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Thanks to my good friend Kevin Borden for creating this opportunity.

Bad Ass Bass Players Feature Meet the New Boss

by Kevin Borden Hello and welcome back to The Low End. I've been involved with bass gear since 1976 and along the way I've met some interesting folks. This month I'd like to introduce to you one of those people. Peter Dapello is a hotshot player, gear collector, and the poobah of one of the best vintage bass-oriented forums on the internet. His M.O. is probably much like yours; he's a regular working stiff, hailing from California's Bay Area. Pete's collection features some heavy hardware, including a slab board 1962 Blonde P-bass, various early '70s Precision and Jazz basses, stringthrough Stingrays, various boutique basses and an early NS2 Spector – all run through vintage Ampeg big rigs. He can be found playing some good meat-and-potatoes rock n' roll about every other weekend with his classic rock cover band, Mr. Meanor. So he's a lot like you. But how does this tie into the world of vintage bass?

Vintage bassdom is an interesting place to be. Is it an industry? Is it a hobby? Is it a brother or sisterhood? The answer to all the above is an emphatic "yes." There is a sizeable support from magazine columns, in-person roundtables and in electronic town halls – also known as the online forums.

There are numerous online forums available not just for bass players or vintage aficionados, but for musicians of all stripes. They range from those dedicated to a specific manufacturer's products to those dealing with new and vintage gear. Forums are a vital part of the player community, providing advice on everything from technique to help finding a scarce piece of gear. There's always an education to be had from pro-level players who moderate or swing by to input their two cents, and these online havens can provide a heads-up on a great piece of gear – or on a real dog not worth your money.

But perhaps the most important, and most overlooked, aspect of these online communities is that they are a great social outlet. You have the ability to electronically chat with musicians who are just like you. While I've found a ton of great gear thanks to bass forums, I've also met some of my best friends there. In the iPod/Nintendo age, it's nice to be among your peers. The forum that Peter started (badassbassplayers.com, referred to simply as BABP) is geared toward an older crowd, who may or may not be vintage players or collectors but have an appreciation of the gear; however, a large percentage of his forum members do in fact own and play vintage gear.

BABP was conceived when a forum Peter was moderating began turning in a social direction, and leaving its gear, music and player-related roots. He wanted to get back to what drove his passion – mainly, everything bass! Pete and his lovely wife Karen gathered together a core group of guys who agreed they wanted to open up a place to call their own. This was not as easy of a task as it may seem – 99% of forums either die on the vine or never gain the needed member strength. This occurs because there's no "buzz" around the forum, the forum is weak in content or the forum is weak in character. Many online communities can quickly turn into wolf packs when someone does not agree with the group's norm, whether or not that norm is correct. A successful forum is properly moderated and this behavior is not allowed. The content has to be truly of substance, related to the nature of the forum and kept fresh. Sadly there are highly successful forums that fail simply because these standards are not adhered to, and it's not at all limited to musical forums.

On January 29, 2006 – what would have been James Jamerson's 68th birthday – the BABP forum was launched. For a few months it was mostly comprised of chatter between the moderators (including myself, acting as the vintage moderator) and some new members who stumbled in. With the help of some valuable feedback from members, the moderator ranks grew and chapters of the forum expanded. Today the forum is flourishing, nearing the 1000 member mark. The median member age is in the late 30s and a very high percentage are gainfully employed family folks. The forum also has a strong international presence. I believe the forum has been successful because Peter started with a passion, turned the passion into an idea, turned the idea into a concept and turned the concept into an item, which in turn becomes your passion. Most great ideas never take hold – he persevered and made a nice home for us middle aged guys, and for folks a few years younger and older as well.

All forums have their place. This is not an endorsement of any site; they all have their own merits and faults. Choose what works for you. The important thing is to pursue your interests, support your hobby and fuel your passion! Take a peek at badassbassplayers.com, as well as talkbass.com Visit the brand specific forums for Gibson, Fender, Rickenbacker and Musicman. These sites are not factory forums; they are enthusiast-run sites and have good information.

That does it for this installment; see you next month after the NJ and Arlington shows. Until then, don't forget the cannolis.

Kevin Borden

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