

TOMASO

SEMITONAL

What was your way into bass?

As a child, I was watching TV when the image of a double bassist appeared on the screen: a close-up of face and hands, accompanied by a wildly intense bass performance. I was transfixed, and the impact stayed with me. It turned out to be the Charles Mingus documentary *Triumph Of The Underdog*. From that moment onwards, I always wanted to play bass. Aged 12, I managed to sneak backstage after a Thin Lizzy show and was lucky enough to meet Phil Lynott, who took the time to sit me down and encourage me to go for it. Soon after, I borrowed a friend's Fender Musicmaster, started playing in local punk bands and the deal was sealed. My first bass was an Aria TSB.

What bass gear do you currently use?

Music Man Stingrays with LaBella strings; EHX, Darkglass, Source Audio, Boss and MXR effects; and a Genz Benz ShuttleMax 9.2 head with Eden D210 XST cabs. I've played five-string bass exclusively for 20 years. The Bass Centre's Nick Owen helped me find my first Stingray and I never looked back.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?

Keep listening. Seek out the spaces in the music, and let these guide the groove you create with the drums. Use fills and slides to accentuate other elements, such as vocal lines. Find unusual points to hang your line on, rather than always starting on the one. Experimenting with note lengths can create different effects: I've been focusing on this for some time.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?

The greatest bass player who ever lived is widely considered to be James Jamerson, and that's difficult to argue with. For me, Tony Levin is definitely up there, though: not only for his command of electric, upright and Chapman Stick, but also for the imagination and passion which runs through his playing.

Where can we hear you play?

My current project, Semitonal, is bass-driven and uses loops, triggers and a live rhythm section to create hypnotic instrumental music with attitude. The bass is very much in charge, defining changes and shifting against layers of melody. I write all the parts myself, then work with a drummer to bring the beats to life. Two EPs have been recorded at Doghouse Studios in Glasgow.

www.semitonal.com

