

# DAVE SWIFT

## JOOLS HOLLAND'S RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA

**Probably best known for his work with Jools Holland on his BBC2 TV and radio shows, and with his Rhythm & Blues Orchestra, bassist and multi instrumentalist Dave Swift talks to Gear's Gav Coulson about working with Jools, touring and his love of Fishman pickups.**

### **Morning Dave. How did you get into playing double bass?**

Well, I originally started on trombone, although my older brothers both played guitar at home and I picked up bits and pieces. Some guys at school needed a bass player for a band and I volunteered, due to the fact I could already read to a fairly high standard and had some limited experience of stringed instruments. I pretty much taught myself, but when my trombone teacher found out how much I'd

progressed on the bass guitar, he convinced me to take up double bass too, knowing that it would help me get more gigs.

### **So you turned pro at 18, and spent a couple of years playing on film and TV soundtracks, radio jingles and cruise ships – but how did you land the Jools Holland gig?**

I decided to move to London and

sought work as a session musician (Dave has done sessions for Rick Astley, American soul singer Gary U.S. Bonds, Ben E. King and ex-Kinks frontman Ray Davies). I heard that Jools Holland was looking for a bass player, particularly one who played acoustic bass as well as bass guitar (renowned bassist Pino Palladino originally held the bass chair in Holland's band, but didn't play upright acoustic bass) so I went for the audition and got the gig there and then.



### **You're a big fan of Fishman pickups – when did you start using them, and what is it that appeals to you about them?**

Like a lot of double bass players of my generation, I started off using a cheap transducer pickup, but I knew I needed a more sophisticated pickup that amplified my double bass more authentically. After trying a number of recognised transducers which I was never fully satisfied with, I came upon the Fishman Full Circle pickup. I knew Fishman had an excellent reputation and that they were world leaders in transducer technology. I also knew that Larry Fishman was himself a double bass player, so who better to design a world class product for the acoustic bass? Within seconds of plugging in my bass with the Full Circle installed, I knew I had found my ultimate pickup. I was hearing the exact sound of my double bass, only louder. The sound was not thin, harsh or scratchy like many transducers can be, it was smooth and woody with lots of detail. I felt I was getting a good combination of the sound of the body as well as the strings, and of course it had the added bonus of doubling up as height adjusters for the bass bridge. Two things for the price of one!

### **And you use Fishman preamps too, don't you?**

Oh yes! The Fishman Pro-EQ Platinum Bass Preamp/DI is a 'must have' for any double bassist. In conjunction with the Full Circle pickup, the sound becomes fuller, richer, and more rounded. There are a number of extremely useful and useable controls on the Platinum Bass EQ, such as the ability to suppress feedback with the phase switch and to get rid



Dave on stage with Kylie & Macca

of any unwanted low end boom with the Depth knob (low cut filter), and from the day I got mine over a decade ago I've never played without it. The combination of the Fishman Full Circle pickup and Fishman Pro-EQ Platinum Preamp/DI provides me with the best system for amplifying my double bass that I've ever encountered.

Since joining Jools Holland, Dave has played at many prestigious events, including the North Sea Jazz Festival, Dubai International Jazz Festival, Blue Note Tokyo, the Montreux Jazz Festival, Glastonbury Music Festival, and the Millennium Night celebration at the Millennium Dome for Her Majesty the Queen. The group also played a sold-out gig at the Sydney Opera House during their 2008 tour of Australia and New Zealand. Dave was also house bassist for the primetime Saturday night Chris Evans TV show Don't Forget Your Toothbrush and also for Name That Tune on Channel 5. He has played on several British movie soundtracks, including: Secret Friends, MILK, Kevin and Perry Go Large and Hunting Venus. Most recently, Dave played bass on the soundtrack to period drama Me And Orson Welles. In the movie, set in 1937, Dave and the Rhythm & Blues Orchestra also make an onscreen appearance as a dance band in the ballroom scene. The band have also played on and appeared in several TV commercials, including two for Bell's Whisky. Dave was also the house bassist on the Johnny Vaughan Tonight series on BBC3, but it's his time as bassist on Jools' TV show that has given him the biggest exposure.

"Double Bass players are known to be extremely fickle and fussy when it comes to instruments, strings, gear, etc.," he says, "and I'm no exception. For me to be able to perform well, I need to know that I'm using the best equipment available. I regularly find myself playing in high pressure situations on live TV broadcasts and in recording studios, as well as touring all over the world, and I cannot afford to be using inferior equipment of any kind. My Fishman Full Circle pickup and Pro-EQ Platinum Bass preamp/DI are world class products, and you won't find me using anything else!"

[www.daveswiftbass.com](http://www.daveswiftbass.com)



The Fishman Full Circle pickup in all its glory - £299

Photos: Sven Arnstein