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Bryant Wilder

The Right Track

<http://www.bryantwilder.com>

intro text and photos courtesy of Pluckwild Music

Intro



Bassist, Songwriter, Arranger and Producer Bryant Wilder began his career in music 26 years ago in the Bronx. His interest in music was forged, in part, by the daily mid-afternoon band rehearsals of his cousin who lived in the same building. One could often hear the funk as it saturated the walls of the old tenement, traveled the dimly lit corridors to Bryant's room and cultivated a musical spark in his own heart. The band's bassist, a certain Puerto Rican Joe (also Bryant's earliest Bass influence!) was the center of a musical attraction for Bryant, and he termed him 'the funkier cat alive'. From that point on, the bass was it for Bryant. And play bass he does!

He has been playing in NYC area churches since he was 15 years old. His work also includes touring, recording and/or performing for Missy Elliot, The CD Hawkins Singers, Jonathan Dubose Jr., Robert Lowe & Generations, New Kids On The Block, Shirley Caesar, Rev. Timothy Wright and the Grammy Award winning Tri-Boro Mass Choir. Recently, he has appeared on Saturday Night Live with Missy Elliot and BET's 'Bobby Jones Gospel' with Monique Walker. He has also worked as a bassist for the house band for Sony Music New R&B Artists Showcases. Throughout his career, Bryant has performed on many of the world greatest stages, including; Radio City Music Hall, Carnegie Hall and Madison Square Garden (MSG). He has also played MSG's Felt Forum, The Meadowlands Arena, PNC Performing Arts Center, Nassau Coliseum and the Westchester County Center.

CD Review

Bryant Wilder has performed on hundreds of recordings. And among others, has worked with the like of Missy Elliot. And this experience both in and out of the studio most definitely shows in this incredible album.

From the beginning Bryant's smooth, sleek production skills shine through with sequenced tracks being flawlessly mixed with live recording.

The album starts off with Bryant strumming a little chord progression on an acoustic guitar. He then goes on to have a conversation with his daughter. Which ends with her saying "I don't know what kinda song you'll be making of that mess". So he shows us. With the song jumping to life full of funk and vibrance. Which sets down a definitive tone for the rest of the album. And while keeping on the same general vibe. Each song brings along a different influence.

The song Available 2 U brings along a definite Marcus Miller vibe to it. It 's a wonderful ambient kind of track with a floaty, mellow slap



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melody over the top.

Next, Bryant shows off some of his versatility with the wonderful track Aah Dios, which has a great samba/salsa, feel to it, and just makes you want to grad a pair of maracas and dance along.

Bryant does 2 versions of a classic gospel song. "Something down inside of me". The first version is in the traditional style with Ella Mae Puckett providing wonder vocals on the track. Bryant then does his own version, which has a very funky house music feel to it. The lyrics are adapted and rather than being sung, they are rapped by the great Phenomenon, adding to the more modern sound of the track.

After Bryant's very lively version of Something Down Inside Of Me the album is wound down with a lovely soft strings, piano and fretless bass piece which is the perfect finale to an incredible album.

The album is extremely versatile, it's super funky and great for getting people up and dancing. But it's also a great album for just sitting back and relaxing to on the days where you just want to chill. Last but not least it's a wonderful album to listen to if you're stuck in a bit of a rut. If you haven't been all that enthusiastic about playing lately, this album will have you grabbing for your bass with a newfound enthusiasm.

You are pictured with several different basses on your album. How many basses do you have, what are they, and which is your favourite?

I own 5 electric basses. I have a 5 string Penza Shur, an original 5 string Tobias (very low serial #), 4 string US made Fender, 4 string AtelierZ, 4 string Fretless Ken Smith built in 1983 & a 4 string Tacoma Acoustic Bass. I used the AtelierZ on virtually every track on my recently release CD entitled: The Right Track. However, I primarily play the Fender for my solo concerts and the Penza & Tobias for most Contemporary Gospel concerts & live recordings. My favorite is the Fender because I find it easy to play and I have made some electronic upgrades that make it soooo funky.

How did you record the bass on the album and what equipment did you use?

The entire album except drums were recorded with a Digi001 and ProTools LE and my basses were recorded with no outboard gear except an Aguilar Direct Box to enhance the signal. No compressors or preamp. When my engineers, Kurt Upper and Elias Sotomayer mixed the CD we used a few virtual processors like Amp Farm, Focusrite EQs and other Oxford plug-ins. We didn't even use a virtual compressor in the final mix!! It was mastered by Herb Powers I believe he uses outboard gear and virtual processors.

Do you use that same equipment when playing live?

If I am recording live I use the Aguilar Direct Box, it has tubes and is very warm. But, when playing live I always use a Demeter pre-amp, an Ampeg power amp and two SWR 4x10 cabinets.

What effects do you use?

I use a Boss Auto Wah (I switched to the Dynamic Wah but returned to the Auto Wah after a short time). The Dynamic Wah had a pronounced digital sound that I didn't care for. I also, use Boss Octaver, Boss Bass Chorus, Boss Flanger, DOD Envelope Filter, and a Mutron II (but never at the same time) LOL.

Who are your main bass influences?

The two bassists that made the biggest impression on me when I was young were a funky finger style player named Joe (I never new his last name) and a heavy thumper named Teddy Williams. I saw these two local cats (Bronx NY) give everything they had every day... even in rehearsals. As far as more notable bassist go, there were Jamerson, Stanley, Rocco, Larry G, Bootsy, Louis Johnson, Anthony Jackson, Abraham, Joel Smith & Will Lee. While I love the playing and work of cats like Marcus, Prince, Victor, Mark King & Nathan East. I am just as old or older than they are so by the time they burst onto the scene my taste and style were already developed. I must add, however, that while the older group influenced me to continue practicing and playing the bass I can't honestly say that they molded or altered the style that I adopted from Joe & Teddy.

When did you start playing bass and at what point did you realize you wanted to make a living out of it?

I consider myself a late bloomer. I always had access to instruments but I didn't seriously start practicing until my mom bought my first bass when I was 14 years old. I realized that I could possibly make a living playing bass after I landed my first paying gig at 18 or 19. But, because I had to help my family I had to get a job where I earned a consistent income. Therefore, I have not aggressively pursued my dream of making a living playing music until recently. As you can see, my playing has always taken a back seat to my career (I am a District Manager for the Social Security Administration) and my family. While I have had many gigs and recording sessions I usually decline opportunities to go on lengthy tours because I have been working a 9-5 for 24 years and I'd have to quit my job for a tour that doesn't pay as much and will most likely end in 3-6 months. What do I do after that? I did however, take a lengthy vacation three years ago to tour as bassist for Missy Elliot and perform with her for her first appearance on Saturday Night Live.

You said 'Being and accompanying bassist is fun, but I know there is much more depth to the music that I create and want to play'. Is this a dilemma most accompanying musicians have you think?

No, I think this dilemma faces exceptional players with great music to offer and who also possess the confidence and intelligence to become a front man. Because you know you must be more than moderately interesting (without the instrument) or have a story to tell in order to keep the attention on an audience. So, I think this dilemma faces many sidemen... not most.

Will there be a point where you call a stop to being session musician and focus just on your solo career?

While I never cared for playing in the sterile environment of a studio (not even my own) I hope the calls never stop coming. However, my passion is live playing. Very little compares to the energy and spirit that comes to the stage from an audience that feels the funk. I have recently formed the Bryant Wilder Band and have started taking engagements to promote my newly released CD (dont let the suit on the cover fool you --- theres some funky stuff on the CD). For the last few concerts I have used Nathaniel Townsley III on Drums, Willie Brown on guitar, Antoine Charlton, Barry D and CD Hawkins on keys, Alan Plummer on percussion, Angel Fernandez and Kevin Bryan on trumpet, Bryan Steel & Richard Dbreu on sax and Joe DeJesus on trombone. It's a big band but we manage to keep it real funky. Naturally I'd have to scale down for anything other than local sets.

Are the songs on your album pieces that have been in your head for a long time and that you wrote along the way while being a session musician or did you compile this material recently?

Other than the two songs that I covered (Available 2 U and Bs Not Dismayed) one song (Tune Up) was written prior to recording The Right Track. It's a little something I have strummed for years prior to show time.

Of all the session/projects you did in the past, which was the one you got the most out of and why?

This is easy. I did a live recording session about three years ago with a Contemporary Gospel Choir called Robert Lowe and Generations that was a blast. I got the most out of this recording because while the Musical Director, the late Gary Montoute, wanted me to stay in the pocket, play solid lines and solid grooves he didnt dictate every note that I had to play. So, it was both fun and challenging to do my thing within the context of moderately defined parameters. Also, the drummer, Danny Ford, inspired me to play just a little funkier.



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