

S. M. V.

STANLEY CLARKE – MARCUS MILLER – VICTOR WOOTEN

Profile

STANLEY CLARKE



Stanley Clarke is nothing short of a living legend, having liberated the bass in much the same way that Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker liberated their instruments decades earlier.

Born in Philadelphia, Clarke headed to New York City right after college as a classically trained bass virtuoso. He quickly made his mark on the New York jazz scene by gigging with Stan Getz, Joe Henderson and Horace Silver before joining Getz pianist Chick Corea to form the seminal, GRAMMY-winning fusion outfit Return to Forever in 1972. As the band took more of an electric focus (with Al Di Meola and Lenny White), Clarke not only split his time between upright and electric bass, but also launched the high-end boutique bass guitar market via his use of custom made Alembic basses.

Taking issue with the narrow perception of the bass as a support rather than solo instrument, Clarke released a string of solo albums, beginning with *Children Forever* in 1973. The watershed recording, *School Days*, came three years later, with a title track that served as the first bona fide bass anthem. Clarke also pushed the tonal range of the electric bass upward, inventing the piccolo and tenor basses in an effort to speak in the range of his musical hero, John Coltrane.

Having solidified his solo career, Clarke moved on to more acclaimed pairings, including the Clarke/Duke Project (with keyboardist George Duke), the New Barbarians (with Keith Richards and Ron Wood), appearances on two Paul McCartney albums, *Animal Logic* (with Police drummer Stewart Copeland) and *Rite of Strings* (with Jean-Luc Ponty and Al Di Meola).

The late '80s brought new opportunities, as Clarke was hired to score the TV series *Pee Wee's Playhouse*. This led to his first movie score for the film *Boyz 'N' the Hood*, and what has become his second career as an acclaimed film composer. Other notable soundtracks include *Passenger 57*, *What's Love Got To Do With It?*, *Poetic Justice*, *The Transporter* and the Showtime series, *Soul Food*.

Having stated repeatedly that the bass is a permanent, internal part of him, Clarke continues to live up to his moniker of Lord of the Low Frequencies. Of late, he has been on the road with the Clarke/Duke Band, *Rite of Strings* and McCoy Tyner, as well as his own group. In addition, the summer of 2008 also marks the highly-anticipated Return To Forever reunion tour.

In 2007, Clarke's Roxboro Entertainment signed with Heads Up International and released *Night School*, a star-studded DVD tribute concert touching on all aspects of his career, and *Toys of Men*, his commercially and critically acclaimed war-conscious CD.

MARCUS MILLER



drummer Lenny White.

Striking a chord with music fans *and* music critics has been a consistent thread running through Marcus Miller's GRAMMY-winning career. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Miller was raised among jazz royalty (his second cousin is Miles Davis pianist Wynton Kelly) in nearby Jamaica, Queens. Inspired by his father, church organist William Miller, young Marcus played piano, organ, clarinet and sax, before gravitating to bass guitar by age 13 in order to get gigs with local bands. He made his professional debut at 16, with flautist Bobbi Humphrey, and then hit the road with

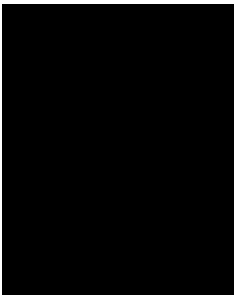
Returning from the road, Miller planted some important seeds: In addition to cracking New York's lucrative jingle and session scene, he joined the bands of *Saturday Night Live* and Roberta Flack, where he met David Sanborn and Luther Vandross. Both Sanborn and Vandross quickly tapped Miller's writing, producing, and multi-instrumental gifts to come up with a steady string of hit records and tours. Soon after, Miles Davis came calling with an invitation that led to six albums – three of which Miller produced, most notably the landmark *Tutu*.

Firmly established as a producer, Miller guided recordings by Vandross (including the 1991 GRAMMY-winning R&B Song of the Year, "Power of Love/Love Power"), Roberta Flack, Aretha Franklin, Chaka Khan, Wayne Shorter and Al Jarreau, while at the same time contributing killer bass lines (his peers nicknamed him the Thumbslinger) to discs by Donald Fagen, the Brecker Brothers, Grover Washington, Jr., Paul Simon, Don Grolnick, Was (Not Was) and countless others. He also formed the Jamaica Boys (with Lenny White and Mark Stevens), and broke into film composing with scores for *Siesta*, *House Party* and *Boomerang*.

In 1992, Miller turned his focus to his solo career with the release of *The Sun Don't Lie*. Armed with the unmistakable sound of his '76 Fender Jazz Bass, Miller accepted the torch passed by Stanley Clarke and Jaco Pastorius and reignited the spark for solo bass albums, setting a new standard in the process. Miller's seven subsequent solo efforts include the GRAMMY-winning *M2*, in 2001 (making him the only solo bassist to have ever won a GRAMMY for Best Contemporary Jazz Album), plus the biographical DVD, *Master of All Trades*.

Miller continues to keep numerous creative irons in the fire, scoring for films as well as the Chris Rock TV show, *Everybody Hates Chris*. He hosts the North Sea and Playboy Jazz Cruises, all while keeping up a rigorous touring pace for his latest CD, *Marcus*.

VICTOR WOOTEN



Like Marcus, "Victor" is the lone name among bass fans that signals the last great hero of the instrument, Victor Wooten. Also like Miller, Wooten's musical reach extends far beyond the four-string. Born in Idaho to a military family, raised on the island of Oahu and on the West Coast, Wooten received bass lessons at age 3 from his brother, Regi. By the age of 5, he had made his stage debut with his four older brothers, collectively known as The Wootens. The family act spent the '70s opening for high-profile groups like Curtis Mayfield and War, and eventually settled in Newport News, Virginia, in the early '80s. There, the brothers landed steady gigs at the Busch Gardens theme park in Williamsburg, and began meeting musicians from Nashville and New York.

In 1988, Wooten moved to Nashville, where he worked with vocalist Jonell Mosser and met New Grass Revival banjo ace Béla Fleck. Within a year, Fleck, Wooten, Wooten's brother Roy (a.k.a. Futureman) and Howard Levy formed the Flecktones, and were on their way to their first of three GRAMMYs to date. Wooten continued his bass focus, first forming Bass Extremes with fretless 6-string savant Steve Bailey, and then releasing the shot heard 'round the bass world: his remarkable 1996 solo debut, *A Show of Hands*.

Meanwhile, seemingly everyone wanted the award-winning and poll-winning bassist to appear on their recording projects. Wooten's recording and/or touring credentials quickly expanded to include a range of artists like Branford Marsalis, Dave Matthews, Bruce Hornsby, Prince, Mark O'Connor, Gov't Mule, Susan Tedeschi, Bill Evans, Vital Tech Tones (with Scott Henderson and Steve Smith), the Jaco Pastorius Word Of Mouth Big Band and India.Arie.

In addition, Wooten took big steps forward in the field of education, offering music and life lessons through his popular Bass Nature Camps in his home base of Tennessee, and his enlightening novel, *The Music Lesson*. He currently maintains an ambitious dual solo/sideman pace, regularly recording and touring with the Flecktones (who have released a dozen albums), Mike Stern and Chick Corea's Elektric Band. With each new solo CD (six so far), Wooten has expanded his musical focus and knack for genre-uniting via his songwriting, producing and multi-instrumental skills – all while maintaining a stellar level of bass playing. This has never been more evident than on *Palmystery*, his most recent CD on Heads Up.

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