



QRD

The Bass Player Interviews

Hey Kidz,

20 years ago I started my zine QRD to interview the musicians I loved that weren't getting asked the questions I wanted to see them answer. Hard to believe I'm still going strong. Four years ago I started a series of interviews with guitar players about their craft & it naturally led to asking some bass players the same basic questions. But bass players are an elusive bunch without big egos & consequently this series didn't take off in quite the same way. Still there is plenty you can learn from these interviews about the secrets of the often understated connection between the guitar & drums & you can become more informed on the eternal question of, "Is a bass just a guitar lower in pitch?"

Hrt  
Brian John Mitchell  
[QRD](#)

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CJ Boyd

October 2010

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Bands: C.J. Boyd (solo bass), Kirtan (formerly The C.J. Boyd Sextet), Move

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QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

C.J. – I'm still playing my first bass, a Mexican-made Fender Precision Bass, sunburst with a white pick guard. Lots of things have happened to it, but I have no intention of ever getting rid of it. My mom helped me buy it when I was 14. I have owned only two other bass guitars in my life. In high school I bought a friend's fretless bass, which was a piece of crap. I later sold it to a pawnshop. Also, for a few years I owned a lovely black acoustic/electric Ovation Applause, which met its death when a lady rear-ended me, crushing the hollow body; along with the violin I'd inherited from my grandfather, but had yet to learn how to play. My Fender P-bass has stood by me through all that other messing around, though.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

C.J. – When I play electric bass, I typically play through a Boss RC20 loop pedal, which has two inputs. I have a mic & my bass going into that, & the output goes to my amp. I like to be self-sufficient, so I usually avoid playing through a PA unless I really need to. When I play upright, I usually don't plug in unless I really have to. I'll even play larger rooms acoustic & just do what I can to get folks to move up & shut up.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

C.J. – The bass for sure. I play some shows without any loops or effects & I play some shows without amps. But I don't play without a bass.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

C.J. – In the states, I tour with a wonderful little SWR Baby Blue II. I bought it years ago in Nashville after playing through tons of different amps. I already had a very sufficient Fender 200 watt bass amp that did me fine. But I was going to be touring a lot & I wanted something that was very powerful, with a good clean tone, but that wasn't very big. I wanted it to be the size of a practice amp, so I could pick it up with one hand, grab my merch with the other & have my bass & bag on my back. The big challenge with playing bass loops is

that sometimes I have 30 or 40 layers of bass coming through my amp, so it has to be able to handle that without getting distorted. Most small practice amps you find will crap out & start distorting with even two or three bass layers going through them. I was so glad to find this little SWR.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

C.J. – Hard question for me. I play more electric bass & that's what I learned on, but I love playing the upright. & I love that it's possible to do so without any electricity. There's a purity about it that never ceases to please me. Can't choose. I love them both.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

C.J. – I like to get lots of different sounds out of a bass, so I use everything I can think of. I fingerpick sometimes, or pluck, or use a pick, or a bow, or an Ebow, or just vibrate the strings on the fretboard, or whatever seems to get the sound I'm going for.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

C.J. – Four. I have sometimes wished for a higher 5th string, or even more occasionally wished for a

lower 5th string. But really I think 4 is plenty. Limitations make you work harder.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

C.J. – I don't really like the guitar very much. I think I'm just over saturated with it. I never really thought of playing it, except if I'm just at a friend's house & messing around with one on the couch or something. When I started playing bass, I was definitely coming from a rock-mentality where I thought of bass, guitar, & drums as being the main instruments out there & everything else seemed exotic. But I soon started playing with cellists & tuba players & harpists & so many other instruments that it boggles my mind why there is so much fuss over the guitar in our country. For some time, guitar was the one instrument I wouldn't let in my sextet. I eventually made an exception, but only because I met a guitarist who didn't really play it like a guitar. Those tend to be the guitarists I like most.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

C.J. – It's amazing how much the larger strings & larger frets change what a person is inclined to do. The larger size limits you somewhat. But it's a good kind of limitation I think. Because of the size,

it's often more of a full body experience. That's even more true if we're talking about an upright bass, which is of course very different from a guitar, since it has no frets & so it requires body memory to know exactly where each pitch is.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

C.J. – I guess I talked about this a bit in the first question, but I could also say that I'm not really a gear head. Sometimes guys (I don't know if its ever been a lady) will come up to me after a show & want to talk about the kind of bass or pedal or amp I have. I'm happy to tell them what I use, but I don't pretend to be any kind of expert. I just play this bass because it's my bass. I don't know that much about other basses, & I'm not that interested to. I think its way more important to use what you have & do something passionate with it than it is to get just the right one. Any one would work, as long as it's functional. I mean I have played some crappy basses that were cheaply made & would be a pain in the ass to play; but other than that, I think if I had learned on an Ibanez or Peavey or something else, I'd probably still be playing that. Having an upright certainly opens up a different range of possibilities, so I guess that's a different issue. Much of the music that I'm writing or arranging for groups has more of a chamber music feel to it & so it just



works better on these old acoustic instruments, rather than modern electric ones. But having said that, before I had an upright; I would do whatever I could to get tones out of my electric that don't usually come out of one.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

C.J. – Don't have an opinion about them. Haven't played with a bass that had one. Or if I did, I don't remember it.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

C.J. – My friend George is making me a bass out of a humidor so that I can have something acoustic to play in the woods that isn't as big & heavy as my upright. Maybe that?

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

C.J. – No, I don't think I'd have a signature pedal. Unless there was a pedal that was like a reverse distortion pedal. I mean a pedal that could take crappy, blown out speakers & make them sounds clean & beautiful. I'd claim that one.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

C.J. – Just two. One electric & one upright.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

C.J. – I tour all the time & so I have them with me all the time as long as I'm touring in the US. When I tour in Europe, I have left my upright with a friend who will appreciate it. My friend Jason took good care of it once & my friend Jim did last time. It usually has something to do with where I'm stashing my van while I'm overseas.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

C.J. – When I bought my electric, I didn't know anything about what I wanted. But I tried a few & liked the action on the one I got. I don't like high action. I also don't like having the strings really close together the way they are on most 6 strings, & on Fender jazz necks, for example. But, again, I'm just used to a Precision neck, so I think I've just grown to think of that as ideal.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

C.J. – As far as bass guitars go, I have no idea. I think I paid \$400 or so back in 1994. That was the only bass I ever bought new. It was harder to find an affordable upright bass. There is such a huge range of prices depending on if it's a solid bass or a laminated bass. In the end, I went with a hybrid--a bass with a solid top & laminated sides & back, which cost about \$3000 with the gig bag included if I recall correctly. That was more than I wanted to shell out, but after doing a lot of research, that ended up seeming like a pretty good deal. & since 90% of the sound comes from the top, it definitely felt worth it to get that solid body sound without having to pay \$5000 or more, which is what most solid bodies cost.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

C.J. – The only changes I've made to my electric bass was when I was in high school, the plastic for the pickups broke, & I was able to keep them on by using a washer on each side. They're still like that now. I wonder sometimes if it contributes to my bass' buzz, which can be pretty bad depending on the room. But I've never really tried to put new pickups on there.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

C.J. – I mostly have one tone on electric & a different tone on upright. But I'm trying to make myself get other tones on the electric. It's funny to admit how conservative I can be when it comes to tone. There are so many "out there" tones I really hate on bass, especially fretless bass & thumping bass. I don't want to be so narrow, but I guess I am so far.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

C.J. – None really. I think I have everything I need. I wouldn't mind having an acoustic bass guitar so I could do more unplugged shows. But at this point, it's more of a nice thought than a lusting.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

C.J. – I mentioned this earlier, but action is the main thing for me. If there's a foot between the string & fretboard, that's going to be a pain in the ass to learn on. Also, I have noticed that some cheaper basses will not file the frets very well, & they can

be sharp. I have cut myself playing shitty basses before.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

C.J. – Buying a crappy fretless bass when I was in high school was definitely the worst. I just got it because a friend was selling it for cheap & it was different from what I had. But such a piece of crap. Best is hard to decide. I don't have a bunch of accessories, so I could say my electric, my upright, my SWR amp, or my loop pedal. All are essential for what I'm doing these days, & it would be hard to say which one was the best purchase.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

C.J. – See above. I really don't know brands much, outside of what I use. I shopped around for different loop pedals quite a bit before I got my Boss RC20, but that was 9 years ago & I haven't kept up with what else is out there since then.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

C.J. – I've gotten into the habit of playing this one melody when I'm tuning, which is at the beginning

of every night. It's a song I wrote years ago called "Wander like the Rhino." It's never really on purpose, but I have noticed that I play it a little almost every night when I'm tuning before a show. Otherwise, there is this chord progression I tend to play a lot. It's just a I to VI minor progression. I can't seem to shake it & it turns up in a bunch of my songs, especially improvisations.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

C.J. – I got my first bass on my 14th birthday. I had been saving up for a bass & my mom helped me buy it.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

C.J. – I think that's going to happen in the next couple of years.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

C.J. – I don't think bass players should play with guitar players except in special circumstances. I said this earlier, but the whole guitar-bass-drum-vocals thing is way over-rated in my opinion.

Thousands of other instruments out there. On the question of distinct or echo, that depends for me on the music. When I put a string quartet together, I often like for us to sound like one big instrument rather than 4 different pieces.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

C.J. – Mostly hear, though its nice playing in bigger venues sometimes where the sound system is really heavy. That's not what I usually go for, but I do appreciate it once in a while. Even when it isn't really loud, I do think that's always an element of playing a low instrument. It shakes you.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

C.J. – This is a hard one to answer. I'm sure there are a few different ways to approach the question, but it makes me first of all think about why I chose the bass when I did in high school. I thought myself such a non-conformist; the thought of playing guitar probably didn't cross my mind. & my family lived in a little apartment, so drums were out too. I wonder what I might have decided to play if my knowledge of music had been broader than rock & pop? I have no idea. But as it was, bass seemed like the only thing for me. I remember listening to

John Paul Jones on Led Zeppelin records & hearing the bass above all else & I took this as a sign of sorts. Same with Primus & Rush & some other bass-heavy bands. Bands that are led by bassists seemed to be more quirky, though someone could certainly object with examples like the Police. Anyway, I think it appealed to my sense of being against the grain. It's easy for me to see in retrospect that this "unusual" choice was not really so strange, given the extremely limited range of choices I considered.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

C.J. – Definitely an ally, when it comes to electric. I do remember when I started playing upright though & I hadn't considered just how different it would be from playing electric. It really frustrated me that I couldn't just hop from one to the other with ease. & I wouldn't practice bowing because I lacked the patience to go from sounding shitty to sounding good. In those days my upright did seem like an adversary.

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

C.J. – Well, early on it was Les Claypool, John Paul Jones, Geddy Lee, Victor Wooten. I was listening



to so much Pearl Jam, Nirvana, Alice in Chains - all that Seattle shit that kinda was grunge, except over-produced & wildly popular. I loved that stuff & listened to the bass lines so I could learn them all. Green Day too, I'm reluctant to admit. Then I started listening to jazz & classical music more & my favorite bassists became Edgar Meyer & Charlie Mingus. & I started getting more influenced by other instruments. I was listening to Bach's cello suites quite a bit & Beethoven's later string quartets & more John Coltrane & Miles Davis in college. By the end of undergraduate, after about 4 years of listening to hardly any new music & especially very little rock, I got into Godspeed & Explosions & a bunch of what folks now call post-rock & math rock. I was in love with Dilute & Silver Mt. Zion, not so much for the bass, but for the compositions. Nowadays very few of my favorite musicians are bassists, & the ones who are are mostly my friends, like Evan Hydzik, whose tasteful understated playing I find such an inspiration. Or Nat Balwin, who is a machine & can play anything from pop to the most avant guard stuff out there. He's best when he does both at the same time though, I think.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

C.J. – Well, we are naturally a silly species, I guess. I named my bass Rosa Lee, after Rosa Lee

Thomson, the bassist from Babe the Blue Ox, who I was really into in high school. I guess I thought a bass should have a girl's name, & Rosa Lee was the first female bassist I ever saw live who actually played the hell out of the bass, rather than just look good as the cute girl bassist (i.e. the hot bassists in Smashing Pumpkins & White Zombie). I also named my fretless bass "Grace" after Grace Slick & later named my acoustic bass guitar "Rasa." I'm not as into naming anymore & I didn't give my upright a name. But I also can't sleep with my upright, which might be why.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

C.J. – I've had my share of accidents, dropping my bass & whatnot, but never done real damage to it. The upright I was borrowing in college had the bridge fall off, but I never figured out why. The school took care of it & didn't blame me.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

C.J. – I don't really practice electric any more. But I play 5-6 nights a week most of the time. I do try to practice bowing my upright. I still feel I have a ways to go before my tone is exactly where I want

it. Being on the road all the time is great for playing, terrible for practicing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

C.J. – Maybe 10 or so, much more when I'm recording. Ideally, I'd have an hour every day just to work on things, rather than mostly playing on stage almost all of the time.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

C.J. – I usually use Ernie Ball Super Slinkys. I haven't changed strings in a while, but I think the low is a 95 & the high is a 40. I play lots of chords & so the lighter gauge just sounds better for my style I think. I prefer a mid-heavy sound, which those strings really bring out.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

C.J. – About once or twice a year, though I'm not too concerned with it. My friend Aaron hasn't changed his in years & I love his tone. Most often I change them only if I'm doing something where I want a bright tone, which isn't that often.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

C.J. – I've probably broken a string about 5-6 times in my life (so in the last 17 years). & at least one of those times I was trying some new strings that were just shitty. I'm not that rough on a bass, at least not on the strings.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

C.J. – I honestly don't know. On electric, I'd guess my fretting hand, but I can't say for sure. On upright, my bow hand is not the strongest. I feel I have a way to go before I'm as proficient as I'd like to be.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

C.J. – Just regular most of the time. Sometimes, when improvising, I'll feel the need to have a lower D or D# & I might drop down mid-song. But that's really rare. I can only think of one song I ever wrote in a different tuning, & that was just to get me out of a rut I was in at the time. I tuned it to DGDG. I think re-tuning your bass is a good exercise to make you look at your fretboard a little differently, but I almost never do it.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

C.J. – I only use sheet music if I'm writing something down for someone else. Other than that, I don't usually write things down for myself. For years, I have had the experience of coming up with something on the bass & thinking, "Oh, I like that. I hope I remember that tomorrow." Usually, that's sorta my test. If I can still play it the next day, it's more likely to be a keeper. If it doesn't stick, then I let it go.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

C.J. – I'd rather not say. There might be too many to count.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

C.J. – Singing, especially for upright bass. The better I get to just knowing pitches without having to find them on the bass, the more free my playing feels. & I think singing is probably the best way to internalize pitches because you have to find them in your head, not on an instrument. But I'd say the same for improving any instrument, not just bass.

QRD – What’s a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

C.J. – One of my favorite recordings ever is Edgar Meyer playing 3 of Bach’s cello suites on the double bass. It’s phenomenal. Every recording of Bach is an interpretation, but his interpretations are some of the best I’ve every encountered. Normally, when I listen to that CD, I’m so spellbound by its sublimity that I’m not thinking about anything very technical. But at times it will occur to me that I will never play anything that requires that much discipline & dedication & sheer dexterity. Another one of my favorites is his rendition of Zigeunerweisen, which is a piece that violinists learn to show off. Not only does he play in on the bass instead of violin, but he KILLS it, so you can’t even think about how ridiculous that transcription must have been. Meyer doesn’t just play classical bass. He plays classical cello & violin ON the bass. I’ll never be anywhere near that & I know it.

QRD – What’s a bass goal you’ve never accomplished?

C.J. – I never learned to throw my bass up in the air & get hit in the face with it like Krist Novoselic (of Nirvana) did. & I never learned to throw spin my bass around my back while playing like Vic Wooten does. & I never did grow hair long enough to whip

around like Jason Newsted used to do back in the *And Justice for All* days. I better get to work.

QRD – What’s the last bass trick you learned?

C.J. – Hmmm. Well I just picked up an Ebow last year & that has been an interesting addition to my arsenal. Not sure if that counts as a trick, but it’s a little trickier on a bass since they’re made to rest on guitar strings & so on bass one must hover with it, instead of letting it rest.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

C.J. – A friend of my dad’s played bass & lived a block away when I was in high school. I don’t know if I would call it a lesson exactly, but he definitely showed me lots of stuff & would help me figure out the Nirvana & Green Day riffs I wanted to know. Can’t remember how often he would come over, but he was a great resource for me in the very early days of playing. In college I found out that I could use a double bass if I took lessons, so I signed up for lessons. I wish I’d taken them a bit more seriously; but at the time, I was way more interested in playing my own weird stuff & kinda half-assedly playing jazz than I was in learning classical technique, so I barely practiced for my lessons at all & only took them every other semester

just in order to keep my greedy mitts on the bass for the whole year. I did learn a little though, at least how to hold the bow & how to hold my hand so that it wouldn't get cramped after a while. I think I learned that. I'd like to relearn that, since I can't remember any more how to avoid that.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

C.J. – I used to give bass lessons & one thing I'd tell them right up front is that they don't really need me. I'm really happy to help, but the main thing anyone starting the bass needs is just playing a lot. It's great to be able to ask someone questions here & there, but nothing is going to help you learn like playing all the time. I'd tell my students that my goal was to answer all of their questions & teach them what I knew as quickly as possible & hope to make myself unnecessary.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

C.J. – Grow a big beard & let birds nest in it? Actually, it has happened twice now that friends have shown me new music of theirs & I think, "Whoa, that kinda sounds like my stuff." That's a weird situation. But I think its good. If I'm



emulatable, then maybe its time for me to find some new sounds & let them have what I have sounded like so far.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

C.J. – I can't. Well, I try to, but it's hard. I think any band is only as good as its weakest player. Of course some bands really showcase just the vocals, or just the guitar, or whatever. But in that case, the players that aren't as much in the spotlight still have to be good at holding it down. If they stand out as being bad, I don't care how much the spotlight is on somebody else, I'm just going to hear that lagging drummer or that out of tune back up singer, or that bassist who's a little off. I try to focus on the positive, but I think even if you're not the star of the show, you have to play your part & play it well.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

C.J. – Edgar Meyer's customized 1769 Gabrielli double bass. It sounds so good it makes angels wet themselves.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

C.J. – So many great players. Edgar Meyer is my favorite classical player, though he does much more than that. But I love so many bass players all over the spectrum. There's no way this isn't going sound conceited as hell, but I don't know anyone personally who tries to stretch the bass & get more sounds out of it than I do. I'm sure there are folks, but I don't know them. But that's partly because I'm a fucking thief. If I hear a sound that somebody else is making (whether on bass or on something else), if I like that sound, I'm going to figure out a way to make it on my bass.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

C.J. – At shows really. I tour all the time, so if someone is interested in finding me, they should check my schedule on MySpace or Facebook. As for recordings, I'm most proud of my newest solo record, Aerial Roots, on Joyful Noise Recordings. I have that & lots of other music up on bandcamp: <http://cjboyd.bandcamp.com>

QRD – Anything else?

C.J. – Are you kidding? You asked questions I'd never dream of asking myself. More thorough than The Dude's doctor.

## Monte Allen of Rollerball & Moodring

October 2010

Name: Monte Trent Allen

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QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Monte – Fender Mustang; it was a loan, so I gave it back & bought an Ibanez 5 string.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Monte – Bass, Orange Squeezer copy that Jesse Stevens made for me, Moog Ring Modulator, Boss Delay, Boss Bass Overdrive, DOD Envelope Filter, MXR Direct Box, amp. Sometimes throw in a Big Muff & a Digitech Delay/Chorus.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Monte – The bass because it is the source of the sound.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Monte – Ampeg B2RE, it is solid state & has been really low maintenance & durable.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Monte – Electric works for me.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Monte – Pick & fingers/thumb.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Monte – I like 4 strings because it is more simple/primal, but 5 or 8 might be fun.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Monte – I started out playing guitar poorly & when I was ready to play in bands, it seemed as if there were a million guitar players & just a few drummers or bass players. So I switched to bass.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Monte – The bass is more of a drum. The guitar is better for playing chords & bending the strings. Cake & frosting.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Monte – Someone built my bass. It is neck through body, all of the hardware is brass. Bartolini non-active pickups & an extended scale ebony neck. I love it.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Monte – I like it on the P-style bass. It could help in keeping a consistent sound with your fingers.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Monte – Long scale, not active, brass hardware, ebony fret board, XLR instead of 1/4 inch jack.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Monte – It would be a really small multi-FX with one knob & one button that did everything. I was going to say an envelope filter that has more

options, but Electro-Harmonix solved that with the Enigma Q Balls.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Monte – Two.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Monte – On stands.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Monte – No dead spots, no plastic tuning pegs. No orange. No purple. No pink. No active pickups. It should be made of solid wood, not particleboard.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Monte – \$500, of course we could spend a lot more if we got it.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Monte – If it needs it. I always think the hip shot is a good upgrade. A low D is a good thing.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Monte – I would like to have a classic sound, but it really is dependent on the music. The bass needs to blend in, so whatever it takes.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Monte – I like all the Moog pedals. Everyone should have an Ampeg SVT. My Whammy Pedal burnt up in Glasgow; it would be great to get another one. Someday, I will own a 60s Fender Jazz or P-bass. I like almost any pedal.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Monte – Maybe a built in tuner. Full scale. No baby necks. Playability. It needs to stay in tune. If you play standing up, it should be somewhat balanced.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Monte – One time Rollerball was on tour & I got a hold of a Peavey fretless. It had not one, but two 9

volts. I grew up in a town with one music store & they were big into Peavey, so I had a lot of Peavey stuff & had good luck with it. This bass was a poorly built piece of shit. I would not wish it on my worst enemy. That thing blew up speakers weekly. Now I hate active instruments. That fucking thing was \$699 & that was after I talked them down. (It was marked at \$1000.) I sold it for 85 bucks. Peavey is a joke. Oh well, I don't need a fretless anyway. Danelectro pedals do not last because the jacks are plastic. My bass was the best purchase. Mae found it for \$400 used with plastic strings. The neck was like new & it was 20 years old. That was a good day.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Monte – I like Ampeg & Moog. Those red Crate amps are horrible obviously. Hartke is kind of wimpy for the money.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Monte – An A chord.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?



Monte – 19, guitar at 12.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Monte – I am still working on that. I am ready for a break through moment any time now.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Monte – Mike Watt is one of my favorite bass players because he can do both of these things at the same time.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Monte – Feeling is better.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Monte – I have dedicated a lot of my life to playing bass. It is a big part of what I am.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Monte – Ally.

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Monte – Rob Kohler is a genius. Boyd Anderson is out of control. Ben Wright turns my world upside-down. Keith Brush has the work ethic. Matteo Bennici is a fucking animal. & on & on. Squarepusher takes it to another level. I love that guy in The Liars.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Monte – One man's wrong is another man's right, but I think that I will leave the cheesy stuff like that for guitar players & Nascar drivers.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Monte – Miss Massive Snowflake had a party at Northpole Records (true story I swear), Moodring was playing & I was a wreck. I surfed on my bass until the pick up fell out. Chopped a wood chair in half with it until my cable broke, & woke up the next day feeling pretty stupid. Jesse fixed it for me & I will never do that shit again. Hopefully.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Monte – String skipping, chord theory.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Monte – About 12 or 15 hours a week. Maybe more during football season.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Monte – 40 to 105. DR is the brand. Handmade. Really great strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Monte – Not very often, maybe every six months.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Monte – Occasionally, but not as much as I used to. It helps to play with the amp loud & a light touch. My man Randall Dunn (Aleph Studio) taught me that.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Monte – My fretting hand is weak, so I keep it simple.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Monte – Standard, I don't have any extra instruments or I would use a lot of tunings.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Monte – Tab, I wish I could read sheet music. I like to record my ideas because it is the feel that I am more interested in than the notes.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Monte – Unwanted string ring. Is being tone deaf a habit?

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Monte – Drums or piano. I am a big fan of cross training; playing music is always good for you.

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Monte – Be-bop, walking bass lines at high bpm.

QRD – What’s a bass goal you’ve never accomplished?

Monte – Having a really good tone.

QRD – What’s the last bass trick you learned?

Monte – Tapping harmonics or right hand slide.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Monte – I did. Rob Kohler changed my life. He taught me how to listen. We worked a lot on improvisation & drinking coffee. He also turned me on to so much good music. “Music is music is music is music” That is what Mr. Kohler would tell you.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don’t think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Monte – I am not a teacher I am a player. Just play what’s in your head.

QRD – What’s something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Monte – Smoke about 10,000 bong loads & wash those down with a bottomless cup of coffee.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Monte – If the bass & drums sound good, I am a pretty forgiving listener. Unless the frontman is trying really hard. That for me is the big turn off.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Monte – James Jamerson. Yeah. Motown. Jaco's Fender would also be sweet.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Monte – Tom Jenkins (Squarepusher).

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Monte – Moodring [Scared of Ferret](#) on Silber Records.

Nicholas Slaton of slicnaton

October 2010

Name: Nicholas Slaton

Bands: slicnaton

Websites: [www.silbermedia.com/slicnaton](http://www.silbermedia.com/slicnaton)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Nicholas – It was a Hohner fretless. It was a cool bass, thin body with a brown to red sunburst & no fret markers. I sold it to upgrade at some point, but I wish I had kept it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Nicholas – I like my basses with long scale lengths & setup with high action. I usually play with a dry sound, but when I use effects I use whatever is available. I use anything from expensive pedals to junk. I always am looking for new ways to get cool sounds. I use a solid state amp with various speaker cabinets.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Nicholas – Fingers, anything can sound good if you play it right.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Nicholas – Acoustic Image Clarus IIR. My amp of choice. Solid state power with a nice EQ, I use this as a head anytime I plug in & when this one dies I'll get the new version to replace it.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Nicholas – I prefer having the right instrument for whatever I'm playing.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Nicholas – I like fingers & bows; I rarely use picks, but once in a while I'll borrow one.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Nicholas – 1-6.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Nicholas – The low-end.



QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Nicholas – They're just bigger.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Nicholas – These days I grab for my Chinese no name double bass. It was in a car accident & the whole top got smashed. The repair estimates were higher than the value of the bass so I got another bass & it went in the closet. After several years I decided to try to put it back together. It isn't pretty, but it still sounds good.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Nicholas – Cool for decoration but seldom used, rarely do they get in the way. They never seem to be close to the place on the string I like to play.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Nicholas – It would have a big body with high action, neck-through with string ferrules. Fretless with a fixed bridge. I've thought about this a lot & my dad & I are going to build one eventually.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Nicholas – I have a Demeter Compressor pedal that would look good with my signature on it.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Nicholas – 7.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Nicholas – In the case at room temperature.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Nicholas – Feel & sound first, but it's got to look cool.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Nicholas – Between \$0-\$120,000.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Nicholas – I will, but only if they break & I usually replace with comparable if not identical parts.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Nicholas – I like to switch it up.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Nicholas – Right now I want a Zon Legacy Elite 6, a Czech Flatback, a campfire style acoustic bass guitar, & some bizarre custom fretlesses.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Nicholas – Good tuning pegs.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Nicholas – Worst was The ART Nightbass multi-effects. It was awful; I bought it in the late nineties so I might like it now! I guess the best would be my Acoustic Image amp; it's my daily driver & workhorse.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Nicholas – I like Demeter, Electro Harmonix, Fender, Bergantino, Acoustic Image, Alembic. I use a lot of varied equipment. It's hard for me to name brand I don't like because everybody makes something cool. Some of my favorite pieces are from brands you wouldn't expect.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Nicholas – Whole notes.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Nicholas – 13.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Nicholas – Hopefully not yet.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Nicholas – It depends on the setting, I like both when done well. It's always nice when the bass can add or emphasize parts without sticking out.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Nicholas – Feel.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Nicholas – I always liked the bottom.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Nicholas – Definitely an ally, a coalition member!

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Nicholas – Basses have their own personalities, they don't need human characteristics.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Nicholas – Again, that's the Chinese bass that was in the car accident. It was smashed into kindling.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Nicholas – Think & listen.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Nicholas – Nowadays about 10 hours a week, used to play much more, would like to play more.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Nicholas – Whatever the biggest gauge is at the store.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Nicholas – As little as possible.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Nicholas – Several times a decade.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Nicholas – You kind of need both.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Nicholas – I use standard tuning, dropped D, & some unspecific non-diatonic tunings.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Nicholas – Sheet music is good. I don't do tab.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Nicholas – Not playing loud enough!

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Nicholas – Definitely drums & then piano.

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Nicholas – When I was a kid I always wanted to play with Madonna.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Nicholas – I like your trick where you have a second bass leaning against the amp that is just used as a drone.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Nicholas – I've taken lots of lessons, I learned that every player has their own way of doing things & so should I.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Nicholas – Harmony.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Nicholas – Play less.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Nicholas – Every good band needs a good bass player. If the band sucks usually a good bassist will move on.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Nicholas – [www.Extemporate.com](http://www.Extemporate.com)

QRD – Anything else?



Nicholas – Thanks for having me!

Trevor Dunn of Fantomas

October 2010

Name: Trevor Dunn

Bands: Fantomas

Websites: [www.trevordunn.net](http://www.trevordunn.net)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Trevor – My first bass was a Hondo (?). Dark brown, double cut-away. I sold it to a piano player in college.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Trevor – I usually prefer to play bass without any effects. However, when needed I run a couple stompboxes (Line6 distortion, Rat, Boss Reverb/Delay, volume pedal).

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Trevor – That is a complicated question. I can usually make due with any amp, but it depends on if I'm playing upright or electric. The combination can be critical so I try to use my own gear when possible. These days I haven't been traveling with

my upright, so I bring my own strings & pickup just in case. Electric is a lot easier to deal with as I have a tendency to use a pretty flat EQ when using my P-bass. In that regard I have a lot of room to adjust.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Trevor – For upright I use an Acoustic Image Focus 1. It is super light & sounds very natural with some capacity to tweak the midrange depending on room sounds. For electric I prefer Ampeg tube amps, GK, SWR, Aguilar.....

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Trevor – I prefer being able to choose between the two.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Trevor – I prefer having a wide range of tone in order to achieve what the music requires. I also use mallets, clothespins, & a triangle beater.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Trevor – For me, four works, although on occasion I use a 5-string with a low B. I'm not into the sound

of anything higher than concert middle C on bass. At that point you might as well be playing guitar.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Trevor – My older brother played guitar & got me into rock music. For whatever reason, although inspired by him, I decided to be a little different, having no idea what the difference really was. I also play some guitar.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Trevor – Keep in mind that “bass” means bass guitar. The difference in pitch dictates, in essence, the difference in role.

QRD – What’s your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Trevor – My main electric is a ‘75 Fender Precision. I find it simple & very versatile.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Trevor – I don’t use them.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Trevor – It would probably be modeled after a vintage Fender or Guild & would have a centipede on it.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Trevor – Probably some type of fuzz/synth/octaver with programmable settings. It would also be very small.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Trevor – I own six electrics & one upright.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Trevor – They are mostly just lying around my room. Some in their cases in the closet. Some lying on the bed.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Trevor – If I'm looking for a bass to buy, I probably have the sound & model already figured out, so ultimately I look for a good physical feel.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Trevor – Whatever it is worth.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Trevor – I've done some minor renovating, i.e. new bridge, nut, etc. But for the most part I keep it simple.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Trevor – I try to adjust to my surroundings. Obviously metal is going to need a different tone than exotica. That said, I prefer a dark, round tone.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Trevor – I've been lusting after a '60s Fender Jazz for many years.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Trevor – Less is more. Getting a good sound & making good music with just volume & one tone knob is a lesson in itself.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Trevor – My '65 Guild Starfire is one of those fantasy stories. A friend's neighbor sold it to me for about \$100. It had no tuning pegs & the input jack was destroyed. After a couple hundred bucks to my repair guy she soars like an eagle. I'm guessing that my custom 5-string fretless purchased in the early '90s is my least used instrument.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Trevor – Usually a Carol Kaye line or something off a Sly Stone record.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Trevor – Thirteen.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Trevor – I'm still trying to get there. Every gig & every session makes an improvement.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Trevor – It completely depends on the situation. I would never be so dogmatic as to say a line should always play the same role.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Trevor – Though I chose it by chance - or so I think - I like being in the background, being in a rhythm section, searching for, or dwelling on, the perfect groove. I think that describes my life in a nutshell.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Trevor – I used to have this theory that our instruments were prisons for the song trapped inside & it was our duty to wrestle (practice) & overcome this cumbersome entombment. But now I think that's kind of a dark analogy. I love my bass. Some of them have traveled the world with me & they are always there for me. Without that ally I would be nothing.



QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Trevor – Bobby Vega, Rusty Allen, Carol Kaye, Jaco Pastorius, Jerry Jemmott, Charlie Haden, Jimmy Garrison, Charles Mingus, Scott Lafaro.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Trevor – I don't think it's silly. There is a lot of emotion that travels through the fingers. I haven't named any of mine, but I do feel the spirit in them.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Trevor – I knocked over my first bass when I was a teenager talking to a girl on the phone. I'll never forget that. I put a big chip in the back of the neck. Aside from that, when I first moved to NYC & had no clue about winterizing my bass the front cracked open one December.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Trevor – Mostly very traditional standard exercises. Pretty much all my upright practicing is long tones,

scales, arpeggios, & classical etudes. Other than that I practice whatever music I need to be learning.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Trevor – I would like to practice 8 hours a day like the old days. When I can, I would say about four a day.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Trevor – For upright I use standard Tomastik orchestral. Electric I use D'Addario regular gauge - either .45 or .50. After years of experimenting these are simply the strings that suit me best.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Trevor – Upright, probably once a year. Electric, very rarely. On a tour with, say, Fantomas I would change them every couple of shows. But for the other things I do I prefer that greasy dander-infused tone that James Jameson championed.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Trevor – Almost never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Trevor – It is important that both hands be agile & dexterous. Coordinating them is crucial. In general, I'd say tone probably comes more from the left hand in upright playing & the right hand in electric.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Trevor – Mostly standard cuz I'm a simple guy. Occasionally drop-D, & sometimes I tune my electric B-E-A-D.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Trevor – I can't stand tablature. I find it annoying & useless. I use standard notation & read bass, treble, & tenor clefs.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Trevor – Not warming up.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Trevor – Piano/keyboard.

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Trevor – Authentic salsa.

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Trevor – Perfect technique.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Trevor – The Italian hairless bow.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Trevor – I've taken many bass lessons. Initially I took lessons for a couple years. Then I studied privately in college. & occasionally I still take lessons from a classical player. I could write an entire book on what I've learned. Probably the most important thing, however, is slowing down & listening.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Trevor – The ability to explore their own technique.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Trevor – Be in my brain.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Trevor – Sure, but you can do that with any instrument. That doesn't mean you will have an enjoyable listening experience.

Jeffrey Roden

October 2010

Name: Jeffrey Roden

Bands: None

Websites: [www.thebigtreemusic.com](http://www.thebigtreemusic.com)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Jeffrey – It was a Harmony hollow body bass & I gave it away to somebody else who was just starting out.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Jeffrey – I do not use effects & just plug straight into my amp. I had an elaborate pedal setup back in the day.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Jeffrey – Definitely the bass

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jeffrey – Ampeg Rocket Bass amp. It is clean & quiet & sounds great at a low volume. It is also

wonderful at revealing the tones & overtones that come from playing quietly.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Jeffrey – Electric bass.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Jeffrey – Fingers & thumb, but not for slapping.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Jeffrey – Four.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Jeffrey – It has more possibilities & the sound of the bass has always moved me.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Jeffrey – That should not even be a question as they are completely different instruments. They serve completely different purposes in an ensemble & each has their own wonders & limitations.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Jeffrey – 1961 Fender Precision. It has a gigantic variety of nuances & sounds that fit almost everything.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Jeffrey – Never use them.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jeffrey – 1961 Fender Precision.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jeffrey – I do not use pedals anymore.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Jeffrey – Two

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Jeffrey – In their cases in my studio.



QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Jeffrey – Great tone first & then how does it feel.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Jeffrey – Under \$1,000 certainly.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Jeffrey – I have used a variety of Jazz Bass pickups to augment the P Bass pickup, but that is all. Currently I'm using a Lindsay Fralin.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jeffrey – I use my fingers & thumb to create the sound based on the piece I am working on or to fit in with the band if I am accompanying.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jeffrey – I would like to have Toru Nitono make me a bass.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Jeffrey – It should be easy to play as playing the bass is very hard in the beginning.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Jeffrey – I bought a Guild D50 acoustic without any electronics, which is like playing a string bass. I have bought so many bad sets of strings it is laughable & kind of pricey.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jeffrey – I have always liked Ampeg small amps & for years I used one of the original Alembic pre-amps, which was insane.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Jeffrey – Something across all the strings & up the neck. Usually very slowly as otherwise you have no way of knowing what the bass sounds like.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Jeffrey – 16.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Jeffrey – 59 or right now. The bass is so subtle & complex really that it is a lifetime project.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Jeffrey – The bass has several functions, which do not include emphasizing other instruments' parts. It should tie the drums into the other instruments by being the bridge between the pitched & non-pitched elements. I know drums are tuned, but the bass does pull together the rhythm of the drums with the harmonic & melodic elements. The bass should also supply the counterpoint to the main melody, be it vocal or instrumental. & if the musicians playing with the bass will somehow manage to leave room, it can carry off many independent ideas. This can be as simple as just eighth notes or a complicated figure.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Jeffrey – Both.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Jeffrey – I have always wanted to play & hear it being played.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jeffrey – Partner & soul pal.

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jeffrey – It is endless Jack Bruce, Paul Chambers, Willie Dixon, Jerry Jemmot, Joe Osborne, there were so many great bass players in all idioms when I started that it is hard to not say everyone.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Jeffrey – I do not have a name for my bass, however I get that people do it.

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a bass & how did you do it?

Jeffrey – The great thing about my bass is that it has been dropped so many times that it is beyond being damaged. There is a really large gash out of the front & I cannot remember what happened.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jeffrey – I do not practice “practice” at all anymore. I should!

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Jeffrey – I play several hours a day & more when I am working or preparing for a record or live performance. I could play 10 hours a day & be happy.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jeffrey – Medium gauge & as they sound right for my solo work.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jeffrey – Yearly or whenever they start to become too dull.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jeffrey – I used to break them all the time, but not anymore as the music I play now is quiet.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jeffrey – It used to be my right hand; however now I have developed so many ways to fret the bass without any noise in the most naked of settings, so I would say it is now my left hand.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jeffrey – Standard tuning & sometimes I detune the E to a D.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jeffrey – Notation as I am a reasonable reader. For popular music I would rather read chord charts.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jeffrey – I would like to be less interested in complexity.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Jeffrey – Keyboard definitely.

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jeffrey – While I have played country music & not embarrassed myself, good country bass is a whole other animal. I have heard some crazy great country players.

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Jeffrey – I wished I could have played with Miles Davis & BB King.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Jeffrey – There are no tricks in music.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jeffrey – I studied bass with Ray Siegel & sight-reading with Joe Valenti. Two musicians who taught me so much about being a professional & how to study music. A good bass teacher should organize through technique, which then allows the student to develop their own ideas of what they want to play. I was fortunate that my teachers gave me the tools to do anything with the bass I wanted to.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Jeffrey – To ignore all the bullshit & to find their own way & their own voice & sound. I taught bass for a long time & many students are overwhelmed by other musicians' views of the instrument or the most common feeling of needing to be something other than what they are or want to be.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jeffrey – Try to listen to all the great musicians on all instruments & bring back to the bass their approach. I have never sounded like anyone else



because I wanted to form my own view of the bass. It requires listening to so many different bass players for so many different reasons. I appreciate the great blues players like Willie Dixon; but also the great jazz players like Paul Chambers, rock players like Jack Bruce, funk players like Jerry Jemmot, etc. But I do not copy them; I just try to absorb the feeling. Really now to play in my style you would need to believe that the sound of the bass is so beautiful that it is sufficiently interesting by itself & without devices or technical mis-directions to stand on its own.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jeffrey – No.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Jeffrey – I would not mind having a Jack Bruce bass, as really starting out he clearly was the one player who said, “things are going to be different.” I have always wanted to meet him to say thanks.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Jeffrey – Lamely enough I have fallen behind on who is it now.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Jeffrey – My last two records, the New Albion records recording titled “seeds of happiness” & my newest release titled “bridge to the other place” all works for the solo electric bass without any other instruments or loops.

QRD – Anything else?

Jeffrey – I very much hope that bass players will release themselves from the frenzy of what they believe to be great playing & discover besides that technical overplaying all the things that the bass can do. I think too that bass players need to stake out their own territory in music so that receive the space both musical & sonic that they used to get. Maybe if recordings contained 20 or 50 less overdubs & loops the bass player might be able to play a part that would be interesting & audible.

Phillip Palmer of Port City Music

October 2010

Name: Phillip Palmer

Bands: Port City Music

Websites: [www.myspace.com/sauriandream](http://www.myspace.com/sauriandream)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Phillip – It was an old bass from the sixties made by a company called Audition. It had a three quarter scale & flat wound strings. I think it was stolen, but I really can't remember.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Phillip – Currently I am running my bass through a 100 watt Ampeg & then I run the line out to a Marshall tremelo pedal, & then into my Epiphone tube amp. This way I have a my fat, warm bass sound & on top of that I can layer other sounds like the tremelo, which I can employ for an organ like sound & spring reverb, gain, etc.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Phillip – My bass.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Phillip – A 100 watt Ampeg Rocket Bass amp with a fifteen inch speaker, which has been discontinued. It has a nice full sound & has plenty of punch to handle any club that I play.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Phillip – Well, if I were stranded on an island I guess I'd have to go for the upright, due to a lack of power. Tough question... uprights have a beautiful sound that cannot be matched by electric, but overall an electric is more versatile.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Phillip – I pretty much split it up 50/50 between pick & fingers, depending on what the song is calling for.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Phillip – 4 is plenty for me.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Phillip – For me it just feels natural. I like the feeling of the fat strings & the low earthy tone.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Phillip – Well, the bass is usually mistakenly called a bass guitar, but my Fender is actually an electric bass violin & I think this is key. Though most guitarists can play the bass, I think many of them actually approach it like a guitar... I'm not saying there is a right or wrong here, but my approach is to generally treat it as completely different than a guitar, even though I do dabble with effects, etc.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Phillip – It's a Fender Jazz bass, which has a narrower neck than a Precision. It has two pickups & I use the neck pickup. It's sound is a bit brighter than a Precision, but it has more variety & can easily get the classic, fat, warm tone.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Phillip – I've tried them before but never warmed up to them, but usually when I'm on the A, D or G

string, I use the next string down as a thumb rest... go figure.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Phillip – Never thought about it.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Phillip – See above answer.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Phillip – Right now just the Fender.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Phillip – Usually in my case, but sometimes I keep it on a stand for quick access.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Phillip – Well, we could get into things like the various woods, the pickup configuration etc., but the two most important things are that it has to feel right to your hands, like two cogs working in

harmony, & it has to sound great, which is of course subjective.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Phillip – Should cost? Hmmmmmm. I don't know. But I've had a couple of nice used basses that were under two hundred dollars.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Phillip – Pretty much just stick with it... so far. Who knows about the future?

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Phillip – I like to have the ability to change it, but 95% of the time I'm after a fat, warm tone, not much treble. I use a pick sometimes to get that clicky sound, but the strings almost have to have a dead sound for me... pick plus treble equals fingernails on a chalkboard.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Phillip – Well, other than Fenders, I've always wanted a Gibson Ripper... I just think they look cool. & I really love those Pignose tube amps, which I believe have been discontinued.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Phillip – Well, It's something I think shouldn't be there... fret markers, cause they encourage us to look at the neck.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Phillip – I bought an Ibanez Road Star just because of how light it was...bad, bad. My best purchase was my Fender Jazz.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Phillip – Well, based on the Ibanez basses I've played, including the one I owned, I just think they lack depth. Never really had a bad amp. I love my Marshall tremelo pedal... best pedal I've ever owned.



QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Phillip – For a long time it was the G major scale... now I typically do bluesy riffs, starting with the third note of the pentatonic scale.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Phillip – 15, I think.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Phillip – Well, as far as manual ability goes, probably around 18 or 19, cause I was practicing by learning Rush songs, plus I played in the high school jazz band. But my interest in technicality dropped off commensurate with my interest in songwriting & what I might call musical texture.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Phillip – Well, that is a case by case matter, but I think for the bass to work in concert with the drums is of utmost importance & most of the time, but not

all, it should have something different to offer from the guitar.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Phillip – Given a choice of only one, hearing it.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Phillip – It is one of my handiest tools.

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Phillip – Roger Waters, Steve Kilbey, Mark Sandman.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Phillip – I won't be the judge on that one... suffice it to say, I have never named an instrument.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Phillip – Well, I owned a Peavey Unity, which was neck through body construction. One time as I was breaking from practice, I leaned it against a swivel

chair...the chair swiveled. It broke the neck up by the headstock. Amazingly, some crazy glue & a C clamp did the trick.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Phillip – I don't practice much anymore, unless I make up a part for a song which I cannot play well. Then I knuckle down.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Phillip – Probably between 5 & 10, unless I'm recording, & that's fine.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Phillip – Light gauge. I once tried heavy gauge, thinking it would naturally fit with my desire for a fat bottom end, but it was just all wrong. Also, I have recently switched back to flat wound strings.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Phillip – Once a year maybe... I like 'em dead... generally only change them if one breaks.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Phillip – Obviously not often, but I have broken about 4 E strings.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Phillip – Probably my fretting hand, because I used to practice my scales like mad, but, ironically, that has probably had little effect on my style because it has become much more of a minimalist approach.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Phillip – Don't mess with tunings much, except on guitars. Back when I owned two Jazz basses, I kept one strung with a 5 string set minus the G, so B, E, A, D. That low B can be a nice secret weapon.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Phillip – Just the letters, plus any pertinent numbers, i.e. A 7 Gm6 F M7 etc.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Phillip – At the risk of sounding pompous, I can't think of any.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Phillip – A piano.

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Phillip – Well, I have thought about being able to play pinch harmonics very rapidly... something to strive for when I get back to practicing one day.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Phillip – See above... just not very well.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Phillip – Yes I did. I learned scales, theory, various techniques, including slap, which I haven't used in years.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Phillip – That underplaying is preferable to overplaying.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Phillip – They would need to study keys & chords & learn to create motifs, or certain notes that resonate well through much of a song.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Phillip – No.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Phillip – Mark Sandman's two string bass. It has an absolutely beautiful body style... almost baroque.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Phillip – I couldn't say.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Phillip – Well they can't, because my best work is not recorded...yet. But they can hear examples at

[myspace.com/sauriandream](https://myspace.com/sauriandream) particularly “Eyes On The Road” & “Sunday Best”

QRD – Anything else?

Phillip – Remember the old saying, less is more... not always true, but most of the time it is.

Nat Baldwin of Dirty Projectors

October 2010

Name: Nat Baldwin

Bands: Nat Baldwin, Dirty Projectors

Websites: [myspace.com/natbaldwin](http://myspace.com/natbaldwin),

[myspace.com/dirtyprojectors](http://myspace.com/dirtyprojectors)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Nat – My first bass is in my room now. It's the only bass I've owned.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Nat – No effects for upright. A Big Muff & some equalizer thing for the electric.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Nat – Bass.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Nat – I liked the GK I had but it broke. It was one of the few amps I've been able to figure out a great sound for both the upright & electric.



QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Nat – Depends on the musical situation, but upright is my main instrument. The only time I've ever played electric bass is in Dirty Projectors, & for a few months when I was 23 with bands called "Bangs" & "Speedbeef."

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Nat – Bow.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Nat – I play basses with 4 strings, but have nothing against people who need another string or two.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Nat – When I decided I wanted to play music I was just more attracted to the bass. I never thought about playing the guitar. I guess I liked the idea of being such an essential part of the music, without being in the spotlight. A lot of reasons you start playing an instrument are hard to explain. I never really thought about it, my ears just naturally gravitated towards the low end & rhythm section when I became interested in music. Maybe I have

certain personality traits that make me a more likely candidate to be interested in the bass, but someone else would probably do a better job describing that.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Nat – It's a different instrument. That's like saying, "What's the difference between a trumpet & an alto sax?" There're plenty of differences & there are plenty of similarities. I don't really care to explain the differences. They are both capable of making a variety of sounds.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Nat – My main & only upright bass I've had my whole musical life. My main & only electric that I use is a Rickenbacker. I don't know much about it other than how to play it.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Nat – I have never thought of them.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Nat – I have no idea. I love the basses I play now, so I guess they would be like them.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Nat – I have even less of an idea of how to answer this question.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Nat – As previously stated, 2 hundred & 17.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Nat – In a case, indoors.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Nat – Good looks, charming, funny. I just wanna be comfortable being around it.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Nat – An intimate relationship or two.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Nat – So far I've just been sticking. If I'm ever in the position to do otherwise I suppose I would consider.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Nat – I like to lock in. Sometimes I like to change, but when I change I like to lock into that change, before I change it again & lock into that.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Nat – Oh my god, too many to list! Just kidding, I think I've displayed my lack of care/knowledge about these types of things in previous answers. I love what I use, but if I start using something else I will probably love that, too.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Nat – Natural skills. Work ethic.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Nat – Best was the Walter Woods bass head I had when I first started out. Worst was selling the Walter Woods when I was 23 & thought I wasn't gonna play upright anymore & was just gonna play punk or any music that was loud.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Nat – I like Walter Woods, Gallien-Krueger, & SWR because that's all I've used for a significant amount of time. Anything I've disliked I only blame on my own lack of knowledge

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Nat – The theme from SportsCenter, or the scat solo in that Jason Mraz song, "I'm Yours."

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Nat – 18.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Nat – Technically, I was at my best when I was 22, by far.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Nat – It would be ridiculous to feel one way over the other. It depends on the music.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Nat – I want them to hear my bass while I'm feeling it.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Nat – Because I love John Stockton.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Nat – Both. For writing my own music, I feel it limits me to a certain style, at least in what I can do or how I can do it to create a song. But I feel like those limitations placed on me by the instrument, or by me playing the instrument, are the very things that make the music unique.

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Nat – Most of the influences I have are not very apparent in my playing now, but I like Charles Mingus, Jimmy Garrison, Charlie Haden, Mark Dresser, Joelle Leandre, Peter Kowald, Rick Danko. Peter Kowald is the one whose playing I still think about as a direct influence to some things that I do now. Everyone else its more of a vibe thing & less of a musical thing.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Nat – I think doing that & not thinking it's silly is unnatural.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Nat – I busted through a string, which proceeded to coil sharply & bust through all of my bow hairs, one by one. I was playing a physically & emotionally intense piece at a high school reunion & it was awkward.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Nat – Now, because I write my own music, I don't do as much technical practice as I'd like. I always get distracted by writing music & that's why I don't

think I've developed technically in quite a long time. Sometimes I get dark about that, but ultimately I am psyched to be creating my own music & it certainly keeps my chops up enough to play what I've been playing. I think if I get back into playing more improvised music I will have to get into practicing more technical stuff, just to be able to sustain the necessary energy.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Nat – I played about 4-8 hours a day for the first 4 years I played but I haven't had anything that consistent since. After those first 4 years, I quit for a year or two, then I started writing my own music. Because my practicing is so much less regimented now & more based on motivation at a specific time, my time really varies. If I'm writing a bunch of stuff, I might play all day for 2 weeks, but when those 2 weeks are done I might have an album or two & then the following 2 weeks won't be as productive. Or I might be preparing for a tour so I practice all day & when I get back I might chill things out or maybe I'll be psyched to get back into writing new stuff. It's all over the place ever since I stopped playing scales all day.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?



Nat – I have no idea.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Nat – Upright strings every year or so. Electric I haven't changed yet.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Nat – I broke that one on the upright that time I described. I think I might have broke an electric one once, but I can't remember the details.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Nat – My fretting hand moves a bit faster & I have some bad habits or just lack of skills in the bow hand. It might just effect my writing style more than anything else; like I'm not gonna write a passage with a ton of slow legato phrases. I end up writing things that just focus on the good, while hopefully hiding the bad

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Nat – Standard tuning because it's what I've always done & I like it just fine. If I used another one maybe it would be cool, too.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Nat – The things that I write now I don't notate.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Nat – Sometimes I forget to really breathe & keep my arms loose, which can create tightening up, especially in my bow arm. I need to keep that right hand loose & think about the power of the movement coming from my back. Sometimes after a solo show my right arm works so hard it feels like it wants to fall off.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Nat – Probably piano, for more harmonic knowledge; but also drums, as it's your partner in the rhythm section in most traditional musical situations.

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Nat – I wish I could slap so I could make my friends laugh.

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Nat – I don't really believe in goals anymore, but when I did I probably wanted to learn some classical piece that ended up not coming together. Some of those Dragonetti waltzes come to mind.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Nat – I don't know, but my favorite one was learning how to balance the upright on your body with no hands. My most significant teacher in college couldn't believe I was never taught that & when he showed me in our first lesson I couldn't believe I would ever do it. It took me about a week of nearly dropping my bass.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Nat – Rick Rozie was my teacher in college for the year & a half I was there. He taught me plenty about technique, but the best thing he taught me was

that I was my best teacher. He could certainly give me some tools to become a better player, but he made me realize that I was gonna be the one alone in a room for hours everyday, & I needed to figure out how to best use that time.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Nat – How to dance

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Nat – Harmonics, double stops, looking cool.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Nat – You can't ignore them, but only acknowledge them as a shitty band with a good bass player.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Nat – Charles Mingus. Because he is the definition of a “bad ass.”

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Nat – I have no idea. I like Adam Pumilia from Delicate Steve, Josh Leblanc from Givers, Nate Brenner from Tune-Yards, Ira Tuton from Yeasayer, Chris Taylor from Grizzly Bear, Kyle Field from Little Wings, & plenty more.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Nat – My best upright work can be heard on my album *Most Valuable Player* & an earlier more experimental album called *Solo Contrabass*. My best electric work is on *Rise Above* with Dirty Projectors & also this split 10” we did with Castanets on a song called “Silence in the Land,” which is hard to find but is actually my favorite.

QRD – Anything else?

Nat – GO CELTICS!

Frank Alexander of Triplicity

October 2010

Name: Frank Alexander

Bands: Triplicity, Studio 713 crew, independent

Websites: [LuzGruvProductions.com](http://LuzGruvProductions.com)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Frank – My very first bass was a bright red, 3/4-sized P-bass knock-off made by Cort. I played it for about a year until I could afford a full-sized P-bass knock-off, at which point I retired it. A few years later I discovered it under my bed in an old case & decided to convert it to a fretless bass. Let's just say the patient did not survive the surgery.... Strange as it may sound, I really have no idea whatever became of that bass.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Frank – Over the last few years I've been spoiled by the DSP stuff I'm able to do on the computer for the home studio production business I run. I haven't had to worry about amps & outboard FX the way I used to. When I do play live my set-up is usually direct from my 5-string Music Man bass to the input of a Genz-Benz 3.0 head, which powers two cabs: a

GK 2x10 & an old Crate 1x15 that has just the right amount of boom. Given the more adventurous stuff I've been doing lately with the trio Triplicity, I've had to add some new noisemakers to the signal chain. Whereas I used to get away with just a Boss CS-3 compression pedal through the FX loop, now I follow that with a DOD Octoplus, an MXR Bass Fuzz, an EH Bassballs, & finally a Boss Phase Shifter for when I wanna get spooky.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Frank – For me, it's the bass, without a doubt. I searched out the Music Man I've got for almost four years before I found it in a used shop back where I used to live in Maryland. With that bass in hand I'm confident I can get pretty much any tone I need or want. I'd say my amp & Boss compression pedal are in a close tie for second place. I've used that pedal since high school, but I discovered the GB head only about a year-and-a-half ago while noodling around with it at Indoor Storm in Raleigh. "Wow" was probably the first word that came to mind. So much tone variability & packaged in under 3lbs of metal.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Frank – The Genz-Benz Shuttle 3.0 is what I'm running these days. I really like the fact it's got a built-in FET pre-amp & the ability to set the center frequency for mid-range EQ-ing. Couple that with three pre-set signal shape EQ settings that can be turned on & off with the click of a button & you've got a very versatile & functional piece of hardware. Did I mention it's less than 3lbs total weight? Just a beautifully designed little box.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Frank – I primarily play electric fretless bass these days, but spent about five years in the '90s studying & playing upright in various jazz combos & big bands. I think the sound I get on my Music Man fretless is a nice compromise; bit of a growl when I need to cut through, but with plenty of sustain & boom when I need to lay it down. Plus, it's hard to beat a fretless instrument of any kind for the articulation of nuances.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Frank – I work best with my fingers, but a pick is needed some times. When I was a younger player I saw using a pick as a sign of not being good enough to play without it... boy was I wrong! There are sounds you can get only with a pick that are



wickedly funky & delicious (check out any O'Jays-era Anthony Jackson for clarification on that point).

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Frank – Just enough to get the job done. No more, no less.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Frank – Because I can. No, wait, that sounds lame. Back in junior high I really liked my guitar teacher, Mr. Gale. He had a way of making music fun & exciting even as he tried to teach us burgeoning metal-heads how to play Bach's Joy of a Man's Desire on nylon folk guitar. One day during the second semester of that class he asked if I'd be interested in learning electric bass so I could play in the school jazz band, apparently the other kid who was doing it dropped out unexpectedly. I said sure. So everyday thereafter I'd spend the second-half of lunch hour in the guitar storage area of the music room, with my Mel Bay Beginner Bass book in front of me, the school's P-bass grinding heavily into my lap & plugged directly into an enormous Yamaha 1x15 cab that, mercifully, had wheels. I continued in guitar class, but knew pretty much by the end of that semester that bass is where it's at for me.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Frank – Great question & one I think about often when I'm tracking guitar right before or after bass. Bass is fundamentally a rhythmic instrument whereas guitar almost from the start has straddled the worlds of rhythm & melody. Even in early chamber music upright bass served to do little more than double the cello part, which itself was often no more than a rhythm part (hence the moniker "double bass" for uprights). Certainly by the 20th century you begin to see that basic essence change for the bass, first notably in jazz (thank you Jimmy Blanton) & later in early rock (thank you Paul McCartney). Not-so-suddenly, melodic elements become as important to bass playing as its rhythmic pulse. I think those changes are still very much felt today, especially when you hear players such as Victor Wooten or Michael Manring performing dazzling, keyboard-like passages on the instrument. Still, when you get right down to it (& even in many of those dazzling performances), the bass establishes the rhythm & groove for a piece of music. That job is the primary role & distinguishing characteristic of the instrument when compared to a guitar.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Frank – It's my 2001 MM StingRay5 fretless. What I love most about it is how even it sounds from string to string; no dead spots anywhere. Even though I've got flat wounds on it, it still manages some growl, too. That's owing to the humbucker-style pickup & the active pre-amp onboard the bass, a really powerful combination. Also, between the 3-way selector switch & the pots for low/mid/high control, I've always been impressed at how wide a range of sound I can get with it. I think that diversity of sound is especially useful in the studio, depending on what I'm tracking bass to, but it also helps a lot when I'm on stage in a space that maybe needs a lot less thump or maybe some extra mids to really get the sound across. Any & all tweaks are right there at my fingertips, which I love.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Frank – I think they are useful for those who've learned to utilize them. Most often I see those on vintage instruments & I'll be damned if I can quite figure out how to get my hand comfortable enough to play around it.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Frank – That’s a toughie. To be perfectly honest, it would probably look, feel & sound a LOT like my Music Man. The only other thing I might add is a whammy bar (yup, we can use ‘em too!).

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Frank – That’s a fun one. It would be a combination compression/distortion pedal with a built-in 10-band graphic EQ that is able to hit all the right frequencies when running through a stack consisting of 2x10 & 1x15 speakers. Fuzz is tricky on bass, distortion even more so, so having the comp & EQ there to help manage it would be perfect.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Frank – Four.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Frank – I keep all but one set-up on stands in my studio. Never know which sound I’ll need & when, so it’s best to keep them all handy.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Frank – The feel. When I pick up an electric it's gotta feel right in my hands from the get-go. I used to think I could get what I wanted from just about any bass & I suppose after enough hours playing that's probably true. But I think you really “sing” on your instrument only when you're 100% comfortable with its feel. I can tell right away if I'm going to enjoy playing a bass by the size & shape of its neck. I started out gigging on a Squire J-bass, so for me it always comes back to having a smaller neck radius & not just wielding a piece of lumber like some of these five- & six-strings I've seen over the last decade. I should also mention having decent pick-ups is important, be they active or otherwise, as they help make things sound a lot better too. I've never spent as much time on getting that right, though, as on making sure the bass feels good to play. Also, electronics can be swapped out, so there is some recourse if your tone just plain blows.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Frank – No more than you have in the bank! Once I began to appreciate that a good instrument is an investment, I realized that old saying about “getting what you pay for” is far more true than false. With that said, I've seen & played amazing basses that start at \$300 & also walked away shaking my head after twenty minutes trying to make something

musical come out of an electric tagged at over \$1500. Beyond individual subjectivity, there's a great deal of variance between manufacturers & the specs they keep.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Frank – With the exception of my first gigging bass, I pretty much stick to what I get. There again experience has been good to me. If I can spend 30-40 minutes playing an instrument through a set-up not so different than mine & be comfortable at what I hear throughout, I'm reasonably confident that I've got what I want. I've got nothing against hot-rodding or otherwise upgrading a bass, especially a cheaper one you get at a bargain price, but it can reach a point where you sink as much into it via improvements as if you'd just gone & purchased a pricier bass outright. Time is money, as they say, so if you're gonna spend a lot of either I suppose it's worth considering the return on each.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Frank – I think by default I've arrived at the primary tone I like to hear most often. It took a while to get this particular bass/amp/effects

combination & to dial in what I most want to hear from it. Now that I've spent some time using these items together I have a solid idea of what to tweak in order to bring about subtle & not-so-subtle variations. That's certainly one of the most fun aspects of recording, the ability to experiment with various tones & sounds I wouldn't otherwise use for personal playing. All the tonal diversity via the hardware I've mentioned really helps out with that.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Frank – Lust might be too strong a word at this point in my playing career, but of late I've been considering upgrading my live rig. Way back in the day I had a '70s-era Acoustic head, various Hartke & Peavey 4x10 cabs & a customized PA cabinet with an 18" speaker. Needless to say, I'm big on lightening the load these days. I've read some good things about a few of the newer MB series heads from GK, lots of power-handling & EQ-ing capability in a lightweight shell. The same is true of the newer neodymium cabs from GK & Acoustic. As for basses, I've had it in the back of my head for some time now that a fretted 5-string Yamaha would make the perfect addition to my collection. The quality on those instruments, even at the entry level, is surprisingly good & the fives I've played

from them have a sound that I think is unique to that company. I admire that quality.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Frank – Not quite sure how to answer that one as the basics for electric bass are always a volume knob, at least one tone control, & working electronics. If those aren't present I don't see how you can even pretend to sell the instrument as functional. One thing that I do think every player's first instrument should have is a set-up. That primarily involves lowering the string-to-neck height just above the point of fret buzz & adjusting the saddles on the bridge to ensure proper intonation of each string. While there is not always a lot that can be done to cheaper instruments as far as set-up is concerned, I do think that if more manufacturers took time getting their entry line of basses in better playing shape right out of the box they'd have many more younger players sticking with their instruments longer. I suppose the cynical might argue that's exactly why the big manufacturers don't do it, so as to get 'em into wanting more expensive versions of the instrument that ARE set up properly. In any case, that kind of increased playability is something that can make a big difference on a first bass.



QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Frank – In terms of value for what I paid, I'd probably say the like-new Mexican made P-bass I picked up at a pawn show a few years back would be up there. I got it for just under half the cost of a new one & it plays as well or better than some of the American ones I've tried out in-store. Back in the early '90s I picked up a new purple Fernandes 6-string bass that had no business being sold: bad pick-ups, lousy intonation, & just generally low playability across the board. I paid a little more for that one than I should've, & certainly lost money on its resale. Luckily I realized the error of my ways fairly quickly & parted with it within six months.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Frank – I've owned various Fender & Ernie Ball basses for over a decade each & I really like the build consistency I've encountered with each brand, especially with EB. The electronics are solid if not great from each & the playability as regards the fingerboard right down to the bridge is almost always perfect for me. I recognize Fender in particular has undergone lots of changes between the '80s & '90s as far as where instruments were built & the specs they used, but I've been able to

find good basses from those years & have been very happy for it. As for amps, early on I had an Acoustic head that I still miss to this day. While I've gotten mostly good usage out of Hartke heads & cabs alike, after discovering Genz-Benz heads I still wonder how I got along before them. I've never been a big FX user for live shows, mostly preferring to work with my bass & amp & then pump that sound through a Boss compression/sustainer to fatten it a bit. That said, I've begun to develop a new appreciation for sonic experimentation following the purchase of my Electro-Harmonix Bass Balls pedal a few years back. I get an interesting mix of fuzz & wackiness with that one.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Frank – Depends on why I'm picking it up. If I'm about to play a song on a bass I own, I'll play some ascending/descending chromatic patterns that I've used since I was a teen to warm-up my fingers. If I'm trying out a bass I usually just pick a basic groove that covers what I specifically want to hear on that particular bass, like a thumpin' low-E riff to check out the sensitivity of the pick-ups or a busier line that moves across the neck to check out the instrument's action/intonation.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Frank – In junior high, around 13 or 14.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Frank – That's a toughie as I'm not certain I have even at this point! If I had to pick, I'd say it probably was around the time I was studying music in college & gigging regularly as a jazz bassist in the 1990s. I've recorded & been on recordings since high school & when I hear tunes I'm on from around that period I sometimes can't believe I knew what to put where.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Frank – That's really situational & depends on the song you're playing & the people you're playing with. Whenever I approach a song I try to think of the rhythmic & melodic aspects of the bass line as two sides of the same dynamic coin. Even within a song you can find space to emphasize a given progression or another instrument's part by playing around with something as simple as a 16th note, or maybe adding a passing tone somewhere in the 2nd

verse where you played it straight in the 1st verse. Playing this many years has given me a huge appreciation for the guys who can take a simple four or five note line & come up with seemingly endless melodic & rhythmic variations while serving the song & never losing the groove. The older I get the more it really does seem that less is more!

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Frank – Really depends on the song & style. If it's a dub tune or something like that that emphasizes the feel of the bass perhaps more than just the individual note choices, you definitely want it to be felt before it's necessarily heard. The same is mostly true with more traditional rock tunes. That's not to say you can't or shouldn't have melodic movement, but the feel & sound of those styles almost always comes first versus the notes you actually play. In something like jazz or any of its offshoots, it's the opposite: you want the notes to be articulated clearly & for the line itself to help push the tune as much as it supports it. There again though tone is important, but you & the people you're playing with should be able to hear what you're doing melodically as you support the song rhythmically.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Frank – My thinking in the creation of music is most often rooted in building a song from the ground up. Bass playing lends itself really well to that mode of thinking, while still allowing for expression of melody too.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Frank – Most definitely my ally.

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Frank – Earlier on it was guys like Geddy Lee & Cliff Burton of Metallica. I really liked the way they could play harder sounding lines that rocked while still emphasizing some melody. After that I started delving deeper into the bass as a groove instrument & that's when I discovered players like James Jamerson, "Duck" Dunn, Francis Rocco Prestia & Jaco Pastorius. Once I started studying music in school & performing in different jazz groups I picked up on upright players like Jimmy Blanton, Ray Brown, & Paul Chambers. My current style is probably most rooted in the playing of guys like Anthony Jackson, Mark Egan, & Jimmy Johnson.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Frank – I think people have a natural tendency to do that to almost any object they care for. If you put in hours practicing an instrument there's bound to be an affection that grows out of it after that much time spent getting to know it. That said, I have never felt the need to name any of my instruments....

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Frank – Tearing the frets off my first bass to convert it to fretless. I could almost hear it screaming with every pull of the pliers!

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Frank – If I'm not running through a tune in order to flesh out possible variations in feel or notes, I'll usually practice playing either arpeggios or scales in odd ascending &/or descending groupings. In the case of a scale, maybe ascend in thirds over two octaves then descend in fourths; for arpeggios, ascend each note of a major scale as a 7th chord, then try descending the same way but using the minor scale. I always try & think of new ways to practice, to explore different aspects of the

fretboard. Years ago I read a great quotation from the drummer Tony Williams when asked about practicing. He said simply, “Practice what you don’t know.” Now I get what he meant.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Frank – Nowadays I’m lucky to get in two or three hours a week, but since I get to spend most of my time composing & recording songs I do get to play bass when I’m tracking for a song or cue. Back in high school & into college I was getting in anywhere from one to two hours a day. Don’t know that I’d still practice that much now even if I had the time. I much more enjoy exploring songwriting with the bass now rather than just running etudes or something like that.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Frank – For the 5-string fretless I use flatwounds gauged .045-.132; for my 4-string basses I use roundwounds gauged .045-.105. I’ve used roundwounds on fretless before, you certainly get a nice buzz with ‘em. As I got more & more into recording though I discovered that flatwounds really make for a smoother, more uniform sound from string to string with no finger noise. There are times when you want a brighter, punchier sound of

course, so I keep Rotosound roundwounds on the other basses. As far as gauge is concerned, I used to experiment a lot with lighter & heavier gauges to see what sounded best through my set-up. I finally arrived at these mid-level gauges because they seem to offer the warmest, roundest sound while also allowing for easy playability.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Frank – Not very, sometimes I'll go a year between changes in fact. To help prevent too much deadness from setting in I'm pretty fanatical about wiping down the strings & neck with a soft cotton cloth after every time I play. I can't quote scientific studies to back this up, but since I started doing that many years ago I've noticed the strings sound fresher longer. I've always been amazed at the amount of oil that gets on strings after you play for a while. Leaving that on the strings to build up can contribute to the string breaking down faster. I think that's particularly true with roundwound strings, which are a little rougher on your fingertips & therefore tend to pull off more residue from your fingers as you play.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Frank – I've broken only one string the entire time I've played bass, & even that wasn't officially a



break. The string just started coming unwound at the tuning peg after the colored end frayed for some reason.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Frank – Both are equally good at what they do, but these days my picking fingers aren't as nimble as they used to be. I went through a Jaco/Jeff Berlin/Tower of Power phase when all I wanted to do was play fast 16th notes with my right hand. It was during that time that I concentrated on exercises that would get my picking hand working smoothly in time with my fretting hand. Doing that made me much more aware of how much influence your picking hand has over your overall sound. To this day I think about how I'm going to play a note or pattern with my picking hand as much as how I'm going to phrase a line with my fretting hand.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Frank – I pretty much stick to EADG with the low B on the five for most songs. I've heard other bassists exploring alt tunings on bass & there's some cool stuff there. For me, I think the way the strings are arranged as-is leaves plenty of space for

me to come up with cool ideas & sounds. I save my alt tuning explorations for acoustic guitar.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Frank – I have no problem with tab, but if I'm going to notate I'll use traditional F-clef staves, bar lines, & notes. An upshot of starting out on bass the way I did is that I pretty much had to read from the get-go if I wanted to get through the Mel Bay book that got plopped down in front of me.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Frank – Getting hung up on a particularly cool sounding riff & playing it to death. That's one reason I wish I did have a little more practice time on bass. I think it's true of most folks that they tend to fall back on what they know when they haven't had time to develop new ideas. I try to be conscious of that whenever I'm playing, especially if it's a live show. There's nothing wrong with a well-timed, well-worn riff that fits like an old pair of your favorite shoes, but too much of that can really make your playing sound stale.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone’s bass playing?

Frank – I suppose guitar would be an obvious choice here, but truthfully I think learning just about any other instrument can help you on your primary instrument. One thing that helped me without me even realizing it was taking a couple semesters of piano in college. The combination of playing rhythm & melody at the same time can provide a much deeper understanding of how those two important aspects best work in a song. Also, the harmony I was exposed to on keyboards definitely gave me a better idea of how to approach note choice when creating bass lines. Of course you can get melody & harmony simultaneously on guitar too, but the orderly way it’s laid out from side to side on keyboard is just something that made understanding it a little easier for me.

QRD – What’s a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Frank – Reggae. I can fake it to a certain extent, but the feel that the real players have is something I’ve never gotten under my fingers. I once had a guitarist I used to play with tell me that the key to reggae bass lines is to think of them in the same way a jazz bassist thinks of dotted quarter notes & triplets in jazz. That is, as having a kind of “swing” feel. I

think he was right on with that, but for some reason I can cop a jazz feel far better than a reggae feel. Guess it's time to practice....

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Frank – Recording a CD of all bass instrumentals. According to my wife however, some goals are best left unattained.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Frank – Tricky to explain, but basically involves plucking a note then plucking the second note down a fifth, then hammering on from one step below the first note, followed by plucking the octave of the second note. Got it, 'cause there will be a test? It sounds terribly confusing, but is actually pretty straightforward to play, which is why I like it. It sounds like a flurry of notes but is really just four different ones; the hammer-on makes it sound really busy. The lick is my interpretation of one I picked up from Jimmy Johnson on some fusion album he was on back in the '90s. Not sure it's exactly what he was doing, but it sounds a lot like it & I had a heckuva lotta fun developing it.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Frank – I took lessons off & on when I was in junior high & high school. I don't recall staying with any one teacher for more than three or four lessons though. I was just so anxious to play what I was hearing that I started transcribing every bit of bass I could figure out from the recordings I had. In fact the best teachers I had were the ones who would tell me to check out this or that recording of such & such because I'd probably like the lines he was playing. Honestly, once that one particular teacher I had mentioned Jaco Pastorius & the album Heavy Weather to me, I was pretty much on my way. Of course I also knew I had a lot of work to do from that point on.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Frank – Probably to really think about what you're about to play before playing it. By that I mean thinking not only about the notes you're going to play, but to the shape of the bass line itself. One thing I realized after transcribing bass lines & actually writing them down to look at, was that the up & down flow of the notes in my favorite pieces of music were like running water. They just flowed, almost effortlessly, from start to finish. When you're just learning bass it can be hard to see your way out of playing this or that scale or arpeggio. By

themselves those things you practice aren't terribly musical. They help, of course, because they instill technique. But when it comes time to construct a bass line the overall shape of the line & how it's going to progress from start to finish should be in your head before you've even played a note. You leave room for surprises, that's what keeps it interesting, but I believe the ability to think about the shape of a bass line before you play it is an important aspect of crafting great lines, regardless of the style.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Frank – Play more notes than are necessary, but play them in time & in a very funky way.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Frank – At this point in my playing life, no. If I'm listening to a band I want everybody to be there at the same time, so to speak. A great bassist can certainly help a band, but s/he alone can't save it.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Frank – Honestly, no one's. It's taken me years to get comfy with the ones I have & I'm happier for it. Owning a bass that belonged to someone else, be they famous or otherwise, is always about learning the feel of the instrument all over again. I can make the noise I like with the noisemakers I have.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Frank – I'm afraid the most current name I can think of is probably Victor Wooten, though he's been around for a couple decades now. I'm certain there are lots of ground-breaking bassists out there & it's probably easier to access their music-making than ever before thanks to the web. I don't keep up on that so much anymore though. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy a cool groove & some tasty bass fills as much as I ever did, but I don't seek out individual players to listen to as much as I used to.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Frank – Right now I'm rehearsing with a trio called Triplicity. It's guitar, bass, & drums & we're getting songs together for a live set to build on the couple of one-off shows we had this past summer. Since it's just the three of us there's lots of sonic space to fill, though I try not to fill all of it at once. Best part of that group is I get to use a lot of FX I

don't usually use when I'm recording. As far as online, I try to keep my MySpace page current with some of the most recent cues, songs, or whatever I've worked on. I usually have some things on there emphasizing bass because it's always fun to unleash that stuff on an unsuspecting world.

QRD – Anything else?

Frank – Thanks for the interview, & sorry about all the words!



Brian Preston

October 2010

Name: Brian Preston

Bands: 2009-Current: George/Preston/Herrett

2007-Current: King/Preston

2006-2008: Kinetic Union Jazz Orchestra

2003-2006: Groove Stream Attractor

1999-2008: Onomata

1994-2003: Smokin' Granny

1990-1995: Messablues

1985-1990: Freehand

1982-1984: Daily Planet

Websites: [www.myspace.com/metaphoricmusic](http://www.myspace.com/metaphoricmusic),

[www.myspace.com/georgeprestonherrett](http://www.myspace.com/georgeprestonherrett),

[www.facebook.com/georgeprestonherrett](http://www.facebook.com/georgeprestonherrett),

[www.facebook.com/kingpreston](http://www.facebook.com/kingpreston),

[www.myspace.com/smokingrannyband](http://www.myspace.com/smokingrannyband),

[www.myspace.com/freehandprogrock](http://www.myspace.com/freehandprogrock),

[www.myspace.com/onomata](http://www.myspace.com/onomata)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Brian – A Fender Precision fretless! I still have it (but play it rarely). My second bass was a Fender Telecaster bass (1972) which I still have, but play rarely. That thing is a tank!

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Brian – Very simple: Carvin 5 or 6 string fretless with active electronics into an Ernie Ball volume pedal, into a Digitech BP200 effects pedal, into an Electro Harmonix Memory Man pedal into a Hartke 3500 amp. Sometimes I use other preamps, but this is my typical live set-up currently.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Brian – Well, I think its all important to get my sound... there are other basses, amps, & effects that I have played that could change the sound, but I think how the player emotes through string attack & note/rhythm choice may be most important.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Brian – Hartke 3500. I like its power & preamp & EQ choices. It seems to emphasize the mid-range punch that I usually like.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Brian – Electric, for sure.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Brian – I am 90% fingers. I can play with a plectrum very well; but for most of what I am doing now, I have more tonal choices at my fingertips, with my fingertips.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Brian – 3, 4, 5 or 6, of course!

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Brian – I like to move long waves. I also play guitar & drums; but my theory is, find musicians who are better at guitar & drums than me, then that leaves room for me to explore the basement. Bass is the cement between rhythm & melody, so it is a perfect place for me.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Brian – It's more physical, its heavier (figuratively & literally), but the real difference is in how a bassist hears the music & the most important thing is when not to play. Rests & space help cement & move the music forward.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Brian – Carvin LB20 (I think that is the model), 5 string, all Koa wood, neck through body, active electronics.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Brian – I think some people may rest their thumbs there.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Brian – Oh wow, I have never thought about it so I I'm not sure.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Brian – Easy customization & arrangements of effects would be one thing...

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Brian – Four.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Brian – In their cases in a closet. But I have had all four hanging as wall art at times....

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Brian – Feel & sound. Does it speak to me?

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Brian – I guess more than \$300. But less than \$2,000. :)

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Brian – I modified my Telecaster when I got it in 1981. Never should have touched it! But I put a Badass bridge on & a jazz pick up too. Also stripped the finish... damn!

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Brian – I am mainly using only my Carvins now. I just did a gig today & I only played the fretted 5 string as it has more of a rock sound than my fretless.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Brian – Ampeg amps. I played a G&L bass a few years ago that I loved. Roscoe fretless basses are incredible. I am sure there are many I would lust after if I let myself go there.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Brian – It's important not to start a young player out with a poor quality instrument. It would be better to borrow a nice instrument if you can't buy at least a mid-grade instrument. If the neck & overall feel is poor, the beginner may get too frustrated & we want it to be a good experience.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Brian – I like my Hartke amp & my classic Telecaster bass. The Carvins are very good. Worst was probably buying a folded horn design speaker cabinet when I was in my 20s... big damn thing that was just not practical - thank the gods that bass amp gear has gotten more compact over the years!



QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Brian – Big fingers... simple melodies, drummer at heart....

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Brian – Geddy Lee, Chris Squire, Anthony Jackson, Percy Jones (Brand X), Ray Schulman (Gentle Giant), some Bill Laswell.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Brian – Stripping the finish off my telecaster!!

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Brian – Listen & think.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Brian – 4-6 hours. I'd like 8-12 hours maybe.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?



Brian – Medium gauge - DRs.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Brian – Not often enough – they're expensive!!

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Brian – Almost never - not in 20 years.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Brian – Ah... interesting question. My picking hand as I use many different types of attack, edges, sweeps, pops, scrapes, mutes, etc., etc. in conjunction with fingering & fretting, sliding & muting... many possible textures!

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Brian – Standard on bass usually.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Brian – Slouching.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Brian – Drums!!

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Brian – Super fast complex fusion lines like those hot chop dudes! LOL

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Brian – Upright bass.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Brian – Using the third finger of picking hand to increase speed.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Brian – Yes, in college I took orchestra bass for one semester. I learned bowing technique, reading simple parts, proper posture, hand positioning... it was actually very helpful. Much later I took one lesson from a jazz player to walk through some jazz standard movements & patterns.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Brian – Humanism & satire.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Brian – Geeze... I don't know... I would rather they develop their own sound.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Brian – No!

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Brian – One of Geddy's or one of Chris Squire's Rickenbackers would be cool!

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Brian – Hadrien Feraud kills with John McLaughlin & my girl friend Mia says I should say Esperanza Spaulding too!

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Brian – A lot of the things with Onomata (6 string fretless), Smokin' Granny, George-Preston-Herrett, Freehand, Daily Planet.

QRD – Anything else?

Brian – Whew...! That was a lot of questions!  
Thanks for your interest!

Jason Ajemian

October 2010

Name: Jason Ajemian

Bands: JA & the HighLife, Who Cares How Long You Sink, Daydream Full Lifestyles, Sun Ship, Day in Pictures

Websites: [www.jasonajemian.com](http://www.jasonajemian.com)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Jason – It was an Acme. I had it for 3 or 4 years. & then I lost it in a match of Split the Kipper.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Jason – Run it in there.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Jason – I am the most important part.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jason – I like a Peavey basic 60 with a 1970 Peavey 300 head - it really lets me feel it.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Jason – Depends on my biorhythms at the moment.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Jason – Pick, fingers, bow, mallets, & a gar jaw when I need the extra grit.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Jason – 4. But I can do it with just one or none.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Jason – Donnie told me to.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Jason – Often two fewer strings. Storage issues. Not as great of an ego source.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Jason – It's a Fendt. We just work together - a symbiosis - we benefit each other.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Jason – Thumb rests are for suckers. My thumb never rests - too busy working it.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jason – I'm thinking something with flames. Solid. Maybe a mount for a 5.5 outboard.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jason – I'm not sure if I would like that kind of responsibility. Maybe just a basic sampler, distortion, delay, & some sort of mellotron effect creator.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Jason – 1.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Jason – In the case. In the white whale.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Jason – Does it work?

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Jason – Free.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Jason – Try to keep it alive.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jason – Mix it up depending on the group/setting/situation.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jason – None. They lust after me.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Jason – Discipline & freedom.



QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Jason – I bought a Stuart Hamm video once - ridiculous. The hard case though -magnificence.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jason – I like the Peavey amps. My uncle lives in Meridian, Mississippi & is a security guard at the factory. Peavey has been good to the family on many levels.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Jason – I like to warm up with an energy exchange for about 10 minutes minimum. Then often slide into Larry Grahaham's "Just Be My Lady."

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Jason – 6.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Jason – Some time in the future.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Jason – Sometimes.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Jason – Feel it.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Jason – Because I like getting low.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jason – I don't mean to get Jarreau on you, but "We're in this love together."

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jason – Mingus, Glen Connick-Paris era, Uncle Mike.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Jason – Depends on the bass. But yes - great idea.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Jason – Shot a hole in it. I had a really bad fever & was hallucinating that the bass was trying to kill me. So I grabbed this snubnose .38 & let it have it.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jason – Getting down with the bonus, stretching, mind power, avoiding nerds.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Jason – 12 to 14 seems to work.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jason – I go heavy.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jason – Whenever I can afford it/need to.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jason – Not so much these days.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jason – I think my laying all over it is the most proficient.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jason – I like tuning to F. it all goes back to Philosophical Logic formulas.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jason – Autocad drawings.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jason – Buying when I should be selling & thinking that there may be tiny people living under my fingernails. An obsession of sorts.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Jason – The penny whistle helped me a lot.

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jason – Well, I'm glad I never tried to play like that guy from Primus - that's for the squares.

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Jason – Gucci linen lemonades.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Jason – Buy working a D flat into a constant drone alligators can be pushed over the edge.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jason – I went to school & all.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Jason – That bass playing is just a word - unless you feel it. & you got to feel it everyday.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jason – Get a rabbit's foot, have some spells cast, & pray to Donnie.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jason – Sure.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Jason – Buell Niedlinger - who else has played bass with Cecil Taylor & Peter Allen?

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Jason – Sure as hell ain't Mike or Kim Gordon. I'm impressed with Craig Keeney - he's aggressive but caring & he's got ears like bullfrog.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Jason – Wherever I'm playing.

QRD – Anything else?

Jason – I just do it for Donnie. Everything for Donnie.

Darin DePaolo of Unspeakable Forces

October 2010

Name: Darin DePaolo

Bands: IANTH, Unspeakable Forces

Websites: [silbermedia.com/unspeakableforces](http://silbermedia.com/unspeakableforces)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Darin – Freshwater large mouth..... I released it.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Darin – Bass to amp, no effects.

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Darin – Bass... amp & effects don't work without it.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Darin – Always been a fan of Gallien Krueger. It's fun to say... "Gallien Krueger."

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?



Darin – Electric bass.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Darin – Finger... pick only for fast playing.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Darin – SIX.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Darin – That is a trick question, a bass can be a guitar.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Darin – Thicker strings.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Darin – Left-handed, Carvin, 5 string, fretless, it looks cool.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Darin – I like it, I play a five string just so I can rest my thumb on the top string because it doesn't have a real thumb rest.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Darin – It would be exclusively left-handed & have built in wireless.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Darin – I would call it a gas pedal & it would be a sustain &/or whammy bar effect.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Darin – Three.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Darin – Two in cases & one as décor.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Darin – Left-handed.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Darin – \$1,000.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Darin – Do better quality strings count as an upgrade?

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Darin – I am only worried about one tone at the moment.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Darin – I do not lust after any material possessions.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Darin – Autopilot.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Darin – I bought a beverage holder to attach to my mic stand.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Darin – I simultaneously like & hate all brands.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Darin – “Smoke on the Water.”

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Darin – Twenty-eight.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Darin – Still waiting after 12 years.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Darin – Depends on the song.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Darin – Depends on the people, I would like some people to feel my bass up along the side of their head.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Darin – I look gay playing the triangle.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Darin – Both.

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Darin – I don't like to insult my influences by mentioning them.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Darin – I say “natural,” but my bass says “silly.”

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Darin – Ripped its lip when removing the hook.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Darin – Guitar Hero.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Darin – SIX & FIVE.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Darin – I forgot.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Darin – Not often enough.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Darin – Never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Darin – Fret, makes me not sound so bad.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Darin – Normal, don't know any different.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Darin – Etch-a-sketch.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Darin – Playing bad.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Darin – Drumming.

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Darin – Upright bass playing.

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Darin – Playing good.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Darin – I don't do tricks, I do illusions.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Darin – NO.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Darin – How to use your bass as a makeshift parachute.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Darin – Bash there hands with a hammer.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Darin – My lawyer advised me not to answer this question.



QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Darin – Cliff Burton.... I like cliché answers.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Darin – I don't pay attention to current musicians.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Darin – In my dreams.

Jill Palumbo of The Torches

October 2010

Name: Jill Palumbo

Bands: The Torches (Washington, DC)

Websites: [thetorches.net](http://thetorches.net), [thetorches.bandcamp.com](http://thetorches.bandcamp.com),  
[lujorecords.com](http://lujorecords.com), [facebook.com/TheeTorches](https://facebook.com/TheeTorches),  
[www.myspace.com/thetorches](http://www.myspace.com/thetorches)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Jill – My first bass was & is a used Fender P with a replacement neck. My dad got it for me for Christmas when I was 14.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Jill – Bass - Tuner - Rat - Amp

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Jill – My bass (see below).

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Jill – I use a Peavey TKO 65. Same very amp my dad also got me for Christmas when I was 14. It's

not fancy, but it's lasted me this long & it's super durable. Loud enough &, though heavy, I was & am still able to lug it.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Jill – Electric, it would be amazing if I could play upright though.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Jill – A pick... I learned to play with Rancid's 'Out Come the Wolves' album... though I am trying to improve on my finger picking skills.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Jill – Four. Period.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Jill – When my friend Amanda & I decided to start a band in the 9th grade, she already knew how to play guitar & I thought bass would be easy enough to learn. It's still remained my primary instrument after all these years, though I've picked up others along the way.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Jill – It's just bigger, especially a Fender P. When I play guitar, it's so much smaller & lighter, it's like I am playing a Geo... when I play my bass, it's like I am playing a Cadillac.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Jill – Same bass I've had since I was 14. It's indestructible; it's a Fender P.... The action is high & the pickups ought to be replaced, but it's my baby. Even the replacement neck is really nice & smooth (I've had other's who've played with my bass tell me this). My dad picked out a good instrument.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Jill – I have one sitting on my nightstand right now, perhaps waiting to be screwed into my body... I kind of don't want to do it, really, but I don't think it's a bad idea. In the meantime I raised one of the pickups so I can sort of rest my thumb on it, it does the trick when I do play with my fingers.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jill – It would just be a Fender P, but 3-quarter size because I have tiny little hands. Which, of course, is on the market.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jill – I don't really like to play with many effects... I'm old fashioned. Too many options... I just don't like it. I like my Rat for distortion. You just stomp on it, no muss no fuss.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Jill – I have a Hofner replica, which is fun to play, I do like how it looks, but it's nose heavy & tends to dive. & the body is awkward to sit with... & it feeds back like a Mo Fo when you play it live... (& got me kicked out of a band once because of that very problem). But it sure looks cool.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Jill – Well, my Hofner replica is wall decoration right now & my Fender P is sitting in a soft shell case at my band's practice space.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Jill – The only bass I am really interested in buying right now is this amazing sounding bass ukulele that I played in Asheville, NC. It's called a Kala Ubass. <http://www.ukeladymusic.com/store/catalog.php?item=28> I hate how acoustic basses sound all twangy & thin... but this itty bitty thing was loud & full sounding, plus it's quite the conversation piece. I am interested to start busking or something with the band & everyone is acoustic except for me... I think I need to get it.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Jill – I have no idea. Ideally under \$200 so kids/income impaired people can afford it.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Jill – I think we know the answer here. But I did just get a new nicer strap for my bass & my boyfriend is trying to convince me to put better pickups in it.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jill – I lock in. The tone knob on my bass doesn't even work properly. If I want to change the tone of my bass, I'll switch from pick to fingers, or pull out the punch knob on my amp, or hit the Rat.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jill – That kala ubass... as for amps? Maybe Ampeg? My amp is a sham... I feel bad for the musicians who've shared our backline. They must be laughing at my rig. I can't even call it a rig.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Jill – Hmm... a built in tuner? Seriously, I don't know. It's as simple as you can get, really.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Jill – Maybe that Hofner replica... it did get me kicked out of a band....

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jill – I just can't abide with the Ibanez (cheaper end) basses. They sound like you're playing with metallic rubber bands.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Jill – “The Taxman” by the Beatles, I walk it around.

QRD – How old were you when you first started playing bass?

Jill – 14 years old.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Jill – 15? I really don't know. I don't think I've gotten much better. I think just within the past year I've started to actually really improve & take my playing a little more seriously... trying to branch out a bit.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?



Jill – It really depends, I think of the bass as a supporting instrument. But in punk bands, it's more of a lead.... You can get super jammy & bluesy... but it gets old pretty fast, I never liked slapping the bass & funk lines (probably cause I can't play them properly? Hmm...). I can appreciate players like Victor Wooten, but he just doesn't float my boat. I do like to play some melodic bridges with the bass... walking up with octaves & whatnot, but for the most part, you'll just see me holding down the fort with the drums.... I'm engaged to our drummer after all.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Jill – Both. Just cause it's low doesn't mean the melody you play isn't an important part of the song.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Jill – Like I said earlier, I never liked being center stage... but I really enjoy complimenting other musicians. Bass is perfect for that... there are a million guitar players... & maybe only half a million bass players. You'll never go out of style.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jill – What kind of silly question is this?

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jill – Matt Freeman... Paul McCartney... Kim Gordon.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Jill – I think it is both natural & silly. Bula was the name I gave my bass when I got her. It's idiotic & I don't call my bass Bula now... but sometimes I think I regress.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Jill – I'm letting mold grow on my soft shell case... that can't be good for Bula....

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jill – I think playing is the best practice. I'm lucky enough to have band practice twice a week. But I really ought to actually practice. Thanks for outing me.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Jill – 3 - 6... maybe throw 6 more hours on top of that... then maybe I would be cooking with fire.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jill – I don't even know.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jill – This is going to sound ridiculous... but I've never once changed the strings on my used bass since I got it when I was 14... so those strings are probably at least 16 - 17 YEARS old. They have my blood & sweat on them, maybe even tears? But you know what? They sound good. I hate how new bass strings sound. That twangy Seinfeld sound... ugh!

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jill – I've never broken a string on a bass. I told you I don't slap the thing.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jill – Probably my fretting hand, but I am working on that. Maybe those 6 more hours of practice would help.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jill – Just the old standard.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jill – I play by ear. I can't read notes . . . even tab is a stretch.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jill – Not knowing how to read notes? It's rough when you don't know what key you're in to communicate with the band!

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Jill – The drums.

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jill – Upright. It's sooooo hard & makes my hands so tired.

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Jill – Playing “Maxwell Murder?” (Rancid - Out Come The Wolves)

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Jill – Probably just getting more competent in playing with my fingers.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jill – Well, I was in the Jazz Ensemble at my all girls high school. That was a hoot. I did learn how to walk the bass & basic blues exchanges. So I think I probably actually learned a lot!

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Jill – Don't play so many dang notes. Root notes are your friends. Move when you are playing bass, it helps. Tap your foot, or nod your head... play with someone else & not along to a song.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jill – Be a chick?

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jill – Nope.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Jill – I am faithful to my Bula. (Did that just slip out?)

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Jill – Brandon Kalber of Poor But Sexy. He makes me realize that everything I've said about not liking the bass being slapped or using effects pedals is just to cover up my inability to do/use these things. He's an amazing bass player in a completely non-pretentious way, the best I've seen.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Jill – The Torches on iTunes... & then they can buy the songs!

QRD – Anything else?

Jill – Thanks for asking me to do this interview!

Jon Case of Irata

October 2010

Name: Jon Case

Bands: Irata

Websites: [iratalive.com](http://iratalive.com), [silbermedia.com/irata](http://silbermedia.com/irata)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Jon – First bass was a Fender Squire P-bass (candy apple red) – traded it in when I upgraded to a new bass.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Jon – From my bass I split my signal... I call them Alpha Sig & Bravo Sig. Alpha Sig runs thru several effects to a Peavey Classic 30 guitar combo amp. Bravo Sig run thru various effects to an Ampeg SVT-CL which pushes an Ampeg 4X10 1X15 cab & a Peavey 4X10 cab

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Jon – All of my gear is important to me... but if I had to pick the one piece of gear that destroys the



most... I would say my SVT-CL..... tuuuuuubes...  
Need I say more?

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Jon – Electric.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Jon – Pick.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Jon – However many you like...my basses have 4...I like 'em.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Jon – BOTTEM END!

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Jon – Less strings.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Jon – My main & newest bass right now is an Ibanez ATK300... very powerful, versatile, & affordable. It has a 3 band active EQ, 3 switchable presets, string-thru body... can dial in MM, P bass, & J bass tones. Can't wait to record with it. Still love my P-basses as well.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Jon – I've got no problem with it.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Jon – It would look like & have all the same features as my ATK... but with my name on the headstock.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Jon – It would be my signature bass overdrive pedal... & it would be the greatest bass overdrive ever... it would have no knobs or buttons... just plug & play... it would sound brutal right out of the box.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Jon – At this time 3... 2 P-basses & my ATK.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Jon – At my home in their cases... but they spend a lot of time on their stands... I play them every day.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Jon – Sound, versatility, has to be comfortable to wear & play, & affordability.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Jon – I tend to buy less expensive basses & upgrade them to my liking... I dump most of my money into effects & amps.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Jon – I do upgrades... my P-basses I gutted & upgraded all the electronics... put new pickups, bridge, nut, & tuners. No upgrades to my ATK at this point.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Jon – I don't play around with my tone too much... my new bass has allowed me to start dialing in different tones... but for the most part I stick with that heavy overdriven driving bass tone.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Jon – As far as I'm concerned... I own the best bass amp you can buy... but I'm always looking at different effect pedals... specifically overdrive pedals. As far as basses... if I had the money I would definitely collect. I would love a stingray, J-bass, Rickenbacker 4003, ripper, grabber, & tons more.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Jon – I would say that more focus needs to be placed on comfort of the bass. A lot of beginner basses are clunky & uncomfortable. Tone & EQ come later as you upgrade & learn the instrument. If the bass is not comfortable to wear & play it's

going to be hard sticking with it & learning the instrument.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Jon – This is an easy one... best purchase was my SVT-CL. Worst was a Bass Big Muff pedal... it went back the same day. It sounded like a fart. Good for guitar... not so good for bass.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Jon – Can't go wrong with Ampeg, Fender, & Boss. Nothing I dis-like really... it just might not have worked with my set-up. Doesn't mean it wouldn't work for someone else.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Jon – Usually the bass.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Jon – 14 or 15 quit for several years & picked it back up at around 23.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Jon – Probably around 25... when I started playing with a band again. We practiced/recorded/played shows so much... I had a bass on me all the time... however, I would like to think that I get better every time I play.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Jon – I think there is room for both... the player should decide for him/herself their favorite way to approach the instrument & what suits that particular song.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Jon – Both.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Jon – I dunno... I was just sort of drawn to it... it was something cosmic I suppose.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Jon – My ally of course.

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Jon – Eric Avery, D’Arcy, Ben Sheppard, Mark Deutrom, David Wm Sims, Joe Lally, Justin Chancellor... to name a few.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Jon – I think it’s natural & silly....

QRD – What’s the most physical damage you’ve done to a bass & how did you do it?

Jon – Never done any damage to a bass to speak of. I’ve destroyed several speakers over the years not to mention my own hearing.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Jon – In the new line up... I’ve taken on the task of vocals... so I’ve been practicing singing.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Jon – I would like to play 40 hours a week. Right now I probably spend 12-15 hours a week.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Jon – 105-45's (medium) for comfort. I can play medium gauge a little faster.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Jon – Not as often as I should... usually when we start recording.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Jon – Never.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Jon – They're probably about the same.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Jon – Right now on our newer material I'm tuning a full step down. I think the reason I've chosen to do



so is because the songs call for it. I just needed those lower notes to make the songs sound the way they needed to sound.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Jon – None of the above.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Jon – I can't think of any.... I'll have to defer that question to my drummer... I'm sure he can come up with a few.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Jon – Drums... but I'm a terrible drummer....

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Jon – Not really any... I would just like to do what I do... better.

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Jon – To design & build my own bass.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Jon – I don't know any bass tricks.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Jon – Nope... never have... self-taught.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Jon – To turn up your amp as loud as it will go.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Jon – Cant be done... next question please.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Jon – Hard to do... but I can... yes.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Jon – One of Paul McCartney's because I could sell it & buy something cool or pay off my house.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Jon – I have no idea.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Jon – The Irata album.

QRD – Anything else?

Jon – Nope.

James Newman of Plumerai

October 2010

Name: James Newman

Bands: Plumerai, The Breakup Tape

Websites: [plumerai.com](http://plumerai.com)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

James – Peavey Dynabass. Traded it in towards my current bass.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

James – Bass -> preamp pedal -> power amp -> cab

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

James – Bass.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

James – Using a Viva Analog 360+. Convenience & is modeled after an Acoustic 360 head. Has built in fuzz.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

James – I've only used an electric so....

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

James – Pick.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

James – 4. Maybe 3.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

James – We already have a guitarist.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

James – Fewer strings hopefully.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

James – 90's standard American Fender Jazz. It's strung low b to d & modded to p/j pickup config. I think the only original parts left are the body, wires & tuning keys.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

James – They're OK I guess. If I didn't use a pick maybe I'd want one.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

James – Probably like what I use now although I would like to try Rick pickups on a Jazz body. Maybe a whammy bar.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

James – Perhaps something similar to the 360 pedal I'm using now, but with chorus & a tuner built in. Maybe an effects loop as well.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

James – One functional & parts to build another.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

James – In my apartment on a rack.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

James – 4 strings.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

James – Should \$500. Reasonable \$900.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

James – Customize.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

James – I change it from time to time. Sometimes a certain tone will be cool for a while & then I go back & it sounds like crap. Also depends on the room, cab, & song. If I had a bass setup like the guy from the Badseeds, I'd probably stick with it forever.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

James – I'd like to try a Wal bass or Rick 4001/3. As for amps I want to try a standard Ampeg rig.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

James – Good action & intonation.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

James – Best: Fender Jazz Worst: Peavey Dynabass (I hated active pickups)

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

James – Nothing in particular.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

James – Usually "Friend Catcher" by Birthday Party

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

James – 20 something. Guitar was my main instrument.



QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

James – 20 something.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

James – Depends on the song.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

James – Depends on what they look like.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

James – Because I'm a crappy drummer, mediocre guitarist, & I can't sing.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

James – Neither. I usually come up with stuff on guitar.

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

James – Simon Gallup, the singer/bassist from Air, the guy from the Badseeds, Tracy Pew, & Steve Severin.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

James – Silly.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

James – This bass is pretty solid. It's fallen a couple of times which resulted in a ding or two.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

James – That's it.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

James – If there aren't any rehearsals or recording sessions, then an hour. Should put in a couple of hours & really practice. I'm not doing jazz or bass solos so I don't require intense training.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

James – No idea. I buy the 5 string pack & use the 4 lower ones. I'm using flatwounds.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

James – Not often. I haven't changed strings on this bass in 3 years.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

James – Haven't yet.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

James – Strumming. If I was good at the other I'd probably start soloing.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

James – Standard tuning. I do change up the tuning on a couple of songs. On "Die...Die Slowly" I drop the open B to an A, & on "Painted Faces" I raise the open D to a B.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

James – Tab is fine. I'm bad at reading music.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

James – Soloing. I need to unleash my inner Yngwie.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

James – Guitar.

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

James – Funk or reggae.

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

James – I don't have any goals.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

James – I haven't learned any.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

James – Nope. Just guitar for about a month.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

James – Seinfeld theme.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

James – I don't have a style. Use a pick & don't slap.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

James – No. For me it's more about the songs.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

James – Steve Severin's Wal bass he used with the Banshees. Mainly because they're expensive. I don't really care about owning something that once belonged to a celebrity.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

James – I haven't kept up with current music.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

James – I'm okay with songs from our *Without Number* album & the track "Crucifixion". They're all probably available on Bandcamp.

QRD – Anything else?

James – Bass solo take 1!

Matteo Bennici

October 2010

Name: Matteo Bennici

Bands: Tsigoti, Squarciatrici, Motociclica Tellacci, Nostratic

Websites: [myspace.com/matteobennici](http://myspace.com/matteobennici), [espdisk.com](http://espdisk.com), [afoforomusicclub.blogspot.com](http://afoforomusicclub.blogspot.com), [myspace.com/motociclicatellacci](http://myspace.com/motociclicatellacci)

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Matteo – A red Vester (a sort of Jackson imitation I guess). I made a deal with a music shop to get a better one & one day I saw exactly that bass played by a young guy at a metal concert... he bought it!

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Matteo – Cello &/or bass > pedal effects & processors > amp > cabinet

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Matteo – My brain & hands.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Matteo – I mainly use a small Ampeg B100 Rocket because it's portable & versatile enough for both cello & bass.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Matteo – Electric. But upright rooocks!

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Matteo – I use all those techniques.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Matteo – Between 1 & 4.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Matteo – 'Cause bass is better!!! Actually I'm more attracted by low-range instruments.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Matteo – Many things from the gesture to the role you have in a band.



QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Matteo – A Japanese Fender Jazz with no special features, but it feels perfect to me until I have enough money to get an old American one.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Matteo – Cool, comfortable. I never had one. I like it better when it's below the strings for playing with thumb. Very stingy!

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Matteo – I love the old Gibson shape. I guess I would add some very good electronics & something bizarre like one fretless string.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Matteo – A four channel loop station with independent on/off switch & filters on each channel.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Matteo – 2 electric, 1 upright.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Matteo – Standing in a corner of my studio-room.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Matteo – It's hard to tell. Usually I already know what I'm buying... anyway must sound, feel, & look like it's good for me.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Matteo – Well I don't think there's an absolute price a bass should cost. Industrial stuff should be very cheap & I understand that a 60s Gibson must have its price. The real problem is actually how much food & basic services cost, but that's another topic.

QRD – Do you upgrade & customize your bass or just stick with what you get?

Matteo – I adjust it when it has some problem, mostly in action. I stick with a lot of stickers!

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Matteo – I have a reference one; but I often have to change according to different bands, spaces, or music.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Matteo – As I said before, an old American Fender J & a 4channel pedal board.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Matteo – A decent sound even in a cheap instrument. Some are real shit, but if you're a beginner you can't know it & rarely sellers are honest about that.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Matteo – Best: switching from Yamaha TRB to Fender. Worst: a lovely handmade fretless that once fell & seriously broke in half & now it's there, still injured & unused.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Matteo – I like Fender, Gibson, Tobias. Also Boss, Danelectro, Electro-Harmonix. I dis-like a lot of stuff!

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Matteo – Nothing ritual, I just feel it.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Matteo – I was 12.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Matteo – All those moments when you intensively play with other people make you grow up a lot.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?

Matteo – It depends on what you want to do! For sure bass is a rule instrument, if making your music you refer to standards so you should follow some good rules, but my favourite musicians break these rules constantly.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Matteo – They have to smell it all over the place!

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Matteo – Because it has more or less the same diapason of cell, which was & now is my first instrument again.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Matteo – That's a funny image! How one can make good music with an enemy on? :-)

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Matteo – Talking about famous people, in my early years Les Claypool was my hero (& I still appreciate him). Now it's Mike Watt.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Matteo – It's not silly at all! I love people who give names to their favourite objects, I find it sensitive. But I never did it!

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Matteo – My beloved handmade fretless fell on the floor & literally split in two. Sadly I wasn't responsible of that.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Matteo – I look more for musical & improvisational solutions than technical. Sound & drive are more important to me.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Matteo – I work a lot with composition & production so I don't practice a lot. I would like to simply practice cello & bass 3 hours a day, but I can't.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Matteo – Both 0.40 & 0.45, depending on the bands I'm playing at the moment.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Matteo – Whenever they end up sucking too much.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Matteo – Not very often. I'm good at saving resources!

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Matteo – I think in all string instruments the right hand is the one that gives the sound & the beat so it's the most important to me. Left hand must be obedient & in-tune.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Matteo – Mostly standard tuning because that's the range that instrument is at its best. Sometimes I detune the E string to reach the range of a five-strings bass.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Matteo – My favourite notation system is ‘by heart’. Mostly I record & listen to my sketches, sometimes I write root-notes. Rarely notes on pentagram.

QRD – What’s a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Matteo – Too many notes.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone’s bass playing?

Matteo – Playing double bass is the hardest training you can do. It feels like flying when you get back to electric!

QRD – What’s a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can’t?

Matteo – Perhaps good solo skills.

QRD – What’s a bass goal you’ve never accomplished?

Matteo – A convincing slap technique. But I don’t care.

QRD – What’s the last bass trick you learned?



Matteo – I can't tell. I'm more focused on musical solutions.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Matteo – I did several times in the past, but not recently. It's always good to learn from someone more expert. Personally, that gave me basics.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Matteo – To think of bass as a compositional instrument.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Matteo – My goofy faces!

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Matteo – Ha-ha-ha-ha, NO!

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Matteo – Sid Vicious's Fender. If I have to be a fetishist....

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Matteo – I'm not very updated about bassists' world, but Mike Watt is my favourite!

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Matteo – Live on stage. Also on Tsigoti & Traumfabrick's albums.

QRD – Anything else?

Matteo – Thank you for this interview. Ciao!

Tim Dahl of Child Abuse

October 2010

Name: Tim Dahl

Bands: Child Abuse

Websites: <http://soundsofchildabuse.com>

QRD – What was your first bass & what happened to it?

Tim – A 1983 Ibanez Roadstar II. It is still the main electric bass that I use today, although it has been modified.

QRD – What's your typical set-up from bass to effects to amplifier?

Tim – Bass-active splitter –  
Channel 1-channel b of a/b box  
Channel 2-envelope filter-ring modulator-  
distortion-channel a of a/b box  
a/b box out - volume pedal -digital delay - amp

QRD – What's the most important part of your rig – bass, amplifier, or effects?

Tim – All equally important.

QRD – What's your main amplifier & why?

Tim – With Child Abuse I use a GK RB1001II head. I can get my sound out of it & it is also super durable on the road. With that, I use Bag End & Mesa cabs. With quieter clean bass gigs, I often use the Walter Woods head.

QRD – Do you prefer upright or electric bass?

Tim – Most of my art music gigs I play electric bass. Most of my local money/working gigs I play upright. I love them both.

QRD – Do you prefer to use a pick, fingers, or a bow?

Tim – I don't know how to play with a pick. I enjoy both playing with my fingers & a bow. I rarely play music that requires arco parts, so I usually play with my fingers.

QRD – How many strings do you think a bass should have?

Tim – As many as it needs.

QRD – Why do you play bass instead of guitar?

Tim – I know how to play bass. I don't know how to play guitar.

QRD – How is a bass different than a guitar other than being lower in pitch?

Tim – An electric bass guitar isn't a whole lot different than a guitar except that it is constructed differently. It is an octave lower & it is traditionally tuned only in 4ths. Where a guitar is traditionally tuned in 4ths & one 3rd between the G & B string. The main difference is its role in the music rather than the tool itself.

QRD – What's your main bass & what are the features that make it such?

Tim – My main electric bass is the first bass that I ever had. It was originally a P-bass design. I have since made it fretless, installed Bartolini P-bass pickups & a Bartolini humbucker bridge pickup. I also converted the tone knob into a pan knob. Lastly I put a Wilkinson bridge on it.

QRD – What do you think of the thumb rests on some basses?

Tim – I don't have any real experience with them to comment.

QRD – If you had a signature bass, what would it look like & what would some of its features be?

Tim – It would be setup the same way as my bass is now.

QRD – If you had a signature pedal, what would it be & what would some of its features be?

Tim – It would interface with my brain & any timbre I imagined would be applied on demand.

QRD – How many basses do you own?

Tim – 6.

QRD – How & where do you store your basses?

Tim – At my house & my rehearsal studio.

QRD – What features do you look for when buying a bass?

Tim – I haven't bought a bass in 8 years & am not even thinking about it.

QRD – How much do you think a good bass should cost?

Tim – It really depends on what one is going for. For some music you can get away with a \$50 piece of shit. Other music truly sounds best with a

\$30,000 Italian double-bass. It all comes down to what you're trying to achieve.

QRD – Are you after one particular bass tone & locking into it, or do you like to change your tone around a lot?

Tim – I change my tone around a lot. But it is these multiple timbres that make “my tone” on a macro-aesthetic level.

QRD – What are some basses, amps, & pedals you particularly lust after?

Tim – The ones I have.

QRD – What do you think are some important features to be on a person's first bass that aren't always there?

Tim – General solid construction.

QRD – What have been the best & worst bass related purchases you've made?

Tim – A guitar strap was the best bass purchase I made because it enabled me to walk around & play. The worst was some faulty strings I bought once.

QRD – What are some effect, amp, & bass brands you particularly like or dis-like & why?

Tim – I like the GK heads & Bag End cabs because they hold up on the road. I was in a car accident where all of my gear was launched out of the vehicle. The GK was under water & the cabs were about 50 yards into the woods. They all work fine to this day.

QRD – What's the first thing you play when you pick up a bass?

Tim – A bunch of random notes.

QRD – How old were you when you started playing bass?

Tim – At age 11 I started fucking around on the bass because I wanted to be in a rock band. I didn't start taking lessons until the 8th grade.

QRD – At what age do you think you leveled up to your best bass playing?

Tim – I am hoping I haven't achieved that yet.

QRD – Do you feel bass lines should echo & emphasize guitar & drum parts or be their own distinct elements?



Tim – Depends on the music you are playing.

QRD – Would you rather people hear or feel your bass?

Tim – Both.

QRD – Why do you think a bass fits you more so than other instruments?

Tim – At this point I have been playing it so long that it is just part of who I am.

QRD – Do you see your bass as your ally or adversary in making music?

Tim – It can be both. In general I try not to write through any instrument. That way my ideas are not being filtered through the limitations of that instrument. With Child Abuse however, I am doing a lot of writing with the bass.

QRD – Who are the bassists that most influenced your playing & sound?

Tim – There's a lot. Bootsy Collins, Jaco, who ever Waylon Jennings bass player was in the late 70s etc... In terms of sound, different timbres that I find attractive from all music & the environment have influenced me.

QRD – Do you think people anthropomorphizing their bass is natural or silly (e.g. naming their bass)?

Tim – I think everyone should do it.

QRD – What's the most physical damage you've done to a bass & how did you do it?

Tim – I broke a tuning peg by dropping my bass once.

QRD – What do you do to practice other than simply playing?

Tim – Scales & arpeggios at very slow tempi. I practice different time schemes against the metronome.

QRD – How many hours a week do you play bass & how many hours would you like to?

Tim – 20+ hours in general.

QRD – What gauge strings do you use & why?

Tim – 105, 85, 65, 45.

QRD – How often do you change strings?

Tim – Depends on what bass. If I'm playing with Child Abuse on the road, I change them about every 5 shows.

QRD – How often do you break strings?

Tim – I used to break them regularly, but I had some custom work done on my saddles & now it is less common. However, if I am doing a more improv based tour, I tend to break them more often.

QRD – Which do you feel is more proficient, your strumming/bowing hand or fretting hand & how does that effect your style?

Tim – I would say both hands are equally good/bad.

QRD – What tunings do you use & why?

Tim – Standard EADG.

QRD – Do you prefer tablature, sheet music, or some other notation system for writing down your own ideas?

Tim – Standard notation, graphs, & recording are the ways I generally “write down” my ideas. Tablature seems to be a very strange thing to use in the year 2010.

QRD – What's a bad habit in your playing you wish you could break?

Tim – Not properly warming up before performances.

QRD – Playing what other instrument do you think can most help someone's bass playing?

Tim – Piano.

QRD – What's a type of bass playing you wish you could do that you can't?

Tim – Merenge. I can fake it, but placements of certain sustained notes & glissandi seem to be a cultural thing that I don't have internalized.

QRD – What's a bass goal you've never accomplished?

Tim – Learning swept arpeggios.

QRD – What's the last bass trick you learned?

Tim – Can't remember.

QRD – Did you ever take bass lessons & if so, what did you learn from them?

Tim – Yes, I have taken many bass lessons. I learned technique.

QRD – What would you teach someone in a bass lesson that you don't think they would generally get from a bass teacher?

Tim – How to use an amp.

QRD – What's something someone would have to do to emulate your style?

Tim – Morph into me.

QRD – If a band has good bass work, can you ignore the rest of the band not being good?

Tim – Yes.

QRD – What famous musician's bass would you like to own & why?

Tim – Paul McCartney's Hofner bass. I could sell it for a lot of money.

QRD – Who do you think is currently the most innovative bass player & why?

Tim – There are so many great bass players. Bootsy Collins always seems innovative to me. Mostly from a timbral perspective.

QRD – Where can people hear your best bass work?

Tim – Child Abuse’s “Cut & Run.”

QRD – Anything else?

Tim – Bass!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!