

# The L'il D'bl Bass

## User Guide

Thank you for purchasing the L'il D'bl Bass and I hope you enjoy it for many years. In this document, for simplicity, I will refer to it as the LDB. It is a unique little instrument with a big sound and can add so much to a jam. It does have some characteristics that are different than a regular mountain dulcimer so please take a few moments to read through this information. This document will live online and be updated as more information is developed. Use the QR code or this link

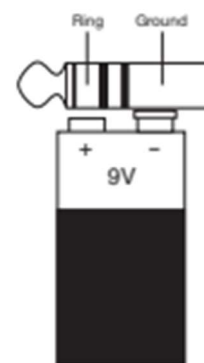


[www.mccaffertydulcimers.com/lil-dbl-bass](http://www.mccaffertydulcimers.com/lil-dbl-bass) to open the L'il D'bl Bass web page with the latest information and playing examples. Listen with ear buds or speakers for the best experience.

### Charging

The LDB has a preamp to amplify the pickup signal but does not have a battery that has to be periodically changed. It is powered by a "super capacitor" that needs to be charged before playing. The LDB comes with a small charger. The charger plugs into the LDB audio output jack and in 60 seconds fully charges the preamp so that it can be played for up to 16 hours. The capacitor may run down over time while the instrument is not being used. It is good practice to simply get in the habit of charging it for one minute before any playing session. You are then good for an evening or weekend of playing enjoyment. Besides simply no output at all, a sign of the capacitor is needing charged is the sound will become distorted or rattly. Charge it for a minute and all will be well. It is not recommended to leave it plugged in for long periods of time while not in use.

If you forget or lose your charger, there is an alternate method of charging using a standard 9V battery and STEREO audio cable. It must be a Stereo cable. Plug the stereo cable into the LDB. On the other end of the cable, touch the positive terminal of the battery to the ring of the cable and the negative terminal to the ground. If you get it backwards, it won't hurt anything, but it won't charge.



### Bass Amplifier

The L'il D'bl is a semi-solid body instrument and must be plugged into a bass amp. Each string has its own pickup that is fully adjustable for height and intonation. The pickups feed a small preamp that insures noise free transmission to the bass amp.

A bass amp is required in order to get quality sound output. Fortunately, there are some quality portable bass amps available. They are small and many operate on both 120 vac and battery. We stress a bass amp rather than an acoustic guitar amp because the speakers of a typical guitar amp will not handle the lower frequency range and can even be damaged at high volume. The quality of the sound is very dependent on the quality of the amp. In our amp reviews, our favorite is currently the **Boss Dual Cube LX 2 x 5-inch Bass Amp**. It can be found at Amazon, Sweetwater Music,... There is an acoustic guitar version of the Dual Cube as well as the bass version. It is important to make sure you get the bass version

as it will not work well at all with a regular acoustic guitar amp. There are a lot of features and adjustments on this little amp. Here is a good starting point for the knobs.



If you don't mind having to plug into a power source, there are good sounding less expensive Bass amps such as the Fender Rumble 15 1x8" 15-watt Bass Combo Amp.

For ultimate freedom, try one of the inexpensive wireless guitar interfaces. Just plug the transmitter into L'il D'bl and the receiver into your bass amp and move about as you like. We have had good luck with the LEKATO Wireless Guitar System with Charging Box from Amazon for around \$50.

### Strings

The LDB is strung with Aquila 23"-26" VSL Thunderbrown bass uke strings (Aquila #167U). Of all the strings we tested, we feel these are the best for the instrument. However, as for all polyurethane or rubber strings, they take time to "stretch in". This is significantly different than your mountain dulcimer steel strings. Over time, they stretch a lot. This can take quite a while (weeks). During this period, when you pick it up, expect it to be flat. I am trying to do some pre-stretching to minimize this, but do not yet know if this is helping. Ideally, you want about 2 wraps of string on the tuner.

More is OK, but if the string wraps to the bottom of the tuner and starts to stack up, you will need to take the string off and pull some of the slack out of it. This is important as trying to tune the tuner in this condition will strip the gears. Just be patient and eventually they will stabilize. Unlike steel strings, they should last for a long time, so once you are stable you should be set for a long and enjoyable playing experience. Since UV light can degrade rubber, we suggest not storing the instrument where the strings are continuously exposed to sunlight.



Use the QR codes to open videos showing you how to install new strings or shorten existing strings when there are too many wraps on the tuner. Watch the Setting Up video first and then the appropriate video depending on what you want to accomplish.



[Setting Up](#)



[New String](#)



[Shorten a String](#)

Setting up for stringing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bz3oI3h42Sk>

New String Install: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFutUNPtQog>

Shortening a String: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXoK1ojXAJI>

As indicated above, the strings stretch a lot. As you are tuning, you will have to turn the knob a lot to make much difference in the pitch. Just keep turning.... When you are within half a step of the final note, turn the knob about a quarter to half a revolution at a time. Then, lift the string out of the nut and let it back down. Check the pitch. This equalizes the tension along the entire length of the string and helps with tuning stability.

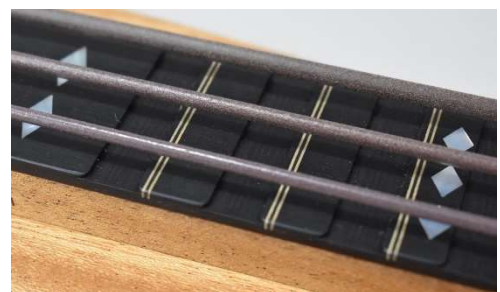
**NOTE:** If you hear a “rattle” on the melody string, the string is not far enough down on the tuner post to sit tightly in the nut slot. Simply back off the melody tuner for half a wrap or so and press down on the string as you tune it back up. The melody string needs to wrap down a bit on the tuner post to provide adequate down pressure at the nut.

### **Bridges and Intonation**

Each string has its own bridge and each bridge incorporates a piezo pickup. The bridges are adjustable in height and intonation. A 1.5mm hex key is required for these adjustments. The LDB has been setup and should not require any further adjustments. If you feel you need to tweak the bridges, please contact me for support.

### **Acu-Fretless**

The L'il D'bl does not have frets. It is based on David's "Acu-Fretless" system. It does have markers where diatonic notes would be. At each one of the diatonic note locations, there is a groove going across the fretboard. When you gently press on the groove, the edge of the groove acts as a fret and creates the "in tune" note. Because of the popularity of the 1 ½ fret, we placed an unmarked groove there to make it easy to hit that note. Since frets are not sticking up above the fretboard surface, you can press in between the diatonic locations and get the missing chromatic notes. So, you can play this instrument as if it is a fretted diatonic instrument or as a fully chromatic fretless instrument. It takes a bit of practice, but you'll catch on quickly. And you can also get those crowd-pleasing slides and



runs that we associate with the double bass! If you prefer, it may be ordered fretless without the grooves but with the diatonic markers.

### **How to Start Playing**

The L'il D'bl Bass is much different to play than your traditional dulcimer. To get started, use this QR code or this link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62X1bgIYyWw> to take a look at this "Getting Started" video by Stephen Seifert.

