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willLEE

He occupies a spot in what might be the highest profile gig in the business today. As house bassist on the highly rated and slightly twisted TV talk show, *Late Night With David Letterman*, Will Lee is heard by literally millions of people five nights a week, laying down his signature deep-in-the-pocket grooves on Motown classics, James Brown hits, old Beatles and Stones staples, the occasional "Tower of Power" tune and anything else that bandleader Paul Shaffer might decide is hip for that evening's show. It's a gig he's held down since the show's inception in 1981 and it doesn't look like he'll be relinquishing that coveted chair anytime soon. (In 1993 they documented their musical chemistry on the 2-CD set, *Paul Shaffer & The Party Boys Of Rock 'n Roll* on SBK Records).

But the *Letterman* show is only the tip of the iceberg for this busy bassist dubbed "The Workingest Man In Show Business" by his longtime colleague guitarist Hiram Bullock (their latest power trio recording together with drummer Clint De Gason is *Live At Mamy's Car Wash* on Big World Music). Viewers of *Late*

6. VICTOR WOOTEN

"Me And My Bass Guitar" (from *A Show Of Hands*, Compass Records). Victor Wooten, bass; Recorded in 1996.

BEFORE: This guy is just unbelievable! Those Wootens are scary, man!

AFTER: You ever see him live! Where he flips that bass around on stage! What the fuck is that shit, man! He's a wild man on stage, flipping the bass around his body and stuff. But when you talk to him he's just a quiet kind of guy. I love Victor. He's done more for the Fodera 4-string than anybody ever thought possible. And he's just got the greatest spirit, man. This song says it all. He's just so dedicated and he knows a lot about himself. He knows that you don't really have to look that far to get a lot of shit happening. It's really all within yourself. The results of dedication are great. First of all, when you spend a lot of time doing 'a thing' and you get really tuned into that thing, your brain uncovers a lot of the mysteries of it but your whole body also gets tuned into where things are. Also, if you spent time trying to find the easiest ways of doing something, then you learn about the economics of motion. When you take apart a certain thing like those real fat triplet figures that he does here, first you hear it and you think it's impossible, then you watch a guy play it and you think, "Hmmm, maybe it's possible." But then if

they were to slow it down and show you really what it is, it's a lot simpler than you can believe. Because it's really just like pyrotechnics. What Victor is doing here is just a combination of slaps in the left and right hand...your hand hammering the strings up and down and in the right order. Beaver Felton was the first guy I started listening to who unlocked a lot of those 'secrets' for me. He'd play a passage and you'd think, "Oh my god, I'm years away from that." And then he would show you how it's done and you'd be playing it in three minutes. So Victor does have that incredible technique down. But it's also about what he feels when he's playing, the things that he hears. If you see him in concert, he'll be quoting from all kinds of different places...classical music, jazz, pop. I walked into a club one night and saw him doing a piece from "The Nutcracker Suite." I mean, what bass player would even think of doing that! But Victor's got a huge vocabulary of different things. His take on "Night In Tunisia" is pretty awesome. You really get a sense of his dedication and his spirit when you hear him play. He's got so much going for him. I mean, he can play the hell out of the bass and he can do backflips with it! It's something that I love to see but could never do myself. I hope nobody expects me to go out there and do a Victor Wooten thing.