

**MUSIC  
TAB!**

**IAN DURY'S "HIT ME WITH YOUR RHYTHM STICK"**

digdeeper

# bassplayer

## LEE SKLAR

THE SONG REMAINS SUPREME

**THE BAD PLUS**

IMAGINES THE RITE OF SPRING  
ON BASS, PIANO & DRUMS

MIAMI JONES

CHRIS WYSE

RYAN MARIEN

BOBBY HACKNEY

**REVIEWED!**

**CORT** B4 ARTISAN & RITHIMIC JEFF BERLIN SIGNATURE

**ESP** ROCCO PRESTIA SIGNATURE

**MARLEAUX** BOUTIQUE BEAUTIES

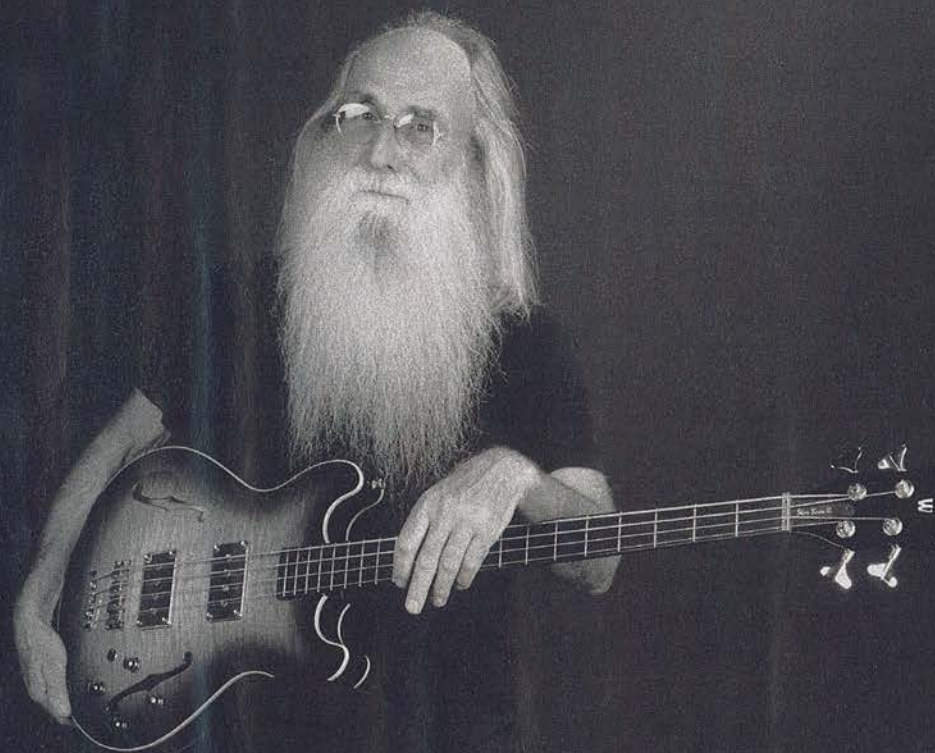




# CONTENTS

JULY 2014 | VOLUME 25, NUMBER 7 | BASSPLAYER.COM

D B S T W



## 30 LEE SKLAR

From **James Taylor** to Nashville to **Judith Owen**, Sklar has been recording and touring—and staying fresh—seemingly since the beginning of time. By Chris Jisi

## 40 REID ANDERSON

The always-stretching trio **the Bad Plus** tackles a 20th-century classical masterpiece, Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. By Jon D'Auria

## 70 IAN DURY & THE BLOCKHEADS' "HIT ME WITH YOUR RHYTHM STICK"

**Norman Watt-Roy** brings a bit of Jaco to the funky 1978 hit.

Cover Photo: Courtesy of Warwick

BASS PLAYER (ISSN 1050-785X) is published 13 times a year, monthly plus a Holiday issue to follow the December issue, by NewBay Media LLC, 1111 Bayhill Drive, Suite 125, San Bruno, CA 94066. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Bruno, CA and at additional mailing offices. Canadian GST No. R13288078, Customer No. 2116057, Agreement No. 40011901. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Bass Player, Box 469069, Escondido, CA 92046.

DEPARTMENTS

- 10 **COMMUNITY**  
The Real World, Dig My Rig, Court of Opinion
- 14 **EXPO**  
Astral Jazz
- 28 **NEW GEAR**  
Gallien-Krueger, Source Audio, Carvin & more
- 82 **BOBBY'S BASSMENT**  
The power of making music

BASS NOTES

- 16 **MIMI JONES** Balancing while stretching
- 
- 18 **CHRIS WYSE** Leading from below with **the Cult**
  - 19 **BOBBY HACKNEY** Catching up with **Death**
  - 20 **EVAN MARIEN** Bass from the future
  - 22 **BPL HIGHLIGHTS** Rickey Minor & pals go beyond
  - 24 **BP RECOMMENDS**

SOUNDRoom

- 46 **MARLEAUX** M-Bass 2012 & Consat N.T. 5-strings
- 50 **CORT** B4 20th Anniversary Bass & Rhythmic 4-strings
- 54 **ESP** LTD RB-1004SM 4-string

TECH BENCH

- 56 **VOICES** Brady Muckelroy's Texas treats
- 58 **GEEK SPEAK** The Direct Input box

WOODSHED

- 62 **JAZZ CONCEPTS**  
Odd times in the studio
- 66 **BLUES YOU CAN USE**  
Jack Myers: Once more with feeling

COURTESY OF WARWICK



# Lee Sklar

## The Song Remains Supreme

**SOMEWHERE, NOT LONG AFTER LEO FENDER'S INVENTION OF THE ELECTRIC BASS GUITAR, A FLOWING BEARD,** wire-rim spectacles, and a biting sense of humor became synonymous with the instrument. Those attributes of course belong to one Leland Sklar, a bona fide bass icon and one of the most instantly recognizable figures in contemporary music. Beyond the visual, ask any true bass fan about Mr. Sklar, and a more reverential reflection of classic recordings and performances comes to mind—the result of a remarkable career spanning six decades and approaching 2,700 albums.

Born in Milwaukee on May 28, 1947, Lee moved with his family to sunny Southern California four years later, enabling him to come of age amid an exploding musical scene that would be a frequent time-machine destination, if such a device existed. He first made sound waves on the late-'60s singer/songwriter circuit, with artists such as James Taylor, Carole King, and Jackson Browne. Quickly, his open mind and locked-in groove led to a steady session pace that included chart-topping pop, rock, and dance hits, movie and TV dates, and groundbreaking fusion sides. The '80s found him in high profile with Phil Collins, when not in

the studio. In the '90s, he extended his recording reach to Nashville, adding a spate of country classics to his career file. In the new millennium, the affable Sklar has been as diverse as ever, while fully embracing the bass community at trade shows and events worldwide—one incarnation being JoStLe, his clinic trio with Steve Bailey and Jonas Hellborg.

These days, Sklar has circled back to his singer/songwriter roots with Welsh vocalist/pianist Judith Owen, whose new CD, *Ebb & Flow* [Caroline], features a dozen song gems interpreted by Lee and his longtime fellow craftsmen, drummer Russ Kunkel and guitarist Waddy Wachtel. We began our discussion with the question of durability, and learned why Lee is an artist's and a song's best friend.

BY CHRIS JISI

PHOTO BY ROB SHANAHAN

**What is the key to your longevity?**

I tend to feel it's that I've always tried to diversify. Guys used to ask me, "How can you go on the road and turn down studio work?" Yet, I don't think I've had one year since 1970 that I haven't been on

tour. It's a matter of balancing it all. I constantly keep my ears wide open in terms of what's going on musically, and I try to stay in as many genres as I can. I also never say no unless I'm sure I'm going to get ripped off. When the call comes, I go, and I end up meeting a lot of new folks; and the next thing you know, I become their regular guy because I've gotten quite efficient at what I do. There's a big word-of-mouth element, too, because there's so much between producers and artists that is transitory. So you end up working for



hundreds of artists rather than one who hits and then misses. Ultimately, I think it's that I'm constantly availing myself. I'm not one of these guys who talks about the good old days. I just look at each day as the first day of my career and I keep moving. I don't care about what I've done in the past; the only thing I'm looking forward to is the next gig.

**You've said you're not an intellectual player. Can you explain?**

Even though I had years of training and theory, when that red light comes on I have almost an out-of-body experience. I don't really think about what I'm doing; I'm very visceral—I go by the seat of my pants and whatever my mood is in the moment. I just react to the vocalist's breathing or the flow of the instruments. That doesn't mean I'm not listening to the drums and minding the changes. There's a part of me that immediately locks into where the drummer is laying his kick drum, to see if I want to double it, or hint at it and do something else around that. After I do a track, my biggest fear is that they'll call me a few weeks later and say, "Something happened—you have to recut your part, and we want you to play it exactly the same!"

That non-intellectual approach extends to styles, too. I'm not an expert at reggae; somewhere in the back of my psyche I understand what it's about, but I try to do it on my terms. On the other hand, I do the Latin GRAMMY Awards each year, and the parts are all written out authentically, which is good because I would never play it that way, and I gain a tool in my arsenal.

**You're also a stickler for being ready to record, the first time you hear a piece of music in the studio.**

That's true. If someone sends me an mp3 of the song in advance, I usually won't listen to it. Or worse yet is when someone says we'd love to rehearse a few days before the session. That's the kiss of death, because we're going to play some fresh, mind-blowing shit, and it's all gonna be gone when we hit the studio. Generally, before anyone has had a chance to think—in those first few takes, when they're just responding to the song itself—that's when the juices flow and the magic happens. Unless a song is deeply complicated, by the fourth take I'm starting to daydream. The best scenerio for me is when someone has saved me the trouble by sketching out a basic chord sheet, so I can

immediately start reacting to the song. The song remains supreme.

**You played piano first; how did you get to bass, and what did you bring from your keyboard experience?**

As a five-year-old, I was blown away by Liberace on TV, and I became a sort of prodigy, winning competitions. But when I got to junior high school, my music teacher, Ted Lynn, said, "We have 40 kids who play piano, but we need a string bass player." He pulled out an old Kay and said, "If you give it a go, I'll get you lessons." Man, the minute I plucked a string and felt the vibrations, that was it; I'd found my calling. The electric bass came four years later, when I was 16, out of frustration of not being heard. My dad took me to Stein on Vine and I got a Melody Bass and a St. George amp. Piano gave me the ability to read in two clefs and, moreover, an understanding of the rhythmic bottom end and the melodic top end. I never copied any player or got deep into anyone's style, but I gravitated to melodic players like McCartney, Tim Bogert, Jamerson, Jack Bruce, Dee Murray with Elton John; that affinity came from piano. Another early key for me was playing along with records by the Beatles, the Righteous Brothers, and James Brown. I used to learn the song at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  RPM, then bump it up to 45, find the key, and play along; then when I got comfortable, I would go back to 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  and there was all this space in the music to navigate through.

**Let's talk about when you first played with James Taylor and how that shaped your style.**

I first met James while I was in a hard rock band called Wolfgang. He came to a rehearsal and we dug each other, so I got a call to play a gig with him at the Troubadour. As I listened to him, I thought, Well, he really doesn't need me because like a lot of folk musicians, he was a one-man band. Except he didn't just fill space with strums, he had all of these beautiful, intricate, moving fingerstyle parts—including the bass line. So I would listen to his thumb and at times double it, and other times I would try to find something that fit around that, maybe not a root but some other interval that would feed off and expand his part. There was never any real dialogue about what to play; his feeling was, that's what he hired me to do. The other bands I was in at the time were more aggressive and experimental, but I'm not sure how that figured in; it's hard to pinpoint exactly

## Instinctual-Lee

### WEND YOUR WAY THROUGH THE

vast archive of Lee Sklar's recordings and you'll find tracks that highlight various aspects of his well-honed playing style: his deep pocket, undersung syncopation, ever-melodic movement, legato slides, upper-register fills, balls-out rockin', and song-friendly sub-hooks. A slamming track that has a taste of all of these attributes is Steve Lukather's "Stab in the Back," from his 2008 solo CD *Ever Changing Times* [Frontiers], which the guitarist describes as his nod to Donald Fagen. Sklar played his "Frankenstein 4-string" and teamed up with drum ace Abe Laboriel Jr. **Example 1a** shows the basic two-bar verse figure. Listen for Lee's fat pocket, and how he shortens every other downbeat-anticipating A. **Example 1b** typifies the pre-chorus and is full of Sklar goodies. Instead of sticking to a root-5 rock bossa pattern, Lee jumps the octave in bar 2, and in adding motion on the descend, anticipates the coming *Fmaj7* chord by ending the measure on a *C*. Bar 3 is pure melody, as he outlines a descending *Fmaj7* chord and includes the passing tone *F#* (leading to the coming *G*). Bar 4 has a trademark Sklar gliss into the *A* and a feel-enhancing quarter-note triplet on beat *three*. Then, with the vocals laying out in bars 7 and 8, Lee lets loose with an ear-grabbing *F#m* pentatonic fill.

Similar magic can be found in **Ex. 1c**, the chorus: In bar 1, Sklar begins a diatonic climb up to the coming *G* chord, only to change direction midway and chromatically descend into it. Placement is the key in bar 2, as Lee lands on beat *three* with the 3rd, *B*, to start his melodic movement to the *Cmaj9* chord.

EX. 1A

Medium rock  
♩ = 130

A7

Feeling as liberated and reactive as he always does, Lee issues a syncopated descending line starting on the 9th of the chord, which keeps its motion going through the *F13* chord in the next measure. Finally, he doubles Lukather's rockin' riff in bars 6-7. Listen also for Lee's spontaneous licks over the *A7* chord during the track's final 1:15.

EX. 1B

Medium rock  
♩ = 130

Dm7 Em7 Fmaj7 G

5

Dm7 Em7 F#m7

EX. 1C

Medium rock  
♩ = 130

Dm9 G13 Cmaj9 F13 Bm7b5

6

E7#9

how a style evolves. I listen to my early recordings now and think, That's interesting, though not necessarily what I'd play now—but it works for the time. It's like looking back and dumping on the hair and clothes of an era; it's not really fair. I will say that the reunion with James and Carole King a few years back was amazing; we sounded like we'd just left off from our last gig in 1970.

It was proof that you can go home again, after all.

**Two special early recordings for you were Jackson Browne's *Running on Empty* and Billy Cobham's *Spectrum*.**

I love *Empty* because it's one of the only true live albums I've been involved with, as opposed to others where by the time everyone makes their fixes the only live thing left is the audience. On

*Empty*, what you hear is exactly what we did. We were on the bus recording, or we'd go to a hotel room, take the bed apart and stick the drums in; I had a little Univox amp that we'd put under the desk; Jackson would record in the bathroom for the echo—plus that band was just so strong onstage. *Spectrum* was during an interesting period. Nat Weiss, who helped the Beatles get to the U.S. and who managed James [Taylor], asked the Section, as we called James' backup band, to come to his hotel room one night so he could play us the test pressing of Mahavishnu's *Bird of Fire*. We flipped out, and he got the Section to open for Mahavishnu, which was a great combination because we were rock fusion and they were jazz fusion. That's where I met Billy, and when he got his first solo deal, he asked me to fly to Electric Lady in New York to play on it. We recorded everything in two days, mostly in first or second takes, and it *screamed*. I had known Tommy Bolin from my Wolfgang days, and to me he was the unexpected element that made it a classic. I had a lot of fun doing the reunion tour with Billy, Gary Husband, and Dean Brown in the early 2000s, but it would have been amazing if we could have had the original band. Every place we played on that tour was like dude musicology 101, with guys staring at our every note. It's flattering; the only problem I have is when I see bassists on YouTube play "Stratus" and they add all kinds of slaps and extras. The point of that bass line is its repeated, hypnotic effect.

**Phil Collins has been a key artist in your career.**

Phil is amazing; I love his pop sensibility as a songwriter, vocalist, and performer, and he's one of the greatest drummers I've ever played with—his pocket is so deep. We first met on a Lee Ritenour album date and hit it off. He called me to record *No Jacket Required* in 1984, and the subsequent world tour in '85, and by then "Sussudio" had become a No. 1 hit, so they changed all the venues on the tour from large clubs to arenas. Then I did *...But Seriously* and *Serious Hits...Live* in '89 and '90. He's so dedicated to making every show the best it can be. We rehearsed for a month before each tour, and every time we'd play a foreign country, he would learn his introduction in whatever the language was, by writing it out phonetically, and the audience would go crazy. He just gets it. The best news is in September Phil is bringing us in for a few weeks of

exploratory rehearsals to gauge the possibility of touring and recording again. We're going to have Jason Bonham on drums, who told me he's been playing along to Phil's stuff.

**How do you reflect on your Nashville period?**

I first started going to Nashville in 1992, through producer Jimmy Bowen, whom I knew from sessions in L.A. in the late '60s. There was a wonderful movement going on with artists like Reba McEntire, Vince Gill, Patty Loveless, George Strait, and Lyle Lovett, with whom I also got to tour. Everyone down there writes story songs, which gives you another dimension to play to. Musician-wise, the caliber is incredible, and we always tracked live. I got to work with the great drummer Eddie Bayers, and we had an instant hookup. The problem was the scene changed; six days of tracking for an album turned into four, then two, and then just single song dates. At that point, it didn't pay to fly us in anymore, so it dried up. And quite a few artists started coming to L.A. The last country album I did was for Clint Black, at Jackson Browne's studio.

**You've been associated with quirky but effective gear, like mandofrets, Dingwall fanned-fret basses, and the Yamaha Sub-Kick.**

The mandofrets evolved from my "Frankenstein 4-string," which is my main bass on 90 percent of my recording work. It was put together by John Caruthers in 1973 with a Charvel alder P-Bass body I handpicked for resonance, a maple '62 P-Bass neck I had that John reshaped to Jazz Bass dimensions, first-generation EMG-P pickups mounted in Jazz Bass position and flipped upside-down—which provided a more even sound—one of the first Hip-Shot D-Tuners, and a Badass bridge. In shaping the neck, John had to remove the frets. I saw some mandolin fret wire hanging in his shop and convinced him to try it, and we were thrilled with the results. It seemed to fit my style of using glissandos, and I had gotten tired of listening to railroad tracks clicking away; with a lightened touch it enables me to get an almost fretless sound.

I literally ran into Sheldon Dingwall and his bass at NAMM almost 20 years ago. He explained the fanned-fret system and the piano-like concept of different string lengths, with a 37" B string and 34" G. At that point, a lot of my work was replacing demo synth-bass parts, and I hadn't found a 5-string where the B matched the other strings. The Dingwall had a massive-sounding B that was in perfect tonality with the rest of the bass, and I've been



**INFO**

**Basses** "Frankenstein 4-string"; Dingwall Signature 5-string; fretted and fretless custom Warwick Star Bass II

**Strings** GHS Super Steels (.040, .058, .080, .102, .128)

**Amps** Euphonic Audio iAmp800, NL210 and CxL112 cabinets, iAmp800; Yamaha SKRM-100 Sub-Kick

**Effects** Boss OC-2 Octave, Aguilar Octamizer, early TC Electronic Chorus/Flange "in the pitch-shift position for fretless."

**Recording** "In the studio I still use my old Tube Works MosValve DI on all of my sessions."

EQUIP

CONNECT



- Lee plays with JoStLe (with Steve Bailey and Jonas Hellborg) at BASS PLAYER LIVE! 2011.
- Lee talks to BP about his historic 2010-11 tour with James Taylor and Carole King.
- Watch Judith Owen's promo clip with Lee.

[bassplayer.com/july2014](http://bassplayer.com/july2014)

“When someone says we’d love to rehearse a few days before the session, that’s the kiss of death.”

playing them ever since. Same with the Yamaha Sub-Kick; I saw Russ [Kunkel] using one and I wanted to try it. In big venues, I put the Sub-Kick in front of my cabinet, instead of a mic, and blend it with the DI signal, and the sound is ridiculous—like a CD.

**And how about your “Producer Switch”?**

Ah, the Producer Switch! That was inspired by incompetent producers ignorant of music terminology, who would make nebulous statements like, “Can you make it shimmer?” Or, “Can you make it more mauve-y?” I had done a TV session where Tommy Tedesco—out of sight of the producer, except for his head—kept bending over and picking up the same

acoustic guitar when asked to try mandolin and other stringed instruments. He would simply play in a different position on the neck, and it worked! So I immediately went home and drilled a hole in my bass and put in a dummy Switchcraft switch. Then when I would get one of these tenuous requests, I would make sure the producer could see me hit the switch, and I’d just play higher up on the neck or pluck closer to the bridge, and they’d say, “Perfect!” On my Warwick Star Basses there was an extra hole from a change in the electronics, so I had them put a Producer Switch on them.

**How did Judith Owen’s project come about?**

I’ve known Harry Shearer, Judith’s husband, for a long time. Every year they do a Christmas show and she plays piano and sings, and always sounds amazing. Apparently, her passion is ‘60s-’70s singer-songwriter music, so she wanted to make a CD with the musicians who played on the music she loved. She called me, Russ, and Waddy, and played us her songs, which were great! So we went into Sunset Sound for a week, came up with our own parts, and cut live—I used my fretted Warwick Star Bass. Judith also wanted to do a James Taylor song, and Russ suggested “Hey Mister That’s Me up on the Jukebox,” because not a lot of folks have covered

**THE COOLEST BASSES ANYWHERE**



SamAsh

MUSIC DIRECT

SERVING MUSICIANS SINCE 1924

Over 20,000 items  
In stock, ready to ship!

SamAsh.com  
Call 1-800-472-6274

FREE SHIPPING  
Most orders over \$9.99





it. She'd never heard it, but the next morning she came in with a terrific arrangement. Soon after, she asked us about touring, and our schedules worked. Part of the tour is going to be just Judith and me in small listening clubs.

**I'm intrigued by your bass sound on "Some Arrows Go in Deep," as well as how your approach to the songs will differ as a live duo.**

On "Arrows," I used a little trick Bob Babbitt taught me, which is to take two small squares cut from a kitchen sponge and put one beneath the G and D and one beneath the A and E strings, right in front of the bridge; it sounds like you're using old La Bella flatwounds. As for the duo aspect with Judith, I'll try to cover a little more ground without being intrusive. There are a couple of songs with distinct guitar lines that I'll cop, and I have a fairly forward role on "You're Not Here Anymore"; plus I'll probably do a few more things rhythmically, not having drums. But the nature of the gig is to not overplay to make up for missing pieces. Judith covers everything on piano, and her time and feel are so good, it's more what can I do to justify my being there, like my early time with James. So I'm trying to find parts that add color and texture, besides support.

**You've been a first-hand witness to much of the history of the L.A. recording scene.**

Yes, and sad to say it's been on the downside for a while. I feel very blessed that I've never had to have another job besides working musician, but I have so many friends who are fabulous musicians, yet are struggling financially. There are all sorts of economic and technological reasons for the downturn. A good part of it is that when I started, record labels, as much as they were hated, had an infrastructure that signed and developed artists. My datebooks from the time are packed solid with demos and album dates. For a bunch of years, 75 percent of my work was going to people's houses by myself and overdubbing bass to their Pro Tools rigs, which really constricts you creatively. I used to joke, I never thought my career would end up by spending time in a guy's bedroom—I thought that's how you start a career! In the last few years I've done a lot more full rhythm section or band dates, which is how you make a song go to another level, so that's a positive trend. People ask if they can send me files to play on, and I have the gear here, but I'm busy enough to have never gotten around to setting it up. My whole life doesn't revolve around music. If I'm on the road, I'd rather wander around the town than sit in my hotel room doing tracks for someone. Overall, I would say it's still

a great time for creative musicians. It's just not a good time for the music business.

**What's next for you?**

I have Judith dates that go throughout the year. I've got some record dates coming up; I just played on two great songs for Toto's new album. And I'm excited about the prospect of making music with Phil Collins again. Basically, I find myself shocked that I just turned 67. In a youth-driven industry, I thought I'd be out to pasture by this time. There are kids sitting next to me on sessions tweeting, and I'm going through my Medicare supplements! But when the phone rings, I still get that same rush I had when I was 20. **BP**

## Lee Times 20

- 1 "You've Got a Friend," James Taylor, 1971
- 2 "Doctor My Eyes," Jackson Browne, 1972
- 3 "Doing the Meatball," the Section, 1972
- 4 "I Am Woman," Helen Reddy, 1972
- 5 "Stratus," Billy Cobham, 1973
- 6 "Theme from Mahogany (Do You Know Where You're Going To)," Diana Ross, 1975
- 7 "Sara Smile," Hall & Oates, 1976
- 8 "Whenever I See Your Smiling Face," James Taylor, 1977
- 9 "Running on Empty," Jackson Browne, 1977
- 10 "It's Raining Men," The Weather Girls, 1982
- 11 "Another Day in Paradise," Phil Collins, 1989
- 12 "Don't Lose That Number" (live), Phil Collins, 1990
- 13 "Better Off Dead," Barefoot Servants, 1994
- 14 "Birmingham," Amanda Marshall, 1996
- 15 "Pretty Little Adriana," Vince Gill, 1996
- 16 "That's Right (You're Not from Texas)," Lyle Lovett, 1996
- 17 "A Thousand Miles," Vanessa Carlton, 2002
- 18 "Love in Limbo," The Jeff Pryor Band, 2003
- 19 "Stab in the Back," Steve Lukather, 2008
- 20 "You're Not Here Anymore," Judith Owen, 2014



JACK BRUCE

Legendary  
tone



THE STAY-IN-TUNE  
STRING COMPANY



sitstrings.com