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## BEFORE & AFTER



### willLEE

**H**e 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 Ganon is *Live At Manny's Car Wash* on Big World Music). Viewers of *Late*

BEFORE & AFTER continued from page 14

#### 6. VICTOR WOOTEN

"No And My Bass Guitar" (from *A Show Of Hands*, Capricorn Records, Victor Wooten, bass, Recorded in 1996)

**BEFORE:** This guy is just unbelievable! These 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 Fenders 4 string than anybody ever thought possible. And he's 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 connects a lot of the mysteries of it but your whole body also gets tuned into where things are. Also, if you spend time trying to find the easiest ways of doing something, then you learn about the connections of motion. When you take apart a certain thing like those real fast triple fingers that he does here, but you hear it and you think it's impossible, then you watch a guy play it and you think, "Wow, maybe it's possible." But then if

they want to show it down and show you really what it is, it's a lot simpler than you can believe. Because it's really just like gymnastics. What Victor is doing here is just a combination of dips to the left and right hand... your hand hammering the strings up and down and to the right

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.

incredible technique down. But it's also about what he feels when he's playing, the things that he hears. If you are into concert, he'll be spacing 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. He takes 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 have to see but could never do myself. I hope nobody expects me to go out there and do a Victor Wooten thing.

#### 7. VICTOR BAILEY

"Round Midnight" (from *Autumn Op.*, Atlantic, Victor Bailey, bass, drum program, Rodney Jones, guitar, Jim Beard, piano, synthesizers, Louie Plattus, acoustic bass, Steve Thornton, percussion, Puugo Bell, sax flts, Jaf Watts, more drums with brushes, Isiah, Branford Marsalis, soprano saxophone; Recorded in 1985)

**BEFORE:** It's the other Victor. Nice organic sound to his bass playing. And that's a very wonderful tone he's got. Nice. The vocals sound great on this. It almost sounds like a man that has recorded in that Bradford on soprano!

**AFTER:** No surprises, really. It's pretty close to the original arrangement of the piece, with some great bass playing by Victor.

**LABEL WATCH** continued from page 62

guy will argue with you, but this is just my opinion—but these people changed the language. There are a lot of great producers. Novak and John Hammond and Norman Granz and Alfred Lion, they were men of great taste, and they knew great artists, and they knew how to capture them. That's one kind of production—that's like a documentary function. But when Leiber and Stoller came along, they did so records what directors do to the movies. And when Specter came along, it was Wagner on the street corner. The third is George Martin, with the Beatles.

**GEORGE MRIZ** continued from page 129

job, I don't think I could have carried it." Modesty becomes him.

As for other pursuits outside of music, Mraz says declaratively, "I'm into fly fishing. I like to take off here and there, but somewhere it always connects with some festival somewhere. It's not easy."

Given his global itinerary, Mraz must know about hot fly-fishing spots around the world. "Mostly from reading about it," he admits. "I can't really combine the two. I'm too serious about it to just go fishing and then go play. I have to do one or the other." Thankfully, for jazz sake, the bass has been his chosen tool.

#### STREET

In the interim, Mraz plays a Czech bass made in the mid-1970s. He also has an Italian bass made in 1952.

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