

DAVE SWIFT *Interview*

continued...

Bass during a sound-check at the Royal Albert Hall. I unpacked it, played it and thought, 'This is one of the best EUB's I've ever tried'. It felt so natural to play, sounded good, and I could get the volume I needed without feedback.

**Have you had to learn any special bass skills to be able to change between electric bass and upright?**

"I see the bass guitar and upright bass as two very different instruments, and personally, I feel they should be approached accordingly. The acoustic upright requires greater physical effort, and is not for the fainthearted. I've had enough blisters to prove it! The EUB is often easier to play as the action can be brought right down and the volume turned up. I prefer the opposite because I like to dig in when I play. If you decide to buy an EUB, I strongly advise you to buy a good double bass method book and find a good teacher because a lot of mistakes can be made by going it alone."

**What has been the reaction to your electric upright? Do any purists tell you, "It isn't the real thing."?**

"I've heard the occasional comment of disapproval, and I'm sure many purists are horrified at the thought of



## ASK THE EXPERT... DAVE SWIFT

seeing, hearing or playing an EUB, but the truth is, this type of instrument can be extremely practical, and in certain situations, invaluable. I make every effort to set up my Yamaha Silent Bass to play, feel, and sound like a true acoustic bass. Admittedly, it's virtually impossible to make them sound exactly the same, and the type of amplifier you use makes a big difference, but with a little perseverance, you can get pretty damn close.

"If I were on a jazz or big band gig, ideally I would use my double bass, but if for whatever reason that was not possible, I'd still rather use an EUB than a bass guitar. I also like the Yamaha because you can plug your headphones straight into it and, dare I say the dreaded word, 'practise' to your heart's content without disturbing the drunken orgy going on in



the hotel room next door... Hang on girls, wait for me!"

**What is your current stage set up with Jools Holland?**

"On stage I use the Yamaha EUB, and a five-string Ernie Ball Music Man. For amplification I use a Walter Woods twin channel amp, relatively unknown in this country, but very popular with American bassists as they are powerful, the size of a large box of cigars, and are very light, a feature our roadie particularly loves. Oh yeah, they sound great too. My cab is a Mesa Boogie with two 15's in it. Jools likes a big, fat,

warm sound, so horns and tweeters are a no-no."

**Tell us about the new Jools Holland album and who you have been working with recently.**

"Our last album, Small World Big Band, featured twenty two different artists including Eric Clapton, Sting, Van Morrison, and Jay Kay. It also featured a song written specially for the album by George Harrison. Although we had met and worked with him before, on this



occasion, sadly, he was too ill to come to England, so we recorded the backing track at Jools' studio, and Jools took the recording to George, who I think was in Switzerland at the time, to put the vocals on. I believe it was one of the last things, if not the last, that he ever did.

"Right now, we are in the middle of a new album, again using guest artists, including Bono, Beverly Knight, Norah Jones and Ray Davies. Ray is also doing a solo album that I'm playing on."

**What advice would you give to anyone who is thinking of taking up the electric upright?**

"By taking up the EUB, hopefully you'll be inspired to play things you wouldn't attempt on the bass guitar. You may find that it's just a stepping-stone to playing an acoustic upright bass. Either way, it may well be one of the most rewarding things you ever do.

There are many EUB's out there that feel, play, and sound like oversized fretless bass guitars. I'm not saying that's a bad thing as long as that's what you want. Personally, I like an EUB that feels, plays, and sounds as much like an acoustic upright bass as possible. If the latter is what you're looking for, then the Yamaha Silent Bass is one of the best you'll find."