

## **Step Back + Take Stock**

**by Rawn Randall**

How many instruments do you own? How many have you owned? OK stop the madness. It is time to break down exactly what is necessary and what is superfluous (ego massage). A lot of you may know my story. I have been either a sales or product manager for many bass product related companies including: Smith Basses, Tobias Guitars, Tung Basses, Steinberger Sound, Gibson USA, Curbow Basses, Eden Electronics, EBS Sweden... and the list goes on and on. I have probably owned over 500 instruments over the past 20 years. Never more than 20 at a time but I saw a pattern. Unless you are a collector owning multiple 10's of instruments is probably not necessary.

Over the years I have noticed the following:

- 01) Most of my clients that own multiple high end instruments are professionals (Doctors, Lawyers etc...)
- 02) Most of the working cats play Fenders or a Fender style instrument
- 03) Most working cats play a 4 string as their main instrument
- 04) It takes a minimum 3 to 5 years or 100 gigs to form a relationship with an instrument
- 05)

## **Trip on the Joy of a Main Axe**

How instruments do you need? Well after your 'bread + butter' axe most cats then have a 5 string and then a fretless. Marcus Miller once told me that, "You have to establish a relationship with one instrument." Haven't we seen Marcus with the same instrument for over 30 years? You have to learn where all your dead spots are. Do you know the difference between the C on the 3rd fret A-string vs. the 8th fret E-string? You need to know what 'YOUR SOUND' is and how to

transfer it to a recorded medium. Nowadays this is mainly a digital media that can alter the integrity of your tone.

How many times have you heard your favorite bassist and said, "Man, that's the tone"? How did your favorite get that tone? They play the same instrument all the time. Check out Will Lee, Nathan East, Sting, Victor Wooten and Bailey, John Patitucci, Jimmy Haslip, Pino Palladino, Richard Bona..... get my point. The top cats don't change their main axe that often. They get hired for the exquisite groove, choice of notes and they sound great!

### **Other Tones**

Yes there are other sounds out there. For every Jazz bass there is a Precision bass. For every Steinberger there is a Hofner Beatle bass. For every Alembic there is a Danelectro. These are all distinguishable, desirable and usable tones. In certain recording situations a producer may not want any other bass (usually a Fender) than what he or she is used to hearing. No matter what you must accommodate what is appropriate for the song, You may not need to take your 7 string 18 volt pre-amped bass to a country session. You may not want to take your Rickenbacker to a funk jam.

*The point is to try to emulate as many tones as possible from your main instrument!*

### **Signs of Sickness**

- 01) Have spent more money on modifications on a bass than the bass cost initially?
- 02) Have sold or traded instruments at a loss only to...
- 03) Sell that next instrument at a loss?
- 04) Do you spend more time deciding which of your many

instruments to play than actually playing it?  
05) Do you not play with other musicians?

## **The Solution**

Why not eliminate some of the redundancy in your collection? Unless you are a collector I bet you could 'get by' with 5 instruments:

- 01) Your Main Axe
- 02) Fretless (playing fretless will improve you fretted playing)
- 03) Axe sounding very different than your main (good to stay out of ruts of always playing the same styles etc..)
- 04) Backup to your main (always important to have your sound backed up in case of emergencies)
- 05) A collectable 60's or 70's instrument (everyone has a investment portfolio right?)

## **What Are You Going To Do Now?**

Well with all that money saved you could do any any one or a combination of he following:

- 01) Take a few private lessons with a Pro in your area
- 02) Go back to school and take a theory or composition class
- 03) Attend a bass camp run by one the 'Bass Heroes' on the scene
- 04) Invest in some sort of music software/computer to record your own music
- 05) Buy a instructional video or book and actually work all the way through it

The bottom line is that you must always be doing something to sharpen your skills. This will always translate into making yourself a more valuable asset.

*Invest in your bass ability not your bass collection!*

SHAMELESS SELF PROMOTION:

Please take a moment and stop by:

[www.myspace.com/darkbassmuz](http://www.myspace.com/darkbassmuz)

to hear some of the music I am producing now.

I have a new CD to be released in September with a group called  
'ARIYA'

You can also drop me line there as well!