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Bryant Wilder

Home Grown Funk

One of the cool things about receiving albums for review is that from time to time you come across something that just stands out. Such is the case with Bryant Wilder's recent release, 'The Right Track'.

In many ways it is easier to take an established star and write about them. It is sometimes more interesting, however, at least from our point of view, to take someone who may not be so widely known and find the story behind them. You listen to their music closely and find many to most of the same admirable qualities as you find in the big names.

It is true that all of our heroes of today and yesterday started out struggling just like everybody else. They possessed some special qualities and skills that caught our notice. You never know who will be the next Stanley, Jaco or Marcus.

As shown on the pages below, and the provided soundfile, Bryant has achieved an incredible sound on his premiere solo album, 'The Right Track'. One of the more interesting things is that he did 99% of that all in his own home. Kinda makes you think that it is true that if you want it done right, you do it yourself!

He is in the early stages at this point in promoting a very strong album. Interviews, both printed and on radio, are being conducted, as well as reviews that are geared to build sufficient interest to build a touring band. His is a fascinating and occasionally draining journey that is just beginning. If we are very lucky many of us will be fortunate enough to experience what is in store for him.



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Bass Inside: In the pursuit of understanding how you came about getting such a clear and punchy sound on this recording, the first question is, what basses are you using. One shot on the back of the CD has you playing what looks like a Fender, though it has a clear pick guard and clear control pot guard. Tell us about this bass.

Bryant: Well, that one is actually one build in Japan. It is called an Atlier. Except for one song on the CD, I use that one on all the tracks.

Bass Inside: In the same shot you are carrying an acoustic electric bass over your back. That one is...?

Bryant: A Tacoma 4-string that I used for the bottom and the melody line for track number 6, 'Aah Dios'.

And the other white Fender lookalike on the cover?

That is a Penza also from Japan made by a luthier the name of Mas Hino.

All three are on the album then?

I recorded the album with the Penza, the Atlier and the Tacoma. I also play an original Tobias 5 and a Ken Smith 4 fretless. Live I play a 4-string American Fender.

Why play a different bass than on the CD?

Because that bass (the Fender) is soooo powerful, it's just one of the best sounding basses I have ever heard. I have done some modifications to it, some changes. One note from that bass is just sublime. I can't even come to describe just how funky that bass sounds!

Did you do any changes electronically?

Oh yeah, I put a pre-amp in it. But even without amplification, this bass still sounds great.

It is strange, you can take a row of basses, all the same model, age, whatever and each feels a little different. In the group, only one will feel right, yet there is no discernable difference.

It could also be things as minute as the density of that particular piece of wood, the lot of wood that it came from, some pieces are just gonna add up to being better. You have to search for the right one. I just got lucky.

'The Right Track' is your first solo release. If things go as you hope are you predicting a second one?

I actually have started recording for the next one! One song in fact is just about in the can. Another one is in the process. But I will endeavor to work and promote this one before I am set to start another one, of course. Hey, I want to make my money back! I have spend upwards of \$40,000 (U.S.) on this one.

And that is you doing most of this on your own, not paying outside studio time?

That's right. But my \$40,000 includes everything from soup to nuts, I included everything in that. From the paying of the musicians to the web design to the packages.

From your own pocket, from your day job?

Yeah, I work 9 to 5 as a District Manager for a Social Security Office. I work for a living! I did my album at night! That is the story for most bass players.

If the demand was there, would you take time off from the 9 to 5 to pursue that demand?

I would and I have in the past. Sometimes up to 30 days in a row. When I toured with Missy Elliot we did the Lillith Fair in the summertime. So I did that for a long while and then capped that all off with a gig on the television show Saturday Nite Live. I did take the time to do that, it is what I love to do. But those opportunities have not happened as much as they could because I haven't availed myself to that. I make a good wage doing the day job, so doing music full time would have to be worthwhile financially.

To cover those bills and expenses that just don't go away because you are on the road. Mortgage, hydro, food, the month to month stuff.

The creditors don't care and are not happy if you don't give it to them.



For most bassists who are sidemen, even a long term project might at best be anything from a 6 month tour to two years. Then the project comes off the road and the money stops. The name artist can afford to take a year off because they are millionaires, and the sideman is left scrambling for his or her next job.

Very true. Very true.

You refer in your bio to 'putting on the Funk Face'. For you, what does the term 'Funk' encompass, what does it mean to you?

I have a definition for you. Funk is bass and drum heavy music that is syncopated in nature but repetitive. So it is like a loop, not necessarily a four-bar loop. You can latch on to an 8 or 16 bar thing but it has to be something that is steady. Something that can get the crowd into, for the lack of a better phrase, a hypnotic groove. The melody line can change, can deviate. But the bass has to be steady, syncopated but always there. You know it's Funk because it hurts your back, you can't stop nodding your head. That kind of thing.

Where you formally trained or did you hammer it all out for yourself?

Actually there was no formal theory readily available for me, other than books that I bought later on in my life. These books showed me that you could play certain scales with certain chords. My strength in playing the foundation and playing short melodies, improvisation in theory and in jazz is not my strong point. I like to figure out a solo before I get up there and do it.

Do you tend to work with 4-strings or do you avail yourself of 5 and 6 strings?

American Gospel Music (Bryant is heavily involved in a Gospel group) requires a low B. The bassist has to ride that low B. I feel the low should more be an accent than to use

it all the time.

Why do you think the choice is made to ride that low B?

For sound support. A lot of Gospel music is focussed on keyboards and vocals, so it all tends to add up to being overly mid-rangey. You don't want to get in the way of the Almighty Keyboard! (Laughs)

Has work in the Gospel end of your music career necessitated using a special rig to allow you to fill that support role properly? With enough power to avoid distortion and give a clean and detailed signal?

I use two SWR 4X10 cabinets with tweeters. Have used them now for as long as I can remember.

And the driver?

An Ampeg power amp and a Demeter preamp, made in Germany.

The CD itself has a remarkably pristine level of clarity in the bass area. How do you go about capturing that sound? We are all looking for our own personal sound. How did you go about achieving yours?

It was all done on a virtual platform. Not one stitch of outboard gear.

Not one amp, not one mic?

Not one stitch, nothing. Other than naturally on the drum tracks. The entire album was recorded in my house. Every track, every bass line was played without other instrumentation. It was played to a click track.

It doesn't sound like it.

Thank you! I placed all my parts (except for one track, 'Fuzzy Wahzzy Was A Bass') first to a click track. Then I added the keyboard parts. I am definitely no keyboardist but I can pick out parts. (Editor's Note: And does a pretty good job of picking out those parts.)

Then I called the guitar player in, Willie Brown, a fabulous guitarist. He put his parts over that. And then when everything was done, I brought it to a studio not too far from where I live and had a Pro Tools rig set up for 12 tracks of drums.

My drummer, Nathaniel Townesly III (Bryant's drummer for live work also. He has worked with pro's like Roberta Flack, Joe Zawinul and Richard Bona. He was also featured last month in Modern Drummer Magazine). He went in and played over my tracks and he did it without a click track!

You must have been very impressed.

He's a remarkable guy!

What amazes me is considering the unusual order you did this, how you kept it organized and didn't lose control of the end result. It must have taken a clear sense of vision to achieve that.

And it gets worse! I stuck with just one keyboard for every keyboard sound that you hear on that album. A lot of people get keyboards and just play 'em without fully

understanding that you can make them less digital or boost the low end, cut the highs...

So you really worked this keyboard to death then?

It paid its way and made it earn its keep, that's exactly what I did!

You told me it took a while to complete this album, how long is a while?

It took two and a half years from the writing of the songs 'till the recording was complete.

When you began all this, was there a goal to aim for? Was it to be a bass fronted album?

There was one goal and that was that it was to end up as an album that people could 'get', could whistle to or hum to.

Yeah, the goal is to make something that sticks in someones head for days afterwards.

Exactly, and I tend to think I was successful in that on at least 6 to 7 of the tracks. I didn't want to create a 'You can't do this' album where a bassists shoots their whole load in the first two or three songs and just keeps repeating themselves, where they have nothing left. Few people out there can pull off an entertaining and fun album.

I have come to think of it as a bass player sort of thing. A guitarist can make an album, show their skills and still be listenable. A sax player or pianist can do this. But most bass players just don't know when to quit.

Imagine a child that is told to just be quiet their whole life, just do their little role and don't step forward, just sit down and eat your breakfast. Then you are finally given the chance to step forward on your own terms, and you open your mouth. YOu find you just can't stop because you might never get the chance again!

(Laughs) I love that! I just didn't want to make an album where only bass players 'get' it, where only bass players can enjoy it.

And would actually only listen to it two or three times, woodshed for a day or two and then shelve them.

Bass players also tend to make albums for other bass players. Why would we want to restrict our audience, it is to our detriment to begin with. I just wanted to break that mold as much as I could.





Listen to [Fuzzy Wahzzy Was A Bass](#) from Bryant's new album and get more info on his [website](#) (download [RealPlayer](#)).



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