

BASS BRAIN

How **Larry Klein** Shapes The Sound Of **Joni Mitchell, Peter Gabriel, Bob Dylan, Don Henley ...**

Gabriel's landmark *So*, put the pick-and-mute bass sound in countless ears. And his dense 5-string work powered one of history's biggest-selling singles: Bryan Adams's "(Everything I Do) I Do It for You."

Behind the board, Klein has parlayed his ongoing eight-album, 19-year partnership with Mitchell (to whom he was married for ten years) into a reputation as a top producer as well as programmer/multi-instrumentalist with artists as diverse as Starship, Rodney Crowell, and jazzers Kyle Eastwood and Chris Botti. Acknowledging his production work with Mitchell, Colvin, Chapman, Holly Cole, Mary Black, and others, he laughs, "For a while I was known as the sensitive female

singer/songwriter guy, which I've come to accept." Larry also added film composing to his resumé, beginning with the score to Martin Scorsese's *Grace of My Heart*. More recently he served as bassist/musical director on TNT's recent Joni Mitchell tribute, and he's doing road dates with Mitchell and a 40-piece orchestra in support of her latest album, *Both Sides Now*.

Born 44 years ago in Pasadena, California, Larry was raised on the sounds of his parents' jazz, pop, and Broadway cast albums. At age six he began guitar lessons, his tastes expanding to include the Beatles, Stones, and vintage blues recordings. In the sixth grade his pals formed a rock band, for which he volunteered to play bass, picking up a Precision. "I liked it right away—the

Larry Klein *continued*

feeling of being in the lower part of the musical infrastructure, and being connected to the drums." Klein became inspired by Paul McCartney, Willie Dixon, James Jamerson, Jack Bruce, Larry Taylor, and Sly Stone's bass work on his album *Fresh*, and he also benefited from a string of devoted teachers. Among his teenage pursuits—privately, in high school, and at a USC program for advanced students—were lessons on piano, electric and acoustic bass, theory, classical and 20th-century composition, and orchestration.

Herb Mickman, Klein's upright teacher,

sparked Larry's turn to jazz. Mickman used to sneak him into the Playboy Jazz Club to see the Bill Evans trio with Eddie Gomez on bass. Larry—fresh out of Cal State L.A.—landed a gig with percussionist Willie Bobo, which led to a five-year stint with Freddie Hubbard and satellite gigs with Joe Henderson, Carmen McRae, and Victor Feldman. Along the way he became disenchanted with the straight-ahead jazz world, as his ears tuned in to the flourishing fusion scene and Feldman's studio side. "The impact of Stanley, Jaco, and Alphonso Johnson motivated me to try putting my own fingerprint on the bass. More than flash, I was interested in shaping the music from the bottom and playing to the composition. Alphonso was a key influence in that way. With my rock

and pop roots, I was also attracted to what great session musicians like Victor Feldman were creating on hit records. Fortunately Victor's drummer, John Guerin, liked me and got me into the L.A. scene."

Quickly packing his schedule with record dates, film and TV scores, and jingles, Larry got a call one day from Guerin to work on Mitchell's *Wild Things*. Over the 12 months it took to complete the album, Klein and Mitchell bounced ideas off each other, co-wrote and co-produced the material, and eventually moved in together. Larry also was able to experiment with and develop his multi-tracked orchestral bass approach. "Her artistic commitment spoiled me," he admits. "I was getting sucked dry by the daily session grind, and I hated the sound of 90% of the tracks I played on." Larry cut way back on dates, took synth programming lessons, and assembled a home studio. "I decided to integrate all of my skills and put myself in a position to make albums sound the way I thought they should sound. That brought me to record production."



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A Selected Discography

With Joni Mitchell: (all on Geffen/Reprise) *Both Sides Now**; *Taming the Tiger**; *Turbulent Indigo**; *Night Ride Home**; *Chalk Mark in a Rain Storm**; *Dog Eat Dog**; *Wild Things Run Fast*. **With Peter Gabriel:** *So*, Geffen. **With Don Henley:** *Inside Job*, Warner Bros.; *End of the Innocence*, Geffen; *Building the Perfect Beast*, Geffen. **With Bryan Adams:** *Waking Up the Neighbours*, A&M. **With Freddie Hubbard:** *Born to be Blue*, Pablo; *Live at the North Sea Jazz Festival*, Pablo. **With Shawn Colvin:** *Fat City**, Columbia. **With Tracy Chapman:** (both on Elektra) *Telling Stories*; *Tracy Chapman*. **With Julia Fordham:** *Falling Forward**, Virgin. **With Robbie Robertson:** *Robbie Robertson*, Geffen. **With Wayne Shorter:** *Atlantis*, Sony. **With Chris Botti:** *Slowing Down the World**, GRP. **With Rodney Crowell:** *Life Is Messy**, Sony. **With Bob Dylan:** *Down in the Groove*, Columbia.

Soundtracks: *Duets*; *Sugartown***; *Grace of My Heart***; *Toy Story*; *Made in America*; *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*; *King of Comedy*; *Raging Bull*.

(* = produced and played on)

(** = wrote the score)

His timing was fortuitous: Klein's association with Mitchell led to bass calls from such respected artists as Henley and Shorter, plus his first outside-producer role, for the Cars' Ben Orr. "The producer-and-technology era was exploding, centered around vital music from England by people like the Police, Tears For Fears, and Paul Young. We did Orr's record in

L-2500

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Larry Klein *continued*

a studio near Bath, England, and Peter Gabriel was nearby working on *So*." In what became a period of hyper-creativity, Larry worked with Orr during the day and played on *So* in the evenings. Gabriel also invited Mitchell to begin her album *Chalk Mark in a Rain Storm* at his studio, and he enlisted Klein for the inaugural Amnesty International tour. In addition to honing his bass concept, Larry refined his production chops through his work with Gabriel and Daniel Lanois on *So*.

What does Klein bring to the production role?

"Ultimately, producing is similar to the challenge of coming up with a good, solid bass part instead of overplaying. Both involve humility for the music's sake. A producer's job is to help an artist edit ideas; you then take those ideas and find the best way to execute them to yield a record that's identifiably the artist's."

These days Larry rotates among playing, producing, and composing. "I've been honored and fortunate to work with many of my heroes, like Joni, Peter, Don, and Bob Dylan—people who have taken the pop song from a novelty or ditty into the realm of literature. I'd like to continue to help maintain those standards." ♪

See music lesson, page 46



ERIC ROBERTS

SOUND THOUGHTS

Larry Klein uses his many basses to find the perfect sonic match for each project. His current rotation includes fretted and fretless Ernie Ball Music Man StingRay 5-strings, fretted and fretless Lakland 5's, a rare Gretsch Country Gentleman semi-hollow bass "with a beautifully round, warm tone that sounds like nothing else," a fretless '62 Jazz, '63 Jazz, '64 Precision, and fretted and fretless Martin B-1 acoustic bass guitars. Larry strings with medium-gauge Rotosound Swing Bass roundwounds, with La Bella or GHS flatwounds on the Gretsch (and sometimes on his other basses). When needed, he reaches for a heavy-gauge guitar pick. Live, Larry plugs into an SWR SM-900 head with one or two Goliath 4x10 cabinets, and he stomps on a Boss pedalboard featuring Chorus, Compressor/Sustainer, Digital Dimension, Distortion/Feedbacker, and Digital Reverb/Delay pedals. His uprights are a 120-year-old Tyrolean and a 100-year-old Bohemian; both sport old Underwood bridge-mounted pickups and Thomastik Spirocore strings. Klein uses a German-style bow.

In the studio Larry usually sends his signal through an early-'80s Simon Systems direct box. "I've tried and liked many of the new tube direct boxes, but the Simon just sounds so good." He then goes into an old Neve 1073 mike preamp and then straight to the tape machine. The proud owner of two old Otari MPR90 2" analog machines, he notes, "I'm a huge fan of analog tape—particularly what it does for bass. It compresses bass in a way nothing else does frequency-wise. It comes back sounding better than it did going in." He keeps his Ampeg B-15 nearby if a miked-amp track is needed.

An effects enthusiast, Larry frequently assembles pre- and post-effects chains. "Every chain-order change gives a different sound, so the best way to develop an idea vocabulary and pinpoint sounds you're hearing is to experiment." While he'll try anything from his Boss pedals to high-end studio rack gear, Klein is especially fond of his Line 6 multi-effects: a DL4 Delay Modeler, an MM4 Modulation Modeler, and the POD amp modeler/signal processor. Larry also favors his vintage Leslie speaker and his Dynacord Leslie simulator "for a cool sound you don't hear a lot on bass." Finally, he digs an old unit called a Hughes Stereo Simulator. "The Hughes has strange, unique stereo imaging that's quite different from the usual pitch shifters and delays. I like to use it when I'm playing harmonics or chordal passages."

recorded it, so based on what I improvised, Don and Mike Campbell added chords and fleshed out the section."

Some 16 years later, Henley called Klein and his fretless Music Man 5 to play on "They're Not Here, They're Not Coming," from the ex-Eagle's new disc *Inside Job* (see review, page 93)—a track very similar to "Boys of Summer." Ex. 6 shows Larry's tasty chord and fill at 2:21. "Again, I came in late in the track and took three or four passes. Don pieced together the final part."

Ex. 7 shows Klein's four-bar fretless BB5000 solo—a melodic jour-

ney through the upper tensions of rich changes—2:48 into "When You Dream," from Wayne Shorter's *Atlantis*. "I just tried to emulate Wayne's thoughtful approach to soloing." Ex. 8 shows Larry's bass line 4:36 into "Where I'm Calling From," a song he co-wrote with Chris Botti from the trumpeter's latest disc, *Slowing Down the World*. Applying the pick-and-mute technique on his Music Man 5, he reacts to Peter Erskine's drums during an open transition section with a subtly displaced bass line on what turned out to be a first-take keeper. Larry later added "atmospheric stuff" with his fretless Lakland 5.

Ex. 5

♩ = 89
Double-time
rock feel

B C#^b/B B C# D#m7

S S
15 13 11 13

PO
11 10

11 9 8

9 4

T
A
B

Ex. 6

♩ = 152
Bright rock

F/C C B^b/C C

S

12 12 10 9

S PO
12 10 9

10 12

S S

12 10

10 12 8

etc.

T
A
B

Ex. 7

♩ = 90
Jazz samba

C6,9/E D6,9/E C6,9/E D6,9/E

8va

19 19 17 17

17 19

16

16 16 16

14 14

17

15 15 15 15 17

14

17 19

19

16

16 16

S

T
A
B

Ex. 8

♩ = 94
Funk pop

Em7

3 5

5 7

3 5

7 7 5

7 5

3 5

5 5

5 7

5 5 5 5 5 5 5

T
A
B