

METAL: IN TEAMES • BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE • T.M. STEVENS

BASS PLAYER

MUSIC!
DIXIE DREGS
'REFRIED
FUNKY
CHICKEN'
ANDY WEST'S
COMPLETE
BASS LINE

DIG DEEPER

A MUSIC PLAYER PUBLICATION | JULY 2008

THE POWER & GLORY OF TUBE AMPS

THE SCIENCE BEHIND
THAT SEXY SOUND

BUYER'S GUIDE
13 TUBE TITANS!

PLUS: ANATOMY OF
A CLASSIC AMP

JAMAALADEEN TACUMA
Funkifying Monk

SUPER-SIDEMAN BRANDINO!
Old-School Feel
With New-School Stars

LESSONS!
KNOW YOUR MODES
BOOGALOO WITH MACEO PARKER
STEVE MILLER BAND 'SWINGTOWN'
TAKADIMI TA! VOCALIZING RHYTHMS



NewDay
A NEWBAY MEDIA PUBLICATION

\$5.99



WWW.BASSPLAYER.COM

KEVIN "BRANDINO"

BRANDON

Ever since the crack studio team dubbed the Wrecking Crew put Los Angeles on the musical map as a recording center in the '60s, the SoCal session scene has mirrored the ebb and flow of the mighty Pacific. Only the staunchest have been able to survive changing industry tides to continue to get the calls from each new regime behind the glass.

Case in point: Kevin "Brandino" Brandon. Known for his powerful, precise tone and feel-good groove, the veteran doubler is now navigating his fourth decade in the City of Angels. Brandon can handle arco and pizzicato upright dates as well as those requiring vintage Fenders or modern 6-strings. Perhaps most impressive of all is that he has done all of the above for contemporary artists such as Outkast, Justin Timberlake, Mary J. Blige, and Joss Stone. Then again, overcoming difficult odds has never daunted Brandon.

OLD SCHOOL
MEETS 
NEW SCHOOL
BY CHRIS JISI

Born in Compton, California, on September 16, 1954, Kevin Brandon came into this world with club feet (both feet were turned backward at birth and had to be reconstructed) and a dislocated hip, which, when reattached to his hipbone, left one leg two inches shorter than the other. Enduring years in the hospital to recover, his gift upon release, at age four,

was a Louis Armstrong concert. Inspired, he tried piano and sax before receiving a St. George electric bass as a Christmas gift at age nine, to fill out a band with his brother and sister. While his ears were soon drawn to the jazz and pop rootings of Slam Stewart, Ray Brown, Paul Chambers, James Jamerson, Chuck Rainey, and Wilton Felder, playing flute in school



provided formal music training. Eventually, Brandon was told that he had to learn upright if he wanted to be a "real bassist." In response, he saved up money through high school, bought a Czech bass, and began classical lessons with a series of private teachers, including Barry Lieberman from the L.A. Philharmonic.

Finding his footing among jazz groups in L.A., after college, Brandon got an offer to join the Tommy Dorsey Band and see New York City,

leading to his first road stint—and the nickname "Brandino," from Dorsey's all-Italian sax section. He returned home to find that his jazz connections were retiring, so he refocused on his electric playing. While playing on a 1978 Chevy Chase prime-time special, Brandon was asked by bandleader H.B. Barnum—who was also Aretha Franklin's musical director—to join the Queen of Soul's road band. Retaining the slot over the next 22 years helped Brandon ride

the fluctuating waves of L.A. session work, as did composing music for the soap opera *Santa Barbara* from 1984 to '92. With the more recent resurgence of old-school players on projects by machine-raised artists, Kevin is once again "hanging ten" with his skilled fingers.

WHY IS THERE SUCH A DEMAND FOR VETERAN musicians by younger artists?

Various reasons, but mostly because we now have a world of information available on the Internet. Whether it's through word of mouth or something artists hear for themselves, musicians and styles can be pinpointed. I had a European producer track me down because I had played with James Brown and Fred Wesley on the soundtrack of *Doctor Detroit* in the early '80s. When I worked with Will.I.am and Justin Timberlake on Justin's latest CD [*FutureSex/LoveSounds*], they were telling everyone how they had hired Michael Jackson's *Thriller* string section—today's artists really want the old feel guys. The other key reason, I feel, is the removal of music and fine arts programs from schools coast to coast in the late '70s. Students weren't able to gain proficiency on instruments, so we had this 20-year void of kids acquiring music skills.

How do your calls break down between acoustic and electric bass?

About 50/50, with some of the upright work being arco. I don't make a big distinction technically between the two instruments; I approach it all as just playing bass, whichever is in my hands. I can swing on electric and I can play hip-hop grooves on upright.

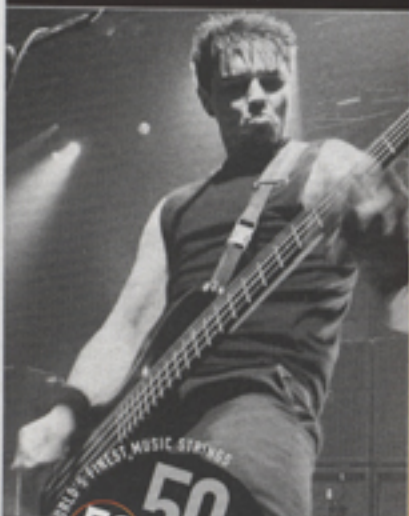
How do you typically come up with parts for hip-hop artists?

I ask the producer what he or she is looking for, whether they want me with the kick drum or against and around it. Then I give them a few different variables—maybe a busy Motown feel, a Memphis feel with less movement—so they can pick out what they want. That's where having a big vocabulary and an assortment of basses is essential. A lot of times what producers are after is a certain lick or riff on a classic R&B song, or something similar to it. I'll also see how many verses and choruses there are and ask them to let me vary the part slightly from the previous sections. But with hip-hop producers you never know; they might cut up your track or loop it.

What sessions with today's chart-toppers stand out?

supreme tone pure quality . long life

Jason James - bullet for my valentine - rotosound player



66
long neck - standard gauge

RS 66LD

45 • 65 • 80 • 105

swing bass

Stainless steel roundwound bass/guitar strings



into the music

www.rotosound.com

www.myspace.com/rotosoundmusicstrings

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR E-NEWSLETTER AT WWW.ROTOSOUND.COM AND RECEIVE ENTRY TO OUR MONTHLY TOUR TICKET DRAW - SEE SITE FOR DETAILS

GEAR

Basses Warwick Streamer 5- and 6-strings; fretless Warwick Streamer 6; '59 Fender Precision; '61 Fender Jazz Bass; '64 Fender Precision with Jazz pickup; 1900 German roundback acoustic bass; 1870 French flatback acoustic bass with low C extension; BrandonBass 5-string electric upright (German and French-style bows)

Strings D'Addario XL ProSteels, GHS Super Steels, La Bella flatwounds, D'Addario Helicore Orchestral and hybrid (with low B) sets

Amps Gallien-Krueger Fusion550 head; Gallien-Krueger 1001RB-II head; Gallien-Krueger Neo 112 and 212 cabinets; Gallien-Krueger MB150E-III combo (for upright)

Recording BBE DI-1000 direct box (for electrics); D-TAR Soundspot, D-TAR Solstice Two-Channel Mixing/Blending System, CAD Trion 8000 mic (for upright)

All of them were fun, even when you don't see the artist. I enjoyed my sessions for Joss Stone [*Introducing Joss Stone*] and Mary J. Blige [*The Breakthrough*] because Raphael Saadiq was the producer. Jamiroquai's *Dynamite* was a blast, the music being a blend of retro '70s and Euro techno. My favorite probably was working with Andre 3000 on Outkast's *SpeakerBoxxx/The Love Below*. For "The Love Below (Intro)," he asked

me to emulate a "low, bassy orchestra" with my upright and bow. I had him sing me a melody, which I recorded, and then I harmonized it on three other tracks.

What advice do you give to young bassists?

I stress the importance of learning the foundation role of the bass. There are a lot of great solo bass CDs out there, but there's still nothing like a great song and knowing the art of how



The Place for Bass

New • Used • Vintage

Order Online!

Toll-Free (USA only)
888-473-5810
517-372-7890 outside USA

www.elderly.com

NEW Gretsch White Falcon Bass C6136LSB



VISA MASTERCARD AMERICAN EXPRESS DISCOVER

FREE CATALOG

SETTING THE STANDARD IN **BASS** AMPLIFICATION



Never Compromise

EDEN-ELECTRONICS.COM



ALLPARTS

America's Premier Guitar & Bass Parts Supplier



Headstock Trademark Licensed to ALLPARTS MUSIC CORPORATION by Fender
Send \$4 U.S. for COLOR CATALOG 13007 Bitmore Park Drive Houston, Texas 77061

to complement it. Kids today are into playing multiple instruments, and that's fine, but I always tell them you need to study one instrument completely. You need to really "go to school" on one instrument and understand its roots and criteria and musicality; that way you'll be so much further along when you pick up other instruments or attempt to produce.

How would you describe the work environment in L.A. now?

We're having a bit of a rebound from the recent writers' strike, which obviously hurt the whole entertainment industry here. Budgets are tight; producers often decide at the last minute that they want real players on a record, to get a different flavor or to offset all the electronics. So you never know when the phone will ring and what it's going to be for. The key to staying alive is diversity. Back in the day you had players who mainly did film dates or rock & roll albums; now more than ever you need to be versatile and draw work from different streams.

Looking back, how were you able to overcome your personal challenges?

I've been very fortunate and I had great support from my parents and family. Coming from "the hood" and having to make my way

in and around a commercial city like Hollywood—where you need to look the part, never mind not walking and talking funny—has probably kept me from some gigs. But luck and skill have gotten me other gigs, so I have no complaints.

I faced my share of discouragement and pitfalls along the way, but if you have the tenacity to hold onto your dreams and have a work ethic to match, you can succeed. That's why I started my nonprofit organization, *You Can Do It If You Try* (www.youcandoitifyoutry.org). It's designed to provide hope, encouragement, and resources to the physically and mentally challenged and underprivileged in the inner-cities. Most recently I set up two local grammar schools with software from Sibelius for music-therapy programs with autistic children.

What lies ahead?

I'm looking to continue on my playing and educational path. I have acoustic and electric solo CDs that I'm preparing to release on my label, 'N House, as well as a songbook with music from the CDs, featuring Sibelius software that enables you to transpose the music to any instrument, in any key. I've also been flying to Las Vegas to do Ben Vereen's Sammy Davis tribute show. It's all good.

SUMMER 2008

Vancouver, BC | Weekend Session | May 30 - June 1
Toronto, ON | Session 1: July 13-18 | Session 2: July 20-25

Guitar

Workshop Plus

BASS DRUMS KEYBOARDS VOCALS

CLASSES FOR ALL LEVELS!

Beginning, Intermediate & Advanced

ALL AGES WELCOME!

12-Adult

MULTIPLE SESSIONS AVAILABLE!

ON OR OFF CAMPUS TUITION

Includes Classes, Room & Meals or Classes Only

Special
Guest
Artists



John Scofield



Paul Gilbert



Billy Sheehan



Rick Gratton



Gary Hoey



Sue Foley

Plus David Gogo, Dave Martone, Don Alder and more!

FOR A FREE BROCHURE OR MORE INFORMATION

Call 905.567.8000 or visit us online: www.guitarworkshopplus.com

▷ ROCK ▷ BLUES ▷ JAZZ ▷ ACOUSTIC ▷ CLASSICAL ▷ GUITAR ▷ BASS ▷ DRUMS ▷ KEYBOARDS ▷ VOCALS ▷ SONGWRITING

GK GALLIEN-KRUEGER

KEVIN 'BRANDINO' BRANDON

Aretha Franklin
Mary J Blige
Justin Timberlake
Joss Stone
Luther Vandross
Jamiroquai
Outkast
James Brown
Stevie Wonder
The Temptations
Tommy Dorsey
The Beach Boys
Jimmy Smith
Ray Charles
Barry White
Kenny Rogers
Gladys Knight
Nancy Wilson
Dionne Warwick
Patti LaBelle
Vanessa Williams
Snoop Dogg
Al Jaureau
Waylon Jennings
Seals & Crofts
George Duke
Joe Sample



BOOTY BASS

How does a poor kid from Compton, CA become the first call bassist for the biggest music acts in the world? Talent, dedication and a whole lot of tenacity. Brandino delivers exactly what top producers are looking for, every time. He chooses GK as his bass rig for exactly the same reason. "Engineers love the flexibility," states Brandino, "The GK delivers the punch, bottom, clarity and power for me to play booty bass!"