CHAPTER 8: WRITING BASS LINES FOR SPEED-PICKED GUITAR PARTS

If you're an extreme metal bassist who has made the decision to play fingerstyle, you've undoubtedly had to face the challenge of what to do during a speed-picked guitar part. When guitarists use alternate picking to tremolo pick or play fast sixteenth-note patterns, they can end up leaving even the fastest fingerstyle player in the dust. Even if the bassist is able to keep up with the guitarist, the result is often an uneven and largely inaudible jumble of notes. In this chapter, we're going to look at two different speed-picked dual guitar parts and examine various options for creating bass lines that complement them.

Example 8-1 illustrates the safest approach, by far: playing “half time.” By playing eighth notes instead of sixteenths, like the guitar, you will be playing one note for every two notes the guitarist plays. This may not be the most exciting approach to take, but it might be the best choice—particularly at high tempos, whereby playing sixteenths in unison with the guitarist is beyond your ability. This approach usually yields a tight and completely acceptable bass line—but not always a very interesting one.

Since there are two guitar parts in Example 8-1, you'll have two notes from which to choose when creating your bass line. In this case, I've chosen to create a line in which the bass plays either the root of a minor 3rd interval or the high note of an octave. As far as the minor 3rds go, had I decided to play the 3rd rather than the root, it would actually create more of a major 6th feel. While emphasizing the major 6th could be an interesting option, generally in metal, the minor tonality works best. Remember, as the bassist, you will be determining the root of all chords and harmonies. Choose your notes carefully!

Example 8-1:

\[\text{[Tablature and musical notation image]}\]