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NORWOOD FISHER

ments, and I think we succeeded. They're two very different albums. I played bass on both sessions, and my brother Fish played drums on both, too.

Your connection with Fish was a huge part of the Fishbone magic.

We've been relating musically since I was six and he was four. My mom got me an acoustic guitar for Christmas, and he got a snare drum—Fish wanted to play drums like pops. Nobody was around to show me how to play chords, so I just started picking out bass lines, and we started writing our own songs right away. To this day, when we play together, the magic erupts.

What advice would you have for bass players who want to lock with their drummers?

I achieve it through conversation. I talk to Fish and [current Fishbone drummer] John Stewart about where we want the groove to sit and the effect we want to have on the dance floor—we'd calculate what we were doing. We talk about leaning the groove forward, laying it back, or playing it right dead on the beat, and we use our imagination to feel that. To be able to talk in those terms increases your ability to lock.

How did you get your first bass?

When I was eight, we were living deep in the hood in South Central L.A., where there

was lots of gang activity. I got a weight set for Christmas, and one of my cousins, concerned that I would grow up and become a thug, offered to give me a bass in exchange for my weights. He had a Fender Lead Bass II—like a P-Bass, but a little different—and he had a Peavey Mark IV amp with a 2x15 cabinet. He was like, "I'll trade you the bass and throw in the amp and the speaker cabinet. Oh, and I ain't gonna listen to rock music anymore, so you can have all my records." I gave him the weight set, and he gave me my life.

Last year, at Thanksgiving dinner, he was like, "So—you did a lot with that!" I thanked him. My life wouldn't be anywhere near the same if I hadn't made that trade.

What were the first songs you learned?

When I was about to turn 12, my cousin showed me how to play the Commodores' "Brick House," "You & I" by Rick James, and P-Funk's "Night of the Thumpasaurus Peoples." That set me off—I could hear a lot better, and I began to be able to pick out whatever was happening at the time. Not too long after that, I met my Fishbone guys.

How did six black teenagers from South Central get turned on to punk rock?

By '78, black radio in L.A. had begun playing Bob Marley and other reggae artists.

We were playing with these reggae rhythms we had begun hearing on the radio, and with our youthful energy and experimentation, we started speeding it up, as fast as we could play. I thought we had invented something new, but two or three days later, Dirty Walt came back with records by the English Beat and the Selector, and then we discovered the Two Tone documentary *Dance Craze* [1981].

Right around the same time, Angelo turned us on to Bad Brains, and more and more punk rock was starting to come up in the media. The Specials played *Saturday Night Live*, and then John Belushi brought Fear onto *SNL*, too. That was a badass band! I was diggin' where fusion was at; I listened to Rush, dabbled in Return To Forever, and really liked bands that could actually play. But I took a turn into this punk-rock realm, and it consumed me.

What about the gospel elements of the Fishbone sound?

We related to punk rock through a gospel lens. We went to church every Sunday, and it was like this [*sings double-time gospel feel*] in Baptist church—and if you go to sanctified church, it was even faster. So we were relating to it through that.

How did the band develop such a hyper-

GHETTO SOUNDWAVE Norwood Fisher's Gear

In the early days, Norwood Fisher grooved on Fender, Peavey, Alembic, Ken Lawrence, and Spector basses—but thanks to Randy Jackson, he's been a staunch Warwick man since the 1980s. "Randy was a good friend of our producer, David Kahne, and after he saw us in the studio, he recommended that I check out Warwick. When we got our advance, I went to a music store in San Fernando Valley—I think it was the Bass Exchange—where [Stone Temple Pilots'] Rob and Dean DeLeo worked. Robert gave me a Warwick, and I didn't even plug the bass in. I just put the horn of the bass to my ear, hit a note, and let it ring, and ring, and ring. That's what I was looking for. God bless it, I felt the neck, and I was like, This is me. This is what I've been trying to get all this time."

Norwood's main basses these days are fretted Thumb, Corvette, and Infinity 5-strings, and he also rocks fretless Warwick Thumb and Alien acoustic 5-strings. He strings them with Dean Markleys, alternating between medium-lights and mediums. When it comes to effects, Norwood is a big fan of his Dunlop Bass Wah and his collection of Pigtronix pedals, which includes a Philosopher's Tone, EP2 Envelope Phaser, PolySaturator, Mothership, Disnortion, and an Attack/Sustain.

His rig consists of three 1,000-watt Warwick Tubepath 10.1 heads, two Warwick WCA 611 6x10 Pro cabs, and two custom Warwick 2x15 cabs. "Angelo complains that it's too loud, but I tell him, 'Hey, the bass is crucial. And it's not me that's making you lose your hearing!'" Norwood says, laughing.

