

was there, Jimi Hendrix, Taj Mahal, Leon Russell, some of the Chamber Brothers, Peter Tork of the Monkeys, Dr. John and some others I can't remember right now. Jimi sat in with us that night. What a night! We clicked big time the first time we played together. Playing with Jimi was unbelievable. It brought out the best in me and then some. Later we would meet at this club called The Scene and jam all night. I remember going to his recording studio at Electric Ladyland and jamming with the recording tape rolling. I have copies of that night.

Once, my brother Herb and I were in Denver between gigs, playing this wedding gig in Cheesman Park, and Jimi was in Denver to play at Mile High Stadium that night. We were set up in this back yard next to the park and a limo pulls up. Jimi gets out, comes over, and of course our guitar player takes off his guitar and gives it to him. We start jamming and the next thing you know all these people start gathering around. The police show up to see what's going on so Jimi jumps back into his limo and takes off. I never will forget that. When recording the next Buddy Miles album Jimi produced three songs; that was way cool, sitting in the studio recording and looking up and seeing Jimi at the recording board mixing. I played my butt off! Later I got this call from Allen Douglas, Jimi's producer, he said, "Jimi wants you to come out and record the *Band of Gypsies* album." I was scheduled to record another project, which I couldn't get out of because I had received some of the money ahead of time. And besides, I had just quit Buddy's band and didn't want to work with him at that time. I figured Jimi and I would get together some other time. Douglas called me again two months later and asked if I would come to New York to do the John McLaughlin *Devotion* album. Of course I said, "Yes", but I didn't know who he was or what type of music he played till I got there. What a trip that was. Space music, big time. But I enjoyed it. It was something new and different. I talked to Jimi while I was there. We still had that desire to play together again, but he left us too soon ... God bless his soul.

Your association with Taj Mahal goes back to the early 70s. How did it start?

I met Taj in 1968. He was at the opening for the Express that night at the Whisky A-Go-Go. Things were happening and everybody wanted to play with each other. Finally after about two or three years he called to see if I wanted

to do a few gigs with him. That was in 1971, I think. It was different from the music I was playing but I liked it. I've known Taj for about 34 years now. I also had the pleasure of working with four or five different bands he put together, all different types of music, and recording several albums. We go way back.

What is the secret of you staying around together so long?

Well, I think it's a couple of things. Respect, for one. I just love what he does and how he does it. The way he carries himself on and off stage; he is a real professional.

One of the highlights of your show was your bass instrumental, which also features on your CD *Bill Rich: The Fee-Vah*.

That song is one I love to play. It kind of loosens things up for me. I start it out with this intro I call *Basstro*. It's like sitting in my basement playing the bass the way I want, doing whatever I want ... sweet! And then I go into "The Fee-Vah" ... a funky, nasty groove. If you listen to that song, notice how the melody and the bassline interacts. I love that. It has no overdubs. I feel good about that song. If you're a bass player, try to play it. If not, still check it out. It also gives the rest of the fellas a chance to step out.

Was recording *The Fee-Vah* a different kick from being a session musician?

Yes, it was a totally different kick. I mean, you are putting out your own stuff, your own groove and vibe and you don't have to cater to anyone else's vision. It can be pretty powerful stuff. Session work pays the bills and broadens your mind, but playing your own music gives you a good feeling.

You have an impressive list of work as a session musician. Do you enjoy the flexibility?

Sure, I don't limit myself to one type of music because there is a lot of good music out there. Styles like reggae, blues, country and western, R&B, jazz, rock, Latin, pop and bluegrass just to name a few. If you just play one thing, you are missing out. I like the fact that I recorded a lot of albums and CDs with different people. Just seeing where the music was coming from gave me a chance to expand my mind and my chops.

Geoff Muldaur told me that Jaco Pastorius, who was playing with Gil Evans, saw you across the room one night and started screaming that you were one of his major guys.

Also, Howard Johnson, the great arranger and tuba guru, said that your bass playing had made it into the arranging scene in jazz and more popular music. Can you tell me about your style of playing?

Well, I listen to a lot of different types of music and play a lot of different kinds of music. I just mix it all together, you know. I make up stuff and add that in there. There are a lot of ways you can start a chord progression. For instance, I might start on the 'minor' note and use the 5th, 7th, and then the tonic with the 10th and end up on the IV chord. I guess it's your choice of the notes you choose as long as it works and sounds good. I don't like to copy other bass players' licks even though they have some good stuff going on. I'll hear it and see where it's coming from and then pick up my bass and figure out what's comfortable for me.

Kevin Brooks

Bill's Bases

Bill Rich still has his original Fender basses plus a selection of newer Warwick models including Stage I and Stage II 5-string models. He prefers the tone of Bartolini pickups and is having his Stage II equipped with these to match his Stage I. "They give me that warm tone I like." A Silvertone started his amp collection followed by a Kustom Amp. "They had the roll and pleated vinyl finish with the sparkles. It looked a lot better than it sounded," he reminisces. Fender Dual Showman's and a Sunn Amp followed. Then he discovered Ampeg. "That was the shit! I have a couple of different models of those. I used to use the Ampeg 8-15 flip top and the Ampeg SVT/V4B. I love that tuba sound! You can feel the bass. I keep that one in my basement. If you're familiar with that, you'll know why. It's a heavy mother. I prefer using that if I don't have to carry it around." Newer amps include a Gallien Krueger 800 RB and SWR speaker cabinets. Strings are Dean Markley SR2000 Med. LT Tapered Strings. But Bill has the following advice. "Check this gear out and find what works for you. That is really the most important thing ..."

ALBUMREVIEWS

MEGADETH

Peace Sells... But Who's Buying?
So Far, So Good... So What?

Rust in Peace
Countdown To Extinction

Youthanasia

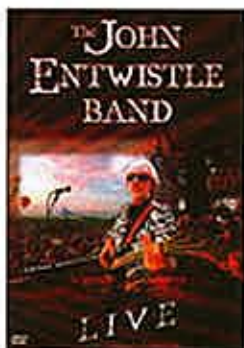
Cryptic Writings

Risk

Craving

All EMI

The Megadeth back catalogue, now remastered and reissued with bonus tracks, is a story of a once-great talent gone to seed. However, from a bass player's point of view, there's tons to explore and enjoy here. Frontman Dave Mustaine's long-suffering bass player Dave Ellefson (inevitably dubbed Dave II, by snide critics) always pulled off a remarkable performance, as well as coping with his mercurial bandmate - a genuine achievement. Look out for the seminal opening bass riff from the title track of *Peace Sells...* and the superb fills he throws in later in the song. More progressive albums such as *Countdown To Extinction* feature Ellefson on highly technical, almost John Myung-like levels of proficiency, too - and although recent Deth records such as *Risk* consist mostly of lame, chart-friendly rock, the bass parts are still to die for. Well worth investigation. Joel McIver



JOHN ENTWISTLE BAND Live

Although the late, much-missed John Entwistle remains the finest bassist ever to emerge from the UK, his solo albums weren't great. Yes, there was a generous humour running through most of his work, which continues to raise a smile ("Honor Rock" is a case in point). But - if we're honest - too much of his solo work was bog-standard, middle-aged mule-rock to be truly seminal.

To enjoy this live DVD of an Entwistle Band festival appearance from 1999, you need either to be a confirmed fan or simply able to rise above the dull, sub-Who riffing and relish the Ox's always-astonishing playing. In my case, the fusillades of notes which Entwistle plucks out of his instrument are worth the price of admission alone: even long-time observers will be impressed by the nonchalant, but always super-accurate, manner in which he played in and around the songs. The Who's "The Real Me" is a highlight, in both song and bass terms, although the clutch of vintage rockers which close the set stand out too. Very rewarding.

Joel McIver