

## Billy Sheehan 04-08-07

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- When did you first "hear the call" to play bass?

There was a band around the corner that practiced at night when I was very young. From a distance, I could hear the BASS more than anything else. Plus, it was big & heavy & the amps were gigantic.

- What bassists inspired you when you were younger, and who are Billy Sheehan's Bass God's today?

Almost everyone I heard, but specifically Paul Samwell-Smith (Yardbirds), Tim Bogert (Vanilla Fudge), McCartney, Jack Bruce, Entwistle. Plus lots of non-bassists & drummers. Now? I still listen to lots of folks, but I can't think of any off hand. There are so many great talents today.

- You brought the bass, which primarily was known as a background instrument, to the forefront; was this a personal goal, or was it something else?

It just happened. I was far from the only one who did. Lemmy, McCartney, Bogert, Bruce, etc., etc. I learned to play rock solid bass FIRST though. I never thought about a solo till I had played for many, many years.

- What is your favorite all time record?

I have about 4500 CD's in my collection. Very few are unimportant to me (almost none, actually) Impossible to answer.

- Who influenced your now infamous two handed tapping technique?

I got it from Billy Gibbons when I saw ZZ Top in 1974. New Years Eve. They opened for Alice Cooper in Buffalo & I saw Billy hit a note on the fretboard w/ his right hand. I also found a piece called (I think) Attack of The Giant Hogweed by Genesis from the very early '70's. The intro is almost EXACTLY a part of VH's Eruption only almost a decade before.

- What was the first bass and amp you actually owned?

Gretsch Pro Bass amp & Hagstrom bass.

- Has your practicing ethic changed through the years?

It changes constantly. I think you need to be as creative a practitioner as a player. I work hard, but it's always DOING something to make my playing better. In many ways.

- What was your first "real" band?

Opus One . In Buffalo, NY. 1970-71. 11 guys. Full horn section. Chicago, Blood Sweat & Tears. It was Jazz-Rock !

- What basses do you currently own?

A whole bunch, but I'm not a gear whore . What I have, I use. My main bass for the last 15 years or so is the Yamaha Attitude. My signature bass from Yamaha.

- Is The Wife truly your all-time favorite bass still?

In a way. I have basses that play & sound better (different), but it will always be the most important to me, and the bass by which all others are judged.

- Which bass that you no longer own, do you wish you still had?

I had an Ampeg Baby Bass, an Ampeg Long Horn , a Dan Armstrong Acrylic, and a great Alembic from the very early &tilde;70's. All gone now.

- What do you consider your greatest moment as a bassist?

I don't think I've had it yet! I've been very lucky to have a prosperous & successful career, that seems to keep on going strong, but I look to the future more than ever.

- What do you consider your worst moment as a bassist?

I have a bad night here & there. It's inevitable. It all balances out in the end & you learn from it.

- From among the musicians with whom you've never played, with whom would you most like to gig with?

Paco De Lucia. Or do a tour with Slipknot.

- Do you have a "favorite gig of all-time"?

In Brazil. Sao Paulo, with Mr. Big. Hundreds of thousands of people on the beach, outdoors. What a night. Then, the Army showed up. I still get email about that show. Also, at Chicken George . A benefit gig in Japan right after the deadly quake there. One more, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Islamic girls up front with hands in the air & huge smiles on their faces. There's hope for peace.

- What's your current set-up, "from strings to amps," live and in the studio?

RotoSound Strings, DiMarzio pick-ups, cord, Ampeg SVT 4 Pro (2), before one SVT is a Pearce pre-amp. ISP Noise gate, Ashley Audio compressors also.

- How is life on the road with Stu Hamm and Jeff Berlin been on the BX3 Tour?Great! Stu, Jeff, & I have a blast! John Mader on drums & Jude Gold on guitar too. They are both awesome.

- What current projects are you working on?

New solo CD, & a bunch of stuff in LA over the next 2-3 months. Tour with Tony MacAlpine & Virgil Donati in Eurpe this fall. Much more.

- What does Billy Sheehan enjoy recreationally outside of music these days?

Not much. I love music it's pretty much everything to me.

- What is the greatest advice you could offer a kid just starting out on bass?

Get in a band & play! Really! Do it now. Get out of the bedroom or basement or where ever you've been & start to play. Copy band? That's fine! The BEATLES were a copy band at first. So was Van Halen & a million other huge successes. Figure it out on your OWN. Being hand-fed every lick by tab & notation doesn't develop EARS. Learn some SONGS. Licks, runs & scales aren't music, they are just parts of it. And sometimes insignificant parts at that. Play with OTHERS. Drums, guitar and/or keys. To play in an ensemble is the key. Playing alone is a drag. Learn SONGS together. SING! Get on the mic & SING WHILE YOU PLAY! Your career will do MUCH better. Pay attention to the audience! Reach out to them. They are the reason there is a music business in the first place.

A Bad Ass thank you to Billy Sheehan for our first of many interviews, and also to member Mike Burduck, for compiling the questions. For the latest on Billy, please visit <http://billysheehan.com>

