaco, you could just listen to him and he would just blow you away. People might have to go back now, 25 years later, and realize what I did...realize how much it was improvised. So we were somewhere in the middle. My favorite *Weather Report* is our band. My favorite *Weather Report* records are the ones I played on, but of course I have a biased opinion in that respect. But this is my favorite sound of *Weather Report*.

MF: You did say the Joe Zawinul did a big band thing with the WDR band and you played on that...is that right?

VB: Yes.

MF: And do you remember about when that was?

VB: It's on Heads Up Records and it's called *Brown Street*. It was recorded in the last couple of years. I have done so much stuff that I forget when that was recorded. I think it might be 2005 or 2006, but I would have to check. I didn't play anything I liked on that album. It was a big band thing so I was just playing a real functional role. It's all classic *Weather Report* tunes: "Black Market," "Badia," it's all 70s era *Weather Report* music. I don't have anything to say on that music that Alphonso Johnson or Jaco Pastorius didn't already say. Actually, the reviews of me were pretty phenomenal, and everybody who hears it always gives me a pretty positive response, but just for my taste I don't have anything to say that Alphonso or Jaco didn't already say, nor do I have any interest in saying anything...I've got my own shit. I did the job and it's actually a really great record. If anybody were to ever ask me what to listen to me on I wouldn't say that (*Brown Street*). But also, it was not my sound. It was that muddy, boomy kind of sound

that's not my tone at all. Whenever I left, Joe just mixed my sound; he just mixed it that way, so I guess that's how he heard my sound on my bass. It's a great record. If you are a fan of that music it's a great big band interpretation of that music – Joe's music and the arrangements were done by Vince Mendoza.

MF: Just out of curiosity, what are you working on right now?

VB: I'm working on a new CD. I've got a new CD with Ron Carter and Lenny White and all kinds of folks on there. And, I'm doing like everybody else – I'm done with record companies. I'm going to release it on my own label and sell it on the internet. I've got about 10,000 bass players on my website alone. So I have an audience out there already. So, basically I'm working on my own thing. If you go on Youtube and look up videos of the *Victor Bailey Group*, I'm 10 times the bass player and 10 times everything I sound like with anybody else. I'm really at a point after years of sideman work that I really just need to do my thing. I'm always getting a gig where somebody who doesn't play bass wrote the bass line on a keyboard with two fingers. So many people think that I play (sings typical pentatonic, pop bass line), but I would never play that. So that's what I'm working on. I'm working on my own record and really just focusing on being an artist.

MF: When do you think this album will be finished?

VB: It's finished, I'm just mixing it now.