



DUSTY WAKEMAN

On Getting A Good Bass Sound In The Studio

TEXAS NATIVE DUSTY WAKEMAN HAS PLAYED bass for 40 years and produced records non-stop for more than half that time. A Southern Californian since the mid 70s, Wakeman spends most of his days behind the console or behind a bass at his Mad Dog Studios in Burbank, where his datebook is brimming with the best in roots and rock music. As a producer, co-producer, engineer, or player, he's lent his magic to all of Dwight Yoakam's albums, as well recordings by Jim Lauderdale, Michelle Shocked, Sin City Allstars, Tony Furtado, Ann McCue, and many others.

What's the secret to your bass sound?

Take off your G string! For me, when God created the Fender bass with Leo Fender, they got it right the first time. A lot of these fancy basses sound good by themselves, but you can't get 'em to 'pop,' and they don't sit in the mix well. So I'm anti-basses with more than four strings, and half the time, I play a 3-string [built by luthier Rick Turner]. And nothing with batteries! People remark at what a fat sound I've got.

As a producer or engineer, how do you approach getting a good bass sound?

It starts with the player. A good player can make any bass sound good; a bad player can make any bass sound bad. Also, it's about listening and finding your place in the song and in the arrangement. If you're trying to put a round peg in a square hole, it starts being about your chops as opposed to supporting the song, and it's going to sound bad. It's all about simplicity.

Also, when I'm producing bass players, one of my things is to get them to play a little harder than they're accustomed to, to get more sound out of the instrument. Guys who play light won't pop though the mix.

Does being a bassist give you an edge as a producer?

I think it does. I look at the big picture when working on the basic track, and I go over parts starting with the end in mind. It's funny; a lot of producers and working engineers I meet started as bass players. My theory is that as a bassist, you're a team player because nobody pays attention to you as an individual. It's all about the singer and the guitar player—and, that special little world that drummers and their fans live in.

—DIANE GERSHUNY FLEMING



CAN BE HEARD ON

Return to Sin City: A Tribute to Gram Parsons [Image Entertainment DVD] (bassist and musical director); Anne McCue, *Roll* [Messenger] (bassist, producer, and mix engineer); Michelle Shocked, *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* [Mighty Sound] (bassist and producer); Tony Furtado, *These Chains* [Funzalo] (bassist, producer/engineer, and mix engineer)

CURRENTLY SPINNING

Rolling Stones, *Let It Bleed* [ABKCO]; Neil Young & Crazy Horse, *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* [Reprise]; Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue* [Columbia/Legacy]; "lots of bluegrass"

GEAR

Bass '61 Fender Precision Bass, Fender American Vintage '62 Jazz Bass, '90 Rick Turner 3-string "Three-Banger," La Bella and Rotosound flatwound strings
Rig Ampeg B-15 combo, Ampeg Rocket amp, Fender Dual Showman head, Eden D410XLT cabinet, Avalon DI, Demeter Tube DI
 "I'll take the bass direct from the DI and mix that and the amp together with a Urei 1176 or a Summit compressor going to tape. Any good compressor will help with the bass, using a 4:1 ratio and -3dB to -5dB gain reduction."



Ibanez Prestige BTB The Ibanez Prestige Series is appropriate for bassists in the mood for something exotic, and BTB models are big and bad. In order to deliver deep, warm tones, Prestige BTB Series basses (BTB1205 5-string \$1,329 list, \$1,000 street; BTB1206 6-string \$1,599 list, \$1,340 street) are made with zebrawood tops and backs, large mahogany bodies, and big necks. Other features include Bartolini pickups and gold hardware. Ibanez, (215) 638-8670, www.ibanez.com.

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